

Further to Comm 2027 regarding the colascione, calascione, colachon, gallichon.....**1. Preamble**

I was very much taken with John Downing's recent Comm 2027 (FoMRHI Q. 130) '*In Search of the coloscione or Neapolitan Tiorba - A Missing Link?*'. He is certainly onto something and has significantly advanced our understanding of how the colichon/gallichon (note variant spellings - and these are but a few, Note 6) might have been developed from the small bodied, very long necked seventeenth century instrument played in Italy (especially Naples) into the relatively common eighteenth century instrument played across much of central Europe. In view of the importance of Comm 2027 to the somewhat convoluted story of the instrument, I felt impelled to dash off this note commenting on some of the matters John mentions and adding a few observations and speculations of my own.

2. The problem of the origins of the gallichon

2.1 For those unfamiliar with arcane aspects of lute organology it may be useful to briefly set out the basic problem regarding this particular instrument. The identity of the late 'baroque' gallichon (a.k.a mandora - not to be confused with the mandore), which seems to have appeared quite suddenly in the late seventeenth century and became played in much of central Europe throughout the eighteenth, has been established for over 30 years(3) and much repertoire and many extant instruments have been identified.

2.2 But what remains unclear is the precise origin of the instrument. One of the core puzzles is the very name, which seems to be vaguely related to that used in earlier times for a very long necked, small bodied Italian instrument, the colascione. Though how precisely a new branch of the lute family evolved from this peculiar instrument (with just two or three strings tuned in an octave or an octave with a fifth), resulting in a much larger bodied 6 string instrument in a wholly different tuning (basically the same intervals as the guitar or the bandora), is still something of a mystery.

3. Some Bohemian connections**3.1 Janowka's treatise of 1701**

This treatise(1) by the Bohemian monk, Tomas Balthazar Janowka, is particularly important as being the first to give a clear and pretty comprehensive description of the new late baroque *Galizona* or *Colachon* as he called it. He describes an instrument with six or eight courses in a nominal (a) tuning (ie top course at a) - stringing could be single or double - and also a version in a higher nominal pitch (d') which he calls the *Mandora* (thus employing a confusing terminology which lasted throughout the eighteenth century). Presumably he reported on instruments which were so reasonably well-established by 1701 as to merit a clear description in his work. This suggests a date for introduction of the new instrument into the region no later than the 1680s or even the 1670s.

3.2 The Talbot ms c 1695

Another, if surprising, Bohemian link is the instrument described in James Talbot's MS of contemporary instrument specifications c.1695 (2) and which he calls a *Colachon*. Talbot accurately reports on a large six course instrument with the first at nominal (a) in the usual

gallichon tuning and belonging to the Bohemian composer Gottfried Finger who worked in London from 1687 to 1704.

3.3 Previous speculation on the Bohemian origin of the gallichon

Many years ago (36 to be precise!) I suggested that the late seventeenth century large gallichon might be a rare example of an instrument (a bit like the saxophone) which had perhaps been consciously invented (possibly in Bohemia - also the source of much MS music for the instrument) at a particular time to meet a precise musical need: in this case for a plucked continuo instrument able to play chromatically in the contrabass region (ie below the F bass clef) and then made possible by a recent technological change (here the advent of overwound strings). Over the years I've continued looking for evidence from around this time/place (mostly from paintings in churches and other sources in central-Europe: eg Bohemia, Moravia and Oberosterreich) to put some flesh on to this idea - but, alas, without any very clear signs of the early organological development.

As an aside, the strange name might have simply been a Czech (or other regional) language attempt to use that associated with an already existing and vaguely similar long lute (ie the Italian colascione). Similarly, the name mandora for the smaller version might be linked to the early mandore - though why in this case use the usual French name for the small instrument rather than the Italian (mandola or variant) is beyond me!

4. Bonito's depictions

4.1 But now in Comm 2027 John presents us with some important paintings by Giuseppe Bonito (1701 or 1707 -1789) depicting a sort of single strung bass lute used in Naples. These are, at least to me, particularly revelatory, and perhaps do indeed suggest (as per John's Comm) a 'missing link' between the early very long necked, small bodied colascione and the later central-European gallichon. Here is a colour image of the best picture (c.1740) in Comm. 2027 <http://www.pinacotecabari.it/gestione/scheda.php?id=154>

This depicts an instrument not that very far removed from the very first recognised extant gallichon (allbeit with a few unusual features): the six single stringed instrument by Johannes Schorn (c.1658 - 1718), Salzburg 1688.

<http://www.salzburgmuseum.at/1618.0.html>

Note how the body/neck joint is curved on both instruments - although this could also indicate a conversion from a wider necked theorbo: a feature also sometimes found on conversions of eighteenth century wide necked eleven and thirteen course lutes to mandoras.

Colour images of other of Bonito's works, some also showing more ordinary lutes with just seven or so courses (once again demonstrating that this particular instrument was still widely played in eighteenth century Italy) are found here

<https://www.google.de/search?q=Giuseppe+Bonito&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=exyIVfGvBMypsgGHI4CADA&ved=0CDAQ7Ak&biw=1024&bih=679>

4.2 Perhaps a more typical early eighteenth century large continuo gallichon by a very well known Bohemian maker is the Thomas Edlinger (Prague, 1729) shown here:

<http://www.vanedwards.co.uk/38b.htm>

The similarity between the 1729 Edlinger and Bonito's c.1740 instrument is striking - with a couple of courses added to extend the range downwards (made possible by overwound strings) the two might essentially be much the same instrument. Indeed, as John points out, there is ample space on the bridge of Bonito's c.1740 instrument for a few more strings and the neck width at the nut even looks wide enough to take two more strings - so perhaps this is a depiction of some six string instrument (itself a conversion from an older theorbo?) restrung with just

four strings to better suit Neapolitan street music tastes and earthier playing styles.

