

# Francesco Corbetta - The Best of All

## 6. La Guitarre royale (1671)

### Introduction

Corbetta's fourth surviving book, **La Guitarre royale**, was printed in Paris after some delay on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1671. The "Extrait du Privilege du Roy" on page 102 reads as follows

#### *Extract from the Privilege of the King*

*By the grace of the king dispatched at St. Germain en Laye dated 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1670. Signed Dalencé. S.' Francesco Corbetti is allowed to print or have printed a book of many pieces to play on the guitar which he has composed, to be sold and retailed to the public during a period of five consecutive years; and all printers, bookshops and others are prohibited from printing the said book, from selling counterfeits or from extracting anything from the same, on pains of a fine of two thousand livres and of all dispensations, damages and interests as it is most amply conveyed by the said privilege.*

*The said Sieur Francesco Corbetti has ceded and transferred his said privilege as above to Hierosme Bonneüil engraver en taille douce in Paris.*

*Finally printed the last day of October, 1671. The exemplairs have been supplied.*

The King granting the privilege is of course Louis XIV. There is more than a year between the date on which the privilege was granted and the date on which the book was finally printed. The reason for the delay is unknown but may have been due to difficulties with the printing. The book is printed throughout from engraved plates. From what Corbetta says in his introduction it seems that he engraved the music himself but the title page and text were probably engraved by Bonneüil to whom Corbetta had ceded his privilege. Printing from engraving was a fairly recent innovation in France in the 1670s. A facsimile of an unidentified copy was published by Minkoff in 1993.

The book is dedicated to the English king, Charles II. All the music is in "mixed" style combining lute style counterpoint with strummed chords. It is however notated in French tablature and is as far as we know the first of Corbetta's books to use French rather than Italian tablature with *alfabeto*. It comprises mainly the standard movements of the suite grouped by mode or key but includes some miscellaneous pieces, amongst them sets of variations on the chaconne and folias. At the end there are four of the movements arranged for vocal ensemble; these are followed by instructions on accompanying a bass line.

Corbetta's dedication to King Charles is on p.2 and translate more or less as follows:

#### *Sire*

*Because of the arduousness of the path of virtue, the human spirit does not have a stimulous more stinging than glory nor a bridle harsher than respect. I, who thus far have known this ambitious truth for the one, and fearful for the other, have perhaps been a long time in submitting my sonatas to the recognition of the world. And I only determined to do it, when I knew that the privilege they would enjoy would not be ephemeral, being recommended by the immortal name of the most glorious of all the Kings of the Earth. What is certain is that in the shade of the laurels of Your Majesty they*

*will have no fear of the lightning of envy. Not disdainng therefore the sublimity of his Great Kingdom, may he bestow a kindly glance on the profound humility with which I dedicate these pages to him: since the final purpose of my intention is to confirm my homage to him, sublimating my luck to the glory of being able to publish them to the Universe.*

*Sire*

*To Your Majesty*

*Your most humble, faithful and obedient Servant Francesco Corbett*

There is an anonymous *Sonetto* in Italian praising the guitar on p.6 between the Italian and French prefaces and a list of contents on p.10.

**La guitarre royale (1671)** is unusual in that it has lengthy introductions in both Italian and French, each accompanied by a page of examples in Italian and French tablature respectively. The Italian introduction appears first on p.3-4 with tablature examples on p.5; the French introduction is on p.7-8 with tablature examples on p.9. Corbetta's mother tongue would have been dialect of Italian and presumably he wrote the Italian preface himself. Even so it is not always clear what he is trying to say. The French preface is not a word for word translation of the Italian and it is sometimes less precise. It was presumably included for the benefit of players who could not read the Italian. Corbetta's French may not have been very fluent and it is also possible that the French version was made by someone else who did not fully understand the subject matter or whose grasp of Italian was limited. However the two prefaces cover the same topics in the same way; they are not intended for different groups of readers. It is possible that some or all of the Italian preface had appeared earlier in one of missing books which Corbetta refers to in his introduction.

The two prefaces are not identical; there are passages in the Italian which are not in the French and vice versa and there are examples in Italian tablature which are not among the French tablature examples – and vice versa. In this translation the two versions are set out in parallel columns for ease of comparison. There are minor variations in the order of the topics discussed. These are highlighted and cross-referenced in green in the translation.

**Note on the translation:** *I have tried to adhere closely to the original texts but have translated more freely when this seemed necessary to make the instructions clear. Explanatory words or phrases are in square brackets.*

**Note on the musical examples:** *The method of stringing which Corbetta preferred had a low octave string only on the fourth course; the strings of the fifth course were in unison in the upper octave. In the examples notes on the fifth course are usually shown in the upper octave. However for convenience the notes on the fifth course in the 5-part chords are sometimes reproduced in the lower octave with the heads shown as crosses; they usually double one of the notes on the higher courses at the unison. I have not shown ornaments except where these relate to the instructions under consideration. The direction of strummed chords is usually shown by the direction of the stem of the chord – down for a bass to treble stroke and up for a treble to bass stroke - except where it is necessary to make the part writing clear.*

## Parallel Translations of the Italian and French Introduction

Italian Preface	French Preface
<p><b>Curioso Lettore</b>            Studious Reader - Read before beginning to play.</p>	<p><b>Audis au Lecteur</b>            Advice to the reader before beginning to play the pieces.</p>
<p><b>In congiuntura d'esser venuto</b>            I arrived in Paris last year in order to live there for some time and as I had begun this work in London, I brought the plates with me in order to finish it.</p> <p><b>Ho voluto esporlo alla luce</b>            I wanted to publish it with the greatest perfection for the satisfaction of students of the guitar and, humbling my Genius, in order to comply above all else with that [satisfaction] of His Majesty [Charles II], who, being a lover of music, has always appreciated and enjoyed my compositions which now in an act of homage I dedicate them to him.</p> <p><b>A dunque in questo libro</b>            Therefore in this book, in order for you to achieve this perfection you must observe the instructions set out here as well as the examples below [on the next page] which together will render the sonatas very easy for you to play;</p>	<p><b>J'arriuy a Paris</b>            I arrived in Paris last year in order to live there for some time. As I had begun this work in London, I brought with me the plates which had been made previously in order to finish it</p> <p><b>afin de l'achever</b>            and to follow the guiding spirit of the King and of myself to publish this book today in all the perfection that I am able</p> <p><b>y apporter où vous remarquerez</b>            to bring to it where you may observe exactly all the instructions which you will see [here] so that you may draw profit from it.</p>
<p><b>ho meslo l'Alfabeto</b>            I have set out for you the <i>Alfabeto</i> [chords] which will help you to play the sonatas accurately by making it easy to to learn them quickly.</p>	<p><b>Not in the French preface</b></p>

### Example 0 – Alfabeto in French and Italian tablature

The image shows a handwritten musical score for 'Alphabet Française' and 'Italiano'. The top staff is titled 'Alphabet Française' and contains a series of chord diagrams for the letters A through M. The bottom staff is titled 'Italiano' and contains a series of fret numbers for the same letters. The fret numbers are written in a way that corresponds to the chord diagrams above them. The letters A through M are written in a cursive hand. The word 'Abelin' is written at the bottom of the page.

N O P

+ A B C D E F G

H I K L M N O P

For convenience notes on the fifth course are shown in the lower octave.

**Comment:** The standard *alfabeto* chords +/A – P are set out in both French and Italian tablature at the beginning of the examples in Italian tablature on p.5. although they are not used in **La guitarre royale (1671)**. They are set out in Italian and French tablature in the introduction to Corbetta’s 1648 book, **Varii scherzi di sonate** which was probably printed in the Spanish Netherlands, presumably for the benefit of players who were not familiar with Italian tablature.

