Music Theory in Britain, 1500–1700: Critical Editions

ISAAC VOSSIUS'S DE POEMATUM CANTU ET VIRIBUS RHYTHMI, 1673

ON THE MUSIC OF POETRY AND POWER OF RHYTHM

Peter Martens

ROUTLEDGE

Isaac Vossius's De poematum cantu et viribus rhythmi, 1673

Dr. Peter Martens provides the first complete edited English translation of and commentary on Isaac Vossius's *De poematum cantu et viribus rythmi*, a late seventeenth-century work of Continental musical humanism, all the more interesting for being published in England and dedicated to royalist Henry Bennett, Duke of Arlington. This treatise plays an important but poorly understood role in the continued development of *rhythmopoeia*; Vossius continues the arguments of figures such as Vincenzo Galilei and Marin Mersenne – desiring to link linguistic rhythm, music, and the passions – by proposing a practical, if undemonstrated, method for doing so based on ancient poetic feet. This resuscitation of poetic feet in the service of affect is made explicit by Vossius but is undoubtedly more familiar to musicologists from Wolfgang Caspar Printz's 1696 *Phrynis Mitilenaeus* or Johann Mattheson's 1739 *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*. Vossius, or more correctly, *De poematum cantu*, was often cited during the century after its publication, and no modern treatment of *rhythmopoeia* seems complete without a citation or short excerpt from this work. There is little secondary literature that focuses on this treatise, but what does exist links this work directly to John Dryden's composition of his 1687 and 1697 St. Cecilia odes, and their musical settings by Giovanni Battista Draghi and Jeremiah Clarke, respectively. In Dean Mace and H. Neville Davies' debate over the extent of Vossius's influence on these works can be found a rich picture of the contentious issues surrounding text-setting and musical affect that so occupied a great many writers in late-seventeenth-century England. A full translation and accompanying discussion of Vossius's own sources and musical influences allows English-language students and scholars to access and study this work in the depth and to the degree it deserves.

Peter Martens is Professor of Music Theory at Texas Tech University and serves as Associate Dean for Faculty, Research and Creative Activity in the Talkington College of Visual & Performing Arts. Dr. Martens holds bachelor's degrees in music and classics from Lawrence University and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in the History and Theory of Music from the University of Chicago.

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

Isaac Vossius's De poematum cantu et viribus rhythmi, 1673

On the Music of Poetry and Power of Rhythm

Peter Martens

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2023
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-032-30593-6 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-30596-7 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-30582-8 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003305828

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

In memory of my father, whose dedication to language study and the art of translation continues to inspire.

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

Contents

	Series editor's preface	viii
	Acknowledgments	ix
1	Introductory essay	1
2	English translation: On the Singing of Poetry and the Powers of Rhythm	20
3	Original Latin text: De Poematum Cantu et Viribus Rythmi	117
	Index	186

Series editor's preface

The purpose of this series is to provide critical editions of music theory in Britain (primarily England, but also Scotland, Ireland, and Wales) from 1500 to 1700. By 'theory' is meant all sorts of writing about music, from textbooks aimed at the beginner to treatises written for a more sophisticated audience. These foundational texts have immense value in revealing attitudes, ways of thinking, and even vocabulary critical for understanding and analyzing music. They reveal beliefs about the power of music, its function in society and its role in education, and they furnish valuable information about performance practice and the context of performance. They are a window into musical culture every bit as important as the music itself.

The editions in this series present the text in its original form. That is, they retain original spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, as well as certain salient features of the type, for example the choice of font. A textual commentary in each volume offers an explication of difficult or unfamiliar terminology as well as suggested corrections of printing errors; the introduction situates the work and its author in a larger historical context.

Jessie Ann Owens
Professor of Music
Dean of Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies
University of California, Davis, USA

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Jessie Ann Owens, whose original recognition of the project's potential, and her patience since then, has made it possible. It would not have come to fruition, however, without Dr. Edward V. George, emeritus Professor of Classics at Texas Tech University, and thus the debt of gratitude owed and expressed here is indeed superlative. His guidance ran the gamut from translation philosophy to the identification of additional errors in the original Latin text to detailed scrutiny of the translation. Ed, thank you.

