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THE VOICE OF THE COMPOSER: THEORY AND PRACTICE  
IN THE WORKS OF PIETRO PONTIO

VOLUME I

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the  
University of North Texas in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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Denton, Texas

December, 1989

Murray, Russell Eugene, Jr., The Voice of the Composer: Theory and Practice in the Works of Pietro Pontio. Doctor of Philosophy (Musicology), December, 1989, 2 volumes, 427 + 211 pp., 22 tables, 4 figures, 3 plates, 46 musical examples, bibliography, 213 titles, works list, documents, music.

The life, music, and theoretical writings of Pietro Pontio (1532-1596) yield considerable insight into questions of theory and practice in the late sixteenth century. The dissertation places Pontio within his musical and cultural milieu, and assesses his role as both theorist and composer.

The first two chapters present an expanded biography based on new archival evidence. The course of Pontio's career is detailed, and corrections such as his exact date of death and his location and employment for the years 1569-1574 are presented. The documents also uniquely detail the working conditions and pedagogical methods and concerns of the sixteenth-century maestro di cappella.

Chapter Three surveys Pontio's two treatises, the *Ragionamento* (1588) and the *Dialogo* (1595), outlining important issues addressed by Pontio. Chapter Four presents a brief survey of Pontio's music, hitherto unstudied, showing his work to be of consistent quality and inventiveness. Chapter Five discusses issues from the *Ragionamento*.

Pontio's important discussion of the use of mode and psalm tone in polyphony suggests a hierarchical approach to cadential structure based on pitch, text relationship, and cadential type, and the author presents a system of cadential classification based on these constructs. The result is a clearer understanding of modal structure and distinctions of genre. Chapter Six examines the second section of Pontio's *Dialogo* as an early attempt at critical writing, similar in scope to that presented by Lodovico Zacconi in the second part of his *Prattica di musica* (1622). In both chapters, Pontio's theoretical writings are amplified by reference to his own musical works and those of his contemporaries.

Chapter Seven assesses Pontio's influences on contemporary and later writers, and details the degree of influence Pontio's treatise had on Valerio Bona's *Regole del contraponto* (1595) and Pietro Cerone's *El Melopeo y maestro* (1613). Both are shown to be heavily dependent on many of the most original aspects of Pontio's work. A summary assesses the important role of Pontio in sharpening our understanding of critical aspects of theory and practice in the period.

Volume Two presents an annotated works list for Pontio's compositions, transcriptions of archival documents used in the study, and transcriptions of representative musical compositions.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank a number of persons and institutions whose help has been instrumental in the completion of the present work. The archival research vital for the first portion of this study would have been impossible without the support of a Fulbright Grant for the academic year 1986-1987, and I thank the United States Information Agency and the Commissione per gli scambi culturali fra l'Italia e gli Stati Uniti. I must also express my gratitude to Luigi Filadoro and Cipriana Scelba of the latter agency for their continuous help during my stay in Italy.

My work in various libraries and archives was made incalculably easier by the kind and generous help of many individuals. In Parma, I benefited from the gracious assistance of Marcello Turchi of the Archivio dell'Ordine Costantiniano di San Giorgio, Maria Parente and Marzio Dall'Acqua of the Archivio di Stato, as well as the staffs of these institutions. Don Alfredo Bianchi and Monsignor Carlo Ferri are to be thanked for their help in the archives of the Cathedral and the Battistero. In Bergamo, the assistance of Gianni Barachetti and Giulio Orazio Bravi of the Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai, Don Antonio Pesenti of the Archivio Vescovile, and Monsignor Mario Lumina of the Archivio del Parrocchia di Sant'Alessandro in Colonna made my short stay in that city all the more profitable. In Milan, Monsignor Enrico Galbiati of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana and the kind staffs of the Archivio della Fabbrica del Duomo and the Archivio di Stato were of constant and significant help. All of these institutions were most generous in allowing me access to materials, providing photocopies in great quantities, and granting me extensive freedom to make microfilms. Additionally, I must thank the Biblioteca Palatina and the Sezione Musicale of the Conservatorio «Arrigo Boito» of Parma, and the Biblioteca Estense of Modena for allowing me to microfilm items in their collections. Finally, many libraries in Italy and elsewhere were helpful in supplying information and microfilms, and space permits me only to mention the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale of Bologna, whose prompt answer to numerous requests for microfilms was enormously helpful at the outset of this project.

A number of scholars and colleagues, both in Italy and in this country are also owed a debt of gratitude. In Parma, Claudio Gallico of the Università degli Studi di Parma and Pierluigi Petrobelli of the Università degli Studi di Roma and the Istituto di Studi Verdiana of Parma were of great help at the initiation of my work, as was Gian Paolo

Minardi--also of the Università degli Studi di Parma--as the project continued. I am also indebted to Enrico Paganuzzi of the Accademia Filarmonica of Verona for suggestions and information. Finally special thanks are due Anna Maria Schianchi who, as she has done in the past and undoubtedly will in the future, helped a young scholar through the problems associated with a new culture and language.

In this country, support and advice were no less plentiful and helpful, and I wish to acknowledge Jessie Ann Owens of Brandeis University for her enthusiastic encouragement from the initial stages of this project. And among many others, I must single out Gary Towne of the University of North Dakota for his uncommon generosity in sharing his research and assisting my forays into areas of investigation rightfully his own, as well as for his reading of various drafts of the first two chapters. My only repayment can be the hope that my work can in turn contribute to his.

As always, I am indebted to the support of friends and family. Thanks to the technological innovations of the day, my wife has been spared the usual tasks associated with such an endeavor, but certainly not the traditional place as the final recipient of gratitude. To her I owe the greatest debt for her never-failing support and for her patient endurance of the inevitable questions of just what it was her husband did for a living. *Sempre nel mio cuore.*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Bergamo APSA</b>	Bergamo, Archivio della Parrocchia di Sant' Alessandro in Colonna.
<b>Bergamo, MIA</b>	Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai, Archivio della Misericordia Maggiore
<b>Lib. Ord.</b>	Liber Ordinationum
<b>Milan, AFD</b>	Milan, Archivio della Fabbrica del Duomo
<b>Milan, BA</b>	Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana
<b>Parma, AB</b>	Parma, Archivio del Battistero
<b>Parma, ACVM</b>	Parma, Archivio di Stato di Parma, Archivio del Consorzio dei Vivi e dei Morti
<b>Parma, AFD</b>	Parma, Archivio della Fabbrica del Duomo
<b>Parma, AOC</b>	Parma, Archivio dell'Ordine Costantiniano di San Giorgio
<b>Parma, ASP</b>	Parma, Archivio di Stato di Parma
<b>Tern.</b>	Terminatione

## INTRODUCTION

As scholars and musicians, we accept the notion, even if only tacitly, that a composer's music speaks to us and that a theorist's writings likewise do the same. At the same time, we just as strongly sense that what the theorist proposes, and what the composer applies, are often at odds. It may therefore seem either self-evident or contradictory to speak of a "composer's voice." In the works of Pietro Pontio (1532-1596), however, we find justification for this idea as well as a unique opportunity--for in Pontio, the voice of the composer is that of the theorist, and the theorist's that of the composer.

In the whole of sixteenth-century music, Pontio stands out as both a prolific composer and a redoubtable theorist. His mastery of his musical craft, witnessed to by well over 100 compositions, is paralleled and equaled by his clear and practical approach to the explanation of that craft. Previous studies touching upon Pontio's life and works have only hinted at the rich possibilities of a detailed investigation, and an important task of a study such as the present one has been to present these aspects fully. In doing so, many corrections were necessary, both in biographical details--ranging from the outline of his career to the date of his death--and in the cataloging of his musical works. This

has only been possible through extensive archival work, careful reading of his theoretical writings, and the transcription of his surviving compositions.

The documentary evidence available concerning Pontio's life and career is remarkably rich, and presents not only the biography of an individual, but a detailed outline of the musical culture that was the foundation for his theoretical ideas. This is especially true of the record of the investigation that was to lead to his departure from his post as maestro di cappella at the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo amid charges of incompetence and immorality. The document, which is discussed at length in Chapter One, says much about the pedagogical duties and concerns of a maestro di cappella of the period, as well as the difficulties he encountered. The details that emerge from the biographical study also give a better picture of Pontio's place within his musical culture. His career is in many ways typical of the period, and his concerns are reflective of a broad class of musicians.

Within his milieu, Pontio stands as a composer of consistent and inventive talent, as well as a theorist of markedly clear practical strengths. His music, which encompasses all of the sacred genres, reflects the concerns of his career as much as do his treatises, which eschew the popular tendencies of humanist discourse to concentrate on those matters important for the musician who wished to rise

from the ranks of a mere singer of polyphony to the more lofty status of a composer. And in particular, Pontio's writings were aimed at the ecclesiastical musician with whom he had spent his career.

In focusing on Pontio's theoretical works, however, we find that they cannot be fully understood apart from his music, particularly in the questions of mode, genre, and style that comprise his most original contribution to theoretical thought of the time. Pontio's important discussion of the use of mode and psalm tone found in the *Ragionamento*, for example, suggests a hierarchical approach to cadential structure based on pitch, text relationship, and cadential type. This hierarchy may be expressed within a system of cadential classification, the validity of which is best seen in Pontio's own works. Likewise, the various aspects of style suggested by Pontio in the second part of his *Dialogo*, nine qualities to which all composers should strive, are explicitly realized in his own compositions and find their best explanation there.

Clearly then, neither aspect of Pontio's musical voice can be understood apart from the other, and this is the remarkable and essential quality of Pontio's work and the one most vital for an understanding of his importance. The voice that emerges finds further resonance in that of other theorists such as Valerio Bona and Pietro Cerone, whose appropriation of large portions of Pontio's works for their

own validate our modern view of Pontio's relevance and importance.

With this study, then, we arrive not at a complete understanding of an individual, but at a starting point for further and particular avenues of investigation. These avenues are all the more helpful in our understanding of the period by virtue of the integration of theory and practice in Pontio's works that is the full expression of the composer's voice.

## CHAPTER I

### PONTIO'S EARLY LIFE AND CAREER

In the Cathedral in Parma, on the four columns supporting the intersection of transept and nave, are monuments to four musicians preeminent in Parma's long and rich musical history. On the southwest corner is the monument stone of Cipriano de Rore, who served the ducal chapel of Ottavio Farnese. Directly across the transept and some three feet higher, next to the great stairs leading to the altar, is that of Claudio Merulo, organist for the Farnese, as well as at the Cathedral and the church of Santa Maria della Steccata. On the opposite side of the altar, at the same level, is the stone for Guilielmo Dillen, who, like Merulo, served all three chapels.<sup>1</sup> Directly across the transept from this stone, its location corresponding to that of de Rore's and

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<sup>1</sup> De Rore (1515 or 1516-1565) served the ducal chapel from 1561 to 1563 and from 1564 until his death in 1565. Merulo (1533-1604) began his service to Ottavio Farnese in 1586. In 1587 he was given the added position of organist at the Cathedral and in 1591 began his service at the church of Santa Maria della Steccata. He held all three positions until his death. Dillen (1543-1627) began his service to the court as a youth in 1555, moving to the Steccata in 1576 to assume the post of maestro di cappella. He left with the suspension of the chapel there in 1582. His whereabouts are unknown until 1601, when he appears again as maestro di cappella at the Cathedral.

completing the perfect symmetry of this quadrivium is the monument to Pietro Pontio:

D. O. M. PIETRO  
 PONTIO INDIGENAE. SACERDOTI. QVOD EIVS  
 FAMA SVPERSTES ASSERTIT.  
 INTEGERRIMO. NEC NON  
 MVSICAE FACVLTATIS. VT.  
 CELEBERRIMIS VRBIBVS  
 OMISSIS. VBI CHORO  
 PRAEFECTVS EXCELLVIT.  
 EDITA AB EO TESTANTVR  
 OPERA PERITISSIMO. D.  
 ALOYSIVS PONTIVS HOC  
 HONORAIVM SA<sup>XVM</sup>  
 RITE. P. C. OBIIT VI CAL.  
 IAN. MDXCVI. NATVS  
 ANNOS LXIV.

This initial description of Pontio as "indigenae sacerdoti" is an apt one, for he was indeed Pietro Pontio, *Parmigiano*. Although his early productive years were spent elsewhere, in chapels of foreign cities, it was to his native city he would return at the height of his career as both composer and theorist. His accomplishments here were but a reflection of the active musical life of the city and its three chapels, and it is in the history of Parma's music in the sixteenth century that we find the roots of Pontio's theoretical science and his practical art.

#### Music in Parma in the Sixteenth Century

In their juxtaposition, the monuments in the Cathedral admirably reflect the rich fabric of musical life in Parma in the sixteenth century. Parma, with a population of some

sixteen thousand persons, was a city of three important chapels--two sacred and one secular. Closely linked, with a free interchange of musicians, all three were active musical centers in the sixteenth century, drawing on the talents of local musicians, as well as attracting musicians from other parts of Italy and Europe.<sup>2</sup> Pontio himself would be linked with two of these chapels, serving twice as maestro di cappella at the church of Santa Maria della Steccata, and in his last years serving in the Consorzio dei Vivi e dei Morti of the Cathedral.

Parma, like Northern Italy in general, was also a center of theoretical activity in the Renaissance, and the city was home to some of the major theorists of the time. In the fifteenth century, Giorgio Anselmi (ca. 1384-1443) taught at the *studium* of the city. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Nicola Burzio (ca. 1450-1528), like Anselmi a native of Parma, served at the Cathedral, and he in turn reflected the teaching he received from Giovanni Gallico (ca. 1415-1473). Later in the century, Giovanni

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<sup>2</sup> Various articles outline the general history and makeup of these three chapels. See especially Gian Paolo Minardi, "Parma," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1980), XIV, 235-237; Paul Kast, "Parma," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Blume, 16 vols. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1949-81), X, cols. 807-814; and Arnaldo Furlotti, "Le tre cappelle di Parma," *La Scala XXXVI* (1952), 47-50. While there is no direct evidence of musical establishments in other churches in the city, this cannot be discounted.



Maria Lanfranco (ca. 1490-1545) served as maestro di cappella at Santa Maria della Steccata. Pontio's work as a theorist can therefore be seen as a reflection of the interests of the musical community from which he came.

### The Chapel of the Cathedral

Of the three chapels, the oldest and hardest to trace is that of the Cathedral. Due in part to the nature of the institution itself, one in which the *coro* was less a distinct cappella than an integral part of the ecclesiastical structure, only sporadic references exist that would indicate a standing musical chapel as such. Instead, from the fourteenth century the musical needs of the Cathedral had been seen to not by a chapel *per se*--organized, paid and controlled by the *fabbrica* of the church--but by an organization that also saw to much of the financial, organizational, and spiritual development of the church, the Consorzio dei Vivi e dei Morti. Founded in 1304 with eighteen beneficiaries, by the sixteenth century the Consorzio had more than eighty members and was a major economic and ecclesiastical force within the structure of the Cathedral.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For a brief history of the Consorzio, see Anna Dadomo, "Una inedita fonte per la storia economica dal XIV al XX secolo: l'archivio del consorzio dei vivi e dei morti di Parma," *Archivio storico per le province parmensi*, ser. IV, vol. XXVI (1974), 349-369. Due to this division of power, as well as the lack of information in the more easily accessible books of the *fabbrica*, very little has been

The *fabbrica*, although the titular government of the church, had by contrast relatively little to do with the music of the Cathedral. It paid the organist, and in the 1580s paid those musicians who were not members of the Consorzio; but throughout this period, musical activity seems to have emanated mainly from within the body of the Consorzio, from whose membership came the priests who served the chapel for both plainchant and polyphonic music.

Through the centuries, the presence of various musicians attests to the musical activity of the Cathedral.<sup>4</sup> Most notable is the tenure of Nicola Burzio as *guardacoro* from 1504 to his death in 1528.<sup>5</sup> Certainly his presence for

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written concerning the history of music in the Cathedral. It is possible that with the availability of the records of the Consorzio, which still await precise cataloging, this task may eventually be attempted.

<sup>4</sup> See Luigi Parigi, "Una 'Scola Cantorum' quattrocentesca nel duomo di Parma," *La Rassegna Musicale* XXV (1955), 118-122 for information concerning music in the Cathedral in the fifteenth century.

<sup>5</sup> That Burzio died in 1528 was suggested by Nestore Pelicelli, "Musicisti in Parma nei secoli XV-XVI: Note ed appunti," *Note d'archivio per la storia musicali* VIII (1931), 136, based on the year that one Thadeus Burtius assumed the benefice held by Nicola. Later writers have taken a more conservative approach, opting instead for "after 1518," the last year that previously-consulted records list Burzio as *guardacoro*. Substantiation for Pelicelli's assertion can be found in the records of the Consorzio. In March of 1528, Burzio was elected rector of the company, but by August he had already died, as the disposition of his will was discussed by the company. In September, Thadeus Burtius was elected to take his place in the company. Parma, Archivio di Stato di Parma, Archivio del Consorzio dei Vivi e dei Morti (hereafter abbreviated

such a long period suggests an active musical chapel. It was, in addition, the city's musical chapel, and during this early part of the century it was supported by a yearly gift of 100 *lire* from the city government. But by the end of Burzio's life, this support had passed to the newly-instituted chapel of Santa Maria della Steccata.<sup>6</sup>

Scattered examples of a polyphonic repertoire from this period of the chapel's history survive as additions to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century chantbooks.<sup>7</sup> The limited sampling presented by these isolated pieces speaks little

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Parma, ACVM), Liber Ordinationum (hereafter abbreviated Lib. Ord.) I, fol. 104 (18 March 1528), fol. 117 (3 August 1528), and fol. 121 (7 September 1528). The date of his death was most probably 25 April, as this is the date listed for his anniversary Mass. Parma, ACVM, 43: Epitome Anniversarium, fol. 70.

<sup>6</sup> This support was given with the proviso that the members of the chapel perform regular Masses for the *antiani* of the city. See below, page 15.

<sup>7</sup> Giuseppe Massera, "Di alcuni canti sacri a due voci nei corali del Duomo di Parma," *Aurea Parma* XLVIII (1964), 79-87, and "Sempre a proposito di alcune musiche polifoniche nei libri liturgici del Duomo di Parma," *Aurea Parma* XLVIII (1964), 257-265 catalog the various pieces. Massera lists three two-voice Credo settings in an archaic note-against-note style; a four-voice "Benedicamus Domino" based on a tenor from Mass IX and a canonic "Deo gratias," both in sixteenth-century notation; and a four-voice "Sancta Maria" in mid-fifteenth-century white notation. To these can be added three two-voiced settings of the Benedicamus Domino in chant-book F/07, noted in Giacomo Zarotti, "Codici e corali della Cattedrale di Parma," *Archivio storico per le province parmensi*, ser. IV, vol. XX (1968), 194. The chantbook is dated 1520, and the pieces are written in the same black mensural notation as that found in the three polyphonic Credos discussed by Massera.

about the full repertoire of the chapel, but the survival of three archaic two-voice Credos in a late fifteenth-century choirbook points to the continuation of a simpler polyphonic practice along with music more reflective of current styles.

The lack of a specific organization for the chapel during this period, especially the lack of a maestro di cappella, eventually led to problems of leadership; and in 1564 the bishop, citing this situation, formally instituted the office of maestro di cappella.<sup>8</sup> The documents pertaining to the institution of this office do not, however, make any mention of a specific cappella; rather they restate the principle that all benefice holders who had such ability were required to perform singing duties at the order of the maestro, who also had the duties of instructing any of the priests who needed or desired it.

Thus we can make only the most basic assumptions concerning the size or quality of the musical establishment of

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<sup>8</sup> "Havendo lo Illustrissimo Monsignor Sforza Vescovo di Parma alla venuta sua à fare la residentia nel suo Vescovado ritrovata che da alcun' anni in qua la Musica nella sua Chiesa Cathedrale, la quale nel resto è honoratamente ufficiata, è stata negletta, et tralasciata, solo per non esservi capo et Maestro di Capella che se ne piglia cura . . ." (The Most Illustrious Monsignor Sforza, Bishop of Parma, having come to take his residence as Bishop, found that for many years the music in the Cathedral, which church, in other ways, is most honorably served, has been neglected and ignored simply because there is no maestro di cappella there to take care of it . . .). Parma, Archivio di Stato di Parma (hereafter abbreviated Parma, ASP), Fondo notarile Cristoforo Torre, filza 1700: Contratti 1564 (31 October 1564).

the Cathedral. Throughout the sixteenth century, in great number, musicians received benefices at the Cathedral to serve in the Consorzio after careers as singers at Santa Maria della Steccata, thereby providing a stable body of musicians to provide music for the Cathedral.<sup>9</sup> For the majority of the century, however, one can only assume that a priest of the Consorzio actually served as a musician based on his past service in other churches. Moreover, when other musicians are specifically mentioned and paid by the church, it is impossible to know whether their presence was to add an extra luster of quality and number to the choir, or to make up for deficiencies.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Chapel of the Farnese Court**

Concurrent with the establishment of the duchy of Parma in 1545 by the order of Pope Paul III, who granted the title

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<sup>9</sup> This steady progression can be noted in the brief biographies of *Parmigiano* musicians contained in Pelicelli, "Musicisti in Parma nei secoli XV-XVI: Note ed appunti," *passim*.

<sup>10</sup> From January of 1583 until July of 1586, for example, regular payments appear for up to seven musicians. After this, through the turn of the century, musicians receive payment only for special feasts: Parma, Archivio della Fabbrica del Duomo (hereafter abbreviated Parma, AFD), F3: Liber solutionum 1579 per totum 1585, and F8: Libro dell'entrata et uscita (1586-1594). By this time, some of these musicians had returned to Santa Maria della Steccata, which they had left as a result of the brief suppression of the chapel in 1582. See Chapter Two below.

to his illegitimate son Pier Luigi Farnese, came the establishment of the ducal chapel. The size and luxury of the chapel can be seen from a description found in a letter dated 28 January 1546, written by the organist Vincenzo Parabosco of Mantua. In it, Parabosco detailed the size and pay of the newly-instituted court chapel, describing a contingent of six players with the abilities and instruments to perform in any possible consort of wind and string instruments, as well as to provide vocal music.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from size, the prestige of the chapel can also be seen in the quality of musicians which it attracted. Most notable, of course, are Cipriano de Rore, who served as *maestro di cappella* from 1561 to 1563 and again from 1564-1565, and Claudio Merulo, who--in addition to his duties at the Cathedral and the Steccata--served as court organist from 1586 until his death in 1604. Along with these, a host of notable lesser lights figure in the history of the chapel during the century, among them the singers Fabrizio Dentice (ca. 1530-before 1601), Josquino Persoens (fl. 1563-1568), the lutenist Santino Garsi (1542-1604) and Guilielmo Dillen (1543-1627). To these names must be added those of Giacches de Wert (1536-1596), Marc'Antonio Ingegneri (ca. 1545-1592),

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<sup>11</sup> The letter is reproduced in Pelicelli, "Musicisti in Parma nei secoli XV-XVI: La Cappella alla Corte Farnese," *Note d'archivio per la storia musicali* IX (1932), 42-43, along with a listing of musicians employed at the court through the century.

and Pietro Vinci (ca. 1535-1584), who in dedications to their works confirm the prestige of this organization by testifying to the liberal and generous support of the art of music by the Farnese.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Chapel at Santa Maria della Steccata**

In many ways, however, the jewel of the city in the sixteenth century was the church of Santa Maria della Steccata. From the day the first stone was laid for the construction of the church on the fourth of April, 1521, it was destined by design and circumstance to become a center of worship, music, and art for a city rich in all three. It is evident that from the very outset, the building of the church was as much a source of civic pride as it was of personal devotion, a notion supported by the monetary help for its construction--in the form of a gift of one thousand *lire*--given by the governors of the city.<sup>13</sup>

The history of the church itself goes back long before the building of the present structure to the late fourteenth century, when an oratorio was established in a house which had on an outside wall a painting of St. John the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 49-52.

<sup>13</sup> The documents concerning this gift are reproduced in Bruno Adorni, ed. *Santa Maria della Steccata a Parma* (Parma: Artegrafica Silva, 1982), 246.

Baptist, whose image was held to have miraculous powers.<sup>14</sup> So popular was this painting as an object of devotion, and so numerous were the people who came to pray before it, that a fence (*steccato*) was erected to protect it. The oratorio, thus called San Giovanni Battista della Steccata, prospered in the fifteenth century during which time a fresco depicting the Madonna nursing the infant Jesus was painted on an interior wall. This painting similarly came to be revered for the miracles attributed to it.<sup>15</sup>

In 1493 a new company, dedicated to the Virgin and consisting of men and women, religious, secular, and lay, was founded in the oratorio. Taking the name of the Annunciazione di Maria Vergine, it shared with its sister confraternity in Rome both its name and its mission of providing dowries for poor girls of the city. As a result of a conflation of names connected with the two paintings found in the original oratorio, this company eventually assumed the title of Madonna della Steccata. The organization flourished, and soon thereafter purchased land and

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<sup>14</sup> The house, which belonged to a Bolognese noble by the name of Antonio Ferrari, was donated to the Order of San Giovanni Gerosolimitano, which founded the oratorio. See Laudedeo Testi, *Santa Maria della Steccata in Parma* (Florence: Battistelli, 1922), 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Due to its presence in the oratorio *della Steccata*, the painting was referred to as the "Madonna della Steccata," and various stories involve a similar fence being built for its protection. See Testi, 7-8.



began the construction of the present church. Construction began in 1521, and on 24 February 1539 the image of the Virgin was transported to the new oratorio in a grand procession and installed on the main altar. During this time the company continued its original mission, which it augmented by serving as a location for worship. It is during this important early period that the beginnings of an active musical life can be found.

It would appear, judging simply from names of musicians who served in the church over the course of the century--men such as Giovanni Maria Lanfranco, Pietro Pontio, Archangelo Crivelli, and Claudio Merulo--that besides being an active chapel, it was one of high and consistent quality. Little, however, is known of the very early history of the musical chapel at the Steccata.<sup>16</sup> But new documentation suggests that the musical chapel began quite early in the development of the church, and emphasizes the central role of the city and various nobles in the support of this musical organization.

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<sup>16</sup> Nestore Pelicelli, *La cappella corale della Steccata nel secolo XVI* (Parma: Fresching, 1916) is the only history of the chapel to date. Pelicelli, a local priest and historian, suggested that the chapel was instituted, fully formed and on a rather large scale, in March of 1528. This picture must be modified in light of new documentation I have found that yields a clearer understanding of the structure of the chapel.

It is likely that the use of music, and specifically polyphonic music, dates back to the period before the construction of the present edifice. Indeed, a case can be made for the presence of a chapel as early as 1522, based on documents I have found in the Archivio di Stato in Parma. A few scattered records of payments to singers exist for this year, and although none of them specify payment for polyphonic singing, they give strong indications of the possibility.<sup>17</sup> On December 18th, 1522, four singers were paid for singing at Mass, Compline, Vespers, and Terce for the "feste comandate" during the entire year.<sup>18</sup> In addition, on 2 March 1523, a payment of twenty *soldi* to a company of trumpeters appears. Both instances point to a general concern for musical adornment, but the individual payment of singers is made more significant by the fact that payment is made for services on "feste comandate," a phrase used routinely in later lists as a general term indicating celebrations of a higher rank in which polyphony was to be employed--apart from the standard feasts. These were, in other words, celebrations for which, from time to time, the

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<sup>17</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo Culto (1395-1788), busta 13: Congregazione della B. V. della Steccata ed Ordine Costantiniano (1510-1676). This *busta* contains, among other items, a bound collection of individual pay receipts from which these documents are taken.

<sup>18</sup> One Don Bartolame di Barberi, for example, was paid five *lire* "per il compimento dela sua mercede per lo anno 1522 per cantare Terza e la messa la feste Comandate."

council of the church desired added musical decoration. Taken together, these payments argue forcefully, even if not overwhelmingly, for the existence of polyphonic music at this early date.

By December of 1526, however, a polyphonic chapel was unquestionably in existence. In a decisive move for the history of music at the Steccata, the ruling *antiani* of the city voted that:

. . . this provision of 100 *lire* per year, formerly promised to the singers of figured music in the cathedral of this city--which is no longer paid--be applied and paid to the Company of the Madonna della Steccata for payment of their singers, who shall be obligated to serve the Steccata, as well as in other places required by the *magnifici signori antiani*, and this at the pleasure of the magnificent council of this city. . . 19

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19 ". . . quella provizione quala è de libre 100 lanno già promessa alli cantori del canto afigurato deputati alla chiesa maggiore de questa città, quale più non se paga, sia applicata e pagata alla compagnia de Madonna de la Stachata per pagamento de li cantori suoi, quali siano obligati servire alla prefata de la Stechata, et in quelli altri loci li serà detto per li magnifici signori antiani seranno per lo advenire, et questo ad beneplacito del magnifico consilio de detta città . . ." Parma, ASP, Archivio del comune, Minute della ordinazione, busta 295 (1501-1527), fascicolo 15, sotto fascicolo VI (14 December 1526). Printed in Adorni, 251. Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 5, suggests--based on the wording of the first document to mention this support (dating from November of 1528)--that the city's support began in March of that year. Parma, Archivio dell'Ordine Costantiniano di San Giorgio (hereafter abbreviated Parma, AOC), Lib. Ord. I, fol. 14v (12 November 1528). The document cited here makes this untenable, and it should be noted that the books simply do not record such financial entries previous to October of 1528, thus explaining the lacuna.

This document is instructive in a number of specifics. First of all, it reinforces the evidence for the existence of a polyphonic chapel in the Cathedral during this period.<sup>20</sup> More importantly for the present discussion, its wording suggests that at that time there were singers capable of singing polyphony *already in the employ* of the Steccata.<sup>21</sup> Finally, this document is useful in underlining the close connection between the church and the city, as it indicates that the singers were in large measure obligated to the service of the *antiani*.<sup>22</sup>

Trying to establish the exact size of the chapel for this early period is difficult. From 1528-1533, the *Libri Ordinationum* record only payments every three months of thirty-seven *lire* for the maestro di cappella and the singers, with no individual names recorded save that of the maestro. In addition to this, during most of this period there are separate payments to one "Raynaldo," listed simply as *musico*, totaling twenty-five *lire* per year. It is only

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<sup>20</sup> See above, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> The first notice in church documents to mention polyphony is a particular in the 1527 will of Sforzino Sforza, Duke of Castell'Arquato, which mandated that annual Masses be sung "in *canto figurato* if possible." Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. I, fol. 8v (13 November 1527).

<sup>22</sup> This will be seen later in the discussion of the duties of the singers. The association between the church and the city can also be seen in the gift, cited above, of one thousand *lire* to aid in the construction of the new oratorio.

in 1533 that we find a specific listing of singers in any form.<sup>23</sup> Here four priests were paid five *lire* for the period of April, May, and June for singing polyphony and plainchant; and along with these, four others were given payments of three *lire* each for singing *only* plainchant or *only* polyphony.

From this, we can conclude the following: a resident priest at the church who sang both plainchant and polyphony in 1533 received annual compensation of twenty *lire* per year (five *lire* per quarter), while one who sang only plainchant, or only polyphony, received twelve *lire* per year. With this information, a reexamination of earlier documents confirms both the structure and the level of payment for the previous years.

In lists dating back to 1529, many of the same priests listed in 1533 appear in the yearly payment to the residents, receiving twelve *lire* per year as payment for their service as "residents in *canto fermo*." The regular payments to the cappella of thirty-seven *lire* during this period, then, comprised the supplements for each resident singer of polyphony (eight *lire* per year, bringing the total up to the twenty *lire* recorded in 1533), the yearly stipend of twelve *lire* for the singers who sang only polyphony, along with the payment to the sopranos and the supplement to

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<sup>23</sup> Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. I, fol. 124v (26 July 1533).

the maestro di cappella for his services (totaling about sixty-eight *lire* per year). The proposed breakdown for this is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
Proposed Breakdown of Spending for the Musical Chapel:  
Santa Maria della Steccata, 1528-1533

Total Expenditure (@ £37 each quarter)	£148
Supplements for 4 singers (@ £8 each)	£ 32
Yearly pay for 4 non-resident singers (@ £12 each)	£ 48
Remainder (=salary for the maestro and boys)	£ 68

Thus, for this early period, the records confirm a choir consisting of seven or eight singers of polyphonic music (including the maestro, one lay musician, and the organist who also had the singing of polyphony as part of his duties), along with an undetermined number of boys, the "disciples" listed in the payments of 1528. These singers, in addition, made up the bulk of the choir used for plainchant.<sup>24</sup> That the city's payments begin in 1527 confirms a

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<sup>24</sup> Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 6, fails to take into account the overlapping duties of the singers of plainchant and figured music. He thus approaches them as two separate sub-chapels, stating that the musical forces consisted of "7 musici pel canto gregoriano, e di 8 pel canto figurato, ai qualli è aggiungere il Da la Musa organista, Il M.o di Cappella che direttamente pagava i fanciulli, e Raynaldo, detto semplicemente musico," or 18 adult musicians plus the boys. Only by careful dissection of the lists he provides,

chapel of this size at that date. The payments from 1522 possibly reflect a smaller establishment--one suited to the more private functions of the original oratorio.

The size of the chapel remained consistent through the next decade. In August of 1534, the salaries of the singers and the maestro were increased. At that point, along with the maestro, six singers are listed. In 1540, when Giovanni Maria Lanfranco was hired to take on the duties of maestro di cappella, seven singers are listed.<sup>25</sup> The chapel enjoyed sustained and continued growth, and in the mid-century and beyond could well support its central position in the musical life of the city.

Concurrent with this growth was the continued support of the city government. Pelicelli reports that in the 1540s the church received the sum of 495 *lire* per year to

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in which he further errs by listing singers from different years as being in one "chapel", does the actual size and structure become relatively clear. Virtually all secondary sources, however, simply report his figures, thus overstating the size of the musical forces at this time by as many as six singers.

<sup>25</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Benedetto Bono, filza 925 (17 January 1540). Transcribed in Adorni, 264. Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 10-12, reproduces the *capitoli* for Lanfranco (Parma, AOC, D 379: Ordine Costantiniano di S. Giorgio--pittura e architettura della Chiesa Magistrale della Steccata, Lib. V (1531-1539)), which lists the duties of the singers as well as their names.

sustain the musical chapel.<sup>26</sup> The close and important relationship between the city and the chapel is illustrated most clearly, however, in the incidents surrounding the suppression of the chapel in 1547. As is often the case in such situations, the exact cause of the disbandment is not made clear, but the documents indicate a continuing level of discord among the singers, which made the continuation of the chapel undesirable.<sup>27</sup>

In late October of that year, the ruling council of the church dismissed one of the singers and then called for the suspension of polyphonic music. The other singers, however, being for the most part resident priests of the church, were not fired, nor was the maestro deprived of his salary. Instead, the suppressed chapel was expected to continue in the duty of singing plainchant. In the same notice, moreover, it was made clear that the residents would still be required to perform a regular Mass for the *antiani* of the city, as well as sing a Hymn after Compline every Saturday--both in polyphony--although they would receive no

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<sup>26</sup> Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 13. I have been unable as of yet to find the source for Pelicelli's assertion, but there is no reason to suspect that the city would have considered ending its support, even if we cannot be certain of the level.

<sup>27</sup> ". . . per li inconvenienti et discordie che son nate tra li cantori . . ." Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. III, fol. 141v (31 October 1547).



pay for it.<sup>28</sup> Thus even as it was willing to suspend many of its internal musical activities, the church felt bound, either by pride or agreement, to continue with its civic function. The chapel was restored in October of 1552, and with the exception of a brief suspension in 1582, continued uninterrupted throughout the rest of the sixteenth century.

In 1564, the church was described in the following terms:

. . . it has an annual earning of around three thousand *scudi*, all of which is spent in celebrating the divine Offices, maintaining the church building, and giving dowries or gifts to virgins . . . [There are] priests chosen [by the Consorzio], of exemplary life, whom they pay . . . , [and] who continually, as if in a cathedral, sing the hours and the divine Offices, and [also] serve as musicians; and every day a number of Masses are performed, observing the time and order established by their superiors, such that at any moment there is celebrated one, and often even two Masses, so that as soon as one finishes, another begins. And thus, from dawn through Nones there is always a Mass . . . . And among other Offices, on Saturday evening they sing Compline. The cappella has a maestro who presides [over the singing]; and nothing is lacking to inspire devotion . . . .<sup>29</sup>

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28 ". . . la messa delli Signori Antiani de questa Citta a canto figurato et le laude de la madonna che si cantano ogni sabbato finito il completo senza pagamento alcuno." Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. III, fol. 141v. (31 October 1547).

29 ". . . habet in annuo redditu scutos tres mille vel circa, quos omnes expendunt in divinatorum celebratione, structura et in nubendo seu dotando Virgines . . . . Nam . . . sacerdotes particulares, mercede conductos et probatae vitae . . . qui ibi continuo, ad instar Cathedralis, horas divinas et divina officia decantant: et ibi continuo Musicam tenent: et die omni Missarum quantitatem celebrari faciunt, tali ordine et temporis observantia, ita

By the time of Pontio's first tenure as maestro di cappella at Santa Maria della Steccata in 1567, the chapel had seemingly developed into the preeminent ecclesiastical choir in the city, and indeed a rival for the splendor of even the ducal court.

In addition to these three courts, musicians were employed by the city, which supported a company of trumpeters and of *pifferi*, who provided music for various civic occasions. The role of these musicians in the musical life

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eorum superiore iubente, quod semper unus ad minus et saepe duo sunt in actu missae celebrandae et statim, una finita, altera parata est: et sic ab alba diei usque ad horam Nonae semper ibi paratae sunt Missae . . . Nam, inter alia divina, singula Sabbati die in sero, Complectorium incinunt. Capellae enim Magistrum habent, qui praest: et nihil ad devotionem incitandam deest . . ." Christoforo Dalla Torre, ["Descriptio Omnium Civitatis et Dioecesis Parmensis Ecclesiarum, Monasteriorum et Beneficiorum in eis Fundatorum"] (manuscript, without title, 1564), presently found in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma (Ms. 1179 bis). Printed in Antonio Schiavi, *La diocese di Parma*, 2 vols. (Parma: Fresching, 1925-1940), II, 104-220. According to Schiavi, the original version of this document (from which Schiavi took the title that appears in his transcription) was written in 1562 and was housed in the Archivio della Curia Vescovile in Parma. I have been informed by the present archivist that this copy no longer exists. In addition, Della Torre made another version of this document in 1584 (Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Ms. 1179), which updates the various benefices. Schiavi's printed version is a concatenation of the 1564 and 1584 manuscripts, thus containing the names of the benefice holders for the entire twenty-year period. Schiavi's transcription is accurate, but no distinction is made between the names from the 1564 version (which contains revisions) and those from 1584. The present quote, presented by Schiavi in the original Latin in *La diocese*, vol. II, 142, is also given in a questionable Italian translation in Arnaldo Marocchi, "La chiesa della Steccata nella storia," in Adorni, 21.

of the city was demonstrative of the cooperation and connection between these three chapels. Although they were employees of the city, they describe themselves in a letter to the Duke as his "servants and vassals."<sup>30</sup> They also served in conjunction with the chapel of the Steccata. For example, every March twenty-fifth, in celebration of the Annunciation of the Virgin, the choir of the Steccata, augmented by the *pifferi* and the trumpeters of the city and the bell ringers of both the city and the Cathedral (the Steccata, it may be noted, has no bell tower), took part in a grand procession from the steps of the Cathedral to the Steccata, undoubtedly a major event in the city.<sup>31</sup> Further evidence is found in an account of the dedication of the city's new fortress in 1591. For this grand civic occasion, the chronicler noted that the music was provided by the organist at the Steccata, Claudio Merulo, and the maestro di cappella, Pietro Pontio.<sup>32</sup> In 1590, records show that two sopranos and a trombonist from the Steccata were hired by

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<sup>30</sup> Pelicelli, "Musicisti in Parma nei secoli XV-XVI: La Cappella alla Corte Farnese," 44-45 reproduces the letter, undated. Claudio Gallico, *Le capitali della musica: Parma* (Cinesello Balsamo-Milano: Arti Grafiche Amilcare Pizzi, 1985), 58, makes reference to the letter, suggesting that it dates from 1547.

<sup>31</sup> The earliest notice I have found concerning this procession dates from 1529. Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. I, fol. 25 (1 April 1529).

<sup>32</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo Comune, Autografi Illustri, busta 4402, #70: Smeraldo Smeraldi.

the Cathedral to augment its musical forces for a festive celebration.<sup>33</sup> Another reflection of the close relationship is seen in the fact, noted above, that many of the singers of the Steccata, after long careers, assumed benefices at the Cathedral where they undoubtedly formed the small but experienced core of the Cathedral's musical chapel.

It was within this closely-knit musical milieu, in close proximity to many fine musicians in a busy atmosphere of musical endeavor, that Pietro Pontio spent his formative years. And it was in such fertile soil that his talents would find their first sustenance. Little is known of this earliest part of Pontio's life; we can only be sure of the circumstances and make suppositions concerning the detail. However, enough suggestive material is present that we would be remiss in not exploring it and drawing even the most preliminary of conclusions.

#### **Pontio's Early Life: Questions of Influence and Patronage**

The earliest writer to mention Pietro Pontio was the *Parmigiano* chronicler Edoari da Erba, who in 1572 wrote:

Still living is Pietro de Ponci, a most skilled musician and priest, not long ago made maestro di cappella in the Duomo of Bergamo, who has composed pleasant and most graceful Masses for

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<sup>33</sup> Parma, AFD, Mandati, casetta 1: 1589-1598; 1601-1622 (23 August 1590).

four voices, which serve many priests in the sacred temples.<sup>34</sup>

But this notice comes rather late in Pontio's career; by that time he had served in two cities and three different chapels, and had published at least one collection of music. As to any concrete information concerning his early life, there is a disheartening paucity. We must, therefore, assume in this case that the man is father to the child and search his later life and career to find material for speculation concerning these early years.

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<sup>34</sup> "Vive ancora Pietro de Ponci peritissimo Musico, e sacerdote, e per la musica fatto poco innanzi dal clero Maestro di Capella del Duomo di Bergamo, qual ha composto canti legiadriissimi, e soavi sopra le messe a quattro voci, dei cui si servono nei tempj sacri molti sacerdoti." "Compendio Copiosissimo dell'Origine, antichità, successi, e Nobilità della Città di Parma, suo Popolo, e Territorio Estratto dal raccolta di Angelo Mario di Edoari da Herba Parmigiano per il medesimo. Parma. L'anno 1572" (Manuscript, date unknown). Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Ms. 1257, 238. Various copies of this manuscript exist in the library in Parma, this being the clearest reading. Apart from that in its title, the manuscript carries no date, and may well be a later copy. The manuscript most often cited (Parma, Biblioteca Palatina Ms. 922) is identical, although it often is not as clear a reading. Curiously, a copy of Pontio's *Ragionamento* contained in the Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique (F.F. 6676), used by Suzanne Clercx for the facsimile edition (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1959) contains a transcription of portions of da Erba's commentary, citing it as dating from 1578. I have been able to identify the hand as that of Gaetano Gaspari, who served as librarian at the Liceo Musicale in Bologna from 1856 to 1881. His designation of his source as "Manuscript D" is enigmatic, and his pagination for the entry ("pag. 98 a tergo") matches none of the copies in the Biblioteca Palatina. As will be seen in Chapter Two, da Erba's placement of Pontio at the Cathedral in Bergamo is incorrect.

In just this sort of historical hindsight, Ireneo Affò suggested--perhaps overzealously--that Pontio was from an early age gifted in the sciences, and especially music.<sup>35</sup> How and when this genius manifested itself in his youth, we can only guess, but his later accomplishments in both the theory and practice of his art validate Affò's early pronouncement. We are left, however, with the difficult task of reconstructing, albeit in cursory form, Pontio's early life--a period that begins with documentation and ends only in speculation.

#### Pontio's Birth and Family Background

The only secure documentation for the early life of Pietro Pontio is that of his birth. Born on the feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin, 25 March 1532, to Orlando Pontio and his wife Catherine, he was baptized Joannes Petrus de Pontius in the *Battistero* of the city on the following day, with Bernardo de Luchetis and Joanna de Morenis serving as godparents.<sup>36</sup> Little, however, can be found concerning his parents. Two years earlier the couple

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<sup>35</sup> "Questo eccellente Professore di Musica . . . è sorti buon genio per le scienze, ma particulatmente per la Musica," Ireneo Affò, *Memorie degli scrittori e letterati parmigiani*, 5 vols. (Parma: Reale, 1789-[1833]), IV, 199.

<sup>36</sup> Parma, Archivio del Battistero (hereafter abbreviated AB), Anni 1521-1535, 26 March 1532. Document 1; transcribed in Pelicelli, *La Capella corale*, 26. Except in this document and some associated with his tenure at the Cathedral in Milan, the name Joannes never appears.

had given birth to another son, Marsillio, but no other notices can be found for him, and it is possible that he died in his youth or else left the city.<sup>37</sup>

The name Pontio was common enough during this period of the city's history, but no birth record can be found for Orlando, and it is possible that he was not a native of Parma. Nor is it possible to establish definitively Pietro's kinship with any of the various branches of the family in Parma. Ranuccio Pico, who appears to have known Pontio, suggested that he was related to Giovanni Pontio, who served as grammar teacher and poet in the court of Ottavio Farnese, but he was unsure of the degree of this relationship.<sup>38</sup> Fortunato Rizzi suggests that Giovanni was born in 1535 and died in 1598, but adds little more

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<sup>37</sup> Parma, AB, Anni 1521-1535, 17 September 1530. Marsillio was born on 14 September. No birth records through 1569 list Marsillio as a father.

<sup>38</sup> "Della medesima Famiglia hò conosciuto Don Pietro Pontio Musico molto eccelente . . . ma non sò in che grado di parentella egli fosse col prenominato Giovanni." Ranuccio Pico, *Appendice de vari soggetti parmigiani che ò per bontà di vita ò per dignità, ò per dottrina sono stati in diversi tempi molto celebri ed illustri* (Parma: Mario Vigna, 1642), 177. Affò, II, 203, either confirms or accepts Pico's acquaintance: "Ranuccio Pico, il quale conobbe sì Pietro, come Giovanni."

information, and none concerning Giovanni and Pietro's relationship.<sup>39</sup>

It has also been assumed that Pontio was related to Aloysius Pontio, a priest who provided Pietro's memorial stone in the Cathedral.<sup>40</sup> No baptismal record in Parma exists for an Aloysius, but later documents show him to have been the son of Joseph Pontio, and a Joseph does begin to appear as a father in birth records beginning in 1555 suggesting that the family had moved to Parma after Aloysius's birth.<sup>41</sup> A family tie is suggested by the appearance of

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<sup>39</sup> Fortunato Rizzi, "Figure dimenticate del Parnasso Parmense," *Aurea Parma* XLII (1958), 33. If this is correct, Giovanni was likely Joannes Paulus, born to Jacobus and Hippolite on 23 January. Parma, AB, Anni 1521-1535, 24 January 1535.

<sup>40</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Girolamo Magnani, filza 3500: Contratti 1596-1597 (15 June 1596), identifies him as "Aloisius Germellus de Pontiis," and an Aloysius Germellus appears in a list of benefice holders in the city. See Schiavi, II, 211. It is unclear from Schiavi's transcription whether the benefice dates from 1564 or 1584, and I have not been able to check the reading for this entry in the original. See above, note 29.

<sup>41</sup> The earliest incontestable document I have found mentioning Aloysius is a will from 1570 in which he served as a witness. Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Pietro Martire Garbazza, filza 2469: Ultima volontà (9 April 1570). This would suggest that he was born before 1555. In addition, in many documents he is described as a resident of the parish of Santa Cecilia--the same parish in which his father, Joseph, resided. Sporadic notices exist from after 1600, but I can find no evidence for Aloysius's date of death.



Aloysius as the witness in two notary documents for Pietro Pontio's godmother, Joanna de Morenis.<sup>42</sup>

Whatever its roots, we can assume that the family Pontio was born into was one of some wealth and prestige. Pontio was related, probably on his mother's side, to the Bosii family, a landed family with a fair number of agricultural holdings outside of the city walls, and these lands would later figure as substantial sources of income for Pontio during his final years.<sup>43</sup> In these years, Pontio was to serve as guardian for the three children of this family--described simply as *nepoti*--the orphans of Francesco de Bosii.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to this meager information, it may be assumed that the family had some degree of lesser nobility in its heritage, for a simple heraldic device consisting of three stars and three weights on a featureless field (Figure 1) appears on Pontio's tombstone.

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<sup>42</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Pietro Martire Garbazzo, filza 2429: Anni 1595-1596 (16 January 1595).

<sup>43</sup> These financial dealings will be discussed at length in Chapter Two below.

<sup>44</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Girolamo Magnani, filza 3499: Contratti 1592-1595 (8 November 1594). See Chapter Two below.

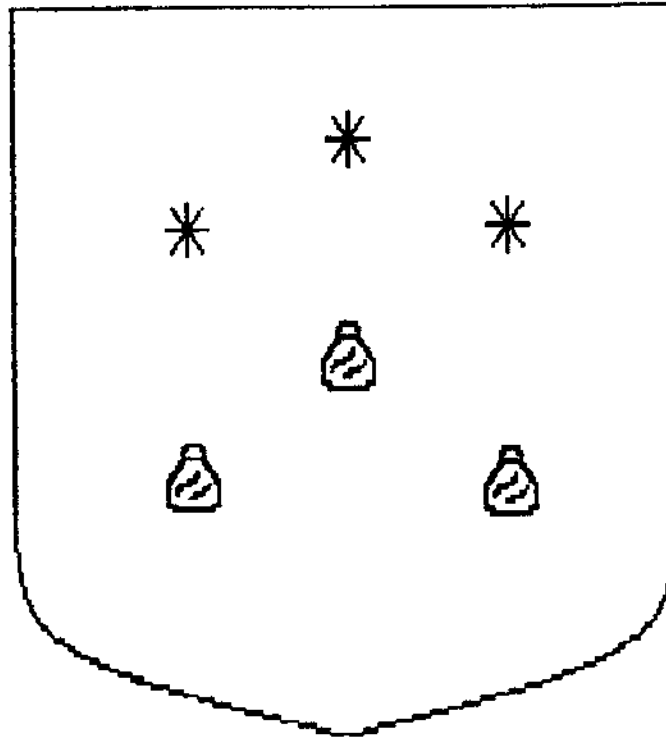


Figure 1. Reproduction of Device on Tombstone of Pietro Pontio

### Speculation Concerning Pontio's Early Life

For the period stretching from Pontio's birth until his arrival at Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo in 1565--a space of some thirty-two years--there can be only speculation. While no records whatsoever, civic or ecclesiastical, can be found for this period, some assumptions can be made, although it would be pointless to go beyond basic generalities. Coming from a family of apparently some substance and connection, it is likely that Pontio received the education and advantages pertaining to this station. He may have received musical training at the seminary of the Cathedral, or possibly at the *scola* of Santa Maria della Steccata.

Exactly when, or even where, he took holy orders, however, cannot be determined with any accuracy.

For the years immediately preceding his move to Bergamo in 1565 to assume the directorship of the chapel at Santa Maria Maggiore, conjecture can be somewhat more certain. There is little doubt but that these years were spent in Parma. Although the deputy sent by the Bergamasque church to hire the new maestro was given the somewhat broader geographic goal of "Parmam vel alibi" for his search, the fact that the deciding factor for his appointment was the recommendation of Cipriano de Rore, at that time maestro di cappella at the Farnese court in Parma, would seem to argue unequivocally for his residence in the city during these years.

Cipriano de Rore's recommendation of Pontio for the position has engendered the belief, accurate or otherwise, that Pontio was a student of the northern master. There is, however, no evidence for this beyond the seemingly logical assumption. Cipriano had returned to Parma from Venice in July of 1564, after having previously been in the city from May of 1561 until April of 1563. During those brief periods, Pontio may have indeed studied with de Rore; but there is no evidence for any official contact between the two, as Pontio does not figure in the records of the court chapel, where the older musician served as maestro di cappella. It is, then, at least as likely that de Rore's recommendation

was based solely on his knowledge of Pontio's abilities, and not the case of a teacher recommending his student.<sup>45</sup>

Whether de Rore knew Pontio as a student or merely as a musical figure in the city, it is without a doubt that Pontio was in Parma at the time, which provokes the question, by what financial means did Pontio--by that time a man in his early thirties--support himself? We can assume that in 1564 he held no benefice in the city.<sup>46</sup> We also can surmise that he was not a singer at the Cathedral or at Santa Maria della Steccata, and no other church is known to have maintained a chapel in this period. We must therefore look not to the church, but the secular world for possible sources of support.

In doing so, two possibilities suggest themselves: familial or patronal support, or musical employment in a secular chapel. As to the first, we will see that late in his life Pontio took a monetary and administrative role in

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<sup>45</sup> In January of 1565, Pietro Paolo Ragazzoni (1499-1580) was maestro at Santa Maria della Steccata, and Giovanni Dolci was holder of the newly-created office at the Cathedral. While neither was to attain anything close to the reputation of Pontio, both had the advantage of experience in the direction of an ecclesiastical chapel. By this time Ragazzoni had published the second, augmented edition of his first book of four-voice Madrigals. Whether these musicians were not interested in the position, or whether de Rore believed the young Pontio to be a more promising candidate for the post, is a matter of conjecture.

<sup>46</sup> Dalla Torre, "Descriptio," in Schiavi, II, 104-220 lists all of the benefices held in city and surrounding parishes for the year 1564; Pontio's name does not appear.

the support of a young priest and musician, Baptista Gnocchis, providing a certain amount of money to support the young priest until such time as he would acquire a benefice equal to the amount of this stipend.<sup>47</sup> This generosity may have been engendered by gratitude for the same type of support received early in his own career. As to the second path, we are led, if by nothing else than by a dearth of evidence, to examine Pontio's relationship with a local noble, Girolamo Cornazzano.

Girolamo Beccharia de Cornazzano, cavalier to the king of Portugal, presents almost as many biographical problems as does Pontio himself.<sup>48</sup> His date of birth is not known, nor that of his death. He appears now and again in court records, the last time to my knowledge being in 1597 when he

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<sup>47</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Girolamo Magnani, filza 3499: Contratti, 1592-1595 (1 December 1595). Document 58. Gnocchis was at that time 26 years of age. More detail on this is found in Chapter Two.

<sup>48</sup> Even his title has been a source of misunderstanding. He is clearly identified as a cavalier to the Portuguese King in a number of documents, most notably in Pontio's dedication to him of his 1582 book of Motets, but the source or reason for this honor is unfathomable. Through a typographical quirk, he became a cavalier to the Polish court in Pelicelli, "Musicisti in Parma nei secoli XV-XVI: Note ed appunti," 209, and has remained so in Roland Jackson "Pietro Pontio," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1980), XV, 82.

was the victim of an attack in Pavia by the agents of the Duke of Mantua.<sup>49</sup>

Girolamo was himself the son of a cavalier, Manfredoto Cornazzano, noted in a chronicle from the mid 1550s as one of the "honoratissimi milites auratae militiae" of Parma.<sup>50</sup> Girolamo's own son Pompeo became Bishop of Parma in 1615.<sup>51</sup> He was also connected with the powerful Beccharia family of Pavia; his mother was Barbara Beccharia di Cornazzano, who, in an agreement reached in 1562 with her sons, ceded a house to Carlo Borromeo for the establishment of the Collegio

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<sup>49</sup> Parma, ASP, Carteggio Farnesiano Estero, b. 172: Mantova 1580-1600 (10 April 1597). The document, *Note delli eccessi trattati nello stato di Mantova et comessi en quello di Parma*, details an attack by armed ruffians on the person of Cornazzano. Even though it was not actually committed in the state of Parma, the fact that the assault occurred to a person close to the ducal court--and was publicly announced as an action of the Mantovan court--made it serious enough for inclusion in this list of complaints. Cornazzano had, from time to time, served as an agent for the Duke of Parma. The incident is discussed in Arnaldo Barilli, "Maura Lucenia Farnese," *Archivio storico per le province parmensi*, ser. II, XXIII (1923), 142-154.

<sup>50</sup> The document is partially transcribed in Schiavi, II, 167-170. It is similar to della Torre's "Descriptio," and was prepared for the Bishop of Parma, Guido Ascanio Sforza. Schiavi notes that he found the volume in the archive of the Curia Vescovile di Parma. The first eleven folios are missing, and on the first surviving page is written "Extimum et valor super quo solvantur decime." I have not ascertained the present existence of the volume.

<sup>51</sup> Ferdinando Ughelli, *Italia Sacra: sive De episcopis Italiae . . .*, 2nd ed., 10 vols. (Venice: Coletti, 1717-1722), II, cols. 192-193.

Borromeo.<sup>52</sup> Despite these connections with the Pavese branch of the Cornazzano family, however, it is likely that Girolamo resided in Parma until about 1567, spending most of his later life in Pavia.<sup>53</sup>

Earlier writers have suggested that Cornazzano served as a patron for Pontio in the years 1569-1577, and indeed this is a likely possibility for the last three years of

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<sup>52</sup> Confirmation of this relationship is found in Luca Conti, *Ragionamento sopra gli Accademici Affidati* (Pavia: n.p., 1574), 109: "Da . . . Manfredotto nacque *Aldigiero* Accademico affidato e *Hieronimo*, i quali hanno formata la loro habitatione in Pavia. Imperciochè nati di Barbara Beccaria gentildonna di valore, di bontà, e di pietà cristiana, succedono alla ricca heredità della istessa illustre lor madre" (To Manfredoto were born Aldigiero, a member of the Accademia Affidato, and Hieronimo, who have made their home in Pavia. In as much as they were born to Barbara Beccharia, a gentlewoman of merit, virtue and Christian piety, they have succeeded to the rich heredity of their own illustrious mother). Quoted in Rodolfo Maiocchi and Attilio Moiraghi, *L'Almo Collegio Borromeo*, 3 vols. (Pavia: various publishers, 1912-1916), I, 83, n. 1. The letter of agreement for the property, dated 28 March 1562, is published in Costantino Baroni, *Il Collegio Borromeo*, Biblioteca pavese di storia patria, 5 (Pavia: Tipografia già Coopertiva, 1937), 47. The involvement of only Barbara and her sons suggests that she was at the time a widow; if so, it is understandable that she would have returned to Pavia. That Manfredoto had died by January of 1562 is seen in a notary document involving three of his sons, Tommaso, Aldgiero, and Girolamo. Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Pietro Giovanni de Monticelli, filza 2208: Atti 1562-1565 (7 January 1562).

<sup>53</sup> The quote cited immediately above indicates that he was in Pavia by 1574. Likewise, all notary documents I have been able to find from after June of 1567 describe Girolamo as a resident of Pavia; however, those dating back to 1562 have him as a resident of Parma. I can find no documents before this date.

this period.<sup>54</sup> It is equally possible that these earliest years of Pontio's career were also spent under the support and protection of this noble family of Parma. This support may have taken the form of monetary support in lieu of a benefice, or of actual service in the cavalier's household. In his dedication to his 1582 book of Motets, Pontio made mention of Girolamo's cultivation of the musical art. This is confirmed in the dedication to a book of Canzonettas by another *parmigiano*, Giovanni Battista Massarengo, who states that among the many virtues possessed by Girolamo was a great love of music.<sup>55</sup> Whether in fact Cornazzano maintained a small musical chapel in his household is unknown, but his station in society, interest in music, and his support of musicians all suggest it, and this may have been the source of both monetary and artistic support for Pontio's early career.

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<sup>54</sup> This has been based on Pontio's 1582 dedication to Girolamo Cornazzano, which mentions Pontio's being in the company of Cornazzano at an unspecified previous time. The dedication is reproduced in Appendix 1. New evidence showing that Pontio was in Bergamo from 1569 until late in 1574 narrows the possible time for such a relationship at this point in his career. See Chapter Two.

<sup>55</sup> ". . . oltre à l'altre herioche virtù, di che è ornata, anco questa in lei fiorisce, di essere vaghissima della Musica," Giovanni Battista Massarengo, *Canzonette alla napoletana libro primo a quattro voce* (Venice: Amadino, 1591). Massarengo was at that time living in Pavia, where he was a student at the Collegio Borromeo. See Pelicelli, "Musicisti in Parma nei secoli XV-XVI: La Cappella alla Corte Farnese," 126.



Before passing on to the documentable facts of Pontio's life and career--those concerning his service at the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo--it is possible to engage in one more bit of speculation, this concerning Pontio's early musical influences. It seems certain that he had some contact with de Rore; the latter's recommendation of Pontio to the authorities in Bergamo attest to this. His position in a well-placed family, as well as what were probably well-known musical abilities, make it likely that he associated freely with the many talented musicians within the city's three chapels. But another, more distant influence must be suggested. In the nearby city of Mantua, from the years 1534 to 1559, the famed Jachet of Mantua served as maestro di cappella at the Cathedral. On the basis of the number of citations of Jachet in Pontio's treatises, it is clear that he admired the older composer's music greatly. In addition, an extraordinarily high number of Pontio's Masses are modeled on works of Jachet. George Nugent was moved by these facts to suggest that Pontio was in some way a "disciple" of the Netherlands master, and this is surely a defensible assertion.<sup>56</sup> Did Pontio in fact journey to Mantua, and perhaps even study with Jachet? It seems

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<sup>56</sup> George Nugent, "The Jaquet Motets and their Authors," 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1973), I, 389-390 notes three such Masses by Pontio. In fact, the number is probably four or more (see Table 11 below).

possible, but without the weight of documentary evidence, it must remain for the time speculation.

#### Bergamo: 1565-1567

Pontio arrived at the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo at a volatile point in its development.<sup>57</sup> Having developed steadily through the course of the century, the musical chapel of the church was entering a period of great difficulties made all the harder by the necessities of Post-Tridentine reform. Pontio, for his own part, made matters more difficult--for the church and for himself--by behaving in a manner which was to bring scandal to the church, and by his own lack of experience, which was to cause severe morale problems within the chapel. All in all, it was to be a decidedly problematic start to what in the end would nevertheless be a long and successful career.

The church of Santa Maria Maggiore has a long history; located in the upper, walled part of the city, its position

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<sup>57</sup> Gary Towne, in a recent paper at the 24th International Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo, 1989), "Convalescence and Coalescence in the Musical Chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo, 1550-1575," has suggested a precipitous decline in the size of the chapel during the years 1565-1567. My own reading of the documents does not lead me to identical conclusions; but as he has convincingly shown, this Post-Tridentine period was one of great upheaval in the chapel.

made it a focal point in the day-to-day life of the community.<sup>58</sup> In contrast to its physical placement immediately next to the Cathedral of San Vincenzo (the north transept opens to the Piazza del Duomo), the church was independent from the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the city. Instead, from 1453 on it was governed by an independent council of citizens, the Consorzio della Misericordia Maggiore.<sup>59</sup>

### The Structure of the Chapel in the 1560s

Throughout the sixteenth century, Santa Maria Maggiore held a central position in the religious and musical life of Bergamo. A polyphonic chapel, begun in the last two decades of the fifteenth century, steadily grew in size and activity through the first half of the sixteenth century under the leadership of Domenico de Rachetis and Gaspar de

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<sup>58</sup> The early history and position of the church is sketched in Towne, "Gaspar de Albertis and Music at Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo in the Sixteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1985). What is presented here concerning the early history of the church merely summarizes his research. See also Sandro Angelini, *Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo*, 2nd ed. (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arte grafiche, 1968).

<sup>59</sup> The Misericordia was founded in 1265 by the Dominican Pinamonte Brembate for the purpose of providing for the poor of the city by the dispensing of alms and gifts of food and wine. It also was charged with providing for the celebration of Masses and Offices at Santa Maria Maggiore. An incomplete sixteenth-century copy of the papal bull granting to the Misericordia complete control over the church is transcribed in Towne, II, 158.

Albertis.<sup>60</sup> In addition to providing necessary musical leadership, the latter was responsible in great part for the establishment of the polyphonic repertoire.<sup>61</sup> While there is evidence of polyphonic chapels in other churches in Bergamo, notably at the Cathedral and at Sant' Alessandro in Colonna in the lower city, the musical chapel at Santa Maria Maggiore was the most active and important through the whole of the century.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> A detailed study of this growth, and especially of the importance of Gaspar is found in Towne, I, 9-48.

<sup>61</sup> The polyphonic choirbooks prepared by Gaspar, which formed the core of the church's repertory, are discussed by Towne, 154-171. A detailed analysis is found in David Crawford and J. Scott Messing, *Gaspar de Albertis' Sixteenth-Century Choirbooks at Bergamo* (N.p.: American Institute of Musicology, forthcoming).

<sup>62</sup> The musical establishments in these two churches await further study. The presence of Pontio, and later Alessandro Savioli, at Sant' Alessandro testifies to the existence of a musical chapel; likewise, there are various references to singers and maestri from the Cathedral in records of Santa Maria Maggiore. In addition, various documents in the archives of the Cathedral, housed in the Archivio Vescovile of Bergamo, list payments to a maestro di cappella and various singers. Gary Towne has informed me that his most recent research has uncovered notices for San Vincenzo extending back to the 1540s. During the first half of the century, there had been two independent cathedrals in Bergamo. The cathedral of Sant' Alessandro was demolished in the early 1560's when the walls of the upper city were rebuilt. After its demolition it survived until the late seventeenth century as an ecclesiastical entity within the cathedral of San Vincenzo. To date, nothing is known about the musical organization of the destroyed cathedral. What documents survive are mixed with those of San Vincenzo.

The chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore was composed primarily of musicians drawn from the ranks of the *cappellani* and *clerici* of the church, who were expected to participate in the musical chapel in addition to their daily routine of saying Mass and Office.<sup>63</sup> These *cappellani*, as well as the older of the *clerici*, were required to be resident at the church, and as such, part of their compensation was in the form of the provision of housing. In addition they received a basic yearly salary, often supplemented either by money, or in gifts of grain and wine, usually given "pro amore Dei."

Records for these supplemental payments, as well as the hiring of the *cappellani* and *clerici*, are found in the *terminationi* of the Consorzio.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately, while the

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<sup>63</sup> These terms and their logical translations--clerics or clerks and chaplains--carry a measure of confusion. The *clerici* were adolescents or young men, not yet ordained, the oldest of whom performed diaconal functions within the church. *Cappellani*, on the other hand, were ordained priests whose duties included the maintenance of a specific chapel. By contrast, the modern term cleric, and to a certain extent clerk, suggest ordination, while the term chaplain suggests a pastoral role not connected with the office of *cappellano*. Nonetheless--but with this caveat in mind--I have used both the original terms and their translations.

<sup>64</sup> The archives of the Consorzio della Misericordia are presently housed in the Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai in Bergamo. An exhaustive catalog of the contents of the archive is found in Luigi Chiodi, "Nel 7<sup>o</sup> centenario di fondazione della Misericordia Maggiore di Bergamo," *Bergomum* LIX (1965), 3-96. The core of this archive is the collection of *terminationi*, the minutes of the Consorzio's meetings, which cover the years 1363-1800. Much of the history of the church, as well as the musical chapel, is

hiring of *clerici* and *cappellani* is noted in these proceedings, as are changes in the basic salary and gifts of money or commodities, the departure of a member of the chapel often went unrecorded unless it was accompanied by some scandal that necessitated direct action by the Consorzio. Because of this, and because not all *cappellani* and *clerici* served as musicians, it is often difficult to trace the career of an individual or to arrive at a completely accurate estimate of the number of musicians active at any given time.<sup>65</sup>

It can be stated with some degree of certainty, however, that by 1565 the number of chaplains active as singers was between ten and twelve.<sup>66</sup> In addition, a number of

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covered in greater or lesser detail in Christoforo Scotti, *Il pio istituto musicale Donizetti in Bergamo* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arte grafiche, 1901). In an appendix (Allegato I: Elenco delle Terminazio del Consorzio della Misericordia Maggiore dal 1<sup>o</sup> settembre 1455 al 22 dicembre 1554 [sic]), Scotti includes transcriptions by Angelo Mazzi of a number of documents from the *terminationi*. In addition, many documents preceding and partially including the time of Pontio's work in Bergamo are transcribed in Towne, II, 156-176. Where applicable, these will noted.

