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*Madalena Casulana and the Italian Madrigal*  
written by Hannah Wunsch  
has been approved for the Department of Choral Conducting

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**MADALENA CASULANA AND THE ITALIAN MADRIGAL**

by

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B.A., Gustavus Adolphus College, 2009

M.M., University of Colorado, 2012

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by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the format  
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Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
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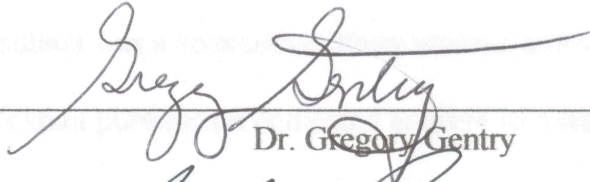
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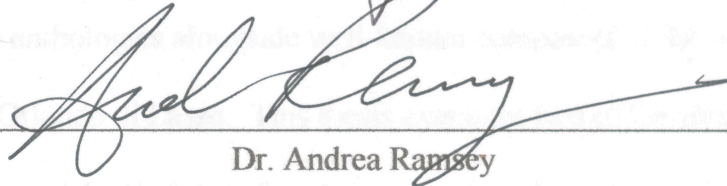
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Wunsch, Hannah Lowrey (D.M.A. Choral Conducting)

Madalena Casulana and the Italian Madrigal

Thesis directed by Dr. Gregory Gentry

## I. INTRODUCTION

Madalena Casulana was a sixteenth-century woman and composer whose madrigals were published in the first extant publication dedicated entirely to a female's work. These madrigals were also published in anthologies alongside well-known composers of the period, including Cipriano de Rore and Orlando di Lasso. This thesis examines two of Casulana's madrigals, *Ridon or per le piaggie* and *Io d'odorate fronde*, and explores how she used established compositional techniques of the Italian madrigal in the late sixteenth century, including text selection, madrigalisms, chromaticism, and word painting in her music. (Maddalena Casulana)

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## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

### WOMEN AND MUSIC IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ITALY

In sixteenth-century Italy, the relationship between women, music, and society existed in a state of flux, swiftly changing and hotly debated during the time. According to Joan Kelly-Gadol, the age of Renaissance did not include women, especially those of higher social status. Overall, females experienced a limiting of social and personal options that men of their classes did not.<sup>1</sup> During the Renaissance, women were expected to focus on motherhood and domestic duties, with a focus on religion and humility.<sup>2</sup> Social mores demanded tacit females whose quieted voices reflected their chastity.<sup>3</sup> However, women's role in society during the 1500s became a topic of contention, especially in France and Italy. By the middle of the sixteenth century, noble families were expected to give young girls a "proper" education, including the study of Latin and music.<sup>4</sup> While upper-class ladies of this period were able to acquire musical knowledge precisely because they grew up in wealthy families, they were not trained or encouraged to devote themselves seriously and over a long period of time to

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<sup>1</sup> While men of the nobility did experience some constriction of social and personal opportunities, men of the bourgeoisie experienced instead a widening of opportunities. (From Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?", in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 140.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen D. Lerner, "Madalena Casulana," in *Women Composers: Music through the Ages* Vol. 1, ed. Martha Furman Schleifer and Sylvia Glickman (New York: G.K. Hall, 1996), 99.

<sup>3</sup> Bonnie Gordon. *Monteverdi's Unruly Women: The Power of Song in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 140. \* Gordon, 2.



developing those skills.<sup>5</sup> Further, outside of private tutors, educational opportunities were scarce.

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, many didn't see the reason to provide an education, especially in music, for women who would not use it. The usual areas of patronage and employment in music—the church and the court—were essentially off-limits to females.

In the sixteenth century, music could be more than impractical for women—it could be dangerous. Madalena Casulana's first patron and perhaps friend, Isabella Medici-Orsini, had aspirations to both sing and compose. Unheard of for a woman of her class, she used music as a means of pleasure in a marriage that was otherwise dismal.<sup>7</sup> While both she and her husband had extramarital affairs, when Isabella Medici-Orsina was murdered by her husband, it was considered her fault. Her husband was able to murder Isabella without facing legal repercussions because she participated publicly in music, both singing and composing. In Rome, this rendered her as a “whore” in the eyes of society.<sup>8</sup>

Music in sixteenth-century Italy existed in somewhat of a dichotomy, juxtaposed between those who considered it an appropriate skill for a lady, and those who considered it a dangerous gateway to impropriety. While females began singing in public spheres, during Madalena's lifetime the connection of women and music remained a delicate one. Composers during the sixteenth century began to depend on well-trained women's voices to display their work.<sup>9</sup> Less

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<sup>5</sup> Jane Bowers, “The Emergence of Women Composers in Italy, 1566-1700,” in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, ed. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 133.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Thomasin LaMay, “Composing from the Throat: Madalena Casulana's *Primo Libro De Madrigali* 1568,” in *Musical Voices of Early Modern Women: Many-Headed Melodies*, ed. Thomasin K. LaMay (Aldershot Hants, England: Ashgate, 2005), 368.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Gordon, 2.



than 80 years later, however, the Pope would issue an edict forbidding any woman to learn music from a man.<sup>10</sup> The edict declared that:

“... music is completely injurious to the modesty that is proper for the [female] sex, because they become distracted from the matters and occupations most proper for them... no unmarried woman, married woman, or widow of any rank, status, condition, even those who for reasons of education or anything else are living in convents or conservatories, under any pretext, even to learn music in order to practice it in those convents, may learn to sing from men, either laymen or clerics or secular clergy, no matter if they are in any way related to them, and to play any sort of musical instrument.”<sup>11</sup>

Authorities on conduct of the period advised women to approach any performance with resistance; indeed, in Pietro Bembo's letter to his daughter, he wrote that “playing music for a woman is a vain and frivolous thing.”<sup>12</sup> According to Thomas Lacquer, gender in the Renaissance existed within actions; that is, to be male was to participate in certain actions, and to be female to participate in other actions.<sup>13</sup> Women were silenced in all modes of speaking in public by a church and culture that saw such utterances as a masculine prerogative.<sup>14</sup> The intellect was essentially male; the body, female. Contemporary culture of the sixteenth century saw exceptionally talented women as having lost their biological purposes as females. For all intents and purposes, in that culture, creative women were in some sense men, or viewed as “man-like.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Translated in Bowers, 139-140.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon, 76.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 187.

<sup>14</sup> LaMay, “Composing from the Throat,” 366.

<sup>15</sup> Thomasin LaMay, “Madalena Casulana: My Body Knows Unheard Of Songs!” in *Gender, Sexuality, and Early Music*, ed. Todd M. Borgerding (New York: Routledge, 2002), 43.

One development that impacted the composition and performance of music was the rise of public female singers, particularly the *concerti della donne*, especially at the court of Ferrara.

<sup>16</sup> While still not considered professional musicians like male musicians of the time, women of the *concerto* were sought out for their singing skills, which allowed them to rise in social stature and eventually marry suitors of a higher rank. In 1580, the Duke Alfonso of Ferrara married the 15-year old daughter of the Duke of Mantua. In part to please her, and in part to create musical splendor in his court, the Duke invited three new sopranos, Laura Peverara, Anna Guarina, and Livia d'Arco to court, where, later joined by Tarquina Molza, they established the Ferrarese *concerto delle donne*.<sup>17</sup>

Although musical women had existed at the court before this, this *concerto della donne* represented a new phase in singing ladies at court. Previously, women were courtiers who happened to sing. The 1580 *concerto*, however, were selected specifically for their voices. Their talent gave them prestige and upward social mobility. Although they were not professional musicians like the females to come later (Caccini or Luzzaschi), they owed their position at court to cultivating their musical abilities.<sup>18</sup>

While it became more acceptable for women to perform as singers during the late 1500s in Italy, there were few who made their careers in music, and laws dictated that women remain

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<sup>16</sup> The subject of *concerto della donne* is spelled many different ways in scholarly sources. In the Italian language, grammatical structure indicates that *concerto delle donne* refers to one "consort of women," while *concerti delle donne* refers to the many "consorts of women" springing up around Italy during the late 1500s. The spelling *concerto della donna* is grammatically impossible, as this would translate as a "consort of woman." For this paper, the spelling *concerto* or *concerti delle donne* will be used.

<sup>17</sup> Anthony Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara, 1579-1597* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 28.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



property of the men in their lives. Females were expected to be the property of their fathers or husbands, and to focus on domestic and church duties. Virginia Vagnoli, who lived and worked in Italy in the late sixteenth century, was a professional singer in the noble courts, but remained the property of her father, and then her husband, all her life.<sup>19</sup> Like most women of the time, Vagnoli's life and career centered around the males to whom she belonged. Vagnoli's career was created by her father, who had the right to accept or refuse offers made on her behalf. Courts of the time considered it more decorous to make dealings through her father, who travelled with her and was paid for her work at the court of Urbino.<sup>20</sup> One summons to a court in Vienna offered Vagnoli the position of a court singer, but also stipulated that she marry the young cornettist Luigi Zenobi, who was at the time in the service of the Emperor Maximilian II.<sup>21</sup> Vagnoli's father refused this offer on her behalf; by 1575, Vagnoli was married to Alessandro Striggio, a composer and instrumentalist in Italy during the Renaissance. After her marriage, she gave up all professional activities, instead focusing on marriage and domestic duties.<sup>22</sup> Although she was able to participate in music before marriage, as a married woman Vagnoli was expected to retire.

Another female musician, Madonna Laura, served in the household musical ensemble of the Pope starting in 1537. While she is listed among the Pope's household singers, it was her husband who collected her payment on her behalf.<sup>23</sup> Far from being independent, female

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<sup>19</sup> Anthony Newcomb, "Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians?" *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*. ed. Jane M. Bowers and Judith Tick, (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1986), 108.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Karin Pendle, "Musical Women in Early Modern Europe," in *Women and Music: A History*, ed. Karin Pendle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 82.



musicians were often used as pawns in the musical and political power-plays of their fathers and husbands.<sup>24</sup>

The sudden rise of famous groups of singing ladies opened the door to a new era of women and music—first for highly prestigious female performers and later female composers.<sup>25</sup> Because of the emerging feminine presence in music, the madrigal, which had until then consisted of men performing for other men, became a relationship of men composing and women performing for mostly male audiences. The secular madrigal had often been a subtle representation of flirtation and sexual relationships, but with female performers, women became the embodiment of madrigal music; “men at court, no longer the performers, often became voyeurs.”<sup>26</sup> According to LaMay, female performers began to embody the texts of the pieces, and the function of madrigals changed dramatically due to the reversal of who performed and who watched the performance.<sup>27</sup> Madalena Casulana (1540-1590) lived at a historical juncture in northern Renaissance Italy when many *concerti delle donne* flourished. Women were just beginning to emerge as professional performers and composers, hired by courts for their talent rather than their birthright.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony Newcomb. *The Madrigal at Ferrara, 1579-1597* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 108.

<sup>26</sup> LaMay, “Madalena Casulana: My Body Knows Unheard Of Songs!” 42.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 42.

## CHAPTER II. MADALENA CASULANA

### HER LIFE AND PUBLICATIONS

According to Thomasin LaMay, during her life Madalena<sup>29</sup> Casulana “resisted and often defied the boundaries peculiar to women in her social environment, even those somewhat looser structures allowed to women who performed.”<sup>30</sup> Madalena Casulana was one of a burgeoning group of female musicians in Italy during the sixteenth century. However, Casulana was lauded not only as an accomplished singer and performer, but also as a teacher of composition and a published composer. During her lifetime, she was recognized alongside prominent composers of the period including Orlando Di Lasso, Cipriano de Rore, and Gioseffo Zarlino. Casulana managed to do what no woman before her is known to have done: publish a volume of her own musical compositions under her own name while also rising to a reputation of esteem and respect with male composers of the period. In spite of her gender, Casulana’s music rose to prominence and renown in sixteenth-century European society.

Madalena Casulana’s known biographical information is brief, and is best presented by Beatrice Pescerelli in *I Madrigali di Madalena Casulana*. Casulana is thought to have been born circa 1540, but her place of birth is uncertain. Pescerelli makes a strong case that Casulana was born in Casola d’Esla, or Casula, a small village near Siena; this led to Madalena’s surname of Casulana, according to the custom of the time in which people were associated with the town of

*Women*, ed James R. Briscoe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) 44.

<sup>29</sup> Beatrice Pescerelli, “Maddalena Casulana,” 45.

<sup>30</sup> Beatrice Pescerelli, *I Madrigali di Madalena Casulana* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1979).

<sup>29</sup> Scholars differ as to the spelling of Casulana’s name, either as “Maddalena” or “Madalena.” Because she herself signed her dedications with the spelling “Madalena,” “Madalena” will be used throughout the paper. Any direct quotations that spell the name differently will be copied sic for accuracy.

<sup>30</sup> LaMay. “Madalena Casulana: My Body Knows of Unheard of Songs!” 42.



their birth.<sup>31</sup> Other contemporaries of Madalena were also given the designation Casulana, as a reference to their hometown. In addition to the well-known painter Alessandro Casolano, the musician Leonardo Morelli appears in the print of his work as "Leonardus Casulanus." This man, another native of Casole d'Elsa, was active in the cathedral of Volterra from 1586 to 1604.<sup>32</sup> These examples support Pescerelli's argument that Casulana was a geographical reference, rather than Madalena's actual surname.

Born into modest means, Casulana existed in the middle of the social classes: high enough that her family could afford her an education, while not so high that she was forced into a socially advantageous marriage. Pescerelli proposes that Madalena was educated in Florence, and while little is known of Casulana's education, it would be this education in both the composing and notation of her music that would define Casulana's life and career.<sup>33</sup>

While Casulana gained acclaim as a composer, she began her career as a singer and lutenist, which was considered more appropriate for a woman of the period.<sup>34</sup> In order to bypass the obstacles in Italian culture surrounding female composition, Madalena began her career by entering the salons and academies in and around Venice, one of the more liberal areas of Italy.<sup>35</sup> By singing and composing for these members, she developed the respect of the male musicians and patrons in the area, who in turn helped disseminate her published works.<sup>36</sup> In fact, one of the

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<sup>31</sup> Beatrice Pescerelli, "Maddalena Casulana," in *New Historical Anthology of Music by Women*, ed. James R. Briscoe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) 44.

<sup>32</sup> Beatrice Pescerelli, "Maddalena Casulana," 45.

<sup>33</sup> Beatrice Pescerelli, *I madrigali di Maddalena Casulana* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1979), 5.

<sup>34</sup> Ellen D. Lerner, "Madalena Casulana," *Women Composers: Music through the Ages*, ed. Martha Furman Schleifer and Sylvia Glickman (New York: G.K. Hall, 1996), 99.

<sup>35</sup> LaMay, "Composing from the Throat," 371.

<sup>36</sup> Lerner, 99.



most important connections Casulana made in her career was with Orlando di Lasso. According to LaMay, Madalena's connection with di Lasso was life-long, and he thought highly of her work as both composer and singer.<sup>37</sup>

Casulana's music was first published in the anthology *Il Desiderio I* in 1566, which featured four of her madrigals. A year later, another madrigal appeared in *Il Desiderio II*. These were the first records of a connection between Madalena Casulana and Orlando di Lasso that would continue throughout her life. Although he was employed in Munich in the court of Duke Albrecht V starting in 1566, in 1567 di Lasso was in Venice to oversee the publication of his *Libro Quatro* for five voices (composed for the Ferrarese Duke Alfonso's newly formed *concerto delle donne*). It was probably during this visit that Casulana and di Lasso became acquainted.<sup>38</sup> He was apparently impressed by her compositions, as he, in 1568, commissioned and performed Casulana's madrigal *Nil mage incundum* in Munich at the wedding of Archduke Wilhelm V of Bavaria. While the music itself has not survived, the Latin text is included in a review of the piece by Massimo Troiano.<sup>39</sup>

In that same year, Antonio Molino (c. 1495-1571), a prominent Venetian actor in the *commedia dell'arte* published his own volume of madrigals, dedicated to Madalena Casulana, whom he called his teacher. While his music is widely different from that of Casulana, it may have been Casulana who taught Molino how to notate his music, as it was tradition in *commedia dell'arte* to improvise. This connection to a prominent member of Italian artistic society gave

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<sup>37</sup> LaMay, "Composing from the Throat," 372.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> LaMay, "Composing from the Throat," 374.

Casulana legitimacy in the Venetian culture, and helped give her music respect in the eyes of Italian culture.

In 1568 Madalena Casulana published her own volume of madrigals, *Il primo libro di madrigali a quattro voce*. It was Casulana's dedication of this volume that drew the wide interest. Dedicated to Isabella de Medici Orsina, Casulana showed clear self-awareness of her uncommon status as female composer. In the dedication, Casulana calls the madrigals her "first fruits," in her aim to "show the world... the futile error of men who believe themselves patrons of the high gifts of intellect, which according to them cannot also be held in the same way by women."<sup>40</sup>

Her *Primo Libro* contained twenty-one madrigals, five of which were previously published in *Il Desiderio I* and *II*. The dedication was signed from Venice, and it was likely she was in the city at that time. After 1568, Casulana's publications indicated she travelled to northern Italy. Her *Secondo Libro di Madrigali a Quattro Voce* was published in 1570 and dedicated to Antonio Londonio, president of the Milanese ministry of finance. This, in combination with Nicolo Tagliaferro's report of his encounter with Casulana in Milan confirms her presence in that city.<sup>41</sup> In Tagliaferro's *Esercisi Filosofici*, he describes one of Casulana's performances, along with two other singers, Vittoria Moschella and Sudetta Fumia.<sup>42</sup> While the review did not overly acclaim Casulana's vocal prowess, it did praise her compositions. Clearly, she had gained the respect of a man in Milan, as well.

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<sup>40</sup> Pescerelli, *I madrigali di Maddalena Casulana*, 17-18.

<sup>41</sup> Pescerelli, 16-17.

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<sup>40</sup> See Appendix E for the full dedication in Italian.

<sup>41</sup> Pescerelli, *I madrigali di Maddalena Casulana*, 16.

<sup>42</sup> LaMay. "Madalena Casulana: My Body Knows of Unheard of Songs!" 52.



By 1583, Madalena published her *Il Primo Libro di Madrigali a Quinto Voce*, dedicated to Count Mario Bevilacqua.<sup>43</sup> In this work, Casulana signed her name as “Madalena Mezari detta Casulana Vicentina,” and Gardano of Monte’s dedication to Madalena in his first book of madrigals for three voices (also in 1583) named her as “Signora Madalena Casulana di Mezarii.”<sup>44</sup> While Pescerelli and other sources suggested that Madalena may have married sometime after 1570 and settled down in Vicenza (*Vicentina*), LaMay proposed that Casulana, after having finally achieved recognition as a composer and musician, either took a new surname or finally become known by her original surname.<sup>45</sup> In any case, her connection to Vicenza was clear, as she was confirmed as a participant in one of the musical gatherings of the Accademia Olimpica of Vicenza in 1583.<sup>46</sup>

The last documentation pertaining to Casulana is the 1591 publication of Venetian publisher Giacomo Vincenti, which lists two volumes of *madrigali spirituali a 4* by Casulana. Unfortunately, the music for these pieces is no longer extant.<sup>47</sup> Bowers noted that these volumes were previously printed by Girolamo Scotto, and that the term *spirituali* was not in fact referencing Casulana’s compositions. Instead, LaMay suggested that it was her first two books of madrigals reprinted in the volume.<sup>48</sup> This would seem to indicate that Casulana’s compositional output slackened in the 1580s. Those who believe she married after 1570 (hence the name

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<sup>43</sup> Pescerelli, *I madrigali di Maddalena Casulana*, 17-18.

<sup>44</sup> Pescerelli, 16-17.

<sup>45</sup> LaMay. "Madalena Casulana: My Body Knows of Unheard of Songs!" 48.

<sup>46</sup> Pescerelli, *I madrigali di Maddalena Casulana* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1979), 19.

<sup>47</sup> Lerner, 99.

<sup>48</sup> LaMay. "Madalena Casulana: My Body Knows of Unheard of Songs!" 50.



change), say she was pushed into an early “retirement” from composing in favor of marriage and domestic responsibilities.<sup>49</sup>

Casulana began her career as a singer who was known for accompanying herself on the lute.<sup>50</sup> However, Casulana was not content with being the voice of the men who composed. Instead, she pushed beyond society’s discouragement of the creative output of women, and adopted the madrigal as her own vessel of expression.

Casulana pushed the societal expectations in all areas of her life. She lived independently, while most women of the sixteenth century in Italy were the property of something or someone. Casulana seemed to have belonged to no one, and travelled freely in Italy throughout her life.<sup>51</sup>

While Casulana is certainly notable as being the first woman with an extant volume of published music, her ability and insistence on notating her music set her apart from all other female participants in music, theater, and creations. In the 1600s in Italy, the act of singing was directly connected with courtesans, who were chiefly found in Venice.<sup>52</sup> Courtesans of the era were not simply prostitutes, but were also expected to entertain their guests with witty conversation and lively music. The courtesans, especially in liberal cities such as Venice, were even able to achieve some amount of independence; courtesan Tullia d’Aragona, for instance, headed an intellectual salon in Venice. Veronica Franco (d. 1591) was also a renowned courtesan, who was an accomplished singer and poet.<sup>53</sup> However, Casulana’s composing and

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<sup>49</sup> Bowers, 107-108.

<sup>50</sup> Pescerelli, *I madrigali di Maddalena Casulana*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> LaMay, “Madalena Casulana: My Body Knows of Unheard of Songs!” 43.

<sup>52</sup> LaMay, “Composing from the Throat,” 369.

<sup>53</sup> Meredith Ray explores Veronica Franco’s creative output in her volume “Writing Gender in Women’s Letter Collections of the Italian Renaissance.” Franco published a volume of fictional letters in 1580, in part to defend herself against criticism from the emerging movement against courtesans. Unlike a noble woman, Franco was a public figure, and therefore she could,

ability to write down her compositions set her apart from courtesans.<sup>54</sup> Courtesans thrived on improvisatory song, while Casulana was able to record her music in notation and publication. Written composition differed completely from the courtesan tradition, and that of the traditional female role. For Casulana to publish “distanced her significantly from the women singers of her time—courtesan and otherwise—who gained public space but never clamored for professional legitimacy.”<sup>55</sup> Courtesans improvised their music, or at least memorized it; it was never written down. The music was a product of the moment, and in their reviews of Casulana, men made sure to mention her notation of music and her virtue; both of these set her apart from the courtesans.<sup>56</sup> Casulana’s ability and insistence to notate and publish her music may have made her the focus of criticism, but it may also have saved her reputation.

Women in sixteenth-century Italy also began participating in the *commedia dell’arte* troupes that had emerged during the period. Players were expected to sing and dance, but only through improvisation. In fact, Some scholars suggest *commedia dell’arte* took shape when courtesans introduced their virtuoso musical and poetic gifts to the bawdy, sexually explicit, all-male comedy of Pantalone.<sup>57</sup> Even the *concerto della donne* of Ferrara specialized in improvisation. Singers were famous for their music decorated with numerous passaggi, trills, and

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at least in theory, express herself freely in print. This is another instance of a woman both claiming independent voice, while also working within a common writing method of men of the period. However, Franco’s publication did inevitably meet with resentment from some. By publishing her own letters, Franco was determined to compete with men “in their own territory and with their own literary instruments” (Ray 135).

<sup>54</sup> Not only does Madalena’s composing differ from the courtesan’s skills, but there is a lack of any evidence connecting Casulana with any group of courtesans, or even a *concerto della donne*.

<sup>55</sup> LaMay, “Composing from the Throat,” 370.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 373.

cadenzas; however, the singers probably “improvised these in rehearsal, and then committed them to memory.”<sup>58</sup> Notation was the domain of composers, not performers.

Throughout her life, Casulana never fit the traditional female role of sixteenth-century Italian society. She developed relationships with prominent male composers and artists of the period, who supported her compositional career. Finally, her notation of her music set her apart from other women of the period who were both independent and creative. In her music, Casulana mastered the madrigal idiom to prove that women could claim intellect as much as men.

The madrigal form consisted of a single stanza with no refrains or repeated lines, and through-composed music.<sup>59</sup> The earliest madrigals were written for three to four voices, but by the mid-sixteenth century madrigals were often composed for five or more voices.<sup>60</sup>

Text selection was one of the most important aspects of the Italian madrigal. In the Italian madrigal, composers enriched the meaning of the impact of the text through several settings, and the genre became an experimental vehicle for dramatic characterization, employing new compositional devices. These musical devices, in which musical material expressed the emotional content of the texts, became known as madrigalism.<sup>61</sup> According to Atlas, more than any other genre of the period, the madrigal became “intoxicated” with the concept that music should be placed in the service of the words.<sup>62</sup> Composers often chose texts by renowned poets, including that of

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<sup>58</sup> Alfred Einstein, *Italian Madrigal*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 120.

<sup>59</sup> Einstein, 121.

<sup>60</sup> Jerome Roche, *The Madrigal*, 2nd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 6.

<sup>61</sup> Einstein, 121.

<sup>62</sup> Einstein, 122.

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<sup>58</sup> Pendle, 82.



### CHAPTER III.

#### THE MADRIGAL IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY ITALY

The madrigal arose from the Italian frottola, a strophic, secular song with the melody featured in the highest voice.<sup>59</sup> Secular music shifted from accompanied song to vocal polyphony, with composers moving from a main melody with a supporting bass and two voices as fillers, into a motet-like polyphonic construction with four parts of equal importance.<sup>60</sup> The madrigal form consisted of a single stanza with no refrains or repeated lines, and through-composed music.<sup>61</sup> The earliest madrigals were written for three to four voices, but by the mid-sixteenth century madrigals were often composed for five or more voices.<sup>62</sup>

Text selection was one of the most important aspects of the Italian madrigal. In the Italian madrigal, composers enriched the meaning of the impact of the text through musical settings, and the genre became an experimental vehicle for dramatic characterization, inspiring new compositional devices. These musical devices, in which musical material expressed the meaning of the texts, became known as madrigalisms.<sup>63</sup> According to Atlas, more than any other genre of the period, the madrigal became “intoxicated” with the concept that music should be placed at the service of the words.<sup>64</sup> Composers often chose texts by renowned poets, including that of

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<sup>62</sup> Einstein, 121.

<sup>63</sup> Einstein, 122.

<sup>64</sup> Allan W. Atlas, *Renaissance Music: Music in Western Europe, 1400-1600*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 634.

