

**The National Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowships Programme**

**Critical Reflection**

**Candidate: Jostein Gundersen**

**Project: Improvisation. Diminutions from 1350 ad. to 1700 ad.**

**May, 2009**

## 1. Synopsis/Short description

In the revised project description, I stated that the subject of the fellowship was the practice of improvising diminutions in the period from about 1350 to about 1700. The objective of the project was to become able to improvise diminutions in three historical styles, as reflected through three historical documents: The manuscript Codex Faenza<sup>1</sup> (ca1420), Sylvestro Ganassi's *Opera Intitulata Fontegara*<sup>2</sup> (1535) and Christopher Simpson's *The Division-Viol* (1659/65).<sup>3</sup> By and large, this corresponds to the outcome of my research period. The most important deviation from this course has been the emphasis on Codex Faenza, on the cost of the attention given to the two other sources, especially *The Division-Viol*. (An account of these adjustment was given in the annual reports of 2006 and 2007.) This is also reflected in the final documentation (see below).

## 2. Personal artistic position/work in relation to chosen subject area nationally and internationally. Contributions to professional development of the subject area.

### 2.1 General remarks

My project belongs to the field frequently referred to as historically informed performance practice. It is often identified with "early music" and sub-divided according to historical focus. There are, however, no clear criteria for this field so far as repertoire is concerned. The performers who place themselves within that tradition have in common that various kinds of historical information are used as basis for the interpretation of different parameters of the performance. One of these parameters is improvisation. Improvisation is becoming ever more important in historically informed performance practice, as is seen through the attention given to it by an increasing number of performers (also within the National Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowships Programme) and institutions (e.g. *Hochschule für Musik und Theater Leipzig*, *Nordic Joint Study Programme in Early Music*, *Schola Cantorum Basiliensis* and its *Forschungsgruppe Basel für Improvisation*). As far as I have observed, the art of improvising diminutions is not a

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1 Biblioteca comunale Manfrediana di Faenza, Codex Bonadies 117. I thank Isolde Ariani for supplying me with high solution photographs.

2 Facsimile edition by Forni, Bologna, 1969

3 Facsimile edition of the 1659 *The Division-Violist* by Broude Brothers, New York, 1998. Lithographic facsimile of the 1665 *The Division-Viol* by Curwen, London, 1966

significant part of the artistic expression of most performers within the field. Through my research project I have developed my skills and knowledge to internalise diminutions as part of my artistic expression, not only on a general level, but on the level of local style.

## **2.2 References.**

Improvisation of diminutions is not a new phenomenon. The artists who have inspired me to go in this direction are too many to be listed here. If I stay within my three fields of research, the number of inspiring artists is reduced drastically. When I first applied for the research scholarship, I did not know of any recordings or performances with diminutions in the style of any of my chosen styles. In Scandinavia, this situation has not changed. Some new international recordings have made substantial artistic contributions to *Codex Faenza* and *La Fontegara*. Within the field of English divisions, CDs and performances which have been available to me do not reflect any radical development.

### **2.2.1 Codex Faenza**

The repertoire of *Codex Faenza* can be explored in different ways: The diminutions can be

1. performed as they are notated (intabulation suggests a keyboard instrument)
2. performed as they are notated, but with different instrumentation, including ensemble performances
3. a) contextualised through alternations either with the original secular songs, or in a liturgical context  
b) contextualised through incorporation of the diminutions into the original secular songs, or liturgical songs  
c) contextualised through attempts at reconstruction of works that are presumed to be lost
4. a) The styles of *Codex Faenza* can be extrapolated to create similar diminutions to other songs from the secular or liturgical Trecento repertoire.  
b) Diminutions in the style of *Codex Faenza* can be incorporated into performances of other compositions or liturgical songs.

Diminutions of *Codex Faenza* have been performed and recorded numerous times as

described under point 1 and 2.<sup>4</sup> *Ensemble Super Librum* has done some experimentation with the diminutions as described under point 3<sup>5</sup>. *Mala Punica*/Pedro Memelsdorff has gone much further in this direction than any other ensemble with their recent recording of the liturgical music in Codex Faenza.<sup>6</sup> The application of the styles of Codex Faenza as described under point 4 has hardly been investigated. The only example I know is the same recording by *Mala Punica*, where they in several cases add diminished counterpoint to the diminutions, in a corresponding style. I have not yet found any recording nor heard any concert performance where diminutions in style with Codex Faenza were improvised to repertoire outside of Codex Faenza. I have worked substantially in this direction. My contribution to the professional field is the extrapolation of Codex Faenza's styles and employing those styles in improvisations on related repertoire.

Although diminutions have been the main issue of my research scholarship, it is but one parameter of the total performance. It is therefore appropriate to clarify where I position myself on a more general level. Needless to say, all musicians draw upon traditions that are not entirely based on source readings. This is perhaps especially the case for medieval music, since there are less sources of information available than for later repertoire. To a greater or lesser extent performers contribute with new expressions, which, if successful, might in turn form new traditions. My approach to Trecento music is more inspired by the work of *Mala Punica* and Pedro Memelsdorff than by any other active ensemble for this repertoire. This relates particularly to the predilection for adding counterpoint and sonorities and using a rich instrumentation with frequent doubling of voices. Not only *Mala Punica* does this, but in my opinion, the ensemble has been an initiator within this repertoire.<sup>7</sup>

This approach is not historically unfounded. (I discuss further the issue of traditions and approaches in chapter 3.) There are many cases where songs are transmitted in two

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4 Recordings by *Ensemble Organum*/Marcel Peres, *Clemencic Consort*, *Ensemble Gilles Binchois*, *Ensemble Unicorn*, *Micrologus*, *La Reverdie*, *Tetraktys*, *Ensemble Super Librum*, to name a few.

5 *Ensemble Super Librum*, "Intabulation and Improvisation in the 14th century", Sonclair, 1989

6 *Mala Punica*, "Faventina", Naïve, 2007

7 Of the younger groups and performers whose careers I follow with interest, I should mention David Catalunya and Guillermo Perez (both perform with *Mala Punica* and *Tasto Solo*, Catalunya is artistic director of *Canto Coronato*). I have invited both to perform with me. Catalunya is a regular member of my ensemble *Currentes*. The improvisations and counterpoints of Atsushi Moriya (a student of Pedro Memelsdorff and founder of the ensemble *Metro Marina*) have also been inspiring to me. Very recently, after the final concert of my research fellowship, I encountered the CD "Das Lochamer Liederbuch" from the Basel-based ensemble *Dulce Melos*, recorded in 2005. The repertoire of this recording is later than Codex Faenza, but the approach of the ensemble is in some ways similar to that of my own. Of especial interest to me are the improvised diminutions of recorder player Yukiko Taita.

parts in one manuscript, and in three parts in another.<sup>8</sup> This can be seen as signs of a flexible attitude regarding the performance. There are many indications in texts and in iconography that instruments were in use also in vocal music. How to read descriptions of musical performances, as those in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Prodenzani's *Il Saporetto* or Gherardi da Prato's *Il Paradiso degli Alberti*, and how to interpret iconography, are areas of research and discussion where there is no common agreement. I have not tried to contribute to this musicological research. I contribute through the experimentation with hypothetical solutions. With improvisation of diminutions on the recorder as my main project, the use of instruments and the addition of music to the transmitted notation are preconditions. My artistic position and contribution as a performer of Trecento music should be understood under these preconditions.

### 2.2.2 Sylvestro Ganassi's *Opera Intitulata Fontegara*

These preconditions are valid also for my Ganassi-project, although here, the use of instruments and the improvisation of diminutions probably causes less discussion. What attracts most attention to the style of Ganassi is his highly complex rhythmical proportions. No later diminution treatise works along these lines. I know of three recordings where the performers (in all cases recorder players) imitate the style of the diminutions in *Opera Intitulata Fontegara*: "Word Play" by *Musica Antiqua of London*, "Harmonice Musices Odhecaton A" by *Les Flamboyants* and "Io amai sempre" by Pierre Boragno et. al.<sup>9</sup> All recordings are instrumental. The two first recordings include only one track each with Ganasssi-like diminutions. The last recording is entirely devoted to recreating the style and repertoire of Ganassi. It is the most a significant contribution to the artistic research on Ganssi's diminutions on record. My own contribution separates from Boragno's record on two points: Firstly, whereas his performance is purely instrumental, I have experimented with bastarda-like diminutions with a singer performing the cantus. Secondly, Boragno's

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8 e.g. the works of Jacopo da Bologna: *In verde prato*: Squarcialupi Codex (Sq) 2vv, Panciatichi (Pan) 3vv; *I'senti'già*: Sq+San Lorenzo (SL) 2vv, Paris n.a.fr. 6771 "Reina" (PR) 3vv; *Si come al canto*: London 29987 (Lo) + Sq 2vv, Pan + PR 3vv. Source: Huck, Oliver. *Die Musik Des Frühen Trecentos*. Edited by Oliver Huck, Musica Mensurabilis. Hildesheim: Olms, 2005. The works of Zacara: *Deduto sey*: Paris, n.a.fr.4917 2vv (P4917), Bologna Biblioteca Universitaria 2216 (BU) 3vv; *Dicovi per certança* Sq 2vv, SL 3vv; *Sol me trafige 'l cor l'aquila bella* (Lucca Codex (Lu) 3vv, Sq + Modena Biblioteca Estense, MS. a.m.5.24 (ModA) 2vv, *Non credo donna* Lu 2vv, Torino T.III.2 (Boverio) 3vv. Source: Zimei, Francesco (ed.). *Antonio Zacara da Teramo e il suo tempo*. Lucca: Lim Editrice, 2004.

