

## International Orpheus Academy 2009 – Edoardo Bellotti

### lecture 2 "Spiridionis "Nova Instructio": an original pedagogical approach to keyboard improvisation in the XVIIth century."

#### ABSTRACT

The pedagogic approach at the keyboard from the XVth to the XVIIIth century was based on a concept of unity: the player learned the technical approach at the keyboard together with the rules of counterpoint, the right fingering together with the theory, the composition as a consequence of the improvisation (as already documented in important sources like Diruta's *Transilvano* or Banchieri's *Organo Suonarino*). But "Nova Instructio pro pulsandis Organis, Spinettis et Manuchordis" by Spiridion a Monte Carmelo published in Bamberg and Wurzburg between 1670 and 1674 is a unique and complete handbook in which the old traditions of improvisation and diminution are combined with the baroque "continuo praxis".

#### 1. **Buchner and the "Fundamenta" in early Renaissance**

The education of the organist in 3 directions:

- Improvising "Praeambula"
- Intabulating polyphonic scores
- Improvising in 2, 3, 4, parts on a cantus firmus

Methodology: structure based con cadences  
composition with patterns and ornamentations

#### 2. **Adriano Banchieri**

*L'organo suonarino*, Venice, 1605

*Conclusioni nel suono dell'organo*, Bologna, 1608

The 4 way of playing the organ:

- Fantasia (improvising counterpointal piece)
- Intavolatura (intabulation)
- Spartitura (Score reading)
- Basso (Thorough bass)

General observations:

- to be a good singer keeping the tempo
- practice of the keyboard with the two hands
- knowledge of "cadences" and good listening to
- In continuity with Diruta, *Il Transilvano*, Venice, 1593 and 1609

The Venetian Toccata and the influence to Hassler, Erbach and Sweelinck

#### 3 **Frescobaldi's heritage and Spiridionis Nova Instructio**

The "Seconda Prattica" and the development of keyboard music in the XVIIth Century

Spiridion Preface:

1. The "cadentiae", which are the most pleasant things to be learned from this book, must be transposed through all keys, beginning with the easier and shorter ones. The principal undertaking of this work lies in this transposition, and one learns thereby to close quickly, to make all manner of "finalia", and to transpose thoroughbass in all keys.
2. The "cadentiae" must be joined together so that the last note of the previous one is always the same as the first note of the following "cadentia".
3. In joining the "cadentiae" together, one must pay attention to those which are proportional to one another in the quantity or length of notes.
4. When a "cadentia" is transposed two or three times, then either another one or a short "passaggium" (of which a sufficient number may be found in the second part of this work) must follow thereafter; subsequently the first "cadentia" is repeated, though always in another key.
5. Where a "cadentia" is found in which both hands execute passagework, it is better that this passage [**Lat.**: is drawn out a little and] not played too fast. But where one must trill with one hand and play passagework with the other, one must not try to play it note-for-note [**Lat.**: in no way must one attend to the quantity of the notes]. But, on the contrary, the trill is played as fast as possible; the passagework, however, somewhat slower, or else there is a bad sound [**Lat.**: otherwise there is confusion].
6. When a "cadentia" has neither trill nor passagework, it must be played with a lively tempo [**Ger. Mensur**] and the tempo varied if possible, now fast, now slowly, sometimes in triple, sometimes in sesquialtera, and also now and then in various suspensions or ties. The modern manner and perfection of the whole work consists in this.
7. In variation of the "cadentiae", I have wanted to give only one - and occasionally two - beats, leaving further working-out to the discretion of the reader.
8. In composition, one must take care that two octaves and two fifths do not ascend or descend together, albeit that on the keyboard instruments other than the organ} this is not much observed.
9. Whenever the bass ascends a fourth or descends a fifth, one must use the major third or cadence notes, unless one intentionally seeks the opposite, which would be notated with the sign *b*.
10. When the bass ascends, the discantus usually descends contrarily, or bass descends, so the discantus ascends. The inner voices, however, remain at the discretion of the composer, albeit that the discantus frequently ascends and descends with the bass.  
[**Lat.** : As for the other things which can occur or be desired in this art, the reader will find them in much variety and reduced to a practical method in the second, third, and fourth part of this work].
11. One thing would I admonish the kind reader. It is reasonable, to be sure, that all types of "cadentiae" should have been incorporated into the first part of this work, but since so many of them yet remain and the expenses [are] too great, [the "cadentiae"] are distributed among the first three parts. Therefore, take care to obtain these as soon as they are published (which - God willing - they should be, from year to year). And when I feel that my effort and labor pleases you, I will consider adding another good supplement to this work [**Lat.**: Live and enjoy yourself.]

#### 4. The main aspects:

- a. "Inventio" as "Imitatio"
  - large knowledge of the repertoire
  - the study of the elements and of their organization (Dispositio)
- b. "Memoria"
  - learn formulas – like learn a new language
  - connect formulas
- c. "Actio"
  - knowledge of the "affects"
  - the musician as an actor

#### 5. Spiridion "formulas" and the diminutions books.

The continuity of a tradition:

- Fundamenta (German XVth century)
- Repertoire of Diminutions (Italian XVIth century):

Girolamo Della Casa, *Il vero modo di diminuir con tutte le sorti di strumenti di fiato & corda & di voce umana*, Venice, 1584;

Giovanni Battista Bovicelli, *Regole, passaggi di musica, madrigali e motetti passeggiati*, Venice, 1594;

Francesco Rognoni, *Selva de varii passaggi secondo l'uso moderno per cantare e sonare*, Milano, 1620

Main aspects:

- a. patterns with ascending and descending motion of the bass
- b. the cadence as the fundament of music
- c. the practice of transposition
- d. the importance of the motion of the extreme parts
- e. the strong connection between formal policy and "gusto", the "varietas"
- f. Spiridion and Frescobaldi's heritage in Germany

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