



Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762): treatise writer and authority¹

Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762): tratadista e autoridade

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Abstract

This article examines the position of Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762) as a model of authority for eighteenth-century English instrumental music. An Italian born in Lucca, Geminiani settled in London in 1714 and developed a prolific professional career as a violinist, composer, teacher, and author of musical treatises. Drawing on the concept of emulation as articulated by Geminiani himself, we analyze his didactic writings (published between 1748 and 1762) from both textual and compositional perspectives. It is possible to identify that, in addition to emulating the didactic model established by John Playford (1623-1686/1687) in the seventeenth century, Geminiani also aligns himself with *auctoritates* of early English (David Rizzio), Italian (Arcangelo Corelli), and French (Jean-Baptiste Lully) music. In this sense, the article concludes that Francesco Geminiani established himself as a paradigmatic figure for English instrumental music through the convergence of diverse national styles.

Keywords: Francesco Geminiani. English Instrumental Music. Didascalia. Mixed Tastes.

Resumo

O presente artigo analisa o posicionamento de Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762) como modelo de autoridade para a música instrumental inglesa no século XVIII. Italiano natural de Lucca, radicou-se em Londres em 1714 e desenvolveu prolífica atividade profissional como violinista, compositor, professor e autor de tratados musicais. A partir do conceito de emulação enunciado por Geminiani, analisamos suas preceptivas (publicadas entre 1748 e 1762), tanto do ponto de vista textual quanto composicional. É possível identificar que o tratadista, além de emular o modelo didascálico estabelecido por John Playford (1623-1686/1687) no século XVII, coloca-se junto a *auctoritates* da música inglesa antiga (David Rizzio), italiana (Arcangelo Corelli) e francesa (Jean-Baptiste Lully). Nesse sentido, conclui-se que Francesco Geminiani estabelece-se como figura modelar para a música instrumental inglesa a partir dos gostos reunidos.

Palavras-chave: Francesco Geminiani. Música Instrumental Inglesa. Didascalia. Gostos Reunidos

1 Introduction

A native of Lucca, Francesco Saverio Geminiani (1687-1762) studied in Rome with Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725) and Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713), probably between 1704 and 1706 (Careri, 2001). Between 1707 and 1709, he served as a

violinist in the *Cappella Palatina*, the principal musical institution of his hometown. It was, however, in London that his career was firmly established.

The choice of the British capital proved to be strategic, for since the 1680s the local audience had already shown a strong interest in Italian music. In the early years of the eighteenth century, Corelli's works circulated widely and were recognized as models of sophistication and good taste. Within this context, beginning in 1714, Geminiani developed a prolific career and soon came to be regarded as an authority in English musical circles – as may be seen in the allegorical tone of the words of the theorist Hubert Le Blanc:

Geminiani, since one must begin with the most refined playing, made himself admired as much as with the Sonatas of *Corelli*, which he performed. They provided the foundation for the kind of Harmony most capable of moving, which at the sound shakes the resonant bodies. *Geminiani* devised note-fillings of his own invention for all sorts of designs. The mind was enchanted, the ear was satisfied. The fair female listeners were ready to swoon, their souls came to their lips, and they knew not where to hasten for a remedy to the wounds inflicted in the manner of Ovid. The sounds of *Geminiani* were the very timbres of England and Germany. One then rested to ruminate upon the potable Golden Sound, which came to be infused through the ear, as if in one of our Planets, where one eats through hearing dishes seemingly proportioned to the organ. There was discussion, comparisons were heard, some observations were read, remarks were made, in order to know what one would have to oppose when judgment was to be rendered upon the whole (Le Blanc, 1740, p.95-96, my translation)².

² Text in French: "*Géminiani, d'autant qu'il faut commencer par le Jeu le plus fin, se fit admirer aussi bien que les Sonates de Corelly, qu'il exécuta. Elles fournirent le fondement de l'Harmonie la plus capable d'émouvoir, qui ébranle à la voix les Corps sonores. Géminiani fit des remplissages de Note de son crû à toutes sortes de desseins. L'esprit étoit charmé, l'oreille étoit satisfaite. Les belles Auditrices étoient prêtes à tomber en défaillance, l'ame leur venoit sur les lèvres, & ne savoit où accourir porter remède à des blessures faites à la manière d'Ovide. Les Sons de Géminiani étoient des Timbres d'Angleterre & d'Allemagne. On se reposa pour ruminer le Son d'or potable, qui venoit de s'infuser par l'oreille, comme dans quelque'une de nos Planètes, où l'on mange par l'ouïe des mets apparemment proportionnés à l'organe. On conféra, entendit des rapports, lut quelques observations, fit des remarques, pour savoir ce qu'on auroit à opposer, quand on feroit droit sur le tout.*" All translations of original texts are by the author. Other translations may be consulted in the bibliographic references.

