

# **Francesco Corbetta - The Best of All**

## **A study of his life and works**

### **Section III**

#### **Dissonance in Corbetta's music**

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## Chapter 19

### Dissonance in Corbetta's music

#### Introduction

The unusual dissonance which is a feature of Corbetta's music – in particular that of his most significant collection 'La guitarre royalle' (1671) – is controversial. Richard Pinnell commented on it briefly in his doctoral dissertation,<sup>1</sup> and suggested that in some places the dissonant notes might be omitted. More recently Lex Eisenhardt has argued that the music is not intended to be played in the way that the notation suggests and that all dissonance which does not conform to what he believes to be the norm in the seventeenth century, including the second inversion, six-four chords, should be eliminated.<sup>2</sup> Some of Corbetta's harmony is unorthodox but it is not unique and it can be explained in the context of the baroque guitar and its repertoire. Similar chords can be found in the works of some of his contemporaries. The only difference is the extent to which Corbetta has taken what was probably a feature of the strummed repertoire, and fused it with a more formal style of writing associated with the lute to create his own personal musical language.

In early seventeenth-century Italian music dissonance was cultivated for its affective quality; it is a characteristic of the lute music of Kapsberger and Michelagnolo Galilei and the keyboard music of Frescobaldi and Michaelangelo Rossi. Later, some of the keyboard sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti feature dissonances which are thought to have been inspired by guitar music he heard in Spain. Dissonance in baroque guitar sources sometimes takes a different form from that found in other music of the period and even standard dissonances may not always be prepared or resolved in a conventional way. This is due in part to the limitations of a five-course instrument which, for practical reasons, often had a re-entrant tuning, and in part to the style of the music which was cultivated in Italy and France which combined lute style counterpoint with elaborate strumming. The music had its roots in popular or "folk" traditions, some of which originated outside Europe, and this is reflected in its idioms.

#### Corbetta's comments on his own music

Corbetta offers some insight into how he viewed his own music in the prefaces to both 'La guitarre royalle' (1671) and in his 1674 book with the same title. In the French preface to the 1671 book he says:

*Et parcequ'il y a tousiours des envieux qui pouroient dire que ma maniere de iouer est trop difficile, a cause qu'une partie de mes pieces aproche de la maniere du Luth, je leur pourrois respondre avec verité que ie ne scay pas un seul accord sur cet instrument, et que je n'ay iamais eu d'autre inclination que pour la Guitare seule, ma maniere est si differente de celle du Luth, que les personnes qui sy connoissent le verront d'abord, et si l'on y trouve quelque chose difficile, c'est parcequ'il est au dessus du commun, étant la meilleure façon de iouer et la mieux fournie qui ayt encore paru en public.*

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<sup>1</sup> Pinnell (1976) p.225-227; Pinnell (1980) p.163-164.

<sup>2</sup> Eisenhardt (2003); Eisenhardt (2007); Eisenhardt (2015).

***As there are always envious people who complain that my style of playing is too difficult, because some of my pieces are in a similar style to that of the lute, I can 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, realize that straightaway 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.<sup>3</sup>***

Corbetta was unusual in that unlike several of his contemporaries who published music for guitar, including Foscari, Bartolotti, and De Visée, he was not a lutenist. Nothing is known about his musical background but in the Italian preface he implies that he was self taught -

*gia il mondo sa che non ho'mai praticato tal instrumento dove non ne so pur un accordo, che per piacer a me stesso la Chitarra sola n'e statto sempre il mio genio non hauendo mai hauto bisogno d'agiuto per perfectionarla;*

***As the world already knows, I have never played this instrument [the lute], of which I do not know a single chord and my passion has always been for 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.<sup>4</sup>***

Although he must have been influenced by contemporary lute music, what he says does not suggest that his music should be reduced to a bland lute-like texture in two or three parts.

In his 1674 book he says

*– Il y a deux ans que le fis parestre un Liure quei contenoit differentes sortes de manieres. Il y auoit des pieces pour ceux qui jouoient mediocrement de cet Instrument et pour ceux quise piquent d'en bien iouer. Auiourd'hui que l'occasion se presente de donner encore quelques nouvelles compositions. l'ay uoulu me conformer a la maniere qui plaist le mieux a sa Maiesté, ueuque parmis les autres elle est la plus cromatique, la plus delicate, et la moins embarassante.*

***Two years ago [i.e. in 1671] I published a book which contained pieces in a different style. It included pieces for those who play the instrument moderately well and for those who pride themselves on playing well. Today I have the opportunity to offer again some new compositions. I want them to conform to the style which best pleases his Majesty [i.e. Louis XIV to whom the book is dedicated], which, among other things, is the most chromatic/colourful (cromatique), the most delicate, and the least complicated.<sup>5</sup>***

Here he is commenting specifically on the kind of music which appealed to the king which is predominantly strummed. It is not clear from the context whether he is using the term “cromatique” with its specific musical meaning or in a more general sense; the rest of the statement is open to almost any interpretation.

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<sup>3</sup> La guitarre royale (1671) Advis au Lecteur, p.8.

<sup>4</sup> La guitarre royale (1671) Curioso Lettore, p.4.

<sup>5</sup> La guitarre royale (1674) Aux Amateurs de la Guitarre, p. 4.

### Baroque guitar notation

Baroque guitar notation is more complex than ordinary lute tablature because it needs to include much more detailed information about what the right hand should do. This is because in the seventeenth century, guitar right-hand technique was different from that of the lute in at least one respect - chords were often (but not always) strummed. Instead of using separate fingers for each note of the chord in lute style, all the notes of the chord were struck with the thumb or fingers in a single stroke, up or down.

At very least it must indicate

- a. whether chords are to be strummed or plucked
- b. if strummed, whether the strokes are down and up
- c. the rhythmic pattern of the strokes

It is therefore labour intensive to copy by hand and difficult to print accurately. A number of shorthand devices were used and inevitably these lead to some uncertainty today and probably did so in the seventeenth century too.

The earliest music for baroque guitar consists of sequences of strummed five-part major or minor common chords. In Italian sources these are represented by single upper-case letters and a few other symbols – known as *alfabeto*. Subsequently *alfabeto* was used for the standard five-part chords in combination with Italian tablature when notating more complex music - a form of notation often referred to today as *mixed tablature*. *Alfabeto* is not used in combination with French tablature in printed books, but the same basic chords appear regularly in the music notated in tablature. There are two areas in particular where the fact that the notation is abbreviated may cause problems.

- a. the unfretted or open courses to be included in strummed chords are not always indicated in the tablature. Instead of putting in the zeros or letter “a”s, the tablature lines are left blank. The player has to decide which open courses to include – or if you wish – which to leave out. This is fairly straightforward although there are occasionally situations in which it is impossible to arrive at a definitive solution.

It does not follow from this that the player has also to decide whether notes represented by figures or letters in the tablature should be left out. Including figures or letters which serve no useful purpose would not save anyone any time or trouble. The obvious way of making it clear what both the left and right hand should be doing would have been to include the zeros or letter “a”s, and the more carefully produced sources do tend to do that where there may be some doubt, although they do not always do so consistently.

- b. if the same chord is to be repeated, the notes to be fretted will be shown once followed by the note values/stroke symbols only. This feature of the notation is complicated by the fact that when auxiliary notes are inserted into or between the chords, these may be shown as if they are single notes which are to be strummed. In some situations, it will not be clear whether they should be played as single notes or whether they should be included in the chord and if so whether the harmony remains the same or whether it changes.

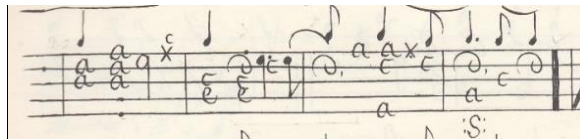
In this context it should be emphasised that, by definition, a chord cannot consist of less than three notes. There is not much point in strumming less than three courses, although this may occasionally be what is intended. It is however a contradiction in terms to speak of strumming a single note. The fact that single notes are sometimes notated as if they were to be strummed is a notational anomaly. Rather than indicating a lack of precision in specifying how many courses should be included in the strum, it represents a failure to distinguish between two styles of playing.

In music which is entirely in *alfabeto* the stroke marks do have more than one function. They indicate the direction of the strokes, but they also indicate how many times a chord should be repeated, how the strokes should be grouped – in threes or fours depending on whether the piece is in triple or common time – and in some instances the duration or time value of the stroke. When single notes are inserted between chords these may also be given stroke marks. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a certain ambiguity, particularly in earlier sources, when indicating whether chords should be strummed or played in lute style. Foscari, for example, does not always make a clear distinction between three-part chords which are to be strummed and those which are to be played in lute style. Corbetta rarely indicates that only two notes should be strummed; there is always a third open course which can be included.

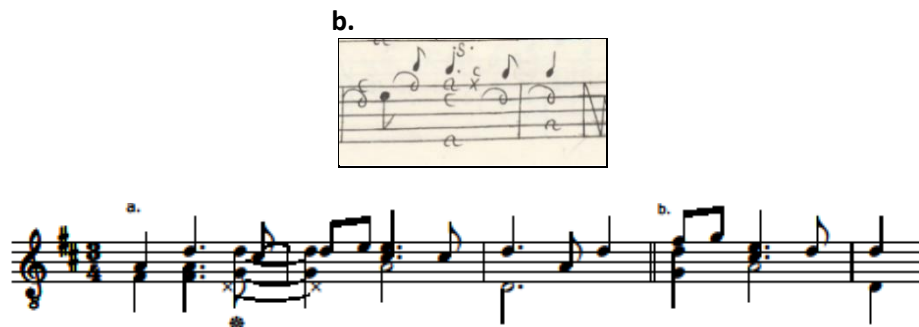
Example 19.1a illustrates the kind of problem which may occur as a result of the imprecise notation. In bars 2-3 it is not immediately obvious which open courses should accompany the quaver passing notes C sharp-D-E at the cadence. At first sight it looks as if the F sharp and A from the previous chord could be repeated or sustained. However, this does not result in a satisfactory cadential progression; the bass line should move stepwise F sharp-G-A-D. It has been argued that the open fourth course should not be included and the passage reduced to only two parts.<sup>6</sup> However there is no justification for omitting it. It belongs in the upper octave of the octave-strung course; the note in the lower octave (shown with a cross-shaped head in the example) is superfluous. The passage is a standard cadential formula, II<sup>7</sup>b – V – I. The example highlights the way in which notes on the fourth and fifth course do not always belong in the lower octave. If the fourth course is omitted, the accented passing note C sharp is less effective as it does not sound with its note of resolution and the underlying harmony is ambiguous. The open fifth course should not be included as it does not belong to the chord. A similar progression occurs at the end of the Chaconne which follows. Here the open third course, G should be included although Corbetta has left the line blank as shown in Example 19.1b. The accented passing note Fsharp will sound with the G on the third course in a simple IV – V – I cadence.

**Example 19.1a-b – Sarabande, p.69, b.21/Chaconne, p.69 b.19**

a.



<sup>6</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p.159.



Some insight into the printing process is essential in order to understand why the notation developed in the way that it did. There were two ways of printing music in the seventeenth century – from moveable type or from engraved copper plates. Printing from moveable type is a mechanical process but it is limited to the number of characters available in the font of type. Engraved plates are more versatile as anything that can be written out by hand can be engraved. Baroque guitar tablature is too complex to print satisfactorily from moveable type and most guitar tablatures were printed from engraved plates. The notation is therefore based on manuscript practices. Producing the plates was however more expensive and more time consuming than type-setting. The composer would have to produce a manuscript copy of the whole work, which he would probably have done guitar in hand. The music was first drawn on the plates using a steel point pen and then engraved with a burin. Both processes involve working with a mirror image. This is the equivalent of hand copying the whole work twice; there is plenty of scope for making mistakes.

In the tables of *alfabeto* chords printed from tablature type found in the earliest guitar books, the zeros are usually included. The earliest known source not to include them is Foscari's 'Il primo, secondo e terzo libro della chitarra spagnola' (after 1630). As far as we know, this is also the earliest book to have been engraved, and the earliest to include music in mixed tablature. In Illustration 19.1 from his earlier book, 'Intavolatura di chitarra spagnola. Libro secondo' (1629), printed from moveable type, the zeros are included. In Illustration 19.2 from a later edition, printed from engraved plates, the zeros are omitted. In both tables it is clear that the open courses are to be included in the chords.<sup>7</sup> The one exception is the chord represented by B<sup>9</sup> which is a dissonance. In the type-set table there is no zero on the fifth course because it should be omitted. In the engraved table this is not clear – the player has to decide whether to include it.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Pesori mentions this specifically in *La galleria musicale* (1648), p.3 - It must be noted that in this tablature, all the strings are strummed with sonority although only one or two may be given numbers; but where there are no strum strokes below, you must pluck only those numbers and that string without strumming. - Si doverà avertire in questa Intavolatura di battere con sonuita tutte le corde benché non fossero occupate che uno o due da numeri, ma picigar poi solo senza battere, quei numeri et quelle corde ove non saranno sotto le battute.

<sup>8</sup> Foscari's 1629 book is substantially a plagiarised version of Colonna's *Intavolatura di chitarra alla Spagnuola* (Milan 1620). It includes most of Colonna's introduction, the same table of chords and many of the same *alfabeto* pieces. In Colonna's book B9 is represented by \*.

Illustration 19.1 – Foscarini's Alfabeto – 1629



Illustration 19.2 – Foscarini's Alfabeto – ca.1630



Illustration 19.3 – Foscarini's Table of Chords

ALFABETO

Letter	Chord
A	C
B	C#
C	D
D	D#
E	E
F	F
G	G
H	G#
I	A
L	A#
M	B
N	B#
O	C
P	C#
Q	D
R	D#
S	E
T	E#
V	F
X	F#
Y	G
Z	G#
&	A
?	A#
R	B
B'	B#
G3	C
H3	C#
M3	D
N3	D#
K3	E
P3	F
M+	G
&3	G#

Whichever method of stringing is used, if all five courses are included in the strum some of the chords will be six-four chords. Some modern players who prefer to use octave stringing on both the fourth and fifth courses find these unacceptable. They argue that players would have omitted the fifth course.<sup>9</sup> There is no evidence that this was considered necessary in the seventeenth century. In the engraved table, Foscarini has included the left hand fingering using the standard system of one to four dots; this clearly indicates that fretted notes on the fifth course should be included in the chords represented by +, F, G and P which will be six-fours with the octave stringing which his tuning instructions imply. There is no reason therefore to leave the open courses out of Chords C or E or the fifth course which is stopped only by the *barré* from Chord M/M<sup>+</sup>. Foscarini himself makes it clear in his Introduction that the *alfabeto* chords are to be strummed in full -

*Si deue auuertire, che tutte le botte notate ò in sù ò in giù, tutte vanno battute piene; E doue si trouerà qualche Lettera del Alfabeto, si sonerà quella botta, che mostrerà detta lettera, battendola tante volte in sù, ò in giù quanti saranno i Segni, che haurà ò in sù, ò in giù. Si auuerti però sopra tutto di sonar qual si sia botta, così ben distinta, e chiara, ch'ogni corda renda il suo vero effeto.*

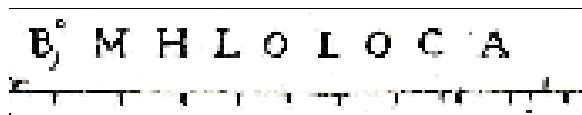
***Note that all the strokes notated either downwards or upwards are strummed in full [battute piene – that is including all five courses]. And when any letter of Alfabeto is found, the chord which that letter represents is strummed, striking it as many times, down or up as there are signs which are down or up. Note above all that each chord is played thus, distinctly and clearly, so that each string renders its true effect.***<sup>10</sup>

#### Dissonance in early Italian guitar books

##### Chord L

The basic sequence of *alfabeto* chords includes one, the C minor chord represented by the letter L, which is particularly awkward to play. A dissonant note “D” on the second course was therefore often substituted for the E flat. (See Illustration 19.4 below). Other altered standard chords are found in some sources. Ruiz de Ribayaz for example includes a dissonant form of the G major chord in which the fifth course is left unfretted.<sup>11</sup> Foscarini’s dissonant chord B<sup>9</sup> is used in what seems to be a characteristically dissonant passage in the Romanesca.

#### Example 19.2 – Foscarini (1640) - Romanesca p<sup>a</sup> parte, p.14



<sup>9</sup> Leaving out the fifth course is not an option when using re-entrant tunings as the lowest sounding note will fall on the third or fourth course. However, without a low octave string on the fifth course the inversions are less intrusive and this maybe one reason why re-entrant tunings were often preferred.

<sup>10</sup> Foscarini - *Li cinque libri* (Rome, 1640), Seconda Regole.

<sup>11</sup> Ruiz de Ribayaz – *Luz y norte musical* (Madrid, 1677), p. 5. The chord is represented by the figure 1 in the Castilian notation he uses which is the equivalent of Chord A in *alfabeto*.



