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From dissonance to note-cluster: the application of musical-rhetorical figures and dissonances to thoroughbass accompaniment of early 17th-century Italian vocal solo music

Figuram nenne ich eine gewisse Art die *Dissonantzen* zu gebrauchen, daß dieselben nicht allein nicht wiederlich, sondern vielmehr annehmlich werden, und des *Componisten* Kunst an den Tag legen.

(I call *Figuram* a certain manner of using dissonances so that these are not only not repulsive, but rather agreeable, and show the art of the composer.)

Christoph Bernhard, *Tractatus compositionis augmentatus*, c. 1655¹

AT the turn of the 17th century Italian composers of secular vocal music began to place a greater emphasis on textual expression. In order better to convey a text's affective meaning, they expanded their harmonic vocabulary and experimented with the treatment of dissonance. These new harmonic tools include the use of extreme or unprepared dissonances (*durezze* and *heterolepsis*), unresolved dissonances in cadences (*ellipsis*), harsh note-clusters (*acciaccatura*), and the persistent repetition of a bass note in a tenorizing cadence (*extensio*) or in the vocal part (*cadentia duriuscula*), thus delaying its resolution. Some composers, especially those associated with the *seconda prattica*, did not eschew any means to make the listener experience the intensity of the emotions described in the text.

For a present-day accompanist it is not always clear from the notated music how and where to apply these new expressive devices in the continuo realization. More often than not, the bass lines are unfigured. Relevant period information on the use of dissonances in accompaniment is not easy to find.

Although the earliest Italian treatises and texts on thoroughbass deal with the realization of unfigured basses,² the authors focus almost exclusively on consonances that must be played above the bass. The treatment of dissonances, however, is hardly mentioned in these texts. These are merely mentioned in passing and illustrated in the musical examples, mostly as conventional suspensions at cadences. It is nevertheless striking to consider that c.1610 composers like Jacopo Peri, Claudio Monteverdi, Francesco Rasi or Johann Hieronymus Kapsberger wrote the most daring note-combinations in their vocal monodies and polyphonic compositions, and Ercole Pasquini was composing the first *durezze e ligature* toccatas for organ or harpsichord (in the application of *durezze e ligature* preceded by Giovanni de Macque and his pupil Trabaci). Whether or not these so-called *durezze* note-combinations were also used in thoroughbass accompaniment is impossible to deduce from contemporary writings on this subject. The questions remain: how might continuo players exploit such dissonances in their realizations for expressive ends? And how can one handle such problematic cases as cadential and other harmonic patterns that appear to conflict with the melodic line?

An examination of the earliest thoroughbass treatises suggests that the authors were somewhat at a loss to explain the accompaniment of music by the *compositori moderni*. For the accompaniment of

prima prattica compositions, the rules of counterpoint dictated which chords should be played. By applying these conventions, players could determine from the bass progression whether they had to play a 5th or a 6th above the bass (together with the 3rd and/or the octave), and whether those 3rds and 6ths had to be minor or major. In the treatises by Francesco Bianciardi and Adriano Banchieri this procedure is outlined in painstaking detail.³ But the treatment of dissonances was hardly mentioned in the early treatises or, if at all, only in regard to 7–6 and 4–3 suspensions at cadences. Although Adriano Banchieri did make a connection between the concept of ‘text as the mistress over music’,⁴ and the use of *durezza* by the modern composer, this was only to stress that composers ought to figure their bass lines.

Finally, by the middle of the 17th century some figures representing unusual dissonant note-combinations appear under the bass lines of recitatives in cantatas. Marc’Antonio Pasqualini wrote figures that clearly represent note-clusters such as 5/#4/3 or 7/#6/5, prefiguring the later *acciaccature* in sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti, and their use in recitatives as described by Francesco Gasparini.⁵ Written-out examples of these note-clusters can also be found in toccatas by Kapsberger and in Frescobaldi’s ‘Cento partite’ for harpsichord.

In the same period Christoph Bernhard, a pupil of Heinrich Schütz, attempted to codify typical harmonic and melodic formulas or figures associated

with the *seconda prattica*. Bernhard’s compositional treatises include *Von der Singe-Kunst, oder Maniera, Tractatus compositionis augmentatus* and *Ausfühlicher Bericht vom Gebrauche der Con-und Dissonantien*. He does not, however, formulate new rules, but only describes a number of musical examples. Only two of these formulas or figures are discussed (or rather, demonstrated) in later treatises. The *cadentia duriuscula*, although not under this name, by Bartolomeo Bismantova (1677) and Henry Purcell (1694) and the *heterolepsis* (also under a different name) by Lorenzo Penna (1672). Of the musical figures, formulated by Bernhard, in particular the *cadentia duriuscula* and the *ellipsis* will be discussed below.

Cadentia duriuscula

A typical element seen in the monody of this period, especially in the *stylus theatralis* or *recitativus*, is the independence of the solo part from the bass line and its implied harmony. In other words, the solo part and the bass line make dissonant note-combinations that fall outside the common chord possibilities of 17th-century harmonic language. Ex.1 shows a typical example, from Brussels Ms.704; ex.2 gives a somewhat later example from Peri’s *Euridice*.

A striking phenomenon in both unfigured or partially figured examples is the sustained, or repeated note A (ex.1) and E (ex.2) in the vocal part. Below this sustained note the bass moves in predominantly stepwise fashion towards the two final notes. This

Ex.1 Jacopo Corsi [attrib.], ‘Almo Dio che’l carr’ardente’, from *Dafne* (1594)

The image shows two systems of musical notation. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a bass line (bass clef). The first system has the lyrics: "Al - mo Dio che' l car - r'ar - den - te per lo ciel vol - gen - d'in - tor -". The second system has the lyrics: "- no ve - st'il di d'un au - reo man -". A star symbol is placed below the bass line of the second system.

persistent fixation on the same note is the cause of the appearance of the dissonance of a 4th above the bass (here indicated by asterisks below the bass line). How should a thoroughbass player realize this bass line? And should one avoid doubling the vocal part? The 17th-century treatises on thoroughbass or counterpoint provide no answers to these questions. Fortunately, however, there are other sources of information available, such as

figures written by the composer under the bass, or written-out accompaniments. One can also examine similar passages in contemporary polyphonic compositions such as madrigals or solo pieces for harpsichord, organ or lute.

The examples by Corsi and Peri are not exceptional cases. Other examples, with sometimes even stronger dissonances between bass and vocal part can be found in various compositions (exx.3–12). All these examples

Ex.2 Jacopo Peri, 'Per quel vago bosschetto', from *Euridice* (1600)

Ex.3 Claudio Monteverdi, 'Io la Musica', from *L'Orfeo* (1609)

Ex.4 Francesco Rasi, 'Indarno febo', from *Vaghezze di musica* (1608)

Ex.5 Jacopo Peri, 'Quest'humil fera', from *Le varie musiche* (1609), bars 30–35

Ex.6 Johann Hieronymus Kapsberger, 'Gia risi del mio mal mentre', from *Libro II di villanelle* (1619): (a) bars 5–8; (b) bars 13–16

(a)

5

i Pie - ta da due — bei ra - i

Musical score for Ex.6 (a) showing bars 5–8. The piece is in C major and common time. The vocal line begins with a half note 'i', followed by quarter notes 'Pie - ta da', a half note 'due', a quarter note 'bei', and a half note 'ra - i'. The lute accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

(b)

13

tar e sos - pi - rar — m'a - van - za.

Musical score for Ex.6 (b) showing bars 13–16. The vocal line continues with a half note 'tar', followed by quarter notes 'e sos - pi - rar', a half note 'm'a - van - za'. The lute accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic patterns.

Ex.7 Johann Hieronymus Kapsberger, 'Dove mi lasci', from *Libro secondo d'arie* (1623)

gra - ve mar - to - so Io per - te vis - sie sen - za te mi mo - ro, e —

Musical score for Ex.7 (first system) showing bars 1–4. The piece is in D minor and common time. The vocal line starts with a half note 'gra - ve mar - to - so', followed by quarter notes 'Io per - te vis - sie', and a half note 'sen - za te mi mo - ro, e'. The lute accompaniment has a simple harmonic accompaniment with some triplets.

— sen - za te — mi mo - ro.

Musical score for Ex.7 (second system) showing bars 5–8. The vocal line continues with a half note 'sen - za te' and a half note 'mi mo - ro'. The lute accompaniment continues with a simple harmonic accompaniment.

Ex.8 Girolamo Frescobaldi, 'Aria di Romanesca', from *Primo libro d'arie musicali* (1630)

ri - por - tar tor - men - ti'e pe - ne,

Musical score for Ex.8 showing bars 1–4. The piece is in D minor and common time. The vocal line starts with a half note 'ri - por - tar', followed by quarter notes 'tor - men - ti'e', and a half note 'pe - ne'. The lute accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Ex.12 Claudio Monteverdi, 'Disprezzata regina', from *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1642)

63

Den-tro'al-le tue de-li-zie, i miei, i miei, i miei_ mar-ti-ri.

Ex.13 Examples of *cadentia duriuscula* from Christoph Bernhard, *Tractatus* (c. 1655)

17th-century writer to describe this figure,¹¹ defined it as follows:

1 *Cadentiae duriusculae* sind, welche etwas seltsame Dissonanzen vor denen beyden Schluß-Noten annehmen.

2 Solche werden fast nur in Soliciniis und meistentheils in Arien und Tripeln angetroffen.

3 Da aber einige in mehrstimmige (Sachen) gefunden würden, so werden die übrigen Stimmen dermaßen gesetzt, daß solche keine Mißhelligkeit spüren lassen.

4 Dieser Figurae Exempel so ich aus anderen hergenommen, mögen anstatt mehrerer Regeln dienen: zumahl weil, wie ich dafür halte, es allemahl besser ist, dieselben gänzlich zu meiden.

5 Es kommen auch bey einigen *Authoribus* außer denen Vorbereitungen zu denen *Cadentzen* in denen *Arien*, und sonsten dergl. Härtingkeiten für, welches sich mit großen *Judicio* zu gebrauchen. Und wären aller *Componisten* bißweilen übel genug genommene *Freyheiten* unmöglich in Regeln zu fassen. Es wird einer an besagten in *Stylo communi* genug haben. Im übrigen lasse ich ihm frey ein mehreres als gut anzunehmen, oder alles (als) böse zu verwerffen.

