

KATHRYN BOSI MONTEATH
Prato, Italia

A CURIOUS SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PAINTING OF MUSIC-MAKING IN CASALE MONFERRATO

IZVLEČEK: Slika v katedrali mesta Casale Monferrato prikazuje šest članov bratovščine svetega Filipa, ki igrajo na viole da gamba in so postavljeni okoli nenavadnega glasbenega stojala, na katerem šest posameznih pultov podpira en sam osrednji drog. Sodelujejo še dva deška pevca, čembalist in dirigent. Na sliki je napis »SI. NOMIO. QUIS. BROMIUS?«.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: viole, glasbena stojala, Casale Monferrato, Adriano Banchieri, Orfej

ABSTRACT: A painting in the Cathedral of Casale Monferrato shows six members of the Confraternità di San Filippo playing viols, positioned around an unusual music stand where six individual bookstands are supported by a single, central pole. Two choirboys, a harpsichordist and a musical director also participate. The painting is inscribed "SI. NOMIO. QUIS. BROMIUS?".

KEYWORDS: viols, music stands, Casale Monferrato, Adriano Banchieri, Orpheus

The name of the northern Italian city of Casale Monferrato in Piemonte will almost certainly be familiar to scholars of Renaissance music: the monumental collection of seven sixteenth-century Renaissance choirbooks in the Archivio Capitolare of the Cathedral of Sant'Evasio in Casale — which was found and edited by David Crawford for the American Institute of Musicology in 1975¹ come immediately to mind (an eighth volume was fortuitously found in a cupboard many years later). One also remembers the Francesco Sforza manuscript (sometimes known as the “Codice Borsieri”) in the same archive, which was likewise studied by Crawford² and displayed in Mantua on the occasion of the exhibition *Gonzaga: La Celeste Galeria*, held in the Palazzo del Te in 2002. Moreover, there is in the same Archivio Capitolare a extensive corpus of sixteenth-century liturgical manuscripts,³ many of which have been decorated with miniatures of great beauty (some pages are reproduced in *Lo Scrinium Riaperto*, published on the occasion of the IX Centenario di Consacrazione del Duomo di S. Evasio, Cattedrale di Casale Monferrato). But other libraries and archives in Casale Monferrato — including in particular the Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile and the Biblioteca Civica “Giovanni Canna”, contain an enormous treasury of early musical sources of innumerable kinds: manuscripts containing both chant and Renaissance polyphony, plus many editions of early printed music that are often rare, even sometimes unique. An extensive report on the musical holdings of the various archives and libraries in Casale Monferrato has been undertaken and published by Stefano Baldi,⁴ while Daniele Torelli has contributed an impressive, admirably researched and highly detailed study of the madrigal sources in the city, concentrating in particular on the printed sources of madrigals in the Biblioteca Civica “Giovanni Canna” and the textual and cultural context of the madrigal in Casale Monferrato.⁵ Moreover, the city’s Museo Civico holds two delightful paintings of musical interest: a concert of angels by Suor Orsola Maddalena Caccia (1596–1676)⁶ and an *Allegoria della musica* (dated 1666) by Suor Angeli-

I am greatly privileged to have been invited to contribute to this volume in honour of my lifelong friend and colleague Metoda Kokole. My warmest thanks go to Myrna Herzog — a noted performer on the viola da gamba and student of its history — for her expert and invaluable information regarding the viols shown in this painting. I also remember with gratitude Manuela Meni, the late Don Alessandro Giganti and Elio Botto for their kind assistance during my researches many years ago in the Archivio Diocesano, the Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile and the Biblioteca Civica “Giovanni Canna”, respectively. I also thank Cavaliere Gian Paolo Bardazza for his encouragement and support of my projects. It was a privilege to be granted access to the remarkable resources in Casale Monferrato for the study of early music.

1 Crawford, *Sixteenth-Century Choirbooks*.

2 Crawford, “Francesco Sforza Manuscript”.

3 See Marchisio, “Scoperte e riscoperte”. See also the earlier study by Guerrini, “I codici musicali dell’Archivio capitolare”.

4 Baldi, *Le fonti musicali in Piemonte*, 101–105.

5 Torelli, “Il madrigale nella Casale dei Gonzaga”.

6 Suor Orsola Maddalena Caccia, *Angeli musicanti* (1625–1630), Casale Monferrato, Museo Civico.

ca Bottera, a pupil of the former, depicting a joyful image of a young woman garlanded with flowers and playing an organ with a score before her, who recalls Santa Cecilia.⁷



Figure 1 | Suor Orsola Maddalena Caccia, *Angeli musicanti* (1625–1630), (Casale Monferrato, Museo Civico; reproduced by permission)



Figure 2 | Suor Angelica Bottera, *Allegoria della musica* (1666), (Casale Monferrato, Museo Civico; reproduced by permission)

See Mazza, *Il Museo Civico*, 55, for a reproduction, comment and bibliography.

⁷ Suor Angelica Bottera, *Allegoria della musica* (1666), Casale Monferrato, Museo Civico. See Mazza, *Il Museo Civico*, 56–57, for a reproduction, comment and bibliography.

This article, however, wishes to make known to a wider public an extraordinary early seventeenth century painting of music-making found in the Cathedral of Sant'Evasio of Casale Monferrato. This unusual painting will be of great interest for scholars of both musical iconography and the history of musical instruments, and I believe it to be still unknown to most musicologists.⁸



Figure 3 | Unknown artist, *Si nomio quis Bromius?*, (c. 1620–1650), (Casale Monferrato, Duomo di Sant'Evasio; reproduced by permission of the Archivio Diocesano)

The painting, by an unknown artist of the early-to-mid seventeenth century, is positioned on the wall to the right of the entrance to the Sala Capitolare of the Cathedral. It depicts the performance of chamber music by six clerics playing various sizes of viola da gamba, (two treble, two tenor and two bass viols), together with two young choirboys and a musical director. All are performing from partbooks, in some of which short phrases of text underlaid to the musical notation can just be discerned (though not deciphered). This suggests a performance of a motet for between six and eight voices, with viols supplying the lower parts and perhaps doubling the singers. They are accompanied by a musician standing at the harpsichord, which has a painting of Orpheus surrounded by wild beasts of noble aspect decorating its inner cover (see Figure 4).

8 Reproduced in *Il Duomo di Casale Monferrato*, 226. A brief reference to the painting can be found in n. 65 of the essay by Spantigati “Dipinti, sculture e arredi”, in which the author attributes the work to an anonymous seventeenth-century artist and offers other comments, which will appear later in this essay. The painting was also published some years later in Martinotti, *Musica a Casale*, 274 (additionally reproduced on the back paper cover of the book). Martinotti attributes it (erroneously) to an eighteenth-century painter without further observation.

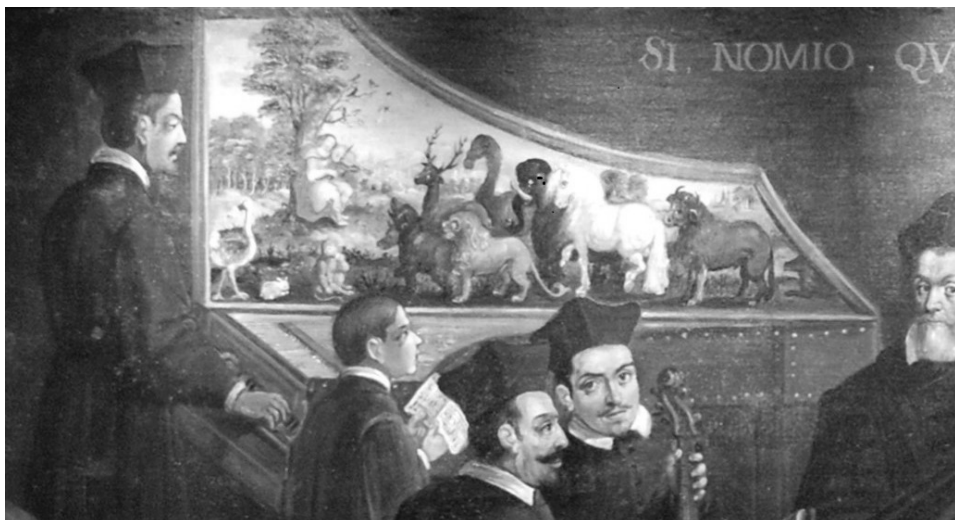


Figure 4 | Unknown artist, *Si nomio quis Bromius?* (detail), (Casale Monferrato, Duomo di Sant'Evasio; reproduced by permission of the Archivio Diocesano)

The subject — Orpheus taming the beasts with the beneficent power of his music — seems to us today to be almost predictable for the decoration of a keyboard musical instrument, given its content. A similar theme can in fact be found on two harpsichords by Johannes and Andreas Ruckers, dating from 1617 and 1646, respectively,⁹ and also on a highly decorated hexagonal Venetian virginal by Giovanni Celestini (1593) held by the Royal College of Music, London. The three vignettes on the nameboard of this instrument, painted on mother-of-pearl lozenges, show two episodes from the life of Apollo — the Greek god of music — flanking a central image that shows Orpheus playing to the beasts, this last scene reproduced in the Appendix, Illustration 3.¹⁰ Colleagues have also notified me about a late seventeenth-century drawing by Hendrick ten Oever showing Orpheus taming the beasts, which is clearly a design intended for the decoration of the inner lid of a harpsichord, now held in the Rijksmuseum (see the Appendix, Illustration 4). Moreover, they have informed me of the presence of a harpsichord by Gilbert Desruisseaux dated 1678–1679, where Orpheus's taming of the animals is depicted on the inner lid, in the Musée de la musique in Paris (see the Appendix, Illustration 5).¹¹ Strangely enough, however, few other examples of such thematic decoration seem to have survived on keyboard instruments from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

9 See Gétreau, "Deux couvercles de clavecins".

10 Kindly brought to my attention by Gabriele Rossi Rognoni of the Royal College of Music, London.

11 I am deeply indebted to Arianna Rigamonte and Tim Shephard for informing me of the drawing and the harpsichord.

The camel visible amongst the creatures shown on the lid in the Casale painting seems to me to be somewhat uncommon in earlier depictions of Orpheus taming the beasts in Italian art, but in the early seventeenth century it often appears, especially in Dutch and Flemish engravings: see, for example, that by Nicolaes de Bruyn (1571–1656) of Orpheus taming the beasts (*Orpheus cithara feras et inanima trahit*), reproduced in this article in the Appendix, Illustration 1; here, tiny camels appear in the background on the far right.¹² In fact, it seems very probable that engravings or paintings by Flemish artists influenced the depiction of animals seen on the harpsichord lid in the Casale painting — not only regarding the presence of camels, but even more with respect to the animals' robust, muscular bodies and noble aspect. Indeed, I venture to suggest that there is a specific relationship between the decoration of this harpsichord lid and the style of the Flemish artist Roelandt Savery (1576–1639), as seen in his painting *Imbarco degli animali sull'arca di Noè* (see Figure 5), held by the Museo Civico of Casale and originating from the Vitta collection, which is thought to derive in turn from the previous owners of the palace, the Natta family of Alfiano.¹³ It suffices to compare the horses, the camels, the deer (whose antlers are practically identical in shape) and the bears to become aware of the similarity. Bearing in mind that this painting attributed to Savery seems to have been held in Casale from an early period of its existence, one might reasonably propose that it offers a model for the illustration of Orpheus on the harpsichord lid.

Returning now to the image of the whole painting, we see on the right a clerical musical director who waves a white cloth to mark the beat. With regard to this last element, I am deeply indebted to Diego Fratelli, who has informed me that Adriano Banchieri, in his *Cartella musicale*, suggests that those directing music may use “mano, bachetta over fazoletto” (hand, baton or handkerchief).¹⁴ Fratelli has also pointed out that using a white cloth would be much more visible than a baton for indicating the time in dark surroundings (perhaps lit only by candles). I am equally grateful to him for pointing out the similar use of a white cloth for the direction of musicians in the lower right-hand corner of the painting by Carl Borromäus Andreas Ruthart (1630–c. 1703) that shows the coronation of Pope Celestino V in the church

12 Nicolaes de Bruyn, *Orpheus cithara feras et inanima trahit* (c. 1610–1630), published by Justus Danckers (1635–1702). See *New Hollstein*, 115–116. This engraving is significant for our painting in Casale on account of both the style of its depiction of the animals and the elaborate tailpiece of the viol, which resemble those of that painting, as will be mentioned later.

13 Mazza, *Il Museo Civico*, 26, states that this painting is held in store by the Museo Civico in Palazzo Langosco, adding that it comes from the collection of Giuseppe Raffaele Vitta donated in 1916. She suggests that this painting, along with the seven other Flemish works donated by Vitta in 1916, belonged to the former owners of the palace, the Natta d'Alfiano family. A description of the contents of the Natta property (De Conti, *Ritratto della città di Casale*, 2) refers, in fact, to “alcuni dipinti forestieri”.

14 Banchieri, *Cartella musicale*, 33.

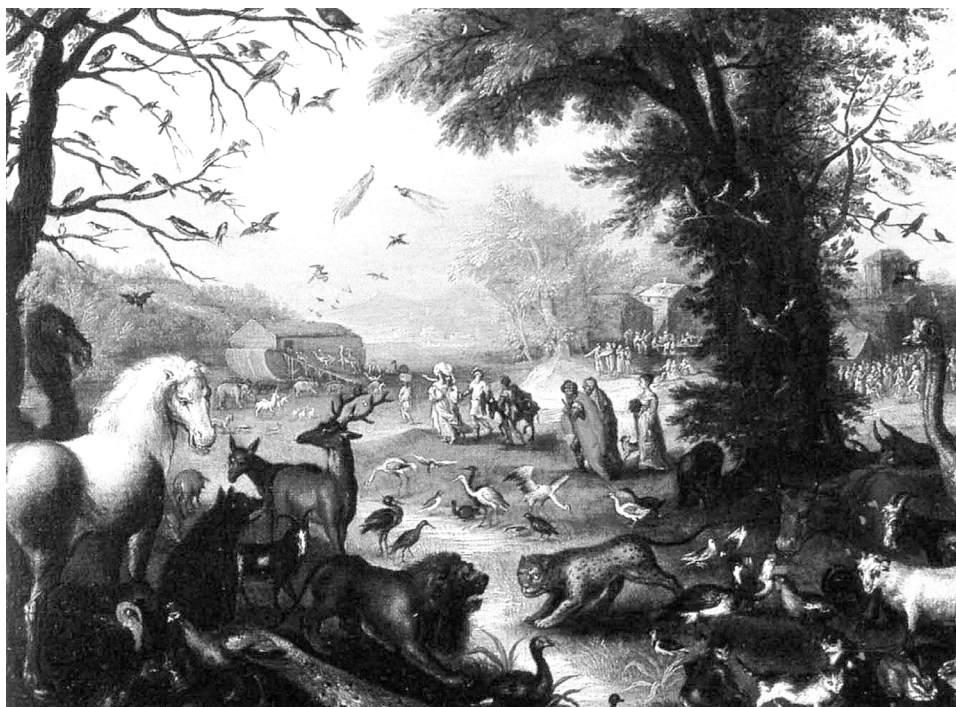


Figure 5 | Roelandt Savery (1576–1639), attrib., *Imbarco degli animali sull'arca di Noè* (Casale Monferrato, Museo Civico; reproduced by permission)

of Collemaggio, L'Aquila; this is discussed by Francesco Zimei and reproduced in detail in the Appendix, Illustration 2.¹⁵

All the musicians in our painting in Casale wear ecclesiastical robes which indicate that they belonged to the Order of San Filippo Neri: these are black robes held by a cord at the waist and closed by five buttons (in this painting — as is more common — the buttons are vertically rather than horizontally aligned); we also see the pointed white collars belonging to the garment beneath the black robe, and black hats or berets with four projecting corners.¹⁶ The relevant Oratorio was established in

¹⁵ Zimei has discussed this painting briefly in his volume *I "canti" del Perdono*, 346–347. For Ruthart, see *Carl Borromäus Andreas Ruthart*, 2020, but this study contains no reference to the painting in Collemaggiore. Rather, it concentrates entirely on Ruthart's countless depictions of animals, which comprised by far the greater part of his output. The engraver Nicolaes de Bruyn, cited in n. 12, was similarly devoted to images of animals, and it seems very likely that works by Flemish artists influenced the depiction of animals on the harpsichord lid in the Casale painting, especially (as I observed earlier) on account of their robust, muscular bodies and noble stance. See my suggestion regarding the painting attributed to Saveri in Casale discussed above.

¹⁶ With regard to the ecclesiastical robes of the Ordine dei Filippini, we are told that they wore a "lunga veste nera da cui fuoriesce il bavero bianco [...] aperta davanti, chiusa al collo con tre

Casale in 1612 by Bishop Tulio del Caretto at the suggestion of Padre Giacinto Natta, a famed preacher and Pontifical Delegate. But the church dedicated to the Saint was not established until 1721,¹⁷ which may explain why this painting, dating from perhaps 1615–1650, has been preserved in the Cathedral of Sant'Evasio rather than in the later church of San Filippo Neri.

The inscription at the head of the painting, reading “SI. NOMIO. QUIS. BROMIUS?” is a little problematic. It can be translated as: “If there is Apollo, who is Bacchus?”.¹⁸ “Nomio”, used as an epithet for Apollo, sometimes signifies a pastoral god but can also mean (importantly for our topic) a law-giver, as emerges from the writings of Cicero.¹⁹ “Bromius” in ancient Greek seems to have sometimes been used as an epithet for Dionysus/Bacchus, signifying “noisy”, “roaring” or “boisterous”.²⁰ Spantigati, in her essay cited in note 8, suggests that the phrase signifies: “Se c’è Apollo (Nomio), chi è Bacco il rumoroso (Bromius)?” ovvero, ‘Se c’è armonia, chi

o cinque bottoni [...] stretta ai fianchi da un cordoglio, annodato a sinistra con pendenti”. “In alcuni congregazioni [...] il lembo sinistro della veste non si abbottonava perpendicolarmente al centro, sotto il mento, ma si sovrapponeva all’altro lato diagonalmente verso sinistra con cinque bottoni” (in our painting the five buttons are placed vertically). “[...] la berretta [...] svasata e sporgente ai quattro angoli, [è] un po’ più basso di quelli di altre religioni”. With regard to lay brothers, “essi indossassero una tonica, lunga sino alle ginocchia, e un mantello un poco più lungo”. Thus the musical director, with his cloak or *tonica*, his hat of different shape and size and his lace-trimmed “bavero”, is clearly a lay brother of the order of Filippini; the choirboys likewise wear cloaks. See Cistellini, “Oratorio di s. Filippo Neri”. I am grateful to Daniela Degli Innocenti of the Museo del Tessuto di Prato for facilitating my access to this volume.

- 17 The idea of establishing an oratorio dedicated to San Filippo Neri in Casale arose in the early seventeenth century as a concrete answer to the requests for renovation and reform initiated by the Council of Trent. In view of its historical importance for the spiritual and communal life of the city, an exhibition with the title “Barocco sacro a Casale Monferrato: la chiesa di San Filippo Neri” was held from 16 October to 8 November 2020 in the Biblioteca del Seminario, Casale Monferrato.
- 18 My thanks to Davide Baldi for this suggestion.
- 19 Nomio is sometimes used as an epithet for divinities — in particular, Apollo and Pan — alluding to their having tended flocks: see for example Callimachus, in his *Hymn to Apollo*. But as an epithet of Apollo, Nomio has another significance — vital for our interpretation — as is given by Cicero in *De natura deorum*, vol. 3, cap. XXIII, 57: “Nomionem appellat, quad ab eo se leges ferunt accepisse”. The fourth [Apollo] belongs to Arcadia, and is called by the Arcadians Nomios, as being their traditional lawgiver (Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 126–127). Note that some scholars, in their references to Cicero, erroneously give *De oratore* instead of *De natura deorum* as the source of this epithet.
- 20 Wikipedia tells us that Bromio or Bromius (ancient Greek: Βρόμιος) was used as an epithet for Dionysus/Bacchus. It signifies “noisy”, “roaring” or “boisterous”, from βρέμειν, to roar. Wikipedia, s.v. “Bromius”, last modified 1 August 2023, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bromius>. This epithet is also given in the entry on Dionysus/Bacchus in Grant, *Who’s Who in Classical Mythology*, 112, but without explanation of its significance or origin. Hence, in the context of the inscription, “Nomio” refers to Apollo as a conferrer of law and order who opposes the rowdy disorder brought about by Bacchus.

stona?” (“If there is Apollo, who is the noisy Bacchus?”; in other words, ‘If there is harmony, who creates discord/dissonance?’”), and I find this exegesis convincing.²¹

But the most extraordinary aspect of the painting in Casale — surely very rare in musical iconography — is the circular wooden structure in the centre of the scene, which supports individually all the scores for the players of the stringed instruments, so that they can play in a circle, reading their parts with facility from a shared “composite” music stand. Even for this reason alone, the painting is fascinating. Students of the iconography of musical instruments will, one hopes, be able to inform us whether such extraordinary music stands are depicted elsewhere. I myself can offer only a painting produced by Peter Paul Rubens, together with Jan Brueghel the Elder: *The Sense of Hearing*, from the series of paintings of *The Five Senses* in the Museo del Prado.²² In the detail of this painting given below, we see a circular table with bookstands attached for the purpose of holding six partbooks for the use of musicians positioned around this table, which also holds a reading lamp. But this structure is quite different from that shown in our painting from Casale, which has been constructed specifically for holding scores or partbooks and for no other purpose.

In the meantime, I offer the following information about the instruments making up the viol consort, which has been most kindly contributed by Myrna Herzog, whose highly expert contribution to this article is fundamental for our knowledge of the viols depicted therein. She notes that the viols in the painting have been made in a guitar-like shape, which is in general less common for those instruments. It is also to be found in a painting by Ludovico Gambara datable to c. 1560 (for this last, see the Appendix, Illustration 7).

- 21 With regard to a connection between the Orpheus depicted on the harpsichord lid and the reference to Apollo and Dionysus/Bacchus in the inscription on the painting, I quote Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, 47: “Orpheus was a Thracian hero closely associated with the cult of Apollo, and was therefore in his early days in conflict with the pre-eminently Thracian worship of Dionysus, an essentially different type of religion. He was thought of as a figure of peace and calm, the maker of a music with magically soothing properties”. Vicari, “*Sparagmos*”, 75, notes that Thracian Orpheus was connected with Apollo: according to some versions of his story (as, for example, that related by Durante in *Compendio della mitologia*, he was the son of Apollo).
- 22 The online inventory of the Prado Museum informs us that in this series of paintings of the five senses (Sight, Hearing, Smell, Taste and Touch), Rubens depicted the figures, while Brueghel the Elder provided the magnificent courtly settings. The pictorial representations on the walls of the room depicted in Hearing include — predictably — a scene portraying Orpheus taming the beasts with his music (however, not visible in the detail of the painting given here, which focuses on the circular table with bookstands, partbooks (the centrally placed one reveals that these are six-part madrigals by Peter Philips) and instruments). Note also the presence of birds and a deer, which refer to the power of music. This painting is discussed and reproduced in the introduction in Drèze and Guilloux, *Rubens et la musique*, 14–15. A bibliography of works dealing specifically with this painting can be found on the website of the Museo del Prado.



Figure 6 | Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Breughel the Elder, *The Sense of Hearing* (1617–1618), (Madrid, Museo del Prado, Inventory P001395; reproduced by permission)

She has informed me that on his website (which no longer exists) the late José Vázquez observed that

this shape of viol, called “figure eight” or “cornerless” or “guitar-shape”, common in the 16th century, is often encountered throughout the 17th and up to the middle of the 18th centuries, particularly in Italy. A number of viols by Grancino (Milano) and Petrus Guarneri (Cremona, later in Mantova) made in this form survive, dating from the beginning of the 18th century.

Herzog points out that the viols in the painting are unusually shallow, like violins. The arching of their fronts suggests that they were most probably made like violins (which, as she says, is quite common for Italian viols), meaning that each table was carved out of a single plank rather than using the English technique of “bent plates” (which was to glue a number of strips of wood — usually five — one alongside the other and then bend them). In addition, their backs seem as round as their tops; they are not canted in the upper part as is usual in viols with flat backs — and the viols have clearly over-lapping edges of table and back. The shape of their sound-holes is typical of North-Italian instruments: F and E (or a rather elaborate C) shaped sound-holes, as can be seen in El Greco’s painting *Annunciazione* dated c. 1600 (see the

Appendix, Illustration 8),²³ as well as in Brescian viols by Gasparo da Salò, Pellegrino de Michelis Zanetto, Pietro Zanetto, Giovanni Paolo Maggini and Antonio Brensio; Cremonese viols by the Amati, Antonio Stradivarius and Andrea Guarneri; Venetian viols by Domenico Ruffo and Ventura Linarol; and Milanese viols by Carlo Testore and Carlo Grancino. The shape of the tailpieces is also remarkable — very elaborate, rather than straight — as can be seen in the viols in the Italian painting *San Francesco confortato da un angelo musicante* by the Genoese Gioacchino Assereto (1600–1649) (see the Appendix, Illustration 6), in the anonymous painting of a concert, of Florentine origin (c. 1550–1600), today in the Louvre (MNR 254) and (as I discovered myself) in the engraving *Orpheus cithara feras et inanima trahit* by Nicolaes de Bruyn (c. 1610–1630), shown in the Appendix, Illustration 1. Their scrolls are also made in the violin fashion — most of them full scrolls (perhaps one is a carved head?) — rather than featuring the open scrolls typical of English viols of the period.

Herzog observes that our painting in Casale Monferrato contains another minor but interesting detail: all the bridges of the viols are positioned very low: much lower than in standard practice today. She notes that this is a common feature of early viols and violins, indicating that the sound post was probably placed just opposite the foot of the bridge, and not at a certain distance, as practised today. This kind of positioning was very common before 1650 — thus preceding the invention of wound (covered) strings — in order to lengthen the playing segment of strings, which boosted the lower strings in particular. Last but not least, she observes that they were clearly built as a set (*concerto*) by a single maker, probably commissioned by the religious institution.

The highly detailed, expert information about the viols depicted in our painting, generously offered by Myrna Herzog, offers us much information about the instruments depicted therein, but we are unable to offer an extensive bibliography for the iconography of the painting of the myth of Orpheus playing to the animals decorating keyboard instruments of the late Renaissance or Baroque; nor can we refer our readers to the existence of similar circular wooden structures in the seventeenth century for the support of scores or part-books for a musical consort. Our essay on this remarkable painting, which deserves to be better known for its many fascinating features, thus concludes with questions for our readers, which can perhaps now be answered by the expertise of the scholarly community.

23 Our illustration shows the painting in the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, but there is also a larger version in the Prado. See Guarino, *L'Annunciazione*.

APPENDIX

Illustrations

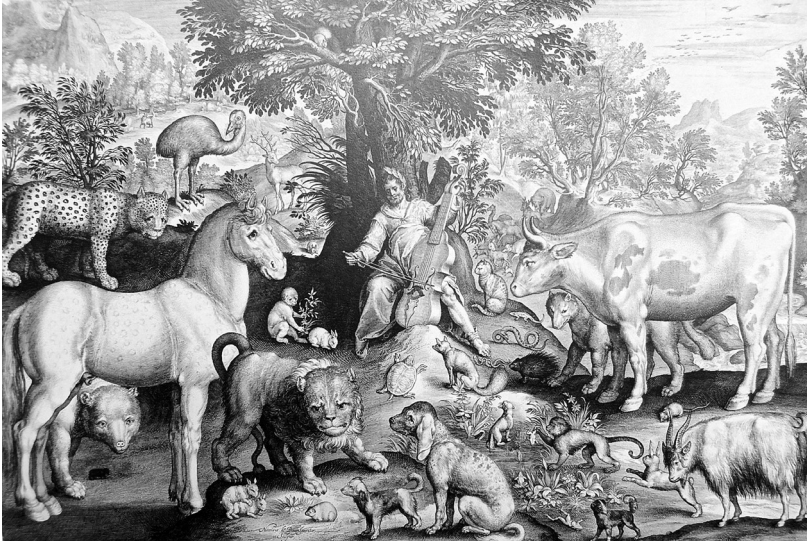


Illustration 1 | Nicolaes de Bruyn (c. 1610–1630), *Orpheus cithara feras et inanima trahit*, published by Justus Danckers (1635–1702)



Illustration 2 | Carl Borromäus Andreas Ruthart (1630–c. 1703), *Incoronazione di Celestino V* (1694?), detail of lower right portion (L'Aquila, Santa Maria di Collemaggio; reproduced by permission)



Illustration 3 | Detail of hexagonal Venetian virginal by Giovanni Celestini (1593), (Royal College of Music, London; reproduced by permission)

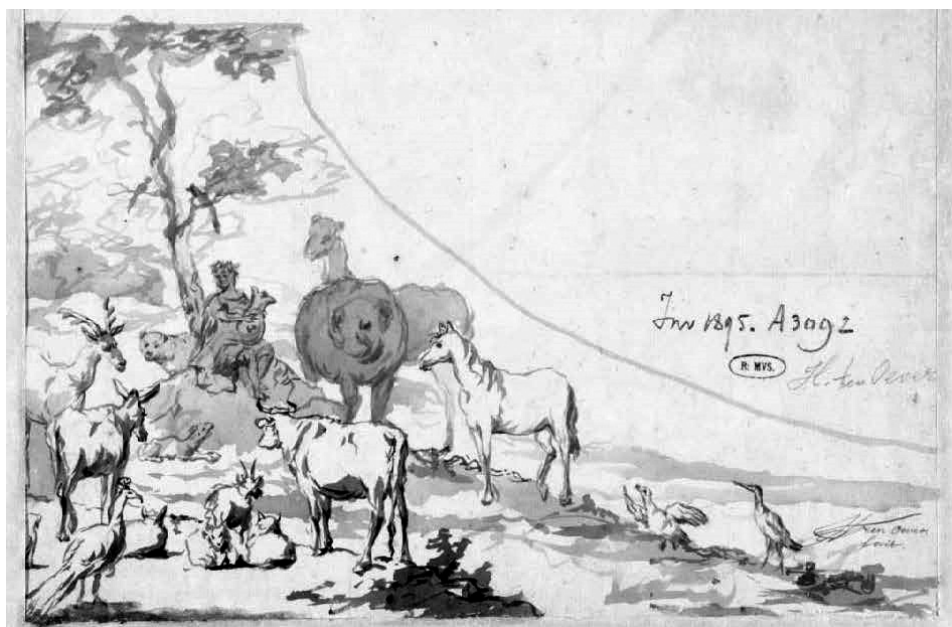


Illustration 4 | Hendrick ten Oever, late seventeenth century, drawing (for harpsichord decoration?) showing Orpheus playing to the animals (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)

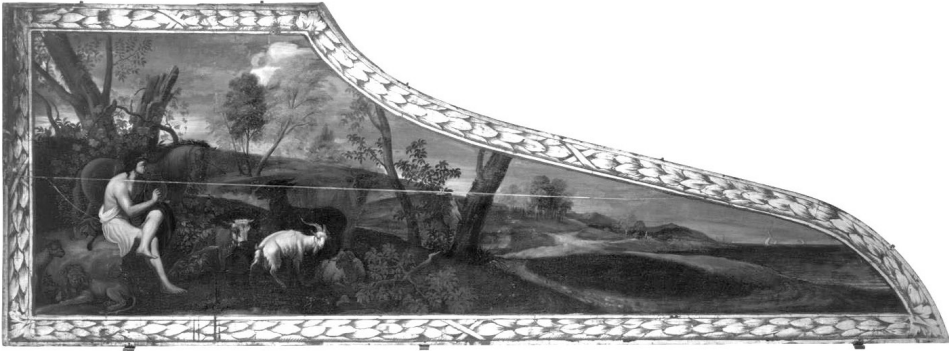


Illustration 5 | Harpsichord lid by Gilbert Desruisseaux (1678–1679), (Musée de la Musique, Paris, inventory number E.979.2.3)



Illustration 6 | Giocchino Assereto (1600–1649), *San Francesco confortato da un angelo musicante* (Collezione D'Arte Della Banca Carige di Genoa)



Illustration 7 | Ludovico Gambara, *Concerto* (c. 1560), (Palazzo Maggi, Cadignano, Brescia)



Illustration 8 | El Greco, *Annunciazione* (c. 1600), detail of upper section (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid)

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ZANIMIVA SLIKA IZ 17. STOLETJA, KI PRIKAŽUJE MUZICIRANJE V CASALE MONFERRATO

Članek obravnava sliko, ki jo hranijo v stolnici sv. Evazija v mestu Casale Monferrato. Prikazuje šest klerikov reda sv. Filipa Nerija, ki igrajo v ansamblu viol da gamba (dve visoki, dve tenorski in dve basovski) in sedijo okrog glasbenega stojala, sestavljenega iz štirinožne konstrukcije, ki podpira osrednji drog s šestimi podaljški – na vsakem od njih je notni pult, kar glasbenikom omogoča igranje v krogu. To zelo nenavadno glasbeno stojalo – po mojem vedenju je edinstveno v upodobitvah muziciranja – spominja na okroglo mizo s šestimi notnimi pulti na sliki Rubensa in Breughela starejšega z naslovom *Čut za sluh* v muzeju Prado, vendar je na sliki v Casalu namesto mize upodobljena konstrukcija, sestavljena iz lesenih drogov. Za ansamblom viol sta dva deška pevca, ki pojeta iz glasovnih zvezkov, še en klerik pa igra na čembalo, ki ima na notranjem delu pokrova prizor Orfeja, ki s svojo glasbo kroti živali (sodeč po redkih danes ohranjenih primerih se zdi to presenetljivo redka dekoracija čembala). Upodobitve živali na pokrovu čembala so podobne tistim na sliki Roelandta Saveryja *Vkrcanje živali na Noetovo barko* v mestnem muzeju v Casalu, in ker naj bi ta slika izvirala iz veje družine Natti d'Alfiano, povezane z Monferratom, domnevam, da jo je naš neznani umetnik poznal. Dirigent z belim robčkom ansamblu kaže dobe, kar spomni na Banchierjevo pripombo v njegovem delu *Cartella musicale*, da glasbeni vodje lahko uporabljajo »mano, barchetta over fazoletto«. Tudi to je redko upodobljeno v prizorih muziciranja, vendar pa podoben prizor zasledimo na Ruthartovi sliki kronanja Celestina V. v Collemaggiu. Na sliki v Casalu je napis »SI. NOMIO. QUIS. BROMIUS?«, ki ga je Carla Enrica Spantigati prevedla kot »Če obstaja Apolon, kdo je hrupni Bakhus?«. To z drugimi besedami pomeni: »Če obstaja harmonija, kdo ustvarja nesoglasje/neskladnost?«, kar je prepričljivo.

Zahvaljujoč strokovnemu znanju Myrne Herzog, raziskovalke in izvajalke, lahko predstavim nekaj informacij o violah, upodobljenih na sliki v Casalu. Prvič, so »kitar-ske oblike«, kar v 16. in 17. stoletju ni redkost. Vendar so nenavadno plitve, pravzaprav kot violine, in so bile verjetno izdelane iz ene same deske, namesto da bi bile sestavljene iz lesenih trakov. Poleg tega v zgornjem delu niso nagnjene in imajo jasno prekriva-joče se robove pokrova in poda. Oblika njihovih zvočnic – F in E (ali okrašen C) – je

značilna za severnoitalijanska glasbila. Njihovi struniki – bolj zapleteni kot preprosti – so izredni. Njihovi polži so zasnovani kakor pri violinah in večina je polnih (eden ima morda izrezljano glavo). Vse kobilice viol da gamba so nameščene zelo nizko, veliko niže, kakor je v navadi danes; to je pogosta značilnost zgodnjih viol da gamba in violin ter nakazuje, da je bila duša verjetno nameščena ravno nasproti noge kobilice. Očitno jih je izdelal en sam izdelovalec; verjetno jih je kot komplet naročila verska ustanova za uporabo pri izvajanju komorne glasbe.

Upam, da bo ta članek opozoril tako raziskovalce kot izvajalce na to izjemno sliko v katedrali v Casalu, ki ponuja toliko zanimivosti in si zasluži, da bi bila širše poznana. Morda bodo kot posledica sedaj na dan prišli podatki o podobnih skupnih glasbenih stojalih in čembalih, okrašenih z Orfejem.