Chapter 7: How to Improvise on the *Lire*

Chapter 7: How to Improvise on *Lire*?

Our knowledge and understanding of improvised singing and accompaniment *ad lyram* seem to be forever lost at first sight, for the simple reason that not only the melody and accompaniment but even the lyrics were sometimes improvised and almost never written down. In such a situation, even a partial, let alone a complete reconstruction of this practice, seems like an unattainable endeavour.

Is that really the case, and to what extent? As we saw in Chapter 6, there are a number of elements and contemporary sources from which we can learn many things that can be of great help to us. What can assist us in today's practical reconstruction of this art is explored in this chapter.[1]

7.1. Terminology, Lira - lute, viola, etc.

First, I wanted to recall some already mentioned terms concerning the activity of *all'improvviso, canterini,* humanist *cantori ad lyram* (which is term used by B. Wilson but not to be found in this form during the 15th or 16th centuries) and similar. As we said the name *improvvisatori* never appeared in their own time but rather in the form of person

che canta all'improvviso, *che dice in rime*, or *che dice alo improviso*

What follows are various names and terms mentioned by B. Wilson in his book[2]:

Niccolò Cieco is described 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 … 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.*

Terms *cantare, recitare* or *dire* rarely admit a literal translation as "recited," or "read aloud," see *cantando*, *gli disse molti versi ...* especially for prose, most often *recitare* and *cantare* are used interchangeably.

cantare alla viola or *cantare alla viola per recitar* (B. Castiglione)

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.' (Cattaneo's *Dodici giornate*)

Cardiere della viola,(Jean Cordier) a musician whom Lorenzo highly valued for his ability to sing beautifully accompanied by his *lira cantare in sulla lira all'improvviso meravigliosamente*

...dixe cose maravigliose de improviso.

Leonardo was *migliore dicitore di rime all' improvviso/* in his time.

Latin *fidibus et cantu* for one who sings to his accompaniment on the *viola* or *lira*

Chitaredo (Pietrobono) & his *tenorista*, … several musician with addition (only latter family name) *della viola* (*Viuola* in case of Antonio di Guido or *della Viuola*)

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[1] See in the Appendix/ Various Lists/ Memories of contemporaries on lira etc.
[2] Blake Wilson: *Singing to the Lyre in Renaissance Italy*.

Other names for similar functions:
Cantorino, cantatore, pulsator, suonatore or sonadore

Canterini, cantastorie, contastorie, cantimpanchi

Cantare for collections: A *cantare* is a political narrative poem in *ottave* (octaves), covering various subjects such as epic, chivalric, adventurous, sacred, or historical-political themes. The genre of "*cantare*" is a literary form that originated and spread in Italy in the 14th century and is of a strictly performative nature. *Cantari* were intended to be publicly recited in squares during festivals or markets by a "*canterino*" (a kind of jester) who enriched their performance with singing and mime.

Given the terminological confusion, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether the names "lira" or "lyra" really refer to the lira da braccio (or some other bowed string instrument) or to the lute (or another plucked instrument). Even if Renaissance sources are slightly less ambiguous than medieval ones, they still create considerable uncertainty, using the above names alternatively as synonyms.[3] In most cases, it is difficult to decide (let alone be "sure") what they specifically refer to. One of the many examples is the association of the composer of frottola, singer, and lute player Bartolomeo Tromboncino with the lira, especially since the instrument is mentioned as a *sonora lira*.[4] If I had to choose, "*sonora*" would better suit the lira da braccio than the lute—especially since, subjectively, the "old" technique of playing the lute with a plectrum sounds louder than the "new" one using fingers.

In the last hundred years, there has been considerable disagreement among music historians and later musicologists over the interpretation of the Latin term "*lyra*" and Italian "*lira*." Some positivists believe that both terms from the last third of the 15th century onwards may always have meant the lira (or viola) da braccio, while others, following J. Tinctoris, argue that at least the Latin name "lyra" always means only and exclusively the lute. The latter group allows, at least sometimes, that the Italian term "lira" may refer to the lira da braccio.

Due to the lira's practical role as an improvisational instrument and its symbolic significance in the late 15th and 16th centuries for Italian humanists, I believe that today there are very few serious musicologists (whether theorists or practitioners) who doubt the existence of such an important instrument.

While Renaissance terminology regarding the lira da braccio is often unreliable, especially in written sources, we do have a wealth of detailed iconographic sources that provide valuable information. However, iconography alone has its limitations.

Many written sources, including archival and literary texts, can sometimes confuse us when they mention the plectrum in connection with the Latin term "lyra," as it could easily refer to a plucked instrument such as a lute. However, from the writings of accomplished musicians and music theorists of the Renaissance period (who often combined both roles, as seen in the case of Ganassi), we learn that the plectrum used with the ancient lyre was akin to a "bow." While this may not align perfectly with modern technical terminology, it adds another layer of complexity to our understanding of these instruments. Therefore, certainty remains elusive in this regard.

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[3] Or as I. Woodfield in his book *The Early History of the Viol*, (Cambridge 1984/88) calls it generic because terms such as viola (Italian), vielle (French) and vihuela (Spanish) were applied not only for the viola but also for other string instruments such as the medieval fiddle, the lira da braccio and (in the absence of a modifying phrase *de arco*) the vihuela.

[4] This information is provided by Francesco Luisi, in his book Del cantar a libro ... o sulla viola LA MUSICA VOCALE NEL RINASCIMENTO, ERI, Turin, 1977. the text says: chi sonarà con sì sonora lira?

As an example of the first, I cite information[5] about Aurelio Brandolini's performance for the Veronese *podestà*[6], Gerolamo Bernardo, held at the Palazzo del Podestà in 1494, where the event was organized for the city's leading citizens and is remembered in detail, including transcripts of poetic texts, thanks to Veronese poet Virgilio Zavarise.[7] ...

> AB [A. Brandolini]: distichs in the eleventh syllables: He sings about the great poet Virgilio ... Now I will sing my sonorous *lyra* / now I will take my sound plectrum.
>
> /And when the five verses were finished, he sang the following elegy:/
> AB: elegy: I believe Phoebus has taken over his plectrum and *cythara* ...

Regarding the second, Silvestro Ganassi in his work *Regula Rubertina* (published in Venice in 1542, in the second part, chapter 8), instead of explaining (as a well-known practitioner, pedagogue and theorist he had to be well versed…) he brings new "contributions" to terminological confusion:

> As you know, the viola[8] has six strings. I often wondered which of the two instruments was older, the lute or the viola, so that I could describe its origin. When I talked about it with others, someone told me that among the antiquities in Rome, he saw a marble relic with many characters. One of them was holding an instrument similar to our viola. From this he concluded that the viola is older than the lute, as evidenced by the figure of Orpheus. It is not said that he used the lute, but a stringed instrument with a bow, which is called a *lira* and resembles a viola in terms of strings and bows. It is called *Lyra* or *Lyrone*, although it is usually said *Violone: Lyrone* or - if there are several - *Lyroni* is more appropriate than the name *Viola* or *Violoni*, because of the *lira* played by Orpheus. This may be enough for an introduction.[9] …
>
> Of course, you can use it [a bow] like on a *lira* with seven strings and imitate a lute. But the difference is of course there. You can't always play chords with a bow because it has to go over the strings.

Additionally, there are several instances where the appearance of the term "lira" in a text (whether archival, poetic, or prose) does not necessarily refer to the lira da braccio. In both Italian and Croatian (specifically Dalmatian) literature, phrases like "my *lira* no longer plays, it is silent or hangs on the wall" are used metaphorically to signify a lack of inspiration for writing or creative expression.

Emile Haraszti wrote in the mid-20th century (1955) about the technique of improvisation in Italian or Latin in 15th-century Italy.[10] Haraszti supports his interpretation of the terms *lyra, lira,* and *viola* as referring to the plucked instrument lute by citing the opinions of contemporary authors such as Baldassare Castiglione (1528) and Johannes Tinctoris (1487). While it may be challenging or impossible to determine from Castiglione's writings whether he is referring to a bowed or plucked instrument when he mentions "*cantare alla viola per recitare*," Tinctoris[11] is clearer in his usage, consistently referring to the lute when mentioning *lyra* and *viola*.

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[5] Blake Wilson: *Singing to the Lyre in Renaissance Italy*.
[6] Podestà, was the name given to the holder of the highest civil office in the government of the Italian cities during the late Middle Ages.
[7] See details in the 8.Appendix/ More Texts
[8] Whenever Ganassi mentions the viola he always means the viola da gamba.
[9] On the true lirone and the practice of calling one or more viols lironi, see later on p.13.
[10] Emile Haraszti, La technique des improvisateurs et de langue vulgaire et de latin au Quattrocento, *Revue belge de musicologie*, nr. 9, 1955, pp.12–31
[11] In his treatise *De inventione et usu musicae*, Naples 1487.

It is indeed surprising that Tinctoris, writing during a time when lira da braccio experienced its peak popularity, does not mention its use, especially considering its prevalence in Naples where he lived and worked. As colleague Rainer Ullreich notes in his article on "Fidel" in the new MGG[12] Tinctoris only discusses the tuning of *viole* with three to five strings, which were tuned in fifths and octaves and used to accompany epics, suggesting a role similar to that of the lira da braccio.

If we were to adopt Tinctoris's perspective, it raises questions about the significance of the numerous iconographic depictions of lira (or viola) da braccio players, particularly in liturgical settings or during improvised performances for humanistic audiences.

The French colleague Philippe Canguilhem is one of the musicologists of the younger generation who dedicated an important part of his research to the phenomenon of improvisation in the music of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, especially the so-called "Canto alla mente" or *sul libro*. I quote from his article "The Birth and Decadence of the Lira da braccio":[13]

> The real question is not when the musical instrument appeared, but rather, when was it decided to call it a lira in reference to the ancient instrument? Asking this question amounts to stepping directly into the realm of terminological confusion that characterizes the world of musical instruments between 1450 and 1500. Confusion, primarily because many of the most useful testimonies from this period are in Latin, and a comparison with contemporary Italian terminology poses more problems than it solves. Confusion, above all, because the different terms used, regardless of the language, initially have a generic meaning and do not apply to a specific instrument. ....
>
> Finally, by the end of the 15th century, *lyra* in Latin texts dedicated to instruments is used to refer to the lute. Two of the most important theorists of the period seem to agree: Bartolomé Ramos de Pareja, on one hand, who in his *Musica Practica* of 1482 describes the tuning of the lute, which he calls *lyra*; and Johannes Tinctoris on the other hand, who in his famous treatise on instruments written around 1470-80 explains "what the lyra, commonly called lute, is" ("*quid sit lyra populariter leutum dicta*"), specifying that it can be played with a plectrum or with the fingers of the right hand.[14]
>
> For Tinctoris, therefore, there is no confusion possible. On one hand, the lute, the common appellation of the lyra, is a plucked string instrument; on the other hand, the viola is a bowed instrument. Two types of viola coexist: while he does not dwell on the first, his clarifications about the second do not allow it to be assimilated with the lira da braccio, whose flat bridge allows for the simultaneous touching of multiple strings. A little further, Tinctoris specifies what he means by viola:
>
> > And although some sing very pleasantly (as we mentioned above) accompanied by this instrument, i.e., the lute, in Italy, and even more often in Spain, where it is done accompanied by a *viola*[15] without a bow. The *viola* with a bow is used in most countries of the world not only for this purpose, but also for reciting epic poetry.
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> Alongside the very useful remarks Tintoris provides on instrument practice, which we will delve into further later on, it must first be noted from this passage that the *viola* can be both bowed

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[12] Vol. II, Bärenreiter, Kassel – Metzler, Stuttgart 1996.

[13] P. Canguilhem, Naissance et décadence de la lira da braccio, *Pallas*, no. 57 (2001), pp.41-54, Presses Universitaires du Midi.

[14] P.C .: J. Tinctoris, *De inventione et Usu Musicae*. On both techniques see in more detail under W. Prizer, on p.

[15] IP: Probaly *vihuela de mano?*

("cum arculo") and plucked ("sine arculo").[16] The distinction between lyra-plucked strings/viola-bowed strings is therefore not relevant, especially since the term *lira* can also be used to refer to a bowed string instrument, but this time in Italian texts. Indeed, I am not aware of a single example of an Italian (and not Latin) text from the 15th century where the word *lira* is used in reference to the lute. The vernacular language, however, is no more precise than Latin: simply, the multiple meanings do not concern the same terms, as *viola* and *lira* are synonymous when referring to a bowed string instrument. Isabelle d'Este, in a letter written in March 1495, mentions the "*viole ovver lire*" (violas or lyres). A few years earlier, in 1491, the famous *lira* player Baccio Ugolini wrote from Naples to Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence:

> Et sono ancho seco (Galeoto del Caretto) in una praticha di fare una *lyra* ad vostro nome, che se riuscisse, come una ne ha facta fare per sè, certo saria degna di stare fralle cose vostre et per bellezza et per dolceza. /.../ Pure si porriano partire le cose di costui in questo modo, che la *viola* et li intagli fossero vostri e i versi di Mariotto.

> "I have arranged with Galeoto del Carretto to have a *lira* built in your name, which, if it proves as successful as the one he had made for himself, will be worthy of being owned by you, both for its beauty and its sweet sound. /.../ Things could be arranged so that the *viola* and the carvings were yours and the verses by Mariotto."

One could multiply the examples, all of which show that the bowed string instrument that would be called lira da braccio in the 16th century is interchangeably referred to as *lira* or *viola* in Italian, while in Latin authors, lyra usually refers to the lute. In practice as well, both plucked and bowed string instruments were used interchangeably to accompany sung poetry, whether epic or lyrical. That this practice was associated with the lyre playing of ancient poets regardless of whether the instrument was played with a bow (lira da braccio, viola da arco) or a plectrum (lute, viola da mano), is explained by reading the ancient texts themselves. ......

Thus, the period that saw the birth of the lira da braccio is characterized above all by terminological confusion concerning string instruments, which does not facilitate the investigation of the circumstances that led to the confluence of the word and the thing.

To this (always based on the writing of B. Wilson) I would add concerning the terminology:

> As names for any bowed instrument to accompany singing *ad lyram*, they are used alternately with the *lira* (or *lyra*), those as *cetra / cetera / citera / quitarra*, all derived from the name for the ancient cousin of the *lira*, named *kithara / cithara* or *citharode* for old singers-poets who were accompanied on the *cithara*.

7.2. Lira da braccio in general, its role, way of playing, construction and impressions of its contemporaries[17]:

The first book devoted to the lira da braccio was written by Alexander Hajdecki, a major in the K.u.K. Army and music enthusiast, and published in Mostar, the capital of Herzegovina,[18] 132 years ago in 1892. This was followed by a significant mention by Hungarian author Ernst Ferand in his

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[16] This could refer to the Spanish *vihuela*, which would not be strange considering that Tinctoris was active at the Aragonese court in Naples.

[17] As already mentioned, for more see Appendix/ Various Lists/ Memories of contemporaries on Lira

[18] Hajdecki, Alexander: *Die Italienische Lira da Braccio*, Eine Kunsthistorische Studie zur Geschichte der Violine. Mostar, 1892; facsimile ed.Amsterdam: Municipal Museum of the Hague, 1965.

aforementioned book in 1938,[19] and an article written by Italian musicologist and engraver Benvenuto Disertori in 1941.[20] After World War II, important contributions were made by Emmanuel Winternitz[21] and Howard Mayer Brown.[22] Their work laid the foundation for further research and study on the lira da braccio, culminating in the comprehensive work by American researcher, musician, and pedagogue Sterling Scott Jones, published in 1995.[23]

Allow me some more quotes, starting with one of the authors who was the first (over eighty years ago, in the late 1930s) to write down significant ideas and provide numerous interesting sources.

Ernst Thomas Ferand (Freund), a Hungarian-born author, was one of the first to articulate significant ideas and provide numerous interesting sources on improvisation. Initially teaching in Austria, he was forced to emigrate to Switzerland after the Nazi "Anschluss." Ferand's book "Die Improvisation in der Musik," published in 1938, established him as perhaps the most recognized authority on the subject of improvisation in Western music. Even after more than 80 years, his work remains relevant and serves as a primary reference for anyone interested in the phenomena and problems of improvisation. It has inspired constructive thinking and concrete actions by numerous musicologists and musicians across generations. Given the exceptional importance of his work, I will begin by quoting passages directly related to our topic.

> However, both reciting and singing to the viola and lyre seem to have been generally popular in Italy in the 15th and 16th centuries, with individuals accompanying themselves on these instruments. Castiglione, in his "*Il Cortegiano*" (1514), mentions both possibilities of accompaniment as a matter of course, and he particularly highlights singing to the viola da braccio ("...even more so singing to the viola...," "...but above all, singing to the viola seems most pleasing, for recitation...")[24]. The fact that this indeed involves self-accompaniment is evident from the remark that elders would appear ridiculous if they accompanied themselves on the viola while singing; if they desired to do so, they should do it in secret.

> The skill of singing and playing the lyre, praised by Vasari in reference to Leonardo da Vinci, is also likely an art of improvisation. ("Leonardo decides to learn to play the lyre... on which he sang divinely.")[25] Schering suggests that this refers to the versatile bowed lyre, the "lyra da braccio," yet it should not be forgotten that during that time, the lute was often referred to as a "lyre" as well.

> In the 16th century manuscript, a treatise dedicated to Pope Leo X entitled "*De musica et poetica opusculum*" by the Florentine Raffaele Brandolino Lippo Jr.[26] , it is mentioned that the patronage of music and poetry received significant support by princes and popes, such as King Alfonso of Naples and his son Ferdinand I, or Pope Pius II (Enea Silvio Piccolomini) and the future Pope Giovanni de' Medici, and that recitation to the "Lyra" was particularly popular, emphasizing the importance of improvisational art in poetry and music in antiquity.

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[19] Ferand, Ernst: *Die Improvisation in der Musik*, Rhein - Verlag Zürich, 1938; he supplemented this book with a practical (musical) edition entitled "Die Improvisation; in Beispielen aus neun Jahrhunderten abendländischer Musik, in the series Das Musikwerk, Arno Volk Verlag, Köln, 1956 and 1961.

[20] Disertori, B.: Pratica e tecnica della lira da braccio, *RMI*, 45, (1941) Rome, p.150-75.

[21] Winternitz, Emanuel: "Lira da braccio." *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (MGG), Voi. 8. Kassel: Bàrenreiter, 1960, pp. 935-54.

[22] See in the General Bibliography under Brown.

[23] More details about the instrument and all people which have done works on Lira da braccio, ist history, playing technique and presumed repertory see in my Final Project from 2018.

[24] *... ancor molto piu il cantare alla viola*, *... ma sopra tutto parmi gratissimo il cantare alla viola, per recitar.*

[25] *Lionardo si risove a imparare a sonare la lira ... onde sopra quella cantava divinamente.*

[26] Which Ferrand later called "Brandolini".

According to Brandolini, improvisers capable of singing in Latin and inventing music and words simultaneously were rare and not very successful before Brandolini himself. Brandolini mentions Angelo Poliziano, Angelo Maturazzi, Probo de Sulmone, the Augustinian monk Gillenus, and finally his brother Aurelio Brandolini (died 1498) as exceptions, whom he deems worthy of the name "Christian Orpheus." This improviser, during his eventful wandering life, also worked at the court of Matthias Corvinus[27] and served in various Italian princely courts, where he celebrated heroic praises in extemporaneous verse, following the ancient tradition of rhapsodes and bards.

In his treatise *De inventione et usu musicae,* Tinctoris informs us that besides the "lyra," the viola was also used for accompanying and embellishing singing as well as for the recitation of heroic poems ("ad historiarum recitationem") as early as the 15th century.

We don't know for sure, but we could at least assume that the names lyra, lira and viola meant the same instrument, lira da braccio, but for Tinctoris it could also mean lute ...

Since Ferand several times went back and forth, from the early 16th century frottole to [ostinato basses] *Ruggiero* and *Romanesca* from the 17th century, I tried to concentrate his thoughts on one or the other of these topics in my quotes ...

Here is very important information for the field of our research:

"The fourth book of frottole by O. Petrucci contains several stanza models for improvised performance for sonnets, stanzas, and capitoli (*Strambotti Ode Frottole Sonetti. Et modo de cantar versi latini e capituli Libro quarto*, Venice [1505?] 1507), such as "Aer da cantar versi latini" by A. Capreolus and a similar (anonymous) "Modo de cantar sonnetti."

See Appendix/Musical examples B, including my realizations for lira da braccio and my audio files. In the same, *Libro IV di frottole*, is the work by Ph. De Lurano, which B. Dissertori used for one of his reconstructions.

The Horatian odes by Tritonius (Hans Judenkünig, etc.) also represent the reflection of such recitation practices. A similar practice is likely found in the polyphonic songs of the "Joueur de lire Joachim Thibault dict Corville," who received a gift of 125 pounds from King Charles IX in 1572 to complete his composition "*pour chanter a plusieurs voix des vers en rhitme et musicque, qui se reciterent sur la lire et le luth.*"[28]

What predates the first lute tablatures printed by Petrucci, Spinaccino (*Intabolatura di lauto*, 1507), Dalza (*Intabulatura de Lauto Libro Quarto*, 1508), and Bossinensis (*Tenori e contrabassi intabulati*, etc., 1509 and 1511), as well as subsequent German tablature books and the scantily preserved manuscripts - if we take for granted that lute music existed as early as the 15th century -, largely belongs to the realm of improvisational practice, primarily focused on song accompaniment and dance music. Song arrangements and preludes, interludes, and postludes following ancient Oriental models, as later recorded by Franciscus Bossinensis for his humanistic ode compositions, were likely practiced long before the first known attempts at tablature arrangements.

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[27] At that time the king of Hungary and Croatia.

[28] Another example that the art of improvisation on both *lire* was not limited to Italy. Given the later date (1572) of this source, one might assume that Corville actually played the lira da gamba.

We do not have any humanistic odes composed by Bossinensis himself, but in his books arranged for voice and lute, there are more such examples composed by other authors, such as M. Pesenti.

Pietro Aaron also distinguishes between "*cantori a liuto*" (singers who sang to the lute from memory) and "*cantori a libro*" (singers who sang from sheet music) in his "*Lucidario in musica*" (1545).[29]

Here I would like to briefly mention what Ferand says about *Aria di Ruggiero, Romanesca*, and improvised singing of *ottave rime*.[30]

Einstein emphasized the character of bass melodies in the popular tunes of the early monodic era, such as the Neapolitan "*Aria di Ruggiero*" and the "*Romanesca*," attributing their usage to the widespread folk improvisational practice of the 16th century. Both the "*Aria di Romanesca*," which first appeared in Caccini's "*Nuove musiche*" (1601/2), and the *Ruggero* melody, first documented by Sigismondo d'India in 1609, have been revealed as the models or skeletons that originally formed the musical basis for the improvised rendition of popular episodes from the most famous heroic songs of Ariosto or Tasso.

A reflection of this practice, singing extemporaneously over a consistent bass theme, can be found in the collection of *Canzonette* by S. Verovio (*Con l'intavolatura del Cimbalo et del Liuto*), which includes a composition labeled as "*Aria per cantar Ottave*." This anonymous composition features a bass related to the "*Aria di Ruggiero*" and derives its text from the "*Orlando Furioso*."

The second author I want to quote is the Italian author Benvenuto Disertori. He wrote a very interesting and for our topic very important article entitled "*Pratica e tecnica della lira da braccio*," (Practice and Technique of [playing] the Lira da Braccio)[31] - just three years after the aforementioned book by E.T. Ferand. has been printed.

Disertori was the first among musicologists to attempt a reconstruction of chords on the lira da braccio based on several iconographic representations from Italian Renaissance art, long before chords and fragments for the lira were transcribed and published.[32] In the same article, he put forth a series of interesting ideas about improvisation, which we will quote here:

Here Ferand mentions, from the fourth book of Petrucci's *frottole* (published in Venice in 1505,…), an anonymous and schematic *modo di cantar sonetti* [way of singing sonnets], and *aer de versi latini*, composed by Antonio Capreoli of Brescia - both compositions in four voices without lyrics, which, at first glance, could make an obvious contribution and shed some light on the performing practice *alla viola*, i.e. the accompaniment on the lira da braccio.

It is certain that one of the keys to the lost musical practice of singing accompaniment on the lira da braccio must be sought in frottolistic literature and in many vocal compositions during the Renaissance inspired by Horace's ode; … Further, even superficial examination, of the Petrucci *frottola* complex is enough to convince us that (except for those added by the editor of the [printed edition] most compositions (especially *ode, sonetti, capitoli*) can be used and have been

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[29] However, in the second case, it could have been an improvised singing "on a book."
[30] Ferand, ibid.
[31] Published in *Rivista Musicale Italiana*, no. 45, 1941; translated from Italian into English by Giuliana Gerini. For other his works see in the General Bibliography.
[32] They were found in the manuscript from Pesaro, (Biblioteca Oliveriana, no. 1144 olim 1193). Which means that they were already known at the time, but no one "recognized" them as the only surviving examples of chords and fragments of music for the lira da braccio.

used to perform numerous other poetic texts, provided they have the same meter. For example, on the *aer de capituli* of Filippo da Lurano, which concludes Book IV of the *Frottole*, the whole *Trionfi* of Petrarca, *Amorosa Visione* [of Boccaccio] or *Divina Commedia* [by Dante ...] could be sung, so to speak. …

In the "*Aer de capituli*", we have replaced the original text, saying "*Un solicito amor una gran fede*", with the text of the "*Canto Primo*" of the *"Divina Commedia"*, and the original sonnet in the composition of Cara "*Mentre ch'a tua beltà fisso dimoro*" with a sonnet of Petrarca, almost too nice: "*Già fiammeggiava l'amorosa stella*". This our method to replace texts was surely used also in the 16th century: it is proved by denominations such as *modi, aeri di cantar capituli, sonetti, versi latini*, given to these short musical formulas, presented sometimes with an occasional text - sometimes with no text at all. …

As I have already done in my project "Lira da Braccio and Lirone," here I must again express some doubts: tuning of the viola da gamba (which was identical to that of the lute without additional strings in the basses) should - at least theoretically –be more suitable for accompanying the voice than tuning of the lira da braccio, tuned essentially like a violin, with the addition of octave strings or as something "in between" the medieval vielle and the violin or viola ... However, at least a century later, Italian musicians active in England (re)discovered this and decided to create the so-called *lyra viol* , thus developing the concept of accompanying the voice or solo playing on both *liras* much further. For this instrument, almost 60 different tunings have been found from the seventeenth century alone.

Here I want to quote from Sterling Scott Jones, author and musician to whom we all owe so much concerning lira da braccio, its iconography, playing technique and reconstructed repertory:[33]

Although the early music movement has produced many excellent players of the medieval fiddle over the last few decades, there has been relatively little interest in delving into its successor, the lira da braccio. There are now many proficient performers on baroque violin and viola, but few have been curious about the instrument which had its beginnings along with them. My own interest took wing after obtaining two such instruments: a copy of the Giovanni Maria lira da braccio in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford made by Fabrizio Reginato (Fonte Alto, Italy) in 1976, followed by a copy of a larger instrument located in the Music Conservatory Museum in Brussels by an anonymous Italian maker, made by Fabrizio Reginato in 1978.

The very lack of concrete knowledge about the lira da braccio and its technical difficulties are a direct challenge in discovering how to make use of the instrument in 16th-century music. The lira da braccio was an obvious attempt at making use of bowed strings chordally without sacrificing melodic possibilities. My first reaction was a feeling of being limited by the almost flat bridge, but after finding my way about I soon discovered a broad spectrum of chordal possibilities hardly possible on any other bowed string instrument. These I have tried to organize in Chapters 5 and 6 of this presentation, including various pieces showing a few ways in which I have made use of the lira da braccio. I have devised a type of fingering tablature to aid in finding chords, which more often than not involves unexpected fingering and string combinations because of the unique tuning of the instrument.

The lira da braccio appeared at the end of the 15th century, flourished in the first third of the 16th century, continued to appear throughout the rest of the century, but disappeared early in the 17th century. Lira da braccio characteristics common to the late medieval fiddle were the spade-

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[33] Jones, Sterling Scott: *The Lira da braccio*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1995.

or leaf-shaped pegbox, the vertical pegs, in early instances the guitar-shaped body, the open strings along the side of the fingerboard, and the use of octaves in the tuning pattern. It is difficult to distinguish between a fiddle and a lira da braccio in late 15th-century iconography. Features common to the violin were the four-cornered body shape of the lira da braccio, one of its most usual forms, and, except for the octave patterns, by the tuning.

In his research Jones analysed about hundred[34] items of iconography showing lira da braccio alone or in ensemble, playing or not and made number of tables and conclusions of greatest importance for any further study of this subject:

> Even though the lira da braccio is one of the most frequently depicted instruments in paintings and drawings of the Italian Renaissance, particularly during the early 16th century-the instrument seems to have been exclusively Italian-it is one which we know least about. This is because so few instruments have survived and because no written music for the instrument has been found except for a short section added in 1540-45 to an earlier lute manuscript (Pesaro). …

> The lira da braccio was portrayed very frequently in the 16th century as ideally fulfilling an improvisational accompanying role in the hands of antique mythological gods, poets, and musicians, such as Apollo, Orpheus, Homer, and King David, …. This tells us much about the Renaissance musician's attitude toward the lira da braccio and its function.

> It is interesting to note that the lira da braccio appeared in order to utilize the new chordal harmonies of the time, as seen in the three- and four-voiced treatment of the *sonetti, strambotti,* and *frottole* forms which developed in the social atmosphere of the courts at Verona, Padua, Mantua, and Venice of the early 16th century. It is no coincidence that it is in this north Italian area that we find the lira da braccio most extensively documented in pictures and drawings, and that all extant instruments originate.

Again, I can warmly recommend Sterling Jones book to anybody interested in this subject.

I quote from the already mentioned article by E. Haraszti "The technique of improvisers in the vernacular and Latin in the quatrocento":[35]

> At the Gonzaga court in Mantua (letter from Elisabette Gonzaga, from 1495) 'Messer Adriano is "*scultore, medaglista, poeta, improvvisatore et suonatore di lire*"[36] …

The following are quotations from two articles by W. Rubsamen, "The Earliest Example of French Lute Tabulature" and "The Justiniane or Viniziane of the 15th Century".[37]

For us, Rubsamen is, among other things,[38] very interesting as the first musicologist to mention the fragments for the lira da braccio preserved in the manuscript from Pesaro[39]. Speaking of [one of the owners and scribes of this manuscript] Tempesta Blondi , he mentions that in his *Tavola* they can be found, among other things; *intavolatura de lira, note de la lira* and *botte del leuto*. He gives the complete *Tavola*, and says:

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[34] Recently, I decided to continue his work and discovered another 200 hundred items, see my study *New Contribution To The Lira Da Braccio Iconography,* 2022, on my home page www.igorpomykalo.eu.

[35] Emile Haraszti, La technique des improvisateurs …

[36] Exact quotation is: *bon scultore* kao i *bona compositore di sonecti*, **bon sonatore di lire** who *dice d´improvviso assai egregiamente.*

[37] Walter H. Rubsamen: The Justiniane or Viniziane of the 15 th Century, *Acta Musicologica* 29 (1957), pp.172-84.

[38] See also his very interesting work Literary Sources of Secular Music in Italy (ca. 1500) (Berkeley, 1943).

[39] Oliveriana, no.1144 olim 1193.

As it seems, the examples of the tablature for the lira da braccio in the Pesaro manuscript are so far the only known examples of this kind. Emanuel Winternitz [in the first edition of the German music encyclopedia *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (MGG), 1948-1987] writes that "written music is not known for Lira da braccio, so, as one would expect from an improvisational instrument, it didn't even exist. " *Romanesca* in tablature for *lira* on p. 174 is a complete composition, but the *pasamezo de lira* on the next page is interrupted after a few bars.

About this manuscript later wrote and published the transcriptions of music and chords for lira da braccio Howard Mayer Brown (1973), Vladimir Ivanoff (1988; he analysed and published all music from this manuscript as part of his doctoral dissertation) and Sterling Scott Jones, in his hitherto unsurpassed study on the lira da braccio.[40]

See the bank of chords on the lira da braccio[41]

Without this discovery[42] our general and detailed knowledge of the mysterious *lira* would remain very scarce. This is especially true for the practical side of "re-creating" its playing technique and supposed repertoire in our time; all of us who dared to deal with this problem, drew our ideas and knowledge from this unique source.

It should be said that the reason that the mentioned fragments and (more importantly) chords for *lira* were notated in direct comparison with its strongest "rival", the lute, was probably the desire of (one of) the scribes of the complete manuscript from Pesaro to save from forgets something he heard and saw somewhere.

