

THE FALSE CONSONANCES OF MUSICK  
BY NICOLA MATTEIS  
SELECTED EXAMPLES

William F. Long



## Introduction

Nicola Matteis was a 17<sup>th</sup> century violinist and guitarist who settled in London in 1672. His text, *THE FALSE CONSONANCES OF MUSIC OR INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PLAYING A TRUE BASSE UPON THE GUITARRE...* teaches how to realize a figured bass on the instrument now known as the “baroque guitar.” It was published in Italian in 1680 and in English two years later.

The baroque guitar is in appearance similar to the modern classical guitar (see Watteau’s sketch on the title page) but is rather smaller with 9 or 10 strings arranged pair-wise into 5 “courses.” The tuning of the baroque guitar is similar to that of the classical guitar—give or take the occasional octave. The lowest two courses of the baroque guitar are tuned an octave higher than on the classical guitar, a so-called “re-entrant tuning” reminiscent of that of the ukelele. Sometimes one of the strings of one or both of these lowest courses was tuned down an octave. The tuning Matteis used is shown below, but his instructions should work for any of the common tuning variants.



Classical guitarists are accustomed to using mensural notation, all the notes being placed on a treble staff, sounding an octave lower than notated. But in folk and popular music tablature notation is common. Tablature tells the guitarist which strings to pluck and which frets to stop. Sometimes tablature includes additional information about note duration, slurs, and special effects. Tablature inevitably produces ambiguities, but so does mensural notation. In popular music publications nowadays, the two are often combined to give a clearer idea of the execution of the music.

In Matteis’ time, tablature was the rule for solo music on fretted instruments. Continuo players, however, had to learn to read a figured bass from mensural notation and to supply appropriate chords. Matteis bridged the gap between solo performance and accompaniment by showing the figured bass *and* the corresponding accompaniment in tablature format. Of special interest is *THE SECOND PART* of Matteis’ book since it provides many practical examples of figured bass realization in various time signatures, styles and keys.

The following pages consist mainly of examples selected from *THE SECOND PART*. In them I’ve rendered Matteis’ tablature into modern form with the help of Finale notation software.

The tablature symbols will be familiar to modern guitarists with a few exceptions:

1. The five strings are represented by the five lines on the TAB staff. The highest course, the E string or strings, is represented by the top line, the B string course is represented by the 2<sup>nd</sup> line down, and so forth.
2. Consistent with 17<sup>th</sup> century practice, the fret positions are indicated by letters, *a* being an open string, *b* a string stopped at the 1<sup>st</sup> fret, *c* a string stopped at the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret, etc. The letter *j* is omitted since it wasn't used in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Up and down arrows ↑ ↓ below the tab staff indicate the direction of a strummed chord. A down arrow ↓ means to strum toward the floor. In mensural notation this would correspond to an arpeggio going *upward*. An up arrow ↑ means to strum away from the floor, a *downward* arpeggio in mensural notation. Note, then, that “up” and “down” are different for the right and left hands. Go figure. And it's even worse if you take into account the re-entrant tunings and octave doublings in the courses.
4. A right parenthesis ) after a note means a trill on that note. In Matteis' realizations this is invariably a cadential trill, and should start from the upper note.
5. Ordinarily, tablature notation tells when a note starts, but it is left to the performer to decide how long to hold the note. A right slash / behind a note, however, indicates that that note is to be sustained, though it gives no idea how long the note should be sustained.

Above the tablature notation I've placed a “mensuralized” version of the tablature calculated by Finale. There is no attempt to work out the voice leading in this version, and the notes won't sound exactly like the notation looks because of the re-entrant tuning. Nonetheless, it makes it easy to see how Matteis' realized the figures, and a classical guitarist playing the baroque guitar from this version will pretty much get the music right.

When I'm quoting Matteis' original text I'll use a *calligraphy font* reminiscent of the typeface Matteis used. Curiously, Matteis' English translation includes a good deal of Italian, especially with musical examples. I have presented Matteis' text just as I found it, orthographic eccentricities and all. My own contributions are in the Times font.

Occasional notes have been changed to correct obvious errors. These are indicated with square brackets, [ ].