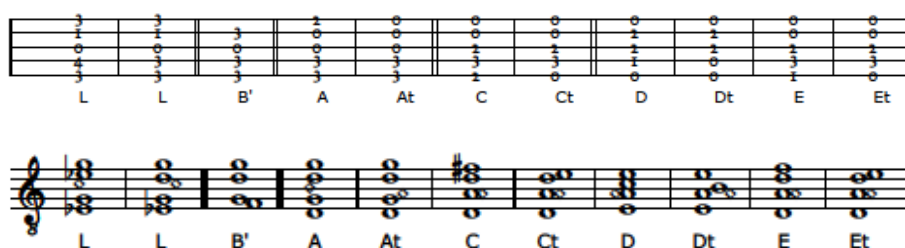


### *Lettere tagliate*

Another kind of dissonant chord, in which one course (not necessarily the fifth) of a standard chord is left unfretted, is described in several collections of *alfabeto* music. These are referred to as *lettere tagliate*. In printed sources they are notated with a “t” following the letter, probably because the printers did not possess a font of “strike through” letters; in manuscript sources a slash is put through the letter. Although it is not entirely clear, the dissonant note seems to be a type of appoggiatura which resolves onto the complete chord. The clearest description is found in a relatively late source, Ricci’s ‘Scuola d’intavolatura’ (1677). He includes four *lettere tagliate*

- At the fifth course is unfretted
- Ct the first course is unfretted
- Dt the second course is unfretted
- Et the first course is unfretted

### Illustration 19.4 – Chord L, Chord B<sup>9</sup> and Ricci’s Lettere Tagliate



Ricci explains that *Si chiamo lettere tagliate, poiche si lascia di tasteggiare una corda* [They are called *lettere tagliate* because one course is left unfretted].<sup>12</sup> Although the *alfabeto* pieces in these books may seem trivial today, they would have formed the basis of elaborate improvisation which in the hands of an accomplished player would have sounded impressive. The information which they contain highlights a practice of creating dissonance by leaving unfretted one course in a chord. This has implications when considering the dissonance found in more sophisticated sources. The term *lettere tagliate* is also used to refer more generally to non-standard chords represented by symbols in other sources – not necessarily ones from which a course is omitted.

### *Alfabeto falso*

Both Foscari, and Corbetta in his 1639 book,<sup>13</sup> include additional sequences of chords which they refer to as *alfabeto dissonante* and *alfabeto falso* respectively. Most of these are either chords needed to introduce a four-three suspension at a cadence or chords of the seventh but some of them have a different note in the treble and are used to create a continuous melodic line.

<sup>12</sup> Ricci - *Delle lettere tagliate*, p.12.

<sup>13</sup> See Section I Chapter 2 for details.

Corbetta uses these only in his 1639 book. In his later books he notates all but the basic *alfabeto* chords in tablature.

### La guitarre royalle (1671)

‘La guitarre royalle’ was, as far as we know, the first of Corbetta’s guitar books to be notated in French tablature rather than in *mixed tablature*. Although it was printed in Paris, it is dedicated to the English king, Charles II and much of the music in it would have been composed when Corbetta was settled in England – something which is often overlooked. It has prefaces in Italian and French which are not identical. Presumably Corbetta wrote the Italian preface himself; the French version varies in some respects and it is not possible to say whether the translation was made by Corbetta himself. From what he says in both prefaces it seems that he engraved at least some of the plates for the book himself. It is very untidy and there are numerous misprints. Because it is in French tablature, all the chords are notated in full rather than represented by *alfabeto* symbols. The Italian preface includes a table of *alfabeto* chords set out in French and Italian tablature, perhaps so that Italian players would more easily recognise the chord shapes. In the both prefaces Corbetta describes his notation in detail,<sup>14</sup> giving examples in tablature. These clearly indicate that

- a. dots are placed on the lines to indicate which courses are to be omitted from strummed chords, whether open or stopped by the *barré*.

The purpose of the dots is described briefly in both prefaces and examples of their use given in the accompanying tablature examples on page 5 and page 9. This system of dots is however never used with Italian tablature.

- b. wavy lines are drawn below the tablature stave to indicate when a *barré* is to be used, both for chordal passages, and for single melodic lines.

These are also mentioned in both prefaces and illustrated in both sets of tablature examples.

Corbetta does also indicate when open courses are to be included in strummed chords by placing the letter “a” on the line, if this might otherwise be unclear. In practice he is rather haphazard in the way that he actually notates the music. However since he had a system for indicating both when a *barré* should be used, and when courses should be omitted, there is no obvious reason why he should simultaneously be using a different method for this purpose – placing letters in the tablature which are not to be played - which he has not mentioned in the introduction. If he had such a system, one would expect him to use it in a similarly random way. Although he is not entirely consistent in the way he notates them, the dissonant chords are stereotypical and occur in specific contexts – usually at a cadence. However, it is possible that in some instances he has put in a letter on the fifth course unintentionally because the chord is played with a *barré*.

In his preface he also makes it clear that he expected his music to be played with a low octave string only on the fourth course, with the strings of the fifth course tuned in unison in the upper octave. This has some implications when considering the dissonance since most of the dissonant

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<sup>14</sup> See Section I Chapter 5 for complete translation and commentary of both prefaces.

notes fall on the fifth course and will therefore sound only in the upper octave. Those on the fourth course will be doubled at the octave, but because of the way that the guitar is strung, the high octave string will tend to sound more prominently than the lower.

A few pieces from 'La guitarre royalle' also survive in other sources. Of these, the Gallot manuscript, GB-Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94, and Antoine Carré's 'Livre de pieces de guitarre' printed ca. 1677<sup>15</sup> are of particular interest because they date from same period in Corbetta's career – the 1660s and 1670s. The Gallot manuscript is considered separately below. Of all his contemporaries, Carré is the person most obviously influenced by Corbetta, and certainly knew him personally. Two sarabandes from 'La guitarre royalle' are included in his 1677 book and some of the same dissonant chords occur in the other pieces – which may indeed be by Corbetta.<sup>16</sup> Comparing these with Corbetta's own versions sheds some light on how one of his contemporaries viewed his dissonance.

In his dissertation Pinnell<sup>17</sup> refers to two frequently used progressions which include what he refers to as "unwanted" notes; these result in what he feels is a "strident anticipation" of the key note. Both occur in conjunction with a perfect cadence. He suggests that as these "unwanted" notes occur in strummed chords which are preceded and followed by sonorities requiring the use of a *barré*, the notes on the fifth course are only included "for convenience" and should be omitted from the strum.

This begs the question – for whose convenience are they included? It is not convenient for the player to have the score littered with superfluous letters and it would make the task of the engraver and printer needlessly complicated. It is usually obvious that a *barré* must be used, as the chords cannot be played otherwise and the "unwanted" notes do not always fall on the fifth course.

One of the progressions which Pinnell mentions (his Example 50) is set out in Example 19.3.

#### Example 19.3 – Gigue, p.51, b. 32-34



All that Corbetta has done here is to double the suspended fourth in unison. The objection to this is academic (provided a low octave string is not being used on the fifth course). In theory the chord will be sustained whilst the note on the third course resolves, but because the sustaining power of the guitar is limited, the whole chord effectively resolves onto the single leading note

<sup>15</sup> Carré - Livre de pieces de guitarre (ca.1677).

<sup>16</sup> The prelude on p.1 is also from La guitarre royalle p. 67.

<sup>17</sup> Pinnell (1976) p.226, Pinnell (1980) p.163-4. Examples 49 and 50.

with the appoggiatura and trill. Whether the note on the fifth course spoils the downward resolution of the appoggiatura, as Pinnell claims, is a matter of personal taste. As Corbetta does this repeatedly, presumably he did not think so. There is no reason to omit the fifth course. The final chord maybe a misprint as Pinnell has assumed. The letter on the second course should be E flat – the chord is a C minor chord (K3 in *alfabeto*). Corbetta may however have notated it in this way because he intended an ascending appoggiatura to be played; he usually includes an ornament of some kind in final chords, and this is the only type which would be practical here. There is no reason why the first and second courses should be omitted from the chord, as Eisenhardt has suggested.

A more ambiguous version of this cadential formula is illustrated in Example 19.4. Because of the way it is notated, it is not clear whether the fifth course should be included as the suspended fourth on the third course resolves or in the following chord. The curved line - a *tenue* sign - indicates that the harmony should be sustained but the movement of the lowest part suggests that at least the B flat should be omitted from the third chord which is a six-three on F natural. Although Corbetta has not indicated it, the *barré* will be established in the previous bar so that there is no need to include the B flat if it is not to be played at least in the first chord.

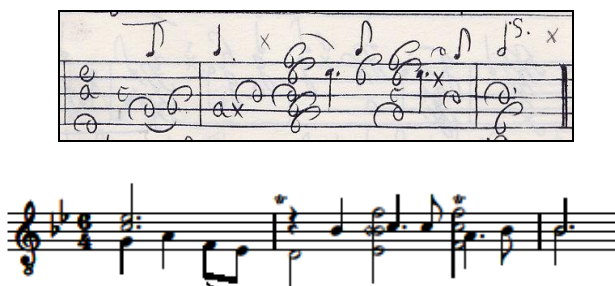
**Example 19.4 - Prelude, p.54, b.11-13**



Elsewhere it seems clear that the fourth may sound simultaneously with its resolution as shown in Example 19.7 below.

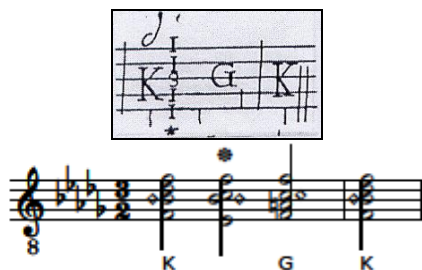
Corbetta often combines the double suspended fourth with what is in effect the dominant seventh in the lowest part combined with a four-three suspension as in Example 19.5.

**Example 19.5 – Sarabande, p.48 b.22-24**



The same progression is found in Example 9.6 from Bartolotti's 'Libro primo'.

**Example 19.6 – Bartolotti, Libro primo, Passacaglia, p.1, b. 40**



In the progression illustrated in Example 19.7 (Pinnell's Example 49), the suspended fourth does sound simultaneously with the third of the chord on to which it should resolve, an occurrence not unknown in Italian music of the early seventeenth century.

**Example 19.7 – Courante, p. 23, b. 25-27**



Here the “unwanted” note falls on the fourth course, so that both the fourth and fifth courses would have to be omitted to eliminate it. However, a *barré* at the fifth fret will have been established at the beginning of the previous bar, well before the first four-part chord in the example and it moves to the third fret for the next two chords. Corbetta has indicated that the fifth course is to be omitted from all four chords by placing dots on the line. The line beneath the tablature indicates that the *barré* at the third fret is to be held throughout the bar. There is no reason why Corbetta should have included the notes on the fourth and fifth courses in the final chord if they are not to be played. The correct note on the fourth course should be “G”, stopped at the fifth fret; the “unwanted” note is there because the chord, represented by H3 in *alfabeto*, cannot be fully fretted if the ornament is to be played on the first course. Many of the dissonant chords occur in conjunction with ornaments or auxiliary notes which make it impossible to fret the correct chords in full. There is a precedent for this kind of alteration in Chord L in the sequence of standard *alfabeto* chords described above. (See Illustration 19.4 above). The note F forms a pedal note on the key note sounding in both the treble and bass registers, which rather than resolving at the cadence sounds simultaneously with its resolution – an effect similar to the *ellipsis* found in some early Italian monody.

The same cadence occurs at the half way mark in the *Sarabande la Stuarde* on page 71. In the *Double* which follows, the chord has been reduced to three parts, leaving out the third and fourth courses rather than the fourth and fifth, and it is intended to be plucked not strummed, as shown

in Example 19.9a-b. The whole point of the *Double* is to create a contrast in texture which would be dissipated if the dissonance was omitted in the first version. These examples illustrate harmonic progressions which Corbetta uses throughout the book and in his other books.

**Example 18.7a-b – Sarabande/Double, p. 71, b.11-12**

a.

b.

A less acceptable (to modern ears) version of this progression occurs when the suspended fourth sounds simultaneously with its resolution when combined with the dominant seventh as in Example 19.9a-b. This Sarabande is also included by Carré. Corbetta has indicated that the chord is to be strummed, but in Carré's version the chord has been reduced to two parts to be plucked. The only "unwanted" note here is on the fifth course; there is no reason why the first and second courses should also be omitted. It is stretching credulity to suggest – as Eisenhardt has done<sup>18</sup> – that Corbetta has included three superfluous letters in the chord in order to indicate that it should be played with a *barré*. Corbetta uses the same chord placed at the third fret in bar 17 of the piece and Carré has reproduced this unaltered.

**Example 19.9a-b – Sarabande, p.65, b. 8-10/Carré, p.17, b. 8-10**

a. Corbetta

b. Carré

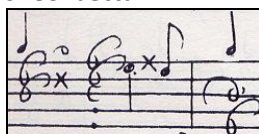
<sup>18</sup> Eisenhardt (2007) p.50.



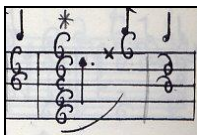
Corbetta himself offers a different alternative. In the other Sarabande which Carré has purloined ('La guitare royale', p. 8/Carré, p.54, b.5-6), he has notated the dissonant form of the chord, whereas Corbetta has omitted the fourth and fifth courses as in Example 19.9c-d. The variants imply nothing more than that the two men did not always play the music in the same way.

#### Example 19.9c-d – Sarabande p. 8/Carré p.54, b.5-6

##### c. Corbetta

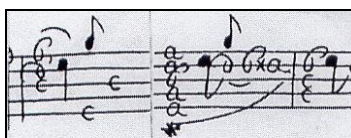


##### d. Carré



This particular dissonant chord is another of Corbetta's standards. In the *Gavotte aymée du Duc de Monmouth* pn page 12, there is a clearly notated example of it with open courses, as in Example 19.10.

#### Example 19.10 – Gavotte, p. 12, b. 6-7





The Sarabande on page 56 is followed by a short Passacaille which is intended to be played as an interlude before the Sarabande is played a second time. The Passacaille consists of two sections, each four bars long. The first section is a sequence of strummed chords, including several dissonances; the second is a single melodic line ending with a simple cadence. Clearly there is intended to be a contrast between the two sections. Eisenhardt however proposes that in the first section, not only the dissonant chords, but also those which will be six-fours, should be reduced to three or four parts. According to his theory there are twelve “unwanted” notes in four bars of music. Corbetta has made it clear that a *barré* is to be used for the first bar and the fifth course omitted from the first chord. There is no justification for omitting the fourth course as well simply because the chord will be a six-four. Common sense suggests that if Corbetta intended the rest of the passage to be in three parts he would have left the fourth and fifth lines blank; it is self evident that a *barré* must be used throughout and it is in nobody’s interest to clutter up the score with so many superfluous letters.

As can be seen in Example 19.11, the passing notes and appoggiaturas form a clear melodic line. Without a low octave string on the fifth course, the dissonant notes will be heard only in the upper octave so that the notes form tone clusters rather like the extremely dissonant chords found in some of Scarlatti’s keyboard sonatas which are sometimes referred to (rightly or wrongly) as *acciaccature*.

**Example 19.11 – Passacaille, p. 56, b. 1-4**



On paper the passage looks bizarre. However, when played on the guitar, because of the ambiguity created by the way in which the instrument is strung, it is quite effective. The passage includes three chord shapes which Corbetta uses frequently. The first of these is a *barré* across the upper four or all five courses with no additional stopped notes - marked (a) in example. The strings of the guitar omitting the fifth course produce a minor seventh chord with the seventh on the fourth course, as in the opening chord here. This is a very common chord in guitar sources which is resolved in various ways. It occurs with open courses as well as with a *barré*. Including the fifth course which is dissonant may seem odd, but it actually sounds effective and may be regarded as idiomatic to the guitar.

Corbetta sometimes uses the chord independently of other chords played with a *barré* as in Example 19.12. The *barré* will be established in the preceding bar and Corbetta has put in the line below the staff to indicate this. There is no logical reason why he should have included the notes on the fourth and fifth courses if what he intended was a three-part chord.



**Example 19.12 - Gigue, p.34, b.15-17**



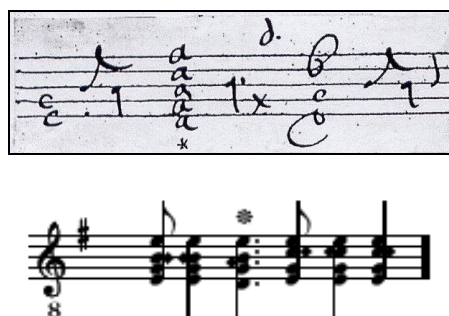
An interesting example of this chord shape is found in the unmeasured Toccata on page 4 of Granata's 'Nvovi sovavi concerti' (1680) where the dissonant notes resolve upwards.

**Example 19.13 – Granata (1680), p. 2, Toccata, p. 4 stave 2**



The manuscript F-Pn F.C.Ms.R.1402 includes seven pieces – four Sarabandes, two Passacailles and a *Vacas* - which feature a five-part chord comprising all five open courses; the chord occurs twelve times in all and is therefore unlikely to be an error. Although the manuscript is in French tablature, the music is intended to be strummed. Many of the pieces are of Spanish provenance. Perhaps these were some of the pieces Scarlatti heard in Spain.

