

Zeitschrift: Basler Beiträge zur Historischen Musikpraxis : Veröffentlichungen der Schola Cantorum Basiliensis
Herausgeber: Schola Cantorum Basiliensis
Band: 41 (2021)

Artikel: Affetto : concept and term in literary and musical criticism
Autor: Piperno, Franco
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-961706>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 29.04.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Concept and Term in Literary and Musical Criticism

Franco Piperno

One of the most distinctive questions related to the aesthetics and performance of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century music surrounds the term *affetto*. The concept has a dual meaning, as exemplified by the phrases “moving the *affetti*” (objective perspective) and “expressing the *affetti*” (subjective perspective). Although the matter has already been extensively discussed numerous times, it is worth revisiting.¹ I aim to compare *affetti* in vocal and instrumental music and to relocate the concept in the larger context of contemporary literary theory, which forms the conceptual and semantic background of the terminology used to describe music. A brief glance at the persistent use of the word *affetto* in both literary and musical sources of the time (i. e., in the titles of published literary and musical works) suffices to understand the need for clarification. The term is far more often associated with literature – poetry in particular – and appeared there long before it surfaced in music. Comparison with poetry, as well as with oratory and the performing arts, helps to clarify what was meant by *affetto* in musical contexts.

The “Dynamics” of *Affetti* in Literary Sources

Seventeenth-century dictionaries provide us with working definitions of *affetto*. The Accademia della Crusca dictionary defines it as follows: “passion d’ animo, nata dal disiderio del bene, e dall’odio del male. Lat. *affectus, us, affectio*” (“a passion of the soul generated by desire of the good and hate of the bad. Latin

¹ An expanded version of this essay has been published in Italian: “Affetto’: concetto e lemma nel linguaggio letterario e critico-musicale fra Cinque e Seicento”, in: *Studi musicali*, n. s., 8 (2017), 49–66. Early approaches to this subject are Mariangela Donà, “Affetti musicali’ nel Seicento”, in: *Studi secenteschi*, 8 (1967), 75–94 and Karl Gustav Fellerer, “Affectus und effectus in der italienischen Monodie”, in: *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 14 (1983), 3–21 and 119–146. I discussed the concept *affetto* in the preface to my edition of Biagio Marini, *Affetti musicali. Opera prima*, ed. Franco Piperno, Milan: Suvini Zerboni 1990, xxvi–xxx. For a recent reappraisal see Rebecca Cypess, “Esprimere la voce humana’: Connections between Vocal and Instrumental Music by Italian Composers of the Early Seventeenth Century”, in: *The Journal of Musicology* 27 (2010), 181–223.

affectus, us, affectio)². This entry describes *affetto* as a static entity. In contrast, literary authors such as Torquato Tasso and Battista Guarini offer a dynamic, mobile conception of the term. Tasso, recalling Aristotle, speaks of *affetti* as “tutti que’ movimenti de l’animo i quali sogliono esser seguiti dal piacere o dal dolore” (“all those soul movements followed by either pleasure or suffering”; my emphasis);³ Guarini for his part describes *affetto* as a “perturbazione d’animo” (“turbulence of the soul”).⁴ This notion of a changing state of mind is consistent with the expression “muovere gli affetti” (“moving the affetti”) frequently used in musical theory or in writings on music.

Literary works and treatises of the period also emphasize the ability of poetry to imitate *affetti*, harking back to the Aristotelian view of the poetic arts as modes of imitation. In his *Dialoghi dell’invenzione poetica* (1554), Alessandro Lionardi – a poet and man of law from Padua – states that poetry emulates the motions of the soul since “null’altro essendo lo scrivere poeticamente che imitare” (“writing poetry consists in nothing else than emulating”); more precisely, he affirms that poetry imitates “esclamazioni, amplificazioni, estenuazioni, riprensioni, ammonizioni, prieghi, lamentazioni, iscusazioni, indignazioni, et altri affetti et effetti simili” (“exclamations, amplifications, exasperations, reproaches, admonitions, pleas, laments, excuses, resentments, and other affects or effects like these”).⁵ All these emotions are in keeping with Guarini’s dynamic concept of *affetti* and some clearly pertain to the musical – or, at least, auditory – sphere (exclamations, amplifications, laments etc). Lionardi is echoed by the Brescian man of letters, Giovan Pietro Capriano (*Della vera poetica*, 1555); since poetry uses words, which are “ottime imitatrici e rappresentatrici delle cose” (“excellent emulators and representations of things”), and metre (“numeri”), with which poets imitate “le azioni, i costumi, gli affetti et i moti quando lor occorre, or con numeri concitati, ora rimessi, ora temperati e misti, secondo gli diversi costumi, affetti, moti et altri accidenti e nature o qualità delle azioni e delle occasioni” (“the actions, customs, affects, and emotions when it is required, using now agitated or calm metres, then moderate or mixed metres according to the different customs, affects, emotions, and other accidents, origins, or qualities of either actions or occasions”).⁶ By distinguishing words from metre, Capriano

2 See http://vocabolario.sns.it/html/_s_index2.html sub voce (30 November 2016). Here and below translations are mine, if not differently indicated.

