

Özgün Makale

Understanding Opera's Predecessor Madrigal Comedy and an Analysis of Adriano Banchieri's *Il Zabaione Musicale*¹

Operanın Öncülü Madrigal Komedinin
Anlamlandırılması ve Adriano Banchieri'nin
Il Zabaione Musicale'si Üzerine bir İnceleme

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Abstract

Madrigal comedy stands at the zenith of compositional procedures in the Renaissance. It indicated a new approach to the interdisciplinary consolidation of theatre and music which would soon give birth to opera. During its relatively short lifespan within the immensely long history of music, madrigal comedy gradually became a prominent type of entertainment music in Italy. Important figures of the late Renaissance such as Banchieri, Croce, and Vecchi composed madrigal comedies and proposed their own solutions to the problems of merging music with drama. Apart from his madrigal comedies, Banchieri was one of the first composers to write definite rules for figured bass and the one of the earliest to utilize dynamic markings on a musical score. This essay initially evaluates the history of madrigal comedy and the career of Banchieri. Then it continues with a theoretical analysis of his *Il Zabaione Musicale*. Lastly, it discusses the findings regarding both the genre and the piece.

Keywords: Madrigal Comedy, Adriano Banchieri, Late Renaissance, *Il Zabaione Musicale*.

Öz

Rönesans'ta bestecilik süreçlerinin zirvesinde duran madrigal komedi, müzik ile tiyatroyu disiplinlerarası şekilde bir araya getiren ve kısa zamanda operayı ortaya çıkartacak olan yeni bir yaklaşıma işaret etmektedir. Madrigal komedi, müzik tarihinin muazzam uzunluğu dikkate alınınca görece kısa süren yaşamında kademeli olarak İtalya'nın önemli bir eğlence müziği türü hâline geldi. Geç Rönesans'ın Banchieri, Croce ve Vecchi gibi önemli sanatçıları bu türde besteler yapıp, müziğin dramayla birleşmesinden doğan sorunlara kendi önerilerini sundular. Banchieri madrigal komedilerinin yanı sıra şifreli bas uygulaması için kesin kurallar yazan ve nota üzerine nüans (dinamik) işaretleri koyan ilk bestecilerden biridir. Bu makalede öncelikle madrigal komedi

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türünün tarihi ve Banchieri'nin kariyeri değerlendirilmiştir. Daha sonra *Il Zabaione Musicale*'nin teorik olarak incelenmesine geçilmiştir. Son olarak hem söz konusu tür hem de besteyle ilgili bulgular tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Madrigal Komedi, Adriano Banchieri, Geç Rönesans, *Il Zabaione Musicale*.

Introduction

Considered by some to be a primitive, underdeveloped version of opera, in its prime, madrigal comedy was highly successful in Italy. It allowed its audience to broaden their perception of music and drama while keeping them entertained by the jokes sprinkled in its text. It paved the way for opera and furthered the dramatic approach to music.

Apart from the meritorious studies of the musicologists Alfred Einstein and Martha Farahat, the best sources one can find on Banchieri's madrigal comedies (composed between 1598 and 1628) are unpublished doctoral theses and compact disc booklets. Also, there are no published thorough analyses of Banchieri's madrigal comedies from a theoretical perspective. To help fill the knowledge gap, this essay approaches the issue both historically and theoretically. Therefore, it first compiles and processes the historical data on madrigal comedy and the works of Banchieri through a survey of the literature, then moves on to the theoretical analysis of *Il Zabaione Musicale*. To overcome the problem of source material scarcity on Banchieri regarding madrigal comedy, writings about more famous madrigalist Orazio Vecchi, Banchieri's contemporary, are utilized.

This essay employs qualitative research methods, utilizing record-keeping and qualitative observation. The historical part of the essay consists of a literature review and critique in the context of madrigal comedy and its most influential composers. The analysis of *Il Zabaione Musicale* is based on the evaluation of rhythm, structure, tonal/modal centers, texture, voice-leading, characters, and text in relation to the music.

1. A Concise History of Madrigal Comedy

The rebirth of Ancient Greek ideals encouraged the intelligentsia of the Renaissance to transform arts, science, and religion. The music scene was not different and was affected by this refreshing vibrant intellectual energy. Since the beginning of *quattrocento*, the audiences of Europe saw a drastic change in their composers' language. With the invasion of English *fauxbourdon* and emancipation of thirds and sixths, continental Europe began to change its perception of consonance and dissonance.³ For the first time, they started to question the old, numerology-driven music theory, which was based on a twisted understanding of Aristotle's philosophy. Modal thinking gradually began to disappear and gave way to functional tonality.⁴

It was around this end of the 16th century that theatre began to merge with music as never before. The first opera *Dafne* emerged from the mind of Jacopo Peri in 1597, with the encouragement from Camerata de' Bardi.⁵ The same year, a Modenese composer Orazio Vecchi composed *L'Amfiparnaso (The Twin Peaks of Parnassus)*. The two were acquaintances at least. Vecchi heard *Eurydice* while he was in Florence in 1600, and from his statement, it can be deduced that Peri

³ Largely thanks to Dunstable and Dufay

⁴ It would take approximately two centuries before this transformation was completed.