The following are quotations from Rubsamen's article "Justiniane or Viniziane of the 15th century":[43]

> All of Giustiniani's secular poems deal with love in its various manifestations: some praise every aspect of female beauty with a refined eloquence comparable only to Petrarch: others are sincere, almost insolent dialogues between mother and daughter or lover. …
>
> Originally, Leonardo sang them with his own accompaniment on lute, lira da braccio or viola,[44] and these *canzonette* spread throughout Italy, and remained popular at least until the beginning of the [16th] century. ...

Examples VII-1 Rubsamen, Justiniane[45]

In his article "The Mystery of the Quatrocento"[46] James Haar says:

> And when Marsilio Ficino took his *lira* (lute, or perhaps a *viola*) to sing Orphic hymns, he would not engage in mensural rhythms and counterpoint rules, whether he knew something about them or not, because the people of antiquity knew nothing about all this;

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[40] Jones, Sterling Scott: *The Lira da Braccio*, …
[41] IP: see in the Appendix / Musical Examples B1.
[42] Rubsamen himself did not "discover" this manuscript from Pesaro – it was already reported by Italian literary historian Saviotti as early as 1889, and Nanie Bridgman mentions it in 1953.
[43] Walter H. Rubsamen: The Justiniane or Viniziane …
[44] With the best will, I couldn't find the source on the basis of which Rubsamen assumed that Giustinian accompanied himself on the lira da braccio; from Parleonio's letter, we only learn that he composed songs for voices and stringed instruments, which could (but not necessarily) include various plucked and bowed instruments - in any case, the late medieval vielle, from which at some point in the 15th century (more likely after 1450?) the lira da braccio developed."
[45] See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-1 Rubsamen Justiniane.
[46] Haar, James, *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music 1350-1600* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986); Chapter 3.

American musicologist, William F. Prizer,[47] devoted most of his scientific work to *frottola*, early 16th century music, and unwritten, oral, improvised Renaissance music. In his article "Frottola and the Unwritten Tradition" he says the following about the *lira*:

> The lira da braccio, *quatrocento* - "imitation" of the ancient *lyra*, is often associated with *frottola* performance and unwritten practice[48] … This type of simple, homophonic texture within the repertoire of *frottola* is most commonly found in *aeri* for *ode, capitoli*, and, to some extent, sonnets. The typical texture of *barzelleta and strambotto* is, however, written in pseudo-counterpoint in which the inner voices are much more active and therefore it would not be easy to reproduce them on the lira da braccio, at least in the four-part version.[49]

In his epochal work "*The Rise of European Music*", 1380-1500,[50] Reinhard Strohm returns several times to the question of the unwritten in relation to the written musical tradition of the past and the phenomenon of Italian improvisers in the late 15th and early 16th centuries:

> … Singing to one's own accompaniment on the lute, viol[51] or lira da braccio seems to have been frequent in the mid to late fifteenth century; Pietrobono apparently excelled in this particular art. Precisely this kind of epic song is said to have flourished at the court of King Mathias Corvinus of Hungary (1469-90); the king was a friend of the Este family whom Pietrobono served, and Pietrobono actually visited Hungary in l488. The Italian humanist Marzio Galeotto wrote about the Hungarian bards at Corvinus's court:

> > There are always disputations going on during his banquets, or speeches held about honourable or enjoyable subjects, or poems sung. There are in fact musicians and *cythara*-singers [*citharoedi*] who narrate in their native language the deeds of heroes, singing on the lyre at the dinner-table. This was the custom of the Romans, and from us has spread to the Hungarians .... Love-songs, however, are rarely performed there, and mostly the deeds against the Turks form the subject matter, not without fitting words.

> We can only speculate which instrument was used by these bards as the chronicler uses apparently classical terms. By 'lyre', he may have meant something like the Italian lira da braccio - the equivalent of the Serbian[52] [!] *gusle* used in later centuries for epic singing. The whole practice was clearly an older tradition in Hungary as well as in other countries, and Galeotto's claim that the Hungarians received it from Italy - because of the latter's descendance from the Romans - sounds unconvincing. …

> The lute and lira da braccio are actually more often seen in miniatures depicting Italian dance; in the treatise *De pratica seu arte tripudii vulgare opusculum* (1463) by Guglielmo Ebreo, there is even a harp.[53] Guglielmo was perhaps the most famous of these intellectuals and dance artists; he

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[47] William F. Prizer, The Frottola and the Unwritten Tradition, *Musical Studies*, Anno XV - 1986 no. 1, pp.3-38.

[48] WP: See, for example, B. DISERTORI, Pratica e tecnica della lira da braccio, …

[49] Which form is irelevant because the accompaniment on the lira was improvised and adapted to the nature of it.

[50] Strohm, Reinhard: *The Rise of European Music, 1380-1500*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993.

[51] Probably a misprint because *viol* in English means *viola da gamba* and not *viola* (da braccio).

[52] IP: Well, I can't help but react when some (otherwise well-informed) world musicologists are persistently trying to ignore some facts; *gusle* - a traditional instrument accompanying epic singing - have been at least as widespread and played for centuries in Croatian Dalmatia and Herzegovina and exist also in Montenegro and Albania. Nor do I share the view of Strohm that Galeotto's claim would be unconvincing, given the enormous influence of Italian culture of the period on the whole of Europe, including Croatia and Hungary.

[53] Also called Giovanni Ambrosio or Ambrogio.

taught at Ferrara, Naples and Montefeltro, developing the choreographies of Domenico and adding to them.[54] …

I return to Philippe Canguilhem and quote from his second, very interesting to us, article "Monody and counterpoint in Florence in the 16th century: from *canto alla lira* to *canto alla bastarda*."[55] In this article, the author primarily deals with *canto alla viola* (in the sense of viola da gamba) and *canto alla lira* (in the sense of lira da gamba or lirone).

> "Solo singing has always been practiced in Florence, at least since the time of Lorenzo the Magnificent. To quote (and translate) Anthony Cummings, 'the practice of solo singing *all'improviso* with the lute, lyre, or viola was absolutely central to the musical experience of fifteenth-century Florence.' This practice was linked to the figure of Marsilio Ficino and his promotion of singing with the *lira*.

> In the early sixteenth century, this tradition continued through figures such as Leonardo da Vinci or his student Atalante Migliorotti. Singing with the lira da braccio would then be practiced in Florence in the first half of the [16th] century, particularly in the context of numerous theatrical performances, in which prologues were often sung by Apollo or another mythological figure using *arie da cantar* mostly suitable for reciting *ottave rime*. Despite the gradual abandonment of the instrument in the second half of the sixteenth century, and its replacement on the stage by the *lirone*, the idea of singing with the *lira* remained alive in Florentine minds, through its symbolic association with the 'sacred' Laurentian period.

> …. What I would like to emphasize is that in Florentine memory, the *lira* had not only been maintained as a symbolic image but also in practice. Not in itself, because the instrument was hardly played in the last decades of the sixteenth century; instead, there are reports showing how the 'timbral colour' of the *lira* could be remembered by preserving the association of the solo voice with the sounds of bowed instruments.[56] …

> It will be Striggio himself who introduces the *lirone* on the Florentine stage, for the first time in 1565: this instrument, conceived to accompany the voice, will progressively replace the lira da braccio and the viola da gamba.[57] However, the latter will continue to play a role of polyphonic accompaniment of the solo voice, this time in ensemble: in 1579, the madrigal by Piero Strozzi entitled "*Fuor dell'umido nido*" was sung by Giulio Caccini "on his and many other *viole*", although the preserved score reports a monodic version.

> These various testimonies therefore highlight how the memory of the *lira* had been preserved in Florence through the reproduction of its sound. We can also note how, from Corteccia to Galilei,

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[54]Interestingly, from the very beginning of my practical engagement with the lira da braccio (aside from frottole), I chose a series of monophonic dances by Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro for my experiments, later also for repertoire.

[55] Philippe Canguilhem: Monodia e contrappunto a Firenze nel Cinquecento: dal 'canto alla lira' al 'canto alla bastarda' in: *La monodia in Toscana alle soglie del XVII secolo*, ed. F. Menchelli-Buttini (Pisa: ETS, 2007), p. 25-42.

[56] IP: Francesco Rognoni, in *Selva di varii passaggi*, Milan 1620, uses the term *lireggiare* for a long, legato, bow movement, as an obvious reminiscence of the special sound of the lira (da braccio and da gamba).

