

MUSICOLOGICAL STUDIES AND DOCUMENTS

26

SEBALD HEYDEN  
*DE ARTE CANENDI*

Translation and Transcription

by

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## INTRODUCTION

The present edition of *De Arte Canendi* is based on the edition published by Petreius in Nürnberg in 1540.<sup>1</sup> Heyden considered *De Arte Canendi* to be the third edition, the first being *Musicae Στοιχείωσις* of 1532 and the second *Musicae, id est artis canendi libri duo* of 1537. Each edition is an enlargement of the preceding one, extending from 26 folios in *Musicae* of 1532 to 115 pages in *Musicae* of 1537 and finally to 163 pages in *De Arte Canendi* of 1540.

The original edition of *De Arte Canendi* begins with twelve unnumbered pages (f.A 1-6) devoted to Heyden's letter of dedication to the Nürnberg patrician Hieronymus Baumgartner, and to an index of chapter headings of the two books that comprise the treatise. Book I treats of the elements of music and Book II is concerned principally with Heyden's theory of *tactus* and mensuration signs.

The modern edition of *De Arte Canendi* endeavors to present a translation of Heyden's text that is accurate and fluent. Heyden's spelling of the names of composers has been retained. Modern equivalents of their names are given in the list of Composers and Compositions, which includes both polyphonic works and individual voice parts that are excerpts of polyphonic pieces. In the text of the treatise Heyden's titles for each composition are given and additional identification is placed in brackets. Names of musical instruments are translated but the original terms are also given. Since the text of *Musicae* 1537 is amplified and extended rather than revised in the edition of 1540, such changes and additions are indicated by footnotes in the modern edition.

Polyphonic works are transcribed into modern notation. Mensuration signs that change within a composition are indicated above the staff. Ligatures and coloration are shown in the usual way.

In *De Arte Canendi* Heyden formulated a theory in which a single unchanging *tactus* is applied to every kind of mensuration sign. This *tactus*-mensuration theory, which is the basis of his work, affirms that the same *tactus* is used for all polyphony in the treatise. The modern transcriptions of the polyphonic pieces are intended to conform to this principle and also to apply his rules of *resolutiones*.

Each transcription has an incipit which shows the original mensuration sign(s). It is essential to observe this sign to determine the tempo intended in the transcription. Heyden considered ○ and ◡ as basic mensurations in which a semibreve equals a complete *tactus*. His examples of these mensurations show that a complete *tactus*, which includes many short note values, must move very slowly in order to be sung successfully. On the other hand, his *resolutiones* in Ⓢ are in larger note values and according to him are sung *alla breve*.

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of *De Arte Canendi* see my article in *Musica Disciplina XXII* (1970).

## LETTER OF DEDICATION

To the most distinguished Hieronymus Baumgartner, Nürnberg patrician, councillor, and most worthy patron, Sebald Heyden sends heartiest greetings.

Most illustrious sir:

If it is ever true in any matter that afterthoughts are wiser, as they are said to be in the old proverb,<sup>2</sup> it is certainly most true in regard to correcting abuses in customs and arts. This is probably the case because it is very difficult in a first attempt immediately to arrange everything with such exactness and moderation that the result is neither more nor less than the material warrants. Examples in regard to customs are too common to make it necessary to furnish proof here, as when we frequently abolish with violence what could be preserved in some other way, or substitute something else that itself needs correction a little later.

But in restoring liberal arts from abuse and barbarisms to their natural condition and true practice, it is very evident in our times that it is not enough to undertake a work but once and to complete a single attempt, since the difficulty of the subject is so great that in former times it was easier to clean the Augean stable<sup>3</sup> than it is now to restore corrupted arts to their true splendor.

Moreover, I also wonder sometimes who has taken on the greater labor, those who first created these arts or those who are now restoring them. Grammar and dialectics can serve as examples. How many works about them, in what quantities of editions, revisions and amplifications have now seen the light of publication? Yet you can hardly find any authors who do not want to change or enlarge such editions of their own works in some place or other, even in the latest edition. Erasmus of Rotterdam, a most distinguished luminary of scholarship, has left his own testimony: one would no more stop reworking his enriched and more substantial lucubrations than he would stop living.

Since such is the case, why then may I not also hope for indulgence in a similar subject, as I now venture to produce *The Art of Singing and the Correct Use of Musical Signs* in a third edition that is the easiest of all for our youth?

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Cicero, *Phillipics*, XII, 2, 5: *posteriores enim cogitationes, ut aiunt, sapientiores solent esse.*

<sup>3</sup> *Augiae stabulum repurgare*, a reference to the proverb about Augeas, king of Elis, whose stable, which had not been cleaned in thirty years, was cleaned in one day by Hercules.

## BOOK I

### *Music, that is, the Art of Singing*

#### PREFACE

We have learned through experience that a far different method of instruction is needed to teach untutored boys than to train those who have been taught carefully for some time. In the same way, we know that in a statuary workshop far different tools are used to hew out rough pieces than to polish the product later. For just as in hewing rough pieces there are appropriately heavier pick-axes which penetrate more forcibly and cut off the original roughness, so also the roughness of youthful natures demands a certain more straightforward lucidity in teaching.

