

Giovanni Battista Bovicelli

Regole

Passaggi di Musica

(1594)

Avertimenti per li passaggi

Translated by Sion M. Honea

Translator's Preface

There is no question that Bovicelli's *Regole* is of great importance for the study of late Renaissance vocal performance practice. It could have been of even greater importance had the author's critical and writing skills equaled his talent as a performer. In regard to writing, too often Bovicelli's explanations assume, probably unconsciously, that the reader already understands what he is explaining—the typical fault of today's authors of computer program operating manuals. He exacerbates this weakness with too many ellipses and some tendency to wandering circumlocutions like those found in Caccini, though not so desperately extreme as in Zacconi. It can often be quite difficult to ferret out what exactly he may have meant.

On the side of critical and analytical skill there are also many problems. It is, of course, an issue of critical and analytical ability that he can so unconsciously assume the reader's prior knowledge of the issue that he is describing in order to inform the reader of that issue. His analysis of the phenomena is often sufficiently weak as to render his explanations incomplete, such as his remark on text setting to the tremolo on original page 9 and his description and illustrations of the tremolo on pages 12-13. In fact, to my mind the latter cannot even qualify as an explanation, so inadequate and defective is it. In this connection also belong the mistakes in some examples and the presumed omission of the all-important designations for the tremolo in example 13. An extensive note in the translation attempts to clarify, to the extent possible, what can only be considered Bovicelli's unbelievably inadequate and inept discussion of the ornament.

Apart from analytical and writing skills, the text is burdened with a variety of mechanical flaws. There are errors, misprints, wrong words, inverted letters and faulty printing, often at critical points.

Given all these flaws, it might seem astounding that Bovicelli's text could still stand as an important one on the subject, in my opinion second in importance to Maffei, even though his verbal text presents relatively little about the diminution technique and nothing on the practice of throat articulation. The former practice Bovicelli largely relegates to the method section of the book and in the latter he evinces little or no interest; apparently it is simply assumed as a given. The importance of his text resides in the fact that he provides quite good coverage of those issues that he does address. Preeminent among these are his remarks on text and text setting in the ornaments and *passaggi*. Thereafter come issues of a more general nature of performance practice, how to perform ornaments and *passaggi* "with grace" because there are better and worse approaches, both of which Bovicelli usually describes.

In two aspects of writing style Bovicelli surpasses most other writers, again Maffei is the exception. Bovicelli seldom ever encumbers his text with superficial and meaningless redundancies or flowery similes, though his "horsiness" does pall a trifle. Further, and more importantly, his terminology is the most simple, streamlined and consistent, in which he might possibly surpass even the masterful Maffei. His terminology for the *passaggio* is essentially and refreshingly limited to "*passaggio*" and "*passaggiare*." Even where he is somewhat vague, such as with *accentuare* and *tempo*, he does not approach the colossal ambiguity of Zacconi.

Even if it is, as Bovicelli would say, repeating a tiresome song to the reader's annoyance, I must state some standard procedures. Page numbers of the original appear in brackets. In the

translation I emphasize closeness to the original over elegance. I have tried to address problems in supplementary notes, to the extent of my ability. I have avoided musical transcriptions in most of the other selections in this series on the grounds that their contribution to understanding does not justify the labor. This is not the case with Bovicelli, whose text would be drastically diminished without them. Thus, I have transcribed all 21 examples and placed them at the end along with one extra of my own, which attempts to interpret what Bovicelli may have meant by the tremolo. I am not an adept at music writing programs, which at the best are not at all congenial to dealing with pre-modern music notation. Fortunately, Bovicelli never uses mensuration signs, which modern time signatures can only misrepresent, and his use of bar lines is often superfluous, for which reason I have occasionally omitted them, I believe with no negative effect on the reader's understanding. The program does not permit the flexibility that Bovicelli's printer possessed manually, especially in regard to the ability to reproduce his errors. I can at least say that I believe my efforts are not inferior to or more confusing than Bovicelli's own.`

The Author to the Reader

[5] It cannot be said with how much amazement and marvel art has always gone playing round about nature, because (just exactly like a monkey to a human) it seems that it has always tried to imitate and make everything that it [art] has seen marvelously imprinted and sculpted in it [nature]. But, if ever one sees art to be marvelous in this imitation, it has been most marvelous in music.¹ Therefore, in seeing the most beautiful order of this our world, as one thing keeps happening alternately after another, and as all together make a kind of silent harmony, whence it is that some by the grand order that they discern in the movements of the heavens imagine as harmony of the sweetest voices. I say that art perceiving this and wanting perhaps also to compete in this with nature—that order and that harmony which the intellect alone understood by subtle discourse—it [music] was disposed and wanted also vividly to represent to the senses, and since it is an easy thing according to the proverb to add to things that exist, the voices thus having first been tuned together by harmony, there have been very many thereafter who have striven to render to a greater perfection what at the beginning was crude and to the culmination such as music is now refined. Among whom it also having occurred to me to write something on the subject of the manner of making *passaggi*, just as seeing the great difference between me and those who have written about it has on one side dismayed me, so on the other side it has reassured me, seeing that there is no craftsman or merchant who refrains from his profession when there remains any of his merchandise to sell, [merely] because there may be many others of the same profession. Rather, it appears that the diversity of things and of opinions may be a beautification for the world and a very great ornament.

