

A DISPUTE ON ACCIDENTALS IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ROME

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Among the many problems which hinder the growth of systematic knowledge in the field of accidentals and *musica ficta*, one of the most difficult is that of achieving something more than a vague and hypothetical picture of the manner in which performing musicians in earlier periods actually approached the task of supplying accidentals in ensemble music. The incomplete or conflicting evidence of the musical sources themselves is, of course, a major source of the problem rather than a key to its solution; and the marked tendency of many 16th-century theorists to deal with the question in an abstract and summary fashion severely limits the range of our present view of the practical nature of this problem in 16th-century musical life. I have attempted elsewhere to gather a few indications from the theorists of the period¹ — notably Aron, Vicentino, and Praetorius — which point all too clearly towards the unhappy conclusion that many performers of the period must have found the problem as difficult as we do today². And I should like to bring forward here another contemporary source, more extended than those just mentioned, which offers an exceptionally vivid and revealing picture of the practical and theoretical difficulties which the traditions of *musica ficta* presented to a group of professional singers in Rome around 1540.

The source in question is the treatise on music by the composer and Papal singer Ghiselin Danckerts, a treatise which was not published in the 16th century and remains unpublished, in its entirety, even now, but which has nevertheless been variously mentioned, studied, described and quoted by a long and impressive list of scholars, including, in the 19th century, Baini, Danjou, de La Fage, Fétis, Ambros, and Vander Straeten³; and, in

¹) In an as yet unpublished study, „A Sample Problem of *Musica Ficta*: Willaert's ‚Pater noster‘ “.

²) Pietro Aron, *Toscanello in Musica, Aggiunta*, 1539, fols. H iv verso and I iv verso (also the corresponding pages in the first edition of the *Aggiunta*, 1529); Nicola Vicentino, *L'Antica musica ridotta alla moderna prattica*, Rome 1555 (facsimile edition, edited by Edward Lowinsky, *Documenta Musicologica*, No. 17, Kassel 1959), fol. 82r; M. Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum*, III, 1619, p. 31.

³) G. Baini, *Memorie Storico-critiche . . . di Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina*, Vol. I (Rome 1828), p. 245, Note 350; Jean Louis Félix Danjou, *Revue de la Musique Religieuse, populaire et classique*, III (1847), p. 201; A. de La Fage, *Essais*

the 20th century, de Bruyn, Van den Borren, Lowinsky, and Palisca¹. An edition of the entire treatise was long planned by the late Raffaele Casimiri, but this project was unfortunately never realized, and at present the most extensive accounts of the existing MSS comprising the treatise are those by La Fage, Vander Straeten, and de Bruyn, the last of which is included in the most detailed survey of Danckerts' career that has yet been made. Thus, it need hardly be said that the anecdote quoted and commented upon here is in no sense new, for it is mentioned by La Fage and de Bruyn and briefly discussed by Van den Borren⁵; nevertheless, the text as a whole has not been generally accessible heretofore, and its bearing on the problem of accidentals seems such as to warrant more detailed consideration.

Thanks chiefly to the extensive biographical account supplied by de Bruyn, a few words will suffice to provide a background. Born presumably in the period 1505—1515, in the vicinity of Liege, Danckerts like so many of his compatriots sought a career in Italy, and he became a singer in the Sistine Chapel in 1538. He was also, at an undetermined time, in the service of Pierluigi Caraffa, of a famous Neapolitan family (Paul IV was a Caraffa)⁶ but his role as a Papal singer can scarcely have been less than his principal function: he was a member of the chapel from 1538 until his forced retirement in the post-Tridentine reorganization of August, 1565, served variously as the chapel's *punctator* and *camerlengo*, and, as de Bruyn deduces from the *Diarii Sistani*, was rarely absent from his post. In 1551 he was one of the judges in the famous debate between Vicentino and Lusitano on the role of the chromatic and enharmonic genera in contemporary practice, and the conservative point of view that resulted in the dismissal of Vicentino's case is patently reflected in his treatise. As de Bruyn has shown, it was written over the decade that followed the debate

de Diphthéographie Musicale (Paris 1864), pp. 224—239; F. J. Fétis, *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens*, Vol. II (1867), p. 425; A. W. Ambros, *Geschichte der Musik*, Vol. III (1868), p. 111; E. Vander Straeten, *La Musique aux Pays-Bas* (Bruxelles 1882), Vol. VI, pp. 369—393.

⁴) J. de Bruyn, Ghisilinus Danckerts . . ., *Tijdschrift der Vereniging voor Nederlandse Musiekgeschiedenis*, XVI (1946), 217—252; XVII (1949), 128—157; Charles Van den Borren, article „Ghiselin Danckerts“, *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band 5, cols. 66—70; Edward Lowinsky, Postface to facsimile edition of Vicentino, *L'Antica musica . . .: Documenta Musicologica*, No. 17 (Kassel 1959); Claude Palisca, A Clarification of *Musica Reservata* in Jean Taisnier's, *Astrologiae*, 1559, *Acta Musicologica*, XXXI (1959), pp. 138—142, 152, 158, 161.

