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*Studies in Italian Sacred and Instrumental Music in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.* By **Stephen Bonta.**

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**A Critical Review by Shanon P. Zusman**

## **1. Introduction**

[1.1] The early history of stringed bass instruments—which includes the earliest incarnations of the violoncello, bass viol, and double bass—and their musical repertoires have received significant attention in the past twenty-five years. Among the most important and oft-cited research is the scholarship of Stephen Bonta. In fact, it is nearly impossible to find a current study on this topic without reference to one of Bonta’s articles.<sup>1</sup> The publishers of the Variorum Collected Studies Series have, moreover, acknowledged the significance of Bonta’s research by devoting their latest volume in the series to his musicological studies.

[1.2] This collection includes sixteen of Bonta’s essays, ranging from his first publication in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* (1967) to his most recent article from the symposium *Barocco Padano* (2002).<sup>2</sup> The volume, which includes a brief preface from the

author and an index, is divided into four categories: Liturgical Practice and Sacred Music, The Violoncello and Other Stringed Instruments, Notation and Style and General. Curiously, the essays under each category are not organized in chronological order; perhaps it would have benefited the reader to follow Bonta's theories in a more chronological order, as it is his tendency to build on his previous scholarship. In the present compilation, the Ashgate editors do not use a continuous pagination. Instead, in order to avoid confusion for future citations, Bonta's articles maintain their original pagination, as originally published. As a different source of confusion, however, Ashgate has failed to furnish an accurate Table of Contents, as it lists many of the original citations in incomplete form. For instance, volume numbers for articles from *Early Music*, *Galpin Society Journal* and *Newsletter of the Catgut Acoustical Society* have been omitted, publishers for two studies which appear in books have been neglected and the title of one of the books is even misspelled.<sup>3</sup>

[1.3] Six of Bonta's sixteen articles merit particular attention by organologists and performers of stringed bass instruments. These articles (Chapters IV-IX) are grouped under "The Violoncello and Other Stringed Instruments" category. Upon close inspection, though, one finds that Chapters VI: "Catline Strings Revisited" and VII: "Corelli's Heritage: The Early Bass Violin in Italy" are, to a great extent, re-workings of Bonta's earlier research, reprinted here as Chapters IV: "From Violone to Violoncello: A Question of Strings?," V: "Terminology for the Bass Violin in Seventeenth-Century Italy" and IX: "Further Thoughts on the History of Strings." Chapter VIII, "The Making of Gut Strings in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Paris" is an enlightening commentary and translation of three entries from Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonne de sciences, des arts et des métiers*.<sup>4</sup> In the following discussion, both

strengths and weaknesses in Bonta's three pioneering essays concerning the early history of the bass violin will be pointed out, and I will suggest some areas which require further investigation.

## **2. Scholarly context**

[2.1] Stephen Bonta's inquiries into the early history of the bass violin stem from his doctoral research on Legrenzi's church sonatas.<sup>5</sup> Confronted with more than one term for the stringed bass instrument in Legrenzi's prints—including *violone* and *viola da braccio*—and the fact that the term *violoncello* was only used rarely by Legrenzi's Italian contemporaries in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Bonta sought to explore the possible meanings of these terms early on in his career.

[2.2] His first publication in this arena, "Further Thoughts on the History of Strings" (1976), reprinted here as Chapter IX, is in some ways a telling sign of what lay ahead. Looking at how string materials affect the overall sound and interpretation of a musical work, a term he defines as "*Realklang*," Bonta considers how string design may have directly affected the design of the instruments themselves ("Further Thoughts," ix-xi). Working with original sources, Bonta cites Mersenne's law on vibrating strings, as well as seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century descriptions by John Dowland, John Playford, Thomas Mace and Sébastien Brossard, paying close attention to observations on the lowest pitched strings for lutes, viols and violins. Bonta goes on to hypothesize that the invention of wound strings, which probably occurred in the 1660s, would serve as "the answer to a vexing problem (or perhaps, more accurately, a vexing condition)," claiming that this invention had a radical effect on instruments of the violin family ("Further Thoughts," xvii). Bonta concludes, "With the invention of wound strings, which could

produce a better bass sound even though shorter than their gut counterpart, the larger sizes [of the violin family] could be abandoned in favor of the smaller” (“Further Thoughts,” xviii).