But, coming closer to reveal my mind regarding these few rules and *passaggi*, everyone may be assured of my intention, which has only been to be useful, whenever I could, nor ever did it come into my thoughts to accuse or insult anyone. I say this for those who might like to reprimand me for having perhaps freely criticized some faults. If others perchance might say that I had [6] created some *passaggi* that seem impossible² to produce by a human voice, I answer them that those gifted by nature with a good disposition (*disposizione*)³ of voice will produce some even more difficult, just as all who understand this profession agree. It also seemed good to me to write out some few rules before writing the *passaggi*, part of which instruct in avoiding certain defects that often occur in

¹ Bovicelli's style in the prefatory "To the Reader" is somewhat more "literary" than are the more pragmatic instructions that follow. In general Bovicelli's style is about midway between the clinically clear and terse discussion of the doctor Maffei (1562) and the at times well-nigh incomprehensible syntactic concatenations of Caccini (1602) or Zacconi (1596).

² This is a reference to the use of *passaggi* by instruments, which were capable of producing more difficult ones than could be sung (cf. Zacconi, 60v). Zacconi and Cerone seek to avoid such criticism in regard to singing by stating that their *passaggi* examples emphasize rhythmic simplicity and by explaining why. The issues concerned complex rhythmic subdivisions, from which Bovicelli clearly does not abstain.

³ The word is more often spelled *disposizione* in Italian. This is a critical term in the subject area and meant, originally, the physiological aptitude (disposition) for throat articulation. Maffei gives incomparably the best discussion of it. The term remains important well into the next century and passes into other languages, German, French and English. For example, Bacilly gives a discussion of it in chapter eight of his *Traité de la méthode ou Art de bien chanter* (1671), p. 48.

singing, and part teach the manner by which anyone can easily make use of passaggi and carry them off well. These rules, for the sake of greater brevity and clarity, I have compiled under two main headings: those relating to notes and those relating to words.

Advice for Passaggi Advice as regards the words

[7] Just as in writing in such style one ought to have an eye on the sense so that the words may not be unseemly, nor in order to accommodate the words well to render the sense defective and mistaken. So also in singing and particularly in producing passaggi, one ought not only pay attention to the notes but also to the words, since one requires great judgment in appointing them well.

One ought, then, to have great care primarily in subdividing the notes for ornamentation (*accentuare*)⁴ or for making passaggi,⁵ and this so as not to produce any barbarism by making short syllables long or long ones short, which is no less unsuitable than it would be ugly and disproportionate for one who had long legs and left the stirrups short or the contrary.⁶ Every time that the passaggi are of continuous notes, which is to say of the same value,⁷ rarely or never ought one to introduce a new syllable but continue up to the end on the first one begun because it will turn out more conveniently,

Music Example # 1

especially because in that great fury and velocity of notes scarcely can one hear the words unless one is near to the [8] singer. Especially also because sometimes the same syllables aid (*aggiutano*)⁸ in making one passaggio more than another, such a A, E, O in respect to I and U, which [latter] two are not so convenient for the voice as are the first [three] because of the difference in pronouncing

⁴ I am not satisfied that there is any entirely suitable English equivalent for this word. My impression is that various authors use it sometimes similarly and sometimes idiosyncratically. In general it seems to relate to an emotional style of singing through the use of improvised ornaments. When specific, it relates to the *accento* ornament, which was treated quite diversely. F. Rognoni gives examples of the simplest form of the *accento*, while Cerone offers more complex ones. Praetorius includes two pages of them in various intervals ((3, 233-234). All these authors are included in this translation series.

⁵ As so often at this stage in European vernaculars, the grammar is not quite clear. The use of *ò* seems to be the inclusive one (i.e., both *accentuare* and *far passaggi* are possible), but it is not clear as to whether it is also the so-called corrective sense that indicates that the two are the same, as *accentuare* or [that is] *making passaggi*, though modern usage tends to use for this sense either *oppure* or *ossia*. It is probable that the former interpretation is correct.

⁶ The proximity of *questo* and *quello* (the latter, the former) here appear (falsely) to indicate that Bovicelli was following up with a more complex explanation. The “red herring” was even emphasized (accidentally?) by Bovicelli’s use of the terms *gambe* and *staffe*, both of which have musical senses! Ultimately any possible confusion is resolved by the fortunate gender-specificity of Italian, despite the fact that both *questo* and *quello* can be used in the neuter with a nominalizing force in referring to a previous idea as a whole rather than a single referent word.

⁷ The description is common among the authors for a succession of notes of equal rhythmic value, e.g., all eighth-notes.