<p><b>Nota che le prime Consonanze</b></p> <p>Note that the chords in the first example are <i>Abbellimenti Rebatimenti</i> and they are indicated with this sign <math>\cap</math> in order to abbreviate them [i.e. to avoid writing them out in full] and looking at the example below you must place a finger on that string [i.e. stop the string] which makes a minor or major third [of the chord], and in all the others you must do the same as you will see in the other examples.</p>	<p><b>Les Consonantes sont marquées</b></p> <p>The chords are marked with this sign <math>\cap</math> in order to put them in abbreviated form. You must look at the following example from which you will understand that it is necessary to run the finger over the string [i.e. stop the string] which forms the minor or major third [of the chord]; and all the others ought to be done in the same way as you will note in the following [example].</p>
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**Example 1 - Ascending appoggiatura without a mordent**

**Comment:** In the places marked with a star there is a b instead of 1 on the first course.

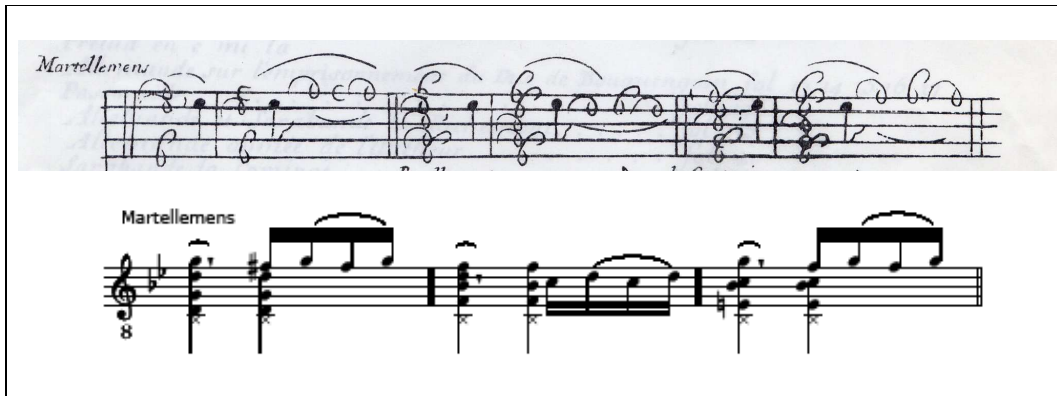
*Preuicre Instruction d'agremens et Cheutes sans Martellemens*

**Preuicre Instruction d'agremens et Cheutes sans Martellemens**

**Comment :** What Corbetta has said here does not altogether make sense... but it is clear from the examples that what he is trying to describe is an ascending appoggiatura without a mordent. If there is a slur over a chord an auxiliary note a semitone or a tone below the note to be ornamented is played followed by the main note. The slur does not make it clear which note is to be ornamented – it is usually but not always the uppermost note of the chord. It does not indicate what value the auxiliary note would have either – this is a matter of some debate.

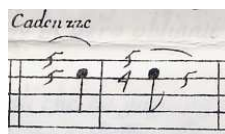
Although Corbetta refers to the “string forming a major or minor third” it does not do so in all of the examples. In the first example the **auxiliary** note is a **major third** above the next note down in the chord (F sharp over a G minor chord); in the **second, sixth and seventh examples** the note on which the auxiliary note **resolves** is the **minor third** of the chord and in the **third and fourth examples** the note on which the auxiliary note **resolves** is the **major third** of the chord. In the **fifth and eighth examples** the note on which the auxiliary note resolves is actually the **root of the chord**.

<p><b>Trouerai questo piccol segno ,</b>          You will find this little sign , between the chord and the [note value indicating the direction of the] stroke which indicates that you must hammer [it] with the little finger.</p>	<p><b>Vous trouerez ce petit Signe ,</b>          You will find this little sign , between the chord and the note [value] which indicates that you must strike [it] with the little finger.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Example 2 - Ascending appoggiatura with a mordent</b></p>	



**Comment:** Corbetta is not giving much away here either but from the example it is clear that if there is a comma after the chord and before the note value you effectively play the same thing twice. Only the first of the four notes will be played with the right hand; the three notes which follow will be played with the little finger. That is why there are two slurs. Strictly speaking the comma should be beside the note to be ornamented but this does not always happen.

**Example 3 - Without a Mordent referred to as *Cadenze* in the Italian examples**



**Comment:** Corbetta has not commented on this example at all but it is simply ascending appoggiatura at a cadence played on the two lowest courses which is a common feature of his music.

**In a nutshell – a slur over a chord indicates that you play an ascending appoggiatura; if there is a comma as well you add a mordent.**

***Vedrai lo Strascio quale e' con questo segno***



You will see the *strascio* which has this sign U which indicates that you must play the first letter [note] with the finger of the right hand and the rest with the left hand for just

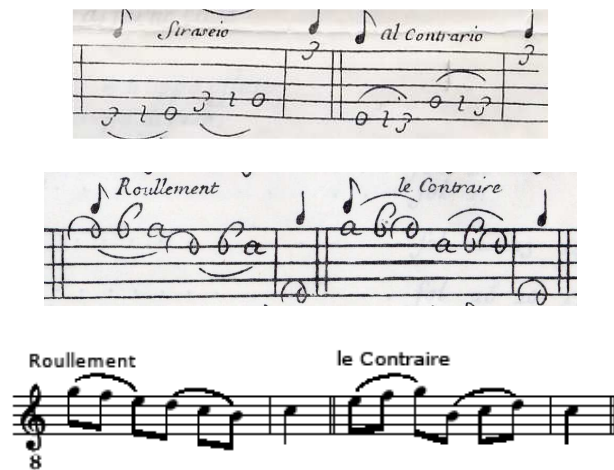
***Vous uerrez ce sign*** U



You will see this sign U which indicates that you must play the first letter with the finger of the right hand and pull off the rest with those of the left just as you see above the

<p>as long as the sign is placed [i.e. including as many notes in the slur as are indicated].</p> <p><b>sara lo stesso al Contrario a questo segno</b> <math>\curvearrowright</math></p> <p>When the same sign <math>\curvearrowright</math> is in the opposite direction the finger must hammer [the notes].</p>	<p>notes. This is called a <i>Tirade</i> [in the example it is called a <i>roullement</i>]</p> <p><b>et lorsque uous y uerrez se signe</b> <math>\curvearrowright</math></p> <p>and when you see there this sign <math>\curvearrowright</math> on the contrary it is necessary to run the finger in the same way as a <i>cheute</i>.</p>
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**Example. 4 - Downward slur/Upward slur**



**Comment :** This is straightforward and describes the standard practice of playing groups of notes with the left hand only. The slur is usually (but not always) placed below the letters for a downward slur and above the letters for an upward slur.

<p><b>Non potendosi far il tremolo</b></p> <p>As it is not possible to make the <i>tremolo</i> [trill] over a quaver or semi-quaver, you will see next how you ought to divide it into two letters [i.e. notes] under [i.e. with the value of] a semiquaver both when plucking and when strumming.</p>	<p><b>Comme on peut pas faire</b></p> <p>As it is not possible to make the <i>tremblement</i> [trill] below the quavers or semiquavers, you will find here the way to divide them into the two letters [i.e. notes] which come after [one another], under [i.e. with the value of] a semiquaver whether they are plucked or strummed.</p>
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**Example 5a - Downward appoggiatura without a trill**

a.

a.

8 a.