[2.3] Bonta’s idea here was ground-breaking. Building on the work of Edmond Van der Straeten, David Boyden and Djilda Abbott & Ephraim Segerman, in particular, Bonta—armed with fresh research from numerous Italian archives—was led directly to the theory that the violoncello, before it was made in its present size, must have existed in a larger version, known to composers, publishers, performers and instrument makers as the “violone.” His next two articles, “From Violone to Violoncello: A Question of Strings?” (1977) and “Terminology for the Bass Violin in Seventeenth-Century Italy” (1978), reprinted here as Chapters IV and V, respectively, look more closely at the multifarious terminology used to connote early stringed bass instruments, as specifically observed in Italian music of the seventeenth century.

### **3. The term *Violone* and the early history of the bass violin**

[3.1] In these two essays [“From Violone to Violoncello: A Question of Strings?” (1977) and “Terminology for the Bass Violin in Seventeenth-Century Italy” (1978)], Bonta examines an overwhelming number of primary sources, including archival records, musical treatises, printed music and observations from letters or diaries of contemporaries. Surprisingly, however, he excludes two areas that would be of particular interest to scholars: iconographic sources and organological evidence. Extant instruments are dismissed entirely with the claim, “we lack trustworthy physical evidence—that is, either early instruments that are known not to have been altered, or maker’s templates, such as those used by Antonio Stradivari for the alto and tenor viola and that survive” (“From Violone to Violoncello,” p. 65). And Bonta provides no

explanation for the absence of musical iconography in his research.<sup>6</sup> In order to build a case for the early history of the bass violin, one cannot ignore the physical evidence—even if it may require acknowledging that only a few large-sized violoncellos exist in museums today or if it involves judging certain artworks as more the result of the artist’s imagination than a realistic depiction. It is a shortcoming on Bonta’s part to have dismissed both types of primary sources in favor of archival documental and printed materials alone.<sup>7</sup>

[3.2] Bonta also examines the etymological evidence surrounding the term *violoncello*. Working in reverse, Bonta argues that the suffix –cello (as well as –cino) suggests that a larger model of bass violin, known as *violone*, must have existed and the new terminology (i.e., *violoncello* or *violoncino*) accounts for the *violone* being made smaller. Such a conclusion is not entirely unreasonable; by Italian language standards, the argument seems convincing (“From Violone to Violoncello,” pp. 84-85).<sup>8</sup> Yet, in approaching the *violone* primarily from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, one wonders whether the author would have come to the same conclusions with a more thorough understanding of the earlier use of the term *violone* in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>9</sup>

[3.3] Steering clear of a generic use of the term *violone*, Bonta asserts that “in our archival and musical evidence we shall see the necessity of considering the context within which a term is found” (“From Violone to Violoncello,” p. 66). The author focuses on a number of Italian cities in order to ascertain more specifically whether a given composer intended or preferred one particular type of bass instrument. Bonta shows that the situation is a complex one which must be assessed locally. He accomplishes this by considering archival records and musical prints

from Bologna, Bergamo, Venice and Rome. In his follow up article, “Terminology for the Bass Violin in Seventeenth-Century Italy,” Bonta presents his findings systematically, reporting on his investigations of archival records town-by-town, demonstrating how scribes, performers and publishers often equate the violone with the violoncello (or violoncino) by referring to an instrument as the “violone” in one document and then by referring to the same instrument (or performer thereof) more specifically as “violoncello” in a related document or corresponding partbook.<sup>10</sup> Bonta is likewise careful to note when a scribe uses the term “violone” in one document and then “violone grosso” in another, illustrating an ambiguity that was often common.

[3.4] One cannot easily refute Bonta’s conclusions on terminology when his observations are based on archival documentation. In fact, such a thorough investigation, done on a local level, is precisely what is required for gaining a better understanding of the use of stringed bass instruments at any point in our musical history. In this regard, Bonta’s scholarship has paved the way for many scholars in the field. Indeed, the early history of the violoncello in particular owes a great deal to Bonta’s work. For instance, Bonta finds the occurrence of the terms “violoncello” and “violoncino” appearing with much greater frequency in the final quarter of the seventeenth century, which he ties to the invention of wound strings, emanating from Bologna after its first appearance in print in 1667 (“From Violone to Violoncello,” pp. 88-90; “Terminology of the Bass Violin,” pp. 28-29). Bonta further sheds light in particular on the terms “bassetto,” “viola da braccio,” and the Venetian “viola,” which, he concludes, all refer most often to the bass violin. Yet again, as Bonta demonstrates, one must look closely at the period and city in question to support this claim beyond a reasonable doubt (“Terminology of the Bass Violin,” pp. 28-40). In

collaboration with the etymological evidence that a violoncello is a type of violone made smaller, it seems, therefore, reasonable for Bonta to conclude that the early bass violin may have referred to as a *violone* in numerous instances. Yet, to say that the term *violone* (in the majority of instances) can *only* mean a bass violin is to go beyond what the facts will allow us to deduce. Bonta never makes this claim directly, however, he does seem to be clearly of that opinion as he remarks at the conclusion of one of his essays that in the process of exploring the various terms associated with the bass violin—which of course now includes *violone*—he has “enlarged the legitimate repertoire for the ‘cellist” (“Terminology of the Bass Violin,” p. 42). This, he admits, unfortunately at the expense of both the gamba player and the contrabassist!

#### **4. The term *Violone* and the early history of the G violone**

[4.1] The only time Bonta falls short of making a convincing argument is in his preliminary remarks, when he tries unequivocally to rule out the use of the most popular form of Italian violone in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: the violone tuned G’CFAdg. Commonly known today as the “G violone,” this instrument enjoyed great popularity in German-speaking lands throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and even early eighteenth centuries and although Italian theorists may not discuss the instrument in great detail after Pietro Cerone (1613) or Giovanni Battista Doni (1640), it is hard to argue that the instrument virtually disappeared from musical life throughout Italy, as Bonta suggests.<sup>11</sup>

[4.2] Turning now to Bonta’s treatment of the G violone, one questions whether it may in fact relate more closely to the terminology encountered in seventeenth century Italian instrumental music than the author acknowledges. Bonta claims that “the term *violone* was not associated with

the viol family by any Italian theorist after 1609,” and with two exceptions—Banchieri’s “violone da gamba” described in *L’Organo suonarino* (1611) and Prandi’s “violone” in *Compendio della musica* (1606)—the instrument, without its “-da gamba” suffix, loses its identity as a member of the viol family (“From Violone to Violoncello,” pp. 73-77).

[4.3] Bonta’s rationale is problematic for three reasons. First, he should have also mentioned that no Italian theorist after 1609 ever mentions the *violone* as a bass violin. The observation that theorists seemed to have defined the *violone* as neither a member of the violin- nor the gamba-family might seem to point to a generic use of the term *violone* for the remainder of the century. Second, again for accuracy’s sake, Bonta might have mentioned that the “-da braccio” suffix appended to *violone* is equally rare. The term “violone da braccio” (i.e., “braccio” appears as a variant of “braccio”) appears only in a few sources: in Giovanni Ghizzolo’s *Quem terra pontus* (1624), in the bass partbook of Maurizio Cazzati’s Opus 15 (1654) and in Giovanni Battista Vitali’s 1666 publication, in which he calls himself a “suonatore di violone da braccio” (“From Violone to Violoncello,” p. 78-79). Third, it appears Bonta’s “suffix argument” may not be the best foundation for this discussion, as we note that Banchieri, in later editions of his treatise (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1611 and 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1638) drops the suffix and even the term *violone* altogether (substituting “*viola basso*”) yet is still clearly describing the instrument that was formerly known as *violone da gamba*. It is curious to note that Bonta, who is doubtless well aware of the subtlety in terminology for Banchieri’s instrument, does not explore the ramifications of this rather generic usage.<sup>12</sup> One might argue that if the term *violone* had been understood by early seventeenth-century musicians, composers and theorists to refer primarily to bass instruments of the gamba



family, Bonta's theory that the violin family as default family for the *violone* (without suffix) is less persuasive.

[4.4] After a close examination of printed music emanating from Italy in the seventeenth century (where the bass part is most often labeled *violone*), Bonta concludes that in the absence of qualifying terminology (such as *violone grosso*, *violone in contrabasso*, *violone doppio*, *violone grande*, *violone grande contrabasso*, or simply *contrabasso*), the term *violone* by itself refers to a stringed bass instrument at 8-foot pitch.<sup>13</sup> Especially in the popular trio sonata genre, Bonta argues that because of the sonority which would result with two soprano instruments and one sub-bass instrument in combination and because of the technical demands imposed by the bass parts, it is fair to say that “another, nontransposing instrument [in addition to the two violins] was intended” to play the bass part (“From Violone to Violoncello,” p. 75). While this conclusion is not without precedence, the author would have benefited from expanding his argument, as a statement like this is bound to offend a number of contrabassists who are able to realize the more challenging parts with clarity and precision. If, however, one looks more to the consort music, dance music, or instrumental canzonas of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth centuries as a suggestion for instrumentation in the trio sonata genre—which Bonta has in fact done in other studies—his argument here holds more water.<sup>14</sup>

[4.5] If we can accept for the moment that the term *violone* was not synonymous with *contrabass* in seventeenth century Italy (note: Bonta is *not* arguing anything about the sixteenth century, the eighteenth century, or music outside of Italy), then we are left with a choice: the term *violone* may refer to a bass instrument of the gamba or violin family. Most musicologists and early music

performers would be content at this point to accept a generic sense of the term; in other words, by *violone* we are to understand a stringed bass instrument such as the bass violin, bass viol, or perhaps Banchieri's "violone da gamba," so long as the instrument plays at 8-foot pitch. This conclusion, however, does not sit well with Bonta, who goes on to argue why the term *violone* would not have been used in a generic sense and why it would not have denoted a gamba-family instrument.

## 5. Principal objections to Bonta's conclusions

[5.1] Bonta does not recommend the G violone—which is acknowledged by earlier Italian theorists as the bass member of the gamba family—for numerous reasons: 1) the lowest string G' would never have been used, which he claims "runs counter to Merula's use of the violin, which regularly encompasses all four strings";<sup>15</sup> 2) the larger size would have "hampered the extensive cultivation of violin style and hence the soloistic possibilities of the instrument";<sup>16</sup> 3) the *Klangideal* of the times would have demanded a pure consort of all violins, not a mixed ensemble with violins and viols;<sup>17</sup> 4) the volume produced by the *violone da gamba* [G violone] would not equal the sound projection of the bass violin, therefore, the bass violin would have been preferred;<sup>18</sup> 5) bass viols were not generally in use, according to two contemporary writers André Maugars (1639) and Thomas Hill (1657), who observed on their visits from Rome and Lucca, respectively, an absence of bass viols;<sup>19</sup> and finally, 6) because the gamba family, of which the *violone da gamba* was a part, was not used in church by professional musicians, and therefore, the *violone da gamba* would have been an unlikely candidate to realize the parts labeled *violone* that appear in Italian seventeenth-century printed music.<sup>20</sup>

[5.2] In the spirit of scholarly dialogue, I would like to address Bonta's arguments (above), one-by-one. Starting with the lower range of the G violone, and assuming the violone parts in question are to sound at pitch, Bonta is correct to assert that the low GG string would not be needed for the overwhelming majority of literature in print. However, as he writes in a later essay, "early composers writing for the violin family tended to avoid the bottom strings and that someone felt impelled to invent the wire-wound string, implies that the bass strings then in use were less than ideal by the standards of the time."<sup>21</sup> By this measure, it seems unfair to dismiss the G violone because its lowest string would seldom have been used. It is one thing to assert that a particular instrument should be excluded if it is not able to play music on the page, but it is quite another to rule out an instrument if it is able to fulfill the pitch requirements (with an additional range below—or above—that exceeds the requirements of any given composition). Furthermore, the extended lower range on the G violone offers the potential of transposing a bass part down an octave in special instances (when a bass player would otherwise have realized the part at written pitch).

[5.3] Precisely what Bonta means by "violin style" is uncertain. If he is suggesting that the G violone was not able to perform rapid divisions and leaps, as found in solo literature for the violin, then he is unfortunately mistaken, since the solo repertoire for the G violone, which encompassed the full range of the instrument, can in fact be quite demanding.<sup>22</sup> The string length of a G violone, which is normally between 85.0 and 95.0 cm, might require more strength in the left hand, yet its tuning (in fourths) and extended range makes this instrument very accessible. Additionally, the clarity of pitch in the lower range (facilitated by frets)—unequaled on the bass violin—can be achieved on the G violone. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, when

certain bass passages with rapid string-crossing figures suggest a tuning in fifths would be more natural (I am thinking of some of Corelli's "violone" passages in particular), perhaps then it is reasonable to assert that a bass violin might serve as a better selection. But for the majority of bass parts labeled *violone* during the first seventy-five years of the seventeenth century, from a player's perspective, there is no reason to claim the G violone would be an inadequate instrument.

[5.4] With respect to Bonta's pure consort *Klangideal*, we simply do not have enough information at this time to conclude whether such an aesthetic existed in the mind of any Italian composer. The notion that ensembles typically performed strictly in families, excluding instruments from other families, is considered a little far-fetched nowadays. Certainly in England and the German-speaking territories during the seventeenth century, it has been clearly demonstrated that violins and lower pitched viols performed together.<sup>23</sup> If Bonta wishes to make his argument believable, he must provide further evidence that Italian composers desired pure consorts, or that pure consorts were the norm. Looking specifically at the early seventeenth century canzona repertoire, Bonta claims that composers (and their publishers) used the flexible designation "con ogni sorte di stromenti" on their title pages because "there were not yet enough instruments in existence to supply this new and sizeable need" ("Corelli's Heritage," p. 230). But this is speculation on the author's part, and we must leave open the question of a "violins only" aesthetic in the absence of further evidence. While it is clear that by mid-eighteenth century, orchestras throughout Italy consisted of violin family instruments, the presence of the G violone and perhaps its contrabass relative, the D violone, in the seventeenth century cannot be denied, let alone ignored and therefore, it poses a challenge to Bonta's theory.

[5.5] Bonta's suggestion that the G violone would be put out of commission by the more strident sound of the bass violin also seems to contradict performance suggestions made by early seventeenth century writers Agostino Agazzari, Adriano Banchieri and Michael Praetorius. Praetorius's *Syntagma musicum*, especially—which Bonta claims is “replete with information on Italian performance practice and instruments of his time”—specifically calls for the use of the violone, and not the “Gross Quint-Bass” or “Bass-Geig da Braccio” to support the bass line, especially in church music (“Catline Strings Revisited,” p. 48). Furthermore, Bonta has argued that before the advent of wound strings, a longer string length was required to accommodate the lower bass range; if a performer or composer had to choose an instrument to play C', does it seem more likely that an instrument with an open C string of 70.0 cm would be selected over an instrument with an open C string of 90.0 cm? I propose that before the widespread dissemination of wound strings through Italy in the final decades of the seventeenth century, the G violone may well have provided a louder and deeper fundamental at 8-foot pitch.

