

The Ethics of Harmony in Italian Renaissance Tuning Theory

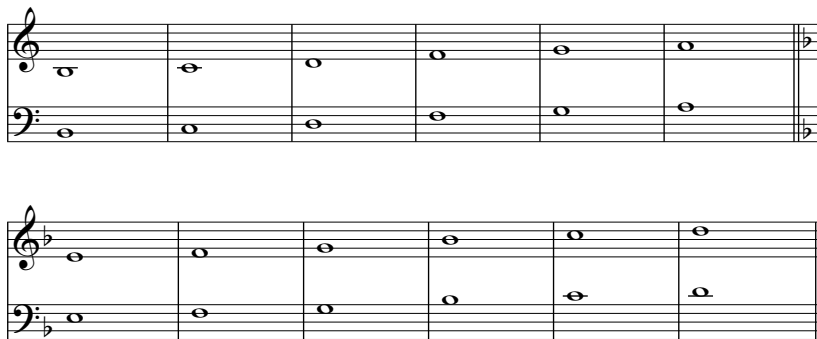
Alex Ness

asness@gmail.com

Vicenzo Galilei: "Dialogue on Ancient and Modern Music"
(Trans. Claude V. Palisca)

p. 64:

"It necessarily follows that the intervals of [the following example], consisting of a minor seventh and a major tone in the ratios assigned to them by the theorist [Zarlino], are not consonant but dissonant octaves, which is against the opinion of the practitioner.



"That they are not what I said they are, we will see by experience in the following calculation from the numbers of their ratios.

9	5	Ratio of the minor seventh
9	8	Ratio of the major tone
<hr/>		
81	40	The 81:40 ratio

"We have obtained as a product the ratio 81:40, which consists of an octave augmented by a comma [81:80 x 2:1 = 81:40]."

Nicola Vicentino: "Ancient Music Adapted to Modern Practice"
(Trans. Maria Rika Maniates)

Book III, Chapter 51: "How to Write an Enharmonic Composition, with an Example"

"In this small example, there occurs a fugue built on the ascending and descending enharmonic dieses."

Text:

Soav'e dolc'ardore, Gentle and sweet passion,
Che fra piant'e sospiri Which among laments and sighs

[Note: The superscript dot raises a note's pitch by an enharmonic diesis (approx. one-fifth of a whole tone, or between one and two syntonic commas). The video shows this composition as it would have been played on Vicentino's archicembalo, an enharmonic keyboard with 36 keys per octave.]

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with four staves. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom three staves are the lute accompaniment. The time signature is 4/4. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score includes lyrics in Italian and English. The first system (measures 1-5) features the lyrics: "So - a - v'e dol - c'ar - do - - re,". The second system (measures 6-10) features: "So - a - v'e dol - c'ar - do - re, Che fra pian - t'e so - re, So - a - v'e dol - c'ar do - re, Che fra". The third system (measures 11-15) features: "spi - ri, Che fra pian - te e so - spi - ri, pian - te e so - spi - ri, Che fra pian - t'e Che fra pian - t'e so - spi - ri, Che fra pian - t'e re, Che fra pian - t'e so - spi - ri, pian -". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals, with a superscript dot indicating an enharmonic diesis.