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International style and medieval Italian music:
a Flemish motet in the Ascoli Piceno/Montefortino fragment

Fame and public reputation provide only fleeting recognition for great men and women unless their deeds and character are recorded in writings that survive throughout the centuries. Those whose stories are not told and retold fade into obscurity. The same fate befalls musical traditions whose few traces make them difficult to reconstruct and enjoy in sound today.

The earliest modern histories of fourteenth and early fifteenth-century Italian music gave voice only to the most fully preserved traditions of Trecento polyphony. The few surviving large codices of the so-called Italian *ars nova* (ca. 1330-1420) are built almost entirely around secular music with texts in Italian that was composed or copied in Florence.

Yet at the same time that this Florentine music flourished, other musical traditions were in full bloom throughout the rest of Northern and Central Italy. These other polyphonic musical traditions emphasized sacred music, ceremonial compositions in Latin, and secular pieces (whether newly composed or imported) with French texts. Reconstructing these traditions has proven difficult because they were not carefully preserved as the beautiful Florentine codices were, but were instead often dismembered and reused as flyleaves for manuscripts considered more important, or used as scraps for strengthening the bindings of books or as inexpensive but strong covers for notarial materials and other documents of the State.

Such was the fate of one of the more significant recent discoveries in Italian *ars nova* music, found by Paolo Peretti in the early 1990s¹. It is a single parchment bifolio collecting a set of motets, Salve Regina settings, a hymn, and two secular songs with French texts that was reused by the notary Antonio Gentili to protect judicial documents of 1552 to 1554 from

¹ P. Peretti, *Fonti inedite di polifonia mensurale dei secoli XIV e XV negli archivi di stato di Ascoli Piceno e Macerata*, «Quaderni musicali marchigiani», 3 (1996), pp. 85-124: 88-93.

the town of Montefortino. This cover, along with the *libellus* it protected, was later transferred to the Archivio di Stato of Ascoli Piceno where it is now vol. 142 of the *Notarile Mandamentale* di Montefortino (hereafter **AP 142**). The damage that resulted from the manuscript's transformation left much of the leaf completely illegible at the time of Peretti's description. More recently, the bifolio has been removed from its cover and partially restored, allowing Peretti and Agostino Ziino to craft a more detailed description of the manuscript, including musical transcriptions². With the clearer view of the fragment that the restoration allowed, a unique rondeau, *Je vous aym de cuer*, could be transcribed completely (though without its probably defective text). The other French-texted piece, *Esperance qui en mon cuer sembat*, would also be completely transcribable in a two-voice version with text, but there is no need to since the piece is already well known from eleven other copies of the music or words³. Four Latin-texted pieces were also able to be transcribed more-or-less completely as they appear in the source; unfortunately, part of the fragment has been cut off and adjacent pages have been lost, so even after every note has been reconstructed, none of these pieces is complete. This music was brought to the ears of Ascoli Piceno during the *Fama* conference through performances by the Ascoli Ensemble directed by Zamler-Carhart; the incomplete pieces were either reconstructed or performed as fragments.

One of these Latin fragments has a textual canon that is a set of directions (often like a riddle) that tells the performer how to expand the few notes written on the page into a much longer composition. It reads as follows⁴:

Canon tenoris, Modus talearum disti<n>guitur in figuris:
 Primo: ut iacent.
 Secundo: recte per medium ut sunt figure cantabis de imperfecto
 maiori, ad<d>endo post vacuas figuras nigras ut iacent

² P. Peretti - A. Ziino, *Ancora sul frammento di Montefortino* (con trascrizioni musicali di M. Cuthbert), in *L'Ars Nova Italiana del Trecento*. VIII Convegno internazionale "Beyond 50 Years of Ars Nova Studies at Certaldo: 1959-2009" (12-14 giugno 2009), cur. M. Gozzi - A. Ziino - F. Zimei, Certaldo-Lucca 2010; including a facsimile of the entire source.

³ M. Cuthbert, *Esperance and the French Song in Foreign Sources*, «Studi Musicali», 36 (2007), pp. 1-19.

⁴ We thank Emily Zazulia and Lorenzo Calvelli for discussions on this text.

