

**JAMES WOOD**

**Gesualdo: *Sacrae Cantiones II***  
**An analysis towards reconstruction**

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## Introduction



Carlo Gesualdo (c.1560 – 1613), is without doubt one of the most controversial and fascinating figures in musical history. He has been referred to variously as ‘this great if disequilibrating composer’<sup>1</sup>, ‘this celebrated and illustrious Dilettante’<sup>2</sup>, ‘sadly amateurish’<sup>3</sup> and ‘inferior to no other composer, having discovered new inventions of composition adorned with thought and caprice so that all musicians and singers of the world have been given to marvel’<sup>4</sup>. Musicologists have been at pains to afford Gesualdo a place within the canon of 16<sup>th</sup>-century and early 17<sup>th</sup>-century music on account of his apparent lack of direct influence, claiming that his unprecedented experiments in chromaticism were without issue until the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and even then, only coincidentally), whilst composers throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been unanimous in their admiration of him, both as an icon of

avant-gardism and as a composer as masterly as he was visionary. But appreciation of his music has been influenced at various times both by his princely status and by his wild, obsessive and even criminal behaviour, which led to the notorious case of the murder of his first wife and her lover as they lay *in flagrante delicto*, a murder which he is well-known to have carefully organised and carried out himself.

Carlo Gesualdo was born into a well-to-do and music-loving family. His grandfather, Luigi Gesualdo, was granted the title of First Prince of Venosa by King Philip of Spain on the occasion of his father, Fabrizio’s marriage to Girolama Borromeo, sister of Carlo Borromeo and niece of Pope Pius IV; the promotion of Gesualdo’s uncle Alfonso to Cardinal in 1561 was undoubtedly also due to this connection. Fabrizio and Girolama had four children: Luigi, Carlo, Isabella and Eleanora; Luigi died at the age of just twenty, leaving Don Carlo as the only surviving male heir. His father, Fabrizio did not have the means to support an extensive musical court, but the court registers nevertheless reveal that he did maintain a small group of fine musicians. Among them were Gesualdo’s teachers, Giovanni Macque (from The Netherlands), who served in Fabrizio Gesualdo’s court from 1588-9, and Pomponio Nenna (from 1589). Other musicians who are known to have served in the Gesualdo court include the composer and lutenist, Fabrizio Filomarino, the composer and music theorist, Rocco Rodio, and composers, Scipione Stella, Scipione Dentice, Leonardo Effrem and Scipione Cerreto; we know that he profited greatly from this rich musical environment, becoming a keen and expert lutenist and harpsichordist. The great poet, Torquato Tasso visited Naples several times in the late 1580s and early 1590s, and it was from the first of these visits that Tasso and Gesualdo became close friends. Their friendship later resulted in a number of poems not only about Gesualdo himself but also about both his wives, as well as a substantial number of Gesualdo’s madrigal texts.

The premature death of Don Carlo’s only brother undoubtedly placed pressure on him to marry, and in 1586 his father arranged his marriage to his cousin, the beautiful Maria d’Avalos (who, at the age of only 25, had already been widowed twice, her previous husbands having apparently died from ‘an excess of connubial bliss’). The marriage was not a success, and it was not long before Maria became involved in an affair with Don Fabrizio Carafa, Duke of Andria, and this is what provoked the Prince, in 1590, to carry out his desperate and decisive acts of revenge. Believing that Don Carlo and Maria’s only son was in fact the illegitimate child of Maria and her lover, he is also alleged to have had the baby rocked to death while his musicians sang madrigals about the beauty of death.

In spite of this, just four years later his second marriage was arranged to Leonora d’Este, daughter of Duke Alfonso II of the noble Este family from Ferrara, and as a result he was taken into their court<sup>5</sup>. The couple had one son, but this marriage, too, was doomed to failure. Gesualdo soon began to mistreat Leonora, and around 1597 he returned alone to his castle in Gesualdo. Torn between her declared love for Don Carlo and her unhappiness at his mistreatment of her, she visited him only occasionally. Gesualdo thus spent long periods in isolation, and became increasingly obsessed with feelings of guilt and remorse. These feelings, and his constant prayers for forgiveness, are reflected in his sudden turn to writing sacred music after many years of writing only madrigals. His expression of guilt is manifest further in the almost obsessively penitential nature of the texts he selected, and the extreme intensity of their musical settings.

<sup>1</sup> Stravinsky

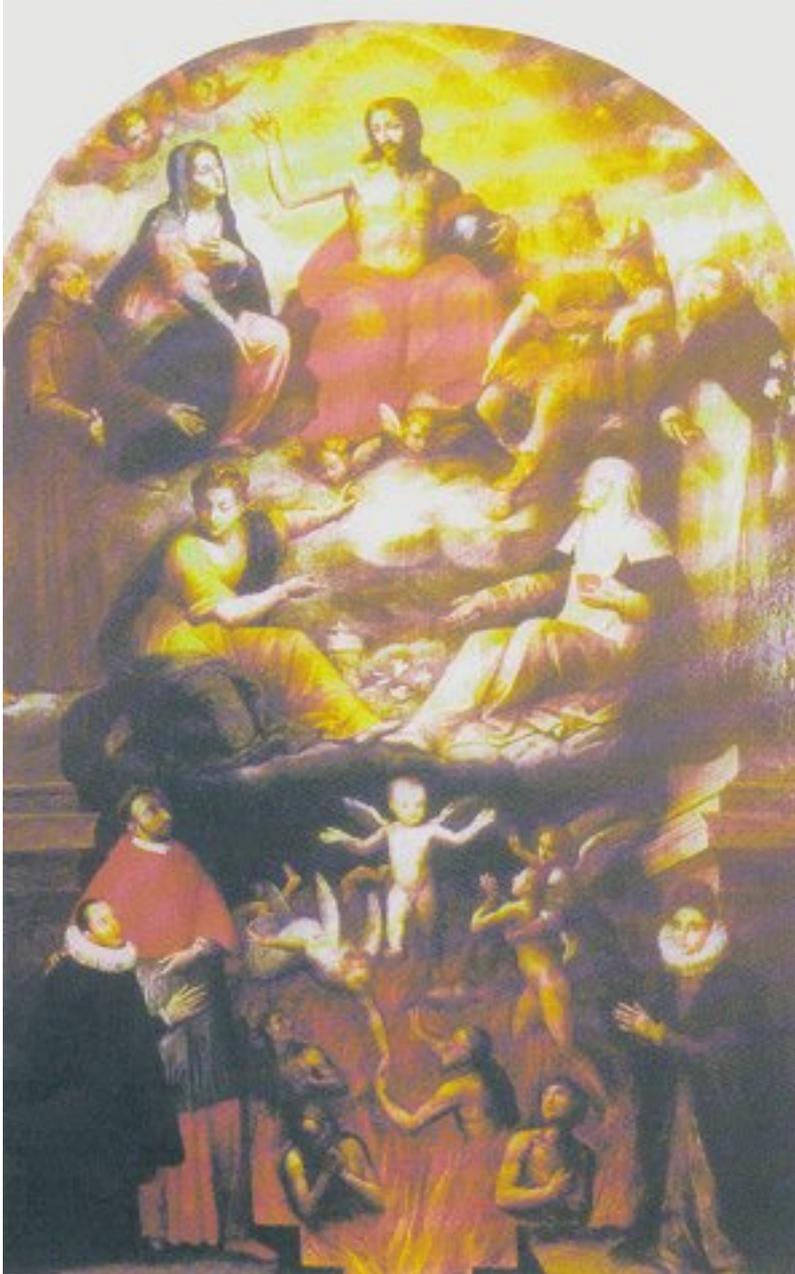
<sup>2</sup> Charles Burney: *A General History of Music From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* (1776-89), ed. Frank Mercer, 4 vols. (New York, 1957), iii, p.217-222

<sup>3</sup> James Haar: *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music in the Renaissance* (University of California Press, 1987), p.144

<sup>4</sup> Scipione Cerreto: *Della pratica musica vocale e strumentali*, (Naples 1601, repr. 1611) p.150

<sup>5</sup> The Court at Ferrara was known for having employed such eminent composers as Josquin, Obrecht, Isaac, Lasso, Willaert, Nicola Vicentino and Luzzasco Luzzaschi, and so Gesualdo became much inspired by this rich musical environment.

Soon after the unfortunate death of Don Carlo's and Leonora's son he also commissioned an altar painting for the *Santa Maria della Grazie* church in Gesualdo. The painting, '*Il perdono di Carlo Gesualdo*' by Giovanni Balducco, recalls the Last Judgement and shows Gesualdo kneeling in prayer in the lower left hand corner, with Jesus the Redeemer raising his right hand in absolution. Gathered all around are divine and saintly figures, including St Francis, whom Gesualdo adored<sup>6</sup>, St Carlo Borromeo (Gesualdo's uncle), St Dominic, the Archangel Michael and the Blessed Virgin Mary. All eyes are fixed on the Redeemer; most point fingers towards the sinner, Gesualdo. Meanwhile two mysterious figures, a male and female, are apparently being rescued from the flames of damnation, while the winged figure of an infant is innocently ascending above.



*Il perdono di Carlo Gesualdo*: Giovanni Balducco

<sup>6</sup> See *Sacrae Cantiones*, Book II, no. 18 – Francis, humble and poor, enters heaven rich and clothed in splendour, and he is honoured with celestial hymns.

But his feelings of guilt and remorse were not limited merely to artistic expression – we know that towards the end of his life he also indulged in masochistic self-flagellation, instructing his staff to whip him regularly; many believe that it was the wounds he suffered as a result of these regular beatings which led to his early death in 1613 at the age of just 53.

The first collection of sacred music to appear were the two Books of *Sacrae Cantiones*, printed in Naples by Constantino Vitali and published by Don Giovanni Pietro Cappuccio in 1603. These were followed by the three sets of *Tenebrae Responsoria* for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, published in 1611. During this crucial and isolated final period of his life he also produced the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Books Madrigals, both in five voices, and also a 7<sup>th</sup> Book in six voices, published posthumously in 1626, and which has sadly come down to us incomplete (only a single part-book, Quintus, survives). He also left a large quantity of music in manuscript which contains some of his most daring experiments in chromaticism, as well as evidence that he was exploring new monodic forms which were soon to flourish in the hands of Monteverdi.

The first book of *Sacrae Cantiones* is for five voices, and the second for six and seven voices. Tragically the Bassus and Sextus part-books for Book II have been lost, leaving what is probably the richest part of his sacred music incomplete and un-performable. It should be noted that, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, music was notated in separate part-books and not in score form, and so any missing part-book renders the whole collection of pieces effectively un-performable. Both books of motets contain music of consistently high quality – the music is at once tender and passionate, sublime and dark, with chromaticism and dissonance used to dramatic effect as Gesualdo explores extremes of emotion, guilt and pleas for forgiveness. Words such as *pain, weeping, sin, darkness, death, celestial light, intercession, forgiveness, and redemption* occur frequently in the texts, and although this was not uncommon in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the obsessive frequency and emotional intensity with which these texts were set reached an extreme development in Gesualdo's music.

Given the fact that these extraordinary qualities have always been clear to see in Book I of the *Sacrae Cantiones*, it has always seemed strange to me that the only attempt at a reconstruction of the incomplete second book to date has been Stravinsky's *Tres Cantiones Sacrae* of 1957-59. Written to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Gesualdo's birth, even these were not intended to be reconstructions in any stylistic manner, as Stravinsky himself always asserted<sup>7</sup>. His typically provocative later remark (from 1968), "Musicians may yet save Gesualdo from musicologists", is all the more ironic for the fact that Stravinsky wrote the Preface to the biography of Gesualdo by his friend, the distinguished musicologist and authority on Gesualdo, Glenn Watkins<sup>8</sup>.

And so it was that I had the idea to try and attempt a stylistic reconstruction of the whole set of twenty motets myself. I am quite sure that I had little idea at the outset just how difficult this task would turn out to be, and indeed there were several moments when I was very tempted to concede defeat. However, my determination was fuelled on the one hand by the excitement of bringing these masterful and visionary pieces back to life, and on the other by the stimulation which came from discovering so many secrets within a compositional technique of such phenomenal strength and sophistication, and from which I, as a composer (even 400 years later), could learn so much. And so I persevered with what has turned out to be one of the most challenging and fascinating projects I have ever undertaken.

My first decision, then, was what to use as a model. Aware of the significant difference in style between Gesualdo's madrigals and his sacred music I resolved to refer principally to *Sacrae Cantiones I* and the *Responsoria* (as well, of course, as the surviving voices of *Sacrae Cantiones II*) for my models, and so began a detailed analysis of these works. The scope and extent of this analysis constantly grew and widened during my work on the reconstruction, as I discovered more and more consistent stylistic aspects in the music. These include techniques of counterpoint, text-setting, melodic and harmonic tendencies and rhythmic style. Consequently, the more I worked on the reconstructions the more I learned; and the more I learned, the more I felt the need to review and re-work what I had done previously. This kind of circular process occupied me over a period of more than two years, from February 2008 until March 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Craft writes: 'Stravinsky has not attempted reconstruction. In fact he seems to have avoided what in some cases might appear to be the prescribed solution. What he has done is to recompose the whole from the point of view of his added parts, with a result that is not pure Gesualdo, but a fusion of the two composers. That is not to say that Stravinsky's additions are violations of Gesualdo's style. Gesualdo *could* have written everything that Stravinsky added... The point is that he probably would not have done so.' Stravinsky: *Tres Cantiones Sacrae*, Introduction by Robert Craft, (Boosey & Hawkes 1960).

I find Craft's description of Stravinsky's work somewhat mis-leading, since Stravinsky did not alter anything in the surviving parts of the motets, but merely composed the missing parts so as to throw the existing parts into a new light. I would go further and say that Stravinsky's additions could certainly not have been written by Gesualdo, and thus they are violations of his style. A fusion of the two composers' styles, however, they are, and as such they remain neither pure Gesualdo nor pure Stravinsky – a quirky response by Stravinsky to a composer he must have found quite fascinating, despite his claim to have had little interest in sixteenth century motets!

<sup>8</sup> Glenn Watkins: *Gesualdo: The Man and his Music*, (Clarendon Paperbacks, second edition 1991)

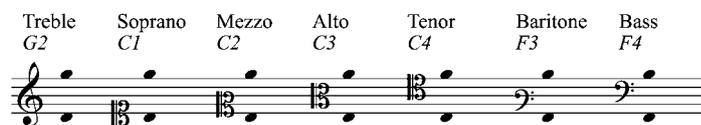
# 1. CLEFS, VOICE-TYPES AND VOICE RANGES

## 1.1 Historical background

The first decision a composer from any age is likely to make before embarking on a composition is its instrumentation. In the case of instrumental composition, clearly, music written for each chosen instrument must lie within its range, and must be notated in the appropriate clef. Today we use a limited number of clefs, but use an almost unlimited number of ledger lines to accommodate each instrument's range in its appropriate clef. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century ledger lines were generally avoided, and so the choice of clefs was far more critical; thus a 16<sup>th</sup>-century composer's first decision would have been to choose a set of clefs, in tandem with their associated voice-types and ranges. Consequently anyone faced with the task of reconstructing a work from an incomplete set of part-books must do likewise.

