

Chapter 6. The art of Italian improvisers from the end of the 15th and the first 3rd of the 16th century

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Chapter 6. The art of Italian improvisers from the end of the 15th and the first 3rd of the 16th century¹

Improvvisatori who should be called differently ...

In the past eighty years, a number of world musicologists have been engaged in the phenomenon of improvisers, and from a certain point (we don't know exactly when or to whom to attribute this...) the Italian term "*improvvisatori*" became established for them, although neither they themselves nor others ever used that name during their time. This term probably evolved from descriptions of their activities, such as reciting, singing, and/or playing *all' improvviso*² - that is, ad hoc and (presumably) without any preparation. As we will see, this does not correspond to the truth either, because the tradition of reciting or singing poetry (with or without accompaniment on an instrument) was long-standing and relied on years of study and exceptionally practiced memory.

As Ernst Ferand (a musicologist and himself an improviser in practice, author of the most comprehensive book to date on the history and development of improvisation, primarily in the music of our Western culture) wrote as early as 1938; improvisation is one of the first and oldest expressions of human musical expression and very quickly began (long before the appearance of any type of musical notation) to be based on some "rules."

Since we are primarily interested in improvisation in early music, specifically the activity of Italian artists who operated in this regard at the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th century,³ we will briefly go back (about two or three centuries) because this phenomenon must be considered in some continuity of its own.

We do not know exactly when the first professional musicians appeared in the Middle Ages, but by the 11th or 12th century at the latest. Apart from the *trobadors* of southern France, the *trouvères* of northern France, and the Austrian-German *minnesängers* - poet-composers of secular music, there were also traveling performers of their works, histrions, jugglers.⁴ and somewhat later those who eventually (under the names of minstrels, heralds, and the like) served more or less regularly - first at numerous courts, and later in cities. In the vast majority of cases, their musical performances were improvised, and only thanks to some fortuitous circumstances, a small part of what they performed daily was recorded in a few manuscripts with vocal or instrumental music. Although we are primarily interested in the improvisation of secular music, the fact is that even sacred music, the so-called Gregorian chant, was transmitted orally for centuries before it was written down for the first time (in the 10th century, around 930, in the Gradual from Laon).

¹ Chapter 6 of this study has its own special, small history... In the spring of 2021, I "roughly" drafted its first version and only after that got my hands on and carefully studied the extraordinary book by Blake Wilson, *Singing to the Lyre in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019). Then, it became clear to me that the entire chapter needed to be started from scratch... Considering that Wilson's book is so revolutionary and new (which does not diminish the value of all other works I had reviewed before him, which, however, were created in different times and therefore followed a different "vision"), I decided to take it as the backbone of the entire chapter and draw numerous quotes from it in further work.

This chapter also changed its place; in the Croatian edition, it was the fifth, but while working on the English version (2022-24), I decided that it should swap places with the (previous) sixth chapter, "How to Improvise Renaissance Music, with Voices and on Instruments," since it follows on from chapters 3 and 4, just as the new chapter 6 forms a kind of whole with chapter 7, after which comes the Appendix with numerous musical examples.

² For this reason, in the final phase of work on Croatian version of this study, I decided to name it after the mentioned activity.

³ Although this practice, in a slightly modified form, developed and lived on throughout the 16th and part of the 17th century.

⁴ Latin: *histrion* or *mimus*, *ioculator*.

We can assume that the vast majority of those musicians (both traveling and those in permanent service, although they often travelled in the company of their lords, for example, on pilgrimages or crusades) did not know even ordinary writing, let alone musical notation, because it simply was not necessary for their art. Learning musical skills of singing and playing were carried out (as is still done today in India, for example) within families, the transmitting of knowledge through generations or with a master, and it had to be based on mastering not only the performing technique of playing and/or singing but also on memory training and the adoption of some mandatory patterns that could be used in combination in the performance of dances or accompanying songs, both lyrical (*canso* and others) and epic (*chanson de geste*).

This art can be traced, especially in the case of Italy (although similar examples could be assumed in the case of most European countries), somewhat later, during the so-called *duecento* (13th century) and *trecento* (14th century). The so-called *tre corone* (three crowns) of Italian literature, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, were at least in their youth capable players of instruments such as the lute or *vielle*, and Petrarch revised his poems with the accompaniment on the lute. In other words, from the time of the troubadours onwards, there was no longer a boundary or difference between recitation, declamation, and singing poetry with (almost invariably their own) instrumental accompaniment on some stringed (usually bowed) instrument.

During the *trecento*, there appeared the so-called *canterini*, singers of their own or others' lyrical or epic poetry with their own accompaniment, who performed in squares, fairs, and in front of churches, as well as more and more frequently at various courts. Initially sporadically, later frequently, they also operated within the newly created urban communes (especially in Florence, Perugia, and Siena) as *canterini* or so-called heralds and performed at various municipal ceremonies.

Of particular interest to us is the strong tradition of *canterini* performances in the Florentine square of San Martino (only a small fragment of it remains today, almost a corner, see picture no. 1)⁵, because throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, performances of numerous *canterini* took place there, some of whom not only gained enormous popularity and admiration from the public, earned a kind of fortune, but also around the last quarter of the 15th century served as a kind of "bridge" to the humanist art of *cantare ad lyram* - singing with the accompaniment of the *lira da braccio*.⁶

This continuity unfolded simultaneously on at least two tracks. Besides the two-century continuity that transitions from histrions/jugglers or minstrels into the tradition of *canterini*, there was a gradual organological transformation of the medieval string instrument *vielle* (Italian: *viuola*) into the *lira da braccio*. Judging by numerous iconographic representations of that time, this transformation was not only very gradual but the two instruments (in various intermediary phases) coexisted and were used in parallel for some time.⁷ We could say that there was also a third track; awareness and some knowledge of the ancient world already existed during the Middle Ages, but the Renaissance, through humanism and *studia universitatis*, gave it the necessary impetus and began to draw inexhaustible inspiration from that world.

We do not know where, how, when, and thanks to whom it happened that humanists chose the ancient instrument lyre as their instrument par excellence, but soon decided that the plectrum and the bow were one and the same thing⁸ and that a "living" instrument - the *vielle* - would be better suited for "reviving" the declamation/singing in the style of ancient *rhapsodes* or *citharodes* than the old one. In the case of their negligent (I would even dare to say ignorant, superficial) attitude

⁵ See later on p.7. and in the Appendix/ Music Examples VI-1 Wilson fig.1.

⁶ This term as well as the similar *cantor/i ad lyram* has been proposed by B. Wilson in his already mentioned book.

⁷ See in the Appendix my choice of the *lira da braccio* Iconography.

⁸ See more on this in Chapter 7, p.2 et seq.

towards the reconstruction of the performance of ancient poetry and music,⁹ one possible comparison comes to mind with our own approach to early music, the "discovery" of it, and the boom in performing music from the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque in our time - specifically, from the late 1950s onwards.

Some musicologists, for instance Ph. Canguilhem, speculate that the already existing practice of singing with one's own accompaniment on (initially exclusively, later predominantly) the *vielle* at some point or through someone's idea received a new name, and that this could have been (one of) the merit of the Italian philosopher, physician, and musician Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499).¹⁰

Given Ficino's enormous reputation, connections, and the support of the ruling de' Medici family, this idea was very quickly embraced by the Florentine cultural and humanistic circles, and later the same concept began to be very successfully "exported" throughout Italy, which went hand in hand with the export of Florentine *cantori ad lyram*, who at the end of the 15th and in the first third of the 16th century dominantly "ruled" and performed *all'improvviso* their own and others' works at most Italian courts and city-states, from north to south - including Naples and Rome, the papal ecclesiastical state.

The apotheosis of improvised art *cantare ad lyram* also leads to an increasingly obvious rift between humanistic exclusivity and the tradition of regular *canterini*, who continue to perform in city squares but increasingly (except for honourable exceptions) are reduced to "ordinary" *cantimbanchi*, charlatans, *curmadori*, who in a way unintentionally return to their histrionic, juggler origins. However, they remain in the domain of improvisation and in some parts of Italy lived on until the middle of the 20th century.¹¹

Similarly, in completely different contexts, the *lira da braccio* (and even more so its younger and larger "sister," the *lira da gamba*¹²) remains forever in the domain of improvisation, accompaniment (at least for some time of one's own) singing, or later in the function of a proto-basso continuo instrument for a group of singers or proto-orchestra. Throughout the 16th century (*lira da braccio* and *lirone*) and in the following 17th century (*lirone*), these instruments constitute an indispensable element in the performance of so-called *intermedii* - a kind of musical inserts, *intermezzi* in theatrical spectacles and precursors to later early operas. The symbolic role of the *lira* (da braccio) was so important and strong that even in the 17th century, some works demanded that the character of Apollo, while singing on stage, at least hold a *lira da braccio* in his hands. He himself, however, no longer plays it, but rather behind (or in front of) the stage, other bowed instruments imitate its sound,¹³ but the old symbolic role of the instrument and its connection with a series of ancient mythical characters are still present.

The accompaniment of one's own or someone else's singing (improvised or performed from notes, printed or manuscript) gradually begins to be taken over by the lute at the beginning of the 16th century, later to some extent by the harpsichord and harp.

⁹ What can we thank for the birth of opera and oratorio...

¹⁰ See more on pp.49-52.

¹¹ For an interview with ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax on November 28, 1954, with Vittorio Lorenzi known as Poetino, see Cavicchi, Camilla: *Musici, cantori e 'cantimbanchi' a corte al tempo dell'Orlando Furioso*. edited by Gianni Venturi. *L'uno e l'altro Ariosto in corte e nelle delizie*, edited by G. Venturi, L.S.Olschki Editore, 2011, pp.263-282.

¹² Also known as *lirone*, *archiviolata* and others.

¹³ The term *lireggiare* (imitating the sound of the *lira da braccio* or *lirone*) has been alive in Baroque music terminology for some time, and colleague Erin Headley also mentions the concept of the "great *lirone*", for example in the case of Orpheus' famous aria "*Possente spirito e formidabil nume*" from Act 3. of the opera of the same name by C. Monteverdi.

6.1. *Joculatores*, medieval predecessors of *canterini*¹⁴

There are almost no documents about professional musicians and/or singers of secular music before the year 1200. The medieval secular predecessors of minstrels had low esteem: the *joculator* (Italian: *giullare* or *giuolare*), or *histrion* or *mimus* - which also denotes singer-poets individually. The first information about Italy is provided by the Franciscan chronicler Salimbene de Adam (1221 - around 1290). Besides the usual *joculatores*, he mentions a special kind, which he calls *miles de curia* (man of the court), who represent a more courtly type of musician, entertainer. The English cleric Thomas Chobham (around 1160-1233/1236) distinguishes three types of *histrion*: the first two are entertainers, dancers, acrobats of the lowest class, while the third type belongs to entertainers who play instruments. Among these latter, there are two kinds, one of which

“performs in taverns, drunks and vulgar parties, and so they should be considered cursed, just like the first two mentioned species. However, there are those called *joculatores* who sing (*cantant*) about the heroic deeds of princes, the lives of saints, and give people comfort in sickness and relaxation.”

St. Thomas Aquinas (Thomas Aquinas, Aquino, 1225-1274) agrees with Chobham in both cases, regarding *histrion* and regarding the *joculator*.

The earliest secular Italian sources related to *joculatores* come from Verona in 1168 and mention the granting of permits for performances at the San Zeno gate. By 1271, *joculatores* living in that city were exempted from paying taxes, except if they lent money to others. Although some continued their itinerant activities, others began to take up permanent positions in the municipalities, primarily with various *podestà* (governors, rulers' representatives, mayors), so they can be considered precursors of *canterini* and city heralds in the following two centuries (*trecento* and *quattrocento*).

6.2. *Canterini* in the 14th century:

I begin with quotes from W. Blake:¹⁵

These *trecento canterini* shared a number of characteristics by which they also differed from their thirteenth-century predecessors. The folk literary culture of their time was much richer, and they dealt with it more. With a few exceptions, their works survive in writing, many of which have circulated in manuscripts for [their] lives and become extremely popular. In this way, [these authors] enjoyed more interactive literary relationships with each other and with other leading figures such as Petrarca and Franco Sacchetti. Despite the increased literary dimension of their professions, they remained oral poets who lived primarily from their voice, not from pen. Their works were designed for a lively [and noisy] audience, not silent readers, and their style, content, and storytelling strategies were conditioned by changing audiences' needs for memory, delivery, and reception. Their activity was mixed oral, in which written texts played a secondary role.

They also shared poetic forms common to all oral performers of the time: shorter lyrical forms of the *capitolo* (in terza rima), *sirventese*, sonnet, *canzona*, occasionally *ballata* and *frottola*, and *ottava rima* in long narrative sequences called *cantare*. Perhaps what distinguished the *trecento*

¹⁴ From now on, my writing is based mostly on the already mentioned book by B. Wilson, from which I also often take numerous quotations. These (like all the other quotes in my study) are indented in relation to my text. When there is a quote from someone else (almost usually an older author) in the quote, it is also indented in relation to the “normal” quote. My comments in the text by others is marked with [] brackets and my Footnotes are identified preceded with IP.

¹⁵ Blake Wilson: *Singing to the Lyre in Renaissance Italy*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

canterino and conditioned the mixed orality of his practice was the strength and ubiquitous influence of poetic models from the written tradition, mainly Dante (*terza rima*), Petrarca (sonnet and *canzona*), Boccaccio (*ottava rima*), and their predecessors, as well as their *dolce stil novo* predecessors.

Wilson gives a very interesting example, the sonnet of Francesco di Vannozzo (1339/40- about 1389), addressed to his lute:

Con tuto 'l mio liuto - overo chitarra
per tenda e per isbarra - e 'vo grattando
e vo cantando - fole
su per le tole - altrui
con questo e con colui
per un bicchier di vino.

With my lute - or guitar
I go through tents and through taverns
plucking and singing tales
at other people's tables
with this fellow or that
for a glass of wine./

Since *rispecti* and *ciciliane* (or *siciliane*) suggest single stanzas of *ottava rima* with hendecasyllabic lines (i.e., *strambotti*), of which relatively few written examples from the *trecento* survive, these references suggest that Francesco cultivated a mostly orally transmitted repertory of sung *ottave* that achieved broad circulation and popularity. *Ottava* stanzas, both isolated as *strambotti* and strung in narrative chains to form *cantari*, would remain the primary oral singing form of *canterini* through the end of the fifteenth century.

6.2.1 Canterini and their relationship with the so-called *Tre Corone* of Italian Literature (Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio):¹⁶

In his *Trattatello in laude di Dante*¹⁷ (1362) Boccaccio¹⁸ wrote the following about Dante's special love of singing:

Above all he took delight in [instrumental] music and songs during his youth, and with each of the best singers and players of the day he was a friend and enjoyed his company. Drawn often to this delight, he composed a great many pleasing and ingenious things that these [musicians] would adorn with music

Dante seems to have distinguished between two kinds of oral performance, one involving the more carefully conceived but still orally transmitted note or *suono* of expert singers like Casella (appropriate especially for the short lyric forms like the sonnet), the other being the loud, heavy-handed renderings of marginally literate street performers (which inclined toward the longer forms of *ottava* and *terza rima*, probably sung to simpler, more formulaic melodic materials).

Philippe Villani, Petrarch's contemporary biographer, describes Petrarch¹⁹ as playing the *lira* admirably, with a sonorous voice full of charm and sweetness. The term "*lira*" here likely refers to a

¹⁶ Ibid. Wilson: *Singing...*

¹⁷ Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321.

¹⁸ Giovanni Boccaccio, 1313 - 1375.

¹⁹ Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch), 1304 - 74.

lute, as mentioned in Petrarch's last will among his few possessions, suggesting its role in his creative process as a poet. He apparently sang his sonnets as he revised them, relying on the lute for support, as he did at other times to lighten the labor of study.

Similarly, for Dante and Petrarch, oral poets and poetry were not only tolerated but were an integral part of their craft.

Boccaccio, a seminal figure in Italian narrative poetry, is credited with inventing the *ottava rima*, a stanza of eight hendecasyllabic lines rhyming ABABABCC. During his residence in Naples, Boccaccio frequented a court library stocked with French poetic works and likely encountered the Sicilian and Neapolitan forms of the hendecasyllabic octave, possibly already in oral circulation for narrative singing. ...

In the Decameron, Boccaccio draws on popular literature, organizing it into 100 carefully sequenced short stories, even though it remains the record of oral performances over ten days, including improvised stories, sung *cantari*, and spontaneous dancing and singing by the ten young Florentines, accompanied by musical instruments as viola, lute, rebec, and keyboard.

This inseparability of music, poetry, and performance brings the Decameron's oral tradition close to the art of the *canterino*, reflecting a common practice in both elite and popular settings. Despite the fixed frame of the Decameron, even literate readers cherry-picked what they wished to read or memorize, echoing an oral tradition of storytelling and performance.

Petrarch, one of the most literate Decameron readers, acknowledges Boccaccio's understanding and acceptance of the culture of performance, including the oral process of adapting or retelling stories and wrote that Boccaccio:

“unlike many *literati*, neither scorned nor feigned ignorance of the culture of performance,” including, it appears, the oral process of *rifacimento*.²⁰ ...

By the late fourteenth century, Florentine *canterini*, or singing storytellers, became increasingly common both within Florence and in other regions. Among them were figures like Messer Dolcibene de' Tori and Giovanni di Firenze, known as Malizia Barattone, who adhered to the traditional model of itinerant courtly entertainers.

However, two of the most renowned *canterini* of the time, Antonio Pucci and Andrea da Barberino, were lifelong residents of Florence who revolutionized the practice and subject matter of the *canterino*.

Wilson continues on life and work of *canterino* Antonio Pucci (ca.1310-88):

Pucci's deep roots in the oral traditions and practices of his time are evident not just in his association as *canterino* with the Bargello²¹. His surviving works are all cast in the genres (sonnet, *capitolo*, *cantare*, *sirventese*) and forms (sonnet, *terza rima*, *ottava rima*, *capitolo quadernario*, respectively) that were the stock and trade of the oral poet.

Proprietà del Mercato Vecchio, a celebration of *piazza* life, and a vibrant speculum of the city's great gathering place for commerce and entertainment, including *sonatori di stormenti e cantatori*. Pucci likely performed it in the very environment he was describing. ...

²⁰ Reprocessing of an already existing work.

²¹ Palazzo del Bargello in Florence, which was once the seat of Bargello, the chief of police.

Reading among people from Pucci's class therefore tended to be mnemonic²² (repeated readings of a few texts in order to memorize), and copying was selective and eclectic. ...

Wilson mentioned here for the first time mnemonic patterns and important role that *arte della memoria* played already by canterini in the 14th century, see later on that.

6.2.2 *Piazza San Martino in Florence*²³

Wilson informs us about the *Piazza San Martino* (relatively small square situated in central Florence, positioned between the cathedral and the *Palazzo Vecchio*) which during the late 14th century, emerged as a prominent site for public presentations of the *canterini*. While occasional references dating back to the 13th century hint at similar favoured locations for public performances in other cities, the *Piazza SM* stands out as the only one with unequivocal sources confirming its continued use and well-established tradition.

The precise location of this square is somewhat uncertain due to the existence of two adjacent squares sharing the same name. The present-day small square known as San Martino derives its name from the charitable brotherhood *Buonumini di San Martino*, situated on the square. Established in 1442 by Archbishop (and possibly later recognized as a saint) Anthony to assist the faith of the *Vergognosi*, or "the ashamed poor," this fraternity occupies a significant place in the community. To the west of this square lies another square now called *Piazza dei Cimatori*, previously known as *Piazza San Martino del Vescovo* or *Piazza del Convento di SM* (Fig. 1), named after the ancient parish church of San Martino that overlooked the square (another square referred to as *seconda piazzuola di SM*).

It is likely that this second square served as a venue for public performances, including singing and *canterini* shows, given its historical association with one of the primary parish churches in the late medieval city.

Wilson on important *canterino* Andrea da Barberino:²⁴

Despite the strong literary dimension of Andrea's work, he remained part of the Florentine *canterino* tradition that mixed oral and written practice, avoided travel, and remained tied to the public space of performances, *piazza San Martino*. Although his biographical details are scarce, it is clear that at the beginning of his career he was a famous singer who performed at *San Martino*. ...

An intriguing question from Andrea's biography, as we know it, concerns the relationship between his professional singing and preserved prose works. No poetry attributable to him has been preserved, and there is no direct evidence that prose was ever sung in San Martino or elsewhere in Florence. He could have recited his prose novels in public, and he probably did (his work *Reali di Francia* addresses the audience, listeners), but what did he sing? Someone else's poetry, early versions of his romances in verse, sung performances of his prose? ...

Although he was educated and had an exceptional ability to absorb and synthesize material from a "stunning array of sources", Andre's creative process remained an oral poet's process, most likely conditioned by his early years as a singer at San Martino, and was characterized by compilation, adaptation and synthesis of diverse materials, use of comparisons, long lists of names and places, detailed and visual descriptions of battles, itineraries, exotic locations, peoples

²² Mnemonic is a skill that makes it easier to remember information by connecting pictures or words.

²³ Blake Wilson: *Singing* ... IP: See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-1 Wilson fig.1.

²⁴ Andrea da Barberino, ca. 1370 -1431/33.

and beasts, idiosyncratic inserts and digressions (in Andrea's case from non-knightly sources), all rendered in clear, pure Tuscan /vernacular/. ...

Performances of Andrea's prose works will remain secret, but there is no doubt about his influence on works later sung in San Martino: a century later *Primo Libro de' Reali*, work by the great Florentine *canterino* Cristoforo Fiorentino, l'Altissimo, was performed in San Martino for some ninety and four plays ranging from 1514 to 1515, and the work is essentially a verse adaptation of the first and second books of Andrea's *Reali di Francia*. ...

The presence and activities of *canterini*, or minstrels, are indeed documented not only in Florence but also in other Italian cities such as Siena and Perugia. The names like Giovanni da Verona, Giovanni orbo da Parma, Angelo da Lucca, Michelagnolo da Volterra, Niccolò cieco d'Arezzo, Matteo da Città di Castello, Rinaldo da Cesena, and Antonio da Fabriano, suggest that these minstrels may have operated in various towns across Italy.

6.2.3 Camilla Cavicchi: The *cantastorie* and his music in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy²⁵

While working on the initial Croatian version of this Compendium, I reviewed numerous articles, some of which I ultimately did not incorporate. However, upon revisiting them recently, I made the decision to include the work of Italian musicologist Camilla Cavicchi due to the presence of intriguing ideas and information. Despite occasionally referencing the term "*canterini*," it appears that she predominantly prefers to use the term "*cantastorie*."

The *cantastorie*, singers of tales, were widespread across the Italian peninsula and its outlying islands from the thirteenth century onwards. With their varied repertoires, they were active until the 1970s, in parallel with the *contastorie* - storytellers - who can, however, still be heard today in Sicily. The latter use a specific declamatory technique that has connections with that of the *cantastorie* and the two categories of musicians have been recorded in history throughout the world. However, I would like to focus on the Italian *cantastorie* of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century, analysing their performance, the social mobility of their art, and the music for the *ottava rima*. ...

According to the available sources, the *cantastorie* were first heard in the northern regions of Italy (Piedmont, Lombardy, and Emilia-Romagna), which were already familiar with the art of the troubadours. From there, the singing of tales began to spread southwards towards the end of the fifteenth century. ...

The *cantastorie* were without doubt both alphabetically and musically literate, as the *cantare* were generally based on a reference text, often in Latin or French, ...

Their literacy is also confirmed by the long list of books belonging to the *canterino* Michelangelo di Cristofano da Volterra "*trombetta*" (born in 1464). This shows 68 titles classified into three types: "*libri di battaglie*" (books on battles), "*libri d'innamoramento*" (books on love), and "*libri per l'anima*" (books for the soul). Another source that attests to the literary knowledge of the *canterini* is the codex 2829 in the Biblioteca Riccardiana e Moreniana in Florence. This collection of *cantari*, copied in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, belonged to a *cantastorie*, who very likely copied the volume from another source.

²⁵ Cavicchi, Camilla: The *cantastorie* and his music in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, *Creatio ex unisono* Einstimmige Musik im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert, *Jahrbuch für Renaissancemusik*, Band 13, 2017, Ed. N. Schwindt.

In order to store this extraordinary number and variety of stories in their memory, the *cantastorie* had to employ special recall techniques. In fact, the *zibaldone* by Michele del Giogante preserves a treatise on memory transmitted to him by the famous *canterino* Maestro Niccolò Cieco da Firenze in December 1435. He describes a mnemonic technique using storage rooms and architectural structures that have many similarities with the "memory palaces" described in the classical texts by Cicero and Quintilian.²⁶...

We know that the *cantastorie* performed in key gathering places, generally in town centres near busy places of worship. The squares of San Martino in Florence, San Michele in Lucca, the Accademia in Naples, San Marco in Venice, and Porta Ravegnana in Bologna were just some of the more famous arenas that resounded with the notes of their art. Before the show, the *cantastorie* prepared the stage for his own performance, even arranging the benches for the public. However, in the fifteenth century, when this practice became very popular and began to draw larger crowds, the municipal authorities began to offer the benches for the audience and an assistant for the *cantastorie*. ...

Some fifteenth- and sixteenth-century woodcuts illustrate similar performances, but are more evidently specific to the *cantari* context. The engraving accompanying Antonio Pucci's 1498 Italian translation of *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*, for instance, shows a man dressed in Classical garb standing on a platform and playing a lira da braccio before a group of elegantly dressed men, some sitting and some standing. ... Printed at the beginning of the sixteenth century it clearly illustrates the contemporary practices of north-eastern Italy.²⁷

About the *cantastorie* performances see more in Chapter 7., p.20

6.3. *Canterini, cantori ad lyram, arte della memoria and rhetoric*:²⁸

We mentioned already²⁹ how important for the improvisation of the poetry (and music) was the memory, (the memorial archive as it calls Anna Maria Busse Berger), already for the medieval musicians. Angela Mariani wrote that improvisation and *inventio* are part of the process that is medieval music performance practice, and in order to do that, one must have a storehouse of memorized musical vocabulary, techniques, and repertoire on which to draw.

But from where is coming this practice and how our colleagues in the Middle Ages, the *canterini* in 14th and 15th centuries and through them also the humanist *cantori ad lyram* learned this art? Could we use it today trying to re-create the art of medieval and renaissance improvisation?

French musicologist and musician Philippe Canguilhem (already mentioned and quoted in this compendium) wrote in several of his articles and in his book on improvisation³⁰ that the creative function of memory has been inspired by several ancient authors speaking about rhetoric, like Aristotle's book *De Anima*, Cicero's *De oratore*, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, and above all the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, thought at the time to be by Cicero.

To consider the cultural background in an attempt to understand how the phenomenon of improvisation was perceived, we must look at the poetic and rhetorical theories of the period. We are encouraged to follow this path by the numerous references to poets and orators of antiquity

²⁶ See more about that in the next paragraph, 6.3 *Canterini, cantori ad lyram, arte della memoria and rhetoric*, from p.9

²⁷ For this and many other illustrations see in the Appendix/ Images.

²⁸ Blake Wilson: *Singing* ... See Chapter 7 or the Appendix/ Lists for details.

²⁹ By Anne Smith in Chapter. 3. and by Philippe Canguilhem, in Chapter 4.

³⁰ Canguilhem, Philippe: *L'Improvisation polyphonique à la Renaissance*, Classiques Garnier, Paris, 2015.

that Tinctoris himself cites in his treatise on counterpoint, including Homer, Aristotle, Cicero, Horace, and Virgil. In the fifteenth century, we can highlight two models that fuelled interest in spontaneous creation, both of which originated in Florentine humanist circles: the *furor poeticus* of Platonic ancestry as seen through the works of Marsilio Ficino, and Quintilian's *color rhetoricus* as revisited by Angelo Poliziano.

Parallel to the emergence of a theory of inspiration that promoted spontaneity, the fifteenth century witnessed a renewed interest in classical rhetoric, which profited from immense prestige. Since its rediscovery by Poggio Bracciolini in 1416, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* was widely distributed among the Italian humanists before quickly imposing itself throughout Europe as a major cultural reference during the Renaissance. Quintilian considers improvisation the linchpin of the orator's art: "The crown of all our study and the highest reward of our long labours is the power of improvisation."

Thomas E. Binley³¹ writing about rhetoric says that 'Grammar' and 'rhetoric' appear in the Middle Ages within the *artes liberales* of the universities emerging directly from classical learning. The basic of the art have remained almost the same for centuries, going from *Ad herennium* and Cicero's *De inventione* to the end of the Middle Ages. They have been constantly improved, remodelled, expanded and renewed to meet many needs, including the communication in the creative arts, specially composing prose and poetry, and perhaps music.

The rhetorical process functioned in many areas other than speech: Curtius wrote about 'rhetorical landscape representations' while Serpieri speaks of 'la retorica al teatro' (the rhetorical use of theatrical space), and music historians have learned that the language and approach of musical theory in the Middle Ages were borrowed directly from medieval grammar and rhetoric.

While the art of rhetoric certainly played an important, even direct role in the *musica theoretica*, it surely played an important, perhaps subliminal role in the composition and performance in the realm of *musica practica* as well, because the *ars poetica* contained the only analytical vocabulary for the planning and performing of musical works.

To illustrate on a representative example how rhetoric functioned in writing the poetry, Binkley uses the treatise *Poetria Nova* by Geoffrey of Vinsauf³², (written in the early thirteenth century, still copied out in manuscript in the fifteenth century, and printed as late as 1721). Vinsauf's work "provided" an elaboration on the Ciceronian rhetoric by focusing on the writing of poetry (and its spoken delivery) and by concentrating it on "the devices of communication, it provides an invaluable reference work for performers. According to Geoffrey, there are three elements necessary for learning to write poetry: *ars*, a knowledge of the immutable laws; *imitatio*, the imitation of models; and *usus*, practice."

Binkley's quoting of Vinsauf:

The first step (in composition) is the ordering of the materials. There are two paths, the path of Nature is to present events as they are presented in Nature - begin your story at the beginning. A more artful way, however, the path of Art, is to begin at some other point or with some material taken not from the beginning, and to proceed from there to the beginning.

³¹ Binkley, Thomas: The work is not the performance, in: *Companion to Medieval & Renaissance Music*, ed.: T. Knighton and D. Fallows, J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd, London 1992

³² Geoffrey of Vinsauf, fl. 1200., representative of the early medieval grammarian movement.

A work may proceed from its opening in a hurried or leisurely manner, leaping ahead to a conclusion or tarrying here and there along the path. Methods of amplification and delay are employed to achieve this, the longer route, hollowing are a few of the techniques of amplification that were employed, dwelling on this or that to delay the arrival at the conclusion:

Repetition - present the material in different clothes, concealed in multiple forms, the same varied in multiple garb.

Periphrase - suggest rather than say, encircle the material but do not reveal it all at once, move by a devious route, thus retarding the tempo.

Digression - go outside the bounds of the material, draw away, but not so far as to lose the way back.

Opposition - let the negative or the opposite join with the positive to form a single harmonious meaning - if one is fast, one is not slow. However, if the shorter route is selected, then techniques of abbreviation are to be employed. These consist essentially of avoiding the techniques of amplification such as those above, with at least one other:

Implication - effect a fusion of material so that what is said may say the unsaid, and do not enshroud the material in a mist, but let sunlight penetrate to reveal clarity; emphasis is a useful tool.

Whether the selected path be short or long, the material must be appropriately adorned. Examine the mind of the material rather than just its face and be sure there is harmony between the adornment and the path. If the material has dignity, let it not be debased by vulgarity. Permit an old word to regain its youth by giving it a home in another situation where it can be a novel guest, giving pleasure by its strangeness. Material can be adorned as an object is painted, and many an object can be adorned with the same paint. Attribute to the cause what the effect claims as its own.

(Binkley:) Rhetorical colours are more readily understood in terms of words than tone. There are difficult ornaments and there are easy ornaments, appropriate for a dignified or a simple style. Consider a few: *repetitio* (restatement for emphasis); *tractio* (multiple forms of the same material); *exclamatio*; and ambiguity (multiple meaning of the same material).

There are faults to avoid: Art tolerates a sequence but forbids a concentrated sequence. Graceless and excessive repetition or incongruous sequencing of the material is to be avoided. In delivery let three tongues speak: that of the mouth, that of countenance and that of gesture. Each has its own laws. Vinsauf offers us a textbook for the delivery of vernacular medieval lyric. He reveals both the considerations and the tactics employed in artistic communication, and for performers today this gives us a matrix for our performance priorities.

The questions such as whether this or that instrument played a tenor line or accompanied a troubadour song are clearly philological considerations that do not materially bear on the sound of the performance or on the interpretation of the work. Such issues as whether there is a prelude, digressive interludes or gestures are of a higher order, because they are oral elements of definition and connotation that have a material hearing on the performance, both in terms of its total sound picture and its reception. ...

The performance elements which determine what we hear and what we play. The music is the sound, not the written document. We must consider first the whole composition-performance process and not merely that part of the process that found written expression.

If we examine music with these points in mind, we will be better equipped to consider interpretation in a medieval context.

I would like to add to this that (as we shall see later in several articles) much of what Binkley writes about performance of medieval music can be applied to the performance and improvisation of Renaissance and early Baroque music too.

Domenico Pietropaolo³³ wrote about rhetoric:

Since training in rhetoric was basic to all education, the mental apparatus for improvisation, though acquired linguistically, could be easily carried over into the arena of the non-verbal arts. It is safe to generalize that, in the verbal as well as in the non-verbal arts, the apparatus consisted of two fundamental skills: the ability to generate by means of stock phrases and variations a rich and vibrant segment of text within a given theme or structure, and the ability to deliver it effectively to the audience. The first of these entails knowing how to determine in its particulars the not-given substance of the performance text—a facility that can be acquired principally by means of training in the rhetoric of *copia*, which, according to Erasmus whose classicism is deeply rooted in the medieval Christian tradition, contributes greatly to the development of “skill in extemporaneous speaking or writing.” Erasmus, of course, is concerned with language³⁴ and ideas, but it is with little difficulty that we can extend to the other arts—arts which deal in notes and tunes or in steps and dances rather than formulas and speeches—his statement asserting the ease of “divert/ing/ even a rashly begun speech in any desired direction” when “so many formulas /are/ prepared in readiness for action.”

The second skill consists in the ability to articulate every segment of the performance by using the rhetoric of body language most appropriate to it and simultaneously most accessible to the audience. Throughout the Middle Ages, when the level of literacy was low, reliance on gesture was high in all spheres of life, and, as a consequence, theoretical reflection on the nature of gestures was a more frequent occurrence than in other periods of history.

There is no great risk of error in assuming that this situation obtains in all the performance arts of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, not only because in the contemporary consciousness they were all theoretically, if circuitously, retraceable to the rhetorical matrix, but also because, like oratory, they all included delivery to an audience as the final creative moment.

Angela Mariani in his book "Improvisation and *Inventio* in the Performance of Medieval Music"³⁵

Most of the scholarly material concerning the relationship of rhetoric to early music is presented in the context of late Renaissance and Baroque repertoire, but rhetoric was also one of the seven liberal arts³⁶ that constituted a medieval education, and its rules would have been known at least to literate musicians in the Middle Ages. In addition, there is a certain amount of universality to rhetorical skill: storytellers; actors, lecturers, lawyers, writers; politicians, and poets learn to use these skills by close observation and imitation of teachers and models. ...

³³ Pietropaolo, Domenico: *Improvisation in the Arts*; article in: T. J. McGee, ed.: *Improvisation in the arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2003.

³⁴ On similarities between language and improvisation see in Chapter 4. Wegman, pp. 26-30.

³⁵ Mariani, Angela: *Improvisation and Inventio in the Performance of Medieval Music*, Oxford University Press, New York 2017

³⁶ Along with grammar, logic, arithmetic, astronomy music and geometry.

Memory is most like a library of texts, made accessible and useful through various consciously applied heuristic schemes.” Carruthers³⁷ also points out that a commonly used metaphor for the “educated memory” was the Latin word *thesaurus*, which translates as “storage room,” and that “the image of the memorial storehouse is a rich model of pre-modern mnemonic practice.”...

The act of improvisation can also include some elements of preplanning. In a 2008 article on improvisation versus composition, music theorist Steve Larson pointed out that separating the process of improvisation from the process of composition because of the supposed “instantaneous” aspect of improvisation is misleading. He articulates the difference in terms of “storage” and the potential for revision:

I now understand improvisation as the real-time yet preheard—and even practiced—choice among possible paths that elaborate a pre-existing structure, using familiar patterns and their familiar combinations and embellishments. ...

In the introduction to her important work *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory*, Anna Maria Busse Berger refers to the memory storehouse as a memorial archive, drawing on the connection between composition and memory articulated by rhetoric scholar Mary Carruthers:

A scholar built up a memorial archive throughout his life from which he would draw in the process of composition. Thus, composition was not about creating a new, innovative work, as it has become in modern times: “Composition is not an act of writing,” Carruthers says, “it is rumination, cogitation, dictation, a listening and a dialogue, a ‘gathering’ (*collectio*) of voices from several places in memory.” But perhaps most importantly, [Carruthers] demonstrates that the same techniques that were used to memorize existing texts were also used to create new works. An author who composed a work in his mind visualized it, usually with the aid of an imaginary architectural structure, or on a written page. These ideas are of central importance for our own understanding of the medieval compositional process in any field, music included.

Since the purpose of constructing a mnemonic score is to facilitate memorization, at some point the process of preparing a performance must include the transition from paper to memory. The parts of a particular performance that will ultimately live in the memory include not only the melody and the text but all of the aspects of invention, including those that are fixed (arrangement) and those that involve fluid composition or improvisation. All must be held in the mind.

In the Middle Ages, memory was viewed not just as a phenomenon arising spontaneously from simple familiarity or repetition but also as a skill developed by mental discipline. The imagination and visualization of images and location were important tools in this process.

The cultivation of memory was also considered to be part of the realm of rhetorical skill. Medieval scholars, orators, poets, and musicians therefore turned to the ancient rhetorical treatises to find techniques that, while originally intended to help orators, were also considered to be useful for the construction and delivery of poetry. Poetic skill, in turn, was directly related to music; Quintilian, in his *Institutio Oratoria*, reminds us that “music was the most ancient of Sciences connected with literature” and that “the most celebrated poets” agree....

³⁷ Carruthers, Mary: *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, UK; Cambridge University Press, 1990).

There were a number of sources used to teach rhetoric in the medieval period. The works of Cicero (first century bce) and Quintilian (first century ce) were popular, as was a work called *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (ca. 90 bce), once attributed to Cicero but now of disputed authorship. These works were also interpreted by medieval authors such as Geoffrey of Vinsauf (*Poetria Nova*), who is particularly important for performers of medieval lyric because his treatise focuses on the delivery of poetry. His treatment of rhetorical structure and his concise but detailed commentary on rhetorical ornament has a direct application to medieval song.

The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* tells us that a speaker should “possess the faculties of Invention (*inventio*), Arrangement (*dispositio*), Style (*elocutio*), Memory (*memoria*), and Delivery (*pronunciatio*). Everything on this list can be applied to the art of musical composition and performance.

The *Rhetorica*'s author further divides the art of *inventio* into the “six parts” of a discourse. These are based on the art of persuasion, and at first glance they may seem to be more applicable to a lawyer's closing arguments than a musical composition. However, I have suggested a few analogies.

1. The *exordium*, or introduction, which prepares the listener, gets his or her attention, and provides a beginning
2. The *narratio*, in which the facts of the issue are stated, or the narration of events is given
3. The *divisio*, in which the speaker outlines the different views on the issue at hand or the main points that he or she is going to present
4. The *confirmatio*, in which the speaker builds his or her argument and bolsters it with convincing corroboration
5. The *confutatio*, in which the speaker refutes all opposing arguments
6. The *conclusio* or *peroratio*, which provides an artful end to the discourse, or, in our case, to the song or instrumental piece

Exordium, *narratio*, and *conclusio* have straightforward musical analogues.

We can compare the *exordium* to a prelude, or any introductory verse, stanza, or section. The *narratio* can be the stanzas that provide the background, topic, or theme of the lyric, ... The musical *conclusio* can take many forms; in medieval music, we often get a cadence that is very typical of the song's mode, a consonant fifth or octave cadence, or a lyric “punch line,” such as the two-line *tornada* that ends a troubadour *canso*.

It is a bit more challenging to assign musical analogues to the *divisio*, *confirmatio*, and *confutatio*; the resulting interpretations can be highly subjective, although in later music it is tempting to draw parallels with certain aspects of functional harmony ...

Rhetorica ad Herennium was also important because it was one of the first rhetorical texts to systematically discuss memory.

In her book *The Art of Memory*, Frances Yates³⁸ gives an extensive discussion of the *Rhetorica*, explaining that the treatise names two kinds of memory, natural and artificial. Artificial memory is extremely important, ... This artificial memory can be developed by way of specific techniques, including the skill of establishing mental “places,” or *loci*, and mental “images.” A mental place can be defined as “a place easily grasped by the memory, such as a house, an intercolumnar space, a corner, an arch, or the like.”

Images, on the other hand, are “forms, marks or *simulacra* (simulations)” of what we wish to remember.” This is not entirely separate from the act of learning something through the action of reading: “The places are very much like wax tablets or papyrus, the images like the letters, the arrangement and disposition of the images like the script, and the delivery is like the reading.”...

Both the *Rhetorica* and Cicero are speaking quite literally of creating architectural images in the mind. Using the framework of this image, content that needs to be memorized is placed in very specific locations. A very famous musical example of a locational mnemonic image is the “Guidonian hand,” found in Guido D'Arezzo's eleventh-century pedagogical and theoretical treatise *Micrologus*, in which the notes of the medieval hexachord system (*ut, re, mi, fa, sol, and la*) are visualized on the joints of the hand rather than in a graph or chart. [Figure 3.11](#) illustrates the hexachord system as it might appear in a chart:³⁹

These mentally constructed loci can be created in any number of different ways and can be as diverse as the individuals creating them. The more personal they are, the more effective they will be for the individual using them. Mary Carruthers compares them to computer icons that “set in motion” a task:

A locational memory system is any scheme that establishes a set of ordered, clearly articulated, and readily recoverable background locations into which memory “images” are consciously placed. These images, often called agent images for they are active, function like the icons in a computer program in that they set in motion a task, the associative procedures of recollection. Within each background, discrete images can be grouped together in scenes, their number limited only by short-term memory. The images provide the associative cues to particular material; their “places” provide the relationship of their matters to one another. The power of this elementary technique is that it provides immediate access to whatever piece of stored material one may want, and it also provides the means to construct any number of cross-referencing, associational links among the elements in such schemes. It provides one with a random access memory [RAM] as well as schematics or templates upon which to construct any number of additional collations and concordances of material. ...

The medieval treatises suggest that we visualize a building, architectural construction, or shape that actually exists, preferably one that we can call up in the memory easily.⁴⁰ Today, we have the added advantage of all kinds of shapes, charts, and templates that we can access via computer; one can easily create a mnemonic image by experimenting with various software programs. It is most effective if performers create their own templates and mnemonic images, as learning and memorization styles vary greatly among individuals. By personalizing these “icons,” to use Carruthers's apt analogy, the images set in motion an even stronger “associative procedure of recollection.” My own experience suggests that after a mnemonic image is recalled in the mind a certain number of times, the content is internalized and the image no longer

³⁸ Yates, Frances A.: *The Art of Memory* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1966)

³⁹ See Music Examples A, Ch.II-4 and 5. Mariani fig.3.11 and 3.12

⁴⁰ See latter on p.18 of this chapter by Wilson and Niccolò Cieco.

needed; however, if an external stimulus such as performance anxiety causes a memory slip, the instant engagement of the mnemonic image can save the day. ...

The ground-breaking medieval music performer and scholar Thomas Binkley often told his students, "Play what the instrument wants to play." ... In other words, in the process of musical invention; medieval players would take advantage of the natural characteristics of their instruments rather than employ extended techniques. The characteristics of the instrument determined, to a degree, what one would play. ...

In her comprehensive study *The Music of the Troubadours*, Elizabeth Aubrey⁴¹ discusses the transmission process:

"Memorization" should not necessarily be understood as exact imprinting on the mind of details from which one must not waver; as we tend to think of it today. A singer could retain the important features of a song that gave it its identity, while allowing some details to change. For the poem, its features of versification (rhyme, verse length and number) were the most compelling elements and allowed for little modification. But individual words; short phrases, and order of stanzas could diverge without losing the essence of the text. For the music, there must be similar elements—perhaps the contour, range, tonal orientation, intervallic structure—that a singer retained in the memory, while allowing details to change.... The singers received a song, either by ear or by eye, and they appropriated that song into their own repertoires, retaining its essence, but reconstructing it according to their own performing style.

This is exactly how the process of learning and performances of Croatian *gusla* (authors) singer-player function, see Primorac, p.62 in Chapter 7.

German musicologist Johannes Menke⁴² about rules of classical rhetoric, which flourished in the 16th century with the Renaissance and humanism. Rhetoric was ubiquitous in culture; every educated person knew her basic concepts.

Let's review the five stages in which a speech is constructed:

1.*Inventio* (Latin: invention or discovery). The topic is reflected upon, and argumentative strategies are developed, using the categorical system of Topoi, which provides specific search formulas for arguments, characteristics, and evidence.

2.*Dispositio* (Latin: arrangement, organization). The content and arguments of the speech are logically and purposefully arranged.

3.*Elocutio* (Latin: expression, formulation). This is the actual elaboration of the speech in detail and includes the ornate embellishment (Latin: *ornatus*) using figures (various linguistic devices) and tropes (forms of figurative speech such as metaphor or allegory).

4.*Memoria* (Latin: memory). The speaker memorizes his presentation, for which the authors provide tips and tricks.

⁴¹ Aubrey, Elisabeth: *The Music of the Troubadours*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996)

⁴² Menke, Johannes: "ponere vel facere", Überlegungen zur Aufführungspraxis und Improvisation des Kontrapunkts in der Renaissance, Vortrag auf dem Leipziger Improvisations Festival 2013, 22. September 2013

5. *Pronuntiatio* (Latin: pronunciation, vocal delivery). This is the actual delivery of the speech, which ultimately decides the success through the use of facial expressions, gestures, and actions.⁴³

The classical speech, therefore, was not improvised but meticulously calculated beforehand. Of course, a skilled speaker is also capable of drafting a speech extemporaneously. The more important the speech is to him, the more thoroughly he will prepare it. We know that ancient orators rehearsed their speeches almost like actors. However, there remains a stage that can always contain improvisational elements: the *Pronuntiatio*, the actual delivered speech.

In his book Blake Wilson⁴⁴ gives a lot of space to the role the trained memory acted by professional *canterini* and *cantori ad lyram*:

The memory of a professional *canterino* was the storehouse for an astonishing array of materials, and the essentially oral and often improvisatory processes by which this material was transformed into what his audiences heard was governed by forces that inhered in these processes, such as combinatorial facility, fantasy, digression, interpolation, and repetition. Such works underwent a constant process of *rifacimento* (both in performance and in copying, which may have been simultaneous) that tended to work against the production of authoritative single versions of a “text,” and fostered the state of textual mobility that Zumthor has called *mouvance*. Robins’s model study of this process concerns Pucci’s *Contrasto delle donne*, a quasi-dramatic dialogue in *ottava rima*, which survives in fifteen different manuscript sources that vary widely in the number and order of stanzas. ...

Those *cantari*, like Pucci’s, or later the *Libro Primo de’ Reali* by Cristoforo Fiorentino that emerged directly from this milieu are probably the closest record we have of Tuscan oral poetry at that time, and their fundamental expressive and structural modes share many qualities with the poetry of primary oral cultures, that is:

1. **mnemonic patterns**: rhythmic, balanced patterns (e.g., *ottava rima*), repetitions or antitheses, epithets and formulae (“vaga damigella,” “un bel prato tutto pien di fiori”), standard thematic settings (a “palazzo fortissimo,” a “selva oscura”);

2. **additive style**: “... e andò alla casa e ritrovò suo padre, e suoi fratelli, e suoi parenti cari ...” that generates continuity;

3. **redundancy**: repetition with variation of words, phrases, situations, or names vs. the sparse linearity of written discourse;

4. **cultural conservatism**: the same stories are told repeatedly, often with content that upholds accepted moral codes; originality resides not in new stories, but in managing the audience interaction anew each time;

5. **concretization**: the structuring of knowledge as immediate, specific, and “close to the human lifeworld” vs. abstract, analytic structuring made possible by writing;

6. **agonistic intonation**: oral discourse that is interactive, competitive, and contested vs. a written discourse abstracted from the arenas of human interaction and more focused on interior crises;

⁴³ And this is the point which interest us most, see about *Pronuntiatio* later.

⁴⁴ Wilson: *Singing ...*

7. **empathetic/participatory**: transmission depends on personal connection vs. writing that fosters disengagement, objectivity;

8. **somatic**: discourse in oral culture never exists simply in a verbal context, but is inseparable from the physical context of performance: gestures, vocal inflections, facial expressions, etc.

Wilson about the Niccolò Cieco of Florence treatise on *arte della memoria*:

Niccolò⁴⁵ passed on to Michele [del Giogante], with permission to transcribe it, something which may constitute his greatest legacy.

Here I Michele di Nofri di Michele di Maso del Giogante, accountant, will show the principle of learning the art of memory, which was revealed to me by Maestro Niccolò Cieco of Florence in December 1435, when he came here.

Thus opens the section in one of Michele's autograph anthologies devoted to Niccolò's *arte della memoria*. Niccolò's treatise belongs to a well-developed tradition of vernacular memory treatises. These all descend in varying degrees from the ancient oratorical tradition transmitted in works of Cicero, Quintilian and the anonymous *Ad Herennium* - see above. All of these classical texts had found their way to Florence by this time, and were in Cosimo's library by 1418.

In the context of classical oratory, *memoria* is a strategic preparation for *pronuntiatio*, that is, delivery or performance.

Aspects of classical memory technique remained in continuous use throughout The Middle Ages when it was applied in monastic communities to the composition of meditative prayer.

A group of five vernacular memory treatises can be linked directly to Florentine *canterini*, and these represent yet another stage in the penetration of memory technique into vernacular culture.

The most idiosyncratic /peculiar/ of the Florentine memory treatises, the one Michele del Giogante tells us was dictated to him by Niccolò cieco d'Arezzo in 1435. and filled with of the kind of raw material that, once stored in a trained memory, became the basis for composition, improvisation, and performance.

Niccolò's *arte della memoria* is what one might expect - a pragmatic and idiosyncratic appropriation of a common practice drawn principally from the *Ad Herennium*.

Artificial memory supplements natural memory and consists of places and images. Regarding places (*luoghi, loci*), which can be either natural (mountains, etc.) or artificial (house, room, etc.), the memory is usually conceived and organized as a house of memory, an architectural space either familiar or imaginary, and consists of any number of contrasting rooms or locations through which the mind can move freely. The locations are to be of moderate in size, luminosity, and space between them, and they should not be crowded with people or activity. There can be any number of locations depending on the number of names and things to be memorized (100 is common, 10,000 is possible), but every fifth one is to be specially marked, and once determined they should be mentally practiced until they become spatially fixed. And it is the spatial rather than the sequential order of the rooms that is fixed, which forms the basis of improvisation since terms and things can be extracted in any order one desires.

⁴⁵ Maestro Niccolò Cieco of Florence (or Arezzo?), ? - ca 1440?

According to the Scarlatti⁴⁶ treatise,

for one full month you must toil over the places so that you can say them from the first to the last, or from the middle one or the third or the fourth up or down; and so you can say which one is the 20th, or 30th, the 17th, the 94th, the 53rd, etc., and separately go back and forth.

Once your memory house is constructed, then, in the words of the *Ad Herennium* author,

order the ideas, words, and images that you wish to remember, placing the first thing in the vestibule, the second in the atrium, then move around the impluvium, into the side rooms, and even onto the statues or paintings (the “house” in this case is an ancient Roman one).

The images are also of two kinds, figurative or verbal (*cose e nome*, or *res et verba*); these should be striking and vivid, and strongly associative, such as a lion for courage, or Herod for betrayal.

The particular features of Niccolò’s treatise are outlined in Table 3.3 (see Example VI-2) It is conformed to the basic plan of the *Ad Herennium* model: a division into two primary parts dealing with places and images.

What follows is a list of 100 places, each with an object “upon it” (the first fifteen are translated in Table 3.3A). As Michele explains in his introduction, the places are “in my house,” chosen at a time when Niccolò was residing with Michele.

*Example VI-2, Wilson Table 3.2 and 3.3 Niccolò cieco d’Arezzo/Michele del Giogante memory treatise*⁴⁷

The second section of the treatise explains in some detail the “eight figures of artificial memory,” but the usual clear distinction between images for words (*nome*) and images for things (*cose*) is blurred, and Niccolò’s treatment of them is idiosyncratic. The eight figures, based perhaps on the eight-fold division that pervades the morality treatises, are eight precepts governing the formation of images and words, and reflects the more practical, pedagogical bent of this treatise.

The distinction between figures known at first hand (*propria*) and imagined ones (*immaginativa*) recalls the *Ad Herennium* distinction between images *veras* and *fictas*, and the use of alliteration (*significativa*) and the breaking of unfamiliar words into meaningful parts (*accientuale*) are basic strategies. The remaining four figures are variations on the principles of how to memorize people or things by forming associations: with what one does (*artista*), with one’s reputation (*famosa*), according to one’s relationship with or attitude toward the thing (*volontaria*), and with its opposite (*condizione effettiva*).

This discussion of figures is prefaced with the kind of promise seen often in the other treatises:

These are the eight figures of artificial memory, which constitute every method and manner of being able to remember every name of a man or a woman or other animals or other memorable things, as well as titles, nicknames, numbers, events, prose, allegories in sermons, the speeches of ambassadors, readings, each and every thing ...

⁴⁶ Filippo Scarlatti treatise was compiled during 1467-71.

⁴⁷ See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-2, Wilson tables 3.2 and 3.3.

This is modest compared to many treatises, which claim that a well-trained and practiced memory may have many such houses in it that are ultimately capable of holding material the equivalent of a private library of books.

6.3.1 Cantare Ad Lyram and Humanistic *Studia Universitatis*⁴⁸

Humanism, as a cultural movement, stemmed primarily from the implementation of the *studia humanitatis*, an educational framework introduced in certain Italian centers in the early fifteenth century and widely adopted across Italy by the 1450s. This educational program focused on poetry, grammar, and rhetoric as its fundamental components.

The alignment of poetic recitation and *cantare ad lyram* with the pedagogical aims of these disciplines ensured their widespread dissemination alongside the *studia humanitatis*.

The evidence illustrates significant shifts in pedagogy and subject matter brought about by this new curriculum. It entailed a reconfiguration of the medieval liberal arts curriculum, which had traditionally emphasized the trivium and quadrivium, to prioritize subjects such as poetry, history, and moral philosophy.

At the heart of this new educational curriculum was a strong emphasis on language and communication skills, encompassing grammar, rhetoric, poetry, and the ability to articulate ideas eloquently and persuasively.

While music was acknowledged by most humanist educators as having a place in their curricula due to its esteemed role in the educational systems and society of ancient Greece and Rome, the primary focus was on the *lyre* and its intimate connection to poetry, singing, and performance. This emphasis highlighted the unique advantages that the *lyre* offered to both performers and audiences.

Memory and Improvisation

It's important to recognize that the *studia humanitatis* emphasized an increased element on oral expression. Skills such as speaking, reciting, singing, pronunciation, and diction were cultivated as integral aspects of the art of discourse, or rhetoric, with a focus on practical application in oratory. These activities were associated with the final canon of rhetoric, *pronuntiatio* (delivery or performance), which, along with *inventio*, *dispositio* (arrangement), *elocutio* (style), and *memoria*, constituted the five canons of rhetoric.

