

## PRAETORIUS ON PERFORMANCE: EXCERPTS FROM *SYNTAGMA MUSICUM* III

Translated by Hans Lampi

Selected with commentary by S. E. Plank

When Michael Praetorius published the *Syntagma Musicum* [*SM*] in the early seventeenth century, he capitalized upon his remarkable zeal for history, his seemingly unbounded enthusiasm for modern, i.e. Italian, music, and his indefatigable capacity for order and system. Three of the planned four volumes appeared in reasonably quick succession:

I. *Syntagmatis musici tomus primus* (Wittenberg and Wolfenbüttel, 1614-15), a discussion of “sacred and secular music; the former dealing with the chant and psalmody of the ancients, the *Missodia*, [and] instrumental music, as used in both the Old and New Testaments....”

II. *Syntagmatis musici tomus secundus. De Organographia* (Wolfenbüttel, 1618), an organological treatise “containing the nomenclature, tuning, and characteristics of all ancient and modern, foreign, barbarian, rustic and unfamiliar, as well as native, artful, agreeable, and familiar musical instruments; together with true and accurate drawings.”

III. *Syntagmatis musici tomus tertius* (Wolfenbüttel, 1618), a discussion of matters of performance, including “the definition, classification, and description of nearly all the musical forms current in Italian, French, English, and German”; “information concerning the notes”; “the use of thorough-bass; the convenient arrangement of a *concerto* with instruments and voices grouped in separate choirs; [and] instruction of young school-boys in the modern Italian style of singing.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus Praetorius offers a “trptych” of musical learning. The historical first part addresses the learned in scholarly Latin (though he acknowledges the value of a German translation); the organological second part adopts the vernacular for “organ builders, organists, and all other instrumentalists”; the practical third part retains the vernacular for both “*musicos* and *musicos cultores*.”<sup>2</sup>

Praetorius, as an observant man of the early seventeenth century, is caught in a world of dramatic change, a world to which *SM* forms an impressive—though sometimes indirect—response. For example, few contemporary changes were as challenging, one suspects, as the cosmological reorientation of the universe by Copernicus and Galileo. This “Copernican Revolution” in which a heliocentric view of the heavens overthrew humankind’s place in the center of creation unsettlingly disrupted the previous system of order. And as

a new world view stabilized, it is significant that a scholar like Praetorius adopted so extensive a systematic approach. In his high degree of systematization,<sup>3</sup> Praetorius was perhaps trying to bring “order” to the world that *he* knew best, when much around him was showing the strain of disorder.

A. Lloyd Moote, in his *The Seventeenth Century: Europe in Ferment*, observes: “Every European was in some way affected by the weakening of traditional bonds and beliefs; and the statesmen, theologians, and upper social orders shared the burden of putting Europe together again, socially, politically, and intellectually. It was an awesome task.”<sup>4</sup> Might we not see *SM* as somehow part of this “awesome task”? Moote dramatically employs well-chosen lines from Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* to exemplify his point about order and chaos:

O, When degree [order] is shaken,  
Which is the ladder to all high designs  
The enterprise is sick...  
Take but degree away, untune that string,  
And hark what discord follows!<sup>5</sup>

In the echo of the discord, Praetorius’s ordered, systematic knowledge contributes to the restoration of harmony.

If in an indirect, cultural sense *SM* responds to change, it also more concretely represents historiographic change itself. A number of historically minded treatises<sup>6</sup> appear in the first half of the seventeenth century. And although writing about music in a historical perspective was not new—witness, for example the humanistically inspired *L’antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica* (1555) by Nicola Vicentino or Vincenzo Galilei’s *Dialogo della musica antica et della moderna* (1581)—in the early part of the century we sense the emergence of a “genre” of music history, of which Praetorius’s *Syntagma Musicum* is a particularly formidable example. Warren Dwight Allen, in his *Philosophies of Music History*, suggests that Praetorius and his Lutheran colleague Sethus Calvisius represent a “new departure” much as do the contemporary music dramas of Florence and Rome. He writes that “the composers and authors of these works [Praetorius and Calvisius; Jacopo Peri and Emilio Cavalieri]... were the first publicly to attempt... to connect ancient tradition, usage, and practice with contemporary needs, usages, and practices.”<sup>7</sup> Given the degree of humanist activity in the century preceding, the notion of “firsts” is admittedly difficult to pursue (as Allen acknowledges), but the historic impulse, which Praetorius exemplifies, achieves a new, encyclopedic expression in the seventeenth century.

The most direct and obvious relation between *SM* and change, however, regards musical style. Without question, the word-centered, humanistic style of the avant-garde in Florence constituted a major musical “watershed.” Joined with the Venetian/Roman development of *concertato* practice,<sup>8</sup> these elements form the basis of what we know as “Baroque” style. And it is the performance of this style that is the focus of *SM III*.

In *SM III*, Praetorius addresses the modern and the Italian: the modern because its

novelty warranted explanation, and the Italian because Italy was the fount and origin of the new style. With a zeal that could perhaps only come from an *Ausländer*, Praetorius is at times unabashedly enthusiastic. For instance, he writes:

In the third and fourth volumes [of *SM*], I have included the most important facts a conductor and practical musician will need to know, especially at this time when music has reached such a high level that any further advance would seem inconceivable.<sup>9</sup>

More than 100 Italian musicians are named in Praetorius's treatise, impressively documenting the scope of his investigations. Recounting his sources, he states:

All this I have gathered together from the prefaces of Italian composers, from the oral accounts of various Italians and those who sojourned in Italy, and also my own thoughts and modest reflections.<sup>10</sup>

One senses here a slight hesitancy to taint the purity of the Italian sources with his "own thoughts," modestly enclosed in the syntactical humility of last place. Little surprise then that in his prefatory "Letter to German Musicians" he again bends the knee to the Italians. He states that he had long hoped someone would take on a project like this, and that the someone would be one trained in

the schools of the most outstanding musicians (which may be found in Italy at all time, in the present as well as in the past—no slur upon other nations intended).<sup>11</sup>

This strong advocacy for things Italian in *SM* III ironically does not derive from Praetorius' own travels there. Again, in prefatory material, he explains that "his health, his activities, and many other inconveniences" have precluded his travel to "Italy and other places."<sup>12</sup> For his exposure to things Italian, we might likely look to Dresden. In 1613 Praetorius' ducal employer, Heinrich Julius of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel died. This initiated a period of formal mourning during which time Praetorius went to the Electoral court of Johann Georg I in Dresden to assist the infirm Kapellmeister, Rogier Michael. Praetorius remained there until the Spring of 1616.<sup>13</sup> This period overlaps with the first years of Heinrich Schütz in the Electoral employ, and as Schütz was then recently returned from his studies with Giovanni Gabrieli in Venice (1609-13), we can imagine that Praetorius found him to be a particularly interesting colleague.<sup>14</sup> (It is easy to see in the similarity of their 1619 publications—Schütz's *Psalmen Davids* and Praetorius's *Polyhymnia Caduceatrix*—the fruit of their interaction.)

Within *SM* III, Praetorius addresses among his many concerns issues of tempo, tuning, dynamics, scoring, and ornamentation. As one of the principal spokesmen for the new *concertato* style—a style in which cornetts, trombones, and trumpets all had strong roles to

play—Praetorius is a figure to whom modern performers of these instruments might look with interest.

### The Excerpts

Concern for the decorum of performance leads Praetorius to recommend that keyboard preludes be improvised before the singing of a polychoral concerto. This prelude both prepares the audience for the work to follow and provides a pleasing means of giving stringed instruments pitches to which they might tune. Fearing mayhem, however, Praetorius cautions the bassoons, trombones, and cornetts to be discreet to the point of tuning at home before the performance and warming up on the mouthpiece.

I must kindly suggest to all organists that they should generally make use of an appropriate introduction when attempting to perform a *concerto* with several choirs in church or at a banquet. Although it may not belong to the main work, it would serve to make the audience favorably disposed, receptive and attentive, and thus entertain them the better—just as excellent orators do who intend to hold forth extensively on important matters. Using their preludes at the beginning they should thus call the listeners and the entire ensemble of musicians together, as it were, so that they may look for their parts and tune their instruments properly and that way prepare themselves for the start of a good and well-sounding performance.

Since lutenists and violists in tuning their lutes and *Geigen* start mostly with G, it is very necessary that [the organists] first play G in octaves with both hands and continue sounding it for a while, then proceed to D, then to A, after that to E, C, and F, stopping on each [tone] with the left hand for about two or three *tactus* while they introduce nice runs and other diminutions with the right, as is customary in toccatas. This they keep up until the others have tuned their lutes, viols, and *Geigen*, etc. Then they may begin a little fugue, an agreeable fantasy or toccata, break off briefly and proceed neatly and smoothly to the *final* on the tone on which the *concerto* starts, in order that they may regain its mode gracefully. Thereupon the entire ensemble in full force may in God's name begin the performance of a fine *concerto*, motet, madrigal, or pavan.

But it creates great confusion and din if the instrumentalists tune their bassoons, trombones, and cornetts during the organist's prelude and carry on loudly and noisily so that it hurts one's ears and gives one the jitters. For it sounds so dreadful and makes such a commotion that one wonders what kind of mayhem is being committed. Therefore everyone should carefully tune the cornett or trombone in his lodging before presenting himself at the church or elsewhere for a performance, and he should work up a good embouchure with his mouthpiece in order that he may delight the ears and hearts of the listeners

rather than offend them with such cacophony.<sup>15</sup>

In many sections of his treatise, Praetorius articulates the importance of variety in performance, sometimes going to great lengths to detail the means by which this can be achieved. With regard to tempo and dynamics he urges that:

A performance must not be hurried, or even the most delightful ensemble will sound confused. With a slower *tactus*, however, the harmony is more agreeable and can be grasped better.

Note values also have to be carefully observed, lest the harmony be marred and disturbed; for to sing without benefit of law and measure is to offend God himself who, as Plato says, provided all things with number, weight, and measure. But to use, by turns, now a slower, now a faster beat, in accordance with the text, lends dignity and grace to a performance and makes it admirable.

Besides, it adds much charm to harmony and melodies, if the dynamic level in the vocal and instrumental parts is varied now and then. (This could be expounded in a thesis.)

Some [authorities] do not want to allow the mixture of motet- and madrigal-styles in any one composition. But I cannot accept their opinion; especially since it makes motets and *concerti* particularly delightful, when after some slow and expressive measures at the beginning several quick phrases follow, succeeded in turn by slow and stately ones, which again change off with faster ones. In order to avoid monotony one should then bring about such variety by alternating between a slow and a fast *tactus*, in addition to dynamic changes as mentioned before.

Furthermore, it is not very commendable and pleasant when singers, organists, and other instrumentalists from habit hasten directly from the penultimate note of a composition into the last note without any hesitation. Therefore I believe I should here admonish those who have hitherto not observed this as it is done at princely courts and by other well-constituted musical organizations, to linger somewhat on the penultimate note, whatever its time value... and only then proceed to the last note.

As a piece is brought to its close, all the remaining voices should stop simultaneously at the sign of the conductor or choirmaster. The tenors should not prolong their tone, a fifth above the bass or lowest voice (in which position the tenor must often end), after the bass has stopped. But if the bass continues to sound a little longer, [perhaps] for another two or four *tactus*, it lends charm and beauty to the music, which no one can deny.<sup>16</sup>

Elsewhere in the treatise, the explanation of the terms “forte,” “piano,” “presto,” “adagio,” and “lento” lead Praetorius again to stress the importance of variety, especially

where it is rendered with moderation and has an affective goal.

These words [forte, piano, presto, adagio, and lento] are sometimes used by the Italians and are marked in the parts in *concerti* and many other places because of the changes in both voices and choirs. I rather like this practice. There are some who believe that this is not very appropriate, especially in churches. I feel, however, that such variety and change are not only agreeable and proper—if applied with moderation and designed to express the affections and evoke them in men—but affect the ear and the spirit of the listener much more and give the *concerto* a unique quality of grace. Often the composition itself as well as the text and the meaning of the words requires that one [change the pace] at times—but not too frequently or excessively—beating now fast, now slowly, also that one let the choir by turns sing quietly and softly, and loudly and briskly.<sup>17</sup>

Variety concerns not only the manner in which a piece is performed—as we have seen above—but also to the juxtaposition of pieces themselves. In explaining the term *intermedio*, Praetorius refers to the alternation of instruments and to the alternation of the music and the spoken comedy. He then appropriates this principle of alternation for putting together effectively varied banquet music. In urging contrasting speeds for successive pieces, Praetorius echoes the common linkage of dance pairs, e.g., the slow, gliding pavane followed by the fast, leaping galliard, and anticipates the alternation of speeds between the movements of many *sonate da chiesa* later in the century.

The pleasant instrumental music performed between the acts of a comedy, with cornetts, viols, or other similar instruments alternating, is called *intermedio* [interlude] by the Italians; at times voices are also used. Its purpose is to allow actors to change their costumes and prepare themselves for the following act, also to enable them to catch their breath and recuperate. One can proceed in a similar manner when trying to arrange some good music for banquets of noblemen and other joyful gatherings. Thus after one has had two or more boys... sing to [the accompaniment of] a harpsichord, regal or a similar fundamental instrument, one immediately begins to play something else with lutes, pandoras, *Geigen*, cornetts, trombones, and the like, with instruments alone and no voices. Then one has the voices start again, thus instruments and voices alternating by turns. Similarly after a *concerto* or a splendid motet a gay canzona, galliard, courante, or the like can be presented with instruments only. This can also be done by a single organist or a lutenist. Playing at banquets he may after performing a motet or madrigal quite slowly and gravely continue with a gay allemande, intrada, branle, or galliard, to be followed again by another motet, madrigal, pavan, or artful fugue.<sup>18</sup>

The extensive attention that Praetorius gives to questions of scoring in *SM III* reveals the potentially large role a varied instrumental ensemble might play in the performance of concertos and motets. In one section of the treatise, Praetorius inventories various instrumental combinations according to clefs. His first examples are drawn from the works of Orlando di Lasso, a logical and well-chosen source, especially given Praetorius's familiarity with the Munich *Kantorei*, which he had earlier described in *SM II*. Moreover, the rich participation of instruments in the vocal music under Lasso's direction is well documented by the handsome 1570 manuscript for the *Penitential Psalms* with illuminations by Hans Mielich depicting Lasso and his forces.<sup>19</sup> Given Praetorius' German proclivity for things Italian, Lasso is also an interesting choice, as several prominent Italians, for example Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, were active under his direction in Munich.

Though I should have been able to describe more extensively how every *concerto* may be arranged in various particular ways, by changing the instrumentation and otherwise, I have hesitated to do so for the time being. For the the art of music has risen so high that nowadays also in our fatherland, Germany, excellent musicians are found who not only have published splendid and pleasing German and Latin *concerti* and other compositions, but who themselves know how to arrange and direct such *concerti* for several choirs and the like better than I could prescribe it with my modest ability.

To mention this matter briefly, however, I have thought of the following device, which I have not previously seen used by anybody; namely to mark down, one after the other, the clefs from all parts of all the *concerti* of an author. This has been done in the thorough-bass of my *Polyhymnia*, at the beginning of which the clefs of all pieces contained in it are listed in the proper order of the parts.

Thus one can promptly ascertain the character of the entire *concerto* as in a mirror; one can see how far approximately every voice may ascend or descend according to the mode of the composition and therefore what wind or string instruments may be used on each part, and to which choir the *cappella* and the singers are to be assigned. For examples I want to list here several of the motets by Orlando (which are available to everyone):

The image shows a musical score for the motet "Laudate pueri Dominum" by Orlando di Lasso. The score is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The text "Laudate pueri Dominum" is written on the left side of the staff. The score is divided into two sections, "1. Chorus." and "2. Chorus.", each marked with a circled number. Below the staff, seven clefs are listed, numbered 1 through 7, corresponding to the parts of the composition. The clefs are: 1. Treble clef, 2. Bass clef, 3. Alto clef, 4. Bass clef, 5. Bass clef, 6. Bass clef, and 7. Bass clef.

In this example one can readily see that, when instrumentalists are available, the two discants of the first choir must be performed on two transverse flutes, or two violins, or two cornetts; the alto, however (as the bassett of the choir), by a voice. In the other choir the alto (as the cantus of the second choir) also must be taken by a voice, and both tenors and the bass by three trombones.

1. Chorus.                      2. Chorus.

Inconvertendo  
a2.

1 2 3 4      5 6 7 8

To the first choir one may quite appropriately assign three transverse flutes or three soft cornetts, or three violins; or one may combine one violin, one cornett, and a transverse flute or recorder; for the bassett, however, one may use a tenor singer and a trombone in addition, if one wishes; one may also use a trombone or bassoon, omitting the voice. In this case a choirboy may be assigned to one discant in order to allow the words to be heard. For the other choir one may use voices alone; or viols *da gamba*, or viol *da braccio*, or recorders, along with a bassoon or bass trombone; but then the discant or the tenor, or both, must simultaneously be sung in addition to being played on the instruments.

Quo properas; d10.

1. Chorus.                      2. Chorus.

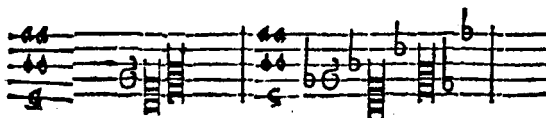
1 2 3 4 5 | 6 7 8 9 10      11




1st. variation	cornett or voice, trom- bone, trombone, trombone, trombone	cornett or voice, trombone, trombone, trombone, bass trombone
2nd variation	voices alone	cornett, trombone, trom- bone, trombone, trombone
3rd variation	voices alone	<i>viols da braccio</i>
4th variation	voices alone	recorders, recorders, trombone, trombone, bassoon
5th variation	<i>viols da braccio</i>	transverse flutes, trom- bone, trombone, trombone, trombone
6th variation	<i>viols da braccio</i>	recorders, recorders, trombone, trombone, bas- soon
7th variation	recorders, recorders, trombone, trombone, bassoon	cornett, trombone, trom- bone, trombone, trombone, etc.

In such choirs the cantus or tenor, or alto, etc., must simultaneously be sung by voices. Anyone may himself look up more examples of this kind in the works of contemporary composers and arrange them according to the clefs....<sup>20</sup>


Having detailed various combinations of instruments, as above, Praetorius then discusses the instrumental choirs individually. The description of the cornett choir reveals Praetorius' sensitivity to issues of range. For instance, with very high parts he suggests that violins may work better unless the cornett player has "complete control." At the other end of the scale, he notes that the lowest notes on the cornett are "unpleasant," sounding "almost like a cowhorn," and suggests trombone or *Tenorgeige* (viola) as good alternatives.



When these four clefs are found in a choir in *cantus regularis* or *transpositus* (that is in *durus* or *mollis*), no matter in what order, a cornett or violin choir is indicated. But in very high choirs it is almost better to use violins than cornetts, unless a good cornett player having complete control of his instrument is available, who may then keep the highest cantus for himself. One does not always use either cornetts or violins by themselves, however, combining them at times by using one violin and two cornetts, or two violins and one cornett, or one violin, one cornett, and one transverse flute or recorder; in addition one would be likely to double one part with a discant singer; then the bassett may not be sung by a voice, but played on a trombone or similar instrument, whichever is appropriate. In such choirs one generally

finds the bassett written in these clefs:  ; it is either sung

or, in addition, played on a trombone or bassoon. But when there is another



 noted above at the beginning, it is better to use a trombone along with

the cornetts (if a player is available who can play a good alto on the trombone), and a *Viol dabratio* [*sic!*] or, as it is otherwise called, a *Tenorgeige* [viola], with the violins. For A is the lowest tone on cornetts, though some players can manage the G, perhaps also the F, in *falsetto*. But since in such a low range it sounds unpleasant and almost like a cowhorn, and the violins reach down to the G only and do not produce a good sound on the lowest string, I consider it far better and more agreeable, as just mentioned, to use a trombone or viola in this case.<sup>21</sup>

The description of the trombone choir addresses issues of transposition, the familiarity of certain clefs for the bass, and the ensemble balance between tenor and bass lines.



Choirs notated in the clefs shown here or in many other different ways are all intended to be arranged for trombones alone, or bassoons, or pommers, or by a combination of bassoons and trombones.


For the most part the alto written in this clef  is sung [in an ensemble] with trombones and bassoons, at times also that tenor [part] 

which has the best melody (this may also quite appropriately be done by a discant singer one octave higher). In this case the alto must not be sung but must be played an octave higher on an alto recorder or violin.

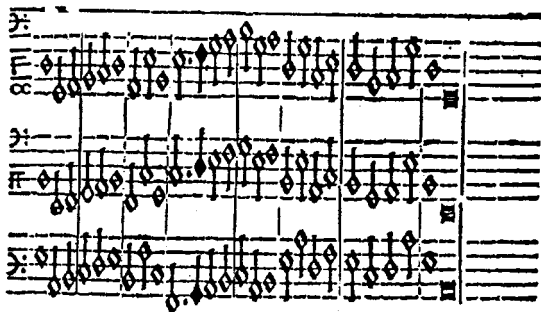
Frequently a discant  is in-

cluded, which is to be sung, or played on a cornett or violin as in the third and sixth examples [above].

...For the low basses... one always uses a double bassoon, or large bass pommer, or bass trombone, just as for the common basses which are written

in bass clef  a bass trombone must be used at all times. But the

double bass trombone or the very large double bass viols cannot very well be played from the very low bass [clefs] since the players are not accustomed to them. Therefore one must copy these basses, one octave higher; thus the  $\mathcal{F}$  must be taken down from the sixth or fifth line and put on the middle or third line, or on the fourth line, counting from the bottom. Then the player can manage quite comfortably. For example:



The last example can be blown on the very low instruments as it is written, but sounds an octave lower.

If in a choir with five or even four parts only, the tenor or *quintus* has the

♯ on the fourth line, the *Γ-ut* or *A-re* often appear as fifths above the bass. Such fifths in the low range will sound somewhat unpleasant if they are not carefully handled. In singing such a part one must not let the voice boom out, or one has to sing an octave higher, or play the part on an instrument, whichever is appropriate. One must be just as careful when instruments only are used (as is to be shown presently); with those instruments which have the low part next to the bass (usually called baritone, *vagans*, *quintus*, or *sextus*), some restraint is necessary, lest they spoil the foundation in the bass with excessively loud and noisy fifths; or lest they sustain the last note of a piece longer than the bass, which some tenors are in the habit of doing. What an ugly sound this produces, however, can be better judged by listening than by looking.

Trombones, bassoons or dulcians, and pommers or bombardars can also be played in the other common clefs customarily used for viol, recorder, and vocal choirs, in the following manner:

**Mit 5. Dolciana: Pommern oder Posaunen.**  
In quarta inferiore.

1. Cantus. 2. Altus. 3. Tenor. 4. Vagans 5. Bassus.



1. Ten. Posau. Drey Quart Posauern. Octav Posau.  
Zwei Chorist Fagoc. oder Chorist Bass Posauern. Drey Fagoc. oder Drey Pom:

In Quarta inferiore. In Octava inferiore.

**Mit 6. Posauern / Fagotten oder Pommern.**



1. Alt Posau. 2. Tenor Posauern. 3. Quart Pos. Octav Posauern.  
Klein Fagot. 4. Chorist Fagotten. Quint Drey Fag.  
Bass Fagot. 4. Chor. Pommern. Groß Bass Posau.  
Ober Nicolo.

Voce humana: vel Cornetto mazo, in quinta vel quarta superiore; vel Fiffara.

