

THE USE OF HARP IN EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ITALY

by

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## INTRODUCTION

For modern harpists, and indeed for the majority of the population, the harp is usually conceived as a large instrument with a triangular frame that houses a complex mechanism where the forty-seven strings are manipulated by seven pedals. The invention of the double-action pedal harp in 1810 by Sebastian Érard is often viewed as the pinnacle of the instrument's development that inspired the bulk of its repertory, giving rise to its popularity among mainstream Western art music and diversifying its modern-day use. However, many do not realize that the harp, in one form or another, has been an equally important and popular instrument throughout history, greatly appreciated by musicians, singers and poets, as well as painters who often depicted it as representative of things celestial and divine.

One of the most remarkable chapters in the history of the harp occurred in early seventeenth-century Italy. Its importance is well documented in a variety of sources, which give evidence to its widespread popularity, versatility, and how it was used in various contexts and venues. The earliest extant sources of printed music for the harp remarked that musical compositions were often intended to be performed interchangeably by keyboard instruments, lute, or harp, as these were self-sufficient instruments requiring no accompaniment.<sup>1</sup> Treatises that deal with *basso continuo*, such as those by Agostino Agazzari (1578 – 1640), often mention that the harp is one of the core instruments in

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<sup>1</sup> F.W. Schulenberg, *Music of the Baroque* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 217.

continuo groups.<sup>2</sup> In addition, there also exist a number of compositions written explicitly for the harp by composers such as Giovanni Maria Trabaci (1575 – 1647) and Ascanio Mayone (1565 – 1627) that display a high degree of virtuosity.

Despite the fact that the Italian Baroque period – considered one of the most influential periods in music history – held the harp in such high regard as attested to by the prolific number of musical settings for the instrument, it is surprising that so little has been written specifically about how the instrument was used or its performance practice, and that so few harpists are aware about its popularity at that time. This study attempts to survey different aspects of the harp in early-seventeenth century Italy, from the origins of the *arpa doppia* to how the musical and social context shaped the use of the instrument. This research compares primary sources that include treatises, musical compositions, and prefaces to major works to exemplify the use of harp in Italy in early seventeenth century.

Chapter One presents a brief history of the European harp, focusing on the development of the *arpa doppia* as the instrument of choice in seventeenth-century Italy. Chapter Two explores the musical context of early Italian baroque and how these settings gave rise to the popularity of the harp. Chapter Three examines the religious and mythological associations of the harp as well as its symbolic connotations that influence the perception of the instrument and its music. Chapter Four discusses the class and gender restrictions that determine the place of the harp in society. Chapters Five and Six survey the use of harp in seventeenth-century Italy – as a continuo instrument and as a solo instrument, respectively.

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<sup>2</sup> Agostino Agazzari, *Del Sonare Sopra 'l Basso con Tutti Li Stromenti e Dell' Uso Loro Nel Conserto* (Siena: Domenico Falconi, 1607), 9.

The baroque harp in Italy was such an important instrument in the history of music, yet much of the art remains unappreciated due to a lack of awareness of its existence and its impact on the musical and cultural scene of its time. It is my hope that this research will provide a greater understanding of the instrument, its usage in both ensemble and solo settings in early seventeenth-century Italy, and the extent of its presence and influence in early Baroque music. Furthermore, I hope that this study will cultivate broader interest and insight into a neglected realm by introducing the rich and diverse repertory for harp that exists during this time period.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE *ARPA DOPPIA*

### **Before the *Arpa doppia*: A brief history**

The harp is one of the most ancient and diverse of all instruments, appearing in various forms across the globe in Africa, Asia and Europe dating back as early as 3500 BC. Wall paintings in ancient Egyptian tombs often depict an instrument shaped like a bow, with a small number of strings that were possibly made from hair or plant fiber.<sup>3</sup> In ancient societies, harps were mostly of the ‘open’ type without a forepillar and were either arched or angular. They appear in various shapes and sizes, and a number of performing positions and playing techniques were used to suit each different type of harp. The strings were usually plucked by the fingers when the instrument was held vertically or struck with a long plectrum when held horizontally. Both methods of playing are evident on ancient representations dating from 2000 BC. While some of these harps had tuning pegs, tuning was mostly accomplished with rotating collars or tuning nooses encircling the neck of the instrument.

Arched harps, where the extended neck forms a curve with the body shaped like a bow, were the most ancient form of the instrument dating from 3000 BC in the Middle East and Egypt (Fig. 1.1). Angular harps first appeared around 2000 BC in Mesopotamia and were built from a hollow sound box joined to a straight string-arm at an angle (Fig. 1.2). The strings, which could be tuned by rotating the knots that held them, were attached to the sound box at one end and tied to the string-arm at the other. These harps

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<sup>3</sup> “History of the Harp,” International Harp Museum, accessed January 11, 2016. <http://www.internationalharpmuseum.org/visit/history.html>

come in different sizes and surviving ancient instruments demonstrate a considerable variety in the number of strings used. Early arched harps usually hold fewer than ten, while angular harps average twenty-one.



**Figure 1.1. Vertical angular harp: clay plaque from Tell Asmar, 1900–1500 BC, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo by Maurice Chuzeville<sup>4</sup>**



**Figure 1.2. Horizontal arched harp (sammû): terracotta relief from Tell Asmar, 1900–1500 BC, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photo by Maurice Chuzeville<sup>5</sup>**

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<sup>4</sup> Bo Lawergren, “Ancient harps,” *Oxford Music Online*, accessed April 10, 2016. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Frame harps, or harps that included a straight forepillar or column to form a triangular shape, briefly appeared in Greece circa 450 – 350 BC, but subsequently disappeared until around 800 AD, when it emerged in medieval western Europe. This harp is generally considered the most direct predecessor to the modern European harp. The curved forepillar was added to provide support for additional strings, which now incorporated stiffer materials such as copper and brass. Strings could also be made from animal-derived materials (gut, sinew, leather, horsehair) or from more exotic materials, like silk.<sup>6</sup> These changes enabled the instrument to produce greater volume and a more resonant tone. Medieval harps generally had a range no wider, and often much narrower, than the human voice. They were generally quite small and portable, suitable for the traveling musicians (Fig. 1.3). They feature a resonator carved out of a single piece of wood, which became the standard construction practice in Europe up to the eighteenth century.

The first harps to feature a hollowed sound box that amplified the sound of the instrument date back to fourteenth century Ireland, known today as the Celtic harp. These harps also included a curved forepillar and a stronger neck that held thirty to thirty-six brass strings which were alternately plucked with long fingernails and stopped with the finger pads. Harps in continental Europe, which were referred to as the Gothic or Renaissance harps, featured a thin and relatively straight forepillar, with a slender neck that curved upward to meet the end of the column. They typically contained twenty-four or more diatonically strung gut strings, which were fixed to the soundboard with brays

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<sup>6</sup> Joan Rimmer, Robert Evans, and William Taylor, “Harp: Europe and the Americas, 1. The Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance,” *Oxford Music Online*, accessed November 11, 2015. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

(wooden pegs). By the end of the seventeenth century, these harps typically had staved sound boxes and straight forepillars with a frame that vaguely resembles the modern pedal harp.



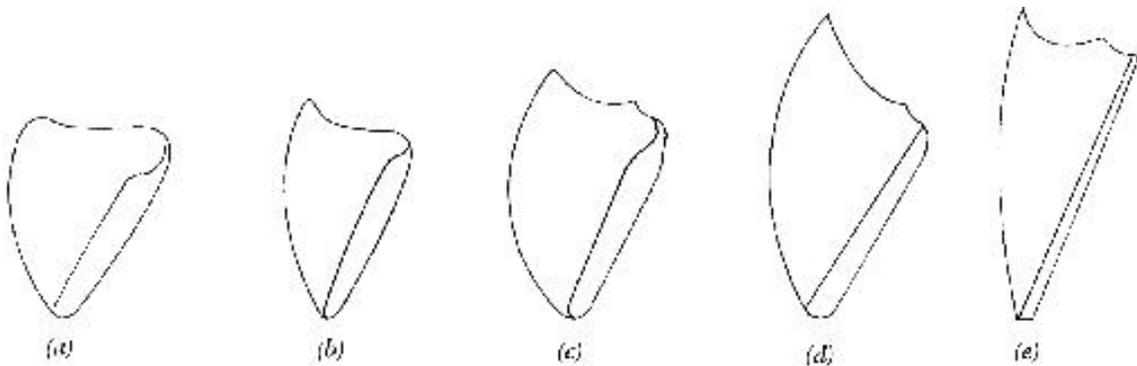
**Figure 1.3. Musician (center) playing a frame harp in the court of René II, duke of Lorraine, detail of a miniature painting from a 15<sup>th</sup>-century psalter, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.<sup>7</sup>**

During the early fifteenth century, considerable experimentation in harp design took place that resulted in several different forms of the instrument. While these included some common features, they were also distinctly different in many ways. The development of the harp during this period mirrored that of the keyboard instruments to incorporate the downward extension of bass register and to increase the range of the

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<sup>7</sup> “Frame Harp,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, accessed November 10, 2015. <http://www.britannica.com/art/frame-harp>.

instrument and the string capacity.<sup>8</sup> In order to achieve this, the angles between the neck and the forepillar needed to be adjusted to accommodate for the longer string length in the bass. In one form, the neck and forepillar were swept upwards to form a high point, resulting in what is known as the ‘high-headed’ harp (Fig. 1.4.d). The other most common design lowered the bass end of the resonator in relation to the neck, resulting in a straighter forepillar. Each string was fixed into the resonator with a right-angled wooden pin known as a bray, against which the string was plucked to produce a tone with a buzzing quality. These harps were gut-strung. While some players continued to play with the older nail technique, others used their fingertips to produce a softer and mellower tone



**Figure 1.4. Schematic profiles of European harps from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.**

**(By Joan Rimmer)<sup>9</sup>**

- a. 11<sup>th</sup> century
- b. 13<sup>th</sup> century
- c. 14<sup>th</sup> century
- d. 15<sup>th</sup> century ‘high-headed’
- e. 15<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>8</sup> Rimmer, Evans, and Taylor.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## ***The Arpa doppia***

The increase in chromaticism in music in the sixteenth century posed a major challenge for harp players due to the diatonic nature of the instrument. Harpists and harp builders have continually experimented with chromatic tunings throughout history. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, a variety of diatonically and chromatically tuned single-strung harps coexisted in many places. Multiple techniques to maneuver chromatic notes are documented, including sharpening the required string by stopping it close to the neck of the instrument with the thumb, or even retuning the instrument.<sup>10</sup> However, these techniques were inconvenient to execute and only feasible to a certain extent, since they often inhibited the flow of music. In order to overcome these difficulties, harp makers added additional rows of strings, resulting the development of multi-rank harps to make chromatic notes as available as they are on the keyboard. Such experimentations began as early as the fourteenth century and reached the peak of popularity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

Multi-rank harps came in various different shapes and sizes depending on geographical region. One distinctive example was the cross-strung harp used in Spain and Portugal, where two ranks of string cross each other to form an 'X'. On the other hand, a type of harp emerged in Italy, known as *the arpa doppia* that featured multiple parallel string ranks. These harps had either two or three rows of strings and varied in size and range. Although theorist Bartelomeo Governardi (1660 – 1668) claimed that the instrument was invented in Rome in 1581, when an experimental model was constructed

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<sup>10</sup> Christa Bordas, "The Double Harp in Spain from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries," *Early Music* 15 No.2, Plucked String Issue (May, 1987): 148.

by the famed violinist Giovan Battista Giacomelli for the court of Ferrara, it is highly probable that the chromatic harp was already in common use in Naples before then.<sup>11</sup> Vincenzo Giustiniani (1564 – 1637) reported in his *Discorso sopra la musica* (1620) that “it might almost be said that the double harp has been invented in Modern Naples; in Rome, it was introduced by a certain Gio. Battista del Violino.”<sup>12</sup> In *Harmonie Universelle* (1636), Marin Mersenne (1588 – 1648) agreed that the harp was indeed invented in Rome, but provided a later date of around 1600.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, despite the ambiguity of the instrument’s origin, Naples was considered the leading center of harp production.<sup>14</sup>

The term *arpa doppia* tends to cause much confusion, as it literally translates to ‘double harp’. Joan Rimmer explained that because of this, the term is often misunderstood as referring to harps with only two rows of strings.<sup>15</sup> However, the word *doppia* implies double in size, which in a sense is similar to the term as used for the double bass or a double bassoon. Within the family of *arpa doppia*, there exists the *arpa a due ordini*, a harp with two rows of strings also known as a double harp, and the *arpa a tre registri*, a harp with three rows of strings also known as a triple harp.

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<sup>11</sup> Cheryl Ann Fulton, “The Works for Arpa Doppia by Giovanni Maria Trabaci (c.1575 – 1647)” (DM diss., Indiana University, 1996), 4.

<sup>12</sup> “[...] L’arpa Doppia quasi s’è trovata a’ tempi nostril in Napoli, et in Roma ebbe principio da un Gio.Battista del Violino, [...]” Vincenzo Giustiniani, *Discorso sopra la musica*, (1620), reprinted in V. Giustiniani, *Discorsi sulle arti e sui mestieri*, ed. and trans. A. Banti (Florence, 1981), 33. Quoted from Dinko Fabris, “The harp in Naples, 1500 – 1700,” *Historical harps: Theoretical and Practical aspects of historical harps* (Dornach: Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 1991): 46.

<sup>13</sup> Fulton, “The Works for Arpa Doppia by Giovanni Maria Trabaci,” 14.

<sup>14</sup> Fabris, 46.

<sup>15</sup> Joan Rimmer, “Harps in the Baroque Era,” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 90<sup>th</sup> Sess. (1963 – 64), 64.

While it is often widely believed that the double harp preceded the triple harp, many scholars have debated the validity of such a statement. Cheryl Ann Fulton explains that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some double harps were only partially double strung, while some triple harps were strung with only one complete string row and two incomplete rows.<sup>16</sup> In fact, most extant triple harps are double strung in the lower register and in the extreme upper register. Hence, to say that the double harp came before the triple harp could be misleading, considering that smaller harps with both two and three rows of strings preceded the invention of the larger *arpa doppia* that we so often associate with the Italian baroque harps of the early seventeenth century. In addition, there is a lack of detailed knowledge in the transformation from a medium-sized double-strung to a large triple-strung harp that could prove that such a transition did indeed occur.<sup>17</sup>

The great majority of Baroque *arpe doppie* have been lost or destroyed as harps are not instruments that were made to last. The high tension of the strings on the soundboard often results in cracks that could eventually cause the instrument to deform and even explode after a certain period of time. Therefore, we should not assume that the very few surviving instruments are representative, given the variety of harps indicated in treatises and other sources. Three treatises in particular survive that contain detailed information on the structure and tuning of multi-rank harps: Bartolomeo Governadi's *Tratado de la Musica* (Madrid, 1634), Marin Mersenne's *Harmonie universelle* (Paris,

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<sup>16</sup> Fulton, "The Works for Arpa Doppia by Giovanni Maria Trabaci," 14.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Lawrence-King, "Introduction to Italian Baroque Harp," *Text, Rhythm, Action Blog*, September 13, 2014, accessed September 30, 2015, <http://andrewlawrenceking.com/tag/triple-harp>.

1636), and Vincenzo Galilei's *Dialogo della Musica antica e della moderna* (Florence, 1581). In "The Works for Arpa Doppia by Giovanni Maria Trabaci (c. 1575 – 1647)," Cheryl Ann Fulton provides a translation on the relevant paragraphs and her interpretation of them. Galilei's is the only known description of the double harp and includes a diagram that shows 58 strings comprising a compass of  $C-d''$ . The two ranks were divided around  $c'$  in which the chromatic rank changes sides, presuming that  $c'$  is the point where the hands change 'register'. His treatise is also well known for its detailed study of tunings and temperaments.<sup>18</sup> Both Governardi and Mersenne described the triple harp in great detail. In Governardi's description, the triple harp has a range of four complete octaves, the way an organ or a harpsichord usually does, with a total of about 75 strings,<sup>19</sup> whereas Mersenne estimates a total of 78 strings but does not give any specific indications of the exact range of pitch.<sup>20</sup>

From these sources and from studying surviving instruments, Fulton draws several conclusions about the basic characteristics of the large triple harp.<sup>21</sup> Gut strings were secured to the soundboard with pegs or pins, whereas brass wires were attached above each peg to prevent the splitting of the wood. The back of the resonator, as can be seen in the Barberini harp, was ribbed rather than carved out of a single piece of wood. Each string was threaded through a metal tuning-pin at the neck, which were squared on the opposite end to fit the tuning key. The range of the instrument varied from over three

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<sup>18</sup> Fulton, "The Works for Arpa Doppia by Giovanni Maria Trabaci," 25-42.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-62.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-24.

<sup>21</sup> Cheryl Ann Fulton, "Harp: Europe and the Americas, 5. Multi-rank harps in Europe outside Spain," *Oxford Music Online*, accessed March 27, 2016. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

octaves to four octaves and a fifth ( $G'-d''$ ), which is the largest range required in works where *arpa doppia* is specified.

These harps are played on the right shoulder and the strings are plucked with the pads of the fingers. The *arpa doppia* is capable of a wide dynamic range and features a clear yet resonant bass register suitable for basso continuo playing. The outer two rows, one for the right hand and one for the left, are tuned identically to the diatonic scale and are commonly tuned with either B-natural or B-flat. The center row, to be played by placing the fingers between the strings of the outer rows by either hand, is tuned to the intervening chromatic notes, much like the black keys of the modern piano. There are two additional notes in each octave between E-F and B-C. These 'extra notes' are often used for enharmonic purposes, most often E-flat/D-sharp and B-flat/A-sharp, which is typical of seventeenth-century practice. In the sixteenth century, however, these strings were tuned to important notes, such as D and A, for additional resonance.<sup>22</sup> Andrew Lawrence-King suggests the following standard tuning on his own instrument:<sup>23</sup>

Left hand row:

FFF GGG AAA BBBb CC DD EE FF GG AA BB etc. to g'

Middle row:

CC# EEb DD# FF# GG# BBb AA# C# Eb D# F# G# Bb A# c#  
etc. to c''#

Right hand row:

FF GG AA BB C D E F G A B c d e f g a etc. to c'' d'' eb''

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<sup>22</sup> Lawrence-King.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

The development of the *arpa doppia* played a crucial role in securing recognition for the harp. The similar construct of the *arpa doppia* to keyboard instruments meant that much of the keyboard repertory could be applied to the harp. The *arpa doppia* allowed for chromatic possibilities that were once deemed impossible. With the added string rows, harpists were able to access chromatic notes with more ease and facility instead of manually manipulating the string length. The size of the instrument provided volume and depth of sound suitable for both solo and continuo playing. Its ability to play clear counterpoint and defined bass lines was certainly superior to that of its highly resonant modern counterpart. In addition, its lower string tension and closer spacing allows for ease of playing fast ornamentation. The large range of the *arpa doppia* is also comparable of that to the keyboard that allows for dramatic contrast between the deep sound of the low register and the crisp articulation of the top. However, unlike the keyboard, it was also possible to play in different temperaments on the *arpa doppia*. Since there are two strings on some of the chromatic notes, namely A-sharp/B-flat and D-sharp/E-flat, it was possible to tune them accordingly to the temperament as required.