**Example 5b-c**

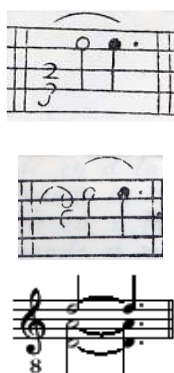
b. c.

b. c.

8 b. c.

**Comment:** Corbetta describes the *tremblement* in the French preface **only** further on. This is a trill which starts on the upper auxiliary note and it is represented in **La guitarrre royale (1671)** by an "x". Here he is explaining what you should do on notes which are too short for a complete trill - he refers to quavers and semiquavers but all the examples show how to divide a quaver. This is split into two semiquavers, the first is the upper auxiliary note and the second the note onto which it resolves. In the first two examples (a & b) he has given the abbreviated form followed by what should actually be played. The third example (c) he gives only what should be played; this may be misprinted as there is an "x" on the second course on the last crotchet in the French example but no letter; there is no x in the Italian example. It is not clear why he has written the word *Cadences* over examples b & c in the French examples.

### Example 5d



Example 5d appears at the end of the *cadenses*; it is not clear what it represents but possibly just indicates notes which are tied to make up a complete bar at the end of a piece.

#### **Questo segno S.**

This sign **S.** indicates repetition of the end of the piece and it may be placed before or after the cadence where, after the second part has been repeated, it will be necessary to stop at the said sign, in order to repeat [the section] from the other [sign] above, and then to repeat the cadence of the piece for the purpose of re-commencing it from the *da capo*;

#### **e trouando il medesimo segno**

and finding the same sign after the cadence, break off at this sign, resuming from the same sign [above] in order to repeat the same [passage]; and that done you will stop at the last cadence in order to begin the *da capo*.

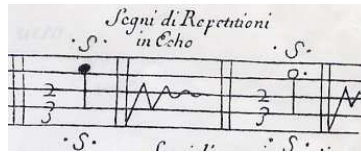
#### **Ce signe S.**

This sign **S.** indicates that one should [make a] repeat at the end of a piece and you will see it before or after the cadences. This is because when the second part has to be repeated it is necessary to stop at the said sign, and to repeat the preceding section above, and then to resume the cadence of the piece in order to begin it again;

#### **mais lorsque uous trouerez**

but when you find the same sign **S.** after the cadence it is not necessary to play it [the cadence] but only to retake [the piece from] the sign in order to repeat the same, and after that you will stop at the cadence in order to begin again.

### Example 6 – Repeat signs

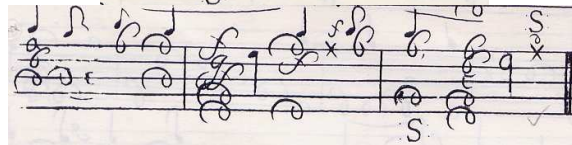
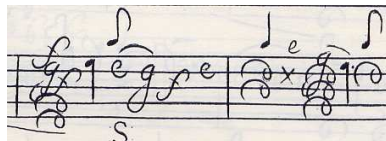


Signes de Repetition  
en Echo



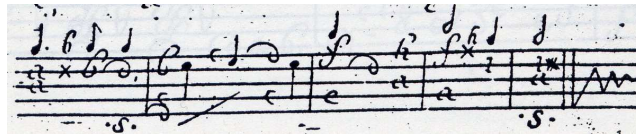
**Comment:** Corbetta is describing different types of repetition which are quite complex. Here he is referring to what is known as the *petite reprise*. The last phrase of a piece is repeated – as a kind of echo. A sign should appear at the point in the music where the repetition begins; at the cadence the sign may appear before or after the final chord or cadential figure. In the first instance the phrase is repeated before the final chord is played; in the second instance it is taken from the end. In Example 7, because the repeat starts on the second beat (of the first bar of the first line) the final chord is omitted the first time around.

### Example 7 – Sarabande p.40 closing bars



In Example 8 the final chord is played before repeating the final phrase.

**Example 8 – Gigue p. 21 closing bars**



The sign is also used to indicate first and second time bars in the middle of a piece in binary form as in Example 9. The first **S.** indicates that the bar which follows is played the first time around. When the section is repeated the chord following the first **S.** is omitted and the music continues after the double bar line from the second **S.**

**Example 9 – Allemande p.25 b.15-17.**



***Sara bene replicar***

It is good to repeat the pieces again many times in order to appreciate the air [tempo] better and to embellish them with the ornaments which I have notated so as to satisfy the ear.

***le vous conseille***

I advise you to repeat the pieces again many times in order to learn the air [tempo] better and in order to embellish them with the cadences which I have notated so as to satisfy the ear.

**Comment:** This is a bit of a *non sequitur* – but having explained which sections of a piece should be repeated Corbetta advises the player to repeat the pieces themselves over and again in order to learn to play them properly – sensible advice.

***Trouerai abbelim<sup>ti</sup> di cadenze***

You will find embellishments of the harmony [cadenze],

***enfin vous verrez***

Finally you will see many em-bellishments or cadences and repetitions.

[This is placed further on in the French preface]

This is also a bit of a non sequitur. In the Italian examples an example of a *cadenzze* follows the *Segni di Repetitioni in Echo* and two more are placed at the very end. These are not included amongst the French examples. They are really just conventional cadential formulas.

**Example 10A - Cadenzze**

Corbetta has not commented on the tablature examples in the French preface labelled *Cadences* which follow the *Signes de Repetition en Echo*. They are not included amongst the Italian examples. The first and third of these seem to be no different from the *Cheutes sans Martellemens* illustrated at the beginning; the first example appears to have been misprinted. The chord in the second bar (marked with an asterisk in the transcription) should be an F major chord; the tablature letter on the second course should be b = c' not a = b natural. It is not clear what the example in the middle is supposed to represent – just a common cadential formula perhaps.

**Example 10B - Cadenses**

The dots at the beginning of the next stave of examples in French tablature are not described either; they are not included in the Italian examples. They may be intended to indicate the repeats of sections in binary form movements. Corbetta usually just puts plain double bars with a flourish at the end of a piece although these are sometimes filled in with dots; in a few places e.g. the Gigue on p. 57 he has just put two dots.

### Example 11



**appresso vedrai la Consonnante con questo segno /**

afterwards you will see the chord with this sign / between the strings which are to be held and this indicates that the chord should be held until you pass to another in order to sustain the harmony,

**e uedrai l'altro fuori delle righe**

and you will also see another outside the lines of the tablature which indicates that the [first] finger traverses the fingerboard [i.e. forms a *barré*] both when strumming and plucking; this is the most convenient method.

**Ce signe /**

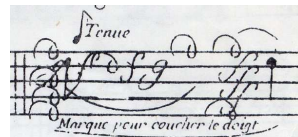
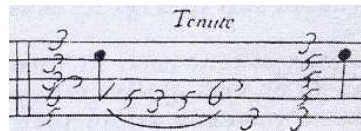
This sign / on the strings indicates that you have to hold the chord until you pass to another so as to sustain the harmony,

**et uoyant celle cy hors des cordes**

and seeing this [sign] underneath the strings indicates that it is necessary to lay the [first] finger across the fret [i.e. use a *barré*] both for *batteries* and for plucking; this is the most convenient way.

[This is placed further on in the French preface]

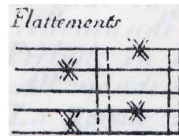
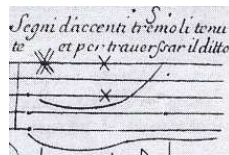
### Example 12 – Signs for *Tenue* and *Barré*



**Comment:** This is straightforward. The curved line on the tablature staff (not to be confused with a slur although it often serves a dual purpose) indicates that the chord should be held whilst the passing notes are played. The line under the staff (shown as a wavy line in the transcription) indicates that a *barré* should be used both in chordal passages and in passages played finger-style. The Italian example does not show the wavy line under the staff indicating the *barré*. Instead it is included together with the *tenuto* sign and the signs for the *acento* and *tremolo* in a separate example [See Example 13 below].

<p><b>Questo ✱ in maniera di doppio tremolo</b>  This sign, ✱ which resembles a double trill sign, is called an <i>acento</i> and it is made by placing the finger firmly on the letter on the course where it is indicated and shaking the hand.</p>	<p><b>Ce signe ✱</b>  This sign ✱ which is the <i>flatement</i> means that it is necessary to hold the finger firmly on the string and to shake with the hand having the little finger on the letter [i.e.fret] of the string where the said sign will be placed.</p> <p><b>[This is placed further on in the French preface]</b></p>
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**Example 13 – Sign for Vibrato [French]/ Vibrato/Trill/Tenue/Barré [Italian]**



**Comment:** The *acento* or *flatement* is a kind of vibrato applied to a single note to emphasize it.

<p><b>Vedrai lesempio -</b>  You will see an example of a <i>repicco</i> placed in a <i>ciaccona</i> [on p.72], where the note with the longer tail indicates [that the chord should be played with] the thumb; beginning first with the fingers [i.e. playing the first chord once with all four fingers], then [do the same] with the thumb [downwards] and then do the same upwards. Note that the four notes tied together indicate that you must first play the chord with second [i.e. middle] finger and afterwards with the first [index] finger [downwards], and then again as upstrokes at a quicker tempo [i.e. as demi-semi-quavers rather than a semi-quavers], and continue with the fingers and thumb [in the same way];</p>	<p><b>Vous verrez l'exemple -</b>  You will see the example of a <i>batterie</i> placed in a <i>caprice de chacone</i> [on p.72] where the note with the longer stem indicates that the thumb should be used for both up and down strokes; and note that when you see four notes tied together, you must use the second finger downwards, and then the first finger [downwards] and then you will do the same upwards very quickly; and you will continue always with the fingers and the thumb following the example as you see [illustrated] here.</p>
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**Example 14 – Repicco/Batterie**

**Comment:** This is the first of two examples of a *repicco* (*batterie* in French) – an elaborate strumming pattern. It is the same as the first bar of the variation which begins at bar 32 in the *Caprice de Chacone* on p. 72 of **La guitare royale (1671)**. The chords with the long stems are played with the thumb – a downstroke followed by an upstroke on the two semi-quavers. These are followed by four demi-semi-quavers – two downstrokes played with the second and first fingers followed by two upstrokes played with the second and first fingers. Two dots beside the note heads represent the second finger and one dot the first. Corbetta has not indicated which fingers should be used for the other chords. The Italian preface is only slightly more helpful. The first full chord is played with all four fingers. Having described how to play the demi-semi-quavers he says “and continue with the fingers and thumb in the same way” which is open to more than one interpretation.

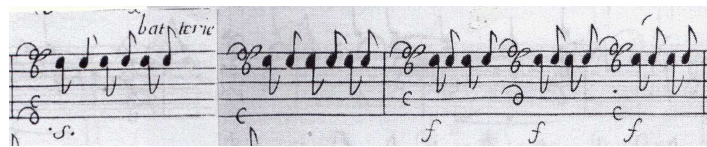
<p><b>nel altra Ciaccona</b>  in another <i>ciaccona</i> [on p.75] you will see another <i>repicco</i> which has already been placed in the press [i.e.appeared in print] where [because] it was misunderstood I have included the same thing in a more perfect way. Where you see six quaver strokes, play four of them from the third course downwards [i.e. towards the first course – alternately down and up], and moving the hand make the next two strokes on the other two courses, the first and second [i.e. 5<sup>th</sup> &amp; 4<sup>th</sup>], without touching the others [i.e 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> &amp; 3<sup>rd</sup>];</p> <p><b>dopo mutando il dito</b>  after changing the finger[s] on the frets, play in the same way for the other six [quavers], and changing the fingers for the next four [quavers], strike the first loudly, and the</p>	<p><b>Dans une autre chacone</b>  In another <i>chacone</i> [on p.75] there is another <i>batterie</i> which I have had printed previously).<sup>1</sup> And because it has the gift of pleasing, I wanted to include it here, where you will see that there are six strokes in the form of quavers. You will play four [quavers] on the first, second and third courses <b>carrying the hand downwards</b>; after you will play the other two strokes on the fourth and fifth courses <b>carrying the hand upwards</b> without touching the others;</p> <p><b>apres changeant le doigt</b>  after changing the fingering [of the left hand] you do the same with the other six quavers. Changing the fingers for the next four which follow, you will strike the first chord a little</p>
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<sup>1</sup> This variation does actually occur in a different Chacone attributed to Corbetta which has survived only in a later manuscript – B-Lc Ms 245 (ca. 1706) p.96.. This may have originally appeared in print in one of Corbetta’s missing books.

other three softly; then changing the fingers at the other [groups of four] do the same until the first six begin again; where you find an *f* this means play the first of the four beats loudly, and thus you will achieve a beautiful *repicco*.

strongly and the other three very sweetly. You will play the others in the same way changing the fingering as you commence the first of each six. This is why you will find an “*f*” that indicates that you strike rather strongly on the first stroke and in this way the batterie will be more delicate.

**Example 15**  
**[Autre Chacone p.75, b.13-14]**



**Comment:** This refers to the *repicco* variation in the Chacone on p. 75 although Corbetta has not reproduced it in his preface. What Corbetta says in the French preface does not make very good sense; the Italian is more helpful. On the first four of each group of six quavers, the first, second and third courses are played; on the last two, the fourth and fifth. In the French version Corbetta seems to be saying that the first four are played as downstrokes and the last two as upstrokes but the notation clearly indicates that the chords are played alternately down – up.

In the Italian preface he says “Where you see six quaver strokes, play four of them from the third course downwards [i.e. from the third course towards the first course], and moving the hand make the next two strokes on the other two courses, the first and second [i.e. fifth and fourth] without touching the others”.

**It is important to realize here that in the Italian preface Corbetta is referring to the order of the courses in the Italian way – the first is the lowest sounding course; the second is what we would usually call the fourth.]<sup>2</sup>**

The “*f*”s under the first chord of each group of four quavers is self explanatory.

	<i>Ce signe / – See above</i>
	<i>Ce signe # – See above</i>

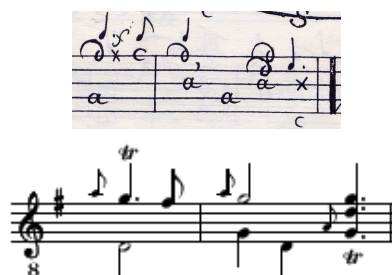
<b>Not in the Italian Preface</b>	<i>Quand vous trouverez ce signe X</i> When you find this sign <b>X</b> which is called
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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that James Tyler in “The guitar and its music, p.177, has transcribed the chords the wrong way round because he was unfamiliar with Italian nomenclature.

	<p><i>tremblement</i> it indicates that it is necessary to trill the finger on that fret and when it will be unstopped you will see above or below the said trill outside the strings a little letter which indicates the place where you ought to make the trill and if you have the finger on the letter you will see the same thing.</p>
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**Comment:** Although Corbetta has not described the trill in the Italian preface he has included an illustration of the appropriate sign with that for the *tremolo* etc. See Example 13 above. He has not included any tablature illustrations of how to play it in the French examples and his description of it is not very helpful. However it is a trill which starts with the upper auxiliary note. This is indicated with a small fret letter placed above or below the tablature stave. It may be played on a stopped string or an open string as seen in this example. Corbetta says nothing at all about how the actual trill is played. This would depend on the length of the note to which it was attached.