⁸ *Aggiutano*, is obscure. Neither *aggiuntano* (join together) nor *aggiustano* (adjust, arrange) supply a plausible meaning. The most probable understanding derives from the verb *aiutare* (to help, assist) with the “d” of the original Latin preposition *ad* (an alternative still in Italian) retained for euphony, and this “d+i” productive of the soft g sound. Then, it is also commonplace to find consonants alternatively in single or double form, even within the same author’s writing. There might also have been an influence from the form *veggano* for *vedano* in the present subjunctive of *vedere* and elsewhere.

them.⁹ Although¹⁰ it is the opinion of some that¹¹ for the convenience of making some *passaggi*, drawing out more syllables on one single note, subdividing it, then, into so many more of lesser value, which corresponds to the number of syllables—I say again that this seems to be unseemly to many, perhaps because, as I have said, it is inevitable to subdivide that note in any way (and this is said with goodwill to all) that I have ever considered to be well done whenever I hear it,¹² that it didn't generate some barbarism, unless the notes were all on the same chord/note¹³ and they were uttered quickly.¹⁴

Now then, the words and the notes can be varied without any of the aforesaid difficulty whenever the notes are not made all of the same value.

Music Example # 2

Where the *passaggi* are of many notes and especially with *groppetti* at the end, which are always concluded with sixteenth-notes or thirtysecond-notes, one ought as much as possible to avoid performing a new syllable on that note that follows immediately after the *groppetto*. Rather, one ought to go moderately with notes of a little greater value.

Music Example # 3

⁹ With the exception of Zacconi, there seems to be general agreement that A, E, O are the preferred vowels for *passaggi* and that I and U are bad. Maffei prefers O as the best, while Cerone is vague but seems to prefer A. Zacconi, oddly, says that A is the most difficult (cf. Zacconi 60r).

¹⁰ This begins a sentence of six and one-half lines of sheer Caccinian convolution. It is rendered all the more ambiguous by Bovicelli's frequent interrupting asides, the imprecise overuse of the multipurpose Italian *che* (a word perhaps even more diverse than English "that") and the loss of letters due to faulty inking of the imprint as alluded to above.

¹¹ At this point Bovicelli loses control of the sentence. This begins a long complex phrase with two infinitives (one apparently used substantively) and a gerund but no finite verb! Thus, it is syntactically impossible to relate its meaning to the rest of the long sentence. Context and guesswork must suffice.

¹² The faulty imprint here is almost disastrous for the meaning. The word in question is divided by the line ending with several letters missing and only *-rò* surviving on the next. Thus, it is only possible to determine that the verb was a first person singular future. Since Bovicelli is discussing a point of which he disapproves, it is unlikely that he is referring to himself as doing the proscribed action but rather as observing others doing it. This leads to the conjecture of *udirò*. The future strikes the English ear as a bit odd, but it is less so in Italian and especially when immediately preceded by the present subjunctive *stia* in the previous clause, the future indicative and the present subjunctive being so closely related in the Romance languages in both sense and originally in morphology.

¹³ The term here is *corda* which means both chord and note, the latter possibly more in the sense of sonority. I have used both in order to communicate to the reader the essential ambiguity of Bovicelli's original. His illustrations do nothing to resolve the issue. In this case and the next following, I believe "note" is intended but perhaps with an implication of harmony.

¹⁴ I believe that this is best understood by considering the previous remarks on vowels as a digression from the subject and that this passage continues Bovicelli's concern with text setting in *passaggi*. I believe he is saying that some people take a long note of the intended *passaggio*, break it up into several smaller notes of the same pitch and set the text to them, thus getting it out of the way of the diminution process so that the *passaggio* can proceed unencumbered. Bovicelli says he has never heard it done successfully except for when two conditions are met: the syllables must be over the same harmony (unfortunately the word here is *corda*, see note 13) and when executed rapidly.

I said one ought to avoid “as much as possible” because some notes one can’t [avoid], and then with a moderate and gentle voice one ought to finish the word in such a way that the gentleness of the voice tempers the harshness that is produced by the speed of the notes.

Music Example # 4

What has been said of *gropetti*, the same also ought to be observed about the tremolo [9], namely, not beginning another syllable, which, nonetheless, one will be able to put there when the two last notes of the tremolo,¹⁵ or of any *passaggio* will be made on the same note/chord (*corda*).

Music Example # 5¹⁶

As to the placement of the words under the notes, it is necessary to pay very close attention to accompany them exactly together, so that not only no barbarisms result from it, as I said in the beginning, but also so that they make the best effect possible, because many times one syllable will have a greater grace when placed under one than under another note, as one will be able to see very clearly from these examples of them.

Music Example # 6

Finally, it is the greatest fault of those who never make an end on the word and always keep repeating the two or three first syllables, as for example saying *Benedi—Benedictus*, being similar to those who have ruined their teeth, who keep chewing over and over the same bite in order to swallow it.

¹⁵ I have provided a lengthy discussion of the tremolo in note 23. Neither of the two possibilities seem in the least possible for text setting such as Bovicelli suggests here.

