

MUSICOLOGICAL STUDIES & DOCUMENTS

29

PROSDOCIMUS DE BELDEMANDIS

A TREATISE
ON THE PRACTICE OF
MENSURAL MUSIC
IN THE ITALIAN MANNER

*(Tractatus practicae cantus mensurabilis
ad modum Ytalicorum)*

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INTRODUCTION

The *Tractatus practicae cantus mensurabilis ad modum Ytalicorum* of Prosdocimus de Beldemandis exists in two redactions, each deriving from a single manuscript source. The first is contained in Ms. A 56 of the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, Bologna, fol. 51^r-57^r (edition in C. E. H. de Coussemaker's *Scriptorum de musica medii aevi nova series*, III [Paris, 1869], pp. 228-248); the second, in Ms. 359 of the Biblioteca Governativa, Lucca, fol. 34^r-47^r (edition in Claudio Sartori's *La notazione italiana del Trecento in una redazione inedita del "Tractatus practice cantus mensurabilis ad modum ytalicorum" di Prosdocimo de Beldemandis* [Firenze, 1938], pp. 35-71). A description of these manuscripts along with a listing of their contents will be found in F. Alberto Gallo's article "La tradizione dei tratti musicali di Prosdocimo de Beldemandis," in *Quadrivium* VI (1964), pp. 57-82.

The present translation of the second redaction is based upon a collation of the manuscript copy with Sartori's edition. A list of *errata* in that edition follows.

Sartori

Bibl. Governativa Ms. 359

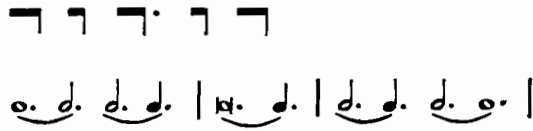
| Page | Line | | Folium | Line | |
|------|---|--------------------|-----------------|-------|---------------------------|
| 35 | 16 | diminuita | 34 ^r | 35 | diminuta |
| 37 | 19 | quomodo | 34 ^v | 58 | quoniam |
| 37 | 25 | figarum | 34 ^v | 69 | figurarum |
| 39 | 8 | cantu | 35 ^v | 27 | cantus |
| 39 | 16 | perperfigurationem | 35 ^v | 42 | patet per figurationem |
| 39 | 18 | pro | 35 ^v | 48 | patet |
| 39 | <i>With reference to f.n. (5), the codex has:</i> | | 35 ^v | 63 | valore |
| 42 | 4 | quomodo | 36 ^v | 53 | qualiter |
| 42 | 9 | tantum | 36 ^v | 63 | tamen |
| 44 | 7 | propter quod | 37 ^v | 42-43 | preterea quia |
| 44 | 10 | pro | 37 ^v | 49 | patet |

A TREATISE ON THE PRACTICE OF MENSURAL MUSIC IN THE ITALIAN MANNER

The art or practice of mensural music is discovered to be of two kinds: There is the Italian practice, which at present only the Italians use, and there is the French practice, which all Europeans now embrace except the Italians. Of late, however, even the Italians have taken to using French practice — perhaps no less well than the French — and to such an extent that they are neglecting their own practice and reveling in the French, thinking their own defective and the French more elegant, more perfect, and more refined — the contrary of which view I shall present in what follows. Now, I believe this situation has come about simply because of the ignorance of present-day Italians, who do not know their own practice at all, though they think they do. I myself have made this mistake, with the result that at one time I expended a good deal of effort on the French practice, completing two works thereon, but when I looked into the Italian practice carefully, I decided at once that I had been seriously wrong in my former conviction, and at that point I resolved upon the composition of this treatise on the Italian practice of mensural music. I hope it will be accepted by those who are truly knowledgeable and that they will correct it, not out of malice but solely from goodwill, by expanding whatever is too brief and abridging whatever is too prolix.

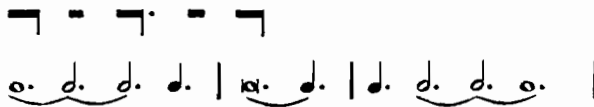
[The mensural notes]

Seeing, then, that mensural music, our present subject, is that in which the figures or notes are considered to have measure, i.e., that they are to be sung according to a species of measure determined by a note-form, this treatise must begin with the mensural notes. Consequently you should know that, among both the Italians and

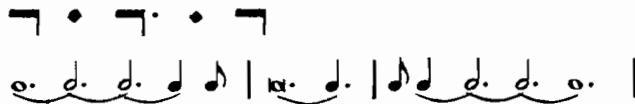


And the reason for this is that any note imperfected by a part of its value, where that part is the note next shorter than itself, its imperfected as a whole.

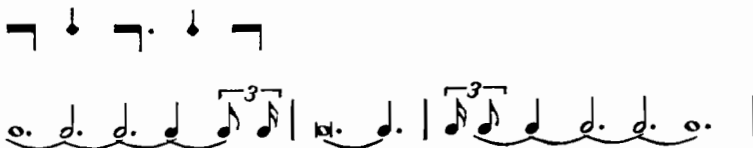
But if in *modus longarum perfectus* a single breve is found between two *maximae*, or a *maxima* and its rest, or a *maxima* and a *punctus*, that breve imperfects the first *maxima* by one of its parts, namely a long, unless prevented by a *punctus* or in some other way; thus:



And if in *tempus perfectum* a single semibreve is found between two *maximae*, or a *maxima* and its rest, or a *maxima* and a *punctus*, that semibreve imperfects the first *maxima* by one of its parts, namely a breve, unless prevented by a *punctus* or in some other way; thus:



And if in *senaria imperfecta* or *novenaria* a minim is found between two *maximae*, or a *maxima* and its rest, or a *maxima* and a *punctus*, that minim imperfects the first *maxima* by one of its parts, namely a semibreve, unless prevented by a *punctus* or in some other way; thus:



It is the same with longs: