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JOHN HOFFACKER

THE ITALIAN WORKS OF HANS LEO HASSLER

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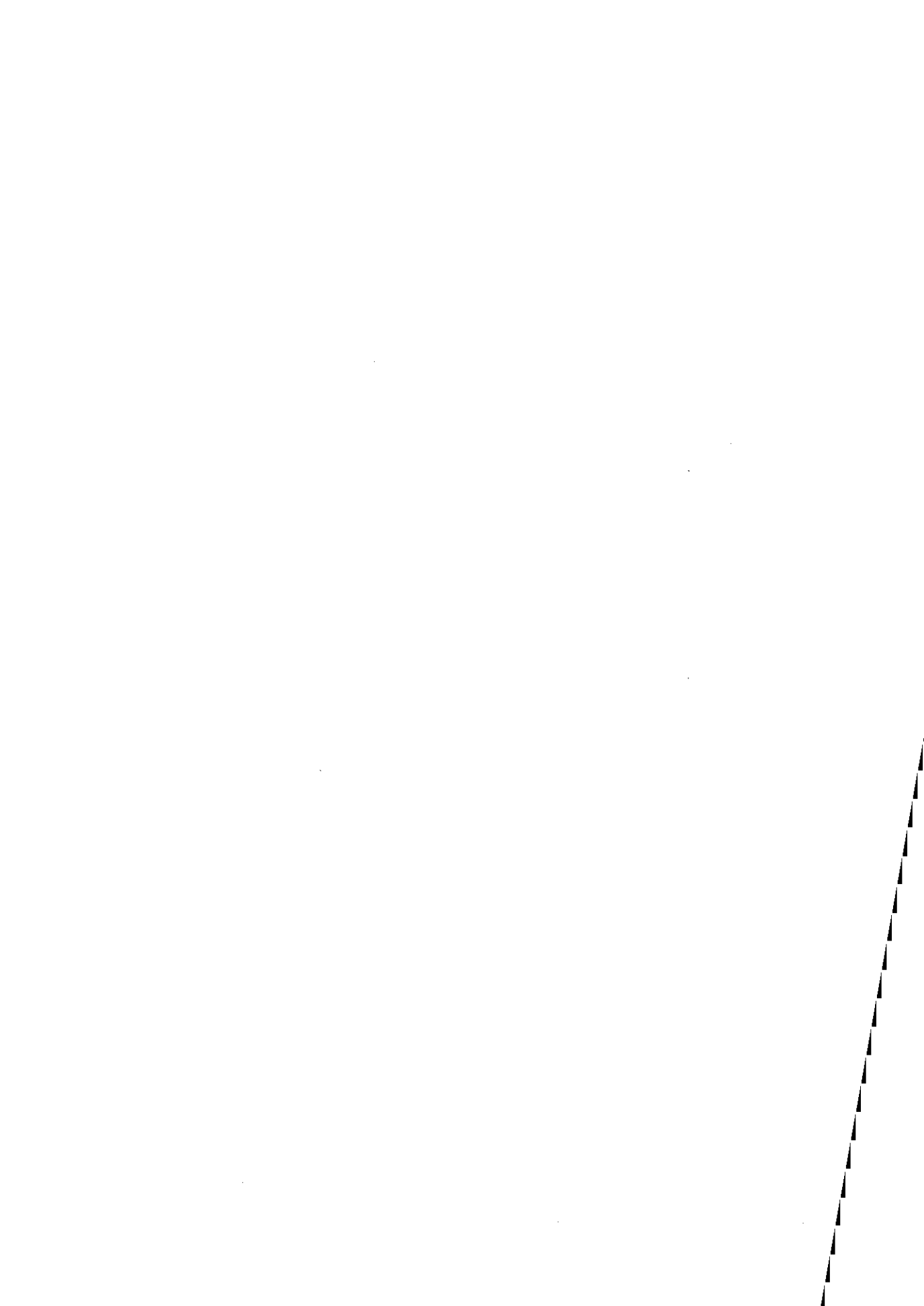


Preface

The secular music of Hans Leo Hassler bridges two eras: in his Italian canzonets and madrigals he is a master of the waning Renaissance, and in his German "Gesäng" he represents the rising Baroque.

The stylistic transition that marks the composer's work seems indeed to be underlined by a choice of texts in different languages—a situation which, to be sure, is not without exceptions, nor is it without parallels in the choral music of later eras.

The foremost German composer of his time, Hassler has not been honored in modern literature in a manner commensurate with his stature. It is especially his secular *oeuvre* that, despite its appeal and renown, has been neglected. One of the reasons may be its somewhat bewildering dichotomy: his German works are by far better known than his Italian works.

The study presented in these pages originated with a performance project concerned with the secular music of Hassler and his contemporaries, a project subsequently granted the Louise Goucher Madrigal Award. While it remains a tempting plan to deal in similar detail with all of Hassler's secular music, a discussion of the Italian works seemed the more immediate challenge for a critical essay, and it is hoped it may help to pave the way for a wider appreciation of the great but little known work of "Maestro Gianleone."

J.H.

Hassler and the Italian Style

It was in Nuremberg, the city of the Meistersinger, that Hans Leo Hassler was born (only the date of his baptism, October 21, 1564, is known).[1] Having preserved much of its medieval character, Nuremberg held high rank among the emerging centers of the German Renaissance. Craftsmen, artisans, and men of commerce lived in a prosperous environment. The first Imperial city to join the Reformation, Nuremberg was the largest and commercially most important settlement in its area until the devastation of the Thirty Years War and the plague of 1634.

The artistic life of Nuremberg was rich and varied. It was here that the works of such masters of the visual arts as Peter Vischer, Michael Wolgemut, and Adam Kraft were created. But it is characteristic of the skill of these artists that one of the best-known among them, Veit Stoss, combined the art of sculpture with the trade of engraving. Nuremberg's fame rested on the craft of the master artisan, and it was chiefly through his command of the techniques of engraving and woodcutting that the city's greatest artist, Albrecht Dürer, gained his international reputation.

Nuremberg's musical life was strongly influenced by the importance of the city as a center of printing. Yet its flourishing trade of music publishing reflected above all a broad indigenous musical culture. The first of the great Nuremberg organists was Konrad Paumann, whose didactic work, *Fundamentum Organisandi,* is preserved together with a famous collection that guides us to the genre that formed the most important bequest for the art of Hans Leo Hassler, the *Lochheimer Liederbuch.* Another equally distinguished Nuremberg collection was the *Schedelsche Liederbuch.* Its compiler was Hartmann Schedel, a physician and prominent humanist who belonged to the circle of Willibald Pirckheimer, Dürer's friend, and its connection with the social environment of the learned humanists is indicative of the high level to which the art of the song had risen in Hassler's time. This art, however, had deep roots in many traditions. Hans Sachs, cobbler and poet, and the foremost of the Meistersinger, stands as the very symbol of the artistic guild spirit that had made song an essential part of the city's cultural life.

[1]The date given in the *New Grove* is erroneous and applies to one of the composer's brothers.

Whereas the *Lochheimer Liederbuch* and the *Schedelsche Liederbuch* are manuscript sources — private holdings which represent some of the earliest polyphonic settings based on German folksong — two later Nuremberg song collections appeared in print in a series of volumes that gave the German polyphonic song widespread fame and popularity. The larger one of these was issued by Georg Forster, like Schedel a Nuremberg physician and close to the city's distinguished group of humanists. His *Ein Auszug guter alter und neuer Liedlein* appeared in five volumes. As the title indicates, it combines the old with the new, and this might be understood in a wider sense than the wording suggests. The significant development that can be seen in these editions is an emancipation from the old courtly art and an emphasis on the new genuine folk art. The same tendency is evident in the other printed collection, published by Hans Ott, and overlapping in time with Forster's prints: both collections dominated Nuremberg's musical scene in Hans Leo Hassler's childhood.

Throughout the Reformation, instruction in singing had gained a significant place in the schools. The prevailing curriculum, based on classical models, included music as a core subject, and parish schools provided musicians for civic and religious festivals. The school cantor typically taught several subjects besides music. An examplar of the learned teacher-musician is Sebald Heyden, rector of the parish school of St. Sebald in Nuremberg from 1525 until his death in 1561, and, like Dürer and Hans Sachs, one of the early proponents of the Reformation. Known for his didactic writings dealing with the rudiments of music, he was also an author of hymns, writing important melodies and including those of other composers such as Ludwig Senfl in his publications. Heyden's most enduring work is the chorale "O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde gross." This chorale became known in many settings, including two written by Hassler. The earlier one, for four voices in the contrapuntal motet style ("fugweiss componiert," as the title of the collection notes[2]), appeared in 1607. The later one is included in a collection "simpliciter gesetzt": simple homophonic settings of seventy-one chorales.[3]

Soon after the death of Sebald Heyden, another important figure rose in Nuremberg to assume the place of the greatest *Lied* composer before Hassler. Arriving in Nuremberg in 1575, Leonhard Lechner entered upon a highly productive eight-year tenure in the parish school of St. Lorenz. In the four collections of secular vocal music that he published in this period,

[2]*Psalmen und christliche Gesänge, auff die Melodeyen fugweiss componiert.* Nuremberg, 1607.

[3]*Kirchengesänge: Psalmen und geistliche Lieder, auff die gemeinen Melodeyen simpliciter gesetzt.* Nuremberg, 1608.

the traditional forms and styles of the German polyphonic *Lied* are to be found, imbued with the grace of Lechner's individual style.

Significantly, however, Lechner's publications also reflect the growing importance of Italian music in the city of Nuremberg. His first publications, songs for three voices, he described as influenced by the Italian popular song ("nach art der welschen Villanellen").[4] Another collection contained four of his Italian madrigals, and various anthologies he published at the time contained Italian compositions. It is possible that before his arrival in Nuremberg, Lechner had been studying in Italy for several years.

It is especially interesting in view of the development of Hassler's work that the ascendancy of Italian Renaissance forms of music had reached Nuremberg at the time of the composer's childhood. Hassler, born three years after Heyden's death, and eleven years of age when Lechner arrived in Nuremberg, was the son of an eminent Nuremberg organist. Like his brothers Kaspar and Jakob, who also were to gain considerable stature as musicians, he apparently received his early training from his father. The three brothers served as choirboys at the church of St. Egidien, where Hassler had been baptized and where his brother Kaspar later assumed the post of organist.

The cantor at St. Egidien at the time was Friedrich Lindner, possibly like Lechner a former student of Orlando di Lasso. Lindner must be considered one of the foremost German advocates of the Italian style, for his volumes of works by Italian masters, including Palestrina, Merulo, Marenzio, Vecchi, and Andrea Gabrieli, represent the largest collection of Italian music available in Germany at the time. Very few German composers were included in Lindner's publications, and it is significant indeed that among them was the young Hans Leo Hassler, to whom Lindner accorded the honor of editing two of his motets, written when Hassler was twenty-four. It may have been Lindner's close association with Hassler's family that had helped to pave the way, two years before this publication, for Hassler's decision to leave Nuremberg to take up studies with Andrea Gabrieli in Venice.

To live in the city so aptly described in contemporary documents as "la Serenissima" and to work with the renowned organist of St. Mark's must have given Hassler a taste for splendor the like of which could not be found in Germany. In this great basilica, a famous musical establishment was thriving: twenty instrumentalists and thirty choristers provided music for the major festivals. The famous architecture of St. Mark's with its two cross

[4]*Neue teutsche Lieder, nach art der welschen Villanellen gantz kurtzweilig zu singen auch auff allerley Seytenspiel zu gebrauchen.* Nuremberg, 1576. *Der ander Theyl neuer teutscher Lieder, nach art der welschen Villanellen.* Nuremberg, 1577.

naves combining Eastern and Western design favored the new technique of writing for *cori spezzati* — spatially separated multiple choirs.

Andrea Gabrieli, at seventy-five still at the height of his creative career, was prolific in many genres of music, secular as well as sacred. His madrigal style owed much to the influence of his friend Orlando di Lasso. His sacred style, which developed along the lines of his teacher Adrian Willaert, used the resources of St. Mark's in all their grandeur. Foremost among his students was his nephew Giovanni Gabrieli, who, after further training in the Munich court chapel under Lasso, returned at the time of Hassler's sojourn in Venice in order to succeed Andrea. After the death of the elder Gabrieli, Hassler apparently continued his studies with Giovanni, with whom he remained in close friendship throughout his life. They died in the same year, 1612, and a collection in which the works of both of them were joined was published in Nuremberg in 1615.

As the great crossroads of trade and culture, Venice provided an ideal environment for the artist of Hassler's time. The merchant class was large and supportive, with no one family so predominant that its swings of fortune could upset economic stability. It was in Venice that through the work of Ottaviano Petrucci the newly invented technique of music printing saw its most decisive advance, and it is of significance in the context of this discussion that the first major collection Petrucci issued was rooted in secular art — the *Odhecaton,* "Book of a Hundred Songs." The character of the city was open to innovations and new ideas, and it was in Venetian music that they found their greatest expression.

While he spent only eighteen months in Venice, Hassler doubtless encountered some of the most influential figures in the music of his time. Gioseffo Zarlino, the preeminent music theorist of the Renaissance, had been *maestro di cappella* at St. Mark's from 1565 to 1590. His successor, Baldassare Donato, was *maestro* of the seminary attached to the basilica when Hassler was in Venice, and the canzonetta style of Donato was to enter Hassler's own compositions in this genre. The fame of Giovanni Croce was the widest of any Venetian composer of madrigals. He succeeded Donato at St. Mark's in 1603, having published numerous volumes of madrigals, with several reaching not only the continent but England in Nicolas Yonge's *Musica Transalpina* (1588). Hassler must have become acquainted with the madrigals of Luca Marenzio and Orazio Vecchi in Venice. But it was above all the smaller secular forms, especially in the work of these masters — the canzonetta ("little song"), the villanella ("village song"), and the balletto ("dance song") — that left their most lasting impact on the writing of Hassler.

Returning to Germany in 1586, Hassler secured the position of chamber organist to Count Octavian Fugger in Augsburg, possibly because

of Andrea Gabrieli's friendship with the Fugger family, the powerful rulers of European finance ("the Pope's bankers"). Augsburg had maintained an orchestra since the time of Maximillian I in the fifteenth century, and its musical heritage included the work of the great early masters of the German polyphonic *Lied,* Heinrich Isaak, Ludwig Senfl, and Paul Hofhaimer. At the end of the sixteenth century, Adam Gumpelzhaimer and Gregor Aichinger were living in Augsburg. The Fugger banking institution was able to afford the finest musicians, and that Hassler lived and worked in this city for fifteen years was testimony to his recognized stature. In Augsburg, Hassler was charged with various duties which included playing the organ and directing the musical performances in the home of his patrons, and various works emanated from this period.

Hassler's music entered the market decisively in 1590 with his *Canzonette a quatro voci,* dedicated to Christoph Fugger. The following year saw the publication of his *Cantiones sacrae de Festis Praecipuis totius anni, a 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, et plurium vocum.* Twelve of the forty-eight motets are for polychoral forces, and there is tangible evidence of the Venetian influence. In 1596, two substantial collections of Hassler's secular music were published, one in Italian and the other in German, whose dedications show Hassler's growing reputation. The *Neue Teutsche Gesänge nach Art der welschen Madrigalen und Canzonetten* (i.e., in the Manner of Italian Madrigals and Canzonets) was dedicated to Bishop Heinrich Julius, Duke of Brunswick. This represents Hassler's first attempt at the new Italian-influenced German *Lied.* The same day, February 1, however, saw the publication of Hassler's Italian *Madrigali a 5, 6, 7, & 8 voci,* dedicated to the Landgrave Moritz von Hessen, the later patron of Heinrich Schütz.

His employment with a Catholic family required Hassler to compose liturgical works, and it is to this that we owe the nine masses Hassler published in 1599 and 1600. These Masses again call for double and triple choirs, and they clearly show the influence of Italian secular music, though they are in general more conservative in style than his motets. By this time Hassler's fame had spread across Europe and he received numerous offers to serve in foreign courts. Yet he applied to the town council of Augsburg for the additional assignment of taking on the direction of the *Stadtpfeiffer,* the civic instrumental organization. Having received the appointment, in 1601 he published his famous collection, *Lustgarten Neuer Teutscher Gesäng, Balletti, Galliarden, und Intraden,* a total of fifty pieces which now included works for instrumental ensemble.

Following Count Octavian's death in 1601, Hassler returned to Nuremberg, where he was hailed as a musician of international fame and was named *Oberkapellmeister* for the city and organist at the *Frauenkirche.* Here he published his *Sacri Concentus* in 1601, dedicating this second collection of Latin motets to the Nuremberg town council. In 1612 the work

was reprinted with the addition of several pieces, bringing the total to fifty-nine motets, three instrumental canzoni, and one ricercar. The *Sacri Concentus* represents Hassler's highest achievement in fusing German and Italian sacred styles.

In 1602, the Emperor Rudolf II, having raised Hassler to nobility, bestowed upon him the post of chamber organist. This may be understood as an appointment that was in essence honorary, for rarely if ever did Hassler perform at the Imperial Court. In this period he began to be heavily occupied with various business enterprises which led him into constant strife and growing restlessness. Eventually he took a leave of absence from Nuremberg, moving to Ulm where he was married to the daughter of a local businessman and became more deeply involved in business ventures. Nevertheless, Ulm was the site of two of his best known publications, in 1607 and 1608, with which he addressed himself for the first time to the Lutheran chorale in settings that placed the old contrapuntal and the modern simple hymn style side by side. His commercial undertakings in Ulm having failed, he sought new employment, and he was appointed to the court of the Elector of Saxony in 1608. His health began to decline, and his final years were spent in steadily increasing illness. He nonetheless accompanied the Elector on a politically important journey to Frankfurt am Main where he attended the coronation of the Emperor Matthias. Here disease claimed its victim, and Hassler died in Frankfurt on June 8, 1612.

* * *

One of the finest characterizations of Hassler, to which special reference is made in *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians,* appears in Hans Joachim Moser's *Geschichte der deutschen Musik,* volume I. Moser compares the appearance of the composer, which we know from a late seventeenth-century engraving, in its sensitive, melancholic expression and slight build, to that of Hugo Wolf. The comparison, of course, is aimed not only at the physiognomy of the two composers but especially at their stature as masters of the German song. The same powerful representation of the vocal form — the same passionate, dramatic penetration of the song text — marks their work. Hassler's supreme mastery of German vocal music anticipates that of Schütz in the following generation, but unlike Schütz's, Hassler's work claims its unique place by giving a new direction to German secular song, based to a large measure upon his Italian experience.

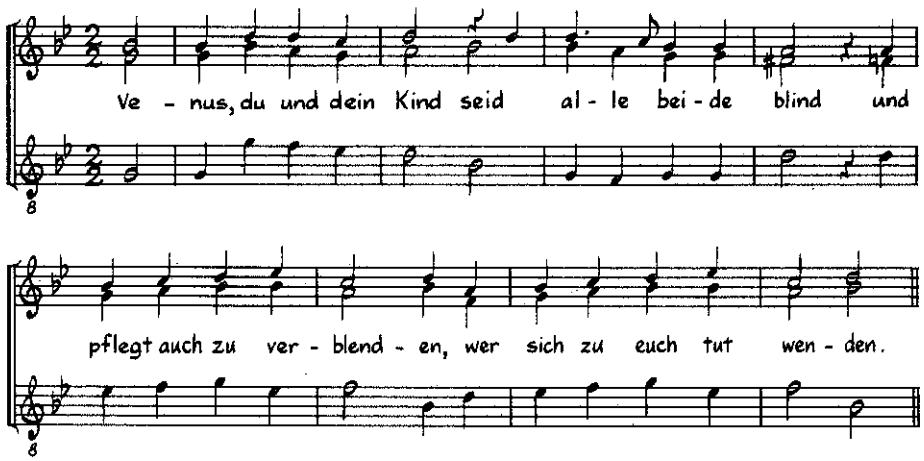
Canzonets

In dedicating his four-part canzonets of 1589 to the "Most Illustrious Signor Christoffero Fucceri" — Baron Christoph Fugger — Hassler describes them as "the first fruit of my meager invention to be issued in print." These words were apparently prompted by more than the servile tone of dedications customary at the time. The statement is not entirely correct in that samples of Hassler's writing had appeared previously in collections in which they were combined with works by other composers. But he must have been aware of the relative tardiness and limitation of his production, which stands in curious contrast to his early success and fame.

It seems characteristic of his restraint and deliberate pace in proceeding to a publication of his own that his first complete collection to go to press consisted of short Italian works. He appears before the German public as a somewhat aloof, sophisticated cosmopolitan whose style is polished, though straightforward.

The canzonet was a form not unknown in Germany. It owed much of its character to the villanella of Southern Italy, which Michael Praetorius in his *Syntagma Musicum* (1619) described as "a peasant song, dealing with peasant themes." The villanella had been introduced to Germany in the

EXAMPLE 1

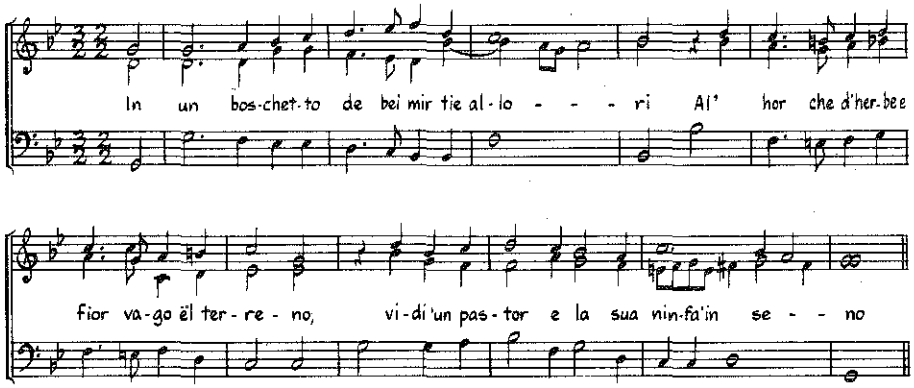


works of Jakob Regnart, whose highly successful brief three-part settings had also appeared in five-part elaborations by Lechner.

Typical of Regnart's style is the lively diction in simple homophonic texture that had taken over from earlier Italian popular forms strict periodization and a predilection for boldly oversimplified parallel chord progressions, as may be seen in some of Regnart's works published in Nuremberg a decade earlier (Example 1).

On the other hand, there was in the Italian villanella a tendency toward more complex phrasing with touches of polyphonic writing. Marenzio, the great madrigalist, had published in Venice a first collection of villanelle, which appeared in the same year as Hassler's work and shows a style markedly different from that of Regnart (Example 2).

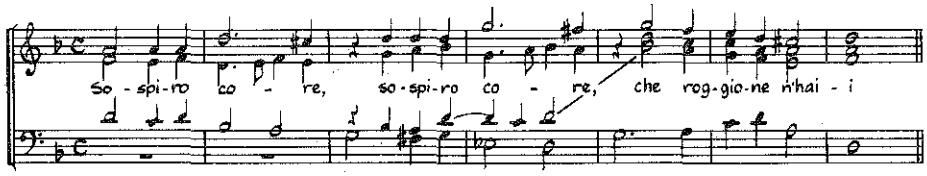
EXAMPLE 2



In Hassler's writing we encounter the hallmarks of the form in a carefully designed mixture. Of the twenty-four pieces in his collection, ten are predominantly homophonic, and the remainder show various combinations of homophonic and contrapuntal textures.

Hassler's use of the simple homophonic style is marked by a remarkable sensitivity to sound and melody as well as to text. The opening phrase of "Sospiro core" (III in the collection) offers a typical example (see Example 3).

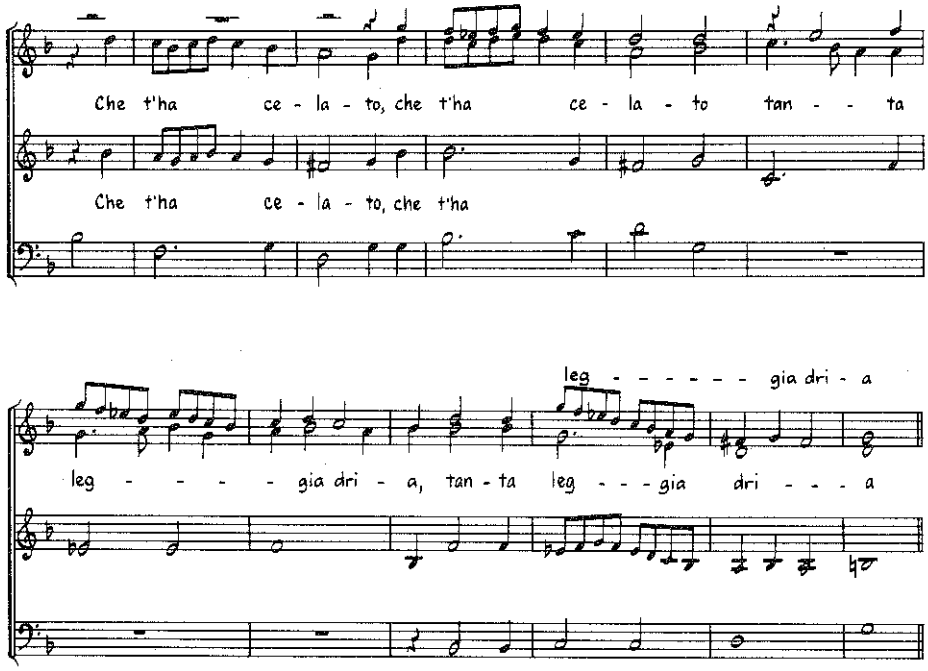
EXAMPLE 3



The Canto's melodic sequence and the delayed addition of the Bass build to a peak in the middle of the phrase, and the melody falls in a graceful arch

shape. A contrasting phrase follows the repetition of this first phrase, and then a new section begins, one that recalls the euphony and techniques of phrase-building in the opening (Example 4).

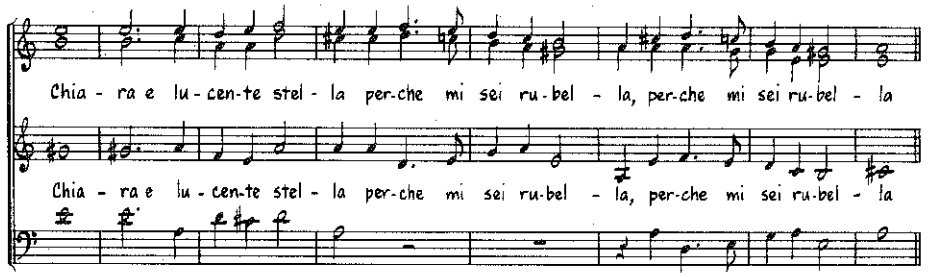
EXAMPLE 4



Here the parallel thirds and melismas capture our attention — the words are almost superfluous. Other songs in the collection completely homophonic in texture reveal very careful attention to word and syllable accent, with a fine sense of rhythm that sustains musical interest (Example 5).

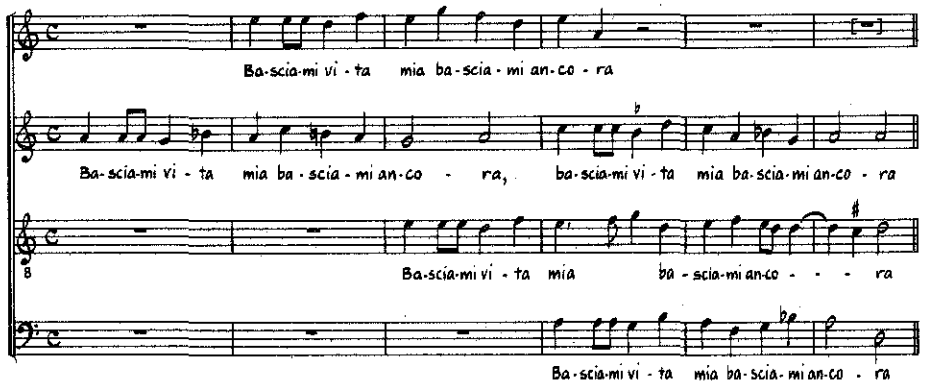
Here once again the Canto melody is arch-shaped, and the harmonic nature of the Bass voice provides a very clear feeling of cadence. Rhythm, melody, texture, and harmony work together in this setting of a pastoral text, and again we see the master's hand.

EXAMPLE 5



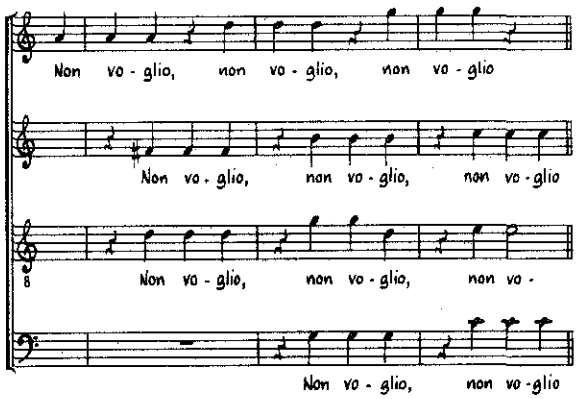
In the thirteen works in this collection that use a mixture of polyphony and homophony we find a light, simple style. Hassler changes the texture of the music in order to convey a change of mood in the text. The lover's ardor is portrayed in a sudden contrapuntal passage (Example 6a).

EXAMPLE 6a



In contrast stands the amusingly coy rejection *Non voglio* . . . ("I do not want [to be scolded by my mother]" — Example 6b).

EXAMPLE 6b



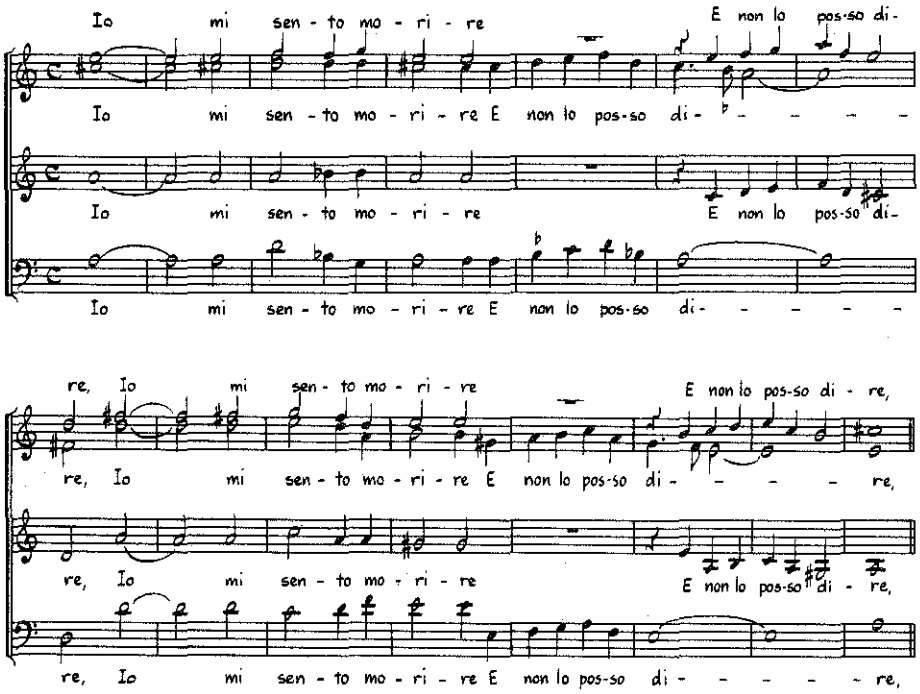
In "Ridon di maggio," the first work in the collection, we encounter a contrast of meter as well. One of the six canzonets with a refrain, "Ridon di maggio" comes closest to the balletto tradition through its homophony in distinctive, dance-like triple meter. Dance patterns are also suggested in "Hor va canzona mia" (XIX), with its homophonic middle section.

Contrast of character plays a general role in affecting the nature of the songs. Rather striking is the number of canzonets in this collection that are obviously serious in tone. "O tu che mi dai pene" (XI) shows little variety in

melodic contour throughout, which, paired with the use of the Dorian mode, lends a poignant quality to the portrayal of the text.

Poignant also is the stately opening of "Io mi sento morire" (Example 7).

EXAMPLE 7



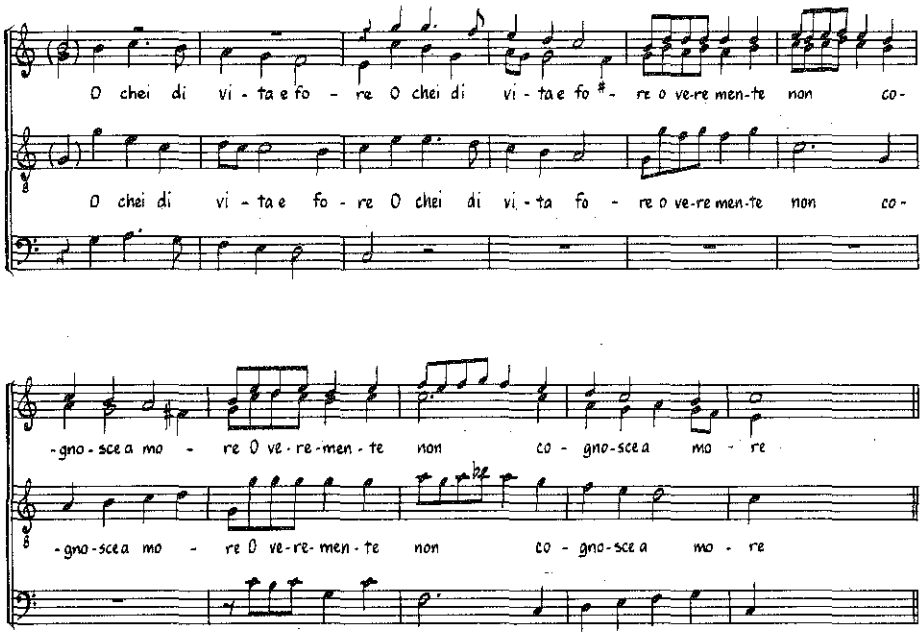
The portentous opening chords and slow harmonic rhythm set a somber tone for this canzonet which continues through long notes stressing the phrase *e non lo posso dire* ("I cannot say it").

Different techniques again are found in "Chi gl'occhi mira" (XVI). In this canzonet we see aspects of the Venetian style, represented by a low choir–high choir separation with melismas in parallel thirds and sixths (Example 8).

These aspects of the Venetian style mark Hassler's collection as a harbinger of Northern Italian influence in Germany. Venetian in a very general sense, is the entire set of compositions, for they show in every detail the fine craftsmanship of the Venetian madrigal style, though in structures whose modest dimensions and refreshing directness invariably suggest the more popular genre.

It was the custom, as we know from Schütz's work, that Gabrieli's students would "graduate" from their years of study with the publication of

EXAMPLE 8



a collection of madrigals — works in which every nuance of the text is expressed with careful musical interpretation. Small motifs, elaborated either in imitative or chordal manner, would portray every key word, so that each setting would obtain an individual character. This principle is adopted in Hassler's canzonets; yet while each piece is clearly different, it is possible to recognize a certain division into groups, which may have guided the organization of the published volume.

Hassler begins the collection with four works in the light canzonet style. The first is distinguished by its triple-meter refrain, and by an opening motif that we encounter also in the first songs in *Neue Teutsche Gesäng* and *Lustgarten.*

The second canzonet continues in the light style, with a sudden darkening of mood at *piangendo forte* ("weeping bitterly," the response in the poem to "whosoever asks for love from me"). Hassler employs here the technique of Venetian *cori spezzati* with suggestions of the separation of high and low choirs as well as echo effects. We observe Venetian influence also in the next two works, and there are some characteristic madrigalisms. *Sospiro* ("sighing") is expressed by the customary halting rhythm of 𝅘𝅥𝅯 ♩ ♩ ♩ , *leggiadria* ("pleasant lightness") is cast in long, flowing melismas in the upper voices of the third canzonet, and *luna* ("moon") is composed in "white notation" (half-notes). Throughout these first few canzonets, there is a pervading spirit of lightness that dominates a variety of textures.

The fifth canzonet appears in stark contrast to the earlier ones. The stately opening (which we have quoted in Example 7) and broadly descending sequences render this a canzonet of more profound substance and give it a special place in the collection.

Numbers VI, VII, and VIII return to a more typical canzonet style. We find here examples of a sudden, brief tossing back and forth of a single word in vocal counterpoint in the midst of an otherwise homophonic setting (VI). In number VII, the rhythmic motif ♩ ♩ ♪♪ ♩ is found in several phrases in different forms. The triple-meter refrain beginning *fuggimi, striggimi, ardimi* forms a lively close for number VIII.

But a wonder awaits us in number IX! After the merry dance of the preceding song, the Alto alone sings *Io son ferito* ("I have been wounded"), and bitter loneliness is expressed in long notes and somber motet style. Three times the text *E quella che mi diede* ("And she who betrays me") is sung before the quickly reiterated *fugge*, which in mounting fugal entrances depicts the capricious evanescence of the beloved. By a sublime touch, Hassler, as if to describe the growing loneliness of the deserted lover, slows down the flight with each contrapuntal entry until at the end the Tenor holds its final note for ten measures.

There is a charming broadening of texture on such text details as *basciami ancora* ("kiss me again" — X), *pene* and *morire* ("pain" and "die" — IX), *mio misero core* ("my poor heart" — XII), and *spitata* ("pitiless" — XIII). But the mournful tone of the ninth canzonet does not return.

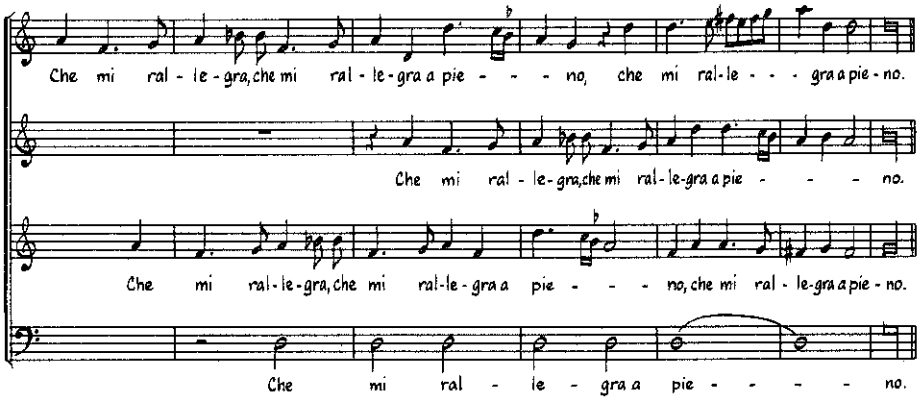
In canzonets XIII–XVI, Hassler begins each piece in three-voice homophonic texture to be joined at the cadence by the fourth voice. "Chiara lucenti rai" (XIV) includes sections of lively counterpoint, closing in the broad chordal style.

Such variety of textures is not found elsewhere in the group. It is variety of rhythm, rather, that forms the focus of attention in "Chi gl'occhi vostri mira" (XVI). In the first half of the work, lively rhythmic motion traces the diction of the text, whereas in the second half, independent rhythmic patterns assume motivic importance.

In the remaining works of the group we find a wide range of styles. The scoring of XVII features pairing of voices, with single entries for *solo soletto* ("alone, all alone"). "Io vo cantar" (XVIII) opens with a strong statement in triple meter, "I will sing," in which an antiphonal effect is once again suggested by the delayed entrances of the fourth voice. A striking contrast in rhythmic texture is formed by the following line, "with such lightness (of heart)," after which the setting turns to more intricate rhythms and part-writing (Example 9).

In XIX, we return to a polyphonic opening: *Hor va canzona mia liet'e*

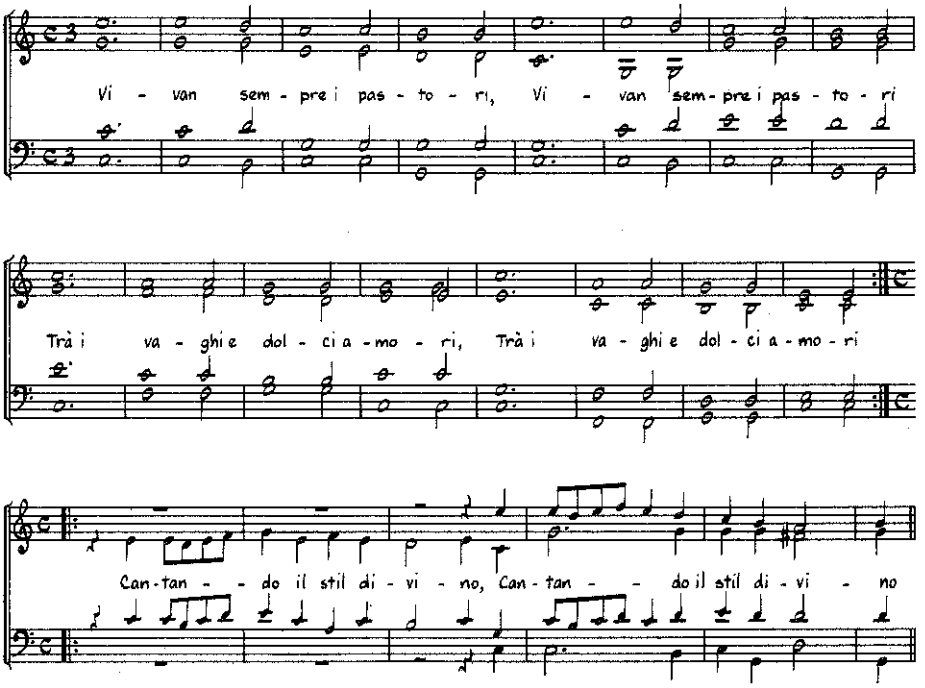
EXAMPLE 9



sicura ("My song goes out, my happiness is assured"). The triple-meter refrain in chordal style also reappears here, forming the center of the work, which then closes in drawn-out polyphony.

With XX–XXII, full four-part homophony rules again, but XXII marks a new caesura in the total sequence. *Mi sento ohime morire* ("I feel, alas, I'm dying") is set in triple meter. Here, however, the tempo is decidedly slow, stressing the use of whole and dotted whole notes. This

EXAMPLE 10



lament is remarkable, too, for its silent moments: each of the last six phrases is eloquently set off by a rest.

In the penultimate work of the collection, Hassler brandishes his contrapuntal mastery with a stretto setting of *Fuggendo andai per boschi selvi e monte* ("I shall flee into the woodlands, groves, and mountains"). The set concludes with a work that recalls various characteristics of the entire collection: alternating use of both triple and duple meter in a radiant C major. It is a joyous tribute to pastoral life, "May the shepherds ever live," and a final emphasis on divine song (Example 10).

Madrigals

The year 1596 marks a turning point in Hassler's creative career. Now in his early thirties, the highly successful composer must have become increasingly aware of the artistic challenge to present the benefits of his foreign studies to his homeland. He had become one of the foremost representatives of the modern Italian style. The time had come to identify his work with his growing stature as the foremost German composer of his era. On the same day, February 1, 1596, he issued his first collection of works on German texts and his final collection of works on Italian texts.

The publication of Hassler's Italian madrigals must be seen against the background of the influence of the remarkable patron of the arts to whom the collection was dedicated. Moritz, Landgrave of Hesse, who in 1597 unsuccessfully tried to win Hassler from his service in Augsburg for the post of *Vizekapellmeister* at his court, was a figure of considerable influence in arts and letters — he was called "the learned" — and was himself a composer of some documented achievements.

Testifying to his munificence in the arts are the dedications of several composers' publications, including those of Michael Praetorius and Heinrich Schütz. In 1611, fifteen years after Hassler, Schütz dedicated his own Italian madrigals, published at the end of his studies with Giovanni Gabrieli, to Moritz. To his dedicatory preface Schütz appended the text (probably written by himself) of the work with which he had concluded this collection, "Vasto mare." Playing on the similarity of *mare* ("sea") and *Maurizio* (his patron's name), he embellished and varied the thought — "mare di virtù e di munificenza." The imposing antiphonal setting is an example of the final dimensions the genre had reached in the generation after Hassler.

Like the other students of Giovanni Gabrieli, Hassler had thus emerged from his journeyman period with the publication of Italian madrigals. The dedication to Moritz is presented as an act of "humble reverence" that might be suited to suggest the excellence of the patronage, and he expresses the hope that his "unassuming and simple" madrigals would gain from it the "true spirit and harmony which in themselves they are lacking."

The form of the madrigal was originally not unlike that of the

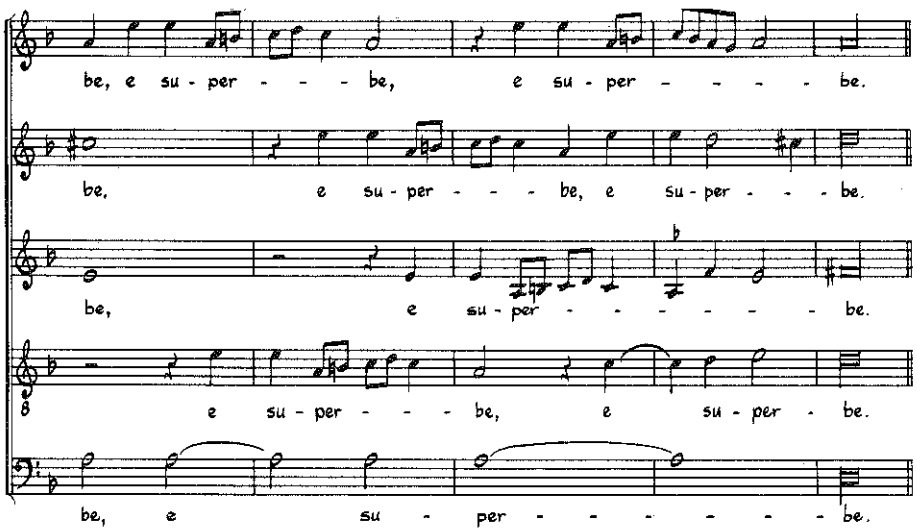
canzonet. In the 1540's composers like Adrian Willaert and Jacob Arcadelt produced four-voice madrigals written mainly in a homophonic style, with the top voice usually being the most melodic. In 1559, with the publication of his *Musica nuova,* Willaert introduced a change in style, transforming the madrigal into the true counterpart of the countrapuntal motet. Orlando di Lasso, Cipriano de Rore, Andrea Gabrieli, and other composers of the first rank turned their interests to the secular literature, using the poetry of such eminent figures as Petrarch (1304–1374) and Tasso (1544–1595). The style of this middle period broadened the dimensions of the madrigal, now often written for five or six voices, at times with double-chorus effects.

In the generation of Giovanni Gabrieli we see a turn from the motet style to one using a more rhetorical approach in conveying the meaning of the text. No longer is homophony reserved for an extraordinary moment in a contrapuntal work to bring a single phrase into relief. The chordal style is now placed in the service of a highly artistic manipulation of textures and the increased expression of harmonic considerations.

The five-voice madrigal represents the synthesis of the homophonic-contrapuntal dialectic in the secular music of the High Renaissance. It is the "test-piece" in which the master composer displays his control of all the elements of vocal composition. The bulk of Hassler's collection, his sixteen works in this medium, stand as a supreme achievement, with a balance of styles, textures, and forms that allows the substance of the text to be expressed in a manner at once eloquent and beautiful.

For six of the poems he set, Hassler decided to divide the music into

EXAMPLE 11

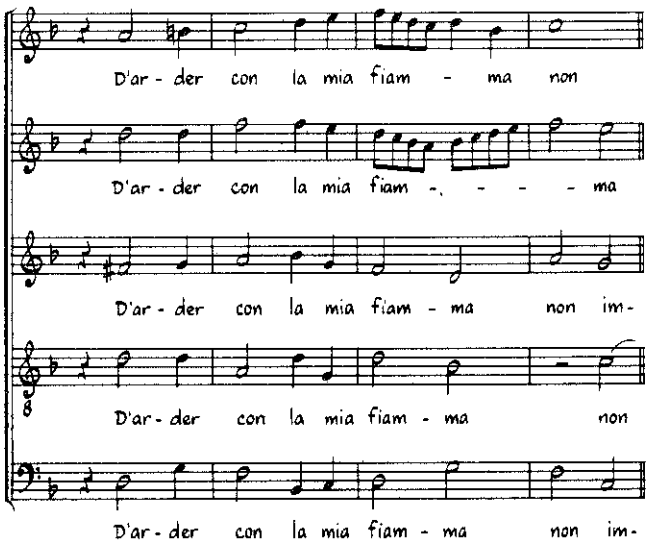


large sections he designated as "Prima Parte" and "Seconda Parte." This represents a major difference as compared to the canzonet — the structural scope has become large and complex. There is such a division in the opening of Hassler's collection, a pair of madrigals based on a poem by Petrarch. It sets the tone of the collection and characterizes it as a publication of considerable sophistication.

The two works are linked by subtle means, the Prima Parte building to a climax in a melismatic flourish on *e superbe* ("and proud" — Example 11).

In the Seconda Parte there is a parallel passage. Here it is the flames of passion that prompt the climactic melisma in a highly descriptive phrase (Example 12).

EXAMPLE 12

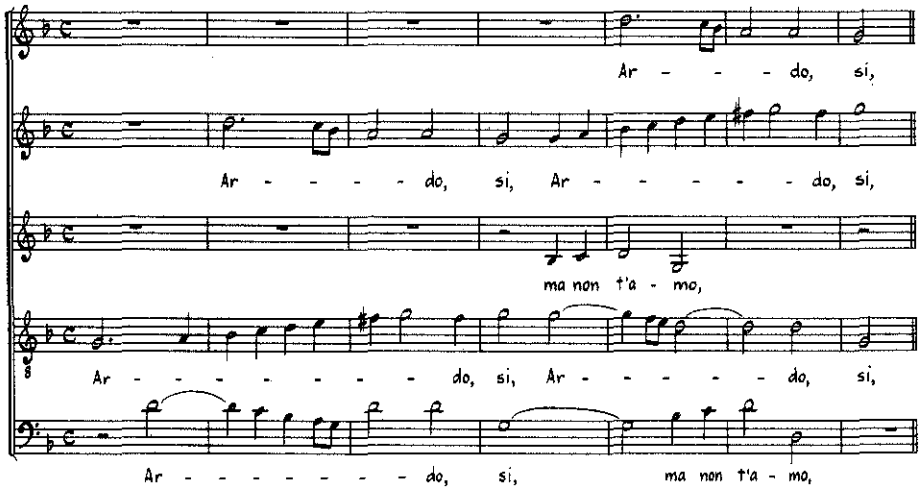


The ardor of disdain, not of desire, is the theme of Guarini's poem in the third madrigal. The text is joined to a "Risposta" on a poem of Tasso, the "response" of the enraged lady to whom the words of the Prima Parte are in this case addressed.

A section of twenty-three measures in complex counterpoint forms the beginning. Here two themes are presented simultaneously, the first immediately inverted and the second following in strict canon. At the same time a third motif — *ma non t'amo* ("but I don't love you") — is injected (Example 13). This passage suggests a remarkable break from the motet tradition of a single theme representing a given idea in the text. "Ardor" is depicted as tortuous and all-consuming (the octave signifying here the concept of all-encompassing emotion). The octave span returns in the Risposta as the

Bass melody for the culminating phrase, a dramatic descent in half-notes that provides a contrast to the melodies in the upper voices.

EXAMPLE 13



The next pair of madrigals is unique in the set because of the sharp contrast between Prima and Seconda Parte. "Qui dove i sacri" (VI) is a pastoral madrigal delighting in the beauties of the natural world. The motifs are generally shorter, yet there are several extremely expressive melodies.

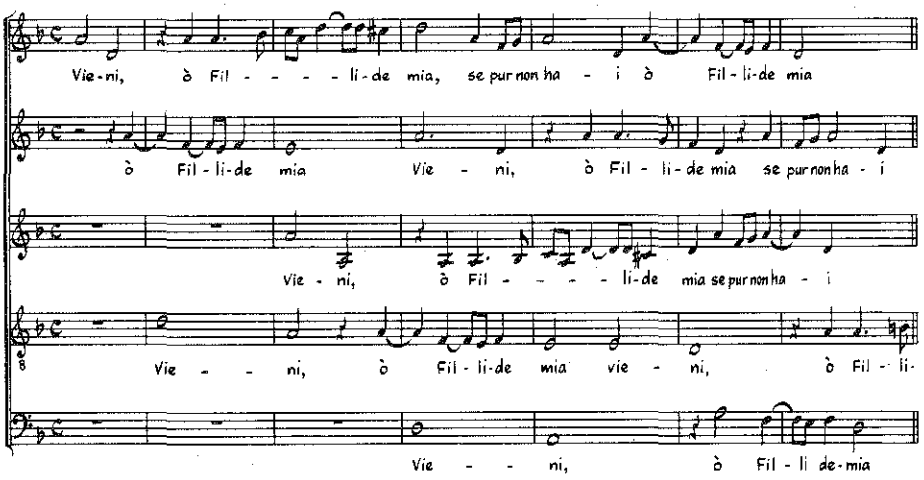
The latter half of the poem, however, reveals an inner passion to which Hassler responds with phrases building harmonic tension on extended pedal points. Counterpoint of the most intricate kind opens "Vieni, ò Fillide mia" (VII). The treatment of the first theme varies in each vocal part, but we find in all of them three recurring motifs: sustained notes for *Vieni,* dotted rhythm for *ò Fillide mia,* and quickening motion for *se pur non hai* (Example 14).

The work closes in rich contrapuntal style. At the center of the madrigal, though, in stark relief from the prevailing texture, is the most poignant word of the text, *lasso* ("despairing"), set in broad chordal phrases.

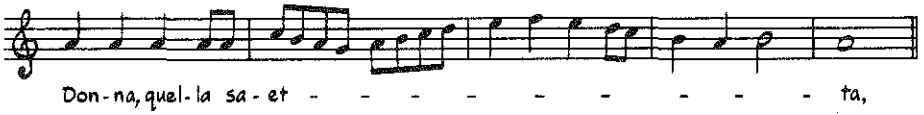
Perhaps most notable for its drama is the central pair of the five-voice set, VIII-IX. "Donna quella saetta" begins with two contrasting phrases. The first depicts the flight of Cupid's arrow (*saetta*) with melismas in the upper voices (Example 15).

The next begins haltingly, dealing first with two words, then four, and finally the complete line.

EXAMPLE 14

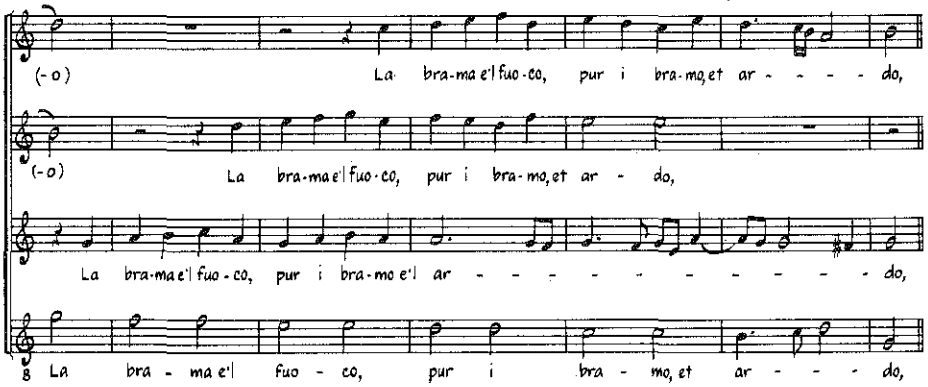


EXAMPLE 15



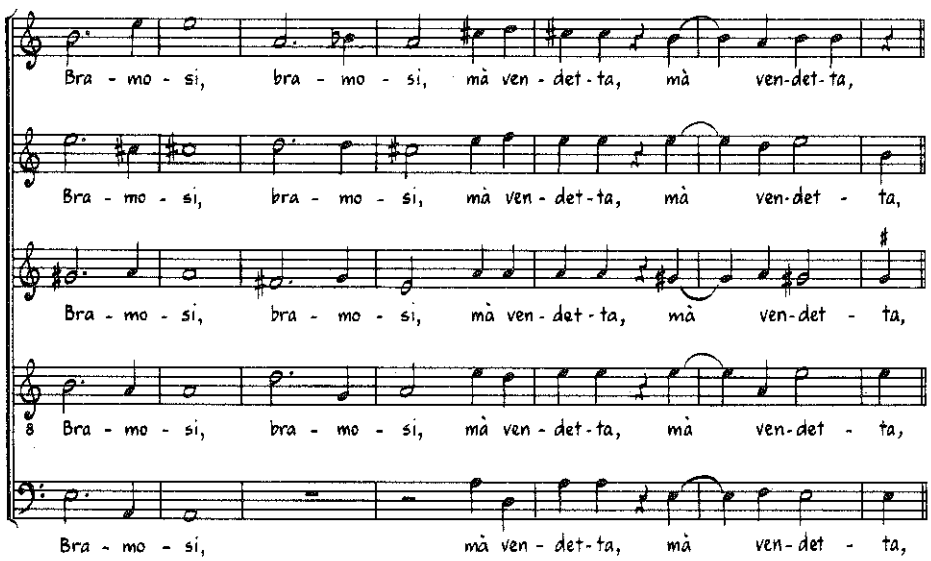
The passionate nature of this madrigal is perhaps best shown in what might be described as a battle for self-control, with one theme slowly descending and the others rising in quicker rhythm (Example 16).

EXAMPLE 16



The Seconda Parte reveals that the ardor so fiercely felt is again not one of love, but disdain — in fact, revenge (*vendetta*). The music builds to full sonority in broad chords, turning to quarter-notes in the pivotal phrase (Example 17).

EXAMPLE 17



Hassler's dramatic skill has brought the madrigal to a peak with this phrase, which snaps off briskly into silence.

The last pair of madrigals for five voices (XII-XIII) exhibits an interesting combination of pastoral and ceremonial styles. In the first line of the poem the composer depicts the brook bubbling down from the spring at the foot of the mountain. Subject and countersubject appear in double counterpoint (Example 18).

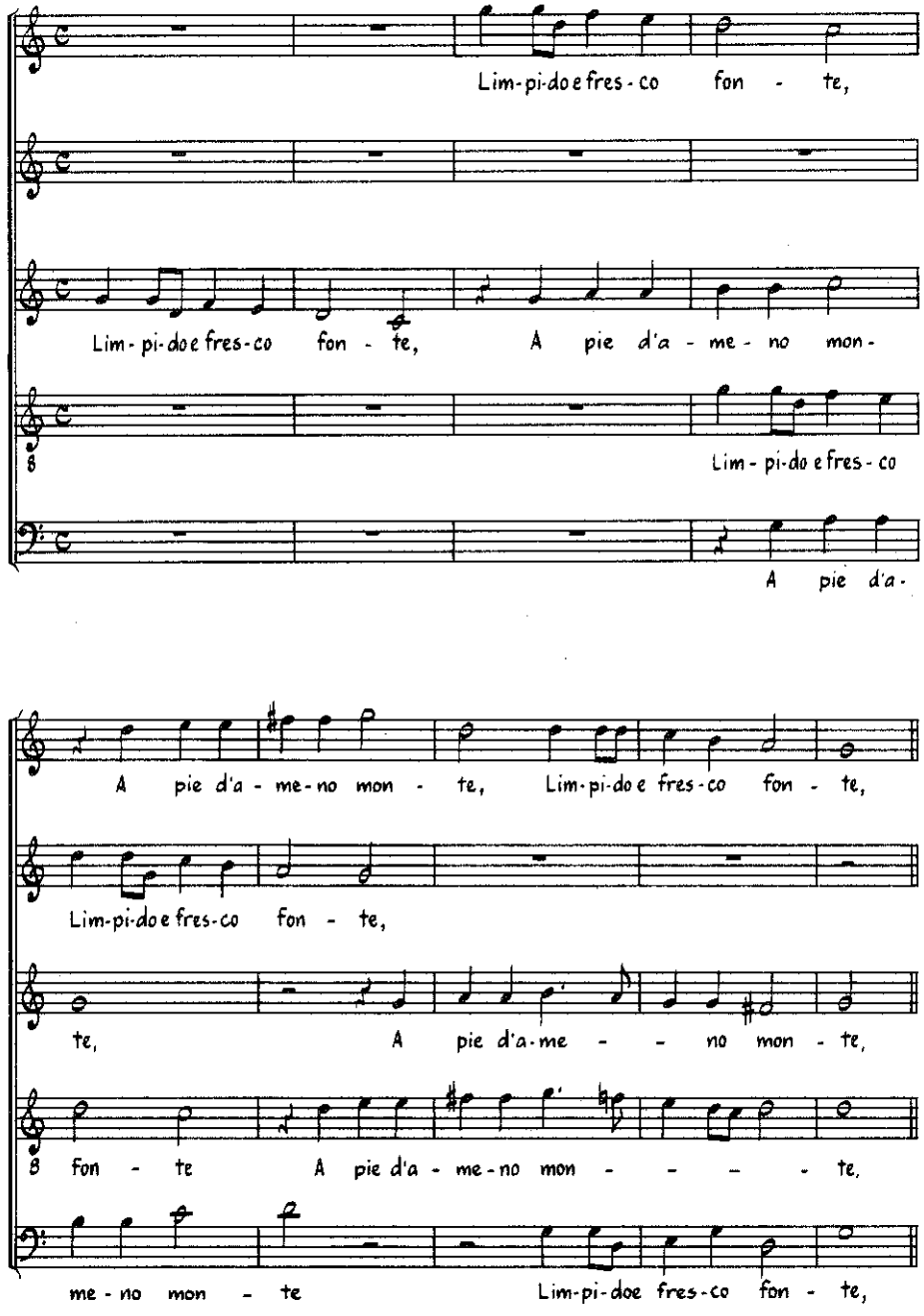
Rhythmic play becomes a prime element in the Seconda Parte. Dancelike rhythms (𝅗𝅥 𝅗𝅥. ♪𝅗𝅥. ♪·) characterize its ceremonial style in repetitive sections. The personages "Vindo e Lico" are drawn individually — "Vindo" in passages of parallel thirds and "Lico" in complex counterpoint — and the pastoral celebration leads to an evocation of the dance: the madrigal ends in the highly rhythmic style of the *balletto.*

The pairing of these madrigals reveals aspects of heightened dramatic construction, which, however, is not entirely absent from the remaining five-voice madrigals, cast as individual works.

In "A chi creder" (V), the first of these, a bright galliard rhythm gives way to long-held notes in the climactic phrase *ma tant'hor temo, quanto già sperai* ("but as great as my fear is my hope"), and a long melisma in the Tenor part glorifies hope while the other parts still sing of fear; then all voices resume lively rhythmic entrances on the word *amor.*

The next in the series of single works, Number X in the collection, is akin to a canzonet in its periodic structure and simple, though expressive, homophony. The entire first phrase, sung by the upper four voices, is

EXAMPLE 18


Lim-pi-do e fres-co fon - te,
Lim-pi-do e fres-co fon - te, A pie d'a - me - no mon -
Lim - pi-do e fres - co
A pie d'a -
A pie d'a - me-no mon - te, Lim-pi-do e fres-co fon - te,
Lim-pi-do e fres-co fon - te,
te, A pie d'a-me - - no mon - te,
fon - te A pie d'a - me-no mon - - - - te,
me - no mon - te Lim-pi-doe fres-co fon - te,

repeated as the Bass entrance completes the full ensemble. And the lovers speak to one another: *Dona mi un bacio e satia il mio desio* ("Give me a kiss and quench my desire") is sung first by the low voices (the boy), then the high (the girl), and finally together. A change to triple meter accentuates the phrase.

In stark contrast to the playful tenth madrigal stands the eleventh. In almost solemn pacing, it is now the wonder and agony of love that is extolled, and the word *lasso* is set off again by a dramatic change in texture and harmony. The final phrase is repeated four times in broadening rhythm.

The set of madrigals for five voices closes with three works decidedly individual in character. The first of these (XIV), extolling the virtues of Lucretia — whose name is rendered as an acrostic through the use of capital letters in the madrigal text — begins with a drawn-out exposition of two themes presented in each voice in succession and merged in stretto once the full five-part texture has been reached. It is followed by a lively antiphonal piece in praise of pastoral love, and here, by subtle yet characteristic contrast, the text is introduced through two themes immediately joined.

What both works have in common, however, is a sudden turn to strictly chordal declamation in the respective central phrases. For the song glorifying Lucretia it is *la voce piena d'angeliche dolcezze* ("the voice filled with angelic sweetness"), and for the pastoral duet of Phyllis and Tirsis it is *et ei baciando* ("and as they kiss") which are the words so singled out. In the latter case, a shift to lilting triple meter lends added emphasis to the line. One realizes: even without an expressly designed pairing of madrigals, Hassler is concerned with large structural scope.

The strongest work (XVI) is saved for the end of the set of five-voice madrigals. It is the most solemn and passionate in the collection, with an unusual, dark scoring for three low voices topped by Canto and Alto — a lament that mirrors the "Lachrymae" compositions of the Elizabethan era. In true motet fashion, the opening words *Care lagrime* ("precious tears") are set in slow-moving close imitation which presents the theme instantly in melodic inversion. The tears, so the words of the text tell us, cannot soften the heart "which takes no pity on my grief," and they continue: "at least for compassion's sake, smother the ignited flame." The increased pleading builds to a climax as half-note motion gives way to passages in quarter- and finally eighth-note rhythm. But melodic description guides the expression of the work now to its close. The five voices sing *O pur crescete* ("Or swell anew") in rising lines, on long pedal points leading to a plagal cadence, which enhance the last phrase: "so I may be immersed in my own grieving."

The second half of Hassler's madrigal collection is scored for larger ensembles. The major group, twelve works for six voices, reflects a variety of styles: light and serious; intimate and sonorous; through-composed and sectional.

The first work in the set, "Miracolo gentille" (XVII), attests to the composer's contrapuntal technique. It opens with pairs of voices moving in contrary motion. As more voices join, the counterpoint becomes simpler, imitation of single themes replacing thematic dualism. Texture plays a role in defining the formal structure. To begin his set of six-voice madrigals with a work of significant proportions, Hassler composed a madrigal in three sections, each building to a peak, yet adding up to a conjunct structure. In each section a pair of voices begins, leading to a homophonic climax for the full ensemble. The work reaches a high point in a tutti statement that in a brief change to triple meter introduces the final section.