¹⁶ Bovicelli’s example is confusing. I believe he intends to present two different *passaggi*, despite the fact that he contrasts tremolo and *passaggio* in his description. Neither of the ornamentations is remotely like the tremolo as he illustrates it in example 13, or rather, as he does not illustrate it effectively!

[10] Advice about the Notes

As to the notes (*note*), then (among which I include passaggi, gorppetti, leaps (*salti*) and everything that in some way can be reduced to notes), great judgment is required primarily in making passaggi or ornamenting (*accentuare*) the notes of value,¹⁷ in which it is necessary to have an ear to the movement of the other parts, because never, except at the end, do all the parts meet together and stop at one and the same time on one and the same prolongation of the harmony. Two examples are presented, nevertheless, so that one may see the way that it must be maintained in the aforementioned variation. Because at times, for example, one will go from Csolfaut (c') over Gsolreut (g) and [to] Csolfa (c''), as in the first example, at times from Dlasolre (d') over Alamire (a) and to Dlasol (d'') as in the second.¹⁸

Music Example # 7

So as not to have to keep repeating the same song many times to the point of the listener's tedium, as the proverb says, the longest ornament it seems often keeps varying with passaggi of the very same notes but diversely put together. Because, just like in writing or speaking, the greatest boredom is, for the one who is listening or reading, if the oration goes along languishing by itself without any color of figures; so in passaggi in singing, if they are without diverse style, almost like revived by the colors, in place of delight, [then] they will bring annoyance. I want to say that passaggi sometimes ought to be of continuous notes of one and the same value, and the same varied sometimes in another way, in such a way that they produce those same pitches (notes), nonetheless they will appear diverse because of the different way of delivering them.

[11] Example # 8

Most often when one sings, so as to give grace to the voice, either in the beginning or wherever it is (but in this as in everything, however, it needs judgment) one begins a third or a fourth lower according to the harmony of the other parts and particularly of the contralto, where

¹⁷ The phrase is *accentuare le note di valore*. The idea seems to be that it is necessary to listen closely to the other parts and keep the rhythm synchronized so that all may cadence together. Since Bovicelli is now discussing notes and no longer the words, as in the previous section, the notes of value cannot refer to textually significant ones. The most likely determinant of "value" would seem to be those that are long and so subject to diminution.

¹⁸ There are two issues. First, this seems a very awkward way to describe the two passaggi represented by examples 7 and 8. In the first example the pitch that experiences diminution is a sustained Gsolreut (g) in the Guidonian system, with the range of the passaggio covering the octave around it, descending to Csolfaut (c') and up to Csolfa (c''). The second issue is an error in the second description. In the second example the passaggio is based on a motive of two pitches, which Bovicelli names incorrectly. The lower pitch as notated is Dsolre (d) and the higher is Alamire (a). The passaggio actually descends to Dsolre (d) and ascends to Dlasolre (d') not, as Bovicelli gives, to Dlasol (d''). As Bovicelli erroneously describes it, the passaggio covers a twelfth because it includes the entire octave d' to d'' above a, instead of the octave d to d' around a.

easily the soprano can form a unison.¹⁹ (What one says of the soprano and contralto, the same holds true in the other parts.) In this, however, one ought to take care that by how much more the first note is held and the second is faster, it also produces greater grace in the voice, which grace cannot possibly be in it every time that the notes are one and the same value. Because the elegance of singing, as I said above, is nothing other than the variation of notes of greater and lesser value, such as one sees here below.

Music Example # 9

This is discerned very well in *groppetti*, which can be terminated in two ways. The first by notes of the same value; the second is such that the end of the *gropetto* is, so to speak “restrained” (*raffrenato*). This succeeds much better for the most part, because it produces greater grace in the voice, and also is more suitable for ending words well, so that the flurry does not happen at the end, which was mentioned, which one must avoid as much as possible. Nonetheless, in order to vary one ought sometimes to use the one with the equal notes and especially when they are not strictly to the words.

Example # 10

The same *groppetti*, not speaking of the voice but of the notes, can be made in more ways, even on one and the same note. I mean that there can be more than one on only one note. Either they can be continuous notes or [they can be] restrained (*raffrenate*), or both of them together.

[12] Example # 11²⁰

Whatever I said about the *gropetto*, that is that it ends with notes of a little more value [longer], is said also of *passaggi*. This value, however, is not intended to reach to white notes²¹

¹⁹ The common term for this is “*intonare*,” though F. Rognoni calls it “*principiar sotto la nota*,” a more vivid description.

