

# Angelo Michele Bartolotti – Prince of the Muses

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## 1. Introduction

Bartolotti's **Libro primo di chitarra spagnola** has no imprint but the dedication to the Florentine nobleman Duca [Jacopo] Salviati, Duke of Giuliano [1607-1672], a member of the legendary Medici family, is signed Florence, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1640. In 1628 Salviati had married Veronica Cibo who achieved some notoriety for ordering the murder of his mistress and placing her severed head in the Duke's dresser drawer. The Salviati coat-of-arms are incorporated into the frontispiece of the book. Bartolotti's **Secondo libro di chitarra** is dedicated on the title page to Queen Christina of Sweden. There is no letter of dedication and the book is undated but it was printed in Rome with official permission. Queen Christina arrived in Rome in December 1655, having abdicated on 6<sup>th</sup> June of the previous year (1654). The book was presumably printed after that date. The two books have been published together in facsimile by Minkoff.<sup>1</sup>

Like Foscari, Bartolotti was a lutenist and theorbo player as well as a guitarist. Although he is usually referred to today as Angelo Michele, he actually signs himself in the earlier book "Angiol: Michele". As he describes himself as "Bolognese" on the title page of his first book and "di Bologna" on the title page of his second, it is to be assumed that Bologna was the city of his birth. Because Italy was made up of numerous independent states, Italian composers often identified themselves in this way. There is however no evidence that he worked in Bologna or belonged to any "Bolognese School" of guitarists as has been suggested. Since his first book is signed from Florence and dedicated to a member of the Florentine aristocracy, he is more likely to have spent his early career in that city. It is clear from the introduction to **Libro primo** that he enjoyed or hoped to acquire Duca Salviati's patronage there as he writes in his letter

*I venture to present to Your Excellency the fruits of my genius although they are imperfect, in order to draw your attention to my burning desire to acquire your patronage, and to show the world how much I value your virtue and generosity. Your Excellency will find in this document various pieces for the Spanish guitar. These are dedicated to you with good reason, because it [the guitar] is a thing held dear by the Muses and even though it is not one of the most sublime of instruments, I have tried hard to render it harmonious. I trust therefore that in the same way that, as is well known, the Prince of the Muses did not think it inappropriate to woo the Forests with the sound of a humble bagpipe, your kindness will not disdain this product of my diligent study. May you receive my homage with pleasure, whilst I pray the Heavens to bestow on you endless happiness.*

The British Library's copy of **Libro primo** has a hand written note on the fly leaf

### *Dil Giulio Medici*

and on the title page there is the stamp of a previous library which owned it which reads

**MEDPALAT  
BIBL.CAES**

with the Medici coat of arms surmounted by a crown. This suggests that it previously belonged to a member of the Medici family and was housed in the Library of the Medici Palazzo in Florence. Today it is still in its original white leather binding with gold decorations. The British Library acquired it in 1880.

It seems that Giulio Medici also owned the lute manuscript **I-Fn Ms. Magl.XIX** which is dated 1635. This does not however include a piece for guitar on f.13v as stated by James Tyler<sup>2</sup>. Another manuscript in the Dolmetsch Library, Haslemere, **GB-Hadolmetsch Ms.II.C.23**, known as the "Medici Lute Manuscript" because it has the Medici coat of arms stamped on the first folio does however include on f.72r-v the first of Bartolotti's *passacaglie* and the opening bars of the second from his **Libro primo**, copied in a different hand from the rest of the manuscript, probably after 1640.

### **GB-Hadolmetsch Ms.II.C.23 - Opening bars of the *Passacaglie* from Bartolotti's *Libro primo*, p. 1**



Subsequently Bartolotti was amongst a group of Italian musicians and actors invited to the court of Queen Christina of Sweden. There are records of his employment there as a theorboist between 30<sup>th</sup> November 1652 and 12<sup>th</sup> July 1654.<sup>3</sup> Christina also loved French ballet and employed French musicians, including the singer Anne de la Barre, as well as English and German musicians. Bartolotti was therefore working in a cosmopolitan environment.

Christchurch College, Oxford possesses a manuscript, **GB-Och Ms. 377** which has a note on the cover reading

**Musica del Signor Angelo Micheli  
Uno de Musici della Capella  
De Reyna di Swecia  
Upsaliae Martii 21  
1653 a 2 et 3 voce**

Although it is not certain how the manuscript came to be in Oxford it is possible that it was brought there by Bulstrode Whitlocke, the English ambassador to Sweden in 1653. He entertained the Italian musicians to dinner at his residence in Uppsala on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1653 when they presented him with “a book of their songs”. A note on the fly leaf of the manuscript reads “Dal dono del Signor Angelo Michele” - “From the gift of Signor Angelo Micheli”. It is to be assumed that it originally belonged to Bartolotti and that he presented it to an English admirer, possibly Whitlocke. All the works in the manuscript are anonymous, but nine pieces are by Luigi Rossi, two by Antonio Cesti and one by Giacomo Carissimi, - the cantata “Sciolto havean dall’alte sponde”.<sup>4</sup>

After her abdication Christina made her way to Rome via Brussels and Innsbruck where she was received into the Roman Catholic church on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1655. Bartolotti seems to have followed in her wake as he was employed by the governor of the Tyrol, Archduke Ferdinand Karl between 1655-1656<sup>5</sup>. Having given up one throne, Christina quickly aspired to another – that of Naples which was under Spanish rule at the time. To further her cause she left Rome in the summer of 1656 and travelled to Paris to enlist the support of Mazarin, arriving there on 8<sup>th</sup> September. She remained in France – an unwanted guest – until May, 1658 when she was persuaded to return to Rome. If Bartolotti was part of her entourage, he may have decided his best option was to remain in France.

In any event he seems to have spent the later part of his life in the French capital. He probably took part in the first performance of Cavalli’s opera “Ercole amante” on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1662 as he is listed in the royal accounts for the first quarter of the year 1664 together with the other Italian musicians of the *Cabinet de*



*Sa Majesté* including the singer, Anna Bergerotti, who were involved. He was paid 450 livres.<sup>6</sup> In that year he also took part in the fifth *Entrée* to Molière's "Le Mariage forcé" accompanying Bergerotti and other singers in a "Concert espagnol". When the Italian troupe was dismissed in 1666, Bartolotti apparently entered the service of the Prince de Condé, Louis II de Bourbon, known as "le Grand Condé" (1621 – 1686)<sup>7</sup>. A leading light in the civil war known as the "Fronde", Condé was exiled after being defeated at the Battle of Dunkirk in 1658 but was re-instated in 1668. At court he was referred to as "Monsieur le Prince".

Bartolotti was highly esteemed as a theorbo player. In a letter dated May 1670, the Dutch scholar, Constantyn Huygens, mentions having heard "Angelo Michel" playing the theorbo in Paris at the house of Anna Bergerotti and regrets not having asked him for copies of the music<sup>8</sup>. Huygens was in Paris between 1661 and 1665. Two manuscripts which date from the 1660s include music for theorbo attributed to Bartolotti - **A : ETGoess Ms. XV 912-2277(1665)** includes 6 pieces and **A: Wn Mus. Ms. 17706 (c.1660)**, 10 pieces. During the 1660s he also wrote a book of instructions for continuo playing which, after circulating first in manuscript, was eventually published in 1669 by Ballard with the title **Table pour apprendre à toucher le théorbe sur la basse continuo**. His name appears on the title page as Angelo Michele Bartolomi. Although the title refers to the theorbo, the exercises are intended for the theorboed lute popular amongst players in France which did not have re-entrant first and second courses.

In the record books of the *Secrétariat de la Maison du Roi* (Louis XIV) there is an entry in January, 1682 recording that the **possessions** of a certain Italian "Miquelange" were assigned to one "*Launay, Garde de la Compagnie de Luxemburg, y servant depuis neuf ans*".<sup>9</sup> If this was Bartolotti, it is to be assumed that he had died some time previously. Under French law the possessions of aliens who died in France became the property of the King to dispose of as he saw fit. There are no references to Bartolotti after that date.<sup>10</sup>

In the *A Lettori* to his fourth guitar book, **Soauì concenti di sonate musicali** (1659) Granata includes Bartolotti's name in the list of composers whose music he accuses Corbetta of having plagiarized and there are certainly passages in Bartolotti's pieces which crop up in Corbetta's although this may not be intentional. It is interesting that although Sanz mentions Foscari, Kapsberger, Pellegrini, Granata and Corbetta in the Prologo to his **Instruccion de musica** (1674), he does not mention Bartolotti although this may be because Bartolotti has not included any detailed instructions in either of his books.<sup>11</sup>

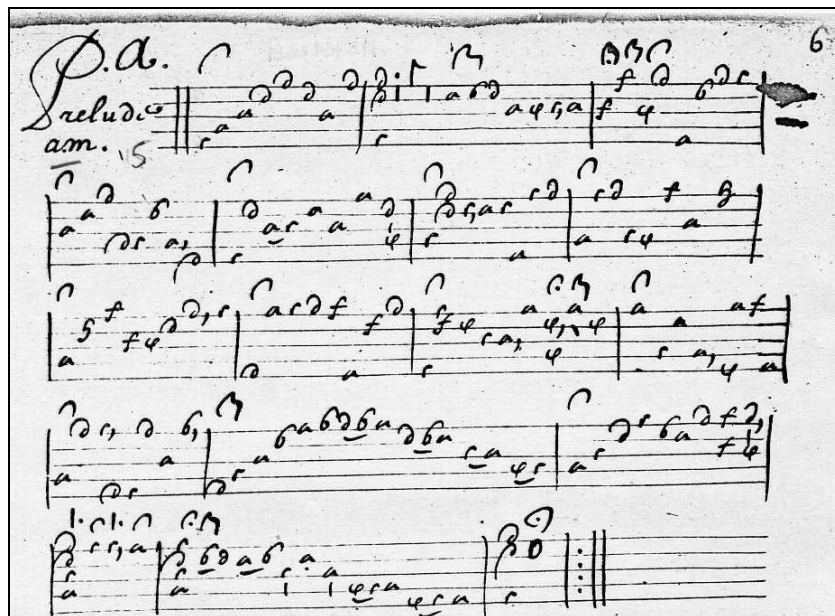
Although as far as we know Bartolotti did not publish any more guitar music, the music from his **Libro secondo** may have circulated quite widely in manuscript. The manuscript, **Pieces de guitarrre de differends auteurs**

recueillis par **Henry François de Gallot (GB:Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94)** which dates from the 1660s includes at least 13 pieces from this source, in some instances identifying the composer by his initials – **a.m.** In addition there are four preludes attributed to **a.m.** which may be by him.

### Pieces by Bartolotti in GB:Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94

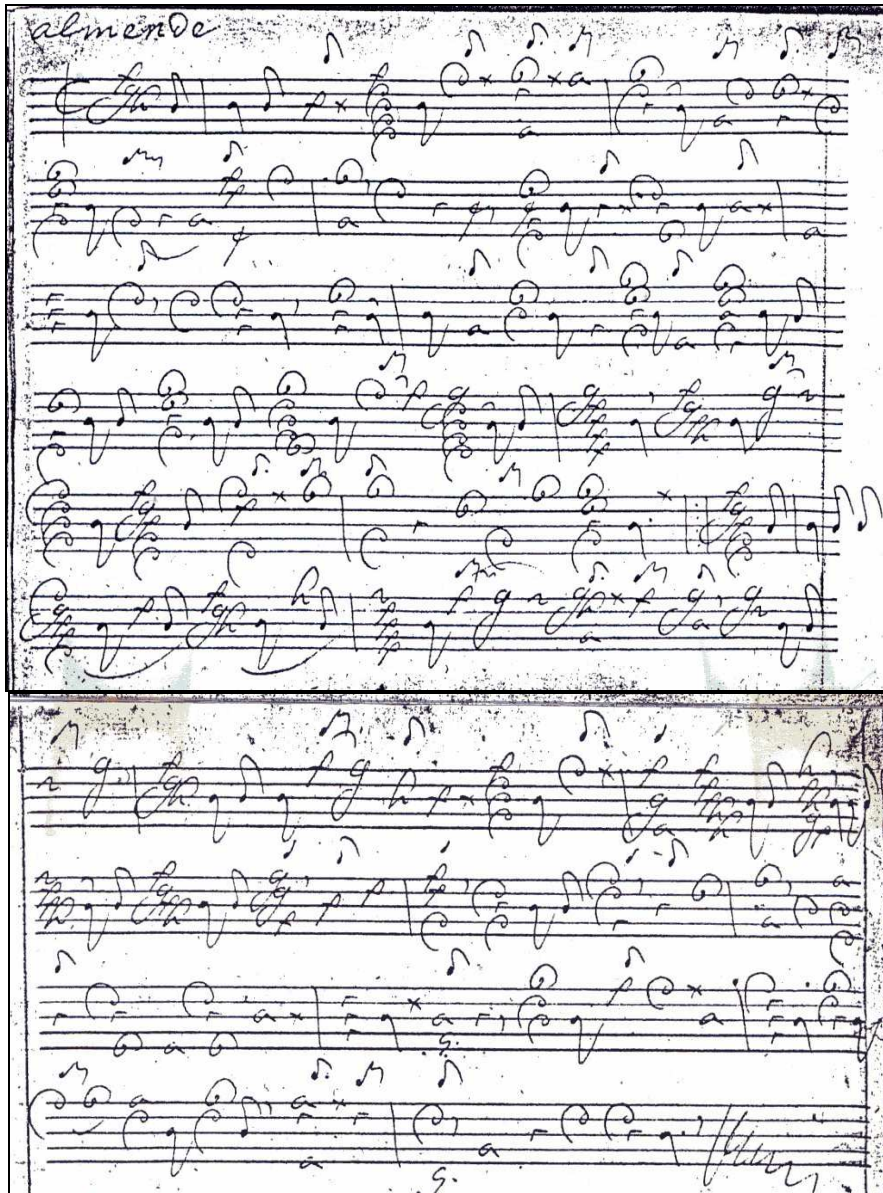
f.6	Prelude (1)	G major	a.m.		
f.7v	Allemande	G major		Book 2, p.18	
f.7v	Gigue	G major	a.m.	Book 2, p.15	
f.8	Courante	G major		Book 2, p.23	
f.8v	Ballet Chabottico	G major		Book 2, p.13	
f.12	Prelude	C major	a.m.		
f.13	Allemande	C major	a.m.	Book 2, p.30.	Abridged
f.13v	Gigue	C major		Book 2, p.28	
f.21	Prelude	D major	a.m.		
f.25	Prelude	A minor	a.m.	Book 2, p.54?	Opening similar
f.26	Allemande	A minor		Book 2, p.55	
f.27	Pasacail	A minor	a.m.	Book 2, p.62.	Abridged
f.30	Prelude	D minor	a.m.		
f.30v	Allemande	D minor		Book 2, p.70	
f.75	Prelude (1)	G minor		Book 2, p.57.	Varies
f.80v	Sarabande	G minor		Book 2, p.90.	Varies
f.80v	Passacaglie	G minor		Book 2, p.100	(first10 vars.)

### GB:Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94 f.6r – Prelud attributed to AM



Even more interesting, a manuscript of English provenance copied probably in the last decade of the seventeenth century includes the *Allemanda* in D minor found on p.70 of **Secondo libro** with a different Double. Clearly Bartolotti's music continued to be popular for many years after his death although there are some rather startling errors in this version which suggest that the copyist was somewhat inexperienced.

**Allemande in D minor (Secondo libro, p.70) copied into a late seventeenth-century manuscript of English provenance now privately owned**





The French manuscript, **F-Pn Ms.Vm. 7675** includes an Allemande in G major on p.79 and a Sarabande in A minor on p.72, both attributed to **Angelo Mikielo** who is often assumed to be Bartolotti. The manuscript also includes an unattributed Sarabande in G major on p.80. The manuscript **F-Pn Ms.Rés. 844** includes the same Allemande with the title "*Allemande du Juif*" on p.268 and the Sarabande in G major on p.286 with the title "*Sarabande d'Angelot*". Because several other pieces in these and other French manuscripts are described as "*du Juif*" the possibility that these might be by Bartolotti has been considered but has been shown to be very unlikely<sup>12</sup>.

