In 1535, Silvestro Ganassi published his *Opera Intitulata La Fontegara* in Venice. *Fontegara* is both the first recorder method ever printed as well as the first treatise entirely devoted to the subject of diminution. The modern history of this fascinating treatise begins in 1934 with an Italian reproduction in the Bolletino Bibliografico Musicale (Milan), followed by Hildemarie Peter's ground-breaking German translation, which – despite being already 65 years old – still continues to be widely used. In the past decennia, the interest for *Fontegara* has steadily grown. Apart from the two translations that were made of Peter's edition (into English and Japanese), two new facsimile editions were produced in the new millennium, as well as translations into modern Italian, French and Portuguese (by respectively, Salvatore, Vossart and Tettamanti). Musicological interest has been very keen as well with recently, among others, a doctoral dissertation exclusively devoted to *Fontegara* (see Windkanal 2019-2).

The latest addition to the stream of publications is a luxurious practical edition, prepared by William Dongois and Philippe Canguilhem. This edition is one of the products of the extensive research programme conducted at the *Haute école de musique de Genève* (HEM), which is devoted to the role of diminution in the performance practice of the music of the period 1500 - 1650. The hypothesis of the research project was that *"Fontegara* could be seen as the work of a professional musician trying to transmit a particular performance style in treatise form" (p. 6). The edition is primarily targeted at practical musicians as the authors "wanted to create an edition that would be clear and straightforward to use, an extension of our hypothesis regarding the 'normalcy' of the treatise itself" (p. 7). Besides a book (available in pdf-format as well), the edition also includes a DVD, which is mainly devoted to practical demonstrations.

The mostly bilingual edition (French-English) is subdivided into a few sections. A "Biographical sketch of Silvestro Ganassi" (pp. 11-14) is followed by a (trilingual) edition of the complete treatise (pp. 45-153), and by a transcription of the 175 handwritten ornamented cadences by Ganassi (pp. 158-165). The final section, titled "Learning to diminish in the style of Ganassi", offers suggestions for the practical application of the treatise (pp. 67-179), followed by written out diminutions of twelve complete compositions by Josquin, Gombert and de Rore, among others (pp. 181-243), which aim to demonstrate the practical application of *Fontegara* in both solo and

ensemble diminutions, according to the views of seven different contemporary musicians.

Regarding their editorial principles, the editors firmly state that "for present-day readers, the organisation and graphic presentation play a considerable role in their understanding of pedagogical texts from the Renaissance" (p. 17). Within the same line of thought, the authors explain that the most important reasoning behind their editorial choices is not only that "musical pedagogy during the Renaissance was probably based, above all else, on listening and repeating sung or played examples", but also that nowadays there are only "a rare few who can make do with facsimiles" (p. 17). Without reducing the importance of oral tradition for Renaissance musicians, the question remains open regarding to what extent any sixteenth-century buyer of *Fontegara* would have had a first-hand opportunity to listen to Ganassi's performances (let alone to take lessons with him). Be that as it may, a present-day editor certainly is confronted with considerable problems to turn the treatise into a successful practical edition, while granting transparent access to the text and music.

Firstly, Ganassi's prose is notoriously difficult to understand (even for Italian native speakers), as it does not follow the modern conventions concerning construction of sentences, punctuation, and orthography. Differing from the previous edition of *Fontegara* (Vossart 2002), which provides a diplomatic transcription of Ganassi's prose parallel to the French translation, the new edition offers an un-annotated version of the text "with a few necessary modifications" that create "shorter, comprehensible sentences" (p. 42). Being centrally presented in the edition, placed between the French and English translation, the resulting Italian prose gains the authority of the original text.

Unfortunately, without an overview of the editorial modifications of Ganassi's text, it becomes rather difficult for the conscientious reader to get an objective impression of the original text and of the translation. The following examples bring a few of the (many) resulting problems to the fore.

