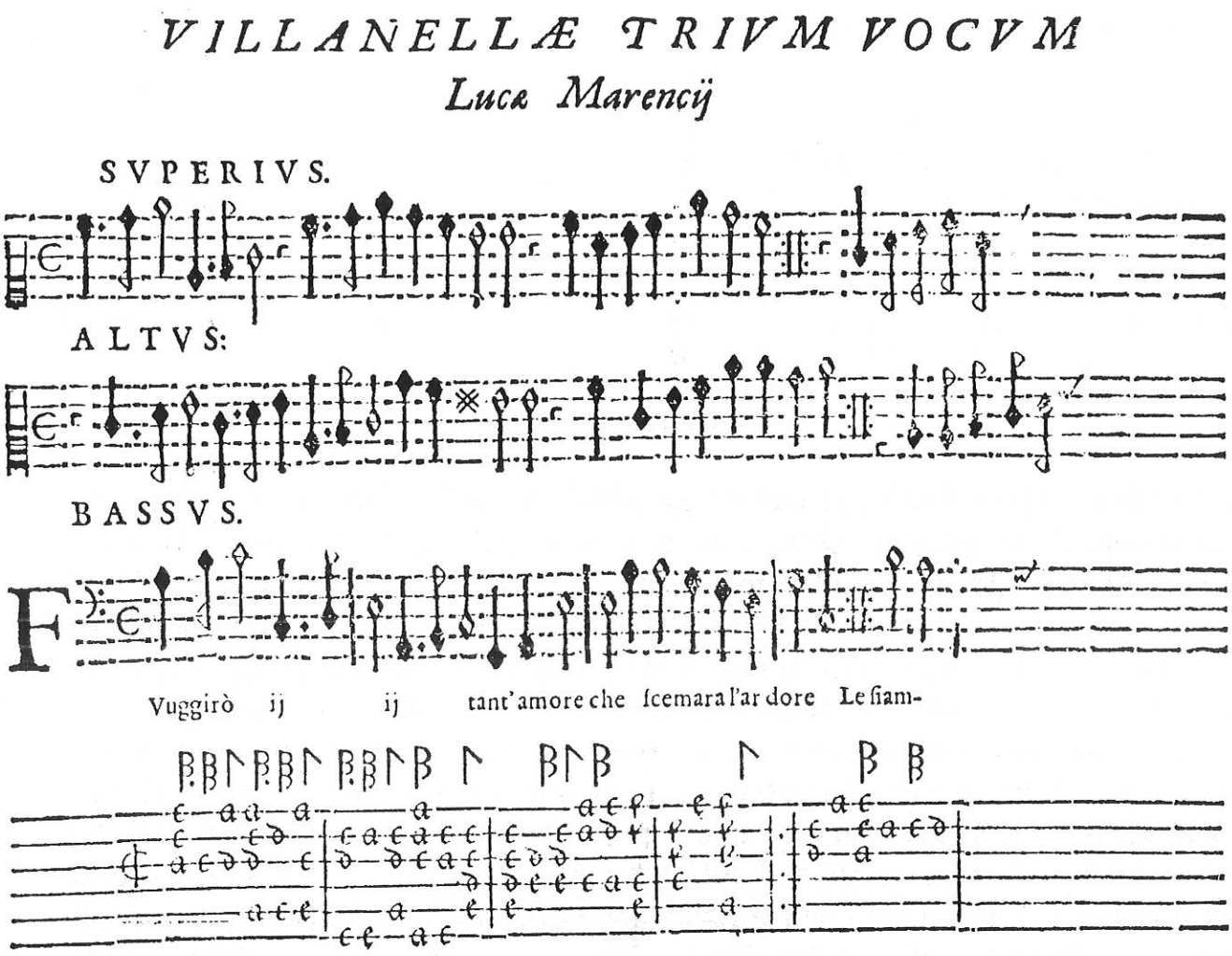
Early Music Performer

A quarterly newsletter dedicated to questions of early music performance - then and now

Issue 2, Spring 1999



Luca Marenzio: *divino compositore*

Robert Spenser *on singing in Purcell's England, part 1*

Nema

Early Music Performer **is the newsletter of the National Early Music Association** and is sent to subscribing members. Subscription to NEMA costs £19 per year, and subscribers receive a copy of *The Early Music Yearbook*. For further details contact the administrator, Christopher Goodwin, Southside Cottage, Brook Hill, Albury, Guildford GU5 9DJ, UK. Tel (++44)/(0) 1483 202159. Fax (++44)/(0)1483 203088
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Includes full listings of articles on early music

Contents of this issue

Editorial

Issue 2 of Early Music Performer and a new editor already! In fact there is very little change, except I have agreed to help our administrator by doing the donkey work on the computer. It remains the role of EMP to provide a service to NEMA members, who are invited to make announcements as found below; please send these, and any relevant letters, to me. We do not intend to compete with *Early Music Review* by providing full events listings, or reviews of concerts, books, music or recordings: we hope to find our own niche with practical performance information. People considering submitting articles may wish to consult administrator Chris Goodwin or chairman Peter Holman. The Summer issue will appear in July; it is hoped that both the Autumn edition and the 1999 Yearbook will appear at the end of October, and that some members may like to collect it from our stand at the London Exhibition of Early Musical Instruments, which takes place on the weekend of Friday, October 29. *Chris Thorn*

Members' Announcements

As part of the Brighton Festival, **The Brighton Consort**, directed by Deborah Roberts, will present a concert entitled *The Golden Age of Spanish Polyphony* on Wednesday May 12th at 8pm in St. Mark's Chapel, Eastern Road, Brighton. The programme features Spanish choral music of the 16th and 17th centuries, including works by Victoria, Cereols, Morales, Lobo and Guerrero, the pieces by Cereols being in a new edition edited by Deborah Roberts. Tickets are available from the Brighton Festival Box Office on 01273 709709 or from Harry Steer on 01273 419723.

For sale: Andrew Garlick Flemish Harpsichord, single manual, 2 x 8ft with decorated soundboard, fully maintained and regulated, £6250. Ian Graham Jones, Chichester 01243 371128

Introduction to Robert Spencer, 'Singing Purcell's Songs'

Peter Holman

One of the last pieces of writing Robert Spencer completed before his untimely death in the summer of 1997 was this extended article on singing Purcell's songs. It was the fruit of many years of studying seventeenth-century English song, collecting early editions and manuscripts of the repertory, and teaching students how to perform it. Bob did not regard it as finished, particularly since he had no chance to discuss Pietro Reggio's *The Art of Singing* (Oxford, 1677), the earliest singing tutor in English. *The Art of Singing* had long been thought lost, though a copy unexpectedly came to light at a Sotheby's auction in May 1997, and is now in a private collection. With characteristic modesty, Bob also did not regard what he had written as a work of scholarship, since he pointed out that it was just a summary of existing knowledge. But it is much more than that, partly because Purcell scholars have generally ignored questions of performance practice relating to singing, and partly because Bob's knowledge of the subject was so profound. We print the article in the form it appeared in successive numbers of *Singing*, 31-34 (1996-7); I am grateful to Mollie Petrie, its editor, for providing copy, and to Jill Spencer for helping to track it down and for giving permission for it to be republished.

Singing Purcell's Songs: the 17th Century Evidence, with suggestions for singers today.

by Robert Spencer

PART ONE

In order to decide the style we should use for singing Purcell's songs today, we should begin by trying to discover what Purcell himself expected to hear from his singers, what the voices were like for which he wrote his songs, and what was the style of singing they used (1). For this information we have to look at three things: the music as published by the composer, the instruction books of the time, and the written comment of the period, however imprecise that is.

VOICES IN 17TH- CENTURY ENGLAND

1. For Chamber Music

As far as the voice itself was concerned, small was beautiful in 17th-century chamber music situations, both professional and amateur. Concert-rooms for public concerts themselves were small: that of York Buildings, built about 1680, measured 32'4" deep by 31'6" broad by 21' high, apparently the same room seating 200 in comfort in 1712. The performing area, presumably in addition to the above measurements, was a raised alcove 15'9" deep by 17' "in diameter", containing "a Semicircle of Seats, and stands for Musick". (2)

Of the singers whom Purcell accompanied, Arabella Hunt had a voice "like the pipe of a bullfinch" according to Hawkins, quoting a fellow singer, probably the bass John Gostling (3). Another soprano who sang for Purcell for many years was Charlotte Butler, about whom Colley Cibber wrote in 1740: "...she prov'd not only a good Actress, but was allow'd [that is, considered], in those Days, to sing and dance to great Perfection. In the dramatick Operas of *Dioclesian*, and that of *King Arthur*, she was a capital, and admired Performer. In speaking too, she had a sweet-ton'd Voice, which, with her naturally genteel Air, and sensible Pronunciation, render'd her wholly Mistress of the Amiable, in many serious characters" (4).

Mrs Ayliff was Purcell's principal soprano in the years 1692-4, singing in The Fairy-Queen and the 1692 Ode for St. Cecilia. Peter Motteux wrote in 1692: "The first of the three Songs which I send you [Ah me! to many deaths decreed] is set by *Mr Purcell* the *Italian* way; had you heard it sung by Mrs. *Aycliff* you would have own'd that there is no pleasure like that which good Notes, when so divinely sung, can create" (5). The castrato Siface (whose departure from England Purcell marked with a keyboard piece titled 'Sefauchi's Farewell') impressed Evelyn in 1687 with his "holding out & delicatenesse in extending & loosing a note with that incomparable softnesse, & sweetnesse" (6).

John Abell, who sang in the Chapel Royal from 1680, was employed as a "countertenor" in James II's private musick from 1685, probably singing falsetto, judging by the range of his published songs (which go up to d") and the description of his voice by Evelyn in 1682: "After supper, came in the famous Trebble, *Mr. Abel*, newly return'd from *Italy*, & indeede I never heard a more excellent voice, one would have sworne it had ben a Womans it was so

high, & so well & skillfully manag'd" (7).