**Example 16 - Trill**  
**[Allemande p. 35 closing bars]**



<p><b>Not in the Italian Preface</b></p>	<p><b><i>Esuitez le plus</i></b>  Follow as much as you can the dots marked thus</p>  <p>you will see on the strings so that you avoid the dissonances, and chose with the thumb precisely the letters notated;</p> <p><b><i>enfin vous verrez – See above</i></b></p>
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### Example 17 - Dots



**Comment:** Dots placed on strings in this way are meant to indicate that the strings should be omitted from the chord. In the French example (a) in the first instance the first and second courses are to be omitted; in the next the third, fourth and fifth and so on. Corbetta has not mentioned this use of dots in the Italian preface but he has included the same illustration in the tablature examples referring to them both as *Ponte Perpicicare* and as *Con doi diti in sú* (b). Surprisingly he has included another more helpful example in Italian tablature (c) although this system of indicating the courses to be omitted is not used in Italian sources.

In a practice which originates with the tables of *alfabeto* chords found in early seventeenth-century Italian guitar books, only the stopped courses of strummed chords are indicated in the tablature; lines representing unstopped courses are left blank. In later more complex music this creates something of a problem. Rather than notate chords in full, various devices were used to indicate courses which should be omitted.

In the music Corbetta uses his dots in a completely random way or not at all and it is not always certain which notes should be included/omitted. In the following example in the first bar at least the fifth course should be omitted from the first chord although there is no dot on the line; in the next chord it is clear that the fourth and fifth courses are to be omitted. In the second bar it is clear that the fourth and fifth courses are to be omitted from the second chord. In the third bar the fifth course is clearly marked to be omitted from the first chord but not from the next two.

**Example 18 – Dots**  
**[Allemande p. 59 b22-25]**

At the very end of the French tablature examples there is an illustration of the dots used to indicate that two notes of a part should be played with the first and second fingers rather than with the thumb and finger with a note underneath -

*Les points ainsi marques ce fi pour pincer avec les 2 doigts en haut*

The dots marked thus indicate that [the notes] must be played upwards with the two fingers.

This use of dots is not actually mentioned in either prefaces. In the Italian examples Corbetta's note *Con i doi diti in sú* [See Example 17 above] implies that the dots may be used for this purpose.

**Example 19 - Right hand fingering**

The dots are placed beside the notes as in this example.

**Example 20 – Right-hand fingering**  
**[Passacaille p.37 b.20-22]**

<p><b><i>Averti di mettere</i></b>  Note that you should put a thin octave on the second [i.e.fourth] course] which is D sol re [i.e. D on the middle line of the bass stave, a low D], because the two in unison do not make the harmony which my sonatas also call for; and always strike the chords with the hand [fingers] and thumb together, which will make the stroke more harmonious.</p>	<p><b><i>Je vous avertis</i></b>  I advise you to put an octave on the fourth course <b>of</b> <i>la re sol</i> [actually la sol re] because the two in unison never make harmony, and strike the chords with the hand [i.e. fingers] and the thumb together in order to have the most harmony.</p>
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**Comment:** In the Italian preface Corbetta refers to the order of the courses in the Italian manner, the first course, more usually referred to as the fifth course, being the lowest sounding and the second course being what we would usually call the fourth course. (As we have already seen he also refers to the courses in this way in the Italian description of the *repicco*). The solmisation probably refers to the low octave string - D on the middle line of the bass stave. The fully re-entrant tuning was probably the norm in Italy from the mid-seventeenth century and Corbetta wants to make it clear to his Italian readers that a low octave string on the fourth course is necessary to provide an adequate bass line for his pieces.

Because in the Italian preface Corbetta describes the octave string as "*picciol*" (literally "little") it has been suggested that he is advising Italian players to put a high octave string on the fourth course which was usually strung in unison at the lower octave. There is no evidence that the guitar was ever strung in this way in Italy or anywhere else. The most likely explanation is that in the Italian preface, Corbetta is advising the use of a thin string - the thinnest string practical for the bourdon - to minimize the inconvenience caused by having strings of different thicknesses which Sanz refers to.

Corbetta's comments on stringing in the French preface are less helpful than those in the Italian preface but they do indicate that the guitar had octave stringing on the fourth course but not the fifth. The word "**de**" should probably be translated as "**of**" rather than regarded as indicating the pitch of the note.<sup>3</sup> The solmisation syllables are in the wrong order but represent the upper octave – in the hexachordal system **la sol re** can only refer to a high D, the d above middle c. In this context they define the pitch of the course rather than the octave string to be added. However the solmisation syllables in both versions may not be intended to be taken literally. They can vary or may simply have been misunderstood or misprinted.

It is however reasonably clear in both prefaces that Corbetta is instructing his readers to add a **low octave string**, or *bourdon*, to the fourth course which was usually tuned in unison at the upper octave, that is to the **re-entrant tuning**. There is no reason why he should be giving contradictory instructions in the two prefaces. Throughout he has covered the same points in more or less that same way.

<p><b><i>Vedrai alla fin</i></b>  You will see at the end of the book the most familiar chords for accompanying the [bass] line,</p>	<p><b><i>Vous uerrez à la fin</i></b>  You will see at the end of the book the most common chords to accompany a bass line with.</p>
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<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Chris Page for clarifying this point of grammar.

**Comment:** Here Corbetta is referring to the *basso continuo* exercises on p. 99-101.

<p><b><i>et per dartene maggior notitia</i></b> and to draw more attention to them, I am supplying the words made for some of my sonatas, especially for the favourite of the King and others, just as you will see in two and three parts voices with <i>basso continuo</i>, and below them the guitar accompaniment.</p>	<p><b><i>l'ay mis l'exemple</i></b> I have included as an example the chansons in three parts with a <i>basso continuo</i> and below the same bass in tablature, which is for accompanying.</p>
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**Comment:** Here Corbetta is referring to the four vocal pieces on p.83-98.

<p><b><i>Trouerai nel principio</i></b> At the beginning of the book [on p.1] you will find the said <i>Allemande favorita</i> in tablature in a different mode [i.e. in B minor instead of C minor] and if you wish to play it in consort [with the vocal version], you must raise the guitar a semitone;</p>	<p><b><i>Dans l'Allemande</i></b> For the <i>Allemande aymée du Roy</i> which is in staff notation [on p.83] you will find the same in tablature above [on p.1] [in] a different mode [i.e. in B minor instead of C minor] to be played alone. If you wish to play it in consort [with the vocal pieces] you should tune the guitar half a tone higher, because on account of the difficulty of the mode it seemed to me necessary to transpose it [the vocal version] up half a tone.</p> <p><b><i>Vous y trouerez encore</i></b> You will also find the <i>Allemande chérie du Duc d'York</i><sup>4</sup> in the same mode [as the tablature version], with the sarabande made on [the occasion of] the death of Madame d'Orleans<sup>5</sup>, and a little <i>Air de Gavotte</i> liked by Monsieur le Duc de Monmouth;<sup>6</sup></p>
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**Comment:** The reason for the transposition is to accommodate the voice parts; two of the other vocal pieces are also in different modes/keys from the solo guitar pieces. This is followed by some general comments on the contents of the book.

