

TRACTATUS PRIMUS

FIRST TREATISE

CAPITULUM PRIMUM

FIRST CHAPTER

Harmoniam atque musicam idem esse multi credunt, verum nos longe aliter sentimus. Ex quorundam enim musicorum sententiis longa investigatione collegimus harmoniam concordium vocum esse commixtionem, musicam vero ipsius concordiae rationem sive perpensam et subtilem cum ratione indaginem. Musica autem triplex est; nam alia mundana, alia humana, alia vero dicitur instrumentalis. Mundanam atque humanam, quoniam speculativae theoricæque sunt, in secundo libro tertioque pertractabimus; tertia autem, quae tota circa instrumenta versatur, consideratio priorem sibi vendicabit locum.

Instrumentum duplex est: aliud enim natura, aliud vero arte constat. Naturale instrumentum vox hominis est, quod naturaliter vocem elevare deprimereque possumus. Artis instrumentum dicitur, quod arte fiat non natura, ut monochordum et cithara et cetera, quae

Many people believe harmony and music to be the same thing but we feel very differently. For after a long investigation, we have concluded from the opinions of certain musicians that harmony is the union of concordant voices, but music is the theory of the concord itself, or if you prefer, a thorough consideration and minute investigation accompanied by reason.¹ Furthermore, music is three-fold: for one type of music is called *mundana*; another type is called *humana*; but yet still another type is called *instrumentalis*. Since *mundana* and *humana* are speculative and theoretical, we will treat them in the second and third book, but the third aspect of music, which deals entirely with the instruments will demand our first consideration.

The instrument is two-fold: one type consists of natural qualities, but the other type consists of artistic principles. The natural instrument is the voice of man, because man is able to raise and lower the voice naturally. An instrument is said to be of art because it is made

cantilenae famulantur.
 Circa quorum
 accuratissimam practicae
 considerationem tria
 perscrutanda nobis
 occurrunt: vox scilicet,
 sonus atque numerus sive
 mensura. Vox in proposito
 abusive pro hominum et
 instrumentorum sono
 sumitur, ut Aristotelis
 sententia est in libro *De
 Anima*: vox est sonus
 animati tantum. Sed vox
 etiam inanimatorum est, ut
 instrumentorum musicorum,
 solum secundum
 similitudinem, quia
 discrete sonant. Sonus
 vero non simpliciter sed
 pro sono duarum aut
 plurium chordarum simul
 percussarum aut hominum
 duorum pluriumve simul
 canentium in praesentiarum
 accipitur. Numerus vero
 similiter non simplex, sed
 cum habitudine ad
 passiones consideratur.

Prima autem consideratio
 a neotericis cantus
 firmus, a quibusdam vero
 cantus planus dicitur,
 secunda contrapunctus,

by art rather than by
 nature, such as the
 monochord, the cithara,
 and others that are
 subservient to the song.
 In respect to the most
 precise consideration of
 the practice of these
 instruments, there are
 three aspects which we
 should examine: namely,
 voice, sound, and rhythm,
 or if you prefer
 measurement.² The term
 "voice," is too often
 taken to represent both
 the sound of men and the
 sound of instruments.
 Thus, it is the opinion of
 Aristotle in the book *De
 Anima* that "the voice is
 the sound of the animate
 being alone."³ But the
 voice is also the sound of
 inanimate beings such as
 musical instruments;
 [however], only according
 to analogy, since they
 sound differently.
 However, the term "sound"
 in the present circum-
 stances is not taken in
 its simplest form, but as
 the sound of two or more
 strings being struck at
 the same time, or of two
 or more people singing at
 the same time.⁴
 Similarly, rhythm is not
 considered in a simple
 fashion, but with a
 condition toward the
 proportions.

The first consideration
 is called *cantus firmus* by
 the new theorists; indeed,
 by some it is called
cantus planus.⁵ The

quam ab antiquis
organizationem dictam
fuisse constat; at tertia
cantus figuratus, quae a
plerisque organi cantus
appellatur. Secundum hanc
igitur triplicem
considerationem compendium
hoc nostrum dividemus.

In prima consideratione
tria praecipue
procurabimus. Primo
instrumento per artem
composito rectas eius
divisiones erudiendis ad
sensum monstrabimus et
chordarum secundum
divisiones percussarum
sonitum, ut memoriae
mandent, admonebimus.
Secundo organum naturale
per [arsim] et thesim
idest per elevationem et
depositionem sive per
intensionem et remissionem [4]
cum artis instrumento
copulantes psallere
concorditer assuefaciemus,
quousque sine eo legitime
psallere didicerint.
Tertio vero odas vel
notulas, per quas omnis
cantus dignosci, cantari
componique possit, in
plano designabimus.

second consideration is
called *contrapunctus*,⁶ a
structure that is known
to have been named by the
ancients. Finally, the
third consideration is
called *cantus figuratus*,⁷
which is [also] commonly
called *organi cantus*.⁸
Consequently, we will
divide this compendium of
ours according to these
three considerations.

In the first
consideration we will
attend to three aspects in
particular. Firstly, we
will show the correct
divisions with the
artificial instrument⁹ in
order to instruct the
students toward a proper
understanding, and we will
admonish them to commit to
memory the sound of the
striking strings according
to the divisions.
Secondly, we will become
accustomed to singing
harmoniously, uniting the
natural instrument with
the artificial instrument
through arsis and thesis;
that is, through the
raising and lowering or,
if you prefer, the
stretching and relaxing
[of the pitch],¹⁰ for
however long it takes them
to learn how to sing
properly without it.
Thirdly, as a matter of
course we will allude to
the points or notes in
plainsong through which
every song is able to be
distinguished, sung, and
composed.

Verum quia
instrumentorum arte
constantium diversa sunt
genera, ne varietate
disciplina fiat obscurior,
unam chordam dividendi
modum et regulam dabimus,
unde monochordi a Graecis
nomen assumptum est.
Postea vero per alia
transeuntes ad intentum
finem deveniemus.

Since the types of
harmonious artificial
instruments are diverse,
[and] lest the teaching
becomes unintelligible due
to [this] variety, we will
give the manner and rule
of dividing one string;
whence it has received the
name *monochord* from the
Greeks. Thereafter, while
touching upon other
matters, we will arrive at
our intended purpose.

ENDNOTES

1. Terni notes that Ramos makes a distinction between "harmony" and "music." This definition of harmony suggests a vertical concept, as opposed to the horizontal thinking of earlier contrapuntists.

2. Ramos usually differentiates between the terms *vox* and *sonus*. Bower notes that the term *vox* can have a variety of meanings, even in a musical context--pitch, note, the human voice (either speaking or singing), or sound in general. Ramos uses the term *sonus* to refer to sound as a musical entity. The definition generally becomes clear within the context of the sentence.

3. Book II, Chapter 8 of Aristotle's *De Anima*. See Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans., intro., and notes by R.D. Hicks (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1965), 420b, 4ff.

4. Terni notes the tautology of Ramos's definitions of *vox* and *sonus* to that found in Tinctoris's *Terminorum musicae diffinitorium*: "Vox est sonus naturaliter aut artificialiter prolatus" while "Sonus est quicquid proprie et per se ab auditu percipitur." Translation: "The voice is a sound produced naturally or artificially" while "sound is whatever is perceived exclusively and intrinsically by the sense of hearing." See Johannes de Tinctoris, *Terminorum musicae diffinitorium*, facsimile of the Treviso Edition (ca. 1494), vol. XXVI, *Monuments of Music and Music Literature in Facsimile* (New York: Broude Brothers Limited, 1966), s.v.

5. lit., "plainsong."

6. lit., "counterpoint."

7. lit., "figured song."

8. lit., "the song of the instrument."

9. i.e., the monochord.

10. Bower notes that the Latin verbs *intentio* and *remissio* have a duplicity of meaning. *Intentio* can imply an increase in the tension of a string (stretching), thereby resulting in a higher pitch--an elevation of the sound, whereas *remissio* implies the opposite, that is--a loosening of the tension (relaxing), thereby resulting in a lower pitch. Thus, at times these two verbs will be translated, respectively, as "to tighten" or "to loosen," and at times as "to raise" or "to lower."