<sup>65</sup> Towne, I, 9-17, has confronted this problem for the first half of the century, and has prepared a listing of musicians active from 1498-1554. In more recent, unpublished research he has extended his list to 1575.

<sup>66</sup> Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai, Archivio della Misericordia Maggiore (hereafter abbreviated Bergamo, MIA), 1385: Spese (1552-1568) (hereafter referred to as Spese), fol. 124, (a listing of chaplains for the distribution of candles, dated 2 February 1565) and fol. 162 (a list of chaplains from January of 1566) confirm this. While there were a number of dismissals and resignations in 1566,

brass players were employed by the church, and they may also have been called upon to sing from time to time.<sup>67</sup>

Along with the *cappellani*, there were forty-eight *clerici* supported by the church. The first twenty-four (the *clerici ordinarii*, aged between twelve and twenty), were organized into an academy, and trained for the priesthood.<sup>68</sup> They were expected to serve as *clerici* until they received ordination, at which time they were obliged to serve the church as priests for a period of eight years at the allotted salary.<sup>69</sup> The remaining twenty-four *clerici* (*clerici*

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nearly all of these chaplains were replaced with others of musical ability.

<sup>67</sup> The reverse of this is demonstrably true. One member of the chapel, Nicolo de Castre, served as cleric and singer before taking on the duties of playing the trombone. Bergamo, MIA, 1268: *Terminatione* (hereafter abbreviated *Term.*) 25, fol. 33 (20 June 1566); cited in Scotti, 190.

<sup>68</sup> According to the *Capitoli* written for the reorganization of the academy in 1566, its purpose was to teach "bona dottrina, perfetti costumi, humane et sacre lettere," as a supplement to the general studies found in the *scola*, which all clerics attended. Bergamo, MIA, 1519: *Capitoli dei salariati per gli anni 1559-1602* (hereafter referred to simply as *Capitoli*), fols. 48-52. An academy was originally founded in 1548. See Giuseppe Locatelli, "L'istruzione in Bergamo e la Misericordia Maggiore," *Bergomum* IV (1910), 57-169; V (1911), 21-99. As part of the reorganization, the number of clerics was increased to fifty, twenty-five *clerici ordinarii* and an equal number of *clerici extraordinarii*.

<sup>69</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1519: *Capitoli*, fols. 27-29 (20 November 1561), specifically *capitolo* 22 (fol. 29). If a cleric or priest left "senza bona licentia," or was fired without serving the allotted time, he was required to reimburse the Misericordia for the cost of vestments, coats and shoes given to him.

*extraordinarii*) were educated in the *scola di grammatica*, probably receiving some rudimentary musical training, in anticipation of a position to be open in the academy.

It was understood that ten of the *clerici ordinarii* were to study figured music and counterpoint, while the other fourteen (later fifteen), less advanced students, were to study plainchant and some figured music.<sup>70</sup> It is safe to assume, then, that the ten advanced students would have regularly been called upon to perform polyphony, the younger of these, whose voices had not changed, singing soprano. The most advanced students may also have been expected to perform counterpoint as the occasion demanded. The other fourteen *clerici ordinarii*, depending on their abilities, may have been used as substitutes, or to augment the numbers for special celebrations.

A reorganization of the academy in 1566, however, resulted in a profound change that must be taken into account in any estimate of the size of the musical forces available to the church for this period. At this time, all twenty-four *clerici ordinarii* were given the option not to

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<sup>70</sup> The terms of Pontio's contract called for him to teach ten *clerici* in "canto figurato et contraponto." Bergamo, MIA, 1519: Capitoli, fol 37. Document 4. Soon thereafter, one of the *cappellani*, Francesco Crivelli, was assigned to teach the other fourteen in "canto fermo et figurato." Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fol. 146v (2 April 1565). Document 6; transcribed in Scotti, 190.



enter the new academy.<sup>71</sup> Eleven exercised this option, of which six can be firmly identified as either having been students of Pontio (and thus competent to sing figured music) or as serving as musicians.<sup>72</sup> As they were still obligated to serve, they were listed as *clerici extraordinarii*, thus swelling the number of available trained singers by at least six.

What emerges from this is evidence of a musical organization of some size: ten to twelve singing *cappellani* with up to thirty-one *clerici* available to sing soprano and/or augment the lower parts. Surely it was not the norm to use all, or even the majority of these voices at one time, but their availability gave to the musical chapel a distinct and perhaps unique flexibility that would easily accommodate the singing of double-choir music on a lavish scale. We know that the choirbooks prepared during the tenure of Gaspar de Alberti contain a number of double-choir works, and it is

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<sup>71</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1519: Capitoli, fols. 48-52 (30 April 1566), specifically *capitolo* 1 (fol. 49).

<sup>72</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1385: Spese, fol. 191. Document 9. This is a listing in Pontios's hand of his students. Five of the clerics are found here. The sixth, Bernaleo Bernalei, was a witness in the *processo* against Pontio, and stated that he participated in Pontio's *scola*. Bergamo, MIA, 989: *Processo contra prete Pietro Poncio* (hereafter referred to as *Processo*), fol. 1. Document 10 (fol. 1, line 17-27). The entire document is transcribed in Appendix 2, and will be discussed in greater detail below.

reasonable to assume that these pieces were still in use in 1567, as the volumes are listed in the books returned by Pontio when he left the church.<sup>73</sup> Along with this, we have evidence of Pontio composing an eight voice work for the choir.<sup>74</sup> The number of singers available could easily perform such a work with as many as four voices on a part.<sup>75</sup>

The nature and growth of the chapel's repertory during this period can be seen by examining the list of music returned by Pontio in 1567.<sup>76</sup> Many of the items in this inventory do not appear in two earlier lists of music, one from 1565, and the other from 1557.<sup>77</sup> These collections are enumerated in Table 2. Given the late printing dates of

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<sup>73</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1385: Spese, fol. 232. Document 14; transcribed in Towne, II, 173.

<sup>74</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fol. 12v. Document 10 (fol. 12v, lines 11-13). Pietro de Medici, a cleric in the church and a student of Pontio, mentions "una messa à otto" that Pontio had composed.

<sup>75</sup> This is not to imply that the use of such forces was normal, only that such a large body was available for special occasions, as well as to provide music on a more regular basis throughout the week. For a discussion of the question of choral forces during this period, specifically at the papal chapel, see Richard Scherr, "Performance Practice in the Papal Chapel during the 16th Century," *Early Music* XV (1987), 453-462, and especially 460-461.

<sup>76</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1385: Spese, fol. 232. Document 14.

<sup>77</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1385: Spese, fols. 20 and 98v. Both are transcribed in Towne, II, 172-174. The oldest of the two lists is headed "Libri consignati al reverendo messer pre Biffetto," and the list from 1565 is headed "Al tener oltra quella erana dispensa al Bifetto."

some of these collections it is possible that some were acquired during Pontio's tenure.

TABLE 2  
Printed Music Acquired by Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo  
(1557-1567)

<i>Collection</i>	<i>Probable edition</i>
<i>Masses</i> (Four-voice)	
Morales (Large format)	Rome: Dorico, 1544
[Josquin]	Petrucci, 1516?
Morales	Venice: Gardano, 1544
<i>Masses</i> (Five-voice)	
Ruffo	Venice: Gardano, 1557 or 1565
<i>Motets</i> (Four-Voice)	
Motetti dei Fiori	Venice: Gardano, 1538, etc
<i>Magnificats</i> (Four-voice)	
Morales (Large format)	Venice: Gardano, 1562
<i>Lamentations</i>	
Morales (à 4 & 5)	Venice: Gardano, 1564
Nasco	Venice: Gardano, 1561 & 1564
Contin	Venice: Scotto, 1561

It is interesting to note the areas in which the repertoire appears to have grown during this period. The addition of several books of Masses is not surprising. The extant choirbooks contained only two Mass settings, one for the feast of St. Rocco and the other a Mass for the Blessed Virgin. And the one Mass print owned by the church (which appears in the 1567 list as a collection by Josquin) though large, must have been seen as too old in style to maintain

such a central position in the musical repertoire.<sup>78</sup> That they would rely so long on such a limited body of Masses seems unlikely, and it has been suggested that many of the additional Mass books may have been acquired in the 1550s.<sup>79</sup> Especially notable, however, is the purchase of three books of Lamentations, all published in 1561 or later, and thus more likely to have been purchased while Pontio was maestro di cappella. The choirbooks compiled by Gaspar contained a number of Lamentation settings; however, whether out of a desire for variety or a belief that Gaspar's settings were outmoded, there was a clear intent to expand this particular repertoire. Thus, in the 1560's, either immediately before or during Pontio's stewardship, we can see some evidence of a continuing enrichment of the repertoire of music used in the chapel, continuing the trend of previous years.

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<sup>78</sup> *Liber quindecim missarum electarum quae per excellentissimos musicos compositae fuerunt* (Rome: Antico, 1516), RISM 1516<sup>1</sup>. This collection contains fifteen Masses, three by Josquin, along with others by Brumel, Fevin, la Rue, Mouton, Pipelare, and Rosselli. Towne, I, 151-154 notes the probability of a much earlier acquisition of this collection. He has also noted the fact that this collection, with five Masses to the Virgin, would be especially appropriate for a church dedicated to the Virgin.

<sup>79</sup> See Towne's discussion of the growth of the polyphonic repertoire, I, 172-185. He has noted that the unavailability of Gaspar's choirbooks for much of the decade 1550-1560 probably served as an impetus for the building of the choir's printed library.

In counterpoint to this evidence of growth and activity, this period is also marked by the signs of impending difficulties. While the outward signs of this upheaval are not uniformly clear, the inward signs of dissatisfaction among the clerics, low morale, and ineffective leadership on the part of Pontio are manifest, and they form a troubled backdrop for his first ecclesiastical post.

**Pontio's Tenure at Santa Maria Maggiore:  
Signs of Impending Problems**

On 17 January 1565, Pontio was elected maestro di cappella at Santa Maria Maggiore.<sup>80</sup> Though originally hired to serve nine years, he would hold this post for only two, leaving as the result of a *processo* formed against him amid charges of dereliction of duty, gambling, and association with prostitutes.<sup>81</sup>

In December of 1564, the position of maestro di cappella had come vacant when Baptista de Mutio, in accordance with the dictates of the Council of Trent, requested license to leave Santa Maria Maggiore in order to take residence in another church for which the Bishop had conferred him a

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<sup>80</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fol. 131-131v (17 January 1565). Document 3; partially transcribed in Scotti, 190.

<sup>81</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1268: Term. 25, fol. 61 (3 January 1567). Document 13.

benefice.<sup>82</sup> On 29 December, the Consorzio voted to send one of the *cappellani*, Jacobus de Rosis de Curte, to "Parmam vel alibi," in order to find a maestro di cappella.<sup>83</sup> Jacobus returned sometime in January, and on 17 January 1565, the council voted to hire Pontio at an annual salary of 400 *lire*.<sup>84</sup>

As has been noted in numerous biographical sources after Scotti's publication of this document, Pontio was hired on the strength of a recommendation by Cipriano de Rore. According to the entry in the *Terminatione*, a panel of the leading musicians of the city was assembled to render judgment on the nominee, but the word of de Rore, "Musicorum Monarche," was sufficient for "Francescum Bifettum Magistrum capelle in ecclesie Dive Vincencii et per alios musicos huius civitatis."<sup>85</sup> It was not, however, sufficient for all of

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<sup>82</sup> The conditions of Mutio's departure are noted in the document for Pontio's election. Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fols. 131-131v. Document 3. The notice of Mutio's request is Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fol. 124 (14 December 1564), transcribed in Scotti, 189.

<sup>83</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fol. 126 (29 December 1564). Document 2; transcribed in Scotti, 189-190.

<sup>84</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fols. 131-131v (17 January 1565). Document 3. In addition to providing expenses to de Rosis, the Consorzio authorized him to promise the payment of expenses to the candidate.

<sup>85</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fols. 131-131v (17 January 1565). Document 3 (fol. 131, line 13-fol. 131v, line 3).

the council, and four of the members voted against Pontio's confirmation to the post.

As noted earlier, this episode has been the source of the widely-held view, presented with varying force by different writers, that Pontio was a student of de Rore. And while it remains without the force of irrefutable evidence, it is compelling. Whatever the case, it is clear that his recommendation of Pontio was instrumental not only in gaining the position but also in securing an impressive salary. Many incidents show that the Misericordia was careful in the allotment of salaries, and was not above giving a less-than-reasonable salary when it believed it could successfully do so.<sup>86</sup>

Evidence of the council's parsimonious treatment of the musicians can be seen in their dealings with Leonardo de Brixia, who served as organist during Pontio's tenure. Like Pontio, Leonardo was hired when his predecessor was granted a benefice elsewhere.<sup>87</sup> He was elected on 29 December 1564,

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<sup>86</sup> In general, there were often great disparities in the level of pay received by musicians providing apparently equal service. Part of the picture may be distorted by the lack of specific pay records, but judging by the starting salaries, as well as increases--or lack thereof--listed in the *terminationi* throughout the century, the discrepancies were quite often large. See Towne, I, 9-61.

<sup>87</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fol. 126 (29 December 1564). Partially transcribed in Scotti, 189. Innocento de Augustiis, who had served the church since 1545, left in order to accede to a benefice in the Cathedral in Bergamo.

at an unspecified salary.<sup>88</sup> It was, however, certainly less than 200 *lire*, for nearly two years later the following entry appears in the *Terminatione*:

Item. *Magnifico* Leonardo de Brixia is elected as organist in the church of Santa Maria with a salary of two hundred *lire imperiali* per year retroactive to the year 1564.<sup>89</sup>

Even with this increase, Leonardo's salary was still less than the 235 *lire* his predecessor had received when he was hired more than twenty years previously.<sup>90</sup> In addition, the terms of Leonardo's contract were very clear in stating that he could not so much as ask "either on his own behalf, or through others," any increase in salary, alms or gifts of money or goods during the seven-year tenure of his contract, without facing the possibility of dismissal.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fol. 126 (29 December 1564).

<sup>89</sup> "Item elegere magnificum Leonardum de Brixia in organistum ecclesie dive Marie cum salario libbrarum duocentum imperiali in anno incipiendo usque di anno 1564." Bergamo, MIA, 1268: Term. 25, fol. 55v (9 December 1566).

<sup>90</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1263: Term. 20, fols. 113v-114v (26 January 1545). Transcribed in Towne, II, 137-138.

<sup>91</sup> ". . . con patto espresso che detto Maestro Leonardo in detto tempo non possa ne vaglia directe vel indirecte per se vel altra interposta persona aut aliter quoquomodo dimandar in detto tempo ut supra specificate aumento di salario manja elemosina, donatino di danari robbe aut di altra cosa ma debba contentarsi del salario sopra specificato, et contrafacendo s'intenda eo tant che sara dimandato, esser casso, se cosi piacerà al praestato Magnifico Consiglio . . ." Bergamo, MIA, 1519: Capitoli, fols. 52v-53.



Given all of this, the 400 *lire* salary received by Pontio was generous, and even represented an increase over that of Mutio; clearly, the Consorzio held Pontio in high esteem.<sup>92</sup> Pontio's duties were typical for such a position. As a *cappellano*, he was required to fulfill the day-to-day duties in the church, saying a daily Mass and participating in the regular celebrations of canonic hours. In addition, he was to exercise the office of *maestro di cappella* whenever polyphonic music was needed in the church, and was also expected to teach ten *clerici in canto figurato* and counterpoint.<sup>93</sup>

Just what was entailed in the teaching part of his duties may be pieced together from various statements made by witnesses who testified against him in the *processo*

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<sup>92</sup> Mutio was hired as *maestro di cappella* at an annual salary of 240 *lire* (Bergamo, MIA, 1265: Term. 22, fols. 226v-227 (2 November 1559; transcribed in Scotti, 185), and was given an increase, to 360 *lire*, due to added duties. Bergamo, MIA, 1266: Term. 23, fols. 132v-133 (5 February 1562; transcribed in Scotti, 186-187). On 17 August 1564 he is also listed as *Prior*, with no salary given. Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fols. 110-110v (17 August 1564; transcribed in Scotti, 188-189). His successor, Severo Ceresolis--whose official title was *Sacristia maggiore*--received 250 *lire*. Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fol. 157v (13 June 1565). This was later raised to 350 *lire*. Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fol. 189v (11 February 1566).

<sup>93</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1519: Capitoli, fol. 37. Document 4 (fol. 37, lines 20-28).

instituted by the Misericordia.<sup>94</sup> He met with his assigned students on a daily basis after their grammar studies, working with them as a group. This session was in reality, however, a large *scola*, which was also attended by clerics other than those specifically assigned to Pontio.<sup>95</sup> He also met with his ten students in his home, either alone or in small groups, to teach singing and counterpoint.<sup>96</sup> He was thus responsible not only for teaching the ten students assigned to him, but also for instructing virtually all of the *scolari* on a regular basis.<sup>97</sup> He also taught privately a number of students outside of these ten assigned to him,

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<sup>94</sup> The *Processo* is a unique document, as it yields extensive information concerning virtually every aspect of the duties of the *maestro di cappella*, and does much to clarify details of the structure of the entire chapel during this period. The specific aspects of teaching are dealt with in greater detail in my article, "On the Teaching Duties of the *Maestro di Cappella* in Sixteenth-Century Italy: The *Processo* Against Pietro Pontio," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* XIV (1988), 115-128.

<sup>95</sup> For example, Gabriel Oleva and Claudio de Cortesis, both of whom were *clerici extraordinarii* and thus not among the ten taught by Pontio, testified against him. Bergamo, MIA, 989: *Processo*, fols. 9-11. Document 10 (see fol. 9, lines 27-31, fol. 10, lines 25-39). Both speak of attending the "Scola di cantar."

<sup>96</sup> Many of the witnesses in the *processo* speak of sessions held at Pontio's house.

<sup>97</sup> It appears that from time to time, Pontio also worked with students during their hours at the *scola di grammatica*. Bergamo, MIA, 989: *Processo*, fol. 10. Document 10 (fol. 10, line 4).

some who were not even clerics; and it appears that they regularly attended the group rehearsals as well.<sup>98</sup>

Throughout Pontio's tenure, the Consorzio continued an effort to make the church as self-sufficient as possible in both liturgical and musical functions. Soon after Pontio was hired, one of the other *cappellani*, Francesco Crivelli, was given the added duties of teaching the other fourteen *clerici* in *canto fermo* and *canto figurato*, as well as instructing them in the singing of the "Epistole, Evangelii, Versetti et ogn'altro che si costumma nella detta chiesa."<sup>99</sup> The rationale for this assignment is revealing of the Consorzio's desires and motives:

Being as this magnificent council in the past days, in the rules established for the reverend *Domino* Pietro Pontio, maestro di cappella of the church of Santa Maria, has assigned to said reverend maestro ten *clerici* of said church to whom he will teach *canto figurato* and counterpoint, and it also being just and convenient to provide for the

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<sup>98</sup> Petrus de Medici, another of the clerks to testify against Pontio, mentions "gli altri scolari quali lo pagavano." Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fol. 13. Document 10 (fol. 13, line 25). This is supported by the list of students mentioned above, Bergamo, MIA, 1385: Spese, fol. 191; Document 9. The list is divided into two groups, the first marked "clerici assignati per la Misericordia," and the other "dice paga il maestro." The first list contains seven names, all *clerici ordinarii*, the second comprises ten students, some of whom are not listed as clerics. Under this list is added "questi altri il maestro dice haverli tolti lui da insegnar et non è pagar."

<sup>99</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fol. 146v (2 April 1565). Document 6. The *capitoli* for Crivelli are found in Bergamo, MIA, 1519: Capitoli, fol. 38v.

remaining *clerici* of said church to be taught and instructed in said science of music, both for the honor and use of the church, and so that in the future she may make use of priests and musicians of this country, and not every day be constrained to seek the aid of foreigners with the obvious damage and inconvenience to this pious place. . . .<sup>100</sup>

Thus every *clerico*, as he went through his training for the priesthood, would receive at least the basic musical training needed to allow him to take his place in the choir for the performance of plainchant, and probably have at least a rudimentary knowledge of singing part-music. As a result, the church would have a consistent body of capable musicians from which to draw for a musical chapel.

This desire for a stable body of local priests was also, in part, behind the reorganization of the academy in 1566. In the *capitoli* establishing the governing of the new academy, there are complaints of the "dearth of native priests," forcing the church to rely on foreigners to fulfill the obligations of the church, many of whom apparently absconded with the money given to support them. As well, complaints were made of *clerici* who took advantage of the education given to them at no charge by leaving rather than fulfilling their duties as priests, or who, while honoring

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<sup>100</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1267: Term. 24, fol. 146v. Document 6 (fol. 146v, lines 4-19).

the letter of their requirements, acted in such a manner as to necessitate removal from their positions.<sup>101</sup>

In response to this need, the Consorzio reaffirmed in its reorganization of the academy the role of the Preceptor in teaching "buon dottrina, perfetti costume," along with "humane et sacre lettere."<sup>102</sup> In addition, the life of the *clerici* became more strictly organized and controlled, and onerous penalties were prescribed for *clerici* who, upon attaining the priesthood, did not serve their agreed-upon eight years of service.<sup>103</sup> All of this led to much dissatisfaction among the *clerici*, a number of whom refused to join the academy, and a number of whom were removed for various violations of the rules. Ultimately, it was a controversy in which Pontio himself, to his detriment, was to become embroiled.

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101 Bergamo, MIA, 1519: Capitoli, fol. 48.

102 Bergamo, MIA, 1519: Capitoli, fol. 48v.

103 Bergamo, MIA, 1519: Capitoli, fol. 49v. In earlier *capitoli* for the clerics, failure to fulfill their obligations resulted in their having to reimburse the Misericordia for clothing given them. The new *capitoli* required a repayment of all expenses incurred by the Misericordia on their behalf (presumably including housing), along with a fine of fifteen *scudi* for every year in which they attended the academy plus every year remaining in their contract. Thus a student who attended the academy for the full eight years and then left without serving his terms as a priest would owe the Misericordia in excess of two hundred and forty *scudi*.

### The *Processo* Against Pietro Pontio

It was within this framework of dissatisfaction and strife that proceedings were begun against Pontio. The formation of the *processo* was announced on 24 July 1566, and the first witnesses were heard on 26 July.<sup>104</sup> The transcription of the proceedings is interesting for a number of reasons. As has been shown, it adds a remarkable amount of detail concerning the actual duties required of Pontio during his tenure. Beyond this, however, it illuminates a number of pedagogical questions seldom discussed, and throws additional light on Pontio's character and temperament.

The complaints for which Pontio was investigated centered around three basic areas: dereliction of or incompetence in his duties, questions about his personal life, including allegations of gambling and consorting with prostitutes, and his encouragement of *clerici* to go against the rules set out in the new *capitoli*. Twelve witnesses testified against Pontio, including *clerici*, fellow *cappellani*, and the cavalier to the Bishop of Bergamo. Testimony was taken until 15 October, though no action was taken officially until 3 January 1567.

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<sup>104</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1268: Term. 25, fol. 40 (24 July 1566). Document 8. The specifics of the charges are not contained in this notice.

The most repeated charge of the proceedings, that of Pontio's neglecting his duties, revolved in part around his procedure in teaching, and as such sheds light on the practices and accepted norms of the time. At the heart of the controversy was Pontio's practice of having the students sing together, evidently relying on some of the older *clerici* to work with the students on an individual basis when needed. Thus, many of the students' complaints echoed those of one *clerico*, Benaleo de Benalei:

. . . I went many times to sing *in compagnia* and in the time that I went I saw that he did not teach the young *scolari*, that is to say the students assigned to him to teach. Instead I saw that he had them taught by other *clerici*, Nicolao [de Castre], il Tenorino [Archangelo Crivelli] and il Solzia [Pietro de Solzia], and then Maestro Pontio had them sing together for the space of a half hour and sometimes more.<sup>105</sup>

It was not necessarily unusual that Pontio would have the older *clerici* help in the teaching, and in fact the *capitoli* for the new academy stated that this would be a duty of the *clerici*.<sup>106</sup> The *clerici* who testified against

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<sup>105</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fol. 1. Document 10 (fol. 1, lines 18-27).

<sup>106</sup> ". . . et se porrerà alli Magnifici Signori Deputati, che parte dessi clerici più adulti et sufficienti habbino ad insegnar, et coadiurar li maestri si del canto come grammatica . . ." (" . . . and if desired by the *Magnifici Signori Deputati*, that those clerics more adult and proficient teach and assist the maestri, both of singing and of grammar . . .). Bergamo, MIA, 1519: Capitoli, fol. 50v.

Pontio, however, consistently compared his practices to those of the previous Maestro, Baptista Mutio,<sup>107</sup> whose method was the more accepted one of having the singers sing "solo a solo," and then "in compagnia."<sup>108</sup> Pontio defended this system, telling Francesco Bordonio, a fellow *cappellano* and former student, that the students could learn just as well singing together as they could singing alone.<sup>109</sup>

The students, however (at least those who testified against Pontio), held that by only working with them in groups, Pontio was not teaching them properly. One student went so far as to try to bribe Pontio into working with him alone. In a strategy his father had suggested, he offered Pontio an unspecified quantity of fowl, meat, and artichokes. This did no good, and Pontio continued to work with

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<sup>107</sup> Benaleo Benalei made this comparison most clearly, stating that he could learn more in one hour from Mutio than ten with Pontio. Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fol. 2. Document 10 (fol. 2, lines 35-38).

<sup>108</sup> This was the method prescribed by the Misericordia in the capitoli for Francesco Crivelli, though some discretion was left to him: "and have the singers sing plainchant and figured music separately and together, as is convenient" ("et farli cantore canto fermo et figurato separatamente et in compagnia come si conviene . . .") Bergamo, MIA, 1519: Capitoli, fol. 38v.

<sup>109</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fol. 3. Document 10 (fol. 3, lines 4-6).



him only in the group, letting the older *clerici* work with him separately.<sup>110</sup>

Charges of favoritism were also brought up in the course of the proceedings. Many of the *clerici*, while protesting the lack of attention given them by Pontio, noted that Pontio did give individual attention to the students whom he taught privately--letting them sing alone during the rehearsals.<sup>111</sup>

The organist at Santa Maria, Leonardo de Brixia, was brought in to testify; he also complained about Pontio's methods, and noted that on occasion they had discussed methods of teaching. Citing such authorities as Willaert ("Adriano"), Perissone Cambio ("Parisone"), Baldesare Donato, and above all Gioseffo Zarlino, Brixia suggested that Pontio's knowledge of musical fundamentals was lacking:

I tell you truly, he does not hold the true rules and norms, above all [the rules] of the

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<sup>110</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fols. 9-9v. Document 10 (fol. 9, line 45-fol. 9v, line 10). The witness, a cleric by the name of Gabriel de Oleva, did say that Pontio would let him sing alone in the Saturday rehearsals before important feasts.

<sup>111</sup> Pietro de Solzia testified: "I saw that he had [Gaspar] Calzolaio, whom he is teaching to sing bass and the boy of Maestro Joan da Lulmo, sing alone, as well as the young son of Maestro Marc Antonio Foppa, all of whom are his students, but I have never seen him make the other clerics sing alone. . ." adding that because of this, he and the other clerics began teaching the younger ones "out of our courtesy." Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fols. 11v-12. Document 10 (fol. 11v, line 39-fol. 12, line 7).

tones. In talking with him, [this] Maestro does not wish to adhere [to the rules] of Giuseppe Gerlin [Zarlino], maestro di cappella di San Marco, so greatly admired, and such things that you can see which are in print.<sup>112</sup>

The question of musical knowledge was brought up as well by one of the older *clerici*, Pietro de Solzia, who told of bringing Pontio a piece he had written, apparently proud of certain "bel ponte." Pontio took exception to some of these, marking them with a cross. However, according to Solzia there were also a number of improperly handled fifths and sixths--which Pontio failed to mark--and furthermore, that:

when later, we *clerici* had sung [the pieces] to try them, we heard them to be false, and from this we understand that he does not teach me faithfully.<sup>113</sup>

This complaint was echoed by the organist, Brixia, who told of hearing a Magnificat written by Francesco Bordonia. Upon hearing it, he noticed some parallel octaves. He then asked Bordonia to show him the music so that he could point out the mistakes, and doing so, Bordonia told him that

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<sup>112</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fol. 15v. Document 10 (fol. 15v, lines 8-10). Brixia may be speaking of Zarlino's acceptance of Glareanus's twelve modes in his *Istitutioni Harmoniche* of 1558. Pontio retained the eight-mode system in his treatises. I am indebted to Giulio Ongaro for supplying the proper identity of Cambio.

<sup>113</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fols. 5-5v. Document 10 (fol. 5, line 24-fol. 5v, line 4).

Pontio had looked at it and said that everything was proper. Brixia then testified that while he could not be sure about whether Pontio had indeed looked at the piece, he had heard similar stories on other occasions. He then proceeded to explain the proper way to judge such pieces, which was first to look carefully at the music to find any manifest errors, and then to listen to it as a final check. Brixia suggested that Pontio seldom took the time to look at the music; rather, he relied on his ear to find mistakes.<sup>114</sup>

Other charges brought against him included allegations that he was lax in the performance of his priestly duties, seldom singing "*in canto fermo*" during the services.<sup>115</sup> The Prior, Guido de Passis, however, testified that he had no knowledge of this.<sup>116</sup> It was also suggested that he did not take enough care with the *purificatore* in preparing for Mass, even allowing it to fall into the dust and be

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<sup>114</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fols. 15v-16. Document 10 (fol. 15v, line 25-fol. 16, line 21). Characteristically, Pontio was to lay great stress on the superiority of the ear over rules in his *Dialogo*. See Chapter Six below.

<sup>115</sup> Both Francesco Bordonio and Pietro Solzia made this claim. Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fols. 3v and 5v. Document 10 (fol. 3v, lines 14-17, and fol. 5v, lines 23-29).

<sup>116</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fol. 8v. Document 10 (fol. 8v, line 16-22).

soiled.<sup>117</sup> Finally, many of the witnesses stated that Pontio carried lice, and one, Gabriel de Oleva, maintained that Pontio gave them to him.<sup>118</sup> But by far the most serious charges brought against Pontio revolved around allegations that he gambled and had dealings with prostitutes. Many witnesses testified that they had seen him playing cards--often with Georgio Bosinis, with whom he shared a house. More seriously, many students suggested that from time to time they would be forced to wait for an hour or more for their lesson while Pontio played cards, or that he would refuse to see them entirely because he was in a hurry to go and play.<sup>119</sup>

On the charge of procuring prostitutes, the most damning witness was Bertulinus di Imbertis, the cavalier of the Bishop.<sup>120</sup> He told of being near the home of one Isabetta, a known prostitute, at about six in the evening and hearing Pontio invite her to come over that evening for dinner and

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<sup>117</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fol. 3v. Document 10 (fol. 3v, lines 5-12). Bordonis states: "I was in the sacristy, and I saw this maestro di cappella take a *purificatore* which was on the chalice, and he tossed it on a bench, which was dirty, and I was greatly scandalized."

<sup>118</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fol. 9v. Document 10 (fol. 9v, lines 18-24).

<sup>119</sup> Testimony on this subject, like much of the other, was based both on actual experience and hearsay.

<sup>120</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fols. 7-8. Document 10.

to spend the night. Imbertis immediately confronted Isabetta, and she confirmed that both she and a friend would be going to spend the night with Pontio and his housemate Georgio Bosinis. She assured him that she was doing so willingly, for she had been there many times and had always been paid well.

Acting on what he had heard, Imbertis went to Pontio's house that night at about one in the morning, and what ensued has the flavor of a passage out of Boccaccio:

And thus I, as Cavalier to the monsignor most reverend Bishop, and from whom I have commission to arrest all Religious persons who fall into such error, went that same evening at around one in the night, in the company of Pietro Moretto, Sebastiano Mutio and one other whose name I do not remember. And we went together to La Corsavola, where this Most Reverend Maestro, and *messer pre* Georgio live. The door was locked, and beating upon it, this Reverend *messer pre* Pietro came to the window and answered, saying "here I am," and I told him "open the door in the name of the Most Reverend Monsignor." He said "gladly," and began to tell me that he could not find the key, and began to call to Georgio and the young boy who lives in the house with him. Finally he threw down a key for me to open the door, which did not open it. And I returned later, and thus [the women] were able to escape along a wall and into an adjoining garden, as Isabetta was to tell me later. And finally, he let me in when it pleased him.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fol. 7v-8. Document 10 (fol. 7v, line 29-fol. 8, line 21). As noted earlier, the church of Santa Maria Maggiore was independent from the control of the Bishop. Just how far the Bishop could have gone in punishing Pontio is unclear.

Fortunately for Pontio, it seems that without the proof of catching him in the act, he could not be charged by the Bishop, possibly owing to his position as a *cappellano* in the one church in the city not under episcopal control.

This was not, however, the only talk concerning Pontio and women. One witness told of hearing that soon after Pontio arrived it was said that he was enamored of a young woman who was married to a local olive merchant, and that as this rumor spread, many people, especially the friends and family, were greatly scandalized.<sup>122</sup>

The final charges had to do with allegations that Pontio fomented dissent among the *cappellani* and *clerici* concerning their acceptance of the various *capitoli*. Most of the testimony is rather vague, the clearest being that of Pietro de Solzia, who said that Pontio suggested that they ignore the rule having to do with the purchasing of their own vestments.<sup>123</sup> This may have been in response to a rule in the *capitoli* of April, 1566, which stated that the *clerici* would be responsible for the replacement of damaged or worn clothing, a responsibility that had originally been

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<sup>122</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fol. 7. Document 10 (fol. 7, line 6-14).

<sup>123</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fols. 5v-6. Document 10 (fol. 5v, line 35-fol. 6, line 10).

assumed by the Misericordia.<sup>124</sup> Also, the generally negative view of foreigners held by the Misericordia came into play, as is seen in the testimony of Antonio Alpheus Veronese, who was formerly a *cappellano* and rector of the *scolari*. He testified that Pontio counseled him that foreigners had to be careful concerning the Consorzio.<sup>125</sup>

While many of the charges put forth in this proceeding may be explained by the confusion and chaos brought about by the changes occurring with the reorganization of the academy, the most serious charges of moral misconduct would seem to stand on their own. Most tellingly, Pontio's unclerical behavior was to bring him more problems at a later date, and was to nearly lead to his dismissal from his position at the Cathedral in Milan.

Along with the factual details we can derive from this document, we also find many indications of Pontio's personality and character. He seems, and maybe rightfully so, to have been distrustful, and he appears, for the most part, to have kept to himself or his gambling partners. Many witnesses make a point of the fact that they had little to do with him outside of the necessities of duty. Brixia described him as a "false and sad person." As evidence of

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<sup>124</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1519: Capitoli, fol. 50v, *capitolo* 17.

<sup>125</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: Processo, fol. 17v. Document 10 (fol. 17v, lines 20-22).

this, he maintained that many times he had suggested to Pontio that they perform:

a "bellissimo concerto" for the principal feasts with [my] playing the organ and [the choir] singing all together as is now done in San Marco.<sup>126</sup>

But, he testified, Pontio did not seem to be interested. Brixia was not the only witness to suggest a dark side to Pontio's personality. He evidently had a quick temper, and one *clerico* testified that Pontio had hit him, along with another cleric.<sup>127</sup>

What is most surprising about these proceedings, however, is the reluctance on the part of the Consorzio to take speedy and decisive action. During the proceedings themselves, of which Pontio was evidently aware, the council granted him twenty days leave.<sup>128</sup> It is probable that Pontio took advantage of the leave to return to Parma to arrange for employment in the event that would be forced to leave Bergamo. And indeed, within two weeks of the reading of the *Processo* in the council, Pontio was named *maestro di*

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<sup>126</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: *Processo*, fol. 16v. Document 10 (fol. 16v, lines 14-20).

<sup>127</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 989: *Processo*, fol. 12v. Document 10 (fol. 12v, lines 20-29).

<sup>128</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1268: Term. 25, fols. 46-46v (12 September 1566). Document 11; noted in Scotti, 191, but erroneously dated 10 September.



cappella of Santa Maria della Steccata in Parma. Along with this, in November of that year, after all the testimony had been heard, Pontio was given a supplement of twenty *lire*.<sup>129</sup>

Even more puzzling is the lack of mention of Pontio's departure in the records of the Consorzio. Ordinarily, if scandal made the position of a priest or cleric untenable in the church, the punishment or dismissal was voted on, and sometimes confirmed some days later. In this case none of this was done, and the records merely read:

In this Magnificent Council was read the processo formed against Pietro Pontio, Maestro di Cappella in the church of Santa Maria.<sup>130</sup>

Just when Pontio left is unclear, but by 13 January, the Consorzio had voted Francesco Crivelli a gift of grain and wine for teaching students over and above those assigned him by the council.<sup>131</sup>

**Santa Maria della Steccata in Parma:  
1567-1569**

Pontio began his duties at the Steccata on 13 January 1567, and was officially elected by the company on

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<sup>129</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1268: Term. 25, fol. 49v (7 November 1566). Document 12, transcribed in Scotti, 191.

<sup>130</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1268: Term. 25, fol. 61 (3 January 1567). Document 13; transcribed in Scotti, 191.

<sup>131</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1268: Term. 25, fol. 62v (13 January 1567). Document 15; transcribed in Scotti, 191.

17 January.<sup>132</sup> His salary was equal to that of his predecessor, Pietro Paolo Ragazzoni, at 168 *lire* per year.<sup>133</sup> While at first sight this seems to represent a much lower salary than the more than 400 *lire* he was paid in Bergamo, other factors must be taken into consideration. He likely held a residency at the church, which probably amounted to about 150 *lire* per year.<sup>134</sup> The combination of the two brings his yearly earnings to a little over 300 *lire*, which would have been a comfortable salary--comparable to the amount earned by a master mason in this period.<sup>135</sup> Along

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<sup>132</sup> Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fol. 178 (17 January 1567). Document 16; transcribed in Pelicelli *La cappella corale*, 26. That he began as early as the thirteenth is seen in the record of payment for the months of January and February. Here Pontio is paid for "un' mese et giorni dieci otto soldi:" Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fol. 179-179v (14 March 1567). Document 17.

<sup>133</sup> Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 27, mistakenly cites the incomplete payment of 14 March (twenty-two *lire*, eight *soldi*) as Pontio's original salary rather than the correct figure of twenty-eight *lire* per bimester.

<sup>134</sup> In 1569, the salary of the residents was raised to 180 *lire* per year: Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fols. 218-219v (29 October 1569). Transcribed in Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 28-30. This rate of fifteen *lire* per month probably was a raise from twelve *lire* per month, or one hundred and forty-four *lire* per year.

<sup>135</sup> Marzio Achille Romani, *Nella spirale di una crisi: Popolazione, mercato e prezzi a Parma tra cinque e seicento*, Università degli studi di Parma, facoltà di economia e commercio, istituto di storia economica e sociale «Gino Luzzatto» saggi 5 (Milan: Giuffrè, 1975), 227-238, presents an exhaustive study of economic conditions in Parma for this period. From a study of contemporary payment records, he concludes that a master mason received an average daily wage of twenty-eight *soldi* in 1568 (based on the payments "per opera"). He further assumes that in an average year the

with this, it could be expected that Pontio would have received various gifts of grain and wine. Although comparable figures are not available for Bergamo at this time, it appears that the apparent difference in salary may not have been that significant, especially in terms of standard of living.<sup>136</sup>

In contrast to the troubled circumstances that Pontio encountered in Bergamo, he assumed the post of *maestro di cappella* at the Steccata at a time of relative stability. The previous *maestro*, Pietro Paolo Ragazzoni, had left the position on November 21 of the previous year to assume leadership of the chapel at the Cathedral.<sup>137</sup> Before him,

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mason would be able to work 200 days, allowing for feast days and inclement weather. Thus his yearly salary would have been 280 *lire* (5600 *soldi*).

<sup>136</sup> This is a seemingly insurmountable problem for studies of the period. With the differences in exchange rates between the local coinage (expressed in terms of the moneys of account—the *lire*, *soldi* and *dinari*) and real gold coins—such as the *scudo* and *ducato*--and even discrepancies between the gold content of these coins--any real comparison is meaningless without reference to prices of essentials and over-all costs of living.

<sup>137</sup> Parma, ACVM, Lib. Ord. III, fol. 123 (21 November 1566). Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 26, states that Ragazzoni remained at the Steccata through the beginning of 1567. This is contradicted by the payment of musicians for November and December 1566, which lists a payment for Ragazzoni for only the month of November: Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fol. 177-177v (7 January 1567). Pelicelli, "Musicisti in Parma nei secoli XV-XVI: Note ed appunti", 201, gives the date of his departure as 22 November, without citing a source.

the chapel had been led for fourteen years by Stefano Alessandrini, who had been elected after the reinstatement of the cappella in 1552. The chapel during this period comprised nine to ten adult singers (all but two of whom seem to have been resident priests), the organist, and a company of trumpeters. Whether this latter group also served as trombonists to accompany the choir in services or were simply ceremonial trumpeters is unclear. What is clear, however, is that one of the lay singers, Pietro Rizzi, was paid an additional twelve *lire* per year on the condition that he both sing and play the trombone as needed.<sup>138</sup>

It is worth noting that Pontio's duties at the Steccata did not include teaching, which probably made the position even more attractive to him given the problems he had encountered in Bergamo. The Steccata, as any other church, undoubtedly had provided for the teaching of music to young *clerici* from the very beginning, but it was not until 1565 that an actual seminary was established, providing instruction in grammar and music to twelve children of poor parents. Of these, four served as *clerici* in the church.<sup>139</sup> The students were taught to sing plainchant and figured

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<sup>138</sup> Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fol. 71v (17 March 1559).

<sup>139</sup> Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fol. 157-158 (16 February 1565). Partially transcribed in Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 26.

music by Thomaso dalla Olla, who may be the same Tomaso (Paroli) who was elected as a resident in *cantus firmus* in 1559.<sup>140</sup>

The extent and exact circumstances in which polyphony was used at the Steccata during this period are unclear. However, a general idea can be gained from a series of four documents, dating from 1539 to the first part of the seventeenth century; the information derived from these is summarized in Table 3. The two documents from 1539 and 1540 simply state that the choir was to perform a polyphonic Mass, as well as sing the Magnificat and Hymn at Vespers for the "feste commandate."<sup>141</sup> They were also to sing at the Masses for the *antiani*, Matins at Christmas, and at Mass on Holy Saturday, as well as any other occasion "per fatto et interesse de la Compagnia." In addition, every Saturday after Compline they were to sing an Antiphon of the Virgin and two Motets. A set of *capitoli* from 1569 spells out the duties of the choir more clearly, mandating polyphonic

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<sup>140</sup> Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fol. 75v (9 June, 1559).

<sup>141</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Benedetto Bono, filza 925 (17 January 1540). This is a copy of the *capitoli* for the hiring of Giovanni Maria Lanfranco. Transcribed in Adorni, *Santa Maria della Steccata*, 264; Parma, AOC, D379 (Ordine Costantiniano di S. Giorgio: *pittura e architettura della Chiesa Magistrale della Steccata, 1531-1539*), contains a more complete description of the singers' duties. Transcribed in Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 10-12.

Vespers for specific feasts.<sup>142</sup> Along with the requirement to sing at any time "per fatto et interesse," the singers were likewise required to sing at any time thought appropriate by the maestro di cappella.<sup>143</sup> This suggests a more active role for the maestro, involving more than just carrying out the wishes of the sacristan and *consiglio*.

Most noticeable in the *capitoli* of 1569 is a strong emphasis on music for Vespers. Rather than having only a polyphonic Hymn and Magnificat, the entire service was performed polyphonically. Just when this emphasis on the use of polyphony for Vespers began is impossible to determine, although in all likelihood the *capitoli* reflect an ongoing practice, and thus represent the norms during Pontio's tenure.

The final document cited in Table 3 is an undated list of musicians' duties.<sup>144</sup> It is clear, however, that this document dates from after 1601 due to the listing of a celebration for the Coronation of Virgin observed on the

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<sup>142</sup> Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fol. 218-219v (29 October 1569). This is a detailed listing of musicians' duties that accompanies the increase in the residents' salaries cited above.

<sup>143</sup> "S'in altre feste et vigilia oltre le sopra notate volesse il Mastro capella che si cantasse, che siano tenuti a cantare, et ubedirlo." Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fol. 218v (29 October 1569).

<sup>144</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo culto (1395-1788), busta 12: Congregazione della B. V. della Steccata ed Ordine Costantiniano (1489-1815). This is probably an archivist's copy of part of an undated *capitolo* from the seventeenth century.

TABLE 3  
Feasts with Polyphony at Santa Maria Della Steccata

	1540	1569	>1601
<i>Fixed Feast Days</i>			
<i>January</i>			
1 Circumcision		[M],V	[M], V(d+v)
6 Epiphany		[M],V(d+v)	[M], V(d+v)
<i>February</i>			
2 Purification BMV	*M	[M],V,Mg(v)	[M], V(d+v)
24 Dedication of church			[M], V(d+v)
<i>March</i>			
19 S. Giuseppi			[M], V(d+v)
25 Annunciation of BMV	*M	[M],V(d+v),C	M,V(1&2),C+L(d+v)
<i>May</i>			
17 Coronation of BMV			M,V(1&2),C+L(d+v)
<i>June</i>			
24 Birth of S. Giovanni		[M],[v],Mg(v)	[M], V(d+v)
29 S. Pietro		[M],V,Mg(v)	[M], V(d+v)
<i>August</i>			
15 Assumption of BMV	*M	[M],V(d+v)	[M],C,V(d+v)
29 Beheading of S. Giovanni			[M], V(d+v)
<i>September</i>			
8 Nativity of BMV	*M	[M],V,Mg(v), C(d+v)	[M],C,V(d+v)
<i>November</i>			
1 All Saints		M,V,Mg(v)	[M], V(d+v)
<i>December</i>			
24 Vigil of Christmas		M	C
25 Christmas	*M,Mt	[M],V1	M, V(d+v) <sup>a</sup>

TABLE 3 (Continued)

	1540	1569	>1601
<i>Movable Feasts:</i>			
"Feste Comandate" For "gli Ufficiali" For "gli antiani" Saturdays Sundays Quadragesima Palm Sunday Holy Tuesday Maundy Thursday Good Friday Holy Saturday Easter Octave of Easter Easter to Pentecost III Pentecost Ascension Corpus Christi	M, Mg+H  M *C, Ant.+2Mot <sup>c</sup>  *C *M, Lm, Bn  *M, Lm, Bn *M, Lm, Bn M ? Ant+2Mot <sup>c</sup> *C	M, Mg <sup>b</sup>  M C, Ant+Mot <sup>c</sup>  St <sup>d</sup>  Bn, Mi M, Bn, Mi M  [M], V(d+v) <sup>a</sup> , C  [M], V(d+v) <sup>a</sup> [M], V, Mg(v) [M], V, Mg(v)	M, Mg M M M(BMV), C+L [M]C+L C <sup>e</sup>    [M], V(d+v) <sup>a</sup> , C  [M], V(d+v) <sup>a</sup> [M], V(d+v) <sup>a</sup> [M], V(d+v) <sup>a</sup>

## Abbreviations:

Ant=Antiphon

Bn=Benedictus

C=Compline

C+L=Compline with Litany of BMV

(d+v)=Day and Vigil

H=Hymn

M=Mass

\*=Services specifically directed to be sung in plainchant by the musicians rather than the residents in *canto fermo*

[M]=Masses assumed for this feast.

Mg=Magnificat

Mi=Miserere

Mt=Matins

St=Stabat Mater

V=Vespers

(v)=Vigil

a. Including the two following days.

b. The choir was also directed to sing at any other feast, as desired by the maestro di capella.

c. To be sung immediately after Compline. The Antiphon and Motets were also required after Compline of any "festa comandata."

d. From the middle of Quadragesima until Holy Wednesday.

e. From the beginning of Quadragesima until Holy Tuesday.



twenty-seventh of May. On that date in 1601, in a solemn ceremony in the Piazza Maggiore (now Piazza Garibaldi), Duke Ranuccio I presented the company of the Steccata with two crowns of gold for the symbolic coronation of the Madonna and the Christ child of the miraculous image that gave the church its name.<sup>145</sup> There are few substantial differences between the duties presented in this list and those of 1569, other than a few added feasts, which may represent an addition to the repertoire or may simply indicate celebrations observed earlier as "feste comandate." The only clear enlargement of liturgical functions is the addition of a number of polyphonic Vespers for the vigils of various feasts.

The duties of the singers thus remained more or less the same through the second half of the sixteenth century, with only a few feasts added to the repertoire of polyphonic music. The general schedule of polyphonic music revealed in these lists is not in any way surprising, with Masses for the major feast days, and an emphasis in the liturgical aspects associated with the Virgin, specifically the service of Vespers and the Magnificat.

An interesting feature of the lists of both 1539/40 and 1569 is the use of Motets. In these two lists Motets are

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<sup>145</sup> This ceremony is described in detail in Arnaldo Marocchi. "La chiesa della Steccata nella storia," in Adorni, 22.

specifically called for in what could be best called a supraliturgical function. That is to say that they were used in conjunction with a service, in this case the Compline every Saturday, but not within the service itself.<sup>146</sup> Rather, they were to be sung immediately after the Marian antiphon, also sung polyphonically, which ends the service. Thus a service of lesser importance is doubly ornamented, first by the addition of the polyphonic setting of the antiphon, and second with the addition of one or two Motets.<sup>147</sup> It is also important to note that the rules at this time call for the service itself to be sung in plainchant, but by the members of the polyphonic chapel, further suggesting a desire to elevate the service musically.<sup>148</sup> By the seventeenth century this practice was subsumed by the fully-polyphonic Compline services.

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<sup>146</sup> Anthony M. Cummings, "Toward an Interpretation of the Sixteenth-Century Motet," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XXXIV (1981), 43-59 discusses a number of liturgical and non-liturgical uses of the Motet. Specifically, he points to the association of the Motet with the Offertory, Elevation and Communion, concluding from his sources that "the genre is never linked with the office" (p. 52). The connection in Parma between the Motet and an office service, even if not used within the context of the liturgy, is worthy of note.

<sup>147</sup> The lists for 1539/40 call for two Motets after the service; the 1569 list calls for one.

<sup>148</sup> This is specifically called for in the *capitoli* of 1539/40, and it is to be assumed that it continued until such time as the entire service was sung in polyphony.

As to the actual musical repertoire used at this time, little can be said. The only reference to the purchase of music is an entry from 1540, which lists an expenditure of fifty-seven *lire*, three *soldi* for "certi libri di canto figurato."<sup>149</sup> This would certainly have been a large purchase, providing enough music to fill the needs of the church for a number of years.

Few changes were made in the size or personnel of the chapel during Pontio's first tenure at the Steccata. Not long before his arrival, the chapel had been augmented with the addition of Giovanni Maria Oliveri.<sup>150</sup> The chapel grew once more in 1568 with the election of Archangelo Crivelli.<sup>151</sup> Crivelli had requested leave of his position as a *clerico* at Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo in October of the previous year in order to study grammar, figured music, and organ, evidently not satisfied with the opportunities offered in Bergamo.<sup>152</sup> He was granted leave with the

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<sup>149</sup> Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. III, fol. 59 (10 June 1540).

<sup>150</sup> Oliveri was elected to sing "canto fermo come di figurato." Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fol. 177v (7 January 1567).

<sup>151</sup> Crivelli was elected "in Residente della musica di canto figurato." Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fol. 193 (9 April 1568). Transcribed in Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 27.

<sup>152</sup> Bergamo, MIA, 1268: Term. 25, fols. 121-122 (23 October 1567). Cited by Scotti, 192. There is no explanation for the long period that elapsed before Crivelli arrived in Parma.

provision that he return in two years to fulfill his obligation to serve as a *cappellano* in the church for eight years.

Crivelli's promise was never fulfilled. On 19 March 1569 Pontio was elected *cappellano* and *maestro di cappella* at Sant'Alessandro in Colonna in Bergamo.<sup>153</sup> And on 13 May, Crivelli was elected to fill the vacancy left at Santa Maria della Steccata, with the added duties of instructing the clerics in *canto figurato*, though without any additional pay.<sup>154</sup> Pontio's motives for leaving are unclear. What is certain is that he left on good terms. Testimony for this is seen in a short but friendly letter written by Pontio to the sacristan of the Steccata in September of that year, inquiring about Crivelli.<sup>155</sup> His decision to leave may have been in part financial, as this was a time of high inflation for the region. For example, between 1560 and 1569 the price of grain increased fourteen percent, wine nearly

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<sup>153</sup> Bergamo, Archivio della Parrocchia di Sant'Alessandro (hereafter abbreviated APSA), Term. (1567-1573), fol. 28 (19 March, 1569). Document 21.

<sup>154</sup> Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fol. 211-211v (13 May 1569). Dalla Olla finished his service at the end of April. Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. IV, fol. 211v (13 May 1569).

<sup>155</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo culto (1395-1788), busta 13: Congregazione della B. V. della Steccata ed ordine Costantiniano (1510-1676), in "Lettere dirette D. Lorenzo Piazza Sacristina della Steccata 1560-1576" (26 September 1569). Document 22.

forty-five percent and basic housing more than sixty percent.<sup>156</sup> The decision may also have been precipitated by the situation concerning Dalla Olla and the teaching of the residents. He may have foreseen, and wanted to avoid, the very situation that Crivelli found himself in: having the added duties of teaching with no additional pay.

Pontio's brief service at the Steccata must have served as a respite for him after the stormy proceedings at Santa Maria Maggiore. His return to Bergamo, called by a church in desperate need of a maestro di cappella resulted in a calmer tenure, though he was once more to leave under the cloud of contention. Nonetheless, it was to be a period of successful leadership and one that brought the added stature of his first musical publication.

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<sup>156</sup> Romani, 252-253.

## CHAPTER II

### COMPOSER AND THEORIST: PONTIO'S MATURE CAREER

Pontio's return to Bergamo was recorded by Angelo Maria da Erba in 1572. His notice, cited in the previous chapter, has relevance beyond simply placing Pontio once again in this outpost of the Venetian empire, however, and it is worth reexamining here:

. . . not long ago [he was] named maestro di cappella in the *Duomo* in Bergamo, [he] has composed pleasant and most graceful Masses for four voices, which serve many priests in the sacred temples.<sup>1</sup>

Da Erba's assertion that Pontio served at the Cathedral in Bergamo was cited by Ireneo Affò and reiterated by later writers until Nestore Pelicelli's inexplicable omission of

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<sup>1</sup> ". . . fatto poco innanzi dal clero Maestro di Capella del Duomo di Bergamo, qual ha composto canti legiadriissimi, e soavi sopra le messe a quattro voci, dei cui servono nei tempi sacri molti sacerdoti." Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Ms. 1287: "Compendio Copiosissimo dell'Origine, antichità, successi, e Nobilità della Città di Parma, suo Populo, e Territorio Estratto dal raccolta di Angelo Mario di Edoari da Herba Parmigiano per il medesimo. Parma. L'anno 1572," 236.

it in his 1931 *Note d'archivio* article.<sup>2</sup> Although incorrect in asserting that Pontio served at the Cathedral, these early sources were correct in placing him in Bergamo at this time. Pontio's return to Bergamo is further confirmed by the title page of his first book of four-voice Masses, which describes him as "Alexandri Bergomi Magistri," thus helping to fill in one of the lacunae in Pontio's biography, while at the same time raising new questions concerning his career.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ireneo Affò, *Memorie degli scrittori e letterati parmigiani*, 5 vols. (Parma: Reale, 1789-[1833]), IV, 199. Nestore Pelicelli, *La cappella corale della Steccata nel secolo XVI* (Parma: Fresching, 1916), 38, cites Da Erba as well, but in his "Musicisti in Parma nei secoli XV-XVI: Note ed appunti," *Note d'archivio per la storia musicali VIII* (1931), 209, he fails to mention Pontio's return to Bergamo. As with other omissions and mistakes found in the latter study, it has been perpetuated by modern scholars, thus creating a lacuna in Pontio's career for the years 1569-1577.

<sup>3</sup> Pontio, *Missarum cum quatuor vocibus Liber Primus* (Venice: Scotto, 1584). The only surviving copy of this collection, found in the British Library, is dated 1584. This copy is clearly a reprint, and most likely a third edition since both Hermann Mendel, *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon*, 11 vols. (Berlin: Oppenheim, 1881), VIII, 144, and François Féty, *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique*, 2nd ed., 8 vols. (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1866-70), VII, 96, cite a 1578 edition of the collection, again well past the time Pontio would have been in Bergamo. Da Erba's mention of Pontio's four-voice Masses points to this specific collection, suggesting a first printing from before 1572.

**Sant'Alessandro in Colonna: 1569-1574**

In the late sixteenth century, there were two churches in Bergamo bearing the name of Sant'Alessandro. The more important of the two, Sant'Alessandro in Colonna, was built on the supposed site of the martyrdom of Bergamo's patron saint. The second and smaller church, Sant'Alessandro in Croce, was built on the site where legend says lilies miraculously sprouted from the drops of blood which fell from his severed head as it was being taken for burial by Santa Grata.<sup>4</sup> This latter church, as Gary Towne points out, was probably too small to support a musical chapel, and it was to Sant'Alessandro in Colonna that Pontio was called in 1569.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The legends of Sant'Alessandro and Santa Grata are confused and often contradictory. Although Alessandro was most likely martyred at the end of the third century, it was probably far from Bergamo, and Santa Grata, who supposedly buried the saint on her land, in all probability lived in the sixth or seventh century. See Sabine Baring-Gould, *The Lives of the Saints*, 2nd ed., 15 vols. (London: Hodges, 1872-1882), IX, 315 and X, 48-49.

<sup>5</sup> Gary Towne, "Gaspar de Albertis and Music at Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo in the Sixteenth Century," 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Santa Barbara, 1985), I, 28, n. 43. Bergamo's second cathedral, where the Saint's relics were housed, was also named for Alessandro. It was demolished in the 1560's during the reconstruction of the city walls. Towne's assumption that Sant'Alessandro in Colonna was the most likely to have supported a musical chapel in the sixteenth century is validated by Pontio's presence there.



Virtually nothing is known about the musical chapel at Sant'Alessandro. But given the history and position of the church itself, it seems likely that the growth and development of the chapel may roughly parallel that of Santa Maria Maggiore. The earliest notice concerning Sant'Alessandro dates from 1133, and a *consorzio* was founded in 1363 to oversee the activities of the church.<sup>6</sup> A copy of the rules of the Consorzio, dating from 1571, reveals their self-image as but a smaller version of the Misericordia Maggiore:

. . . even though [the Consorzio di San Alessandro] is a great deal smaller than the Misericordia Maggiore, nonetheless, concerning the administration and government, it is virtually its imitator . . . its earnings . . . are used in part for the benefit of the poor . . . in part for the celebration of the Mass and divine office . . . and in part for the maintaining of the building and decoration of the church . . .<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Mario Lumina, *S. Alessandro in Colonna* (Bergamo: Edizioni Greppi, 1977), 6-11. The Consorzio della Misericordia Maggiore, by comparison, was founded in 1265.

<sup>7</sup> ". . . anchor che sia di gran lunga più debole di quello della Misericordia maggiore; nondimeno, circa la amministrazione, et governo, è suo quasi emulo . . . Tutti i redditi, e le entrate . . . sono, parte a beneficio dei poveri . . . et parte nella celebration delle messe et divini officii . . . et nella manutentione della fabrica et ornato della chiesa . . ." *La regola del ven. consorzio di S. Alessandro in Colonna compilata l'anno 1571* (Bergamo, 1589), extracted in Angelo Roncalli (Joannes XXIII), *Gli atti della visita apostolica di S. Carlo Borromeo a Bergamo (1575)*, Fontes Ambrosiana XIII-XVII, 5 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 1936-1957), II, 260.

From this desire to emulate the larger Santa Maria Maggiore, it might be expected that in the level of musical activity--if not the quality as well--the company would have strived toward the example set by the larger institution. Any assessment of its role in the musical life in Bergamo in the sixteenth century, however, awaits further and broader research.<sup>8</sup>

#### Pontio's Tenure at Sant'Alessandro: 1569-1574

Archival records for this period from Sant'Alessandro in Colonna show that Pontio's employment as maestro di cappella there began in March of 1569.<sup>9</sup> He was elected to the post after a long and difficult search to find a

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<sup>8</sup> Information gleaned from a study of Pontio's tenure at the church seems to bear some of these suppositions out to a degree, but they can be seen as preliminary at best. Gary Towne has begun a more detailed study of the chapel of this period.

<sup>9</sup> The archives of the church are presently housed in the Archivio della Parrocchia di Sant'Alessandro in Colonna (hereafter abbreviated Bergamo, APSA) and for this period consist of the *terminationi* of the Consorzio di Sant'Alessandro in Colonna (from 1513 on) and the *Libri delle Parti* of the Scola del SS. Sacramento, which served as the seminary for the church (from 1511 on). There are no *Libri Mastri* for the period. The archives are somewhat disordered, and more material may exist there. Presently the only study of the church is Lumina, *S. Alessandro in Colonna*. Monsignor Lumina is presently the archivist there, and his study includes a number of transcriptions from the books (193 ff.), mostly dealing with artists and architects. A complete study of the *terminationi* for the period will undoubtedly establish the history from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Lumina includes no discussion of music, although in his excerpted documents, he includes the notice of a payment to Antonio Talpino, a trombone player, in 1563.

replacement for Alessandro de Beronus, who was fired as maestro di cappella on 12 March 1568.<sup>10</sup> In an attempt to hire a suitable replacement, the Consorzio voted to send a letter to Pope Pius IV, asking dispensation to hire Baptista Mutio--Pontio's predecessor at Santa Maria Maggiore--yet allowing him to retain the benefice he held at another church.<sup>11</sup> Their plea was unsuccessful, and on 10 October 1568 the Consorzio hired Sebastiano Pillani at a salary of 180 *lire* per year plus his residence.<sup>12</sup> On 6 December, his salary was increased by twenty *lire*, two *somae* of wheat, and a *carrum* of wine; and he was given an extra forty-five *lire* for teaching reading and writing to the clerics of the *scola*.<sup>13</sup> Finally, on 11 December he was given a five-year contract, and his salary was raised to 240 *lire*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1567-1573), fol. 15 (12 March 1568).

<sup>11</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1567-1573), fol. 17v (9 May 1568). It was because of this benefice that Mutio left his position at Santa Maria Maggiore in 1564 (see above page 48).

<sup>12</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1567-1573), fol. 19 (10 October 1568). This salary included 60 *lire* for teaching an unspecified number of clerics. On 28 October he was provided with a house by the Consorzio (fol. 19v).

<sup>13</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1567-1573), fol. 22 (6 December 1568).

<sup>14</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1567-1573), fol. 23 (11 December 1568).

Pillani was evidently dissatisfied with some aspect of his situation, however, and left within months of the new agreement. On 27 February 1569, the Consorzio approved the expenses for one "Georgio cappellano magnificis pietatis Bergomi" to go to Parma to hire a maestro di cappella.<sup>15</sup> On 19 March, Pontio was elected for an unspecified tenure. According to the terms of his employment, he was to serve as a *cappellano* in the church, and as part of his duties as maestro di cappella he was to teach twelve students in figured music and counterpoint as well as instructing two priors in organ. His remuneration was to comprise sixty *scudi*, two *somae* of grain, one measure of wine, a house, and his share of the distribution that made up the residence of the *cappellani*. His appointment was approved with only one member of the Consorzio objecting.<sup>16</sup>

A number of the details in these documents are interesting, and worth further exploration. First is the identity of *maestro* Giorgio, who made the arrangements for the appointment of Pontio. A later entry in the *terminazioni* identifies him as "Georgio Placentino," and in both

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<sup>15</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminazione (1567-1573), fol. 27v (27 February 1569). Document 20.

<sup>16</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminazione (1567-1573), fol. 28 (19 March 1569). Document 21.

documents he is described as "Cappellano magnificis pietatis."<sup>17</sup> No record of a *cappellano* by that name at Sant' Alessandro can be found for the year 1569, and it is possible that the designation "magnificis pietatis" may refer to the Misericordia Maggiore, where Georgio de Bosonis, with whom Pontio had shared both house and scandal during his tenure there, still served.<sup>18</sup> Bosonis was later hired by the Consorzio of Sant' Alessandro, and the notice refers to him as "Georgius de Bosonibus de Parma."<sup>19</sup> The two were likely one in the same, and a confusion of the two cities by the scribe is understandable, given the fact that the Farnese duchy incorporated both cities.<sup>20</sup>

Why the Consorzio would call on someone from outside of the church to hire a *maestro di cappella* is unclear, although if he were indeed from Santa Maria Maggiore the

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<sup>17</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1567-1573), fol. 28 (19 March 1569). The entry records the payment of nine *lire* for expenses incurred in bringing Pontio to Bergamo.

<sup>18</sup> While the entries in the records of the *Consorzio* are not always an accurate source concerning the presence of a particular *cappellano*, a complete listing of *cappellani* exists, dating from January of 1570, which likewise does not list a Georgio. Bergamo, APSA, Terminazione (1567-1573), fol. 40 (30 January 1570).

<sup>19</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1567-1573), fol. 41 (16 February 1570).

<sup>20</sup> This, in fact, is exactly what occurred in the entry concerning Pontio's appointment. Here the scribe named Pontio as a citizen of Piacenza, and then corrected it to read Parma. Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1567-1573), fol. 28 (19 March 1569). Document 21.

deference to their musical chapel is understandable. And Georgio de Bosonis was evidently well-regarded as a musician, for when he was hired at Sant'Alessandro it was at a salary much higher than his fellow *cappellani*.<sup>21</sup> The personal friendship of Bosonis and Pontio also does much to explain Pontio's return to Bergamo from a good position at Santa Maria Della Steccata.

Pontio's salary is equally worthy of note. Supposing a rate of exchange of seven *lire* per *scudo*, the resulting 420 *lire* is notably higher than the 240 *lire* given Pillani and is especially high given the salary of a normal *cappellano*, which was at that time as low as 110 *lire*.<sup>22</sup> The differential between the salaries of the maestro and the *cappellani* bears further explanation. When Pontio served as maestro di cappella at Santa Maria Maggiore, his salary was roughly

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<sup>21</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1567-1573), fol. 41 (16 February 1570). He was hired at a salary of 200 *lire*, plus his residence. Other *cappellani* were paid between 110 *lire* and 130 *lire* at this time.

<sup>22</sup> I can find no documents which give an exchange rate in Bergamo for this period. However, Roncalli, I, 357 cites a document from 1575 listing the salary of the organist at Santa Maria Maggiore at 90 *scudi* which equaled 630 *lire* (hence: one *scudo* = seven *lire*). This rate seems to have been fairly stable in Northern Italy during this period. In Parma, for example, the rate from 1565-1575 fluctuated very little, maintaining a constant value of about seven *lire*. See Marzio Achille Romani, *Nella spirale di una crisi: Popolazione, mercato e prezzi a Parma tra cinque e seicento*, Università degli studi di Parma, facoltà di economia e commercio, istituto di storia economica e sociale «Gino Luzzatto» saggi 5 (Milan: Giuffrè, 1975), 334.

twice that of a well-paid singer. This differential is comparable to that found nearly ten years later for Pietro Vinci when he occupied the same post at Santa Maria Maggiore, at which time his salary of 664 *lire* compared to an average singer's salary of 320 *lire*.<sup>23</sup> That Pontio received more than three times the salary of a singer, compared to only double for his predecessor, suggests once again a high estimation of his ability.

The chapel that Pontio led from 1569-1575 was large and well-organized. Reconstructing from the various notices in the *terminationi*, the number of *cappellani* who served as musicians averaged about ten.<sup>24</sup> In addition, there was a body of twelve *clerici* who studied with Pontio, and a number of younger *scolari* who were taught by other *cappellani*.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Roncalli, I, 357-8. A resident priest earned 230 *lire* per year (60 *lire* of which, along with added measures of grain and wine, comprised his residence). In addition, he was given an average of 90 *lire* for his services as a singer: "A gli altri cantori £90, a chi 60 et a chi più, secondo la bontà delle voce."

<sup>24</sup> A reliable listing can be made from various entries in the *terminazioni*. Although singers are not always immediately identified as such upon their assumption of duties, other entries (i.e. extra pay for musical services) make their identities clear.

