

# Giovanni Battista Vitali's Violone in the *Accademia*

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## Introduction

Drawing on existing literature and, in particular, on the pioneering research carried out by Alessandra Chiarelli, Owen Jander and John Suess, I shall begin this article with a brief description of the context of the Modenese musical 'accademia' (a special type of cantata), while highlighting relevant aspects of Giovanni Battista Vitali's life and output.<sup>1</sup> This study will then proceed to a discussion and contextualization of the use of the bass violin in late seventeenth-century dramatic music and will subsequently examine Vitali's *accademia* *Se le passioni amorose si debbano scoprire all'amico*, 'Olà, saggi, tacete', and its aria with *solo-obbligato* violone.<sup>2</sup> A transcription of that aria, 'Non hà compagno amor', is published as a supplement to this article. With regard to the history of the early cello and the use of terms such as 'violone', in-depth analyses are available in literature by Marc Vanscheeuwijck and myself, among others.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alessandra Chiarelli, 'Giuseppe Colombi, Giovanni Maria Bononcini, Domenico Gabrielli & Giovanni Maria (Angelo) Bononcini', in *The Italian Cantata in the Seventeenth Century*, 14, ed. Alessandra Chiarelli (New York and London: Garland, 1985–86); Alessandra Chiarelli, 'Fonti e vita musicale estense tra corte, collezionismo e accademie. Raccolta bibliografica e tradizione inventariale', in Mauro Bini (ed.), *Gli Estensi. La corte di Modena* (Modena: Il Bulino edizioni d'arte, 1999), 263–309; Owen Jander, 'The Cantata in Accademia: Music for the Accademia de' Dissonanti and their Duke, Francesco II d'Este', *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia*, 10 (1975), 519–44; John G. Suess, 'The University of Modena, the "Accademia dei Dissonanti", and the Academy Cantatas of Giovanni Battista Vitali: An Example of Cartesian Rationalism and Music', in Angelo Pompilio (ed.), *Atti del XIV Congresso della Società Internazionale di Musicologia: Trasmissione e recezione delle forme di culture musicale*, 3 vols (Turin: EDT, 1990), i, 58–66.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank Alessandra Chiarelli and Markella Vandoros for their most valuable comments and suggestions in the completion of this article.

<sup>3</sup> Marc Vanscheeuwijck, 'Sulle tracce del violoncello nel repertorio tardo-seicentesco in area padana', in Alberto Colzani, Andrea Luppi and Maurizio Padoan (eds), *Barocco Padano 7* (Como: AMIS, 2012), 109–44; 'Violoncello and Violone', in Stewart Carter (ed.), *A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century*

The musical *accademia* under consideration here, *Se le passioni amorose si debbano scoprire all'amico* ('Olà, saggi, tacete'), by Giovanni Battista Vitali (1632–92), originated from the Modenese Accademia de' Dissonanti. Possessing a poetic text pertinent to the academy, it was evidently conceived for and performed at one of the academy's meetings and both composed and played by members of the *cappella musicale* of the court of Francesco II d'Este, Duke of Modena. The Accademia de' Dissonanti, established in the early 1680s, had by 1684 been sanctioned by the duke. Its meetings were held either at his palace or at the college of San Carlo. These courtly intellectual gatherings, themselves also called 'accademie', presented topics which provided the framework for discussions, poetry, orations and music. The subjects were mainly connected with Francesco II and events concerning the house of Este. The cantatas that originated from these meetings were labelled 'accademie' after the occasion of composition and performance, a term found in extant manuscript sources. The musical *accademia* is a sub-genre which differs from the cantata mainly in its text, which centres on the topic of the academy's meeting.<sup>4</sup> In Modena, *accademia*-like cantatas were produced well before the formation of the Accademia de' Dissonanti, by composers connected to the court, in particular Giovanni Maria Bononcini (1642–78), with texts by Modenese intellectuals who then became members of the academy when it was subsequently established. As revealed by Chiarelli, this practice was already in place, with the same customs, since the early years of Francesco II's government.<sup>5</sup>

Vitali composed nine *accademie* for the Accademia de' Dissonanti; of these, only *Se le passioni amorose si debbano scoprire all'amico* contains an aria with *solo-obbligato* violone. Vitali had begun his career as a 'violonlino' (most likely *violoncino*) player at San Petronio in Bologna.<sup>6</sup> He defined himself, in the 1660s, as a player of the 'violone da braccio'<sup>7</sup> and, when he left his post in 1674, a position for a 'violoncello' player

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*Music*, second edition (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2012), 231–47; Alessandro Sanguineti, 'Da Spalla or da Gamba? The Early Cello in Northern Italian Repertoire, 1650–95', *The Galpin Society Journal*, 69 (2016), 1–10.

<sup>4</sup> For details of the different types of cantatas, see Sara Dieci, *I manoscritti di cantate nell'Archivio della Basilica di San Petronio* (doctoral dissertation, University of Salento, 2009), 13–16.

<sup>5</sup> Chiarelli, 'Giuseppe Colombi', introduction.

<sup>6</sup> The term 'violonlino' appears in *I-Bsp*, Atti della Fabrica (Decreta Congregationis) VI, fol. 149.

<sup>7</sup> In Giovanni Battista Vitali, *Correnti, e Balletti da Camera a due Violini, col suo Basso continuo per Spinetta ò Violone*, Op. 1 (Bologna: Silvani, 1666).

became vacant.<sup>8</sup> During the second half of the seventeenth century cellos existed in different sizes and tunings, with terminology varying according to date and local usage. There is evidence of a small instrument played horizontally (*violoncello da spalla*); however, Vitali most likely played his violone or violoncello vertically. From 1674 he was employed at Francesco II's court in Modena as *sottomaestro di cappella* and subsequently as *maestro di cappella* during the period 1684–86. He is mainly known for his instrumental music, however he also composed sacred vocal music and dramatic works (oratorios and cantatas).

### The *bassi* in Italian seventeenth-century cantatas

Seventeenth-century Italian cantatas are mostly scored for single voice or two voices and continuo; however, towards the last quarter of the century, some other instruments were occasionally added to play *sinfonie* and *ritornelli* or to accompany *obbligato* some *arie* or *ariosi*.<sup>9</sup> Typically two violins were added, although larger forces were occasionally introduced, such as the Roman *concertino* and *concerto grosso* groups.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, very little is known about the exact instrumentation and deployment of the continuo group. In essence, the most innovative musical change in late seventeenth-century Italian cantatas was the increasing importance given to the continuo in arias, where it provides not only harmonic support but also often serves as a melodic and rhythmical counterpart to the singer, in effect becoming an integral and independent voice within the texture. The continuo frequently anticipates the vocal motif (or material derived from it) at the beginning of the aria and imitates the voice throughout. In other arias, the continuo came increasingly to contain patterned rhythmical figurations or to develop active melodic and rhythmical material independent from the voice. This change in how the music was written mirrors a similar trend found in operas and oratorios in the latter part of the century.

This contrapuntal manner of the bass line suggests the use of a melodic instrument such as the cello, and the late seventeenth-century cantatas by Giovanni Bononcini (1670–1747) and Antonio Caldara (1670–1736) seem to confirm that this instrument

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<sup>8</sup> *I-Bsp*, Cart. 408, fasc. 1: Suppliche (Memoriali) dei Musici. See also Osvaldo Gambassi, *La Cappella Musicale di San Petronio, Maestri, organisti, cantori e strumentisti dal 1436 al 1920* (Florence: Olschki, 1987), 478 (doc. 81) and 496 (doc. 151).

