

**Repertories of Polyphony between Unmeasured and Measured  
in the Late Middle Ages**

*Michael Scott Cuthbert*  
*Music 213r: Topics in Medieval Polyphony*

*Prof. Thomas Forrest Kelly*  
*Harvard University, Spring 2000*  
*27 May 2000*

## Repertories of Polyphony between Unmeasured and Measured in the Late Middle Ages

Michael Scott Cuthbert

The distinction between high and low vocal style in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries once seemed quite clear. To the former belonged the songs comprising the great codices: manuscripts, sometimes lavishly decorated, copied long after the music was first composed, and dedicated to the preservation of these pieces as a repertory. To this largely Italian group were added sacred pieces of French origin in a similarly refined style, such as the isorhythmic motets and mass of Guillaume de Machaut—music for connoisseurs and not necessarily or primarily of practical use in any particular liturgy. Low vocal style was everything else, including monophonic chant, *unica* songs in fragmentary sources, sacred polyphony in liturgical manuscripts, and secular monody.

Work conducted in the last four decades has expanded the purview of both sides of this cultural gap without attempting to eliminate it completely. The reach of low vocal style has been extended through focused attention on note-against-note unmeasured polyphony,<sup>1</sup> studies of the unwritten tradition of *sicilianas* in Italy,<sup>2</sup> and increased work on the connections between vocalists and instrumentalists.<sup>3</sup> On the other side, much more attention has been paid to the context of pieces in the high art style which were not fortunate enough to be found in the great song manuscripts of Tuscany. Studies of manuscript fragments transmitting art music have especially flourished.<sup>4</sup> These examinations have increased our knowledge not only of places and times where *ars nova* polyphony was copied but also the variety of notational systems, paleographic styles, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Corsi-Petrobelli, Gallo, Gallo-Vecchi, FischerQ. See bibliography for an explanation of abbreviations.

<sup>2</sup> PirrottaN.

<sup>3</sup> Howard Mayer Brown, "The trecento harp," in *Studies in the performance of late mediaeval music*, edited by Stanley Boorman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> PirrottaC, John Nádas and Agostino Ziino, *The Lucca codex* (Lucca: Libreria musicale italiana, 1990), Agostino Ziino, *Il Codice T.III.2* (Lucca: Libreria musicale italiana, 1994), Anne Hallmark, "Some Evidence for French Influence in Northern Italy, c. 1400," in *Studies in the Performance of Late Medieval Music*, edited by Stanley Boorman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 193-228.

liturgical settings applied to the music. Despite the convergent direction of both branches of scholarship, the idea of a continuum of musical style, existing from the most simple to the exceedingly complex, has not appeared in print. The notion that there cannot be a continuous stream of rhythmic notation or rhythmic performance has been the largest obstacle to such a theory. Gallo wrote, in his article on *cantus planus binatim*, “the connections between the two types of repertory, mensural and non-mensural, are slight.”<sup>5</sup> He further argued that, with few exceptions, the connections were one-directional; mensural polyphony influenced non-mensural.

Margaret Bent, even while distinguishing many different categories of rhythmic and notational practice, kept a distance between simple and art repertories. She downplayed the “few” pieces of note-against-note mensural music and the “few modest pieces” of simpler non-homophonic music, explaining that there is a dividing line which is “in general borne out by manuscript segregation.”<sup>6</sup> Only in one place in her article did she admit to how narrow this line might be:

The already difficult and arbitrary distinction between ‘art’ and ‘primitive’ music is further complicated by what was said above—namely, that to admit the possibility of mensural performance (and, indeed, notation) of the ‘true’ simple repertory further blurs the boundaries between ‘simple’ and ‘simple art’ polyphony. But it would be pointless to quibble here about individual exclusions and inclusions.<sup>7</sup>

This paper is an examination of that line, the difficult distinction between the simple and the not-so-simple. In a sense, I want it to be a “pointless quibbling,” as Bent puts it, but not because I intend to come up with a classification for every individual exclusion. Rather, I want to show that the musical repertory between *cantus planus binatim* and the art repertory is not a hodge-podge of a few isolated exceptions. Instead, this collection of works is formidable and important for our understanding of other repertories. I do not want to get rid of the notions of art and simple polyphony,

---

<sup>5</sup> Gallo, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> BentD, p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

which are useful concepts, if only as terminological shorthand for repertoires we already know. I would like to redefine them as ends of a stylistic spectrum with a healthy and understudied center.

The manuscript repertory is likewise large and diverse; my survey goes far beyond the polyphonic musical centers of Italy and France, into England, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Poland, and is continuous from the beginning of the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century. But the paper mainly focuses on Italian sources from c. 1370-1450 because there are many sources from this time, rivaled in number only by late fifteenth-century German sources, and because the connections to the art tradition and to *binatim*, and from there, to plainsong, are so strong in that period. The mainstream Italian art song tradition referenced by Bent, Gallo, and many others, is not nearly so overwhelming as might be thought. The four manuscripts which transmit Trecento secular polyphony nearly exclusively comprise only approximately 470 folios.<sup>8</sup> Against this can be set two dozen or so manuscript fragments, many from northern Italy, which present both secular and sacred *ars nova* music. If each of these works originally comprised merely a fascicle or two, then they would have been as common as what we think of as the main song tradition. We have further evidence that at least several fragments were full codices in their own right.<sup>9</sup>

### Homophonic Mensural Polyphony

The most numerous of the pieces which blur the boundary between mensural and non-mensural polyphony are those works which have rhythmically accurate notation but are in a note-against-note style. These pieces fall into the gap between mensural and non-mensural polyphony for two reasons. The first is that it is unclear that all musicians needed to know how to read mensural

---

<sup>8</sup> The manuscripts are I-Fn26 (Pan.), F-Pn6771 (Reina), F-Pn568 (Pit.), and I-Fl87 (Squarcialupi). Another more recent discovery which fits into this category of song anthology is the San Lorenzo palimpsest, I-Fas122II.