<sup>25</sup> Although it is not expressly stated that these chaplains taught the students music, it can be assumed by the fact that all of the chaplains in question can also be identified as singers, and by the fact that they were paid by the Consorzio, and not the *scola* as was the case when Pillani was assigned to teach reading and writing. Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1567-1573), fol. 22 (6 December 1568).

The records in the *terminationi* reveal few specifics about Pontio's activities during the course of his residence at Sant'Alessandro. An active program to improve the quality of the choir during this period can be detected, however. Under Pontio's leadership, salaries for the musical *cappellani* were raised, and those hired during this period entered service at notably higher salaries.<sup>26</sup> As noted earlier, Georgio de Bosonis was hired at a salary of 200 *lire*, compared to a prevailing average of 100-130 *lire*. In December of 1570 Nicolaus de Advocatis, who had been hired one year earlier at a salary of 110 *lire*, received an increase to 200 *lire*.<sup>27</sup> In November of 1571, this was raised to 250 *lire*.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The matter of salaries is somewhat confusing for this period. There was, in principle, a discrepancy in salaries between the singing and non-singing *cappellani*. By December of 1574, when the salaries were equalized, singing *cappellani* were paid a base salary of 160 *lire*, while their non-singing brethren received 170 *lire*. This distinction was mostly irrelevant, for those hired to sing regularly received a higher salary (in only one case is there an indication of a specific supplement for singing polyphonic music). This fact may explain the lower base salary. It may also be that their abilities as singers gave them more opportunities to receive emoluments on a per-service basis for votive Masses and special celebrations.

<sup>27</sup> Bergamo, APSA, *Terminatione* (1567-1573), fol. 32v (7 October 1569); fol. 48v (1 December 1570). Nicolaus (Nicolaus Advocatus de Castre) had been a cleric at Santa Maria Maggiore while Pontio was there. He was removed from his position in July of 1566 for disobedience and insubordination. Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai, Archivio della Misericordia Maggiore (hereafter abbreviated Bergamo, MIA), 1268: Term. 25, fol. 37v (4 July 1566).

<sup>28</sup> Bergamo, APSA, *Terminatione* (1567-1573), fol. 59 (23 November 1571).



In December of that year the bass Augustino de Petri was hired as *cappellano* and singer, on the recommendation of Pontio, at a salary of 250 *lire*.<sup>29</sup>

This period of growth in the chapel also coincided with the beginning of Pontio's career as a published composer. While there is evidence that he composed as part of his duties at Santa Maria Maggiore, none of his published music can be linked to this period, nor to his first tenure at Santa Maria della Steccata in Parma. His first book of four-part Masses is clearly identified with the time of his leadership at Sant'Alessandro, and it likely held an important place in the repertory of the church. An inventory from 1573 suggests that this repertory was limited, listing only four books of music by one "Nicolo da Lira," and six books by various authors.<sup>30</sup>

Pontio's collection is varied, and presents five Masses, three of which are based on secular models. A distinctly utilitarian tone is set with the final Mass, entitled *Missa Mortuorum tum omissa voce tum plena voce*, suggesting a uniquely flexible piece. The surviving bass part, however, gives no indication as to how many voices can

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<sup>29</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1567-1573), fol. 62v (21 December 1571).

<sup>30</sup> Roncalli, II, 183.

be omitted.<sup>31</sup> If we may judge by Da Erba's comments cited at the beginning of this chapter, the collection was well-known and used, at least in Parma.

### The Decline of the Chapel and Pontio's Departure

The general growth of the chapel under Pontio's leadership slowed markedly during his final few months at Sant' Alessandro, and his departure was once more accompanied by a certain degree of confrontation with church authorities. On 29 January 1574, the council voted to attempt to reach an accord with Pontio.<sup>32</sup> Whether this was necessitated by dissatisfaction on Pontio's part or that of the council is not mentioned. In April, Giovanni Salvagno and Ardizzone l'Aglio were assigned to write a new set of *capitoli* for Pontio, and on the first of May, the same two deputies were elected to reach a final accord.<sup>33</sup> They likely reached one, although no specifics are noted in the *terminationi*;

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<sup>31</sup> Nors Sigurd Josephson, "The *Missa De Beata Virgine* of the Sixteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1970), 258, notes a similar approach in the *Missa de Beata Virgine* of Rocco Rodio (c. 1530-after 1615), published by Dorico in 1562. See Gustave Reese, *Music in the Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1959), 486, for further commentary.

<sup>32</sup> Bergamo, APSA, *Terminatione* (1573-1584), fol. 28 (29 January 1574). Document 24.

<sup>33</sup> Bergamo, APSA, *Terminatione* (1573-1584), fol. 34 (18 April 1574); fol. 34v (1 May 1574). Document 26.

however, by September Pontio had apparently taken leave from his position:

Given that the Reverend Maestro Pre Pietro Pontio *cappellano* and maestro di cappella, against the accords made with him, has taken leave from service as *cappellano* and maestro di cappella of this venerable Consorzio, a vote was taken as to whether said *maestro pre* Pietro should be given license as he has asked.<sup>34</sup>

The council voted six to one to deny his petition, but by this time Pontio had either already left, or else he departed soon after, for less than a month later the council made provisions to rent the house Pontio had lived in to a local mason.<sup>35</sup> Soon thereafter, on 17 December, Ludovico Cerone was given a supplement in recognition of his taking on the duties of maestro di cappella.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1573-1584), fol. 40v (10 September 1574). Document 27.

<sup>35</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1573-1584), fol. 41v (5 October 1574). Document 28.

<sup>36</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1573-1584), fol. 47v (17 December 1574). In this notice, mention is made of Ludovico's nephew, who served the church as a cleric and musician. This is undoubtedly Giovanni Battista Cerone, who was hired by the council to sing figured music on 10 December. Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1573-1584), fol. 46v (10 December 1574). It is not known if Ludovico and Giovanni were any relation to the theorist Pietro Cerone, and it would be tempting to find such a link with a musical family. In fact there was a Pietro Cerone listed as a cleric in 1574, although this may be the same Pietro who later served as prior of the scola and died in 1627. See Ramon Baselga Esteve, "Pedro Cerone de Bergamo. Estudio bio-bibliografico," *Tesoro sacro musicale* LIV-LV/615-620 (1971-72), 11.

During the time that the council was in negotiation with Pontio--and in the ensuing period leading up to the time of his departure--a number of *cappellani* either left Sant'Alessandro or requested leave, including Georgio de Bosonis.<sup>37</sup> More tellingly, the notices for the hiring of two of the new *cappellani* make specific note of a lack of qualified priests.<sup>38</sup> Along with this, the fact that one of the clerics, Giovanni Battista Cerone, was given an addition to his stipend for singing figured music in place of a priest, and that a former *cappellano*, Francesco de Pecchis, was paid a sum of two *scudi* for his musical services suggest that musicians were in short supply at the church.<sup>39</sup> The cause and effect is impossible to ascertain. Pontio's departure may have been a catalyst for, or a reaction to the decline; or the same dissatisfactions that led to Pontio's desire to leave may have precipitated the decline. At any rate, the chapel was a long time in recovering, and a replacement for Pontio was not found until July of 1575,

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<sup>37</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1573-1584), fol. 27v (22 January 1574).

<sup>38</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1573-1584), fol. 38v (18 August 1574); fol. 41 (5 October 1574).

<sup>39</sup> Pechiis was replaced on 14 May 1574. Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1573-1584), fol. 35v. He was paid for serving as a musician on 17 December 1574. Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1573-1584), fol. 48.

barely in time to prepare for the visit of Carlo Borromeo to the city.<sup>40</sup>

Just where Pontio may have gone upon leaving Sant'Alessandro is uncertain. It is probable that he left the city, and once again, employment by Girolamo Cornazzano must at least be suggested as a possible explanation for this period of his career.<sup>41</sup>

If Pontio were indeed in the employ of Cornazzano, this must have placed him not in Parma, as has been assumed, but rather in Pavia. Although it is impossible to trace Cornazzano from year to year, a number of documents from this time place his residence in the latter city.<sup>42</sup> In May of 1572, for example, two notary documents dealing with

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<sup>40</sup> Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1573-1584), fol. 64 (2 July 1575). Frate Caterino da Venesia was elected after at least one candidate, Olivero da Crema, was rejected by the council. Bergamo, APSA, Terminatione (1573-1584), fol. 61 (20 May 1575). Borromeo's apostolic visit took place in September.

<sup>41</sup> An obvious assumption, were Pontio to have stayed in Bergamo, would be that he served in the Cathedral. Although the records of the Cathedral are highly disordered and incomplete, payments from 24 January 1574 and 17 September 1577 show a "Maestro Zumina" as maestro di cappella, and it can be assumed that he served for the intervening period. Bergamo, Archivio del Capitolare, 572: Spese (1526-1592) contains an unordered collection of miscellaneous pay sheets.

<sup>42</sup> The latest document I can find specifically tying Cornazzano to Parma comes from 1567. Parma, Archivio di Stato di Parma (hereafter abbreviated Parma, ASP), Fondo notarile Ottavio Banzola, filza 2710: Contratti, 1567-1568 (10 June 1567).

property matters in Parma identify Cornazzano as residing in Pavia.<sup>43</sup> The same is true of a document dating from 1578 as well as a letter from 1581.<sup>44</sup> His residence in the city is also confirmed by Luca Conti's chronicle of 1574, cited in the previous chapter, which states that both Girolamo and his brother Aldigiero were then residing in Pavia.<sup>45</sup> Cornazzano's son Pompeo--born in 1576, and later to become bishop of Parma--is enigmatically described by one chronicler, however, as being "from Pavia, but a native of Parma."<sup>46</sup> Cornazzano, therefore, may have moved his residence freely between the two cities.

Although Pontio's city of residence is no more clarified than that of his supposed patron for this period, his employment by Cornazzano at this time would suggest a nexus

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<sup>43</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Gaspare Mendogni, filza 2652: Contratti, 1570-1573 (2 May 1572) describes Cornazzano as "habitum in civitate Papiae."

<sup>44</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Julius de Pecorinus, filza 2805: Contratti, 1578 (21 January 1578). The letter, dating from 13 June 1581, is summarized in a miscellaneous collection of documents compiled by Edoari Da Erba. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Ms. Misc. 1193, 2 vols., I, 134.

<sup>45</sup> Luca Conti, *Ragionamento sopra gli Accademici Affidati* (Pavia: n.p., 1574), 109, quoted in Rodolfo Maiocchi and Attilio Moiraghi, *L'Almo Collegio Borromeo*, 3 vols. (Pavia: various publishers, 1912-1916), I, 83, n. 1. See above, pages 33-34.

<sup>46</sup> Cited in Giovanni Maria Allodi, *Serie cronologica dei Vescovi di Parma con alcuni cenni sui principali avvenimenti civili*, 2 vols. (Parma: Fiaccadori, 1856), II, 178. Pompeo was Bishop in the city from 1615-1647.

which might ultimately point to his future appointment in Milan. One of the most problematic aspects of the accepted patronage relationship between Pontio and Cornazzano has been the question of Borromeo's hiring of Pontio to serve in his church in Milan. On the surface it would seem unlikely that the progress of Pontio's career would recommend him for such a position. He began his career late in his life, was fired from his first position, then returned to his native city for two years. Going once more to serve in Bergamo, he left this position against the desires of the council of the church. With this checkered history, his next position was in the company of a minor nobleman. None of this would suggest that his subsequent position would be one of the most important and prestigious ecclesiastical posts in Northern Italy.

Even the facts surrounding Pontio's arrival in Milan raise more questions than they answer. Prior to his election no negotiations were entered into by the church council, no emissaries were sent, and no payments were made for the transporting of the nominee to Milan. In short, a new maestro was needed, Pontio was selected, and he began his duties; all of which suggests that Pontio was both known and near at hand, and would presuppose some connections to Milan and the Cathedral.

A probable explanation for Pontio's presumed reputation in Milan may be suggested by dealings with Cardinal Borromeo

by Cornazzano and the Beccharia family of Pavia. Cornazzano's involvement with the establishment of the Collegio Borromeo was noted earlier. Moreover, as a student in Pavia, the young Borromeo had rented a house from the family.<sup>47</sup> If in fact the family maintained a musical chapel, Borromeo would have had the opportunity for first-hand knowledge of Pontio, thus explaining his expedited appointment at the Cathedral.

#### Milan: 1577-1582

Pontio's arrival in Milan occurred without official note, and in fact, the recognition of his election to the position came nearly twelve weeks after he had assumed the duties of maestro di cappella.<sup>48</sup> In hiring Pontio, the *Fabbrica* of the Cathedral was bringing to an end a long-standing problem in the person of Simone Boyleau, whose

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<sup>47</sup> Maiocchi, I, 64.

<sup>48</sup> Milan, Archivio della Fabbrica del Duomo (hereafter abbreviated Milan, AFD), Liber Ordinationum (hereafter abbreviated Lib. Ord.) XIV, fol. 18v (20 June 1577) notes his election. Document 30. Federico Mompellio, "La Cappella del Duomo dal 1573 al 1714," in *Storia di Milano*, ed. Giovanni Alfieri, 17 vols. (Milan: Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri per la storia di Milano, 1953-1968), XVI, 509, states that after Boyleau's departure in April of 1577, Fiormente Marchese took over the leadership of the chapel until Pontio's arrival, supposedly in June. However, an entry in the *vachette* of the church lists the payment to the chapel for the first half of 1577, including the payment to Pontio of his salary "per mensibus tribus," that is from 1 April until the end of June. Milan, AFD, Vachetta 421 (1576-1578), fols. 138v-139 (30 June 1577).



relationship with the council was troubled at best.<sup>49</sup> Boyleau had served as *maestro di cappella* from 1551 until 1557, when he was fired by the council. Readmitted to the chapel in 1572 as *coadiutore* to Vincenzo Ruffo, he took over as *maestro* in 1573 when Ruffo left for Pistoia. He was dismissed a year later for leaving the city without permission, but rehired once more some months later.

Boyleau's final problems with the council occurred during the course of a plague which struck the city in the summer of 1576 and lasted into the following year. On 8 March 1577, a notation in the *vachette* lists payment to Boyleau for only the months of November and December, suggesting that he had once again left the city--without permission--to escape the dangers of the plague.<sup>50</sup> On 18 March he petitioned the council for his salary for the first trimester, once more suggesting that he had been absent from the city. The money was granted, but it was his last payment, for at the same time the council voted to fire him.<sup>51</sup>

Pontio began his duties at the Cathedral less than two weeks after Boyleau's dismissal. At the time of his formal

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<sup>49</sup> Boyleau's ups and downs with the council are detailed by Mompellio, 507-509.

<sup>50</sup> Milan, AFD, Vachetta 421 (1576-1578), fol. 111-111v (8 March 1577).

<sup>51</sup> Milan, AFD, Lib. Ord. XIV, fol. 10v (18 March 1577). His salary was paid on April 2nd. AFD, Vachetta 753 (1577-1578), fol. 18.

election, his salary was set at 125 *scudi* per year.<sup>52</sup> At the then-current rate of five *lire*, eighteen *soldi*, this equaled 737 *lire*, 10 *soldi*.<sup>53</sup> As was the case in Bergamo, this was a substantial increase over the salary of his predecessor in the position, who had received only 400 *lire* per year, suggesting that in his first months in Milan Pontio had more than met the expectations of his employers.<sup>54</sup>

#### Pontio's Tenure at the Cathedral

The duties of the *maestro di cappella* at the Milanese Cathedral have been outlined by Lewis Lockwood, based on a

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<sup>52</sup> Milan, AFD, Lib. Ord. XIV, fol. 18v (20 June 1577). Document 30. In addition, on 23 July 1579 Pontio was granted a *pensione* of fifty-five *lire* for the rental of a house. Milan, AFD, Lib. Ord. XIV, fol. 84v (23 July 1579).

<sup>53</sup> Pontio was paid trimesterally at £184, s.7, d.6. The rate of exchange was stable at least to 1580, which is clear from the salary of the organist Josefo Caimo who received 90 *scudi* per year (listed in the *vachette* at £132, s.15 each trimester) and later 100 *scudi* (at £147, s.10 each trimester). Thus Carl Anthon's statement that the rate at this time was £5, s.10, is somewhat low. See Carl Gustav Anthon, "Music and Musicians in Northern Italy During the Sixteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1943), 324, n.12.

<sup>54</sup> Boyleau received £200 each semester. Milan, AFD, *Vachetta* 421 (1576-1578), fol. 75 (19 September 1576). This was a raise from the £150 he had been paid previously, and brought him up to the salary that Ruffo had received in 1573.

set of rules dating from 1572.<sup>55</sup> A letter to Borromeo dated 16 December 1579 from the archpriest of the church, Giovanni Fontana, confirms that the duties had changed little, if at all, in the intervening years. The maestro was, according to Fontana, required to sing at all the major feasts and any other time he was called upon. Along with this, he was charged with instructing the clerics in music.<sup>56</sup> In discussing the salary of the maestro, Fontana mentions that he was also eligible for payments for singing votive Masses.<sup>57</sup> Nothing in the various documents, however, indicates that Pontio held the post of *cappellano*; therefore his duties would not have included the maintenance of an individual chapel.

In addition to these basic duties, the rules of 1572 make unique reference to specific compositional requirements:

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<sup>55</sup> Lewis Lockwood, *The Counter-Reformation and the Masses of Vincenzo Ruffo*, *Studi di musica Veneta*, 2 (Vienna: Universal Editions; Venice: Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 1970), 58-63. The rules from 1572 are found in Milan, AFD, Cartella 404: *Discipline e regolamenti* (30 June 1572). Lockwood presents a translation of the entire document. Although the short translations presented here are my own, they owe much in their understanding to his excellent work.

<sup>56</sup> Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana (hereafter abbreviated Milan, BA), *Lettere a San Carlo*, F. 149 inf., fol. 357v. Document 37.

<sup>57</sup> Milan, BA, *Lettere a San Carlo*, F. 149 inf., fol. 357v. Document 37.

The maestro di cappella is obliged every month to compose a Mass and a Magnificat, and those Hymns which will be necessary, according to notice which will be given to him by the *maestro di coro*. And he will give notice to the *Provintiali della Musica* of any such compositions of his.<sup>58</sup>

This requirement, as Lockwood has pointed out, is demanding and none of the maestri of the period seem to have met it; at the least, it is not reflected in their publications.<sup>59</sup> While not meeting the letter of the agreement, Pontio at least was in compliance with the general spirit, for he was as prolific--or more so--than the others, and it was during this period that Pontio began to have music published on a steady basis. These six years saw the publication of two books of Masses and the reprinting of another, a collection of twenty-one Motets along with the fourteen Psalms and three Magnificat settings that comprise his

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<sup>58</sup> "Che'l Maestro di Capella sia tenuto ogni mese comporre una messa et uno Magnificat, et quelli Inni, che serranno necessarii secondo gli sara dato Memoriale dal Maestro di Choro, et di tali sue compositione vedia notitia alli Provintiali della Musica." Milan, AFD, Cartella 404: Discipline e regolamenti (30 June 1572), fol. 2v.

<sup>59</sup> Ruffo, for example, published only a book of Psalms and a book of Masses during the time he served as maestro di cappella. In addition, he published a book of Masses and a book of Psalms the year after he left, both of which may represent music composed during his Milanese employment. Neither Boyleau, who followed him, nor Giulio Cesare Gabuzzi, who followed Pontio, did even this well.

single Psalm collection (See Table 4).<sup>60</sup> To this can be added the two Pater Noster settings found in a print dating from 1619, which is a printed version of a service book from the Cathedral.<sup>61</sup> It is also possible that some or all of

TABLE 4  
Published Collections By Pontio, 1577-1582

<i>Year</i>	<i>Collection and Contents</i>	<i>RISM</i>
[1578]	Psalms a 4 14 Psalms, 3 Magnificat settings	P5083
1580	Masses a 5 4 (?) Masses	—
1581	Masses a 5 4 Masses	P5077
1582	Motets a 5 4 Masses	1582 <sup>3</sup>

the Magnificats published in 1584 may date from this period. The publication of this large body of works at this point in his career was no doubt facilitated by the prestige of the position itself, and this opportunity, coupled with the

<sup>60</sup> The surviving copy of Pontio's book of Psalms, published in Venice by Scotto, is dated 1589. As Mompellio, 510, notes, this is undoubtedly a reprint, since the title page identifies him as maestro di cappella of the Milanese cathedral. Johann Gottfried Walther, "Pietro Pontio," *Musikalisches Lexikon, oder musikalische Bibliothek* (Leipzig: Wolfgang Deer, 1732; facsimile edition ed. Richard Schaal, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1953), 487--along with later bibliographic notices--cite a 1578 edition of the print. See Appendix 1.

<sup>61</sup> *Illustrissimo Reverendissimoque D. D. Federico Borromeo . . . ad vespervas musicali concertui accomodata* (Milan: Rolla, 1619) RISM 1619<sup>3-4</sup>. The manuscript version is found in Milan, AFD, Libroni 25 and 26 (Inni et Pater).

obligations imposed on him by the rules of 1572, spurred Pontio to a productive period that firmly established his credentials as a composer.

The desire of the Cathedral's council for a steady stream of new music reflected the needs of a well-established and active choir. It was, in Pontio's time, also a choir in the midst of growth. The 1572 rules mandate that the official size of the cappella was to be three basses, four tenors and four altos (plus the boys who sang soprano), and that the maestro was bound to inform the council if any of these should be absent so that they might be replaced at the discretion of the council.<sup>62</sup> Lists of musicians from 1572-1576 suggest that this size remained constant.<sup>63</sup> However, in the payment for musicians for the second half of 1576, nine tenors are listed, although not all for the entire period.<sup>64</sup> From then until the second half of 1578, when the individual musicians are no longer listed in the payments, eight to ten tenors regularly appear on the payrolls.

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<sup>62</sup> Milan, AFD, Cartella 404: Discipline e regolamenti (30 June 1572), fol. 2v.

<sup>63</sup> Milan, AFD, Vachette 419, 420, and 421 contain more or less complete listings of singers, indicating voice parts and individual salaries, from 1572-1578. After this, the entries are less precise, listing only the number of musicians and the total expenditure.

<sup>64</sup> Milan, AFD, Vachetta 421 (1576-1578), fols. 111-111v (8 March 1577).

This augmentation of the choir is a clear indication of a change in the repertory of the choir from four-voice music to five-voice. Significantly, one of the first incidental payments to Pontio was for the purchase of collections of Motets and Magnificats, presumably to give the newly enlarged choir a sufficient supply of five-voice music.<sup>65</sup>

Not surprisingly, the music composed by Pontio during this period reflects the augmented size of the choir. His collection of Psalms, while nominally for four voices, is consistently augmented to five voices in the Doxology. The two books of Masses published during this period are both for five voices, and the second makes use of six-voice texture for the final Agnus Dei settings. The 1582 collection of Motets, as well, is for five voices, and also includes three eight-voice settings.<sup>66</sup> By contrast, all of Pontio's purely four-voice collections can be securely dated either before or after this period.

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<sup>65</sup> Pontio was paid £8, s.10 "per tanti per lui spese in diversi libri de Mottetti et Magnificat per uso dela Musica del Domo." Milan, AFD, Vachetta 753 (1577-1578), fol. 56 (2 August 1577). This amount would have been enough for as many as eight collections.

<sup>66</sup> All three are double-choir settings. That double-choir music was used at the Cathedral for festive occasions is seen in a payment from 1580 that specifically mentions two choirs and two organs used for the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. Milan, AFD, Vachetta 754 (1578-1582), fol. 234 (30 September 1580).

### Recurring Problems: Borromeo's Search for a New Maestro

During Pontio's service at Santa Maria della Steccata in the 1560s and subsequently at Sant'Alessandro in Colonna, nothing suggests any problems similar to those he had experienced at Santa Maria Maggiore. But within a few years of his arrival in Milan, his behavior once more provoked questions concerning his moral fitness. Although there is no indication that any disciplinary action was ever taken against Pontio during the time he served in Milan, there is clear evidence that in 1579 the archpriest of the church, Giovanni Fontana, and Cardinal Borromeo actively considered his dismissal.

Much of what occurred at this time is detailed in a series of letters, found in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, dating from the end of 1579 and the beginning of 1580. The letters in question are between Fontana and Borromeo, and between Borromeo and Costanzo Porta.<sup>67</sup> The

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<sup>67</sup> The Biblioteca Ambrosiana contains the major collection of the letters of Carlo Borromeo including letters to him (mostly contained in the series *Lettere a San Carlo*) as well as letters by him in the form of draft copies by his secretary (mostly contained in the series *Minute di San Carlo*). The ordering of the letters within these collections is sometimes haphazard, and there is some mixing of nominal contents between the series. The library is in possession of a very complete and accurate typescript catalog of all the letters. I am indebted to Monsignor Enrico Galbiati for his patient help during my work in the library. Some of these letters have been partially transcribed and discussed by Antonio Garbelotto, *Il P. Costanzo Porta da Cremona, O.F.M. conv. grande polifonista del '500*, extracted from *Miscellanea Francescana* (1954) (Rome: S. Theodora,



first indication of a problem is found in a letter from 24 September 1579, written by Fontana to Borromeo, who was then in Rome. In discussing various subjects concerning the administration of the church, Fontana reported that the rector of the seminary was threatening to leave unless a new maestro di cappella could be found who was more suitable because:

more and more I find that the one we have is most unable in this office, in part for his frequent fraternization with seculars as well as in other necessities of this office . . . .<sup>68</sup>

It is impossible to reconstruct exactly how and when Porta became involved in this matter. His letters to Borromeo make it clear that at some time in the early fall of 1579 Borromeo had visited Loretto, where Porta was then

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1954), 125-131; 135-137. He misleadingly describes the complex of letters as "a copious epistolary" of Porta relative to this period: "Among others, [there are] numerous letters addressed to the Cardinal, to which, unfortunately, the relative responses of the eminent prelate are missing, [a collection] which would be, without a doubt of indisputable preciousness" (p. 125). In point of fact, Porta's "copious epistolary," comprises only those letters which Garbelotto published; in consulting the library's index, I could find no others. On the other hand, the relevant responses do exist. And while they are not the incalculably precious find he envisaged they do more accurately reflect the situation at the Cathedral during this period. Because of the incomplete and often inaccurate transcription Garbelotto presented in his article, the entire body of the letters in question is presented in Appendix 2.

<sup>68</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 148 inf., fols. 179v-180. Document 32.

employed. During this visit he evidently spoke with Porta, although the nature of their conversation is unknown. On the basis of this conversation, Porta seems to have taken it upon himself to contact a former student of his in Venice, Ludovico Balbi, suggesting the possibility of his taking the position of maestro di cappella in Milan. Balbi responded to Porta's letter on 31 October, stating that he would take the position, though not necessarily willingly:

Concerning the matter in Milan, I will do whatever will please you, and what will, at the same time, accommodate me. Thanks be to God, I tell you truly that I am in one of the best cities in the world, in my own house [order], with every comfort, a room that can be called good, [and] the support of the convent, as you know--both in terms of the expenses of the company, and in the fact that I earn 150 *ducati*. I tell you all of this so that in having to leave here, as I believe I will, you may make negotiations . . . <sup>69</sup>

Porta, upon receiving this reply, wrote immediately to Borromeo, officially suggesting Balbi for the position:

Such is my desire that Your Illustrious Lordship be well served by a maestro di cappella, since you told me of your having only the best wishes for the service of your church, that soon after, I wrote to a father of our order in Venice by the name of Ludovico Balbi, by birth a Venetian. He is a man of some thirty-four years, a priest of good habits, and who is held in high esteem by all of the musicians of this city . . .

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<sup>69</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 149 inf., fol. 61. Document 33 (fol. 61, lines 8-17).

If you have made no other decision, I believe that you would be well served by him.<sup>70</sup>

In fact, Borromeo may have made overtures to Porta himself concerning the position, thus spurring him to find another suitable candidate. Porta hints to as much in a letter to Giulio Brunetti, Borromeo's secretary, in which he stated his desire that Borromeo have a suitable maestro; if not Porta himself, than someone of his choosing.<sup>71</sup> The letter, written the same day as his first letter to Borromeo, served to plead his case for Balbi through a trusted third party and made mention of both Balbi's position as maestro di cappella at Cà Grande in Venice and the quality of his published works.<sup>72</sup> With his letter, he also forwarded the letter he had received from Balbi, perhaps to bring Balbi's concerns indirectly into the negotiations.

Receiving no response to these letters, Porta wrote again to Borromeo on 19 December. His letter reveals some

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<sup>70</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 149 inf., fol. 59. Document 34 (fol. 59, lines 1-14). Porta, Balbi, and Borromeo were all Minorite Franciscans.

<sup>71</sup> "Desideroso dunque, che S. S. Illustrissima habbia se non la persona mia, almeno un'altro . . ." Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 149 inf., fol. 60. Document 35.

<sup>72</sup> Balbi's published works at this point comprised two books of four-voice Madrigals (Venice: Gardano, 1570 and 1576), and a collection entitled *Ecclesiasticarum cantionum quatuor vocum* . . . (Venice: Gardano, 1578).

impatience with the lack of response, and is almost plaintive in its tone:

It has already been some time since I wrote a letter to you in which I proposed an excellent man of music for maestro di cappella in your church. At present he is maestro di cappella at Cà Grande in Venice, which is his native country. In his life and habits he conforms to your desires. But seeing that I have received no response, I thought that my letter had come to a bad end.

Thus I am moved to write to you again, as I do with great humility, that in having such, you may take this information; and you may rest assured that in this I will be satisfied. The subject is of our order, he is a priest and of the age of about thirty-four. So ardent is my desire that you be satisfied, that perhaps in the course of this matter I have been presumptuous, and for this, I pray your pardon, for in such I was moved by a good cause and a good end. I will say no more.<sup>73</sup>

Borromeo, however, had responded to Porta's first letter, albeit somewhat tardily.<sup>74</sup> This reply must have arrived after Porta's second letter, accounting for Porta's sense of frustration in the matter. Borromeo's response,

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<sup>73</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 149 inf., fols. 378-378v. Document 38 (fol. 378, line 3-378v, line 5).

<sup>74</sup> Milan, BA, Minute di San Carlo, P. 18 inf., fol. 150. Document 36. The letter has no date, though another hand has added: "Senza data. Scrive da Roma la Ariv.o 1579 dopo le Idi di Sett.o." The letter is part of a bifolio and is preceded by a reply to a letter of 21 November 1579, written by the Duke of Savoy, suggesting that Borromeo's response to Porta was written no earlier than the first part of December. As will be seen, it was written no later than about the twenty-fifth of December.

when it did arrive, was clearly not what Porta would have wished:

Because I intend to have serve me as maestro di cappella a person who is a secular priest, I could not choose the priest whom you proposed. But I thank you nonetheless for diligence. . . .<sup>75</sup>

Judging from Borromeo's lukewarm response to Porta's suggestion of Balbi, who was certainly an able person for the job, it can be assumed that he had indeed been interested in Porta from the beginning, and was not willing to make accommodations for anyone of lesser stature or one for whom special accommodations would have had to be made. The matter was not quite at an end, however, for almost immediately after Borromeo had sent his letter to Porta, he received another letter from Fontana, dated 19 December, in which the archpriest once more expressed his concern over the behavior of Pontio:

The maestro di cappella is not yet fired, and I would gladly make a change for the reasons that I have already written to you of: that he is insufficient for his being less than exemplary (and even less spiritual), leading a liberal and

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<sup>75</sup> Milan, BA, Minute di San Carlo, P. 18 inf., fol. 150. Document 36.

licentious life, and that he is overly involved with seculars.<sup>76</sup>

Fontana went on in the letter to suggest that he would like to see the duties of the maestro changed to include a prohibition against his singing elsewhere without permission; perhaps this too was a source of contention. Borromeo, concerned over the problems cited by his representative at his church, responded in mid-January by writing once more to Porta, suggesting that he might be interested in considering Balbi after all:

I wrote to you the other day that it would be difficult to accept the priest proposed to me by you for maestro di cappella in my church in Milan, for his being a religious. It was not my desire to exclude him, for when I return to Milan, which, if it be pleasing to God, will be soon, I will make certain deliberations on this matter.<sup>77</sup>

Borromeo clearly did return shortly thereafter, for there are no letters between him and Fontana from 20 January

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<sup>76</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 149 inf., fols. 357-357v. Document 37. Borromeo would have received this letter after sending his negative response, thus the rationale for dating Borromeo's letter from about the twenty-fifth of December.

<sup>77</sup> Milan, BA, Minute di San Carlo, P. 18, inf., fol. 222v. Document 39. Once again, the date is in question. The library's catalog gives a date of June, 1580. This is clearly mistaken. A letter in the same bifolio, addressed to a Galeazza Capra, is in reply to his letter "of the tenth." The only letter from Capra written on the tenth of any month is one from 10 January 1580, placing Borromeo's letter to Porta from about the middle of January.

until 3 March 1580. It is also clear that some other remedy to the problem was found--one which did not include the dismissal of Pontio. Neither this matter, nor any other concerning any problems with Pontio are discussed in any further letters between the two.

The problem thus reconciled, Pontio continued his service to the church in Milan without incident for nearly three years. As director of the cardinal's musical chapel, he was *de facto* one of the leading musical figures of the city, a point made by Giovanni Paolo Caimo--a canon at the Cathedral--in a letter to Borromeo of 25 April 1582, discussing the plans for a procession on the occasion of a provincial council:

. . . the preparation for the provincial council is now finished, and all the provisions have been made. I have put together a group of all the best musicians of the city, both priests and monks, for the procession, of which, of course, the leader will be Pontio, maestro di cappella.<sup>78</sup>

Despite this position of esteem, Pontio was nonetheless hampered by various usurpations of his power within the structure of the cathedral chapel. His decision to leave Milan seems to have been spurred in part by decisions made concerning the musical chapel, decisions from which he was

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<sup>78</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 158 inf., fol. 369. Document 40.

excluded. He hints at this dissatisfaction in a letter to Borromeo asking permission to leave his post:

Some time ago I told Monsignor [Giovanni Paolo] Caimo that he should tell you that, with all due respect, I no longer wished to serve. Now they have made a priest vice maestro di cappella without speaking or consulting with me at all. And as I have told the Monsignor Vicar, I was not present for anything, nor do I know anything, since he was not tested *in cappella* so as to assure the Monsignor concerning his ability to govern a chapel. Concerning his knowledge: I do know that he does not compose. There is, on the other hand, *Maestro Pre* Giovanni Antonio Breda, who possesses a rare and beautiful voice, who has served the chapel for twenty-six years--two as vice maestro--and who still is serving. And of him there are no rumors among the singers, nor the entire city. Thus moved by this and other worthy reasons, I am resolved to return to my country to live more quietly, and thus humbly I request your leave. And wherever I go, in both word and deed, you will find me most ready to serve you always.<sup>79</sup>

The situation concerning the naming of a vice maestro seems to have been the culminating action of a process which had eroded Pontio's power to control the make-up of the chapel. This power had been somewhat limited from the outset, with the rules of 1572 delimiting the maestro's powers:

The maestro di cappella may not hire or fire any singer without permission of the *Capitolo*, with the exception of the *putti*, which he may hire

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<sup>79</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 160 inf., fol. 244. (28 October 1582). Document 48.



and fire, however, with the participation of the *Provinciali*.<sup>80</sup>

In 1582, the *Capitolo* seemed concerned about the quality of the singers coming into the chapel, and in February of that year it admonished Pontio to exercise care in the selection of musicians.<sup>81</sup> The subject was again raised by the council in March, and they voted to establish a procedure for the hiring of musicians which called for them to be tested by a body of musicians both from the Cathedral and from other churches.<sup>82</sup> This loss of power and control was likely the cause of Pontio's dissatisfaction, and the episode concerning the naming of a vice-maestro was probably the final straw.

At the same time, Borromeo was either aware of Pontio's dissatisfaction and desire to leave, or else he was in some way displeased with his maestro di cappella, for in May of 1582 he once again began negotiations with Porta concerning

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<sup>80</sup> "Che'l Maestro di Capella, non possi ricevere, ne cassare niuno Cantore senza licenzia del Capitolo; ecetto i Putti, quali possa cassare, et pigliare, però con participatione delli Provinciali." Milan, AFD, Cartella 404: Discipline e regolamenti (30 June 1572), fol. 2v.

<sup>81</sup> "Concluserunt ut moneatur praefectus capella Musicorum ut ad primum capitulum veniat cum notula Musicorum, et de sufficientia atque qualitate ac diligentia vel negligentia eorum referat." Milan, AFD, Lib. Ord. XIV (1577-1586), fol. 131v (15 February 1582).

<sup>82</sup> Milan, AFD, Lib. Ord. XIV (1577-1586), fol. 144v (26 March 1582).

a new maestro. The tenor of the letters concerned with this is altogether different from those of 1579. In contrast to the almost pleading tone of the earlier letters, Porta is straightforward and confident, evidently reflecting a formal request from Borromeo to find a new maestro. In his first letter he gives a frank assessment of one candidate:

Don Marsilio da Fossonbrone is possessed of a beautiful tenor voice, he is stable, a priest of good habits, and leads a good life. But he is not a composer, [an ability] which would be appropriate for a church such as yours.<sup>83</sup>

He goes on to suggest another student, Giulio Cesare Gabuzzi, and finishes by once again suggesting that Ludovico Balbi would also be a good candidate.<sup>84</sup>

In his next letter, Porta once more maneuvered to get Balbi into the negotiations. He began by suggesting some problems with hiring Gabuzzi: he had a father and mother who would not wish him to leave, and more importantly, he had no desire to become a priest. Given Gabuzzi's youth (he was twenty-four at the time) Porta suggested that this might not have been proper for a church such as the Cathedral in Milan. Once again he proposed Balbi, saying that it was

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<sup>83</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 159 inf., fol. 86. Document 42.

<sup>84</sup> In this letter, Gabuzzi is never mentioned by name, only referred to as a student of Porta's "apresso il Reverendissimo Vescovo di Forli." His identity is made clear in subsequent letters.

virtually impossible to find a secular priest who would be adequate for the position in Borromeo's church.<sup>85</sup>

By July, Borromeo was almost convinced to hire Balbi, but was still concerned about Balbi's desire to live in the convent:

It is necessary that the maestro live in a house assigned to him near the Duomo in order to teach a number of the boys and priests, and also to serve in the choir early in the morning for Matins when they are observed, and late in the evening, which often occurs. All of which would be hard to do given that the convent of San Francesco is very far away.<sup>86</sup>

Borromeo promised to resolve the matter by the end of September, but something happened to put an end to Borromeo's consideration of Balbi. No direct explanation of the problem survives, but a letter from Porta dated 15 October mentions the problem by way of reiteration. The vague description contained in the letter suggests that Borromeo had offered Balbi the post, but under the condition that he live outside of the convent. Balbi evidently refused these conditions, and his refusal was a source of great embarrassment to Porta:

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<sup>85</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 159 inf., fol. 157. Document 43.

<sup>86</sup> Milan, BA, Minute di San Carlo, P. 22 inf., fol. 250-250v. Document 44 (fol. 250, line 10-250v, line 1).

I wrote to you in another letter telling you of the wrong done to me by Frate Balbi, and of the confusion I felt toward him because of this, and that the reason was that every time he lived outside of the convent, he could never be secure in his conscience.<sup>87</sup>

Porta went on to restate his recommendation of Gabuzzi. In addition, he took it upon himself to speak to Gabuzzi about the position, and on 2 October Gabuzzi wrote to Borromeo indicating an interest in the post, sending one of his compositions, and inviting the Cardinal to stop in Bologna so that they could discuss the matter.<sup>88</sup> Borromeo did, and on the twentieth of October, Gabuzzi wrote to Borromeo again, confirming his willingness to accept the position and asking more specific information concerning duties.<sup>89</sup> His letter suggests that the position had been officially offered him at this time. Thus the decision to replace Pontio had been reached even before Borromeo had received his letter of resignation. On 30 October, Borromeo wrote once more to Porta, confirming his choice of Gabuzzi.<sup>90</sup> Upon receiving Pontio's letter, Borromeo wrote

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<sup>87</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 63 inf., fols. 398-398v. Document 46 (fol 398, lines 1-10).

<sup>88</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 63 inf., fol. 360. Document 45.

<sup>89</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 160 inf., fol. 209. Document 47.

<sup>90</sup> Milan, BA, Minute di San Carlo, P. 22 inf., fol. 148. Document 49.

two letters, both dated 6 November, to close the matter.<sup>91</sup>

The first, addressed to Gabuzzi, gave final instructions for his move to Milan; the second gave Pontio leave to return to Parma:

My most dear Reverend. We have seen the desire which you have expressed to me in your letter of the twenty-eighth of the past month, and we give you leave to go where it most pleases you, giving you, with this letter, good license, and praying our Lord all good for you.<sup>92</sup>

Pontio's departure was prompt. On the ninth of November, he was given his pay for the month of October.<sup>93</sup> On 26 November, he was elected maestro di cappella for a second

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<sup>91</sup> Milan, BA, Lettere a San Carlo, F. 63 inf., fol. 286. Document 51. Minute di San Carlo, P. 22 inf., fol. 158v. Document 50.

<sup>92</sup> Milan, BA, Minute di San Carlo, P. 22 inf., fol. 158v. Document 50.

<sup>93</sup> Milan, AFD, Libro Mastro 347, fol. 221. Document 52. Mompellio's contention that Pontio stayed in Milan until the end of the year is based on a mistaken reading of an entry on the same page, dated 21 October, assigning Pontio money to pay the musicians who had sung "il giorno della Natività della mad.a passata" as well as for the procession celebrating the naval victory against Portugal which had occurred in July. Mompellio read the entry as simply "Natività," rather than the birth of the Virgin (8 September) suggesting that Pontio remained until the end of December. Mompellio, 510.

time at Santa Maria della Steccata in Parma, evidently beginning his duties on the first of December.<sup>94</sup>

### Pontio's Return to Parma

Pontio had written in his letter to Cardinal Borromeo that he wished to return to Parma "to live more quietly." If by that he meant to live in a town removed from the busy atmosphere of a major center such as Milan, he was certainly correct. If, on the other hand, he meant to imply that he wished for his own life to be simpler and free from worldly encumbrances he was either mistaken or not completely sincere in this statement. With his return to Parma, Pontio began what can be viewed as a decisively different way of life. It is a period in which his sources of influence, commerce, and patronage almost literally shift axes ninety degrees, from a web of connections stretching Northwest from Parma to Pavia, Milan, and Bergamo, to one running Northeast from Parma to Verona and Venice.

This period also marks a change in Pontio's social and economic position from that of a peripatetic, though well-paid, outsider to a stable and apparently prosperous member of the society of his native city. This change was not

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<sup>94</sup> Parma, Archivio dell'Ordine Costantiniano di San Giorgio (hereafter abbreviated Parma, AOC), Lib. Ord. VI, page 174 (26 November 1582). Document 53. On 21 December, Pontio was given payment for the month of December. Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. VI, page 175 (21 December 1582). Document 154.

immediate, and in fact his return to Santa Maria della Steccata may have been a carefully planned matter involving negotiations for the position as well as extensive personal financial arrangements.

The first hint of Pontio's change in financial status comes while he was still in Milan. In June of 1579, he had an agreement drawn up arranging for his financial matters in Parma to be handled by Marcello and Camillo Lalatta.<sup>95</sup> They acted almost immediately by securing for Pontio the rights to a piece of agricultural land on the northern edge of the city.<sup>96</sup> For these rights, Pontio paid the sum of 1000 *lire*, and received a yearly return of fifty-five *lire*.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Milan, Archivio di Stato di Milano, Fondo notarile Giovanni Giacomo Regretti, filza 17835: 4 February 1571-6 May 1581 (17 June 1579).

<sup>96</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Ludovico Sacca, filza 2342: Contratti, July-December 1579 (27 August 1579).

<sup>97</sup> Though not specifically referred to as such, the arrangement follows the guidelines of an *annum censum*, which was a legitimate way for a priest to receive a guaranteed return on an investment of money, while avoiding questions of usury. The principles were enunciated in the papal bull *de censibus*, promulgated by Pius V on 19 January 1569. In broad principle, it allowed a priest to enter into an agreement similar to a modern-day bond instrument. For an investment of a set amount of money, the investor would be given the rights to an income-producing piece of real property (such as a house, or a parcel of land). During the life of the agreement, the owner of the land retained the right to use the property to produce income, from which proceeds he would pay the investor a set sum (limited by the bull to a maximum of seven-and-a-half percent of the original investment per year). At the end of the agreement (the term of which could be set in the contract, or open-ended), the owner would "buy back" the *annum censum* from the investor at the original price. In reality, of course, this was

The timing of these actions--coming not at the beginning of Pontio's residence in Milan, but more than two years later--suggests a sudden change in his financial status, one which required help in the management of his affairs. The most obvious explanation is that this was the result of his receiving an inheritance following the death of his father.<sup>98</sup> This indication of enhanced financial status is matched by one of social status as well: one of Pontio's agents, Marcello Lalatta, was a member of the Company of the Steccata from 1545 to the mid 1570s--often serving as prior--and a person of some position in the city.

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a legal cover for the secured loan of money, during the life of which the debtor would pay a fixed interest, restoring the capital to the investor at the end of the loan. The advantage to the priest is clear: it allowed him to turn a store of cash into a steady and legitimate source of annual support. Some information on *anni censi* can be found in Antonio Rota, "Canoni e censi," *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, 12 vols. (Vatican City: Ente per l'enciclopedia cattolica e per il libro cattolico, 1949-1954), III, cols. 550-551. A discussion and transcription of the papal bull can be found in F. Lucii Ferraris, *Prompta Bibliotheca Canonica, Juridica, Moralis, Theologica*, 8 vols. (Petit-Montrouge: J.P. Migne, 1858), II, 483-493. The low rate of return for this particular investment (five-and-a-half percent per annum) should be noted. Antonio di Bosiis, the owner of the land, was a relative of Pontio, either a cousin or, more likely, an uncle.

<sup>98</sup> No will or mention of a death date can be found for Orlando Pontio. The notary document in Milan refers to Pontio as "filius quondam" of Orlando, so he died in 1579 or before. If his father's will was the source of this money (and possibly more), it was also almost certainly the source of at least one of the houses that Pontio owned.



The preparation for Pontio's return to Santa Maria della Steccata may have begun as early as April of 1582, when the polyphonic chapel was suspended.<sup>99</sup> As was the case when the chapel was disbanded in 1547, the musicians were probably not fired, at least not those who served as resident priests. Instead, they performed the same function, but without the use of polyphonic music.<sup>100</sup>

During this same period, Pontio became more and more involved in business affairs in Parma, possibly in anticipation of his return. In May of 1582, he liquidated his *annum censum* with Marc'Antonio de Bosiis, buying, in turn, a more lucrative one that returned seventy-five *lire* per year.<sup>101</sup> In August of that year, he established an *annum censum* on

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<sup>99</sup> Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. VI, fol. 145 (20 Arpil 1582). The reasons for this suspension are not given except to say that the action was taken "per degni rispetti."

<sup>100</sup> Upon the reforming of the chapel in December of 1582, many of the musicians reappear as members. As noted in the previous chapter concerning the case in 1547, the relevant documents note that there were still some limited polyphonic musical duties that needed attending to, such as the Masses for the *antiani* of the city and the performance of Motets after Compline on Saturday, which the residents were to sing, though without extra pay. Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. III, fol. 141v (31 October 1547). It is likely that these same conditions and requirements obtained in 1582.

<sup>101</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Ludovico Sacca, filza 2347: Contratti, 1582 (11 May 1582). The new *annum censum* was founded on land owned by Alexander de Zanderiis. Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Ludovico Sacca, filza 2347: Contratti, January-June 1582 (11 May 1582).

another piece of land, yielding fifty-five *lire* per year.<sup>102</sup> Also in August, Pontio finished a rental agreement with Melchior Prattisotto for a room in a house he owned, collecting rent for the previous three years.<sup>103</sup> Although the location of the house is not mentioned, it was likely the home he owned in the parish of Santa Cecilia, the *finis* clearing the way for the house's sale three days later for a price of 825 *lire*.<sup>104</sup>

Pontio came to Parma in the summer of 1582 to conclude some of these agreements in person. While the transactions in May were done through the third party of Marcello Lalatta, those in August were attended to by Pontio himself.<sup>105</sup> Oddly, the first two documents from August describe Pontio as a resident of Parma, the first in the parish of Santissima Trinità (where Pontio's relative Marc' Antonio de Bosiis lived, and where Pontio was to live until 1584) and the second in that of San Tommaso (possibly a

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<sup>102</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Ludovico Sacca, filza 2348: Contratti, July-December 1582 (11 August 1582).

<sup>103</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Giulio Pecorini, filza 2809: Contratti, 1582 (7 August 1582). Pontio received ninety-nine *lire* for the three years.

<sup>104</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Cesare Vandoni, filza 2338: Atti, 1582-1583 (10 August 1582).

<sup>105</sup> There is no indication of a leave of absence having been granted to Pontio at this time in the records of the Cathedral in Milan. Neither, however is there any mention of disciplinary action resulting from an unauthorized leave.

mistake of the scribe, although it should also be noted that this was the parish where Marcello Lalatta resided).<sup>106</sup> A third, while less specific, is more exact, stating that Pontio, while a resident of Milan, was presently in the city of Parma.<sup>107</sup>

It is perhaps not coincidental that all of these business transactions were occurring at the same time that Borromeo was in negotiation for a new maestro di cappella and while the company of the Steccata would have been contemplating the future of the chapel. All of this suggests that Pontio was preparing for a return to Parma and was aware of the upcoming change, whether it was of his own volition, or the choice of Borromeo. In anticipation, he cleared up dealings with his house in the parish of Santa Cecilia, and most importantly made investments which would provide a steady income to supplement a salary much lower than the one he would be leaving behind in Milan.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Lalatta is so described in the various documents in which he acted as Pontio's agent.

<sup>107</sup> "Reverendo Domino Petro de Pontiis presbiterum parmensis et cetera, habitanti mediolani de presenti moram trahens parmae. . ." Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Ludovico Sacca, filza 2348: Contratti, July-December 1582 (11 August 1582).

<sup>108</sup> Pontio's salary at the Steccata was fifty *scudi* per year, worth at that time 355 *lire* (1 *scudi* = £7, s.2). Whether he received any further remuneration in the form of a residence is not known. Parma, AOC, Lib. Ord. VI, page 174 (26 November 1582). Document 53.

**Santa Maria Della Steccata: 1582-1592**

With his finances in order, and his employment in Milan terminated, Pontio assumed the post of maestro di cappella at Santa Maria della Steccata around the first of December, 1582. His first task was to rebuild the polyphonic chapel. At the time of the breakup in April, the chapel comprised twelve musicians; starting in December of 1582, ten musicians served, of which five were from the old chapel.<sup>109</sup> Of those musicians who did not resume service in 1582, three (Christoforo Platino, Ottavio Platino and Fabio Verdelis) had gone to the Cathedral, the first two returning in 1587.<sup>110</sup> The remaining three all appear again in the

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<sup>109</sup> Pelicelli, *La Cappella corale*, 43-44 is inexact in giving the makeup of the chapel after its reinstatement. This is due to a gap in the records of the *Libri Ordinationum*--in which pay notices were regularly recorded--from January of 1582 through the end of the century. Fortunately, two *buste* of *mandati* fill in this missing information. The first, Parma, AOC, Mandati, busta 34 (1587-1599) contains notary copies of all pay lists for the years 1584-1599; the second, Parma, AOC, Mandati, busta 37 (1592-1595 [sic]) is mismarked, and in reality contains material from 1572 to 1593. It contains notary copies of all payments to the chapel for the period, with the exception of September to December 1575 and January to July 1576, which at any rate are contained in the contemporary *Libri Ordinationum*. Thus a complete list of musicians can be constructed for the entire period.

<sup>110</sup> All three are regularly listed as musicians at the Cathedral from April 1583 to September 1586. Parma, Archivio della Fabbrica del Duomo (hereafter abbreviated Parma, AFD), F3: Liber Solutionum (1579-1585); F8: Libro dell'entrata et uscita (1586-1594). This period is the only one for which musicians are specifically listed, and it is possible that they served before and after this period. Christoforo and Ottavio Platino both reappear in pay records

records as musicians within the next eight years, and may have served as residents in the meantime.<sup>111</sup>

Under Pontio's leadership, the polyphonic chapel grew slightly, reaching a peak of thirteen adult musicians in the period from November 1590 to June of 1592.<sup>112</sup> Records from 1583-1587 also list regular payment to four sopranos. Although not formally listed as such, a number of the musicians are variously mentioned as trombone players, though it is probable that like Pietro Rizzi in the 1560s, they were required to serve as both singers and instrumentalists as the situation demanded. It seems clear from the lists, however, that a full complement of brass players was available to the chapel.

During this period Pontio also increased the repertoire of the chapel, not only with his own compositions and music he may have owned, but with a rather large collection of music added between the years 1582 and 1592. Table 5 shows those purchases for which records survive. As can be seen,

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at the Steccata on 25 June 1587, receiving payment for May and June. Parma, AOC, Mandati, busta 37 (25 June 1587).

<sup>111</sup> Thomaso Pichiono returned in December of 1583, Flaminio Messaleo in November of 1586, and Mercurio Aiano in November of 1590. Parma, AOC, Mandati, busta 37 (5 March 1584), (19 December 1586), and (1 January 1591).

<sup>112</sup> The chapel numbered between nine and ten from 1582 until late 1586. It increased to eleven in November of that year, and almost immediately went to twelve, where it remained from July of 1587 until November of 1590.

it is a generally conservative, though up-to-date collection, with a heavy reliance on the Motets of Orlando di Lasso, and, of course, Pontio's own compositions.

TABLE 5  
Purchase of Music for the Steccata: 1585-1588

<i>Date</i>	<i>Composer</i>	<i>Description</i>
5/17/85	Vincenzo Ruffo ----- Palestrina Orlando di Lasso Pietro Pontio Phillippe de Monte Giulio Zacchino Giovanni Matteo Asola Pietro Pontio Pietro Pontio [Pietro Pontio]	Mottetti a5 Motteti del fiore a5 Motteti a5 Motteti a5 Motteti a5 Motteti a5 Motteti a4 Messa a4 Messa a4 Magnificat a4 Salmi a4
5/29/87	Orlando di Lasso	Sette libri di moteti,
8/12/88	Paolo Isnardi Pietro Vinci Palestrina Paolo Isnardi Palestrina Pietro Pontio	Salmi a4 Messe a4 Secondo libro a4 [Masses] Messe a5 Terzo libro a5 [Masses] Secondo libro de moteti a5

#### The Music and the Treatises: New Patronage

With his return to Parma, Pontio continued the productivity of his years in Milan. The final fourteen years of his life saw the publication of the majority of his output, including four and possibly five books of Masses, two books of Motets, his collections of Magnificats, Hymns, and Lamentations as well as three works appearing in

anthologies, one of which being his only known secular work.<sup>113</sup>

These last years also mark his entry into the field of theoretical writing. The source of his posthumous reputation, his two treatises serve as a summation of his practical experiences as a maestro di cappella and composer. Yet the inspiration for these two works may have been less retrospective and more immediate: his contact with the Accademia Filarmonica of Verona, and especially its patrons, Mario and Alessandro Bevilacqua. The Bevilacquas, the Accademia, and the city of Verona were, in fact, a central focus--primarily in terms of patronage--throughout the remainder of Pontio's life.<sup>114</sup> Unfortunately, apart from the evidence found in the various dedications, little can be discerned as to the nature of Pontio's relationship with the leading family and musical institution of Verona.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>114</sup> Pontio's third book of five-voice Masses (1585) and the *Ragionamento* (1588) were both dedicated to Mario Bevilacqua, the second book of Motets (1588) was dedicated to Alessandro Bevilacqua, and the *Dialogo* (1595) was dedicated to the Accademia Filarmonica.

<sup>115</sup> The archives for the Accademia are, unfortunately, spotty for this period, and no record of Pontio seems to remain. The letters of the Bevilacqua family, which may conceivably contain material concerning Pontio, is likewise disordered and is presently in the midst of reorganization. Dr. Enrico Paganuzzi, librarian for the Accademia, has informed me that in his various forays into the Bevilacqua letters, he has uncovered nothing concerning Pontio.

Pontio's first introduction to the Bevilacquas probably came in 1584. In the dedication to his third book of five-voice Masses--the first of his collections dedicated to his Veronese patrons--he addresses himself to Mario Bevilacqua, stating that they had met the previous year when Pontio had visited the city while returning to Parma from Venice.<sup>116</sup>

Pontio was likely returning from business in Venice, probably involving matters of publishing.<sup>117</sup> Given his continued indebtedness to the Bevilacquas and the Accademia, it was surely not his only visit. The time spent in Verona, and especially that with the Accademia Filarmonica, seems to have awakened in him an interest in--or at least provided an outlet for--theoretical musings. The Accademia was, of course, known for its discussions of the art of music, and it is no accident that Pontio's two treatises are written as dialogues taking place in this type of setting.

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<sup>116</sup> "Annus est, aut non multo secus Illustrissime Comes, cum ego Venetiis Parmam rediens, non tam desiderio ductus urbis Nobilissimae quam fama tui nominis impulsus, iter Verona facere constitui, quo cum pervenissem, teque ego non sine magna voluptate, neque tū non ingrante de facie cognovisses, ita verbis vultu, re denique me benignus excepisti, ut vitam quae mihi reliqua foret, acerbe ducendam putarem, nisi qua possem cleritate, quo mihi daretur insigniore indicio istam tuam egregiam in me voluntatem merita desperans assequi gratus imitarer." Pontio, *Missarum cum quinque vocibus liber tertius nunc primum in lucem aeditus* (Venice: Scotto, 1585).

<sup>117</sup> Affò, IV, 199, states this flatly: "ed essendo andato per suoi affari a Venezia. . ."



The *Ragionamento* is set in the *ridotto* of Count Mario Bevilacqua (to whom the work is dedicated).<sup>118</sup> It is written as a dialogue between a Reverendo Maestro Don Paolo, a learned musician visiting Verona for the first time (without a doubt, Pontio himself) and Maestro Don Hettore, who, over a series of four evenings, interrogates Don Paolo concerning different aspects of music as they await the meetings of the *ridotto*. Pontio gives a general rationale for writing the book in his dedication:

I send to your Most Illustrious Lordship this present work of mine, which has as its purpose only to be useful to those who, after many of my compositions have been published, say to me that they wish to know of music. It is in order that they can, with ease, find some slight illumination, that I show them the path. To Your Most Illustrious Lordship, therefore, friend and protector of Music and of musicians, whose house, so illustrious, continually resounds with harmony and worthy and excellent concord, I send this work of mine. I do this, I tell you, as a testament to the servitude which I hold toward you, praying affectionately that you remain solid in your love for me, as I will always remain in my reverence for you. Thus may God give you every happiness.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Mario's *ridotto* was the most famous of those in Verona at the time. It was continued by Alessandro after Mario's death in 1593.

<sup>119</sup> "Invio à V. S. Illustriss. la presente mia fatica, qual ha in se questa mira sola di giovare altrui, acciò dopò molte mie compositioni date alla stampa, habbino anco da me coloro, che vogliono di Musica sapere, onde possano con facilità trovare un picciolo lume, che gli mostri la strada. A V. S. adunque amico, et protettore della Musica, e de' Musici, la cui casa tanto Illustiss. di continuo risuona d'harmonia, e concerti degni, et eccellenti, questa mia fatica invio, dico, come testimonio della servitù che tengo

It is clear, however, that the book was addressed as much to Mario and his *ridotto*, as it was to the anonymous musicians asking illumination from Pontio in matters musical. This sense of homage to the Verona's nobility and institutions is made more clear in Pontio's second treatise, the *Dialogo* of 1595.<sup>120</sup> Here the setting is moved to the Accademia Filarmonica itself, to whom the volume is dedicated. And whereas Marco only made cameo appearances in the *Ragionamento*, here Alessandro is made the central focus, acting as guide in a three-way dialogue between himself and two other noblemen, Count Giordano Sarego and Count Marco Verità. The dedication is also more direct in its intention, spending no time justifying the work, but simply presenting it as a gift of affection and "osservanza" to the Accademia.

The dedication to the *Dialogo* is accompanied by two sonnets by one Antonio Maria Prati, the first in praise of the Accademia and the other of Pontio himself. The two sonnets are united by their continued references to images of the sea and water; Pontio, especially, is portrayed in

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con lei, pregandola affettuosamente star salda in amarmi, come starò sempr'io nel riverirla; così Iddio gli doni ogni contento." Pietro Pontio, *Ragionamento di musica* (Parma: Viotto, 1588; facsimile edition ed. Suzanne Clercx, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1959), s.p.

<sup>120</sup> Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo . . . ove si tratta della theorica e pratica di musica . . .* (Parma: Viotto, 1595).

this manner, and this interlocking of poetic images heightens the sense of intimacy between Pontio and the Accademia.<sup>121</sup> In the first sonnet, addressed to the Accademia, Pontio is portrayed offering a gift of "singing fish," the bounty of his oceanic art. He is also likened to a "king of the river," offering a tribute to the *Accademia*. This last image is a clear reference to the device of the Accademia, a half-man, half-fish emerging from the water holding a sphere inscribed with the motto "Coelorum Imitatur Concentum:"

Famosi CIGNI; il cui celeste canto  
 Le fere alletta, e gli elementi intorno:  
 E dove nasce, e dove more il giorno,  
 Et altrui porge invidia, e toglie il vanto.  
 Se ogni altra voce pàr di roco pianto,  
 E cede à l'Harmonia, c'hà in voi soggiorno,  
 Come cede à Real di gemme adorno,  
 Di Bifolco, ò Pastor, povero manto;  
 E se di quella sete ampio Occeàno,  
 Giust'è che'l PONTIO entro à' cerului campi  
 V'offra gli accenti suoi: canoro pesce;  
 O pur, qual Rè de' fiumi, in viso humano,  
 Porga il tributo de l'humor, che gli esce  
 Dal crine ogn'hor, con gloriosi lampi.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> This was a common conceit of the time. See for example Giovanni Matteo Asola's dedication to Palestrina of a collection of Psalms: *Sacra omnium solemnitatum Psalmodia vespertina cum cantico B. Virginis* (Venice: Amadino, 1592) RISM 1592<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>122</sup> Famous SWANS; whose celestial song allures the wild beasts and the surrounding elements, and where is born and where dies the day, and to whom others proffer only envy and are deprived of honor: if all other voices seem as hoarse cries and cede to the Harmony that resides in you as cedes to the King adorned with jewels the poor clods of the plowman or shepherd; just so, from the thirst of the ample ocean, it is right that PONTIO, living within perfection,

The sonnet in praise of Pontio continues this symbolism, with Pontio represented as a sailor guiding his ship across perilous waters--a wanderer in the illumination of Music, dedicated to her praise and honor--who, after long years of work in his art, chooses to spend his last years in the explanation of that art. He offers it not in his own form, but in the "unreal guise" of the interlocutors who speak for him in the treatise:

Come tal'hor Nocchior, che dianzi ài venti  
 Fidò spesso le vele, e i legni à l'onde  
 E del mar periglioso ambe le sponde  
 Varcò fra mille rischi, e mille stenti  
 L'arte sua spiega à peregrini intenti:  
 Ove l'acque sian meno, ò piu profonde:  
 Gli scogli, e l'aure avverse, e le seconde,  
 Et i lumi del Ciel fidi, e lucenti.  
 Così Tù, che fin'hor, con nome altero,  
 Di MUSICA in solcando i vasti flutti,  
 Spendesti gli anni, et imbiancasti il crine:  
 Vago di posa homai, sotto non vero  
 Sembante, insegna altrui di quella i frutti,  
 E gli honori, e i perigli, e le dottrine.<sup>123</sup>

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offers to you his gift of singing fish, or else that the River King, in human visage offers the tribute of humor that comes continuously from his locks in glorious flashes.

123 As now and again the Navigator--who not long ago regularly entrusted the sails and the oars to the winds and the waves, and who from shore to shore of the perilous sea, crossed over a thousand risks and a thousand toils--explains his art to the intent pilgrims, [showing] where the water is deeper or more shallow, and [teaching of] the rocks and the adverse winds and courses, and of the stars of the heaven so faithful and bright. So you--who until now, with the proud name of MUSIC, spent the years in plowing the vast waves until your locks grayed--long not for rest at last, but rather, under unreal guise, teach others of those fruits, and of the honors and the perils, and of the rules.

Pontio's close ties to the Accademia are brought into sharper focus by a curious copy of the *Dialogo*, mentioned by Pelicelli and found in the Biblioteca Palatina of Parma (the title pages from the two editions are reproduced here as Plates 1 and 2).<sup>124</sup> The volume is an alternate printing of the treatise in which a new title page has been substituted, and a frontispiece added. These additions were made by the printer himself and were not simply the result of a rebinding, as the printer's marks in this exemplar show a rearrangement of the plates in the first gathering to allow for the added pages.<sup>125</sup> The alternate title page was engraved by Hector Smeraldi, the son of Smeraldo Smeraldi, a

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<sup>124</sup> Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, N IX 13527. Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 40 and "Musicisti in Parma nei secoli XV-XVI: Note ed appunti," 211, make note of the variant edition, as does Angelo Pezzana, *Continuazione delle Memorie degli scrittori e letterati parmigiano*, 6 vols. (Parma Tipografia Ducale, 1837-1859), VI, 275, who describes it in detail. Communication with all of the libraries known to possess copies of the *Dialogo* reveals that one other such edition exists, in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, 14.7, Musica 2°.

<sup>125</sup> A printer's mark of P3, for example, appears on the first page of the dedication of the variant edition, while in the original print the page is marked P2. The final two pages in the Palatina edition are missing, hence the colophon is lost. However, it is clear that as in the original print the first fascicle, containing all the introductory material, is a duerno, comprising as it does eight pages. The librarian at the Herzog August Bibliothek has informed me that the colophon in their copy is identical to those in all others.

local architect and engineer.<sup>126</sup> The most notable feature is the portrait of Pontio, dressed in simple priestly garb, surmounting a border which includes a number of musical instruments and two female figures representing the twin sciences of Mathematics and Music. The printer's design, a unicorn, is included at the bottom.

Equally interesting is the frontispiece which follows (Plate 3).<sup>127</sup> The figure in the center is the device of the Accademia Filarmonica, with its motto "Caelorum Imitatur Concentum" placed above. Below this is a coat of arms containing anchors and woven chains.

The purpose of this variant edition is unclear. It would be difficult to imagine this as a second edition, as not even the most obvious errors of pagination are corrected from the original.<sup>128</sup> Nor does it seem possible that a second printing would have been called for within the space of less than six months.<sup>129</sup> It can be assumed, then, that both versions were printed simultaneously, with the limited

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<sup>126</sup> Pezzana, VI, in unpaginated notes to his article on Pontio points out Hettore's relationship to Smeraldo.

<sup>127</sup> Pelicelli makes no mention of this page, and Pezzana mentions it only in passing, neither noting the significance.

<sup>128</sup> The last five pages, for example, are numbered 148, 143, 160, 151, and 152, respectively.

<sup>129</sup> Pontio's dedication is dated 15 August 1595, and both prints carry a 1595 year of publication.

DIALOGO  
 DEL R. M. DON  
 PIETRO PONTIO  
 PARMIGIANO,

Ove si tratta della Theorica, e Pratica  
 di Musica.

*Et anco si mostra la diuersità de' Contraponti,  
 & Canoni.*



In Parma, appresso Erasmo Viothi. 1595.

