

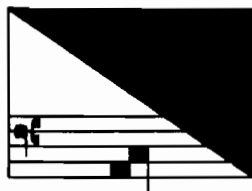
MUSICOLOGICAL STUDIES & DOCUMENTS

42

IN SEARCH OF HARMONY

Hebrew and Humanist Elements in Sixteenth-Century Musical Thought

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FOREWORD

The rich tapestry of Renaissance thought was shot with Hebraic threads, not an obvious part of the pattern, yet essential to its full appreciation.

Roth, *The History of the Jews in Italy*, p. 205

This book began, in 1975, as an exercise in source identification. It set the following problem: *the well-known music theorist Gioseffo Zarlino, in one of his treatises from the later sixteenth century, discoursed on music of the Hebrews: what were his sources?* But the tracing of sources is no more than the first step to be taken; it must be completed by an analysis of their content and function, that is, by source interpretation. Which explains why the modest exercise in identification performed in Chapter 1 expanded to comprise the materials in Chapters 2-10: the sources raised as many questions about themselves as they did about the purposes of the theorist who employed them. Offhand, Hebrew music and Renaissance composition would seem to belong to two disparate streams of development, and ever since Kipling, we tend to assert that East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet. But the fact remains that somewhere the twain met in the conceptions of Zarlino: he thought highly enough of Hebrew music to advise composers to look to it as a model. In order to understand why Hebrew music assumed such importance for him, it was necessary to comb his writings for the premises of the aesthetic to which he subscribed. The search inevitably led into the realm of humanism: humanist influences formed the basic outlook of Zarlino as well as of composers and theorists, in increasing numbers, from the later fifteenth to the seventeenth century. True, many musicians did not comply with the postulates of humanism. Vincenzo Galilei complained, as late as 1581, that “among the most renowned of past and present [musicians] you will find no lack of those who first compose notes by whimsy, then adapt to them whatever words they see fit; they are not at all concerned that the words and their notes display such incompatibility as to equal, if not exceed that which was said¹ to exist between

¹ By Aristotle, *Politics*, 1342b (cf. Strunk, ed., *Source Readings in Music History*, p. 23).

Chapter 1

ZARLINO ON HEBREW MUSIC

...videbitur non ante Moysis, ducis Israelitarum, tempus
poesim apud Hebreos habuisse principium.

Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium libri XV* (XIV. 8),
ed. Romano, II, 702

The trumpet's blast that toppled the walls of Jericho (Joshua 6:20), Jephthah whose daughter advanced to greet him with timbrels and dances (Judges 11:34), David playing his harp before moody Saul (1 Samuel 16:23) – these and other references to music and musical instruments in the Old Testament are commonplace in writings of the Church Fathers and the early music theorists. They figure as examples of literary ornament, not as part of a concentrated discussion of Hebrew music. The first Western music theorist to handle the topic on a more than casual basis appears to be Gioseffo Zarlino (1517-90), in Book VIII, Chapter 13 of his *Sopplimenti musicali* (1588).¹ The source has been overlooked by scholars in the field. They date the treatment of Hebrew music in musical writings, as distinguished from rabbinical literature or the writings of Jewish and Christian Hebraists, from Bottrigari's dialogue *Il Trimerone* (1599), Praetorius' *Syntagma musicum*, Volume I (1614/15), and treatises of Mersenne and Kircher (to be reviewed

¹ The writer came upon the chapter while assembling materials for a study on the theory of text-music relations from ancient times to the seventeenth century (see outline in *American Council of Learned Societies Newsletter*, XXV/3-4 [1974], 22-25, eventually to become his *Word-Tone Relations in Musical Thought*). He examined it in the copy of the treatise held by the Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.), first summarizing his findings, in 1978, in an article entitled "Note on the Influence of Hebrew Accents on Renaissance Music Theory" (see Bibliography). As he recently learned, though too late for consideration here, the chapter has also been discussed by Seth Joshua Weiner in "Renaissance Prosodic Thought as a Branch of 'Musica Speculativa'" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1981), esp. 50-98.

Chapter 6

MUSIC AND LANGUAGE

Accentus autem est quasi ad cantus
dictus, quod ad cantilenam vocis
nos facit agnoscere syllabas.

Servius Honoratus, from his
commentary to Donatus' *Ars
grammatica* (ed. Keil,
Grammatici latini, IV, 451)

In Part I we pursued our investigation of Hebraist currents until Kircher. One line leads from Zarlino to later theorists in the domain of *hebraica*, another line leads from him to others in the domain of humanism. In Part II we shall pursue this second line of investigation through the writings of Zarlino to those of his pupil Galilei.