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

1 Introductory essay

Common Observation and Arcane Knowledge: Isaac Vossius's Recovery of the Past in *De poematum cantu et viribus rythmi* (*On the Singing of Poetry and the Powers of Rhythm*), 1673

Introduction

Among the fantastical races and creatures depicted in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Jonathan Swift singles out for particular satire a class of citizen among the Laputans, a people who lived on a floating island city and rule those on the earth beneath them. This subset of Laputan society is exceedingly learned, especially in the subjects of the ancient quadrivium: mathematics, geometry, astronomy, and music. Yet they are pompous, unhelpful to their fellow Laputans, and utterly incapable in the practical and pedestrian matters of daily life.

Swift's characterization of these overly educated persons resembles pictures of Isaac Vossius painted by his critics-qua-biographers. The two authors could not have met personally; the 22-year-old Swift relocated to England in late 1689, the same year of Vossius's February death in London.[1] The Laputan type, as it were, surely did not die with Vossius, however, and over a century later we find a rather Swiftian account of Vossius in Alexander Chalmers's *General Biographical Dictionary*. Chalmers's generally unflattering 1812 entry proves to be a significant source for factual detail on Vossius's life, a valuable digest of others' remarks on the man, and an engaging character study. Chalmers depicts Vossius as one who "spent his whole life in studying," and who

> understood almost all the languages in Europe, without being able to speak one of them well; who knew to the very bottom the genius and customs of antiquity, yet was an utter stranger to the manners of his own times. He

1 The connection is tantalizing, however; Swift's English benefactor and employer, Sir William Temple, in his 1690 "Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning" praises Vossius's work on the chronology of the Septuagint Bible.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003305828-1

> expressed himself in conversation as a man would have done in a commentary upon Juvenal or Petronius.[2]

While Vossius's preoccupations did overlap with those of the Laputans, whose sartorial embroidery showed planets, geometrical figures, and musical instruments, his areas of focus consisted of areas of study even more ephemeral to his own epoch: lands, cultures, and topics distant from late seventeenth-century Europe in chronology or geography or both. For Vossius, as for many thinkers in the few centuries that preceded him, ancient Greece and Rome were the paragon of literate civilization, providing the theoretical and ontological bases for emerging disciplines in what we now call the humanities and fine arts. But in his day, global exploration had opened new information corridors to Europeans, connecting scholars such as Vossius with far-off lands such as China, India, and the American West. Indeed, Vossius's appetite for the ancient European world, an appetite waning among many of his contemporaries, was only matched by the rapacity with which he sought out and consumed information on these novel exotic locales, especially China. To be fair, Sino-fanaticism was not uncommon among the intelligentsia of his day, but Vossius seems to have had a particularly bad case.[3] On this topic Chalmers opines that "he was . . . ready to swallow, without chewing, any extraordinary and wonderful thing, though ever so fabulous and impossible."[4]

While Vossius may have matched the Laputans in their inability to function normally in daily living, he had no difficulty expressing deep thoughts and opinions publicly; he seemingly wrote and spoke constantly. His career was that of an international polymath, holding institutional positions in Holland during the 1640s, and in Sweden as the librarian and Greek tutor to then-Protestant Queen Christina starting in 1648 – and the number and prestige of positions that he declined is as impressive as those he held. Equally impressive is Vossius's list of works, which is as long as the topics are diverse, with treatises on subjects ranging from Biblical exegesis, natural history, and philosophy, to the size and population of ancient Rome, the movement of the winds and seas, and music. Many of these works were written during his longest place of residency as an adult before his final relocation to England: The Hague, where he lived from 1655 to 1670. During the first five years of this stay, Vossius had the company of the exiled Charles II, who waited out the Protectorate there along with several royalists including nobleman Henry Bennet, later the Lord Arlington. Bennet immediately became a major figure in King Charles's Restoration government – Keeper of the Privy Purse in 1661 and Secretary of State in 1662 – and the eventual dedicatee of *De poematum cantu et viribus rythmi* in 1671. It is the strong connections forged at The Hague that facilitated

2 Alexander Chalmers, "Isaac Vossius," in *The General Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 30 (London, 1812), 437.

3 On Vossius's sometimes facile use of Chinese history, cf. William Poole, "Isaac Vossius, Robert Hooke, and the Early Royal Society's use of Sinology," unpublished essay (University of Oxford, 2008).

4 Chalmers, "Isaac Vossius," 437.

Vossius's invitation and relocation to London in 1670, when he was also made Doctor of Civil Law at Oxford. He was feted by the academic community as had been his father in 1629, notably by the Royal Society, to which he had been elected Fellow in 1664. Charles made him canon of Windsor in 1673, and from that point until his death in 1689 he remained in England.[5]

As we will see, Vossius's renown during his lifetime and in the two centuries after his death appears to have been due to a combination of his family name and his own publications and personality. But the presumed source for much of his own broad learning is the achievement for which he is arguably best remembered: the assembly of a library of nearly 5,000 books and manuscripts – a collection with a compelling and tortured history of its own – housed since the early eighteenth century at the University of Leiden.

In the shadow of Gerhard

Isaac Vossius was the seventh of nine children, born in 1618 to Gerhard Johann Vossius, a towering figure in theology, classical philology, and rhetoric during the first half of the seventeenth century. Raised in the Vossius home in Leiden – at that time a prosperous university and textile-producing Dutch city second in population only to Amsterdam – Isaac was immersed in a highly literary family culture steeped in the academic practices of historiography and exegesis. We catch a glimpse of home life in a 1641 letter to the 23-year-old Isaac from Swedish diplomat Harald Appelboom: "In my eyes your house is a temple in which your father is the oracle of all scholarship and where your brothers and you all participate as priests."[6] Whatever degree of hyperbole is involved in this encomium, it is evident that Isaac embraced the family trade, benefitting not only from his father's tutelage and example, but also from his reputation in the major European political centers of the day, which granted Isaac instant name recognition in, access to, and mobility between courts, universities, and governmental institutions.

Of course, such legacies are a blessing and curse. At age 45, with his father dead nearly 15 years, Vossius received a tidy sum and an offer of continued royal patronage in the form of a history professorship from Louis XIV; the official offer letter from the French Controller General of Finance, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, was likely one of many reminders to the adult Vossius that he was his father's son: "Every one knows, that you worthily follow the example of the famous Vossius your father; and that, having received from him a name which hath rendered him illustrious by his writings, you will preserve the glory of it by yours."[7] But to whatever extent Isaac benefited from his parentage during his lifetime, comparisons with Gerhard

5 For greater biographical detail cf. Thomas Seccombe and F. F. Blok (rev.), "Vossius, Isaac (1618–1689)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

6 Quoted in C. S. M. Rademaker, *Life and Work of Gerardus Joannes Vossius* (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1981), 277.

7 As quoted in Chalmers, "Isaac Vossius," 437. It is also worth noting that Isaac is the only one of Gerhard's four sons to have survived his father.

in the eighteenth century did not favor the son. The Trevoux *journalistes* provide an extensive posthumous comparison of the two men's characters as reflected in their respective writings:

> In the father, judgment prevails; in the son, imagination. . . . The father distrusts the bestfounded conjectures; the son loves nothing but conjectures, and those bold and daring: the father forms his opinions upon what he reads; the son conceives an opinion, and then reads. . . . The father's aim was to instruct; the son's to parade and make a noise: truth was the father's darling object; novelty the son's. . . . The father has written good books; the son has written curious books.[8]

De poematum cantu is surely one of Isaac Vossius's curious books, and one senses here and there in the work at least some evidence for the consistency with which Vossius came to be disparaged in this manner. But whatever direct observations might have lain behind the intellectually unflattering portraits by both Chalmers and the *journalistes*, we do well to bear in mind that neither of these sources is known for their tolerance toward contemporary philosophes whose worldly focus extended to Christian unbelief. Again Chalmers, citing remarks attributed to the English King: "Charles II who knew his character well, used to call him the strangest man in the world for 'there is nothing,' the king would say, 'which he refuses to believe, except the Bible.'"[9] Perhaps the most well-known anecdote regarding Vossius's skepticism in spiritual matters originates in Pierre des Maizeaux's 1711 biography of Charles de St. Évremond, a fellow expatriate with whom Vossius spent time while both were at the court of Windsor. On his deathbed Vossius is said by des Maizeaux to have eschewed the sacrament, requesting instead that the attending dean of Windsor "oblige the farmers to pay me what they owe me."[10]