Petrarch.<sup>65</sup> In the sixteenth century, Cardinal Pietro Bembo (1470-1547) revived the poetry of Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374) (Petrarch). Bembo explored the contrasting qualities of Petrarch's poems, labelling them "piacevolezza" (pleasingness) and "gravita" (severity). Composers attempted to reflect these qualities in their music.

Both Einstein and Rubsamen attribute the rise in popularity of Petrarch's poetry to the emergence of the madrigal.<sup>66</sup> According to Einstein:

"The literary trend in secular music... grew in strength during the 1520s until classical verses of distinction and elegance became the norm. An already active and vigorous cult of Petrarch was to achieve such influence that in subsequent decades each of the master's lyrics was set to music not once but many times. This heightened artistry of text... was but one of the stylistic elements necessary to make up the balanced euphony of the madrigal."<sup>67</sup>

According to Dean Mace, Bembo's theories directly influenced the madrigal aesthetic; not that the musical style was prompted by the musical deficiencies of the frottola, but that the new reading of poetry advocated by Bembo's *ars poetica* stimulated a need for original musical expression.<sup>68</sup> It certainly follows that the poetry of Petrarch, the fundamental model for Bembo's theories, was widely adopted by prominent composers of the time.

As composers attempted to express the meaning of the poetry, compositional techniques became established. The fundamental problem still facing the madrigalists was how to reconcile Petrarchan poetry with a polyphonic musical medium to create an infusion of meaning and

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<sup>65</sup> Iain Fenlon and James Haar, *The Italian Madrigal in the Early Sixteenth Century: Sources and Interpretation*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), 5.

<sup>66</sup> Fenlon and Haar, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Walter H. Rubsamen, *Literary Sources of Secular Music in Italy c. 1500*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943) 35.

<sup>68</sup> Dean Mace, "Pietro Bembo and the Literary Origins of the Italian Madrigal" in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 55, no. 1. (1969) 83.



sound.<sup>69</sup> Madrigalisms were one of these techniques. While the terms *text-painting* and *madrigalisms* are sometimes used interchangeably in modern scholarship, in the height of the Renaissance madrigalisms went beyond a general idea of text-painting. Madrigalisms became established musical concepts used by numerous composers to relate the music to a poetic idea. For instance, composers would use rapidly-moving eighth or sixteenth notes for the idea of joy or laughter, or use suspensions or minor intervals to denote weeping or grief.<sup>70</sup> These were clearly established musical gestures used by many composers to set a certain word or phrase. Text-painting, however, was a more general technique of using music to reflect the literal or figurative meaning of a word or phrase.<sup>71</sup> Text-painting devices ranged from onomatopoeia (for example, the imitation of the sounds of battle, birdsong or chattering washerwomen by Janequin) through figurative or pictorial melodic or contrapuntal gestures and texture (a single voice for ‘all alone’ or three voices for the Trinity), but would vary from composer to composer.<sup>72</sup> Finally, composers also explored aspects of overall sound and text unity; that is, going beyond overt madrigalisms or text-painting to create an overall picture of the text through the harmony of the individual voice lines.”<sup>73</sup> These involved painstaking diction, an inner rhetoric as opposed to the crude imitation of nature, and the art of restrained *espressivo*.<sup>74</sup> With the death of Willaert and Rore in the early 1560s, a change began to subtly move into the madrigal. A new boldness of

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<sup>69</sup> Roche, 25.

<sup>70</sup> Einstein, 121.

<sup>71</sup> Grove Dictionary of Music Online, “Word Painting” redirected from “Madrigalism.”

<sup>72</sup> Tim Carter, “Word Painting” in *Grove Music Online*, (Oxford University Press, 2007-2015).

<sup>73</sup> Roche, 25.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 27.



style, simplistic vocal coloring, and a new harmonic awareness began looking toward the Baroque era.<sup>75</sup>

In her work, Casulana used the established techniques of madrigal composition in the late sixteenth century. By using established poets, poetic texts, madrigalisms, text-painting, tonal shifts, and expressive vocal lines, Casulana proved that men were not the only masters of intellect. Through these techniques, Casulana's compositions gained renown, and were published alongside male composers of the period.

In Madalena Casulana's dedication of her *Il Primo Libro de Madrigali a 4 voci*, she claimed that she hoped her compositions would prove that men were not the only possessors of intellect. Through choosing an established idiom and mastering its style, Madalena Casulana created a direct correlation that could not be ignored and was published alongside other renowned composers of the time. Through her text selection of established poets as a symbol, as well as her use of madrigalisms, text painting, and rhythmic complexity, Casulana created compositions that both followed the traditions, as well as achieved success in all standards of criteria for the period. By carefully selecting texts and displaying her compositional ability through madrigalisms, tonal shifts, and text painting, Casulana created madrigals that were recognized and published in spite of the obstacles surrounding a female composer in sixteenth-century Italy.

According to available records available, Casulana was the first woman to publish her compositions; however, she was soon followed by other female composers. Vittoria Aliphanza Alberti published a collection of madrigals and another of sonnets in 1591. Cesarina Ricci also

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 46.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CASULANA AND THE ITALIAN MADRIGAL

I know truly, most Illustrious and Most Excellent Lady, that these first fruits of mine cannot, because of their weakness, produce the effect that I would like, which would be, other than to give Your Excellence some proof of my devotion, to show also to the world (as much as is allowed me in this musical profession) the conceited error of men. They believe so strongly to be the masters of the high gifts of the intellect that, in their opinion, these gifts cannot likewise be shared by Women.

- Dedication from Maddalena Casulana's first publication, *Il primo libro de madrigali a quattro voci*, Venice: Girolamo Scotto, 1568.

In Madalena Casulana's dedication of her *Il Primo Libro de Madrigali a 4 voce*, she claimed that she hoped her compositions would prove that men were not the only possessors of intellect. Through choosing an established idiom and mastering its style, Madalena Casulana created a direct correlation that could not be ignored and was published alongside other renowned composers of the time. Through her text selection of established poets and themes, as well as her use of madrigalisms, text painting, and rhythmic complexity, Casulana created compositions that both followed the traditions, as well as achieved success in all standards of criteria for the period. By carefully selecting texts and displaying her compositional ability through madrigalisms, tonal shifts, and text painting, Casulana created madrigals that were recognized and published in spite of the obstacles surrounding a female composer in sixteenth-century Italy.

According to available records available, Casulana was the first woman to publish her compositions; however, she was soon followed by other female composers. Vittoria/Raphaella likely the same person. Unlike Casulana, neither of these women were singers as well; in fact, Alleotti published a collection of madrigals and another of motets in 1593; Cesarina Ricci also

<sup>77</sup> Maca, 83

published a book of madrigals in 1597.<sup>76</sup> Casulana may have been intent on taking something usually set and owned by men—that is, the poetry of Petrarch—and setting it in a way that was as good as, if not better, than her male counterparts. Her selection of texts placed her compositions alongside the standard repertoire of the period, and lent them legitimacy. For instance, in her *Secondo libro di Madrigali a quattro voce*, Casulana published *Ridon or [hor] per le piaggie* based on text taken from a sestain by Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374). The longer poem, *La ver' l'aurora*, was written in sestain form, consisting of six stanzas of six lines each, normally followed by a three-line envoi. The words that end each line of the first stanza are used as line endings in each of the following stanzas, rotated in a set pattern.

The poetry of Francesco Petrarch was used by many renowned madrigalists of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, including Adrian Willaert, Orlando Di Lasso, and Cipriano de Rore. Poet and literary theorist Pietro Bembo (mentioned earlier for his disapproval of women's participation in music) compiled an edition of Francesco Petrarch's poetry and later published his theories on how contemporary poets could attain excellence by imitating Petrarch. The poetic form of the madrigal, which consisted of an irregular number of lines of usually 7 or 11 syllables, without repetition, and usually on a serious topic, came to be the standard as a result of Bembo's influence.<sup>77</sup> In selecting a text by Petrarch, Casulana chose to set her music to a text by one of the most respected poets of the period. Casulana set texts by Petrarch throughout her career, including *L'aver l'aurora* (*Il primo libro di Madrigali a quattro voce*), *Amore per qual cagion*, *Io*

*Cimini family in Italy. Like, as Pescerelli suggests, was the case with Maddalena designated "Casulana" in reference to her place of birth. Serafino was called Aquilato or dell'Aquilato in Casulana's native town. She was born in 1466.*

<sup>76</sup> LaMay, "Composing from the Throat," 366. Vittoria/Raphaella, LaMay says, were most likely the same person. Unlike Casulana, neither of these women were singers as well; in fact, LaMay points out that the next woman who achieved prestige both as a composer and a singer was Francesca Caccini in the 1600s.

<sup>77</sup> Mace, 83.



*d'odorate, Ahi possanza d'amor (Secondo libro di Madrigali)*, and *Datemi pace, Perch'al viso d'amor*, and *Ben veggio di lontano (Il Primo Libro di Madrigali a Cinque Voce)*.

