

ENRICO CORREGGIA
«*Videmus nunc per speculum, in aenigmate*»
*From sign to sound:
reflections on a topsy-turvey world*

One of the greatest errors that an historian can commit is to refer to sources without placing them in their context, applying the criteria of reading with regard to his own times. Even if this seems self-evident, it is in reality the fundamental premise for undertaking valid research.

Why repeat it on this occasion? Everyone has his own image of the medieval period, whether epic, chivalric, millenarian, dark, or luminous. And it is the first great historical epoch to undergo this process. That which has survived from the Romans, the Egyptians and the Mesopotamians has come to light through the archeological disciplines, and has been transformed into an open air museum. This is not so for the medieval period, which still lives today: its structures are still being used, whether churches, banks or *palazzi*. Much of that which it has left us – material or immaterial – still functions. And this is a fact which we must never forget.

[...] the medieval period represents the crucible of Europe and of modern civilisation. It invented all the things with which we are still grappling: banks and bills of exchange, estates, the structures of administration and communal politics, class struggles and pauperism, disputes between church and state, universities, mystical terrorism, circumstantial trials, hospitals and bishoprics, even organised tourism [...]. And in fact we are not obsessed with the problem of slavery, or of ostracism, or why one might necessarily have to kill one's own moth-

er (classical problems *per eccellenza*), but instead how to face heresy, and one's companions who err, and those who repent; how to respect one's wife and languish for one's lover, since the medieval period also invented the concept of love in the West.¹

It may seem banal to say so, but the ambience which surrounds us is not that of our forebears, the sounds and colours that we perceive are not the same, and the rhythm of life is different.² And thus the aesthetic and sonorous ideals which we attribute to the music of those times, consolidated by the production of recordings, is in fact modern, and – as we will see – beyond the logic of an informed context.

The first hypothesis that can shake our tree of certainty is truly paradoxical: that which we call Gregorian chant (*canto gregoriano*) is neither chant (that is to say, song) nor Gregorian.³ That it has nothing to do with Gregory the Great is by now universally known and acknowledged; only the odd primary school continues to spread the myth. But that it is not song⁴ is still relatively unknown and difficult to digest. In truth, some have tried to make this point within the monastic ambience, but its sonorous tradition has neglected every form of historical and liturgical contextualization.

Let us try for a moment to challenge the idea of sound that we have

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- 1 UMBERTO ECO, *Dieci modi di sognare il Medioevo*, paper read at the conference *Il sogno del Medioevo. Il revival del Medioevo nelle culture contemporanee*, «Quaderni medievali», 1986, n. 21, pp. 187-200. (Now reissued in Id., *Sugli specchi e altri saggi*, Milano, La Nave di Teseo editore, 2018, s.p.).
 - 2 We should remember that only one hundred years ago the confines of Europe were redesigned by the First World War. In the meantime there has been the era of totalitarianism, the Cold War, the economic boom, the new crisis. The world changes with startling rapidity and we cannot think of the past as a closed entity without a fluidity of aesthetics, styles, technology and morality.
 - 3 MASSIMO LATTANZI, *Il canto gregoriano non è canto: appunti per un paradosso*, in *Cantando Praedicare*, ed. by Godejard Joppich and Stephan Klöckner, Regensburg, Bosse, 1992, pp. 109-119.
 - 4 Liturgical chant was not an artistic element; it was not a decoration or embellishment; it was not *song* as we understand it today: it was liturgy. Recited Mass is a recent development. In early times it was always sung, and the singer was an ordained priest. When we lament that liturgical music is not valued today, it reflects this change of perspective. Liturgical chant has become song and has ceased to be liturgy.

received, and of the aesthetic which has been transmitted between the 19th and 20th centuries. We are lead to believe that the ornamentation of a line – we must take care to remember that performance practice is often erroneous – is a characteristic of the Renaissance or baroque. But this belief must have an origin somewhere, and we cannot ignore the multitude of examples which have come down to us. This series of *Gloria patri* (Figs. 1A, B, C e D) has a common matrix.⁵ There is nothing to prevent us from attributing the variants to melodic traditions deriving from different monasteries, as in fact one is often done. But the notation derives from vocal practice, and the most evident element – the incipit – would seem to reflect a different perception of an ornamental form, today seen as an execrable vice, which has had success in vocal music until the



20th century: the *attacco dal basso*.⁶

In the first example, it is conceivable that the copyist has not found it necessary to notate an habitual practice. In the others following, the scribes have probably decided to write down that which they perceived

5 See, respectively, the following sources: A) Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, Codex 611(89), *Antiphonarium pro Ecclesia Einsidlensi*, f. 57r: (<https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/sbe/0611>); B) Fribourg/ Freiburg, Couvent des Cordeliers/ Franziskanerkloster, Ms. 2: *Antiphonarium* (<https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/fcc/0002>), f. 7v; C) Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, Codex 611(89) cit., f. 49r; D) Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Archivio di S. Pietro B79, *Antiphonarium*, f. 28v (http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Arch.Cap.S.Pietro.B.79).