[5.6] Moreover, descriptions by two foreigners, Maugars and Hill, who visited two different cities in Italy should not be seen as clear evidence that the viol had gone out of use in Italy. Even if both writers acknowledge the absence of bass viols at the events they attended, it is simply premature to conclude that viols were not longer in use in Italy. Tharald Borgir has examined the same documents and has suggested that, while their observations cannot be denied, we must take with a grain of salt how Maugars or Hill may have defined “bass viol.” More specifically, the bass viol to an English- or Frenchman is likely not to have corresponded with the Italian bass of the gamba family.<sup>24</sup>

[5.7.1] Finally, we come to Bonta's assertion that viols were not used in Italian churches by professional musicians in the seventeenth century. In "The Use of Instruments in Sacred Music in Italy, 1560-1700" (1990), Bonta reports only a single appearance of the –da gamba suffix in the nearly 130 collections of sacred prints calling for instruments. He writes, "In every other instance either the suffix *da braccio* (or *da braccio*) has been appended, or the family to which the instrument belongs has not been identified" ("The Uses of Instruments," p. 524). Bonta's critical blind spot is evident from the key to the appendix of his article, where he has combined "violone or basso viola da braccio" under the rubric "D," so that the reader will never know which term was used in print ("The uses of instruments," p. 526). By equating "violone" and "basso viola da braccio" in this essay, Bonta has presented his findings rather inaccurately and further entangled the situation for future musicologists to unravel.

[5.7.2] A citation from Jambe de Fer (1556), where class distinction separates those who play viols ("gentleman, merchants and other men of virtue") from those who play violins ("who make a living from it"), is used by Bonta as evidence that only violin family instruments would have been utilized in church. Yet this distinction may not necessarily have applied to Italian churches in the seventeenth century, and it surely did not apply to professional players of the violone (da gamba). Nearly all of the archival documentation analyzed by Bonta—especially if the discussion is limited to instances of the term *violone* in conjunction with the –grosso, –grande, or –doppio suffix—points to the regular employment of performers on the bass and/or contrabass member of the gamba family, therefore calling into question Bonta's statement that only violin family instruments were played in church. In light of what may be learned from early

seventeenth century theorists regarding the use of the violone (as a large bodied gamba-family instrument), Bonta's hypothesis must be aggressively challenged.

## 6. Conclusion

[6.1] Bonta's writings are essential materials to all those studying the early history of stringed bass instruments and the performance of seventeenth-century Italian instrumental music. The Ashgate collection makes readily available his contributions for generations to come. Although many of Bonta's arguments for the use of the early bass violin in favor of the G violone may be challenged, it is clear that the field of early stringed bass research owes a debt of gratitude to this scholar. To Stephen Bonta, a sincere thank you for his scholarly spirit, inquisitive nature, and trail-blazing research.

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<sup>1</sup> Writers have been coming to terms with Bonta's research for the many years now. Some of the more recent, thought-provoking studies include: Tharald Borgir, *The Performance of the Basso Continuo in Italian Baroque Music* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1987); Peter Walls, "Strings," *Performance Practice: Music after 1600*, Howard Mayer Brown & Stanley Sadie, eds. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989); Peter Allsop, *The Italian 'Trio' Sonata* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Duane Rosengard, *Contrabbassi Cremonesi* (Cremona: Turris, 1992); Mimmo Peruffo, "The mystery of gut bass strings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the role of loaded-weighted gut," *Recercare* V (1993): 115-149; Renato Meucci, "Viola, violoncello and viola da braccio: the violoncello in Venice in the times of Montagnana," *Domenico Montagnana "Lauter in Venetia,"* Fausto Cacciatori & Bruce Carlson, eds. (Cremona: Carlson, Cacciatori, Neumann, 1998); Alfred Planyavsky, *The Baroque Double Bass Violone*, tr. James Barket (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998); Gregory Barnett, "The Violoncello da Spalla: Shouldering the Cello in the Baroque Era," *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* XXIV (1998): 81-106; Robin Stowell, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Cello* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Joëlle Morton, "The Early History and Use of the G Violone," *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America* 36 (1999): 40-66; Paul Brun, *A New History of the Double Bass* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Paul Brun Publications, 2000); Herbert Meyers, "The Sizes and Tunings of Early Viols: Some Questions (and a Few Answers)," *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America* 38 (2001); Annette Otterstedt, *The Viol: History of an Instrument*, tr. Hans Reiners (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> It is unfortunate that the publishers were not able to include one of Bonta's book reviews as an appendix to the volume. In particular, his review of Planyavsky's *The Baroque Double Bass*