Another countertenor known to Purcell was John Pate, who sang Mopsa in the 1693 revival of the Fairy-Queen, and "Tis Nature's Voice" in the 1692 St. Cecilia Ode. In 1698 Evelyn noted: "...I heard that rare Voice, Mr. Pate, who was lately come from *Italy*, reputed the most excellent singer, ever England had: he sang indeede many rare Italian Recitatives, &c: & severall compositions of the late Mr. Pursal, esteemed the best composer of any Englishman hitherto" (8).

One of the first singers Purcell heard, apart from his father, was the bass, Captain Henry Cooke, who was to teach him at the Chapel Royal until he was 13. In 1654 Evelyn noted that he was: "esteem'd the best singer after the *Italian* manner of any in *England*: he entertain'd us with his voice & *Theorba*" (9). Pepys thought the same in 1661: "without doubt, he hath the best manner of singing in the world" (10), confirming in 1667: "...he himself doth endeed sing in a manner, as to voice and manner, the best I ever heard yet; and a strange mastery he hath in making of extraordinary surprizing closes, that are mighty pretty" (11).

Purcell wrote for the bass, John Gostling, whom Evelyn called "stupendious" (12) in 1685; not very informative but indicating at least that he was impressive.

Evelyn, who had his 18-year-old daughter taught by a professional singer, noted "that of all the Scholars of ... Signor *Pietro* [Reggio] ... she was esteem'd the best; the sweetenesse of her voice, and the manegement of it, adding such an agreeablenesse to her Countenance, without any constraint and concerne, that when she sung, it was as charming to the Eye, as to the Eare" (13).

That Purcell wrote technically demanding songs for young singers also suggests that small voices could negotiate the coloratura, but that he was not expecting projection or volume, even in the theatre. Jenny Bowen sang 'To arms, heroic prince!' as a 13-year-old treble, and Letitia Cross was about 14 when she performed 'From rosy bow'rs', both in the theatre.

part of 'To arms, heroic prince', from *Deliciae Musicae, 2nd Book* (1695) p.19

part of 'From rosy bow's', from *Orpheus Britannicus* (1698) p.98

2. For Larger Acoustics

Loud voices had their place - in the larger acoustics of masquing hall, theatre and church. As far back as 1608 "a loud tenor" sang Ferrabosco's 'So beautie on the waters stood' in the banqueting House, then measuring 90' by 40' (14).

Crivellati wrote in Italy, 1624: "it is necessary to further advise that one sings in a choir and in churches differently than in a room; thus in the former one sings with a loud voice, and in rooms and at social gatherings one sings with a subdued voice" (15).

Evelyn in 1685: "...heard [the amateur] Mrs. Packer...sing before his Majestie & the Duke privately...so lowd, as tooke away much of the sweetenesse; certainely never woman had a stronger, or better [voice] could she possibly have govern'd it: She would do rarely in a large Church among the Nunns" (16).

But Pepys thought there were limits, even in church: "I went to the King's Chapel to the closet, and there I hear [the amateur, ?Francis or John] Cresset sing a Tenor part along with the Church music; very handsomely, but so loud that people did laugh at him - as a thing done for ostentacion" (17).

3. For Theatre Projection

In about 1695, Roger North pinpointed the problem of vocal projection in theatre acoustics: "The English have generally voices good enough, tho' not up to the pitch of warmer countrys. But come into the theater or musick-

meeting, and you shall have a woman sing like a mouse in a cheese, scarce to be heard, and for the most part her teeth shutt (18). This last observation of what may have been common practice was confirmed by John Playford in his 1655 *Introduction to the Skill of Musick*, where he advised: "In the expressing of your Sounds, let it come cleare from your throat, and not through your teeth, being shut together..." (19). The wording of this sentence became more bizarre in the edition of 1664 (and similarly up to 1694), reading "& not through your *teeth* by sucking in your breath" (20).

The playwright Congreave confirmed that projection of sound was a problem in the theatre, when he wrote in 1701 that the Dorset Garden Theatre stage was modified for Eccles' Judgment of Paris: "The front of the stage was all built into a concave with deal boards; all which was faced with tin, to increase and throw forwards the sound" (21). As far as can be ascertained, the theatre's exterior measurements were 148' (one third of which was stage) by 57', accommodating only 7-800 audience, and yet there appears to have been a problem of projection, indicating, perhaps, that voices were generally small (22). However, we should bear in mind that this was a very unusual occasion, when the orchestral pit had been converted into a coffee shop/bar, forcing the orchestra to join the singers on stage - a total of more than 85 performers - for what must have been (as Peter Holman has reminded me) only a concert performance.

But Dryden wrote in 1693 that the actor-singers Mrs Bracegirdle and Thomas Doggett "sung better than [the bass, John] Redding and Mrs Ayloff, whose trade it was" (23), suggesting that the actor's training in rhetoric was a better preparation than that of professional singers for coping with theatre acoustics - my cue for examining rhetorical delivery in the theatre.

RHETORICAL DELIVERY IN THE THEATRE

Thomas Betterton, the actor, producer and playwright, collaborated with Purcell over a 15-year span, particularly in the final five years of Purcell's life, 1690-95. He acted with Purcell's stage singers in *Theodosius, Amphitryon* and *King Arthur,* wrote song texts for Purcell to set in *Dioclesian*; and produced his semi-operas *Dioclesian, King Arthur* and *The Fairy-Queen*. Betterton was also paid a £50 advance to "get up ye Indian Queen", but on the dissolution of the United Company of actors in 1694 he quitted the production before the first night.

According to Charles Gildon in 1710 (24), Betterton wrote a manual of good acting style, which style would have been used, I suggest, by the singers as well as the actors directed by him. It is unlikely that the manner of delivery and action would have differed - that two styles would have been used on one stage. Alfred Roffe, in a little known book of 1875, observed this connection: "...the musical Actors and Actresses of Purcell's time *did* possess...in a very excellent degree, that union of qualities which is necessary for the adequate performance of Purcell's Music. That the *elocutionary* element, in Purcell's singers, might have existed in a higher degree than the strictly mechanical one, is possible enough;...but then, in music of great passion and expression, the elocutionary element is the primary one...He or she whose delivery or declamation, when speaking, is beautiful, cannot, if possessed of a singing voice, but sing well" (25).

As two thirds of Purcell's solo songs were written for the theatre, I believe this theatrical, affective style, as described in Betterton's manual, applies when singing any of his songs. In his *Life* Gildon explained how he flattered Betterton into showing him his manual:

Gildon:
I have often wish'd...that some Men...acquainted with the *Graces of Action* and *Speaking*, would lay down some Rules, by which the young Beginners might direct themselves to that perfection... (p.17)

Betterton:
I shall fetch you a Manuscript on his Head, written by a Friend of mine, to which I confess I contributed all, that I was able; which if well perus'd, and thoughly weigh'd, I persuade my self our Stage would rise and not fall in Reputation." (pp.17-18)

Gilden:
On this he went into his House, and after a little Stay return'd to us with some loose Papers, which I knew to be his own hand; and being seated,...he thus began. (p.18)

Betterton:
The Stage ought to be the Seat of Passion in its various kinds, and therefore the Actor ought to be thoroughly acquainted with the whole nature of the Affections, and Habits of the Mind, or else he will never be able to express them justly in his Looks and Gestures, as well as in the tone of his Voice, and manner of utterance. (p.40)

The player therefore...ought to form in his Mind a very strong Idea of the Subject of his Passion, and then the Passion it self will not fail to follow, rise into the Eyes, and affect both the Sense and Understanding of the

Spectators with the same *Tenderness*. The Performance of this is express'd in *Shakespear's Hamlet* admirably well. and should be often consider'd by our young Players.

Hamlet:

It is not monstrous that this player here
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his whole conceit
That from her working all his visage wanned,
tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole fiction suiting,
With forms of his conceit? And all for nothing.
For Hecuba!
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her! What would he do
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculty of eyes and ears. (p70)

...And tho...what I have before quoted from *Hamlet*...do happily express the Soul and Art of Acting, [in] which *Shakespear* has drawn the compleat Art of Gesture in miniature...yet all the Directions, which he gives, relate (except one Lone) wholly to speaking.

Hamlet:

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you - trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier had spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air with your hand., thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and as I may say the whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious perriwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings...pray you avoid it...be not too tame, neither; but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance: that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. (pp. 81-82)

John Downes, in 1708(26), tells us that Betterton was instructed how to act the roles of Hamlet and Henry VIII by Sir William Davenant, who had seen the actors Taylor and Lowin, themselves coached by Shakespeare. With only two links in the chain connecting Betterton to Shakespeare, we can easily believe that Shakespearean style was being followed and recommended in Purcell's opera house.

Betterton again:

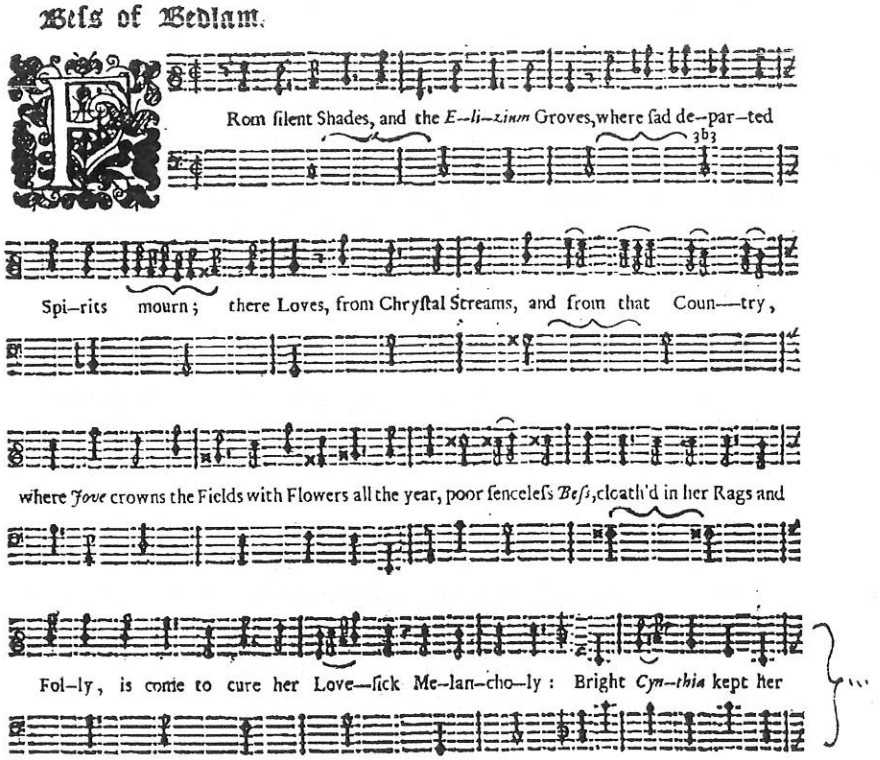
"There are, in short, two things to make the Speaker heard and understood without Difficulty; first, a very distinct and articulate Voice, and next a very strong and vigorous Pronunciation. (p.101)

Next to the Fineness of the Tone, the Variation of it is what will make the Auditors pleas'd and delighted with what they hear; you ought therefore to employ much Care and Time in learning the Art of varying the Voice, according to the Diversity of the Subjects, of the Passions you would express or excite, stronger of weaker, higher or lower, as will be most agreeable to what you say. (p102)

...for as in Music, so in Speaking, 'tis the Variety, which makes the Harmony; and as for a Fidler or Lutinist, or any other Performer in Music, to strike always the same String and Note, would be so far from tolerable Music, that it would be ridiculously insufferable and dull, so can nothing grate the ear so much, or give the Auditors a greater Disgust as a Voice still in the same Tone, without Division or Variety. (pp.102-3) This *Variation* is so founded in Nature, that should you hear two People, in a Language you do not understand, talking together with Heat, the one in *Anger*, the other in *Fear*; one in *Joy*, the other in *Sorrow*, you might easily distinguish the Passions from each other by the different Tone, and Cadence of their Voice, as well as by their Countenance and Gesture; nay, a blind Man, who could not observe Those, by the Voice would easily know the Distinction. (p.105)

..;.when you design only to make your Hearers understand you, there is no need of Heat or Motion, a clear and distinct Voice and Utterance is sufficient; because the informing the Understanding being here all the Business, the moving the Will and Passions has nothing to do." (p.110)

For example, I think the beginning of 'Bess of Bedlam' should be sung in this manner, clearly articulated but with little emotion:



Betterton again:
"When you are therefore to speak, you ought first with Care to consider the Nature of the Thing of which you are to speak, and fix a very deep impression of it in your own Mind, before you can be throughly touch'd with it your self, or able by an agreeable Passion produce your *Speech*, that will produce a violent Pronunciation; but if it arise only from a tranquill and gentle Thought, the Force and Accent of the Delivery will be gentle and calm; so that the Speaker ought first to fix the Tone and Accent of his Voice to every Passion, that affects him, be it of Joy or Sorrow, that he may by a sympathetical Force convey it to others. Thus will he best express *Love* by a gay, soft and charming Voice; his *Hate*, by a sharp, sullen, and severe one; his *Joy*, by a full flowing and brisk Voice; his *Grief*, by a sad, dull and languishing Tone...(p.113)

...I would advise all those, who would speak with Beauty and harmony in these various inflections of the Voice, often to read with Caution and Attention aloud the best and most passionate Tragedies, and those Comedies, which may afford the greatest Variety...nothing can be more serviceable to the Improvement of Action and Eloquence.. (p.124)

Tho, I fear, I may have tir'd you with all these Rules and Observations, which immediately relate to the Actors; yet I cannot conclude without saying something of our Theatrical Dancing and Musick...Under the last Head of Music, I shall presume to say something of *Opera's*, which have of late been dangerous Rivals of the Drama." (p.142)

(By "operas" Betterton meant not the semi-operas of Purcell, but operas "after the Italian manner", starting with Clayton's Arsinoë in 1705.)

Betterton again:
"...the People of Figure, who in reason might have been expected to be the Guardians and Supporters of the noblest and most rational DIVERSION, that the Wit of Man can invent, which at once instructs and transports the Soul. were the first, nay, I may say, the only People, who conspir'd its Ruin, by prodigal Subscriptions for *Squeaking Italians*, and cap'ring Monsieurs...(pp.143-4)...when scarce any Nation has given us, for all our Money, better singers than Mrs. *Tofts* and Mr. *Leveridge*, who yet being of our growth, maintain but a second or third Character among worse Voices. (pp.156-7)

Music therefore ought still, as originally was, to be mingled with the *Drama*, where it is subservient to Poetry, and comes into the Relief of the Mind, when that has been long intense on some noble Scene of passion, but ought never

to be a separate Entertainment of any Length. But tho we allow the Vocal the Preheminence of all other sorts of Music, yet we cannot without the greatest Absurdities receive even that on Subjects improper for it, or in a manner unnatural, that is, as it is offer'd to us in our [Italian] *Opera's*, which of late the Town (I mean the leading part of the Audience) has been perfectly intoxicated, and in that drunken Fit has thrown away more Thousands of Pounds for their Support, than would have furnish'd us with the best Poetry, and the best Music in the World...(p.158)

Mr. Henry Purcell['s]...Music supported a Company of young raw Actors, against the best and most favour'd of that Time [after the demise of the United Company in 1694], and transported the Town for several years together, as they do yet all true Lovers of Music. Let any Master compare *Twice ten hundred Deities*, the Music in the *Frost Scene*, several Parts of the *Indian Queen*, and twenty more pieces of *Henry Purcel*, with all the *Arrieto's, Dacapo's, Recitativo's* of *Camilla, Pyrrhus, Clotilda, &c*, and then judge which excels...the Arietto's are pretty light Airs, which tickle the Ear, but reach no father; *Purcel* moves the Passions as he pleases, nay, *Paints* in Sounds...This was *Henry Purcel's* Talent; and his MUSIC, as known as it is, and as often repeated as it has been, has to this Day the very same Effect...Purcel's [airs] being compos'd to penetrate the Soul, and make the Blood thrill through the Veins, live for ever. (pp.167-8)

These few extracts come from an acting manual of some 150 pages. Its relevance, not remarked before, for those wanting to know how to sing Purcell's songs, lies in the fact that it was written by the man who wrote texts for Purcell to set, and who acted in and directed the singers in the semi-operas. It shows that performing style then was rhetorical and affective, achieved by the performer first feeling and recreating in himself the emotion that he wished the audience to feel. Roger North put it succinctly in his manuscript note on "The Performer", written in c1700: "It is his part to observe his caracter, and the tendency of the air, so as to express his subject..." (27). In 1740, the actor Colley Cibber summarised the essence of affective communication in fewer words: "He that feels not himself the Passion he would raise, will talk to a sleeping Audience" (28).

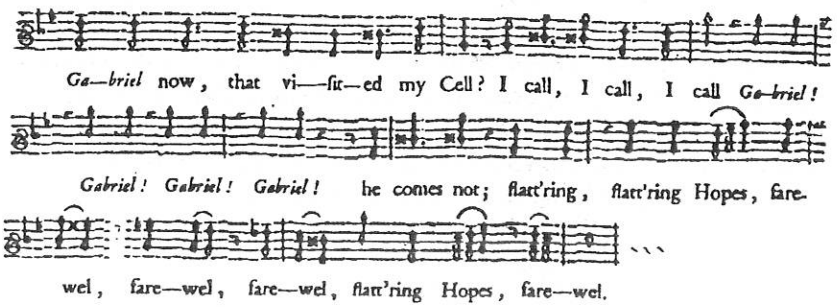
ACTING IN PURCELL'S SEMI-OPERAS

I think that Roger North, in his well-known description of Charlotte Butler singing in King Arthur, misunderstood her dramatic intention in turning her back on the audience: "I remember in Purcell's excellent opera of *King Arthur*, when Mrs Butler, in the person of Cupid, was to call up Genius, she had the liberty to turn her face to the scean, and her back to the theater. She was in no concerne for her face, but sang a recitative {What ho, thou genius of this isle!] of calling towards place where genius was to rise, and performed it admirably, even beyond any thing I ever heard upon the English stage. And I could ascribe it to nothing so much as the liberty she had of concealing her face, which she could not endure should she be so contorted as is necessary to sound well, before her gallants, or at least her envious sex" (29). I would have thought it more likely that she turned her back on the audience because producer Betterton suggested it was more realistic dramatically to face the eventual entry point of the Cold Genius, one of the upstage trapdoors.

RHETORIC IN COMPOSITION

Three years after Purcell's death, Henry Playford, the publisher of his posthumous song collection, *Orpheus Britannicus*, wrote:
"...The Author's extraordinary Talent in all sorts of Musick is sufficiently known, but he was especially admir'd for the Vocal, having a peculiar Genius to express the Energy of *English* Words, whereby he mov'd the Passions of his Auditors..." (30).

