

## FANTINI AND MERSENNE: SOME ADDITIONS TO RECENT CONTROVERSIES

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The seminal importance of the first printed trumpet method, Girolamo Fantini's *Modo per Imparare a sonare di tromba* of 1638, has long been recognized, and its contents have been subjected to scrutiny of one type or another on many occasions during the last 100 years and more. Paradoxically, factual information regarding the life of the author has been at a premium and this has given rise to many unsubstantiated suppositions and suggestions. With all this in mind, Igino Conforzi's article "Girolamo Fantini, 'Monarch of the Trumpet': Recent Additions to His Biography" (HBSJ 5 [1993]: 159-173) is to be welcomed in supplying much-needed and firmly dated archival information on the early period of Fantini's career. Particularly striking is the evidence of the esteem in which he was held during his heyday in the 1630s; more poignant is the indication of the reverses he suffered later in life as Lady Fortune took her toll. However, on two matters of substance – the failure to follow up a lacuna in the Tuscan court payment records, and a wayward discussion of Mersenne's writings on Fantini's trumpet playing—the conclusions reached must be called into question.

In "partially disproving" the hypothesis that Fantini may have traveled to Germany during the period 1636-1639 (pp. 165-6), Conforzi fails to take full account of a window of opportunity that his own researches have uncovered: the period from 21 August to 19 December 1636, when Girolamo Fantini did not receive any payment of salary and when he may then have been absent from the Tuscan court. Certain details included in the *Modo*, when taken together, strongly indicate just such a visit during the period in question. First, in the dedicatory letter to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, dated 20 April 1638, Fantini acknowledges that his trumpet method was "the result of that little leisure conceded to me from time to time over [the last] three years."<sup>1</sup> The lacuna noted in the court records may mark one such extended period of "leisure."

Second, the portrait of Fantini which is found in the *Modo* includes a legend indicating that it was executed when he was 36 years old.<sup>2</sup> If Conforzi's research is correct, Girolamo Fantini must have been born only shortly before the date of his baptism on 11 February 1600 (p. 161). Assuming that the legend is factual, the likeness must have been prepared not much before 11 February 1636 and not after 11 February 1637. In the woodcut, Fantini is depicted wearing a medallion that bears the inscription "FERDINANDVS SECVNDVS. INPERATOR" ("FERDINAND THE SECOND, EMPEROR").

The grand-duchy of Tuscany was among the Italian relics of the Holy Roman Empire, whose sole emperor from 1619 until 1637 was the Hapsburg Emperor Ferdinand II. Grand-duke Ferdinand of Tuscany was a firm ally of the Holy Roman Emperor during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and helped finance the imperial cause. As a result, he would not have dared to presume to proclaim himself "INPERATOR." Therefore, if Conforzi has identi-

fied the correct Fantini, the medallion must have been presented to Fantini by, or on behalf of, the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II on some occasion before 11 February 1637. Even if Girolamo Fantini the trumpeter is not the Girolamo Fantini who was baptized on 11 February 1600, the medallion must have been presented before 15 February 1637, when the emperor passed away. Giovanni Pirazzoli's mention of an occasion on which "Emperor Ferdinand II had one of his trumpeters made captain of the cavalry with extraordinary emoluments and payment, for his virtue and valor"<sup>3</sup> may be reinstated as a possible report on the appearance of Fantini in German-speaking lands, rather than rejected as an error, as Conforzi suggests (p. 168).

Third, both the form and the nature of a particular sequence of music found in the *Modo* also attest to a ceremony attended by Fantini and presided over by the Holy Roman Emperor himself. The multi-movement *Entrate Imperiali* are found on pp. 17-21 of the *Modo*. They mark Fantini's sole contribution to the Italian-style trumpet ensemble sonata, a late Renaissance form that was fast giving way to the newer *Aufzug*, to dance movements and other more abstract forms. Fantini does not actually use the term "sonata" here (it is employed to describe two pieces for solo trumpet, the eight trumpet duets, ten abstract pieces for trumpet and harpsichord, and the eight multisectional movements for trumpet and organ), but the *Entrate Imperiali* are indicated "to be played in ensemble";<sup>4</sup> the omission may well be a simple printer's error. Following Italian-style performance practice, the triadic *quinta* part is given in full.<sup>5</sup> In addition, and departing from the late Renaissance practice, music in the *clarino* register is found after the *quinta* part: this music will be discussed later.

The *quinta* part begins with an intrada. In both its form and its music, it proves to be a variant of the *quinta* part of the intrada found on fol 8r-v of Bendinelli's *Tutta l'arte della trombetta* (1614); another variant of the same music comprises the *quinta* part of the Toccata to Monteverdi's *Orfeo* of 1607. All of this points to an ultimate origin in a single piece of music performed more or less homophonically by a trumpet ensemble. After a pause, a five-measure piece follows, which proves to be a much-truncated toccata. As the toccata is a monophonic form, unison trumpets must be employed here.

After yet another pause, a more substantial piece follows. It is in two parts, the first in simple time and the second in compound time. The simple-time section is a sonata. Its form is closely related to that of the late Renaissance trumpet ensemble sonata: it includes a one-measure theme, a regular phrase structure, and also the "half-close" and "full-close" phrase endings characteristic of the form. However, contrasting with the progressively applied and tightly controlled rhythmic diminution applied to the late-Renaissance sonata themes, the present theme is treated in a more perfunctory manner and lacks the forward drive of its precursor. The same decay is also noted in the other roughly contemporary examples of the Italian-style trumpet ensemble sonata: the fragment included in the Sanctus of Christoph Straus' *Missa Veni sponsa Christi* of 1631,<sup>6</sup> and the complete sonata composed by Johann Arnold in 1652.<sup>7</sup> The similarities, moreover, confirm that Fantini's work is to be performed by a five-part trumpet ensemble of *clarino*, *quinta*, *alto e basso*, *volgano* and *grosso*, together with timpani. The compound time section is entitled *Rotta*. It follows the sonata without any break whatsoever in accordance with standard performance practice. Again, in both its

form and its music, it proves to be a variant of the complete *rottas* and *rotta* fragments that are found immediately at the ends of the sonatas in Bendinelli's method and also in the Danish trumpet books of Heinrich Lübeck (d.1619) and Magnus Thomsen (d.1612). Again, this points to an origin in a single piece of music. During the *rotta*, the player of the clarino part—and sometimes also the *quinta* player—rest, while the others perform homophonically.

There are two anomalies in the *quinta* music for the sonata: the first two-measure phrase is notated in  $\phi$  with the half note as the beat, while the remainder is in  $\ominus$  with the quarter note as the beat; and the sign  $:::$  is found at various points and is, unusually, often placed next to the barline. These may be explained by examining the *clarino* music that follows the *quinta* part.

Two pieces are to be found. The first is simply called *l'Imperiale*. It is in  $\ominus$  meter with the quarter note as the beat. Its music is in three sections that are separated by the sign  $:::$ . Because the middle section as printed is half as long as the other two, the sign  $:::$  must indicate that its music is to be repeated to achieve balance with them. A direction at the end of the music indicates that the *intrada* is to be played again to end this [Prima] *Imperiale*.

The second piece is termed *Seconda Imperiale*. It is notated as if in  $\ominus$  but, as the half-note is the beat, it is actually in  $\phi$ .<sup>8</sup> The music consists of regular eight-beat phrases, all but one of them paired. Once more, a note indicates that it too is followed by the *intrada* to finish. In the Italian-style trumpet ensemble sonatas, a second performance of the *intrada* normally follows the sonata and *rotta* to end the music. As the *clarino* is normally silent during the *rotta*, each *clarino* piece must belong to a sonata and must then fit over some *quinta* part.

The *clarino* music for the *Seconda Imperiale* fits exactly above the *quinta* music of the sonata when the first phrase of the latter part remains as printed and the note values of the rest are doubled, and when the eight-beat phrase found between the two signs  $:::$  at the end of the sonata is played twice.<sup>9</sup> The other signs  $:::$  are ignored in this instance.

The *clarino* part for the [Prima] *Imperiale* may be placed over the *quinta* music when the note values of the first phrase of the latter are halved and the entire sonata is read in  $\ominus$ . In this instance, the sign  $:::$  is used as an orientation sign that instructs the other players to wait longer than usual at the phrase endings. Unlike the other piece, the *clarino* part of the [Prima] *Imperiale* contains asymmetrical phrases, due to the addition of a little rising melisma at the ends of its odd-numbered phrases and also to the presence of longer-than-usual notes at the end of each phrase.

