

MUSICOLOGICAL STUDIES AND DOCUMENTS

20

FRANCHINUS GAFFURIUS

PRACTICA MUSICAE

Translation and Transcription

by

CLEMENT A. MILLER



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AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MUSICOLOGY

MUSICOLOGICAL STUDIES AND DOCUMENTS

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General Editor

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INTRODUCTION

This edition of *Practica Musicae* is based on the first edition printed at Milan in 1496 and dedicated to Ludovico the Moor, duke of Milan ¹. The popularity of Gaffurius's treatise is attested to by the numerous succeeding editions based on the original but modified to a greater or lesser degree.

These include the editions of 1497, 1502, and 1508, printed at Brescia with the title *Musicae utriusque Cantus Practica*; also the Venetian editions of 1512, 1517, and 1522 ². In 1492 the *Tractato Vulgare del Canto Figurato* was published in Milan under the name of Francesco Caza, a pupil of Gaffurius. The work consists of a translation into Italian of Book II of *Practica Musicae*. Another Italian translation, despite its title, is *Angelicum ac divinum opus musicae*, which appeared in Milan in 1508. Although this edition has been called a partially modified version of parts II and III of *Practica Musicae* ³, it contains material from all four books of *Practica*, but in an abridged form. The Italian version of the text is a compendium of the original and also includes new material. While the *Practica* has more than 150 polyphonic musical examples, the Italian edition of 1508 contains 1 four-part example.

Practica Musicae has been called part of a *Trilogia Gaffuriana*, the other two parts being *Theorica Musicae* (1492) and *De Harmonia Musicorum Instrumentorum Opus* (1518) ⁴. Between them the three works offer a complete theoretical and practical course in composition. Support for this viewpoint is readily found in *Practica*. Gaffurius frequently refers to *Theorica Musicae* and tells the reader that the fatigue experienced in reading the weighty *Theorica* will be removed by the *Practica*, which will revive and refresh his spirits. The other member of the *Trilogia*, *De Harmonia Musicorum Instrumentorum Opus*, is cited more frequently in the *Practica* than any other single entry. Since these citations

¹ A study of the four books of *Practica Musicae* may be found in my article in *Musica Disciplina* XXII (1968).

² *Franchino Gaffurio* (Lodi, 1951), p. 134.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁴ Luigi Salamina, "La Trilogia Gaffuriana", in *Franchino Gaffurio* (Lodi, 1951), p. 137.

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their harmony not only mentally and rationally, but also by hearing and performance.

I do not suggest, however, that our musical practise is much different from that of grammarians. When we use a long or short syllable, it is done entirely according to the principles and authority of those who have gone before us. But a musician must be careful of the correct measurement of tones, and not articulate any syllable before he knows its value through a measuring of time and tone. Although this is described in Book 2, Chapter I of the present work, it has already been demonstrated with effectual statements by St. Augustine in Book 2 of his *De Musica*.

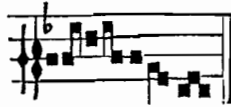
There are actually four kinds of musicians who produce sonorous tones. To the first kind belong those who are versed in prose, as orators and lectors, and who express their thoughts in words rather than in melody. In divine services they also sing psalms and antiphons, called plainchant (although improperly) by priests of the Gregorian and our own Ambrosian rite, because they sing each note simply and evenly with note-values which are short and equal. Plainchant does not have harmony of several parts, but the beginning and continuation of its melodies are established because the movement of its tones and the range of its modes (also called Tones) are clearly understood according to the natural order of the diatonic genus. For this reason I call plainchant a soniferous reading, that is, a reading aloud with tones either sustained or moving. According to Aristotle in the twenty-eighth Problem relating to harmony, the ancients called their first observation of such modulated speech the laws⁴ which they set down for the musical instruction of their youth.

To the second kind of musician belong those who not only compose verses but who also declaim them in longs and breves according to a metrical plan (as in poetry); the manner of expression of the second kind allows it greater freedom than that of the first.

To the third kind belong those truly called musicians and singers, who create melody and sweet song in some mode and in a contrapuntal style which will be thoroughly studied in Book 3 of the present work.

To the fourth kind belong actors, mimes, and those who move rhythmically in response to musical sound, as in circle dances and other dances. Theophrastus has ascribed a pleasing music to them in their singing and dancing.

⁴ Nomes. Cf. Problems XIX, 28.