Here is one of Purcell's contemporaries saying that his composition used the same rhetorical style required of the actor; confirming that because Purcell was affective in his composition, so the singer must perform in an affective manner to express that composition and move the listener:



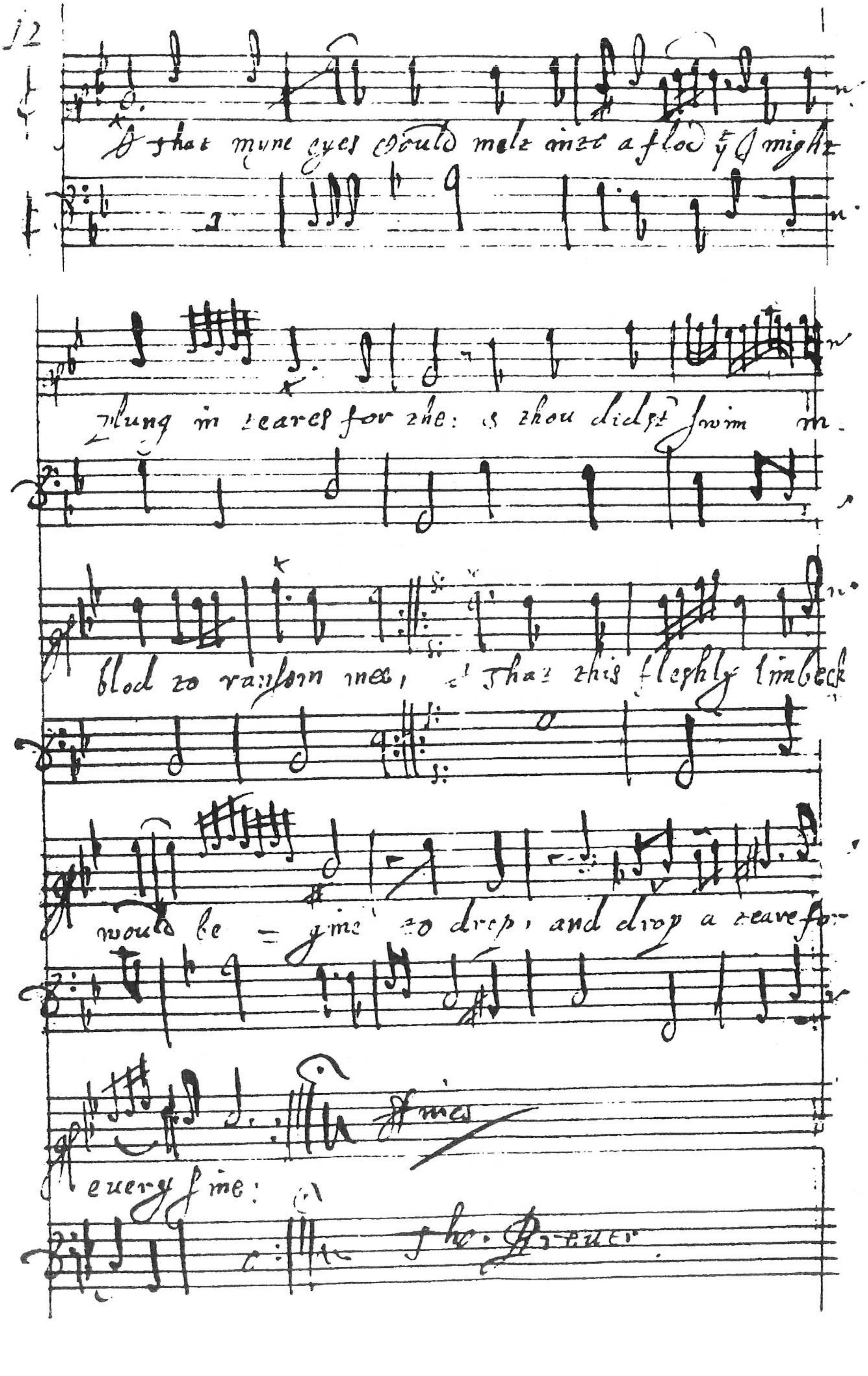
In 1710 Betterton also confirmed the effect Purcell's composition had on the listener: "*Purcel* penetrates the Heart, makes the Blood dance through your Veins, and thrill with the agreeable Violence offer'd by his Heavenly Harmony" (31).

ITALIAN SINGING STYLE AND GRACING IN ENGLAND

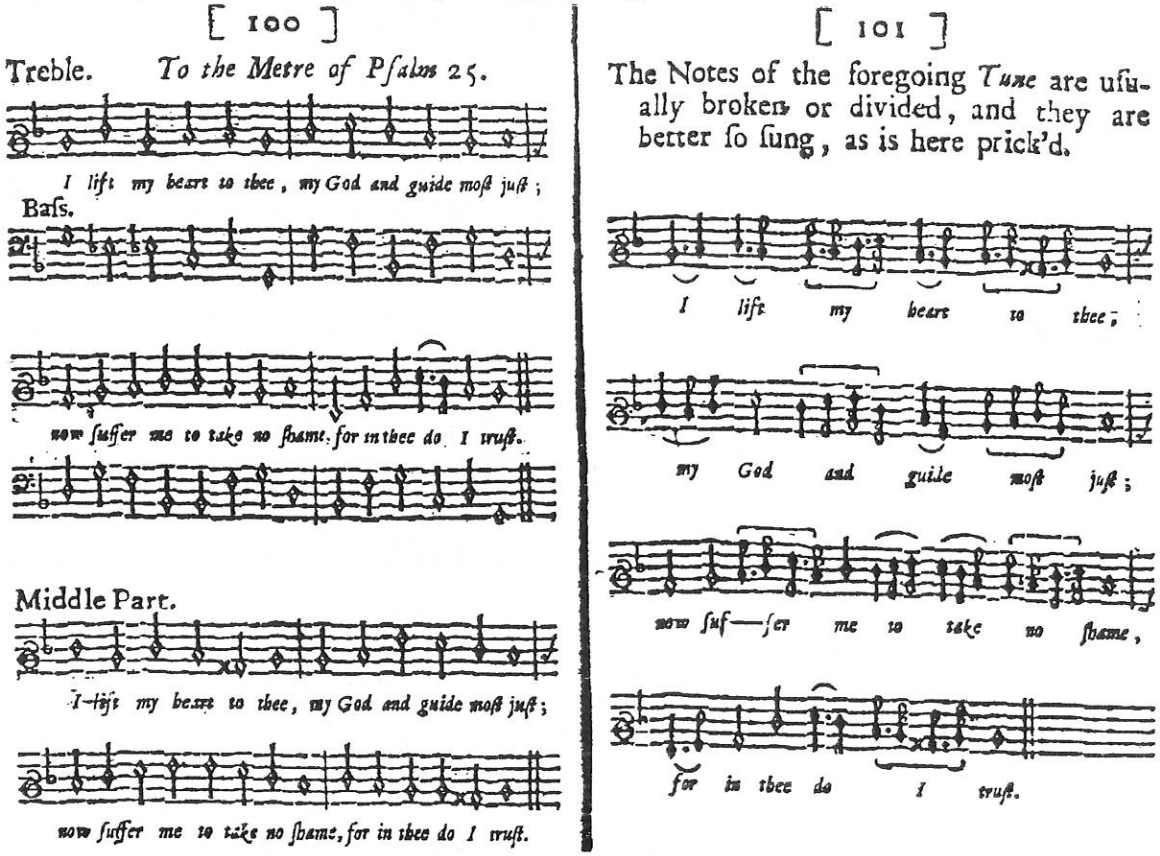
In the dedication to Dioclesian, 1691, Purcell (perhaps revising a first draft by Dryden) wrote: "Musick is yet but in its Nonage, a forward Child . . .'Tis now learning *Italian*, which is its best Master..."(32). Just as Italy taught the composer in the 1590s, so was it master of the singer throughout the century. We should now look at that Italian singing style specially noted for its gracing, in 17th-century England.

Purcell was taught to sing as a Chapel Royal chorister by Captain Cooke, noted by Evelyn in 1654 as "esteem'd the best singer after the Italian manner of any in England'(33). In 1664 Playford included in the 4th edition of his Brief Introduction to the Skill of Musick, "Directions for Singing after the Italian manner: these Graces (Trills, Grups, and Exclamations]...have been used here in England by most of ~ the Gentlemen of His Majesties Chappel above this 40 years [that is, since about 1625), and now is come to that Excellency and Perfection there, by the Skill and furtherance of that Orpheus of our time, *Henry Cook* Genttleman and Master of the Children of His Majesties Chappel . ." (34). The 'Directions' was an anonymous translation of Caccini's introduction to his Nuove Musiche of 1602, and was reprinted, with small variations, in every edition of the Brief Introduction including that revised by Purcell himself in 1694. It was omitted from the 1697 edition, presumably because by then Caccini's style was at last considered old-fashioned.

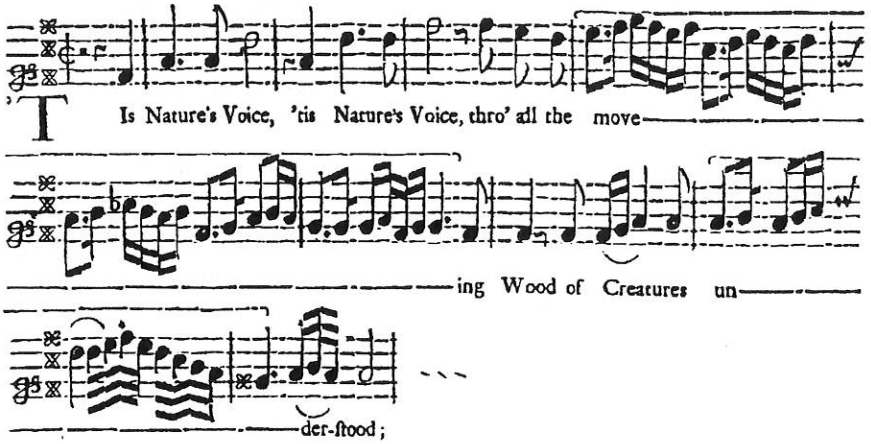
By way of illustration to the 'Directions', an English ayre by Thomas Brewer, "O that mine eyes", was appended to the 1664 edition, with only three cadential trills marked. However, two manuscript versions give some idea of how it was ornamented with divisions and graces in performance, this one here illustrated being written out c.1650-60:


12
O that myne eyes would melt into a flod y I might
plung in teares for the: as thou didst swim in
blod to ransom mee, O that this fleshly limbeck
would be = gin to drop, and drop a teare for
every time:
Tho. Brewer.