As can be seen, Le Blanc emphasizes that the sonority produced by Geminiani in his performance of his master's sonatas was not solely Italian, but also English. While on the one hand the repertoire moved the listeners, on the other the ornamented execution enriched and refined music already much admired, acting as a remedy for the soul of the audience. In this sense, the writer concludes, Geminiani became a standard of excellence.

This seems indeed to have been his true intent. In *A Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick*, Geminiani (1749, p. 4) states that "the Road to Emulation is both open and wide," and "the most effectual Method to triumph over an Author is to excel him; and he manifests his Affection to a Science most who contributes most to its Advancement." In other words, taking models of reference with the aim of surpassing them – a project recurrent among many eighteenth-century composers – constituted the starting point of his musical and theoretical works. Moreover, it was through the emulation of authorities that the tastes and musical styles of the eighteenth century were consolidated³.

Within this emulative horizon, beginning in 1748 and continuing until his death in 1762, Francesco Geminiani embarked on a long and prolific journey of producing preceptive works. England, for its part, had already established in the previous century a significant tradition in the field of *didascalia*⁴. By publishing a wide range of tutors in the seventeenth century, John Playford (1623-1686/1687) not only consolidated a practice but also instituted a model.

Considering his fruitful career as a violinist, teacher, and composer in England, it is reasonable to assume that Geminiani would also find success by emulating this insular tradition within the realm of instructive works, which fall under the didascalical genre. In this context, he published seven treatises: *Rules for Playing in a True Taste* (c. 1748), *A Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick* (1749), *The*

³ A lengthy introduction to the concept of emulation can be found in the first chapter of Held (2021).

⁴ *Didascalia*, referring to the didascalical genre, designates the body of preceptive works or writings intended for teaching and instruction. It encompasses, for example, both Playford's and Geminiani's texts, allowing them – albeit with different levels of depth and distinct target audiences – to be understood within the same interpretative framework. The concept was originally developed, on the basis of the entry found in John Rider's *Bibliotheca Scholastica* (1589), in Held (2021).

Art of Playing on the Violin (1751), *The Art of Accompaniament* (1756/1757), *Guida Armonica* (1756/1758), *The Harmonicall Miscellany* (1758), and *The Art of Playing the Guitar or Cittra* (1760).

2 Emulation in the treatises of Francesco Geminiani

Just as Playford moves between instruction and poetics in his texts, Geminiani develops his *corpus* of treatises under the same premise. In his prefaces, one can identify a purpose analogous to the British model, with recurring references to his aspirations, efforts, and successes in the elaboration of his preceptive works. In the preface to *Rules for Playing in a True Taste*, he records:

The Desire I have of assisting those who would perform in a just Taste on the *Violin, German Flute, Violoncello and Harpsichord, particularly the Thorough Bass*, has induced me to publish these Compositions, the Subject of which are such English, Scotch and Irish Airs as are proper for the Purpose (Geminiani, c. 1748, pref.).

The style of these reflections approaches that of Playford, including the emulation of his perorations. At the end of the introductory text of *The English Dancing Master* (1651), the Englishman concludes that he has ventured “to put forth this ensuing Worke to the view, and gentle censure of all ingenious Gentlemen lovers of this Quallity [the dance]; not doubting but their goodnes will pardon what may be amisse, and accept of the honest Intention of him that is a faithfull honourer of your Virtues, and *your servant to command, J.P.*” (Playford, 1651, n. p.).

In parallel, we read in Geminiani: “I shall think myself very happy, if these my Endeavours prove as useful and entertaining to the Publick, as I sincerely intend them to be, having a just and grateful Sense of their Indulgence” (Geminiani, c. 1748, pref.). In *The Art of Playing on the Violin*, another example: “I have nothing farther to add, but to beg the lovers of music will receive this work with the same candour with which it is offered to them. From their *most obedient and humble servant, F. G.*” (Geminiani, 1751, pref.).

Just as in Playford, so too in Geminiani the efforts undertaken are highlighted. While the Englishman observed in 1651 that the publication of his dancing tutor was intended to relieve beginners of any obstacles, the Italian, in *A Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick*, declares:

How far I have succeeded in this Attempt, those who are most conversant in the Art, are the fittest to judge: But how difficult it was to succeed in it, No-body can judge better than myself (not to destroy the Simplicity and Beauty, I found required some Discretion) (Geminiani, 1749, pref.).