In addition to Petrarch, Casulana set texts written by other respected poets, including Jacopo Sannazaro, Luigi Tansillo, Serafino Aquilano, Bernard Tasso, Annibale Caro, Guilio Strozzi, and Vincenzo Quirino, popular with established madrigal composers of the period.<sup>78</sup> Sannazaro, whom Casulana set extensively throughout her career, was also a favorite of Jacques Arcadelt (1504-1568) (*Se per colpa del vostro fiero sdegno*), Orlando di Lasso (*Per pianto la mia carne*), and Claudio Monteverdi (*La pastorella*).

In addition to the care with which Casulana chose poets, she also selected unique texts that were either gender-neutral or written from the male perspective (a *he* speaking to or about a *she*).<sup>79</sup> This was highly unusual with creating female contemporaries of the time.<sup>80</sup> Gaspara Stampa's *Rime* were all written from her own "I" voice or a separate "she" voice, often longing for an absent lover named "he."<sup>81</sup> Courtesan Tullia d'Aragona specifically named men in her volumes of poetry, whom she addressed in her own voice. In her volume of letters, Veronica Franco wrote from her own perspective, keeping the gaze completely on herself while also controlling that gaze.<sup>82</sup> Alleotti and Ricci, the madrigal composers who followed Casulana, usually composed from the female perspective. Casulana selected texts that spoke of women

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<sup>78</sup> Lerner, 102. Serafino Aquilano, interestingly, was actually named Serafino Cimini, of the Cimini family in Italy. Like, as Pescerelli suggests, was the case with Madalena designated "Casulana" in reference to her place of birth, Serafino was called Aquilano or dell'Aquilano in reference to Aquila, where he was born in 1466.

<sup>79</sup> LaMay, "Madalena Casulana: My Body Knows Unheard Of Songs!" 57.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Of course, there were no contemporary female composers that scholars can compare, but female poets of the time used the opportunity to write from the female perspective.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> LaMay, "Madalena Casulana: My Body Knows Unheard Of Songs!" 58.

from the male perspective, and who were often depicted as unattainable, cold objects. LaMay suggested that Casulana chose to speak from the male perspective so that she could control how the female was viewed.<sup>83</sup> Casulana was “not willing to move the female out of critical positioning in the story... she wanted to hold up the beautiful woman, but control who was looking at her.”<sup>84</sup> Perhaps this was part of Casulana’s motivation, but perhaps the true motivation behind which texts Casulana chose was more simple and direct. While this did provide Casulana with control of how to treat the subject, she stated her goal herself in the dedication of her first book. Casulana aimed to prove to men that they were not the only ones capable of fine composing. By maintaining the male or gender-neutral perspective, Casulana was, in effect, able to create a direct comparison of her compositions those by male madrigalists. A female perspective text would immediately indicate that the composer as a woman. By using a standard text, in fact even some set by other male composers, she hopefully created an unbiased listener. It also maintained the focus on her music, rather than her text selection. A female perspective text, while artistic and slowly becoming more acceptable, would nonetheless draw the wrong attention of potential listeners and performers. By choosing standard, respected texts, the focus remained on Casulana and her music, as was her stated intention. Casulana did not aim to represent the views or the voice of all women; rather, she hoped to prove that the work of a woman was as worthwhile as that of a man.

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<sup>83</sup> LaMay, “Composing from the Throat,” 366.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

## POETRY, MADRIGALISMS, AND WORD PAINTING

### IN *RIDON OR PER LA PIAGGIE*

While madrigals in the first half of the century were based around the use of thick and continuous counterpoint and pervasive imitation, by the 1550s, madrigal composers were beginning to use polyphony, including imitation and canonic techniques, word painting, chromaticism, and changes in texture. From even her earliest pieces, Casulana used these techniques to display her skill. She exemplified the use of madrigalisms, chromaticism, and text painting in one of her very first compositions: *Ridon or [hor] per le piaggie*.<sup>85</sup>

The text of *Ridon or per le piaggie* is part of the larger sestain *La ver l'aurora*. The sestain, from the perspective of the poet, describes awaking in the dawn to a gentle breeze, which makes the poet think of his beloved, Laura.<sup>86</sup> Petrarch often used wordplay to reference his love, Laura, and the breeze, *l'aura* in Italian. He likened obtaining his love to catching the breeze in a net. The speaker's love was unrequited, as was always the case when Petrarch was describing his love for Laura. For her madrigal *Ridon or per le piagge*, Casulana set the final stanza of the sestain in *La ver l'aurora*, before the final three-line envoi (see Figure 1. Translation of *Ridon or per le piagge*).

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<sup>85</sup> The modern spelling of "or" would today be "hor" in Italian. For the rest of this paper, however, Casulana's original spelling of "or" will be used.

<sup>86</sup> See Appendix A for full translation.



Ridon or per le piagge herbe et fiori:  
 esser non pò che quella angelica alma  
 non senta il suon de l'amorose note.  
 Se nostra ria fortuna è di più forza,  
 lagrimando et cantando i nostri versi  
 et col bue zoppo andrem cacciando l'aura.

Now the meadows smile with grass and flowers,  
 it cannot be that her angelic soul  
 does not hear the sound of loving music.  
 But if my cruel fate has the greater power,  
 sing and weep together will be our song,  
 and with a lame ox go to catch the breeze.

**Figure 1. Translation of *Ridon or per le piagge***

Casulana composed melodic vocal lines that expressed the emotion inherent in this respected text, with appearances of word painting and sudden chromatic shifts. Casulana began the madrigal with the expected musical setting of the word “ridon” (laughter), however, Casulana didn’t simply set “ridon” in rapid eighth or sixteenth notes, as was the obvious text setting for words denoting joy; rather, the word “piagge” (spelled piagge in modern Italian) (meadows) was set with running sixteenth notes in the bass and tenor voices. This literally created an image of “laughing meadows” within the first line (see Figure 2. “Laughing meadows” *Ridon or per le piagge*). The use of quickly-moving notes was an established madrigalism for words of laughing or joy, and Madalena took the traditional idiom and created an aural picture.

1

Rid - on or per le piag - gie'er-bett' e fio - ri, es - ser non

Rid - on or per le piag - gie'er - bett' e fio - ri, es - ser non

Rid - on or per le piag - gie'er-bett' e fio - ri, es - ser non

Rid - on or per le piag - gie'er-bett' e fio - ri,

Figure 2. "Laughing meadows" *Ridon or per le piagge*

Next, Madalena captured the contrasting emotion of the next line, “esser non pò che quella angelica alma non senta il suon de l'amorose note,” (it cannot be that her angelic soul does not hear the sound of loving music), by creating imitative protests in the voices, repeating “esser non pò” (it cannot be) first in the alto and canto voices, then the alto, tenor, and bass voices, and finally echoed again by the canto voice, the music imitated the disbelief of the words “esser non puo” (see Figure 3. “Esser non puo” *Ridon or per le piagge*). Next, Casulana calmed the voices for the words “quella angelica alma” (that her angelic soul), leading to a brief cadence on a D Ionian chord (see Figure 3. “Esser non puo” *Ridon or per le piagge*). Through the contrasting setting of the two phrases, “esser non puo” and “quella angelica alma,” Casulana juxtaposed the difference of the two phrases “it cannot be” and “her angelic soul.” This change in texture followed another traditional compositional technique in the late 1500s.



Figure 3. "Es-ser non puo" *Ridon or per le piaggie*

Figure 3. "Es-ser non puo" *Ridon or per le piaggie*

While the texture was mostly homophonic until this point in the piece, the next line of text "non sent'il" (cannot hear). Whereas the composition up to this point was mostly homophonic, with slight imitative entrances that still allowed the words to be understood, at this point Casulana created an almost contrapuntal texture. The alto introduces the text, followed by the cantus, tenor, and bass voices (See Figure 4. "Non sent'il suon" *Ridon or per le piaggie*). The listener is unable to hear the text or differentiate the voices. Following "non sent'il," Casulana composed music that illustrates a deep and low sonority for the text "de l'amorose note" (the loving music), bringing in descending lines in the alto and bass voices, while also setting "note" (notes) in half notes. Casulana also moved the music toward A phrygian, lowering the B's in the bass voice to B $\flat$ , then doing the same in the alto voice (see Figure 4. "Non sent'il suon" *Ridon or per le piaggie*). Casulana displayed her compositional ability through setting each phrase in music that reflected the textual meaning.





Figure 4. "non sent' il suon" *Ridon or per le piagge*

While the texture was mostly energetic until this point in the piece, the next line of text "lagrimando et cantando i nostri versi" (sing and weep together will be our song) is set with evident text painting. The word "lagrimando" (weeping) is set with long note values: whole and half notes (see Figure 5. "lagrimand'e cantandoi" *Ridon or per le piagge*). Casulana also created a weeping motive through the suspensions in the tenor line. This weeping motive is even more dramatic as it contrasts the next word, "cantando" (singing). Casulana set "cantando" in swiftly moving quarter and eighth notes in each voice, literally making the voices sing through the "cantando" (See Figure 5. "lagrimand'e cantandoi" *Ridon or per le piagge*). Like Casulana's use of the madrigalism for "laughing," her use of the established compositional techniques for "weeping" displayed her mastery of the madrigal idiom.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>87</sup> LaMay, "Madalena Casulana: My Body Knows Unheard Of Songs!" 45.