[57] IP: P. Canguilhem does not mention the important detail that Striggio's *lira* or viola (according to the only detailed source of his contemporaries, Girolamo Cardano) was tuned completely differently from the "normal" lirone; its 18 strings were tuned in major triads placed one above the other. The fact that chords were used on the viola (da gamba or de arco) at the same time (including the accompaniment of one's own or someone else's singing) on viol add new uncertainty in Strigio's case. Clearly his *lira* (da gamba) was completely different from the "normal" one (which had 11 to 16 strings at most and was tuned in ascending fifths or descending fourths — sometimes with extra bass strings outside the fingerboard), but did he play the second, "normal" *lira* in addition to the first, or did he play chords on the viola da gamba?

passing through Striggio, all the examples refer to polyphonies performed monodically, either through a "reduction" made by an instrumentalist or by various instruments replacing the voices.

Let's return again to the first article by Philippe Canguilhem "Naissance et décadence de la lira da braccio":[58]

The scarcity of iconographic evidence for the period before 1500 may perhaps explain why no one has ever, to my knowledge, attempted to answer a question that is nonetheless not without interest: where and when did the lira da braccio appear? But another reason, deeper, must be advanced, which highlights the difficulties encountered by all those who have already delved into the history of musical instruments at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance. If it is so difficult to explain where and when the lira was born, it is because one must have decided what exactly one is talking about: the thing (the instrument itself) or the word used to designate it.

Defining the lira da braccio organologically is not a difficult thing. A bowed string instrument with a flat back, its body can take different forms (from an oval body to one adopting the shape of a violin), but beyond its general physical appearance, its most distinctive features are as follows: the neck is fretless, tuning is in fifths and unisons [IP: and two octaves!], and most of the time, two of the seven strings are stretched over the neck to serve as drones. The bridge is almost flat, unlike viols, allowing the instrumentalist to catch several strings at once with their bow and play chords, essential for accompanying oneself while singing. The pegbox, finally, is often heart-shaped, with the pegs mounted vertically, not sideways.[59]

Representations of instruments closely matching this definition have existed since the 13th century, originating from both Italy and all over Europe. Called vielle, they have a variable number of strings, which are tuned in fifths and unisons, with one or two drones, a flat bridge, and a pegbox on which the pegs are mounted vertically, …
Nevertheless, I would like to suggest here that Florence may have served as the cradle for the lira da braccio, and that its designers may well have gravitated in the circle of Marsilio Ficino.

But he gave a name to this practice ("*ad lyram canere*"), and was able to relate it to Neoplatonism and the theory of poetic inspiration, poetic "rage" (furor). The arguments in favour of this thesis are numerous, given the importance of the lyre in Ficino's philosophy.

After 1540, however, the interest of Italians in the instrument seems to gradually diminish, almost ceasing completely in the second half of the century, … Two reasons, one practical and the other more symbolic - although with practical implications as well - seem to have played a role.

First, the lira was quickly overshadowed, and then dominated by the lute, which became after 1520 the universal instrument for accompanying singing, especially among amateurs, these courtiers who practiced "*cantar alla viola per recitare*" according to the formula used by Castiglione in 1528/38. Moreover, they could also enjoy playing instrumental pieces with the lute, which the lira was incapable of offering.[60]

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[58] P. Canguilhem, Naissance et décadence de la lira da braccio, ...
[59] P.C .: Only ten instruments have been preserved, all from the 16th century. See S. Jones, op. cit., pp. 10-13.
[60] IP: Considering that I have been researching and realizing the same for 40 years on the lira da braccio (and only a little shorter on the lira da gamba, lirone), I can say the opposite based on my practical experience. Part of the lute, as well as the viol repertoire (Ganassi and Ortiz and others) of the first half and the middle of the 16th century can be performed on the lira without any major modifications.

The second reason that can explain the progressive decline of the lira da braccio after 1540 lies in the emergence of a new instrument, the lirone or lira da gamba, a hybrid instrument that borrows as much from the viola da gamba as from the lira da braccio.[61] Although both types of lyres coexisted in the second half of the 16th century, the new instrument gradually replaced the old one when it came to evoking ancient music on theatre stages, and this for two reasons. Being a larger instrument held between the legs, the lirone has greater power and depth of sound compared to the lira da braccio, which proves very useful when the scenes expand in the late 16th century; but above all, its eleven strings [IP: up to 18] allow for a much greater number of chords than the seven strings of the lira da braccio. It even becomes possible to accompany vocal polyphony on the lirone, as the great virtuoso Alessandro Striggio was capable of doing.[62] With the advent of accompanied monody, the lirone became the ideal companion of instruments intended for *basso continuo* (*tiorba*, harpsichord, organ) while offering additional symbolic significance, especially in the accompaniment of the numerous laments and other lamentations that invaded operas in the early 17th century.

While it seems established that the lira da gamba took on the humanistic attributes of the lira da braccio in the second half of the 16th century, the latter did not disappear from Italian musical life.

At this point, I must add some of my thoughts (which I partly already presented in the, for now…, latest version of my project on both *lire* Final Project, 2018.). The confusion with the unreliable terminology of numerous written sources from the 16th century, which write *lyra* or *lira* but "mean" lute, which write *viola* - which can mean all bowed instruments, therefore viola da braccio or da gamba but also (depending on which part of that century we are talking about) lira da braccio and from "some" point - *lira da gamba* or *lirone*. As a practitioner on both *liras* (since 1981 and 1985 respectively) and a researcher (since 1996), I cannot agree that the appearance of the lira da gamba brings only advantages in terms of performance-technical possibilities compared to the lira da braccio. I agree that the larger number of strings (but also the very practical tuning method) on the *lirone* allows for the performance of a greater number of chords (some even in two registers - lower and higher) but the problem (or let's call it a feature) that some chords can only be performed as quart-sixt chords, with a fifth in the bass exists with both liras… The undeniable advantage of the lira da braccio compared to the lira da gamba is the possibility not only to accompany your singing in chords but also your own melody that you perform on the higher strings, again with (your own, simultaneous) accompaniment on the lower strings.

And finally (since this is also mentioned as an advantage of the larger instrument), the sonority of the lira da braccio not only does not lag behind that of the lirone but even surpasses it, and the typical alto lira da braccio plays almost in the same register as the lirone, differences - if any - exist only in the case of the bass strings outside the fretboard, which many of my colleagues (theorists and not) still wrongly call "drones".

Since the lira da gamba (as its name suggests) is a kind of viol, I decided to add some information about the history and technique of playing this instrument based on the writing of the already mentioned colleague Ian Woodfield.[63]

Viol (*vihuela de mano / de arco*) appeared in the city of Valencia in the second half of the 15th century and came to Italy through the Catalan Borgia family and their ties to Rome (election of two popes, first bishop of Valencia; Alonso Borgia becomes Calixtus III and Rodrigo Borgia, Alexander VI) as well as the connection of Rome with the Aragonese court in Naples. ...

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[61] P.C .: On this instrument see E. Headley, "Lirone", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, vol. 14, edited by S. Sadie, London: Macmillan, 2001, p. 746-9.
[62] IP: See footnote 57 on this.
[63] Woodfield, Ian: *The Early History of the Viol*, Cambridge 1984/88.

In Italy the development of the lira da braccio was a response to the demand for improvised accompaniment of vocal recitations, but in Spain, where the lira was clearly unknown, it must be assumed that other bowed instruments such as *viella, rabab* and viol met this need. Certainly, of the two types of music played on Tinctoris' *'viola cum arculo'*, on the Valencian viola with a flat bridge, a simple accompaniment for epics and other recitations would suit much better. ... Even the relatively undemanding chordal recitation patterns known to have been used by lira da braccio players in Italy could not be easily played on a flat-bridge instrument such as the one on the *vihuela* [*de arco*]...

Quoting Ganassi:

Ganassi explicitly states that *'Io vorei Dio d'amore'* is an imitation of the style of playing associated with the lira da braccio and the similarities are obvious. However, there is one important difference. While *lira* players are known to recite based on the bass line, improvising the chords above it,[64] the bass viol of a deeper sound plays the lower parts with a vocal line at the top. ...