And, in the preface to *Guida Armonica*, he adds:

These Considerations, and the Advantage I conceived a more just and extensive System of Modulation, would be to the Science of Musick, induced me to compile the following Work, a Work of no small Difficulty, the Labour of many Years, and not a few of them almost wholly spent therein. I have the Satisfaction however to think my Time well spent, and my Labour well bestowed (Geminiani, 1756, pref.).

Finally, in *The Art of Playing the Guitar or Cittra*, we read:

The Use of the lesser Guitar or Citera, being lately revived amongst us, I thought it might be of general advantage to its admirers to Compose some Lessons adapted to the compass and stile of that Instrument. And have endeavour'd to improve it by adding more Harmony and Modulation to the usual manner of performing on it (Geminiani, 1760, pref.).

From another perspective, the process of emulation may also be identified in other argumentative devices. For instance, just as Playford declares that he had been encouraged by a "knowing friend" to publish *The English Dancing Master*, Geminiani, with regard to *The Art of Accompaniament*, states:

I, some Years since, began to compose a Book upon the Subject of Thorough Bass [...] but being diverted from my Design, by other

Matters, I had almost laid it aside. I have since been prevailed upon, by the Exhortations of some of my Friends, to finish the Work; and here offer to the Publick, the first Part thereof, which, if approved of, will be very soon followed by the Remainder (Geminiani, 1756, pref.).

As can be seen, Francesco Geminiani sought to contribute actively to the consolidation of the style of instrumental music in England. In this regard, he devoted his first two preceptive works specifically to the construction of the concept of good taste - a notion of great relevance not only for that country but for the eighteenth century as a whole. Aligned with empiricist thought, the author set out to instruct his readers – both amateurs and professionals – in the refinement of the ingenuity required for the ability to judge. He explains:

Lastly, as the chief End I have in view, is to contribute as far as my Abilities will permit, to the Perfection of an Art that I love, and to rescue the Character of Musician from the Disgrace and Contempt which the Follies of ignorant Pretenders have brought upon it, I hope no acknowledg'd Master will lend his Countenance to the Misconstruction which those Pretenders may think their Interest to pass upon it (Geminiani, 1749, p. 4).

As is well known, references to *auctoritates* are a *sine qua non* condition for the surpassing of models. In this sense, the set of exemplary authors mentioned by Geminiani begins with two distinct representatives: "Two Composers of Musick have appear'd in the World, who in their different Kinds of Melody, have rais'd my Admiration; namely *David Rizzio* and *Gio. Baptista Lulli* [Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687)]" (Geminiani, 1749, pref.).

An Italian born in Pancalieri around 1533, Rizzio⁵ was the son of an impoverished musician, as Marshall (2004) notes. His skills, however, enabled him to work in important European centers. As a singer, he served the Archbishop of Turin and later moved to Nice, in France, where he collaborated with the court of

⁵ His name appears in various sources under the variants Riccio, Rizzi, Rizzo, and Rezzio.

the Duke of Savoy. In 1561, he left for Scotland as secretary to the ambassador Moretto. According to Marshall, a decisive factor in his biography:

Aware of Riccio's musical talents, Moretto advised him to seek a position at the Scottish court, for it was well known that Mary, Queen of Scots, was fond of music and was herself an accomplished performer. As it happened, Mary was looking for a bass to make up the quartet of French singers who performed partsongs and sacred music for her. Riccio persuaded them to let him sing with them before the queen. She heard him twice, was impressed with his voice, and, when Moretto left for home soon afterwards, she made Riccio one of her *valets de chambre* (gentlemen of the privy chamber) (Marshall, 2004, s. p.).

Rizzio was active in the musical life of the court, and the queen's deep admiration for him, combined with the many privileges she granted him, ultimately led to his assassination in 1566⁶. His name, however, continued to resonate as a composer in various repositories of Scots songs until the end of the eighteenth century (Clements, 2013), when, according to Holman (2013), Rizzio was revered as a myth. Although the authorship of the melodies attributed to him has not been firmly established, his presence deserves special mention in the two editions of *Orpheus Caledonius: or a Collection of Scots Songs Set to Musick* (1726 and 1733) by William Thomson (c.1684-c.1752), as well as in James Oswald's (1710-1769) *Second Collection of Curious Scots Tunes* (1743).

Rizzio's relevance within the eighteenth-century musical context is further validated by his recurrence in music sales advertisements between 1731 and 1753. In seven of them, his name appears associated with that of Geminiani: *Universal Spectator and Weekly Journal* (08/05/1731, 14/08/1731, and 25/11/1731), *Grub Street Journal* (19/01/1732), *London Country Journal* (14/12/1734) (see, for instance, Fig. 1), and *London Evening Post* (14/04/1753 and 28/08/1753)⁷.