<sup>9</sup> See Agostino Ziino, *Il codice T.III.2*, PirrotaC, or my own previous work on the Paduan fragments.

music in order to perform these pieces. It is conceivable that singers of some voices, particularly the lower voices, followed the rhythmic patterning of the upper voices. Evidence for this behavior is presented in category C, below. Some works in that group show notational problems, especially in lower voices, which seem to indicate that the singers were not totally dependent on the written shapes to determine the lengths of note but listened and stayed with the other singers. The information homophonic mensural works provide about rhythmic practice in unmeasured homophonic polyphony, such as *cantus planus binatim*, is the second reason for including these works in this study and will be discussed below with respect to a specific piece, *Nicolay Solemnia*.

Homophonic mensural polyphony, like most of the cross-over styles of polyphony discussed in this paper, has several features in common with *binatim* and other simpler repertoires. The pieces are almost exclusively anonymous and, until the later German and Eastern European sources, are primarily sacred works.<sup>10</sup> Like the *binatim* pieces, some works are based on preexisting chant melodies, but the majority are not. Several of the pieces exist in three voice versions, a feature not found in the works without rhythmic notation. A non-exclusive list of these pieces, with selected incipits, follows:<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> An exception to the principle of anonymity is Gloria in I-CF<sub>79</sub> attributed to “Fr. Antonius de Civitate.” It may be dangerous speculation to wonder aloud if the attribution appears because this piece is unusual in that it was composed by a local musician. If so, then we might wonder again about whether there are non-local or international origins for the rest of the Cividale repertory.

<sup>11</sup> I have only included works in black-notation in this list. Incipits are taken from FischerRISM.

### A. Non-Modal Homophonic Polyphony

- A-Ssp7 1b. *Et cum spiritu tuo, Gloria tibi*, flyleaf (some syncopation in upper voice)  
 A-Wn2777 7. *Lieb dein verlangen hat umbfangen*, f. 18r (similar to A-Ssp7, 1b)  
 CS-S3 4. ...*day nám ku podiwenii kdyz*, ff. 180r, 184v  
 CS-VB28 1. *Huic sit memoria Amen*, f. 175r (quasi-squeezebox polyphony)  
 D-Bs100 1. *Phisis stupescit lux convenit*, ff. 81r/v, 88r (three voices, near homophonic)  
 D-BT190 31. *Corde natus ex parentis*, f. 34r/v  
 36. *Salve virgo speciosa*, ff. 41v, 42r  
*et passim*  
 GB-Lbm27630 65. *Salve pater lumnium omnium/Exaudi nos mundi dos celi ros*, ff. 58v, 59r  
 76. *Adam cum viragine/O Maria celi via virgo pia*, ff. 65v, 66r (both in  $\frac{2}{4}$  feel, or possibly mode 3)

A-Wn2777, CS-S3:

Discantus *hulus Lieb. etc.*  
 Tenor *Lieb dein verlangen hat umbfangen ...*

Discantus  
 ...*day nám ku po-di-we-nii když...*  
 Tenor  
 ...*day nám ku po-di-we-nii když...*

CS-VB28, D-Bs100:

Discantus  
 Tenor  
*Huic sit memoria Amen.*

Discantus  
 Tenor  
*Huic sit memoria Amen.*

Tenor  
*Phisis stupescit lux convenit...*

Discantus  
*Phisis stupescit lux convenit...*

Medium (?)  
*Phisis stupescit lux convenit...*

D-BT190 (31):

Cor-de na-tus ex pa-ren-tis an-te mun-di ...  
 Cor-de na-tus ex pa-ren-tis an-te mun-di ...

GB-Lbm27630, (65,76):

Mutetus  
 Tenor  
*Sal-ve pa-ter lu-mi-num om-ni-um...*

Tenor  
*Ex-su-di nos mun-di dos ce-li ros...*

Tenor  
*A-dam cum vi-ra-gi-ne cur nos in voragine...*

Tenor  
*O Ma-ri-a ce-li vi-a vir-go pi-a...*

- GB-OH 1. *Qui tollis peccata mundi*, f. 1r  
 2. *[P]ax hominibus bone voluntatis*, ff. IV, 2r  
 3. *Et in terra pax hominibus* f. 2r/v  
 4. *[Et in terra]*, f. 3r
- I-CF79 1. Fr. Antonius de Civitate, *Et in terra pax*, ff. Bv, Cr
- I-PAad09 1. *Patrem omnipotentem*, ff. A-D  
 2. *Credo, Patrem*, ff. I40v, I48r
- I-Rvat657 1. *Credo, Patrem omnipotentem*, ff. 419v, 420r

## GB-OH (I-6):

1 Qui tol-lis pec-ca - ta mun - di...

2 [P]ax ho - mi-ni-bus bo-ne vo-lun-tatis...

3 Et in ter-ra pax ho - mi-ni-bus...

4 ...no - stram qui se-des ad...  
 Contratenor. Et in terra.

5 Et in ter-ra pax ho - minibus...

6 ...tol-lis pec-ca-ta mun-di sus-ci-po...

## I-CF79, A-Wm15503, CH-SG8392 (1):

Et in ter-ra pax ho-minibus...