It is interesting what Woodfield says about one edition of the German lute player Hans Judenkünig who worked in Vienna:[65]

On the title page, a woodcut of both of Judenkünig's two treatises, *Utilis et compendaria introductio* (c. 1518) and *Ain schone kunstliche underweisung* (c. 1523), shows a duet of lute and *viola* [da gamba], and the introductory remarks unequivocally say that the reader should be taught how to play both the lute and the *viola* [da gamba]. On the fol. *A i* from the earlier of these two works Judenkünig promises to teach both the lute and the instrument popularly known as the *Geygen (& Lutine & quod wulgo Geygen nominant)*. While Judenkünig clearly expected his readers to know what lute was, he seemed to feel the need to define *Geygen* more precisely. So on fol. *A ii* again promises to teach both instruments, 'the lute and an instrument popularly known as the *Geygen* which is very similar to the *lira* (' *& Lutine & quod Lyrae simillimum est, quodque wulgo Geygen vocant*), in a later German work he simply refers to ' *Lautten und Geygen* ', the later instrument was better known at the time.

Woodfiled also mentions interesting information about viols that imitated the shape of the lira da braccio:

The most prized string instrument in Italy at the time of the arrival of the *vihuela de arco* was the lira da braccio, so almost inevitably some Italian viol makers copied its characteristic body shape with two lower corners and a smoothly rounded upper belly.[66] Although no viol of this type has been preserved, there are several of their depictions in early 16th-century Italian art. Numerous lira-shaped viols appear to have been used in Ferrari. ...

The use of lira - shaped viol in Ferrara in the early 16th century can be hinted at in an entertainment report from 1506. On 5th of February, Prospero wrote from Ferrara to Isabella d'Este describing *intermedii*. The first of them consisted of '*lire grande sonata da octo persone*,' (large *lire* [i.e. *viols* or *violoni*?] played by eight person'). After the first few decades of the 16th century, viols of this type gradually disappeared, which is undoubtedly a reflection of the declining popularity of the lira itself.

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[64] IP: Ganassi describes the practice of reciting basses on the lira da braccio (*prattica del dire and bassi accompagnado con il suon della Lyra*) in *Lettione Seconda*, chapter 16. See under Disertori, p.45

[65] In the circle of the local humanistic academy of Konrad Celtis, who taught rhetoric and poetics at the University of Vienna and founded the so-called *Collegium poetarum et mathematicorum*.

[66] Which ist he form of B-Lira da braccio see Jones and my Iconographies of the instrument. See Appendix/ Images.

Regarding playing technique and possible role models, Woodfield says:

> The development of advanced playing techniques by Italian virtuosos from the mid-16th century instigated the rise of solo viol music. In search of an idiomatic way of composition that would suit the viol as a solo instrument, Italian musicians explored two opposite styles: virtuoso playing and chord writing. The first of these took advantage of the agility of the instrument, the clarity of the articulation, and the wide range, and, at least in its early stages, owed much to contemporary lute music. The second probably stemmed from a desire to emulate the more inspired efforts of Italian *lira* players. ...

> No other accompaniment to the voice for the mid-16th century viol has survived, but independent confirmation of this practice comes from a report on one of the interludes performed at the wedding of Cosimo I and Eleanor of Toledo in 1539. After the third act Silenus sings the song *'O begli anni del oro '* while he accompanied himself on the viol playing all the parts · (*violone sonando tutte le parti*).[67]

Mentioning the *lirone*/ lira da gamba, Woodfield says:

> In the second half of the 16th century, the constant need for a deeper bowed instrument to perform chordal accompaniment led to the development of the *lirone*. The appearance of this special instrument for playing chords may indicate the dissatisfaction that some (including Ganassi) felt with viol in this role. As its name suggests, lirone is conceived as a bass version of the lira da braccio. With its pair of drone strings [!] and its nine to fourteen melodic strings and tuning in ascending fifths or descending fourths (see Ceretto, 1601: G g/ C c g d a e b f#´c# ´) the instrument was probably rather clumsy, and yet enjoyed a certain fashion. In the Florentine *intermedio* orchestra it may have been used as a kind of continuo instrument.

If the chords on the viol[68] began to be used following the example of the lira da braccio (see Ganassi), it was logical that after the invention of "a new, larger *lira* (with 11 strings) by A. Migliorotti, someone would come up with the idea to unify both existing concepts in a new instrument: the *lirone*. Later in the 16th century, the *virtuoso* aspect of this developed in the form of a new instrument called the *viola bastarda*, which Italians transmitted and established in England. There, later in the 17th century, there were parallel developments of the so-called *Division* and *Lyra viol* - the latter certainly inspired by the tradition of combining improvised playing on the lira da braccio and chords on the lira da gamba/lirone. Although there is no evidence for it, it would be interesting to consider the possibility that the lira da braccio (at least indirectly) contributed some ideas to the creation and development of the *viola d'amore*...

As early as the first version of my Lira project (2001),[69] I wondered why lira da braccio players did not decide to tune it identically to the viola da gamba (or lute) because it (along with the application of Ganassi's technique of "skipping" strings to avoid notes that would be foreign to the chord) would enable the performance of the already vast lute repertoire. Sterling Jones, in his reconstruction of lira da braccio chords in 1995,[70] suggested lowering the highest string of the lira by a whole tone so that the interval between the highest two strings is a fourth, as with the lute, which gives excellent results for many chords and requires only minimal adjustment in playing the melody.

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[67] See also P. Canguelhem, p. of/in these study.
[68] IP: For chords on the viol see in the Appendix/ Musical Examples B.3.
[69] Pomykalo, Igor: Lira da braccio and lira da gamba: Reconstruction of playing Technique and the repertory, FINAL REPORT, 2018 (first version, February 2001)
[70] Jones, Sterling Scott: *The Lira da Braccio*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis 1995.

Here I return to T. McGee and his article "*Cantare all'improvviso* ":[71]

> Scenes from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century depicting an improvising singer most often depict him singing alone with a bowed instrument, suggesting an unchanged way of performing that connects the activity with a long and sustainable tradition.[72] …

> If the nature of improvised music changed in the late fifteenth century from a slightly accompanied melody to a three-part or four-part polyphonic *frottola* texture, instead of depicting a solo singer with his lira da braccio, later paintings should contain either a group of instruments or a single instrument that adapts more easily to multiple polyphonic lines like a keyboard instrument or lute.[73] But it is from the sixteenth century that we have the largest number of depictions of the lira da braccio.[74] The singer of the title role in the first performance of Poliziano's *Orfeo* was praised by Lorenzo de' Medici for singing *ad lyram*, a term that refers not only to the lira da braccio but also confirms the existence of tradition.

In this case, too, an extensive citations from Blake Wilson's book[75] seems inevitable, trying to divide the quotations into several topics that are particularly important for this study:

1.In general, about the *lira*, its technique of playing and the impression of the audience:[76]

> As the well-known and traditional activity of accompanied solo singing was harmonized with the ancient poetic practice of *rhapsodes* and *chitarodes*,[77] the classical vocabulary began to be applied to humanistic practice: *cantare ad lyram/ cantare in sulla lira*, as it was most commonly called, refers to ancient, classic *lyra* used in ancient Greece to accompany recitation and singing. But the Renaissance *lira* was completely different from the plucked ancient U-shaped instrument, and the name referred specifically to the lira da braccio - a bowed instrument with seven strings, which during the last third of the fifteenth century largely supplanted the late medieval *viola* (*viuola,* or *vielle*) as an instrument of choice for humanist singers-poets, or in general for any bowed instrument they used: viola, lira da braccio, or, increasingly in the sixteenth century, the lute.[78]

Performance of Antonio di Guido 1459 and impressions of Galeazzo Maria Sforza…

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[71] T. J. McGee: *Cantare all' improvviso*; Improvising to Poetry in Late Medieval Italy,
in: Improvisation in the arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, Kalamazoo, Mich. : Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2003.

[72] TMG: for numerous iconographic sources depicting the lira da braccio see Winternitz, Leonardo da Vinci as a Musician, 25-39, and Haar, Essays on Italian Poetry and Music, Figs. 2-5. IP: and on the FB, IPs LIRAFORUM.