<sup>9</sup> For a bibliographic database of Italian cantata repertory, see *Clori: The Archive of the Italian Cantata* at <http://cantataitaliana.it/index.php>.

<sup>10</sup> See Carolyn Gianturco, 'La vita di Alessandro Stradella illustrata da alcune testimonianze musicali', in *Alessandro Stradella e Modena, musica, documenti, immagini, Catalogo della mostra Biblioteca Estense, Sala dei Manoscritti, novembre 1983-gennaio 1984* (Modena: Coptip, 1983), 13–22. Online at <http://bibliotecaestense.beniculturali.it/info/img/esp/i-mo-beu-1983-sc.m.21-stradella.pdf>

was indeed used to accompany the voice in arias that possess an active continuo part. Bononcini was widely known for 'those fine Inventions in his Basses to which he was led by an Instrument [the violoncello] upon which he excels'.<sup>11</sup> In effect, some of his arias exhibit particularly melodically- and rhythmically-active continuo lines that reveal 'the hand of an experienced cellist'.<sup>12</sup> These cantata arias from the 1690s often use *bassi* with 'walking' lines, arpeggiations, repeated notes, stepwise adornment and *basso ostinato* to engender the rhythmic drive.<sup>13</sup> The instrumental character of these active continuo lines often defines 'the choice of thematic material of the aria' and creates 'an osmosis between the two contrapuntal lines', i.e. the voice and the continuo, 'so that they interchange the melodic prerogative, with consequent homogenisation of the two languages or a more defined polarity between the vocal and instrumental lines'.<sup>14</sup> The contrapuntal character of the *basso* is also found in instrumental sections of some cantatas, as similarly evident in contemporary opera and oratorio scores. This might have been the result of cross-pollination between dramatic genres and instrumental music, where the stringed bass line became increasingly active from the 1670s.

Archival records of opera performances and opera scores surviving from the latter part of the seventeenth century suggest that the instruments employed for the *bassi* in dramatic contexts could be the harpsichord, cello, theorbo (or the handier archlute), double bass and, occasionally, trombone. The size of the continuo group in opera is presumably larger than the one involved in performances of cantatas; this is partially due to the different size of the performance space, but also because of the different occasion of performance. The occasion determines the financial resources: in opera, the budget was certainly more conspicuous, enabling more players and continuo instrumentalists to be hired and giving composers a wider palette. Furthermore, opera productions sought to astonish the audience: having more continuo players and occasionally virtuosi *ai bassi* could serve this purpose. The performance of cantatas, on the contrary, was almost an everyday occurrence at courts, where a smaller continuo

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<sup>11</sup> Johann Ernst Galliard, 'To the Lovers of Musick', in *Six English Cantatas after the Italian Manner Compos'd by Mr Galliard* (London: J. Walsh & J. Hare, [1716]). GB-Lcm, II F. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Colin Timms (with Malcolm Boyd), 'Cantata', *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/04748pg1>.

<sup>13</sup> Lowell Lindgren, 'Bononcini's Agreeable and Easie Style, and Those Fine Inventions in His Basses', in Michael Talbot (ed.), *Aspects of the Secular Cantata in Late Baroque Italy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 135–75: 159.

<sup>14</sup> Sara Dieci, 'Due Clori ritrovate di Giovanni Bononcini', *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia*, 37/2 (2002), 249–64: 257.

group would have been convenient. Furthermore, cantatas were composed for the private consumption of patrons and their guests and reflected the refined taste of this social context, in which the composer's attempt to surprise and delight the audience was carried out through musical devices more subtle and hidden than are generally found in opera.<sup>15</sup> In Modenese *accademie*, for example, with a poetic text given primary importance, the music was designed to communicate affections through the division of the literary text into recitatives and arias, the internal structure of arias, the use or absence of dissonances, the choices of keys, dulcet effects and other means, rather than through long melismatic passages of vocal virtuosity or extravagant instrumentations. Consequently, the harpsichord was probably the main accompanying instrument in cantatas, to which the cello and the theorbo (or one or the other) might occasionally have been added. We can assume that the make-up of the continuo group changed, depending on musical function, the occasion of performance, location and the human forces available.

Various sources from the 1690s suggest that a continuo group formed by the harpsichord and cello had not hitherto been a norm but was becoming a standard; however, very little is known about how the group was constituted in the preceding decades or the role of the cellist in the different sections of a cantata.<sup>16</sup> The *opera prima* of Giacomo Antonio Perti (1661–1756), published by Monti in 1688, is one of the very few musical sources to offer an insight into how the cellist might have been employed in cantatas towards the end of the century.<sup>17</sup> The print of Perti's *Cantate morali e spirituali*, Op. 1, unusually consists of a set of separate parts that includes one for the cellist—distinct from the continuo part. This illustrates in detail the variety of possibilities in cantata orchestration, unlike similar repertoire surviving in manuscript or published scores which is generally notated on a two-stave system for the voice and continuo.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Roger Freitas, 'Singing and Playing: the Italian Cantata and the Rage for Wit', *Music & Letters*, 82/4 (2001), 509–42.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Williams and David Ledbetter assert that 'the combination of harpsichord and cello was not common in Italy before the last decade of the 17th century', but became standard after that in Italian cantatas. Throughout the seventeenth century, 'a great variety and richness of continuo instrumentation prevailed'. Peter Williams and David Ledbetter, 'Continuo', *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06353>.

<sup>17</sup> Giacomo Antonio Perti, *Cantate morali e spirituali ...*, Op. 1 (Bologna: Giacomo Monti, 1688).

<sup>18</sup> Only Bolognese publishers seem to have been particularly active in printing cantatas; their output includes *cantate morali e spirituali* and *cantate da camera*.

Example 1: Perti, 'Perdono ò Cesare' in *Turchia supplicante*, 'Canto solo, con v.v.', Op. 1 No. 1.

Example 2: Perti, 'Pace', in *Turchia supplicante*, 'Canto solo, con v.v.', Op. 1 No. 1.

Example 3: Perti, 'Son legato', in *La notte illuminata*, 'Basso solo con v.v. e violoncello obligato', Op. 1 No. 4.



In Perti's *Cantate* the cellist does not normally participate in recitatives, with one exception ('Confusione di chi ama'), but plays in all instrumental sections (the *sinfonie* and *ritornelli*). This collection reveals a great flexibility in the use of the instrument in arias: the cellist is directed in some places to double the continuo line, in others to play a different line. Moreover, in instrumental episodes the cellist in some instances participates with the violins, in others has a part with rests instead. The following three examples illustrate some of these permutations. In *Turchia supplicante*, a cantata for 'Canto solo, con v.v.' (soprano solo, with violins), the bass violinist plays the same line as the continuo in the aria 'Perdono ò Cesare' (see Example 1).<sup>19</sup> However, in 'Pace', the cellist joins with the violins in the instrumental episodes and does not support the continuo elsewhere (Example 2). In *La notte illuminata*, a cantata 'a basso solo con v.v. e violoncello obbligato', the aria 'Son legato' presents an opening instrumental phrase where the cellist, obviously in an *obbligato* role, participates actively in the imitative texture, and is here given the responsibility, 'solo', for initiating the musical incipit (Example 3). This sort of imitative counterpoint is often found in contemporary publications of Italian sacred sonatas.