9 "Word Play", Signum records, London 2001 (Track 10: "Cantai, or piango", Philip Thorby, recorder); "Harmonice Musices Odhecaton A", Raumklang, Schloß Goseck, 2001, (Track 25, "De tous biens playne", Michael Form, recorder); "Io amai sempre", ZigZag-Territoires, Paris, 2008 (Pierre Boragno, recorder)

seems to "stitch together" his diminutions, as he says in the liner notes. Although I have frequently tried to shape passages through cutting and pasting from Ganassi's catalogue, I have not applied this method consistently for an entire composition, and not for any of my performances. At this point I also separate from concert performances I have heard during the two first *Frankfurter Renaissance-Treffen*. This forum is in fact the only place I have heard other musicians try to adopt Ganassi's style of diminutions. I have still not met musicians who play diminutions inspired by Ganassi without writing them down first, remaining faithful to the catalogue. The "cut-and-paste"-method was employed by Luca de Paolis in his introduction to the 1991 facsimile of Ganassi's treatise<sup>10</sup> and Howard Mayer Brown.<sup>11</sup> The latter labels the method "applied musicology".<sup>12</sup> A performance of a similarly constructed diminution could be described as the performance of applied musicology. In my opinion, one does not cross the border to artistic research before the expression of performance has some influence on the diminutions, at least on the level of revision. I imitate the style of Ganassi not only in the sense of his figures, but in the sense of improvising. My diminutions are based on his material, but shaped according to expressive continuity and consequence. Through rhythmically complex diminutions I also take a clear artistic stand in the often formulated question whether Ganassi's complex rhythmic proportions should be considered a manner of writing tempo rubato.

### **2.2.3 Christopher Simpson's *The Division-Viol***

As with Codex Faenza, there are several recordings of Simpson's composed divisions to grounds.<sup>13</sup> I have not found any recordings where the performers improvise or compose their own grounds, based on either Simpson or any other 16th century English source to improvisation. The reservation should now be made that much might have happened on the concert stages which I am not aware of. I keep myself up to date on CD-publications, but the concert stage is a different world where musicians might try out approaches that they do not record on CD. This reservation is valid for all of my three fields of research, but especially so for the work on Christopher Simpson. Because of the priority given first and foremost to the work on Codex Faenza, secondly to Ganassi, I do

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10 Paolis, Luca de, ed. *Silvestro Ganassi Dal Fontego (1492-?)*, *Opera Intitulata Fontegara. Introduzione, Pratica Di Musica*. Collana Di Facsimili Della Società Italiana Del Flauto Dolce. Roma: Società Italiana del Flauto Dolce, 1991

11 Brown, Howard Mayer. *Embellishing Sixteenth-Century Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976

12 *ibid.* p.49

13 e.g. "The Monthes"/*Sonnerie*, Virgin classics, 2000, "Rayuela"/*Rayuela*, Ollive Music, 2005, "Breaking the Ground"/*Rozendaal/Schrader*, Centaur records, 2008, "Divisions and Fantasias"/*Coolen/Zipperling/Ayrton* 2007

not feel that I have had enough time to orient myself in the field of artistic research related to the English art of playing divisions to a ground in general, and to Simpson's style in particular. As related above, my work on *The Division-Viol* was downsized in the first year of my fellowship period. Consequently, this is the field where my contribution is smallest, and less defined. The possible implications of Simpson's major didactic treatise remain very far from exhausted. I have worked on improvising diminutions to grounds and English madrigals, but feel that I should research much more profoundly the implications of Simpson's (sub)divisions: Breaking the ground, discanting, and mixed division, his descriptions of the continued ground (as in thorough-bass, motets and madrigals), and of two instruments playing together on a ground. Somewhat surprisingly, I still find myself one of relatively few performers on melodic instruments trying to improvise my own divisions to a ground. My performances are a challenge to those who do not move beyond the boundaries of notation.

### **3. Critical reflection on the process. Artistic choices and turning points, theory applied, dialogue with various networks and the professional environment**

#### **3.1 General remarks:**

Total emancipation from tradition does not exist in musical performance, where tacit knowledge gained through oral transmission is always a factor. In artistic research of early music, therefore, it cannot be considered wrong to base one self in part on traditions established by other performers. In fact, to some extent it is impossible not to do so. Much can be learned and inspired from the sources). Still, any musician does many things in his performance that cannot be justified through the written sources alone. An ensemble, consequently, must be considered an ensemble of traditions. The artistic position of my ensemble *Currentes* is defined through the backgrounds and traditions of the musicians. It is of high importance, especially for a person who holds a significant teaching and/or research position (for which this scholarship qualifies) to be conscious of elements of traditions and innovation in his performance, or indeed any performance. For this reason, I very consciously undertook many experiments during my research fellowship, with respect to repertoire, ensemble constellation, instrumentation and sound production, and approach of performance. In the following, I give a brief report of the most important choices and changes.

## 3.2 Instrumentation and approaches:

### 3.2.1 Ensemble constellations with recorder in performances of polyphonic Trecento music

As already stated, the performance of my projects on the recorder and the addition of diminutions were preconditions for my research. The question whether the recorder was in use in the polyphonic repertoire of the Trecento should nevertheless be discussed. Iconography suggests that it was not the most central instrument. It is depicted much less often than organetti, lutes, fiddles and harps. Still, it is hard to overlook that on the two pages in Squarcialupi Codex most abundantly decorated with musical instruments, between fiddles, harps, lutes, organetti (organ portatives) and shawms, recorders also appear. There are three of them, probably of two different sizes, in each of the openings for *Magister Franciscus Cecus Horganista de Florentia* (Landini) (121v) and *Magister Johannes Horganista de Florentia* (195v) respectively. In Prodenzani's famous *Il Saporetto* from ca 1415, "pifari sordi", soft wind instruments, are mentioned at the end of sonnet 33, and "by implication, used for the pieces named in the two quatrains of Sonnet 34"<sup>14</sup>. At least three of them are *ballate* by Landini.

Even if we on account of the relatively rare occurrence of the recorder in iconography consider it peripheral to secular Trecento polyphony, the character of its sound is not. Just as the clavisimbalum or the clavisiterium can be considered mechanised harps or lutes, the organetto can be considered a mechanised recorder, or rather consort of recorders. Most organetti are depicted as relatively small (2-foot) instruments. Like the recorder, they would probably cover the cantus-register (rather than the tenor function it fills in some ensembles today). Three of the four composers depicted with instruments in Squarcialupi codex play the organetto (Landini, *Magister Johannes*, and *Magister Frater Andreas Horganista de Florentia*). Organetti appear in countless paintings, miniatures and frescos.

It is not possible to deduce securely from this information whether or not the recorder was employed in secular polyphony, and if so, how and to which extent. The sources we know do not discourage the inclusion of the recorder in that context, unless one wishes to consider the modest number of appearances in the sources a sort of negative evidence. I do not find negative evidence of much use in artistic research. Instead, my contribution to the discussion around the use of the recorder (and other high wind instruments) in secular

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14 Nádas, John. "A Cautious Reading of Simone Prudenanzi's *Il Saporetto*." *Recercare: Rivista per lo studio e la pratica della musica antica* 10 (1998): 23-38. p.27



Trecento polyphony is my experience from using it.

I have employed alto and tenor recorders for the Trecento repertoire. (More information on the recorder models follows below). Both these instruments are usually the highest sounding in the ensemble. In an ensemble with a female singer, the ambitus of the tenor recorder equals that of the cantus. If the singer is a mezzo-soprano, the tenor recorder will be higher than the voice. The alto recorder functions as a 2-foot instrument doubling the cantus (or triplum, or cantus secundus) in the octave. (I do not have a penchant for such doubling, and rarely employ it.) The choices that remain are either to 1) double the vocal line, 2) find songs with two upper voices of equal register, or 3) add material to the composition. In the final concert, I used all these approaches. They are, together with doubling at the octave, the solutions at hand when performing songs with a singer and a high wind instrument in the ensemble.

A different approach is to divide instrumental from vocal execution. In the final concert, our performance of Landini's *ballata Angelica biltà* was done first with the recorder, then with the singer accompanied by fiddle and clavisimbalum (without doubling the vocal line).

The evident possibility of a purely instrumental performance was amply explored in the final concert: The instrumental pieces (diminutions and a reconstruction) were performed in nearly all possible combinations: recorder solo, clavisimbalum solo, recorder with fiddle, recorder with clavisimbalum, fiddle with clavisimbalum, and recorder with fiddle and clavisimbalum. Only fiddle solo was left untried.

Excursus: Instruments and Codex Faenza.

