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Main Subject: Traverso

Research Coach: Kate Clark

Title of Research:
The advent of the transverse flute in Italy and its use in mixed consorts during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries

Research Question:
Which were the possible combinations of instruments that included flute and which occasions saw performances of these *mixed consorts*?

Summary of results:
The performance of vocal polyphony on instruments during the sixteenth century appears to be guided by two main ideas. On the one hand, musicians tried to imitate the *a cappella* choir with homogeneous instrumental consorts, or *whole consorts*, where the instruments belonged to the same family. On the other hand, they tried to maintain the polyphonic texture clear, letting instruments with a very different timbre play in a mixed choir, or *mixed consort*. Based on a wide array of sources (letters, chronicles, iconography, inventories, instruction treatises, and surviving instruments) my Research Paper investigates the possibilities of combining the flute with other instruments and with voices in *mixed consort* settings. My main conclusion is that *whole* and *mixed consorts* did not follow a completely separate development, but the two choirs would often overlap and integrate in many different combinations, with much freedom and invention. This consideration should encourage modern performers of secular Italian music of the sixteenth century to keep their mind open to the possibility of transforming *a cappella* compositions into colorful ensembles mixing voices and different instruments.

Biography:
Giuditta Isoldi studied at the Conservatory of Florence, where she graduated in Flute with Paolo Zampini. In 2010 she moved to the Netherlands where she focused her studies on Historical informed Performance Practice of the flute and she obtained a Bachelor in Traverso with Barthold Kuijken at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague. Next to Traverso, she studies baroque Oboe with Frank de Bruine. She is currently attending a Master in Traverso at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague with Barthold Kuijken, Kate Clark and Wilbert Hazelzet.

The advent of the transverse flute in Italy and its use in mixed consorts during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries

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Introduction

This Research paper is a study of the use of the Renaissance flute in Italy during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Letters, chronicles, iconography, inventories, instruction treatises and surviving instruments provide clear evidence of the popularity of the flute during this period, in the North of Italy. My objective is to create concert programs for a mixed consort performing sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century music, therefore the aim of my research is to give a theoretical and historical basis to this performance practice.

In Chapter I, after three paragraphs on the "consort principle", on the flute family and on the practice of flute consort I have brought together many evidences which attest the presence of the flute and of its use in many cities and courts. Most of the accounts describing either big musical events or more intimate musical reunions refer to ensembles that are a combination of different instruments. Today we call this kind of ensemble *mixed consort*, in order to distinguish it from the *whole consort*, where the instruments involved belong to the same family.

Chapter II is dedicated to the *mixed consort* topic, which I analyze from a historical, theoretical and practical point of view. I will use the term *mixed consort* in a very broad way, meaning all possible mixed groups, from a flute and lute duo, until a much larger group that mixes voices and instruments. Which are the possible combinations that include one or more flutes? Which repertoire? What was the role of the flute? The Florentine *intermedii*, which are a central theme of the second chapter are a marvelous, rich example of how many combinations of different sounds and voices were possible in performance practice of the time.

Although focusing on the performance practice in Italy, I could not avoid referring to England and Germany. In fact, these countries give an exceptional example of *mixed consort* practice in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as some German and English composers wrote for a specific combination of instruments mentioning them on the score, which was very rare at the time.

With the help of many friends and colleagues who play with me I was able to create some Audio samples, trying out practically *mixed* and *whole consorts* and being able to listen to the results. In the Appendix, I include a detailed description of these samples and an explanation of my reasons for choosing them.

I am very thankful to my research coach, Kate Clark, for her patient advice, her suggestions, encouragement and good judgment. With many thanks also to Kathryn Cok, Charles Toet, Barthold Kuijken, Marcello Gatti, Franco Pavan, Diego Fratelli, Luigi Lupo, Paola and Antonia, Marit, Kim, Fanni, Toni, Radka, Chloe, Lucía and Giuliano.

Two technical indications:
Unless otherwise specified all translations are by Giuditta Isoldi. When talking about pitch I indicate with **G** the note g just below the middle c, with **GG** the octave lower and with **g** the octave higher, giudittaon the treble clef line.

Chapter I
The "Consort" Principle and the flute

1.1 Aesthetic ideas behind the consort grouping

In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, when monophony started giving way to polyphony, many instruments followed suit, and developed in families. Instrument makers started building three or four sizes of the same instrument, pitched a fifth or a fourth apart, after the model of different voices in a vocal choir, in order to enable instrumentalists to perform vocal polyphony.

It is difficult to trace how instrumental consorts developed prior to 1500. The few sources existing are unclear or not complete, and almost no instrument survived. Musical manuscripts, even the ones without a text, do not give any indication about which instruments could be employed and if any instrument was even intended to take part.[1] Nevertheless, from the few scattered evidences, which we do have, it appears that the consort idea started with shawms.[2] In the first half of the fifteenth century, two sizes of shawm playing *bicinia* were already common. When the slide trumpet, replaced later by the trombone, joined them, this combination established itself as the most important *alta cappella* professional consort trough-out Europe.[3]

The performance of vocal polyphony on instruments, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, appears guided by two main ideas. On the one hand, musicians tried to imitate the *a cappella* choir with homogeneous instrumental consorts, or *whole consorts*, where the instruments belong to the same family, but are of different sizes according with the voice register. On the other hand, they tried to maintain the polyphonic texture clear, letting instruments with a very different timbre play in a mixed choir, or *mixed consort*.

These two ideas did not follow a completely separate development, but with very much freedom and invention, the two choirs would often overlap and integrate in many different combinations.[4] Although in the modern usage the term *consort* refers mostly to a family of like instruments, to be clear enough I will adopt in my research the term *whole consort* when referring to a homogeneous group, and the term *mixed consort* when referring to a group of instruments, which do not belong to the same family.

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[1] Howard Mayer Brown. *Performance Practice: Music before Sixteen Hundred* ed. Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie, New York, 1989, pp 22-3

[2] For more on 'The beginning of the Consort Principle' see: Nancy Hadden. *From Swiss flute to Consorts: History Music and Playing Techniques of the Transverse Flute in Switzerland, Germany and France ca. 1470-1640*. Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The University of Leeds, 2010, pp 12-14

[3] For the early history of *alta cappella*, see Keith Polk, *Wind Bands of Medieval Flemish Cities*, brass and Woodwind Quarterly, 1 (1966), pp 93-113

[4] For more on this issue see the chapter about Renaissance flute in Gianni Lazzari, *Il flauto traverso, storia tecnica e acustica*, EDT, 2003 p 16

The term *consort* itself does not really belong to the sixteenth century. In fact, we find the first written evidence of the English word *consort* in a musical sense only in 1575, in a description of a spectacle presented to the Queen Elizabeth I,[5] while the Italian word *concerto* denoted in the early sixteenth century simply an ensemble of voices or instruments. The Italian term *concerto,* however, changed its meaning at the end of the 16th Century, describing a "new style which involved solo-like parts and competing choirs and groups of instruments".[6]

1.2 The Renaissance flute and the flute consort

The instrument that we call nowadays Renaissance Flute is a keyless, almost cylindrically bored, wooden transverse flute. It is a consort instrument, made in three different sizes and it appears in sources from the early sixteenth to the second half of the seventeenth century, when probably coexisted for a while with the newly developed baroque-type flute.

Our sources are iconography, chronicles, various archives sources (inventories, orders and payments), organological and instrumental treatises, the few examples of dedicated repertoire and surviving museum specimens.[7] Many of these sources suggest that the flute had a twofold usage: as military instrument and in chamber music. It is very unclear whether the two different usages always corresponded to two different kinds of flute, probably at the beginning they differed only on role, context and repertoire, and later on they started being two distinct instruments.

Thoinot Arbeau, and later Marin Mersenne and Michael Praetorius wrote about the military flute. They all insist on the shrillness of its sound, and Mersenne and Praetorius specify that the fingerings are different and the range is smaller than the one of the chamber music flute.[8] Arbeau included in his *Orchesographie* (1589 and 1596) two pieces that are the only extant pieces specifically for the military flutes: the soldiers playing the flute, called *fifers*, mostly improvised, accompanied by a drum, using the Phrygian mode to instigate rage and belligerence.[9]

For information on the performance practice of the flute in the first half of the sixteenth century, we can only refer to Martin Agricola's *Musica instrumentalis deudsch*, published in Wittenberg in 1528 or 1529 (second edition in 1545)[10]. In fact, he is the only writer we know, who furnishes details about the flute before Philibert Jambe de Fer's *Épitome musical*, theoretical work on music and instruments of 1556.[11]

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[5] "From thence her Majestie passing yet further on the brydge, Protheus appeared, sitting on a Dolphyns backe… With in the which Dolphyn a Consort of Musicke was secretely placed, the which sounded, and Protheus clearing his voyce, sang". *The Princelye Pleasures*, London, 1576, lost; repr. in The Whole Woorks, London, 1587

[6] Edwards Warwick, *Consort*. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press. Accessed November 14, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06322.

