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“A Free and Knightly Art”: Monteverdi’s Toccata for Orfeo and the Neo-Chivalric Ideal in Early Seventeenth-Century Italy

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PART ONE

I. Monteverdi’s Instructions

A performance of Monteverdi’s Orfeo usually commences with the Toccata that Monteverdi presents as the first musical number of his published score of 1609: a refulgent fanfare that kicks off with a pumping bass to which are added funkily syncopated da-da-da-da das in the middle, triadic summonses, and swirling flourishes at the top. I always hear it as a swaggering announcement of Monteverdi’s taking possession not only of the new musico-dramatic form of opera, but of modern music itself, for Orfeo is the first of a number of great works in which Monteverdi seems to cast down the gauntlet to four centuries of musical posterity with the challenge “here are some of the things that the new music can do – now run with them.”
But what exactly is Monteverdi’s Toccata? The designations of the five parts in the score (Basso, Vulgano, Alto e Basso, Quinta, Clarino) indicate, as we shall see, that the Toccata is intended for the standard five-part military-ceremonial trumpet band that was to be found in armies, cities and courts throughout Europe at this date.\(^1\) But although the score details five parts, the list of instruments for the opera only specifies four trumpets: “Un Clarino, con tre trombe sordine.” (A Clarino, with three muted trumpets - clarino refers to the high register in which the trumpet plays, which demanded a specific set of skills, not to a distinct instrument). The trumpets play nowhere else in the opera (trumpets were not considered to be “musical” instruments at this date) so must be listed for the Toccata alone.

Ingenious explanations have been given for the missing trumpet part in the instrumental listing. The trumpet historian Peter Downey believes that “con tre trombe sordine” is a misprint for “con [qua]tref[o] trombe sordine” or "un Clarino[,] [qua]tref[o] trombe sordine”.\(^2\) In the *Cambridge Opera Handbook* to *Orfeo* Jane Glover argues that the two lower pedal parts were probably played on trombones, although this would have required only clarino and two trumpets, and there is no evidence that trombones ever mixed with trumpet ensembles of this period.\(^3\) In *The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi* Joachim Steinhauser seems to accept Glover’s suggestion as a given when he writes that “muted trumpets and trombones are reserved for the ceremonial Toccata”, although there is no

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1. Peter Downey suggests that style was primarily found in the Holy Roman Empire, Italy (where the style originated, perhaps with borrowings from Burgundy), Scandinavia and the German-speaking Baltic States. Personal email communication, 14.08.2018.
reference anywhere to the trombones being muted, and they are clearly identified as
accompanying the Act III and IV choruses of Infernal Spirits.  
Caldwell Titcomb attempted
to explain the anomaly by arguing that, since kettledrums were invariably a component of a
courtly trumpet ensemble, the basso part for the Toccata would have been allocated to the
drummer. 
Although he was right about the presence of drums, which became a standard
component of the military and ceremonial trumpet band from the mid-fifteenth century, it
must be questionable whether a tuned kettledrum alone could provide sufficient harmonic
grounding for the drone-like bottom of the ensemble, and it is probable that the drums
followed the more punchy quinta or alto e basso parts.

I think it most likely that the listing of only four trumpets is simply a mistake, like the
different quantifications of trombones elsewhere in the score. But Monteverdi’s full
instruction for playing the Toccata seems to offer us a simpler explanation that has been
curiously ignored by these scholars. He writes “Toccata che si suona avanti il levar de la tela
tre volte con tutti li stromenti, & si fa un Tuono più alto volendo sonar le trombe con le
sordine.” (Toccata which is played three times before the raising of the curtain with all the
instruments, and it makes it one tone higher if wishing to sound [the] trumpets with [the]
mutes. 
) So if this indicates that all of the orchestral instruments should play the Toccata, all
five parts would clearly be covered. But the instruction is ambiguous: does Monteverdi mean
by the conditional construction that it is the trumpets that are optional, or the mutes? Since in
the instrumental listing the trumpets are detailed as being muted, this would suggest that it’s
the trumpets (with their mutes) that are optional here, rather than the mutes. But Monteverdi

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5 Caldwell Titcomb, “Baroque Court and Military Trumpets and Kettledrums: Technique and Music”,
7 I have bracketed the definite article here since in English the definite article would imply reference to specific
trumpets with specific mutes that exist (i.e., as listed with the instruments for the opera), rather than just any old
trumpets or mutes in general. The definite article does not imply this distinction in Italian.
may have simply been listing the instruments as they were played, rather than prescribing how they should be played (a distinction that seems to occur throughout the score, when Monteverdi sometimes writes performance instructions in the past tense, and sometimes in the present, implying a distinction between description and prescription ⑧).

But if it is the trumpets that are optional, why would Monteverdi suggest that his standard trumpet-band fanfare, such as we know to have routinely been played before theatrical performances in Mantua and elsewhere, can be played without trumpets? And must not “all the instruments” surely include the trumpets? In this discussion of Monteverdi’s Toccata I will deploy these, and some of the other puzzles it presents, as means of investigating how Monteverdi’s incorporation of a traditional military-ceremonial trumpet fanfare that harks back to the age of medieval chivalry in the score for his decisive contribution to the distinctly modern form of opera reflects two aspects of the self-definition of the Italian ruling classes in the era of post-Renaissance political retrenchment that is designated by Italian historians as “refeudalisation”.

II. Italian Blowing-at-Table

Let us start by assuming that Monteverdi’s Toccata is what it looks like: a five-part trumpet fanfare. Writing in the Cambridge Opera Handbook for Orfeo, John Whenham describes the Toccata as “a series of flourishes which may be derived from authentic military signals”, ⑨ and many commentators observe that the quinta and alto e basso parts of the fanfare indeed sound like the army trumpet calls that once issued commands to troops on and off the battlefield. ⑩ But in his study of the musical topics associated with military signalling,

Raymond Monelle argued for caution about the military signalling attribution in the *Orfeo Toccata*, suggesting that the tradition of the “improvised ensemble of trumpets” exemplified by the Toccata, represented by the civic and palace trumpet bands that were to be found in virtually every Renaissance city and court, needs to be distinguished from that of military signalling.\(^{11}\) This distinction does sometimes seem to have been made. When Henri of Valois stopped in Venice *en route* from Poland to France to claim his throne as King Henri III of France in 1574, the Venetians pushed out the boat (literally and figuratively) for the visiting dignitary, calling for musicians from outside Venice to make up numbers. The capitano of Padua had orders to send to Venice all of that city’s trumpeters and drummers, but it was made clear that musically trained trumpeters, not military signallers, were required.\(^{12}\) At the imperial court in Vienna fifteen trumpeters were employed between 1566-77, four of whom were designated as “*musikalisch*”, to distinguish them from field trumpeters.\(^{13}\) But more often trumpeters were not included with musicians in court records at all.\(^{14}\) The musicians listed variously in the Gonzaga court accounts for 1606-1608, who would largely have constituted Monteverdi’s ensemble for *Orfeo*, included five wind players; a cornettist and trombonist are specified, but only one trumpeter, identified as a clarino player, a skill for which there was no demand on the battlefield since military signallers used only the lower registers.\(^{15}\) The 1592 payroll lists 22-25 musicians, but none of them are trumpet

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13 Tarr, *The Trumpet*, 149. A similar distinction was made at the Swedish court in 1587, where three trumpeters were described as *musicus* to distinguish them from field trumpeters. See Ardis Grosjean, “The Sad but Musical End of Trumpeter Carsten Mistleff, or Hard Times in Stockholm in the 1590s,” *Historic Brass Society Journal* 12 (2000): 255-258 (p. 256).
14 See Howard Mayer Brown, *Sixteenth-Century Instrumentation: The Music for the Florentine Intermedii*, (Dallas: American Institute of Musicology, 1973), 58. Warren Kirkendale finds that, apart from the pre-eminent “musical” trumpeter of the day Girolamo Fantini, the administrative accounts for the grand duke of Tuscany in the early seventeenth century do not record any trumpeters at all. They were probably detailed in the state’s military accounts. Warren Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians in Florence during the Principate of the Medici* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1993), 43.
players, although we know there to have been a ducal trumpet band at this date.\textsuperscript{16} Other documented references to court wind bands in the ducal centres of Mantua and Casale, two by Monteverdi himself, refer only to mixed wind bands rather than trumpet bands.\textsuperscript{17} Monteverdi indicates the nature of this mixed wind ensemble repertory when, in a letter of 1611 suggesting a multi-instrumental player to join Prince Francesco Gonzaga’s wind band at the court in Casale, he tells us that the prince liked to have his wind band play “in the chambers and in church, along the streets and on the fortresses, now madrigals, now chansons, now airs, and now dances”, a repertory that would have excluded trumpeters of the day.\textsuperscript{18}

Trumpeters, it seems, were not considered to be part of the court \textit{capella}. They were either detailed separately, or, more tellingly, they were listed in army accounts instead. The complete surviving accounts for the Duchy of Mantua for the year 1577 show two different entries related to trumpets. Amongst the military costs of the permanent garrison to defend the city are two trumpeters, who would certainly have been signallers.\textsuperscript{19} Another entry refers to “il dazio delle trombe”: the “trumpet duty”.\textsuperscript{20} The editor of the accounts suggests that this was a tax to pay for the civic trumpet band, and a record of 1589 indeed refers to payments

\begin{quote}
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\item[\textsuperscript{16}] Parisi, \textit{Ducal Patronage of Music in Mantua, 1587-1627}, 23. For ducal trumpet band see below fn. 33.
\item[\textsuperscript{17}] In a 1609 letter from Cremona, Monteverdi discusses an ensemble of cornett and trombone players, indicating that the father and two sons “play all the wind instruments”, \textit{The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi}, trans. and ed. Denis Stevens, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 64-5. In another letter of 1611 Monteverdi mentions finding a fifth player for Prince Francesco Gonzaga's wind band in Casale, to play "recorder, cornetto, trombone, flute and bassoon." \textit{The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi}, 81.
\item[\textsuperscript{18}] \textit{The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi}, 81.
\item[\textsuperscript{19}] Aldo de Maddalena, \textit{Le finanze del ducato di Mantova all’epoca di Guglielmo Gonzaga}, 125. The state of Mantua-Monferrato did not maintain a professional standing army at this date - troops would have been mustered for campaigns as necessary. The first Italian standing army was established in the militarised state of Savoy in the 1560s, (see Ciro Paleotti, \textit{A Military History of Italy} (Westport Ct: Praiger Security International, 2008), 171). Otherwise, in Mantua as in most other Italian cities, only a small garrison force was maintained permanently. In Mantua this consisted of around 200 men in 1577. See Aldo de Maddalena, \textit{Le finanze del ducato di Mantova all’epoca di Guglielmo Gonzaga}, 124.
\item[\textsuperscript{20}] de Maddalena, \textit{Le finanze del ducato di Mantova all’epoca di Guglielmo Gonzaga}, 33. The “dazio delle trombe” is listed with a range of indirect taxes on goods and services that would normally imply that this was a tax \textit{on} trumpets, which is somewhat less likely.
\end{itemize}
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for the “Trombetti della Città”, the duties of which would have included service as
watchmen on the city gates (often for fire as well as external dangers), accompanying civic
occasions and proclamations, and marking the morning and evening hours.