⁵) La Fage, *Essais . . .*, p. 307 f.; de Bruyn, *op. cit.*, *Tijdschrift . . .* XVII (1949), p. 144, 146; Van den Borren, *op. cit.*, *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Band 5, col. 70.

⁶) Biblioteca Vallicelliana, MS R 56b, fols. 370—370v.

of 1551, and forms a conservative parallel to Vicentino's famous exposition of his views, published in 1555. Few of Danckerts' compositions are preserved, and the place and date of his death are unknown.

Although his treatise remained unpublished, there is little reason to contest Van den Borren's claim that it is „Das Werk, das ihn berühmt gemacht hat.“ Parts of it presumably circulated in Roman musical circles and perhaps even beyond them, for Artusi later published a defense of Danckerts' and Escobedo's rejection of Vicentino's theories⁷. The treatise exists in three versions in the Biblioteca Vallicelliana in Rome: MS R 56, No. 15 (now bound separately as MS R 56*b*); MS R 56, No. 15*b*; and MS R 56, No. 33⁸. The first two of these, evidently autographs, contain numerous corrections and additions; the third is apparently a copy. Perhaps with a view to the polemical character of much of his treatise, Danckerts labored carefully over its text, and de Bruyn has succeeded in dating the three redactions (which differ somewhat in their contents), placing the first in 1551, the second in 1555—56 (after the publication of Vicentino's treatise), and the third in about 1559—60⁹. Only the second version (MS R 56, No. 15, fols. 405r—407v) contains in detail the anecdote dealt with here, which is expanded beyond a brief reference to the subject in the first version (MS R 56*b*, fols. 374—374v). The implication is that between 1551 and about 1556 Danckerts decided to give a more complete account of this affair, and to include in his treatise both a document he had originally written at the time the incident occurred (between 1538 and 1544, as will be seen), and a more extended description of the affair that he was presumably constructing from memory at the time of writing the second version of the treatise in the mid-50's.

The anecdote with which we are concerned is evidently introduced by Danckerts not so much for what it reveals about the problem of unspecified accidentals (although that is its principal feature of interest for us), but rather as a tendentious illustration of the major thesis of his treatise as a whole. This thesis, briefly stated, is a defense of orthodox modal tradition

⁷) Artusi's pamphlet is referred to by Fétis (*Biographie Universelle . . .*, Vol. I, p. 151) as a separate publication with the title *Difesa ragionata della sentenza data di Ghisilino Danckerts et Bartolomeo Escobedo . . . contro D. Nicola Vicentino*. As Fétis observes, the text of this pamphlet was later incorporated into Artusi's well-known *Imperfetioni della musica moderna*, I, 1600, fols. 14—38.

⁸) La Fage, *Essais . . .*, No. 19 (p. 224) at first discusses the treatise on the basis of a copy made by Baini, which La Fage says was made „sur l'original qui existe dans la bibliothèque du palais Corsini alla Lungara“. (I have been unable to locate the treatise in the Biblioteca Corsini.) Under No. 38 (p. 307), on the other hand, La Fage gives an accurate description of the MSS in the Biblioteca Vallicelliana compendium R 56.

⁹) de Bruyn, *op. cit.*, *Tijdschrift . . . XVII* (1949), 145 f.

in polyphony (as Danckerts conceived it) against recent innovations in harmony and notation which were, in his eyes, threatening to undermine the integrity and purity of the diatonic eight-mode system. The first part of his treatise is a description of the dispute of 1551, with a lengthy justification of his decision against Vicentino; the second part reviews the intervallic structure of the three genera and the hexachord system; and the third part is an attack upon the composers of Danckerts' own generation who, for no other reason that he could see but the pursuit of novelty („la nuova maniera“) were contaminating the traditional modal system by introducing degree-inflecting accidentals into their works, were misusing the terms „cromatico“ and „misura di breve“ in entitling their compositions¹⁰, and were confounding the traditional meanings of the signs for such proportional relations as tripla and sesquialtera. I shall return later to a consideration of Danckerts' views as a theorist; for the moment it is worth emphasizing that the anecdote related here is, so far as we can tell, pure history rather than fiction (for we have at present no reason to doubt Danckerts' account), and that it is a tale concerned with practical musicianship in vocal performance of his own time and milieu. Danckerts introduces the story at the beginning of the third part of the treatise, the first chapter of which is devoted to the opinion that the genera should not be mingled with one another in polyphony, and to an explanation of the three species of tetrachords comprising the genera. He then continues:

(fol. 405)

Se ben ho dimostrato di sopra gli ordini che se osseruano nelli progressi delli Tetrachordi di ciascun delli suddetti tre generi, secondo la descrizione di Boetio et altri authori, e datone qualche esempio per più facile intelligentia; Non vorrei però che per causa mia fossero abusati, e di tal maniera tramischiati l'un con l'altro. Che i canti non fossero poi, ne dell'un, ne dell'altro genere. Si come nella presente età nostra si troua, che i canti del genere Diatonico (postposto ogni buon ordine) sono venuti in tali e tanti disordini, sotto pretesto che questi compositori novelli dicono di voler comporre alla nuova maniera, che non hanno più forma ne modo di tuono autentico o plagali alcuno, come dirò più largamente nel sosseguito capitolo¹¹ di questa ultima parte, dopo che haurò posto una dichiarazione ouero

¹⁰) For a review of the events and publications constituting what Danckerts refers to as the „nuova maniera“, see C. Palisca, op. cit., Acta Musicologica, XXXI (1959), p. 138 ff.