3 Torquato Tasso, *Il Porzio ovvero de le virtù*, in: Id., *Dialoghi*, ed. Giovanni Baffetti, vol. 2, Milan: Rizzoli 1998, 1048.

4 Battista Guarini, *Il Verrato*, in: Id., *Opere*, ed. Marziano Guglieminetti, Turin: UTET 1971, 801.

5 Alessandro Lionardi, *Dialoghi dell’invenzione poetica* (1554), in: *Trattati di poetica e retorica del Cinquecento*, ed. Bernard Weinberg, vol. 2, Rome-Bari: Laterza 1970, 243.

6 Giovan Pietro Capriano, *Della vera poetica* (1555), in: *ibid.*, 296.

states that the latter, a musical element, is capable of rendering *affetti*, thus implicitly acknowledging music's ability to represent emotions. Decades later Gioseffo Zarlino reiterates this concept stating that “le cagioni, che possono muouer gli Affetti in un Soggetto; che sono l'Harmonia & il Numero ò Rhythmo, serui della Oratione” (“what can move the affects in a person are the harmony and the metre or rhythm, both servants of the words”)⁷ and later on Monteverdi finds in the rhythmic resource of sixteen semiquavers struck one after the other “la similitudine del affetto che ricercavo” (“the resemblance to the passion which I sought”), that is the musical means “riuscire alla immitatione del ira” (“capable of depicting anger”).⁸

In his *Trattato della poesia lirica* (1580), Pomponio Torelli, a man of letters, tragedian, and diplomat from Parma, expands on the imitative capabilities of poetry and its musical elements: poetry, he writes, consists in “immitatione di costumi et affetti diversi” (“imitation of different customs and affects”) and results from the union between “l'harmonia de i versi e ritmo de i piedi” (“the harmony of verses and the rhythm of feet”).⁹ Music –vocal and instrumental – is no less imitative of *affetti* than poetry itself, “perciò che o fatta di voci o di strumenti, o dell'uno e l'altro insieme, sempre immita” (“because, whether it consists of voices or of instruments, or a combination of both, it always imitates”).¹⁰ Torelli draws a very clear parallel between music and poetry concerning the representation of *affetti*. He also claims that the performer reveals *affetto* throughout their musical performance and is responsible for its impact on the listener's psyche. This happens above all in vocal music, where “l'armonia con la consonanza aerea delle voci [...] porta seco e l'affetto e l'animo di chi canta, col qual affetto di chi la fa move l'affetto e l'animo di chi l'ode, e con l'animo penetrando l'animo, così pian piano infonde i costumi” (“the harmony, with its airy consonance of the various voices, effuses the affect and the soul of the singer, and with the latter's affect moves the listener's affect and soul; and penetrating the (listener's) soul with the (singer's) soul, gradually infuses (its) customs (in the listener)”).¹¹ Therefore singers are praised for their rhetorical and psychagogical skills; ideally, excellent *musici cantori* become composers in their own right by shaping the affective content of the pieces they perform.

Torelli's view is shared by the humanist musicologist Girolamo Mei, who adds that the expression of *affetti* in music causes listeners to resonate emotionally with what they hear: the music is able “all'espressione dell'affetto, dalla quale

7 Gioseffo Zarlino, *Sopplimenti musicali*, Venice: De' Franceschi 1588, 309.

8 Claudio Monteverdi, *Madrigali guerrieri et amorosi*, Venice: Vincenti 1638, *A chi legge*.

9 Pomponio Torelli, *Trattato della poesia lirica* (1580), in: *Trattati di poetica e retorica*, ed. Bernard Weinberg, vol. IV, Rome-Bari: Laterza 1974, 265.