It seemed here that such lucidity would be shown most suitably if to certain rather brief questions I gave in answer the precepts to be taught, and did so in specific and definitive terms, just as in a dialog; and finally, adding individual examples for each of the precepts, so that young boys would grasp very easily whatever is being taught, just as they do in counting on their fingers. Therefore, let those who so desire make use of these precepts, however constituted; may they also consider my work fairly, in which I have attempted to be of the utmost benefit to untutored youth.

#### CHAPTER 1

What is music?

It is the art of producing tones correctly and melodiously, and in this way it pertains to sound. Music is produced in three ways: by the human voice, by wind instruments (*fistulae*), and by string instruments. Voices create sound by movement of the tongue, wind instruments by blowing, and string instruments by striking.

What is the origin of music?

It comes from the muses, whom the ancients revered as guardians of the liberal arts, undoubtedly because with this name they meant to show a certain quickening of the human spirit influenced by divine authority, as well as a zeal for studies, qualities that are also highly necessary in a modern authority who teaches liberal arts. And this is why the muses are considered to be daughters of Jove and Memoria, and derive their names ἀπὸ τοῦ μῶσθαι, that is, from seeking<sup>9</sup>, or ἀπὸ τοῦ μάσαι, that is, from teaching.

<sup>9</sup> In Plato's *Cratylus*, 406a, the muses are named πηρὰ τὸ μίεθαι from searching, and also from philosophy; in Isadore's *Etymologiarum* III, 15, 1, muses are named ἀπὸ τοῦ μνεῖθαι, *id est a quarendo*.

appearance that such intricate songs are usually sung less expeditiously. If one looks carefully at the *resolutio* given for the following example, he will find nothing that is not very common and easy. On the contrary, everything in it agrees exactly in all respects with *integra* perfection, so that if you listen from a distance to both versions being sung you cannot determine whether *integra perfectio* or *diminuta resolutio* is sung.

Every *diminuta resolutio* will be sung correctly if it is sung as *dupla proportio*, just as all songs with the sign  $\text{C}$  should be sung. We will discuss this later.

Through the following example young students can become practised in all such intricate songs, namely, by resolving *integra* perfection into imperfect diminution and then singing the resolution in *proportio dupla*.

Ex. 19 *Kyrie I* from [*Missa*] *Malheur me bat* — A. Agricola

The musical score for Ex. 19 consists of four systems of music. The first system shows the vocal parts: Discantus, Altus, Tenor, and Bassus. Each part has a 'Resolutio' section. The second system shows the vocal parts with a '5' above the first measure. The third system shows the vocal parts with a '5' above the first measure. The score is written in a single system with four staves.



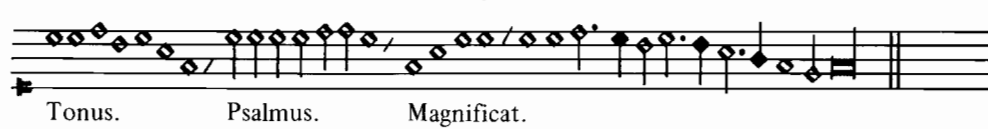
Monodia Quarti Toni.



What is a song of the fifth Tone?

It is a song which ends on *fa* and which frequently repeats the *fa* a perfect fifth higher, or, as others prefer to say, a song which ends on *ut* and which frequently reiterates the perfect fifth *sol* and the major third *mi*.

Monodia Quinti Toni.



What is a song of the sixth Tone?

One which frequently repeats the final *fa*, with *la* a major third higher.

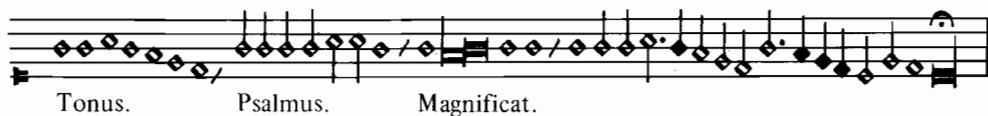
Monodia Sexti Toni.



What is a song of the seventh Tone?

It is one which frequently repeats *sol* and then descends to the final *ut*.

Monodia Septimi Toni.



What is a song of the eighth Tone?

It is one which forms its melody by frequent repetition of the fourth between *fa* and *ut*, the final.

Monodia Octavi Toni.



Example of the first Tone.  
Ex. 47 *Pater meus agricola est* — Alexander Agric[ola]

*Discantus*

*Tenor*

*Bassus*

5

10

15

20

The image shows a musical score for a discantus section. It consists of six systems of three staves each. The top staff is for the Tenor voice, the middle for the Bassus, and the bottom for the Discantus instrument. The music is in a 3/2 time signature and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score includes measure numbers 5, 10, 15, and 20. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as minims, crotchets, and quavers, along with rests and accidentals.