Among our purely instrumental performances was Codex Faenza's diminution of Zacara's *Rosetta*. The question may be asked why we played the diminished *ballata* with two instruments (recorder and fiddle) rather than on the present keyboard instrument (on which was performed the diminution of *lo mi son*). All diminutions in Codex Faenza are intabulated, which strongly suggest that the manuscript was intended for a single musician, most likely a keyboard player. Musicologists have discussed extensively the organological aspects of this manuscript.<sup>15</sup> Several arguments have been presented that speak for a performance on two instruments: 1. In some of the diminutions, the cantus and tenor lines overlap each other, so that a performance on a one-

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15 see for example McGee, Timothy J. "Instruments and the Faenza Codex." *Early Music* 14, no. 4 (1986): 480-90; Eberlein, Roland. "The Faenza Codex: Music for Organ or for Lute Duet?" *Early Music* 20, no. 3 (1992): 461-66; Eberlein, Roland, and Timothy J. McGee. "Once Again, the Faenza Codex." *Early Music* 20, no. 3 (1992): 466-68

manual keyboard is impossible. No two-manual keyboard is known before the 16th century, and no organ of the 14th century has pedals covering the necessary range.<sup>16</sup> 2. A few of the diminutions have repeated notes, most conspicuously in *Non avra may pietà*. These passages are awkward on a keyboard, but very idiomatic for example on a lute. 3. The diminution of *Sotto l'imperio* uses coloration to indicate the lower staff shifts from following the original tenor-line to following the original contratenor or cantus. One possible reason could be to facilitate an ensemble performance.<sup>17</sup> 4. A far heavier argument for an ensemble performance is the probability that some of the diminutions were copied from parts, not from another intabulation: The use of coloration in *Sotto l'imperio* shows that the scribe knew all parts of the original composition, and an erasure in tempus 4 shows confirms that he most probably copied from parts.<sup>18</sup> In the *secunda pars* of *Che pena è questa* (80r), the scribe overlooked two tempora in the cantus part, but not in the tenor, causing a shift of two tempora between the two parts. This was not discovered by the scribe before copying the tenor line. Noticing that he had two tempora too many in the tenor in comparison to the cantus, he chose to compose on the page a new ending in the cantus part, retaining the original length of the tenor line. As Memelsdorff has shown, the scribe erased his first creative attempt, revealing that he is a copyist, not the composer of the diminution.<sup>19</sup> It is very unlikely that the scribe would not have noticed his error earlier if he was copying from a score.<sup>20</sup> If indications in the intabulations that the scribe was copying from parts is not enough to convince the reader of the possibility that diminutions in parts existed, I finally refer to Memelsdorff's article on the manuscript Siena 36, where he uncovers a diminution, in parts, on the first section of *Kyrie cunctipotens genitor Deus*.<sup>21</sup> I firmly believe diminution were not a technique reserved for keyboard performers, and see no reason why one should not try to adopt the style of Codex Faenza on other instruments.

In addition to the different instrumentations heard in the final concert, during the scholarship period I also presented a concert with Trecento polyphony including an organetto player in the ensemble. The difficulty of the constellation was that the organetto and the recorder were covering the same register as the singer.

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16 McGee, Timothy J. "Instruments and the Faenza Codex", p.482

17 Memelsdorff, Pedro. "Motti a Motti: Reflections on a Motet Intabulation of the Early Quattrocento." *Recercare: Rivista per lo studio e la pratica della musica antica* 10 (1998): 39-68, p. 57f

18 *ibid.* p. 57

19 *ibid.* p. 59, and Memelsdorff, Pedro. "New Music in the Codex Faenza 117." *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 13, no. 2 (2004): 141-61, p. 143f

20 Memelsdorff has found many more indications in the manuscript as to which diminutions were copied from an already intabulated version, and which were copied from parts. See his forthcoming study and facsimile edition.

21 Memelsdorff, Pedro. "Siena 36 rivisitata: Paolo da Firenze, Johannes Ciconia, e l'interrelazione di polifonia e trattatistica in fonti del primo quattrocento." *Acta Musicologica* 76, no. 2 (2004): 159-91, p.177 ff., facsimile on p.189, transcription on p.191

We also performed several times two-part songs without adding material to the transmitted notation or doubling voices: the cantus part was sung, the fiddle played the tenor. Because of the clear preconditions for my research project, I did not give priority to such a rendering of the repertoire in the final concert.

### **3.2.2 Ensemble constellations and sound production**

The sound of the ensemble is not constituted by the instrumentation alone, but also by the way the musicians perform on their instruments. This is particularly true for the field of medieval music, where there are less conventions as to how an instrument should be made and played than in later repertoire. During my research period, I have gone very far in experimenting with musicians from different traditions. The audible results were accordingly disparate.

For the Trecento program, I have worked with singers from different traditions: Singers with classical training, early music-training, and singers from the (I dare say exotic) school of Dr. Rebecca Stewart at the *Schola Cantorum Brabantie*. I also worked with fiddle players with very different backgrounds: Two of them play the baroque violin, two of them are folk musicians playing the Norwegian Harding-fiddle. Their medieval fiddles are as dissimilar as their playing styles.

For the Cinquecento program, I worked with singers from all the traditions mentioned above. The viola da gamba players I worked with, performed on violas based on late baroque models. Not until February 2009 did I meet a gamba player possessing an instrument based on 16th century instruments as presented in iconography (Holger Faust, Köln). As became evident on that occasion (*II. Frankfurter Renaissance Treffen*), this is an area where instrument makers have obtained extremely different results, using historical documents from the same period. The incompatible results of different instrument makers claiming to base themselves on historical documents, demonstrate the relative significance of those documents, and the personal influence of the maker and the performer. It goes without saying that this is valid for sound production in general.

As with the Trecento program, we tried out different ensemble constellations (full vocal ensemble with instruments doubling the parts, one singer accompanied by harpsichord and a recorder playing a "bastarda"-part, instrumental performances with recorder trio, one recorder and a harpsichord, one recorder and an organ, to mention a few). In the end, I settled for a small ensemble, similar to the Trecento ensemble, consisting of a singer, a keyboard player, a viola da gamba player and myself. What I

particularly like about this constellation is the necessity of adapting the music, arriving at solutions that sound out of the ordinary.

The choice of instruments and musicians kept me occupied during the whole scholarship period, and will continue to do so. At the onset I followed principles I believed would lead the projects in the right directions: I bought "medieval" recorders<sup>22</sup> and an organetto for the Trecento repertoire, and ordered a consort of renaissance recorders for the Ganassi-projects. I firmly decided only to work with singers and instrumentalists who were specialised in the repertoire, and started searching for viola da gamba players with 16th century instruments. At the end of the research fellowship things look different. Some of the choices I met regarding instruments initially were of a pragmatic nature. The medieval recorders did not work in the context of my Trecento-ensemble, so I used so-called Ganassi-recorders instead. The same instruments were used for the Ganassi-project, since the consort I ordered will be finished only in 2011. The Ganassi-recorders were in use partially also for the English program of 17th-century music, together with one of the medieval flutes and a couple of high-baroque models. At this point, though, I chose instruments according to which sound suited the ensemble, not from lack of instruments or from principles.

The final results reflect not only what I found most original, but also what I found most convincing. My guiding parameter at a certain point became less principle decisions, and more aesthetic choices based on which instruments and musicians fitted best together.

### **3.3 Training and network**

During the research period I have undertaken substantial theoretical training, and visited many seminars and lectures. I frequented Pedro Memelsdorff's medieval seminars at the *Escola Superior de Musica de Catalunya* in Barcelona (ca160 hours), finished a "Corso di Perfezionamento in l'Ars Nova in Europa" at the *Università Roma Tor Vergata* (144 hours) and visited *Schola Cantorum Brabantie* in Tilburg/Holland (ca 30 hours). I frequented a seminar for Trecento literature at the University of Bergen, took private lessons in Latin, and improved my knowledge of the Italian language. I visited the seminar "Codex Faenza 117 e l'alternativim in Italia alla fine del medioevo" organised by *Fondazione Giorgio Cini*, and the 1st and 2nd *Frankfurter Renaissance-Treffen*. My international

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22 The description "medieval" gives the impression of a true copy. The instruments are based on iconography, so their sound is to a large extent the result of the maker's taste and my own requests.

network of musicians and musicologists has largely been created through these institutions. I lament having very few contacts in France and in Basel. My attempts at visiting Sorbonne (Bagby/Livljanic) and Basel failed on practicalities.

### **3.4 Applied theory and method.**

There is no standard music history or music theory for Trecento. Musicologists are still discussing everything from modal theory and solmisation to counterpoint and diminution. It has therefore been necessary for me not only to study general music theory relevant to the period, but also keep myself updated on recent developments in a fast developing field. Because of the many problems with modern editions of the Trecento music, I have learned sufficiently the Italian notation to make my own editions. (All the songs in the final concert were performed from my editions, except the diminution on *lo mi son* from Codex Faenza, which was performed from an edition made by David Catalunya.)

It has been most important to study the music, which often cannot be described with general rules for composition. This is certainly the case for Codex Faenza. A few past attempts at describing the style of the diminutions have led to generalisations.<sup>23</sup> I have tried to avoid that, by analysing small groups of diminutions, or even single diminutions, and using them as models for my own improvisations.

In the first months of the scholarship period I was quite busy making catalogues of diminutions in Trecento repertoire. I started with the diminutions in the early madrigals (Piero, Giovanni, Jacopo), with the intention of comparing these diminutions with those in Codex Faenza. I followed different strategies in making the catalogues. I first followed the model of the renaissance diminution treatises, using melodic interval as unit of organisation. It turned out very difficult to reduce diminutions to basic melodic intervals: In most cases, there is more than one possibility of reduction, so that the decision where in the catalogue to place a particular diminution became a matter of interpretation.

Another problem with this method is that it does not help us to contextualise the diminutions. All the methods for learning how to improvise from Ganassi onwards are based on music theory and consequent learning systems that do not belong to the education of our times. It is necessary to employ modern teaching/learning techniques for

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<sup>23</sup> See for example McGee, Timothy J. "Ornamentation, National Styles, and the Faenza Codex." *Early Music New Zealand* Vol 3 Pt 2 (1987): 3-14, passim. For a closer discussion, see my article "Reflections on diminutions in the polyphonic music of Trecento" (unpublished, presented as part of the critical reflections on the final documentation of the artistic research fellowship.

modern performers. This is not to say that the method of studying catalogues of diminutions are of little value, but they are of less immediate value to us than they were to their first readers. The training of a musician in the late middle ages and renaissance would include knowledge of solmisation, of the modes, mensural notation, counterpoint (contemporaneous, of course), etc.<sup>24</sup> As Busse Berger shows, the memorisation of counterpoint progressions was an essential part of the training in the 14th (and also in the 16th).<sup>25</sup> For a musician who wishes to study the music of the past, it is crucial to understand the basic music theory and methods of that time. There is, however, a long way from understanding a learning system cognitively to the complete automatisisation of it through thousands of hours of memorisation and music making, together with other musicians following the same training system.