⁶ The unease caused by the event was remarked upon by Mary, Queen of Scots, until the end of her life (Marshall, 2004).

⁷ In these publications, Geminiani appears alongside names such as Henry and Daniel Purcell, Handel, Bononcini, Corelli, Pepusch, and various British musical authorities.

Figure 1. Music publication advertisement.

**Lately Published, curiously Printed in six Pocket Volumes.
[Price Eighteen Shillings.]**

**The MUSICAL MISCELLANY; being a Collec-
tion of choice Songs and Lyrick Poems. Set to Musick by the most
eminent Masters, (with the Basses to each Tune, and transposed
for the Flute) viz.**

Atrillio.	Dr. Croft.	Haym.	Ravenscraft.
Barret.	Dicupart.	Holmes.	David Rizzio.
Betts.	Fleming.	Holcomb.	Scedo.
Bononcini.	Galliard.	Leveridge.	J. Sheeles.
Bradley.	Geminiani.	Monro.	Trevers.
Brailsford.	Gough.	Pepusch.	Vincent.
Burgels.	Grano.	Potter.	Webber.
Carey.	Graves.	D. Purcell.	Weldon.
Charke.	Green.	H. Purcell.	Wichello.
Cole.	Handel.	Ramondou.	Anth. Young.

**Printed for John Osborn at the Golden Ball in Paternoster
Row.**

Source: *London Country Journal*, 14/12/1734.

According to Holman (2013), Geminiani drew almost the entire repertoire of *Rules for Playing in a True Taste* and *A Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick* from the collection assembled in *Orpheus Caledonius* (mainly from the expanded second edition)⁸. Of the sixteen compositions, five are attributed to Rizzio: *Ann thou were my ain Thing*, *The Lass of Peaty's Mill &c.*, *O Bessy Bell &c.*, *Bush aboon Traquair*, and *Auld Bob Morrice*⁹. Of these, the first two respectively open the collection of pieces in each of the treatises.

If Jean-Baptiste Lully represents the exemplary figure of French music, Francesco Geminiani positions David Rizzio as the first authoritative model of British music – as can be observed in the continuation of the preface to *A Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick*:

[...] of these which stands highest in Reputation, or deserves to stand highest, is none of my Business to pronounce: But when I

⁸ Only three pieces – *What shall I do to shew how much I love her* (Purcell), *An irish Tune* and *An English Tune* (anonymous) – are not found in the repository.

⁹ In *Orpheus Caledonius*: *Ann thou were my Ain thing*, *The Lass of Peaty's Mill*, *Bessy Bell*, *The Boosh aboon Traquair* e *Auld Rob Morris*.

consider, that Rizzio was foremost in point of Time, that till then Melody was intirely rude and barbarous, and that he found Means at once to civilize and inspire it with all the native Gallantry of the SCOTISH Nation, I am inclinable to give him the Preference (Geminiani, 1749, pref.).

From this, it is possible to identify certain points of convergence between Rizzio, Lully, and Geminiani:

- Origin: all were Italian – an aspect reinforced by the record of Gio. Battista Lulli's baptismal name;
- Displacement: Lully settled in France; Rizzio passed through that country before definitively establishing himself in Scotland; and Geminiani, who lived in England, travelled and published sonatas, concertos, and treatises in several countries where his compatriots had already achieved renown;
- Influence: Lully consolidated the style of French music; Rizzio, that of English music. From them, Geminiani was able to emulate.

Recognizing Rizzio's quality and the admiration already mentioned, Geminiani thus presents himself as an emulator:

But Melody, tho' pleasing to All, seldom communicates the highest Degree of Pleasure; and it was owing to this Reflection, that I lately have undertaken to improve the Melody of Rizzio into Harmony, by converting some of his Air into two, three, and four Parts; and by making such Additions and Accompanymts to others as should give them all the Variety and Fullness required in a Concert (Geminiani, 1749, pref.).

Just as he had emulated Arcangelo Corelli in the orchestrations of the Op. 5 sonatas, Geminiani adopted the same strategy in his *didascalia*, expanding the horizon of possibilities for the compositions in their original state. Each traditional melody he worked on is re-elaborated as a sonata, trio sonata, or song with orchestral accompaniment. The selection was not random: in addition to the pieces attributed to Rizzio, it also includes anonymous traditional instrumental compositions (one Irish and one English), a melody by Purcell, and others taken

from Thomson (1733)¹⁰. Such a procedure corresponded to a well-established practice in England, as demonstrated by the numerous transcriptions of his sonatas, including those made by his own students, among them Charles Avison (1709-1770).

