

TRACES OF JEWISH MUSICIANS IN THE *TRATTATO* OF LOMAZZO

MOSHÉ BARASCH, *Jerusalem*

The discovery of traces of Jewish musicians in Lomazzo's *Trattato dell'Arte della Pittura* would no doubt be of interest to historians of Jewish music as well as to art historians in general. Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo was one of the most significant writers on the subject of art during the period of the late Renaissance, and his *Trattato*, which appeared in Milan in 1584, is the most exhaustive work of its kind. In studying Lomazzo's theory of art we often have the feeling that he is relying on sources that are unknown to us. In this connection we must take into account not only the vast erudition that characterized so many of the humanistic writers of the sixteenth century but also the oral traditions — stories, explanations, conceptions — that Lomazzo had heard and incorporated in his writings without mentioning their sources. It is naturally very difficult to determine the origin of these traditions since we generally have no texts on which we can depend. For this reason even seemingly casual references may prove to be significant.

In the sixth book of the *Trattato*, which is devoted to the “practica” of the artist and which consists for the most part of a long drawn-out iconography, Lomazzo also speaks of the representation of themes that are related to music. After mentioning the well-known Biblical and mythological figures that we expect to find in this connection (David playing before Saul, Orpheus, Sappho, Apollo and the Muses), he says: “And it would be an attractive and charming thing to represent the nine choruses of music in three groups together with their instruments and the portraits of the outstanding men in each of these [choruses]...”¹ The nine choruses are: the chorus of voices (vocal music), of organs, lutes, *lire*, *viole da gamba*, harps, zithers (*cetere*), horns and trombones. The musicians who are to be represented by their portraits in each of these choruses are not mythological figures but well-known contemporaries whose names are given by Lomazzo. In the sixth chorus, that of the harps, there should be a representation of “Gio: Leonardo, known as *dall' Arpa*, the Jew of Mantua, and his son Abramo”.²

¹ *Trattato dell'Arte della Pittura, Scultura e Architettura*, ed. Saverio del Monte (Rome, 1844) II, p. 196.

² *Ibid.*

The family dall' Arpa was a famous family of Jewish musicians and actors who flourished at the court of Mantua in the sixteenth century. From a letter dated 25 February 1542, preserved in the Gonzaga archives in Mantua, we learn that "Abramo dall' Arpa, Ebreo" took the part of the god Pan in a play given under the auspices of the duke. This actor and musician was in the service of the duke of Mantua as late as December 1566. In this same year his nephew, Abramino dall' Arpa, took part in a concert given at Mantua in honour of the cardinal legate of Bologna. As late as the year 1587 he had to follow the dying duke to Goito to cheer him up with his harp playing.³

The exact name of Abramo dall' Arpa's father, whom Lomazzo calls Gio-[vanni] Leonardo, seems not to have been known. It is therefore doubtful whether Lomazzo really had Abramo dall' Arpa in mind, the one whose father must have died about a generation before the *Trattato* was written, or else Abramino, who was one of Lomazzo's contemporaries. In any case Lomazzo seems to have regarded the family dall' Arpa as the sole representatives of harp playing. It is worth noting in this connection that he names three musicians⁴ for each chorus but when he comes to the chorus of the harps he contents himself with two names only, both of which belong to this family.

In the same chapter of the *Trattato* we find a further reference of musical interest related to Jewish tradition. After giving a list of musical themes for representation by the painter, Lomazzo also speaks of the "wonderful concert of the musicians in Solomon's temple, with their various instruments on which different things are played, such as the psalms on the *neza*, the odes on the *nabuli*, which we call the organ, on the *mismor* the psalms, on the *sire* the songs, on the *zefila* the prayers, on the *berasca* the blessings, on the *hallel* the songs of praise, on the *hodaia* the songs of thanksgiving, on the *afre* (probably *asre*) the fortunes of every individual and on the *halleluia* the praises of God and the meditations".⁵

³ E. Birnbaum, *Juedische Musiker am Hofe von Mantua, von 1542-1628*, reprint from *Kalender fuer Israeliten* (Wien, 1893), pp. 11 ff.; A. Bertolotti, *Musici alla conte dei Gonzaga in Mantova* (Milano, 1890), pp. 35 f.; A. d'Ancona, *Origine del teatro italiano* (Torino, 1891), p. 400 (the last two works were not accessible to me at the time of writing this note).

⁴ In some of the choruses (e.g. the fourth) he gives more than three names and requires the painter to select his own three.

⁵ *Trattato*, II, p. 195: "...il concerto mirabile dei musici del tempio di Salomone in coro co' suoi diversi stromenti musicali, in cui diverse cose si cantavano, come i salmi nella *neza*, le odi nel *nabuli*, che è l'istesso organo appresso di noi, nel *mismor* i salmi, nel *sire* la cantica, nel *zefila* le orazioni, nel *berasca* le benedizioni, nel *halel* le laudi, nel *hodaia* il riferimento di grazie, nell' *afre* le felicità di alcuno, e nell' *aleluja* le lodi di Dio solo, e le meditazioni." The term *nabuli*/*nablium*, Greek *nabla*, is a transcription of the old Hebrew *nebel* = harp. It appears already in the Septuagint and later became fairly widespread in Mediaeval Latin. Cf. C. Benzinger in *Realenzyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, XIII, pp. 585 ff. The Byzantine dictionary (the so-called Suidas) also has *nabla*.

