

# The Music of Castrato Lutenists at the Time of Caravaggio

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Caravaggio's portrait of a young man playing the lute, in its three known surviving versions, has contributed significantly to the immortality of the lute as an emblem of Renaissance culture.<sup>1</sup> Often seen as an allegory of love and a commentary on other metaphysical dimensions of the human condition, it also is the subject of more literal interpretations and, on this occasion, I wish to focus my attention on it as a representation of late sixteenth-century music and musical practice. As Franca Trinchieri Camiz and others have observed, the young man depicted as Caravaggio's lute player is not simply playing the lute, but appears to be a singer who accompanies himself on the instrument.<sup>2</sup> His androgynous appearance leads to the speculation that he was possibly a castrato and – literally or figuratively – possibly one of those highly sought after castrato lutenists who adorned the homes of the secular and ecclesiastical nobility in Rome around the turn of the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> If the model who sat for Caravaggio were the talented young Spanish castrato named Pedro Montoya, as proposed by Franca Trinchieri Camiz, then all the pieces of one of the possible literal readings of the painting would all fit neatly together. Montoya spent most of the 1590s in Rome as a singer in the papal chapel and, together with Caravaggio, resided at the home of the Cardinal Del Monte at the time the painting was executed. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that there is no further evidence to support Trinchieri Camiz's hypothesis beyond the coincidence of the artist and castrato singer being members of the Cardinal's *famiglia* at the same time.<sup>4</sup> In fact, there is now an equally suggestive case that Caravaggio's model was his close friend Mario Minniti (1577-1640), a painter from Syracuse with whom he appears to have formed a very close association and who appears to have modelled for him for as many as nine paintings between 1593 and 1599.<sup>5</sup> Admittedly, the case for Minniti rests somewhat tenuously on an engraved portrait of him published in 1821 but whose model is unknown.<sup>6</sup> There is, therefore, a good chance that Caravaggio's model was not a castrato at all, even if the painter may have chosen to represent him deliberately on this occasion as angelic and androgynous, and with the marked physical characteristics of a eunuch. Painting him in such a manner served the symbolic purposes of the painting which, after all, was an allegory rather than a portrait. Whether Caravaggio intended us to see his subject as a castrato or simply as a sensuous youth is not important here, it is sufficient that Caravaggio's painting should evoke the image of the castrato lutenists who flourished in Rome around the turn of the century and who were no doubt prized in part for the sensuality of their performance.

In this discussion, I wish to explore some of the implications that arise from Caravaggio's *Lute Player* and to try to situate them in a broader musical panorama. To some extent this will involve intertwining the painting with a little known manuscript of lute music that I believe probably to have been compiled by an Italian castrato lutenist during the same years. Prior to considering this manuscript and its usefulness in illuminating Caravaggio's *Lute Player*, I would like to make four preliminary general observations which, given the limits of space cannot be developed here into all their fullness. Moving from the general to the specific, these pertain to 1) the place of singer-lutenists and singer-songwriters in sixteenth-century music history, 2) the longevity of musical styles and the resultant historiographical implications, 3) the necessarily pluralistic view of music history around 1600 that results from incorporating instrumental music into the broader panorama, and 4) the notion of lutenist-singer vis-a-vis the singer-lutenist.

The music pages from which Caravaggio's lute player performs are painted with extraordinary accuracy and were identified by Colin Slim in 1985.<sup>7</sup> With such precise depiction, it is likely that they were chosen carefully. They are significant in terms of their texts, their age, and the fact that they are polyphonic bass part books rather than pages containing lute tablature. Of special note is the fact that the music was not recently composed: the paintings offer us madrigals composed by Jacques Arcadelt, Francesco de Layolle, and Jachet de Berchem in the 1530s and that had remained in fashion for over fifty years.<sup>8</sup> Although some scholars are dismissive of the old-fashioned Petrarchan style of the poetry of these madrigals, showing surprise that an adventurous Caravaggio had not been seduced by the fashionable poetry of Giambattista Marino, for example, we must suppose that the madrigals he chose to depict still had sufficient currency late in the sixteenth century for them to be understood as complementary to the visual dimension of the painting and that their mere incipits were still able to trigger recollections of poems that, as Trinchieri Camiz notes, «speak of intense devotion: love consumed by passion and sexual longing – themes that complement the sensuality evoked by the painted images».<sup>9</sup>

Performing polyphonic madrigals intended for four or more voices as solo songs with lute accompaniment was a well established practice by Caravaggio's time. Since early in the sixteenth century, singers had been arranging the lower parts of vocal polyphony for the lute. Their arrangements were largely literal reductions of the voices into lute tablature, in some cases with one voice omitted for the sake of greater clarity or simplicity.<sup>10</sup> As has been observed by other scholars, Caravaggio's lute player does not perform in this way, but reads directly from the bass part, probably playing something like an improvised basso continuo accompaniment rather than an exact reproduction of the original polyphony. Even though the earliest sources of music with a basso continuo part date precisely from Caravaggio's time, it is clear that the written basso continuo is little more than the formalisation of a practice that was already well established.<sup>11</sup> The small number of songs with lute accompaniment that survive from the sixteenth century is thus a gross under-representation of a flourishing practice. Accordingly, in histories of music whose narrative is

principally traced around surviving musical sources, the lute song is little more than an occasional shadowy figure rather than a prominent part of the Renaissance musical landscape, from Bossinensis to Bottegari, and beyond. Literary and documentary studies, on the other hand, make it clear that singing to the lute was a widespread practice during the sixteenth century in a wide range of social contexts, both formal and informal, in courtly society as well as in the popular sphere.<sup>12</sup> Caravaggio's *Lute player* exemplifies this discrepancy in that it shows the performance of lute songs without the need of a specifically prepared lute part. Presumably, the lutenist in the painting is singing a melody, the cantus part of the madrigal, that he knows from memory, while improvising a chordal accompaniment in the style of a basso continuo upon the madrigal's bass voice. Whether using composed, traditional, popular or extemporised materials, this is what singer-lutenists had been doing probably since the lute first came into existence. In more immediate terms, the musical style of Caravaggio's lutenist probably conforms not so much to the new style that developed in and around Bardi's Camerata, but from the practice that developed early in the sixteenth century and that is reflected on the one hand in the lute song arrangements of madrigals by Philippe Verdelot published in Venice in 1536 or, on the other hand, by songs with freely composed accompaniments such as those first appear in the same year in the vihuela book of Luis de Milán and which might bear some connection to the practices of Italian *cantautori* and *saltimbanchi*, if not to the improvisatory practices of humanists such as Marsilio Ficino.<sup>13</sup> Caravaggio's singing lutenist is thus not an exception, but part of the normal practice of the sixteenth century. In this light, the so-called "new" monody that was coming into fashion at the same moment might be seen as little more than an old continuous tradition with a new expressive accent.