**Example 19.14 – F-Pn. Ms. Rés.1402, Passacaille espagnol, p.112, opening bars**



The chords marked (b) in Example 9.11 above are a dissonant form of Chord N. The note on the fifth course is the ninth of the chord. Like Chord L, Chord N is awkward to play because it involves a wide stretch and the fifth course is fretted with the second finger. The fifth course was therefore sometimes omitted.<sup>19</sup> (See Illustration 19.5 below). In this instance the fifth course cannot be stopped because of the appoggiatura on the first chord and the single note following the second. It is possible that the note on the fifth course has been included in error. However, the chord does occur in two other pieces, both of which are characterised by unusual dissonance – the *Passacaille* on page 18 and *Tanbour de Suisse* on page 78. It may have been regarded as acceptable when strumming.<sup>20</sup> In *Tanbour de Suisse*, the seventh is introduced as a passing note on the first course which makes it impossible to fret the correct note on the fifth course. Corbetta has omitted the fifth course the third time around adding to the confusion.

**Example 19.15 – Tanbour de Suisse, p.77, b. 24-26**



The chord marked (c) immediately preceding the cadence in Example 19.11, is a minor seventh chord on the second degree of the scale. The seventh is doubled on the fourth course and the dissonant note on the fifth course anticipates not the key note, but the root of the dominant which follows it. This often occurs in circumstances where a full *barré* would be unnecessary if the fourth and fifth courses were omitted. In Example 19.16 it would be more convenient to use a half *barré* as the chord is preceded and followed by the open fourth course.

**Example 19.16 – Prelude, p.59, b. 16-18**



In some instances, leaving out the fifth course may subtly alter nature of the harmonic progression. In Example 19.17a the chord in the extract from the *Allemande* is a dominant seventh

<sup>19</sup> Without a bourdon on the fifth course, Chord N will sound the same whether or not the fifth course is included.

<sup>20</sup> The same chord shape occurs in the *Tanbour de France Fife* in *La guitare royale* (1674), p.2. This forms part of a longer piece for two guitars commemorating the taking of Maastricht by the French in 1673. This features some extremely dissonant chords which are probably intended to depict the chaos of war.

with an “unwanted” note on the fourth course; omitting both the fourth and fifth courses will convert the chord to a diminished triad on the leading note. Corbetta has done just that at the end of the Sarabande to create a different effect. (Example 19.17b). The dot on the fifth course indicates that it should be omitted; the note on the fourth course should be included. Leaving out courses can have implications beyond the elimination of “unwanted” notes.

**Example 19.17a-b – Allemande, p.54, b.24-24/Sarabande, p.56, b. 27-28**

a.



b.



a.

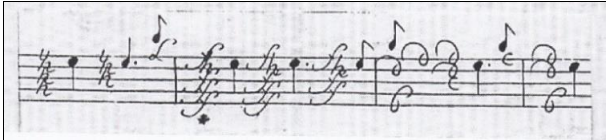
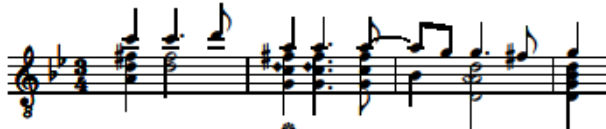


b.



The same progression occurs three times in a Sarabande in Grenerin’s ‘Livre de guitarre’ (1680). In the Example 19.18 the fifth course is omitted from the chord on the upbeat but the dissonant note is included in all three chords.

**Example 19.18 – Grenerin, Sarabande p.48, b. 3-5**

There are two further instances where the dissonance occurs because the correct chord cannot be fully fretted. In Example 19.19 – a catch phrase which Corbetta is rather fond of - the correct chord should be Chord K3; the fourth course should be fretted at the fifth fret with the third finger. (See Illustration 19.5 below). This does not leave a finger free for the passing notes

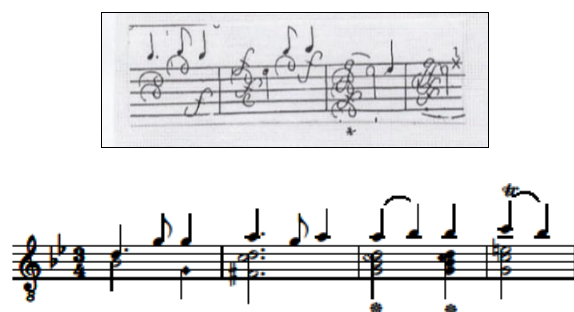
inserted between the chords so it is left unfretted. As Corbetta has indicated that the fifth course is to be omitted from the next chord, once again there is no reason why he should have included the letters on the fourth and fifth courses if they are not to be played.

**Example 19.19 – Allemande, p. 63, b. 8-10**



The chord in Example 19.20 does not have an *alfabeto* symbol although it can be regarded as a variant of Chord P with a different note in the treble. (See Illustration 19.5 below). It occurs frequently throughout the book and illustrates a similar problem. The fifth course should be fretted at the fifth fret to supply the correct note; this is impossible because of the appoggiatura on the first course.

**Example 19.20 – Gigue 2, p.57, b.10-13**



The *barré* can be established in the first bar of the example and Corbetta has omitted the fifth course from the chord in the next bar although he could have included it as it would simply double the dominant seventh on the third course in unison. He has also indicated that the fifth course should be omitted from the last chord in the example by placing a dot on the line. The dissonance is therefore probably intentional; the dissonant note could however be omitted when the chord is repeated on the upbeat. As with Chord N, the dissonance may have been acceptable when strumming. The chord does also occur occasionally with the fifth course omitted. The same progression is found in the unmeasured *Pasagallo* by Granata.

**Example 19.21 – Granata (1680), Pasagallo, p.14, stave 3**

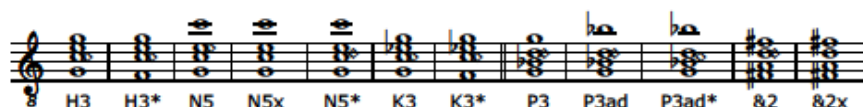




**Illustration 19.5 - Corbetta's altered chords**



Symbol \$ is used in place of & as tablature programme will not put symbol & in the text field.



Leaving aside the chords which are idiomatic to the guitar, Corbetta's dissonance is quite straight forward and can be summarized as follows -

- The dissonant fourth and seventh are often doubled in five-part chords. This is unavoidable because the notes of the chord have to be distributed across the fingerboard in a way that they can conveniently be played. This is quite common in other five-course guitar sources.
- The dissonant fourth often sounds simultaneously with the third of the chord on to which it resolves. This is a characteristic of seventeenth-century music more generally.
- Anticipation of the keynote at cadences is pervasive. This is also characteristic of the period – epitomised in the four-three suspension, in trills which start with the upper auxiliary note and in the short upbeat note which sometimes precedes the final chord.

Corbetta would not have thought of the music in these terms or used modern terminology to justify it. He would have done instinctively what was practical and sounded effective on his instrument. The standard *alfabeto* chords and their variants form the bedrock of his music. Because most of the dissonance occurs in conjunction with passage work the underlying harmony is often ambiguous. It is this ambiguity which makes the music endlessly fascinating.

#### **GB-Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94 – “Pieces de guittarre....recueillis par Henry François de Gallot”**

The Gallot manuscript is a complex document which consists of two separate manuscripts, a large one bound inside a smaller one.<sup>21</sup> The title page indicates that it was copied for Gallot by his servant, a certain Monnier. Although the manuscript is dated Nantes, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1661, it was obviously copied over a period of time as some pieces are individually dated much later. The larger manuscript includes nearly all the pieces from Corbetta's 'Varii capricii' (1643), and a

<sup>21</sup> The Gallot manuscript is discussed in detail in Section II Chapters 11 and 15.

substantial number from his 'Varii scherzi' (1648). Although these have been transcribed into French tablature they adhere closely to the printed versions, reproducing Corbetta's dissonance unaltered.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, the manuscript includes seven pieces from 'La guitarre royalle' in versions which may have originated before they were included in the printed book. The music in 'La guitarre royalle' was composed over a considerable period of time. It includes an allemande commemorating the death of the Duke of Gloucester, Charles II's youngest brother, who died in 1660 and another commemorating the death of his sister, Madame d'Orleans, in 1670. Some of the pieces may have circulated in manuscript before they appeared in print. In a letter to his sister dated 1665 Charles II mentions that he is sending her some of Corbetta's pieces and will send more as he composes them.

The concordances are as follows

	Corbetta	Gallot
Allemande du Roy	p.1	f.58v
Allemande sur la mort du duc de Glocester	p.7	f.56v
Sarabande	p.8	f.57
Allemande faite sur l'Emprisonnement		
Du Duc de Bouquingam	p.13	f.98v
Sarabande la Victoire	p.30	f.60
Sarabande la Stuarde	p.71	f.37v
Tanbour de Suisse	p.77	f.53v

Four pieces are clearly associated with individuals at the Restoration Court in the 1660s. In 1666 the Duke of Buckingham was involved in the notorious divorce case of Lady Anne Roos and was sent to the Tower after a fight with Lord Dorchester during which Dorchester's periwig was pulled off and Buckingham had a handful of hair pulled out. *La Stuarde* probably refers to Francis Teresa Stuart, known as *La Belle Stuart*, one of the few women that Charles II failed to seduce.

The two sources cannot be compared in detail here but there are many obvious differences.

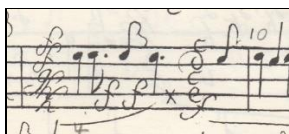
1. In the *Allemande du Roy* and *Allemande...du Duc de Bouquingam* the note values are halved fitting two bars into one.
2. Two bars are omitted from the second half of the *Allemande...du duc de Glocester* and the closing bars are different.
3. In the *Sarabande* (page 8/folio 57) the anacrusis is ignored so that the dotted crotchet falls on the first beat of the bar; the second half of the piece varies considerably from the printed version.
4. The *Sarabande la Stuarde* does not include the Double, but several of the standard five-part chords have been reduced to three parts.
5. *Tanbour de Suisse* has the title *Pascaille Colintampton f* in the manuscript; each variation has a *diminution*. Variations 7 (which includes the dissonance illustrated in Example 14 above), 8, 11 and 12 at the end are omitted. A note at the end states that *La Diminution a voir faite par De Gallot d'Irlande 1676* [The diminution was made by De Gallot d'Irlande in 1676].

<sup>22</sup> The smaller manuscript also includes pieces from Corbetta's *La guitarre royalle* (Paris, 1674).

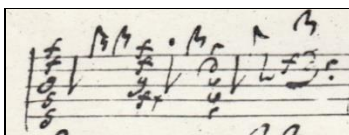
In places the music has been simplified. Throughout the *Allemande du Duc de Bouquingam* the fifth course is omitted from Chord N, presumably because it is easier to play that way, although Corbetta has included it. There are some places where the underlying harmony has been altered – not always for the better. In Example 19.22 from *Allemande du Roy* ('La guitarre royalle' page 1, bars 9-10/ Gallot folio 58v, bar 5) a B minor chord, which is easier to play, has been substituted for Corbetta's D major chord.

**Example 19.22 – Allemande, p.1, b.9-10/Gallot f.58v, b. 5**

**a. Corbetta**



**b. Gallot**



In the original, this version of the D major chord is the one represented by the symbol “&” in *alfabeto* - played at the second fret. After Chord L, this chord is the most awkward to play if the fifth course is included as this is fretted with the little finger. Gallot invariably leaves out the fifth course whenever this particular chord occurs, or substitutes a simpler chord as he has done here.

Because some of the dissonant chords have been altered, Eisenhardt has suggested that this “uncovers a practice of strumming where the right hand does not always play all the courses which are suggested by the left hand fingering and that this raises the question as to which letters in the pieces in ‘La guitarre royalle’ are only there for reasons of fingering”.<sup>23</sup> However, it is just as likely that Gallot eliminated the dissonance because he disliked it, rather than because he had the key to Corbetta's secret system of notation. Rather than omitting courses from strummed chords, he often eliminates them altogether, reducing the music to two or three parts to be played in lute style. At the middle cadence in the *Sarabande la Stuarde* illustrated in Example 19.7 above, he has substituted the three-part plucked chord from the *Double* for the strummed dissonant

<sup>23</sup> Eisenhardt (2003) p.14.

chord, rather than omitted the fourth and fifth courses. He has omitted the dissonant variations from *Tanbour de Suisse* altogether.

The progression illustrated in Example 19.9 above also occurs in the *Allemande...du duc de Glocester* at bar 12 and like Carré, Gallot has reduced it to two parts to be plucked rather than strummed. If Corbetta was in the habit of not only including superfluous letters in the tablature, but also of indicating that the chords were to be strummed when he intended the music to be reduced to two or three-part counterpoint and played in lute style, he was perverse indeed! Gallot does not omit the note on the fifth course when this simply duplicates the suspended fourth as in Example 9.2 above. Whether by accident or design he or his copiest has introduced some unusual dissonance of his own!

As a general rule, unless a manuscript has a proven connection with the composer himself, variations in the text can only be regarded as a matter of personal preference on the part of the compiler. Players often learnt pieces by ear and later wrote out a rough sketch as an *aide memoire*. Because of the way that music circulated in the seventeenth century, pieces often survive in different versions. Although some of the variant readings may have originated with Corbetta, Gallot's versions cannot be regarded as more authoritative than those which Corbetta himself prepared for printing. There are obvious errors in many of the other pieces in the manuscript.

### Corbetta's six-four chords

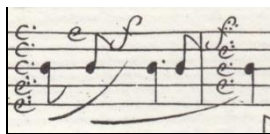
As a corollary to his theory about Corbetta's dissonance and the method of stringing he preferred, Eisenhardt has suggested that Corbetta also includes letters on the fifth course when notating standard *alfabeto* chords which will be six-four chords although these are not intended to be played. Because six-fours were regarded as dissonant in the seventeenth century, the fifth course should also be omitted from the strum.<sup>24</sup> It is difficult to follow the logic of this argument. As we have seen in Foscarini's Tables, two of the chords which will be six-fours with octave stringing, the standard E major and E minor chords (F and + in *alfabeto*) are not played with a *barré* but have the fifth of the chord on the fifth course stopped at the second fret, and the standard F major and F minor chords (G and P in *alfabeto*), although played with a *barré*, have the fifth course fretted at the third fret with the third finger. There is no reason why Corbetta should have gone to the trouble of including the letter on the fifth course in these chords - which he does - if the note is not to be played. In his 1674 book he occasionally gives the left-hand fingering using the same system of dots as Foscarini. Specifically, he gives the alternative fingering for chord P, fretting the fifth course with the second finger and the fourth course with the third when it is necessary to free the fourth finger for a passing note as in Example 19.23.

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<sup>24</sup> Theorists of the period disagreed as to whether the interval of the fourth from the bass was a dissonance. Doisi de Velasco surveys some of the arguments in *Nuevo modo de cifra* (ca. 1640). Although he considered octave stringing preferable when accompanying a bass line (he says nothing about solo music) he also says (p.16) "Whichever way [the guitar] is strung, some chords will have 4ths between the lowest voices [i.e. will be six-four chords]. This will not matter when they are played *rasgado* (...Que aun que de una, o de otra manera no se libran algunas consonancias de las quartas en las bozes bajas, esto se puedo suplir, quando se tañen de *rasgado*) implying that when the chords are strummed the inversions are acceptable. In his tables of chords', he includes the standard *alfabeto* chords as an option for the initial root position chords regardless of their inversions, although he offers alternatives with the root as the lowest note when the standard chord is either in first or second inversion.



**Example 19.23 – La guitarre royale (1674) – Passacaille, p. 56, b.25-6**



There would be no point in this if the notes on the fifth course were to be omitted. He also sometimes indicates that the open fifth course (A) should be included in a D major chord which would make it a six-four. Without octave stringing on the fifth course these chords will all be in root position. Corbetta often omits fifth course from the standard F major chord because it is necessary to re-finger it to accommodate auxiliary notes.

### Conclusion

How do we decide whether the dissonance in Corbetta's music, and that of some of his contemporaries, is so uncharacteristic of the period that it cannot be accepted at face value? Comparing the repertoire with that of other instruments such as the lute or keyboard is only helpful in so far as it confirms that experimenting with dissonance was a preoccupation of seventeenth-century composers, particularly in the earlier part century when different instruments began develop repertoires which reflected their individual characteristics. The guitar occupied a niche in society which set it apart from more formal music making. As a five-course instrument, it could do some things – strumming and playing elaborately ornamented melodic lines - which are less effective on more "main stream" instruments. It was popular because it was different from the lute, not because it was a poor substitute for it. On the other hand, it is clear that many people disliked the guitar and this is probably because there is something inherently unsatisfactory about the instrument and its music.

There was a standard method of indicating left hand fingering used by both guitarists (including Corbetta himself) and lutenists, and Corbetta has devised a simple way of indicating when a *barré* should be used. It is impossible to prove that he did not also have a secret notational device for this purpose, but he had no need of one, unless he set out to deliberately to confuse anyone who tried to play his music. This does raise one other question – how seriously did he intend the dissonance to be taken? The music in 'La guitarre royale' was composed whilst he was based at the court of Charles II which was notorious for its decadence. It may sometime have been his intention to amuse or shock his audience, or simply to attract their attention when he was playing as they probably did not sit listening in silence as we do today! If this was so he may sometimes have left out some of the dissonance. He would not have played his own music from the printed book and would probably never have played it the same way twice. Whether or not he cared about the way in which his music was played, once it had appeared in print, he had no way of preventing people from playing it in any way they liked, or even from re-printing it unattributed as Carré has done.

It is a widely held view that we can prove that the composer preferred one method of stringing rather than another, and that by editing out anything which we dislike, we can create a “definitive” version of the music. The problem with this idea is that everyone who analyses the music arrives at a different conclusion because they start with a different set of priorities. Most baroque guitar music is not intabulated in such a way that one method of stringing is clearly intended and ironing out its idiosyncracies is not as easy as is often suggested. Arguments about whether the music conforms to rules of music theory, whatever these may be, miss the point – there is no reason why it should. Today more importance seems to be attached to how the music looks on paper, than to how it sounds when played, as it would have been, with the guitar strung with plain gut. What we have is a framework which can be interpreted in a number of ways. Perhaps the time has come to admit that what we are really arguing about is our own personal preferences.

## Chapter 20

### Further Observations on the Gallot Manuscript

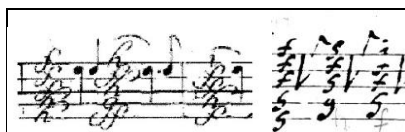
#### Introduction

In the CDROM files to his recording of some of Corbetta's music,<sup>1</sup> Eisenhardt has reproduced two small examples from the Gallot manuscript. His first example is taken from the Allemande on page 13, b. 13-14; the second from the Allemande on page 7, b.12-13.

#### Example 20.1a

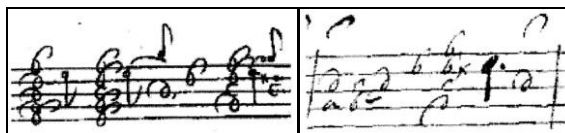
**Corbetta - Allemande p.13 b.13-14/Gallot- Allemande f.98v b.14**

*(2 bars of Corbetta = 1 bar in Gallot)*



#### Example 20.1b

**Corbetta - Allemande p.7 b.12/Gallot – Allemande f.56v b.12**



In the first example Gallot has omitted the notes on the fifth course from the second and third strummed five-part chords although Corbetta has included them. In the second example Gallot has reduced the first and second five-part strummed chord to two plucked notes. There is no justification for omitting the fifth course from the first chord in Example 20.1a or for reducing the first chord in Example 20.1b to two parts; both are standard B flat major chords.

Nevertheless, Eisenhardt claims that

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<sup>1</sup> Eisenhardt (2003),

*These examples show exactly where the “non-harmonic tones” appear; the scribe of the Gallot manuscript.... found it necessary to give a version different from La guitarre royale. This uncovers a practice of strumming where the right hand does not always play all the courses that are suggested by the left hand fingering. [Emphasis mine]. The question arises which letters in La guitarre royale (1671) are only there for reasons of fingering.<sup>2</sup>*

Eisenhardt has promoted the idea, first proposed by Richard Pinnell in 1976, that the “unusual dissonances” or “non-harmonic tones” that feature in Corbetta’s ‘La guitarre royale’ (1671) are only there “for convenience” and are not intended to be played. In his more recently published book,<sup>3</sup> he has copied Pinnell’s comments several times, presenting them as if they were a well-established fact. It is unlikely that Pinnell intended his remarks to be used as an excuse for bowdlerizing Corbetta’s music. It would be helpful therefore to clarify what he, in a very brief passage about Corbetta’s harmony, actually said<sup>4</sup> -

*Anticipations are also frequent non-harmonic tones at cadence points, as shown by the circled note in Ex. 49. The Courante in Ex. 49 includes one frequent non-harmonic tone which I have been unable to justify. The note in question is the low F (sounding also an octave above) contained in the chord just before the circled F. The chord is merely V [the dominant] (except for this strident anticipation of I [the key note]).*

Eisenhardt has reproduced and commented on this example (Example 7.22b and Example 7.23a) on p. 167-8 of his book.

**Example 20.2**  
**Pinnell’s Ex. 49 - Courante p.24 b.25-28**

The image displays three musical staves. The top staff is a transcription of Corbetta's 'Courante' (p. 24, b. 25-28) with a 'barre' and 'dot' marking. The middle staff is a transcription of the same piece with a circled note and a red star marking. The bottom staff is a transcription of the same piece with a circled note and a red star marking. The red stars highlight the dissonant notes which Pinnell objects to.

(The red stars highlight the dissonant notes which Pinnell objects to).

Pinnell continues

*Another example [Ex. 50] of this shows a C on the fifth course in a chord of G. The C circled... [in the example] is at the same pitch (because of the octave transposition of the fifth course) as the*

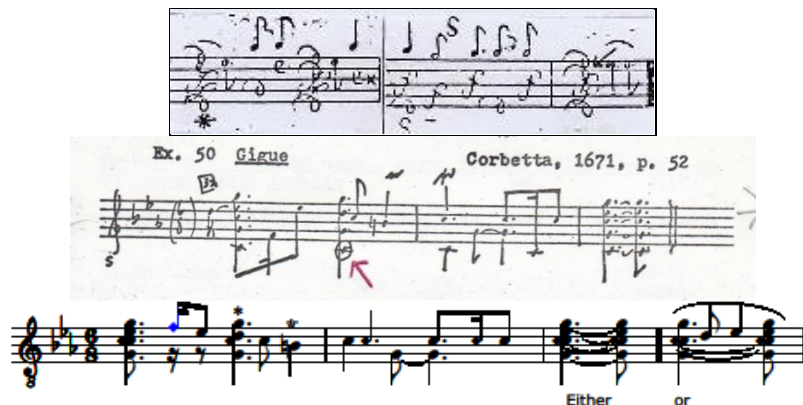
<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.14.

<sup>3</sup> Eisenhardt (2015).

<sup>4</sup> Pinnell (1976) p.225-227; Pinnell (1980), p.163-164.

***tone of the appoggiatura preceding the trill. [Emphasis mine]. To modern ears this seems to spoil the downward resolution of the non-harmonic tone.***

**Example 20.3**  
**Pinnell's Ex.50 - Gigue p.52 b. 33-35**



Pinnell acknowledged that the method of stringing which Corbetta intended for the music in 'La guitarra royale' (1671) was the "French" tuning with octave stringing only on the fourth course.<sup>5</sup> For practical reasons, he transcribed his examples showing notes on the fifth course in the lower octave which may confuse some readers.<sup>6</sup> Eisenhardt does not accept this as the most likely option, arguing that Corbetta used octave stringing on both fourth and fifth courses; he is also reluctant to accept that even with octave stringing, these courses play a dual role. As a result, his own transcriptions are misleading.

Pinnell's two examples actually illustrate two different problems. In the first (Ex.49) the "unwanted dissonance" - F - is the suspended fourth sounding simultaneously with the note E, the third of the chord, on to which it should resolve. It is on the fourth course; the note on the fifth course is the root of the chord. Both the fourth and fifth courses would have to be omitted to eliminate it if the chord is to be strummed. In his second (Ex.50) the C on the fifth course simply duplicates the suspended fourth on the third course in unison, as Pinnell himself has pointed out. Both resolve onto the single note – B natural on the next quaver which is plucked.

Pinnell comments

***Usually, one justification may be applied in cases such as this. Since these "unwanted dissonances" are in rasgueado chords, and are preceded and followed by sonorities which require the left-hand index to "bar" or fret all of the courses at the third fret, [in his examples] it may have been notated for convenience. In other words, the fifth course... may have been omitted by the player from the strum.***

Neither Pinnell nor Eisenhardt have mentioned that Corbetta had a perfectly good way of indicating when a *barré* should be used – placing a wavy line under the tablature stave<sup>7</sup> – if he thought that this

<sup>5</sup> For details of the method of stringing Corbetta preferred see Section I, Chapter 8 of this study.

<sup>6</sup> Pinnell made his transcription at a time when there were few alternatives to writing everything out by hand; including the tablature as well was not really a practical option. This method would not be regarded as satisfactory today when staff notation and tablature can easily be reproduced by computer.

<sup>7</sup> See Section I Chapter 5 for details. Eisenhardt has recently asserted that "This is incorrect. In *La guitarra royale* (1671) wavy lines are often used in situations with open strings. It is a way to tell that you should hold the hand in the same position. It

information was useful. Indeed, in Pinnell's first example, the line below the staff does indicate that a *barré* should be used throughout the passage in question. There is no reason why Corbetta should have used a different system which he has not mentioned in his introduction for this purpose. Corbetta also places dots on the tablature lines to indicate courses which should be omitted although he does not do so consistently. In Pinnell's first example, dots are placed on the lowest line for the first four chords but not the chord at the cadence; there is no justification for leaving out any of the notes from this chord. The unwanted dissonances may be preceded and followed by sonorities requiring a *barré*, although this is certainly not always the case. However, the significant point that both Pinnell and Eisenhardt have overlooked is that the "dissonant" notes occur in conjunction with passing notes or ornaments. In order to play these, one course of the chord must be left unstopped. The chord in Pinnell's Ex. 49 is Chord H3; the fourth course must be left unfretted and the chord refingered so that the descending appoggiatura on the first course can be played. In Pinnell's Ex. 50 the chord is Chord G3; the fifth course must be left unfretted in order to play the C on the third course.

Neither Pinnell nor Eisenhardt have explained why it is "convenient" to have notes in the tablature which are not to be played. Pinnell suggests only that the fifth course might be omitted and has overlooked the fact that it is the note on the fourth course which needs to be omitted in his Ex.49. Eisenhardt has argued that in some places, two or even three notes should be omitted from the chord.

In his book Eisenhardt starts by explaining that

***Corbetta was the seventeenth century's greatest promoter of the guitar.....At the same time it is questionable [emphasis mine] whether the tablatures from his masterwork *La guitarre royale* were fully comprehensible to other players of his time.*<sup>8</sup>**

In a note he adds

***Corbetta's earlier books were in Italian tablature. It is likely [emphasis mine] that some French guitarists made transcriptions in French tablature for their own convenience.....*<sup>9</sup>**

Certainly, some of Corbetta's earlier music in Italian tablature is found in other sources (in particular in the Gallot manuscript) transcribed into French tablature. However, 'La guitarre royale' is in French tablature which players in France and in England would have had no difficulty in comprehending, especially as Corbetta himself was often on hand to explain to them anything that they might have misunderstood. What some of his contemporaries may have found difficult to comprehend and accept is his complex and original musical language. Remy Médard, who clearly knew Corbetta personally, suggests as much when he comments

***I have tried to emulate the style of the celebrated Francisque Corbet which he explained to me over several months with this difference – I found for my pieces a simplicity which he could not take the trouble to give to his.*<sup>10</sup>**

Médard's own music consists mainly of straightforward two- or three-part writing with only the most basic five-part strummed chords and may have been intended for a fully re-entrant tuning. In every

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certainly was not Corbetta's perfectly good way of indicating when a barre should be used". Eisenhardt (2017) Opmerking [16]. Clearly neither he, nor Pinnell, have studied Corbetta's instructions and examples at the beginning of the book.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit. p.99.

<sup>9</sup> Op. cit. p.218 Note 40.

<sup>10</sup> No page number. Je pretens avoir entierement suivi la maniere du fameux francisque Corbet, qu'il ma communiqué pendant quelques mois avec cette difference que J'ay trouvé pour mes pieces une facilité qu'il ne s'est pas donné la peine de chercher.

way Corbetta's music is musically and technically more demanding. It is not just an eccentric notational device which would take several months to explain. Eisenhardt goes on to observe

***There are several [emphasis mine] manuscripts in which pieces from La guitarre royalle (1671) are copied, and some of Corbetta's most extreme harmonies have been changed. From how the tablatures are altered it appears that some of Corbetta's contemporaries perhaps played differently from what his tablatures say.***<sup>11</sup>

The only other manuscript besides the Gallot manuscript which he actually identifies is the manuscript copied by Jean-Baptiste Castillion in about 1706 – B.Lc Ms.245.<sup>12</sup> He has not mentioned the one other significant manuscript source which includes pieces from 'La guitarre royalle' (1671) – Santiago de Murcia's 'Passacalles y obras', GB:Lbl Ms.Add.31640, dated 1732, although he does refer to Carré's second printed book – 'Livre de pieces de guitarre et de musique' printed sometime between 1677-1688 which includes three pieces borrowed from 'La guitarre royalle'.

Eisenhardt makes the same point in his Chapter 7 when discussing Corbetta's dissonance in more detail.

***There are several manuscripts from the seventeenth century into which music by Corbetta was copied, such as Henri [sic] Gallot's large manuscript (Gb-Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94). There are sometimes "corrections" of Corbetta's notation of exactly such dissonant chords.***<sup>13</sup>

In fact, Gallot is the only manuscript source in which there are significant differences. Both Castillion and Murcia reproduce most of the dissonance unaltered.<sup>14</sup>

Eisenhardt then reproduces Richard Pinnell's views on the subject

***Richard Pinnell suggests why considerably fewer works were copied from the La guitarre royalle [into the Gallot manuscript – Eisenhardt has not made this clear] than from Corbetta's other books:***

***"Gallot demonstrates a knowledge of all Corbetta's printed books and a certain intimacy with three of them. Gallot's favourites are those of 1643, 1648 and 1674. Occasional excerpts from Corbetta's book of 1671...show that Gallot knew the book, but either could not play the music, or simply did not care for it".***<sup>15</sup>

Pinnell seems to have been unaware that the main section of the Gallot manuscript was copied during the 1660s and that the pieces in question were probably copied into it before 'La guitarre royalle' had appeared in print.<sup>16</sup> Gallot's reason for not including other pieces from the 1671 book is more likely to have been because he had not seen it. He obtained the few pieces that he has copied from another, earlier, source. The Gallot manuscript also includes twenty-three pieces from Corbetta's 'La guitarre royalle' (1674) which feature many of the same dissonant chords. These were copied between 1682-1689 into a smaller manuscript, now bound up with the main manuscript, and usually reproduce the music as it is in the printed book.<sup>17</sup> Eisenhardt seems to have been unaware of this.

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<sup>11</sup> Op. cit. p.100.

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit. p. 218 Note 45.

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit. p. 229 Note17

<sup>14</sup> As my analysis shows. See Section II Chapters 15 and 16.

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit. p.100 / Pinnell (1976) p. 267; Pinnell (1980) p.193.

<sup>16</sup> For the dating of pieces in Gallot see Section II Chapter 11.

<sup>17</sup> See Section II Chapter 11.

The pieces in 'La guitarre royalle' were clearly composed over a period of several years and some of them circulated in manuscript before appearing in print. In a letter to his sister, Henriette-Anne, wife to the younger brother of Louis XIV, Philippe, Duc d'Orleans dated May 1667 Charles II wrote

*I have heere sent you some lessons for the guittar, which I hope will please you. The Comte de Gramont did carry over with him others, which maybe you have; and as Francisco makes any more that pleases me, I will send them to you.*<sup>18</sup>

Rather than making this clear, Eisenhardt confuses the issue further by commenting

*It is just as likely that the scribe of the Gallot manuscript (or the scribe of a source it was copied from) did not know how to make sense of the harmonies of some of the tablatures from "La guitarre royalle". Most of the alternative versions of Corbetta's compositions that we find in the Gallot manuscript are no easier to play, and the alterations are often rather awkward.*<sup>19</sup>

As an afterthought he has added a note

*For example, the Allemande du Roy from p.1 of La guitarre royalle (1671). In Gallot's version the music is changed considerably (mostly simplifications). It gives the impression that the tablature was not copied from "La guitarre royalle" but rather written from memory. [Emphasis mine]. Because of the confusing tuning of the instrument this must have been a very difficult task. It remains possible that the tablatures were copied from an alternative source, possibly even by Corbetta. Considering the poor solutions, however this is not very likely.*<sup>20</sup>

He concludes this chapter with the following observation

*As will be argued in Chapter 7, Corbetta may have used tablature letters as a means to indicate left-hand fingering (in particular to show that a barré should be placed) [emphasis mine] not to actually represent the notes that should sound. Corbetta was not the only guitarist to write such unusual "harmonies"; this barré notation virus infected the tablatures of a few others too.*<sup>21</sup>

Eisenhardt has not explained in what circumstances tablature letters are used to indicate left-hand fingering other than to indicate a *barré*. The only other guitarists that he identifies whose tablatures are "infected" by this "*barré* notation virus" are Carbonchi and François Martin.<sup>22</sup> In fact the "unusual dissonances" are encountered occasionally in the works of Bartolotti, Pellegrini, Granata, Grenerin and in particular Carré, and in some anonymous manuscript sources as well as in Corbetta's 1643 and 1648 books. The fact that the dissonant chords occur right across the repertoire in stylistically predictable contexts - primarily at a cadence in conjunction with a four-three suspension - suggests that they are an integral feature of baroque guitar music, in both the Italian and French repertoire.

Eisenhardt has added yet another note referring to the Gallot manuscript.

*It is remarkable that at other places in the Gallot manuscript there are the same "barre fingering harmonies" that were removed [emphasis mine] from Corbetta's works [by whom? Eisenhardt does not say]. Apparently, this way of indicating a barré was used more often, even if it was confusing for performance.*<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Charles II (1996) p. 117.

<sup>19</sup> Op. cit. p. 100.

<sup>20</sup> Op. cit. p. 218 Note 47.

<sup>21</sup> Op. cit. p.100.

<sup>22</sup> Op. cit. p. 169.

<sup>23</sup> Op. cit. p.218 Note 49.