During the medieval period, memory and performance were somewhat overlooked in educational curricula. However, they were subsequently acknowledged as vital elements in both ancient treatises by Quintilian and Cicero, and in the enriched oral tradition of Renaissance oratory, particularly within the educational framework of the *studia humanitatis*.

Memory was highlighted as an essential aspect of preparation for performance in humanist educational writings, often drawing parallels with ancient treatises on the subject. Vergerio advised students to daily select a few pieces of information to memorize, emphasizing that “whatever we do not have by memory or can easily recall, we seem not to know at all.”

⁴⁸ Ibid. Wilson: *Singing to the Lyre in Renaissance Italy*. IP: See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-3, Wilson table 5.1. and VI-4 Wilson table 5.2.

Piccolomini⁴⁹ emphasized the inseparable link between speaking ability and memory, stressing the importance of committing verses or notable quotations to memory daily. Memory was depicted as the repository of knowledge and learning, referred to as the "storeroom of knowledge" and the source of inspiration, nurturing creativity like a mother to the Muses.

Bruni and Battista Guarini highlighted poetry's suitability for memorization due to its structured and rhythmic qualities, facilitating recall. Vittorino⁵⁰ stressed the importance of memorizing lengthy Latin poems, including entire books of Virgil's Aeneid, as poetry encompassed a wide range of knowledge expected of a well-educated individual. A proficient memory was seen as evidence of one's deep understanding and appreciation of classical literature and its structure, demonstrating intelligence and comprehension.

In his book "Music in the Castle"⁵¹ Franco Alberto Gallo wrote:

Carboni's⁵² practice of singing Latin verses and accompanying himself on a stringed instrument was perhaps the result of his having studied with Guarino Veronese⁵³ in Ferrara. Guarino does not seem ever to have been personally and directly concerned with music, but his reading of the ancient writers must certainly have brought him to understand its importance. In a letter to Vitaliano Faella in 1424. Guarino tells of having participated in a banquet enlivened by the presence of musicians

who so developed the meaning with their skill and harmonious music, that they appeared to have come from the school of Timotheus.

In one of the epitaphs Ludovico Carboni explicitly credits Guarino with teaching his students to compose Latin verses with musical accompaniment:

I taught /them/ well how to weare verses with sounding *plectrum*.

The theoretical foundation for this practice among nobles and men of letters educated in the Guarinian manner was a treatise entitled *De ingenuiss moribus et liberalibus studiis adolescentie*, written by Pierpaolo Vergerio⁵⁴ in 1402 for Ubertino, son of Francesco da Carrara, lord of Padua.

In this "praeclarissimo libello" (most splendid book), as Guarino called it, Vergerio - drawing on the teachings in the eighth book of Aristotle's *Politics*-includes music among the four essential disciplines (along with grammar, gymnastics, and drawing) in the education of a Young noble. He specifically recommends the practice of singing accompanied by an instrument:

But it certainly will not be inappropriate for them to relax with song and stringed instruments.

Leonello's⁵⁵ reassuring response is intentionally styled in similar terms:

I allow myself some time for relaxing by singing and playing music/ *cantui et fidibus*/.

⁴⁹ Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405 – 1464) Humanist, writer, historian and pope Pius II.

⁵⁰ Vittorino da Feltre (1378-1446) Italian humanist and teacher.

⁵¹ In Italian original: *Musica nel castello: Trovatori, libri, oratori nelle corti italiane dal XIII al XV secolo*, Società editrice Il Mulino, Bologna, 1992. Engl. version: University of Chicago Press, London 1995.

⁵² Ludovico Carbone (1430-1485).

⁵³ Guarino Veronese o Guarino da Verona (1374-1460).

⁵⁴ Pier Paolo Vergerio or Pietro Paolo Vergerio, Vergerius, Koper/ Capodistria 1370 - 1444) Slovenian born Italian humanist etc.

⁵⁵ Leonello d'Este (also spelled Lionello, 1407-1450).

Listening to musicians as they sing and play stringed instruments was recommended by the authoritative Giovanni Pontano⁵⁶ in *De principe*, a book dedicated to Ferdinand of Aragon and destined for the education of his son Alfonso:

Musicians also should be brought in, to cheer the soul and soothe away cares with song and stringed instruments.

As we saw, in most cases mentioned are "stringed instruments", sometimes *cithara* and even *lyra*.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, *cantare ad lyram* had become widespread in humanistic educational circles, but not only among those with a particular penchant for a serious musical activity or at least as a break from serious study, as it became an essential addition to the practical skill all pedagogues agreed that it is necessary for diction, recitation and eloquence.

Everyday recitation was the standard, and brought other benefits, such as aiding the memory, inducing audacity in speaking, encouraging listeners' minds to pay attention and understanding, and even strengthening the body against colds and aiding digestion.⁵⁷ (!)

Wilson:

It should be clear that the *studia humanitatis* fostered an increased element of orality. Speaking, reciting, singing, pronunciation, and diction were skills pursued as aspects of the art of discourse, or rhetoric, and its practical application as oratory.

Given the increasing influence of this education among social elites in late fifteenth-century Italy, it should come as no surprise that improvisatory singing of verse thrived in humanist settings. In fact, it explains what to us might seem the more extraordinary talents of men like Aurelio and Raffaele Brandolini, Bernardo Accolti, Andrea Marone and others, such as the ability to improvise Latin poems on set themes (on any subject) in prescribed meters.

Again Gallo:

Certainly the ancient practice of improvising verses in song with instrumental accompaniment was particularly fashionable at Ferrata: but its popularity was not limited to that court alone. Ludovico Carboni no doubt met one of the most famous improvisors in Naples during his stay there in 1473: this was Aurelio Brandolini, also called Lippo (rheum-eyed) because of severe visual handicap. Born in Florence in 1454, Brandolini had moved to Naples at an early age, and with the patronage of king Ferdinand he was able to complete his studies there. According to his brother Raffaele (also a poet and musician, and the author of a small treatise in praise of music and poetry), Aurelio's ability to improvise earned him the admiration of many important members of the Neapolitan court:

by his unremitting application and excellent recommendation, he accomplished so much in Naples that he gained great praise and favour when he celebrated heroic praises in extemporaneous verse, before Ferdinand, the first king of Naples; before Antonello Petrucci, the king's privy minister; before the most excellent count Giulio Aquaviva and his son Andrea Matteo, the marquis; and before many nobles of the realm endowed with the ultimate in character and talent.

⁵⁶ Giovanni Pontano (1429-1503).

⁵⁷ Wilson, *ibid*.

6.3.2 Brothers Brandolini and Pietrobono:

As a certain “bridge” to practice of *improvvisatori*, whom Wilson rightfully calls *cantori ad lyram*, I have decided to give the floor to both brothers, Aurelio and Raffaele Brandolini, two of the most famous improvisers, poet-singers. Both of them (and other who reported about their performances) gave the particularly valuable testimonies about their own or (in the case of Aurelio) about the artistry of lutenist Pietrobono⁵⁸ providing first-hand insight (unfortunately without details about the musical side of the performance in the case of Raffaele), the role of *arte della memoria* and rhetoric, audience impressions, and more.

I shall start with Aurelio⁵⁹:

Brandolini remained in Rome during the subsequent pontificate of Innocent VIII. One of his “concerts,” which was “recorded” in this period, survives in a copy made by the Venetian chronicler Marin Sanudo. The performance probably dates from 1485 and took place before a group of Venetian patricians. Bernardo Bembo, orator of Venice at the papal court, was among them, as was his son Pietro, the future man of letters then fifteen years old, who transcribed the texts as were delivered. The first piece is a composition of eight Sapphic strophes, in which Brandolini invokes the Virgin’s blessing on the Venetian guests and prays for healing for the pope, who was then ill:

Bountiful [Mother] residing in serene heaven,
Hear our voices as our instruments make melodious song.

Bernardo Bembo then proposes a theme: let him deplore our age, but praise antiquity, which Brandolini immediately develops into forty-nine distichs sung to the lyra:

I will come quickly now to [the topic of] Latin verses.

The improviser is so secure in his skill that he challenges the young transcriber to a race:

ready your pen, friend scribe.
You will not be able to keep up with my words; I will go faster;
you will not be able to write down my verses.

Pietro Bembo accepts the challenge and even sportively assumes the blame for any eventual errors in transcription, noting at the foot of the page:

If you find any verses that are not so good, ascribe that to an error on the part of those who were writing while Lippo the blind Florentine was singing.

In conclusion, yielding to the request made by another member of the audience, Pietro Diedo, to sing improvised verses in Italian, Brandolini performs two strophes of eight lines each that begin:

I should not exceed the promise made.

This transition to improvisation in the vernacular, which was unusual for Brandolini, is perhaps an “easy-listening piece” offered to the public at the end of the concert. In fact, Raffaele

⁵⁸ Pietrobono Burzelli, detto dal Chitarino (1410/1425-1497).

⁵⁹ Gallo, *Music in the castle*.

Brandolini places these two types of improvisation—the loftier one in Latin and the lower one in the vernacular—in distinct contrast to one another, due to their respective social and cultural components:

But for this reason a Latin song is much superior to one in the vernacular: because the former is geared to the senatorial rank, the latter to the plebeian; the one is praised by those with powerful minds, the other by bumpkins; the one by Romans, the other by barbarians; the one by the learned who delight in the respectable business of the fine arts, the other by the unlearned, dissolute in their disreputable idleness. . . .

In 1489 Brandolini left Rome for Hungary and the court of King Matthias Corvinus. There he found two individuals he had already known in Naples: Queen Beatrice, the daughter of Ferdinand of Aragon, and the instrumentalist Pietrobono, whom Brandolini had praised in verse.

His dialogue *De humanae vitae conditione et toleranda corporis aegritudine* was composed in this period and dedicated to the king and queen. Among the various remedies it proposes for alleviating the suffering of illness, listening to instrumental and vocal music was by no means a casual choice:

How great is that which is perceived by the ears when we are held fast by the marvellous consonance or variety or sweetness of either human voices or musical instruments? . . .

However, neither religious habit nor academic dignity prevented him from continuing to improvise poetry in music. Indeed, one of Brandolini's most famous performances took place in this last period of his life. The concert was given in Verona on 8 October 1494, hosted by the podestà Gerolamo Bernardo. A detailed "program" survives with the transcription of all the poetic texts, this time the work of the Veronese poet Virgilio Zavarise:

To the magnificent and most illustrious Lord Gerolamo Bernardo, podestà of Verona: Virgilio Zavarise of Verona, in extemporaneous songs of Lippo Aurelio of Tuscany, blind from birth, now a member of the Hermits of St. Augustine and an outstanding preacher, sung to the *lyra* in the court of the podestà 8 October 1494.

Brandolini's first piece consists of twelve distichs dedicated to the podestà:

You who rule our city, O Bernardo, we acknowledge.

Then come verses by Zavarise, also in honour of the podestà, immediately followed by Brandolini's response:

The hendecasyllables of Virgilio Zavarise in which Calliope himself speaks of the justice of the most illustrious lord Bernardo, podestà of Verona:

I, Calliope, long invoked, am here . . .

Lippo Aurelio, touching his *lyra* began [in reply] to the above-written hendecasyllables of Virgilio: He sings of the great poet Virgilio.

In the final lines of this response Brandolini announces the next composition, again in distichs:

now I will sing to my sounding *lyra*, now I will take my resounding plectrum.
And when the hendecasyllables ended, he sang the following elegy:

I believe now that Phoebus has taken up his plectrum and cithara . . .

Then there is another exchange of hendecasyllables—a metric pattern perhaps preferred by Zavarise, who improvised his verses but apparently did not sing them:

Virgilio to Lippo ex tempore:
You the poet have no material . . .

Lippo to Virgilio:
O, would that I could bring back the ancient poets . . .

At this point Brandolini begins the longest and most complex piece of the entire performance—a eulogy to the illustrious men of Verona in fifty-one distichs:

Lippo celebrates the illustrious men of Verona and sings the praise of our country at the urging of Pietro Donato:

Now I [will] not [sing] praises with only a wandering song . . .

This is followed by the recitation of a prose piece. Brandolini then presents the last piece of the concert (on a religious subject) and concludes with thanks to his public:

After Ludovico Cendrato has recited the letter from Pontius Pilate to Tiberius Caesar, in which Pilate tries to clear himself of the unjust murder of Our Saviour, Lippo inveighs against Pilate and finally thanks his audience:

I am not tired, but my voice is hoarse from singing . . .

Despite this assertion that he no longer has any voice, Brandolini's final piece consists of no less than forty-two improvised distichs.

A "review" of this concert also survives, in a letter from Matteo Bosso to Girolamo Campagnola in Padua. On a previous occasion when Bosso had praised another improviser on the "*lyra*," Pamfilo Sasso, he had also declared his great admiration for Brandolini's exceptional memory, likening him to Pico della Mirandola and Ermolao Barbaro.⁶⁰ His description of the concert in Verona begins with a panegyric of Brandolini as a sacred orator and a philosopher:

At Verona we have just heard in the pulpit the prophet Lippo the Florentine, a religious of the hermetic order, . . . This man loves the sacred writings above all, and most skilfully treats of them and promulgates them. And this man understood whatever ancient philosophy has come to us from the Greeks, a philosophy that was serious, full, polished, and of keen discernment when it came to us, and now has grown to maturity—how fast it has happened!—in our gymnasium.

He understood this philosophy so well that when he took up some topic from it we seemed to be hearing not some Burleo, or Paolo Veneto, or Strodo, but, in fact, Pato, or Aristotle, or Theophrastus.

Bosso follows this with praise of Brandolini as a poet and musician who even surpasses those of antiquity:

⁶⁰ See in the Appendix/ Various Lists/ List of probable *Canterini* and *Cantori ad Lyram* (and lute) players

With regard to the *lyra*—let me speak quite boldly—Apollo and Amphion yield to him. By this one thing he is victorious over the famous poets: that what they hammered out through long nights and by burning the midnight oil, he fashions and sings extemporaneously.

The most impressive part of the concert, according to this “critic,” was the longest composition, the piece in celebration of the illustrious men of Verona:

In a gathering of many of the most noble citizens, patrons of literature, including the podestà himself, no matter what it pleased them to propose to our Lippo, his *lyra* was handed to him and right away he put together and sang metrical verses on whatever it was. Finally, when asked to speak of famous men of ancient glory whose native land was Verona, he, without any hesitation or taking time to think, described at length Catullus, Cornelius Nepos, Pliny the Younger, the dignity of citizenship, and the splendor of the city, with a very fine song that earned most splendid and well-deserved praise.

Bosso ends by telling Campagnola that if Brandolini should ever come to Padua it would be well worth his trouble to go and hear him. This is particularly significant in light of the fact that Campagnola had a young son who was also blind from birth and a capable improviser on the “lyra,” just like the subject of Bosso’s letter.

Aurelio Brandolini died of the plague in Rome in 1497. He left to us the memory of a man of culture, above all an effective orator and skilful poet, who also had a solid familiarity with music:

a man certainly very learned, but above all very eloquent and fluent, also a consummate poet, and quite adequately educated in many other disciplines, especially music.⁶¹

It follows the citation of most important excerpts from Aureliano’s “*Libellum*” in which he gave his impressions about performance by Ferrarese *improvvisatore* and lute virtuoso Pietrobono:

II

To Pietrobono

You who are most brilliant among the poets, the disciples of the Muses, O unique light of Phoebus, greatest glory of the lyre, accept the gifts of Lippo the Tuscan, small gifts, it is true, but something which no one among the great princes could have given you. ...

III

Here begins the small volume by Lippo Brandolini addressed to the Most Serene King Ferdinand in praise of music and of Pietrobono

Therefore the one of whom I *sing* has surmounted, by a strenuous path, a difficult pinnacle that few men achieve.

Look with favor on my undertaking, O Phoebus (I *sing* of your gifts), and *touch my instrument*, the *strings of my lyre*. Begin verses fashioned in an elegiac poetry; begin new praises in a polished elegy.

⁶¹ Giacomo Filippo [Foresti] da Bergamo, *Supplementum supplementi cronicarum* (Venice, 1503),

Then our father, ..., clothed him with genius worthy of any god, and gave him the gifts of the Muses: the plectrum, the lyre.

He came; he is here; he is seen in the image of Phoebus, differing from Phoebus in name only. He is like him in form, in his entire figure (with your locks, O Phoebus, vie with his dark head of hair). He takes after him in his eyes, in his face, and in his comely bearing and in that he can tower above the others in his *skill* with the lyre.

Indeed, he deserves this; still, the name that you had given him, fair Phoebus, was more fitting. That was more fitting; for who else was more dear to you, who can possibly be more worthy of your names? For who is better than this man? Who is more outstanding than this one? *Who moves his hand on the strings with such art?*

Come then, observe, any of you who are afire with the love of the Muses, set before your eyes each of these things. Pay close attention, as *his left hand runs* along the entire *cithara*, as *his hand so swiftly travels* along the *tuneful strings*. You will marvel at *how all his fingers fly simultaneously*, how *one hand is in so many places at once*. Now it *dashes* to the very *top of the instrument*, now it *runs* to the very *bottom*. You would swear there could hardly be just *one hand* and one **lyre**, but a *thousand hands flying*, a *thousand lyres sounding*.

Attend closely now as he *strikes* with his *ivory plectrum*, see with what art he *moves* the *plectrum*, with what art he *moves the strings*. Here you will also marvel at the *exceedingly swift movements* of *his right hand*, as it *strikes the harmonious strings* to the *rhythms* of *each finger*.

For his *right hand* is obedient to the rhythms of the other; this hand *accompanies* all that one's notes. His finger flashes here; there his *right hand* twinkles with the *sounding plectrum*; thus each fulfils its part. And this hand does not move its fingers unless the right hand moves the plectrum, and that hand does not move the strings except when this one moves its fingers. The *right hand complies with the left*, and that, in turn, complies with the right; *each one gives its support to the rhythms of the other*.

And there is no hope of any rest for either plectrum or fingers, there is no rest until the song is finished.

But what *tunes* does he play on his *strings*? what *songs* with his plectrum? Rather, what does he not play on his lyre? Whatever songs Britain sings, beloved of the Muses, and France, no less favoured by the Muses, the beseeching laments of Spain in her wide lands, and the songs of serious Italy. Finally, whatever belongs to the Muses throughout the whole world, whatever belongs to all of them, whatever belongs to music, this one man produces with his plectrum and his *singing strings*; he *plays all of them* on his Thracian lyre.

But to what *rhythms*? with what art does he play his *songs*? with what *expression*? in what *modes*? Here is achievement; here is something praiseworthy; here is glory of the highest merit, here is the high point of the world's music. Look *how varied are the rhythms he beats out to the same song*, *how close-packed are the notes he executes by his art*. He *packs together the notes and the crowded rhythms*, and he *draws them out*, and he *varies them* and he *fills them yet again with many notes*. He *runs along and travels the whole length of the strings*, and *immediately repeats the same things in three or four different ways*. He *goes back and forth along the lyre*, but *always with a different arrangement*, and thus using *different rhythms he goes back and forth along the lyre*. The rhythms are *not* put together the same in any of his songs or the *notes* put together in the same *arrangement*. That crowding throng of

notes grows ever greater and greater, the stronger the rhythm, the thicker the crowd of notes. Just as when dense hail crackles and leaps on wet roofs with unceasing sound, now he rages, pounding the *strings* with a *frenzied* plectrum, he goes rushing along on his instrument like a torrent. And now he gives forth *quiet songs* and glides like ripples in flowing water.

During all this *his faithful companion* holds firm and maintains the unmoving tenor,⁶² a faithful companion in art, even more faithful in love. The one restrains, with both his hands, the other's wandering steps, and forces them to go in fixed ways. If he did not do this, there would be no laws in song, and there would be no great music in the world. This one maintains the rhythms of that one; that one is swayed by this one's *ebony fingerboard*; thus the music of each aids the other.

He undertakes *various songs* with his learned plectrum and plays *whole songs* in consistent *modes*; and constructing (he way along which he directs his step, he sets out with measured steps along his *instrument*. He sets out on his journey with *left and right hand flying*, the fingers of one and the nimble plectrum of the other *working in harmony*. In the whole song he goes beyond prescribed boundaries and he continually invents new modes. Impatient of the yoke, he looks down on the mastered art form; he scorns one art form, however, in aid of another. He scorns the aid of art and walks roughshod over art by means of art, but he is always mindful of the beginning of the song. *Throughout the whole song he maintains whatever meter he began with, and he journeys and returns to fixed modes. Within a measured interval he goes along and travels to the end; in his own time he returns to fixed spots.* For he is kept within the boundaries of the *mode* and *uniform intervals*; otherwise there could hardly be such a thing as a way to be traversed. *He has this fixed before his eyes at all times; he has this always fixed in his heart's memory.* But he nevertheless goes beyond this with another art, like one who breaks out of prison and goes free. *Now he runs ahead of his tenor, now he follows him; now he leaves his own place, now he gets there first. He has a thousand arts, daily he invents more, but still in all his art he does nothing unbecoming.*⁶³ ...

Add to this that he dresses up his *song* with *facial expression* and *gesture*; whatever he *plays* on the *cithara* he also presents with his *body* and *face*. Now he bends his head to the ground, now he lifts it to the skies, and he moves his face and his lips and his feet to the *cithara*. He turns his eyes this way and that *in accord with his instrument*; his whole being acts in *harmony* with his *cithara*.

Who could manage to describe each of these separate things with its own verse? It is not even easy to speak of the whole in a general way. Moreover, the power of speech fails us, and what is needed most of all in this matter is *eloquence*. There are no adequate words for these things. What more is there to say? Genius and language fall short. You sing for us, O Phoebus, you who know all the rest, for indeed, elegy alone cannot do everything.

But you, O bard to be celebrated throughout the whole world, you, O Phoebus, bard, foremost glory of the lyre, live, I pray; may your happy lifetime fill out the years of Nestor — or your years, O learned Sibyl. As in olden days the musician Xenophylus lived a long life and was never sick a day, thus may it be granted to you to have lived through Nestorian years, and may your life be unsullied by any misfortune.

⁶² *Tenorista*, playing just sustained notes of a drone?

⁶³ Here I could suppose that Pietrobono and his *tenorista* performed a kind of *contrapunto alla mente*.

IV

By the same author, in praise of Pietrobono

Orpheus is said to have attracted the listening mountains and forests and wild beasts to his songs; it is said that Amphion built the walls of Boeothian Thebes, and stones came to the wall of their own accord, the sound and music of Arion's lyre swayed dolphins and savage sea-beasts and seals.

These seemed to the common folk of olden days to be great miracles, but Pietrobono has taught us that this is nothing. He himself is so skilled in his art and in all *rhythms* that he could vanquish in Phoebus himself if that were allowed. He moves his nimble fingers and his plectrum that flies along the *strings*, and he goes *back and forth along the whole* lyre; he performs French songs and British, Spanish laments and Italian melodies.

Do you believe that Orpheus moved forests, and Arion fish, and the Theban rocks? You are a wicked person. They stirred with their crude music the hearts of rustics, and with their novel arts those whose minds were not used to such things. Credulous simplicity is enthralled by pleasing novelty, and uncultured sensitivity is captivated by a middling art. From this comes the legend that mountains were moved and came to the songs, that stones leaped into a new wall.

But Pietro with his *cithara* captivates princes and kings who are experts, and with it also men who are already exceptionally skilled. It is not enough to move untutored hearts with middling song; he who sways the learned, this is the one who in my eyes is learned.

Ann E. Moyer in her book, Raffaele Brandolini, *On Music and Poetry (De musica et poetica, 1513)*:⁶⁴

Raffaele Brandolini's (ca. 1465-1517) reputation as a poet arose not simply from his studious composition of Latin meters, but from his role as a performer of his own verse, especially that invented on the spot during the banquets that filled the evenings of courts both lay and ecclesiastical. In *On Music and Poetry* he asserts not only the importance of music and poetry as subjects, but also the value of this particular performance practice to society. He alternates between theoretical discussion and practical examples, ancient society and modern, analysis and advocacy. Humanist studies, he argues, are so important that they deserve a ruling place not only in the realm of scholarship, but also that of leisure and even of entertainment.

In the work Brandolini looks back several times upon the course of his own career as well as that of his elder brother. Their lives followed one another closely enough, in fact, that Raffaele himself was often known and referred to by contemporaries as the younger brother of the noted humanist, Aurelio (1454-97). ... Both brothers suffered a progressive loss of vision that seems to have been quite severe by late adolescence; for this reason they shared even a nickname, "Lippus." ...

Both brothers left a number of surviving works of poetry and prose. Most of them have remained in manuscript.

[Wilson:]

⁶⁴ Ann E. Moyer (with the assistance of Marc Laureys), *Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies* Tempe, Arizona 2001

The novelty of both the content and form of the work is indicated on the title page, where he calls it a “continuous oration” (*perpetua oratione*). ...

Raffaele’s oration is divided into three sections of roughly equal length devoted to music, poetry, then to issues related to the combination of the two. ... in an extensive section devoted to the lyre, for his focus upon the lyre’s primary role in song. But these are preparation for the primary topic, one of personal relevance to Raffaele: the appropriateness of lyric song in the domestic setting of banquets. Here he is at pains to distinguish the mere entertainment ... from morally uplifting song that “restrains our desires, bridles excess, controls the soul’s emotions, and subdues them under the yoke of reason.” ... “/Music/ completes both history and poetry, since the feet and rhythms proper to musicians are very much necessary for both It perfects the orator, since it furnishes him the rhythms of body and voice.»

Here begin the quotes from Raffaele's booklet, in which he addresses to apostolic protonotary Corradolo Stanga:⁶⁵

You admonished me in a recent conversation not to employ the **lyre**⁶⁶ and Latin meters at the banquets of high prelates, as things fit only for buffoons, parasites, and men of no intelligence or judgment, ...

It would seem you have made two points in your admonition: one with regard to music, the other to poetry. For since you enjoined me so sincerely not to employ the **lyre** and poetic meters when I am a guest at the banquets of princes, you seemed to me to condemn the pursuit of both arts.

Which of these two should I defend first, music or poetry? ...

But let us begin with music, for that was the art attacked by you first of all. You do not consider it proper to sing accompanied by the **lyre** during banquets? Why, then! Is it the *sweet harmony* you detest, or the musical instrument, or perhaps the custom? ...

Within the memory of our fathers both Alfonso, that noble King of Aragon, and Borso d’Este — the former governed laudably the Kingdom of Naples, the other the Duchy of Ferrara (as you know) — fostered and supported above all men prominent in this discipline. Not much later, Pope Pius II took such delight in poetic verses accompanied by the **lyre** that he preferred this sort of enjoyment to all others. And not only did he enjoy hearing the **lyre**, but he was also not reluctant to play it very sweetly on occasion.

Following his example, Cardinal-Deacon Giovanni⁶⁷, who by his gifts of spirit and intellect shows himself to be a most worthy son of his father Lorenzo, long ago studied the art of music with such zeal that now he surpasses his very noted teachers. He so enjoys it in his leisure hours that sometimes he actually sings together with choice singers, and at other times listens attentively to others singing, sometimes using a varied and *pleasing harmony* of *stringed* [fidium harmonia] *instruments*.

“But I could not have imagined,” you say, “that a serious man in particular, one who professes the study of the liberal arts, must take up the **lyre**.” What musical instrument, then, more

⁶⁵ From Moyer’s book, see above.

⁶⁶ When Raffaele is (presumably) speaking about *lira moderna* (i.e. *lira da braccio*) I am using the **bold** letters, when is clear or to assume that he meant the Greek or Roman *lira antica*, the *italic*.

⁶⁷ Giovanni de’ Medici, later Pope Leo X (1475-1521).

appropriate for such an occasion, more honourable for such persons or more suited to such topics could it have been fitting to take up, so that a capable *performer* of some skill might *sing* some *song* either in praise or in jest during a banquet with the most serious of men?

I am intentionally omitting those parts where Raffaele bring the old story about the origin of *lyra* (assuming the *lira da braccio*) as an argument in favour of using it. The exception consists of thoughts that can be applied to both instruments, the ancient and the modern *lira*.

Mercury ... seems to have believed that the *ratio* of the *strings* was truly *physical* and *metaphysical*. Apollo or Terpander thought the same about the seven-stringed *lyre*. For did they not teach that the *lyre* was the most eminent musical instrument, whose *concord* so well befits the *qualities* of the *human body*, the origins of the world, and the celestial bodies, that cold would not be opposed to hot, nor dry to wet by some discord between them; so that fire, air, water, and earth would not be separated by a proportion of inequality among themselves or fail to unite in order to bring forth and emit the seeds of many things; and finally, so that the certain course and effect of each planet would not remain unknown? If we look into those causes a little more deeply, we will understand beyond any doubt that the entire power of body and soul is contained therein. Is not cold properly matched to high, hot to low, and medium to tempered? Can the elements themselves and their many and important principles, such as the eclipses of the sun and the moon and the various motions of the planets; the courses and paths of the stars; comets; thunder, rainstorms, whirlwinds, sudden storms at sea; and finally, the motion of the earth, be understood without the *analogy* of *strings*?

Raffaele uses several times expressions like *harmony of strings*, *concord of the lyre*, *mellifluous eloquence*, *sweetness of his singing*, *lyric concord*:

“An elegiac song,” you say, “does not demand the **lyre**, since sighs, lamentations, and tears, with which it is replete, do not agree with the **lyre’s** harmony.” ... But at banquets, not the praises of love but the celebrations of heroes are sung to the *lyre* in elegiac verses.” That I do not repudiate. He who attacks that tradition, attacks a custom sacred and established among the ancients; indeed, he would attack antiquity itself.

Surely you are not unaware that in antiquity the *lyre* was customarily passed around at the banquets of great princes;

[this is interesting because the similar practice imitating the Ancients existed in the Raffaele’s own time.]

The poet preserved *decorum*, I say, something that philosophers particularly demand. So after the splendid banquet, in the presence of Aeneas, the originator of the Roman race, and of Dido, the ruler of the Punic Kingdom, Iopas, himself not unlike the figure of Apollo in habit and appearance and with *Apollo’s instrument*, declaimed the most profound problems of nature in elegant verses. ... Thus you see how suitable the *lyric instrument* is for proper dinner gatherings; in fact, how much more outstanding than others that might be used for expressing happiness.

“I do not approve of the custom,” you say. But now if you compare this practice to the others instituted by those ancient, skilful investigators of all things, either you must approve highly of this one or look down on all ancient practices together.

The *lyric song*, then, restrains the emotions of the soul that run wild at banquets, just as that famous *concord* of pipes among the Spartans, used at the beginning of battles, calmed their rage and vehemence. ...

[on Music:] While it is one of the four mathematical disciplines, it binds the other three so closely to it, that without it no one could understand the orbits of the planets and the movements of the stars, nor establish the proportions and shapes of *places* and *objects*,⁶⁸ nor measure the length, depth, and breadth of land and sea. It encompasses the three branches of philosophy in such a close bond of kinship that it draws together and governs by its own judgment, as it were, not only the functions and parts of reason and nature but also of morals.

Music heals diseases not only of the body but also of the soul.

So whether your profession is grammar or oratory, or philosophy, or medicine, or jurisprudence in both kinds of law, or theology, as is your rank — or, rather, for whatever mental or physical tasks you feel you were born — you could not allow yourself to be held ignorant of this discipline or uninterested in it. For no part of human life, whether in matters public or private, domestic or foreign, personal or social, can do without musical functions. I am convinced that I have now demonstrated to you that whether it was *music's sweetness* that you reproved, or the *lyric instrument*, or the custom, this practice is not only appropriate for a serious person, but also entirely inconsistent with a person of frivolity.

Now I will direct my argumentative weapons towards the second point of your admonition, which related to poetry. If, as I wish and hope, you give them a fair hearing, you will acknowledge my practice of *extemporaneous harmony*, so much so that you rebuke the greed or ignorance of those emperors and popes in particular who, ... were the main reason for my turning my own back on the study of both disciplines.

It is disgraceful,” you say, “for you to recite any sort of poetry at proper banquets.” Tell us, what do you consider disgraceful? The nature of poetry, the quality of song, the *extemporaneous manner of singing*, Latin verses, or finally the subject matter itself, which commonly strives for the dinner guests' esteem and benevolence?

Obviously, Raffaelle is convinced that his practice “of *extemporaneous harmony*” should be acknowledged, because was the esteem of “emperors and popes in particular” why he “turned back ... on the study of both disciplines, i.e. music and poetry.

He thinks that the nature “of poetry, the quality of song, the *extemporaneous manner of singing*, Latin verses, .. commonly strives for the dinner guests' esteem and benevolence, ...

Poetry does possess the gravity, “is a divine capacity, which touches solely the best and most learned men by divine power. ... since it rests upon the foundations of religion and philosophy, it is considered both most honourable to master and most *fitting for all subjects, persons, places, and times*.”⁶⁹ Poets are divinely inspired by the *furor* by which they are touched⁷⁰, and poetry has a certain spiritual quality that inspires literary fictions — the proper words fitted to things and the appropriate things to words — that breathes feeling into them, and dignity and charm into the feelings.

Poets have “understood all things, explored and mastered them, predicted them, taught them, ... with arguments, confirmed them with examples, and made them all convincing with their comparisons, to great admiration.” ...

⁶⁸ Clear allusion on rhetoric and *arte della memoria*.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Allusion on M. Ficino divine *furor*.

Whether “they write about the nature of heaven or earth or about divine or human power, ... should be exalted to heaven with highest praises, because they have disclosed what was hidden, explicated what was entangled, clarified what was ambiguous, shed light on what was obscure, and attended to all *things, places, and persons*.⁷¹ ...

It is not to disdain

“eloquence itself, which congratulates, gives thanks, praises virtues, disparages vice, consoles the afflicted, strengthens the anxious, defends the accused, accuses the wicked; which is suited to the rostrum in the senate, the forum, and the military camp. But with how much zeal will it be fit to revere poetry, with what diligence to respect it, with what clever skill to engage in it, with what sympathy of the soul to approve it, with what keen vigilance to practice it, a discipline which encompasses and treats not one but all of these sciences, as the best and most ancient poets so eloquently prove.” ...

“...Therefore if poetry expressed, ... not one or another discipline, but all; if its name was held to be famous in all the world; if poets were so valued, during their life and thereafter, by peoples, kings, and even the immortal gods, shall we hesitate to consider poetry appropriate, useful, and in fact necessary for all *persons, places, and times*?⁷² ...

“The prophets surely followed this method of approbation; they not only *sang* of the future in verses but also intimated it with various figures and parables, alluding at some times to *things*, at others to *persons*, and occasionally to *places* and *times*.⁷³

“If it is music we seek, what is found smoother or sweeter, might I ask, than the verses of Horace, who always plays something pleasant on the *tibia* and *lyre*? And how well poetry goes together with music is shown plainly both through the agreeable dissimilarity of its *concord* and the subjects fit for *singing*. If we do not despise arithmetic and geometry, we will judge that the one is proper to poets, as they invented, sang, and perfected the various types of meters; and that the other has been revealed and explained in the books of those who have recorded in their verses the *distances, lengths, widths, heights, and circumferences of places, regions, cities, provinces, of land and sea*.⁷⁴

“...poetry has a divine origin and is useful and even necessary for all actions of human life, all arts and disciplines, and in fact to all things. This being the case, it seems to me that no person of whatever age, sex, or rank; no place; and no occasion in time should properly be devoid of poetic beauty and dignity.”

Poetry should not be banished from our hearts and banquets of princes because it is not less honourable or unsuitable for banquets. It offers “pleasure and beauty at any place or moment in time, particularly in the afternoon hours, ... and everyone’s mind is tranquil.

So **lyre** should be used on banquets same as *singing* and *reciting of a song*. ...

One should not

“faults the *quality of the song* and the *practice of extemporaneous speaking*, claiming that *elegiac song*, which I have been accustomed to use often with the **lyre**, is by nature mournful

⁷¹ Rhetoric and *Arte della memoria*.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

and soft, and not appropriate for the cheerfulness of banquets; and that an *improvised song* is not capable of capturing notice and attention. I claim that *elegiac* song arose from the soul's strongest and most troublesome emotions, that is, from its pity and tears; further, that an *extempore song* unquestionably merits greater credit and admiration than one *carefully composed*. ...

Here, Raffaele, an Augustinian Hermit and a priest who taught theology, enters in a description of a love poems which

“first instil hope for winning over the beloved, then strike with fear of separation. At one moment they denounce the girl's cruelty, then they sing of her charms and attractions. ... feelings of sadness and happiness are incited, and even if the renowned name of elegy seems to be derived from pity and tears, yet its subject matter relates to happiness no less than to sadness, just as the genre of encomium is sometimes assigned to censure; ... anyone who sings the praises of the dead or the loves of the young, unless he stirs the souls of men from weeping to laughter, from despair to calm, and from grief and tears to enjoyment and happiness, will not even seem worthy of the least title of poet, because he will not achieve his goal, which is to sing for admiration.”⁷⁵

“If therefore the souls of men are moved more easily to happiness than to tears; if *elegiac* song is fit not only for mourning but also for happiness; if the poets never used it more for celebrating or denouncing loves or for recounting the praises of the dead, than they did for gatherings, banquets, games, and serious matters; then there is nothing to your censure of *elegiac* song as associated with mourning and funerals, or as licentious.”

Raffaele particularly defends the practice of *extempore* singing, with no preparation, having “merit, usefulness and application.” And continues:

„Every *literary composition*, then, whether in poetry or in prose, if it is to be read, is properly recommended on the *basis* of its *invention* and judgment, its arrangement and order, its ornament and abundance; if it is to be recited, to these should be added firmness of *memory*, seemliness of body, and *clarity of voice*. In consequence — when they expressed their opinions in the senate, ... or presented to the people in private and public theatres the results of their many nights of labour and vigilance, ... those ancient orators and poets most assiduously sought praise not just for their judgment, composition, and ornament, but above all for their *memory and delivery*.“

Therefore, while a poet's esteem proceeds first from the *invention* of his poem, next from its *composition*, third from its *ornament*, fourth from his *fluency in recitation*, and *finally* from his *delivery*, I maintain that the *extemporaneous style* in *oratory or poetry* deserves a higher recommendation than — or certainly an equally great one as — a long and much-polished style; ...

Raffaele proceeds making certain comparisons between the prepared (written) speeches or similar and his improvised art:

„For *invention, composition, and expression* are not judged in the same way when they are carefully elaborated or hastily produced. In the first case, that which is earnest, eloquent, elaborate, and perfect is commended; in the second case, a discerning and reasonable listener will demand something of moderate quality provided that it is appropriate to the *things*,

⁷⁵ Comparisons typical for rhetoric.

persons, places, and times, and not so much polished in its wording and adorned with pointed observations as sprinkled with witticisms and jests, if it is delivered well and by heart. Therefore, I ask for prudence and fairness of judgment from those persons who believe that an oration composed in haste and without previous thought should be judged by the same standards as one long and carefully laboured over, the *extemporaneous* poem by the same standards as a thoughtfully prepared one.”

“I myself prefer *extemporaneous simplicity* to *long-laboured ostentation*, which is the main reason why what is just and fair is not easy to discern. For that which the historians have felt quite properly about the difficulty of history, I might apply to the practice of *extemporaneous speaking* and *singing*: whatever someone finds easy to say or do, that he readily accepts; things beyond that he views as contrived and false. And so the *elegiac song declaimed extemporaneously* can be seen as neither humble nor undistinguished if it is judged properly, and one weighs not so much what might have been produced over a long span of days and months of thought, but what was produced in a minimal amount of time.”

The next part return to the practice and Raffaele asks enumerating various elements important for his performance:

What indeed did I sing *extempore* to the **lyre**? From where did I choose the subject matter for my songs? Naturally, from *circumstances* and *occasions*, from *persons*, from *places* and *times*. I have sung of things of the past, the present, or the future, according to the will of those who charged me with the task. As for matters past: both of peace and of war; of peace, both sacred and profane; of matters sacred, the deeds of those whose ashes we venerate, the sufferings of no small number of martyrs, the ancient and modern rites of religious ceremonies; of matters profane, the deliberations and accomplishments of citizens, the words and deeds of philosophers; of war, the battles fought, the victories and triumphs won. As for matters present: both those intimate and amusing, and those austere and weighty; amusing when I upbraided in jest a quiet person for his silence or a talker for his chatter or a drowsy person for his nodding, at times with such great force and ability (if I may be forgiven for saying so) that I held practically all dinner guests astounded; weighty when I debated many questions of moral philosophy in verses, when I contrasted the corrupt morals of our age with the honourable practices of the ancients. I *sang* of matters future, when, driven by poetic — that is, *divine* — *frenzy*,⁷⁶ I implored punishments for vices, rewards for virtues.

It is clear that Raffaele has „thought with care, his performances have not been devoided of „benevolence, responsiveness, and attention”, that he prepared himself diligently. He always sing about a subject ... taking careful consideration of geography, topography, and chronography”...

“These things find a good reception, and produce admiration and wonder, if they are recited with thought, if the subjects and words are arranged optimally, or at least tolerably, and if ranks and ages are prudently taken into account.”

“About what subjects did I speak in which I did not relate jests agreeably, serious matters gravely, or cruel things harshly, and devote as much effort and energy to the arrangement of subjects and words as the limitations of time permitted?”

“This one thing I will most rightly say (which I believe should by no means be disregarded): that I maintained the charm and dignity of facts and words with the greatest care.”

⁷⁶ See by Ficino.

Now we come to *memory*. Although it may seem to be one of the features produced after long nights of work and study at home, it usually brings no small praise to those compositions that are delivered *extemporaneously*: when the train of the argument requested for recitation is maintained; when from a conversation already begun a theme for *singing* is taken up and continued; when events that span a long period of time are brought forth; when, finally, nothing is left out that the listeners had anxiously wished for and desired.

Here, Raffaele comes closer to the practical performance:

Delivery remains now, no less necessary to an *orator* and a *poet* than to an *actor*. I believe it should be observed equally by someone who recites *extempore* as well as by the person who delivers something rehearsed, so that *his voice harmonizes with the notes of the strings*; so that he adopts a pleasant *alternation of singing and playing*; so that he tailors his mouth, his eyes, his whole head most appropriately to the theme, so that he seems neither to show off his ability of *extempore delivery*, nor to disdain or fear the judgments of those present. He should move his hands and arms *harmoniously*, so that he displays neither carelessness nor haughtiness. I omit the other embellishments of *delivery*, lest I seem to have taken up the task of advising rather than doing away with an exposed fault.

In any case, so as not to digress further: an *extemporaneous performance* will not be a bad one if it's one *strength* lies in well-considered *invention*; if it excels only in *organization*, in my opinion it will not be condemned; if it shines out with the glittering ornaments of *subjects and words*, the light of *eloquence* itself will illuminate any dark places of judgment and *composition*; if someone by chance lacks those three and relies upon the help of *memory* and *delivery*, I certainly will consider not even him devoid of merit.

Look, then, for how many weighty reasons it is fitting not to reject the *practice* of *extemporaneous singing*. Nor should that trite and common precept about proficiency influence you: that he who has become accustomed to *extemporaneous performance* cannot produce anything fully composed and finished. This is a *commonplace* that has been refuted by proof to the contrary from the most learned men, since they who best spoke and *sang extemporaneously* were far better at pleading both public and private cases with careful reflection in the senate, on the rostra, in the forum; and they often presented their long and carefully-wrought *poems* in the most celebrated places and in the fullest gatherings of noble men.

But perhaps you find fault with Latin meters that are not perfect in every word and phrase and therefore inferior to the vernacular ones, and are not understood readily either. I must point out here that nothing can be found to be absolutely perfect; but that what comes closest to perfection should be highly praised, as indeed happens in all crafts and in all the arts. ... Nonetheless, a person who is at the same time both the best orator and the greatest poet, lacking not even the smallest details of the art, is not easy to find. So I am of the opinion that full and complete perfection should not be demanded in *extemporaneous* verses; but they should be sought out with all the more effort, when they are in Latin, those being rarer and more difficult. Nor should it disturb us that those *verses declaimed extempore* cannot possess perfect judgment, order, and ornament. ...

Therefore our own *practice of singing with the lyre* (*canendi ad lyram*) is perhaps considered less serious and seemly; but if only the basis of this opinion would proceed from the nature of the facts rather than from people's ignorance and inexperience! Literary matters would then of course be dealt with far better. Since, however, a Latin poem, be it recited after careful preparation or *extempore*, is worthy of the ears and spirits of only a highly select company, it

is rejected by most, since they neither understand it themselves, nor allow peaceably to have others hear and understand it.

I would certainly not think that *vernacular* verse should be despised and rejected on that account, ... in part because such verse is understood by many people, and in part because Dante and Francis Petrarch, in everyone's opinion, achieved very great fame in such compositions. And even in our own age so many stand out, and stand out in such a way, that they easily obtained for themselves no small reputation in that art on account of their skill and practice.

Here Raffaele enumerates the most renowned performers, poets-musician of his time which

“with ... marvelous skill in public and private affairs, ... especially in [their] vernacular and jovial verses to be sung *extempore with the lyre* [as for instance] Baccio Ugolino, “bound himself to the soul of Lorenzo de 'Medici,” “Actius Sincerus, patrician of Naples”⁷⁷, “Chariteo the Spaniard”⁷⁸, “Bernardo Accolti”⁷⁹

“I leave aside the others; for many at Florence, Naples, and Rome have been rendered famous in our age by the study of this art. Very few, however, as far as I know, have made a name for themselves on account of the same fluency in Latin recitation.”

Responding to Stanga's critic Raffaele arrives to the *commonplaces*⁸⁰:

“What do you call *commonplaces*? Certainly those items — you will respond — from which arguments suitable for many cases can easily be drawn; those items — I say — that are not tied to particular *things* or *persons* or *places* or *times*. You are thinking correctly indeed and from the viewpoint of an orator; but tell me, I pray, how it is that you reprove my use of *commonplaces* in *extemporaneous* verse, where there is no need to confirm or invalidate according to oratorical practice? You search out — so you say — the topics that can be adduced in praise or blame of someone. And if you praise a particular person, you extol the general moral obligations of prudence, justice, equity, faithfulness, piety, religion, beneficence, bravery, discretion, moderation, and the other virtues. If on the contrary you fault cunning, recklessness, injustice, pride, treachery, superstition, avarice, laziness or insolence, wantonness, and other blemishes of the soul, you inveigh against them in *improvised* verse — as you say yourself — and while you stay within the common tracks of vices and virtues, you exceed the proper manner of praise and blame. ...

In my *extemporaneous* verses I set these examples before my eyes; so if I declaim about a prudent and just man, I would begin with *commonplaces* about prudence and justice and then run through that man's individual actions, whatever he may have accomplished prudently and justly in private and in public life. If on the contrary I inveigh against an imprudent and unjust man either in jest or in indignation, I would seek out the foundations of both vices, so that after having opened the door of *commonplaces* I could not fail to see the innermost hiding places of individual arguments. ...

You rebuke the highest skill of the *orator and poet*;... when you accuse me you denounce Cicero and Vergil, whom I consider authorities in speaking and *singing*. For whatever fruits

⁷⁷ Jacoppo Sannazzaro (1458-1530).

⁷⁸ Benedetto Gareth or Benet Garret called il Chariteo (ca 1450 – 1514).

⁷⁹ Bernardo Accolti (1458-1535), called “L'Unico Aretino”.

⁸⁰ On *loci communes* see, inter alia, Quintilian, *Inst. Oratoria*.

of their reflections each of them brought forth I am eager to *imitate in composed or extemporaneous* work, as far as I can succeed with my ability, and I sharpen my own talents with their file. Further, I praise no one in such a manner that I could not offer a true reason for commendation; I disparage no one in such a manner as to arouse hostility against me or annoyance in my audience *while I am performing*. I observe such moderation in both regards, so that I can at times expose an unknown blemish in a person I praise, and sometimes praise a recognized quality in a person whom I censure. ...

Sometimes I was charged to *recite* in verse a discourse held about war and peace, where the outstanding and genuine qualities not only of natural ability but of eloquence and memory can be seen: natural ability, because it is an *extemporaneous performance*; eloquence, because I adorn the bare sayings of any person with literary ornaments of the poets, strengthen them with examples, recall what has been omitted, elucidate what is obscure, and make fictions convincing as best I can; *memory*, because I leave out nothing about often very diverse matters and persons. ... Often I was supposed to repeat in verse a history that had been read, or to explain a problem proposed on a certain subject, a task I carried out many times at the banquets of cardinals. ...

Now all these things proceeded neither from the *commonplaces* of praise or blame of persons, nor from flattery, nor finally from any disparagement; and yet they were delivered *extempore* with dignity and eloquence. ... And if you also add this observation: "Our people have not been accustomed to use the **lyre** and *Latin song* at banquets," I will respond frankly that morals have been greatly corrupted by very many of our age. But anyone who took delight in virtues and letters greatly commended this particular sort of enjoyment, having regarded it as superior to whores, actors, flatterers, buffoons, and parasites. ...

Very few indeed (as far as I know) have until now come forward to *perform* as *singers*. It was attempted in Florence by Angelo Poliziano,⁸¹ ... Angelo Maturanzio⁸² of Perugia ... began doing so in Rome. Probo of Sulmona⁸³ took it up, ...

My brother Lippus⁸⁴ began to take it up in his early youth, relying more on divine than on human counsel; and he became so accomplished in the judgment of all, that he was very often called the *Christian Orpheus*... At about the age of seventeen, then, he began first with vernacular verses, soon also with Latin ones. And he perfected them with such zeal and commendation at Naples ... he obtained many praises and thanks in return.

He *sang* so often, so familiarly, and in so many different ways in the presence of the Pope himself, that every day in his private study he would expound in varied song the merits of the pontiffs at some times, serious questions of philosophy at others, or often sacred histories. He *recited* at many renowned banquets of both cardinals and bishops, and the most honourable assemblies of very learned men.

For having interrupted in the meanwhile the *practice of singing to the lyre*, under clear skies, even as the minds of mortals turned to fostering and supporting the studies of the liberal arts, I retired to the secluded activities of writing and teaching. Certainly I did not do so due to an intent to disparage that most excellent sort of practice, now interrupted, on account of its shallowness, or to avoid taking it up again at some time because of the ingratitude of men, but so that I might take stock of the *times, seasons, things, and persons*; so that, finally, in an occupation with little financial reward I might escape the malicious voices of detractors.

⁸¹ Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494).

⁸² Angelo Maturanzio of Perugia (Mataracius, Matarazzo, 1443-1518).

⁸³ Marco Probo Mariano (1455-1494).

⁸⁴ Aurelio Brandolini Lippo (ca 1454-1497).

Since they neither admit the *sweetness of music* to the soul or even to the ears, nor approve of the most *gracious concord of the lyre*, nor would they have this most charming custom tried out at banquets, nor acknowledge the most distinguished origin of poetry, its outstanding dignity, and finally its abundant fruits, they find fault incessantly — sometimes with the nature of song, at others with *extemporaneous performance*, and at still other times with Latin verses and the manifold subject of *singing* — without clearly seeing how much elegance and reputation a poet engaged at the dinner tables can bring them. ...

Always addressed to Stanga:

You, however, who did not hesitate to do away with my *practice of singing* with your counsels, I beseech and implore, by the long-standing and mutual goodwill between us, that you carefully ponder your personal practices with regard to *things, persons, and places*, and compare them with this practice of mine. For, if integrity, prudence, religion, innocence, moderation, if all the other virtues, if the best experience in private and public matters mean anything to you (as surely they should, to the highest degree), you will prefer this well-established practice — not invention — of ours, honourable and esteemed indeed, to all those others (as I believe). ...

If indeed you compare those things most equitably (as you have been accustomed to do with all others), you will not hesitate to affirm that this sort of practice of mine properly belongs to a most dignified person and a most learned man. ...

And because you know no sort of enjoyment that is more ancient, more sacred, more valuable, more desirable, more pleasant, and equally appropriate for laymen and clerics, than that which our ancestors invented; once invented, perfected; once perfected, taught to their contemporaries and to posterity — please delight in it yourself and encourage wealthy patrons again and again with your authority and influence, that they may favour those with talent and enjoy the results of their studies and labours.

6.4. Cantare ad Lyram in the courts of Italy, Ferrara, Urbino, Napoli and Rome:⁸⁵

During the second half of the fifteenth century, and largely caused by the widespread adoption of the *studia humanitatis*,⁸⁶ humanism dominated the culture of the ruling elite in the most important Italian cities. ... However, the cultural ethos of the new humanistic courts differed from the civic environment in which humanism first appeared; it was no longer a program to nurture virtues to ensure the public good within the municipal republican order, humanism in the courts was reshaped to serve the growing appetite for court splendour and entertainment as an expression of dynastic *magnificenza*. ...

The careers of singer-poets like Bernardo Accolti, Atalante Migliorotti, Serafino Aquilano, and the Brandolini brothers were characterized by their mobility, as they frequently performed in various cities outside their hometowns. This mobility facilitated a dynamic exchange of ideas and practices, leading to intersections between different musical styles and traditions. For instance, there was a blending of polyphony with *cantare ad lyram*, as well as a fusion between traditional *canterino* performances and the more humanistic approach of the *cantor ad lyram*. Additionally, these movements sparked discussions and debates about the use of vernacular language (*questione della lingua*), with various competing notions emerging regarding its proper usage and form.

⁸⁵ Wilson: *Singing* ...

⁸⁶ See pp.20-23.

Ferrara⁸⁷:

Few courts were more welcoming to the art of the *canterino* than Ferrara (see Table 6.1). But while a strong humanist tradition of *cantare ad lyram* emanated from its university (newly reopened in 1442) and was instilled in Leonello through his instruction under Guarino, the practice at court seems to have adhered to an older feudal model of itinerant, non-salaried performers engaged to *cantare in giesta*, to sing vernacular narrative poetry based on the epic traditions of Carolingian romance and Roman history and mythology. ... This cultural divide between a Latin humanism emanating (at first) from its university, and a more feudal tradition of vernacular romance literature rooted in courtly performance is significant, for it helps explain the exceptional adherence to chivalric themes by Ferrarese literary figures like Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso.

While *canterini* were documented in pay records with titles such as *cantorino*, *cantor*, or *cantatore*, as well as *pulsator* or *suonatore*, along with mentions of their performances by *che dice in rime*, or *che dice alo improviso*,⁸⁸ their role was distinct from other musicians. They were often associated with instruments like the *vielle* or *lira da braccio*, referred to as *lira*, *viola*, or *cetra*. Unlike chapel singers who focused on polyphonic singing, *canterini* were perceived more as poets and actors, for whom singing was a distinct mode of performance known as *dire*.

Sorting out the identities of two blind Francescos, referred to as “Francesco orbo” or “Francesco cieco,” has been a challenge for scholars. Francesco da Firenze, the more traditional *canterino* of the two, is identified as an improviser, singer, and *lira*-player. His surviving poems, both in *ottava rima*, bear indications of originating from improvisation and oral tradition.

The Cardinal’s commendatory letter for Francesco shows his great esteem for his *dilectus familiaris*, and the “illustrious performing on his **lyre** of his many extemporized verses and stories.”

Giovanni orbo da Parma, another blind *canterino*, served the court during 1468-78, when he overlapped and performed with Francesco cieco da Firenze in 1477 for the Sforza brothers. ...

The Este court, particularly under the influence of Isabella d’Este,⁸⁹ played a pivotal role in transitioning from oral to written performance practices for Italian solo singing during the sixteenth century. By the late fifteenth century, there was a notable shift away from employing *canterini*, with a growing emphasis on cultivating the *frottola* as the primary medium for solo musical settings of vernacular verse.

Isabella d’Este, while initially engaging the services of Antonio cieco da Ferrara in the early 1490s, also began voice lessons with Johannes Martini, a prominent Franco-Flemish polyphonic composer at the Ferrara court. Despite her own proficiency with the *lira da braccio* and exposure to Italian poetry through *canterino* performances, the arrival of composers like Bartolomeo Tromboncino in 1489 and Marchetto Cara in 1494 signaled a significant shift in Italian musical practices. These composers, who were also lutenist-singers, represented a transition from the oral tradition of *canterino* practice to setting vernacular verse in written musical notation. While the *frottola* tradition retained elements of its oral origins, the separation of roles between poet and composer marked a fundamental alteration as the practice moved into the realm of written tradition.

⁸⁷ Ibid. Wilson, *Singing...* IP: See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-5, Wilson table 6.1.

⁸⁸ See in Chapter 7., p.1., 7.1. Terminology.

⁸⁹ See See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-8 Tizian’s portrait of Isabella d’Este.

The American musicologist Lewis H. Lockwood (1930) also wrote about improvisers at the Ferrara court and particularly about Pietrobono. Here we are interested in the improvisational career of this musician and some of his colleagues:⁹⁰

The writers unanimously praise him as « *rarissimo citharista* », but from the long poem by Cornazzano describing him as singer at a wedding feast for Francesco Sforza it is clear that he also excelled in the singing of narrative verse, accompanying himself on a stringed instrument, almost certainly the lute. Whatever his fame as singer, he is more consistently praised as a great lutenist, and it may not be merely poetic license when Cornazzano writes, « *chi vole passar di un mondo all'altro, odi sonare Pietrobono* »; while Beatrice d'Aragona explicitly calls him, in a letter of 1488, « *nostro sonatore de leuto* ». ...

Leonello, a gifted orator and sometime poet, became something of a musician as well, had both theoretical and practical musical sources prepared for him, brought more musicians to the court, and played not only the organ but the *chitarino*. ...

His [Pietrobono] continued presence at the court in the last years of Leonello's reign is again confirmed by documents, several in 1449, of which the most important is one of February 1, 1449, ordering that a certain Zanetto be put into the *Bolletta de' Salariati* as *tenorista* in direct connection with Pietrobono, called *citharedo*. This is the earliest reference to a second musician as *tenorista* for Pietrobono, an assignment that is always filled by a performer given this denotation and whose name is always found in close proximity to that of Pietrobono even in payment records - perhaps a lutenist with whom he played duos, perhaps a *tenor viol* player whose role was to furnish a mid-range pattern against which he could improvise a *discant* as singer or as lutenist, in a two- or possibly three-part ensemble.⁹¹ That Pietrobono played and perhaps also sang in a high register is suggested by more than one source, among them the curious phrase of Caleffini, quoted above, in which he is called "*maestro de sonare leuto de Christiani, vz de soprano*"; although Caleffini may not have known much about music, he could probably tell a high part from a low one. ...

At Leonello's death, Borso allowed most of Leonello's chapel members to leave Ferrara for other destinations, and at no time did he replace them with musicians of their own type. ...

Yet just as significant as Borso's acquiescence in the dispersion of the polyphonic group of singers is his enlargement of the number and variety of his players, a trend that indicates a continued cultivation of court festivities, of improvisational performance, of dance, and probably of some kind of ensemble chamber music. On more than one occasion Borso's musicians, apart from Pietrobono, were sought out by the court of Milan, and in 1458 Niccolo Tedesco recommended to Luigi Gonzaga of Mantua that he secure a certain « *Brith, abilissimo in cantare arie veneziane* »

The lists of musicians are extant for only five of the twenty years of his reign, but they are happily well distributed (1456, 1459, 1462, 1470, 1471). For 1456 they show a group of 14 instrumentalists, from among whom we can separate the five *trombeti*, who had primarily ceremonial duties. This still leaves a substantial group of nine: one *trombone* (a certain Agostino), two *piffari* (Corrado de Alemagna and Zoanne de Alemagna), the harpist Paolo Grillo, the singer Niccolo Tedesco, the lutenist Pietrobono and his *tenorista*, Francesco Malacise; another *citharista*, Biasio Montolino; and Fiescho *sonatore*, apparently a keyboard player. In 1462 the cast of characters is still the same; but it has some important changes in 1470, when it

⁹⁰ Lewis Lockwood: Pietrobono and the Instrumental Tradition at Ferrara in the Fifteenth Century, *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia*, Vol. 10 (1975), pp. 115-133.

⁹¹ See more on tenoristi in Chapter 7., p.22.

adds a certain Cornelio di Fiandra (a singer who is to remain until 1512); Jacomo de Bologna *sonadore* (it is not clear what he played); and Andrea *della Viola*, the earliest-mentioned member of the *Della Viola* dynasty to be in service in Ferrara, the grandfather of the well-known Alfonso and Francesco *Della Viola*. ... The group thus remains essentially the same until 1471, when Borso dies, adding in that year only another *violinist* named Zampatilo della Viola, later a maker of masks. In 1471 the simultaneous presence of two *violinists* and two lutenists (Pietrobono and Rainaldo del *chitarino*) may stir speculation about instrumental ensembles; with the harp and wind players at hand the combinations could have been remarkably varied. ...

In the Borso period the emphasis was clearly on the improvisational side; the court was especially open to the visiting *canterini* or improvisers, whose traditions reached back to the *giullari* and were akin to the popular *cantastorie* and *cantimpanche* who entertained crowds in Florence and elsewhere. Evidence of increasing attention to this kind of entertainment at the court in the 1460's is given by documents published by Bertoni, and at least two of these performers remained at Ferrara for many years - Francesco Cieco da Ferrara and Giovanni Orbo. For a glimpse of their role in domestic life at court we can turn to two letters, both written on the same summer day (August 22, 1468) by Sforza Maria Sforza, then a visitor at Ferrara, writing from Belfiore:

[To his mother:] Heri non andassimo in campagna ma al disnare havessimo diversi piaceri, de clavicembali, de liuti, de buffoni et de Magistro Zohanne Orbo; quale dixè maravigliosamente, piu de lusato.

[To his brother:] Havessimo diversi piaceri de sono de organetti, de liuti, de clavicimboli, de bufoni, cioè del Scocola, et de Magistro Zohane Orbo, quale veramente dixè cose maravigliose de *improviso*.

Such testimony helps us to grasp something of the role of music as reinforcement and component of informal communal diversion in the daily life of the court, and the description emphasizes not only the setting indoors, but also the use of music after eating, and the variety of entertainments provided. Such informal and spontaneous situations must often have demanded sudden use of the court's resources, and no doubt the musicians and *buffoni* had learned to be ready to perform on short notice. To do so they obviously needed a repertoire of *memorized* material, subject to renewal and modification, both verbal and musical, and if their normal performances were entirely without the use of notation, then the use of fixed *formulas* was clearly essential. Yet equally obviously, the formulas needed by keyboard players, lutenists, and *canterini* could hardly have been the same. While the *improvisers* made use of narrative verse-forms, the instrumentalists probably adapted to their own needs some of the increasingly familiar standard tunes of the day, very likely drawing on such resources as the current *basse dance* repertoire and thus using in informal circumstances music gathered and codified for more formal purposes - the conceptual model is obviously more than akin to the practices of 20th-century jazz musicians, improvising on "hit tunes". ...

The presumed role of Pietrobono in this mixed and transitional era may have been as a kind of mediator between the world of the improvisers and that of the contrapuntally trained and cultivated performers of part-music. He was probably one of the few lutenists who could compete with ease (as the poets tell us) with the narrative improvisers and yet also combine with others in polyphonic ensembles.

Urbino and Castiglione's book *Il libro del Cortegiano*⁹²

⁹² Blake Wilson: *Singing* ...

For anyone interested in the cultural life of the Renaissance courts, Urbino is an irresistible venue, for under the reigns of Federico da Montefeltro (1444-82, named duke in 1474) and his son Guidobaldo (1482-1508) it became what many regard as a model humanist court. That perception comes to us not through actual court records, which are largely missing for this period, but through the idealizing portrait of Urbino court life captured by Baldassar Castiglione in his *Il libro del Cortegiano* (The Book of the Courtier)⁹³. ...

Castiglione, who himself owned and played violas, reveals a keen ear and appreciation for singing, and he and many of his interlocutors would have had occasion to hear both singers.

Castiglione returns to the subject of music in Book II (12-14), which is generally concerned with how the courtier is to go about achieving the goals laid out in Book I. It is here that *cantare ad lyram* emerges in *Il Cortegiano*, and receives Castiglione's endorsement as the kind of music making most appropriate for a courtier. So when Gaspare asks which kind of music the courtier should prefer, Messer Federico Fregoso, the leader of conversations on day two, responds:

Truly beautiful music consists, in my opinion, in fine singing, in reading accurately from notation [*cantar bene al libro sicuramente*] and in an attractive personal style [*bella maniera*]; but even more in singing to the [accompaniment of the] 'viola', because nearly all the sweetness is in the singing voice, and we follow the manner [*modo*] and texted melody [*aria*] when our ears are not distracted by more than one voice, and when every little error is apparent, something that does not happen when singing with others [*in compagnia*] because one helps the other. But above all, what seems to me most pleasing is singing poetry to the viola [*cantare alla viola per recitar*], for the instrument gives the words a beauty and force. All keyboard instruments are harmonious, because their consonances are perfect, and if played well they can produce many things that fill the soul with musical sweetness. And no less delightful is the music of four bowed violas [*viole da arco*], which is most suave and exquisite. The human voice gives ornament and grace to all these instruments, with which I think it is enough that our courtier has some acquaintance (though the more proficient he is the better), without troubling himself with those which Minerva and Alcibiades scorned, because they were thought to be unpleasant.

The significance of a passage in *Il Cortegiano* regarding musical training and performance, particularly solo singing accompanied by a stringed instrument, cannot be overstated given the widespread influence of this text. It not only sanctioned these skills as essential for a well-educated and refined individual but also provided detailed insights into performance practices of the time.

Of particular interest is the use of the term "viola," which presents challenges for translators due to its ambiguous meaning. The distinction between "viola" for solo singing and "viola d'arco"⁹⁴ for ensemble playing adds complexity to the translation process. Over centuries and through various translations of *Il Cortegiano* into different languages, this ambiguity led to mistranslations and deliberate re-translations to align with evolving performance practices.

As musical preferences shifted towards the lute and modern violin family, translations reflected these changes, sometimes at the expense of accurate representation of historical terminology. The displacement of older instruments like the vielle and lira da braccio by the lute, and the transition to modern bowed instruments, contributed to the reinterpretation of terms like "viola" in *Il Cortegiano*.

⁹³ See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-6 Castiglione frontpage and Raphael's portrait.

⁹⁴ Meaning viola da gamba or viol in English.

More to the point, however, is what Castiglione intended by his terms in the first place. Viola da gamba consorts were in use in late fifteenth-century Italy, for example under Isabella d'Este's patronage in Mantua, and this is very likely what Castiglione meant by the *quattro viole da arco*. But what instrument did he intend for solo singing, *cantare alla viola* as he first calls it, and *cantare alla viola per recitar* as he calls it later in the passage? The designation of the ensemble violas as *da arco* (bowed) has led some to reason that viola in earlier passages must refer to an instrument either *senz'arco* (unbowed, i.e., a lute), or to assume the complementary designation *da mano* (plucked, and so a lute or a Spanish vihuela). But viola at this time typically refers to a bowed vielle or, as was more likely by this time and setting, a *lira da braccio*, and the distinction intended is more likely between lap-held bowed viols for ensemble playing, and a bowed viola da braccio, held against the shoulder, for solo singing. The latter, or something very close to it, is what Castiglione himself owned and played to accompany his own singing, and the unusual expression *cantare alla viola per recitare* clearly refers, as Castiglione goes on to explain, to the performance of poetry in which the instrument serves to intensify the impact of the words. The distinction that does come across clearly is between this kind of oral performance, and the more studied, less spontaneous *cantar bene a libro sicuramente*, reading accurately from notation. In other words, I believe *cantare alla viola* and *cantare alla viola per recitar* refer to the same thing, and that both represent Castiglione's effort to render *cantare ad lyram* in the vernacular.

...

In summary, Castiglione's observations on singing within a court context imply that he and his interlocutors appreciated performances where solo singers of Italian verse, whether accompanied by plucked or bowed instruments, presented simple or complex musical arrangements, and delivered sight-read or extemporized renditions. They valued performances where stylish singing and instrumental accompaniment enhanced the meaning of the words without overshadowing the flexibility and spontaneity of the delivery, a concept known as *sprezzatura*. For them, singing was intricately connected to language, and both were influenced by the values and priorities of the humanist court environment.

Aragonese court in Naples⁹⁵

Like Ferrara, the Aragonese court supported a vibrant musical culture that included one of the largest polyphonic chapels in Italy by ca. 1450, a rich tradition of instrumental music, and a thriving practice of *cantare ad lyram* tied to a humanist literary culture, all generously supported by the Aragonese kings Alfonso "The Magnanimous" (1442-58) and Ferrante (or Ferdinand I, 1458-94). But unlike Ferrara, Naples was a kingdom with a fractious rural nobility of barons, and the Aragonese rulers were Spaniards whose claim to their Italian *regno* was recent, continually contested by their Angevin predecessors, and resisted by the rural barons. ...

In essence, Naples initially relied on external artists and scholars for its Italian vernacular literary tradition but eventually developed its own unique brand of humanism rooted in the Latin and vernacular literary culture nurtured within its court, academy, and university.

By the time diplomatic relations were established with Florence in 1476 under Lorenzo de' Medici's efforts, the Neapolitan court had gained renown for its diverse literary culture, particularly in Latin and vernacular lyric poetry. This culture fostered a vibrant tradition of *cantare ad lyram* performances and encompassed theatrical productions of pastoral eclogues, farsas, and *gluommeri*.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Wilson: *Singing ...*

⁹⁶ "Glìommero" (plural: glìommeri) is a masculine noun in the Neapolitan dialect, derived from the Latin word "glōmus -mēris," meaning "skein" or "coil." In the Neapolitan dialect, it refers to a "skein" or "coil," but it is also used to denote a poetic composition from the 15th and 16th centuries. This composition consists of a series of hendecasyllabic lines

While Naples is acknowledged as a centre for *cantare ad lyram*, detailed records of this activity are scarce, largely due to the destruction of many Aragonese court archival documents during World War II. Similar to other courtly centres like Ferrara, these records often provide limited insights into the popular singing activities of local *canterini* outside the court environment. However, it's conceivable that a robust oral tradition of Neapolitan dialect verse, which later evolved into the *villanesca alla napoletana* during the sixteenth century, sustained such practices and injected vitality into elite literary endeavors, mirroring the dynamics seen in Florence and Ferrara. Starting from around 1470, courtly singer-poets became a regular and essential part of the vibrant cultural scene centered around key venues in Naples. These venues included King Ferrante's residence in the Castelnuovo, the dynamic artistic circle at Castel Capuano led by the duke of Calabria (later Alfonso II) and his cultured wife Ippolita Sforza, and the scholarly environment of the Academia Pontaniana under the guidance of Giovanni Pontano, the court's leading humanist scholar (1426-1503). Apart from the royal court complex, urban aristocratic families congregated in the city's five neighborhoods (*seggi*), and the courts of feudal aristocrats scattered throughout the Neapolitan *regno* also played a significant role. These feudal aristocrats often found themselves in conflict with their foreign rulers.

Though we have much to learn about these courts' patronage of music and poetry, it is clear that a number of them, such as Potenza, Popoli, and Atri, were centres of active engagement with lyric poetry and its performance. These venues were criss-crossed by the activities of Neapolitan singer-poets who "likely met [one another] in various urban and rural locations around the kingdom." Pietro Jacopo De Jennaro's rural estate, the Rocca delle Fratte, was in the diocese of Gaeta, but he was closely connected to Giovanni Cantelmo, count of Popoli, who in 1468 compiled a *cansonero* of Neapolitan lyric poetry tied to the Neapolitan oral singing environment, and both were linked to the poetic environment of the royal court and its many other singer-poets. De Jennaro was part of the ducal circle at Castel Capuano, which included Galeota, Jacopo Sannazaro, and Masuccio Salernitano, and as a member of Pontano's *Accademia* he would have crossed paths with Sannazaro and Benedetto Gareth (both distinguished singer-poets), and quite possibly with the music theorist Johannes Tinctoris.

The humanist culture of the royal court was strongly advanced by Ferrante's reformation of the university's academic structure in 1465 to include the *studia humanitatis*. The court's most distinguished singer-poet was the Catalan-born Benet [Benedetto] Gareth (*Il Cariteo*, or *Chariteus*, 1450-1514), who was in his teens when he moved to Naples from Barcelona by 1468, and (except during a forced residence in Rome during 1501-03) spent the rest of his life there. During the golden age of Neapolitan arts and letters under Ferrante, other figures came and went.

Serafino Aquilano (1466-1500), perhaps the greatest singer-poet of his age, spent formative years in the kingdom, first as a young page in service to Antonio de Guevara, count of Potenza during 1478-81 (when he briefly studied music - probably singing and lute - with the Flemish singer/composer Guillelmus Guarnierius), then in 1485-86 and 1491-92 in Naples. During these latter years he was directly influenced by the style of Cariteo's vernacular poetry and singing, ... The Florentine brothers Brandolini, Aurelio Lippo Brandolini (1454-97) and Raffaele Lippo Brandolini (1465-1517) came to the court as children in 1466, ... [in spite of] state of almost complete blindness that befell them,⁹⁷ they managed to acquire an excellent humanistic education at court, so both became successful scholars, speakers and passionate practitioners and exponents of the art of *cantare ad lyram*. ...

with rhyme in the middle, where various topics, allusions to current events, memories of old stories, proverbs, etc., are intertwined.

⁹⁷ The reason they both got a nickname Lippo.

One can only imagine, in the absence of court records, that the simultaneous presence in Naples of Cariteo, the young Brandolini brothers, and Serafino Aquilano, made that the *cantare ad lyram* scene in Naples must have been brilliant, lively, and very competitive. Typically, all of these singers were foreigners (Serafino was from Aquila, at the extreme northern edge of the regno), but all came to Naples in their youth and appear to have developed some or most of their skills as performers here. ... The Neapolitan scene was further enlivened by the many other poets of vernacular lyric verse, including De Jennaro, Giuliano Perleoni, and Giovan Francesco Caracciolo, many of whom, like Sannazaro, were themselves singers and performers. Baccio Ugolini was often in Naples for extended periods during 1488-93, and we know already from a 1491 letter that the duke of Calabria enjoyed Baccio's singing and lyre-playing. A final figure to add to the list of possible singer-poets in Naples is the mysterious figure of Notturmo Napolitano.⁹⁸

Latin Rome:⁹⁹

Cantare ad lyram developed in Rome as it had elsewhere in Italy, as a component of humanist culture, but humanism in Rome developed in a manner that was unique to the city's history and institutions.

The establishment of humanist culture in fifteenth-century Rome thus began late, and advanced unsteadily depending on the attitude of popes who were either supportive ... or hostile. ...

Rome emerged as a center of humanist activity around 1475 and remained so until the Sack of Rome in 1527, particularly flourishing after the political upheavals of the 1490s that affected Florence and Naples. However, Rome cultivated a distinct form of humanism influenced by its clerical-courtly society. This "curial humanism" was characterized by a focus on Latin language, especially Ciceronian Latin, as well as a clerical environment that demanded humanists to adapt their skills and values to serve the needs of the church. Rome boasted a robust patronage system, including the papal court, the vast bureaucracy of the Curia Romana, the courts of cardinals, prelates, wealthy laymen, and various intellectual sodalities and academies.

Despite the seemingly less conducive environment for *cantare ad lyram*, the practice thrived in Rome and reached its peak of popularity during the early sixteenth century. Even within the clerical context of Rome, there was a demand for poets and orators, and the practice proved adaptable to the curial setting. Additionally, vernacular poetry found supporters and patrons, such as Paolo Cortesi and Angelo Colocci, and performers like Serafino Aquilano, who were drawn to Rome and found support from clerical patrons whose intellectual and social habits often mirrored their secular counterparts elsewhere in Italy.

In the heartland of the ancient Roman Empire, the resurgent papacy with its imperial ambitions engaged in a dynamic, sometimes uneasy, dialogue with the city's pagan history. This dialogue influenced numerous spectacles in Rome's convivial culture, where the singing of Latin verses was a common occurrence, including the enthronement of a lyre-playing Apollo in the pope's apartments. Rome shared similarities with other humanist environments, where figures like Orpheus and Apollo from antiquity became universal symbols of eloquent and civilizing discourse. Therefore, a contemporary performer in a humanist setting who sang verse accompanied by a string instrument likely evoked perceptions of being an *alter* Orpheus or, in Rome, an *Orpheus Christianus*.

⁹⁸ BW: Henry, "Alter Orpheus," 256-257, where the author reprints and discusses the woodcut on the title page where the bearded Notturmo is seen playing the lyre da braccio. Notturmo was active approx. 1505-1530, during which time there is evidence of his presence in Venice, Milan, Mantua, Bologna and Rome.

⁹⁹ Ibid., Wilson: *Singing* ...

It would be hard to imagine humanist singer-poets who more exemplified the Roman environment than the Brandolini brothers Aurelio (1454-97) and Raffaele (1465-1517).¹⁰⁰

Despite our current fragmentary knowledge of the staging of elaborate banquets elsewhere in Italy, it seems safe to say that the Roman scene was unique by virtue of its curial environment, the multiplicity and cosmopolitanism of its patronage sources, and the neo-Latin character of Roman humanism. Under conditions that seem to have prevailed from about 1470 until the Sack of Rome in 1527, the self-consciously humanist *convivium* in Rome became the *de rigueur* activity of the city's most prestigious households, whether curial, courtly, or academic. ...

The majority of this testimony relates to what was clearly the high point of Roman festive life in general, the pontificate of Leo X (1513-21), but Brandolini's treatise was finished by this time, and the many banquets at which he reports his brother Aurelio having performed pre-date this period, and suggest an active tradition of poetic performance at banquets stretching back to the late fifteenth century. Aurelio was in Rome during 1480-89, and was a member of Pomponio Leto's Roman Academy when it was hosting some of the earliest known classicizing *convivia*. The diary of Jacopo Gherardi records that in 1483, on April 21st, the birthday of the city of Rome was celebrated with "a dinner ... where the sodality had prepared an elegant banquet (*elegans convivium*) for literary men ... six bishops took part ... and numerous erudites and noble youths ... and numerous verses were recited by memory by various learned youths (*versus quum plures etiam memoriter recitati*)." Here and in other documents, the terms *recitare* or *dire* rarely admit a literal translation as "recited," or "read aloud," as for example when a youth performing before Giuliano de Medici during his 1513 investiture banquet is described as *cantando, gli disse molti versi* ("singing, he said many verses"). Though non-singing recitation certainly took place, especially for prose, most often *recitare* and *cantare* are used interchangeably, and Brandolini, who rarely mentions non-singing recitation, takes for granted that singing is the most compelling mode of poetic delivery. In any event, Aurelio must have sung often in Leto's gatherings, if not on this occasion, for the banquets of academies undoubtedly came closest to Raffaele's ideal setting for serious poetic performance.

Without doubt, the second decade of the sixteenth century was the high tide of Roman banqueting, thanks in no small part to Pope Leo's tastes for both festive spectacle and music, especially for *cantare ad lyram*. The Neapolitan singer Camillo de Monopoli, called *Il Querno*, was on the pope's payroll as "archipoeta" with the duty to sing for him during his private meals. Querno himself also dined, but before each course he was required to "sing six verses on different themes." ...

The next year [1520] the banquet took place at the Vatican palace in the salon of Cardinal Innocentio Cibo, and the dinner guests were entertained by some fifty singers and instrumentalists dressed as physicians (*medici*). These were led by another favourite improviser of Leo's, Maestro Andrea Marone da Brescia (ca. 1474/5-1528) along with another *buffone*, who cracked jokes and alternately sang and played a number of pieces. ... Marone was a well-educated humanist with solid Latin, and was evidently the best of Leo's singers *ad lyram*. In a description oddly reminiscent of Aurelio Brandolini's account of Pietrobono carried away in the heat of improvising, Paolo Giovio portrayed Marone's delivery in the exaggerated Ficinian terms of *divino furore*:

With his lyre and his voice [*fidibus et cantu*] he invokes the Muses and when once he has thrown his soul into the music and quickened it with a livelier breath seeps, along like a

¹⁰⁰ See pp.23-39 about them.

raging torrent so violently that verses which are extemporaneous and produced on the impulse of the moment seem to have been planned and composed long before. As he sings, his eyes are fixed and burning, sweat drips from him, the veins stand out on his forehead, and, wonderful to tell, his trained ear, as if it were that of an attentive listener, controls all the sweep of the rushing numbers [*impetum profluentum numerorum*] with the most perfect art.¹⁰¹

In 1515, a more decorous version of the Cosmas and Damian feast featured Raffaele Brandolini himself delivering an oration in praise of Cosimo de' Medici il vecchio, and this was probably the occasion for the famous improvisatory singing competition ordered by Leo in which Marone, thanks in part to his superior ability on the *lira da braccio*, reportedly vanquished Raffaele and Leo's other singers. Marone could also rise to the occasion of Latin solemnity: at the 1517 Cosmas and Damian banquet, his reputation for being able to extemporize verse on any subject was on display when he performed a long and elevated Latin poem on the politically delicate question of mounting a crusade against the Turks. ...

In 1520, among the day's horse and buffalo races and fireworks, was a dinner hosted by Leo for "many cardinals and ambassadors" in the Castel Sant'Angelo, "where there was a musical performance by eight voices, eight *lironi*,¹⁰² seven flutes and a trombone. And then buffoons, etc." The term buffoni does not translate well as either "buffoon" or "jester," for historically (as for example in its application to the heralds in service to civic *signorie*) it referred non-derisively to singer-poets with performing and acting skills. Nevertheless, one senses that by 1520 there was little effort in such events to maintain the literary dimension of a symposium, and that the show was rather stolen by the kaleidoscopic spectacles of polyphonic ensembles of voices and instruments capable of stylistically (and linguistically) reflecting the cosmopolitan tastes of cardinals and ambassadors from throughout and beyond Italy.

Raphael's fresco *Parnassus*

Raphael's fresco "*Parnassus*" in the *Stanza della Segnatura* in the Vatican, Rome, is certainly the best-known and one of the most beautiful works of art depicting the *lira da braccio*. Speaking about *cantori ad lyram* and the role the *lira da braccio* had in Latin Rome (and elsewhere in Italy) at the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th century without mentioning this fresco wouldn't be possible.

(Wilson) The *lira da braccio* in the hands of Apollo is striking for being among the few aspects of the fresco not modeled on the ancient images, and from the resources available to him in Rome, Raphael knew perfectly well what an ancient lyre looked like. In fact, the earlier version of the fresco recorded in an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi shows Apollo plucking the strings of an ancient lyre, and considering the centrality of the image within the fresco, and the fact that Apollo is the only one (of the five depicted) actually playing an instrument, the choice to replace it with a modern bowed instrument is significant, and could not have been lightly made.

¹⁰¹ BW: Giovo's statement that Marone's improvisations appear so finished that they "seem to have been planned and composed long before," was frequently applied to *improvvisatori*, for example to Accolti in *Il cortegiano*, and to Cristoforo L'Altissimo when Sanudo heard him perform in Venice, and recalls Quintilian's admonition regarding ex tempore speaking that it "must be so formed by much and diligent composition, that even what is poured forth by us unpremeditatedly may present the appearance of having been written"; Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* X. 7, 7.

¹⁰² IP: I suppose that, even if Migliorotti presumably invented *lirone* already in 1505, in this case probably eight *lira da braccio* players performed together, or according to Ganassi and Venetian archives the instruments of the violin family sometimes have been called *lire* or *lironi*. Anyway, in Ferrara, on 5th of February 1506, in the first *intermedio*, eight people played eight *lironi* '*lire grande sonata da octo persone*...

