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# **Nicola Vicentinos «Musica praticabile»**

Internationales Symposium der Schola Cantorum Basiliensis

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## **Abstracts**

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**Luigi Collarile** (Schola Cantorum Basiliensis)

### **Nicola Vicentino in Venice. New Perspectives**

Among the many obscure points in Vicentino's biography, one relevant aspect concerns his relationship with Venice. He lived in the city before 1546, receiving instruction from the celebrated Adrian Willaert, at that time master of the ducal chapel of St Mark's. After some years spent in Rome and Ferrara, where in 1555 he published his treatise, Vicentino returned to Venice probably following his patron, Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, who supervised in 1556 the celebrations in honour of Bona Sforza, Queen of Poland. In 1560, Vicentino was employed by the parish church of St Pantaleone as music master. In this period, he supervised the construction of his Arciorgano, built by the renowned organ builder Vincenzo Colombi. New investigations shed light on Vicentino's intellectual network, as well as on his connections with important circles of the city and emblematic figures of the Venetian music scene, such as Gioseffo Zarlino.

**Luigi Collarile** (Basel), **David Gallagher** (London)

### **Exploring Vicentino's *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* (Rome 1555): Towards a Material History**

The publication of Nicola Vicentino's *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica*, printed in Rome in 1555, was the result of a complex process of production. On the basis of a careful bibliographical analysis of the currently identified copies of the print, this contribution aims to offer new perspectives on the material history of the edition and the development of the text it transmits. The reconstruction of the various stages of the production process has made it possible to clarify various peculiarities of the text, while also providing valuable information regarding the preparatory manuscript, some of which Vicentino probably drafted during the print run. The census of errors corrected during or after the printing stage has highlighted the accurate revision of the printed copies, and affords a valuable starting point for the preparation of the new critical edition of Vicentino's treatise.

**Catherine Deutsch** (Metz)

### **Nicola Vicentino and Maddalena Casulana: The Intertwined Paths of Two Vicentine Musicians**

In this paper, I will examine the links between Maddalena Casulana and Nicola Vicentino, two Vicentine musicians whose paths crossed on numerous occasions between the 1550s and the early 1570s. After outlining the parallels in their lives and the points of intersection between their networks, I will show that some of Casulana's madrigals bear many similarities to Vicentino's style: an experimental use of

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chromaticism; a sometimes very free conception of the modal framework; a singular treatment of certain kinds of dissonance. Finally, I will hypothesise that Casulana may have been one of Vicentino's pupils, and that the latter may have introduced her to counterpoint.

**Daniele Filippi** (Turin)

### **Vicentino in a City with Two Souls: Sacred and Secular Music Cultures in 16th-Century Milan**

After reconstructing the circumstances that brought Vicentino to Milan in the mid 1560s (already elucidated in a seminal study by Davide Daolmi), I will offer a brief retrospective on music in Milan in the decades from Franchinus Gaffurius's death (1522) to Vicentino's arrival. The city that welcomed him had two souls: there was the sacred city shaped by Carlo Borromeo's ecclesiastical policies and reforms, on the one hand, and the secular one, embodied by such unconventional groups as G.P. Lomazzo's Facchini della Val di Blenio, on the other. As I will show, Lomazzo, a painter, poet, and theorist of art, who made a portrait of Vicentino and praised him in several of his writings, is a key link between Vicentino and a complex network of Milanese artists, musicians, and patrons of the liberal arts. Finally, I will briefly discuss Vicentino's activity as a teacher in a city with a thriving instrumental scene, in which advanced experiments in instrument making were not uncommon.

**Johannes Keller** (Basel) & **Vicente Parrilla** (Leuven)

### **Writing the Unwritable: A Comparison of Lusitano's and Vicentino's Treatises**

In this friendly 'dispute', Johannes Keller and Vicente Parrilla will explore similarities and differences between Lusitano's manuscript source (F-Pn Esp. 219) and Vicentino's treatise *L'antica musica ridotta alla prattica moderna* (Rome 1555). Both Renaissance authors provide a glimpse into otherwise undocumented aspects of sixteenth-century polyphonic practice. Vicentino and Lusitano were seeking a specific type of musical complexity yet departing from different motivations and producing diverse outcomes. Vicentino's complexity enhances musical expressivity by charting significantly more pitches and interval sizes than what was considered 'normal' at the time. Lusitano's endeavours result in an effort to systematically document and ensure the transmission of counterpoint techniques that go way beyond what present-day specialised musicians are able to do.