¹¹) The words „sosseguito capitolo“ are a later insertion: the words „terzo capitolo“ have been lightly cancelled. The crudity of Danckerts' Italian prose style was earlier observed by La Fage.

opinione mia, data sopra una differentia Musicale infrascritta, la quale si era litigata innanzi a diuersi giudici in Roma, et allhora si litigaua(no) authori innanzi al R(everen)do Mons(ign)or Ant(oni)o trivulzio¹² Vescovo di Tholone nel tempo di papa paulo terzo, fra due cantori della Collegiata chiesa di s. Lorenzo in Damaso di Roma, l'uno era chiamato M. Guido francese contrabasso, e l'altro M. Giovan Zoppino da Parma Tenore, la dichiarazione della qual Differentia non sarà forse in tutto fuora di proposito ne senza frutto del detto terzo Capitolo, per le ragioni in essa espresse.

Danckerts concludes this first chapter of the third part with further insistence on the importance of keeping the genera distinct from one another in composition. He then devotes Chapter II to the promised narrative.

[Chapter II]
(fol. 405v)

Essendo i sopradetti cantori in compagnia degli altri della detta Collegiata chiesa congregati, per cantare et antivedere i canti della settimana santa, e fra gli altri, la prima Lamentatione che incomincia Incipit Lamentatio hyeremie prophete ecc, composta dal Eccellente Musico M. Giovan Scribano, Compositore e Cantore ancho esso della suddetta Capella del papa, a quattro uoci: scritta in un libro grande da cappella, con pochissimi b molli nella Voce del Basso, e nella positione overo linea del q mi notati: la qual Lamentatione da Molti e particolarmente dal detto M. Giovan Scribano suo Authore, e tenuta e giudicata del secondo tono, per fare la sua final conclusione in D sol re per la sillaba Re. e cantando i detti cantori la detta Lamentatione nel detto libro con pochi b molli in q mi scritta e notata: Il sopradetto M. Guido contrabasso disse che la voce del Basso si douea cantare p(er) b molli in q mi. e prese la penna e pose un b per segno del b molle, nel principio delle linee del q mi. Del che M. Giovanni Zoppino Tenore predetto riprese il detto M. Guido, dicendogli che il segno del b molle non si douea mettere nel principio della linea per non esser ordinario: ma innanzi a quelle note che douean esser cantate per b molle in q mi accidentalmente, e fingere il b mol doue bisognaua: o in effetto simil parole. Alche il detto M. Guido rispose, e perfidiò, dicendo, che la sua voce sola del Basso, si douea cantare [tutta] p(er) b molle, e le altre uoci cioè del Tenore: Contralto: e Soprano si doueano cantare p(er) q duro, e che per questo hauea posto il segno del b molle nel principio delle linee del q mi, e uolea cantare la detta uoce sua del Basso ordinariamente tutta per

¹²) The name „Antonio Trivulzio“ is a later insertion.

h molle in h mi: e sopra questa Differentia cioè Se il segno del h molle Douea di Ragione Ordinamente stare nel principio delle linee del h mi o non¹³: fecero una Scomessa di tre scudi doro: Promettendo tutti due, di stare al giudicio di M. Constantio festa e di M. Charles d'argentilz, Ambi due compositori eccellenti e cantori della suddetta capella del papa, i quali giudicarono poi, secondo la lor scientia contra il detto M. Guido.

Il quale non restando sodisfatto di tal giuditio fe commettere la causa innanzi al Auditor della Ca(mer)a Apostolica, doue ancho hebbe la sententia contro. & poi innanzi al R(everen)do M. Paulo Drago; & al ultimo innanzi a suddetto Monsignor di Tholone, Il quale havendo notitia di me, da poi che della maggior parte delli Compositori di Musica che sonno per le capelle di Roma, et ancho delli suddetti M. Constantio et di m. Charles giudici et anche di M. Christofooro morales compositore¹⁴ eccellente e Cantore anchora esso¹⁵ della suddetta capella del papa, hauea inteso loro opinioni sopra la detta differentia (secondo esso mi disse) mi (fol. 406) mando a domandare, et molto sottilmente volse intendere da me le ragioni musicali sopra la detta differentia, le quali hauendo esso ben compresi mi preghò strettamente ch'io uolesse mettere in scritti ancho la mia opinione co(n) la Ragione sulla quale io la fondaua. Dicendomi che era deliberato di dar fine a questa lite, affermandomi¹⁶ che la Differentia era come di sopra è scritta, mi diede il libro sopradetto accio che io hauessi da considerare il caso¹⁷. Al quale Mons(ign)or per mano del detto M. Giovan Zoppino mandai poi la mia scritta del seguente Tenore.