6 Studying the sources of Allegri's *Miserere* I came across a magnificent manuscript of 1892 (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cappella Sistina, MS 375) transcribed by Domenico Mustafà, which followed slavishly the tradition of ornamentation in vogue until twenty years previously. But without undergoing further research, it suffices to listen to the recordings which have come down to us by singers of the beginning of the 20th century (above all, those of Alessandro Moreschi, the last castrato), to hear this ornamentation, and experience an aesthetic now long surpassed.

as an *attacco* from the lower forth, with a *portamento* to the vital note.

Color est pulchritudo soni vel obiectum auditus, per quod auditus suscipit placentiam. Et fit multis modis: aut sono ordinato, aut in florificatione soni, aut in repetitione eiusdem vocis vel diversae.⁷

From this point of view, attributing to the term *color* used in medieval treatises⁸ the significance of *ornamentation*, the palid pastoral sonorous watercolour which we have always contemplated, promoted moreover through a certain discographic tradition, is literally destroyed.

As always, a very useful aid in reconstructing that which took place in the churches comes from negative criticism. No-one would bother to forbid something that was not a concrete risk or a general practice:

Nunc vox stringitur, nunc frangitur, nunc impingitur, nunc diffusiori sonitu dilatatur. Aliquando, quod pudet dicere, in equinos hinnitus cogitur; aliquando virili vigore deposito, in femineae vocis gracilitates acuitur, nonnunquam artificiosa quadam circumvolutione torquetur et retorquetur. Videas aliquando hominem aperto ore quasi intercluso halitu exspirare, non cantare, ac ridiculosa quadam vocis interceptione quasi minitari silentium; nunc agones morientium, vel exstasim patientium imitari.⁹

But let us try to understand the scene which we might find before us and how we have arrived at certain interpretations today.

7 IOHANNES DE GARLANDIA, *De mensurabili musica*, kritische Edition mit Kommentar und Interpretation der Notationslehre Erich Reimer, 2 vols., Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1972, I, p. 95.

8 Not to be confused with the term *color* in isorhythmic notation.

9 AELREDO DI RIEVAULX, *De Speculo Caritatis* in *Trattati d'amore cristiani del 12. secolo*, ed. by Francesco Zambon, 2 vols., [Milano], Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, Arnoldo Mondadori, 2008, II, pp. 14-413.

In search of lost sound

The technical upheavals undergone by vocal music between the 18th and 19th centuries by reason of theatrical requirements have changed radically the concept of the sound of Art music. In particular, the theory of the use of the lower larynx according to Manuel Garcia in his treatise of 1850-47¹⁰ has brought about a darkening of the timbre and a densening of mass of sound at the expense of the clear articulation of *belcanto*. The widespread diffusion of these techniques throughout every layer of society, together with a prevalent taste for a theatrical aesthetic, has brought about an operistic invasion in sacred music as well, above all in Italy.¹¹

On the death of Leo XIII, in 1903, the Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto, was elected Pope with the name of Pius X. One of his first acts was to try to re-establish order in the liturgical repertory. Thus, on 22 November of the same year, he composed a *motu proprio* with which he tried to exterpate the theatrical elements of sacred music, bringing back into use the chant called “gregoriano”, and classical polyphony.

Cantus gregorianus, quem transmisit traditio, in sacris solemnibus omnino est instaurandus, et omnes pro certo habeant sacram liturgiam nihil solemnitatis amittere, quamvis hac una musica agatur. Praesertim apud populum cantus gregorianus est instaurandus, quo vehementius Christicolae, more maiorum, sacrae liturgiae sint rursus participes.¹²

At that moment, Gregorian chant, together with a generalised idea of a medieval sonorous aesthetic, took on the aspects with which we are familiar today. The work of reform of the musical liturgy was entrusted to the Benedictine abbey of Solesmes, which has always demonstrated,

10 MANUEL GARCIA, *Traité complet de l'art du chant*, Paris, [chez l'auteur], 1840-47.

11 Personages such as Father Davide da Bergamo are entirely characteristic of their period. Today we would find it difficult to consider their compositions as liturgical, but at the time, governed by opera, they were exactly that.