However, although indicative, Perti's Op. 1 does not necessarily provide conclusive evidence for how the cello was used in other cantatas generally. Since this publication belongs to the sub-genre of *cantate morali*, its scoring might reflect a usage typical only of this sub-genre. In Mus. F. 1382, a manuscript collection of cantatas containing some that lack attributions, the first three compositions, all explicitly attributed to Carlo Grossi (c1634–88), are with violins.<sup>20</sup> However, all instrumental sections in them contain a written-out unfigured bass line in addition to the continuo. This particular scoring of *sinfonie* and *ritornelli* is occasionally found in other MS scores, particularly of opera, copied in Modena for the court of Francesco II in the late 1680s and early 1690s. The unfigured bass part, most likely for the cellist, is the actual bass line that is occasionally also imitative with the violins, whereas the continuo acts as support, doubling this line and either playing the relevant harmonic notes or the *basso seguente*. Interestingly, the cello staff disappears in all the arias, including the aria with violins in the cantata *Amor cieco*, raising questions regarding the participation of the

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<sup>19</sup> The music examples in this article (transcriptions by the present writer except for Example 8) reproduce the features of their sources with regard to beaming, accidentals and figured bass.

<sup>20</sup> *Cantate da Camera del cavalier Carlo Grossi, I-Moe*, Mus. F. 1382, ff. 1r–22v; Alessandra Chiarelli, *I codici di musica della Raccolta Estense: ricostruzione dall'inventario settecentesco*, Quaderni della Rivista italiana di musicologia 16 (Florence: Olschki, 1987), 37. On Grossi's musical production see Licia Sirch, *L'Anfione dell'Adria: catalogo tematico di Carlo Grossi* (Venice: Fondazione Levi, 1999) and Licia Sirch, *Intorno all'oratorio Sant'Alessio di Pier Matteo Petrucci e Carlo Grossi (1675 ca.)* (Como: AMIS, 2008).

bass violinist in any of them. However, it could be that contemporary cellists knew exactly what they were expected to play in arias, and therefore that there was no need for composers to provide specific instructions. In instrumental sections Grossi was employing, according to this manuscript, a disposition that was already established in published church sonatas, where the two violins and the bass violin form the three voices in *à 3* scoring while a separate bass for the continuo acts as support. This is unusual in dramatic contexts, where the scoring found in secular sonatas *à 3* (i.e. two violin staves and a figured bass) was more commonly employed in *sinfonie* and *ritornelli*. So far, the evidence suggests that arias in cantatas composed in the 1690s most likely included a bass violinist. However, it remains unclear, for cantatas composed before this decade, whether the cellist only played in instrumental sections or also had a role in active continuo arias or in all arias. Moreover, we cannot exclude an involvement *a priori* of the cellist in recitatives, although the declamatory style of composition, the relevance of the vocal text and the principle of *variatio* would strongly suggest the use of a realizing instrument alone.

Despite the differences between cantata, oratorio and opera, the musical forms remain largely similar: instrumental sections (typically *sinfonie* and *ritornelli*) and vocal portions (recitatives and arias). Therefore, I shall include in this discussion opera and oratorio repertoire, in which, again, local traditions influenced continuo practices. Tharald Borgir argues that in oratorios from Bologna, for example, evidence suggests that the harpsichordist and archluteist were the continuo players while the cellist played only in arias and instrumental sections, unlike in Neapolitan oratorios where the cellist also played in recitatives. In contrast, harpsichord and cello were apparently generally preferred in opera.<sup>21</sup> To go beyond Borgir's findings, in order to understand fully the evolution of the *bassi* we need to focus on the changing role and compositional style of the continuo from as early as the 1660s. In operas, oratorios and cantatas composed before this decade the continuo acted always as a support in the bass for the upper part or parts, and could be melodically active only if it doubled a melodic bass part. In addition to this function, at least from the 1670s, the continuo started regularly to contribute to the contrapuntal texture, although it is not clear what led to this change. It might have also been influenced by the development of particular instrumental idioms of *bassi* such as the theorbo, the harpsichord and the bass violin (in its various sizes and tunings). The bass violin, a precursor of the vertically-played cello, was increasingly used *concertante* in instrumental music, with an evident change

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<sup>21</sup> Tharald Borgir, *The Performance of the Basso Continuo in Seventeenth Century Italian Music* (PhD dissertation, University of California, 1971), 93–101.



in the style of writing for the instrument. Whatever the truth of the matter, composers deliberately used this new active continuo to enrich their arias: 'By supplying more introductions, codettas and ritornellos in arias and cantatas, the continuo helped to articulate the structure; and by echoing and anticipating the vocal material it was frequently drawn into a contrapuntal relationship with the voice.'<sup>22</sup> The more active continuo manner appears only in a number of arias and instrumental sections, whereas in the recitatives the continuo remains largely static.

Example 4, presenting the first few bars of the aria 'Risvegliatemi pensieri' by Giacomo Carissimi (1605–74), illustrates a typical supportive continuo line as commonly found in most arias that predate 1670.<sup>23</sup> The subsequent examples display three different types of active continuo line. Pietro Simone Agostini (c1635–80) provides notably engaging basses in the arias 'Non sò come l'alma mia' in the cantata *Oh Clorinda*, and 'Onde belle' in *Ruscelletto amoroso*.<sup>24</sup> In the first aria the continuo is built with musical material independent of the voice, which is used as ostinato (Example 5), whereas in the second, the continuo is imitative with the voice (Example 6). Finally, in Bononcini's aria 'Al bel dardo' in *Sempre piango, e dir non so*, from his Op. 8 collection of *duetti da camera* (a type of cantata for two voices), the instrumental character of the bass is particularly evident.<sup>25</sup>

Example 4: Carissimi, 'Risvegliatemi pensieri', in *Risvegliatemi pensieri* (I-Fc, Basevi CF.48).

Example 5: Agostini, 'Non sò come l'alma mia', in *Oh Clorinda* (I-Moe, Mus. F. 1385).

<sup>22</sup> Timms, 'Cantata'.

<sup>23</sup> Giacomo Carissimi, *Cantate del Sig.r Jacopo Carissimi*, I-Fc, Basevi CF.48, ff. 45r–47r.

<sup>24</sup> Pietro Simone Agostini, *Cantate per musica di Pier Simone Agostini*, I-Moe, Mus. F. 1385, ff. 21v–23v and 31v–32v.

<sup>25</sup> Giovanni Bononcini, *Duetti da camera*, Op. 8 (Bologna: Giacomo Monti, 1691).

Example 6: Agostini, 'Onde belle', in *Ruscelletto amoroso* (I-Moe, Mus. F. 1385).

Alleg.

On - de bel - - - le cris - ta - li spu - man - - - ti  
On - de bel - - - le cris

Example 7: G. Bononcini, 'Al bel dardo', in *Sempre piango, e dir non so*, Op. 8 No. 7.

