

New Research on Fourteenth-Century Music

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Résumé

On Feb. 21st-22nd 2021 a graduate student conference on medieval polyphony, organised by the Department of Musicology and Cultural Heritage of the University of Pavia, campus of Cremona, took place online. In this short review, we briefly describe the contents of each paper, while trying to identify some common trends and some contact points between the different contributions that may point to potentially fruitful research directions for the younger generation of medieval musicologists.

Mots-Clés

Ars nova italiana, filologia musicale, Ars nova francese, notazione musicale.

Texte intégral

The scholarship on medieval music in general, and specifically on the fourteenth-century repertoires, is arguably undergoing a phase of healthy expansion, with various ongoing international projects (think of the Machaut project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council at Exeter University from 2010 to 2014, Principal Investigator Yolanda

Plumley [1]; and several more recent ones) and new research directions being explored by scholars of various ages, and at different career stages.

The conference, *Current Research in Fourteenth-Century Music*, which was held online over two days on March 8th and 9th 2021 (hosted by the Department of Musicology and Cultural Heritage of the University of Pavia, campus of Cremona, coordinated by Antonio Calvia, Michele Epifani and Daniele Sabaino) aimed to present the research of young scholars, all of them graduate and doctoral students, on any topic related to fourteenth-century music; it was organised as part of the ambitious undertaking of the *European Ars Nova* project, based in Florence and Cremona and funded by an ERC advanced grant [2], with the goal of reinvestigating the Italian and French polyphonic repertoire with special attention to the text-music relationship.

The call for papers encouraged submissions pertaining to palaeographical, music-theoretical, historical, analytical and philological issues in relation to the repertoires of interest, as well as more interdisciplinary approaches focusing on musical iconography and on the interaction between music and text; the ten selected papers covered many, if not all, of these areas of interest. Four of them addressed eminently notational problems.

Federico Zavanelli investigated the problem of the so-called *Gaudet brevitae moderni*, short notational treatises that expand and innovate on the notational theory of Franco, and many of which seem to provide a theoretical underpinning to the musical and notational developments that are conventionally referred to as ‘Petronian’, and which are characterised by a proliferation of graphically undifferentiated semibreves well beyond the three accepted by Franco [3]. Since many of these treatises circulated in Italy, their study is obviously important to reconstruct the origins of the specifically Italian Trecento notation: the paper was rich in stimulating observations in this respect.

One particularly interesting, and somewhat puzzling, aspect is that many of the existing copies of these treatises were copied rather late in the century, or even in the 15th century, at a time when they would seem to have long exhausted their eminently practical function. Zavanelli concluded his paper with some tentative hypotheses on this phenomenon, which points to a more general problem in the circulation of both the musical theory and the musical repertoire in the Middle Ages: the retrospective nature of many compilations which are now seen as summing up a certain repertoire, like the three big *W1* (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 628 Helmst.), *F* (Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pluteus 29.1) and *W2* (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 1099 Helmst.) *codices* for the ‘Notre Dame’ modal repertoire, or indeed the *Squarcialupi* (Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Palatino 87) for the Italian Trecento, is a well-known fact.

Giulia Accornero concentrated on the very origins of the Italian Trecento notation proper, namely the theorisation of Marchettus [4]. Her central hypothesis was that Marchetto's designation of the throcaic arrangement of the succession of two semibreves as «*via artis*», and of the iambic arrangement as «*via naturae*», may originate in the terminology of the medieval computus: a tradition of practical mathematics that extends back to Bede the Venerable. It is, of course, important to notice that the iambic option may have appeared to Marchetto as the 'natural' one, simply because it was (presumably!) the only one contemplated in the Franconian system – much in the same way as (to make an unrelated example) the iambic two-note ligature was deemed «*cum proprietate et cum perfectione*» once the option arose to give them an alternative, throcaic, meaning through graphical differentiation: yet this does not seem to me in contradiction with Accornero's thesis, since it is well known that Marchetto looked at the philosophical and mathematical thought of his time for theoretical legitimation to his theories, fundamentally 'purely musical' and practical in nature (as clearly demonstrated by his seeking advice from the Dominican Sifante da Ferrara for the more speculative parts of his *Pomerium*).