3 Emulation in the musical examples of *Rules for Playing in a True Taste* (c. 1748)

The “improvement” of language in Geminiani’s emulative approach can be easily identified in the opening melody of *Rules for Playing in a True Taste*: Ann thou were my ain Thing. Originally (Fig. 2), it is a strophic and symmetrical song – sixteen measures divided into two eight-bar sections, each musical phrase thus subdivided into four – attributed to Rizzio. Taken from *Orpheus Caledonius* (1733), Geminiani retains the same textual structure but develops a distinct variation for each repetition indicated in the source.

¹⁰ Despite the expansion of the repertoire in the second edition (1733) of *Orpheus Caledonius*, the melodies curiously display fewer ornamentations, as well as simplifications in the basso continuo, when compared to the first (1726). This factor may have been considered by Geminiani as a valid argument to demonstrate his intentions of surpassing.

Figure 2. Rizzio, *Ann thou were my Ain thing*.

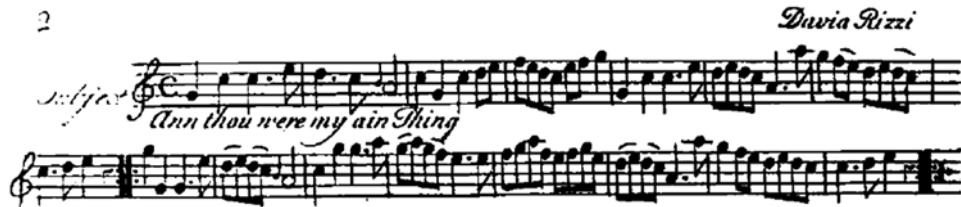


Source: Thomson (1733).

The project may be discerned by observing the exposition of the theme, indicated as *subject* in the score (Fig. 3). Here, Geminiani presents it as raw material to be worked out. With the exception of two upper appoggiaturas (bars 2 and 10) and eight slurs (bars 7, 10, 12, and 14), the notes are set without any other sign of ornamentation or articulation. Nor is there any indication of dynamics or suggestions of fingering for the violinist's left hand. Perhaps this represents the inherent quality in Rizzio, as observed in *A Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick*, constituting one of the starting points for emulation. Curiously, there is

also no continuo line - an indication that Geminiani would elaborate a new one for each section.

Figure 3. Geminiani/Rizzio, *Ann thou were my Ain thing, Subject*.



Source: Geminiani (c. 1748).

Figure 4. Geminiani/Rizzio, *Ann thou were my Ain thing, Cantabile*.



Source: Geminiani (c. 1748).

From this, Geminiani's insertions may be observed. In the very first variation (*Cantabile*, Fig. 4), a variety of "good taste" devices are immediately apparent, according to the composer's own terminology. In the upper part, a collection of ornaments is distributed across every bar: in the first eight bars one finds the plain shake, turn'd shake, superior appoggiatura, inferior appoggiatura, holding the note, staccato, swelling the sound, diminishing the sound, forte, anticipation, separation, beat, and combinations thereof. In other words, within

only eight bars twelve of the fourteen¹¹ ornaments described in *A Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick* are presented, organized in a table (Fig. 5) in a manner analogous to Playford's procedure in *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick*. In the continuo, an equally inventive range of devices is employed: leaps in quavers or in combinations of quavers with two semiquavers; slurs; semiquaver passages (in ascending or descending scales and arpeggios); and even ornamentation.

Figure 5. Table of ornaments.



Source: Geminiani (1749).

¹¹ It is worth recalling Geminiani's position regarding vibrato, its notation, and its use. In *Rules for Playing in a True Taste* (c. 1748, pref.), he declares that he has omitted "the Mark of the Close Shake, which may be made on any Note whatsoever". In *A Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick* (1749, p. 3), he clarifies that "This cannot possibly be described by Notes as in former Examples. To perform it, you must press the Finger strongly upon the String of the Instrument, and move the Wrist in and out slowly and equally, when it is long continued swelling the Sound by Degrees, drawing the Bow nearer to the Bridge, and ending it very strong it may express Majesty, Dignity, &c. But making it shorter, lower and softer, it may denote Affliction, Fear, &c. and when it is made on short Notes, it only contributes to make their Sound more agreeable; and for this Reason it should be made use of as often as possible". This very same text was reproduced in *The Art of Playing on the Violin* (1751). Considering the ingenious context, guided by good taste, in which Geminiani is situated, statements such as "may be made on any Note whatsoever" or "it should be made use of as often as possible" therefore mean only when good taste so permits.

In the subsequent variations, Geminiani develops a variety of technical and stylistic resources. Among them are combinations of *agréments* (ornamentation in the French style) and *extempore ornamentation* (in the Italian style) (Fig. 6), as well as long sequences of semiquavers in a *moto perpetuo* character, both for the violin (Fig. 7) and for the bass (Fig. 8) – in the latter case with frequent alternations between the F and C clefs, a device which, as in his sonatas and concerti *grossi*, indicates changes of register. In some passages he even inserts a counterpoint line in the basso continuo, suggesting the combined use of harpsichord and cello (Fig. 9)¹² and constituting a sign of an emulative approach to Purcell's model.

Figure 6. Geminiani, *Ann thou were my Ain thing*, ornamentation.



Source: Geminiani (c. 1748).

Figure 7. Geminiani, *Ann thou were my Ain thing*, *moto perpetuo* in the upper part.



Source: Geminiani (c. 1748).

¹² The full title of the treatise is *Rules for playing in a true taste on the Violin German Flute Violoncello and Harpsicord particularly the Thorough Bass Exemplifyd in a Variety of Compositions on the Subjects of English, Scotch and Irish Tunes*.

Figure 8. Geminiani, *Ann thou were my Ain thing*, moto perpetuo in the lower part.



Source: Geminiani (c. 1748).

Figure 9. Geminiani, *Ann thou were my Ain thing*, thorough bass.



Source: Geminiani (c. 1748).

Indeed, the second melody of *Rules for Playing in a True Taste*, *What shall I do to shew how much I love her*, is attributed to Purcell. The choice may indicate that, after demonstrating his emulation of Rizzio in the harmonic–melodic development of the traditional repertory that he represents, the moment came to emulate English composers, with Purcell as the exemplary figure.

Geminiani seems then to have opted to emulate the style of consort music. In the first five variations he explores ornamental sophistication, displaying with exuberance both *extempore* improvisatory writing and the use of *agréments* in the upper voice. In the penultimate variation, he develops the continuo with a more vigorous and even extravagant character, in contrast to the presentation of the theme in the treble instrument, ornamented with restraint – possibly in allusion to the final variation of Corelli's Op. 5 No. 12 sonata. Having demonstrated his ability

to gather various styles within a single work, the final variation develops the sonority of the consort. With the elaboration of a counterpoint line in the bass and the indication *affetuoso*, Geminiani balances the functions of the three voices (Fig. 10).

Figure 10. Geminiani, *Ann thou were my Ain thing, Affetuoso*.



Source: Geminiani (c. 1748).

In *An Irish Tune and An English Tune*, Geminiani seems to emulate the genre of division-musick, whose model of authority is likewise Playford¹³. In the former, the last three variations privilege extended passages of quavers or semiquavers in place of Italian-style ornamentation – whereas the opening variations are marked by the abundant use of *agrément*s. The continuo, although not cast as a typical seventeenth-century ground bass, remains without further elaboration until the final variation, possibly in yet another reference to Corelli's Op. 5 No. 12 sonata, which would once again represent the synthesis of English, French, and Italian styles. Moreover, various instrumental devices are explored, and the style of writing comes significantly close to the examples found in Playford's *The Division-Violin* (1684) (Fig. 11).

¹³ In a sense, all the compositions of *Rules for Playing in a True Taste* and *A Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick* allude to division-musick, especially if we consider the rhetorical meaning of the term in its context. The style of writing in *An Irish Tune*, however, seems to be a direct reference to the proposed genre.

Figure 11. Geminiani, *An Irish tune, Legato e sciolto*.



Source: Geminiani (c.1748).

In the last three variations of *An English Tune*, Geminiani returns to the emulation of consort music, particularly in the form of the fantasia-suite. As in the melody attributed to Purcell, he develops two voices in the bass, balancing the functions performed by the resulting three voices. Furthermore, in the final two variations the composer includes specific interludes for solo harpsichord, which introduce the violin melody. With the continuo realized according to the precepts of *The Art of Accompaniment*¹⁴, the writing strongly recalls the sonority characteristic of the emulated genre (Fig. 12).

Figure 12. Geminiani, *An English tune, Andante*



Source: Geminiani (c.1748).

¹⁴ In the preface, he instructs that "*The Art of Accompaniment* consists in displaying Harmony, disposing the Chords, in a just Distribution of the Sounds whereof they consist, and in ordering them after a Manner, that may give the Ear the Pleasure of a continued and uninterrupted Melody" (Geminiani, 1756, pref.).