The text tells the performer to perform the piece twice (except the last two notes written in black), but the second time making each of them half its written length so that it is in imperfect time, major prolation (or modern 6/8). This is a way of distinguishing the two *talea*, that is, the sections of an composition with a repeating rhythmic pattern (called *isorhythm*):

Canon of the tenor, the *modus* [*i.e.*, mensuration] of the *taleae* is distinguished by the figures [*i.e.*, notes]:
 First, as they are.
 Second: to do it correctly, you will sing the notes half as they are, in imperfect major, adding, after the void figures, the black [figures] as they are.

Unfortunately since so little of the tenor voice survives, these descriptions are of little help in transcribing the piece – they instead give the parameters for how we might transcribe the work if more of the tenor were to someday emerge in a currently unknown source.

Another two pieces resisted identification at the time when Cuthbert provided transcriptions to be published with Peretti and Ziino's article, but new evidence about the works' contents and their significance has enabled us to bring back more of the music from these works.

Only a single voice of the piece on the verso of folio B survives. It is, unfortunately, on the side of the parchment that was on the outside of the binding. It has therefore suffered so much wear as to become nearly illegible, unlike the recto, which was protected from wear by virtue of facing the notarial document rather than the elements. Exposure of the verso under an ultraviolet lamp revealed enough of the remaining ink to allow us to read the word *flandrie*, "Flanders." Mention of Flanders is rare enough in late medieval Italian musical manuscripts to permit identification in other sources.

Indeed, a careful search through many surviving motets found a match for this piece in two surviving sources: Nuremberg, Stadtbibliothek, *Fragment* lat. 9, from *Centurio* V, 61 (hereafter **Nur9**) and Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Municipale (*olim* Bibliothèque de la Ville), MS 222. C.22 (hereafter **Stras**). **Nur9** is a small fragment of Viennese origin containing three motets and one untexted composition titled *Bobik blazen* which may be a piece for instruments, an unknown Dutch piece (given the incipit Hollaner in another source, or the only surviving work of the music theorist Johannes Olendrinus)⁵. **Stras** was a large manuscript from the Upper

⁵ On **Nur9** and other Viennese sources see M. Cuthbert, *The Nuremberg and Melk Fragments and the International Ars Nova*, «Studi Musicali», 39 (2010), in press.

Rhine region (Basel/Strasbourg) containing sacred and secular compositions of French, Italian, and German origins that was destroyed by fire in 1870. It survives only in a partial copy, including this motet, that was made by Edmond de Coussemaker and is now located in Brussels⁶.

AP 142

Comes flandrie
flos victorie
cunctis sistitur
hinc armonia
cum melodia
[et accipitur]
arte [vere] tinta
face fortuita
que perpenditur
hinc nam conducitur
hermam quo pangitur
ut contingat melos
quo cor reficitur
et sursum trahitur
ad inrandum celos
Igitur Boecii
armonia que perfecta
accidit ut (pecii?)
armo(rum?) labe delecta
cymbalis in quavis mulcens
corda studiosorum
laudibus divinis tingens
corda pars est istorum
nam infra speciem
toni ultra semitonium
differunt in ipsis sonis
penes testimonium
uolentes hic enuclea[vi]
per ex(perientiam)
[...] pro (in)gen...
[...]libus (aciolo?)
debet benedici
qu(e?) sic stante sono
[...] decorata urbs ludouici.

Nur9

Comes flandrie
flos victoris
cunctis sistitur
huc armonica
cum melodia
et accipitur
[arte] vere tinta
face fortuita
que perpenditur
hic nam conducitur
hic manet qui pangitur
ut contingat malos
que privat refici
et sursum trahitur
ad inrandum celos
figitur Boecius
armonicus perfectus
accidit ut pecii
animo labe delectat
cymbalis in quavis mulcens
corda studiosorum
laudibus divinis tangens
corda pax est isto[rum]
quolibet astrola
debet dominus benedici
que sic state sono
decorata urbs ludowyci.

Stras

Comes flandrie
efflos victorie
cunctis sistitur
huic armonia
cum melodia
N. arripitur
arte non tuita
fauce forcuita
Que propenditur
hinc nam conducitur
harmon quo pangitur
ut contingat melos
quo cor reficitur
et sursum trahitur
ad inrandum celos
igitur Boecii
armonia perfecta
accidit est ut pretii
armon labe delecta
cimbalis in quavis mulcens
corda studiosorum
laudibus divinis
ungatis corda plax est isti
isto relevis
Nam infra species
toni ultra semitonium
differunt in ipsis soni
penes testimonium
volens hoc enucleare
per experientiam.
Nam sit cantui magis clare
melos per tangertiam
quolibet ostiblo
debet dominus benedici
quod sit stante sono
decorata sit urbs ludovici

⁶ Cossemaker's transcriptions have been published in a facsimile edited by Albert Vander Linden, *Le manuscrit musical M.222 C.22 de la Bibliothèque de Strasbourg: XV^e siècle*, Bruxelles 1977.