Allegro

Al bel dar-do d'untuo sguar do più resis - te - re non  
sò più re - sis - - - - - te - re - non - sò

*p*

Alessandro Stradella (1639–82) was among the composers who started to create a ostinato in the bass line. In manuscript sources, the continuo staves often indicate two or more musical lines, as if Stradella, or at least the copyist, used the continuo as if it were a box (a limited area of the page) in which to write all possible accompanying voices. Notating two parts on the same staff became more widespread during the 1690s where some continuo staves occasionally included two musically-different bass lines (this may be found also in some prints, such as Bononcini's Op. 8). The upper line of these *bassi* was most likely intended for a melodic instrument such as the cello. Although the *bassi* in Stradella's cantatas 'usually call for virtuoso instrumentalists',<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Carolyn Gianturco, 'Stradella, Alessandro', *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26888>.

they do not exploit the technical possibilities of the instruments fully. At least one of his cantatas includes an aria with an unlabelled additional bass that presents an active line, whereas the continuo plays a simplified version of this bass with only the harmonically-relevant notes.<sup>27</sup> The copy of the cantata *Tante perle* in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marcina, Venice, contains the aria 'Chi provò' with this unlabelled bass line at the top of the continuo staff (Example 8).<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, in a copy of this aria preserved in Modena, only this active bass line is notated and the continuo is omitted (Example 9).<sup>29</sup> This might imply that the paramount musical line was the active bass and that the continuo as shown in the Venice manuscript was actually the additional line of a type that an experienced player could have worked out on his own. This seems to indicate that melodically-active bass parts were not usually built on the less active continuo line through improvisation, but rather the opposite: that the continuo bass was derived from the active one. Stradella was probably one of the first to define the constitution of the continuo group with more precision in some of his larger cantatas with *concertino* and *concerto grosso*, discerning when the *bassi del concerto grosso* or those *del concertino*, or indeed *tutti li bassi*, should accompany. The reference to the lute in some *concertino* passages in these larger works seems to suggest that this was his favoured instrument in the bass, in addition to a keyboard.

Example 8: Stradella, 'Chi provò', in *Tante perle* (I-Vmn, It.IV.463.9987, quoted from Borgir, 122).

The image shows a musical score for the aria 'Chi provò' from the cantata *Tante perle* by Alessandro Stradella. The score is written in 3/4 time and consists of a vocal line and a basso continuo line. The vocal line has the following lyrics: "Chi provò sde gno so il fa - - - - to a di - ra - - - - to non pie tà cru del". The basso continuo line is written in a lower register and provides harmonic support for the vocal line.

<sup>27</sup> Gianturco (in Gianturco, 'Stradella, Alessandro') reports two cantatas with the possible use of the lute: *Tante perle non versa l'Aurora* (*Lagrime*) and *M'e' venuto a fastidio lo sperare* (*Apolloni*), secular cantatas for soprano, lute(?) and continuo.

<sup>28</sup> Alessandro Stradella, *Cantate a voce sola del insigne Alesandro Stradella, I-Vmn*, It.IV.463.9987. Borgir (p. 121) supposes that this extra bass part in the aria 'Chi provò' was intended for the cello.

<sup>29</sup> Alessandro Stradella, *Cantate a voce sola con b.c., I-Moe*, Mus. G. 287, ff. 54v–55v.

Example 9: Stradella, 'Chi provò', in *Tante perle* (I-Moe, G. 287).

The image shows a musical score for the aria 'Chi provò' by Stradella. It consists of two staves: a vocal line (treble clef) and a basso continuo line (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are written below the vocal line: 'chi provò sde gno-so il fa - - - - to a - di - ra - - - - to non pie - tà cru-del'. The vocal line features a melodic line with some grace notes and a final cadence. The basso continuo line provides a rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment with various figures.

Stradella was mainly active in Rome, but his music was widely known in Northern Italy too, where in the 1680s a small number of composers began to write an extra bass *concertante* part in a limited number of opera and oratorio arias. This development, however, is more likely to have resulted from local instrumental practices than from Stradella's influence. In the 1680s, the vertically-played bass violin emerged in Northern Italy. In fact, most of these extra *concertante* bass parts were actually intended for—in some cases actually specified for—the new, smaller bass member of the violin family and labelled, according to local usage, 'violoncello' in Emilia and 'viola' in Venice.<sup>30</sup> The presence of this kind of aria in which a violoncello is obligatorily employed might be the result of the change in the role of the instrumental ensemble in Venetian opera around 1675 (with more frequent use of *obbligato* instruments generally) and the participation in the performance of a particular virtuoso.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, a shift in emphasis from the lyrical towards virtuoso coloratura in arias in the late 1680s might have also been a stimulus for the composition of *obbligato* bass violin arias.<sup>32</sup> It is unlikely that it was the consequence of an attempt to use the bass violin as a rhetorical feature.<sup>33</sup> *Obbligato* and continuo instruments had been used as rhetorical

<sup>30</sup> Norbert Dubowy recognizes that the development of the use of *obbligato* bass violin in dramatic contexts originated in Emilia and was imported to Venice. Norbert Dubowy, 'Pollarolo e Ziani a Verona. Annotazioni in margine a tre partiture ritrovate', in Alberto Colzani, Andrea Luppi and Maurizio Padoan (eds), *Seicento inesplorato. L'evento musicale tra prassi e stile: un modello di interdipendenza. Atti del III Convegno internazionale sulla musica in area lombardo-padana del secolo XVII* (Como: AMIS, 1993), 509–35: 520.

<sup>31</sup> Paolo-Emilio Ferrari provided an account of the case of *Il Favore degli Dei*, an opera performed in Parma in 1690. The arrival of a harpist in town led Duke Ranuccio II to request that an aria with harp be added to the score. Paolo-Emilio Ferrari, *Spettacoli Drammatico-musicali e Coreografici in Parma dall'anno 1628 all'anno 1883* (Parma: Adorni, 1884), 10.

<sup>32</sup> Reinmar Emans, 'Giovanni Legrenzis Oper *Eteocle e Polinice* in der Bearbeitung Antonio Gianettinis. Ein Beitrag zur musikästhetischen Entwicklung der Arie', in Colzani et al (eds), *Seicento inesplorato*, 559–90: 570 ('wesentlicher war die Abkehr vom Liedhaften zur wie auch immer gearteten, breit angelegten und virtuoson Koloratur').

<sup>33</sup> Alessandro Sanguineti, 'Bernardo Sabadini and his *Solo-Obbligato* Bass Violin Arias', in *Miscellanea Ruspoli 4* (in preparation).

devices in dramatic music from the early seventeenth century, and certain ones, such as the trumpet, were still being chosen in the 1670s and 80s for defining particular dramatic moments. However, a study of the vocal texts of *obbligato* bass violin arias reveals that this instrument was employed in a variety of dramatic contexts: scenes of love, despair or battle, to mention a few. For example, in the aria 'Se il tiranno caderà' in *Il Rodoaldo* (1685) set by Domenico Gabrielli (1659–90)—one of the first composers regularly to include the violoncello as *obbligato*—Elviro sings of his relief and joy at the prospect of Rodoaldo being murdered.<sup>34</sup> However, in another such aria, 'Bellezza tiranna' in *Il Clearco* (1685), Gabrielli chose the violoncello ('viola', according to Venetian nomenclature) for an *obbligato* accompaniment to this love song about suffering.<sup>35</sup>