In 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century music clefs and voice ranges are wholly interdependent. A five-line staff (without the use of ledger lines) provides a range of one 8<sup>ve</sup> and a 4<sup>th</sup>. A set of clefs was designed to suit the relative ranges of the various voice-types. The clefs most commonly used (with their associated written ranges) were as follows:

### Ex. 1



By Gesualdo's time composers regularly used the full range of an 8<sup>ve</sup> and a 4<sup>th</sup> in all voices. However, vocal ranges at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century had started to become gradually extended as singers (perhaps especially basses) became increasingly adept at singing in extreme registers. By Monteverdi's time it is clear that many basses boasted a range of some two 8<sup>ves</sup>, and so composers were quick to exploit this new virtuosity. Even in the 1603 *Sacrae Cantiones I (SCI)* Gesualdo takes the bass down to written low E in three motets, to low E $\flat$  in one, and to low A (implied low E) in two further 'High Clef' motets (see later discussion of 'High Clef pieces'); in the *Responsoria* there are also numerous low Es and E $\flat$ s, as well as occasional high Cs. One spectacular example of Gesualdo's use of extended bass range can be seen in Example 2, from the *Responsoria*:

### Ex. 2: *Responsoria: Sabb. Sanct., Resp.VIII*



In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the implied voice-type associated with Altus parts is commonly assumed to have been a falsettist (today's countertenor). In fact, any falsettist that might have been employed would have sung Cantus, while Altus parts would have been sung by what we think of as a high (light) tenor. The Altus parts of *SCI*, the *Responsoria* and *SCII* are no exception in implying singers of this type, with the ability to float up to high g' and a' without needing to bawl or to go fully into falsetto, but who also had a good low register.

Although the Sextus part in the *Responsoria* uses mainly a C<sub>1</sub> clef, it is nevertheless possible that the Sextus in *SCII* used either a C<sub>1</sub> clef (thus bringing in a second 'soprano') or a second C<sub>3</sub> clef (bringing in a second high tenor). In fact, in most of my reconstructions I opted for the latter, and therefore it was important to look at the frequency with which he employed high a' in the surviving C<sub>3</sub> parts (Altus) of *SCII*, as well as those in *SCI*. In *SCI*, Altus normally ascends to the high a' no more than 3 or 4 times in any one motet; however, there are 8 high a's in nos.3, 10 and 12, 13 in no.6, and 12 in no.18. In the Altus part of *SCII* there are 5 in nos.6, 9 and 13, 7 in no.2, 8 in no.18, 9 in no.15, 13 in no.19, 14 in no.3 and 19 in no.20. I have therefore attempted to strike a similar balance, at the very least treating this high register with a certain respect, and only taking Sextus to high a' when there is a good musical or textual reason for doing so.

The other parameter of range which has to be considered in the context of reconstruction is the total range of all broken voices (*voci mutae*, i.e. excluding falsetto and castrato). In Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame* this range is just two 8<sup>ves</sup>, but it is clear that, as the range of individual voices began to expand, so too did the overall range of broken male voices. By Gesualdo's time it had reached two 8<sup>ves</sup> and an augmented 4<sup>th</sup> (low E $\flat$  to high a'), and by Monteverdi's time two 8<sup>ves</sup> and a 5<sup>th</sup> (D to a'). In my reconstruction I have attempted to stay within the appropriate overall range of broken voices by keeping the highest Sextus note to a' (whenever Sextus uses C<sub>3</sub>) and not taking Bassus lower than F (except for once or maximum twice in any one piece).

The basic four clefs used in 16<sup>th</sup>-century four-voice music were Soprano (C1), Alto (C3), Tenor (C4) and Bass (F4). Given that ledger lines were generally to be avoided (at least at first) each clef defined the range and type of voice. If he wanted to add a fifth voice (Quintus) he would have to choose an extra one of these voice types, and therefore an extra one of these clefs. For example, in *SCI (a5)* Quintus uses either a C4 clef (like Tenor, i.e. bringing in an extra tenor voice), or a C3 clef (like Altus, i.e. bringing in an extra high tenor voice), or C1 (like Cantus, i.e. bringing in an extra 'soprano' voice). The same principle applies with the addition of a sixth voice (Sextus), a seventh voice (Septimus) and so on. The one exception to this '4-clef rule' occurs when the extra voice is a baritone, which uses the baritone clef: F3.

## 1.2 High Clef Pieces

So far I have discussed the use of so-called 'Normal Clefs' - by this I mean clefs where the notated pitch-level very approximately matches our understanding of sounding pitch. Occasionally composers used a higher set of clefs, where a downward transposition (in our terms) of a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> was implied - indeed intended. This practice of shifting clefs (which could be up *or* down) was generally referred to as a *chiavette*, or *chiavi trasportati*. But the concept of transposition was only really relevant to instrumentalists, because singers were only concerned with relative pitches and not with any concept of absolute pitch. The Neapolitan music theorist, Pietro Cerone, in his *El Melopeo y maestro: tractado de música theorico y pratica...* (1613) writes:

...and this difference ['transposition'] is of no concern to the singer, who pays no attention to anything except to sound his syllables [solemnization] correctly, observing the intervals of tones and semitones.

Notation in 'High Clefs' was widely employed not least by Palestrina, whose Fourth Book of Motets (*Cantico dei Cantici*), for example, is entirely notated in this way. I refer to these as High Clef Pieces. The reason for this convention concerns modes and key signatures. First of all, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century there were almost never any key signatures other than an open key signature and a single flat (B $\flat$ ), because B $\flat$  did not count as an accidental (cf. the German system, in which B $\natural$  = H and B $\flat$  = B). Consequently music which in instrumental terms would need a key signature of a sharp or two flats was notated a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> higher and in a higher set of clefs in order to avoid this. Thus Cantus's C1 clef would be replaced by G2 (treble clef), Altus's C3 would be replaced either by C2 (mezzo-soprano clef) or C1 (soprano clef), Tenor's C4 by C3 (alto clef) and Bassus's F2 by F3 (baritone clef).

**Ex. 3** High Clefs

S	A	T	Bar	B
G2	C1 or C2	C3	C4	F3

Normal Clefs

C1	C3	C4	F3	F4
----	----	----	----	----

The identification of High Clef pieces is very simple if we first of all look at the original clefs used for Bassus and Cantus: if Bassus is notated in F3 (baritone clef), or even in C4 (tenor clef), this is a clear indication that the piece is notated in High Clefs, and must be transposed down. It often also follows that if Bassus is notated in F3, Cantus will also be notated in G2 (treble clef), and vice versa. This is the case in all Gesualdo's High Clef pieces in *SCI* and *SCII*.

Another possible reason why composers used this code of practice was, paradoxically, in order to pitch the voices slightly *lower* than the ranges implied by Normal Clefs. This lower pitch results from the fact that High Clefs lie only a 3<sup>rd</sup> higher than their Normal Clef equivalents, whereas the required compensatory downward transpositions are of a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>. The Italian practice of High Clef notation and consequent downward transposition is documented in many sources<sup>9</sup>, but the question of what interval should be used in that downward transposition was sometimes a matter of taste. Praetorius, in his *Syntagma Musicum* (1619) writes:

*Ob zwar ein jeder Gesang, welcher hoch Claviret, das ist, da im Bass das  $\text{F}_3$  uff der ander oder dritten Lini von oben an zu zehlen, oder das  $\text{C}_4$  uff der dritten Lini also befunden wird; Wenn er b mol, per quartam inferiorem in durum; Wenn er aber  $\text{C}_4$  dur, per quintam inferiorem in mollem, naturaliter in die Tabulatur oder Partitur von Organisten, Lauttenisten und allen andern, die sich der Fundament Instrumenten gebrauchen, gebracht und transponiret werden muss: So befindet sich doch, dass in etlichen Modis, Als in Mixolydio, Aeolio und Hypoionico, wenn sie per quintam transponiret, eine languidior & pigrior harmonia propter graviore sonos generiret werde: Darumb es dann ungleich besser, und wird auch der Gesang viel frischer und anmuthiger zuhören, wenn diese Modi per quartam ex duro in durum transponiret werden.*

Every vocal piece in high clefs, i.e., where the bass is written in C4 or C3, or F3, must be transposed when it is put into tablature or score for players of the organ, lute and all other foundation instruments, as follows: if it has a flat, down a fourth *in durum*, but if it has no flat down a fifth *in mollem, naturaliter*. Yet if some modes, e.g. Mixolydian, Aeolian and Hypoionian, are transposed by a 5<sup>th</sup>, a duller and worse harmony is produced because of the lower sounds; hence it is much better, and the piece becomes much fresher and more spirited to listen to, if these modes are transposed by a fourth, *ex duro in durum*.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Andrew Parrott: *Transposition in Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610 - an 'aberration defended'*, (Early Music November 1984), p.490 and Andrew Parrott: *Monteverdi: onwards and downwards*, (Early Music May 2004), p.303

<sup>10</sup> Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum*, iii (Wolfenbüttel, 1619/R 1958), pp.80-81; cited in Mendel, *op cit*, pp.140-41; cited in Andrew Parrott: *Transposition in Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610 - an 'aberration defended'*, (Early Music November 1984), p.490

The question of Key Signature is introduced in a later passage from the same source:

*Dieses aber muss sonderlich allhier observiret und in acht genommen werden, dass in denen Gesängen, welche Mixolydij, AEolij und Hypoionici Modi, in quartam inferiorem (weil es in der Quint, wie oben angezeigt, allzuschläferig seyn möchte, und in der Quart sich etwas frischer und anmutiger, sonderlich uffn Instrumenten hören lest) transponiret werden, forn an bey dem Clave Signata ♯ die Diesis ♯ bezeichnet.*

But this especially must be observed and taken note of here: that in those songs which, [being in Mixolydian, Aeolian and Hypoionian modes, are to be transposed a 4<sup>th</sup> lower (because down a 5<sup>th</sup>, as shown above, may be too sleepy, and down a 4<sup>th</sup> sounds rather fresher and more pleasant, especially on harpsichords) a sharp is marked at the beginning beside the clef.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.3 Choice of clefs in the reconstruction

For my reconstruction, the choice of clef for Bassus was clearly not difficult to make. All the Normal Clef motets needed an F4, as one would expect, and all the High Clef motets needed an F3. For Sextus, the choice of clef was more difficult. We find in the *Responsoria* that Gesualdo's Sextus is paired with Cantus, thus bringing in a second 'soprano' voice. Quintus is paired with Tenor, bringing in an extra tenor, except for a short passage in *Sabb. Sanct Resp.VIII (a4)*, which is written in F3. Thus the clefs used in the *Responsoria* are as follows:

*Responsoria*: clefs:

<b>C</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>B</b>
C1=====	C1	C3	C4=====	C4*	F4

\*For a short verse in *Sabb. Sanct., Resp.VIII (20 bars a4)* the Tenor is written in F3.

If we look at the clefs used in *SCI*, it is clear that he paired the voices in three different ways, according to the demands made by different musical contexts, and possibly also for variety of texture: Quintus is paired twice with Tenor, once with Altus and once with Cantus.

*SCI*, clefs:

	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>B</b>
Normal Clef motets					
1. I-VI, VIII-X	C1	C3	C4=====	C4	F4
2a. VII, XII-XIII, XVI-XIX	C1	C3=====	C3	C4	F4
2b. XI	C1==	C3	== C1	C4	F4
High Clef motets					
3. XIV-XV	G2	C1	C3=====	C3	F3

In *SCII* there are two motets where Sextus is in canon with other voices, and therefore has needed no reconstruction. In no.II (*Da pacem Domine*) the Tenor is marked *Canon in Diapente* (Canon at the 5<sup>th</sup>) and in no.XII (*Assumpta est Maria*) Quintus is marked *Canon in Diapason et Diapente* (Canon at the 8<sup>ve</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup>). The rhythmic distance of the canon is shown in the part-book of the canon's source in each case by the *signum congruaentiae*, hence in no.II (*Da pacem Domine*) the missing Sextus is revealed, and in no.XII (*Assumpta est Maria*) both Sextus and Tenor can be derived. In this particular case the Tenor part-book gives the resolution at the 5<sup>th</sup>, which makes it clear that the 8<sup>ve</sup> resolution was given to Sextus. This in turn means that in no.II (*Da pacem Domine*) the Sextus needs a C4 clef (paired with Quintus), and in no.XII (*Assumpta est Maria*) Sextus needs a C1 clef (paired with Cantus).

The very different tessiturae of Sextus in these two cases, plus the examples from *SCI* and the *Responsoria* effectively left the choice of pairing for the other motets in *SCII* wide open, and so in the end it was the general tessitura of the surrounding voices as well as obvious gaps in the harmonic structure which led me to make the choice of clef for Sextus in each case. Motets such as no.VIII (*Veni Creator spiritus*), no.XIV (*Ardens est cor meum*), and particularly the opening of no.XVI (*O Beata Mater*), for example, suggested the need for a second 'soprano' voice, just as nos.I (*Virgo benedicta*), III (*Sana me Domine*) and IX (*O sacrum convivium*) suggested a lower, darker texture.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid*, p.136

The following table shows the clefs used in my reconstruction of *SCII*. Gesualdo's original clefs (for Cantus, Altus, Quintus and Tenor) are shown in roman type, and clefs I have used in my reconstruction are shown in italics.