12 PIUS PP. X, *Inter plurimas pastoralis officii sollicitudines*, Città del Vaticano, Acta Sanctae Sedis, vol. XXXVI (1903-04), pp. 387-395: 390.

since the time of its refounder Dom Prosper Guéranger,¹³ a great interest in the rediscovery of the patrimony of liturgical music.

It was thus that the *Liber Usualis Missae et Officii*, a goldmine for the knowledge of Gregorian melodies, was born. But involuntarily, this act of enthusiasm and restoration has had a devastating effect on performance practice. To make this chant accessible to everyone, a teaching method was created which even today is deeply rooted in the collective imagination by reason of its extraordinary and widespread diffusion. The development of methods of recording and the market for such recordings has diffused a sonorous ideal which is that of the French abbey tradition of seraphic voices of monks, in strong contrast to the resounding voices of our own choirs. And if so much has been undertaken to recover notational studies, there is still much to be done to recover the vocal characteristics.

The greatest misunderstanding which still circulates amongst those who occupy themselves with medieval music has its origin in a famous passage from Isidore of Seville,¹⁴ which was to have great repercussion throughout the centuries.

Perfecta autem vox est alta, suavis et clara: alta, ut in sublime sufficiat; clara, ut aures adimpleat; suavis, ut animos audientium blandiat. Si ex his aliquid defuerit, vox perfecta non est.¹⁵

The concept of *vox clara, alta et suavis*, read in the 20th century,

13 Dom Prosper-Louis Pascal Guéranger (1805-1875) became Prior of Solesmes in 1833, restoring the Benedictine order in France, which had disappeared from the times of the revolution. His great desire to restore music, and the notable patrimony of codices which he inherited, lead him to charge Dom Paul Jausions with liberating the most ancient of them from the “incrustations” of “modern times”. This work opened the path towards *Paléographie musicale* first under the direction of Dom Joseph Pothier, and then by Dom André Mocquereau. The Solesmes school will continue to produce dedicated and important scholars of the calibre of Joseph Gajard and dom Eugène Cardine, who can never be sufficiently cited.

14 Isidore (ca. 560-636) was Bishop of Seville. Doctor of the Church, he was a prolific author of texts of every kind and one of the great resources for the historic reconstruction of Spain of the Visigoths.

15 ISIDORE OF SEVILLE, *Etymologiarum sive Originum libri 20: recognovit brevique adnotatione critica instruxit*, ed. by Wallace Martin Lindsay, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1911, book III, chap. XX.

seemed to fit perfectly with the style proposed by the monks of Solesmes: voices which were high, splendidly tenoristic, clear, sweet, angelic, in complete contrast to the vocality by that time known as theatrical. But what does this all mean?

Medieval singers already knew the distinction between vocal registers. They did not call them tenor, baritone and bass, as we are do today,¹⁶ but certainly they were conscious of the impossibility of all the monks achieving certain vocal heights. For this reason, contrary to that which one often imagines, the note of intonation could never be placed too high.

Quoniam autem omnes voces vigorem consequuntur ex pectore, ideo quarto necessarium est, ut nunquam adeo cantus alte incipiatur, precipue ab habentibus voces capitis, quin ad minus unam notam ceteris bassiolem pro fundamento sue vocis statuant in pectore, et nec nimis basse, quod est ululare, nec nimis alte, quod est clamare, sed mediocriter quod est cantare, ita scilicet ut non cantus voci, sed vox cantui dominetur, semper incipiant. Alias pulchrae note formari non possunt.¹⁷

The vocality, too, also seems very different to that which we habitually know. I have constantly been struck by the fact that in the western world liturgical chant has always been so ethereal, notwithstanding the intimate relationships in the first millennium between Papal Rome and that which still remained of the Empire, which, since we have never become used to the idea that the true Romans in that period were those who spoke Greek, we have called Byzantine.¹⁸

16 In medieval times singers would have been divided between those who have voices of the head, the throat, or the chest.

17 HIERONYMUS DE MORAVIA, *Tractatus de musica*, ed. by Simon M. Cserba, Regensburg, Pustet, 1935, pp. 179-189, 263-291: 188, electronic version in the *Thesaurus Musicarum Latinarum* (TML), 1994, accessed on February 20, 2019, <http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tml/13th/IERTDM2>.