<p><b><i>seguitano altre favorite</i></b> there follow other favourites also in tablature and other [pieces] newly composed brought together in the book - that is - Preludes, Allemandes, Correnti, Sarabandes, Giges in the English and French</p>	<p><b><i>vous verrez aussi des preludes</i></b> you will also see the preludes with which the allemandes begin. Amongst these [allemandes] there are two which ought to be played very tenderly, one on the death of the Duke of Gloucester<sup>7</sup> and the other on</p>
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<sup>4</sup> Charles II's younger brother who succeeded him as James II in 1684.

<sup>5</sup> Charles II's youngest sister, Henrietta Anne, married to the Duc de Orléans, the younger brother of Louis XIV.

<sup>6</sup> Charles II's eldest illegitimate child.

<sup>7</sup> Charles II's younger brother who died in 1660.

<p>manner, and other airs with various passacaglias, ciacconas, and folias, all with intricate embellishments, which, if observed, will perfect your guitar playing.</p>	<p>the imprisonment of the Duke of Buckingham<sup>8</sup> which you will find entirely perfect; these are followed by the courantes, sarabandes, giges in the manner of France and England, and other airs where a part has been played and sung before the king, which are also very perfect. There are also passacailles, chaconnes, folias, with airs [variations] which I have composed afresh, and in order to please everyone, you will see some to strum simply and others to pluck only, and others to pluck and strum together.</p>
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**Comment :** The rest of the preface deals with more personal matters including plagiarism which Corbetta seems to have suffered from more than most. The first incident of which he complains relate to a book which he apparently had printed in the 1650s. The two account differs in some respects.

<p><b>This is placed further on in the Italian preface.</b></p>	<p><b><i>Et parcequ'il y a</i></b>  And because there are always envious people who are able to say that my style of playing is too difficult, because some of my pieces are in a similar style to that of the lute, I am able to reply to them truthfully that I do not know a single chord on that instrument, and that I have never had any inclination other than for the guitar alone; my style is so different from that of the lute, that people, if they are acquainted with it, see it straight-away and if they find something difficult, this is because [my music] is over and above the ordinary, being in the best fashion of playing and the best collection of pieces which has yet appeared in public.</p>
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**Comment:** Corbetta – unlike many other guitarists of the period, including Foscarini, Bartolotti and De Visée, was not a lutenist.

<p><b><i>Mi conviere dauertiri</i></b><sup>9</sup>  I would like to tell you – so that it does not happen again – about what happened to</p>	<p><b><i>Tels sentiments</i></b>  Such sentiments could only come from those to whom I have given my pieces, which they</p>
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<sup>8</sup> The Duke of Buckingham was twice arrested and sent to the Tower of London. In 1666 he was involved in a notorious divorce case and imprisoned after a fight with Lord Dorchester. In 1667 he was accused of treason on the grounds that he had commissioned a horoscope of King Charles' birth. He was conveyed to the Tower in June 1667 but released in the following month after a perfunctory interrogation.

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to Nadia Taggioff for translating the Italian preface from the point onwards.

<p>some of my sonatas which I had sent for printing; and also about other books which have been patched up; and in particular [I would like to tell you what happened] to one I had printed <b>in the year 1656 here in Paris</b> [at the time] when it pleased His Majesty [King Louis XIV] to allow me to take part in an <i>Entrée</i> for several guitars of a ballet composed by the most famous Sr. Gio. Battista Lulli. As an act of respect I presented His Majesty with two copies. As I had to travel, the plates were transported elsewhere and after some other pieces had been added to them they were dedicated to a foreign Prince;</p> <p><b><i>come qui se'uisto</i></b> as this has been noticed here, without however any indication as to the character responsible for this impudence, I felt obliged to give another one for printing. I am astonished at these composers who have no shame in putting their names to books which they have not made any efforts themselves to compose.</p> <p>In it [this book] I rejoice so much at their discomfort that my guitar has of necessity risen up [against them].</p>	<p>have torn up, stolen, printed and turned to their own profit. Amongst these are those who have taken from me the plates of a book which I had left in Paris, after having dedicated it to the King of France, on the occasion of a ballet composed by the very famous composer Jean-Baptiste Lully, Master of the King's Music in 1656. For this I was allowed by His Majesty to make an <i>Entrée</i> for several guitars, having presented two copies of this book of my composition to that great monarch, in recognition of all the favours which I had received from His Majesty. They took advantage of the time of my departure from Paris in order to seize the said plates, throwing in some other pieces and dedicating them afresh in their name to a foreign prince;</p> <p><b><i>mais pour confondre</i></b> but in order to confound their temerity and to punish their theft, I wished to present this book today at the same time in order expose their ignorance by means of pieces which are more beautiful and novel than any which have appeared until now. These should seem to you easy and gracious, if you observe the embellishments and subtleties which I have placed in this book, so that you may perfect yourselves in the beautiful method of playing the guitar. I have brought everything of mine of which I am able for your particular satisfaction which will also be mine. Adieu.</p>
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**Comment:** The two accounts of this incident differ in some respects. In the French preface Corbetta refers to a book which he says he dedicated to Louis XIV, and accuses persons unnamed in Paris of pirating it. He says also that he had given two copies of the book to Louis. He does not however say that it was actually printed in Paris in 1656. The ballet in which Corbetta took part was Lully's "La galanterie du temps".

In the Italian preface the account of the same incident is shorter. At first sight Corbetta seems to be saying that the book was printed in Paris in 1656. It is possible however that the clause "in the year 1656 here in Paris" does refer to the time and place when the piracy occurred rather than to the time and place when the book was printed. Corbetta tends to write as he might speak rather than arranging his material in the most logical order. He says that he presented two copies of the book to Louis XIV but does not say that it was dedicated to Louis XIV.

Although there are inconsistencies, Corbetta seems to be referring to a different book from the one dedicated to the Duke of Brunswick-Luneberg which he mentions in the account of his dispute with Granata in the final section of the Italian preface. [See below]. There is a gap of some twenty-two years between the publication of the books of 1648 and 1671 during which he may have published several other books which are now missing.

An unusual copy of Corbetta's **Varii scherzi di sonate (Brussels, 1648)**, was sold at Sotheby's in 1991.<sup>10</sup> This may be the **Guitarra española y sus diferencias de sones** dedicated to the Spanish king Philip IV listed by the seventeenth century bibliographer, Nicolas Antonio, and possibly the pirated edition to which Corbetta refers. It was printed from the same plates as the original version of **Varii scherzi** although the pieces are arranged in a different order and the titles of the exercises for accompanying a bass line at the end of the book have been altered to Spanish. It includes three additional pieces by Corbetta, a Prelud in G minor, a Brand and an Almanda, both in B flat major, and three Spanish pieces. The Brand and Almanda are included in **GB:Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94** (f.44); the Brand is also in **B:Lc.Ms.245** (p.93) where it is attributed to Corbetta.<sup>11</sup>

<p><b><i>diro dun altro</i></b></p> <p>I must speak of someone else in Italy, in Bologna, a certain guitar player named Granata, who, besides stealing my sonatas, also took ideas from my printed books and published them under his name, as I saw in one of his books in Venice, on my return from Spain. Whilst I was attending to some business in Bologna, Granata came to me, and apologised for publishing some of my sonatas in his book. As he had been one of my students, he had taken the liberty of doing so. It is also true to say that I had given him many of my sonatas years ago, but as he offended me several times with his arrogant malice, I resolved to treat him in the same way in a book dedicated to the honourable George William, Duke of Brunswick Lunebergh.</p> <p>Because this obscure reprimand was evidently unclear to him, I was forced to make a more explicit clarification during my stay in England following a discourse in one of his books in which he accused me of plagiarizing authors of both guitar music and lute music. This was clearly the awkward stupidity of a senseless person in view of the fact that he himself had stolen and published some of my sonatas and other pieces, and moreover that he had requested his friends</p>	<p><b>Not in the French preface</b></p>
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<sup>10</sup> A facsimile edition was published by the Deutsche Lauten Gesellschaft in 2006.