Normal Clef motets ( <i>a6</i> )	<b>C</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>B</b>	
1. I-V, IX-XI, XIII, XV-XVI, XVIII-XIX	C1	<i>C3</i> ==== C3	C3	C4==== C4	C4	<i>F4</i>	
2. VI, XII, XIV	C1==== <i>C1</i>	C3	C3	C4==== C4	C4	<i>F4</i>	
	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>B</b>	
3. II	C1	C3	C4==== C4	C4	F3	<i>F4</i>	
High Clef motets	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>B</b>	
4a. VII	G2==== G2	<i>C1</i>	C3	C4	C4	<i>F3</i>	
	<b>C</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>B</b>	
4b. VIII	G2==== G2	C1	C3	C4	C4	<i>F3</i>	
	<b>C</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>B</b>	
5. XVI, XVII	G2==== G2	C1	C3==== C3	C3	C3	<i>F3</i>	
Normal Clef motet ( <i>a7</i> )	<b>C</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>SP</b>	<b>B</b>
6. XX	C1	<i>C3</i> ==== C3	C3	C4==== C4	C4	F3	<i>F4</i>

Some further remarks regarding my choice of clefs:

1. In the first group of motets in this table Sextus is paired with Altus, and thus brings in an extra high tenor. Bassus has to use F4, since Cantus uses C1.
2. In the second group Sextus is paired with Cantus, thus bringing in an extra 'soprano' voice. Once again Bassus uses F4, since Cantus uses C1.
3. As already mentioned, in II (*Da pacem Domine*) Sextus is in canon with Tenor and has thus required no reconstruction. It is paired with Quintus, thus bringing in a second tenor. Cantus uses C1 and therefore Bassus uses F4, while Tenor uses the extra permitted 5<sup>th</sup> clef (F3).
4. In groups 4a and 4b Cantus uses G2, which is already enough to indicate that these are High Clef pieces, therefore Bassus has to use F3. Altus is exceptional here, having a range from d' to e''; the high e'' occurs three times and is therefore not merely a 'one-off' but forms the part's highest note. Since there is not a single case in *SCI*, *SCII* or the *Responsoria* where Gesualdo takes Altus above d'' (a' transposed), and since this high e'' (b' transposed) would expand the total range of broken voices to an unprecedented two 8<sup>ves</sup> and a 5<sup>th</sup>, it is clear that in this case Altus is paired with Cantus, thus bringing in a second 'soprano' voice, as in the motets of groups 2 and 5 (although in this case the top two notes of the range are not used). This means that Altus and Sextus swap places, with Sextus becoming the highest 'broken' voice, with d'' as its top note (= a' transposed). I have therefore used C1 for Sextus, which is the normal High Clef for Altus. This means that there are now 5 clefs, but since Tenor uses C4, this becomes the extra permitted 5<sup>th</sup> clef (baritone voice).
5. Group 5 is more straightforward. Sextus reassumes its normal position, and I have paired it with Cantus (G2), once again bringing in a second 'soprano' voice. This means that all the High Clef motets have two 'soprano' parts. Since Cantus uses G2, Bassus once again has to use F3.
6. The final motet, no.XX (*Illumina nos*) is in seven voices. Cantus uses C1, making this a Normal Clef piece, therefore Bassus has to use F4. Sextus is paired with Altus and uses C3, bringing in a second high tenor, as in all the motets in group 1. Septima Pars uses F3 - the extra permitted 5<sup>th</sup> clef (baritone).

# Musical Style

## 2. COUNTERPOINT

### 2.1. Definition of a Point

The term “Counterpoint” (*Contrapunctus*) first of all implies the idea of ‘Point against Point’. So what do we mean by a Point? Points are identified not only by their associated melodic fragments, but also by the text-fragments they set. Text-fragments (which may be as short as one word, or as long as two or three words) are always repeated, but not necessarily always in the same sequence. For example, in *Veni Creator spiritus* (see Example 4) the text in Altus begins *Veni Creator spiritus, / spiritus, / veni Creator spiritus*, and the text in Tenor begins *Creator spiritus, / veni Creator spiritus*. This different word order is already enough to establish that each of the first three words of the text constitutes a separate Point. If we look further it becomes clear that each of these text-fragments is set to a clearly distinctive melodic phrase which is imitated by each voice in turn. This is a crucial principle to establish right from the start, since there are numerous instances where Points might at first seem longer than they actually are, owing to (for example) two text-fragments being consistently joined together for a while and only being split apart later.

Ex. 4: *Veni Creator spiritus*

The musical score for 'Veni Creator spiritus' is presented in three systems, each with six staves representing the vocal parts: C (Cantus), S (Soprano), A (Alto), Q (Quarto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). The music is in G major and common time. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables across measures. Measure numbers 1, 6, and 11 are indicated at the beginning of their respective systems.

**System 1 (Measures 1-5):**

- C: Ve - - ni Cre - a - - - - - tor,
- S: Ve - - ni Cre - a - - - -
- A: Ve - - ni Cre - a - - - tor spi -
- Q: - - - - -
- T: - - - - -
- B: - - - - -

**System 2 (Measures 6-10):**

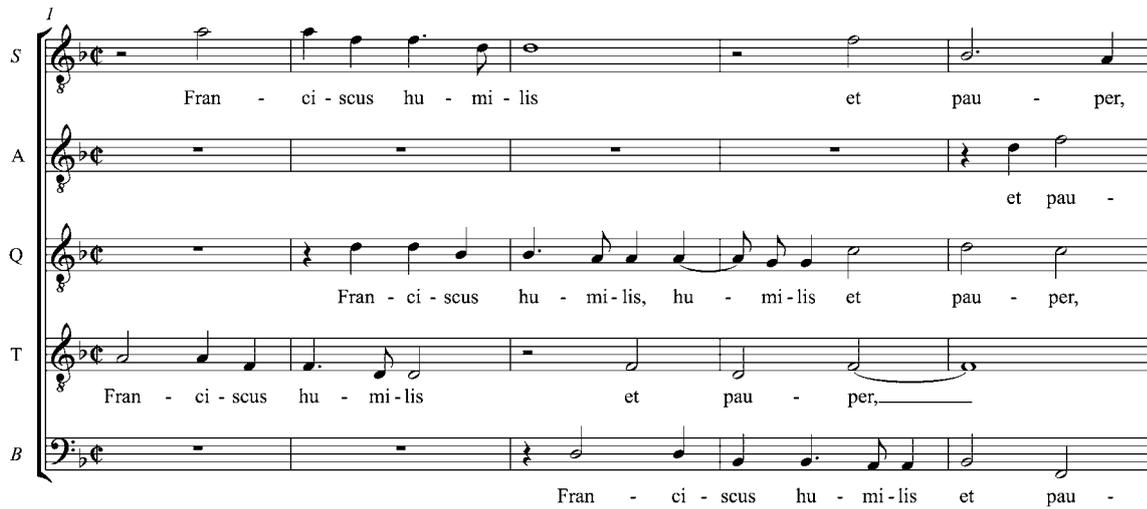
- C: ve - - ni Cre - a - - - - -
- S: - tor, spi - - ri - tus, Cre - a - - - tor spi -
- A: - ri - tus, spi - - - ri - tus, ve - - - ni
- Q: Ve - - - ni Cre - a - - -
- T: - - - - - Cre - a - - - tor spi - ri -
- B: Ve - - - ni Cre - a - - - - -

**System 3 (Measures 11-15):**

- C: tor spi - ri - tus, re -
- S: - ri - tus, ve - ni, ve - ni Cre - a - - - tor spi - ri - tus,
- A: - Cre - a - - - tor spi - ri - tus, re - ple tu - o - rum cor -
- Q: tor, Cre - a - - - tor, ve - - - ni, ve - ni Cre - a -
- T: tus, ve - - - ni Cre - a - - - tor spi - ri - tus,
- B: tor, ve - - - ni Cre - a - - - - - tor spi - ri - tus, spi -

A good example of this can be seen in *Franciscus humilis* (see Examples 5 and 6): in the first part of the motet (see Example 5) the text in Quintus runs *Franciscus humilis, humilis et pauper*; in the second part (from bar 32, see Example 6) the text in Quintus runs *Franciscus humilis et pauper, humilis et pauper* and in Cantus runs *Franciscus humilis et pauper, et pauper*. This separate repetition of *humilis* and *et pauper* confirms that *Franciscus*, *humilis* and *et pauper* in fact constitute three separate Points.

**Example 5: *Franciscus humilis***



1

S Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis et pau - per,

A et pau -

Q Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis, hu - mi - lis et pau - per,

T Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis et pau - per,

B Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis et pau -

**Example 6: *Franciscus humilis***



31

C Fran - cis - cus hu - mi - lis et pau - per, et pau - per,

S tur. Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis et

A - tur. Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis et pau -

Q tur. Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis et pau - per, hu - mi - lis et pau -

T - tur. Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis et pau -

B tur. Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis et pau - per,

This relationship between text-fragment and melodic fragment is important not only for the correct identification of Points, but also for the understanding of Gesualdo's contrapuntal style in general, and thus is crucial to the task of reconstruction.



## ii) Stretched Imitation

One special characteristic of Gesualdo's imitative style is his use of what I call 'stretched imitation', where the contour of the imitation of each Point remains consistent, even though the intervals may be stretched (or compressed) each time.

Example 8 shows an example of this with the Point *Verba mea*. Here the imitations are always syllabic, and always descending, but the intervals are stretched or compressed in each case. With the Point *auribus*, the first two syllables, *au-ri* are always set to the same pitch, and *-bus* almost always to a lower pitch, with the interval stretched in each case. One exception is the rising *-bus* in Q, bar 11; and also noteworthy here are the inverted imitations and varied rhythms of the Point *percipe*.

### Example 8: *Verba mea*

The musical score for Example 8, *Verba mea*, is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 1-5) features five vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Quintus (Q), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics for each part are: S: Ver - ba me - a au - ri - bus per - - - ; A: Ver - ba me - a, ver - ba me - a au - ri - bus; Q: Ver - ba me - a au - ri - bus per - - - ci - pe Do - ; T: Ver - ba me - ; B: Ver - ba me - a au - ri - bus. The second system (measures 6-11) features six vocal parts: Contralto (C), Soprano (S), Alto (A), Quintus (Q), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics for each part are: C: Ver - ba me - a au - ri - bus per - - - ci - ; S: - ci - pe Do - mi - ne, au - ri - bus, au - ri - bus per - - - ci - pe, ; A: per - - - ci - pe Do - mi - ne, ver - ba me - a au - ri - bus, au - ri - ; Q: - mi - ne, au - ri - bus per - - - ci - pe, au - ri - bus; T: a au - ri - bus per - - - ci - pe Do - mi - ne, in - ; B: per - - - ci - pe, ver - ba me - a au - ri - bus, au - ri - bus. The score includes various musical notations such as rests, notes, and slurs, and is set in a common time signature.

## iii) Avoidance of collisions at Point entries

An important characteristic of all good counterpoint is that Point entries should be clearly heard, and not blurred or confused with other voices. In practice that means that each Point should enter in a gap in the texture, and not collide with the same note being sounded by another voice at the same moment. If we look at Example 8, we see that each entry of the Point *Verba mea* accordingly enters in a gap in the texture, as it should. However, if Bassus were to enter on third crotchet of bar 3 instead of the fourth, making the first note a dotted minim, as in Quintus, it would collide with the E in Quintus, and would therefore be 'forbidden'. Similarly, in bar 4, Tenor could not start its Point *Verba* on the third crotchet (instead of the fourth) because it would collide with the C in Altus. However, in bar 9, Sextus begins the Point *auribus* on the E which is already sounding in Quintus – this is allowed because the E in Quintus was started earlier, and is merely being sustained. Thus it is the combination of rhythmic and pitch collision at the entrance of Points that Gesualdo consistently avoids.

Gesualdo goes to considerable lengths to avoid such collisions. Occasionally he manages this with the simple use of syncopation, as can be seen in Examples 9 and 10:

**Example 9: *Veni Creator Spiritus***

56

C  
de, ac - cen - - - - - de.

S  
cen - - - - - de, ac - cen - - - - - de, ac - cen - - - - - de.

A  
i - gnem ac - cen - - - - - de.

Q  
- gnem ac - cen - - - - - de, ac - cen - - - - - de.

T  
i - gnem ac - cen - - - - - de.

B  
gnem ac - cen - - - - - de, ac - cen - - - - - de.

Note the syncopation in bar 57 in Altus – *accende* could not start on the third crotchet as it would collide with Tenor, and clearly it could not start on the second crotchet as this would bring the whole phrase into unison with Sextus. There is, however, an unusual exception to be seen here, with the collision between Tenor and Altus in bar 56, fourth crotchet.

**Example 10: *Illumina nos***

59

C  
- - a - mur, vi - - - - - tae glo - ri - a per fru - a - - - - -

S  
a per - fru - a - - - - - mur, vi - tae glo - ri - a

A  
- tae glo - ri - a per - fru - a - - - - - mur, vi - tae, vi -

Q  
- mur, vi - tae, vi - tae glo - ri - a, vi - tae glo - ri - a

T  
- vi - tae glo - ri - a per fru - a - - - - - mur, vi - tae glo -

SP  
glo - ri - a per - fru - a - - - - - mur, per - fru - a - - - - - mur,

B  
- per - fru - a - - - - - mur, vi - tae glo - ri - a, glo - ri -

In Example 10, bar 62, Quintus neatly avoids a collision with Septima Pars with its syncopation on *gloria*.

There are, however, cases where Gesualdo fails to avoid collisions.

In Example 11, bar 36, Quintus's *Point sine* collides with Tenor's *Jesum*, and in bar 38, Altus's *sine* collides with Quintus.

**Example 11: Ave sanctissima Maria**

36

C to, si - ne pec - ca - to,

S con - ce - pi - sti Je - - sum si - ne

A Je - sum si - ne pec - ca - to, si - ne pec - ca

Q - sum si - ne pec - - ca - -

T pi - sti Je - sum si - ne pec - -

B si - ne pec - ca - - - - to,

In Example 12, bar 19, Quintus's *Point splendor* collides with Tenor. This establishes the precedent to permit the collision between Sextus's *Point lucis* and Quintus's *Point Oriens* in my reconstruction of bar 13 of *O Oriens*, as shown in Example 13.

**Example 12: O Oriens**

19

C ter - nae, O

S O O - ri - ens,

A - dor,

Q - ri - ens, splen -

T - cis ae - ter -

B splen - -

**Example 13: O Oriens**

13

C dor

S - lu -

A lu -

Q ens, O - ri - ens,

T splen -

B O O

**iv) Rhythm of entries of Points of Imitation**

There are basically two types of formula used: the first applies to opening sections, and the second applies after the opening, once the music has established momentum. In opening sections, a pair of voices will enter, and then be allowed to run for two or three bars as a duo, before the remaining voices enter in relatively slow succession (usually at one or two beat intervals). This is to allow each Point to be clearly heard and noticed before the next Point enters. Once the music has established momentum, the Points tend to enter rather quickly after each other in groups. The aim is to avoid Points starting simultaneously (although this does occasionally happen), and to achieve a certain ‘flow’ with the successive Point entries, thus enhancing the polyphony.

Example 14 shows the opening of *O Oriens*. Here Cantus and Sextus enter first with the Point *O Oriens*. They are left alone for two bars until the entry of the four remaining voices. Altus enters at the beginning of bar 3, and thereafter the entries of *O Oriens* (excluding the simultaneous entry of Sextus) occur at the following intervals: 2 - 3 - 3 - 1 - 1 (crotchet beats). This shows a gradual acceleration of the entries, as the music gathers momentum. Now that the music has gathered momentum, the next group of Point entries (now including the Point *splendor*) follow each other in much quicker succession. The last of the six voices to enter is Quintus in bar 5 - after this entry the Points of Imitation (now counting both *O Oriens* and *splendor*) occur at the following intervals: 3 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 2 - 1 - 1 - 3 - 1 - 1. (Note that there are several simultaneous entries in this passage.)

