THE BASSANO FAMILY, THE RECORDER, AND THE WRITER KNOWN AS SHAKESPEARE

The Bassano family played an important role in the history of the recorder in the 16th and 17th centuries as performers, instrument makers, and composers. Recent research by John Hudson has placed the family closer than you can imagine to the plays and poems of William Shakespeare, in an astonishing way.

Let's take a look first at the Bassano family and their involvement with the recorder. In 1531, the brothers **Alvise, Anthony, Jasper** and **John**—going by the last name "**de Jeronimo**" (sons of Jeronimo)—paid an initial visit to the English Court of Henry VIII (ruled 1509-47), serving in the "sackbuts," a consort that played both sackbuts and shawms. The musicians probably stayed only a year or two, then returned to Venice.

In 1538, Anthony Bassano must have gone back to England, because he was appointed by the king as a "maker of diverse instruments." A year later, Alvise, Jasper and John arrived in England again, along with two more brothers, **Jacomo** the eldest and **Baptista** the youngest. Alvise wrote later that in leaving Venice, they "lost their entertainment and [were] in jeopardy of utter banishment from thence." Although Jacomo returned to Venice within a few years, continuing the Venetian branch of the family, the other five Bassanos were appointed to the English Court in 1540 "in the science or art of music." From this time on, the family used the last name Bassani, then Bassano.

The reason the brothers would have lost their "entertainment" (service or employment) and been unable to return to Venice is revealed in a letter written by Henry's agent in Venice, Edmond Harvel. The Venetian authorities denied the Bassanos a license to leave, but "putting also any displeasure or damage [that] might ensue unto them aside, [they] are departed ... with all their instruments." After praising the Bassanos as "all excellent and esteemed above all others in this city," Harvel goes on to suggest "it shall be no small honor to His Majesty to have music comparable with any other prince or perchance better and more variable."

What would the Bassanos have added to the musical establishment at Court? Not only Anthony but several other members of the family were important instrument makers. On the performing side, besides a violin band, two wind consorts existed at the Court: "sackbuts" and "flutes" (flutes and cornetti). Although the Bassano family had concentrated on shawms and sackbuts in Venice as well as during their first visit to England, my research has shown that in 1540 the brothers made up a third wind consort of "recorders."

In 1550, when Alvise's son **Augustine** was old enough to join, the consort expanded to six members.

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Astonishingly, this consort lasted until the reorganization of the Court wind musicians into a single group by Charles I in 1630—exactly 90 years. Of the 19 members of the consort during this period, and one man who was used as an extra, no fewer than 13 were Bassanos. In addition to the six already listed, the consort included Alvise's son **Lodovico**; Anthony's

By David Lasocki

The author writes about woodwind instruments, their history, repertory, and performance practices. His book with Richard Griscom, The Recorder: A Research and Information Guide, *published by Routledge, received the 2014 Vincent H. Duckles Award from the Music Library Association for best book-length bibliography or reference work in music. Now in its third edition, this collaborative book incorporates Lasocki's annual reviews in* AR *of research on the recorder. Among his other books, he wrote a definitive study of the Bassanos with Roger Prior.*

In 2010 he received the ***ARS Distinguished Achievement Award****. He is also the recipient of the 2010 Frances Densmore Prize from the American Musical Instrument Society for the most distinguished article-length work in English for his two-part article, "New Light on the Early History of the Keyed Bugle."*

Since he retired from his position as Head of Reference Services in the Cook Music Library at Indiana University in January 2011, he has been devoting himself to many unfinished writings and editions, to his own publishing company Instant Harmony, and to the practice of energy medicine. See his web site, ***www.instantharmony.net****.*

Family Tree of the Musical Members of the Bassano Family

Jeronimo I
?d. 1545

Jacomo
d. c.1559-66

Orvetta
= *Santo Griti*
aka *Santo Bassano*
c.1530-1586

Giovanni
c.1560-1617

Santino
fl. 1615-19

Antonio
fl. 1615

Alvise
d. 1554

Laura
d. by 1596
= *Joseph Lupo d. 1616*

Lodovico
d. 1593

Augustine
d. 1604

Jasper
d. 1577

John
d. 1570

Anthony I
d. 1574

Elizabeth
b. 1545
= *Ambrose Grasso d. 1582*

Mark Anthony
1546-1599

Arthur
1547-1624

Anthony II
1579-1658

Edward I
1551-1615

Andrea
1554-1626

Thomas
1589-1617

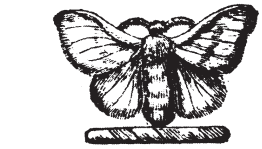
Lucretia
1556-1634
= *Nicholas Lanier I*
c.1523–1612

Jeronimo II
1559-1635

Scipio
1586-1613

Edward II
1588-1638

Henry
1597-1665



Baptista
d. 1576

Emilia
1569-1645
= *Alphonso Lanier (son of Nicholas)*
d. 1613

sons **Arthur, Edward I, Andrea** and **Jeronimo II**; Arthur's son **Anthony II**; and Jeronimo II's son **Henry**. (*See family tree above and chart of consort on p. 13.*) Three of the outsiders—William Daman and Alphonso and Clement Lanier—were related to the Bassanos by marriage.

Henry VIII himself played the recorder. A chronicler reported that the summer Progresses of 1510 found him "exercising himself daily in shooting, singing, dancing, wrestling, casting of the bar, playing at the recorders, flute, virginals, and in setting of song, making of ballads, and did set two goodly Masses." A case of seven walnut recorders from the royal instrument collection was signed out in 1542-43 "to the King's majesty's own use."

Origins of the Family

Jeronimo I, father of the six brothers, had moved by 1506-12 from the town of Bassano to Venice, where he became a member of the six *trombe e piffari* (sackbut and shawm players) of the Doge. Bassano is situated in the foothills of the Alps, below Monte Grappa, in the Veneto region of northern Italy and at that time a dependency of Venice. Lorenzo Marucini, a Venetian doctor and man of letters, wrote in 1577 that Jeronimo was "called 'il Piva,' inventor of a new bass wind instrument, excellent *pifaro* ... his excellence also in making recorders was great; whence those instruments marked with his stamp are held in high esteem among musicians and are very expensive when they are found."

"Il Piva" meant "the bagpipe"—or a dance of the 15th and 16th centuries, presumably originally danced by peasants to the bagpipe. This appellation for Jeronimo has been traced in the Bassano archives. In 1502, the city Council hired Magister Hieronymus Piva or his son, Magister Jacob Piva, to tune and maintain the organs of the church of San Francesco. In 1481, the prior of the Sancte Crucis (Holy Cross) monastery had given "about four fields" of forested land near Crespano (10 miles east of Bassano) to Baptista Piva (son of the late Andree Crespano), Baptista's unnamed wife, and their sons Zanantonio and Hieronimo. This document furnishes the names of Jeronimo's brother, father and grandfather, previously unknown, and suggests that the family was living in Crespano.