*Con licenz. a de' Superiori.*

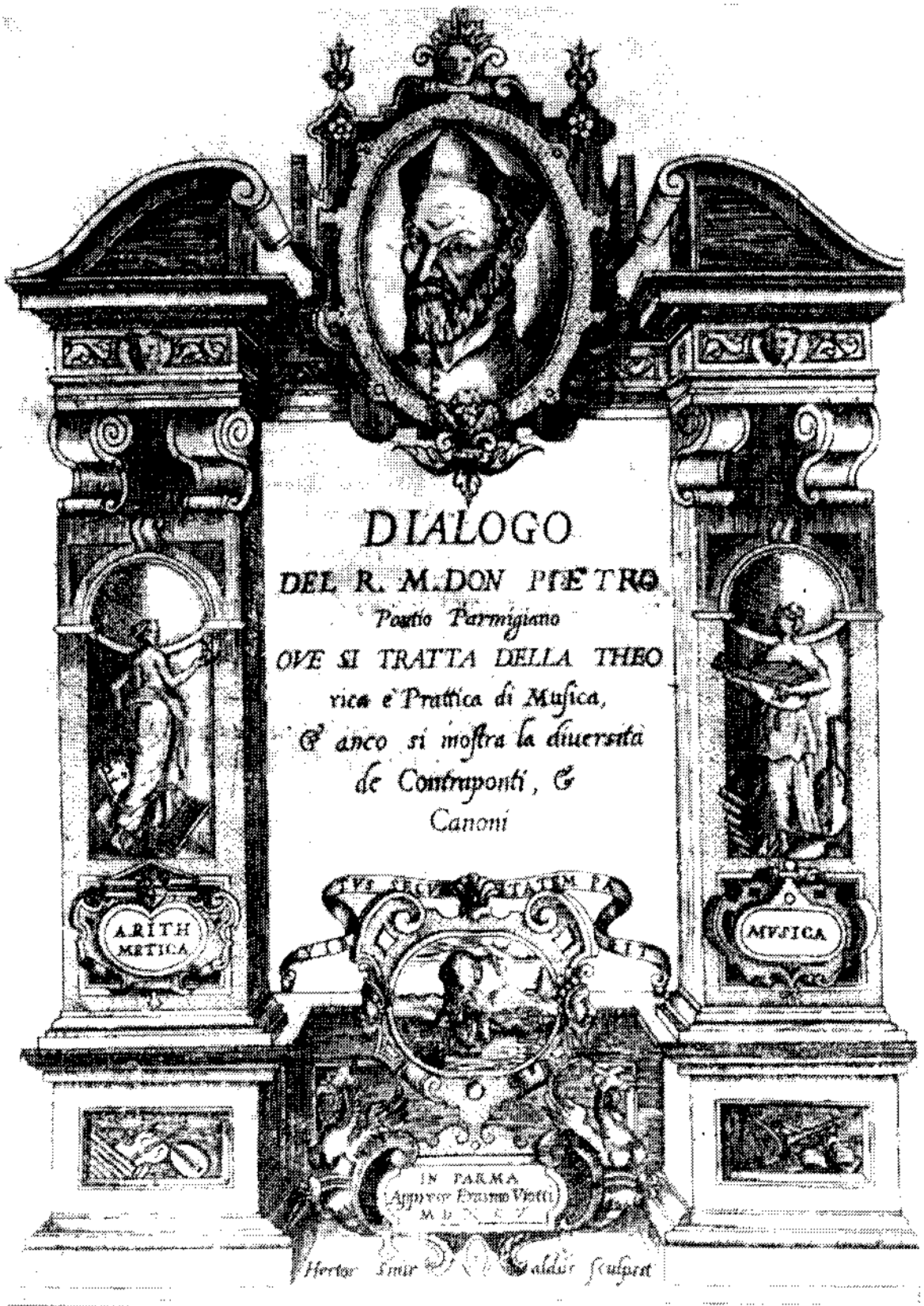
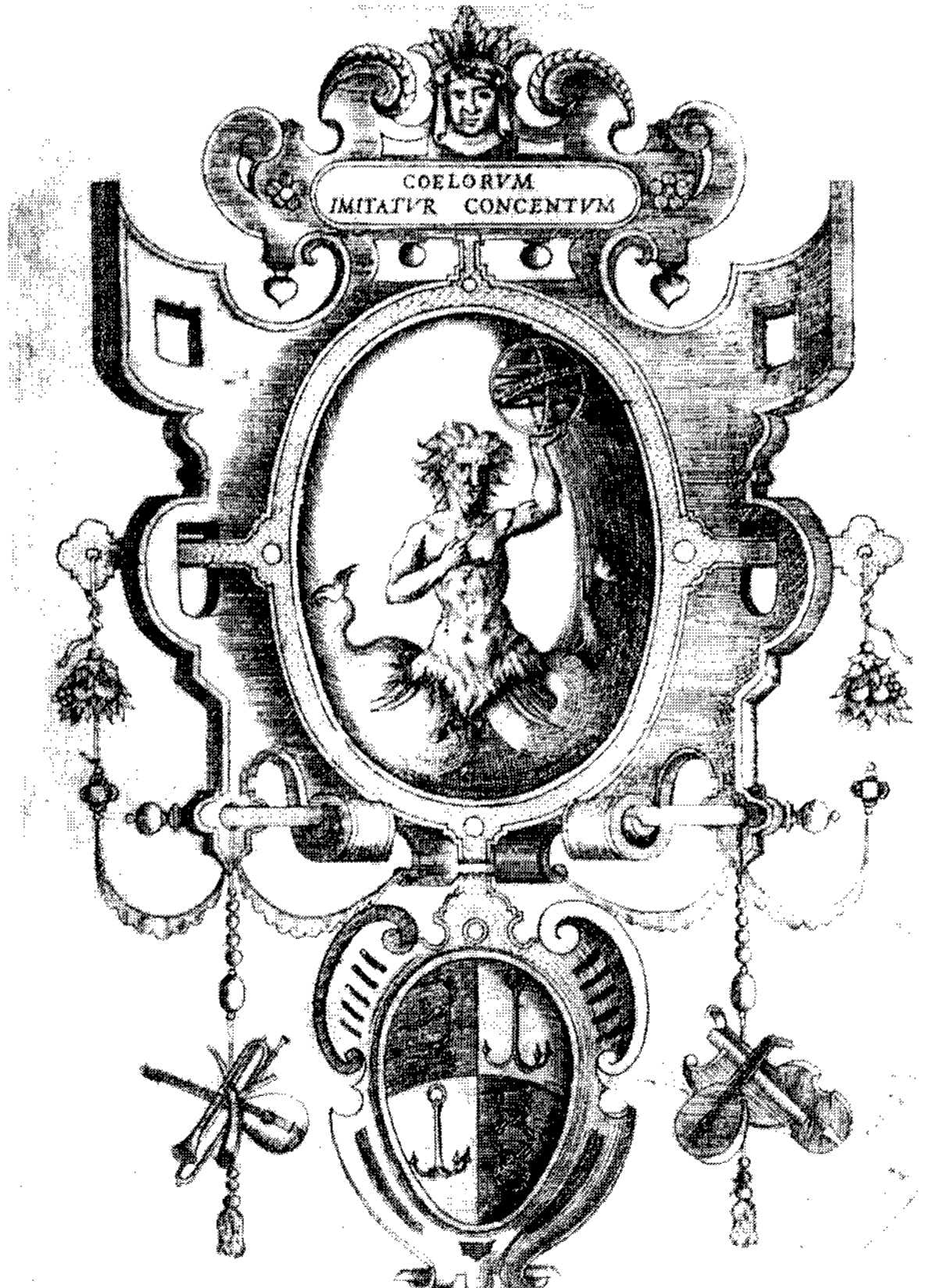


PLATE 2

Pontio, *Dialogo* (1595), Alternate Title Page





## PLATE 3

Pontio, *Dialogo* (1595), Alternate Frontispiece

number of special editions destined to be presentation copies. For whom they were intended is unclear, and the provenance of the surviving copies give no hint.<sup>130</sup> Whether the intended recipients were the Accademia, Pontio, or both, the symbolism of the frontispiece is strong testimony to the strength of the relationship between Pontio and his Veronese patrons.

In 1589, possibly hoping that his connections with Alessandro and Mario would help his chances, Pontio tried to obtain the position of maestro di cappella at the Cathedral in Verona. The search conducted by the church was an extended one--lasting from 14 January 1589 to 19 March 1590--and involved seven candidates.<sup>131</sup> In the end, the canons of the Cathedral decided on Matteo Asola, and Pontio remained in Parma. Even though he did not get the position, his candidacy may have helped in making the acquaintance of

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<sup>130</sup> The copy in Parma was probably added to the collection sometime in the early nineteenth century. It is possible that it came from the books that Pontio left in his will to the Consorzio dei Vivi e dei Morti, but it is impossible to know for sure (see note 149 below). The copy in Wolfenbüttel, I am informed, entered the collection before 1666, along with a number of other Italian books.

<sup>131</sup> The seven candidates were Giovanni Floria of Bergamo, Felipe Anerio, Pontio, Ludovico Balbi, Domenico Maccarino of Verona, Benedetto Pallavicino and Matteo Asola. Information on this episode can be found in Antonio Spagnolo, "Le scuole accollitali di grammatica e di musica in Verona," *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia d'agricoltura scienza lettere arti e commercio di Verona*, serie IV, vol. V, fasc. I, anno 1904 (1905), 179-180.

Asola, who was enough impressed with Pontio's compositional abilities to include one of his works in his 1592 collection of Psalms dedicated to Palestrina.<sup>132</sup> The work, a setting of *Laudate pueri*, might even have been submitted by Pontio in his application for the position in Verona.

In attempting to secure the position in Verona, Pontio may have been acting on a desire to maintain and strengthen his relationship with the Bevilacqua family. He may also have wished to leave Parma to escape worsening economic conditions. The city was, in fact, in the early stages of an agricultural and financial crisis which was to give rise to the worst period of famine of the century.<sup>133</sup> The signs of the crisis were visible as early as 1588, when a mediocre grain harvest led to rising prices. This was followed by two successive cold, wet springs, resulting in widespread crop losses and shortages of basic foodstuffs. Combined with bad management on the part of the city government, and coming at the end of an inflationary decade that saw basic prices rise over twenty percent, the years 1590-1592 resulted in, as Romani puts it, "a frighting hemorrhaging of human life," rivaling even the disastrous plague of 1630.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> *Sacra omnium solemnitatum Psalmodia vespertina* (see note 121 above).

<sup>133</sup> Romani, 115-130, details the causes and effects of this economic disaster.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

The hardship of these years is underscored by a letter from Pontio to the council of the Steccata asking for financial help:

Knowing the highest affection [you have] toward those that serve Your Illustrious Lordships at the Madonna, and also toward the virtuosi; and also since these times are so difficult, as Your Illustrious Lordships know; for these reasons I am moved to pray that Your Illustrious Lordships be served in giving me the aid of a small portion of my salary, so that I may pass and reach the end of these hard and calamitous years. For this I have no doubt that for your courtesy and love, I will obtain what I desire.<sup>135</sup>

The council responded by giving Pontio a gift of twelve *scudi*, equivalent to about three month's salary.<sup>136</sup> The previous year, Pontio had also received 300 *lire* from the council for a room in his house, purchased as part of the legacy of Angelo Pezzana.<sup>137</sup> Pontio probably purchased this house in 1584, when the surviving notary documents note a

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<sup>135</sup> Parma, AOC, Mandati, busta 36 (10 January 1592). Document 55.

<sup>136</sup> Parma, AOC, Mandati, busta 36 (10 January 1592).

<sup>137</sup> The 300 *lire* was given to the Steccata from the will of Angelo Pezzana. Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Pietro Martire Garbazza, filza 2489: Contratti, 1591 (11 February 1591). The transaction is recorded in Parma, AOC, Rogiti, 1590 al 1592, pp. 281-285 (17 May, 1591).

change in his residence from the parish of Santissima Trinità to Santa Catterina, where he remained until his death.<sup>138</sup>

**The Consorzio dei Vivi e dei Morti: 1592-1596**

Although Pontio stayed in Parma during the city's difficult years, he remained at the Steccata only a short time, resigning his position in 1592 to take a benefice at the Cathedral. Some confusion exists as to the exact date on which he assumed this benefice. The actual documents concerning this no longer exist, either in the notarial archives or those of the Cathedral, but an archivist's note in the archive of the Capitolare makes note of the collation of the benefice, citing a document by the notary Giacomo Rambolini from 22 May 1592.<sup>139</sup> In addition, Pelicelli cites a document from the *mandati* of the archives of the Steccata (also missing) dated 5 June, stating that Pontio had received the benefice "con buona gratia dell' Ill.mo et Rev.mo sig. Card. Farnese."<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Giulio Pecorini, filza 2811: Contratti, 1584 (17 January 1584). This document, acknowledging partial payment for the sale of another house, is the first to list Santa Catterina as the parish of his residence. The house he lived in backed up to the then-monastery of the Capuchins (now Santa Maria del Tempio).

<sup>139</sup> Parma, Archivio della Capitolare del Duomo, Capsula XXII, #3, Anno 1592 (Arca B). A careful check of Rambolini's documents for that year yielded nothing.

<sup>140</sup> Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 41.

The date of the granting of the Benefice is confirmed in the records of the Consorzio dei Vivi e dei Morti, which on 22 May admitted Pontio to their membership.<sup>141</sup> Pontio did not leave the Steccata immediately, however, for the pay lists of musicians show him receiving his full salary until the end of August, and he probably remained until his replacement, Gotofredo Flamengo, could assume the office.<sup>142</sup>

The benefice that Pontio accepted at the Cathedral was not a particularly large one, amounting to a little more than half of his salary at the Steccata.<sup>143</sup> By virtue of this benefice, however, he was entitled to his share of the *distributione quotidiane* received for saying the various votive Masses.<sup>144</sup> This probably totaled about 450 *lire* per

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<sup>141</sup> Parma, Archivio di Stato di Parma, Archivio del Consorzio dei Vivi e dei Morti (hereafter abbreviated Parma, ACVM), Vol. VI: Lib. Ord. (1588-1594), fol. 184v (22 May 1592). Document 56.

<sup>142</sup> Parma, AOC, Mandati, busta 37 (1592-1595 [sic=1572-1593]), 21 August 1592.

<sup>143</sup> The benefice is described in a document, dated the day of Pontio's death, which began the process of transferring the benefice to its new holder. Here the level of remuneration is set at twenty-five *ducatoni*, at the rate of £7, s.6 each (i.e. £182, s.10). Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Girolamo Magnani, filza 3500: Contratti, 1596-1597 (27 December 1597 [=1596]).

<sup>144</sup> In 1595, the total distribution was nearly 45,000 *lire*, which was divided among some 100 *consortiale*, canons and substitutes. Parma, ACVM, 94/47: Liber Massarum (1595), pp. 355 and 373.

year, providing Pontio a comfortable salary for his final years.

Pelicelli has suggested that Pontio's move to the Cathedral was by its nature a sort of semi-retirement. In a flight of historical fantasy, he offers the following explanation:

Pontio, nearly sixty, could no longer meet the duties of teaching, especially since it fell on him to instruct a large choir, as well as the preparation for the solemn functions of the Steccata, which at that time could be considered a Ducal church. This responsibility was compounded by the presence in Parma of celebrated musical masters.

The chance to escape this heavy weight presented itself when he obtained . . . a benefice at the Cathedral.<sup>145</sup>

While Pelicelli gives no evidence for his judgment of Pontio's declining capabilities, the implication that Pontio lived out his final years in unproductive retirement is clearly perceived. The facts of the situation, however, would argue otherwise. As noted earlier, the Consorzio was by its constitution charged with providing the music for the

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<sup>145</sup> "Il Ponzio, quasi sessantenne, più non poteva reggere alla fatica dell'insegnamento, specialmente perchè su di lui pesava l'istruzione del coro numeroso, e la preparazione delle solenni funzioni alla Steccata che sino da quel tempo si può considerare quale chiesa ducale. Di qui ancora una maggiore responsabilità, quasi aggravata, della presenza in Parma di celebri maestri di Musica. La occasione, per lasciare il peso non lieve, si presentò quando ottenne . . . un beneficio nella Cattedrale di Parma." Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 41.

Cathedral, and the few surviving records indicate that this was often done on a lavish scale.<sup>146</sup> More than ten of the members of the Consorzio during Pontio's presence can be identified as musicians, many of whom had served at the Steccata, forming a modest but experienced polyphonic chapel. Added to this, of course, is the presence in the Cathedral of the organist Claudio Merulo.<sup>147</sup> It seems highly unlikely that Pontio would not have had some part in the musical activities of the church.

Further evidence of the musical activity of the Consorzio is provided by Pontio himself, who in the final year of his life published his Vesper Hymns, dedicating them to the Consorzio.<sup>148</sup> More significant is the fact that Pontio left to the Consorzio the whole of his music:

. . . both prints and manuscripts with the provision that they be put in a box in the Consorzio, and also that they neither be sold or

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<sup>146</sup> A payment from 1590, for example, lists nineteen singers and five brass players, presumably over and above the singers in the Consorzio. Parma, AFD, Mandati, Cassetta 1: 1589-1598; 1601-1622 (4 October 1590).

<sup>147</sup> Merulo began his service at the Cathedral in May of 1587. His first payment comes on 6 July 1587, for June and twenty-four days in May. Parma, AFD, F8: Libro dell'entrata et uscita (1586-1594), fol. 83v (6 July 1587).

<sup>148</sup> Pontio, *Hymni solemniores ad vespertinas horas canendi quattuor vocibus noviter impressis* (Venice: Amadino, 1596).



dispersed, but rather that they ought to be assiduously used by said Consorzio and all others for the exercise of music in said Consorzio.<sup>149</sup>

Beyond these assumed musical activities at the Cathedral, Pontio became an active participant in the business of the Consorzio. On 18 March 1595, he was elected a rector.<sup>150</sup> A year later, he became "praefectus super matutinis."<sup>151</sup> Along with the added responsibilities he received increased compensation by way of various in-kind gifts.<sup>152</sup>

In the final years of his life, Pontio also assumed other responsibilities. In 1594 he became legal guardian of three nieces and nephews, the children of Francesco de Bosiis, after the latter's death and the subsequent deaths of both their grandfather, Antonio de Bosiis, and their mother. In June of that year, Pontio was given executive

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<sup>149</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Ottavio Banzola, filza 2734: Atti, 1594 (5 July 1594). Document 57 (fol. 4, lines 11-23). The wealth of the Consorzio was dispersed according to a series of laws at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1927, all of the documents and some books were deposited in the Archivio di Stato. A careful exploration of this collection revealed no trace of Pontio's music. It is likely that the music was sold or destroyed well before the dispersal of the Consorzio's property.

<sup>150</sup> Parma, ACVM, Vol. VII: Lib. Ord. (1594-1603), fol. 42 (18 March 1594).

<sup>151</sup> Parma, ACVM, Vol. VII: Lib. Ord. (1594-1603), fol. 95v (18 March 1596).

<sup>152</sup> These consisted of items such as wood, bread and wax, either for use or barter.

power over the inheritance of his nephew Domitio until he attained his majority some eight years hence.<sup>153</sup> In November, he served as agent for the rental of property in the name of all three of the children.<sup>154</sup>

During this time he was also the agent for a member of the company of the Steccata, Modesto de Grassellis, in the support of Baptista de Gnocchis, a young cleric and musician who had served with Pontio at the Steccata.<sup>155</sup> Under the terms of the agreement, he was to see that Baptista received fifteen *scudi* per year for his support as he began his career in the priesthood. Five *scudi* were to be paid by Pontio himself, with the other ten being paid by Grassellis. The pact was to end at such time as Gnocchis received a benefice or other means of support totaling fifteen *scudi* or more.<sup>156</sup>

Along with all of these extra-musical duties, Pontio remained active in his musical pursuits up to the time of

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<sup>153</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Ottavio Banzola, filza 2734: Atti, 1594 (13 June 1594).

<sup>154</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Ottavio Banzola, filza 2734: Atti, 1594 (8 November 1594).

<sup>155</sup> Gnocchis was born 17 March 1569, and served at the Steccata from 1591-1592. He published a few collections of music and two spiritual tracts. He died in the plague of 1630. See Pelicelli, "Musicisti in Parma nei secoli XV-XVI: Note ed appunti," 289-290.

<sup>156</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Girolamo Magnani, filza 3499: Contratti, 1592-1595 (1 December 1595). Document 58.

his death. In 1592 he published his third book of four-voice Masses, dedicated to Ludovico Taberna, Bishop of Lodi and Papal nuncio.<sup>157</sup> The year 1595 saw the publication of his *Dialogo*, and in the final year of his life he published the book of Hymns that he dedicated to the Consorzio. As well, in this last year his only known secular work, the Madrigal "Vincitrice guerriere," was published.<sup>158</sup>

### Pontio's Death

Soon after taking on the responsibilities of guardianship in June of 1594, Pontio wrote his will.<sup>159</sup> In it, he asked to be buried in the Cathedral, under the pillar directly across from where his burial stone is presently found. He named as universal heir his ward, Domitio De Bosiis, and left him an unspecified amount of money and

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<sup>157</sup> *D. Petri Pontii . . . Missarum quatuor vocibus liber tertius nunc primum in lucem editus.* (Venice: Amadino, 1592). Taberna was originally from Milan, and Pontio may have made his acquaintance during his employment at the Cathedral there. See Ferdinando Ughelli, *Italia sacra: sive De episcopis Italiae . . .*, 2nd ed., 10 vols. (Venice: Coletti, 1717-1722), IV, col. 685-686. I am indebted to Giulio Ongaro for identifying Taberna for me.

<sup>158</sup> *Vittoria amorosa di diversi authori a cinque voci nuovamente stampata* (Venice: Vincenti, 1596) RISM 1596<sup>11</sup>. No complete copy of the collection survives. See Appendix 1.

<sup>159</sup> Parma, ASP, Fondo notarile Ottavio Banzola, filza 2734: Atti, 1594 (5 July 1594). Document 57.

personal property, including his house.<sup>160</sup> He also left a number of bequests that reflect the material wealth he had amassed. To the Confraternity of Sancti Sacramenti (also known as "i Rossi" after the red caps worn by the members) in the church of Santissima Trinità he left an unspecified amount for the saying of twenty Masses per year "pro quolibet anniversario." To the church of Ognisanti he left 300 *lire* for a requiem Mass and anniversary Masses.

Along with these gifts, Pontio left three *anni censi* to the Consorzio dei Vivi e dei Morti. The first, valued at 1000 *lire*, provided the Consorzio with seventy-five *lire* per year, with which they were to pay for the celebration of a yearly anniversary Mass.<sup>161</sup> The other two were founded on a house near Pontio's in the parish of Santa Catterina. Each was valued at 500 *lire* and yielded thirty-seven *lire* and ten *soldi* per year. The yearly proceeds went to help in the support of two acquaintances of Pontio's, Peregrino and

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<sup>160</sup> Domitio had not yet reached legal age, and his affairs were handled by another guardian, Joannes de Bobuleis. The will does not specifically mention the house, but later documents make it clear that it was part of the will.

<sup>161</sup> The source of the two *censi* is not made clear in the will; neither are the exact terms of their deposition noted. Full details are found in the entries in the Consorzio's Liber Massarum and Epitome Anniversarium. Parma, ACVM, 94/47: Liber Massarum, 1597, fol. 101; Parma, ACVM, 43: Epitome Anniversarium, fols. 118 and 201. Documents 59 and 60.

Margarita Canutis.<sup>162</sup> Upon their deaths, the money was to go to pay for additional Masses for Pontio. Finally, along with the music he left to the Consorzio, he left to his fellow *consorziale* Andrea de Maseris a coat, alb and chasuble for the saying of Mass.

Pontio died on 27 December 1596.<sup>163</sup> Affò, citing the diary of Smeraldo Smeraldi, gives a clear portrait of his final days:

25 December 1596. I went to visit Maestro Domino Pietro Pontio, and also there was Signor Bartolomeo Simonetta, the surgeon, and also there were many priests, his friends. He faced death readily and courageously. Although he was without fever, his sickness was a terrible catarrh, which was in his chest as well as his head. He was,

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<sup>162</sup> Peregrino and Margarita, brother and sister, lived in the same parish as Pontio, perhaps renting a room in his house. According to a notice in the documents of the Consorzio, Peregrino had been the victim of a stroke. Parma, ACVM, Vol. VI, Lib. Ord. (1588-1594), fol. 229 (5 April 1593).

<sup>163</sup> The year usually given, 1595, is based on a misprint in Pelicelli, "Musicisti in Parma nei secoli XV-XVI: Note ed appunti," 209, which also gives the date incorrectly as 28 December. In Pelicelli, *La cappella corale*, 40, the date is correct on all counts. Claudio Sartori, "Pietro Ponzio," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Blume, 16 vols. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1949-1981) X, col. 1447, logically justifies the incorrect date by reference to the tombstone ("VI Cal. Ian. = 27 Dezember 1595 nicht 1596"), but in doing so conflates the *stile nativitate* dating, which begins the year on 25 December and which was used in legal documents in Parma, with the Roman calendar beginning on 1 January. The notation on the stone indicating that Pontio was sixty-four at the time of his death supports the 1596 date. Further--and decisive--proof can be found in Pontio's signature on an account book of the Consorzio, dated 12 December 1596. Parma, ACVM, 94/47: Liber Massarum 1595, 1596, 1597; Anno 1595, fol. 379.

however, sound in all his thoughts and recognized everyone.

27 [December]. Today the Reverend Maestro Domino Pietro Pontio, most excellent and rare musician, died, with sadness and loss to all his friends for having lost such a perfect and rare composer. They have taken him to be buried in the Cathedral.<sup>164</sup>

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164 "25 Dec. 1596 sono andato a visitare M. Don Pietro Pontio, e vi è anco venuto il Signor Bartolommeo Simonetta, Chirurgo, e vi erano molti preti suoi amici, et esso se ne stava con buonissimo e pronto animo al morire: però era quasi senza febre, ma il suo male era il grossissimo catarro, cha haveva sul petto, e che gli cadea della testa; però havea sani tutti gli suoi sentimenti, e conosceva ciascuno . . . 27. hoggi e morto il Reverendo M. Don Pietro Pontio Musico eccelentissimo et raro con dolore et danno di tutti gli suoi amici per haver perso un sì raro e perfetto compositore, et l'hanno portato a sepellire in Duomo." Affò, IV, 199-200. Affò describes the diary as "*Diari manoscritti* di Smeraldo Smeraldi, che conservo presso di me originali." The present location of the original is unknown.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TREATISES OF PIETRO PONTIO: AN OVERVIEW

Pietro Pontio's professional life was one of service to the church, and his creative output reflects that service. In great measure, his musical treatises were aimed at that musical world with which he was most familiar. By virtue of his career as a maestro di cappella at churches both large and small, Pontio was well acquainted with the daily and practical needs of the musician. His treatises exhibit a direct approach to meeting the needs of these musicians within the realm of *musica prattica*. The emphasis is always on the practical, with little regard for the more ethereal arguments of the humanist theorists, and as little concern for the traditional matters of the venerable science of *musica speculativa*. Yet his treatises are no mere singing manuals: his goal from the outset was to produce the true *musico*, the equivalent of Zarlino's *musico perfetto* and Cerone's *melopeo*. In both of his treatises, Pontio goes beyond the simple pronouncement of invariable rules to delve into more complex questions of genre, aesthetics, and taste--all, however, in markedly practical terms.

Similarly, Pontio's music, almost entirely sacred, addressed the needs of his station in the musical world, and he produced a comprehensive body of liturgical and paraliturgical works--works that combined an approach reflective of the musical concerns of the post-tridentine church with a consistently inventive style and execution of high quality.

Additionally, the music and writings form a coherent whole, one that reflects in admirable manner the realities of his musical world. In the end, Pontio speaks not with two voices--at one time that of the composer and at another that of the theorist--but with one, a lucid voice that commands our attention even as it draws our interest. Before examining that voice, however, it is instructive to look at the individual parts--the treatises and the music. Little has been written about either, and it is therefore advantageous to come to an understanding of the scope and nature of this body of work before proceeding to the more detailed investigation of specific matters that will occupy the remainder of this study.

### **The Scope of the Treatises**

The theoretical writings of Pietro Pontio came late in his life and reflect as much his musical career as the general theoretical tradition of the period. As a *Parmigiano* he continued the tradition of Giorgio Anselmi, Nicolà Burzio, and Giovanni Maria Lanfranco; yet his treatises are



not imitations of these works, nor of any others. In an era marked by literary and rhetorical *imitatio*, Pontio is a notably individual and original musical thinker. While well within the more conservative stream of the day, and reflecting many of the conventions of content and presentation, his treatises exhibit a remarkable sense of balance and integration within the two works and, above all, an individual approach to the process of learning.

Along with his debt to his theoretical roots, Pontio's reliance on his own immediate experience can easily be perceived. Of the many citations he makes of other writers, most appear to derive from direct reading of the sources, not from another's commentary, as is sometimes the case in treatises of the period. More importantly, much of the content of the treatises is illustrated by examples of specific musical works, reflecting Pontio's knowledge of an extensive repertoire. And if some pieces and composers seem somewhat obscure choices, it can be seen that they are reflective of his exposure to specific works during his career, such as his citation of the Lamentations of Giovanni Nasco and Giovanni Contino, collections that he used while at Santa Maria Maggiore and Bergamo.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the

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<sup>1</sup> Pietro Pontio. *Dialogo . . . ove si tratta della theorica e prattica di musica . . .* (Parma: Viotto, 1595), 61. Both of these collections, along with the Lamentations of Morales (which Pontio likewise cites here) first appear in lists of music returned to the church by Pontio when he left his position there (see Chapter One above). Document

many sacred works with which he would have had intimate contact on a daily basis, he also exhibits, not surprisingly, familiarity with the Madrigals of Cipriano de Rore.<sup>2</sup> As well, he showed an interest in the music of his more progressive contemporaries, citing the likes of Alessandro Striggio, Claudio Merulo, and Luzzasco Luzzaschi.

Pontio's treatises also stand out in the unity of their general approach. As Lawrence Gushee has noted concerning the content and style of theoretical works in the Middle Ages, musical treatises can be viewed in a number of ways, and they tend to fall into definable categories.<sup>3</sup> Many, such as Giovanni Maria Artusi's *L'Arte del contraponto* (1586/1598) and the counterpoint manuals that became popular toward the end of the century, can be viewed as almost

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14. The list is also reproduced in Gary Towne, "Gaspar de Albertis and Music at Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo in the Sixteenth Century," 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Santa Barbara, 1985), II, 173-174, and the contents discussed, I, 172-185.

<sup>2</sup> Pontio's connection with de Rore was explored above. He seemed particularly conversant with the earlier Madrigal collections of Cipriano, notably his first book of four-voice Madrigals printed in 1550.

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence A. Gushee, "Questions of Genre in Medieval Treatises on Music," in *Gattungen der Musik in Einzeldarstellungen: Gedenkschrift Leo Schrade*, ed. Wulf Arlt et al. (Bern: Francke, 1973), 365-433. Many of Gushee's comments apply here as well.

completely instructional *prattiche*--handbooks as it were--dealing with a specifically defined and limited subject. Treatises such as Zarlino's *Le Istitutioni harmoniche* (1558)--and later, Pietro Cerone's *El Melopeo y Maestro* (1613)--can be seen, on the other hand, as *summae*--a systematic presentation of a complete body of knowledge, exploring in detail both speculative and practical aspects of the art. Nicolà Burzio's *Musices opusculum* (1487), written in response to Bartolomeo Ramos de Pareja's *Musica Practica* of 1482, and later, Giovanni Spataro's response to Burzio in his *Difensio in Nic. Burtii Parmensis opusculum* (1491), are examples of the genre of the polemic, propagating a specific point of view on a circumscribed subject. These categories, however, are not exclusive, and combinations can be found. A famous example is Nicola Vicentino's *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* (1555), which, while in part the *summa*, is in large measure polemical. A very few, such as Thomas Morley's *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597), can be viewed as systematic attempts to introduce in a pedagogical fashion an entire body of knowledge--to be, in other words, a combination of the simple *prattica* and the *summa*.

It is into this last category that Pontio's treatises, the *Ragionamento di musica* (1588) and the *Dialogo* (1595), fall. And within this category, they stand out as unique. In them Pontio presents--in two separate, and in general

estimation independent, volumes--a unified pedagogical system.<sup>4</sup> This unity derives from the fact that the two treatises are guided by a precise systematic method, a coherent program of learning that takes as its audience a specific level of musician within a particular setting.

Taken as a whole, his two treatises serve as a solid, unified *prattica* and reflect a progressive program of learning. Both are cast in the form of a dialogue, a form that Pontio used well to shape the course of his discussion (one more selective than encyclopedic) in which he easily glossed over topics he viewed as extraneous to get to the heart of the practical matter.<sup>5</sup> His guiding principle throughout was one of making clear, dichotomous distinctions in such areas as modal procedure, style, and genre, along with explaining the proper and improper realization of each.

The organization of the two volumes--both internally and with regard to their relationship to each other--is reflective of Pontio's own distinction between the singer and the musician, in which dichotomy can also be found the definition of his audience. His approach is rooted in his

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<sup>4</sup> Ludovico Zacconi's *Prattica di Musica*, 2 vols. (Venice: Polo, 1592 and Vincenti, 1622) also presents a single theoretical essay within the scope of two separate volumes. His approach, however, is more that of the *summa* or compendium.

<sup>5</sup> Klaus-Jürgen Sachs, "'Theorica e Prattica di Musica' in Pietro Pontios *Dialogo* (Parma, 1595)," *Musiktheorie IV* (1989), 127-131, discusses Pontio's use of this form.

own concept of the perfect musician as a blend of the practical and speculative, and more importantly in a belief that it is the practical skill that is the more difficult and worthy of praise.<sup>6</sup> It was to the person aspiring to this status, within an ecclesiastical situation, that the two treatises were specifically addressed.

Pontio's definition of the perfect musician is conventional, and owes much to earlier writers:

. . . today can be found some musicians who only put practice to work to combine consonances and dissonances. But the true musician will be that one who has a knowledge of practical and the speculative. Boethius spoke of this musician in his first [book] in the twenty-fourth chapter. . .

More specifically, the practical musician to whom Pontio was addressing himself was the aspiring composer. The *cantore*, who had few abilities beyond those of singing, was certainly not a musician. And while to be competent in his duties the singer needed some grounding in theory, these needs were limited, and were never specifically addressed by

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<sup>6</sup> This is a concept that finds its fullest realization in the *Dialogo*.

<sup>7</sup> ". . . hoggidì si vedono alcuni Musici, che solamente danno opera alla Pratica di porre le consonantie, & dissonantie insieme. Ma il vero Musico sarà quello, che della Pratica, & della Speculativa havrà cognitione. Di questo Musico parlava Boetio nel primo al vigesimoquarto capo . . ." Pontio, *Ragionamento di musica* (Parma: Viotto, 1588; facsimile edition ed. Suzanne Clercx, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1959), 10.

Pontio. Even the contrapuntist was not a true musician; though capable of combining consonances and dissonances, he was still at an elementary stage. Pontio made manifest this distinction in the first part of the *Ragionamento* in answer to the student's question concerning the singer who could write (or improvise) counterpoint:

[Hettore] . . . I have heard some singers who, above a *cantus firmus* form another part, which gives delight to the listeners. Would they not thus be called musicians, since they are able to put together, with reason, the consonances and dissonances?

Paolo: I respond differently, that they should not be called musicians, rather contrapuntists, their not having thus passed any farther. But the Musician (speaking of the practical musician) is he who knows how to coordinate three, four, five and more voices together such that they are pleasing to the ears of those skilled in Music. One can with merit call him a Musician, as are the excellent Iacchetto, Adriano, Morales, Gombert, Cipriano, Palestrina, and others such.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [Hettore] ". . . hò sentito alcuni Cantori, quali sopra il canto fermo formavano un'altra parte, quale dava diletto à gli ascoltanti, questi non saranno essi chiamati Musici, poiche sono giunti alla ragione di porre le consonantie, & dissonantie?"

Paulo: Io vi rispondo, che altramente non debbano chiamarsi Musici, ma contrapuntisti, non essendo però passati più avanti. Ma Musico sarà quello (parlando del Musico pratico) che saprà accommodare tre, quattro, cinque parte, & più insieme, di modo che siano grate all'orecchie de' periti nella Musica, questo meritevolmente si potrà chiamare Musico, come furono gli Eccellenti Iacchetto, Adriano, Morales, Gombert, Cipriano, il Palestina [sic], & altri tali." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 11.

In the course of his two treatises, Pontio presents all the material needed to move the student from the level of the skilled singer, the one described above, to that of the perfect musician. His intended audience was one that had mastered the more basic skills, for the simple elements of singing are excluded from his discussion. No time is spent imparting such rudimentary skills as the use of the hand or the principles of notation. Similarly, the fundamentals of rhythmic control--mode, tempus, and prolation--are not introduced until later in the discourse, and this in the specific context of the presentation of material relating to the art of composition. Rather, the two treatises, in a careful progression of subjects, present the well-trained singer with the fundamentals of counterpoint, a knowledge of the modes, and the material which will allow him apply these contrapuntal skills to the art of composition.<sup>9</sup> With these skills, he could count himself among the ranks of the musicians, and this is the goal of the *Ragionamento*.

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<sup>9</sup> For Pontio, counterpoint serves a dual purpose, and as such, its exact definition is not always clear. As a performance skill, it is important to the singer, for without it "he will never be held to be a secure or good singer" (*senza del quale non potria giamai esser tenuto sicuro, ne buono Cantore*). Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 12. More importantly, as a technical skill, counterpoint also aids the composer, since it is the "road to composition." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 22.

But if the student, through the study of counterpoint and the basics of compositions presented in the *Ragionamento*, had arrived at any level of perfection in his art at this point, it was, as Zarlino would say, "not through reason and science, but through long practice."<sup>10</sup> It was Pontio's goal in the *Dialogo*, therefore, to present this body of reason and science, yielding the perfection expressed in Pontio's definition of the musician.

The first part of the *Dialogo* provides a more detailed treatment of speculative matters than that found in the *Ragionamento*; and while not as extensive as the discussion found in, for example, Zarlino's *Istitutioni*, it is of sufficient scope and depth for the needs of the practical musician. The second part continues with an extensive discussion of the qualities of composition, introducing a system of critical evaluation necessary to transcend the typical problems of the less-experienced composer. The final section introduces the more advanced techniques of counterpoint and canon that allow the student to perfect the practical aspect of his art, moving the student from the realm of the proficient contrapuntist and composer to the more exalted status of "learned," and to become, indeed, a *musico perfetto*.

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10 " . . . non per ragione & per scienza: ma per lungo uso . . ." Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le Istitutioni harmoniche* (Venice: Senese, 1558), 21.



### **The *Ragionamento* (1588)**

Of Pontio's two treatises, the *Ragionamento* is the more studied and discussed.<sup>11</sup> The focus in such studies has been Pontio's original and seminal discussion of Psalm and Mass composition. The treatise is essentially a *prattica*. Of the 161 pages in the *Ragionamento*, a scant twelve deal with purely speculative matters, and even in these there is less discussion than obligatory mention. Even without using the term *prattica* in the title, Pontio clearly announces his intent with a brief list of the contents, which promises nothing more than a discussion of purely practical matters:

. . . wherein are treated the passages of consonances and dissonances, both good and bad, the manner of composing Motets, Masses, Psalms and other compositions, and other advice for the contrapuntist and the composer, as well as other things pertinent to music.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the treatise, the focus is on those basic techniques needed by the contrapuntist as well as the

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<sup>11</sup> The most recent study is Klaus-Jürgen Sachs, "Musikalische 'Struktur' im Spiegel der Kompositionslehre von Pietro Pontios *Ragionamento di musica* (1588)," in *Zeichen und Struktur in der Musik der Renaissance*, ed. Klaus Hortchansky (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1989), 141-157. Due to the recent date of its publication, it was not available at the time of this study.

<sup>12</sup> ". . . ove si tratta de' passaggi delle consonantie, & dissonantie, buoni, & non buoni; & del modo di far Motetti, Messe, Salmi, & altre compositioni; et d'alcuni avvertimenti per il contrapuntista, & compositore, & altre cose pertinenti alla Musica."

composer. As such, no time is spent on the rudimentary matters of notation or solmization. Indeed, Don Hettore, the student of the dialogue, reveals his portion of knowledge by knowingly citing Luigi Dentice during a discussion of the nature of *musica mundana*.<sup>13</sup> In the course of his discussions, Pontio shows himself to be well read in the art of music. Here the citations of other writers (enumerated in Table 6) are numerous and relevant.

The treatise is, however, more than just a compendium of quotations and minutiae, and Pontio's citations of specific writers and composers are all encompassed within a unified approach to the subject. In the end, his discussions of these basic matters reflect Pontio's own compositional abilities as well as his masterful understanding of the music of his time. If it is conservative in nature, this is only a reflection of the conservative nature of the musical positions he occupied during his career.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Jack Westrup, in his review of the facsimile edition of the *Ragionamento*, *Music and Letters* XLI (1960), 82-83, cites this as a weakness of the treatise, noting that by 1588 "Marenzio had published twelve books of madrigals, and Monteverdi was launching his career as a composer. Music was in a melting-pot. But of all of this, Pontio seems blissfully unaware." It seems to me that selectivity rather than ignorance is at the heart of the matter, and that Pontio concentrated on what was appropriate for the subject being discussed.

TABLE 6  
Theorists Cited by Pontio in the *Ragionamento*

Theorist	Work
Giovanni Maria Lanfranco	<i>Scintille di Musica</i> (1533)
Franchino Gaforius	<i>Prattica Musicae</i> (1497)
Biagio Rosetti	[ <i>Libellus de rudimentis Musices</i> , 1529]
Pietro Aaron	<i>Il Toscanello</i>
Angelo da Picitono	<i>Fior Angelo</i> (1547)
Angelo Politiano	
Gregorio Reisch	<i>Principiis Musicae</i> (Book V of <i>Margarita Philosophica</i> , 1504)
Plutarch	?
Plato	<i>Timeus</i>
	<i>Libro de Anima</i>
Boethius	<i>De Musica</i>
	<i>Arithmetica</i>
Luigi Dentice	[ <i>Duo dialoghi della musica</i> , 1552]
Archemides	?
Cicero	<i>De somno Scipionis</i>
Macrobio	<i>Sogno di Scipione</i> (Commentary)
Celio Rodigino	[ <i>Sicuti antiquarum lectionum commentarios</i> , 1516]
Nicolà Burzio	<i>Musices opusculum</i> , 1487
Stefano Vanneo	[ <i>Recanetum</i> , 1533]
Guglielmo Durante	[ <i>Incipit Rationale divinarum officiarum</i> , 1473]
Ludovico Fogliano	[ <i>Musica Theorica</i> , 1529]
Gioseffo Zarlino	<i>L'Istitutioni harmoniche</i> , 1558
Vincezo Galilei	[ <i>Dialogo della musica</i> , 1581]?

Pontio's mastery of the musical repertoire of his day is, like his knowledge of theoretical sources, seen in the bulk and breadth of the examples cited (see Table 7). His citations are detailed and exact, showing a marked familiarity with the material. As noted above, much of the music cited was the music with which Pontio had contact through his duties in various chapels. His discussions, therefore,

are the result not of theoretical musings, but of day-to-day observations.

TABLE 7  
Composers Cited by Pontio in the *Ragionamento*

Composer	Number of Citations	Percentage
Pietro Pontio	34	18%
Jachet of Mantua	32	17%
Cipriano de Rore	28	15%
Cristóbal de Morales	19	10%
Josquin	16	8%
Palestrina	9	5%
Others	52	27%

Pontio's choice of composers is interesting, especially the high percentage of pieces by Jachet and de Rore.<sup>15</sup> This is yet another indication of the esteem Pontio had for Jachet, and in discussing Pontio's music, we will see other indications of the elder composer's influence. Also notable is the low incidence of citations of Palestrina. That Pontio knew a great deal of the latter's work is clear: there are records of the purchase of Palestrina's music at the Steccata during Pontio's tenure, and as we will see, Pontio's choice of certain pieces of Palestrina's as models for imitation could only have come from his acquaintance with the works in manuscript. This emphasis strengthens

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<sup>15</sup> Jachet is identified only as "Iachetto" in both treatises, but it is unquestionable, based on the pieces cited, that he is speaking of Jachet of Mantua.

Jachet's preeminent position in Pontio's hierarchy--one even higher than Pontio's own supposed teacher, de Rore--for it is clear that the large numbers of citations is due to choice and not simply availability.

Pontio's concern with distinctions finds its most obvious manifestation in the *Ragionamento's* often-cited discussion of the qualities of various genres, including his explanation of the techniques of Mass composition, found in the fourth *ragionamento*. Beyond this, however, the theme of distinctions can be seen interwoven into many of the sections of the treatise. This is notable in his discussion of modes, where he makes the clear differentiation between the procedures used for Psalms and Magnificats, and those used for Masses and Motets. These sorts of dichotomies, far from being merely pedantic, are viewed by Pontio as a vital component in the education of a musician. Significantly, this ideal is expanded into a systematic critical approach in the *Dialogo*.

The *Ragionamento* is divided into four sections, representing four successive discussions between "Il Reverendo Maestro Don Paolo" and his student, "Maestro Don Hettore," each taking place in the hours preceding the daily meetings of Mario Bevilacqua's Veronese *ridotto*. Each section is more or less complete unto itself, and deals with one particular topic, although there is some repetition and intermixing of material.

The first *ragionamento* is a short and somewhat perfunctory discussion of speculative matters. Relying on a host of authorities, both ancient and modern, Pontio outlines the basic concerns. His definition of music emphasizes the rational aspect:

Music is nothing more than the modulation of the voice made with reason.<sup>16</sup>

Citing Giovanni Maria Lanfranco, Franchino Gaforius, and Biagio Rossetti (Blasio), Paolo provides Hettore with specific justification for his reliance on reason:

And it is with most beautiful reason that he [Blasio] has said this, for if the voice were not governed by proportion and measure, from time to time, indeed almost always, it would be sent out so deformed as to give more annoyance than pleasure. But guided by reason and judgment, it makes a suave and sweet *concerto*. Besides, if it were otherwise, everyone would, by nature, be able to sing, which one can see to be false. . . thus you see that music is of delight to men because the voice is guided by reason and proportion. And this is a sufficient definition of music.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "Sapiate dunque la Musica non esser altro, che una modulatione della voce fatta con ragione . . ." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 2.

<sup>17</sup> "Et con bellissima ragione hà detto questo; perche se la voce non fosse governata con proportione, & misura; alle volte, & quasi sempre ella verrebbe così sconciamente mandata fuori, che darebbe più presto noia, che diletto: ma guidata dalla ragione, & dal giuditio fà un concerto soave, & dolce: & s'altrimente ciò fosse, naturalmente tutti saprebbono cantare; la qual cosa si vede esser falsa . . . Hor vedete, che la Musica è cosa dilettevole à gli huomini, essendo con ragione, & proportione della voce adoperata, & ciò per diffinitione della Musica sufficientemente sia detto." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 2. The quote under

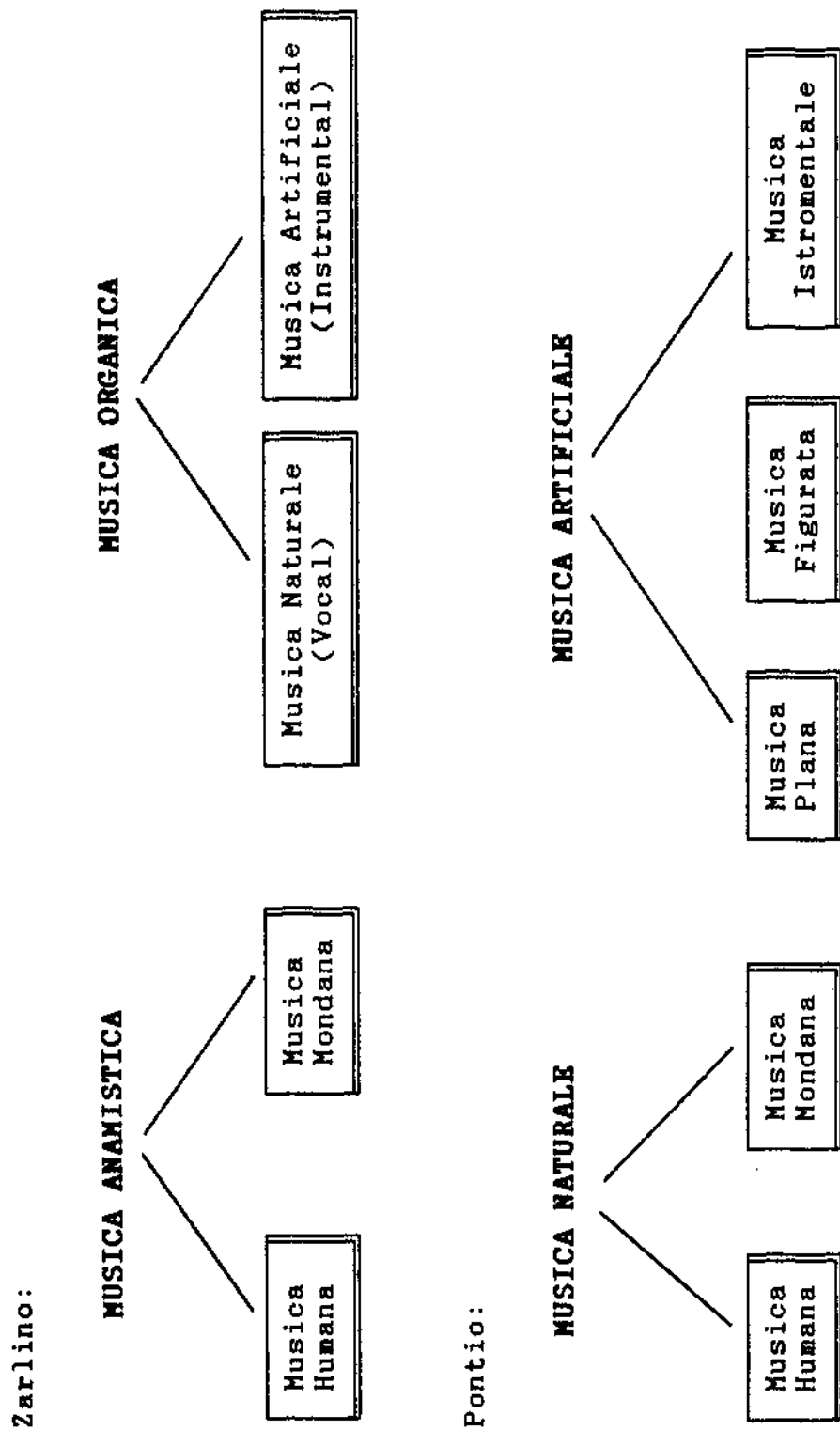
Having given a very practical definition, Pontio goes on to present a bipartite division of music similar to that presented by Zarlino, consisting of *musica natura* (Zarlino's *musica anamistica*), from which comes *musica humana* and *musica mundana*, and *musica artificiale* (Zarlino's *musica organica*), comprising *musica plana*, *musica figurata* and *musica istromentale*. The two schemes are shown in Figure 2.

Pontio parts company with Zarlino, however, in the subdivision of this second type of music, and in his use of the term *artificiale*. For Zarlino, vocal music was a subclass of *musica organica*, one which he referred to as *musica harmonica*, or *musica natura*. Instrumental music, on the other hand, was under the category of *musica artificiale*. For Pontio, however, all music which issued from human action, both vocal and instrumental, was subsumed under the

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discussion is from Biagio Rossetti, *Libellus de rudimentis musices* (Verona: Stephanum & Nicholinis de Sabio, 1529; facsimile edition, New York: Broude Bros., 1968), [1]. Pontio's is not an exact reading. The ultimate source is the *Lucidarium* of Marchetto of Padua. See Jan W. Herlinger, *The Lucidarium of Marchetto of Padua: A Critical Edition, Translation and Commentary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 85.

FIGURE 2  
Pontio and Zarlino's Division of Music





category of *musica artificiale*.<sup>18</sup> He was well aware of his break with the tradition represented by Zarlino:

It is true that the first two [*musica plana* and *musica figurata*] could be in part attributed to [*musica*] *naturale*, since they employ natural instruments. Nonetheless, I number them among the artificial.<sup>19</sup>

In this distinction, Pontio is the more pragmatic. By erasing the natural/artificial distinction between vocal and instrumental music, he makes it easier to speak of them in equal terms. He was later to be taken to task by Artusi, who took this and other discussions as an indication that

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<sup>18</sup> This bipartite division of natural and artificial seems to reflect an older tradition, separate from that of Boethius, with its roots in the writings of Martianus Capella and John Scottus Erigena. See Calvin M. Bower, "Natural and Artificial Music: The Origins and Development of an Aesthetic Concept," *Musica Disciplina* XXV (1971), 17-31. Ironically, this system embodies a Neo-Platonic principle that practical music is but a reflection of the ideal, found in *Musica Naturale*, suggesting a higher place for the latter, which is at odds with Pontio's overall schema. Pontio's division may also reflect that of Giovanni Maria Artusi, found in the *L'Arte del contraponto* (Venice: Vincenti, 1586/1598; facsimile edition, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969), 1, which reproduces Zarlino's system but uses the same Natural/Artificial dichotomy found in Pontio's.

<sup>19</sup> "Vero è, che le due prime si potrebbeno in parte attribuire alla Naturale; perche in esse s'adoperano instrumenti naturali, pur io l'hò numerate frá l'Artificiali." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 3.

Pontio was denying the differences in tuning between the voice and instruments.<sup>20</sup>

Pontio spends little time discussing the concepts of *musica humana* and *musica mundana*, giving only the barest outline of their subject matter, and pointing out that knowledge of these subjects required a fair background in Philosophy and Astrology. He then briefly defines the three types of artificial music: *musica plana*, *musica figurata* and *musica istromentale*. After this, Pontio gives the standard distinction of the speculative and practical musician and, like Zarlino before him, goes to great lengths to distinguish the *cantore*, the mere singer of notes, from the *musico*.

The remainder of the first part is given over to a discussion of the basis and derivation of musical proportion from that of equality to the *genere multiplice superpartiente*. He ends by noting briefly that it is from these ratios that are born the notes of music, referring Hettore to writers from Boethius to Galilei "each of whom have amply

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<sup>20</sup> Artusi, *L'Artusi, ovvero delle imperfettioni della moderna musica* (Venice: Giacomo Vincenti, 1600; facsimile edition, Bologna: Forni, 1968), 8-9. See Chapter Seven below for a full discussion of this.

talked of this."<sup>21</sup> With this, Pontio ends his discussion of the speculative matters he believed necessary for the student, promising in their next meeting to discuss more important matters such as the difference between counterpoint and composition. Within this brief section, it is clear that he saw speculative matters as of little essential value for his student. It was enough that he have a knowledge of the scope--but not necessarily the detail--of the speculative art; but more importantly, it was necessary to know the difference between the singer and the musician, and to have a cursory knowledge of the numerical basis of the consonance. With that background, the student was at least marginally equipped to enter into a discussion of the practical matters of music.

With the second *ragionamento*, Pontio begins his treatment of what is the heart of this treatise, the practice of counterpoint. But at the same time, he is clear in his belief that it is but a stage in the development of the musician. In speaking of florid counterpoint he states:

. . . and this second [type of counterpoint] is that which is of use to those who wish to make

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<sup>21</sup> " . . . & se più desiderate sapere di queste consonantie, come da diverse proportioni vengono, non vi partirete da Boetio, & dal Fogliano da Modena, & dalle scintille del Lanfranco Parmegiano, & dal Zarlino, & ancora da Vicentio Galieli [sic] Fiorentino, perche ciascuno di loro ampiamente [sic] n'hà parlato." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 20.

music their profession: because from this counterpoint you pass on to composition; and from this comes, then, different varieties of composition: Masses, Motets, Psalms, Hymns, Lamentations, and Ricercars . . .<sup>22</sup>

With this, along with a brief distinction between simple and florid counterpoint, Paolo informs his student that there are three things which he must possess in order to be a successful contrapuntist: a knowledge of the consonances and dissonances and how they are used; an understanding of the modes and how they are formed; and finally a knowledge of the qualities that a counterpoint sung above a cantus firmus must have in order that it not be mistaken for a duo--that is to say, a composed piece. This latter was as intriguing a question to Hettore as it is to us at first sight, and Hettore immediately asks the obvious: how do they differ, being that they are both for two voices?<sup>23</sup> In a nice bit of maneuvering doubtlessly designed to keep

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22 " . . . & questo secondo è quello, che conviene à coloro, che di Musica vogliono far professione: perche con questo contrapunto ve ne passate alla compositione; dalla quale vengono poi tante variate compositioni: come sono Messe, Motetti, Salmi, Hinni, Lamentationi, & Ricercari . . ." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 21.

23 This is an interesting question on a number of levels, as will be seen. But first and foremost, in warning the would-be contrapuntist that his two-voice counterpoint could be confused with a "duo" suggests that Pontio was of the opinion that counterpoint was not a fully spontaneous art. If otherwise, one would assume that the distinction between the two would lie immediately in the *all'improvviso* nature of the counterpoint.

Hettore's interest by begging a tantalizing question, Paolo assures him that "on this matter there should be no doubt," and that it in its proper place it would be discussed.

That proper place, however, is not in the second *ragionamento*, which is given over to an exhaustive treatment of the various consonances and dissonances. The approach taken here is a more carefully organized version of that taken by Tinctoris in his *Liber de arte contrapuncti*: that is, explanation by means of a listing of voice-leading<sup>24</sup>. After a quick explanation of the variety of consonances (perfect and imperfect) and some general rules about their use, Paolo systematically lists the various voice leadings.

Pontio's approach in this section is very simple and well-defined. Each interval, from the unison to the seventh, is discussed, beginning with the consonances and then passing on to the dissonances. For each, some comment is made about the makeup of the interval, but the majority of time is spent on the various voice-leadings (*passaggi*)--enumerated and then explained--as is seen in his discussion of the interval of the fifth:

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<sup>24</sup> Johannes Tinctoris, *The Art of Counterpoint (Liber de arte contrapuncti)*, trans. Albert Seay, Musicological Studies and Documents, 5 (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1961), 22-83 (Chapters III-XVIII). By contrast to Pontio's explication, the passages of each interval are presented by Tinctoris in strict ascending order, starting with the unison.

Now I will begin to tell you about the perfect fifth; and I say that this has six *passaggi*: the first from the Fifth to the Sixth, the second is from the Fifth to the Octave, the third from the Fifth to the Third, the fourth from the Fifth to the Unison, the sixth from the Fifth to the Second.<sup>25</sup>

Following this, the various possibilities for each *passaggio* are presented, with musical examples and citations of compositions to illustrate. Pontio does not limit the discussion to correct voice-leading, however. Some are presented as less than optimal movements, some manifestly forbidden, and a number are recommended as usable in composition of more than three voices, but not in counterpoint; or in composition of more than four voices, but not in *terzetti*, and so on. The citations of compositions are for the most part extremely accurate and easily found by the student; and even when the rhythmic structure of the passage in question is somewhat different from the model given in his explanation, the principle is easy to grasp.

The voice-leading rules presented by Pontio offer no great departure from the common practice of the time, although doubtless any theorist of Pontio's day could quibble over one or two passages. Pontio's presentation is

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<sup>25</sup> "Hora comincierò à dirvi della Quinta perfetta; & vi dico, che questa havrà sei passaggi; Il primo dalla Quinta alla Sesta; Il secondo dalla Quinta alla Ottava; Il terzo dalla Quinta alla Terza; Il Quarto dalla Quinta all'Unisono; Il quinto dalla Quinta alla Settima; Il sesto dalla Quinta alla Seconda." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 43.

well-ordered and easily understood. His approach is not completely strict, and he does from time to time wander to bring up related matters. For example, in his discussion of the passages of the unison he returns to a discussion of counterpoint in general, and we learn a little more about his concept of counterpoint when he notes that:

. . . the more your counterpoint and composition moves with conjunct intervals, the easier it will be for the singer . . .<sup>26</sup>

Thus he implies that the contrapuntist and the singer were not always one in the same, or in other words that counterpoint could be in part a compositional product.<sup>27</sup>

Paolo also instructs Hettore in other matters in the course of this section, such as the use of *musica ficta* and accidentals, but in doing so, Pontio presents nothing new or at variance with other writers. Paolo ends his discourse by

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<sup>26</sup> "quanto più il vostro contrapunto, & compositione andarà con movimento congiunto, tanto più sarà al Cantore facile . . ." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 32.

<sup>27</sup> This echoes, though not in as ironic a language, Nicola Vicentino's statement that "True counterpoint, or better-put, true composition over a *cantus firmus*, is that in which all the parts that are sung *alla mente* are written" (Il vero contrapunto, ò per dir meglio la vera compositione sopra il canto fermo sarà che tutte le parti, che si cantano alla mente, siano scritte . . .). Nicola Vicentino, *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* (Rome: Antonio Barre, 1555; facsimile edition ed. Edward E. Lowinsky as vol. 17 of *Documenta Musicologia*, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1959), fol. 80.

once more promising Hettore to explain the difference between counterpoint and duo, as well as hinting at other matters to be discussed in the final section.

To begin the third *ragionamento*--which has as its core the discussion of modality, the second requirement Pontio deemed necessary to the contrapuntist--Paolo gets immediately to the point by instructing his student on the nature of counterpoint. What proves to be an original approach to the definition of this genre is indicated immediately in Paolo's six rules of counterpoint:

. . . the manner in which one forms a counterpoint above a plainsong or figured song of two voices is this: First, that as ordinarily as possible, it will proceed with conjunct motion. Second, it will contain a number of beautiful phrases, and the longer it is, the more this is appropriate. Third, it will have some inventions repeated in different ways [with different harmonies]; and this advice, among all the others, should be observed not only in counterpoint of two and three voices, but as well in composition of four and five voices. Fourth, that one does not find in it movements that cannot be sung by the singer, such as movements of the seventh or ninth; the major sixth ascending and descending or the minor sixth descending (but this interval may be used in ascending), and this is said also for compositions of more voices. Fifth, few, if any, cadences should be made; and if some are made, they should be made for the repetition of an invention, or to make a slight rest, or to start a new invention. Sixth, as much as possible, the parts should not approach the octave or unison on a strong beat with the bass ascending; and this



when the [preceding] tenth or third is major, but if they are minor, then one can use this passage.<sup>28</sup>

With these rules, we see clearer indication of a stylistic distinction between counterpoint and composition. In general, the majority of Pontio's rules in this section seem just as applicable to composition, and he suggests as much. These particular rules, however, appear designed to focus on the simple and exposed nature of the two-part structure of the typical counterpoint, stressing the need for variety in long compositions, and the avoidance of intervallic progressions which would stand out in this texture. Most notable is the emphasis on cadences and rests--suggesting a more

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28 " . . . il modo, che s'hà da tenere volendo formare un contrapunto sopra de uno canto Plano, ò figurato de due voci, è questo. Primo, che vada ordinariamente più, che può con movimento congiunto. Secondo, habbia in se alcune belle tirate, & quanto più in longo s'estenderanno, tanto più saranno propiate à detto contrapunto. Terzo, habbia qualche replica d'inventione per modi diversi; & questo avvertimento frà tutti gli altri si deve osservare non solamente nel contrapunto di due voci, & tre; ma ancora nelle compositioni di quattro, & cinque voci. Quarto, non si trovano in lui movimenti, che cantare non si possano; come movimenti di Settima, di Nona, & di Sesta maggiore nell' ascendere, & discendere, & di Sesta minore nel discendere; perche nell' ascendere si può fare; & questo sia detto ancora per le compositioni di più voci. Quinto, tenga poche, anzi pochissime cadenze; et, se pur se ne facessero, siano fatte per replicare l'inventione, overo per fare un poco di riposo, over per trovare nuove inventioni. Sesto, si trovano le parti manco, che si può in Octava, over Unisone in principio di misura; quando la parte Bassa ascende, & questo sarà, quando la Decima, & la Terza saranno maggiori, ma quando elle saranno minore il passaggio si potrà fare." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 89-90.

continuous, arabesque-like nature for the counterpoint, without any long pauses in the added part.<sup>29</sup>

Further evidence of this stylistic differentiation is found as Paolo explains the three types of counterpoint: *diminuito*, *legato*, and *fugato*. His definition of the latter two are the typical ones; *contrapunto legato* is that made with syncopated note values against the cantus firmus, and *contrapunto fugato* involves the repetition of figures, either from the *cantus prius factus* to the added voice, or within the added voice itself.<sup>30</sup> His definition of *contrapunto diminuito*, however, places the stylistic differences right at the forefront:

*Diminuito* means that in it one does not find breves, nor semibreves, nor dotted minims placed on a strong beat; rather it is constantly in motion, now with semiminims, now with chromas, and

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<sup>29</sup> A later writer who appropriated much from Pontio, Valerio Bona, in his *Regole del contraponto et compositione brevemente raccolte da diversi auttori* (Casale: Bernardo Grasso, 1595), 29-30, presents these same rules, changing the sixth to read "that you never make a cadence" (che tu non facci mai Cadenza).

<sup>30</sup> "Fugato sarà, quando il contrapunto seguirà le medesime figure della parte; over quando replicherà due, tre, & più volte per diversi modi un medesimo passaggio." He later expands the definition to include canons written above a cantus firmus. Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 90-92.

now with semibreves and dotted minims made in syncopation.<sup>31</sup>

Thus for Pontio the overriding distinction between counterpoint, defined as a performance practice, and composition is not one of the manner of its creation--since both could be written rather than improvised--but rather one of the style of the end product. Even in diminished counterpoint, which in its freedom from the obligations of *legato* and *fugato* style would seem to be the equivalent of composition, Pontio presents a clear stylistic distinction. The style of the counterpoint is a constantly moving, syncopated one, never coming to a full rest, and constantly spinning out its melody against the *cantus prius factus*--whether that part is a *canto plano* or a *canto figurato*. His examples in this section, as well as those used in the *Dialogo*, all follow this particular style, which can be seen in Example 1.

Further stylistic distinctions are found as Paolo explains the difference between counterpoint and duo. Along with the qualities previously mentioned, he adds that a

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<sup>31</sup> "diminuïto s'intende, ch'in lui non si truonino [sic, = trovino] Brevi, nè Semibreui, nè Minime, co'l punto in principio di misura poste; ma sempre stia in continuo moto, hora con Semiminime, hora con Chrome, & hora con Semibreui, & Minime col punto in elevatione della misura fatte." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 90.

Example 1. Pietro Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 90: Example of *contrapunto diminuito*.

counterpoint will not contain a rest of a breve or semi-breve, and also that while in a two-voiced composition the overall range should not exceed a twelfth or a thirteenth, the contrapuntist is completely free to go beyond the fifteenth, or even farther:

. . . as the contrapuntist wishes and is comfortable, and sometimes he can pass with a diminution from the Bass [range] to the Soprano [range], and from the Soprano to the Bass, which you rarely see in a duo.<sup>32</sup>

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32 " . . . si come al contrapuntista piace, & gli torna comodo. & alle volte se ne passerà con una diminutione di Semiminime di Basso in Soprano, & di Soprano in Basso; ilche rare volte nel Duo si vede." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 93. Tinctoris noted this quality of counterpoint, and stated it as his rationale for extending his discussion of the intervals to the twenty-second. See Tinctoris, Chapter II, 18.

These stylistic conventions were not, it appears, absolutely obligatory, for in an example of counterpoint against a *canto figurato* found in the *Dialogo* some of the rules against semibreves on a strong beat are ignored (Example 2). It should be noted, however, that this is a counterpoint *con obligationi*--in this case a constantly repeating figure--and thus free from some of the specific rules of the genre.

Example 2. Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo*, 91: Example of *contrapunto con obligationi* against a *canto figurato*.

Thus, along with the normally accepted distinction between the practices of counterpoint and composition--that the former is improvised (or at least not notated)--Pontio adds information concerning specific stylistic features of the practice. In doing so, he provides a rare glimpse of

the realization of a performance practice that, by its unnotated nature, is all but hidden from us.

With the full definition of the generic aspects of counterpoint dispensed with, Pontio proceeds to explain the use of the modes, one of the most original and valuable sections of the treatise. The crux of his argument is, as in the question of the style of counterpoint, based on the idea of the requirements and properties of different genres, in this case the different modal approach found between those compositions based on the Psalm tone (Psalms and Magnificats), and those independent of the tones (Masses, Madrigals, and the like). Within these genres the recognition and organization of the mode is tied almost exclusively to the cadences.<sup>33</sup>

The significant elements of Pontio's discussion fall into three related areas. The first of these is the way in which the two generic approaches are clearly set out within polyphonic technique, thus giving a specific and differing set of cadences for the Psalm-based polyphonic works and those composed of free modality. Previous theorists had, when they even discussed modality within the context of polyphony, limited themselves to what we consider modality

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<sup>33</sup> Pontio does, at the end of his discussion (pages 119-121), address the question of identification of the mode by the opening of the melody, range, and the like, but this is clearly a secondary issue, as is his mention of clef configuration.

proper (as exhibited in Masses, Motets, and so on), presenting the allowable cadences for each and relying largely on principles of chant theory in doing so.<sup>34</sup> Pontio, on the other hand, makes a clear and systematic presentation of the cadential structures of each, providing for the first time a discussion of Psalm-based compositions completely within the sphere of polyphonic theory. A second important aspect of Pontio's presentation of the topic is the clear recognition of the interdependence of the two aspects of modality. While other theorists had allowed for a wide variety of cadences in polyphonic composition, Pontio was the first to attempt to justify these, in a systematic way, on the basis of the mode's relationship to the parallel Psalm tone--and vice versa. We see this in his explanation of the cadences for the first mode:

One can also make other cadences in this mode, such as on F which is valued almost as if it were a principal and terminating cadence, for the

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<sup>34</sup> These earlier theorists, such as Tinctoris and Aaron can be seen largely as either limited or expansive in their acceptance of non-standard cadential pitches, and no specific rationale can be found for their choices. A listing of Tinctoris's and Aaron's accepted cadential levels is included in Leeman L. Perkins, "Mode and Structure in the Masses of Josquin," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XXVI (1973), 200-201. In Zarlino, on the other hand, we can find a clear rationale, but he is far less expansive, discussing cadences on only first, third, and fifth degrees of the modal scale for each modal pair. See Zarlino, *Istitutioni*, 320-335. Other cadences are allowed; however they are not presented in the same systematic manner as in the *Ragionamento*.

fact that it is the mediant of the fifth [i.e. D-A], and also, the Psalm begins its intonation on this note.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, the third major aspect of this approach to modality is the systematic designation of a hierarchy of cadences within a modal structure and a clear description of the techniques used to articulate this hierarchy. Cadences are described by Pontio as "principal," or "terminating" to denote the strongest level, or "non-principal," or "non-terminating," to signify those which are more useful for subsidiary cadences. These three aspects--a generic approach to modality, the interdependence of cadential determinants, and a hierarchical system of cadence distribution--work in concert to produce Pontio's fully-realized modal system. As will be seen, their use as analytical tools reveals much about specific compositional approaches.<sup>36</sup>

The approach Pontio takes to explicating the material of this section is similar to that used by Zarlino in the fourth book of his *Istitutioni*. Each mode is discussed in turn, with the general features of the mode set forth, and

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<sup>35</sup> "Si possono ancora fare in detto Tuono altre cadenze, come nella corda F qual'è stimata quasi per cadenza principale, & terminata; per esser corda, che fà la medietà della Diapente, & anco i Salmi cominciano la sua intonazione in detta corda . . ." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 100.

<sup>36</sup> This topic will form the core of Chapter Five.



the cadences listed. This is followed by a short two-voice example illustrating the procedure of the mode. In keeping with his differentiation between genres, Pontio presents two examples for each, one illustrating the modal/cadential structure found in Masses, Motets and so on, the other presenting the same for Psalm-based compositions.

In addition, examples from the literature are cited to show how these cadences, in their various hierarchical positions, are used to articulate correctly a given mode or tone.<sup>37</sup> The general outline of this can be seen in Table 8, which lists the principal and secondary cadences for each mode as set forth in Pontio's text. Likewise, it lists the cadences for each of the Psalm tones. Pontio differs from Zarlino by discussing only the traditional eight modes. Following the conservative tradition, he views the other modes as irregular, suggesting that if the student were interested, he could find it all explained in Zarlino's *Istitutioni*.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The use of the terms "tone" and "mode" can be misleading, and Pontio is somewhat cavalier about mixing "tuono," and "modo." To avoid confusion I will use the term "mode" specifically for the procedure found in non-Psalm based composition, and "tone" for those pieces dependent for their structure on the Psalm or Magnificat tone.

<sup>38</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 120. As was seen earlier, Pontio had never been an exponent of the twelve-mode system, a source of contention with the organist at Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo.

TABLE 8  
Summary of Pontio's Rules on the Modes

MODE:	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Principal Cadences	D A	D A	E A	E A	F C	F C	G D	G C D
Secondary Cadences	F <sup>1</sup> C G	[F C G]	C <sup>1</sup> G B F	[CBF]	A <sup>1</sup> D G	A <sup>1</sup> Bb GD	A <sup>1</sup> E <sup>1</sup> C F	F A
Transposition <sup>2</sup>	YES	YES, G&D <sup>3</sup>	RARE	YES	NO	YES, C	?	?
Psalm Cadences	D A	D F	A C	E A	C A	F A	A E	C G
Other Psalm Cadences			G	G			D	F

<sup>1</sup> Cadences of enough strength to serve at end of a period, or at the introduction of a new subject. Usually related to cadential notes of the parallel Psalm-tone.

<sup>2</sup> Transposition by fourth with Bb. Variations noted.

<sup>3</sup> Transposition one octave higher.

By the end of the third *ragionamento*, Paolo has imparted to his student the basic knowledge needed to be a proficient contrapuntist, as well as the basic theoretical building blocks needed to pass on to composition. The fourth *ragionamento* concentrates on those techniques that would truly permit him to begin the perfection of that skill, and allow him to move into the more exalted ranks of the *musico*. Paolo begins his final conversation with Hettore by introducing the principles of rhythmic notation: mode, tempus, and prolation. As was previously noted, no

time is spent introducing the rudiments of notation, the names of the notes, and so on; just as previous sections had presumed a knowledge of matters pertaining to the *cantore*, so here Paolo assumes in Hettore a basic command of the material.

Little need be said about this section. The standard fare of notational problems is offered, including questions of old versus modern ways of notating proportions. It is only worth noting that this is clearly aimed at perfecting the skills of the composer, not merely at producing a competent polyphonist. Its placement here clearly indicates the shift away from the more basic skills of the contrapuntist toward the refined art of the composer.

These preliminaries being taken care of, Paolo then presents a series of specific items useful to the composer in perfecting his composition, beginning with the correct use of the semiminim and chroma and continuing with various problematic voice leadings, questions of *musica ficta* and the like. The presentation at this point is random; it is, in the end, simply a miscellany of advice. This, however, leads to the final, and most widely known section of the treatise, Pontio's discussion of the specific techniques for

the various genres, in order: Motet, Mass, Psalm, Magnificat, Hymn, Lamentation, Ricercar and Madrigal.<sup>39</sup>

For the most part, the statements provided here are general in nature, pointing to questions not of specific technique, but of style. For example, Paolo's advice concerning the composition of the Motet is as follows:

The manner, or style as we would say, in making a Motet is grave, and quiet, wherein one sees the parts moving with gravity, and in particular the Bass, and the composer should follow this order from the beginning to the end; and equally, the inventions used ought to be grave.<sup>40</sup>

This contrasts completely with the style of the Madrigal:

The inventions of the Madrigal ought to be brief, no more than two or three semibreves in

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<sup>39</sup> Of these, his comments on the Mass have been carefully examined in Lewis Lockwood, "On Parody as Term and Concept in 16th-Century Music," *Aspects of Medieval and Renaissance Music: A Birthday Offering to Gustave Reese*, ed. Jan LaRue (New York: Norton, 1966), 560-575, and "A View of the Early Sixteenth-Century Parody Mass," *The Department of Music, Queens College of New York Twenty-fifth Anniversary Festschrift*, ed. Albert Mell (New York: Queens College Press, 1964), 53-77, and those concerning Psalm and Magnificat in James Armstrong, "How to Compose a Psalm: Ponzio and Cerone Compared," *Studi musicali* VII (1978), 103-139. The reader is referred to these studies. The other categories deserve and await similar study.

<sup>40</sup> "Il Modo, ò stile, che dir vogliamo, volendo far un Motetto, è grave, & quieto; dove si vede le parti moversi con gravità, & in particolar la parte Bassa; & il compositore deve servare tal ordine con le parti dal principio fin'all'ultimo; et parimente le inventioni debbono esser gravi." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 154.

length . . . otherwise they would not be appropriate to the Madrigal, but more to the Motet.<sup>41</sup>

These general statements are of course closely related to Vicentino's exhortation concerning correct style as presented in the fourth book of his *L'antica musica*.<sup>42</sup> This debt to Vicentino is especially notable in relation to Vicentino's advice that to achieve a proper style in a sacred piece, the composer should have one part remain still while another moves, and vice versa--the exact approach Pontio employs in describing the grave style needed for the Motet and Mass:

One achieves this gravity, or grave style in this manner: that when two parts sing, and in one is found a figure of a breve, the other then moves with figures of minims or semiminims, or with a semibreve in syncopation.<sup>43</sup>

Not all of Pontio's advice is restricted to general comments concerning stylistic propriety. The most noted

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41 "Le inventioni del Madrigale debbono esser brevi, non più di due tempi di Semibreui, over di tre . . . che s'altramente fossero, non sarebbero proprie del Madrigale; ma piú presto da Motetto . . ." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 160.

42 Nicola Vicentino, 78v-81.

43 "Si serva la gravità, è lo stile grave in questo modo, che quando due parte cantano, & ch'in una di esse parti si truova una figura di Breve, l'altra si moverà poi con figure di Minime, over di Semiminime, over con una figura di Semibreve, posta in elevatione della misura . . ." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 154. The relevant section in Vicentino, *L'antica musica*, is Chapter XX: Del modo di star fermo & moversi nelle compositioni, 81-81v.

example is that dealing with the process of writing a Mass in imitation of another work, but he also deals with matters of form, for example the various ways in which the tone can be set within a Magnificat.<sup>44</sup> In addition, he gives valuable insight into subtle differences of genre and better indication of a composer's awareness of these nuances. This, indeed, is the true value of this section, for while it does not immediately appear to give us all the information we might wish on a particular genre, it is a rich source for the study of the awareness of genre by the composer and theorist. Such is the case in discussing the Ricercar. The genre has rightly been linked to the Motet in terms of the overall compositional approach, but often we tend to confuse procedure with style. Pontio makes clear, however, the contemporary distinction in the nature of the material used for the composition, pointing out that the invention should be long so that it is clearly heard by the listener, and that, unlike in the Motet, this invention may be repeated again and again, or indeed may be the sole subject of the entire Ricercar.<sup>45</sup>

With this section, Paolo comes to an end of his discussion, hinting at the contents of the *Dialogo* by informing

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<sup>44</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 157-158, see Armstrong, "How to Compose," 116-117.

<sup>45</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 159-160.

the student that there is more for him to learn, such as the varieties of canon and different types of contrapuntal obligations--the material which was to make up the entire third *dialogo*. At this point, the student has reached a definable plateau in his studies. He has mastered the basic technique of counterpoint as well as composition; he can arrange the notes correctly following the rules of consonance and dissonance treatment and in accordance with the structure of the mode. More importantly, rather than simply being able to produce polyphony, he has been given the knowledge to shape specific types of pieces within the qualities of each genre. He is without doubt at this point a *musico* by Pontio's definition, but there remains more to make him the perfect musician. This, then, is the role of the *Dialogo*.

#### The *Dialogo* (1595)

Pontio's second treatise, published in the last years of his life, serves as a continuation of the program of learning begun in the *Ragionamento*. The subtitle of the treatise is misleading in this aspect, however, for even though it succinctly sums up the general contents, it suggests a reiteration of material from the previous treatise:

. . . wherein is treated the theory and practice of music, and also is demonstrated the diverse types of counterpoint and canon.<sup>46</sup>

Likewise the general structure and approach of the two treatises--that of moving from speculative to practical matters--suggests a similarity of content and purpose.<sup>47</sup> Yet throughout the *Dialogo* it is understood that in writing it Pontio presupposed the knowledge found in the *Ragionamento*, and that it aimed at transcending this knowledge.

On the other hand, it does a disservice to the *Dialogo* to view it simply as an advanced version of the earlier treatise, a sequel. Instead, the two volumes, taken together, enunciate Pontio's overall approach to instruction with admirable clarity. It was the purpose of the *Dialogo* to complete the process of education for the student begun in the *Ragionamento* by giving him the advanced techniques of canon and advanced counterpoint to perfect his abilities as a composer. In concert with this, the student needed an understanding of those speculative matters which were within the purview of the perfect musician Pontio described in the

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46 ". . . ove si tratta della Theorica è Prattica di Musica, & anco si mostra la diversità de Contraponti & Canoni"

47 John W. Moore, in his article "Pietro Ponzio," in *Complete Encyclopaedia of Music*, ed. John W. Moore (Boston: Ditson, 1880; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1973), 741, indeed stated as much, suggesting that the *Dialogo* was, in fact, the same work as the *Ragionamento*.



*Ragionamento*. Finally, such a perfect artist required some understanding of the critical aspects of music: what makes a piece good, what specific techniques to concentrate on to achieve this end, and, as a composer, produce works of admirable quality. Also implied is the suggestion that he should also be a discriminating listener, so that he would be able to choose the best works as models for learning. These three broad areas of knowledge--speculative, practical and aesthetic--form the three sections of the work, the trivium to the *Ragionamento's* quadrivium.

Like the *Ragionamento*, the *Dialogo* is in the form of a series of conversations set within the circle of Pontio's Veronese patrons. A more exalted tone is set, however, for the place of the conversations is the Accademia Filarmonica of the city, and the master of the conversation is none other than Count Alessandro Bevilacqua, whose students are likewise nobility, the Counts Giordano Sarego and Marco Verità. It is thus more a conversation among equals, but one in which Alessandro is clearly the scholar to whom the others turn for the explanation of these matters.

The first conversation presents information of a specifically speculative nature. The scope is limited, however. Alessandro expounds upon the inventors of music as well as music's uses and misuses. The tone is distinctly non-secular. The inventor of music was Jubal, as it is

stated in Genesis, and all other claims made of the parentage of Apollo, Mercury, and the like, are simply errors due the distance in time and ignorance of the writers.

Pythagoras, on the other hand, was surely the first after the flood to delve into the science of music, so that he too, in a limited way, can be identified as a father of music. Pontio's definition of the nature and use of music follows this line as well, for its primary purpose is the praise of the Creator, and its abuses are of a secular character:

. . . often [this purpose] is badly usurped by many of the moderns, and it is exercised in praise of the mortal, ephemeral, and the profane, putting in music words both filthy and shameful. This is, above all, abominable for being a falsification of the primary character of so noble a science . . .<sup>48</sup>

Alessandro also declares that, concurrent with its lofty usefulness, music has a number of powers--among them the ethical powers posited by Plato--and was also the one science on which all the arts, from Architecture to Oratory, were dependent.

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48 " . . . tutta volta è da molti moderni malamente usurpata, & essercitata in lodare cose mortali, caduche, e profane, ponendo in Musica parole lorde, e vergognose. Cosa sommamente abominevole, essendosi per questo falsificato il primo carattere di sì nobile scienza . . ." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 7-8.

The bulk of the first dialogue is focused on the numerical proportions and the consonances and dissonances they express. The tuning system he presents is a simple just intonation scheme virtually identical to that presented by Fogliano, and Pontio does little more than present the ratios and their mathematical proof.<sup>49</sup>

The second dialogue, while no longer than the first, forms the real heart of the treatise and comprises a detailed listing of nine qualities by which composers can vary in their writing. As will be seen in Chapter Six, these form the basis of a critical apparatus that, while not as subjective and aesthetic-based as that later presented by Zacconi in the second book of his *Musica Prattica* of 1622, nonetheless present a coherent standard of criteria for making judgments about pieces and their composers. In many ways, the material presented is a continuation of what was presented in the fourth *ragionamento*, and the underlying principle of discrimination and categorization is ever present in the discussion. The purpose, akin to that of the fourth *ragionamento*, is practical: to allow the composer to

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<sup>49</sup> Ludovico Fogliano, *Musica Theorica Ludovici Foliani Mutinensis: docte simul ac dilucide pertactata: in qua quamplures de harmonicis intervallis: non prius tentatur: continentur speculationes* (Venice: Johannes Antonius & Fratres de Sabio, 1529). For an explanation of Fogliano's system, see J. Murray Barbour, *Tuning and Temperament* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State College Press, 1951), 94-95.

understand what to look for in a work that is worthy of praise.

The nine points presented by Pontio are: invention, style, accommodation of the consonances and dissonances, consideration of the words, invention made according to the mode, learned style, introduction of new inventions in such a way as to be heard by the listener, adherence to the mode, and use of cadences outside of the mode.<sup>50</sup> All are presented as a practical dichotomy, suggesting that a composer either followed the precept or did not. This practical focus highlights--indeed it is predicated on--the view of the superiority of practice over theory. This view appears as foreign to the listeners of Alessandro's lecture as it must have to the contemporary reader brought up on Zarlino. For Pontio's definition of the musician, that of a practical musician made perfect by his knowledge of science, is the exact opposite of Zarlino, who stated:

The musician is he who is skilled in music and has the ability to judge--not by sound [alone] but by that reason that pertains to this science.

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<sup>50</sup> Pontio's terms are: *Inventione, stile, accomodar le consonanze e dissonanze, consideratione alle parole, inventioni fatte secondo il tuono, compositione più dotta e ingegnosa, inventione che si osservarà, oservando il tuono, and cadenze fuori il tuono.* The meaning of these terms will be explored in Chapter Six.

Which person, if he can accomplish things pertaining to the practice, will be more perfect in his science and can be called a perfect musician.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, for Zarlino, theory is the primary and superior aspect of the art, and to the musician reading Zarlino, Vicentino, or others, clearly the more difficult. Alessandro confounds his listeners even more by claiming, instead, that practice is more difficult, as well as more important to the musician. He defends his point of view by emphasizing that while one can study all of the great theoretical works, they will not teach one to compose. This is because while theorists in general do not disagree as to what, for example, constitutes a consonance or a dissonance, composers differ greatly in their practice. And it is only when these differences are understood that one can perfect his art, surely a more difficult task than the acquisition of theoretical knowledge.

The nine differences between composers form the core of this practical knowledge, and Pontio explains them in a section that covers a wide area from the completely practical to the aesthetic. But throughout, the final judge is the "ear of the trained musician." This is, of course, the

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<sup>51</sup> "Musico esser colui, che nella Musica è perito, & hà facultà di giudicare, non per suono: ma per ragione quello, che in tale scienza di contiene. Il quale se alla cose appertinenti alla prattica darà opera, sarà la sua scienza più perfetta." Zarlino, *Istitutioni*, 21.

complete break with Zarlino's ideal, and once more, Alessandro's disciples voice their disbelief of the idea that sound can be the superior of reason. Alessandro answers with an example of two voice-leadings that while "made with reason, using singable movements, and conforming to the rule," were not pleasing to the ear.<sup>52</sup> Thus, it is the ear of the musician, carefully trained as to the differences between correct and incorrect practice--an ability not acquired solely though theoretical discussion--that leads him to the perfection of his art. And Pontio uses the nine differences to highlight those areas to which the composer must constantly be attentive.

With this discussion, Pontio completed the philosophical core of the *Dialogo*. The student had learned that portion of speculative music deemed important by Pontio, and had learned the aesthetic applications of the practical art within a framework that points the way to continued mastery--the application of the well trained critical ear to the many questions that went beyond the scope of theoretical knowledge. There was little of basic substance left for Pontio's students to learn--merely those musical graces with which he could elevate his musical utterance. For Pontio, this took two forms. The first was a continuation, on much

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<sup>52</sup> " . . . fatte con ragione, secondo i movimenti cantabili, & conformi alle regole . . ." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 70.

the same level, of the type of random advice offered in the fourth *ragionamento*. This material comprises the end of the second dialogue. Little is offered here that is worthy of note, or that has not been presented in other sections of his treatise. In many ways it serves to move toward the final aspect he wishes to discuss. A composer, according to Pontio, must use all of these skills to produce a piece full of good and pleasing harmonies; but beyond this, he must show his learned aspect by being skilled in the techniques of advanced contrapuntal and canonic devices. These techniques form virtually the entirety of the last dialogue.

Within this final section, Pontio presents a compendium of contrapuntal technique. First he briefly explains the nature of the various obligations of counterpoint, such as counterpoint made of all consonances, or without the interval of the fifth, or made of the repetition of one passage. From there he presents the varieties of double and triple counterpoint.

After this, Pontio discusses the difference between *fuga* and *imitatione*, and here he presents one of the clearer expositions of the concept of imitation and tonal answer, reflecting more exactly than Zarlino the reality of contemporary practice. He defines imitation (as opposed to *fuga obbligato*, which involves an exact reproduction of a melody, and *fuga sciolta*, which starts exactly but then departs at

the composer's will) as having a difference either in pitch/solmization or rhythm.<sup>53</sup>

Following this, the treatise is ended with an even larger compendium of canonic techniques, including double canons, inverted canons, those combining the two (the most complex being a double canon in inversion at the third and ninth), canons with interchangeable voices and finally four-part canons. Each is presented with a short example and minimal commentary.<sup>54</sup> This final dialogue ends with effusive praise for the gift of knowledge offered by Alessandro. The cool breezes that the guests looked forward to at the beginning of their visit are transformed in their final tribute to the "sweet Zephyrs" of his goodness, and the harsh rays of the Veronese sun they sought to avoid become and the rays of his "clear intellect."

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<sup>53</sup> "L'imitatione sarà questa, che imitarà un Motetto, Madrigale, ò Canzone con gli istessi movimenti; mà non servirà il valore delle figure del Motetto, ò Madrigale, od altra cosa, che si sia, nè tampoco alle volte gli stessi Tuoni, & Semituoni." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 106. James Haar, "Zarlino's Definition of Fugue and Imitation," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XXIV (1971), 236, makes note of Pontio's explanation: "Pontio's definition is something of an improvement upon Zarlino's, for there are certain points of imitation in sixteenth-century music that are inexact in rhythm as well as pitch, with the latter being a matter of different intervals, not just of different hexachordal structure."

<sup>54</sup> A number of the examples of double counterpoint were used by Pietro Cerone in his *El Melopeo y Maestro*, 2 vols. (Naples: Gargano & Nucci, 1613; facsimile edition, ed. Robert Stevenson, New York, Da Capo, 1971). See Chapter Seven below.



In the end, Pontio's intellect shines through as well, and in looking back, the progression of musical knowledge becomes clear, its logic inarguable. Nonetheless, some questions remain, and certain concepts, looked at in isolation, are not perfectly clear. Some of these find their explanation within the other half of Pontio's creative personality, the music. Still others, as we will see, find explication in the merging of theory and practice.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE COMPOSITIONS OF PIETRO PONTIO: AN INTRODUCTION

Even more than his theoretical writings, the music of Pietro Pontio has been ignored by modern scholars. This has, in part, been due to the simple lack of availability, as no complete pieces exist in modern edition.<sup>1</sup> Another problem is the lack of an accurate assessment of Pontio's output and its current availability.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The published excerpts comprise a section from a Magnificat published in Giovanni Battista Martini, *Esemplare o sia saggio fondamentale pratico di contrapunto sopra il canto fermo*, 2 vols. (Bologna: Lelio della Volpe, 1774-1776), I, 178-180; the Agnus Dei from his *Missa Exaudi Domine* in Federico Mompellio, "La Cappella del Duomo dal 1573 al 1714," in *Storia di Milano*, ed. Giovanni Alfieri, 17 vols. (Milan: Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri per la storia di Milano, 1953-1966), XVI, 533-534; and the modal examples from the third part of the *Ragionamento* published as *15 Kadenzen in den acht Kirchentönen in Orgelmusik an europäischen Kathedralen III: Bergamo/Passau*, ed. Eberhard Kraus as vol. 9 of *Cantantibus organis* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> Roland Jackson, "Pietro Pontio," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1980), XV, 83, for example, lists a separate book of Motets from 1582 that does not exist, inaccurately describes the second printing of the book of Psalms (1589) as a second book, and erroneously suggests that it, along with the first book of five-voice Masses, and the book of Magnificats, are lost.

### The Scope of Pontio's Compositions

It is still not possible to make a complete and accurate estimation of Pontio's musical corpus, but modern listings, supplemented by notations from early bibliographies, printers lists, and citations in the treatises of Pontio and Cerone make it possible to come to a better approximation of this body of work, an annotated list of which is presented in Appendix 1. A condensed census is shown in Table 9.

By any estimation, the sheer quantity of Pontio's compositions is impressive, especially considering the relatively short duration of his creative life, which spanned little more than thirty years. His published music appeared within a period of only twenty-five years. Within that time, he published at least seven books of Masses comprising at the minimum twenty-five works, and in all likelihood thirty.<sup>3</sup> This includes Masses for four, five, six, and eight voices.

Pontio also published three books of Motets for five voices. From the one book that exists in its entirety, and the second, for which only three partbooks remain, he can be credited with thirty-four Motets for five, six, eight and

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<sup>3</sup> This assumes that the lost prints contain at least four Masses each, the standard number in this period and typical for Pontio's collections.

TABLE 9  
Census of the Musical Works of Pietro Pontio

Genre	Complete	Partial	Lost	Total
Masses (4-voice)	0	9	4?	13?
Masses (5-voice)	7	0	3-4+	10-11+
Masses (6-voice)	0	0	2-4	2-4
Masses (8-voice)	1	0	?	1
Motets	20	14	2-15+	36-49+
Magnificats	21	0	0	21
Psalms	17	0	0	17
Hymns	21	0	0	21
Lamentations	0	0	?	?
Madrigals	0	1	0	1
Total	87	24	11- 27+	122- 132+

twelve voices.<sup>4</sup> From the third book, which is documented both by citations in the treatises and a notation in a publisher's list, two Motets can be confirmed.<sup>5</sup> It is reasonable to assume that this collection, which gives no indication of being a shared compilation, would contain at

<sup>4</sup> Each of these collections also contains one Motet by Archangelo Crivelli.

<sup>5</sup> Pontio, *Dialogo . . . ove si tratta della theorica e prattica di musica . . .* (Parma: Viotto, 1595), 51, cites the Motets *Lamentabatur Jacob* and *Quemadmodum desiderat Cervus ad fontes aquarum* from this collection. Three books of Motets are also noted in a list from the publisher Scotto dating from 1596 that will be cited presently.

least ten to fifteen works, placing the number of Motets at around forty-nine.

All other sacred genres are represented by single collections or pieces in anthologies, and these securely documentable works all represent Pontio's compositions for Vespers services. His 1589 collection of Psalms, which as noted above probably originally appeared in 1578, contains fifteen Psalms, with two other settings appearing in anthologies from late in Pontio's career.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the 1578 collection also contains three Magnificat settings, augmenting the eighteen that appear in his 1584 Magnificat print. Finally, all of his twenty-one published Hymns are found in his final printed collection, dating from 1596. The only other verifiable work by Pontio is a single Madrigal which appears in a 1596 compilation that includes, among other authors, Palestrina, Giovanni Gastoldi, and Luca Marenzio.<sup>7</sup>

Along with these, it is likely that Pontio also published one book of Lamentations. Evidence for this collection is found in the 1596 list noted above from the publishing house of Girolamo Scotto, which specifies a

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<sup>6</sup> *Sacra omnium solemnitatum Psalmodia vespertina* . . . Venice: Amadino, 1592) RISM 1592<sup>3</sup>; and *Psalmodia vespertina integra omnium solemnitatum* . . . a diversis in arte musica excellentissimis viris (Milan: Francisci et Simonis Tini, 1596) RISM 1596<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> *Vittoria amorosa de diversi authori a cinque voci nuovamente stampata* (Venice: G. Vincenti, 1596) RISM 1596<sup>11</sup>. Only the altus, bassus, and quintus parts survive.

collection entitled simply "Pietro Pontio à 4" under the general heading of "Lamentationi per la Septimana Sancta."<sup>8</sup> Such lists can sometimes be misleading, however, as they often include many types of collections under a general heading, with only minimal distinction made, and this must be taken into account in this case.<sup>9</sup> However, the catalog lists, in addition to this collection, Pontio's first two books of four-voice book of Masses, his Psalm collection and his book of Magnificats (see Table 10). Thus, each of his four-voice collections known to have been published by Scotto is accounted for, suggesting strongly that the collection in question is in fact a four-voice collection of Lamentations, previously undocumented.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "Indice de libri di musica stampata dalli magn. ci Scoti cioè quelli che sino al presente Anno 1596 si ritrovano," reproduced in Oscar Mischiati, *Indici, cataloghi e avvisi degli editori e librai musicale italiani dal 1591 al 1798*. Studi e testi per la storia della musica, 2 (Florence: Olschki, 1984), 105.

<sup>9</sup> For example, the entry for Pontio's Magnificat collection is also listed under Lamentations as "Pietro Pontio à 4," its identity derived from the fact that it is in a group of prints that follows a collection clearly identified as a book of Magnificats. Indentation of the entries takes the place of the typical "idem."

<sup>10</sup> The only other four-voice collections are his third book of Masses, published in 1592, and the 1596 collection of Hymns, both printed by Riciardo Amadino. Dating the Lamentations print is a precarious enterprise. Its publication by Scotto might argue for a date previous to 1592, when his works began to be published by Amadino, yet there is no mention of the work in the discussion of Lamentations in the *Dialogo* (1595) to confirm this earliest date.

TABLE 10  
Listing of Collections by Pontio  
from the Firm of Girolamo Scotto, 1596

Category/Item Number	Description
Messe A Quattro & A Cinque Voci	
#177	Pietro Poncio à 4 lib. 1.2
#178	Idem lib. 2.3 à 5
Lamentationi per la Settimana Santa	
#235	Pietro Poncio à 4
#242	[Magnificat] Pietro Poncio à 4
Vespri & Salmi	
#224	Pietro Poncio à 4
Motett A 4.5.6. & 8	
#213	Pietro Poncio à 5 lib. 1.2.3

Of this large amount of music, a good deal survives in complete form. Included in this is all of the Vespers music, two out of the three books of five-voice Masses and one of the books of Motets. These complete collections also span the full range of his creative career, from the 1578 book of Psalms to the 1596 collection of Hymns. Of those that survive in incomplete form, none contains enough music for substantial reconstruction; however, some information concerning content, style and technique can be derived from their study.

#### Masses

The Masses of Pietro Pontio comprise the largest part of his compositional output, as well as spanning virtually

his entire productive career. The first book of four-voice Masses, as noted previously, was undoubtedly his first publication and likely dates from before 1572. His last collection of Masses, the third book for four voices, was published in 1592.

Pontio's Mass compositions comprise all genres, and include at least three Requiem Masses, a markedly high rate of production in this genre.<sup>11</sup> The majority of his Masses are based on preexisting material, the greater part of these being imitation Masses based on a polyphonic model (see Table 11). In addition to these, he composed at least one other Mass based on plainsong, the *Missa De Beata Virgine*, and two based on solmization subjects, the *Missa La sol fa re mi*, and a hexachord Mass.<sup>12</sup>

The polyphonic subjects used by Pontio present a free mix of sacred and secular, and in the case of the *Missa*

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<sup>11</sup> None of these Requiems have previously been noted. Of his predecessors and contemporaries, only Giovanni Matteo Asola and Giulio Belli wrote three Requiems. Mirroring the lack of standardized procedure for the Requiem in the sixteenth century, all three composers presented slightly varying approaches in their works. See Harold T. Luce, "The Requiem Mass from its Plainsong Beginnings to 1600," 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1958), 232-239 and 255-257 for a general discussion of the works of Asola and Belli.

<sup>12</sup> Neither of these Masses survive, so their procedure in treating the subject is unknown. The source of the Hexachord Mass is unknown; its existence is documented only by a reference in Pietro Cerone, *El Melopeo y Maestro*, 2 vols. (Naples: Gargano & Nucci, 1613; facsimile edition ed. Robert Stevenson, New York, Da Capo, 1971), 688.



TABLE 11  
The Masses of Pietro Pontio and their Sources

MASS	Type	Source
<b>Complete works</b>		
Missa "Dominus regnavit" (5v)	Imitation	Motet: Pontio
Missa "Exaudi domini" (5v) <sup>1</sup>	Imitation	Motet: ?
Missa "Se fra quest'herbe e fiori" (5v)	Imitation	Madrigal: Palestrina
Missa Sine nomine (5v)	Free	-----
Missa "Vestiva i colli" (5v)	Imitation	Madrigal/Mass: Palestrina
Missa "Salvum me fac Domine" (5v)	Imitation	Motet: Jachet of Mantua
Missa Mortuorum (5v)	Requiem	Plainsong
Missa Sine nomine a otto voci (8v) à Choro separato	Free	-----
<b>Partial works</b>		
Missa "Dal freddo reno" (4v)	Imitation	Madrigal: ?
Missa "Sine nomine" (4v)	Free	-----
Missa "Il biancho e dolce cigno" (4v)	Imitation	Madrigal: Arcadelt
Missa "Ancidetimi" (4v)	Imitation	Madrigal: Arcadelt
Missa Mortuorum tum omissa voce tum plena voce (4v)	Requiem	Plainsong
Missa de Beata Virgine (4v)	Plainsong	Plainsong: Mass for BMV
Missa "Sine nomine" (4v)	Free	-----
Missa Sexti toni sine nomine (4v)	Free	-----
Missa Mortuorum (4v)	Requiem	Plainsong
<b>Lost Works</b>		
Missa "In die tribulationis" (5v)	?	?
Missa "Locutus est Dominus" (5v)	Imitation	Motet: Jachet
Missa "Repleatur os meum lauda tua" (5v)	Imitation	Motet: Jachet?
Missa "Si bona suscepimus" (6v?)	Imitation	Motet: Jachet?
Missa "La sol fa re mi" (6v?)	?	Soggetto Cavatto
Missa "Ut re mi fa sol la"(?)	Hexachord	Hexachord

<sup>1</sup> This title appears on the title page of the collection. The work also carries the title *Exaudi Deus* on the individual parts.

*Vestiva i colli*--which is based both on the Madrigal and Palestrina's own Mass on that Madrigal--on a mixture of the two.<sup>13</sup> Also notable is the reliance on models by Jachet of Mantua. Along with the two works securely traceable to Jachet, three others, *Missa In die tribulationis*, *Missa Repleatur os meam lauda tua*, and *Missa Si bona suscepimus*, are linked with subjects often associated with Motets by Jachet, and it is perhaps worth noting that Jachet also had a setting of "La sol fa re mi."<sup>14</sup>

All of Pontio's Masses exhibit similar general style characteristics: a blend of syntactic imitation and homophonic declamatory style within a generally thick texture. His is a generally conservative style, with little use of chromaticism. Within the thick polyphonic texture is a

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<sup>13</sup> This is not the only example of so-called double-parody in the repertoire. Interestingly enough, Giovanni Maria Nanino is credited with the same procedure in his *Missa Vestiva i colli*, one of a number of Masses written on this subject. Nanino's Mass exists only in manuscript dated 1594, hence the exact dating is hard to determine. The work is in modern edition as Giovanni Maria Nanino, *Missa Vestiva i colli*, ed. H.W. Frey (Wolfenbüttel: Verlag für musikalische Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1935). Nanino's and Pontio's treatment of the opening point from the Madrigal is remarkably similar, suggesting a third level of modeling between the two composers. For a survey of the various Masses based on Palestrina's Madrigal, see Hans Joachim Moser, "Vestiva i colli," *Archiv für Musikforschung* IV (1939), 129-156; 376.

<sup>14</sup> The possibility of Jachet's influence on Pontio, first suggested by George Nugent, "The Jaquet Motets and their Authors," 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1973), I, 389-390, was noted in Chapter One.

predilection for long melodic lines and a overall blurring of individual phrases which separates him from the open and transparent style of Palestrina, and allies him more closely with that of Gombert.<sup>15</sup>

Within the Credo and Gloria sections of his Masses, polyphonic structure becomes subservient to a more homophonic approach representing a concern with textual clarity--more markedly so in those works dating from his service in Milan under the authority of Cardinal Borromeo.<sup>16</sup> At no time, however, does this concern with textual clarity result in pure homophony, often cited as the ideal of counter-reformation thought. This results, in part, from an extensive use of syncopation, most obvious in individual examples of displacement syncopation of the semibreve covering as many as six semibreves (see Example 3).

Example 3. Pietro Pontio, *Missa Sine nomine*, Credo, measures 130-135.



<sup>15</sup> Jackson, 62 has noted this resemblance of style.

<sup>16</sup> The relationship of Pontio's style and the ideals of Borromeo and the counter-reformation will be dealt with in Chapter Five.

There is little evidence of specific stylistic change through the course of these works--or in his works in general--nor is there much outward difference in style between those works based on a polyphonic subject, and those based on plainchant. In the latter, there is little treatment of the borrowed material that even approaches either a literal *cantus firmus* technique or traditional paraphrase style. Instead, Pontio used the melodic material of the source in the same way he used an original melodic idea or borrowed polyphonic inventions, making it the focus of motivic polyphonic imitation rather than employing it as an ongoing structural voice.

Pure *cantus firmus* treatment can be seen in Pontio's three Requiems. In these works, of which only one survives in complete form, Pontio moves away from traditional reliance on the *cantus firmus*.<sup>17</sup> While there are expected differences in approach between the three in terms of forces and the selection of movements set, we can see a general consistency of technical approach. Specifically, the works

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<sup>17</sup> The one that does survive, that from the third book of five-voice Masses, is a remarkable work. Of all the Requiems in the Renaissance, it is the only five-voice setting to employ only adult voices, and the entire piece seldom exceeds the tessitura F-f' (Claudin de Sermisy's Requiem and Asola's from 1580 are set for four adult voice, though Sermisy adds higher voices in Offertory; see Luce, I, 185-195 and 232-239 for discussions of these works). The resulting texture, especially in the Introit and Kyrie, is exceedingly dense, with richly dissonant passages, such as can be seen in the final bars of the first Kyrie.

exhibit three different approaches to the borrowed plainchant (see Table 12). The first, a true cantus firmus technique, consists of the presentation of the entire borrowed melody, either strictly or in paraphrase, in one voice. In his later Requiems, Pontio limits this technique to the verse of the Introit, setting the Psalm tone which constitutes the verse in a homophonic or quasi-homophonic setting typical of Psalms in this period.<sup>18</sup>

Pontio also uses the plainchant in the manner of a head motive. Here he presents the opening notes of the plainchant in long values--usually in the tenor--almost immediately breaking off into new material integrated into the texture of the other voices, with no further reference to the plainchant. This can be seen in the opening Kyrie of his five-voice Requiem.<sup>19</sup> As can be seen, the surrounding material shows only a passing relationship with the plain-song presented in the tenor voice, which itself disappears after the fourth measure. None of the remaining points have any demonstrable relationship to the cantus firmus.

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<sup>18</sup> This follows a pattern, detectable in other Requiem settings, of style identification with parallel genres. For example, the Antiphon sections of the Introit tend to be in a style mirroring that of the Motet, the verse that of the Psalm, and so on. Notably, the Sequence tends to mirror its most closely related genre, the Hymn.

<sup>19</sup> The entire Kyrie can be found in Appendix 3.

TABLE 12  
Use of *Cantus Firmus* Materials in the Requiem Masses of Pietro Pontio

	1584 <sup>1</sup>	1585	1592 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Introit</b>			
Requiem/*Aeternam	Cantus firmus	Head motive	Imitative point
Te decet . . . /Et tibi	Cantus firmus	Cantus firmus	Cantus firmus
Exaudi	Cantus firmus	Cantus firmus	Cantus firmus
<b>Kyrie</b>			
Kyrie I	Cantus firmus	Head Motive	Head motive
Christe	Cantus firmus	Head Motive	Absent?
Kyrie II	Cantus firmus	Imitative point	Imitative point
<b>Gradual</b>			
Requiem/*Aeternam	Imitative point	-----	-----
In memoria	-----	-----	-----
<b>Tract</b>			
Absolve	-----	-----	-----
<b>Sequence</b>			
1. Dies Irae	-----	Imitative point	-----
2. Quantus tremor	Imitative point	-----	Imitative point
3. Tuba mirum	-----	Imitative point	-----
4. Mors stupebit	Imitative point	-----	Imitative point
5. Liber scriptus	-----	Imitative point	-----
6. Judex ergo	Imitative point	-----	Imitative point
7. Quid sum	-----	-----	-----
8. Rex tremendae	= #2	-----	-----
9. Recordare	-----	-----	-----
10. Quarens me	= #4	-----	-----
11. Juste judex	-----	-----	-----
12. Ingemisco	= #6	-----	-----
13. Qui Mariam	-----	-----	-----
14. Preces meae	Absent?	-----	-----

15. Inter oves	-----	-----	-----	-----
16. Confutatis	-----	-----	-----	-----
17. Oro supplex	-----	-----	-----	-----
18. Lacrimosa	Absent?	-----	-----	Absent?
19. Judicandis	Absent?	Absent	-----	Absent?
20. Pie Jesu				
<b>Offertory</b>				
Domine/Rex gloria	Absent?	Absent	Absent	Absent?
Hostias	Imitative point	Absent	Absent	Absent?
<b>Sanctus</b>				
Sanctus	Absent?	Absent	Absent	Absent?
Osanna	Absent?	Absent	Absent	Absent?
Benedictus	Absent?	Absent	Absent	Absent?
Osanna	Absent?	Absent	Absent	Absent?
<b>Agnus</b>				
Agnus I	Absent?	Head motive	-----	Absent?
Agnus II	-----	-----	-----	-----
Agnus III	Absent?	Head motive	-----	Absent?
<b>Communion</b>				
Lux aeterna/Cum sanctis	Imitative point	Imitative Point	Imitative point	Imitative point

1 Tenor part only.

2 Tenor and Bass parts only.

Finally, Pontio often uses the material of the plainchant as a basis for the opening point of an imitative texture--in which all voices participate--and the cantus firmus is deprived of any exceptional qualities within that texture. Typically, only the opening point is formed from preexistent material, and the remainder of movement is freely composed.<sup>20</sup> This seems to have been his favored method for setting the Sequence and the Communion; the opening measures of the Sequence from the five-voice Requiem is illustrative of this technique (Example 4).

Example 4. Pietro Pontio, *Missa Mortuorum* (1585), Sequence, measures 1-8.

The image shows a musical score for five voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass) in mensural notation. The lyrics are: "Di - - es i - - rae, di - es i - - la, di - - es". The score is divided into four measures. Above the first measure, there are two 't' marks. Above the second measure, there are two 't' marks. Above the third measure, there are two 't' marks. Above the fourth measure, there are two 't' marks. The lyrics are written below the staves, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across measures.

<sup>20</sup> In this way, Pontio departs from the classical sixteenth-century paraphrase style, which makes use of all of the material of the chant. See Robert L. Marshall, "The Paraphrase Technique of Palestrina in His Masses Based on Hymns," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XVI (1963), 347-372, although Marshall notes a breaking away from this strict formula in Palestrina's later works.



## Example 4 (continued)

5

il - - - - la, di - es i - - - rae, di - es il - - - -

Di - - es i - - - - rae,

il - - - - la, di - - es i - rae, sol -

di - - - es il - - - la, sol - vet sac -

Di - - es i - - - rae, di - es il - - - -

Inherent in the latter two approaches is a distinct lessening of the role of the cantus firmus compared to other composers' use of these techniques.<sup>21</sup> Instead, with the exceptions of the verses of the Introit, which Pontio sets in the cantus firmus style of the Psalm, and the Kyrie of the Requiem from his first book of four-voice Masses, Pontio never uses the entire chant within the course of a movement.

<sup>21</sup> By contrast, in the sequence of Giovanni Matteo Asola's Requiem of 1576--which, like Pontio's setting, uses the material from the plainchant as the basis for imitative points rather than simply setting a paraphrased version in one voice surrounded by related imitative motives--the borrowed material permeates all areas of the setting in typical paraphrase style. Luce, II, 313-348, provides a transcription of the work. Because Asola integrates the material so completely into the ongoing imitative texture, Luce underestimated the degree of his use of the plainchant, stating that "in the Sequence, the plainsong melody is rarely heard" (I, 233).

Moreover, when a portion is used, it is less presented than developed. In many ways, Pontio treats the material as he would the *soggetto* of a polyphonic composition, often with little reference to the original intent of the music. What strict treatment does remain can be seen as merely the slight weight of tradition and not the obligation of style.

Pontio's avoidance of strict cantus firmus or paraphrase technique is also seen in another of his Masses of a type generally associated with such techniques, the *Missa de Beata Virgine* from his third book of four-voice Masses. Although only the tenor and bass parts survive for this work, the overall construction can clearly be seen. As was the Requiem, the *de Beata Virgine* Mass as a genre was a liturgically unified form, in which the various chants for the ordinary and in some cases the proper of this votive Mass were used as a *cantus prius factus* for each of the movements. This material was then set in either cantus firmus or paraphrase fashion. Traditionally, this model was closely adhered to.<sup>22</sup>

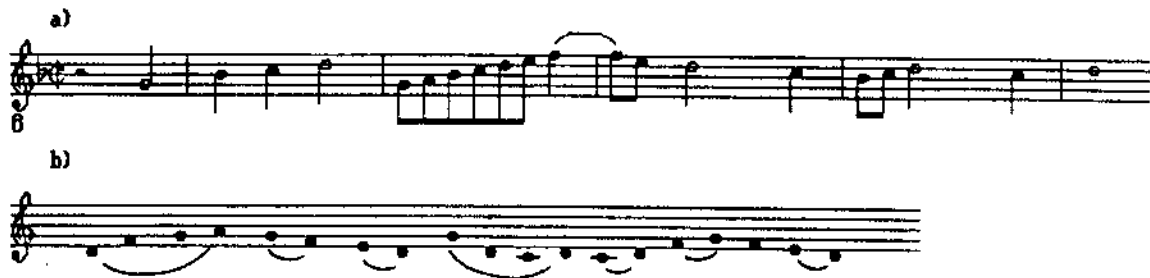
Pontio departs from this model in two significant ways. First, as is frequent in his Requiem Masses, the plainchant

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<sup>22</sup> Nors Sigurd Josephson, "The *Missa De Beata Virgine* of the Sixteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1970) surveys the genre. Throughout, with minor variation in the exact chant chosen, the model was followed carefully by composers. Josephson was unaware of the existence of Pontio's Mass, which has not previously been noted.

material is shaped into points of imitation, though never fully paraphrased. But more importantly, Pontio's Mass is musically, rather than liturgically, organized. Each movement of the Mass is based not on the proper chant for that movement, but solely on the Kyrie of the plainchant Mass.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the plainchant is handled very freely, and the resulting polyphonic material is related to the original more motivically than melodically.<sup>24</sup> The nature of this relationship can be seen by comparing the original chant with the tenor derived from it as used in the opening Kyrie (Example 5). While the distinct shape of the opening gesture and the overall direction of the melody are preserved, it is clear that the chant is not paraphrased, but rather transformed into a polyphonic point of imitation.

Example 5a and b. Pietro Pontio, *Missa de beata Virgine*, Kyrie, tenor, measures 1-6; Kyrie IX.



<sup>23</sup> Pontio employs Kyrie IX, as do most sixteenth-century settings. See the descriptions of individual works in Josephson, *passim* for a discussion of the chants used by different composers.

<sup>24</sup> Marshall, 361, notes this approach in Palestrina's *Missa "Ad caenum agni."*

Thereafter, in contrast to the typical *de Beata Virgine* Mass, each movement is set in the same mode and shares the same germinal material. This material, as in the similar sections of the Requiem Masses, is freely worked out in imitation, with only the motive derived from the incipit being carried over into the polyphonic texture. The surviving parts show the material freely worked out in all voices, as can be seen in the opening measures of the Benedictus, a duet between tenor and bass (Example 6)<sup>25</sup>

Example 6. Pietro Pontio, *Missa de Beata Virgine*,  
Benedictus, measures 1-7.

Even more striking--and more revealing of Pontio's departure from standardized practice--is the distribution of the material through the course of the Mass (Table 13).

<sup>25</sup> The entire section is transcribed in Appendix 3.

TABLE 13  
 Pietro Pontio: *Missae de Beata Virgine*  
 Use of Borrowed Material at Opening of Sections

Section	Voice(s)	Source
Kyrie		
Kyrie I	T/B	Kyrie I
Christe	T/B <sup>1</sup>	Christe
Kyrie II	T	Kyrie
Gloria		
Et in terra	T/B	Kyrie I
Qui tollis	T	Christe
Credo		
Patrem	T <sup>2</sup> /B	Kyrie I
Et incarnatus	T <sup>1</sup>	Christe
Crucifixus		Kyrie I
Sanctus		
Sanctus	T <sup>3</sup> /B <sup>3</sup>	Kyrie I
Benedictus	T/B	Kyrie I
Agnus Dei		
Agnus I	T/B	Kyrie I
Agnus III	T/[A?] <sup>4</sup>	Kyrie I
		+canon (new material)

<sup>1</sup> Tonal answer of *soggetto*.

<sup>2</sup> Inversion of *soggetto*.

<sup>3</sup> *Soggetto* modified by filled-in intervals.

<sup>4</sup> A realization of the missing altus part suggests Pontio used the *soggetto* in this part.

The full significance of this is best seen by referring to Pontio's description, from the *Ragionamento*, of how to compose a Mass, a section that has been seminal in modern discussions of imitation technique:

. . . in composing a Mass the invention of the first Kyrie--that is, the beginning--and that

of the Gloria, and of the Credo, and of the Sanctus, and of the first Agnus, should be similar. I warn you, nonetheless, that in saying that they are similar, I don't mean that they are similar in consonance. That is to say, if the beginning of the first Kyrie is *ut mi fa sol la* beginning in the tenor and following in the soprano, and it does the same in the beginning of the Gloria and the Credo without any variety; I do not mean this in any way. Rather, one should make the same invention in different ways, now beginning with the tenor, now with the soprano, now with the bass, so that there is variety in the parts . . . Now, if the first Kyrie is made on the invention from the beginning of a Motet or Madrigal, or something else, the Christe then will be made on some other invention from this song from which the Mass is made. One can also pick an invention of one's own, as long as it is appropriate to the tone, as is convenient. For the final Kyrie, the beginning is according to your wishes, but it is best that you use the end of the *cantilena* for the end of the invention.<sup>26</sup>

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26 " . . . nel far una Messa la inventione del suo primo Kyrie, cioè il principio, & quello della Gloria, & del Credo, & del Sanctus, & del primo Agnus, conviene, che siano simili, avvertendo nondimeno, che si bene dico, che vogliono esser simili, non intendo però siano simili di consonantie, come sarebbe, che il principio del primo Kyrie dicesse, *ut mi fa sol sol la*; et che principiassse il Tenore, & dopo il Soprano, & così fosse il medesimo il principio della Gloria, & de Credo, senza punto di varietà; questo non intendo io per alcuno modo; ma che si faccia la medesima inventione per diversi modi, hora facendo principiare il Tenore, hora il Soprano, hora il Basso, affine che vi sia varietà nelle parti . . . Hora fatto che sarà il primo Kyrie sopra la inventione del principio del Motetto, ò Madrigale, ò altra cosa, che sia, il Christe si farà poi sopra qualche altra inventione di esso canto; dove sarà fatta la Messa. Si potrà pigliare ancora una sua inventione, mentre sia appropriata al detto Tuono, che così conviene. Dell'ultimo Kyrie il principio sarà secondo il vostro volere; ma conviene, che faccia nel finire la inventione del fine di essa cantilena." Pontio, *Ragionamento di musica* (Parma: Viotto, 1588; facsimile edition ed. Suzanne Clercx, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1959), 155-156.

The *cantilena* used by Pontio for this Mass, then, is the Kyrie of the plainsong Mass for the Blessed Virgin, and he treats it as he would the invention from a polyphonic model, using the beginning as the main material for the Mass, and the contrasting opening of the *Christe* (which serves here in the same manner as the *secunda pars* of a Motet) as the alternate theme.

This points up two very important distinctions, the first relating to Pontio's Mass, and the second bearing more generally on his process of composition. First, this Mass is clearly removed from the genre of the *de Beata Virgine* Mass. It is, for all intents and purposes, an imitation Mass on Kyrie IX. There is no liturgical unity, nor does it exhibit signs of the paraphrase technique typically used with such a monophonic subject.

Secondly, and more importantly, it shows the true nature of Pontio's instruction for the composing of Masses, which has understandably been somewhat misunderstood in the present day. It is worth emphasizing that Pontio talks about using the "invention from the beginning" of a Motet, Mass, or whatever. This, rearranged, reset, and even recomposed, serves as the material for the Mass. Moreover, this process, as this Mass points out, is the same whether the subject is polyphonic or not. In fact, Pontio notes soon after this passage that to compose a *Missa Sine nomine*, the

same procedure is followed with inventions of the composer's own creation.

Thus for Pontio, all Masses were composed in the same manner; for him imitation had less to do with the appropriation of a polyphonic complex to be manipulated by the composer and more to do with an approach to composition that took any individual invention and treated it as any other invention the composer might devise. He could be, and in fact was cautioned to be, more dependent on his own compositional abilities and on the potential of the borrowed invention, than on the original composition itself.<sup>27</sup>

In general, Pontio's imitation Masses reflect the same freedom indicated by his theoretical approach. Evidence of this can be seen in his *Missa Vestiva i colli*. As indicated above, this Mass takes as its source material from both the Madrigal by Palestrina and Palestrina's own Mass based on it.<sup>28</sup> Within the tradition of the "Vestiva i colli" Mass,

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<sup>27</sup> This suggests a different approach to such works, and one that is beyond the scope of the present study for an adequate exploration. But clearly in these works we must be more aware of the compositional techniques of the composer himself, concentrating more on what he does with the material than in where he places it. The advantage is obvious, in that we are directly confronting the technique and style of the composer, as the actual technique of composition is in fact indistinguishable from that in his non-imitation works.

<sup>28</sup> Palestrina's Madrigal was one of the most popular subjects for imitation Masses in the latter part of the sixteenth century, rivaling the earlier "L'homme armé" tradition. See Moser for a discussion of the various Masses based on the Madrigal.



Pontio's stands out as one of the earliest such works, and one of the few to be composed outside of the Roman school of composers.

To assert that a Mass takes as its model two so closely related works must be made carefully, as the concept itself contains a certain measure of self-contradiction. There are clear indications, however, that Pontio was acquainted with Palestrina's Mass, and freely took certain features to use in his Mass.<sup>29</sup> The first is the material presented in the bass's entrance on the second subject in measure eight (Example 7a). This is a modification of the original bass entrance in the Madrigal (Example 7b), and is identical to that found in Palestrina's Mass (measures 10-12).<sup>30</sup>

Example 7a and b. Pietro Pontio, *Missa Vestiva i colli*, Kyrie, bass, measures 8-10; Palestrina, "Vestiva i colli," bass, measures 14-19.



<sup>29</sup> Pontio could only have known the work in manuscript form, however, as the work was not printed until after Palestrina's death.

<sup>30</sup> Palestrina, "Vestiva i Colli," *Le Opere Complete*, ed. Raffaele Casimiri, 33 vols. (Rome: Fratelli Scalera, 1939-1981), IX, 117-125 and *Missa "Vestiva i colli,"* Ibid, XV, 54-92.

Secondly, the contrasting point in Pontio's first Kyrie (beginning in the tenor in measure 12) derives not from any subject in the Madrigal, but rather from the invention used by Palestrina for his *Christe*, specifically the tenor entrance in measure forty (Example 8). While this point may ultimately derive from material in the Madrigal, it is extremely unlikely that both Pontio and Palestrina would arrive at identical derivations. Finally, the cadence used by Pontio for the end of the first Kyrie, the "Et in Spiritus," and the *Agnus Dei* come from Palestrina's own cadence for the first Kyrie and its subsequent modifications, the telling feature being the figure of the falling third at the point of resolution, which does not appear in any of the cadences of the Madrigal (see the complete Kyrie in Appendix 3).

Example 8. Palestrina, *Missa Vestiva i colli*, *Christe*, tenor, measures 40-41.



The presence of these features, so clearly derived from Palestrina's Mass, raises a question: to what degree was Pontio dependent on the Mass for overall structural features of his work? Despite the striking presence of cadential and motivic material unquestionably derived from Palestrina's

Mass, the answer is very little. This can be most immediately demonstrated by comparing the overall form of the Mass in terms of division of text, voicing, and sectional cadences (Table 14). Indeed, the two works are united only by those features that were standard--according to Pontio--in the composition of a Mass, such as the use of the secondary cadential pitch for internal sectional cadences (as in the Kyrie), and in the tendency toward reduced voices in specific sections of the work. Conversely, those sections marked

TABLE 14  
Formal Structure in the "Vestiva i colli" Masses of  
Palestrina and Pontio

Section	Palestrina		Pontio	
	Texture	Cadence	Texture	Cadence
Kyrie				
Kyrie I	a 5	A	a 5	A
Christe	a 4	D	a 5	D
Kyrie II	a 5	A	a 5	A
Gloria				
Et in terra	a 5	D	a 5	D
Qui tollis	a 5	A	a 5	A
Credo				
Patrem	a 5	A	a 5	D
Et incarnatus	a 5	D	a 5	A
Crucifixus	a 4	A	a 3	-->
Et iteram	a 4	A	-->	D
Et in Spiritum	a 5	A	a 5	A
Sanctus				
Sanctus	a 5	A	a 5	-->
Hosanna	a 5	A	-->	A
Benedictus	a 4	D	a 3	A
Hosanna	a 5	A	quasi ut supra	A
Agnus Dei				
Agnus I	a 5	A	a 5	A
Agnus II	a 6	A	---	---

in Palestrina's Mass by distinctive approaches to division, texture, and cadential levels have no exact reflection in Pontio's work.

Likewise, it would be assumed that if Pontio's Mass were structurally based on Palestrina's Mass, there would be a similarity of structure in the respective Kyries, which can be viewed--especially in light of Pontio's description of the technique--as the very heart of the imitation process.<sup>31</sup> Here the difference is marked. Palestrina's first Kyrie is built upon the first two imitative points of the model, as would be expected. His *Christe*, on the other hand, makes use of a new subject (noted above), which may be related to material in the Madrigal, but if so is clearly transformed. The final Kyrie once again makes use of a transformed subject from the original, this based on the Madrigal's fourth point of imitation (measures 31-42).

Pontio's Kyrie shows no structural relationship to Palestrina's; instead it uses the materials of the Madrigal exactly as prescribed in the *Ragionamento*. The initial Kyrie, like Palestrina's, is based on the first two subjects of the Madrigal, augmented by the new subject derived from

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<sup>31</sup> By contrast, the Gloria and Credo sections typically exhibit a freer approach to the borrowed material due to the exigencies of the extended text. See Quentin W. Quereau, "Palestrina and the Motetti del fiore of Jacques Moderne: a Study of Borrowing Procedure in Fourteen Parody Masses" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1974), 120-126.

Palestrina's *Christe*. The *Christe*, in turn, takes as its subject the opening point of the *secunda pars* of Palestrina's Madrigal, developing this through the whole of the section. The final Kyrie begins with a quasi-homophonic texture freely treating material derived from the third subject in the Madrigal (measures 19-33), but most notably--and in complete contrast to Palestrina--Pontio ends this section with material from the final two imitative points of the Madrigal (measures 57-90 of the *secunda pars*), fully realizing the plan set forth in the *Ragionamento*. He continues throughout the Mass to use *these* materials as his structural linchpins in the work, rather than those presented in Palestrina's Kyrie.

Thus, despite the use of features from Palestrina's Mass, the ultimate source is the Madrigal. Rather than emulating the Mass, Pontio simply refers to it while maintaining scrupulous regard for his original model. Cerone, in transmitting Pontio's approach to the imitation Mass, was to add the observation that the more materials the composer could use from the original model, the more worthy of praise his work would be.<sup>32</sup> It appears Pontio anticipated this and even took it a step further by using material from both works.

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<sup>32</sup> Cerone, 687.

The final point to be made about Pontio's technique of imitation concerns his treatment of the borrowed material. In general, Palestrina is much more literal in his borrowing. In most appearances of the first subject, even with entrances rearranged, Palestrina retains almost completely the notes of each individual line (Example 9b), and more importantly, even while compressed, the harmonic movement is identical in many of the expositions of this subject. Pontio, by contrast, begins immediately to transform the subject at its first appearance, compressing the line, and often--although this is not the case in this example--changing the melodic goal of the line itself (Example 9c). In addition, the harmonic structure is changed by the entrance of the third voice in Pontio's setting. Each subsequent exposition of the subject then takes an entirely new approach.

Example 9a, b and c. Palestrina, "Vestiva i colli," cantus, measures 1-10; Palestrina, *Missa Vestiva i colli*, Kyrie, cantus, measures 2-7; Pontio, *Missa Vestiva i colli*, Kyrie, cantus, measures 1-3.

The image displays three musical staves, labeled a), b), and c), each showing a different treatment of the subject 'Vestiva i colli'. Staff a) shows the original subject in Palestrina's setting, consisting of a single melodic line with a clear harmonic structure. Staff b) shows the subject as it appears in Palestrina's *Missa Vestiva i colli*, where the subject is compressed but retains its original melodic and harmonic identity. Staff c) shows the subject as it appears in Pontio's *Missa Vestiva i colli*, where the subject is significantly transformed, including changes to the melodic line and the harmonic structure.

This technique, that of approaching the invention not as a part of a polyphonic complex to be manipulated, but rather as raw melodic and motivic material to be freely elaborated, is evident in all of his imitation Masses. His treatment of the subject in the second Kyrie of the *Missa Salvum me fac* (Example 10) is typical. In it he presents Jachet's original subject (marked by brackets) along with an inversion of this subject, both bearing only motivic relationship to Jachet's original point.

The point to be made is that Pontio's approach is more compositional than constructivist, one in which the final shape of the borrowed material shows a greater influence of the composer's hand than we tend to expect in such a work. For Pontio, the process is more nearly equal to the act of pure composition, the challenge being to make the appropriated material as much one's own as possible, while at the same time preserving and emulating the structure of the original. In doing so, Pontio sets imitation at the very heart of the compositional process, as we will see in aspects of his Motet composition.

Example 10. Pontio, *Missa Salvum me fac*, Kyrie II,  
measures 39-46.

40

Ky - ri - e e - - - lei - - - -  
Ky - - ri - e e - - -  
Ky - - ri - e -

45

Ky - - ri - e e - - - lei - son, [ky - son, [ky - - ri - e e - lei - son, [ky - - ri - e e - lei - - - e - lei - - son, e - lei - - -  
Ky - - ri - e

### Motets

Pontio's Motets present a much less complex picture of musical and theoretical concerns. Comprising his second largest category, it is nonetheless hard to explore adequately, given the fact that only about one-third survive,



and these only from one collection. In general, little use of borrowed material can be found in his Motets, with the exception of the settings of the Antiphons for the Blessed Virgin.<sup>33</sup> Here the material is handled with the same loose approach to paraphrase found in his setting of the Sequence in his five-voice Requiem. Each phrase of the Antiphon is used as a point of imitation, with no real sense of *cantus firmus* technique. It may be accompanied by new figures, as in the opening point of his *Regina caeli* from the second book, or it may involve all voices in the working out of the subject in full paraphrase as in the setting of the *resurrexit* section. This technique is mentioned by Pontio in his discussion of Hymn composition in the *Ragionamento*, which follows his explanation of the Magnificat. Here he states that one must follow the plainchant in these compositions or be seen as without judgment or learning.<sup>34</sup>

Other than in the final verses of the Psalms and Magnificats, the Motet is the only genre in which Pontio makes

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<sup>33</sup> Pontio includes a setting of *Regina caeli* in both surviving collections, and a setting of *Alma redemptoris mater* can be found in the first book. Given the need for these Motets for use of the choir at the Steccata, it is surprising that settings for the other two are not found in these collections, although it is possible, indeed probable, that they appeared in the lost third book.

<sup>34</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 158. Pontio includes the Marian Antiphons among the general class of works dependent on a preexisting plainchant, such as the Hymn and the Magnificat.

any extensive use of canonic technique. Those in the first book are simple two-voice canons, the most complex being that in *Verbum iniquum*, which calls for a canon at the seventh in contrary motion. Two pieces in the second book, however, call for more advanced techniques. *Veni Domine* is a six-voice work in which four of the voices are derived by canon at the octave, sixth, and fourth below the cantus voice.

More ambitious is his setting of *Vidi turbam magnam* in the same collection.<sup>35</sup> The Motet is set for twelve voices, divided into three choirs. Each of the voices in choir three is derived by canon at the unison from the respective voice in the second choir. There is little overlap between the two choirs, and what results is a set of antiphonal repeats of each section of the piece. Against this, the first choir sings an independent part, freely mixing with the antiphonal choirs, augmenting their parts, and, in the *alleluia* section, serving as a third antiphonal choir.

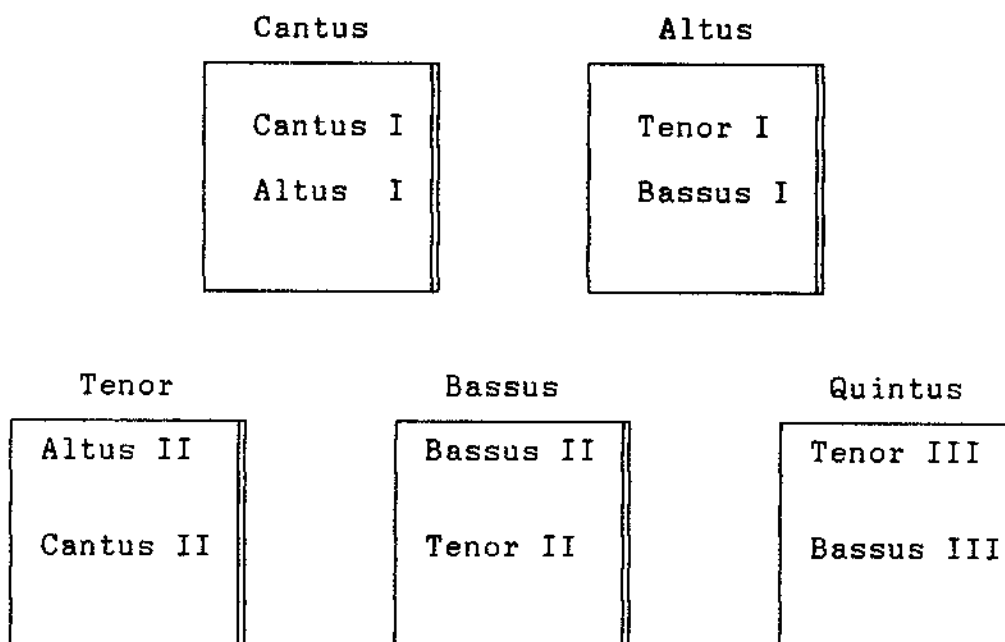
The physical placement of the parts of the Motet in the partbooks is interesting, as it suggests the mode of performance (see Figure 3). The cantus and altus books contain the music for choir one, while the tenor, bassus and quintus books contain, respectively, cantus and altus two; tenor and

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<sup>35</sup> The entire piece is transcribed in Appendix 3.

bassus two; and tenor and bassus three (the resolutions for cantus and altus three are omitted). As the chart makes clear, it is impossible, without the provision of a second copy, to perform this work with the two antiphonal choirs separated, since the cantus and altus of the third choir is dependent on the unresolved canon contained in the book containing the cantus and altus parts for the second choir. The independent first choir, on the other hand, is contained in two completely separate partbooks, suggesting that it was Pontio's intention that this choir be physically separate from the other voices, highlighting its often independent nature.

FIGURE 3  
Pietro Pontio: *Vidi turbam magnam*,  
Distribution of Parts



Along with Motets that are freely composed, based on canon, or that use material derived from plainchant, Pontio has a number cast in a refrain-motet form. His refrain-motet works are interesting in their reworking of material in the final section, which is closely related to the ideas of imitation discussed in conjunction with the Masses. Like Cipriano de Rore before him, in the repeat of material in the refrain, Pontio often made small modifications. This often is little more than a simple change in rhythm in one voice-- transforming, for example, two semibreves into a dotted semibreve and a minim--or the switching of two, often equivalent, voices such as the tenor and quintus.<sup>36</sup> Sometimes, however, the repeat contains somewhat extensive reworking of material--more than is seen in the refrain works of de Rore, but still retaining the integrity of the

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<sup>36</sup> The rationale behind this particular technique is a mystery. It might have been the desire to have a subtle variation in overall sound caused by different voices in a small choir. Or the intent may have been a more practical one, to maintain the interest of the singer, a non-academic *musica reservata*. Louis Nuernberger, "The Five-Voice Madrigals of Cipriano de Rore," 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1963), I, 212-225, notes de Rore's penchant for exchanging parts in the repetition of final lines of a Madrigal. No mention is made of the type of reworking which can be found with some frequency in his late Madrigals. As with Pontio, this reworking ranges from simple voice exchange and ornamentation of parts to wholesale recomposition.

original structure.<sup>37</sup> More extensive reworking--in fact a complete re-composition of a parallel section--can be seen in examining the beginning of the two refrain sections of the Motet *Praeparate corda* (the entire work is given in Appendix 3). Both use the same invention to set the text "et liberavit vos," but in the repeat the entire point is recomposed. In the first statement, the new invention is introduced by the altus in measure 34, and answered by the bass at the point at which the soprano ends the previous section (measure 36). This is followed by a contrasting point in the altus (measure 37), leading to answers of the original point in the tenor (measure 48), the soprano, and then the quintus (measure 41).