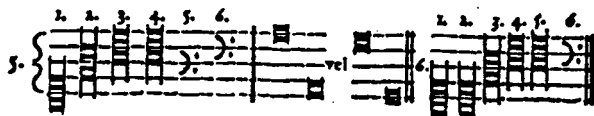
In Quarta inferiore. In Quinta inferiore. In Octava inferiore.

It should be noted here that for such large and low bass instruments as pommers, bassoons or dulcians, and trombones, no compositions are better fitted than those written in Hypodorian (in our usage the second mode) and Hypoionian, which we call the twelfth mode, otherwise called the fifth or sixth mode.



Both of these examples, as well as the first two in Hypoionian, can be played on six crumhorns, one tone higher.

The following is played on crumhorns as written, but on bassoons, pommers, and trombones a fifth lower.



The preceding may be done with six dulcians, or six pommers, or six trombones. Compositions written in such clefs could be played an octave lower, since on the double-*Quint* bassoon and large bass pommer, the twelve-foot organ pitch  $F_1$  is available as the lowest tone, on the double bass trombone in addition to it the  $E_1$ ,  $D_1$ , and perhaps the sixteen-foot  $C_1$ . But in the extreme low range the thirds and fifths produce a disagreeable, unpleasant sound (as mentioned in the second volume), and on the four low keys of the large bass pommers and bassoons one cannot manage fast notes very well. Therefore it is better and quite convenient to play motets, *concerti*, sonatas, and canzonas, written in these and similar clefs, a fourth or fifth lower, as indicated with the clefs [in the examples] below. All this can similarly be applied to the large double bass and bass viols, when the viola da gamba bass is used as the discant.

Not everyone is able to reach the  $g'$  and  $a'$  *la-mi-re*, in the alto, on a common tenor trombone, let alone on a *Chorist*-bassoon, when the first part, the cantus, is to be played a fourth or fifth lower, as an alto. Therefore this part should be played either on an alto trombone or *Zingel-corthol*—which is a little *Cant*-bassoon—or sung by an alto singer. But one has to be careful in composing not to let any part ascend far beyond the octave; although some players manage to go up to  $g'$  on *Chorist*-bassoons, to  $a'$  on tenor trombones, and still higher yet, only a few are capable of doing this. Everyone else has to stop at  $d'$  on the bassoons and at  $e'$ , at the most  $a'$ , on trombones.

Likewise the baritones or *Vagant-Stimmen* (i.e., *Quintus*) whose clef  $\mathfrak{F}$  is on the third, the middle line, must not be carried below  $c$ .

The viols also are very well suited to these clefs, especially when the parts are transposed down by a fourth or a fifth.<sup>22</sup>

Mit 3. Posaunen: Und 2. Bass-Pomern oder Fagotten.  
In Quarta inferiore vel Quinta.

3. Posaunen. 2. Bass-Pomern. Groß-Cornet. 3. Posaunen. Chor Fag. Doppel Fag.  
1. Chor Trompeten. 2. Chor Posaunen. Bass-Pom. Groß B. F.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. In Quarta. Mit 4.

Mit 4. Posaunen / und 4. Dolcianen oder Fagotten  
eine Quarta niedriger.  
1. Chorus. Trompeten. 2. Chorus. Fagot vel Bombardon.

10. In Quarta inferiore

Trompeten vel vasa.  
Diesen 1. Chor, kan man auch wol mit andern Instrumenten machen.

Praetorius discusses at length the different ways in which his concerted church music—his *Polyhymniae*—can be arranged and performed. (Again the familiar tendency towards systematized flexibility is evident.) He establishes twelve different styles (one arranged into nine different methods!).<sup>23</sup> The first of these twelve styles is characterized by the use of trumpets and timpani. Praetorius here makes specific reference to the concertos of *Polyhymniae Tubiciniae* and *Tympanistriae* as examples of this style. However, this collection appears not to have been published, although the contents are listed in *SM III*.<sup>24</sup> A good surviving example of the style, however, is the setting of *In Dulci Jubilo* in *Polyhymnia Caduceatrix*.<sup>25</sup>

Not surprisingly, Praetorius again advocates flexibility, stating that the trumpet parts may be omitted or played by other instruments. Moreover, he strives for variety by occasionally reducing the traditional, multi-register trumpet ensemble (*Clarino, Principal, Alter Bass, Volgan, Grob, and Fladdergröb*) to solo, duo, and trio passages. Praetorius' remarks additionally reveal a practical attitude that one feels certain is rooted in experience. For example, he suggests that owing to the amount of air required to play the trumpet, trumpeters tend to rush. Thus the conductor should himself speed the tempo up during the trumpet passages; readjustment of the speed is possible when the trumpets do not play. Problems of balance are also addressed in his suggestion that the trumpet ensemble be located *nabe bey der Kirchen* in order not to drown out the other musicians.<sup>26</sup>

The Latin and German compositions in the *Polyhymniae Tubicinae* and *Tympanistriae* belong to the first style [of arranging *concerti*]. In these one may at one's pleasure use trumpets and timpani in churches in which this can be justified.

But if one cannot, will not, or must not use the trumpeters and timpanists, these compositions can nevertheless be performed quite well in town churches without trumpeters. In this case their sonatas and whatever else has been composed for them may be omitted entirely.

If other instrumentalists are available, however, all of this may be played on *Geigen*, cornetts, and trombones.

At first I arranged the German compositions mostly in such a way that the entire church congregation could sing along simultaneously.

But since this might seem too simple and plain to some, I changed them in order to introduce at various places additional variations for alternating choirs allowing for the use of trumpets along with some repetitions and episodes.

One thing should be remembered here: since the trumpeters are in the habit of hurrying (particularly because the trumpets require a good deal of breath, which cannot be sustained very well at a slow pace), one should accelerate the beat when the trumpeters enter, otherwise they always finish their *sonatas* too soon. Later the beat may be lengthened, until the trumpeters start in again.

