

## ***Musica ficta* and Implied Chromatic Inflexions in the Music of Estêvão Lopes Morago**

**Pedro Sousa Silva**

### **Resumo**

Por *musica ficta* entende-se o conjunto de regras teóricas e a prática interpretativa que o intérprete (editor ou executante) segue, directamente influenciado pelo critérios estilísticos e o gosto individuais. Neste artigo discute-se de que forma os hábitos estilísticos actuais podem influenciar a forma como negligenciamos os cromatismos implícitos, ou até mesmo avaliamos como erros determinadas passagens na música de Estêvão Lopes Morago.

### **Palavras-chave**

Estêvão Lopes Morago; *Musica ficta*; Cromatismo; Interpretação.

### **Abstract**

*Musica ficta* is both a set of theoretical rules and a performance practice whose application depends on the stylistic criteria and taste of the interpreter (editor or performer). This paper discusses how our modern stylistic habits might cause us to overlook implicit chromaticism or even to take for errors correct passages in the music of Estêvão Lopes Morago.

### **Keywords**

Estêvão Lopes Morago; *Musica ficta*; Chromaticism; Interpretation.

### **Introduction**

**I**N 1940 MANUEL JOAQUIM PRESENTED the composer Estêvão Lopes Morago to the world, in an article<sup>1</sup> accompanied by a transcription of the *Te Deum* for Christmas Matins from manuscript *P-Va* Cód. 3 (fol. 34v-39r). Twenty-one years later, he had the possibility of revising the transcription, when publishing a group of selected works in the Gulbenkian Foundation's *Portugaliae Musica* series.<sup>2</sup> In the foreword to the new edition were presented the reasons for the revision: admitting indirectly that he had made some changes to the original source

---

<sup>1</sup> Manuel JOAQUIM, 'Um inédito musical: o "Te-Deum" do licenciado Estêvão Lopes Morago', *Brotéria*, 30/5 (1940), pp. 497-504.

<sup>2</sup> Estêvão Lopes MORAGO, *Várias obras de música religiosa 'A Cappella'*, edited by Manuel Joaquim, *Portugaliae Musica*, 4 (Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1961).

in the earlier edition, motivated by a lesser familiarity with the melodic and harmonic characteristics of the repertoire (especially as far as false relations and diminished chords were concerned), in the 1961 version Joaquim replaces many original accidentals previously omitted, and offers detailed explanation for each change.

The point of departure for this paper is precisely one of those corrections, to the tenor line of the final verse, 'Fiat misericordia'. To avoid an augmented fifth between bass and tenor, and a tritone with the alto in bar 215, Manuel Joaquim withdraws the sharp from the C/mi<sup>3</sup> at the word 'Domine' in the first transcription. In the later edition he criticises this solution, claiming that the passage is obviously wrong in the original:

In the present case, it should be said without hesitation that to the negligence of the composer and all those that rehearsed and conducted the work from the choirbook from the earliest performances, further negligence was added: that arising from my poor reading in 1940.<sup>4</sup>

The error is thus corrected: the D/re of the semibrevis at the word 'tua' was changed to a minima and the A/re at the word 'super' to a semibrevis. To Manuel Joaquim, the error was very obvious: 'As may be observed, the correction was in a small detail: in the vertical rhythmic simultaneity of all voices, singing together the rhythm of the word *Domine*'.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 1. Manuscript *P-Va* Cód. 3, fols. 38v-39r

<sup>3</sup> Notes are denoted by the letter referring to the *clave* followed by the solmization syllable referring to the *voce* (e.g. F/fa, C/sol, B/mi).

<sup>4</sup> 'No caso de que se trata, sem evasivas se diz que à negligência do autor e de quantos ensaiaram e dirigiram a obra pelo livro de estante, nas execuções mais recuadas, outra negligência se juntou: a resultante do nosso fraco golpe de vista em 1940'; MORAGO, *Várias obras* (see note 2), p. 47 (author's translation).