One of the functions of the recorder consort was to play dance music.

Because Jeronimo's father was already known as "il Piva," Roger Prior speculated that the family "originally worked as traveling bagpipers in the villages around Bassano." The silkworms and mulberry trees on the family's coat of arms also suggest that the family were at one time involved in the silk industry, which was well-established in Bassano and Venice at that time. How and when they became involved with wind-playing and -making remains to be discovered.

The Recorder Consort

What was it like to be a member of a recorder consort at Court in those days? The musicians were attached to the Presence Chamber, a part of the main living area of all the various royal palaces—Westminster, Greenwich, Richmond, Hampton Court, and Windsor—that was open to anyone who was entitled to appear at Court. Augustine Bassano, threatened with removal from his rented house in 1564, stated in a legal case that he was "one bounden to give daily attendance upon the Queen's Majesty"—or in other words, be on call every day.

Judging by its surviving repertory, as we will see, one of the functions of the recorder consort was to play dance music. Elizabeth was herself a keen dancer. Towards the end of her reign the French ambassador said she told him that "in her youth she danced very well, and composed measures and music, and had played them herself and danced them." As late as 1601, Virginio Orsino wrote of his meeting with the Queen, then in her late 60s: "Her Majesty was pleased to dance, which is the greatest honor that she

Places in the Court Recorder Consort

Alvise Bassano — **1540-1554**	**Lodovico Bassano** — **(1554) 1568-1593**	**Robert Baker senior** — **1594-1637**	**Robert Baker junior** **(by 1625) 1637-1642**
Jasper Bassano — **1540-1577**	**Jeronimo Bassano II** — **1578-1635**	**Henry Bassano** **(1622) 1635-1665**	
John Bassano — **1540-1570**	**Arthur Bassano** — **1570-1624**	**Anthony Bassano II** **(1609) 1624-1658**	
Anthony Bassano I — **1540–1574**	**Edward Bassano I** — **1575-1615**	**Anthony Bassano II** — **1615-1624**	**William Noke** **1624-1631**
Baptista Bassano — **1540-1576**	**William Daman** — **1576-1591**	**Alphonso Lanier** — **1593-1613**	**John Hussey** **1613-1629**
	Augustine Bassano — **1550–1604**	**Clement Lanier** **1604–1661**	

Dates in parentheses show when the member began serving as a substitute before being officially appointed. In 1630, the wind musicians became part of one large group, but they retained their nominal membership in one or more consorts until their death. Anthony Bassano II held and was paid for two places in the recorder consort.

could do me, according to the word of those informed of this court."

Dance music was used not only to accompany dancing: some of the pieces, especially the contrapuntal ones or those with irregular structures, were probably used as entertainment or dinner music. Lupold von Wedel wrote of dinner with the Queen (1585): "her musicians were also in the apartment and discoursed excellent music" (shades of *Hamlet*! see p. 23). The transcriptions of vocal music commonly played by wind musicians would also have been used as entertainment or dinner music.

In the early 17th century, documents relating to the recorder players show they took part in special ceremonies. These included the installation of the Duke of York (the future Charles I) as a Knight of the Garter in 1611; the marriage of the Elector Palatine to James I's daughter Elizabeth at Windsor in 1613; and the arrival of Henrietta Maria, Charles I's wife, from France in 1625.

Recorders seem to have played little part in Court masques, although they may have been intended by the term "soft music," as in the theater. A Spanish visitor who attended a masque in 1611 reported that "When their Majesties entered accompanied by the princess and the ambassadors of Spain and Venice, flageolets played and the curtain was drawn up." "Flageolets" is probably an erroneous version of recorders.

Although Court documents called the Bassano brothers and their successors "recorders," this consort may have played other instruments, too. Mixed consorts of one or more recorders with plucked and bowed stringed instruments as well as keyboard instruments are documented in Europe.

The Bassanos did keep up their chops on other wind instruments: four descendants of Anthony I (**Mark Anthony,** Andrea**, Edward II** and Henry) served in the sackbuts; and Anthony II and **Thomas** were associated with the flutes.

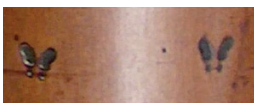
Instrument Making

The Venetian doctor Lorenzo Marucini reported Jeronimo I's excellent reputation as a recorder maker. The "new bass wind instrument" he is said to have invented was presumably the curtal (dulcian). Marucini's comment about Jeronimo's maker's mark suggests that it may have been different from those of his descendants. So he may have used the marks HIE.S, HIER.S, and HIERO.S, found on 31 surviving wind instruments (nine cornetti, eight dulcians, and 16 recorders, as well as a recorder case). The three marks are presumably contractions of the Latin name Hieronymus, the equivalent of the Venetian Jeronimo. The modern recorder maker Adrian Brown (*photographer of these maker's marks on museum insruments, below*) has concluded, however, that the marks are more likely to have been German than Italian.

The four brothers who went from Venice to England in 1539 brought "all their instruments"—perhaps stock-in-trade as well as those they played. We can be sure that Alvise was a maker, because he had a "working house" as well as a dwelling house in the family's living quarters in the Charterhouse in 1545. Anthony also had more accommodation there than Jasper, John and Baptista, but in any case, all the brothers would have had ample space for working as well as living.

When the brothers were turned out of the Charterhouse, Anthony, Jasper and John lived together in Mark Lane in the City of London, on a property containing several houses and pieces of land, formerly called The Bell and thus perhaps a disused inn. It was close to the River Thames and the port of London, therefore ideal for the export of instruments. Baptista's choosing to live apart from them could mean that he had a separate workshop or else was not a maker.

A surviving legal document from 1571 states that Jacomo, the brother who returned to Venice and a known wind-instrument maker, was "in fraterna existentis"—a business relationship—with his brothers. Another passage refers to "the property . . . of the brotherly company of the said late Jacomo and John Bassano." Perhaps instruments went in both directions between London and Venice, and Jacomo would probably have supplied his brothers with music for their use in London as well as for resale.



The breadth of the instrument-making of the first generation of the family in

England may be grasped from an inventory of "the instrument chest made by the Bassani brothers" that contained "instruments so beautiful and good that they are suited for dignitaries and potentates." The inventory was made in 1571 by Johann (Hans) Jakob Fugger, superintendent of the music at the Bavarian court in Munich. The chest contained: (1) a set of six unidentified wind instruments, possibly bombards (large shawms) or quiet shawms; (2) a set of seven *Pfeiffen* (pipes), which may have been flutes; (3) a set of 10 cornetti and a fife; (4) a set of 12 crumhorns of named sizes; and (5) a set of nine recorders (*Fletten*). An accompanying letter mentions a chest of six viole da gamba and a chest of three lutes made by the Bassanos in London.

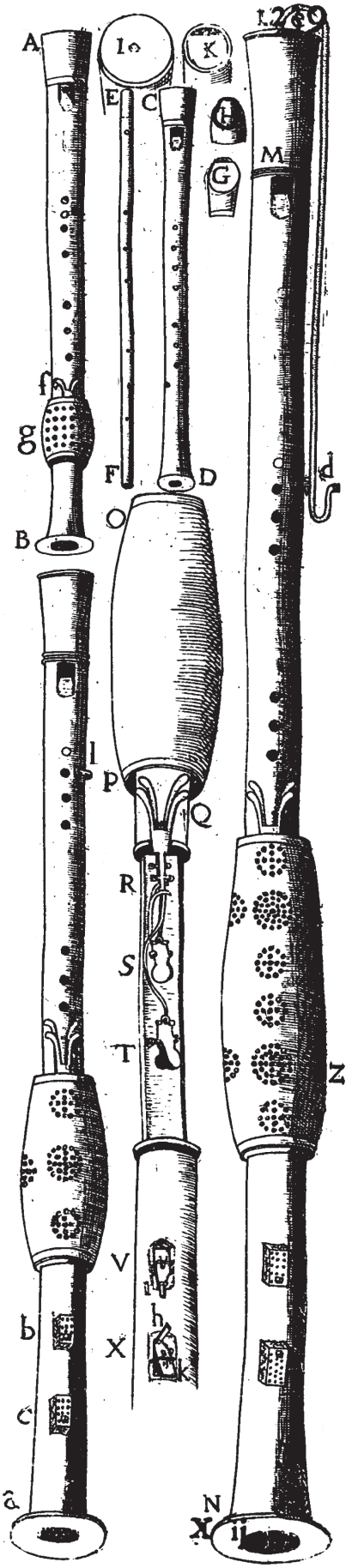
The well-known inventory of Henry VIII's instrument collection at Westminster after his death in 1547 includes 16 cornetti, 18 crumhorns, 13 dulceuses, two fifes, 77 flutes, a tabor pipe, 76 recorders, 18 or 19 shawms, a Venice lute, and 19 viols. Another inventory from 1542 duplicates 53 items in the 1547 inventory almost word for word. Yet in the five intervening years, the collection had gained 11 of the crumhorns, the dulceuses, the fifes, 12 of the flutes, 36 of the recorders, the lute, and 14 of the viols. Many, if not all, were presumably made by Bassano family members.

The making, and particularly the repairing, of instruments was continued by members of the Bassano family's second generation in England.

The inventory made in 1566 of the instruments belonging to another Fugger family member—Johann Jakob's youngest brother Raimund Fugger junior, an Augsburg banker and patron of the arts—includes "a large case, in it twenty-seven recorders, large and small. Made in England." Although the inventory does not say so, perhaps some of the cornetti, crumhorns, *fagotti* (probably curtals), flutes and shawms listed were also made by the Bassanos.

Bassano instruments also show up in Spain. In 1567 Ciudad Rodrigo cathedral asked Felipe II's ambassador in England to help them in acquiring recorders and crumhorns for their *ministriles* (instrumentalists). In 1626, the chapter minutes of Huesca cathedral included a reference to a case of eight "very good recorders" in the sacristry, and another, "large and very good recorder" stored separately that served as a *baxon* (bass curtal), and may therefore have been a great bass in F or even an extended great bass in C.

The making, and particularly the repairing, of instruments was continued



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by members of the Bassano family's second generation in England. Arthur bequeathed to his son Anthony II in 1624 "all my instruments, working tools and necessaries belonging to the art of making of instruments which shall be remaining in the capital messuage [large house] where I now dwell ... in Mark Lane...." No other member of the third generation seems to have been associated with instrument making or repairing, so it was probably Anthony II who made one of the most famous sets of recorders in history. In his *Harmonie universelle* (Paris, 1636), Marin Mersenne says that the three sizes of recorder most common in the 16th century (discant, tenor and bass) "make the small register, as those that follow make the great register; but they can all be sounded together, like the great and small registers of organs." He shows an engraving of two smaller recorders and two larger, remarking, "The large recorders that follow have been sent from England to one of our kings." (*See illustration, left.*)

Mersenne shows the largest recorder's fontanelle removed to expose the keywork needed to play its low notes, "so that our makers could make similar ones [keys]." That recorders played at the French court had been made in England by the Bassanos could be the origin of *flûte d'Angleterre* (English flute), one of the French names for the recorder, first reported by Mersenne.

Anthony Bassano II may also have made some or all of the woodwind instruments bought for the English Court in the early 17th century, including cornetti, shawms, and a "treble recorder" (discant in G) in 1636.

As we have noted, the oldest brother, Jacopo or Jacomo, went back to Venice by 1544. He and his descendants constituted the Venetian branch of the family, who performed and made instruments there into the early 17th century. In 1559 Jacomo and his son-in-law **Santo Griti** made a contract with three *pifferi* of the Doge of Venice to provide cornetti, crumhorns, curtals, flutes, recorders and shawms, partly for the musicians' own use, although they also acted as agents for the makers.

Because of the draw of the name, Santo changed his name to, or became known as, Santo Bassano. He was the probable inventor of the bassanello; Michael Praetorius describes it as a quiet double-reed instrument with narrow conical bore, made in three sizes, and having an innovatory construction allowing the joints to be pulled apart to vary the instrument's pitch.

Santo's son **Giovanni** became a member of the Doge's *piffari*, then *maestro di canto* at the ducal seminary of St. Mark's cathedral, and finally director of instrumental musical at St. Mark's. He wrote several methods as well as both sacred and secular music.

As members of both branches of the Bassano family made instruments —and they seem to have been prolific makers—one would expect some, perhaps many, of their instruments to have survived. But none of the maker's marks on extant instruments can be ascribed to them with certainty. I put forward a theory, which has been generally accepted, that both branches after Jeronimo I used some version of the **!!** mark, formerly described as "rabbit's feet," occurring singly or in twos or threes. (*See photos on p. 14*). This mark is found on no fewer than 121 surviving wind instruments, including 45 recorders.

Three arguments link the **!!** mark with the Bassano family. First, given the family's coat of arms, it could well

be a schematic version of a silkworm moth with open wings—that is, the wings only, without the body. Second, the mark is found on surviving examples of all the instruments the family are known to have made, and it is by far the most common mark on such instruments. Third, the cornetti at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, which have the triple mark, are known to have been bought for that cathedral, presumably from makers in England. The same mark is found on a cornetto in the Castle Museum, Norwich, which is likely to be of English provenance (perhaps used by the Norwich waits).

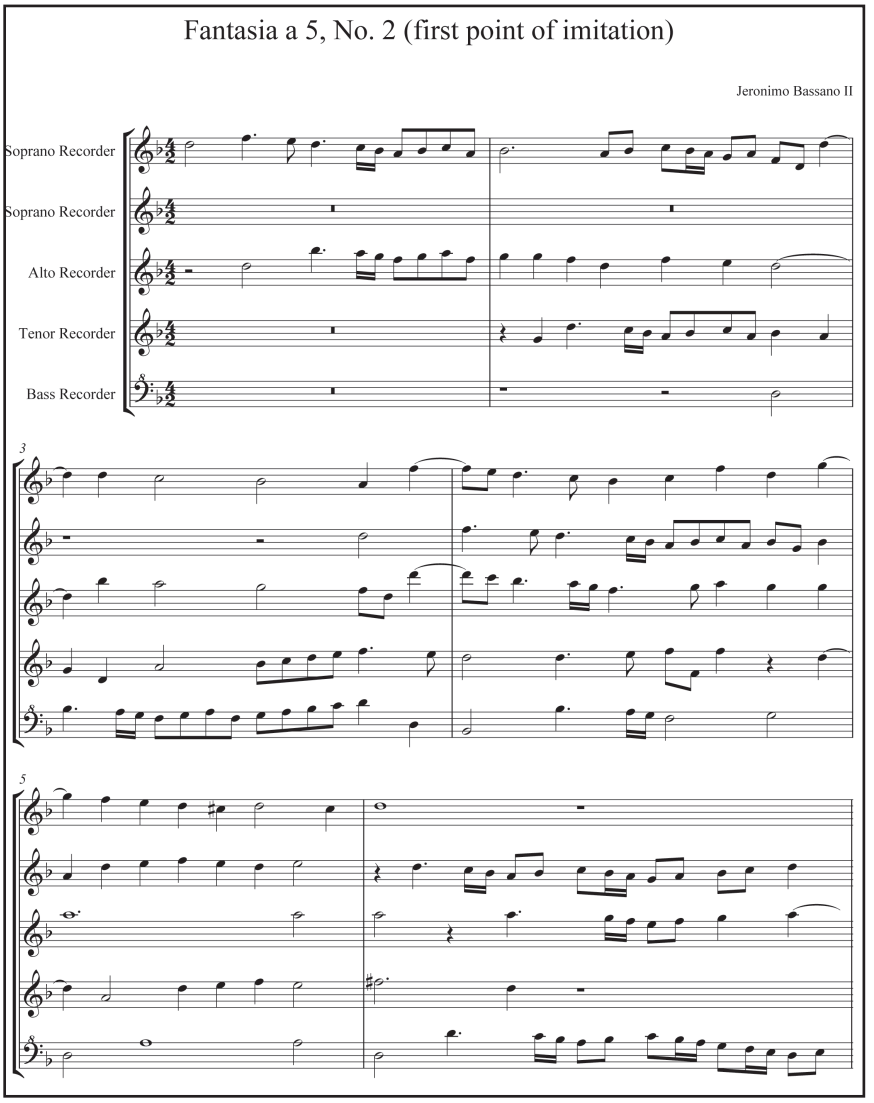
Standard of Performance

Some sense of the quality of performance the Bassanos would have brought with them from Venice can be deduced from Venetian and other Italian sources. Sylvestro Ganassi's famous treatise on recorder playing, *Opera intitulata Fontegara* (Venice, 1535), was written by a recorder player employed by the Doge of Venice at the time the Bassano brothers were in that city and perhaps similarly employed; they would presumably have been among those leading recorder players of the time that Ganassi says he had studied and played with. Ganassi described, and Jerome Cardan confirmed c.1546, an expressive style of recorder playing based on imitation of the human voice and achieved by good breath control, alternate fingerings, a variety of articulations, and diminution technique.

Compositions

No surviving English compositions from the 16th or early 17th centuries are marked specifically for recorders. The performing of transcriptions of vocal music by flute and recorder consorts was known in France in the 1530s and had spread to Germany by the 1550s; it may also have been a common Venetian practice that the Bassanos would have brought to England. A group of more than 30 wordless motets and madrigals found in the Fitzwilliam Wind Manuscript, which bears the coat of arms of James I in the early 17th century, continued this practice.

Fantasia a 5, No. 2 (first point of imitation)



Although the Court recorder consort consisted of five, then six players, the earliest music for it (1540-60) would have been in a maximum of four parts (canto, alto, tenor and bass), consort music for a larger number of parts being as yet unknown in England. The extra player or two in the consort might have doubled, say, the bass at the octave below, a practice that makes the whole consort sound an octave lower.

Around 1560, composers began adding a quintus part between the tenor and bass. Finally, around 1575-80, composers created six-part consort music by adding a sextus part, which was in effect a second cantus; the practice of pairing and crossing those two parts was introduced from the Italian madrigal of the day.

About 19 16th-century pieces by Augustine and Jeronimo Bassano II (as well as one by William Daman) survive in consort versions and/or lute or keyboard arrangements, which seem to represent part of the repertory of the recorder consort over a period of 50 years. As one would expect from their having been composed by members of the second generation of the Bassano family, these pieces are in four to six parts. (*See* Fantasia *by Jeronimo II above*, and *a five-part* Galiarda *by Augustine Bassano following this article*.)

The family coat of arms, on which is displayed three silmworm moths and a mulberry tree, refers to a trade that Jews introduced into Italy and in which they were involved for a long time.

Were the Bassanos Jewish?

A wealth of circumstantial evidence, of which we have space to cite only a little, suggests that the Bassanos were of Jewish origin, passing for Christians and perhaps practicing Judaism in secret. The family was close colleagues of Jews, lived with them, and married them. For example, Augustine's sister **Laura** married the Venetian violinist and composer **Joseph Lupo**, whose father Ambrose was imprisoned in 1542 for being a "New Christian" (converted Jew). Laura and Joseph were living with Augustine by 1571.

The family coat of arms, on which is displayed three silkworm moths and a mulberry tree, refers to a trade that Jews introduced into Italy and in which they were involved for a long time.

When the five Bassano brothers settled in London, they were given lodgings in the London Charterhouse. The public execution of the Carthusian monks who had lived there had scandalized Catholic Europe in 1535 and caused open expressions of outrage in Venice. Yet only a few years later the Bassanos, who had just arrived from Venice with their wives and children, were living in the monks' abandoned cells and using other rooms as workshops.

Mark Lane, where three of the brothers settled next, was home to London's Portuguese Jewish community. A member of this community, Erasmus Añes, was Augustine's "servant" in 1564. The head of the Portuguese Jews, Dr. Hector Nuñez, lived with his extended family in a *posada* (inn), an arrangement that sounds like that of the Bassanos at Mark Lane. The Nuñez family was reported to observe Jewish rites at home but to publicly attend Protestant churches.