While the large triple harp was the most prevalent form of the instrument in early seventeenth-century Italy, the only ascertainably surviving instrument of such sort is the Barberini harp, preserved in the *Museo degli Strumenti Musicali* in Rome (Fig. 1.5). This famous harp was made by an unknown maker around 1625 for the influential Barberini family, who belonged to the Italian nobility in seventeenth-century Rome and provided invaluable patronage to music. The sheer size of the Barberini harp is indeed impressive. It measures a towering 193 cm in height, and the sound box extends 134 cm long. The forepillar is adorned with astonishing detailed carving and gilding. The harp's thorough

triple stringing makes it completely chromatic. The stringing occurs on the player's left of the neck, as in the modern harp, and the neck is stepped so that the three ranks lie separately. Curiously, the number of tuning pins in the neck does not correspond with the number of pins in the soundboard, so the original configuration of this harp cannot be precisely determined.<sup>24</sup> However, based on the soundboard, the Barberini harp has a total of 94 strings, with 23 in the treble row, 29 in the middle row, and 24 in the bass row.<sup>25</sup>



**Figure 1.5. The Barberini Harp, 1605-1620, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali.<sup>26</sup>**

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<sup>24</sup> Fulton, "Multi-rank harps in Europe outside Spain."

<sup>25</sup> Fulton, "The Works for Arpa Doppia by Giovanni Maria Trabaci," 56.

<sup>26</sup> "Arpa Barberini," Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, accessed March 30, 2016. <http://www.museostrumentimusicali.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/129/arpa-barberini>

## Development of the Welsh Harp

The triple harp appeared in the British Isles in the early seventeenth century from Italy when in 1629, the French harpist Jean le Felle [Flesle], whom Mersenne had mentioned as one who “plays the harp to perfection,”<sup>27</sup> was summoned to the court of Charles I as ‘musician in ordinary for the harp’ in London. Payment records showed that a new harp was brought in for the royal service and harp strings were paid for.<sup>28</sup> However, the popularity of the instrument eventually flourished amongst the Welsh harpers, so much so that the triple harp was generally known as the Welsh harp by the eighteenth century and is now a national symbol in Wales. While the popularity of the instrument declined in continental Europe, it remained prominent in Wales well into the nineteenth century, but was eventually abandoned after the early twentieth century as the pedal harps come into favor.

By the eighteenth century, the typical Welsh triple developed into a large instrument with a high head and a steep harmonic curve, much different in shape than its Italian predecessor. It features long bass wires but, to allow easier access to the high notes, the treble register does not extend over the player’s head.<sup>29</sup> Harpist and composer John Parry (1776 – 1851) provides a description of the instrument in the preface *The Welsh Harper* (London 1839), the second volume of his collection of Welsh airs.<sup>30</sup>

The compass of the Triple Harp, in general, is about five octaves, or thirty-seven strings in the principal row, which is on the side played by the right hand, called the bass row. The middle row, which produces the flats and sharps, consists of thirty-four strings; and the treble, or left hand row,

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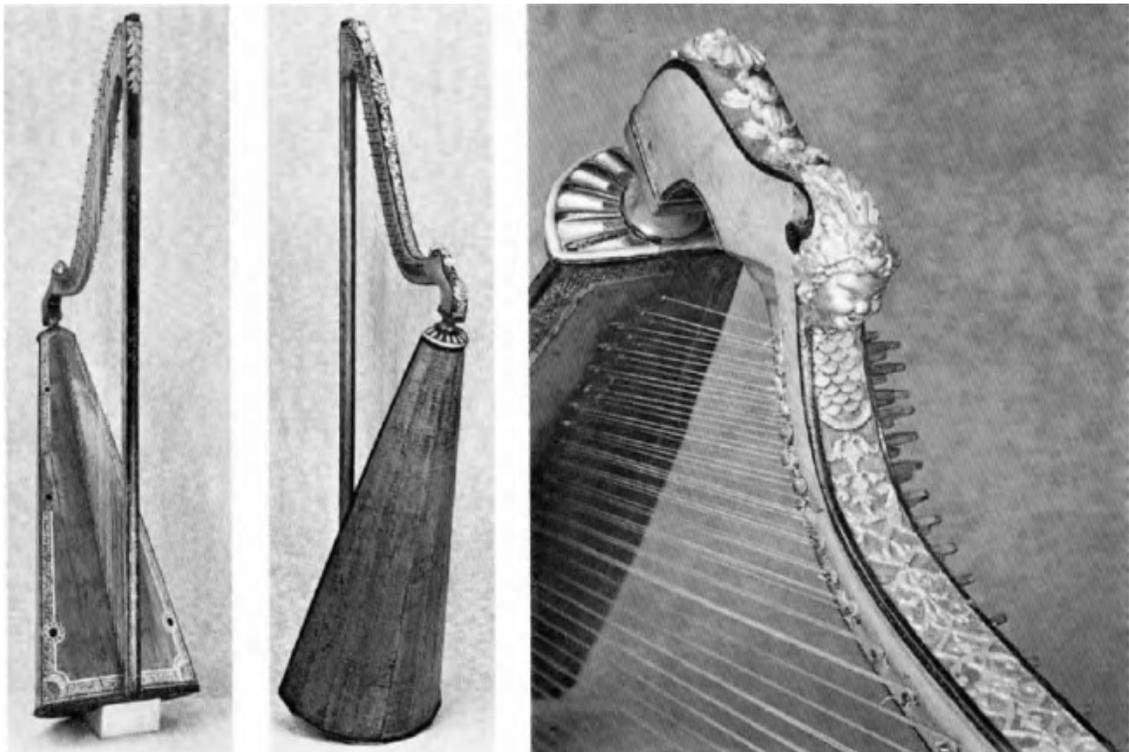
<sup>27</sup> Fulton, “The Works for Arpa Doppia by Giovanni Maria Trabaci,” 46.

<sup>28</sup> Rimmer, “Harps in Baroque Era,” 67.

<sup>29</sup> Lawrence-King.

<sup>30</sup> Fulton, “Multi-rank harps in Europe outside Spain.”

numbers twenty-seven strings. The outside rows are tuned in unison, and always in the diatonic scale, that is, in the regular and natural scale of tones and semitones, as a peal of eight bells is tuned. When it is necessary to change the key, for instance, from C to G, all the Fs in the outside rows are made sharp by raising them half a tone. Again, to change from C to F, every B in the outside rows is made flat, by lowering it a semitone. When an accidental sharp or flat is required, the performer inserts a finger between two of the outer strings, and finds it in the middle row. Many experiments have been made, with a view of obviating the necessity of tuning the instrument every time a change in the key occurred. Brass rings were fixed near the comb, but those rattled and jarred; in short, every attempt failed until the invention of the Pedals. ... Yet my old country Triple Harp, though it has its imperfections, possesses one advantage, and that is the unisons. Who has ever heard some of the old Welsh airs with variations, and not been quite delighted with the effect of the unisons?



**Figure 1.6. Earliest surviving Welsh Triple Harp, 1736.<sup>31</sup>**

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<sup>31</sup> Andrew Lawrence-King, "Triple, or Modern Welsh Harp," *Text, Rhythm, Action Blog*, March 12, 2014, accessed September 30, 2015, <https://andrewlawrenceking.com/2014/03/12/the-triple-or-modern-welsh-harp/>

## CHAPTER TWO: MUSICAL CONTEXT

In *Music in the Baroque Era: From Monteverdi to Bach*, Manfred Bukofzer divides the Baroque epoch into the early, middle, and late periods, which he roughly dates as follows: the first from 1580 to 1630, the second from 1630 to 1680, and the last from 1680 to 1730.<sup>1</sup> Bukofzer notes that these dates indicate the formative periods of new concepts and apply only to Italy, from which Baroque music receives its principal characteristics. The Baroque period was a particularly exciting one in music history, as a great variety of forms, techniques, and idioms were created for the first time, providing a wealth of musical material that has survived in various transformations to the present day. The music of the Baroque era includes many contrasting figures and genres, such as the monody of Jacopo Peri and Giulio Caccini, the madrigals of Claudio Monteverdi, the *tragédie lyrique* of Jean-Baptiste Lully, the instrumental concerti of Antonio Vivaldi, and the great fugues of Johann Sebastian Bach.

For the purposes of this document, I will be focusing on the early period, specifically at the turn of the seventeenth century in Italy. As the Renaissance era shifted into the Baroque, two ideas prevailed: the rise of solo monody in opposition to counterpoint, and an affective approach to words. These consequently led to the development of the recitative and the basso continuo, two devices that remained fundamental right up to the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> In addition, idiomatic possibilities inherent in individual instruments were gradually recognized, leading to the emancipation

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<sup>1</sup> Manfred Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era: From Monteverdi to Bach* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1947), 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

of instrumental music from vocal music and the rise in virtuoso playing. These developments determined the course of Western music history and were largely responsible for the consequent rise of popularity of the *arpa doppia* in Italy.

One of the most important turning points in the history of the harp was its emergence as mainstream musical instruments in Western art music. The increase in chromaticism in music urged instrument makers to develop a new kind of harp capable of adapting to the musical needs of the time. As the *arpa doppia* came to fruition, composers and musicians quickly recognized its unique capabilities and sound. Early Italian operas featured it as a continuo instrument with increasing frequency, and several outstanding solos were composed that added to its otherwise limited repertory from previous eras. Several factors contributed to the rise in popularity of the *arpa doppia*. The transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque and its subsequent musical developments were essential to the development of the harp, its use, and its repertory. The popularity of any instrument depends upon musical and social demands, and the harp is no exception. The suitability of the harp to early Italian Baroque musical style was a major reason for its wide use. In addition, Spanish influence in Naples was essential to the promotion of harp as a mainstream instrument. Bringing all these factors into consideration, harpists began to play vital roles in prominent courts, and harpist-composers expanded the harp's repertory. As a result, the harp scene of early seventeenth-century Italy was a particularly rich and exciting one in the history of the instrument.

## The Importance of Italy

The Baroque period saw the emergence of distinct national styles, with Italian musical style rising to the forefront. In addition to dividing the Baroque into three periods, Bukofzer also noted that these three periods began about ten or twenty years later in other countries than in Italy. Thus, when Germany brought Baroque music to its peak around 1730, Italy had already turned to the *stile galant*.<sup>3</sup> The cities of Florence, Venice, and Rome saw some of the most substantial developments in the history of music. Music was highly important in the cultural life of Italians, where many civil and sacred establishments employed musicians whose responsibilities included performing, teaching, and composing. Music printing was an emerging industry that originated and flourished in Italy, allowing published prints to circulate and preserve musical traditions and trends. Italy also dominated the manufacturing of musical instruments, producing many of the finest and most advanced quilled and stringed instruments that were exported to other European countries. One of the most profound of the Italian musical developments is the birth of opera, a genre that has remained important in subsequent centuries to the present; thus, marking this as one of the most notable milestones in the history of Western art music.

Of particular significance to the *arpa doppia* was the musical and cultural scene in Naples, the largest city in Italy through the sixteenth century and the third largest in all of Europe. Naples was the home of many great artists, writers, and philosophers. Additionally, with its prominent musical institutions, Naples was especially significant within the Italian peninsula and throughout Europe. The *Cappella Reale*, also known as

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<sup>3</sup> Bukofzer, 17.

the Royal Chapel, employed vocalists and instrumentalists to perform at musical events that accompanied the ruling court's social and political ceremonies. Naples was a seat of the Spanish viceroy and, as a result, it was heavily under the influence of Spanish culture. However, the Italians were still heavily involved in terms of musical development, propelling it to compete with Venice as one of the principal musical centers of Italy and making it one of the great cultural centers of Europe. The court of the viceroy and the chapel of the *Chiesa della Santissima Annunziata* set the scene for notable musicians such as Giovanni de Macque (c.1548 – 1614), Giovanni Maria Trabaci (1575 – 1647) and Ascanio Mayone (1565 – 1627), who formed the core of what was known as the Neapolitan School. Naples witnessed an expansion in virtuosic harpsichord writing, from the polyphonic ideals of Trabaci's *ricercari* and *canzone* to the flamboyant *toccatas* of Mayone. These were subsequently alluded to the *arpa doppia*.

### **The Influence of Spain**

Naples was strongly tied to Spain for political reasons when the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis in April 1559 confirmed Spain's direct control of Naples, amongst other cities. This political influence resulted in cultural influence as well. The harp was an especially popular instrument in Spain and the Iberian Peninsula as a whole. One of the earliest extant sources of instruction and music specifically for the harp is Alonso Mudarra's 1546 treatise *Tres libros de música en cifras para vihuela*. Other Spanish composers who wrote for the harp included Luis Venegas de Henestrosa's *Libro de Cifra Nueva para tecla, harpa y vihuela* (1557) and Antonio de Cabezón's *Obras de música para tecla, arpa y vihuela* (1578). In addition, many Spanish theorists and scholars wrote extensively

about the instrument, indicating that the harp was indeed a widely popular instrument in Spain and had been so for a long time.<sup>4</sup>

Spanish harpists were most often found in cathedrals, although they were also in employment in court chapels, houses of nobility, monasteries, theatres, and churches. The most famous harpist active in Spain was arguably the highly celebrated Ludovico, who was harpist to King Fernando II (“El Católico,” 1452 – 1615) and whose ravishing virtuosity was well-documented by many authors and scholars. He was known to overcome the diatonic limitations of the harp by pressing the string against the neck of the instrument to shorten the string length and increase the tension, thereby raising the pitch.<sup>5</sup> Such technique undoubtedly requires an accomplished player’s skills.

In his *Declaración de instrumentos musicales* of 1555, Fray Juan Bermudo stated:

As it had been shown, the harp in its original tuning (the white keys of the monochord) is imperfect for the genre, and the music played nowadays belongs to the semi-chromatic genre. Everything that has been said in the two previous chapters is rather a search for adequate music for the harp, than to perfect [i.e., suggest ways of improving] the said harp.<sup>6</sup>

This statement highlights the limitations of the diatonic harp and its inefficiencies in dealing with the increasingly chromatic compositions of the time. Bermudo also wrote about transforming the diatonic harp into a chromatic instrument in order to adapt to contemporary musical language. Such a quest produced several unique features in the

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<sup>4</sup> Hannelore Devaere, “The Baroque Double Harp in the Kingdom of Naples,” in *Aspects of the Historical Harp: Proceedings of the International Historical Harp in Symposium*, ed. Martin van Schaik (Utrecht: Foundation for Historical Performance Practice, 1994), 14.

<sup>5</sup> Juan Bermudo, *Declaracion de instrumentos musicales* (Osuna. 1555/R1957), f.cxiv. Translation from Cristina Bordas, “The Double Harp in Spain from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” *Early Music* 15 no. 2 (May, 1987): 148.

<sup>6</sup> Bordas, 148.

development of the harp in Spain that pinnacled with the Spanish cross-strung harp, or the *arpa de dos órdenes*. Several books and treatises indicated that the chromatic capabilities of such a harp were comparable to those of keyboard instruments. Cristina Bordas summarizes the use of harp in Spain as follows:

The role of the harp as a polyphonic instrument suitable for vocal accompaniment increased gradually throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, reaching its highest point between 1674 and 1700. Before this period, the important position of this instrument had already been established by its use in the musical chapels, and especially by its suitability as a continuo instrument, flourishing in Spain circa 1650. The growing trend in the use of the harp received its greatest boost, however, during the reign of Carlos II (1665-1700), shaped by the characteristic style of the Spanish Baroque, in which *tonos* and *villancicos* predominate. A large number of these pieces accurately reflect the important position achieved by the harp, particularly in its use as an obbligato instrument.<sup>7</sup>

The harp's popularity in Spain eventually spread to Naples around 1550. Consequently, Naples became one of the leading Italian cities of the seventeenth century for harp music, producing many fine harpists and composers who played a significant role in the development of the use of harp. Since Naples was under Spanish domination, Spanish courtiers initially employed only their own musicians. Diego Ortiz (1510 – 1570) was hired as the first *maestro di cappella* under Viceroy Pedro de Toledo in 1555. He was replaced by another Spanish successor, Francisco Martínez de Lorcos, in 1570. However, non-Spaniards began to take over such roles from 1583, beginning with Bartolemeo Le Roy (1530 – 1599) from Burgundy.<sup>8</sup> In 1599, Flemish composer Giovanni de Macque (1548 – 1614) assumed the prominent position. He was succeeded by his student, Giovanni Maria Trabaci. In addition to the courts, churches were also important

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<sup>7</sup> Bordas, 152-153.

<sup>8</sup> Devaere, 13.

for musical activity in Naples, as the city became central to church authorities under Spanish occupation. The *Chiesa dell'Annunziata* was renowned for having employed many prominent musicians, including Giovanni de Macque and Ascanio Mayone.

### **Harpists in Italy**

Spain thus played an important role in its influence on the popularity of the harp in Naples, marking the origins of the Italian harp school. While harpists in Spain were most likely to be employed in churches and double the role as the organist, Neapolitan harpists were most often found in the service of the court and played the cembalo as well.<sup>9</sup> Outside the courts, they were also utilized in churches, private patrons, and public venues. They often played several instruments in addition to the harp, mostly the keyboard and occasionally lute, and many were prolific composers too. While Ludovico dominated the Spanish harp scene in the sixteenth century, Gian Leonardo Mollica (1530 – 1602), more commonly known as Gian Leonardo dell'Arpa, was certainly his eminent equivalent in Naples and was often considered the pioneer of the Neapolitan harp tradition. Even as the popularity of the harp eventually spread to the rest of the country, many of the leading harpists still had Neapolitan origin or were trained in Naples. Those who remained in Naples included Flaminio Caracciola (fl. 1579-90), Scipione Bolino (fl. 1600), Rinaldo Trematerra (d. 1603), Francesco de Auxiliis (c. 1630), Domenico Gallo (fl. 1600), Ascanio Mayone and his son, Giulio Mayone (c.1590 – before 1636).