At first sight it would seem as if Lomazzo had taken a set of Hebrew terms, mainly from the captions of the Psalms, and used them quite wrongly as names of musical instruments (except for *nabuli* = *nebel*). However, as I have been informed by Dr. Bathja Bayer, this passage is a direct — although condensed — quotation from Pico della Mirandola's *Apologia tredecim quaestionum*.⁶ Lomazzo's list of the "ten singers of old", which follows upon his list of instruments, also appears in this passage of Pico's. Pico's source (or sources) can be identified in several mediaeval Jewish commentaries. These, in turn, only carry on a midrashic tradition of which the earliest appearances are in ySukkah III,10 and bPesahîm 117a. Dr. Bayer is preparing a study on this midrashic motive, and another study on the historical information about the contemporary musicians mentioned in Lomazzo's "nine choruses" in addition to the dall' Arpa family.⁷

⁶ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Apologia tredecim quaestionum*, in Vol. I of his *Commentationes* (Basel, 1572), fol. E iii (=p.[7] of the chapter "Quaestio quinta, de magia naturali et cabala hebraeorum").

⁷ *Trattato*, II, p. 195.

YUVAL

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ISRAËL ADLER

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HANOCH AVENARY AND BATHJA BAYER

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ABBREVIATIONS

(N.B.: The special abbreviations and sigla used by N. Allony are listed at the end of his article.)

<i>AHw</i>	W. von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> , Wiesbaden, 1959 →
<i>AL</i>	M. Steinschneider, <i>Die arabische Literatur der Juden</i> , Frankfurt a.M., 1902
<i>AMl</i>	<i>Acta Musicologica</i>
<i>b</i>	Babylonian Talmud
<i>CAD</i>	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , Chicago, 1956 →
<i>CB</i>	M. Steinschneider, <i>Catalogus librorum Hebraeorum in bibliotheca Bodleiana</i> , Berlin, 1852–1860
<i>CS</i>	E. de Coussemaker, ed., <i>Scriptores de musica medii aevi...</i> , Paris, 1864–1876
<i>DTO</i>	<i>Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich</i>
<i>Elssfeldt</i>	O. Elssfeldt, <i>The Old Testament — An Introduction</i> (tr. from the 3rd German edition by P. R. Ackroyd), Oxford, 1965
<i>Enc. Mus. Fasquelle</i>	<i>Encyclopédie de la musique</i> , Paris, Fasquelle, 1958–1961
<i>Erlanger</i>	R. d'Erlanger, <i>La musique arabe</i> , Paris, 1930–1949
<i>Farmer, Gen. Fragm.</i>	H. G. Farmer, <i>The Oriental Musical Influence and Jewish Genizah Fragments on Music</i> , London, 1964; repr. of two art. from <i>Glasgow University Oriental Society, Transactions</i> , 19 (1963): 1–15 (“The Oriental Musical Influence” = pp. 7–21 of repr.); 52–62 (“Jewish Genizah Fragments on Music” = pp. 22–32 of repr.)
<i>GS</i>	M. Gerbert, ed., <i>Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica...</i> , Sankt Blasien, 1784
<i>HOM</i>	A. Z. Idelsohn, <i>Hebräisch-orientalischer Melodienschatz</i> , Leipzig–Berlin–Jerusalem, 1914–1932
<i>HU</i>	M. Steinschneider, <i>Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters</i> , Berlin, 1893
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IMS</i>	International Musicological Society
<i>IQ</i>	<i>Islamic Quarterly</i>
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
<i>JAMS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Musicological Society</i>
<i>JIFMC</i>	<i>Journal of the International Folk Music Council</i>
<i>JMT</i>	<i>Journal of Musical Theory</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>KS</i>	<i>Kirjath Sepher</i>
<i>m</i>	Mishnah

<i>MD</i>	<i>Musica Disciplina</i>
<i>MGG</i>	<i>Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> , Kassel, 1949 →
<i>MGWJ</i>	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
<i>MQ</i>	<i>Musical Quarterly</i>
<i>NOHM</i>	<i>New Oxford History of Music</i> , London, 1955 →
<i>PAAJR</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> (ed. Migne)
<i>1Q</i>	Dead Sea Scrolls, Qumran Cave 1
<i>1QH</i>	“Thanksgiving Scroll”
<i>1QM</i>	“War Scroll”
<i>1QS</i>	“Manual of Discipline”
<i>REI</i>	<i>Revue des Etudes Islamiques</i>
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des Etudes Juives</i>
Riemann, <i>Hbd. Mg.</i>	H. Riemann, <i>Handbuch der Musikgeschichte</i> , Leipzig, 1919–1922
Riemann, <i>ML</i>	H. Riemann, <i>Musik-Lexikon</i> (quoted edition indicated by exponent)
<i>RM</i>	<i>Revue de Musicologie</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>SIMG</i>	<i>Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft</i>
Steinschneider, <i>Cat.</i> Berlin	M. Steinschneider, <i>Verzeichnis der hebräischen Handschriften [der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin]</i> , Berlin, 1878–1897
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>y</i>	Jerusalem Talmud
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>ZfMW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft</i>
<i>ZGJD</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland</i>