**Example 14: *O Oriens***

The musical score for Example 14, *O Oriens*, is presented in six staves, labeled C (Cantus), S (Sextus), A (Altus), Q (Quintus), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). The score is in common time (C) and features a series of rhythmic markings above the staves, indicated by downward arrows and numbers (1, 2, 3). The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words hyphenated across bars. The first system covers bars 1-5, and the second system covers bars 6-10. The lyrics for the first system are: C: O O - ri - ens, splen - - - dor, O O - ; S: O O - ri - ens, O O - ri - ens, splen - - dor, \*; A: O O - ri - ens, O O - ri - ens, - - - - - ; Q: - - - - - O; T: O O - ri - ens, splen - - - ; B: - - - - - O O - ri - . The lyrics for the second system are: C: - ri - ens, splen - - dor, O O - ri - ens, splen - - ; S: O O - ri - ens, O O - ri - ens splen - dor, ; A: splen - - dor, splen - - - - dor, O; Q: O - ri - ens, splen - - dor, O O - ri - ; T: - - - dor, O O - ri - ens, O O - ; B: ens, O O - ri - ens, splen - - dor, O O - .

Later on in the same motet there is a similarly rapid group of ‘ping-pong-like’ Point entries. Example 15 (from the end of bar 28 until the beginning of bar 31) shows entries of *aeternae, veni, et illumina* and *lucis* at the following intervals: 1 - 1 - 1 - 2 - 1 - 2 - 1.

### Example 15: *O Oriens*

Example 15 shows a musical score for six voices: C (Cantus), S (Soprano), A (Alto), Q (Quinto), T (Tenore), and B (Basso). The score spans from bar 28 to the beginning of bar 31. Above the staff, rhythmic markings indicate intervals: 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1. The lyrics are: C: ter - nae, ae - ter - nae, lu - cis ae - ter - nae:; S: lu - cis ae - ter - nae, lu - cis ae - ter - nae; A: ve - ni et il - lu - mi - na ve - ; Q: - cis ae - ter - nae: ve - ni, ve - ni,; T: - dor lu - cis ae - ter - nae:; B: - cis, lu - cis ae - ter - nae:

### 2.3. Parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> and 8<sup>ves</sup>

It is well known that all composers of polyphony, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century right through to the 17<sup>th</sup>, ruthlessly tried to avoid parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> and 8<sup>ves</sup>, to the extent that they are effectively ‘forbidden’ to anyone attempting such a reconstruction. Before we look at examples of parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> and 8<sup>ves</sup> in Gesualdo’s music, we should first define them, and the various contexts in which they can sometimes occur.

#### Example 16

Example 16 shows two systems of musical notation. The first system contains staves T (Tenore) and B (Basso) for bars 1 through 6. The second system contains staves A (Alto), T (Tenore), and B (Basso) for bars 7 through 9. The notation includes various intervals and rests, illustrating different contexts of parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> and 8<sup>ves</sup>.

In Example 16, bars 1 and 2 show straightforward parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> and parallel 8<sup>ves</sup> between T and B. These are effectively forbidden in all polyphonic music, although, as we shall see, there is one example in *SCII* where they do occur.

Bars 3 and 4 show ‘inverted’ (or contrary motion) parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> and 8<sup>ves</sup> - although these are avoided by many polyphonic composers, they are relatively common in Gesualdo’s music, and there are many examples in *SCII* (see Examples 18 and 19).

In bars 5 and 6 the parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> and 8<sup>ves</sup> are separated by rests - there are numerous examples of these in *SCII*, and so, although they are to be avoided, they are permissible.

In bar 7 the potential parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> between T and B are separated by a passing note in T. This passing note is not considered concordant because it forms a 6/4 chord which is neither passing nor cadential (see section 5.3 in this article) - it is therefore considered a normal, dissonant passing note, and therefore the parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> are not avoided.

In bar 8 the potential parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> between T and B are separated by a passing note in B. This passing note is clearly dissonant against A, and therefore the parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> are once again not avoided.

In bar 9, however, the potential parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> between T and B are separated by what seems to be a passing note in T. In this case, this E is in fact concordant, making an e-minor 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion chord on the second crotchet; it therefore does not really count as a passing note and thus the potential parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> between T and B are avoided.

In the surviving parts of *SCII* there is one single example of straightforward parallel 8<sup>ves</sup>, see Example 17, bar 54, between Cantus and Quintus.

Example 18, bar 21, shows inverted parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> between Altus and Tenor.

Example 19, bar 60, shows inverted parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> between Cantus and Tenor.

**Example 17:**  
*O anima sanctissima*

**Example 18:**  
*Ave sanctissima Maria*

**Example 19:**  
*Ave sanctissima Maria*

Example 20, bars 44-45, shows parallel 8<sup>ves</sup> between Cantus and Quintus, separated by a rest in Cantus.

Example 21, bar 4, shows parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> between Cantus and Tenor, separated by rests in both voices.

**Example 20:**  
*O Oriens*

**Example 21:**  
*Adoramus te Christe*

Example 22, bars 27-28, shows parallel 8<sup>ves</sup> between Cantus and Quintus, again separated by a rest in Cantus.

**Example 22:**  
*Veni sponsa Christi*

Example 22 shows a musical score for six voices: Cantus (C), Soprano (S), Alto (A), Quintus (Q), Tenor (T), and Bassus (B). The score is in G major (one flat) and 3/8 time. The lyrics are: "ti - bi Do - nam, quam ti - bi Do - co - ro - nam, - mi - nus praec - pa - ra - vit, ti - bi Do - ti - bi, quam ti - bi Do -". The Cantus part has a rest in bar 27, while the Quintus part has a note. This creates a parallel 8<sup>ves</sup> interval between the two parts in bar 28.

Although I have not found a single example of parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> or 8<sup>ves</sup> separated by a passing note in the surviving voices of *SCII*, there are two potential cases in my reconstructed parts which I would like to mention here.

In Example 23, bars 22-23, there are potential parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> between Quintus and Bassus. Here the F in Bassus is an accented, falling passing note, and the E in consonant. Hence the E is the main note, and therefore the potential parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> between Quintus C - A and Bassus F - D are avoided.

**Example 23: Adoramus te Christe**

Example 23 shows a musical score for six voices: Cantus (C), Soprano (S), Alto (A), Quintus (Q), Tenor (T), and Bassus (B). The score is in G major (one flat) and 3/8 time. The lyrics are: "qui - san - ctam cru - qui - a per san - a per san - ctam cru -". The Quintus part has a note on C in bar 22, and the Bassus part has a note on F. This creates a potential parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> interval between the two parts.

In Example 24, bar 60, however, there are potential parallel 8<sup>ves</sup> between Altus (last two crotchets) and Bassus (fifth and seventh quavers). Here the E $\flat$  in Bassus is indeed a normal passing note, and so the parallel 8<sup>ves</sup> are not avoided. This is the one case in my reconstruction where I have permitted parallel 5<sup>ths</sup> or 8<sup>ves</sup>, since I felt that the strength of the rising scale imitation of *perfruumur*, the lack of any other similar solution and the effectively unnoticeable nature of the parallels themselves was sufficient to justify it.

**Example 24: *Illumina nos***

60

C  
- a - - - mur,

S  
- - - - - I

A  
a per - fru - a -

Q  
vi - - tae,

T  
glo - - ri - a

SP  
per - fru - a -

B  
a - - - - -

### 3. TEXT

#### 3.1. Text setting

As already briefly discussed under 2.2 (Style of Imitation) above, Gesualdo's treatment of text is another important aspect of his contrapuntal style, and therefore crucial to the task of reconstruction.

##### i) Rhythmic treatment of stressed and unstressed syllables

First of all, Gesualdo generally conforms to the normal tradition of setting text according to its natural scansion, as follows: stressed syllables belong basically on strong beats (first and third crotchets in 2/2), and unstressed syllables belong on weak beats (second and fourth crotchets). However, there are numerous exceptions to this basic and somewhat over-simplistic rule. Let us take one passage from *Franciscus humilis* to provide some examples (see Example 27, opposite). Here the text runs: *hymnis caelestibus honoratur* (stressed syllables appear in bold type)<sup>13</sup>. Looking first at the word *hymnis*, we see straightforward rhythmic treatments of this word in Cantus, bar 56, where the stressed *hy-* comes on the first crotchet (strong beat), and the unstressed *-mnis* on the second (weak beat); and in Quintus, bar 57, where the stressed *hy-* again comes on the first crotchet (strong), but the unstressed *-mnis* comes on the third crotchet (also strong). Here the unstressed syllable is allowed on the strong third crotchet, because the stressed syllable is also on a strong beat. Almost all the other instances of *hymnis* are syncopated: in Altus, bar 55, both *hy-* and *-mnis* are displaced by one crotchet, resulting in syncopation. In such a case, when the strong syllable falls on a weak beat, so too must the succeeding weak syllable.

However, if we look at my reconstruction of Sextus, bar 60, (Example 27) we see yet another variant: *hy-* again falls on a weak beat, and *-mnis* on a strong, however, the phrase continues with the word *caelestibus* with the strong syllable *-le-* falling on the next weak beat, thus making the whole phrase *hymnis caelestibus* syncopated. This is permissible, since a string of strong syllables is displaced by a crotchet onto consecutive weak beats. In fact, in this case the syncopation starts even earlier, from *caelestibus honoratur* in bar 58. The setting of the the word *caelestibus* follows the same principle; straightforward settings can be seen in Cantus, bars 56 and 57, and in Altus, bars 56 and 57 (this time with a melisma on the stressed *-le-*), and syncopated settings in Quintus, bars 52, 57 and 60. The setting of the word *honoratur* also follows the same principle; in Cantus, bar 52, the weak *ho-* falls on a strong beat, but this is permissible since the strong *-ra-* also falls on a strong beat. The same applies to all the long-note versions: Cantus, bars 53-55, Tenor, bars 54-56, and Quintus, bars 61-66.

As always, there are exceptions, and particularly so in the case of this complex question. Example 25 shows the text *Domina mundi* unusually set by Gesualdo in *Ave sanctissima Maria*, Quintus, bar 26; similarly, my setting of *honoratur* in *Franciscus humilis*, Sextus, bar 24 (see Example 26) is technically incorrect for the same reason. One reason for this is that there is often ambiguity as to whether a particular note is syncopated or not; if one note in a phrase is considered to be syncopated, how long does the syncopation last? In spite of this ambiguity, a sensitivity to the natural stress of the text was a necessary part of polyphonic technique, and Gesualdo was no less fastidious in his observance of this than his contemporaries<sup>14</sup>.

Example 25: *Ave sanctissima Maria*



Example 26: *Franciscus humilis*



<sup>13</sup> Rules of accentuation in Latin: if the penult is long, it bears the accent; if the penult is short, the antepenult gets the accent; words of two syllables are accented on the penult.

<sup>14</sup> Here I cannot resist quoting Dr. Burney once again: 'This illustrious Dilettante seems to merit as little praise on account of the expression of words, for which he has been celebrated by Doni, as for his counterpoint; for the syllables are constantly made long or short, just as it best suited his melody; and in the repetition of words, we frequently see the same syllable long in one bar, and short in another or the contrary; by which it is manifest that their just accentuation was never thought of'. *A General History iii*, p.217-222.

Example 27: *Franciscus humilis*

52

C ho - no - ra - tur, ho - - no - - ra - tur, hy - mnis cae - le - sti -

S mnis cae - le - sti - bus ho - no - ra - tur, hy -

A - sti - bus ho - no - ra - - tur, hy - mnis cae - le - - -

Q mnis cae - les - sti - bus ho - - no - ra - tur, ho - no - ra - tur,

T tur, ho - no - ra - - tur, ho - no - ra -

B tur, ho - no - ra - tur, hy - mnis cae

57

C bus, cae - le - sti - bus ho - no - ra - tur, \_\_\_\_\_

S - mnis cae - le - sti - bus, cae - le - sti - bus ho - no - ra - tur, hy - mnis cae - le - sti - bus ho - no -

A - sti - bus, cae - le - sti - bus ho - no - ra - tur, ho - no - ra -

Q hy - mnis cae - le - sti bus, hy - mnis cae - le - sti bus, cae - le - sti - bus ho - no -

T tur, hy - mnis cae - le - sti - bus ho - no - ra - tur, \_\_\_\_\_ hy -

B le - sti - bus ho - no - ra - tur, hy - mnis cae - le - sti bus, cae -

62

C \_\_\_\_\_ ho - no - ra - tur. <sup>1)</sup>

S ra - - - tur, ho - no - ra - - tur.

A \_\_\_\_\_ tur. \_\_\_\_\_

Q \_\_\_\_\_ ra - - tur. \_\_\_\_\_

T - mnis cae - le - sti - bus ho - no - ra - - tur.

B le - sti - bus \_\_\_\_\_ ho - no - ra - - tur.

1) C in Ugrino

## ii) Consistency in treatment of text-fragments

As already briefly discussed under '2.2 Style of Imitation' above, Gesualdo's treatment of text is another important aspect of his contrapuntal style, and therefore crucial to the task of reconstruction. I have already shown one example of Gesualdo's consistency in setting text-fragments syllabically or melismatically. Whilst discussing Gesualdo's treatment of text in greater detail I would like to show a few more examples of this aspect before proceeding further. Let us first look at the opening of *Discedite a me* (Example 28).

### Example 28: *Discedite a me omnes*

The musical score for 'Discedite a me omnes' is presented in three systems, each with six vocal parts: Contralto (C), Soprano (S), Alto (A), Quarta (Q), Tenore (T), and Basso (B). The lyrics are in Latin and are distributed across the parts, often with overlapping syllables and melismas.