For this reason, I started to make Trecento catalogues based on counterpoint and rhythmic division, so that I would easier recognise the situation to which a certain figure would apply. (The method is also closer to the treatises up to Tinctoris dealing with diminished counterpoint. Only the Berkeley treatise does not show the underlying tenor for his diminutions, but is as the others organised after rhythmic division.) My rhythmic categories followed the Italian system of *divisiones*. My main contrapuntal categories were *principalis/finalis* and *penultima*. They do not cover nearly all contrapuntal situations. *Antepenultima* is a too loose as a category, so I let tenor movement and certain, frequently occurring contrapuntal successions form the basis.

I discovered after a while a lack of compatibility between the goal of my project and the purpose of my catalogue. The catalogue's size and growing complexity would perhaps have made it a tool for musicological survey and comparison had I finished it. Its comprehensiveness was not very practical for my intention of adopting particular styles of diminutions. Time time it would have taken to make the catalogue ready for musicological use would have been at the cost of practising and memorising diminutions. I decided to make smaller catalogues that could be shaped according to my needs. I found this method of organising the material much more flexible and informative. My main parameters of organisation are still contrapuntal progressions and cadences, but I also frequently organise diminutions after melodic interval (especially when the original song is unknown,

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24 See f.ex. Berger, Karol. *Musica Ficta. Theories of Accidental Inflections in Vocal Polyphony from Marchetto Da Padova to Gioseffo Zarlino*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 2

25 Berger, Anna Maria Busse. *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, especially chapter 4. Although the treatises changed from listing musical examples to formulating rules in the modern sense, "memorization of cadences and progressions continued". p 156

or the counterpoint is difficult to deduce securely), or after the figures. With this last method one easily sees in which situations a given figure can occur, instead of seeing the figures that can occur in a given situation.

The idea of making catalogues based on counterpoint can be transferred to *La Fontegara* and later treatises. By inserting the assumed counterpoint into the catalogue, one facilitates not only memorisation of the figures, but also analysis of the style.

The treatise of Christopher Simpson is much more available to a modern performer, as it is much closer to our harmonic training systems. The harmonic basis is very clear when "breaking the ground" (playing diminutions on the bass line). The examples for "descanting" upon the ground (playing melodic diminutions on a melody accompanied by the ground), are given with the ground, so there is no way of misunderstanding the underlying bass line.

### **3.5 The relation between memorisation and improvisation**

The issue of memorisation is central to improvisation. I have in the three past years been confronted a few times with the demur that it does not look like I am improvising, because I have sheet music in front of me. The naiveness of this hesitation surprises me, but at the same time shows the difficult relation classically trained musicians have to improvisation. (No-one has ever charged me with the accusation "it does not *sound* as if you are improvising", which for the sake of relevance and polemic would raise the level considerably.) One seems to think that improvisation must be the opposite of everything we normally do, i.e. improvisation means no memory aid such as sheet music, no preparation, no forethought, etc. It cannot be farther from the truth. I prepare very much the compositions I want to improvise on. I learn the structure by heart, but still prefer to keep it in front of me so I can concentrate on shaping my diminutions. I believe most other musicians who improvise over a structure do the same.

## 4. Critical reflection on results

### 4.1 Relevance and contribution

The introductory definition of improvisation in Grove Music Online reminds us that "to some extent every performance involves elements of improvisation" and "to some extent every improvisation rests on a series of conventions or implicit rules."<sup>26</sup> When improvising diminutions in historical styles, the improvisatory element is the diminutions, the historical styles are the conventions or implicit rules. By internalising a large number of figures within one style, we at the same time teach ourselves the conventions, so that we might be capable of creating new figures within the historical style without constant recourse to the sources. It is at this point we can claim to be improvising. During my research scholarship I have passed beyond this point in all the three styles I set out to study.

The field of historically informed performance practice has since many years given an increasing attention to improvisation as part of the performer's expressive possibilities. My project contributes to challenge the habit among the majority of classically trained musicians, even within the field of historically informed performance practice, to perform written-out versions of what was originally improvised. It has particular relevance through the level of specialisation, where single sources define the conventions of the style. Improvisations in the styles of Codex Faenza and *La Fontegara* are unknown to most musicians and listeners alike, which adds further to the relevance of my presentations.

### 4.1 Communication of the final concert:

My performances of the Trecento music have shown to be of high value to an audience with little or no experience with the repertoire. The final concert was very well received, despite, or perhaps because, the novelty the music represented to most listeners. We were successful in creating a programme which was varied in expression and approach, and at the same time consistent in its form and development, both stylistically and textually.

Because of the audience's lack of familiarity with the repertoire, I decided to shape the booklet in a way that would facilitate access rather than intimidation. The first choice

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26 Bruno Nettl, et al. "Improvisation." Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. 25 May. 2009 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13738>>



was not to include texts and translations. I care a great deal about the texts, but my experience is that it is artistically contraproductive to print ten to twelve pages of poetry with translations. The audience feels obliged to follow the poetry as the program develops. Instead of giving the ensemble their full attention, they divide it on three tasks: listening, trying to follow the text (in a language they do not understand), and at the same time trying to read the translations. I chose to give a short introduction to *our* reading of the texts, which is what interests in the concert situation. My introduction fulfilled that function. At the same time, it was shaped so as to gradually reveal my artistic development and position, from an artist searching for beauty, to an artist presenting himself more than that which he was searching for, thus reflecting the programme's textual development in a double sense. I am particularly happy with that part of the programme booklet.

Also the section "Transmission, Research, Performance" followed that development, if less artistically. To underline once again the development from source reading to artistic processing and presentation, and also to stress the importance of openness around sources and processes, I adopted vocabulary from definitions of open-source computing technology in the second paragraph of this section.

In my opinion, the programme, supported by the booklet, offered a highly artistic contribution to a debate on the role of the performer, subtle enough not to draw attention away from the artistic expression.

## **Reflections on diminutions in the polyphonic music of Trecento<sup>1</sup>**

A text presented as part of the critical reflection on the final documentation

The National Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowships Programme

Candidate: Jostein Gundersen

May 2009

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<sup>1</sup> An early version of this text was presented as a final exam for the "Corso di perfezionamento in l'Ars Nova in Europa", *Università Roma Tor Vergata*, 2008.

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"...la divisione non si fa se non per aprire la sententia della cosa divisa..."

Dante, *Vita Nova*<sup>2</sup>

## **Introduction:**

When I applied for the Research Fellowship, I was convinced that Codex Faenza reflected an improvisatory practice. I made it a precondition for my project that I would improvise diminutions in the style of Codex Faenza to compositions of the Trecento. In the following reflections I intend to question my understanding of the relation between composition and improvisation in Trecento.

## **1. Definitions of diminutions:**

Diminution is a term used frequently to describe ornaments in polyphonic music. Writers usually refer to passages of notes that are faster than the text declamation in vocal music (melismas), or faster than the pace of strict counterpoint in vocal or instrumental music. Attempts have been made at more exact definitions.

*Grove Music* defines diminution as

"A term used in the context of improvised embellishment during the Renaissance and Baroque periods to describe a melodic figure that replaces a long note with notes of shorter value. Diminution is close in meaning to the English 'division', the Italian *passaggio*, the Spanish *glosa*, and the French *double*. Whereas specific graces such as trills or *appoggiaturas* were applied to single notes, diminutions served to decorate the transition from one note of a melody to the next with passage-work, giving scope for virtuoso display."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nova*, a cura di Luca Carlo Rossi, Milano, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1999, chapter 7/13 (p.67)

<sup>3</sup> Greer Garden and Robert Donington. "Diminution." In *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/42071> (accessed November 24, 2008).

*Grove Music* does not include medieval music in the definition of the term. *The Oxford Companion to Music's* article on "ornaments and ornamentation"<sup>4</sup> discusses music up to 1600 in three short paragraphs, of which one paragraph covers the middle ages, mentioning one medieval theorist (Hieronymus de Moravia) and one medieval composer (Machaut), but no sources. "Diminution" is in this entry again equated with "passaggi", and is described as "compound ornamentation". In both entries diminutions are considered ornaments, which in turn are considered improvisatory and non-structural in all available entries on the subject, either implicitly or explicitly.<sup>5</sup>

*Grove Music* gives more information on diminution in the middle ages under the entry "Counterpoint"<sup>6</sup>, mentioning four of the five Ars Nova treatises that describe diminutions in more detail (see chapter 4). *Contrapunctus diminutus* is equated to "figured composition", and it is pointed out that counterpoint and diminished counterpoint were largely separate in theory and terminology up to Tinctoris. The chapters on counterpoint up to 1600 are written by Klaus-Jürgen Sachs. In his referential study on counterpoint in the 14th and 15th centuries, Klaus-Jürgen Sachs defines *contrapunctus diminutus* followingly:

"...die Technik des Diminuirens, d.h. des Einfügens von Zwischentönen in die Gegenstimme eines vorhandenen Note-gegen-Note-Satzes..."<sup>7</sup>