In 1576, the Earl of Oxford took the singer Orazio Cuoco, aged about 16, back to England with him from Venice. After 11 months as Oxford's page, Cuoco returned home, where he was summoned to the HolyInquisition. When asked, "Was there anyone in England who wanted to make you read prohibited books and to teach you the doctrine of heretics?" Cuoco cited Ambrose Lupo as well as "five Venetian brothers who are musicians of the Queen and make recorders and bowed stringed instruments." If we take Cuoco's comment literally, he would have known Anthony's five sons. Normally the "heresy" then found in England would have been Protestantism. But the heretical books the Bassanos pressed on Cuoco were likely in Italian, or perhaps Latin, so they are unlikely to have been Anglican tracts.

Did Emilia Bassano Lanier Write Shakespeare?

Emilia (Amelia, Aemilia) Bassano (1569–1645) was the younger daughter of Baptista Bassano and probably his common-law wife, **Margaret Johnson**. Baptista lived separately from his brothers in Spitalfields, outside the City of London, in a sketchy area that housed the main theaters as well as makers and weavers of silk. In 1597 Emilia told the astrologer Simon Forman that her father died when she was seven, and even before that he suffered financial misfortune. Stephen Vaughan the Younger, a silk merchant, lived next door and later became the overseer of Margaret's will.

After her father's death in 1576, Emilia was brought up as a surrogate daughter by **Susan Bertie**, the widowed Countess of Kent, who would have lived with her brother, **Peregrine Bertie, Lord Willoughby**, a celebrated general. The family connection may have been Vaughan's daughter Anne Locke, inventor of the sonnet sequence, who dedicated her book to the Duchess of Suffolk, mother of Susan and Peregrine Bertie.

Living with an aristocrat would have given Emilia an education available only to a privileged few in England, including history, logic, rhetoric, Greek, Latin, literature and the classics. Willoughby could well have taken Emilia on his voyage to Denmark in 1582, where he stayed at Elsinore Castle and encountered Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

When Susan Bertie remarried that same year and headed to Holland, another living situation had to be found for Emilia. She became the mistress of **Lord Hunsdon**, thought to be an illegitimate son of Henry VIII. Among other official posts, he eventually served as Lord Chamberlain, in charge of the English theater. Hunsdon not only lived in London but also monitored the northern border of England with Scotland. Emilia told Forman that Hunsdon treated her well, and showered her with money and jewels.

The much older Hunsdon, separated from his wife, may have welcomed Emilia as an English example of the *cortigiana onesta*, or "honest courtesan." In Italy such women were known for their knowledge of languages and literature, their wit, and their skill at music and in the bedchamber.

When Emilia became pregnant in 1592—perhaps by an affair with the playwright Christopher Marlowe rather than by Hunsdon—she was married off for the sake of appearance to her cousin **Alphonso Lanier**, a member of the Court recorder consort. Lanier was the son of **Nicholas Lanier I**, a flute and cornetto player from Rouen, France, who arrived in England in 1561 and created a musical dynasty similar to the Bassanos, even marrying into their family himself.

Emilia told Forman that in five years Alphonso had already squandered her fortune. Living away from the Court, she would have set up a household and been concerned with domestic matters.

Emilia moved to Cookham Dean near Windsor around 1604, helping to tutor the Countess of Cumberland's daughter, Anne Clifford, later Countess of Dorset. In 1611, Emilia published a book of poems, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, the last of them a "Description of Cooke-ham." The title of the book may be a parody of "Ave rex Judaeorum," addressed to Jesus on the cross. Emilia and her book have become celebrated among modern feminist scholars and the subject of numerous articles.

Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon (1526-96), by Steven van Herwijck (c.1530-1565/67). Among other official posts, he eventually served as Lord Chamberlain, in charge of the English theater.

Emilia came to instant fame in 1973, when the historian A. L. Rowse ... proclaimed that she was the "dark lady" described in Shakespeare's Sonnets numbers 127-154 ... a black-haired, black-eyed woman of notorious promiscuity.

Alphonso Lanier died in 1613. Four years later, Emilia set up a school, uncommon for a woman, where "for her maintenance and relief," she "was compelled to teach and educate the children of divers persons of worth and understanding." In the 1630s, representing herself in court, she fought a protracted legal battle with Alphonso's brothers to obtain his share of their royal grant of fees for the weighing of hay and straw brought into the London area.

She was buried in 1645 at the age of 76, described as a "pensioner."

Emilia came to instant fame in 1973, when the historian A. L. Rowse, after reading about her in Forman's casebooks, proclaimed that she was the "dark lady" described in Shakespeare's Sonnets numbers 127-154, which have as their principal theme the poet's tormented love affair with a black-haired, black-eyed woman of notorious promiscuity.

The "Chandos" portrait (c.1600-10) of William Shakspere, possibly painted by a fellow player and later passing through possession by the Duke of Chandos.

Rowse made some factual errors, which hindered the acceptance of his argument by literary scholars, but Roger Prior demonstrated that Emilia was close to Shakespeare and certainly a good candidate for the dark lady, including physically. Her cousins, arrested in 1584 for what modern English law would call loitering with intent, were described as "a little black man" and "a tall black man." And a year later, during the war with Spain, another cousin was mistaken for a Spaniard on the streets of London and almost killed by soldiers.

William Shakspere, the actor whose name appears in about 60 different spellings in family documents, was a glove-maker's son from Warwickshire with an elementary education. He was charged with murder as an associate of the gangster Francis Langley and lived far from where the Shakespeare plays were performed.

Disbelief that he could have written the plays and poems published under the name Shakespeare began even in his lifetime. For example, he acted in Ben Jonson's *Every Man out of His Humour* (1598), which parodies him as the country bumpkin Sogliardo who has the comic coat of arms and motto "not without mustard" (poking fun at the motto on Shakspere's coat of arms, *Non sanz droict*, "not without right"). Jonson, introducing the First Folio, Shakespeare's collected works, in 1623, described the author as a "matron."

About 80 other candidates for the author have been proposed so far, notably the Earl of Oxford, Christopher Marlowe, Francis Bacon, Queen Elizabeth, the Earl of Derby, the Earl of Rutland, and the Countess of Pembroke.

New Research on Emilia

Research on Emilia Bassano Lanier has recently experienced a new and exciting turn. The Shakespeare scholar and dramaturge **John Hudson** has made an excellent case for her having written the works herself, or at least been the principal author. The circumstances of Emilia's life, the knowledge she could have picked up from them,and aspects of her own writings fit numerous features of the plays and poems well.

Hudson's case moves along six major trains of thought:

(1) The vast and broad knowledge displayed in the works, including Hebrew, Italian, and Jewish literature, literature for girls and women, cooking and homemaking, medicine, northern English dialect (little from Shakspere's Warwickshire), music and instruments, power struggles at Court, generalship and soldiery, shipping, the law, astronomy, falconry, silk weaving, the cities of Bassano and Venice, and Elsinore Castle. Many of the 2,000 neologisms (newly-invented words) in the works are translated from Italian.