18 After the Giustinian period, in which Belisario and Narsete took the City from the hands of the Ostrogoths, the formal Byzantine dominium, coinciding in reality with a strengthening of the Pontifical power, lasted for centuries. Rome and Ravenna, the two imperial cities outside the control of the northern barbarians, continued to have contact, united as they were

In reality, in medieval iconography, the singer is often depicted with his face in a strained position, generally with a prognathous jaw and orientated upwards.¹⁹ This position assured a full projection of sound, which often had to fill large spaces, and a guttural vocality very similar to that inherited by more conservative traditions in places such as Sardinia, Corsica, certain parts of Spain and north Africa.

While we are still in the field of these oral traditions, the characteristic nasal sound which we commonly associate with the popular secular traditions,²⁰ is one of the hypotheses regarding the reconstruction of the sacred repertory, even beyond the Mediterranean:

Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;
Hir gretteste ooth was but by Seinte Loy;
And she was cleped Madame Eglentyne.

Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely,
And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe,
For Frenssh of Parys was to hir unknowe.²¹

by a narrow commercial corridor that passed through Perugia. In the 7th century Rome saw an enormous affluence of officials and high religious positions – Popes included – of oriental origin and often speaking Greek at that time. Even the election of the Pope had to undergo imperial approval, so much so that Martin I (†655) was arrested by the Byzantine authorities and deported to Constantinople for usurpation, given that his nomination had never been approved. In the religious ferment of the 8th century, Pope Gregory II refused to apply the decree of Leone III Isaurico regarding the principles of iconoclasm in Rome (727). In this circumstance the contrasts between empire and Pope became gradually stronger, finally arriving at a definitive oriental influence on Rome with the alliance between Stefano II and Pipino *il Breve*, king of the Franks, which took place in 753 a.C.

19 To cite a memorable example, let us note the singing monks in the fresco of the Presepe di Greccio (1295-99), the work of Giotto, in the Upper Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi.

20 It is impossible not to think of the song *a tenores*, in which the *sa oghe*, the only thematic voice, is sung with an extremely nasal sound, a Sardinian tradition.

21 GEOFFREY CHAUCER, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. by Alfred W. Pollard, London, Macmillan and Co., 1907, I, pp. 6-7.

Even if this passage from Chaucer may be considered satirical, and therefore to be taken with a pinch of salt, we cannot ignore his intrinsic quality as a man of his time, and thus familiar with contemporary practices. Ironical or not, it should be taken into consideration.

The dynamic value of this sweetness characteristic of monodic song should also be reconsidered. Keeping well in mind the fact that, in any case, the chant of the abbeys today and that of centuries ago might have sonorous qualities which are not necessarily similar, it has been theorized that a differentiation existed according to the typology of song in the Office, and in the Mass.

De modo cantandi secundum Guidonem. Item nota del modo del intonare in choro: ut ait Guido in tertio sue musice: che li responsi nocturni se voleno intonare viva voce per dismiscidare li somnolenti. Ne le antiphone cum dolce voce e suave. Ne li introiti come voce preconicha per incitare il populo aldiuino officio. Ne li alleluya suaueamente se debeno intonare. Ne li tracti e gradualis cum la voce morigerata e pausata se debe continuare. Ne li offertorii & communione moderatamente quanto sia possibile se debeno cantare: & in questo modo le nostre conscientie apresso el vero e superno idio e a la zente del mondo saranno excusati.²²

But even if the language changes with a multitude of semantic or dialectic forms, and the same Latin language undergoes extreme differentiation between one place and another within the Empire,²³ to think of a single kind of vocality is to say the least utopic. The refinement of the Romans, heirs to an atavistic *depositum*, regarded other cultures with suspicion and ill concealed superiority.

Alpina siquidem corpora, vocum suarum tonitruis altisone perstreptentia,

22 BONAVENTURA DA BRESCIA, *Regula musice plane*, New York, Broude Brothers, 1975, chap. 42 (Monuments of Music and Music Literature, facs., II/77).