Title	Key	F-Pn Ms. Vm. 7675	F-Pn Ms. Rés. 844
Allemande	G major	Allemande D'Angelo Mikielo, p.79	Allemande du juif, p.268
Sarabande	G major	Sarabande, p.80	Sarabande d'Angelot, p.286
Sarabande	A minor	Sarabande D'Angelo Mikielo, p.72	

#### **F- Pn Ms. Vm<sup>7675</sup>, f.79 Allemande by Angelo Mikielo**





The young English lutenist and guitarist, Bullen Reymes, who toured the continent in the 1630s, arrived in Turin on 6<sup>th</sup> October, 1633 where he remained until the end of the month. On the 8<sup>th</sup> he went to visit a Jew called **Sig. Angilo** who played the lute, and he heard him play again two days later. There is however no reason to suppose that this was Bartolotti. At least one of the pieces described as “*du Juif*” – the sarabande in **F:Pn Vm7675** (p.97) is attributed to Corbetta in another source and several of the other “*du Juif*” pieces are in a *scordatura* known as “*ton du Juif*”. The pieces in question are rather simple – certainly not of the quality we associate with Bartolotti’s work. The name Angelo Mikielo or Michaelangelo is a common Italian Christian name so that it is uncertain whether any of the the pieces are actually by Bartolotti.

**At the beginning of each of Bartolotti’s two books there are brief instructions to the player. These are translated with a commentary and musical examples in Sections 2 and 3. Section 4 examines Bartolotti’s use of *lettere tagliate*.**

## 2. Libro Primo di Chitarra Spagnola (1640)

The music in Bartolotti's **Libro primo di chitarra spagnola** comprises a series of *passacaglie* which start in the key of B flat minor and proceed in a circle of fifths through all the intervening keys back to B flat minor. These are followed by a *ciaccona* and six suites in C major, A minor, G minor, D major, B minor and D minor, each of which includes an *allemanda*, 2 *corrente* and a *sarabanda*. At the end there is a Follia. The music is notated in Italian tablature with *alfabeto* and both the music and the notation are still firmly rooted in *alfabeto* and its conventions. It is however barred regularly and the time signatures and note values are accurately indicated throughout. It therefore presents fewer problems than many guitar tablatures. Although there are occasionally ungainly sequences of chords and crude changes of harmony, the music overall is of a high standard and sadly has been almost entirely neglected in favour of that in the second book.

Compared to Foscarini, Bartolotti's instructions are brief and not always to the point.

### A LETTORI (1640)

The first point which he makes is quite clear -

*Note that when performing the present works, all that which is described below should be observed; that is - whenever a letter of Alfabeto is found, its stroke mark will be beside it. And the strokes are on the bottom line;*

What he has not mentioned is that there are also other chords notated in tablature with stroke marks beside them. But perhaps this is splitting hairs! Whether the chords are represented by *alfabeto* or notated in tablature, if they have a stroke mark beside them, they are strummed. If there is no stroke mark, which only occurs with chords notated in tablature, the chords will be played in lute style.

Bartolotti then goes on to say

*And when a letter is followed by a number, and then the stroke, the hand must be held firm if this is possible, so as to make the said number and to give its stroke, or if more than one in the form which it is written.*

This is somewhat ambiguous because Bartolotti has not made it clear whether the numbers which follow the chords are to be played as single notes, or whether they are to be incorporated into the chord. However, if this is read in

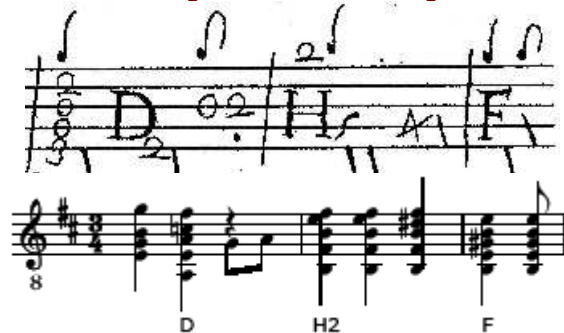
conjunction with the next part of the instructions in which he explains how single notes, or chords which are not to be strummed are notated, it does seem that they should be, or at least may be, included in the chord if this is practicable.

*And if there are no stroke marks, pluck in the manner indicated by the dots below the numbers. That is, where there is one dot, it must be played upwards with the first finger, and where there are two, it must be played upwards with the second. Where there is no dot, the stroke is played downwards with the thumb and where two numbers are found with the dots beside them they must be given upwards with the two fingers, the first and second.*

This is self-explanatory. Presumably where there are two numbers without dots beside them they are played with the thumb and a finger.

One thing which Bartolotti has failed to mention altogether - perhaps because he thought it was self-evident - is that notes are often inserted into standard *alfabeto* chords [rather than between them] to form 4 - 3 suspensions or other dissonances – a situation covered by Foscarini in his fifth rule. We can perhaps forgive him for that, as it is indeed fairly obvious how the following, and similar passages, should be played.

#### **Musical Example 1 – Corrente p. 65 b.21-23**



This example is interesting because as well as inserting a 4-3 suspension into Chord H2 at the cadence, Bartolotti has also indicated that an F sharp (played at the second fret) should be substituted for the open first course in Chord D, converting it from a standard A minor chord to a **minor seventh chord** on the second degree of the scale as the music modulates to E major. He amends *alfabeto* chords in this way in a number of places – saving himself the trouble of notating altered chords fully in tablature. This is both ingenious and backward looking. The tendency from then onwards is to use *alfabeto* only for the standard chords.

**Bartolotti seems to have been particularly interested in different types of right-hand technique and in theory he has a system in place which allows him**



to indicate very precisely what the right hand should be doing most of the time. In practice, being an ordinary mortal, he is not entirely consistent in the way that he uses it.

The most obvious problem is the inconsistent way in which he notates notes between chords which can only be played as single notes.

In Musical Example 2 he has notated the same thing differently at (a) and (b).

### Musical Example 2 – Allemanda p. 59 b.4-5 & 12-14

A. B.

The image shows two musical examples, A and B, illustrating different notations for chords and single notes. Example A shows a sequence of chords: C, H, D, and O. Example B shows a sequence of chords: C, H, K3, and C. The notation includes various symbols like '3 1 0' and '3 0' above the notes, and '3 3 1 2 1' below the notes. The chords are labeled C, H, D, O, and K3.

It is only possible to hold all the notes in Chord H and fret the auxiliary note at the third fret on the first course by using a fourth finger half *barré*. At [A] Bartolotti has indicated that this is to be played as a single note with the first finger of the right hand. At [B] he has put a stroke mark beside the note although, presumably, it is intended to be played in exactly the same way. Chord K3 which follows cannot be held whilst the note fretted at the fifth fret on the first course is played – and Bartolotti has correctly indicated that it should be played single note with the first finger of the right hand.

[As a matter of interest in [A] he has also introduced auxiliary notes into Chord D in bar 3 converting it in this context from an A minor chord into a first inversion diminished seventh chord on the leading note with a suspended fourth].

In Musical Example 3 the note at the third fret on the first course following Chord M3 could be included as the chord is repeated but that at the sixth fret in

the next bar cannot. Bartolotti has not made it clear that Chord M3 should be repeated on the first beat of the second full bar.

### Musical Example 3 – Corente p.60 b.12-15



However it is reasonable to assume that single notes should be played on both up-strokes as shown in the transcription.

In other places he is more precise in indicating how the music should be played. In Musical Example 4 neither of the auxiliary notes which follow Chord K2 can be included in the chord and he has clearly indicated that they should be played as single notes. He has also put in Chord K2 again on the second downbeat. It is therefore reasonable to assume that same motif in the previous example and that which occurs with Chord M5+ in Musical Example 5 below could also be played in this way.

### Musical Example 4 – Corente p. 64 b. 2-3



It is noteworthy that, unlike Foscari, Bartolotti never notates single notes on the upper courses between chords in a way that suggests that they should be played as down-strokes with the thumb.

It is important to recognize that single notes are sometimes marked to be played as single notes and sometimes marked as if they were to be strummed.

This is a notational inconsistency. Rather than indicating a lack of precision in specifying how many courses should be included in the strum, it represents a failure to distinguish clearly between the two styles of playing which occurs throughout the book and is common in other early guitar books. This does have further implications – it is possible that in some places Bartolotti is also inconsistent when notating passages in two parts which should be played in lute style - as we shall see.

### Open Courses – to include or not to include?

Like Foscarini, Bartolotti also says that the chords should only include the notes indicated by numbers in the tablature -

*In each and every place it should be noted that the stroke should only include those strings indicated by the numbers*

and like Foscarini he does not mention the fact that the open courses which will have to be included if the chord is strummed may not always be indicated. In practice Bartolotti does often, although not always, put in the zeros except in places where it is obvious that the open courses must be included if the chord is to be strummed. In Musical Example 5 he has put in the zeros in the chords marked [a] because otherwise it would not be clear that the open fifth course should be included, but not in the one marked [b] where it would not be possible to strum the chord unless the open second, third and fourth courses were included. (The last quaver note in the first bar is probably misprinted and should be C played at the eighth rather than the seventh fret; it can only be played whilst the chord is held using a fourth finger half *barré*).

#### Musical Example 5 – Corente p. 52 b.2-6



Nevertheless Bartolotti does not seem to have had a clear policy on this matter. In the second bar of Musical Example 6 he has put in the zeros in the first chord,



omitted them from the second and included the zero on the first course in the third chord where it would not be obvious that it should be included, but omitted it from the fourth course which must be included if the chord is strummed. In the next bar he has included all the zeros in the chord following Chord D.

#### **Musical Example 6 – Passacaglia p.19 b.48-51**



There are places which are more ambiguous – because he has not put in the zeros at all. In Musical Example 7 there is a stroke mark under the 7 on the first course – marked with an asterisk in the transcription. It seems unlikely that this is intended to be played as a single note even though there is an ornament attached to it.

The second, third and fourth open courses could be included, as shown at the end but it is more likely that the stopped notes on the second and third courses in the previous chord are to be repeated as this makes better harmonic sense. Situations like this call for a certain amount of harmonic analysis.

#### **Musical Example 7 – Passacaglia p.19 b.10-12**



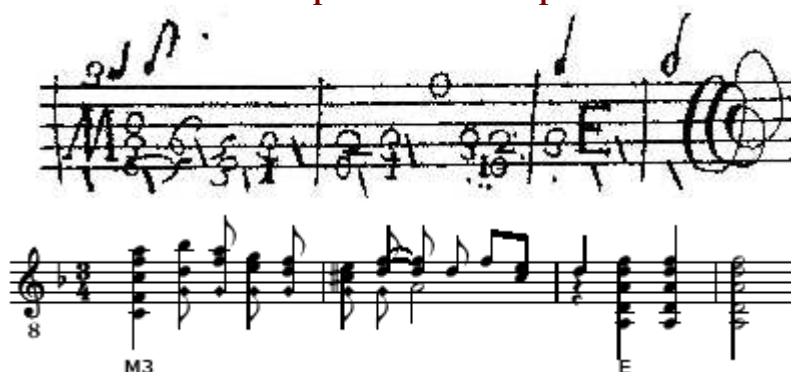
Unlike Foscarini, Bartolotti never puts stroke marks in places where including open courses would result in inexplicable dissonances. In Musical Example 8 the whole passage is marked to be strummed except for the chord in bar 2 – marked with an asterisk - where the open third course would be dissonant.

### Musical Example 8 – Passacaglia p.1 b.8-10



In the two preceding examples there are places where Bartolotti has indicated that only two notes should be included in the strum. In Musical Example 7 the third course could be included in the first bar and the first course could be included in the third as indicated by the diamond shaped notes although this seems a bit unnecessary. In Musical Example 8 it is not possible to include any open courses in the chord marked with an exclamation mark other than the one Bartolotti has indicated. As already noted in the section dealing with Foscarini, there is not much point in strumming less than three courses. Bartolotti is unusual in that, in **Libro primo**, he does sometimes put strum marks in passages which are apparently in two parts. In Musical Example 9 it would be feasible to include the open third course as indicated with the diamond shaped notes although it is uncertain whether that is what Bartolotti intended.

### Musical Example 9 – Corente p.72 b.29-31



In a similar passage in Musical Example 10 it does not really make very good harmonic sense to include the open courses at all except where Bartolotti has indicated.

**Musical Example 10 – Passacaglia p.17 b.24-28**



This raises an interesting question. Does Bartolotti intend passages like this to be played with down - and up-strokes with one or two fingers - and was this a recognised feature of right-hand technique in the guitar repertoire? Passages like this are sometimes found in music for the cittern, played with a plectrum.

Or is Bartolotti simply being inconsistent in the way he uses his notation? It is not difficult to play the first two groups of crotchets in this way because they fall on the first and second courses, but it is rather less effective to do so when they fall on the second and third.

There are similar passages in Antonio Carbonchi's **Sonate di chitarra spagnola** (1640) in which he indicates that only the intervening 5-part chords should be strummed. (Carbonchi uses French tablature and places the stroke marks on, rather than below the staff; there is a misprint in the opening bar – the upper note of fourth quaver pair should be A natural stopped at the fifth fret).

**Musical Example 11 – Carbonchi (1640) – Passacaglia p.11 b.43-46**



It may of course be that the two men had different ideas about the best way to play passages like these, and both of them are typical of seventeenth-century practice. However Corbetta – our loadstar – never indicates that only two notes should be included in the strum; there is always a third open course which could be included. It is less trouble to put in stroke marks than it is to put dots beside each pair of notes and it is possible that Bartolotti, like Foscari, is



making a rather random distinction between passages in 2- or 3-part counterpoint which should be strummed and those which should be played in lute style, especially as, in his second book, he does use a variety of signs and symbols to indicate different right-hand effects.

### **The Rest of Bartolotti's Introduction.**

Bartolotti then goes on to explain a particular kind of right-hand strumming effect in his Ciaccona (p.49)

*In the ciaccona it can be seen that there are two variations where the stroke marks are not attached to the first [lowest] line; these strokes are played downwards with the first two fingers.*

### **Musical Example 12 – Ciaccona p.49 b.16-22**

The musical example consists of a lute tablature at the top and two systems of musical notation below, labeled A and B. The tablature shows a sequence of chords: a three-note chord (first, second, and third courses), a two-note chord (second and third courses), and a three-note chord (first, second, and third courses). The two-note chord is marked with an asterisk. Systems A and B show the strumming patterns for these chords. In system A, the first stroke is on the first line, while the others are on the first space. In system B, all strokes are on the first space. The red strokes indicate the strumming points for each chord.

This is self explanatory. The only complication here is that Bartolotti has put a dot beside the slash under the second chord. This consists of only two notes on the second and third courses - marked with an asterisk in the example. This is awkward to play in the way Bartolotti seems to imply; the dot may be intended to indicate that only the first finger should be used in this instance. Bartolotti has not indicated that first course should be included although it could be. All the other chords consist of three notes on the first, second and first courses and can comfortably be played as indicated.

In the transcription above all notes on the fourth and fifth courses have been transcribed in the upper octave creating a coherent melodic line in [12A]. The second transcription [12B] shows the random octave doubling which would occur with *bourdons* on the lower courses. This does not matter very much when it occurs on the main notes of the *ostinato* but the low octave string needs to be omitted from the intervening notes. Bartolotti could have placed all the notes in the correct octave on the upper courses.

The Ciaccona also includes a variation, b.68-71 in which a running passage on the fourth and fifth courses is intended to be played with the thumb and first finger alternating in lute style. Playing a passage like this on an octave strung course is quite tricky although presumably an accomplished player like Bartolotti would have been used this technique.

### Musical Example 13 – Ciaccona p. 49 b.68-72



From a purely musical point of view the passage works better without octave stringing on either the fourth or fifth courses. With a *bourdon* on the fifth course the descending *ostinato* bass in the lowest part fizzles out and skips up a minor third to an unprepared dissonance at the cadence. The final note G of the *ostinato* is a seventh above on the third course as in [A.] Without *bourdons* the *ostinato* descends correctly ending with a perfect cadence; the suspended fourth is prepared in the preceding bar. [B.]

The whole piece is an interesting exercise in different right-hand techniques.

Bartolotti concludes by mentioning briefly the signs used for ornaments without giving any information as to how these should be executed. The first of these is the *trillo*.

*This is the sign for the Trillo ·/·. When it is found crossing a line, that string must be trilled, and if it is found otherwise, the string which is nearest is trilled.*

By this he means that the *trillo* sign will be placed on the line next to the note to be ornamented if this is convenient; otherwise wherever he can fit it in. In practice if there is no space for it, it is usually placed immediately below the stave. It is not always entirely clear which note the *trillo* belongs to, but in the music a simple trill starting on the main note is probably what is intended in most places although this may vary according to context.

This is followed by the signs for the *trillo sforzato* or vibrato and *strascico* (or *strascino*) or slur.

*This is the sign for a forced Trill #*

*This is the one for the Strascico ∪*

Finally he says

*And the symbols described here can be seen beside the Alfabeto [set out on the next page].*

On the following page Bartolotti has set out the table of *alfabeto* chords together with the signs for ornaments with the heading

*Alfabeto and lettere tagliate, with other symbols in the tablature of the present book for use when playing the present works.*

### **Bartolotti's Table of Chords and Ornaments in Libro Primo**



This is followed by a note which is self explanatory -

*I have not included all the letters of the Alfabeto because they are not all necessary. Note that the letters should be played where the number above the letter indicates.*



In other words, chords which are played with a *barré* should be played at the fret indicated by the number - H3, M3 etc. will be played at the third fret.

## Summary and Conclusion

Bartolotti is inconsistent in the way that he notates single notes inserted between strummed chords, sometimes putting a stroke mark and sometimes the dot indicating a single finger. This is not a serious problem. Whether or not the passing notes are included in the chord as it is repeated (where practical) or played as single notes is largely a matter of taste.

As far as the passages in 2-part counterpoint are concerned, it cannot be said with certainty whether he does actually mean these to be “strummed” or whether the stroke marks are used simply as a convenient way of separating the notes from one another and making the music easier to read as with Foscari.

In music which is entirely in *alfabeto* the stroke marks do actually have more than one function. They indicate the direction of the strokes, but they also indicate how many times a chord should be repeated, how the strokes should be grouped – in threes or fours depending on whether the piece is in triple or common time - and in some instances the duration or time value of the stroke. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a certain ambiguity, particularly in earlier sources, when indicating whether chords or passages like that in Musical example 10 should be strummed or played in lute style. There is no reason why, when we play the music, we should not use whichever right-hand technique works best for us.

### 3. Secondo Libro di Chitarra (ca. 1656)

The music of Bartolotti's **Secondo libro di chitarra** is different in style from that of his earlier book with a more lute-like, free voice texture, fewer strummed chords, and elaborate passage work, ornamentation and *campanelas*. The pieces are arranged in seven sections according to key. The pagination runs continuously from 1 to 104 but each section is also individually numbered as follows –

p.1-9	=	[p.1-9] (not separately numbered)	E minor	12
p.10 -25	=	p.1-16	G major	23
p.26-41	=	p.1-16	C major	23
p.42-53	=	p.1-12	D major	20
p.54- 63	=	p.1-11 (p.8 lacking)	A minor	15
p.64-80	=	p.1-17	D minor	25
p.81-104	=	p.1-24	G minor	13

Unusually the even numbers of the continuous sequence are on the recto rather than verso side of each page. The individual numbering has the even numbers on the verso as is more customary. The print is much darker towards end of the book. It is conceivable that the last one or two groups of pieces were added to an earlier edition.

Each group of pieces comprises at least one prelude, several of the standard movements of the suite – allemandes, courantes, sarabandes and gigue together with other dance movements, often with doubles. There are also 2 ciaconas, 7 passacaglie and a follias. Bartolotti may have played the music on the theorbo as well as on the guitar and this is reflected in the way the music is intabulated. Some of the music may indeed have originally been composed for the theorbo. Notes on fifth courses are more likely to belong in the upper octave even when they form part of the lowest voice. The fourth course is treated as the lowest sounding course although notes may occasionally belong in an upper part. This feature is not confined to *campanellas*. Displaced notes occur in the bass line even where they could conveniently be played in the right octave.

Bartolotti was clearly influenced by French music. Throughout the French form of the titles of the dance movements is used. There are *style luthée* preludes and *doubles* to the dance movements; examples of the *gigue* in common time as well as several gavottes and a menuette, both relatively recent and characteristic French dances. The notation also reflects some French practices.

It is possible that Bartolotti was familiar with French sources of guitar music about which we can only speculate today. There is a tendency to assume that

because no music for guitar is known to have appeared in print in France between Luis de Brizeño's **Metodo mui facilissimo para aprender a tañer la guitarra a lo español** (Paris, 1626) and François Martin's **Pieces de guitairre**, (Paris, 1663) there was little interest in the guitar. This may reflect economic and sociological factors rather than a lack of enthusiasm on the part of French musicians. As far as the *alfabeto* repertoire was concerned there was no need for separate publications as these could easily have been imported from Italy. Numerous volumes of *airs de cour* were printed in Paris the first half of the century with lute accompaniment; it is possible that the guitar was sometimes used to accompany these. There certainly seems to have been a large number of guitarists active at the court of Louis XIII after his marriage to the Spanish princess, Anne of Austria, in 1615. Although Henry Grenerin's **Livre de guitarre** did not appear in print until 1680, Grenerin was appointed *musicien du roi* as a theorbo player in 1641 and took part in *ballets de Cour* between 1656-1661. He probably knew both Bartolotti and Corbetta and it is conceivable that some of his guitar pieces date from before 1680. Music printing from engraving rather than moveable type did not become common in France until after 1660.

### **Bartolotti's Instructions to the Player**

The instructions at the beginning of the second book are very brief - presumably because, as Bartolotti says, the music is not intended for beginners who need a lot of instruction.

#### *Al Lettore (1655)*

*For a long time, urged by many people, I intended to publish this my second book of sonatas for the guitar. But because of some setbacks, I have not been able to satisfy the wishes of those who asked me in vain to present it to them.*

*Although my manner of playing may be criticised for being too difficult, I hope nevertheless that each may find that he can play it more easily than he would expect, provided that all the signs which are explained below are observed, because it was not for beginners that I embarked upon the present labour, but for those advanced in this profession.*

It is not clear whether the setbacks he refers to were due to problems in getting the music engraved or of a more personal nature but certainly the complexity of the music and the way in which it is notated must have made the printing process more difficult than usual.

## Alfabeto

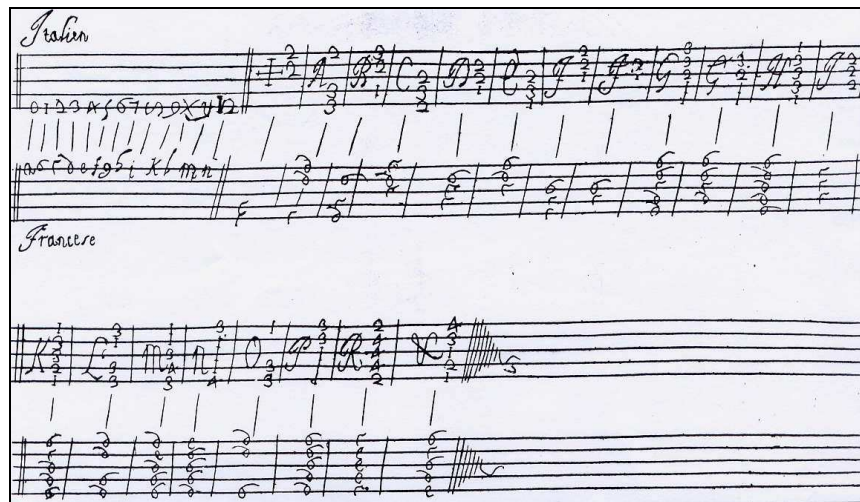
Bartolotti next goes on to explain that he uses only the basic sequence of *alfabeto* letters and that these will have the appropriate fret number above them if they are to be played at a higher fret.

*In the first place I have not used all the letters of alfabeto, because it is intended that they [i.e. those which are used] should be made at the fret which the number above the letter indicates.*

The *Alfabeto* is set out on the preceding page in both Italian and French tablature. The table includes **Chord +** followed by **Chords A-P**, **Chord R**, which is used as an alternative to **H2**, and Chord **&**. Two of his *lettere tagliate* from the earlier book - **F** and **G** – are placed next to the corresponding standard letters but **P** *tagliate* is not included.

The chords are preceded by the notes at each fret from the first to the twelfth in both Italian and French tablature. Clearly Bartolotti had both Italian and French guitarists in his sights and wished to make his music as accessible as possible to French players.

### Bartolotti's Table of Chords in Libro Secondo



On the opposite page he has set out in tablature the *lettere tagliate* **G** and **P** and given sample chords with fret numbers above them without the corresponding tablature. He has however included the tablature for one additional chord, - **M+**, not included in the table. (See illustration below).

## Rhythm and Strumming Notation

Note values for notes/chords to be played in lute style are placed above the stave in the usual manner. However, instead of placing stroke marks on the lowest line of the tablature to indicate the direction of the strummed chords as in other Italian tablatures, including his own **Libro primo**, in **Secondo libro** Bartolotti has adopted the French system of placing the note values for chords to be strummed on the stave with the stems down for a down-stroke (bass to treble) and up for an up-stroke (treble to bass). In an added refinement to this system, he places the note-head on the tablature line representing the lowest note of the chord, which may be on the third, fourth or fifth line, depending on whether the lowest note of the chord is on the third, fourth or fifth course.

He explains this briefly as follows

*The down- and up-strokes are represented by musical notes. If these are found on the fifth line, all the strings are struck; otherwise they are only struck from where the stroke starts as is shown in the example below, playing them quickly or slowly according to the value of the note, and when the note is not on the line, [i.e. is above the stave] the strings are plucked.*

Bartolotti has evidently borrowed the idea of placing the note values on the stave from an earlier French guitar source. Mersenne credits a Monsieur Martin (probably not the same person as François Martin mentioned above) with the idea of placing the note values **above** the stave with the **stems up or down** depending on the direction of the strokes, as in the following illustration

### **Monsieur Martin – Sarabande** **Mersenne - Harmonie universelle (Paris, 1636), Livre Second, fol. 97**

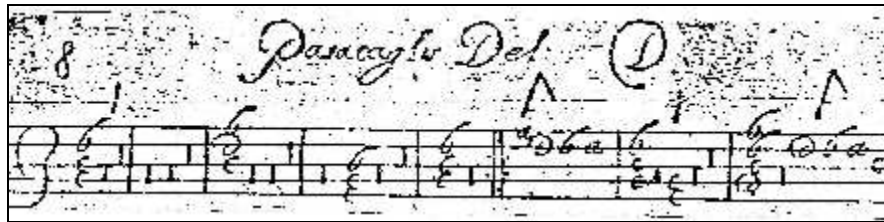


The credit for actually placing the stroke marks on the stave must (currently) go to an Italian, Antonio Carbonchi. In order to achieve wider recognition for his work, the music in his first book, **Sonate de chitarra spagnola** (Florence,



1640) is notated in French tablature with stroke marks on the staff as in the following illustration

**Antonio Carbonchi – Pasacaglia  
Sonate de chitarra spagnola (Florence, 1640), p.8**



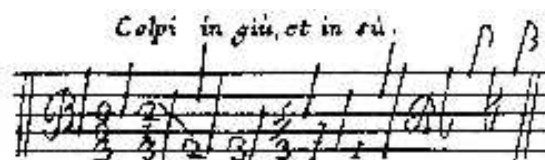
The earliest example of music with the note values placed on the staff to have come to light so far is **F:Psg.Ms.Rés. 2344 - Tablature de guitarre fait par Monsieur Dupille** which is dated **1649**, seven years before Bartolotti's book appeared in print. What we do not know at present is whether the idea was Mr Dupille's or whether it was already in use by that time. The following illustration is the opening section of an *air* which had appeared in print earlier in Etienne Moulinie's **Airs de cour** (Paris, 1629). It should be noted that the chords are the same as those found in *alfabeto* but notated in French tablature.

**Moulinie – Souffrez beaux yeux (Sarabande dialogue)  
F:Psg.Ms.Rés. 2344, f.28v**



Following Bartolotti's instructions there is a short example in tablature illustrating how his system works, reproduced in Musical Example 1.

**Musical Example 1**





Although Bartolotti has included the zeros in the first chord following Chord B, he has not done so in any of the others. The slash through the next chord indicates that the notes on the second, third and fourth courses must also be included in the chord which follows although he has not explicitly mentioned this. The open courses have to be included here and in the following bar as the note heads suggest.

### Open Courses – to include or not to include?

In practice Bartolotti's system is far from fool proof. It has one obvious defect and that is that it does not automatically make it clear whether the open first or second courses should be included when the stroke symbol is on the fourth or fifth tablature line. In order to address this problem, Bartolotti often puts in the zeros on the lower courses even when the position of the note value on the staff alone indicates this. This results in unnecessary duplication of information which contributes to the cluttered appearance of the music and must have made the book more difficult and time-consuming to engrave.

In Musical Example 2 Bartolotti has put in the zeros on the fifth course at [a] and on the fourth course at [b] although the position of the note value makes it clear that these should be included anyway. The player is left to deduce from this that the open first course should be omitted from each chord as there is no zero. (It should be noted that with a low octave string or bourdon on the fifth course the first chord, highlighted in red, will be a six-four chord – Chord E without the first course. The note in blue is also played on the fifth course).

### Musical Example 2 – Sarabande, p. 90 b.9-14



In this example it is fairly obvious that the first course must be omitted in both places, as it will be dissonant but sometimes the player is left to second guess. In Musical Example 3 it is not clear whether in bar 2 the open first course should be included in the first chord or whether the first and second courses should be included in the second chord (marked with an asterisk in the transcription) although most players would probably assume that they should be. It is not entirely clear either whether in the second chord the second course should be stopped at the third fret or unstopped. The *tenute* sign presumably indicates that the chord should be sustained whilst the quaver passing note on the second course is played.

### Musical Example 3 – Ciacona p. 38 b.28-30



Bartolotti has not explained the purpose of the slash when used in this context. Musical Example 4 is more ambiguous. It is not clear whether the open first course should be included in each chord from the chord marked with an asterisk to the cadence as in [A] or whether the F sharp in the preceding chord should be repeated as in [B] which results in a more complex harmonic progression.

### Musical Example 4 - - Courante p. 12, b.9-11.



Another situation which he has not explained is illustrated in Musical Example 5. Here the *tenute* marks are used to indicate that the standard Chord B should be repeated as the passing notes on the fourth course are played, but the fifth course is to be omitted.

**Musical Example 5 – Ciaccona p. 38 b.56-60.**



[Strictly speaking, there is no need to include the zeros in the last (G major) chord of each phrase since the note heads on the fourth course alone indicate that the open fourth, third and second courses should be included. It is incidentally a six-four chord].

Aside from these anomalies, the note values are sometimes placed on the wrong line altogether – one of the hazards of using such a complex system. In Musical Example 6 it does not make sense to include the open fourth and fifth courses in the highlighted passage.