Figure 5. "lagrimand'e cantandoi" *Ridon or per le piaggie*

Finally, Casulana seemed to impart some humor with the text "ol bue zoppo" (the lame ox). In the original engraving, she moved from common time to triple meter, as though the singer is suddenly tripping (denoted here with a triplum bracket) (see Figure 6. "e col bue zopp'andrem" *Ridon or per le piaggie*). Then, she immediately created the feeling of "cacciando" (chasing) with imitative running eighth notes, first in the tenor and bass voices, and then in the alto and canto voices. Casulana echoed this motive for the final phrase, repeating the text "ol bue zoppo" with the tripping triple motive, then the running eighth note motives for "cacciando" before finally cadencing on a D major on the words "l'aura" (the breeze).

15

S e col bue zopp' an - drem cac - cian - do l'au - ra, e col bue

A e col bue zopp' an - drem cac - cian - do l'au - ra, e col bue

T e col bue zopp' an - drem cac - cian - do l'au - ra, e col bue

B e col bue zopp' an - drem cac - cian - do l'au - ra, e col bue

Figure 6. "e col bue zopp'andrem" *Ridon or per le piagge*

Petrarch often used the breeze as a subtle way to refer to his unrequited lover, Laura.

Casulana skillfully invoked this double meaning by using the same D Ionian chord used for the cadence on "angelic' alma" (angelic soul) that Petrarch calls Laura earlier in the stanza, that she does for the cadence for "l'aura." The "angelic soul" is both "the wind" and "Laura" (see Figure 7. "l'aura" *Ridon or per le piagge*).





Figure 7. "l'aura" *Ridon or per le piaggie*

Throughout *Ridon or per le piaggie*, Casulana used the established and well-known text of Petrarch as a canvas on which she displayed her mastery of the madrigal idioms. In the second half of the sixteenth century, Italian composers used madrigalisms, text painting, and chromaticism to express the emotions of poetry by Petrarch and other established poets.

Figure 8. Translation of *l'adorabile* Petrarch text

\* Popular poetry and music of the Renaissance often focused on Chloris and Zephyrus. Chloris was a nymph in one such myth, who was raped by the Zephyrus. After the encounter, Zephyrus renames Chloris "Flora," and makes her the goddess of flowers. This topic would be well within the expectations of established Renaissance poetry, without focusing on the subject matter of a nymph, but rather her beauty before the defilement.

\* While the poem translation located in Appendix 1 is taken from Thomson's *Lalage's* article "Meditation on Love: My Body Knows Unkindness of Love." Dr. Peterson created this translation, which is why it is not accurate to the original. I cannot place my

## POETRY, MADRIGALISMS, WORD PAINTING, AND CHROMATICISM IN

### *IO D'ODORATE FRONDE*

Throughout Casulana's career, she continued to develop her madrigal compositional methods. While *Ridon or per le piaggie* exemplified the skill with which Casulana composed her very first publications, in *Io d'odorate fronde*, published in her *Secondo Libro de Madrigali a Quattro Voce*, she developed her skill even further. The text of *Io d'odorate*, one of the popular Chloris stories,<sup>88</sup> describes the experience of smelling flowers in the night; the narrator can't see them, but knows they are there through their scent (see Figure 8. Translation of *Io d'odorate fronde* text).

Io d'odorate fronde de bei fiori  
Che la felice arabbia in grembo asconde  
Te sacra un gran altar tra verde alhori  
Che arda mai sempre qui vicin al onde.

E de le nimphe de la nobil ciori  
Meco la piu leggiadro in queste sponde  
Cantera, cantera le due lodi ad una  
Fin che col sol il ciel tutto si in bruna.

I, with the scents of leaves of the beautiful flowers  
that the happy Arabbia (Arabian) in her lap hides  
dedicate to you a great altar of greens that at all hours  
will burn forever near the waves.

And, of the nymphs of the noble Chloris  
with me the prettiest on this shore will sing,  
will sing the two praises until the end  
when (at which time), with the sun, the heavens all  
themselves will become dark. (until the end of time)

Figure 8. Translation of *Io d'odorate fronde* text

<sup>88</sup> Popular poetry and music of the Renaissance often focused on Greek and Roman myths. Chloris was a nymph in one such myth, who was raped by the Zephyrus. After the encounter, Zephyrus renames Chloris "Flora," and makes her the goddess of flowers. This topic would be well within the expectations of established Renaissance poetry, without focusing on the subjugation of Chloris, but rather her beauty before the defilement.

<sup>89</sup> While the poetic translation located in Appendix C is taken from Thomasin LaMay's article "Madalena Casulana: My Body Knows Unheard of Songs," Dr. Peterson created this translation, which is slightly more accurate to the original Italian phrasing.



With this beautiful text, Casulana quickly created a relationship between the text and the music. From the very beginning of the piece, Madalena set the poetry with music that reflected and enhanced its meaning. First, the tenors introduce the “felice Arrabia” (happy Arabian) with running eighth notes that were imitated by the other three voices (see Figure 9. “Io d’odorate fronde e bei fiori” *Io d’odorate fronde*).<sup>90</sup>

Figure 9. "Io d'odorate fronde e bei fiori" *Io d'odorate fronde*

This text painting continues throughout the piece; when the text speaks of “Meco la piu leggria” (the prettiest [nymphs]), the three upper voices sing the text with swift and graceful eighth notes, while the bass voice *tacets* (see Figure 10. “Meco la piu leggria” *Io d’odorate fronde*).

Figure 10. “Meco la piu leggria” *Io d’odorate fronde*

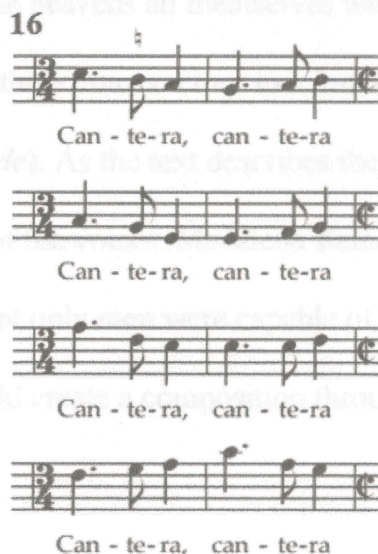
<sup>90</sup> Lamay, “Madalena Casulana, By Body Knows Unheard of Songs!” 59. In Greek and Roman literature, the Arabian peninsula was divided into three regions, the Arabia Deserta (Arabian Desert), Arabia Petraea (area around the city of Petra) and Felix Arabia (Fertile Arabia). In this case, the poetry makes a play on words with the “felice” making a sound similar to “Felix,” denoting both the happiness of the narrator as well as the fertility of the nymph Chloris and Arrabia’s “lap.”





**Figure 10. "Meco la piu leggìa" *Io d'odorate fronde***

Next, Casulana set the text describing the nymph will “Cantera” (sing) with a lilting dotted rhythm in triple meter (see Figure 11. “Cantera, cantera” *Io d'odorate fronde*).



**Figure 11. "Cantera, cantera" *Io d'odorate fronde***

Although the music reverts to duple meter with text “le due lodi” (your two praises until the end), upon the returning “Cantera,” Casulana maintained the dotted rhythm (see Figure 12. “una, cantera” *Io d'odorate fronde*).

le tue lo-di ad u - na ad u - na, can - te-ra

le tue lo - di ad u-na ad u - na, can - te-ra

le tue lo - di ad u-na ad u - na, can - te-ra

le tue lo - di, — can - te-ra

Figure 12. "una cantera" *Io d'odorate fronde*

Finally, as the text exclaims the narrator's joy will continue only "sol il ciel tutto si in bruna" (when, with the sun, the heavens all themselves will become dark), the outer three voices slow to longer values, and all three voices return to a lower range (see Figure 13. "sol il ciel tutto si in bruna" *Io d'odorate fronde*). As the text describes the darkening sky, Casulana created darkness in the lower ranges of the voices. Madalena stated in the preface of her *Primo Libro* that she aimed to prove that not only men were capable of intelligence. Her artistic setting of this text proved that a woman could create a composition through the techniques of the period.

sol il ciel tut-to si in bru - - na, fin che col sol il ciel tut - to si in bru - - na.

sol il ciel tut-to, tut - to si in bru - na, fin che col sol il ciel tut - to, tut - to si in bru - na.

sol il ciel tut-to si in bru - na, fin che col sol il ciel tut - to, tut-to si in bru - na.

sol il ciel tut-to si in bru - na, fin che col sol il ciel tut - to si in bru - - na.

