MUSICAL TREATISES IN THE RENAISSANCE

by

MARIA RIKA MANIATES

The Music Library in the Edward Johnson Building at the University of Toronto considerable number of musical treatises from the 15th to the early 17th centuries in the form of facsimiles, translations and first editions. Since new items are added constantly to this growing collection, the following report does not represent an exhaustive bibliography on this subject. All the major treatises of this period are nevertheless included.

Although no individual theorist on this list evinces a single, inclusive conception of Renaissance and Reformation musical thought, an overall survey from Tinctoris to Praetorius presents the historian with a comprehensive understanding of a historically connected tradition in the history of ideas and musical style. With the exception of an odd dictionary or critical tract, the treatises are concerned mainly with rules of theory and composition, or description of instruments and performance practice. However, they also contain a wealth of information about relationships between composers, theorists and men of letters, historical and aesthetic orientation, the history of philosophical concepts, and to a lesser extent, sociological background. While the former are the avowed subjects covered by the treatises, and are therefore recognized and discussed by musical historians, the latter belong to a secondary, and often allusive, level of the works, and are therefore meaningful only when approached from other areas of cultural history. To obtain these insights, the humanist scholar must examine not only the preface, which is easily accessible and rewarding, but also the more formidable body of the treatises where revealing remarks are hidden in unexpected places.

Since detailed annotations are not practical, I have included a brief comment on the theorists themselves plus a general description of the contents of each treatise. Further information and relevant bibliography can be obtained in G. Reese, Music in the Renaissance, and Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart (F. Blume ed.). The bibliography proceeds in approximate chronological order: the rubric (MC) indicates that an item is available on microcard.

HOTHBY, John. (1415-1487). This English theoretician lived most of his life in Italy. He taught in Lucca from 1467-86 and then returned to the court of Henry VII in England.

CB
359
RV

La Calliopea legale (s.d.) Transl., A. Seay, The Musical Works of John Hothby, 1963. "Calliopea" is the humanistic symbol for the human voice; "legale" refers to "canto legale" or "cantus planus" (plainchant) as opposed to mensural polyphony.

Regulae supra contrapunctum (ca. 1475). E. de Coussemaker, Scriptorum de musica medii aevi nova series, III, 333-34, and also in Seay, The Musical Works of John Hothby. A

very concise treatise dealing with the rules of intervals and proper voice leading.

TINCTORIS, Johannes. (1436-1511). Although well educated in law and mathematics, Tinctoris was known as a composer and theorist. His numerous writings are extremely important as documents in the development of musical thought and style during the early Renaissance. His five most important treatises are given below. Until 1487, Tinctoris was attached to the court of Ferdinand of Aragon in Naples. After that date, he lived in Nivelles.

Terminorum musicae diffinitorium (written ca. 1473) Naples, 1494. Latin and English edition, Dictionary of Musical Terms, C. Parrish ed., London, 1963. Except for a 13th-century MS fragment, Tinctoris' dictionary is the first of its kind.

Proportionale musices (Naples, ca. 1474). Coussemaker, Scriptorum, IV, 153-77. English transl. by A. Seay in Journal of Music Theory, 1: 22-75 (1957). In the celebrated preface, Tinctoris cites Dunstable and the English school as the source of a new style of polyphony on the continent. The work itself deals with the complicated system of time signatures in mensural polyphony.

Liber de arte contrapuncti, Naples, 1477. Coussemaker, Scriptorum, IV, 79-153. In the preface, Tinctoris shows his awareness of the important stylistic innovations of Dufay's generation. English transl. by A. Seay, The Art of Counterpoint, Musicological Studies and Documents, Vol. V, 1961.

Complexus effectuum musices (Naples, s.d.) Coussemaker, Scriptorum, IV, 191-200. In this unusual treatise devoted to musical aesthetics, Tinctoris compiles a systematic list of musical effects.

De inventione et usu musicae, Naples, ca. 1485. K. Weinmann, Johannes Tinctoris und sein unbekannter Traktat...., 1917. This incomplete work features short discussions of instruments and performance practice.

GUILELMUS Monachus (dates unknown). No information about William the Monk is available.

De praeceptis artis musice et practice compendiosus libellus, (ca. 1180-90). Coussemaker, Scriptorum, III, 273-307.
This treatise is one of the early sources on fauxbourdon and gymel practice.

CAZA, Francesco (dates unknown).

Tractato vulgare del canto figurato, Milan, 1492. Facs. ed., J. Wolf, 1922.

RAMOS DE PAREJA, Bartolomé (1440-1491). A Spanish theorist of remarkably progressive ideas, Ramos lectured at the university of Salamanca and also taught in Bologna (although he did not occupy the chair in music at that university).