He has not given any examples. What he presumably means is that they are not present in the printed version; they cannot have been “removed” if they were not there in the first place. In bar 21 of the *Allemande du roy* for example, Gallot has included the B on the fifth course in error in the chord on the third beat. This is the equivalent of Chord &2; Corbetta has indicated that the fifth course should be omitted with a dot on the line in order to keep the fourth finger free for the variant Chord &2 with A on the first course on the next beat. On the fourth beat Gallot has an A major chord - the equivalent of Chord N - instead of the more difficult variant of Chord &2 but has included the B on the fifth course. This is a version of Chord N which does appear occasionally in ‘La guitarre royalle’. However, given the overall inaccuracy of Gallot’s version, it is more likely that he has included the notes on the fifth course in both chords in error, rather than deliberately to indicate that a *barré* must be used; it is impossible to play either chord without one.

### What does Gallot really tell us?

Although in his book he has not said so in as many words, Eisenhardt has created the impression that the variations in Gallot’s versions, and in other sources, are significant and shed some light on Corbetta’s dissonance or notation. This is simply not the case. First and foremost, none of the other sources which he mentions eliminate Corbetta’s unusual dissonance. Secondly Gallot may have disliked or misunderstood Corbetta’s dissonance, but this does not prove that Corbetta intended his music to be played differently from the way that he has notated it in the printed book which he himself prepared for the press. It certainly does not “uncover a practice of strumming where the right hand does not always play all the courses that are suggested by the left- hand fingering”.<sup>24</sup> What it really uncovers is Gallot’s incompetence as a player and copyist.

Finally, the problems with Gallot’s versions have nothing to do with the “confusing tuning of the instrument”. There is little doubt that Corbetta used a low octave string or bourdon only on the fourth course, as Pinnell suggests, and Gallot would have done likewise. When writing out the music Gallot has had no problem recalling the melodic line and the two-part counterpoint, and usually arranges it on the fingerboard in the same way as in the printed book taking into account displacements caused by the re-entrant tuning. Where he has come seriously unstuck is when trying to work out the underlying harmony. He often seems to lack even the most basic grasp of musical theory. This is very obvious in the *Allemande*, the piece which varies most significantly. It is not just the “unusual dissonance” that he has “corrected”. He often eliminates straight forward chords of the seventh reducing the harmony to the basic triads and he often eliminates strummed chords altogether. The most likely explanation is that he (or the copyist of the source from which he obtained the pieces) had learnt them by ear from another player and wrote them out from memory, guitar in hand, which may have been common practice in the seventeenth century. This would explain some of the more bizarre errors highlighted in my transcriptions. However, it is possible that some of the variant readings originated with Corbetta. The most obvious example of this can be seen at the mid cadence in the Sarabande on page 8. Both Gallot and Carré have a C minor chord on the first beat with an E flat played at the eleventh fret – m - on the first course. Corbetta may have altered the melodic line in the printed version to avoid using the eleventh fret, perhaps because he was aware that many players would have had only ten frets on their instrument. Murcia is the same as in the printed book. Carré cannot have copied his version from Gallot’s privately compiled and owned manuscript and must have obtained his version of the piece independently from a different source.

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<sup>24</sup> The secret of Corbetta’s notation – op. cit. p.14.

## Chapter 21

### Pandora's Lyre Unpicked

In the myth Pandora is given a jar containing all sorts of evils hitherto unknown in the world which she is told not to open. Needless to say, she opens it and all the evils fly out leaving only Hope under the lid as a consolation for mankind. Eisenhardt has put forward some extraordinary ideas about Corbetta's music on a number of occasions, most recently in Chapter 7 of his recently published book.<sup>1</sup> As these have received a great deal of publicity, it seems reasonable to comment on them in some details.

#### Open courses

The Allemande in B minor on page 1 of 'La guitarre royalle' (1671) includes a harmonic progression which occurs in many of the pieces in this source. At bar 35 on the semiquaver there is a single note – C sharp – played on the second course at the second fret. Corbetta has clearly indicated that this is to be strummed. In order to do this effectively at least the third and fourth open courses should be included in the strum. This is one of the pieces included in three manuscript sources, the Gallot manuscript,<sup>2</sup> the manuscript copied by Castillion<sup>3</sup> and Santiago de Murcia's 'Passacalles y obras'.<sup>4</sup> Gallot has ignored implications of the bass line (if he was even aware of them) and implies that the D major chord should be sustained for two beats which is rather feeble. Castillion and Murcia have reproduced the notes as written, including the strum note value, without indicating the open courses to be included.<sup>5</sup>

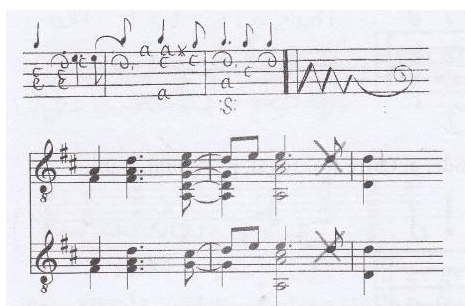
Eisenhardt has reproduced an almost identical example of this progression from the Sarabande on page 69 as his Ex. 7.13, commenting on it as follows:

***It seems unlikely that the note on the open fourth course in the last chord of the first measure is part of the harmony. It is a harsh dissonance, unprepared and unresolved. If the fourth course is excluded the fifth should surely be omitted as well.***<sup>6</sup>

#### Example 21.1

#### Eisenhardt Ex.7.13 - Corbetta – Sarabande p. 69 b.21-23

#### With Eisenhardt's transcription



<sup>1</sup> Eisenhardt (2015).

<sup>2</sup> GB-Ob Ms.Mus.Sch.C94).

<sup>3</sup> B-Lc Ms.245.

<sup>4</sup> GB-Lbl Ms.Add.31640.

<sup>5</sup> See relevant chapters in Section II.

<sup>6</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p 159.

### Correct Transcription



(The quaver on the second course preceding the last note should be C sharp not D as shown in Eisenhardt's transcription).

Eisenhardt has not analysed the underlying harmonic progression correctly. The bass line is clearly F sharp - G - A - D. The only one option for a chord on G taking into account the movement of the melodic line is a first inversion E minor seventh chord, E – **G** – [B] – D; this is a standard dissonance well within what was acceptable in the seventeenth century. The D is the minor seventh; it is prepared on the second course in the previous chord and resolves on C sharp at the cadence. Because of the limited compass of the instrument, in order to include it, Corbetta has had to place it on the fourth course where it will be duplicated in the lower octave. (The note in the lower octave is shown as a cross in my transcription). The C sharp is an ascending appoggiatura.

The first course – E - could be included in the strum although it obscures the melodic line; however, it is not uncommon for the melodic interest to be embedded in the harmony in this way in Corbetta's music. It is not an "unprepared sixth" as Eisenhardt has claimed.<sup>7</sup> It is the root of the chord and does not need to be prepared or resolved; the interval of a major/minor sixth is never dissonant. Eisenhardt does not seem to understand that what he thinks of as an "added sixth chord" is the same as a first inversion minor seventh chord or six-five; the dissonant note which should be prepared and resolved is the fifth above the bass, not the sixth.

The open fifth course does not belong to the chord and should strictly speaking be omitted. Eisenhardt has reduced the passage to two parts which is unsatisfactory. The chord is clearly intended to be strummed and without a third note in the chord, the underlying harmony is ambiguous. It cannot be regarded as a chord on the subdominant, as this would lack the major third and would result in consecutive fifths between the outer parts.

Eisenhardt observes that

***An almost identical situation, [to his Ex. 7.13] in another key can be found in a sarabande [in 'La guitarra royale' p.65] by Corbetta [ex. 7.14].<sup>8</sup>***

He compares this to the version of the same Sarabande in Carré's 'Livre de guitare'.<sup>9</sup> Exactly the same progression occurs in the *Allemande sur la mort du duc de Gloaster* at bar 12;<sup>10</sup> indeed, it is one of Corbetta's standard cadential progressions.

In this example the bass line is D - E flat - F - B flat. The chord on E flat is a first inversion C minor seventh chord – C - E flat – [G] – B flat; the A is the ascending appoggiatura. Although the harmony is the same, I – ii7b – V – I, the position of the notes on the fingerboard is different. Here with the correct method of stringing, the note B flat on the fifth course (shown with a lozenge-shaped head in my transcription) will sound only in the upper octave. The "non-harmonic" tone is the F on the first course, not the B flat on the fifth. There is no need to leave out the note C on the second course. It is

<sup>7</sup> Eisenhardt (2017) Opmerking [I24].

<sup>8</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p. 159

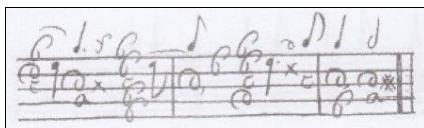
<sup>9</sup> Carré p. 17 – Sarabande Plainte.

<sup>10</sup> Included in the Gallot ms on f.58v.

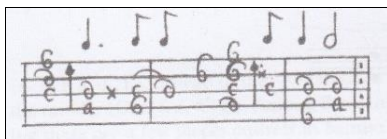
not an “unprepared sixth” as Eisenhardt claims.<sup>11</sup> As in the previous example, it is the root of the chord and does not need to be prepared or resolved. The only reason for not including it would be because it obscures the melodic line. As before, it cannot be regarded as a chord on the subdominant as it would lack the major third and would result in consecutive fifths between the outer parts.

**Example 21.2**  
**Eisenhardt Ex.7.14**

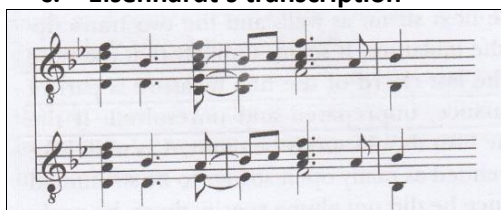
**a. Corbetta – Sarabande p. 65 b.8-9**



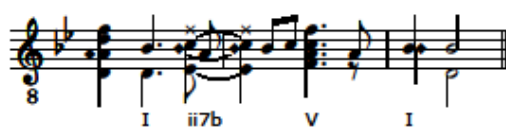
**b. Carré –Sarabande p.17 b.8-9**



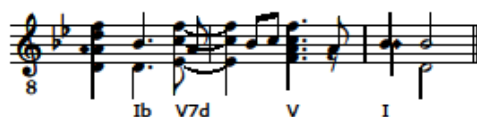
**c. Eisenhardt's transcription**



**Correct Transcription**



**Alternative Transcription**



Eisenhardt remarks

*The last chord of the first measure is again very dissonant as in example 7.13 only here Corbetta has written out the whole chord in tablature. In the version of this same sarabande published by Carré.... this chord is simplified in the same way as the thinner of the two transcriptions in example 7.13. Carré has left out a number of the tablature letters from Corbetta's original. The simplified harmony can still be played battuto, so justice can be done to Corbetta's original strum notation. [Emphasis mine].<sup>12</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> Eisenhardt (2017) Opmerking [l27].

<sup>12</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p. 159.

Carré clearly did not think that his simplified harmony could still be played *battuto*, and nor did Gallot who has reduced it in exactly the same way in the Allemande. Both have indicated that the two notes should be plucked. There is no need to omit the notes on the fifth or second courses – only the note F on the first course (shown as a cross in my transcription) does not belong to the minor seventh chord on C.

Deciding which notes to leave out is not as straightforward as Eisenhardt suggests. In this example if the fifth course is omitted and the first course included, the chord would be a dominant seventh, F – A – C – E flat. There would be no way of knowing what Corbetta really intended.

It is stretching credibility to the limit to suggest that Corbetta has included three letters in the chord which are not to be played, just because the chord must be played with a *barré*, and has indicated that the two notes that remain should be strummed when it makes more sense to play them separately. If the comparison proves anything at all, it suggests that more open courses should be included in his Ex.7.13, not fewer stopped ones in his Ex.7.14.

Eisenhardt continues

***Perhaps Corbetta has used the letters of the tablature – normally supposed to represent exactly which strings should sound – in an improper way to serve as fingering for the left hand. [Emphasis mine].<sup>13</sup>***

Well – perhaps he hasn't....!

***If that were true, [why should it be?] the tablature letters would only indicate the best fingerings, [emphasis mine] and not which courses should be played.<sup>14</sup>***

Eisenhardt implies that there are alternative, less satisfactory, fingering options to using a *barré* but usually this is not the case. Even if the “dissonant” notes are omitted, a *barré* still has to be used and the resulting two-part counterpoint cannot be placed in a different position on the fingerboard.

Nevertheless, Eisenhardt adds a note referring to Pinnell again

***In his dissertation Pinnell comments on Corbetta's confusing notation. He suggests that Corbetta wrote these letters “for convenience” and he concludes that the non-harmonic tones should not be played.<sup>15</sup>***

Pinnell has not commented on Corbetta's “confusing notation”; he has commented on some of Corbetta's unusual harmony. He has not included this example and he has certainly not suggested that five-part chords intended to be strummed should be reduced to two parts played pizzicato. He probably never intended his speculative comments to be used in the way the Eisenhardt has done.

Eisenhardt then claims

***In that respect it could be seen as a manifestation of an attitude towards the notation of strummed textures similar to what underlies Foscari's practice of omitting zeros:<sup>16</sup> On paper the battuto***

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<sup>13</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p. 159

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.159-60.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.229 Note 19.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p.160. On p.153-158 Eisenhardt discusses some of Foscari's music. Because he has failed to grasp the underlying principles of baroque guitar notation in general and Foscari's notation in particular most of what he says makes no sense.

***chords are treated as something primarily for the left hand. Neither Foscarini nor Corbetta provided more information for the right hand than an ambiguous sign for a strummed chord.***<sup>17</sup>

This does not make sense; there is no similarity between the two practices. Leaving the tablature lines blank, rather than putting in the zeros or “a”s, is standard practice in most baroque guitar sources; it makes it easier and less time-consuming to hand copy or print the music clearly and accurately. Eisenhardt has admitted as much, observing in his final chapter

***This was probably done because it saves labor and costs in writing and engraving.***<sup>18</sup>

As a general rule, open courses may be included if they belong to the basic triad. In other circumstances (such as Eisenhardt’s Ex.7.13 discussed above) it is necessary to identify the underlying harmonic progression accurately to decide what is appropriate.

If Corbetta intended fewer courses to be included in the strum, there is no logical reason why he should have put in all the superfluous letters. Eisenhardt continues

***Those familiar with strummed chord accompaniment (and modern songs) will probably understand the rationale behind these shorthand notations.***<sup>19</sup>

It is hard to imagine a more unhelpful attempt to confuse the issue than this. Including figures or letters in the tablature which are not to be played is **not** a shorthand notation. (Whatever players today may do when accompanying “modern songs” has no bearing on what players did in the seventeenth century).<sup>20</sup>

Eisenhardt has more recently observed

***Foscarini’s [notation] is shorthand. Corbetta’s notation could be seen as a different case. Still, it would be a simple (or simplistic) way to indicate a barre.***<sup>21</sup>

There is no way in which Corbetta’s notation can be regarded as a simple or simplistic way of indicating a *barré*. Referring to it as a “shorthand” notation implies that it is a shortened or abbreviated form of something more complex. Including hundreds of letters in the score which are not to be played is clearly no such thing. On the contrary, it makes the music more difficult to copy or print clearly and accurately, it would confuse the player, and it serves no useful purpose. There are simpler ways of indicating a *barré*, including Corbetta’s own system of placing wavy lines beneath the tablature stave which Eisenhardt has ignored.

Eisenhardt contradicts himself in his summing up.

***...in the case of the barré notation of Corbetta.... simplification of what is notated...may be called for.***<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p.160.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.177.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.160.

<sup>20</sup> See Additional Note 1 at the end of this Chapter.

<sup>21</sup> Cognitive dissonance op. cit. Opmerking [I32].

<sup>22</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p.169.

### Barré notation in cadences

Eisenhardt goes on to discuss what he refers to as “*barré* notation in cadences”. Perhaps realizing that the variations in the Gallot manuscript and other sources do not support his theories, he has resorted instead to comparing passages from Corbetta’s ‘*Varii capricii per la ghittara spagnvola*’ (1643) which are in Italian tablature with similar passages from ‘*La guitarre royalle*’ (1671) in French tablature which he claims are intended to be played in the same way although they are notated differently. Referring to his Examples 7.21a and 7.22a from Corbetta’s 1643 book he remarks

***...probably voice leading was the reason for using these thinner chordal textures [in the Italian examples]. Gradually he began to write four- and five-part chords instead which resulted from the inclusion of extra tablature letters for the barré. [Emphasis mine]<sup>23</sup>.***

These examples are intended to prove that in the passages in French tablature, Corbetta has added the notes on the fifth course, and in some instances the fourth course as well, only to indicate that the chord must be played with a *barré*, and that they should be left out.

This begs the question – why should he have done this in 1671, if he did not think it necessary in 1643?

**Eisenhardt’s Ex. 7.21a-c and Ex. 7.24 compare perfect cadences with a simple four-three suspension.**

Ex.7.21a-b from the 1643 book combine three-and four-part writing in Italian tablature with a final *alfabeto* chord; Ex. 7.21c from 1671 has five-part chords ending on a single note in French tablature. In Ex.7.21a the first and fifth courses are omitted from the dominant chord with a four-three suspension; in Ex.7.21b only the fifth course is omitted. In Ex.7.21c the fifth course is included, doubling the suspended fourth. It is the equivalent of Chord G3; because of the left-hand fingering, the fifth course must either be omitted or left unfretted so that the B with the descending *appoggiatura* can be played on the third course.

