

## *History and Theory of Performance*

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### **Vocal Ornamentation in Caccini: From Theory to Practice**

**Elena V. Kruglova**

The State Musical Pedagogical Institute named  
after M. M. Ippolitov-Ivanov,  
Moscow, Russian Federation,  
✉ [elenakruglova@mail.ru](mailto:elenakruglova@mail.ru),  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6565-2083>



**Abstract.** The main purpose of the published article is to study the role and determine the possibility of using jewelry in Giulio Caccini vocal music. The composer, the creator of the “new” style, the first among his contemporaries in the preface to the collections of arias and madrigals *Le nuove musiche* (1602) and *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* (1614) outlined the main positions of the school of artistic singing, where he reports on the recording of his compositions how to perform. This often leads performers into confusion about the possibility of using any jewelry. As a result, today, in some cases, Caccini music sounds monotonous, uninteresting.

In the Baroque era, there was a clear discrepancy between practice and musical notation. An in-depth study and comparison of musical sources, their historical understanding, evaluation based on documentary and theoretical evidence allows us to identify the real practice and features of reproducing

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jewelry offered by Caccini for performance. As a result, the author of the article emphasizes the need to rethink the approach to performance, in particular, concerning the application of various ornamental effects. In this regard, it becomes important to observe their main purpose: to enhance the affect and mood of the composition through expressive transmission of the word.

**Keywords:** Giulio Caccini, early Baroque, ornamentation, esclamation, sprezzatura, trillo, gruppo, historical performance practice, traditions of performance, vocal technique, expressiveness in singing

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История и теория  
исполнительства

Научная статья

Вокальная орнаментация Джулио Каччини:  
от теории к практике

Елена Валентиновна Круглова

Государственный музыкально-педагогический институт

имени М. М. Ипполитова-Иванова,

г. Москва, Российская Федерация,

✉ [elenakruglowa@mail.ru](mailto:elenakruglowa@mail.ru),

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6565-2083>

**Аннотация.** Основная цель настоящей статьи — исследование роли и определение возможности применения украшений в вокальной музыке Джулио Каччини. В предисловиях к сборникам арий и мадригалов *Le nuove musiche* (1602) и *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* (1614), ставших отражением созданного композитором «нового стиля», Каччини первым среди своих современников изложил основные позиции школы художественного пения и дал методические рекомендации по исполнению собственных произведений. Однако его указания нередко приводят исполнителей в недоумение, заставляя сомневаться в возможности и корректности применения каких-либо украшений. В результате сегодня музыка Каччини в ряде случаев звучит однообразно, неинтересно.

В эпоху барокко существовало явное расхождение между нотной записью и исполнительством. Углубленное изучение и сравнение музыкальных источников, их историческое осмысление, оценка на основе документальных и теоретических свидетельств позволяет понять реальную практику и особенности воспроизведения предлагаемых Каччини украшений. Автор статьи подчеркивает необходимость переосмыслить подходы к исполнению, в том числе специфику применения различных орнаментальных эффектов. Важным в этом отношении становится соблюдение главного их предназначения: усиление аффекта, эмоционального модуса сочинения посредством выразительной передачи слова.

**Ключевые слова:** Джулио Каччини, раннее барокко, орнаментация, эскламация, спрецатура, трилло, группо, историческая исполнительская практика, традиции исполнения, вокальная техника, выразительность в пении

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### Introduction

When studying the works of Giulio Caccini (1561–1618), singers often find themselves reflecting on the correct stylistic interpretation. Contemporary performers generally either adhere strictly to the musical text or permit themselves to use minor embellishments. In the latter case, the question naturally arises concerning which embellishment decisions are the most stylistically appropriate.

The question of introducing ornamentation into Caccini's works is mainly discussed in foreign publications [1; 2; 3; 4]. In the works of Russian musicologists [5; 6], the embellishments provided by the composer and their use in singing practice are generally treated in an overview manner that emphasises a theoretical examination of the problem. In this context, the significance of Caccini's novel approach to ornamentation has been interpreted as a kind of "protest against the Renaissance tradition" [5, p. 23]. In the present work, in which the most important features of Caccini's vocal ornamentation are discussed, we will also consider possible approaches to its introduction into the performance practice of contemporary vocalists.

### Historical role

Giulio Caccini is widely regarded as a "17th-century musical revolutionary".<sup>1</sup> His novel approach to singing is noted by Michael Praetorius in Chapter 9 of the third part of the treatise *Syntagma Musicum* (1619).<sup>2</sup> In a letter to his friend Torquato Tasso, Abbot Angelo Grillo refers to the Italian composer as "the father of recitative singing".<sup>3</sup> Severo Bonini praised Caccini as the true inventor of the new style, observing that almost every musician of that time became famous only by imitating him.<sup>4</sup> According to K. M. Mazurin, who referred in turn to the opinion of F. J. Fetis, "in terms of expressing passion, Caccini stood above Monteverdi, and was surpassed only by Carissimi".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mazurin, K. M. (1902). *Methodology of singing. Singing pedagogy course*, vol. 1. A. A. Levenson, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Praetorius, M. (1619). *Syntagma Musicum*, p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> Mazurin, K. M. (1902). *Methodology of singing. Singing pedagogy course*, vol. 1. A. A. Levenson, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Bonini, S. (1903). Estratto dalla Prima parte del Discorsi e Regole sopra la musica. In A. Solerti (Ed.), *L'origine del melodramma* (pp. 134–135).

<sup>5</sup> Mazurin, K. M. (1902). *Methodology of singing. Singing pedagogy course*, vol. 1. A. A. Levenson, p. 3.

Caccini's reputation as an innovative composer has survived to this day. Citing leading experts on early music, Victor Coelho, professor of music at the University of Calgary, notes Caccini's role as the progenitor of a new era (Oliver Strunk<sup>6</sup>), the father of monody (Manfred Bukofzer<sup>7</sup>) and the creator of a new style of singing (Donald Grout<sup>8</sup>) [7]. In his article, Coelho also acknowledges the opinions of researchers from the 1980s and 1990s, who consider that Caccini drew on earlier experience of performing improvisation; that is, he was not in the full sense the inventor of monody<sup>9</sup>. Even if true, however, this still would not negate the role of the Italian musician as the central figure of the early Italian Baroque.

Known as Giulio Romano (i.e., a native of Rome), Caccini had already in his youth joined the Florentine Camerata, where he became acquainted with the ideas of Count Giovanni de' Bardi and Vincenzo Galilei, whose influence underlay his criticism of counterpoint, which he lambasted as "the destroyer of Poetry"<sup>10</sup>. At the very beginning of the 17th century, Caccini announced that he had invented a new style of music. This announcement appeared first in the *Preface* to the opera *Eurydice* (1600), where he referred to a noble style of singing "which could be practiced by others"<sup>11</sup>. Another reference appeared in the *The New Music* collection of arias and madrigals published in Florence (*Le Nuove Musiche*) for voice and basso continuo (1601<sup>12</sup>, see *Illustration 1*).

There is little doubt about Caccini's enormous influence on the composers of his time. In 1605 Enrico Radesca di Foggia published in Turin the first book of his 'Canzonettes, Madrigals and Arias in the Roman Manner' (*Canzonette, madrigali et arie allaromana*). The following year, Domenico Brunetti presented a collection of madrigals, canzonets and arias in Bologna under the title *L'Euterpe*, while in 1607, a collection of chamber vocal music entitled 'Madrigals and Spiritual Canzonets' (*Madrigali e canzonette spirituali*) by Severo Bonini was printed in Florence. In the preface of the latter work, the author noted that his works were only an imitation of the elegant style

<sup>6</sup> Strunk, O. (Ed.). (1950). *Source Readings in Music History*. W. W. Norton, p. 370.

<sup>7</sup> Bukofzer, M. (1947). *Music in the Baroque Era*. W. W. Norton, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Grout, D. J. (1960). *A History of Western Music* (2nd ed). W. W. Norton, p. 278.

<sup>9</sup> Coelho refers to the works by C. Palisca (Palisca, C. (1989). *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations*. Yale University Press), G. M. Brown (Brown, H. M. (1981). *The Geography of Florentine Monody: Caccini at Home and Abroad*. *Early Music*, 9, 147–168), J. W. Hill (Hill, J. W. (1983). *Realized Continuo Accompaniments from Florence ca. 1600*. *Early Music*, 11, 194–208), and others.

<sup>10</sup> Caccini, G. (1601/1602) *Le nuove musiche*. Giorgio Marescotti, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Caccini, G. (1600) *L'Euridice*. Giorgio Marescotti, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Here and elsewhere the traditional translation of the title of this collection is used. However, a grammatically more accurate option might be "The New Musics" (i.e., referring to a number of new musical works). While the collection was actually printed at the beginning of 1602 (in accordance with the peculiarities of the calendar adopted in Florence at that time), the year 1601 is indicated on its title page.



Illustration 1. G. Caccini. *Le Nuove Musiche*.  
Title page of the 1602 (1601) edition.

of the outstanding composer Caccini. Ottavio Durante compared his work *Arie devote* (Rome, 1608) with “a small trickle taken from the fountain of his (Caccini’s) school”<sup>13</sup>. Soon, similar collections of works in the new monodic style were published by many Italian composers (including Jacopo Peri, M. da Galliano, Domenico Belli, D. Visconti, Raffaello Rontani, Filippo Vitali, Francesca Caccini, Andrea Falconieri and others)<sup>14</sup>.

Caccini gained wide renown as a virtuoso singer and vocal teacher. He became particularly well-known as a performer of complex madrigals decorated with coloratura passages; his singing was distinguished by its special expressiveness and clarity of diction [8, p. 11] Referring to the singer’s performance in the Florence Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on the occasion of the arrival of Christina of Lorraine, the wife of the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinando I, Bonini wrote: “Welcoming the entering Christina

of Lorraine, the first to sing was Giulio Caccini, known as Romano, with the words *O benedetto giorno*<sup>15</sup>. As a result of the great pleasure he bestowed upon the countless multitude gathered there, he was called for a long time called *Benedetto giorno*<sup>16</sup>. His performances in Paris also brought him fame, which we also find confirmed in the words of Bonini: “Human language cannot express how the maestro was received and showered with praise and honours not only by His Majesty,

<sup>13</sup> Ehrichs, A. (1908). *Giulio Caccini: Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der Hohen Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Leipzig*. Hesse & Becker, p. 75.

<sup>14</sup> We should also note that the style of solo singing and the type of ornamentation that gained relevance during the first decade of the 17th century soon became a model for expressiveness not only in solo singing, but also in solo instrumental playing.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Oh, blessed day’.

<sup>16</sup> Bonini, S. (1903). Estratto dalla Prima parte del Discorsi e Regole sopra la musica. In A. Solerti (Ed.), *L’origine del melodramma*, p. 130.

but also by all the notable dukes and barons of France who were here”<sup>17</sup>. Among the maestro’s students were such renowned performers as Vittoria Archilei, Adriana Basile, Francesco Razi, Severo Bonini, Antonio Brunelli, Giovanni Gualberto Magli and others. The Florentine vocal school that was thus created soon declared its influence on the musical art of other European countries. In particular, Caccini’s method was used in Germany by Heinrich Schütz, Michael Praetorius and Johann Andreas Herbst.

### *Le Nuove Musiche and Performing Practice*

The collection *Le Nuove Musiche* was not only a publication of specific works, but also a kind of methodological guide, which set out to describe the features of vocal performance. Previously, other masters had tended to pass on their knowledge only empirically. On this matter, Caccini himself wrote: “While this [vocal art — *E.K.*] can be assimilated up to a certain point through long-term practice <...>, the theory presented in this manual is necessary for achieving mastery.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, as the 17th-century scholar of Italian music Nigel Fortune pointed out, the Preface to *The New Music* became “the manifesto of the new style” of Italian solo song.<sup>19</sup> Caccini sharply criticised singers for excessive coloration of the melody involving extended melismatic *passaggi*, which lead to a loss of lyrical comprehension. In his view, due to the excessive use of *passaggi*, few people understood the words even of famous singers<sup>20</sup>.

In this connection, it is important to remember that the training of a singer in Caccini’s time essentially boiled down to the development of a beautiful sound, as well as the virtuoso singing of passages and embellishments, but without necessarily understanding the principles of their application. However, Caccini and his followers felt that the leading position occupied by coloratura singing, which reflected the widespread application of the Renaissance practice of ornamentation, was to the detriment of artistic expressiveness. In contrast to the aspirations for artistic expression developed in the Florentine vocal school, the *passaggi* style of singing was cultivated in Rome, as repeatedly pointed out by composers and singers of the papal chapel in their treatises and didactic manuals up until around 1620. For example, the virtuoso Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger published richly ornamented motets and arias in the edition *Mottetti passeggiati* (1612) and *Arie passeggiate* (*Libro 1* – 1612; *Libro 2* – 1623). In 1615 Francesco Severi, a castrato singer of the Sistine Chapel, indicated in the Preface to his collection *Salmi passeggiati* that *passaggi* were part of the singing style then practiced in Rome.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>18</sup> Caccini, G. (1601/1602) *Le nuove musiche*. Giorgio Marescotti, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Cit. from: [3, p. 389]

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Severi, F. (1615). *Salmi passeggiati per tutte le voci nella maniera che si cantano in Roma*. Nicolò Borboni, p. 2

For Caccini, not only should music have beautiful melodies, but it should also express emotion and be capable of touching the human soul. In advocating the concept of expressive singing, he referred to Plato's idea that music is speech, rhythm, and only then sound<sup>22</sup>. According to this new vocal style, the role of decorations had to be reassessed. Of particular importance is his rejection of long, diminutive roulades, which, in his opinion, detracted from the desired manner. Caccini was perhaps the first composer to begin the practice of carefully notating all *passaggi* and other embellishments in the musical text. The composer's words deserve special attention: "If these *passaggi* are to be used, it should be done in accordance with the rules described in my works, and not by chance ..., so that they should have been prepared in advance for inclusion in the work."<sup>23</sup> Thus, Caccini quite explicitly called on singers to take great care when ornamenting melodies. In the collection 'New Pieces of Music and a New Way of Writing Them' (1614, see *Illustration 2*), he emphasised the importance of accurately recording his own manner of solo singing in the musical text<sup>24</sup>. In this regard, A. D. Verin-Galitskaya's characterisation of Caccini's innovative ideas is absolutely accurate:

Caccini's decision to publish his own works along with a notation of all the improvisations is an idea that would have been unthinkable for previous generations of musicians. The notation of *passaggi* in the musical text is a restriction that Caccini felt obliged to impose on the oral tradition in an attempt to "curb" it and impose his own composer's will on the performers. However, this in no way contradicts his negative attitude towards the use of *passaggi*. Rather, it follows from the following idea: if singers are inevitably going to embellish the music, then let them perform the *passaggi* intended by the composer. [...] Following Caccini, other composers began to notate embellishments; as a consequence, throughout the Baroque era, this practice began to lead more and more confidently from the realm of oral music-making to the sphere of writing [5, p. 23].



*Illustration 2.* G. Caccini.  
*Le Nuove Musiche.*  
Title page of the 1614 edition.

<sup>22</sup> Caccini, G. (1601/1602) *Le nuove musiche*. Giorgio Marescotti, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Caccini, G. (1614). *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle*. Zanobi Pignoni, e Compagni, p. 3.



To correctly understand Caccini's notations, it is important to turn to the performance practices of his time. The musical text of a solo composition at that time served only as a kind of framework for a monodic composition, leaving the performer free to ornament the melody with various decorative elements. Singers did not have to strictly adhere to the author's text; indeed, changing individual musical phrases and melodic constructions was considered to be an indicator of virtuosity. Theorists and practitioners thus increasingly concluded that it was pointless to write out diminutions and *passaggi* in notation. Therefore, their character and the speed of their execution were perceived and learned empirically. American musicologist Howard Mayer Brown writes that "Caccini ... made an earnest effort to compose all the ornamentation that had hitherto been improvised in an attempt to control the amount and kind of it and to reconcile the two extremes of expression and ornamentation" [9, p. 76].

The composer's detailed notation of *passaggi* represented an attempt to limit the singers' unrestrained improvisational *coloratura*. Since he well understood the power of virtuoso art and its magical effect on listeners, he approached the issue of music coloration quite flexibly. For example, admiring the virtuoso skill of Vittoria Archilei, he called her an excellent singer<sup>25</sup>.

As a rule, Caccini used *passaggi* on long syllables and in final cadences, noting that they were invented not so much for a good style of singing, but to provide greater elegance and "tickling the ear", and were appropriate only in unexpressive places.<sup>26</sup> Many of these *passaggi* consist of chains of melismas. According to Caccini, the use of certain types of decoration, which he referred to as "effects" [*effetti*], must always correspond to the content of the text. Thus, a completely even — or "identical" — performance is to be explained in terms of a misunderstanding of the meaning. At the same time, Caccini resolutely opposed any tendency towards exaggerated use of long *passaggi* and excessive ornamentation.

In an effort to enliven the melody in short syllables, Caccini resorted to embellishments "lasting no longer than a quarter or half of the entire measure".<sup>27</sup> It is significant that these ornaments, which are aimed at imparting elegance, are not *passaggi* in the full sense of the word. Moreover, the general rules may often allow for certain exceptions.<sup>28</sup> Thus we may interpret the composer's instructions not as strictly dogmatic, but as merely advisory in nature.

<sup>25</sup> For more details on this, see one of the articles by the author of these lines [10].

<sup>26</sup> Caccini, G. (1601/1602) *Le nuove musiche*. Giorgio Marescotti, p. 5.

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

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

*Ornamentation*

Among the melodic ornaments, Caccini singles out two similar ornaments: *trillo* and *gruppo* (see *Example 1*).



*Example 1.* Caccini G. *Le nuove musiche*. P. 7. Trillo and gruppo<sup>29</sup>

Performing a trill (*trillo*) involves repeating one note with a gradual reduction in the duration of its sound. Caccini writes that the trill described by him on one note must begin with the first quarter and “beat with the larynx each note on the vowel a until the last whole (note)”<sup>30</sup>.

Caccini’s *gruppo* [a small group of notes sung on a single syllable] is not a *gruppetto* in the modern sense. In fact, it was on the basis of this decoration that the later form of trill, still in use today, was developed. The *gruppo* referred to by Caccini has the basic characteristics of a second trill with its ending in the form of a *gruppetto*, where the fundamental note descends to a lower tone before rising again to the fundamental. Unlike his predecessors, Caccini recommended performing this decoration with a gradual acceleration and increase in the intensity of the sound; this ornament could be either simple or more complex depending on the content of the text. According to Caccini, the *trillo* and the *gruppo* are a kind of bridge to many ornaments in singing<sup>31</sup>.

By associating them with dynamics, ornaments acquired a new quality of expressiveness. This realisation was not arrived at by chance. As a singer and vocal teacher, Caccini was concerned with the issues of sound reproduction, which he recommended to begin with a full voice of beautiful timbre with impeccable intonation (*l’intonazione della voce*), which he described in some detail<sup>32</sup>.

Let us agree with the interpretation of Wiley Hitchcock, who writes that Caccini uses the term *intonazione* in two senses, namely, to denote the precision of sound reproduction and its attack [3, p. 392]. “The first and most important foundation, according to Caccini, is vocal intonation on all notes, not only to avoid harshness, but also to have a good manner”<sup>33</sup>. Here we are talking, firstly, about the precision and quality of tone and, secondly, about the attack of sound, which is understood as “good manner”.

<sup>29</sup> The modern notation is given according to the publication: Mazurin, K. M. (transl.), Sergeeva E. A. (sc. ed.). (2023). *Caccini, G. Novaya muzyka [New Music]* Lan ’; Planet of Music, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> Caccini, G. (1601/1602) *Le nuove musiche*. Giorgio Marescotti, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

Caccini indicates three approaches to tone production<sup>34</sup>. The first of them refers to taking the sound from the lower third. This method is not accepted by Caccini<sup>35</sup>. The second method — *il crescere, e scemare* (“strengthening and weakening”) implies a precise attack of the main tone with a gradual intensification of the voice and its subsequent attenuation. Caccini suggests introducing this type of attack on long notes and considers it the most noble (later this technique was embodied *in messa di voce* – a two-sided placing of the voice). The third method, which Caccini finds the most emotional and the best for creating a special expressiveness in the transmission of affect, is the *esclamazione* (“exclamation”). The peculiarity of the performance is the use of the “decrescendo–crescendo” technique (*forte – piano – mezzo forte*), namely: after a bright sound, the singer should switch to *diminuendo* (decrescendo), and when it weakens, to *esclamazione*, which implies a certain amplification of the sound<sup>36</sup> and will create the effect of an exclamation (see *Example 2*).



*Example 2.* G. Caccini. *Le nuove musiche*. P. 6  
Faithful execution of the *esclamazione*<sup>37</sup>

Caccini distinguishes between two variants of this technique, which depend on the content of the text: *esclamazione languida* (sentimental, languid) and *esclamazione piu viva* (inspired, lively) (see *Examples 3, 4*).

*Example 3.* G. Caccini. *Le nuove musiche*. P. 7.  
Faithful execution of the *esclamazione*

This is a rather complex technical technique in vocal practice. In order to avoid a gross error consisting of dynamic variegation – referred to in Russian vocal theory in terms of a “dynamic bubble” – it is important to achieve the finest regulation of breathing, which is associated with control of the “inhaler and exhaler” muscle groups (agonists and antagonists). Based on the meaning of the words and the nature of the text,

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> We may note that even today, the attack of a sound “approaching” a note is widely considered to be a flaw.

<sup>36</sup> Caccini, G. (1601/1602) *Le nuove musiche*. Giorgio Maescotti, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> A similar example is given in: [13, p. 37].

in order to create a special expressiveness, exclamatory notes as the primary means of conveying affect should be used on half durations or quarter notes with a dot, followed by a slight accent on a descending short note. If a note of a whole duration sounds, then, according to Caccini, it is more appropriate to use two-sided placing of the sound.



Example 4. G. Caccini. *Le nuove musiche*. P. 10.  
Fragment of the Madrigal *Deh, deh, dove son fuggiti*.  
Composer's instructions on the use of esclamazione and trillo

The composer also offers original views in matters of organising rhythm, which can also be used to decorate a melody. Caccini provides a number of interesting examples of more elegant execution, which, according to F. Neumann show, “how the affective power of certain melodic figures can be increased by rhythmic manipulation” [4, p. 26]. Thus, it is recommended to replace the melodic movement of even eighth or sixteenth note durations in singing with a dotted or Lombard (reverse dotted) rhythm with the addition of final trills, but on condition that it corresponds to the character of the music of the poetic text (see *Example 5*).

The ornament that Caccini introduces under the term *cascata*, which also refers to rhythmic variation, implies a rapid descending stepwise movement of the melody in the interval up to and including the seventh. Again, the principle of applying a *cascata* should be regulated by the meaning of the text. Among the possible performance options, the composer notes: a simple *cascata* – *cascata scempia*; a double *cascata* – *cascata doppia*, with a pause to “catch” the breath; *cascata per ricorre il fiato* – a *cascata* using inhalation; *altra cascata simile* – another simple *cascata*. He gives notation examples showing how even eighth notes can be rhythmically regrouped in performance (see *Example 6*).

Example 5. G. Caccini. *Le nuove musiche*. P. 8. Rhythmic variations: top line (1) – original text; bottom line (2) – recommended version<sup>38</sup>

Example 6. G. Caccini. *Le nuove musiche*. P. 8. Rhythmic variations: top line (1) – original text; two bottom lines (2, 3) – recommended versions<sup>39</sup>

To enhance expressive singing, which should reflect the natural rhythm of speech, Caccini mentions *sprezzatura* – “noble carelessness.” This is a rather complex definition that requires clarification. It is believed that the word was first used

<sup>38</sup> The modern transcript is given according to the publication: Mazurin, K. M. (transl.), Sergeeva E. A. (sc. ed.). (2023). *Caccini, G. Novaya muzyka [New Music]* Lan ’; Planet of Music, p. 11