Both authors operate within a space of musical practice that cannot be fully covered by musical notation or written language. Lusitano's teachings require a mental process to apply and examine the multiple possibilities of counterpoint. Vicentino's pitch space can only be perceived, processed, and applied through the means of his Archicembalo or Arciorgano. Both practices enable the reader to create new music. Their primary purpose is not to provide tools for analysis or assessment of existing music but to

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establish a framework for conceiving and executing (new) polyphony. While Lusitano mainly addresses improvised music, Vicentino clearly works with composed music. The productive confrontation of Vicentino's and Lusitano's approaches shows the remarkable diversity of their musical realities. While a comparison between these two extraordinary minds shows that there are certain parallels between both authors, their inherent incompatibility also soon becomes evident.

**Martin Kirnbauer** (Basel)

### **Revisiting Nicola Vicentino and his *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* (Rome 1555)**

The treatise *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* by Nicola Vicentino (1510–1577), published in Rome in 1555, has a checkered reputation: on the one hand, the publication and its author are mentioned in all overviews of Renaissance music history; on the other, Claude Palisca's claim of 1996 is still true: namely, that it is "one of the most famous books in the history of music theory and one of the least read". A digital edition with translations, commentary and practical exploration, which is currently being developed within the framework of the previous SNSF project "Vicentino21", aims to change this. The contribution attempts to contextualize the author and his work and to describe the relationship of the individual contributions to the Basel symposium as a whole. The title of the symposium, "Musica pratticabile", points to the goal of the new understanding of the treatise, which is supported by recent research.

**Stefano Lorenzetti** (Conservatorio di Musica di Vicenza)

### **The Madrigal as a Multifaceted Object: Vicentino's Fifth Book of Madrigals and His Directions on Performance Practice**

What is a madrigal? The question might seem as absurd as the answer is obvious, if we consider the madrigal a kind of 'textual object' consigned to memory preferably through print. If, on the other hand, we consider the madrigal an 'open object' of which we attempt to investigate the multiple facets of its use, the question may, perhaps, acquire its own meaning.

Investigating the uses of the madrigal means investigating the contexts and functions of the musical event, as well as the modes of performance practice in which the genre is involved. Vicentino's Fifth book of madrigals (Milan 1572), for its distinguishing features, as well as the suggestive indications on performance praxis that we find in his theoretical treatise, can help us understand how what the written text can normalise is not so much a static form as a dynamic form that constitutes itself as a 'chemical reagent' of a possible transformation of musical matter in the sign of action. The title of a famous book by John Austin, who revolutionised the philosophy of language, read thus: How to do things with words. In that book, Austin highlighted the existence of performative utterances, that instead of saying

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something or affirming the truth or falsity of something, do something. Perhaps, we should rethink the madrigal essentially as an act, as something that, first of all, is done. In this sense, a paraphrase, of the title of Austin's book, could help to focus on the true nature on the genre: How to do things with notes.

## **Marco Mangani** (Florenz)

### **Nicola Vicentino and the Question of Language in 16th-Century Italy: The Preface "alli lettori"**

Among the many thematic digressions contained in Vicentino's treatise, there is one that deserves particular attention: the preface "to the readers" that immediately follows the dedication to the cardinal of Ferrara. This preface, putting the musical subject matter to the side, is entirely focused on the treatise's linguistic format, and offers a list of word variants, mixing purely orthographic issues with questions of phonetic, morphological and even lexical relevance: a list too long to have been drawn up merely as an example.

This paper examines Vicentino's arguments against the backdrop of a linguistic debate that also saw Gian Giorgio Trissino involved, and compares them with Gioseffo Zarlino's orthographic conduct.

## **Giordano Mastrocola** (Toulouse)

### **After the Disputa: The Last Notes in Lusitano's *Trattato grande di musica pratica***

Vicentino and Lusitano, after the Roman dispute, represent two irreconcilable poles: that of innovation and that of conservatism. But the notes added by Lusitano to his 'Great treatise', demonstrate the penetration of "musica pratticabile" into the theoretical edifice of the tradition.

## **Jessie Ann Owens** (Davis, CA)

### **Thinking about Cadences: Vicentino, Tigrini, Morley**

My paper explores Vicentino's place in sixteenth-century theoretical discussions of cadence. I compare his approach to Zarlino's, considering the scope and organization of the presentation as well as terminology. I am particularly interested in the ways that later writers, especially Orazio Tigrini (1588) and Thomas Morley (1597), directly or indirectly follow Vicentino's teachings. I will also explore changes in the roles played by the structural voices.