We know, through Vasari's "*Vite*," that Raphael must have been familiar with¹⁰³ the *lira da braccio* and its use in contemporary poetic performance, and probably even played it. Vasari tells us that Raphael's teacher in Urbino, Timoteo Viti (who would come to Rome to work with Raphael), was an accomplished musician who "delighted in playing every sort of instrument, but particularly the *lira da braccio*, to the accompaniment of which he sang *all'improvviso* with extraordinary grace." Another friend and fellow Urbinese who ended up in Rome, the architect Donato Bramante, also "delighted in poetry and loved to improvise upon the *lira*."

In the Vatican, the very heart of Latin Rome, it is remarkable to see the inclusion of poets noted primarily for their secular vernacular works, not only Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, but contemporary poets in the right foreground. While there is no clear consensus about the identity of some of these figures (Ariosto, Tebaldeo, and Sannazaro have been proposed), one of them - the figure at the center of the group in the right foreground with his finger to his lips - has recently been convincingly identified by Jonathan Unglaub as Bernardo Accolti, l'Unico Aretino, one of the most famous practitioners of *cantare ad lyram* in Rome, see a portrait by Andrea del Sarto (Fig. 6.1).¹⁰⁴

At play here is an ancient set of Platonic ideas that Ficino had made well known to the humanist world: a cosmos filled with motion, sympathetic vibration, and music, the lyre as a symbol of the celestial harmony generated by the spheres (its seven strings corresponding to the seven planets)¹⁰⁵, and the *cithara*-playing Apollo as a *primum mobile* at the center. ... for Ficino, ... , Apollo was the "lord of the sounding lyre," the inventor of music who presides at the conjunction of "words, song, and sounds." ...

In Raphael's fresco, the act of *cantare ad lyram* reached its peak both visually and symbolically, representing the pinnacle of humanist ideals. No other artwork or literary piece of the time so perfectly embodies its essence. However, the Vatican Parnassus also serves as a farewell to singing to the *lira da braccio* as a dominant cultural practice. The changing cultural and political landscape in Italy would soon bring irreversible transformations, altering the ancient tradition that seamlessly combined poetry and music.¹⁰⁶

6.5. Most prominent *Cantori ad Lyram* (with impressions of contemporaries)¹⁰⁷

We have already spoken about three particularly interesting and important *cantori ad lyram*, here I wanted to mention several others which deserve attention and about which we have some more information provided by their contemporaries.

Niccolò Cieco (? – ca1440?). The date of birth of this poet in the vernacular and singer of the fourteenth century, for whose birthplace Florence and Arezzo are fighting, is unknown. He resided in various Italian cities: in the second decade of the [15th] century he was perhaps in Venice, since in 1425 he dedicated a ternary to the republic; two years later he moved to the papal court. The *capitolo* composed "in praise of Pope Martin" on the occasion of the wedding of the pope's nephew Antonio Colonna and the ternary *Ave, padre santissimo, salve ave*, in honor of his successor Eugene IV belong to the Roman period.

¹⁰³ Raphael's father, renown painter Giovanni Santi, painted between 1450-1490 one *Appolo con le muse* where Appolo is playing a beautiful vielle (proto-lira?) with five strings on the fingerboard.

¹⁰⁴ See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-11 Wilson fig. 6.1.

¹⁰⁵ As Jones in his book on *Lira da braccio* wrote: From top down, [there are] 2+2+3 strings on the fingerboard, two off, total of nine strings symbolizing the nine Muses.

¹⁰⁶ See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-9 Wilson's book cover and VI-10 Wilson fig. 7.1 Raphael *Parnassus*.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., Wilson: *Singing* IP: See in the Appendix/Variou Lists/ 8.4. List of Probable *Canterini* and *Cantori ad lyram* (and Lute) Players, and Music Examples A, Ch. VI-11 Wilson Table 16.1 Provisional list of humanist improvisatori

On October 8, 1432, he was engaged as a singer "*ad servitia comunis perusij pro uno anno*" in Perugia, and in the second part of the same year he returned to Rome, where he composed the song "Against Ingratitude", dated in many codices in 1433. He did not have to stay long in the capital, as he was already in Siena in 1435, and in the last months of that year [1435] he moved to Florence, where he was hosted by Michele Del Giogante. It was during that period that he reached the peak of his fame for his particular skills in the art of improvisation, which he demonstrated by singing on Sunday at S. Martino Square. His success is evidenced by the large number of manuscripts reporting on his texts, which were very often transcribed by the viewers themselves to preserve memories.

[Wilson:] The Neapolitan humanist Giovanni Pontano (1429-1503) later recorded his impression of Niccolò as a public singer in a passage from his *De fortitudine domestica* (Naples, 1490):

Good lord! What audiences have flocked to hear Niccolò Cieco; on feast days, he sang from the bench in Etruscan rhymes, /telling/ sacred stories, and the histories. Here there were learned men, here a great many Florentines, all running to hear him perform.

The legal documents from Perugia clarify that his performances of poetry were enriched by his instrumental accompaniment. He is described there as a *cantarinus* who *cantat et citharam pulsut*, or as *citerista et cantorum rimarum* and *citerista rimator et rimarum inventor*, where cithara is clearly a Latin term for the viola. The term cithara, along with its variations (citera, guitarra, etc.), originated from the Greek term kithara used in ancient times to refer to a specific type of ancient lyre. However, in fifteenth-century Italy, it was used more broadly to encompass both bowed string instruments (viola/vielle, lira da braccio) and plucked string instruments (lute). Its interpretation in a particular context depends on factors such as the terms used interchangeably with it (*quitarrista seu violista*) or the prevailing knowledge of the instruments used by fifteenth-century *canterini*. Similarly, the term *lyra*, originally referring to the ancient Greek stringed instrument, was repurposed in the later fifteenth century to denote the lira da braccio. However, *viola/viuola* and *lira* were also used interchangeably until the early sixteenth century when the older *viola/vielle* declined in favour of the lira da braccio (and, to a growing extent, the lute) as the preferred bowed instrument for humanist singer-poets.¹⁰⁸

During this period, Niccolò had established a permanent residence in Florence, residing at the house of Michele del Giogante. Michele seemed to take on the roles of an impresario and mentor regarding the performances at San Martino, bringing both young talent like Simone di Grazia, a teenager at the time, and possibly a young Antonio di Guido in 1437, as well as experienced performers like Niccolò, to the forefront. Michele was evidently a central figure in the scene, navigating the controversies that often arose in the dynamic environment of San Martino. There was a rift between Niccolò and Michele in 1436 when Michele transcribed Niccolò's live performances at San Martino without authorization, leading Niccolò to not speak with him for three days.

Even long after his passing, Niccolò's performances remained vivid memories, closely associated with San Martino and with Michele del Giogante, who played a significant role in Niccolò's successful integration into Florence. Our previous discussion touched upon Niccolò, Giogante, and the *art of memory*. (see p.9 etc.).

Antonio di Guido or Antonio della Viuola (1418-1486) emerged as a superstar in fifteenth-century Florence, enjoying a remarkable half-century career. Michele del Giogante documented his rapid

¹⁰⁸ See also in Chapter 7, p.1., 7.1.Terminology.

rise to fame following his debut at San Martino in 1437. When Antonio passed away on July 10, 1486, he was honoured with a Latin epitaph penned by the esteemed Tuscan poet Angelo Poliziano.

[Wilson:] Antonio performing for Cosimo de' Medici and his guests at his Villa Careggi on April 23, 1459:

After dinner, I retired to a room with all the other guests. I heard a maestro Antonio sing, accompanying himself on the *citarra /viola/*,

Numerous historical documents indicate Antonio's close association with the Medici during the early 1470s. Correspondence from the Medici archives reveals Antonio's intimate relationship with Lorenzo de' Medici during this period. In 1473, Lorenzo urgently summoned Antonio to Vallombrosa, prompting Antonio to seek clarification on the purpose of his visit.

[Wilson:] The only reason I see for Lorenzo to summon Antonio della Viuola with some urgency, and for Antonio to be so concerned about the meaning of the text, is that Antonio was being urged by Lorenzo to provide a musical setting of the text, perhaps in the context of a critique of one of Lorenzo's early drafts. Nor is it hard to imagine the two men collaborating in working out a musical setting of some kind, for we know that this kind of *cantare all'improvviso* was cultivated by Lorenzo, and was a genuine source of delight to him in his leisure moments.

Vallombrosa, where this interaction likely took place, was a property owned by Antonio where he occasionally resided. An unexpected reference to this encounter appears in Luigi Pulci's *Morgante*, where he humorously entrusts the reading of his work to two fellow Florentine poets, Bernardo Bellincioni and Antonio di Guido, who served as models for characters in Pulci's epic poem:

And then it will be read by my Antonio/who makes our lyre gloriously sound/with our Ausonian sweet native verse/though he who may bear witness to true light/in Vallombrosa is now living still ...

From Lorenzo de' Medici to his most fervent rivals, Antonio was universally hailed as a "maestro," and the most detailed, albeit somewhat ambiguous, explanation of this title comes from Michele del Giogante. In 1449, Michele added a postscript to a sonnet addressed to "Maestro Antonio who sings in San Martino," referring to him as:

that noble man Antonio master of music and of singing in Florence itself. Note that I have made this addition in saying "of music and of singing" for if I had said [master of] singing only, this does not seem to me a worthy title, even though he possesses that art at its highest. It seems to me more honourable to make that addition, that is to say "of music and of song," and I didn't say this to offend in any way, for then I would have been lying, but to honour him, although I don't know if he really knows about music. ...

The music that Antonio di Guido excelled in, characterized by a spontaneous reliance on a repertoire of melodies and melodic patterns acquired and utilized within an exclusively oral tradition, did not align with Michele's conception of music as an art governed by rules and written practices.

In a letter penned by the young Michele Verino, son of the renowned humanist Ugolino Verino, during his studies at the University of Florence, Michele reminisced about a performance by the elderly Antonio that he had attended at San Martino sometime in the 1480s:

Concerning oratorical delivery, how esteemed is the witness of Demosthenes, to whom is attributed all the power of oratory. Once I heard Antonio singing the wars of Orlando in Piazza San Martino, and he sang with such eloquence that you seemed to be hearing Petrarch himself, and you would have believed yourself to be in the midst of the battle, not merely hearing a description of it. Later I read one of his own poems, so rough that he seemed like another person. Clearly, therefore, such works are best when delivered with eloquence, for this kind of practice benefits greatly from the diligent and judicious use of not only voice, but bodily gesture as well.

Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) and his Orphic singing on the *lira*¹⁰⁹

Ficino's Orphic singing¹¹⁰ was strongly rooted in the widely practiced Florentine cultural tradition of instrument-accompanied poetic performances, which laid the foundation for Ficino's lifelong engagement with this theme, both in his philosophical writings and as an activity he shared with a range of his friends and acquaintances.

However, what has not been fully assessed is the relationship between Ficino's musical thought (and practice) and the emergence and spread of *cantare ad lyram* as a widely accepted humanistic practice rooted in contemporary practices. This practice and the iconographic tradition of numerous figures playing the *lira* developed in tandem, so that by the time Raphael painted his *Parnassus* in Rome around 1510-11, his Apollo was not only the embodiment of Platonic conceptions of poetic frenzy but also a reflection of established humanistic activity.

It appears that Ficino received some musical education as a child. After moving from his hometown of Figline Valdarno to Florence in the late 1440s, he studied grammar with Luca d'Antonio Bernardi from San Gimignano, who also taught him to play the *lira*. During his teaching career, which lasted until the 1480s and spanned across Tuscany, Bernardi wrote and performed dramatic works inspired by classical Latin comedies, in which his students sang and recited their roles accompanied by the *lira*. There is a high probability that Ficino learned to declaim Latin verses accompanied by a bowed instrument through his studies with Bernardi.

The first mention of Ficino's Orphic singing accompanied by the *lira* can be found in his letter from 1462, addressed to his patron Cosimo de' Medici, the founder of the so-called Platonic Academy in Careggi. In the letter, Ficino added a translation of the Orphic hymn "To the Cosmos", expressing gratitude to Cosimo and explaining that he had been playing the *lira* and singing the divine music of Orpheus for mental relaxation. Ficino's references to Orphic singing continued in his philosophical letters to patrons, friends, and students.

Ficino's letters also reveal instances where poetry exchange led to correspondence, such as when Alessandro Braccesi sent Ficino some of his songs, which Ficino sang through with his *lira*. In letters to close friends, Ficino invoked the imagery of two harmonious *lyre* as a symbol of Platonic affinity between like-minded souls.¹¹¹ One of these close friends was Sebastiano Foresi, (1424-88), a notary, poet, and musician, and here the image of two harmonious *lyre* was no figure of speech. In 1476, Ficino wrote to him:

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Wilson.

¹¹⁰ In the summer of 2003, commissioned by the Styriarte Early Music Festival in Graz, I reconstructed the music based on a translation of Orphic hymns by Marsilio Ficino and performed them with my own accompaniment on the *lira da braccio*.

¹¹¹ Although this is not of any special importance for this study, it can be mentioned that, according to some authors, the so-called platonic love that Ficino advocated and lived was not asexual but related to that of the same sex between two men — something that was common among the intellectual and artistic elite (not only) of Italy at the time.

What are you doing today, my Foresi? Are you playing the *lira*? Take heed that you do not play without Marsilio! Otherwise, if you break faith with me, the strings of our *lira* will sound completely out of tune to you. As often as I sing with my *lira*, I sing in harmony with you. To me no melody is sweet without the sweetest friend.

A subsequent letter reveals that Foresi not only played, but built *lire*:

There is no one amongst all my friends with whom I converse more profoundly and more enjoyably than with you, my sweet Foresi. For I address others with only the tongue or pen, but you I often address with the plectrum and *lira*. In fact, without you, my Foresi, my plectrum is quiet, my *lira* is mute. Come I beseech you, my Foresi, whenever you sing to the *lira*, sing in harmony with me. But I see that while you are so intent upon constructing a *lira*, you are forgetting the music of the other.

Antonio d'Agostino da San Miniato (1433-?), Cherubino Quarquagli and Baccio Ugolini were notable among Ficino's music-making correspondents and acquaintances. Antonio d'Agostino had been a *canterino* in his youth, while Cherubino Quarquagli and Baccio Ugolini were renowned for their improvisatory singing of secular *strambotti* and sonnets.

In the dynamic social and intellectual environment of Florence, Ficino frequently interacted and collaborated with other *lira*-playing singer-poets. It is unlikely that this activity was imposed by Ficino as an esoteric practice on his surroundings. Rather, it likely emerged in response to an established local tradition that Ficino encountered in his youth. Ficino adapted this tradition to suit his own purposes, and it facilitated his collaborations with other artists.

One of Ficino's notable achievements was his integration of Platonic philosophy with musical performance, a fusion that he cultivated through his writing and performing. This image of the divinely inspired poet-musician, which Ficino embodied, resonated in the European imagination for centuries to come. Giovanni Antonio Campano (1429-77), captured this essence in a poem depicting Ficino himself singing and playing in a state of divine inspiration:

If curly-haired Apollo tried Marsilio's lyre,
Apollo would fail, defeated in playing and in singing.
There is fury in a lover who sings while a girl is singing:
he strikes the lyre when she turns, when she nods.
At that moment his eyes sparkle, he rises on both feet,
and masters the tunes he had never fully grasped.

Philippe Canguilhem, in his article "The Birth and Decadence of the Lira da Braccio,"¹¹² directly associates the practice of singing to the *lira* (*da braccio*) with the activities of Marsilio Ficino. It would be appealing to attribute the authorship of the *lira da braccio* (as a humanistic instrument specifically intended for accompanying sung or recited poetry) to Ficino but we cannot make him the inventor of it. When Cosimo the Elder moved him to Careggi in 1459, the practice of singing with accompaniment on bowed instrument *viuola* was already well established in Florence and elsewhere; the instrument existed, as did its name. Canguilhem thinks that Ficino gave the name to practice "*ad lyram canere*" and knew how to connect it with Neoplatonism and the theory of poetic "frenzy" (*furor*). In favour of this thesis speaks the importance of the place the *lira* occupied in Ficino's philosophy. In 1462, Cosimo the Elder in a letter asked him to join him and bring along his

¹¹² Philippe Canguilhem: Naissance et décadence de la lira da braccio, *Pallas*, No. 57 (2001), Presses Universitaires du Midi, pp.41-54.

Latin version of *Philebus*, not forgetting "Orpheus's lyre." This *lyra orphica* was so named because he sang Orphic hymns with it, ...

This defines it as "a kind of enlightenment of the rational soul by which God raises the soul that has slipped into the lower world and draws it into the higher." Ficino himself was carried away by this enthusiasm when he sang with the accompaniment of his *orphica lyra*: testimonies on this subject, describing his fiery performances when he improvised, are frequent. ...

Canguilhem supposed that Florence may have served as the cradle of the *lira da braccio* and that its creators may have gravitated towards Marsilio Ficino. ... He asks on which instrument Ficino actually play? All contemporary records on Ficino musician are in Latin, his instrument is called *lyra* or sometimes *cithara*, clearly evoking antiquity. In his own texts, Ficino uses the term *lyra*, so as in many other cases we cannot be sure that it is not the lute. But a 16th century Florentine testimony, ignored by musicologists so far, provides valuable information about Ficino's instrument:

"[Ficino] Was not accustomed to studying for more than two hours at a time, but often returned to his books, and in the meantime, following Pythagoras' example, relaxed with the *lira*, whose sound was particularly pleasing. He learned music as a child, and on his *lira*, he sang the verses of selected poets and others that he composed himself. When he went to the countryside to visit his close friends or other nobles, they sometimes asked him to bring his *lira* for their mutual pleasure, and that is why he mentions it so often in his letters. His instrument then passed into the hands of Bartolommeo Romulo, a lawyer of certain distinction in our time, who kept it as a memory."

Canguilhem is sure that this text undoubtedly shows that Ficino played the *lira da braccio*, for two reasons: first, Piero Caponsacchi uses this term at a time when all ambiguities have disappeared; second, the end of his text tells us that he undoubtedly saw this instrument himself, which has been preserved in Florence since the end of the 15th century. My remark to his statement would be that unfortunately the bow wasn't mentioned nowhere.

Even if many signs indicate that Florence may have been the place where the practice of singing with the accompaniment of a bowed instrument called the *lira* represented the contemporary equivalent of the ancient practice. Anyway, many questions remain unanswered: why was this instrument chosen to bear this name and embody this symbolism, rather than the lute or viola? For Canguilhem the answer undoubtedly lies in the main, if not exclusive, use of the *lira* in the practice of sung recitation of poetry. Again, I want to make only a slight correction of his view: I think it should be said that the name *lyra*, *lira* started to be used already in first decades of 15th century, together with the role and use for *vielle* (*viuola* in Italian), which played very similar role already two centuries before.

Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492): from *canterino* to *cantor ad lyram*¹¹³

The earliest poetic works of Lorenzo belong to the tradition of the *canterini*, therefore works in the vernacular "folk" style in melodious meters of Tuscan *ottava* and *terza rima*, along with early sonnets and ballads.

Lorenzo early on received instructions from the *maestro della viola*, Giuliano Catellaccio, and rarely separated from his *lira* until the end of his life, as singing poetry with instrumental accompaniment remained one of his great passions. Furthermore, *lira* remained his constant

¹¹³ Ibid. Wilson.

companion and a strong symbol of his connection to Florentine cultural heritage, which would accompany his poetic development.

His *brigata* included social equals such as Braccio Martelli, Pietro Alamanni, Bernardo Rucellai, Guglielmo de' Pazzi, and Sigismondo della Stufa, but also performing singer-poets of humble social rank such as Luigi Pulci and Antonio di Guido, whose company Lorenzo seems to have particularly enjoyed. It appears that the most important activities of the circle took place at their rural villas, such as the Medici ones in Cafaggiolo and Careggi.

Another curiosity is the information that towards the end of his short life, Lorenzo's household included *Cardiere della viola*, a musician whom Lorenzo highly valued for his ability to sing beautifully accompanied by his *lira* (*cantare in sulla lira all'improvviso meravigliosamente*). This was Jean Cordier (born around 1440 in Bruges, where he also died in 1501), a Dutch tenor who led a group of singers recruited by Portinaro in Bruges and Guillaume Du Fay in Cambrai to come to Italy. He joined the chapel of Piero de' Medici in Florence and inspired his master with improvisations on the *lira da braccio*.

Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494):

Regarding this poet, Blake Wilson says the following:

Angelo Poliziano embodies a paradox with respect to the role of oral and written tradition in Italian humanistic culture. As a careful scholar and philological restorer of ancient texts, he is undoubtedly one of the greatest models of written tradition and textual authority. However, the same man included in his poetic practice the oral, improvisational tradition of *cantare ad lyram*, which was undoubtedly contrary to the understanding of the text as fixed and authoritative (or even written). But for Poliziano, as for Lorenzo who shows the same duality, the dichotomy is false, because the mixed orality within which he operated suggests a more symbiotic than contradictory relationship; in his poetic practice, his eclectic approach to the critical question of imitating ancient authors was closer to the practice of *cantare all'improvviso* than one might think. ...

Poliziano did not become a virtuoso of the practice of *cantare ad lyram*, as was the case with Baccio Ugolini, nor was it a "personal life passion" for him as it was for Lorenzo, but, if we are to believe Camelli's writing, he was very successful in it. Like all members of Camelli's *Concerto mediceo*, Poliziano was part of a culture of poetic performance, and poetry among them was "published" by singing and reciting. The court poet from the court of Ferrara Cassio Brucurelli da Narni, who belonged to the performing poets, placed Poliziano high among them:

Among the most famous was Poliziano/who recited to others in the most beautiful way/
many of his "stanze"; and the clear, melodious style/gave obvious delight to others.

While Ficino was the centre of the Orphic revival in the realms of philosophy and religion, Poliziano was a key figure in the dissemination of the myth of Orpheus both in the Ficinian sense and in the non-Ficinian sense in poetry and theatre. ...

As Ficino's pupil, Poliziano must have been early influenced by both his teachings and his exemplary Orphic singing. The Florentine poet Naldo Naldi depicted Ficino as Orpheus when he attributed magical powers over trees and animals to him:

Hence he soothes the unyielding oaks with his lyre and his song,
And softens once more the hearts of wild beasts.

And in the *carmen* to Fonzio Poliziano draws inspiration directly from Ficino's playing, which like that of Orpheus springs up from under his fingers, to return home and "invoke Phoebus, touching the divine lyre with my plectrum." Poliziano was quick to grasp the interpretive richness of the story.

[Marsilio's lyre], far more successful than the lyre of Thracian Orpheus, has brought back from the underworld what is, if I am not mistaken, the true Eurydice, that is, Platonic wisdom with its all-embracing understanding.] ...

Although there was disagreement about the date of composition of Poliziano's "*Favola d'Orfeo*" most scholars now agree that it was written in 1480 for the court in Mantua, most likely for a banquet during the carnival season when Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga entertained his brothers. ...

Like its theatrical predecessors, "Orfeo" is a combination of recited and sung verses, but unlike them, it contains an unusual amount of music in a rich array of poetic forms.¹¹⁴

The sung parts of the play are typically lyrical moments of dramatic pause, and they are interspersed with recitation that mostly advances the plot as it is, so the songs take on a function similar to the aria in later opera. This is perhaps most evident in the scene that attracts the almost exclusive attention of many scholars, the Sapphic ode with which Orpheus first appears in the play. It contains the most detailed and musically explicit stage direction [didascalia] in the play:

"Orpheus, who sings the following Latin verses on the mountain with his lyre, is interrupted by a shepherd announcing the death of Eurydice. These verses, proposed by Messer Baccio Ugolini, who played Orpheus, are in honour of the cardinal of Mantua [Francesco Gonzaga]."

"Orpheus" represents a significant moment when numerous important events from the end of the fifteenth century converge: the vernacularisation of the legend of Orpheus (and the accompanying promotion of the Tuscan vernacular), the definitive portrayal of the practice of *cantare ad lyram* as a humanistic activity through its identification with the ancient tradition of sung poetry, and the export of Florentine singers and poets to courtly environments outside Florence.

The court in Mantua attempted to revive the play a decade later when Marquis Francesco II engaged Philipo Lapaccini and Ercole Albergati (Zafarano) to organize the event, and Atalante Migliorotti to sing the role of Orpheus. Efforts continued the following year, but ultimately proved unsuccessful because Migliorotti was too busy with professional commitments in Venice and Padua to carry this out.

Poliziano's "Orpheus" naturally leads us to the next great and very important representative of the art of singing with the *lira*, such as,

Bartolomeo Baccio Ugolini (? – 1494)¹¹⁵

[Wilson:] There is no better introduction to Baccio's admirable character than that composed by his friend Poliziano in a letter to Francesco Pulci in 1489: ...

Whether sung extempore to the lira [*quae ad citharam canit ex tempore*] or composed in leisure [*quaeper otium componit*], what is sweeter, more polished, and more beautiful? Such is my Baccio.

¹¹⁴ See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-12, Wilson Table 4.2.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. Wilson.

His diplomatic missions placed him in the highest social circles of Naples, Rome, and Ferrara/Mantua (among others), where his elegant and progressive poetry and refined singing and lyre playing were eagerly sought after, undoubtedly further opening the doors of diplomacy for him.

In 1488, Baccio wrote to Lorenzo about the progress of making a magnificent new *lira* that was "worthy to be among your most beautiful and sweetest things," but the project became somewhat delicate due to the fact that Baccio, in making and refining the instrument, collaborated closely with the otherwise respected Neapolitan court poet Francesco Galeotto, whose poetry Baccio did not appreciate and suggested that it should be given to Lorenzo's barber for his opinion. Always a sharp critic, Baccio continued to urge Lorenzo to trust his judgment regarding what pleased him and what did not, as he knew "how much those delicate ears abhorred [lyre playing that sounded like] the filing of a saw."¹¹⁶

In a letter to Ludovico Gonzaga in 1459, Baccio also promised that he would "come to Mantua full of verses that will caress your delicate ears", and that he was ready to "recite your works and sing their praises in verses accompanied by the *lira*". As Baccio's elegant Latin letter demonstrates, he was by this time (when Lorenzo was only ten years old) already an accomplished scholar, poet, and performer.

Baccio often, on behalf of Lorenzo, stayed in Rome during extended visits, where he mixed diplomacy with immersing himself in the vibrant Roman local culture of *cantare ad lyram*, which included banquets, theatrical performances, evening serenades on the streets of Rome, and pleasant gatherings in Roman academies and courts where poetry was discussed and performed.

Less "classical" were the nights when Baccio went out with his fellow *cantores ad lyram* Cherubino Quarquagli and Giovanni Antonio Campano to "take their lyre and sing through the city streets at night under the windows of those who sleep." One of Baccio's finest moments in Rome was a performance where he sang Latin verses and accompanied himself in the role of Orpheus in a series of dramatic displays set at an extravagant banquet in June 1473, celebrating the marriage of Eleonora of Aragon and Duke Ercole d'Este. On this occasion, Baccio's audience included ruling aristocratic families from Ferrara, Naples, and Rome.

It is not surprising that Baccio, a scholar and *lira* player who was also a priest, soon established close relations with Ficino. Early in Lorenzo's service, Baccio was already among Ficino's correspondents as a member of the latter's "first genus" of friends, and he regularly attended Ficino's informal gatherings. Ficino's letter addressed to Giovanni Antonio Campano, Baccio's beneficent companion in his Roman escapades (likely written in the short period of 1473-74 while Campano was in the service of Cardinal Pietro Riario, the Roman patron of the solemn banquets of 1473, where Baccio played a leading role):

Baccio Ugolino has very often been singing in the academy divine things of you and your cardinal... so that you are now known to all our set as the Column of the Academy.

As a more skilled performer who was frequently engaged beyond literary circles outside Florence, Baccio was able to export Florentine poetic innovation (enhanced by the exemplary practice of *cantare ad lyram*) and adopt other influences (such as courtly *strambotto* or *rispetta cortigiana*) that he encountered in Roman circles. It seems that Baccio was equally effective as a diplomat in the realm of poetry as he was in politics.