<sup>5</sup> 'Como é dado a verificar, em bem pouco estava a correcção: na vertical simultaneidade rítmica de todas as vozes, a jogar certa com o ritmo da palavra *Domine*'; MORAGO, *Várias obras* (see note 2).

215

(tu) - a Do - mi - ne su-(per)

(tu) - a Do - mi - ne su - (per)

(tu) - a Do - mi - ne su-(per)

(tu) - a Do - mi - ne su - (per)

**Example 1.** Bars 215-6 from Manuel Joaquim's transcription in 1940, transcribed in the preface of the *Portugaliae Musica* edition<sup>6</sup>

210

Fi - at mi - se - ri - cor - di - a tu - a

Fi - at mi - se - ri - cor - di - a tu - a

Fi - at mi - se - ri - cor - di - a tu - a

Fi - at mi - se - ri - cor - di - a tu - a

215

220

Do - mi - ne su - per nos, quem - ad - mo - dum spe - ra - vi - mus

Do - mi - ne su - per nos, quem - ad - mo - dum spe - ra -

Do - mi - ne su - per su - per nos, quem - ad - mo - dum spe - ra -

Do - mi - ne su - per su - per nos,

**Example 2.** Bars 210-23 from Manuel Joaquim's 1961 transcription<sup>7</sup>

However, as I shall argue below, I do not believe that there is any error in the original. Both solutions presented by Manuel Joaquim represent two stages of a stylistic impression of the repertoire, but neither attempts to solve the 'problem' according to information taken directly from the theoretical and practical sources of the period, in particular those concerning the use of *musica ficta*.

<sup>6</sup> MORAGO, *Várias obras* (see note 2), p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> MORAGO, *Várias obras* (see note 2).

### ***Musica ficta* and transcription**

Of all the aspects related to the transcription and performance of the renaissance polyphonic repertoire, the use of *musica ficta* is perhaps one of those most subject to opinion and polemics. However, the chromatic inflexion of a given note in a given circumstance is a relatively well-documented practice in the sources of the period. Even considering the variety of formulations used by theoretical sources and the divergences between different intabulations of vocal works, the circumstances in which *ficta* is applied are usually clear and simple.

We can divide those circumstances into two groups, according to motivation: the necessity of solving a melodic or harmonic *problem* belongs to the *causa necessitatis*; the possibility of making an alteration on account of a melodic or harmonic characteristic belongs to the *causa pulchritudinis*.<sup>8</sup> For each *causa*, the treatises define explicit situations:

*Causa necessitatis*: 1) *Mi contra fa*: according to the formulation originating in the Middle Ages, in a perfect consonance during counterpoint, or as a point of arrival, one note cannot be solmized as *mi* if the other is solmized as *fa*. This means that the intervals of augmented and diminished fifths and octaves are forbidden. 2) *Fa supra la*: according to Guillaud, ‘Whenever above these six notes [i.e. a hexacord] we find one exceeding a second, it should be named *fa*, without the need for mutation, and we should proceed by flats, even that the symbol is not indicated, unless we find a natural sign’.<sup>9</sup>

*Causa pulchritudinis*: 1) Cadence: when in a cadence, the final perfect consonance should be preceded by the nearest imperfect consonance.<sup>10</sup> 2) *Tierce de picardie*: the minor third of a final chord should be changed to major, as, for instance Aaron notes (see Figure 2).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Even if this terminology dates from the 13th century, its inherent logic prevails until the 17th century. For instance, Pedro Talésio refers to the ‘necessitatis causa’ in order to avoid the melodic tritone; Pedro TALÉSIO, *Arte de canto chão* (Coimbra, Diogo Gomes de Loureiro, 1618), pp. 36-8.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Toutesfois & quantes que par dessus ces six voix s’en trouera une seule note n’excédante que d’une seconde, elle s’appellera fa, sans faire nuance, laquelle faudra proferer mollement, mesmement sans aucun signe de b mol: pourueu que celuy de n’y soit mis’; Maximilian GUILLIAUD, *Rudiments de musique pratique* (Paris, Nicolas du Chemin, 1554), chapter 5 (author’s translation).