The two *Entrate Imperiale* are, in many ways, unique trumpet ensemble sonatas. Outwardly, the *quinta* part, and thus the other lower parts, more or less conform to the normal pattern of *intrada*-*toccat*a (a minor innovation of Fantini's)—*intrada*. However, the actual part is no longer of prime importance in the sonata with its *rotta*-ensemble texture, for the music of its single sonata merely functions as a vehicle for the presentation of two different clarino pieces. Fantini has actually developed a type of trumpet ensemble monody: a single clarino line is supported by a chordal accompaniment that is, of necessity, rhythmically rather than harmonically active. Moreover, the two clarino pieces are techni-

cally demanding movements, both designed and clearly intended to display the virtuosity of the clarinist.

What is preserved here is the music that may have accompanied the occasion during which Fantini was presented with the medallion, whose procedure may have been as follows: the first *Entrata Imperiale* (intrada-toccatà-sonata complete with the *clarino* music of the [Prima] *Imperiale-rotta-intrada*) was sounded at the ceremonial entrance of the emperor; Fantini, who was playing the clarino part throughout the occasion, was then presented with the medallion “for his virtue and valor”; as the emperor withdrew, the second *Entrata Imperiale* (intrada-toccatà-sonata complete with the *clarino* music of the *Seconda Imperiale-rotta-intrada*) was played.<sup>10</sup> The totality of the evidence—circumstantial, documentary, iconographical, and musical—strongly indicates that Fantini did make a journey northwards from Florence, most probably during the period of his apparent absence between 21 August and 21 December 1636. The means, the motive, and the opportunity are all present.

Conforzi errs in his interpretation of the famous passage from the *Harmonicorum Libri* of 1635 in which Mersenne reported on Fantini’s performance of non-harmonic pitches on the natural trumpet, which apparently includes a “controversial first clause” (p. 171, n. 20). However, the only controversy here is a dispute of widespread modern manufacture, for Mersenne is quite explicit and also writes with clarity at this point. Moreover—and this is all too rarely recognized—Mersenne rephrases much of the same material in the *Harmonie Universelle* of 1636, which permits cross-checking of text of the *Harmonicorum Libri*.

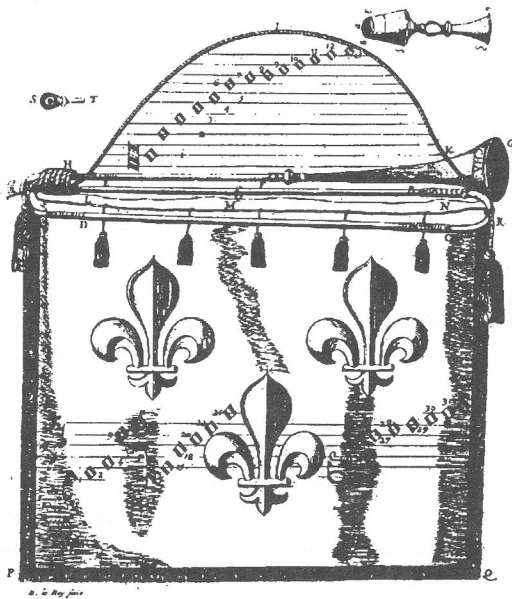


Figure 1

Mersenne: *Harmonie Universelle* (1636), *livre cinquième*, p. 267.

The passage in question comes at the end of a long discourse on the range of the natural trumpet that includes a woodcut of the instrument complete with mouthpiece, mute, banner, and cord. (See Figure 1.)<sup>11</sup> In the upper portion of the illustration, between the trumpet and its cord, is a twelve-line staff showing the range of a trumpet in C. It is described as “the common range of the trumpet” because it includes only those natural harmonics that are employed militarily and musically.<sup>12</sup> Mersenne informs us that “this system comprises three octaves, the interval of a twenty-second”<sup>13</sup> and adds that the numbers placed above the notes, from 1—the lowest note, c—to 13—the highest note, c'''—indicate only their ascending numerical order. (See Example 1a.)

