Francesca Caccini (1587-1641): Composer, Performer, and Professor Represented in Il Primo Libro Delle Musiche

Marina Lobato Miranda

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FRANCESCA CACCINI (1587-1641): COMPOSER, PERFORMER, AND PROFESSOR
REPRESENTED IN IL PRIMO LIBRO DELLE MUSICHE

by

MARINA MIRANDA

Under the Direction of Marie Sumner Lott

ABSTRACT

This research analyses Francesca Caccini’s Il primo libro delle musiche as representative, not only of her musical style, but also of her characteristics as performer and voice teacher. The first chapters embrace her early musical life and the influences of her father in her musical style and career, followed by a brief explanation of Giulio Caccini’s compositional characteristics. The succeeding section clarifies the ornaments adopted by Francesca and her father in their songs, and the way they should be sang according to Giulio’s collection Le nuove musique. In order to analyze Il primo libro as an important pedagogic source to professors and students around 1600’s, the next chapters discuss the early concept of vocal technic and teaching during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries based on treatises by Pier Tosi and Giambattista Mancini, and how these ideas could be associated with Francesca as a voice professor and “maestrina” inside the Medici’s court.

INDEX WORDS: Francesca Caccini, Il primo libro delle musiche, 17th century vocal music, Italian songs, Baroque vocal music.
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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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1 INTRODUCTION

Francesca Caccini composed and published her *Il primo libro delle musiche* in 1618, same year that her father Giulio Caccini died. This book made her best known during her lifetime for been the most extensive collection of solo songs by a single composer that had been printed, with short vocal works for one and two voices and continuo, which includes: nineteen sacred solos songs, thirteen secular solo songs, and four duets for soprano and bass. This complete and extensive collection was an important source for scholars to obtain some details about the early seventeenth century musical style and society, and how this music influenced contemporary compositions.

Characterized by the monody (style popularized by Giulio Caccini) and declamatory strophic variations, this book is also organized in a didactic order, according to the style of the songs, the mood of the texts necessary for their interpretations, and vocal techniques.

In general, *Il primo libro* was influenced by Giulio’s music, but this collection also displays of Francesca’s compositional characteristics, which distinguish her works from of her father, or from any other monody composer of her time. Francesca always uses dissonances with almost no preparation, extending the resolution of them and it’s also common to see the use of the diminished seventh chord and she also had a really good training in counterpoint. Because she was a virtuous singer, her music fits really well the soprano’s range, and she knew exactly how to explore different colors of the voice according to the emotion she desired for the poem. All these characteristics made her music extremely expressive, and even with all the problems for been considered a women who went too far for her time, she became one of the greatest
composers of 1500’s/1600’s that we have registered. She achieved a respected position as a musician, influencing a lot of other contemporary composers.

My purpose in this thesis is to understand her music over her history and how she displayed her own compositional characteristics and pedagogic skills in *Il primo libro delle musiche*. In order to explain these elements, the first chapter talks about Francesca Ciccini’s life and how her career was developed until she published *Il primo libro delle musiche* and the history of this publication associated to her role inside the court. This first chapter also emphasizes the importance of her father in her professional life and the influences of his musical style, which is strongly present in Francesca’s compositions, in special in *Il primo libro*.

To clarify the compositional characteristics that influenced Francesca’s music, the second chapter is about Giulio Caccini and his importance for the development of the new Florentine musical style during that time, which made him one of the biggest representatives of the monody. Francesca was strongly influenced by this new style, and it is essential to know them in order to understand her music. For that reason, many of *Il primo libro*’s components can be better comprehended when compared to her father’s collection *Le nuove musiche*, such as the way she organized the songs in the book, and the ornaments that she requested, but with no explanation of how they should be performed. The next step of this thesis discusses some of these ornaments, which was explained by Giulio Caccini in his *Le nuove musiche*. Once this musical style was clarified, the next chapter presents a overview of *Il primo libro* with musical analyses of some songs or set of songs, such as her motets, madrigal, and romanesca arias, exploring the compositional elements in this volume associated to the poem and the way Francesca organized this music.
The following chapter explains the Baroque Italian school of singing based on treatises by Pier Tosi (1647-1732) and Giambatista Mancini (1714-1800). This section brings us the idea of how the vocal pedagogy was approached during that time and also important elements of vocal technic according to these two singers and voice teachers, who wrote about their own experiences and the aesthetic of singing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

After understanding the concept of voice in 1600s, the last chapter is a pedagogical analysis of *Il primo libro*. This chapter suggests the idea that Francesca composed and published this collection to be used as a didactic vocal material, helping singers to improve not only their technic but also expressivity and musical style. It also contains examples of her commitment to teach other women in the Medici court and churches.
2 CONNECTING THE COMPOSER’S LIFE AND MUSIC

Francesca Caccini was born in Florence on September 18, 1587. Because of her musical parents, she grew up in the artistic community of the Medici court, one of the most cultured courts in Europe.¹ She was educated by her father, the great composer Giulio Caccini (1546-1618), also known as “Il Romano” and for her mother, Lucia Caccini, who was a singer at the Medici court in Florence. At an early age Francesca learned how to sing, to play lute, and she was also known for her ability with guitar, keyboard, and poetry in the vernacular Tuscan and in Latin. Her first performance was as part of a family ensemble called “Concerto Caccini” before the court of the grand duke Ferdinando I de’ Medici (1549-1602) and after that, she became member of an ensemble called “Concerto delle donne,” which was composed by three sopranos: Francesca, her sister, and the famous singer Vittoria Archilei (1550-ca. 1620). She also sang the airs and the choruses written by her father and inserted into the opera Euridice (1600) by Jacopo Peri (1561-1633) and in her father’s Il rapimento di Cefalo, based on a libretto by Gabriello Chiabrera (1552-1638).² Soon, she became a famous singer and could be recognized around Italy for her virtuosi and technique. Between 1604-5, her family traveled to France, at the request of Maria d’ Medici. The king was so impressed by Francesca’s voice that he asked her to stay at the French court: “La Cecchina sang better than anyone in France, and that there was no consort to equal the Caccinis,” but she was unable to leave the Tuscan service.³ After that, she was also requested to perform at the

court of Gonzagas in Mantua in the premiere of Monteverdi’s *Arianna*, but the request was denied once again.

On November 11, 1607, she married the singer Giovannibattista Signorini in Florence and from 1608 to 1614 she served the Tuscan court performing in sacred music festivals during Holy Week. During that time, she wrote music for court entertainments with libretti by her friend Michelangiolo Buonarroti.

Two years latter, Cardinal Carlo de’ Medici went to Rome to show off his musicians including “Il Zazzerino” (Florentine nickname for Jacopo Peri), Giambattista Signorini, and Francesca Caccini, and because of her success, in April of 1617 she went to a tour trip with her husband to Genoa, Milan, Parma, Lucca, and Savona. Everybody was impressed by Caccini’s singing, as we can see in a letter to Michelangiolo Buonarroti by the poet Chiabrera about her concert in Genoa: “Here she was heard as a marvel, without any dissension; and just in a few days her fame has spread far.’’

At the same time that she became famous as a performer, she was working on her own compositions for the Tuscan court. We can find letters and other documents from that time which prove the existence of compositions, such as, as *Il martirio di Sant’ Agata, La fiera, Fest delle dame, La stevia*, and others, but unfortunately most of this works are lost or didn’t survive the time action. She also wrote two Operas: “*La libertazione di Ruggiero dall’ isola d’Alcina*” and “*Rinaldo inamorato.*”

On February 23, 1618, Francesca was performing in Pisa and she wrote to her friend, Michelangiolo, about the publication of her *Il primo libro delle musiche*. In this letter, she showed her desire to honor her father in this publication and asked him to help her with the dedication that she was writing.

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If possible, I should like to name my father where I praise the virtuosi of Florence, in such a way that he honoured by it, to speak of him as the master of the others, because I would not have it appear that I wished to depend on him through pride, but to acknowledge him as master.⁵

She sent him the letters and writings, so he could correct the grammar and the style of the introduction. The publication ended up with no introduction, but a dedication to Cardinal de’ Medici.⁶

If I could demonstrate by other methods the immensity of my debt to your Highness, I would not yearn to publish under your name the music here presented, knowing how much inferior it may be to the most exquisite taste of this century, and to the declaration of my most grateful servitude. But then, since I can only do so much while striving to please your highness, this is only a symbol of how much I would wish to do. I confess that I am held in the infinite bounty of your Highness, and I beg you with the great humility to continue to protect me with the aura of your grace and your authority. I acknowledge that virtue and worthiness are lacking in me and beg that I might be forgiven for this, and inspired so that I might in fact find service in the world not unworthy of the Highest Family. Praying the divine Majesty for the continued happiness of Your Majesty, I bow most humbly and I kiss your garments.

From Florence, 16 August, 1618.

Most humble and indebted servant,

Francesca Caccini ne’ Signorini.⁷

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Her father died in the same year that this collection was published, but besides his name was not mentioned in the introduction, the dedication to the Cardinal de’ Medici is a strong evidence of the involvement of the court with the publication of this book, which also leads us to think about the importance of this collection for the society of that time.
For some musicologists, this collection from 1618 has a lot in common with her father’s collection *Nuove musiche*, which was a significant contribution to the repertoire of monody. It makes completely sense when we think that Giulio Caccini was not only her father, but also the one who taught her everything about music and who wrote a lot of songs for her performances. In order to understand Francesca’s compositions, it is really important to know some of her father’s musical characteristics, which made him one of the most important monody composers around 1570’s and 1580’s.
3 GIULIO CACCINI’S MUSIC AND CAREER

Giulio Caccini was one of the members of the circle of musicians, intellectuals, poets and philosophers who gathered around Count Giovanni Bardi’s house in Florence. For the members of this group (known as Camerata Fiorentina), music had to be expressive and affecting, and the elaboration of the polyphony didn't help the understanding of the words.\(^8\)

Giulio’s music was based on the techniques of “Villanelle alla Napolitana,” and other genres of the ancient and partly unwritten tradition of native Italian popular music, also used to set Italian poems. This compositional style influenced Giulio’s music, as we can see in his *Nuove Musiche* (1602). Even the highly polished arias share stylistic features with the simple arias of the Neapolitan circle, which becomes clearer when they are deprived of embellishment.

Giulio explained in the preface of *Nuove Musiche* why his strophic arias were different from those of his contemporaries. He set better poetry than most of the other composers of “cazonettas,” coordinating his embellishments with the words and the ideas behind the words. He also explained that he sometimes moved his melodies in dissonance against the bass, so the

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bass lines were no longer so closely tied to the rhythms of the melody, becoming really independent in most of his strophic arias.\(^{10}\)

His compositional style influenced Francesca’s Il primo libro in the virtuoso singing lines, which are more “cantabile” and less “spoken,’ if compared to the recitative style set by the others Camerata Fiorentina composers, and also the way she sets the words with the melody, the key relationship, the strophic variations, and all the ornamentation of her songs. In “Le nuove musiche” Giulio explains in a didactic preface the use of this ornaments and how it has to be applied in each variation. This vocal ornamentation is one of the biggest characteristics of the 1500’s/1600’s Baroque monody. Different from her father, who set a section in his book only to talk about his preferences, Francesca hasn’t written any detail on this. The ornaments appear written in her music as “trillo,” “passaggi,” “giri di voce,” but with no explanation of how it should be performed. Since she was Giulio’s pupil, she basically adopted the same “rules” and musical style of her father, such as the use of the trill, or vocal tremolos on long notes, but not in final supertonic to tonic cadences or other ornaments on short notes and dotted rhythms.

3.1 Vocal ornamentation in Giulio’s Le nuove musiche

In his preface of Le nuove musiche, Giulio Caccini explains his vocal ornamentation, which influenced the “nuove stile” of singing of the late 16th century. This new style was based on the relationship between the text and the music with the use of “gorgheoggiado” technique (warbling). This technique consists in starting and stopping the vocal sound by the quick opening and closing of the vocal folds while the air is passing through, which requires good breath

control, since it can only be produced if the intensity of the air stream remains low. Once the control of this technique is acquired, the singer can speed up the notes using throat articulation to make sure that each note is as clear as possible for the listener even in short ornaments, such as “trilli,” “gruppi,” or “cascade.”

One of the most requested ornaments in his book is the “trillo” (tremolo) and the “gruppo” (trill). In his preface, Giulio explains how the ornament was written and how it should be sung:

The tremolo written by me on a single note is demonstrated in this way for no other reason than that, in teaching it to my first wife and now to the one who is living with my daughters, I observed no other rule than that which is written out for both ornaments: i.e., to begin with the first quarter-note, then restrike each note with the throat on the vowel “a,” up to the final double-whole-note; and like-wise the trill. How excellently the said tremolo and trill were learned by my late wife with the above rule may be adjudge by those who heard her sing during her lifetime… I can state with some assurance that no better way to teach them can be found, nor a better way to describe it, than is here given for both ornaments.\(^{11}\)

In this section, he illustrates an exercise by which he trains his students’ voices to improve speed articulation of both tremolo (trillo) and trill (gruppo). In performance, both should be rhythmically affected and they are not supposed to be measured even when they appear written-out.

Bovicelli, for example, describes the tremolo as a “trembling” of the voice on a single note and it accelerates by degree as a “cadential” ornament. In this preface of his book, Giulio included one model song, where the tremolos were suggested at three of the four cadences when the voice falls by step to the tonic note. Most of time this ornament is not written into the music, so it needs to be added by the performer whenever the voice falls from the second degree to tonic. The “cadential” trills are usually written into the music and it appears when the voice rises from leading tone to tonic. This information can help singers figure out which ornament they should add in the performance, and which one they should expect to find in the music.

According to Giulio’s preface, another ornament that performers should add in his songs since most of time they are not indicated are: “l’intonazione della voce” or vocal intonation, “l’esclamazione” or exclamation, and “il crescere e scemare della voce” or crescendo and diminuendo of the voice.

Lintonazione della voce or vocal intonation was used both to avoid “flattening” or “sharpening” notes and also to have a good musical style. It involves the manner in which the singer attacks the note at the beginning of a phrase. To do it correctly, it was important for the

13 “Il tremolo nondimeno, che non è altro, che un tremardi voce sopra ad una stessa nota, ricerca, che le note vadino sempre per grado.” Giovanni Battista Bovicelli, “Regole, passage di musica” (Venice, 1594), p.12.
performer to have a mastered breath control, which allowed them to use three different modes of attack. The first one begins from a third lower and rises to the written note, and in this case he affirms that the singer must be careful to not stay too long on the third below, or to avoid it when discordant with the melody. The second option is a “piano” attack directly on the written note followed by a gradual crescendo, while the third one is a strong attack on the given note followed by a decrescendo and both second and third options allow the singer to move the music affect toward an exclamation or “esclamazione.”

The exclamation was used in more dramatic passages to emphasize the meaning of the word and to make it more affective. It can be expressed both through a crescendo followed by a decrescendo of the vocal melody. According to the composer, it can be used on half-notes and dotted quarter-notes that descend but not on whole-notes (some exceptions may happen), and most of the time they must be added by the interpreter because the notation of the ornament does not appear in the music.

Giulio also talked about the “il crescere e scemare della voce” or the crescendo and diminuendo of the voice. For him, both dynamics have to be used in the same phrase as only one ornament, instead of separated. It also justifies his preference for not using exclamations on whole-notes, since they offer more room for crescendo and diminuendo, which should occur on long notes. This change of intensity of sound imitates the dynamic shape of the speech, which results in declamatory phrases.

There are a lot of other small ornaments that Giulio explains in his “Le nuove musiche,” such as “ribattuta di gola” or “ricocheting with the throat” (slow trill in uneven rhythms), “giri di voce” or “roulades” (passages with divisions and diminutions), which can be: “simplici” or “simple” (eighth-notes values), “graces” or “grace” (uneven eighth-note value), “doppi” or
“double” (sixteenth-note values), “raddoppiate” or “redoubled” (thirty-second-note values), and “intrecciate l’una nell’altra” or “intertwined with each other” (sequence of eighths, sixteenths, and thirty-seconds notes).

Another common term that we can find in his music is the use of “passaggi,” which are note flourishes usually on short syllables. He also uses “la cascade per ricorre il fiato” or a fall to retake a breath, which is a break before a descending sequence of notes until the penultimate note.
Il primo libro delle musiche was the biggest evidence of Francesca Caccini’s importance as a composer in the new Florentine style, and her pedagogical skills. The book is divided into two sections in the Tavola. The first one called “spirituali” or spiritual is characterized by sacred text and more substantial compositions including two sonnets, four madrigals, an aria, one ottave remanesca and one ottave sopra la romanesca, three arie allegre, five motets, and two hymns. The second section is called “temporali” or temporal, with secular text and lighter melodies, such as canzonette, motetti, and hinni. Giulio Caccini also organized his Le nuove musiche in a similar way: The front part of the book is composed for madrigals (more dramatic sections almost like an recitativo “cantante”), and the back section, for aria (representing the lighter and strophic forms).

In the spirituali section, the Ottave sopra la romanesca (eight rhymed poems over the same bass line), “Nube gentil” (Gentle cloud) is about the clouds that hide God’s face. The music starts in minor mode, and a dissonance between A and Eb in the second syllable of “nube”(cloud) brings a big tension emphasized by a “trillo” to represent this word, and quickly it’s dissolved in “gentle” as we can see in Figure 3-1. The “romanesca” is represented by the basso ostinato, which moves in such present way with skips and different lines in each entrance. This style was common in XVI and XVI centuries as an aria for singing poetry and as a subject for instrumental variations characterized by descending descant formula supported by a standard chordal progression whose bass moves by 4ths.\(^{14}\) The vocal melody varies even more than the bass and the melismatic sections confirm Francesca as a virtuous singer. The vocal

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embellishments are really well placed in order to give a dramatic interpretation for some words, as the trillo on “nube” or “cloud,” and “velo” or “veil.”

According to the musicologist Richad Savino, the “romanesca” bass is not used in this form, or in any other secular piece of this collection and although it was used in the sacred works, in the secular section the title ‘romanesca’ implies the use of an ostinato bass, often in minor mode, or just a music written in the “Roman style.”¹⁵ For the accompaniment, the composer suggested the use of lute (as chitarrone, tiorba, arciliuto, or liuto attiorbato) or keyboard instrument (as harpsichord, clavichord, spinet, and the organ for the motets).

Figure 4-1 Ottava sopra la romanesca, “Nube Genil” from Primo libro delle musiche

All mottetti have sacred Latin texts, while the madrigals in the spiritual part are in vernacular language. The mottetti are divided in sections with sometimes an alleluia between them and always as an extended coda. She chose the Psalm 150, which text praises the Lord with varied instrumental music (“Praise the lord… With the sound of trumpets… With psaltery and kithara… With drum and dance.”) to open the Latin set. In this setting of “Laudate Dominum,” there are ten similar sections (variations) before the “Alleluia,” and she also uses a lot of dissonances by appogiaturas. As a singer, she uses some didactic elements in some specific passages, such as the richly varied and ornamented phrases in soprano’s vocal passaggio notes (Bb/C/D), which seems to be intentionally set with technical purpose as a “practice repertoire” for young singers. She also seems to represent the words “Laudate” (praise) and “Alleluia” with the same purpose. In “Laudate” for example, each repetition happens around the same “passaggio” notes in the same melodic direction but different intervals, while the “Alleluia” could be used to practice upward and downward melismatic passages in different rhythmic patterns but around the same range as we can see in figure 3-2.
Through the bass, it is more clear her use of the musical A-B-A’ with the strophic form, which can be interpreted as exordium (verses 1-2/measures 1-11), narration (verses 3-6/measures 12-40), and peroration (Alleluia/measure 41-48). The peroration reinforces the Alleluia section as the psalm’s response while the bass in the “narration,” echoes most of the voice’s motive in the word “Laudate,” representing the music in Lord’s command.

The secular section (temporali) also contains a variety of work types and genres, including one ottave, one two-voiced madrigal, an aria, three ottave sopra la romanesca, an aria sopra la romanesca, and ten canzonette, three of which are set as duets. Her canzonette are all in triple meter almost like a dance (with the exception of “fresche aurette.”) with syncopated rhythms, guitar accompaniments, and popular songs influences, as we can see in “S’io men vò” and “Ch’amor sia nudo.”
It is clear the way Francesca displays her compositional style and technique through the songs, which are listed in the table of contents according to the first lines of the poems and their forms. In “Ardo infelice” for example, she uses dramatic melodic intervals, as minor second in the first phase of the music both in a voice skip and between bass (as we can see in the figure 3-4). She also uses intervals such as minor sixth, diminished fourth, tritons, and chromatic progressions to intensify mood of the text, bringing the suffering of the character in this song. In Figure 3-3 we can see the text, the translation of the poem, and with the scheme of rhymes.16

Ardo infelice: Poem in six-stanza eighth rime. The rhyme scheme is “a-b-a-b-a-b-c-c.”

Text:

Prima Parte
Ardo infelice, e palesar non tento
A chi l’alma mi strugge il foco mio
Ben si legge nel volto il mio tormento
E l’affanno del cor narra il desio.
Se talor parlo il fulminar pavento
Di quel guardo cruel che mi ferio
Che quanto ard’ il mio cor quanto sospira
Tanto teme di lui l’orgoglio, e l’ira.

Translation:

Part One
Unhappily I burn, and make no attempt to show
My fire to the one who consumes my soul;
My suffering can be clearly read on my face,
And my heart’s anguish tells of my desire.
If at times I speak up, I dread the lightning
From that cruel look that wounded me,
For as much as my heart burns and longs,
So it fears its pride, and its ire.

Seconda Parte
Dell’aspre pene mie nunzii dolenti
Alla bella mia morte invio sospiri
Ma che pro se per l’aria ’l par de’ venti
Sen vanno i messaggier de’ miei martiri.
Amarissime lacrime cocenti
Sparto per far pales’ i miei desiri
Ma nulla giova e ’l pianto mio non vede,
O per altra cagion mato lo volere.

Terza Parte
Talor lungi da lei soave speme
L’anima mi losinga e falla audace,
Che pri ch’io m’avvicini all’or estreme
Al bell’idolo mio dimanzi pace.
Così voci e lamenti accolo insieme
Per l’incendio scoprir che si mi sface,
Ma poscia palesand il mio dolore
Restaghiaccio le lingua, e fiamma il core.

Quarta Parte
Sovrane amanzi alla crudele, e bella
Tutto gelido vo tutto tremante,
E loquace tacer muta favella
Chieghion dolce pietae al bel sembiante.
Ma per fiero tenor della mia stella
Non sa scoprir il mio languir amante
E ’l foco palesar nell’alma accolo
Interrotto parlare, pallido volto.

Quinta Parte
Chizia norella a nuovo sole intorno
Volgo lo sguardo innamorato, e ’l piede
Dovunque si raggiro e fa seggiorno
Seguir le vaghe piante ogni’or mi vede.
Seco passa la notte, e seco il giorno
Ne però del mio foco ella s’avvede
E per mia dura irrepellibil sorte
D’uccidermi non sa chi mi di morte.

Sesta, e ultima Parte
Cara stelle d’amor come potete
Le vostre in me fisar vaghe pupille
E di quell’alto incendio onde m’ardete
Il veder non m’inte, e le faville.
Il cor voi mi ferite, e non vedete
Del cor le piaghe a mille segni, e mille,
Occhi belli, occhi rei, sapete tardi
Che colpa è il mio morir de’ vostri sguardi.

Part Two
As mournful messengers of my harsh sufferings
To my beautiful death I send my sighs;
But to what avail, if, like winds,
The messengers of my sufferings blow about in thin air.
Bitter burning tears
I shed to let my desires be known,
But nothing helps me, and she does not see my weeping,
Or believes it springs from some other cause.

Part Three
At times, away from her, sweet hope
Flatters my soul and makes it bold,
So that before I reach my final hour
I may ask my lovely idol for peace.
Thus words and laments I join together
To reveal the flames that so consume me,
But then, as it discloses my pain,
My tongue remains frozen, and my heart aching.

Part Four
Frequently, I go before that cruel beauty
All cold and shivering,
And my loquacious silence and silent speech
Ask her lovely countenance for sweet mercy.
But, because of my star’s proud demeanor,
My interrupted words, my pale face,
Don’t know how to reveal my lovelorn languishing,
Or how to show the fire that dwells in my soul.

Part Five
Like a new Clytie, following a new sun
I turn my enamored gaze, and my foot,
Wherever it may turn and linger,
Witnesses my following her lovely footsteps.
With her I [my gaze?] spend nights, and with her days,
But she is not aware of my fire,
And it is my hard immutable fate
That she who brings me death does not know she is killing me.

Part Six
Beloved stars of love, how can
You fix your lovely eyes on me
And of that great fire with which you burn me
See neither ashes nor sparks?
You wound my heart, and do not see
Its wounds, or their marks, thousand upon thousand;
Lovely eyes, culpable eyes, only too late
Will you know that your glances are to blame for my death.

Figure 4-3 Text and translation of “Ardo infelice” from Il primo libro delle musiche
Her madrigal a due voci (for soprano and bass), “Io mi distruggo,” has a lot of imitative passages between the soprano and the bass voice, characteristic of the madrigal form of that time. Besides that, the bass voice and the basso continuo are connected playing almost the same melodic line together during the entire music, as we can see in the figure 3-5.
Imitative Sections
Relation between Voice and Basso Continuo

Figure 4-5 Madrigal a due voci, “Io mi distruggo” from *Il primo libro delle musiche*

One of the biggest characteristics of Francesca’s music is her extensive use of strophic variations (as we can see in her aria sopra la romanesca “Dov’io credea le mie speranze vere) as well as her father.
The Italian school of singing and the way it has been taught suffered a lot of changes both in style and concepts since the beginning of the sixteenth century until the traditional “bel canto” in the nineteenth century. Pier Tosi (1647-1732), and the soprano Giambattista Mancini (1714-1800) wrote about vocal pedagogy and the esthetic of singing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries based on their own experiences as performers and professors, and the same happened to other voice teachers who taught their students according to their own understanding as performers.

The castrati were responsible for the first consistent “school of singing” developed in Italy during that time and some of them became not only famous performers but also renowned voice teachers. According to Sally Sanford, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries some essential elements of the art of singing, such as breath, and placement of the sound, were learned through “imitation,” since professors didn’t have as much information about vocal physiology as we have today. Professors with a established vocal technique would teach based on their own sensation of how the sound was produced and the students would have to incorporate that “feeling,” or sometimes they would try to approach the quality of their voices to the voice of their masters. There were also other aspects of this art that would be passed from professors to students through the development of some theoretical concepts.

The most important components that would differentiate a good singer from a bad one were their perfect intonation and clear articulation of the words, but in order to achieve these...
elements, it was essential for singers to master the sight-reading or “prima-vista” technique as soon as they started voice lessons. According to Tosi’s treatise from 1723, the sight-reading was one of the first steps that a professor would teach to a beginner voice student. This method called solmization, was developed by Guido d’Arezzo (c.995-after1033) and helped singers to learn chants in a short time through six names of notes: Ut, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La. The singers had to memorize these names to learn the sequence of whole-steps and half-steps in a scale that started from G to C. In this sequence of six notes (hexachord), the third and the fourth notes are separated by half-steps while the other notes by whole-steps, and they could be transposed starting from any other note. According to Tosi, a good singer had to be capable to hear the difference between a D# and an Eb, which would affect their capacity of singing not only long notes, but also short ones, and ornaments, in special, the “appoggiatura.” This aspect of singing was important for the performance of the early vocal repertoire, which includes Francesca Caccini’s songs. She used a lot of chromatic passages and dissonances in her music, which required a perfect intonation of the singer.

Sally Sanford also wrote about the concept of a good intonation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which was characterized by straight tones, with almost no vibration or no “vibrato.” For her, this sound style would help singers to improve their diction and also make the poem more understandable for the audience, mainly in dramatic passages and speech-like sections.

18 Pier Francesco Tosi, Opinione de' cantori antichi e moderni, o siena osservazione sopra il canto figurato (Bologna: 1723).

Mancini also wrote in his treatise about the causes of a bad intonation, which could happen either for natural or accidental reasons. The “natural cause” happens when a singer does not have “perfect” ears or auditory dyslexia, which would result in the wrong perception of the sound. In this case, Mancini says that a person would not be able to become a singer since there is no cure. The “accidental causes” were always temporary and could happen for different reasons, such as illness, hormonal issues, nervousness, anxiety, or problematic vocal technique. In this case, the professor should be aware to identify and help the student to fix the problem.

In addition to sight-reading, it was really important for a beginning singer to be accompanied by an instrument during vocal instructions in order to keep the intonation and to improve their aural skills. While learning solmization, voice students also had to start practicing how to sustain long notes and the “mesa de voce,” which involved a gradual “crescendo” and “diminuendo” while sustaining a single note. Only when this technique was mastered, could they start vocalizing in three different opened vowels: “A” (a), E (è), and O (ò) adding other vocal ornaments, as the “trillo”

During the sixteenth century, voice teachers were responsible for helping students to develop their vocal skills according to the particularity of each one, instead of adapting their voices to fit a specific opera role or a pre-existing repertoire. The progress of a student also depended on his commitment. For this reason, Tosi wrote in his treatise some advice both to masters and their pupils, which reflected the vocal pedagogy of that time and how those professors and students would behave in order to succeed in their career, including Francesca Caccini who assumed an important role in the seventeenth century as a voice teacher in the

Medici Court and also developed her “Il primo libro” as a pedagogic material for singers along to all the earlier concepts recorded by Tosi.

For Tosi, a professor should never let their students sing while holding the score in front of their face, otherwise it would make them hold their voice, and hide themself. Confidence was considered the biggest virtue of a singer, which allows them to support their breath when singing long or short musical phrases, without creating a flutter. In order to develop confidence and not arrogance in a student, a professor should encourage him to perform in front of important people since the beginning of his studies. 21

Tosi also suggests that a professor should introduce sacred repertoire to their pupils, since it would help them lose some dramatic habits of interpretation originated from secular repertoire, which was considered too feminine. Sacred songs were more “masculine” and less dramatic, most of time in Latin, which demanded good diction and articulation of the words. The recitativo also had to be sung with energy, but usually with no affection. The aria should not be “over interpreted,” avoiding changes in the original tempo. Successively, the student should also start studying cantatas and motets, so they could figure out the difference between both styles. Finally, even when a student shows satisfactory improvement, his professor could not let him start performing for an audience without a second opinion from someone more experienced, who would correct details that sometimes the professor could not see. 22

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21 Non gli permetta mai cantando di tener la carta di musica sul volto, acciò non impedisca il suono alla sua voce, nè lo renda timido. Assuefaccia lo scolaro a cantar sovente in presenza di persone riguardevoli, e per nascità, e per inteligenza di professione, affinchè perdendo a poco a poco ogni timore diventi ardito, ma non arrogante. L’ardire è il primogenitor della fortuna, e in un cantore diventa merito. All’incontro chi teme è infelicissimo: opressa dalla difficoltà del respiro gli trema sempre la voce; è necessitate ad ogni nota di perder il tempo per inghiottire; pena per non poter condur seco la sua abilità fuor di casa, disgusta chi lo sento; e rovina talmente le composizioni, che non si conoscono più per quelle che sono. (TOSI, 1723, p.37).

22 […] dovrà immediatamente introdurlo allo studio dell’arie acclesiastiche, in cui bisogna lasciar da
The sixth chapter of Tosi’s treatise is entirely dedicated to advising students, almost like a book of “rules” that would lead them to succeed in their career. For him, it is important for singers to have discipline and moral virtues, avoiding disorders or violent activities, which would harm their voices. A good student is not the one who practice only using the voice, but also using their brain. It means that voice students should always practice at home and be auto-critic enough to correct themselves, according to the instruction of their teachers. In this case, he suggested the use of a mirror, so they could see their face and body while practicing at home, preventing convulsive movements that would happen while they are singing.

He stresses that the best time to practice would be early in the morning and the duration of study depends of each singer, but that one-hour per day was not enough even for those who had already mastered their vocal technique. Both Tosi and Mancini are not clear about how long a student should practice per day, but they warn them to be careful and not over sing otherwise they can injure their voices.

Un’ora di applicazione al giorno non basta nè meno a chi ha pronte tutte le potenze dell’anima; consideri dunque il maestro quanto tempo debba impiegare per chi d’eguale protezza non le possiede, e quando ne chiegga l’obbligo di adattarsi alla capacità di chi studia. (TOSI, 1723, p. 39).

parte ogni vezzo teatrale, e femminile, e cantar da Uomo; perciò lo provvederà di vari motetti naturali, nobilmente vaghi, misti d’allegro, e di patetico, adattati all’abilità scoperta in lui, e proseguire con frequenti lezioni a farglieli imparar sì, che con franchezza, e spirit li possegga. Nel medesimo tempo procurerà, che le parole sieno ben pronunziante, e meglio intese; che i recitative sieno espressi con forza, e sostenuti senza affettazione; che le arie non manchino nè di tempo, nè di qualche principio de gustoso artificio; e soprattutto, che i finali de'motetti sieno eseguiti da'passaggi distaccati, intonati, e veloci. Successivamente g'insinugerà quel metodo, che al gusto delle cantate richiedesi, affinchè coll'esercizio ei scopra la differenza, che verte fra l'uno, e l'altro stile. Contento que sia il maestro del profitto dello scolaro non s’immaginasse mai di farlo sentire in pubblico se prima non ode il savio di quegli uomini, che sanno più cantare, che adulare, poichè non solo sceglieranno quelle camposizioni più proprie a fargli onore, ma lo correggeranno anche di que'difetti, e forse de quegli errori, che dall'ommissione, a dall'ignoranza dell'istruttore non erano stati emendati, a conosciuti. (TOSI, 1723, p. 48).
In order to have good diction for the words, it was essential for singers to be literate. It means also that they should learn as many languages as possible and know the meaning of each word they are singing, specifically the Latin, which had to be sung correctly in churches.

The singers should also learn counterpoint and how to play an instrument, so they could accompany themselves while singing and it would also reduce the chance of musical mistakes such as bad use of ornaments or wrong melodic lines. For Tosi, the ornaments were an interpretative element and the performer must not depend on the composer to add this section in the music, which according to him was a characteristic of female musicians.

In order to improve their performances and to learn more about ornamentation, the students should always observe the best singers as a “model.” He says that a good student would always bring their scores to concerts and take notes on ornaments and improvisations performed by excellent musicians. In the beginning, he advises these students to try to copy those performers until they learn exactly what should be done, but once they become professionals they must never imitate but create as consequence of their knowledge and experiences. Even students should never imitate other professional singers without adding new elements to their performances, since it would destroy their creativity.

Singers must always pay attention to do not acquire that common fault, imitating too closely what they see and hear; so instead of improving their natural gifts, they will often lose them. However, I do not mean to exclude imitation, because by imitating the perfect

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24 Se dissi che un cantante non deve più copiare, ora replica colla ragione apresso: il copiare è da scolare, e l’inventar ee da maestro. (TOSI, 1723, p. 97).
in music, using sane judgment and modifications suitable to one’s own particular talent, one perfect himself.25

Based on Tosi’s and Mancini’s treatises, we can understand how the vocal pedagogy was approached by professors and students in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries and conclude that the role of a master was not only correct the natural or temporary vocal issues acquired during the learning process of their pupils, but they should also support these students to develop their vocal qualities and musical identity based on their individuality. These elements would be essential to differentiate these students from other singers in a professional career. In general these concepts also help us to understand some of the didactic components that would had affected Francesca Caccini teaching and the way she used her *Il primo libro delle musiche* as a pedagogic source for other singer. (1647-1732), and the soprano Giambatista Mancini (1714-1800). They wrote about vocal pedagogy and the esthetic of singing in the XVII and XVIII centuries based on them own experiences as singers and the same happened to other voice teachers who taught their students according to them own knowledge as performers.

Sanford says that the art of singing in the XVII and XVIII centuries were learned through “imitation,” sinde the vocal teachers didn’t have a as much information about vocal physiology and the castrates were responsible for the first consistent “school of singing” which developed in Italy during that time.

In a letter to Buonaroti from Genoa, Fancesca Caccini showed a strong commitment to a life of study when she says: “Life would leave me before the desire to study and the passion I have always brought to virtue, because this is worth more than any treasure or fame.” Her passion for knowledge influenced her work as teacher and also made of her the court most highly paid musician by 1614. Evidence of her teaching skills can be found in a memo from 1623, which reports to the court the progress of some of her students. It includes Emilia Grazi, Caterina di Domenico, Lucrecia di Battista il Mancino, Suora Maria Vittoria Frescobaldi, the daughters of Curtio Picchena and the physician Lorenzo Parigi. She also prepared the ladies, and the Medici children for performances at the women’s court and for her, teaching was a way she found to utilize her knowledge. In a letter to Andrea Cioli dated of March 1619, she points her responsibility for a studio of young female musicians for the Granducato’s service while she sick:

My most respected patron and lord,

Because of my, many labors in recent days I am in bed with a little medicine to rest, and therefore I could no reply to you this morning. Now I tell you that it is not possible that I could even think of composing and teaching to these girls music for the seventy lines of poetry you have sent, in only the three days between today and Saturday because there girls and I, we are tired from having had to learn the Office for Holy Week in only two weeks, and the half hour of music to sing in the archduchess’s chapel for Feast of the Holy Sacrament, which took me two months to teach them, because these are little girls that do not yet sing from parts and they learn by force of study and practice. I am greatly
mortified that I can not show myself as ready to serve my most serene patrons in this matter as I have been in all others and willingly, and, if Sr. Ottavio Rinuccini had given at least 10 days’ advance notice we would have been able to strain ourselves, and our not doing it is not because we cannot endure the effort but for the shortness of time, and the impossibility of our few forces. For this reason I return the words to you and beg you to explain vividly to her/his Highness because I am so sure of the pieta and benevolence of my serene patrons that I don’t doubt at all that I will be excused and pitied, because in their service I will never look at any sort of labor as effort, and I have no other desire but to serve well and promptly and with that end I bow to you, begging you anew to excuse and help me with her/his Highness and I thank you so much for the good office you have done me with this service that I press on you: I will remain very obliged to you for it, and because you are my protector I am of good hope and again I urge it on you, praying Our Lord to grant your every desired happiness. From home 25 March 1619.

I bow to your wife, and remind her that I am her very devoted servant,

Your ever very obliged servant,

Francesca Caccini ne’ Signorini Malaspina

Most of Francesca’s music was composed for these girls as a pedagogic material in order to practice modes, different harmonies, ornaments and “passaggi.” Francesca had completely authority over them and her reputation as teacher or “maestrina” depended of their progress. For that reason she worked hard in order to musically prepare these girls and also to protect her studio from over-work or from an under-rehearsed performance.

Il Primo libro is an example of her commitment to her studies and to her pupil. It is considered a big book of music (ninety-nine pages) and the way she organized all the songs may suggest some technical and interpretative elements that she wanted to teach. The fact that the order of the songs in the table (tavola) does not match the order of the songs in the book could be an evidence that she expected the book to be used by other aspiring singers or by them professors, since the tavola printed in the last page of the book identifies each song by genre grouped into nineteen spirituali (sacred) and seven temporali (secular) and this division probably facilitated her work as professor according to the venues where she taught, which could be in Florence’s convents or in the women’s court.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Song’s Title</th>
<th>Genre According to Print</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chi è costei, che qual sorgente aurora</td>
<td>Sonnet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Che fai, misero core, ecco ch’in croce</td>
<td>Sonnet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ardo infelice, a palesar non tento</td>
<td>Ottave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Maria, dolce Maria</td>
<td>Madrigal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nel camino aspro, et erto</td>
<td>Madrigal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6-1 Francesca Caccini, Il primo libro delle musiche, távola
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pietà, mercede aita</th>
<th>Madrigal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ferma, Signore, arresta</td>
<td>Madrigal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ecco, ch’io verso il sangue</td>
<td>Aria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Deh, chi già mai potrà, Vergine bella</td>
<td>Ottave romanesca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nube gentil che di lucente velo</td>
<td>Ottave sopra la romanesca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Io mi distruggo, et ardo</td>
<td>Madrigal for 2 voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lasciatemi qui solo</td>
<td>Aria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>O che nuovo stupor mirate intorno</td>
<td>Aria allegra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Su le piume de’ venti</td>
<td>Aria allegra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Giunto è’l di, che dovea’l cielo</td>
<td>Aria allegra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Io veggio i campi verdeggiar fecondi</td>
<td>Ottave sopra la romanesca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>La pastorella mia</td>
<td>Ottave sopra la romanesca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Rendi alle mie speranze Il verde, e i fiori</td>
<td>Ottave sopra la romanesca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Dove io credea le mie speranze verde</td>
<td>Sopra la romanesca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Laudate Dominum</td>
<td>Motet</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Haec dies</td>
<td>Motet</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Regina Caeli laetare</td>
<td>Motet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Adorate Dominum</td>
<td>Motet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Beate Sebastiane</td>
<td>Motet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Te lucis ante terminorum</td>
<td>Hymn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Jesu corona virginum</td>
<td>Hymn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>S’io men Von</td>
<td>Canzonatta for 2 voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Non so se quel sorriso</td>
<td>Canzonatta</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Chi desia di saper che cosa è Amore</td>
<td>Canzonatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Che t’ho fatt’io?</td>
<td>Canzonatta</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>O vive rose</td>
<td>Canzonatta for 2 voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Se muove a giurar fede</td>
<td>Canzonatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Ch’Amor sia nudo, e pur com l’ali al tergo</td>
<td>Canzonatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>French’aurette</td>
<td>Canzonatta for 2 voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Dispiegate</td>
<td>Canzonatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>O chiome belle</td>
<td>Canzonatta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 Francesca Caccini, Il primo libro delle musiche, order of the songs in the book

Another important fact is that it the big number of evidences that Caccini worked really hard to have her Il Primo Libro published. Besides that, it is easy to find documents referring to her performances of most of these songs. For many musicologists it could mean that she wanted to spread her technic to other singers instead of creating a book for her own use as performer. This interpretation can be reinforced by some documents, which refers to this book as part of a court cultural program to prepare the Tuscan people for an event of Cosimo II’s death, which made this publication strongly encouraged by the court. Because of the big number of composers trying to achieve success during that time, only important compositions could be published and they needed the court’s approval. Most of these works were about Tuscan subjects or associated with the Medici court.

When we open Il Primo libro, one of the first things we can see roughly midway of the book is that the songs seem to have many more notes than words, which does not occur in the end of the book with a big set of strophic songs. Such “organization” was pointed by Cristoforo Bronzini as a “feminine excess.” But considering her pedagogic skills, it would be probably a way she found to work different sing styles through these songs, focusing in virtuosic passages

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and ornaments in the first half and the speech-like melodies through the last songs, which were characterized by long strophic variations.

The text or song titles of this collection are connected almost like a self-reflexive book. Titles such as “Che fai?” (What are you doing?) and “Ardo” (I burn) may suggest some kind of question and answer. It also happens between text and harmony, which some times play with each other reinforcing or contradicting the meaning of the words or the real character’s feeling behind them. It happens, for example, in the opening section of the song “Non so” (I don’t know) which shows a really predictable cadence (V-I) while the text express doubt.

According to Suzanne Cusick, one of the biggest examples of this connection between different songs happens in “Chi è costei?” and “Che fai?” In the first song, the melody is rich in movement, which according to Cusick, was one of the characteristic of the women defended during that time. “Chi è costei?” is about the Virgin of the Assumption moving miraculously through the paradise, which used to be considered a masculine space. In this song the voice is active, with a lot of “movement” and the bass line represents the motion of the character through transpositions. Contrasting the women’s idea, “Che fai?” has a static melodic line, which would represent the fixed characteristic of the masculine gender. This song is about the crucified Christ characterized by an unmoving vocal line full of breath interruptions, and with a stable harmony. While in the first song we have Christ’s mother movability, rich in notes and virtuosic passages, in the second one we have a tormented Christ with speech-like vocal line, both oppositely connected as an example of different genders represented by different musical elements. These contrasting elements would help singers to develop their interpretative skills in order to

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differentiate their performances of each song based on the gender of the character that they should represent.

These songs can be also used as a pedagogic material to work different aspects of vocal technic and ornamentation. The tremolo or “trillo,” for example, falls on the top of notes of various durations and they are identified by the abbreviation “tri.” On longer sustained notes, it is always appropriated the use of “Caccini’s trillo” with a measured “accelerando.” In general, this ornament falls on shorter notes, quarter, and eighth notes, often in dotted rhythms, and in several instances on sixteenth notes, often in the middle of elaborated roulades and passages. In these last extreme instances the singer will let alone a measured accelerando. In final supertonic-tonic cadences the “trillo” will be omitted even considered one of the most obvious places for its use. In this case, the performer should add this ornament, even if there is no symbol for that in the score.

In the first stanza of “Ardo infelice,” for example, she adds the trillo in the second note, emphasizing the title of the song. She also uses the trillo in the words “foco” (fire), and tormento (torment). She also suggests this ornament at least three more time in this section in order to accentuate the affection of the poem, but in the end of this first stanza, the word “ira” (anger) is represented by two long notes, which even with no ornament suggested, the performer usually would have to add a “trillo” or a “gruppo” before the last one.
Figure 6-2 “Ardo infelice” from *Il primo libro delle musiche* (example 1)

Figure 6-3 “Ardo infelice” from *Il primo libro delle musiche* (example 2)
The melodic lines are organized almost spoken-like with some doted notes and the “key words” are represented by melismatic passages full of ornaments. The range of the song, the vowels in the melismas and ornaments, and the tempo of the music, help the performer to understand some technical elements in especial the use of the “trill” and how it should be sang. In this way, it would be possible for students to practice a specific passage almost as a “vocalize exercise”, in which they would learn how to improve their vocal technic and musical style.

In the begging of “Maria, dolce Maria” she suggests a trillo in the words “dolce” and “Maria” emphasizing the character of the text and its adjective and in the word “canto,” she wrote a virtuosi passage with tremolos and short “gruppo.” This last one was not suggested with a symbol on the top of the note, but she wrote this ornament in the music starting from different notes, once again, that could be used as a vocalize with quick upward and downward passages and tremolos. To represent the trillo she not only wrote the abbreviation “tri” on the top of the ornament in the music and to help even more the performer, she set most of the melismatic sections to be sang with the vowel “a,” which according to Tosi is the best vowel to practice ornaments and quick passages.
Most of these repertoires were also very efficient to help singers to improve their breath control. Tosi, for example, didn’t explain the breath’s physiology in his treated, but he wrote some rules of when these breaths should happen in order to guarantee a good musical phrase and style. These rules can also be applied for Francesca’s il primo libro and in some of these songs she used the breath as an interpretative element to emphasize both physical and psychological conditions of the character, as in “Ardo infelice” and “Che fai.” The way she set the phrases of these songs helped the performers to develop not only their musical style, but also their technic with long melismatic phrases which requires a good breath control and knowledge of some rules to avoid interruptions of the musical phrase, which would affect the inflexion of the poem.

One of the most important rules is to avoid breaths while singing the same word. This rule can only be broken if the performer has to sing a long musical phrases in the same word,
which is impossible to finish without taking another breath. In this case, the performer needs to respect the musical phrase and the harmony, identifying the most appropriate place to break the word. In the end of the sixth stanza of Ardo Infelice, for example, she finishes the song with a long melismatic phrase in the word “vostri.” This phrase happens in the syllable “vo” and after around three measures the word concludes with “stri.”

Another element that can help singers to avoid incorrect breath is saving air instead of releasing it all during the sing. It can be reached by chest expansion through the entire musical phrase, which is called breath support and it is responsible for a good musical phrase, intonation, and diction. Once the singer learns this technic, he will be able to sing an entire long phrase without taking too long to recover himself for the next breath.

Usually this inhalation should happen during musical pauses or after a long note, but in the absence of both, the singer will have to choose a spot after a downbeat note to breathe and never after an upbeat. Singers also have to avoid breathing after the last note of a measure when the musical phrase is connected to the downbeat of the next one, except during quick upward or downward triplets, they can breathe after the last note. Another mistake would happen if a breath occurs between a trillo and the next note. In the end of the duet “Io mi distrugo,” the soprano has
a long melodic line full of trillos, and the performer needs to be careful to don’t breathe between the ornaments. In this example, the most appropriated place to take a breath would be between one of the sequences of notes that compose the melody, but avoiding any break of the melodic line. She also placed a quick pause probably to help the performer. These melodies were very important to teach performers how to acquire a good breath support, since once they can sing well this phrase, they will be able to perform the rest of the music and other melismatic repertoires. The figure 6-6 shows the most appropriated place to breathe in the section discussed before.

Figure 6-6 “Io mi distrugo” from *Il primo libro delle musiche*

If a short note is connected to a long one, the singer should breathe before the short one. In case of short repeated pauses (like a pattern), the singer would have to choose for one or two of them to take a breath. In case of long sustained note with no pause, the singer can breathe before this note, or if it happens in the last syllable of a word, the singer can breathe before the
first syllable. In “Veggio campi verdeggiar,” for example, the singer would have to breathe before “d’intorno.”

Figure 6-7 “Veggio campi verdeggiar” from *Il primo libro delle musiche*

Francesca’s *Il Primo Libro* also helped performers with their interpretative skills. In order to pass to the audience the emotion and the meaning of the poetry the singer has to be attempt to the diction of the words, which needs to be as understandable as possible. The Italian school of singing is mostly based on the “speak,” which means that singers should always try to approach their sing to their speak characteristics: “Si canta come si parla” or “you sing as you speak.” Based on that, the vowels are the result of changes that the vocal system applies in the sound, which provides to each vowel a different characteristic. Besides that, the timber of each vowel can also be changed as an interpretative element. An “a” for example, can have a different sound if sang to express anger or love, but an “a” should always be clear as an “a” and can’t sound like any other vowel.
Francesca used a lot of interpretative elements in her *Il primo libro*, always relating the music with the poetry and the psychological condition of the character. “Ardo infelice,” for example represents the manifestation of an internal pain, characteristic of female gender. This song is about a person (probably a woman) who laments her incapacity of express desire for her beloved, which some theorists would call of “anxiety of authorship into anxieties of voice” symbolized by the eloquence of silence, where the performer has to interpret the quiet using the language of the body.

In vocal repertoire, these moments would have to be performed not only through facial expressions, but also with the voice. In a lament, for example, a performer usually would have to approach the singing voice to the speak-like voice in order to make the words more clear and also to bring more “humanity” to the music, such as breathlessness, sighs, and interrupted speech, which makes the psychological pain more real to the audience. Usually a singer can use these elements to connect the music and the meaning of the words, but sometimes in an “ironic” situation, they can be used to express the real feeling of the character, even if the text shows an opposite idea.

To represent the breathlessness, Francesca sets some rests interrupting the vocal lines mainly in dramatic and declamatory passages. Sometimes these moments are not as clear in the musical notation, but through the text and the melody, she invites the performer to interrupt the music with sighs. These sections are usually freer, which allows the performer to improvise according to their expressivity.

In “Ardo infelice” one of these moments happen in a medium vocal register, always around “G,” which helps the singers to keep the purity of vowels and to explore the articulation of the words. Sometimes the melody goes upwards (usually to a note that is not in the mode)
representing some explosive moments of courage of the character, but always followed by downwards lines (back to the tonic or bellow) indicating her lack of bravery. In this example the most enthusiastic moment happens in “B,” which vocally is not the highest note of the music, but it brings out a different bright mood to this section. This song was set around “g minor” (hypodorian mode), always used to represent sadness or piety, which facilities the interpretation of breathlessness passages reinforcing the lack of energy in the music. The medium/low range of this song also helps the singer with the speak-like style in dramatic sections.

Figure 6-8 “Ardo infelice” from *Il primo libro delle musiche* (example 4)

If in “Ardo infelice” the interpreter has to perform the anxiety of the character, in the next song Francesca teaches how to control this feeling. In “Maria, dolce Maria” the vocal lines and harmony are more agitated than the previous song, but at the same time the performer can not let this anxiety to affect his vocal technic. These ecstasy moments come through ornamented lines, expanding the intervallic space every time the name of Christ’s mother, “Maria,” is announced.
Although these agitated lines can make it harder for the listener to understand the text, it emphasizes the mood of the music through rich melodic sequences and tight motivic relationship between the voice and the bass.

The music also suggests the performer to add a certain “grace” every time the text brings some of Maria’s attributes or actions, as in the figure 6-4 with the words “soave” or gentle, “sacro” or consecrated, and “imparadis’il core” or enraptures my heart. In the word “canto” (sing), Francesca uses a long virtuosi phrase marked with “trillos” both in the beginning and in the end. This is one of the most difficult passages of this madrigal, which the performer should have a great breath support and self control to balance the emotion of the music with his own emotion. This section is characterized by a small upward progression followed by a trillo on Bb and B natural, which comes back to F, when the melody starts another small sequences of notes, ending with a trillo on B and finally C.

Figure 6-9 “Maria, dolce Maria” from *Il primo libro delle musiche* (example 2)
7 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis has been to bring attention to Francesca Caccini’s musical characteristics, not only as a composer and performer, but also focusing on her pedagogic role during 1600s and how *Il primo libro delle musiche* represented her responsibility for teaching the art of singing to other promising vocal students.

Through her musical history we can conclude that she had an important role in the Medici court, starting as a performer, and later becoming a composer and vocal teacher. All her attributes made her respected by the court and by other musicians and intellectuals of that time (as we could see in some letters). This professional respect for women was not common in the 1600’s sexiest society, when while men were responsible for intellectual developments and possessor of power, women were only servants of their husbands.

Even facing all those difficulties due her gender, Francesca was supported by the court, which made the publication of her *Il primo libro delle musiche* possible. This support also proves that the court was strongly interest in this collection, and one of the reasons is that this book would help other singer improving their vocal skills. This is the first greatest evidence that connects this book to a pedagogic material.

The second one is the way these songs were organized in this volume. They were divided by secular and sacred in the “Tavola,” or table of contents, which does not match their actual order in the collection, but would help with the identification the their themes. Considering that this book was a musical pedagogic resource to other women, the first songs (following the actual order) introduce this work not only as a vocal guide to develop vocal technique, but they also teach the “reader” how they can perform different characters in diverse psychological conditions.
Each song from *Il primo libro* requires a different mood, such as desire, loss, anguish, ecstasy, or tranquility, and the singers would have to be able to perform not only a female role, such as the movable virgin Mary in “Chie è costei,” but they also would have to represent the masculine desperate breath of Jesus Christ in “Che fai.” All these elements were essential to help vocal students liberate their voices and their expressivity, contradicting the concept of how a woman should behave according to the society of that time.

In *Il primo libro*, Francesca developed different songs which help even contemporary singers to improve them breath-control, range, pitch, musical form, improvisation, and coordination for self performances where the singer also have to play the accompaniment. Her “romanesca” style, for example, helped musicians to improvise and to create narrative structures with such personalities and at the same time faithful to her musical style.

Comparing Francesca’s *Il primo libro* with her father’s *Le nuove musiche*, we could also identify some important vocal elements and ornaments that would be adequate to her songs, such as the use of the “trillo” and the “gruppo” (the most requested ornaments in her collection).

Finally, after general analyses of Francesca’s collection, we can conclude that this work was one of the most important survived compositions of vocal works from the XVII century. In additional to the pedagogic purpose of this volume, it also reflects the great compositional style that was blooming in Florence during that time. Her father was one of the biggest personalities of this new musical Florentine style, characterized by the monody, pure declamatory text, and long strophic variations.

In general, Francesca followed her father’s compositional steps, but always with a strong musical personality, which brought her reputation. She influenced not only other composers, but also other singers and vocal teachers of her time and contemporaries. Her music applying an
important role into the development of the traditional Italian school of singing, becoming a basic step toward the development of the romantic “bel canto.”
REFERENCES