⁵ Florentine Camerata. An elite group of humanists, musicians, poets, and intellectuals who came together under the patronage of Giovanni de' Bardi to shape the future of arts in the late Renaissance.



held Vecchi's opinion in high regard (Peri, 1934). In the foreword of the print of his *Eurydice*, Peri assures his readers that this is how the Greeks and Romans sang when telling their fables. He then compares the success of his new piece to his *Dafne* and writes:

“But the present *Eurydice* had an even greater success, not because it was heard by (...) worthy men whom I named and further by Count Alfonso Fontanella and Signor Orazio Vecchi, noble confirmers of my belief, but because it was represented before so great a queen and before so many celebrated princes of Italy and France and because it was sung by the most excellent musicians of our times.” (Strunk, 1950, pp. 373-376)

Although Vecchi himself never wrote an opera, he must have been very welcoming and open-minded towards the development of this new genre.

Madrigal comedy is “a cycle of vocal pieces in the style of the madrigal and lighter Italian secular forms that are connected by a vague plot or common theme” (Britannica, 2002). The origins of the genre can be traced back to Alessandro Striggio's *Il Cicalamento delle Donne al Bucato* (*The Chatter of Women at the Laundry*), composed in 1567. However, it is with Vecchi's *L'Amfiparnaso*, that the genre reaches the highest point. Vecchi subtitled his piece as *comedia harmonica* and referring to it in the preface as *comedia musicale*. In today's terminology, this piece is considered a madrigal comedy. *L'Amfiparnaso* is one of the best and substantial examples of this genre. So, it is possible to say that when opera was being invented, madrigal comedy was reaching its peak. Coined by the German-American musicologist Alfred Einstein in the 20th century, the term madrigal comedy signifies series of secular vocal pieces, bound together by a plot or story in which the music is descriptive of the action of the characters or the situation.

Vecchi was also known in England as a talented and knowledgeable madrigal composer. In his book, *A Plaine and Easie Introduction on to Practicall Musicke* (sic) (1597), Thomas Morley⁶ recommends his readers to study “Horatio Vecchi” alongside other madrigalists (Strunk, 1950, pp. 274-278). Henry Peacham⁷ (the younger) also pays tribute to Vecchi in *The Compleat* (sic) *Gentleman* (1622), his book on the Puritan concept of duty. He states:

“I bring you now mine own master, Horatio Vecchi of Modena, besides goodness of air most pleasing of all other for his conceit and variety, wherewith all his works are singularly beautified, as well his madrigals of five and six as those his canzonets... Then that great master, and master not long since of St. Mark's chapel in Venice, second to none for a full, lofty, and sprightly vein, following none save his own humor, who while he lived was one of the most free and brave companions of the world...” (Strunk, 1950, pp. 331-337)

In fact, their bravery along with humanism and humor is what makes Vecchi and Banchieri exceptional. In a world weary of religious superstition aiding and abetting autocratic rule, those composers' madrigal comedies transformed the minds of the high society. In Banchieri's words, “As well as serious dramatic works, people need joy, pieces providing light entertainment. Do one of them well and enjoy the other.” Furthermore, he states that he had no other purpose than “passing the hours of leisure” when writing his madrigal comedies (Garrett, 1972). In this context, Banchieri's words may remind many, who are literate in music history, the concept of *Gebrauchsmusik*,⁸ which was put forth by Hindemith. Today, in a world ravaged by extreme commercialism, Banchieri's approach can be beneficial in bringing admirers of light and serious music together.

⁶ Thomas Morley (1557-1602) was a prominent English madrigalist and influential theorist of the Elizabethan School.

⁷ Henry Peacham (1578-1644) was a renaissance poet and writer. Peacham had the opportunity to travel to France, Italy, Westphalia, and the Netherlands, and made a lot of friends in music circles.

⁸ Music for use. Music that is concerned about being understood by its audience, instead of art for art's sake attitude.



When it comes to staged productions, in the *Introduzione* of his *L'Amfiparnaso*, Vecchi proclaims the following to his listener:

“The place of this action is the great theatre of the world... know then that the spectacle of which I speak is seen through the mind, into which it enters through the ears, not through the eyes; be silent then, and instead of looking, listen” (Vecchi, 1977, p. 15).

This remark is proof that Vecchi was only interested in the aural phenomenon provided by the music. An equally important visual experience could impair the listening experience, therefore was not welcome. Vecchi's position on this issue can be understood even more clearly by the following statement also in his *L'Amfiparnaso*:

“Moreover, the music is not interspersed with such pleasures for the sight as might relieve the one sense by the attentiveness of the other. However, those desirous of more action may refer every want to what is presupposed and inwardly expressed, and thus will they be able to form a complete idea of the play.” (Vecchi, 1977, p. 15)

Considering the gaps in the storyline of his work, Vecchi depended on the common knowledge of the people regarding characters from *commedia dell'arte*. Furthermore, he did not mind composing for five parts for each singer to sing the line of a single character. In this sense, he is more Renaissance-oriented than baroque composers who would look for clarity in the arms of monody.⁹

The structure of the madrigal comedy forced Banchieri to think about what the audience was going to experience in terms of visual setting since the singers and actors were different people. He suggested that the actors should wear masks, the singers should be grouped together on one side, and the acting should take place in front of the painting of an empty street (Figure 1). These adjustments were introduced to promote coherency and believability (Garrett, 1972).