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<sup>9</sup> Rajka Dobronić-Mazzoni, *The Eternal Harp: A Musical and Cultural Historical Study* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 2002), 58.

After Naples, Rome was the most prominent city for the harp, with many esteemed harpists performing in the city. The most prominent of the Roman harpists was perhaps Orazio Michi (1594 – 1641), also known as Orazio dell’Arpa, who was trained in Naples. His playing was highly praised by several writers, including Pietro della Valle, Andrè Maugars, Vincenzo Giustiniani, and Giovanni Battista Doni. Adriana Basile (1580 – 1640) was another famous harpist and singer who arrived in Rome from Naples with her two musician daughters, Leonora and Caterina, who were both notable musicians, the latter also a harpist. Composer Luigi Rossi (1597 – 1653), who spent many years in Naples, was a familiar name in the Roman musical scene and central to many harpists active in the city. His brother, Giovanni Carlo Rossi (1617 – 1692) was a celebrated player of the *arpa a tre registri*.<sup>10</sup> In 1627, Luigi Rossi married the renowned harpist, Costanza da Ponte (d. 1646), whose brother Paolo (b. 1614) also played the harp professionally. Another notable harpist was Marco Marazzoli (1602 – 1662), also known as Marco dell’arpa, who served under the Barberini patronage and played the splendid Barberini harp.

Outside of Naples and Rome, the most prominent harpists were found in Mantua and Ferrara. Laura Peverara (1563 – 1601) began serving the court of Ferrara before 1580 as both singer and harpist, while Lucrezia Urbana, a harpist of Neapolitan origin who was active in Rome for a time, served the Gonzaga court of Mantua from before 1603 until 1608. In Florence, Giulio Caccini (1550 – 1618), who entered the service of the Medici

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<sup>10</sup> Devaere, 27.

court, was known to accompany himself on the harp and chitarrone while singing.<sup>11</sup>

Giovanni Battista Jacomelli (1571 – 1609), more widely known as a violinist, could also play the harp respectably and was active in Florence from 1586. Surprisingly, there is no substantial record of harpists actively working in Venice, despite its thriving commercial opera scene.

### **The Rise of Opera and *Stile Rappresentativo***

As previously stated, one of the most profound turning points in the history of music was the rise of opera in the Baroque era. While liturgical musical dramas, mystery plays, and pastoral plays such as Adam de la Halle's *Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion* have existed since the early Medieval period, opera as we know today developed from discussions among intellectuals living in Florence in the 1570s. The group, known as the Florentine Camerata and led by Count Giovanni de' Bardi (1534 – 1612), sought to revive the dramatic arts of ancient Greek tragedy and the emotive power of Greek music. The Florentine scholar Girolamo Mei (1519 – 1594) conducted research on ancient Greek treatises and concluded that Greek music consisted of a single melodic line, sung by a soloist or chorus with or without accompaniment. In *Le nuove musiche* (1601), Giulio Caccini expressed his disdain for the contrapuntal style of the time and his admiration for the Greek philosophers and the power of their music:

For these very intelligent gentlemen [the *Camerata*] have always encouraged me and have with the clearest reasons convinced me that I should not praise that kind of music which does not allow the words to be understood: which destroys the content and the line of the verse, now

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<sup>11</sup> “Caccini,” from *Companion to Baroque Music*, ed. Julie Ann Sadie (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 44.

lengthening, now shortening the syllables, to fit them to the counterpoint – an outrage to poetry. They convinced me that I should follow the style so praised by Plato, and other philosophers, who affirmed that music is nothing else but first the word, and second the poetic rhythm, and last the sound, not the reverse order, if you want the music to reach the hearer’s intellect, and to create those wonderful effects which the ancient writers admired. These desired ends could not be reached by the counterpoint in modern music...<sup>12</sup>

The *Camerata* believed that Greek dramas were sung throughout and in such a way that the emotion of the text was conveyed; yet the words were always clearly audible and understood by the audience. In their attempt to imitate such precepts of ancient Greek theater, they experimented with a new method of composing dramatic vocal music with the intent of a more direct communication to the audience. In doing so, they broke from the complex polyphony of the Renaissance, which they believed obscured the text and lacked direct emotive communication. As a result, especially in vocal music, the contrapuntal style so prominent in the Renaissance era subsided as a new style developed, where a solo vocal line was sung in such a way that expressed the intended emotions of the text over chordal accompaniment. This marked the emergence of the *stile rappresentativo*.

The term *stile rappresentativo* appeared in print on the title page of Caccini’s opera *Euridice* (1600), where he specified “*composta in musica in stile rappresentativo*.”<sup>13</sup> Scholar F.W. Sternfeld notes that one could assume the terms *stile monodico* and *stile recitativo* to be synonymous with *stile rappresentativo* and may have

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<sup>12</sup> Giulio Caccini, “Ai Lettori” from *Le Nuove Musiche* (Florence: Giorgio Marescotti, 1602). Translation from Alfred Ashfield Finch, “A Study of Caccini’s *Le Nuove Musiche*” (MM thesis, University of Rochester, 1942), 2.

<sup>13</sup> Giulio Caccini, *Euridice*, (Florence: Giorgio Marescotti, 1609).

been used interchangeably by Italian musicians during that time.<sup>14</sup> In his 1634 letter to Giovanni Battista Doni describing his father's Camerata and early opera in Florence, Pietro de' Bardi wrote that "*il canto in stile rappresentativo*" had been developed by Vincenzo Galilei (1520 – 1591), who wrote extensively on the topic in his treatise *Dialogo della musica antica et della moderna* (1581).<sup>15</sup> Galilei argued that monody, the ancient style of solo singing, could express the emotions of a text better than polyphony. The term *stile rappresentativo* was not restricted only to operas, but could also be applied to other genres, such as solo songs, that displayed dramatic and expressive qualities.

Music in *stile rappresentativo* is essentially recitative-like, in which the words are sung syllabically but in free rhythm and with phrasing following the natural declamation and stresses of the text. However, the most emphasis was placed on an affective approach to words. Emotive words were embellished, often with virtuoso elements, to highlight their meaning. Devices such as frequent pauses, unusual intervals, and other expressive vocal effects were used to intensify emotion. Caccini explains this in *Le Nuove Musiche*:

There came to me a thought of introducing a kind of music by means of which someone could, in a way, tell a story in harmony, using in it (as I have said on other occasions) a kind of lofty *sprezzatura* of song, at times passing through dissonances but maintaining the chords steady in the bass, except when I want to make use of it for ordinary practice, with the middle parts played by the instrument in order to express some affect, they not being good for anything other.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> F.W. Sternfeld, "A Note on *Stile Recitativo*," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 110 (1983-84): 44.

<sup>15</sup> Pietro de' Bardi, "Letter to Giovanni Battista Doni (1634)," in *Source Readings in Music History*, ed. Oliver Strunk (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 524.

<sup>16</sup> Finch, 2.

Caccini then continued to give detailed explanations on how one should perform the various ornaments and other vocal effects in order to effectively communicate the emotive aspect of the text to the listener. Instruments such as the lute, harp, or harpsichord were used for accompaniment to provide a basic harmonic rhythm for the singer to guide their embellishments. These accompaniment instruments also offered possibilities for expressive harmony, such as by using dissonances to convey anguish. In short, the music represented a text in a particularly dramatic or emotional way. Tim Carter summarizes precisely the function of *stile rappresentativo*: “it enacts, rather than tells, a story.”<sup>17</sup> The outcome was perhaps not quite the original Greek dramatic style that the Florentine Camerata was trying to emulate, but it was a crucial element in the evolution of opera.

The earliest composers of musical drama included Jacopo Peri (1561 – 1633), Giulio Caccini, and Emilio de’ Cavalieri (1550 – 1602). *La Dafne* (1598) by Peri is often thought to have been the first full-length opera, written as a continuously sung pastoral. While most of the music is lost, the complete libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini has survived. The first opera to be preserved completely was Peri’s *Euridice*, performed at the celebration for the wedding of Maria de’ Medici and King Henri IV of France in 1600. Other early operas of note were Cavalieri’s *Rappresentatione di Anima, et di Corpo* (1600) and Caccini’s *Euridice* (1602). While many of these early operas contain characteristic features of their *intermedi* predecessors, such as the invisible orchestra and the use of machinery for effects, the function of music differed greatly. While *intermedi*

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<sup>17</sup> Tim Carter, “The Search for Musical Meaning,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Seventeenth Century Music*, ed. Tim Carter and John Butt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 191.

juxtaposed drama and music by presenting motets, madrigals, instrumental music and ballets as self-contained musical forms, operas fused the two elements by means of the continuous recitative with the music subordinate to the text.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the use of a small group of instrumentalists, rather than the vast orchestra for the *intermedi*, established what would later be known as the continuo group.

Claudio Monteverdi (1567 – 1643) was perhaps the most prominent composer of the operatic genre in that time. His first opera *L'Orfeo*, based on libretto by Alessandro Striggio, was produced at Mantua in 1607 and is generally regarded as the first masterpiece of operatic history, so much so that it has often been mistaken as the first opera to be composed. In many ways, the opera, with its magnificence and grandeur, was a more fully developed example of the new genre as compared to its Florentine counterparts.<sup>19</sup> Monteverdi scored for a large orchestra of approximately forty players, utilizing specific instruments or instrumental groups to depict particular scenes and characters. Strings and recorders often illustrated the pastoral scenes with nymphs and shepherds, while the heavy brass conveyed the underworld. In contrast, the harp was associated with the heavenly and the ethereal. Monteverdi also made dramatic use of closed musical forms: the strophic aria, the dance song, the chamber duet, as well as the instrumental interlude, which had been previously discarded by the Camerata.<sup>20</sup> However, in the spirit of *stile rappresentativo*, these forms were made subservient to the drama. Monteverdi wrote numerous operas after *L'Orfeo*. Unfortunately, the music has

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<sup>18</sup> Bukofzer, 55.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

survived for only a few of them. His other notable operas include *L'Arianna* (1607), *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (1639), and *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1643).

### **Basso Continuo**

With the rise of monody, the need for a new system of accompaniment became apparent and the basso continuo, also known as thoroughbass or figured bass, became the main technical device of this new style. Essentially, the function of seventeenth-century continuo is to realize the harmonic and rhythmic implications of the bass line by filling out chords over it. In notation, only the bass line is written, thus serving as compositional shorthand that gives considerable freedom to the performer in terms of interpreting a given bass line in relation to the treble melody. The bass line could be figured with a conventional shorthand notation to indicate the appropriate harmonies that are required, or it could also be un-figured, leaving the harmonic realization to the discretion of the continuo player. In terms of practicality for publication purposes, the reduction of ink usage and printing cost could also be a factor that prompted this shorthand device. The realization of the accompaniment lies in the hands of the players through improvisation within the framework of certain conventions as well as the skill, imagination, and taste of the player. Keyboard instruments (organ, harpsichord) and/or plucked string instruments (chitarrone, theorbo, lute, guitar, harp) were often used to produce the harmonic sonorities, while bowed string bass instruments (bass viol, violoncello) or wind instruments (bassoon) were used to reinforce and sustain the bass line.

In order for musicians to better understand the function and execution of basso continuo, Agostino Agazzari (1578 – 1640) published his manual of instructions in 1607,

titled *Del sonare sopra 'l basso con tutti li stromenti e dell' uso loro nel concerto* (“On playing upon the thoroughbass with all the instruments and their use in an ensemble”).

The treatise is one of the earliest instruction manuals and remains an invaluable resource for performing *basso continuo*, with its practical instructions and guidelines for the use of counterpoint and the improvisation of melodic parts upon the bass line. Agazzari provided several reasons for the necessity of basso continuo:

Firstly, due to the modern style of singing the recitativo and composing; secondly due to comfort; thirdly due to the quantity and variety of works which are needed for the ensemble.<sup>21</sup>

He then distinguished the instruments of foundation (*stromenti da fondamento*), which would play the bass line and realize the chords, from the instruments of ornamentation (*stromenti d'ornamento*) that would “mingle with the voices in various ways...for no other reason but to adorn and beautify.”<sup>22</sup> Bukofzer explains the importance of such distinction:

For the first time there emerged in music history a harmonic polarity between bass and soprano, between harmonic support and a new type of melody dependent on such support. This polarity is the essence of the monodic style... The division of fundamental and ornamental function in the field of instruments directly paralleled the dualism of bass accompaniment and melody.<sup>23</sup>

The development of the basso continuo and the delegation of the accompaniment to the bass gave the melody a new sense of freedom and agility, where the singer was free

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<sup>21</sup> Agostini Agazzari, *Del sonare sopra 'l basso con tutti li stromenti e dell' uso loro nel concerto* (Siena: Domenico Falconi, 1607). Ed. and trans. Bernhard Lang (2003), *Bassus Generalis*, accessed March 15, 2016. <http://www.bassus-generalis.org>.

<sup>22</sup> F.T. Arnold, *The Art of Accompaniment from a thorough-bass as practiced in the XVIIth & XVIIIth centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), 71.

<sup>23</sup> Bukofzer, 11.

to embellish within the framework provided by the bass. Since the duality of the bass line and the melody dominated the compositional structure, the remaining texture remained free from the constrictions of contrapuntal interplay and could be freely filled up by means of improvisation at the discretion of the continuo player.<sup>24</sup> Hence, the role of harmonic function is provided, while the continuo player maintains some leeway for adjusting to the singer's expressivity.

### **Emancipation of Instrumental Music**

You would hardly believe, sir, the high regard which the Italians have for those who excel on instruments, and how much more importance they attach to instrumental music than to vocal, saying that one man can produce by himself more beautiful inventions than four voices together, and that it has charms and liberties that vocal music does not have.

André Maugars, *Response faite à un curieux sur le sentiment de la musique d'Italie* (Rome, 1639)<sup>25</sup>

The conception of musical structure in the Renaissance era was rooted strongly upon polyphonic part-writing that treated both instrumental and vocal parts akin to each other. As such, vocal and instrumental parts were often interchangeable. However, at the beginning of the Baroque period, composers began to recognize the unique characteristics of the instrumental medium that set it apart from the vocal medium. Consequently, they began to distinguish between vocal and instrumental parts in music, even recognizing

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>25</sup> André Maugars, *Response faite à un curieux sur le Sentient de la Musique d'Italie*, Rome, 1939. Translated by Walter H. Bishop in "Response faite à un curieux sur le Sentient de la Musique d'Italie," *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America* 8 (1971): 11.

colors and effects that define individual instruments. The idiomatic capabilities of the instrumental and vocal media were recognized for the first time as composers began to take advantage of what each particular instrument could offer in terms of sonority.

Hence, the stylistic element of idiomatic writing made its first appearances.

Up to this point, instrumental music was mainly functional in that it often served as accompaniment to dancing or singing. Rarely was it listened to or played for its own sake and consequently, it was not valued as highly as vocal music. Much instrumental playing was improvised and skills were passed on orally, hence little of such music survived in notation. However, this new emphasis on idiomatic writing prompted composers to commit to paper what would previously have been virtuosic improvised ornamentation on a vocal line, thus shedding light on the importance of instrumental music that had previously been largely ignored. This consequently led to the emancipation of instrumental music as an independent genre. As composers began to develop and exploit the different capabilities of instruments, the concept of virtuosity rose into prominence, and many performers achieved fame and reputation with their technique and artistry on particular instruments.

The notion that music ought to move or impress the listener, which prompted the invention of monody, was perhaps influential to a certain extent in the rise of virtuosic solo instrumental repertory. Instrumental composers borrowed many elements typical of the new vocal idioms in their writing, including the use of basso continuo, affective writing, featuring of a soloist, and the incorporation of virtuosic embellishments. In addition to the new roles of instrumental music, the Baroque era also saw the development of new instruments, new genres and styles, as well as a growing body of

solo instrumental publication. These factors gave rise to the importance of instrumental music and the quality of instrumental performances and composition increased.

### **Rise in Popularity of the Harp**

There are several important factors that contributed to the rise in popularity of the harp in early seventeenth-century Italy. The development of the *arpa doppia* effectively expanded the usage of the instrument in many ways, as its unique characteristics paired with its versatility rendered it highly desirable. Its newfound chromaticism, as well as its larger range and volume, made it highly useful in various settings. The birth of opera and development of *stile rappresentativo* were crucial in promoting the popularity of the harp, as the instrument performed several functions that were the very essence of the early Italian baroque style, most notably basso continuo. The *arpa doppia* was a versatile instrument, capable of fulfilling roles in the provision of bass, harmony, and melody. The long bass wires provided the instrument with a bass register that not only projected but also sustained slow-moving harmony with its resonance. Its wide register rendered it capable of providing a varied array of texture that offered the resonance of rich solid chords to delicate embellishments in the upper register. Its flexibility in accompanying solo singers was quickly recognized, as it was able to provide varying degrees of rhythmic impulses, ranging from a sharply placed chord to a long, rippling arpeggio capable of sustaining harmony.<sup>26</sup> The harp was irreplaceable in many aspects, as it

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<sup>26</sup> Andrew Lawrence King, "The Harp as Continuo Instrument in Early Italian Opera," in *Historical Harps: Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Historical Harps*, ed. Heidrun Rosenzweig (Dornach: Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 1991), 136.

offered unique colors and effects that no other instrument could. Yet at the same time, it provided most, if not all, the functions that were essential to the practice of basso continuo. It was an instrument that is arguably unique both symbolically and aesthetically, as will be discussed in Chapter Three. Hence, it was highly favored in the accompaniment of Italian operas. In addition, the harp was also featured in collections of songs and other forms by many composers of the time such as Sigismondo d'India (1582 – 1629) and Filippo Albin (1590 – 1626).

In addition to its use as continuo instrument, the harp was also beginning to emerge as a solo instrument, with its solo repertory expanding at an unprecedented rate. This was due largely to the combination of the emancipation of instrumental music and the improvements made on the *arpa doppia* as an instrument. Composers began writing expressly for the harp, and many of the keyboard publications were often interchangeable with harp since both instruments possess similar range and tuning. Consequently, the notion of virtuosity associated with the harp began to rise. Harpists started acquiring fame and recognition for their mastery of the instrument, which further encouraged the exploitation of the instrument's technical and artistic possibilities. This marks the rise of the harp not only as an instrument for accompaniment, but also as a solo instrument capable of displaying brilliance designed to impress.