In chapter 6 of *Fontegara*, Ganassi continues the presentation of the various basic forms of articulation, which he had started in the previous chapter. In the opening sentence, the editors exchange the original colon present in "nō compiuta:cioe" by a full stop. Consequently, the following sentence now starts with the word "Cioè", which creates a direct correlation between the immediately following adjective "meza" and "la

compiuta". A little further on in the text, the symbol '&' is transcribed as a full stop, creating yet another new sentence that starts with "E dela sillaba". These alterations of the punctuation have direct consequences for the translations (p. 62).

Nota che i diti moti originali fi caufa alcuni effetti de lingua copiuta e no compluta; cioe meza la co/. piuta fara composta de due fillabe come fon loriginale; la mezza de una fillaba ouer litera i questo mo do co uelocita, t t t t.ouer d d d d; & dela fillaba de de ge che ouer da de di do du.pero int enderai po ter mutar la prima litera in ogni altra; fi come feria ta te ti to tu.ca che chi co cu; & i altri modi; & an/

Note que les coups de langue fondamentaux entraînent des effets de langue complets ou incomplets. L'effet demi complet sera composé de deux syllabes, comme les coups de langue fondamentaux; la demière syllabe ou lettre, articulée de cette manière avec rapidité: t t t t t, ou d d d d d et la syllabe complète $d\acute{e} d\acute{e} g\acute{e} k\acute{e}$, ou $da d\acute{e} di do dou$. Tu comprendras aussi que l'on peut changer la première lettre Nota che i diti moti originali si causa alcuni effetti de lingua compiuta e non compiuta. Cioè meza la compiuta sarà composta de due sillabe come son l'originale. La mezza de una sillaba over litera in questo modo con velocità t t t t over d d d d. E de la sillaba de de ge che over da de di do du. Però intenderai poter mutar la prima litera in ogni altra, si come

Note that the fundamental tonguings produce effects of the tongue that are either complete or incomplete. The half-complete effect will be made up of two syllables, like the fundamental tonguings; the half syllable or letter, articulated in this way at speed: t t t t t, or d d d d and the complete syllable de de ge ke, or da de di do du. You will also understand that one can

The translations of this segment do not only remain rather vague and nondescriptive for modern wind-players, but are also objectively incorrect in several aspects. For example, the interpretation of the text that is presented in the Italian prose does not recognise Ganassi's recurrent usage of a pair of words as means of clarification of the meaning (clearly, "non compiuta" and "meza" are synonyms). Another interpretation of the punctuation, one that remains considerably closer to the original, renders a very different reading of the text, and results in a practically diametrically opposed translation.

Nota che i diti moti originali si causa alcuni effetti de lingua compiuta e non compiuta: cioè meza. La compiuta sarà composta de due sillabe, come son l'originale; la mezza, de una sillaba over litera, in questo modo con velocità: t t t t t over d d d d, de la sillaba: de de ge che over da de di do du.

Note that the aforesaid fundamental tonguings produce some effects of the articulation, which is either complete or incomplete, i.e. halved. The complete [articulation] will consist of two syllables, as is the case with the fundamental tonguings. The halved [articulation will consist] of one syllable or letter, [pronounced] in this way at speed: 't t t t t' or 'd d d d', [or] of the syllable: de de ge che, or, da de di do du.

Besides these modifications of the original text that are fairly difficult to detect, there are also several incongruences in the actual translations. As may be clear from the following example, some of the translators' choices are, at times, of a rather dubious quality, considering that the edition stems from a (academic) background of historical informed performance practice and aims to be a practical tool. In chapter 13, Ganassi uses relative solmization to define musical intervals. As it was common in his day and age, *ut-mi* does not only indicate the major third 'c-e', but also 'f-a' and 'g-b'. With the solmization of the intervals *mi-mi* and *fa-fa*, Ganassi is not describing unisons or octaves (as the English translation seems to imply), but pure fifths (respectively 'e-b', and 'f-c' or 'bflat-f'). The editors have clearly overlooked the theoretical principle of relative solmization syllables, and translated all of them as fixed pitches (p. 70).

E inanci che ti mostri la pratica del diminuire, ti ad-	Before presenting the practice of diminution, I will
vertirò di alcune parte necessarie. E primamente	now mention certain necessary elements. First, one
è da considerare che nel far le diminutione, habi-	must make sure that there is an equivalence between
no similitudine sì nel fine come nel principio. Cioè	the end and the beginning of the diminutions. This
quando tu volesse diminuire el moto della tertia	means that, when you wish to diminish the interval of
e ogni altra consonantia senza mezzo alcuno come	a third and any other disjunct interval, such as c-e, c-f,
sarà ut-mi, ut-fa, ut-sol, similmente re-fa, mi-la,	c-g or even d-f, e-a, e-e or f-f in any manner in which it
mi-mi e fa-fa, e in ciascuno modo che si trovasse, tu	is found, you must begin your diminution on the first
principiarai il tuo diminuire in quello loco medemo	note, whether it be c or d or e or f. This note could
se'l sarà ut o re o mi o fa, e quello serà over ne la sua	sometimes be found at the octave of the first note,
ottava le quali conrispondeno al suo principio sì di	either above or below. And again, if the interval of a

In several instances, there are incongruences between the French and the English translations. The (linguistic) quality of the translation into French is notably better and, at times, this translation might serve to grasp the meaning of the English translation. For example, the opening sentence of chapter 18 (p. 141):

Note que, d'après les exemples donnés dans les marges, la formule qui diminue la seconde ascendante te servira également pour la seconde non brisée descendante, si on change sa finale. La seconde brisée descendante, qui se trouve au n° 11 ou au n° 6, peut ainsi te servir pour une tierce ascendante avec un saut, comme on peut le voir dans les exemples. On voit ensuite que les formules qui Nota che l'atto che diminuisse la seconda ascendente per lo essemplo fati su li marzine si comprende quelli mutando il suo finale ti servirà per la seconda non spezada descendente e la seconda spezada descendente che è al numero 11 over sei, ti pò servir per terza ascendente con salto come se vede neli essempli. Dapoi si vede gli atti che diminuisse la semibreve Note that the formula which diminishes the ascending second in the examples given in the margins will serve you equally for the descending undivided second if you change its final note. And the descending divided second, to be found at no. 11 or no. 6, can serve you for the ascending third with a leap, as you can see in the examples. One then sees that the formulas that

The unidiomatic construction of the sentence in the English translation, combined with the lack of punctuation as well as the unequivocally erroneous choice of the word "diminishes" in the context of a specific musical interval, easily lead to a confusing and even incorrect understanding of the text.

A possibly even trickier problem the modern editors (might) need to solve is the transcription of the many musical examples that Ganassi included in *Fontegara*. Wisely, the editors copy the oblong format of *Fontegara*, which "allows for the visualization of all of the diminutions of an interval" (p. 18) across the full page opening, offering a clear view of the rhythmical progression of the diminutions on each staff. The editors also maintain the soprano-clef of the original notation, to avoid "octaviating G-clefs as well

as notation 'at pitch', both of which are unusual for musicians accustomed to performing sixteenth- and seventeenth-century music" (p. 19).

The notation in Fontegara reflects Ganassi's modal approach to rhythm, and transmits note values without a direct optical connection to a certain beat or pulse. The editors choose to replace this essential principle by a notation that seeks to optically group crotchet beats as much as possible, and yet avoids ties as the editors feel "this would have broken too many practices of sixteenth-century notation" (p. 23). Brackets drawn over the entire diminution example (quintuplet, sextuplet and septuplet) indicate the various proportions, which are a very distinctive feature of Fontegara. Although far from being consistent in the application of their beaming principles, the editors claim "this system has the advantage of being immediately readable" (p. 22), but admit "this system hides the interior structures – symmetries and other forms of organisation – found in some figures" (p. 23). They "nevertheless opted for this system because it provides a real tool for approaching Fontegara", and substantiate their choice with the argument that the reader "always has the option of consulting the original text which is easily found in facsimile or in digital versions online" (p. 23). Given the aforementioned editorial remark that nowadays only a rare few people are capable of working with a facsimile, this argument is rather surprising for a practical edition.