<sup>10</sup> The definition of cadence, or clausula, lies outside the scope of this paper. However I would like to quote the detailed description by Nunes da Silva in 1685, who grounds his formulation and terminology in concepts often found in 16th-century sources: ‘Clausula he o fim de qualquer obra; em canto chão he subindo hum ponto, & decendo outro; & em canto de Orgão decendo hum ponto, & subindo outro. Destas duas se ordena a clausula em contraponto, que tem quatro partes, a saber, Prevenção, que he especie boa; Ligadura, que he especie má; septima, ou segunda, & suas compostas; Disculpa, ou abono de Ligadura, que he especie imperfeita; & fechar a clausula, que será sempre especie perfeita, & melhor. lus 8º. 15º. Sempre se usa da clausula no fim da obra de preceyto; & tambem se usa de clausula no contexto da obra por elegância, & neste caso bem se pode escusar o fechar, porque somente basta a prevenção, ligadura, & disculpa. São duas as clausulas em contraponto, a saber, clausula sustentida, & clausula remissa. Clausula sustentida he quando o canto chão he tono, & contraponto semitono. Clausula remissa he quando o canto chão he semitono, & o contraponto tono. O contraponto se entende pela voz, que faz a ligadura, & o canto chão pela voz, que com ella forma falsa’; Manuel Nunes da SILVA, *Arte minima, que com semibreve prolaçam tratta em tempo breve, os modos da maxima, & longa sciencia da musica* (Lisboa, Joam Galram, 1685), pp. 27-8.

<sup>11</sup> Pietro AARON, *Thoscanello de la musica*, libro secondo (Venetia, Bernardino et Mattheo de Uitali, 1529), chapter XX.



**Figure 2.** Examples of the *tierce de picardie* in Aaron, *Thoscanello de la musica*, libro secondo, chapter XX

Even if the rules and circumstances for the use of *ficta* are very straightforward, and confirmed by intabulations, there are many different approaches to it on the part of modern editors and performers. There are essentially three reasons for this: 1) Very often, different intabulations of the same work have different solutions for the same passage, showing that *musica ficta* can be indeed a matter of opinion; 2) Sometimes the rules contradict themselves; for instance, when a *fa supra la* leads to a *mi contra fa*; 3) Editors and performers cannot, understandably, dissociate their choices from their views on the repertoire.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Musica Ficta* in the music of Estêvão Lopes Morago**

The present paper is an outcome of my attempt, as a performer of renaissance polyphony, to use *musica ficta* as a tool to build aesthetic concepts. Instead of using *ficta* according to stylistic criteria derived from my previous work with the music, I have tried merely to apply the rules, to experiment within the boundaries of those rules and to observe how my perception of musical style changed. I found in the music of Morago, in particular in the works for the Office of the Dead, a fertile field for experimentation.

### ***Mi contra fa* and implicit chromaticism**

I will begin with the example that opened this discussion, the beginning of the final verse of the *Te Deum* that so disturbed Manuel Joaquim. As noted above, I believe that there is no error in the original. Firstly, Manuel Joaquim's premise that the sharp should also apply to the next note may be erroneous. *P-Va* Cód. 3 sometimes repeats accidentals in consecutive notes (Example 4, bars 143-4) and sometimes does not (Example 10, bar 422), but in any case this is a circumstance in which the *mi contra fa* rule should be used, as may be seen in Example 3, bars 216-7.

<sup>12</sup> A good example may be found in the following passage: 'Enfin la tablature presente un nombre relativement élevé de *barbarismes* où la rencontre a une octave de distance d'un meme degré naturel et altéré produit une *dureté* harmonique qui contraste singulièrement avec la *douceur ambiante* d'un langage entierement base sur les sonorités de l'accord parfait'; Marc HONEGGER, 'La tablature de D. Pisador et le problème des altérations au XVIe siècle, III. Question du bémol', *Revue de Musicologie*, 60 (1974), pp. 3-32.

