

Kurtzer doch gründlicher Unterricht vom General-Baß

Brief Yet Fundamental Instruction in Thoroughbass

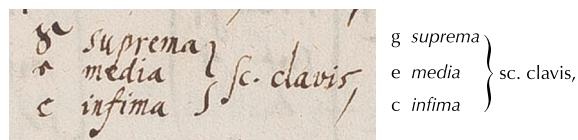
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[1] KURTZER DOCH GRÜNDLICHER UN- TERRICHT VOM GENERAL-BASS.

Fundamentum Baseos sive Basis Generalis ist Trias harmonica, welche in demselben überall dominiret, diese Trias aber bestehet in dreyen sonis, welche zusammen eine qvintam mit ihrer eingefasten tertia machen, und können diese als {c, e, g} tres soni füglich also genennet werden und unterscheiden



Unter diesen gehöret die *infima* dem Bass ei-
gentlich zu, zuweilen findet sich auch wol die
media in demselbigen videlicet in sextis gar
selten die *suprema*, als

BRIEF YET FUNDAMENTAL INSTRUCTION IN THOROUGHBASS

The foundation of the bass, or thoroughbass, is the *trias harmonica*, which predominates everywhere therein. But this *trias* consists of three pitches, which are together a fifth and the third contained within it. One can appropriately call the three pitches {c, e, g} as follows:

Of these [above pitches], the *infima* belongs in the bass. Occasionally the *media* is also found in the bass, resulting in a sixth. The *suprema* is seldom found in the bass, as shown:¹

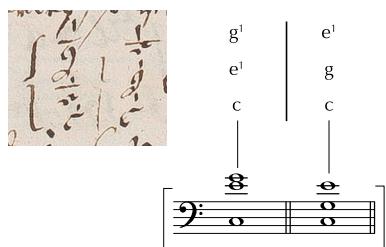
c¹ infima
g suprema
e media

media e⁽¹⁾ d⁽¹⁾ supr.
infima c⁽¹⁾ h med.
suprema g g inf.

[Bass clef: 8/8 time signature: Tablature staff with four vertical stems]

¹ The example below implies that the *suprema* may only be placed in the bass in the context of 6/4 re-
solving to 5/3. Note that the tablature in the two right-hand columns erroneously places all pitches in
the same octave.

Und ob zwar diese Trias nicht allein in sonis proximis, sondern auch in remotis kan gegriffen werden, so ists eben das, siqvidem de Octavis idem est judicium, als:



et c[etera] nur daß darbey zumerken daß die soni triades [nicht] gar zu weit von einander zusetzen, ne pp [proportionum] nimium hiatum, vel nimiam earundem [eandem?] distan- tiam omnis pereat gratia harmoniae [damit nicht sämtliche Annehmlichkeit in der Harmo- nie einem zu großen Auseinanderklaffen der Proportionen und einer zu großen Distanz der- selben zum Opfer fällt]. Darüm [2] denn wol zugelaßen wirdt dieselbe zu augiren, od[er] multipliciren sond[e]rli[ch] die infimam u[nd] supremam zuweilen auch wol die medium alß

And even if this *trias* is played not in close but in spread position, this does not make a difference, because transposition by an octave does not change the function of the pitches, as shown:

etc. One only has to note that the pitches of the trias are not set too far from one another, so that an excessive distance may not destroy the gracefulness of the harmony. Thus, one is allowed to double, or multiply the harmony, especially the *infimam* and *supremam*, occasionally also the *medium*, as shown:

wenn dem na[ch] im General Bass eine notula schle[ch]t stehet, und [nicht]s darüber gezei[ch]net ist, so wird dießelbe vor die infima triadis gehalten, u[nd] wird darzu ihre natürli[ch]e qvinta (suprema et media]) gegriffen, entwed[er] in sonis proximis vel remotis et [cetera] alß

[3]

g e¹ g¹ g¹
e vel g vel e¹ vel auolius (?) e¹
[or] [or] e¹ c¹ etc.
c c c g
c c

Wenn aber etw[as] anderes darzu gegriffen werden alß



5 6

Allhier muß die notula in zwey Theil getheilet werden, zum ersten Theil gehöret die qvinta, zum andern die Sexta, wie auch in den vorhergehenden exempl[la] mit doppelten Zieffern zu sehen, als auch mit mehren, als:

3 4 3 4 e f e f
c

item mit doppelten Zahlen

When a note stands alone in thoroughbass and nothing is indicated above it, this note is taken as the *infima* of the *triadis* and is played with its natural [diatonic] fifth (*suprema* and *media*), either in close or spread position, as shown:

But when something else should be played, as in

Here the bass note must be divided in two parts, the fifth belongs to the first part and the sixth to the other part, as can be seen in the previous examples with the double figure, as well as in the following example with multiple [figures]:

likewise with double figures [i.e. two vertical figures indicating simultaneous pitches]

[Offensichtlich fehlerhaft: Hier sollte jeweils »4« statt »5« stehen. Both should be »4« instead of »5.«]

The image shows two parts of a manuscript. The left part contains handwritten numbers (5, 6, 5, 6, 5) above a staff with bass clef and three pairs of notes. The right part shows a staff with bass clef and various note heads, with labels like 'g a g a g' and 'e f e f e' above it. Below these are two staves with bass clefs and note heads.

also auch mit anderer Zahl, als [9.] [8.] [7.] et c[etera]. Weilen aber in der Triade harmonica die media zuweilen ist vel natura-durior vel mollior; und wird solches mit diesen signis chromaticis in den general-Baß angedeutet, nemblich \flat . und \sharp , dieses Bedeutet tertiam Majorem, jenes aber tertiam minorem. Wo aber die Ziefern 3 oder gar [kleins] drüber gezeichnet ist, so wird diese gebährlich und gewöhnliche tertia, so von Natur, und secundum seriem sonorum sive notularum darzu kommen, da-selbsten zugegriffen, als:

The same applies to other figures like 9, 8, 7, etc. In the *trias harmonica* the *media* is sometimes major, sometimes minor. This is indicated by chromatic figures in thoroughbass, namely \flat and \sharp . The second means major third, the first, minor third. But where the figure 3 or no figure at all is indicated, then the proper and normal third is played as it would be naturally according to the scale [i.e. diatonically], as shown:

The image shows two parts of a manuscript. The left part contains handwritten numbers (a, f, d, f, a) above a staff with bass clef and three pairs of notes. The right part shows a staff with bass clef and note heads, with labels like 'tertia major' and 'tertia minor' above it. Below these are two staves with bass clefs and note heads.

gehören also die beide signa chromatica \flat . und \sharp allein zu der tertia, und diese tertias desto leichter zu wißen [4] muß man achtung haben auff den Baß, wie er gezeichnet sey, ob er nemlich Cantum durum oder mollem andeute, Ist er Cantus durus so hat er an gewissen Orten seine tertias, ist er aber mollis, so hat er auch gewisse tertias. Zum Exempel, wenn der Bassus notulam in g hat, und ist Cantus durus, so muß darzu das h, als die tertia dura seu major gegriffen werden, Ist aber der Cantus mollis, so wird zu dem G das b als 3tia mollis seu minor gegriffen et c[etera]. Es were denn, daß die beide signa \flat . und \sharp ein anders anzeigen als \sharp in molli-