A lighter mood characterizes the next three madrigals in the set. It finds immediate expression in the syncopated opening phrases of "Mentre la Donna mia" (XVIII). The high voices, used in pairs, predominate. Yet throughout, the total texture is antiphonal. The full ensemble unites only in a phrase that argues the poem's point: the beloved's "affection" may make her cheeks rosy — but if her color changes, how can her heart be constant?

The second of the group is a paean to music, "Musica è lo mio core" (XIX). Here the full sonority rules almost throughout, and this work's periodic form suggests a ceremonial style. We encounter for the first time a structure employing a repeated section — the form of the madrigal is A B B C. It marks an important break from a mere adherence to the form of the text. The music of Hassler's generation assumed a new independence from poetry.

The ceremonial style is nowhere more in evidence than in "Tessea cateno d'oro" (XX). It was most likely written in celebration of a wedding, judging from the final lines of text:

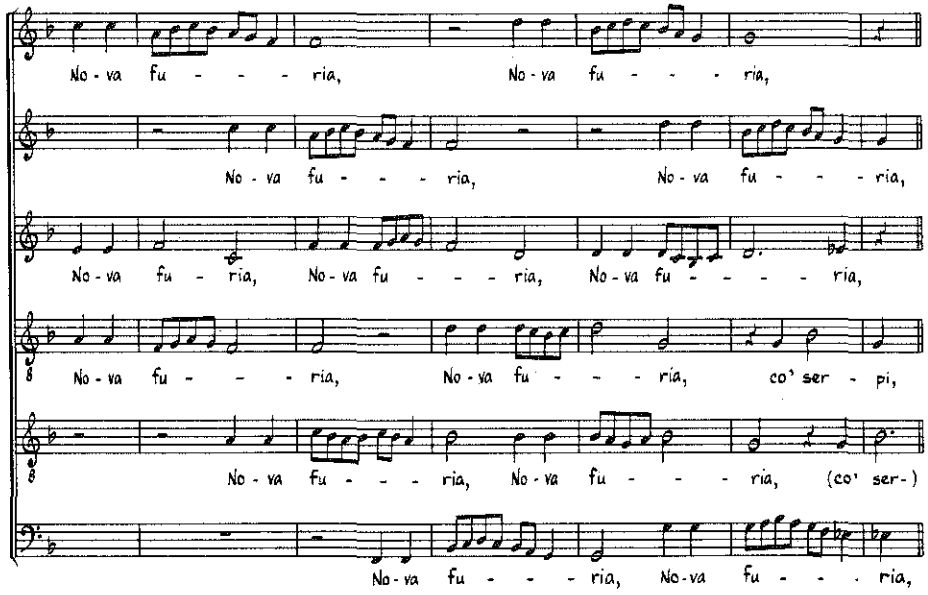
O ben felice giorno,	O most happy day,
O ben felice amori,	O most happy loves,
O nodi lieti e santi,	O knot, blessed and whole,
O ben felice Amanti.	O most happy lovers.

The music for these lines takes on a veritably ecstatic tone, which culminates in a grand widening of the final phrase.

Torquato Tasso's "Gerusalemme liberata" provided inspiration for many composers, including Handel, and the poet has been celebrated throughout the centuries as a seminal figure of the era. From this classic epic Hassler drew two strophes, set as Prima and Seconda Parte in madrigals XXI and XXII. The Prima Parte lends a fiery stress to the words "new fury" (Example 19). In the Seconda Parte, the text is more clearly

declaimed, with more homophonic texture, and with rhythm derived from the syllabic stress of the words. Highly expressive harmony is found in the treatment of the word *dolente* ("sad") — a series of suspensions moving from the highest voice down to the lowest.

EXAMPLE 19



Perhaps the most direct in rendering the spirit of the text, "O dolci lagrimette" (XXIII) brings a few key words into sharp relief, mainly through changes to full texture and to long note values, leading to the final phrase, *e mi consumi* ("and I consume myself").

The division into two parts serves again for Veniero's "Fiammagia-vano in ciel" in the next two madrigals (XXIV and XXV). The opening part conveys the emptiness of the night sky with widely separated contrapuntal entries and only the upper three voices singing. The full meaning of the nocturne is revealed in the second part, "Ne d'egli anchor." Here again the opening texture (four voices, beginning in a broad fugal exposition) leads to a chordal statement by the full ensemble: *Cosi vince Madonna* ("Thus does my lady vanquish").

Like the five-voice madrigals, the set for six voices is concluded with three works in greatly varied style. "Real natura" (XXVI) is a relatively long madrigal, through-composed. A unifying element is the syncopated shape of phrases, and the six-part texture is lightened through frequent echo effects.

"Rara virtu" (XXVII) again draws on the possibilities of *cori spezzati,* but to a greater extent. More than any of the others, this madrigal suggests

the sonorities of a large ensemble and resonant acoustics. The contrapuntal texture is direct, often in readily perceptible canon, and the different lines of the text are clearly separated. Yet homophony becomes a prevailing texture, and Hassler's skill in building to the conclusion is evident in the repetition of the final phrase in ever-broadening rhythm.

The final work for six voices, "Mi parto" (XXVIII) is one of the most expressive of the set. With a text of only four lines, the composer has created a masterpiece of a somber, passionate quality that laments the sorrows of parting.

The last six madrigals form a most remarkable epilogue. It was unusual for a composer of Hassler's time to add to the standard collection of five-part madrigals — in itself characteristic of a highly developed polyphonic technique — works written for a larger number of voices. The group of six-part pieces just discussed gives ample testimony of Hassler's affinity to the Venetian school and its antiphonal practice normally associated only with the more demanding style of sacred music, especially the motet. The remaining madrigals bear witness to the intense contrapuntal schooling Hassler received from Gabrieli, for they not only adhere to the antiphonal texture but abound in densely written passages for seven and eight independently moving parts.

The climactic emphasis upon such a rich vocal fabric is particularly evident in the single seven-part madrigal (XXIX) that introduces the group. The subject is once more the sorrow of parting, and the words *partir sempre vorrei* ("I must forever part") convey a tendentious message which applies in a special way to the artist himself — he takes leave of the Italian madrigal.

While the seven-part madrigal announces greater dimensions of design, the four eight-part madrigals that follow merge these in ever new ways with the double-chorus concept. The "Primo Choro" may function as the group of lower voices (as in XXX and XXXII) or as the group of upper voices (as in XXXI and XXXIII). The two choirs may be locked in canon (XXXI) or move in more loosely textured antiphonal play. But in the last madrigal, their alternation assumes a function that seems to lend finality to the wide range of the composer's *cori spezzati* technique.

It is entitled *Risonanza di echo a 8.* Like Lasso's famous echo madrigal, it suggests the rising Baroque concerto. But the "risonanza" of two choirs offers here, in words and music, a last reflection of the old technique as well as of the entire work. The musical responses vary from complete phrases to a single chord as they express the subtle interpretations given to classic love poetry in the bitter-sweet thoughts of the poem's echoing text line endings; they tell the story of love and death — *amore* — *more.*

Conclusion

The composer who had been so deliberate in presenting his works to the general public was amazingly prompt in verifying his formal leave from Italian Renaissance art. The dedicatory preface for his first collection of compositions on German texts, published together with his madrigals, took on the character of a veritable manifesto, the most explicit statement Hassler ever wrote about his work.

The dedicatee of Hassler's *Neue Teutsche Gesäng* was Heinrich Julius, Duke of Brunswick, for whom Praetorius served as *Kapellmeister* and whom Hassler may have met at the Imperial Court. As Hassler mentions in his dedication, the Duke was an eminent patron of the arts and himself not inexperienced in the techniques of musical composition. From Praetorius's own career we gather that Heinrich Julius favored the rise of German Protestant art, and in the works of his *Kapellmeister* the use of German texts by far outweighs that of the traditional Latin texts observed in the liturgy.

This tendency evidently guided Hassler in the new direction he had resolved to take, and it does not seem accidental that he chose the title *Neue Teutsche Gesäng,* because the works in this collection not only mark a departure from foreign texts but a novel attitude in every respect. It seems appropriate therefore to conclude this study by quoting the composer's own wording. The beginning of his dedication reads as follows:

> Worthy, Illustrious, and Noble Prince and Ruler:
>
> Among all the excellent arts in this world there is none that can move the human mind to greater delight than the exquisite art of music; one may truthfully say that it claims a heavenly quality, wherefore it is loved and honored by everyone, and in praiseworthy use at the courts of emperors, kings, and all princes. I have been devoted to this sublime art from my earliest days and have exercised myself in it by composing and publishing hitherto collections of works on Latin and Italian texts. Since, however, many works by other musicians and well-known composers exist in print in these languages, whereas few compositions in the German language have appeared, and since not everyone understands Latin and Italian, I have often been admonished and encouraged to write and issue in print some German songs. To this desire I have now wished to respond by applying my small talent to

> composing the present pieces as well as the words that serve as texts in this publication. I have hoped to set an example with them and to give more able composers reason to follow such model, so that the lauded art will come into greater and better use in the native tongue.

The consequences of Hassler's move were more substantial than these words suggest. His remaining works, all on German texts, were not only to adopt the secular spirit of his era by turning to the German vernacular, but they firmly guided his great legacy of the Italian Renaissance into the new art of the German Baroque. His lifework was concluded with several collections published during the first decade of the century in which Bach and Handel were born.

Music calligraphy by Bert Kosow.

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