Et in ter-ra pax ho-mi-ni-bus... Ge-zu Kry-ste smilug se nad na-mi. Re-so-net in lau-di-bus cum io-cun-dus...

Et in ter-ra pax ho-minibus... Re-so-net in lau-di-bus cum io-cun-dus...

The Salzburg manuscript, A-Ssp7, and the Vienna manuscript, A-Wn2777, both contain two voice homophonic pieces where the top voice is frequently syncopated by one minim as the voices approach. There is a tradition of German polyphony which appears homophonic on paper, but where one voice is syncopated with respect to the other throughout the entire piece, like a fourth-species counterpoint exercise. Although such works might grow out of the homophonic tradition, I consider them too much of a departure from this style to include them in this study.<sup>12</sup>

The Old Hall pieces which are in score notation, ff. 11R-11V, show a progression from almost total homophony to entirely independent parts. Though the music after the fourth piece is beyond the purview of this survey, the works as a whole show how the homophonic mensural tradition has been integrated into the mainline of art polyphony in one English manuscript.

### B. Modal Homophonic Polyphony

- A-Wn15503/ 1. *Gezu Kryste smilug se nad ná mi* [1], ff. 11V, 12R; ff. 12V, 14R  
 A-Wn15509  
 CH-GSBh A 1. *Justa vox piis spiritus stetit et ploravit* [1], pp. 215-230  
 CH-SGs 392 1. *Resonet in laudibus* [1], p. 87 (squeezebox polyphony)  
 2. *In hoc anni circulo* [1], p. 88  
 4. *Puer nobis nascitur* [1], p. 89  
 5. *Nicolay solempnia* [2], pp. 103, 104 (squeezebox polyphony)  
 CS-OU 3. *Otce wssemohoucího* [1], ff. 460V, 463V  
 D-BT190 24. *Nicolai solempnia* [2], f. 29V, 30R  
 I-Fl999 2. *Verbum caro factum est* [1], f. 95V

A sub-category of homophonic mensural polyphony are those pieces which are entirely within a single rhythmic mode. The concept of modal rhythm is usually thought to disappear with the

<sup>12</sup> The most syncopated work which has been considered for this survey is the *Patrem* from Cividale Ms. 79, which I have classified under category C.

CH-SGs392 (4, 5):

The image shows two examples of mensural notation from the manuscript CH-SGs392. Each example consists of two staves of music with mensural notation (neumes on a four-line staff) and Latin lyrics written below. The first example on the left is for the piece 'Pu-er no-bis na-sci-tur re-ctor an-ge-lo-rum...' and the second example on the right is for 'Ny-co-la-y so-lem-pni-a su-a pre-ceps...'. The notation is in a single rhythmic mode.

introduction of Franconian notation, and thus the liberation of the individual note or section of a ligature, around 1260. There is no reason, however, that changes in musical notation necessarily will precipitate changes in musical style. The Swiss and Austrian manuscripts, from the mid-fifteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries respectively, attest to this perseverance of rhythmic style.

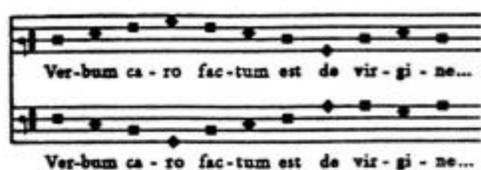
A piece notated in modal rhythm has very simple rhythmic information. Thus, it does not necessarily imply that the performers had knowledge of mensural notation. *Iusta vox piis spiritus* is a more complex example, however, where the singers needed to know minims and semibreve ligatures in addition to the usual breve (square) and semibreve (lozenge) note forms. In the preceding list, the italic number in brackets indicates the rhythmic mode of the piece—[1] in all cases except *Nicolay Solemnia* which will be discussed below for other reasons.

### C. Problematic Homophonic Polyphony

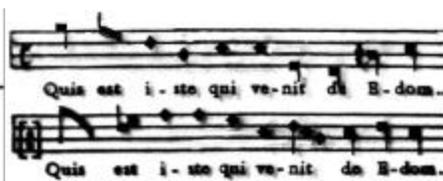
- I-CF79            2. *Patrem omnipotentem*, ff. Bv, Cr  
 I-FOL/I-GR197 1., 2. *Et in terra*, f. Ar/v, ff. 1V, 2R  
 I-SC10            1. *Patrem omnipotentem*, ff. 32IV, 323R  
 I-PC55/I-PC56    5. *Quis est iste qui venit de Edom*, f. 51R  
 PL-Kklar206    2. *Surrexit Christus hodie...Benedicamus domino*, f. 251R

The *Patrem* in Siena Ms. 10 and the *Et in terra* of the Foligno and Grottaferrata fragments are mainly homophonic but have an interesting variant in their highest voice. Approaching the first cadence, the top voice has the rhythm S S M against S S S in the other voices.<sup>13</sup> Nino Pirrotta

I-Fl99, CH-GsBh A:



I-SC10, I-PC55:



<sup>13</sup> The last two notes of the lower voice in <sup>S</sup>C-10 are a *c.o.p.* ligature.

discussed this phenomenon in the Foligno fragment, where he deduces that the notation of the top voice applies to all voices in these cases, and that the proper interpretation is  $\frac{6}{8}$  ♩. ♩. ♩.<sup>14</sup> I agree with Pirrotta's rhythmic interpretation, while disagreeing with his dating of the work, nearly a century before the manuscript date. He bases this date entirely on the consistency of the notational style with the teachings of Marchetto.