215 220

(C) Fi - at mi - se - ri - cor - di - a tu - a do - mi - ne su - per nos quem

(A) Fi - at mi - se - ri - cor - di - a tu - a do - mi - ne su - per nos

(T) Fi - at mi - se - ri - cor - di - a tu - a do - mi - ne su - per su - per

(B) Fi - at mi - se - ri - cor - di - a tu - a do - mi - ne su - per su - per

**Example 3.** Implicit chromaticism in the *Te Deum* (bars 211-20)

The tenor's C sharp/mi in bar 216 begins as a major third above the bass and becomes an augmented fifth above the F/fa of the next bar. Applying the *mi contra fa* rule, the sharp should disappear and therefore produce a chromatic alteration during the word 'Domine' (the other choice, to add a sharp in the bass, would provoke another *mi contra fa* with the alto). Curiously, the *Te Deum* presents other similar moments that did not worry Manuel Joaquim, perhaps because they appear between words (Example 4: bars 135-6, 143-4).

135 140

(C) Te er - go quæ - su - mus tu - is fa - mu - lis sub - ve - ni

(A) Te er - go quæ - su - mus tu - is fa - mu - lis sub - ve - ni sub -

(T) Te er - go quæ - su - mus tu - is fa - mu - lis sub -

(B) Te er - go quæ - su - mus tu - is fa - mu - lis

145 150

(C) sub - ve - ni quos præ - ti - o - so san - gui - ne re - de - mis - ti.

(A) ve - ni quos præ - ti - o - so san - gui - ne re - de - mis - ti.

(T) ve - ni quos præ - ti - o - so san - gui - ne re - de - mis - ti.

(B) sub - ve - ni quos præ - ti - o - so san - gui - ne re - de - mis - ti.

**Example 4.** Implicit chromaticisms in the *Te Deum* (bars 135-6 and 143-4)

The only doubt is therefore whether the alteration should come only when the bass moves to the C/fa or directly after the C sharp/mi. If we take as the criterion the absence of a sharp in the second C, the chromatic alteration could be made already in the note before the *mi contra fa*, which

could result in an expressive illustration of the literary text, ‘Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos’.

Similar situations, in which there is a chromatic alteration implied in the application of the *mi contra fa* rule, can be found in others amongst Morago’s works. Examples 5 and 6 show two cases, in the *Introitus* of the *Missa pro Defunctis* (bars 65-6) and in the lesson *Parce mihi Domine* (bars 29-30).

**Example 5.** Implicit chromaticisms in the *Missa pro Defunctis* (bars 65-6)

**Example 6.** Implicit chromaticisms in *Parce mihi Domine* (bars 29-30)

### ***Fa supra la* and chromatic inflexions**

Returning to Example 4, the C sharp/mi of the soprano in bar 142 is preceded by an editorial B flat/fa in the bass. This alteration is motivated by the *fa supra la* rule and the result is a combination of melodic gestures that may provoke some surprise in the modern listener: there is a double chromatic alteration (in the bass B flat-A and in the soprano C sharp-C) separated diagonally by an augmented second (B flat-C sharp). Once more it is cod. 3 itself that confirms that the application of the *fa supra la* is intended, since in bar 102 of the same *Te Deum* (Example 7) we find a similar situation with a preventative B natural, agreeing with Guillaud’s indication cited above.

95 100

(C) æ glo - ri - æ chris - te Tu ad li - be - ran - dum

(A) æ chris - te Tu ad li - be - ran - dum sus -

(T) glo - ri - æ chris - te Tu ad li - be - ran - dum sus-cep-

(B) æ chris - te Tu ad li - be - ran - dum sus-cep-

105 110

(C) sus-cep - tu - rus ho - mi - nem non hor - ru - i - sti non hor - ru - i - sti

(A) cep - tu - rus ho - mi - nem non hor - ru - i - sti

(T) tu - rus sus-cep - tu - rus ho - mi - nem non hor - ru - i - sti hor - ru - i - sti

(B) tu - rus ho - mi - nem non hor - ru - i - sti

Example 7. *Mi supra la* in the *Te Deum* (bar 102)