<sup>39</sup> The modern transcript is given according to the publication: Mazurin, K. M. (transl.), Sergeeva E. A. (sc. ed.). (2023). *Caccini, G. Novaya muzyka [New Music]* Lan ’; Planet of Music, p. 11

by Baldassare Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), understanding *sprezzatura* as naturalness and elegance: “...so that nothing appears to have been done with deliberate skill, so that the observer could accept this skill as a natural gift”.<sup>40</sup> Paolo D’Angelo, professor at the University of Rome, notes that *sprezzatura* is the opposite of affectation, a kind of aesthetic paradox: by hiding skill, art at the same time asserts itself [11, p. 154]. Today, many musicians equate *sprezzatura* with rhythmic freedom or the term *rubato*, known since the 18th century. In fact, Caccini himself did not say anything about this (and could not say anything) but wrote only about “a noble manner of carefree, insouciant singing”<sup>41</sup>. Contemporary researchers of vocal performance of the early Baroque period rarely omit mention of this phenomenon, noting, in particular, the similarity of *sprezzatura* with oratory [12], its influence on the freer use of dissonances in the relationship of the voice with the basso continuo [13, p. 34–35]. Perhaps the most accurate definition of the purpose of this technique was given by Caccini himself in the Preface to “*Eurydice*” (1600), noting that by means of *sprezzatura* “I come much closer to the essence of the speech”<sup>42</sup>. In other words, *sprezzatura* is understood not so much as freedom of tempo, but as an expression of natural declamation.

Thus, modern singers, trained to sing with absolute rhythmic precision, need to master the practice of *sprezzatura* by acquiring the necessary skills to perform it. The easiest way is to expressively recite the text in a manner similar to an orator’s speech. However, this does not by any means imply arbitrariness or approval of taking any liberties on the part of the performers. Warning singers against exaggerated or excessive use of expressive effects and ornamentation, Caccini reports that when placing *esclamazione*, appropriate effects must be used to express the affect, without accelerating the movement<sup>43</sup>. Therefore, *sprezzatura* should be used in singing together with possible rhythmic variation, but with mandatory observance of the exact meter.

### Conclusion

A review of the performing techniques described by Caccini in his work “The New Musics” allows us to conclude that the performer plays a significant role in creating the sound image of the composition: “A monody would remain a bare skeleton,” writes Manfred Bukofzer, “were it not for the effective delivery of the singer and his embellishments, which served here not merely an ornamental but a structural function”<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Cit. from: [3, p. 389].

<sup>41</sup> Caccini, G. (1601/1602) *Le nuove musiche*. Giorgio Marescotti, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Caccini, G. (1600) *L’Euridice*. Giorgio Marescotti, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Caccini, G. (1601/1602) *Le nuove musiche*. Giorgio Marescotti, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Bukofzer, M. (1947). *Music in the Baroque Era*. W. W. Norton, p. 27.

Charles Burney, drawing attention to some similarities in the styles of Caccini and Lully, whose advantages were simplicity of melodies, poetry and expressiveness, wrote:

Though we are now inclined to wonder how pleasing effects could be produced by such simple, unadorned, and almost unaccompanied melodies; yet, when we consider what raptures were long after excited in France by a familiar Music in the operas of Lulli, our wonder will cease; particularly, if we recollect that the passages of taste and embellishment, which while now antiquated and vulgar, were then new and elegant; and that the expression of the Music of this period in Italy is so entirely loft, that, like a dead language, no one is certain how it was pronounced.<sup>45</sup>

These words, spoken at the end of the 18th century, are still quite relevant today.

While contemporary singers may consider that the current notation system provides an accurate recording of music, for a stylistically correct interpretation it requires correct evaluation, informed understanding and an appropriate reading. Not the least argument is the words of Caccini himself: “Indeed, there are many things used in a good style of singing that are written in one way, but in order to be more graceful, are performed in a completely different way, therefore they say that some [performers – *E. K.*] sing with more grace, and others with less”<sup>46</sup>. In any case, for a stylistically correct interpretation of Giulio Caccini’s music, the vocal embellishments discussed in this article must certainly be taken into consideration. However, such an interpretation is also obliged to enhance expressiveness in order to convey the content of the poetic text more accurately.

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<sup>45</sup> Burney, Ch. (1789). *A General History of Music*, vol. IV. ,p. 136.

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Information about the author:

**Elena V. Kruglova** — Cand. Sci. (Art Studies), Professor, Academic Singing Department.

Информация об авторе:

**Круглова Е. В.** — кандидат искусствоведения, профессор, кафедра академического пения.

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