The implications of the undifferentiated semibreves in the lower voices is my main concern. That the indicator of rhythmic mode is found in the top voice suggests that it was the singer of this voice who could most likely be expected to read mensural notation, and the other singers would likely follow him during a performance. After the first statement with the *semibrevis minima*, all semibreves in the upper part are without tail in the Foligno fragment.<sup>15</sup> The number of rhythmic inaccuracies in that work—Pirrotta counts six before the “Gratias tibi” alone—argue that the notation was not the most important way the singers knew the work. They began, ended, and changed notes together despite erroneous notational evidence to the contrary. This interpretation is not completely without precedent. Many fully mensural pieces of polyphony have rhythmic discrepancies between parts at and near cadences. One voice might have a breve as its cadence tone while another has a long and the last a duplex long. Probably all voices attacked and released together.

<sup>14</sup> PirrottaC, pp. 116-118.

<sup>15</sup> I did not have access to a facsimile of the Siena manuscript, so I am unable to discuss the notation of the *Patrem* after the incipit.

*Quis est iste qui venit de Edom* presents several other problems for mensural interpretation.

The two voice work is transmitted in two nearly identical Paduan processional. A facsimile of the work was published in Gallo-Vecchi and in some copies of Vecchi's edition of the Paduan manuscripts:



Vecchi provides a very singable transcription of the work, complete with a new second line in place of the unison ending:<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Vecchi, p. 108.

*Duo ANGELI super pergulo, ostendendo crucem, dicant: Quis.*

Quis est iste qui ne -  
nit de E - dom tinctis  
ue - stibus do Bos - - ra.

This edition of *Quis est iste* obscures some of the unusual notational features of the work. The first note of the lower voice is a breve, which Vecchi has transcribed as a quarter note. The notes in the second measure are semibreves, which he also transcribed as quarter notes. Later, in m. 4, a semibreve *caudate* is transcribed as a half-note, twice as long as the first breve of the piece. Further, the ligature on the antepenultimate syllable, “do” in Vecchi’s transcription, appears from his edition to be an impossible ligature of three longs. The edition by von Fischer and Gallo contains the same irregularities.<sup>17</sup> Their editorial choices might have been the only workable option given the notational peculiarities of the piece. An edition which is faithful to the hierarchy of brevis and semibrevis and has the two levels of semibreve required by the *caudate*, such as the one I have provided below, yields a work which lurches from slow to very fast notes:

<sup>17</sup> Fischer-Gallo<sub>12</sub>, p. 114. It should be noted that Vecchi, Von Fischer, and Gallo had access to both I-Pc<sub>55</sub> and I-Pc<sub>56</sub> while my work was conducted on I-Pc<sub>56</sub> alone. However, Von Fischer and Gallo’s critical notes (p. 200) suggest that the two manuscripts are in agreement on the points I have outlined above.

The image displays a musical score for the Latin text "Quis est iste qui venit de E-dom tinc-tis ves-ti-bus de Bos-ra." It features three systems of notation. The first system shows the original mensural notation with a large initial 'Q' and 'E' and a second system shows a transcription of the mensural notation. The second system shows two transcriptions of the mensural notation, one for the upper voice and one for the lower voice. The third system shows a transcription of the mensural notation with double dots over notes in the upper voice.

Quis est iste qui ve-nit de E - dom  
 tinc - tis ves - ti - bus de Bos - - - - - ra.  
 tinc - tis ves - ti - bus de Bos - - - - - ra.  
 Quis est is-te qui ve-nit de E-dom tinc-tis ves-ti-bus de Bos - ra.  
 Quis est is-te qui ve-nit de E-dom tinc-tis ves-ti-bus de Bos - ra.

Perhaps a quasi-mensural interpretation or something closer to free rhythm, as the second transcription above shows, was intended.

Information about rhythmic practice can be found not only in the mensural and quasi-mensural pieces in the Paduan processions, but in the *binatim* and monophonic works as well. In *Ave gratia plena*, two dots have been placed over notes in the upper voice where that voice has one note against two notes in the lower voice. The double dots seem to be warnings to the singer of that part that he must wait for the other musician to sing two notes before he can continue. This would suggest that it is the note which is the constant rather than the syllable, as Vecchi has suggested. If it were the latter, we would instead expect warning signs to appear in the voice with two notes.

The mostly-monophonic sequence repertory in the same manuscripts argues against this interpretation. In many of the sequences, a syllable from the first presentation of a melody will

receive a single note, while the corresponding syllable in the repeat will have a two-note ligature.

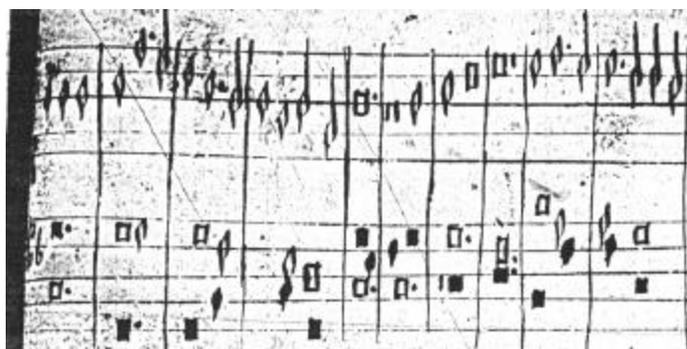
Usually the ligature will comprise the note above the original note followed by the note itself.

Though not inconceivable, it is difficult to imagine that the musical line's rhythm would be altered for the second text, since the texts themselves were chosen to have the same accent and syllable structure. Considering this incongruous evidence, a closer examination of rhythm in these manuscripts is clearly warranted.

#### *D. Simple Pieces in Score Notation*

A-Wn<sub>5094</sub> 4. Du Fay, *Ce jour le doit*, f. 148<sup>bis</sup>v  
 F-Pn<sub>6771</sub> 184. Landini, *Questa fanculla*, f. 85r  
 185. Textless piece, f. 85v

A small category of music exists pieces normally transmitted in mensural notation and with separate parts, instead written in a simplified score notation. Guillaume Du Fay's *Ce jour le doit* is an example of such a work. In this version, the lower two voices contain only breves and semibreves with the occasional semibrevis rest. A line of division appears through and between staves after every third semibreve, presumably to align parts:




---

A-Wn<sub>5094</sub>, F-Pn<sub>6771</sub> (184):

The layout and simplified notation of this version—coloration in the lower voices is completely absent—would allow for musicians less skilled at reading mensural notation to perform the work. The possibility that these pieces, none of which are texted, might be versions for keyboard instruments cannot be discounted. They are, however, transmitted in the context of pieces definitely intended to be performed by multiple musicians.<sup>18</sup>

### E. Miscellaneous

- A-GÖ<sub>307</sub> 2. *Jube domine consolamini*, ff. 1v, 2v  
 5. *In semper o pie*, ff. 4r, 6r
- D-BT<sub>190</sub> 4. *Puer nobis nascitur...Benedicamus domino*, f. 6r/v  
 17. *In natali domini*, f. 24r/v  
 20. *Gaudent in domino*, f. 26r/v
- D-WIN 1. [*Jube domne... Primo tempore*] *caro factum est*, f. 17r  
 2. *Jube domne... Maria deo placuit*, f. 17v, 19r  
 3. *Jube domne...Cela benenigna*, f. 19v, 21v
- F-Pn<sub>568</sub> 197. Paolo, *Benedicamus domino*, f. 138r.
- GB-Ob<sub>229</sub> 2. *Benedicamus domino*, f. 53v.
- I-Fl<sub>999</sub> 1. Paolo, *Gaudeamus omnes in domino*, ff. 19v, 20r
- PL-Kb<sub>18</sub> 2. *Ave in ævum sanctissima caro*, ff. 2v, 3r (3 voices)  
 3. *Ave verbum incarnatum*, f. 3v

Three works present an unusual tradition in similar fashion. The Paduan manuscript fragment, GB-Ob<sub>229</sub>, contains a *Benedicamus Domino* with a mensural upper line over a liturgically

<sup>18</sup> The hodge-podge nature of the works in A-Wn<sub>5094</sub> and the difference in scribal hands among those pieces weakens this caveat somewhat for *Ce jour le doit*.

A-GÖ<sub>307</sub> (2), D-BT<sub>190</sub> (4, 17):

The image shows three examples of mensural notation. The first is a two-staff system for 'Jube domine... Consolamini...'. The second is a two-staff system for 'Puer nobis nascitur... Benedicamus d' and 'Puer nobis nascitur... Benedicamus'. The third is a two-staff system for 'In na-ta-li do-mi-ni gau-dent' and 'In na-ta-li do-mi-ni gau-dent'. The notation uses square neumes on a four-line staff with a mensural line above.

D-WIN (2, 3):

The image shows two examples of mensural notation. The first is a two-staff system for 'Ju - be domne... Ma-ri-a de-o pla-cu-it...'. The second is a two-staff system for 'Ju - be domne... Cel-la be-ni-gna...'. The notation uses square neumes on a four-line staff with a mensural line above.

standard (harmonic) mode 2 *Benedicamus* tenor. The top line is marked *s[enaria] i[m]p[re]fecta* but is better thought of as being in the first rhythmic mode. The lower voice is written entirely in long-long mensural ligatures.

This work is in the same hand as, and shares a bifolio with Ciconia's *Sus une fontaine*, one of the most complex pieces of *ars subtilior* polyphony.

Similar to the Paduan *Benedicamus* is Paulus de Florentia's *Gaudeamus omnes in domnio*. The tenor of the piece is a standard (harmonic) mode 1 chant. The tenor, which is spatially quite separate from the cantus, must be interpreted entirely in breves despite the shapes of its ligatures, that is, it must be considered non-mensural. At the same time, the upper voice shows a greater range of rhythmic ingenuity than the Paduan example, incorporating syncopation and coloration rather than remaining within a single rhythmic mode.<sup>19</sup> Another work in a similar vein and also by Paulus is the three voice *Benedicamus Domino* appearing in Pit (F-Pn568).<sup>20</sup> All three of these examples go against our prevailing notion of Trecento sacred polyphony being essentially newly composed. Their

<sup>19</sup> This example was also discussed in Kurt von Fischer, "Paolo da Firenze und der Codex Squarcialupi," *Quadrivium* 9 (1968), pp. 5-19.

<sup>20</sup> The tenor of this piece was discussed in Willie Apel, *The Notation of Polyphonic Music, 900-1600* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953), pp. 378-80. The presence of such a work, complete with Italian *divisiones* letters, in what is normally thought of as one of the fundamental song repertoires erodes the evidence for manuscript segregation. I have not conducted an exhaustive search for polyphony of this type. Others may exist.

florid upper voices also present a different strain of cross-over polyphony from the homophonic mensural works examined in categories A-C above.

The remaining pieces all show different rhythmic or mensural quirks placing them outside the mainstream of mensural music. The two Polish examples show an unusual variant of rhythmic practice where there is no note value between a long  $L$  and a semibreve  $S$ . The German examples in D-BT<sub>190</sub> use two notes ( $LB$  or  $BB$ ) presumably to show notes which are twice as long as the others. The presence of a tail would therefore have no influence on rhythm.

Two *Jube domne* from the German manuscript, D-WIN, alternate between non-mensural (though with some possible rhythmic interpretation) and mensural notation, as the example from folio 26 demonstrates:<sup>21</sup>

The image displays three staves of musical notation. Each staff consists of two lines: an upper line with mensural notation (neumes) and a lower line with sustained notes (breves). The lyrics are written below the staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a flat sign (B-flat). The lyrics are: "Ju - be domne silencium fieri in aures audien-". The second staff continues the lyrics: "ci um Ut possim intelligere et tu bene -". The third staff concludes the lyrics: "dice re Cella beniana puella quam diqna deo gloriosa".

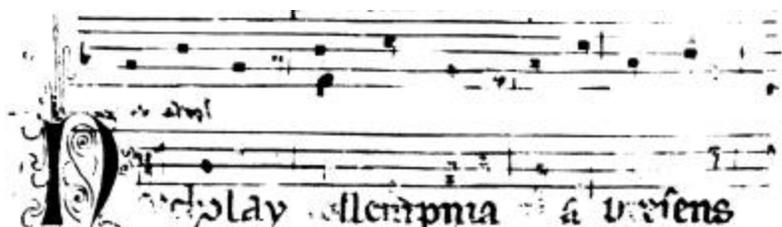
The *Jube Domine* from the fifteenth century Austrian manuscript, A-GÖ<sub>307</sub> likewise begins with a florid upper line over a sustained tenor. The tenor in that manuscript is written out with identical breves in this piece and with identical longs in another piece from the same manuscript, *In*

<sup>21</sup> GöllnerL, p. 61.

*semper o pie*. One breve or long is written for each note in the upper voice. These examples give evidence, though certainly not conclusive, for an interpretation of equal note length, even for *currantes*, in the upper parts of florid voices in late sources.

### Nicolay Solemnia and the Rhythm of *Cantus Planus Binatim*

One melody of a *Benedicamus* trope for the feast of St. Nicholas, *Nicolay Solemnia*, is preserved in three manuscripts, Cividale 56, St. Gall 392, and Berlin-Tübingen 190.<sup>22</sup> *Nicolay Solemnia* in the Cividale gradual is an example of *cantus planus binatim* and has been cited previously by Gallo.<sup>23</sup> The work appears in a manuscript containing twelve polyphonic pieces, none of which are notated in a system preserving rhythmic information:



*Nicolay Solemnia* in the St. Gall manuscript is notated in a clear second rhythmic mode, which von Fischer chooses to transcribe as long-breve with an upbeat.<sup>24</sup>



The St. Gall version of *Nicolay* cannot be taken as an isolated anomaly. The work is also transmitted as second mode in the Berlin-Tübingen Ms. 190, with an added third voice and in a similar

<sup>22</sup> I-CF56, ff. 254v, 255r. CH-SGs 392, pp. 103, 104, D-BT 190, ff. 29v, 30r.

<sup>23</sup> Gallo, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> FischerQ, p. 300.

notational style as the same manuscript's *Puer nobis nascitur* (another St. Gall concordance) and *In natali domini*, cited earlier. Both the St. Gall and the Berlin-Tübingen manuscripts date from the middle of the fifteenth century, while Cividale 56 originated near 1400.

The presence of a work in both measured and unmeasured form coupled with evidence that some scribes were totally unfamiliar with mensural notation might tempt us to conclude that all polyphony was sung in measured rhythm, even if it is not written as such. Unfortunately, easy answers elude us again. The case of two pieces from a Venetian manuscript, *I-Vnm145*, will serve as a demonstration.

The first work, the Benedicamus trope *Verbum patris hodie* (f. 102v), might seem a candidate for a mensural interpretation of a rhythmically ambiguous piece. The music is written with two voices on the same staff and with undifferentiated longs interspersed with the occasional non-rhythmic breve or ligature. The accent pattern of the text might seem to imply mode 1, second ordo rhythm: *Verbum patris hodie procesit ex uirgine. Virtutes angelice cum canore iubilo*. We might apply this mensural interpretation secure in our belief that the scribe's ability with mensural notation was matched only by his skill in rhyming:



On the following page opening, however, the same scribe presents an entirely different view of notational practice. The second work, *Verbum caro factum est*, uses a similar score layout, but longs, breves, semibreves, minims, and mensural ligatures are all employed:



There are two obvious possibilities to explain this change in notational system. The first is that the scribe has copied these two works out of different exemplars of quite different styles with no knowledge of the musical content he was transmitting. This position conflicts with our growing view of scribes as careful editors and music critics who commonly add more information to a work than they omit.<sup>25</sup> In *Verbum caro*, there are, however, several rhythmic oddities—semibreves against breves and breve-breve ligatures better read as having opposite propriety. But, with one exception, these errors occur at the beginning and ends of phrases, where even otherwise meticulous scribes in totally mensural manuscripts tend to be careless. The idea of multiple exemplars also seems

<sup>25</sup> See Margaret Bent, "Some Criteria for Establishing Relationships Between Sources of Late-Medieval Polyphony," in *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, edited by Iain Fenlon, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 296 and John Nádas, "The Transmission of Trecento Secular Polyphony: Manuscript Production and Scribal Practices in Italy at the end of the Middle Ages," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1985), *passim*.

increasingly unlikely as more cases of this nature are found. A careful examination of the manuscript and scribal context of pieces of mensural polyphony is needed to accurately gauge the frequency with which scribes transmit pieces in both mensural and non-mensural notation.