The motet turns out to be not a local composition at all, but instead a piece commemorating a victory of Louis II de Male, count of Flanders, that was celebrated in Bruges⁷. The text of the triplum in **AP 142** is substantially different from the version in **Nur9** and quite different from **Stras**. All three versions of the triplum are compared below, with an English translation of the Ascoli version.

To the extent that the text of **AP 142** is legible, it can be translated as follows:

Count of Flanders, the crown of [your] victory is displayed to everyone and harmony goes forth from this place with melody, for it is led from here by a fortuitous torch, which is carefully considered, dipped indeed in art, by which it is composed so that the tune reaches Hermes, whereby the heart is refreshed and taken skyward so as to enter the heavens.

Therefore the harmony of Boethius which falls perfectly so that [...] delighted by the lowering of weapons, soothing the heart of the eager, in any (harmony) with cymbals, filling the hearts with divine praise, it is a part of them.

For inferior in beauty [...] the tones beyond the semitone differ in the same sounds. I have explained the evidence to those willing (to listen), in place of [...] must be blessed [...] the distinguished city of Louis.

Remarkably the triplum in **AP 142** is several verses longer than in **Nur9**, which begs the question of how it would have fitted with the lower voices in the same source, unfortunately lost to us.

In light of the text in **AP 142**, the version previously known from **Nur9** now appears to be severely corrupted, whereas **AP 142**, to the extent that it can be read, preserves a fully coherent poetic and grammatical structure. For example, the first six verses of the poem feature an AABCCB rhyme with five syllables per verse. This form is intact in **AP 142** but mangled in **Nur9**, where the rhyme *victoris* upsets both the rhyme and the meter by the second verse already. The copyist of **Nur9** appears to have had a poor command of Latin. While the poem speaks of broadcasting Louis' glory from the place of victory out into the world and up to the heavens, the **Nur9** copyist repeatedly misunderstands the word *hinc* 'from here' and replaces

⁷ See Reinhard Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges*, Oxford 1990, p. 103; Strohm provides a transcription of the piece based on **Nur9** on pp. 201-205.

it with other words that eliminate the idea of movement away from Louis. The version in **Stras** appears to be in intermediate stage of preservation. Much of the verse structure is coherent, some of the word differences with **AP 142** are indeed possible Latin alternatives without changing the meaning much (e.g. *sursus* for *sursum* and even *arripitur* for *accipitur*). On the other hand, the text contains a number of nonsense words (e.g. *armon*, *ostiblo*). Only in very few cases could the alternative text of **Stras** be an equal or better representation of the original Latin poetry than **AP 142**. For example it is perhaps equally sensible to write that the harmony is led outwards *fauce* ‘by a throat’ as *face* ‘by a torch,’ though in poetic usage both are conceivable. In any case it is more difficult to make an accurate determination as to the state of corruption of **Stras**, since, unlike with **AP 142** and **Nur9**, the original manuscript is lost and our knowledge of its contents comes entirely from Coussemaker’s handwritten transcription. Despite his care and skill, it is not impossible that he would have introduced corruptions of his own while transcribing the piece and we cannot know which ones he faithfully copied from the original and which ones he introduced inadvertently.

The poem as we can read it in **AP 142** as a whole is typical of late fourteenth-century Latin secular motets. Its vocabulary is generally educated and its grammatical construction sophisticated, suggesting an cultivated poet familiar with classical models. Non-classical Latin usage, widespread in most motet texts just a generation earlier⁸, is almost absent here with the exception of the typical medieval word *pecii* ‘piece,’ undoubtedly chosen for its rhyme with *Boecii*. Like earlier motet texts, it is still rhyming poetry rather than the metric poetry that begins to gain ground in the early fifteenth century⁹. But typically for poetry of the so-called *ars subtilior* period, it contains many classical and technical references, in this case to Boethius, Hermes and concepts of music theory.