**System 1 (Measures 1-5):**

- C:** Di - sce - - di - te a me o - - mnes
- S:** Di - sce - - di - te a me o - mnes, qui
- A:** Di - sce - - di - te a - me o - - mnes - - qui o - pe -
- Q:** Di - sce - - di - te a me -
- T:** a me o -
- B:** a me o - mnes di - sce -

**System 2 (Measures 6-11):**

- C:** qui o - pe - ra - mi - ni i - ni - qui - ta - - tem a me
- S:** o - pe - ra - mi - ni i - ni - qui - ta - - tem, i - ni - qui - ta - - tem a
- A:** ra - mi - ni - - i - ni - qui - ta - - tem o - mnes, di - sce -
- Q:** o - mnes a me, di - sce - - di - te
- T:** mnes, di - sce - - di - te a me, a me o -
- B:** - di - te a me o - mnes, a me, o - mnes, a me,

**System 3 (Measures 12-17):**

- C:** a me, di - sce - - di - te a me, a me
- S:** - me, a me, di - sce - di - te a
- A:** - di - te - a me, a me, di - sce - - di - te
- Q:** a me, di - sce - - di - te a me o -
- T:** mnes qui o - pe - ra - mi - ni i - ni - qui - ta - - tem, di - sce - - di - te
- B:** a me, qui o - pe - ra - mi - ni i - ni - qui - ta - - tem, di - sce -



### iii) Treatment of text in melismas

Within a melisma, a run of quavers or semiquavers is never immediately followed by the next syllable without there being at least one intervening longer note (crotchet or longer). Example 30 shows this principle quite clearly. Here the Point *splendor* (all voices) has a melisma which includes a run of quavers and sometimes semiquavers on *splen-*; this run is always followed by a crotchet, minim or semibreve, before going on to the last syllable *-dor*. Similarly, the Point *lucis* begins with a melisma on *lu-* ending with a crotchet or minim, before going on to the final syllable *-cis*. Consequently in my reconstruction of Sextus in bar 25, for example, I have resisted the temptation of placing the final syllable *-cis* on the fourth beat, instead delaying it until one crotchet later. The same principle can be seen with the Point *aeternae* (in the cases where it is melismatic). This invariable rule<sup>15</sup> is sufficient to reveal an error in Glen Watkins's Ugrino edition of *Illumina nos*, bar 69 (See Example 31, first line of text), where the syllable *-a-* immediately follows the two semi-quavers. My proposed corrected version can be seen in the lower line of underlaid text.

This is not to suggest, however, that individual syllables may not be articulated by quavers or semiquavers. If we look again at Example 30, we see the Point *O Oriens* set with the syllables *O-ri-ens* set to dotted crotchet-quaver-crotchet. This is acceptable since the word is set syllabically, and therefore there is no melisma on the first syllable *O-*.

#### Example 30: *O Oriens*

Example 30: *O Oriens* musical score showing six vocal parts (C, S, A, Q, T, B) from bar 20 to 25. The lyrics are: *O - ri - ens, splen - - dor, O O - ri - ens, splen - dor, splen - dor, splen - - - dor, splen - dor, O - ri - ens, splen - - - dor, lu - nae, O O - ri - ens, splen - - - dor, - dor, O O - ri - ens, splen - dor lu - splen - - dor lu - cis ae - ter - nae, ae - ter - nae, lu - - cis, lu - - cis ae - ter - nae, dor lu - cis ae - ter - nae: ve - ni - - cis ae - ter - nae, lu - - cis ae - ter - nae: O O - ri - ens, splen - - - dor lu - - cis, splen - - - dor lu - - cis, lu -*

#### Example 31: *Illumina nos*

Example 31: *Illumina nos* musical score showing a single vocal part (Q) from bar 65. The lyrics are: *per - fru - a - - - - - mur, per - fru - a - a - mur, per - fru - a - - - - - mur, per - fru - a - a - mur,*

<sup>15</sup> I have used the term 'rule' throughout this article to describe those rules or principles applied by the composer himself (whether consciously or subconsciously) which combine to form his musical technique and style, rather than to imply any kind of rule imposed by external sources.

## 3.2. Text strings

### i) Manner of repetition of text-fragments

As we have already briefly discussed under Points of Imitation above, text-fragments are always repeated, but not necessarily in the same sequence. However, the way Gesualdo handles these repetitions is yet another highly characteristic aspect of his style. Let us take, for example, *O Beata Mater*. The whole text runs as follows:

*O Beata Mater et intacta Virgo, gloriosa Regina mundi, intercede pro nobis ad Dominum.*

First of all Gesualdo divides the text into two parts, often defined by a colon in the text; here the second part begins with the word *intercede*. The text-fragments in the first part are repeated over and over in various sequences until the end of the first part of the motet. Once each voice has moved on to the second part of the text, it generally does not return to any fragment from the first part. However, the division between the first and second parts of the text occurs at a different moment in each voice, creating a kind of staggered break between each part of the motet.

In the case of *O Beata Mater*, the sequences of text-fragments in the first part of the motet in each of the four surviving voices run as follows:

Cantus: *O Beata Mater et intacta Virgo,/O Beata Mater,/O Beata Mater et intacta Virgo, gloriosa,/O Beata Mater,/O Beata Mater,/Mater et intacta Virgo,/Virgo, gloriosa Regina mundi,/Regina mundi,/Regina mundi,*

Altus: *O Beata Mater et intacta,/intacta,/et intacta Virgo, gloriosa,/O Beata Mater,/Mater et intacta,/et intacta,/et intacta Virgo, gloriosa,/gloriosa,/gloriosa Regina mundi,/Virgo, gloriosa Regina mundi,*

Quintus: *O Beata,/O Beata,/O Beata Mater,/Mater et intacta Virgo, gloriosa,/O Beata Mater et intacta Virgo,/Virgo, gloriosa Regina mundi,/Regina,/Regina mundi,/Regina mundi,/mundi,*

Tenor: *O Beata Mater et intacta Virgo, gloriosa,/O Beata Mater,/O Beata Mater,/Mater et intacta,/et intacta Virgo,/Virgo,/gloriosa Regina,/Regina mundi,/Regina mundi.*

This is enough to reveal two important ‘rules’ governing Gesualdo’s repetition of text-fragments:

a) A voice may repeat any previous fragment from the same part of the text, but it may not skip forwards. For example in the above text, the following sequence would not be possible: *O Beata Mater et intacta Virgo,/O Beata Mater/gloriosa Regina mundi*, because *et intacta Virgo* is missing after the repetition of *O Beata Mater* and before *gloriosa Regina mundi*.

b) No text-fragment may be repeated more than three times without a different fragment intervening. For example, in Altus (above) the word *gloriosa* is repeated three times, then comes *Regina mundi,/Virgo* before *gloriosa* appears for the fourth time. A good example of this principle can be found in the final section of *Illumina nos* and the text-fragment *vitae gloria perfruamur*.

Gesualdo’s five surviving voices have the following sequences:

Cantus: *vitae gloria perfruamur,/vitae gloria perfruamur,/perfruamur,/vitae gloria perfruamur.*

Altus: *vitae,/vitae gloria,/vitae gloria perfruamur,/vitae,/vitae gloria perfruamur,/vitae,/vitae gloria,/gloria perfruamur.*

Quintus: *vitae gloria perfruamur,/vitae,/vitae gloria,/vitae gloria perfruamur,/perfruamur,/gloria perfruamur.*

Tenor: *vitae gloria,/ vitae,/ vitae,/ vitae gloria perfruamur,/ vitae gloria perfruamur,/ perfruamur,/ perfruamur.*

Septima Pars: *vitae,/vitae gloria perfruamur,/perfruamur,/vitae gloria,/gloria,/vitae gloria,/vitae gloria perfruamur.*

Even in this instance, where a considerable extension of the text is necessary, never is a word or text-fragment repeated more than three times.

Following these two ‘rules’, my reconstruction of these two passages has the following text-fragment sequences:

#### 1) *O Beata Mater*

Sextus: *O Beata Mater et intacta Virgo,/O Beata Mater et intacta Virgo,/gloriosa,/O Beata Mater et intacta Virgo,/et intacta,/intacta Virgo,/gloriosa Regina mundi,/Regina mundi,/Regina mundi.*

Bassus: *O Beata Mater et intacta Virgo,/O Beata Mater,/Mater et intacta Virgo,/et intacta/et intacta Virgo, gloriosa,/gloriosa Regina mundi,/gloriosa Regina mundi*

#### 2) *Illumina nos*

Sextus: *vitae gloria perfruamur,/vitae gloria,/vitae gloria,/gloria perfruamur,/perfruamur,/perfruamur.*

Bassus: *vitae,/vitae gloria,/vitae gloria perfruamur,/vitae gloria,/gloria perfruamur,/vitae gloria,/gloria perfruamur.*

In *Ad te levavi* Gesualdo breaks this ‘rule’ as follows: the text runs:

*Ad te levavi animam meam: Domine Deus meus in te confido, non erubescam.*

The text in Gesualdo’s Cantus, however, runs:

*Ad te levavi animam meam,/ad te levavi animam meam, Domine Deus meus,/ad te levavi animam meam:[\*] in te confido,...;* hence *Domine Deus meus* is missing after the third appearance of *animam meam* (marked thus [\*]).

In my reconstruction of Sextus I have been forced to follow suit at this point and allow the following text-fragment sequence:

*Ad te levavi animam meam,/animam meam, Domine Deus meus,/ad te levavi,/ad te levavi animam meam,/ad te levavi animam meam,/animam meam: [\*] in te confido...*

## ii) Text-fragments set to different melodies

Before we leave this discussion of Gesualdo's treatment of text, it is worth making one further observation. When repeating a text-fragment within a voice, Gesualdo often (but by no means always) varies the melody associated with it. If we look at Example 35 (opposite), we can see that the Point *splendor* has two basic versions: the first as in Cantus, bars 2 - 4, and the second as in Cantus, bars 6 - 7. Similarly, in Example 29 we saw that the word *iniquitatem* was first set melismatically, and later syllabically. However, it is important to notice that each version of each Point is always imitated by all the other voices, even if the two versions appear in a different order in some voices. In Example 35 (opposite), if we refer to Cantus' *splendor* in bars 2 - 4 as version A, and that in bars 6 - 7 as version B, we see that within the 19 bars of this example, Cantus has these versions in the order ABBA, Altus in the order BABB, Quintus in the order BBB, with A not occurring until bars 19 - 20, and Tenor has a kind of composite AB followed by BB. In my reconstruction Sextus has BB followed by a composite AB and Bassus has just BB.

## 4. MELODY

### 4.1. Permitted melodic intervals

Certain melodic intervals were avoided by 16<sup>th</sup>-century composers, mainly because they were considered ungrateful to sing. In general Gesualdo abides by this convention. 'Forbidden' melodic intervals are: augmented 4<sup>th</sup>/diminished 5<sup>th</sup>, major 6<sup>th</sup>, minor 7<sup>th</sup> and major 7<sup>th</sup>, and any interval greater than one 8<sup>ve</sup>. Diminished 4<sup>ths</sup> (for example F<sup>#</sup> to B $\flat$ ) also tend to be avoided (although they do occur in certain chromatic situations). However other chromatic intervals, such as F to F<sup>#</sup>, are quite common, and indeed specially characteristic of Gesualdo's music. The 'forbidden' melodic intervals are allowed, however, when a rest, however short, intervenes.

Example 32: *Ave sanctissima Maria*

Example 32 reveals a number of interesting cases. Beside the chromatic passages in Cantus and Altus in bars 4 - 5, in bar 2 Altus has a diminished 5<sup>th</sup> separated by a rest and Tenor has a major 6<sup>th</sup> separated by a rest.

This 'melodic interval rule' frequently helps us make decisions about *music ficta*. Example 33 shows Cantus going from B $\flat$  - E - this indicates quite clearly either that the E should be flattened or that the B $\flat$  should be sharpened to B, depending on the context.

Example 33: *Sana me Domine*

The rule also helped in identifying a misprint in Glen Watkins's (Ugrino) edition of *Ad te levavi*. Example 34 (here transposed down a 4<sup>th</sup>) shows my corrected version of Altus in bars 24 and 25. In Ugrino the first note of bar 25 was an A (= E transposed), which made no sense together with Tenor. This suggested a mistake either in Tenor or Altus, but the fact that Altus rose a major 6<sup>th</sup> from C to A (= G - E transposed) indicated clearly that the mistake lay with the Altus's A (E transposed), hence my correction to G (= D transposed).

Example 34: *Ad te levavi*

Example 35: *O Oriens*

The musical score for "O Oriens" is presented in three systems, each with six vocal staves (C, S, A, Q, T, B) and a piano accompaniment staff. The lyrics are in Latin and are distributed across the vocal parts. The score includes various musical markings such as 'A', 'B', and 'A/B' above certain notes, indicating specific musical phrases or ornaments. The piano accompaniment provides a harmonic and rhythmic foundation for the vocal lines.

**System 1 (Measures 1-5):**

- C:** O O - ri-ens, splen - - - dor, O O -
- S:** O O - ri-ens, O O - ri-ens, splen - - - dor,
- A:** O O - ri-ens, O O - ri-ens,
- Q:** O
- T:** O O - ri-ens, splen - - -
- B:** O O - ri -

**System 2 (Measures 6-9):**

- C:** - ri - ens, splen - dor, O O - ri - ens, splen - -
- S:** O O - ri - ens, O O - ri - ens splen - dor,
- A:** splen - - - dor, splen - - - dor, O
- Q:** O - ri - ens, splen - - - dor, O O - ri -
- T:** - - - dor, O O - ri - ens, O O -
- B:** ens, O O - ri - ens, splen - - - dor, O O -

**System 3 (Measures 10-14):**

- C:** dor, splen - - - dor lu -
- S:** splen - - - dor lu - - - cis ae - ter -
- A:** O - ri-ens, splen - - - dor lu - cis ae - ter -
- Q:** ens, splen - - - dor, O O - ri - ens, O - ri - ens, splen - dor
- T:** - ri-ens, O O - ri - ens splen - dor, splen - dor
- B:** - ri-ens, splen - - - dor, O O - ri-ens, splen -

**System 4 (Measures 15-18):**

- C:** cis ae - ter - nae, lu - - - cis ae - ter - nae, O
- S:** nae, O O - ri - ens, O O - ri-ens,
- A:** nae, O O - ri-ens, splen - dor,
- Q:** lu - - - cis ae - ter - nae, O O - ri-ens, splen -
- T:** lu - - - cis, lu - - - cis ae - ter -
- B:** dor lu - - - cis, O O - ri-ens, O - ri-ens, splen - - -



It would be tempting to try to suggest that these cases arose as a result of some textual reference, or word-painting, but there is little to suggest that in these examples. And in spite of the fact that, in Examples 38 and 39, the central note (between the wide leap) is repeated, thus minimising the effect of the wide leap, it is true to say that Gesualdo did not shy away from such extreme melodic contours nearly to the extent his contemporaries did, and that they contribute to the general intensity of his melodic language. It was this aspect of Gesualdo's melodic style which led me to allow, for example, the following voice leading in my reconstruction of Sextus in *Ave sanctissima Maria* (see Example 42):

**Example 42: *Ave sanctissima Maria*, Sextus, b.39-40**



Finally it will be noticed that 8<sup>ve</sup> leaps (and indeed major and minor 6<sup>ths</sup>) are always set syllabically and never melismatically.

## 5. HARMONY

### 5.1. Harmonic integrity

A basic principle in Gesualdo's harmonic style is that, as long as at least three voices are sounding, each passing harmony should be represented by a complete triad at all times. This means that in the case of a motet (or section of a motet) which starts out polyphonically with just a pair of voices, the triads of each harmony should be complete, with root, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, as soon as possible after the entry of the third voice.