In the repeat of the text in the *secunda pars*, the point is extended and completely rearranged. Here the invention is again introduced by the altus (in measure 99), accompanying once more the ending of the previous section in the soprano (note however the different surrounding voices). At the point of resolution in the soprano, the invention is answered not by the bass, but by the quintus, accompanied by the original countersubject in the altus (measure 102). The

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<sup>37</sup> An example of this can be seen in the Motet *Emendemus in melius*, discussed in Chapter Five, and transcribed in Appendix 3. C.f. measures 55-59 and 123-127.

next statement appears in the soprano, delayed by a semi-breve, followed by a new variant of the invention in the altus (measures 103-104). Finally, in measure 106, the bassus utters the subject, answered two measure later in the quintus.

In all, the entire point, besides being completely rearranged, is extended by two measures. And at the end, the material is entirely rearranged to allow for an unusual change of cadence level, the first part having ended not on the final, as is usually the case in Pontio's refrain settings, but on the cofinal of A.<sup>38</sup> Yet within this rearranged material there are sections that are virtually identical (c.f. measures 48-55 and 115-122). This, as in his imitation Masses, becomes a central device for imparting both unity and variety to the work as a whole.

### Hymns

Pontio says little about the Hymn in his discussion of genres in the *Ragionamento* except to classify it with those pieces--including the other works for the vesper service, the Psalms and the Magnificat--which make extensive use of plainchant:

. . . as you can see in the Hymns of Adriano and of Iachetto, and other authors, and as you can

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<sup>38</sup> This is the only one of Pontio's refrain-motets to do so.

see in the *Salve Regina* of Josquin and Finotto, and so in the *oratione dominicale* of Adriano and Gomberto, and in the *Regina Caeli* of Pietro Pontio, which all follow the cantus firmus. And in doing otherwise, one does not have any judgment or learning.<sup>39</sup>

Pontio's collection of Hymns--his last works, published in 1596--comprises twenty-one Vesper Hymns for the major feasts of the church year. The style of composition follows the tradition of setting alternate verses in polyphony based on the original chant, leaving the remaining verses to be sung in plainchant.<sup>40</sup> The melodies and texts used by Pontio differ somewhat from those of other composers, reflecting the liturgical tradition of the Cathedral in Parma, and all variants can be found in a pair of Hymnals conserved in the Cathedral archives, dating from the fifteenth century.<sup>41</sup>

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39 " . . . come potrete vedere ne gl'Hinni di Adriano, & di Iachetto, & altri auttori; & come si può vedere nella *Salve Regina* di Josquino, & di Finotto, & così nell'oratione dominicale di Adriano, & di Comberto [sic], & nel *Regina Coeli* di Pietro Pontio, quali tutti hanno seguitato il canto Plano; E facendosi altrimenti, non hà del giuditioso, nè del dotto." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 158.

40 As did other composers, Pontio set either the even- or the odd-numbered verses. The opening verse is never divided between plainchant and polyphony as Palestrina and Porta had done. See Tom R. Ward, "Hymn, Polyphonic Latin" *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1980), VIII, 841-845 for a general discussion of the genre.

41 Parma, Archivio del Capitolare del Duomo, AC/14 and AC/05. The former is dated 1421, while the latter, according to Giacomo Zarotti, "Codice e corali della Cattedrale di Parma," *Archivio storico per le province parmensi*, ser. IV, vol. XX (1968), 196, is listed in an inventory dating from 1483. Between the two books there are no differences of

In Pontio's Hymn compositions, we find the same approach to the borrowed plainsong material discussed above, namely a free approach to the *cantus prius factus*, alternately mixing passages of pure cantus firmus style with sections more in paraphrase style. He differs from his technique in the previous works only in that the borrowed material, no matter how freely treated, permeates the entire texture of the work to a degree seldom seen in those other genres. In this, his approach is closely related to the two composers he cites as examples, Willaert and Jachet of Mantua.<sup>42</sup> Like these two, the original material of the Hymn is so woven into the texture as to become inseparable, and even when it appears as a true cantus firmus, it is so surrounded by various permutations that it loses the traditional cantus firmus flavor.

This technique can be seen in three different manifestations in the Hymn *Christe Redemptor* from the Christmas

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substance, and only a few of detail.

<sup>42</sup> Walter Gerstenberg, in his introduction to the Hymns of Willaert, describes his style in a manner appropriate to the discussion of Pontio's: "Every *cantus prius factus* can occur in two forms. It may either follow the course of the imitation, or remain detached from it. Between these two extremes, every single work finds its own distinct position." Adrian Willaert, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Hermann Zenck and Walter Gerstenberg, *Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae* 3, 14 vols. (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1950-1977), VII, iii.



Vespers.<sup>43</sup> In the first verse, "Tu lumen," each phrase of the chant serves as the basis for a point of imitation for the respective phrase of the setting. However, the chant material is completely transformed into imitative points, and no one voice presents the entire chant, even in paraphrase. In fact, the first two phrases are elided in the cantus, where the distinctive F-A-C opening of the second phrase of the chant bridges the cantus's first and second text phrases (Example 11)

Example 11a and b. Pietro Pontio, *Christe Redemptor*, cantus, measures 5-10; "Christe redemptor," plainchant.

a)

b)

By contrast, in the final verse, "Nos quoque," the cantus presents the entire plainsong, with only minimal paraphrase, accompanied by freely derived points of imitation. But even here, the influence of the plainchant is seen in the other voices, as in measures 65-69, where the opening notes of each point serve as anticipatory imitation

<sup>43</sup> The entire piece is transcribed in Appendix 3.

of the cantus's statement in measure 70. The middle ground described above by Gerstenberg is evident in the middle verse of this setting, "Sic presens." In this section, even as the chant is used for the material of the inventions, its presentation more nearly approaches a complete paraphrase, as witnessed in measures 45-51 in the tenor. Still, there is no sense of pure cantus firmus presentation; rather, the melody becomes in this case a more complete polyphonic *soggetto*.

As in his imitation Masses, Pontio is free in his shaping of inventions from the borrowed melody. Evidence of this is seen in the Hymn *Aurea luces* for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul.<sup>44</sup> In the opening of the second verse, the derived point of imitation is presented by the bass in measure 33, and answered three measures later at the fifth by the altus. This is accompanied in the tenor and the cantus by a contrasting figure, which takes as its material the inversion of the first three notes of the chant.

Unlike Willaert and Jachet, and indeed any of his contemporaries, Pontio never varied the number of voices within an individual piece, either to reduce the number in an individual verse, or to augment for the culminating verse

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<sup>44</sup> The entire piece appears in Appendix 3.

of the setting.<sup>45</sup> Nor did Pontio make use of any canonic techniques in any of the works, a procedure common in other collections of Hymns in the late sixteenth century. Despite these differences, Pontio's settings accurately reflect the tradition and techniques espoused in the *Ragionamento*, and serve as the most intensive examples of cantus firmus use in a non-psalmodic style.

### Psalms and Magnificats

The other works for Vespers composed by Pontio, the Psalms and the Magnificats, together form the final substantial body of music in the composer's output. More will be said later concerning these two genres in the course of investigating Pontio's approach to modality, but some general observations are appropriate here. While his Psalms and Magnificats are similar in overall structure, both making use of the melodic and, more importantly, the cadential aspects of the chants on which they are based, the style of the two genres is markedly different. Pontio's Psalms are, in many ways, the simplest of his works, being often nothing more than unadorned presentations of the Psalm text in a style approaching the falsobordone, with the emphasis on a

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<sup>45</sup> This latter departure may possibly indicate that the choir supported by the Consorzio dei Vivi e dei Morti of the Cathedral, to whom the collection is dedicated and presumably for whose use it was intended, was small and unable to accommodate five-voice singing. The former, on the other hand, can only be explained as a matter of choice.

clear pronunciation of the text. This is the style he specifically recommends for the Psalm in the *Ragionamento*.<sup>46</sup> This approach is especially pronounced in the initial verses of many of his settings, as for example the opening verse of *Credidi propter* (Example 12)<sup>47</sup>

Example 12. Pietro Pontio, *Credidi propter*, measures 1-7.

The musical score for Example 12, Pietro Pontio's *Credidi propter*, measures 1-7, is presented in two systems. The first system shows the vocal parts (Cantus, Altus, Tenor, Bassus) and their lyrics: "E - - - - go au - - - - ten hu - mi - li -". The second system continues the lyrics: "a - - - - tus sum ni - - - - mis." The score includes musical notation for each voice part, with lyrics written below the notes. A measure number '5' is indicated above the second system.

<sup>46</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 156. For a more complete investigation of Pontio's explanation of the genre, the reader is referred once more to Armstrong, "How to Compose."

<sup>47</sup> The entire piece is found in Appendix 3.

Variety is achieved in other verses by employing a more imitative style, as in the second verse of the same Psalm, but Pontio warns against too much involvement of the other voices in imitating the Psalm tone:

. . . because in imitating the cantus firmus in all the parts the verse would be long, which is not appropriate for the Psalm, but one may well make the imitation with two parts, or at least with one.<sup>48</sup>

Pontio also varied the texture by separating the voice carrying the cantus firmus from the rest of the texture by means of rhythmic displacement, as in the opening of the third verse of his setting of *Dixit Dominus* (Example 13).<sup>49</sup>

Example 13. Pietro Pontio, *Dixit Dominus*, measures 20-23.

20

Ju - - - ra - - - vit Do - ni - nus,

Ju - - - - ra - vit Do - ni - nus, et non pae - ni - te - - bit -

Ju - - - - ra - vit Do - ni - nus, et non pae - ni - te - - bit

Ju - - - - ra - vit Do - ni - nus, et non pae - ni - te - - bit

48 " . . . perche imitando il canto fermo con tutte le parti sarebbe il verso longo; ilche non conviene nelli Salmi; ma bene si potrà fare la imitatione con due parti, o almeno con uno." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 156-157.

49 The entire Psalm will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five, and is presented in Appendix 3.

As was standard for Psalm settings, the Doxology is presented with added voices, making use of a simple canon, often derived from the Psalm tone. Usually this involved the same non-overlapping presentation of the canon as can be seen in the "Gloria Patri" from *Dixit Dominus*.<sup>50</sup> From time to time, however, Pontio used more complex procedures, such as the canon in augmentation found in the "Gloria Patri" of his *Credidi propter*.

All of the Psalm settings from the 1589 collection, as well as one of the two Psalms published in multi-composer collections, follow this form in their structure. The only exception is his five-voice setting of *In convertendo*, published in a Milanese collection from 1596.<sup>51</sup> The collection contains a mixture of styles and Pontio's work is a through-composed setting of all the verses of the Psalm.

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<sup>50</sup> This style is especially reminiscent of that used in the Doxologies of the Magnificats of Cristóbal de Morales.

<sup>51</sup> *Psalmodia Vespertina integra omnium solemnitate a diversis in arte musica excellentissimis viris* (Milan: Tini, 1596) RISM 1596<sup>1</sup>. The collection contains mostly works from composers active in Milan and the surrounding region.

Pontio's Magnificats, by contrast, are more expansive treatments of both the text and the borrowed plainchant. In his explanation of the genre, Pontio notes that in the Magnificat the composer was free to make use of the borrowed tone in all of the voices, producing verses of greater length than in the Psalm. Moreover, he suggested a number of different ways that this could be done, ranging from having only part of the tone present in the verse to having the entire tone stated, either in different or multiple voices, or entirely in one voice with a new, independent invention being imitated in the other voice--the technique that Pontio held to be "above all to be admired for being learned and ingenious."<sup>52</sup>

In his four-voice Magnificats, which comprise sixteen separate settings of the odd- and even-numbered verses in each mode, along with a setting of the even-numbered verses for the second tone and the odd-numbered verses for the third tone, Pontio also made regular use of a strategy not mentioned in the *Ragionamento*, but later described by Cerone in his *El Melopeo*--that of systematically reducing voices

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<sup>52</sup> "[il qual modo] sopra tutti è da osservare per esser dotto, & ingenioso." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 158. The various approaches to setting the Magnificat tone, as enunciated in the *Ragionamento*, and as augmented and modified in Cerone's *El Melopeo* are detailed in Armstrong, 116-117. See Chapter Five below.

for particular verses.<sup>53</sup> Cerone notes that four verses, the "Et Misericordia eius," "Deposuit potentes," "Fecit potentiam," and "Esurientes implevit bonis," may be set in this way, and that in their reduced voicing, they should be more learned in style, containing more "industry and artifice."<sup>54</sup> In other words, they should be in a more strictly polyphonic style, such as that in the "Fecit potentiam," of Pontio's *Magnificat secundi toni* from his 1589 Psalm print.<sup>55</sup>

Pontio also used an augmentation of voices, as well as canon, to bring a sense of climax to the "Sicut erat" in his setting of even-numbered verses (e.g. those beginning with the verse "Et exultavit") while the "Gloria Patri" remained in a four-voice texture.

The remaining Magnificats, one for eight voices and two for five voices, abandon the above procedure. They are in form, and maybe in function, completely apart from the other Magnificats. All are, like the lone Psalm setting mentioned above, settings of the entire text, with no special distinctions made for the various sections. Even in the eight-voice setting, the odd- and even-numbered verses are not divided between the two choirs in alternating manner.

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<sup>53</sup> Cerone, 691.

<sup>54</sup> These are the only verses that Pontio presents in reduced voicing.

<sup>55</sup> The work is found in Appendix 3.



Moreover, the settings show little adherence either to the melodic or cadential structure of the original tone, a style Pontio himself disparaged as being of little value. They are simply Motet-like settings of the text, completely divorced from the plainchant/alternatim principles of the others. In addition, the two five-voice settings make use of syncopated minim values which Pontio clearly excluded from the correct "grave" style, as in this example from his setting for the eighth tone (Example 14).<sup>56</sup>

Example 14. Pietro Pontio, *Magnificat octavi toni cum quinque vocibus*, measures 20-27.

20

o - - - nnes ge - - ne - ra - ti - o - - nes. Qui - a fe -  
 cent o - - - nnes ge - - ne - ra - ti - o - - nes.  
 - - - nnes ge - ne - ra - ti - o - nes. Qui - a fe -  
 cent o - nnes ge - ne - ra - ti - o - - nes. Qui - a fe -  
 cent o - - - nnes ge - - ne - ra - ti - o - - nes. Qui - a fe -  
 cent o - - - nnes ge - - ne - ra - ti - o - - nes. Qui - a fe -

<sup>56</sup> These rhythmic deviances are also found in some of his Mass settings, though never to this extent.

## Example 14 (continued)

25

-cit mi -hi ma-gna qui po - tens est: et san-ctum no - - - - men e - -

Et san - - - ctum no -men e - -

-cit mi -hi ma-gna qui po - tens est: et san-ctum no - - - - men e - -

-cit mi -hi ma-gna qui po - tens est: et san-ctum no - - - - men e - - - -

-cit mi -hi ma-gna qui po - tens est:

The previous discussions have shown how closely interwoven are Pontio's theoretical principles and his musical composition. Many of the theoretical ideas contained in his two treatises can illumine our understanding of not only Pontio's musical output, but also that of his more famed contemporaries. But more significantly, we can see that some of Pontio's most original principles, his commentary on which gives us a unique focus on contemporary styles, find their best reflection in his own music.

Among many areas of discussion, two stand out as worthy of deeper study--two which, respectively, form the heart of the two treatises. The first is Pontio's discussion of modality found in the *Ragionamento*, which has bearing not just on the basic principles of modality, but on the very heart of style and genre in the period. The second is his

treatment of questions of style and criticism, which forms the entirety of the second *dialogo*. In these topics, we confront very fundamental concerns of the period. It is to these subjects that Pontio makes his greatest contribution, and it is to these that we will now turn.

## CHAPTER V

### THE *RAGIONAMENTO* AND QUESTIONS OF MODE AND GENRE

Among the subjects discussed by Pietro Pontio in his first treatise, the *Ragionamento*, one of the most significant is that of modality. Within his discussion, Pontio introduced concepts that, when fully realized, offer not only insight into questions of modality, but at the same time point to important distinctions of genre based on varying approaches to modal structure. These ideas evolve from Pontio's careful enunciation of a hierarchy of cadences and from his clear division of modal procedure between Psalm-based compositions and those based entirely on the eight church modes more traditionally associated with polyphonic composition.

#### Cadence Hierarchy and Modal Structure

The importance of the cadence for Pontio in defining the modal structure of a musical work has been noted above. At no point in his discussion, however, does he actually define the term except in the most general manner:

A cadence is nothing more than a repose or a termination of the parts of your song, or of its

period: and this knowledge is of greatest importance . . .<sup>1</sup>

It is clear, however, from his examples in the *Ragionamento*, as well as his numerous citations of individual compositions, that his conception was almost exclusively that of the two-part formula described by Zarlino as the *cadenza perfetta* (Example 15).<sup>2</sup> Numerous modern scholars have amplified Zarlino's comments, and the central role that

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<sup>1</sup> "Cadenza non è altro, che un riposo, over una terminatione delle parti della vostra cantilena, & del vostro periodo: & questa cognitione delle cadenze egli è cosa di somma importanza . . ." Pietro Pontio, *Ragionamento di musica* (Parma: Viotto, 1588; facsimile edition ed. Suzanne Clercx, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1959), 94.

<sup>2</sup> While a case can be made for including a discussion of simple closes (a chordal cadence involving all voices without the presence of the two-voice structure or the simple resolution of a single line without the 7-6 suspension figure), the former is rare within the ongoing texture of a work, while the latter can be so numerous as to be virtually meaningless from an analytical point of view. While Zarlino notes this type of cadence, he states that it is more suitable for simple counterpoint, and not for florid--nor, by extension, for composition. For Zarlino's discussion of the structure and function of the cadence, see Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le Istitutioni harmoniche* (Venice: Senese, 1558), 221-225. For a translation of this part of the *Istitutioni*, see Zarlino, *The Art of Counterpoint*, part 3 of *Le Istitutioni harmoniche* (1558), translated by Guy A. Marco and Claude V. Palisca, Music Theory Translation Series, 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 141-151.

this formula played in articulating modal structure in the Renaissance is inarguable.<sup>3</sup>

Example 15. *Cadenza perfetta* as described in Gioseffo Zarlino, *Istitutioni harmoniche*.



In this standard cadential formula, the top voice-- called by Bernhard Meier the *cantizans*--with its stereotypical syncope and suspension formula, plays the leading role. By contrast, the so-called *tenorizans* (usually in downward, step-wise motion), forms a dissonance, resolution, and then an octave with the *cantizans*, serving as the supporting

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<sup>3</sup> The most exhaustive treatment is found in Bernhard Meier, *Die Tonarten der klassischen Vokalpolyphonie: nach den Quellen dargestellt* (Utrecht: Oosthoek, Scheltma und Holkema, 1974), see especially pages 75-102. Other studies have applied the principles noted by Meier to various repertoires. Leeman L. Perkins, "Mode and Structure in the Masses of Josquin," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XXVI (1973), 189-239, notes differences in accepted cadential pitches as noted by Joannes Tinctoris and Pietro Aaron. These differences will be discussed at more length below. These studies, along with many others, suggest the subtleties of cadential manipulation in the hands of the composers of the day and point us toward an important stylistic tool that can be used in the study of the music of this period.

partner.<sup>4</sup> Meier labels the three parts of this formula (1) antepenultimate, (2) penultimate, and (3) ultimate.<sup>5</sup> The other voices of the polyphonic texture are less important to this cadential figure, and while they may confirm the pitch level by conforming to the chord indicated by the octave of the resolution, they may also resolve differently, depriving the octave of its position as root of the chord. The presence of these other pitches, however, does not negate the primacy of the cadential pitches formed by the *cantizans* and the *tenorizans* in identifying the modal structure. And while they may serve to weaken the point of cadence, they do not remove it from consideration.

As Claude Palisca has noted, Pontio's overall approach to cadences and modality is reminiscent of Pietro Aaron's in that he makes distinctions between allowable and non-allowable cadences.<sup>6</sup> But whereas Aaron was content to state that certain cadences were either allowable or not (over and

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<sup>4</sup> Meier also describes a typical alto and bass formula (*altizans* and *bassizans*), which will not be included in the present discussion. In some cases, the half-step motion--downward in this case--is found in the *tenorizans*, forming a Phrygian cadence.

<sup>5</sup> Meier, 77.

<sup>6</sup> See Palisca's Introduction to Zarlino, *On the Modes*, part 4 of *Le Istitutioni harmoniche* (1558), trans. Vered Cohen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), XIV. Zarlino, on the other hand, enumerates only principal cadences, specifically those on the first, third, and fifth degree of every modal pair.

above the expected cadences of a mode), Pontio went a step further to describe how and when such a cadence was useful and licit in a composition. In principle, nearly any cadence is allowed by Pontio, if treated properly; this is made clear in his explanation of the first mode. After noting that cadences were allowable on D, A, F, G, and C, the student, Hettore, asks if cadences could be made on E or B, since all the others were acceptable. In Paolo's answer, we find the crux of Pontio's system:

One cannot say that these are truly bad, as long as they do not make a dissonance and are made in passing. These may serve you in Masses and Motets, as well as other compositions, but in Psalms, I do not judge it to be a good thing in any case, and even in Mass and Motet they are not completely appropriate, not only for a termination (which you should never do), but as a transitory cadence . . . .<sup>7</sup>

The significance of this statement is twofold. First it illustrates Pontio's concept of an interwoven hierarchy of cadential pitch and of cadential function. Secondly, it points to his concern with differing cadential propriety based on genre: what is allowed in Mass, Motet and other

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<sup>7</sup> "Non si può dire stiano male veramente, mentre non facciano dissonantia; & occorrendovi qualche passaggio per transito, ve ne potrete servire, facendo Messe, & Motetti, & altri compositioni; ma ne'Salmi io non giudico esser cosa buona per alcun modo, & anco nelle Messe, & Motetti non sono troppo à proposito, non solo per terminate (ilche mai non deve fare); ma ne anco per transito. . ." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 101.



pieces is not allowable in the Psalms, and what is useful in a Madrigal (one of the probable "other pieces") is only tolerable in Mass and Motet.

The hierarchy proposed by this statement is described by Pontio with a welter of terms--terms which are sometimes confusing in their overlapping. These terms deal with the two concepts mentioned above: pitch level and cadential type. A cadence which can be used at the end of a piece or at the end of a major section is variously called by Pontio proper (*propria*), terminating (*terminata*) or principal (*principale*), while those which are weaker are called improper (*impropria*) or non-terminating (*non terminata*). Further, Pontio suggests that these latter cadences be made in a transitory manner (*per transito*), so as not to cause a digression from the mode.<sup>8</sup> In the fourth *ragionamento*, he

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<sup>8</sup> Some confusion may arise with the terms "terminating" (*terminata*) and "transitory" (*per transito*). The first term also suggests a type of cadence, that is, a perfectly formed final cadence. Conversely, the term *per transito* might suggest a cadence on an "improper" degree. However, in theory--and more importantly in practice--cadences on primary cadential degrees can be made "per transito," as will be seen below. Additionally, an ostensibly "non-terminating" cadence (based on its place within the modal structure, such as A or E in mode VII) can be so strong within the cadential hierarchy that Pontio describes it as almost equal in strength to the terminating cadence. To avoid confusion, I will employ the terms "primary" and "secondary" to distinguish those cadences which are appropriate to endings, by virtue of their pitch, from those which are of a lower rank (yet nonetheless usable within the proper context). I will use the term "transitory" to describe a weakened cadence, regardless of the propriety of its degree.

makes one aspect of this distinction clearer, noting (as Zarlino previously had) that the nature of the "terminating" cadence is tied closely to the text:

The composer should equally be advised that in making a terminating cadence, the word should be completed, as well as the phrase; as well, if possible, it should end on the beginning of a measure, which will not be difficult for the prudent composer.<sup>9</sup>

A more specific explanation is found in his discussion of a particular text, from the Responsory *Emendemus in melius*:

Hettore: Please make clearer to me what you mean by the conclusion of the words.

Paolo: I mean that you do not interpose one conclusion on another, interrupting the sense, as one would in saying *quae ignoranter peccavimus, ne subito*; and making a terminating cadence on those words, *ne subito*, because there are other words joined to this, which are these: *praeoccupati die mortis*. Because in doing so, you break all the conclusions. Thus in this manner one makes the

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<sup>9</sup> "Deve parimente esser avertito il compositore, che facendo cadenza terminata, sia finita la parola, et insieme sia finita la terminatione del senso; et ancora (se sia possibile) sia compita la misura del Tempo, ilche non sarà difficile al compositore prudente." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 144. Here *terminata* implies both a type of cadence as well as pitch degree. Zarlino, *Istitutioni*, 221 makes similar observations.

conclusions, setting *quae ignoranter peccavimus*, and then following [with] *ne subito, praeoccupati die mortis*.<sup>10</sup>

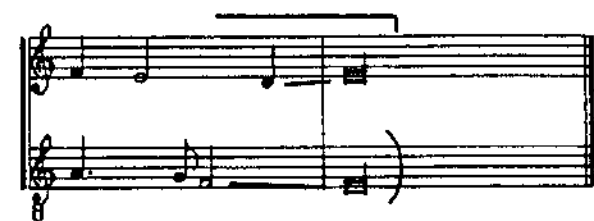
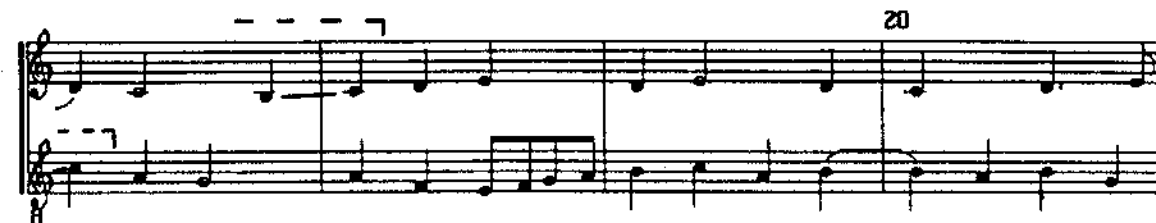
The nature of "transitory" cadences, both in form and cadential degree, is partially illustrated in Pontio's treatment of the third mode. Here he supplies a two-voice example illustrating the cadences proper for a Motet in this mode (Example 16). In the discussion that follows concerning the proper cadences for the Psalm in the third tone, Paolo is asked by Hettore if it would be proper to have a cadence on F in this tone. Paolo replies that it would be proper, but it should be made "as if on the run."<sup>11</sup> He then cites the cadence on G in the Motet exemplar (see measures 15-16) to illustrate this procedure. In fact there are two examples of cadences in this short example which are on non-primary degrees: the cadence on G, and that on D

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<sup>10</sup> "*Het. Di gratia fatemi più chiaro quello, che volete dire parlando della conclusione delle parole. Pao. Voglio dire, che non interponete una conclusione con l'altra, interrompendo il senso, come sarebbe à dire: quae ignoranter peccavimus, ne subito; & facesti una cadenza terminata sopra quelle parole, ne subito, perche vi sono altre parole, che gli vanno aggiunte, quali sono queste, praeoccupati die mortis, perche così facendo, romperesti ogni conclusione; in questo modo adunque si concluderanno, ponendo, quae ignoranter peccavimus, & poi seguendo, ne subito, praeoccupati die mortis . . .*" Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 139.

<sup>11</sup> "Vi rispondo, che si potrà fare, *ma vada fuggendo*." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 109 (italics mine).

Example 16. Pietro Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 107-108: Example of Motet cadences for the third mode.



(measures 8-9).<sup>12</sup> All other cadences are on the primary degrees of A and E.<sup>13</sup>

All of the cadences in this example, both primary and secondary, are perfectly formed *cadenze perfette*, with the correct *cantizans* and *tenorizans* formulas. An examination of these cadences reveals that the quality that separates the "proper" ones from the "transitory" is that the latter, even in this untexted example, are clearly intended to come in the middle of a phrase or even a word. By the accepted rules of text setting in this period, the figure of a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note found in the upper voice in measures nine and sixteen would only in exceptional cases support more than one syllable.<sup>14</sup> Nor can these figures be supposed as extensions of the resolution. By contrast, the cadences deemed proper by Pontio are clearly

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<sup>12</sup> Pontio lists these two pitches, along with B and C, as allowable in mode three, noting that C is almost like a proper cadence ("come propria") as it is the mediant of the parallel Psalm tone. Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 106.

<sup>13</sup> Note should be made of the *cantizans* formula on C in measures 17-18. While this is a legitimate cadence formula, it is weakened somewhat in not being accompanied by the *tenorizans*. This type of cadence will be treated below. It is important to note that even in its abortive form, this cadence serves to articulate a strong cadential degree within the mode.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of Zarlino's rules of text setting, see Mary S. Lewis, "Zarlino's Theories of Text Underlay as Illustrated in his Motet Book of 1549," *MLA Notes* XLII (1985), 239-267.

set off by rests followed by a restatement of the original point of imitation, suggesting as well a repetition of text.

Although this is the only distinction concerning cadential procedure made explicit in Pontio's discussion of cadences, further specifics concerning transitory cadences are implicit in the various examples cited by Pontio from contemporary works, and these are confirmed by a systematic investigation of Pontio's own works. From this examination it becomes apparent that a number of variables beyond simple text placement come into play in analyzing cadential structure. These can be broken down into three broad categories based on the cadence's relationship to the text, the type or structure of the cadence, and finally the relationship of the main cadential voices to each other.

As Pontio points out in the previously cited example, transitory cadences tend to not be coincident with textual phrase-endings, while proper or terminating cadences are. This simple dichotomy can be further refined upon closer examination, showing that there were a number of different options open to the composer. I have grouped these into six distinct cadential levels.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> It should be pointed out that these six levels constitute my own system of categorization; however, I will illustrate them using examples cited in Pontio's discussion of cadential procedures, or from examples of his own compositions. The agreement of his examples with these categories does not indicate that exactly such a system underlies his theories, but rather that this approach to analysis reflects his clear concern with textual and cadential

The first of these, a Level One cadence, occurs when both voices of a cadence resolve together, marking the end of one musical and textual phrase, and the beginning of another in both cadential voices (Example 17).<sup>16</sup> Almost invariably this type of phrase is followed by a rest in one or both parts before the new musical and textual phrase.<sup>17</sup>

Example 17. Pietro Pontio, *Magnificat septimi toni*, measures 114-117 (Level One cadence).

115

- li - o, et Fi - - - li - o et Spi - ri - tu -  
 et Fi - - - - - li - - - o  
 Fi - - - li - o, et Fi - li - o et Spi - ri - tu - i San -  
 Fi - - - - li - o, et Fi - li - o et Spi - ri - tu - i San - -

structure, and ultimately with ideas of mode and genre.

<sup>16</sup> Pontio, *Magnificat liber primus* (Venice: Scotto, 1584). Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 116, cites this cadence as an example of the use of D as a primary cadential degree in the seventh tone. According to Pontio, this position is derived from the degree's function as the reciting tone in mode seven: "Potresti ancora per una sol volta far cadenza nella corda D, per esser corda mediatrice di quello tuono ne' Motetti & Messe . . ."

<sup>17</sup> Pontio, *Dialogo . . . ove si tratta della theorica e prattica di musica* (Parma: Viotto, 1595), 62-63 notes the importance of this rest in setting the new phrase apart from the ongoing texture.

A Level Two cadence is one in which only one voice resolves to the end of a text phrase, while the other voice continues, eventually finishing the phrase and then proceeding to the new musical point or presenting a restatement of the original material (Example 18).<sup>18</sup> In both cases, the function of the cadence is to delineate the end of a textual unit--the first doing so in a more direct and easily perceived manner--and as such, it assumes a significant structural role within a piece.

Example 18. Jachet of Mantua, *Repleator os meum*, measures 37-40 (Level Two cadence)

40

The musical score consists of five staves. The lyrics are written below the staves. The first staff has the lyrics "-a tu - - a." and "No - - li". The second staff has the lyrics "(-a) tu - - - - a. No -". The third staff has the lyrics "ma - - gni-fi - cen - ti a tu - - a.". The fourth staff has the lyrics "-cen - ti-a tu - - a. No - - li me pro - -". The fifth staff has the lyrics "- a ma - - gni-fi - cen - - - ti - a tu - a".

<sup>18</sup> Jachet of Mantua, *Primo libro dei motetti a cinque voci* (Venice: Scotto, 1539), in *Opera Omnia*, ed. Philip Jackson and George Nugent, *Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae* 54, 6 vols. (N.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1971- ), V. It is possible for either the *cantizans* or the *tenorizans* to bear the ending word of the phrase both here and in the Level Four cadence discussed below. Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 106, cites this cadence to illustrate the use of a cadence on C in mode three, which he ranks as "come propria."



A Level Three cadence is parallel in musical structure to a Level One cadence; but rather than signaling the end of a phrase, it marks its repeat, and no new musical or textual material is introduced by either voice (Example 19).<sup>19</sup>

Example 19. Pietro Pontio, *Ad caenum agni*, measures 21-24 (Level Three cadence).

vi - - vi - mus De - o, gu -  
 Gu - stan - do vi - vi - mus De - o, (gu - stan - do vi - vi -  
 vi - - - - vi - mus De - - - - o, [gu - stan - do vi - vi - mus De -  
 vi - - vi - mus De - - - - - o, gu - stan - do vi - vi - mus De -

A Level Four cadence is also used to mark a repeat, but like the second-level cadence, only one voice resolves to the end of the text unit (Example 20).<sup>20</sup> Thus, while musically as significant as the Level One and Level Two cadences (on the surface level), they are lower in a hierarchy of cadential significance owing to their subsidiary role in articulating the text.

<sup>19</sup> Pontio, *Hymni solemniores ad vespertinas horas canendi quattuor vocibus noviter impressus* (Venice: Amadino, 1596).

<sup>20</sup> Pontio, *Psalmi vesperarum totius anni secundum romanae ecclesiae usum cum quattuor vocibus decantandi* (Venice: Scotto, [1578]/1589).

Example 20. Pietro Pontio, *In convertendo*, measures 54-57  
(Level Four cadence).

55

Finally, the weakest cadential levels (Levels Five and Six) are those which are tied neither to the ending of a phrase nor its repetition. In a Level Five cadence, the two points of resolution articulate the end of the same word, which, however, is not the end of a phrase (Example 21).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Clemens non Papa, *Missa cum quatuor vocibus, ad imitationem cantilanae En espoir, condita . . . tomus III* (Leuven: Phalèse, 1557), in *Opera Omnia*, ed. K. Ph. Bernet Kempers and Chris Maas, *Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae* 4, 21 vols. (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1951-1976), I/3. This cadence is further weakened by the irregular resolution in the tenor. Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 100, cites this cadence as one which must be made "per transito." It is interesting that Pontio uses this as an example of a cadence made, by necessity (one must assume on the basis of text), weaker. For Pontio the phrase *Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam* appears to have represented an indivisible sense unit, as explained in his discussion of *Emendemus in melius* previously cited. Indeed, in all of his Masses available for study, this approach to the phrase structure is respected, with the word *tibi* never being

Example 21. Clemens non Papa, *Missa En espoir*, Gloria,  
measures 25-28 (Level Five cadence).

25

ti - as a - gi - mus ti - - - bi

a - - - gi - mus ti - - - bi prop

bi, gra - ti - as a - gi - mus ti - bi

- mus ti - - bi prop - - ter

Similarly, a Level Six cadence appears in the middle of a text phrase; however, in this case neither voice resolves textually (Example 22).<sup>22</sup> In Pontio's example for the third mode cited above, both transitory cadences give indications of being fifth- and sixth-level, while all others are unquestionably Level One or Level Three.

Thus we have a general classification of cadential strength based solely on textual considerations. This is not to suggest an exact rank ordering of the cadence levels; rather, it suggests a general approach to the question of the interrelation of text and cadences. Clearly, by purely

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articulated by a formal cadence. The detail of his concern with the text is seen as well in the work cited in Example 25 below.

<sup>22</sup> Pontio, *Misarum cum quinque vocibus liber tertius nunc primam in lucem aeditus* (Venice: Scotto, 1585).

Example 22. Pietro Pontio, *Missa Vestiva i colli*, Kyrie II, measures 40-43 (Level Six cadence).

40

Ky - - - ri - e e - lei - -

Ky - - - ri - e e - - - lei

Ky - - - ri - e e - - - lei - - son, [ky -

Ky - - - ri - e e - - - - - - - - lei - son, [ky -

musical criteria all of the cadences presented above are of equal validity and moment within the contrapuntal fabric of a work. Yet it is equally clear from Pontio's comments on specific examples, and by extension his own compositional output, that such a conception of this interplay is consonant with his own concerns.

In addition to the cadential levels suggested here, cadences can be distinguished by type, based on the presence of features that serve to obscure the *cantizans/tenorizans* structure. This is usually marked by the modification of one of the cadential voices and can take a number of

forms.<sup>23</sup> Zarlino notes the deceptive nature of this type of cadence when he states:

To evade a cadence is (as we have seen) a certain way by which the voices, seeming to want to make a perfect cadence according to the ways demonstrated above, resolve otherwise.<sup>24</sup>

The crucial element in this type of cadence is the presence of the *cantizans* formula. The most common, and least disruptive, of these evaded forms is the altered cadence, wherein the *tenorizans* resolves upward in parallel motion with the *cantizans*, forming the interval of a sixth or third at the point of resolution (Example 23).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Zarlino gives examples of a number of such methods of evading a cadence. He does not present these in any systematic way, rather, they are all listed under the general rubric "fuggir la cadenza." Zarlino, *Istitutioni*, 225-226.

<sup>24</sup> "Fuggir la Cadenza sia (come havemo veduto) un certo atto, il qual fanno le parti, accennando di voler fare una terminatione perfetta, secondo l'uno de i modi mostrati di sopra, & si rivolgono altrove . . ." Zarlino, *Istitutioni*, 226. A number of different terms may and have been used for these modified cadential formulae. For the sake of simplicity, I have opted to use simple descriptive terminology, avoiding such terms as "fugita," "fugir la cadenza," and the like, which often lead to confusion since they describe a general class of cadences, rather than a specific technique.

<sup>25</sup> *Nicolai Gombert musici excelentissimi Pentaphthongos harmonia, que quinque vocum motetta vulgo nominantur. additis nunc eiusdem quoque ipsius Gomberti, necnon Jachetti & Morales motettis . . . Liber primus* (Venice: Scotto, 1541). This work is edited in Cristóbal de Morales, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Higinio Anglés, 8 vols. (Rome: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1952-1971), II. Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 114, cites the tenor and bass as cadential voices of a *per transito* cadence on G in mode six. Whether this is a mistake, or whether Pontio considered the altered

Example 23. Cristóbal de Morales, *Cum natus esset Jesus*,  
measures 194-197 (altered cadence).

Likewise, an altered cadence can involve the *tenorizans* resolving to any other pitch consonant with the *cantizans* (Example 24).<sup>26</sup> It is revealing that Pontio uses the first example to illustrate a "per transito" cadence (on G in mode six). Strictly from its relationship to the text, this cadence would be viewed as a strong Level One or Level Three cadence, since it is followed by rests in all voices. Thus the feature that makes it a transitory cadence for Pontio can only be the presence of the altered *tenorizans*. This confirms that Pontio viewed this procedure as a way of weakening a cadence to fit the transitory nature prescribed by its pitch level.

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voice as having lost its role in the cadence is open to interpretation.

<sup>26</sup> Pontio, *Modulationum cum quinque vocibus liber secundus noviter impressus* (Venice: Scotto, 1588).

Example 24. Pietro Pontio, *Videns Jacob*, measures 64-67  
(cadence altered by leap).

65

-tres e - - - - ius, fra - tres e - - - - ius

Additionally, the *tenorizans* can entirely fail to resolve, by dropping out, leaving the *cantizans* exposed at the point of resolution and forming an avoided cadence (Example 25),<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Madrigali del la fama a quatro voci composti da l'infrascritti autori, novamente con diligentia stampati et corretti Cypriano de Rore, Francesco de la Viola, Francesco Manara* (Venice: Gardane, 1548) RISM 1548<sup>1</sup>, edited in Cipriano de Rore, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Bernhard Meier, Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae 14, 8 vols. (N.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1959-1977). Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 100, describes this as a transitory cadence in mode one. It should be noted that although this cadence marks the end of a line of text, it is part of a run-on line: "Gli mostraste la via fece Amore,/Ei fe gran seno a gir, ch'in paradiso/Non poteva già farsi più beato," thus it clearly serves a transitory role.

Example 25. Cipriano de Rore, *La bella netta*, measures 39-40 (avoided cadence).

40

pa - ra - di - so

pa - ra - di - - - so Non po - te -

pa - ra - di - - - - so

pa - ra - di - - - - so Non

or it can move after forming the interval of the second or the seventh with the *cantizans* (an escaped cadence), although this is more rarely seen (Example 26).<sup>28</sup>

Example 26. Pietro Pontio, *Magnificat primi toni*, measures 80-83 (escaped cadence).

80

Su - - sce - pit

-sce-pit Is - ra - el pu - - e - rum su - um, pu - - e -

(pu-) e - rum su - um, [su-

Su - - sce-pit Is - ra - el pu - - e -

<sup>28</sup> Pontio, *Magnificat liber primus* (Venice: Scotto, 1584).



Even less commonly seen is a cadence in which the *cantizans* is altered at the resolution, resolving downward to form a sixth with the properly formed *tenorizans* (Example 27).<sup>29</sup>

Example 27. Pietro Pontio, *Magnificat sexti toni*, measures 64-65 (altered *cantizans*).

Finally, cadences can also be distinguished by a change in the structure of the two-voice formula itself. The most common way is to reverse the positions of two voices, placing the *tenorizans* in the upper voice, as in Examples 23 and 26 above. Any of the preceding formulae can be found in

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<sup>29</sup> Pontio, *Ibid.* Care must be taken in identifying this particular formula, as it would be easy to admit situations which in no way were considered cadential, but simply 7-6 suspensions within the body of phrase. As such, a fifth-level cadence is impossible in this configuration, pointing once again to the importance of text in determining the presence of a cadence. See, for example, mm. 17-18 of Pontio's example from Mode III cited above in example 2.

this guise. As well, the *tenorizans* can be dispensed with altogether, leaving the *cantizans* in a four-three relationship with a lower voice (Example 28; this type of cadence is closely related to the escaped cadence shown in Example 26 above).<sup>30</sup>

Example 28. Cipriano de Rore, *Non è ch'il*, measures 27-29 (4-3 suspension).

-to il fuo - co can - giar - - - si in du - - - ro  
 (sen)-to il fuo-co can- giar-si in du - ro ghiac -  
 -to il fuo - co can - giar - - - si in du - - ro ghiac -  
 sen-to il fuo-co can - giar - - si in du - - - ro

Any cadence, then, can be categorized by means of three qualities: type, level and position. While no hard and fast

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<sup>30</sup> Cipriano de Rore, *Il primo libro de madrigale a quattro voci* (Ferrara: Giovanni Buglhat & Antonio Hucher, 1550), in *Opera Omnia*, IV. Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 100, points to this as an example of a transitory cadence in mode one. Zarlino, *Istitutioni*, 223-224, notes that this is still a true cadence if the resolution is to an octave or unison.

rule can be made in terms of establishing an immutable hierarchy of cadence type, a general rule is that the odd-numbered levels (e.g. I, III, and V) tend to be stronger than even-numbered ones due to the coincidence of the text. In general, Pontio's examples indicate that cadences on secondary pitches should not be used for the unequivocal articulation of textual phrases, although primary cadences can be used at any point as long as they do not contradict the sense of the text. Equally apparent is the principle that if a secondary cadence does appear at a structurally important point, it should be weakened so as not to cause a departure from the mode. Further, it is clear that these various types of cadences can be used to shape the structure of a section of a piece, or indeed an entire work.

An example of this procedure can be seen in a verse from a Magnificat setting by Pontio (Example 29).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Pontio, *Magnificat liber primus* (1584).

Example 29. Pietro Pontio, *Magnificat terti toni*, measures 79-98.

80

Su - - - - - sce - - - - pit Is - ra - el

Su - - - - - sce - - - - pit Is - - ra - - -

Su - - - - - sce - - - - - pit Is - ra - el pu -

Su - - - - - sce - pit Is - - - ra - el pu - e - rum

85

pu - - - - - e - - rum su - - - - - um re - - cor -

- ei pu - - - - - e - rum su - - - - - um re - - cor -

- e - rum su - - - - - um, (pu - e - rum su - - - - - um)

su - - - - - um, pu - e - rum su - - - - - um re - - cor -

90

- da - - - - - tus ni - se - ri - cor - - - - di - ae su - - - -

- da - - - - - tus ni - se - - - - ri - cor - - - - di - ae su - - -

re - cor - da - tus ni - se - - - - ri - cor - - - - di - ae su - - -

- da - - - - - tus ni se - - - - ri - cor - di - ae su - - -

## Example 29 (continued)

The musical score consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system covers measures 85-88, and the second system covers measures 95-98. The lyrics are Latin text from the Magnificat. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, various note values, rests, and accidentals (sharps and naturals). The lyrics are:
   
- ae, (re - - cor - da - - - tus
   
- ae, re - - cor - da - - - tus mi - se -
   
- ae, re - - cor - da - - tus, re - - - cor - da - -
   
- ae, re - - cor - da - - - tus, re - - - cor - da - - - tus mi -
   
95 ni - se - ri - cor - - di - ae su - - - - - ae.
   
- - - - - ri - cor - di - ae su - - - - - ae.
   
- tus mi - se - ri - cor - - di - ae su - - - - - ae.
   
- se - - - ri - cor - - di - ae su - - - - - ae.

The cadences from this verse have been summarized in Table 15. As can be seen, the strongest cadences, based on the indicators of type, level and placement, are found in measures 85 to 86, and 97 to 98. These two cadences fall on the pitches C and A respectively--the final and mediant of the Magnificat tone, and thus the primary degrees. More importantly, they also fall on the most important points in the text, marking the division between the antecedent and

consequent phrases of the verse "Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae suae." In this way the basic outline of the Magnificat tone is expressed in a clear, straightforward manner.<sup>32</sup> It is the arrangement of the other cadences, however, that fills out this skeleton, and as such is deserving of closer scrutiny.

TABLE 15  
Table of Cadences  
Pietro Pontio, *Magnificat tertii toni*,  
"Suscepit Israel," measures 79-98

Measure	Pitch	Voices	Type <sup>1</sup>	Level	Placement
81-82	D	Alt/Ten	Altered	VI	T/C
85-86	C	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
87-88	E	Alt/Bass	Phrygian	V	C/T
90-91	A	Cant/Ten	CP	III	C/T
93-94	G	Cant/Bass	CP	IV	T/C
97-98	A	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T

<sup>1</sup> CP=cadenza perfetta

<sup>32</sup> This is the expected procedure for the construction of such a verse. See Gustave Reese, "The Polyphonic Magnificat of the Renaissance as a Design in Tonal Centers," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XIII (1960), 68-78 and Robert Luoma, "Aspects of Mode in Sixteenth-Century Magnificats," *Musical Quarterly* LXII (1976), 395-408. More recently, James Armstrong, "How to Compose a Psalm: Ponzio and Cerone Compared," *Studi musicali* VII (1978), 103-139, has given the two earlier studies a firm theoretical foundation by examining Pontio's discussion of Psalm and Magnificat writing found in the *Ragionamento* and Cerone's adaptation of this in his *Melopeo*. Further refinement of this approach will be offered below.

Following the two Level One cadences, the strongest ones are the Level Three cadence on A in measures 90-91 and the Level Five cadence on E in measures 87-88. Of the two, the former stands out by its marking the repetition of the second half of the verse, while the latter is in the middle of the phrase, and serves only to articulate a single word, "recordatus." Significantly, this stronger of the two cadences is on the final of the tone, thus supporting and balancing the final cadence in measures 97-98, while the other is, according to Pontio's hierarchy, transitory.

The remaining cadences of the section, on D in measures 81-82 and on G in measures 93-94, are weakened by their removal from the "proper" pitch level outlined by the final and mediant of the tone. In addition, they are less prominent by virtue of their relationship to the text (Levels Six and Four respectively), by voice placement, and in the cadence on D--arguably the most removed from the tone--by an alteration of the cadential formula itself.<sup>33</sup> This clearly

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<sup>33</sup> This distinction between proper and transitory cadences in the Magnificats is admittedly inexact, and at no point does Pontio list cadences for the Magnificat tones themselves. However, the Magnificat tones are close enough in structure to the parallel Psalm tone that some generalizations can be made. Pontio cites A and C as the terminating notes for the third Psalm tone, with G as an allowable secondary cadence. This matches the structure outlined by Reese and Luoma, based on the monophonic recitation formulae for this tone. That G has a strong secondary role is due to its function as the initial note of the Magnificat tone. E is related by virtue of its function as the final of the parallel mode, though this is more a justification than a true relationship. On the other hand, D

worked-out cadential structure projects the outline of the tone within a nicely balanced verse, one that leads to the mediant in the first phrase of eight bars, followed by a thirteen-bar phrase comprising a full repetition of the consequent phrase. This longer second phrase is in turn supported by the strong Level Three cadence on the final at the point of repetition and sustained by weaker cadences on both primary and secondary degrees.

The concern for tonal form evidenced in this short example is also found in larger, non-psalmodic works, and the Motet *Emendemus in melius* from Pontio's second book of five-voice Motets from 1588 offers a clear illustration of this.<sup>34</sup> The Motet is in the third mode, and is cast in the form of a Refrain-Motet, with the final twenty-five measures of each *pars* being essentially identical. As noted in Chapter Four, Pontio's restatement of material in the second *pars* is often accompanied by some reworking; in this case the tenor and quintus voices are wholly exchanged, and all

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seemingly has no justifiable place and would thus be considered allowable only in the weakest setting; this is precisely what transpires in this example.

<sup>34</sup> Pontio, *Modulationum cum quinque vocibus liber secundus noviter impressus* (Venice: Scotto, 1588). The entire Motet can be found in Appendix 3. The text is the responsory for the blessing of the ashes on Ash Wednesday: *Graduale Romanum* (Paris: Desclée, 1957), 86. Pontio's setting makes no use of the plainchant, which is in the second mode.



voices are slightly reworked in measures 123 through 127 (c.f. measures 55-59).

In his explanation of the structure of the third mode in the *Ragionamento*, Pontio lists the primary cadences as being A and E. In addition to these, he allows G, B, C, and F as secondary cadences and singles out C as being nearly as strong as a primary cadence by virtue of its relationship to the mediant of the parallel Psalm tone. It is suitable, therefore, for the introduction of a new point of imitation, but not for the ending of a *pars* or an entire piece.<sup>35</sup> These guidelines are reflected with admirable accuracy in the cadential structure of the Motet, the outline of which is shown in Table 16.

Most immediately apparent in this example is the variety of cadences in terms of both type and level as compared to those found in the Magnificat (Example 29 above). In keeping with the non-sectional nature of the Motet, fewer strong cadences are used, and many of these Level One and Level Three cadences are weakened by various methods of

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35 ". . . & questa si può haver come propria, per esser corda mediatrice del Salmo, come intenderete; ma non già in essa finire, nè prima, nè seconda parte." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 106.

TABLE 16  
Table of Cadences  
Pietro Pontio, Motet: *Emendemus in melius*

Measure	Pitch	Voices	Type	Level	Placement
8-9	G	Cant/Quin	CP	IV	C/T
20	A ] <sup>1</sup>	Ten/Quin	Escaped	II	T/C
22-23	A	Cant/Quin	Altered	VI	C/T
25-26	E	Alt/Ten	Phrygian	IV	C/T
A 28-29	A	Cant/Alt	4-3/Avoid	III	C/T
31-32	A ]	Alt/Ten	Escaped	II	T/C
35-36	A ]	Ten/Quin	CP	II	T/C
40-41	E	Cant/Quin	Phrygian	III	C/T
45-46	A ]	Alt/Quin	Altered	I	T/C
49-50	C ]	Alt/Ten	Altered	I	T/C
55-58	G	Cant/Quin	CP	III	C/T
58-59	A ]	Cant/Quin	CP	II	C/T
B 68	E	Cant/Quin	Phrygian	IV	C/T
68-69	A	Alt/Ten	Altered	III	T/C
71-72	E ]	Alt/Bass	Phrygian	I	C/T
Secunda pars					
80-81	E	Cant/Quin	Phrygian	IV	C/T
85-86	E	Alt/Ten	Phrygian	III	C/T
91-92	A	Alt/Ten	Altered	III	C/T
C 102-103	A	Cant/Ten	CP	VI	C/T
105-106	A	Alt/Quin	CP	VI	C/T
115-116	G	Cant/Quin	Altered	IV	C/T
117-118	C ]	Alt/Quin	Altered	I	C/T
123-124	G	Cant/Ten	CP	III	C/T
126-127	A ]	Cant/Ten	CP	II	C/T
B 136	E	Cant/Ten	Phrygian	IV	C/T
136-137	A	Alt/Quin	Altered	III	T/C
139-140	E ]	Alt/Bass	Phrygian	I	C/T

<sup>1</sup> The symbol "]" marks the end of a textual phrase.

evasion. Within this continuous texture, however, Pontio's careful use of cadence pitch and type serves to delineate both the overall form and specific phrase structure of the work. Throughout the piece, Pontio makes systematic use of the hierarchical order of cadence degrees of the mode to project clearly the overall structure of the Motet, while at

the same time imparting a sense of balance and long-range coherence to the piece.

As expected, each *pars* ends with a cadence on the final of E. The second principal cadence degree, A, serves to mark virtually all of the musical/textual phrases within the body of the work (marked with a ] in the chart). These are almost invariably weakened, however, in both level and type, as can be seen in Example 30. Here the force of the clear *cantizans* formula in the tenor voice in measure 20 is lessened by the continuation of the text in the quintus voice, forming a Level Two cadence. In addition, the musical structure is modified by the escaping action of the *tenorizans* at this point, whose move to C is derived from the *soggetto* for this phrase (cf. measure 15, in the tenor voice, in the complete transcription of the work presented in Appendix 3).

A parallel procedure can be seen occurring in the cantus and quintus voices in measures 22-23. The strong continuity of melodic and thematic flow is thereby enhanced by the lack of unmodified cadences on the principal degree on E at these ending points, thus avoiding a sense of complete repose. Concurrently, a sense of opposition between the two pitch levels maintains the arching flow characteristic of this style.

Example 30. Pietro Pontio, *Emendemus in melius*, measures 19-26.

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-ter pec - ca - vi - mus, quae i - gno - ran - ter pec - ca - vi - mus: Ne su - bi-to prae - o - cu - pa - ti di - e wor - tis, (quae) i - gno - ran - ter pec - ca - vi - mus: i - gno - ran - ter pec - ca - vi - mus:

25

-ca - vi - mus: Ne su - bi-to prae - o - cu - pa - ti di - e wor - tis, su - bi-to prae - o - cu - pa - ti, -vi - mus: Ne Ne su - bi-

These features, however--as in the Magnificat verse cited above--mark only the outer form, and it is in the secondary cadences that we see the full realization of Pontio's principles. As he notes, the pitch C holds a special place within the cadential scheme of mode three due

to its relationship to the mediant of the parallel Psalm tone. Not as strong as E or A, it nonetheless serves as a valid point of repose. The two cadences on C in this work reflect this functional role in that they mark the beginning of the refrain in both *partes*; and in so doing, the pitch serves a function nearly as strong as the pitch A, a function closely akin to its true nature as a mediant in a Psalm tone.

Further balance is imparted to the work by the transitory cadences on G in measures 8-9, 55-56, and 123-124. These points serve as the first cadence of each major section, linking the tonal structure of the A section to that of the refrain. In this light, the Level Three cadence in E in measures 85-86 becomes all the more striking. Placing an articulating cadence on E at this point presents a balancing contrast to the initial tonal structure of both the *prima pars* and the two statements of the refrain, all of which concentrate on the pitches of A and G for internal articulations.

Thus, in this work, Pontio carefully respects his own precepts of cadential propriety. The hierarchy of pitches is scrupulously respected. Further, the subtleties enunciated in his treatises find realization in the clear formal plan of the work--not, however, with the rigidity of a pedagogue, but with the sensitivity of a musician. Exigencies of form are quickly dispatched, and the hierarchical

system is used to impart shading and balance, bringing both theory and practice into full concord.

### Cadential Structure and Genre Distinction

The structure of the various levels of cadences as described above has ramifications beyond simple analysis and discussions of modality. Its role extends to the question of distinctions between genres, a subject which serves as a focus in the final section of the *Ragionamento*. Here, as shown earlier, Pontio makes generalized distinctions between various genres, most often in terms of subject material used as well as general style.

There is, however, another aspect of style and genre that is hinted at in this section, and made explicit in his music, and that involves the interaction of modality and cadential structure in the definition of genre and style. Such distinctions are found not just between Motets and psalmodic compositions, but equally between two closely-related forms of psalmodic composition, the Psalm and the Magnificat.

Pontio is more explicit than any contemporary theorist on the important distinction between modal procedure in the Psalms as opposed to that in Motets, Masses and the like.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Pietro Aaron, *Thoscanello de la musica* (Venice: Bernardino & Mattheo Vitali, 1523, facsimile edition, New York: Broude Brothers, 1969), Book II, chapter XVIII [sic]. mentions the cadence points for Psalms and Magnificats, but limits himself to the final and the mediant with no

He points out that the difference lies in the cadential points as well as the nature of the *soggetto* or invention. Modern writers, whether familiar with Pontio's writing or not, have made note of the obvious connection between the pitch of the mediant and the final of the Psalm tone acting in the same way as the final and reciting tone of the modes.<sup>37</sup> The nature of the melodic material is concurrently controlled by this Psalm tone, since at least one voice should incorporate the tone in its part.

It goes without saying, then, that the overall tonal plan of a Psalm setting differs from that of a Motet in the parallel mode. This is especially notable where there is a wide divergence in tonal structures between the pairs, such as mode seven--which has as its principal cadences G and D--and the parallel seventh tone--which uses A and E as its terminating cadences.

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discussion of the relationship between the tone and the mode. See also Aaron, *Thoscanello*, trans. Peter Bergquist, 3 vols., Colorado College Music Press Translations, 4 (Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1970). II, 32-33. Likewise, Zarlino, citing Stefan Vanneos's *Recanetum* (1533), treats the subject in much the same manner. See Cohen, 55-58.

<sup>37</sup> See Reese, "The Polyphonic Magnificat," Luoma, and Armstrong, cited above. Reese makes use of the term "tonal plan," which Luoma correctly takes exception to as being too closely connected with modern harmonic plan. As I will show below, however, Luoma's substitution of "cadential plan" does not adequately describe the principle at work in these pieces.

There are, of course, distinctions beyond this simple dichotomy. A Psalm is not simply a setting of the text in Motet style with a differing set of cadences. In their simplest form, Psalms are no more than polyphonic recitation formulas in falsobordone style.<sup>38</sup> In more ambitious works, though, they are a careful and skillful working out of that plan. In these more elaborate alternatim settings, the emphasis shifts from an unrelenting focus on the recitation and cadence to a more polyphonic fantasy on the material of the Psalm tone itself. However, as skillful as this may be, the composer must, according to Pontio, be careful to keep the phrases and their working out succinct:

. . . and if you make some inventions within these verses, they should be brief, and this brevity can be understood in two ways; first that it be brief in effect, made with short subjects (*con poche figure*); second that the parts begin one after the other with a pause of a semibreve,

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<sup>38</sup> The elements and nature of this style are outlined in Murray C. Bradshaw, *The Falsobordone: A Study in Renaissance and Baroque Music*, Musicological Studies and Documents, 34 (N.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1978). An extreme example of this can be found in the simple untexted *falsobordone* formulas for the recitation of Psalms found in a miscellaneous collection published by Rolla in Milan in 1619 and dedicated to Federico Borromeo (RISM 1619<sup>3</sup> and 1619<sup>4</sup>). This collection is a published version of a service anthology compiled at the Cathedral in Milan in the late sixteenth century (Milan, Archivio della Fabbrica del Duomo, Libroni 25 and 26).



or a breve, and no more. And this is to make the verses brief, and again, not to fall into the style of the Motet. . . .<sup>39</sup>

Pontio makes a stylistic differentiation between this approach, used for Psalm writing, and that used for the Magnificat, placing the latter's more rigorously polyphonic outward style--in some aspects--closer to that of the Motet:<sup>40</sup>

If you wish to make a Magnificat, [it is] after all, really a Psalm. Nonetheless, it is one of the "osservati," which is always more solemn, thus it is convenient to compose it in a more learned style . . . one part begins after the other at the space of two, three or four breves. . . .<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> "& se pur farete qualche inventione per entro quelli versetti, vuole esser breve, & questa brevità si può intendere in due modi; prima, che sia breve in effetto fatta con poche figure; secondo che le parti cominciano l'una doppo l'altra per pausa di Semibreve, over di Breve, e non di più; & questo per far il versetto breve, & ancora per non cadere nel stile del Motetto. . ." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 157.

<sup>40</sup> Winfried Kirsch, "Magnificat, Polyphonic to 1600," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1980), XI, 496, perhaps overstates the case in saying that in the late Renaissance the Magnificat had attained a character that could be described as "a largely independent species of the Motet"; no matter what the outer trappings of style might indicate, the tonal plan exhibited in each makes them completely separate genres.

<sup>41</sup> "Volendo far un Magnificat; ancora che sia veramente un Salmo; nondimeno è uno delli osservati, quale sempre si fa' solemne, & perciò conviene esser fatto con più dotto stile . . . una parte comincia doppo l'altra per uno, due, tre, & quattro tempi di Breve . . ." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 157.

In structure, however, the Magnificat is more akin to the Psalm than to the Motet. But beyond this similarity, there is a clearer distinction between the Psalm and the Magnificat, one based on specific approaches to cadential structure; and Pontio's admonition to observe a more learned style points us toward that distinction.

In principle, each verse should be constructed using part or all of the tone as a cantus firmus. Pontio delineates a number of ways in which this can be done:

1. All parts can imitate the intonation.
2. Two can imitate the intonation, the others presenting another invention.
3. Parts can start with new invention, then take up the tone.
4. One part can present the entire Magnificat tone.
5. One part can present the first part of the tone, up to the mediant, with another voice presenting the second half of the tone.
6. No cantus firmus is present up to the point of the mediant cadence, but is present in one or two voices from there to the end.
7. One part may present the entire cantus firmus, with the other voices presenting one or more independent inventions against this (suggesting that no. 4 describes more counterpoint based on the incipit against the tone).

8. No reference is made to the tone (Pontio describes this as the least laudable technique).<sup>42</sup>

This compositional procedure yields the most outwardly notable stylistic distinction between Psalm and Magnificat: the length of the verses. Pontio emphasizes this point in listing the requirements for writing a Psalm:

In wishing to write a Psalm I say (leaving aside for this time the canticle of the Virgin Mary, that is the Magnificat, and the Benedictus and Nunc Dimittis), it will not matter if you leave out an imitation of the Psalm in all parts in order that it be a short verse; because in imitating the cantus firmus in all voices it would be a long verse, which is not proper for the Psalm. But it is well if you can imitate the tone with two parts, or at least one, so it can be seen that the tone is being observed.<sup>43</sup>

Magnificat verses, by and large, tend to be more spacious in their conception than those of a Psalm, and this is a marked feature in Pontio's work. In Pontio's output, for example, the average Psalm verse is fourteen measures in length, whereas the average Magnificat verse is slightly

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<sup>42</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 157-158. Armstrong, 116-117, summarizes these rules and compares them to Cerone's list.

<sup>43</sup> "Volendo dico far Salmi (lasciando fuora il cantico di Maria Vergine, cioè il *Magnificat*, & il *Benedictus*, et il *Nunc dimittis*) non farà caso, se ben lasciate la imitatione del Salmo di tutti le parti, per esser il versetto breve; perche imitando il canto fermo con tutte le parti sarebbe il verso longo, ilche non conviene nelli Salmi; ma bene si potrà fare la imitatione con due parti, ò almeno con uno; acciò si veda esser stato osservato la imitatione del Tuono." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 156-157.

more than twenty-two measures in length.<sup>44</sup> This demand for longer verses in a more learned, intensely contrapuntal style leads to a markedly different use of cadences beyond the major structural points of mediant and final.<sup>45</sup> Each of the two principal cadences within the verse mark off an area supported and often dominated by transitory cadences of that pitch. These sections are virtually hermetic, in that seldom, if ever, will a cadence on the mediant level play a structural role after the principal mediant cadence. These cadences then prolong the cadential level of the mediant or final by presenting weaker cadential structures, or even arguably non-cadential structures focusing on that pitch.

Moreover, the increase in length in the Magnificat verse is specifically accomplished by extending the area after the mediant cadence. This is almost invariably marked by a Level Three cadence on the degree of the final, which

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<sup>44</sup> This figure was arrived at by averaging the length of all Psalm verses with the exception of the first in every setting, which is only a half-verse response to the plainchant incipit. Likewise, in computing the length of Magnificat verses, the "Anima mea" was excluded for the same reason.

<sup>45</sup> I will speak here only of the four-voice Magnificats from the 1584 collection and the two four-voice examples from the 1578 Psalm print. As noted in Chapter Four, the five-voice Magnificats from the former and the eight-voice example in the latter are of a markedly different style, being closer in this case to Motets on the Magnificat text. While the cadences of the given tone are respected in these pieces, the formal aspects are sacrificed to the ongoing polyphonic texture more characteristic of the Motet.

announces the repetition of part or all of the second half of the verse. The ensuing form is shown in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4  
Typical Cadential Structure of Pontio's Magnificat Verses

Text	Phrase 1	Phrase 2,	Phrase 2
Cadence Level	I	III	I
Cadence Pitch	Mediant	Final	Final

This pattern was seen in an isolated Magnificat verse earlier in the example from Pontio's *Magnificat tertii toni*, in the verse "Suscepit Israel" (Example 29 above). The full measure of this approach in a complete setting can be seen in an early Magnificat setting by Pontio, his *Magnificat secundi toni* from the 1578 book of Psalms.<sup>46</sup> Here, with a predictable clarity, Pontio sets each verse in the manner described above, using the few secondary cadences only in subordinate roles to support the three main cadences in each verse, with a Level One cadence on the mediant, a Level Three cadence on the final to articulate the repeat of the second phrase, and a closing Level One cadence on the final (see Table 17).

<sup>46</sup> Pontio, *Psalmi vesperarum totius anni secundum Romanae ecclesiae usum, cum quatuor vocibus decantandi* (Venice: Scotto, [1578]/1589). This setting, slightly reworked, appears in his 1584 Magnificat collection. The entire piece is reproduced in Appendix 3.

TABLE 17  
Table of Cadences  
Pietro Pontio, *Magnificat secundi toni*

Measure	Pitch	Voices	Type	Level	Placement
Et exultavit					
8-9	Bb	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
12-13	G	Ten/Bass	CP	III	C/T
16	G	Cant/Ten	CP	III	C/T
20	G	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T?
Quia fecit					
29-30	Bb	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
34-35	G	Cant/Ten	CP	III	C/T
40-41	G	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
Fecit potentiam					
48-49	Bb	Cant/Alt	CP	I	C/T
52-53	G	Cant/Alt	CP	III	C/T
59-60	G	Cant/Ten	CP	III	C/T
62-63	G	Cant/Alt	CP	I	C/T
Esurientes					
70-71	F	Alt/Ten	Alt	III	C/T
73-74	Bb	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
78	D	Alt/--	CP	III	C/T
81-82	G	Cant/Ten	CP	III	C/T
84-85	G	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
Sicut locutus est					
92-93	Bb	Ten/Bass	CP	I	C/T
100-101	G	Cant/Ten	CP	III	C/T
108-109	G	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
Sicut erat					
128-129	G	Cant/Quin	CP	III	C/T
134-135	G	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T

While the pattern of cadential structure shown above is found in all of Pontio's later four-voice *Magnificat* settings, few follow the pattern as simplistically as in this early example. It is evident that in the intervening years Pontio learned the value of *varietà*, and the *Magnificats* in the 1584 collection evidence more concern for varying the cadences in all aspects of voice participation, cadential

level, and cadential type. In addition, in the later Magnificats, cadential and even non-cadential structures are used with more assurance in order to maintain the ongoing polyphonic texture while at the same time reinforcing the mode in ways that were not destructive to the continuity of this texture.