Opinione scritta sopra la detta Differentia e mandata al sudetto S(ign)or Giudice.

Hauendo io veduto e considerato (R[everen]do Mons[ign]or mio) il causo della detta Differentia; dico, che se i compositori e Cantori si uogliono gouernare nel lor comporre e cantare, a uolonta e fantasia loro, e desprezzare gli Ordini: Leggi: Regole: e Dottrine buoni, dateci da i nostri Antichi, non accade parlarne ne darne piu altramente la mia opinione. ma permettergli questi, e molti altri errori, commessi da loro, in molti canti, a

¹³) This entire title, from „Se“ to „non“, is in large and bold characters in the manuscript.

¹⁴) The word „anche“ before the name is a later insertion; the words „anche esso“ before „compositore“ have been cancelled.

¹⁵) The words „anchora esso“ are a later insertion.

¹⁶) The word „et“ before „affermandomi“ is cancelled.

¹⁷) The entire last phrase, from „mi“ to „caso“, is cancelled, as if Dankerts, after writing the phrase, decided not to let it appear, in a final version, that his access to the composition had been through the mediation of the Bishop.

uolunta e fantasia loro, il che (come ho detto) glie'l permetto, ma non glie'l approuo. Ma gouernandomi con la Ragione e dottrina, ho hauuto dalli mei Antecessori e Maestri honorandi (la quale in parte descriverò qui di sotto sopra questo ponto a bastanza, lasciandone quel che non fa al nostro proposito) Dico che nel canto del secondo tuono, quando finisce in D sol re, come fa la suddetta lamentatione, non sta bene che il segno del \flat mol stia nel principio delle linee della positione di \natural mi (intendendo per quel ponerlo nel principio delle linee []). Che tutto il canto di quella voce si debbia cantare ordinariamente per \flat molle, perciò che allhora la prima spetie del Diatessaron cioè sol re ouero Re sol, Appropriata al secondo tuono, diuenta seconda spetie del Diatessaron, cioè la mi, ouero mi la, la quale è appropriata al terzo e quarto tuono, e cosi vien falsificato ouero alterato il detto secondo tuono dalla seconda spetie del diatessaron, il quale secondo tuono è composto della prima spetie del diapente cioè Re La ouera La Re sopra il suo finale, e della prima spetie del Diatessaron, cioè Sol Re ouero Re Sol sotto il suo finale. Come qui di sotto chiaramente si vedrà per le regole ouero ordini a ciascun delli detti tuoni appropriati e dalli Musici antichi e Moderni approbati et osseruati.

I quali tuoni sono otto: e si conoscono alla lor final terminatione, e ciascun di essi e composto d'una spetie del diapenthe e d'una spetie del diatessaron, le quali compliscono insieme un Diapason, fra la qual Diapason ciascun di loro trascorre di questa sorte.

I quattro tuoni chiamati autentici trascorrono sopra la lor final terminatione per il Diapente e Diatessaron infin al Diapason, e se manchassero d'arrivare al Diapason sarebbon(o) chiamati imperfetti; e se passassero col' ascenso si chiamerebbono sopr'abondanti.

I quattro tuoni chiamati plagali trascorrono sopra la lor final terminatione insino al diapente, e sotto la lor final terminatione insino al diatessaron, e se manchassero d'arrivare col'ascenso al diapente di sopra, o col discenso al diatessaron di sotto, sarebbono chiamati imperfetti da quella banda che manchassero, e similmente se passassero o di sopra col ascenso, o di sotto col discenso, si direbbono similmente sopra abbondanti, da (fol. 406v) quella parte che passassero. Però e da sapere che la consuetudine suol concedere alli tuoni autentici di poter discendere una voce sotto il suo solito finale, et alli plagali di potere ascendere una uoce sopra il suo diapente senza incorrere pena di esser chiamati sopra abundantanti . . .

(Danckerts continues on fol. 406v—407 with this description of the eight modes and with musical examples illustrating their varied collocations of fourth and fifth, comprising the octave. Both the description and the

examples are the conventional ones by which the modal octaves are presented in theoretical writings of this period.) He then continues:

(fol. 407)

Risoluzione della suddetta differentia

Essendo dunque chiaro per le sopradette Regole, leggi, et ordini, a noi dati, e lasciati dalli Musici, Antecessori e Maestri nostri, Che il Secondo Tuono è composto della prima spetie del diapente cioè Re: La, o la, Re: e della prima spetie del Diatessaron, qual è, Re, sol: ouero Sol, Re: incominciando dal D sol re, qual è suo proprio fine, discendendo in A re: Dico ch'il segno di \flat molle non deve, ne puo esser posto con ragion ordinariamente nel principio delle linee del \natural mi, per non falsificare il secondo tuono nel suo diatessaron con la seconda spetie del Diatessaron (la qual 2^o spetie convien al terzo e quarto tuoni, e non al secondo) ma deue esser posto innanzi a quelle note che di necessita deueno esser cantate accidentalmente per \flat molle nella linea del \natural mi: per evitare qualche imperfetta o sopra abbondante quinta, ouero ottaua, o per indolcire qualche consonantia¹⁸ cruda e dura, o per fuggire qualche Tritono, o altro salto incommodo, con questo segno del \flat mol, come di sopra piu largamente è stato detto.