As already noted, Caccini's 'Directions' were included in every edition of Playford's *Brief Introduction* from 1664 to 1694, suggesting that both graces and divisions were to some extent still employed by Purcell's singers. This is reinforced by two other sources. First, the story recounted by Anthony Aston in the 1740s about the treble Jemmy Bowen: "He, when practising a Song set by Mr. PURCELL, some of the Music told him to grace and run a Division in such a Place. *O let him alone*, said M. Purcell; *he will grace it more naturally than you, or I, can teach him*" (35). Second, *A New and Easie Method to Learn to Sing by Book* (1686) (36), included an example, not remarked before, of a psalm tune "usually broken or divided, and they are better so sung":

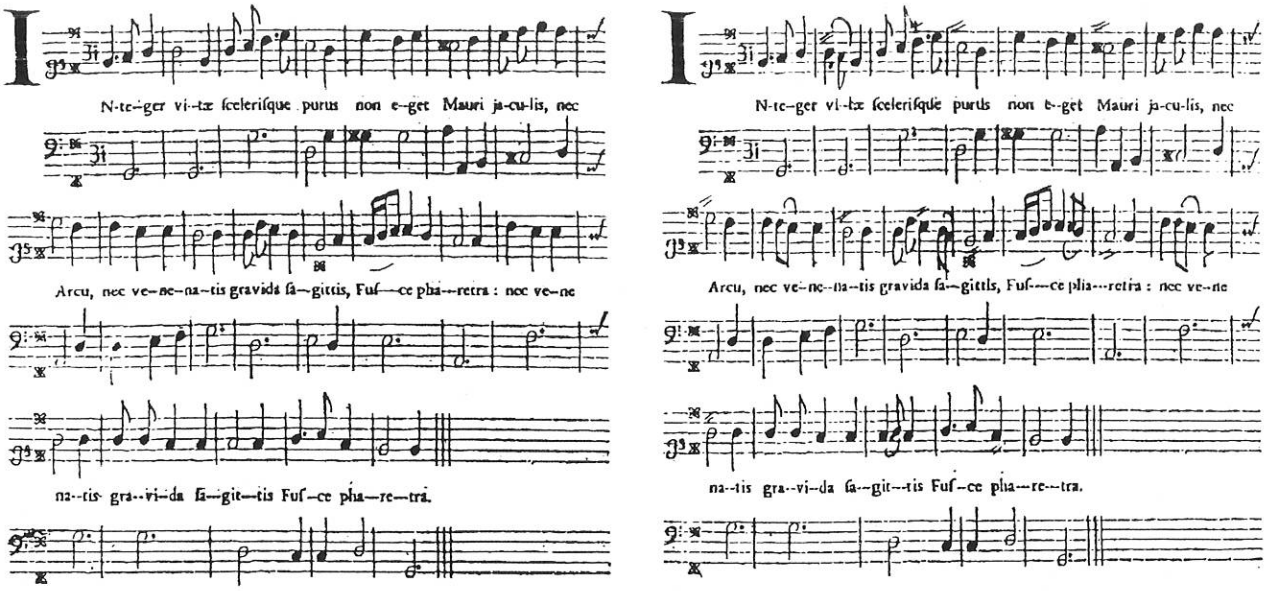


However, by the 1680s no manuscripts included divisions notated in the manner of the song by Brewer. It seems that by then composers wrote divisions out as part of the vocal line, as remarked by Hawkins in 1776: "...we see in many of Purcell's songs the graces written at length, and made a part of the composition" (37), For example, ''Tis Nature's Voice' from the 1692 St Cecilia Ode "which was sung with incredible Graces by Mr. *Purcell* himself" (38):



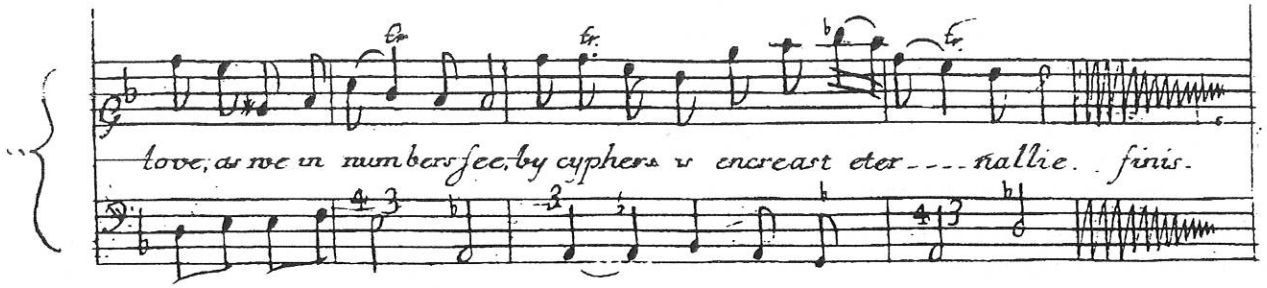
The beginning of ''Tis Nature's Voice, from *Orpheus Britannicus* (1698) p177, where it was transposed for high voice.

Most English songs composed before 1660 (such as those of the Lawes brothers) could be sung in their basic form by amateurs. Perhaps this was the style of singing heard by Pepys in 1660: "...one Hazard sung alone after the old fashion; which was very much cried up, but I did not like it" (39). It was probably the arrival of Italian professional singers, such as Pietro Reggio, in the 1660s that gave impetus to composers to write more demanding songs, which in turn required a better singing technique to perform them. The inclusion of voice divisions such as those imply a more professional voice, capable of singing sustained coloratura. I suspect that the amateur singer of the mid-century was to some extent left behind. By the 1680s, only graces, not divisions, were added by hand to some printed songs, but they were restricted to cadential shakes (trills), beats, backfalls and forefalls (appoggiaturas).



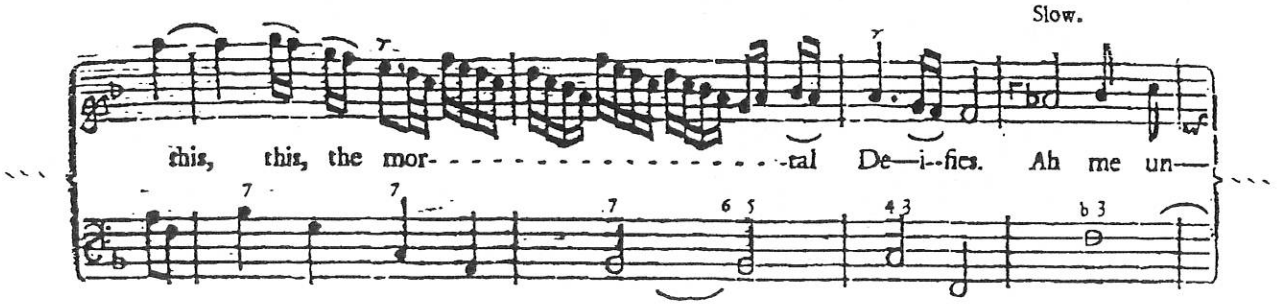
'Integer vitae', from *Vinculum Societatis*, 2nd Book (1688) p21, and a second copy with graces added by a contemporary hand.

Shakes were the only graces to be included by the engraver of Pietro Reggio's English *Songs* in 1680, and they were added to every cadence.



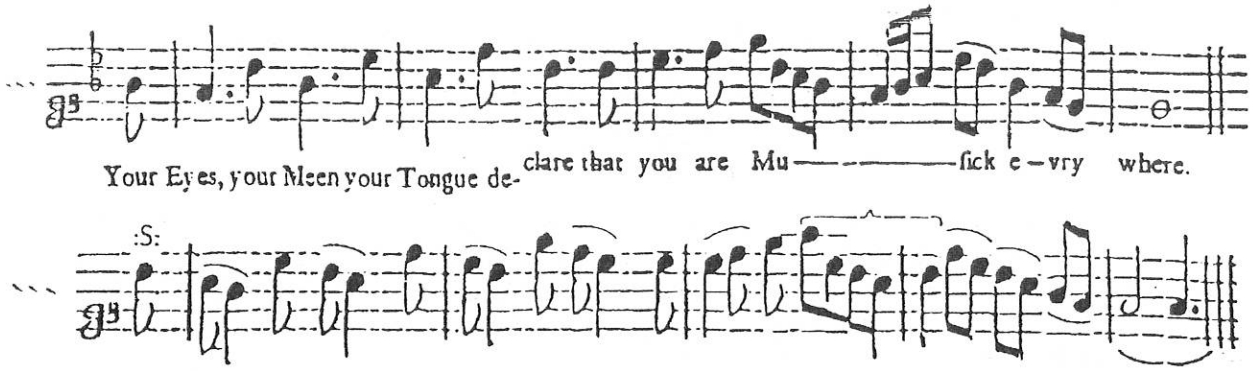
The end of 'The Encrease' from P Reggio's Songs (1680) p32.