5 10

(Cantus) Cre - do quod re - dem - ptor me - us vi - vit & in no - vis - si - mo di -

(Altus) Cre - do quod re - dem - ptor me - us vi - vit & in no - vis - si - mo di -

(Tenor) Cre - do quod re - dem - ptor me - us vi - vit & in no - vis - si - mo di -

(Bassus) Cre - do quod re - dem - ptor me - us vi - vit & in no - vis - si - mo di -

12 15 20

C e de ter - ra su - rre - ctu - rus sum. Et in car - ne me - a vi - de - bo De - um

A e de ter - ra su - rre - ctu - rus sum. Et in car - ne me - a vi - de - bo De - um

T e de ter - ra su - rre - ctu - rus sum. Et in car - ne me - a vi - de - bo De - um

B e de ter - ra su - rre - ctu - rus sum. Et in car - ne me - a vi - de - bo De - um

Example 8. *Fa supra la* in *Credo quod Redemptor* (bar 13)



The image displays a musical score for the 'Agnus Dei' section of a Mass for the Dead. It features four vocal parts: Soprano (C), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics are in Latin: 'A-gnus De - i Qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di do - na e - is re - qui - em'. The score is divided into four systems, with measure numbers 405, 420, 430, and 440 marked. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves, with some words split across lines. The score concludes with the words 'do - na e - is re - qui - em sem - pi - ter - nam'.

**Example 10.** Agnus Dei from the *Missa pro Defunctis*

In the motet *De profundis* too there is an instance in which a *fa supra la* in the highest note of the soprano causes some friction with this context (Example 9, bar 19). The E flat/*fa* becomes the

beginning of a descending diminished triad E flat-C-A, reinforced by the A/mi of the bass in the bar 20. Curiously, the soprano and bass have at that moment a symmetrical chromatic inflexion (A-B flat-A in the bass and D-Eb-D in the soprano) that recalls another particular moment of the work: the simultaneity of C sharp/mi and E flat/fa in symmetrical melodic movement in bar 8, the text being 'De profundis clamavi ad te'.

The soprano part of the Agnus Dei from the *Missa pro Defunctis* presents circumstances similar to those in *Credo quod Redemptor*, that would invite the application of the *fa supra la* (Example 10: bars 413, 427, 438). However the situation may be viewed as different from that previously described, since the melody is a paraphrase of the chant (Figure 3). Two possibilities are therefore possible: 1) The origin of the melody is irrelevant and the *fa supra rule* is valid; 2) The original plainsong melody should remain unaltered.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 2.** Chant for the third Agnus Dei from the *Missa defunctorum*<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, to the knowledge of the present author, there exists no intabulation of this Agnus Dei. One can, however, search for analogous situations in other intabulated works that might assist us in understanding which criteria would be applied. One melody used as the basis for a huge number of polyphonic works, often intabulated, in which a similar problem can occur, is the hymn *Ave maris stella*.

For the present paper, I consulted two intabulations of a section of the *Missa Ave Maris Stella* by Josquin, the first for keyboard by Gonzalo de Baena<sup>15</sup> and the second for vihuela by Diego Pisador.<sup>16</sup> Whereas the first source is still waiting for a deeper study that and bring more light to the

<sup>13</sup> Further enquiry is needed regarding *musica ficta* in chant. Chapter XX of Talésio's treatise concerns the 'regras para cantar por divisam accidentalmente', i.e., how to add flats and sharps in order to avoid tritones or to make cadences; TALÉSIO, *Arte* (see note 8), p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> Filipe de MAGALHÃES, *Cantvm ecclesiasticvm commendandi animas, corporaqve sepeliendi Defunctorum, Officium, Missam, & Stationes* (Conimbricæ, ex officina Vidua Emmanuelis de Carvalho, 1676), fol. 91.

<sup>15</sup> Gonzalo de BAENA, *Arte novamente inventada pera aprender a tanger* (Lisboa, German Galhard, 1540).