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## **Elam Rotem** (Basel)

### **‘Cosa nuova et molto difficile’ – Chromatic and Enharmonic Music in the Lamentations of Emilio de’ Cavalieri**

In a letter from Emilio de’ Cavalieri to Luzzasco Luzzaschi (1592), Cavalieri referred to an organ that divided the tone into ten parts. While we cannot seem to find such a division in Cavalieri’s surviving music, we can identify what appears to be a division of the tone into five parts, in a passage that Cavalieri annotated with the word “henarmonic”. This striking “henarmonic” section is found in a manuscript containing Lamentation settings by Cavalieri, which also includes the earliest known church monodies for voice and basso continuo. In this presentation, this unique musical excerpt will be discussed and demonstrated with the assistance of a singer accompanied by a special digitized organ. In addition, a variety of innovative aspects of Cavalieri’s oeuvre will be examined, particularly in the areas of accompanied monody, basso continuo, tuning, and counterpoint.

## **Markus Roth** (Essen)

### **Bella varietà. Überlegungen zu Vicentinos Konsonanztechnik**

Mein Beitrag für das Basler Vicentino-Symposium setzt bei der gängigen Vorstellung einer «three-level hierarchy» zwischen den Tongeschlechtern (Berger 1976) an und versucht, ergänzend einige Aspekte der Eigengesetzlichkeit chromatischer und enharmonischer Satz- bzw. Klangtechnik aufzuzeigen, die bei Vicentino eigentlich in erster Linie eine Konsonanztechnik ist. Ausgehend von dieser Überlegung soll Vicentinos *L'antica musica* auf besondere Hinweise zur Klanggestaltung befragt und u. a. über den Unterschied zwischen Fortschreitung und ›Färbung‹ und über die Registrierung imperfekter Konsonanzen in chromatischen und enharmonischen Kontexten nachgedacht werden.

## **Anne Smith** (Zürich)

### **Nicola Vicentino vs. Ghisilino Danckerts OR The Heresy of the Major Semitone**

Our slow reading and discussion of Vicentino’s treatise, together with my experience with the Archicembalo, when joined with a close examination of Danckerts’ text, has led me to a new perspective on the dispute, namely that it primarily concerned the size of the semitone not only in the diatonic genus, but also in the general musical practice of the time. With the increasing use of thirds and sixths in the late 14th and early 15th centuries, tuning in vocal ensembles most likely shifted towards just intonation. This in turn necessitated a shift towards meantone tuning on the part of keyboard players when they accompanied singers.

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What is difficult to comprehend today, is how this practical fact was rejected in theory for more than a hundred years because it called the principles of Boethius and Guido into question, principles that were upheld by the Catholic Church, whereas it was frequently silently accepted in the actual practice. The specific forms of this rejection on the part of Danckerts will be addressed in this presentation, and investigated in relation to the practice exemplified by Vicentino.

**Florian Vogt** (Basel), **Anne Smith** (Zürich), **Johannes Keller** (Basel)

### **John Hothby as Vicentino's Forerunner – Reflections on Possible Points of Contact, Overlaps and Discontinuities**

John Hothby (ca. 1430–1487) is seen as one of the most important 15th-century theorists. His work has been disseminated in numerous texts on diverse theoretical and practical subjects; in these he shows not only Hothby's awareness of tradition, but also his endeavor to describe matters precisely and to proceed innovatively. One of Hothby's important interests lay in the correct solmization and intonation of chromatic notes, for which he developed a progressive system, based on his concept of arranging the notes of the tonal system in diverse ordines. He also possessed an instrument with additional red keys, with which he could aurally demonstrate the enharmonic notes that lay outside of his solmization system, notes that were used, for example, when singing plainchant.

Based on such achievements, Hothby is often mentioned today as a like-minded precursor of Vicentino – although Vicentino was born 25 years after Hothby's death – well knowing that they belonged to completely different generations, and that in addition, the Pythagorean basis for the tonal system was progressively undermined by the meantone practice essential for Vicentino during the course of the 15th century. In our presentation we will pursue some of the points of contact between Hothby and Vicentino: In which aspects and in what manner can intellectual and explicit connections be established? Where can continuity and lack thereof be ascertained?

**Mara Winter** (Basel)

### **Exploring Historical Color Theories in Music**

In this paper I will compare past approaches to the division of the musical octave and its relationship to the mixing of complex colors. Relating color theory to complex interval relationships in contemporary microtonal music, I will explain how I have incorporated expressive tuning practices into my compositions.

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**Rolf Wissmann** (Basel)

**From the Source to the Digital Edition**

The presentation will give an insight into the tools and workflows used to create a digital edition of Nicola Vicentino's treatise *L'antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* as part of Vicentino21. A demo version of the developed web application will also be shown.