Almost all typeset English songs of the periods omit grace signs, probably for typographical reasons, until Blow's *Amphion Anglicus*, 1700:



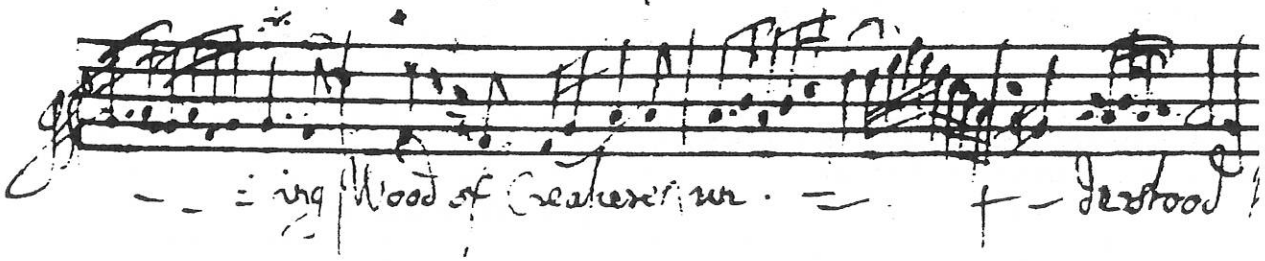
Part of 'Sappho to the Goddess of Beauty', from J Blow, *Amphion Angicus* (1700) p7

We can safely deduce from the earlier tradition, and from the shake signs added to the cadences in Reggio's and Blow's songbooks, that graces were added to all songs in the 1680s and 90s. We can see a sample of what was actually sung in 'If music be the food of love', which was printed in two versions, the first as written by Purcell, the second notated by someone hearing it sung with added appoggiaturas



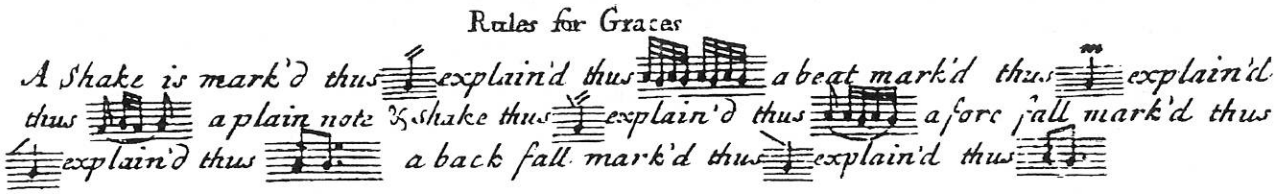
Part of 'If music be the food of love'; the setting in G minor from *The Gentleman's Journal* (June 1692) pp28-9, that in A minor from *Comes Amoris, 4th book* (1693) p15

And occasionally Purcell himself added shake signs in his manuscripts, using the same sign for both voice and violin, similar to that used by Blow in his *Amphion Anglicus*, 1700 (see above), but with the addition of three dots. Purcell added the sign mostly to dotted notes, which were frequently tied to a previous note of the same pitch, but it can also be found on a crochet. quaver or even a semiquaver, implying that shakes could be extremely brief. Purcell added them to both his church music (40) and his secular songs, as in the Gresham Songbook:



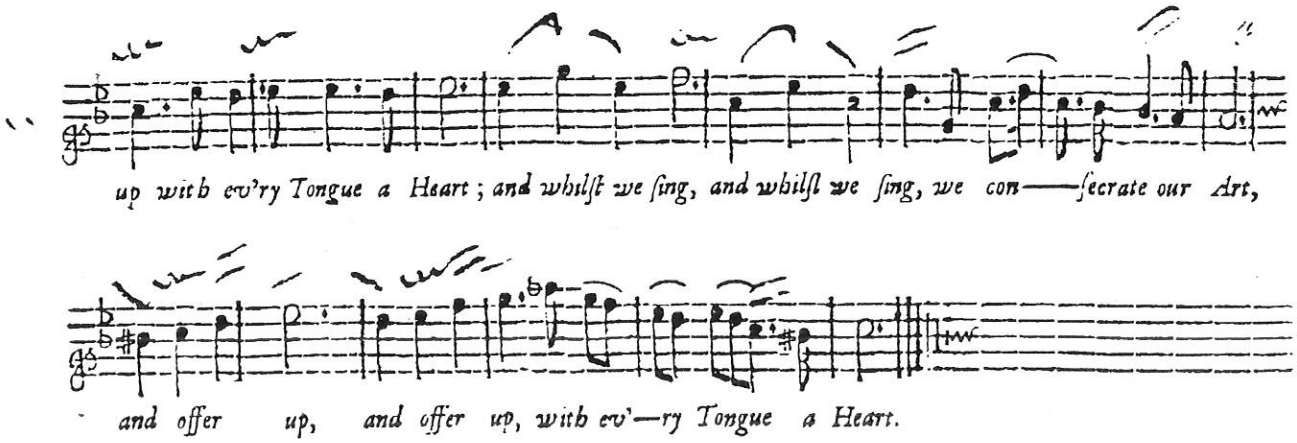
A shake written by Purcell himself near the beginning of ''Tis Nature's Voice', from the Gresham Songbook, f20v

Purcell also prepared keyboard 'Rules for Graces', "...written...at the request of a particular friend, & taken from his owne Manuscript...", which were printed posthumously in October 1697 (41):



The beginning of 'Rules for Graces', from *The Harpsichord Master* (1697) f[5]

These graces might possibly be relevant for songs as well, though we should cautiously note that Purcell used a different shake sign in his vocal manuscripts. However, some scribes did add these keyboard signs to printed songs.



The end of 'We sing to him', with grace signs added to a copy of *Harmonia Sacra Book 1 2nd ed (1703) p63.*,

TO BE CONTINUED:

The second part of Robert Spencer's article will appear in the summer edition of *Early Music Performer*. It includes *17th Century Teaching, Interpreting the Written Music* and *Pitch and Transposition.*

References

1. Further information on Purcell's singers can be found in: A Roffe, *A Musical Triad...to which is added, Old English Singers, and Mr. Bowman* (London, 1872); O Baldwin and T Wilson, 'Purcell's Stage Singers', in *Performing the Music of Henry Purcell*, ed M Burden (Oxford 1996) 105-29; A Parrott, 'Performing Purcell', in *The Purcell Companion*, ed M Burden (London 1995) 417-29, this specially for its convincing division of the late 17th century 'counterteno:' voice into high (modern falsetto) and low (modern high tenor).
2. *Roger North on Music*, ed J Wilson (London, 1959) 305-6
3. J Hawkins, A General History of...Music (London, 1776) IV, 546
4. C Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian* (London, 1740) 135-6
5. P Motteux, *The Gentleman's Journal* (London, August 1692) 26.
6. *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed E S de Beer (Oxford, 1955) IV, 547; 19 April.
7. *The Diary of John Evelyn*, IV, 270; 27 January 1682. "Aloud proclaim...Set and sung by Mr. Abell" [London, 1702], highest note d2.
8. *The Diary of John Evelyn*, V, 289, 30 May.
9. *The Diary of John Evelyn*, III, 144; 28 October.
10. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed R Latham and W Matthews (London, 1970-83) II, 142; 27 July.
11 *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, VIII, 59; 13 February.
12 *The Diary of John Evelyn*, IV, 404; 28 January.
13 *The Diary of John Evelyn*, IV, 421-1; 14 March 1685
14 Ben Jonson, *Masques* (London, 1616) 908.
15. C Crivellati, Discorso Musicali (Viterbo, 1624) 196: "Deve di più avertir, che in altra maniera si canta nel choro, e nelle chiese, che in camera, però che in quelle si canta con voce alta, e nelle camere, e nelle conversationi si canta con voce rimessa", translated by Dr Nigel Fortune.
16. *The Diary of John Evelyn, IV, 404; 28 January.*
17. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, VIII, 425; 8 September.
18. *Roger North on Music*, 215
19. J Playford, *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick* [2nd edition] {London, 16550 31.
20. J Playford, *A Brief Introduction to the Skill of Musick, 4th ed. much enlarged* (London, 1664) 19.
21. G M Berkeley, *Literary Relics* (London, 1789) 325-6; letter from William Congreave to Joseph Keally in Dublin, 10 December 1700.
22. M A Radice, 'Theater Architecture at the Time of Purcell and its Influence on his "Dramatick Operas"', in *Musical Quarterly* LXXIV/I (1990) 109, 111, 129.
23. *The Letters of John Dryden*, ed C E Ward (Durham N C, 1942) 53; 9 May 1693.
24. C Gildon, *A Life of Mr Thomas Betterton* (London, 1710).
25. A Roffe, op.cit. in note 1, 68-9, 54.
26. J Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus* (London, 1708) 21, 24.
27. *Roger North on Music*, 228
28. C Cibber, op.cit., 86.
29. *Roger North on Music*, 217-8. The implications of this passage are discussed in great detail in R Savage, 'Calling Up Genius: Purcell, Roger North, and Charlotte Butler', in *Performing the Music of Henry Purcell*, ed M Burden (Oxford, 1996) 212-31, particularly 219+.
30. H Purcell, *Orpheus Britannicus* (London, 1698) iii.
31. C Gildon, op cit., 167.
32. H. Purcell, *The Vocal and Instrumental Musick of the Prophetess. or the History of Dioclesian* (London, 1691) sig. A2-A2v.
33. *The Diary of John Evelyn*, III. 144: 28th October.
34. J. Playford, *A Brief Introduction to the Skill of Musick, 4th ed. much Enlarged* (London, 1664} 57, 76. The 1666 edition (p.58) modified this to: "...*Trills Grups, and Exclamations*...have been used to our English Ayres. above this 40 years and Taught here in England, by our late Eminent Professors of *Musick* Mr. *Nicholas Laneare*, Mr. *Henry Lawes.* Dr. *Wilson*, and Dr. *Colman* and Mr. *Walter Porter*..." As Cooke retained the post of Master of the Children until his death in 1672, it is curious, but as yet unexplained, that his name was replaced.
35. A. Aston, *A brief Supplement to Colley Cibber...his Lives of the Late Famous Actor and Actresses* [London, c1747] 18.
36. [S Pack] *A New and Easy Method to Learn to Sing by Book* (London, 1686). Dr Richard Luckett has recently established that Captain Simon Pack (1654-1701), the amateur song writer, was the author.
37. J Hawkins, op cit, IV, 524.