The treatise

Notwithstanding critiques in matters of the soul and style of inquiry, Vossius, as well as the unique present work, cast a long shadow on the eighteenth century. *De poematum cantu*'s front matter provides as much detail as we can obtain regarding the origins of this 1673 publication. The extensive preface is postscripted "London, 1671," and as it sums up the argument of the main text, was most likely written later than the main body. The treatise's dedicatee, Lord Arlington, is referred to as a member of the Order of the Garter, an honor not bestowed on him until 1672, which suggests that Arlington perhaps had a hand in publishing the work, which earned him an *ex post facto*, but ante-dated, dedication. Three years after his 1670

8 Ibid., 437
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.

move to England, it appears that Vossius delivered *De poematum cantu* as an oral presentation to an Oxford audience at the Sheldonian Theater. The paper, entirely in Latin, was published anonymously in London, also in 1673; it is unlikely that Vossius wrote the entire treatise during his first year at Oxford, and thus much of the contents of *De poematum cantu* likely date from his years at The Hague.

Vossius's chief motivation for the work was his view that the procedure by which poetic text is set to music, or *rhythmopoeia*, dying as it were a slow death in musico-philosophical discourse during the seventeenth century, was in fact necessary if texted music were to have persuasive or emotional power, and further that it would disappear along with the seventeenth century if not actively resuscitated by musicians of the present day. To credit Vossius with giving life support to an increasingly bedridden philosophy from the oxygen tank of antiquity could be seen as damning with faint praise. Yet this treatise not only transmitted the basic tenets of *rhythmopoeia* into the next century – beginning with an understanding of textual meter in classical Greek poetry – but in so doing gathered together ancient and exotic sources for the education of his audience in a way that few, and possibly no other seventeenth-century writer, could have done.

Influences from the early seventeenth century

Apart from being well-traveled and therefore acquainted with contemporary musical practice, it is clear that Vossius was familiar with key developments in musical philosophy of the preceding 150 years. It is less clear whether or not he was aware of localized attempts to resurrect ancient Greek poetry in the service of modern music, such as Paris's late sixteenth-century Académie de Poésie et de Musique, a significant if short-lived realization of the founder Jean-Antoine de Baïf's explicit aim to revitalize French music with affect borne of the ancient poetic meters.[11] The resulting *musique mesurée* was published in Paris in the early decades of the seventeenth century. And while the text of *De poematum cantu* gives no evidence that its author was acquainted with the writings of various other sixteenth-century European salons and academies, Vossius's stated motivation is strikingly similar to that of Girolamo Mei, who wrote on the topic a century earlier.[12] Mei's mission is summarized by Claude Palisca: "to investigate why the music of the ancients had such powerful effects on its listeners while the music of modern times was impotent by comparison."[13] Even if unacquainted with these writings themselves, there is a clear and probable link between these efforts and Vossius, via the work of a well-known musico-intellectual figure of his father's generation, Marin Mersenne. Vossius borrows freely from Mersenne's 1636 *Harmonie Universelle* (without

11 Theories as articulated in Antoine de Baïf, *Etrenes de poezie Franzoeze an vers mezures* (Paris, 1574).

12 Girolamo Mei, *Come potesse tanto la musica appresso* gli antichi (unpublished, 1570s).

13 Claude Palisca, "Girolamo Mei: Mentor to the Florentine Camerata," *Musical Quarterly* 40/1 (1954): 8.

citation, 64) and, perhaps surprisingly, also references the personal correspondence of Mersenne and René Descartes (113).[14] At barely forty years after the letters were written, they provide an example of Vossius's remarkable access to the information of his time.