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*Violone* in the on-line *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 6/2 (2000) would have been an excellent addition. This review, entitled “Five Essential Errors,” is located on-line at <http://sscm-jscm.press.uiuc.edu/jscm/v6/no2/Bonta.html>.

<sup>3</sup> III: “The use of instruments in sacred music in Italy 1560-1700” was published in volume 18/4 of *Early Music*; VIII: “The Making of Gut Strings in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Paris” was published in volume 52 of the *Galpin Society Journal*; IX: “Further Thoughts on the History of Strings” was published in volume 26 of the *Newsletter of the Catgut Acoustical Society*; X: [Preface to] *The Instrumental Music of Giovanni Legrenzi* was published by Harvard University Press in Cambridge, MA; XI: “The Instrumental Music of Giovanni Legrenzi: Style & Significance,” was published by Leo S. Olschki in 1994; XII: “Brossard’s Practice Concerning the Use of Accidentals and the Continuo in his Instrumental Music” was published by Editions Klincksieck; XVI: “The Interpretation of Notation in Music for Italian Instrumental Ensembles in the Mid- to Late-17<sup>th</sup> Century” was an article in the symposium *Barocco padano* (not *padoan*).

<sup>4</sup> This translation is especially recommended for anyone interested in the history of gut string making. As Bonta does not relate this process directly to the early history of stringed bass instruments, further commentary is reserved for another occasion.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Bonta, *The Church Sonatas of Giovanni Legrenzi*, Ph.D. diss. Harvard, 1964. For a preliminary look at Legrenzi’s works, one should have a look at the introduction to one of Bonta’s modern editions: “The Instrumental Music of Giovanni Legrenzi, *Sonata a Due e Tre, Opus 2, 1655*” (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1984), reprinted here as Chapter X, in addition to his article “The Instrumental Music of Giovanni Legrenzi: Style & Significance,” in *Giovanni Legrenzi e la Cappella Ducale di San Marco* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1994), reprinted here as Chapter XI.

<sup>6</sup> Bonta does mention three iconographic sources in the two articles, but as a category of evidence to be examined, he apparently places little value, or at least unequal value, on this type of primary source in comparison to his study of archival documents. Some of his observations on iconography—borrowed mainly from German sources—include: Michael Praetorius (“From Violone to Violoncello,” p. 74), Johann Christoph Weigel (“From Violone to Violoncello,” p. 83) and Filippo Bonanni (“Terminology for the Bass Violin,” p. 37-38). Bonta describes the instrument pictured by Weigel and Praetorius as a “five-string violone,” which may not be as accurate as one would have liked; in fact, Praetorius never describes his “Gross Quint-Bass” or “Bass-Geig da Braccio” as a violone—an important detail Bonta may have too conveniently overlooked. In another article, reprinted here as Chapter VII: “Corelli’s Heritage: The Early Bass Violin in Italy,” Bonta incorporates a number of iconographic sources and finally examines a few extant bass violins; see especially pp. 227-231 and Plates 1-9. Still, much work is to be done in these two areas of research.

<sup>7</sup> Ian Woodfield’s *Early History of the Viol* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) is a model study in this regard; as Woodfield demonstrates, when writing about the history of an instrument and its use in musical repertoires, scholars should give adequate attention to the extant instruments and their depiction in visual art.