The quotation from Kircher at the end of Chapter 5 designates the first three of the five parts that Quintilian, for one, regarded as fundamental to the art of rhetoric, namely, *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio* (the others being *memoria* and *pronuntiatio* or *actio*).¹ Which raises the question of the relation of music and language in the thinking of Zarlino. Zenck described the relation as one so indissoluble and so rooted in human sensibilities that it furnished "the a priori points of departure for Zarlino's music philosophy, and as such, it interlocked with the spirit and culture of the Renaissance."² The unshakeable belief of the theorist in the capacity of music to conform to the structures and convey the meanings of language served as a framework for the humanist aesthetic

¹ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, III. iii. 1 (Books IV-VI are devoted to *inventio*, VII to *dispositio*, VIII-X to *elocutio* and XI to *memoria* and *pronuntiatio*). For a detailed exposition of the different *partes artis* according to Aristotle (*Rhetoric*), Cicero (*De inventione*, *De oratore*), pseudo-Cicero (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*), Quintilian and others, see Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, I, 139-527. As to the musical applications of *pronuntiatio*, see Gallo, "Pronuntiatio, ricerche sulla storia di un termine retorico-musicale."

² "Zarlino's 'Istitutioni harmoniche' als Quelle zur Musikanschauung der italienischen Renaissance," p. 546.

Separate intervals were to be shaped into phrases according to the various possibilities of diatonic and chromatic writing. Zarlino recognized the two kinds of writing as congruent with the basic affections of happiness and sadness: “the [intervallic] movement is of two kinds, namely, natural [i.e., diatonic] and accidental [i.e., chromatic]. ... With the first kind the song becomes somewhat more sonorous and robust, while with the second it becomes sweeter and somewhat more languid.”⁷⁵ The use of semitones as an expressive device was known from the early Renaissance – here is an example from the *Missa Sancti Jacobi* by Dufay:⁷⁶

Cru - ci - fi - xus et - i - am pro no - bis: sub

Cru - ci - fi - xus et - i - am pro no - bis: sub

Pon - ti - o Pi - la - - - -

Pon - ti - o Pi - la - - - - to pas -

- - - to pas - sus, et se - pul - tus est

sus, et se - pul - tus est Et

⁷⁵ Pp. 339-40 (Part IV, Chap. 32).*

⁷⁶ Dufay, *Opera omnia*, ed. de Van & Besseler, II, 32 (Credo, mm. 79-93). As to the origins of semitonal movement, Feldmann stressed that they lie in oratory (“Untersuchungen zum Wort-Ton Verhältnis in den Gloria-Credo-Sätzen von Dufay bis Josquin,” p. 145); see next note.

APPENDIX

Includes the original wording for all items referred to by asterisk
in the corresponding footnotes to Foreword, Chapters 1–10 and Epilogue

FOREWORD

² “...oltre che non sono mancati & non mancano tra piu famosi, di quelli che hanno prima composte le note secondo i loro capricci, & adattatovi poi quelle parole che è paruto loro; senza haver fatto alcuna stima, che tra le parole & le note, sia la medesima ò maggiore disformità di quella che si è detta essere tra il Dithirambo & l’harmonia Doria...”

CHAPTER 1

⁵ “Recte autem dividetur liber iste noster in tria volumina secundum accentus tria genera...”

³⁹ “Ma seguitando il Terzo accidente del Suono, ch’è il Colore, dico; che è quello, per ilquale nella Modulatione i Suoni sono differenti l’un dall’altro per i due accidenti già mostrati; cioè, per il Luogo & per il Tempo; in quello che chiamiamo Aria nella Cantilena; come si ode continuamente nelle sue Parti che cantiamo.”

CHAPTER 2

²³ “...ut nosti, ego hactenus nutrivi & promovi in Christiano orbe studium istud varij libellis Elianis, quos pro ingenij mei parvitate latinis feci, communicavique candide omnibus studiosis...”

CHAPTER 3

¹ “Ma poscia la Poesia ben si vede con la Musica esser tanto congiunta, che chiunque da questa separar la volesse, restarebbe quasi corpo separato dall’anima.”

¹⁰ “מֵתֵג [meteg] Frenum. Capistrum vel camus. Sic. lxx. exposuere in psalmo xxxij. In camo et freno maxillas eorum constringe. Est autem camus a graecis sumptus quod illi kimos dicunt. Et est quaedam species freni secundum Iulium pollucem et Suidam. Ita Proverbiorum. xxvi. Flagellum equo et camus asino. Licet David Kimhi illic stimulum quo asini punguntur velit intelligi.”

¹¹ “Inde motus sum ut de syllabarum quantitate tractaturus eam rhythmici facultatem potius rhetoricis consistere principiis putaverim quam grammaticis, quod sermo quantumbet rudis grammaticorum est qui accentus suos non iuxta temporum dimensionem, sed solo inflectendi usu observant.”