Vossius appears to adopt several general stances on which Mersenne and Descartes came to agree: 1) universal proportion cannot provide the sole organizing principle behind music, nor can it be the ultimate goal of musical expression; 2) the arousal of passions is the appropriate goal of a musical composition; 3) the passions are mental events separate from reason, and are stimulated by a mechanical response similar to sympathetic vibration; and 4) the composer/philosopher's task is, therefore, to discover the best way to influence or govern this mechanism.

Both Descartes and Mersenne seem to have had additional unique influences on Vossius as well, even if only as transmitters of earlier ideas. In his *Compendium musicae*, Descartes ascribes affective power to rhythm alone: "Time in music has such power that it can be pleasurable in itself; such is the case with the military drum." Specifically, a slow tempo induces "languor, sadness, fear, pride," while a quick tempo arouses the "faster emotions, such as joy, etc." Descartes continues by claiming that duple rhythms, the measures of which go by quickly, are less affective than triple meters, which the listener has more time to process.[15] Vossius would attempt to be more thorough, if no more systematic, than the young Descartes.

Mersenne, following the French Académie, had also elevated poetic rhythm in importance above the pitch material of music and stated that rhythms could be affective in and of themselves. Mersenne's *musique accentuelle* was the conceptual result. Its musical application, *musique rhythmique*, proved more difficult. Dean Mace sees this challenge present throughout French rhythmic thought in the first half of the seventeenth century: "Despite all the new French enthusiasm for the imagined power of rhythm we find in none of their theoretical writings an account of the detailed correspondence between certain feet and certain feelings. Allusions to the powers of rhythms are everywhere vague and general."[16] Indeed, while Mersenne can be credited with the *idea* that certain rhythmical patterns can have invariable effects on the passions independent of numerical proportion, he left this original rhythmic hypothesis unexplored by not proposing which particular rhythms could or would do so. These questions are precisely those that Vossius implicitly claims to answer in *De poematum cantu*. He was

14 And to return to the immediately previous point: Mersenne's 1623 *Quaestiones Celeberrimae in Genesim* (57) contains an account of Baïf's conceptually compatible project on behalf of *rhythmopoeia*, such that Vossius must have been either ignorant of this treatise and Baïf's work (seemingly unlikely), or that he did not deign to reference such an effort being undertaken on behalf of the French language, which he frequently disparages.

15 René Descartes, *Compendium of Music* (*Compendium musicae*, 1618), trans. Walter Robert (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1961), 14.

16 Dean T. Mace, "Musical Humanism, the Doctrine of Rhythmus, and the Saint Cecilia Odes of Dryden," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (1964): 284.

able to undertake this task because he was not conflicted about an idea which Mersenne seemed to retain throughout his life, despite dismissals by Descartes and Vincenzo Galilei, namely, the possibility of an absolute musical language. Although Vossius too leaves his boldest claims in this area undetailed, he buttressed the foundational importance of *rhythmopoeia* in music composition, and as we will see, thereby helped bequeath this area of study to the eighteenth century and beyond.

Main argument and its classical underpinnings

The reader need go no further than Vossius's first sentence in *De poematum cantu* to learn that his version of music history begins with poetry, or more precisely, that these two disciplines were not distinct in antiquity. Further, the ideal source of musical rhythm is ancient Greek poetry:

> Whatever pertains to the poetic arts ought to be drawn from the Greeks almost exclusively, since they refined this art both more thoroughly and felicitously than any other nation, and since they have left behind records from which we can learn how lofty were the heights to which this science was raised by them. (2)

Thus, his view of music is not grounded in ancient numerology or cosmology; the two passing references to "Pythagorean(s)" in the treatise touch on general affect and not proportion. Rather, as so many authors before and since, his takes as his springboard legends concerning music's influence:

> Those people who have some experience of the world, and who are not complete strangers to ancient histories, know how great is the power of meters in disturbing and settling affects, so that there is no need to confirm the fact by either examples or logic. (12)

The linkage to musical rhythm may already be sufficiently clear, but Vossius makes explicit the connection between ancient poetry and newer ideas about sympathetic vibration. After introducing the topic of identically-tuned vibrating strings, Vossius makes the connection in this way:

> If you strum one of them, the other one will also be heard, even though many other strings of varying tension are interspersed. . . . But if we perceive motions even in inanimate bodies of this kind, could anyone doubt that the same thing happens in our sense organs, especially since both reason and everyday examples manifest that very phenomenon? Is it not a common observation that if we see someone singing, weeping, dancing, or laughing, we experience an immediate urge to do the same, and not from an inscrutable power, as most people think, but somehow driven by the very nature and similitude of the movements, which is so dynamic that we can scarcely

> see someone yawn without being compelled to do likewise?[17] But if the power of those movements, which so emanate from raw and simple nature that they forcefully affect not only humans and other living things but even inanimate bodies as well, is so manifest, I think no one will deny that the influence of rhythmic movements is yet far greater. The power of these movements is so great that everywhere they signify something beyond voice and sound, and in truth they arouse much greater emotions than any voice or any oration could. (64–65)

But Vossius spends far more of *De poematum cantu* framing his argument with evidence from the ancient world than he does exploring these mechanistic models from his own century. His predilection for an imagined "Golden Age" of Greek poetry is abundantly clear, an epoch which predates his primary source texts, which in turn are the "monuments" from which he draws much of his material. His oldest primary source, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, was a Greek rhetorician writing in the first century BCE, who was already complaining that the modern music of his time had lost the force of ancient music.[18] Anti-modern sentiment is likewise heard in another work frequently cited by Vossius, the *Institutio Oratoria* by Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, a Roman author writing ca. 60–80 CE (hereafter Quintilian).[19] Quintilian follows the Aristoxenian division of music into rhythm and melody, and the close link between musical rhythm, poetry, and the performance thereof is clear from the following passage in the pedagogically-oriented first volume: "the poets should be read by our future orator. But can they be read without some knowledge of music?"[20]

Later, in Chapter 10 of volume I, Quintilian outlines a complete curriculum for young students of rhetoric. Claiming that the art of letters and music were once united, he sees music as an indispensable part of the ideal orator's training, but

> The music which I desire to see taught is not our modern music, which has been emasculated by the lascivious melodies of our effeminate [theatrical] stage and has to no small extent destroyed such manly vigor as we still possessed. . . . I will have none of your psalteries and viols, that are unfit even for the use of a modest girl, but give me the knowledge of the principles of music which have the power to excite or assuage the full range of affections.[21]

17 These sentences on "social" sympathetic vibration are a close paraphrase of Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, Parten. IV, Prop. XVII, 374–375.

18 Dionysius of Halicarnassus (c. 60–c. 7 BCE), *On Literary Composition*.

19 Quintilian had also been one of Gerhard Vossius's favorite authors on rhetoric. In fact, Gerhard titled one of his own works *Institutiones Oratoriae*.

20 M. Fabius *Quintilianus, Institutio Oratoria*, trans. H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 29.

21 Ibid., 175.

Quintilian goes on to list the affective characteristics of several specific feet (see Table 1.1, second column). Vossius's contribution was to borrow the idea that each poetic foot has its own particular affect, and to posit these relationships as the answer to Mersenne's unexplored hypothesis: that poetic feet themselves are the primary force behind his (and his century's) preoccupation with musical affect. As Vossius argues, however, since the true art of composing text for musical setting – focusing on poetic feet – had been lost for many centuries, no music during that period had truly aroused the passions (21).

In what is perhaps itself a rhetorical move, Vossius comes to the crux of his argument at the exact center of *De poematum cantu*. Like Quintilian, he lists the affect of individual poetic feet, also shown in Table 1.1. Yet it is immediately apparent that Vossius's list is not copied from Quintilian. His is a more complete list, and most of his affects do not correspond exactly to those of Quintilian; on the affect of the dactyl in particular the two are in complete disagreement. After this presentation of individual feet, Vossius sums up: "Finally, however many feet we consider, whether they be simple or complex, we see a unique force and property in each one, to such an extent that no affect whatsoever can be described whose image these feet cannot represent." (74) This is Vossius's grandest claim for rhythm – that, when used correctly, poetic feet in and of themselves are bearers of meaning to the human spirit.