Figure 1: Woodcut of an actor delivering the prologue of *L'Amfiparnaso* (Vecchi, 1597).

By 1610, madrigal comedies started to fall out of favor and disappear from the music scene, evolving into opera. Considered by some as Vecchi's heir (Farhat, 1991), Banchieri carried the torch of madrigal comedy until his death. His contributions had made the genre more effective and convincing. However, for the upcoming composers, the capabilities and endless possibilities of the opera were far more interesting.

2. The Life and Career of Adriano Tomaso Banchieri

A prominent and industrious composer of the late Renaissance, Adriano Banchieri (Figure 2) was born in Bologna on September 3, 1568. According to some musicologists, he was also interested

⁹ Monody is the style of composing a solo vocal line with accompaniment.



in literature and philosophy, publishing various writings under the pseudonym Camillo Scaligeri (or Scaliggeri) (Mischianti, 1963).

Apparently, the most substantial change in his life occurred when he entered the Olivetan order of the Benedictine monks. The order was based near his birthplace Bologna, at San Michele in Bosco. A phrase on his dedicatory letter in the preface of the second edition of his theoretical work *L'Organo suonarino* (*The Organ Playing*, 1611; the first edition was printed in 1605), tells of him “being bound for twenty-four years by the mild yoke of obedience in the Olivetan Order” (Marcase, 1967). This means that he entered the order in 1587. Banchieri became a novice in 1589. After taking vows, and in religion, the name “Adriano” in 1590 (Marcase, 1967), in 1591, he wrote his first treatise, *Conclusioni del suono dell'organo* (*Conclusions of the Organ Sound*) (Figure 3). Throughout various editions of the book, Banchieri tackled the subject of figured bass, finally detailing his thoughts on the subject in the *dialogo musicale* (musical dialogue) added to the 1614 edition. Being as open-minded as he was, he supported the use of figures and encouraged innovations in the field. (Damschroder & Williams, 1990, pp. 22-24)

He then traveled to various places to work for the order. In 1592, he arrived at the Church of Ss. Bartolomeo e Ponziano in Lucca. Spending only one year there, his next destination was San Benedetto in Siena, and he stayed there during 1593. Biographers' debates have not yet settled, regarding the possibility of him playing the organ for churches in Lucca or Siena. He returned to San Michele in 1594 and stayed there until 1600. Those six years were quite important for the musician since in 1595 he started studying with Adrian Willaert's former apprentice Gioseffo Guami (his apprenticeship lasted three years), and in 1596, he became the organist at San Michele.



Figure 2: A portrait of Adriano Banchieri (Banchieri, 1614).

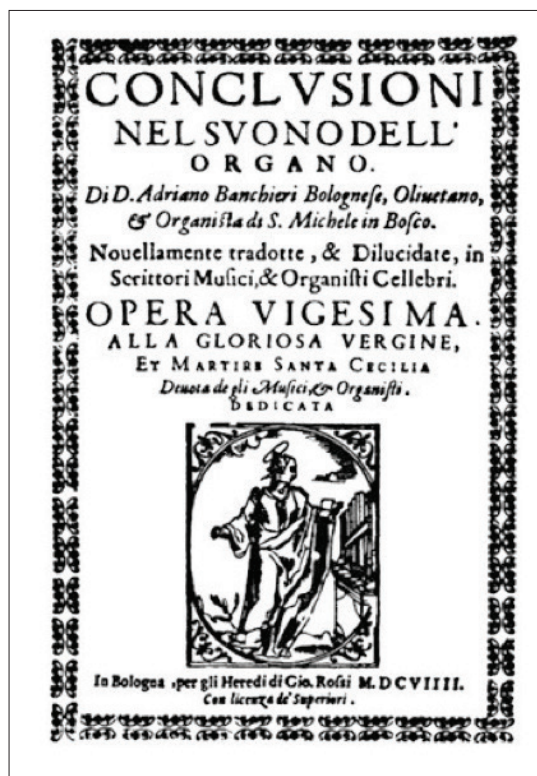


Figure 3: The cover of *Conclusioni del suono dell'organo* (Banchieri, 1609).

In *Dizionario universale dei musicisti*, Carlo Schmidl suggests that the lessons Banchieri took from Guami were predominantly counterpoint lessons (Schmidl, 1938, p. 34). Banchieri was very fond of Guami's music. In his second book of instrumental ensemble canzonas, *Canzoni alla francese a quattro voci sonare* (Four-part French Songs), he included one of Guami's as the seventh piece, naming it *La Guamina* (Kelly, 1962). During the same six-year period (1594-1600), he composed one of his most successful and well-known madrigal comedies, *La pazzia senile* (*Senile Madness*) (1598) and in 1600, he wrote another madrigal comedy, *Il studio dilettevole* (*The Delightful Study*; based upon *L'Amfiparnasso* of Vecchi) (Kelly, 1962).