An example of this more complex approach can be seen in a section from Pontio's *Magnificat tertii toni* from the 1584 Magnificat print (Example 31). In measures 71-72 we find the Level Three cadence that articulates the repeat of the consequent phrase of the verse, and establishes the final cadence on A. As Pontio repeats this final phrase, he regresses to the mediant cadence on C with a series of non-cadential structures which suggest the pitch, without actually presenting it in a substantial form. The first is seen in measures 74-75 in the cantus and tenor. The tenor carries the *cantizans*, weakened, however, by the fact that it ends a text phrase only in its extension. The *tenorizans* fills the function of an escaped cadential voice, forming the seventh on the strong beat of measure 74, but immediately moving away. This is immediately followed by another weakened cadential formula in the same voices, with the cadential roles reversed. This time the cantus forms the *cantizans*, which is altered to the final cadential pitch of A at the point of resolution (measure 76), while the tenor

avoids the cadence entirely. Immediately following this is the final cadence on A in measure 78.<sup>47</sup>

Example 31. Pietro Pontio, *Magnificat tertii toni*, measures 71-78.

The image displays a musical score for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in G major, measures 71-78. The lyrics are: hu - mi - les, et e - xul - ta - vit hu - mi - les, et e - xul - ta - vit hu - mi - les.

Measure 71: hu - mi - les, et e - xul - ta - vit hu - mi - les, et e - xul -

Measure 72: hu - mi - les, et e - xul - ta - vit hu - mi - les, et e - xul -

Measure 73: hu - mi - les, et e - xul - ta - vit hu - mi - les, et e - xul -

Measure 74: hu - mi - les, et e - xul - ta - vit hu - mi - les, et e - xul -

Measure 75: hu - mi - les, et e - xul - ta - vit hu - mi - les, et e - xul -

Measure 76: hu - mi - les, et e - xul - ta - vit hu - mi - les, et e - xul -

Measure 77: hu - mi - les, et e - xul - ta - vit hu - mi - les, et e - xul -

Measure 78: hu - mi - les, et e - xul - ta - vit hu - mi - les.

In adding this measure of variety, Pontio was more closely approaching the style of what was undoubtedly his

<sup>47</sup> This is a typical feature in Pontio's works. Almost invariably, these abortive cadential figures, too weak to be considered structural, repeatedly reinforce structural pitches, very rarely appearing on non-primary degrees.



model for this type of composition, the Magnificats of Morales, though some differences may be noted.<sup>48</sup> Morales's works in general show a more expansive approach than even the late Magnificats of Pontio. Here the average length of each verse is closer to twenty-eight measures. But the most notable difference is in the overall approach to form as expressed in the cadential structure. Morales, in contrast to Pontio, often elaborates the first section of the verse, revolving around the mediant cadence, in the same manner in which both composers treat the second half of the verse. Here Level Three cadences are used to mark text repeats in a manner almost never seen in Pontio's works. This structure is seen in Table 18, which shows the cadences from the verse "Suscepit Israel" from his *Magnificat primi toni*.<sup>49</sup>

In Morales's Magnificats in general, one can find a greater variety of cadences, both in type and level. Typically, Morales makes more use of Level Two and Level Four cadences than Pontio, yielding a more continuous polyphonic flow. The enlargement of the first section of the verse noted above is clear in this verse, with the Level Three

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<sup>48</sup> That these works were his models is suggested by the high frequency with which Pontio cites them in both treatises.

<sup>49</sup> Cristóbal de Morales, *Magnificat Moralis Ispani aliorumque authorum liber primus* (Venice: Scotto, 1542), edited in *Opera Omnia*, IV. The pieces in this collection appeared in various forms in more than fifteen different prints in the sixteenth century.

TABLE 18  
Table of Cadences  
Cristóbal de Morales, *Magnificat primi toni*,  
"Suscepit Israel," measures 94-124

Measure	Pitch	Voices	Type	Level	Placement
98	D	Cant/Alt	Avoided	III	C/T
103-104	D	Cant/Ten	Escaped	II	C/T
104-105	D	Ten/Bass	CP	I	C/T
107-108	D	Cant/Ten	CP	III	C/T
109-110	G	Alt/Bass	CP	V	C/T
111-112	D	Ten/Bass	4-3	V	C/T
116	G	Cant/Ten	CP	III	C/T
119-120	G	Alt/Bass	CP	III	C/T
122	G	Cant/Bass	4-3	IV	C/T
123-124	G	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T

cadence in measures 107-108 marking a complete repetition of the first textual phrase. Like Pontio in his later works, Morales is never rigid in this approach to form, and much variation can be seen from verse to verse. Even so, the more expansive approach as well as the unrelenting nature of the texture stands in sharp contrast to Pontio's essays in this genre.

These contrasts point at clear stylistic differences between the composers. It would be easy to attribute these differences to varying levels of competence between the two musicians, suggesting an inability to maintain large-scale tonal structures and a crabbedness in the nature of Pontio's writing. However, as his Motets suggest, this is not the case, and it is evident that Pontio could easily support a more extensive tonal structure. It is, then, a matter of

choice on Pontio's part, based either on a more carefully prescribed conception of the form or a desire or need to write less prolix and demanding pieces more suitable for his immediate situation.

Whatever the reason for these differences, both approaches to the Magnificat depart markedly in scope and formal structure from that found in Pontio's settings of the Psalm tones. In comparison to those of the Magnificat, Psalm verses tend to be equally bipartite, with little of the use of supporting cadences found in the Magnificat. This reflects the brief nature called for by Pontio in his description of the genre. Here cadential goals are more immediate, and little time is spent in textual or musical repetition. This principle is seen in the cadential structure of the Psalm *Dixit Dominus*, from the 1578 Psalm collection (Table 19).<sup>50</sup>

The more direct nature of the presentation of the tone is clear, and nowhere is there evidence of a recurring extended structure for the verses. The verse "Judicabit in nationibus," for example, is marked simply by the cadence on the mediant and the final. By contrast, the longest verse, "Juravit Dominus," presents a more individual approach to the structure. The only full text repetition in this verse occurs in measure twenty-four (the Level Five cadences, in

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<sup>50</sup> The entire piece can be found in Appendix 3.

TABLE 19  
Table of Cadences  
Pietro Pontio, Psalm, *Dixit Dominus*, *primi toni*

Measure	Pitch	Voices	Type	Level	Placement
3	G	Alt/Bass	CP	III	C/T
5-6	G	Alt/Ten	CP	I	C/T
Virgam Virtutis					
8-9	G	Alt/Ten	CP	V	T/C
12-13	Bb	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
17-18	D	Alt/Bass	Phrygian	VI	C/T
18-19	G	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
Juravit Dominus					
24	G	Alt/Bass	CP	III	C/T
27	A	Alt/Bass	Phrygian	VI	C/T
27-28	D	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
29-30	G	Alt/Ten	CP	V	T/C
31-32	G	Alt/Ten	CP	V	C/T
37-38	G	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
Judicabit in Nationibus					
44-45	D	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
49-50	G	Cant/Ten	CP	I	C/T
Gloria Patri					
54-55	D	Cant/Bass	CP	II	C/-
58-59	D	Cant/Ten	Alt	I	T/C
61-62	G	Cant/Alt	CP	IV	T/C
62-63	D	Cant/Ten	Alt	IV	C/T
65-66	G	Alt/Ten	CP	I	C/T

measures 29-30 and 31-32, do not articulate repeats, only single words). Also, in the first section of the phrase, the repeat is marked not by a cadence on the mediant--which would provide both the clear articulation and sense of continuation found in such text repetitions in the Magnificat--but on the final. Combined with the typically homophonic style of the Psalm setting, the work reflects a simple and direct expression of the text, with little use of text repetition and formal shading found in either the

Motets or the Magnificats. This is a pattern which holds true in all of the Psalms.

Thus individual style, and more importantly, genre distinctions can be viewed in terms of cadential structure. Although expressed in basically dichotomous terms (mode versus tone, Motet versus Psalm), it is clear under more careful scrutiny that this seemingly simple approach reflects admirably the varying subtleties which were part of stylistic and generic differences that can be seen in the music of the time. While never expressing these two concepts directly in the *Ragionamento*, Pontio provides the raw materials for a more profitable examination of these topics.

In many ways, this discussion sets the stage for the most important aspect of his second treatise, which is a discussion of style and criticism. In the various sections of this first treatise, Pontio gives the student the necessary practical tools to undertake the practice of music. More importantly, he has also given him the tools to begin the more advanced discussions to follow in the *Dialogo*, discussions which elevate Pontio's ostensibly superficial system of distinctions to a unified approach to study and criticism.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE *DIALOGO* AND NASCENT MUSICAL CRITICISM

Critical writing about music, let alone any systematic approach to critical evaluation, by writers in the Renaissance is a rare occurrence and worthy of note. Ludovico Zacconi's brief discussion of the matter in the second part of his *Prattica di musica* of 1622 may be singled out as one of the earliest such instances.<sup>1</sup> His brief discussion is all the more notable in that it ascribes the ideas presented to none other than Gioseffo Zarlino.<sup>2</sup> As James Haar points out, this brief digression occurs "apropos of nothing," suggesting not a novel idea, but rather a common topic, worthy only of mention in passing. Indeed, this type of discussion must have been a common occurrence in the various *accademie* and *ridotti* of the period.

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<sup>1</sup> See James Haar, "A Sixteenth-Century Attempt at Music Criticism," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XXXVI (1983), 191-209. Haar includes a complete transcription and translation of the passage in question.

<sup>2</sup> ". . . io mi ricordo, che l'anno 1584. discorrendosi un giorno di Musica alla presenza de molti di detta professione, innanzi al Signor Don Ioseffo Zerlino. . ." Ludovico Zacconi, *Prattica di musica seconda parte divisa, e distinta in quattro libri* (Venice: Vincenti, 1622; facsimile edition, Bologna: Forni, 1967), 49-50. See Haar, "A Sixteenth-Century Attempt at Music Criticism," for a thorough discussion of this section of the treatise.

In Pietro Pontio's *Dialogo*, just such a discussion of this subject by Alessandro and his fellow academicians appears, which--in contrast to Zarlino's supposed discourse--is both lengthy and apropos. It comprises, in fact, nearly the whole of the entire second dialogue, where--in Pontio carefully sets out nine particular qualities that distinguish one composer from another. In contrast to Zacconi, Pontio very carefully defines each of these terms, though with little reference to specific composers. Thus, even as we gain a more precise understanding of his general principles, we are left on our own to employ them in a truly critical fashion to the music and composers of the period.

The impetus for Alessandro's detailed exploration of this topic derives from the end of the previous dialogue, a typically detailed and somewhat tedious discussion of speculative matters, and an enumeration of the ratios related to tuning. After this long exposition, one of the interlocutors, Marco, asks about the importance of these theoretical matters, and, in effect, about their relevance to the practical art of music:

I would happily know if, in having a most excellent knowledge of this musical theory, one can become a perfect composer, and if this theory offers any help to the composer.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> ". . . saprai volontieri, se per haver buonissima intelligenza di questa Theorica musicale si può divenir perfetto compositore; e se questa Theorica porge aiuto alcuno al comporre in Musica." Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo* . . .

Alessandro replies at great length, saying that theory and practice are two different things entirely, and that it is only through study of the latter, which is much more difficult, that one can learn the art of composition.<sup>4</sup> The continuation of this conversation, in turn, begins the second dialogue. Marco, still dissatisfied with Alessandro's answer from the previous day's discussion, asks how it is that theory is not of primary importance, given that it is "the mother of proportion, and thus of consonance and dissonance." Alessandro's reply leads the conversation directly to the central concern of this second dialogue, the question of variety among composers:

One sees that among the writers of musical theory there is almost no variety, and in different things they agree; nor in that which is important do they differ . . . which one cannot

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*ove si tratta della theorica e prattica di Musica . . .*  
(Parma: Viotto, 1595), 41.

<sup>4</sup> In this, Pontio is in perfect agreement with Zacconi, who, in speaking of the theoretical writers such as Boethius, opines that one could spend a great deal of time studying them without ever learning to compose. See Haar, "A Sixteenth-Century Attempt at Musical Criticism," 197. More to the point, Zacconi states that a composer is "quello che la pone in prattica, perche qual si voglia dotto ch'habbia quella dottrina non saperà mai comporre, se non l'impara dal compositore." *Prattica di musica utile et necessaria si al compositore comporre i canti suoi regulatamente, si anco al cantore per assicurarsi in tutte le cose cantabili* (Venice: Girolamo Polo, 1592; facsimile edition, Bologna: Forni, 1970), fol. 13.



say of [musical] practice; because in composing music, one does not see one composer similar to another. . .<sup>5</sup>

To amplify this, Alessandro lists nine specific ways in which composers can vary:

The cause of this is, first, the invention; because one will make a more beautiful one than another, in which it will be more animated, and he will be better able to use it so that it is pleasing to hear. The second cause is that through much study one will have acquired a style of composing (as it is called) which is more lovely, more elegant, and more musical than the other. The third is that one knows better how to put together the consonances and dissonances in his compositions than the other, so that they will give more pleasure to the listener, which those of that other composer will not do. The fourth cause (and in this there is great variety) is that one, more than the other, will have consideration for the words, such that if these words signify happiness, or sadness, he will find a tone which will be of the proper happy or sad nature.<sup>6</sup> The fifth is because when a composer begins a composition, he will find inventions made according to the given tone, and appropriate to it, and which will serve as well in the middle as at the end. And one will see sometimes such compositions made in imitation of the plainsong in which one will observe this chant very well, while the other will

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<sup>5</sup> "Si vede fra gli Scrittori della Theorica di Musica, non esser quasi nulla di varietà; et in diverse cose conformarsi insieme; ne in quel, che importa contrariarsi. . . Ilche non si può dire nella prattica; perche nel comporre in Musica non si vede un compositore simile al'altro. . ." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 43-44.

<sup>6</sup> Pontio uses the term "tone" (tuono) to refer to both mode and the Psalm tone. I have endeavored to make these distinctions clear in my discussion. I have, however, retained Pontio's generic term in my translation of his material. The reader, I am confident, will be able to make any distinctions necessary from the context.

not. The sixth cause, which results in great variety among composers, is that one will make his composition more learned and ingenious than the other. The seventh is that one will introduce an invention in the middle of his piece, which will not be noticed by the listener, nor even heard, while the other will make it so that it will be heard and very well understood. The eighth reason that causes variety is that one, more than the other, will observe the tone. The ninth cause is that one will make use of cadences outside of the tone, while the other will not. And these are the causes that give birth to such variety among composers.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Causa di questo è prima l'inventione; perche uno la farà più bella dell'altro, in quella sarà più pronto, & talmente la saprà accommodare, che farà nelle compositioni grato udire, la seconda causa è, che uno per lo studio grande havrà acquistato uno stile di comporre (così chiamato) più vago, più elegante, & più musicale dell'altro. Terza è, ch'uno saprà meglio accommodar le consonanze, e le dissonanze nelle sue compositioni d'un altro; & che perciò daranno alli ascoltanti più grato udire, che non faranno quelle di quell'altro compositore. La quarta causa è, & in questo fa venir gran varietà; perche uno più, che l'altro, havrà consideratione alle parole. Perilche se quelle significaranno allegrezza, over mestitia, troverà un tuono, che sarà di propria natura allegro, ò mesto. La quinta sia; perche, quando uno compositore darà principio alla sua compositione, troverà inventioni fatte secondo il tuono propostosi, & appropriate à quello, le quali serverà così nel mezo, come nel fine: & si vedrà alcuna volta tal compositione fatta ad imitatione del Canto plano, che benissimo sarà osservato da quello, ilche non sarà osservato da un altro. La sesta causa, che fa seguire fra compositori gran varietà, è perche uno farà la sua compositione più dotta, & ingegnosa, che non farà un'altro. La settima sia, ch'uno farà una sola inventione nel mezo della sua compositione, che non sarà dalli Ascoltanti considerata, ne tampoco intesa, & da un'altro sarà fatta sì, che si osserverà, & benissimo s'intenderà. L'ottava cagione, che causa varietà, è; perche uno più, che un'altro osserverà il tuono. La nona causa è, ch'uno si servirà delle cadenze fuori del tuono, & l'altro nò. Et queste sono le cause, che fanno nascere tanta varietà fra compositori." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 45.

This type of list, analogous as it is in many ways to those of other composers, is most notably similar in content to the six rules of counterpoint presented by Zarlino in chapter twenty-six of the third book of the *Istitutioni*, which singles out six qualities as being of overriding importance:

1. There must be a subject.
2. The piece should be composed primarily of consonances and dissonances.
3. The voices should proceed properly "in true and legitimate intervals."
4. There should be variety in the modulations and harmonies.
5. The melody must belong to a prescribed mode.
6. The harmonies should complement the text.<sup>8</sup>

Zarlino's list is more wholly didactic than that presented by either Zacconi or Pontio. And while Zarlino promises an explanation of all the points listed, a specific one is not immediately forthcoming. On the other hand, Alessandro's comments, like those found in Zacconi's *Prattica*, form the outline for a basic critical apparatus. Pontio's items differ, however, from those proposed by Zacconi in two important ways. First, they are more descriptive of technical features--and thus to a degree more

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<sup>8</sup> Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le Istitutioni harmoniche* (Venice, Senese, 1558), 171-172.

objective--than the general terms suggested by Zacconi, such as *arte*, *diletto* and the like.<sup>9</sup> As objective and technical as they are, however, in their further explanation there is opportunity for qualitative judgment.

The second difference is one of tone and approach. Zacconi's stylistic determinants are ideals, and while the more a composer exhibits them the more praiseworthy he is, it is understood from his introduction to the subject that not all of these gifts are distributed equally.<sup>10</sup> As such, the composer who exhibits several is all the more to be admired. For Pontio, however, the qualities he presents are, at their base, a minimum for good composition; and rather than praising a composer who is graced with one of the gifts in abundance, it is the composer who is lacking in them who receives the attention of the critical listener.

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<sup>9</sup> There are, to be sure, more plainly subjective terms in Pontio's discussion, notably the requirement that the composer have a style that is "elegant." Don Harrán, "Elegance as a Concept in Sixteenth-Century Music Criticism," *Renaissance Quarterly* XLI (1988), 431-432 has noted Pontio's use of this term in the *Ragionamento* as a synonym for both "ornamented" and "tasteful." The use here, not noted by Harrán, is an even stronger indication than that found in the *Ragionamento* of the use of "elegance" as a specifically critical term. Also to be noted is Pontio's use of the term "musical" (*musicale*).

<sup>10</sup> "It is both clear and certain that the gifts of the Lord, however manifold (not to say infinite), are divided and distributed by His Divine Majesty in such a way that very often one who possesses one gift does not have another." Zacconi, *Prattica* (1622), 49, quoted and translated in Haar, "A Sixteenth-Century Attempt at Music Criticism," 193.

This more negative approach makes his system--as will be seen--one more didactic and less purely critical.

Along with the purely musical ramifications of this approach, certain pedagogical matters are of moment here, and it is apparent that this scheme has strong roots in the *ars rhetorica*. In classical rhetorical theory, the art of oratory was divided into five aspects: invention, arrangement, expression or style, memory, and delivery. These are described by Cicero in the following manner:

Invention (*inventio*) is the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible. Arrangement (*dispositio*) is the distribution of arguments thus discovered in the proper order. Expression (*elocutio*) is the fitting of the proper language to the invented matter. Memory (*memoria*) is the firm mental grasp of the matters and the words. Delivery (*pronuntiatio*) is the control of the voice and body in a manner suitable to the dignity of the subject of style.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Cicero [Marcus Tullius], *De Inventione*, trans. H.M. Hubbell, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), 19-20 (1.vii.9). The parallel is even more striking in the Stoic tradition, represented by Zeno, who reversed the position of the second and third elements, thus exactly matching Pontio's schema in the first three elements. See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 2 vols., trans. R.D. Hicks, The Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1931), II, 153 (VII.43). And at least one modern translator has translated the term *elocutio* as style, thus adding weight to this comparison. See Ad. C. Herrennium, *De Ratione Dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herrennium)*, trans. Henry Caplan, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 7 (I.ii.3), cited in Howard Meyer Brown, "Emulation, Competition, and Homage: Imitation and Theories of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XXXV (1982), 39.

Although exact comparisons are impossible between the two traditions--oratory is, after all, a combinatorial art comprising both composition and performance--nonetheless strong parallels can be seen in terminology and more importantly in intent. The connection between the first three qualities is obvious. The musical invention--like its rhetorical counterpart, the *inventio*--is the crux of the work, deriving from the mind of the artist and carried to its fruition in the realization of the work. *Elocutio* and style are similar enough to likewise need no lengthy explication. And the arrangement of the consonances and dissonances, which after all serve only to clothe the invention, is little different than the orator's arrangement of his arguments, his *dispositio*; the goal in both cases is to have the invention/argument make sense to the listener.

The rhetorical *elocutio* also finds concordance with a number of the qualities advanced by Pontio. For the musical work to be coherent to the listener, the invention should fit the mode chosen (or risk contradicting the original argument). As well, the entire work should follow the modality thus established, and any deviation must be seen as a meaningful expressive device. The presence or absence of learned devices is also a reflection of the expression, as

is the presence of cadences outside of the mode, which have often been linked to the idea of rhetorical flourish.<sup>12</sup>

The final rhetorical quality, *memoria*, seems at first to offer no ready parallels within Pontio's scheme. Memory is, of course, a self-directed quality--in part the preparation for the delivery of the oration. Returning to Cicero, however, we find the term defined by him as the "firm mental grasp of the matters and words." From the listener's point of view, this is the purpose of Pontio's seventh quality--one which finds no counterpart in the other rhetorical qualities--which concerns the correct introduction of a new subject within the course of the work. This new invention, if properly prepared, impresses itself upon the listener in such a way that he has the same firm mental grasp as does the singer or orator in his presentation. Pontio, in fact, employs the term *memoria* to explain the significance of this quality, noting that if a new invention is preceded by a rest in the part presenting it:

The listeners lend it their ear, and place  
the notes, which the singer has set forth, in  
their memory . . .<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In this, and in Pontio's admonition for the composer to take the text into consideration in the selection of a mode, he comes closest to the rhetorical ideal of *pronuntiatio*.

<sup>13</sup> " . . . gli Ascoltanti le porgono orecchia, e servono nella memoria le figure, che proferisce il Cantore . . ." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 63.

The listener is thus able to follow the presentation of this subject as it is enunciated in the different voices. And just as the speaker who has not memorized the points of a speech will confuse these points and will both lessen their effectiveness and lose the attention of the audience, so the musical listener depends on the concept of *memoria* to maintain an understanding of the direction of the composition. Thus one is able to commit the material to memory so that the following events of the piece make sense. In the absence of this process, one will miss the musical point as well as lose the ability to concentrate.

Seen from this perspective, this section of the *Dialogo* is a masterful pedagogical adaptation of rhetorical principles to the subject matter of music, paralleling and complementing the oft-noted connection between the fruits of the two arts.<sup>14</sup> As a pedagogical tool, its location is propitious, for with its presentation, all of the basic material needed for the perfection of the musician has been

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<sup>14</sup> These principles were in common circulation during this period, and Pontio's appropriation of them may be attributed to common knowledge. He might also have had first hand access to the sources by way of the library of Camillio Platoni, a priest and scholar who had served at the Steccata before Pontio's arrival there in 1567. In the inventory of this library completed after his death, a number of classical sources on rhetoric are listed, including Aristotle, Cicero, and three copies of *De Ratione Dicendi*. Parma, Archivio di Stato di Parma, Fondo notarile Giacomo Rambolini, filza 2434: Contratti, 1592 (21 April 1592).



introduced. As a *musico*--a composer--and having been given the theoretical roots of the art, the student is here presented with a clear model by which he can both put to use all that he has learned to the perfection of his art, and make judgments of those works which would serve as models for his future work.

### Pontio's Nine Qualities of Style

At first glance, the various qualities listed by Pontio seem to overlap and suffer from the same lack of concrete definition as Zacconi's. However, unlike Zacconi's treatment of this question, Pontio is ready with detailed explanations for each of the terms, filling out the general outline of the subject presented at the opening of the dialogue.

#### *Inventione*

The first distinction among composers is in the nature of the very beginning of their pieces: the invention and its treatment. According to Pontio, the composer must create an invention of good qualities--both linear and harmonic--which:

with graceful movements or intervals moves from place to place, and with the other part finds itself now at the interval of a fifth, now a sixth, and other times at the third or the octave, as the occasion carries it, making its movement pleasing and harmonious to hear. An invention made in this way can be called beautiful, when, however, its intervals are according to the tone

in which the composition is based; it being otherwise, it can not be so called. And it is known with certainty that its beauty consists in the parts moving together well, and that its intervals are comfortable to the singer, and that one does not hear any movement of the parts that is not made with good effect. And this will be known when the ears of expert musicians are not offended.<sup>15</sup>

Pontio provides an example to illustrate the features which make for a pleasing invention (Example 32). He then continues, using this subject to expand upon an number of technical questions, such as the nature of a real answer, how melodies are written to fit in the mode, and the use of contrary motion, diminution, and augmentation to vary the basic material. But apart from these, three strictly technical qualities can be seen to be vital for a pleasing invention. First, the parts should move easily, with a singable melody that neither causes discomfort nor confuses the singer. Closely allied with this, the structure of the invention must be consistent with that of the mode.

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15 ". . . con leggiadri movimenti, ò intervalli si moverà da luogo à luogo; e poi con l'altra parte si troverà hora in quinta, hora in sesta, & tal volta in terza, overo in ottava, si come l'occasione porterà, facendo gli suoi movimenti grato, & harmonioso udire. Questa così fatta inventione si potrà chiamare bella; quando, però gli suoi intervalli seranno secondo il tuono, dove serà fondata detta compositione, che, s'altrimente fosse, non si potrebbe così chiamar. Et sappiasi certo, che la sua bellezza consiste nel far modular bene le parti insieme; & che i suoi intervalli siino commodi al cantore; &, che non si senta movimento alcuno delle parti, che non faccia buono effetto. Et questo si conoscerà, quando l'orrechia de'Periti di Musica non serà offesa." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 46.

Example 32. Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo*, 46: Example of a proper invention.



Thirdly, the composer must avoid mistakes of range, clefs, and improper intervals so that, again, the singer is not inconvenienced, nor are the ears of the trained musician bothered.

These are entirely matters of correct technique, and they must be followed carefully by the composer as a bare minimum. But beyond these is a fourth quality, which truly sets the graceful invention apart, and that is that it be filled with pleasing harmonies and, equally important, that there are a variety of such harmonies. Thus, an overreliance on parallel intervals is to be avoided. The example provided follows all of these precepts. Each line arches gracefully, reflecting the structure of the Dorian mode, and at the same time presents a pleasing balance and variety of intervals.

All of these qualities are focused here on a very small scale; larger questions are ignored. In short, Pontio is saying that to write a good piece, one must start with good material, emphasizing the idea that the first task of a composer is the crafting of a good *inventione*, which besides being correct must contain from the outset the qualities of beauty and variety that will then serve the work as a whole.

### *Stile*

Pontio's second category focuses on what he calls the overall style of the composer--the "modo di comporre"--which, in part, takes the basic requirements of the invention to a wider focus. If he has a pleasing style, the composer does not write any intervals which cannot be sung, and as much as possible, the parts move in conjunct motion. Above all, the success of this style can be judged by the comfort and delight of the singer and the listener:

In the end (these parts having been put together as I have said) that composition will be sung by the singers with admirable delight: and it will be impossible that they make any error in singing it being that one part (so to speak) calls to the other. But, if those parts are put together in another way, one will hear them pronounced with difficulty by the singers, and they will render little delight and sweetness to the listeners. And when one part has some pauses, it will be necessary that the singer be diligent and warned to keep careful count of these pauses so that he does not make an error . . . All of this will happen because the part is begun without aim or reason, which will not happen when the parts

are put together in a well-ordered way, as I have already said.<sup>16</sup>

Pontio's definition of good style, then, is very simple: a composer with a good style is one whose pieces are easy to sing. In giving more detail to the student, he states that there are six reasons that the piece might be difficult, or not pleasing to sing (and thus exhibiting a bad style):

1. The parts may not be put together properly.
2. There may be improper parallel intervals.
3. Phrases may end at the wrong cadential point.
4. The invention may be badly made.
5. The parts may follow each other too soon, or too late.

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<sup>16</sup> "All' hora adunque da' Cantori (essendo poste le parti insieme, come hò detto) serà cantata quella compositione con mirabile dilettectione: & impossibile serà, che nel cantare faccino errore, essendo, che una parte (per modo di dire) chiamerà l'altra. Mà, se in altro modo seranno le dette parti poste, si sentiranno quelle parti dalli Cantori esser prononciate pur forza; & alli Ascoltanti renderanno poco diletto, e dolcezza. Et, quando una parte si poserà con alquante pause, converrà, che il Cantore sia diligente, & avvertito nel tener conto d'esse pause, acciò non faccia errore . . . Tutto questo accaderà, perche detta parte farà principio fuor di proposito, e senza ragione. Il che non avverrà, quando le parti serrano poste con bell'ordine, come già hò detto." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 53.

6. The composer may be guilty of making a "dead composition," or one without movement.<sup>17</sup>

Leaving aside for the moment the final mistake the composer might make, that of making a "dead composition," what is apparent in these rules is that Pontio has extended the basic rules given for the crafting of an invention to the entire piece. The procedures that yield a good invention, applied to the piece as a whole, produce a work that has a coherent sense of motion and logic. Entrances are made on correct--or at least logical--itches, and in a rhythmically balanced way, so that the singer is always at ease. All of this is then applied to a well-crafted, and well-constructed invention, as can be seen in the example he provides (Example 33).

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17 "Prima può questo essere per non haver' il Compositore con bell'ordine, & nel suo proprio essere accommodare le parti insieme, può esser' ancora, che fra le parti siano di quelli affrontamenti d'unisono, & d'ottava per movimento separati, come dimostrò Pietro Pontio nella seconda parte del suo ragionamento di Musica, & il simile dell'altre consonanze. Alle volte causerà questo il non stare nelli suoi termini secondo il tuono, & il non far le sue conclusioni, over cadenze (come dir vogliamo) nelle Quinte, & Quarte di quel tuono, ove serà formata la cantilena. Avverrà forse questo ancora, perche l'inventioni non seranno poste con bell'ordine, & nel suo proprio essere: over, che daranno principio più presto, che non convenirà: over seranno tardi nel cominciar. Ultimamente potrà ciò essere, perche il Compositore havrà fatta morta la compositione, cioè, senza movimento." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 53-54.

Example 33. Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo*, 55: Example of pleasing style.

The last item in Pontio's list, the warning against "dead composition," is the only aspect of this entire *Dialogo* that has previously been noted by modern writers.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Kurt von Fischer, "Zur Geschichte der Passionskomposition des 16. Jahrhunderts in Italien," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, XI (1954), 204, suggested that Pontio was speaking of falsobordone and limiting it only to specific uses. Murray C. Bradshaw, *The Falsobordone: A Study in Renaissance and Baroque Music*, Musicological Studies and Documents, 34 (N.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1978), 148, more correctly points out that Pontio was

There has been some question as to what exactly Pontio was referring, since Alessandro tells his students only what the sin is, and not necessarily how to avoid it:

A composition (speaking of Masses, Motets, Psalms, Magnificats, Ricercars, and other types of pieces except, however, for the "Incarnatus" of the Mass, the "Gloria Patri" of the Psalms, the lessons of Holy Week, and other things pertaining to that week) is heard to be dead when the parts move together in breves or semibreves for a considerable period of time; nor will there be any of these parts, three or four parts singing together, that makes any movement, which style (as I have already said) renders little delight, as all can see from this example [Example 34].

It can be seen how these parts move in equal motion for some time, which mode and style makes the composition sad and without any pleasure or delight. It is permitted from time to time, however, in Motets and other compositions, that the parts may stay together for the space of a semibreve, or a breve, but this being done, the parts then begin to move following the manner and style of the compositions of expert musicians, as is revealed in the Motets of Willaert, Gombert, Phinot and others similar, which I will pass over in order not to take too much time.<sup>19</sup>

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discussing a style rather than a genre. Lewis Lockwood, *The Counter-Reformation and the Masses of Vincenzo Ruffo*, *Studi di Musica Veneta*, 2 (Vienna: Universal Editions; Venice: Fondazione Cini, 1970), 199-201 suggests that Pontio is taking specific issue with the so-called intelligible style of the counter-reformation as exemplified by Ruffo and others.

<sup>19</sup> "Morta la compositione (parlando di Messe, Motetti, Salmi, Magnificat, Ricercarii, et altre varie Compositioni, ecettuato però l'Incarnatus de spiritu sancto della Messa, il Gloria patri delli Salmi, le lettioni della settimana santa, et altre cose pertinenti à detta settimana) s'intende, quando le parti vanno comunemente con misura di Breve over con misura di Semibreve, per alquanto spatio di tempo; ne vi serrà parte alcuna d'esse, cantando trè, over



Example 34. Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo*, 54: Example of  
"dead composition."

5

10

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quattro parti insieme, che facciano movimento alcuno, il qual modo (come già ho detto) rende poco diletto come da questo essemplio il tutto potrassi vedere."  
[Pontio's example is inserted here]

"Hora veggono, come quelle parti vanno egualmente in misura per ispacio assai di tempo, il qual modo, e stile fa la compositione mesta, e senza vaghezza, e diletto alcuno. Si permette però alle volte ne' Motetti, et altre compositioni per un tempo di Semibreve, over de Breve al più, che le parti si possano fermar' insieme; ma, fatto questo, le Parti poi cominciano a far movimento, servando l'ordine, e lo stile della Compositioni de' periti Musici, come ciò ben scoprono i Motetti di Adriano, Gomberto, Finotto, et altri simili, i quali per non dilongarmi tacerò." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 54.

Put into context, however, and especially the context of his own compositions, Pontio's admonition takes on a greater clarity. The example he provides to illustrate this *morta la compositione* presents a rather innocuous homophonic phrase (Example 34). The general style demonstrated here is arguably similar to that of Ruffo, but it is the first four bars in particular that Pontio appears to find most fault with. Especially noticeable in the first two bars are the repeated breves in all three voices, followed immediately by nearly two measures of a static A-minor chord, broken only by a passing-note F in the upper voice. Unequivocally, the first five measures of Pontio's example are illustrative of his term "dead composition," a quality compounded in the example by the lack of melodic interest in the top voice. The rest of the example breaks away from the unrelenting homophony of the first five bars and presents more rhythmic variety and textural interest.

If, as Lockwood has suggested, Pontio was directly confronting the style of Ruffo with this example, it suggests a number of contradictions for both Pontio the theorist and Pontio the composer. In the *Ragionamento*, he notes the need for clear setting of the text in the Psalms, as well as other liturgical works, specifically noting the usefulness of the falsobordone style in the Psalms, the "Gloria" of the Magnificat, and the "Et incarnatus" of the

Mass, as well as the lessons for Holy Week.<sup>20</sup> In principle, then, he was plainly in sympathy with the ideals of the so-called intelligible style.<sup>21</sup>

As a composer, Pontio faced the problem on a more immediate basis: from 1577-1582 he was maestro di cappella for the person who seemingly inspired these techniques in Ruffo, Carlo Borromeo.<sup>22</sup> While the progress of musical reform in Milan during this period is difficult to assess, and no documents comparable to the seminal letters between Borromeo and Nicolo Ormaneto exist to give a clear indication of contemporary thought, we do know from the many letters that survive that Borromeo maintained an active, if not overriding, interest in the music of his church.<sup>23</sup> It would be expected, therefore, that the music Pontio composed during his tenure would reflect the concerns which were held by Borromeo. In fact, we see clear evidence of this in the Masses of Pontio.

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<sup>20</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento di musica* . . . (Parma: Viotto, 1588; facsimile edition ed. Suzanne Clercx, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1959), 157-158.

<sup>21</sup> Whether in fact it is proper to speak of an intelligible style *per se* is open to question. To do so, I think, erects artificial barriers and suggests opposing camps. It would be better, then, to concentrate on specific techniques of intelligibility within the universal style.

<sup>22</sup> See Lockwood, *Counter-Reformation*, especially pages 90-94 for a succinct presentation of Borromeo's role in the development of this approach.

<sup>23</sup> See above, Chapter Two.

Fully one third of Pontio's published collections date from his period in Milan: three books of Masses, one book of Magnificats and one of Psalms. Unfortunately only one collection of Masses and the book of Psalms survive in complete form; however, both reveal a composer deeply concerned, as his theoretical writings would indicate, with clarity of text. A few examples from his second book of five-voice Masses, dating from 1581, will suffice both to show his approach and to explain better his theoretical concerns.<sup>24</sup>

These techniques are made clear by a comparison of Example 34 above with the first four measures of the "Et in terra" of Pontio's *Missa Dominus regnavit* (Example 35). In this example each syllable, with the exception of those in the first measure, is set to a different harmony, providing motion within the individual parts. This mirrors the desire for diversity of intervals Pontio expressed in his discussion of the invention. And although the altus line reiterates an E over the space of two breves, this stasis is mitigated by the changing harmonies of the other voices. Thus, while this opening has a homophonic texture very similar to that in Example 34, Pontio does not view this as a fault in itself. And while one part may not always have

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<sup>24</sup> Pontio, *Missarum liber secundus cum quinque vocibus nunc primum in lucem aeditus* (Venice: Scotto, 1581).

Example 35. Pietro Pontio, *Missa Dominus regnavit*, Gloria, measures 1-7.

5

C  
Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus bo - nae

A  
Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus bo - nae

T  
Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus bo - nae

Q  
Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus bo - nae

B  
Bo - nae

vo - lun - ta - tis.

vo - lun - ta - tis.

vo - lun - ta - tis.

vo - lun - ta - tis.

vo - lun - ta - tis.

clear melodic motion, the moving harmonies create ample variety.

Another aspect separating these two examples is the use of rhythm to articulate the text. In Example 34, there is no marked rhythmic profile, simply two equal breves followed by two semibreves. Any text set to this would have no declamatory properties. On the other hand, the opening of Example 35 provides a rhythm that fits the accent of the text, accurately conveying its inherent rhythmic properties and giving a sense of motion to the music.

These are very basic techniques, of course, and not strikingly different from what might be found in a similar piece by any number of his contemporaries, including Ruffo. Indeed, Bradshaw has pointed out these characteristics in the simplest of *falsobordoni*.<sup>25</sup> Pontio's example in the *Dialogo* is, after all, merely a paradigm of the problem, not an example from a specific piece.

In other pieces, however, Pontio showed a great penchant, as well as some talent, for maintaining an interesting balance between intelligibility and variety. In many cases Pontio concentrated on the rhythmic enunciation of the individual word in a single voice or group of voices within the overall texture in order to effect a more fundamental change in that texture--such that the text would still be

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<sup>25</sup> Bradshaw, 21-26; 51-73.

clearly understood, and yet the composer would retain more artistic latitude.

In the fifth measure of Example 35 this technique can be noted in the setting of the words "bonae voluntatis." In the quintus the text is set to a rhythm contrasting with that of the other four voices, yet nonetheless fitting the accentual pattern of the words. The syncopated entry puts added emphasis on the strong syllable "bo-," and the dotted-quarter and eighth-note rhythm of "voluntatis" is a diminution of the dotted-half and quarter-note rhythm found in the other voices. As a result, the individual voice, and hence the text it carries, stands out from the texture, all the while exhibiting in its freedom the same concern for accurate enunciation as the accompanying homophonic voices.

The approach this represents can be seen even more clearly in Example 36, from the Credo of the same Mass. Here the individual voice is brought out by the extensive use of displacement syncopation within the context of a purely homophonic background. All voices, save the tenor, move in strict note-against-note style. The tenor, on the other hand, moves against this chordal background with a line that is removed from the prevailing rhythmic structure.

The technique Pontio employs here produces what can perhaps be described as a bi-focal text setting. The background voices are a point of focus by virtue of the homophonic texture, and they present the text in a

Example 36. Pietro Pontio, *Missa Dominus regnavit*, Credo, measures 61-71.

65

C Et in - car - na - tus est de Spi - ri - tu

A Et in - car - na - tus est de Spi - ri - tu

T Et in - car - na - - tus est de Spi - ri - tu.

Q Et in - car - na - tus est de Spi - ri - tu

B Et in - car - na - tus est de Spi - ri - tu

70

San - cto ex Ma - ri - a Vir - gi - ne:

San - cto ex Ma - ri - a Vir - gi - ne:

San - cto ex Ma - ri - a Vir - gi - ne:

San - cto ex Ma - ri - a Vir - gi - ne:

San - cto ex Ma - ri - a Vir - gi - ne:

San - cto ex Ma - ri - a Vir - gi - ne:



straightforward, highly understandable manner. The syncopated free voice is equally a point of focus because of the variety it introduces. Yet it too retains a faithfulness to the quantity and quality of the Latin syllables. While seeming at first glance to be working against the principles of intelligibility, the resulting texture, rather like a classic figure-ground illustration, simultaneously presents two settings of the text; either one, as a point of focus, presents a satisfying enunciation. Together they present a desirable measure of variety. The resultant syncopated and dual-level texture seen in this and in many of Pontio's pieces continues from this idea of rhythmically separating one or more strands from the texture. This, then, is another aspect of the variety Pontio seeks in warning the composer against "dead composition."

In all of these concerns, Pontio's focus is still on the surface features of style. The aspects he deals with provide a snapshot of correct style at any given point within the piece. Just as the composer has an obligation to fashion his invention correctly, so he must then maintain this technique through all points of the work in order to arrive at a correct and pleasing style.

***Accommodar le consonanze e dissonanze***

In his advice on this third source of variation between composers, Pontio's aim is to bring the concerns of the

first two categories fully to the level of the piece as a whole. Much of the advice is repetition of or expansion on what has preceded it. He advises that the parts should not make use of prohibited intervals, such as the descending minor sixth, or the major sixth, ninth or tritone, and that parallel perfect intervals should be avoided. To this, he adds warnings concerning voice-crossing, and the admonition that cadences should respect the structure of the text:

Again, the diligent composer will have regard that one part does not go in [the range of] another, for example the tenor in [the range of] the bass, or vice versa. And by this I mean when one uses such a passage three or four times in the same piece, where only once is tolerable. Equally, be advised that a conclusion should be at the end of a sentence, or where one finds a period; and that the cadence, which is called a conclusion, or the general pause, be made on the fourth or fifth of the tone, or another pitch appropriate to that tone, the particulars of which were demonstrated by Pietro Pontio in the third *ragionamento*.<sup>26</sup>

Pontio included no examples in this section since he obviously saw this as a summation of the preceding sections.

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<sup>26</sup> "Ancora havrà riguardo il diligente Compositore, che una parte non vadi nell'altra, ciò è, il Tenore nel Basso, e così anco per il contrario. Et questo voglio intendere, quando facessero tal passaggio trè, e quattro volte in una istessa Compositione, che pur una sola si può sopportare. Parimente avverta nelle sue conclusioni, che sia finita la sentenza delle parole, over dove si trovi il punto: & la cadenza, qual si chiama conclusione, over riposo generale, sia fatta nelle Quarta, e Quinta di detto Tuono, overo in altra chorda appropriata à tal Tuono, le quali particolarità furono mostrate da Pietro Pontio nel Terzo ragionamento . . ." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 57.

Once a composer has produced a well-crafted invention, surrounded it with the qualities of a good and pleasing style and a logical polyphonic structure, there is little left with which to be concerned. The advice that is given here is two-fold. Most important is that all of the correct procedure which marked the invention and contributed to the overall style must be maintained throughout the entire work. No unsingable intervals, parallel unisons, fifths or octaves, or the overuse of voice crossing should mar the overall progression of the piece. But along with this, to bring full coherence to the work, the structure of the text must be respected. This coherence is closely tied to the use of cadential structure to articulate the periods of the text, as was seen in Pontio's discussion of modality in the third *ragionamento*.

As was noted, this ideal of coherence extended even to the level of individual phrases within a line of text. Thus for the most laudable of composers, musical and textual coherence are both indispensable and inseparable, and it is the highest mark of a good composer that he transcend simple correctness and a pleasing style to produce a piece not only to please the musical sensibility of the performer and listener, but also to engage the intellect while serving its primary function of expressing the text.

*Consideratione alle parole*

Like all theorists of his day, Pontio believed that the nature of the text should be taken into account by the composer when choosing the material for a composition. But unlike a number of his contemporaries, he finds no true emotive power in the modes themselves. In the theoretical section of the *Dialogo*, he spends no time in cataloging the specific natures of various modes. The same is true in his technical discussion of the modes in the *Ragionamento*. No classical authorities are brought to bear on the discussion, nor are the humanistic tales of the power of specific modes evoked.

Instead, Pontio takes a strikingly rational approach, dealing with only a few factors that can be seen to reflect the overall mood of the text. Above all, whatever powers a mode might possess, the expression of the text, in Pontio's view, was in the end completely under the control of the composer:

. . . I will pass now to the fourth [cause] which is born of this: that one more than the other will have consideration of the words, and that if they speak of sadness, he will find a tone of the proper sad nature, such as the second, fourth or sixth, and will make his composition on these and will find harmonies full of sadness. But if [the words] speak of happiness, he will

choose one of the others, which another composer, less knowledgeable, will not do.<sup>27</sup>

The basic determinant here, then, is overall range. The plagal modes, with the exception of the higher-sitting eighth mode, are seen by their nature to express sadness. But Alessandro continues immediately to say that in the end, the mood set is under the control of the composer, as any mode can be made either sad or happy by an intelligent composer. The others present question how a mode can be made to go against its nature, asking how this transformation, "truly new and worthy of understanding," can be accomplished:

It should not thus appear strange that a man, knowledgeable in speculative matters, and with the experience of having made many harmonies, would know how to change a subject from one nature to the other. And that this be true, we know that composers by long experience have many times observed that slow movements in the parts render a composition somewhat sad, as we can see in the lessons of Holy Week, and in other compositions similar to these, such as the "Gloria Patri" of the Magnificat and the "Incarnatus." When it is, then, that the song be sad, it will use such slow motion and also by the minor third, which renders it very sad. If on the other hand he wants his

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27 ". . . me ne passerò all Quarta, la qual nasce da questo, che uno più dell'altro havrà considerazione alle parole; &, se trattaranno di mestitia, troverà un Tuono di propria natura mesto, come il secondo, il Quarto, il Sesto, & sopra di loro farà la sua compositione; & troverà harmonia, & concerti pieni di mestitia; ma, se trattaranno d'allegrezza, pigliarà uno delli restanti: Ilche non saprà fare un'altro Compositore meno instrutto." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 58.

composition happy, he will use quick motion, as we can see in secular compositions, and in place of the minor third, the major tenth, and other motions that make the music happy. If one has this knowledge, one can change the nature of any mode.<sup>28</sup>

Pontio's suggestions are at once obvious and practical. Two items are of note in this explanation. The first is that all of the advice is aimed at the level of detail within a composition. Since, as Pontio suggests, any mode can serve any mood of the text, one is free to choose any mode, and transform it at will to fit the mood of the text through the motion of the subject and the use of intervals. Also notable is the fact that Pontio's suggestion concerning intervals is not completely tied to the major/minor third dichotomy, but rather includes equal consideration of texture and spacing. Thus in a mode such as mode four, the

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<sup>28</sup> "Non le paia ciò strano; perche l'huomo intelligente con le speculationi, & con l'isperienze dell'harmonie più volte fatte, saprà tramutar' un soggetto d'una natura nell'altra. Et che ciò sia il vero, sappiamo che i Compositori per la longa isperienza fatta più volta hanno osservato, che i moti delle parti tardi rendono la compositione alquanto mesta, come si può vedere nelle lettioni della settimana santa, & in altre compositioni à quelle simili, come il Gloria Patri delli Magnificat, & l'Incarnatus. Quando adunque vorrà, che la sua cantilena sia mesta, si servirà di tal moti tardi, et anco della Terza minore, la qual rende assai mestitia. Se poi vorrà la sua compositione allegra, si servirà delli moti veloci, come si può vedere nelle compositioni volgari; & in luogo della Terza minore si servirà della Decima maggiore, & di altri movimenti, che fanno la Musica allegra. Si che havendo questa intelligenza potrà ad ogni Tuono tramutar la sua natura." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 58.

dark quality of the register and the preponderance of minor intervals can be overcome by the use of more widely-spaced chordal structures.

This principle is clearly seen in two Psalm settings, *De profundis* and *Laudate pueri Dominum*, from Pontio's 1578 Psalm print. Both are built on the fourth Psalm tone, yet they are completely antipodal in mood and nature. Pontio's response to this can be seen in the setting of the first verse in each setting. *De profundis* (Example 37) begins in a low register, with the chant melody set in the tenor voice. The style, with its slow and even motion, approaches that of "dead composition," and the gravity imparted by this reference to falsobordone style is immediate.

Example 37. Pietro Pontio, *De Profundis*, measures 1-6.

The image shows a musical score for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in mensural notation. The lyrics are: "Do - - - mi - ne e - xau - - di vo - cem me - - - - an, vo -". The music is in a low register and features a slow, even motion characteristic of falsobordone style. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span multiple notes.

## Example 37 (continued)

5

- - cem me - - an.  
 - - cem me - - an.  
 - - - - an.  
 - - cem me - - - an.

In contrast, *Laudate pueri* begins with a much higher tessitura, and the chant is in the cantus (Example 38). Harmonic movement is quicker and the immediate move to the major chord on the third beat adds to the brighter effect. *De profundis*, on the other hand, has a slower harmonic movement at the beginning, and although it begins with a major triad, this in effect serves to make the move to the minor triad on D in the second measure an immediate reference to darker qualities.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The idea of the preparation of a contrast to heighten it, immediately apparent to our own critical sense has theoretical precedent in the rhetorical stress on the importance of dichotomy, as in Zarlino's discussion of the nature of consonance wherein he justifies the use of dissonance by saying that it makes the following concord all the sweeter "as the sight of light is most delightful after darkness, and the taste of sweetness more delicious after bitterness" (. . . si come dopo le tenebre è più grata, & dilettevole alla vista la luce; & il dolce dopo l'amaro è più gustevole . . . ). Zarlino, *Istitutioni*, 173.



Example 38. Pietro Pontio, *Laudate pueri Dominum*, measures 1-5.

The image shows a musical score for four staves. The lyrics are written below each staff. The first staff has the lyrics 'Lau - da - te no - men Do - mi - ni.' The second staff has 'Lau - da - te no - men Do - mi - ni, Do - mi - ni.' The third staff has 'Lau - da - te no - men Do - mi - ni, Do - mi - ni.' The fourth staff has 'Lau - da - te no - men Do - mi - ni, Do - mi - ni.' The music is in a common time signature and features a mix of eighth and quarter notes.

Another distinction can be seen in the movement to and treatment of the major triad on G that appears in both of these verses. Both are approached by raised leading tones, which impart a stronger sense of arrival, but in the case of *De profundis*, this arrival is to a closely-spaced chord (measure 3) which immediately moves, by means of a dropping bass line, to a minor triad on E. The parallel point in *Laudate pueri* (measure 2) shows a different approach, with a more open chordal structure on the triad on G, which is prolonged by movement within the chord in the upper voices--followed by a smooth conjunct descent in the bass leading to the major triad on C in measure three.

By its very nature, this kind of change must be seen as transitory, and those just presented are best viewed as generalizations, with all the perils inherent. Just as the general mood is subject to change to fit the overall

nature of the text, so the technique may vary within a piece to highlight a temporary change in the mood of the text. Such a case can be found in the final Psalm verse of *De profundis* (Example 39). Here the texture is noticeably more open, especially on the key word "misericordia," announcing the manifold mercies and redemption with which the Lord will redeem Israel. It is, then, simply one more tool to be used in the accurate setting of the word, and as malleable to the composer's desires as any text-painting technique.

Example 39. Pietro Pontio, *De profundis*, measures 29-38.

30

Qui - - a a - - pud Do - ni - num ni - se - ri - cor - di -

Qui - - a a - - pud Do - ni - num ni - se - ri - cor - di -

Qui - - a a - - pud Do - ni - num ni - se - ri - cor - di -

Qui - - a a - - pud Do - ni - num ni - se - ri - cor - di -

## Example 39 (continued)

35

-a: et co - pi - o - - - - - sa a - pud e - um re - dem - -

-a: et co - pi - o - - - - - sa a - pud e - um re -

-a: et co - pi - o - - - - - sa a - pud e - um re -

-a: et co - pi - o - - - - - sa a - pud e - um re -

- - - - - pti - o.

-dem - - - - pti - o.

-dem - - - - pti - o.

- - - - - pti - o.

*Inventioni fatte secondo il tuono*

In the third ragionamento, Pontio dealt in great length with the question of modal procedure. The approach, however, mostly concerned itself with the overall structure and the distribution of cadences. In this very brief section, Alessandro impresses upon his listeners the importance of the melodic content of the various inventions, stressing

that the learned composer finds an invention which properly reflects the modality of the piece not just for the beginning, but for the internal sections as well. He is less forthcoming about the manner in which this is done, simply saying that it is a quality of the learned composer, but clearly, all that he says concerning modality in the *Ragionamento* and in the earlier section on the invention are applicable here.

The manner in which this topic is examined, however, brings up the question of how Pontio viewed the nature of the invention itself: as a series of independent sections, each taking their own part in the promulgation of the mode, or as a unified series of inventions which as a whole reflected a specific realization of the mode. Recently Benito Rivera has suggested this latter idea as a viable point of departure for the modal analysis of a work.<sup>30</sup> Pontio seems to reflect this idea in this part of his discussion, hinting at the continuous nature of the *soggetto*. As an addendum to his admonition to respect the modes, Alessandro states:

. . . when one sees his composition made in imitation of a plainsong, such as that on the

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<sup>30</sup> Benito Rivera presented these ideas in a paper presented at the Forty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society (Baltimore, November 3-6, 1988), "Finding the Newly-Composed *Soggetto* In Willaert's Imitative Counterpoint: A Step in Modal Analysis." This material will be further developed in his forthcoming study on the compositional theory and practice of Willaert and Zarlino.

Oratione Dominicale, the Salve Regina, the Magnificat, or some similar piece, one recognizes such imitations made on the plainsong, made with respect to its nature and accompanied with true, correct, and legitimate intervals . . .<sup>31</sup>

His illustration to explain this (Example 40) does little more to enlighten than the similar example of a correctly-made invention (Example 32 above). The melodies exhibit all of the positive qualities associated with a well-crafted invention: primarily conjunct motion in the individual parts and an adherence to the general structure of the mode. In addition, the accompanying melodies form

Example 40. Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo*, 59: Example of an invention made in imitation of a plainsong.

The image shows two systems of musical notation. Each system consists of two staves. The top staff of each system is in a soprano clef (C1) and contains a vocal line with a melisma (indicated by a long horizontal line) and a lute accompaniment. The bottom staff of each system is in an alto clef (C3) and contains a lute accompaniment. The music is in a mode with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The notation includes various rhythmic values such as minims, crotchets, and quavers, along with rests and accidentals.

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31 ". . . quando si vede la sua compositione fatta per imitatione del Canto Plano, come sopra l'Oratione Dominicale, la Salve Regina, il cantico di Maria Vergine, & altri simili, onde si conosce tale imitatione sopra il Canto Plano, fatta in suo proprio essere, & accommodata con veri, e legitimi intervalli . . ." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 59.

pleasing and correct intervals with the subject. The only difference is that here the requirement is that the nature of the *entire* plainchant (the specifics of the cadences, and hence the overall modal procedure) be carefully respected.<sup>32</sup> In presenting this as illustrative of a procedure under discussion rather than a departure from it, Pontio suggests that there is no procedural difference between the use of a borrowed plainchant and that of a newly-composed *soggetto*. Once more the technical concern of an isolated section, the invention, is elevated to a more global one; modality is transformed from a concern with specific melodic formulation to one of overall coherence as the entire *soggetto*, free or derived, is realized through the course of the work.

All of this appears to have been overwhelming to Alessandro's assembled academicians, and Marco asks how this respect for both melody and modality can be maintained with four and even five voices. Alessandro's answer was probably less than satisfactory to the listeners, stating that indeed it is difficult, but that one can see it done in the works

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<sup>32</sup> This is especially relevant in compositions such as the Hymns. Here, as Pontio points out in the *Ragionamento*, 138, the composer is faced with the challenge of respecting the given mode of a chant in terms of cadential structure, while at the same time taking into account the melodic structure of the original melody which forms the *soggetto* and which may or may not show such a regularity of procedure.

of composers such as Jachet of Mantua, Adrian Willaert, Cipriano de Rore, Palestrina and Costanzo Porta, because:

. . . the practical and diligent composer guards against these mistakes and inconveniences; and he knows that each part ought to respect its own nature and its endings, nor should he allow the tenor to act as the alto ought to, and likewise the contrary.<sup>33</sup>

***Compositione più dotta e ingegnosa***

Pontio's next category for judging a composer is a commonly cited virtue: that of learned style. Assuming that all of the preceding technical demands are observed scrupulously, a composer can distinguish himself by making use of certain techniques which render his composition learned. The first of these is the use of different inventions, or "fughe" in each section of the piece. Alessandro presents this with neither comment nor example. The second way is to have as a basis for the composition a cantus firmus, either a specific melody--such as the antiphon used in Palestrina's *Missa Ecce sacerdos magnus*--or an invented subject--such as Josquin's *Missa Hercules Dux Ferrariae*, his *Missa La sol fa re mi*, or Pontio's own Mass on this subject--all of which he cites as examples of this technique.

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<sup>33</sup> ". . . il Compositor pratico, e diligente antivede questi disordini, & incomodi; e sà, che ciaschuna parte deve restar nell'esser suo, e nelli suoi termini; ne permette, che il Tenore faccia quello, che dovrebbe far l'Alto, e così anco per il contrario." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 59.

It is clear by the examples that in this case, Pontio is speaking of the by-then anachronistic style of the Tenor Mass. For him, the learned aspect lies not in the use of the *cantus firmus per se*, but in fashioning new inventions above this sustained *cantus firmus*:

. . . he can demonstrate his learning, when above this *cantus firmus* and these figures the composer finds varied inventions, as one can see in the above named Masses. The same can be seen in the Magnificats of Morales . . .<sup>34</sup>

Thus, this particular learned style has a specific place in the Masses and Magnificats. Pontio seems to go out of his way to exclude the other genres. This is seen in his compositions as well, where no trace of true *cantus firmus* technique can be seen outside of the Masses or Magnificats.<sup>35</sup>

The third method is the use of canon, and as examples he cites Josquin's *Missa ad fugam*, Cristóbal de Morales's *Missa Ave maris stella*, his own *In die tribulationis* and

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<sup>34</sup> ". . . può mostrar lo studio suo, quando sopra di esso canto Plano, & di esse figure il compositore troverà varie inventioni, come si vede nelle sopranominate Messe. Il simile possono vedere nelli Magnificat di Morales . . ." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 60.

<sup>35</sup> This is especially notable in the Hymns. While a number of composers often cited by Pontio (for example Willaert and Porta) retain at least some reference to *cantus firmus* procedure in the Hymns, Pontio's, perhaps influenced by the style of Jachet, more completely integrate the *cantus prius factus* into the texture of the work, making it the springboard for each polyphonic invention.



Jachet's *Missa Peccata mea*. These works exhibit a wide range of canonic technique, ranging from the unchanging canonic structure of Morales's work--constantly at the fourth and at the same distance, with little overlapping of subject--to the more virtuoso effect found in Jachet's Mass, in which the canon is set at constantly changing intervals and decreasing distances.<sup>36</sup>

In the third dialogue, Pontio spends a great deal of time discussing the various types of canon, at various intervals and with various mutations of the subject. The height of complication is a double canon in contrary motion at the third and at the ninth (Example 41).

In his own composition, however, Pontio makes relatively little use of such advanced techniques. In his Psalms and Magnificats, the final verses use very simple canon, often with little overlapping of the subject, very much in the style of Morales's Magnificat settings. The more rigorous approach taken by Pontio in his Motets was cited in Chapter Four above.

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<sup>36</sup> Morales's Mass, from *Missae cum quatuor vocibus paribus decantandae, Moralis Hispani, ac aliorum authorum* (Venice: Scotto, 1542), is edited in Cristóbal de Morales *Opera Omnia*, ed. Higinio Anglés, 8 vols. (Rome: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1952-1971), I. Jachet's Mass is from his *Il primo libro de le messe a cinque voci* (Venice: Scotto, 1544), and is edited in Jachet of Mantua, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Philip Jackson and George Nugent, *Corpus Mesurabilis Musicae*, 54, 6. vols. (N.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1971- ), I.

Example 41. Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo*, 141: Double canon in contrary motion at the third and ninth.

Guida per Nona

Guida alla Terza

Consequente

Consequente

5

10

## Example 41 (Continued)

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The image shows a musical score for four staves. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The middle two staves are also in treble clef. The score is divided into three measures by vertical bar lines. The first measure contains several eighth and quarter notes. The second measure contains a quarter note followed by a half note. The third measure contains a quarter note followed by a half note. The notation is somewhat faded and difficult to read precisely.

Pontio is clear to point out that this type of technical flourish is not the *sine qua non* of composition, and that pieces without these artifices, if pleasingly made, are equally worthy of praise. In fact, certain pieces, due to their gravity and nature, are best set without any such devices, such as the lessons of Holy Week, the Passion, the *Miserere*, the "Incarnatus" of the Mass and the "Gloria Patri" of the Magnificat.

***Inventione che si osservarà***

In general, the nature of many of Pontio's desired qualities in a composer is based less on purely technical questions than on aesthetic ideals seen from the point of view of the performer or listener. This is especially true in the seventh quality, for which he also uses the term "interest." For the performer, the aesthetic ideal is provided in the quality of *stile*, and is that of complete

and immediate coherence, the idea that the parts should "call to each other." The listener, on the other hand, needs to be provided with clear periodic distinctions that can be easily identified. Assuming that the composer has done nothing to offend the ear of the listener, and has even brought honor on himself by including a variety of learned devices, he must, in addition, be careful that his intentions are clear in terms of the way the work progresses. Alessandro enunciates Pontio's idea in this way:

. . . in their compositions, [composers] should use inventions, which, when they are heard and noticed by the listener, will give great fame and reputation to the authors; and, when it is otherwise, their work will be in vain, because they will not be given any consideration. Now, the invention [begun] without any repose will neither be heard nor noticed by the listener.<sup>37</sup>

The example provided by Pontio shows that the problem he is speaking about is simply one of not providing a rest between the end of one point of imitation and the beginning

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37 ". . . nelle lor compositioni si vogliono servir dell'Inventioni, le quali, quando seranno intese, & osservate, daranno gran fama, e reputatione alli Autori; & quando fosse altrimenti, vana sarebbe la fatica loro, poiche non sarebbero in veruna consideratione. Hora l'inventione fatta senza alcun riposo dalli Ascoltanti non potrà esser' osservata, nè intesa." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 62.

of another (Example 42). As he explains, the reason is not specifically a musical one, but one of both musical and

Example 42. Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo*, 63: Example of improperly introduced inventions.

The image displays two systems of musical notation, each consisting of three staves. The first system is marked with a 'B' at the bottom left. The second system is marked with a '5' at the top left and a 'B' at the bottom left. Asterisks mark specific notes in the first system.

textual clarity. With the new subject (marked by an asterisk) hidden in this manner, the listener is left confused as to the nature and purpose of the material, whether the new material is there to serve as a new invention, a purely

musical continuation of the old invention, as a means to heighten the text, or simply as a means--as Alessandro describes it--of filling out the parts.<sup>38</sup>

Pontio's answer to this problem is simple and common-sense: he suggests that each new entrance be separated from the previous material by at least a minim rest, as he shows in the following example (Example 43). This is an idealistic example, and as an unwavering principle it is ignored by all composers of the time, including Pontio himself. The principle, that of making the new point notable to the listener, is, however, a sound one, and a legitimate basis for a critical tool. The composer has other means available to mark the beginning of a new point, such as a change in texture or register. Moreover, this concept is closely tied to Pontio's earlier exhortations concerning "dead composition," once again emphasizing the importance of articulating the text, both at the immediate level of the word and at the larger level of the phrase.

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<sup>38</sup> ". . . gli Ascoltanti (per la maggior parte) non ponno giudicar, se quelle figure siano fatte per Inventione, ò per far cantar le parti, over per esplicar le parole poste sotto le figure predette, ò più tosto per empimento (per dir cosi) delle parti . . ." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 63.

Example 43. Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo*, 64: Example of properly introduced inventions.

The first system of musical notation consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The middle staff is in treble clef and contains a line of whole rests. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes. A 'B' time signature is located at the beginning of the bottom staff.

The second system of musical notation consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including some beamed eighth notes. The middle staff is in treble clef and contains a line of whole rests. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes. A '5' measure number is at the start of the top staff, and a '6' measure number is at the start of the bottom staff.

The third system of musical notation consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including some beamed eighth notes. The middle staff is in treble clef and contains a line of whole rests. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes. A '10' measure number is at the start of the top staff, and a 'B' time signature is at the start of the bottom staff.

The fourth system of musical notation consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The middle staff is in treble clef and contains a line of whole rests. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes. A 'B' time signature is at the start of the bottom staff.

*Osservando il tuono*

In his earlier sections, Pontio had called attention to the importance of the mode on the small scale: in the formation of a subject, and in bringing a sense of coherence to the overall *concentus* of the work. In commenting on this eighth point of difference among composers, Pontio shifts the point of focus once again, moving now to the question of overall tonal coherence in a work, as expressed in the use of cadences proper to the tone.

Pontio briefly outlines the principles enunciated in the third *ragionamento*, and then refers the reader to that work for a more complete explanation. In doing so, he lays stress on the underlying principle of his system, that of the connection between the Psalm tones and the modes, and reaffirms the vital role of the cadence in the realization of a tonal plan. He explains the structure of the modes as the combination of species of fourths and fifth, and very much as Zarlino had done, points to the extremes of these species as the primary cadential points for the modes. He then briefly suggests the other possibilities discussed at length in the *Ragionamento*:

One can also use other places, which are the mediant of the Psalm, and sometimes the beginning note, and also the mediant of the species of fifth



for these modes, because these are often notes appropriate to the tones of the Psalm.<sup>39</sup>

### *Cadenze fuori del tuono*

Having explained the principles of regular tonal cadences, Alessandro suggests that the good composer may use cadences "outside of the mode," to a good effect, providing they are handled correctly and cause no offense to the listener. This is, of course, the same as the *per transito* cadences Pontio discussed in the *Ragionamento*. Alessandro gives examples of a cadence on A in mode eight and one on G in mode six to illustrate these possibilities.

Also provided is an illustration of an improperly used cadence on E in mode six (Example 44). He explains that the reason that this is not an allowable cadence is that one cannot make a cadence on it using the naturally occurring fifth (because of the Bb in the signature) and thus would not produce an *effetto buono*. Alessandro then notes that cadences on G and D, while still outside of the mode, are clearly more pleasing to the ear.

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<sup>39</sup> "Si può servir ancora d'altri luoghi, i quali seranno, dove i Salmi fanno la sua medietà, & anco alle volte dove principiano, e nella medietà ancora della Quinta d'essi Tuoni; perche sono chorde appropriate all Tuoni del Salmo . . ." *Dialogo*, 66.

Example 44. Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo*, 69: Example of an improperly made cadence on E in mode six.