A second possibility emerges as more likely. The two pieces are representatives of different polyphonic styles, and the notational differences between the two are not accidents of exemplar transmission. This conclusion makes the work of transcription and manuscript examination more difficult. For each piece transmitted in non-mensural form, it must be known whether the scribe had knowledge of a method of notating the piece rhythmically. In the case of *Verbum patris hodie*, the scribe did, and thus the non-mensural system seems deliberate. The version of *Nycholay sollempnia* in Cividale 56 answers this question far less clearly. Ten of the other polyphonic works in the manuscript transmit no discernible rhythmic information. The notation of the remaining work, *Amor patris*, might exhibit some rhythmic significance in the first two melismata but no conventional mensural notation or variant thereof is being used. Thus, the scribe has not shown that he has a grasp of rhythmic notation and we cannot say with any certainty that the works in Cividale 56 were intended to be performed in free rhythm rather than mensurally.

### Remnants of a Homophonic Tradition in Mensural Music

Evidence of the influence of homophonic mensural polyphony is found in several pieces of sacred art music from the late Trecento and early Quattrocento. Two *Glorias* by Antonius Zacara da Teramo have openings which are very similar to the style of homophonic mensural mass movements.<sup>26</sup> An example of such a movement is the *Credo* from a Vatican Ms. (I-Rvat657, ff. 419v, 420r):<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The attribution of the second *Gloria*, from the Polish manuscript PL-Wn378, to Zacara is uncertain, though the similarity of the opening to the *Gloria Micinella* adds to the probability that he is the composer.

<sup>27</sup> I have touched-up part of this facsimile to remove some show through.



This movement is perfectly homophonic for the first two lines of music and nearly perfect following. The phrases have a tendency to use longer note values at the beginning and ends, and semibreves and minims in the middle and before cadences.<sup>28</sup> Some pieces of homophonic polyphony, such as the first Credo of the Parma fragment, I-PAad09, even accelerate from their opening longs, through breves, to semibreves, and finally minims before allowing the notes to occur in other orders.

The Gloria Micinella of Zacara begins similarly homophonically and may be trying to recall the same tradition. The opening is in two voices, almost a trademark of Zacara's Glorias. The only places which are not homophonic set MSM in the top voice against SS in the lower voice. This substitution is quite common in homophonic mensural polyphony, as shown in A-Ssp7 and A-Wn2777 earlier:

Another Gloria by Zacara begins similarly:

<sup>28</sup> This connects slightly to the Trecento style of having long melismas on the penultimate syllable of a phrase, but unlike the secular styles, such as ballate or especially madrigals, the shorter note values begin several syllables before the cadence.



the regions I could only hint at, especially in the east, is also needed to round out a picture of cross-over polyphonic styles in the early fifteenth century. Finally, a return to the manuscript sources is needed. The numbers and patterns of preservation of these works must be more fully known. The idea of stylistic segregation of manuscripts must be systematically examined and possibly removed. The reevaluation of the line between high and simple polyphony could greatly enhance our understanding of the social, religious, and artistic roles of polyphonic music in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

## Manuscript Sigla

### **Austria**

- A-GÖ<sub>307</sub> Göttweig, Bibliothek des Benediktinerstifts, Ms. 307, 15 c.  
 A-Ssp<sub>7</sub> Salzburg, Bibliothek des Benediktinerstifts St. Peter Ms. a IV 7, 15/16c.  
 A-Wn<sub>2777</sub> Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod 2777, 1425-36.  
 A-Wn<sub>5094</sub> Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod 5094, 15 c. [3870.5094]  
 A-Wn<sub>15503</sub> Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod 15503, mid 16 c.  
 A-Wn<sub>15509</sub> Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod 15509, late 16 c.

### **Switzerland**

- CH-GsBh A Grand-Saint Bernard, Bibliothèque de l'Hospice, Ms. without shelfmark, 15/16 c.  
 CH-GsBh B Grand-Saint Bernard, Bibliothèque de l'Hospice, Ms. without shelfmark, 15/16 c.  
 CH-SGs 392 St. Gallen Stiftsbibliothek Cod 392, mid 15 c.

### **Czech Republic or Slovakia**

- CS-S<sub>3</sub> Sedlcany, Městské museum na Cerveném Hrádku, Ms. M 3, 16 c.  
 CS-VB<sub>28</sub> Vyšší Brod, Klášterní knihovna, Ms. 28, 15 c. [Dreves in *Kirchenmusicalisches Jahrbuch* 3 (1888)]

### **Germany**

- D-Bs<sub>100</sub> Berlin, Staatsbibliothek der Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. theol. lat. 4° 100, 15 c.  
 D-BT<sub>190</sub> Berlin-Tübingen, Staatsbibliothek, Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. germ. 8° 190, 15 c.  
 D-WIN Winzenhofen, Pfarrarchiv, Ms. without shelfmark, late 15c. [GöllingerL; Irtenkauf, *Musikforschung* 12 (1959)]

### **France**

- F-AM<sub>162</sub> Amiens, Bibliothèque Municipale, ms. 162, late 15/early 16c. [3139.461.61.1]  
 F-Pn<sub>568</sub> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. fonds ital. 568 (Pit), late 14/15 c.  
 F-Pn<sub>6771</sub> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. fonds nouv. acq. frç. 6771 (Reina), late 14/15 c. [3675.6771]

### **Great Britian**

- GB-Lbm<sub>27630</sub> London, British Museum (British Library), Ms. add. 27630. 14/15 c. [3235.27630]  
 GB-Ob<sub>229</sub> Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Can Pat. lat 229 (PadA), late 14/15 c. [2665.7]  
 GB-OH Old Hall, Library of St. Edmund's College, Ms. without shelfmark, 14/15 c. [3644.5.1]

### **Italy**

- I-CF<sub>79</sub> Cividale del Friuli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Cod. LXXIX, 15 c. [3286.869.16.10]  
 I-Fl<sub>999</sub> Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. Asbh. 999. 1423-4. [Gallo-Vecchi]  
 I-FOL Foligno, Biblioteca Comunale, Frammenti musicali, 15 c. [3402.523.33.1, PirrotaC]  
 I-GR<sub>197</sub> Grottaferrata, Biblioteca dell'Abbazia, Collocazione provvisoria 197, 15 c.

- I-PC55 Padova, Biblioteca Capitolare, Ms. C. 55, 14/15 c. [Vecchi, Gallo-Vecchi]  
 I-PC56 Padova, Biblioteca Capitolare, Ms. C. 56, 14/15 c. [Vecchi, Gallo-Vecchi]  
 I-PUIII5 Padova, Biblioteca Universitaria, Ms. III5, PadB, 14/15c. [2670.89.3]  
 I-PUI475 Padova, Biblioteca Universitaria, Ms. 1475, PadA, 14/15c. [2670.89.4]  
 I-PAad09 Parma, Archivio della Fabbrica del Duomo, Ms. F-09, 15c. [Gallo-Vecchi, Fischer-Gallo<sup>13</sup>, Massera, *Aurea Parma* 48 [Ital 4010.4]]  
 I-PIca176 Pisa, Biblioteca Cateriniana del Seminario Arcivescovile, Ms. 176. 14/15 c.  
 I-SCIO Siena, Biblioteca Comunale, Ms. H. I. 10. 14/15 c. [Fischer-Gallo<sup>12</sup>]  
 I-Vnm145 Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale di S. Marco, Cod. italiano IX 145. 14/15 c.? [Gallo-Vecchi]

### **Poland**

- PL-Kb18 Kraków, Biblioteka Klasztoru OO. Bernardynów, Ms. 18/RL. 15/16 c.  
 PL-Kklar206 Kraków, Biblioteka Klasztoru SS. Klarysek (S. Andrea), Ms. 206. c. 1340. [MGG 10, "Polen", Tf 83]

### **United States**

- US-Cn24 Chicago, The Newberry Library, Ms. 24 (olim 23817), 13/14 c. [Hughes, *Acta Musicologica* 39, Fischer-Gallo<sup>12</sup>]

## Bibliography

**BentD** Margaret Bent. "The Definition of Simple Polyphony. Some Questions." In **Corsi-Petrobelli**. pp. 33-42.

**BentN** Margaret Bent. "New and Little-known Fragments of English Medieval Polyphony," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 21 (1968), pp. 137-156.

### **Corsi-Petrobelli**

Cesare Corsi and Pierluigi Petrobelli, editors. *Le Polifonie primitive in Friuli e in Europa: atti del congresso internazionale, Cividale del Friuli, 22-24 agosto 1980*. Rome: Edizioni Torre d'Orfeo, 1989. *Miscellanea musicologica*; 4. pp. 13-30.

### **FischerQ**

Kurt von Fischer. "Neue Quellen Mehrstimmiger Musik des 15. Jahrhunderts aus Schweizerischen Klöstern." In *Renaissance-Muziek 1400-1600. Donum Natalicium René Bernard Lenaerts* Edited by Jozef Robijns. Leuven: Katholieke Universiteit, Seminarie voor Muziekwetenschap, 1969. pp. 293-301.

### **FischerRISM**

Kurt von Fischer. *RISM Handschriften mit mehrstimmiger Musik des 14., 15., und 16. Jahrhunderts B/IV/4*, 2 vols. Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1972.

**FischerS**

Kurt von Fischer. "The Sacred Polyphony of the Italian Trecento," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 100 (1973-1974). pp. 134-157.

**Fischer-Gallo**<sub>12</sub>

Kurt von Fischer and F. Alberto Gallo, editors. *Italian Sacred Music*, in *Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century*, vol. 12. Monaco: Editions de l'Oiseau-lyre, 1976.

**Fischer-Gallo**<sub>13</sub>

Kurt von Fischer and F. Alberto Gallo, editors. *Italian Sacred and Ceremonial Music*, in *Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century*, vol. 13. Monaco: Editions de l'Oiseau-lyre, 1987.

**Gallo** F. Alberto Gallo. "The Practice of *Cantus Planus Binatim* in Italy from the Beginning of the 14th to the Beginning of the 16th Century." In **Corsi-Petrobelli**, pp. 13-30.

**Gallo-Vecchi**

F. Alberto Gallo and Giuseppi Vecchi, editors. *I Più Antichi Monumenti Sacri Italiani*. Bologna: Università degli studi di Bologna, 1968.

**GöllnerL**

Theodore Göllner, *Die mehrstimmigen liturgischen Lesungen*. Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1969.

**PirrottaC**

Nino Pirrotta. "Church Polyphony Apropos of a New Fragment at Foligno." In *Studies in Music History, Essays for Oliver Strunk*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968. pp. 113ff.

**PirrottaN**

Nino Pirrotta. "New Glimpses of an Unwritten Tradition." In *Words and Music: The Scholar's View. A Medley of Problems and Solutions Compiled in Honor of A. Tillman Merritt*, edited by Laurence Berman. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972. pp. 271-91.

**Strohm** Reinhard Strohm. "Polifonie Più o Meno Primitive. Annotazioni alla Relazione di Base e Nuove Fonti." In **Corsi-Petrobelli**. pp. 83-98.

**Vecchi** Giuseppe Vecchi. *Uffici Drammatici Padovani*. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1954.