The definition is deduced from the medieval treatises on counterpoint. Sachs writes a history of counterpoint as moving towards a "vollausgebildete Contrapunctus-Lehre", where *contrapunctus* means a strict two-part note-against-note counterpoint, with interchanging perfect and imperfect consonances and contrary movement between the voices as hallmarks. This counterpoint was the fundament of *contrapunctus diminutus*. By the end of the 15th century, the term *contrapunctus* usually covered

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<sup>4</sup> McVeigh, Simon and Neal Peres Da Costa. "Ornaments and ornamentation." In *The Oxford Companion to Music*, edited by Alison Latham. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e4894> (accessed November 24, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> See for example the definition of "embellishment": "That element in music which is decorative rather than structural". Robert Donigton. "Embellishment." In *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/08765> (accessed November 24, 2008):

<sup>6</sup> Klaus-Jürgen Sachs and Carl Dahlhaus. "Counterpoint." In *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06690> (accessed November 24, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Sachs, Klaus-Jürgen. *Der Contrapunctus Im 14. Und 15. Jahrhundert. Untersuchungen Zum Terminus, Zur Lehre Und Zu Den Quellen*. Edited by Han Heinrich Eggebrecht. Vol. XIII, Beihefte Zum Archiv Für Musikwissenschaft. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974. p. 142

both *contrapunctus* and *contrapunctus diminutus*.<sup>8</sup> These two terms serve to divide between no more than two levels: Strict note-against-note counterpoint, and any counterpoint with more than one note against another. If the treatises teach theory of composition, diminished counterpoint includes nearly all surviving polyphonic works.

Evidently, Sachs' definition is not compatible with the descriptions of ornamentation and diminution in *Grove Music* and *The Oxford Companion of Music*, as it would imply that the majority of notes copied into Trecento manuscripts are non-structural and reflect an improvisatory tradition. These discrepant descriptions result from the emphasis on the aspects of performance on the one hand, and on counterpoint theory on the other.

## 2. Diminutions and counterpoint treatises

With a few exceptions (see chapter 4), Ars Nova treatises on composition deal only with the rules of note-against-note counterpoint. Strict counterpoint as described above is in the medieval treatises frequently described as the fundament of diminished counterpoint<sup>9</sup>, and is often compared to the construction of a fundament.<sup>10</sup> Several scholars have accordingly applied reductive analysis to Trecento repertoire,<sup>11</sup> uncovering a "Skeleton" (Horsley, Bent) or a "Gerüstsatz" (Huck). As Huck points out in his analysis of *Quando i oselli* from Codex Rossi, the diminutions in cantus (Huck calls them figurations) usually hide parallel perfect consonances in the underlying counterpoint.<sup>12</sup> Perforce the counterpoint cannot be considered a "vollausgebildete Contrapunctus-Lehre", in which parallel perfect consonances do not play a part.

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* passim, particularly chapters II.6. (pp. 45-56) and IV.2. (pp. 140-169)

<sup>9</sup> See for example Prosdocius de Beldomandi: "contrapunctus proprie sumptus alterius comuniter sumpti fundamentum", in Herlinger, Jan: *Contrapunctus. Critical text, translation and introduction*. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1984 pp. 30-31.

<sup>10</sup> Sachs, *Der Contrapunctus*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>11</sup> For example Bent, Margaret, "Ciconia, Prosdocius, and the workings of musical grammar as exemplified in O felix templum and O Padua" in *Johannes Ciconia. Musicien de la transition*. Vendrix (ed). Turnhout, Belgium, Brepols Publishers pp. 65-108; Sara Fuller, "On Sonority in Fourteenth-Century Polyphony: Some Preliminary Reflections", in *Journal of Music Theory*, vol. 30, 1986, pp. 35-70 (particularly p. 47ff.), Jane Flynn, "The Intabulation of De toutes fleurs (B31) in the Codex Faenza as Analytical Model" in Leach, Elizabeth E., *Machaut's music: new interpretations*. Woodbridge, Boydell Press. 2003, pp. 175-191. Also Oliver Huck, "Die Musik des frühen Trecento", Hildesheim, Olms, 2005, p.113ff.

<sup>12</sup> Huck, *op.cit.* p. 114

Yet parallel perfect consonances happen all the time in the Trecento repertoire, as do parallel dissonances, not only in the *Gerüstsatz*, but also in the diminutions.<sup>13</sup> It is clear that the rules of strict counterpoint as formulated above were not considered a necessity by all composers. An interesting witness in theory to this practice is the counterpoint treatise of Paolo da Firenze.<sup>14</sup> One of his counterpoint examples basically consists of parallel fifths and octaves, "legalised" by a counterpoint of two notes in cantus against one note in tenor. When the tenor has a rising stepwise movement, the cantus goes from the fifth to the octave on each tenor note, thus securing contrary movement. When the tenor descends, the cantus leaps down from the octave to the fifth, and moves through the sixth to the next octave consonance. A glance at the compositions of Paolo reveals such counterpoint in bar 39 of the *ballata* "Amor da po' che tu", and in the two last bars of the *pedi* of the *ballata* "Amor, de'dimmi". There are also numerous cases where diminutions in cantus hide parallel perfect consonances in the underlying counterpoint.

Sachs considers Paolo's treatise as belonging between *Klanghschrittlehre* and *contrapunctus*.<sup>15</sup> (This classification of contrapuntal characteristics should not be confused with historical/chronological development. Considering the birthyear of Paolo, according to Fallows ca1355,<sup>16</sup> Paolo's treatise must be later than for example the Berkeley treatise (1375), which according to Sachs represents the "Kernlehre"<sup>17</sup>.) If the term "diminution" is derived from *contrapunctus diminutus*, it is a paradox that musicology *applies* it to describe figurations (to use a more neutral word) appearing in music that musicology disqualifies as true *contrapunctus*. I am not suggesting that another term ought to be employed for figurations in all Trecento music that does not follow the strict rules of note-against-note counterpoint (although an investigation into the terminological multitude of the Trecento would be interesting). Yet we should be aware that Trecento music does not always employ the rules of strict counterpoint,

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<sup>13</sup> To mention but one example: "Io me son uno che per le frasche" by Jacopo da Bologna (the version of Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Panciatichiano 26), tempora 1-3, 8, 16, 29-30 (*Gerüst*), 46, 48-49, 51-52, 62, 62-63, 64, 65-66. There are also parallel 7ths in bars 20 and 33. I follow the edition *Die mehrfach überlieferten Kompositionen des frühen Trecento*, Oliver Huck, Sandra Dieckmann (ed.), Olms, 2007

<sup>14</sup> "Ars ad discantandum contrapunctum secundum magistrum Paulum de Florentia", published by Pier Paolo Scattolin: "I trattati di Jacopo da Bologna e Paolo da Firenze", *Quadrievium*, vol. XV - Fasc. 1, 1974, pp. 63-79. The example referred to in the text is on p. 69

<sup>15</sup> Sachs, op.cit., p. 115

<sup>16</sup> David Fallows. "Paolo da Firenze." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. 29 May. 2009 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20842>>.

<sup>17</sup> Sachs, *Der Contrapunctus*, p. 145

and that diminutions consequently are not necessarily an extension of or secondary to strict counterpoint.

Terminology was not always uniform in the 14th century, as is evident from Sachs's study. *Contrapunctus diminutus* ("De diminutione contrapuncti"/de Muris)<sup>18</sup> seems to be synonymous with a considerable number of historical terms, including *contrapunctus large sumptus* and *cantus fractibilis* ("Contrapunctus"/Prosdocimo<sup>19</sup>), *discantus mensurabilis floribus adornatus* (Petrus frater dictus Palma Ociosa, 1336<sup>20</sup>), *voces in partes dividere* or *verbulare* (Berkeley treatise/Goscalcus)<sup>21</sup>, *fractura contrapuncti* or *biscantus* ("Ad sciendum artem cantus")<sup>22</sup>, *discantare*,<sup>23</sup> etc. To my knowledge, there is no scholar who has suggested semantic differences between the terms.

Sachs gives account of five treatises before Tinctoris that deal with diminished counterpoint: the above mentioned Palma Ociosa (1336), "De diminutione contrapuncti", the Berkeley treatise (1375), "Ad sciendum artem cantus" and "Regulae de contrapunto" by Antonius de Leno (beginning of 15th century).<sup>24</sup> The five treatises have different strategies of systematization of diminutions. Petrus displays diminutions according to the four main mensurations. Antonio da Leno shows how to write diminutions of two notes against one, then three notes against one. After that he deals with three notational issues: Prolation, alteration, and the *punctus divisionis* (or *ponte de divisione*, as he calls it), then turns to the proportions *sesquitertia*, *sesquialtera*, *dupla*, *dupla superpartiens* (8:3), *tripla*, *quadrupla*, before

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<sup>18</sup>The author of "Cum notum sit" and its second part "De diminutione contrapuncti" is generally believed to be de Muris. See Sachs, *Der Contrapunctus*, p. 181ff.

<sup>19</sup> Prosdocimus de Beldomandi/Herlinger, pp. 30-31

<sup>20</sup> Sachs, *Der Contrapunctus* pp. 48-49 and 140-141

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* p. 145 and pp. 148-153, and Ellsworth, Oliver *The Berkeley Manuscript*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1984, p. 120ff. (For a short discussion of the attribution of the treatise to Goscalcus, see the introduction, pp. 13-15).  
p. 120ff.