1 *Cadentiae duriusculae* are those (cadences) in which rather peculiar dissonances precede the two final notes.

2 They appear almost only in solo song and for the most part in arias and triple metre sections.

3 If they are found in polyphonic compositions, the other voices have to be set in such a way that they do not cause any conflict or unpleasantness.

4 The examples of these figures that I took from other composers may, in the place of several rules, serve as demonstration, the more so because, in my opinion, it is better to avoid them entirely.

5 With some authors this type of harshness occurs apart from the preparations of cadences and things like that, but they should be applied with great discernment. It is impossible to condense into rules the sometimes horrible liberties some composers take. The *stylus communis* includes a sufficient amount of examples. For the rest I leave him free to accept most things as good or to reject everything as evil.

Bernhard gives three short examples (ex.13).¹² He does not give a clear explanation as to the origins of the *cadentia duriuscula*. However, in reference to other musical figures, he suggests that they originated from the improvisation of singers and instrumentalists:¹³

Nachgehends hat man *observiret*, daß künstliche Sänger auch *Instrumentalisten*, wann dergleichen Sachen zu machen gewesen, von den Noten hier und dort etwas abgewichen, und also einige anmutige Art der *Figuren* zu erfinden Anlaß gegeben; denn was mit vernünftigen Wohl-Laut kan gesungen werden, mag man auch wohl setzen.¹⁴

Following this, it has been observed that artful singers and instrumentalists, in places where it was appropriate to do so, moved only now and then a little away from the written notes, creating elegant figures this way. Thus, what can be sung with good sounding effect might as well be written.

What is most remarkable about Bernhard's commentary on the *cadentia duriuscula* is that it is descriptive, and certainly not prescriptive. Even

Ex.14 (a) Examples of *cadentia duriuscula* from Bartolomeo Bismantova, *Compendio musicale* (1677); (b) realizations of the figures

(a)

Preparamento alla Cadenza di 4.^a e 3.^a Mano in C.^a e 3.^a

M. D.	11. 13.	11. 13.
	10. 12.	10. 12.
M. S.	C. C.	I. I.
	I. I.	I. I.

(b)

more telling, his later treatise, the *Ausführlicher Bericht* (in essence a later and shorter version of the *Tractatus*), leaves out the *cadentia duriuscula* entirely. The popularity of this figure among his contemporaries is nonetheless convincingly demonstrated by the abundance of examples in their compositions.

A somewhat later treatise writer, Bartolomeo Bismantova, similarly describes the *cadentia duriuscula* in its essential form. His thoroughbass treatise, *Compendio musicale* (1677), contains an example, now labelled *Preparamento alla Cadenza di 4a e 3a* (ex.14). Bismantova clearly indicates how the realization of the figures should be divided between the hands (*mano destra* and *mano sinistra*).

An even later description of this figure can be found in Henry Purcell's chapter on counterpoint in Playford's *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick* (1694).¹⁵ Here he gives examples of typical Italian progressions, which he describes simply as 'the Third and Fourth together' (ex.15). The example shows, confirmed by its complete figures, that in the upper voices the note-combination of D/C is repeated five times.

Ex.15 Henry Purcell's example of *cadentia duriuscula* from John Playford, *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick* (1694)

There is another sort of Discord used by the Italians not yet mentioned neither, which is the Third and Fourth together, to introduce a Cioffe. As for Example.

Other sources of information on performance practice

Given the limited discussion of *cadentia duriuscula* found in contemporary treatises, one must turn to an examination of similar passages in composed music for information about the *basso continuo* realization

of these passages. These might include: (1) written-out examples in lute tablature, e.g. Kapsberger, 'Gia risi del mio mal' (ex.6); (2) polyphonic compositions, e.g. Mazzocchi's five-voice madrigal 'Uscite à mille' (ex.10) and Frescobaldi's 'Cento partite' for harpsichord or organ (ex.16); (3) *cadentiae duriusculae* with figures supplied by the composer: (e.g. exx.2, 5, 10, 11, with figures by Peri and Mazzocchi).

The written-out accompaniment

Ex.6 shows written-out *cadentiae duriusculae* from the lute tablature of Kapsberger's 'Gia risi del mio mal'. At the essential dissonant places the vocal part is doubled in the accompaniment. In both cadences the suspension 5/4 note-combination A/G, above the dominant bass note D, is anticipated in the earlier chord (7/6) with exactly the same two notes.

There is one remarkable difference between ex.6a and 6b. In ex.6a the 7/6 combination on the B is preceded by another 7th, now prepared, between bass and vocal part on the C, with the result of two 7ths following each other between the bass and the vocal part. On this bass note C, Kapsberger did not write the A/G combination, which in that case would have caused a 7/6/5 note-cluster, but wrote the 6/3 instead. We can conclude that Kapsberger wrote his realization *with* and *against* the vocal part. By realizing the bass line according to the aforementioned rules and, at the same time, doubling the vocal part, he confirmed and stressed the effect of dissonance between bass and solo part.