²⁰ As so often, it is difficult to understand Bovicelli’s descriptions, especially in light of his illustrations, which tend to provide more complicated forms of the item to be explained, rather than the simplest and clearest. Example 11 presents two statements of a three-measure motive elaborated by two different variants below the original. This looks very confusing because the two iterations of the motive appear to be one single phrase. Each variant presents two *groppetti*. On the first occasion the lower variant is labeled as “*gropetto raffrenato*” and the second time as “*groppetti di note uguali*.” On the first occasion Bovicelli brackets and labels only the lower variant as *raffrenato*. In that it consists of faster not slower notes, its status as *raffrenato* “restrained” seems mysterious. In the verbal description Bovicelli specifies that the distinguishing character of the restrained type is that it avoids a flurry (*furia*) of notes at the end and that (by implicit comparison with the first type, whose notes are equal) it has notes of unequal value. Further, the term *raffrenato* would seem to indicate a slowing of notes at the end, so as to avoid the *furia* there. The facts that the lower variant of the first *gropetto* seems far from *raffrenato* but actually quite “busy,” as he says. Thus, the illustration seems to contradict Bovicelli’s description. The *uguali* illustration apparently simply presents two variants of the *uguali* *gropetto*. This is typical of Bovicelli’s illustrations, they can present complicated examples poorly identified and poorly exemplary of his verbal descriptions.

²¹ By this Bovicelli means the half-note or longer.

because it would be a contrary and crude effect; rather, [the intent is] in the way that is used in horsemanship.²² Cavalry men are not accustomed, when they have given a long ride to a horse, to draw in the reins suddenly in mid-career, but they keep reining in little by little and slowing the steps.

Example # 12

The tremolo, nonetheless, which is nothing other than a trembling (*tremar*) of the voice on one and the same note, seeks for the notes to go always stepwise, nor in any other way can the tremolo be produced by a human voice, and this ought to be made on the designated note, taking care that at least until the third note no new syllable is added to it, as also was said above when speaking about words.²³

²² This is Bovicelli's second "horsey" simile. Since the ownership of a horse required a very substantial income in those days, it was a sign of aristocracy or wealth. Perhaps Bovicelli is making an implicit claim to social status.

²³ In trying to understand Bovicelli's discussion of the tremolo the reader must bear several things in mind:

1. Bovicelli's description is inadequate and confusing. "*Il tremolo nondimeno, che non è altro, che un tremar di voce sopra ad una stessa nota, ricerca, che le note vadino sempre per grado . . .*" First, "tremar," "tremble, shake, quiver" of the voice on one note sounds to the modern ear like (a) a vibrato, or (b) possibly a trill. Bovicelli then adds that the notes (not note) go by step. The first issue cannot be resolved from Bovicelli's description or illustration. A resolution for the second issue, "the notes always more by step," is suggested by the illustrations, which in every single case show that the original melodic context moves by step, which, at the least, presents an alternative to understanding that he is speaking of the ornamental figure that moves by step. In other words, Bovicelli may mean that the tremolo (whatever it may be) occurs only in original stepwise contexts. If so, Bovicelli failed to add that crucial point, something like "*un tremar di voce sopra ad una stessa nota, ricerca che le note, le quali nel passo siano, vadino sempre per grado.*" To complicate matters even more, Praetorius (1619, 3: 235) for his illustration of "tremulo" clearly depends on Bovicelli, translating word for word the original phrase as "*Tremulo: Ist nichts anders alß ein Zittern der Stimme uber einer Noten.*" But, his illustration is of a trill! I argue that Praetorius has probably been misled by Bovicelli's subsequent phrase "*note vadino sempre per grado*" and has understood or chosen to apply the term to what we today call a trill, but which went under various terms in his own time: e.g., tremolo, trillo, groppo. It seems somewhat more likely to me, especially given the context and the location of the tremolo, that Bovicelli operates within an Italian tradition as presented by F. Rognoni.
2. Apparently, in none of the examples does Bovicelli attempt to illustrate the tremolo itself. For the reasons stated here the turn-like figure cannot be the tremolo but can only be a diminution on the larger note of the original motive. Why Bovicelli would introduce this complexity is baffling. He shows only the locations at which a tremolo can be used. It might seem that the turn-like figure that the notes form in example 13 could be the tremolo—indeed, this was my first interpretation—but this is virtually precluded by Bovicelli in examples 14 and 15 where he says that the tremolo is performed on notes as indicated by the sign, the note being only the dotted eighth-note within the figure. Note also that the designated notes are not the pitches of the original motive, so once again the turn-like figure cannot be considered the tremolo but is a turn-like diminution of the original pitch. It should also be noted that Praetorius, who specifically claims an influence from Bovicelli, provides a similarly vague example in connection with what he calls a second kind of "trillo," his trillo being a repeated note tremolo of the Rognoni type. His examples show a short elaboration somewhat similar to Bovicelli's on one note of which he has placed the symbol "tr." The value of the note on which he places it varies but can be as short as a thirtysecond-note! See Praetorius 3, 238.
3. Of the three relevant illustrations, 13, 14 and 15, Bovicelli only indicates where specifically the tremolos occur in the latter two. The first illustration, whether by design or oversight, does not indicate where the

[13] Example # 13

Among the number of notes that go by step are the accents,²⁴ which are made on half-notes, which, however, ought to be varied with judgment in more ways as to the value of the notes, in which—although in singing there appears little difference—nonetheless make a different effect, which cannot be made on accents that are on quarter-notes, because these accents, being entirely of sixteenth-notes or thirtysecond-notes, which are very fast, cannot be made in more than one manner only, although the tremolo can be made there, but fast and not so formal.

