

# Basso Continuo

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*Music 110: Baroque and Classical Music History*



*Pastore del Coro.*

INFE Ch'i bei crin d'oro Sciogliete lie te allo scherzar de venti E

The image shows a page of a musical score. On the left is a large, ornate initial letter 'N' containing a miniature illustration of a shepherd with a staff and sheep. To the right of the 'N' is the title 'Pastore del Coro.' followed by two staves of music. The first staff is a vocal line with lyrics underneath. The second staff is a basso continuo line with figured bass notation. The lyrics are 'INFE Ch'i bei crin d'oro Sciogliete lie te allo scherzar de venti E'. There are some markings above the second staff, including a '6' and a symbol resembling a crossed hammer.

# Basso Continuo

“Continuous Bass”

“Figured Bass”

1. Treble Melody
2. Bassline melody
3. Chordal “realization”

# Basso Continuo

Agostino Agazzari

*Del Sonare Sopra'l Basso*

*Con Tutti Li Stromenti*

*E Dell' Uso Loro Nel Conserto*

(1607)

# Basso Continuo

Agostino Agazzari

*Sounding above the bass*

*With all the instruments*

*And their use in the concerto*

(1607)

# Basso Continuo

## *Agazzari's Rules*

**FIRSTLY**, know counterpoint,  
be able to sing,  
feel proportion and the rhythm,  
know all the clefs/keys;  
know how to correctly resolve dissonances.

**SECONDLY**, Know how to play your instrument

**THIRDLY**, have a good ear to hear harmonic movement

# Basso Continuo

## *Agazzari's Rules*

Instrumental Roles in Realizing the Continuo

**Instruments of the Foundation**

*Strumenti da fondamento*

**Instruments of Ornamentation**

*Strumenti d'ornamento*

# Basso Continuo

## *Agazzari's Rules*

Instrumental Roles in Realizing the Continuo

### **Instruments of the Foundation**

*Strumenti da fondamento*

Play bass melody and realize harmonic support

### **Instruments of Ornamentation**

*Strumenti d'ornamento*

“Mingle with the voices in various ways  
for no other reason but to adorn and beautify”

# Basso Continuo

## *Agazzari's Rules*

Instrumental Roles in Realizing the Continuo

### **Instruments of the Foundation**

Organ, Harpsichord, Lute, Chitarrone, Theorbo, Harp

### **Instruments of Ornamentation**

Lute, Theorbo, Chitarrone, Harp,  
Lirone, Spinnet, Chitarrina, Violin, Pandora





Liuto

*Lute*



Tiorbo

*Theorbo*



# Chitarrone



“Chi-ta-rra” = Kithara

“o-ne” = big

Organo  
di Legno

*Chamber  
Organ*



Arpa  
*Harp*



# Lirone

“Li-ra” = lyre

“o-ne” = big



# Basso Continuo

## *Agazzari's Rules*

### **Instruments of the Foundation**

Play the bassline as it stands, and supporting the voices by occasionally doubling the bass in the lower octave

Play the harmony firmly, sonorous, and unbroken

Avoid the registers of the voices and do not double their parts

Play within a small compass and low down.

Do not ornament in a way that obscures the voice parts



# Basso Continuo

## *Agazzari's Rules*

### **Instruments of Ornamentation**

“The instruments [of ornamentation] mingle with the voices in various ways...for no other reason but to adorn and beautify... and ‘season’ the said *concerto*.”

The player ‘composes’ new parts and counterpoints over the bass.

The player must observe and regulate himself according to the particular limits of his instrument to be successful.

# Basso Continuo

## *Agazzari's Rules*

When in all together the two groups must “have a regard to one another, giving way to, and not interfering with each other. If there are many of them, they must each bide their own time, and not like sparrows, all playing at once, and each trying to make the most noise.

# Basso Continuo

## *Agazzari's Rules*

All chords are natural to the key, or accidental which may be indicated in the basso continuo figures

Accidentals in the figures refer to the third above the written note

Numbers refer to the inversion and chord type

Chord inversions—usually first inversion—not indicated by figures, May many times be recognized by an accidental in the bass part, but not always

# Basso Continuo

## *Agazzari's Rules*

The image displays a musical score for Basso Continuo, consisting of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and shows a sequence of chords. The lower staff is in bass clef and shows the corresponding figured bass notation. The figures are: b, #, 6, 6, 7, 6, 4, 4. The first two figures (b and #) have a sharp sign above them. The first two figures (6 and #) have a double bar line after the second figure. The first two figures (6 and #) have a double bar line after the second figure. The first two figures (6 and #) have a double bar line after the second figure.

Figure	Chord
b	F major
#	F# major
6	F major
6	F major
7	F major
6	F major
4	F major
4	F major

# Basso Continuo

## *Agazzari's Rules*



Mor io parto, e sento nel parti re Al penar al mo ri

The image shows a musical score for Basso Continuo. It features a decorative initial 'A' on the left. The score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The lower staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the staves: 'Mor io parto, e sento nel parti re Al penar al mo ri'. The lower staff includes figured bass notation with figures 7, 6, 6, 7, and 6.

# Basso Continuo

## *Agazzari's Rules*

**Rule 1 & 2.** Realization is in contrary motion to bassline

**Rule 3.** If the bass moves melodically (stepwise) in fast notes, the harmony remains stationary

**Rule 4.** If the bass motion is disjunct in fast notes, each note must be given its own harmony.

# Basso Continuo

## *Agazzari's Rules*



# Basso Continuo

The image shows a musical score for Basso Continuo. It consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, common time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "Mo - ve - te vi\_à pie - tà, mo - ve - te - vi à pie - tà". The middle staff is empty. The bottom staff is a bass line in bass clef, common time, with figured bass notation. The figures are: #, #, #, #, #, #, #, #.

Mo - ve - te vi\_à pie - tà, mo - ve - te - vi à pie - tà



# Basso Continuo

Uc - ci - di - mi, do - lo - re, uc - ci - di - mi, do - lo - re.

The image shows a musical score for a Basso Continuo and a voice part. The top staff is in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The bottom staff is in bass clef with a common time signature (C). The lyrics are written below the top staff. The music consists of two phrases: 'Uc - ci - di - mi, do - lo - re,' followed by 'uc - ci - di - mi, do - lo - re.' The bass line provides a simple harmonic accompaniment, primarily using whole notes and half notes.

# Basso Continuo

Uc - ci - di - mi, do-lo - re, uc - ci - di-mi, do-lo - re.

The image shows a musical score for a Basso Continuo and a vocal line. The vocal line is written in a treble clef with a common time signature (C). The lyrics are "Uc - ci - di - mi, do-lo - re, uc - ci - di-mi, do-lo - re." The Basso Continuo line is written in a bass clef with a common time signature (C). The score consists of two staves. The vocal line has a melodic line with a sharp sign on the final note of the second phrase. The Basso Continuo line has a bass line with a sharp sign on the second measure.

“Uccidimi, dolore” [Kill me, sadness]