10 Ibid., 290.

11 Ibid., 287.

naturalmente si commuove il simile in chi ode” (“to express the affect and to naturally move the listener’s corresponding affect”).¹² This happens, according to Mei, when the music causes the listener’s internal emotional state to reverberate with the emotions surrounding them. Mei, like Gioseffo Zarlino¹³ and Vincenzo Galilei,¹⁴ describes the phenomenon as a sort of sympathetic resonance of the human soul which, like a string, is set in motion by an external vibration (the music’s *affetti*) to which it has a harmonic similarity. Thus, the discussion on the relationship between music and *affetti* acquires a scientific perspective (the conceptual basis for *Affektenlehre*) as well as a rhetorical one – the latter often used by composers in their written dedications to underline the pertinence of their work to their dedicatee’s psyche.¹⁵

The Musician’s Perspective on *Affetti*

Giulio Caccini’s writings clearly define the theories on music’s ability to express *affetti* and to set the listener’s soul resonating sympathetically: indeed, Caccini played a vital role in the adoption of the term *affetto* in musical parlance by using and discussing it in the preface *Ai lettori* to his *Nuove musiche* (1602). Neither Luigi Zenobi’s detailed letter on singers, players, and composers (ca. 1600)¹⁶ nor Viadana’s preface to his celebrated *Concerti ecclesiastici* (1602)¹⁷ provide such a mature and innovative discussion on that concept. In Caccini’s view, *affetti* are inherent in both the music and its execution because they derive from the correct use of “ornamenti” (“ornaments”) in relation to the words and

12 Girolamo Mei, *Discorso sopra la musica antica, e moderna*, Venice: Ciotti 1602 (reprint Bologna: Forni 1968), [4].

13 Zarlino, *Sopplimenti* (see n. 7), 237.

14 *Dialogo della musica antica e della moderna*, Florence: Marescotti 1581, 74.

15 See e.g. Leonard Meldert’s dedication to cardinal Giulio Della Rovere of his *Primo libro di madrigali a 5 voci*, Venice: Scotto 1578: “If music is simply a concord that proceeds from different voices in harmony, I may with good grace of Yr. Excellency say that you have been, and are such music to me, just as I am musician and servant to you, since [...] you deigned with the Basso of your greatness, with the Alto of your humility, with the Canto of your generosity, and with the Tenor of your perseverance to sing with extraordinary harmony that hymn in my favor, more welcome and sweet than anything my barren wit can compose, which was that of receiving me under your protection”. Similar expressions may be found in Ercole Porta’s dedication to Clelia Pepoli of his *Vaga ghirlanda di soavi, et odorati fiori musicali a 1–5 voci*, Bologna: Rossi 1613 and in Giovanni Legrenzi’s dedication to Giovan Carlo Savorgnan of his *Primo libro di Sonate a due, e tre*, op. 2, Venice: Gardano-Magni 1655.

16 See it in Bonnie J. Blackburn and Edward J. Lowinsky, “Luigi Zenobi and His Letter on the Perfect Musician”, in: *Studi musicali* 22 (1993), 61–114.

17 See it in Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History*, New York: Norton 1950, 419–423.

their meaning, following “una regola generale, che nel crescere, e scemare della voce, e nelle esclamazioni sia il fondamento di esso affetto” (“a general rule that vocal crescendos and diminuendos and *esclamazioni* are the basis of affect”, transl. Hitchcock).¹⁸ Therefore he can describe the *affetti* (what he does in his preface, giving musical examples) and his students can learn them. Caccini’s *ornamenti* are intimately connected to Guarini’s “turbulences of the soul” since they generate a disturbance in the flow of melody, harmony, and sound through which *affetti* are represented. As Caccini was a composer, a performer, and a teacher, he was particularly able to both describe and require of his readers/students *ornamenti* or *effetti* suitable for rendering specific *affetti* well. As a result of the strong relation between *ornamenti/effetti* and *affetti* in his discourse, the two concepts tend to unify and assimilate: the “nobiltà di buon canto”, he says, comes from “una voce naturale comoda per tutte le corde, la quale altrui potrà maneggiare à suo talento, senza valersi della respirazione per altro che per mostrarsi padrone di tutti gli *affetti* migliori che occorrono usarsi in sì fatta nobilissima maniera di cantare” (“a natural voice, comfortable through the whole range, able to be controlled at will, [and] with the breath used only to demonstrate mastery of all the best affects necessary for this most noble manner of singing”, transl. Hitchcock).¹⁹ Here *ornamenti* or *effetti* coincide with *affetti*, and thus he boldly declares that they are an autonomous expressive quality of his music: in Caccini’s theory and practice the *verbal* affects, which require mastering and using specific performing effects, become *musical* affects. He makes his conclusive assertion about this in his second volume of *Musiche* (1614): “lo affetto in chi canta altro non è che per la forza di diuerse note, e di uari accenti co ‘l temperamento del piano e del forte, una espressione delle parole e del concetto che si prendono à cantare atta à muouere affetto in chi ascolta” (“Affect, in a singer, is simply [this], that by the power of certain notes and varied stresses, together with modifications of the dynamics, an expression of the words and the [poet’s] meaning, projected through song, acts to move the affect of him who is listening”, transl. Hitchcock).²⁰ Here Caccini reaffirms the concept of sympathetic resonance (the *affetto* in the music stimulates the corresponding *affetto* in the listener) resulting from an appropriate performance of a musical passage the composer has adequately conceived according to the meaning of the words.