<sup>11</sup> For details see my article "Recovering a lost book of guitar music by Corbetta" in *Consort*, Vol. 61, Summer 2005.

<p>here to send him lute sonatas by Gaultier, Dufaut and others,</p>	
<p><b>et per vero se ne vede</b>  it is so obvious that the world already knows it, that I have never played this instrument, of which I do not know a single chord and that my passion has always been the guitar, which I play for my own pleasure. I have always had a natural talent and have never needed any help to perfect my technique. Many guitar teachers, particularly here in Paris have held second place to me as they themselves have confessed.</p> <p>Granata himself would not be second to them. If only he had remembered the apologies he offered me in Bologna, he would not have gone so far. It is necessary to remind him of this incident.</p> <p>I am sorry to have involved you in such a base discussion of such unworthy characters. But if you have any liking for my books, you will excuse the author, plagued by such an ungrateful and envious scoundrel.</p> <p>And so live happily.</p>	<p><b>Et parcequ'il y a - See above</b></p>

**Comment:** Corbetta's account of his dispute with his pupil Giovanni Battista Granata is only included in the Italian preface. Presumably it would have been of no interest to French readers who would not have known who he was.

In fact it is Granata who first mentions the dispute between the two men. In the preface to his *Soavi concerti di sonate musicali* (1659)<sup>12</sup> he says that he is printing the book to safeguard his reputation

[I was] stimulated moreover to compose from zeal for my reputation which may have been compromised when a certain professor of the Spanish guitar, too full of his own self importance, was prompted to say perfidiously, from ambition or from some other motive (he would not be able to distinguish one from the other) that I had reprinted, pieced together or rewritten some his own compositions and by this strategy I had tried to take credit for myself, whilst he like Aesop's crow attired himself in another's feathers in order to see himself in print. ....It is true, I regret to say, that I know that these same have (unfortunately) plundered the publications of Bartolotti and of Piccinini from Bologna, of Gaultier, of Monsieur Dufaut, Foscarini and others and even myself, transposing pieces from the lute to the guitar, from French tablature to Italian tablature, and from one mode to

<sup>12</sup> Giovanni Battista Granata - *Soavi concerti di sonate musicali* (Bologna, 1659).

another, and have tried to conceal the reputation of others under cryptic names whilst exalting themselves as may be easily known from the professors of the art. .<sup>13</sup>

Although he does not identify his “certain professor of the Spanish guitar” this must have been Corbetta.

A possible sequence of events is as follows. Granata included some of Corbetta’s pieces in one or other of the three books which he published between 1646 and 1651.<sup>14</sup> During a visit to Venice Corbetta saw a copy of Granata’s book and whilst in Bologna accused Granata of plagiarism. Between 1652 and 1659 Corbetta published a book dedicated to the Duke of Brunswick Luneberg, including in it some of Granata’s pieces. In 1659 Granata accused Corbetta of claiming the credit for some of his music and some time after this as Corbetta says here -

I was forced to make a more explicit clarification during my stay in England following a discourse in one of his books in which he accused me of plagiarizing authors of both guitar music and lute music.

When and where this explicit clarification took place is as yet unknown but in 1671 preface Corbetta responds in detail with his version of events. No copies of a book dedicated to the Duke of Brunswick-Luneberg have as yet come to light.

I would like to thank Chris Page for his assistance in translating Corbetta’s Instructions.

## May 2015

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<sup>13</sup> ‘...stimolato in oltre al comporre da zelo di riputatione, poiche verrebbe in parte denigrata, quando a qualche Professore della Chitarra Spagnuola abbacinato da troppo stima di se, fosse caduto in cuore di dire perfidamente, per ambitione, ò per altro (che esso pure non sapesse distinguere) habbia ristampate, rappezzate, o fatte sue le di lui compositioni, e che per tale strada pretenda d’accreditarse, mentre esso qual Coruo d’Esopo si forse vestuo delle penne altrui, per comparire alle Stampe....’

E’ben vero, che mi rincresce, ch’io abbia a dire di havere conosciuto, che questi medesimi habbino (come pur troppo si vede) spoltate le Stampe di i Bertolotti, de i Piccinini da Bologna, de i Gottieri, de i Monsù de Fò, de i Foscarini, & aluri, e le mie ancora, e trasportando dal Leuto alla Chitarra, dal Francese all’Italiano, e da un tuono in un’altro, e vogliono sotto nomi Anagramatici con l’esaltar se stessi sepelire la fama altrui...’

<sup>14</sup> Giovanni Battista Granata - *Capricci armonici* (1646); *Nuove suonate di chitarriglia* (No imprint, ca.1650); *Nuova scielta di capricci* (No imprint, ca. 1651).

# Francesco Corbetta - The Best of All

## 7. La Guitarre royale (1674)

### Introduction

Corbetta's fifth and last surviving book with the same title as the 1671 book - **La Guitarre royale** - was printed in Paris on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1674, three weeks after the Privilege had been granted. The "Extrait du Privilege du Roy" on page 6 reads as follows

#### *Extract from the Privilege of the King*

*By the grace of the king dispatched at St. Germain en Laye dated 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1673. Signed Lenormant.S.<sup>r</sup> Francesco Corbetti is allowed to print or have printed a book of many pieces to play on the guitar which he has composed, to be sold and retailed to the public during a period of six consecutive years; and all printers, bookshops and others are prohibited from printing the said book, from selling counterfeits or from extracting anything from the same, on pains of a fine of three thousand livres and of all dispensations, damages and interests as it is most amply conveyed by the said privilege.*

*The said Sieur Francesco Corbetti has ceded and transferred his said privilege as above to Hierosme Bonneüil engraver en taille douce in Paris.*

*Finally printed the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1674. The exemplairs have been supplied.*

It is printed from engraved plates made by Bonneüil to whom Corbetta had ceded the privilege as before. A note on the illustrated title page reads

**Engraved by H. Bonneüil and sold in Paris by the said Bonneüil at Lard above the Halle aux Cuirs near the Holy Innocents.**

The church of the Holy Innocents and cemetery attached to it were situated in the central market area of Paris.

The book is dedicated to the French king, Louis XIV. The music is in almost entirely strummed with occasional single notes and short lute style passages, presumably because this is the style which appealed to Louis XIV. It is however notated in French tablature. The contents are more miscellaneous than those of the 1761 book and the music less interesting. It includes numerous sarabandes and minuets, two allemandes, a gigue, sets of variations on the Passacaille, Chacone and Follie and some battle pieces. The first twelve pieces are for two guitars; the second guitar part was printed as a separate booklet. A facsimile of the book without the second guitar part (presumably of the copy in the Civico Museo Bibliografico in Bologna) has been published by Forni Editore. A facsimile of the separate parts for the first twelve pieces was published by Studio per Edizioni Scelte in 1983. The second guitar part has been reproduced from the copy in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Corbetta's dedication to King Louis is on p.2.

There is an anonymous six line verse in French comparing Corbetta to Orpheus on p.3 and a list of contents on p.5.

## Corbetta's Instructions to the Player

The introduction on p.4 is very brief and there are no examples to illustrate the points made.