38. *The Gentleman's Journal* (November 1692) 18. There has been much ink spilt on whether this meant that Purcell actually sang the solo at the first performance. I read it, specially as Purcell wrote Mr Pate's name against the voice part, that Purcell only composed the graces.'
39. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, I, 19: 16 January. Thomas Hazard, who died 23 January 1666/7, was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal from 1637 and a Singingman of Westminster Abbey. Detailed discussion (originally written in 1978) of declamatory/continuo song and its ornamentation can be found in E H Jones, The Performance of English Song 1610-70 (New York, 1989).
40. British Library, Add MSS 30930 and 30931, and RM.20.h.8.
41. *The Harpsichord Master. Containing plain and easy instructions for Learners...written by...Mr H Purcell at the request of a particular friend, & taken from his owne Manuscript, never before publish't...*(London), Walsh, 1697) f[5]; advertised for sale in the Post Boy of October 21-23. The Rules were re-engraved for "the Second Edition of the Harpsichord Book, with Additions of Lessons, and Directions for Young Beginners" (advertisement of H Playford in the London Gazette, 22 November 1697, listed in *RMA Research Chronicle I* (1961) 21). No copy of this 2nd edition is known, but the Rules are included (? perhaps inserted later) in the New York Public Library copy of *A Choice Collection of Lessons for the Harpsichord... Composed by ye late Mr Henry Purcell* (London, H Playford 1696). See H Diack Johnstone, 'Ornamentation in the Keyboard Music of Henry Purcell and his Contemporaries', in *Performing the Music of Henry Purcell*, ed M Burden (Oxford, 1996) 82-4, for a different interpretation of the publishing chronology.

Luca Marenzio: *divino compositore*

by James Chater

This year we celebrate the quatercentenary of Marenzio's death, which the records unambiguously show occurred in Rome on 22 August 1599. So far so good, but then the problems start: the notice of his death (in the Parish records of San Lorenzo in Lucina) describe him as a papal singer (*Cantore di N[ostro] Sig[no]re*), even though the diaries of the papal chapel do not prove he was a member of that institution.

This is just one of the many loose ends that still surround Marenzio's biography. What exactly was his role in the northern and central Italian courts and academies that fostered him, and how exactly did he earn his living? A stable source of income had been provided by the generous and hospitable Cardinal Luigi d'Este, who lived no differently than a secular prince. After his death in 1586 Marenzio's phenomenal output at the printing presses was reduced to a trickle, which suggests that the cardinal had subsidised his prints. (Marco Bizzarini: Marenzio: *la carriera di un musicista tra Rinascimento e Controriforma*, Coccaglio, 1998.) Marenzio occupied a number of short-term or informal positions at the court of Florence and in noble Roman households, including the Vatican itself, before being packed off to Poland for a year or two (1595-8), returning to die at the Villa de Medici in Rome.

The last 13 years of Marenzio's life trace an unusual pattern of adherence to a group of interrelated Roman and Florentine patrons rather than a period of fixed employment with one in particular. Yet I think it would be wrong to consider Marenzio's toings and froings as a sign of ignominy, just because it was unusual for the time. Henry Peacham (*Compleat Gentleman*, 1622) alleges a love affair between the composer and a kinswoman of the pope (for a full discussion, see Bizzarini, *op cit*, pp 201-21). Whatever the basis of these allegations one might be tempted to give them credence if Peacham did not go on to say that Marenzio sent for the woman in question from Poland. Marenzio appears to have been in good standing with the papal court when he died, otherwise his death would not have been announced in the *avvisi di Roma*.

While the vast majority of composers (as distinct from executants) earned their living in some ecclesiastical position and would have regarded secular music as only a part of their duties, or as recreation, Marenzio concentrated mostly though not exclusively on secular music. And it was as a composer rather than as an executant or a maestro di cappella that the Spanish composer Sebastian Raval recalls him in his vignette of a musical gathering in the palace of Cardinal Montalto *Sig. Luca Marenzio divino Compositore* alongside the *Cavaliere del Liuto [Lorenzini?] universal nel mondo [...]Scipion Dentici rarissimo nel cimbalo* and *Sig. [Scipione] Stella virtuosissimo in differenti virt.* All the other figures were composers, but only Marenzio is singled out as such. Later, the poet Angelo Grillo called him an *immortal swan*, and in the 17th century he was known as the *sweetest swan of Italy*.

It is in the earliest madrigals starting with the phenomenally successful *First Book of Madrigals* (1580) that Marenzio's influence and popularity made itself immediately apparent: first in Italy, then in Germany and the Low Countries, and then with Dowland and the English madrigalists. The secret of his success was described by Vincenzo Giustiniani as *une nuova aria et gratea le orecchie*, a manner [or air] new and pleasing to the ear. The Neapolitan singing style which was then sweeping up the Italian peninsular no doubt had some effect on the formation of Marenzio's style, whether directly, or mediated through the *villanella* or *canzonetta alla napolitana* or through the more intricate singing style cultivated at Ferrara. A new lightness and transparency appears, a clear vertical ordering of sonorities that does away

with the last remnants of the opaque, densely woven "Flemish" style. Crisp, pithy rhythmic motives, soprano-bass polarity and harmonic control and planning, sometimes on an impressive scale these are the audible signs of the *nuova aria*. Naturally, they pervade not only the early madrigals, but his *villanelle* as well.

At the same time there is a graver, more melancholy side, the aspect picked up by Dowland in his songs and Lachrymae pavans. The oft-quoted "purple passages", such as the enharmonic modulations in *O voi che sospirate*, or the chromatic ascent through a ninth in *Solo e pensoso*, are just the tip of the iceberg. Almost all his early books include a few notated in the barred C time. denoting a rhythmically more uniform, sustained, motet-like pace. After the death of Cardinal Luigi Marenzio he gathered together a whole book of such pieces, and dedicated it to a famous Veronese academician, Mario Bevilacqua (*First Book for 4, 5 and 6 Voices*, 1588). We do not know what Bevilacqua made of it, but the book met with little commercial success. But as his choice of texts and dedication make clear, he was seeking new directions, a quest that continued for several years.

One of the most exciting phases of my Marenzio research was to discover the startling beauty and audacity of these later madrigals, at a time (the 1970s) when very few of them were available in a modern editions. Could he really have meant this or that bold modulation? surely no one would have thought of such-and-such a dissonance before Monteverdi? and so on. The already mentioned 1588 book may have announced a change, but the form this eventually took was very different from the style adopted in the 1588 book. Starting with the *Sixth Book of Madrigals for Five Voices* (1594), and especially in the two subsequent five-voice books of 1595 and 1598, Marenzio develops a declamatory style led by a soprano part whose abrupt leaps and fluctuations in tessitura have a clear expressive function and are designed to depict emotions realistically. Marenzio not only *draws* emotions and concepts, as he had already done with such bravura in his earlier madrigals, but he allows them to *speak* as well. Exclamations and rhetorical questions are always highlighted, as though Marenzio had been paying attention to the way actors and solo singers declaimed their lines. This style is applied to passages from Guarini's famous play *Il pastor fido*, to which Marenzio had frequent recourse, starting a vogue among composers.

There is a close coincidence of aims between this style and that of *recitar cantando*. Alfred Einstein knew Marenzio's 1590s madrigals well, labelling them *pre-monodic*. But 50 years ago, less was known about the ubiquity of monodic practice in 16th-century Italy, and there was an unspoken tendency to assume that monody had been "invented" by Caccini and the Florentines. with a little help from Cavalieri. However in the light of what we know now, Marenzio's later madrigals are perhaps best described as post-monodic. In his recently published monograph (*Roman Monody, Cantata, and Opera from the Circles around Cardinal Montalto*, Oxford, 1997, pp. 247-55) John Hill has concluded that one of Marenzio's 1594 *Pastor fido* settings, *Anima cruda*, is based on an anonymous monodic setting of the same lines.

How many other of Marenzio's madrigals will turn out to based on monodies is unclear and perhaps to pose the question is a little beside the point. And this is surely that monodic practice was far more a part of Marenzio's world, the boundaries between polyphony and monody more blurred, than the written sources by themselves would suggest. If Venetian publishers like Gardano and Amadino preferred the part-book format, no doubt they did so for solidly commercial reasons: it is far easier to execute a solo-voice performance from a single part-book than it is for five singers to extrapolate polyphonic lines from a monodic print or a tablature.

This has clear implications for those of us who wish to perform Marenzio's madrigals today. The uniformly polyphonic format of Marenzio's madrigals should not deter us from exploring ways of combining voices and instruments: performances for one, two or three upper voices with instrumental accompaniment can make a pleasant change from using all five voices, and solo performance - in the light of what I have said before - is definitely to be encouraged. Many of the 1580s madrigals exploit echo effects and part-crossing between two high soprano parts, and could be performed by two sopranos with instrumental accompaniment. But beware: in many madrigals, one or more of the voices tend to fall silent for long periods, and thus do not sing the complete text. If you love literature and this bothers you, check the individual voices for textual omissions before deciding on a mode of performance or cultivate a range of 22 notes, the range with which Giustiniani credited the bass Ercole Pallantrotti! This problem does not occur in the three-voice *villanelle*, which can easily be performed by one, two or three voices with or without instruments. For the more Neapolitan-minded, guitars are a good alternative to lutes or harpsichord in the villanelle. The polychoral pieces that Marenzio often placed at the end of a book (echo pieces, wedding epithalamia, intermedii) were probably performed with a proportionately larger number of instruments: lutes, theorboes, harps, harpsichords, organs etc. The specifications for the Florentine Intermedii of 1589 (in which Marenzio took part) would provide clues.