These *concerti* are to be arranged in such a way that five, six, or seven trumpeters, with or without a timpanist, are put in a separate place near the nave, in order that each part may be heard clearly and independently. For if they stood within [the main section of] the church, the powerful sound and reverberation of the trumpets would drown out the entire music. Then the *Kapellmeister* or someone else sure of the *tactus* must have the thorough-bass part in front of him and beat time in such a way that the ensemble of musicians within the church on one hand, and the trumpeters on the other, can see and follow him, especially the one playing the *Quint* or, as it is mostly called, the *Principal*.

For every such *concerto* I have written out the trumpet parts (though it is up to any well-trained musician to improve upon them.)

Since in all things variety is pleasing and agreeable, I have also inserted some variations in the German compositions so that the trumpeters and timpanists would not always join in as a group; sometimes a *clarino* alone will play the chorale melody along with the entire ensemble, sometimes a duo will be performed by two *clarini* or one *clarino* and a *Principal*, or a trio with two *clarini* and one *Quint* (i.e., *Principal*).

Among the trumpeters there must be at least two—such as the one playing the *Quint* and the one playing the second *clarino*—who know how to read

music and thus can play from the notes as I wrote them.

To be sure, the first *clarino* follows the chorale and can easily be played by anyone familiar with the tune. It is also necessary that the *Alter Bass* player study his part from the written music, in order that the intervals and chords of the three *Principal* parts may be correct. The other [players] on *Volgan*, *Grob*, *Fladdergrob*, and timpani follow the lead *Principal* and can find their parts by themselves, thus having no need of [written] music.

But in the case that trumpeters able to read music may not be available, I have thought of an easier way: they may then join in by playing only their usual *sonatas*, with proportions and *triplas* or without them, and for one, two, one-half or one-quarter *Post*, as the *concerto* may call for it.

For clarification I have added there some of these common *sonatas*.

In this connection I must also explain some terms generally used by trumpeters.

*Intrada* is like an introduction and *final*; they use it before beginning their *sonatas* when they play at banquets, and also for holds on the *final*.

*Sonada* or *Sonata* is [a piece] which they use during banquets and also for dancing. I call the *Vortanz Sonada* without *Tripel*, the *Nachtanz, Sonada* with *Tripel*. Since the *Quint* or *Principal* player has the most important part, the *clarino* player as well as the timpanist and the others have to follow him.

One *Post* contains sixteen *tactus*.

One-half *Post* contains eight *tactus*.

One-quarter *Post* contains four *tactus*.

Some people want to count four *tactus* to one *Post*, some two *tactus* to a quarter *Post*, which, however, is not acceptable.

The *Principal*, *Quinta*, or *Sonata* as some call it, is the tenor proper which governs and leads the entire trumpet and timpani choir.

*Clarino* is the discant which carries the melody or chorale, embellishing it with ascending and descending diminutions or coloraturas at his pleasure and to the best of his ability.

*Alter Bass* is like an alto, forming at all times thirds and fourths, rarely fifths with the *Sonata* or *Quint*. *Volgan* keeps to the fifth above the bass or *Grob* and always remains on one tone, namely the g.

*Grob* is the proper bass or foundation and also remains on one tone—the four-foot c.

*Fladdergrob* stays one octave below the bass or *Grob*, on the eight-foot C.

It is quite customary for the *Quinta* and *clarino* to move mostly in octaves, especially when they play chorales or other pieces in their *sonatas*, which appears strange to an experienced musician. In some of these *concerti* I have therefore wanted to compose and print the notes of the three upper voices, *clarino*, *Quinta*, and *Alter Bass*, in order that the trumpeters able to read music could practice them and thus play along with the entire ensemble with better



results. It is not always possible, however, to avoid dissonances and other forbidden intervals in arranging the parts.<sup>27</sup>

The same concern for balance that prompts Praetorius to place the trumpets away from the main ensemble within the church also surfaces in remarks relating to the cornett. In his chapter “About the Thorough-Bass,” Praetorius, interweaving translations of Agostino Agazzari (*Del sonare sopra il basso*, 1607) and Lodovico Viadana (*Cento concerti ecclesiastici*, 1602) with his own commentary, extends a cautionary note about continuo balance especially to include “blaring” cornetts and “screaming” singers. In his comments he underscores that this creates a significant pitch problem.

This point [made by Agazzari about balance] above all must be carefully kept in mind in all *concerti*, by instrumentalists as well as singers. No one must cover up and outshout the other with his instrument or voice, though this happens very frequently, causing much splendid music to be spoiled and ruined. When one thus tries to outdo the other, the instrumentalists, particularly cornett players with their blaring but also singers through their screaming, rise in pitch so much that the organist playing along is forced to stop entirely. At the end it happens then that the whole ensemble through excessive blowing and shouting has gone sharp by a half, often indeed a whole tone and more.

A.A. [A. Agazzari] Without a doubt A. Agazzari has realized this, for he demands that the wind instruments, especially cornetts, should be omitted in soft, nice, and delicate ensembles—because of the variation caused by the human breath—and that they should only be used in large and loud ones.

In small ensembles a trombone—if blown well and delicately—may sometimes also be used as the bass playing along with small positives or four-foot organ stops. M.P.C. [Praetorius] This need not apply to one who can control his cornett and similar instruments properly and who is master of his instrument.<sup>28</sup>

The concluding chapter of *SM III* is “A Method of Teaching Choir Boys... According to the New Italian Style.” Insofar as instruments familiarly imitate the voice and insofar as much of the discussion here centers on a common vocabulary of ornamentation, this explicitly “vocal” chapter has much of interest to the wind player. For example, Praetorius is clear in establishing priorities: ornamental *passaggi* are important, but art, not glottal or digital prowess, should rule:

An orator must not only adorn an oration with beautiful, agreeable, and spirited words and splendid metaphors but he must also enunciate properly and rouse the emotions by raising or lowering the voice and speaking now softly, now loudly. Similarly a musician must not only sing, but he must sing

artfully and expressively in order to move the hearts of the listeners, to rouse their emotions, and to allow the music to accomplish its ultimate purpose.