**Musical Example 6 – Sarabande p.8 b.17-20**



As far as the chords represented by *alfabeto* symbols are concerned, it is obvious that all five courses should be included without the added complication of the note heads. However, Bartolotti does rather frequently indicate that the fifth course should be omitted from Chords C and E, something which will be examined in Section 4 on his *lettere tagliate*.

Bartolotti does seem to have had a problem in notating his music in a clear and unambiguous way. The obvious thing to do (as a lutenist) would have been to put in the zeros consistently, especially as he frequently puts them in anyway, and indeed, to have notated more of the chords in full; this would have been no more time-consuming or difficult to engrave than the system he has adopted. But this idea does not seem to have occurred to him and he does not seem to have had any clear purpose in mind when deciding to use such a cumbersome notational device. It may have been simply a “conceit” or fanciful idea adopted because of its visual impact rather than for any practical reason.

For better or worse, none of his successors saw fit to copy his idea and the two later sources which include pieces by him have made no attempt to reproduce this feature of his notation although in both of them music has been transcribed into French tablature.

There is one further feature of Bartolotti’s rhythmic notation which is not explained at all. Whenever there are two strokes in equal note values to be played in the same direction – two up- or down-strokes – they are often tied together. This occurs frequently on the pick up beats at the outset and midpoint of the allemandes as in Musical Example 7.

#### Musical Example 7 – Allemande p.11 b.1



In the few concordant pieces in **GB:Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94** (see Section 1) the notes are not tied together. In the eighteenth-century manuscript (reproduced in Section 1) two semiquavers are replaced by a quaver up-stroke.

This notational device also occurs in Bartolotti’s version of the famous *repicco* variation in the Ciaccona on p.38. Presumably it is intended to indicate the way in which the chords should be strummed although Bartolotti has not given any indication of the right-hand fingers to be used.



### Musical Example 8 – Ciaccona p.38 b.175-178



This variation occurs in various guises in a number of sources. The earliest example is found in **Tablature de guitarre fait par Monsieur Dupille - F:Psg.Ms.Rés. 2344**. Beginning on the second tablature line, each chord is split into smaller note values played as two down-strokes followed by two up-strokes, each pair tied together. The first and last quaver of each group of four has a longer stem. The reason for this is not explained in this manuscript.

### Tablature de guitarre fait par Monsieur Dupille – Chacona F:Psg.Ms.Rés. 2344



However Corbetta's description of the *repicco* in **La Guitarre royale** (1671), indicates that the longer stem indicates that the thumb should be used whilst dots beside the letters indicate that the second or first finger should be used. His instructions in the separate Italian and French prefaces vary slightly but it is reasonably clear what he means.

*You will see an example of a repicco placed in a ciaccona, where the longer stem to the note signifies the thumb; having already begun with the fingers [i.e. played the chord once with all four fingers], then do the same, [downwards and] upwards with the thumb. Observe that the four tied notes indicate that one must play first with the second finger and then with the first finger close together, and the same again as down-strokes very quickly, and continue thus with the fingers and thumb. [Italian preface]*

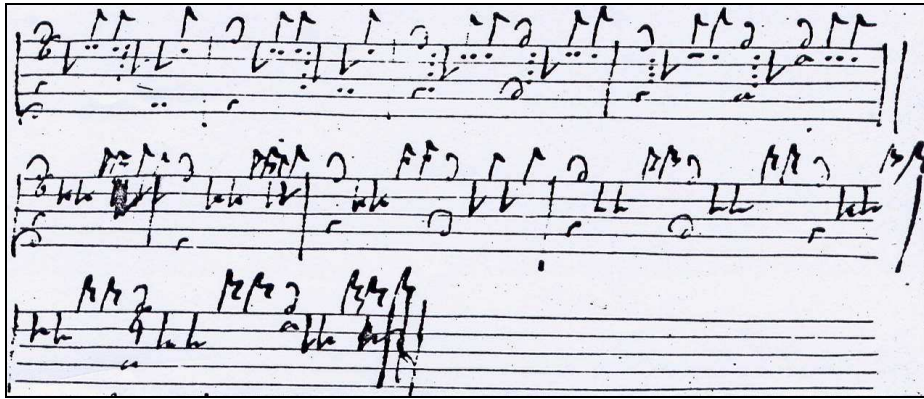
*You will see the example of a batterie placed in a caprice de chacone where the note with the longer stem indicates that the thumb should be used for both up and down strokes; and observe that when you see four notes tied together, you must use the second finger downwards, and then the first finger and then you will do the same upwards very quickly; and you will continue always with the fingers and the thumb following the example which you will see here [i.e. in the tablature examples on the next page. [French preface]*

**Corbetta – Caprice de Chaconne  
La Guitarre Royale (1671) p. 72**



A similar variation is found in at the end of a Chaconne attributed to Corbetta in the **GB:Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94** f.21v which may have been copied in the 1660s. Dots are placed beside the note values to indicate the different fingers which should be used – second finger followed by the first finger for the tied quavers, followed by presumably four fingers for the down-stroke and so on.

**GB:Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94**  
**Chaconna francisco f.21v (begins f.15)**



### Performance Marks

The rest of Bartolotti's tablature examples illustrate with varying degrees of clarity some of the other complications in his notation.

### Bartolotti's Tablature Examples in Libro Secondo

The first of these illustrates the *Arpeggio disteso* also referred to as *Lettere con segni per l'arpeggio*. The sign *./* under a chord indicates that it should be arpeggiated rather than strummed. Bartolotti gives one written out example of how this might be done. This is straightforward.

The *Tenute* sign – a slash above or below a group of notes – indicates that the first note(s) should be held whilst subsequent ones are played, in theory at least enabling the underlying counterpoint to be re-constructed. In practice they are

really a guide to the left-hand fingering, grouping together notes which are played in the same position on the fingerboard. The only problem is the rather imprecise way in which they are used in the tablature so that it is not always clear which notes should be sustained. Bartolotti does also use a slash as a shorthand way of indicating that some notes should be repeated in strummed chords against a moving part as in Musical Example 1 above. In some instances he may simply be using them to separate out long sequences of small note values.

## Ornaments

These are followed by the symbols used for ornaments.

The first is the **trillo** represented by a comma , which in the tablature examples appears to indicate an upper auxiliary note or descending appoggiatura. In the absence of any accompanying written explanation, the correct interpretation of the tablature does however raise some questions.

In the first two examples it is not clear why the main note is repeated with a *trillo* sign attached to it, but as the note makes the interval of a fourth with the bass it is presumably intended that it should resolve downwards a semitone at some point as partially illustrated in the last two examples.

### Musical Example 9 – Modo per far li trilli



In the music itself the sign occurs both in single melodic lines and attached to one note in a chord, particularly at a cadence. Depending on the context, either a simple descending appoggiatura or possibly a more extended trill starting with the upper auxiliary note could be played although there is no mention of the latter. Instances of both of Bartolotti's examples occur frequently in the music and the third of the chord on to which the ornamented note should resolve is usually notated as a separate note. Examples from the music are shown in Musical Examples 10 and 11.



### Musical Example 10 – Allemande p.67 b.17-18



### Musical Example 11 – Brando p.66 b.15-16.



The **mordente**, represented by **x** indicates that a lower auxiliary note should be inserted between two notes at the same pitch. Whether this is a semitone or a tone below the main note depends on the context.

### Musical Example 12 – Modo per far li mordente



**Strascini** are straightforward slurs – the first note only is played with the right hand, the rest with the left hand. If the notes are in a downward direction, described as *tirar le corde*, the slur is placed below the figures; if upwards - *metter li diti* - above the figures.

A slur over a figure indicates an **ascending appoggiatura**. Bartolotti gives three examples. The only problem here is that the tablature realization of the



first and last of these is given before the illustration of how it is actually notated; there is no written realization for the second example.

### Musical Example 13 – *Modo per appoggiar le corde*



An example from the tablature can be seen on the last note of in Musical Example 10 above.

At the end Bartolotti illustrates one final feature in his notation. When writing 2- or 3 - part counterpoint the notes are to be played simultaneously if joined by a straight line - **Corde insieme** - or separately if joined by a slash - **Corde separate**. In practice this is really unnecessary refinement. If the notes are not to be played separately then it is fairly obvious that they should be played simultaneously. It would have been sufficient to indicate one or the other. In Musical Example 14 he has put in the line between the two notes at the cadence.

### Musical Example 14 – *Corde Insieme* *Gigue, p. 91 9-10*



Bartolotti actually uses the *corde separate* sign in a different way from what his example suggests. It is really used as a kind of space saving device to indicate that the values should be halved with (probably) the first note sustained. In Musical Example 15 each crotchet is effectively split into two quavers.

**Musical Example 15 – Corde sepe  
Ciacona p. 17 b. 61-65**



In Musical Example 16 the two quavers on the third beat of the bar should be split into two semiquavers; as the preceding notes are all semiquavers there is no obvious reason for doing them in this way other than that they take up less room.

**Musical Example 16 – Allemande p. 47 b.2-3**



## Conclusion

Perhaps because some of his admirers had complained that his music was too difficult, Bartolotti seems to have gone out of his way to include a lot more information about how it should be played than was customary. In doing so he has set himself an almost impossible task and as a result his notation is inconsistent and sometimes ambiguous. There is a lot to be said for keeping things simple! Some of the refinements in his notation are not really necessary, especially if the music is intended for those "advanced in this profession", whilst other vital information – for example about which open courses to include or how to execute the *trillo* - is lacking. However although it is sometimes difficult to decide which are the right notes to play, most of the problems can be solved with a bit of common sense. It is reasonable to assume that players were allowed to exercise their own discretion to a considerable degree and that the welter of information is meant to be helpful

**but not prescriptive. Bartolotti won't turn in his grave if we do something slightly different from what he had originally attended!**

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<sup>1</sup> Bartolotti, Angelo Michel – Libro primo et secondo di chitarra spagnola. Geneva : Minkoff, 1984. Introduction by Claude Chauvel.

<sup>2</sup> Tyler, James & Sparks, Paul – The guitar and its music. Oxford : University Press, 2002, p69-72.

<sup>3</sup> Webber, Geoffrey – Italian music at the court of Queen Christina in Svensk Tidskrift für Musikforskning, 75/2 (1993), p.47-53.

<sup>4</sup> A full list of contents is available at <http://library.chch.ox.ac.uk/music>.

<sup>5</sup> Chauvel, Claude – Introduction to Minkoff facsimile edition.

<sup>6</sup> Prunières, Henry - L'opera italien en France avant Lully. - Paris : Champion, 1910, p.277-278 ; p.311-312 .

<sup>7</sup> Chauvel, Claude – Introduction to Minkoff facsimile edition.

<sup>8</sup> Huygens, Constantin - Musique et musiciens aux XVIIe siècle : correspondance et oeuvre musicales de Constantin Huygens. Leyde: E.J. Brill, 1882, p.55.

<sup>9</sup> Benoit, Marcel – Musiques de cour. Paris : A & J. Picard, 1971, p. 80.

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that the English translation of the passage in the introduction to the Minkoff facsimile is misleading. The French "Launay.....s'est vu attribuer **les biens** (i.e. goods or possessions in the plural) ayant appartenu 'au nommé Miquelange'..... is translated as "was assigned the possession of one Miquelange" etc. which makes no sense.

<sup>11</sup> Pelegrini's *Armoniosi concerti* (1650) does not include any instructions for accompanying a bass line but it does include a longer and clearer introduction than either of Bartolotti's books explaining ornamentation and *alfabeto*.

<sup>12</sup> Goy, François-Pierre – Luth et guitare dans le journal et la correspondance (1631-1636) de Bullen Reymes in Luth et luthistes en Occident. Paris : Cité de la Musique, 1999, p.185-200 .

## 4. Bartolotti's *Lettere tagliate*

### Introduction

Bartolotti is unusual in that in both **Libro primo** and **Secondo libro** he has included in his table of *alfabeto* chords three *lettere tagliate*, **G**, **P** and **F**, which represent alternative versions of three standard chords from which the note on the fifth course, the fifth of the chord, is to be omitted.

His **Secondo libro** is also unusual in that instead of indicating the direction of the strummed strokes in the Italian manner with small stroke marks down or up from the lowest line of the tablature, he has adopted the French system of placing the note values on the staff with the stems down or up as appropriate. In an added refinement to this system, he places the note-head on the tablature line representing the lowest note of the chord, which may be on the third, fourth or fifth course. He has taken advantage of this system to indicate occasionally that the fifth course should be omitted from some of the other *alfabeto* chords, usually but not always, those which have the fifth of the chord on the fifth course.

It has been suggested that this is because Bartolotti intended his music to be played with octave stringing or *bourdons* on both the fourth and fifth courses.<sup>1</sup> With this method of stringing the corresponding standard chords would be second inversion or six-four chords which he wished to avoid. However, a closer examination of his music and the way in which these notational devices are used in the tablature suggests that they serve a different purpose and do not clearly indicate the method of stringing he preferred.

### What's wrong with a six-four chord?

According to the basic rules of harmony, six-four chords should only be used in specific circumstances – most commonly at a cadence or as a combination of passing notes between two other chords, illustrated in Musical Example 1A-B.

#### Musical Example 1

##### A. Cadential Six-four



## B. Passing Six-four



However in the early seventeenth century the concept of a six-four chord *per-se* did not really exist. According to the rules of counterpoint the interval of a perfect fourth between the lowest part and any upper part was regarded as a dissonance which had to be prepared and resolved, or at least resolved. It is fairly obvious that the 5-part *alfabeto* six-four chords cannot be used in the way that the rules suggest. In practice the rules of counterpoint are flexible and were not always rigidly observed by composers of the period.

Theorists at the time were divided over the question of whether the interval of a fourth was dissonant. In 1640 Doisi de Velasco summarized the situation when discussing the stringing of the guitar in the context of its rôle as an accompanying instrument.

*When one wishes to play contrapuntally, the notes [of the guitar] are not so few that they do not exceed seventeen, a range sufficient to accompany any contrapuntal music. For this reason it seems to me better to string the guitar with bourdons on the fourth and fifth courses, rather than without them, because then it is more sonorous and similar in range to that of natural voices. Whichever way it is strung, some chords will have fourths between the lowest voices [i.e. will be six-four chords]. This will not matter when the chords are strummed.<sup>2</sup>*

He then goes on to say –

*Because there are many examples in ancient compositions, which make unqualified use of the fourth, some [theorists] maintain that it is not only a consonant (as a complement to the fifth in the same way that other consonances are complementary..... but is even more perfect than the fifth as Zarlino explains at length.*

*Nevertheless we do not use it freely with the bass except in circumstances with which composers will be familiar. I will also explain .....how it is possible to play without the said fourths when this is to be preferred. And playing*



*sometimes rasgado and sometimes punteado as is convenient with some consonances, you will find the guitar perfect, complete, gallant and graceful.*

It should be stressed that Doisi de Velasco regards six-four chords as acceptable when strummed and makes it clear here and elsewhere in the book that strummed chords and 3-part counterpoint can be combined when accompanying.

Nassarre however, when discussing whether the fourth is a perfect interval, observes -

*It is true that when formed with the bass by itself it (the interval of a perfect fourth) does not have the same degree of sonority as other (intervals) and for this reason it is included among the dissonances. Nevertheless this is not sufficient reason (for excluding it) when experience shows us that on some musical instruments it is used in the bass in place of the perfect fifth. This is true of the guitar and some others.<sup>3</sup>*

Musicologists today with a special interest in musical theory also seem to have less of a problem with the six-four chords in guitar music than many people who play the baroque guitar. Richard Hudson coined the term “inversionless chords” because that is how they function in 5-course guitar music.<sup>4</sup> There is no reason to suppose that Bartolotti or any of his contemporaries regarded six-four chords as so beyond the pale that they needed special notational devices to eliminate them. We should be careful not to judge the music by a false set of criteria.

## **Alfabeto**

The hand-copying and printing of guitar music in the seventeenth century was a laborious activity and various shorthand devices were therefore used. *Alfabeto* is one such device – the common major and minor 5-part guitar chords are represented by single upper-case letters rather than notated in full in tablature. Some of the more ambitious books include symbols for dissonant chords, the commonest being those used to introduce a 4-3 suspension at a cadence, or chords of the seventh.<sup>5</sup> However the term *lettere tagliate* - literally a letter (representing a chord) from which something is cut out - originally referred to a peculiar kind of dissonance used in *alfabeto* music. One course, not necessarily the fifth, in a standard chord is left unfretted, rather than omitted. In printed sources these are notated with a “t” following the letter, probably because the printers did not possess a font of “strike through” letters; in manuscript sources a slash is put through the letter. It is used in the *battute* books of Pietro Millioni and his imitators but the clearest description of them is found in a relatively late

source, Ricci's **Scuola d'intavolatura** printed in 1677. He includes four *lettere tagliate*

At	the fifth course is unfretted
Ct	the first course is unfretted
Dt	the second course is unfretted
Et	the first course is unfretted

and says "They are called *lettere tagliate* because one course is left unfretted".<sup>6</sup>

### **Musical Example 2 – Ricci's *Lettere Tagliate***



In later sources, like the books of Bartolotti, *alfabeto* is used for the standard chords in combination with Italian tablature when notating more sophisticated music.

Many Italian guitar books include tables of *alfabeto* chords in the preliminaries. Some of these indicate the open courses which are to be included in the chords by placing **zeros** on the relevant tablature lines, but many leave these lines blank.

**This is simply a short cut on the part of the copyist or engraver; the open courses must always be included.**

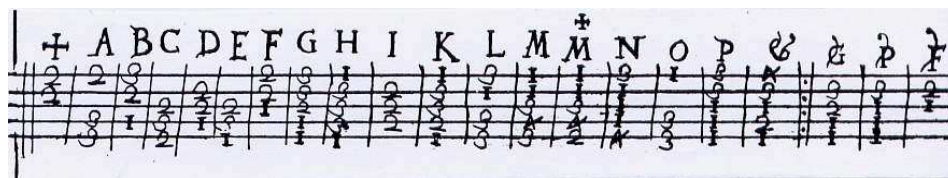
This is clear from those sources which describe the chords verbally and/or include the fingering. The fingering of the chords was fairly standardized. Some of them can be re-fingered when necessary to integrate them with passage work, but many of them can only be fingered in one way which makes them rather inflexible.

## Bartolotti's Libro Primo

In the introduction to his **Libro primo** Bartolotti has included a table setting out the standard *alfabeto* chords represented by the letters A to P and the symbols + and & without indicating the open courses. He has also included in his table his three *lettere tagliate*, **G**, **P** and **F**, from which the fifth course, the fifth of the chord is to be omitted. These are just a shorthand way of indicating a frequently used 4-part chord instead of writing it out in full.

**In principle when he prints a standard letter you play a standard chord; when he prints a *lettera tagliata*, you play a *lettera tagliata*.**

### Bartolotti's Table of Chords in Libro Primo



There are **eight** chords in the basic sequence which are six-fours with octave stringing on the fifth course -

**+    C    E    F    G    M    M+    P**

These are set out in Musical Example 3. (It should be noted that Chords G, M, M+ and P are played with a *barré* and can therefore be played at any fret; the fret number is placed above the letter.)

### Musical Example 3 – Bartolotti's six-four *Alfabeto* Chords and *Lettere Tagliate*



Bartolotti was a professional theorbo-player and was presumably familiar with the basic rules of musical theory. If he used octave stringing on the fifth course and wished to avoid inappropriate second inversions, he could simply have set out these chords in the table, indicating that the fifth course was to be omitted by putting a cross or a dot on the line as there are very few situations in which they can be used as functional six-four chords as illustrated in Musical Example 1A-B above. He has not done so and freely uses them throughout the book, including

standard Chords G, P and F. He also writes other 3 -, 4 - and 5-part chords in tablature which will be six-fours.

The tablature for Chords +, F, G, M and P clearly indicates that the fifth course is to be included and it is obvious that the unstopped first, second and third courses are to be included in Chords + and F.

**There is no reason to suppose that the unstopped fifth course, which has been left blank, is to be omitted from Chords C and E.**

*Lettere tagliate* are supplied for only for **Chords G, P and F**. These are also included in Musical Example 3.

### **Why these three chords and not the others?**

There are two important questions which those who claim that Bartolotti's only concern was eliminating six-four chords prefer to ignore.

1. Why should Bartolotti have singled out these three chords for special treatment? If he was concerned about six-four chords you would expect him to provide similar alternatives for the other chords as well.
2. Why (as we shall see), does Bartolotti use **G tagliate** frequently but use the other two hardly at all?

**Six-four chords are not something which any competent musician would eliminate in a random or arbitrary fashion.**

In practice Bartolotti uses his *lettere tagliate* primarily so that passing notes, auxiliary notes or ornaments can be introduced into or between the chords whilst the underlying harmony is sustained. Because of the way they are fingered, this can be difficult unless the fifth course is omitted. Bartolotti also uses them to achieve a more logical left-hand fingering or a smoother transition from one chord to another. In some instances he uses a *lettere tagliate* to notate a diminished triad or chord of the seventh by substituting a note which does not belong to the major or minor triad. As such chords can be in any inversion this does not shed any light on the method of stringing he may have preferred.

*[In the musical examples from Libro primo which follow notes on the fourth and fifth courses are usually shown in the lower octave in order to illustrate the difference between standard chords and tagliate chords. Inevitably this re-enforces the idea that the purpose of the lettere tagliate is to avoid six-fours and this is perhaps why some people have*

*jumped to the conclusion that this is what was intended. Notes on the fourth and fifth courses which belong in the upper octave are usually shown in red.*

*In Libro primo, if a chord is to be strummed, there is a stroke mark downwards from the bottom line of the tablature for a down stroke and upwards for an up stroke. Dots beneath the figures indicate that the notes are to be played as single notes and represent right-hand fingering; one dot for the index finger and two for the middle finger. Bartolotti uses a slash with a dot on either side to indicate a trill.*

*I have included transcriptions of the tablature showing the left-hand fingering where appropriate and practical, using figures in a circle below the tablature, although it is difficult to indicate this clearly and legibly. It is necessary to play the examples (and the rest of the music) on the guitar to understand the points I am trying to make. It is instructive to try including the fifth course in the tagliate chords to see the difference leaving it out makes to the left-hand fingering].*

**It is important to keep the fourth finger free for passage work.**

### **G tagliata**

Chord G is played with a *barré*. The fifth course is stopped with the third finger, the fourth course with the fourth finger and third course with the second finger.

**By leaving out the fifth course it is possible to re-finger the chord, using the third finger on the fourth course, freeing the fourth finger.**

One of the commonest incidences of auxiliary notes with G *tagliata* is the 4-3 suspension at a cadence. For this reason G *tagliata* is the one Bartolotti uses most often.

**G tagliate occurs 180 times in the course of 76 pages of music.**

44 involve 4-3 suspensions, 92 have other possible fingering implications; the remaining 44 have no immediately obvious fingering advantages. Where Bartolotti considered it unnecessary or impractical to hold the chord he uses a standard Chord G although this will be a six-four with octave stringing on the fifth course.

**The standard form of the chord including the fifth course occurs 47 times.**

*[Figures are approximate – give or take one or two as counting them is a laborious business].*

In Musical Example 4 a standard Chord G is used in the first bar; the chord must be released in order to play the passing notes which follow. Bartolotti has indicated that they are to be played as single notes. In the next bar, G *tagliata* is



used in order to introduce the 4-3 suspension; the B flat on the third course must be stopped with the fourth finger so the fifth course must be omitted.

#### **Musical Example 4 – Passacaglia p.1 b.15-17**

The musical notation for Musical Example 4 consists of three staves. The top staff shows a sequence of chords: G, M, K, G, K. The middle staff shows a sequence of chords: G, K. The bottom staff shows a sequence of chords: G2, M+, K, Gt, K. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

It should also be noted that in the chord in tablature at the beginning of bar 2 of the example the note on the fourth course is the seventh of the chord. It belongs in the upper octave; it is prepared in the preceding bar and resolves on the D flat on the next beat. Inverting the parts in this way is something which Bartolotti does quite frequently because it is impractical to place the note on a higher course.

In Musical Example 5 the first Chord G2 must be released in order to play the passage work which follows but it is necessary to omit the fifth course from the second Chord G2 in order to play the trill. Bartolotti has duplicated the B natural in the chord at the cadence although this makes no “aural difference” when the chord is played.

#### **Musical Example 5 – Allemanda p. 67 b.13-14**

The musical notation for Musical Example 5 consists of a single staff showing a sequence of chords: G, G, G, G, G. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.



Bartolotti also uses *G tagliata* to achieve a more economical movement of the fingers when moving from one chord to another. In Musical Example 6 M3 is followed by *G tagliata*, M and E. As both M and E are six-four chords with octave stringing there is no obvious logic to leaving out the fifth course from one chord but not the others, but it does simplify the change of fingers.

#### Musical Example 6 – Corente p.60 b.15-16



In both Italian and French tablature sources it was common practice to leave out the fifth course from Chord G because it is so often necessary to re-finger it to accommodate passage work and ornamentation.

#### P tagliata

Chord P is also played with a *barré*; the fifth course is usually stopped with the third finger, the fourth course with the fourth finger. It can however easily be re-fingered using the second and third fingers so that the fourth finger is free; the chord can then usually be held whilst most auxiliary notes are played.

*P tagliata* is therefore the one which Bartolotti uses least – only about 20 times throughout the book; there is no need for it.

The standard form of the chord occurs 98 times.

There are a few places as in Musical Example 7, where, because Chord P would have to be re-fingered to include the passing note on the first course, it is simply more convenient to leave out the fifth course from the chord and from the preceding Chord G to avoid an unnecessary flurry of finger changes. Bartolotti has therefore notated both of them as *lettere tagliate*. With octave stringing Chord M3 at the end is a six-four chord.

### Musical Example 7 – Passacaglia p.13 b.40-42

The image displays three staves of musical notation for Musical Example 7. The top staff shows a single line of music with notes and fingerings. The middle staff shows four chords: G, P, N, and M, each with a '3' above it and a '1' below it. The bottom staff shows a melodic line with a red arrow pointing to a note, followed by four chords labeled G3t, P3t, N3, and M3. Below the M3 chord is the figured bass notation 6/4.

In Musical Example 8 it is clear that Bartolotti did not regard of P *tagliate* just as a means of eliminating a six-four chord. He has used it to notate a 7-6 suspension in a cadential passage involving the first inversion of the diminished triad on the leading note – D F A flat (rather than F A flat C); the fifth course is omitted because it would alter the character of the harmonic progression by introducing the note C - the diatonic seventh - into the chord. Chord M is a six-four chord. P *tagliata* is used in a similar way in a few other places.

### Musical Example 8 – Passacaglia p.7 b.20

The image displays two staves of musical notation for Musical Example 8. The top staff shows two chords: MP and M, each with a '4' below it. The bottom staff shows four chords labeled M, Pt, 6, and M. Below the M chords is the figured bass notation 6/4, and below the Pt chord is the number 7. Below the 6 chord is the number 6.

In contrast in Musical Example 9 Bartolotti **has** included the note on the fifth course in Chord P4 when notating a similar suspension over the [third inversion] diatonic chord of the seventh on the leading note (E# G# B D#) which creates a different harmonic progression. In this context the presence or absence of a low octave string on the fifth course makes no difference to the voice leading as the progression is invertible. Chord M4 which precedes and follows it is a six-four chord. Bartolotti has also used G *tagliate* for the opening phrase because the harmony changes on each minim and the note C sharp on the fifth course does not belong to the intervening chords. The fourth finger must be used for the passing notes inserted into each chord.

### Musical Example 9 – Passacaglia p.43 b.1-5

### F tagliata

Chord F does not involve the use of a *barré*; the fifth course is stopped with the second finger, the fourth course with the third finger and the third course with the first finger; the fourth finger is free. It is therefore more difficult to justify a *lettera tagliata* for it on the grounds of fingering alone.

**It is however used almost as infrequently as P tagliata – there are 34, of which about 27 result in more convenient fingering.**

**The standard form of the chord occurs 14 times.**

It is most often used to introduce 4-3 suspensions at a cadence as in Musical Example 10.

### Musical Example 10 – Passacaglia p.31 b.40-41



If the fourth finger rather than the third is used for the auxiliary note the fingers are bunched together. There is some evidence that this was considered unsatisfactory. Better clearance and a smoother transition from chord to chord is achieved by leaving out the fifth course and re-fingering the chord so that the fourth course is stopped with the second finger and the third course with the first finger freeing the third finger for the auxiliary note, especially if a trill is to be added as in Musical Example 11. Whether marked or not, an ornament of some sort would usually be played at a cadence and the ornamentation added may have been more elaborate than the simple explanations found in most guitar books suggests.

#### Musical Example 11 – Passacaglia, p. 31, b.20-21



Bartolotti may also have been prompted to use a *lettera tagliata* in this context because of its association with the dissonant chords found in sources which use only *alfabeto*. Corbetta has included the equivalent of Bartolotti's *F tagliata* in the *Alfabeto falso* of his first book **De gli scherzi armoniche** (Bologna, 1639) represented by **F\***. In his advice to the reader he specifically says that this is so that a trill can be played on the third course with the third finger and it is used in this way in his *alfabeto* pieces often preceded by a suspended fourth as in bars 1 and 3 of Musical Example 12.



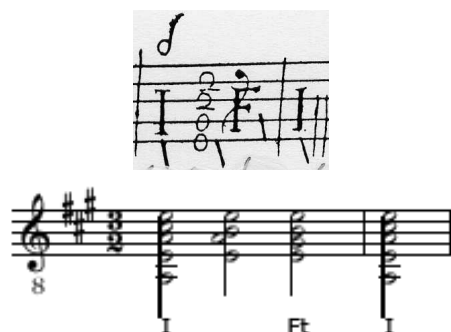
### Musical Example 12 – Corbetta 1639 p.42

#### Pass'emezo sopra il D – Altra parte passeggiata, b.1-4



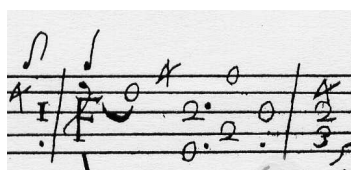
Foscarini has also included the chord in the *Alfabeto dissonante* of **Li Cinque libri della chitarra alla spagnola** (Rome, ca.1640) indicating the amended fingering although he does not explain its purpose; the fourth course is stopped with the second finger instead of the third. In Musical Example 13 Bartolotti has notated the chord introducing the suspended fourth in tablature instead of combining it with the *lettera tagliata* as in Musical Example 10 above. Corbetta includes a *lettera tagliata* for this chord represented as D\*.

### Musical Example 13 – Passacaglie, p.31, b.4-5



In Musical Example 14 the fifth course is omitted to make room for the slurred notes which belong in the upper octave. The open fifth course on the third minim also belongs in the upper octave; the note the octave below is superfluous and creates a leap of a seventh in the lowest part. Unwanted doubling of notes on the fifth course like this occurs frequently when a low octave string is used.

### Musical Example 14 – Passacaglie, p.31, b.29-30





There are some instances where auxiliary notes can only be introduced if the fifth course is omitted as in Musical Example 15 where the seventh of the chord is introduced as a passing note.

### Musical Example 15 – Passacaglia, p.33, b.50-51



In Musical Example 16 leaving out the fifth course achieves a smoother transition to the part writing.