From the 1680s, if not earlier, the bass violin in opera and oratorio served both as continuo and as *obbligato*. Occasionally, two cellists were employed in opera: one was possibly used only in the continuo and the other was required also to play *obbligato* parts. Within an instrumental group, upper voices such as violins (whether these are accompanying or not) may normally be considered by default as *obbligati* (i.e. instruments whose participation cannot be omitted), unlike the membership of the continuo group which can vary. In the sources for many contemporary arias with violins, the label 'obbligato' or 'con violini' is omitted as unnecessary. Thus an instrument tends to be specified as *obbligato* only when its use with this function was not customary, such as in the case of a bass violin. Whereas some arias may contain more than one *obbligato* instrument, others have only one—an instrumental role that I have termed 'solo-obbligato'.<sup>36</sup> Normally, an aria with *solo-obbligato* bass violin has that part notated on its own *concertante* staff, separate from the continuo, such as in the aria 'Se ragion consiglia' in *Il Clearco* by Gabrielli (Example 10).<sup>37</sup> Less frequently, such arias were notated on a two-stave system with no distinct continuo line, but where an inscription reveals the obligatory participation of the instrument. This is the case, for instance, in the aria 'Veder quel che m'adora' with 'Violoncelo' (Example 11) by Bernardo Sabadini (16[..]–1718).<sup>38</sup> In such a scenario, the continuo players would have played the principal

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<sup>34</sup> Domenico Gabrielli, *Il Rodoaldo*, opera, *I-Moe*, Mus. F. 418, ff. 85r–87r.

<sup>35</sup> Domenico Gabrielli, *Il Clearco*, opera, *I-Moe*, Mus. F. 424, ff. 115r–117r.

<sup>36</sup> A term I first used in Alessandro Sanguineti, *The Bass Violin in Northern Italian Repertoire in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century*, two volumes (PhD dissertation, Royal College of Music, London, 2014), vol. i, xvi.

<sup>37</sup> Gabrielli, *Il Clearco*, ff. 105r–107r.

<sup>38</sup> Bernardo Sabadini, *Canzonette dell'Opera di Piacenza dell'anno 1687*, *I-Moe*, Mus. G. 294, ff. 1r–3r.

harmonic notes of the bass *obbligato* part. Very rarely, only one bass line is provided along with an inscription specifying it for a particular instrument ‘solo’, such as in the aria ‘Dissi giurando’, ‘con il Violoncello solo’ (Example 12), in the opera *L’ingresso alla gioventù di Claudio Nerone* (1692), set by Antonio Giannettini (1648–1721).<sup>39</sup> This might mean that the instrument was played without the addition of any other continuo instrument; nevertheless the term ‘solo’ might simply mean that the specified instrument has the only *obbligato* part, and thus that other continuo players could have participated by playing *extempore* from the single bass line provided. The presence of a few figured bass symbols in the *solo* bass in this aria (on f. 130v) might further suggest the involvement of realizing continuo instruments in this case. In other cases too, the significance of the term ‘solo’ can occasionally be difficult to establish. The recitative ‘Languia d’amor’ in *L’ingresso* is inscribed explicitly to be ‘con l’accompagnamento della sola Tiorba’ (f. 96r): ‘with the accompaniment of a theorbo alone’. However, when the adjective ‘solo’ is located after the noun, it typically means that this particular instrument carries the only *obbligato* or *concertante* voice, with the accompaniment of the continuo. This is the case with the numerous contemporary collections entitled ‘sonate a violino solo’.

Example 10: Gabrielli, ‘Se ragion consiglia’ in *Il Clearco* (*I-Moe*, Mus. F. 424).

*Aria con la viola*

Allegro

6                      6

Se ra - gion con - si - gla à l'ar - - - - - mi no - bil co - re ri - sve - gla l'ar -

<sup>39</sup> Antonio Giannettini, *L’ingresso alla gioventù di Claudio Nerone*, opera, *I-Moe*, Mus. F. 499, ff. 129r–131r.



Giovanni Battista Vitali's Violone in the *Accademia*

Example 11: Sabadini, 'Veder quel che m'adora', in *Canzonette dell'Opera di Piacenza dell'anno 1687* (I-Moe, Mus. G. 294).

The image shows a musical score for Example 11. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system is for the Violoncello, with a treble clef and a common time signature. The second system is for the vocal line, with a treble clef and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "Ve - der ve - der quel che m'a".

Example 12: Giannettini, 'Dissi giurando', in *L'ingresso alla gioventù di Claudio Nerone* (I-MOe, Mus. F. 499).

Aria con il Violoncello solo

The image shows a musical score for Example 12. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system is for the Violoncello, with a treble clef and a common time signature. The tempo is marked "Largo". The second system is for the vocal line, with a treble clef and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "Dis - si giu ran - do al cor com - pa - gno al Dio d'a - mor dis - si giu - ran - do al cor com". The third system is for the Violoncello, with a treble clef and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "Dis - si giu ran - do al cor com - pa - gno al Dio d'a - mor dis - si giu - ran - do al cor com".

There is an inherent difference between melodically-active continuo arias where the presence of a cellist is likely but not necessary (since any other continuo instrument may have been substituted) and *solo-obbligato* violoncello arias where the cellist is essential. Bononcini, for example, composed both types of arias: active continuo arias that probably involve a cellist in his cantatas from the 1690s and a few *solo-obbligato*

violoncello arias, such as the four found in the two early oratorios *Il Giosuè* (1688) and *La Maddalena* (1690).<sup>40</sup> A combination of factors doubtless led to the regular appearance, in certain operas and oratorios of the late 1680s set by Gabrielli, Sabadini and Bononcini, of arias featuring a cello as *obbligato*.<sup>41</sup> Surely, the trend towards a more active and contrapuntal continuo was a precursor to this choice.

The introduction of active continuo arias and then *solo-obbligato* violoncello arias might even have been a trend resulting from a desire to build on and exploit the advantages already apparent from an established performance practice. In arias, cellists might have regularly improvised on the continuo part. Harpsichordists, theorbists and cellists might have found consensus on how best to perform the provided continuo line, with melodic ornamentation played on the bass violin (becoming increasingly imitative to the singer), harmonic realization on the harpsichord, and a mix of harmonic and melodic realization on the theorbo. Seen in that light, active continuo arias could be the product of their composers' need to specify which arias warrant more contrapuntal bass lines than others and then to show how the bass is to be characterized melodically, thus to a degree impeding the players' freedom to improvise. Yet the fact that composers generally preferred, in these cases, to notate the actively moving bass line rather than the simple continuo seems to indicate the opposite: that the practice had become that the continuo player would simplify the active line, rather than that the cellist would improvise from a simple continuo line. In the 1680s certain composers started to provide occasional arias with two bass staves, one for the active cellist and one for the simplified continuo, calling these arias 'con violoncello obbligato'. Since active continuo arias with moving bass lines were already the trend, it seems unlikely that the intention in these cases was to define the simpler continuo line. Rather, the provision of a separate *obbligato* bass for a specified instrument seems to focus attention on this *concertante* feature with an implication that it was something new and different, hence also the tendency to label these arias with the terms 'obbligato', 'solo', 'aria con', etc. To conclude: the writing down of an *obbligato* bass line is not proof of an established performance practice. In arias, cellists did not usually improvise an embellished version of the bass. This is further confirmed by the presence of written-out *solo-obbligato* arias for the bass violin in dramatic works by

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<sup>40</sup> Giovanni Bononcini, *Il Giosuè*, oratorio (*I-Moe*, Mus. F. 103): 'Venir, pagnar e vincere', 'Posto abbiame' nostri aciari' and 'Sempre invitto e sempre forte'; *La Maddalena in casa del Fariseo*, oratorio (*I-Moe*, Mus. F. 102): 'Chi serva la beltà'.