[7] For detailed informations abou the extant museum specimens see Filadelfio Puglisi, *A survey of renaissance flutes*, The Galpin Society Journal, Vol 41, pp. 67-82, October 1988

[8] See, Anne Smith, *The Reinassance Flute*, in John Solum, *The Early Flute*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992, pp 11-33

[9] Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchésographie*, published by Jehan des Preyz, Lengres, 1596, fo..17

[10] Martin Agricola, *Musica instrumentalis deudsch*, Wittenberg, 1528/29. It has been reprinted in quasi-facsimile in *Publikation älterer praktischer und teoretischer Musik-Werke*, vol 20, Breitkopf und Härtel, Leipzig, 1896, along with the fourth, revised edition of 1545.

[11] Philibert Jambe de Fer, *Épitome musical des tons, sons et accordz, es voix humaines, fleustes d'alleman, Fleustes à neuf trous, Viols & Violons*, Lyons, 1556

When we look at Agricola and at Jambe de Fer, we find evidence of the two different ways of playing the flute in *whole consort* during the sixteenth century. Martin Agricola, in his 1545 edition of *Musica instrumentalis deudsch* (Wittenberg) describes the flute family as composed by a bass in GG, a middle size in D for both tenor and alto, and a descant flute in A (Fig 1). There, the middle size flute is in charge of the two inner voices. However, if we look at Jambe de Fer's *Épitome musical* (Lyon) we see that he does not even mention the discant flute, implying that the flute *whole consort* consisted only of two different sizes of flute: bass and tenor-alto.[12] In fact, the wide and flexible range of the tenor-alto flute in D makes possible also this way of playing flute consort, where the top part is played on a D tenor-size flute as well.

Fig. 1 Illustration of the flute family in martin Agricola's *Musica instrumentalis deudsch*

The repertoire of the flute consort was mostly borrowed from the vocal repertoire. Flutes could play any polyphonic piece, which suited to them and to the various ranges of the different sizes. In 1533 Pierre Attaignant, music publisher established in Paris, issued two volumes of chansons, *Chansons musicales a quatre parties* and *Vingt et sept chansons musicales a quatre parties.* In his preface, the publisher explains that he marked with an "a" the most suitable pieces for the German flutes, with a "b" the ones that sound better on the recorder, and with "ab" the pieces sounding equally well on both consorts.[13]

Pierre Attaignant does not specify whether the flute consort he intends includes the discant flute or not, but there are two reasons why I would choose to play them with the combination of one bass and three tenor-size flutes. The first one is that although Agricola is the only theoretical source contemporary of Attaignant, he was writing in Germany, and it is hard to imagine that the way of playing flute *whole consort* in Germany was the

[12] See, Anne Smith, *The Reinassance Flute*, in John Solum, *The Early Flute*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992, pp 11-33

[13] *Chansons musicales a quatre parties/desquelles les plus convenables a la fleuste dallemant sont/ signees en la table cy dessoubz escripte par a. et a la fleuste / a neuf trous par b. et pour les deux fleustes sont signees par ab*, Pierre Attaignant, Paris 1533

same in France. The second reason is that Jambe de Fer's Epitome musical was published, in Lyon, only twenty-three years after Attaignant's prints, and, as often happens with theoretical treatises, it might reflect a slightly earlier practice.

Audio sample 1 | *Je ne puis pas*. From Vingt et sept chansons musicales a quatre parties, Paris 1533. Renaissance flute *whole consort*, four voices, two different sizes of flute: bass and tenor (for more details see Appendix).

Beside the *whole consort*, iconography, chronicles and other sources point out that the renaissance flute had always a role performing polyphony in *mixed consorts*. Here, while the top part could have been played by a violin or a mute cornett and/or sung, the flute would have been playing an inner voice. When Praetorius, in his Syntagma musicum III (1619), writes about the *flute choir* (homogeneous consort), he introduces already the possibility of playing the bass voice on another soft low instrument, like a dulcian or a sackbut.[14]

This demonstrates that there is a fine line between *whole* and *mixed consort*, and that performers of today should be able to keep the flexibility proper of musical practice. I will discuss in detail the *mixed consort* topic in Chapter II.

1.3 The bass flute: a unique phenomenon

The bass flute deserves special attention because of its role and development. A drawing by Urs Graf, a Swiss engraver from Basel, represents the earliest evidence of the existence of the bass flute, dated 1523 (fig. 2). Not many years before, in 1511, Sebastian Virdung published in the same city his *Musica Getutscht*, which is the earliest known theoretical source that contains the transverse flute. It is noticeable that he does not mention the bass flute, depicting only one size of flute and presenting it as military.

In her doctoral thesis, discussed in 2010 at the University of Leeds, Nancy Hadden supposes that Graf's picture is an ironic representation of soldiers playing music with a soft flute consort, activity proper of the upper class, or of court musicians, exactly the antithesis of what soldiers played with military flutes.[15] Nevertheless, Graf's drawing remains an evidence that the bass flute existed in 1523, and suggests that, like the tenor, it was made from a single piece of wood. Nowadays, three one-piece bass flute survive, the rest of the original basses are in two pieces.

It is impossible to date precisely the existing original flutes, but probably the development of a playable bass flute took place between 1511 (Virdung's treatise) and 1523 (Graf's drawing).

Comparing with other families of wind instruments, such as recorders, dulcians or shawms, which had their bass size already in the fifteenth century, the physical problems of making and playing the bass flute, must have made its evolution difficult and problematic, and impeded for a while the development of a *whole flute consort.*

[14] Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma musicum III*, translated and edited by Jeffery T. Kite-Powell, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 156-157

[15] See Nancy Hadden. *From Swiss flute to Consorts: History Music and Playing Techniques of the Transverse Flute in Switzerland, Germany and France ca. 1470-1640*. Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The University of Leeds, 2010, pp 130-134

Fig. 2 Urs Graf, *New Year's Greetings to Jörg Schweiger, 1523,*
depicting four soldiers playing a full consort of flutes.

Strikingly keys were never added to the transverse flute even if using keys to cover holes that the hand otherwise could not reach was a technique that instrument makers already knew and used for a long time on the other wind instruments. In order to avoid the use of keys on a bass flute, the finger holes have been moved so far towards the mouth hole, that they need to have a very small diameter so to maintain a correct tuning. The consequence is a weak sound, and still the fingers have to be stretched. On the other hand, balancing the flute is made easier by no adding heavy keys, and, since the hands have to be strained, it is important that the bass flute stays as light as possible.[16] Another possible reason for not adding keys could have been the thinness of the wood, especially concerning the tenor size.

Italy is the country where most of the renaissance flutes are preserved. There we can find twelve of the sixteen surviving original bass flutes: eight are preserved in Verona, in Northern Italy, divided between the Accademia Filarmonica (six) and the Biblioteca Capitolare (two). The other four are spread in Merano, Milano, Bologna and Rome. Even if currently in Rome, this last bass comes originally from Verona, from the family collection

[16] See Filadelfio Puglisi, *A survey of renaissance flutes*, The Galpin Society Journal, Vol 41, pp. 67-82, October 1988, pp 75-76

of the Count Giusti.[17] The instrument collections in Verona are in fact particularly vast and important and I will refer to them again later.

Besides the originals, there are other relevant evidences of the presence and the use of the bass flute in Italy during the Renaissance, namely the inventories of noble families and courts. For example, in a Medici inventory of loans, dated 1640, we find a *traversa grossa* (big traverso) mentioned and a *traversa grossa del concerto* (big "concerto" traverso). What is intended with the epithet *del concerto* is still not sure. The Medici Court probably had some flutes meant for playing in mixed ensembles, and some other flutes probably purchased as a *whole consort*, more suitable for playing polyphony, made as a set of instruments by the same maker and most likely at the same pitch and tuned to the same scale.[18]

Almost one hundred years after Urs Graf's drawing, writing about the *flute choir* in his *Syntagma Musicum* of 1619, Praetorius introduces the possibility of replacing the bass flute with a dulcian, or a sackbut, or a soft shawm. In this way the bass would sound more and would have a lower register. Although this is a beautiful combination, I personally believe that the bass flute makes the colour of a *whole flute consort* very unique, and, especially when performing earlier music from the sixteenth century, I would rather search for a general sound which goes towards the colour of the bass flute sound, gaining resonance more than volume. My experiments in that direction have been for me always convincing, making intonation easier as well.

1.4 The Renaissance Flute in Italy

An essential contribution to our knowledge of renaissance flutes was given by Filadelfio Puglisi. In 1988 he identified and measured 43 surviving flutes in Europe. His "Survey of renaissance flutes" is the first very detailed classification of these instruments and includes one descant, twenty-seven tenors and fifteen basses.[19] In 1995 S.p.e.s. Editions published Puglisi's book "The Renaissance Transverse Flutes in Italy", which contains extremely accurate measurements of all the twenty-six flutes preserved in Italy.

As I mentioned before, Verona is the city where we can find the largest collections of extant original renaissance flutes. Out of the many hundreds which must have existed, only around fifty specimens survived and are today in museums and private collections in Europe and out of these fifty flutes, twenty are in Verona. Here, there are two collections of renaissance wind instruments and both include transverse flutes. The Accademia Filarmonica (AFV) counts six tenor flutes and, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, six bass flutes, while the Biblioteca Capitolare (BCV) has six tenors and two basses.