Those references, certainly a sign of high culture at the end of the fourteenth century and undoubtedly woven into the text to demonstrate the sophistication of the Flemish court, were almost entirely lost on the scribe of **Nur9**. He apparently did not recognize the Greek word *melos* ‘tune’ and replaced with *malos*, leaving the sentence mangled. He also entirely

⁸ See for example Machaut’s Latin motets.

⁹ For example, out of Dufay’s thirteen isorhythmic motets, all in Latin verse, four are set to metric poetry (*Rite majorem*, *Nuper rosarum flores*, *Salve flos*, *Magnanime gentes*), one has metric poetry in only one voice, the contratenor (*Ecclesie militantis*) and the rest consist of rhyming poetry.

skipped the verses containing advanced technical musical vocabulary, especially «toni ultra semitonium differunt in ipsis sonis» (the tones beyond the semitone differ in the same sounds), perhaps because he did not understand the words. Aside from technical terms, more educated – but by no means obtuse – vocabulary such as the verb *enucleavi* ‘I explained’ was also left out.

Altogether, the textual differences between **AP 142** and **Nur9** suggest that the Italian source is much closer than the German source to the Flemish original and that the Italian scribe was for more competent in Latin than the German one. Furthermore, the musical settings strongly suggest that **AP 142**’s text is closer to what the composer intended. In the last third of the cantus of **Nur9** there are long stretches of music without text. These passages are underlaid quasi-syllabically in **AP 142** (again, **Stras** represents an intermediate stage between the two). The music of the three sources differs substantially enough from each other that it warrants its own separate study in the context of other Franco-Flemish and Italian pieces that survive in quite different versions in Italian and Central or Eastern European sources. In general, and in *Comes flandrie* in particular, the pieces in Italian sources are more decorated than in Germanic, Czech, and Polish sources. For instance, a semibreve D in **Nur9** might be rendered as three minims, DCD in **AP 142**. In the absence of an earlier Flemish source we cannot say how close **AP 142** is to the original, but the fact that a poem of such complexity still reads as if it were intact after being copied so far from Flanders suggests that we are in the presence not of a distant transmission of Flemish music to a peripheral zone, but on the contrary, of a reliable transmission to a discriminating recipient.

The musical theme of this motet, made even more apparent now that the text in **AP 142** has revealed several more verses filled with technical musical vocabulary, places it squarely in the tradition of late-fourteenth-century motets about music, together with *Apollinis eclipsatur*, *Alma polis religio* and *Musicalis sciencia*. Strohm (1985) attributes the latter to Petrus de Brugis and proposes that he could also be the composer of *Comes flandrie*. We have not uncovered additional evidence in **AP 142** to weigh in one way or another, but we do note the stylistic similarity between the two motets, in particular the use of tight hockets and the general avoidance of dissonance, perhaps a result of Flanders’ proximity to the influence of English music¹⁰.

¹⁰ See the slightly earlier English motet about music, *Musorum collegio*.

The question remains of why a Flemish composition would find its way to the Marche. If Petrus de Brugis is indeed the composer of *Comes flandrie*, then it ought to be no surprise that his music should be found so far from home: the *duplum* of the motet *Apollinis eclipsatur* names him in a short list of musicians «vox quorum mundi climata penetrat» (whose voice penetrates all regions of the world).

But even if he is not, a possible element of answer may be found in the singular history of the town of Montefortino as a destination for international pilgrims seeking to consult the *Sibilla Appenninica*, or Apennine Sibyl¹¹. The Apennine Sibyl, like the more famous oracle at Delphi, was a woman regarded as endowed with prophetic abilities and living at a holy site. The one near Montefortino was reputed to dwell in the *Grotta della Sibilla*, or Sibyl's Cave, a cave near the top of the mountain Monte Sibilla, on the outskirts of the town. The presence of an oracle in the Apennine region is already recorded in Roman sources¹².

Two early fifteenth-century sources bear witness to the Sibyl's considerable international fame in the late Middle Ages. The first one, *Il Guerin Meschino*, is a chivalric romance written by Tuscan author Andrea de Barberino around 1410. The work, which is set several centuries earlier, mentions the Apennine Sibyl about fifty times and features characters traveling from overseas to Montefortino in order to consult the oracle. It is of course a work of fiction, but the idea of traveling long distances to consult the Sibyl of Montefortino must have been familiar enough to early fifteenth-century readers to be used as the conventional backdrop of a chivalric narrative.