### Musical Example 16 – Courante, p.56, b.29-30



One final example of *F tagliata* also suggests that Bartolotti was not unduly concerned with the bass line or with six-four chords. In Musical Example 17A-B the same harmonic progression – a Phrygian cadence - occurs twice. The first time around Bartolotti has written a standard Chord F, although with octave stringing the note on the fifth course will obscure the bass line. Because it is desirable to release the chord and move to second position for the auxiliary notes in anticipation of Chord M2+ which is played with a *barré*, there are few advantages to omitting the fifth course here.

The second time around Bartolotti has written *F tagliata*. Here if the the fifth course is left out, the third and fourth fingers are ready for the passage work which follows. The move to second position takes place later, on the last beat of the bar. Bartolotti has also used a standard Chord F in bar 23 of the piece and there are several other six-four chords throughout.

**It is hard to believe that Bartolotti was incapable of writing the same harmonic progression accurately twice in one short movement if he was really concerned about the bass part.**

#### **Musical Example 17A-B – Courante, p.57, b.2-4 & 12-14**

**A.**

8

4 6 7 4 6 7

4 6 7 4 6 7

M 2 K 2 H 3

**B.**

3 4 5 6 7 8

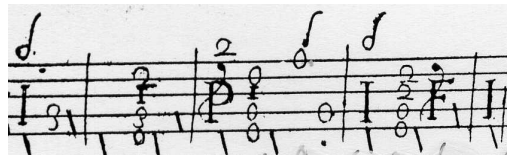
3 4 5 6 7 8

3 4 5 6 7 8



There are passages, as in Musical Example 18A-B, where in spite of the *tagliata* chord, octave stringing would obscure the bass line rather than enhance it. The fifth course could be included in Chord P. However, if the counterpoint is analysed correctly it can be seen that in the chord following P *tagliata*, the note on the fourth course actually belongs to the inner part. It is the seventh of the chord and resolves by way of the changing note figure on to C sharp on the second course in Chord I. Bartolotti has placed it on the fourth course because in this particular 4-part chord it is not practical to play it on the second course. With a *bourdon* on the fourth course the seventh is doubled in the bass and does not resolve satisfactorily. The inner part is doubled in a random way below the real bass and the changing note figure is also left hanging. In the three preceding chords the lowest part simply doubles the highest in consecutive octaves.

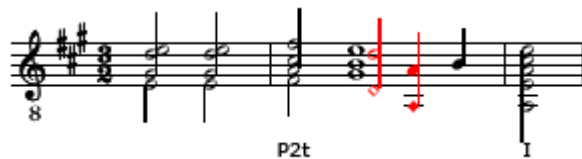
#### Musical Example 18A-B – Passacaglia, p.31, b.2-4



A.



B.



The example shows first the correct underlying counterpoint (A) and secondly what would actually be heard when the passage is played with *bourdons* on the lower courses (B).

#### Six-four chords without *lettere tagliate* - Chords +, C, E and M

There are no *lettere tagliate* for Chords +, C or E because the way they are fingered means that auxiliary notes can easily be accommodated without omitting the fifth course. The fourth and fifth courses are unstopped in Chords

C and E; in Chord + the fifth course is usually stopped with the first finger and the fourth with the second leaving the third and fourth fingers free. Chord C, a D major chord, can easily accommodate a 4-3 suspension at a cadence and Bartolotti often uses it in this way. On the other hand it is difficult to introduce auxiliary notes into Chord M, even if the fifth course is omitted. As this is stopped only by the *barré* leaving it out does not free up any fingers. The fourth course is also stopped only by the *barré*. In the major form the third course is stopped with the second finger, the second course with the fourth finger and the first course with the third finger. In the minor form the third course is stopped with the third finger, the second course with the fourth finger and the first course with the second finger. It is not possible to re-finger either form to free the fourth finger so there is no point in having a *lettera tagliata* for it.

### The remaining chords

The remaining chords are set out in Musical Example 19. Of those which will be in either root position or first inversion with octave stringing, A, B, D, H and I are fingered in a way which makes it possible to hold the chord whilst playing auxiliary notes at least in some circumstances and 4-3 suspensions can be imposed on Chords H and I.

#### Musical example 19 – Bartolotti's other *alfabeto* chords



### Chord N

Chord N can sometimes accommodate an auxiliary note if the fifth course, which is stopped with the second finger, is omitted. Although there is no N *tagliata* Bartolotti frequently writes the equivalent in tablature as in Musical Example 20 where the seventh of the chord is introduced as a passing note on the first course. The corresponding Chord N is shown at the end of the stave. Bartolotti has also indicated that the open fourth course should be included in the first chord making it into a six-four with octave stringing. He could easily have made it a root position chord by stopping the fourth course at the fifth fret with the third finger; he seems to have preferred to keep both the third and fourth fingers free for the passage work which follows. Chords P5 and M3 are also six-four chords.



### Musical Example 20 – Corente, p.53, b.26-28

This variant of Chord N and **a variant of Chord A** with the fifth course omitted also occur several times as simple six-four chords as in Musical Example 21

### Musical Example 21 – Ciaccona, p.49, 3-5

An ascending appoggiatura can also be played on the first course if the fifth course is omitted from Chord N. This occurs occasionally in Bartolotti's **Secondo libro** and is very common in Corbetta's **La guitarre royale** (Paris, 1671).

### Chord &

The seventh can also be introduced into the chord represented by **&** if the fifth course is omitted although this occurs less often. The chord is played with a *barré*; the second course is stopped with the second finger, the fourth course with the third finger and the fifth course with the fourth finger. If the fifth course is omitted, the seventh can be played on the third course with the fourth finger.

In Musical Example 22 the G *tagliata* is preferable because the fourth finger will be used for the notes on the first course in the preceding bar. The next chord is a

**Musical Example 22 – Ciaccona, p.49, b.56-60**

**Musical Example 23 – Passacaglia, p. 11, b.36-38**

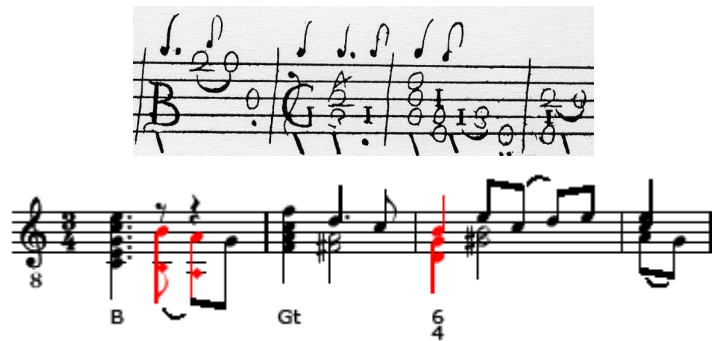
Chords K and L are problematic because of the position of the third and fourth fingers and leaving out the fifth course does not provide a solution. In Chord K,

as in Chord M, the fifth course is stopped only by the *barré* so that leaving it out does not free up any fingers. The fingering of Chord L is awkward and cannot be altered to accommodate auxiliary notes.

It should be noted that in Musical Example 4, bar 1, (above) the auxiliary note following Chord M+ can be included in the chord, but that following Chord K cannot; Bartolotti has notated the latter as a single note. Although his notation is quite detailed, he is not entirely consistent. He sometimes adds auxiliary notes to strummed chords which cannot be played whilst the chord is sustained and sometimes uses standard chords in conjunction with passage work where *tagliate* chords would be preferable.

Bartolotti occasionally writes 3-part six-fours which are unnecessary and compromise the voice leading of the lowest part as in Musical Example 24.

#### Musical Example 24 – Corente, p.56, b.3-8



### Libro Primo – Conclusions

All that Bartolotti has done in **Libro primo** is to omit the fifth course from Chord G and Chord F fairly consistently for purely practical reasons, the most obvious of these being to insert a 4-3 suspension with ornamentation into the chord at a cadence. He rarely omits the fifth course from Chord P because the chord can usually be re-fingered. He may have included it in his table because it is a minor version of Chord G and then realized that there was no need for it because of the difference in fingering. He has no inhibitions about using other *alfabeto* chords which are six-fours with a *bourdon* on the fifth course or writing six-four chords in tablature.

Today Bartolotti's *lettere tagliate* have attracted attention because they are very noticeable in the printed score. His contemporaries simply wrote out altered chords in tablature in similar circumstances. In his **Varii capricci per la ghittara spagnola**. (Milan 1643) Corbetta regularly notates Chord G in tablature leaving

out the fifth course in exactly the same circumstances as Bartolotti uses his *lettere tagliate*.

**Of a total of 66 notated chords, 35 are 4-3 suspensions, 21 have other fingering implications, 10 have no obvious fingering advantages. Standard Chord G occurs 23 times and standard Chords F and P are used freely.**

More than half of the instances where he has omitted the fifth course from Chord G involve the 4-3 suspension with an ornament at a cadence as in Musical Example 25.

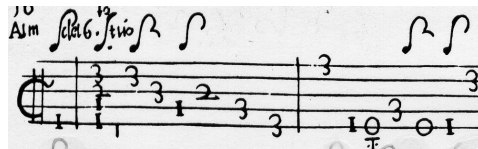
**Musical Example 25 - Passacaglia, Corbetta 1643 p.30 b.53-4**



In Musical Example 26A the fifth course is omitted from the first chord in anticipation of the arpeggio figure that follows, and in Musical Example 26B it is omitted so that the trill can be played on the third course.

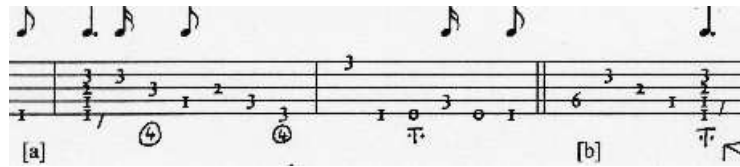
**Musical Example 26A-B – Almanda, Corbetta 1643 p.50 b.1-2 & b.18**

**A.**



**B.**





**A**

**B.**



Corbetta does not always put in the ornament. The two courantes which follow end with an almost identical cadential figure, but the trill on third course is not indicated in the tablature. However, it was standard practice to play an ornament of some kind at a cadence, and it is reasonable to assume that one is intended to be played in each movement. From 1643 onwards Corbetta frequently omits the fifth course from Chord G although he invariably includes it in Chord P and other standard chords with the fifth of the chord on the fifth course.

Other guitar sources indicate that ornamentation may be added *ad libitum*. In **The False consonances of musick** (ca.1682, p.79) Matteis for example writes

*To set your tune off the better you must make severall sorts of graces of your own genius, it being very troublesome for the composer to mark them.*

**This has implications for left-hand fingering beyond the immediately obvious.**

In French sources, De Visée, who apparently never used a low octave string on the fifth course, often writes out the F major chord (the equivalent of G *tagliate*) omitting the fifth course as in the Chacone in F major on p. 49 of his **Livre de guitarre** (1682). Grenerin, throughout his **Livre de guitarre** (1680) leaves out the fifth course from the F major chord but not from the minor chord represented in *alfabeto* by the letter P or from other standard chords with the fifth of the chord on the fifth course. Matteis, in the table of *alfabeto* chords on p.8 of **The false consonances of musick** has indicated that the fifth course should always be omitted from Chord G, but not from any of the other chords with the fifth of the chord on the fifth course.

**Six-four chords are either acceptable or not depending on your point of view and can be easily and consistently eliminated.**

Left- and right hand fingerings are variable. There are different ways of doing things; some may be better than others but it is to some extent a personal matter

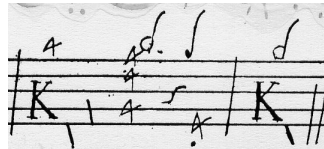


and players will have different ideas about what works best in practice. Deciding on the optimum placement of the music on the fingerboard in respect of both the left and right hands, and notating the music accurately and conveniently is a daunting task.

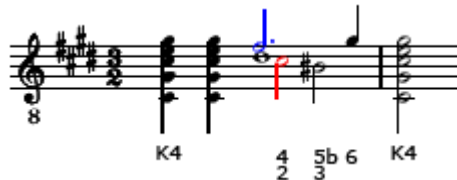
There are other features of the music in **Libro primo** which are equally significant when considering whether Bartolotti had any specific method of stringing in mind. In particular the way in which he often places notes on the fourth and especially the fifth course which belong in the upper octave in the part-writing and in the voicing of chords. In Musical Example 27 the voice-leading at the cadence in only makes sense if the notes on both the fourth and fifth courses sound in the upper octave as in A. The underlying harmonic progression is a nonsense if these notes are treated as if they belonged in the lower octave as in B.

1. The chord in tablature is a diminished chord on the leading note/dominant seventh with a 4-3 suspension.
2. The C sharp on the **fifth** course resolves onto the B sharp on the **third** course.
3. The F sharp on the fourth course should fall to E natural but in Chord K4 this is in the octave above. (The 4 is missing from the final Chord K in the tablature).

#### Musical Example 27A-C – Passacaglia, p.35, last 4 bars



A.



B.



Bartolotti could have put the C sharp on the third course stopped at the sixth fret as shown in Musical Example 27C. It is no more difficult to play in that way. The F sharp is acceptable in the lowest part but it should fall to E natural which is only present in the upper octave in Chord K4.



The emphasis on the treble strings of the lower courses is pervasive. Because of the way in which the guitar is strung notes on the fourth and fifth courses will be clearly audible in the upper register, sometimes creating a different melodic line or inner part from that which the tablature seems to suggest. Many players are so conditioned to thinking of them as belonging to the bass part that they overlook this peculiarity. Passages like this are common in baroque guitar music, which is why no single method of stringing results in a version which conforms consistently to the rules of counterpoint. Similar effects can be seen in Examples 4 and 18 above.

The music in **Libro primo** is less well known and less immediately appealing than that in **Secondo libro**. Players are unfamiliar with it and seem unable to look beyond what may at first sight seem obvious.

## Bartolotti's Secondo Libro

It should be fairly obvious to anyone who has read the preceding with an open mind that the *lettere tagliate* used in **Libro primo** have nothing to do with eliminating six-four chords. Things are less clearcut in **Secondo libro**.

The music is different in style from that of the earlier book with a more lute-like texture and fewer strummed chords. Although it is in Italian tablature, *alfabeto* is used sparingly and even standard chords are sometimes notated in tablature. Bartolotti has included his three *lettere tagliate* in the tables at the beginning of the book, but they are used only in a handful of places in the music.

Instead of indicating the direction of the strummed strokes in the Italian manner, with stroke marks down and up from the lowest tablature line, the note values for strummed chords are placed on the staff with the stems down or up as appropriate with the note-head on the tablature line representing the lowest note of the chord; this may be on the third, fourth or fifth course.

In theory this should have enabled him to indicate his intentions precisely. In practice the system does not make it clear whether the first and second courses should be included in chords which start on the fourth or fifth course. This can lead to harmonic and melodic ambiguity. To address this problem, Bartolotti often, but not always, puts in zeros even when the position of the note value on the staff alone indicates this.

In Musical Example 1A-B it is not clear whether the open first course should be included in the second chord. If it is included the chord is a minor seventh chord on E; if it is omitted it is a plain G minor chord. The melodic line also varies.

### Musical Example 1 - Canarie p.74 b. 8-10

The image displays three musical staves. The top staff is a handwritten tablature with numbers 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000. The bottom two staves are printed musical notation, labeled A and B, showing the same passage with different interpretations of the second chord.

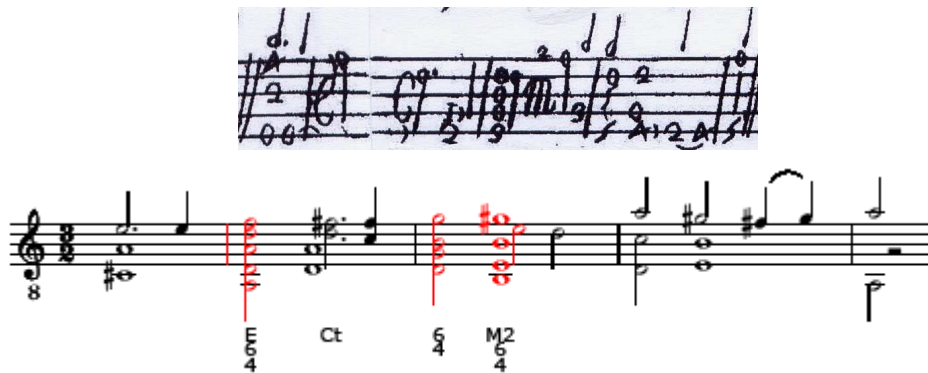
The complexities of the system seem to have made it difficult to notate and engrave the music clearly and accurately. As a result there are many inconsistencies which make it impossible to be certain of Bartolotti's objectives – if indeed he had a clear purpose in mind at all and he may not have done.

*[In the musical examples from Secondo libro which follow, notes on the fourth and fifth courses are usually shown in the lower octave in order to highlight the difference between standard chords and tagliate chords. Notes on the fourth and fifth courses which*

belong in the upper octave are usually shown in blue to highlight the extent to which they are used as re-entrant courses. Six-four chords are shown in red to draw attention to the frequency with which they occur and the complete lack of theoretical logic with which they are used in the music. As left-hand fingering is less of an issue it is indicated only in the transcriptions in the places where it is particularly relevant. Ornaments are not shown in the transcription unless they have some bearing on the point being illustrated. It is however clear that the music is intended to be elaborately ornamented and this has implications for how the music may be arranged on the fingerboard].

In Musical Example 2 Bartolotti has indicated that the fifth course should be omitted from Chord C, which with octave stringing will be converted from a six-four chord to root position. As the other three chords in the passage, including that notated in tablature at the beginning of bar 3 (a variant of Chord A), will be six-four chords anyway there is no logic in this. Passages like this occur throughout the book.

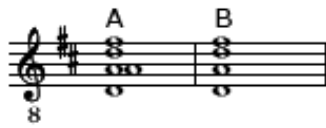
### Musical Example 2 – Passacaglie p.62, b.44-48



### Chord C

Bartolotti frequently indicates that the fifth course should be omitted from Chord C. Players who favour octave stringing on both fourth and fifth courses claim that this proves conclusively that this is the method of stringing which Bartolotti preferred and that the purpose of his unusual notation was to eliminate six-four chords. Without a *bourdon* on the fifth course - the so-called "French" tuning - Chord C will sound the same whether the fifth course is included or not as in Musical Example 3.

**Musical Example 3 – Chord C – French tuning  
With and without the fifth course**



The following example is quoted in the introduction to a recent arrangement for classical guitar of some of Bartolotti's music edited by Jeffrey George.<sup>7</sup> In bar 3 of Musical Example 4A Bartolotti has indicated that the fifth course should be included in Chord C. In bar 3 of Musical Example 4B he has indicated that it should be omitted.

**Musical Example 4 A-B – Gigue, p. 44, b. 11-14**

**A.** **B.**

Musical notation for Musical Example 4 A-B. It shows two versions, A and B, of a Gigue. Version A includes the fifth course in Chord C (indicated by a '5' below the staff) and Version B omits it. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines. The chords are labeled 'C6' and 'I'.

With the French tuning there will be no “aural difference” between Chord C in A and Chord C in B as George observes. This may be so, but it begs the question –

**Why is it acceptable to have a six-four chord in one place but not the other? If six-four chords or voice leading were an issue, Bartolotti should have left out the fifth course in both places.**

George has not offered any justification for this inconsistency.

It is possible that Bartolotti was musically illiterate and did not understand when it was appropriate to use six-four chords. He just eliminated them here

and there at random. There are however other explanations which do him more credit.

1. Bartolotti is more concerned with creating contrasting textures. In section A a short melodic sequence is punctuated by 5-part chords. Section B occurs in a passage which is in 2-part counterpoint with a brief imitative motif where a 5-part chord would be less appropriate.

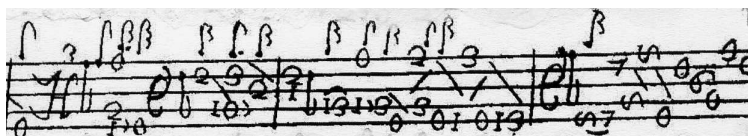
2. In section B omitting the fifth course makes it easier to place the emphasis on the fourth course D, following the C sharp in the previous bar which makes the voice leading clearer. Bartolotti does not offer any advice about how the chords are to be strummed but it is possible to vary them using only the thumb, only fingers or a combination of both. De Visée includes very detailed instructions for different kind of strums.<sup>8</sup>

Overall the voice leading of the lowest part is not very satisfactory. In Section A the dominant seventh chord on E in bar 2 of the example has the seventh on the fourth course resolving in the upper octave in Chord I. In Section B Bartolotti has indicated that the open fifth course should be included in the opening chords which, with a *bourdon*, creates an unnecessary doubling of the root of the chord an octave lower and an upward leap of a seventh in the lowest voice, both of which are out of keeping with the prevailing texture.<sup>9</sup> Bartolotti is fond of creating unusual sonorities by including as many unison open courses as possible. With the French tuning the chord has a characteristic luminescence.

### Chord E

Bartolotti rather less frequently indicates that the fifth course should be omitted from Chord E but is similarly inconsistent from a musical point of view in the way he uses one form rather than the other. In Musical Example 5 omitting the fifth course from Chord E in the first bar certainly improves the voice leading in a passage of 2-part counterpoint but it should also have been omitted from Chord E at the end of the passage for the same reason. However, overall the section reaches its climax with Chord E before a passage in *campanellas* which explains why he may have preferred to make a distinction between the number of courses included.

#### Musical Example 5 – Allemande, p. 58 b.15-17







Chord C occurs approximately 187 times throughout the book; the 5-course form 96 times, the 4-course form 91 times.

Chord E occurs approximately 115 times; the 5-course form 68 times, the 4-course version 47. There is no apparent musical logic to the distinction made between the 4 - and 5-part versions.

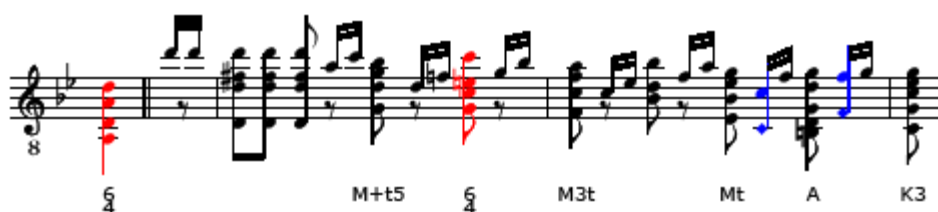
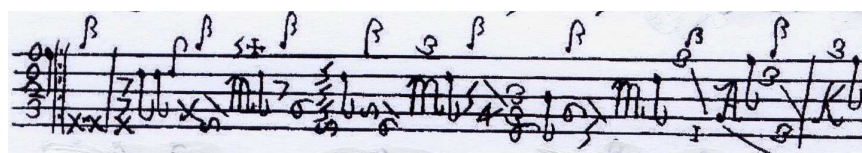
### Chord M

Lex Eisenhardt<sup>10</sup> has suggested that Bartolotti may have regarded Chords M and M+ as *barré* transpositions of Chords C and E – as indeed they are. This observation is however wide of the mark as Bartolotti does not seem to have noticed the connection between them and rarely indicates that the fifth course should be omitted from either Chord M or Chord M+.

Although Chord M/M+ occurs 98 times throughout *Secondo libro*, Bartolotti has indicated that the fifth course should be omitted from it in only 10 places.

Three of these occur in the following passage reproduced by Eisenhardt but not transcribed into staff notation.<sup>11</sup>

### Musical Example 6 – Allemande p.95 b.10-11



In this example the chord in tablature immediately following M5+ is a six-four chord – actually Chord N with the fifth course omitted. Eisenhardt has failed to point this out or justify the discrepancy. The fifth course stopped at the seventh fret with the second finger could be included but it is easier to omit it. Bartolotti should have omitted the fourth course from the chord as he has done from the

chord following Chord M3. The chord at the end of the previous section is also a six-four chord which Bartolotti has clearly indicated by putting the zeros on the fourth and fifth lines. It is the equivalent of Chord E with the first course omitted. Throughout the rest of this particular piece there are two instances of Chord M where Bartolotti has indicated that the fifth course should be included as well as a standard Chord P at the beginning and a standard Chord C in bar 17. It is hard to believe that he would be so inconsistent if six-four chords were really an issue.

Chords C and M frequently occur one after the other and Bartolotti omits the fifth course from Chord C and not Chord M which also suggests that he perceived no connection between them. Musical Example 7 illustrates this inconsistency and also highlights the irregularity in the voice leading of the lower part. The D sharp in the lower octave in the second bar is superfluous and results in the bass line falling a seventh. Bartolotti could have avoided this by playing it at the eighth fret on the third course as shown below. It is easier for both the left hand and right hand to play the note on the fifth course. The dominant seventh at the cadence is on the fourth course although it belongs and resolves in the upper octave. Problems like this occur constantly in the music; just leaving out the fifth course here and there does not enhance the voice leading in any way.

#### Musical Example 7 – Sarabande p. 48 b.16-20

The image displays a musical score for a Sarabande, specifically measures 16-20 on page 48. It features a treble staff and a bass staff. Above the treble staff, there is a handwritten musical notation. The bass staff shows a sequence of chords labeled M+2, Ct, and I. Below the bass staff, a diagram illustrates the fretting for the M+2 chord on a six-stringed instrument, with the fifth course (string 5) being the lowest note.

From p.77 onwards Bartolotti gives up indicating that the fifth course should be omitted from these three chords almost entirely, which suggests that he had changed his mind about whether this was necessary.

## Chords G, P and F

Rather than using the *lettere tagliate* for Chords G, P and F, Bartolotti usually notates these in tablature if the fifth course is to be omitted in the same circumstances that he uses his *lettere tagliate* in **Libro primo** - that is to introduce a 4-3 suspension or to accommodate ornamentation or passage work.

### Chord G

In Musical Example 8 Bartolotti has omitted the fifth course from Chord G in the second bar so that a 4-3 suspension combined with a descending appoggiatura can be inserted into the chord; the B flats on the third course will be stopped with the fourth finger throughout. At the cadence the fifth course is omitted so that the passing note E flat, the seventh of the chord can be played on the second course also with the fourth finger. The first chord is a six-four – the equivalent of Chord E without the first course; the note on the fifth course obscures the voice leading of the lower part.

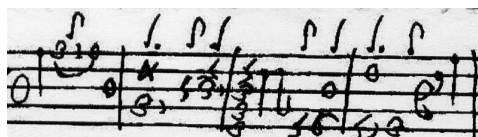
#### Musical Example 8 – Sarabande p. 90 b.9-14



### Chord P

In Musical Example 9 if the fifth course is omitted the chord can be re-fingered and sustained whilst the passing note is played. The notes on the fifth course in the first bar belong in the upper octave; Bartolotti could easily have put them in the right octave on the second and third courses. As they are slurred leaving out the *bourdon* is not an easy option. Chord E at the end is a six-four.

#### Musical Example 9 – Sarabande p. 93 b.1-4





## Chord F

In Musical Example 10 if the fifth course is omitted from Chord F the note E on the fourth course can be stopped with the second finger and held right through to the cadence; the note A on the third course, the first note of the 4-3 suspension, is played with the third finger which is also in the correct position for the chord at the cadence. It should be noted that to make harmonic sense, in bar 2 of the example the note D on the fourth course (shown in blue) belongs in the upper octave whilst the A and F in the previous bar (shown in red) are held over. The quaver E in bar 1 cannot be treated as a suspension and resolve onto the note C.<sup>12</sup> In bar 4 of the example Bartolotti could easily have included the open fifth course in the A major chord making it root position instead of a six-four.

## Musical Example 10 – Sarabande p. 35 b.18 -20



Bartolotti never indicates that the fifth course should be omitted from Chord + which is also a six-four chord although in a few places he does notate the chord in tablature as a 4 -part chord.

## Chords A and N

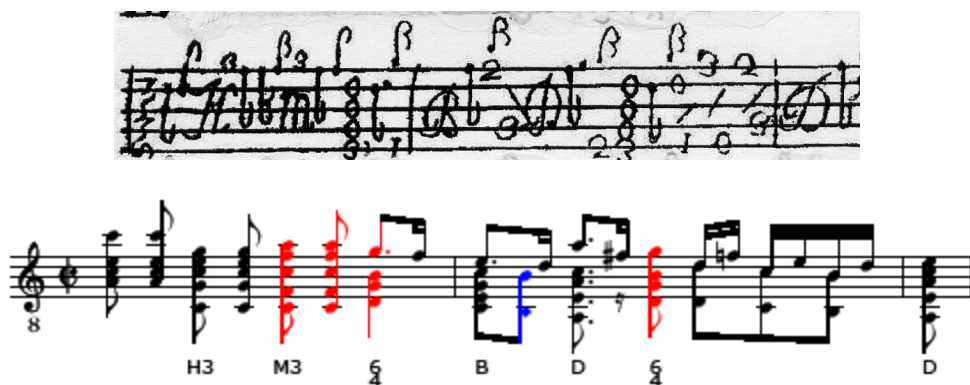
The A major chord in the previous example is a variant of Chord A/N. Chords N and A omitting the fifth course occur frequently, sometimes combined with auxiliary notes but quite often as plain and simple six-four chords. Bartolotti often prefers the version of Chord A with the third of the chord on the open second course as in Musical Example 11. He could have included the fifth course stopped at the second fret making the chord a six-three and indeed there is no obvious reason why he should have omitted it. The semiquaver D (in blue) could also easily be played on the second course to avoid unnecessary doubling in the octave below.

### Musical Example 11 – Sarabande p. 31 b.16-19



The same chord occurs twice in Musical Example 12; it would not have been difficult to include the fifth course in both of the chords in spite of the passing notes. Chord M3 is of course a six-four chord.

### Musical Example 12 – Allemande p. 58



The chord in bar 2 of Musical Example 13A-B is the equivalent of Chord N at the fifth fret with the fifth course (sounding the third of the chord) omitted; it

could be included but it is easier to leave it out. In bar 1 of the example the note on the open fourth course belongs in the upper octave; in the penultimate bar (marked with a bracket) the open fifth course also belongs in the upper octave; the note in the lower octave is superfluous and creates an inappropriate leap of seventh with the preceding and following note G. The correct voice leading of the lower part is shown in blue throughout. The second half of the piece starts with another six-four Chord N. In this instance the open fourth course could be included instead being stopped at the seventh fret; indeed the chord sounds better when played in that way.

### Musical Example 13A-B – Sarabande p. 28 b. 3-7 & 13-14

### Remaining Chords

Eisenhardt claims that “Significantly... Chords B, D, H, I, K, L, R and & are always indicated with a strum covering all five courses and are therefore in root position”.<sup>13</sup> (He has ignored Chords A and N). In fact, although Chord & and the dissonant form of Chord L are included in the table of chords at the beginning of the book, Chord & is never used in the music and Chord L occurs only in a couple of places so the question of whether to omit the fifth course from them never arises. There is no reason why Bartolotti should leave out the fifth from the other chords. There are no practical advantages in doing so as is explained in the section on **Libro primo**. Chords B, D, H and I can easily accommodate auxiliary notes whilst Chord K cannot in most circumstances.