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<sup>8</sup> See also VI: “Catline Strings Revisited,” *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* XIV (1988): 50-51.

<sup>9</sup> For a clear understanding of the *violone* and its musical repertory at the turn of the sixteenth to seventeenth century, see Joëlle Morton’s article “The Early History and Use of the G Violone,” *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America* 36 (1999): 40-66.

<sup>10</sup> For records in Bologna, see “From Violone to Violoncello,” especially pp. 77-80, 88-90; in “Terminology for the Bass Violin,” pp. 28-32; for records in Rome, see “From Violone to Violoncello,” especially pp. 80-81; for records in Bergamo, see “Terminology for the Bass Violin,” especially pp. 8-23; for records in Venice, see “Terminology for the Bass Violin,” especially pp. 26-27, 32-40.

<sup>11</sup> The most comprehensive study to date on the G violone is Alfred Planyavsky’s *The Baroque Double Bass Violone*, tr. James Barket (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Given Banchieri’s later terminology for the *violone da gamba*, known simply as *viola basso*, one must look more closely at occurrences of this and its closely related term, *basso di viola*. As thorough as Bonta is in all his discussions of terminology, it appears this small fact, which appears as footnote 27 in “From Violone to Violoncello,” p. 74, has not been adequately explored. He mentions the “basso di viola” in Buonamente’s instrumental music, but then defines it as a bass viola da gamba. See “Terminology for the Bass Violin,” p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Bonta calls attention to terminology for the contrabass in a number of his articles reprinted in this volume. See especially, “Terminology for the Bass Violin,” p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Three of Bonta’s articles, reprinted here as Chapters III, XIV and XVI, respectively address the ensemble canzona, in which the author builds on Eunice Crocker’s work, *An Introductory Study of the Italian Canzona for Instrumental Ensembles and Its Influence upon the Baroque Sonata* (Ph.D. diss., Radcliffe College, 1943). See “The Use of Instruments in Sacred Music in Italy 1560-1700,” “The Use of Instruments in the Ensemble Canzona and Sonata in Italy, 1580-1650,” and “The Interpretation of Notation in Music for Italian Instrumental Ensembles in the Mid- to Late-17<sup>th</sup> Century.”

<sup>15</sup> Bonta raises these general objections in his opening remarks. For the first objection, see “From Violone to Violoncello,” pp. 76.

<sup>16</sup> See “Terminology for the Bass Violin,” p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> See “From Violone to Violoncello,” p. 76.

<sup>18</sup> See “From Violone to Violoncello,” p. 76-77.

<sup>19</sup> See “From Violone to Violoncello,” p. 77.

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<sup>20</sup> See “Terminology for the Bass Violin,” p. 6, 11-12; also, see Chapter III: “The use of instruments in sacred music in Italy 1560-1700,” pp. 524.

<sup>21</sup> See “Catline Strings Revisited,” p. 53. This article takes a critical look at “hawser-laid” strings, manufactured by Abbott and Segerman. Bonta argues that catline strings were not made in this way and moreover, that there is no evidence of this invention in string making, as Abbott and Segerman assert. See especially, pp. 38-50.

<sup>22</sup> See Morton, *op cit*.

<sup>23</sup> Two studies in particular point to the use of a mixed consort, featuring violins on the higher melodic parts, with viols on the lower melodic parts. See Peter Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court 1540-1690* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) and Laurence Dreyfus, *Bach’s Continuo Group: Players and Practices in His Vocal Works* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

<sup>24</sup> See Borgir’s *The Performance of the Basso Continuo in Italian Baroque Music* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1987), especially pp. 77. For the most recent collection of essays demonstrating that the viola da gamba was used well into the seventeenth century in Italy, see *The Italian Viola da Gamba: Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Italian Viola da Gamba*, ed. Susan Orlando (Turin: Angolo Manzoni, 2002).