Polyphonic examples

Frescobaldi, in his 'Cento partite sopra passacagli' for solo harpsichord, wrote the *cadentia duriuscula* in several places (bars 4, 59–60, 188–9, 218–19) (ex.16).¹⁶ Both cadences in bars 4 and 59–60 are similar. They are rather short, and the 5/4 chord is

preceded only by 6/4/3. In bar 188–9 the 5/4 chord is preceded by 6/5, 5/4 and 4/3 above a chromatic ascending bass line. In ex.16 the 5/4 chord is preceded by 10/9, 4/3 and 6/5 above a partly chromatic descending bass line. In all examples, the repeated interval of a second (the 5/4 note-combination above the penultimate bass note) is placed in the upper parts. The dissonances sound together with the complete consonant harmony—which, while not always written out in full above the bass, is implied by the context of the progression.¹⁷

Cadentia duriuscula figured by the composer

An early example with figures provided by the composer is Peri's recitative from *Euridice* (ex.2). Here he writes single figures, indicating major 3rds and a 4th (11), under all bass notes of the cadence, except below the 'rather peculiar dissonance' where the B in the bass forms a 4th with the E in the vocal part. The absence of a figure at this point suggests that Peri expected the continuo player to follow the rules for the realization of unfigured bass lines, which made the figuring of such a place redundant. According to these rules given in the 17th-century *basso continuo* treatises (by Bianciardi, Agazzari, Banchieri, Praetorius and Penna, just to mention a few),¹⁸ the thoroughbass player is expected to play a 6/3 chord with a major 6th when the bass is descending a tone or a semitone. The 6th has to be major because it must resolve to a perfect consonance—in this case, of course, the octave—via the nearest imperfect consonance. By playing this 6/3 in combination with the vocal part—whether we double the vocal part or not—the result is a 4/3 chord. However, in terms of counterpoint, the 4th is a dissonance that has to resolve into the 3rd; they may not sound together. This is probably the reason why the 4/3 chord is not mentioned in counterpoint—or

Ex.16 Girolamo Frescobaldi, 'Cento partite sopra passacagli', from *Il primo libro di toccate* (1637), bars 218–21

Ex.17 Realizations of the figures in ex.2 (Peri, 'Per quel vago bosschetto')

thoroughbass treatises—at all before the third quarter of the 17th century. One reference to this chord can be found in Bismantova (ex.14).

As indicated by Peri's figures, major 3rds have to be played above the first A and above the G. While an accompanist might be tempted to add a 4th (D) to the first A chord as an anticipation to the chords G and second A (figured with 11), the sharp in the figure negates this possibility: the C# cannot sound together with the D (ex.17). Moreover, the sharp above the A also indicates that a 5th (or 6/5—but by no means a 6th without a 5th) has to be played above the next bass note G: the major 3rd (C#) *must* resolve into a pure 5th above G (D). Since the E in the vocal part forms a 6th with this G, a 6/5 chord will be the sounding result whether or not we double the vocal part. The 5th above the G acts as the preparation for the 4th (or 11th) above the next bass note A, which will resolve in the major 3rd above the last A. If there would not have been any figures, this example could have been realized according to ex.17b. In the present situation, the example has to be realized as in ex.17a.

The other example by Peri (ex.5) is a half cadence. Apart from that, it resembles the cadences by Frescobaldi (ex.8) and Rasi (ex.4): in all three examples an A in the solo voice is written against a G in the bass, creating the interval of a 9th. In Peri's example (bar 34) the bass note G requires not only a 3rd (B) and 5th (D), but also the octave. This doubled G acts both as the resolution of the F# on beat one, as well as the preparation for the 4th above the D in beat three. This G will, of course, sound very harsh against the solo voice. However, the figures indicate that this is indeed what Peri intended.

Similarly, Mazzocchi also wrote figures for cadences in exx.10 and 11 in order to clarify the

harmonic progression and to ensure that certain dissonances would be performed by the continuo player(s). In ex.10 the figures have two functions: they represent the intervals formed by the vocal parts, but indicate additional notes for the *basso continuo* realization. In bar 15 a sharpened 6th is added to the 4th in the figure, even though this G# is not to be found in the vocal parts; likewise, a 3rd (D) must be played in the accompaniment, even though it is not figured. This is also the case for the 6/5 chord on G in bar 16: the 5th (D) is not in the vocal part, but it is indicated by the figure. Again, in ex.11 Mazzocchi wrote a sharpened 4th, followed by a 6 above the B. The sharpened 4th, F#, must resolve to the G in the realization, thereby making an unavoidable clash with the A in the vocal part (beat 3).

The above examples are clear indications that Mazzocchi's figures are not simply an aid for the continuo player to prevent the playing of wrong chords, or as a warning to avoid the playing of the indicated dissonances. These figures rather serve to make the harmony full and complete.

The realization of the *cadentia duriuscula*

Ex.18 recapitulates exx.1–12, but whereas those examples were in approximate chronological order, here the material is arranged according to the type of harmonic progression. Each example of *cadentia duriuscula* is given in three versions, A, B and C. The composer's original figures are written *above* the bass line. The figures below the bass line are added by me.