In 1543, 1544 and 1545, only some military flutes are listed in the inventories of the AFV. The *chamber music* flutes appear for the first time in the inventory of 1562, and, since then, they will be always present until January 1628, when 50 *fifferi* are listed, counting old ones and new ones.

Why did so few instruments survive time? The instruments themselves are fragile and thin, difficult to be preserved, but one of the reasons might have been also obsolescence, occurred during the second half of the seventeenth century. If on one hand, the

[17] Ibidem.

[18] See Luigi Lupo, *Il flauto traverso rinascimentale*. Thesis for the degree of History of Medieval and Renaissance Music, D.A.M.S., University of Bologna, 1994, pp. 88-90

[19] Filadelfio Puglisi, *A survey of renaissance flutes*, The Galpin Society Journal, Vol 41, pp. 67-82, October 1988.

decline made some instruments disappear, on the other hand it is also the reason why the instrument of the AFV collection arrived to us. In fact, from the seventeenth century on, the entire collection (not less than 150 instruments) was offered for sale several times, because the Academy needed money. The keyboards and the stringed instruments were sold, but not the old-fashioned flutes.

During the sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, the transverse flute was very popular in Italy, mainly in the north. There are, besides the extant original flutes, many written indications that confirm it. The core and the conclusion of the first chapter of my research is a list of evidences, sorted in chronological order and including, among other sources, chronicles from the time, inventories and musical treatises which represent a clear example of the advent and the presence of the flute in Italy between the 1529 and 1654.[20] Many times we read about mixed consorts performing for specific occasions, and even if all the instruments involved are listed, often we can only speculate about their repertoire. This is a very fascinating matter, which surely deserves further researches.

1529, Ferrara.

Christophoro Messisbugo's *Libro novo nel qual s'insegna a far d'ogni sorte di vivanda* is a treatise about the art of organizing a banquet for a noble family, and a cookbook. The book was published in Venice in 1559, 11 years after Messisbugo's death.[21] The author gives many cooking recipes, but in the first, very interesting part of the book, he describes *molti et diversi conviti* (many and different banquets) to give examples of how a banquet should be prepared and realized. These descriptions are most fascinating to musicians for the details he gives about the music performed during each course at three of the banquets. The flute is mentioned in two of the many banquets, the ones which are described more in detail, and to which I am now going to look closer. Some music was performed during every course of the banquet, and the author writes which instruments took part to each musical moment.

On Saturday 20th May 1529, Ippolito d'Este, Archbishop of Milan and later Cardinal of Ferrara, gave a banquet for his brother Ercole II d'Este, Duke of Chartres and later Duke of Ferrara, 54 guests in total. Here the transverse flute, called *flauto alla alemana*, played in two groups: during the second of seventeen courses, three musicians played a dolzaina,[22] a trombone and a flute.[23] During the last course, Alphonso della Viuola conducted a big group: six voices, six viols, a lira, a lute, a cittara, a trombone, a big recorder and a middle-sized recorder (probably a bass and a tenor), a flute, a sordina, and two keyboard instruments, a big one and a small one. Messisbugo adds that the music was so well played that everyone thought to have passed from the Earth to Paradise.[24]

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[20] See: Gianni Lazzeri *Il flauto traverso: storia, tecnica, acustica*, EDT srl, 2003, p 25-28 and Luigi Lupo, *Il flauto traverso rinascimentale*. Thesis for the degree of History of Medieval and Renaissance Music, D.A.M.S., University of Bologna, 1994, pp. 75-83

[21] About Messisbugo's banquets, see Howard Mayer Brown, *A Cook's Tour of Ferrara in 1529*. Rivista Italiana di musicologia X, 1975

[22] Which instrument is meant with the word *dolzaina* is still ambiguous. The term appears in literary and archival documents, inventories and musical treatises from the fourteenth trough the seventeenth centuries. Although the name resembles the one of the dulciana it is unlikely that they were the same instrument because a number of descriptions mention both instruments playing together. For example in the fifth Intermedio della Pellegrina, Florence 1589, *dolzaini* and *fagotti* (*bassoons*) played together.

[23]"[…] Et in tutto che questa vivanda era in tavola fu suonata una Dolzaina, uno Trombone, et uno Flauto alla Alemana." Cristofaro Messisbugo, *Libro novo nel qual s'insegna a far d'ogni sorte di vivanda*, Venice 1559, fo. 11.

[24] "[…] le quali cose mentre si mangiarono fece una Musica M. Alphonso dalla Viuola, nella quale erano sei Voci, sei Viuole, una Lira, un Lauto, una Cittara, un Trombone, un Flauto grosso, un Flauto alla

Audio sample | *La Alfonsina* by Johannes Ghiselin Verbonnet. From Petrucci Odecathon 1501. This piece is for three voices: alto, tenor and bass, and it is here performed by flute, trombone and dulcian (for more details see Appendix).

On Sunday 24th January 1529, Ercole II d'Este, Duke of Chartres and later Duke of Ferrara, gave a banquet for his father Ercole I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. There were 104 guests in all. Here the flute appears in three moments: during the third course, *dialoghi a otto, partiti in due chori* (dialogues for 8 voices, divided in two choruses) were performed. Each chorus consisted of four voices, a lute, a viol, a flute and a trombone.[25] During the last course five viols and five voices, a keyboard instrument, a bass recorder, a lira, a trombone and a flute played some music.[26] Then, after the meal, a pasty was brought, containing the names of all the guests. There were presents to be drawn, and at that moment, four flutes played.[27]

Audio sample 3 | *Il bianco e dolce cigno* by Jakob Arcadelt. This madrigal for four voices (SATB) is here performed by a *whole consort* of flutes (for more details see Appendix).

1530, Ferrara.

In an anonymous purchase note, inside a d'Este family's archive, there is an order for "a couple of German flutes, which are meant to be played in the middle of the flute (on the side), and not at the top, as we do with our ones".[28] This document attests that in 1530 the transverse flute was still something quite exotic, compared to the recorder, which is mentioned as "our flute", but at the same time becoming an instrument to be purchased in a Court.

1539 to 1589, Florence.

The chronicles of the *Intermedii* mention very often transverse flutes among the instruments played. This accounts are very important to the understanding of the instrumentation practice of the time and I will focus on them in the third paragraph of the next chapter.

1544, Venice.

Antonfrancesco Doni, in his *Dialogo della musica*, describes a musical reunion in Venice: two singers, three viole da gamba, a violone, two cornets, a lute, a flute and an

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Alemana, una Sordina e due stromenti da penna, un grande, et uno picciolo, la qual musica fu tanto bene concertata, che ad ogn'uno pareva essere di quivi alle superne parti passato." Ibidem, fo. 15

[25]"[…] si sonarono Dialoghi a otto, partiti in due Chori a questo modo, dall'una parte erano quattro Voci accompagnate con un Lauto, una Viuola, et un Flauto alla Alemana, et uno Trombone, et dall'altra parte il simigliante, e sonossi fino che venne la Quarta Vivanda." Ibidem, fo. 17

[26]"E a quelle confettioni fu suonata questa Musica, cioè cinque Viuole, con le quali etiandio cinque Voci, un stromento da penna, un Flauto grosso, una Lira, un Trombone, et un Flauto all'Alemana." Ibidem fo. 19

[27] "Et mentre si cavò la detta ventura, sonarono quattro Flauti all'Alemana." Ibidem

[28] "[…] Appresso vorrei che mi si portassino una cassa o sia coppia di Flauti alemani che si suonano a mezo el flauto, et non in testa, come si fanno li nostri; ma avvertite de torli buoni et che siano compiti de tutte le voci che si vanno" from: Luigi Valdrighi, *Cappelle, concerti e musiche in casa d'Este. Atti e Memorie delle RR deputazioni di storia patria*, series III, vol II, Modena, 1883, p. 462

harpsichord. About the flute player Doni writes: "Paolo Vergelli, eminent with the transverse flute."[29]

1546, Brescia.

Vincenzo Parabosco, organist of the Brescia Cathedral, composer and poet, wrote a letter to Alessandro Viustino in Piacenza, discussing the recruitment of a musical ensemble for the Duke of Parma. The letter is dated 28th January 1546 and it gives a general glimpse into performance practice, especially regarding multi-instrumentalism:

> "And I explained everything that Your Lordship wrote concerning how His Excellency our Lord Duke of Parma would like to know what kinds of instruments they play and how much they would want for their salary and how many persons make up their company. The first of them that was asked, messer Giovanni Pietro Rizetti, replied to me that they were six in number and that if they came to serve His Excellency they would serve him with these kinds of consorts (*concerti*), I say excellently. First trumpets of all the kinds that can be played, then six trombones (*trombone*), of six shawms (*pifari*), then six cornets (*corneti*), then six crumhorns (*cornamuse*), then six recorders (*flauti*), then six flutes *(piferi ala alemana)*, then of six viole da braccio (*viole da brazo*), then instead of naming other consorts, perhaps Your Excellency would enjoy more than all the others - because it is something unusual and so new that I believe that it will please you exceedingly - the union of those above said instruments, of one type or another, accompanied in various ways by vocal music. All of them are excellent at playing from music and in improvising upon the book of the cantor."[30]

1562 to 1628, Verona.

As mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, from 1562 to 1628 flutes are present in the inventories of the Accademia Filarmonica. They are now the biggest extant renaissance flute collection.

1565, Bologna.

During a banquet given for the prince Frederick of Bavaria, at the Fantuzzi house, music was played with viols, harpsichord and transverse flutes (*viole da braccio, clavicembalo e flauti traversi*).[31]

1568, Venice.

Four mute cornets, two little cornets (cornettini), a crumhorn (cornamusa), a flute (fiffero) and three trombones played for the celebrations of S. Marcus, the patron of the city.[32]

1581, Florence.

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[29]"Paolo Vergelli col fiffero traverso eccellente" from: Antonfrancesco Doni, *Dialogo della musica*, Girolamo Scotto, 1544

[30] See also: http://kimballtrombone.com/trombone-history-timeline/trombone-history-16th-century-2/ last accessed January, 21, 2015

[31] Walter Salmen, *Musikleben im 16. Jahrhundert*, Musikgeschichte in Bildern, III, Leipzig, VEB Deutscher Verlag für Music 1976, p. 40

[32] Denis Arnold, *Con ogni sorta di stromenti*, Brass Quarterly, II, 1959, p. 104

Vincenzo Galilei writes about the provenance of various instruments in his *Dialogo di Vincentio Galilei Nobile Fiorentino, della musica antica, et della moderna*: "[…] the French spread the recorders to Italy; the Swiss spread the transverse flutes".[33]

1586, Florence.

Alessandro Striggio, in a letter, describes a school in Florence, were abandoned children learned to play *il cornetto* and *la traversa.* The school was well known in the Florentine musical environment, and formed good musicians. As mentioned above, multi-instrumentalism was a very typical feature of a renaissance musician. The school was founded by the priest Bernardino di Francesco Pagani, called *il franciosino,* and the children played every day for the Grand Duke and in many other special occasions.[34]

In chronicles and archives, musicians coming from this school are always recognizable, because they usually get the epithet *del franciosino*. A good example can be found in the Buonarroti Archive: in October 1608, for the wedding of Cosimo II de Medici and Maria Magdalena of Austria, *Il giudizio di Paride*, a *favola pastorale* by Michelangelo Buonarroti (nephew of the most famous one) was represented in Florence. As usual, a set of *Intermedii* was represented between the acts. Among the musicians who took part in the sixth *intermedio,* called *Il tempio della pace* (The temple of peace, fig. 3) there are:

- Orazio Grazi, *del franciosino,* Tenor
- a violin, played by Antonio Vanetti the *Moretto del franciosino*
- a transverse flute, played by Paolo Grazi, *del franciosino*
- a bass trombone played by Antonio Lassagnini, the *Biondino del franciosino*.[35]

1593, Verona.

In the inventory of the property left by Count Mario Bevilacqua, many tranverse flutes are listed. Mario Bevilacqua was a famous patron in Verona, music enthusiast, collector and connoisseur of art.

1594, Bologna.

Ercole Bottrigari mentions many times the transverse flute (*flauto traverso*) in his most important treatise, a dialogue on music theory and music practice titled *Il desiderio, overo de'concerti di varii strumenti musicali*. Bottrigari was inspired to write the treatise by an ensemble heard in Bologna, which featured a flute.[36] The first edition was published under the pseudonym Alemanno Benelli, and only after 1598 it was re-published under Bottrigari's real name.

1600, approximately, Bologna.

1600 is the date given to a manuscript kept in the "Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale" in Bologna, called *Il Dolcimelo*, and signed by Aurelio Virgiliano. We have no information about who Aurelio Vigiliano was, but his manuscript is the first and the most relevant Italian treatise on the flute. *Il Dolcimelo* is divided in three parts but each part, all unfinished.

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[33] "Furono introdotti in Italia i flauti dritti da Galli, et dagli Svizzeri i Traversi". Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogo di Vincentio Galilei Nobile Fiorentino, della musica antica, et della moderna,* Giorgio Marescotti editor, Florence, 1581, p 146

[34] "[…] li fa sonare, ogni giorno in ringhiera del Granduca e alla tavola: e servirono similmente alla commedia che fece il Granduca per le nozze di Ferrara […]"

[35] See Luigi Lupo, *Il flauto traverso rinascimentale*. Thesis for the degree of History of Medieval and Renaissance Music, D.A.M.S., University of Bologna, 1994, pp. 78-79

[36] See Gianni Lazzeri *Il flauto traverso: storia, tecnica, acustica*, EDT srl, 2003, p 28

In the third book, Virgiliano gives the indication that, if needed, the flute can transpose a fourth up or a fifth down. He also gives a fingering chart. The second book contains sixteen *Ricercate fiorite*, which can be played by many different instruments. In ten of them, the *traversa* is mentioned and the sixth Ricercata was probably written especially for the flute, since it is quoted as first possible instrument.

1607, Mantova.

The Duke of Mantova tried to purchase some flutes through his ambassador in Venice, Ercole Udine. The ambassador was helped by his friend Giovani Gabrieli, who writes, in a letter dated 1st September 1607, that the maker asked a very high price, considering flutes very difficult instruments to make.[37]

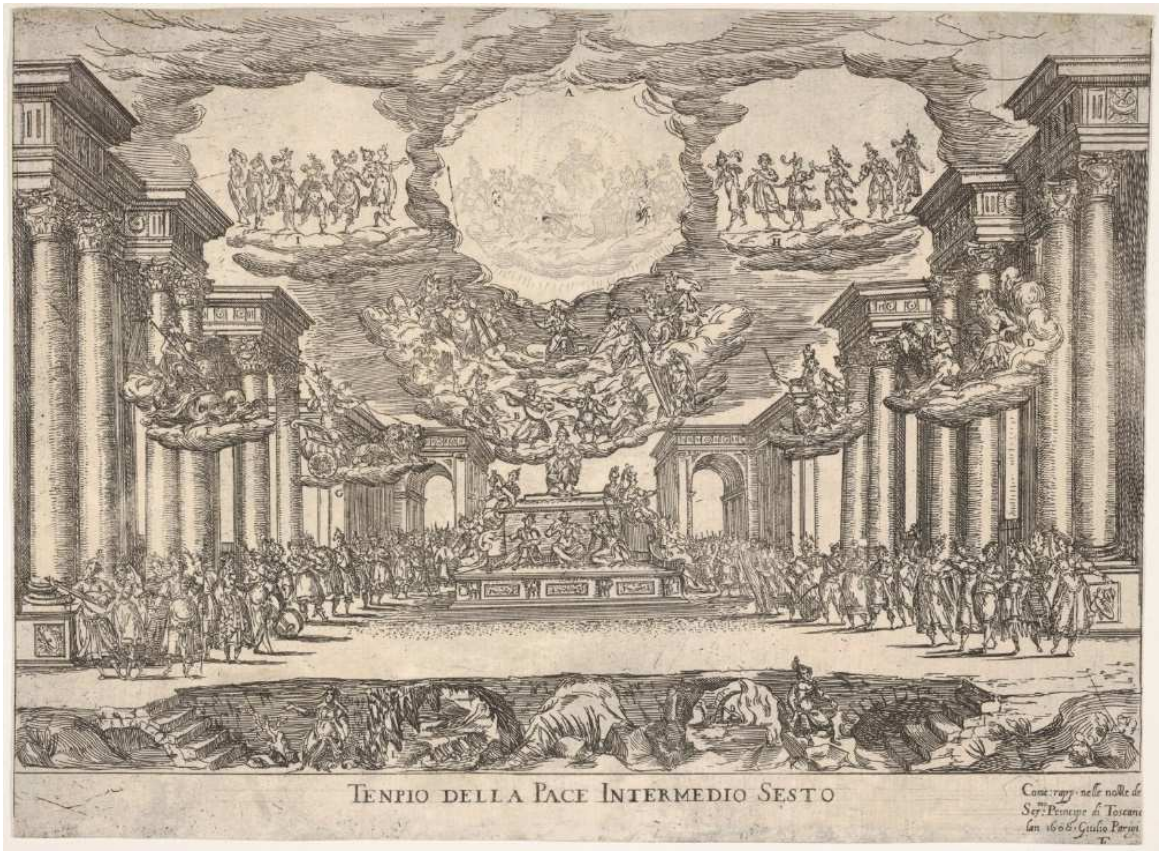

Fig. 3: Remigio Cantagallina, after Giulio Parigi's scene for the Sixth intermedio: *The temple of peace*[38]

1608, Florence.

The above mentioned Buonarroti Archive (fo. 60-62), lists a *traversa* player among the musicians who took part in the sixth intermedio of *Il Giudizio di Paride* (fig 3a). Unfortunately the music written for that occasion is lost.

1628, Rome.