4.3 Of course, parallel evolution is not restricted just to the biological world and two large six stringed lute type instruments might have been developed quite independently around the same time in both Naples and Bohemia - though I think the similarity in the names makes it unlikely in this case. And whilst we don't know what Bonito called the instruments he depicted (*calascione* is an attractive thought, though by no means proven - see 6.1 below), at the very least we can say that a large single strung lute type instrument, in appearance close to the mid-European six string gallichon, was played in Italy in the early eighteenth century - and perhaps, crucially, in the late seventeenth century too.

5. Revised hypothesis on the origins of the 'baroque' gallichon

In short, whilst the new evidence is circumstantial, John's discovery provides a further very important clue to understanding how the Northern instrument may have developed. So my (revised!) take on all this is that a Bonito type of instrument employed in Italy in the late seventeenth century was admired by travellers to that country. Bohemian visitors were especially taken with the instrument and its more formal continuo (rather than Neapolitan 'folksy') possibilities and copied it in a six string configuration with an extended range downwards made possible by the new overwound string technology. Thus leading to the instrument soon to be described by Janovka.

6. The tiorba a taccone a.k.a calascione

6.1 As if bringing Bonito's significant pictures to our attention wasn't enough, John also points out an instrument '*La tiorba a taccone*' mentioned in a Neapolitan poem of 1646, and seemingly also known as the '*calascione*' (note the spelling: 'cal...' not 'col...'). This instrument had 10 strings - if the text relates precisely - though whether disposed in five course or ten single strings is unclear. John suggests that this Neapolitan instrument may have led to the invention of the Paduan tiorba, but I think he's on thinner ice here. Not only does the depiction of the '*Paduanische theorba*' in Praetorius's 1614 *Syntagma Musica De Organographie* (and in other earlier representations) well pre-date the 1646 source, the Paduan theorbo must have been pretty well known by 1614 (perhaps from the late decades of the sixteenth century as the chitaronne) for Praetorius to have decided it was sufficiently established to merit inclusion in his great work of that year (4). Even more speculatively, the Venice-Padua region is well removed and separated by the Apennines from the Kingdom of Naples and both were (and are) jealous of their individual identities: I think it unlikely that a Neapolitan maker would have doffed their cap to Padua.

6.2 Indeed, whilst the offset double roses in Bonito's painting seem to reflect those found on the '*Paduanische theorba*' - which came first is impossible to say. And other lute family instruments also exhibit more than one central rose: this feature is simply, I suggest, a characteristic of individual makers rather than of a particular instrument.

6.3 More telling is, I think, the use of the '*a taccone*' qualifier. This indicates that '*La tiorba a taccone*' is a particular, non-standard type of tiorba - ie the *calascione* is a special sort of tiorba played with a plectrum. This suggests that in the seventeenth century the ordinary (non-special) tiorba generally played in Naples (for opera and such) was not the *calascione* but was an instrument more in line with those used in other parts of Italy. All a bit reminiscent of the

chitarra battente/chitarra controversy - but that's another can of worms....

6.4 Kircher's 1650 description of how the tiorba was invented should be read, in my view, with much caution: especially bearing in mind his low and mere passing interest in plucked instruments (5). Further, even if given much credence, his description of doubling the neck of a lute and adding strings might just as well describe the ordinary double neck theorbo configuration rather than a single long necked colascione type instrument (with neck twice the length of an ordinary lute). Having said this - all much enjoyable food for thought.....

7. Last thoughts

7.1 John's discovery now persuades me to approach from the other direction to try and identify mid- European paintings or other sources which depict something closer to the Neapolitan instrument (calascione?) painted by Bonito. I'd be very grateful if any members can point me in the direction of such depictions.

7.2 What would also be of particular interest is any indication as to how '*La tiorba a taccone*' a.k.a *calascione* was actually strung (eg , size, pitches, numbers of strings - single or double). Regarding the stringing of Bonito's instrument (calascione?), it looks to me as though the painter depicted plain gut strings all of roughly similar gauge and not really consistent with the octave or octave and fifth tuning of the colascione. Indeed, rather closer to the stringing of the first four courses of the Northern gallichon - though perhaps this is mere wishful thinking! Any further thoughts much welcomed.....

Notes

- 1) Balthazar Janowka '*Clavis ad Thesaurum Magnae Artis Musicae*', Prague, 1701.
- 2) James Talbot MS c. 1695. Christ Church Library MS 1187. (Transcription by Michael Prynne in G.S.J. XIV March 1968)
- 3) M. Hodgson - FoMRHI Comm 175 The identity of 18th century 6 course 'lutes', 1979; - FoMRHI Comm 194 The development of the callachon, 1979; D. Gill - FoMRHI Comm 274 Mandore and Calachon, 1980.
- 4) '*Syntagma Musicum II de Organographia*', parts I and II, Michael Praetorius, 1614/15. (Modern translation David Crookes, Clarendon Press, 1991).
- 5) Athanasius Kircher, '*Musurgia Universalis*', Rome, 1650. (Facsimile OLMS Hildesheim, New York, 1970).
- 6) A few variants (not necessarily exhaustive!) found in the sources:
colascione, calascione, colachon, gallichon, calichon, chalicon, callichon, gallichon, galizona, gallishon, gallischon, gallichona, gallichone, galichona, gallimon, calchedon, chalcedon, caldecon . . .