A singer must not only be endowed with a splendid natural voice, but he must also have a good mind and a thorough knowledge of music. He must know how to execute the accents in good taste, where to introduce runs or coloraturas (called *passaggi* by the Italians), i.e., not anywhere in a composition, but appropriately, at the right time and in a certain way, in order that the listener may not only be aware of the loveliness of the voice, but also be able to enjoy the art. For those singers deserve no praise who are endowed by God and nature with an especially delightful, vibrating voice and in addition possess a well-rounded neck and throat for making diminutions, yet do not allow themselves to be governed by the rules of music and with their excessive coloraturas go beyond the limits prescribed in the composition. Thus they spoil and obscure it so much that one neither knows what they sing nor can hear—much less grasp—the text or the notes (as the composer set them and as the piece would sound best).

This evil method (which especially some instrumentalists have also embraced) provides little joy for the listeners, particularly those who have some knowledge of the art; to the contrary, it makes them sullen and sleepy. But singing should not be deprived by inappropriate diminutions of the natural power and grace that the Master has given it, and each word and sentence should be intelligible to anyone.<sup>29</sup>

From the frequency with which late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century sources felt obliged to spell out the details of ornamentation, we can safely assume its importance to the style as well as sense something of the novelty that required such regular explanation. Instruction in ornamentation was the explicit purpose of a number of tutors, viz. “division” manuals that through copious tables amply exemplify the performer’s choices.<sup>30</sup> But more to the point here are the published compositions that self-consciously associate themselves with the *stile nuovo*, e.g. Giulio Caccini’s *Le Nuove Musiche* (1601/2) or Emilio Cavalieri’s *Rappresentazione di Anima et di Corpo* (1600) and whose prefaces define an ornamental practice. As the new Italian style is Praetorius’s target, he follows their lead, exemplifying the *accento*,<sup>31</sup> *tremulo*, *groppo*, *tirata*, and *trillo*.

[A] singer must understand thoroughly how to employ diminutions (otherwise commonly called coloraturas) agreeably and appropriately.

One speaks of diminution when a longer note is broken up into many other faster and smaller notes. There are different kinds of them, arranged here in the following order: accent, *tremulo*, *groppi*, and *tirata*.



[*Groppi*]. *Gruppi* or *gropi* are used in cadences and have to be executed more sharply than the *tremuli*.



[*Tirate*]. *Tirate* are long, fast, scalewise runs up or down the keyboard.



The faster and more sharply these runs are executed, the better and more agreeable is the effect, but one must be able to hear every note clearly.

Diminutions not moving stepwise are *trillo* and *passaggi*.

[*Trillo*]. There are two kinds of *trillo*. One is on one tone, either on a line or in a space, and consists of many notes in fast repetition.



[Examples] of this type are found in Claudio Monteverdi.

The other *trillo* is executed in various ways. To be sure, it is impossible to learn how to make a proper trill from written instructions; [it can only be learned] through live demonstration and the efforts of a teacher. Then one may learn from the other just as one bird learns by watching another. Therefore I have so far never found a description of this type of *trillo* with any Italian writer, with the exception of the aforementioned Giulio Caccini, but

only the indication *t*, *tr*, or *tri* above the notes to be furnished with a *trillo*. I have considered it necessary, however, to include here several kinds [of *trillo*] in passing, in order that novices, so far still ignorant of them, may see and learn what approximately may be called *trillo*.

[*Pasaggi*]. *Pasaggi* are fast runs which are employed over longer notes, both stepwise and in skips of any size, ascending as well as descending.

There are two kinds: some are simple, made up of minims or semiminims or a combination of minims and semiminims; some are broken, formed of fusas or semifusas, or a combination of fusas and semifusas.

(The semiminims are called *chromata* in Italian, the fusas, *semichromata*, the semifusas, *bischromata*.)

Students [who are] beginners in this art should first start with simple *passaggi* and then gradually practice the broken ones full of fusas diligently

until they finally arrive at those with semifusas and can manage them successfully.<sup>32</sup>

---

Praetorius brings the third volume of his monumental work to a close with formulaic grace:

[M]ay the benevolent and sincere musician live in good health and continue to favor me and be well-disposed toward me. I shall in turn endeavor to serve him faithfully to the limit of my powers as long as I live.<sup>33</sup>

His concern with the practicalities of music-making, as seen in the several excerpts presented here, brings forth rich comment regarding tuning, dynamics, scoring, and ornamentation. That we, in turn, remain "well disposed" towards him acknowledges both the wealth of information he provides the performer and the degree to which his writing fruitfully funds many of our modern ideas about seventeenth-century performance.

*Hans Lampl completed his doctorate in musicology at the University of Southern California with a dissertation on Praetorius' Syntagma Musicum, vol. III (see note 1). Now retired from teaching, he maintains an active interest in the study of musical interpretation and performance. He currently lives in Arizona.*

*Steven Plank is professor of musicology at Oberlin College, where he also directs the Collegium Musicum Vocal Ensemble. He is an active performer on cornetto and Baroque trumpet and is the author of the forthcoming "The Way to Heavens Doors": An Introduction to Liturgical Process and Musical Style from Scarecrow Press*

---

## NOTES

1. For a facsimile edition, see *Syntagma Musicum, Facsimile-Nachdruck*, ed. Wilibald Gurlitt (Kassel, 1958-59). Modern editions in translation include Michael David Fleming, "Michael Praetorius, Music Historian: An Annotated Translation of *Syntagma Musicum* I, pt. I (PhD diss., Washington University, 1979); *De Organographia*, trans. Harold Blumenfeld (New York, 1980); *De Organographia*, trans. and ed. David Z. Crookes (Oxford, 1986); and Hans Lampl, "A translation of *Syntagma Musicum* III by Michael Praetorius" (diss., Univ. of Southern California, 1957). The excerpts which form the basis of this article are taken from a revised version of Dr. Lampl's dissertation. Descriptions of the respective volumes are quoted from a catalogue of Praetorius' works that he includes in *SM* III. See Lampl, "Praetorius," pp. 300-01. The planned fourth volume, devoted to composition, never appeared. A new translation of *SM* III is presently in preparation by Jeffery Kite-Powell of Florida State University.