However, in such an attempt to survey harp music of early seventeenth-century Italy, it is important to note that the reliance on surviving documents for evidence imposes limits on one's findings. While the harp was considered a mainstream instrument, there is little evidence of this as far as publications are concerned. Harp playing was very much an improvised art and instructions were passed on by oral

tradition; hence, little music would have been written down. Although music publishing was a sizable industry in Italy, much of this was in Venice, which was quite a distance away from Naples and Rome where most harpists were active. We may thus assume this to be an explanation for much of the repertory not being in print, despite the number of outstanding performers. As a result, we have unfortunately lost much of their music. In addition, it is important to note that while the harp experienced a surge of popularity, it was still a relatively rare instrument in comparison to others, such as the lute or the harpsichord, due to its high cost and the complexity of construction, which required extensive training. However, even with limited documentary evidence, one can still appreciate the expansion of quality and quantity of its use during the early seventeenth century in Italy.

## **CHAPTER THREE: SYMBOLIC ASSOCIATIONS**

For much of its history, the harp has possessed strong religious and mythological associations. Its religious connections to King David and angels, as well as its roots in Greek mythology, played important roles in influencing musical works by early- to mid-seventeenth century composers in Italy. The ancient Greeks especially revered the lyre, the predecessor of the harp, as it was the chosen instrument of Orpheus, a Greek god featured in many early dramas and operas. The harp was also associated with the pastoral, in particular with nymphs and shepherds. These symbolic representations inspired composers to feature the harp in dramatic works to evoke certain images and scenery or to accompany certain characters. Hence, the harp became an indispensable instrument that was highly featured in continuo groups in operas.

From the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, the harp was often depicted with these symbolic associations in various types of art, including paintings, sculptures, manuscript illuminations, tiles, stained glass, and tapestries. These iconographical depictions have proved important for scholars and historical harpists in their study of the instrument in its earlier forms. Baroque artists' frequent incorporation of contemporary instruments enable modern harp builders to make replicas from these paintings in their efforts to reconstruct historical harps.

### **Religious Association**

The harp appears in several biblical references and can also be found in various works of art with religious themes. Of these, the two most prominent subjects were King

David and angels, both of whom were frequently portrayed with the instrument. The biblical king, who was once a shepherd, was famously known to be able to calm the nerves of King Saul with his enchanting harp playing.<sup>1</sup> While contemporary harpists were sometimes featured in portraits, the harp was often paired with the David wearing a crown. These illuminations can be found in numerous medieval psalters. Later in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, King David was a prominent subject in Italian paintings. It is interesting to observe the change of shape in the instrument over the centuries in these works of art. While the biblical instrument was more akin to a kinnor or a lyre, artists typically depicted King David with contemporary instruments, including the *arpa doppia* at the height of the instrument's popularity.

One painting of particular note is *David che suona l'arpa* (1619, Fig. 3.1) by Domenico Zampieri (1581 – 1641), a painter, architect and maker of musical instruments who was born in Bologna and died in Naples. In this particular painting, King David is shown playing a large triple-strung *arpa doppia*. While we may never know the exact instrument that King David played, one can assume that this would be an inaccurate representation of his original instrument. However, since Zampieri himself was an Italian harp builder, it is not a far-fetched assumption that the harp in the painting is a fairly accurate depiction of a commonly used early seventeenth-century Italian harp. Consequently, this particular painting has served many purposes for historical harpists and harp builders alike.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 16: 14-23 (English Standard Version).



**Fig. 3.1. Domenico Zampieri, *King David playing the Harp*, 1619, Palace of Versailles, France.<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> Domenico Zampieri, *King David playing the Harp* (1619), Chateau de Versailles, accessed November 25, 2016. <http://collections.chateauversailles.fr>.

Since harps do not survive due to high string tension, historical harp builders do not have access to a wide variety of surviving instruments on which to base replicas. Paintings can then serve as visual models for reconstruction. In this particular painting, the impressively large size of the *arpa doppia* towering over the player should clear up any misconception about the size of the instrument, as many often assume historical harps to be small. Additionally, the depicted parallel triple-stringing, the curved column, and lack of harmonic curve in the neck are quite different than that of the modern pedal harp, which features a deeply curved neck and a straight column. The restrained décor of the column is particularly curious and unexpected. Arts in the Baroque, from grand architecture to flourishing musical ornamentations, are typically perceived as heavily embellished. It is thus especially remarkable that the *arpe doppie* featured in seventeenth-century Italian paintings often have little to no strictly decorative adornment. In fact, based on these visual evidences, the ornate Barberini harp is most likely the exception to the norm.

In addition to aiding historical harp builders in constructing replicas, paintings enable scholars and harpists to observe how the *arpa doppia* should be positioned and played.<sup>3</sup> In this Zampieri painting, the relatively low seating height and the placement of hand position are of particular note, as they differ vastly from how a modern concert grand harp should be positioned. We can assume that the low seating position allows better access to the bass strings, while the low left hand in comparison to the right gives

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew Lawrence King, harp lesson with the author in London on February 24, 2015.

clarity to the bass line.<sup>4</sup> Both this seating and hand position emphasize the importance of the bass, which points towards the primary use of the *arpa doppia* – basso continuo.

Besides its association with King David, the harp was also frequently affiliated with angels. Although angels in Italian art mostly depicted scenes from Bible stories, they were also featured playing a variety of contemporary musical instruments, including the harp both in its gothic and Irish forms. These reflections of Christian iconography can be found in various forms of sacred art, from paintings to the stained glass of churches. The archetypal image of angels playing the harp amongst the clouds in heaven is thought to have originated from the book of Revelation in the Bible, which described a vision of heaven with “four living creatures [...], each holding a harp.” Many scholars believe that these creatures were angels.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the visual arts, harps also were featured prominently in religious dramatic arts. Liturgical drama, miracle plays and religious processions, of which the most important was the Corpus Christi procession, were often accompanied by music. During the Corpus Christi processions, as with the plays, scenes that depicted heaven were accompanied by *bas* or soft-sounding instruments, of which the most popular were the harp, psaltery, and lute.<sup>6</sup>

### **Mythological Association**

The lyre – and therefore by association the harp – was perhaps the most important and well-known instrument played by the ancient Greeks. The Roman-Greek historian

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Revelation 5:8.

<sup>6</sup> Adrian Rose, "Angel Musicians in the Medieval Stained Glass of Norfolk Churches," *Early Music* 29, no. 2 (2001): 192.

Diodorus Siculus (ca .80–20 BCE) claimed that the harp was indeed created on the ancient Holy Island of Crete, the island that created the myths of Greek gods and Goddesses.<sup>7</sup> The instrument was frequently depicted in all forms of Greek art in the hands of various gods and goddesses. It was played either alone or as an accompaniment to singing or lyric poetry in a variety of occasions, including official banquets, religious ceremonies, healing and entertainment.

In Greek mythology, amongst his many other roles, Apollo was the god of the arts. More specifically, he was the god of music, poetry and dance. Additionally, he was also the protector of shepherds and their flocks.<sup>8</sup> Apollo was known as a skilled player of the lyre and he was often depicted playing the instrument given by Hermes, the messenger God, in compensation for cattle theft.<sup>9</sup> This is a curious parallel to King David, who was also described as shepherd and musician. Apollo later passed the skill to Orpheus, who eventually became the most celebrated musician in Greek mythology.<sup>10</sup> Orpheus was known to be so skilled on the harp and was such a legendary figure that many myths became associated with his playing. When he accompanied Jason and the Argonauts on their quest for the Golden Fleece, Orpheus' musical prowess greatly aided their journey. He calmed the sea with his playing, saved the Argonauts from the deadly

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<sup>7</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian in Fifteen Books*, trans. by G. Booth (London: 1814), 348.

<sup>8</sup> David Sacks and Lisa R. Brody, "Apollo," in *Encyclopedia of the Ancient Greek World* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2005), 35.

<sup>9</sup> Tamra Orr, *Profiles in Greek Mythology: Apollo* (Delaware: Mitchell Lane Publishers, 2009), 35.

<sup>10</sup> "Orpheus," in *Encyclopedia of Greek Mythology*, accessed December 20, 2016. <http://www.mythweb.com/Encyc/entries/orpheus.html>.

Sirens by overpowering their bewitching songs, and stopped the Argonauts' quarrel with his mesmerizing playing.<sup>11</sup>

However, Orpheus is perhaps most famous for his attempt to retrieve his wife Eurydice from the underworld. Orpheus's harp enchanted Charon, the ferryman who carried the souls of the dead across the river Styx into the underworld, and Charon agreed to take Orpheus across the river, despite Orpheus still being alive. After that, the soothing sound of his harp tamed Cerberus, the monstrous three-headed dog who guarded the gates of the underworld. Finally, Orpheus' emotive playing persuaded Hades and Persephone, king and queen of the underworld, to let him take Eurydice back to earth on the condition that he was not to look back at her until they had both reached the surface, a task that he ultimately failed.<sup>12</sup>

## **Symbolism**

As a result of these religious and mythical associations, the harp is a particularly symbolic instrument. The church was important to the daily life of the people, and it served as an important musical establishment in seventeenth-century Italy. Hence, it is no surprise that the harp's religious connections go hand-in-hand with the music that was produced and its place in society. These connotations evoke certain perception of the instrument, namely its mystical and ethereal quality, and its associations with the good and the heavenly. The biblical story of King David and the harp, along with the frequent

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<sup>11</sup> Adolf Köhnken, "Apollonius' *Argonautica*," in *A Companion to Hellenistic Literature*, ed. James J. Clauss and Martin Cuypers (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010), 146.

<sup>12</sup> M. Owen Lee, *A Season of Opera from Orpheus to Ariadne* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 4.

pairing of the two in artwork, connected the harp to royalty. The harp consequently became an instrument that was highly favored amongst the elite and often conveyed social status.

The parallel between King David and the Greek god Apollo is especially curious. Both were shepherds and musicians alike, and were inextricably linked to the harp. One could therefore assume that perhaps this was the reason the harp, along with the lute, was frequently used to accompany pastoral and dance scenes. There is a certain sweetness in plucked strings that exudes the peace and tranquility so often associated with such scenes. The connection between Apollo and his lyre also elevates the instrument and its music into the realms of the gods. Its mystical qualities are further enhanced by its healing and soothing ability, as well as its power to charm and enthrall. In addition to its otherworldliness, the harp's long-standing association with angels consequently evokes the image of heaven and the celestial.

These symbolic associations are especially important in a composer's or performer's deliberate choice to include harp in a piece's instrumentation, especially in continuo groupings. Examples include the famous obbligato harp part in Claudio Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (1607) when Orpheus persuades Charon to let him enter the underworld and the use of harp in the continuo section during scenes in the field of Thrace. The harp was also important from the aesthetic standpoint. In his treatise *Musica Scenica* (1635), Giovanni Battista Doni (1593 – 1647) suggested keeping the harpsichords hidden in opera performances but placing the harp where it can be seen, due to its splendid portrayal of simplicity and regality as well as its exquisite beauty. He considered the harp a noble instrument, much preferable to the keyboard, for its ability to

blend with the voice and violins. In addition, the harp was deemed the best instrument for portraying antiquity, one of the most prominent interests of Florentine aristocrats, intellectuals, and musicians.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Mara Galassi, "The *arpa a tre registri* in seventeenth century Rome," in *Historical Harps: Theoretical and practical aspects of historical harps*, ed. Heidrun Rosenzweig (Dornach: Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 1991), 76.

## CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIAL CONTEXT

The social context of the harp is an important consideration in the discussion of the instrument's popularity and use in the music of early seventeenth-century Italy. The rise and decline of the harp's popularity throughout time can be traced to its class and gender connotations. Once a common instrument enjoyed by the vast population in the Middle Ages, the harp became an instrument exclusively for highly trained musicians or for social elites by the late Renaissance and the early Baroque. This subsequently had a bearing on the instrument's gender associations, whereby male harpists were often viewed as professional musicians, female harpists played it as a statement of high social status and wealth. From the perspective of higher art music, the harp seemed to be gaining widespread popularity; however, from a social perspective, it was increasingly becoming an exclusive instrument.

### **Class**

Throughout the centuries, the harp was an instrument that had been enjoyed by amateurs and professionals alike across a broad spectrum of social classes in continental Europe. As scholar Ann Yeung notes in her insightful account of the social context of the harp during the Middle Ages, the harp was an instrument that “enjoyed a popularity not yet constricted by conceptions of class and gender.”<sup>1</sup> Both men and women across the social spectrum, from laborers and middle-class merchants to wealthy nobility, played the

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Yeung, “Gender, Image, and Reception: The Development and Social History of the Pedal Harp” (DM diss., Indiana University, 1998), 20.

harp. It was a highly versatile instrument that could be used for self-accompanied singing, for instrumental groups, for accompaniment of secular songs and dances, and storytelling. Its small frame at that time rendered it much more portable than later harps; hence, it was favored by wandering musicians. This practice is evident in various manuscript illustrations showing minstrels playing instruments, including the harp. However, it is interesting that among all secular instruments, the harp was most popular in high society circles and was held in high esteem, despite its popularity with the lower members of society.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the harp continued to be used to accompany epic and lyric poetry. The minstrels who played the harp during this time typically consisted of men and women from the artisan class, often hired to entertain the nobility and wealthy merchants.<sup>3</sup> Yeung describes some such uses:

The harp was also used as a solitary instrument to soothe the listener. Because of the soft nature of the instrument, it was often performed during meals to relax the nobility, and it accompanied theatre productions, ceremonies, and church services. Sometimes the *vallets* would perform music in the bedchambers of the nobility to lull them to sleep.<sup>4</sup>

By the early- to mid-fifteenth century, harpists were also found amongst church and court musicians. However, by this time, the harp was no longer the common instrument played by laborers and nobilities alike, as it gradually became a specialist instrument restricted only to trained professionals and the social elite. The increasing complexity of its mechanism required detailed workmanship, which consequently led to the increase of the

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<sup>2</sup> Howard Mayer Brown, "The trecento harp," in *Studies in the Performance of Late Mediaeval Music*, ed. Stanley Boorman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 24.

<sup>3</sup> Yeung, 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

instruments' cost. Hence, it was no longer as readily available to the lower classes of society and most of those who played it did so as their main occupation.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, its large size made it much less portable and thus unsuitable for the wandering musicians so numerous at that time. In contrast, harpists were now found in the employment of courts and under wealthy patronage. Those who did not play it as their primary occupation were often wealthy members of society or the aristocracy, such as Queen Isabeau of Bavaria, Catherine of France and her husband Henry V of England, the duke of Burgundy Philip the Bold and his son Charles the Bold, and Charles d'Orléans and his mother, Valentine Visconti.<sup>6</sup>

Baroque musicians belonged mostly to the middle classes who worked chiefly for the ruling classes.<sup>7</sup> Most professional musical training took place in the form of apprenticeship, while in musical families the skill was passed from one generation to the next. Institutions such as churches and courts frequently provided training grounds for professional musicians. In addition, Naples began establishing conservatories in the sixteenth century, a practice that evolved from charitable foundations, usually for orphans, that spread throughout Italy and the rest of Europe.<sup>8</sup> Often, only the most affluent members of society were able to study music for non-professional reasons, and many of them did so solely with the intent of social advancement. There are only few

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<sup>5</sup> Tim Hobrough, "Early Harp Attitudes," *Early Music* 8, no. 4 (1980): 507-8.

<sup>6</sup> Roslyn Rensch, *Harps and Harpists, revised edition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 81-82.

<sup>7</sup> David Schulenberg, *Music of the Baroque* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 8.

<sup>8</sup> Dinko Fabris, *Music in Seventeenth Century Naples* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 79.

records of such amateurs achieving musical distinctions, and the predominant contribution of the upper classes to the musical scene was patronage.

The *arpa doppia* of early seventeenth-century Italy was an instrument highly favored in the aristocratic musical circles and often associated with the royal courts, religious services, and secular celebrations. While other smaller and single-rank harps continued to be used, the *arpa doppia* was the favored instrument on account of its versatility, due to its chromaticism and wider volume and range. However, it was an instrument almost solely restricted to professionals due to its complexity, requiring proper training in order to achieve mastery. Hence, the *arpa doppia* was often associated with elitism. Employment records show that harpists were found in the services of courts and churches, and many would have played other musical instruments as well, most often keyboard, to expand their musical opportunities.

## **Gender**

Although the harp was once an instrument enjoyed by both men and women alike, the marginalization of women in Western European society during the Renaissance resulted in the decline of popularity of harp with women. The patriarchal structures that defined the training and career of many musicians often inhibited women from entering the profession. Laws and customs often prevented women from participation in church music. Moreover, many areas even prevented the appearance of women in operas and other theatrical performances.<sup>9</sup> Public performances by women for an audience could also imply sexual availability, as in the case of Venice's courtesans. Hence, women's career

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<sup>9</sup> Schulenberg, 10.

development was often limited to institutions or wealthy patrons and subject to their protection.<sup>10</sup> Due to the growing association of the harp with elitism and professionalism, it came to be perceived as an inappropriate instrument for a woman. The *arpa doppia* was an instrument that required specific high-level training and was one that was mostly played by professional musicians. Since women were often barred in terms of career advancement due to the decline of their status in society, it would be highly unlikely for them to have received the appropriate training to allow them to serve in the courts and churches and play the instrument professionally.

On the other hand, within private spheres, the harp became an appropriate vehicle for chaste display. Most women who played the harp were typically noble amateurs, where talent on the instrument could serve social advancement in aristocratic circles.<sup>11</sup> As Yeung explains:

The concept of women in the Renaissance emphasized restraint and understatement. Display was not overt; Castiglione makes this clear when he states that it is better to occupy the hands in some type of activity in order to display them. The harp was a perfect vehicle for displaying the limbs of gentlewomen in decorous fashion. Weighed down by ornate appearance and confined to immobility in display, the instrument and its player occupied the same social niche and became inextricably linked.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, a few remarkable female harpists held positions in prominent courts and earned reputations and respect for their musical skills. Laura Peverara (1550 – 1601) was a renowned harpist and singer born in Mantua and active in the court of Ferrara. In

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen Rose, “Music in the Market Place,” in *Cambridge Companion to Seventeenth Century Music*, ed. Tim Carter and John Butt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 76.

<sup>11</sup> Yeung, 36.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

1580, she became a prominent member of the *Concerto delle donne*, a group of virtuosic female singers that flourished in Italy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and was pre-eminent in the courts of Ferrara, Mantua, and Florence. The establishment of the ensemble was instrumental in initiating a shift of women's role in music, as women could now be brought to court and trained as professional musicians. Laura Peverara was in a trio comprising of Livia d'Arco (1565 – 1611), who played the viola da gamba, and Anna Guarini (1563 – 1598), the lute.<sup>13</sup> The three were known to self-accompany on their respective instruments while they sang. Laura's harp was called *Arpa Estense*, or *L'arpa di Lara*, with 49 strings strung in three staggered parallel rows. The central row has 28 strings that continue from top to bottom, the upper left side has 10 strings, and the bottom right side has 11 strings. The harp has passed through several owners and residencies. It is now kept in the Galleria Estense in Modena.<sup>14</sup>

Another distinguished female harpist was Lucrezia Urbana, a highly praised harpist of Neapolitan origins. She served in the Gonzaga court in Mantua between 1603 and 1608, where Claudio Monteverdi was *maestro della musica*. Hence, it was highly probable that she played the *arpa doppia* for the first performance of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* that featured the famous obbligato harp part.<sup>15</sup> Her playing came to the attention of the Duke of Mantua, who declared great satisfaction with her musical skills in a letter

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<sup>13</sup> Rajka Dobronić-Mazzoni, *The Eternal Harp: A Musical and Cultural Historical Study* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 2002), 61.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 60.

of recommendation.<sup>16</sup> On a letter dated December 9, 1609, Cardinal Alessandro Montalto Peretti remarked that he “would gladly go without eating to hear the harp played as by our Neapolitan lady.”<sup>17</sup>

Other female harpists of note who were active in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Italy included Adriana Basile (1580 – 1640), who was employed in the Gonzaga court in Mantua; Constanza da Ponte (1601 – 1461), who served in the Borghese household with her husband, Luigi Rossi; and Caterina Baroni (1624 – 1670), a celebrated harpist in Rome and daughter of Adriana Basile, who inherited the instruments of Orazio dell’arpa.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Fabris Dinko, “The harp in Naples 1500-1700,” in *Historical Harps: Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Historical Harps*, ed. Heidrun Rosenzweig (Dornach: Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 1991), 50.

<sup>17</sup> “[...] Della vista che si compiacque far il cardinal Monte alto [...] come ancor lui dice che stareve senza mangier per sentir a sonar l’arpa all nostra napolitana [...]” Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE HARP AS A CONTINUO INSTRUMENT

Based on period title pages and surviving parts, Jack Ashworth and Paul O’Dette devised a chart that represents the likely possibilities for continuo instrumentation categorized by genre, typical composers, and instrumental choices. Table 5.1 is a summarized reproduction of their chart as pertaining to early- to mid-seventeenth century Italy. From this brief summary, one can get a general sense of how the harp was utilized as a continuo instrument in early seventeenth-century Italy. It was used primarily in secular settings rather than liturgical. The harp was featured largely in continuo sections for operas. Its use in productions in the courts of Mantua and Rome was well documented; however, it is curious that there are little to no account of harp activity in Venice, where commercial opera houses sprouted. The considerable distance between Naples and Venice that inhibited the spread of the harp’s popularity could explain this phenomenon, or that the *arpa doppia* had begun to decline by the time these Venetian opera houses came into fashion. The harp also served as an accompaniment instrument in the solo songs and monody of composers such as Caccini and D’India. In addition, it was also used for the concerted madrigals of Monteverdi.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jack Ashworth and Paul Odette, “Basso Continuo,” in *A Performer’s Guide to Seventeenth Century Music*, ed. by Stewart Carter (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 291.

Table 5.1. Likely possibility for continuo instrumentation.<sup>2</sup>

<i>Genre</i>	<i>Typical Composers</i>	<i>Representative Choices for Chordal Accompaniment</i>	<i>Double Bass Line?</i>
<i>Italy (1600 – 1635)</i>			
<b>Sacred Polyphony</b>	Monteverdi, Anerio	organ/SS <sup>3</sup> (sometimes optional)	no
<b>Sacred Concerto</b>	Viadana, Gabrieli, Monteverdi	organ, organ/SS, often with theorbo	AOD <sup>4</sup>
<b>Solo Song/Monody</b>	Caccini, d'India	theorbo, harp, harpsichord	no
<b>Villanelle, Canzonette</b>	Kapsberger, d'India	guitar, theorbo, harpsichord	no
<b>Sonatas and Canzonas</b>	Fontana, Castello	organ, theorbo, harpsichord	no
<b>Concerted Madrigal</b>	Monteverdi	<i>chitarrone</i> , harpsichord, spinet, lute, harp, organ	no
<b>Opera</b>	Peri, Gagliano, Monteverdi	harpsichord, organ, theorbo	AOD
<i>Italy (1635 – 1665)</i>			
<b>All Liturgical Music</b>	Monteverdi, Rovetta, Cazzati	organ, theorbo	AOD
<b>Oratorio</b>	Carissima	organ, theorbo, harpsichord, lute, lirone	AOD
<b>Opera, Cantata (Venice)</b>	Monteverdi, Cavalli, Cesti	theorbo, harpsichord	AOD
<b>Opera, Cantata (Rome)</b>	Landi, L. Rossi, Marazzoli	theorbo, archlute, harp, lirone, guitar, harpsichord	AOD
<b>Sonatas</b>	Uccellini, Marini	organ, harpsichord, theorbo	no

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 338–40.

<sup>3</sup> SS = “short score” -style accompaniment, where the keyboard player (or lutenist) plays the notes the chorus is singing, not an improvisatory realization.

<sup>4</sup> AOD = as occasion demands.

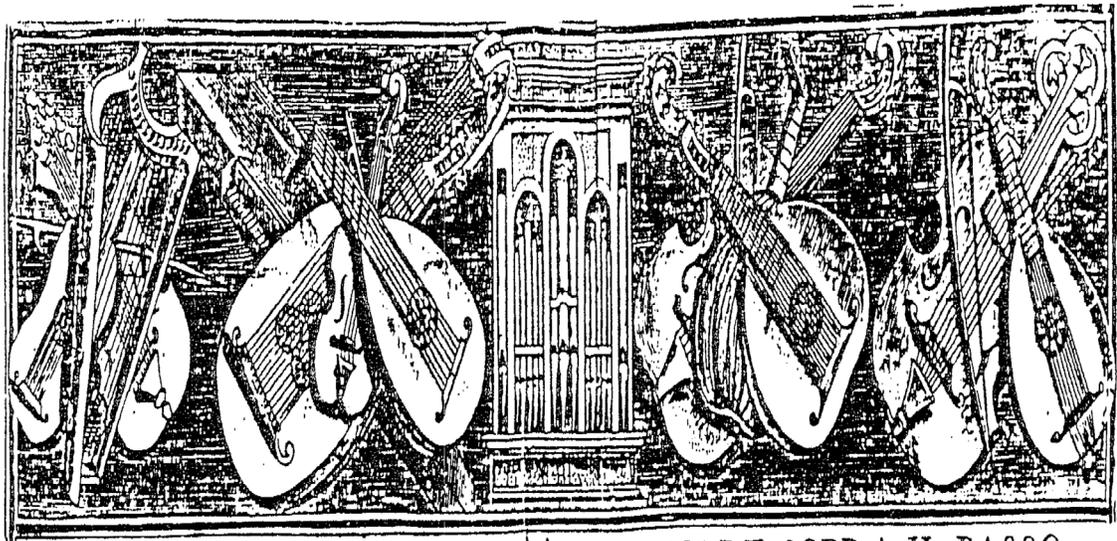
Several Baroque theorists mention the harp as a continuo instrument in their treatises. The title page of *Breve revola per imparar' a sonare sopra il basso con ogni sorta d'istrumento* (1607) by Francesco Bianciardi (1572 – 1607), an Italian composer and organist, features a number of popular continuo instruments, the harp among them (Fig. 5.1). The English writer James Talbot (1664 – 1708) noted that the triple harp was “capable of Thorough Bass.”<sup>5</sup> The third volume of *Syntagma Musicum* (1619) by the German music theorist Michael Praetorius (1575 – 1621) also contained a discussion of the harp as a continuo instrument. Of particular significance is *Del sonare sopra il basso con tutti li stromenti e dell' uso loro nel conserto* (1607, Fig. 5.2) by Agostino Agazzari (1578 – 1640), who dedicated a portion in his treatise for the harp, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The harp was often paired with another instrument in continuo settings. In his article “Harp as a Continuo Instrument in Early Opera,” Andrew Lawrence King summarizes typical combinations of two instruments<sup>6</sup>:

Organ and chitarrone (Italian recitative); lute and harp (Italian dance-music); organ and harp (Spanish sacred music); harpsichord and violone (often with chitarrone as well, in dances); harp and lirone (a Neapolitan favorite); harp and lyra (as in the Florentine Intermedi from 1589); harp and guitar (Spanish secular music); harp and harpsichord (found in a piece by Gregorio Strozzi for continuo alone).

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<sup>5</sup> Joan Rimmer, “James Talbot’s Manuscript: VI. Harps,” *The Galpin Society Journal* 16 (May 1963): 64.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Lawrence-King, “The harp as a continuo instrument in early Italian opera,” in *Historical Harps: Theoretical and practical aspects of historical harps*, ed. by Heidrun Rosenzweig (Dornach: Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 1991), 138.



BREVE REGOLA PER IMPARAR' A SONARE SOPRA IL BASSO  
CON OGNI SORTE D'ISTRUMENTO,  
DI FRANCESCO BIANCIARDI.

**Fig. 5.1.** Title page of Francesco Bianciardi, *Breve revola per imparar' a sonare sopra il basso con ogni sorta d'istrumento*, Siena, 1607.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Francesco Bianciardi, *Breve revola per imparar' a sonare sopra il basso* (Siena, 1607). Reprinted in *ibid.*, 138



Fig. 5.2. Title page of Agostino Agazzari, *Del sonare sopra il basso con tutti li stromenti e dell' uso loro nel consercto*, Siena, 1607.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Agostini Agazzari, *Del sonare sopra'l basso con tutti li stromenti e dell' uso loro nel consercto* (Siena: Domenico Falconi, 1607).

## Agazzari's treatise

One of the most important writings concerning the use of the harp as a continuo instrument is *Del sonare sopra il basso con tutti li stromenti e dell' uso loro nel conserto* ("On playing upon the thoroughbass with all the instruments and their use in an ensemble") by Italian composer and music theorist Agostino Agazzari (1578 – 1640). This particular treatise has served as an important source of information about continuo playing for various instrumentalists and for other theorists. Another such treatise that discusses the harp is *Syntagma Musicum III* by Michael Praetorius (1571 – 1621), who was a German composer, organist, and music theorist and referenced Agazzari in his writing. In this section, we will discuss Agazzari's explanation of the use of harp in continuo playing, and we will also compare Praetorius' observations and comparison to Agazzari's treatise.

Agazzari divided the continuo instruments into two types according to the functions of each instrument. The first type he labeled instruments of foundation, which included instruments capable of playing chords such as the organ, cembalo, lute, theorbo, and harp. He described these instruments as those that have "a perfect balance between the voices"<sup>9</sup> and whose purpose is to "guide and support the entire sound of the voices."<sup>10</sup>

When playing an instrument of foundation, Agazzari advised that one has to

hold the harmony [and] make a continuous sound in order to support the voice, touching once silently, once strong, as demanded by the quality and quantity of the voices, the acoustic and the work, and shall not pluck the

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<sup>9</sup> Agostini Agazzari, *Del sonare sopra'l basso con tutti li stromenti e dell' uso loro nel conserto* (Siena: Domenico Falconi, 1607). Ed. and trans. Bernhard Lang (2003), *Bassus Generalis*, accessed March 15, 2016. <http://www.bassus-generalis.org>.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

chords too strongly when the voice sings a *passagio*, or in a certain affect which should not be disturbed.<sup>11</sup>

The second type of continuo instruments were labeled instruments of ornamentation, which Agazzari defined as “instruments which mix themselves with the voices in various manners ... for nothing else than to decorate and to adorn and to round off the ensemble which they meddle in.”<sup>12</sup> These included the harp, lute, theorbo, lirone, cither, spinet, *chitarrina*, violin, *pandora*, and other similar instruments, whose purpose was to “make the sound of the harmony more agreeable”<sup>13</sup> by means of runs, embellishments, and counterpoints to the melody. Agazzari advised that players of ornamental instruments should

sometimes hit strong [and] sometimes as a quiet echo, sometimes with long *passagio*, sometimes with short ones, with doublings, with bourdon, with nice jokes, repetitions, to give fugues in various chords and places; summed up, to introduce the voices with long *gruppi* and trills and accents at its time, which is giving grace to the music and taste, and pleasure to the listener: where judgment has to be used that one is not hindering the other, but to give [each other] time, especially when the instruments are similar.<sup>14</sup>

Similar to Agazzari, Michael Praetorius divided musical instruments into two groups, *Omnivoca* and *Univoca*, translating respectively to “all voices” and “one voice.”

He likens *Omnivoca* to fundamental and *Univoca* to ornamental instruments of Agazzari:

1. Omnivoca or fundamental instruments are those able to play all voices of a composition, producing the entire body and complete harmony of all inner and lower parts, in vocal as well as in instrumental music...

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 12

2. ... Univoca or simplicia, or ornamental instruments, are used in order to make the harmony more agreeable and sonorous, with playful figures (*scherzando*, as the Italians say) and counterpoints, and also to adorn the music with embellishments. They all are melody instruments that can produce only one single voice.<sup>15</sup>

One will notice that the harp is one of the few instruments that Agazzari has classified both as instrument of foundation and ornamentation, highlighting favorable perceptions of the harp as versatile in the early Italian Baroque. Agazzari described the double harp as

an instrument which is good for every purpose, for the treble as well as for the bass, [that] should be used with all possibilities, with lovely pizzicato, with answering of the two hands, with trills etc.; in [summary], it asks for a good counterpoint.<sup>16</sup>

Michael Praetorius agreed that the harp could be placed in both categories. Additionally, he noted that harps are most efficient as fundamental instruments in a soft and restrained ensemble consisting of up to three voices. In a large ensemble consisting of many performers, they are better utilized as ornamental instruments to decorate and enrich the inner voices.<sup>17</sup>

While many treatises deal with continuo playing in early seventeenth-century Italy, Agazzari's was one of the few that discusses the harp explicitly, albeit briefly, explaining its function, and offering advice on how it should be played. He attests to what he believed to be the essential qualities that all players of fundamental instruments should possess:

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum III* (Wolfenbüttel, 1619), trans. Hans Lampl in "A translation of *Syntagma Musicum III* by Michael Praetorius" (DMA Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1957), 207.

<sup>16</sup> Agazzari, trans. Lang, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Praetorius, trans. Lampl, 207.

First he has to know counterpoint or must at least be able to sing surely, and has to have a feeling for the proportions and the rhythm, and read all the clefs/keys, has to know how to resolve bad into good notes, has to know the major and minor 3. and 6. and other similar things.

Secondly, he has to master his instrument, to understand the tablature or the *spartitura* partition, and he has to have much practice on the keyboard ... [so] that he does not play wrong notes into the consonances or look [at his hands] during the performance.

Thirdly, he has to have a good ear to feel the movement [of the voices between themselves].<sup>18</sup>

Praetorius discussed the above qualifications that an organist should possess and provided specific instructions for realizing figured bass, referring to Agazzari extensively. However, he added “everything mentioned before has to be diligently applied also to the lute, harp, chitarrone or theorbo.”<sup>19</sup>

## **Operas**

Early seventeenth-century Italian operas often utilized the harp in the orchestra, specifically in continuo groups. We read in Agazzari and Praetorius how the harp can be used as a fundamental instrument for two or three singers and as an ornamental instrument in a large ensemble, making it a highly versatile instrument for accompaniment. In a diverse operatic continuo ensemble where many instruments were available, decisions had to be made on the suitable instrumentation to accompany specific passages. Emilio de Cavalieri’s *Rappresentione de Anima, e di Corpo* (1600) was one of the most important documents in discussing the aesthetics and practice of *rappresentatione per recitar cantando*, which emphasized on moving the audience to

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<sup>18</sup>Agazzari, trans. Lang, 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> Praetorius, trans. Lampl, 264.

experience various affects through a variety of musical, poetic, dramatic, and visual effects. Cavalieri explained that the number of instruments playing should correspond to the size of the venue and that they should not be seen by the audience. In addition, he also specified that continuo scoring should be in accordance with the affect of the recitation.<sup>20</sup>

The harp's symbolism and associations profoundly impacted the affects with which it was paired with. Instrumentation in early Baroque opera grew out of the tradition of sixteenth-century *intermedii*, in which a great deal of symbolism was associated with various instruments.<sup>21</sup> Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* serves as a most appropriate example for the discussion of the role of the *arpa doppia* in early Italian operas and how the harp's various symbolic associations translate to musical affects. He listed around forty-one instruments in his published score of *L'Orfeo* (Fig.5.2), but as per practice of his days, their exact usage was not specifically indicated. Typically, a great amount of freedom was allowed in the choice of instrumentation, depending upon the availability of musicians, and at their discretion. However, Monteverdi did specify at several points the exact instrumentation he intended for the continuo group, with distinct groups of instruments used to depict particular scenes and characters.

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<sup>20</sup> Emilio Cavalieri, "A' Lettori," in *Rappresentatione di anima, et di corpo* (Rome: Nicolò Mutij, 1600).

<sup>21</sup> Ashworth and Odette, 333.



PERSONAGGI,

*La Musica Prologo.*  
*Orfeo.*  
*Euridice.*  
*Choro di Ninfe, e Pastori.*  
*Speranza.*  
*Caronte.*  
*Choro di Spiriti infernali.*  
*Proserpina.*  
*Plutone.*  
*Apollo.*  
*Choro de Pastori che fecero la morefca*  
*nel fine.*

STROMENTI.

*Dnoi Gramicembani.*  
*Dnoi contrabassi de Viola.*  
*Dieci Viole da braccio.*  
*Vn Arpa doppia.*  
*Dnoi Violini piccoli alla Fransefe.*  
*Dnoi Chitaroni.*  
*Dnoi Organi di legno.*  
*Tre bassi da gamba.*  
*Quattro Tromboni.*  
*Vn Regale.*  
*Dnoi Cornetti.*  
*Vn Flautino alla Vigefima feconda*  
*Vn Clarino con tre trombe fecondine.*



Fig.5.3. Instrumentation page of Claudio Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, 1609.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Claudio Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo* (Venice: Ricciardo Amadino, 1609).

The two worlds within the opera are each portrayed by distinctive instrumentation choices. The jubilation of the pastoral world, along with choruses of nymphs and shepherds, is conveyed by the strings, recorders, chitarroni, harpsichords, harp, and organs. On the other hand, instruments such as the brass and the regal represented the dark underworld. The accompaniment of the central character Orpheus is of particular interest, as certain instruments were deliberately chosen to emulate the emotion he expresses at each moment. Of the twenty-two continuo indications given by Monteverdi, nine are specifically for accompanying Orpheus.<sup>23</sup>

Monteverdi indicated the *arpa doppia* to be used both as a continuo and solo instrument for the famous harp solo in “Possento Spirto” from Act 3 of the opera. In this aria, Orpheus attempts to persuade Charon to let him enter the underworld in his quest to rescue Eurydice. This aria contains several striking features that distinguish it from other early Italian Baroque arias. The specified instrumentation includes a static accompaniment of organ and chitarrone in addition to a series of obbligato instruments, including two violins, two cornets, and harp. What is most unusual is that the obbligato harp part is fully and idiomatically written out. Monteverdi utilized the full range of the instrument and took advantage of its unique capabilities, mirroring the right with left hand in both similar and contrary motion and featuring fluid scale runs, wide arpeggios, and highly embellished cadences, in contrast to the static accompaniment played by the continuo group.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Stephen Stubbs, “Continuo Orchestration in Orfeo,” *Early Music* 22, no. 1 (February, 1994): 8.

<sup>24</sup> David W. Music, “Harp as Continuo Instrument in the Baroque,” *The American Harp Journal* 7, no. 3 (June, 1980): 21.

It is indeed curious to contemplate why Monteverdi specified the use of *arpa doppia* in this particular aria and even wrote out an extensive and even virtuosic obbligato part for it, a practice that was highly uncommon at the time. Certainly, the range and chromaticism used in the obbligato part explain the specific choice of the *arpa doppia* rather than the generic *arpa*. The necessity of this instrument is unquestionable in this case, as these features would have been impossible to accomplish on a single-ranked harp of the time. To illustrate this famous Greek myth more accurately, Monteverdi used the *arpa doppia* to represent the lyre of Orpheus. As previously discussed, this was a common choice of instrument for self-accompaniment in Greek mythology by various gods and goddesses. To reproduce this effect in the aria, Monteverdi alternated solo harp with Orpheus' singing, as if Orpheus were accompanying himself. The juxtaposition of the obbligato *arpa doppia* solo and the organ and chitarrone accompaniment is especially jarring. While the organ and chitarrone hold long, static bass notes to represent Charon, the *arpa doppia* part is characterized by elaborate flourishes across the range of the instrument. Monteverdi thus uses these distinct soundscapes to represent the character of Charon in the dark underworld in contrast to the valiant Orpheus and his noble instrument.

The harp is also specified for use in the aria "Lasciate i monti" in Act I and in the ritornello at the end of Act IV; however, it functions as a continuo instrument rather than a solo instrument. Once again, Monteverdi's specific designation of the harp for these two numbers is significant. In "Lasciate i monti," the chorus sings of nymphs joyfully dancing in the meadows, and in the Act IV ritornello the scene changes from the underworld back to the field of Thrace. The harp has long been associated with nymphs

and shepherds and thus was often used to accompany pastoral and dance scenes.

Monteverdi's choice of instrumentation in these particular instances conforms to tradition and symbolic expectations.

It is difficult to trace the use of harps in continuo, since composers do not generally specify instrumentation and much is left to the discretion of the performers and no doubt to the availability of players and instruments. To compound these issues, scores were often destroyed or lost over time. Historians and musicians often must rely on payment records of courts and opera houses, as well as written accounts of historical performances, yet these do not give the complete picture of how harps were used as continuo instruments. Nevertheless, there are a few operas in which we can ascertain the use of the harp. Stefano Landi's *Il Sant'Alessio* (1632) is another opera that specifically requires harp in the score.

It is curious that Landi specified *arpe* in the plural, as opposed to the singular *arpa*. Similarly in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, while he specified *arpa doppia* for "Possento spirito" and "Lascia i monti," he also chose the word *arpe* for the ritornello in Act IV. The differentiation in wording could suggest the use of multiple harps rather than just one, although such a scenario seems unlikely in actual performance, given the uncommonness and expense of the instrument. Perhaps, if resources allowed, multiple harpists would have been the ideal. In the second edition of *Musica Scenica II* (Florence, 1763), Italian musicologist and humanist Giovanni Battista Doni (1593 – 1647) suggested that if one harp is not loud enough for the theatre, more could be added; they could then play in turn, the other players resting, suggesting that the utilization of multiple harps might indeed

have occurred.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, the language discrepancy could also suggest differentiation between specifically using *arpa doppia* and the flexibility of playing on a diatonic harp, as it is not likely that every harpist had access to a chromatic harp.

In some instances even when the harp is not specifically called for in the score, it would be included in the continuo instrumentation regardless. One such example is “Pur ti miro, pur to godo” from the closing scene in Monteverdi’s *L’incoronazione di Poppea* (1643), when the Roman emperor Nerone and his mistress Poppea engage in a rapturous declamation of love as the opera ends. The aria opens and ends with a descending ground bass, which is typically embellished with the sound of plucked strings, such as the lute or the harp. However, Monteverdi does not specify the instrumentation, nor do contemporary written accounts of performances survive in order to verify the instrumentation. It seems reasonable to assume that the sweet sound of plucked strings would be considered most appropriate to accompany this love duet. Moreover, the harp is also an ancient symbol of love and a bridge between heaven and earth, making it a most suitable instrument for this aria.<sup>26</sup>

Several well-known harpists also wrote operas, and it seems probable that they would have composed with the harp in mind. Marco Marazzoli (1602 – 1662) was a renowned harpist and prolific opera composer, so it would be highly likely that his operas *Que soffre spera* (1639) and *Dal male il bene* (1653) included the harp in the continuo instrumentation. Indeed, Giovan Carlo Rossi was known to have been the harpist for *Que*

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<sup>25</sup> Mara Galassi, “The *arpa a tre registri* in seventeenth century Rome,” in *Historical Harps: Theoretical and practical aspects of historical harps*, ed. Heidrun Rosenzweig (Dornach: Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 1991), 76.

<sup>26</sup> J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. Jack Sage (New York: Dover Publications, 2002), 139.

*soffre spero* and Domenico Mazzochi's *San Bonifatio* in 1639.<sup>27</sup> Andrea Falconieri (c. 1585 – 1656) is another such example, as he was known as a lutenist and harpist as well as a composer of operas. Luigi Rossi (1597 – 1653) was surrounded by a family of harpists, although it is unknown whether he played the instrument himself. Hence, it makes sense to assume that his many operas would have included the harp. In addition, courts in Mantua, Ferrara, Siena, and Florence employed permanent harpists, and it would make sense that they were utilized for operatic productions.

### **Accompaniment to Vocal Music**

In addition to operas, the harp was also used frequently to accompany vocal music in a variety of genres, including madrigals, arias, motets, canzonas, and villanelles. As with operas, the continuo instrumentation was often not explicitly specified, thus making it difficult to determine exactly when and where the harp was used. While some publications suggest appropriate instrumentation, the harp was often not listed, probably due to the relative rarity of the instrument. One should keep in mind that monodies were often written for amateurs, and the *arpa doppia* was an instrument of great complexity that required extensive training. In addition, it was also an expensive investment and therefore not as readily available as many of the other continuo instruments, such as the harpsichord or the lute, which could be found more commonly in regular households.

Nevertheless, evidence exist that points to the use of the harp in a variety of monadic genres. Doni states in his treatise *Del compendio del trattato de' generi e de' modi della musica* that the harp is the most appropriate instrument to accompany solo

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<sup>27</sup> Galassi, 72.

monody, following the traditions of ancient Greece.<sup>28</sup> This certainly holds true, as the harp was used rather extensively as an instrument for vocal accompaniment. The harp was sometimes listed as a suitable instrument for accompaniment in Italian songbooks, with some composers even expressing their preference to it. In the preface to his second book of *Villanelle* (1618), Francesco Lambardi noted that “[these compositions] will be much more successful if sung with the perfect instruments, such as harpsichords, lutes, double harps, etc.”<sup>29</sup> Marcelo Albano’s *Il primo libro di canzoni, e madrigaletti, a tre, et a quattro voci* (1616, Naples) states: “To the benevolent readers. These canzoni and madrigaletti will work better if they are sung to perfect instruments such as the lute, the harpsichord, the harp and other instruments.”<sup>30</sup>

Giulio Caccini (1550 – 1618), a celebrated singer and instrumentalist at the Medici court, was instrumental in the birth of the solo monody. His *Le nuove musiche* (1602) consists of twelve solo madrigals and ten strophic arias for solo voice and basso continuo. He also included a preface that described the ideals and techniques of early baroque solo singing style. His explanations of ornamentation and figured bass in the songs are considered one of the major sources of early seventeenth-century performance

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<sup>28</sup> “fra gl'Instrumenti, il più atto ad accompagnar simil musica crederai, che fusse l'arpa [...] pratica da gl'antichi Greci.” Giovanni Battista, *Del compendio del trattato de' generi e de' modi della musica* (Rome: Andrea Fei, 1635), 119.

<sup>29</sup> Dinko Fabris, “The harp in Naples 1500-1700,” in *Historical Harps: Theoretical and practical aspects of historical harps*, ed. Heidrun Rosenzweig (Dornach: Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 1991), 11.

<sup>30</sup> “A binigni lettori. Queste canzoni & madrigaletti riusciranno meglio se si cantano con istrumenti perfetti come liuto, cimbalo, arpa & altri istrumenti [...]” Quoted in Hannelore Devaere, “The Baroque Double Harp in the Kingdom of Naples,” in *Aspects of the Historical Harp: Proceedings of the International Historical Harp Symposium*, ed. Martin van Schaik (Utrecht: Foundation for Historical Performance Practice, 1994), 19.

practice. Caccini was known to accompany himself on the lute, chitarrone, viol, and harp.<sup>31</sup> Hence, it would not be improbable that some of his solo monodies were written with the intention of a harp accompaniment, as he might have performed them himself.

Sigismondo d'India (1582 – 1629) was another Italian composer who made significant contributions to solo monody. He was a prolific composer of vocal music in most of the genres common at the time, including monodies, madrigals, and motets. The first edition of his first, fourth, and fifth book of *Le musiche da cantar solo* (published in 1609, 1621, and 1623, respectively) list the *arpa doppia* as a possible instrument for accompaniment, along with clavichord and chitarrone (Fig. 5.4). Similarly, the *arpa doppia* was also mentioned as a suitable accompanying instrument in *I lieti giorni di Napoli*, a collection of Italian songs in the Spanish style for two or three voices by Girolamo Montesardo (1580 – 1643) published in Naples in 1612 (Fig. 5.5).<sup>32</sup> Likewise, Filippo Albini (1590 – 1626) published his *Secondo libro dei musicali concerti da cantarsi nel cembalo, tiorbo o arpa doppia* in Rome in 1626.

Some composers did not explicitly indicate *arpa doppia* as a continuo instrumental option, but instead listed the harp in one of its varied forms. Bernardino Borlasca (1580 – 1631) in his *Canzonette à tre voci* (1611) included the *lira doppia* and the *arpone* (large harp) on the title page as instruments that could be used for accompaniment, along with chitarrone, cembalo, *chitariglia alla spagnola*, “or other

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<sup>31</sup> “Caccini,” from *Companion to Baroque Music*, ed. Julie Ann Sadie (University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990), 44.

<sup>32</sup> Fabris, 11.

instrument of *concerto* as is today the custom in the courts of Rome.”<sup>33</sup> Other Italian monody books where the harp is listed as an alternative continuo instrument include those by Francesco Lambardi (1587 – 1642), Carlo Milanuzzi (1590 – 1647), Marc’Antonio Negri (d.1624), Giovanni Felice Sances (1600 – 1679), and Claudio Saracini (1586 – 1630).<sup>34</sup> In some cases where the harp is not explicitly specified, it was hinted to as a possible instrument. This was largely due to its versatility and similarity to other continuo instruments, especially those with plucked strings that were commonly used such as the lute or theorbo. Therefore, it rendered no grounds for exclusion. Alessandro Grandi (1586 – 1630), among many others, stated on the cover page of *Primo libro de motetti* that these are to be accompanied by the organ, harpsichord, theorbo, or other similar instrument (Fig. 5.6). Thus, one can assume that harp was a definite possibility.

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<sup>33</sup> “o altro simile strumento da concerto com’hoggi di si costuma nella Corte de Roma.” Quoted in Cory Michael Gavito, “The *Alfabeto* Song in Print, 1610 – ca. 1665: Neapolitan Roots, Roman Codification, and ‘*Il Gusto Popolare*’” (Ph.D diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2006), 72.

<sup>34</sup> Music, 22.



Fig.5.4. Title page, Sigismondo d'India, *Le musiche da cantar solo*, 1609.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Sigismondo d'India, *Le musiche da cantar solo* (Milan: Tini & Lomazzo, 1609).

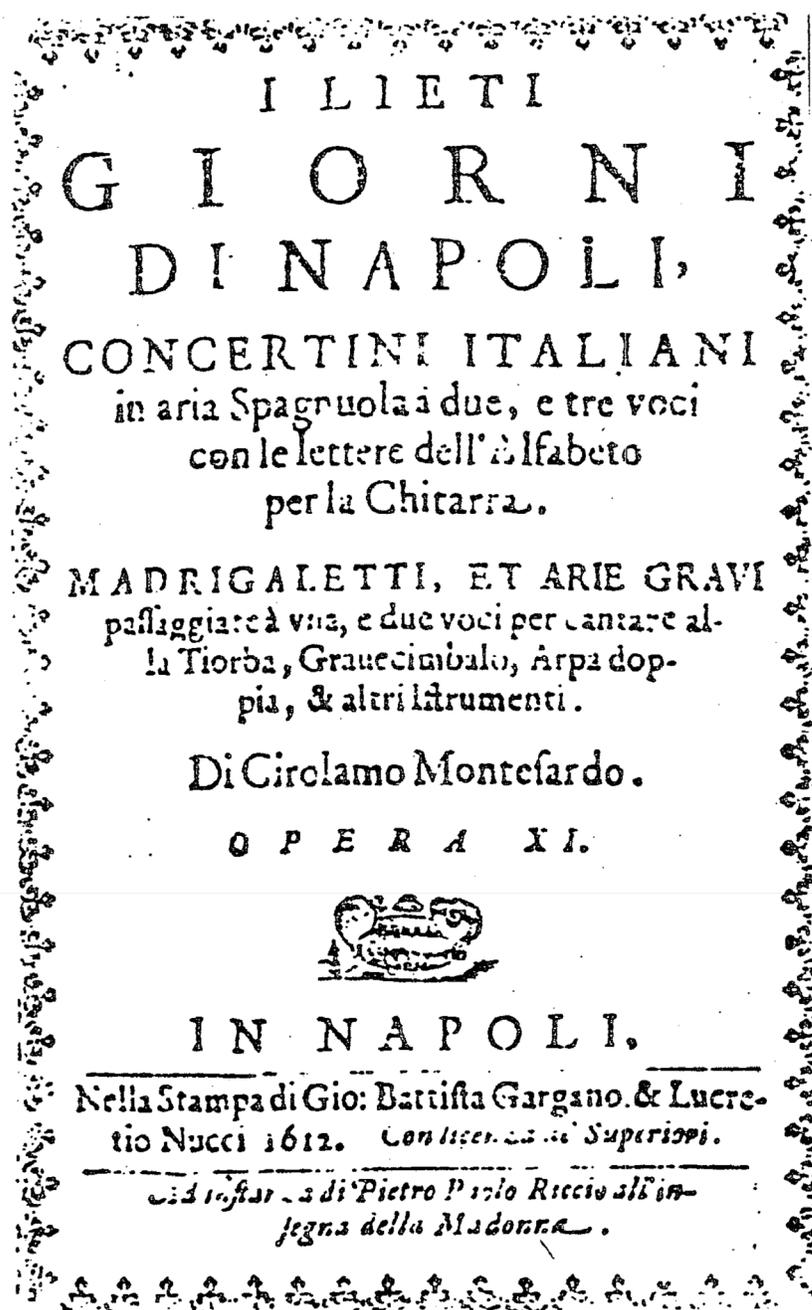
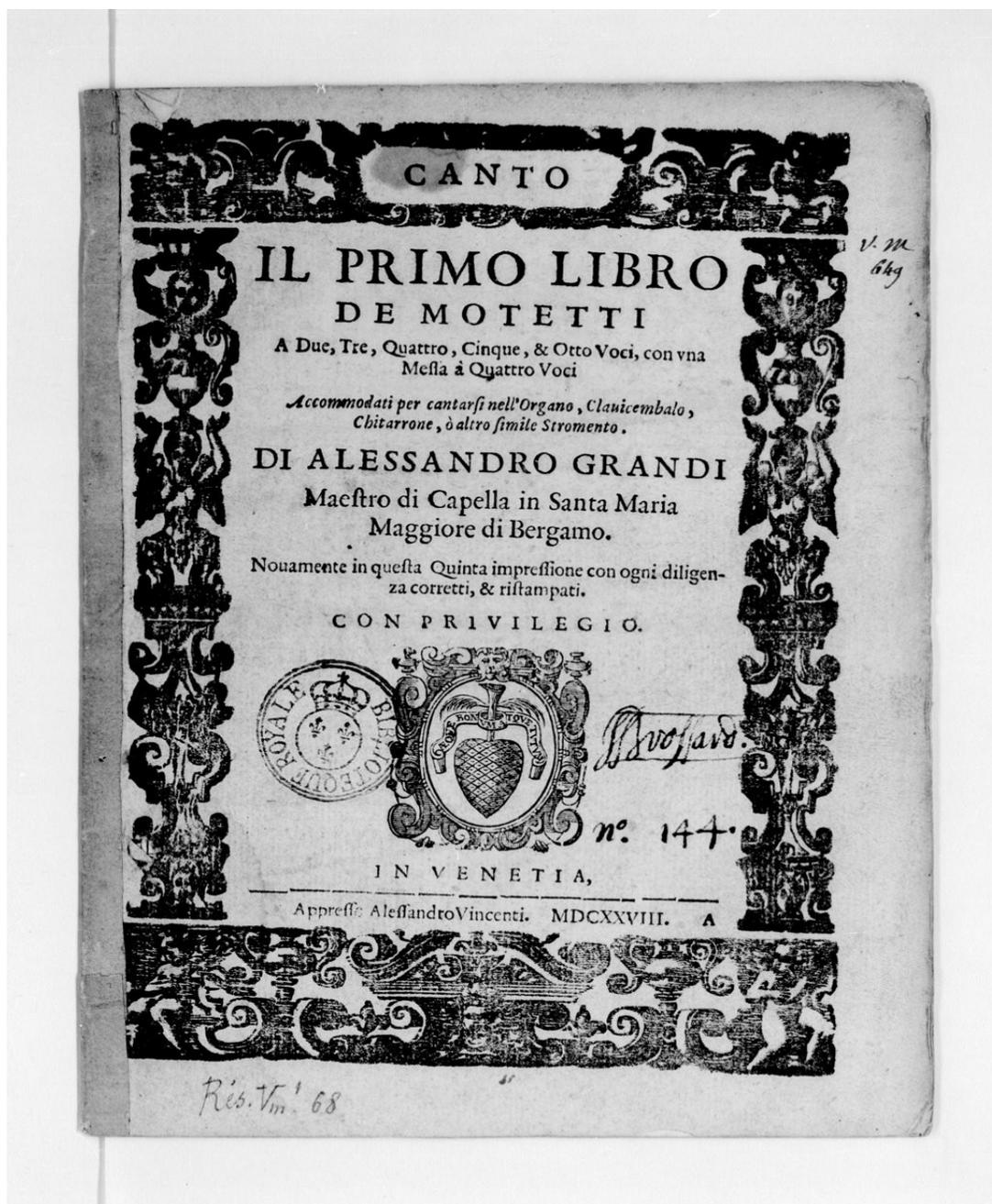


Fig.5.5. Title page, Girolamo Montesardo, *I lieti giorni di Napoli*, 1612.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Girolamo Montesardo, *I lieti giorni di Napoli* (Naples: Battista Gargano & Lucretio Nacci, 1612)



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Fig.5.6. Title page, Alessandro Grandi, *Primo Libro de Motetti*, 1628.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> “Alessandro Grandi, *Primo libro de Motetti a due, tre, quattro, cinque & otto voci* (Venice: Alessandro Vincenti, 1628). Europeana Collections, accessed February 12, 2017.  
[http://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/record/9200365/BibliographicResource\\_2000081552275.html](http://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/record/9200365/BibliographicResource_2000081552275.html)

## CHAPTER SIX: THE HARP AS A SOLO INSTRUMENT

While the harp has a long history, comparatively little music has been written specifically for it. One of the earliest sources that indicates the use of harp was *Tres libros de música en cifras para vihuela* by Alonso Mudarra (1510 – 1580), which included the pieces *Tiento IX para harpu u organu* and *Fantasia X que contrahaze la harpa en la manera de Ludovico*. This collection was published in 1546; however, it is important to note that the date does not represent the origins of the solo harp tradition, as such a tradition had already existed for hundreds of years. While more sources gradually became available throughout the late Renaissance and the Baroque, the majority of documented harp repertoire came into existence only after the invention of the double-action pedal harp in 1810. Hence, in our attempt to survey the harp literature of the early Italian Baroque, one faces the challenge of relying on the small amount of surviving documentary evidence.

As previously noted, publications of solo harp music were especially sparse due to the fact that it was a largely improvised art and was often transmitted orally. In addition, the harp did not have a sufficiently large amateur base for solo publications to be economically viable in the market. Hence, the small amount of music that we have in print is not fully representative of either solo harp repertoire of the time or the popularity of the instrument. In fact, it offers only a mere glimpse of the instrument's capabilities and uses. The numerous documented accounts of harp players' virtuosity indicate that the harp was indeed used extensively as a solo instrument, and that repertoire did exist – printed or improvised – enabling these virtuoso performers to display their technical

prowess and their artistry. This was especially true of the Neapolitan school, where Italian harp traditions took root.

Italy was at the forefront of Baroque instrumental music: Venice rose to prominence due to its large publishing industry, Rome and Florence were noted for their outstanding performers, and Ferrara's active music scene was indebted to Este patronage. In Southern Italy, however, the emergence of the Neapolitan school, heavily influenced by the sixteenth-century Spanish "experimental"<sup>38</sup> style, established a new keyboard tradition that was consequently reflected in contemporary harp music. The Neapolitan school was known for its virtuosic technical display enabled by idiomatic keyboard writing and coupled with daring harmonic directions. It is worth noting that much of the harp music that was published was within keyboard collections and in similar style to keyboard music. Indeed, the two were often interchangeable and transferable, such as the aforementioned works by Mudarra. This is not surprising, given the similarities between the two instruments and that harp notation did not differ from that for keyboard in Italy.<sup>39</sup> In addition, many of the virtuoso harpists were keyboard players as well.

### **Music specifically for the harp**

Two of the most influential figures in Naples were Giovanni Maria Trabaci (1575 – 1647) and Ascanio Mayone (1565 – 1627), both outstanding students of Giovanni de Macque (c.1548 – 1614). While both composers produced similar outputs, each had

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Judd, "Italy," *Keyboard music before 1700*, ed. Alexander Silbiger (Routledge: New York and London, 2004), 223.

<sup>39</sup> "Fantasy and Craft: The Solo Instrumentalist," *Cambridge History of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Music*, ed. Tim Carter and John Butt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 459.

distinguishing stylistic characteristics. Trabaci wrote more in the polyphonic style, with his best works being the *ricercars* and *canzonas*. Mayone's music is more idiosyncratic and virtuosic, and he wrote notable *toccatas*. These tendencies could be a reflection of each composer's instrumental specialties. Mayone was a virtuoso harpist himself, as well as an organist who wrote little polyphonic vocal music. Trabaci, on the other hand, who was known as an organist and directed one of the most important musical institutions of Naples, was also a prolific composer of vocal music.<sup>40</sup>

In 1593, harpist, organist, and composer Ascanio Mayone succeeded Scipione Stella (1558 – 1662) as organist at the *Chiesa dell'Annunziata*, one of the leading musical institutions in Naples at the time. Mayone was later appointed *maestro di capella* of the same church. In 1601, Scipione Cerreto (1551 – 1633), an Italian theorist and composer, compiled a famous list of Neapolitan musicians in *Della prattica musica vocale, et strumentale*, where Mayone was listed as one of the excellent performers on the organ and the *arpa a due ordini* (Fig. 6.1).<sup>41</sup> He was appointed second organist of the royal chapel of the Spanish viceroys, and when Trabacci succeeded Macque as *maestro di capella* in 1614, Mayone was promoted to first organist. His son, Giulio Mayone (c.1590 – before 1636), was also a celebrated harpist who served in the *Santa Casa dell'Annunziata* from 1610 to 1628 and later in the Oratory of St Philip Neri until his death.

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<sup>40</sup> Judd, 261.

<sup>41</sup> Scipione Cerreto, *Della prattica musica vocale et strumentale* (Naples: Giovanni Giacomo Carlino, 1601), 158.

*Martio Cortese Napolitano.*

*Il Reu. Don Gioan Battista di Nicola Napol. & Hedomatario.*

*Ottavio Cortese Napolitano.*

*Prospero Staiualo Napolitano.*

Sonatori eccellenti di Tromboni, di Ciaramelle, e Cornetti,  
della Città di Napoli, che oggi viuono.

<i>Francesco.</i>	)	<i>Anseloni</i>
<i>Tarquinio.</i>	)	<i>fratelli</i>
<i>Gioanni, &amp;</i>	)	<i>Napolitani.</i>
<i>Bartolomeo.</i>	)	

Sonatori eccellenti dell'Arpa à due ordini, della Città di  
Napoli, che oggi viuono.

*Gioan Lonardo dell'Arpa Napolitano.*

*Scanio Maione Napolitano.*

*Dominico Gallo Napolitano.*

Vi sono ancora molt'altri giouani virtuosi di Musica, i qua-  
li sono medesimamente di mirabil riuscita non solo della  
Compositiõe, ma anco del suono di varij stromenti.

*Non tacerò di voi spirti beati  
Ch' al Ciel state a goder con gli altri Santi,  
Di rinouar di voi l'almi, e preggiati  
Concenti, con bel stil composti, e quanti  
Oggi vi sono ancor c'hanno spiegati  
De bei vostri concetti, tanti, e tanti,  
Ben lo sò io, e à tutti è noto quanto  
Haue illustrato il mondo il vostro Canto.*

Cópositori eccellenti della Città di Nap. ch'oggi nõ viuono.

*Laise Dentice Musico Theorico gentil'buomo Napolitano.*

*Diego Ortiz Spagnuolo per antichità Napolitano.*

*Il Re-*

Fig.6.1. List of notable Neapolitan harpists in *Della prattica musica vocale et strumentale* by Scipione Cerreto<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Mayone's *Primo libro di diversi capricci* (Naples, 1603) was the first publication containing keyboard music that incorporates new Neapolitan style, featuring restless rhythms and abruptly contrasting sections.<sup>43</sup> Like the keyboard works of his colleague Giovanni Maria Trabaci, these are often considered predecessors to the signature keyboard style of Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583 – 1643). Mayone's other keyboard works include partitas, toccatas and ricercars. His vocal music consisted of madrigals, and his sacred output included motets, *Messe e vespri*, *Laetatus sum*, and *Magnificat*.

Mayone's *Secondo libro di diversi capricci per sonare* (Naples, 1609) includes the *Recercare sopra il Canto fermo di Costantio Festa per sonar all'Arpa*, an imitative ricercar with a *cantus firmus* based on the *La Spagna* melody. The piece is generally considered one of the first pieces specifically written for the harp, due to its early publication date.<sup>44</sup> It is certainly surprising that this is his only work specified for the harp, as one would have expected more output for the instrument from such an accomplished harpist. This piece exemplifies the *stile antico* approach that features controlled dissonance and measured counterpoint weaving around the *cantus firmus*, which is set in breves in the tenor. While it lacks the lavish ornamentation and display of virtuosity typically associated with the Neapolitan school, the imaginative contrapuntal treatment of the melodic patterns is indeed impressive. The subject is presented in a

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<sup>43</sup> Roland Jackson. "Mayone, Ascanio," in *Oxford Music Online*, accessed December 3, 2016. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

<sup>44</sup> Hannelore Devaere, "The Baroque Double Harp in the Kingdom of Naples," in *Aspects of the Historical Harp: Proceedings of the International Historical Harp Symposium*, ed. Martin van Schaik (Utrecht: Foundation for Historical Performance Practice, 1994), 26.

consistent manner and composition techniques such as *stretto*, diminution, inversion, and parallel thirds, sixths, and tenths are skillfully incorporated.<sup>45</sup>

Giovanni Maria Trabaci was an Italian organist, composer and harpist. While not much was known about his early life, in 1601 he was appointed organist to the royal chapel of the Spanish viceroys in Naples. Trabaci succeeded his teacher, Giovanni de Macque, as *maestro di capella* in 1614 and remained in that position until his death in 1647. He also served as organist at the *Oratorio dei Filippini* in 1597 and then later from 1625 to 1630. He was also affiliated with the Neapolitan aristocratic family of Capoa di Balzo from 1603 to 1611.

Trabaci had a large compositional output in both the vocal and instrumental sphere. His vocal music spans 169 sacred and 60 secular works that embrace a variety of forms, ranging from large-scale masses and Passion settings to more intimate dialogues and arias. He was also a prolific instrumental composer, with a known output of 165 keyboard works. These were especially important as they foreshadowed Girolamo Frescobaldi in their bold virtuosity and adventurous harmonic language.<sup>46</sup> Trabaci's keyboard compositions are mostly published in two collections: *Ricercate, canzone francese, capricci, canti Fermi, gagliarde, partite diverse, toccata durezze e ligature, et un madrigale passagiato nel fine* (Naples, 1603); and *Il secondo libro de ricercate, & altri varii capricci* (Naples, 1615). In both volumes, he noted to his readers that the works could indeed be played on any instrument. In the latter collection, which was published

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<sup>45</sup> Raymond Harrison Kelton, "The Instrumental Music of Ascanio Mayone" (Ph.D Diss., North Texas State College, 1961), 102.

<sup>46</sup> Roland Jackson. "Trabaci, Giovanni Maria" in *Oxford Music Online*, accessed December 3, 2016. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

shortly he succeeded Giovanni de Macque as *maestro di capella*, the following pieces were expressly written for the harp:

Toccata seconda, & ligature per l'Arpa  
Partite artificiose sopra il Tenor di Zefiro  
Partita Seconda per l'Arpa  
Partita Ottava per l'Arpa  
Partita Nona per l'Arpa  
Partita Undecima per l'Arpa  
Ancidetemi pur per l'Arpa

The *Toccata seconda, & ligature per l'Arpa* begins with an ascending line in thirds, followed by a dramatic yet idiomatic G minor descending arpeggio that spreads across the entire range of the instrument. Strict fugal writing then displaces the restless rhythm and dramatic harmonic shifts that dominate the rhapsodic opening, although performers often choose to embellish the contrapuntal voices. As evident in the composition, Trabaci employs scales, trills, turns, and imitations of the hands deemed so suitable and idiomatic for the harp by Agazzari in his famous treatise.

These features are also present in his *Ancidetemi pur per l'Arpa*, a highly ornamented transcription of a four-part madrigal by Jacob Arcadelt (1505 – 1567). This immensely virtuosic instrumental setting fully exploits the technical capability of the harp. The sheer length of the work, along with the palette of varied figurations and florid embellishments across the full range of the instrument, pose a challenge to any harpist. In addition, the piece contains drastically contrasting moods and ever-changing tonal colors marked with distinct chromaticism with bold harmonic changes.

Trabaci's *Partite sopra Zefiro* includes twelve variations, of which the second, eighth, ninth, and eleventh are assigned to the harp. According to Cheryl Ann Fulton, although the origin of the Zefiro theme is mysterious, it is "a name for a variation of the

passamezzo modern theme.”<sup>47</sup> While the variations are each short in length, they exhibit the wide variety of tonal colors and characteristics that the harp is capable of displaying: smooth scales in the second partita; a stately, quasi allemande quality in the eighth; a bold, declamatory style in the ninth; and playful *scherzando* figures in the opening of the eleventh.

### **Other Possibilities**

Other than pieces specifically written for the harp, there is unfortunately little evidence as to what other music played on the instrument. However, it is reasonable to assume that the vast amount of keyboard music that was widely accessible was often played on the harp. As seen in the examples by Mayone and Trabaci, the harp was a versatile instrument equal to the keyboard in its adaptability to different styles and genres, from strict fugal writing to the dramatic virtuoso display. Since most harpists were also keyboard players, it would not be unusual for them to perform the same pieces on both instruments. In addition, repertory from other plucked instruments, such as the lute, was often adapted to the harp, due to the similar sound and timbre of the two instruments. At times vocal music such as madrigals could also be played on the harp, all of which widened the instrument’s repertory.

There are a large number of seventeenth-century instrumental works that were not designated for specific instruments, allowing performers to adapt these to their needs or the occasion. Due to its similar notation to keyboard music, it is often difficult to identify

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<sup>47</sup> Cheryl Ann Fulton, “The Works for Arpa Doppia by Giovanni Maria Trabaci (c.1575 – 1647)” (DM diss., Indiana University, 1996), 79.

harp repertory unless the harp was specifically indicated. Possible distinguishing features of idiomatic harp writing, as opposed to the keyboard, include large stretches of intervals or voice-crossings. These are often difficult to execute on the keyboard but are easily playable on the harp, due to the harp's closer string spacing and sideways orientation of hand placement. Hence, many scholars believe that there exists several pieces that could have in fact been written for the harp, despite the non-specified instrumentation leading others to believe these pieces were for keyboard.

Cheryl Ann Fulton draws striking comparison between Rinaldo Trematerra's (d. 1603) *Partite sopra Zefiro* and Trabaci's work of the same title. Both sets of variations were written in the same mode and in duple meter, are the same length, and use a similar, if not identical, bass line. Furthermore, the opening four measures of Trematerra's second variation are almost identical to that of Trabaci's eighth *partita*. According to Fulton, it is highly likely that Trabaci was quoting Trematerra in his variation set, given the structural musical connections between the two pieces. Trematerra was a renowned harpist himself more commonly known as Rinaldo dell'arpa, and he was well connected to Gesualdo and the Ferrarese court. Hence, it is highly likely that his *Partite sopra Zefiro* was indeed written for the harp.<sup>48</sup>

Neapolitan composer Rocco Rodio (1535 – after 1615) published his *Libro primo di ricercate* in 1575, which contained five ricercars and four fantasias. Although widely accepted as keyboard music, scholar Santiago Kastner suggested that some may well have been written for the harp and were probably inspired by the virtuosity of harpist

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 76.

Gian Leonardo dell'Arpa, with whom he was closely associated.<sup>49</sup> Kastner believes that the *Fantasia La mi re fa mi re* was indeed inspired by the chromatic harp, as the large intervals would have been more comfortable to play on the harp than on the keyboard.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the lack of historic documentation, a survey of modern *arpa doppia* recordings and concert programs provides a sampling of the extent of early seventeenth-century harp repertory. Although not specified for the harp, many keyboard works such as Mayone's and Trabaci's could feasibly be played on the instrument. In addition, several renowned harp virtuosos of early seventeenth-century Italy were prominent composers as well; for example, Gian Leonardo dell'Arpa. Therefore, it would only be natural to assume that these composers conceived many of their works for the harp and performed these pieces themselves. In other cases, composers such as Giovanni de Macque and Luigi Rossi, who frequented the Neapolitan harp circle and were naturally influenced by the possibilities of the instrument, wrote pieces that were remarkably idiomatic for the harp. In addition, keyboard publications by notable keyboard composers such as Luzzasco Luzzaschi (1545 – 1607) and Girolamo Frescobaldi often contain pieces that were equally suited for the *arpa doppia*. Hence, the scope of harp repertoire in seventeenth-century Italy is quite extensive, despite the apparent lack of music written specifically for the instrument.

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<sup>49</sup> Dinko Fabris, "The harp in Naples 1500-1700," in *Historical Harps: Theoretical and practical aspects of historical harps*, ed. Heidrun Rosenzweig (Dornach: Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 1991), 45.

<sup>50</sup> Francesco Tasini, "The *Libro di Ricercate a Quattro Voci* (1575) by Rocco Rodio and some Remarks on the Relationship between Naples and Spain in the Sixteenth Century," *Anuario Musical* 69 (Jan.- Dec. 2014), 105.

## **Notable harpists**

The music scene of the early Italian Baroque was bursting with an unprecedented number of harpists, most notably in Naples and Rome. Many of these were noted for their exceptional ability and mastery of the instrument, possessing technical brilliance and musical artistry that captivated audiences and inspired many written accounts of their performances. While the names Mayone and Trabaci are synonymous with the Italian harp school, there were several other prominent harpists who contributed to the development of the *arpa doppia* and shed light on its virtuoso possibilities.

### **Gian Leonardo Mollica (1530 – 1602)**

Gian Leonardo Mollica, more commonly known as Giovanni Leonardo dell'Arpa, was a Neapolitan harpist, singer, composer, and actor. He was especially known as an outstanding player of the *arpa doppia* and was a favored entertainer in the aristocratic circles of Giovanna d'Aragona and her children. Gian Leonardo's fame and style of playing spread beyond Naples to Spain and presumably the whole of Europe, as he remained the leading harpist for over half a century. He was recommended to Wilhelm of Bavaria in 1563 by Cardinal Truchsess and invited to the Ferrarese court in 1584, where the famous harpist Laura Peverara was already active. However, he declined the latter offer to remain in Naples.<sup>51</sup>

Gian Leonardo's skills were particularly noted by several Neapolitan writers. Giovan Battista del Tuffo declared his admiration in 1588:

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<sup>51</sup> Devaere, 15.

Who could latch the shoes of that great man Gian Leonardo dell'Arpa? As an impression of talent, virtue, skill and judgment he showed the greatness of his dear, celestial, divine, rare instrument...<sup>52</sup>

Gian Leonardo was the first harpist mentioned in Scipione Cerreto's *Della prattica musica vocale, et strumentale* (1601) and he was often considered the first virtuoso of the instrument in Naples.<sup>53</sup> He was so highly acclaimed that the Neapolitan poet Giulio Cesare Cortese described Gian Leonardo as the inventor of the *arpa doppia* in his *Viaggio di Parnaso*: "The Sirens of Naples, contralto, sang a beautiful villanelle; Gian Leonardo played the double harp, of which he himself is the inventor – so celebrated and beautiful."<sup>54</sup>

Gian Leonardo was often regarded as the first musician of the unique Italian harp tradition. His style of playing served as the basis of the Neapolitan harp school until late in the seventeenth century. His students included Domenico Gallo (fl. 1600), a famed Neapolitan harpist known to play the *arpa a due ordini*; Scipione Bolino (fl. 1600), who was *maestro di cappella* under Giovanni de Macque and the first official harpist of the Royal Chapel in 1599; Francesco de Auxiliis (c. 1630), who replaced Scipione Bolino at

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<sup>52</sup> "Ma chi potrà scogliere la scarpa a quel grand'uom Giov. Leonardo dell'Arpa? Ché lui quasi in effetto col'ingegno, valor, arte e giuditio con sé bello esercizio ha dimostrato fuore le grandezze del caro suo celeste, divin strumento raro." G.B. Del Tufo, *Ritratto della grandezza, delizie e meraviglie de la nobilissima città di Napoli*, (Ms. 1588c.) ed. C. Tagliareni (Naples, 1588), 103. Quoted in Rajka Dobronić-Mazzoni, *The Eternal Harp: A Musical and Cultural Historical Study* (Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 2002), 59.

<sup>53</sup> Cerreto, 158.

<sup>54</sup> "La Serena de Napole cantava / de contràuto na brava villanelle; / No cierto Giallonardo le sonava / l'arpa, ch'isso accacciaie famosa e bella; / E per fare conzierto assaie chiù tunno / Sonaie lo colascione Compà Iunno..." G.C. Cortese, *Viaggio di Parnaso*, 1621, Canto I, verse 42, in *Opere Poetiche*, ed. E. Malato (Rome, 1967), 273. Quoted in Fabris, 49.

the Royal Chapel after 1611 and succeeded Giulio Mayone at the Oratorio di San Filippo Neri; and Flaminio Caracciolo (fl. 1579-90). Gian Leonardo's compositional output included six *canzoni* in 1565, six *canzoni* in 1566, and three *villanelle* in 1567. He also wrote seven *napolitane* that were published in Venice, 1570, as part of the anthology *Corona dell napolitane à 3 e à 4 voci di diversi eccellentissimi musica*, which included compositions by other composers.

### **Giovanni de Macque (c. 1548 – 1614)**

Giovanni de Macque was born in Valenciennes and was a Flemish composer, organist and teacher who later established his career in Naples. While his exact birth year is unknown, it was probably between 1548 and 1550. He served in the choir of the imperial chapel in Vienna as a child and later studied with composer Philippe de Monte (1521 – 1603). He spent some years in Rome from 1574 before moving to Naples in 1585, where he remained for the rest of his life. He was first employed by the Gesualdo household and was appointed organist of the chapel of the Spanish Viceroy in 1594. Eventually, Macque succeeded Bartolomeo Roy and was promoted to *maestro di capella* in 1599. Under his direction, the number of musicians doubled and he produced many distinguished students who continued the traditions of the Neapolitan school.<sup>55</sup>

Macque published 12 separate books of madrigals and was also a prolific composer of instrumental and keyboard music that included canzonas, ricercars, capriccios and numerous pieces for organ. His sacred output consisted a book of motets for five to eight voices, litanies, laudi spirituali, and contrafactum motets. Macque's

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<sup>55</sup> Devaere, 20.

compositional style underwent a notable shift when he moved to Naples. While his earlier works embodied the conservatism of his Roman contemporaries, he began writing in more progressive idioms and experimented with chromaticism and dissonances, reflecting the influence of Carlo Gesualdo (1566 – 1613).<sup>56</sup>

Macque was an important successor of Gian Leonardo dell'Arpa in the development of the harp and the Neapolitan school. While he was not explicitly known as a harpist, he was known to have composed for the instrument and had several students who were celebrated harpists, most notably Giovanni Marie Trabaci and Ascanio Mayone, who both served as first and second organists respectively under Macque's direction as *maestro di capella*. Other notable students included Francesco Lambardi (1587 – 1642), Donato Antonio Spano (1585 – after 1609), Andrea Falconieri (c. 1585 – 1656) and Luigi Rossi (1597 – 1653).

### **Orazio Michi (1594 – 1641)**

Orazio Michi, also known as Orazio dell'Arpa, was a harpist and composer born in Alife in the province of Caserta and was active in Rome for his professional life. His virtuosity on the *arpa doppia* could indicate that he received his musical training in Naples where the instrument was particularly prevalent, although no formal documentation confirms this. In 1613, he entered the service of Cardinal Alessandro Peretti di Montalto, a known music lover who employed numerous musicians in his household, and worked there until the Cardinal's death in 1623. Michi is known to have

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<sup>56</sup> W. Richard Shindle, "Macque, Giovanni de," in *Oxford Music Online*, accessed December 20, 2016. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

been the harpist for *Amor pudico*, a pastiche opera performed in celebration of the wedding of Cardinal's Montalto brother, Michele Peretti, in 1614.<sup>57</sup> By 1620, Michi was the most highly paid musician of the Montalto household, with compensation that included an additional annual pension sourced from two of the cardinal's abbeys.<sup>58</sup> After Cardinal Montalto's death, Michi continued his service under Cardinal Maurizio of Savoy until 1630. He also received additional patronage from Cardinals Antonio Barberini, Giovanni Battista Maria Pallota, and Bernardino Spada. Between 1636 and 1641, Michi lived in Vallicello in the parish of S. Celso. He died in Rome in 1641.

Michi was a widely celebrated virtuoso of the *arpa doppia* whose highly innovative playing secured his place as the leading Roman harpist in the seventeenth century. His playing was praised in the writings of Vincenzo Giustiniani, André Maugars, Pietro della Valle, and Severo Bonini. Vincenzo Giustiniani wrote:

Orazio Michi now plays this double harp almost miraculously, not only as regards his enormous skill but also in terms of his particular way of damping the sound of the strings which were they to continue to sound would cause dissonance and cacophony.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Mara Galassi, "The *arpa a tre registri* in seventeenth century Rome," in *Historical Harps: Theoretical and practical aspects of historical harps*, ed. Heidrun Rosenzweig (Dornach: Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 1991), 71.

<sup>58</sup> John Walter Hill, "Michi, Orazio," in *Oxford Music Online*, accessed December 13, 2016. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

<sup>59</sup> "Et ora Orazio Mihi suona di questa Arpa Doppia quasi miracolosamente, non solo nell'artificio, ma in un modo particolare di smorzare il suono delle corde, il quale se continuasse cagionerebbe dissonanza e cacofonia, e di più un trillo difficile a ual si voglia altro..." Vincenzo Giustiniani, *Discorso sopra la musica*, (1620), reprinted in V. Giustiniani, *Discorsi sulle arti e sui mestieri*, ed. and trans. A. Banti (Florence, 1981), 33. Quoted in Galassi, 71.

In 1621, the famous singer Francesco Rasi declared that the most remarkable musical event in Rome was the playing of Orazio Michi.<sup>60</sup> Claims also exist that he was the first to play the *arpa a tre registri*, although no substantial evidence support this.<sup>61</sup> While none of his instrumental composition survives, one could assume the existence of works for solo harp that he would have performed himself. He also contributed greatly to the emerging monodic style and wrote around 100 vocal works that included canzonettas, arias, and madrigals. Most of these were for solo voice and continuo, with the exception of six for two voices and another six for three voices.

### **Luigi Rossi (1597 – 1653) and his circle of harpists**

Luigi Rossi was an important figure of seventeenth-century Italian harp circles, as well as being an organist and a composer. While it was never clearly established whether he did in fact play the instrument, his name was well associated with the instrument, since many of his family members were remarkable harpists. He was particularly active first in Rome, then in Paris later, and was particularly known for his canzonettas, cantatas and operas. While his birthplace is not clearly established, one could trace his origins to the Kingdom of Naples. Rossi spent his early years in Naples in the service of the Duke of Trajetto and studied with Giovanni de Macque. He moved to Rome in 1620 and was employed as a musician under Marc'Antonio Borghese, who was the Prince of Sumona and the great nephew of Pope Paul V. By then, he was also a proficient player of lute and harpsichord.

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<sup>60</sup> “Sin hora non ho sentito cosa di grand’eccellenza più d’Orazio dell’arpa...,” letter of F. Rasi from Rome, dated 9 April, 1621. Quoted in Fabris, 52.

<sup>61</sup> Dobronić-Mazzoni, 58.

In 1627, Rossi married Costanza de Ponte, an outstanding harpist and one of the most highly regarded musicians of her day. Costanza de Ponte worked in the same household as Rossi serving Marc'Antonio Borghese's wife, Camilla Orsini. The formidable duo often traveled together to perform in some of the leading courts in Italy, including the Medici court in Florence in 1635. Additionally, Costanza's brother, Paolo de Ponte, also played professionally and was active in the court of Vienna.

Rossi became the organist of San Luigi dei Francesi in 1633, the official church of France in Rome and one of the most important Roman musical establishments. He continued serving this position until his death despite his frequent absence from Rome when he moved to France a few years later. His brother, Giovanni Carlo Rossi (1617-1692), would act as his substitute during his absence. Like his brother, Carlo Rossi was also an organist and composer. However, he was also a renowned harp virtuoso. He later became affiliated with Palazzo Barberini, reviving the famed Barberini harp in 1673 on the momentous occasion when Maffeo Barberini was awarded the Order of the Golden Fleece. He is also known to have played the harp in the operas *Chi soffre speri* by Marco Marazzoli and in *San Bonifatio* by Domenico Mazzocchi in 1639.<sup>62</sup>

Luigi Rossi entered the service of Cardinal Antonio Barberini in 1641. In 1642, he wrote his first opera *Il palazzo incantato*, which was sponsored by the Cardinal. When Cardinal Barberini was exiled from Rome in 1645, Rossi followed him to France and eventually settled in Paris while his wife remained in Rome. His only other opera *Orfeo*, was written at the request of Cardinal Jules Mazarin in 1647. At the height of his fame, Rossi was highly regarded by his contemporaries as one of the leading musical

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<sup>62</sup> Galassi, 72.

figures of Rome, despite ongoing political disruption that often impacted negatively on the performances of his operas. His other compositions included 300 settings of secular Italian verse, of which three-quarters are canzonettas. However, almost none of Rossi's instrumental music survives.

### **Marco Marazzoli (1602 – 1662)**

Marco Marazzoli, born in Parma in 1602, was an Italian singer, esteemed harpist, and a highly versatile composer of vocal music who was closely linked to the Barberini family. While not much was known about his early life, he received training as a priest and was presumably ordained around 1625. He moved to Rome in 1626 and the same year entered the service of Cardinal Antonio Barberini, with whom he traveled extensively in the company of other contemporary musicians such as Filippo Vitali and Stefano Landi. In 1637, Marazzoli was appointed *aiutante di camera* to Barberini and served as a tenor in the papal chapel in Rome, a position secured for him by the Barberini family. Finally in 1639, Marazzoli was promoted to the position of *musicò* in the Barberini household and served as a tenor in the Sistine Chapel by 1640.

Marazzoli was a prolific opera composer, although his output was temporarily halted during the exile of the Barberini family. In addition, he also wrote around 380 extant cantatas for one to six voices with continuo accompaniment that embraced a wide variety of vocal forms. His instrumental music consists of mostly sinfonias for operas and ballets. He was a prominent figure in the musical life of seventeenth-century Rome and was frequently known as Marco dell'Arpa, reflecting his renowned virtuosity on the *arpa doppia*. The Barberini family made him a gift of the famous Barberini harp, which was

built between 1605 and 1620, bearing the Barberini coat of arms on the finely carved and gilded column. In 1662, upon his death, the harp was returned to his patron, Antonio Barberini. Together with the instrument, Marazzoli also left the Cardinal a painting by Giovanni Lanfranco, expressly painted for Marazzoli that depicted Venus playing the Barberini harp.<sup>63</sup> The painting is now kept at the National Gallery of Ancient Art in Palazzo Barberini, while the harp is preserved in the National Museum of Musical Instruments, both in Rome.

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<sup>63</sup> “The Barberini Harp,” Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, accessed on 20 December, 2016. <http://museostrumentimusicali.beniculturali.it/index.php?en/129/the-barberini-harp>.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this document is to introduce the *arpa doppia* within its musical and socio-cultural context and to understand its use in early seventeenth-century Italy. Throughout history, harp makers have sought to expand the instrument's range and tuning possibilities. In the late sixteenth century, harps with multiple parallel string-ranks emerged in Italy, known as the *arpa doppia*. These harps varied in size and range, and consist of two or three parallel ranks of strings.

Italy was at the forefront of musical development in the early Baroque, and Naples was regarded as the most important city for the *arpa doppia*. Due to strong political ties to Spain, the Neapolitan musical and cultural scenes were heavily under Spanish influence. The harp was an important instrument in Spain, as attested to in many extant writings and musical examples pertaining to the instrument. The popularity of the instrument spread to Naples, where many notable harpists were trained, and gradually to the rest of the country. There were several factors in the development of early Italian Baroque music that promoted the harp as an indispensable instrument in both ensemble and solo settings. The rise of the opera and *stile rappresentativo* consequently led to the development of basso continuo, in which the harp was particularly useful in providing unique sound colors. Additionally, the increasing importance of instrumental music in the Baroque era encouraged composers to write for solo harp. At the same time, technical prowess and high levels of artistry were increasingly valued, giving rise to the notion of the virtuoso harpist. New compositions reflected this trend by including brilliant, idiomatic passages in harp solos.

The harp has always been a unique instrument with strong symbolic associations that influenced its use in music. In the religious realm, the instrument was often associated with King David, who played the harp to soothe the angst of King Saul. Additionally, Christian iconography often portrays the harp with angels and in heaven. Thus, the harp is often portrayed as otherworldly with mystical healing powers that belongs to the celestial. In the mythological world, the harp was played by various Greek gods and goddesses either alone or to accompany songs and poetry. Hence, it was perhaps the most important instrument in Ancient Greece. The story of Orpheus and the underworld inspired many early operas, the most famous of which was by Claudio Monteverdi, who wrote an *obbligato* harp solo to represent Orpheus's lyre in his attempt to enchant Charon. In addition, the harp was also used as part of the continuo instrumentation in pastoral scenes with nymphs and shepherds.

Although the harp was once an instrument enjoyed by both men and women across the social spectrum, it gradually became accessible only to a select few. While the development of the *arpa doppia* expanded the harp's chromatic ability to keep pace with trends in composition, the greater complexity of the instrument meant that only the most highly skilled were able to play it. It was also a large and cumbersome instrument, unlike its portable Renaissance counterpart. Furthermore, the refined workmanship required to build such an instrument also meant an increase in cost, thus making the harp accessible to only the wealthy elites of society or to professional musicians. The market for amateur harpists diminished significantly as a result. The marginalization of women in a patriarchal society also hindered many female musicians and harpists from seeking

employment. Even so, several highly celebrated female harpists managed to defy conventions and carve their own career.

The main use, or at least the most documented use of the harp in the early seventeenth century, was in continuo playing. Baroque theorists mentioned the harp as a continuo instrument in their treatises, the most important of which was Agostini Agazzari's *Del sonare sopra 'l basso con tutti li stromenti e dell' uso loro nel conserto* (1607). In his work, Agazzari explained the function of the harp in continuo playing and suggested how one should play it. It is documented that the harp was used widely both within the continuo section of operas as well as in the accompaniment for solo songs. However, the instrumentation was often not specified, making it difficult to determine where and when it would have been used. However, Claudio Monteverdi specifically called for the *arpa doppia* in his *L'Orfeo* (1607), even writing a complex *obbligato* part, and many Italian monody books list the harp as an alternative continuo instrument.

The harp was used not only for continuo but also extensively as a solo instrument. Just as with music publications with continuo, few solo publications survive that are specifically for the harp. However, extensive documentation illustrating the technical prowess of celebrated harpists confirms that the harp was indeed prized as a solo instrument capable of virtuoso display. Besides compositions expressly written for the harp by Ascanio Mayone and Giovanni Marie Trabaci, keyboard music was widely accessible and often played on the harp, thus expanding the repertory for solo harp.

The harp was an invaluable instrument in the cultural and musical scenes of seventeenth-century Italy. However, its versatility and rich history is unfortunately ignored in modern harp education. The world of early music and early harp often seems

inaccessible to non-specialists; as a result, much music is lost that could otherwise expand the modern harpist's repertory, stylistic awareness, and musical experiences. While the *arpa doppia* is indeed very different from the contemporary concert grand and requires additional specialist training, I hope that this research will inspire others to transcribe some of its rich and diverse music for the modern harp to increase accessibility for today's harpists. Finally, I hope to encourage understanding of one of the most important periods of harp development, as well as an appreciation for its wonderful music.

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