Geminiani's justification for his choice of repertoire refers not only to its quality or diversity but also – and above all – to the representativity that he perceived as necessary to fulfill his purpose of instructing his readers in good taste. According to Holman (2013, p. 213), the composer "seems to have been attracted to the repertory partly because of its 'Simplicity and Beauty', but also because of the opportunities for displaying good taste in ornamentation". In addition, he presents the music from varied perspectives of tempo, harmonic modulation, instrumentation, and compositional genres (consort, fantasia-suite, division-musick, and trio sonata). In this way, by combining the Italian, French, and English styles in such an elaborate manner, he offers us a stylistic amalgam representative of the cosmopolitan musical activity of that context. Beyond his great technical skill on the violin, the work carried out in the compositions of these treatises also allowed Geminiani to manifest an intellectual virtuosity, in line with practices already common in the seventeenth century, as described by Roger North (1728) and Rebecca Herissone (2018).

4 Emulation and *Varietas*

The concept of variety (*varietas*), set forth by Geminiani, was in vogue in eighteenth-century England. In *The Art of Musick* (1740), the German-born London resident John Frederick Lampe (1702/1703-1751) states:

By repeating the same Species and Manner of Modulation, and its Melodies too often, let it be ever so pleasing in its Nature, without some new Variety in the Parts, it tires for want of fresh Entertainment; so that we should take care no oftner then till the Mind has received a sufficient Impression. A good Management of the necessary Varieties of Sounds so as to fill and not cloy the Ear, and to shew their Force and Beauty, will be a convincing Proof of the Master's Ability and Strength of Genius (Lampe, 1740, p. 47).

Geminiani, similarly, argues:

Even in common Speech a Difference of Tone gives the same Word a different Meaning. And with regard to musical Performances, Experience has shewn that the Imagination of the Hearer is in general so much at the Disposal of the Master that by the Help of Variations, Movements, Intervals and Modulation he may almost stamp what Impression on the Mind he pleases (Geminiani, 1749, p. 3-4).

This ability to vary ingeniously is directly linked to good taste, which, for Lampe, requires work, experience, and fidelity to rules in order to be attained:

It has been endeavour'd to introduce new Expressions of Melody, call'd a *new style* and some have succeeded so well, as to gain the Name of Men of refin'd *Taste*, and by their Judgment and Delicacy of Expression have deserved it; but this is a Flight too high, to be generally attempted, for most commonly we find those who attempt it, leave Nature at such a Distance, as to be quite out of Sight of her, they grow giddy with their Fancies, and their Performances are without *Rule or Connection* (Lampe, 1740, p. 48).

Geminiani's aim, therefore, is to teach how to acquire and refine good taste through rules, thereby contributing to the consolidation of the style of English instrumental music – here, through his preceptive works. For him, variety is a concept intrinsically associated with emulation, as can already be observed in Quintilian (1921 [c. 35 d.C.], v. 2, p. 113-114):

The figures must neither be derived from poetry nor such as are contrary to current usage, though warranted by the authority of antiquity (for it is important that our language should be entirely normal), but should be designed to relieve tedium by their variety and should be frequently changed to relax the strain of attention. Thus we shall avoid repeating the same terminations and escape monotony of rhythm and a stereotyped turn of phrase. For the *statement of facts* lacks all the other allurements of style and, unless it is characterized by this kind of charm, will necessarily fall all flat.

Geminiani's approach as a preceptor of good taste is unique, both in the complexity of what he teaches and in the breadth of genres he emulates, demonstrating that his musical language develops under the aegis of what came to be called the "mixed tastes." Aware of this, he observes:

The Ingenious will discover, at the first View, that the present Work is wholly unlike both in Style and Manner: But then I hope they will discover also, that for the same Reason, it is likely to be so much the more useful; and so much the more entertaining in the Performance. I do not pretend to be the Inventor of either: other Composers of the highest Class have been Adventurers in the same Voyage; and none with more Success than the celebrated Corelli, as may be seen in his fifth Composition upon the *Aria della Follia di Spagna*. I have had the Pleasure of discoursing with him myself upon this Subject, and heard him acknowledge the Satisfaction he took in composing it, and the Value he set upon it (Geminiani, 1749, pref).