Vincenzo Giustiniani, in his *Discorso sopra la musica dei suoi tempi*, writes:

[37] Luigi Lupo, *Il flauto traverso rinascimentale*. Thesis for the degree of History of Medieval and Renaissance Music, D.A.M.S., University of Bologna, 1994, p. 78

[38] Downloaded from Metropolitan Museum of Art - Gallery Images, www.metmuseum.org

> Not so many people in Italy are able to play the *Pifaro*, which is the Transverse German flute, with knowledge of the musical counterpoint, and with grace and justness. In Rome Mister Giulio Cesare d'Orvieto used to play it, and at the moment also another man, who, among the the many virtues and honored excellent abilities which he has, plays also this instrument with amazement of the listeners.[39]

Unfortunately there is no indication of the repertoire that these two excellent flute players performed to amaze their audience. From Vincenzo Giustiniani's remark, we could presume that he heard them playing unaccompanied. We could imagine that a flute player, performing *solo*, could have gained the praise of the public with some Ricercars or Fantasias based on some renowned tune.

Fig.3a: detail of The *temple of peace*

1640, Florence.

In the inventory of loans of the Medici collection of instruments, 17 *traverse* are listed as lent out. Among them there are two descants and two basses ("traversa piccola alla quarta alta and traversa grossa").[40]

1654, Florence.

In the inventory of the Medici collection of instruments, 19 *traverse* are listed. Probably the instruments lent out at that moment are not counted in this list.[41]

[39] "Il suonare con il Pifero o sia Traversa all'usanza tedesca, ma con termini di contrappunto musicale, e con grazia e giustezza, non è anotizia di molti in Italia; et in Roma lo soleva suonare in Sig. Giulio Cesare d'Orvieto, et al presente lo suona anche un signor principale, che fra le molte virtù et essercitij onorati che pssiede in eccelenza, suona anche di questo stromento con stupore di chi lo sente." From: Angelo Solerti, *Le origini del Melodramma*, Bocca, Torino, 1903, p. 127

[40] Vinicio Gai. *Gli strumenti musicali della corte medicea e il Museo del Conservatorio "Luigi Cherubini" di Firenze: cenni storici e catalogo descrittivo*. Licosa, 1969, pp. 22-24

[41] Ibidem, p. 4-5

1.5 Terminology

One of the difficulties encountered in tracing a linear history of the flute in Italy is that there was not a univocal name adopted everywhere and through time to indicate the same instrument. In fact, depending on the geographical area, the flute assumed different names.

Generally, when the word *flauto* comes without any other indication it refers most of the time to a recorder. A very typical name, that also explains its supposed provenance was *flauto alla alemanna* or *flauto Tedesco* (German flute).

On the other hand, the term *fiffaro* probably indicated at first the military flute, and then it was adopted to indicate the chamber music flute, mostly in the north of Italy, namely in Venice, Mantova, and Verona. The military flute was sometimes called *fiffaro da campo* (fife for the field), and in this way it was still distinguished from the chamber music flute. It is also noticeable how often, in the inventories, military flutes are listed beside drums, as they were a fixed duo in the military parade. The term *fiffaro* must not be confused with the other term *piffaro* or *piffara*, which indicates a double reed instrument.

In the area of Tuscany and Emilia, the flute tended to be called *traversa*, or *flauto traverso*, or *flauto/traversa d'Alemagna*. *Traversa* is the name used by Aurelio Virgiliano in his *Dolcimelo*, and the same term is used in the Medici archives.

Sometimes, for the flutes of the Medici court, we find a specification of the size of the flute. For example, in the inventory of loans dated 1640, we read: *traversa grossa*, *traversa mezzana* and *traversa piccola*, respectively big, middle-sized and small transverse flute.

In short, we can adfirm that the most used terms to indicate the transverse flute in Italy between the XVI and XVII century are *fiffaro*, more in the Venetian environment and *traversa*, used in the areas of Tuscany and Emilia.[42]

[42] About the terminology in Italy see: Luigi Lupo, *Il flauto traverso rinascimentale*. Thesis for the degree of History of Medieval and Renaissance Music, D.A.M.S., University of Bologna, 1994, pp. 84-92

Chapter II
Mixed Consorts

2.1 The non-specification of instrumentation: problem or opportunity?

> A rigid choice of performing medium is alien to seventeenth century and earlier music, but complete flexibility, uninformed by historical and practical considerations, may equally lead to performances far removed from the spirit in which the music was written.[43]

During the Renaissance, up until Giovanni Gabrieli and Claudio Monteverdi, the instrumentation of a music piece was very seldom fixed. Musicians had a certain amount of freedom to decide how a piece had to be performed. *English mixed consort* music sources, specifying which instruments are involved in the performance of a certain piece, are quite unusual under this respect.

Most sixteenth-century vocal music which survives today fails to mention instrumental participation, and this would suggest to us that it was originally sung *a cappella*. But many contemporary descriptions of performances then, make clear that instruments very often accompanied vocal music.[44] For this reason, Howard Mayer Brown suggests that "performances that strive to recapture the original spirit of such compositions must seek to bring them back to life by imaginative reconstruction".[45]

Most of the time the performers, and not the composers, chose the instrumentation, and the criteria could have been tradition, taste, and of course the availability of instruments and musicians on the specific occasion. So, the choice of one or another instrument does not seem dictated by the compositional process nor by the musical genre and rather than the music itself, the function of the music, and the character of the occasion on which the music was going to be played, tended to influence instrumentation choices. We can find a good example of this (although later than the sixteenth century) at Saint Omer, in the north of France. Here, at the English Jesuit College:

> The music of viols was associated in the early seventeenth century with the training of young musicians; mixed consort music was effective for the reception of guests and persons of distinction, while the music of wind instruments such as the hautbois and the recorders was suitable for the reception of people of high rank. In

[43] Edwards Warwick, *Consort*. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press. Accessed November 14, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06322.

[44] See for instance the examples given in Emilie Elsner, *Unteruschung der instrumentalen Besetzungspraxis der weltlichen Musik im 16. Jhrhundert in Italien,* Spezialdruckerei für Dissertationen Dr. H. Eschenhagen, 1935.

[45] Howard Mayer Brown, *Sixteenth-Century Instrumentation: the music of the Florentine Intermedii*. Musicological Studies & Documents, XXX, Roma, American Institute 1973

> the theatre, where consort music was often played, instrumentation would often be determined by the symbolic associations of particular instruments. Strings, whether viols or violins, represented harmony, unity or agreement; oboes had magical associations and were often called for in connection with evil portents; the soft sound of flutes or recorders, sometimes referred to as *still music*, tended to symbolize death.[46]

One of the great contributes that Anne Smith gives in her study about the renaissance flute, is drawing up the repertoire charts.[47] They are a list of rare examples which form the entire renaissance repertoire where the flute is mentioned among the possible instruments to be used. In this list, we can find all the possible type of texts and genres of music. There are ricercari, chansons, lieder, different dances, madrigals and motets.

Therefore, if it is not the genre, nor the character, nor the compositional process which determined an instrument repertoire, we can consider the repertoire of a renaissance instrument much wider than what is actually indicated on few existing music sources. It is important to notice that the lack of instrumentation indication does not mean at all that it was a meaningless choice. On the contrary, it was probably a shared issue, and in fact, composers, publishers and theoreticians of the time give suggestions about which pieces suit best to different instruments and about how to choose a music piece and how to transpose it eventually.[48]

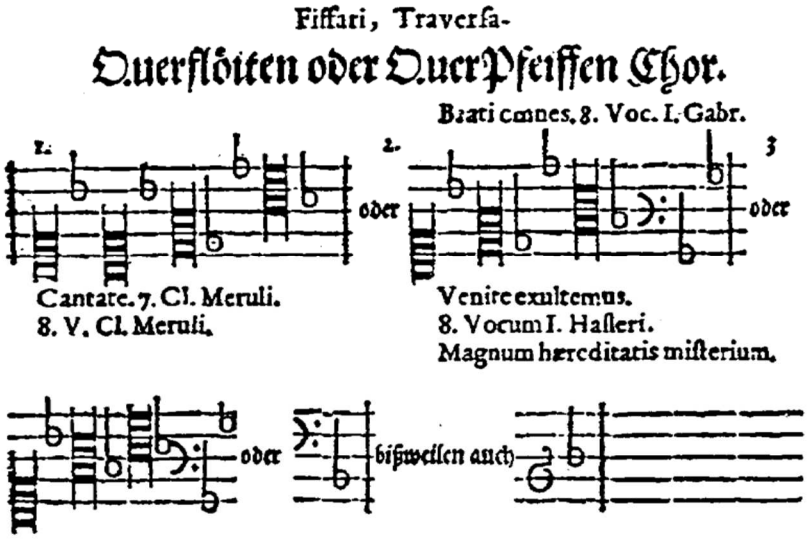

Fig. 4

A noticeable example, although in the seventeenth century, can be found in Michael Praetorius' *Syntagma musicum III* of 1619. There he gives a very practical and quick method for the arrangement and the distribution of parts in a mixed ensemble. It is based on clefs. Praetorius proposes to make a sort of resume of all clefs used in a piece, and starting from it:

> […] the characteristic of the whole composition can quite easily be determined as in a mirror. For example, one can see approximately how high and low each part

[46] Edwards Warwick, *Consort*. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press. Accessed November 14, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06322.