### *To lovers of the guitar*

*In order to satisfy the inclination which I have always had towards the guitar, I wished to see what those who make a profession of it do in several places in Europe. And as they requested me insistently to give to the public some compositions following their style I have had some printed several times in order to satisfy them. It is two years since I caused to appear a book which contained pieces in different styles [i.e. La guitarre royale (1671)]. It had pieces for those who play the instrument moderately well and for those who pride themselves on playing very well. Today as the opportunity arises to offer again some new compositions, I wished to conform myself to the style which is most pleasing to his Majesty [i.e. Louis XIV to whom the book is dedicated] given that, considered in relation to the others, it is the most chromatic [colourful<sup>1</sup>], the most delicate, and the least complicated. I hope that the great Monarch who has sometimes honoured me with his commands, will add to my happiness the honour of his approval and his protection. I will be always be obliged to you if you judge them by their proper merit, following the custom of the French, to walk always in the footsteps of their great King. If you wish to take the trouble you will see below some advice for playing my pieces well, where there is that which is easy for those who are not very advanced, [and] that which is harder for those who are more advanced and so on for the rest.*

*I have added the Tirades for the left hand in places where they could be plucked with the right. If furthermore you find some in the plucking manner, they are all also so easy that they will not cause problems for those who are accustomed.*

According to "La guitarre royale" (1671) a *tirade* is a downward slur which is played with the left hand after the first note has been plucked with the right. Corbetta seems to be saying that he has put in slurs to be played with the left hand but there are also places where the notes should all be played with the right.

*You know already what is a Tenue, a Chute, a Tirade etc. I have repeated it only for those who know less than you.*

Presumably because his readers had already studied the introduction to the 1671 book.

*The Tenue, which is expressed by this mark ) means hold the hand in the same position until the place where it [i.e. the mark] finishes.*

The *tenue* sign indicates that the notes should be held. In practice it is used in different ways. Although the underlying harmony remains the same some, notes within the chord[s] may change. In this example the uppermost notes of the chords in the first bar change to create a melodic line over the G minor chord.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mersenne's comment: « Il faut remarquer que le genre chromatique de musique a pris son nom des couleurs , car *chroma* signifie *couleur* » - « It is necessary to point out that the « .

**Musical example 1 – Sarabande , p.54, b. 1-2**



*The Chute which is thus  $\curvearrowright$  means that the fingers should fall or curl on the following letters [i.e. those included in the slur].*

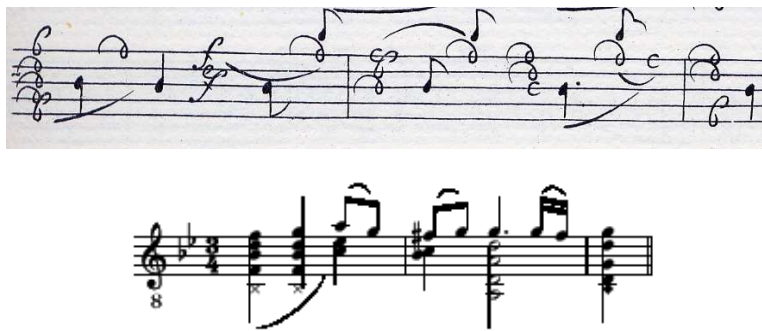
The *chute* is an upward slur.

*La Tirade which is marked in this fashion  $\curvearrowleft$  means to draw the fingers when playing the letters which are within the Tirade.*

The *tirade* is a downward slur.

In the music these occur infrequently; the *chute* is really the same as an ascending appoggiatura as in this example.

**Musical Example 2 – Follie G. re. sol.ut p. 34 b.46-48**



*The [same] dots which serve for plucking for the right hand serve here [also] for the left in those particular places where I have placed them. You will see from the number of dots which are found between the lines [with] which finger it is necessary to stop [the strings]. One dot indicates the finger nearest the thumb, two dots the next etc.*

Dots are sometime used to indicate left hand fingering. Some of the pieces have quite detailed left-hand fingering perhaps because the fingering of some of the chords is complex. The system of dots is straightforward

- |            |   |               |
|------------|---|---------------|
| one dot    | = | index finger  |
| two dots   | = | middle finger |
| three dots | = | ring finger   |
| four dots  | = | little finger |

Corbetta does not make use of a wavy line to indicate a *barré* as in the 1671 book. The actual chords are sometimes ambiguous because it is not always clear whether open courses should be included. In the following example a *barré* at the fifth fret is necessary for the first two chords. The most convenient way of playing the rest of it is to use a *barré* at the second fret excluding the fifth course from the *barré*; if this option is selected it is however necessary to omit the fourth and fifth courses from the D major chord. The alternative is to finger the D major chord in the standard way with 2nd – 3rd - 1st finger from the first course downwards.

### Musical Example 3 – Passacaille p. 56 closing bars

*Those [dots] which are on the lines indicate that the strings which those lines represent should not be played.*

The dots may also indicate which notes to omit from a chord. As in **La guitare royale (1671)** Corbetta uses these dots in the music in a completely random way or not at all and it is not always certain which notes should be included/omitted. In the following example the fourth and fifth courses are to be omitted from the first full bar. In this book Corbetta often places “a”s on the tablature line to indicate when open courses should be included as in the last chord; the dot on the fifth line is therefore really superfluous. It doesn’t seem to have occurred to him or anyone else that the simplest solution would have been to put in the “a”s all the time.

### Musical Example 4 – Passacaille p.15 b.19-22

*The Martellement which is shown with this mark, is a stiffler trill.*

This comment is not particularly helpful but presumably it represents a mordent as in **La guitare royale (1671)**. It is used infrequently in the music.

*For the true [or full] trill when you see this sign x you will play it [starting] on the letter which will be outside the [tablature] lines either above or below.*

This is a trill with the auxiliary note shown above or below tablature as in **La guitarrre royale (1671)**.

*I have supplied you with additional parts to some of the pieces and the Allemande [on p.11] can even be played alone because of the number of positions [chords] in E mi la. Note that the two guitars must be tuned in unison.*

This is straightforward – the first twelve pieces have a second guitar part although the Allemande in E minor can be played on its own. The solmisation syllables are in the wrong order – they should be **la mi**.

*You should follow the note values which are above the lines as is usual, that is those which I have put in the musical manner but as all the pieces are barred this will clarify for you any difficulties which you found above.*

This is also straightforward up to a point. In fact because most of the music is strummed the note values are on the tablature stave. They are only placed above the stave if they are to be played as single notes.

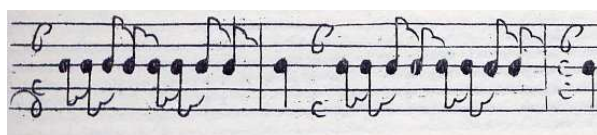
*And if you find in the pieces [anything you do not understand] and likewise in the preceding book [i.e. that of 1671], you will know [where to find] the Engraver to whom you will be able to address yourself in order to be plainly instructed.*

It was quite common to advise purchasers of the book that they could get assistance from the printer or the guitarist himself.

*In the Batterie the longest note [i.e. the note with the longest stem] indicates the thumb.*

The *repicco* variation is included in the Chacone which starts on p. 26. This is in C major – the usual key for the chacone; different versions of this strummed variation are particularly associated with it. Corbetta has not explained which fingers should be used alternately with the thumb.

#### Musical Example 5 – Chacone p.26 repicco variation



*When resting the first finger on the fingerboard, you will touch the dots marked, one to each string.*

It is not entirely clear what Corbetta means by this but when a *barré* is being used presumably the stopped notes are played as indicated by the other letters.

I would like to thank Chris Page for his assistance in translating the preface.