<sup>16</sup> Diego PISADOR, *Libro de musica de vihuela* (Salamanca, 1552).

issue of *musica ficta*, Honegger's work on Pisador<sup>17</sup> shows that the use of *fa supra la* is very frequent on his intabulations.<sup>18</sup> In both Baena and Pisador there are passages where *fa supra la* is avoided. In Examples 11-16 are shown two excerpts of the Agnus Dei from Josquin's Missa *Ave Maris Stella* in the versions of Baena and Pisador, and in the transcription by Albert Smijers.<sup>19</sup>

In both examples we find passages where the *fa supra la* rule is ignored. In Examples 14-16 are presented two passages from the Agnus Dei of Josquin's Missa *Ave Maris Stella* according to the intabulations of Baena and Pisador, and in the transcription by Albert Smijers. According to the *fa supra la* rule, the initial notes in the also in bar 10 and the soprano in bar 15 should be flat, but both intabulations leave them unaltered. A possible explanation is that the melodic character of the *mi supra la* at the opening of the hymn prevails over the solmisation rule. Similar reasoning suggests that in Morago's Agnus Dei too the above-mentioned *fa supra la* should be avoided.<sup>20</sup>

**Example 11a-11b.** Excerpt from Josquin's Missa *Ave Maris Stella*, Agnus Dei (bars 9-10 in the edition by Albert Smijers): Baena's intabulation (fol. 61r) and the author's transcription

<sup>17</sup> Marc HONEGGER, 'La tablature de D. Pisador et le problème des altérations au XVIe siècle', *Revue de Musicologie*, 59 (1973), pp. 38-59; Marc HONEGGER, 'La tablature de D. Pisador et le problème des altérations au XVIe siècle, II. Question du dièse (prenant la forme du bécarre en mode transposé)', *Revue de Musicologie*, 59 (1973), pp. 191-230; Marc HONEGGER, 'La tablature de D. Pisador et le problème des altérations au XVIe siècle, III. Question du bémol', *Revue de Musicologie*, 60 (1974), pp. 3-32.

<sup>18</sup> 'D'après cette règle d'ordre mélodique, couramment observé par les musiciens exécutants jusqu'au XVIIe et même jusqu'au XVIIIe siècle, toute note dépassant l'hexacorde d'un degré pour redescendre aussitôt doit être abaissée d'un demi-ton. Dans les textes imprimés, la nécessité de préciser la hauteur réelle de la 7e note ne s'imposait donc pas impérieusement. Cela explique le nombre relativement peu élevé de bémols obéissant à cette règle et notes dans les originaux vocaux de Josquin. Dans la tablature de Pisador par contre, les passages de ce genre sont très fréquemment pourvus du bémol surajouté'; Marc HONEGGER, 'La tablature de D. Pisador' (see note 12), p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Josquin des PRÉS, *Werken van Josquin des Prés*, 15, edited by Albert Smijers (Leipzig, Kistner & Siegel, 1935).

<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that we are applying criteria derived from the analysis of intabulations from the 1540s of music from the late 15th century to repertoire from the 1620s. As the *fa supra la* rule had not been formulated in Josquin's period with the same assertiveness as in 16th-century sources, it is possible that practices differed. For instance, Loys Bourgeois mentioned an 'old way' of making mutations, ascending in ut instead of re; Loys BOURGEOIS, *Le droict chemin de musique* (Geneve, Jean Gérard, 1550), chapter 1.

**Example 12a-12b.** Excerpt from Josquin’s *Missa Ave Maris Stella*, *Agnus Dei* (bars 9-10 in the edition by Albert Smijers): Pisador’s intabulation (fol. 68v) and the author’s transcription (transposed up one tone to allow better comparison between examples)

**Example 13.** Josquin’s *Missa Ave Maris Stella*, *Agnus Dei*, bars 9-10, Albert Smijers’ transcription

**Example 14a-14b.** Excerpt from Josquin’s *Missa Ave Maris Stella*, *Agnus Dei* (bars 14-5 in the edition by Albert Smijers): Baena’s intabulation (fol. 61v) and the author’s transcription