[47] Anne Smith, *Die Renaissancequerflöte und ihre Musik, ein Beitrag zur Interpretation der Quellen*. Basler Jahrbuch für Historische Musikpraxis II, Amadeus Verlag, Basel, 1978, p 64-76

[48] See Gianni Lazzeri *Il flauto traverso: storia, tecnica, acustica*, EDT srl, 2003, p.41

> ascends or descends according to the mode in which it is set and therefore which wind or string instruments are suitable for each part and which choirs might be sung and which played.[49]

Figure 4 shows an example of clefs that, Praetorius writes, are intended for the *querflöiten oder querpfeiffen chor* (choir of transverse flutes). Praetorius takes the examples from renowned pieces by Claudio Merulo, Giovanni Gabrieli, and Hans Hassler. This is the paragraph of *Syntagma Musicum III* mentioned before, where Praetorius does not include the bass flute in the flute choir, but proposes "three transverse flutes and a dulcian, or soft shawm (stille Pombard) or sackbut".

The fact that the instrumentation is not strictly indicated becomes, at the end, a challenging opportunity for the interpreters of today, who can experiment with different instrumentations, enriching a piece each time with different colors, and adapting the performance to the specific occasion.

2.2 The octavation practice

As I wrote in the first chapter, there is evidence that the *whole consort* of flutes played chansons, and, more generally, vocal music during the sixteenth century. There is no music written specifically for the flute consort, and that means that every piece needed to be adapted or transposed. The most common transposition was to the higher octave. Apparently, for long time, the flute was considered a 4-foot instrument, not 2-foot, and, strangely enough, the octavation was put into practice without consciousness of it.

This is what we deduce when Michael Praetorius, for the first time, points out that the flute range is always notated an octave lower than it sounds.

> It is commonly thought by numerous musicians that this kind of recorder or flute [in c or d respectively] is a true tenor in pitch, and that their lowest note is the note *c* or *d* in the tenor and thus their pitch is at four foot (according to the mensuration of the organ makers). To tell the truth I was of the same opinion at the beginning, because it is very difficult for the ear to recognize and distinguish the difference: but when one plays this note against that of an organ pipe and assiduously compares one with the other, {one hears that] it is only a true discant, as the note *c'* or *d'* is at two foot pitch.[50]

Moreover, a transverse flute built to play the bass part sounding at real pitch, in vocal polyphony of the sixteenth century, would have been a very long instrument, probably impossible to make, and surely too uncomfortable to play.

[49] Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma musicum III*, translated and edited by Jeffery T. Kite-Powell, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 156-157

[50] Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma musicum*, vol II fo. 21, quoted in Anne Smith, *The Reinassance Flute*, in John Solum, *The Early Flute*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992, p 20

Fig. 5 Magnificat by Jan I. Sadeler (1550-1600) after Maerten de Vos (1532-1603).

Praetorius writes about a comparison with the organ, and that confirms the fact that playing only with flutes in a *whole consort*, one could not notice that every voice is transposed. On the contrary, when playing in a *mixed consort*, the first problem that logically comes to mind is the octavation. Nevertheless, for many reasons it remains possible and very pleasant, to include a flute, which plays an octave higher than the notated pitch, in a mixed ensemble playing at pitch. In fact the timber of the flute sound blends very well with the other instruments, and sometimes stays in the background. Therefore, for example, if a flute plays the alto part together with a voice singing the soprano part, even if the flute is almost the whole time higher in pitch, the sound mixture works, and the octavation does not disturb.

Audio sample 4 | *Zephiro spira e 'l bel tempo rimena* by Bartolomeo Tromboncino. From *Tenori e contrabassi intabulati col sopran in canto figurato*, Petrucci 1509.
In this recording the soprano and the lute play from the Petrucci tablature, while the flute plays the alto part taken from the four-voices edition of the same piece (for more details see Appendix).

In the engraving reproduced in figure 5, we can see a marvelous example of a mixed choir performing sacred music, a Magnificat for five voices by Cornelis Verdonck (1563-1625). The distribution of voices appears clear enough: to the right of the Virgin Mary, a cornett plays the superius, a tenor voice and a viola da gamba sing and play the tenor voice in canon, a transverse flute plays the alto and another viola da gamba plays the bass.

2.3 The flute in Florence in mixed consorts

The city of Florence has a central role in the study of *mixed consorts* in Italy because of the rich music scene promoted by the Medici family, and the detailed chronicles describing the *intermedii* that were performed there through the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

An *intermedio* was a form of entertainment, both musical and theatrical, which was inserted between the acts of neo-classical comedies. The first *intermedii* were performed in Ferrara in the late fifteenth-century, between the acts of the ancient comedies by Plautus and Terence, and those ones written by their humanist followers. Since these comedies are always in five acts, at the beginning the *intermedii* were performed in sets of four. Later, when they became popular, the number was increased to six, with one *intermedio* before the first act and a last one at the end of the comedy. Beginning in the 1550's, *favole pastorali* (pastoral plays) came into fashion, and they were often supplied with sets of *intermedii* too.

Intermedii could be performed out of the sight of the audience (*intermedio non apparente*), but far more popular were the visible ones (*intermedio apparente*), performed by costumed singers, instrumentalists, actors and dancers. What they enacted was either a pastoral or a mythological story, pantomimed, danced, but almost never spoken. Although without a proper plot, often *intermedii* were unified in theme, or sometimes connected with the play itself. They were like *living pictures*, which stressed spectacle more than plot, and were meant to relief the audience from the possible complexity of the play itself. Howard Mayer Brown gives a lively picture of it:

> […] the inventive stage engineers of the time devised ingenious machines so that gods and goddesses could descend from the heavens or else be revealed in consultation on Mount Olympus, prosaic city streets could be transformed in an instant into beautiful, exotic gardens or the burning city of hell, and mountains, caves, and grottoes could spring magically up from beneath the stage floor.[51]

The *intermedii* had a major success, but they received criticism too, raising many debates among the theorists of that time. An anonymous comedian remarks that the play had come to serve as *intermedii* for the *intermedii* and the Tuscan poet Anton Francesco Grazzini, alias *il Lasca*, in the prologue to his work *La Strega* (The witch, 1556) complains that "once *intermedii* were made to serve the comedies, but now comedies are made to serve the *intermedii*". Other renaissance theorists criticized the practice of inserting them between the acts of a play as disrupting. The humanist Gian Giorgio Trissino (1478-1550) prefers to hear singing during a play only for the classic choruses, as in the ancient tragedies and comedies, and admits that:

> […] instead of these choruses, music, dance and other things are introduced in the comedies played nowadays which are called *intermedii*; these are very different from the action of the comedy and sometimes so many buffoons and jugglers are introduced that another comedy is made, an inconvenience that does not allow one to enjoy the doctrine of the comedy.[52]

[51] Howard Mayer Brown. *Sixteenth-Century Instrumentation: the music of the Florentine Intermedii.* Musicological Studies & Documents, XXX, American Institute of Musicology, Rome, 1973, p. 15

[52] Gian Giorgio Trissino, *La quinta e la sesta divisione della poetica del Trissino*, published by Andrea Arrivabene, Venice, 1562, fo. 32. Quoted in: David Nutter, *Intermedio*. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music

On the other hand, Giovan Battista Giraldi, alias *Cynthius*, poet and playwright from Ferrara, writes enthusiastically about the *intermedii* saying that they divide the acts of a comedy or a tragedy in the same way as the chorus in the ancient dramas divided the parts or acts. In his *Discorsi intorno al comporre de i romanzi, delle commedie, e delle tragedie* (Ferrara 1554) he writes:

> […] today we make this distinction with music at the ends of acts when the stage remains empty […] either making the musicians arise from the middle of the stage by means of machines […] or hearing them from behind the scenes so that no one is seen. This latter manner is easier and more in use, but the other is more pleasurable, not to say marvelous, especially if the musicians are in costume. [53]

Court *intermedii*, organized and performed for a special occasion, such as a wedding, or a baptism of a noble child, or an official visit, were the most splendid, grandiose, and costly of all. In fact, during the early sixteenth century they developed into an ideal vehicle of courtly extravagance. The importance of the role of music increased, and the expectations regarding the effects given by the sound were as high as the ones regarding the visual wonders of stage machinery.

Unfortunately, little of the music composed for *intermedii* survives. Only two complete sets are extant, namely the set performed in Florence in 1539, celebrating the wedding of Cosimo I de' Medici with Eleonora of Toledo, with texts by Alessandro Striggio and music by Francesco Corteccia, and the set performed in 1589, for the wedding of Ferdinando de' Medici with Christine of Lorraine. The latter set, created for the comedy *La pellegrina*, was performed many times and it was probably the most costly ever devised, involving a large number of writers and musicians. These two sets are extant because they were published at the time as special commemorative editions. Nevertheless, only thanks to the many accounts of performances that survive in letters, diaries and especially in the printed description booklets of contemporary writers, we have detailed information about music, instrumentation, scenes, costuming and other particulars of the whole production.