Musica practica, Bologna, 1482. Facs, ed., J. Wolf, 1901.
This controversial treatise presents many revolutionary ideas: major and minor thirds are treated as consonant intervals; a new definition of pervading imitation is proposed as well as an octave system instead of the Guidonian hexachord. Ramos also favours equal-tempered tuning.

GAFFURIO, Franchino (1451-1522). Gaffurio studied both theology and music as a young man. Around 1480, he met Tinctoris in Naples and engaged him in a series of public debates. In 1484, Gaffurio settled in Milan where he apparently established a music school.

Theorica musica, Milan, 1492. (First publ. Naples 1482) (MC)
Theoretical concepts of music modelled on Greek tradition.

Practica musicae, Milan 1496.. (MC) Gaffurio's most famous treatise contains a valuable discussion of compositional practices in the 15th century. He mentions the importance of vertical sonority as opposed to the medieval concept of stratified polyphony. Gaffurio is here interested in music as a living experience, not as an exemplar of theoretical speculation.

De harmonia, Milan, 1518. (MC) This discussion of classical Greek theory sparked a controversy with Spataro. See below.

SPATARO, Giovanni (1458-1541). Spataro, a pupil of Ramos de Pareja, was influential as a teacher and initiated a tradition of theory and musical thought in Bologna.

Dilucida et probatissime demonstratione ... contra certe frivole et vane excusatione da Franchino Gafurio (maestro de li errori),

Bologna 1521. Facs. ed., J. Wolf, 1925. This work attacks Gaffurio on his theories of tuning.

VIRDUNG, Sebastian (ca. 1500). Virdung was active at the court chapel in Heidelberg from 1500 on.

Musica getuscht, Basel, 1511. Facs. ed., L. Schrade, 1931.

The earliest detailed discussion of instruments and the practice of transcribing vocal music for instrumental performance.

FABER, Nicolaus (dates unknown). Faber was priest and singer to William IV of Bavaria from 1511-1550.

Musicae rudimenta, (Augsburg) 1516. (MC) This little didactic treatise was a very popular handbook for school children.

AARON, Pietro (1480-ca. 1545). An important humanist scholar and musical theorist, Aaron was active in Venice from 1525-45.

Libri tres de institutione harmonica, Bologna, 1516. (MC)

This work, criticized by Gaffurio regarding the topics of tuning and mensural notation, contains the first systematic formulation of integrated polyphony.

Il toscanello in musica, Venice, 1529. (First ed. 1523) (MC)

This well-known treatise discusses many subjects from a progressive point of view. The portion on accidentals sheds light on the practice of musica ficta.

Trattato della natura ... di tutti gli tuoni di canto figurato, Venice, 1525. (MC) Aaron proposes new criteria for judging the mode of polyphonic pieces.

FOGLIANO, Ludovico (d. 1539). Fogliano spent most of his career in Modena. Besides his musical writings, he also planned to publish Italian translations of Aristotle and Averroes. The latter works exist in draft MSS.

Musica theorica, Venice 1529. (MC) Fogliano suggests a tuning system which is closer to just intonation than to the Pythagorean system. He preceded Zarlino in this respect.

ORNITHOPARCHUS, (VOGELMAIER) Andreas (ca. 1485-ca. 1535). Vogelmaier, magister artium at Tübingen around 1516, is the first important German theorist of the 16th century.

Musice active micrologus, Leipzig, 1519. (First ed. 1519) (MC)

This compendium is one of the earliest sources dealing with the problem of tactus in polyphonic music. An English translation by the composer, John Dowland, appeared in London in 1609.

AGRICOLA, Martin (1486-1556). Agricola, whose real name was Martin Sore, was a composer and private music teacher in Magdeburg. In 1527 he was appointed cantor at the first Lutheran church in that city.

Musica instrumentalis deudsch, Wittenberg, 1529. R. Eitner, ed. A description of instruments and instrumental music based on Virdung (see above), but with considerable new material added.

RHAU, Georg (1488-1548). Rhau was cantor of the Thomasschule in Leipzig from 1518-20, and subsequently founded his important publishing house in Wittenberg. He edited most of Luther's writings as well as numerous collections of polyphonic music.

Enchiridion musicae mensuralis, n.p., 1531. (MC)

GLAREANUS, Henricus (1488-1563). An important Swiss humanist and friend of Erasmus, Glareanus taught mathematics, philosophy and musical theory in Basel, Paris and Freiburg.

Isagoge in musicen, Basel, 1516. (MC) Like Rhau's work, this treatise is a practical introduction to the rudiments of music.

Dodekachordon, Basel, 1547. (MC) In this celebrated work, Glareanus expounds his system of twelve modes, extending the traditional eight inherited from medieval theory. In addition to the theoretical discussion, he gives many valuable descriptions and evaluations of composers contemporary to Josquin Desprez, as well as numerous examples of their compositions.