Another of the adjustments to traditional musical historiography that arises from Caravaggio's lute player concerns the way that in which our notions of music history are focused on innovation rather than stylistic longevity, on the moment of invention rather than on the length of time they remained part of their own performance practice. Caravaggio's life coincided with radical new music developments in Italy, especially the birth of monodic song, opera, and new instrumental styles, but it needs to be acknowledged that this occurred alongside existing musical styles and repertoires that had not passed into obsolescence, from liturgical repertory in the Palestrina style through to secular compositions by Arcadelt and his contemporaries, or even the lute music of Francesco da Milano (1497-1543).<sup>14</sup> As already discussed, Caravaggio appears to have chosen the musical works represented in his painting deliberately as part of his artistic program, rather than merely having adorned his painting with some old discarded music books that had come his way, the anachronistic debris of a past practice. Instead, it appears that Caravaggio is telling us that some of the madrigals of Arcadelt and his contemporaries remained in use alongside the new music that was being composed. Rather than having to exclude the familiar in favour of the new, it was possible for new and old to co-exist in complete harmony. The interesting question that arises, however, concerns performance practice

and the way that older music may have been transformed through time. On such questions it is very difficult to do more than speculate as to what degree the Roman castrati of Caravaggio's time performed older, well-known madrigals literally with little change, or whether they embellished them with diminutions according to the practices elucidated in the treatises of Dalla Casa, Rognoni and other theorists who attempted to codify the art of extemporised ornamentation that, according to Vincenzo Giustiniani, had been introduced into Rome from Naples.<sup>15</sup>

The coexistence of the old and the new in Italian music around 1600 manifests itself in other ways as well. With regard to plucked strings, the divide between the old and the new became associated with the use of different varieties of lute. Six and seven-course Renaissance lutes in the style of the instruments played by Caravaggio's lute player continued in popularity, but their use appears to have been increasingly restricted to amateurs in more conservative aristocratic and patrician circles, and the professional musicians who served them. In contrast, the new instruments such as the tiorba and chitarrone, initially invented to accompany the voice in the new monodic style, became increasingly the domain of professional players. Lutenists such as Michaelangelo Galilei, Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger, Alessandro Piccinini who composed new music in the style of the *seconda prattica* all concentrated their energies in these new instruments that were so well suited for the new declamatory style.<sup>16</sup>

Manuscripts by two other musicians approximately contemporary with Caravaggio's *Lute player* provide useful comparison and help amplify the musical context of the painting. The first of these is the songbook assembled during the last quarter of the sixteenth century by Cosimo Bottegari (1554-1620) a professional lutenist-singer from Florence who served Duke Albert V of Bavaria as well as the Medici and the Este in Italy.<sup>17</sup> It principally comprises arrangements of madrigals for lute and voice made for his own use. Unlike Caravaggio's lutenist who appears to have been able to convert a bass line into a basso continuo accompaniment at sight – a practice that was used in Florence during the same period by members of Bardi's *Camerata* – Bottegari wrote out his music in a score of two staves, with the superius parts of the madrigals in mensural notation on the upper staff and a reduction of the other voices on the lower staff in tablature. This two-staff format was neither new nor uncommon and was used in nineteen books of lute songs printed in Italy between 1570 and 1603.<sup>18</sup> The Bottegari book is particularly interesting because of the nature of his lute arrangements that suggest him only to have been a lutenist of modest ability, rather than a virtuoso player. His arrangements frequently simplify intricacies within the original polyphony for the sake of idiomatic simplicity, presumably to allow him greater freedom to concentrate on his vocal performance. A group of solo pieces in his book confirms this evaluation. His simplifications suggest that he had no qualms about cutting corners in order to produce a workable, pragmatic result. In this sense, he would probably have been scorned by purists such as Vincenzo Galilei who zealously maintained the purity and integrity of the polyphony of his models in his intabulations at all costs. Bottegari thus appears to have been more a singer than a



lutenist, a singer whose ability allowed him to accompany himself when he sang, but without any indication of being able to entertain and enthrall his listeners with his solo playing.

It would not have been difficult for someone with Bottegari's modest instrumental skill to have become a competent continuo player. One of the advantages of the basso continuo is, in fact, the flexibility that players are afforded to style their accompaniments according to their skill level. We therefore have no way of knowing if Caravaggio's lutenist played with anything greater than Bottegari's apparent modesty, or if his ability was more akin to the abilities of some of the other castrato lutenists about whom we have some albeit fragmentary knowledge. While it might seem overly laborious that a singer-lutenist such as Bottegari should bother to write arrangements for over 120 madrigals, particularly given his simplifications, when he had the alternative of improvising an accompaniment from their bass parts, it may well not have appeared like this to him. He was simply following the same laborious practice that was used by the authors of all the other contemporary books of lute songs. One by one, Bottegari had to transfer each of the voices of a polyphonic models into tablature, gradually building an accompaniment that is essentially a score reduction, a basso seguente in lute tablature modified to fall easily under the fingers. Even though the result of this process might not be very different from a continuo realisation, particularly in works with homophonic or quasi-homophonic texture, it simply may not have entered the mind of players such as Bottegari. The continuo-style approach with all its shortcuts may have been beyond the aesthetic or intellectual limits of musicians brought up in a culture of linear polyphony. Notwithstanding, there can be little doubt that lutenists understood chords and harmonic progressions long before they were ever explained in theoretical or didactic texts.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast to those professional lute-playing singers such as Bottegari, it is clear that some of the castrato singers in Rome and elsewhere around 1600 were indeed proficient lutenists, probably able to perform solo music for their aristocratic patrons in addition to singing to their own accompaniment. This is clearly revealed in several documents pertaining to the court of Mantua. The best known of these is a letter sent on 4 May 1583 by Duke of Mantua, Guglielmo Gonzaga, to his agent in Paris explaining the attributes of the kind of castrato he was seeking for his court. He describes his ideal castrato as being a «good Catholic» of even temperament, of good voice, and that he would be more highly prized if he were also to know counterpoint and were able to accompany himself on the lute in chamber music:

*che principalmente siano buoni cattolici et gioveni quieti, si che si possa sperare longa et amorevole servitù da loro. Che siano sicuri nel cantare et habbiano buona voce Se havranno contrapunto et sapranno sonare di leutto per cantarvi dentro saranno tanto più cari*<sup>20</sup>

Further correspondence attests to the Duke's endeavours to secure castrati in France and Spain given the scarcity of local singers, evidently to serve not only in the court chapel, but also for recreational chamber music as had been the case since 1573. Sherr also reports on two attempts to recruit

French castrato lutenists to the court. The earlier of these was in October 1583 when Ferrante Ghisoni, one of the Duke's agents in France, informed the Duke that he had located a castrato but that he was not in favour of making him an offer given that his singing and lute playing were not yet good enough for him to be employable at Mantua. In December of the same year, Ghisoni was unsuccessful in his attempts to lure another highly-paid castrato for the court. This castrato named Carbona, who sang at the court of the Queen of Navarre and was principally engaged to perform *musica da camera*, also accompanied himself on the lute, and Sherr adds that there were numerous castrato lutenists in France at the time who could sing and ornament well, and who were thus suited as chamber musicians.<sup>21</sup>

Another castrato lutenist who demonstrates a high level of virtuosity as an instrumentalist can only be identified at present by his surname, Barbarino. Unlike the book assembled by Bottegari, however, Barbarino's lute book is not an anthology of songs, but an album of solo lute music. Presently held by the Biblioteka Jagiellońska in Kraków with the signature Ms. Mus. 40032, the manuscript was formerly held in the Preussische Staatsbibliothek (now the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek) in Berlin, and was one of the large number of valuable items that went missing during World War II only to reappear more than thirty years later.<sup>22</sup> The stamp of the Bibliotheca Regia Berolinensis, the Prussian royal library, on the cover of the manuscript indicates that it has resided in the library for a considerable time. When we examined the manuscript on site in 2002, Dinko Fabris and I were able to determine that the book was rebound sometime after 10 December 1830, the date of the newspaper that was used to reinforce the book's spine at that time. Another internal inscription in German on the rear fly leaf (p. 405) in a seventeenth or eighteenth-century hand leaves no doubt that the manuscript had resided north of the Alps for considerably longer, but there is no evidence to explain how and when it came to Germany. It could have been brought north by its owner had he travelled to Germany for professional reasons as Cosimo Bottegari had done. Alternatively, the manuscript might have been acquired by a German traveller in Italy at some point after it had passed from Barbarino's possession, presumably after his death. The German inscription seems to be the work of a librarian or cataloguer, someone who knew enough about music to identify the contents as tablature notation, but was insufficiently specialised to realise that it was lute rather than keyboard tablature. The inscription also reveals that the manuscript had already lost thirty-one of its original two hundred folios. Unfortunately, the year of the inscription or the place where it was made remain indecipherable to this point in time. The inscription appears to read as follows: «In this book are one hundred and sixty nine leaves and thereafter are two that are added on and with keyboard tablature, the 1st day of May [undecipherable text]»<sup>23</sup> (Fig. 1).

Judging by specific details of the tablature notation as well as the evolution of the handwriting of the manuscript's sole copyist, P-Kj 40032 appears to have been compiled over period of perhaps thirty years, from circa 1580. The only precise indication of its date is an inscription on page 406 made early in 1611. Among previous scholars who have examined the manuscript, only Kirsch paid any attention to this inscription, describing it as «four lines

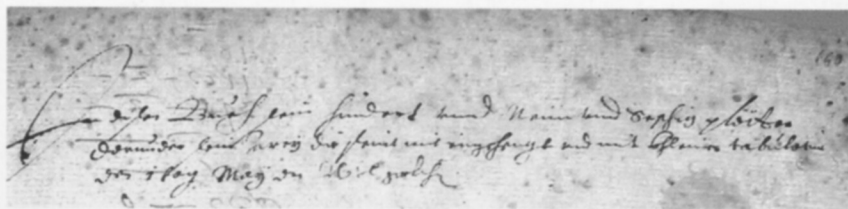


Fig. 1, Barbarino, *Lute Book*, detail, (PL-Kj Mus. Ms 40032, p. 405).

of multiply crossed-out and hardly legible Italian text». <sup>24</sup> Similarly, previous scholars who have described or inventoried the manuscript were not able to unravel the process of compilation, in some cases mistakenly attributing apparent differences in handwriting to multiple copyists, rather than understanding them as changes in the handwriting of the one individual who copied it over a long period of time. <sup>25</sup>

This is not a manuscript that was compiled from gatherings of diverse origin in the possession of its owner, but a book that was made specifically to be used for the compilation of an anthology of lute music. It is a book that was commissioned and made to order, comprising 25 quaternions of paper ruled with nine six-line tablature staves, and numbered from 1 to 406. <sup>26</sup> The tablature was ruled prior to binding with two almost identical rastra – on the basis of detailed measurements of the distances between staff lines and between the staves themselves – each able to draw an entire page with one pull. The ruling of the pages therefore probably represents the toil of at least two employees of the workshop that produced it. Subsequent to the German inscription a further ten folios have gone missing, so only 160 of the original 201 remain. The paper has no watermarks to help establish the date and provenance of the manuscript with precision. It is therefore primarily on the basis of the musical contents that makes Naples the most likely place of origin of the manuscript, although there are also strong links with Rome and Parma. These connections are suggested by the presence of more than forty works by Lorenzino da Roma and Santino Garsi da Parma alongside numerous pieces by Fabrizio Dentice, Giulio Severino, and several other Neapolitans. <sup>27</sup> Other factors that strengthen the hypothesis of the manuscript's Neapolitan provenance is the quite extensive use of Spanish names and spellings in titles throughout the manuscript, as well as the presence of works of either Spanish origin or composed on Spanish models. Examples of the mixture of Spanish and Italian that reinforces this theory are seen in titles of works such as *Conditor alme sobre il Canto llano* (p. 3), *Pedazo de fantasia del ottavo di Luis Maimón* (p. 15), or *Sobre il Canto piano dell'Ave Maris Stella del Sig. Fra[ncesco] Aguyles* (p. 53). <sup>28</sup> In the latter case, the composer's surname also appears to be Spanish in origin. Other composers included in the manuscript of possible Spanish heritage are Francesco Cardone, Castillo, and Luis Maymón. Other works in the manuscript also have close ties to Spanish musical practices and are not found in any other contemporary non-Spanish source, works such as *Passos de Castillo* (p. 105), *Prima y segunda diffa delas vacas de luy Maymon* (p. 160), the group of *Folias en primer tono*, *Folias en Bassus* and *Folias en soprano* (pp. 376-379), or the only texted piece in the manuscript *Quien la dira la pena del amor*, a loose reworking of Willaert's five voice *chanson* *Qui la dira la peine de mon coeur* (p. 56).

The only clue to the identity of the compiler and owner of the manuscript is revealed by the obliterated inscription on page 406 of the manuscript. Both the inscription and the cancellation marks appear to be the work of the manuscript's owner and compiler. He appears to have been particularly interested in ensuring that his own name was completely obliterated and it has not been possible to decipher this name to date, despite the use of modern digital technology to assist the reading. Even though we cannot yet establish his name with certainty, we can confirm that it is not either of the other two contemporary musicians known to us with the same surname, Angelo Barbarino or Bartolomeo Barbarino, as neither name matches the legible fragments of the name in the inscription.<sup>29</sup> Further illegibility is due to fact that several words were lost when repairs were made to the last fascicle of the manuscript during rebinding in the early nineteenth century. The sheets of this gathering had evidently been torn out and had to be trimmed and glued back together before being re-sewn. This particular page appears to have been trimmed by some 40 millimetres on the bound edge.

The inscription is an incomplete receipt that Barbarino began to write to acknowledge payment of his salary in February 1611. Any attempt to explain why this receipt was written in the last page of the manuscript or why it was left incomplete can be nothing more than speculation. It may have been that Barbarino began to draft a receipt in the back of his lute book in the absence of other writing materials, but that a blank sheet of paper was found before he had completed it and that he was able to scratch out the incomplete draft without having to tear the page from his book. Whatever the case, and thanks to digital technology that has allowed the removal of much of the cancellation, enough of the inscription has been revealed for the value of the inscription to become clear with regard to establishing some idea of its compiler and its provenance. The inscription reads as follows:

*Il nome sia di dio il 22 di febraio 1611 / Io [undecipherable first name] barbarino castrato servi il Sre alfonso Bra / o [...] / E piu o riceputo dal Sre alfonso diciotto / Di moneta a conto dal mio salario che fu ver...*

From this it can be seen that on 22 February 1611 a salary payment of 18 *giulie* in cash was made to the castrato Barbarino – with the an undecipherable first name – for services to Alfonso Br[...], a patron who for the moment must also remain unidentified on account of the trimming of the page during restoration. Figure two shows the inscription in its original condition in the manuscript, while the same fragment is shown after digital enhancement in figure three (Figs. 2-3).

Barbarino appears to have planned the organisation of his book by genres, leaving the first hundred pages to make a copy of what was presumably another book of lute music called *Flores para tañer* by another otherwise unknown musician whom he names as Luys Maymón. This was followed by fifty pages each for intabulations and passamezzi, one hundred pages for fantasias and other abstract works, and then fifty pages

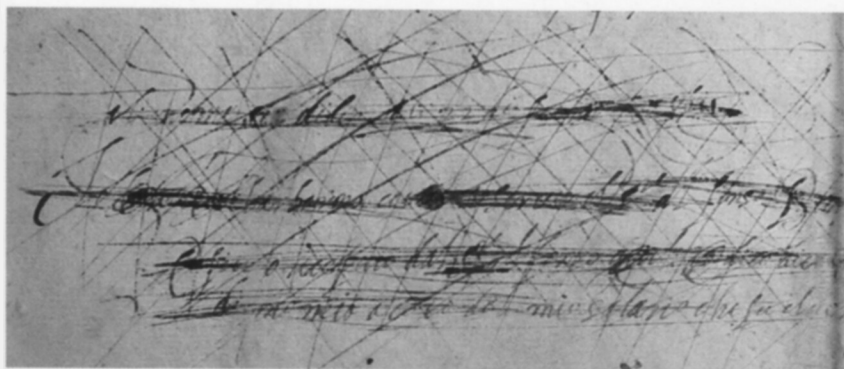


Fig. 2, Barbarino, *Lute Book*, detail (PL-Kj Mus. Ms 40032, p. 406).

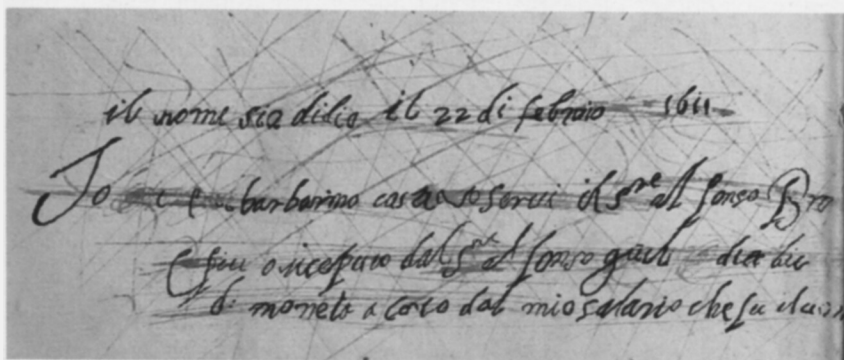


Fig. 3, Barbarino, *Lute Book*, enhanced detail, (PL-Kj Mus. Ms 40032, p. 406).

each for galliards and a miscellany of French, Italian, German, and Spanish dances and variations. In point of fact, the copying of *Flores para tañer* took five pages more than expected, and so the section of intabulations starts in the middle of page 105. In reality, then, the divisions of the manuscript are as follows:

1-105	Luys Maymón, <i>Flores para tañer</i>
105-149	intabulations
150-199	passamezzi
200-299	abstract works
300-349	galliards
350-400	other French, Italian, German, and Spanish works

The hypothesis that Barbarino's book incorporates an already extant lute book by another lutenist is based on the rubric at the end of the sixth system of page 105 «*Finis de Flores para tañer de Luis Maymon*». That this be the end of a manuscript rather than an individual work is suggested by numerous factors, most notably because the title itself is so typical of Spanish poetic and musical anthologies of the period, such as the well known poetic anthology *Ramillete de flores* manuscript (E-Mn Ms 6001) that also contains a fascicle of music in tablature for vihuela.<sup>30</sup> The second consideration is that the consistent practice of the copyist throughout the manuscript was to place titles in the left hand margin at the beginning of each

piece, written vertically rather than horizontally. The only time he writes in the tablature itself is at the end of each piece where he writes «*finis*» following the final bar line.

The identity of Luis Maymón cannot be established with certainty. The surname is clearly Sephardic and derived from the name of the twelfth-century Jewish philosopher born in Córdoba in 1137, Moses Maimonides, and so it is likely that the ancestors of Luys Maymón originally had come from Spain to Naples. It is likely that he is the same lutenist named by Cerreto in 1601 as Luise Maglione who, together with his brother Garsi Maglione, is listed among those no longer alive, «*Sonatori eccellenti di liuto della città di Napoli, che oggi non vivono*». <sup>31</sup> Given the uncommonness of the name Luis or Luise in Naples at the time, it is also possible that he is the same «*Mastro Luise suonatore*» who is listed in the 1598 census of Naples as residing in the vicinity of the church of Santa Maria la Scala. <sup>32</sup> There was obviously some fluidity in Naples concerning the spelling of surnames and the fact that a singer known in the Sant'Annunziata as Giovan Domenico Maione was recorded in the Neapolitan Royal Chapel in 1593 as Juan Domingo Maymón opens the way to speculate whether the various Neapolitan musicians with the surnames Maymón, Maglione or Maione may have all been from the same family. In this case, Luis Maymón may have been related to contemporary musicians such as Ascanio Maione (ca. 1565-1627). <sup>33</sup>

The reason that the organisational plan of the Barbarino lute book has not previously been detected relates to the way the manuscript was copied. It is not evident when simply perusing an inventory of the book's contents, as the pieces inserted at a later date to use up vacant unused space generally do not correspond to the musical genre of the section of the book where they are placed. Barbarino's copying process can be unpicked by careful observation of where pieces are placed, the gradual changes in his handwriting over time, and the changes to specific features of his tablature, particularly rhythmic notation. When he started compiling the book, he generally began each new piece on the *verso* side of a *folio*, that is, on the left hand page of an opening in the book if he knew that it would require more than a single page. As a performer, his aim was to minimise the number of page turns. Most of pieces would be less than two pages and could be played without the interruption of a page turn. A smaller number required a single page turn, but very few works were longer than four pages of tablature; many pieces were considerably shorter and would fit on half a page or less. As the manuscript filled, Barbarino went back through the book and matched the length of the new pieces he wished to copy to the number of empty staves on a given page. Hence, on page 117, for example, within the section devoted to intabulations, Barbarino chose a brief idiomatic piece in a more modern style entitled *Passaggio* di Giovanni Batista to use up the three staves that remained at the end of Giulio Severino's intabulation of Palestrina's madrigal *Da poi che'io viddi vostra falsa fede*. In the same way, he began to copy a lengthy *ricercar* by Fabrizio Dentice on page 256, a piece that would require nearly three full pages (Figs. 4-5). The copying shows Barbarino at his neatest, with compact accurate notation in



the classic Italian style using flagged note stems to indicate rhythm. At the end of this *ricercar*, on page 258, Barbarino marked the end of the piece with a double bar and the characteristic indication «*Finis*». At this point, he decided to commence another *ricercar* by Dentice, starting on the eighth system of page 258, even though he probably realised he could have left the two final staves blank and begun at the top of the next page, knowing that the piece would fit on a single page (Fig. 5). This is what occurs at numerous other places in the manuscript. Completing this second *ricercar* with three staves to spare on page 259, he turned the page and began a new *Fantasia* by Dentice on page 260, completing it on page 261. At some later point in time, and with a marginally more relaxed hand, Barbarino went back to page 259 and used the three vacant staves to copy an anonymous *Tochatina* for a more modern seven-course lute, and using the style of rhythmic notation using mensural symbols that became normal practice in Italy from the turn of the seventeenth century. The handwriting is otherwise remarkably similar, although the final strokes of the numbers three and five, in particular, are written with greater speed and abandon, and less attention is paid to closing the circle on the figure 0. Barbarino realised, moreover, that he would be hard pressed to fit the piece onto three staves and thus extended the staff lines of the last two staves to fit in a few extra bars.

If we assume the Neapolitan provenance of the Barbarino lute book, its repertory can be seen in geographical terms as representing three different spheres: international, national, and local. The significance of the presence of an international repertory is that it indicates that lute music

Fig. 4, Barbarino, *Lute Book*, (PL-Kj Mus. Ms 40032, pp. 256-257).



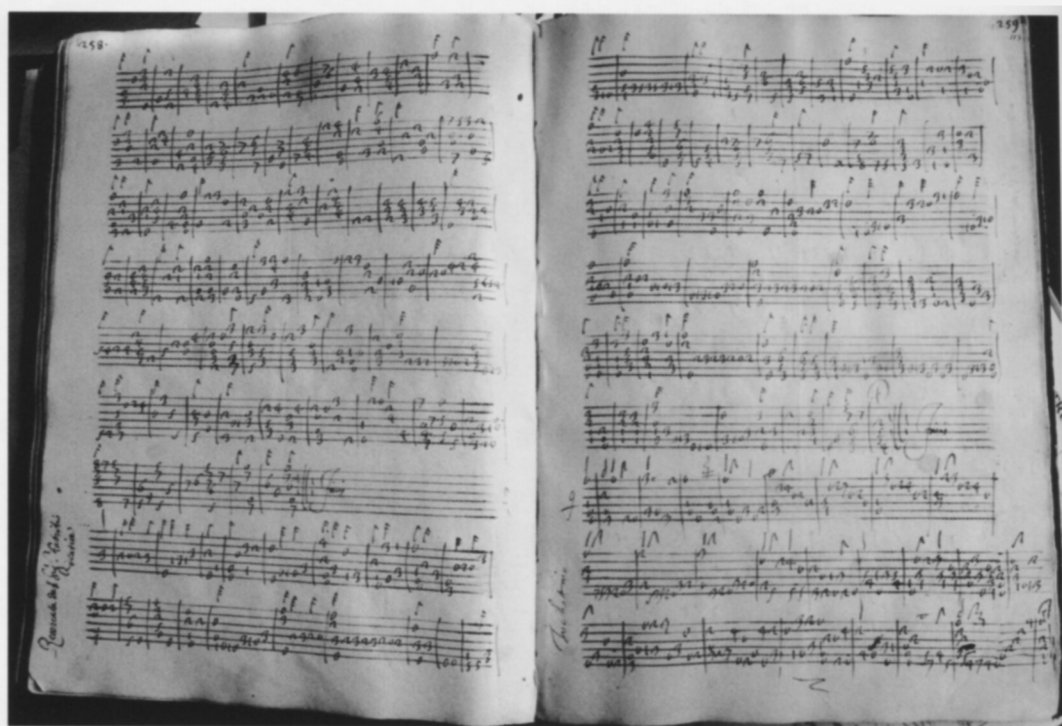


Fig. 5, Barbarino,  
*Lute Book*,  
(PL-Kj Mus.  
Ms 40032,  
pp. 258-259).

from all parts of Europe reached southern Italy and that Naples can, in fact, be considered part of the lute's native habitat. These works of this type include intabulations of internationally renowned chansons such as *Susanne un jour* by Lassus and *La guerre* by Clément Janequin, internationally acclaimed madrigals such as Striggio's *Lascia la pena mia*, and famous dance pieces including two by the English lutenist, John Johnson. More specifically Italian repertory includes compositions by Francesco da Milano whose reputation lived on for half a century beyond his death in 1543, the composers such as Lorenzino and Santino Garsi already mentioned, and many dances and passamezzi that have cognates and concordances in other Italian lute sources. At the more local level, the Barbarino lute book is a principal source for the works of Neapolitan lutenists, particularly Fabrizio Dentice, Giulio Severino and Luys Maymón, and also contains numerous other works that relate directly to Hispano-Neapolitan culture such as settings of the folia and a unique piece entitled *Seguidillas para cantar*.

At the same time, with a total of 350 works, the manuscript is one of the largest sources of Italian music of the late sixteenth century, and a principal source for the non-Neapolitans Lorenzino and Santino Garsi. Only about one quarter of the works bear composer attributions and these, in turn, range from composers who are well known through to others named only as Pietro Paolo and Giuseppe Giovanni who are yet to be identified. A full list of composers and the number of works by them in the manuscript is given in Table 1.



COMPOSER	WORKS	COMPOSER	WORKS
Santino Garsi	26	Giovanni Battista [dalla Gostena?]	3
Lorenzino	18	John Johnston	2
Luis Maymón	9	Severino, Giulio	2
Fabrizio Dentice	7	Aguyles	2
Pietro Paolo	7	Juan Farnese	1
Giuseppe Giovanni	6	Ippolito Tartaglino	1
Francesco Canova da Milano	3	Teodoro	1
Francesco Cardone	3	Battistino	1
Castillo	3		

Table 1, Barbarino, *Lute Book* (PL-Kj Mus. Ms 40032), attributed works.

Division of the works into genres can only give an approximate idea of the contents as some 54 pieces in the manuscript (15%) are untitled or incomplete and cannot always be identified unequivocally. Table 3 shows the repertory distributed into genres. Dances outnumber all other genres significantly, although they do not occupy as many pages of the manuscript as some other genres due to their brevity. Perhaps the absence of pavaues is noteworthy, but the large numbers of galliards, courantes, and voltes is typical of the period.

The large number of abstract works is one of the features of Barbarino's collection. This preponderance of abstract works is not typical of Italian lute sources of the second half of the sixteenth century that tend much more heavily towards dance music and intabulations, although there is a strong link with the Siena lute book in which some 140 of the total contents of 156 pieces are abstract works, and with which the Barbarino manuscript has nearly a dozen concordances.<sup>34</sup> Some thirty of the Barbarino pieces, unfortunately, are presented without attribution and not many of these have been identified through concordances. Among the works with composer attributions are fantasias and ricercars by well-known composers Francesco da Milano (3), Fabrizio Dentice (5) and Lorenzino (6), as well as two by Luys Maymón and five each by the two identified only as Pietro Paolo and Giuseppe Giovanni. Within the category of abstract works are some shorter, more modern works named *Toccata* and three designated with the title *Entrade di liuto*.

Madrigals and French chansons account for the vast majority of intabulated polyphony in the collection. These range from works of the early sixteenth century through to the most popular works of Palestrina and Lassus (see Table 3). The earliest works reflect the lasting reputation of Josquin and include his motet *Benedicta es, caelorum regina*, and the "Credo" from his *Missa Gaudeamus*. The collection includes a couple of madrigals from the same period as those that are depicted in Caravaggio's *Lute player*, such as Philippe Verdelot's *Ultimi sospiri miei* (first published in 1541), and is noteworthy for the multiple versions of Lassus' renowned chanson *Susanne un jour* and Palestrina's most famous madrigal *Vestiva i colli*. Variations on popular grounds and works built on cantus firmus melodies make up the remainder of the manuscript, together with a small

number of fragmentary works that gather together materials for use in teaching or improvised performance.

GENRE	NO	INCLUDED
Dances	139	galliard (38), courante (23), volta (17), branle (8), aria di Firenze (5), balletto (5), allemanda (4), seguidilla (1), etc
Abstract works	80	fantasia/ ricercar (58), toccata (17), preludio (5)
Intabulations	76	madrigal (26), chanson (25), motet (5), etc
Variations	28	passamezzo, pavana, pavaniglia, folia, romanesca, monaca,
Didactic works	18	Passaggio, Clausula, Dirata, Passos
Cantus firmus settings	9	

Table 2, Barbarino, *Lute Book* (PL-Kj Mus. Ms 40032), compositional genres.

COMPOSER	WORKS	COMPOSER	WORKS
Orlando de Lassus	26	Josquin des Près	2
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina	8	Giaches de Wert	2
Thomas Crecquillon	6	Clemens non Papa	1
Cipriano de Rore	4	Noel Faignient	1
Domenico Ferrabosco	3	Nicholas Gombert (?)	1
Philippe de Monte	3	Pierre Sandrin	1
Alessandro Striggio	3	Philippe Verdelot	1
Clément Janequin (?)	2	Adrian Willaert (?)	1

Table 3, Barbarino, *Lute Book* (PL-Kj Mus. Ms 40032), composers of vocal music intabulated in the manuscript.

The importance of the Barbarino lute book is due to two principal factors, that it was compiled by a castrato and its probable provenance. If our deductions are correct concerning its Neapolitan origins, then it fills an important gap in knowledge of the life of the lute and the activity of lutenists in Naples in the second half of the sixteenth century. It complements the musical repertory transmitted in the only other known source of lute music in Naples, the *Intavolatura de Viola o vero Lauto* of Francesco da Milano issued in 1536 by Joannes Sulzbach, the instructions on intabulation by Bartolomeo Lieto of 1559, the list of Neapolitan lute players that Cerreto included in his 1601 treatise, and the new information concerning German lutemakers in Naples recently published by Luigi Sisto.<sup>35</sup> The Barbarino manuscript is thus a document of prime importance concerning the presence of the lute in southern Italy in the later sixteenth century.

No other known musical source preserves the solo lute repertory of a castrato lutenist after the fashion of the *Lute player* painted by Caravaggio. While the Barbarino lute book does not reveal anything concerning the

way that such singers accompanied themselves on the lute, it indicates that castrato lutenists, some of them at least, were highly competent instrumentalists who were able to perform some of the most complex, sophisticated and virtuosic lute music of their age. The evidence from the incomplete receipt on the book's last page does seem to suggest that Barbarino was employed as a castrato, although it is unable to clarify whether the payment was for services as a chamber musician or as a member of his patron's chapel. The evidence provided by Sherr and Trinchieri Camiz suggests that both possibilities were available to lutenist singers such as Barbarino or Caravaggio's lute player.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The two best known versions of the painting are in the Wildenstein Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York and the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Until recently dismissed as a copy, the third version was formerly in the collection of the Duke of Beaufort at Badminton House, Gloucestershire, but was sold to a private collector at Sotheby's, New York, in 2001.

<sup>2</sup> TRINCHIERI CAMIZ 1988.

<sup>3</sup> In many cases, these castrati appear to have choristers who were given board and lodging in the homes of the ecclesiastical elite, sometimes in exchange for performing domestic roles as singer-lutenists. See SHERR 1980.

<sup>4</sup> TRINCHIERI CAMIZ 1988, p. 172.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the *Lute player*, these paintings are *Boy with a Basket of Fruit* (1593), *The Fortune Teller* (1594), *The Cardsharps* (1594), *The Concert* (1595), *Bacchus* (1596), *Boy bitten by a Lizard* (1595-1596), *The Calling of Saint Matthew* (1599 ca.) and *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* (1599 ca.).

<sup>6</sup> The suggestion that Mario Minniti was Caravaggio's model in all these works was first made by FROMMEL 1971. The portrait of Minniti bearing the attribution «*Marcellino Minasi inciso diretto d'Antonino Minasi*» was published in GROSSO CACOPARDO 1821, p. 82. Acceptance of this hypothesis has been growing since the publication of ROBB 1998, and is now widely accepted, particularly in a considerable number of websites such as Wikipedia, and more specialised sites concerning Caravaggio such as the authoritative yet unsigned MINNITI, *Mario (nei dipinti di Caravaggio)*, MINNITI (s.d.).

<sup>7</sup> SLIM 1985.

<sup>8</sup> The madrigals *Chi potrà dir*, *Se la dura durezza* and *Voi Sapete* by Arcadelt are depicted in both the Hermitage and Badminton versions of the *Lute player*, while the Wildenstein version shows the *Lasciar il velo* by Layolle and *Perchè non date voi* by Jachet.

<sup>9</sup> TRINCHIERI CAMIZ 1991, p. 218. Criticism of the outmoded nature of Arcadelt's madrigals in Caravaggio's time is offered in CROPPER 2006.

<sup>10</sup> The title of the earliest surviving collection of such works makes it clear that the arranger's technique was to omit the alto parts of the frottole; he intabulated, making the lute accompaniment solely from the tenor and bass: BOSSINENSIS 1509. On the basis of printed sources it would seem that later arrangers were less given to omitting parts, although manuscript sources sometimes show a more flexible approach.

<sup>11</sup> An extensive discussion and history of the practice is given in the article by WILLIAMS, LEDBETTER (s.d.).

<sup>12</sup> For a thorough study of the lute song in the late sixteenth century, see MASON 1997.

<sup>13</sup> The earliest madrigal arrangements similar to those presumably being sung by Caravaggio's *Lute Player* appear in VERDELOT 1536. Earlier works to present intabulated vocal music include BOSSINENSIS 1509 and various volumes of chansons published by P. Attaignant, the earliest of which is ATTAINGNANT 1529. The earliest source of songs with freely composed accompaniments is MILAN 1536. On Ficino and

music, see WALKER 1958.

<sup>14</sup> Vincenzo Giustiniani (1564-1637), owner of one of the copies of the *Lute player*, acknowledges in his *Discorso sopra la musica* (1628 ca.) to have been familiar with the music of Arcadelt. On the longevity of Francesco da Milano's music see COELHO 1996.

<sup>15</sup> DALLA CASA 1980; ROGNONI TAEGGIO 1978. For a general survey see BROWN 1976. For Giustiniani's claim on the embellished style, see BOTTRIGARI, GIUSTINIANI 1962, p. 69.

<sup>16</sup> See COELHO 1997, pp. 108-141, especially pp. 121-122.

<sup>17</sup> I-MOe Ms. C 311; republished in facsimile in BOTTEGARI 2006; for a transcription and modern edition see BOTTRIGARI, 1965.

<sup>18</sup> These are listed in MASON 1997, pp. 77-78.

<sup>19</sup> The strongest confirmation of this is the repertory of dances built on chordal schemes and variation sets based on repeated harmonic grounds that flourished from the early sixteenth century.

Moreover, the earliest theoretical explanation is found decades earlier than the earliest explanations of continuo performance in SANCTA MARIA 1565. This is described in RUBIO 1980; and more recently in English in ROIG-FRANCOLÍ 1995.

<sup>20</sup> This document was first brought to light and published in part in CANAL 1879, but was later reproduced in full in SHERR 1980, pp. 53-54 with an English translation of the relevant passage on p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> SHERR 1980, p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> Concerning the story of the manuscript during these years, see WHITEHEAD 1976; WHITEHEAD 1980 and KIRSCH 1985. A more recent perspective is provided by SROKA 2007.

<sup>23</sup> «*In diesem Buch sein hundert und neun und seschig pläter / darunter sein Zwey die seint mit eingehengt und mit khlavir [=Klavier] tabulatur / den i tag May dem*», BOETTICHER 1978, p. 22, misread several words in this inscription, especially «*pläter*» [=Blätter] which he misread as «*Stücken*», as well as the undecipherable final word which he interpreted with the highly improbable reading of «*Madxxxii*», the year 1626. This repeats the reading given by OSTHOFF 1926, p. 42. A more accurate reading was given by KIRSCH, MEIEROTT 1992, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> «*Vier Zeilen mehrfach durchstrichener und kaum lesbarer italienischer Texte*», KIRSCH, MEIEROTT 1992, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> BOETTICHER 1978, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> The total number of pages should have been 400 but in fact was 402 due to the addition of a ninth folio to the last (25th) quaternion. Furthermore, the scribe numbered the pages incorrectly, jumping from page 355 to 360 on what would have been folio 137, hence increasing the total by a further four pages.

<sup>27</sup> Many of these are now available in modern edition in GRIFFITHS, FABRIS 2004.

<sup>28</sup> The Spanish words are underlined.

<sup>29</sup> A canzonetta *Un giorno passeggiando* by Angelo Barbarino is included in the anthology AMADINO 1589. Bartolomeo Barbarino, known as «Il Pesarino», was a singer, theorist and organist active in various parts of Italy – Loreto, Urbino, Pesaro, Padua and Venice – between 1593 and 1640

who published numerous books of predominantly solo motets and madrigals with continuo accompaniment between 1606 and 1625. For further details see ROCHE, MILLER (s.d.).

<sup>30</sup> REY 1975.

<sup>31</sup> CERRETO 1969, p. 159.

<sup>32</sup> FARAGLIA, 1898, p. 523.

<sup>33</sup> This is explored in greater depth in FABRIS (s.d.).

<sup>34</sup> NL-DHnmi, Kluis A 20 (*olim* NL-DHgm Ms 28 B 39), reproduced in NESS 1988.

<sup>35</sup> CANOVA DA MILANO 1977; LIETO 1993; and CERRETO 1969, pp. 157-160; SISTO 2010.

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# La musica al tempo di Caravaggio

a cura di

Stefania Macioce

Enrico De Pascale

coordinamento e collaborazione scientifica

Alessio Calabresi

Malena B. McGrath

GANGEMI  EDITORE



## Sommario

Introduzione <i>Stefania Macioce</i> <i>Enrico De Pascale</i>	7
Tavole	10
Caravaggio e il "melodioso liuto" <i>Stefania Macioce</i>	17
Caravaggio dilettante di musica? <i>Sybille Ebert-Schiffner</i>	29
Il «musicò Augellin» rinchiuso in gabbia nel <i>Suonatore di liuto</i> del Caravaggio <i>Giacomo Berra</i>	41
Il "ciclo musicale" di Caravaggio: gioco nascosto di committenti <i>Dinko Fabris</i>	73
The Music of Castrato Lutenists at the Time of Caravaggio <i>John Griffiths</i>	87
Tastar de corde <i>Mariagrazia Carlone</i>	105
Spazi della musica nella Milano di Caravaggio <i>Andrea Spiriti</i>	115
«Musica reservata». Indagine sui concerti dipinti nell'Italia settentrionale del Cinquecento <i>Sonia Cavicchioli</i>	133
Santa o cortigiana? La figura della donna musicista dopo i suonatori di liuto di Caravaggio <i>Alexandra Ziane</i>	149



Dalla <i>musica instrumentis</i> costituita alla <i>musica mundana</i> : tipologie della Maddalena penitente tra Cinque e Seicento <i>Cristina Santarelli</i>	165
I dipinti musicali di Cecco del Caravaggio <i>Renato Meucci</i>	175
Il Maestro dei Giocatori, anche maestro di temi musicali <i>Gianni Papi</i>	189
Strumenti musicali nella vita e nell'opera di Angelo Caroselli (1585-1652), pittore "caravaggesco" <i>Marta Rossetti</i>	201
<i>Ut pictura musica</i> . Evaristo Baschenis (1617-1677): realtà e pratica musicale <i>Enrico De Pascale – Giorgio Ferraris</i>	219
La definizione della tipologia ritrattistica dell'"evirato cantore" dopo Caravaggio <i>Elena Bugini</i>	231
Dal genere all'allegoria: concerti di Valentin de Boulogne nei disegni e nelle stampe di traduzione <i>Michela Gianfranceschi</i>	241
Teoria e prassi musicale nell'età post-caravaggesca <i>Claudio Strinati</i>	255
Abstracts	268
Bibliografia	284
Referenze fotografiche	318