23 At its maximum expansion, under Traiano (at its head from 98 to 117 a.c.), the Roman empire consisted of 53 states, from Portugal to Arabia Saudita, and including Britain, the Ukraine and even Russia. Notwithstanding the efforts to unify its language, the Latin of Britain sounded almost like another language to the ears of a Roman of Egypt. This did not happen only at a popular level. It will be Carlo Magno who will undertake a veritable linguistic reform, thanks to the abilities of such persons as Alcuino of York, Paul the Deacon, Teodulfo d'Orléans, Eginardo or Pietro da Pisa, who gravitated around his court.

susceptae modulationis dulcedinem proprie non resultant, quia bibuli gutturis barbara feritas, dum inflexionibus et repercussionibus mitem nititur edere cantilenam, natarali quodam fragore, quasi plaustra per gradus confuse sonantia rigidas voces iactat, sicque audientium animos, quos mulcere debuerat, exasperando magis ac obstrependo conturbat.²⁴

The world of treatises is full of references to the sounds which were heard.²⁵ In the light of these testimonies, it would seem that the perfect voice would be *alta* (that is, powerful), *clara* (clearly perceptible and able to fill the ear), and *suavis* (expressive, able to project the subtleties of the music, and elevate the souls of the listeners).

The value of good ornamentation

As we have already seen, ornamentation in medieval music was not a merely theoretical concept. The melodies of liturgical song (and not only) had embellishments. But early writers had difficulty in describing certain kinds of sounds, saying that the only way to understand them was to hear them, which means that a study of the notation was not sufficient by itself, and that it is very likely that every tentative will remain pure hypothesis in eternity.

Olim cantores cantu sic complacuer
Heredesque suos voluerunt scita docere.
Contigit ergo novas hos ingeniare figuras
Ut possent varias vocum figurare tenuras
Quas dixere notas certus quod ab inde vocatur
Cursus cantandi qui vocali sociatur.
Clives, plice, virga, quilismata, puncta, podati
Nomina sunt harum; sint pressi consociati.
Pes notulis binis vult sursum tendere crescens;

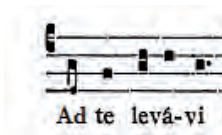
24 IOANNES DIACONUS, *Sancti Gregorii Magni Vita*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus*, ed. by Jacques Paul Migne, Paris, 1892, Series Prima, Tomus LXXV, Liber II, 7, col. 91.

25 See, for example, the treatises ANONIMO, *Instituta Patrum de modo psallendi sive cantandi*; ADEMARO, *Chronicon Aquitanicum et Francicum*; ELIAS SALOMONIS, *Scientia artis musicae*.

Deficit illa tamen quam signat acuta liquescens.
Vult notulis binis semper descendere clivis
Obscurumque sonum notat illius nota finis.
Praecedat pausam vel stat pausantis in ore,
Ac si perfecte notule fungatur honore.²⁶

Amongst these “ornamental” neumes, the *liquescenza* occupies a special place. This sign is found in correspondence with consonances which are liquid, nasal, sometimes dental, and diphthongs. For a long period it was considered correct to perform them with a softening of the voice to the point of singing the only consonance on the liquescent sound. This might, perhaps, have made sense for sounds which were liquid and nasal. But how could it be done with dental consonants?

Liquescent vero in multis voces more litterarum, ita ut inceptus modus unius ad alteram limpide transiens nec finiri videatur. Porro liquescenti voci punctum quasi maculando supponimus hoc modo:



Si eam plenius vis proferre non liquefaciens nihil nocet, saepe autem magis placet. Et omnia quae diximus, nec nimis raro nec nimis continue facias, sed cum discretione.²⁷

In these terms, the liquescence seems to indicate a great *glissando*, a fluid passage which, following a direction defined by the diminished note, connects the note of departure with that of conclusion. In Guido's example, therefore, the sound would proceed without continuity between the G and F passing without pausing on the D.

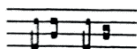
This in itself is by no means enough to understand the multitude of

26 *Summa Musicae: A Thirteenth-Century Manual for Singers*, ed. by Christopher Page, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, II, pp. 540-554.

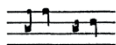
27 GUIDO D'AREZZO, *Micrologus*, in ID., *Le opere*, ed. by Angelo Rusconi, Firenze, Edizioni del Galluzzo-Fondazione Franceschini, 2005, p. 38; music example from Liber Usualis.

forms and variants of this ornamentation. We are helped by another treatise, the *Metrologus*, which is in fact a trope on Guidonian writings. So much so, that if we incorporate it within the original text, it offers us many more details and examples of all the subjects discussed by Guido:

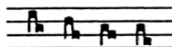
[...] aliquando super consonantias ut reg, dig, leg, ag, vim, vem, tum, tem et super consimiles sonando usque ad proximam vocem vel notam iuxta se vel supra se hoc modo:



Ascendendo vero hoc modo:

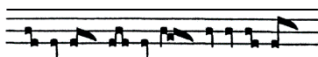


Et si proxima nota subsequens inferior se fuerit, tunc non est liquescens sed duae notae sunt post hanc liquescentem hoc modo:



Aliquando sequitur alia nota inferior se similiter fiet et post has notas.