The second source, *Le paradis de la Reine Sibylle*, is a travel diary written in 1437 by French author Antoine de La Sale, relating his own visit to the Sibyl's cave in Montefortino in 1420. On the basis of various graffiti he saw carved at the entrance of the cave and transcribed in his book, La Sale claims that the cave had been visited in 1338 by a certain Her Hans wan Bamberg, and again at an unspecified date by a certain Thomas de Pons. Whether or not the date of 1338 and the specific name of the visitors are accurate, La Sale's account constitutes further evidence of a tradition of

¹¹ We thank Gianni Brandozzi for pointing out this connection to the Sibyl.

¹² Suetonius (first century AD), *De vita caesarum, vita Vitellii*, X: «In Appennini quidem iugis etiam pervigilium egit» (A vigil was also held at the top of the Apennine Mountains). Trebellius Pollio (early fifth century AD), *Historia augusta, Divus Claudius*, X, 4: «Item cum Appennino de se consuleret, responsum huius modi accepit» (Similarly, when he [*i.e.* Emperor Claudius Gothicus] asked about his future in the Apennine Mountains, he received such a response).

pilgrims traveling from foreign lands to Montefortino in the fourteenth and early fifteenth century, corroborating the evidence already offered by *Il Guerrin Meschino*.

Although no specific evidence survives of a Flemish visitor (or at least one carrying a Flemish musical manuscript) to Montefortino in the late fourteenth century, the context of a sibyl attracting foreign visitors provides a highly plausible explanation as to why a Flemish motet could have found its way to the Marche. This theory also has the merit of explaining why the motet would have specifically reached the town of Montefortino, rather than any other town in the Marche, especially in the absence of any particular political, cultural or commercial relationship between the Marche and Flanders in the late fourteenth century.

The example of the pilgrimage to the Sibyl of Montefortino invites us to keep an open mind to the idea that cultural contact between Northern Europe and Central Italy could occur without the mediation of either Rome or Northern Italy, and moreover as a result of individual behavior rather than through the usual channels of ecclesiastical and diplomatic connections.

We may also find it surprising that a motet with such a specifically Flemish political text as *Comes Flandrie* could have appealed to an audience in Central Italy. The pervasive notion that medieval audiences valued text to the same extent as music, or even more, could lead us to overestimate the importance of this text to an Italian audience. It is, on the contrary, quite possible that the Italian audience of *Comes Flandrie* was mostly interested in the music and did not care more about the Latin text than a modern audience would. The late Middle Ages offer a number of examples of successful compositions that were appreciated for their musical qualities alone, even in cases where the text is wholly inappropriate¹³. A case in point is the ballade *Par les bons Gedeon et Sanson* celebrating the Avignon pope Clement VII which is transmitted in the Boverio fragments (Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, T.III.2) with Clement designated as “antipape:” clearly a piece copied for its music rather than for its message¹⁴.

¹³ We are not the only authors to believe in wider distributions than have previously been considered. The words of A. Ziino, *Gli ‘ultramontani’ in Italia e la nascita dello ‘stile internazionale’: un primo bilancio e nuove prospettive* in *Il mondo cortese di Gentile da Fabriano e l’immaginario musicale*, cur. M. Lacchè, Rome 2008, pp. 15-27, support our belief: «A mio parere, però, non essendo possibile ricondurre tutti i frammenti esistenti alle corti del Nord o a Roma e dintorni, dobbiamo ipotizzare e immaginarci un orizzonte geografico e culturale molto più ampio».

¹⁴ A. Ziino, *Il Codice T.III.2: Studio introduttivo ed edizione in facsimile*, Lucca 1994 (Ars Nova, 3), p. 103.