When embarking on the reconstruction of any given motet, my first task was always to make a harmonic analysis of the four extant voices. This harmonic analysis would of course at first be incomplete, since there would be many instances where there was not enough information to be able to make a complete analysis. For example, if the four extant voices on one particular beat only included the notes F and D, this is only enough to suggest that the harmony on that beat could be d-minor or B<sup>b</sup> major. In this case I would mark this chord as being 'B<sup>b</sup>/d', and it would then be my task to resolve this ambiguity during the course of the polyphonic reconstruction. However, there was normally enough information provided to make a fairly complete harmonic analysis, and this, together with the 'harmonic integrity' principle, was enough to enable a start at building a kind of 'skeleton' of the reconstructed Points at each moment. The process was very similar to filling in a crossword puzzle, where gradually the number of possibilities for each word is reduced as more letters from other words are filled in along its course.

The following examples, however, show instances where harmonic integrity has had to give way to other polyphonic considerations. In Example 43 we see that in bar 3 both the first beat (C and E) and the second beat (E and B) are incomplete triads, and bar 4 is incomplete until the last crotchet. In this case, given that momentum and polyphony are not yet fully established, and possibly as a result of failing to find a satisfactory solution for an earlier entry of Sextus or Bassus which would complete the triads in bars 3 and 4, I decided to allow this in favour of a better rhythm of Point entries. (See section 2.2.iv, earlier in this article).

**Example 43: *Ad te levavi***

Cantus (C): Ad te le -

Soprano (S): Ad

Alto (A): Ad te le - va - vi, ad

Tenor (T): Ad te le - va - vi a - ni-mam me - am,

Quinto (Q): Ad te le - va -

Basso (B): Ad te

Harmonic analysis: C/E, E/B, A/E, E/G, Complete =>



Example 47 (from the *Responsoria*) shows one of the most extreme examples of such a progression. More examples can be seen in Examples 48 and 61, below.

**Example 47: Responsoria: Feria VI, Resp. III**

19

C  
in a - ma - ri - tu - di - nem, ut me cru - ci - fi - ge - res, ut me

S  
in a - ma - ri - tu - di - nem, ut me cru - ci - fi - ge - res, ut me

A  
nem, in a - ma - ri - tu - di - nem, ut me cru - ci - fi - ge - res, ut me cru

Q  
tu - di - nem, ut me cru - ci - fi - ge - res,

T  
ut me cru - ci - fi - ge

B  
a - ma - ri - tu - di - nem, ut  
VII in G-min A-min VII (F) A-min + G susp. ut

**Example 48:  
Responsoria: Feria VI, Resp. VI**

75

C  
abs - que mi - se - ri

A  
abs - que mi - se

T  
abs - que mi - se - ri

B  
abs - que mi - se  
VII E (A-min) (1st inv.)

Examples 49 and 50 show less extreme, but nevertheless unconventional progressions in *SCII*:

### Example 49: *Ardens est cor meum*

28

C  
la - chry - mans quae -

S  
La - chry - mans quae -

A  
la - chry - mans quae -

Q  
la - chry - mans quae -

T  
la - chry - mans quae -

B  
la - chry - mans, la -  
VII IV (C)  
(or I in F)

### Example 50: *Virgo benedicta*

33

C  
lor, tri - bu - lor

S  
mis tri - bu - lor, tri - bu - lor

A  
- ni - am ni - mis tri - bu - lor

Q  
- de,

T  
- mis tri - bu - lor

B  
mis, ni - mis tri - bu - lor,  
VII #III

Example 50 is particularly interesting, since the leading-note triad is already implied by the four original parts right from the third crotchet of bar 33 until the fourth crotchet of bar 34, and it leads neither to the Tonic nor to the Subdominant of its own key (here C or F respectively), but rather to the unrelated key of E (which one could possibly describe as Mediant (III) with a sharpened 3<sup>rd</sup>). In order to make sense of this potentially problematic moment, I allowed myself the use of an unprepared suspension in Sextus on the word *tribulor* (*I am distressed*) in Sextus (ringed) as an imitation of Cantus in the previous bar. (See later discussion of suspensions in section 5.4.i, below.)

### 5.3. 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversions (6/4 chords)

In all polyphonic music from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, triads are normally in either Root Position or 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion. However, 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversions become increasingly common in certain circumstances from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Since responsibility for 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversions lies mainly with Bassus, and since Bassus is one of the parts which I have had to reconstruct, naturally it has been important to understand how and in what context Gesualdo uses them. Although this may seem an unduly heavy responsibility, I have found that the use of 6/4s, especially those at cadences, is almost always strongly implied by the existing four voices.

According to 16<sup>th</sup>-century contrapuntal tradition, 6/4s can be either Cadential or Passing. By the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century, Cadential 6/4s become very common, and are indeed almost always used at final or other important cadences. Gesualdo indeed makes powerful use of them and in this respect foreshadows the music of both Schütz and Monteverdi.

Example 51 (bb.73-74) shows a typical example of a Cadential 6/4 at a final cadence.

Example 52 (bb.29-30) shows a typical example of a Cadential 6/4 at a mid-point cadence.

Example 53 (b.19) shows an example of a Cadential 6/4 at a cadence which is significant structurally only in that it concludes the text-fragment *discedite a me omnes* before going on with the next text-fragment *qui operamini*.

Example 54 (bb. 34-37) reveals several interesting cases - in bar 34 the 6/4 is neither really Cadential nor Passing, but only briefly created (on third crotchet of the bar) by the suspension in Altus - in bar 35 there is a brief 6/4 on second crotchet - this is theoretically a Cadential 6/4, in that there is an expected C-major cadence on the first beat of bar 36, although in fact this expectation is not fulfilled - and in bar 36 there is a cadential 6/4 on the fourth beat (also strongly implied and anticipated already on the third beat).

Passing 6/4s are less common, but still used in certain circumstances. Example 55 reveals a couple of interesting cases: bar 47, third beat is basically a Cadential 6/4 implying an a-minor cadence on first beat of 48 - this cadence is not resolved as expected, but instead Bassus is suspended (making a passing 6/4 on the first beat) before resolving onto a d-minor chord on the second crotchet of bar 48. Just a few bars later, in bar 53, Bassus holds a pedal A on the climax of the Point *et non invenio eum* over which the voices move, creating a 6/4 on both the second and fourth crotchets. I maintain that the pedal A (and its consequent pair of 6/4s) is strongly implied by the surviving voices, and therefore justified in my reconstruction.

**Example 51: Ave sanctissima Maria**

73

C - - stris.  
S - - stris.  
A - no - stris.  
Q - stris.  
T - tis no - stris.  
B no - stris.

6 4 V I

**Example 52: Sana me Domine**

29

C sal - vum  
S et sal - vus e - ro,  
A e - ro,  
Q et sal - vus e - ro,  
T ro, sal - vum me fac,  
B sal - vus e - ro,

6 4 V I

**Example 53: Discedite a me**

18

C o - mnes, a me  
S - me, a me  
A a me, a me o  
Q mnes, a me  
T - a me, a me  
B - di - te a me o -

6 4

**Example 54: Discedite a me**

34

C e - xau - di - vit Do - - - mi - nus, e -  
S di - vit e - xau - di - vit Do - - - mi - nus, e  
A - di - vit, e - xau - di - vit Do -  
Q - xau - di - vit, e - xau - di - vit Do  
T - - - vit, quo - ni - am  
B - - - vit, e - xau - di - vit

6 4 6 4 6 4 V I

**Example 55: Ardens est cor meum**

47

C et non in - ve - ni-o e - um, et non in - ve - ni-o  
S et non in - ve - ni-o e - um, et non in - ve - ni-o e - um,  
A et non in - ve - ni-o e - um, et non in - ve - ni-o  
Q ve - ni-o e - um, et non in - ve - ni-o e - um, et non in -  
T et non in - ve - ni-o e - um, et non in - ve - ni-o e - um, in - ve - ni-o e -  
B non in - ve - ni-o e - um, et non in - ve - ni-o e - um, in - ve - ni-o e -

6 4 6 4 6 4 6 4

Gesualdo becomes increasingly daring and creative in his use of 6/4s, as can be seen from the later *Responsoria*. Example 56 shows an extraordinary progression from the *Responsoria* for Holy Saturday. Once again we see the exceptional use of a specific technical device provoked by the text. The text here is *Quia veniet dies Domini magna, et amara valde*. (*For the day of the Lord come, great and exceedingly bitter*), from which the fragment *et amara valde* (*and exceedingly bitter*) provokes this extraordinary sequence:

**Example 56: Responsoria. Sabb. Sanct, Resp. III**

The musical score for Example 56 consists of six staves, labeled C, S, A, Q, T, and B from top to bottom. The lyrics are: 'et a - ma - ra val - de, et a - ma - ra val - de, val - de.' The score is written in 6/4 time. The C staff (Cantus) begins with a B major chord. The S staff (Sextus) begins with an e-minor 2nd inversion. The A staff (Alto) begins with an F major 1st inversion. The Q staff (Quintus) begins with a b-minor chord. The T staff (Tenor) begins with a D major chord. The B staff (Bass) begins with an a-minor chord. The score shows a complex sequence of harmonic changes and dissonances, with various 6/4 chords and suspensions. The lyrics are: 'et a - ma - ra val - de, et a - ma - ra val - de, val - de.' The time signature is 6/4.

First of all, this sequence opens on a blazing B-major chord; this, in itself, is highly unusual, but coming straight from the preceding D-major cadence, is even more shocking. But what happens next is extreme, even for Gesualdo: in bar 20 he moves to an e-minor 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion, setting up the expectation of an e-minor cadence; this expectation is immediately dashed by the move to an F-major 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion with a suspended E on the third crotchet; as this is resolved on the fourth crotchet, yet another 6/4 (now d-minor) is created; this moves straight to b-minor with a suspended A in Cantus, which resolves to G<sup>#</sup> and a further E-major 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion, which cadences briefly in A-major. As if that were not enough, he then goes on through a D-major 6/4, an unprepared suspension (see section 5.4.i, below) in Sextus, a suspension in Cantus resolving onto a dissonance, a further unprepared suspension in Cantus and finally to an imperfect a-minor cadence. When one attempts to analyse this passage harmonically, it seems as if he has taken all possible types of dissonance (as well as 6/4 chords) and used them, one after the other, out of context, unprepared and unresolved. But the genius of this passage lies in the counterpoint and the inexorable sense of direction of each of the voices which, when put together, create a sequence of harmonies which presents a succession of images which is nothing less than apocalyptic<sup>16</sup>.

Although there are few such extreme uses of 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversions in *SCII*, it is important to understand the direction in which Gesualdo was heading during the period between *SCI* (1603) and the *Responsoria* (1611), when he was working on *SCII*. If, for example, in my reconstruction of *Ardens est cor meum*, the sequence of 6/4s that we saw in Example 55 might at first seem slightly unorthodox, then I would submit that it is positively mild in comparison with this example from the *Responsoria*.

<sup>16</sup> Burney describes a comparable passage in *Moro Lasso* (from the Madrigals, Book VI) as 'a specimen of his style, and harsh, crude, and licentious modulation; in which, the beginning a composition in A minor, with the chord of C<sup>#</sup>, with a sharp third, is neither consonant to the present laws of modulation, nor to those of the ecclesiastical tones; to which, as keys were not settled and determined on the fixed principles of major and minor, in the time of Venosa, composers chiefly adhered. But a more offensive license is taken in the second chord of this madrigal than in the first; for it is not only repugnant to every rule of transition at present established, but extremely shocking and disgusting to the ear, to go from one chord to another in which there is no relation, real or imaginary; and which is composed of sounds wholly extraneous and foreign to any key to which the first chord belongs'. *A General History iii*, p.217-222.

It is worth putting this notorious passage from Burney into historical context by quoting the Belgian musicologist, Fétis' reaction to it: '[Burney] found in [Gesualdo's madrigals] neither melody, nor rhythm, nor phraseological merit, and he was stunned at the false system of modulation, the perpetual embarrassments and the inexperience in the arrangement of the parts. This judgement, as severe as it is unjust, proves only that Burney did not understand the original thought which prevailed in the madrigals of the Prince of Venosa... The system of tonal succession employed by Gesualdo is not true modulation, because the harmonic element of tonal progression did not yet exist when he was writing; but these same successions are a part of his thought, and Burney was wrong to judge them by the ordinary rules'. *Biographie universelle des musiciens*, (Firmin-Didot et Cie. Paris 1879) iii, pp.469-470.

Stravinsky hits the nail firmly on the head of the question of Gesualdo's 'modulation': 'Gesualdo's music must be approached through the art of this voice-leading. His harmonic system was discovered and perfected through the inventions of voice-leading, and his harmony is trained by his voice-leading exactly as a vine is trained by a trellis. I learned this much myself when, a few months before composing the *Monumentum*, I fabricated the lost parts to the canonic motets *Da Pacem Domine* and *Assumpta est Maria*'. Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Expositions and Developments* (1962, reprinted University of California Press 1981), p.120.



Example 58 reveals several interesting cases. In Altus, bar 54, the suspension operates again conventionally, at crotchet speed. However, in Tenor, bars 52 - 53, and in Quintus, bar 54, the preparation is a minim and the suspension and resolution are both crotchets. This gave me the precedent for the minim preparations in Sextus, bar 55 and Bassus, bars 56 - 57. In Altus, bars 56 - 57, the suspension operates basically at crotchet speed, although the resolution is ornamented with a downward auxiliary note (C $\sharp$ ). This gave me the precedent for the ornamented resolution of Sextus in bar 56, whilst my quaver resolution in Bassus, bar 57, takes its precedent from Example 57, Quintus, bar 5.

**Example 58: *Ardens est cor meum***

In Example 59, Tenor, bar 39, the suspension is similar to that discussed in Example 57 (Quintus). The preparation is a quaver, the suspension is a quaver, and the resolution consists of two semiquavers descending step-wise from the suspension. The first of these semiquavers is dissonant, so that a consonant resolution is only achieved with the second semiquaver (A $\flat$ ). This, then, provides another example of a resolution consisting of two step-wise falling notes, half the value of the suspension, and of which only the second is the consonant resolution.

**Example 59: *Illumina nos***

Occasionally Gesualdo employs what I choose to call an unprepared suspension - i.e. one whose preparation is dissonant. This type of suspension, used mostly at cadences, became a highly characteristic feature of the music of Schütz, Monteverdi and other 17<sup>th</sup> century composers, but which in Gesualdo's time represented quite a bold, modern use of dissonance. Examples 60 and 61 show examples of unprepared suspensions (ringed) from the 1611 *Responsoria*.