Caccini’s theory was not limited to secular music: composers of sacred music also adopted the idea that the musical composition bears the *affetto* in itself

18 Giulio Caccini, *Le nuove musiche*, Florence: Marescotti 1602, *Ai lettori*, [6] (modern edition by Hugh W. Hitchcock, Madison (Wisc.): A–R Editions 1970, 48).

19 Ibid. [11] (modern edition, 56).

20 Giulio Caccini, *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle*, Florence: Pignoni 1614, *Alcuni avvertimenti*, [2] (modern edition by Hugh W. Hitchcock, Madison (Wisc.): A–R Editions 1978, xxxii and xxxiii).

and the performer needs only bring it to the surface. Agostino Agazzari (*Sacrae laudes*, 1603) speaks of his “nuovo stile” (“new style”) in which text and music are closely intertwined; he adopted this style “in comporre il mottetto, seguendo il maggior’affetto, che per me si è potuto del cantare, ed isprimer vivamente le parole” (“in composing the motet, that is pursuing the best possible *affetto* both in the singing and in a vivid expression of the words”). According to Agazzari, this new style lies in the *composition* of a vocal line expressing a particular emotion appropriate to the text, which needs to be executed in a befitting and flexible manner, that is beginning with

misura molto larga, massime nelle esclamationi, & parole affettuose potendo tal volta nel mezzo ristrengerla, com’in qualche proportione, ò fuga ribattuta, ritornando poi alla primiera, sendo che cosi si dà più affetto al canto, & forza alle parole non perdendo la grauità dovuta nella Chiesa.²¹

a measure in slow tempo, especially where the text has exclamations and tender words, then passing if necessary to a faster tempo, as happens with some proportions or repeated fugues, and then returning to the initial measure; in doing so you sing with more *affetto* and give more vigour to the words without losing the *gravitas* required in church.

Ottavio Durante (*Arie devote*, 1608) instructs the composer to search for *affetto* in his writing, in order to create consonance with the listener’s soul:

Deuono primieramente i Compositori considerar’ bene quel che hanno da comporre, sia Mottetto, Madrigale, o qualsiuoglia altra cosa, e procurar di adornar con la musica le parole con quelli affetti che gli si conuengono, seruendosi di toni appropriati, acciò con questo mezzo siano i lor concetti con più efficacia introdotti negli animi delli ascoltanti.²²

First of all, composers must accurately consider what they are going to compose – be it a motet, a madrigal, or whatever else – then they need to musically adorn the words with appropriate *affetti*, using the right tones, in order that the meaning of the words will effectively penetrate the listeners’ souls.

Sigismondo d’India (*Primo libro delle musiche*, 1609) and Giovanni Paolo Cima (*Concerti Ecclesiastici*, 1610) express *affetti* in their compositions using unusual and often unorthodox melodic lines. D’India declares that he tries to render the *affetti* in his music looking for “intervalli non ordinari, passando con più novità da una consonanza all’altra, secondo la varietà de i sensi delle parole, e che per

²¹ Agostino Agazzari, *Sacrae laudes* [...] *quaternis, quinis, senis, septenis, octonisque vocibus cum basso ad organum, & musica instrumenta. Liber secundus*, Rome: Zanetti 1603, *Avvertimento del autore*.

