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ISTITUTO STORICO ITALIANO PER IL MEDIO EVO
ROMA 2011
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 1990s\(^1\). 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

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 transcriptions. 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 words. 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 follows:

Canon tenoris, Modus talearum distin: guitur in figuris:
Primo: ut iacent.
Secundo: recte per medium ut sunt figure cantabis de imperfecto
maiori, adendo post vacas figurae nigras ut iacent

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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 \textit{i.e., mensuration} of the taleae is distinguished by the figures \textit{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 ultra-violet lamp revealed enough of the remaining ink to allow us to read the word \textit{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, \textit{Fragment} lat. 9, \textit{from Centurio V}, 61 (hereafter Nur9) and Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Municipale (\textit{olum} 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 \textit{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)\textsuperscript{5}. Stras was a large manuscript from the Upper

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 Brussels.⁶

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{AP 142} & \quad \text{Nur} 9 & \quad \text{Stras} \\
\text{Comes flandrie} & \quad \text{Comes flandrie} & \quad \text{Comes flandrie} \\
flos victorie & \quad flos victoris & \quad efllos victorie \\
cunctis sistitur & \quad cunctis sistitur & \quad cunctis sistitur \\
hinc armonia & \quad huc armonica & \quad huic armonia \\
cum melodía & \quad cum melodía & \quad cum melodía \\
[et accipitur] & \quad [et accipitur] & \quad [et accipitur] \\
arte [vere] tinta & \quad arte [vere] tinta & \quad arte non tinta \\
face fortuita & \quad face fortuita & \quad face forscuita \\
que perpenditur & \quad que perpenditur & \quad Que propenditur \\
hinc nam conducitur & \quad hic nam conducitur & \quad hinc nam conducitur \\
hermanam quo pangitur & \quad hic manet qui pangitur & \quad harmon quo panditur \\
ut contingat melos & \quad ut contingat melos & \quad ut contingat melos \\
quo cor reficitur & \quad que privat reficet & \quad quo cor reficitur \\
et surssum trahitur & \quad et surssum trahitur & \quad et surssum trahitur \\
ad intrandum celos & \quad ad intrandum celos & \quad ad intrandum celos \\
Igitur Boecii & \quad figitur Boecius & \quad igitur Boecii \\
armonia que perfecta & \quad armonicus perfectus & \quad armonia perfecta \\
accidit ut (pecii?) & \quad accidit ut pecii & \quad accidit ut pretii \\
armon(lum?) labe delecta & \quad animo labe delectat & \quad armon labe dejecta \\
cymbalis in quavis mulcens & \quad cymbalis in quavis mulcens & \quad cymbalis in quavis mulcens \\
corda studiosorum & \quad corda studiosorum & \quad corda studiosorum \\
laudibus divis in tingens & \quad laudibus divis in tingens & \quad laudibus divis in \\
corda pars est istorum & \quad corda pax est isto[rum] & \quad ungatis corda plax est isti \\
nam infra speciem & \quad quolibet astrola & \quad isto relevis \\
toni ultra semitonium & \quad debet dominus benedici & \quad Nam infra species \\
differunt in ipsis sonis & \quad que sic state sono & \quad toni ultra semitonium \\
penes testimoniunm & \quad decorata urbs ludowyci. & \quad differunt in ipsis soni \\
vulentes hic enuclea[v] & \quad penes testimoniunm & \quad volens hoc enucleare \\
per ex(perienciam) & \quad per ex(perienciam) & \quad per experientiam. \\
[...] pro (in)gen... & \quad [....] pro (in)gen... & \quad Nam sit cantui magis clare \\
[...][ibus (aciuolo?)] & \quad [....][ibus (aciuolo?)] & \quad melos per tangertiam \\
debet benedici & \quad debet benedici & \quad quelibet ostiblo \\
qui(?) sic stante sono & \quad qui(?) sic stante sono & \quad debet dominus benedici \\
[...] decorata urbs ludowyci. & \quad [....] decorata urbs ludowyci. & \quad quod sit stante sono \\
\end{align*}
\]

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 Bruges. 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

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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. surus 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 earlier, 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 century. 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

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8 See for example Machaut’s Latin motets.
9 For example, out of Dufay’s thirteenisorhythmic motets, all in Latin verse, four are set to metric poetry (Rite maiorum, Nuper rosarum flores, Salse flôs, Magnanime gentes), one has metric poetry in only one voice, the contratenor (Ecclesi militantis) and the rest consist of rhyming poetry.
skipped the verses containing advanced technical musical vocabulary, especially «toni ultra semitoniun diflerrunt 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 scientia. 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 music.  

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10 See the slightly earlier English motet about music, Musicorum 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 Sibyl\(^\text{11}\). 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 Appenine region is already recorded in Roman sources\(^\text{12}\).

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 Bamborg, 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

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\(^\text{11}\) We thank Gianni Brandozzi for pointing out this connection to the Sibyl.

\(^\text{12}\) 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 consularet, responsum huius modi accepti» (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 inappropriate. 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 message.

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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 immaginare un orizzonte geografico e culturale molto più ampio.”

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 compositions\(^{16}\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AP 142</th>
<th>Weerbeke(^{17})</th>
<th>Vaet and Senfl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mater digna Dei,</td>
<td>Mater digna Dei,</td>
<td>Mater digna Dei,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lux et porta diei</td>
<td>Venie via luxque diei</td>
<td>Veniae via luxque diei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dux comesque mei</td>
<td>Duxque comesque mei</td>
<td>Duxque comesque mei.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nata Dei,</td>
<td>Nata Dei,</td>
<td>Vaet: Sponsa mea,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ... ]</td>
<td>Miserere mei,</td>
<td>Senfl: Sponsa Dei,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ... ] alma diei</td>
<td>Lux alma diei,</td>
<td>Miserere mei,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digna coli</td>
<td>Digna coli,</td>
<td>Lux alma diei, [Senfl: Dei,]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R [ ... ] P[ ... ]</td>
<td>Regina poli,</td>
<td>Digna coli,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me linquere noli.</td>
<td>Me linquere noli.</td>
<td>Me linquere noli.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senfl only:</td>
<td>Senfl only:</td>
<td>Senfl only:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nixa Deum,</td>
<td>Nixa Deum,</td>
<td>Nixa Deum,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defende reum,</td>
<td>Defende reum,</td>
<td>Defende reum,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mihi dando</td>
<td>Mihi dando</td>
<td>Mihi dando</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trophaeum.</td>
<td>trophaeum.</td>
<td>trophaeum.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{15}\) 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.

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 semibreve 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me tibi virgo pia</th>
<th>Genitrix commend</th>
<th>Mi tibi virgo pia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G [... ]</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitrix commendo</td>
<td>Jesu fili dei</td>
<td>Jesu Christe, Fili Dei vivi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Tu miserere mei</td>
<td>Miserere mei.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Christus rex venit in pace,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deus homo factus est,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deus propitious,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Esto mihi peccatori,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Et custos animae meae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nunc et semper et ubique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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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
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. 2050*\(^{19}\).

\(^{19}\) 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.

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.