**Example 15a-15b.** Josquin's *Missa Ave Maris Stella*, *Agnus Dei* (bars 14-5 in the edition by Albert Smijers) in Pisador's intabulation (fol. 68v) and the author's transcription (transposed up one tone to allow better comparison between examples)

**Example 16.** Josquin's *Missa Ave Maris Stella*, *Agnus Dei*, bars 14-5, Albert Smijers' transcription

### *Mi contra fa* and improbable intervals

The first *Agnus Dei* from the *Missa pro Defunctis* by Morago (Example 10) presents yet another problem worthy of mention. In bar 439, the soprano has F/fa followed by G sharp/mi, an interval of an augmented second, not considered singable.<sup>21</sup> To avoid this interval, one would need to add a sharp to the F, but doing so will provoke a *mi contra fa* with the F/fa in the alto. The source therefore presents a situation in which one must choose which 'error' to commit: the melodic augmented second or the false relation with the alto. We find the same circumstance in bar 62 of the lesson *Parce mihi Domine* and bar 11 of the motet *Comissa mea pavesco*. Curiously the words in question are 'peccata' and 'comissa'.

<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the augmented second or its inversion is not in the list of 'intervalos cantáveis' or 'incantáveis' in the treatise of Talésio, António Fernandes or Nunes da Silva. Vicente Lusitano refers to it on his counterpoint rules when stating: 'Non daremo, mi, contra, fa, in secunda, quarta, quinta, settima, ne ottava (...)'. Vicente LUSITANO, *Introduitione facilissima, et novissima, di canto fermo, figurato, contraponto semplice, et in concerto* (Roma, Antonio Baldo, 1553), fol. 12v. Owing to the lack of a historically documented expression, I have chosen to name this class of interval as 'improbable interval'.

Example 17 shows a musical score for four voices: C (Cantus), A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bassus). The lyrics are: pec - ca - vi quid fa - ci-am ti - bi o cus - tos ho - mi - num. The score includes bar numbers 60, 65, and 70. A specific interval in bar 61 is highlighted with a circled '4' in the Tenor part.

**Example 17.** Improbable interval in the lesson *Parce mihi Domine* (bar 61)

Example 18 shows a musical score for six voices: [Superius I], [Superius II], [Altus I], [Altus II], [Tenor], and [Bassus]. The lyrics are: Co - mis - sa me - a pa - ves - co pa - ves - co pa - ves - co. The score includes bar numbers 5 and 10. A specific interval in bar 11 is highlighted with circled 'b's in the Superius II part.

**Example 18.** Improbable interval in the motet *Comissa mea pavesco* (bar 11)

## Conclusion

If *musica ficta* bears witness to the application of melodic and harmonic habits in certain circumstances, then the modern transcriber/performer needs to be aware that the criteria would have been learned through a process of empirical experience that is no longer accessible to us. Thus, any approach to the matter requires experience of historical practices that should be, as far as possible, detached from any preconceptions as to how things should sound.

As far as renaissance polyphony is concerned, the question that we should pose should not be ‘Where should we apply *ficta*?’ but ‘Where should we not apply *ficta* (and why)?’ It is possible that the common belief that *music ficta* is a tool to prevent undesirable intervals is more a medieval conception than renaissance, where the phenomenon seems to be more linked to melodic and

contrapuntal circumstances, to judge by formulations in treatises and examples in intabulations. And if we remember that polyphony is essentially notated in parts or choir books, and far more rarely in open score, then it makes sense that, from the performers' point of view, melodic instincts prevail.

**Pedro Sousa Silva** is a recorder player, musical director, teacher and researcher. He devotes part of his time to the study and interpretation of the repertoires contained in sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century Portuguese sources, working to bring them to the modern listener with his ensembles *A Imagem da Melancolia* and *Arte Minima*. He is a Professor Adjunto at ESMAE, Porto, where he is the head of the Early Music Department, and a researcher of CESEM at the Universidade Nova, Lisbon.

Recebido em | *Received* 04/10/2014  
Aceite em | *Accepted* 12/11/2014