(2) The religious allegories in the works, which demonstrate a strong anti-Christian stance. Even more surprisingly, there is a focus on the Flavian Caesars and the First Roman–Jewish War (66-73 AD) from a Jewish perspective.

(3) The little we know about William Shakspere the man and how unpromising a candidate he is as the author of the works.

(4) The fit between Emilia's biography and the knowledge displayed in the works.
(5) The fit between the characteristics of Emilia's poetry and the works.
(6) The "literary signatures" left in the works: the common name Emilia; the characters Bassanius and Emillius in *Titus Andronicus*; and the image of a swan dying to music, Ovid's symbol of a great poet, associated with four names: Aemilia and Willough(by), Bassanio, and Johnson (John's son)—Emilia's first name, the last name of her adopted family (Countess of Kent), her father's last name, and her mother's last name.

Why Hudson Thinks Emilia Wrote Shakespeare

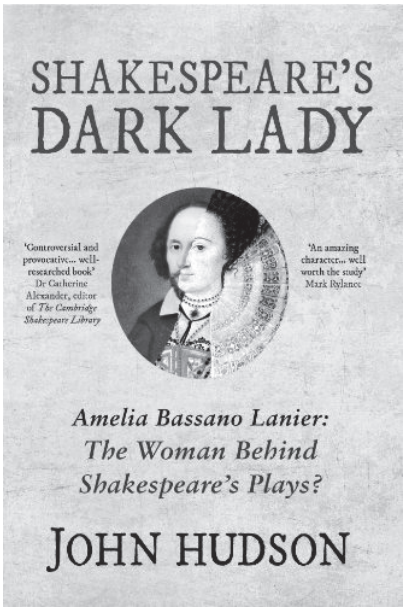
Briefly summarizing Hudson's version, Emilia Bassano was the daughter of the youngest of five Bassano brothers, who emigrated to England in 1538-39 and were probably secret Jews. Growing up in a musical household, she picked up some practical knowledge of music and probably learned to play the lute and keyboard. She was also introduced to Hebrew, Judaism, and Jewish history, which she kept up by contact with her cousins later in life.

After her father died when she was seven, she was brought up in the household of the Countess of Kent, a Calvinist sympathizer, and given a privileged education. After the age of consent, she became the mistress of Lord Hunsdon, a prominent courtier in charge of the English theater. In her early twenties she had an affair with the playwright Christopher Marlowe.

After she became pregnant, by Hunsdon or Marlowe, she was married off to a relative of the Bassanos, another Court musician, Alphonso Lanier, continuing her exposure to music practice. A trip to Italy with her cousins soon afterwards enabled to her to become familiar with Bassano, Venice, and the *Commedia dell'Arte*. The influences of the Countess of Kent, Lord Hunsdon, Marlowe, and Italy gave her the knowledge of the world and of writing that she needed to create plays and poems.

Simon Forman recorded that Emilia told him "tales of invoking spirits" with which she had intended some kind of "villainy"—hardly the stuff of orthodox Christianity. If she wrote them, she used literary techniques to hide beneath the plays' surface a heretical Jewish story about Christianity, waiting for a time when "eyes not yet created shall o'er-read" it (*Sonnet 81*). She used "literary signatures" to claim her authorship.

But to protect herself, in case the true meanings of the plays were discovered during her lifetime and she were imprisoned, tortured and executed, she used a play-broker, the actor William Shakspere, to conceal her identity. The plays were published under the name William Shakespeare, which besides being more or less the name of Shakspere, may have denoted Pallas Athena, the goddess of poets, known as "a shaker of the spear."



Hunsdon could even have placed Shakspere in the Chamberlain's Men to ensure a supply of fine material for his company. Shakspere brokered the plays, ignorant of the dangerous heresies they contained, even claiming that his "fair copies" were his original drafts.

Despite Ben Jonson's satire, Shakspere was never exposed, and retired to his mansion in Stratford upon Avon, wealthy perhaps partly because of payments for the plays, and his fraudulent reputation intact. Emilia continued to modify and revise the plays after Shakspere's death in 1616.

Hunsdon could even have placed Shakspere in the Chamberlain's Men to ensure a supply of fine material for his company.

The Recorder in Shakespeare

In Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1590-97), Act 5 scene 1, the recorder appears in a play within a play. Commenting on the Prologue to *Pyramus and Thisbe* performed by the "mechanicals" at her wedding, Hippolyta compares Quince's acting to a child's inability to control a recorder: "Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on a recorder; a sound, but not in government." This beautiful quotation suggests a tutor's intimate knowledge of the recorder in education, not to mention the understanding that the recorder is more difficult to "govern" than it may seem.

Act 3 Scene 2 of *Hamlet* (1599-1602) includes a celebrated scene for recorders. The first published edition of the play, the First Quarto of 1603, contains only about half the text of the later editions, and may be a reconstruction from memory by one of the actors. The recorder scene is not fully realized, and the "pipe" is not even named, but Hamlet's ironic reference to the instrument as "a thing of nothing" is thereby spelled out more clearly than in the later versions.

Hamlet's childhood friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been sent by King Claudius (his uncle and

stepfather) and Queen Gertrude (his mother), to spy on him.

HAMLET
I pray will you play upon this pipe?

ROSENCRANTZ
Alas, my lord, I cannot.

HAMLET
Pray will you?

GUILDENSTERN
I have no skill, my lord.

HAMLET
Why look, it is a thing of nothing.
Tis but stopping of these holes,
And with a little breath from your lips,
It will give most delicate music.

GUILDENSTERN
But this cannot we do, my lord.

HAMLET
Pray now, pray heartily, I beseech you.

ROSENCRANTZ
My lord, we cannot.

HAMLET
Why, how unworthy a thing would you make of me.
You would seem to know my stops, you would play upon me,
You would search the very inward part of my heart,
And dive into the secret of my soul,
Zounds, do you think I am easier to be played
On than a pipe? Call me what instrument
You will, though you can fret me, yet you cannot
Play upon me....

"Stops" here means fingerings as well as how his friends are impeding him. "Fret" means torment or annoy, but also refers to the frets on stringed instruments, switching the musical metaphor.

In the Second Quarto edition published only a year later, this passage has become part of another play within a play, *The Mousetrap*, framed by two references to "players" (actors) with recorders. The musicians attached to the London theaters of the day acted minor parts in the plays.

In this subplay, a man murders a king; his loving wife, initially inconsolable over the king's death, marries the murderer—the very scenario that has taken place at the Danish Court, and Hamlet wants to let Claudius and Gertrude know that he is aware of it. He tells them: "This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna: Gonzago is the duke's name; his wife, Baptista."

He is clearly taunting, because the Gonzagas were dukes of Mantua, in Italy—but the wife's name is highly significant for our purposes, especially as it is roughly equidistant in the text from the two stage directions for players with recorders, a form of "literary signature" for Emilia's father Baptista. (Hudson has shown that the entire play is built upon a complex matrix of allegories arranged like the lines in a polyphonic score.)