Banchieri made a substantial contribution to the art of music in *Canzoni alla francese a quattro voci sonare*. In the eleventh canzona, *La Organistina Bella, in echo*, he innovatively indicated *piano* and *forte* markings for the performers (Figure 4). This is the earliest known use of dynamic instructions on the score.¹⁰ He also distinguished between loud and soft in his *La Pazzia Senile*. According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music* (Kennedy, 2021), this piece "is regarded as almost the first comic opera."



Figure 4: Facsimile of the first page of *La Organistina bella*, canto part (Banchieri, 1596).

In the following decade, his life revolved around the organ. First, in 1600, he was appointed as organist at Santa Maria monastery in Regola at Imola for four years. Next, he went to San Piet-

¹⁰ In the past, another Italian, G. Gabrieli, was credited with the first use of dynamics on the score of his *Sonata pian e forte* (1597). However, Banchieri's *La Organistina Bella, in echo* (composed in 1596) predates Gabrieli's piece.

ro at Gubio in 1604 and played a masterfully crafted organ built by Vincenzo Fiammingo. Banchieri loved it so much, that he mentioned it in his *Conclusioni del suono dell'organo* (Capaccioli, 1954, p. 341). *Il Zabaione musicale* (*The Musical Eggnog*) was published in Milan in the same year.

In the next year, Banchieri's most influential and monumental theoretical work, *L'Organo suonarino* was published in Venice by Amadino. It is also the first book to contain specific rules for figured bass practice (MacClintock, 1982), a major contribution to the music theory field in the late Renaissance, heralding the quintessential Baroque approach to improvisational accompaniment. Also in 1605, he composed another important madrigal comedy, *Il Festino nella sera del Giovedì grasso avanti cena* (*Entertainment for the Eve of the Carnival Thursday before Dinner*). In 1608, Banchieri reassumed his post as organist in San Michele and continued to work, compose, and write there. In 1615, he played a significant role in the founding of *Accademia dei Floridi*, which was visited by Monteverdi in 1620. The honorary title of Abbate Benemerito was given to Banchieri in 1618. He passed away in 1634 because of apoplexy. The *Necrologium olivetanum* has an entry regarding Banchieri: "An. 1634. R. D. Adrianus Bancherius Bonon. Ab. Emeritus. Apoplexia obiit Bononia. Fuit Musicus Clarus. Multa dedit" (Fantuzzi, 1781, p. 338).

In an era of constant debate between Artusi (*stile antico – prima prattica*) and Monteverdi (*stile moderno – seconda prattica*), Banchieri sided with the innovative, young generation and showed his support in the foreword of his *Festino*. There, he mentions that on his way to join the guests of *Festino*, he came upon an old man, "Ancient Rigor," whose slovenly appearance was as revolting as the folios of counterpoint he was carrying. Not realizing whom he was addressing, "Ancient Rigor" admonished Banchieri to turn back, to reject an association with the new style:

"Stay, O Delight, and by no means go upstairs, seeing that the author, having rejected me as his rightful master, (...) [uses] dissonances and irrational things that are diatonically objectionable; wherefore (if thou art True Delight) turn back, for there is no place for thee."

Banchieri replied:

"I am indeed Delight, but I am Modern Delight; wherefore, O Rigor, hear what the author maintains (and to speak frankly, I am he): having refused to observe the rules of those folios of thine *ad unguem*, he has succeeded admirably, although with the sophistries and cavilings thou sought to insinuate that the modern composers ought to put thy antiquated precepts into practice... Wherefore I counsel thee, O Ancient Rigor, to peddle those folios of thine to the fish-monger, for the next week they will make an excellent catchall for sardines, tuna fish, herrings, and caviar." (Einstein, Krappe, Sessions & Strunk, 1949, pp. 803-804)

In the madrigal comedy itself, Banchieri makes fun of the "Ancient Rigor's" way of thinking even more. In the *Contrappunto bestiale a mente* (*Counterpoint of the animals*), he writes a Gregorian chant-like melody underneath the animal sounds (Garrett, 1972).

These kinds of statements give an idea of where Banchieri stood in the conflict between *prima prattica* and *seconda prattica*. It is also suggested by some musicologists that he was a mediator between the old and the new in his musical language. This claim has a strong basis considering his educational and compositional approaches. In terms of education, he encouraged young composers to advance to the newer *contrappunto commune* only after acquiring a thorough understanding of the older *contrappunto osservato* (Damschroder & Williams, 1990). Regarding Banchieri's compositions, if one analyzes his chords and harmony procedures closely, one will see that both modal and tonal ideas are active. In his earlier pieces, it is inherently easier to see a conservative approach when putting chords together and modal procedures are in abundance.



In his later works, tonal applications are more common, but he never abandons the 16th century approach. Maybe that is the reason why he always has a few tricks up his sleeve, whereas a strictly tonal composer would have been more predictable to modern ears.

3. Analysis of *Il Zabaione Musicale*

*Il Zabaione Musicale*¹¹ consists of an introduction, three acts, and two madrigals that act as interludes between Acts, coming after Act I and II. The work opens with the introduction (Figure 5) in which the singers split the parts between themselves:

- “Now that we are here together
Let us all sing merrily.
- Who will take the soprano?
- I have it in hand.
- This contralto?
- I will take it on.
- Here is the tenor!
- You, if you will.”