William F. Long

# Esempio Facile

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

4 3 4 #3 4 3

4 #3 6 4 #3

4 #3

*Altro modo facile in tripla.*

The musical score is divided into three systems, each with a Bass line and a Baroque Guitar system. The Baroque Guitar system consists of a treble clef staff with chordal notation and a tablature staff with letters 'a', 'b', 'c', and 'd' representing fret positions. Fingering numbers (1-4) are placed above the Bass line. Arrows indicate plucking directions: down for bass notes and up for treble notes.

**System 1:** Bass line starts with a half note G2, followed by quarter notes F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. Fingering: 4, 3, 6, 6. Baroque Guitar tablature: a, b, b, d, a, a, d, d, a, d. Plucking directions: down, down, up, down, down, up, down, up, down.

**System 2:** Bass line starts with a half note G1, followed by quarter notes F1, E1, D1, C1, B0, A0, G0. Fingering: 7, #6, #, 4, #3. Baroque Guitar tablature: d, c, d, d, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a. Plucking directions: down, up, down, up, down, up, down, down, up, down, up, down, up.

**System 3:** Bass line starts with a half note G0, followed by quarter notes F0, E0, D0, C0, B-1, A-1, G-1. Fingering: 4, 3, 4, 3. Baroque Guitar tablature: b, d, a, a, a, a, b, b, d, a, a, b. Plucking directions: down, down, down, up, down, up, down, down, down, down.

*Ordinariamente quando il basso camina di crome à deue dar l'accompagnamento, esempio.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

6 6

T  
A  
B

a a c a a a f c c d b  
a a a a a a f d d d a  
a a c b c e b c e c a a c a a c  
c e c b c e b c e c e a c e a d c a c

#6 #6 5 # 6 # #

a a c d c) a c a a a d a a c c a  
b b b b) e e a a a d b e a c e a c  
a a a e e a a b c c e e  
c a c c a) c c c a) c c a c d a c d a

#3 4 4 #3 #6 #3 4 4 #3

a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a  
e f f e) f a a b b d d b e a e f e) a  
e e e c c a) c c b b c c e e e a  
a c c d d c c a c d a a a a c

*Quando il basso cominasse assai ueloce, no è necessario dar l'accompagnamento tanto souante ma solo all prima delle quattro.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

The musical score consists of three systems. Each system includes a Bass line (bass clef, treble clef), a Treble line (treble clef), and a Baroque Guitar line (TAB). The first system shows a simple accompaniment. The second system features a more complex, faster bass line with a '4' and '#3' marking. The third system continues with similar complexity, also marked with '4' and '#3'. The Baroque Guitar tablature uses letters 'a', 'c', 'd', 'e' on the strings, with some slanted lines indicating bends or slides.

*Le seste che cqaminano più adagio, è necessario darci tutti di accompagnamenti, Esempio.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

(6) 6 6 6 7 6 7 6 6 6 4 3 6 6 7  
 e d b b e d d d c d a b a d g f c  
 a c a d d c) d a a c d a c a a a d a  
 b d b a d d b a a c d a a a a a d a

6 4 3 #6 6 7 6 5 # 7 6 6 #3 6  
 d d d b b d b b b a) a f b) a b a g  
 e d d d a e e d d c) d g  
 d c a a a d a a c a c d a a a  
 b b d a a c d a b b a a a a a

7 6 7 6 7 #6 #6 6 # 6 4 #3  
 g f f d d b c) d b d f e c d d c) d  
 e e d d b a a a e f e c d d c) d  
 f e d d c a a a f f a d b d a b

*Caminar di feste nelle compositioni sono assai gradeuole all' udito,  
Esempio.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 #6 6 6 6 6 5 # 6 6 6 6 5

# 6 4 #3 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 #6 6 6 6 6 5

# 6 4 #3 # 4 #3

T  
A  
B

e d b d b b c d f g f d c d a b a) d  
a d b d d d d c d c a c d f h f c d a c a d  
d b d b a b a d a d b a d b a d a d b d b a

a d a d c) d b b d c d c a c a c d f h f d  
c d a c a d b a b a d a d b d b a

a a d a a d b) a d a b d a a b

*Quando trouate delle note d'una battuta l'una quanti colpi douete dare.*  
*Esempio.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