<sup>41</sup> Critical editions of all the *solo-obbligato* arias by Gabrielli, Sabadini and Bononcini that are currently known are available in the Violoncello Obbligato Edition (2016), ed. Alessandro Sanguineti, at <http://www.alessandrosanguineti.com/violoncello-obbligato-edition-cviu>.

cellist-composers who performed in the staging of their own operas and oratorios such as Gabrielli and Bononcini. Rather, the composition of arias with *solo-obbligato* bass violin indicates a specific intention to enhance and make more distinctive both the aria's instrumentation and its contrapuntal texture.

Although increasingly used in opera and oratorio scores, an additional staff for *obbligato* violoncello is less often found in cantata arias—one of the exceptions being the *Cantate da camera a voce sola*, Op. 1 (published 1692), of Pietro Porfiri (c1640–after 1714).<sup>42</sup> Even Gabrielli and Bononcini did not use the cello the same way in their cantatas as occasionally they did in their operas and oratorios, mentioned earlier.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, some continuo parts in their cantatas reveal the skillful hand of a cellist, confirming that Gabrielli and Bononcini themselves must often have played the bass in cantata arias even if the cello was not *obbligato*.<sup>44</sup> Vitali's aria with *solo-obbligato* violone sits well in this framework. Already a skilled bass violinist, Vitali witnessed around 1690–92 the rise of this new type of aria for the possibly slightly smaller violoncello in the hands of his colleagues Gabrielli and Bononcini and understandably decided, we may suppose, to write one such example.

### Giovanni Battista Vitali's *solo-obbligato* violone

Vitali composed nine *accademie* while employed in Modena. The articles by Suess and Jander discuss these works and their context well but do not mention the one aria they contain with *solo-obbligato* bass violin: 'Non hà compagno amor', the second aria in *Se le passioni amorose si debbano scoprire all'amico*.<sup>45</sup> Preserved on ff. 23v–27v in the manuscript Mus. E. 245, the aria includes an unlabelled *obbligato* staff at the top of the system, seemingly for a stringed bass instrument.<sup>46</sup> Jander defined this cantata for 'bass, accompanied by two violins and basso continuo', while Suess considered the scoring 'à 4 strings and continuo' or (in his *Grove* worklist) simply for 'instruments'—

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<sup>42</sup> Pietro Porfiri, *Cantate da camera a voce sola*, Op. 1 (Bologna: Pier-Maria Monti, 1692).

<sup>43</sup> There is one exception: Giovanni Bononcini's serenata *La nemica d'Amore fatta amante*, performed in 1693, mentioned by Lindgren in his introduction to *Cantatas by Giovanni Bononcini 1670–1747*, ed. Lowell Lindgren, *The Italian Cantata in the Seventeenth Century*, 10 (New York and London: Garland, 1985–86).

<sup>44</sup> Chiarelli, 'Giuseppe Colombi'.

<sup>45</sup> I would like to thank Giovanni Indulti for bringing this aria to my attention.

<sup>46</sup> Giovanni Battista Vitali, *Accademia per la Ss.ma Annunziata & Se le passioni amorose si debbano scoprire all'amico*, I-Moe, Mus. E. 245.

both scholars thus failing to notice the instrumentation in this particular aria.<sup>47</sup> The *à 4* definition does not match the manuscript's scoring: the opening *sinfonia* has two violin staves and a continuo line; the first aria, 'È un segreto il Nume alato', is for two violins playing virtuoso double-stops and chordal passages.<sup>48</sup>

The aria 'Non hà compagno amor' must be one of the earliest known examples of cantata aria with *solo-obbligato* bass violin, having most likely been composed and performed either in 1692 or shortly beforehand, between 1690 and 1692. As Jander reported, the vocal text seems to be connected with the wedding of Francesco II and Margherita Farnese on 14 July 1692.<sup>49</sup> In 1690 the duke was still without a legitimate heir and had not yet married, and concerns were mounting because of his deteriorating health. The Modenese intelligentsia welcomed the wedding agreement with Duke Ranuccio II Farnese of Parma, reached in 1690, as a sign of hope.<sup>50</sup> There can be little doubt that the *accademia Se le passioni amorose si debbano scoprire all'amico*— 'if amorous feelings should be disclosed to a friend'—was composed and performed in celebration of Francesco II's forthcoming wedding.

Table 1, below, gives the full vocal text of the work, translated into English by the present writer:

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<sup>47</sup> Jander, 522 and 543. Suess, 'The University of Modena', 65, and John G. Suess, 'Vitali: (1) Giovanni Battista Vitali', *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29523pg1>.

<sup>48</sup> Suess's interpretation of instrumentation is sometimes inconsistent for other Vitali cantatas too, for example concerning a manuscript collection of six other Vitali *accademie*: 'Cantate varie per musica di Giambatt[ist]a Vitali', *I-Moe*, Mus. F. 1261. Of the six, two give five staves—three notated in the treble G-clef and one each for singer and continuo—a scoring that Suess (in 'The University of Modena') defines as '*à 4* strings plus continuo', thus assuming the presence of a bass violinist playing the bass line derived from the continuo staff. These two are *Per l'Accademia sopra la nascita di S. A. S. - Coronata d'Applausi* (ff. 1r–11r) and *Problema. Se l'Aquila Estense* (ff. 13r–21v). However, the instrumentation of the remaining four is defined by counting the number of instrumental staves with the exclusion of any bass. The four are *Accademia Se il mondo peggiori, o' migliori* (ff. 24r–34r); *Accademia. Qual ferisce piu' la lingua o' la spada* (ff. 35r–50v); *Cantata per l'accademia del Vitali, 'Chi mi sia non lo so già'* (ff. 51r–54r); and *Per l'Accademia della Coronazione della Regina d'Ingh.ra* (ff. 55r–73v). This inconsistency is partly rectified in Suess's *Grove Music Online* entry, although only for two of these four *accademie* (*Accademia Se il mondo peggiori, o' migliori* and *Accademia. Qual ferisce piu' la lingua o' la spada*).

<sup>49</sup> Jander, 538.

<sup>50</sup> For an overview of the events and political discussions leading to Francesco II's wedding, see Paul Andrew Atkin, *Opera Production in Late Seventeenth-Century Modena: The Case of 'L'Ingresso alla gioventù di Claudio Nerone' (1692)* (PhD dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2010) 25–48.

Table 1

**Recitativo**

Olà saggi tacete  
Concedete per poco  
Al Dio d'Amore  
nel'Accademia un loco[.]  
Dite il vostro argomento  
Se l'affanno è il tormento  
Al'amico svellar si deggia  
il mio pensiero vi dirò concludendo di nò[.]

Hello there, wise men be quiet. Admit for a little time the God of love into the Academy.

Express your argument, if your anxiety is the trouble whether one should disclose (amorous feelings) to a friend, my thoughts will be revealed as I conclude that they should not.