Although important in the ensemble, bowed string instruments that accompanied singers in the Florentine *intermedii*, were not more prominent then wind instruments. The flute is among the most frequently employed winds, together with cornets and trombones. The other wind instruments to which the *intermedio* descriptions refer, like recorders, pipe and tabor, crumhorns and *dolzaine* seem to be used only for particular moments, or at least for more rare occasions.

Whoever decided how to instrumentate the music of the *intermedii*, added often one or two flutes to large mixed ensembles, and did not only restrict the flute within the *whole consort*. However, if present, the *whole consort*, might have been combined with other consorts, doubling or playing polychoral music.

To conclude this paragraph it is worth to give a few examples of the mixed ensembles including flutes reported in the description booklets of the *intermedii*.

Online. Oxford University Press, accessed February 2, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13831.

[53] Giambattista Giraldi, alias Cynthius. *Discorsi intorno al comporre de i romanzi, delle commedie, e delle tragedie, e di altre maniere di poesie*, Ferrara, 1554, p. 250. Quote in David Nutter, *Intermedio*. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed February 2, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13831.

In 1539, after the second act of the comedy *Il Commodo*, by Antonio Landi, three mermaids, three sea nymphs and three sea monsters performed *Chi me l'ha tolta ohime?* by Francesco Corteccia: three female voices, three lutes and three flutes played.[54]

Audio sample 5 | *Le Syrene, chi me l'ha tolta ohime?* by Francesco Corteccia (for more details see Appendix).

In 1548, the king of France, Henry II and his wife Caterina de' Medici visited Lyon. There, the resident Florentine community had staged the comedy *La Calandra* by Bernardo Dovizi alias Cardinal Bibbiena, with the related *intermedii*. The first *intermedio* featured a solo voice, two spinets and four flutes. The very last piece, probably for four voices, was played by a solo voice, two spinets, four flutes and two viole da gamba.[55] Nothing of the music, by Piero Mannucci, survives.

In 1565, for the wedding of Francesco de' Medici with Joanna of Austria, *intermedii* for Francesco d'Ambra's comedy *La Cofanaria*, were realized at the court of Florence.[56] The subject was taken from the story of Cupid and Psyche. The first *intermedio*, with music by Alessandro Striggio, featured at the beginning four double harpsichords (*gravicembali doppi*), four viole da gamba, two trombones, two tenor recorders, one mute cornet, one transverse flute, and two lutes.[57] At the end of this *intermedio* we find four voices on stage and the following instruments offstage: two harpsichords, bass lute, bass viola da gamba, descant-viol and recorder (probably playing *passaggi*), four transverse flutes, and one trombone.[58] The second *intermedio* featured one flute as well.

Which part did the flute play in large groups? The sources that we have unfortunately do not specify it. Several times flutes probably doubled the highest voice, but more often they took over the inner parts as members of a mixed consort in a large ensemble. Howard Mayer Brown, in the Appendix of his *Sixteenth-Century Instrumentation* made a reconstruction of the instrumentations that were used, giving to each of the pieces a probable disposition of instruments and voices.[59]

As we can see in the few examples given, the flute is constantly present in the *intermedii* at the Medici Court in Florence, from 1539 up to 1608, for the *intermedii* for *Il Giudizio di Paride* by Michelangelo Buonarroti (see Chapter I).

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[54] The *intermedii* of 1539 are described in: Pier Francesco Giambullari, *Apparato et feste nelle nozze dello Illustrissimo signor Duca di Firenze, et della Duchessa sua Consorte, con le sue Stanze, Madriali, Comedia; et Intermedii in quelle recitati.* Giunti, Florence, 1589.

[55] Described in: *La Magnifica et Triumphale Entrata del Christianiss. Re di Francia Henrico secondo di questo nome, fatta nella nobile e antiqua Città di Lyone à luy e à la sua Serenissima consorte Chaterina alli 21 di Sept. 1548. Colla particulare descritione della Comedia che fece recitare la Natione Fiorentina a richiesta di Sua Maestà Christianissima.* Gulielmo Rovillio, Lyon, 1549

[56] Described in Domenico Mellini, *Descrizione dell'apparato della comedia et intermedii d'essa recitata in Firenze, il giorno di S. Stefano l'anno 1565… nelle reali nozze dell'illustriss. S. Francisco Medici Principe di Fiorenza e di Siena, e della regina Giovanna d'Austria sua consorte,* Florence, 1565.

[57] Ibidem: "La Musica di questo primo Intermedio era concertata. Da quattro Gravicembali doppi. Da quattro Viole d'arco. Da dua Tromboni. Da dua Tenori di Flauti. Da un Cornetto muto. Da una Traversa. Et da dua Leuti".

[58] Ibidem: "L'ultima stanza poi d'Amore fu a cinque cantata anch'ella fuori tutta da voci, & accompagnata dentro. Da due Gravicembali. Da un Liuto grosso. Da un sotto basso di Viola, aggiunto sopra le parti. Da un soprano di Viola aggiunto anch'egli. Da un Flauto similmente aggiunto. Da quattro Traverse. Et da un Trombone".

[59] Howard Mayer Brown. *Sixteenth-Century Instrumentation: the music of the Florentine Intermedii.* Musicological Studies & Documents, XXX, American Institute of Musicology, Rome, 1973, p. 83

At the Gabinetto degli Uffizi in Florence there is a rich collection of renaissance drawings depicting musical scenes. These drawings are very useful for the researcher because of the glimpse they give on musical practice. In 1951 Luigi Parigi made a complete catalogue with descriptions of all of them. Among the drawings dated sixteenth or early seventeenth century, twenty-six illustrate a flute playing with other instruments. In figure 6, we can see an example: *Concerto Musicale*, by Bartolommeo Spranger (1546-1627?), where a viola da gamba, a flute and a singer are represented.[60]

Beside these evidences, the school mentioned in 1586 by Alessandro Striggio, and the inventories of the instruments belonging to the de' Medici family show how popular the instrument was in the city in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

Fig. 6 Bartolommeo Spranger (1546-1627?) Concerto musicale,
Florence Gabinetto degli Uffizi

2.4 A brief comparison with mixed consorts in England and Germany

The history of the *mixed consort* in England follows a peculiar path that is worthy of attention. In fact the term *English consort* refers to a specific combination of instruments,

[60] See Luigi Parigi, *I disegni musicali del Gabinetto degli Uffizzi e delle minori collezioni pubbliche a Firenze.* Firenze, Olschki, 1951; and Luisa Marcucci and Luigi Parigi, *Mostra di strumenti musicali in disegni degli Uffizi, Catalogo.* Firenze, Olschki, 1952

namely lute, pandora, bass viola da gamba, citterne, treble viola da gamba and flute. Before looking closer at the *English consort*, I will spend a few words on the English musical scene and the flute, which was a very popular instrument in the sixteenth-century England.

The inventory of Henry VIII, compiled in 1547, after his death, mentions, among more than 200 wind instruments, 72 transverse flutes and 2 military flutes, some of them particularly rich, and decorated with silver, ivory or golden rings.[61]

Chronicles of the time describe how music had a central role in Henry the VIII's court. The king himself played many instruments, including the flute, the recorder and the lute, the organ and the virginal. He loved dancing and singing and, according to contemporary accounts, he was very gifted. In a letter of Nicolo Sagudino, Secretary of the Venetian Embassy, dated June 6th 1515, we find an excellent description of the magnificent entertainment given to the ambassadors in Greenwich. I quote the whole passage because it gives a complete and lively picture of the entertainment. After the banquet,

> […] they were taken into rooms containing a number of organs, harpsichords (*clavicimbani*), flutes, and other musical instruments, where the prelates and nobles were assembled to see the jousts then in preparation. The ambassadors told some of these nobles that he (Sagudino) was a proficient on some of these instruments. He was consequently asked to play, and did so for a long time, being listened with great attention. Among the listeners was a Brescian, to whom the kings gives 300 ducats a year for playing the lute, and who took up his instruments and played a few things with him (Sagudino). Afterwards two musicians, also in the king's service, played the organ, but very badly; they kept bad time, their touch was feeble, and their execution not very good. The prelates who were present said the king would certainly desire to hear him (Sagudino), as his majesty practices on these instruments day and night.[62]

Flutes took part also to solemn and very important ceremonies, as for example the funeral of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, where seven flutes played.[63]

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, a typical grouping of six unlike instruments, which Praetorius calls *English Consort*, starts appearing in chronicles. In the anonymous description[64] of the four-day fete given in September 1591, for entertaining the Queen at the Earl of Hertford's Hampshire estate of Elvetham, we read:

> After this speech, the Fairy Quene and her maides daunced about the garland, singing a song of sixe partes, with the musicke of an exquisite consort, wherein was the Lute, Bandora, Base-Violl, Citterne, Treble-violl, and Flute

For this combination of instruments Thomas Morley published his *Consort Lessons* in 1599, and Philip Rosseter his *Lessons for Consort* (1609). In the third volume of his

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[61] David Greer. *Henry VIII, King of England.* Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed January 29, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/12809

[62] Rawdon Brown's *Calendar of Venetian State Papers*, vol II, p. 248. Quoted in: Digby Wyatt. *On the foreign artists employed in England during the sixteenth century, and their influence on british art.* Royal Institute of British Architects. Paper read at the Ordinary General Meeting, held on Monday, 18th May, 1868. Published by The Royal institute of British Architects, London, 1869

[63] See Gianni Lazzeri, *Il flauto traverso: storia, tecnica, acustica*, EDT srl, 2003, p 23

[64] The Honorable Entertainment gieuen to the Queenes Maiestie in Progresse, at Elvetham in Hampshire, by the right Honorable the Earle of Hertford, 1591

Syntagma Musicum, Praetorius wrote enthusiastically of the *English Consort* in the paragraph of the Lute Choir, showing that it could actually be made up of a variety of different instruments, and that his peculiarity was the quantity of plucked strings, which "produces quite a beautiful effect and lovely sound (*resonantz*)". His descriptions testify to the fame of such ensembles on the continent in the early seventeenth century.