6 7 #6 6 #4

4 #3 # 4 #3 7 # 7

# #3 4 #3 #6 4 #3

*Molte settíme, è seste un dopo l'altro, sono assaie gradeuole all' udito.*

7 6 7 6 7 6 7 6 # 6 7 6 7 6 7 6

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

7 6 7 6 7 6 7 6 7 6 7 4 #3 6 7 6 7 6 7 #

7 6 7 #6 7 6 7 6 7 6 7 # 6 6



*Le semicrome come uadino toccate, esempio*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

4 #3 #6

T  
A  
B

a a d c) d d a c  
a b d d d a b  
c c c a c e a  
c e c a d d c a c c d a d c a c d a

# 4 #3 4 #3

c c a a a a a  
e e b f e) a a b f e) a  
e e a c e a e a a c e a  
e e d a e c a c e a  
c c d a c c d a c d a c

*Se andassero tanto presto, che la mano non potesse arriuare all' ora si  
deue toccar la prima della quattro cosi.*

4 #3 #6 # 4 #3 4 #3

a a d c) d d a c c a a a a a a a  
a b d d b c e a b f e) a a b f e) a  
a a c a a a a b e a b e a  
c c a a a c a e a b f e) a  
d a c c d a c d a c d a c d a c

*Quando il basso camina di questa maniera in che fuoco si deue dar l'accompagnamento, Esempio.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

4 3

4 #3 4 3

4 3

T  
A  
B

a b d a b d a b d  
b b a b b a) b b d  
c c a c a a a  
d a c d c d c c d d a c c d c c d a c e a

d a d c) d b d a d b d  
a b d a b d b b a)  
a a c c a c e a a  
c d a c d c d a c d a a

a b d a b d a  
b b d b a)  
a a c a a  
c c d d a c c d a d

*Per sonare un basso, con spirito, è uivacità Eempio*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

2 6 7 6

# 6 7 7 # 7 #6 7 4 #3 6

7 7 6 7 6 # 7 7 4 #3

T  
A  
B

a b a a d b a a b d a  
c c c b d c a c c c  
c c c a a c a a c d d c c a

a d d b b b a f f f d c d c c a d b  
a b b a b a f f e f c f f c f b  
c c a a d a a a a c c c

b b b a a a a a d d a d b a b a a  
b a a b d c a d d b d b a c c b c  
a a d c a a a a a a a a a a a

*Quando il basso camina così, in che luogo uadi dato l'accompagnamento, esempio.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

4 #3 # 4 #3 #

#6 5 # #6 4 #3 # 6 5

6 5 # 4 #3 # 4 #3

T  
A  
B

a c a a c a a f e) a f  
c d d a c c b) c e b e b b) a f  
c c c e e c c e b e e c a c  
a c e a a a c e c) a c a a c c a c e e e

c e c b b c c c c a a c e a c e d) e c b c e  
a e a c a c e a c e e e e a c e c c a c b) c c a c e

a a c c e a f f e) f c a a a a  
a d c d d f f f e) c d a a a c  
b c e e e e e e) c c b b) c c  
a e e a e a c c a c a c

*Quando il basso camina ueloce, in che fuoco uadi data  
l'accompagnamento, esempio.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T a c a a a a a  
 A c d a a b c  
 B c c e a c e c e c a e c a e c a a c e a c e

c a c a c e a a f e a b c e c a e c e a c e c a e c a

a c b c c e c a e c a a c a c e c e e a c e c a a



*Quando si troua nella tripla una nota, cò un punto in questa forma,  
come si deue fare Esempio.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

6/4

4/4

6/4

*si d'a quella raschiata al punto quando il basso un adagio; che se  
andasse presto è necessario*

*In tempo binario all nota, con il punto, è bene dalle uolta à darci una batteria, così quando pero uadi adagio.*

4 #3

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

4 3

4 #3 4 #3

*When you meet with long notes ether a measure or two it is very necessary to pinch y<sup>e</sup> notes as thus*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

*p p p i m i*

*p p p i m i*

*The more quicker and the more clearer you play the better it will sett your tune of and so in all the notes of Musick you may stop any note you please with your left hand the right pinching the said strings...*

*The first second and third strings must be pincht with your Thum and the fourth with your fore finger and the fifth with your middle finger pinching out the full time of your note.*

*That you may learn easily and perfectly, I have sett down a little example upon euery Key of Musick that you may know in what place the naturall Six ought to be given the aforesaid Sixt being markt with a Star*

Here, the "aforesaid Sixt" is actually indicated below by a (6) instead of by a star.

*This example is very convenient upon any Instrument to play y<sup>e</sup> thorough basse in good order*

The image shows a musical score for Bass and Baroque Guitar. The Bass line is in G major, 4/4 time, with a sequence of notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F#3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4. Above the notes are fingering indications: (6), 7, 6, (6), 7, 6, (6), (6). The Baroque Guitar part shows six strings (T, A, B) with tablature letters (d, a, c, b, e) and rhythmic markings (down and up strokes).

*In G.terza minore.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

4 3 #6 (6) 4 #3

# 4 #3

*In A.terza minore.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

6 5 5 6 (6) 7 6

# 4 3 #

# 4 #3

T  
A  
B

a b a d a a a a a a a a a  
b b a b b a b a b a b a b a b a  
c c a a a b c d c d a c d d d a c d d d a  
a a a a a b d a a a e  
a a b b b b b a) b b d  
b b a a a c a b b d  
c c d d d a c d a d d d a a  
c c d a a a b) c c a

*In A. terza maggiore.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

4 #3 (6) 7 #6

T  
A  
B

a a a a a a a a a a a a  
c c d a d c a e a c  
c c b c a c b c b b c  
c c e a c c e a c c  
a a a a a a a a a a a a

#3 4 4 #3 6 (6) 4 #3

a a a a d c f a a  
e f f e a a d d f a b d  
e e b b c e a a c c c  
a a c c c e a a a c e a c  
a a c c c e a a a c e a c

*In B.terza minore.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

6 5 # 4 #3 4

6 5 #6 5 # (6) 6 5

7 #6 # 4 #3

The musical score is organized into three systems. Each system contains three staves: a Bass line (bass clef), a Baroque Guitar line (treble clef), and a TAB line. The Bass line shows a melodic progression with fingerings and accidentals. The Baroque Guitar line shows chordal accompaniment with plucking directions (up and down arrows) and fingerings. The TAB line provides fret numbers for each string (T, A, B) and plucking directions. The key signature is B minor (two sharps). The time signature is common time (C). The first system has 8 measures, the second has 8 measures, and the third has 8 measures.

*In B.mí terza Maggiore*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

2 (6) 5 #6

3 4 4 3 7 6 7 6 7 6

7 6 7 6 5 4 3

*In B.f.a terza Maggiore*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

The score consists of two systems. The first system has 10 measures. The second system has 10 measures. The Bass line includes fingerings (6), (6), 4, #3, and (6). The Baroque Guitar part includes fingerings (6), (6), 4, #3, 4, and 3. The TAB system shows string names (T, A, B) and fret numbers (b, d, c, a, e) for each string.

The 2nd note in measure 5 is an F in Matteis book.

*C.solfaut, terza Maggiore.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

6 7

6 (6) 4 #3

(6) 6 4 3

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "C.solfaut, terza Maggiore." It is arranged for Bass and Baroque Guitar. The score is divided into three systems. Each system consists of a Bass staff (bass clef, common time), a Treble staff (treble clef, common time), and a Tablature staff (T, A, B lines). The tablature uses letters 'a', 'b', 'c', and 'd' to denote fret positions. Fret numbers are indicated above the notes in the Bass staff. The first system covers measures 1-8, the second system covers measures 9-16, and the third system covers measures 17-20. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the third system.

*C.terza minore.*

The image displays a musical score for two instruments: Bass and Baroque Guitar. The score is organized into three systems, each containing a Bass staff, a Baroque Guitar staff, and a TAB staff. The music is in a minor key, indicated by two flats in the key signature. The time signature is common time (C). The first system includes a TAB staff with fret numbers (d, e, f, d) and plucking directions (down and up arrows). The second system includes a TAB staff with fret numbers (d, a, a, c) and plucking directions. The third system includes a TAB staff with fret numbers (d, a, a, b) and plucking directions. The score concludes with a double bar line.