**Aria**

È un segreto il Nume alato  
Che scoperto mai non fù  
E sol quanto stè celato  
Non perdè la sua Virtù[.]  
Egli è un ombra e solcò i sguardi  
D'un bel ciglio si svelò  
È fanciullo, e solcò i dardi  
Ad un cor si palesò[.]

It is a strategy that the God of love (Cupid) has never been unveiled: only staying concealed, he has not lost his powers.

He (Cupid) is a shadow and only when you crossed her beautiful eyes has he revealed himself with his shooting arrows.

**Recitativo**

Corre trito assioma  
Ch'ogni cosa comune è frà l'amico  
Mà proverbio ben degno  
Che compagno non vuole amor nel Regno[.]

The trite axiom is accepted: that everything is shared between friends.  
However, a respectable proverb says that love does not want companions.

**Aria**

Non hà compagno amor  
È solo è adorator  
D'un bel sembiante  
E n'insegna l'arcier  
Solo chi sà tacer  
È vero amante[.]  
Porta bendato il crin  
Ne' scopre il Dio bambin  
La sua bellezza  
E si cela nel cor  
Che l'anima d'amor  
La segretezza[.]

Love does not have companions; it is only the admirer of a beautiful face. Cupid teaches that only he who is able to keep quiet is a true lover.

The God of love veils his hair and hides his beauty. The secrecy is concealed in the heart of the loving soul.

**Recitativo**

Or voi dunque intendete  
Ch'ama il silentio Amore  
E s'avien ch'il suo ardore  
L'alma a voi ne consumi  
Habbian silentio i labbri, e lingua i lumi[.]

Thus, you learn that love prefers silence.

And if it happens that its fire burns in your heart, may your lips be silent, and may your reason speak.



The accademia opens with a recitative that addresses the academy congregation directly, presenting both the pertinent question (should amorous feelings be disclosed to a friend?) and the writer's negative answer. In the following aria, 'È un segreto il Nume alato', the secrecy of Cupid is praised. The next recitative advises that, although people think that one should share everything with a friend, it is said to be wiser to keep love for oneself. This last suggestion gives the central message for the second aria, 'Non hà compagno amor' (love does not have companions). The accademia concludes, in a final recitative, with the writer's advice to the congregation and possibly to Francesco II: love prefers silence. It is unknown who wrote this text, however the message portrayed most likely mirrors the academy's view on the matter.



Illustration 1. *I-MOe*, Mus. E. 245, ff. 23v–24r, showing the opening of the aria 'Non hà compagno amor' in two three-stave systems below the final bars of the second recitative (staves 1 and 2). Reproduced by kind permission of the Italian Minister of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism.



By 1690–92 the aria with *solo-obbligato* violoncello in opera and oratorio had become almost a customary feature. Gabrielli and Bononcini travelled around Northern Italy with their virtuoso arias and various other composers occasionally included the instrument in such a role. Vitali played and composed for the violone, clearly a vertically-played instrument, and we may conjecture that the bass violin *obbligato* part, as notated on its own staff in the manuscript, was intended for, and played by, Vitali himself on his violone. Indeed, the part in this aria employs the same  $BB\flat-F-c-g$  tuning as his unaccompanied *Partite per il Violone*.<sup>51</sup>

The key of this aria, G minor, suits the open top string of Vitali's violone, particularly for playing the tonic chord. The voicing of the chord ( $G-d-g$ ) is indeed identical to that of Gabrielli's G major or minor chords, which also show the advantage of the top string being tuned to  $g$ , that occur repeatedly in the second movement of his cello sonata and in the aria 'Vuoi tÙ lasciarmi amore' in the opera *Silvio Rè d'Alba* (1689).<sup>52</sup> However, Gabrielli used all three open strings on his  $C-G-d-g$  tuning, whereas Vitali would have used the first finger for the lower two notes of the chord. Example 13 shows the complete *solo-obbligato* violone part, to which I have appended the fingerings that may be deduced. Vitali's  $G-d-g$  chord is found in bars 32, 50, 75 and 90. Only in bar 7 does the minor third  $b\flat$  appear at the top of the chord. Vitali's tuning is revealed straight away, in the opening period (bars 1–7). Here, the particular choice of chords and double-stops is evidence confirming that an instrument tuned  $BB\flat-F-c-g$ , rather than a  $C-G-d-g/a$  violoncello, was intended.

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<sup>51</sup> Giovanni Battista Vitali, *Partite sopra diverse Suonate per il Violino e Violone, I-Moe*, Mus. E. 244: a set of ten pieces for unaccompanied violone (*Partite per il Violone*) followed by eight for unaccompanied violin (*Partite per il Violino*).

<sup>52</sup> Domenico Gabrielli, *Ricercari, canone e sonata per violoncello, I-Moe*, Mus. G. 79, ff. 15v–20v; *Silvio Rè d'Alba*, opera, *I-Moe*, Mus. F. 422, ff. 100v–101v.

Example 13: Vitali, 'Non hà compagno amor', violone staff, deduced fingerings.

BAR 1-7

BB flat-F-c-g

BAR 16-21

BAR 28-32

BAR 87-90

Vitali's 'violone' is the equivalent of Gabrielli or Bononcini's 'violoncello': i.e. it had the same organological identity, with possibly minor differences in size, but was tuned differently. In Modena various composers, such as Giovanni Maria Bononcini, father of Giovanni, and Giuseppe Colombi (1635–94), tuned the violone to  $BB\flat-F-c-g$ , which was thus called Modenese tuning. In the early 1680s Vitali and Colombi developed new techniques on the bass violin, such as the double-stops and chords found in their unaccompanied violone music, that were probably influenced by the virtuoso style with which they, and other Modenese composers, often composed for the violin. The correlation of these techniques on both the violin and the bass violin is peculiar to the Modenese musical milieu. The fact that these composers working for Francesco II were

skilled string players had an impact on the type of music produced at court and created the conditions ideal for technical experimentation. Vitali's academy cantata *Se le passioni amorose si debbano scoprire all'amico* deserves to be considered, on several grounds, a highlight of the Modenese string school. In the first aria, 'È un segreto il Nume alato', the two violinists play extensive passages in double-stops. In the second aria, 'Non hà compagno amor', the bass violinist frequently performs double-stops and chords. Prior to this cantata, Vitali and his colleagues at Francesco II's court had used these techniques for the bass violin only in instrumental music. Gabrielli and Giovanni Bononcini, on the other hand, began to adopt these advanced Modenese techniques in their *solo-obbligato* violoncello arias in operas and oratorios during the late 1680s, parts that include several prolonged passages with double-stops and chords. Yet Gabrielli and Bononcini were (as far as we know from extant sources) the only ones using double-stops and chords in their arias, perhaps as a sign of their own virtuosity as players. The other contemporary composers who included *solo-obbligato* violoncello arias in their operas, oratorios or cantatas usually composed a single melodic line for the instrument. Sabadini, for example, never required the cellist to perform double-stops or chords, judging from the twelve such arias that are known to us.<sup>53</sup> Until 1690–92, near the end of his life, Vitali had never written an aria with *solo-obbligato* violone (or at least there is no evidence from extant sources that he had composed any). However, he then went on to compose the aria 'Non hà compagno amor', perhaps influenced by Gabrielli's and Bononcini's examples.