²² Ottavio Durante, *Arie devote le quali contengono in se la maniera di cantar con gratia l’imitation delle parole, et il modo di scriver passaggi, et altri affetti*, Rome: Verovio 1608, *A lettori*.

questo mezzo i canti avrebbero maggior affetto e maggior forza nel muovere gli affetti dell'animo" ("uncommon intervals, moving in a new way from one consonance to another according to the various meanings of the words; by this means the music reaches a greater affect and a greater strength in moving the affections of the soul").²³ Cima warns the reader against considering some passage of his music as being composed incorrectly: "Et scuoprendo passi alquanto licentiosi, considerino le parole, ouero l'affetto della Musica, che troueranno esser fatto ogni cosa con sano giuditio" ("finding some unorthodox passage [in my music], consider the words, that is the *affetto* of the music, and you will find that everything has been judiciously conceived").²⁴ The use of deviations (*licenze*) from the compositional canon is recognized as the primary expressive tool for composers in the early seventeenth century. Thus, it is in the composition and performance of a piece, rather than in the text alone, that *affetti* move the listeners: the phenomenon gradually becomes purely musical.

Despite any rhetorical effort, the witnesses quoted above, like many others, remain vague about exactly what a musical *affetto* is and how to produce it. The sources clearly specify what an *affetto* is *not* and what conflicts with it: they unanimously state that *affetto* and *passaggi* are incompatible, that is, the emotional quality of the music conflicts with virtuoso ornamentation. Caccini sees embellishments as mere aural titillation, the contrary of moving affections:

[...] i passaggi non sono stati ritrovati perché fiano necessari alla buona maniera di cantare, ma credo io più tosto per una certa titillazione a gli orecchi di quelli, che meno intendono che cosa sia cantare con affetto, che se ciò sapessero indubitatamente i passaggi sarebbero abborriti, non essendo cosa più contraria di loro all'affetto.²⁵

[...] *passaggi* were not devised because they are essential to good singing style but rather, I believe, as a kind of tickling of the ears of those who hardly understand what affective singing really is. If they did understand, *passaggi* would doubtless be loathed, there being nothing more inimical to affective expression. [transl. Hitchcock]

This explains why, in his foreword to Emilio De' Cavalieri's *Rappresentazione di anima e di corpo* (1601), Alessandro Guidotti recommends "che il cantante abbia bella voce, bene intunata e che la porti salda, che canti con affetto, piano e forte, *senza passaggi*" ("that the singer has a nice voice, well in tune and stable, and sings with *affetto*, quietly and loudly, *without embellishments*", italics

²³ Sigismondo d'India, *Le musiche [...] da cantar solo nel clavicordo, chitarone, arpa doppia et altri istromenti simili*, Milan: heirs of Simon Tini & Filippo Lomazzo 1609, *Al cortese lettore*.

²⁴ Giovanni Paolo Cima, *Concerti Ecclesiastici à una, due, tre, quattro voci [...] & sei sonate, per Instrumeti à due, tre e quatro*, Milan: heirs of Simon Tini & Filippo Lomazzo 1610, *L'Autore alli benigni lettori*.

²⁵ Caccini, *Le nuove musiche* (see n. 18), *Ai lettori* [5], (modern edition, 47).

mine).²⁶ Others, including Ottavio Durante and Adriano Banchieri, share the same preoccupation. In his *Arie devote* quoted above, Durante prescribes how to play the beginning of an expressive piece: “Nel principio di qualsivoglia compositione affettuosa, & graue, si deue principiar con grauità, e senza passaggi, ma non senza affetti” (“At the beginning of any expressive and solemn composition one needs to start with gravity and without *passaggi*, but not without *affetti*”).²⁷ In 1610 Banchieri required that the “concerti” printed in his *Vezzo di perle musicali* “sieno concertati con affetto & grauità, suonando & cantando senza diminutioni & gorghe” (“be performed with *affetto* and gravity, playing and singing without diminutions and embellishments”).²⁸ However, the concept of *passaggio* evolves from superficial ornament to expressive enhancement. Caccini is again pivotal in this process. In the preface to his second volume of *Nuove musiche* (1614) he advises the reader that he has “segnato sopra la parte che canta e trilli, e gruppi, et altri nuovi affetti non più veduti per le stampe, con passaggi più proprii per la voce” (“indicated in the voice part tremolos, trills, and other new *affetti* not often seen in print, with diminutions that are most appropriate for the voice”).²⁹ Writing down ornaments and diminutions – with the pedagogical aim of making them a matter of study and imitation – limits the performer’s scope to improvise and invent their interpretation. The ornaments become constitutive elements of the musical *affetto* under the expert guide of the teacher – Caccini, who is also both composer and singer. This is an important development, since for the first time it gives ornaments both an expressive quality and an aesthetic dignity. The French tradition of *agrèments* and their psychological nature finds its roots here.