*In D. lasofrè, terza minore.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

4 #3 (6) 7 6

4 3 6 5 #

4 #3 7 #6

*D lasolre terza Maggiore.*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

4 #3 (6) 6/5

4 3 4 #3

(6) 6/5 5 (6) 6/5 4 3

c d a a a a a c c d d a a  
 d d c c a a c c d d a a c c  
 c c c c c b c c c c e e a a  
 a a c c a c c a a a a c c a a

↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑  
 ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓

*E.lamí, terza minore*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

The score is divided into three systems. Each system includes a Bass line, a Baroque Guitar line with chord diagrams and plucking directions, and a TAB line with fret numbers and note names.

**System 1:** Bass line has notes G#2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F#3, G3. Baroque Guitar line shows chords: A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2. TAB line shows fret numbers: 6, (6), 7, #6, (6). Note names: a, a, e, c, a, a, a, e, a, a, c, c.

**System 2:** Bass line has notes G#2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F#3, G3. Baroque Guitar line shows chords: A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2. TAB line shows fret numbers: 6, 5, #, (6), 7, 6. Note names: a, a, c, c, a, c, c, a, a, a, a, b, a, c.

**System 3:** Bass line has notes G#2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F#3, G3. Baroque Guitar line shows chords: A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2, A2-C2-E2. TAB line shows fret numbers: #, (6), 4, #3. Note names: c, a, a, c, e, a, a, b, c, e, a, a, b, c, c, c.

*E.lami, terza Maggiore*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

The image displays a musical score for the piece "E.lami, terza Maggiore". It is arranged for Bass, Baroque Guitar, and TAB. The score is divided into three systems. Each system includes a Bass line, a Baroque Guitar line with chord diagrams and fretting arrows, and a TAB line with letter-based fretting instructions. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is common time (C). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 4, #3, 6, 7, 6, 7, 6, 7, 6 in the first system, #, 4, #3, 6, 7, 6, 7, 6, 7, 6 in the second system, and 4, 3 in the third system. The TAB line uses letters 'a', 'b', 'c', 'e', 'd', 'f' to denote fret positions on the strings.

*Questo tuono non' è troppo usitato*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

(6) 6 4 3 (6) 7 #6

(6) 6 # 4 #3 6 b5

4 3

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Questo tuono non' è troppo usitato". It is arranged for Bass and Baroque Guitar. The score is divided into three systems. Each system includes a Bass line, a Baroque Guitar line with chordal notation and fingering, and a TAB line with fret numbers and plucking directions. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The first system has 11 measures, the second has 11 measures, and the third has 6 measures. The TAB line uses letters 'd', 'e', 'f', 'a', 'b' for frets and arrows for plucking directions. The Baroque Guitar line shows chordal structures with stems and flags indicating plucking directions. The Bass line contains a melodic line with some accidentals and fingering numbers.



*terza minore*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

T  
A  
B

(6) (6) 4 #3 6 7 6  
 # # #5/4 #3 # 6 b5  
 # 4 #3

b b a b a) d a c) d b a f d)  
 b b a b a) a b b a a c  
 d d d d d b d a d d d c) d

a a b b d d a a b b d  
 a a b b a a a a c  
 d d d d d d d d d

b b b a b b a c)  
 d e d b d d d

*F faut dièses à canto terza Maggiore*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

(6) (6) 7 #6 6 5

6 5 4 2 (6) 3 6 5 #3  
 4 4

T c c c a c c c b) c c c a  
 A d d b / d b b c c c d  
 B e e d / e d b d d d e

c c e c) b b c e h e h g) c  
 e e e e c c d g h h g) c  
 e e e e e d e e e d e  
 c c c e e e

*F faut dièses à canto terza Minore*

Bass

Baroque Guitar

7 6 #6 # 7 #6 #6 # 4 #3

*Finis*

T  
A  
B

c c c c c c c c  
c c d e b d) c c b b  
a e e b d) e e e c c

c e e c b f f e) f f d b c  
c a d e c c c d e) c f d c d  
a c a a a a c e d) e