The image shows a facsimile of the introduction of *Il Zabaione Musicale*. On the left is the title page with the heading "Lo Stampatore à gli virtuofi Cantori." and a large decorative initial 'G' for the text. The text describes the printer's profession and the nature of the madrigals. Below the text is a small illustration of a landscape with a tree and a building. On the right is the musical score for the introduction, titled "INTRODUZIONE." and "CANTO 142". The score features a large decorative initial 'G' and several staves of music with lyrics in Italian. The lyrics include: "Ii che ridorsi fia Tutti al- legri tutti allegri canciamo, cantis mo, Io che lo rego in mano, Voi per nostrar amore, Hor concertati per recreatione Guſiamo queſto dolce ZABAIONE. NE, Guſiamo queſto dolce ZABAIONE, ij. Guſiamo queſto dolce ZABAIONE, ij. ZABAIONE." The score ends with the title "Il Zabaione Musicale à 5." and a page number "A 3".

Figure 5: Facsimile of *Il Zabaione*, canto part from the introduction (Banchieri, 1604).

This opening creates a smooth and interesting transition from the murmuring atmosphere created by the audience before the performance. The first two lines are sung by the whole choir, then the tenor takes on the task of distributing the parts and he asks the questions. Each singer for the respective part responds to him. When he asks about the tenor, the other singers respond “You, if you will.” At that spot, the direction of the melodies and harmonic procedures make

¹¹ Additionally titled *Inventione Boscareccia (A Sylvan Invention)* (Anderson, 1995).



a shift from the level of F to the level of C, with the B naturals in the cantus II line. In fact, the composer writes the archaic single-leading-tone cadence, and the progressing character of the movement comes to a halt. After that deliberately weird stop, the tenor continues distributing and everything is back on track again. The weight the tenor part shoulders shows that Banchieri, despite the innovative composer he is, still holds the tenor part in a special place and gives it a certain leadership status. After the cards are dealt, the choir comes together in a homophonic texture and sings: “Now, together for the entertainment, let us taste this sweet zabaglione.”¹² On the word “zabaglione” (*zabaione* in Italian), the composer uses 4-3 suspensions in the cadences. The first cadence on that word is on the level of F, the second one pushes the music onto the level of B-flat. The prolonged third one brings the music back to the tonic, F major.¹³ The bass’ fundamental stepwise ascending motion strengthens the arrival of the tonic. The contrast between the whole tones of the bass and the playful upper voices is another important point that needs to be mentioned.

A characterized concept, *Carefree Humor* sings in the prologue which is very short. F major dominates the movement, with the exception of E-flats occurring to hint at the F-Mixolydian mode. *L’Humor Spensierato* (*Carefree Humor*) (Figure 6) calls for the banishment of sadness and orders “silence in this meadow.” He wants everyone to be attentive and stay silent. These lines



Figure 6: Depiction of *L’Humor Spensierato* in the facsimile (Banchieri, 1604).¹⁴

¹² The word *zabaglione* signifies an Italian dessert made from egg yolk, sugar, and sweet alcohol.

¹³ It must be understood that when this paper mentions “majors and minors,” it is never implied that the use of keys is in an advanced tonal sense. Those terms are used because of mere convenience.

¹⁴ Notice the minute dissimilarities between figure 6 and figure 1. Both woodcuts use the same drawing techniques in their depictions.

might be perceived as Banchieri's further attempt to make the audience stop talking amongst each other and pay attention to his work. The exchange between the male and female singers on the words "lovely shepherdesses, pretty, charming, and fair," and "you shepherds, full of ardour" is another point that draws attention, creating coherence between the text and the music.

The third movement, *Intermedio di felici pastori (Intermedio of Happy Shepherds)*, starts with the same key signatures, but the center has shifted from F to G, which creates an Aeolian scale. The text is predominantly about love and assures the listener that loving for love's sake is the most wonderful thing. The use of F-sharps empowers the G minor sound, creating the aforementioned tonal-modal effect. Another important section comes on measure 17, where the alto's B-natural collides with the cantus II's B-flat. After the clash, to which they arrived from opposite directions, both voices move to opposite directions again, taking the voice-leading rules of the time into consideration. The same procedure is repeated between the bass and the alto one measure later. On the words, "ah, non si trova," Banchieri uses a Phrygian full cadence with E-flat, G, C going to D, A, D, putting emphasis on the modal side of the piece. Also here, Banchieri makes use of male versus female grouping, but it does not overshadow the whole movement and dissolves into different groupings. This movement is described by the composer on the original manuscripts as *a due cori* (for two choruses), so the vocal organization corresponds to that idea.

In *Procne and Philomela*, the fourth movement, the composer initiates word-painting right at the beginning as canto I sings the word "vago" ("bird") with fly-like gestures, in which the 8th note runs come after dotted quarter notes. Canto II rhythmically imitates canto I's line. The same procedure takes place on the words "che saltellando vai" ("that goes hopping") This time, to signify the hopping gesture, Banchieri uses both the dotted quarter note followed by an 8th, and a 5th leap from A to D. Again, imitated in the canto II part. The text in the movement transfigures the atmosphere into a melancholic one, since it tells the story of a horrid Greek myth about Philomela,¹⁵ and by doing so, disregards the warnings given by *L'Humor Spensierato* in the introduction. Starting in measure 13, the words "misera me" are repeated multiple times in every part with F-sharps and B-flats on the level of G, so there is a strong G minor influence in that section.