***Affetti* in Instrumental Music**

What I discussed till now pertains to vocal music, but instrumental music was also influenced by these stylistic and aesthetic changes. The shift in this field was slower; before the groundbreaking prefaces to Frescobaldi’s instrumental works, *affetti* in instrumental genres did not benefit from the same amount of theoretical discussion, because of instrumental players’ status as artisans. In practice, the correlation between *affetti* and instrumental music first appeared in publications

²⁶ Emilio de’ Cavalieri, *Rappresentatione di anima e di corpo*, Rome: Muti 1600, *A’ Lettori* (italics mine).

²⁷ Durante, *Arie devote* (see n. 22), *Al lettore*.

²⁸ Adriano Banchieri, *Vezzo di perle musicali*. [...] *Opera Ventesima Terza*, Venice: Ricciardo Amadino 1610, *L’Autore a chi concerta*.

²⁹ Caccini, *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* (see n. 21), *A discreti lettori*, [1] (modern Edition: xxx and xxxi, transl. by Hitchcock).

of dance music, aiming to express the *affetti* inherent in the noble dancer's movements and postures. Fabrizio Caroso's *Il ballarino* (1581) contains dances linked to specific *affetti*: “Amor costante” (Constant Love), “Contentezza d'Amore” (Love's Contentment), “Nobilità” (Nobleness) and “Dolce amoroso foco” (Sweet Fire of Love). In Salomone Rossi's *Terzo libro de varie sonate* (1613) we find two galliards named “La Disperata” (The Desperate) and “Amor perfetto” (Perfect Love).³⁰

A more significant development in the history of *affetti* in instrumental music is the gradual recognition that musical composition could represent *affetti* in an abstract yet effective manner. Music without words began to be considered capable of emulating texted music; it, too, could stir similar feelings in the listener. Salomone Rossi exemplified this development, naming the opening trio sonata in his *Terzo libro* “La moderna” (The Modern One). The soloistic opening and the following dialogue between the two violins show striking similarities with the expressivity of contemporary vocal music and its *affettuoso* passages.³¹ And while in his preface to the *Toccate* (1615) Frescobaldi notices “quanto accetta sia la maniera di sonare con affetti cantabili e con diversità di passi” (“the overall acceptance of the style of playing with passionate vocal effects and with a diversity of movements”) and invites readers to imitate “i madrigali moderni, i quali quantunque difficili si ageuolano per mezzo della battuta, portandola hor languida, hor veloce, e sostenendola etiandio in aria secondo i loro affetti, o senso delle parole” (“the modern madrigals, which, although they are difficult, are facilitated by means of the tactus, guiding it sometimes languidly, sometimes quickly, and even sustaining it in the air, according to their passions, or the sense of the words”),³² he acknowledges that, like vocal music, instrumental music can imitate passions. In the 1624 foreword to the *Capricci* he explicitly emphasizes that wordless music itself gives precise indications on the *affetto* to be expressed in the performance: “in queste cose, che non paressero regolate, con l'uso del contrapunto, si debba primieramente cercar l'affetto di quel passo et il fine dell'Autore circa la diletatione dell'udito et il modo che si ricerca nel sonare” (“in those pieces, which might seem irregular in their use of counterpoint, you should first look for the passion of the passage in question and the intention of the Composer concerning the delight of the listener and the way one should

30 Rebecca Cypess, *Curious & Modern Inventions. Instrumental Music as Discovery in Galileo's Italy*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2016, 90–99.

31 Ibid, 101; for further uses of similar openings see my *Prefazione* to Biagio Marini, *Affetti musicali. Opera prima* (see n. 1), xxxiii–xxxvi. Rebecca Cypess discusses connections between the concept of modernity and violinistic virtuosity in her “Esprimere la voce humana” (see n. 1), 183.

32 Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Toccate e partite d'intavolatura di cimbalo, Libro primo*, Rome: Borboni 1615, *Al lettore*.

play”).³³ In an analogous description of his dance music – similarly to d’India writing 25 years before about his vocal music – Michele Pesenti said that he used compositional licence to render and express *affetti*: “Non vi apporterà meraviglia ritrovar in alcune di queste mie Correnti, None, Settime, Tritoni, Semiquinte, e simili risonanze, poiché non accompagnandole con le parti di mezzo e sonandole à battuta presta, rendono vaghezza, & affetto contrario alla natura loro” (“Do not be surprised to find in my *correnti* some ninths, sevenths, tritones, diminished fifths, or other intervals of this kind, since by playing them without the middle parts and at a fast tempo they generate gracefulness and affection contrary to their nature”).³⁴

All this explains why Biagio Marini could entitle his opus I, a collection of instrumental music *Affetti musicali* – an early and ambitious title indeed. Rebecca Cypess has rightly highlighted the correlation between the practice of *conversazione* and Marini’s works, the latter intended to move various *affetti* in the same way as developing a conversation on different subjects would.³⁵ This correlation was already implicit in the bond between two refined forms of social interaction: dance music (of which Marini’s opus I has plenty) and conversation among cultivated ladies and gentlemen. Above all, this link was possible because by 1617 instrumental music was recognized as a powerful tool for expressing *affetti* autonomously and proficiently, reaching a level of eloquence previously exclusive to vocal music. Like the latter before it, instrumental music progressively refined its semiotic system and codified its symbols, becoming a decipherable, comprehensible language in its own right.