The *accademia Se le passioni amorose si debbano scoprire all'amico* presents a very special type of writing also in the first aria with two violins, 'È un segreto il Nume alato'. Vitali's cantatas typically employ violins, often for virtuoso display, but this is the only case where the violins have continuous double-stops and chords.<sup>54</sup> The special status of this *accademia* is further highlighted by the unusually equal roles of the two violin parts in relation to the structure of this aria. 'È un segreto il Nume alato' has the structure ABA–A'B'A' (a ternary unit followed by a strophic variation), not dissimilar to that of another aria by Vitali, 'Cosi dunque si dirà' in *Accademia sopra il Problema se il Mondo migliori, o peggiori*, discussed by Suess, where 'both stanzas of the text employ almost the same music'.<sup>55</sup> The violins play together for the instrumental period that opens the aria, which is repeated at the beginning of A', and also in the closing

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<sup>53</sup> Alessandro Sanguineti, 'Bernardo Sabadini and his *Solo-Obbligato* Bass Violin Arias', in *Miscellanea Ruspoli* 4 (in preparation).

<sup>54</sup> Jander, 543.

<sup>55</sup> Suess, 'The University of Modena', 63. Giovanni Battista Vitali, *Cantate varie per musica di Giambattista Vitali*, I-Moe, Mus. F. 1261, ff. 29v–34r.

instrumental period. However, in ABA only the first violinist plays virtuoso passages *concertante* with the voice. In A'B'A' the exact same musical material is played by the second violinist alone, while the first rests. This unusual writing was surely designed to showcase the equal bravura of the two violinists most likely to have been the performers: Colombi or Antonio Allemani, working in Modena between 1679 and 1707, and Tommaso Antonio Vitali (1663–1745), the composer's son. One cannot but conclude that the special writing for this cantata reflects the very particular occasion of performance and the quality of the players available.

The *solo-obbligato* violone aria 'Non hà compagno amor' also has an ABA–A'B'A' strophic structure, where ABA and A'B'A' present almost identical musical content but different vocal text. The violone opens the aria with a four-bar passage that anticipates motivic elements of the aria (see examples 13 and 14). This passage is reiterated at the beginning of A'. The violone also brings the aria to an end with a final passage in the manner of a ritornello. This type of instrumental opening is common among many arias with *obbligato* instruments, including those with *solo-obbligato* violoncello by Gabrielli, Bononcini and Sabadini. Thereafter, in Vitali's aria the violone remains *concertante*, interacting with the voice throughout.

Of the aria's many interesting details, the first to attract attention is that the violone player and the singer perform strictly in turn, never simultaneously (Example 14). This is unusual compared with many other contemporary *solo-obbligato* violoncello arias where, in at least some vocal periods, the bass violinist continues to play, alongside the continuo, a secondary line or a rhythmically-active bass line such as in Gabrielli's aria 'Se il tiranno caderà' in the opera *Il Rodoaldo* (Example 15). Although contraposition between the *solo-obbligato* violoncello and the voice is the key element in most such arias, Gabrielli, Bononcini and Sabadini also used the instrument as accompaniment alongside the continuo, thus employing it in a double role, both *concertante* and supportive. In contrast, Vitali did not require *obbligato* instruments to play simultaneously with the voice; this is true throughout his dramatic vocal music, including in the aria with *obbligato* violins, 'È un segreto il Nume alato'. It is important to note that the violone aria 'Non hà compagno amor' shows that same 'opposition' relationship between the *obbligato* and vocal parts: it does not represent a change of habit. From this fact we might infer that Vitali considered the violone exclusively as part of the instrumental group, rather than as an instrument that was part of the continuo and that could also be used as *obbligato*—but that would in turn imply that he did not routinely play his bass violin in continuo arias. But that was probably not the case. Since Vitali always composed his *obbligato* arias with this 'opposition' technique, he is likely, when deciding to include one for his violone, simply to have treated the instrument in the same way as he would with other *obbligato* instruments.

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Example 14: Vivaldi, 'Non hà compagno amor' in *Se le passioni amorose si debbano scoprire all'amico* (I-MOe, Mus. E. 245).

The image shows a musical score for Example 14. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has three staves: the top staff is for the Violone, the middle staff is for the vocal line, and the bottom staff is for the basso continuo. The second system also has three staves, with the vocal line containing the lyrics: "Non hà com-pa - gno amor" and "non ha com-pa - gno amor e solo è ado-ra". The music is in a minor key and common time.

Example 15: Gabrielli, 'Se il tiranno caderà' in *Il Rodoaldo* (I-MOe, Mus. F. 418).

The image shows a musical score for Example 15. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has three staves: the top staff is for the Violone, the middle staff is for the vocal line, and the bottom staff is for the basso continuo. The second system also has three staves, with the vocal line containing the lyrics: "Se il ti" and "- ran - no... ca - de - rà". The music is in a minor key and common time, and is marked "Presto".

se il ti-ran-no... ca-de-rà[,] tut-to gio-ia e tut-to ri-so og-gi il Te bro e-sul - te - rà.

Another interesting aspect of this particular cantata is the formal absence of *ritornelli*. Although most instrumental episodes that precede or follow vocal periods can effectively be considered to act as *ritornelli*, Vitali usually used the term ‘ritornello’ itself only at the beginning or at the end of continuo arias, whereas he preferred to integrate instrumental episodes into arias with *obbligato* instruments. For example, in ‘Non hà compagno amor’, a *solo-obbligato* violone episode is used as a closing statement, rather than a full instrumental *ritornello* (i.e. with violins). In contrast, Gabrielli used instrumental *ritornelli* at the ends of many of his *solo-obbligato* violoncello arias, such as in ‘Si bella io spererò’ in *Silvio Rè d’Alba*, thus typically avoiding a closure with a *solo-obbligato* phrase. There was surely no set rule with regard to how to conclude such arias. This flexibility is illustrated, for example, in the *ritornello* to Giovanni Bononcini’s aria ‘Venir, pagnar e vincere’ in *Il Giosuè*, where the *solo-obbligato* cellist continues to play the solo opening semiquaver descending pattern well into the start of the instrumental *ritornello*, accompanied by the violins and viola.<sup>56</sup>

We have seen how Vitali’s academia *Se le passioni amorose si debbano scoprire all’amico* mixes traditional and experimental aspects, as well as elements typical of the local Modenese musical milieu and external influences. The inclusion in the work of a *solo-obbligato* bass violin aria was innovative, particularly for a cantata, even though it was a type that had already begun to feature in operas and oratorios. However, he employed his old violone tuned  $BB\flat - F - c - g$ , whereas his contemporaries preferred the possibly smaller violoncello tuned  $C - G - d - g/a$ . The use of double-stops and chords on string instruments is certainly associated with Modena, however local composers never included the bass violin as *solo-obbligato* in arias, as far as we know, prior to Gabrielli’s arrival at Francesco II’s court in 1687. Although Vitali’s cantatas have been the subject of research for some time, the recent identification of the aria ‘Non hà compagno amor’ as for *solo-obbligato* violone has raised the question of how many other

<sup>56</sup> Giovanni Bononcini, *Il Giosuè*, ff. 21r–22v.



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such arias exist in extant manuscripts. The repertoire needs to be thoroughly examined in its entirety before the complete picture may emerge of how and why the bass violin was used in opera, oratorio and cantata in the second half of the seventeenth century.

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