As can be seen in my analysis and transcription in Section II of this study, even Gallot does not eliminate the fifth course from a chord if all that it does is to double the suspended fourth in unison. In the context of a strummed chord this is perfectly acceptable. All that Pinnell has said about this particular progression (his Ex.50) is

***To modern ears this [the note on the fifth course] seems to spoil the downward resolution of the non-harmonic tone [the appoggiatura on the third course].<sup>24</sup>***

This may be so (although it is a sweeping assumption – how many modern ears did he consult?) but neither Pinnell nor Eisenhardt know whether Corbetta or seventeenth-century ears thought it spoils the downward resolution of the non-harmonic tone. It only becomes a problem if one insists in using a low octave string on the fifth course.

The Italian *passacaglias* are in triple time with a steady three crotchets to a bar; the harmony changes on each beat and Corbetta has imposed upon it the customary “down – down – up” strumming pattern although it could just as well be played *pizzicato*. The cadences illustrated occur at the end of regular four-bar sections.

The *Allemande* is rhythmically and harmonically much more complex. This “cadence” occurs at the mid-point of two bars of chords in quavers. The harmony changes on each quaver and the melodic

<sup>23</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p.167.

<sup>24</sup> Pinnell (1976) p. 227; (1980) p. 164.

interest is sometimes embedded in the chords. Corbetta's own notation suggests that the fifth course should be omitted in a couple of places. The fourth chord is the equivalent of Chord N; the fifth course, which should be stopped at the seventh fret with the second finger, has been omitted to simplify the left-hand fingering. The third chord after the cadence on F sharp could include the open fifth course, A; Corbetta indicates that the fifth course could be included in this chord elsewhere. Passages like this are common in 'La guitarre royalle' (1671).

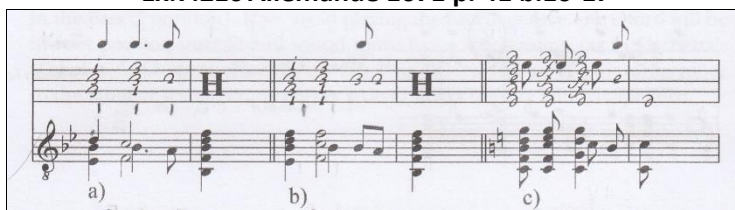
My transcription shows first the three examples, with the Italian examples transposed into C major for ease of comparison. The French example is then shown in the context in which it occurs with the correct method of stringing. The third chord in Eisenhardt's Ex.7.21c is the same as the second in the Italian examples.

### Example 21.3 - Eisenhardt Ex.7.21

Ex.7.21a Passacaglia 1643 p.14, b.15-16

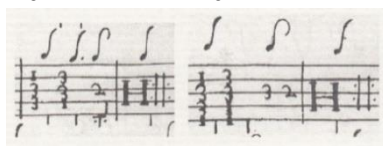
Ex.7.21b Passacaglia 1643 p.14, b.4-5

Ex.7.21c Allemande 1671 p. 41 b.16-17

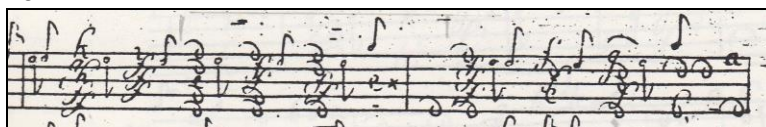


Original Italian tablature

a. b.



c.

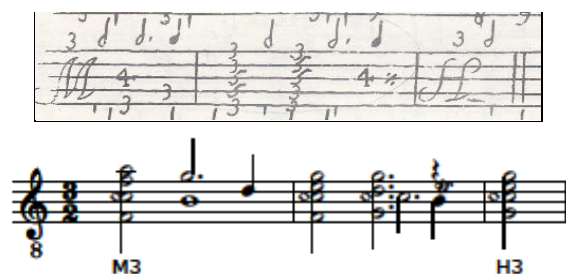


(Notes on the fifth course are shown in red).

A cadence almost identical to that illustrated in Eisenhardt's Ex.7.21a-b occurs in the Passacaglia on page 18 of Corbetta's 'Varii scherzi di sonate' (1648), Example 21.4, and this instance Corbetta has indicated that all five courses should be included in both chords. There are a number of other places in this book where Corbetta has doubled the suspended fourth in this way.



**Example 21.4**  
**Passacaglia 1648 p.18, b.10-12**



Eisenhardt's Ex.7.24 shows a similar cadence from the continuo exercises in Corbetta's 1643 and 1671 books. He claims that

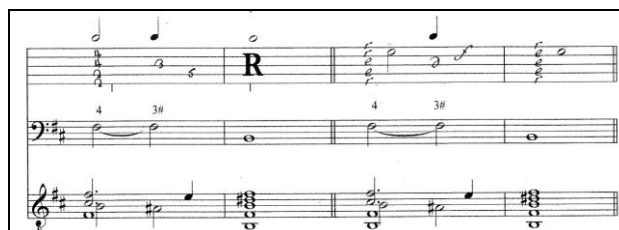
*In Corbetta's instructions for accompaniment in La guitarre royale, the continuo exercises from his 1643 book are transcribed into French tablature. In the latter the fifth course is added. This can be compared to examples 7.21b and 7.21c.<sup>25</sup>*

And more recently that

*As ex 7.24 is taken from an instruction for figured bass ..... it would be illogical to suppose French tuning here, as the 'correct method of stringing'. With a bourdon on the fifth course there would be a non-harmonic bass note B..... which is completely unacceptable here. It would make sense to leave the fifth course out.<sup>26</sup>*

There is no reason why the "French" tuning should not be used when accompanying a bass line. Which ever method of stringing is used, the bass line in these exercises is not always reproduced as written. In this example, with the "French" tuning, the B on the fifth course will duplicate the note on the third course (the suspended fourth) in unison which is acceptable. There will only be a "non-harmonic bass note B" if there is a bourdon on the fifth course. With the French tuning the lowest sounding note will be F sharp, the root of the chord. This particular example happens to end with Chord R – the equivalent of Chord H2, a B major chord, which, with a bourdon on the fifth course will be in root position. However, several of the other examples of a four-three suspension in both books end with a chord which will not be in root position and two of the examples in 'La guitarre royale' have the fifth of the chord, rather than the root, on the fifth course in the dominant chord. In both books, the first example has the four-three suspension in the lowest sounding part whichever method of stringing is used.

**Example 21.5**  
**Eisenhardt Ex.7.24**  
**Exercises for accompanying a bass line 1643 p. 73/1671 p.100**



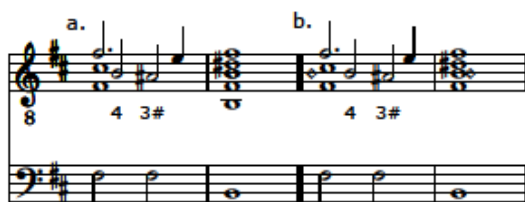
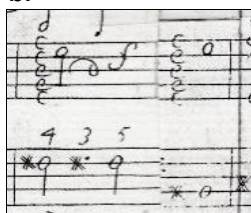
<sup>25</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p.168.

<sup>26</sup> Eisenhardt (2017) Opmerking [I35].

a.



b.



The exercises found in Corbetta's 1643 (and in his 1648) book are not identical with those of 'La guitarre royale' (1671). Understandably after a period of more than twenty years Corbetta has arranged some of the examples differently. The progressions illustrated in 1671 vary from those in the earlier books, and the chords are often filled out with additional courses. He seems to have had a different style of accompaniment in mind – one which features more strummed chords and is more appropriate for the guitar - than the keyboard inspired exercises in the earlier books.<sup>27</sup>

It could be argued just as convincingly that in 1643 Corbetta used a bourdon on the fifth course and therefore avoided doubling the fourth; in 1671 he used the French tuning and was able to include it.

Observant readers will notice that the 1671 excerpt above (Example 21.3/Ex.7.21c) includes two more of Corbetta's "unusual dissonances"; the second chord is Chord H with the fourth course left unfretted. In this context, it is the same as the first chord in the two Italian examples –  $IV^{7/9}$ . The fifth course could be included as it doubles the note on the third course in unison. The first chord is the dominant seventh with an added fourth. Eisenhardt has not commented on either of these.

**Eisenhardt's Ex.7.22a-c and 7.23a compare perfect cadences in which Chord H3, the dominant, is combined with a four-three suspension in a different context.**

Eisenhardt's Ex. 7.22a from the *Corrente*, 1643 page 55 bars 12-14 in Italian tablature illustrates Chord H3 with a straightforward four-three suspension inserted on the second course without any ornamentation. It occurs in a perfect cadence at the midpoint of a piece in binary form. It is not comparable in any way with the examples in French tablature, in which the four-three suspension is placed on the fourth course. No passing notes are inserted into the three-part chords preceding Chord H3 and there is no ornament of any sort attached to Chord H3 itself; indeed, it is impossible to

<sup>27</sup> See Section I Chapter 7 of this study for a detailed comparison of the three sources.

play one. The left-hand fingering is therefore straightforward. It should be noted that the chord preceding Chord H3 is a first inversion minor seventh chord on the second degree of the scale or added sixth. (Eisenhardt has omitted the strum marks from all the chords).

His Ex.7.22b-c and 7.23a in French tablature are examples of Chord H3 with the fourth course left unstopped. Ex.7.22b and Ex.7.23a are the same; both are the same as Pinnell's Ex. 49. It is not clear why Eisenhardt has included it twice. He has omitted the chord which precedes Chord N3 from his Ex.7.22b, but has included it in Ex.7.23a which creates a certain amount of confusion. (He has not transcribed the two examples in the same way, which adds to the confusion). He has also omitted the ornament on the first course in Ex.7.22b and Ex.7.22c but has included it in Ex.7.23a. He has however ignored the effect this has on the left-hand fingering.

Eisenhardt observes that

***The first two chords of example 7.22b [the second and third chords in his example 7.23a] can be understood as modifications of the alfabeto N chord, which would explain the dots on the fifth line.<sup>28</sup>***

It is not clear what he hopes to prove by this. The first chord in his Ex.7.22b (the second in his Ex.7.23a) is indeed a variant of Chord N3, omitting the fifth course (a B flat major chord), but the second chord (third in Ex.7.23a) is certainly not. It is a G minor chord, a variant of Chord P3.

#### Example 21.6 - Eisenhardt Ex.7.22

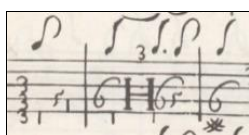
Ex.7.22a - Corrente 1643 p. 55, b.12-14

Ex.7.22b/Ex.7.23a - Courante 1671 p.23, b. 26-27

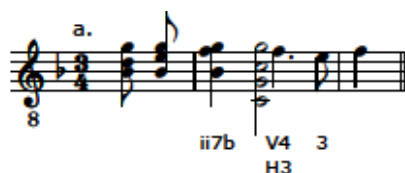
Ex.7.22c Allemande 1671 p.22 b.25-26

The image displays musical notation for three examples: a) Ex.7.22a, b) Ex.7.22b/Ex.7.23a, and c) Ex.7.22c. Each example consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and ornaments. Below the main examples, there is a detailed transcription of the first part (a), showing the original tablature and the correct transcription with notes and ornaments.

**Original tablature with correct transcriptions  
Ex.7.22a.**



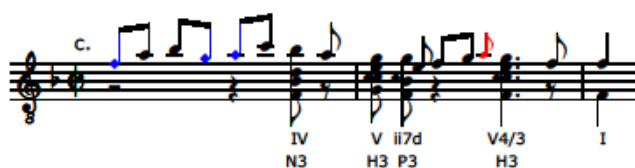
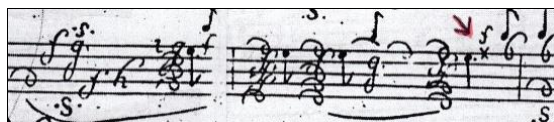
<sup>28</sup> Op. cit. p. 167.



Ex.7.22b/Ex.7.23a.



Ex.7.22c – Allemande p.23 b. 25-26



The chord which precedes Chord N3 in Eisenhardt's Ex.7.23a is a variant of Chord &5 (an F major chord) with a different note on the first course. The fifth course, which would have to be stopped with the fourth finger, has been omitted so that the note at the eighth fret on the first course can be played; there is a dot on the fifth course. The second chord is a B flat major chord – N3 with the fifth course omitted.

The next chord is a G minor seventh chord, G - B flat - [D] - F with an ascending appoggiatura - E, a variant of Chord P3. Corbetta has placed a dot on the fifth course, which does not belong to the chord, to indicate that it should be omitted. All three chords are four-part chords; the dots have nothing to do with any of them being Chord N3. Corbetta has placed wavy line under the stave to indicate that a *barré* should be used up to and including the chord at the cadence.

In the next chord, Chord H3 – C major, the dominant – the fifth course is to be included; the fourth course must be left unstopped and the chord refingered so that the appoggiatura on the first course can be played. This results in a four-three suspension with the third and fourth sounding simultaneously. This is not uncommon in the guitar repertoire and is in different ways also a feature of early Italian monody.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> See Additional Note 2 at the end of this Chapter.

Ex.7.22c illustrates exactly the same cadence but the way in which it is approached is different. The chord at the end of the first bar is Chord N3 (not shown in Eisenhardt's example); the fifth course is omitted to make way for the passing note A on the first course; there is a dot on the line to indicate this. Corbetta has included the fifth course in the next chord – simple Chord H3. The next chord is again a G minor seventh chord, G - B flat - [D] - F, a variant of Chord P3 with an ascending appoggiatura - E. Here Corbetta has included the “non-harmonic tone” - C - on the fifth course. Possibly he wanted to maintain the five-part texture, but it may simply be an error on the part of the engraver; it is the sort of error that is easy to make. The C major chord - Chord H3 - at the cadence is the same as in the previous example – the fourth course is unstopped so that the appoggiatura can be played on the first course.

Eisenhardt has commented further on Ex.7.22c as follows

***Probably a V-IV-V-I cadence (C-B♭-C-F) is intended. The incomplete B♭ major chord b♭– [d] – f' (the IV) includes a g' (the sixth) in the treble, which may be omitted. However, this dissonant g' is prepared in the treble of the preceding C major chord and it finally resolves to f', in the final chord. [Emphasis mine]. To further confuse the matter, there is as well the nonharmonic c' on the fifth course.<sup>30</sup>***

This is nonsense. The second chord is obviously a G minor seventh chord. It cannot be a B flat major chord if the third of the chord – D – is lacking. The progression is V - ii<sup>7</sup>d - V<sup>4/3</sup> – I. Once again, Eisenhardt has failed to understand that an “added sixth chord” is a first inversion minor seventh chord or six-five. **The interval of a sixth is never dissonant.** The G is the root of the chord and should not be omitted; it does not need to be prepared and is obviously not dissonant in the C major chord which follows. The note F, on the fourth course, is the **seventh** of the chord.

The next part of his comment is also nonsense.

***There is only one possible B♭ major chord with a barre in third position, and this is chord N3. This chord would preferably include the note d on the fifth course, played with the second finger. Quite often the fifth course remains unstopped (apart from the first finger), when melodies are played on the second or first courses, such as the e' – f' – g' in this example. The e' resolves to the chord note f' and the g' anticipates the same note in the next chord. The underlying harmony, however, remains B♭ and it would make sense to consider it as a variant of chord N.<sup>31</sup>***

The chord cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered as a variant of Chord N3. This should have B flat played at the sixth fret on the first course and crucially, include a D, the third of the chord, on the second course; without the major third it cannot be regarded as a B flat major chord or as a form of Chord N. There is an alternative *alfabeto* chord played with a *barré* at the third fret – Chord P3 - which is a G minor chord. The E is an ascending appoggiatura; G and F both belong to the underlying harmony. - as shown in the following example. The fifth may be omitted from a minor seventh chord in three-part writing. The C on the fifth course in Ex. 7.22c is the non-harmonic tone, and could be omitted.

<sup>30</sup> Eisenhardt (2017) Opmerking [I39]

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Opmerking [I39]

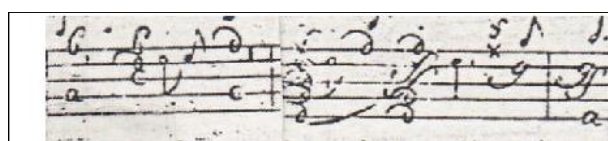
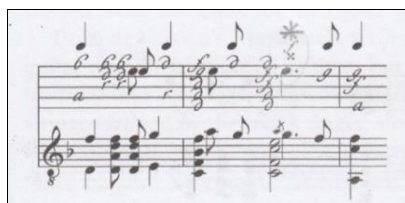
**Example – 21.7**  
**Chords N3 & P3/Minor 7<sup>th</sup> chord on G**



The rest of his comment is too muddled to take seriously. The succession of root position triads – V–IV–V–I – which he proposes is crude and amateurish and does not create a satisfactory cadence. This is of course the sort of thing what Gallot tends to do, which is why his versions are inferior to Corbetta's own.

Eisenhardt's Ex. 7.23b is not a perfect cadence; it occurs in the middle of a phrase.