The Player as an Actor: Gestures and *Affetti*

Finally, we need to consider the role of the body and physical gestures in representing *affetti*. Though typical of actors, physical expression is important to performers of both vocal and instrumental music. In 1616 Giovanni Bonifacio, a lawyer and playwright from Veneto, published an important treatise on mime with the long title: *L’arte de cenni, con la quale formandosi favella visibile, si tratta tutta la muta eloquenza, che non è altro che un facondo silentio* (*The art of gestures, which, being performed, can create a visible speech, dealing with all the*

33 Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Il primo libro di capricci fatti sopra diversi soggetti et arie in partitura*, Rome: Soldi 1624, *A gli studiosi dell’opera*.

34 Martino Pesenti, *Il primo libro delle correnti alla francese per sonar nel clavicembalo, & altri stromenti*, Venice: Vincenti 1635, *Alli Signori sonatori*.

35 Rebecca Cypess, “Instrumental Music and ‘Conversazione’ in Early Seicento Venice: Biagio Marini’s ‘Affetti Musicali’ (1617)”, in: *Music & Letters*, 93 (2013), 453–478.

silent eloquence, which is nothing other than an eloquent silence).³⁶ In his treatise, from which “tutte l’arti liberali, e mecaniche si prevagliano” (“every liberal as well as mechanical art will benefit”),³⁷ he describes gestures which seventeenth-century culture associated with particular words, emotions, and states of mind, creating the outer expression of a person’s inner life. The 1610s are crucial to defining these concepts across different disciplines. In 1618 the actor Flaminio Scala writes that gestures are of great importance in transmitting emotions because “gl’affetti si muovono più agevolmente da’ gesti che dalle parole” (“gestures can move the *affetti* more easily than words”).³⁸ In the first opera performances, singers were expected to have no less skill in physical eloquence than actors; they needed to be able to transmit emotion with their bodies in order to move the *affetti* and provoke sympathetic resonance between interpreter and spectator.³⁹ The anonymous author of *Il corago* (1630) expanded on this issue, and Andrea Perrucci concluded in his treatise *Dell’arte rappresentativa* (1699) that the actor’s body is central to his eloquence, which is based on his voice and his gestures: “una per l’orecchio, l’altra per l’occhio movono gli affetti dell’animo, e vi penetrano” (“they arouse the soul’s affections and penetrate it, the former through the ear and the latter through the eye”).⁴⁰

Though at first, gesture only seems important to performers of text, either spoken or sung, it is relevant to players of instrumental music, who transmit non-semantic texts and make them meaningful to the listener through both musical and physical gesture. In certain sections of sonatas by Dario Castello,⁴¹ Bia-

³⁶ Vicenza: Francesco Grossi 1616.

³⁷ Ibid., title page.

³⁸ Flaminio Scala, preface to *Il finto marito* (1618), in: *Commedie dei comici dell’arte*, ed. Laura Falavolti, Turin: UTET 1982, 234.

³⁹ See e.g. the descriptions of the performances of Antonio Brandi in Marco da Gagliano’s *La Dafne* (Florence, Marescotti 1608, *Ai Lettori*, 5) and of Francesco Ranani and other singers in Filippo Vitali’s *Aretusa* (Rome: Soldi 1620, *Al benigno lettore*).

⁴⁰ Andrea Perrucci, *Dell’arte rappresentativa premeditata ed all’improvviso*, Naples: Mutio 1699, 100; English translation: *A Treatise on Acting from Memory and by Improvisation*, Bilingual edition in Italian and English by Francesco Cotticelli, Anne Goodrich Heck, and Thomas F. Heck, Lanham (Maryland): Scarecrow Press 2007, 51.

⁴¹ Dario Castello: *Terza sonata*, beginning of the second section, from *Sonate concertate in stil moderno. Libro primo*, Venice 1621; modern edition: Dario Castello, *Selected Ensemble Sonatas*, ed. Eleanor Selfridge-Field, Part I, Madison (Wisc.): A–R Editions 1977, 4.