Returning to the fragment as a whole, the second work that could not be transcribed before high-quality digital images of the source were made is a Marian hymn, *Mater digna dei*, found on the recto of folio A. The text is related to, but not identical to other hymns with the same incipit. Variations of this text were set later by Ludwig Senfl, Jacobus Vaet, and Gaspar van Weerbeke (printed in Petrucci's *Motetti A*)¹⁵. Compared to other versions of the hymn, the text here sets fewer lines, even after accounting for the losses created by the damages to the right side of the folio. We can contrast the surviving text of **AP 142**'s setting with the text used in three later compositions¹⁶:

AP 142	Weerbeke ¹⁷	Vaet and Senfl
Mater digna Dei,	Mater digna Dei,	Mater digna Dei,
Lux et porta diei [...]	Venie via luxque diei Sis tutela rei	Veniae via luxque diei Sis tutela rei
Dux comesque mei.	Duxque comesque mei.	Duxque comesque mei.
Nata Dei, [...] [...] alma diei	Nata Dei, Miserere mei, Lux alma diei,	<i>Vaet</i> : Sponsa mea, <i>Senfl</i> : Sponsa Dei, Miserere mei, Lux alma diei, [<i>Senfl</i> : Dei,]
Digna coli R [...] P [...] Me linqere noli.	Digna coli, Regina poli, Me linqere noli.	Digna coli, Regina poli, Me linqere noli. <i>Senfl only</i> : Nixa Deum, Defende reum, Mihi dando trophaeum.

¹⁵ See for instance no. 11335 in U. Chevalier, *Repertorium hymnologicum*, II, Louvain 1897. The hymn was known in Italy at least by the mid-fifteenth century as is attested by a manuscript from Northern Italy of Galvano de Padua's *Memoriale de Confessione Gentile*, sold at Sotheby's in 1996.

¹⁶ We thank the Archivio di Stato, Ascoli Piceno for providing us with clear ultraviolet images of the source, without which this identification would not have been possible, and Prof. Luigi Morganti of the Istituto di Studi Medioevali "Cecco d'Ascoli" for his assistance in obtaining access to the documents.

¹⁷ Weerbeke: Text from Petrucci, *Motetti A*, opening 55. Vaet: *Jacobus Vaet c. 1529-*

Me tibi virgo pia G [...]	Me tibi virgo pia Genitrix commendo Maria Iesu fili dei Tu miserere mei.	Mi tibi virgo pia Genitrix commendo Maria Jesu Christe, Fili Dei vivi Miserere mei. Christus rex venit in pace, Deus homo factus est, Deus propitius, Esto mihi peccatori, Et custos animae meae Nunc et semper et ubique. Amen.
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Although the later setting of *Mater digna dei* has many more lines of text, the version in **AP 142** ends presumably after «Genitrix commendo Maria» (with or without an Amen). The piece on the following verso, «[...] esulum quo tantus», is not textually related to this work, though it shows similar rhythmic complexities. The scribe of folio A seems to have been more interested in these complexities, including isorhythm and coloration, than his collaborator who copied folio B.

The layout of the page, with an active upper voice and a slower, lower voice marked “contratenor”, suggests a four-voice piece. Presumably another upper voice and a tenor appeared on the preceding page, which is now lost.

The upper voice alternates between the mensuration **O** or 3/4 with **C** or 2/4 simultaneously with the contratenor’s consistent **C**. Instead of the semi-breve being equal between the sections in **O** and **C**, it is the breve that remains constant, creating passages of hemiola between the two voices. Both of the voices are isorhythmic, consisting of two talea (two repeating rhythmic units) and a single color (that is, without melodic repetition). The isorhythm of the contratenor is particularly obvious since a new talea begins at the beginning of the second staff. The tenor would certainly also have been isorhythmic. Since it is rare that one upper voice is isorhythmic while the other is not (it only happens twice in the motets catalogued by Frank Ll. Harrison), it is quite likely that the whole piece was panisorhythmic¹⁸. A

1567, *Sämtliche Werke II: Motetten Band 2, Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich*, vol. 100, cur. M. Steinhardt, Graz-Wien 1962, pp. 44-48. Senfl: *Ludwig Senfl, Zwei Marien-motetten zu fünf Stimmen, Das Chorwerk*, heft 62, cur. W. Gerstenberg, Wolfenbüttel 1957, pp. 1-14.

¹⁸ F.Ll. Harrison, *Motets of French Provenance, Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century*, V, Monaco 1968, p. 202.

transcription of the surviving music, with a reconstruction of the hypothetical text, appears in Example 1 below. Notes given without pitches denote sections which are missing but whose rhythms can be restored through comparison with other surviving isorhythmic sections. Where the **C-dot** or 6/8 sections actually begin can only be speculated. Their existence is strongly suggested by the piece's single surviving void-semibreve: a note that only makes sense within the context of perfect prolation such as 6/8 or 9/8.