Three examples may suffice to illustrate that the applied notational system for the transcription results in a needlessly complicated representation of even the simplest of rhythmical and melodic structures in Ganassi's diminution examples.

1. Regola Seconda, descending third number 9, diminution example number 5



In this diminution example, Ganassi applies the proportion prescribed in *Regola Seconda* on the level of the minim: each minim of the intervallic model is ornamented with the equivalence of five quavers. Essentially, this diminution is a short sequence with a minor rhythmical variation for the second half. In their transcription of this example (p. 100), the editors opt to complement the dotted crotchet with the following quaver, which disregards the symmetry and leads to incorrect articulation.



2. Regola Terza, descending fifth number 4, diminution example number 7.



In concordance with the proportion prescribed in *Regola Terza*, Ganassi creates a motive of six semiquavers in this example, which is repeated to ornament each individual crotchet of the intervallic model of a descending fifth. The first and last notes of the motive are identical, and state precisely the note of the intervallic model the motive embellishes.



The transcription of this example in the new edition (p. 129) completely hides the smooth and consequent systematics of Ganassi's diminution, which is rather easy to read in Ganassi's own notation, and which would be otherwise relatively easy to perform.



2. Regola Seconda, diminution example number 1 of the first cadence in C*



* Note that this example contains a mistake in *Fontegara*, as the final note should have been printed on the lowest line of the staff.

The systematic rhythmic construction of this diminution is easily recognisable as well in Ganassi's own notation. Respecting the proportion of *Regola Seconda* (which in this example operates on two levels), Ganassi embellishes each note of the model with a melodic figure that contains five notes: five quavers for each of the minims of the model, and five crotches for the semibreve. Again, the note of the model is always reflected in the first and last notes of the respective figure. The new transcription corrupts the clear

interior organisation of the diminution, and the large quintuplet (now of a duration equivalent to two semibreves) invites the reader to interpret the overall rhythmical make up of the example as being designed with five against four minims, and with a central segment in prolonged syncopation (p. 110).



In complete concordance with the conventions of his time, Ganassi notated proportional signs by way of numerical combinations, as for instance in chapter 12.

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	0			
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-CohA	of the		7	P
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The transcription of this example in the new edition illustrates the indifference of the editors towards Ganassi's characteristic modal approach to rhythm, as well as to its sixteenth-century theoretical principles (p. 69).



Apart from removing all proportional numerical combinations, the editors entirely suppress the final proportion of the example (8/7), and even halve the note values of this particular diminution. The reader is not made aware of any of these editorial decisions. Curiously, this presentation of the final diminution in *proportio sesquiseptima* (8/7) with halved note values actually already appears in the old edition of Hildemarie Peters.

Moreover, a quick comparative glance to the facsimile image shown above will reveal that the transcription of the ornamentation of the third and fourth semibreve is completely inaccurate. On the same page, the diminution of the third semibreve of this example appears once more, in another example just above it. However, the transcription of the rhythm is different for this example, which illustrates the inconsistent editorial attitude towards grouping of notes.



Unfortunately, this kind of careless negligence is not uncommon at all in the edition, even to the extent that the editors do not refrain from transforming Ganassi's diminution examples.

1. Vertical lines

Regola Quarta, interval number 11, diminution example number 1 (p. 136).



Regola Prima, Cadence number 3, diminution examples 2-5 (pp. 90-91).



In the transcription of the first example above, the small vertical line in the middle of the ornamentation is omitted. The second example is one of the instances from which it becomes apparent that the new edition is, in all probability, based on solely one original exemplar of *Fontegara*, although research has shown that the eight remaining original exemplars are not identical at all. Clearly, all vertical lines that appear in the transcription of the diminution examples of Cadence 3 in *Regola Prima* differ from Ganassi's customary usage. In fact, these lines are handwritten additions by a later user of the book, and only appear in the original exemplar that is preserved in Bologna.