Finally, Marenzio's madrigals can be deceptively difficult to sing in tune. Chromatic step degrees are one thing, but degree alteration can be difficult even without direct chromaticisms, and cycles of fifths can play an important structural role, generating distant modulations within a short space of time. All the more reason to combine voices with instruments, at least to start with. Once the harmonic intricacies have been mastered, a cappella performance becomes a more realistic option, though by that time you may prefer to combine with instruments. Alternatively, the voices and

instruments could each "do their own thing": for instance, viol consorts could tackle the textless transcriptions which survive in one English manuscript (British Library RM24 d2). Marenzio may have been a literary composer first, but his music has survived transalpinisation and has appealed to generations of English with little or no knowledge of the texts he set.

Those who would like to sample Marenzio in modern readily accessible editions may start with:

Stainer & Bell, Invitation to Madrigals vol 12 & 13
London Pro Musica TM20
Alfreston Music, Florentine Intermedii for large scale works.

IN BRIEF . . .

Here are the contents of recent issues of early music periodicals, with brief summaries of the contents of some articles with particular bearing on perfomance practice issues.

***American Musicological Society, Journal of,* vol 51 no 2**

Yearsley, David, 'Alchemy and Counterpoint in an Age of Reason'
Barnett, Gregory, 'Modal Theory, Church Keys, and the Sonata at the End of the Seventeenth Century'

***Continuo*, vol. 22, no. 4**

[Interviews with Jaap Schroder, Ron and Ruth Moir, profile of Stefan Lundgren, London musical life, and CD reviews]

***Continuo*, vol. 22, no. 5**

William Bauer, 'Stalking cantatas of the Mexican Baroque'
Robert Karpiak, 'Culture of the Keyborad in 18th Century Russia'
Nancy Metzger, 'The Seven Wonders of the World of Baroque Music III [the harpsichord]
[CD reviews]

***Early Music*, XXVI/4, Nov. 1998**

[Issue dedicated to the librettist Metastasio, 1698–1782]

Reinhard Strohm, 'Dramatic dualities: Metastasio and the tradition of the opera pair'
Wendy Hiller, 'Reforming Achilles: gender, opera seria and the rhetoric of the enlightened hero'
Roger Savage, 'Staging an opera: letters from the Cesarian poet'
Don Neville, 'Opera or oratorio? Metastasio sacred *opere serie*'
Michael Burden, '"Twittering and trilling": Swedish reaction to Metastasio'
Jose-Maximo Leza, 'Metastasio on the Spanish stage: operatic adaptations in the public theatres of Madrid in the 1730s'
Roger Savage, 'A dynastic marriage celebrated'
Andrew Parrott, 'Bach's chorus: beyond reasonable doubt;
book reviews of:
John Harley, *William Byrd, Gentleman of the Chapel Royal* (Scolar Press, 1997)
Janice Dockendorff Boland, *Method for the one-keyed flute, Baroque and Classical* (University of California Press, 1998)
Ed. Albert Dunning, *Intorno a Locatelli: studi in occasione del tricentenario della nascita di Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695-1764)* (Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1995)
Ed. Stanley Sadie, *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (Macmillan, 1998)
Bach: St Matthew Passion, BWV247, recitatives and turbae by Reinhard Keiser: reconstruction, edition and vocal score by AH Gomme (Barenreiter, 1997)
Georg Benda, 17 sonatas for keyboard, ed. Christopher Hogwood (OUP, 1997)
Georg Benda, 35 sonatinas for keyboard, ed. Timothy Roberts (OUP, 1997)
Dietrich Buxtehude, Samtliche Orgelwerke, vols 1 and 2, ed. Klaus Beckman (Breitkopf and Hartel, 1997)

***Early Music*, XXVII/1, Feb. 1999**

Eleonora M. Beck, 'Marchetto da Padova and Giotto's Scrovegni Chapel frescoes'
Iain Fenlon, 'Giaches de Wert at Novellara'
Daniel Heartz, '*The Beggar's Opera* and *opera comique en vaudevilles*'
Jean Grundy Fanelli, 'A sweet bird of youth, Caffarelli in Pistoia'
Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, 'Heidegger and the management of the Haymarket Opera 1713–17'
Patricia Howard, 'Guadagni in the dock: a crisis in the career of a castrato'
Janet K Page, 'Music and the royal procession in Maria Theresa's Vienna'
book reviews of:
Fabrice Fitch, *Johannes Ockeghem: Masses and Models* (Paris: Honor Champion, 1997)
Eugene Casjen Cramer, *Tomas Luis de Victoria: a guide to research,* (New York and London, Garland, 1998)
David Ledbetter, *The new Bach reader: a life of Johann Sebastian Bach in letters and documents,* ed. H T David and A Mendel (New York and London, WW Norton, 1998)
Valerie Walden, *One hundred years of violincello: a history of technique and performance practice, 1740-1840* (CUP, 1998)
Trouvère lyrics with melodies: complete comparative edition, vols 1-15, ed. H Tischler (Neuhausen: AIM/Hanssler, 1997)
John Field, *Nocturnes and related pieces* ed R Langley, MB vol 71 (London: Stainer and Bell, 1997)

***Early Music Review* 48, March 1999**

Reviews: Montagu, Jeremy & Gwen 'Minstrels & Angels: Carvings of Musicians in Medieval English Churches...'
Divine Harmony: Music and Icons of Ancient Russia

Venice: Music and painting from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Century
James Haar, 'The Science and Art of Renaissance Music
Ashbee, Andrew and Lasocki, David, assisted by Holman, Peter and Kisby, Fiona, 'A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians 1485-1714
Gibbons, Orlando, 'Werke fur Orgel'
Blow, John 'Complete Harpsichord Music' (Musica Brittanica lxxiii)
Ginger, John, ed 'Handel's Trumpeter: The Diary of John Grano'
Braughli, Bernard, 'The Clavichord'
Sutcliffe, W Dean, ed, 'Haydn Studies'
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***Viola da Gamba Society of Great Britain Newsletter* no. 104, Jan 1999**

[Report of November meeting, and visit to Aquila string company]
book reviews of: William Byrd, *Pavans and Galliards in five parts*, ed. R Rastall (four-fifteen press, 1998)
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The Feb/March 1999 issue of *Early Music Today* contains a very clear and succint article on the much debated subject of early pitch, entitled 'Touching Pitch' by Nicholas Mitchell. He argues that there was a fixed pitch standard in Mediaeval and Renaissance. Instruments were traded all over Europe: Ruckers harpsichords, woodwind from Venice, violins from Brescia, brass instruments from Nuremberg, lutes from Venice and Cologne. Countless pictures show instruments from different families in mixed consorts; and travelling musicians must often have played together; at the Bavarian royal wedding of 1568 over 100 musicians played together, many of these from the retinues of noble wedding guests. All this would simply have been impossible without a universal pitch standard. So what was the pitch standard? Surviving fixed pitch instruments show it was about a semitone above modern pitch. Within this standard, there were certain common transposition conventions. A high consort of recorders (descant in G, two tenors in C and bass in F) corresponds to the vocal ranges of SATB singers, (singing from the lower family of clefs C1, C3, C4 and F4), with top notes of f', b' flat, and e' flat. In turn, Praetorius shows a high pitched family of viols, with the same nomenclature, top notes and relational pitches (fifths apart) as this high recorder consort. The lowest of these is labelled 'klein Bass'. A lower pitched consort would play a fourth lower than this (i.e. a major third below modern pitch). Surviving organs and harpsichords seem to fit this argument, generally built for the lower pitch: Schlick (1511), Bermudo (1555) and some English specifications refer to a ten-foot bottom C organ pipe. Now, a modern C organ pipe is an eight-foot pipe; a ten foot pipe would produce a (modern) A flat - i.e. a major third below modern pitch, the old low pitch. To muddy the waters, however, organs were often made to sound a *fifth* above the low pitch (a tone above the higher pitch; so a minor third above modern written pitch). To make like easier, Ruckers made double manual harpsichords, with one keyboard at the low pitch, the other a fifth higher (or a fourth lower) at the higher organ pitch. To summarise, a chord of C major would come out in (modern) D flat major on (high pitch) recorders, A flat major on the harpsichord (or low pitched viols) and E flat major at the higher organ pitch! Clearly a lot of transposition was necessary, but a musical training based on reading music by intervals, simple key signatures and moveable clefs must have helped. Philip Pickett has commissioned a set of instruments based on this argument, and finds they work extremely well from a musical point of view; many tessitura and balance problems seem to disappear.

The February issue of *Early Music Review* includes, under the amusing title 'silly pluckers' a defence by Peter Holman of the use of plucked instruments in the continuo section of many late 17th and some early 18th century operas. Lully may have used two harpsichords, two theorboes and many lutes in his operas; Corelli used as many as five archlutes for a church concert in 1689; Georg Muffat wrote in his *Ausserlesene Instrumental Music* (1701): 'you should embellish the bass part of the full [orchestra] chorus with the accompaniment of several harpsichords, theorboes and harps . . .'; Handel was using two harpsichords and a theorbo for the 1733 opera season; Quantz was still recommending two harpsichords and a theorbo for a theatre orchestra in 1752. The fashion for using a single harpsichord seemingly came in in the early 18th century: Roger North wrote in 1720: 'Hence, away all yee lutes and guitars, and make room for the fair consort basses'. The guitar meanwhile, was still highly fashionable, and in the theatre was associated with Spanish and North African scenes, and the Chaconne, for example Purcell's 'Dance Gittars Chacony' in *Dido and Aeneas* and the 1674 court masque *Calisto* which seems to have included four guitarists playing chaconnes, with castanet accompaniment. Anthony Rowland-Jones points out that there is a copperplate engraving of the orchestra playing for Antonio Lotti's *Teofane* in the Dresden opera house in 1713, which clearly shows two theorboes (or archlutes?) in the pit - in fact S L Weiss would have been one of the players on that occasion.