GANASSI, Silvestre de (b. 1492). Ganassi was a teacher and player of both the recorder and gamba. As an instrumentalist, he was attached to the church of San Marco in Venice.

Opera intitulata Fontegara, Venice, 1535. English transl. from a German ed., 1956. An instruction manual for playing the recorder including rules of ornamentation.

Regola rubertina, Venice, 1542-1543. (MC) One of the earliest known viol methods.

HEYDEN, Sebaldus (1499-1561). Heyden was rector and cantor in several churches of Nurnberg.

De arte canendi, Nurnberg, 1540 (First ed., 1537). (MC) A didactic treatise on polyphonic music.

COCLICUS, Adrianus Petit (ca. 1500-1563). An extremely colorful character, Coclicus claimed to have studied with Josquin Desprez.

He taught at a number of German universities from 1546-50 and finally settled in Copenhagen after 1556 as organist at the court chapel.

Compendium musices descriptum ab Adrianus Petit Coclico discipolo Josquini de Pres, Nurnberg, 1552. (MC) Facs. ed., M. Bukofzer, Documenta Musicologica, 1954. The statements of this fantastic personality have dubious authenticity. His treatise was supposedly written to shed light on "musica reservata," a performance term whose specific meaning still remains a mystery. Coclicus also describes the teaching method of Josquin.

LISTENIUS, Nicolaus (dates unknown). Listenius resided at the court in Brandenburg in the 1530's. Very little is known about his background, but his encyclopedic treatise was extremely influential on the subsequent development of German theory.

Musica, Wittenberg, (First ed., 1537) 1548 (MC)

BERMUDO, Juan (ca. 1510-after 1550). Bermudo, a Spanish theologian and musician, served several bishops of Andalusia.

Declaración de instrumentos musicales, Osuna, 1555. Facs. ed., M.S. Kastner, Documenta Musicologica, 1957. This handbook contains a comprehensive discussion of general musical theory, as well as a description of instruments, tunings, fingerings and repertoire.

SANTA MARIA, Tomas de (1510-1570). Santa Maria was the leading organist in Valladolid from 1565-70.

Libro llamado arte de tañer fantasía, Valladolid, 1565. (MC)
One of the earliest theoretical discussions of the fantasia genre for keyboard instruments and lute.

VICENTINO, Nicola (1511-1572). Vicentino was a learned humanist and musician in the service of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este at Ferrara and Rome.

L'antica ridotta alla moderna prattica, Roma 1555. (MC) Here Vicentino develops an experimental theory of scales based on his interpretation of the ancient Greek diatonic, chromatic and enharmonic genera. In the same work, he describes his invention, the archicembalo: an instrument with six keyboards capable of producing the quarter-tones characteristic of the enharmonic genus.

SALINAS, Francisco de (1513-1590). A blind organist, Salinas served the Duke of Alba in Naples from 1553-58 and returned to Spain in 1567 as professor of music at the university of Salamanca.

De musica libri septem, Salamanca, 1577. (MC) Salinas restates many of Zarlino's theories (see below) and makes an important contribution to the concept of mean-tone temperament. His treatise also contains examples of Spanish popular music of the 16th century.

ZARLINO, Gioseffo (1517-1590). Zarlino studied composition with Adrian Willaert in Venice and became maestro di cappella at San Marco from 1565-90.

Le institutione harmoniche, Venice, 1558. (MC) A 1573 edition of this work is available in the Rare Book Room of the Music Library. Zarlino's treatise, the most influential work of the century, is a compendium of knowledge: counterpoint, modes and ethos, expression and text setting are all discussed. His system of just intonation based on Ptolemy raised a violent controversy with his former pupil, Galilei. (See below)

Dimostrazione harmoniche, Venice, 1571. (MC) A copy of the original edition is in the Rare Book Room. This exposition of intervals and the division of the monochord takes the form of a series of dialogues which were said to have happened at the home of Adrian Willaert, Zarlino's teacher.

GALILEI, Vincenzo (1520-91). Galilei was an important composer and writer active in the Florentine Camerata and father of the scientist Galileo. His thought was partially influenced by the noted humanist Girolamo Mei.

Dialogo della musica antica e della moderna, Florence, 1581. (MC) This treatise is considered to be the manifesto of the new style of monody.

Discorso intorno alle opere di messer Gioseffo Zarlino di Chioggia. Florence, 1589. (MC) Galilei vigorously Zarlino's ideas as exemplifying an outmoded aesthetic of Renaissance polyphony. Zarlino was defended by Artusi, the notorious critic of Monteverdi, in his Trattato apologetico in difesa dele' Opere del R. Zarlino da Chioggia, 1590.