Super vocales vero non faciat liquescentem vel strictionem nisi tantum super au, eu, luy, ley et ey. Quando vero super a e i o vel u, sic formatur:



Tunc vero ultima pro duabus reputatur vocibus. [...] ²⁸





And it is thus that we discover that the liquescence has, in reality, a multitude of forms, and that its performance depends on the direction of the line, from the syllable and the interval. And notwithstanding Guido's admonishment regarding the moderation with which to use this practice, it would seem that, given its codicological prominence, it occupied a significant position amongst the medieval ornamental forms. This, clearly, would

28 ANONIMO, *Metrologus*, in *Expositiones in Micrologum Guidonis Aretini*, ed. by Joseph Smits van Waesberghe, Amsterdam, North-Holland Publishing Company, 1957, pp. 67-92: 89-90.



influence strongly the sonorous aesthetic and vocal technique, which must, perforce, have been richly endowed with sinuous nuances.

Amongst the liquescent neumes that are still relatively unknown, that called the *plica* deserves mention. From the information that we have, it would seem to be a bisonic neume, which functions as an ascending or descending *appoggiatura*:

Plica est inflexio vocis a voce sub una figura. Solae longae et breves sunt plicabiles. Plicarum alia ascendens, alia descendens, quae in plano vocantur semitonus et semivocalis.²⁹

As cited by Odington, the *plica* seems to be simply a transcription of an *epiphonus* or a *cephalicus*. And in effect, if we look carefully, the notation of Sankt Gall reveals a close semiographic relationship. The sign of the descending *plica* () seems to derive directly from *cephalicus* (), as a “compressed” form, and the ascending *plica* () from the *epiphonus* (). If we can be sure of the melodic nature of the sign,³⁰ its timbric characteristics remain less clear and less easily understood.

Plica est nota divisionis eiusdem soni in gravem vel in acutam, et debet formari in gutture cum epygloto.³¹

Another ornamental neume is the so-called *quilisma*. It too belongs to the family of liquescences and is placed in a position between two notes which are a third or a fourth distant from each other. On its performance whole realms of paper have been written, especially for its etymological and graphic relations () with the Byzantine *kylisma* ().

29 WALTER ODINGTON, *De speculatione musicae*, ed. by Frederick F. Hammond, [Dallas], American Institute of Musicology, 1970, chap. 129 (*Corpus Scriptorum de Musica*, vol. 14).

30 From a comparison with the adiastematic notations, it would even seem possible to hypothesise an inflection from above so light as to be perceived as bisonic; in fact a kind of quarter tone.

31 ANONIMO, *Ars musicae mensurabilis secundum Franconem*, (Mss. Paris, Bibl. Nat., lat. 15129; Uppsala, Universiteitsbibl., C 55), ed. by Gilbert Reaney and André Gilles, [Rome], American Institute of Musicology, 1971, p. 45.

For this reason, already by the beginning of the 20th century its performance as a *gruppetto*³² or *glissando* had been proposed.³³ But what does it mean?

A testimony to this sign dates back to the 9th century and describes it as a note which is tremulous and ascending.

Versus istarum novissimarum partium tremulam adclivemque emittunt vocem.³⁴

But is it instead really a melodic ornament, as theorised by semiology of the early neumatic notations? In effect, it would seem so, at least if we read the *Summa Musice*.

Quilisma dicitur curvatio, et continet notulas tres vel plures quandoque ascendens et iterum descendens, quandoque e contrario.³⁵

This description, however, would seem to refer more to the entire figure of the quilismatic *scandicus* (or *salicus*) rather than to an ornament.

Tremula est similiter vox reperiussa sicut morula, sed illud interest, quia in morula voces eadem aequali impulsu vocis proferuntur, in tremula vero eadem nunc maiori, nunc minori impulsu vocis efferuntur quasi tremendo.

[...]

Repercussio alius morula, alius tremula, et hoc est: aut habeant morulam, aut tremulam, id est varium tenorem per varium impulsu, non per variam vocem.³⁶

32 AMÉDÉE GASTOUÉ, *Cours théorique et pratique de plain-chant Romain Grégorien*, Paris, Au bureau d'édition de la Schola Cantorum, 1904.