This Consort was actively present in the English Court from about 1556 up to 1660. Figure 7, detail from *The Memorial Painting of Sir Henry Unton*, by an unknown artist, circa 1596, shows an *English consort*.

Fig. 7 detail from The Memorial Painting of Sir Henry Unton",
Circa 1596, National Portrait Gallery, London

Moving our attention to Germany, and before referring to the use of flutes in *mixed consorts*, it is important to mention the very first known collection of music dedicated to a *whole consort* of flutes, recorders, or other instruments: Arnt von Aich's *Hubscher lieder*, published in Cologne, ca. 1519-1520. The title page says:

> In this little book, one finds seventy-five pretty songs for soprano, alto, bass and tenor, amusing to sing. Also some to play in an artful way with recorders, flutes and other musical instruments.[65]

The instrumentation is mentioned only on the title page, so the content must be worked out by looking at the ranges in order to choose for the right instrument. The book contains entirely German songs in four parts, with the tune and the text in the tenor part.

Concerning the use of the flute in combination with other instruments, German sacred motets of the early seventeenth century are among the latest examples that we can find before the instrument started its development towards the baroque flute.

[65] "In dissem Buechlyen fynt man LXXV. Hubscher Lieder myt Discant. Alt. Bas. und Tenor. Lustick zu syngen. Auch etlich zu fleiten, schwegelen und anderen musicalisch Instrumenten artlichen zu gebrauchen". Quoted from Nancy Hadden. *From Swiss flute to Consorts: History, Music and* […] Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The University of Leeds, 2010, p 145. A precise date for Aich's publication cannot be verified; the volume is listed in RISM as [1519$_5$].

Aligning with what Praetorius writes, many German composers, probably influenced by the polychoral Venetian style, wrote sacred pieces and motets which included the flute explicitly in the score. For example Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672) in his sacred concerted music gave often an obbligato role to the transverse. Johann Hermann Schein (1586-1630), was Thomaskantor and responsible of directing the choral music in the Thomaskirche and the Nicolaikirche in Leipzig, from 1616 to 1630. He wrote many sacred compositions with obbligato flutes, other instruments and voices. Tobias Michael (1592-1657), cantor of the Thomanerchor in Leipzig from 1631 to 1657, in his masterpiece *Musicalische Seelenlust* (1634-7), writes twenty-six *concertos*, for various solo voices with many obbligato instruments, flutes included. Sebastian Knüpfer (1633-1676), cantor of the Thomanerchor in Leipzig from 1657 to 1676, and director of the city's music, wrote many sacred works with written parts for two flutes (called *traverso*).

Audio sample 6 | *Ach Herr, strafe mich nicht in deinem Zorn* by Sebastian Knüpfer (for more details see Appendix).

Looking at this sources, the role of the obbligato flute in the seventeenth-century Sacred Concertos does not seem very distant from the role of the flute in Johann Sebastian Bach's Cantatas, written in Leipzig a few decades after Knüpfer's death.

2.5 Conclusions

During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, composers left many decisions, that later came to be a part of the compositional process itself, to the imagination and skills of the singers and players. For example, which instruments to use, how to embellish melodic lines, how to underlay a text in a song, when to play accidentals, and so on. The size of the hall, the nature of the occasion, and of course the number of people and instruments available were important for taking decisions. There was almost never a unique version of a piece, and instrumentation was not yet part of the compositional process.

Strikingly, among all the examples I wrote in this paper only once the flutes play in *whole consort*, and for the rest one or more flutes join mixed groups, either larger or not. Also in all the Florentine *intermedii* chronicles, only twice we read about a composition performed by voices without any instrumental support. These facts reinforce the impression that *whole consort* or *a cappella* performances were considered as a more special sound in the sixteenth century than we suppose sometimes.

We should be than encouraged, when performing secular Italian music of the Sixteenth century, to keep our mind open to the possibility of transforming *a cappella* compositions into colorful ensembles mixing voices and different instruments.

Moreover, we should be careful when putting the music for the *intermedii* on the same level of the madrigals. Indeed, *intermedii*'s music was written in a style particularly suited for the theater, free of dissonances, often homophonic, relatively simple, and with masses of sound, whereas madrigals were composed with more sensitive control over contrapuntal detail and dissonance level, and were apt for chamber performances. Therefore, the orchestration of the madrigals was perhaps more discreet, but I believe that there is no need for a radical change.

We have seen also descriptions of music played at banquets and inside houses, where instruments were often mixed. Hence I wonder how madrigals by Verdelot, Marenzio, Gesualdo, Arcadelt, de Rore, and Monteverdi among many others, could sound if one would judiciously mix instruments and voices.

The audio samples I present with my research paper are only the beginning of my sound combinations experiments, and I am planning to carry on with them in a way to open new soundscapes and to enrich my concert-programming possibilities.

Appendix
Notes on the sound samples

Audio sample 1

Je ne puis pas. From Vingt et sept chansons musicales a quatre parties, Paris 1533.
Recorded on 20-05-2013, flute consort: Chloe Hansen, superius; Antonia Molina Ruiz, altus; Radka Kubínová, tenor; Giuditta Isoldi, bassus.
This is an example of the songs Pierre Attaignant published in 1533. The song has the text and it is among the ones which are marked as most suitable for transverse flutes.

Audio sample 2

Johannes Ghiselin, *La Alfonsina*. From Petrucci Odecathon 1501.
Recorded on 04-02-2015, Giuditta Isoldi, flute; Marit Lund Bjørnsen, trombone; Kim Stockx, dulcian.
One of the musical groups described in Messisbugo's book catches my attention very much. It is the one composed by a flute, a trombone and a *dolzaina*. Although the *dolzaina* might be another kind of instrument, I decided to try how this combination would be with a dulcian. I applied the practical instrumentation principle of using what is available, and I could not find any dolzaina to play this piece. Moreover, Praetorius also suggests combining dulcians with flutes. I chose an Italian three voices madrigal, published by Petrucci in 1501, without a text. It might have been a bit old fashioned when the Banquet in 1529 took place, but it could have been also still in vogue.

Audio sample 3

Jakob Arcadelt, *Il bianco e dolce cigno*. From Il primo libro de' madrigali a 4 voci, Antonio gardano, Venice 1539.
Recorded on 20-05-2013, flute consort: Chloe Hansen, superius; Antonia Molina Ruiz, altus; Radka Kubínová, tenor; Giuditta Isoldi, bassus.
Only once, during the banquets described by Messisbugo, a *whole consort* of flutes appears. I chose to play an Italian four voices Madrigal to have an idea of how could have been sounding the flute choir during Messisbugo's feast.

Audio sample 4

Bartolomeo Tromboncino, *Zephiro spira e 'l bel tempo rimena*. From: Tenori e contrabassi intabulati col sopran in canto figurato, Petrucci 1509
Recorded on 23-10-2014, Ignotæ Deæ: Antonia Harper, soprano; Giuditta Isoldi, flute; Paola Ventrella, lute.
This is an example I want to give of how a flute playing an alto part up an octave, and being in this way almost all the time above the soprano voice, doesn't disturb the balance of the group and blends anyway with the sound quality of the mixed ensemble.

Audio sample 5

Sebastian Knüpfer, *Ach Herr, strafe mich nicht in deinem Zorn*. From the CD: Thomaskantoren vor Bach | S. Knüpfer, J. Schelle, J. Kuhnau. Cantus Cölln; Konrad Junghänel, conductor. Harmonia Mundi 1993.

For this piece, probably dated between 1670 and 1675, Knüpfer utilizes, alongside the five-part string ensemble, trumpets and timpani, and two flutes. A copy of the score in Berlin marks the parts as *Traversi* flutes, and this recording follows that instruction. Another copy in Dresden asks for *Flauti* (recorders or traversi?). Kate Clark and Wilbert Hazelzet play the renaissance flute in this recording.

Audio sample 6

Francesco Corteccia, *Chi me l'ha tolta ohime? Le Syrene*. From the CD: Firenze 1539. Centre de Musique Ancienne di Ginevra; Studio di Musica Rinascimentale di Palermo; Schola Jacopo da Bologna; Gabriel Garrido, conductor. Tactus 1990.

The ensemble has recorded the three voices Madrigal by Corteccia following the instrumentation denscribed by Pierfrancesco Giambullari: three female voices, three flutes and three lutes.

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