2. Mutation of rhythm and melody

Regola Seconda, cadence number 7, diminution example number 4.



The diminution above is perfectly correct in *Fontegara*, but several modifications of the rhythm (replacing two quavers and one crotchet by two semiquavers and a quaver) force the editors to add four extra notes to the diminution (p. 111). This alteration too, bears similarity to Hildemarie Peters' transcription of the example.

3. Unnecessary modifications

Regola Seconda, descending second number 9, diminution example number 8.



This example shows one of the instances the editors first correctly transcribe the diminution example, but then proceed to modify both melody and rhythm (p. 36). This 'corrected' version is included in the transcription of the main body of the treatise (p. 97). However, Ganassi's example is perfectly fine and does not require any correction at all.

The transparency and practicality of the edition is further jeopardized when it turns out that the editorial principles of the transcription of the musical examples in the main body of the treatise are not consequently applied in the twelve written-out diminutions of complete pieces that are added at the end of the book. For instance, only one out of these twelve pieces maintains the original soprano clef, whereas the other eleven opt for the anachronistic G-clef. Apart from the obvious consequences for performance practice, this choice also means that the correlation to *Fontegara*'s extensive fingering tables is entirely lost.

A large number of diminution examples from *Fontegara* that re-appear in the written out embellishments are not identically transcribed, and even the previously

proclaimed ban on anachronistic ties is lifted as, for instance, becomes clear from bar 32 of the diminution on Gombert's motet *Beata Maria*. The illustration below shows, on the left side, the transcription of the motet with the proposed diminution (p. 240) and, on the right side, the exact same diminution example as it appears in the transcription of the treatise (p. 136).





(*Regola Quarta*, descending interval no. 10, diminution example number 3)

Additionally, this example from *Beata Maria* illustrates one of several discrepancies of a conceptual nature in the twelve embellished pieces, as far as the correct practical application of Ganassi's treatise is concerned. With the above-mentioned diminution example, Ganassi provided an embellishment for a descending second ('e-mi /d-re') with an intermediary note that re-states the very same descending second. Conform the proportional prescription of *Regola Quarta* (C7/4), Ganassi consequently uses the equivalence of seven quavers to ornament each note of the intervallic model:



However, Gombert's melody for the *superius* of the motet (bar 32) features a descending second ('c-sol / bflat-fa') with an entirely different intermediary note, i.e. a descending third ('a-mi'). Thus, the application and transposition of this particular diminution example into Gombert's polyphonic context results in a harsh dissonance. In *Fontegara*, Ganassi clearly states that diminution is "nothing but an ornament of the counterpoint" and, throughout his entire treatise, repeatedly warns his readers against such incorrect violations of the counterpoint.

Taking all these different aspects into consideration (and only a greatly abridged selection of examples could be presented here), the conclusion must be that this new edition fails to meet its proposed goals. As far as the content is concerned, the reader is left with an overall impression of a beautiful, yet rather careless edition, which is heavily flavoured with an anachronistic approach that clearly strives to bring *Fontegara* in line with the diminution treatises the were produced (long) after Ganassi's death. This anachronism is evident, for example, in the transformation of a diminution that was previously conceived in the style of Giovanni Bassano (p. 190), but also transpires from the editors' almost 'Mary Shelley-an' proposal to "humanize Ganassi's complicated diminution examples" through the use of a computer (p. 173), an advice which is sharply discrepant with the proclaimed "normalcy" of the treatise (p. 7 and p. 23). Needless to say that this kind of approach is not adequate to successfully enter the universe of the music of the Renaissance in general, but most certainly does not do any justice to the work of Ganassi, in particular. Since the previous edition of *Fontegara* (Vossart, 2002), the musicological research has made significant progress to our understanding of Ganassi's treatises, and one can only lament the missed opportunity to offer to the modern practical musician, who is interested in the music from the Renaissance, a tool to access this important source.