**Example 60: Responsoria: Sabbati Sancti, Resp. V**

16

C Si est do - lor

S Si est do - - - lor

A Si est do - lor

Q Si est do - - - lor si

T

B Si est do - lor si - mi

**Example 61: Responsoria: Sabbati Sancti, Resp. II**

34

C ad mor - tem:

S ad mor - tem, ad mor - - - tem:

A mor - tem, ad mor - tem:

Q ad mor - tem:

T ad mor - tem, ad mor - tem:

B ad mor - tem:

VII (B-min) A (1st inv.)

Examples 62 - 65 show examples of unprepared suspensions in *SCII* (ringed).

**Example 62: *Ardens est cor meum***

5

Ar - dens est  
vi - den - di Do - mi num  
cor me - um vi - den -  
um vi - den - di Do - mi num me -  
dens est cor me - um,  
dens est cor me - um,

**Example 63: *Virgo benedicta***

54

et in ho - ra mor - tis me - ae.  
ho - ra, et in ho - ra mor - tis me - ae.  
ae, et in ho - ra mor - tis me - ae.  
et in ho - ra mor - tis me - ae.  
me - ae, et in hor - ra mor - tis me - ae.  
mor - tis, et in ho - ra mor - tis me - ae.

**Example 64: *Sana me Domine***

55

tu es, tu es.  
es, sa - lus me - a tu es.  
- a tu es.  
- a tu es, tu es.  
sa - lus me - a tu es.  
tu es, tu es.

### Example 65: *O Oriens*

Another important 'rule' that one can deduce from the traditional behaviour of suspensions is that the note onto which the suspension resolves should not be already sounding in another voice, whether in the same octave or even in another octave. However, it is clear that when this 'rule' is broken, the dissonance achieves a special intensity, and so it is not surprising that we find plenty of examples of this in Gesualdo's music. However, when he does break this rule, the suspension almost invariably resolves onto a note already sounding in another voice *in another octave*, and not in the same octave. In Example 47, bar 24, we saw that Sextus resolves onto A which is already sounding (one 8<sup>ve</sup> lower) in Quintus - the fact that this suspension is also unprepared brings a double intensity to the word *crucifigeres*. In Example 61, bar 37, Sextus resolves onto A which is sounding (one 8<sup>ve</sup> lower) in Altus, and in Example 66, bar 8, Altus resolves onto D which is sounding (one 8<sup>ve</sup> lower) in Bassus.

#### Example 66: *Responsoria: Feria VI, Resp. III*

#### Example 66a: *Virgo benedicta*

#### Example 66b: *Sana me Domine*

#### Example 66c: *Veni sponsa Christi*

#### Example 66d: *Responsoria: Feria VI, Resp. I*

Very occasionally Gesualdo resolves suspensions onto a note already sounding *in the same octave*, as can be seen in *Virgo benedicta*, bar 25, Quintus against Altus (Example 66a). This gave me a precedent for the resolution of Sextus against Tenor in *Sana me Domine*, bar 56-57 (see Example 66b), and of Tenor against Sextus in *Veni Sponsa Christi*, bar 5 (see Example 66c). In such cases he will sometimes move the already sounding note out of the way to make room for the suspension resolution (see Example 66d). In my reconstruction I have occasionally resorted to this manoeuvre also, as can be seen in Example 55, bar 53, Tenor and Bassus, and Example 8, bar 6, Sextus and Altus. It is interesting to note that, in cases where a suspension resolves onto a held note which does *not* move out of the way for the resolution, it almost always does so onto the root or 5<sup>th</sup> of the chord rather than onto the 3<sup>rd</sup>.





Example 71, bar 43, Sextus shows a further case where I felt that a falling, crotchet passing note was justified by the text-painting of *lachrymans*, even if it, too, is somewhat risqué.

**Example 71: *Ardens est cor meum***

40

C e - - - - um, la - chry-mans, la - chry - mans quae - ro

S ve - ni - o e - - - - um, la - chry mans, la - chry - mans quae - ro

A - um, e - - - - um, la - chry-mans quae - ro

Q um, in - ve - ni - o e - - - - um, la - chry-mans quae - ro

T e - - - - um, e - - - - um, la - chry mans, la - chry mans quae - ro

B ve - ni - o e - - - - um, la - chry mans, la - chry - mans quae -

**iii) Auxiliary Notes**

Like passing notes, auxiliary notes can theoretically be falling or rising, accented or unaccented, and normally at half-beat speed (here quaver) or quarter-beat speed (here semiquaver). In *SCII* downward auxiliary notes, both unaccented and accented, are reasonably common, but upward ones are rare.

Falling, unaccented auxiliary notes can be seen in the following examples:

Example 9, Quintus, bar 58, third last note (quarter-beat speed)

Example 62, Quintus, bar 7, second note (half-beat speed)

Falling, accented auxiliary notes can be seen in the following examples:

Example 14, Sextus, bar 4, second note (because the F is dissonant) (quarter-beat speed)

Example 14, Cantus, bar 6, second last note (because the C is dissonant) (quarter-beat speed)

Example 14, Tenor, bar 6, second note (because the A is dissonant) (quarter-beat speed)

Examples of rising, accented auxiliary notes (quaver speed) can be seen in Examples 72 and 73.

In Example 72, bar 55, Cantus, the first  $E^b$  is a falling, accented passing note, but the second  $E^b$  is a rising, accented auxiliary note. In Example 73, bar 43, Tenor, the penultimate note is also a rising, accented auxiliary note.

**Example 72: *O anima sanctissima***

54 1)

C ce - dan - - - - tur,

S chry-mae, la - chry - mae, la

A chry - mae, la - chry - mae

Q tur, la - chry - mae, la - chry-

T tur,

B ce - dan - - - - tur,

**Example 73: *O sacrum convivium***

43

C gra - ti - a:

S gra

A gra - ti - a:

Q gra

T gra

B gra - ti - a:

e 6 V  
4

#### iv) *Echappées*

The fourth type of dissonance, the *échappée*, occurs mainly at cadences. An example of this can be seen in Example 74, Quintus, bar 53 (marked\*\*). Here, instead of the A preceding to the F<sup>#</sup> simply via a G passing note, the dissonant G falls first to an E before going back to the F<sup>#</sup>. The same thing happens in Altus at the final cadence of *Ave sanctissima Maria* (see Example 75). This established the precedent for my *échappée* at the final cadence of *Ne derelinquas me* (see Example 76, Sextus, bar 60).

Example 74: *Da pacem Domine*

Example 75: *Ave sanctissima Maria*

Example 76: *Ne derelinquas me*

## 6. RHYTHM

### 6.1. Note-values

Today we have become so accustomed to sophisticated modern rhythmic notation, that it is easy to forget the basic limitations imposed by 16<sup>th</sup>-century notation. There were no such things as ties, but a note-value could be dotted (only single-dotted). However, since there were no 'bar-lines', notes could be dotted over what, in modern notation, looks like a bar-line, and note-values could also extend over and beyond a modern bar-line. The available note-values were basically as shown in Example 77.

Example 77

### 6.2. Rhythmic flow

The root of the Ancient Greek word *rhythmos* means *flow*<sup>18</sup>. Since the teaching of music as part of the Quadrivium in medieval universities was firmly founded on Ancient Greek principles (mainly through the Latin translations of Ancient Greek musical theory by Boethius<sup>19</sup>), this concept would have been quite clear to all composers of polyphony from the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the 17<sup>th</sup>. Today it is easy to forget this basic concept, and the implication it carried for 16<sup>th</sup>-century composers. We should also remember that music was notated in and performed from separate part-books. Thus during polyphonic passages any interruption of the basic *tactus* - the 'heart-beat' of the music - would have created practical problems of ensemble, as well as being aesthetically at odds with the very nature of polyphony.

<sup>18</sup> Lionel Pearson: *Aristoxenus Elementa Rhythmica*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1990), p.xxiii

<sup>19</sup> Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius: *Fundamentals of Music*, translated by Calvin M. Bower (Yale University Press 1989)

I have already discussed the nature of Points of Imitation, and we have seen that each Point has its own rhythmic as well as melodic characteristics. We have also seen how, from the beginning of a motet or section, the voices enter one by one, gradually establishing a polyphonic texture, and as soon as possible establishing harmonic integrity through triadic completeness. The same technique is applied in the rhythmic domain, in that rhythmic integrity (by which I mean continuity of pulse, here the crotchet) is established as soon as possible. Examples 78 and 79 show typical examples of this pulsation getting established at the beginning of a motet.

### Example 78: *Virgo benedicta*

Pulse...

1

C

S

A

Q

T

B

Be - - - ne - di -

Vir - go be -

Be - - - ne - di - cta, Vir - go, -

Vir -

Vir - go be - - - ne - di - - - - cta,

Vir - go be - - - - ne - di - - - - cta,

### Example 79: *Sana me Domine*

Pulse...

1

C

S

A

Q

T

B

Do -

Sa - na me Do - - - mi -

Do - - - mi - ne -

Sa - - na me Do - - - mi - ne, Do - - - mi -

Sa - - na me Do - - - - mi - ne,

Sa - - - na me, sa -

The reverse process can often happen at cadences - either final cadences or cadences ending the first part of a two-part motet. Here the beat-pulsation can be slowed from, for example, crotchet to minim pulse in order to 'shape' the cadence in a satisfactory and musical way. Example 80 shows the mid-point of *Franciscus humilis*. In bars 30 and 31 the pulsation slows from crotchet to minim in order to shape the cadence at the end of the first part of the motet, before starting again with the opening Point *Franciscus humilis*.

### Example 80: *Franciscus humilis*

29 Pulse



C tur. Fran - cis - cus hu - mi - lis et pau - per, et pau -  
 S - no - ra - - - tur. Fran - ci - scus hu - mi -  
 A - no - ra - - - tur. Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis  
 Q tur, ho - no - ra - - - tur. Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis et pau - per, hu -  
 T ho - no - ra - - - tur. Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis  
 B ho - no - ra - - - tur. Fran - ci - scus hu - mi - lis et

In Example 81 Gesualdo goes a step further. In bar 30 he slows the pulse from crotchet to minim in order to shape the final cadence of the first part of the motet; then there is a short, predominantly minim-pulse Point focussing on the words *salvum me fac*, before he proceeds with the second part of the motet, and the words *et salvus ero*. This has the dramatic effect of focussing special attention not only on the words *salvum me fac* (*save me*) (so typical of Gesualdo in his yearning for forgiveness) but also on the subsequent phrase *et salvus ero* (*and I will be saved*).

### Example 81: *Sana me Domine*

29 Pulse...



C sal - vum me fac, me fac et sal - vus e - ro  
 S et sal - vus e - ro, sal - vum me fac et sal - vus e -  
 A e - ro, sal - vum me fac et sal - vus e - ro  
 Q et sal - vus e - ro, sal - vum me fac et sal - vus e - ro, et sal - vus  
 T ro, sal - vum me fac, sal - vum me fac et sal - vus  
 B sal - vus e - ro, sal - vum me fac, me fac et sal - vus e - ro

Further examples of the pulsation slowing at final cadences can be clearly seen in Examples 58 and 64, where just the penultimate chord is a minim, and Example 61, where the slowing down and shaping of the cadence starts already four bars before the cadence.

Like many 16<sup>th</sup>-century composers, Gesualdo occasionally alternates between polyphony and homophony. Whilst continuity of rhythmic flow is an essential aspect of polyphonic music, it is not relevant in homophonic passages. Indeed it is the very presence or absence of a continuous rhythmic pulsation that is the primary factor in distinguishing these two types of texture. A classic example of homophony can be seen in Example 82.

**Example 82: Responsoria: Sabb. Sanct, Resp V**

The musical score for Example 82 consists of six staves, each representing a different voice part: C (Cantus), S (Soprano), A (Alto), Q (Quinto), T (Tenore), and B (Basso). The lyrics are: "O vos, o vos omnes, qui transitis per viam, at". The music is in a common time signature (C) and features a homophonic texture with a crotchet pulsation. The lyrics are: "O vos, o vos omnes, qui transitis per viam, at".

However, homophonic passages can be quite short, as in Example 36, bars 46 - 49, Example 49, bars 28 - 29, and Example 71, bars 42 - 44. In Example 32, bars 1 - 5, the texture is essentially homophonic (in that the individual voices are not imitative but merely fulfill a chordal function), although Gesualdo nevertheless maintains a crotchet pulsation from the second crotchet of bar 3 until the third crotchet of bar 5 by varying the rhythm in the individual voices, in order to give a smoothness and serenity to the word *sanctissima*.

Example 83 reveals a similar case where a brief moment of homophony is used to illustrate the text. After the opening Point, *Franciscus humilis et pauper*, the polyphony is halted for a moment on a bare 8<sup>ve</sup> in just two voices (bar 6, Alto and Bassus) on the word *pauper* (*poor*); this is then immediately contrasted with a richly orchestrated, homophonic 6-part chord on the word *dives* (*rich*) before the polyphony resumes with the word *caelum*.



In Example 84 Gesualdo develops the idea of rhythmically ornamented homophony a little further. The first statement of *sustinete hic* is purely homophonic, and in the second statement Tenor is shifted one beat later. After a short phrase of two-voice polyphony to the words *et vigilate mecum* he returns to homophony for *nunc videbitis turbam* (*now you shall see the crowd*), this time with elaborate rhythmic ornamentation, before settling on the word *turbam*. Finally he returns to polyphony for the final phrase, *quae circumdabit me* (*which will surround me*).

**Example 84: Responsoria: Feria V, Resp II**

17

C  
sus-ti - ne - te hic, sus-ti - ne - te hic, nunc vi - de - bi - tis

S  
sus-ti - ne - te hic, sus-ti - ne - te hic, et vi - gi - la - te me - - cum: nunc vi - de - bi - tis

A  
sus-ti - ne - te hic, sus-ti - ne - te hic, et vi - gi - la - te me - cum: nunc vi - de - bi - tis

Q  
tem: sus-ti - ne - te hic, sus-ti - ne - te hic, nunc vi - de - bi - tis

T  
sus-ti - ne - te hic, sus-ti - ne - te hic, nunc vi - de - bi - tis

B  
sus-ti - ne - te hic, sus-ti - ne - te hic, nunc vi - de - bi - tis

23

C  
tur - bam, quae, quae cir - - cum - da - bit me:

S  
tur - bam, quae cir - - cum - da - bit me:

A  
tur - bam, quae cir - cum - da - bit, quae cir - - cum - da - bit me:

Q  
tur - bam, quae cir - - cum - da - bit, quae cir - - cum - da - bit me:

T  
tur - bam, quae cir - - cum - da - bit me, quae cir - - cum - da - bit me:

B  
tur - bam, quae cir - - cum - da - bit me:

The study of Gesualdo's control of rhythmic flow and pulsation in polyphony and homophony has been important to my reconstruction in very many instances. Example 85 shows a passage from *Assumpta est Maria*, in which only Bassus has required reconstruction, since Sextus is simply in canon with Quintus. Here I was faced with the problem of whether to maintain the crotchet pulsation through bar 37 with Bassus, or whether to yield to strongly implied moment of stillness in the second half of the bar. Having found two Points of Imitation for *benedicunt Dominum/benedicunt* (bars 34 - 38) with which I was reasonably satisfied, I still had the option of maintaining the crotchet pulsation as, for instance, in Example 86. However, armed with all the evidence of Gesualdo's technique of briefly pausing the continuous pulsation during polyphonic passages, or subtly inserting a moment of homophony into a polyphonic passage in order to focus on a particular word or image, and given that my solution in this case created much better imitation (there are no repeated notes elsewhere on the syllables *-di-cunt*), I decided that the word *benedicunt* deserved a moment of stillness here, and therefore allowed a brief interruption to the flow of pulsation.

