

CORPVS SCRIPTORVM DE MVSICA

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ANONIMI
NOTITIA DEL VALORE DELLE NOTE
DEL CANTO MISVRATO

EDIDIT
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1957

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FOREWORD*

Music history is perhaps coming to recognize a Florentine school of the pre-Medici period, though unable as yet to trace origins and early development. Whether or not the term "school" may appropriately be applied, we know by now an outstanding group formed of such talented composers as Francesco, Giovanni, Gherardello, Jacopo (da Firenze), Lorenzo Masini, Piero, Donato da Cascia, all active during the 14th century, as also men as Paolo (at the turn of the century) and Andrea dei Servi (active early in the 15th century).

These musicians carried polyphonic art to one of its summits. Francesco (Landini) has already been compared with the great French master Guillaume de Machaut; the others will be better known as their works are brought to light (in *Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae*).

We may safely assume that thanks to such men Florence of the 14th century was a brilliant centre of music. And we are fortunate enough to be heirs to charming masterpieces of a lyrical kind from that epoch. This heritage surely implies the existence of a polyphonic art grown out of a rich soil of local tradition, and which, besides producing the works of the Florentines themselves, later influenced the works of a Guillaume Dufay.

Such a rich tradition had doubtless also its theoretical

* An article on the present treatise, containing some of the introductory material here given, appeared in *Musica Disciplina* IV, 1950.

spokesmen. But history has left us no treatise that might be considered as the particular theoretical expression of the Florentine art. To be sure, Italy of the 14th century does not abound with theoretical works, and her most important theorist of the time, Marchettus of Padua, was separated from the banks of the Arno not only by distance but by differing political and social conditions.

The treatise here presented is one of the three theoretical works of probably Florentine origin so far come down to us, and it undoubtedly represents an oral tradition of musical teaching in Florence of the 14th century¹. It cannot be considered as the formulation of the doctrine that nourished the works of the great Florentine masters, for its teaching is rather elementary. Nevertheless, it may be classed with the important treatises of polyphony of the age because of its abundant and original terminology, and because it is one of the very few instances of a treatise written in the Tuscan dialect and of popularization of musical theory. Moreover, it helps us to reconstruct the spirit as well as curriculum of mensuralist instruction in 14th-century Florence.

Florence, Spring 1951.

¹ Of the other two, the rather inconsequential *Arte del biscanto misurato secondo il maestro Iacopo da Bologna* (found in the same codex containing our treatise) was published by J. Wolf in *Theodore Kroyer, Festschrift zum sechzigsten Geburtstage . . .*, Regensburg, 1933. The third equally uninteresting treatise of Florentine origin, *Ars ad adiscendum contrapunctum secundum Magistrum Paulum de Florentia*, is found in the manuscript Ashburnham 1119 at the Bibl. Mediceo-Laurenziana.

THE CODEX

The present treatise is contained in but a single source, the manuscript Redi 71 (**Re**) of the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana at Florence. The codex is a small volume, measuring 216 x 144 mm., whose original brown leather binding, somewhat restored, has been conserved. A later hand has inscribed on the back of this binding: "Regole del canto". There are 81 paper folios, plus 2 parchment fly-leaves; the recto of the first of these, and ff. 60-81 are blank. The folios have been numbered by a modern hand with Arabic numerals.

The manuscript was copied in the first years of the 15th century by a very legible hand, who used with moderation the ordinary abbreviations of the period. The initials and the titles are in red; the volume is otherwise devoid of any kind of ornamentation. While the pages bear marks of long use, the manuscript is still in good condition, and apparently intact. An *ex-libris* on the verso of the first fly-leaf reads: "A uso di s̄r landomina". On ff. 18v, 19r, 25r, 25v, 26v, 27r, 27v, 28r, 28v, red notes are included in the musical examples.

The following is an inventory of the whole contents of the manuscript, which contains seven musical treatises, all in the Tuscan dialect:

INCIPIT AND EXPLICIT

Ff.

- 1r „Tavola”
- 1. 2r „Ad avere alcuna noticia del canto & prima della mano.

THE TREATISE

The *Notitia del valore delle note* is a short elementary compilation of the principles of mensuralist notation, written in the Tuscan dialect. It is an *unicum*, copied in a manuscript (just described), which contains seven theoretical works, all written in the same tongue.