¹¹⁶ What I could rather associate with bad playing of a bowed than with a plucked instrument...

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)¹¹⁷

[Wilson:] Perhaps we should not be surprised to learn that one of the great polymaths of all time, the exemplary “Renaissance Man” Leonardo da Vinci, included the practice of *cantare ad lyram* among his many talents as painter, architect, inventor, and scientist. As Vasari put it so movingly in his biography of Leonardo:

The greatest gifts are often seen, in the course of nature, rained down by celestial influences on human creatures; and sometimes, in supernatural fashion, beauty, grace, and talent are united beyond measure in one single person, in a manner that to whatever such a person turns his attention, his every action is so divine, that, surpassing all other men, it makes itself clearly known as a thing bestowed by God (as it is), and not acquired by human art.

Vasari continues by mentioning Leonardo's first professional engagement outside Florence when, at the age of thirty, Lorenzo de' Medici sent him to the court of Sforza in Milan:

It came about that the Duke of Milan, Giovan Galeazzo, died and that Ludovico Sforza was established as his successor in the year 1494. At that time Leonardo, with great fanfare, was brought to the duke to play for him, since the duke had a great liking of the sound of the *lira*; and Leonardo brought there the instrument he had built with his own hands, made largely of silver but in the shape of a horse skull—a bizarre, new thing—so that the sound */l'armonia/* would have greater resonance and sonority; with this he surpassed all the musicians who came there to play. In addition, he was the best performer of improvised poetry */migliore dicitore di rime all' improvviso/* in his time.

An earlier version of this story exists in a source from the early sixteenth century, Anonimo Gaddiano (BNF, Mgl. XVII. 17), and here we learn that Leonardo did not go to Milan alone but with his young disciple of his skill in *cantare ad lyram*, who also showed much promise:

Leonardo was an eloquent speaker and an outstanding player of the *lira*, and he was the teacher of Atalante Migliorotti, whom he instructed on the instrument... When he was 30 years old, Lorenzo il Magnifico sent him to the duke of Milan together with Atalante Migliorotti to present to him a *lira*, for he was unique in playing this instrument.

[Wilson:]

Leonardo's special abilities on the lyre were legendary at a time when the Milanese painter Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo (1538-1600) wrote:

"Next to Pindar the Theban, here is Leonardo the painter, prince of all those who at that time played the *lira* and *viola*... who as you all know was unparalleled in his time as a *lira* player."

Leonardo would stay at the Milanese court from 1482 to 1499, where he was active as a painter, sculptor, military architect, and engineer, but the extraordinary conclusion that can be drawn from these documents is that Leonardo went to the Milanese court for the first time in none of these capacities but primarily as a musician, and, as Lomazzo's biography from around 1539 suggests, as a designer of theatrical activities at the court:

He had an extraordinary power of mind ... and since he was a marvellous inventor and connoisseur of all subtleties and delights for the stage, and he sang masterfully to his own accompaniment on the *lira*, he miraculously pleased all the princes throughout his life.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., Wilson: *Singing ...*

As we have seen, in Milan, he was accompanied by his young protégé Atalante Migliorotti, who would continue a long and successful career as a court improviser and actor, solidifying the notion that Leonardo likely began his career as a performer and designer of court spectacles, and it was in that capacity that he came to Milan. In 1498, Leonardo visited the court of Mantua strictly in a musical capacity when Marquis Francesco Gonzaga wrote to his court treasurer:

We want you to give Leonardo Florentino, the bearer of this letter, eleven ducats, which we are giving him in payment for the many lute and viola strings he has given us, releasing /the money/ immediately so that he can continue his journey.

The reference to lute strings, together with the relatively recent discovery of Leonardo's sketch of a female left hand placed on the fingerboard of a lute (from approximately the same time), suggests that in addition to the *lira*, Leonardo may have played the lute.

This, at the time, would not have been unusual because playing multiple (especially related) instruments was almost a rule. Moreover, if in iconographic sources *lira* appears (in duet) with another instrument, then it is most often the lute, and the only notated music for the *lira da braccio* is preserved in a manuscript from Pesaro (Biblioteca Oliveriana, no. 1144 olim 1193) which otherwise contains exclusively music for the lute and other plucked instruments.

Atalante Migliorotti (1466 -ca1535)¹¹⁸

After his stay in Milan with Leonardo, Migliorotti surely returned to Florence, and by the beginning of the 1490s, although nominally serving Piero de' Medici, he was highly sought after as a performer and travelled extensively. As mentioned earlier, he was too occupied with professional duties in Venice and Padua to accept Francesco Gonzaga's invitation to sing the lead role in a new performance of Poliziano's *Orpheus* in 1490 and 1491, but this did not prevent him from developing warm relations with the court of Mantua. In 1493, he presented Isabella with "a good, small cithara" suitable for her use. As Isabella's agent in negotiations with Migliorotti, Niccolò da Correggio offered her one of his *lire*, but upon learning that Migliorotti's would be delivered, he admitted,

"use that of Atalante, which, with his name and the memory of him who gave it to you, will incline you to learn with more affection."

The respect shown to Migliorotti here later encouraged him to seek her blessing at the baptism of his own daughter, whom he named Isabella in honour of the marchioness.

The last news about Migliorotti as a performer comes from Florence, where he is mentioned as a member of the Sacred Academy of the Medici in 1515. That year he was elected to office in the academy (as a patron and ambassador to the pope), and his colleagues, the academics, obviously highly valued him. Naldo Naldi honoured him with two Latin epigrams full of flattering, classicistic references to his singing and playing the *lira*, and he was chosen as the "permanent *cytharedo* of our Sacred Academy" thanks to the "sound of his sweet lyre" (*dolce cetra*), which turned him into "another Orpheus." But the silence of historical records about the last twenty years of his professional life suggests that he may have stopped performing: he seems to have left no trace in the well-documented Roman festival environment, and it seems that none of his songs or their musical arrangements have survived in manuscript or print.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Ibid., Wilson: *Singing* ...

¹¹⁹ About Migliorotti as possible inventor of *lira da gamba* or *lirone* see in the Chapter 7., p.20

Cristoforo Fiorentino l'Altissimo (? - ca1526?)¹²⁰

The last known traditional *canterino* of high reputation in Florence was Cristoforo Fiorentino, known as l'Altissimo (died around 1526). Considering that his activity ran parallel to that of the "learned" humanist *cantors ad lyram*, I have decided to include him in this part of Chapter 6.

Judging from what we can infer from the preserved documents, it seems that Cristoforo was the only *canterino* who performed at Piazza San Martino between the death of Antonio di Guido in 1486 and Cristoforo's departure from Florence in 1518, as no other performer is mentioned in connection with that venue. After Cristoforo's last known performances at San Martino during 1514/15, neither San Martino nor a professional civic cantor of any renown is ever mentioned again in the existing records, so we could conclude that both the venue and the practice that took place there lost their purpose of existence, along with the republican political environment that had nurtured them for so long.

Considering that there are very detailed reports about the performances of his most significant work, *Il Primo Libro de' Reali*, which provide a very interesting insight into the system of improvisational technique of the *cantor*, I bring the following quotes from B. Wilson's book:

Cristoforo was at the peak of his career while he was performing his monumental *cantare II Primo Libro de' Reali* at San Martino, where he commanded the venue several times each week over a thirteen-month period. No other extant poetic work of any kind is so explicitly tied to the San Martino environment, and the poem itself is full of references to the venue and the [*a*]uditori who flocked to hear him there, as well as indications of the days and frequency of his performances. The *Primo libro* consists of ninety-four *cantari*, and each *cantare* (typically forty or so stanzas of *ottava rima*) was a self-contained narration that constituted a single day's fare. After an initial stanza invoking God's blessing, each *cantare* typically proceeds to a second stanza addressed to his *diligente* or *benigni uditori* before resuming the story where he had left off at the end of the previous performance. These are the fleeting moments that allow us to take the pulse of the event per se before Cristoforo launches his audience into the larger-than-life fantasy world of the Carolingian paladins. Part of the *canterino*'s rhetoric at this juncture is to cast himself in humble terms in the face of his worthy audience: ...

These verses, lead directly to Cristoforo's audience at San Martino, almost always culminate with a specific strategic goal of the initial stanzas, capturing the attention of the noisy crowd. The attention it demands is rarely just auditory but also visual, reminding us that the experience of San Martino was multisensory. Gestures, body language, and facial expressions of the *canterino* were undoubtedly crucial in how the audience understood and visualized the story they heard, and vice versa; the trained eye of the *canterino* allowed him to gauge the mood, composition, and receptivity of the crowd in front of him.

In all ninety-four *cantari* of the *Primo libro*, the word "*improvviso*" is mentioned only twice, in the first and last *cantare*. At the beginning, it serves as a reminder to Cristoforo's audience, as well as to us, that he was engaged in an extraordinary and rather uncertain activity - performing from memory and constantly creating and recreating his poetic and musical materials during the performance itself. In those circumstances, he asks for forgiveness for occasional shortcomings in his verses. ...

The fashion of the *strambotto* emerged at the end of the fifteenth century, and its close relationship with improvisation, sung performance, and the *ottava rima* form of *cantare* made it irresistible for

¹²⁰ Ibid., Wilson.

poets of Cristoforo's generation to perform. His *strambotti* particularly reveal mental habits of mnemonic techniques we previously discussed in relation to Antonio di Guido: the use of strong and sharply contrasting visual images and mastery of a large lexical stockpile using a long series of names (*nome*) and things (*cose*)...

At least four of Cristoforo's *strambotti* (together with the *ottava* from his work *Rotta, bellezze di un uomo, Stanze del medesimo e Invocazioni fatte in San Martino*) appear again, with minor variations, as stanzas in the *Primo libro*. Which ones were the first, earlier ones, is not clear, but an excellent analysis of the *Primo libro* and its sources by Luca Degl' Innocenti reveals another characteristic quality of *canterino* verses, which is why Cristoforo's existing works provide a rare opportunity for study: widespread "recycling" (*rifacimento*) of existing poetry and prose. To start with, the *Primo libro* itself is a huge *rifacimento* of an older *cantare*, the first two books of prose *Reali di Francia* by Andrea da Barberino (which, in turn, were based on French and Franco-Venetian models). The transmutation was anything but direct; Cristoforo appropriated Andrea's material differently ... - many names and some phrases were literally copied, their exact order often changed, other parts paraphrased, and parts of new material interpolated to varying degrees, all conditioned by the sonic and formal demands of *ottava rima*:...

Andrea's *cantari* were among the most popular works of the fifteenth century, so from the first stanzas of the *Primo libro*, Cristoforo placed himself in a long and rich Florentine tradition of epic knightly storytelling, which was among the greatest pleasures one could experience at San Martino.

Whatever Cristoforo's reasons for moving to Venice were, he did not wait long to start doing what he knew best: performing in public. The first thing we hear about him comes from the pen of Marino Sanudo, the tireless Venetian chronicler, who, in the company of officials of the Venetian government, heard Cristoforo perform on May 10, 1518, and recorded his personal reflections:

On this day, in the Terranova, where public readings take place, a Florentine poet named the Altissimo, whose proper name is Cristoforo, who had come into this area on the Sensa [Feast of the Ascension], mounted a *cariega* [probably some kind of bench or platform] after gathering a large number of auditors, among whom I, Marin Sanudo, had shown up along with Lord Gaspero della Vedova. He performed verses [*recita versi*] *all'improvviso*, and another played the *lira* while he performed [*uno sona la lira e lui li recita*]¹²¹. He began by singing the praises of Venice, then he accepted a request from the audience to perform on the subject of the soul, and so he began to sing about the soul. But in my judgment this was a thing already worked out and composed in Florence, because it sounded so fluent. Then he passed around a box seeking payment, and when he had collected a certain amount, he performed *all'improvviso* another time.

[Wilson:] The Terranova was the smaller area of piazza between the Doge's Palace and the current *Biblioteca Marciana*, and one wonders how he managed to gather a crowd before he mounted a raised platform of some kind and began to perform - perhaps he was assisted in this by his *lira da braccio* player, who may have been hired to help draw Venetians to this unknown *canterino* as well as to accompany him.

Bernardo Accolti, *Unico Aretino* (1458-1535)¹²²

As a bridge to the world of Italian courts and the role of *cantori ad lyram* in that environment, let us consider the figure or activity of the singer-poet Bernardino Accolti, also known as *L'unico*

¹²¹ A rare example where one *canterino* sings and another provide the accompaniment on *lira*.

¹²² See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-13, Wilson fig. 6.2, Bernardo Accolti, *L'Unico Aretino*

Aretino. He also leads us towards the practice of singing with the *lira* in Vatican Rome. I'll pass the floor back to B. Wilson¹²³:

If ever there was a singer-poet at home in the world of the court it was Bernardo Accolti, the *Unico Aretino* (the "Singular Aretine"), and so of the many musical poets mentioned in the pages of *Il Cortegiano*, only *Signor Unico* is given pride of place as an interlocutor. As the member of a prominent family, which included his father Benedetto, the Florentine jurist, humanist, and historian, and his brother Pietro who was made a cardinal in 1511, Bernardo moved with ease and acclaim among the Italian courts, and his skills as an extemporizing poet and charismatic performer made him an exemplary courtier of the kind Castiglione was in the process of fashioning. Notwithstanding Accolti's social bona fides, however, Castiglione casts him (perhaps not so inaccurately) as a somewhat eccentric figure given to extreme opinions, bizarre flights of fancy, and the tireless pursuit of his role as the unrequited suitor of the most famous courtly ladies of the day. ...

It was Castiglione himself who reported in a letter to Federico Gonzaga in 1521 that "last night, in the presence of a very large audience, the Unico Aretino improvised before the pope for three hours, wonderfully, as was his custom."

In May 1512, at the banquet marking the opening of the Fifth Lateran Council, Accolti performed his "*Ternale*" in honor of the Virgin Mary, a "spiritual chapter in *terza rima*." After Pope Leo X was elected, upon learning that Unico was going to perform this work again in the Vatican, Swiss guards escorted Accolti to the venue. The Pope ordered all doors to be opened to accommodate as many people as possible, and the artist continued to captivate the crowd. This is at least the posthumous account of Accolti's greatest admirer, Pietro Aretino, who added: "never had a poet attained the level at which all the kings, princes, and Popes of the time held him."

He may have returned to Florence only in 1515, at the entrance (*entrata*) of his patron, the Medici Pope Leo X, an event later recorded in Vasari's fresco in the Palazzo Vecchio. He quickly entered the Florentine circles close to the court, such as the Sacred Academy of the Medici, where he was elected to office and engaged with leading literary and musical personalities of the city. There is no doubt that he often performed in the company of his fellow academy member, Atalante Migliorotti. Mantua was an inevitable destination for Accolti, given that Isabella d'Este (second only to her sister-in-law Elisabetta Gonzaga) was the object of his courtly admiration. Accolti wrote to Isabella in 1502 (when he was acting as the teacher of Isabella's ten-year-old son Federico in Rome, at the time a political hostage of the papal court), praising her special abilities as a poet and singer *ad lyram*:

What genius flourished in Italy today, to which, verse or prose, your name has not been subjected to noble efforts and praise? Where flourish music, singing, liberality, comedies, spectacles, and vernacular verses, that you are not able to judge with a new miracle in a lady of such nobility and invention, not only judging them but also composing them perfectly and performing them perfectly to the *viola* or the lute [*perfectamente componendo eperfectamente in viola o leuto recitandole*]?

Isabella was evidently not immune to Accolti's charm, as she responded to his letter expressing immense admiration for his unmatched verses and the "elegance, abundance, and sharpness" of his genius. It must be that within the orbit of Mantua/Ferrara, he came into contact with Ariosto, who towards the end of his *Orlando Furioso* praises a group of Italian poets and humanists,

¹²³ Ibid. Wilson, *Singing...*

paying tribute to the "the shining light of Arezzo, Unico Accolti " (*il gran lume Aretin, l'Unico Accolti*).

In a similar review of leading literati, in the work *La Morte del Danese* (1522) by the court poet from Ferrara, Cassio Brucurelli da Narni, Accolti is compared to Apollo and Orpheus, in a rare description as a player of the lyre *all'improvviso*:

Then was seen the Unico aretino, a new Orpheus with his lyre [held] to his neck,
[singing] *all'improvviso* in a style so divine that even Apollo envied him for not a few years.¹²⁴

Like other poet-singers who lived in the early decades of the sixteenth century, such as Cariteo and Notturmo Napolitano, Accolti experienced having his poems printed during his lifetime. Unlike many others, during the sixteenth century, his works were widely circulated through frequent manuscript copying and reprinting, but the tension between oral and written transmission applied to his poems as well as to all other oral poets. As Giovio wrote, "many of his *carmina*) are in circulation, written down in various styles, but he was always at his most 'unique' and remarkable when, before great primes, he performed *ad lyram* the death of Polyxena on the altar and the fourth book of Virgil on the passions of Dido, rendered in his own incomparably felicitous translation."

The content of Accolti's poetry was partly dictated by his Petrarchan muse, *Julia*, but unlike Cariteo's *Luna* or Petrarch's *Laura*, she had to compete with other Accolti muses in real life, and his more spontaneous and opportunistic creative process took him far from something like an integrated songbook. His non-Petrarchan devotion was also evident in his dedication to more traditional forms of oral poets: *ottava rima* (*Virginia*) and *strambotti*. As a typical medium for the emotions of love, the sonnet was for Accolti primarily a means for the "laments" of his lover. In his famous and unusual *D'un Carciophono*, *Julia* is compared to an artichoke in an idea that must have greatly amused his courtly audience.

You, with a thousand deceits,
conceal the truth and it,
among a thousand leaves, hides the fruit.
Within so many teasing layers,
you rarely grant favour and it,
within so many bracts,
the few at the centre among such bitterness,
has a fleeting flavour.

Regardless of whether Accolti performed his works by referring to specific images, ... the images of ancient historical and mythological figures he evokes in his poems represent classical sources well known to his audience. They were irresistible material for dramatic performers like Accolti - masters of conjuring *mental images* and infusing them with the affective power of his music.

It was this ability, rather than occasional eccentricities of courtship, that earned him a prominent place at Castiglione's gatherings.

¹²⁴ A very interesting detail about the holding of the instrument which unequivocally indicates that it was a lira da braccio and not a lute and that some musicians held the instrument like a violin and not on the shoulder (probably because of the size of the instrument?) as on a series of iconographic representations.

Benedetto Gareth, *Il Cariteo* (ca1450-1515)¹²⁵

The absence of court records and the fact that Cariteo rarely traveled and performed his poetry outside Naples complicates the assessment of his contemporary status as a *cantore ad lyram*.

... he was a person of great importance in the creation and performance of lyric poetry in the vernacular language, and he had a formative influence on poetic and singing styles (especially in regard to strambotto) of Serafino, Andrea Cossa, and probably anyone else who came to or from Naples. ...

In 1490, in Milan, Calmeta ... praised above all the style exemplified by Cariteo and Serafino:

In their manner of singing, /singers of vernacular poetry/ should imitate Chariteo and Serafino, who in our time have held the palm in such practice of more refined styles of singing and striven to accompany their rhymes with smooth and calm music, that the excellence of their witty and edifying words might be better understood; for they have the judgement of a discerning jeweller, who, wanting to display the finest and whitest pearl, will not wrap it in a golden cloth, but in some black silk, that it might show up better.

The first thing to note about this passage is that it speaks to a crucial feature of *cantare ad lyram*, the inseparability of music and poetry, as Calmeta refers not only to "manner of singing" (i.e., interpretative issues such as tone, rhythm, and dynamics, regardless of the actual melodic content), but to music itself, characterized here as "smooth and serene," all under the heading of the hotly debated topic of poetic imitation. Given Cariteo's musical style, it appears that this characterization was corroborated by Paolo Cortesi in his work *De cardinalatu*:

The manner of singing now is divided into ... Phrygian, Lydian, and Dorian . . . The Lydian can be considered to be of two kinds, one that is called complex, and the second simple ... Simple is that manner that results in a rather languid modulation; thus we saw to be inflected those verses of P. Maro /Virgil/ which used to be sung, on suggestion of Ferdinand II by the poet Caritheus.

Cariteo seems not to have excelled in the flashy, embellished singing that Calmeta described as obstructive to the "subtleties and rare inventions" of better poetry and suitable for more popular poetic forms, but rather in a fluid and unhurried style, more conducive to clear and expressive declamation of words. In other words, a style that corresponds to the introspective and relatively subtle Petrarchan diction of his poetry. Raffaele Brandolini commented on this Petrarchan current in his Neapolitan years and added Cariteo to his pantheon of successful singers, which included Baccio, Sannazaro, and Bernarda Accolti.

Although his humanistic education provided him with excellent knowledge of Latin, Cariteo's poetry was exclusively in the Italian vernacular, created distinctly in the style of Tuscan poetic language. ...

For Cariteo, the type of poetic voice as song was not merely literary vanity, as the poet was an actual singer, and we get another example of the natural kinship between contemporary practice *cantare ad lyram* and verbally transmitted humanistic endeavours, be they intellectual (ancient poetic practice), educational (*studia humanitatis*), social (*Il Cortegiano*), poetic (Petrarch), or, as we will see, dramatic (eclogues). It is precisely in Cariteo's distinctly elegiac poetic voice that we

¹²⁵ Ibid., Wilson: *Singing* ...

might discover the source of what Cortesi characterized as singing without ornamentation and limp. ...

A clear shift in that voice occurs when Cariteo takes a more open political stance in some of his poems from the *Endimione* collection. His *Aragonia*, the sixth canzone in *Endimione*, was written during 1495-96 and represents an extensive encomium in praise of the entire Aragonese dynasty.

This piece serves as a useful reminder that not all poetry intended for court performance was love poetry, and the role of a patriotic poet like him could actually resemble the role of civic heralds of republican cities - states whose *canzoni morali* could function as a form of state-sponsored oratory.

A rare description of Cariteo's actual singing comes from reports of court festivities celebrating the marriage between Ferdinand II and Infanta Giovanna in 1496. They included dancing, banquets with "entertaining musical interludes of all sorts of farce and eclogues", recitation of many *gliommeri napolitaneschi*, and Cariteo's singing of songs from his *Endimione*.

Cariteo, who is called Barcinio in Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, and is secretary to the King, sang very many of his frottole /*fè cantare mille sue frottola*/, composed by him in praise of his *Luna*, with whom he is admirably in love under the name of *Endimione*.

However one interprets the term *frottola* in this context, it points us to the poetic forms that could be sung in Cariteo's *Endimione*, which include sonnets, *canzoni*, *capitoli*, and *ballate*. As lyrical forms approved by Petrarch, *sestine* and madrigals were also included in *Endimione*, but they were mostly not sung in Cariteo's time. On the other hand, among the most commonly sung poetic forms of that era were the *strambotto* and the *capitolo in terza rima*.

During Cariteo's lifetime, the *strambotto* was extremely popular as the preferred lyrical medium for poetic improvisation and singing, and his thirty-two *strambotti* show the characteristic charms of the form that can be traced back to the influence of Luigi Pulci and Angelo Poliziano: the popularization of language in an epigrammatic form that balances wit and grace with spontaneity and direct expression.

However, to a large extent, the *strambotto* being an oral form, of all of Cariteo's popular forms, it is the least susceptible to critique as a written text per se, because a crucial element of its character and success was the individual manner of melody and singing presented by the *cantor ad lyram* during his performance. Here, it's useful to remember that Cariteo's style was transmitted through performed *strambotti*, via Andrea Cossa, to Serafino Aquilano, and here we can also reconcile Calmeta's and Cortesi's comments regarding his smooth, elegiac singing with the recurring figure of the suffering lover.

By the end of the fifteenth century, the *strambotto*, like the Northern Italian *frottola*, was an oral poetic form subject to the influence of written polyphonic practice in the fluid environment of Italian courts, and Cariteo's works were no exception. "*Amando e desiando io vivo*" is the only Cariteo poem preserved in musical form, printed in two versions: four-voice in Petrucci's *Frottole libro nono* (Venice, 1509) and a version for voice and lute in the work of Francesco Bossinensis, *Tenori e contrabassi intabulati col sopran in canto figurato per cantar e sonar col lauto, Libro secundo* (Venice, 1511).¹²⁶

It is tempting to regard the music here as "the work of Cariteo," or as "representative of the kind of piece Cariteo performed at the meetings of Pontano's Academy," and it is possible that Serafino or Cossa could have been conduits to the northern courts of Cariteo's singing as well as

¹²⁶ See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-14, Wilson fig.6.2.

his poetry. ... It is also difficult to square the rather generic and uninteresting character of the melody in this written version which perhaps has more to do with the *modo de cantar sonetti* and other such musical templates for singing certain poetic forms that began to circulate around this time with the distinctive musical *arie* that were said to distinguish successful singer-poets like Cariteo and Serafino.

Jacopo Sannazaro (1458 - 1530)¹²⁷

Sannazaro's first eclogues date around 1480-82, followed by an early version of *Arcadia* titled *Libro Pastorale Intitolato Archadio* written around 1482-88, which included ten prose and eclogues. After 1488, the final version was reached through the revision of the first ten prose and eclogues, along with the addition of two more pairs of eclogues in prose and an epilogue. The early formative phase of *Arcadia* took place, as seen, in a highly performative environment for pastoral performances in which Sannazaro had a leading role, but also in an oral intellectual environment where works in progress were regularly performed, discussed, and revised almost like in a workshop through interaction with a group of fellow writers and scholars. *Libro Pastorale* was presented to Duchess Ippolita Maria Sforza as an illuminated presentation before her death in 1488, so it likely took shape in her literary circle in Castel Capuano, which included his teacher Giuniano Maio and other writers who were particularly engaged in folk poetry and theatrical performances.

The most innovative and influential aspects of *Arcadia* were already in place with the *Libro Pastorale*: its book length narrative sweep across ten eclogues, the separation of the shepherd's poetic utterances (eclogues) from the narrative frame (the proses that set up each eclogue), and the infusion of Petrarchan language, mostly by way of the lyric forms of the *canzoni*, *sestine*, and madrigals inserted into the eclogues. Almost everything about the fictional orality of *Arcadia* has its clear precedent in the Neapolitan court cultural practices. As was true for Serafino in his eclogue, the continual poetic singing of the shepherds, which is described in many of the proses and dominates the eclogues, had its obvious counterpart in Neapolitan court life, including the irresistible opportunity to cast performing court poets like Sannazaro (Sincero) and Cariteo (Barcinio) in roles as the archetypal singer-poets of an idyllic ancient world.

The shepherd often engages in spontaneous and improvised singing, such as when in Eclogue III Galicio interrupts his song upon seeing his beloved shepherdess, "without any of us asking him to," or in any of the many competitions of Arcadian singing mirroring the courtly poetic competitions (*gare*), where one shepherd is challenged to exchange stanzas with a companion and follows them by harmonizing poetic form, final rhymes, and theme. Sannazaro particularly cleverly employed interwoven *sestina* forms in Eclogue IV and *terza rima* in Eclogues VI and IX, leaving little room for manoeuvring to the performers.

A particular form of the poetic *gara* common to both *Arcadia* and the contemporary practices of *improvvisatori* involved the challenge to improvise on a set topic revealed at the moment of performance; in Eclogue X, Selvaggio, "to whom it fell to frame his song upon the subject imposed," launched into a long moralizing eclogue revealing the topic earlier given him by Opico - to sing the praises of the golden age of *Arcadia*, in which Sannazaro included a diatribe on the evils of the present day that alluded to the political crisis in Naples in 1485 when the barons conspired to overthrow the government.