**Example 21.8**  
**Eisenhardt Ex. 7.23b -Courante 1671 p.23, b.3-5**



Eisenhardt comments on this example as follows

***The preparation [my emphasis] of the bass note does not always occur in this cadence; in example 7.23b the final chord is in 6/3 position and the nonharmonic F on the fourth course is even more disturbing because the dissonance it creates is never resolved.***<sup>32</sup>

My original comment was on this was "It is not clear what he means in saying that *the preparation of the bass note does not always occur in this cadence*". Eisenhardt has commented on my observation is as follows

***It is impossible to discuss these matters with someone who misinterprets every word you say. It should not be too difficult to see that my remark (ex. 7.23b) is about the nonharmonic bass note (the f), which in this case (final cadence or not) cannot be justified as being an anticipation of the root of the harmony to which it resolves.***<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p.168.

<sup>33</sup> Eisenhardt (2017) Opmerking [I41].

Unfortunately, he does not seem to understand the difference between “preparation” and “resolution”. (It is easier to accuse other people of misrepresenting what one has said, than it is to admit that there is a misleading error in one’s own text and that it does not make sense). The “non-harmonic” tone F, in the C major chord, is not an anticipation of the bass note of the F major chord which follows; it is the suspended fourth, which in this example and in Ex.7.22b-c and Ex.7.23a is prepared in the previous chord but sounds simultaneously with the note E in the C major chord onto which it should resolve. (In Eisenhardt’s own transcription the F is not actually the bass note which creates further confusion). The quaver F in the upper octave is the anticipation. Eisenhardt may find the non-harmonic F disturbing but that does not prove that it is not what Corbetta intended. (With octave stringing on the fourth course, the note will sound more prominently in the upper octave).

All of these examples include this one “frequent nonharmonic tone” (the F added to the dominant on C) which Pinnell rather surprisingly says that he is “unable to justify”.

***The chord is merely V [the dominant] (except for the strident anticipation of I [the key note]).<sup>34</sup>***

Whether or not it is a strident anticipation of the key note is entirely subjective. The four-three suspension is the commonest dissonance found in music from the late middle ages through to the present day. The problem arises here because it is sounding simultaneously with its note of resolution.<sup>35</sup> The four-three suspension cannot be played on the second course as in the Italian example if the appoggiatura on the first course is to be played as well, because both would need to be stopped with the fourth finger. The “non-harmonic tone” on the fourth course can only be eliminated if both the fifth course – which is consonant – and the fourth course are omitted reducing the chord to three parts and omitting the four-three suspension altogether. This does not result in a very satisfactory cadence. It is one of the commonest dissonances found in ‘La guitarre royale’ (1671) and perfectly acceptable to many modern ears.

Another point about this particular chord – effectively Chord H with the fourth course left unfretted – is that its function may vary according to context. In Eisenhardt’s Ex.7.21a-b it occurs as chord IV<sup>7</sup> before the final cadence – the E flat (F in my transcription) is the root of the chord; there is no need for it to be prepared. In Ex.7.22 and Ex.7.23 it is used as chord V combined with a four-three suspension in which circumstances the fourth should be prepared in the previous chord. In the examples which Eisenhardt has included it is prepared correctly. As regards the “non-harmonic tones” - these do not resolve in several of his other examples either so that Ex.7.23b is no different.

Eisenhardt has not commented on the chord which precedes the C major chord in his Ex.7.23b which features a “non-harmonic tone” B flat on the third course. This is probably intended to be an F major chord (the equivalent of Chord M3); the note on the third course should be C stopped at the fifth fret. It is probably a misprint; the engraver has put a “d” instead of an “f” which is a very easy error to make.<sup>36</sup> The note A on the first course is the third of the chord; the quaver G is an anticipation of the note in the dominant chord follows. In this instance the progression is simply I – V<sup>4/3</sup> - Ib. The bass line for the complete extract is D E F C A.

All that Eisenhardt’s examples really illustrate is different textures and different contexts. We may not like the music but these compromises are the result of the limitations of the instrument.

Eisenhardt claims that

<sup>34</sup> Pinnell (1976) p. 226; 1980, p.164.

<sup>35</sup> See Additional Note 2 at the end of this Chapter.

<sup>36</sup> This form of Chord M occurs only in few other places, also probably misprints. It is not one of Corbetta’s standard altered chords.

***It can be doubted that Corbetta over the years aimed for an extreme increase of dissonance in exactly the same cadences [as those illustrated in Ex.7.21 and Ex.7.22].***

It is even more doubtful that Corbetta would have suddenly decided it was necessary to include hundreds of letters in his 1671 tablature, just because the chord was played with a *barré*, when he had not done so previously.

Eisenhardt then asks

***Is what we see here a progressive development of his harmonic language or has he made a wrong use of tablature, only showing at what point the barré has to be placed as Richard Pinnell suggests.***<sup>37</sup>

There is really no question about it. It is clearly a progressive development of his harmonic language. There is no conceivable reason why Corbetta should have “made a wrong use of tablature”. Eisenhardt has not put forward any convincing reasons why he should have done so. Corbetta published five books over a period of thirty years; there is a gap of twenty-two years between the publication of his 1648 book and that of 1671 during which he published at least one, possibly two other books which are not extant. There is a very obvious development in his harmonic language, as well as in his musical style overall and in the kind of pieces he composed. The pieces in his 1639 book are almost entirely in *alfabeto*; the handful of pieces in “mixed style” are very simple. In his 1643 book, two- and three-part counterpoint is combined with strummed standard *alfabeto* chords. In 1648 the emphasis shifts from writing passacaglias towards writing the standard movements of the suite with lute style preludes included for the first time. Some of the “unusual harmonies” occur in both his 1643 and 1648 books in similar contexts. The music in ‘La guitarre royalle’ (1671) is more complex in every way.

In his concluding chapter Eisenhardt claims

***Today it is sometimes supposed that guitarists never played their chord strums the same way twice. In this respect the capriciousness of Corbetta’s barré notation can be misleading, since it does not necessarily imply that there was great variation in his performance.***<sup>38</sup>

This is disingenuous. It is reasonable to assume that when Corbetta notated cadences differently, he intended them to be played differently. “Capriciousness” implies that Corbetta deliberately or carelessly notated things differently, although he intended them to be played in the same way. There is no reason to suppose that he did. There is nothing capricious about his notation. It is not always consistent or accurate but that is to be expected in the circumstances.

Eisenhardt’s claim that there was no great variation in Corbetta’s performance is also unhelpful. Corbetta would not have played his own music from the printed book and would not always have played it the same way; this is what composers and players with any imagination do. Improvisation played an important part in the seventeenth century, especially as regards ornamentation and strumming patterns. What we have in the printed book is the version which he committed to paper.

Eisenhardt continues

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<sup>37</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p.167.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid p.178.



***In pizzicato sections from the same compositions there is not the slightest sign of indecision. It seems unlikely that his hesitancy would have been confined to battuto only, and to chords with barrés in particular, which leads to the conjecture that not all he put in tablature is music.***<sup>39</sup>

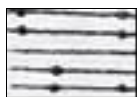
This is also disingenious. The left-hand fingering in the pizzicato sections is straight forward. Difficulties arise when this style of playing has to be combined with strummed chords which work best if all five courses are included. There may be different options depending on the context. The most obvious example is Chord N. (See Example 21.11 below). In its standard form it is played with a *barré*. The first course is stopped with the fourth finger and the fifth course with the second. The commonest auxiliary note to be combined with this chord is the minor/major seventh, either as a descending passing note or an ascending appoggiatura on the first course. This can only be stopped with the second finger. The obvious solution is to omit the fifth course. However, in some positions, as Eisenhardt himself has observed,<sup>40</sup> the open fifth course can be included because it belongs to the basic triad. There is also plenty of evidence to support the inclusion of the fifth course, even when this is dissonant. Chord N with the fifth course left unfretted is one of the chords included in Corbetta's *Alfabeto falso* in 'De gli scherzi armonici' (1639) represented by N\*. It is perfectly understandable that Corbetta should be inconsistent when writing out this and other chords which present similar problems and it is reasonable to assume that he sometimes did one thing and sometimes another.

### Corbetta's dots

As we have already noted, Corbetta sometimes places dots on the tablature lines to indicate courses that should be omitted from strummed chords. In the French preface he comments as follows

*Esuitez [i.e. Et suivez] le plus que uous pourrez les points marquez ainsi [illustration] que uous uerrez sur les cordes, afin desuiter les dissonances, et choisissez avec le pouce les lettres precisement noties;*

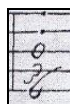
***Follow as much as you can the dots marked thus which you will see on the strings so that you avoid the dissonances, and choose with the thumb precisely the letters notated;***



He also mentions them the Italian preface and they are illustrated at the end of the seventh tablature line of examples on page 5.

*Shiua piu che potrai i punti che uedrai sopra le righe per euitar le dissonanze scegliano con la mano o col polzo le lettere precisamente notate ;*

***Follow as much as possible the dots which you can see on the lines to avoid the dissonances choosing with the fingers or the thumb the letters exactly notated.***



Corbetta has not said that they are only used to indicate **open** courses which are to be omitted; what he says may apply equally to stopped or open courses. It is clear that what he says applies to the right

<sup>39</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p 178

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.165.

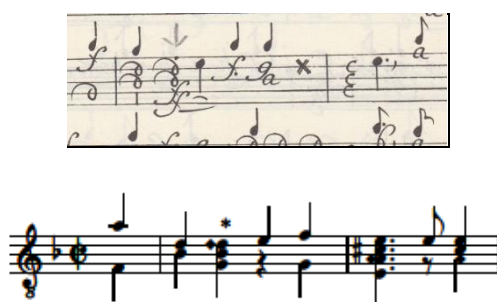
hand. Although they are generally used to indicate lower courses to be omitted, he does very occasionally use a dot to indicate that the first course should be omitted for melodic reasons as in Example 21.9.

**Example 21.9 - Corbetta – Passacalle p.44 b.31-32**



De Visée also uses dots to indicate that the first course should be omitted for melodic reasons. In Example 21.10 from the Allemande on pages 18-19 of 'Livre de guitarre' (1682) he has indicated the first course should be omitted from the equivalent of Chord H3. It will be stopped by the *barré* at the third fret and is not dissonant.

**Example 21.10 – De Visée (1682), Allemande p. 18 b.22-24**



Having overlooked the dots in his previous writings, Eisenhardt has devoted a section of Chapter 7 in his book<sup>41</sup> to arguing that Corbetta had some other purpose in using them. It is not entirely clear what he hopes to prove by this, but it seems to be related to his attempts to argue that many of the letters in the tablature are there “only to serve as left-hand fingering”<sup>42</sup> and are not intended to be played. He starts by questioning “why dots were added in some cases but not in others”.<sup>43</sup> He then argues that in at least some of the chords, some of the time, the unstopped fifth course would not be dissonant and it would not therefore be necessary to omit it. This may be the case, but in practice, whether the fifth course is included in the strum or not, in chords which are played with a *barré*, it will be stopped with the *barré* unless this is placed across only four courses. This is usually an unnecessary complication, especially as it would be appropriate in some placements of some of the chords, but not others.

In Ex.7.18 on page 165 of his book Eisenhardt gives examples of Chords N and & with the fifth course omitted and the open course included. Commenting on these he observes that

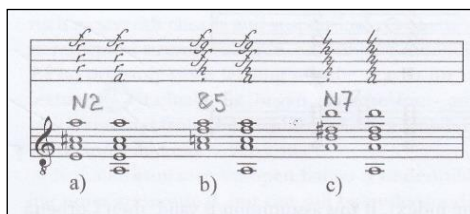
<sup>41</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p. 164-6.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid p. 177.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid p.164.

*In the chords for example 7.18, the principal reason for the dot does not appear to be to avoid dissonance created by playing added open courses.<sup>44</sup>*

Illustration 21.1 – Eisenhardt Ex. 7.18



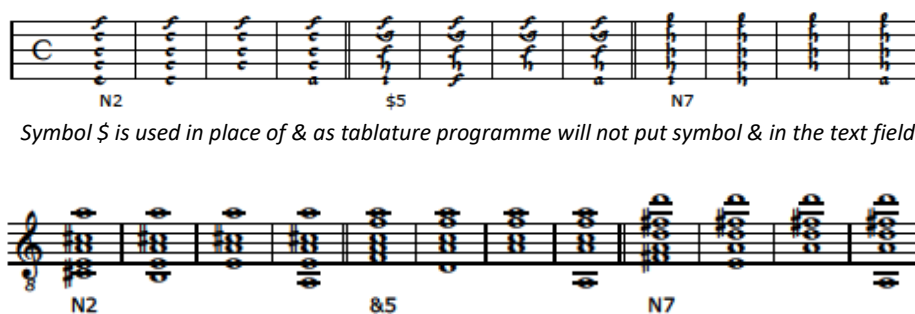
His comment, illustrated with this example, is based on a false premise. He has wrongly assumed that Corbetta is referring only to open courses. The dot is there in these chords to indicate that the **fifth course stopped by the *barré* is dissonant** and must be omitted.

The first of his examples is Chord N2 which is an A major chord. This is played with a *barré* at the second fret and the fifth course should be stopped at the fourth fret with the second finger; if the fifth course is stopped only by the *barré*, it will sound B natural not A natural.

His second example is Chord &5, an F major chord. If the fifth course is stopped only with the *barré* it will sound the note D instead of F.

The third example is of Chord N7 which is another D major chord; with the *barré* the note on the fifth course will be E not A.

Example 21.11 – All Possible Variants of Chords N2, &5 and N7



Symbol § is used in place of & as tablature programme will not put symbol & in the text field.

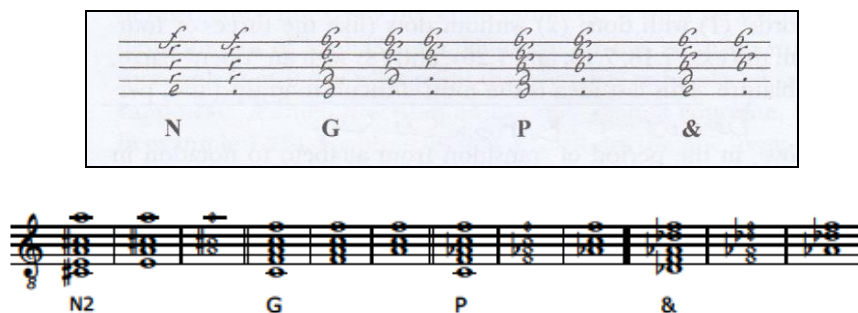
Eisenhardt then goes on to comment on Chords N, G, P and & which may be reduced to four or three notes.

***Nor is it** [clear that the reason for the dot is to avoid dissonance created by added open courses] **for certain transpositions of the chords in example 7.19. For example alfabeto G in first position or alfabeto N in second position appear very often as dotless four-part chords, to which the open fifth course can be added with little consequence for the harmony.***<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Eisenhardt (2015 p.164.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid p.164.

### Illustration 21.2 – Eisenhardt Ex. 7.19



*Eisenhardt has not transcribed the chords in this example into staff notation.  
I have added the chords with lozenge-shaped heads for comparison.*

It should be noted that Eisenhardt's first chord is N2, i.e. played at the second fret, rather than the first. Secondly, the open fifth course cannot be included in his chords Chord P (F minor) or Chord & (D flat major) but could be included in both chords if played at the second fret (F sharp minor/D major respectively). He has not included the four part versions of P and & although they occur as four-part chords with a dot on the fifth line. (See Example 21.6 above for a four-part example of &5 with a dot on the fifth line).

However, all three chord shapes occasionally occur as four-part chords when it is necessary to omit the fifth course for reasons of left-hand fingering. What Eisenhardt refuses to acknowledge is that omitting the fifth course from these chords simplifies the left hand fingering and this is often essential to accommodate passing notes and ornamentation. Whether the open fifth course is included or not is a matter of convenience.

As already noted, after Chord L, Chord & is the most awkward to finger because the fifth course is stopped with the fourth finger. Corbetta has not even included it in his *alfabeto* table on page 5 although he does sometimes write it out in full in tablature.<sup>46</sup>

In Chord N the note on the fifth course is fretted with the second finger. It must be left unfretted if passing notes are to be inserted.

Chords G and P without the fifth course are the equivalent of Bartolotti's *lettere tagliate* and are used in the same way – to introduce passing notes and suspensions and to facilitate ornamentation.

Chord G is played with a *barré*. The fifth course is stopped with the third finger, the fourth course with the fourth finger and third course with the second finger. By leaving out the fifth course it is possible to re-finger the chord, using the third finger on the fourth course, freeing the fourth finger. The fifth course will still be stopped with the *barré*.

Chord P is also played with a *barré*; the fifth course is usually stopped with the third finger, the fourth course with the fourth finger. It is however possible to re-finger it using the second and third fingers so that the fourth finger is free; the chord can then usually be sustained whilst most auxiliary notes are played. Any which way, the fifth course will still be stopped with the *barré*.

The fact that these chords are not always combined with passage work does not invalidate this explanation. The more convenient form gradually takes precedence over the less convenient form. Because the four-part chords are more useful this form becomes standard. Corbetta and Bartolotti

<sup>46</sup> Corbetta has not included it in the table in his 1648 book either.

may have been accomplished players but there is no reason why they should have gone to the trouble of including notes on the fifth course if there is nothing to be gained by doing so.