Quanto a quello che diffese detto M. Guido con(trabasso, nella seconda sua perfidia, doue nuole che si canta la uoce sola del Basso per \flat molle, e le altre tre uoci cioè del Tenore: Alto e Soprano: per \natural duro, non accade responderli altramente (parendomi che esso l'habbia detto come furioso, poco perito, e manco pratico e senza ragione alcuna) Essendo impossibile d'accordarsi mai quelle ottaue che s'affrontano con la detta uoce del Basso, nella positione del \natural mi: e la uoce del Alto, nella positione del \flat fa \natural mi, le quali sono molte, e sarebbero sempre false dissonanti et insupportabili e non solo dalli dotti Musici compositori, e Cantori, ma ancho da gli ignoranti della detta scientia sarebbero abhorriti e biasimati.

e cosi nella detta lamentatione non si dee segnare il \flat molle nel principio delle linee della positione del \natural mi per non hauersi a
 (fol. 407v) *cantare ordinariamente per \flat molle. Ma si lo dee segnare accidentalmente in quelli luoghi, et innanzi a quelle note doue bisogna (e come è detto di sopra) Tanto nella uoce del¹⁹ basso, quanto del Alto: Tenore: e soprano, per le ragioni di sopra dette. È tanto meno si dee cantare il Basso ordinariamente per \flat molle, quanto in alcuni luoghi (cantando però le altre tre uoci (e particolarmente lo Alto) per \natural duro,*

¹⁸) The word „altra“ is cancelled before „consonantia“.

¹⁹) The words „uoce del“ are substituted for „contra“ Basso.

come uol il detto M. Guido) è farla di cantarla per \natural duro in \natural mi, per imitare la fuga, propostali dalla uoce del Alto, Come chiaramente nella detta Lamentatione in piu luoghi o passi (e fra gli altri, nel susseguente passo) se può uedere.

Example 1²⁰

The musical score for Example 1 consists of two systems of five measures each. The parts are labeled Cantus, Altus, Tenor, and Bassus. The word "Aleph" is written below the first measure of each part. The Cantus part has a melodic line with a slur over measures 2-4. The other parts have rhythmic accompaniment. The first system ends at measure 5, and the second system ends at measure 10.

Ecco adunque che in questo sopradetto passo, della suddetta lamentatione si canta due uolte p(er) \natural duro in \natural mi ordinariamente, et una uolta per \flat molle accidentalmente, per indolcire la quinta imperfetta e cruda, che se gli opponeua dalla uoce del Alto, con la composta sua del soprano. & per questa ragione non si dee porre il segno del \flat molle nel principio delle linee ordinariamente in \natural mi, ma accidentalmente innanzi a quelle note che ne hanno di bisogno come hauea la antepenultima della uoce del Basso nel suddetto passo, & questo e il parere et opinione di me ghisilino predetto fondata sopra le dette Ragioni, e li bascio le mani.

When did this tempest in a teapot take place? Assuming that Dankerts' account is factually correct, or substantially so, what is known of the careers of the principal figures in the affair helps to narrow down the date

²⁰) Dankerts gives the example in small-scale choirbook arrangement, i. e., each part separately, with Cantus over Tenor on the left, and Alto over Bass on the right.

to the period between 1538 and 1544, i. e. between eleven and seventeen years before the presumed writing of this second version of the treatise in 1555—56. Danckerts' somewhat haphazard narrative names no fewer than ten individuals who were involved in the affair in different ways: 1) the two singers of the chapel of San Lorenzo: the Bass, Guido francese, and the Tenor, Giovanni Zoppino of Parma²¹; 2) the non-musicians to whom, as personages in authority, Master Guido appealed his case (preposterous as this tactic appears, it may merely reflect Guido's disturbance over the imminent loss of the money staked on the original difference of opinion): Antonio Trivulzio, Bishop of Toulon; Master Paulo Drago; and the unnamed Auditor of the Apostolic Chamber; 3) the musical authorities: Costanzo Festa, Charles d'Argentilly, Cristobal de Morales, and that curiously neglected figure, the composer himself, Juan Escribano. As for Danckerts' own role, it becomes clear from one remark in his narrative that his version of the affair is based mainly on what he was told by Bishop Trivulzio (*affermandomi che la Differentia era come di sopra è scritta*); on the other hand, Danckerts reports that he sent his written „Opinione“ to the Bishop „by the hand of Giovanni Zoppino“, so that he was, after all, in direct touch with at least one of the principals. Moreover, at the time of the affair he too was a member of the Sistine Chapel along with Escribano, Festa, Charles, and Morales.