ORTIZ, Diego (1525-?). Ortiz, a Spanish composer and performer, served as musician in the vice-regal court of the Duke of Alba in Naples from 1555-1570.

Tratado de glosas sobre clausulas, Rome, 1553. Facs. ed., M. Schneider, 1913. This famous treatise contains rules for instrumental ornamentation and improvisation, or variations, on ostinato basses.

FINCK, Hermann (1527-1558). Finck was active as a composer and organist in Wittenberg.

Practica musica, Wittenberg, 1556. (MC) This didactic treatise contains a discussion of improvisation and notated ornamentation in polyphonic music. Finck also makes one of the few documentary references to Nicolas Gombert.

BOTTRIGARI, Ercole (1531-1612). Bottrigari was both a musician and humanist scholar well versed in Greek and Latin. In addition to his performance treatise, he published a work on the theories of Aristoxenos.

Il desiderio, Venice, 1594. (MC) Performance practice and instrumental ensembles are accurately described.

ARTUSI, Giovanni Maria (1540-1613). Artusi, a pupil of Zarlino, was active as a teacher and writer in Bologna.

L'arte del contrapunto, Venice, 1586. (MC) This composition treatise describes the rules of polyphonic writing.

L'Artusi ovvero delle imperfettioni della musica moderna, Venice, 1600. (MC) As a conservative theorist, Artusi attacks the modern madrigal with its emphasis on dramatic text declamation and emotional expressivity. He deplored the neglect of polyphonic voice-leading and harmonically prepared dissonance. His criticism of Monteverdi prompted the latter composer to write a defense of the modern practice in the preface to his fifth book of madrigals.

CERRETO, Scipione (1551-1633). Cerreto was active in Naples as a lutenist, theorist and music teacher.

Della prattica musica vocale e strumentale, Naples, 1601. (MC) This work is important as a reference to musical life and practice in Naples.

ZACCONI, Lodovico (1555-1627). Zacconi spent some time in Munich (1591-95) and finally settled in Venice.

Prattica di musica utile et necessaria, Venice, 1596. (MC) Because of its didactic function, this treatise contains a very straightforward discussion of theory and counterpoint. Several chapters are devoted to a description of the instruments used by Monteverdi and the early opera composers.

MORLEY, Thomas (1557-1602). Morley graduated Mus. Bac. from Oxford in 1558 and spent his career in London as organist at St. Paul's Cathedral and Gentleman of the Chapel Royal.

A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke, London, 1597. Facs. ed., E.H. Fellowes, 1937. This is the first treatise on 16th century theory and composition to be published in England.

CERONE, Pedro (1566-1626). This Italian theorist spent some time in Spain as a chapel singer to Philip II and III, but returned to Naples in 1610.

El melopeo y maestro, Naples, 1613. (MC) Cerone's retrospective treatise sums up the polyphonic style of Palestrina's generation. The excessive length and pedantic style of this work were ridiculed by Antonio Eximeno, the 18th-century Spanish writer and theorist.

DIRUTA, Girolamo (1561-1612?). Diruta, a pupil of Merulo and Zarlino, was a noted organist in Venice.

Il transilvano, Venice, 1593 and 1619. (MC) This work is a treatise on organ playing with emphasis on ornamentation and improvisation.

DEMANTIUS, Cristoph (1567-1643). Demantius was a music teacher in Freiburg from 1604-43.

Isagoge artis musicae, Onoldsbach, 1611. (First ed. 1602). (MC) Demantius' extremely popular instruction book saw its tenth edition in 1671. It is printed with Latin on one page and the corresponding German on the facing page. It also contains the first musical dictionary translating Italian, Latin and Greek terms into German.

GUMPELTZHAIMER, Adam (1559-1625).

Compendium musicae latino-germanicum, Augsburg, 1616. (MC)

PRAETORIUS, Michael (1571-1621). A German composer and theorist, Praetorius was Kapellmeister in Wolfenbuttel from 1612-21.

Syntagma musicum I and II, Wittenburg, 1615; III, Wolfenbuttel, 1619. (MC) Vol. III facs. ed., E. Bernouilli, 1916. This encyclopedic work contains much valuable information about late Renaissance and early Baroque music. I: ancient music and instruments. II: detailed description of 15th and 16th instruments. III: discussion of secular composition.

NOTICE: OWNERS OF RENAISSANCE LEGAL LITERATURE

Renaissance and Reformation is planning to devote one or two issues to Renaissance law books in public or private collections in or near Toronto. If you have any law books in your collection printed before 1680--Roman law, canon law, customary law, statutory law, or pleas--write to Natalie Zemon Davis, Department of Political Economy, University of Toronto.