<sup>22</sup> Sachs, *Der Contrapunctus*, pp.153-154

<sup>23</sup> In some medieval treatises, *discantare* takes on the same meaning as *contrapunctus diminutus*. Sachs gives the name "eigentlicher jüngerer Discantus" to this usage of the term. *Ibid.* p. 36ff, particularly p. 41

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, on Petrus, pp. 140-142, "De diminutione", p. 45f. and pp.143-147, Berkeley/Goscalcus, p. 145, p. 148-153, "Ad sciendum artem cantus" pp.153-154, Antonius de Leno, p. 141f. Sachs does not publish the musical examples of Petrus. A transcription of the treatise with the music in modern notation has been published by Johannes Wolf: "Ein Beitrag zur Diskantlehre des 14. Jahrhunderts", *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft 15. Jahrgang*, 1914, pp. 504-543. Sachs does not publish much of the problematic examples in Berkeley, and only gives a small portion of Antonio de Leno's examples. The date of Leno's treatise is suggested in Gallo, F. Alberto and Andreas Bucker. "Antonius de Leno." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01062> (accessed November 24, 2008).



he finally shows how to notate the pause. "Ad sciendum artem cantus" is systematic in the intervallic relations, and uses the same tenor line for several examples. Both tenor and discantus in "De diminutione contrapuncti" are held within the space of one hexachord. Goscalcus is a special case: As Petrus, he gives examples in the four mensurations, but he only writes the counterpart, and not the tenorline. In addition, there are many long ascending ligatures interchanging with notation of shorter note values. At first the ligatures seem to function as division lines between the various examples. The ligatures are all different in ambitus, but with seemingly no connection to the *verbulas*. Except for Sachs, who found some consequence in the ambitus of all the examples, I do not know of attempts at explaining the examples from the point of view of counterpoint.

Berger tells us that medieval musicians had a "memorial archive" that covered the three areas chant, music theory treatises (on intervals, solmization and the hexachord), and, from the 13th century, counterpoint.<sup>25</sup> She believes the music student, having memorised all note-against-note progressions, would be taught diminutions not by way of rules to be memorised, but through numerous examples. The examples would facilitate the students invention of his own diminutions, rather than repeating formulae.<sup>26</sup> This could help to explain the lack of a tenor part in Goscalcus examples. He probably expects the student to have memorised the preceding diagram with possible contrapuntal sonorities,<sup>27</sup> from which one can imagine an underlying tenor to the diminutions.

Goscalcus demands of a master that he respects the counterpoint when making a *discant*. He is aware of a common notion that diminutions (which he calls "verbula") work as intermediary notes, which then allow two or more consecutive perfect consonances to appear in the counterpoint. But, as he writes, in so doing, one "does not proceed masterfully."<sup>28</sup> Evidently, to Paolo diminutions were not merely the tools of a *cantor*, but belonged to the training of a *magister*.

The examples of diminution by Petrus allows parallel fifths and octaves in his diminutions, perhaps not so since he is writing 40 years earlier than Goscalcus.

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<sup>25</sup> Berger, Anna Maria B., *Medieval music and the art of memory*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005, p. 45.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, pp. 152-154

<sup>27</sup> Ellsworth, *op. cit.*, pp.116-117

<sup>28</sup> "...non magistraliter procedit", *ibid*, pp. 130-131

Antonio da Leno, on the other hand, is a later writer than Goscalcus, but still allows the kind of progressions the latter deems "non magistraliter".<sup>29</sup>

What the diminution treatises have in common is the method, not the style. They all follow more or less the scheme outlined by Berger, in that they teach intervals and proportions first, then counterpoint, and finally extend the counterpoint with diminutions.<sup>30</sup>

I do not know any study comparing the styles of the diminution treatises with the Trecento repertoire. It is also outside the scope of these reflections. Such a study would be helpful to determine to which extent the treatises are connected to the composition techniques of the Trecento, and vice versa.

### 3. Diminutions as improvisatory element of performance

Grove Music, in its description of diminutions as performative element, relates to a later repertoire of treatises on improvisation. There are reasons to consider diminutions in Trecento as signs of improvisation in performance as well. Perhaps the most important is that the transmission of Trecento polyphony often displays great variance in the diminutions, where there is more than one source for a composition.

A comparison of early Trecento compositions that are transmitted in more than one source shows that there is much more variance in the transmission of cantus diminutions than in the tenor lines.<sup>31</sup> The cases of a stable transmission of cantus diminutions with a variance in tenor are not few (I counted for example a little more than 20 in the works of Jacopo da Bologna), but not nearly as many as the variant readings of the diminutions where the tenor is the same in all sources. Furthermore, tenor-changes are very often minor rhythmic differences, whereas the top voices have a higher proportion of melodic to rhythmic divergences. The variance in Trecento

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<sup>29</sup> Sachs, *Der Contrapunctus*, p. 142f. According to Sachs, Antonio base himself "eindeutig auf dem Contrapunctus." Yet in the first example, there are numerous cases of parallel octaves hidden by intermediary sixths in the diminution.

<sup>30</sup> Antonius de Leno's treatise starts with counterpoint, but he refers to a preceding, lost chapter in the treatise that must have treated solmisation: "Dinanzi se dito dele mutazione a presso dirassi dele voxes che se trovan nel contraponto." *Saggi musicali italiani*, Andreas Giger (ed.): [http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/smi/quattrocento/LNREG\\_TEXT.html](http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/smi/quattrocento/LNREG_TEXT.html). Accessed 29.05.2009

<sup>31</sup> I follow the edition of Oliver Huck and Sandra Dieckmann (ed.), *Die mehrfach überlieferten Kompositionen des frühen Trecento*. Olms, 2007

diminutions would be a subject for a thorough study,<sup>32</sup> based on the *ductus* of scribes rather than style of composers, as composers are only accessible to us through scribes.<sup>33</sup> Another argument for not attempting a definition of style based on composer, is the number of works transmitted without ascription, or with conflicting ascriptions between the sources.

Other arguments for the improvisational character of diminutions have been set forth by scholars: Brooks Toliver regards the melismas of Codex Rossi as improvisatory on grounds of their formlessness: "They seldom end on the pitches that began them...they possess little coherence in the way of imitation, voice-exchange, augmentation, and/or diminution of a melody or theme, or even any casual musical repetition."<sup>34</sup> She concludes that the singers probably did not remember the melismas, but performed them differently each time.

I find Tolivers observations difficult to accept. I do not see how the melismas in Codex Rossi are "formless". In light of Berger's writing on the medieval art of memory, the conclusion that the singers did not remember their passages seems a little weak. Assuming that the performers indeed did give the diminutions a new shape in each performance, it is just as likely that they did so because it was an open parameter, and not because of memory problems.

Wilson suggests that the early Florentine repertoire is in an improvisatory style.<sup>35</sup> Contrary to Toliver, he stresses the "more theoretically schooled artistry," and less improvisational elements in the works of Piero and Jacopo.<sup>36</sup> (Piero is represented in Rossi Codex with at least two madrigals, and Pirotta speculates about the attribution of three more songs in the manuscript to Piero.<sup>37</sup>) Wilson puts forward the possibility of a mutual influence between the northern madrigal and the florid lauda repertoire of Florence, and shows how the lauda repertoire shares melodic figures with the madrigals. Since these figures also appear in Codex Faenza, he suggests that

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<sup>32</sup> Such a study has partly been done by Huck, see footnote 30. He does not analyze the stylistic differences between the diminutions in the sources, but has made the material available for further investigation.

<sup>33</sup> See for example Jacopo's "Di novo è giunto", where the scribe of Reina is the only one to notate repeated pitches across the brevis-unit (7-8, 37-38, 45-46), the scribe of Panciatichi is the only to use triplets (40, 44), and cancels 3 and shortens 2 of the 11 breaks in Reina. Huck, op.cit., pp. 63-65

<sup>34</sup> Toliver, Brooks: "Improvisation in the Madrigals of the Rossi Codex" in *Acta Musicologica* Vol. 64 Fasc 2, 1992, pp.165-176, p. 167

<sup>35</sup> Wilson, Blake McD., "Madrigal, Lauda, and Local Style in Trecento Florence" in *The Journal of Musicology* Vol. 15, No. 2: pp. 137-177. p. 139

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* p. 139

<sup>37</sup> *Il codice Rossi 215 della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Introductory study and facsimile edition by Nino Pirrotta, LIM, Lucca, 1992 p. 103f

an "instrumental style, perhaps the improvisatory style of the Florentine organists, may have been a stylistic tributary for both repertoires."<sup>38</sup> Jane Flynn follows Wilson's opinion in her (reductive) analysis of Machaut's "De toutes flours", and relativises her work to the probability that vocal performances included improvisation. In the process of improvising ornaments, she suspects that the "original" vocal model of the diminution at some points were simplified to its underlying counterpoint, and then re-ornamented.<sup>39</sup>

Timothy McGee considers the diminutions in Faenza Codex "rare examples of ornamentation and improvization".<sup>40</sup> Unlike most other scholars, he does not always stress the importance of counterpoint, but also considers other origins of diminutions. In his book on medieval ornaments,<sup>41</sup> he connects Codex Faenza to a general Italian practice throughout the middle ages that remained as "close as possible to the vocal and ornamental style disseminated from Rome as early as the eighth and ninth centuries and probably in practice there from much earlier."<sup>42</sup> In my opinion, McGee's attempts at drawing lines across enormous spans of time makes it difficult to draw any clear conclusions. Still, the possibility that diminutions, or some figures of diminutions, are born of a performance practice independent of counterpoint cannot be rejected.