In first mentioning the dispute, Danckerts places it „in the reign of Paul III“, i. e., between 1534 and 1549. The period of Charles d'Argentilly's service in the Chapel exceeds these limits — extending from 1528 to 1556 — and is thus of no help in settling its date. But Festa died in 1545, and the most recent studies on Morales show that he left Rome to return permanently to Spain in the same year²². Further, the terminal date can be set with fair confidence a year earlier, 1544, thanks to the movements of Bishop Trivulzio: named Bishop of Toulon by Clement VII in 1528, he was made governor of Perugia by Paul III, and was named vice-legate to Avignon in 1544²³. As for the earlier boundary, it is set absolutely by the

²¹) I have been unable to trace any identifiable reference to a singer named „Guido francese“. As for Giovanni Zoppino of Parma, he is not mentioned in standard reference works or in N. Pelicelli, *Musicisti in Parma . . .*, Note d'Archivio, VIII (1931), 132, 196, 278; and IX (1932), 41, 217. Eitner, *Quellen-Lexikon*, Band X, p. 361, lists a „Geronimo Zoppino“ who was employed at Ferrara around 1555; this entry is based on Cinciarino's *Introduktion*, 1555, p. 11.

²²) See „Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart“, articles „Festa, Costanzo“ (Knut Jeppesen), and „Morales“ (Robert Stevenson). Also Stevenson's „Cristobal de Morales: A Fourth-Centenary Biography“, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, VI (1953), pp 3—42. Stevenson shows (p. 18) that Morales was also absent from Rome from April of 1540 until May of 1541.

date of Morales's appointment as a Papal singer in 1535. And in all probability it must be fixed after 1538, when Danckerts joined the Chapel, for he tells us that his opinion was solicited by the Bishop „in order to put an end to the affair“ (*che era deliberato a dar fine a questa lite*), and it seems extremely unlikely that the quarrel could then have lasted as long as three years. Thus, the limits that can presently be established are 1538 and 1544.

Juan Escribano, the composer of the much-debated Lamentation, is the least prominent figure in the narrative. He was a singer in the Sistine Chapel longer than any of the others involved here, from 1507 until his death in 1558²⁴. Only a few of his compositions are preserved, but they range over a long and changing era: two pieces appeared as early as 1510, in Antico's *Canzoni Nove*; a Magnificat was copied into Cappella Sistina MS 44 (written around 1513), and a motet in Cappella Sistina 46 (compiled before 1527, and perhaps before 1521). Furthermore, as will be seen, a Lamentation setting by him is preserved in a Roman source compiled in 1543. The curious fact about Escribano in this dispute is that, beyond Danckerts' reference to Escribano's opinion on the mode of the Lamentation, no one involved in the affair is reported to have sought his views on the question of supplying accidentals. Whether there may have been any practical reason for this apparent lapse we do not know, nor can we be sure whether Danckerts' account is in this respect wholly objective.

As for the musical chapel of San Lorenzo in Damaso, in which the dispute occurred, practically nothing can be said about its activities or traditions at this period. The first extended indications of its musical forces in the 17th century have just recently been published by Paul Kast²⁵; but no documentary information for the 16th century has yet been made available. Danckerts tells us that the singers of the chapel were gathered to prepare (*antivedere*) the music of Holy Week, and describes them as singing from „un libro grande da cappella.“ In a remark that he later cancelled from his text he mentions that this choirbook was placed at his disposal by Bishop Trivulzio at the time of requesting his opinion. But if any part of the older musical archive of San Lorenzo has been preserved, nothing is now known of its whereabouts, and no musical source that can be specifically attributed to this chapel has yet been located²⁶.

²³) G. Moroni, *Dizionario di Erudizione Storico-Ecclesiastica*, Vol. LXXXI (Venezia 1856), pp. 82—83.

²⁴) See „Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart“, Band 3, cols. 1523—1524, article „Escribano“ (Higinio Angles).

²⁵) *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*“, Band 11, article „Rom. D.“, cols. 712, 719.

²⁶) See Helmut Hucke, G. O. Pitoni und seine Messen im Archiv der Cappella Giulia, *Kirchenmusikalisches Jahrbuch*, Jahrgang 39 (1955), p. 78.

On the other hand, Lamentations by Escribano are preserved in the archive of the Cappella Giulia. Although the setting of the *Aleph* passage quoted by Danckerts has not been located, a passage from another Lamentation by Escribano, contained in the large choirbook Cappella Giulia XII-3, provides a setting of the slightly later text „Princeps provinciarum“ that is very similar to the *Aleph* setting given by Danckerts. Moreover, Cappella Giulia XII-3 is a source compiled by the copyist Federico Maria Perusino in the year 1543 (within the period in which the dispute took place); it contains music for Holy Week; and its repertoire represents not only Escribano but three other composers named by Danckerts as having taken part in this affair: Festa, Morales, and Charles d'Argentilly²⁷. The passage in question is found in the Lamentation by Escribano which appears on folios Lxxx-xcvii of the choirbook, and the reader can judge how closely it resembles the quotation given by Danckerts.

Example 2 from Cap. Giulia Ms XII-3, fol. lxxx^v - lxxxi

5

Princeps

Princeps

Princeps

Princeps

10

provinciarum

provinciarum

provinciarum

provinciarum

provinciarum

etc.

etc.

etc.

etc.

etc.