Example # 14

Example # 15

Now as to eighth-notes, there ought not to be many in a run (*tirata*), unless they go by step [14] because when not singing a capella but in ensemble, where the tactus ought to be slow, those wanting to make eighth-notes that do not go by step, [the *tirata*] seems like studying an exercise. Nonetheless, there is a possible remedy by making one eighth-note dotted and the next without, because from that variation of time results a different effect in both.²⁵

Thirtysecond-notes, then, beyond the disposition (*disposition*) of the voice²⁶ ought to be well separated, nor ought they be used much, even these, unless they go like I have said of stepwise

tremolos are to be executed! Only 14 and 15 utilize signs to mark the points for the tremolos, here indicated by a V accent over the note.

4. Bovicelli never explains the difference between the “formal” and “informal” tremolo and since the figures that he presents, in which the tremolo is to be made, are nearly identical in nature, this also would seem to preclude the possibility that the turn-like figure itself is the tremolo.
5. In example 15 the tremolo apparently is executed on the two notes as though they were tied.

The only way that I see to explain what Bovicelli intends is to apply F. Rognoni’s (1620) tremolo, which is a brief reiterated pulse on the same pitch. Bovicelli’s indications seem always to identify dotted notes, in fact every single one is only a dotted eighth-note in length or the equivalent, at suitable points. Example 15 merely resolves the dotted eighth-note of example 14 into two distinct notes, sixteenth + eighth instead of the dotted eighth-note. At the end of the musical examples I have created an extra example to illustrate the figure on which Bovicelli says that a tremolo is to be executed. This I have also realized with both Rognoni’s pulsed tremolo and Praetorius’ trill. I am inclined for the reasons given here to the interpretation that Rognoni’s form is probably the correct one. It is considerable support for this interpretation that Praetorius gives a very similar example for what he calls a second kind of “trillo” but is actually a Rognoni-type tremolo. The mere change of the Praetorius’ term from trillo to tremolo would result in something very close to Bovicelli’s examples of the tremolo.

While it is true, as has been seen, that Bovicelli’s text and illustrations sometimes cross the boundary into vagueness and even confusion, this is the worst example of all. I have dealt with hundreds of descriptions of ornaments in dozens of primary sources and yet can remember none so ineptly handled as this one.

²⁴ I accept *accento* as an anglicized term.

²⁵ Some authors use the word for eighth-note, *croma* loosely for short “flagged” notes of various types. I can only suppose that Bovicelli means a succession of alternating dotted eighth-notes and sixteenth-notes.

²⁶ This enters upon the issue of throat articulation and seems to say that such runs of sixteenths ought to be more detached than usual in throat articulation. Maffei, who is far the best on the subject, calls the effect of throat articulation delicate and controlled. Zacconi, and after him Cerone, criticizes those who do not make the pitches

eighth-notes. In which thirtysecond-notes result a very lovely effect, whenever in a run of many notes stepwise the first is held more than those following, as for example:

Example # 16

Take care that not all notes are performed in exactly the same way, because sometimes one ought to separate one by one enough so that the difference is heard one from the other in the voice, and this is when they serve in a run. On the contrary, when they serve to facilitate the leap of a third, which otherwise cannot serve in the middle of a run, where there are only two notes of less value, those ought not be made heard with such force, because thus they produce greater grace, the two thirtysecond-notes are those following below.

Example # 17

In leaps equally sometimes it is well to give them a certain liveliness by performing the higher note with a little emphasis, as we are accustomed to say, and this when the first note is of the same value with the following ones, one ought to perform equally without any difference of voice.

For these same accentos²⁷ should be noticed that in leaps every time that the note preceding the leap is of greater value, that of the leap ought not be expressed with much force but sounded with grace.

[15] Example # 18

Although a succession of many leaps together may be more appropriate for instruments than for the voice, anyway, if they are accommodated well with the words they succeed also in the voice, taking care, however, as above, that the higher notes of the leap are taken with grace and without force, which [latter] is quite unbecoming.

Example # 19

Just as it would be very unbecoming in the one who writes if the words are [sad]²⁸ to accompany them with happy notes, or sad notes to happy words. Likewise in singing, the words should be imitated as much as possible, that is, do not adorn sad words with passaggi but accompany them, so to speak, with accentos and a mournful voice. If the words are happy, use passaggi and even give them vivacity making the notes vary as is seen here below.

Example # 20

distinctly and so produce an unclear passaggio. At this date it is impossible to know exactly what effect Bovicelli had in mind.

²⁷ Here he seems to use *accento* to mean a more general term including a variety of ornaments.

²⁸ The text reads "*molte*" but this misprint is made clear in the following line in the contrast with *allegre*. It should be *meste*.

Anyway, to quote the proverb, every rule has its exception: in which case it is permitted sometime even under sad words (if the sonorities and harmony of the parts require) to make a *passaggio*, although perhaps they might not express all that sadness that the words require, which, however, one ought not do without judgment and with the occasion of *passaggi* such as would require it.