33 CÉLESTIN VIVELL, *Das Quilisma*, «Musica Sacra», 2 (1912), pp. 33-37.

34 AURELIANUS REOMENSIS, *Musica disciplina*, ed. by Lawrence Gushee, [Rome], American Institute of Musicology, 1975, chap. XIII (Corpus Scriptorum de Musica, vol. 21).

35 *Summa Musice: A Thirteenth-Century Manual* cit., pp. 534-535.

36 ANONIMO, *Commentarius in Micrologum Guidonis Aretini*, in *Expositiones in Micrologum Guidonis Aretini*, ed. by Joseph Smits van Waesberghe, Amsterdam, North-Holland Publi-

Thus, the *tremula* takes on an entirely different dimension: an ornament of semi-percussive nature, which involves an oscillation of volume, but not of height. But how can we be sure that that author of *the Commentarius* is really speaking about the *quilisma*, if he never cites it?

Morula dupliciter longior est vel brevior, si silentium inter duas voces duplum est ad aliud silentium inter duas voces. Eodem modo morula dupliciter est brevior, si taciturnitas inter duas simpla est ad aliam taciturnitatem inter duas voces. Quod dicit “aut tremulam habeant”, puto intelligendum sic esse. Tremula est neuma quam gradatam vel quilisma dicimus quae longitudinem, de qua dicit duplo longiorem cum subiecta virgula denotat, sine qua brevitatem, quae intimatur per hoc quod dicit vel duplo brevior insinuat.³⁷

Thus we have found the correspondence between *quilisma* and *tremula*, and with it its position within the ornamental system of the Middle Ages.

Not all ornamental forms, however, can be found in the notation. Some are hidden in the maze of performance practice, and their use would have been lost forever, given their lack of graphic indication, had it not been documented by writers of the time. Notwithstanding the more or less detailed description which some writers give, however, the aesthetic idea which we have constructed of medieval sound continues to confuse us, precluding their execution in the name of an excessive purity.

This is the case, for example, of the trill and the vibrato which are automatically associated with styles which are decidedly later and absolutely deplored in the performance of medieval music. And yet the oscillation of frequency at less than a semitone, which corresponds to the modern vibrato, or equal to or greater than a semitone, as with the current trill, is a well documented practice:

Est autem flos harmonicus decora vocis sive soni et celerrima procellaris-

shing Company, 1957, pp. 99-172: 149.

37 ARIBO, *De Musica*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus*, ed. by Jacques Paul Migne, Paris, 1854, Series Secunda, Tomus CL, col. 1326.

que vibratio. Florum autem alii longi, alii aperti, alii vero existunt subiti.

Longi flores sunt, quorum vibratio est morosa metasque semitonii non excedit.

Aperti autem sunt, quorum vibratio est morosa metasque toni non excedit.

Subiti vero sunt, quorum quidem vibratio in principio est morosa, in medio autem et in fine est celerrima metasque semitonii non excedit.³⁸

Thus there existed three types of *vibratio*. And it is particularly interesting to note that they included microtonal oscillations: if it was not permitted to go beyond a semitone it means that in any case the use of the entire gammit contained within it was foreseen.

The 'schism' of the semitone

As we have just seen, microtonality, which we have always and only associated with the oriental world, does not occur in western Europe only in the 20th century. But the western repertoires (of which, in medieval times, we cannot describe as being unified traditions) knew this language well, and have left notable evidence to identify it.

[...] quae subductio appellatur diesis & medietas sequentis semitonii, sicut semitonium est medietas sequentis toni.³⁹

The memory of this genre, called enharmonic, precisely in the principal chapels of the courts and the great cathedrals,⁴⁰ must have been of long duration even after its disuse and not only in the Mediterranean area.

38 HIERONYMUS DE MORAVIA, *Tractatus de musica* cit., p. 184.

39 GUIDO D'AREZZO, *Micrologus*, ed. by Joseph Smits van Waesberghe, Rome-Dallas, American Institute of Musicology, 1955, p. 135.

40 LEO A. J. LOUSBERG, *Microtones according to Augustine. Neumes, Semiotics and Rhetoric in Romano-Frankish liturgical chant*, Universiteit Utrecht, PhD dissertation, 2018.

This is demonstrated by a small anonymous treatise compiled in southern Germany⁴¹ towards the beginning of the 14th century.