Date. The treatise was composed in the last years of the 14th or in the first years of the 15th century. The inclusion of hollow red notes, as well as the existence of the *modi maximarum*, taken into account for all the eight rhythmic modes defined in the work, leaves no doubt as to this date. Neither Marchettus nor Philippe de Vitry admits this large mensuration; indeed, the former very clearly denies it. Among the more important Italian writings, we find the mode mentioned for the first time in a work of Prosdocius de Beldemandis, composed in the year 1412³. The mode is also defined in French treatises probably compiled during the latter part of the 14th century. But inasmuch as the author of our compilation drew his material, as we shall see later, from the oral tradition of the Florentine school, and only secondarily from authoritative treatises, it would be imprudent to suppose that the teaching concerning the *modus maximarum* had become widespread in central Italy before the last quarter of the 14th century. Despite the reluctance of theorists to admit the existence of a new mode, the mensuration existed in fact in the works of Florentine musicians composed around the

³ *Tractatus practice cantus mensurabilis ad modum Ytalicorum*, recently re-edited by C. Sartori, *La Notazione italiana del trecento*; also in CS, 3, 228-248.



NOTITIA
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DEL CANTO MISURATO



1c
Pose

¹ Anno ancora le supradette note el medesimo valore nelle pose o seperationi, le quali pose vogliono essere di tempo tanto, quanto sella nota si pronuntiasse. ² Et per tanto la posa della maxima perfecta nel modo perfecto occupera tanti spatii, quanti tempi — cioe brevi — essa maxima varra. ³ Se sara di nove tempi, vuole la sua posa essere come é qui posto per exemplo qui di sotto:

Ex. 9a  ⁴ Se vara .vi., cosi: *Ex. 9b*  o cosi: *Ex. 9c* 

⁵ Se sara di quatro tempi, sara di .iiii. spatii, cosi:

Ex. 10a  ⁶ Se sara di tre, cosi: *Ex. 10b*  ⁷ Se sara di dua, cosi:

Ex. 10c  ⁸ Se sara d'una, cosi: *Ex. 11*  breve. ⁹ Della semi-

breve: *Ex. 12*  ¹⁰ Della minima: *Ex. 13* 



Ex. 14 ¹¹ Della semiminima: 

¹² Et nota che sella nota per cui tu farai la posa sara perfecta, la posa ancora sara cosi, et sella nota sara imperfecta, cosi sara la posa. ¹³ Ora per che ogni imperfecta puo essere perfecta per puncto dal lato dextro, non pero per puncto puo la posa essere perfecta, ma perfecta et imperfecta puo essere secundo la perfectione o imperfectione della nota per cui é posta. ¹⁴ Et delle pose basti.

1d
Legature

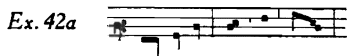
¹ Avendo delle note absolute, et di loro forma et pose, bisogna vedere el loro valore et nome quando sono legate et

1c: 3 di nove *ego*: don *cod.* 4 *posita sub exemplo cod.* — .vi. *ego*: vi *cod.*
5 .iiii. *ego*: iiiii *cod.* 6-7 *posite sub exemplo cod.*

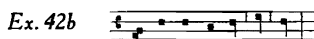
Exempla: 9 *tres partes super una scala continua cod.* 10 *tres partes super una scala continua cod.* 12  *cod.* 13  *cod.*

altra volta o piu, le medesime sincope et spirationi et valore, dissimili le voci. ² Niente di meno taglia ancora é medesimo modo. ³ Ma usasi ne' tenori artificiali*, partendo il tinore in certe parti, si come el tinore di certi motetti, cioe LUCE CLARUS o SUB ARTURO o OMNI HABENTI.

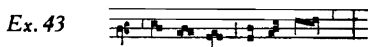
Exemplo:



Tenor LUCE CLARUS a tre taglie di valore a questo modo; ma in voce sono differenziate.



SUB ARTURO a tre taglie di valore; ma in voce sono differenziate.



Tenor OMNI HABENTI a due taglie, non in medesima voce. ⁴ Pero che se fossono le taglie in valore et in medesima, voce, una compositione di note piu volte repetuta parebbe, et non altro.

DEO GRATIAS

21: 3 artificiali ego: artificio atificati cod. sub Arturo ego: sabarturus cod.

Exemplum 42 due partes super una scala continua cod.

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