2. The respective audiences are specified in Praetorius' address "To the Benevolent Reader" in *SM I*. See Fleming, "Praetorius," p. 31.

3. Friedrich Blume refers to Praetorius' characteristic "passion for system." Cited in Lampl, "Praetorius," p. v. In a similar vein, Walter Blankenburg observes that "a conscious feature of his output is his extraordinarily systematic approach to his works, including a thorough grasp of their texts as well as an exhaustive consideration of their practical application. All this goes hand in hand with an urge to collect and with a sense of pedagogic responsibility." See *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 1980 ed., s.v. "Praetorius, Michael."

4. A. Lloyd Moote, *The Seventeenth Century: Europe in Ferment* (Lexington, MA, 1970), p. 2.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

6. In addition to *SM*, see Sethus Calvisius, *Exercitationes Musicae Duae* (Leipzig, 1600); Domenico Pietro Cerone, *El Melopeo y Maestro* (Naples, 1613); Marin Mersenne, *Traité de l'harmonie universelle* (Paris, 1627); and Athanasius Kircher, *Musurgia universalis* (Rome, 1650).

7. Warren Dwight Allen, *Philosophies of Music History: A Study of General Histories of Music 1600-1960* (New York, 1962), p. 5.

8. Though *SM* is an extensive resource for the study of *concertato* practice, Praetorius is now well known for propagating a faulty understanding of the *concerto* idea. Praetorius' view of the concerto is combative—musical forces contending with one another—while a more mainstream view relates to the harmonious uniting of disparate into a whole. See *inter alia*, Claude Palisca, *Baroque Music* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1991), pp. 66-7; and Lorenzo Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 35.

9. Lampl, "Praetorius," p. 3.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

13. See Kurt Gudewill and Hans Hasse, *Michael Praetorius Cruetzbergensis 1571(?)–1621* (Wolfenbüttel, 1971), p. 13.

14. Gina Spagnoli offers an interesting essay on the Electoral chapel in "Dresden at the Time of Heinrich Schütz," in *Music and Society: the Early Baroque Era*, ed. Curtis A. Price (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1993), pp. 164-84. Significantly, Italian musicians formed part of the Dresden musical establishment for much of the 17th century, even to the point of controversy in the 1650s. See esp. p. 168.

15. *SM III*, pp. 151-52; Lampl, "Praetorius," pp. 198-99.

16. *SM III*, pp. 79-80; Lampl, "Praetorius," pp. 105-06.

17. *SM III*, pp. 79-80; Lampl, "Praetorius," pp. 105-06.

18. *SM III*, p. 130; Lampl, "Praetorius," p. 43.

19. For discussions of the Munich chapel under Lasso's direction, see Gary Fisher, "The Munich Kapelle of Orlando di Lasso (1563-1594): A Model for Renaissance Choral Performance Practice" (doctoral diss., University of Oklahoma, 1987); Clive Wearing, "Orlando Lassus (1532-1594) and the Munich Kapelle," *Early Music* 10 (1982): 147-53; Rudolf Eras, "Zur Deutung von Mielihs Bild der Bayerischen Hofkapelle," *Die Musikforschung* 16 (1963): 364-67; and Walter Frei, "Die bayerische Hofkapelle unter Orlando di Lasso," *Die Musikforschung* 15 (1962): 359-64.

20. *SM III*, pp. 152-54; Lampl, "Praetorius," pp. 200-204.

21. *SM III*, p. 155; Lampl, "Praetorius," pp. 204-5.

22. *SM III*, pp. 159-65; Lampl, "Praetorius," pp. 209-17.

23. Praetorius' 1619 *Polyhymnia Caduceatrix*, a large collection of church concertos for lavish forces with detailed performance instructions, contains an index of concertos in that collection according to which style they exemplify. See *Gesamtausgabe der Musikalischen Werke von Michael Praetorius*, ed. Wilibald Gurlitt (Wolfenbüttel, n.d.), vol. 17. For translation of the instructions for *Polyhymnia Caduceatrix*, see Margaret Anne Boudreaux, "Michael Praetorius's *Polyhymnia Caduceatrix et Panegyrica* (1619): An Annotated Translation" (DMA diss., University of Colorado, 1989).

24. Lampl, "Praetorius," pp. 277-78.

25. *Gesamtausgabe 1712*: 566-598.

26. The phrase "nahe bey der Kirchen" seems to place the trumpeters outside of the church itself. However, Lampl suggests—compellingly, I think—that "Kirche" here is likely a reference to "Hauptkirche" or "the nave"; thus they stand "in a separate place near the nave." Praetorius addresses trumpet balance in *Polyhymnia Caduceatrix* as well: "It is also useful, if one wants to use trumpets in a quiet piece, to put mutes in...." See Boudreaux, "Praetorius," p. 93. For a detailed discussion of Praetorius and the trumpet, especially with regard to the "First Style," see Don L. Smithers, *The Music & History of the Baroque Trumpet before 1721* (Carbondale, IL, 1988), pp. 135-140.

27. *SM III*, pp. 169-172; Lampl, "Praetorius," pp. 223-229.

28. *SM III*, pp. 148-49; Lampl, "Praetorius," p. 195.

29. *SM III*, pp. 229-30; Lampl, "Praetorius," pp. 313-14.

30. See, for example, the representative Giovanni Bassano, *Ricercate, passaggi et cadentie* (Venice, 1585) or Girolamo dalla Casa, *Il vero modo diminuir* (Venice, 1584). A useful bibliographic study



is Ernest T. Ferand, "Didactic Embellishment Literature in the Late Renaissance: A Survey of Sources," in *Aspects of Medieval and Renaissance Music: A Birthday Offering to Gustave Reese* (New York, 1978).

31. For an extended survey and discussion, see Bruce Dickey, "L'Accento: In Search of a Forgotten Ornament," *Historical Brass Society Journal* 3 (1991): 98-121.

32. *SM* III, pp. 232-240; Lampl, "Praetorius," pp. 317-24.

33. *SM* III, p. 240; Lampl, "Praetorius," p. 325.