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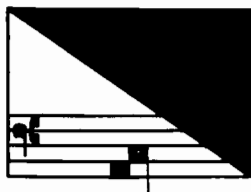
39

VINCENZO GALILEI

FRONIMO

1584

Translated and edited
by
CAROL MACCLINTOCK



AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MUSICOLOGY
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FOREWORD

Vincenzo Galilei's treatise on intabulation and playing the lute – FRONIMO – first appeared in 1568. It must surely have been a welcome work, for Galilei was a lutenist of considerable reputation as well as a theorist and composer. The 1568 edition, published by the Venetian printer Girolamo Scotto, was entitled *FRONIMO DIALOGO di Vincentio Galilei Fiorentino, Nel quale si contengono le vere, Et necessarie regole del Intavolare la Musica nel Liuto*. Galilei dedicated it to Duke William of Bavaria, signing himself as “humilissimo et devotissimo Servitor.” It is not known if Galilei had actually served in that famous Bavarian center of music before FRONIMO's publication, but it has been established that he was indeed there in the years 1578 and 1579.

It was not until 1584, almost twenty years later, that Galilei again brought out his FRONIMO, “enriched by the Author, and adorned with new ideas and examples.” This version was also published in Venice by “the Heir of Girolamo Scotto,” but it was dedicated to a different patron – Jacopo Corsi, the nobleman in whose palace opera had its birth. One may wonder why so much time elapsed between the two editions; the reason is clear, however, when one considers Galilei's activities and output during those years: he was teaching music, writing a *Compendio nella Theorica della Musica* (c. 1570) and his *Dialogo della musica antica e moderna*, published in 1581, composing and publishing a book of madrigals à 4 and 5 (1574), and also pursuing studies on ancient Greek music with the renowned scholar Girolamo Mei.¹ At the same time he was immersed in investigations of dissonance and consonance in relation to expression of the text (essentially the principles of the *seconda prattica*, though not so called by Galilei.)²

FRONIMO is a didactic work unique in the lute literature of the sixteenth century. Like Thomas Morley's *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Music* of 1597, the dialogue is carried on between the pupil Eumatius and the master, Fronimo (i. e. Galilei). The eager scholar asks questions of Fronimo and receives not only the answers he seeks but also a great amount of additional information. Unlike the printed lutebooks which appeared in increasing numbers throughout

¹ C. Palisca, “Girolamo Mei, Mentor to the Florentine Camerata,” MQ (XL), 1954.

C. Palisca, *Girolamo Mei (1519–1594), Letters on Ancient and Modern Music to V. Galilei and Giovanni Bardi. The original text edited and annotated, with an extensive Introduction in English*. MSD 3. (American Institute of Musicology, n. d. Revised edition 1977)

² C. Palisca, “Vincenzo Galilei's Counterpoint Treatise: a Code for the Seconda Pratica,” JAMS IX (Summer, 1956), 81–96.

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*Not in the text though in the index of the original. G. Ed.

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*In the original the several titles under each letter of the alphabet are not alphabetically ordered. Here they have been recast to be so ordered. G. Ed.

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List of the Authors of the Cantilenas
scattered through the Work,
34 [recte 35] in number.

Adriano Villaert	Gostanzo Porta
Alessandro Striggio	Giaches da Ponte
Annibal Padovano	Giaches Vuert
Annibal Zoilo	Hippolito Bacchusi
Animuccia	Lionardo Primavera
Antonio del Pace	Marco Antonio Ingegneri
Baston	Marco Antonio Pordenon
Bartolomeo Spontone	Orlando di Lassus
Baldassar Donato	Pietro Vinci
Bernardino Giacomini	Pietro Taglia
Cipriano Rore	Pedro Gherrero
Filippo di Monte	Verdelotto
Francesco Rossello	Vincentio Galilei
Ferrabosco	[B. M.]
Gian Contino	[Morales]
Gian Andrea Dragoni	[Portinaro]
Giannetto da Palestrina	[Ruffo]
Gian Maria Nanino	

FRONIMO

Dialogue by Vincentio Galilei, noble Florentine
On the Art of Intabulating and Playing music
on man made instruments of strings and winds,
and in particular, on the Lute

* * * * *

Interlocutors

Eumatius and Fronimo

Eu. That man may call himself truly blessed who, fleeing the troubles and fatiguing vanities of the world, the intemperance, pride, adulation, deceptions and pretences of the courts, brings himself to a solitary and tranquil life; for my part I desire nothing other than to be able to do so without reproof. Truly, each time I steal away from the Palace, and from serious thoughts, and come to this villa on the banks of the river, beneath the shade of tall lime trees and leafy arbors, I seem to be transported from the torments of Hell to the pleasures of Paradise – for what is there here which does not please and give the highest delight? Here the natural colors of the flowers and grass are most beautiful and delightful objects for the eyes, the murmur of the streamlet, the soft movement of the trees, together with the voices of nightingales and other birds, accord so well together that they fill the ear with sweetness; in short, all the sentiments find particular joy and delight. Oh, how willingly would I sometimes seek refuge from the summer sun in such a place with my dear Fronimo! May it please God, that to find him (since for no other reason have I left the house) I may not have to go much farther, so that I can talk with him about worthy and pleasing matters, which, together with his sweet and harmonious sounds, dissipate the melancholy in me, as has happened many times. But what new music do I hear? It is a Lute, and from what I hear, sweetly played. There he is, sitting on that stump with lute in hand. I must draw near quietly so as not to interrupt the harmony and to see if he is one of my friends. It is Fronimo, or my eyes do not serve me! Surely it is he. O virtuous youth and worthy of praise! I have heard it said by many people that he is on the way to becoming one of the skillful musicians of our times, and I can easily believe it.

Many times astute and learned¹⁵ players (to return to what I just said) in going from a simple or composed consonance to another somewhat distant, have struck the consonance again, for it was not possible to make it sound fully without a new repercussion. And of this practice we have an example in two places in the canzone which begins *D'un spiritu triste*: one in the sixth bar and the other in the twentieth. And, up to now having shown you sufficiently by means of many examples how the repercussion of a note may be necessary, I wish now to show you that it is not less useful and necessary to silence some repetitions.¹⁶ To conclude, I will say in a few words that often it is necessary to imagine that the present example may be this –

¹⁵ 1568, omits “e giuditiosi”.

¹⁶ 1568, omits “some repercussions.”

Eu. I am in truth pleased that I have heard so many things from that Gentleman, therefore I give you in return what I owe – at least the greatest thanks of which I am capable, assuring you that if I can be mistaken about some things, in this I am not mistaken: I know how much you have made this art advance over all others, and consequently how infinite is my debt.

I can never hope to repay such benefits with my powers, however I shall not fail to show my gratitude daily, and to show that I am aware of your worth. I repent of having wasted so much time, during which I could have learned many things, thanks to your generosity and courtesy, trusting in which I can say for certain you will never be bored by helping me, for each hour I am more inflamed by the desire to learn.

Fr. You need have no doubts about it, for it not only does not weary me to be of service, but I ask you always to call on me. And seeing you a bit more often, I promise to tell you of new things continually, for I will never conceal from you anything I know.

Eu. It would not weary me to be always with you. But since we are to meet again for similar conversations, and in order not to overburden you at one time, I will take my leave.

Fr. Go, and live happily.

THE END.

Registro.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTVXYZA,

Tutti sonno Duerni.



**I N V I N ' E G I A ,
M D L X X X I I I I .**