Giacomo Ferraris's paper addressed the problem of the tempo relationship between different *tempora* and *divisiones*, in the French and Italian context. The common interpretation is that a fundamental difference between the Italian and French notational systems lies in a basic distinction between a generalised use of a relationship of semibreve equivalence between different divisions in the Italian system vs minim equivalence between different *tempora* and *prolationes* in the French one. Ferraris tried to problematise this assumption, through an observation of both the musical repertoire and the fourteenth-century theory. His examination of the repertoire utilised a tool first proposed by Marco Gozzi (drawing on partly similar concepts proposed, in relation to different repertoires, by Charles Hamm and Rob Wegman) [5], that of tenor density. His analysis seemed to suggest not only that a generalised relationship of semibreve equivalence between most *divisiones* (with the exception of the *quaternaria*) is not actually characteristic of the Italian system from its inception, but evolves from an earlier relationship of breve equivalence between the various *divisiones* articulating the perfect and imperfect *tempus* respectively (and this has already been proposed by some scholars), but also that the general assumption of universal minim equivalence as the basis of the French system may be a somewhat later development than generally thought. This hypothesis is also based on the fact that the only French theoretical text whose datation in the early 14th century is unequivocal, De Muris' *Notitia artis musicae*, completed in 1321 [6], doesn't mention minim equivalence (or even minims, since the smaller notational values are still generically described as semibreves) at all.

Philippa Ovenden undertook a thorough examination of the notational system exposed in Johannes Vetulus de Anagnia's *Liber de Musica* [7]. Vetulus is absolutely explicit in assuming minim equivalence as the basis of his system, not only in terms of simultaneous relationships

between different *divisiones* or, in French terms, *tempora* with *prolationes* (an aspect, this, that is not directly pertinent to the repertoire from the earlier part of the century, since the simultaneous use of different *prolationes*, in French terms, or of *divisiones* with binary and ternary articulation, in Italian terms, is never found except in the context of *mutatio qualitatis*, which can be considered a particular and non-generalisable case in the context of tempo relationships) but also in terms of the minim being the fundamental tempo unit, characterised by unchanging speed. De Anagnia's theory has long been considered a result of French influence, presumably as a consequence of his place of origin, the present-day region of Campania, then part of the Anjou kingdom of Naples, whose cultural ties to France are well known. This is certainly a defensible (and well-argued): at the same time, a reexamination of the origins of minim equivalence in the French theory and practice, along the lines that we have briefly delineated, might prompt an alternative hypothesis, one which sees the development of minim equivalence in both the French and Italian systems as the result of independent parallel evolution. Ovenden placed particular emphasis on the many aspects of Anagnia's notational theory that clearly anticipate the innovations of the international style of the so-called *ars subtilior*: a reconsideration of how much of the development of the new style is due to a penetration of French elements into the Italian theory and practice, and to what extent, on the other hand, it may derive from the converging evolution of the two national traditions, might then be a worthy field of investigation in the future.

The remaining papers concentrated on individual works or groups of works.

Angelica Vomera's paper was dedicated to Antonio Zachara da Teramo, a somewhat enigmatic composer from the end of the 14th century, active in the Papal chapel, who has been the object of some attention in recent years [8]. Vomera undertook a thorough study of the ballata *D'amor languire*, preserved in mss. Lucca, Archivio di Stato, 184 and Torino, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, T.III.2, with particular attention to its textual aspects and to some intertextual elements that their close analysis reveals.

Delaney Hart's contribution went back in time to the beginning of the century, to the *Roman de Fauvel* (Paris, BnF, fr. 146) which preserves some of the very first pieces in French *ars nova* notation. Her study focused on the motet *Orbis orbatus / Vos pastores*, which like many other Fauvel compositions makes use of grotesque bestial imagery as a metaphor for the corruption of the Church [9]. The various bestial metaphors contained in the motet were thus subjected to careful scrutiny, also drawing on the comparatively recent book-length study by Anna Zayaruznaya, *The Monstrous New Art*, dedicated to a comprehensive examination of the use of monstrous or bestial images in the French *ars nova* motet [10].