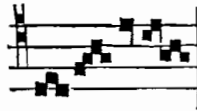
Six mutations proceed from *G sol re ut*. In ascending from the natural to the soft b hexachord, the first mutation is made by changing the first syllable into the second, or *sol* into *re*, as shown here:



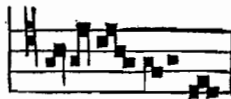
In descending from soft b to the natural hexachord, the second mutation occurs by changing the second syllable into the first, or *re* into *sol*, as shown here:



The third mutation is made by changing the first syllable into the third, or *sol* into *ut*, moving from the natural to the square b hexachord because of a rising melody, as illustrated:



The fourth is the reverse and occurs in a descending movement by changing *ut* into *sol*, moving from the b hexachord into the natural as indicated:



The fifth mutation occurs in an ascending movement by changing the second syllable into the third, or *re* into *ut*, moving from the soft b to the square b hexachord, as here:



CHAPTER 1

POETS AND MUSICIANS MEASURE VOCAL SOUNDS WITH LONG AND SHORT QUANTITIES

The execution of a musical sound, which in the preceding book was accomplished with notes moving at an equal rate of speed, is effected among poets and musicians by figures of varied temporal values. Through careful examination they determine the temporal duration of a word by considering syllables either short or long. A short syllable is assigned one beat and a long syllable receives two beats, since two is the first number which is twice one. As the grammarian Diomedes says, "Since one precedes two, a short syllable precedes a long syllable"¹. A syllable is considered short by nature or because of a following vowel, and a long syllable is accurately recognized by nature, position, or also accent. Certain syllables are common to both, namely, if a liquid is naturally short and follows a mute, then this syllable can be either short or long, as in *tenebre* and *patris*, and in many examples found in Greek and Latin poets.

Every kind of poem in varied meters was composed in conjunction with the sound of a lyra or cithara, as we have already mentioned in Book I of *Theorica* and will explain more fully in *Harmonia Instrumentalis*², where ancient authorities on modes will be discussed³. All poems are composed of various metrical feet, and these also have a varied number of beats. The dactyl (to speak about the quantities of some) contains three syllables, the first long and the others short, as *armiger* and *principis*, and thus has four beats. The spondee, formed by two long syllables, also has four beats, as *foelix* and *aestas*. The iamb, called a rapid foot and containing three beats, has two syllables, the first short and the last long, as *pias*. The reverse of the iamb is the trochee, containing three beats

¹ *Ante enim brevis quam longa syllaba reperta est, ut prius unum quam duo*. Diomedes, *De arte grammatica* (Venetiae, 1522), *Lib. 3, Cap. 2*. Diomedes (fl. 375) and Quintilian are the two most important sources for the transmission to the Renaissance of the traditional classification of poetic genres. Apparently Diomedes was much read in the fifteenth century. See Charles Trinkhaus "The Unknown *Quattrocento* Poetics of Bartolommeo della Fonte", in *Studies in the Renaissance* (The Renaissance Society of America, New York), vol. 13, p. 87.

² In IV, 10, Gaffurius sprints a Sapphic poem of his contemporary, Lancinus Curtius, and sets the seventh stanza to music in two parts, one in the Dorian and one in the Hypodorian. The setting is syllabic, and uses combinations of breves and semibreves to create the verse meter. The seventh stanza begins with the line *Musices septemque modos Planete*.

³ *Op. cit., lib. 3, cap. 2*.

The first breve following the sign of *tempus imperfectum* and *prolatio perfecta* is imperfected *a parte ante* and *a parte post ad partes propinquas*, the first part of which is imperfected *a parte ante* and the second *a parte post*. But the following breve is only imperfected *a parte post* according to both *partes* by the following two minims, the first of which imperfects the first semibreve unit and the second imperfects the second *a parte post*.

Concerning the second way of recognizing imperfection: whenever a *punctus divisionis* is affixed to a note for the note's sake or because of it and another or other notes, the note will imperfect a preceding or following larger note if it can be imperfected, as this tenor shows:

Ex. 5

In this tenor the third breve is imperfected *a parte post ad totum*, which is shown by the *punctus divisionis* following the first semibreve. The fourth breve is imperfected *a parte ante ad totum*, which is clearly indicated by the *punctus divisionis* before the two preceding minims. The *punctus divisionis* between the two semibreves which separate the last two breves, shows that the second last or fifth breve is imperfected *a parte post* and the sixth breve *a parte ante*.

If a larger note preceding or following a dotted smaller note is not imperfected, then the smaller note is transferred to the first note to which it can be

Cantus Ex. 49

Tenor

Contra-
tenor

Nevertheless, I can hardly tolerate the use of one number to show a proportion, for we already stated that a proportion cannot be formed with less than two numbers.

Proportio tripla

In *proportio tripla*, the second species of *genus multiplex*, notes of the larger upper number are made equal to those of the smaller lower number by including them exactly three times, as 3 to 1, 6 to 2, 9 to 3, and so forth. In this proportion three notes equal in value one of the same name and quantity, so that each of the three loses two-thirds of its own value. The proportion is indicated in songs

by 1, 2, or 3, as the following harmony indicates:

Cantus Ex. 50

Tenor

(sic)

If *proportio tripla* in a series of notes is followed by *subtripla*, which is its opposite, the tripla is then removed and notes following the *subtripla* have the same value as notes preceding the *tripla*. This is true of every proportion that is followed exactly by its opposite proportion, for the equality of the extremes is always observed, as seen in this harmony: