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Giulio Caccini

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Giulio Caccini

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Introduction

The compositional career of Giulio Caccini (1551–1618) spanned the turn of the seventeenth century and witnessed many changes in musical style and culture that have traditionally been associated with the transition between the Renaissance and Baroque periods. His [L'Euridice](#) (Florence, 1600) was the first opera to be published, and his [Le nuove musiche](#) (Florence, 1602), brought a collection of secular songs including through-composed madrigals and strophic “airs” or “arias” to the musical marketplace.¹ Caccini asserted the innovative quality of the latter collection’s Italian monody, music for a solo singer accompanied by basso continuo, in a lengthy preface to the print that addresses contemporary vocal performance practices and early seventeenth-century musical aesthetics.

Caccini’s career was rather typical for a northern Italian composer living at the turn of the century. He was supported professionally throughout his career in large part by the Medici family in Florence, at whose court he was responsible for managing the court musicians, performing as a singer, and teaching both native and foreign vocal students in addition to composing. He traveled frequently and used his trips abroad, which were likely intended to portray Caccini as a bellwether of Florence’s cultural achievement, to network with other high profile patrons in cities such as Ferrara, Rome, Genoa, and Paris.² As a result of these travels and his personal initiative in distributing his compositions, many influential patrons of the arts were familiar with his talents, and he frequently entertained competing offers from potential employers throughout northern Italy.

Caccini’s surviving musical publications reflect the competitive atmosphere cultivated by musicians in northern Italy around 1600. In fact, the composer found himself rushing to publish his self-proclaimed innovative repertoire ahead of his rivals on more than one occasion. For example, Caccini’s setting of Ottavio Rinuccini’s (1562–1621) libretto *L'Euridice* (1600) recounting the story of Orfeo and Euridice, [Euridice composta in musica](#), was hastily composed to beat his competitor [Jacopo Peri](#), who set the same text in his [Le musiche ... sopra L'Euridice](#), a much more successful production, to the press.³

¹ The dedication of [Le nuove musiche](#) is dated 1601, but the print itself is dated 1602.

² Howard Mayer Brown, “[The Geography of Florentine Monody: Caccini at Home and Abroad](#),” *Early Music* 9 (1981): 154.

³ While [Peri](#)’s version, [Le musiche...sopra L'Euridice](#), was performed for the wedding of Maria de’ Medici to Henri IV of France, Caccini had his singing students taking part in the production perform his own music, resulting in the performance of an odd mashup of music by both Peri and Caccini. Caccini’s setting of [L'Euridice](#) was not performed in full until December of 1602. For more about [Peri](#)’s composition, see Tim Carter and Richard Goldthwaite, *Orpheus in the Marketplace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 109–12.

While Caccini won that race, the death of his printer delayed his publication of *Le nuove musiche*, causing him, despite his best efforts, to fail in his pursuit to publish the very first collection of monody—Domenico Melli’s *Musiche per cantare nel chittarone, clavicembalo & altri instramenti* (Venice, 1602), which appeared just a few months before Caccini’s volume, claims that title.⁴ Although Florence’s musical luminary was not the first to publish in the style, in the preface to *Le nuove musiche* the composer maintains his status as inventor of the monodic style—one of several examples of Caccini’s vanity and competitive attitude. Although this central claim of the preface is rather selfishly mistaken, this introductory essay remains an important source of information regarding contemporary performance practices including examples vocal ornaments, as ambiguous as their notation throughout the volume may be.⁵

Life

Caccini was born in 1551 in either Rome or Tivoli. He got his musical start, as many musicians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did, singing as a choir boy in Rome. Caccini did not stay in Rome for long, however. He traveled to Florence in 1565, having been recruited to perform for the Medici family by a Florentine ambassador. Florence agreed with him; by 1566 he had relocated to the city, even though he was not granted an official position as a court musician on the Medici’s payroll until 1579.⁶ Despite offers from neighboring courts and his frequent travel, Florence, where he worked as a performer, composer, and teacher, remained home to him and his family.

Music was a consistently cohesive force in Caccini’s family. His first wife was Lucia di Filippo Gagnolanti, a singer with whom he had two daughters who both became singers and composers. In fact, his oldest daughter, [Francesca Caccini](#) (1587–ca. 1641), would later become arguably the most famous Caccini, touring widely throughout Italy, achieving fame for her brilliant *passaggi*, and composing and publishing both monody and operas.⁷ Margherita Agostino Benevole della Scala, Giulio’s second wife, was also a singer. Keeping music in the family seemed important to Caccini: at one point [Girolamo Frescobaldi](#), a famous contemporary composer of keyboard

⁴ Tim Carter and H. Wiley Hitchcock, “[Giulio Caccini](#),” *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40146>.

⁵ For more on the invention of monody, see Barbara Russano Hanning, “Love’s New Voice: Italian Monodic Song,” in *The World of Baroque Music: New Perspectives*, edited by George B. Stauffer (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 25–47; Murray Bradshaw, “[Cavalieri and Early Monody](#),” *The Journal of Musicology* 9:2 (1991): 238–53; Claude Palisca, ed. *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); and Walter Kirkendale, “[The Myth of the ‘Birth of Opera’ in the Florentine Camerata Debunked by Emilio de’ Cavalieri](#),” *The Opera Quarterly* 19:4 (2003): 631–43. Scholars have also called into question the precision of Caccini’s notation of vocal ornaments. See H. Wiley Hitchcock, “[Vocal Ornamentation in Caccini’s Le nuove musiche](#),” *The Musical Quarterly* 56 (1970): 389–44.

⁶ For several years (1593–1600) Caccini was ousted, rather scandalously, from his position at the Medici court. It was not until he contributed to the festivities for the wedding of Maria de’ Medici in 1600 that he was returned to the court’s payroll. See Carter and Goldthwaite, *Orpheus in the Marketplace*, 109–10.

⁷ For more on Francesca Caccini, see Suzanne Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court: Music and the Circulation of Power* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), and Ronald James Alexander and Richard Savino, eds, *Francesca Caccini’s Il primo libro delle musiche of 1618: A Modern Critical Edition of the Secular Monodies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

music, was proposed as a husband for Settimia, Caccini's youngest daughter, but negotiations regarding the match were not successful.⁸

The family also performed together. The Caccini *concerto*, a group including Giulio, his second wife, his two daughters, and his illegitimate son Pompeo, has been described as a Florentine complement to Ferrara's famously virtuosic group of female singers, the *concerto delle donne*.⁹ Having been invited to sing for Maria de' Medici in Paris, the Caccinis traveled through Milan, Turin, and Lyon on their way to the French city from Florence, a tour that particularly showcased Francesca Caccini's virtuosic musicality. While at home the Caccini household attracted great singers and composers of song. [Sigismondo d'India](#), another prolific composer of secular music, had songs performed there, and well-known singers were frequent visitors.¹⁰

Caccini was influenced by significant patrons and teachers throughout his career. Upon his arrival in Florence, he studied with [Scipione del Palla](#) (d. 1569), a vocal teacher who hailed from Naples and from whom, according to Caccini himself, he learned the "noble manner of singing."¹¹ In Florence he also met [Count Giovanni de' Bardi](#) (1534–1612), a prominent benefactor of the arts who surrounded himself with musicians, intellectuals, poets, and philosophers, and who would later become one of Caccini's most influential patrons and the dedicatee of the composer's first opera, *L'Euridice*.¹² In fact, it was on a visit to Ferrara with [de' Bardi](#) that Caccini heard Duke Alfonso II d'Este's *concerto delle donne*, the innovative group of professional female singers mentioned above that boasted multiple high and florid voices after which the Caccini family *concerto* was modeled. Later, Caccini accompanied [de' Bardi](#) to Rome as his secretary. Caccini took full advantage of any opportunity to travel, studying regional musical styles and ensuring that his name and musical works were familiar to potential patrons throughout northern Italy. Consequently, Caccini entertained offers from noble families in Ferrara and Genoa in addition to competing offers from Florentine patrons and was often asked to provide music for special occasions throughout northern Italy, especially family weddings.

Works and Compositional Style

Caccini's oeuvre is made up entirely of Italian secular music. He is particularly well-known for his contribution to the early history of opera, with his *L'Euridice* standing as the earliest known printed opera. Caccini produced two other publications, both collections of monody including strophic arias and through-composed madrigals: the aforementioned *Le nuove musiche* and its sequel entitled *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* (Florence, 1614).¹³

⁸ Carter and Hitchcock, "Giulio Caccini."

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ For more about Sigismondo d'India, see John J. Joyce, *The Monodies of Sigismondo d'India* (UMI Research Press, 1981), and Tim Carter, "[Intriguing Laments: Sigismondo d'India, Claudio Monteverdi, and Dido 'alla parmigiana' \(1628\)](#)," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 49:1 (1996): 32–69.

¹¹ Brown, "[The Geography of Florentine Monody](#)," 147.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ For more on this later volume see H. Wiley Hitchcock, "[Caccini's 'Other' Nuove musiche](#)," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 27 (1974): 438–60.

Central to Caccini's compositional style is the audible comprehension of the text, a tangible reflection of the baroque emphasis on the Platonic power of combining text and music to excite one's personal affects, a capacity most potent when the words can be clearly understood by the listener. He writes in his preface to [Le nuove musiche](#),

Discerning gentlemen always encouraged me and convinced me with the clearest arguments not to value that kind of music which does not allow the words to be understood well and which spoils the meaning and the poetic meter by now lengthening and now cutting the syllables short to fit the counterpoint, and thereby lacerating the poetry.¹⁴

Caccini's focus on expressing the text resonates with the music and writings of his contemporary, [Claudio Monteverdi](#) (1567–1643). Both composers put the text and its meaning at the forefront of their compositional process, treating texted music as a form of rhythmic and melodic speech. While [Monteverdi](#) defended his "improper" use of dissonance, as identified by [Giovanni Artusi](#) (1540–1613), in support of affective text setting characteristic of a new *seconda prattica*,¹⁵ Caccini demands the same sort of attention to the text but on the part of performers when ornamenting the melodies, imploring them to take great care not to eclipse the poetry.

Like [Monteverdi](#)'s *seconda prattica*, both Caccini's music and his preface in [Le nuove musiche](#) betray a split with past musical trends. The thick textures found in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century polyphonic vocal repertoire of Caccini's predecessors, composers such as [Giovanni Pierluigi Palestrina](#) (1525–1594) and [Josquin des Prez](#) (d. 1521), emphasized contrapuntal complexity at the expense of the text. Furthermore, singers and composers of earlier accompanied solo song were too focused on the virtuosic facility of the voice, also diminishing the affective potential of the texted music. In contrast, Caccini returns music to its primitive Platonic state as intoned rhythmic text in a simplified monodic setting. In fact, he lauds his own "groundbreaking compositions" that powerfully unite text and musical affect and writes that he was "told that never before had anyone heard music for a solo voice and a simple stringed instrument with such power to move the affect of one's soul," music's highest calling in the [Baroque period](#).¹⁶

Caccini's texts, which he boldly claims that are "better" than those set by his colleagues, clearly reflect baroque aesthetics in topic and sonic characteristics. Texts penned by his contemporary lyric poets including Giovanni Battista Guarini (1538–1612), Ottavio Rinuccini (1562–1621), and Gabriello Chiabrera (1552–1638), whom Caccini himself describes as authors of "good modern poetry in a popular mode," appear in both his arias and madrigals.¹⁷ Human agency and experience are central in this repertoire, reflecting humanist poetic trends popular in northern

¹⁴ Oliver Strunk and Leo Treitler, eds., "From the Preface to *Le nuove musiche*," in *Source Readings in Music History* (W.W. Norton, 1998), 608.

¹⁵ See Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin, eds., "The 'Second Practice' (Artusi, Monteverdi)" in *Music in the Western World*, 2nd ed. (Cengage Learning, 2008), 145–47.

¹⁶ Caccini, *Le nuove musiche* (1602), 45–46.

¹⁷ Brown, "[The Geography of Florentine Monody](#)," 153.

Italy around the turn of the century that were, according to Howard Mayer Brown, brought north by figures such as Scipione de Palla, Caccini's teacher who hailed from Naples in the South.¹⁸ Audible qualities of these texts reflect the mimetic style popular in the [Baroque period](#), one that aimed to imitate the accents and underlying emotions of speech in and of itself, a style well-suited for clear and affective text declamation in musical contexts.¹⁹

These characteristics are evident in Ottaviano Rinuccini's libretto Caccini set in his [L'Euridice composta in musica](#), a *Favola en musica* [Musical Tale] and one of the earliest dramas set to music. Rinuccini incorporated expressive devices such as assonance, anaphora, and other types of word and sound repetition to convey emotionally charged sentiments in his texts, even in the absence of music.²⁰ Moreover, the naturally rhythmic quality of the text along with the careful consideration of the sounds created by each word suits the joining of poetry and music perfectly.

L'Euridice recounts a story derived from books ten and eleven of Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (9 AD). When Orfeo learns that his love, Euridice, has been bitten by a snake and died, he sets out on a quest to Hades, the underworld, to retrieve her. Orfeo, a musician himself, uses his musical talents to placate various characters along the way. After reaching his destination, he is allowed to lead Euridice out of the underworld to return to life on one condition: as they depart, Orfeo must not look back, simply trusting that Euridice is following behind him. In the original Roman myth, Orfeo fails at this challenge and glances back to see Euridice being swept back into the underworld. Rinuccini, however, modified the story to create a happy ending: Orfeo succeeds and Euridice returns to life.

The primacy of the text persists in Caccini's musical setting of the tale. The music is driven largely by the form and content of the libretto. While characters do pause to express their emotions in arias, long sections of recitative dominate the piece, melodically declaiming the text in a syllabic fashion, exhibiting the composer's self-proclaimed new "representational style." Narrative accounts are central to the production; we hear of Euridice's death through a messenger, and Orpheus's reaction to her death is similarly presented. Shorter aria-like phrases and occasional choruses interrupt the monologues and dialogues sung in recitative. The various sections of aria and recitative, as well as occasional choruses are accompanied throughout by a continuo group made up of at least one harmonic instrument (usually a lute and/or harpsichord) whose bass line is most often doubled by a viola da gamba. This sparse accompaniment allows for ultimate flexibility in performance. Rhythm and ornamentation can be easily modified to serve the drama of the text.

A simple basso continuo part accompanies the solo arias and madrigals included in Caccini's [Le nuove musiche](#) as well. This texture, solo voice accompanied by continuo, defines the monodic style, which the composer boldly claims to have invented both on his title page and in the collection's preface. Manuscripts and publications of solo song from as early as 1509 indicate,

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Carter and Goldthwaite, *Orpheus in the Marketplace*, 112.

²⁰ Ibid.

however, that Caccini's print was actually the continuation of a long-standing musical tradition.²¹ Furthermore, the title page of the earliest known printed collection of monody, Domenico Melli's *Musiche* (Venice, 1602), which was printed mere months before Caccini's collection, does not contain any particular fanfare, suggesting that Melli himself did not consider the contents of his volume to be a particularly "new" sort of music.²²

Even though his claim to creating a whole new style of music seems to be a slight exaggeration, the preface to *Le nuove musiche*, in which monody serves as a vehicle for careful improvisatory embellishment to enhance the expressivity in both text and music, is inventive in its own right. In this introductory essay, Caccini describes his qualms with singers who take extensive liberties in performing his pieces and specifically emphasizes their negligent approach to the text describing how "the quantity of *passaggi* sung on both long and short syllables meant that not a word could be understood."²³ His critiques are specific, identifying particular ornaments that are used arbitrarily:

It seemed to me that these pieces of mine had been honoured enough—indeed, much more than they merited—by being constantly performed by the most famous singers of Italy, male and female, and by other noble persons who are lovers of the profession. But now I see many of them circulating tattered and torn; moreover I see ill-used those single and double roulades—rather, those redoubled and intertwined with each other—developed by me to avoid that old style of *passaggi* formerly in common use (one more suited to wind and stringed instruments than to the voice); and I see vocal crescendos and decrescendos, *esclamazioni*, tremolos, and trills, and other such embellishments of good singing style used indiscriminately. Thus I have been forced (and also urged by friends) to have these pieces of mine published, and in this first publication to explain to my readers by means of the present discourse the reasons that led me to such a type of song for solo voice.²⁴

It is clear from both the preface and the ornaments and melodic decorations notated in the print that Caccini did not want to eliminate ornamentation, but he took issue with the excessive decoration inserted into the music by "unscrupulous performers who knew nothing about graceful singing."²⁵ He encouraged performers to use ornamentation as a tool to effectively present the text and to heighten the emotion of the poetry with clever embellishments in performance.²⁶ He accomplishes this in two ways. First, he simply writes the "grace" into his compositions, a practice that he describes in his preface. He writes that he has "concealed as much of the art of counterpoint" as possible, has "placed chords on long syllables," and has only occasionally decorated the melodic line with eighth notes, which was acceptable because it

²¹ Tim Carter, "[On the Composition and Performance of Caccini's *Le nuove musiche* \(1602\)](#)," *Early Music* 12 (1984): 208.

²² Tim Carter, "[Caccini's Amarilli, mia bella: Some Questions \(and a Few Answers\)](#)," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 113 (1988): 251.

²³ Strunk and Treitler, eds., "From the Preface to *Le nuove musiche*," 608.

²⁴ Caccini, *Le nuove musiche* (1602), 43.

²⁵ Carter and Hitchcock, "Giulio Caccini."

²⁶ John Bass, "[Would Caccini Approve? A Closer Look at Egerton 2971 and Florid Monody](#)," *Early Music* 36 (2008): 91.

provided an “extra graceful touch.”²⁷ Second, he describes specific vocal techniques and ornaments, including crescendo, decrescendo, *esclamazioni*, *trilli*, and *gruppi* in his preface and provides musical notation showing how to implement these techniques.²⁸

He brings these two pedagogical strategies together in an annotated score of a piece titled “Deh, dove son fuggiti” that contains “all the best affective devices,” which allows him to provide examples in a musical context.²⁹ While his score annotations throughout the volume are fairly minimal, he clearly intended the singers to extrapolate information from his preface when performing the pieces. He emphasizes this innovation in his second volume of monody, *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* (Florence, 1614), where he describes the music of the collection as notated “exactly as it is sung,” and notes that “all the delicacies of this art can be learned without having to hear the composer sing” emphasizing his desired control over the performer’s approach to expressing the text.³⁰

Caccini provides advice for the continuo players as well. He describes how the continuo part, while realized in an improvisatory fashion, should support the vocal line rather than function as a simple accompaniment or as a contrapuntal counterpart. The accompanist, therefore, should not be content with a simple four-part harmonic realization but should vary the accompaniment according to the affect of the text.³¹ Furthermore, the figured bass notated along with the bass line in Caccini’s *Le nuove musiche* suggests a more sophisticated harmonic vocabulary than often found at the time, especially in his use of 6-3 chords and suspensions.³² To help facilitate the accurate performance of these figures, Caccini developed a new procedure in his figured bass notation to specifically indicate when a harmonic note should be struck or re-struck over a sustained bass note.³³ This is yet another example of Caccini exerting authority over the performance of the music in his print.

Caccini includes two types of vocal pieces in *Le nuove musiche*: madrigals and strophic canzonettas or “arias.” The air-like melodies of Caccini’s arias are light, tuneful, and firmly rooted in dance rhythms. The texts are set, for the most part, syllabically. For example, in “[Al fonte, al prato](#)” [At the spring, in the meadow], a strophic aria, Caccini’s melodic writing is at its simplest. (A recording of this piece is available at [this link](#).) The rhythms are straightforward, consisting mainly of quarter notes in triple meter. In this piece, Caccini reserves a sole melodic embellishment for the very final phrase in mm. 18–19 (Example 1).

²⁷ Strunk and Treitler, “From the Preface to *Le nuove musiche*,” 609.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 608–17.

²⁹ For a detailed consideration of this example, see Robert Toft, *With Passionate Voice: Re-Creative Singing in Sixteenth-Century England and Italy* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 227–40.

³⁰ Hitchcock, “[Caccini’s ‘Other’ Nuove musiche](#),” 454–59.

³¹ Carter, “[On the Composition and Performance](#),” 213.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

Example 1. Caccini, “[Al fonte, al prato](#),” mm. 13–25

13

Cia- scun ch'è stan- co Ri- po- s'il fian- co, Cia- scun ch'è stan- co
 Nè s'o- dan ma- i Quer- e- le o lai, Nè s'o- dan ma- i
 Men- tre ch'a l'on- de Ec- co ri- spon- de, Men- tre ch'a l'on- de
 E noi pian pian- o Con lei can- tia- no, E noi pian pian- o

19

Ri- po- s'il fian- co.
 Quer- e- le o lai.
 Ec- co ri- spon- de.
 Con lei can- tia- no.

In another strophic aria, “[Belle rose porporine](#)” [Lovely rosy cheeks], Caccini alternates between a more straightforward melodic style and a more decorated style, careful not to obscure the text at hand, a shift that can be seen in m. 6 (Example 2).³⁴

Example 2. Caccini, “[Belle rose porporine](#),” mm. 1–8

[1.] Bel- le ro- se por- po- ri ne— Che tra spi- ne— Sul- l'au-
 -ro- ra— non a- pri- te; Ma, mi- ni- stri de- gl'a mo- ri, Bei te- so- ri Di bei

³⁴ Giulio Caccini, *Belle rose porporine*, A-R Online Music Anthology, http://www.armusicanthology.com/anthology/?music_id=600

Caccini also makes use of expressive chains of suspensions to express his texts, as can be seen in “[Sfogava con le stele](#)” [He cries to the stars] in mm. 6–8 (Example 3). The suspensions accompany the text “under the night sky, grieving.”

Example 3. “[Sfogava con le stelle](#),” mm. 6–8

The madrigals, true to form, are through-composed with scant repetition of words or phrases and no repeated music. If short phrases are repeated, they are done so with a clear rhetorical affect in mind. It is on these repetitions of single words or short phrases where many of Caccini’s melodic embellishments occur. See, for instance, the opening passages of “[Vedrò l’mio sol](#)” [I will see my sun], given in Example 4, in which Caccini follows a simple syllabic setting of a phrase with an ornamented version as seen in the repetition of the text “[Vedrò l’mio sol](#)” in mm. 1–4 and of “o mia luce, o mia gioia” [o my light, o my joy] in mm. 17–19. Other embellishments are implemented with careful attention to create a clear and expressive text setting, such as his melodic flourish articulating the noteworthy word “die” (m. 7) and decorating the end of the opening phrase (mm. 11–12). As expected, any notated ornamentation is rather restrained and serves to enhance the text.

Reception and Influence

Caccini lived during a spirited time of musical innovation and competition. He was well known and celebrated in his day, largely a result of his own agency. He advocated for himself at the Medici court, promoting his talents as a teacher and his inventiveness as a singer and composer. In his preface to [Le nuove musiche](#) he describes his active dissemination of his own music, which he claims was widely performed by the most skilled performers of the time, describing that his pieces were “constantly performed by the most famous singers of Italy, male and female, and by other noble lovers of the profession.”³⁵ If we are to take Caccini at his word, he made substantial efforts to circulate his music widely in manuscript before publishing his volumes, a strategy not unlike releasing a single to drum up hype for the upcoming release of an album.

³⁵ Caccini, *Le nuove musiche* (1602), 43.

Example 4. “[Vedro l’mio sol](#),” mm. 1–19

Example 4. “[Vedro l’mio sol](#),” mm. 1–19

Score for “[Vedro l’mio sol](#),” mm. 1–19. The score is in G major and 6/8 time, with a tempo of quarter note = 80. The lyrics are: Ve- drò'l mio sol, ve- drò'l mio sol, ve- drò pri- ma ch'io muo- ia Quel so- spi- ra- to gior- no Che fac- cia'l vo- stro rag- giò me ri- tor- no. O mia lu- ce, o mia gio- ia, O mia lu- ce, o mia gio- ia, Ben più m'è'.

Caccini’s works and writings were well known abroad, especially in the Low Countries and in England. Evidence for this international renown survives in transcriptions of Caccini’s pieces for instruments; Tim Carter has discovered transcriptions of Caccini’s works in publications by Robert Dowland, English anthologist, composer, and lutenist and son of famed lutenist John Dowland. Dowland included a version of Caccini’s “Dovro dunque morire” [Must I then die] along with “[Amarilli, mia bella](#)” [My fair Amaryllis] in his *Musicall Banquet* (London, 1610), along with realizations of the bass line for lute.³⁶ A version of the madrigal “[Amarilli](#)” was transcribed for virginal, an early keyboard instrument, by Peter Philips as early as 1603. Caccini’s preface was also included in English translation in John Playford’s *Introduction to the Skill of Music*, which was published in England for the first time in 1655.³⁷ Evidence also exists

³⁶ Carter, “[Caccini’s Amarilli, mia bella](#),” 266–69.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

that other composers used Caccini's compositions as melodic models. [Jacob van Eyck](#), for example, composed sets of variations based on Caccini's "[Amarilli, mia bella](#)."³⁸

Caccini's biography, professional life, and musical publications are all emblematic of the general spirit of compositional competition that was prevalent in northern Italy around the turn of the seventeenth century. His preface to [Le nuove musiche](#) not only provides a valuable source of information regarding vocal performance practices of the time but also lends insight into the composer's competitive professional motivations. This print, while not being the *first* published collection of monody, remains an important collection of artful settings of contemporary poetry that establishes Caccini as an innovative composer of vocal music at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

³⁸ Thiemo Wind, "Amarilli mia bella: Jacob van Eyck's Melodic Model," *Jacob van Eyck Quarterly* 3 (2004). <http://www.jacobvaneck.info/main.htm>.

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