The last movement of the first act is *Danza di Pastorelle (The Dance of Shepherdesses)*, one of the most powerful, vibrant, and characteristic movements in the whole work (Figure 7). The key signature has a B-flat, but the piece starts on a G-minor chord, then quickly dissolves into a B-flat major chord. Then the B-flat is solidified with the E-flat on the bass that comes on an E-flat major chord which acts as IV in B-flat major.

On measure 6, Banchieri cleverly uses the B-flat chord as IV and cadences on F acting as IV to C, which then acts as IV to G, and he is back on G minor, so there is quite a lot of plagal motion there. On the 4th chord of the 5th measure he writes an escape tone A in a B-flat major chord, further proof that as far as dissonances go, he is a liberal. In measure 7, a D major chord is followed by an Eb-G, then again D major on the level of G minor. The closeness of F-sharp and E-flat in that area creates a very interesting sound and sticks out as a different color in the piece. Furthermore, in that spot, the words are "lirum li" which mimics the sound of a bagpipe (Figure 8). This kind of instrument mimicking is a very distinctive quality of madrigal comedies. The movement ends with a full cadence on a G major chord. In some performances today, the singers sing a downward glissando on the last chord, to give the impression of a bagpipe going out of tune when there is not enough air left in it.

¹⁵ In Greek Mythology, Philomela is a character who was raped and mutilated by her sister's husband, King Tereus of Thrace. After taking her revenge, she was transformed into a nightingale. Nightingales are known for their sorrowful tunes and the bird in the 4th movement of the madrigal is Philomela, who is turned into a nightingale.



C
Sia.mo cin.que pa-sto-rel-le, Tut.te cin.que vez.zo.see

C II
Sia.mo cin.que pa-sto-rel-le, Tut.te cin.que vez.zo.see

A
Sia.mo cin.que pa-sto-rel-le, Tut.te cin.que vez.zo.see

T
Sia.mo cin.que pa-sto-rel-le, Tut.te cin.que vez.zo.see

B
Sia.mo cin.que pa-sto-rel-le, Tut.te cin.que vez.zo.see

Figure 7: The beginning of the *Danza di Pastorelle* (Banchieri, 1997, p. 63).

li-rum li-rum li-rum li, [li-rum li-rum li-rum

li-rum li-rum li-rum li, [li-rum li-rum li-rum

li,] li-rum li-rum li, [li-rum li-rum

li, li-rum li-rum li-rum li, li-rum li-rum li-rum

li, li-rum li-rum li, [li-rum li-rum

Figure 8: "Lirum li" mimicking a bagpipe (Banchieri, 1997, p. 65).

The madrigal that splits Acts I and II is *Soavissimo ardore* (Sweetest Ardor). Its text was written by Giovanni Battista Guarini, a famous poet, and humanist of the late Renaissance. With this madrigal, it is the first time that the composer stops using the B-flat key signature. It starts with



a D minor chord and ends on the level of D major. The diminished 4th in canto II part pushes the boundaries of the voice-leading organization of the time. Also, Banchieri distributes beautiful and lyrical 8th note melismatic patterns in stepwise motion throughout the madrigal. These patterns consist of four notes and are almost always imitated with an inversion on other voices.

Act II begins with the *Intermedio di pignattari* (Intermedio of Cooking-Pot Sellers.) The text in this movement was taken from a collection of five-part madrigals published by Manilio Caputi in 1593 (Anderson, 1995). With this movement, the melancholy created in the madrigal dissolves. The singers' lines resemble vendors' street cries, especially the tenor's "uh" syllable that comes on high-pitch notes. There are pockets of tonality every now and then. For example, there is a strong full cadence in measure 5 but only a few measures later, in measure 10, a plagal cadence occurs on the level of A. There are imitations between changing groups throughout which creates the exact "crowded" ambience the composer seeks to be coherent with the text. The movement ends with a full cadence on G major.

The next movement's text is by Agostino da Padova, and it is a lament for a bird killed by a cat (Anderson, 1995). Beginning with the words "augellin lascivetto" ("playful bird"), a canon is initiated between canto I and II. Another imitative entry takes place in measure 26, where bass imitates canto I from a 5th down, although it is not exact. In fact, it is not easy to find strict and long imitations of J.S. Bach in this era, but even little touches of imitation make the music incredibly energetic and keeps its audience interested. The 2nd *stanza* describes what a sweet creature the bird is. When it ends, and the agony that arises from its death begins (Figure 9), the composer suddenly starts bringing longer rhythmic values into play (especially on the words "ahi," since it is a custom in Renaissance music to "suffer" on longer note values).

The image shows a musical score for five voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Bass) in a single system. The lyrics are: "-te - steil ciel e gl'e - le - men - ti? Ahi, _____". The score features various note values and rests, with the "Ahi" section marked by a long horizontal line. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature.