Some are accustomed to accommodate the *passaggi* to their style, if a note is worth a beat (*battuta*)²⁹ [then they] hold it two or three, by what justification I don't know. I know well that it is more praiseworthy in making *passaggi* to remain precisely bound to the time (*tempo*) that is found as composed in the song, except in the end, that is, on the last note.

[16] One ought also always to avoid this way of ending a cadence. To the degree it is more used, to that degree it is worse.

Example # 21

Finally, in all *passaggi*, cadences and accentos in every other style of singing, one ought to breathe in tempo and with judgment, and most of all one ought not breathe between those notes that serve for accentos until at least part of the last note sounds, nor in the middle of *passaggi* when the notes are of the same value, and the same holds good at the end of every *passaggio* and cadence.

And here I am unable to make a final conclusion of these few rules without speaking also of those—I know not whether by weakness of chest or because they are fearful—who lack air and take a breath every few notes, coming to a halt like horses fearful of every little shadow, with whom as with horses, I would like for this my little warning to serve and give them the help of the spurs. This is clear, that this mostly does not happen except by little attention, which is discerned particularly in those who sing also breaking the notes sometimes, that is allowing that note on which one takes a breath with a certain quickness, so that they hardly make its intoning (*intonation*) heard, making on the contrary almost more noise by taking the breath than by their voice.³⁰ Some also—so as to touch briefly³¹ some general faults, because it isn't possible to present all the rules of singing—they clamp their teeth together as if just intending to breathe. Some send their voice into the nose, others into the throat. Yet others, finally, right from the beginning of the song, from the first note they begin (as is customary to say) recklessly to make *passaggi*, and what is worse, many times so as to make, as it is presently called, *di gorga*³² don't worry about saying all the words, a very unsuitable thing and very great defect in whatever they want to sing well. One ought, then, at the beginning of

²⁹ This is one of the few occasions of uncertain terminology in Bovicelli's text. I am inclined to think that it does not mean *tactus*. Surely an improvised extension of one *tactus* into two or three would be egregious even for that day.

³⁰ The intoning is a term for the the ornamental approach to the note from the third or fourth below, but it can also mean a variety of things. Here it seems to mean "attacking" the pitch after a breath. Bovicelli is saying that they make more sound breathing than they do singing. See also original page 11, note 20.

³¹ The idiom *alla sfuggita* has several different meanings.

³² Maffei uses the term *di gorga* to refer to the throat articulation, but later it and its related terms came to be used more loosely to mean something like "embellishment." The *passaggio* technique is implicitly or explicitly linked to throat articulation. My sense is that Bovicelli is being censoriously sarcastic by using what he considers a currently "trendy" new term.

a song for the space of three or four tactus [?] (*tempi*).³³ If, however, I don't say [specifically] on the first tactus but on the second or third, no *passaggio* would succeed there [on the first tactus] so opportunely that it would deserve to be admitted.³⁴

³³ This is Bovicelli's first use of the word *tempo* in this specific context, so his intent is unclear. However, other authors are clear in saying that one should not make a *passaggio* during the first few tactus; thus, I suggest tactus.

³⁴ Bovicelli is somewhat confusing here because of his ellipses. He is clarifying, not very effectively, that even though he didn't say never on the first tactus but only not on the second or third, nevertheless, there is no excuse for doing one on the first tactus.

Glossary

Despite his other flaws, Bovicelli is fairly exemplary in his handling of terminology. He is much more consistent than Caccini and incomparably more than Zacconi and Cerone. Few words need much specific comment.

Accentuare—both in the sense of to sing in an affective style and also to use ornamental graces, which latter are, of course, considered to be a means to the former. It also can mean to apply the specific accento ornament.

Battuta—My sense is that Bovicelli uses this to indicate a “beat,” a rhythmic pulse of the subdivided tactus.

Corda—This is always a problem in Italian because it legitimately means both note and chord. Only the context can make it clear. My sense is that he uses it to indicate a note that has a harmonic significance.

Nota—Bovicelli uses this in a much more modern and flexible way than many authors. It can mean both a pitch and a visual representation of that pitch, a “note.”

Passaggio, Passaggiare—This is virtually the only term that Bovicelli uses for the musical passage resulting from the improvised diminution technique. *Passaggiare* is the verbal form of it, “make a passaggio.”

Tempo—This term is the one that seems to be used most vaguely. Its basic meaning seems to be “time,” but he also seems occasionally to use it with other implications, in which case I translated it contextually.

Example # 1

Al le lu ia

Bad according to Bovicelli

Al le lu ia

Good according to Bovicelli

Al le lu ia

Example # 2

Al le lu ia

* coloration

* Program does not allow accurate indication of Bovicelli's coloration

Example # 3

& [et] sem per

Example # 4

Al le lu ia

Al le lu ia

Detailed description: This example shows two staves of music in a single system. The top staff is a vocal line in G major (one flat) with lyrics 'Al le lu ia'. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (beamed eighth notes), G4 (quarter). The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a similar melodic line: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (beamed eighth notes), G4 (quarter). The lyrics 'Al le lu ia' are written below both staves.