Diatonicum autem genus ceteris naturalius canit per tonum et tonum ac semitonium in singulis cythare tetracordis. Cromaticum vero a naturali intentione in molliem descendens in omnibus tetracordis per semitonium ac semitonium et tria semitonia specialiter psallit. Enharmonium vero optime coaptatum cantat in omnibus tetrachordis, per diesim ac diesim et diatonium, id est duos tonos. Est autem diesis medietas semitonii. In talibus quippe vorum distantis specialiter quatuor chordae continue cum in quolibet genere psallere placuit, fuerant temperatae. Sed chromaticum genus, quia eius mollietates multos effeminavit, ab antiquioribus est damnatum. Enharmonium vero propter eius difficultatem et hominum desidia iam dudum ab aula recessit, vixque diatonicum in usu remansit.⁴²

Arnoulf de Saint-Gilles, the French theoretician of the 15th century, who seems to have belonged to a Benedictine community of Hainaut, writes a treatise in which he reviews various kinds of singers, from the worst – unworthy of that name⁴³ – to the highest proponents of the art. In this last group women sometimes also appear (contrary to the legend that we have invented during the last centuries according to which it was forbidden for women to sing in church), who were able to sing in the microtonic style with extreme precision.

E quibus pars altera, favorosi videlicet sexus feminei, quae quanto rarius tanto pretiosior, dum in dulcisoni gutturis epigloto tonos librate dividit in semitonia, et semitonia in athomos indivisibiles, garritat ineffabili lascivique melodiomate, quod magis putares angelicum quam humanum.⁴⁴

41 ANONIMO, *Tractatulus de Musica*, München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 28186, ff. 258r-259v.

42 *Ivi*, c. 258v.

43 Theoretical writings are full of these disparaging descriptions, from Aelredo di Rievaulx to the wonderful and famous phrase: «ut boves in pratis, sic vos in choro boatis» by Conrad von Zabern.

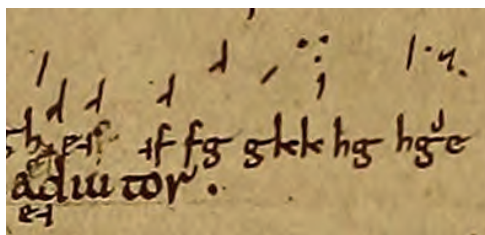
44 ARNULPHUS DE SANCTO GILLEN, *Tractatulus de differentiis et generibus cantorum*, in *Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica sacra potissimum*, ed. by Martin Gerbert, St. Blaise, Typis

But are there forms of notation which indicate quarter tones?

In 1854, Alexandre Joseph Hydulphe Vincent published a study⁴⁵ of a manuscript from Borgogne held at Montpellier:⁴⁶ the so-called Tonary of St. Benigne of Dijon. Compiled most probably during the last years of the 10th century, it contains chant for both Mass and Office, but, contrary to the usual format of Graduals and Antiphonaries, it orders them by genre (from antiphons to introits, alleluias, graduals, offertories, and so on...), and divides them further in eight parts, according to the principles of the *octoechos*. Another peculiarity of this codex is the fact that the chants are given in double notation: that in *campo aperto* and an alphabetical form invented by Abbot Guglielmo of Volpiano. In this last, which is purely melodic, we can find five special signs which seem to indicate intervals smaller than a semitone.

An example is offered by the gradual *Tibi Domine*⁴⁷ in which, on the word *adiutor*, we see a sign which would seem to indicate a note which is higher than E and lower than F.

Our path, in this topsy-turvy world, is still long and impervious. It only remains for us to study, and above all, to sing.



(English translation: Kathryn Bosi Monteath)

San-Blasianis, 1784, III, pp. 316-318: 317.

45 ALEXANDRE-JOSEPH-HYDULPHE VINCENT, *Emploi des quarts de ton dans le chant grégorien: constaté sur l'antiphonaire de Montpellier*, «Revue archéologique», 11 (1854), pp. 262-272.

46 *Antiphonarium Tonale Missarum*, Codex H.159 de la Bibliothèque de l'école de Médecine de Montpellier, in *Paléographie Musicale. Les principaux manuscrits de chant grégorien, ambrosien, mozarabe, gallican publiés en fac-similés phototypiques par les Bénédictines de Solesmes, sous la direction de dom André Mocquereau*, Prima Serie, vol. VIII, Tournai, Société de Saint-Jean l'évangéliste, Desclée, Lefebvre & C, 1901-1905.

47 «Tibi Domine derelictus est pauper: pupillo tu eris adiutor», in *Ivi*, p. 160.