Figure 9: "Ahi"s begin after the death of the bird (Banchieri, 1997, p. 85).



However, contrasting to the expectations from a person who went through the high-tonal age of music, Banchieri does not bring minor chords to indicate that there is a sad situation. While the longer rhythmic values carry the burden of bringing sadness to the music, he mostly stays on G major and D major. Certainly, there is the other possibility of the composer joking around, but it is hard to do so with words such as, “deprived me of every hope, and you of life.” Yet another G major ending is used in the movement, but this time with a B-sharp in the alto (falsetto) part acting as B-natural for voice-leading purposes.

The ninth movement, *Trisi a Clori*, also starts on the key of G major. Banchieri utilizes imitative structures in abundance here. The compositional procedure is the following: the entry of an individual voice, its imitation, coming together with other voices in homophony, and cadence. In areas like the 1st, 5th, and 6th measures, a voice pairing can be observed. However, no matter how thin the texture might be at the beginning or in the middle of a phrase, the ending cadences are always thickly textured and homophonically structured. In the text, the shepherd (in the persona of Thyrsus) addresses his beloved and asks her what he must do, since her gaze did not heal his heart. The following movement starts with a dialogue between the shepherd (this time in the character of Amyntas) and Daphne.

In *Dialogo: Aminta, Dafne e giudizio d'Amore*, the B-flat key signature returns, and the music is predominantly based on the F major sound (Figure 10). The first two cadences are on C major and F major, which creates a I – V – I in a broad perspective. In the text so far, the shepherd tells Daphne that he would kiss her, and it is sung by all-male singers. With the pickup to the 5th measure, women start singing as Daphne, who tells Amyntas she, too, only wants to kiss him. Then a playful “who will kiss first, Amyntas or Daphne” is sung by all voices in a homophonic setting. Again, Banchieri uses homophony as a compliment to polyphony where everyone “comes together.” Next, Cupid intervenes and gives his sentence: “Let them kiss each other and love each other equally.” There, the bass’s whole-note descending line starts and goes from a middle C to an octave down, while the other voices sing energetic quarter or 8th notes. This creates a wonderful contrast between different parts and adds another dimension to the piece. The movement ends with a V-I full cadence on F major.

The next movement is about hunting and eating a sparrow. The dominant sound is again F major. Imitative entrance is followed by homophonic structure once more. The setting of the text to the music reminds one of the nursery rhymes. There is a call and response structure both in the music and text. For the first time in the work, a triple meter is used. The words “ecco la passerina!” (“here is the sparrow!”) are given to higher voices, while “e poca roba” (“a little morsel”) is sung by bass, and sometimes by bass and tenor both. It is on “e poca roba” that the composer changes the time signature to triple meter. There is no substantial modulation, the focus is on the playfulness of individual, imitative lines. The second act ends with an F major chord.

The text of the second madrigal that intervenes Act II and III was written by Alberto Parma. In this piece, Banchieri divides words into syllables to create a quasi-echo effect. For example, the first syllable of the word, “baci,” (“kisses”) is first sung by canto II, alto, and tenor parts, and then repeated by canto I. After the first line of the text (kisses, sighs, and words), voice-pairs are put into use in a thin texture. The astonishing suspensions that come in the 15th measure (in a more homophonic structure) are quite effective, especially because of the contrast between the previous plain and simple voice-pairs, and the magnitude of the new section. Another G major ending awaits the listener in the closure.



10 CANTO

DIALOGO.
Aminta, Dafne, & giuditio d'Amore.

B Acianfi Pastorella: Rispose Dafne, anch'i-

o Te caro Aminta solbacciar defi o, Hor chi bacierà prima A-

minta ò Dafne, Aminta ò Dafne, S'ogn'vn bacciar defi a,

Dia la sentenza Amore, Bacin del pari, e pari sia l'ardore,

Bacin del pari, e pari sia l'ardore, ij.

Bacin del pari, e pari sia l'ardore.

Figure 10: Canto part of *Dialogo* (Banchieri, 1604).

The thirteenth movement is a quintessential “torment madrigal” of the Renaissance, where Banchieri makes use of chromaticism as never before in the work, in order to empower the spirit of the text. Especially between measures 15 and 20, on the words, “anzi si stempra in angoscioso guai,” (“but languishes in bitter woes”) chromatic sounds are abundant. Banchieri’s own poem, *Ergasto appassionato* (*Passionate Ergastus*) is about the grievance of a lover which ends with the words, “to have to live content, and to die in torment.” This is the second time in the work that a D minor chord starts a movement. It quickly dissolves into a B-flat major chord which is VI, but with a chromatic ascend to B-natural and then C-sharp in the bass pushes the sound back unto the level of D minor. In the last four measures, the composer cleverly changes the D minor chord from tonic to subdominant and escapes to A major for a fresh cadential sound.



In *Preparamento pastorale*, (*Shepherd's Preparing*) the text is about two lovers, Silvio and Carino, singing to their beloved ones, Amaryllis and Phyllis. It is the most homophonic area in the piece. At the beginning of sentences, he assigns two or three words to whole notes, so the singers just stay on the same note while singing. These two points strengthen the idea of this movement to be more about furthering the story than compositional craftsmanship. G major sound dominates this section.

Next is the *Gara amorosa di pastori* (*Shepherd's Love Contest*). Here, two madrigals are interwoven with the top three lines (females) singing the first, and the bottom two (males) singing the second which is in accordance with the "contest" idea. In this movement, Banchieri writes the most extreme chromatic structures that one can see in this work. After the two lovers proclaim their love, the time signature changes to triple meter,¹⁶ and the two groups come together, singing the words "let us sing no more, here are the shepherds, to dance through these flowers..." In this closing section, the music suddenly gets faster in tempo, and the feeling of a festival dominates the atmosphere as the music gets more and more joyful. This aura is maintained in the next movement,

Danza di ninfe e pastori (*Dance of the Nymphs and Shepherds*) which is also triple meter. The main text is often interrupted with the happy "fa-la-la" singing. There is usually a dotted note in the second section of the "fa-la-la" phrases, so that the dancing feeling may be enhanced. The subtle use of hemiolas in the cadential areas further contribute to that notion. Both movements end in G major. Even in the middle sections, Banchieri does not want to wander off too much to different pitch centers. In the last movement (Figure 11), *Licenza* (*License*), *L'Humor Spensierato* returns with a similar text except the ending, where it wants everyone to cry out and proclaim: "Long live sweet Zabaglione."

Figure 11: The last movement of the piece, canto part (Banchieri, 1604).

¹⁶ This is the second time that happens in the work.

Discussion and Conclusion

The madrigal comedy is an essential part of music history and an important attempt to intertwine music and drama. Understanding it gives insight into the development process of opera, which is probably the most groundbreaking innovation in staged productions.

From a 21st century point of view, madrigal comedy has a few weaknesses as a genre. First of all, the problem of the audience associating itself with, and feeling empathy towards the characters; in Vecchi's case, this has to do with a single character's words being sung by two or more singers; in Banchieri's case, it has to do with the audience hearing the story being told from a third-person point-of-view. Opera is by far more persuasive and inviting in that context. Secondly, in most cases, the plot is not strongly held together. As opposed to operas, it is hard to follow the plotline when it is interrupted by sentimental madrigals and *intermedii*¹⁷ popping out now and then. Thirdly, madrigal comedy relies heavily on cultural references from 16th- and 17th-century Italy which makes it locally oriented in terms of time and place. This works in both ways as it makes the local populace relate more to the work while alienating a foreign audience. Fourthly, the musical language of the time dealt with both tonal and modal procedures and was still not developed enough to prolong an idea for extended periods of time, which sometimes creates a cohesion problem. Lastly, the goal being entertainment rather than deep conceptual thinking contradicts Vecchi's premise of aurally creating images in the mind. It especially does not work with a less properly educated audience. Besides, even if the work is staged with "masks miming," as Banchieri advised, it is still obvious that the actors are separate from the singers, creating a displacement phenomenon, which would not be bizarre in a surreal David Lynch movie.¹⁸

Nevertheless, even for the modern listener, the playful and energetic melodies, imaginative word-painting, clarity and freshness of the sound, heart-breaking and beautiful love madrigals utilizing chromaticism, singers jovially mimicking instruments with their voices, and the theatrical value of madrigal comedies are some of the elements that make them pleasant to listen and watch.

Regarding the analysis of *Il Zabaione Musicale* five important points need to be addressed. First of all, the time signature rarely changes, keeping the music in duple meter. However, if one observes where the composer makes the change to triple meter, one will see that it is always the critical areas, such as endings. This helps to keep the audience interested and prepares a fresh start for the next movement. Secondly, the short duration of movements: The longest movement being 2 minutes and 36 seconds, and most of them being around just a minute, it is possible to say that the composer wants the listener to focus on the whole, rather than small parts; he wants the piece to keep flowing. Thirdly, the loosely set plot: the text is not coherent and especially challenging for the 21st-century listener. However, one should note that the mindset behind madrigal comedy is different from opera. The former is interested in entertaining the public via cultural references and short movements that do not need that much commitment from the listener, while the latter is concerned with telling an orderly and continuous story, requiring complete attention from its audience. Fourthly, the commitment to G major, especially in the last two-thirds of the piece: For the classically trained listener of today, staying on a single center for so long might be aurally overwhelming. This was less of an issue in Banchieri's time since the methods and applications of modulation were limited. Lastly, the multiple occurrences of the

¹⁷ Music (and sometimes dance) performed between acts.

¹⁸ See the opera singer scene in Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001).



word “zabaglione”, mostly towards the end, in a praising manner. This can be likened to catch-phrases of today’s TV series. It is not hard to imagine that it created a direct reaction from the audience of the time because of the cultural reference.

In an age where the old-style clashed with the new style, Banchieri stood as a bridge, since he admired and encouraged innovative ideas while reserving the right to use the old techniques. His entertainment music made use of theatrical elements and pushed the boundaries of setting text to music. He considered the music and the text to be equally important. If extensively studied, his works, along with his mischievous, cheerful, open-minded, and creative spirit can be a source of inspiration even for today’s artists. His nonchalant acceptance of the coexistence of serious and light music was forward-looking, which should enlighten and set an example for the radical minds of our day.

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