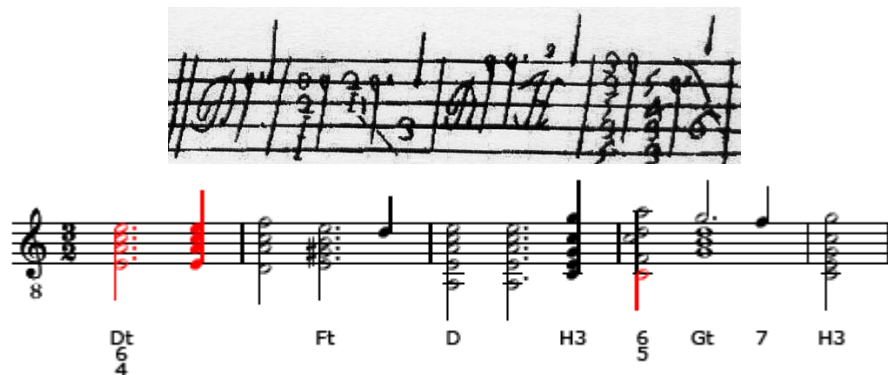
However Bartolotti does indicate that the fifth course should be omitted from Chords D and I in a small number of places; in each case they will then be six-fours. In Musical Example 14 the fifth course is to be omitted from Chord D combined with a 4-3 suspension perhaps because the passage consists mainly of 4-part chords or to avoid the G sharp falling a seventh; he should really have omitted the E on the fourth course which is superfluous.

#### Musical Example 14 – Allemande p. 60 b.5-7



In Musical Example 15 the fifth course is also omitted from Chord D in a short passage of 4-part chords. In both examples it seems reasonably certain that this is intentional rather than a misprint. Furthermore in Musical Example 15 F *tagliate* in bar 2 and G *tagliate* in bar 4 (notated in tablature) are used so that the dominant seventh can be introduced as passing notes. The chord which precedes G *tagliate* is a minor seventh chord on the second degree of the scale – D F A C. The seventh – C – is duplicate in the lower octave and does not resolve; Bartolotti should have omitted it if he was using a *bourdon* on the fifth course as it creates an unsatisfactory bass line.

#### Musical Example 15 – Passacaglie p. 62 b.68-70



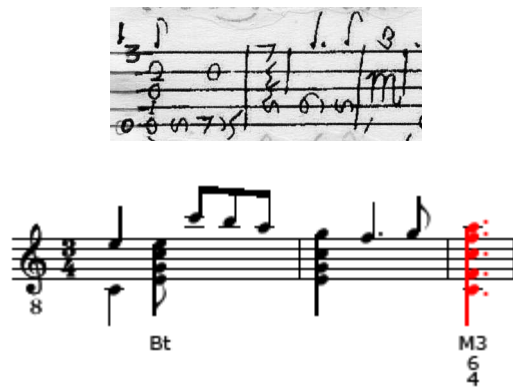
In Musical Example 16 the fifth course is to be omitted from Chord I in what is a characteristic cadential formula.

### Musical Example 16 – Allemande p.15 b.13-14



Although Bartolotti does not use his innovative notational device to indicate that the fifth course should be omitted from Chord B he occasionally writes out the chord in tablature as in Musical Example 17 where the fifth course is to be omitted in a similar cadential formula.

### Musical Example 17 – Courante p.30 b. 3-5



The only chords from which Bartolotti never omits the fifth course are Chord H (he occasionally uses R instead of H2) and Chord K. There is no obvious reason why he should, as in both chords the fifth course is stopped only by the *barré* and omitting it does not therefore have any fingering advantages.

Bartolotti does quite often write out *alfabeto* chords in tablature omitting the first course in order to create a different melodic line. In Musical Example 18 Chord H3 is notated without the first course. There is no “aural difference” between this and Chord B which precedes it. However, from the point of view of left-hand fingering it is convenient to shift the chord to the third fret in

anticipation of the auxiliary notes which follow. The unusual voicing of the chord in bar 4 marked with an asterisk should also be noted – the note on the third course is higher in pitch than that on the second course. The note A on the open fifth course at the end also belongs in the upper octave with superfluous doubling in the lower octave and a skip of a seventh in the lowest part.

### Musical Example 21 – Sarabande p. 56 b. 14-18



### Six-four chords in tablature

In addition to the 4-part versions of ChordA/N there are a fair number of 3, 4 and 5-part six-four chords notated in tablature. In Musical Example 19 Bartolotti has actually doubled the fourth in the bass – for the simple reason that if he wants to start the piece with a 5-part chord this is the only practical combination of notes which will fit with the note stopped at the seventh fret on the first course. There will be no “aural difference” whether the fifth course is included or not.

### Musical Example 19 – Ciacona p. 17 b. 1-4



The deciding factor as to how many courses to include in a chord and how to arrange the notes on the fingerboard is purely matter of what is practical. In bar 3 of Musical Example 20 there is a 3-part six-four chord – actually Chord M2 with the fourth and fifth courses omitted because in the context it is awkward to

finger the complete chord. The note on the fifth course in the chord on the third beat in bar 4 is the dominant seventh. It belongs in the upper octave and resolves onto the G on the third course in the next bar. The note in the lower octave is superfluous and creates an unwanted leap of a seventh in the lowest part. There is no other way in which Bartolotti could have included the seventh in the chord. The open first course in the first chord of the last bar is superfluous from the point of view of the part writing and also creates no “aural difference” to the sound of the chord; presumably it is included because it is more convenient to included four courses when strumming the chord. Bartolotti could have intabulated the chord in a simpler way as shown below.

### Musical Example 20 – Sarabande p. 56 b. 3-7

This truncated version of Chord M also occurs in Musical Example 21; the root of the chord – F – could easily be played on the fourth course but Bartolotti has omitted it. In both examples the voice leading of the lower part is unsatisfactory.

### Musical Example 21 – Courante p. 65 b. 6-7

**Throughout the book there are approximately eighty six-four chords notated in tablature.**

Some of these can be justified in one way or another but most of the time they are simply six-four chords which Bartolotti could and would surely have avoided if he regarded six-four chords as unacceptable.

On balance if these are offset against the number of places where Bartolotti has indicated that the fifth course should be omitted from Chords C & E there are slightly fewer six-four chords than there might otherwise have been. But to seize on one insignificant feature of the music and insist that this proves beyond any doubt that it is intended to be played with one method of stringing rather than any other whilst ignoring other equally important features which suggest different possibilities is simplistic and partisan.

## **Secondo Libro – Conclusions**

Bartolotti makes no consistent or logical attempt to avoid standard six-four chords represented with *alfabeto*. The six-four chords notated in tablature occur in a predictable context - the fifth course is omitted from Chord N and both the fourth and fifth course from Chord M for practical reasons and the first course is omitted from Chord E for harmonic and melodic reasons to avoid a minor third at a cadence in a minor key. These three variants occur with such regularity that they cannot be dismissed as errors. Other six-four chords occur where it is impractical to arrange the notes on the fingerboard in any other way. Although throughout the book there are a substantial number of misprints, especially in the note values, the music is not so inaccurately printed that overall it cannot be taken at face value.

**Eliminating six-four chords at random is not acceptable by any standards and does not represent progress or an evolutionary step in the way that music for 5-course guitar developed.**

Bartolotti's disregard for other aspects of musical theory, in particular the correct preparation and resolution of 4-3 suspensions and chords of the seventh, with the dissonance often placed on the lower courses and resolving in the upper octave indicates that he adopted a practical rather than pedantic approach to arranging the music. First and foremost the notes have to fit conveniently onto the fingerboard of a 5-course instrument.

The frequency with which notes on the fifth course which belong to the lowest part will be doubled at random in the lower octave, creating ungainly skips of a seventh when a bourdon is used on the fifth course, even when they could easily

be played at the correct pitch on a higher course suggests that that he took it for granted that the instrument had re-entrant fifth course. This feature is not confined to *campanella* passages; single notes or groups of notes on the same course may be displaced for no obvious reason.

Claims are often made that with the “right technique” all of these peculiarities can be eliminated; the *bourdons*, or in some instances the high octave strings, can be left out. This may be so when playing *campanella* passages but it is not practical to do so in other circumstances. In Musical Example 22 the three notes on the fifth course highlighted in blue are slurred and it is therefore, if not impossible, extremely difficult to leave out the *bourdon*. It would make more sense to play the notes on the second course as shown below. Chord G3 at the beginning is a six-four chord.

### Musical Example 22 – Sarabande Double p. 31, b.8-10

Idiosyncracies like this are common in the music. A similar instance can be seen in Musical Example 9 above.

On the other hand notes on the fourth course are more likely to belong to in the lower octave and may even have a dual function. Musical Example 23 illustrates difference in treatment of the two courses.

### Musical Example 23 – Gigue p.91 b.4-6





The *bourdon* on the fifth course in bar 2 is superfluous; at the cadence the note on the fourth course belongs in both octaves. Of all composers for the baroque guitar, Bartolotti is the one guitarist who exploits the re-entrant effect to the greatest extent. As a theorbo player re-entrant tunings would have been second nature to him. He would also have been familiar with the different *accordes nouveaux* with their emphasis on open courses.

Bartolotti is also more interested in creating contrasting textures and sonorities using different right-hand techniques than in eliminating the six-four chords or ensuring that there is a continuous bass line. He has a tendency to use 5-part chords at the beginning and end of sections whilst 4-part chords occur in the context of the intervening 3- or 4-part counterpoint which makes sense from the point of view of creating a balanced, homogenous texture. 5-part chords are also more likely to be used in pieces like the *sarabanda*, *ciaccona* or *passacaglie* where the emphasis is on block harmony. The chords, both those notated in *alfabeto* and those in tablature are often to be arpeggiated in an elaborate manner rather than strummed so that the inversions are unimportant. He frequently duplicates notes in a chord which be in unison although in theory this creates no “aural difference”. In practice doubling notes in unison, especially if open courses are included does give the chord a more luminous timbre.

## Overall Conclusions

There is a tendency today to regard every aspect of baroque guitar music and its notation as an indication of the method of stringing the composer preferred as if nothing else mattered. It is important not to overlook other explanations as to why the music is intabulated in the way that it is; these may also give us an insight into how it might have been played. It is also important not to read into what are really only convenient notational devices more than they are intended to convey. Eisenhardt claims that “Bartolotti’s notations for strummed chords, the *lettere tagliate* from his 1640 book and the stroke signs [i.e. stems of the note values] in the tablature from his Secondo libro seem to serve the purpose of increasing control over the bass line, for example by avoiding 6/4 chords on a guitar strung with bourdons”.<sup>14</sup>

This is confusing the medium with the message. It is not the function of the notation to exercise control over the bass line or any other aspect of the composition. The music is composed first. It may then be written down in one

way or another. The notation may be adapted to make the composer's intentions clearer but it does not determine the voicing of the chords or the voice-leading. Bartolotti does use *alfabeto* as a shorthand device in a number of different ways to notate complex harmonic progressions– particularly in **Libro primo**. But in **Secondo libro** he is more likely to write out the music in tablature including the zeros where necessary.

He did not need any unusual or complex systems of notation to eliminate six-four chords or to achieve more control over the bass line. It would have been less time consuming and more practical when engraving and printing the music to have notated all but the basic *alfabeto* chords in tablature putting in the zeros when appropriate (as other guitarists did). In both books he does in fact notate most of the non- standard 3-, 4- and 5-part chords in full usually putting in the zeros; the position of the note values on the staff is an unnecessary duplication of information which simply makes the score more cluttered.

There is a difference between music in staff notation which gives no information about how the music fits onto the instrument and tablature which does so fairly precisely but does not give a clear and unambiguous picture of the underlying counterpoint. The primary concern when intabulating music for a 5-course instrument is how to fit it conveniently on to the fingerboard; the rules of harmony and counterpoint must of necessity take second place as de Visée says -

*I beg those who understand the art of composition well and are unfamiliar with the guitar not to be scandalized if they find that I sometimes break the rules. The instrument calls for it and it is necessary above all to satisfy the ear.*<sup>15</sup>

The music is the way that it is because that is how the instrument is. It is unlikely that de Visée would have been content to use a less than satisfactory method of stringing and break the rules if there were a simple remedy at hand. He may well have been familiar with some of Bartolotti's music and may even have heard him play.

**Bartolotti himself makes no mention of the method of stringing he preferred – if indeed he had any preferences. The music works well with different methods of stringing and it is really a matter of personal taste which method is used today.**

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Boye - Performing 17th century Italian guitar music *in* Performance on lute, guitar and vihuela. (C.U.P. 1997, p.181).

<sup>2</sup> Doizi de Velasco, Nicolao - Nuevo modo de cifrar (1640) p16. -...y quando se quiera tañer con fugas no son tanpocos sus puntos que no passen de diez y siete, termino bastante a dilatarse en qualquier fuga, y por esta razon me parece mejor el encordarla con bordones en la quarta y

quinta cuerda, y no sin ellos, porque asi es mas sonora, y mas semejante a los puntos de las bozes naturales. Que aun que de una, o de otra manera no se libran algunas consonancias de las quartas en las bozes bajas, esto se puedo suplir, quando se tañen de rasgado.....Demas, que en los compositores antiguos ay muchos exemplos, que usaron de la quarta absolutamente, y la tuvieron per especie no solo consonante (come correspondiente de la quinta, porque de las consonantes corresponden otras consonantes .....mas aun perfeta, que la quinta, como largamente lo trata Zerlino. Si bien no usamos della libremente con la voz baja sin las circunstancias, que sabe el Compositor. Ttambien mostrare ..... el poder tañer sin dichas quartas, quando se viere en ella esta palabra mejor, y taniendo una vez de rasgado y otra punteando las cuerdas, que convinieren a algunas consonancias la hallaran perfecta adundante, bisarra y airosissima.

<sup>3</sup> Nassarre, Pablo – Escuela musica (1724) Part 2, Book 1, Chapter 9, p. 57 - En que se prueba, como la quarta es especie perfecta, y que los Practicos la cuentan entre las disonantes, y como no es consonante, ni disonante... Verdad es, que formada con el Baxo, por si sola, no tiene aquellos grados de sonoridad que otras, y por esso la cuentan entre las disonantes; aunque no es bastante motivo este, quando la experiencia nos enseña, que algunos Instrumentos Musicos se usa con el Baxo en lugar de quinta (esto es en la Guitarra y en algunos otros).

<sup>4</sup> Hudson, Richard – The concept of mode in Italian guitar music during the first half of the seventeenth century. – *Acta Musicologica*. Vol. XXXXII (1970) p.163-183. Hudson, Richard – The music in Italian tablatures for the 5-course Spanish guitar. *Journal of the Lute Society of America*. Vol. IV (1971), p. 21-42. The earliest writer to comment is Hans David - The 6-4 chord without theory : an unofficial history. – *Bach*. Vol.II/3 (1971), p.7-14. The article was originally written in the 1940s.

<sup>5</sup> Foscari, Giovanni Paolo - Il primo, seco[n]do, e terzo libro della chitarra spagnola (ca.1630 and later editions) p.1 includes a table of chords referred to as “Alfabeto dissonante”. Corbetta, Franceso – De gli scherzi armonici (1639) p. 4 includes an “Alfabeto falso”.

<sup>6</sup> Ricci, Pietro - Scuola d'intavolatura (1677) p. 12 - Delle *lettere tagliate* – Si chiamo *lettere tagliate*, poiche si lascia di tasteggiare una corda.

<sup>7</sup> Angelo Michele Bartolotti : a performance edition of suites from...Secondo libro di chitarra of 1655 ; arranged for classical guitar by Jeffrey George. Mel Bay, 2010.p.25.

<sup>8</sup> De Visée, Robert – Livre de guittarre. Paris : Bonneüil, 1682. Advis, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> George has omitted these notes from his arrangement. Op. cit. p. 121.

<sup>10</sup> Eisenhardt, Lex – “Bourdons as usual”. *In Lute XLVII* (2007) p.17.

<sup>11</sup> Op. cit. p.17.

<sup>12</sup> George has transcribed the passage as follows which makes little sense. Op. cit. p. 101.



<sup>13</sup> Op. cit. p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Eisenhardt, Lex – “More on bourdons”. *In Lute XLIX* (2009) p.77.

<sup>15</sup> De Visée Op. cit. p.4.