Figure 13. "sol il ciel tutto si in bruna" *Io d'odorate fronde*

This text painting is paired throughout with modal shifts. For instance, as "arabbia in grembo asconde" (happy Arrabia hides [the flowers] in her green womb), Casulana shifted swiftly from D mixolydian to G mixolydian, through the sudden appearance of chromaticism (specifically the F#) (see Figure 14. "arabbia in grembo asconde" *Io d'odorate fronde*). One of the first madrigalists to use this chromaticism was Adrian Willaert, who associated certain intervals with relating emotions.<sup>91</sup> Willaert correlated major thirds and sixths with harshness, while minor intervals were related to sweetness or grief. In this section, Casulana avoided any startling sixths, instead using minor intervals, including the minor third from D to F in the alto line (measure 3 in Figure 14 "arabbia in grembo asconde").<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Roche, 9.

<sup>92</sup> Fenlon and Haar, 74.



5

ce a - rab - bia in grem - bo as-con-de. Te sa-cra un gran al-tar.

ce a - rab - bia in grem bo as - con - de. Te sa-cra un gran al-tar

8 - ce a-rab - bia in grem - bo as-con-de. Te sa-cra un gran al-tar

ce a-rab - bia in grem - bo as - con - de. Te sa-cra un gran al-tar

**Figure 14. "arabia in grembo asconde" *Io d'odorate fronde***

As the text exclaims "Cantera" (sing), Casulana employed a sudden shift to B  $\flat$  from the measure prior, and continues to move between C  $\sharp$  and C  $\natural$ , as well as B  $\flat$  and B  $\sharp$ , for the rest of the piece (see Figure 15. Chromaticism in *Io d'odorate fronde*). The chromaticism creates color, emphasizing the text painting that Madalena displayed throughout the madrigal. This chromaticism also proved that Casulana was not only the master of madrigalisms and text-painting, but could also employ chromatic shifts to achieve artistic expression.

de la no-bil clo - ri. Me-co la piu leg-gia - dro in que - ste spon - de. Can - te-ra, can - te-ra

de la no-bil clo - ri. Me - co la piu leg-gia-dro in que-ste spon - de. Can - te-ra, can - te-ra

de la no-bil clo - ri. Me - co la piu leg-gia-dro in que - ste spon - de. Can - te-ra, can - te-ra

de la no-bil clo - ri. Can - te-ra, can - te-ra

22

sol il ciel tut-to si in bru - na, fin che col sol il ciel tut - to si in bru - na.

sol il ciel tut-to, tut - to si in bru - na, fin che col sol il ciel tut - to, tut - to si in bru - na.

sol il ciel tut-to si in bru - na, fin che col sol il ciel tut - to, tut-to si in bru - na.

sol il ciel tut-to si in bru - na, fin che col sol il ciel tut - to si in bru - na.

Figure 15. Chromaticism in *Io d'odorate fronde*



## CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION

In the sixteenth century, the options for women outside of marriage remained scarce. From courtesan to wife, women were expected to remain the property or provision of men. During this century, women began to participate in musical performance in courts and noble families; however, the “creative” woman was still an anomaly. After marriage, females were expected to retire from any sort of public career, instead focusing on domestic duties. Music remained a subject highly erotic, and women’s participation in music and performance remained highly connected to their sexual reputations. However, amidst this society Madalena Casulana managed not only to publish her music, but to do so alongside respected male contemporary composers, including Orlando di Lasso and Cipriano de Rore.

In doing this, Casulana not only achieved her independence, but also her respectable reputation as a composer. While her talent in the medium of madrigals certainly brought her respect and attention, her ability to and insistence on writing down her compositions also set her apart from other females participating in music during the period. From her very early work, including *Ridon or per le piaggie*, to her later compositions, such as *Io d’odorate fronde*, Casulana used established techniques to create madrigals respected by many. Casulana also achieved success by working with prominent male artists and composers of sixteenth-century Italy. Certainly the support of these composers and artists helped to protect Madalena’s respectability and further her musical renown.

Through using established idioms of madrigals, including text selection, madrigalisms, and chromatic shifts, and Casulana proved through her music that men were not the only masters



of intellect. By working within the poetry and compositional techniques already established by men, Casulana proved that the skills to compose madrigals of musical and artful distinction were not the domain of only one gender.

Some questions emerge. Di Lasso promoted Madalena by premiering a piece at the wedding feast of his employer. Did he aid her beyond this, either through introducing her to other composers and patrons, or monetarily? While no evidence has been found to suggest this, di Lasso certainly supported Casulana, and his acceptance, as well as that of other prominent artists of the period, certainly helped to develop her career during her lifetime.

Madalena Casulana was respected by her peers and contemporaries, so another question remains: why is her work relatively unknown today? Few performance editions are available to purchase or find online, and even fewer are frequently performed. However, Casulana's work exists in one of the first extant publications dedicated to a woman, and her music stands alongside de Rore's and di Lasso's work as artistic examples of the Italian madrigal form. Hopefully, through research and editions, modern musicians and choirs can be introduced to Madalena Casulana's name and work.

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Homini et dei volce vincer per forza  
 Amor, come si legge in prime e in verti  
 et io l'prova in sul primo lyra de' fiori  
 Ora ne l' mio signor ne le sue note  
 ne l' panger mio ne i proglia per far leticia  
 trone o di vita o di morir quod'ama

Men and gods were overcome by the power  
 of love, as we read in praise and song  
 and I proved at the first opening of the flower  
 Now neither my Lord nor his music  
 nor my tears or prayers can make me  
 carry off from life or death, for he, who,

A l'ultimo bisogno, o misera alma  
 accampa ogni suo ingegno, ogni sua forza  
 mentre fra noi di vita si cerca l'ama  
 Nulla al mondo è che non possano i vati  
 et li capidi dicano senza in far non  
 poncho l'gale adone con novi fou

In time of greatest need, O wretched soul,  
 gather all your wit about you and your power,  
 while among us death is still to be feared  
 Nothing on earth's side, and in the world,  
 and in our hearts, be aspersed with the light  
 besides seeking in the world the way to

Ridon or per le piagge heretic et fieri:

Near the meadow wide with grass and

## APPENDIX A. *Là ver' l'aurora* Translation

*Là ver' l'aurora, che sí dolce l'aura  
al tempo novo suol muovere i fiori,  
et li augelletti incominciar lor versi,  
sí dolcemente i pensier' dentro a l'alma  
mover mi sento a chi li à tutti in forza,  
che ritornar convenni a le mie note.*

*Temprar potess'io in sí soavi note  
i miei sospiri ch'addolcissen Laura,  
faccendo a lei ragion ch'a me fa forza!  
Ma pria fia 'l verno la stagion de' fiori,  
ch'amor fiorisca in quella nobil alma,  
che non curò già mai rime né versi.*

*Quante lagrime, lasso, et quanti versi  
ò già sparti al mio tempo, e 'n quante note  
ò riprovato humiliar quell'alma!  
Ella si sta com'aspr'alpe a l'aura  
dolce, la qual ben move frondi et fiori,  
ma nulla pò se 'ncontra maggior forza.*

*Homini et dèi solea vincer per forza  
Amor, come si legge in prose e 'n versi:  
et io 'l provai in sul primo aprir de' fiori.  
Ora né 'l mio signor né le sue note  
né 'l pianger mio né i preghi pòn far Laura  
trarre o di vita o di martir quest'alma.*

*A l'ultimo bisogno, o misera alma,  
accampa ogni tuo ingegno, ogni tua forza,  
mentre fra noi di vita alberga l'aura.  
Nulla al mondo è che non possano i versi;  
et li aspidi incantar sanno in lor note,  
nonché 'l gielo adornar con novi fiori.*

**Ridon or per le piagge herbe et fiori:**

*Towards the dawn when the sweet breeze  
over the fresh spring earth stirs the flowers,  
and the little birds begin their song,  
I feel my thoughts stirred within my soul,  
so sweetly by her who has them in her power,  
that I must turn again to my own music.*

*If I could tune my sighs to such gentle music  
as Laura makes with the sweetening breeze,  
showing her the reason why I'm in her power!  
But sooner will winter be the season of flowers,  
than love will flourish in that noble soul,  
that never cared for my rhymes or song.*

*How many tears, alas, and how much song  
have I scattered in my time, and with what music  
have I tried again and again to soften her soul!  
She remains a harsh mountain in the breeze,  
a sweet one that stirs the grass and flowers,  
but has no strength against her greater power.*

*Men and gods were overcome by the power  
of Love, as we read in prose and song:  
and I proved at the first opening of the flowers.  
Now neither my Lord nor his music  
nor my tears or prayers can make this breeze  
carry off, from life or torment, this my soul.*

*In time of greatest need, O wretched soul,  
gather all your wits about you, and your power,  
while among us there is still this living breeze  
Nothing on earth's impossible for song,  
and it can charm the serpent with its music,  
besides adorning ice with fresh flowers.*

**Now the meadows smile with grass and**

*"Translation by A. S. Kline, "La ver' l'aurora," (Peter LaBian 2007)*

esser non pò che quella angelica alma  
non senta il suon de l'amorose note.  
Se nostra ria fortuna è di piú forza,  
lagrimando et cantando i nostri versi  
et col bue zoppo andrem cacciando  
l'aura.