Stefano Maffioletti considered three fourteenth-century motets, *Apollinis eclipsatur* attributed to Bernard of Cluny, and the anonymous *Musicalis Sciencia* and *Sub Arturo plebs*

vallata, which share the characteristic of quoting, either in the *motetus* or in the *triplum* text, the names of well-known composers of the French or the English *ars nova* [11]. Maffioletti's central thesis is that the citation of these names points to a new conception of authoriality in the *ars nova* relative to the *ars antiqua* repertoire, with more attention being given to the individual achievements of composers and theoreticians; a thesis that is of course not completely new, and seems to find confirmation in the attention given in the compilation of fourteenth-century manuscripts to the figures of some composers (think of the prominence of Landini in the *Squarcialupi* in particular, and even more of Machaut's direct involvement in the process of assembling and copying of the manuscripts transmitting his repertoire).

And the following paper by Lachlan Hughes precisely illustrate the prestige enjoyed by Landini in the Florentine cultural and literary circles of his time: it focused on a sonnet exchange between Franco Sacchetti and Landini (with Sacchetti's *Veggendo tante piaghe e tanti segni*, and Landini's response *Se per segno mirar che dal ciel vegn*), in which Landini referenced setting a newly composed ballata by Sacchetti to music. Various identifications have been proposed for the ballata in question: Hughes's paper set out to confirm, with more stringent arguments, the identification, already proposed by Franca Brambilla Ageno, with *Perché virtù fa l'uom costant' e forte*, the musical setting of which is preserved uniquely on fols. 42^v-43^r of ms. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Panciatichiano 26 [12].

Rhianydd Hallas provided an investigation of the use of *contrafacta* in late-medieval offices, specifically focusing on the relationship between two offices written for the new feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary in the last two decades of the 14th century, Jan of Jenštejn's office *Exurgens autem Maria*, dating to 1385-1390, and Adam Easton's office *Accedunt laudes virginis*, from 1386-1390, and the earlier office for St Francis of Assisi, *Franciscus vir catholicus*, written by Julian of Speyer, whose musical contents they readapt in different ways. Her contribution may at first sight appear as an outlier in a conference almost entirely dedicated to the polyphonic repertoire, but it was still very valuable – both for its intrinsic scholarly quality, and in light of the importance of taking a wide-ranging approach in the study of the medieval repertoire, especially considering how the first training of the medieval musician was typically in liturgical monody, and a knowledge of that repertoire would have inevitably coloured his approach to polyphony (even if we accept, as indeed seems the prevalent orientation in the more recent research, that the modal theory played no direct role outside liturgical monody until the 15th century).

Christina Dioguardi appropriately concluded the two-day conference by pointing to what arguably represents one of the most urgent fields of study in the Trecento research in the next years, the appropriate assessment and, where possible, full transcription of the contents of the so-called *San Lorenzo* ms. (Firenze, Archivio del Capitolo di San Lorenzo,

2211) whose status as a palimpsest has so far made it difficult to interpret the underscribed musical repertory. Dioguardi concentrated her first efforts in that sense on three songs by Hubertus de Salinis [13], the only non-Italian composer to be named anywhere in the manuscript (and the attribution to Hubertus de Salinis of one further composition was proposed on a stylistic, notational and textual basis). Among the many aspects of interest of this paper were the somewhat elusive figure of Salinis himself, about whom very little is known besides his presence in this codex, and the fact that his compositions are copied in white void notation, and with a certain graphical clumsiness which could indicate an unfamiliarity on the copist's part with this relatively new, at the time, notational typology. Finally, by Dioguardi's own admission, the difficulties with the deciphering of the musical writing mean that her proposed transcriptions might need to undergo some further revising, especially in places that seem, at face value, to present dissonances that would appear unusual by the standards of the compositional grammar of the late 14th century. All in all, this was an exciting paper, hopefully preluding to further, much-needed work on this ms., and a most fitting conclusion to this stimulating two-day conference.

Notes

[1] *Citation and Allusion in the Late Medieval French Motet and Chanson*. The link to the project website [URL: http://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/history/research/centres/medieval/past/citation_and_allusion/] was no longer accessible as of 3 Oct. 2022.

[2] For a presentation of the project, its goals and its state of advancement, cf. the official website *European Ars Nova* [URL: <https://www.europeanarsnova.eu/arsnova-about/>, accessed 3 Oct. 2022].

[3] Alberto F. Gallo, *La teoria della notazione in Italia dalla fine del XIII all'inizio del XV secolo*, Bologna, Tamari, 1966, pp. 19-21. A very clear (if somewhat dated on some aspects) introduction to the general principles of the 'Petronian' notation can be found in Willi Apel, *The Notation of Polyphonic Music*, Cambridge (MA), Mediaeval Academy of America, 1961 [4th ed.], pp. 318-324. For a more recent discussion of this topic cf. *The Montpellier Codex: The Final Fascicle. Contents, Contexts, Chronologies*, Catherine Bradley and Karen Desmond (eds.), Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2018.

[4] Marchetus de Padua, *Pomerium*, Giuseppe Vecchi (ed.), Roma, American Institute of Musicology, 1961, vol. 6, pp. 31-210.

- [5] Charles Hamm, *A Chronology of the Works of Guillaume Dufay Based on a Study of Mensural Practice*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1964; Rob C. Wegman, «Concerning Tempo in the English Polyphonic Mass, c.1420-70», *Acta Musicologica*, 61/1, 1989, pp. 40-65.
- [6] Ulrich Michels, *Die Musiktraktate des Johannes de Muris*, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1970.
- [7] Iohannis Vetuli de Anagnia, *Liber de musica*, Frederick Hammond (ed.), Rome, American Institute of Musicology, 1977.
- [8] Cf. e.g. the papers gathered in *Antonio Zacara da Teramo e il suo tempo*, Francesco Zimei (ed.), Lucca, LIM, 2004.
- [9] Around the time of the conference, Reinhard Strohm has discussed a new ms., the musical appendix of Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 5094, containing a version of *Apollinis eclipsatur*: cf. Reinhard Strohm, «A Collection of Fragments, or a Fragment of a Collection? The Musical Appendix of A-Wn Cod. 5094», *Disiecta Membra Musicae: Studies in Musical Fragmentology*, Giovanni Varelli (ed.), Berlin, de Gruyter, 2020, pp. 241-261.
- [10] Anna Zayaruznaya, *The Monstrous New Art. Divided Forms in the Late Medieval Motet*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- [11] For *Apollinis eclipsatur* cf. *Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century*, vol. 5. *Motets of French Provenance*, Frank Ll. Harrison (ed.), Monaco, Éditions de L'Oiseau-Lyre, 1968, p. 50 (IV115), p. 54 (*Barc*); for *Musicalis sciencia* cf. *ibid.*, p. 181; for *Sub Arturo plebs vallate* cf. *ibid.*, p. 172, and *The Motets of the Manuscripts Chantilly, Musée Condé, 564 (olim 1047) and Modena, Biblioteca Estense, a M. 5, 24 (olim lat. 568)*, Ursula Günther (ed.), [n.p.], American Institute of Musicology, 1965, p. 49.
- [12] Franco Sacchetti, *Il libro delle rime*, Franca Brambilla Ageno (ed.), Firenze-Perth, Olschki-University of Western Australia Press, 1990.
- [13] For a discussion of the two versions – Hubertus and Humbertus – in which the name of this composer is transmitted in different manuscripts cf. Margaret Bent, «The Motet Collection of San Lorenzo 2211 (SL) and the Composer Hubertus de Salinis», *The End of the Ars Nova in Italy. The San Lorenzo Palimpsest and Related Repertories*, Maria Sofia Lannutti, Antonio Calvia, Stefano Campagnolo, Andreas Janke and John Nádas (eds.), Firenze, SISMELEdizioni del Galluzzo, 2020, pp. 46-70.

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Droits d'auteur



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