The figures below all A examples are according to the rules from the above-mentioned contemporary treatises for playing unfigured bass lines. The figures below all B examples are, in a number of cases (exx.1–8), the same figures from the A example,

Ex.18 Analysis of exx.1-12

(a) = ex.1

Figure 1: Musical score for example 1. The treble staff contains three measures labeled A, B, and C. The bass staff contains three measures with figured bass notation: 6 5/3 #, 4/3 6/5 5/4 #, and a final measure with a whole note chord.

(b) = ex.2

Figure 2: Musical score for example 2. The treble staff contains three measures labeled A, B, and C. The bass staff contains three measures with figured bass notation: #6 5/3 5/4 #, #6 5/4 6/5 5/4 #, and a final measure with a whole note chord.

(c) = ex.12

Figure 3: Musical score for example 12. The treble staff contains three measures labeled A, B, and C. The bass staff contains three measures with figured bass notation: 6/3 #5/3 5/4 #, #4/3 #5/4 #6/5 5/4 #, and a final measure with a whole note chord.

(d) = ex.8

Figure 4: Musical score for example 8. The treble staff contains three measures labeled A, B, and C. The bass staff contains three measures with figured bass notation: 5/3 5/3 6 6 5/4 #, 5/3 5/3 9/5 6/4 5/4 #, and a final measure with a whole note chord.

(e) = ex.4

Figure 5: Musical score for example 4. The treble staff contains three measures labeled A, B, and C. The bass staff contains three measures with figured bass notation: #6 5/3 5/4 #, #6 9/5 5/4 #, and a final measure with a whole note chord.

(f) = ex.5

Figure 6: Musical score for example 5. The treble staff contains three measures labeled A, B, and C. The bass staff contains three measures with figured bass notation: 6 5/8 5/4 #3/2 #, # 5/4 9/5 5/4 3/2 #, and a final measure with a whole note chord.

(g) = ex.3

A B C

5 5 5 6 5 4 # 5 5 6 7 5 4 #

(h) = ex.6

A B

7 6 5 4 # 5 7 6 5 4 #

(i) = ex.7

A B C

6 5 # 7 6 5 # 7 6 5 #

(j) = ex.9

A B C

#6 5 6 5 4 # 4 3 4 5 6 7 5 4 # 4 3 4 5 6 7 5 4 #

(k) = ex.10

A B C

#6 5 6 6 5 4 # 4 #6 5 6 7 6 5 4 # 4 3 4 5 6 7 5 4 #

(l) = ex.11

A B C

3 #4 6 3 #4 6 3 #4 6

6 5 5 4 # 7 6 5 4 #

combined with extra figures representing the vocal part.

In the other cases (exx.9, 11), below the bass lines of the B examples, I have added figures based on the written-out examples of Kapsberger's 'Gia risi del mio mal' (ex.6), Frescobaldi's examples from 'Cento partite' (ex.16) and Mazzocchi's madrigal 'Uscite à mille' (ex.10). With 'Gia risi del mio mal', I simply figured the realizations as they are given by Kapsberger himself. As for 'Uscite à mille', I only added simple figures to the A example in order to demonstrate that figures according to *prima prattica* rules would have been sufficient for a correct realization.

Analysis of all the examples in ex.18 shows that, above the penultimate cadential bass note (the dominant) one can play—and in some cases one must play—first the suspension 4th together with the 5th, after which the 4th will resolve into the 3rd. Typical for the *cadentia duriuscula* is that the *second*, formed by this note-combination of 4th and 5th, appears already above one or more of the preceding bass notes (and in most cases the vocal part is included in this second), giving rise to other combinations of figures, e.g.

the 4/3 sonority in exx. 1, 2, 12

the 9/8 sonority in exx.8, 4, 5

the 7/6 sonority in exx.3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11

This is demonstrated in the C part of every example in ex.18.

Occasionally, there are other consonant chords like 6/5 and/or 5/3 between the *duriuscula* chord and the penultimate suspension. Sometimes there is more than one 'duriuscula' chord in the cadence, as in Frescobaldi's 'Aria di Romanesca' (ex.8) and Mazzocchi's 'Uscite à mille' (ex.10).

At this point let us return to the question: how might a continuo realization exploit dissonance either with or against a voice. And how should a thoroughbass player harmonize unfigured *cadentiae duriusculae* in particular? If this musical figure did indeed originate in the practice of improvisation, as stated by Christoph Bernhard, a simple cadence form must have been the basis on which both singers and bass players began to make variations. It is not difficult to imagine how this figure may have developed in actual practice. In ex.19 I suggest a possible model of development. In ex.19a the cadence is written in its simplest form. In ex.19b I have added ornamental notes to the upper voice. In ex.19c ornamental notes are also added to the bass line, while in ex.19d the vocal line is simplified. As is illustrated by examples 1–12, in many cases the available space in the cadence has been used, or extra bass notes added immediately preceding the cadence, to add harmonies or ornaments that could enhance the dramatic expression of the text.

The written-out accompaniment and the examples figured by the composer make it clear that most of these cadences can be accompanied correctly both with and without the doubling of the dissonances of the vocal part. In written-out accompaniments (for instance, lute tablatures) the vocal part is often partly or even completely doubled, which makes doubling a possibility supported by historical sources. This, however, is rather a matter of personal taste, and may also depend upon the instrument used. Harsh note-combinations will usually sound less penetrating when played on a chitarrone than on a harpsichord, let alone an organ.¹⁹ However, if composers specified instruments at all, as Monteverdi does in *L'Orfeo*, this does not seem to concern the dissonance treatment.