Example 1: *MATER DIGNA DEI*, transcribed

Ma - - - ter di - gna De - i, Lux et por - ta die -

① Contratenor

- - - i [Si - - - te - - - re - - - re - - - ij]

Dux co - mes - que me - i.

Na - ta De - i.

[Mi - - - re - - - re - - - re - - - i]

51
Luz/ al - ma die - i, Di - gna cu - li,

61
Re - gi - na po - bli,

71
Me - lin - que - re - no - li,

81
Me - ti - li vir - - - - -

91
go pi - a Ge - ni - trix car - men - do Ma - ri - a.

Returning to the fragment as a whole, it is possible that the manuscript could be of local production or for local use. The inhabitants of Ascoli Piceno possessed musical manuscripts conforming to local tastes since at least the thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries-witness for instance, the notated breviary with the Use of the Friars Minor (Franciscans) of Ascoli Piceno, now Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Reg. lat.* 2050¹⁹.

¹⁹ Facsimile of f. 112r in H.M. Bannister, *Monumenti vaticani di paleografia musicale latina*, 2 vols, Leipzig 1913, tavola 86b, online at <http://www-cgi.uni-regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/Musikwissenschaft/Cantus/Bannister/>

The people of Ascoli almost certainly heard sophisticated polyphonic music of both secular and sacred types. Giovanni Sercambi's early fifteenth-century *Novelle*, which takes place in 1374, depicts the musical travels of a group of men, women, and children who perform Mass music daily (with accompaniment on the psaltery) along with Italian ballate and madrigals. After leaving Ascoli while on their way to Fermo, the group is said to have sung Francesco da Firenze's ballata *Vita non è più misera*²⁰. Even if we must admit that the trip is fictional, the same reasoning applies as for *Il Guerin Meschino*: Sercambi would not have made Ascoli a destination if the thought of refined, complicated polyphonic music being performed in that town would have been considered absurd.

If it seems unlikely that a town as small as Montefortino (or even Ascoli) could have produced sophisticated polyphony in the early fifteenth century, we need only look at the musical patrimony of another, even smaller, town in the neighboring Abruzzi to open up the possibilities. Seven folios from a mid-fifteenth century polyphonic manuscript were recently found in Rocca di Botte, a small village of approximately 500 inhabitants in the province of L'Aquila²¹. Though it has now been moved to Avezzano, the source was documented in Rocca di Botte since the sixteenth century, and there is no reason to believe it was moved there from a more cosmopolitan center earlier. Other towns have left musical legacies far beyond what we might expect given their populations, political importance, or reputation for learning. Chief among such towns is Cividale del Friuli, which despite its small size was an important seat for liturgical drama²², simple polyphony²³, *ars nova* music²⁴, and, later, high-Renaissance polyphony²⁵.

²⁰ F.A. Gallo, *Music of the Middle Ages II*, Cambridge 1985, p. 70.

²¹ F. Zimei, *Music in Small Italian Villages: A New Source of Fifteenth-Century Polyphony from Rocca di Botte*, «Studi Musicali», 36 (2007), pp. 21-63.

²² G. Cattin, *Tra Padova e Cividale: nuova fonte per la drammaturgia sacra nel medioevo*, «Il Saggiatore musicale», 1 (1994), pp. 7-112.

²³ *Le Polifonie primitive in Friuli e in Europa*. Atti del congresso internazionale Cividale del Friuli, 22-24 agosto 1980, cur. C. Corsi - P. Petrobelli, Rome 1989.

²⁴ M. Cuthbert, *Trecento Fragments and Polyphony Beyond the Codex*, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2006, online at <www.trecento.com/dissertation/>, pp. 230-276.

²⁵ L. Lockwood, *Sources of Renaissance Polyphony from Cividale del Friuli: The Manuscripts 53 and 59 of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale*, «Il Saggiatore Musicale», 1 (1994), pp. 249-314.

The survival, even if in fragmentary form, of a musical legacy that may tentatively be connected to a local provenance near Ascoli should spur researchers towards further investigations in smaller archives. A full picture of musical life in late-medieval Italy will not be found by still closer examinations of intact musical sources in large towns alone. Rather we may find them among the many public and ecclesiastical archives of the Marche, wrapped as fragments covering centuries of documents that together with the musical legacy attest to the unique fame and strong *vox publica* of the region.