The fact that we do not have a second source for any of the diminutions in Codex Faenza limits our ability to see the consistency in the transmission of the diminutions. The one song that was copied twice in the codex ("Jour mour lanie" on 43r-v and "Iorleuie" on 50r-v) in fact shows a more stable transmission of the diminution than of the tenor. There is one rhythmic variant reading in tempus 32 of the cantus, reported by Plamenac,<sup>43</sup> versus more substantial discrepancies in the tenor lines in tempora 18-20, 29-32 and 34, in both rhythm and pitch.<sup>44</sup> Apart from that, the notation is different, and according to Memelsdorff by two different scribes.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Wilson, op.cit., pp. 161-162

<sup>39</sup> Flynn, op.cit. p. 176

<sup>40</sup> McGee, Timothy J. "Instruments and the Faenza Codex." *Early Music* 14, no. 4 (1986): 480-90, p. 480. He confirms his view in "Ornamentation, national styles, and the Faenza Codex" in *Early Music New Zealand*, vol. 3 Pt. 2, 1987, pp.3-14. In his writings known to me, he does not deliver any direct arguments for the opinion that Codex Faenza reflects an improvisatory style.

<sup>41</sup> McGee, Timothy J., and Randall A. Rosenfeld. *The Sound of Medieval Song: Ornamentation and Vocal Style According to Treatises*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 152

<sup>43</sup> Plamenac, *Keyboard Music of the late Middle Ages in Codex Faenza*, AiM, 1972, p. XVIII

<sup>44</sup> In tempus 18 the first note of "Jour mour lanie" has a quarter note and two eighth notes, whereas "Iorleuie" has a punctuated quarter note and an eighth note. The third note of "Jour mour lanie" is left

The main problem of regarding diminutions as a remnant of a improvisational performance practice, be it the diminutions of Codex Faenza or of any other manuscript, is that our concept of improvisation is not analogous to the that of the middle ages. Margaret Bent problematises the projection of our understanding of improvisation, which according to her includes "the notion of spontaneous, unpremeditated music-making", onto medieval music.<sup>46</sup> Although not all musicians and scholars would agree that "unpremeditated" is an appropriate adjective to describe contemporary understanding of the word,<sup>47</sup> I agree with Bent that we are likely to assume differences between written and unwritten music that do not apply to a culture where nearly everything would be memorised. As Bent points out, and as anyone can confirm by searching the database "Thesaurvs Mvsicarvm Latinarvm",<sup>48</sup> the adjective improvisus ("*unforeseen*") is very rarely used before 1500,<sup>49</sup> and not once in the above mentioned five treatises that describe in more detail methods for diminishing.

According to Berger, the musician of the 14th and 15th century could compose polyphonic music in his mind and perform it by heart, without ever having to write it down.<sup>50</sup> When a change occurred, was it a lapse of memory, improvisation, or revised composition? The question is impossible to answer precisely. Our division between system (composition) on the one side and arbitrariness (improvisation) on the other does not apply to the middle ages. The medieval way of making music might have possessed an openness on all levels of the "composition", from contrapuntal progressions and *musica ficta* to diminutions. In this context, diminutions are not

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out. In tempus 19 the rhythm of the two versions are opposite, and in tempus 20, the syncopated rhythm of "Jour mour lanie" is replaced by a quarter note and two eighth notes on the same pitches. The variant readings of 29-32 was reported by Plamenac, *ibid.*, to which should be added that "Iourleuie" ends on a G.

<sup>45</sup> All references to scribes in Codex Faenza in this article are from Pedro Memelsdorff, in "Motti a Motti: Reflections on a Motet Intabulation of the Early Quattrocento." *Recercare: Rivista per lo studio e la pratica della musica antica* 10 (1998): 39-68, "New Music in the Codex Faenza 117." *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 13, no. 2 (2004): 141-61, and information presented during medieval seminars at Escola Superior de Musica de Catalunya, Barcelona, 2004-2008, and Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, *Seminari di Musica Antica*, May 2007

<sup>46</sup> Bent, Margaret. "'Resfacta' and 'Cantare Super Librum'." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 36, no. 3 (1983): 371-91, p.374

<sup>47</sup> Blackburn comments on Bent's statement in Blackburn, Bonnie J., "On Compositional Process in the Fifteenth Century" in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 40 No. 2, pp. 210-284: "It is hard to believe that any musical result could be obtained if one insists that improvisation be 'spontaneous, unpremeditated'", p. 258. Bent refers to Apel, though, who goes even further in his definition of improvisation, as an art of performing without aid of manuscripts, sketches, or even memory. Bent, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tml/start.html>

<sup>49</sup> Bent, *op.cit.*, p. 375

<sup>50</sup> Berger, *op. cit.*, p. 159, or chapter 6, *passim*

more or less arbitrary than the rest of a composition. In the last chapter, I would like to demonstrate that in the paraphrases in Codex Faenza, that I and others have considered improvisations, certain figures are very important for the character of not only single pieces, but groups of pieces.

#### 4. Some observations on the vocabulary in Codex Faenza

There have been made attempts in the past at codifying the diminutions of Codex Faenza. The contributions of McGee<sup>51</sup> are unfortunately full of generalizations: While being correct in observing that Codex Faenza does not reproduce shifted rhythms across the unit of measure in the vocal models, his allegation that Codex Faenza does not know this subtlety<sup>52</sup> is contradicted by the Kyrie on 88r-90r (measures 121, 124), and the Benedicamus on 97r-v (measure 17). He observes that the intabulations of French pieces have one less level of diminutions than the Italian, and that the Italian diminutions have more sudden changes between quick and fast notes. This might be a general tendency, but ignores the fact that *Le ior* and *Viver ne puis* have semiminims (*Le ior* also has semiminim-triplets) and very abrupt changes of speed. Vice versa, some of the diminutions on Italian songs are as slow as the original, and would then fall into one of McGee's descriptions of French style (*Rosetta* on 50v-52r, *Un fior gentil*). His account of the use of the rhythm SB-M-SB-M in "simple time" (senaria perfecta in the original notation), "compound duple" (senaria imperfecta) or "compound triple" (novenaria) as a "substitute for even quavers in the vocal model" is strange indeed. He counts four instances in the seven French pieces (where the vocal model is known) and no cases at all in the Italian examples.<sup>53</sup> To say that this rhythm does not occur in the Italian songs is of course wrong (see list below): The vocal model for *Io me son* was recognised by Plamenac, and obviously overlooked by McGee. That he did not know *Deduto sey* (attributed to Zacara only in 1997 by Caraci Vela<sup>54</sup>) or suspect the connection of Plamenac 42 with

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<sup>51</sup> His principle article in the style of Codex Faenza is "Ornamentation and national styles"

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, p.8

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.* p.10

<sup>54</sup> Vela, M. C. (1997). "Una nuova attribuzione a Zacara da un trattato musicale del primo Quattrocento." *Acta Musicologica* vol.69 no.2, 1997, pp.182-185.

an Italian motet (suggested convincingly by Memelsdorff in 1998<sup>55</sup>) is understandable, but serves only to prove the danger of generalising on fragmentary knowledge. The following (incomplete) list gives a better image of the employment in Codex Faenza of the rhythm referred to by McGee:

Kyrie 2r-3r (bar 64), Gloria 3v-5r (16), Hont peur (23-24), De tout flors (33), Aspire refus (12), De ce fol penser (4), Jay grant espoir (20), Constantia (58), Viver ne puis (45), Elas mon cuer 39r-40r (7), Deduto sey (22), Plamenac 17 (25), Sangilio (3), Plamenac 23<sup>56</sup> (3), Io me son uno (26-27), Gloria 90r-92v (159-160), Plamenac 42 (64), Plamenac 43, (18), Plamenac 45 (3), Plamenac 46 (20), Ave maris stella (6).

The existence of this rhythm in (at least) three compositions of Italian origin, makes it highly problematic to categorise its usage as part of a French "national performance practice",<sup>57</sup> with the imminent danger of creating circular arguments.

Michael Kugler distinguishes several figures and their usage in his extensive work on Codex Faenza,<sup>58</sup> among them "Triolenwendung" (p. 57ff.), "Initialformel" (p.60ff.), "Tonumschreibungswendung" (p.62ff.), "Quintoktavfloskel" (75ff.), "Semiminimatriole" (89ff.), "Tonrepetitionen" (97ff.), and "auskolorierte Schlußklänge" (108ff.). He also lists various "formulae" and describes their usage.<sup>59</sup> One of the problems with Kugler's work is that he, as McGee and most others, stresses the differences between a French and an Italian section of the manuscript, perhaps because he believed Codex Faenza was written by one person, as was the common opinion until Memelsdorff's article in 1998.<sup>60</sup> Thus the main parameter of investigation into style has frequently been compositional model and/or origin, which in many cases is not completely clear.

It is possible to investigate musical style without primary knowledge of scribes, provided one does not base research on hybrid editions, such as many of the

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<sup>55</sup> Memelsdorff: "Motti a motti"

<sup>56</sup> See footnote 65

<sup>57</sup> McGee, "Ornamentation and national styles", p.11

<sup>58</sup> Kugler, Michael, *Die Tastenmusik im Codex Faenza*, Tutzing, 1972

<sup>59</sup> see f.ex. p.66 in the section on Italian music, or p.151ff. on liturgical music

<sup>60</sup> Memelsdorff, 1998, "Motti a motti". Memelsdorff's verdict, that his "hypothesis [of several scribes rather than one for the whole codex] invalidates many, if not all, of the analytical generalizations attempted in the past", with particular reference to McGee and Kugler, p. 42, is quite harsh. Whereas McGee's lack of detail in his observations disqualifies many of his results, no matter how many scribes were involved, Kugler's primary interest in distinguishing between the functions of the various figures is in itself not a blind alley.

volumes of *Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century*.<sup>61</sup> Oliver Huck suggests various strategies that I find useful. By separating pitch, rhythm and counterpoint, he arrives at results that are informative for all these parameters, and eventually also leading to conclusions on style.<sup>62</sup>

In the following, I will draw attention towards a few figurations in Codex Faenza that might look common, but deserve special attention.