A second range-table is found placed on the banner in the lower portion of the woodcut. Here the trumpet range is set in F and it “contains 17 notes and thus surpasses the upper one with 4 lower notes.”<sup>14</sup> This time the notes are numbered according to

the harmonic interval which they make from any higher note compared to the lower, first note: for example, 9 indicates that the fourth note produces a major ninth [with the first]; 11, the fifth note, an eleventh, and 15, the sixth note, sounds a double octave with the first; and similarly the rest, until the seventeenth note, the highest, on which 32 is superscribed, produces a thirty-second, that is, a perfect fourth more than four octaves.<sup>15</sup> (See Example 1b.)

a) according to the first mode, C

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

b) according to the seventh mode, F

1 2 4 9 11 15 18 20 22 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32

**Example 1**  
Mersenne's trumpet range-table

Mersenne intimately binds the two range-tables:

For the first note [in the upper range,] c, marked by 1, represents the first, or the deepest and most profound tone of all those which are used militarily and

musically: the same note is also indicated by the fifth note in the lower [range, f], which is superscribed with 11, for the same trumpet range is included here under the clef with the b flat, that is, in F, showing that its tunes may be given in the first mode—which begins on C—or in the seventh [mode]—which begins on F.<sup>16</sup>

The two range-tables correspond exactly in the intervals between the notes that are higher than their respective linked notes, for “it is only in the four lower notes that it [i.e., the lower range set in F] differs from the upper [range set in C]; on this we insist.”<sup>17</sup>

Mersenne describes the four additional pitches most conveniently in the *Harmonie Universelle*, using as his starting point the second harmonic, f, which is numbered 11 in the lower range set in F:

I have met only one who descends a Major Third below the second harmonic, [that is who can sound the pitch d,] rather than descend by a complete octave [to the first harmonic, F], which I will discuss when dealing with the range of the trumpet; in which [range,] moreover, two notes are found below the first [harmonic, F], for there are some who descend under this [harmonic], firstly by a Minor Third [to D] and then by one Tone [to C]. But, apart from the fact that this is not common and that these notes are made with great difficulty, they are worthless and need not be given any consideration.<sup>18</sup>

When the “controversial” passage quoted by Conforzi is taken in its true context, the meaning is crystal-clear. Mersenne is referring to the lower range in F and has just noted that its third note, F, is the first harmonic,

... which may be produced by all trumpeters:<sup>19</sup> but since one may descend lower than the third note[, F,] by the interval of a Minor Third [to D] (although it is difficult to avoid striking the third note, which the ordinary trumpeter is unable to by-pass), I suspect that the most erudite trumpeters may moderate the breath in this way, that they may make single tones in rising to the third [note, F], or even to the fifth note [i.e., f], that is, they may ascend by step.<sup>20</sup>

This discussion then leads Mersenne to report on Fantini’s performance of non-harmonic passing notes and auxiliary notes in the triadic register and of notes lipped downwards by one semitone in the diatonic register; a similar passage in the *Harmonie Universelle* leads him to discuss the same without actually referring to Fantini. However, Mersenne is not talking about feigned pitches in the higher registers in the so-called “controversial clause”: he is discussing the “privileged tones” that are clustered around the first two harmonics of the natural trumpet range.

Perhaps Girolamo Fantini really was a “monarch of the trumpet.” However, given the

evidence of the recently discovered early-17th-century trumpet parts that originated elsewhere, it is quite certain that there were also many other “monarchs” in other lands, among them the Viennese trumpeter who performed the earliest-recorded trumpet cadenza in Christoph Straus’ *Missa “Veni sponsa Christi”* before 1631, and Schütz’ trumpeter at Dresden, who played in *Buccinate in neomenia tuba/jubilare Deo in chordis et organo* (SWV 275-6) around 1629, for example. Moreover, what about Mersenne’s colleague, the anonymous French trumpeter who seems to have surpassed them all in his exploration of the lowest part of the natural trumpet’s range?

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## NOTES

1. *Modo per Imparare a sonare DI TROMBA* (Frankfurt?, 1638/ facs. Nashville, 1972), (= *Modo*), p. [5]: “... che quel poco d’ozio, che da tre anni in quà mi è stato alle volte concesso.” The English translation is by E.H. Tarr in *Method for learning to play THE TRUMPET* (Nashville, 1975), p. 3, apart from the editorial addition, which is my own.
2. *Modo*, p. [3]: “GIROLAMO FANTINI DA SPOLETI D ANNI XXXVI.”
3. In *I FIATI GLORIOSI Encornj dati dalla Fama ALLA TROMBA* (Bologna, 1656), p. 22: “Dall’ Imperatore Ferdinando Secondo fù fatto Capitano di Caualleria vn suo Trombetta co emolumenti, e paghe straordinarie, per la sua virtù, e valore.”
4. *Modo*, p. 17: “... per sonare in concerto...”
5. Information about this trumpet ensemble performance style, and detailed analyses of the musical forms of the different pieces included in it, will be found in my *The Trumpet and Its Role in Music of the Renaissance and early Baroque* (PhD diss., The Queen’s University of Belfast, 1983, 3 vols.), (= *The Trumpet and its Role*), esp. 1: 79-87, 99-105, 250-308.
6. Printed in Vienna: see the edition in *The Trumpet and its Role*, 3: 293-5, mm. 4-9 and 14-19.
7. Printed in Dresden. An excerpt is included in *The Trumpet and its Role*, 1: 104.
8. Similar notation problems are found in some other pieces in the *Modo*.
9. On page 19, line 1. A few minor printer’s errors in the *quinta* part must also be corrected.
10. This was suggested in *The Trumpet and its Role*, 1: 205; the form and reconstruction method are discussed there in 1: 103-4, 250-2, 305-8; an edition is presented in 2: 317-324. My reconstruction

