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## Zacconi, Banchieri, and the Counterpoint Species: Reconstructing the *Klanglichkeit* of the *Contrapunto in Compagnia*

### ABSTRACT

#### Background

The point of departure for my presentation is the field of improvised counterpoint from the late Renaissance until the first half of the 17th century. The research in that area dates back to authors like Ernest Ferand and has nowadays turned into a substantially growing topic, reconstructing the historical and liturgical context of this mainly unwritten musical practice (see e.g. Canguilhem 2015) as well as bringing the practice itself back to life — through ensembles like *Le chant sur le livre* (direction Jean-Yves Haymoz), and through the publication of textbooks by authors like Peter Schubert or Barnabé Janin. With the help of these textbooks, the subject of improvised counterpoint has been successively brought back to the (music theory) classroom and there serves as a foundational method for gaining a profound knowledge about the music of the renaissance as a whole.

An important issue in the pedagogy of (*stile antico*) counterpoint is the role of the ‘species’ — that is the teaching of counterpoint via restricting the note values while inventing lines to a given *cantus firmus*. Since the publication of Johann Joseph Fux’s seminal treatise *Gradus ad Parnassum* from the year 1725 the species have become quasi *the* method for teaching counterpoint. Due to being so highly influential, the story of the species is nowadays almost inevitably told in the context of Fux’s concept. This has led to the fact, that the history of the species approach before Fux — that dates back at least to the 15th century (see e.g. Menke 2015, 180) — has not been in the foreground of research about the pedagogy and music of the Renaissance and early Baroque.

Especially, it is the question, which role the species have played in the context of the practice of improvised counterpoint, that has been widely overlooked. I think that therein lies a huge potential for future research, both in reconstructing the historical role of the species for the pedagogy of improvised counterpoint, and in finding connections between the species and the daily (liturgical) practice, an investigation that leads directly to the *Klanglichkeit* — i.e. the particular sound of the diverse styles of the *contrapunto alla mente*.

#### Aims and Repertoire Studied

My aim in this presentation is to shed light on one particular practice of improvised counterpoint in the 17th century, namely the *contrapunto in compagnia*, which has been described in the treatises by authors like Lodovico Zacconi or Adriano Banchieri, and which must have been a highly esteemed daily liturgical practice in churches (at least) throughout Italy. At first, I will discuss some of the prescriptions, that are given in the treatises for performing the *con-*

*trapunto in compagnia*. It is especially the treatise by Banchieri, that is highly helpful in reconstructing the techniques of that practice: he describes a method for *composing* a piece, that sounds like an improvised piece, and thus gives to the audience the illusion, that the ensemble singing would actually improvise in the style of the *contrapunto in compagnia*. Therefore we encounter a method, that seems to be highly useful in particular for ensembles that are not capable to well improvise.

This will lead me to my hypothesis, that, when looking at the sources, one can assume that the *contrapunto in compagnia* must have been in many ways connected to the approach of species counterpoint. Therefore, the *Klanglichkeit* of that improvisational genre is much determined by the interaction of the species with aspects of improvising the *contrapunto in compagnia*.

#### Methods

The methodology that I will apply in my presentation is based on *historische Satzlehre* and *practice based research*, with a strong interplay between the theoretical reconstruction of music-analytical thinking — which we can derive from the treatises — and today’s practical testing and reflection upon it.

#### Implications

The results not only shed new lights on the developmental history of Fux’s counterpoint pedagogy, but provide a considerable insight into the daily — and in this case mainly unwritten — musical practice. In other musical areas the discovering, reconstructing and reviving of such unwritten practices has yet led to astonishing results, for instance in the field of the *Partimento* practice of the 18th century (see e.g. Sanguinetti 2012), with the many implications for music analysis (one example: Gjerdingen 2007) and music theory teaching (see e.g. Vogt 2017). The reconstructing, reviving, and analyzing of the practices of improvised counterpoint promises to be similarly productive for the music of the Renaissance and the 17th century.

#### Keywords

Practice Based Research, Species Counterpoint, Improvised Counterpoint, Music Analysis, 17th Century.

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