Ex.19 Model of development of *cadentia duriuscula*

The dynamic shaping of the text could also influence a decision about whether or not to double the vocal part. Composers who use such extreme musical figures like *cadentia duriuscula* are demonstrating a preference for abrasive sounds. Where the text is intensely sorrowful, the music must not only express violent pain but also cause the listener to experience it. Similar effects can be heard in the madrigals of Gesualdo and Monteverdi, and in Frescobaldi's keyboard toccatas. These new dissonance treatments form an essential tool for the expressiveness of the music of this period. It is a pity that in most present-day performances these musical-rhetorical figures are not recognized or understood by the performers and consequently ignored, played down, or their harsh dissonances softened. A recent case is the new recording of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* directed by Emanuelle Haïm. To give one example: at the end of the second verse of *La Musica*'s recitative the text is 's'infiappar le più gelate menti' ('inflamm the coldest minds'). Monteverdi places the word *gelate* between the B in the vocal part and the C# in the bass, just before both cadence notes (ex.3). In the recording, this important C#, which causes the B in the vocal part to sound highly expressive, is practically inaudible.

Understanding musical-rhetorical figures, is obviously important for editors as well. Ex.12 serves to illustrate the problem of editing music with

unfigured bass lines without a thorough understanding of rhetorical figures and dissonance treatment. In Ottavia's lament 'Disprezzata regina' the figure with its note repetitions is, as usual, placed over a sorrowful text, below which the bass squirms its way towards the cadence. Monteverdi enhances this effect, making it even more sad and 'sighing' by adding *appoggiature* to the last two note repetitions. Ex.20a, which shows the editorial figuring added by the harpsichordist and musicologist Alan Curtis, who has not recognized or understood the *cadentia duriuscula*. In the first place, below the first 'i miei', above the bass note C, the 6/3 and not the 6/2 should be added to the #4. According to the contemporary rules a 6/#4/2 chord has to resolve into a 6/3 chord, but Monteverdi repeats the F#, which now becomes a 5th above the next bass note B. Only the 6/#4/3 chord can resolve in a 3/5 chord.

Second, the bass note A in the next bar does not descend to G, and thus does not form a so-called tenor-cadence. If that *had* been the case, then Curtis's figures, according to the contemporary *basso continuo* treatises, would have been correct. At this point, however, the bass will ascend a step, hence the G is an ornament (i.e. an *accento*) and not a suspension, so that a #6 is sufficient here. These two corrections merely result in a correct harmonization. The affective power is, however, strongly increased when a Frescobaldi-like harmonization, like the one shown

Ex.20 Claudio Monteverdi, 'Disprezzata regina', from *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1642): (a) with figures by Curtis; (b) with figures by the author (compare ex.12)

(a)

(b)

in ex.16, is applied here. Only after applying this harmonization does the whole phrase become coherent and, by application of these caustic note-combinations, obtain its intended sorrowful character.

That the realization of ex.20b can also be applied to Monteverdi's 'Ed è pur dunque vero' (ex.9) has already been demonstrated in ex.18j. Here it is possible to apply more than one *duriuscula* chord and even to play the characteristic combination of a 2nd in the realization on every bass note. This way of realizing the *cadentia duriuscula* will shape and unify the entire musical figure. Of course, it is also possible to play the repeated 2nds in the middle of the accompaniment and play the upper voice of the realization partly in contrary motion to the bass line. My suggested realization of this passage is shown in ex.21.

Ellipsis

In *stilo recitativo*, a very dissonant effect is occasionally created when the composer omits the resolution of a 4th or a 7th in the vocal part of the cadence. At the same time the continuo player does have to play those resolutions. In Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* there is an example in the recitative of Pastore (ex.22, at the word *pianto*). Monteverdi did not add figures to the

bass line here, so there is actually no information as to how to realize this cadence.

A similar passage is discussed in Christoph Bernhard's *Tractatus*. He calls this musical figure an *ellipsis* and explains that 'Ellipsis ist eine Auslaßung der sonst erfordernten Consonantz' ('*Ellipsis* is the leaving out of the otherwise required consonance').²⁰ Bernhard gives a number of different examples to demonstrate this figure; one of them closely resembles the final cadence of Monteverdi's *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*. The string parts accompany this cadence with only a 5th and an octave on the penultimate chord. It is unclear whether Monteverdi wants the continuo player to play the 5/4 suspension resolving to the 3rd or not. Considering the very serene and calm atmosphere of the text and the situation (after all, Clorinda expects to ascend to heaven), I would chose to leave out the 4-#3 here and only double the string parts. But this might be an exception to the general treatment of *ellipsis* in thoroughbass playing.