When the players return, Hamlet's first comment refers to how hunters move to the windward side of animals to drive them into a net, but it also puns on the wind needed to blow the recorder. Then he seizes on the recorder, an instrument that seems easy but needs some "skill" to "command," as a metaphor for how his friends are pumping him for information: Guildenstern cannot play the recorder, so he certainly cannot "play" Hamlet.

Reenter the **PLAYERS** *with recorders*

HAMLET
... Oh, the recorders! Let me see one.
(aside to **ROSENCRANTZ** and **GUILDENSTERN**)
To withdraw with you, why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?

GUILDENSTERN
O my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

HAMLET
I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

GUILDENSTERN
My lord, I cannot.

HAMLET
I pray you.

GUILDENSTERN
Believe me, I cannot.

HAMLET
I do beseech you.

GUILDENSTERN
I know no touch of it, my lord.

HAMLET
It is as easy as lying.
Govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

GUILDENSTERN
But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony. I have not the skill.

HAMLET
Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me. You would seem to know my stops. You would pluck out the heart of my mystery. You would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass. And there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak? 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me.

How much more poetic this metaphor has become! And as Christopher R. Wilson and Michela Calore put it, "The verbal imagery of this speech is reinforced in performance by the presence of the recorder as a visual signifier."

The Shakespeare text implies a familiarity with the instrument that becomes more explicable if it was written by the daughter of a professional recorder player (Baptista Bassano)—

"The verbal imagery of this speech is reinforced in performance by the presence of the recorder as a visual signifier."

whose name is even invoked—and wife of another (Alphonso Lanier).

In *The Two Noblemen Kinsmen* (1613-14), a collaboration between Shakespeare and John Fletcher, Act 5 scene 1, the stage directions call for "Still music of record[er]s." Amazingly, the music introduces the prayer of a character named Emilia—that, of her two suitors, the one who loves her should conquer her. Love and the supernatural were the recorder's main associations in the Jacobean theater of the time.

Emilia, the Recorder and the Writer Known as Shakespeare

Hudson's persuasive argument that Emilia Bassano Lanier was the principal author of the plays published under the name of William Shakespeare gives us a new view of the recorder in those plays and ties in neatly with the important recorder-playing history of Emilia's families of birth and marriage.

What better present for us as recorder players as we approach 2016, the 400th anniversary of the death of Shakspere?

Reading List

Adrian Brown and David Lasocki, "Renaissance Recorders and their Makers," *American Recorder* 47, no. 1 (January 2006): 19-35; available from the ARS archives and as a free download from ***http://instantharmony.net/Music/american_recorder.php***.

John Hudson, *Shakespeare's Dark Lady: Amelia Bassano Lanier—The Woman Behind Shakespeare's Plays?* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley, 2014). See also ***www.darkladyplayers.com/the-dark-lady.html*** and ***www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyn-3GNOd7w***.

David Lasocki, "The Recorder in the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline Theater," *American Recorder* 25, no. 1 (February 1984): 3–10; available from the ARS archives and as a free download from ***http://instantharmony.net/Music/american_recorder.php***.

David Lasocki with Roger Prior, *The Bassanos: Venetian Musicians and Instrument Makers in England, 1531–1665* (Aldershot: Scolar Press; Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1995); out of print; available as an e-book with a bonus, *Research on the Bassano Family, 1995–2014*, from ***http://instantharmony.net/Music/eb12.php***.

Christopher R. Wilson and Michela Calore, *Music in Shakespeare: A Dictionary* (London & New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2005).

Editions

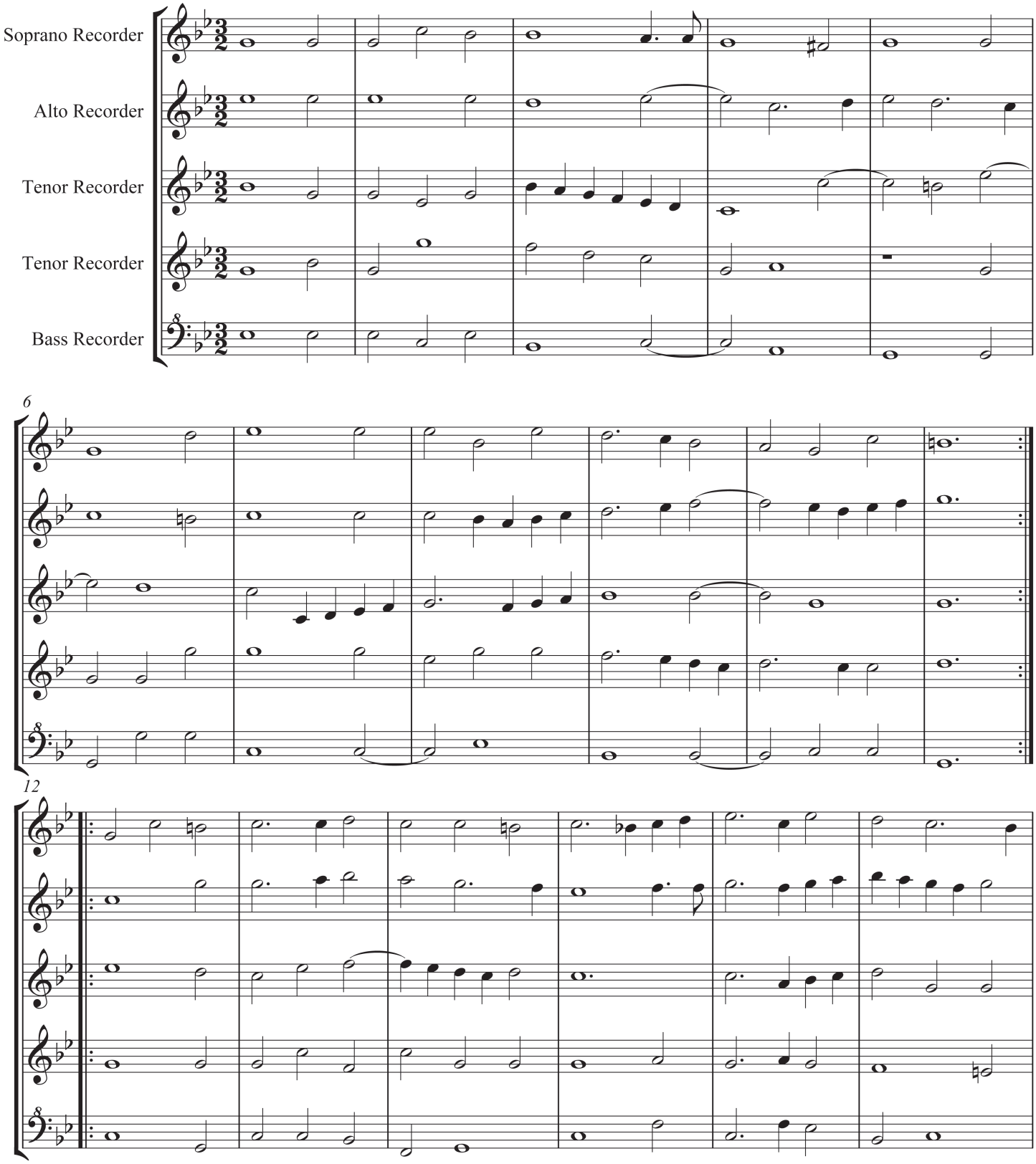
Augustine Bassano, *Pavans and Galliards in 5 Parts for an Ensemble of Recorders (Flutes/Viols/Shawms/Cornetts and Sackbuts) S.A.A./T.T.B.*, ed. Peter Holman, The Royal Wind Music, I (London: Nova Music, 1981); only available as an e-edition from ***http://instantharmony.net/Music.***