In rete accolgo l'aura, e 'n ghiaccio i fiori,  
e 'n versi tento sorda et rigida alma,  
che né forza d'Amor prezza né note.

flowers,  
it cannot be that her angelic soul  
does not hear the sound of loving music.  
But if my cruel fate has the greater power,  
sing and weep together will be our song,  
and with a lame ox go to catch the breeze.<sup>93</sup>

I catch the breeze with a net, seed ice with  
flowers,  
and hold with song a deaf unyielding soul,  
indifferent to Love's power and my music.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Boldface font added.

<sup>94</sup> Translation by A. S. Kline, "La ver l'aurora," (Peter Sadlon, 2007).



# APPENDIX B. *Ridon or per le piaggie*

## Ridon or per le piaggie

Madalena Casulana  
ed. Hannah Wunsch

Soprano Alto Tenor Bass

Rid - on or per le piag - gie'er-bett' e fio - ri, es - ser non

Rid - on or per le piag - gie'er - bett' e fio - ri, es - ser non

Rid - on or per le piag - gie'er-bett' e fio - ri, es - ser non

Rid - on or per le piag - gie'er-bett' e fio - ri,

4

S  
puo, es - ser non puo che quel - l'an - ge - lie' al - ma non sent 'il suon de

A  
puo, es - ser non puo che quel - l'an - ge - lie' al - ma non sent 'il suon de

T  
puo, es - ser non puo che quel - l'an - ge - lie' al - ma non sent 'il

B  
es - ser non puo, che quel - l'an - ge - lie' al - ma non

7

S  
l'a-mo-ro-se no - te, non sent' il suon de l'a-mo-ro-se no - te Se no - stra ria for -

A  
l'a-mo-ro - se no - te, de l'a-mo-ro - se no - te Se no - stra ria for -

T  
suon non sent' il suon de l'a - mo-ro - se no - te Se no - stra ria for - tun'

B  
sent 'il suon de l'a-mo-ro-se no - te, Se no - stra ria for -

©

## Ridon or per le piaggie

11

S tun' e di piu for - za, la - gri - mand' e can-tan - doi no - stri ver - si

A tun' e di piu for - za, la - gri - mand' e can-tan - doi no - stri ver - si

T e di piu for - za, la - gri - mand' e can-tan - doi no - stri ver - si

B tun' e di piu for - za, la - gri - mand' e can-tan - doi no - stri ver - si

15

S e col bué zopp' an - drem cac - cian - do l'au - ra, e col bué

A e col bué zopp' an - drem cac - cian - do l'au - ra, e col bué

T e col bué zopp' an - drem cac - cian - do l'au - ra, e col bué

B e col bué zopp' an - drem cac - cian - do l'au - ra, e col bué

18

S zopp' an - drem cac - cian - do l'au - ra.

A zopp' an - drem cac - cian - do l'au - ra.

T zopp' an - drem cac - cian - do l'au - ra.

B zopp' an - drem cac - cian - do l'au - ra.



## APPENDIX C. *Io d'odorate fronde* translation

Io d'odorate fronde de bei fiori  
Che la felice arabbia in grembo asconde  
Te sacra un gran altar tra verde alhori  
Che arda mai sempre qui vicin al onde.

E de le nimphe de la nobil ciori  
Meco la piu leggiadro in queste sponde  
Cantera, cantera le due lodi ad una  
Fin che col sol il ciel tutto si in bruna.

### **Literal Translation:**

I, with the scents of leaves of the beautiful flowers  
that the happy Arabbia (Arabian) in her lap hides  
dedicate to you a great altar of greens that at all  
hours  
will burn forever near the waves.

And, of the nymphs of the noble Chloris  
with me the prettiest on this shore will sing,  
will sing the two praises until the end  
when (at which time), with the sun, the heavens all  
themselves will become dark. (until the end of  
time)<sup>95</sup>

### **Poetic Translation:**

Among green laurel trees, I consecrate to you a  
great altar  
of the fragrant branches and beautiful flowers  
that *Felix Arrabia* hides in her lap,  
(an altar) that may always burn here, near the  
waters;  
and with me, the most graceful among the nymphs  
of the noble Chloris  
will sing your praises one after another  
on these shores  
until the sun and the whole sky grow dark.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Literal Translation by Dr. Patti Peterson.

<sup>96</sup> Poetic Translation from LaMay, "My Body Knows Unheard of Songs!" 137.



# APPENDIX D. *Io d'odorate fronde*

## *Io d'odorate*

Maddalena CASULANA  
(c. 1544 - c. 1590)

Soprano  
Alto  
Tenor  
Bass

Io d'o - do-ra-te fron - de de bei fio - ri. Che la fe - li -

5

ce a - rab - bia in grem - bo as-con-de. Te sa-cra un gran al-tar tra ver-de al - ho -

9

-ri. Che ar - da mai sem-pre qui vi - cin al on - de. E de le nim - phe



13  $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$

de la no-bil clo - ri. Me-co la piu leg-gia - dro in que - ste spon - de. Can - te-ra, can - te-ra

de la no-bil clo - ri. Me - co la piu leg-gia-dro in que-ste spon - de. Can - te-ra, can - te-ra

de la no-bil clo - ri. Me - co la piu leg-gia-dro in que - ste spon - de. Can - te-ra, can - te-ra

de la no-bil clo - ri. Can - te-ra, can - te-ra

18  $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$

le tue lo-di ad u - na ad u - na, can-te-ra le tue lo - di ad u-na ad u - na. Fin che col

le tue lo - di ad u-na ad u - na, can-te-ra le tue lo - di ad u-na ad u - na. Fin che col

le tue lo - di ad u-na ad u - na, can-te-ra le tue lo - di ad u-na ad u - na. Fin che col

le tue lo - di, can-te-ra le tue lo - di ad u-na ad u - na. Fin che col

22

sol il ciel tut-to si in bru - na, fin che col sol il ciel tut - to si in bru - na.

sol il ciel tut-to, tut - to si in bru - na, fin che col sol il ciel tut - to, tut - to si in bru - na.

sol il ciel tut-to si in bru - na, fin che col sol il ciel tut - to, tut-to si in bru - na.

sol il ciel tut-to si in bru - na, fin che col sol il ciel tut - to si in bru - na.



## APPENDIX E:

### Dedication to Isabella De' Medici-Orsina (1568)

The dedication appeared in Casulana's *Il primo libro de madrigali a quattro voci*, published in 1568 by Girolamo Scotto.

All' Illustrissima et Eccellentissima Signora, la Signora Donna Isabella De' Medici Orsina, Duchessa dei Bracciano.

Conosco veramenta Illustrissima et Eccellentissima Signora, che queste mie primittie, per la debolezza loro, non possono partorir quell' effetto, ch'io vorrei, che sarebbe *oltre il dar qualche testimonio all' Eccellentia Vostra della divotion mio*, di mostrar anche al monday (per quanto mi fosse concesso in questa profession della Musica) il vano error de gl'huomini, che de gli alti doni dell' intelletto tanto si credono patroni, che par loro, ch'alle Donne non possono medesimamente esser communi. Ma con tutto ciò non ho voluto mancar di mandarle in luce, sperando che dal chiaro nome di Vostra Eccellentia (a cui riverentemente le dedico) tanto di lumi debbano consequire, che da quello possa accendersi qualche altro più elevato ingegno, a dimostrar con chiari effetti quello che non ho potuto dimostrar'io se non con l'animo. Gradisca dunque l'Eccellentia Vostra questa mia candida intentione, e se da così immaturi frutti non me ne potrà venir quella lode, che sola è il premio delle virtuose fatiche, faccia almeno la bontà di lei, ch'io ne god ail premio della sua gratia, che così, se non per buono, almeno per fortunatissimi saranno da me sempre reputati; et a Vostra Eccellenta humilmente bacio le mani.

De Venetia il di x. d'Aprile. 1568. Di Vostra Eccellentia Humilissima Servitrice Madalena Casulana.

To the Most Illustrious and Excellent Lady, Donna Isabelle de' Medici Orsina, Duchess of Bracciano.

I know truly, most Illustrious and Most Excellent Lady, that these first fruits of mine cannot, because of their weakness, produce the effect that I would like, which would be, other than to give Your Excellence some proof of my devotion, to show also to the world (as much as is allowed me in this musical profession) the conceited error of men. They believe so strongly to be the masters of the high gifts of the intellect that, in their opinion, these gifts cannot likewise be shared by Women.

Nevertheless, I did not want to fail to publish them: I hope these works will acquire so much light from the renowned name of Your Excellence (to whom I



reverently dedicate them) that from this light other, more elevated minds may be kindled, in order to demonstrate with clear effect what I could not demonstrate, if not with my intent.

Therefore, Your Excellence, please accept this sincere intention of mine, and if from such unripe fruits I could not obtain that praise which is the only reward for virtuous toils, let at least your generosity allow me to enjoy the reward of your favor. In this way, I will always consider these fruits, if not good, at least most fortunate.

I humbly kiss the hands of Your Excellence. From Venice, the tenth day of April, 1568. The most humble servant of Your Excellence, Madalena Casulana.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Pendle, 82.



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