of the two *Entrate Imperiale* is found on two recordings, both produced in 1989: *Festal Mass at the Imperial Court of Vienna 1648* (Pickwick, PCD 974) with the Yorkshire Bach Choir and others under Peter Seymour, which also includes the Straus *Missa "Veni sponsa Christi,"* and Monteverdi: *Mass of Thanksgiving, Venice 1631* (EMI CDS 7 49876 2) with the Taverner Consort, Choir, and Players under Andrew Parrott, in which drums, rather than timpani, are employed.

11. In *Harmonicorum Libri* (Paris, 1635), (= HL), p. 108, and in *Harmonie Universelle* (Paris, 1636), (= HU), *Liure Cinquième des Instrumens à vent*, p. 267."

12. HL, p. 109: "...vulgarem Tubae extensionem complecti..."

13. Ibid.: "...Hoc autem systema tres octauas, hoc est Vigesimamsecundam continet..."

14. Ibid. "...Systema vero inferius 17 notis constat, atque adeo superius 4 notis gramioribus superat..."

15. Ibid. "... intervalla Harmonica, quae fiunt a qualibet acutiore note cum graviore primo collata: exempli gratia, 9 ostendit 4 notam efficere Nonam maiorem; 11, quintam notam Vndecimam, & 15, sextum notam cum prima sonara Disdiapason, & ita de reliquis, donec nota decimaseptima, siue vltima, cui 32 superscribitur, Trigesimamsecundam, hoc est Diatessaron super quatuor Octauis efficiat."

16. HU, p. 268: "Or la premiere note VI marquée par 1 signifie le premier ton, ou le plus creux & le plus profond de tous ceux qui seruent à la guerre, ou aux chansons: le quel est aussi signifié par la cinquième note d'en bas, qui a sur soy 11, de sorte que l'on a icy la mesme estenduë de la Trompette sous la clef de b mol, ou de F vt, pour monstrer que ses chants peuuent estre rapportez au premier Mode qui commence on C vt, ou ao septiesme qui commence en F vt."

17. HL, p. 109: "...Sed cum in quatuor grauioribus notis solummodo differat a superiore, his insistamus..."

18. HU, p. 256: "...i'aye rencontré qu'on qui descend d'une Tierce maieure plus bas que le second son, au lieu de descendre d'une Octave entiere, comme je diray dans l'estenduë de la Trompette, dans laquelle on void encore deux tons sous le premier, soulds lequel il y en a qui descendent premierement d'une Tierce mineure, & puis d'un ton; mais outre que cela n'est pas ordinaire, & que ces tons se font avec une grande difficulté, ils ne valen rien, c'est pourquoy il n'en fault faire nul estat."

19. HL, p. 109: "...enimvero tertai fieri potest ab omnibus Tubicinibus..."

20. Ibid: "Sed cum descensus sit vltior, & a 3 nota ad 2 fiat per semiditonom, licet difficulter, priusquam attingatur tertia nota, quam vulgus Tubicinum praetergredi nequit, suspicor eruditissimos Tubicines spiritum ita moderari posse, vt singulos tonos a tertia, vel a quinta nota versus acutum efficiant, hoc est per gradus ascendant." Ibid: "... Sed cum descensus sit vltior, & a 3 nota ad 2 fiat per semiditonom, licet difficulter, priusquam attingatur tertia nota, quam vulgus Tubicinum praetergredi nequit, suspicor eruditissimos Tubicines spiritum ita moderari posse, vt singulos tonos a tertia, vel a quinta nota versus acutum efficiant, hoc est per gradus ascendant."