Example # 5

Ve ni Ve ni

Ve ni ve ni

Detailed description: This example shows two staves of music in a single system. The top staff is a vocal line in G major with lyrics 'Ve ni Ve ni'. The notes are: G4 (half), A4 (half), B4 (half), C5 (half). The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a similar melodic line: G4 (half), A4 (half), B4 (half), C5 (half). The lyrics 'Ve ni Ve ni' are written below the top staff, and 'Ve ni ve ni' are written below the bottom staff.

Example # 6

Amen A men A men

* coloration * coloration

* Bovicelli uses coloration, whose subtleties cannot be expressed.

Detailed description: This example shows two staves of music in a single system. The top staff is a vocal line in G major with lyrics 'Amen A men A men'. The notes are: G4 (half), A4 (half), B4 (half), C5 (half). The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a similar melodic line: G4 (half), A4 (half), B4 (half), C5 (half). The lyrics 'Amen A men A men' are written below the top staff. Annotations '* coloration' are placed above the B4 and C5 notes in the bottom staff. A footnote below the example reads: '* Bovicelli uses coloration, whose subtleties cannot be expressed.'

Example 7

Detailed description: This example shows three staves of music in a single system. The top staff is a vocal line in G major with a long note (G4) followed by a rest. The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment with a complex, rhythmic melodic line. The lyrics are not visible for this example.

Example continues next page

Example 11

* **Groppetto raffrenato:** [Bovicelli sees to mean this as the raffrenato.]

Groppetti di note uguali

Example # 12

Bad Example

Good Example

A

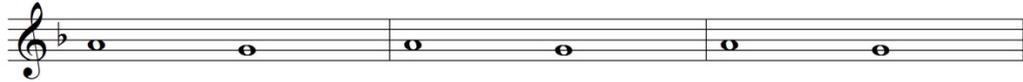
men

A

men*

Bovicelli's placement of "men" appears to be under the second quarter.

Example # 13



Bad example

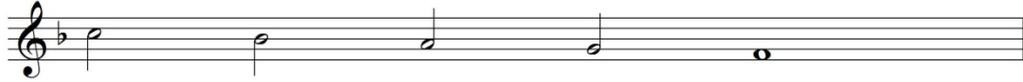
Good example



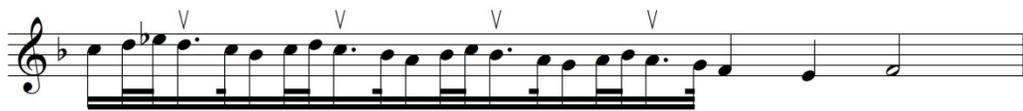
A men A men A men *

*coloration here that can't be expressed

Example # 14



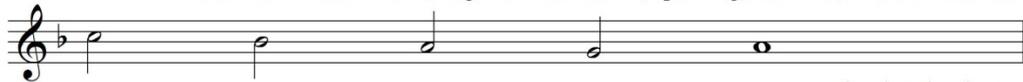
On the designated notes one ought to make a formal tremolo



On the designated notes [V] one ought to make a tremolo but not a formal one as above.

Example # 15

Although where it has been written in the examples given above, anyway, the one who wants it more clear, ought to write it thus, speaking, however, of the formal one.



* coloration here



The formal tremolo on the two notes designated.

Example # 16

Example # 16 consists of two staves of music in a single system. The top staff is a vocal line in G major, starting with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a whole note G4. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment line, starting with a sixteenth-note scale from G4 down to G3, followed by a quarter note G4, and then a whole note G4.

Example # 17

Example # 17 consists of four staves of music in a single system. The top staff is a vocal line in G major, starting with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a whole note G4. The second staff is a piano accompaniment line, starting with a sixteenth-note scale from G4 down to G3, followed by a quarter note G4, and then a whole note G4. The third staff is a vocal line in G major, starting with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a whole note G4. The fourth staff is a piano accompaniment line, starting with a sixteenth-note scale from G4 down to G3, followed by a quarter note G4, and then a whole note G4. The word "coloration" is written above the fourth staff, and an asterisk is placed below the piano accompaniment line.

* = Bovicelli's use of thirtysecond-notes to avoid a leap

Example # 18

Example # 18 consists of two staves of music in a single system. The top staff is a vocal line in G major, starting with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a whole note G4. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment line, starting with a sixteenth-note scale from G4 down to G3, followed by a quarter note G4, and then a whole note G4. The word "A" is written below the first note of the vocal line, and the word "men" is written below the second and third notes of the vocal line. The word "A" is written below the first note of the piano accompaniment line, and the word "men" is written below the second and third notes of the piano accompaniment line.

Example # 19

A men A men

A men a men a men a men

Example # 20

A ve A ve

A ve A ve

Example # 21

Bad Example This way is good

A men A men

Extra Example on Bovicelli's Tremolo

From Bovicelli
Example # 14

Tremolo from
F. Rognoni (1620)

Bovicelli with tremolo
from Rognoni

Bovicelli with trill
possibly according to
Praetorius (1619)