Jerome Bassano, *Four Fantasias in 5 Parts for an Ensemble of Recorders (Flutes/Viols/Shawms/Cornetts and Sackbuts) S.S.A.T.B.*, ed. Peter Holman, The Royal Wind Music, II (London: Nova Music, 1981); reprinted by Spartan Press, Scotland, 1999; ***www.spartanpress.co.uk/spweb/details.php?catno=NM202.***

William Daman, *Fantasia de sei soprani for Six Treble Instruments*, ed. Peter Holman (London: Mapa Mundi, 1980); ***www.mapamundimusic.com/mapamundi.html***.

Galiarda

Augustine Bassano



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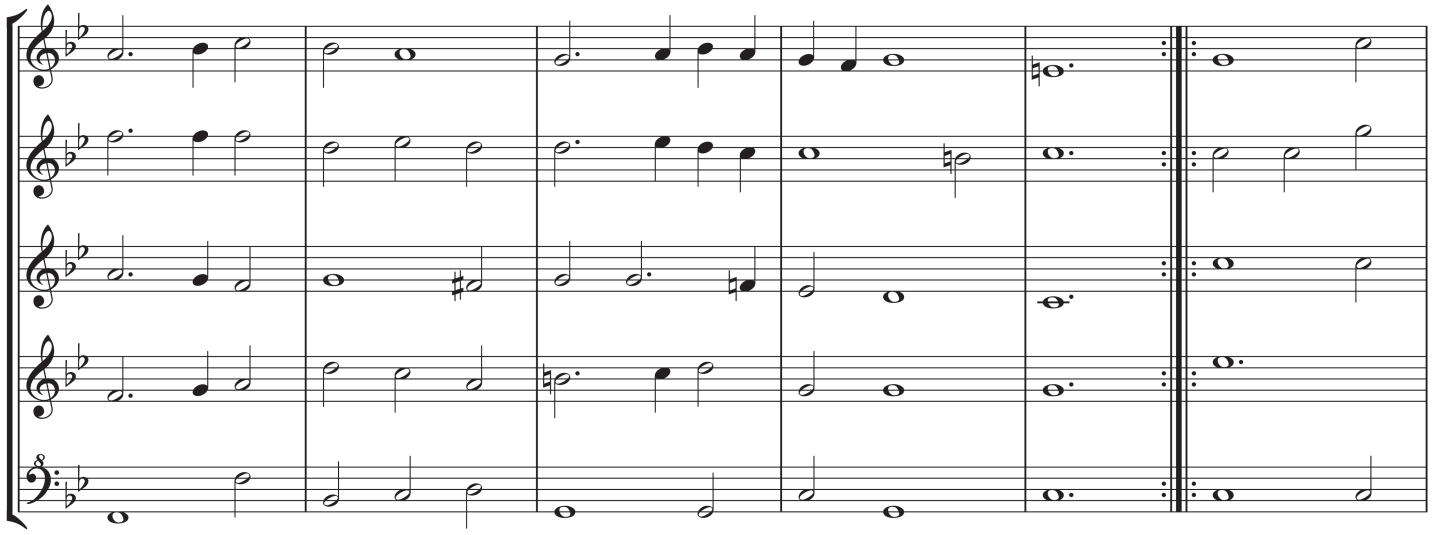

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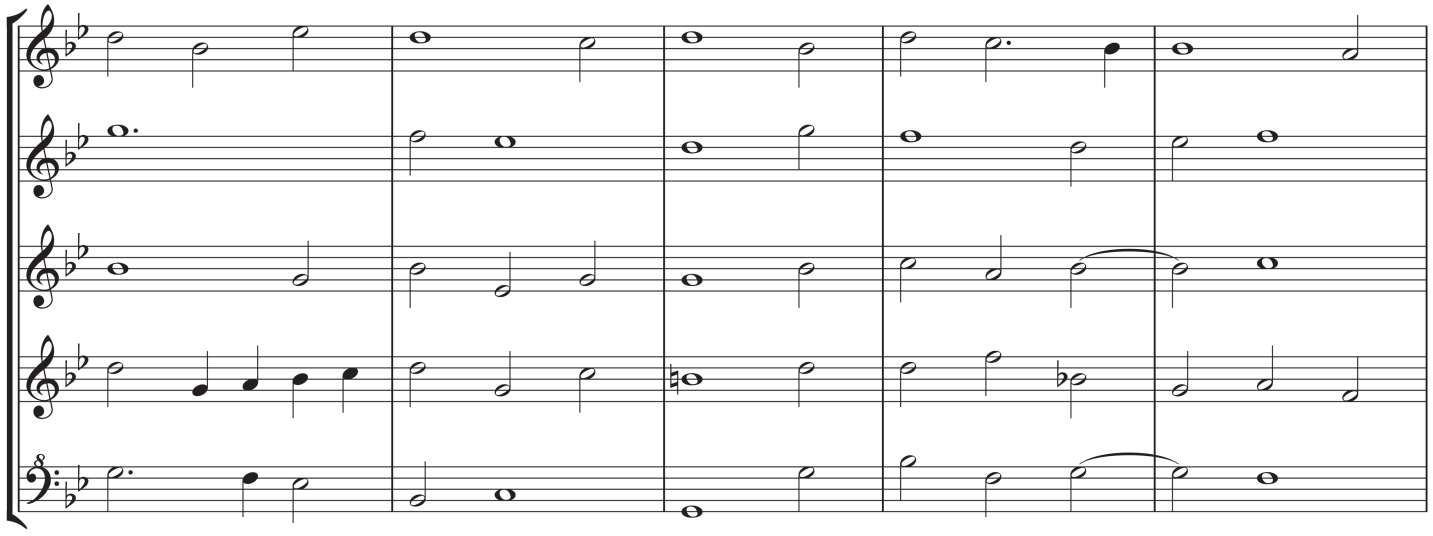

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