²⁷) In the absence of a published catalogue of the musical archive of the Cappella Giulia, the reader is referred to brief descriptions of this MS by Walter Rubsamén, *Music Research in Italian Libraries, Notes*, Vol. VI, No. 4 (September 1949), p. 548; Knud Jeppesen, *Gaspar de Albertis: A Forgotten Master of the 16th Century*,

While Danckerts' rather elliptical narrative conveys the fundamental issues in this controversy (as well as, perhaps unwittingly, its comic overtones), it fails to answer a number of questions that we would willingly put regarding the practical side of the affair and the problem of applying accidentals in performance. Thus, Danckerts does not tell us how many singers took part in this performance, or whether Guido and Giovanni were the only singers of the Bass and Tenor parts; nor do we learn from him whether there was any instrumental support, or whether the singing was directed by a choirmaster. Danckerts makes no mention whatever of a *maestro di cappella*, and the evidence he does give is such as to suggest that if a choirmaster was present he signally failed to settle the affair or to soothe Guido's ruffled feelings. Equally unfortunately, Danckerts fails to indicate the reasons why Festa and Charles rejected Guido's proposal to insert a flat signature in the Bass, and although he maintains that Morales expressed an opinion, he either does not know or does not take time to say what that opinion was. Again, one sees that Danckerts' major purpose in introducing the tale is to illustrate his view of modality, and his account is so designed as to center attention on his own theoretical convictions.

Two questions dominate the controversy: one centers on the signature and mode of the composition; the other, on the application of local accidentals. Guido at first contends that the Bass part of the Lamentation should be sung with B-flat throughout, and, suiting the action to the word, inserts a B-flat in the Bass as signature. Why he should have done so is not entirely clear either from Danckerts' description or from the example he quotes, for Danckerts is evidently unsure at what point in the performance the controversy arose. As example he gives only the *Aleph* passage, close to the beginning of the Lamentation; but he understands Guido to insist that the B-flat which appeared only sporadically in the Bass part in this source (*un libro grande da cappella, con pochissimi b molli nella Voce del Basso*) should be applied to the entire Bass part in the work (*e uolea cantare la detta uoce sua del Basso ordinariamente tutta per b molle in q mi*). The point of particular interest is that in the *Aleph* passage there is no linear segment in the Bass which would demand any chromatic alteration in order to suppress an undesirable linear interval, either by conjunct or disjunct motion. In the example, as given by Danckerts, the Bass part consists only of the notes *d-c-b-a*, with B-flat specified at measure 8 (whether by Danckerts or by Escribano, we do not know). We

The Musical Quarterly, XLII (1958), p. 319; and Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Band 11, article „Römische Handschriften“ (P a u l K a s t), col. 755.

thus infer that if Guido's demand for the repeated use of B-flat was based on linear considerations, these must have turned up elsewhere in the piece; if, on the other hand, his dissatisfaction arose from harmonic problems (which seems more likely), a clear example is provided by the diminished fifth at m. 8 (*mi contra fa* between Bass and Alto, with the Superius doubling *fa* an octave higher), which is ameliorated by the explicit flat. Assuming for the moment that this B-flat in the Bass at m. 8 was also stipulated in the original choirbook, we see that its very presence justified the singer's confusion. For its stipulation would be predicated on a lack of confidence in the singer's ability to supply the accidental himself if it were not explicitly written down. Thus, Guido's confusion in this passage could well have arisen from a general uncertainty as to the completeness of the notation (the very source of the *musica ficta* problem): if he found a flat already written in at m. 8, then he was presumably uncertain whether to sing B-flats in mm. 5 and 6; and if he did not find a stipulated flat at m. 8, but sang B-flat nevertheless to correct the diminished fifth with the upper voices, then he must still have been uncertain about mm. 5 and 6. Accordingly, Guido's demand is for a uniform procedure that would do away with these imponderables, and his simple and drastic suggestion, that all *B*'s in the Bass be sung as B-flats, would admirably resolve the problem if it did not produce unfortunate inconsistencies with the other voices, and if it did not (in Danckerts' opinion) violate the modal integrity of the composition.

Let us now consider the problem from Danckerts' point of view. The bulk of his discourse is given over to the problem of the signature, and his rejection of Guido's proposals is based entirely on his defense of modal purity. „This Lamentation,“ he says, „is considered by many, and particularly by Master Giovanni Scribano, its author, to be in the Second Mode, making its ending on *D sol re* with the syllable *Re*.“ Now, from the *Aleph* passage alone, Danckerts' assignment of the work to the Second Mode rather than the First is difficult to justify, unless the Bass in this passage, descending a fourth below its final, is regarded as an indicator of plagal status. But even if the remainder of the Lamentation were to support Danckerts' view, his explanations of what he means by „mode“ are both strongly traditional and extremely simple — they lack any recognition of the existence of difficulties in establishing an unequivocal meaning for this term as applied to polyphony. His presentation of the eight modes as the varied collocations of the diatonic species of fourths and fifths goes back, of course (in a sense immediately relevant to the 16th century) through earlier writers to Tinctoris, while in a more extended sense it goes back far