The two chromatic figures, \flat and \sharp , only refer to the third. And in order to recognize this third more easily, one must take notice of how the bass is represented, namely, whether it indicates *cantus durum* or [*cantus*] *mollis*. If it is *cantus durus* then it has on certain places its thirds, but if it is *cantus mollis*, then it also has certain thirds. For example, when the bass note is *g* in *cantus durus*, then $b\sharp$, or the major third, must always be played. But if it is *cantus mollis*, then $b\flat$ is played to the *g* as a minor third, etc. But this does not apply when the signatures \flat and \sharp indicate a different constellation. In *mollis*, \sharp requires $b\sharp$ over *g*, or the major third, and

erfordert über dem g das h tertia major, u[nd] das b in duro über dem g das b tertiam minorem; Mit denen Sextis ists auch also beschaffen, wie-wol gut, daß man sonderl[ich] characteres darzu hette, wie sie in des h[errn] S[amuelis] Scheids Concerten zubefinden, da die Sexta minor mit den gewöhnlich[en] 6 angedeutet wird, die major aber mit diesem Charactere 6+, sind aber in allen drückereyen nicht zufinden, usus et auditus müst[en] hiebey das Beste thun, wie wol es beßer were, daß man alsobald für Augen hette, was man greffen solte, hette man desto weniger an der Meinunge des Autoris zuzweifeln; Follgen allebeide Systemata mit ihren tertias tam naturalib[us] qvam artificialib[us]

the b in *durus* requires b over the g, or the minor third. With sixths it works in the same manner; it would be good to have special figures, however, such as one finds in Samuel Scheidt's *Concerti*, where the minor sixth is indicated with the usual 6, and the major sixth with the figure 6+.² But these are not found in all printing shops. One's taste and ear are the best judges in this matter. It would be better, however, if one had directly before the eyes exactly what one should play, for one would not have to guess the composer's mind. Here follow both systems [*cantus durus* and *mollis*] with their thirds, both natural and artificial [diatonic and chromatic].

[Cantus durus]

a	h
F	G
b	b
G	G
c¹	c♯¹
A	A
d¹	d♯¹
H	H
e¹	e♯¹
C	C
f	d
E	E
g¹	e
G	F
g♯¹	f
A	G
a¹	g
a²	
h¹	

[Cantus mollis]

[‡]	[‡]
F	G
G	G
A	A
H	H
C	D
E	E
F	F
G	G

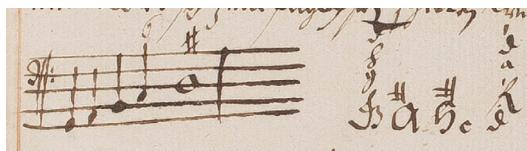
[5] N[ota] B[ene] wenn denn im General Bass für einer Noten dieses signum # stehet, wird darzu mehren theils eine sexta gegriffen, denn alsdenn hat der General Baß nicht infimam, sondern medium Triadis s[ive] (?) Systematis duri und in C Systematis mollis zu observiren[.]

N[ota] B[ene] wenn ein hauffen geschwinde Noten in gradib[us] auffeinander follgen, darf man zu einer ieglichen nicht eine besondere concordanz greffen, sondern zu der ersten und immittelst die andern laßen fürüber gehen, auch zuweilen zu der ersten und mittelst[en], und wo es sich zum füglichsten schicken will, als:

N.B. When the sign # appears in thoroughbass, a sixth is mostly played with it, for the thoroughbass [the bass voice] then does not have the *infimam*, but the *medium* of the *triadis*, whether in *cantus durus* or *mollis*.

N.B. When a series of quick, stepwise notes appear consecutively, one cannot play a chord on every note. Instead, one plays a chord on the first and lets the intervening note pass. And occasionally [one plays a chord] on the first and middle note, and wherever it is most appropriate, such as:

2 This may refer to Scheidt's *Pars prima concertuum sacrorum* (1622) or the *Geistliche Concerte* (4 vols., 1631–40).



6 ♯

d¹ [e¹] d¹
h [a] a
g [e] f[#]
G A H c d

[
6



6

d¹ e¹ e¹
h c¹ c¹
g f e d c

[
6

N[ota] B[ene] so wird auch eine Clausula oder Cadentia gewöhnlich angedeutet mit folgenden Ziefern [3][4][3][4] et c[etera] cætera praxis habet.

N.B. A *clausula* or cadence is usually indicated with the following figures: "3-4-3-4." What remains is shown by practice.³

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³ It is unclear if the treatise is intended to end here, or if it is an incomplete transcription of another work.