The 1589 record also details “Trombetti del Duca” alongside the Trombetti della
Città. The omission of trumpeters from the record of the ducal musicians in Monteverdi’s
time, and the separate listing for the Trombetti del Duca, makes it more probable that the
Orfeo trumpeters, undoubtedly the Trombetti del Duca, were military-trained trumpeters, and
we know from seventeenth-century imperial edicts that members of the imperial court
trumpeters guild were standardly required to have served in the field to qualify for
membership. This suggests that, contra Monelle, there was no clear distinction between
military signallers and ensemble trumpeters - although evidently not all signallers were also
ensemble musicians, hence the distinction sometimes made between musical and non-musical
trumpeters. This relationship between field signallers and trumpet ensembles (as well as the
Italian origin of such ensembles), is confirmed in a letter of 1557 from King Christian III
of Denmark to the Elector of Saxony. The Danish king, who took great interest in brass
instruments, is asking the Elector if he can send him any Italian trumpeters, and writes of the
custom of “Italian blowing-at-table”, for which Christian sought players who could play both
cavalry signals and six-part ensemble trumpet music “in the Italian style”. Moreover, we

21 Mantua, Archivio Gonzaga, busta 410, register 43, fol.54. I am extremely grateful to Susan Parisi for
providing me with this information and archival location.
22 Tarr, The Trumpet, 62.
23 Tarr, The Trumpet, 45; Frank A. d’Accone, The Civic Muse: Music and Musicians in Siena during the Middle
24 Johann Ernst Altenburg, Essay on an Introduction to the Heroic and Musical Trumpeters’ and
Kettledrummers’ Art for the Sake of a Wider Acceptance of the Same. Described Historically, Theoretically, and
Practically and Illustrated with Examples, trans. Edward H. Tarr from the 1795 Halle edition published by
25 Downey notes that the first record of what was then the new “Italian” style of trumpet playing is found in
Mantua in 1486. Peter Downey, “The Trumpet and its Role in Music of the Renaissance and Early Baroque”
(PhD. diss., The Queen’s University of Belfast, 1983), 39.
26 Peter Downey, “A renaissance correspondence concerning trumpet music,” Early Music, Vol. 9, Issue 3 (July
know from some of the earliest surviving trumpet manuals that the music played by trumpet ensembles for civic and court events was the same as that played for military occasions. In the trumpet manual entitled *Volume di tutta l’arte della Trombetta* of 1614 by the Munich-based Italian trumpeter Cesare Bendinelli, preserved in a manuscript in Bendinelli’s home town of Verona, Bendinelli details the occasions on which a “Sonata a Sarassineta” might be played: “in the field, at princely courts, or in other places.”

Ensemble trumpet music accompanied a whole range of events in Italian civic and court life from the late middle ages onward: in the fifteenth century Tinctoris mentions “weddings and the splendid banquets of great men, likewise in triumphal processions, and in other celebrations both public and private, not to mention in the soundings for the start of days and nights”. Trumpets, as Timothy J. McGee writes in his study of civic music in Florence in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, were “the accepted symbol of authority”, a visual and sonic signifier of wealth and power, and the status of a prince or nobleman was often reflected in the number of trumpeters who accompanied him or her. If necessary, rulers would borrow trumpeters from elsewhere to make a suitable splash, as did the reclusive Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga, who didn’t like noisy (*strepitoso*) music, and having dispensed with his court trumpets had to borrow some trumpeters from Innsbruck for the wedding of his son Vincenzo to Eleonora de’ Medici in 1584 (as we have seen, Vincenzo had evidently restored the trumpeters by 1589).

Such music is often described, as by Monelle, as “improvised”, which seems to be confirmed in a letter from the later sixteenth century in which Wilhelm of Bavaria writes to

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28 “concentibus” – Tinctoris is probably referring to the watch, or post, rather than to “concerts”, as the Tinctoris *Complete Theoretical Works* translates concentibus. Johannes Tinctoris, *De inventione et usu musice*, Book III.9, [http://earlymusictheory.org/Tinctoris/texts/deinventioneetusamusice/#pane0=Translation](http://earlymusictheory.org/Tinctoris/texts/deinventioneetusamusice/#pane0=Translation).


his sister explaining that he is unable to send her written music performed by his trumpeters, as she has requested, since their table music is not written down, “and they make it only out of their heads”. But it is probably more accurately described as semi-improvised according to memorised formulae. The trumpeters did not play from written music, and many were probably not musically literate. But Peter Downey notes that although the Elector of Saxony was unable to send King Christian of Denmark any of his Italian trumpeters, as requested, he was able to send him written examples of some Italian cavalry signals, and music for a six-part sonata for “blowing-at-table”, which suggests that at least some of Christian’s trumpeters could read music. And writing in 1615 Michael Praetorius can require that the clarino and quinta (and ideally the alto e basso) players in an ensemble should be able to read music, although more often the notations for ensemble music in the trumpet manuals by Bendinelli and the Florentine trumpeter Girolamo Fantini (the latter of 1638 being the first published trumpet manual) provided only one part, the rest following standard formulas. Monteverdi’s Toccata is therefore the first fully notated example of such a piece for trumpet band in “the Italian style”.

III. Signals

The Orfeo trumpeters would almost certainly have been trained as signallers, which makes it all the more likely that their semi-improvised fanfares would have been at least “associated” with battlefield signals, as Tim Carter puts it. But we only know about military trumpet

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31 Tarr, *The Trumpet*, 70. Much of Duke Wilhelm’s trumpet music was written down by his court trumpeter, Cesare Bendinelli, of course, so he was being a little disingenuous. But this doesn’t negate the conclusion that the players normally played from memory.
32 See Kurtzman and Koldau “Trombe, Trombe d’argento, Trombe squarciate, Tromboni, and Pifferi …”, para. 2.4.
33 Peter Downey, “A Renaissance Correspondence concerning Trumpet Music”, 328.
35 Girolamo Fantini, *Modo per Imparare a sonare/di Tromba/tanto di Guerra/Quanto Musicalmente in Organo, con Tromba/ Sordina, col Cimbalo, e ogni altro istumento* (Frankfurt: Daniel Vuastch, 1638)
signals at all prior to the seventeenth century from their imitation in vocal music by composers such as Machaut, Dufay or Janequin (whose *La Bataille* of 1528 includes widely-used commands such as the *boutez selle* - saddle up), and indeed, Monteverdi himself in many of his madrigals in which war is employed as a metaphor for love. These include “Gira il nemico” from *the Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi* (Eighth Book of Madrigals), whose text includes standard commands such as “butta la sella” (Janequin’s “boutez selles”) and “tutti a cavallo”; the Guarini madrigal “Non più guerra, pietate” from *Il quarto libro de madrigali a cinque voci* (Fourth Book of Madrigals), in which Monteverdi recalls military-style signalling in the sharply articulated rhythmical quick-fire exchanges that run throughout the madrigal; and other madrigals from the Eighth Book, such as “Armato il cor d’adamantina fede”, “Ogni amante e guerrier” and “Se vittorie si belle”.

But although the references to signalling in these madrigals are unmistakable, it is difficult to say whether Monteverdi was employing *authentic* signals, either here or in the Toccata, since we have so few independent sources of verification. The military historian J. R. Hale suggests that the scarceness of official military manuals that might have recorded such signals during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was due to ruling regimes’ understandable reluctance to put information about their armed forces into print. With regard signalling a particular premium seems to have been placed upon secrecy, to ensure that the enemy didn’t obtain information about one’s commands, which would enable him to figure the movement of one’s troops and one’s battle tactics. In an English military handbook of 1562, in manuscript only, described by Hale as “a practical handbook for amateur captains” (such as Falstaff, who has to muster and train troops in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*

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36 Denis Arnold also found echoes of the signalling style in several madrigals (“Interrotte speranze” and “Tornate, o cari baci”) in the *Seventh Book of Madrigals*, in which there is no explicit reference to war or arms in the poems being set. Denis Arnold, *Monteverdi* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1990), 89.

plays), maintaining secrecy is listed as a crucial attribute of the military signaller, who, if he falls into the hands of the enemy, must resist “gyftes and greate rewardes, also bankettes and plentie of wyne” and sometimes even “payne and cruell torments” intended to make him disclose his signals. Secrecy continued be a premium through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; in the 1795 trumpet manual of the Saxon trumpeter Johann Ernst Altenburg, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur heroisch-musikalischen Trompeter- und Paukerkunst* (Essay for a Manual on Heroic and Musical Trumpeters’ and Kettledrummers’ Art), Altenburg declines to publish musical examples of trumpet signals for fear of being reproached for revealing “secrets” (although this may have referred rather to the secrets of the trumpeters guild, guarded as jealously as the craft secrets of operative masonry, than to military discipline).  

For this reason the earliest known records of military signals for trumpet, from the last decade of the sixteenth century, are found only in manuscript, although they undoubtedly reflect a growing need to regularise and document the system of signals that was part of the increasing professionalization of army discipline in Europe in the later sixteenth century. And although the first printed volumes containing signals appeared in the 1630s, they were non-official, and it was not until the mid-eighteenth century that signals started to be codified systematically by national armies as part of the more general reform of army discipline that was initiated by (of course) Prussia, leading to the standardization of signals for the Prussian army commanded by King Frederick William II in 1787, which was then followed elsewhere in Europe.