into the Middle Ages. Danckerts offers none of the finer distinctions supplied by so recent a predecessor as Pietro Aron²⁸, and he raises no questions as to which voice in a polyphonic complex is the principal determinant of the mode; or what the proper cadential steps are, or ought to be. Writing in the 1550's, he exhibits no awareness of Glarean's recent revision of modal theory in the *Dodecachordon* of 1547; he nowhere suggests that the assignment of mode to a Lamentation may be complicated by the presence of an elaborated recitation-tone; in short, he holds fast to a simple dogma for which he can claim only the virtues of authority and tradition. Perhaps the most revealing aspect of Danckerts' discussion of mode is its very absence of theoretical depth, in the sense that it exhibits a point of view that a practical musician of mid-century Rome could espouse, and which dominated his outlook on contemporary developments. The paradox in his appeal to tradition is that he uses it to reject Guido's proposal for a flat signature in the Bass alone, but gives no hint of knowing anything of those repertoires of the past in which partial signatures had been the rule rather than the exception.

On the subject of local accidentals in the Lamentation Danckerts' views are of greater interest, for they show us in specific terms how a practical musician of the period reasoned about this problem. Having rejected the flat as signature, Danckerts' *Risolutione* presents, in fairly clear form, the criteria by which the accidental ought to be used: 1) to avoid alteration of perfect fifths and octaves; 2) „to soften some harsh and crude consonance“; 3) „to avoid a tritone or other awkward leap.“ From the mention of the word „leap“ only in the third item, it can be inferred that the first two are intended to refer to vertical, not linear intervals, and this concentration on vertical sonorities governs Danckerts' view of the „Aleph“ passage. His proposed solutions are as follows:

1) the Bass should sing B-flat at m. 8 (to produce a correct vertical sonority);

2) the Bass should sing B ♯ at m. 5 and 6, for two reasons that are alluded to (though not consecutively) in his account. The immediate reason is that B ♯ conforms to the signature (*ordinariamente*). The second reason, mentioned just before the musical illustration, is that the Bass should sing B ♯ in order to supply an exact imitation of the passage just sung by the Alto (*per imitare la fuga, propostali dalla uoce del'Alto*).

This last reason is doubtless the most interesting of all, for it suggests a criterion of applying accidentals based not only on local and immediate

²⁸) Trattato della natura et cognizione de tutti li toni . . . 1525 (partial translation in Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* (New York 1950), pp. 205—218).

considerations of vertical sonorities or melodic construction, but upon the larger relationship of structural elements in a composition, in this case the paired imitation of Superius-Alto and Tenor-Bass. To be sure, this particular passage presents no problems of transposition or solmization, since the imitation is at the octave; but the passage provides valuable evidence that the device of imitation could be invoked by contemporary musicians as a means of justifying, and rendering consistent, a particular set of accidentals.

Paradoxically, however, Danckerts' solution to m. 5 & 6, while solving one problem, creates another. He demands B ♯ in Alto and Bass because of the signature and the imitation. But the progression B ♯ — A (Alto, m. 2 & 3; Baß, m. 5 & 6) fails to satisfy another venerable rule of *musica ficta*, namely, that a perfect interval when approached by contrary motion from an imperfect interval, should be preceded by the larger, not the smaller, imperfect interval. Following this rule, both Alto and Bass should have B-flats in all measures up to m. 6 (just as the unfortunate Guido had demanded). Yet this interpretation would flatly contradict Danckerts' thesis as to the mode of the *Aleph* passage, for now both Alto and Bass would have B-flats throughout the passage, the very opposite of what he is trying to demonstrate. Thus, Danckerts' presentation twists and turns in the difficult attempt to reconcile a dogmatic view of the modality of the passage with the rules of applying accidentals. And the broader implications of the conflict between these issues deserve further study.

What can we learn from this episode? While striving to reduce the area of speculation to the minimum that seems warranted, this much can be said. The anecdote eloquently sustains the view that the major difficulties in the field of unspecified accidentals are not, as so often suggested, due to the loss of a uniform tradition that was once firmly fixed and universally understood. The singers of the time — and these are professionals, not amateurs — could all too easily fall into confusion over the „correct“ means of supplying accidentals. Moreover, the anecdote also supports the view that the problem of accidentals might profitably be construed in two ways: on the one hand, as a historical problem, in which our attempt is to discover what the performers did, or probably did; on the other hand, as a more nearly theoretical problem, in which our attempt is to satisfy ourselves as to what the singers should have done, or might have done, if they had been able to construct a proper and relevant theoretical basis for dealing with intractable cases. It is exactly this latter process that Danckerts attempts to carry out, and it is comforting to realize that his aim is essentially the same as ours — namely, to show what the theoretical

presuppositions of the composition are, or *may be*, and how these can be realized in the application of accidentals. Whether his recommendations were, let us say, taken up in a subsequent performance is a historical question for which we have no further evidence. But establishing the relative plausibility of the versions that might have been inferred in performance — establishing, that is, the range of acceptable putative readings of this and other works, readings on which our evaluations of the style and significance of these works must inevitably rest — remains the goal towards which a good deal of further study in this difficult subject might profitably be directed.