Thus, in this main argument, as in his treatment of vocal ornamentation, flute performance and construction, pipe organ construction, dancing, or frets on stringed instruments, Vossius is solidly an "ancient," and he conjures endless variety in expressing that the modern condition is degraded. This attitude comes through even during his occasional comparisons between modern European musical practices, where his critique is fairly balanced – for example, seeming to anticipate the principal language- and rhythm-based flaws used by both sides in the mid-eighteenth-century *Querelle des Bouffons*. In similar fashion, he is equally dismissive of Galileo Galilei and Descartes, and even where the latter disagrees with the former the critique is critiqued as not quite on point. All the while, even when agreeing with these earlier modern writers on some small points, he discounts their body of work for neglecting what was his main concern: rhythm.

But it remains true that Vossius's particular adaptation of his classical sources would not have been possible without the influence of his own century. Not that he was the first seventeenth-century author to transfer ideas from classical oratory to music; one author in particular from early in the century can be seen to have paved the way for Vossius's systematization of poetic feet. Joachim Burmeister's 1606 *Musica Poetica* was to its date the most systematic treatment of classical rhetoric in the service of music, taking lists of rhetorical figures from classical authors and equating each with a characteristic gesture from sixteenth-century polyphony. Burmeister's musical figures are generally of a larger scale than metrical feet, however, and his exposition of figures is in the service of the stylistic mechanics of *musica poetica* (improvised or written composition), rather than on the affect that might be produced by them. Both approaches have classical rhetoric at their root; Burmeister focuses on the argument's construction, while Vossius, possibly

following Athanasius Kircher's 1650 *Musurgia Universalis* (uncited), focuses on rhetoric's ability to arouse the passions.

One of the challenges of approaching *De poematum cantu* is that the diversity of classical authors upon whom Vossius draws is matched by the number of digressions from his main argument – or perhaps better, by the number of antiquity-promoting accretions to his main argument.[22] The labeling and description of the Vitruvian water-organ (98ff.) is the clearest wholesale borrowing from an ancient author; Porphyry's *Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics*[23] in particular is frequently cited, either directly or obliquely via references to the statements of other authors that Porphyry pulls together in that work. Vossius's digest of material from Vitruvius,[24] Porphyry, and others warrants further detailed study in conjunction with his own copies of these texts, preserved in his library at the University of Leiden. Marginalia or peculiarities in his own manuscripts or editions could help to clarify his more impenetrable or currently unattributed observations. Finally, there are glimpses of Vossius's own proficiency with textual criticism, such as what appears to be a correction of his source text in a quote from the Περι Τονων (formerly attributed Arcadius, commonly called *De Accentibus*), a correction that was not made explicitly in scholarship on that text until the nineteenth century.[25]

Critical reception

The 1673 publication of *De poematum cantu* was immediately (and anonymously) reviewed in the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*. Unfortunately for us, this is not a critical review but simply a summary of the work. The success of the treatise's argument, in fact, is left "to the judicious to determine."[26] In one of the few editorial comments, the author does explain the treatise's focus on musical rhythm to the exclusion of harmony by stating that "he [Vossius] acknowledges that the Moderns have largely handled it [harmony]."[27]

Reviews, citations, and adaptations followed Vossius's death, even though the anonymously published treatise gradually became unmoored from its author. Roger North, a politician, lawyer, and amateur musician of the next generation, leaves us the initial extant (though unpublished) critique from ca. 1700. Not one to mince words, North states "the author of this charg [*De poematum cantu*], writes of the moderne musick, with as much ignorance as ever yet abased a subject in print,

22 One could switch the figure/ground relationship implied here, however, and claim that Vossius's overall argument in this treatise was in fact a general championing of the ancient world, with text and music simply acting as specific foregrounded examples.

23 Late third century CE.

24 Marcus Vitruvius Pollo, fl. first century BCE, whose principle work *De architectura* is far broader in scope than its title might suggest.

25 See fn 68 in Latin text.

26 *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 8/93 (April 21, 1673): 6024.

27 Ibid.