I will first look at a figure and its variants that appears many times in the manuscript, the majority of the them in gathering 10 (folios 88r-97v)<sup>63</sup>. The elements of this figure was partially discussed by Kugler, who gave the name "Formel a" to the part corresponding to the second half of my figures A3/a3. He also pointed out that it was frequently used in combination with the first part of the figure corresponding to my A1/a1. Kugler's "Formel a" appears very frequently in Codex Faenza, as do his other micro-formulae,<sup>64</sup> too frequently to justify their categorisation as diminutions characteristic to the liturgical music:

The following list of "Formel a" in the manuscript gives an indication of the frequent appearance of Kugler's formulae. (Only the occurrences in senaria perfecta are counted here, but it can be found in other divisions as well.) "Formel a" is very often on the penultima (marked with a p). For sake of simplicity, the numbers follow the bar numbering in Plamenac's edition:

*Hont paur*: 3, 21, 70, *De tout flors*: 3p, 6p, 7p, 18, 20, 29p, 35p, 44p, 62p, *Aspire refus*: 24, 25, 36, *Elas mon cuer* 39r :15p, 18p, (28p), (38p), 42p, 44p, *De ce fol penser*: 5p, *J'ay grant espoir*: 14p, 37p, not in Constantia, (only first part of Figure a in bars 14, 22, 57. This song seems to have a slightly different vocabulary than its neighbours in the ms), *Viver ne puis*: 5p, 10p, 14p, 43p<sup>65</sup>, 47p, Plamenac 18: 10, 16, 18, 20, Plamenac 23:<sup>66</sup> 8p, *Biance flour*: 41p (many occurrences in *Aquila altera*, but it is not in senaria imperfecta), *Un fior gentil*: 10p

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<sup>61</sup> L'oiseau-Lyre, Monaco

<sup>62</sup> Huck, 2005, *Die Musik des frühen Trecento*, chapter I.4.4 (particularly pp.111-113), chapter II.5.4, chapter III.2.4

<sup>63</sup> On the gatherings and their order, see Plamenac, "A Note on the Rearrangement of Faenza Codex 117", in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol.17, No.1, 1964, pp. 78-81, and Memelsdorff, "Motti a Motti", particularly p. 44

<sup>64</sup> Kugler, op.cit. p.151

<sup>65</sup> if one considers the 4th note an error, which I do not doubt: The neck of the note corresponds with a b, and the figure would be extraordinary with three repeated c's

<sup>66</sup> The Sangilio gap is well known. McGee has suggested that the piece continues from bar 26 into the next piece (Plamenac's no. 23) after the double line in the last system of 54v (the end of Plamenac's Sangilio). See his edition of the piece in McGee, *Medieval instrumental dances*, Indiana, University Press, 1989, pp.150-159. See also the list of errors in McGee's cleffing in this piece, in the review by Brainard, Ingrid, in *Dance Chronicle*, Vol.15, No.2, 1992, pp. 237-243.



None of Kugler's formulae are particular for the liturgical music. But, as the following example shows, some of the combinations are close to exclusive. (Where more than one note is given in the lower staff, it indicates that the figure in the higher staff occurs (untransposed) on all those notes.)

### Codex Faenza, Figure A

The musical score for Codex Faenza, Figure A, consists of seven systems of piano accompaniment. Each system shows the figure in different contexts and transpositions:

- System 1:** Labeled A1, A2, and A3. Includes the text "Elas mon cuer 39r:28".
- System 2:** Labeled A1.
- System 3:** Labeled A1, A2, and A3.
- System 4:** Labeled A1 and A2.
- System 5:** Labeled A1 Transposed.
- System 6:** Labeled A2, A3, and A3 Transposed.
- System 7:** Labeled A1 and A2.

Measure numbers and other annotations are provided for each system:

- System 1: 40:1,5,11,63,75,131;42:104;45:6;47:19 40:2
- System 2: 41:124 41:110-111 42:38-39
- System 3: 40:46-47 44:18-19 40:66-67
- System 4: 40:35-36 48:34-24
- System 5: 40:37 40:51 41:182 2:56
- System 6: 44:4-5 45:17 40:6
- System 7: 1:72 1:22;2:81

40:20                      2:61;Elas mon cuer 39r:38                      Viver ne puis:47

### Figure a

a1                      a2                      a3

40:3;45:16                      41:3;44:11;45:2,20                      41:32;44:9

<sup>4</sup> a1

40:18,23                      42:10-11                      [Rosetta] 82v:41-42

<sup>9</sup>

45:18                      40:111-112                      41:38-39

<sup>14</sup>

41:108-109                      41:119-120

<sup>18</sup> a1 Transposed

46:30                      40:108                      44:12                      41:116-117

<sup>23</sup> a2 Transposed

Elas mon cuer 39r:41                      [Benedicamus Domino] 57r:33

<sup>25</sup> a3 Transposed

41:131                      41:181                      De tout flors:7

Figure A1-3 appear 32 times, figure a1-3 appear 26 times. Of the total of 58 appearances, only six are outside repertoire of diminutions on liturgical tenors. Three are in *Elas mon cuer* (2xA and 1xa), one in *Viver ne puis* (A), one in *Rosetta* 82v (a), and one in *De tout flors* (a). Of the remaining 52, an overwhelming 47 occur on the folios 88r-97v, the collection of predominantly liturgical music at the end of the manuscript.<sup>67</sup>

The only variants that have relatively stable functions are A3/a3. They appear a total of 14 times, of which 12 are penultima-sounds. The other motives occur in various contrapuntal situations. Contrary to the impression that diminutions are arbitrary and replaceable, we see diminutions that are used consistently, almost independent of the tenor line. (A1 appears over all notes of the scale, c,d,e,f,g,#g,a,b). Indeed, they create an element of identity for the diminutions between 87r-97v, reinforcing the impression that the section should be seen as a whole.<sup>68</sup>

made present not only throughout but also at the very beginning (Kyrie 88r bar 1) and close to the end (Benedicamus 97r-v, bar 24-25). With the exception of the variants A3/a3, the figures A and a cannot be considered extensions of a particular contrapuntal progression.

The following "figure B" appears extremely seldom:

Figure B



It is quite unexpected that there is only one case in the whole ms of more than three successive falling third/rising second (Kyrie 79r, tempus 8), considering the rather high rate of the contrary movement rising second/falling third (example below). According to Memelsdorff, the same scribe is responsible for "Soto limperio" and for

<sup>67</sup> As Memelsdorff has shown, 97r was not originally the last folio of the codex. "Motti a motti", p. 44

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Caldwell's suggestion that the three diminutions on 95r-96v are of liturgical origin, in Caldwell, John. "The Organ in the Medieval Latin Liturgy, 800-1500." *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 93 (1966): 11-24, and Memelsdorff's similar (in part artistic) proposals regarding the two diminutions on 93r-95v, in "Motti a motti", passim, and the recording *Faventina. The liturgical music of Codex Faenza 117 (1380-1420)*, naïve, 2007

the Kyrie on 79r.<sup>69</sup> As with Figure A/a, its employment is quite local, and perhaps one of the strongest traits of Kyrie 79r.

Figure C



Not regarding counterpoint, this kind of long chain of rising second/falling third appears, in addition to the examples,<sup>70</sup> in *La dolce sere* (46-47), *In perial sedendo* (78-79), Kyrie 79r (16-17), *Deduto sey* (88-89), and with less than four consecutive rising second/falling third in another ca 25 places in the ms, particularly concentrated in *Che pena è questa* (5 times), and *Constantia* (3 times).

Finally, Figure D, a rhythmic figure that appears in only two songs, and Figure E, a quite resemblant rhythm, that appears much more frequently:

Figure D

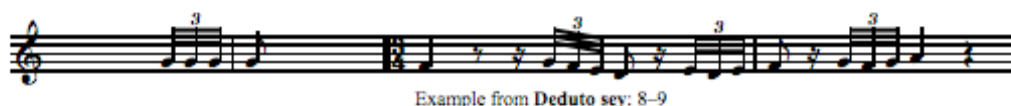


Figure E



In the intabulation of *Deduto sey*, figure D is presented 21 times. In *Le ior* it is used 3 times. Rhythms corresponding to figure E, on the other hand, is used in as many as 17 songs.

<sup>69</sup> Personal communication

<sup>70</sup> The first example, the erased Gloria 26v, has been restored and published by Memelsdorff, "New Music in the Codex Faenza 117"

I could have presented many more examples, but hope these modest "word counts" will suffice to demonstrate that Faenza does not have one vocabulary corresponding to two national styles, or one style for liturgical tenors. Some figures are of almost "private" character (Figures B and D), used in only one or two songs. Other figures, (Figures C and E) looking suspiciously like their more exclusive relatives, are to be seen in numerous diminutions, and cannot be said to belong to only one scribe or only one formal category. Figure A/a appears very often, but largely within one section, and strengthens the hypothesis that the diminutions in that section should be considered unity.

## **5. Conclusions**

Discussion on diminutions often tend to emphasise their secondary character, either as result of counterpoint, or as more or less arbitrary formulae, expressions of improvisational practices. Although good reasons exist for continuing research in both these directions, it has here been my intention to show that diminutions are not necessarily dependent of counterpoint, and that they through consequent employment within a (group of) composition(s) contribute to the identity of that unit as much as any other parameter. In light of Berger's research, we should want to reconsider the relation between composition and improvisation in the late middle ages.