32 affetto

38

6 4 3 6

5 6# 6 6 # 5

EX 1: D. Castello: *Terza sonata*, beginning of the second section, from *Sonate concertate in stil moderno*. *Libro primo*, Venice 1621, bars 32–43.

gio Marini,⁴² Giuseppe Scarani,⁴³ and Bartolomé de Selma y Salaverde⁴⁴ the word *affetto* is printed near passages, to emphasize the rendering of certain emotional effects (Ex. 1–5).

In those passages, the interpretation of the word *affetto/affetti* is not clear. My hypothesis is that the composer is asking performers for eloquent gestures of the entire body, designed to amplify the pathos of the improvisational rendering of the *affettuosità* of those sections, requiring more than mechanical movement of the arms or of the bow while playing the notes. With these indications the composers seem to be recommending that players of instrumental music not only imitate singers, but also borrow the “silent eloquence” of their body ges-

⁴² Biagio Marini: *Sonata IV per sonar due corde*, from *Sonate, simphonie, canzoni* [...] *op. VIII* (Venice 1626/1629); modern edition: *Sonate, simphonie, canzoni* [...] *op. VIII*, ed. Maura Zoni, Milan: Suvini Zerboni 2004, 172.

⁴³ Giuseppe Scarani: *Sonata VI* and *Sonata XIII*, from *Sonate concertate* (Venice 1630); modern edition: Giuseppe Scarani, *18 Sonate Concertate a due e tre voci (Venezia 1630)*, ed. Doron David Sherwin, Bologna: UT Orpheus 1998, 30 and 64.

⁴⁴ Bartolomé de Selma y Salaverde, *Primo libro delle canzoni, fantasie et correnti da suonar ad una. 2. 3. 4. Con basso continuo*, Venice: Magni 1638, *Canzon terza*, 7.

The image shows a musical score for B. Marini's Sonata IV. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff is marked 'tardo' and features dynamic markings 'f' and 't'. The second staff is marked 'Affetti' and has a '6' above it. The third staff is marked 'Presto' and has a '2' below it. The fourth staff continues the musical notation. The score is written in a single system with various rhythmic values and accidentals.

Ex. 2: B. Marini: *Sonata IV per sonar due corde*, from *Sonate, simphonie, canzoni [...] op. VIII* (Venice 1626/1629), bars 59–64.

The image shows a musical score for G. Scarani's Sonata VI. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff is marked 'Adagio' and has the number '98' above it. The second and third staves are marked 'affetto'. The score is written in a single system with various rhythmic values and accidentals.

Ex. 3: G. Scarani: *Sonata VI*, from *Sonate concertate* (Venice 1630), bars 98–103.

tures as described by Osio,⁴⁵ Scala, Perrucci, and others. This enlivens the instrumental performance and highlights the musical instruments themselves, which several of the early seventeenth-century *Theatra instrumentorum* studied by Rebecca Cypess record, describe, and study principally as mechanical objects of scientific interest.⁴⁶ This new professional and aesthetic condition of instrumentalists in this period outlines them as performers not only to listen to, but to *watch*, like singers and actors.

⁴⁵ Teodato Osio, *L'armonia del nudo parlare con ragione di numeri pitagorici discoperta*, Milan: Ferrandi 1632.

⁴⁶ See n. 31.

65 **Adagio**

71 **Largo**

[affetti]

affetti

affetti

Ex. 4: G. Scarani: *Sonata XIII*, from *Sonate concertate* (Venice 1630), bars 65–75.

3 **Soprano, Solo.** 7

Affetti

canzon

Ex. 5: B. de Selma y Salaverde: Beginning of *Canzon terza a soprano solo*, from *Canzoni, fantasie et correnti* (Venice 1638).

*

To conclude, *affetto* is a term and a concept initially pertaining to literature, especially to poetry and its musical qualities; in music, *affetto* means the inner emotions of the words the composer is expected to reveal and emphasize when

setting expressive poetic texts. Thus the term *affetto* has both verbal and musical origins. The new performative protagonism of early Seicento singers and instrumentalists in the realm of monodic music of the “seconda pratica” fostered the increasing role and even complete autonomy of music (composition and performance) in expressing *affetti*. This process is similar to the growing importance of gesture compared to the verbal elocution for actors. Consequently, transitioning to the era we usually call “baroque”, the *affetto* ceases to be an abstract expressive ideal and becomes a concrete means of musical communication.