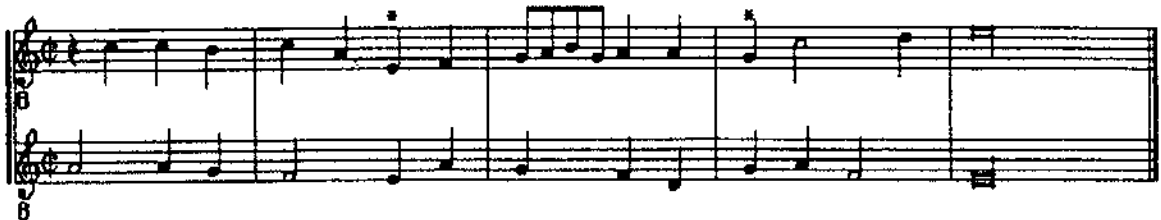
The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. The middle staff is in alto clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The music features a sequence of notes across four measures, with some notes beamed together.

The second system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The middle staff is in alto clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The music features a sequence of notes across four measures, with some notes beamed together and a fermata over the final note of the bottom staff.

The third system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The middle staff is in alto clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The music features a sequence of notes across four measures, with a fermata over the final note of the bottom staff. The number '10' is written above the first measure of the top staff.

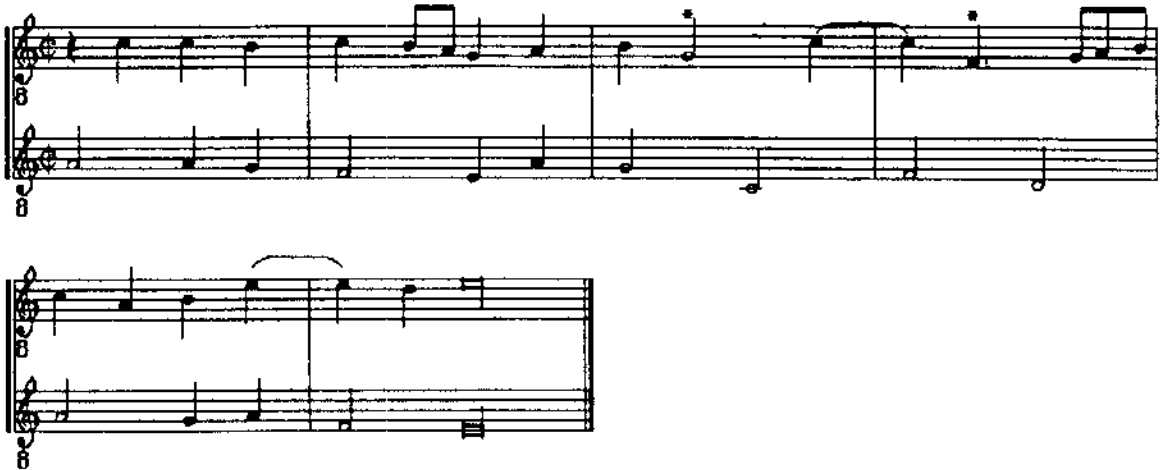
This brings up an important point for Pontio's discussion, and one that Giordano immediately jumps upon: that in making such judgments (and presumably all critical judgments), it is more important to rely on the ear than on any specific rules. He points this out more distinctly with two examples involving voice-leading. In the first (Example 45) he points to the two points at which the parts move from a third or a fifth to a unison (marked here by an asterisk). Both are correct in that they move from one consonant interval to another in "singable" motions, yet they are not pleasing to the ear.

Example 45. Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo*, 70: Example of incorrectly approached unisons.



In the second illustration (Example 46) he points out that the same movement (found in the second measure), as in the previous examples, is awkward, yet moving from a third to a unison or a fifth to a unison with only one part moving is perfectly acceptable, as is seen in the following measure.

Example 46. Pietro Pontio, *Dialogo*, 70: Example of properly approached unisons.



He sums up the discussion by asking rhetorically:

. . . how can one be sure that one passage has a better effect than another except with the ear? . . . One can thus say, that in this practice of composing music the ear takes the lead in judging the things that are of good or bad effect in compositions.<sup>40</sup>

This, as Giordano points out, is the true mark that practice is more difficult than theory, as it involves the careful training not just of the intellect, but of the ear. Alessandro then goes on to recommend that it is only through the singing of music of excellent composers, as well as

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<sup>40</sup> ". . . che le farà certe del miglior effetto d'un passaggio dell'altro, fuorché il giudizio dell'orecchia? . . . Si potrà dunque dir, che in questa prattica del comporre in Musica l'orecchia ottenga il Principato nel giudicar le cose di buono, ò di reo effetto nelle composizioni." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 71.

practice in counterpoint and finally composition that the musician can develop the faculties needed for the critical judgments he proposes.

### Aspects of Criticism

In many ways, Pontio's entire second dialogue is an outgrowth of the material and approach presented in the fourth section of the *Ragionamento*. This can be seen most clearly in the five rules for composition presented there:

The composer should be advised that his composition [ought to] have five qualities; first that it be made within a mode, or tone as we say. Second, that it be made of consonances and dissonances. Third, that the words are suitably concluded. Fourth, that in it are found new inventions. Fifth, that in it there are always thirds and fifths when four parts sing, if it is possible without inconvenience.<sup>41</sup>

In the section that follows these rules, a number of other items of advice are offered, many of which are related to the material later found in the *Dialogo*. There is not,

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<sup>41</sup> "Deve il compositore esser avertito, che la sua compositione habbia cinque qualità; Prima, sia formata sotto un Modo, ò Tuono, che dir vogliamo. Seconda, che sia formata di consonantie, e dissonantie. Terza, c'habbia le sue conclusioni delle parole. Quarta, ch'in essa si trovano nuove inventioni. Quinta, ch'in essa vi sia sempre la terza, & Quinta, quando canteranno quattro parti, se sia possibile senza discommodo." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 139.

however, the sense of coherence found in the latter discussion.<sup>42</sup>

Likewise in the *Dialogo*, after presenting his nine points of difference between composers, Pontio continues with another series of rules. What separates the discussions in these two treatises is first, the nature of their organization, and second, the goal. In general, throughout the *Ragionamento* the rules are nothing more than loosely connected--or unconnected--lists of technical requirements, which the composer was bound to follow in order to produce an acceptable composition. This fits well within the structure of the treatise, which is that of a beginning *prattica*, giving the student the basic knowledge to be considered not a *cantore*, but a true *musico*.

The purpose of the *Dialogo* was, of course, somewhat different. Its unstated aim was to produce, or at least point the way to becoming, the perfect musician, competent in matters of both theory and practice. A part of this perfection was the ability to judge the differences in quality between one composer and another, and to differentiate between what was good style and what was not--a matter

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<sup>42</sup> Much of the advice also appears, in very similar form, in Pietro Cerone *El Melopeo y Maestro*, 2 vols. (Naples: Gargano & Nucci, 1613; facsimile edition ed. Robert Stevenson, New York, Da Capo, 1971), especially pp. 672-675. See Chapter Seven below.

of the highest difficulty in that it involved not easily memorized rules, but the ability to judge with the ear.

All of this is somewhat different from what was proposed by Zacconi. Zacconi advanced a concept of criticism based on qualities and talents unequally distributed among artists. It is in effect style criticism in the modern sense, and his desired end is consistent with the modern goal of style criticism, that of distinguishing between the styles of different composers:

From this it follows that once one has heard the works of these composers, when their music is sung on another occasion one can immediately say, "This is the work of such-and-such;" and indeed so it turns out to be, for when one has heard the works of one author several times, one can distinguish them at once when hearing them with other works and say that it is the work of such-and-such an author.<sup>43</sup>

Pontio's goals, on the other hand, were more didactic and pedagogic. The student, like Zacconi's disciple, was expected to judge, but in the more juridical sense of the word. The final criterion for this is what is praiseworthy and what is not, which compositions are worthy of being

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43 ". . . dal che ne nasce, che chi ha sentito le cose di dette auttori una volta, cantandosi altre volte altre loro compositioni, subito si sà dire, quest'opera è del tale: e veramente così è, poi che; quando l'huomo d'un autore piu volta hà sentito le sue cose, subito frà l'altre sentendole, le sà discernere, e dice è opera del tal autore." Zacconi, *Prattica* (1622), 50, translated in Haar, "A Sixteenth-Century Attempt at Music Criticism," 194.

sung, and more importantly, which composers are more worthy of emulation. Thus it is difficult to make comparisons between the two approaches. Certainly Pontio's discussion of the subject in the second Dialogue is in no way a precursor to Zacconi's discussion, nor does it seem influenced by any other writings.

Instead, his is an original approach to the problem of the perfection of style. As with the progressive form of the two treatises, the model presented is a coherent approach to the question of style. Its importance for us lies in the fact that it spells out in clearer detail just what the composer, singer, and listener were concerned with, and how works as a whole were perceived by all three. From these we can see, at least in Pontio's terms, what the ideal was to which the composer should strive.

First we see that at all levels, from the very first notes, through the general approach to composition, to the structure of the entire piece, the composer should strive for correct treatment of consonance and dissonance, attention to the chosen mode, logical tonal structure, interest and variety (*inventione, stile, accommodar le consonanze e dissonanze*). Secondly, the composer must marshal these techniques to the service of the word (*consideratione alle parole*). This involves as much the selection and/or modification of the mode as it does the correct accentuation of the words. Thirdly, having chosen that mode, its full



realization must be seen in all of the materials used within the work (*inventioni fatte secondo il tuono*), and the overall structure must correctly reflect the mode (*osservando il tuono*).

Given all of this correct technical execution, the composer can then distinguish himself by the presence of a learned style (*composizione più dotta e ingegnosa*), creating interest in the listener by well-structured and delineated periods (*inventione che si osserverà*), and by the correct use of cadences outside the mode to add interest and flair to the work (*cadenze fuori del tuono*).

With this universal approach taken, it is not surprising that little is found in the way of specific citations and praise of individual composers. From Pontio's point of view, all composers worthy of praise (and the list cited in the previous discussion of the two treatises indicates who Pontio felt these to be) aspire to these goals. In his own work, as seen in the examples cited in the course of this study, it is clear that Pontio himself was largely successful in the attainment of these goals.

As a critical tool, the areas of concern brought forward in this section show us, to a certain degree, what to look for--but more importantly, they show us where to look. We see, as we should suspect, that the composer, singer, and listener judged at all levels, and had a specific idea of balance and coherence with which we can readily identify.

Unlike Zacconi's often obscure references to vague stylistic principles, Pontio presents us with the day-to-day sensibilities and concerns of the practical musician. His ideas, their weight of emphasis, and even their manner of presentation suggest less the lofty atmosphere of the academy than the realities of the composer's workshop and the cathedral chapel.

Interestingly, it is one of Pontio's central terms, *stile*, which has the most resonance with a present-day conception of criticism, in that it deals with many of the surface-level details that are embraced by the term, such as melody, harmony and phraseological balance. We should take note also that it is here that Pontio resorts to his most subjective concept, that of describing a proper style as one in which the "parts call to one another." This is, of course, a concept that any singer who is well-studied in this style will immediately understand and identify with. It also suggests in the most unambiguous of terms that even in this period, musicians encountered great difficulty in defining the elusive fine points of style, being reduced as it were to saying in effect "I may not be able to define it, but I know it when I sing it."

Pontio does us the service, at least, of pointing the way toward a better understanding of this sometimes slippery term with his emphasis on questions of logic and coherence, thus elevating these technical concerns to their rightful

contemporary position as important aesthetic matters. This, in the end, is the value of his treatment of these matters in this second dialogue. In it, we are able to see these simple pedagogical matters set within a hierarchy of aesthetic assumptions, and are thus able to focus--with more nearly the vision of his epoch--on those matters which were of central importance to critical judgment, be it that of the composer, performer, or listener. Once again the eminently practical pedagogue, Pontio serves not to give us answers, but to provide a more accurate focus for our scrutiny.

## CHAPTER VII

### ASSESSING THE COMPOSER'S VOICE: CONTEMPORARY AND MODERN PERSPECTIVES

It has been the fate of Pietro Pontio that his treatises are more often cited than studied, his ideas more often appropriated than properly acknowledged; his music has suffered even worse neglect. That his treatises have received little systematic study is due in large part to the lack of availability.<sup>1</sup> While the *Ragionamento* has been edited in facsimile, Pontio's later treatise, the *Dialogo*, remains only in the original 1595 print.<sup>2</sup> But even while his influence on later writers can be noted, its extent is veiled in the near-anonymity conferred on Pontio by those who were influenced by him. At least two authors, Pietro Cerone and Valerio Bona, incorporated large sections of the *Ragionamento* into their works; and while Pontio is dutifully listed by each as one of the important theoretical writers

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<sup>1</sup> There does seem, however, to be a reawakening of interest in Pontio's treatises, as witnessed by the two recent articles by Klaus-Jürgen Sachs cited in Chapter Three.

<sup>2</sup> Pietro Pontio, *Ragionamento di musica* (Parma: Viotto, 1588; facsimile edition ed. Suzanne Clercx, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1959); *Dialogo . . . ove si tratta della theorica e prattica di musica* (Parma: Viotto, 1595).

of the time, the full measure of their debt to him is nowhere hinted.<sup>3</sup>

This situation tends to mask Pontio's true significance. James Haar has accurately described Pontio as a "minor Zarlino," and noted that he had a following among later theorists.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the simple act of borrowing by later writers is not in itself unusual, nor does it automatically confer a special position on the original. Much of the material that Pontio includes in his treatises is no more than the common coin of contemporary theoretical discourse, and its appropriation, even in close paraphrase, does not always merit specific note or close scrutiny. When, however, original thoughts, large sections, or--as in the cases of Cerone and Bona--virtually the entire content or structure of his work is taken over by an author, it is worthy of more careful exploration. These incidents

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<sup>3</sup> The extent of Cerone's borrowing has been noted briefly by Lewis Lockwood, "On Parody as Term and Concept in 16th-Century Music," *Aspects of Medieval and Renaissance Music: A Birthday Offering to Gustave Reese*, ed. Jan LaRue (New York: Norton, 1966), 571, especially n. 24. Bona's indebtedness has, in the main, been heretofore unrecognized.

<sup>4</sup> James Haar, "Zarlino's Definition of Fugue and Imitation," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XXIV (1971), 238. Specifically, Haar notes that Scipione Cerreto's discussion of tonal answers in his *Della prattica musica vocale et strumentale* (Naples: Giacomo Carlino, 1601; facsimile edition, Bologna: Forni, 1969), 212, is modeled after that in Pontio's *Dialogo*.

of borrowing serve as accurate measures of Pontio's influence as well as an indication of how his ideas were received and accepted by his contemporaries and by later writers.

His music, on the other hand, shows more clearly the results of the vicissitudes of stylistic change. From its creation it was somewhat at the periphery of popular styles, neither representative of the soon-to-be venerated Roman school, nor of the more progressive Venetian school. As a result, its posthumous reception, indeed its continued physical existence, was due more to the specialized interest of a few people than to any ongoing tradition. Nonetheless, we can also trace some history, albeit sketchy, concerning the interest and critical appraisal of this body of music.

#### Later Use and Assessment

Along with the large-scale borrowing of material by Cerone and Bona--which will be detailed below--there are a number of other indications of Pontio's posthumous influence. While the majority of these instances concern his theoretical writings, there is also some suggestion of sporadic interest in his music. The relevance of his music was, of course, hampered by the momentous change in musical style at this time, a change that was most apparent in the

very region which had the greatest contact with his music--the north of Italy.<sup>5</sup>

### The Treatises

Even apart from Cerone, Pontio was not completely forgotten as a theorist in the seventeenth century. His name appears in the pantheon of composers and theorists in at least three late-seventeenth-century works: Giovanni Bona's *De Divina Psalmodia*, Giovanni Maria Bononcini's *Musico pratico*, and Lorenzo Penna's *Li Primi Albori musicali*.<sup>6</sup> But his appearance is in name only, and there is no indication of borrowing by these authors. By this point the study of counterpoint had passed from a practical performance skill to a clear handmaiden of composition. Meanwhile, the concept of modality was being more and more subsumed into the emerging ideas of tonality; thus his concepts had

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<sup>5</sup> On this, see Jerome Roche, *North Italian Church Music in the Age of Monteverdi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, 8-14).

<sup>6</sup> Giovanni Bona, *De Divina Psalmodia, eiusque causis, mysteriis, et disciplinis, deque variis ritibus omnium ecclesiarum in psalendis divinis officiis, tractatus historicus, symbolicus, asceticus. Sive psallentis ecclesiae harmonia, opus novum, & curiosum, ac multiplici eruditione illustratum* (Paris: Ludovicum Billaine, 1663), Giovanni Maria Bononcini, *Musico pratico* (Bologna: Giacomo Monti, 1673; facsimile edition, New York: Broude Bros. 1969), and Lorenzo Penna, *Li Primi Albori musicali . . .* (Bologna: Giacomo Monti, 1673). On the close relationship of the latter two, see Joseph-Horst Lederer, "Zur Kontrapunkttheorie Lorenzo Pennas," *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft* XXVIII (1977), 105-115.

little place in the new science of music, and his work more and more inspired only antiquarian interest.

Pontio had fared little better with many of his contemporaries, however. He was ignored by the more progressive wing; even the staunch conservative Artusi spoke of him only in the nearly anonymous guise of "that modern Parmigiano"--and in harsh terms, excoriating him for his refusal to accept the idea of "different musics" for the various instruments. Artusi saw this as a repudiation of the reality of the idiosyncratic tuning of the various instruments:

Now it is that I see the error of this modern-day Parmigiano, who continually says, and repeats it many times in his books, that under this heading of instrumental music, all instruments play one thing together, and that among the intervals of one and the other there is no difference . . . if he had studied the good Authors, I believe he would have quickly changed his thought.

After identifying the authors he was referring to--perhaps pointedly including Luigi Dentice, whom Pontio cites to justify his statements--he dismisses Pontio with a remark

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<sup>7</sup> "Hora si, che io m'accorgo dell'errore del Moderno Parmigiano, che pur ostinatamente dice, et replica più volte ne' suoi Libri, che sotto questo capo di Musica Instrumentale, tutti gl'istromenti suonano una cosa istesse, et che fra gl'intervalli dell'uno, et dell'altro non vi cade alcuna differenza . . . se havesse studiato li buoni Auttori, credo, che presto havrebbe mutato pensiero . . ." Giovanni Maria Artusi, *L'Artusi overo delle imperfettioni della moderna musica* (Venice: Giacomo Vincenti, 1600; facsimile edition, Bologna: Forni, 1968).



which seems to even more pointedly place him in the camp of the moderns:

Let us leave him be, remaining in his ignorance together with those who, day and night, occupy themselves with an instrument in order to find things extravagant, outside of reason, and far removed from the experience given by our forebears.<sup>8</sup>

This of course would put Pontio in the company of the likes of Vicentino and Luzzaschi. But Pontio shows little identification with this more progressive wing; furthermore, apart from the matter of the categories of music, he makes scant mention of instrumental music in his treatises, which are concerned almost exclusively with the realm of sacred vocal music. It would seem, moreover, that Artusi gravely misread an admittedly difficult passage from the *Ragionamento*, a discussion concerned more with semantics than with theoretical realities. Early in his discussion of instrumental music Pontio dismissed those who would suggest that each type of instrument played a different type of music as being ill-informed--more likely singers than musicians. In further explanation, Paolo--Pontio's voice in the dialogue--contends that while there are differences, notably in

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<sup>8</sup> "Lasciamo, che stia, et resti nella sua ignoranza insieme con quelli, che giorno e notte s'affaticano con lo Intromento per ritrovare cose stravaganti, fuori della ragione, e lontani dalla isperianza già fata da' nostri passatti . . ." Ibid., 8v-9.

tuning, in the speculative matter of the divisions of music all instrumental music was united under the same broad category, not to be broken down into a seemingly infinite number of different *musiche*:

*Het[tore]*: Thus, you conclude that there is not found more than one Instrumental Music?

*Pao[lo]*: There should be no doubt about this point. And the reason that one says "they have made a good *Musica di Viola*," and other times that of the flutes and of cornetts, is born of *the quality of the instruments, not [from the fact] that the players do not use the same consonances in playing now the cornett and now the viol*; for if it were so, that each sort of instrument made a type of Music, as this would demand, what could the practical musicians and players do when you find a harpsichord, a flute, two lutes and other various instruments? Truly, there would have to be more than six types of music, for there are more than six types of instruments; all of which is seen to be false; rather, it should be said that there was made a most beautiful concert.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "Adunque voi concludete non trovarli più d'una Musica Istromentale? *Pao.* Non si deve di questo punto dubitare; & la cagione, che si dice, hanno fatto una buona Musica di Viuole, & alle volte una di Flauti, & di Cornetti, nasce della qualità delli stromenti, *non già che de medesime consonantie gli sonatori non usino sonando hor di Cornetti, hor di Viuole*; perche se così fosse, ch'ogni sorte d'istromenti facesse una sorte di Musica, come si domandarebbe quella, che sogliano fare gli pratici Musici, & Sonatori, dove si truova un'appicordo, un Flauto, due Liuti, & altri vari istromenti? veramente bisognerebbe fosseno più di sei sorti di Musiche; poiche vi entrano più di sei variati istromenti; il che si vede esser falso; ma si dirà, egli è stato un bellissimo concerto." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 11-12 (italics mine).

Thus it is not at all clear that he rejects the idea of differing intonation; he merely allows, as did Artusi himself, that mixed groups could perform together.<sup>10</sup> Rather, the targets of his dissatisfaction are those who would make a false partitioning of instrumental music, making more complicated his simple division of *Musica Aritificiale* into *Musica Plana*, *Musica Figurata* and *Musica Istromentale*.

Except for these few borrowings, notices, and vitriolic attacks, Pontio's two treatises fell quickly into obscurity as the seventeenth century progressed. Judging from the number of copies that survive, both treatises were well distributed, but there is no reliable indication that either was ever reprinted.<sup>11</sup> By this time, they were clearly relegated to the area of bibliographic interest. In the eighteenth century, however, we can find scattered references to the treatises. Charles Burney, in his *General*

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<sup>10</sup> Unlike Artusi, Pontio does not go into detail concerning the differences in tuning and the ways that they can successfully be combined. That, of course, was not his interest at this section of the treatise, which is merely speculative.

<sup>11</sup> Eduard Bernsdorf "Pietro Ponzio," *Neues Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst*, ed. Eduard Bernsdorf, 4 vols. (Vols. I & II: Dresden: Robert Schaefer, 1856; Volumes III & IV: Offenbach: Andre, 1861), III, 213 lists a 1603 edition of the *Dialogo* and Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Allgemeine Litteratur der Musik* (Leipzig: Schwichert, 1792; facsimile edition, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1962), 420 lists a 1591 edition. The former is doubtful since all of the surviving copies I have had access to are dated 1595, and the latter is clearly in error given the dated dedication to the work.

*History of Music*, cites Pontio's discussion of the style of composing a Madrigal, erroneously maintaining that Pontio was a prolific composer in that medium.<sup>12</sup> He also made note that he had scored many of the works of Pontio.<sup>13</sup>

Giovanni Battista Martini was also comfortably familiar with at least the *Dialogo*, and used a passage from it to help settle a question sent to him by Ignazio Balbi of Milan, concerning the correct tonal answer to a contrapuntal problem presented to an applicant for the post of organist at the Cathedral.<sup>14</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, any mention of Pontio's treatises was limited to the rehashing of material presented by early bibliographers, supplemented only by a

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<sup>12</sup> Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*, 4 vols. (London, 1776-1789), with critical and historical notes by Frank Mercer (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1935; reprint, New York: Dover, 1957) III, 167. Here Burney translates Pontio's comments on the composition of a Madrigal.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, III, 189.

<sup>14</sup> Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, I.28.22 & 23 (14 April 1773 and 24 April 1773). Martini sided with the applicant, one Gaetano Piazza, maintaining that his response to the subject better matched Pontio's dictum that a response must respect the nature of the tone as well as be well-structured musically: "purche stia nel proprio essere del tuono, e sia fatta l'Inventione con bell'ordine musicale, e comodo delle parti." Pontio, *Dialogo*, 56. Martini cites the entire quote in his letter, describing Pontio as "uno de più antichi scrittori che abbia parlato delle Fughe del Tuono." The emphasis here is taken from the copy of the *Dialogo* in the library's collection (B. 138), and probably is Martini's annotation.

few original errors.<sup>15</sup> In this century, it has been the interest in the question of parody technique and the recognition of Cerone's indebtedness to Pontio that has brought the latter's works to a more central position, although the reception has not always been positive.<sup>16</sup>

Pontio's present place within the canon of sixteenth-century theory is based in large part on Lewis Lockwood's identification of the *Ragionamento* as the source for much of Pietro Cerone's discussion of parody technique.<sup>17</sup> Cerone's indebtedness to Pontio's *Ragionamento* for his discussion of the style of composing a Psalm has, more recently, been explored by James Armstrong.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> John W. Moore, "Pietro Ponzio," *Complete Encyclopaedia of Music*, ed. John W. Moore (Boston: Ditson, 1880; reprint New York: AMS Press, 1973), 741, for example, suggested that the *Dialogo*, erroneously dated 1583, was one and the same with the *Ragionamento*.

<sup>16</sup> Jack Westrup, in his review of Suzanne Clercx's facsimile edition of the *Ragionamento*, in *Music and Letters* XLI (1960), 82-83, churlishly takes Pontio to task for not providing enough information on genre and style: "Hopefully the reader notices that on page 160 he is to be told how to write a madrigal, but when it comes to the point, he is fobbed off with a few conventional generalizations," suggesting that Pontio was like other writers of the day who were not "in any way interested in living music."

<sup>17</sup> Lockwood, "On Parody as Term and Concept," 571-572.

<sup>18</sup> James Armstrong, "How to Compose a Psalm: Ponzio and Cerone Compared," *Studi musicali* VII (1978), 103-139.

### The Music

In contrast to this growing interest in Pontio's theoretical writings, his music has been almost completely ignored by modern writers. At best, it is given cursory description concerning the scope and style, and even at that, the remarks are often incorrect.<sup>19</sup> The lack of correct secondary information compounds the problem of the lack of easy accessibility to the music itself as only parts of a few works exist in modern transcription.<sup>20</sup>

Few citations of Pontio as a composer can be found in theoretical writings. In virtually all cases, the theorists who cited him viewed his contribution as being solely theoretical. While Cerone did cite works of Pontio's in his *El Melopeo*, it is likely that the impetus for this came mostly from Pontio's own citations of himself in the *Ragionamento*. Cerone did, however, note pieces not found in Pontio's own discussions, thus it is clear that Cerone knew at least some of Pontio's works first hand. Later in the seventeenth century, the Iberian theorist Manuel Nuñez da Sylva listed

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<sup>19</sup> The most up-to-date listing of works appears in Roland Jackson, "Pietro Pontio," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1980), XV, 82-83. As noted in Chapter Four, the list is incomplete and inaccurate in citing the location of surviving copies.

<sup>20</sup> The exceptions to this have been noted in Chapter Four above (see footnote 1).

Pontio among noted composers.<sup>21</sup> It is probable, however, that Sylva's knowledge of Pontio as a composer resulted not from firsthand experience with his music, but rather from a familiarity with the citations contained in Cerone's *El Melopeo*.<sup>22</sup>

The lack of interest in Pontio's music was accompanied by the physical loss of a great majority of the printed copies, and while the body that remains is representative, it is unfortunately small. Even in his own city, what should have proven to be rich sources for his music suffered ignominious fates. Pontio's own library of prints and manuscripts, left to the Consorzio dei Vivi e dei Morti after his death, has disappeared without a trace. The Consorzio was suppressed at the beginning of the twentieth century, and its materials originally went to the Ospedale Maggiore of the city in 1912. These were then given to the

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<sup>21</sup> Manoel Nunes da Sylva, *Arte Minima que com semibreve prolaçam tratta em tempo breve, os modos da Maxima, & Longa sciencia da Musica* (Lisbon: Joam Galram, 1685). Sylva mentions Pontio in his section entitled *Compendio da Arte de Contrapunto & Compostura*, pp. 17-44. Cited by Higinio Anglés in *Catálogo Musical de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid*, 3 vols. (Barcelona: Instituto Español de Musicología, 1949), II, 182.

<sup>22</sup> The other non-Spanish musicians cited by Sylva are the same as those found in the *Melopeo*, namely Alessandro Striggio, Cipriano de Rore, Palestrina, and Adrian Willaert, along with Pontio and Cerone.

Archivio di Stato in 1927, where they are presently found.<sup>23</sup> It is probable that by this time, the collection had been sold or destroyed. If it had still existed at the time of the dispersal of the Consorzio's goods, it should have either ended up in the collection of the Archivio di Stato, or else been acquired by the Biblioteca Palatina, whose librarian at the time, Guido Gasparini, had a strong interest in music. Neither seems to be the case, and no indications of its ultimate fate can be found.<sup>24</sup>

Another lost source for Pontio's music is the musical library of Santa Maria della Steccata, which surely contained a number of Pontio's prints.<sup>25</sup> Its fate is more

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<sup>23</sup> "Archivio di Stato di Parma," estratto dall volume III della *Guida generale degli archivi stati italiana* (Rome: n.p., 1986), 418-419. Parma, Archivio di Stato, Archivio del Consorzio dei Vivi e dei Morti, contains some scattered bits of music, mostly printed music from the nineteenth century, however, and more often than not secular.

<sup>24</sup> Guido Gasparini, and Nestore Pelicelli, *Città de Parma. (Biblioteche e archivio di Parma. R. Biblioteca Palatina di Parma. Sezione musicale della biblioteca suddetta. R. Archivio de Stato. Archivio della Chiesa della Steccata Id. della Cattedrale. Catalogo delle opere musicali. Compilatori della schede G. Gasparini e N. Pelicelli)* ([Parma]: n.p., 1911), list no music from the Consorzio, nor is there any mention of Pontio's library in any of the other sources catalogued here.

<sup>25</sup> A number of these prints were purchased during Pontio's tenure there from 1582-1592. See Chapter Two above.



definitive: much of it was burned at the end of the nineteenth century to help provide heat for the church.<sup>26</sup>

Much of the music that does survive owes its continued existence to the interest of Padre Martini. Throughout his career, Martini actively collected music of the sixteenth-century masters, and a number of his letters deal with his searching for music and information about various composers.<sup>27</sup> His interest in Pontio went beyond a mere collector's fascination, however, as seen in his study of the *Dialogo* noted above. He also studied the music itself, and in his *Esemplare* we find the only discussion of a particular work of Pontio's, the "Sicut erat" from the *Magnificat octavi toni* from his first book of Magnificats.<sup>28</sup>

With this lone exception, the music of Pietro Pontio has been ignored, as it seems to have been in his lifetime. This is not surprising, given his place as a conservative

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<sup>26</sup> Arnaldo Furlotti, "Le tre cappelle di Parma," *La Scala* XXXVI (1952), 49.

<sup>27</sup> See Anne Schnoebelen, *Padre Martini's Collection of Letters in the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale in Bologna: An Annotated Index*, Annotated Reference Tools in Music, 2 (New York: Pendragon Press, 1979). Due to Martini's interest, the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale in Bologna contains the largest extant collection of Pontio's music (see Appendix 1).

<sup>28</sup> Giovanni Battista Martini, *Esemplare o sia saggio fondamentale pratico di contrapunto sopra il canto fermo*, 2 vols. (Bologna: Lelio della Volpe, 1774-1776), I, 178-180. Martini used the work to illustrate the use of counterpoint and canon in the setting of the Magnificat tone.

artist in a period of great ferment and change. Nor is it surprising given the nature of the institutions that would likely have been the audience for its publication, the limited one of the ecclesiastical chapel. But if both the music and the treatises have suffered neglect over the intervening centuries, there is adequate evidence of a lively interest in the treatises immediately after the time of Pontio's death. We find such evidence in the treatises of two theorists who, at least geographically, had demonstrable ties with Pontio: Pietro Cerone, originally of Bergamo, and Fra Valerio Bona of Brescia.

#### **Borrowing in Pietro Cerone's *El Melopeo***

The most ready example of Pontio's influence on later theorists is Pietro Cerone's borrowing of material from Pontio in his encyclopedic *El Melopeo y Maestro* of 1613.<sup>29</sup> In an appropriate caveat concerning Cerone's borrowing in general, Lewis Lockwood has provided hints as to the scope of Cerone's appropriation of material from Pontio's *Ragionamento*:

No doubt a truly exhaustive comparison of Cerone with earlier writers--a task no one has yet had the patience or temerity to undertake--would yield a far clearer picture of what is old and

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<sup>29</sup> Pietro Cerone, *El Melopeo y Maestro*, 2 vols. (Naples: Gargano & Nucci, 1613; facsimile edition ed. Robert Stevenson, New York, Da Capo, 1971).

what is new in the vast sea of information and opinion.<sup>30</sup>

To continue Lockwood's metaphor, a considerable part of this sea of information can be traced to Pontio's treatises, encompassing small inlets and bays as well as vast stretches of open water. Seen in its totality, the full extent of the borrowing from the *Ragionamento* is indeed impressive, as Table 20 indicates.

Cerone's use of material from the *Dialogo*, by comparison, is small, but by no means insignificant. In general, it involves only the borrowing of musical examples used to illustrate advanced techniques of counterpoint in the final section of the treatise. On the other hand, everything contained in the *Ragionamento* can, in large measure, be found in the *Melopeo* in more or less its original form, though not in an order reflecting the specific program of learning set forth by Pontio. Cerone's treatise is, instead, a compendium in both form and substance, and an imposing one at that. The material from the *Ragionamento*--complete as it may be--as well as that from the *Dialogo*, forms only a percentage of the whole.

Cerone's approach to this material is often little more than wholesale appropriation of entire sections of the

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<sup>30</sup> Lewis Lockwood, "On Parody as a Term and Concept," 571.

TABLE 20  
Cerone's Use of Material from the *Ragionamento*

Section	Pages	Subject	Cerone	
Ragionamento I	2-3	Definition of Music	204-205	
	3-4	Musica Humana	205-206	
	7-8	Musica Mondana	221	
	9	Musica Plana	211	
	9	Musica Figurata	211	
	10	Speculative Musician	219	
	10	Practical Musician	219	
	11	The Cantore	217-218	
	Ragionamento II	21	Counterpoint as Preparation for Composition	595
		22	Simple Counterpoint	574
22		Florid Counterpoint	574	
25-87		<i>Passaggi</i> of Intervals	618-649	
Ragionamento III	89-90	Rules of Counterpoint	575-576	
	93	Difference Between Duo and Counterpoint	576	
	96	Recognition of Mode	352	
	97	Psalm Intonations	355	
	99-118	The Modes	883-898	
Ragionamento IV	136-138	Use of Semiminims	650-651	
	139-153	Advice to Composers and Contrapuntists	654-660; 672-675	
	154-160	How to Compose a Motet, etc.	685-693	

original, sometimes with amplification, and sometimes without.<sup>31</sup> In some cases (for example, pages 139-153 of the

<sup>31</sup> Francisco Garcia, "Pietro Cerone's *El Melopeo y Maestro*: A Synthesis of Sixteenth-Century Musical Theory" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1978), discusses Cerone's method of borrowing, especially from Zarlino in Books IX, X, and XIV. He also points to Cerone's indebtedness to other authors, mentioning Pontio in passing.

*Ragionamento*, a compilation of advice to the composer and contrapuntist) Pontio's original material is broken up, rearranged, and put into two separate sections (Cerone's pages 654-660 and 672-675). Conversely, pages 89-90 and page 93 of the *Ragionamento* (rules for counterpoint and a discussion of the differences between two-voice counterpoint and two-part composition), are slightly rearranged, and combined by Cerone into a unified section (pages 575-576).

The simplest form of Cerone's borrowing is seen in the undisguised translation of passages. Pontio, for example, defines *Musica figurata* as follows:

Musica Figurata è una quantità di figure cantate hor con moto tardo, hor con moto veloce, & velocissimo secondo la forma delle figure.<sup>32</sup>

Cerone's translation, while somewhat prolix, is clear and straightforward:

Mas la Musica de Canto de Organo, es una cantidad de figuras cantadas ò pronunciadas ahora con movimiento tarde, quando con veloz (que es presto y ligero) y quando con velocissimo; segun la forma y significado de las figuras ò notas.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to taking Pontio's ideas--as well as his very words--Cerone also appropriated the citations and quotations used by Pontio along with his commentary on

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<sup>32</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Cerone, 211.

these. In doing this, he sometimes acted as editor--leaving out quotations and commentary, adding his own, or translating a quotation. Compare their discussions of the question "what is music?":

Pontio:

Sappiate dunque la Musica non esser altro, che una modulatione della voce fatta con ragione; ovvero come dice Gio. Maria Lanfranco nella prima parte delle sue scintille. "Musica è la Maestra di tutte le modulationi, che nascono da suoni, & canti." Et Franchino nel primo capo del primo libro scoprendo, che cosa fosse Musica, disse. "Est igitur Musica actio motus sonorum consonantias, ac melodiam efficiens." Lo mostrò parimente il Rever. D. Blasio, quando disse. "Musica est scientia, que in numeris, proportionibus, consonantiis, mensuris, et qualitatibus consistit." Et con bellissima ragione hà detto questo, perche se la voce non fosse governata con proportione, & misura; alle volte, & quasi sempre ella verrebbe così sconciamente mandata fuori, che darebbe più presto noia, che diletto: ma guidata della ragione, & dal giuditio fà un concerto soave, & dolce: & s'altrimenti ciò fosse, naturalmente tutti saprebbero cantare; la qual cosa si vede esser falsa.<sup>34</sup>

Cerone:

Tambien podemos dezir que la *Musica otra cosa no es que una modulacion de voces hecha con razon y juyzio*: ò como dize Iuan Maria Lanfranco; *La Musica es la maestra de todas las harmonias que nacen de sonos y cantos*: y para diffinirla mas copiosamente diremos con Gafforo; *Musica est actio motus sonorum consonancias, ac melodiam efficiens*. . . . Otro autor mas antiguo dize; *Musica est scientia quae in numeris, proportionibus, consonantiis, mensuris & qualitatibus consistit*. . . . Con mucho razon dixo esto; porque si la boz no fuesse regida con proporciones y con medidas,

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<sup>34</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 2.

algunas vezes y casi siempre, ella vendria ser formada tan desconcertadamente, que antes diera fastidio que deleyte: y si otra manera fuesse, naturalmente todos sabriamos cantar, lo qual veemos no ser verdad.<sup>35</sup>

In these and similar sections, Cerone simply took material from Pontio and embedded it within greatly expanded discussions. In this, the *Ragionamento* is used simply as another source for both quotation and commentary. The surrounding material is just as likely to be from yet another source, and Cerone's function is simply that of a compiler.

Along with the text, Cerone also found many of Pontio's musical examples useful. In his discussion of the various types of double counterpoint (pages 596-603) a great many of Cerone's musical examples are taken over completely from Pontio's discussion of this topic in his *Dialogo*, pages 89-105.<sup>36</sup> The text, however, is Cerone's; or at the least

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<sup>35</sup> Cerone, 204-205. In the material from the *Ragionamento*, I have added quotation marks to show clearly the material quoted by Pontio. The italics in the parallel section from *El Melopeo* are from the original. Cerone does not identify Blasio (Biagio Rossetti) in the text, but does so in the *marginalia*, referring to the treatise as "*Compend. music.*" (the first page of the treatise carries the heading *Compendium Musicae*, and the work likely was known by that title). See Chapter Three, note 17. The quote from Rossetti is taken directly from the *Ragionamento*, as it is an exact transmission of Pontio's variant of the original.

<sup>36</sup> Cerone, 596-603.

it is not Pontio's.<sup>37</sup> The situation is the same in much of chapters fifteen through twenty-five in Book Eleven of *El Melopeo*, in which Cerone cataloged the various voice leadings or *passaggi* of all the intervals.<sup>38</sup> Many of his examples are taken from the parallel section in the *Ragionamento* (pages 25-87), and from time to time he cited the same works as Pontio to illustrate a particular *passaggio*, at times even using Pontio's own commentary on the examples.

The incidence of exact textual borrowing in these sections, however, is not great. Pontio serves merely as a convenient source to illustrate what were in reality basic and universally accepted concepts. As was true in Cerone's section on invertible counterpoint, another source might just as easily have been used.

It is interesting, and perhaps revealing of Cerone's attitude toward Pontio's work, however, that he chose not to borrow the original wording of prose in these sections. There was little for Cerone to gain in it, either by way of intellectual content or of felicitous prose. By contrast, the sections in which Cerone is most dependent for ideas and prose represent the real heart of the *Ragionamento*, and must

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<sup>37</sup> Garcia, 92, has noted that some of the examples-- as well as some of the text in this section--come from Zarlino's 1573 edition of the *Istitutioni*. Cerone also wrote a few counterpoints of his own using the *cantus firmus* he borrowed from the *Dialogo*.

<sup>38</sup> Cerone, 618-649.



have impressed Cerone greatly. It is in those sections-- where Pontio shows his originality and, ironically, the very parts which in their borrowed form earned the *Melopeo* much of its fame--that Cerone did his most significant and extensive borrowing. Two such cases are striking in content as well as telling in intent: Pontio's discussion of modality, found in the third *Ragionamento*, and his listing of the stylistic features of the various genres of composition, contained in the fourth.<sup>39</sup>

As noted in Chapter Five above, Pontio's discussion of the modes is important for two concepts: the explanation of modal procedure in the Psalm tones and their full integration into modal procedure in general, as well as Pontio's clear enunciation of a system of cadential hierarchies. Cerone did not deviate from this in approach, and only rarely in detail. He retained the basic structure of the original discourse, discussing the formation of each mode, its principal cadence points, and the justification for these when they depart from the final or cofinal of the modes. He also provided a short two-voice example for each mode, showing the strict modality used in Motets, Masses, and the like, and the variant treatment found in pieces based on the Psalm tone. To this he added a few features.

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<sup>39</sup> Cerone, 883-898, and 685-693 respectively. The parallel sections in the *Ragionamento* are 99-118 and 154-160.

Borrowing from the tradition of Zarlino, he began the discussion of each mode by describing it in terms of the harmonic or arithmetic division of the octave species.<sup>40</sup> He also added, in a way more systematic and consistent than Pontio, discussion of the proper clefs for each mode, and their allowable transpositions.

What is most striking in this section, and once again reflective of Cerone's regard for the *Ragionamento*, is that he was true to the spirit and originality of his source even as he sometimes disagreed with it. For example, he often used Pontio's musical examples for each mode with few modifications; yet he changed the clefs to reflect his own system when it differed from Pontio's.<sup>41</sup> Most notably, Cerone, as an adherent to the twelve-mode system of Zarlino, added a discussion of modes nine through twelve, using his own prose while adhering to Pontio's form and approach. Cerone also differed with Pontio on the propriety of the use of Bb in mode six, and although his general discussion is

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<sup>40</sup> C.f. Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le Istitutioni harmoniche* (Venice: Senese, 1558), 320-335, and *On the Modes*, Part 4 of *Le Istitutioni harmoniche* (1558), trans. Vered Cohen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 54-89.

<sup>41</sup> When Cerone did make changes in Pontio's musical examples, these were primarily by way of ornamentation of some of the figures. In mode five, and the first example of mode six, he adds a new phrase to the beginning of the examples. These in no way, however, change the nature of the examples, and seem only to reflect a capriciousness on the part of Cerone.

identical, he provided a complete set of new examples for the mode, without the flat. Since, however, the use of the flat in mode six was, for Cerone, a transposition of mode twelve, he took Pontio's original mode six example and made it his own for mode twelve.<sup>42</sup>

Cerone was even more direct in his borrowing from the last section of the *Ragionamento*, and again, Cerone reveals himself as both editor and emulator. On page 139 of the *Ragionamento*, for example, Pontio lists five qualities that a composition should have: that it should be in a mode, that it should be made of consonances and dissonances, that the structure of the music and the sense of the text should be coordinated, that there should be new inventions, and that there should be thirds and fifths whenever there are four or more voices. From these very basic rules, he goes on in the next fourteen pages to discuss a number of more specific issues to which the composer should address himself. These range from the aesthetic--that the composer should have a measure of variety in his piece--to the technical--that the composer must avoid doubling a flatted note that descends, since the singer of the other part will, if the part proceeds upward, undoubtedly sing the pitch raised, resulting in an augmented octave.

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<sup>42</sup> Cerone, 905-907. See also Armstrong, "How to Compose a Psalm," 108.

Cerone took this somewhat unfocused discussion and condensed much of it into a list of advice to the composer. This forms the core of his forty-three rules in Book Twelve, chapter six.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, he also used some of this material in a section earlier in the treatise--this one structured more nearly like Pontio's discussion--in Chapter Four of the same book.<sup>44</sup> In this section, many of Pontio's musical examples are used (and sometimes modified), and citations of pieces are repeated. In addition, some sections are merely translations of Pontio's original text.

The final section of the fourth *Ragionamento*, Pontio's well-known discussion of the various stylistic features of the different genres, is taken over in whole by Cerone.<sup>45</sup> The ordering of the subjects, illustrative examples, and much of the original prose is left completely intact, and Cerone's discussion is, for all intents and purposes, simply a gloss on Pontio's original. The majority of the changes that are found represent an attempt on Cerone's part to be more complete and encyclopedic. Such is the case in his discussion of the techniques for writing an imitation Mass. In his discussion, Pontio notes that the beginning of the

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<sup>43</sup> Cerone, 672-677.

<sup>44</sup> Cerone, 656-665.

<sup>45</sup> Cerone, 685-693. The relevant section of the *Ragionamento* is found on pages 154-160.

Kyrie, as well as that of all the other major divisions should begin with the principal invention of the original model, and that the end of each of these sections should take as their model the final invention of the piece. All other sections are up to the composer:

. . . the *Christe* can then be made on some other invention of this song from which the Mass will be made. One can also choose an invention of one's own, as long as it is appropriate to the said tone . . .<sup>46</sup>

Cerone, for his part, made this general rule more complete, pointing out that the beginning of the second Kyrie, as well as the second and third *Agnus Dei*, are left to the choice of the composer, and repeated what had been mentioned in earlier sections--by both himself and Pontio--that the intermediate sections are free to end on the cofinal of the mode. In addition, he noted the differences in the use of imitation found between the solemn and ferial Masses and provides a further breakdown of the types of Masses.<sup>47</sup>

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46 ". . . il *Christe* si sarà poi sopra qualche altra inventione di esso canto; dove sarà fatta la Messa. Si potrà pigliare ancora una sua inventione, mentre sia appropriata al detto Tuono . . ." Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 156.

47 Cerone, 688. He gives the following classifications of Masses: Masses on original subjects (*Missa sine nomine*), brief Masses (*Missa brevis* or *l' hora è tarda*), Masses based on solmized subjects (e.g. *Missa La sol fa re mi*), Masses based solely on a mode (e.g. *missa secondi toni*) and Masses for specific feasts (e.g. *Missa Beata Virgine*).

Other examples of Cerone's fleshing out of material-- material either implied by Pontio or clearly reflective of practice in Pontio's time as well as Cerone's--include his discussion of those sections in the Mass and Magnificat in which it was proper to reduce the number of voices, and his requirement for a more learned, strictly contrapuntal style in these sections. He also was careful to include in his separate discussions of the Ricercar, Madrigal, Hymn, and Lamentations that the cadences proper to the Motet (as opposed to the Psalm) should be employed. Pontio was no less insistent on this point--merely less redundant--as he had made this a clear distinction in his discussion of the modes.

Cerone went afield from Pontio only a few times in his discussion of genres, mostly to reflect current practice in Spain. For example, in discussing Psalm composition, even while following Pontio virtually verbatim, he notes that in Spain it was the regular practice to sing the Psalms only in *falsobordone* (as well as the Magnificats on days of lesser solemnity). He also added citations of Guerrero and Victoria in his treatment of Mass composition (and in Psalm writing, Asola and Pontio). One other departure which may reflect Spanish practice is his comment that the Lamentations of Holy Week were to be sung with one to a part.

These borrowings show, in both scope and manner, an intimate familiarity with Pontio's treatises on the part of

Cerone, and with his music. Even so, any conclusions from this as to the dissemination of Pontio's work are hard to make. Most open to question is whether Cerone was exposed to Pontio's writings in Spain or in Naples--which would suggest a currency for his treatises in these centers--or whether his interest in Pontio's work was born of their mutual connection with the city of Bergamo, where the two may have had some contact when Cerone was a choirboy.<sup>48</sup>

Whatever the reason for Cerone's initial interest, however, Pontio's influence on Cerone cannot be underestimated. It is perhaps easy to view *El Melopeo* as nothing more than a scholastic compendium of sixteenth century musical treatises. But its importance lies in its position--as Garcia suggests in the title of his study of the work--as a synthesis of sixteenth-century theoretical practice. Cerone selected his material with care, and made judicious, even if to our eyes plagiaristic, use of an immense body of theoretical thought. Among these works, he placed Pontio's treatises in a place of distinction, reflected, if nothing else, by the wholesale appropriation of material from the *Ragionamento* and the care he exercised in transmitting those parts of Pontio's treatises which contained his most original thought.

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<sup>48</sup> Concerning this, see Chapter Two above.

**The *Regole del contraponto* (1595): Valerio Bona's  
Condensation of the *Ragionamento***

Cerone was not the only theorist to make use of Pontio's work, nor was he the most systematic in his borrowing. Pontio's influence on Valerio Bona's *Regole del contraponto* of 1595, the nature of which has not previously been recognized, is even stronger.<sup>49</sup> In a manner not seen in Cerone's borrowing, it is apparent that the *Ragionamento* served Bona not just as a source, but as a model for the entire treatise, for along with the borrowing of individual sections, clear indications of the original formal structure of Pontio's treatise can be seen. In many important ways, Bona's *Regole* is a nearly complete--if not always accurate--condensation of the entire *Ragionamento*.<sup>50</sup>

Bona acknowledged from the outset his indebtedness to Pontio, as well as other theorists. The title, to begin with, clearly indicates that the material is collected from various authors. In the introduction, aptly citing the principle *Nihil dictum, quod prius non fuerit dictum*, Bona notes that in reading these many authors, the student can

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<sup>49</sup> Valerio Bona, *Regole del contraponto et compositione brevemente raccolte da diversi auttori* (Casale: Bernardo Grasso, 1595).

<sup>50</sup> In many ways, this process can be compared to Artusi's condensation of Zarlino's *Istitutioni* in his *L'Arte del contrapunto* (Venice: Vincenti 1598; facsimile edition, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969).



become confused and dulled. To offset this, he proposes a recipe:

to give [my student] food that his stomach can digest, I have briefly extracted this sauce from many excellent authors, and I have put it in this little book, so that my student can taste it at his pleasure.<sup>51</sup>

Bona is specific about both the authors and the sources he recommends, citing Lanfranco's *Scintille*, Zarlino's *Istitutioni*, Artusi's *L'arte del contrapunto*, and Pontio's *Ragionamento*.<sup>52</sup> Bona's treatise, however, is less the sauce he describes than a *pasticcio*, full of entire chunks of

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51 ". . . io, per dargli cibo, ch'il suo stomaco possi diggerire, hò cavato brevemente il sugo da molti eccellenti Auttori, & in questo picciol libretto l'hò posto, à fine, che il mio scolaro, à piacer suo lo possa gustare . . ." Bona, *Regole*, [i].

52 It is a measure of the extent to which Pontio's contribution is ignored that in Adriano Cavicchi, "Valerio Bona," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Blume, 16 vols. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1949-1981), XV, col. 916, the author states that the Bona's *Regole* is a simplification of Zarlino, Lanfranco and Artusi, overlooking Pontio entirely. Similarly, Ernst Apfel, *Geschichte der Kompositionslehre von dem Anfängen bis gegen 1700*, 3 vols. (Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshofen, 1981), III, 353, notes that along with Zarlino and Artusi, Bona's treatise was particularly indebted in content to Pontio and Lanfranco, but that in the matter of organization, the model was Artusi's *L'Arte del Contrapunto*: "Der Traktat von Bona stellt eine Vereinfachung der Lehrwerke von G. M. Lanfranco . . . , Zarlino . . . , und Artusi . . . , aber auch von P. Pontio, *Ragionamento di Musica*, Parma, inhaltlich besonders derer von Lanfranco und Pontio, in der Stoffanordnung besonders der Tafeln von G. M. Artusi, dar."

these treatises, the most overwhelming flavor being that of Pontio's *Ragionamento*.

Bona's debt to the *Ragionamento* is clear, even as he seems to draw on other authors. In his definition of music, he quotes other writers:

*Musica est scientia, quae in numeris, proportionibus, consonantiis, mensuris, & qualitibus Consistit.* ò vero volgamente diremo; la Musica è la maestra d'ogni Canto, che nasca da Canto, ò suono . . . .<sup>53</sup>

Although not credited by Bona, the two quotes are from the theorists Biagio Rossetti (Blasio) and Giovanni Maria Lanfranco, respectively--the same authors who, properly credited and reversed in position, appear in Pontio's own definition of music:

. . . come dice Gio. Maria Lanfranco . . .  
Musica è la Maestra di tutti le modulationi, che nascono da suoni, & canti . . . . Lo mostrò parimente il Rever. D. Blasio quando disse Musica est scientia, que in numeris, proportionibus, consonantiis, mensuris, & qualitibus consistit.<sup>54</sup>

As Cerone did in *El Melopeo*, Bona freely took entire sections of Pontio's text, making only the most minor of changes. His technique is clearly seen in his discussion of the distinction between the contrapuntist and the true

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<sup>53</sup> Bona, *Regole*, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 2.

*musico*. Here even some of the nature of the original dialogue is retained, as Bona turns Hettore's question into a rhetorical one:

Pontio: *Het[ore]*. Udite ancora questo vi prego; hò sentito alcuni Cantori, quali sopra il canto fermo formavano un'altra parte, quale dava diletto à gli ascoltanti, questi non saranno essi chiamati Musici, poiche sono giunti alla ragione di porre le consonantie, & dissonantie? *Pao[lo]*. Io vi rispondo, che altramente non debbano chiamarsi Musici, ma contrapuntisti, non essendo però passati più avanti. Ma Musico sarà quello (parlando del Musico pratico) che saprà accommodare [sic] tre, quattro, cinque parte, & più insieme . . .<sup>55</sup>

Bona: Si chiamerà Musico quello (parlando del Musico pratico) il quale saprà comporre à tre, quattro, e più voci. Uno dunque, che canterà un'altra parte sopra il canto figurato, ò sopra il canto fermo, non si chiamerà Musico? poiche è giunto alla cognitione di porre le consonanze è dissonanze insieme? nò, mà si chiamerà Contrapuntista, non essendo passato più oltre.<sup>56</sup>

Along with such direct quotations, a number of unique and important ideas from Pontio's treatise find a home in Bona's short volume. Notable are the distinctions of genre and style in Pontio's definition of counterpoint, and his carefully-explained difference between counterpoint and Duo.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Bona, *Regole*, 2-3.

<sup>57</sup> Pontio's definition of counterpoint is fully discussed in Chapter Three above.

But as the case with Cerone's *El Melopeo*, the full measure of Bona's indebtedness is seen in comparing the entire contents of the two treatises (Table 21).

As can be seen, the overall four-part structure of the *Ragionamento* is retained, even if the sections are not clearly articulated. Pontio's first *ragionamento* is made briefer by the subtraction of the section dealing with basics of mathematical ratios. The material of the second and third, dealing with intervallic progressions, counterpoint and the modes is retained nearly intact, with even some additions on Bona's part. Finally, the fourth section--which Pontio aims almost completely at the composer--is retained, though truncated by the omission of the discussion of the various genres with which Pontio ends the *Ragionamento*.

Within this structure, Bona exercises some freedom, however, adding sections from the other works cited to fill out areas that Pontio had ignored. As an example, Bona's inserted discussion of the treatment of consonances and dissonances (pages 6-12), in which he discusses the division of consonances into three types--*perfette*, *perfette mezzane*,

TABLE 21  
 Comparison of Contents of Bona's *Regole* and Pontio's *Ragionamento*

Bona		Pontio	
Page	Topic	Page	Topic
1	Definition della Musica	2-3	<i>Ragionamento I</i> Che cosa sia Musica
1	Division della Musica		
1	Division della Musica Naturale	3-7	Della Musica Humana
		7-8	Della Musica Mondana
1	Musica artificiale qual sia	8-9	Della Musica Plana
2	Musica plana	9	Della Musica Figurata
2	Musica figurata	9-10	Della Musica Istromentale
2	Musica instramentale		
2	Division del Musico	10	Del Musico Specolativo
2	Musico specolativo	10	Del Musico Prattico
2	Musico prattico	11	[Del Cantore]
2-3	Qual si debba chiamar Musico	11-12	Del Cantore
3	Qual sia il Cantore		[... intervallic proportions]
			<i>Ragionamento II</i>
3	Che Cosa Sia Contraponto	22	Del contrapunto semplice
	Semplice et Diminuito		
3	Division del contraponto		
4	Contraponto diminuito	23-25	Del contrapunto Florido
6	Unisono, che cosa sia	25	Dell'Unisono
	[... consonance & dissonance treatment.]		

- 12-29 Modo, et Passaggi delle Consonanze  
per far il Contraponto & prima,  
Dell'Unisono [etc.]
- 25-88 Dell'Unisono [etc.]  
*Ragionamento III*
- 89-90 Del Modo, che s'hà da tenere nel  
formare un contrapunto sopra il  
canto Piano, ò Figurato
- 90-93 Delle Qualità che deve havere
- 93-94 Della differenza del contrapunto al  
Duo, et alla compositione
- 94-96 "Otto sono gli Tuoni . . ."
- 96-99 Cognitione del Tuono de' Salmi
- 99-121 Del formatione del primo Tuono, etc.
- 94-85 Della Cadenza  
*Ragionamento IV*
- [. . . rhythmic proportions]
- 136-138 Della Seminima & Chroma
- 138-139 Della Seminima & Chroma
- 139-153 Degli avvertimenti, che deve havere  
il compositore, & contrapuntista
- 
- 12-29 Modo, et Passaggi delle Consonanze  
per far il Contraponto & prima,  
Dell'Unisono [etc.]
- 29-30 [Six rules of counterpoint]
- 30-31 Qualità del Contraponto, numero tre
- 31 [Difference between counterpoint and Duo]
- 32 Tuoni Numeri Otto
- 32-33 Cognitione per intonar il Salmo
- 33-34 Cognitione per conoscer de qual tono sia  
un Canto figurato  
[. . . clefs]
- 44 Che cosa sia cadenza
- [. . . rhythmic proportions]
- 62-63 Della Seminima
- 63-64 Della Chroma, et semichroma  
[. . . dotting and coloration]
- 68-71 Avvertimenti per la Compositione

and *imperfette et emmele*--is taken almost entirely from Lanfranco's *Scintille*.<sup>58</sup>

Along with retaining the general structure, specifics of Pontio's approach are appropriated by Bona. In the section paralleling the second *ragionamento* (pages 12-29), Bona took the identical tack as Pontio had in discussing intervals, specifying the number of different passages for each interval and then listing them. He condensed Pontio's discourse by omitting examples and citations of works, and by simply listing (rather than illustrating) those passages that were problematic or prohibited. Little of substance is changed in this section, although the order of discussion is modified, presenting the major intervals before the minor ones, and moving the discussion of the diminished fifth to a place right after that of the perfect fifth. In addition, the explanation of some of the specific passages varies in his discussion, but not enough to weaken Pontio's claim to patrimony.

Likewise, Bona's presentation of the modes (pages 32-32) owes a great deal to the *Ragionamento*, and we see in it

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<sup>58</sup> Giovanni Maria Lanfranco, *Scintille di musica* (Brescia: Lodovico Britannico, 1533), 113-115. Lanfranco's discussion ultimately derives from Boethius, and even Zarlino makes note of the triple division of the consonances into Perfect, Imperfect and Medial. See Barbara Lee, "Lanfranco's *Scintille di musica* and Its Relation to 16th-century Music Theory" (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1961), 216-218. But unlike Bona, Zarlino specifically rejects this division.

a clear reflection of Pontio's careful integration of the Psalm tones and modal structure. He also reproduces Pontio's argument that the skilled composer could control the affect of a mode by various technical means.<sup>59</sup>

While for the most part, Bona's transmission of Pontio's theories in this condensed form are accurate, a few inconsistencies and distortions appear. This is most apparent in Bona's discussion of the modes. The most salient point of Pontio's theory is the clear correlation of genre and approaches to modality; that even though there is some overlap, Psalm-based compositions and non-Psalm-based compositions work with a slightly different gamut of tonal and cadential materials. In Bona's treatment of this subject much of the material comes directly out of the third *ragionamento*; however, Pontio's distinction between "Motet" and "Psalm" cadences has been transformed here into a distinction between plainsong and polyphony.

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<sup>59</sup> Bona, *Regole*, 38-39. These pages are missing in the copy of Bona's treatise found in the New York Public Library. I have not been able to consult other copies, but Angiola Cortellazzo, "Le «Regole del contraponto et compositione» di Valerio Bona da Brescia," in *Memorie e contributi alla musica dal medioevo all'età moderna offerti a F. Ghisi nel settantesimo compleanno (1901-1971)*, 2 vols., *Miscellanea saggi convegni*, 2 (Bologna: Antiquae Musicae Italicae Studiosi, 1971), I, 314 reports Bona's brief statements on this subject, citing a quotation mirroring Pontio's ideas: "Secondo il parer mio il tono è allegro o mesto, secondo che il compositore lo fa, con l'aria da lui ritrovata."



The eight tones are categorized by Bona using the scheme found in the *Ragionamento*--and later used by Scipione Cerreto--to establish the Psalm tone by means of the interval separating the end of the Antiphon and the *differentia* of the Psalm.<sup>60</sup> Following Pontio's distinction, Bona states that the modality of Psalm compositions--as opposed to *canto fermo* or *canto figurato*--can be found using this method. He then continues the distinction of Psalm/non-Psalm by listing the regular finals of the eight modes.

To this point Bona is in complete agreement with Pontio. He begins to depart, however, by suggesting a different arrangement for the structure of cadences of the modes, this based not on the extreme pitches of the fourth and fifth species, but more nearly on the structure of the Psalm tone, stating:

. . . each tone has its beginning, middle and end, and [these] are the chords on which fall, or to say more properly, are made the cadence.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Bona, *Regole*, 32, Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 96 and Scipione Cerreto, *Della prattica musica vocale et strumentale* (Naples: Giacomo Carlino, 1601; facsimile edition, Bologna: Forni, 1969), 143.

<sup>61</sup> ". . . ogni tuono, hà il suo principio, mezzo, & fine, & sono le Corde, nelle quali propriamente casca ò per dir meglio fà Cadenza . . ." Bona, *Regole*, 34. That Bona is speaking specifically of regular modality is clear from the title of the section, "Cognitione per conoscer di qual tono sia un Canto figurato."

His cadences are, not surprisingly given this approach, virtually identical to those given by Pontio as the *principio*, *medietà*, and *fine* of the Psalm tones.<sup>62</sup> These are shown in Table 22. As can be seen, only in mode seven does he depart from Pontio's order, and even this reflects pitches allowed by Pontio for alternate cadences in polyphonic Psalm settings.<sup>63</sup>

TABLE 22  
Cadences for *Canto Figurato* Proposed by Valerio Bona  
and  
Cadences for the Psalm Tones Proposed by Pietro Pontio

Mode	Bona			Pontio		
	<i>Principio</i>	<i>Mezzo</i>	<i>Fine</i>	<i>Principio</i>	<i>Medietà</i>	<i>Fine</i>
I	F	A	D	F	A	D
II	C	F	D	C	F	D
III	G	C	A or E	G	C	A
IV	A	A	E	A	A	E
V	F	C	A	F	C	A
VI	F	A	F	F	A	F
VII	G	D	A	C	E	A
VIII	G	C	G	G	C	G

In addition to misunderstanding content, by condensing this material, Bona ignored the specific internal logic of his model. For example, by elevating what were originally

<sup>62</sup> Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 97-98.

<sup>63</sup> Regarding this, Pontio states: "You can occasionally make a cadence on D, as it is the mediant chord of this mode in Motets and Masses . . ." (Potresti ancora per una sol volta far cadenza nella corda D, per esser corda mediatrice di questo tuono ne' Motetti, & Messe . . .). Pontio, *Ragionamento*, 116. See Table 8 above.

digressions on Pontio's part into entire chapters, the orderly flow of information is interrupted. Such is the case with Bona's chapters on the use of accidentals.<sup>64</sup> Just as in the *Ragionamento*, these appear as an outgrowth of the discussion of the use of the interval of the sixth. But while Pontio integrated his remarks into the discussion which precipitated them, Bona separated them into two distinct chapters. Even while this placement of the material between the discussion of the sixth and that of the octave helps to confirm his source, at the same time it greatly weakens the logic of the original argument.

Possibly more damaging to Pontio's theoretical program is Bona's abandonment of the clear four-part form of the *Ragionamento*. In both word and deed, Pontio had presented a clear pedagogical progression, from the fundamentals of music necessary for all students, through the specific techniques of voice-leading vital to the contrapuntist, followed by a very careful explanation of the genre itself and an introduction to the modes, finally ending with the materials which would move the student to the realm of the composing *musico* and more perfect contrapuntist. This strong internal logic is completely missing in Bona's treatment, which in the end presents all of the material with none of the justifying form. Given these problems, it is

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<sup>64</sup> Bona, *Regole*, 23-24.

not surprising that Bona's treatise has been seen as a pale and somewhat disorganized imitation of Zarlino.<sup>65</sup>

All of this only serves to point out the importance of the organizational structure of the *Ragionamento*, and suggests that while the treatise was well-known enough to be a source for other writers, it was not always completely understood in either form or content. Further, we see that even as Pontio represented in many ways the end of a conservative theoretical tradition, already outmoded by the works of Galilei and Vicentino, his work nonetheless found further resonance in a small school of more conservative North Italian theorists into the next century, culminating in Cerone's *El Melopeo*.

#### Conclusion: Judging the Composer's Voice

All of the aspects of life and works of Pietro Pontio, by themselves, command our attention and add to our sum total of knowledge of the period. But in isolation they are overshadowed by the fact that in their combination, in the

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<sup>65</sup> Joseph-Horst Lederer, "Valerio Bona," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1980), III, 12 states: "In his theoretical work *Regole del contraponto* (1595) he relied largely upon Zarlino's *Istitutioni harmoniche*; he had already freed himself from exaggerated speculative elements in Zarlino's theory, but reproduced its practical elements, in somewhat haphazard form."

cross-fertilization of his music and his writings, we discover in Pontio a true voice of the period. Although the accessibility of this material is still limited, the opportunities presented in their study are nonetheless significant. His compositions and theoretical writings speak to us, and in the end we must listen critically and judge that voice.

Pontio's is an authentic voice, for it speaks from experience. As a theorist his writings are informed by his experience as a composer. More than any other aspect, it is the pragmatism of his work that stands out. The same is true of his compositions, which as a body reflect the practical needs of his career, and as such give us insight into that life. If his works seem parochial, it is a reflection of a self-imposed limitation, a desire to deal only with those matters that formed the substance of his milieu.

His is also an informed voice. His writings show a clear understanding of the theoretical background, both the immediate and the more remote. His treatises form an important part of the continuum of the North Italian theoretical tradition, and they accurately reflect that tradition even as they provide new material for its continuation.

Most notably, his is a practical voice. Although he reflects in some ways a humanist point of view, his works are in no way humanist documents in the classical sense. He

eschews complex justifications, concentrating on the immediate sense of the informed ear. His aesthetic ideals are practical as well, focusing on the comfort and enjoyment of the singer, as well as the delight and interest of the listener as his primary aesthetic criteria.

His is, in many ways, an original voice; even while it is practical, it avoids the monotony that such practicality can engender, and while as a theorist he is indebted to many sources, these ideas find logical place in his writings. His works are no mere pastiches, but rather original syntheses of thought. Their structure is defined by a logical approach to the subject that imparts not just information, but a valuable, often singular point of view. His program of learning reflects his pragmatic nature, and provides insight into many aspects of the teaching and learning process during this period.

Finally, his is a relevant voice. The fundamental questions addressed in his treatises, questions of form, of structure and of technique speak volumes. But more importantly, his music provides a clear realization of these ideas, in turn helping to define them more clearly. This is not the rarefied atmosphere of humanistic speculation, nor the sometimes misleading treasure-trove of the virtuoso composer, but rather the day-to-day theory and practice which was the foundation of style and musical culture of the

period. The voice of the composer is most often purely musical; in Pontio we find one that is equally intellectual, and in it we find a rare balance that leads to a more pragmatic understanding of many of the concerns of the musicians of the sixteenth century.

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