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38 Hale, “On a Tudor Parade Ground”, 274.  
The earliest records we know of are the manuscript collections by the German trumpeters Magnus Thomsen and Hendrich Lübeck working at the royal court in Denmark (c.1598). These, with Bendinelli’s 1614 manual, include a selection of the same five or six familiar cavalry signals such as *boutes selles/buta sella* (saddle up); *mont’a cavallo/à cheval* (mount); *cavalche/cavalquat* (march cavalry); *allo stendardo/à l’estendart* (to the standard); *l’augetto/au guet* (the watch), to which could be added calls such as the charge and the retreat. These core signals all have clear family resemblances that suggest that, since there were as yet no printed collections available, there may have been at this date what the early-trumpet historian Peter Downey calls a “pan-European” system of signals in operation - although Lübeck and Bendinelli both indicate a distinction between French and Italian signals.

However, in Monteverdi’s “Gira il nemico” from the Eighth Book of Madrigals, in which the poem’s male lovers deploy military metaphors to describe laying siege to their sweethearts, each verse ends with a standard battle command such as “butta la sella” or “tutti a cavallo”. Their ringing settings by Monteverdi sound authentic enough, but do not match any of those recorded by the manuals. It is possible that by this date, as Raymond Monelle claims, armies and regiments had their own particular signals, (why else would there be such need for secrecy about signals?), and we certainly know from later practice that signals

43 Formats and spellings for the commands vary greatly; since there is no approved spelling there is no purpose in my including “sic” for every variant. The spellings here are taken from Bendinelli (Italian) and Mersenne (French). Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle, contenant la Théorie et la Pratique de la Musique* (Paris: Sebastien Cramoisy, 1636), Vol II, 262-266.
44 Bendinelli also includes the field signals for “skirmish” and “retreat”, and camp signals for “bivouac” and “parade” (Cesare Bendinelli, *Tutta l’arte*, 3-5). Machiavelli suggests that some additional signals were already in use by the early sixteenth century, “indicating when they should stop or go forward or turn back, when they should fire the artillery, when to move the extraordinary Veliti”. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Seven Books on the Art of War* (1519-20), trans. Henry Neville (1675) (Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 2006), 86.
45 Downey, “The Trumpet and its Role in Music of the Renaissance and Early Baroque”, 96. Downey identifies three distinct groupings of signals with family resemblances.
were specific not only to regiments, but to companies and platoons, to avoid the risk of confusion on the battlefield as to whom was being signalled. 47 So it is possible that “Gira il nemico”, published in a collection dedicated to the Habsburg emperor Ferdinand III, refers to the signals of the imperial army, of which we have no independent record. However, there is more direct evidence for the sources of the signal-like motifs in the *Orfeo* Toccata.

IV. Toccata

A toccata is a musical title that most familiarly implies a kind of free-form fantasia with rapid, digitally dextrous (the word toccata derives from toccare, to touch) figurations, usually for keyboard instrument, such as those made famous by Frescobaldi (and later, of course, Bach), or for plucked instruments, such as those for lute or theorbo by Johann Hieronymous (Giovanni Girolamo) Kapsberger and Alessandro Piccinini. Toccatas for lute are found from the early sixteenth century, and keyboard toccatas from the later in the century, becoming something of a craze subsequent to the first published example in 1591.48 Monteverdi’s toccata evidently doesn’t conform to this genre. But the term was, in fact, originally used for trumpet fanfares: an account from as early as 1494, refers to “una toccata de trombette” being sounded for Alfonso II of Naples.49 It has been suggested that the term’s later use for the keyboard or plucked string genre was because these imitated the “touch” of the drum in a trumpet ensemble.

47 Nineteenth-century manuals that catalogued military signals more systematically make clear that, on the battlefield, the signal would first of all identify the regiment, then company or squadron and platoon (or position) before sounding the tactical command; for example, a nineteenth-century manual of the Italian Bersaglieri corps lists composite bugle calls that might include a sequence such as “1st Bersaglieri” + “Company” + “Right/Nr.3” + “Deploy in open order”. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bersaglieri. A British Army signalling manual of 1914 lists 38 “routine” calls and 40 field calls for the cavalry alone: *Trumpet and Bugle Sounds for the Army* (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1915). Military historian (and professional player of the natural trumpet) Jon T. Sumida suggests that such specialist signals were developed from the later sixteenth century primarily for new infantry battlefield formations (personal email, 13.10.2018).

Toccata was a generic term that could refer to any kind of trumpet flourish or fanfare, solo or otherwise, although it seems to have been used in particular for a unit with rapid quarter notes, such as we find in Monteverdi’s alto e basso part, often actually described by the composer’s contemporaries as the “toccata” part. A toccata was also a standard component of the modular trumpet-band sonata, which normally consisted of an intrada, a rodda, a toccata, and the sonata proper. However, both Bendinelli and Fantini also designate the field signals that are included in their collections as toccatas (Bendinelli “tocade di Guerra”).

But rather than just using toccata/tocada as a generic term for field signals, as does Fantini, Bendinelli also uses the term more specifically to refer to a kind of call to attention for the standard field commands, often adding the rider “con la sua tocada” in association with the command signals, and providing a number of tocade suitable for “all sorts of occasions”. Shakespeare’s frequent use of the English transliteration of toccata, “tucket”, indicates a similar function. Thus in Henry V the Constable of France orders the trumpets to “sound the tucket sonance and the note to mount.” (IV.2.35). Here, as in Bendinelli, the tucket/toccata would seem to be a call to attention, and in his preface to his opera Dafne, presented in Mantua in 1608, Monteverdi’s contemporary Marco da Gagliano says that just such a call to attention was advisable for a theatrical performance too: “Before the falling of the curtain, in order to get the audience attentive, a sinfonia should be played by the different instruments that serve to accompany the choruses and play the ritornelli”.

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50 Anthony Baines, Brass Instruments: Their History and Development (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), 132. We might also note that tonguing instructions for such signals in the trumpet manual of Fantini often sound onomatopoeically like “toccata” - e.g. his “second tocada”, which sounds “Tegheda tan ta”. Girolamo Fantini, Modo per imparare a suonare di trombe, 7.
51 Bendinelli, Tutta l’arte della Trombetta, 3.
52 Bendinelli, Volumi di tutta l’arte della Trombetta, 3.
53 Bendinelli, Volume di tutta l’arte della Trombetta, 5.
However, in other contexts in Shakespeare’s plays a tucket can refer to a personal trumpet call to announce someone – as in *The Merchant of Venice*, when the stage directions indicate “tucket” and Lorenzo says to Portia “Your husband is at hand; I hear his trumpet.” (V.1.121), or in *King Lear* when Goneril’s arrival is announced with a tucket: “Cornwall. What trumpet's that? Regan. I know't, my sister's…” (II.4.186-7)  

Monteverdi’s *Orfeo* tucket may have been as closely associated with the Gonzaga family in this fashion as their coat of arms or the personal *imprese*, or emblems, that are to be found everywhere in the decorations of the Ducal palaces in Mantua. It was standard on public occasions in Mantua for the Duke to be accompanied by a band of trumpets and drums announcing his presence or passage: in the court chronicler Federico Follino’s account of the festivities for the wedding of Prince Francesco Gonzaga (the patron of *Orfeo*) to Margherita of Savoy in 1608, we read a number of times of Duke Vincenzo setting out from his palace “con buon numero di trombe, e di tamburri”.  

And Monteverdi re-uses the *Orfeo* Toccata (replacing trumpets with more “musical” cornetts) in the opening number of his *Vespers*, published while he was still in the employ of Duke Vincenzo, quite possibly with the intent of stamping his employer’s identity on the work (although we know that trumpet ensembles were also sometimes employed in church services at this time  – in which case Monteverdi’s innovation would have been to combine such a fanfare with the opening chorus of the *Vespers*).

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55 As tucket is a derivation of toccata, sennet is a derivation from either sonata or sarasinetta. In Shakespeare sennets tend to be reserved for rulers or military victors. See Christopher R. Wilson, “Shakespeare and Early Modern Music”, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts*, eds. Mark Thornton Burnett, Adrian Streete and Ramona Wray (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 119-141 (p.124). Wilson suggests that the terminology of tucket and sennet indicates awareness of Italian-style trumpet ensemble music in England by Shakespeare’s time.


It has been suggested that, like Goneril’s tucket, Monteverdi’s Toccata, may have served as a signal heralding the entrance of Duke Vincenzo to the auditorium where *Orfeo* was due to be performed, the effect of which is captured in Andrew Parrott’s 2013 recording of the opera, where the Toccata is sounded at first in the distance, and then draws close. 58 But Follino’s description of the fanfare for the performance of Guarini’s play *L’Idropica* at the 1608 wedding celebrations in Mantua explains clearly that, played from behind the stage, it announced the performance itself: “At the third statement of the sounding the large curtain that concealed the stage disappeared…” 59 Indeed, a preparatory trumpet flourish (invariably triple) was customary to announce most theatrical performances at that time. The very well-documented 1585 performance of Sophocles’s *King Oedipus* at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza commenced in a similar fashion,60 as did performances in the public theatres of London (although with more modest musical forces). In Ben Jonson’s play *Cynthia’s Revels* (1600) Jonson specifies in the metatheatrical Prologue where the three “soundings” are to occur.

V. Bendinelli and Fantini

Bendinelli’s and Fantini’s manuals make clear that a toccata has quite specific military connotations. Yet most of the pieces presented in Fantini’s book are not, in fact, military signals or pieces for military or ceremonial trumpet ensemble. For the novelty of Fantini’s collection was that, in addition to the signals and five part sonatas for ensemble found in Bendinelli, Fantini also presents a whole catalogue of “musical” trumpet pieces, with titles

58 Monteverdi, *L’Orfeo*, Taverner Consort and Players, conducted by Andrew Parrott, Avie 2013. Jordi Savall more vaingloriously sets the Toccata to accompany his own sweeping entry into the orchestra pit. El *Orfeo* de Claudio Monteverdi, versión de Jordi Savall, con Le Concert des Nations, La Capella Reial de catalunya y solistas*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBsXbn0clbU.
60 The explorer Filippo Pigafetta records in his account of the performance that before the lowering of the curtain “there was a sound of trumpets and drums”. Alberto Gallo, *La prima rappresentazione al Teatro Olimpico* (Milan: Edizione Polifilio, 1973), 56.
such ricercata, balletto or sonata, which are for solo trumpet and keyboard continuo, the genre that made Fantini famous as a performer. The pieces are all given the names of prominent Tuscan families that reads like a Debrett’s Peerage of the Florentine and Tuscan nobility: Bentivogli, Riccardi, Bardi, Piccolomini, Salviati, Del Monte, and “Renuccini”, the family of the poet and librettist. Such appellations were not uncommon in instrumental collections of the period – such as Biagio Marino’s collection Affetti musicale (1617), which lists a comparable panoply of Venetian nobility and cittadini - and are probably courtesy appellations recognising patrons or subscribers, perhaps to curry favour with the families in question, or simply designed to add distinction (in both senses of the term) to the pieces themselves.

But although they are not for ensemble, the standard trumpet figurations in these “musical” pieces are often close to those found in Monteverdi’s Toccata, such as the four quaver upward flourishes at the beginning of the “Balletto prima parte detto dello Spada”, which are similar to Monteverdi’s clarino part, suggesting the transposition for solo trumpet of techniques derived from trumpet ensemble playing, based on a performance tradition of long-established formulas. And some of these figurations appear again in the “Sonata detta del Gonzaga”, one of the few works in the collection that is ascribed to a non-Tuscan family.

Although no direct link with Mantua can be established, the portrait of Fantini that prefaces his collection shows him wearing a medal with the name of the Habsburg emperor Ferdinand

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62 See Rebecca Cypess, Curious & Modern Inventions: Instrumental Music as Discovery in Galileo's Italy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 54-57.
63 Fantini, Modo per Imparare a sonare di Tromba, 28.
64 Fantini, Modo per Imparare a sonare di Tromba, 73.
II, whose court in Vienna Fantini is believed to have visited and whose wife was Eleonora Gonzaga. It is likely that the Gonzaga sonata is named in honour of her.  

Fantini’s Gonzaga sonata includes in particular Monteverdi’s slow trills (for which Fantini’s word is *groppo*, not *trillo*, which is a technique derived from singing and consists of a rapidly repeated note on a single pitch, a technique that Fantini also advises on how to emulate on the trumpet 66), but otherwise the material is not close enough to Monteverdi’s Toccata for the two to represent an “official” Gonzaga fanfare. But amongst the Fantini collection are also two pieces designated as “Entrata Imperiale per sonare in concerto” 67 for a trumpet choir. These titles may indicate that they were intended as ceremonial accompaniment for the entry of Emperor Ferdinand, although the designation “imperiale” was common for fanfares played at any grand occasion associated with imperial ceremony, emperor or no emperor, 68 and the title of Entrata may simply indicate the intrada section of a trumpet sonata, rather than its suitability to accompany the “entrance” of the ruler. There are clear parallels between Fantini’s “Entrata Imperiale” and Monteverdi’s Toccata – most notably in the quinta parts, which evidently draw on a common source. And Monteverdi, like Fantini and Bendinelli, uses the relatively standard designations given to indicate the trumpet partials in identifying the registers of his own five parts, although there are some variations (and Fantini and Bendinelli both list six possible registers, reflecting the fact that trumpet ensembles could be five or six part).

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<th>Fantini</th>
<th>Bendinelli</th>
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68 An imperiale was played in Sienna in 1520 in for the entry of the Spanish envoy to announce the election of Charles V as emperor, and on other such occasions. d’Accone, *The Civic Muse*, 492. In his account of the naumachia that was a part of the 1608 wedding festivities in Mantua Follino mentions that at one moment trumpets and drums sounded “un aria alla tedesca, detta l’Imperiale”. Follino, *Compendio*, 72.
It will be noted that the one term used with absolute consistency of both word and orthography by all three is “quinta” – a standard musical designation for any fifth part added to a regular four-part ensemble. In trumpet music, however, the quinta was the leader of the group, providing the identifying thematic material that the rest followed, as explained by Praetorius: “The Principal, Quinta, or the Sonata as some call it, is the true tenor which leads the entire choir of trumpeters and military kettle drummers”.69 This material might come from popular songs, or even sacred music,70 but most often it consisted of a variant of what was clearly a standard intrada formula, found in Thomsen and Bendinelli as well as in Fantini.71 In Fantini the quinta is often the only part of an ensemble notated fully throughout, the rest being fitted to it according to the formulas that we duly find replicated in Monteverdi’s Toccata. Bendinelli sometimes scores an alto e basso part,72 but in Fantini the only other part that may be notated, placed after the quinta part on the page, is the equivalent of Monteverdi’s clarino, a florid series of runs within a five-note range rather than the fixed harmonic intervals played by the other trumpeters, techniques that are only possible in the

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71 Bendinelli, *Volumi di tutta l’arte della Trombetta*, 8r-v. And see Downey, *Fantini and Mersenne*, 356.
72 Bendinelli, *Volumi di tutta l’arte della Trombetta*, 37v.
highest register of the trumpet, using a special mouthpiece. It is left to the player of the clarino part in Fantini’s presentation to fit it to the quinta part supplied.

It is Bendinelli who provides us with the necessary information as to how the five-voice trumpet sonata, only partially presented in his and Fantini’s scores, actually worked. The thematic materials of the sections of a trumpet sonata were usually presented, often in unison by all the players, before the different parts were added, and appended to Bendinelli’s “Sonata a Sarassineta” [which] one can play long or short and can be adapted to various actions/occasions” is an instruction:

I wish to point out that a single player begins and others follow in order, as is the custom… First the grosso player, second the vulgano, third alto e basso, that is, he who imitates the sonata [ie the quinta] with his notes, only lower, and who has to be quite expert; fourth, the one who leads [the quinta], and fifth the clarino who should avoid parallel octaves …

Bendinelli’s description implies a sequence of staggered entries, allowing the members of ensemble to join in as the specific material for the sonata made itself evident. Although Monteverdi starts his Toccata with one-and-a-half beats of basso and vulgano alone, the remaining instruments enter together so that the parts all play simultaneously (as would have happened eventually with Bendinelli’s ensemble). Otherwise Monteverdi’s Toccata matches Bendinelli’s instructions for the Sonata a Sarassineta exactly: the basso and vulgano pump out a drone bass, the quinta part leads with the distinguishing intrada material, the alto e

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73 See Peter Downey, “The Trumpet and its Role in Music of the Renaissance and Early Baroque”, 68.
74 A Sarasinetta was an extended sonata, usually sounded for rulers and military chiefs. In Shakespeare a “Sennet”, which may be a derivation of either sonata or sarasinetta, is similarly instructed to be played mainly for rulers.
75 Bendinelli, Volumi di tutta l’arte della Trombetta, 8r. One wonders how the alto e basso could “imitate” a part whose entry follows it. Peter Downey considers Bendinelli’s instruction to be misleading in this respect, and that the standard way of assembling was from quinta down, finally capped by the clarino. Personal email, 20.08.2018.a
basso part (which is similar to toccata parts found in both Bendinelli and Thomsen 76) shadows the quinta a fifth below, whilst on the top the clarino exercises its high-wire act.

VI. “All the Instruments”

The trumpeters who accompanied Duke Vincenzo on his various forays out of his palace in 1608 were almost certainly the same trumpeters who had played the Orfeo Toccata the year before. Their fanfares would have been semi-improvised according to the formulas that Bendinelli and Fantini partially transcribe or explain, probably learned and transmitted by ear. It may, indeed, be the case that the Orfeo Toccata was similarly transcribed rather than composed by Monteverdi. In his account of L’Idropica at the 1608 wedding celebrations Follino describes how “When all the people which the theatre could hold were gathered together … and once the torches were lit in the theatre, the usual signal by the sounding of the trumpets [il solito segno del suono delle trombe] was given from behind the stage...” 77. It is unclear whether the fanfare is “solito” because it is usual to have such a fanfare, or because the fanfare was the usual (i.e., standard) one. Either way the “usual” trumpet fanfare was most likely the same as, or similar to, the Orfeo Toccata. We know that Monteverdi composed the music for the Prologue to L’Idropica that followed, with a text written for the occasion by Chiabrera, so he would have been on hand to supply a new toccata too if necessary. But it was more likely a standard court fanfare, used alike for Orfeo and L’Idropica, and probably on many other occasions.

The martial associations of the Toccata and its players are clear, even if it doesn’t incorporate battlefield signals as such. And they would have been entirely suitable to the well-known military pretensions of Monteverdi’s employer Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga, who, as

77 Follino, Compendio delle sontuose Feste, 74.
the Venetian ambassador to Mantua reported in 1588, had “an inclination toward the military, of which he is so enamoured that he does not speak or think of anything else, and thus he seeks the occasion to fulfil this his keenest desire.” 78 According to one historian, Vincenzo “spent much of his life trying to live up to the dimensions of the chivalric heroes galloping out of the pages of Ariosto and Tasso”.79 Vincenzo had personally commanded his troops in no fewer than three expeditions against the Turks in Hungary and Croatia in emulation of Tasso’s crusading leader in Gerusalemme liberate, Godefroy de Bouillon (in Italian Goffredo di Buglione), and in 1600 he planned to decorate his palace in the town of Goito with a series of sixty paintings depicting scenes from Tasso’s epic.80 At that time Mantegna’s superb six-panel depiction of a Roman Triumph, crowded with trumpeters lifting their bells to the sky, was hanging in the new Galleria del Mostre in the Ducal Palace, a reminder to Vincenzo of the military triumphs to which he too aspired.

But such strident military associations are much less obviously appropriate to the pastoral-mythological narrative of love, loss, supplication and lamentation that follows in Striggio’s and Monteverdi’s opera itself. The contrast between the raucous flourishes of the Toccata and the graceful string Ritornello that opens the opera proper is striking. And indeed,

80 It is not known if this project was carried out, although given its scale and the lack of any surviving work it is judged unlikely. See Elena Fumagalli, “Ovidio, Ariosto e Tasso in casa del cardinale Carlo de Medici”, in L’arme e gli amori: Ariosto, Tasso and Guarini in Late Renaissance Florence, eds. Massimiliano Rossi and Fiorella Gioffredi Superbi (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2001), Vol. 2, Dynasty, Court and Imagery, 327-340. Vincenzo was not unique in his crusading pretensions. In Florence, the Medici claimed a more direct link to Godefroy through Ferdinando’s wife Christina of Lorraine, who was supposed to be a direct descendent. See Marcello Fantoni, “Il simbolismo medico del potere fra conque e seicento”, in L’arme e gli amori, Vol. 2, 17-26 (p.21). The arches erected in Florence for her arrival in the city for her wedding made several references to Goffredo, and the funeral orations for two of her sons referred explicitly to this lineage: Francesco di Ferdinando is described at his death in 1614 as “quasi novello Goffredo” (Elena Fumagalli, Massimiliano Rossi and Riccardo Spinelli, L’arme e gli amori: La poesia di Ariosto, Tasso e Guarini nell’arte fiorentina del Seicento (exhibition catalogue) (Florence: Sillabe, 2001), 132), whilst Cosimo II’s proposal to transport the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (location of the burial of Godefroy as well as Christ) to Florence earned him praise as a “true descendent” of Buglione (Fumagalli et al, L’arme e gli amori (exhibition catalogue), 100). Triumph trumpeters reappear in the series of paintings undertaken in 1608-10 in the Pitti Palace in Florence to celebrate military victories won against the Turks during the rule of Ferdinando I. (Fumagalli et al, L’arme e gli amori (exhibition catalogue), 99, 136-8).
if we examine the published score more closely we find that the Toccata is not in fact paginated with the rest of the score; the first page to be numbered is that which contains the Ritornello and Prologue on the opposite page to the Toccata, numbered as page 1. What is called “paratextual” material (title page, dedications, indexes, etc.) in published texts was often added after the main text was printed, and was thus outside the pagination of the main text. That paratextual components were added at the end of the publishing process only seems to confirm their provisional or marginal nature. Indeed, the fact that Galileo’s exculpatory preface to the Dialogue on the Two World System - the work that earned his condemnation by the Inquisition - in which Galileo made an expression of his Catholic piety, was so obviously printed in a different typeface from the rest of the book (and also not paginated), was a crucial aspect of the Inquisition’s charges against Galileo that the preface was insincere, and that its inclusion as paratextual material “rendered it useless inasmuch as it was alienated from the body of the book”.81

The paratextual status of the Orfeo Toccata is further indication that it should not be considered as an integral part of the score for the opera itself. To modern ears it would be quite normal for an operatic performance to be prefaced by some sort of overture, often indeed in baroque opera no more than the kind of “festive noise” (in the words of Reinhardt Strohm 82) that is represented by the Toccata. And indeed, several composers of early opera refer to the need for some sort of prefatory music before the performance of an opera proper starts. In the “avvertimenti” to Cavalieri’s Rappresentatione di anima, e di corpo we read that “At the beginning, before the curtain drops, it will be good to perform a full music with

doubled voices and a large quantity of instruments”, 83 and we have already seen Marco da Gagliano’s advice for such prefatory music before Dafne. Although the court performance of Dafne for the Mantua carnival of 1608 would almost certainly have been prefaced by “il solito segno delle trombe”, like Cavalieri, Gagliano implies that there should also be an instrumental piece, although unlike Cavalieri, and Monteverdi (if we recall the latter’s “all the instruments”) one that excludes the recitative instruments. But neither Cavalieri nor Gagliano offer anything to fulfil this role in their scores, implying that they weren’t fussed what piece of music was played in this slot, and it was not customary for such prefatory music to be included in the score in early operas; many operas of this period apparently launch straight into recitative without even so much as the instrumental ritornello with which Monteverdi introduces his Orfeo Prologue. Gagliano’s ritornelli for the Prologue of Dafne are perfunctory in comparison - no more than a few transitional chords between verses. In his edition of Peri’s Euridice, Howard Mayer Brown added an Orfeo-Toccata-like reworking of the Fantini sonata “known as the Renuccini” on the assumption that at least some sort of fanfare or introductory music would have been played on such an important occasion. But neither Peri’s, nor Caccini’s, published scores for Euridice offer anything of the sort. If his Toccata was, indeed, to be played by all the instruments it would seem that Monteverdi had conflated Cavalieri’s and Gagliano’s expectation of an instrumental prelude with the standard ceremonial fanfare.

The expectation of an instrumental prelude to an opera has led music historians to some anachronistic ways of interpreting Monteverdi’s Toccata, despite the indifference of composers such as Cavalieri and Gagliano as to what should be played, the piece’s clear lineage in the standard trumpet fanfare formulas, and its paratextual status. Assuming that the

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Toccata was integral to Monteverdi’s score, and applying nineteenth-century expectations of musical unity based on “organic growth and coherence”, the English musicologist Robert Donington sought to demonstrate that the Toccata contained the thematic material for the whole opera in nuce. 84 I don’t need to spell out Peter Kivy’s demolition of Donington’s thesis, in which he shows that thematic similarities are to be expected of any tonal or modal music of the period, and are just as evident in Peri’s Euridice, which Donington had judged to be a lesser work precisely because it was supposed to lack the necessary organic growth and coherence. 85 Moreover, although Monteverdi’s instruction that the fanfares should be played “with all the instruments” might be taken as further evidence of his desire to link the Toccata to the rest of the opera, as might the raising of the pitch to the key of D if trumpets with mutes were employed, thus conforming to the key of the Prologue, the instruction is, as we have seen, ambiguous. At face value it means that the fanfares should be played by the whole instrumental ensemble for the opera, thus creating an especially sumptuous racket. (The Italian word for racket or din is “fragore”, often used as term of approbation in descriptions of trumpet and drum fanfares. 86) But when for the Act I chorus “Vieni imeneo” Monteverdi similarly details that the instrumental accompaniment was performed “with the sounding of all the instruments” (“concertato al suono de tutti gli stromenti”) he presumably meant all the instruments relevant to that section of the opera – the bowed and plucked string instruments (and later recorders) that he designates as suitable to the pastoral mode, and not the sombre lower brass and rasping regal organ that are deployed to convey the infernal world in Acts III and IV (let alone the martial trumpets of the Toccata). So is it possible that, in the instance of the Toccata, knowing that the regular way of playing a sonata-like trumpet fanfare was with

each line initially played monophonically, or as in Bendinelli’s instruction additively, Monteverdi wanted to make clear that the parts were to be played by all of the trumpets together, rather than all of the opera’s instruments? In which case it would be clear that it is the mutes, not the trumpets, that are optional. This reading would certainly solve some of the problems raised by any of the other interpretations of Monteverdi’s instruction. Either way, “all the instruments” must include the trumpets that are included in the instrument listing, so this again implies that it is the mutes that are optional, despite the reference to muted trumpets in the orchestral listing. If they were definitely to be muted, which, as the composer explains, raises their pitch by one tone, then, for the convenience of the rest of the orchestra, might he not have written the Toccata in D rather than the standard C of trumpet music (since the trumpeters would not have been playing from a score)?

Why might one want to play the trumpets with mutes anyway? Mersenne informs us in 1636 that mutes could soften the “violence and noise” of trumpets, and were used in battle to stifle trumpet commands “when you don’t want the trumpet to be heard from places where the enemy may be located”. In civilian contexts it seems that muted trumpets were sometimes employed for funeral processions and burials. But Mersenne’s description of other ways to soften the trumpet so that it can “take away the desire to hear the softness of the lute and other instruments in those who love harmony” indicates that he is also thinking of the potential of the trumpet as an instrument for domestic art music – still very novel at this date, and for which Mersenne acknowledges Fantini as the pioneer. And indeed, on the title page of Fantini’s collection of trumpet pieces, Fantini explains that the work contains “modo per Imparare a sonare/DI TROMBA/ TANTO DI GUERRA/ Quanto Musicalmente in

Organo, con Tromba/ Sordina, col Cimbalo, e ogn’altro istruimento.” I.e., it is a manual for learning to play the trumpet, whether for war, or whether musically accompanied by organ, with muted trumpet, with a cembalo or any other instruments. (Note that Fantini’s distinction is between playing for war and playing musically; his toccatas and entratas would have fallen into the first category). The Shakespeare scholar Christopher Wilson observes that when Shakespeare’s later plays started to be played in indoor theatres the stage instructions in the folio editions tend to specify the softer cornett rather than the trumpets previously detailed for open air performances, \(^9^0\) and Monteverdi’s recommendation of mutes is probably not primarily intended to raise the Toccata to the pitch of the following Ritornello, but to render it suitable for “musical” performance in a confined interior space (such as we are told in one account Orfeo was presented in) if full-throttle trumpets were going to make too much fragore. If Monteverdi meant by “all the instruments” not “all the orchestral instruments” but “all of the trumpets together”, with the option to play with or without mutes, then this would make much more sense of his otherwise highly confusing presentation of the Toccata in the score.

**PART 2**

**VII. Refeudalization**

The Orfeo Toccata evidently does not “belong” to Orfeo. But nonetheless, it would have been heard in conjunction with the opera at its first performances, and sits alongside the rest of the opera in the published score. I want to suggest that the apparent disjunction between the rousing, martial Toccata and the (largely) pastoral opera that follows is representative of a

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fundamental dichotomy in the self-fashioning of the ruling classes in early seventeenth-century Italy. In particular, it is indicative of two aspects of what has standardly been called “refeudalization” in the historiography of later sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century Italy: firstly, the cultivation of an ideology of rural landownership and a lifestyle of *otium* (or leisure) that went with the acquisition of feudal land tenures, of which all forms of pastoral art are an expression; and secondly, an anachronistic revival of the trappings of medieval chivalry, which the British Renaissance scholar Frances Yates, referring to what a more recent historian calls “the spectacular revival of chivalric ideals and practices” in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, once described as the “imaginative re-feudalisation of culture”.

Refedualization is a term that was originally coined by the Italian historians Ruggiero Romano and Rosario Villari in the 1960s, Romano to explain aspects of land reclamation in seventeenth-century Italy, and Villari to explain the causes of the Neapolitan revolt of 1647. According to Villari, the Spanish rulers of Naples ensured the loyalty of the local aristocracy by awarding them feudal fiefdoms in the government’s control that had often previously been administered by local communes. Given the impossibility of generalising from one Italian state to the next there is no absolute agreement on the extent or nature of refeudalization in Italy. But it appears that the Medici regime in Tuscany was engaged in a very similar process of re-allocating feudal dues and jurisdictions to loyal followers, and that the Venetian state awarded Venetian patricians feudal tenures on the

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conquered terrafirma, dispossessing the local nobility who had resisted Venetian expansion.\textsuperscript{96} In both cases feudal fiefdoms and their accompanying titles were particularly desirable since membership of the Florentine patriciate or the Venetian nobility carried no title, and bearing a title was becoming the only internationally recognised marker of aristocracy.\textsuperscript{97} In Mantua itself the most extensive refeudalization took place in the principality of Monferrato, inherited by the Gonzagas in 1531, where Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga initially imposed his rule on the local nobility by force, stripping them of traditional feudal rights when they resisted, and using their former feudal jurisdictions to raise money for his coffers. His son Vincenzo I in turn “pulverised the territory in a myriad of feudal jurisdictions”, \textsuperscript{98} and endowed loyal supporters with the confiscated fiefdoms, a process described by the historian of Mantua Paul Grendel as “a classic example of the refeudalization of an Italian state”. \textsuperscript{99}

Refeudalization was also associated with what another historian has described as “aristocratization”, \textsuperscript{100} a process in Italy whereby mercantile urban patriciates and redneck feudal lords were transformed into “a disciplined courtly aristocracy”\textsuperscript{101} owing its status and rewards directly to the new-style ruler. There was, indeed, from Machiavelli onward, a standard political belief that the modern prince required such an aristocracy to bolster his own status and legitimacy. In this process, as Jonathan Dewald puts it, “The nobles became a

\textsuperscript{96} Giuseppe Fiocco, \textit{Alvise Cornaro: il suo tempo e le sue opera} (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 1965), 67-69.


\textsuperscript{98} Sergio Marinella (ed.), \textit{Manierismo a Mantova}, 12.

\textsuperscript{99} Paul F. Grendel, \textit{The University of Mantua, the Gonzaga, and the Jesuits, 1584-1630} (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), 13.


coherent social class”. The extent of refeudalization itself has subsequently been
questioned, as has the Risorgimento-era narrative, propounded by the nineteenth-century
literary scholar Francesco de Santis, that the chivalric revival, and the noble academies to be
found in every Italian city (such as that which commissioned Orfeo), were
symptomatic of the decadence of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Italy after the glories of
the Renaissance due to a formerly productive urban business class adopting “the mores and
trappings of an idle aristocracy, squandering its wealth on landed estates, pageantry and the
bucolic pleasures of a country villa” (in Domenico Sella’s critical rendition of the narrative).

Historians have more recently recognised that investment in land often led to agricultural
improvement - an aspect that is evident in the conception of Palladio’s many villas on the
Venetian terrafirma, the schemes for which often incorporated working farm buildings,
suitably classicised. Nonetheless, the re-emergence of pastoral arts in the sixteenth century,
and the revival of chivalry, were both quite clearly part of the cultivation of a new, neo-feudal
class ideology.

The “pageantry” that Domenico Sella refers to consisted primarily of the neo-
chivalric displays that took place in obverse relation to the actual engagement of the Italian
nobility with warfare during the second half of the sixteenth century, a period of sustained
peace on the Italian peninsula after the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559, which ended
sixty-five years of hostilities in Italy between France and the Habsburgs. In his study of
chivalry the historian Maurice Keen argued that chivalry had ceased to be a vital social force
by the sixteenth century, offering economic arguments related to the decline of the older
feudal nobility, and the growth of a courtly aristocracy more interested in offices and

103 See Domenico Sella, *Crisis and Continuity: The Economy of Spanish Lombardy in the Seventeenth Century*
benefices than in military service. Changes in warfare also meant that the military values promoted by chivalry were increasingly redundant: developments in weaponry, in particularly heavy artillery, had shifted emphasis from pitched battles, in which mounted cavalry (the mainstay of the chivalric ethos) had played a crucial role, to siege warfare; combat with lances, of the kind that was practiced at jousts and tournaments, was dying out. From the mid sixteenth century, states were beginning to establish what would effectively become national standing armies, which would come to replace the mustering of troops through the summons of feudal landowners and their retainers. And with this went an increased professionalization of army business in areas such as training, regimental organisation, etc. We find the threat to the values of knightly chivalry from modern warfare expressed in literary texts such as Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, which includes an anguished reference to decline of chivalric values in the era of gunpowder, and in Don Quixote’s lengthy imprecations against modern warfare, in particular artillery. In this climate chivalry could survive only as an elaborate form of play acting (or the sublime delusions of a madman). Nonetheless, the chivalric revival was an indication of significant social changes that were real enough.

As part of the establishment of a modern aristocracy the sixteenth century saw a plethora of treatises discussing the nature of nobility (Claudio Donati notes in particular that the decades either side of 1600 produced works on this topic in a number “without precedent”), as well as behaviour manuals for the new courtly aristocrats (a sure sign of status and legitimation anxiety), starting with the definitive work in this genre, Castiglione’s *The
Courtier (1528). Such treatises debated the essential appurtenances of aristocracy: were they family and lineage, prowess in war, public service, leisure, or culture and learning? Ideally to be aristocratic would encompass all of these qualities. 113 But in reality theorists tended to privilege one aspect over another, which led to some standard rhetorical debating points, e.g.: between birth and culture; between birth and civic duty; between arms and letters - a topic of some import in Italy, where the military humiliations of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were often attributed to the Italian ruling classes’ interest in intellectual and cultural pursuits over warfare114); sometimes between arms and music (as in Michelangelo Buonarroti Junior’s “Discourse on the foundation of an academy professing letters, arms and music”, in which Buonarroti attempts to dispel doubts about the masculinity of music by citing all the famous warriors who were also musicians115); or between arms and agriculture, the latter the topic of a letter by the Venetian landowner and agronomist Alvise Cornaro to the writer Sperone Speroni of 1542, in which Cornaro argued the superiority of “holy agriculture” over arms or imperialism 116 (conveniently ignoring that it was military conquest that had given Venetian patricians such as Cornaro access to estates on the terrafirma to bolster their declining commercial incomes from trade).

VIII. Neo Chivalry

The relationship between refeudalization, early opera and pastoral arts must be the subject of a different essay, for here I am concerned with that aspect of the first performance of Orfeo

113 Although oddly that most bookish of nouveaux aristocrats, Montaigne, held that prowess in arms was the only definition of nobility. Michel de Montaigne, The Complete Essays, trans. M.A.Screech (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 431.
114 A frequent complaint of Machiavelli: Hanlon, The Twilight of a Military Tradition, 4. Contesting this dichotomy, Don Quixote gives a splendidly argued defence of arms as a “science” that requires the skills of the jurist, the theologian, the physician, the astronomer and the mathematician. Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote, Part 1, chapters 37 and 38.
that relates to the chivalric revival, a “model of corporate class behaviour that [the aristocracy] could still cling to as relevant to their lives in a period of rapid social and political change”, 117 and that contributed to the establishment of a new set of standards for what it was to be noble, often in conscious opposition to the mercantile values from which so many of the new aristocracy originally derived their wealth and from which they now wished to distance themselves. The ubiquity of commercial city states in Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, their exclusion of feudal lords and their resultant tendency to employ mercenary armies, meant that chivalry had played a less important role in Italian Renaissance life than in some parts of Europe.118 But if, as Castiglione and many others averred, “the first and true profession of the courtier must be that of arms”, 119 military prowess would again become an essential appurtenance in the age of the courtier. Thus, as Dewald argues, values of “generosity, courage and indifference to calculation”, were promoted as a counterfoil to commercial instrumentality (as indeed, pastoral otium came to stand as a set of values in opposition to urban negotium).120 Books dedicated to the revived cult of chivalry poured off the press in the latter half of the sixteenth century: titles such as Della origine de’ cavalieri by Francesco Sansovino (1566, 1570) and Il cavaliere of 1589 by the Bolognese mercenary soldier and fortifications expert Domenico Mora, who (ironically, given his expertise) lamented the decline of chivalry in Italy, which he believed to be due to the exaggerated value placed upon literature and learning, and proposed that chivalric training schools should be established all over Europe for the defence of Christendom.121 In Ferrara, perhaps the centre of the cultural revival of chivalry, the writer Giovann Battista Pigna (of bourgeois

120 Dewald, The European Nobility 1400-1800, 10.
origin) wrote books extolling the values of the chivalric romance represented by *Orlando Furioso* (originally published in Ferrara), defended the aristocratic right to duel, and argued for the diplomatic precedence of the d’Este rulers of Ferrara due to their illustrious feudal genealogy over the grubby mercantile origins of the Medici rulers of Florence (as did Torquato Tasso after him).\(^\text{122}\) The aristocratic academies that sprung up all over Italy in the later sixteenth century were often also training grounds for chivalric ideals, augmented by more specialised military academies, such as the Collegio dei Nobili established in Parma in 1601,\(^\text{123}\) or those founded in cities in the Veneto, with the support of the Venetian government, between 1608-10 - although their chronicler J. R. Hale suggests that they were more akin to “finishing schools” to keep young _terrafirma_ nobles who were excluded from political activity out of trouble, rather than rigorous training for future cavalry officers.\(^\text{124}\)

Perhaps the first sign of the association of the new princely regimes in Italy with the revival of aristocratic chivalry was the foundation in 1561 by Grand Duke Cosimo 1 of Tuscany of the chivalric Ordine di Santo Stefano, one of the most obvious of Cosimo’s attempts to impose, in the words of R. Burr Lichfield, “a military and feudal façade upon the city [Florence]”\(^\text{125}\) (although the Order’s headquarters were, in fact, in Pisa, since its military duties were primarily naval). Supposedly open only to those of noble birth (with at least four quarters to their arms\(^\text{126}\)) it was founded in emulation of the seafaring Knights of Malta, which itself closed ranks to exclude applicants from “mercantile” families, and tightened the scrutiny process for evidence of nobility, only a few years later.\(^\text{127}\) Not to be outdone, as part

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\(^\text{122}\) Donati, _L’idea di nobiltà in Italia_, 129.
\(^\text{125}\) R. Burr Litchfield, _Emergence of a Bureaucracy_, 27.
\(^\text{126}\) Franco Angiolini and Paolo Malamima, “Problemi della mobilità sociale a Firenze tra la metà del cinquecento e i primi decenni del seicento”, _Società e storia_, 1974, no.4, 17-47.
\(^\text{127}\) Donati, _L’idea di nobiltà in Italia_, 250.
of his own “remilitarization of state and court”\(^{128}\), in 1607, the year of *Orfeo*, Duke Vincenzo Gonzago initiated plans for an order of knights in Mantua, dedicated to the most precious relic in the city, the sacred blood of Christ that had supposedly been spilled by the spear of the Roman centurion Longinus as Christ hung on the cross. The order was in clear emulation of the Order of St Stephen and of a similar neo-chivalric order in Piedmont, the Order of the Knights of Santi Maurizio e Lazzaro, (1573) \(^{129}\) founded by the House of Savoy, with whom the Gonzagas were establishing a diplomatic relationship through dynastic alliance, Vincenzo’s oldest son Francesco to Margherita of Savoy. Vincenzo’s relationship to the notoriously hot-headed Duke Carlo Emanuele of Savoy seems to have largely been one of rivalry and one-upmanship, and Vincenzo was so desperate to get the new order launched when Carlo Emanuele was in Mantua for the wedding that he stalled his protracted and unseemly haggling with the Pope over terms (a trade-off between benefices for the knights and the Pope’s chastity conditions) and went ahead with establishing the order without formal papal approval, the Order of the Redentore being duly instituted on the 25\(^{th}\) of May 1608 at a ceremony in the basilica of S. Andrea in the presence of Duke Carlo Emanuele.\(^{130}\)

Vincenzo’s Act of Foundation for the order declared, with good Counter-Reformation rhetoric, that it was established “to encourage not only virtuous works of chivalry, but particularly that for our order and for themselves [the knights] are obligated to show themselves with their strength and worthy actions the most bitter enemies of the enemies of the Holy Faith…” \(^{131}\) Another clause requires that members of the order “honour and defend women… and in all things conduct themselves with knightly actions that show themselves

\(^{128}\) Marinella (ed.), *Manierismo a Mantova*, 12.
\(^{129}\) Hanlon, *The Twilight of a Military Tradition*, 82.
worthy of the name of the order that they bear”. This last stipulation in particular would have been heartily applauded by that exemplary knight errant Don Quixote, who had made his first appearance in print 1605. For they are a clear attempt to revive the values of medieval chivalry, albeit derived from later literary imaginings of chivalric courtly love presented by the irrepresible chivalric romances that were the object of Cervantes’s gentle mockery in *Don Quixote*.

The Mantuan author of such chivalric romances Ludovico Arrivabene tells us that Vincenzo Gonzaga first conceived the idea of a military order in Mantua as early as 1589, the year in which Arrivabene published his own study of the chivalric orders of knighthood, *Dell Origine de’ Cavalieri del Tosone, e di altri Ordini, de’ Simboli, e delle Imprese* (On the Origins of the Knights of the Golden Fleece, and of other Orders, of Symbols and Emblems). The book was dedicated to Vincenzo when the duke received (for a considerable price – 300,000 scudi) the order of the Golden Fleece from King Philip of Spain. Many of Vincenzo Gonzaga’s forbears were *condottiere*, and Vincenzo clearly sought to emulate the military feats of his illustrious ancestors, such as those illustrated in the series of eight large paintings made for Vincenzo’s father Guglielmo Gonzaga in the 1570s and 80s by the Venetian painter Tintoretto, the greatest painter of battle scenes of his day, that still hung in the Ducal Palace in Monteverdi’s time; or the feats of some of his contemporaries such as Alessandro Farnese, Duke of Parma and governor of the Spanish Netherlands, or his cousin Vespasiano Gonzaga of Sabbioneta, whose military prowess had earned him governerships in Spain. The huge sum paid to the King of Spain for his Golden Fleece was given by Vincenzo

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132 Cottafavi, “L’Ordine cavalleresco del Redentore”, 244.
134 They can be found today, somewhat skied, in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich.
as a “loan” in the hope (unfulfilled) that Vicenzo might be offered the generalship of Flanders in addition to the Golden Fleece. 135

Instead, in 1595 Vincenzo responded to an appeal from the emperor Rudolph II for a league against the Turks, leading his Mantuan troops to the battlefront and commanding them in the siege of Visograd before abruptly returning home due to illness. Vincenzo embarked on a second expedition in 1597 which ended equally abruptly due to a disagreement about authority between Vincenzo and the commander of the imperial troops. 136 In 1601 Vincenzo responded a third time to a request for troops to recapture the fortress of Canissa from the Turks, although this expedition was even less glorious for the Christian allies, Vincenzo and his fellow Italians (the Florentines led by Don Giovanni Medici and the Papal troops under Pope Clement VIII’s nephew Gian Francesco Aldobrandini) being blamed for the siege’s failure by their German allies. 137

Despite their lack of glory, Vincenzo’s first two campaigns were fully documented by the Mantuan chronicler Fortunato Cardi, with poems in honour of Vincenzo’s exploits. 138 Even as the third campaign was being undertaken in the autumn of 1601, back in Mantua Federico Follino, as master of ceremonies for the court, wrote to Vincenzo at the front in October to establish Vincenzo’s wishes for the upcoming carnival festivities in Mantua (did he want a comedy, or an example of the newly fashionable pastoral, as the main entertainment?), and then in November suggesting that the chosen play might have an intermezzo celebrating Vincenzo’s hopefully imminent victory at Canissa, 139 detailing the spectacular sonic effects that might be achieved (“dei colpi d’artiglieria, e del suono di
trombe e tamburi”). Alas, events meant that the planned victory celebrations never took place (although Vincenzo’s campaign is nonetheless commemorated prominently in an inscription on a ceiling in the duke’s apartments in the Ducal Palace). Had they done so no doubt Monteverdi, who had accompanied Vincenzo in the duke’s musical entourage on the first campaign, would have provided some of the music for Follino’s vision of the finale as a “fantasmagoria di musiche e fuochi”.

IX. War Games

In lieu of glory in battle the Italian nobility in the early seventeenth century had to content themselves with largely theatrical displays of their military skills. In 1615, the Florentine poet and dramatist Andrea Salvadori, in his preface to the published account of La guerra d’amore, one of the many chivalric sbarre or battute presented during the carnival in Florence that year, insisted upon the value of such spectacles in promoting a bellicose spirit against the “ozio della pace” (the “otium” of peace), comparing such activities to the war games of the Homeric heroes. Salvadori proposed that the best sports for the aristocracy are those on horseback, pointing to the equestrian basis of chivalric knighthood (the Italian name for a knight is cavaliero, from cavallo (horse), from which the Italian term for chivalry, cavaleria, derives, just as the English term chivalry derives from cheval). Neo-chivalresque events were invariably mounted, and by the seventeenth century consisted of more than the rowdy, and often bloody, jousting that had characterised medieval chivalry. Late renaissance jousts and tournaments had become sophisticated theatrical events involving dramatic scenarios, equestrian ballets, and, invariably, music. The theatricality of seventeenth-century

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140 Claudia Burattelli, Spettacoli di corte a Mantova tra Cinque e Seicento (Firenze: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1999), 94.
141 Burattelli, Spettacoli di corte a Mantova tra Cinque e Seicento, 94.
142 Andrea Salvadori, Guerra d’Amore. Festa del Serenissima Gran Duca di Toscana Cosimo Secondo (Florence: Zanobi Pignoni, 1615), 5.
jousts is evident from the lengthy literary accounts of many such *sbarre*, which became a regular feature of annual carnival festivities, as well as weddings and ceremonial entries. In the case of Salvadori’s *La guerra d’amore*, both the text and a descriptive account survive, which includes engravings by Jacques Caillot depicting the event, with ground plans showing the elaborate choreography of the battle scene.\(^{143}\) This event, which was staged in the piazza in front of the church of Santa Croce, has a narrative in which the hand of Lucinda, the Queen of India, is being fought for by the Kings of Asia and Africa (played by the young Duke Cosimo II and his brother). The performance had extensive music, including settings of lengthy arias, by a team of composers that included Jacopo Peri, although as is almost invariably the case with such productions, the music is lost. The ruling family took spectacles such extravaganzas seriously – we have the correspondence that records the negotiations between Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger and the Grand Duchess Cristina concerning a *sbarra* that was due to take place in Pisa in 1607 which shows that the Grand Duchess was closely engaged with both the practicalities, and the precise allegorical meanings, of the event.\(^{144}\)

A chivalric display might be described variously as *barriera*, *quintana*, *battaglia*, *torneo*, *giostra*, *giuoco* or *sbarra*. As we have already seen, music played a crucial part in such performances, to the extent that Paolo Fabbri coins the term “opera-torneo” to describe such extravaganzas (albeit disclaiming any desire to establish a new subgenre of opera by the term);\(^{145}\) for the tournament that was presented at the 1608 wedding in Mantua Follino lists at least forty instrumentalists, typically prominent, of course, being trumpets and drums.\(^{146}\)

Francis Markham and other English authors of military textbooks remind us that the trumpet

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\(^{144}\) Cole, *Music, Spectacle and Cultural Brokerage in Early Modern Italy*, 201-4.


\(^{146}\) Follino, *Compendio*, 99-124.
was used exclusively for cavalry signalling, infantry having to make do with drums alone (“drum and fife” are usually referred to together, but the fife’s purpose was “to excite cheerfulness, and alacrity in the Soldiers, not to signal”).¹⁴⁷ But trumpets had also become an indicator of nobility by association; Timothy J. McGee suggests that when, after the plebeian Ciompi revolt in Florence the patrician Signoria and Priorate was restored in 1382, they appropriated the civic trumpet band as a personal sign of nobility, rather than merely of civic authority.¹⁴⁸ And just as ruling regimes attempted to define and demarcate the indicators of aristocracy through such means as neo-feudal titles, chivalric orders, institutes for genealogical and heraldic documentation, rules of court etiquette or sumptuary laws, so in some parts of Europe attempts were made to limit the playing of trumpets and kettle drums to aristocratic contexts. From 1623 a number of imperial edicts confirmed the privileges (but also responsibilities) of trumpeters and drummers in the imperial domains: “Because trumpeters and kettle drummers perform solely for the Emperor, Kings, Electoral and Imperial Princes, counts and lords of knightly rank, and similar persons of quality” they were to be forbidden to play with “jugglers, tower watchmen, caretakers and the like.” Trumpeters, one seventeenth-century writ declares, are a “knightly kind”, their calling not a trade but “a free and knightly art.”¹⁴⁹ Conversely, comedians, jugglers and other such riff-raff were forbidden to play on trumpets or military kettledrums, and even official city trumpeters were forbidden to play their instruments outside their “stages, stands or towers”.¹⁵⁰

According to Giulio Cesare Monteverdi in the “Dichiaratione” appended to his brother’s Scherzi musicali a tre voci (1607), Monteverdi was regularly employed in

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¹⁴⁷ Francis Markham, Five Decades of Epistles of Warre (London: Augustine Matthews, 1622), 59-60.
¹⁴⁸ Timothy J. McGee, The Ceremonial Musicians of Late Medieval Florence, 137.
composing music for the regular tournaments (*tornei*) that took place in Mantua, and one such project, in Parma rather than Mantua, is well documented. Monteverdi was to contribute music to a theatrical tournament to celebrate the wedding of Duke Odoardo Farnese to Margherita de’ Medici in 1628. The event took place in the cavernous Teatro Farnese, which had been constructed in 1618 in the old military riding school (a telling detail in its own right), and although it is often designated as the first surviving permanent theatre with a proscenium, it was intended as a multi-purpose space, able to accommodate a tournament as comfortably as a drama. The title of the tournament was *Mercurio e Marte*. The music is, again, lost, but we have a detailed account of the event in addition to Monteverdi’s correspondence, and the libretto survives. *Mercurio e Marte* presents the reconciliation of Mercury and Mars - representing the princely virtues of letters and eloquence (Mercury) and those of arms (Mars), the latter with which Odoardo was as obsessed as Vincenzo Gonzaga - after Discord has sown a rift between them. Mercury lays out the conflict in terms of the musical instruments associated with the two qualities:

Che paraggio v'è mai
fra le trombe, e le cetre,
fra timpani, e viole,
fra le lingue, e le spade
tra funesti cipressi, e vivi allori?
O quanto mai più vale il fulmine felice, d'una lingua oratrice,

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151 Giulio Cesare Monteverdi, “Dichiaratione della lettera stampata nel Quinto libro de suoi madregali”, *Scherzi Musicali a tre voci* (Venice: Ricciardo Amadino, 1607). Giulio Cesare is listing all of Monteverdi’s onerous responsibilities to explain why he hasn’t written his own defence against the criticisms of Artusi.

Monteverdi, who liked to set contrasting groups of instruments against each other, would surely have seized the opportunity to oppose trumpets and lyres (or their nearest equivalents), drums and violins. As, indeed, happens in the opening musical numbers in the Orfeo score.

In Mercurio e Marte reconciliation is brought about after a mock equestrian battle. In the battle of La guerra d’amore love triumphs over war. At the height of the battle Mars and Venus arrive in chariots in great fury. Mars calls for the combatants to cease fighting, and Venus, in a long aria, expresses her horror at the warlike activities:

Ma dhe, che si feroce orrendo aspetto  
D’armi, d’odio, di sdegno, e di furore  
Troppò, forti guerrier, mi turba il petto  
Troppò m’offende, e m’alterisce il core.  

She then urges the rival parties to lay down their arms and to dance instead. The work closes with an equestrian ballet accompanied by a choral ode extolling the triumphs of love, at the end of which Lucinda departs still a maiden (courtly love was, of course, as much an ideal of the chivalric code as was warfare; and it was, after all, the value of the warlike games of the sbarra, with its display of masculine strength, rather than war itself, that Salvadori was promoting).

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153 What place is there  
between trumpets and lyres,  
between drums and viols,  
between speeches and swords  
between gloomy cypresses or living laurels?  
Oh how much better is the happy thunderbolt of words of oratory,  
than the deep wound of a warrior’s sword.  
154 But gods, what ferociously horrifying appearance  
Of weapons, of hatred, of indignation, and of fury.  
Too much, strong warriors, troubles my breast  
Too much offends me, and terrifies my heart.
X. Oaten Reeds and Trumpets

The conflict of love and war was integral to the renaissance epics of Ariosto and Tasso as of Homer and Virgil, and the triumph of love over war, exemplified by Venus’s seduction of Mars, was a common topic of classical and renaissance art. In Botticelli’s depiction a post-coital Mars sprawls naked and comatose whilst cupids gleefully make off with his arms. And the theme of love triumphing over arms also underpins Monteverdi’s Eighth Book of madrigals, in which Monteverdi introduced his discovery of the genera concitato, the agitated style suitable to the depiction of anger or war. Not only does the collection begin with Monteverdi’s setting of Marino’s Arms and Love poem, it also contains Monteverdi’s minidrama Il combattimento di Trancredi e Clorinda, based on a section of Gerusalemme liberata, which plays on the conceit of love against war and love as war – a theme that Monteverdi had visited many times in his madrigals. Monteverdi may have included another of his occasional works in the collection, the Ballo delle Ingrate, first presented at the 1608 wedding in Mantua alongside Arianna, because of its early deployment of the William-Tell galloping music that accompanies a reference to warriors on the battlefield, that recurs in Il combattimento, as evidence of Monteverdi’s priority claims to this musical topic, upon which he insists in his preface to the collection.

In this preface Monteverdi explains that he has developed the new concitato style in an attempt to find a modern equivalent for Plato’s description of the warlike metres in Greek poetry, suitable to convey “the utterances and the accents of a brave man who is engaged in warfare.” A justification for this might be to fulfil the tripartite categorisations of classical rhetoric whereby there were three genera – the high, the middling and the low, described by Monteverdi as representing anger, moderation and humility. Within the new rhetorical regime

155 The passage is from Plato’s Republic, not his Rhetoric, as M mistakenly says. Plato, The Republic, Book III.
of the *seconda pratica* it might have been judged remiss if music didn’t have an appropriate “high” style to represent the neo-feudal values of a revived aristocratic chivalry, one that would be suitable for a book dedicated to the Emperor Ferdinand as “a paragon among warrior-princes”. As Richard Wistreich has demonstrated in his study of the soldier and singer Giulio Cesare Brancaccio (1515-1586), the imperative of establishing a suitably masculine, aristocratic, and even “chivalric” style of musicianship haunted Brancaccio’s career as courtier and musician, and Monteverdi might similarly have been explicitly responding to Tasso’s plea in his literary dialogue *La Cavaletta* (1587) for his musical contemporaries to re-establish a more weighty style in Italian secular music. It is surely no coincidence that Monteverdi turns to Tasso for his own attempt at the high style, referring to him in his preface as “the divine Tasso”, and setting the tragic final encounter of Tancredi and Clorinda from *Gerusalemme liberata* as one of the cornerstones of the collection. Like Virgil before him (and many poets after Virgil when turning from pastoral to epic), Monteverdi may have considered that it was time to “lay aside his oaten reeds for trumpets”. Monteverdi had introduced his Seventh Book of Madrigals with a poem by Marino in which the poet attempts to “raise his style and songs” to sing of Mars, but in vain; he is always defeated by the subject of love. In the Eighth Book Monteverdi girds his loins to assert more forcefully that although others sing of love, he will sing of war (“Marte”) - although it quickly becomes apparent that war is still primarily a metaphor for love as war.

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Monteverdi’s *Orfeo* Toccata, along with other works in the *stile concitato*, is music to represent a crucial aspect of the self-refashioning of Italian rulers and aristocracy at the beginning of the seventeenth century. If the function of music of the second practice was to represent, then it must be able to represent all aspects of the ideals of the new ruling classes, although the Toccata and the *stile concitato* employ fundamentally different means to do so. The Toccata signifies through a complex web of military associations and topics, whereas the madrigals of the Eighth Book attempt to convey the actions and emotions of war and combat directly: Tancredi and Clorinda galloping onto the stage, the challenge, the clash of weapons; it is representational music in the modern style. But either way, the music serves to aestheticise war in the same way as did theatricalised tournaments, choreographed horse ballets and the new art of equestrian dressage. 159 *Il combattimento* was originally performed, in the Mocenigo palace in Venice in 1624, before the War of the Mantuan Succession of 1630, the first significant war on the Italian peninsular for many years, and before the more extended horrors of the Thirty Years War began to ravage all Europe with the entry of the Swedes, also in 1630. Theodore Rabb has noted that whereas Tintoretto and the younger Rubens painted scenes that glorified war during periods of relative peace, the later Rubens, in a painting like *The Horrors of War* of 1635, and Velasquez, in *The Surrender of Breda* (1634-5), with its emphasis upon the compassion of the Spanish victor for the defeated Dutch, or *Mars Resting* of 1638-40, a portrayal of Mars as a war-weary old soldier, painted what can only be described as anti-war images. 160 The revival of chivalry from the mid-sixteenth century may have been part of the broader socio-political project of refeudalization and aristocratization, but it was also the fruit of a relatively peaceful era which was

sufficiently removed from the real horrors of war for its protagonists to be able to play at aestheticized war games instead.

This essay is part of a more extensive study of early opera and early modernity, charting the relationship between opera and socio-economic aspects of early modernity, in particular aspects such as early capitalist state formations, the scientific revolution, and colonial exploration. We might want to ask how the Orfeo Toccata (I’m not sure we can confidently designate it “Monteverdi’s” Toccata any longer), a fanfare recalling the age of medieval chivalry, was appropriate to announce such a distinctively “modern” art form as opera? Perhaps the point here is that, understood dialectically, a crucial element of modernity, and in particular of its need for legitimation, is, in Eric Hobsbawm’s famous formulation, “the invention of tradition”. ¹⁶¹ For it is the novelty of the present, the consciousness of being modern, that causes people not only to consider the present’s distinctness from the past, but also what is of value from the past that can be recuperated to legitimate the present. This was, after all, the project that Renaissance humanism had introduced, and it was under the aegis of just such a revival of antiquity that opera itself had come into being. But the revival of chivalry was the restoration of a more recent past that could be presented as a fiction of continuity rather than the story of rupture, loss and only partial retrieval that was all that early opera could claim.

Nicholas Till
26. 10. 2018