Two earlier examples of an *ellipsis* in the vocal part show that the accompaniment has been, or was supposed to be realized independently of the vocal part. The first example is the conclusion of Kapsberger's 'Interotte speranza' (ex.23). In the final

Ex.21 Claudio Monteverdi, 'Ed è pur dunque vero', from *Scherzi musicali* (1632), with a realization by the author (compare ex.9), bars 128–32

fa-bri-ca-te il se-pol-cro al-la mia vi-ta

6/4/3 8/5/4 10/6/5 10/7/6 5/4 #

Ex.22 Claudio Monteverdi, 'In questo lieto', from *L'Orfeo* (1609)

sel-ve ha-so-spi-ra-to'e pian-to.

cadence the vocal part forms a 4th against the bass, a dissonance that remains unresolved. By contrast, in the lute tablature the 4th does resolve, according to the rules, to the major 3rd. The second example, found in Peri's *Euridice* (ex.24), concerns an unresolved 7th. In Orfeo's recitative 'Funeste piaggie' we see in the vocal part how the 7th is prepared but not resolved, while at the same time above the bass note A a major 6th is prescribed by the composer. In both cases the resulting clash was clearly intentional.

Likewise, Monteverdi's ex.20 in the penultimate bar ends with an *ellipsis*. It is true that this cadence does have the resolution of the 3rd in the vocal part, but since this resolution sounds together with the last syllable of the word 'vita', which is connected to the final note with a tie, this major 3rd is rather an *accento*. In the abridged version of the *Tractatus*, the *Ausführlicher Bericht*, Bernhard once more explains the *ellipsis*, but this time he gives an addition to the explanation concerning the performance practice for the singers:

Und wenn in einer *Cadenz* die *Quarta* durch die *Tertia* nicht resolviret wird, sondern stehen bleibet. Das kömmet her aus

dem *Cercar della Nota*, wovon in der Manier in der 24.ten Regul. [i.e. 'Cercar della nota heißt ein Suchen der Noten, und wird mit dem *c* bezeichnet.'] Denn der Sänger muss es unten *resolviren*.

when in a cadence the 4th is not resolved but stays on. Here one has to apply the *cercar della nota* according to the 24th rule [i.e. 'Cercar della nota means a searching for the note, and is indicated by *c*.'], which means the singer has to sing the resolution from below.²¹

Bernhardt asks the singers to resolve the 4th from below as a short embellishing note (*cercar della nota*). This is exactly what happens in bar 131 of ex.21. When the continuo player resolves the A to G# in the third beat, the A in the solo voice is held until the fourth beat.

In the same manner Frescobaldi demonstrates his own treatment of *ellipsis* (ex.25): in the one voice the 4th is not resolved; in the other it is. This example also combines *cadentia duriuscula* with *ellipsis*. Again we find the note-combination of a 6th and a 7th on the third beat in bar 238. Instances like this, in which both the dissonance and its resolution are allowed to sound simultaneously, demonstrate that

Ex.23 Johann Hieronymus Kapsberger, 'Interotte speranza', final bar, from *Libro primo di arie passeggiate* (1612)

The image shows a musical score for the final bar of 'Interotte speranza' by Johann Hieronymus Kapsberger. It consists of three staves: a vocal part in treble clef with lyrics 'ro - go mi - o', a bass part in bass clef, and a lute tablature transcription in bass clef. The tablature uses letters and accidentals to represent fret positions on the strings.

Ex.24 Peri, 'Funeste piaggie', from *Euridice* (realization in brackets by the author)

The image shows a musical score for 'Funeste piaggie' by Peri. It consists of two staves: a vocal part in treble clef with lyrics 'al suon dell' an - go - scio - se mie pa - ro - le' and a lute tablature transcription in bass clef. The tablature includes a bracketed section with accidentals, and the numbers 6, 11, and # are written below the staff.



Illus. 1 The frontispiece of the 1612 edition of Kapsberger's *Libro Primo di Arie Passeggiate à Una Voce con L'intavolatura del Chitarone*, from which Ex.23, 'Interotte Speranza' was taken

the resulting sonorities in certain contexts were sought and appreciated.

Conclusion

The musical figures discussed here, *cadentia duriuscula* and *ellipsis*, were originally developed through improvisation above typical cadential patterns as a means to express more powerfully the meaning of the text in vocal music. It is these typical formulas that were extended into a form of prolonged cadential preparation; still, the additional notes which fill out the bass line must nevertheless be harmonized according to the rules of the earliest thoroughbass

treatise writers, e.g. of the *prima prattica*. If continuo players do not have a working knowledge of these conventional counterpoint rules, difficulties arise when attempting to realize the unfigured bass lines of the *seconda prattica*.

What I further set out to demonstrate is that recognizing and understanding these figures is not only a prerequisite for the correct accompaniment of Italian 17th-century solo vocal music but also that active use of these figures can lead to a definite enhancement of the affect and the expression of the music without in any way impeding the singer.

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This paper is an extended version of a lecture with the same title given during the International Basso Continuo Symposium in the Holland Festival Early Music 1998 in Utrecht.

1 Issued as *Die Kompositionslehre Heinrich Schützens in der Fassung seines Schülers Christoph Bernhard*, ed. J. M. Müller-Blattau (Leipzig, 1926).