What makes *Arcadia* so strongly rooted in Neapolitan court culture in the 1480s and early 1490s is the allegorical function of its pastoral world, which requires a certain permeability between the

¹²⁷ Ibid., Wilson: BW: That Sannazaro himself sang with his own accompaniment by a lyre is confirmed by R. Brandolini in his work *De Musica et Poetica*.

fictional, literary world of Arcadia and the performative world of the court; this literally grounds the work in the Neapolitan landscape but also leads to the Arcadian masking of real singers who sing like Cariteo (Barcinio), De Jennaro (Montano), Sannazaro (Sincero), and Giovanni Francesco Caracciolo (Caracciolo). Caracciolo's song is actually inserted into Selvaggio's song in Eclogue X, where he is presented as a brilliant singer resembling Apollo who "in sounding *sampogna*¹²⁸ or lyre would not find his equal in all of *Arcadia*."

This was one aspect of Sannazaro's work for which there was no practical parallel in the real performative world of the Neapolitan court, as reflected in Serafino's verse eclogue, nor would there be until the advent of opera. But even in their "essentialized" poetic state in *Arcadia*, Sannazaro's lyrical eclogues remain a reflection of the rich performative culture of the Neapolitan court, one in which he was deeply immersed while writing *Arcadia*. The solidification of the courtly oral world of dramatic eclogues in the literary form of *Arcadia* later did not remove pastoral drama from that oral world. If anything, like Castiglione's oral world in *Il Cortegiano*, with its enormous success and wide distribution, *Arcadia* reshaped courtly oral environments for the years to come.

In this way, *Arcadia* enshrined *cantare ad lyram* as the very manifestation of what Arcadian shepherds and their courtly avatars regarded as their defining cultural practice. In time, the form of their musical practice would shift to polyphonic madrigals and Baroque monody, but for a while longer singer-poets like Serafino, Cariteo, Accolti, and Migliorotti would continue to summon for their audiences the ubiquitous lyre-playing images of legendary Arcadians like Orpheus and Apollo.¹²⁹

Serafino Aquilano (1466-1500)¹³⁰

Serafino Aquilano (full name: Serafino de' Ciminelli dall'Aquila) was perhaps the greatest singer-poet of his time.

Although singer-poets of the calibre of Baccio Ugolini, Benedetto Gareth, and Bernardo Accolti enjoyed wide fame, none of them attracted the attention that poets, humanists, and literary critics devoted to Serafino Aquilano. Due to his premature death, he was honoured with an unprecedented series of publications: between 1502 and 1513, twenty editions of his collected poems were printed, and in 1504, the Bolognese humanist G.F. Achillini published *Collettanee grece, latine e volgare /.../ nella morte de l'ardente Seraphino Aquilano*, a monumental collection of 331 poems in Greek, Latin, and Italian by a great array of poets, all dedicated to the memory of this famous singer-poet. Alongside *Collettanee*, Serafino's biography by Vincenzo Calmeta (1460-1508), *Vita del facondo poeta volgare Serafino Aquilano*, a radical departure in a genre that had hitherto entirely excluded biographies of contemporary poets, was also published. In 1503, the humanist scholar Angelo Colocci (1484-1549) published his own edition of Serafino's works, to which he added a lengthy and passionate defence, his *Apologia ... nell'opere de Seraphino*. Together, these works provide a wealth of biographical details and reveal a talented poet, musician, and actor who possessed exceptional charisma and communication skills, and who also occupied a special place in the literary programs of his main apologists, Calmeta and Colocci.

Like the figure in Filippino Lippi's portrait, Serafino is not easy to analyse, and he seems to be composed of qualities from the world of traditional *canterini* as well as humanist singer-poets. Calmeta, who spent a lot of time with Serafino and knew him well, described Serafino as extremely rough in behaviour and dress, "more licentious than urbane" in his conversation, greedy for food

¹²⁸ A kind of Italian bagpipes.

¹²⁹ See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-15, Wilson Table 6.3-1 and 6.3-2.

¹³⁰ Ibid., Wilson: *Singing* ... IP: See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-16, Wilson Table 7.2

and fame, inclined to the street and the company of common people, with whom he shared contempt for the stinginess and corruption of courtly courts.

[Wilson]: Unlike his courtly counterparts, he did not pursue his poetry and performing with the kind of casual *sprezzatura* recommended by Castiglione, that is, as an adjunct to other humanist pursuits like diplomacy, oratory, or bureaucratic office-holding, but as a professional and with utter devotion to his muse. And his was a decidedly oral muse. At the time of his death, the state of his poetic corpus displayed little regard for written forms: nothing survived in his own hand, nothing had been collected or published, and as his first editor Francesco Flavio lamented in 1502,

“the works of Seraphino were dispersed throughout all of Italy, divided into small bits and scattered, so that it was hard to know which were his; I feared a second death - that of his works - even more than his first death.”

On the other hand, although his clothing and behaviour may suggest a modest position in the courtly environment, his background, education, and bold attitude towards his patrons suggest otherwise. He was born into a lower nobility family in Aquila, and in 1478, he was sent as a page to the court of the Neapolitan nobleman Antonio de Guevara, Count of Potenza, to begin his education in a culturally rich environment that must have included at least music and literature. Although Calmeta noted that the twelve-year-old Serafino at this stage "barely knew any Latin," he received music instruction from the famous Flemish musician Guillaume Garnier (Guillelmus Guarnerius), from whose teaching Serafino "so profited in a few years that among other Italian musicians he led in composing songs (*componere canti*)."

Reference to Serafino's study with a Flemish musician has led to speculation about the nature of his musical education and skills, and therefore the type of music with which he accompanied his poems. This was obviously an extraordinary aspect of Serafino's art. For Cortesi, there was "nothing sweeter than his way of singing." Calmeta claimed that Serafino brought to Rome a "new way of singing" (*novo modo di cantare*), "smooth" (*stesa e piana*) and "refined" style learned in Milan in 1489 from "musical form" in which Andrea Cossa sang Cariteo's *strambotti* on the lute. Colocci praised his ability to unleash the passions of his listeners through the rare combination of words and music, which he achieved not only with his vocal melodies but through a rare harmonization of "words with the lute."

When, after returning to Rome in 1491, Serafino began attending Cortesi's academy, Calmeta attributed his success in performing his own works at "demanding competitions of other literati" to "the harmony of his music and the acuity of his *strambotti*." Calmeta clearly indicates that Serafino composed "melodies and words (*lo aere e lo parole*)," and that his melodies were valued and occasionally transcribed. In a letter dated November 4, 1490, Fra Christophorus of Novara wrote to an official of the Milanese duchy office in Rome: "if the poet Serafino has written anything new, I shall use every diligence to have the music copied with the words" (*per haverla notata et le parole*).

His music perhaps as much as his verse was the object of imitation by the hosts of younger singer-poets inspired by Serafino. As Cortesi wrote in his *De cardinalatu* (1510), "such a multitude of imitative court singers (*auleddi*) emanated from him that whatever is seen to be sung in this genre in all Italy appears to be born out of the model of his sung poems /*carmina*/ and /melodic/ modes." This echoes Calmeta's earlier statement in the *Vita*:

many players and singers seeing how performing rather than the writing /*che la forza dil recitare più che dil comporre*/ had given fame /to Serafino/, and how this manner was so pleasing to princes, the learned, and to graceful ladies, they resolved to imitate /Serafino/, and

to learn both his melodies */aeri/* and his words. So it was that within a short time his poems were scattered throughout Italy not just by him but by many other *citaredi*.

Calmeta's report is significant because it confirms the explicitly oral means by which Serafino's poems were transmitted.

It is clear that Serafino's music stood out for its attention and was praised for the emotional strength it gave to his poetry, thus achieving an almost autonomous status and influence that was unique among the world of early modern singer-poets. This obvious reification of Serafino's music, together with his learning from the aforementioned Flemish master, tempted some critics to assume that his musical accompaniment may have taken written form and included polyphonic composition. After all, Garnier was an *optimus contrapunctista* and a prominent member of Neapolitan musical circles that included Johannes Tinctoris, as indicated by his name being mentioned in Gafori's *Theoriae musicae tractatus* and *Practica musice*. It is known that Serafino associated with composers of polyphony in the hybrid environments of Italian courts. While he and Josquin were in the service of Ascanio Maria Sforza, Serafino addressed a sonnet "to Josquin, His Companion, Ascanio's Musician" which alludes to the independent spirit they shared by valuing talent above the easy success of courtly youths...

Although all this suggests that Serafino possessed formal musical knowledge greater than that of his contemporary singer-poets, none of it suggests knowledge significantly different from what Castiglione recommended to an esteemed courtier. Rudimentary music education would include instruction in solmization, and Serafino's playful manipulation of it in his poetry would have delighted his courtly audience. It is also important to note that the playful syllables of solmization were an audible aspect of the poem, thus corresponding to the arsenal of an oral poet like Serafino. Garnier's own training and teaching of Serafino, probably, besides singing and playing an instrument, also included counterpoint and composition. This is actually suggested in Calmeta's report on Serafino's development immediately after studying with Garnier:

Being compelled to return to his homeland and reside there for three years [1481-84], he gave himself to learning the sonnets, *canzoni*, and *Trionfi* of Petrarch, so that he not only acquired the greatest familiarity with them, but attuned them to music so well that when one heard them sung by him on the lute they surpassed any other harmony */ma tanto bene con la musica li accordava che a sentirli da lui cantare nel liuto, ogni altra harmonia superavano/*.

[Wilson]: Serafino, in other words, appears to have emerged from his early studies not more inclined to polyphony and notated music, but as a gifted singer-poet of Italian vernacular verse with strong musical abilities that remained guided by oral practice. Or as Cortesi put it, Serafino was in a direct line of succession from Petrarch as a performer of vernacular poetry to the lute, a genre to which he gives the classicizing term *carmina*:

Which genre Franciscus Petrarca is said to have first established as he sang his exalted poems to the lute. But of late Seraphinus Aquilanus was the originator of the renewal of this genre, by whom such a controlled conjunction of modes and songs was woven that there could be nothing sweeter than the manner of his modes.

Despite the obviously unique qualities of Serafino's music, it may not be surprising that its actual state does not differ much from the state of his contemporary singer-poets: not a single note of his has survived. In all the numerous examples of his poems, and especially in the significant number of surviving polyphonic musical settings of his poems (some of which were transcribed during his lifetime), there is not a single reference or possibility of attributing Serafino as a composer. It is not necessary to look far for the reasons for this, because as Cortesi, Calmeta, and Colocci observe with

particular emphasis, he “intertwined words and music with such perception,” and his music, despite its expressive beauty and power, remained embedded in the words and resistant to notation.

[Wilson]: This, I believe, is the central point in what is perhaps Calmeta’s most well-known statement about the music of Serafino and his kind. This is delivered in his essay *Qual stil tra’ volgari poeti sia da imitare* (“Which style among those of the vernacular poeti should one imitate”) where Calmeta attempts in a more systematic manner to advise aspiring young singer-poets about whom to emulate in the matter of applying music to vernacular poetry:

There are those youths who take delight in vernacular works not to achieve style in composition, but the better to prevail through them in their amorous endeavors ... being accustomed to take pleasure in the art of singing, /they/ wish by their songs (particularly if they can sing in diminution) to entertain their ladies ... they must busy themselves with *stanze*, *barzellette*, *frottole* and other pedestrian styles, and not rely upon subtleties and inventions ... which when associated with music are not only overshadowed, but obstructed in such a way that they cannot be discerned ...

[Wilson]: The advocacy of Serafino as the exemplary practitioner of a *lingua cortigiana* required the establishment of his humanist credentials as a singer-poet, and the elevation of Serafino Aquilano from an unrefined vernacular *citharedo* to an Apollonian singer-poet was accomplished in part by the application of a classicizing veneer to his professional image and activity. As noted above, Cortesi placed Serafino in a lineage traceable to Petrarch, the “ancient” model of the vernacular poet who not merely wrote but “sang his exalted poems *ad lembum*” (to the lute), a lineage that continued through the “multitude of imitative court singers that emanate from [Serafino].” Colocci takes up the fashioning of Serafino’s classical profile by invoking classical precedents for the affective fusion of word and song:

/Critics/ will grant /Serafino/ a unique style of diction, but he tried to harmonize the words with the lute in order to impress them more deeply on the souls of the audience, to inflame them at one moment and release them at another, just the way Gracchus used his lyre to the same effect at sessions of the Senate. I predict that just as Terpander will never lack for praise for having joined his voice to the music of his lyre, or Dardanus to that of the pipes, so Serafino is to be celebrated more than anyone else before him for giving us a way /modo/ both to express the passions of love in verse and impress /them on our hearers.

6.6. The end of the art of *Cantare ad lyram*, its transformation and the continuation in the 16th and 17th centuries¹³¹

The essential features of the solo singing tradition described in this study linguistic pluralism and eclectic imitation, orality and improvisation, the frequent interface between learned and popular traditions, the inseparability of poetry and music, and the conflated roles of poet, musician, and performer - were all challenged by the vernacular poetics associated with Pietro Bembo, which were widely accepted by about 1530.

What Bembo began with the publication in 1501 of the first *Petrarchino*, a pocket-sized edition of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, and in 1505 with his dialogue *Gli Asolani*, was completed after the 1525 publication of the immensely influential *Prose della volgar lingua*: the promotion of Petrarch’s lyric verse, especially the sonnets, as the ideal model for vernacular poetry.

¹³¹ Ibid., Wilson: *Singing ...IP*: See Music Examples A, Ch. VI-17, Wilson fig. E2.1 Unkown *canterino* or *Cantore ad lyram* with his *lira da braccio*

Bembo's purist view of poetic language entailed seismic shifts in the way poetry was conceived, composed, and transmitted: oral performance (including music) was rejected as a criterion for judging the poet, and the written text (notwithstanding its Petrarchan sonic qualities) was exalted as the essential object for analysis and the formation of a normative theoretical system. For Bembo and his followers, vernacular poetry was a serious literary activity that effectively uncoupled writing from speech, and thereby from singing. It aspired to the formal and stylistic elevation represented by Ciceronian eloquence by looking to a single, clearly defined linguistic model, *trecento* Tuscan, and rejected the messy eclecticism of the *lingua cortigiana* and the ludic environment of the courts.

The new Petrarchist orthodoxy was borne along by the larger cultural forces in play at this time, including the rise of authoritarian regimes in response to the Italian wars and political destabilization of the Italian courts, and the religious orthodoxy and obedience generated by the Counter-Reformation. The effect of the new poetics upon the old might best be understood as shifts in the play between a number of dualities.

Numerous surviving accounts from the sixteenth century describe pleasant gatherings during which music appeared in various forms, including *cantare ad lyram*. These are usually collections of *novelle* (in the manner of Boccaccio's *Decameron*) or dialogues (in the manner of *Il Cortegiano*), some invented and some recreations of real events, but most involve a small *brigata* of well-educated men (and occasionally women) with common interests in various intellectual topics, among which reciting and singing poetry is always included. In 1541, Mario Equicola described an informal meeting in Rome that took place in the 1530s when the *Accademia dei Vignaiuoli* met at the home of the Florentine patrician Giovambattista Strozzi. Strozzi, along with Niccolò Franciotti, Pietro Gelido, and Carlo Gualteruzzi, all *maravigliosi dicitori d'improvviso*, amazed their colleagues with sung improvisation on a theme revealed only at the moment of performance.

Silvan Cattaneo's *Dodici giornate* is a collection of *novelle* that describe a journey around Lake Garda (near Brescia) around 1540, undertaken by Count Fortunato Martinengo and a *brigata* of male companions, mostly scholars, students, and friends from Padua.¹³² Their main source of recreation was reciting and singing poetry accompanied by violas, lutes, *lira da braccios*, and harpsichord. Although the genres and performance practices described by Cattaneo are extremely diverse, music-making tends to be classified into two types: singing any existing short lyrical works (sonnets, *canzoni*, madrigals) accompanied by a lute, harpsichord, or violas [viols?], and longer forms of *terza* and *ottava rima* accompanied by a *lira* or *viola*. The former sometimes included polyphony and the use of music books, while the latter involved unnotated music that seems to be more closely related to poetry, suggested by interchangeable use of *dire* and *cantare*, and expressions like *cantarvi dentro /la lira/, cantarli nella lira*, and *nella sua lira ... cantando* to describe the 'submersion of the poetic singing "within" the *lira*'s music.'

[Wilson] A more thorough examination of such sixteenth-century literary sources is needed, but a preliminary reading suggests that *cantare ad lyram* in elite circles persisted while assuming a more specialized and restricted role as a form of recreation among educated amateurs. It also competed with proliferating options for the solo singing of verse, including pre-composed polyphonic settings that were increasingly well-adapted to vernacular verse and available in the more accessible medium of tablature notation, and the use of instruments like the lute, viola da gamba, and *lirone* that challenged the primacy of the *lira da braccio*. There is also some evidence that by the second half of the sixteenth century, theoretical discussions of poetry in

¹³² See: Bonnie Blackburn, "Fortunato Martinengo and his Musical Tour around Lake Garda" in *Fortunato Martinengo: Un gentiluomo del Rinascimento fra arti, lettere e musica*, edited by Marco Bizzarini and Elisabetta Selmi, Brescia 2018.

Italian literary academies increasingly regarded singing as “not part of the verse’s natural essence,” a position that came about in part as an interpretation of Aristotle’s *Poetics*.

During the first half of the sixteenth century, traditional centers of *cantare ad lyram* practice like Naples and Florence tended to resist Bembist poetics and continue nurturing the practices and careers of singer-poets.

In Cattaneo's *Dodici giornate*, for example, the primary exponent of singing to the lyre among the company, Signor Capoano, was a Neapolitan gentleman distinguished for his poetry and “sweet manner of singing to the lyre typical of the Neapolitan area.” During the short tenure of the Sacred Academy of the Medici in Florence (ca. 1515-19), the skills of the professional singer-poets Bernardo Accolti and Atalante Migliorotti were highly prized and eagerly integrated into the socially fluid world of the Academy. But even in these strongholds *cantare ad lyram* eventually lost its preeminence or purity. The Neapolitan solo singers Luigi Dentice (1510-66), his son Fabrizio (ca. 1539-81), Giulio Cesare Brancaccio (1515-86), and their contemporary Scipione delle Palle (a Siennese who spent most of his career in Naples) have been described as “improvisers” who may have employed extemporized instrumental accompaniments based on standard chord progressions, but their practices were strongly hybridized by their engagement with polyphonic composition, theory, and performance.¹³³

The activities of these same men as singing actors in court theatrical performances, especially in Naples, remind us that *cantare ad lyram* progressed in that context between the late fifteenth century and the 1520s, during the experimental and nascent phase of Italian theatre that coincided with the high tide of *cantare ad lyram*.

However, as theatre historians have stated, verse plays thereafter sought to eliminate singing in favour of spoken recitation, and the interrupted connection between theatre and singing was rebuilt with newer and hybrid forms of solo singing represented by Scipione and his colleagues.

[Wilson] In Florence, as elsewhere, professional *cantores ad lyram* like Accolti, Migliorotti, and Notturmo Napolitano become difficult to locate later in the century as the socially heterogeneous environments in which they moved disappeared, and as their practice was marginalized by or subsumed into the emerging music-poetic genres of the madrigal.

Noble amateurs like Brancaccio did not want to be considered professional musicians, considering that status to be craft-based and undignified. In some contexts, the traditional form of *cantare ad lyram* seems to have been reduced to a cliché for ancient poetry and performance, as in Messisbugo's report on a court banquet in Ferrara in 1529 when the only example of *cantare ad lyram* among the splendid variety of instrumental and polyphonic vocal ensembles occurred when a solitary singer "came onto the stage with a *lira*, singing in the style of Orpheus."¹³⁴

¹³³ BW: Cardamone, “The Prince of Salerno,” 80-96; Brown, “The Geography of Florentine Monody,” pp.147-152; Canguilhem, “Monodia e contrappunto a Firenze,” pp.41-42, where he connects Brancacci and Scipio with the practice of transforming counterpoint madrigals into monodic versions. In a separate study, Brown claims that in Naples, Scipione, Luigi and Fabrizio Dentice participated in creating new types of *arie da cantare* formulas for singing the refined lyric verse of Petrarca, Tansilla and Bemba, music reflected in *Aeri raccolti* (Naples, 1577) by Rocco Rodio and the monody composed by Scipio's pupil Giulio Caccini; Brown, “Petrarch in Naples”, pp.24, 44.

¹³⁴ BW: Brown, “A Cook’s Tour of Ferrara in 1529,” p.238. In contrast, at the 1539 wedding ceremonies of the Duke Cosimo de’ Medici and Eleanor of Toledo, Apollo, who played the lyre, often appeared and sang improvised music in several stanzas of *ottava rima* composed by Giovanni Battista Gelli, and they alternated through the prologue with polyphonic canzone and canzone settings. But in the future, *cantare ad lyram* seems to be gradually being replaced by composed monodic works at court banquets and spectacles.

Socially distinct from the genteel amateur singers of the courts and academies were the *canterini* and *cantimpanchi* who flourished anew in urban piazzas during the sixteenth century, especially in the cities of northern Italy. These figures appear to perpetuate the oral and itinerant practices of their fifteenth-century predecessors, like Zuan Battista Sambeni of Remedello (ca. 1530-69), a dyer in a workshop in Venice who supplemented his income by “singing on the bench and playing the lyre, and going here and there among many cities.” But sixteenth-century *canterini* also operated in the changed conditions brought about by the availability of cheap print (especially after the 1530s) and the increasing censorship of civic and religious authorities less tolerant of dissent and free speech. The economic synergy between singing and selling cheap printed pamphlets (or other goods) in the piazza was irresistible to street singers of all ranks. At one extreme were the *cerretani* and *ciarlatani* who pilfered, altered, and hawked the work of poets like Boccaccio and Ariosto without acknowledgment, or those described by Tommaso Garzoni in his *La piazza universale*, like Cristoforo Scandio, *il Cieco da Forlì* (ca. 1540-93), who performed to attract customers to their medical remedies, perfumes, soaps, and other goods. But there were more literate *canterini* such as Zanobi della Barba, Ippolito Ferrarese, Niccolò Zoppino, and Jacopo Coppa who were also editors and publishers of the pamphlets that they and others performed and sold in the piazzas of north Italian cities. Peter Burke has described these journeyman printers as the semi-literate members of a “chap-book culture” that mediated between learned and traditional oral cultures.

These enterprising performers all operated in an environment of literacy and book ownership rates probably higher than their fifteenth century counterparts, and they enabled the movement of all kinds of literature between popular and elite environments. But this social mobility was less easy for the performers themselves than it had been for figures like Antonio di Guido and Serafino Aquilano.

From my Lira project, I draw upon what serves as a fitting epilogue here. The lira da braccio, along with the lira da gamba/lirone, played a pivotal role in shaping musical forms, techniques, and performance practices in numerous ways. It was instrumental in early experiments with “monody,” even before the emergence of what is traditionally recognized as true monody. Additionally, the lirone contributed significantly to the development of *basso continuo* in the early Baroque period. Both instruments held intellectual and symbolic significance for humanists, particularly Neoplatonists, due to their association with the revival of ancient performance practices, especially in accompanying vocal performances.

The practice of improvised performance, particularly in the context of accompanying one's own singing, was a distinctive feature that was later adopted by the lute. However, it was intentionally not notated, and thus, has been lost to the history. Nonetheless, the technique of chordal playing on bowed instruments persisted and was adapted by violinists, as exemplified by B. Marini's *Capriccio a modo di lira*, as showcased in Jones' work. This technique was further developed by virtuosos and composers such as Biber and Bach, extending its influence all the way to Bartok.

The memory of the sound produced by both *lire* persisted even after their disuse. Francesco Rognoni, in his work *Selva di varii passaggi* (Milan 1620), utilizes the term “*lireggiare*” to describe a long, *legato* bow stroke, evoking the sound of these instruments. In Marco da Gagliano's opera *La Dafne* (performed in 1608 in Mantua), Apollo appears in the sixth scene holding a lira da braccio while singing the aria “*Non curi la mia pianta, o fiamma, o gelo,*” accompanied by four *viole* (whether viols or violins), which imitate the sound of the *lira* with three chords.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ In terms of their construction and “natural” sequence, these chords are more reminiscent of those in the lyre that gamba than those in the lyre that braccio ...

Despite the lira's cessation of use, its symbolic association with antiquity and mythical figures like Apollo remained present and recognizable to composers and their audiences and in the iconography the lira playing Appolos appeared in Dutch or German prints until the mid 17th century.

American viol player Erin Headley, first musician who conducted systematic research and performed on the lira da gamba/lirone, shared (at one of the symposia attended by both of us) the idea that the ideal sound described above persisted in what she referred to as the "big *lira*" or a bowed ensemble comprising instruments from the violin family. This ensemble played long, legato (*lireggiare*) chords, echoing the sound of both *lire*.

To remember and repeat:

[BINKLEY-Vinsauf] p.10.

[PIETROPAOLO] p.12 Rhetoric

[MARIANI-Caruthers] p.13. "Memory is most like a library of texts, ..."

[BUSSE BERGER] p.13. Memorial archive and composition

[MARIANI-Rhetorica ad Herennium] p.14

[MARIANI-Yates] p.15. ... two kinds of memory, natural and artificial.

[MARIANI-Caruthers] p.15. *loci*, comparison with computer icons

[MENKE-Rhetoric] p.16. about rules of classical rhetoric,

[WILSON-Memory] p.17. The memory of a professional *canterino*

[WILSON] p.18-20. about the Niccolò Cieco of Florence treatise on *arte della memoria*:

[WILSON] p.20 Memory and Improvisation and *studia humanitatis*

[WILSON] p.23. Brothers Brandolini and Pietrobono ... Aurelio's performance in Venice 1485 ...

[GALLO-A. Brandolini] p.24. Aurelio's performance in Verona, 8.10.1494.

[GALLO-A. Brandolini] p.26-29. Aurelio's "Libellum" about performance by Ferrarese singer and lute virtuoso Pietrobono.

[MOYER] p.29. on Raffaele Brandolini's book *On Music and Poetry (De musica et poetica, 1513)*.

[WILSON] p.29. on Raffaele Brandolini's work.

[MOYER] p.30-39. Quotes from Raffaele's booklet, in which he addresses to apostolic protonotary Corradolo Stanga. ... Music (See in the Appendix/

[WILSON] 6.4. Cantare ad Lyram in the courts of Italy:

p.39-42. Ferrara, p.41-42. (LOCKWOOD) Pietrobono

[WILSON] p.42-44. Urbino, 43. *Cantare alla viola* (Cantare ad lyram?), p.44. *cantare alla viola per recitar* ...

p.44-46. Aragonese court in Naples, p.45. Neapolitan lyric poetry and its performers,

p.46-48. Latin Rome, p.47. Banquets, feasts, academies, Andrea Marone,
[WILSON] p.48. Raphael *Parnassus*

[WILSON] p. 49. 6.5. Most prominent Cantori ad Lyram (with impressions of contemporaries)

Niccolò Cieco p.48, p.49. Michele del Gigante

Antonio di Guido (Antonio della Viuola) p.50, p.51. his playing, Marsilio Ficino p.52-54, interesting about playing the lira, p.53. Ficino's role in emerging of lira (da braccio?)

Lorenzo de' Medici p.54, Angelo Poliziano p.54-56, p.56. his *Orfeo*

Baccio Ugolini p.56, p.57. his performances, Leonardo da Vinci p.57-9, Atalante Migliorotti p.57-8,

Cristoforo Fiorentino l'Altissimo p.59-61, p.60 about his performances on S.Martino

Bernardo Accolti p.61-63, p.62. and Isabella d'Este, his performances,

Benedetto Gareth p.63-65, p.64. his performances,

Jacopo Sannazaro p.65-6 his *Arcadia*

and Serafino Aquilano p.67-70, p.68. his study with Flemish musician Guillaume Garnier

[WILSON] p.70. 6.6. End of the art of Cantare ad lyram: p.71. survival of the lira,

Reading recommendations:

BINKLEY, Thomas: *The work is not the performance, ...*
See also in the Appendix, 8.1. GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

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... See 8.1. Ibid

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... See 8.1. Ibid

PIETROPAOLO, Domenico: *Improvisation in the Arts; ...* See 8.1. Ibid

WILSON, Blake: *Singing to the Lyre in Renaissance Italy, ...* ... See 8.1. Ibid