Eisenhardt goes on to claim that

*In these situations the dot would give ambiguous information as it can be understood as an indication that the right hand should omit the fifth course, but also that the placement of a finger of the left hand (belonging to a former alfabeto chord) is redundant.*<sup>47</sup>

This is disingenious. The fifth course will still be stopped by the *barré* even if it is not fingered. Corbetta has stated in his introduction what the dots are for and it is clear that he is referring to the right hand. There is no justification for claiming that they have any other purpose. Eisenhardt also observes that Chords N, G, P and &

*sometimes have dots and sometimes do not, and presumably Corbetta was not completely convinced of the necessity of providing information of this kind. It shows his indecision with respect to the notation of battuto chords in general which is often far from accurate.*<sup>48</sup>

What it really shows is not that Corbetta had not made up his mind which notes should be included in the chords; this is usually a matter of common sense, dots or no dots. It shows that he is inconsistent in the way he uses his system of dots to indicate which courses should be omitted. Most the time he simply did not bother to put them in because he did not think that they were necessary. His notation of *battuto* chords is reasonably accurate and in most cases represents his intentions quite clearly.

Turning to Chords K and H Eisenhardt observes that these are treated differently in so far as Corbetta never uses dots to indicate that the fifth course should be omitted. He then remarks

*A possible explanation for the different treatment of K and H could be that these two chords require the fifth course to be fingered with a barré, a quantité négligeable [i.e. a matter of no account] on which Corbetta was not inclined to waste any dots. It has a function comparable to the nut in first position".*<sup>49</sup>

But this is equally true of the other chords. The *barré* does not cease to act as a nut in Chords N, &, G and P just because the fifth course is stopped at another fret above it. The reason why Corbetta never omits the fifth course from Chords K and H is that there are no fingering advantages to leaving it out and he intends it to be included in the strum.

The point about Chord K is that it cannot accommodate passing notes at all, even if the fifth course is omitted, as the fingering of the stopped courses cannot be altered. Chord H can sometimes do so without omitting the fifth course. However, both K and H are regularly used with the **fourth course unstopped** so that passing notes can be introduced in a progression which is characteristic of Corbetta's style. The fourth course cannot be omitted if the chord is strummed; this results in a dissonance which is clearly intentional as in Example 21.6 above (altered Chord H) and the following example of altered Chord K.

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<sup>47</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p.164.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid p.165.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid p.165.

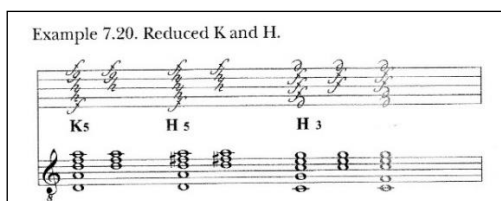
**Example 21.12**  
**Sarabande p.4 b.21-22**



There is no possible reason why Corbetta should regularly notate these two chords as five-part chords if three-part chords are what is intended. There is no question of any *quantité négligeable*. This is true of the other chords as well.

In his example 7.20 Eisenhardt illustrates variants of Chords K5, H5 and H3 comprising only three notes which are usually notated without dots.

**Illustration 21.3 – Eisenhardt Ex. 7.20**



He points out that when played at the fifth fret, the open fourth and fifth courses can be included in both K5 and H5. (They cannot be included in Chord H3). It is not clear what he hopes to prove by this. Both chords can be played without using a *barré*; they are often used at the beginning of a phrase where it is self-evident that a five-part chord is intended and that the open courses should be included. In Example 21.13, the opening chords can and should include the open courses; there are no dots. The chord on last beat of the bar is an A major chord and should not include the open courses; Corbetta has put dots on the fourth and fifth line to indicate this.

**Example 21.13 – Variant of Chord K5**  
**Allemande p. 41 b. 1**



In Example 21.14 the open fourth and fifth courses should be included In the opening chords; there are no dots.

**Example 21.14 – Variant of Chord H5**  
**Allemande p. 63 b. 14**



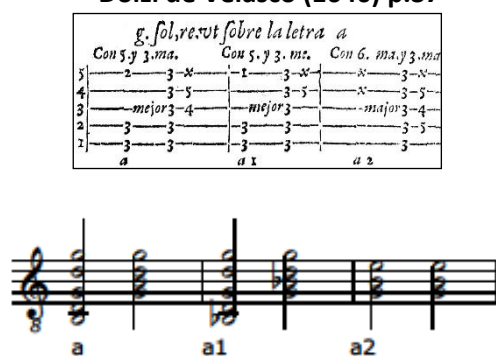
Eisenhardt has not included or commented on the variant of Chord K which is frequently used at the second or third fret (B minor and C minor) and has a dissonant note on the fourth course.

Corbetta does sometimes reduce the chords to only three notes, but this is usually because they are being used in the context of three-part writing in lute style where dots are not really necessary. If he intended his music to be reduced to bland, sometimes inept, three-part counterpoint throughout he could have written out all the chords in this way.

Eisenhardt concludes this section of his book claiming that “*Thus a discrepancy is created between instructions for the left hand and those for the right.*” He attempts to justify his belief that the dots are intended not only to indicate that the relevant courses should not be played by the right hand, but also that they should not be stopped with the left hand with a reference to Doizi de Velasco’s treatise ‘Nuevo modo de cifra’ (ca. 1640).

***Doizi de Velasco’s Nuevo modo de cifra is probably the most detailed tutor for guitar accompaniment of its time, but in his examples we find contradictory instructions....In Velasco’s diagrams [Eisenhardt’s Example 5.1 on p. 105] there are chords with all the strings stopped with the index fingure (i.e. with a barré) where he has indicated with an x that the fifth course should nevertheless not be touched by the right hand. The “x” is there not only “to avoid the dissonance” of the C on the fifth course, but to tell that no extra finger needs to be placed on the fifth fret.<sup>50</sup>***

**Illustration 21.4 - Eisenhardt Ex. 5.1<sup>51</sup>**  
**Doizi de Velasco (1640) p.37**



*Eisenhardt has not transcribed the example into staff notation.*

<sup>50</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p.166.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid p.105.

Eisenhardt's tortuous comment is irrelevant when considering Corbetta's notation. Doisi has not said that no extra finger needs to be placed on the fifth fret. He explains the purpose of the x in his notation as follows

*En la cifra con que generalmente se enseña a tañer por punteado se usa poner un çero en la cuerda, que se a de tocar en vano, y en la que no sea tocar, ninguna señal. Mas como en el modo de tañer por consonancias, para su mayor perfeccion conviene en algunas no tocar alguna cuerda aunque se pise, no he podido seguir esta Regla general. Y asi en la cuerda, que estuviere, una, x, no se tocara, aunque de algun dedo sea pisada, y la que no la tuviere, ni otro qualquier numero, se tocarà en vano.<sup>52</sup>*

***In the tablature notation with which playing in punteado style is generally shown, it is usual to put a zero on the string which has to be played open, or unstopped, and no sign on that string which is not to be played at all. However it has not been possible to follow this general rule because when playing chords in their more accurate form, it is necessary in some of them not to pluck a string even though it may be stopped. Thus the string on which there is an x will not be played, even though some finger may be stopping it. And that string which does not have it [an x] or any other number, is played open.***

The rest of Eisenhardt's observation makes even less sense. He seems to be suggesting that Corbetta has included letters on the fifth course to indicate a *barré*, but has then failed to put in a dot as well to indicate that the course should be omitted from the strum.

***Corbetta's notation is even more elusive, because he avoids putting a dot on a string stopped with a barré. Consequently, he lost his means of showing (like Velasco) that the right hand should not strike the string.***

Doizi's treatise serves a completely different purpose. It comprises a series of musical examples illustrating the chords which can accompany a specific note in the bass; it does not include pieces which are intended to be played. It is printed from letterpress rather than from an engraving and the most likely reason why he has been unable to indicate open courses to be included in the chords is because the font of type did not include a zero. The only way he could do so was to leave the lines blank.

Eisenhardt concludes by observing

***First, open courses that are not indicated may have to be included in strummed chords for reasons of harmony or voice leading....Second in the case of the barré notation of Corbetta (...and others.....) simplification of what is notated...may be called for. Thus, the inaccurate notational practice of the seventeenth-century guitarist gives rise to persistent uncertainty about how the music should be played.<sup>53</sup>***

The problem with baroque guitar notation is that it is abbreviated, not that it is inaccurate. There is no logic to Eisenhardt's attempts to argue that because it is not always clear which open courses are to be included in some chords, it is appropriate to omit stopped courses which are clearly indicated in the tablature. To suggest that Corbetta has included literally hundreds of letters in the tablature which are not to be played and serve only as an indication that a *barré* should be used, and has failed to put in dots as well to indicate which courses should be omitted; that Corbetta deliberately misused tablature notation to write out his music in a way that makes no sense, flies in the face of all reason.

<sup>52</sup> Nuevo modo de cifra, p.35.

<sup>53</sup> Eisenhardt (2015)p.169.



An ill-considered remark in a dissertation written forty years ago, when much less was known about the baroque guitar, has been made the basis of an elaborate fantasy.

Corbetta's music may not be as popular today as that of Sanz or Santiago de Murcia and it is not as easy to play, but it is much more interesting and original. It requires careful study, with particular attention paid to the elaborate ornamentation which is characteristic of music of the period, and the implications that this has for left-hand fingering. Only by playing it is it possible to understand where Corbetta is coming from. Studying it on paper in the light of inappropriate theoretical considerations is a futile exercise. Eisenhardt has done little more than copy Pinnell's examples; he has not made an in-depth study of Corbetta's harmony and notation or considered alternative explanations. Because he is apparently unfamiliar with the basic rules of harmony and counterpoint, and has not read Corbetta's instructions at the beginning of the book, his comments are often misleading. It would be a pity if players today were discouraged from exploring the music by such unlikely theories.

### Additional Note 1

In a lengthy note commenting on my observations,<sup>1</sup> Eisenhardt has tried to justify his argument that including letters which are not to be played in strummed chords is a comparable shorthand notation to Foscari's practice of omitting zeros.

***I would say that strummed chord accompaniment is particularly relevant here. Moreover, my remark should better be read in its context.***<sup>2</sup>

Corbetta's 'La guitarre royale' does not include any music with strummed chord accompaniment. It comprises sophisticated solo guitar music combining two- and three-part counterpoint with strummed chords.

Eisenhardt's text continues

***In battuto, the actual number of courses touched by the right hand (and also the intensity of the impact of the stroke on each individual string) can vary widely, depending on the context. Upstrokes, for example, have a tendency to include fewer strings than downstrokes. [Emphasis mine].***<sup>3</sup>

To my knowledge, none of the original sources suggest that fewer courses should be included in upstrokes as a matter of course. When the music is notated in tablature, the number of courses to be "touched by the right hand" in *battuto* is usually quite clear, whether they are upstrokes or downstrokes; it is not up to the player to decide to leave out some of them out. In any event, the dissonant chords in 'La guitarre royale' usually fall on accented downstrokes so this observation does not hold water.<sup>4</sup>

In Italian and Spanish sources, the standard five-part chords are represented by single letters of the alphabet – *alfabeto*; there is no reason to suppose that the chords were not played in the way that they are notated in the tables set out in the introductions to the books which use them. The whole point about a shorthand system is that everyone understands what it represents, not that everyone can interpret it in any way they wish. In music which is predominantly strummed, single notes may be inserted between the chords to create a melodic line. These may be given stroke marks although they are intended to be plucked. This is a notational anomaly. Chords consist of at least three notes and are strummed; single notes and two-part counterpoint are plucked. There is no evidence that fewer than three courses should be strummed even if this is possible.

The most detailed description of how chords were played in this repertoire is found in the introduction to De Visée's 'Livre de guittarre' (1682).

*Quand on trouuera un accord marqué de cette maniere (a) Il faut faire coulés les doights de la main droite en descendant, et finir par le poulce, en doucissant, et les touchant l'une apres l'autre, selon que la mesure le permettra; si c'est une noire, ou une croche qui ne permette pas de demeurer beaucoup, et que cette mesme marque (b) soit au dessous de la batterie Il faut battre du poulce seulement; si c'est un coup en haut, et que ce soit une blanche ou un noire pointée Il faut releuer du premier et du second*

<sup>1</sup> Cognitive dissonance Opmerking [I31].

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p. 160.

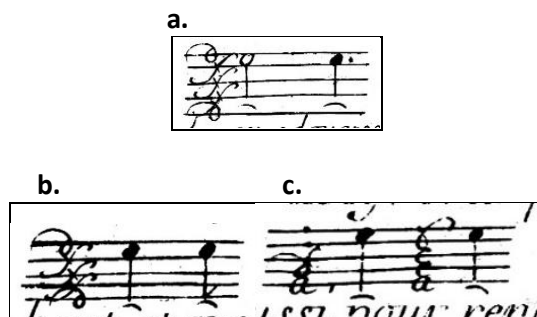
<sup>4</sup> This is certainly the case in Eisenhardt's Ex. 7.16 [Eisenhardt (2015) p.161]. See Chapter 19, Example 19.11 for my transcription and commentary on this example.

*doight en touchant de mesme qu'en descendant les cordes l'un apres l'autre, et si c'est une noire ou une croche, relever du premier doight brusquement. Quand il i aura des points sur quelques unes des lignes, ainsi que vous voïée (c) Il ne faut pas toucher les cordes qu'elles designent affin de uitter les dissonances et aussi pour rendre le chant plus distngt.*

***When you find a chord marked in this manner (a) it is necessary to run the fingers of the right hand downwards and to finish softly with the thumb, and to touch them [the strings] one after the other according to the value of the note; if it is a crotchet or a quaver which does not allow for much delay and this same mark (b) is below the batterie, it is necessary to strike with the thumb only. If there is an upward stroke and there is a minim or a dotted crotchet it is necessary to rise upwards with the first and second fingers touching the strings one after the other in the same way as descending, and if it is crotchet or quaver to strike upwards briskly with the first finger.***

***When there are dots on some of the lines as you may see here (c) you should not strike the strings which they indicate so as to avoid dissonances and to render the melody more distinct. It is necessary that the thumb should fall downwards [i.e. towards the floor] and that on rising the first finger should make the same effect as the thumb.***<sup>5</sup>

Illustration 21.5  
De Visée's Examples



In 'La guitarre royale' the chords are written out in full; they are not represented by shorthand symbols of any kind. They are only ambiguous (apart from misprints) insofar as the open courses to be included in the chords are not always indicated; this is true of Foscarini as well as Corbetta.

Eisenhardt continues

***... and a thumb stroke usually puts more emphasis on the lower strings than a stroke with the fingers, whereas an upstroke with the index finger accents the treble strings.***<sup>6</sup>

This is also questionable. The treble string(s) on the lower courses are usually placed on the thumb side of a course so that in practice, more emphasis will be placed on them even with a thumb stroke. With the re-entrant tuning which Corbetta and De Visée used, the fifth course will comprise only treble strings.

Eisenhardt's note concludes

<sup>5</sup> Advis p.5.

<sup>6</sup> Eisenhardt (2015) p.160.

*On paper, all the notes of the chord look as if they are all of the same loudness. However, in performance the notes tend to be played differently, even up to the point that some notes can hardly be perceived (or being virtually inaudible) while others dominate.<sup>7</sup>*

This contradicts Eisenhardt's own comment about his Ex. 7.13

*There is no (realistic) way to avoid playing the low d on the fourth course, as the chord should be strummed. We cannot prevent it to spoil the bass line f# - g - a - d<sup>8</sup>*

Eisenhardt's central tenet is that "not all we see is music"; some of the letters representing notes are there only to indicate that the chord must be played with a *barré*. "Simplification of what is written is needed"; some of the "notes" must be left out. He can't have it both ways.

### Additional Note 2

The classical example of the clash between the suspended fourth and the third of the chord on to which it should resolve is found in early Italian monody where the voice part sustains the dissonance whilst it is resolved in the accompaniment as can be seen in the following example.

#### Example 21.15 Kapsberger – Interotte speranza, final bar From Libro primo di arie passeggiate (1612)



Both Foscari and Corbetta include in their tables of dissonant chords a form of Chord B in which the suspended fourth is clearly intended to sound simultaneously with the major third onto which it resolves, represented by B+ and B\* respectively.

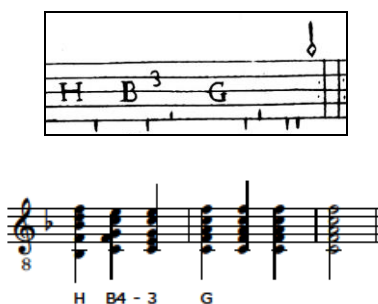
<sup>7</sup> Cognitive dissonance Opmerking [I31].

<sup>8</sup> Cognitive dissonance Opmerking [I24]. See Example 21.1 above for my transcription and commentary on this example.

Foscarini and Bartolotti include examples of a four-three suspension introduced into the C major chord represented in *alfabeto* by letter B. The fourth will clash with the third of the chord if the open first course is included; there is no reason to suppose that it would have been omitted. The dissonance does usually resolve as the chord is repeated on the upbeat.

#### Example 21.16

**Foscarini – Corrente detta la Faurita, final cadence**  
**Li cinque libri della chitarra alla spagnola p.60**



#### Example 21.17

**Bartolotti – Passacaglia, b. 23-24**  
**Libro primo di chitarra spagnola p.15**



Valdambrini frequently cadences in E minor the following way

#### Example 21.18

**Valdambrini – Corrente 9<sup>na</sup> b. 23-24**  
**Libro primo d'intavolatvra de chitarra p.14**



These idiosyncracies are a result of the limitations of the instrument which composers exploited in an imaginative way.