THE FALSE CONSONANCES OF MUSICK
BY NICOLA MATTEIS
SELECTED EXAMPLES

William F. Long
Introduction

Nicola Matteis was a 17\textsuperscript{th} century violinist and guitarist who settled in London in 1672. His text, \textit{THE FALSE CONSONANCES OF MUSIC OR INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PLAYING A TRUE BASSE UPON THE GUITARRE...} teaches how to realize a figured bass on the instrument now known as the “baroque guitar.” It was published in Italian in 1680 and in English two years later.

The baroque guitar is in appearance similar to the modern classical guitar (see Watteau’s sketch on the title page) but is rather smaller with 9 or 10 strings arranged pair-wise into 5 “courses.” The tuning of the baroque guitar is similar to that of the classical guitar—give or take the occasional octave. The lowest two courses of the baroque guitar are tuned an octave higher than on the classical guitar, a so-called “re-entrant tuning” reminiscent of that of the ukulele. Sometimes one of the strings of one or both of these lowest courses was tuned down an octave. The tuning Matteis used is shown below, but his instructions should work for any of the common tuning variants.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{baroque_guitar_tuning}
\caption{Baroque guitar tuning}
\end{figure}

Classical guitarists are accustomed to using mensural notation, all the notes being placed on a treble staff, sounding an octave lower than notated. But in folk and popular music tablature notation is common. Tablature tells the guitarist which strings to pluck and which frets to stop. Sometimes tablature includes additional information about note duration, slurs, and special effects. Tablature inevitably produces ambiguities, but so does mensural notation. In popular music publications nowadays, the two are often combined to give a clearer idea of the execution of the music.

In Matteis’ time, tablature was the rule for solo music on fretted instruments. Continuo players, however, had to learn to read a figured bass from mensural notation and to supply appropriate chords. Matteis bridged the gap between solo performance and accompaniment by showing the figured bass and the corresponding accompaniment in tablature format. Of special interest is \textit{THE SECOND PART} of Matteis’ book since it provides many practical examples of figured bass realization in various time signatures, styles and keys.

The following pages consist mainly of examples selected from \textit{THE SECOND PART}. In them I’ve rendered Matteis’ tablature into modern form with the help of Finale notation software.
The tablature symbols will be familiar to modern guitarists with a few exceptions:

1. The five strings are represented by the five lines on the TAB staff. The highest course, the E string or strings, is represented by the top line, the B string course is represented by the 2nd line down, and so forth.
2. Consistent with 17th century practice, the fret positions are indicated by letters, \textit{a} being an open string, \textit{b} a string stopped at the 1st fret, \textit{c} a string stopped at the 2nd fret, etc. The letter \textit{j} is omitted since it wasn’t used in the 17th century.
3. Up and down arrows $\uparrow$ $\downarrow$ below the tab staff indicate the direction of a strummed chord. A down arrow $\downarrow$ means to strum toward the floor. In mensural notation this would correspond to an arpeggio going \textit{upward}. An up arrow $\uparrow$ means to strum away from the floor, a \textit{downward} arpeggio in mensural notation. Note, then, that “up” and “down” are different for the right and left hands. Go figure. And it’s even worse if you take into account the re-entrant tunings and octave doublings in the courses.
4. A right parenthesis $)$ after a note means a trill on that note. In Matteis’ realizations this is invariably a cadential trill, and should start from the upper note.
5. Ordinarily, tablature notation tells when a note starts, but it is left to the performer to decide how long to hold the note. A right slash / behind a note, however, indicates that that note is to be sustained, though it gives no idea how long the note should be sustained.

Above the tablature notation I’ve placed a “mensuralized” version of the tablature calculated by Finale. There is no attempt to work out the voice leading in this version, and the notes won’t sound exactly like the notation looks because of the re-entrant tuning. Nonetheless, it makes it easy to see how Matteis’ realized the figures, and a classical guitarist playing the baroque guitar from this version will pretty much get the music right.

When I’m quoting Matteis’ original text I’ll use a \textit{calligraphy font} reminiscent of the typeface Matteis used. Curiously, Matteis’ English translation includes a good deal of Italian, especially with musical examples. I have presented Matteis’ text just as I found it, orthographic eccentricities and all. My own contributions are in the Times font.

Occasional notes have been changed to correct obvious errors. These are indicated with square brackets, [ ].

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Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 28
Ordinariamente quando il basso camina di crome à deue dar l'accompagnamento, esempio.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 30
Quando il basso cominasse assai ueloce, no è necessario dar l'accompagnamento tanto souante ma solo all' prima delle quattro.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 31
Le seste che camminano più adagio, è necessario darci tutti di accompagnamenti, Esempio.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 34
Caminar di feste nelle compositioni sono assai gradeuole all' udito,

**Esempio.**

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 35
Quando trouate delle note d'una battuta l'una quanti colpi douete dare.

Esemplio.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 36
Molte settimane, è seste un dopo l'altro, sono assai gradevole all'udito.
Le semicrome come uadino toccate, esempio

Se andassero tanto presto, che la mano non potesse arriuare all' ora si deue toccar la prima della quattro cosi.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 39
Quando il basso camina di questa maniera in che luoc si deue dar l’accompagnamento, Esempio.
Per sonare un basso, con spirito, è vivacità Esempio

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 41
Quando il basso camina così, in che luogo uadi dato l’accompagnamento,
esempio.
Quando il basso camina ueloce, in che luoco uadi data
l'accompagnamento, esempio.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 43
Per accompagnar la trípla con buona maniera, Esempio.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 44
Quando si troua nella tripla una nota, con un punto in questa forma, come si deue fare. Esempio.

si d'a quella raschiata al punto quando il basso un adagio; che se andasse presto è necessario

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 45
In tempo binario all’nota, con il punto, è bene dalle volta à darci una batteria, cosi quando pero uadi adagio.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 46
When you meet with long notes either a measure or two it is very necessary to pinch ye notes as thus

The more quicker and the more clearer you play the better it will sett your tune of and so in all the notes of Musick you may stop any note you please with your left hand the right pinching the said strings...

The first second and third strings must be pincht with your Thum and the fourth with your fore finger and the fifth with your middle finger pinching out the full time of your note.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 47
That you may learn easily and perfectly, I have sett down a little example upon every Key of Musick that you may know in what place the natural Six ought to be given the aforesaid Sixt being markt with a Star.

Here, the "aforesaid Sixt" is actually indicated below by a (6) instead of by a star.

This example is very convenient upon any Instrument to play ye thorough basse in good order.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 48
Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 49a
In A.terza minore.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 49b
In A.terza maggiore.

Nicola Matteis — The False Consonances of Music, page 50a
In B.terza minore.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 50b
Nicola Matteis — The False Consonances of Music, page 51a
The 2nd note in measure 5 is an F in Matteis book.
Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 52a
Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 52b
In D.lasolè, terza minore.

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 53
D lasolre terza Maggiore.

Nicola Matteis — The False Consonances of Music, page 54a
Nicola Matteis — The False Consonances of Music, page 55a
Questo tuono non' è troppo usitato

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 55b
terza minore

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 56b
Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 57a
"Faut dîses à canto terza Minore"

Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 57b