2 Francesco Bianciardi, *Breve regola per imparar a sonare sopra il basso con ogni sorte d'instrumento* (Siena, 1607); Agostino Agazzari, *Del suonare sopra il basso con tutti stromenti & uso loro nel concerto* (Siena, 1607); Adriano Banchieri, *L'organo suonarino* (Venice, 1611).

3 A detailed discussion of these treatises is given by T. de Goede,

'"Del sonare sopra il basso": over het uitwerken van vroeg zeventiende-eeuwse bassen', *Tijdschrift voor muziektheorie*, i (1996), pp.123–41, and in *Performance practice review*, x/1 (Spring 1997).

4 'E per maggiore intelligenza ne lasciar cosa di rilievo, restami à dire che alcuni compositori moderni, per maggior sicurezza segnano le Quinte e Seste, Settime & Seste, & simili, che nelle durezza & legature si vanno seguitando come qui.' Banchieri, *L'organo suonarino*, p.11.

5 See *Cantatas by Marc'Antonio Pasqualini*, ed. M. Murata, Italian Cantata in the Seventeenth Century (New York, 1985) and Francesco Gasparini, *L'armonico pratico al*

cimbalo (Venice, 1708; facsimile edn, Bologna, 2001), chap.9: 'Delle false de i recitativi, e del modo di far acciacature'.

6 In conservative dissonance treatment, both voices must begin from a consonant interval, move stepwise to the dissonant interval (of a 2nd, 4th, 7th or 9th), and then, again by stepwise motion, resolve to a consonance.

7 Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le istituzioni harmoniche* (Venice, 1558), book 3: *L'arte del contrapunto*, trans. G. A. Marco and C. V. Palisca (New Haven, 1968).

8 See O. Strunk, *Source readings in music history* (New York, 1950), pp.302, 393, 405, 413. F. Remppl, *Die*

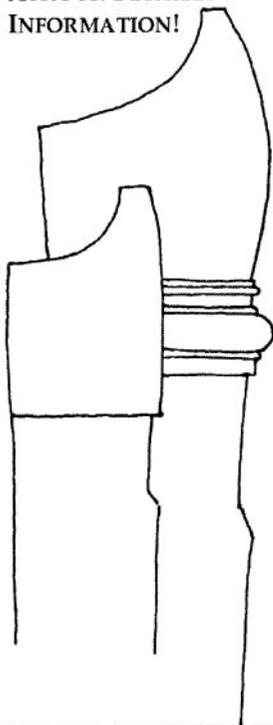


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Kontrapunkttraktate Vincenzo Galileis (Cologne, 1980); C. V. Palisca, *Studies in the history of Italian music and music theory* (Oxford, 1994), chap.2; Adriano Banchieri, *Cartella musicale, nel canto figurato, fermo & contrapunto* (Venice, 1614).

9 Palisca, *Studies in the history of Italian music and music theory*, p.29.

10 See *Die Kompositionslehre Heinrich Schützens*, ed. Müller-Blattau, p.42, §9; p.82.

11 According to D. Bartel, *Musica poetica: musical-rhetorical figures in German Baroque music* (Lincoln, NE, 1997).

12 *Die Kompositionslehre Heinrich Schützens*, ed. Müller-Blattau, p.82.

13 *Die Kompositionslehre Heinrich Schützens*, ed. Müller-Blattau, p.72, §§3-4; p.73, §3.

14 *Die Kompositionslehre Heinrich Schützens*, ed. Müller-Blattau, p.147, §2.

15 J. Playford, *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick* (London, 12/1694; R/ New York, 1972) (containing also *The Art of Descant, or composing Musick in Parts: Made very Plain and Easy by the late Mr. Henry Purcell*). Purcell discusses the 'Sharp seventh [called *heterolepsis* by Bernhard] and *Flat Seventh* [later called the diminished seventh chord] two Notes mightily in use among the *Italian Masters*' on pp.181-2. 'The *Flat Sixth* before a *Close* [later called the Neapolitan sixth chord] is a Favourite Note with the *Italians* . . .' 'There is another sort of *Discord* used by the *Italians* (. . .) which is the *Third* and *Fourth* together, to introduce a *Close*' (p.182).

16 Other examples from Frescobaldi can be found in *Il secondo libro di toccate* (1627), for instance in 'Canzona prima' (bar 40), 'Partite sopra ciaccona' (bars 29, 31) and 'Partite sopra passacagli' (bars 12, 21).

17 Although Mazzocchi's 'Uscite à mille' (ex.10) is a polyphonic work, it will be discussed in the section on figured examples.

18 Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma musicum*, iii (1619), pp.144-52; Lorenzo Penna, *Li primi albori musicali*, iii (Bologna, 1672). See also F. T. Arnold, *The art of accompaniment from a thorough-bass as practised in*

the xviii and xviii centuries (London, 1931).

19 Vincenzo Giustiniani says about the singers: 'They sing with one or at most three voices in concert with suitable instruments, as the Theorbo, or Chitarre, or the Cembalo, or with Organ, according to the circumstances.' *Discorso sopra la musica* (c.1628), trans. C. MacClintock (American Institute of Musicology, 1962).

20 *Die Kompositionslehre Heinrich Schützens*, ed. Müller-Blattau, p.84.

21 *Die Kompositionslehre Heinrich Schützens*, ed. Müller-Blattau, p.151.

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