### Example 85: *Assumpta est Maria*

Example 85 shows a musical score for six voices (C, S, A, Q, T, B) from *Assumpta est Maria*. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: C: num, be - ne - di - cunt Do - mi - num, lau - dan - - tes,; S: - tes - - - - be - - - -; A: dan - - - - tes - - - - be -; Q: be - - - - ne - di - cunt Do - mi num,; T: mi - num, - - - - be - ne - di - cunt Do - - - - mi - num, lau - dan -; B: Do - mi - num, be - ne - di - cunt Do - mi num, lau - dan - - - tes, be -

### Example 86

Example 86 shows a musical score for the Bassus (B) voice from *Assumpta est Maria*. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: B: Do - mi num, be - ne - di - cunt Do - mi - num, Do - mi num,

## 6.3. Rests

I have already discussed the question of available note-values in section 6.2, above. The restriction to available note-values does not apply, of course, to rests, which can be added together to create a rest of any length, simply by being placed next to each other on the staff.

One issue that does arise with rests, however, is the maximum length of rest in any one voice. Gesualdo rarely rests a voice for more than 6 minims after its first entry. In the surviving voices of *SCII*, however, there are cases of up to 8 minims - for example in *Assumpta est Maria*, Quintus, bars 14 - 18 (8 minims) and similarly in its canon, in *Ad te levavi*, Cantus, bars 25 - 29 (10 minims), and in *O anima sanctissima*, Cantus, bars 15 - 18 (6.5 minims). This established a precedent for my resting a voice for more than 6 minims in a few cases, as follows: *Gaudeamus omnes*, Sextus, bars 42 - 46 (7.5 minims), *Ad te levavi*, Sextus, bars 48 - 51 (7 minims), and *O anima sanctissima*, Sextus, bars 23 - 26 (7 minims).

## Conclusions and Performance Practice

### 7. CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding pages I have laid out and explained what I believe are the principal ‘rules’ applicable to the task of reconstruction of *SCII*, and have shown examples of where both Gesualdo and I have both obeyed them and broken them. There are nevertheless a few instances where I have been forced to break or at least ‘bend’ a rule for which I have been unable to find a specific precedent in Gesualdo’s sacred music. I have owned up to a few of these in the course of this article, but in other such cases (which I hope are rare), the reader should be aware of the lengths to which I have gone to find a solution which obeys *all* the rules, and that only after weeks of failed attempts will I have allowed myself to compromise, effectively prioritising one rule over another in the search for the most musically appropriate solution. A greater sin would have been to continue to allow these masterly pieces to lie unperformable for a moment longer, for they represent no less than one third of the sacred music of this truly great and visionary composer. For, throughout the two years during which I have worked on this reconstruction, the further I have delved into Gesualdo’s technique and style, the deeper my respect for this composer has become.

#### 7.1. Performance Practice

First of all comes the question: solo voices or multiple voices? Given the virtuosity needed to perform large parts of both *SCII* and the *Responsoria*, and given the extreme challenges of intonation in the chromatic passages, it seems highly likely that Gesualdo would have performed these pieces with solo voices. The *Chiesa Santa Maria delle Grazie* in the town of Gesualdo, where Gesualdo lived and worked from 1597 until the end of his life, is very small, and so a large group of singers would certainly not have been needed to fill the space, nor would there have been room for them. We know that Gesualdo employed singers in his court to sing his madrigals - and one assumes that these same singers would have been used in the church to sing the motets when required. Certainly an expert group of solo voices can bring a greater flexibility to the chord-by-chord problems of intonation often posed by the music, and for these reasons solo voices still represent the ideal and most historically faithful performance group today.

However, *SCII* on the whole demands somewhat less virtuosity from the performers than the *Responsoria*, and so I believe that multiple voices (2 or even 3 to a part) can also be considered for the less florid pieces, especially for larger buildings. The best of today’s vocal consorts and chamber choirs consistently prove themselves adept at navigating such chord-by-chord intonation issues, and in many cases the effect of Just Intonation in chromatic passages by a small choir can be extremely beautiful.

As far as voice-types are concerned, Gesualdo probably had at his disposal castrati or falsettists (for *C1* in Normal Clefs), high (light) tenors (for *C3*), lower tenors or even baritones (for *C4*), baritones (for the occasional *F3*), and good low basses (for *F4*). It is also evident that Gesualdo, like many Italian composers of the time, has a predilection for low sonorities. It seems therefore no coincidence that all these voice-types, despite the importance placed on high tenors being able to float up to high *g*’ and *a*’ without needing either to bawl or to go fully into falsetto, need to have a strong low register. Thus when making the decision whether to use women or falsettists to replace the castrati it should be remembered that a strong low register is essential, thus giving an evenness of strength and timbre throughout the range and at the same time bringing out the music’s characteristic dark sonorities.

The problem of finding good high tenors of the type clearly needed for this music was probably no less for Gesualdo than it is today, but the fact remains that they are needed, and indeed are indispensable to solo-voice performances. Women’s voices, which were excluded from the male Church in Gesualdo’s day, are, of course, available to us today, and so can be used very effectively for the Cantus (*C1*) parts. All the *C3* parts go down to *e*, and can therefore be sung either by high, light tenors, or countertenors, or (if using multiple voices) a combination of the two. The great advantage of countertenors is their ability to use their baritone voice in the low register, thus bringing the essential strength needed when their voice becomes the bass of the texture. It is also important that parts using the same clef employ one and the same voice-type (or combination of voice-types, if using multiple voices). So, for example, where Altus and Sextus both use *C3* clefs, the voices on these two parts must be of the same type.

## 7.2 Temperament and Tuning

Singers in Gesualdo's day would have been accustomed to singing not in equal temperament, but in either Just Intonation (when singing unaccompanied) or in quarter-comma meantone (when singing with instruments). This tuning system allows certain intervals (notably major and minor 3<sup>rds</sup>) to be pure, but only in a maximum of eight keys; the majority of diatonic tones and semitones are equal, except in the case of certain 'bad' or 'Wolf' intervals. Wolf major 3<sup>rds</sup> are: C<sup>#</sup>-F, F<sup>#</sup>-B<sup>b</sup>, G<sup>#</sup>-C and B-E<sup>b</sup>; Wolf minor 3<sup>rds</sup> are: E<sup>b</sup>-F<sup>#</sup>, F-G<sup>#</sup> and B<sup>b</sup>-C<sup>#</sup>. All but one perfect 5<sup>th</sup> are tempered a quarter of a syntonic comma less than a pure 5<sup>th</sup>, which was considered acceptable. The one Wolf 5<sup>th</sup> is G<sup>#</sup>-E<sup>b</sup>. This means that chords such as C<sup>#</sup> major, F<sup>#</sup> major, G<sup>#</sup> major, B major, E<sup>b</sup> minor, F minor and B<sup>b</sup> minor sound so sour as to be (for most music) unusable.

It is tempting to think that Gesualdo, in his experiments in chromaticism, might have wanted to use these 'sour' intervals creatively. After all, the word *chromatic* comes from the Greek *chromos* (colour), and so these different-sounding triads could well have been considered merely as available 'colours', rather than mathematically incorrect triads to be avoided at all costs. If we recall the extraordinary passage in the *Responsoria* referred to in Example 56, the B-major chord at the beginning of this passage might conceivably have been intended to sound 'out of tune' as a deliberate painting of the text: *et amara valde* (and exceedingly bitter). However exciting this idea may seem, there are several reasons why I think that it is unlikely to have been Gesualdo's intention: firstly, it is very likely that Gesualdo's sacred music (and indeed more particularly the madrigals) would have been sung unaccompanied. Since singers tend to sing in Just intonation intuitively when they are singing unaccompanied, they would have found it extremely difficult to tune Wolf intervals deliberately, without the guidance of a keyboard instrument. Even singers today find singing microtones in contemporary microtonal music extremely difficult, and even in 'atonal' contexts devoid of any gravitation from implied triads. Secondly, Gesualdo's use of remote keys or triads such as B major is by no means restricted to passages where the text is describing bitterness or the like, especially in the late madrigals, where C<sup>#</sup> major chords are not uncommon.

Thirdly and most importantly, it should be noted that Ferrara had become the centre of experimentation in temperament since the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. So-called 'split-key' organs and harpsichords had been in existence since the late 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>20</sup>: these were instruments which had two keys (and therefore two independent tunings) for each of the black keys (F<sup>#</sup>/G<sup>b</sup>, G<sup>#</sup>/A<sup>b</sup>, A<sup>#</sup>/B<sup>b</sup>, C<sup>#</sup>/D<sup>b</sup> and D<sup>#</sup>/E<sup>b</sup>) as well as an extra key between E and F (for E<sup>#</sup>) and between B and C (for B<sup>#</sup>). The resulting 19-note instrument was known as the *Cembalo Cromatico* (or *Organo Cromatico*), and these instruments were relatively common in Italy in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup>



Cembalo Cromatico  
reconstruction by Denzil Wraight for Christopher Stembridge

In 1555 the Italian music theorist and composer, Nicola Vicentino went one step further and built the *Archicembalo*. The purpose of this instrument was to solve the problem of the quarter-comma tempered 5<sup>ths</sup>. It had two keyboards, the lower of which was identical to the *Cembalo Cromatico* and had 19 keys, and the upper of which had 17 keys. Thus this instrument had a total of 36 keys which could be tuned in such a way as to include a complete gamut of pure 5<sup>ths</sup> as well as major and minor 3<sup>rds</sup>. There was also an alternative tuning known as 'extended quarter-comma meantone' where the lower keyboard was tuned identically to the *Cembalo Cromatico*, and the upper keyboard (without the additional keys between E and F and between B and C) was tuned a quarter-comma higher. Hence pure 5<sup>ths</sup> could be achieved by playing them across the two keyboards. In this tuning the last 5 pitches (32<sup>nd</sup> to 36<sup>th</sup>) were redundant, since they were virtually identical to five other pitches in the system; hence the instrument effectively had 31 pitches to the octave.

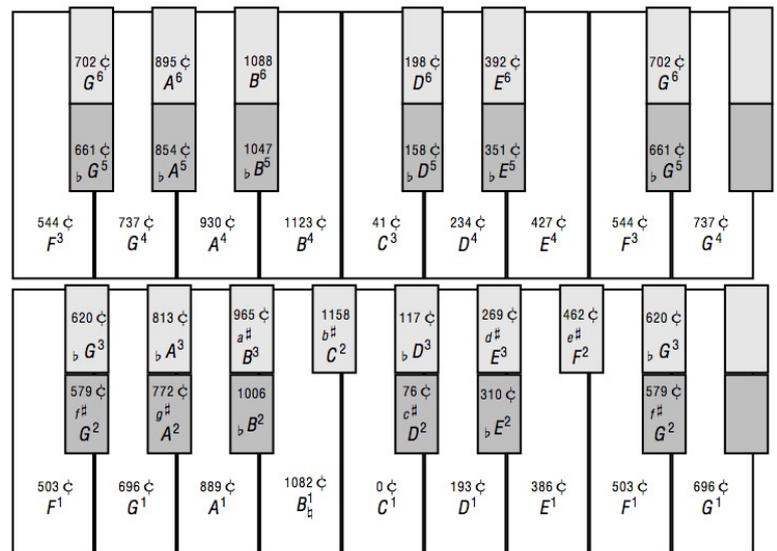
<sup>20</sup> The earliest split-key organ known to us was that in Cesena Cathedral dating from 1468.

<sup>21</sup> See also Patrizio Barbieri: *Enharmonic instruments and music, 1470-1900* (Patrizio Barbieri Publications, 2008).

## Archicembalo



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Tuning system showing intervals from C in cents

We know that there was an *Archicembalo* at the court of the Duke of Este in Ferrara by the time Gesualdo married Leonora d'Este in 1594, and during the period up to 1596 when he lived there. Nicola Vicentino had served as tutor to the Duke of Este as early as the 1530s, and after a short period in Rome returned there at about the time he first built the *Archicembalo* in 1555. Luzzasco Luzzaschi, a composer also employed at the court of Este and who is known to have had a great influence on Gesualdo, played the instrument regularly there in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century; so it is extremely likely that Gesualdo, too, had access to this extraordinary instrument, and was therefore able to use it to explore remote keys and try out chromatic progressions.

The implications of this for today's performers of both Gesualdo's sacred and his secular music are considerable. First of all Gesualdo's singers must have been acutely aware of the difference between diatonic (or 'major') semitones (eg. C - D<sup>b</sup>: c.117 cents) and chromatic (or 'minor') semitones C - C<sup>#</sup>: c.76 cents)<sup>22</sup>. They will consequently have been aware of the considerable difference, for example, between C<sup>#</sup> and D<sup>b</sup>: a massive 41 cents (almost a quartertone). If the tuning of the two-manual *Archicembalo* had been their model rather than the simpler, 19-note *Cembalo cromatico*, they would have been conscious of occasionally adjusting the principal diatonic pitches (C, D, E, F, etc.) as well, to suit certain musical contexts and chromatic progressions, just as a player of the *archicembalo* might have used the upper or lower keyboard to gain purer 5<sup>ths</sup> in certain circumstances.

Performers of Gesualdo's music today will already be aware of the difficulties of reconciling a natural inclination towards Just intonation with the challenges posed by the extreme chromaticism of much of the music. Perhaps these difficulties can be solved with reference to either the *Cembalo cromatico* model or the *Archicembalo* model. Either way, it seems clear that the wealth of experimentation in temperament to which Gesualdo had ample access in Ferrara laid the foundations of his chromaticism in all the works from that time on, which include *SCI*, *SCII* and the *Responsoria*, not to mention the last four books of madrigals. We do not know for sure whether Gesualdo owned an *Archicembalo* or a *Cembalo cromatico* at Gesualdo during his last seventeen years, but it is highly probable that he had a *Cembalo cromatico*, since they were already fairly common in Italy by that time; and even without either of these instruments it is probable that his exposure to the instruments in Ferrara would have been sufficient for his ear to have become irreversibly accustomed to the sound-world of these instruments for many years to come.

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<sup>22</sup> An equal-tempered semitone = 100 cents