The reference to Corelli and to the Op. 5 No. 12 sonata, in addition to corroborating the hypothesis that Geminiani had mentioned it in the aforementioned works, supports the argument that the composer integrates him into his path of emulation - especially when he claims not to have "created" the style, but to have conquered it by surpassing the models listed in these treatises (Rizzio, Lully, and Corelli). Moreover, the author shows himself aligned with currents of thought in eighteenth-century England. Just as the philosopher Joseph Addison (2002 [1712]) recommends acquaintance with the works of the ancients, Geminiani declares, in the preface to the *Guida Armonica*:

The ancient Composers however, perfectly understood the Art of Modulation, as is evident from their Works: But it must be confessed, their Method of modulating was not altogether proper for Instrumental Musick. *B. Lulli, A. Corelli, and J. Bononcini*, were the first Improvers of Instrumental Musick; and had Genius and natural Abilities sufficient to draw from the Ancients, such a Variety of Modulation, as they judged sufficient to render their Compositions delightful and spirituous. But they are greatly mistaken who imagine that the vast Foundation of universal Harmony can be established upon the narrow and confined

Modulation of those Authors. If those Authors had introduced more of the Substance of the ancient Modulation into their Compositions, they would have had greater Variety in them, and consequently would have been more entertaining (Geminiani, 1756, pref).

In this sense, it is clear that Geminiani regarded his work as superior to that of Lully, Corelli, and Bononcini¹⁵. By recognizing the qualities of these masters, just as he had already done with Rizzio, the writer argued that he had succeeded in his emulation, seeking to demonstrate this throughout his *didascalia*. By bringing together the best of each with his own experience, he consolidated a new style. In *A Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick*, there is even a self-congratulatory tone with respect to his contributions to English music:

When I came first to *London*, which was Thirty-four Years ago, I found Musick in so thriving a State, that I had all the Reason imaginable to suppose the Growth would be suitable to the Excellency of the Soil. But I have lived to be most miserably disappointed; for tho' it cannot be said that there was any want of Encouragement, that Encouragement was ill bestow'd. The Hand was more considered than the Head; the Performance than the Composition; and hence it followed, that instead of labouring to cultivate a Taste, which seem'd to be all that was wanting, the Publick was content to nourish Insipidity. Architecture, on the contrary, at that Time was in a very deplorable State, and yet in the same Interval, it has risen to its Meridian under the Protection of a most noble and intelligent LORD; and under a Patronage yet more illustrious and sublime, **I have strong Reasons to flatter myself of seeing MUSICK do the same** (Geminiani, 1749, p. 4, our emphasis).

Holman (2013) demonstrates that the type of repertoire treated in the works was an object of particular admiration among the Italians, motivated by the legacy of Rizzio. Throughout the eighteenth century, numerous melodies and songs were

¹⁵ The Italian Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747) is cited as an *auctoritas* of vocal music. Invited by the Royal Academy of Music, he was in London for the first time in 1720. According to Lindgren (2004), he was extremely successful, and his operas were performed hundreds of times. He was also acclaimed in Paris.

revisited, transcribed, and rearranged. Yet, as the musicologist argues, Geminiani distinguishes himself by the high complexity of his proposal and, though a pioneer in such an exuberant and meticulous didactic approach, he knew how to combine multiple stylistic elements with an ancient and long-lived tradition, thereby establishing new paradigms of this language. After nearly five decades of concerts, publications, reprints, and interaction with dozens of composers and pupils on British soil, the “Road to Emulation” – both open and wide – was thus fulfilled in his activity as a preceptor.

5 Conclusion

Francesco Geminiani’s activity in the eighteenth-century British context certainly was not limited to his role as a violinist. Although his quality as a performer was validated throughout the decades he remained in England, his contributions in the fields of composition and musical teaching were equally relevant, disseminated, and valued.

The British capital was, at this time, the stage for discussions around the concept of taste. Thinkers such as North and Addison devoted reflections to the ideal of a national style, constructed from local traditions in dialogue with continental parameters. Inserted in this context, Geminiani traced his road to emulation in order to contribute to the consolidation of insular tastes.

In his didascalical *corpus*, elaborated in accordance with the English tradition established by John Playford, the writer selected, in *Rules for Playing in a True Taste* (c. 1748) and in *A Treatise of Good Taste in the Art of Musick* (1749), three authorities: David Rizzio, Arcangelo Corelli, and Jean-Baptiste Lully. Positioning himself as the new *auctoritas* in Britain, Geminiani sought to refine the prevailing musical tastes of the island. From the traditional repertoire drawn from *Orpheus Caledonius*, the most widespread repository of Scottish popular songs, he instructed good taste by means of a textual explanation of this concept, followed by guidelines for its acquisition and refinement, as well as its practical application to the repertoire.

By composing variations on these melodies, he worked with all the genres of instrumental music in circulation in England between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: consort, fantasia-suite, division-musick, trio sonata, and sonata. Thus, Geminiani synthesized and consolidated aspects of English instrumental music which, at that moment, constituted an amalgam of the three styles: English, Italian, and French.

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