[73] TMG: The structure of the lira da braccio severely limits its polyphonic performance possibilities in the direction of relatively slow movement of chords or borduns [!]. On the instrument see Jones, The Lira da Braccio; Winternitz, Leonardo da Vinci as a Musician, chap. 4; and Howard Mayer Brown, Sixteenth-Century Instrumentation: The Music of the Florentine Intermedii (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1973), 41-45; 223-25. Prizer, in "The Frottola and the Unwritten Tradition," 8-9, believes the instrument was able to perform simple polyphonic-style polyphony. Although this was possible, difficulties in doing so suggest that it was not the type of music conceived for this instrument.
IP: I have to express my disagreement once again; Sterling Jones brings in his book a few typical frottola that sound great on the *lira*, and I have sung numerous frottole (edited for voice and lute) from both books by Bossinensis for years with my own accompaniment on the lira da braccio.

[74] IP: This is in contrast to what Canguilhem says about the iconographic depictions of the lira da braccio, see p.12.

[75] Blake Wilson: *Singing to the Lyre in Renaissance Italy*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019

[76] Here I am repeating some information already given in the previous, 6th, chapter.

[77] Rhapsodes and citharoedes?

[78] *Liuto, leuto* - in Dalmatia: *leut*.

In what measure this was achieved through the quality of Antonio's voice (and instrument) or the melodic and harmonic material he employed, we really cannot tell, but he clearly understood how to achieve the orator's goal of decorum, matching the mode of his delivery to his material, and matching both to his audience.

Clearly Antonio was performing a chivalric *cantare*, no doubt embellishing and improvising both textual and musical elements, and giving dramatic force to his performance through bodily (including facial) gestures, and inflections of his voice and viola. ...

… These civic *canterini* were generally expected not only to compose and sing poetry, but to accompany themselves *all 'improvviso* on a bowed instrument variously called the *citera* (*quitarra*) or *viola*, which could mean either the traditional [late medieval] instrument *viuola* (*vielle*) or [most often] the lira da braccio. …

Interestingly, Ficino successfully diagnosed and cured Musano's fever, and like many of Ficino's friends, Musano honored him with a visit to Careggi to, in fact, complete his treatment with "the sound of the *lira* and the singing of hymns."…

The following summer [1473], while Lorenzo was staying in Vallombrosa he sent for maestro Antonio della Viuola, that is Antonio di Guido, asking him to join Lorenzo for what was clearly intended to be an intimate period of sharing and performing sonnets.[79]

According to Naldo Naldi, who honored him with two Latin epigrams packed with flattering, classicizing references to his singing and lyre-playing, Attalante Migliorotti was elected "*cytharedo* in perpetuity of our Sacred Academy" by virtue of the "sound of his sweet lyre" (*dolce cetra*) that transformed him into "another Orpheus."

Castiglione, who himself owned and played the *viola*, reveals a keen ear and admiration for singing, and he and many of his interlocutors would have the opportunity to hear both singers. Castiglione returns to the theme of music in the second book (12-14), ... Here *cantare ad lyram* appears in his "Il Cortegiano", and receives Castiglione's approval as the type of music most appropriate for the courtier. ... Messer Federico Fregoso:

> … But above all, what I like the most is singing poetry with the *viola / cantare alla viola per recitar /*, because the instrument gives the words beauty and strength. …

The latter, or something very close to it, is what Castiglione himself possessed and played to accompany his 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 amplify the influence of words.

At the end of the first book [Marquise Andrea Matteo] there is an anecdote about the power of music which says that King Ferdinand himself especially enjoyed *cantare ad lyram*. The story is about a person who, having lost Ferdinand's affection, regained it when he "took his cithara and sang a song under the king's window which delighted the king greatly." ...

Another quote from Camilla Cavicchi:[80]

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[79] This is one of several sources of contemporaries based on which it could be assumed that in some (exceptional?) cases at least two lira da braccio players sang and played together.
[80] Camilla Cavicchi: The *cantastorie* and his music in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, …

In 1558, the same year as Zarlino's *Istitutioni*, Girolamo Ruscelli published in Venice *Del modo di comporre in versi nella lingua italiana*, a treatise which also describes how to compose *ottava rima*. Ruscelli recounts a performance by Silvio Antoniano, a famous musician and lawyer[81] who sang to the lyre, as well as the lute, with an extremely gracious voice, facial expressions and gestures, which, alongside pronunciation, were all fundamental elements of this kind of performance. Antoniano was apparently able to improvise *ottava rima* on any subject that people proposed, a skill that was also practiced by *cantastorie* and *ciarlatani* - people from different social backgrounds who adopted this art to entrance their public, which included humanists, diplomats and politicians, such as Nicolò Machiavelli (who was himself an excellent *canterino*). …

In the fifteenth century the music of the *cantastorie* certainly provided inspirational models for court musicians. … Court performers also borrowed the use of monody in the intonation of classical poetry, as suggested by Francesco Negri in his *Brevis grammatica* (1480), in which some [five] examples of this type of monody have survived. In Negri's "grammar", the rhythmic model of the melodies did not correspond to the metrics of classical poetry.

2.Wilson on the construction of the lira and the like:

… A letter that Luigi Pulci, in August 1468, sent to Lorenzo in Cafaggiolo where he writes that he sent him his *lira* and books, and in August 1472 (when Lorenzo was in Cafaggiolo without his *viuola*), he demanded of him [Pulci] to ask his secretary Micholozzi when [he] will arrive, ... In that case Lorenzo's *viola* was in Ficino's hands, and its delivery was delayed due to the fact that Ficino was repairing the instrument and changing its strings. The following summer, while Lorenzo was in Vallombrosa, he sent maestro Antonio della Viuola (Antonio di Guido), asking him to join him in editing and performing the sonnet.[82] ...

Just a few weeks before that [1488] Baccio [Ugolini] wrote to Lorenzo about the progress of making a magnificent new *lira* that is "worth being among your most beautiful and sweetest things", but the project became a bit delicate due to the fact that Baccio, in making and in arranging the instrument closely collaborated with the esteemed Neapolitan court poet Francesco Galeoto, whose poetry Baccio did not appreciate, so he suggested that it should be given for reading to Lorenzo's barber. Always a sharp critic, Baccio continued to ask Lorenzo to have confidence in his judgment of what he liked and disliked because he knew "how much those sensitive ears disgusted the *lira* playing that sounded like wheting [the teeth] of a saw."[83]

Wilson mentions Migliorotti in connection with a new instrument which, according to the description, could be the first very early mention of the lira da gamba (lirone):

The next time Migliorotti appears is in a letter to Francesco Gonzaga in 1505, sounding somewhat like the protege of his inventor-teacher /Leonardo/ as he describes a new type of lira da braccio he has constructed:

With my small ability, I am introducing a new, unheard and unknown method of playing, with a new and unknown type of *lira*. I shall add strings so that there are twelve [a *lira da braccio*

[81] Silvio Antoniano (1540 - 1603), later cardinal.
[82] An allegation that could (but does not have to) mean playing two *lire* together.
[83] B. Wilson, ibid., Curti, "Le rime di Baccio Ugolini", 176-178, discusses Galeotti's strambotti and interprets Baccio's mention of the creaking sound of a saw grinding (limare una sega) refers to the clumsy and inconsistent sound of Galeot's poetry, but since Baccio uses this phrase in the context of a discussion of a new lyre, it is in any case more appropriate for describing the sound of a bowed *lira*.

typically had seven], some attached to the tailpiece [off the fingerboard], and some on the fingerboard, in perfect and consummate harmony. [84]

What surprises me about this early appearance of the "lira da gamba" is the fact that it is verified in performance practice (mostly) in connection with *intermedi* only about fifty years later. The question arises "where" it was, where it "disappeared" all that time, was it hiding under the usual name of *lira* or *viola*?

[Wilson] Shortly afterwards, in a letter revealing his close connection to music, Pietro Bembo wrote to his brother Carlo that "the *viuola* strings you sent us are not good. This was seen in the presence of the Duchess [Lucrezia Borgia] while Giacomo da San Secondo played on them."

7.3. About Lute, *Lira* and *tenoristi*

William Prizer[85] wonders how more complex pieces were performed, so he says that the earliest examples of oral tradition were probably accompanied by an instrumental line played by the singer, thus creating a two-voice framework. Judging by iconographic sources, this method of performance continued into the fifteenth century: a Northern Italian miniature from around 1470, "Fountain of Youth" from the *Libro "De Sphera"*, depicts a solo lutenist playing with a plectrum and therefore capable of playing only one voice,[86] and Apollonio di Giovanni, in the so-called "Virgil's Manuscript", Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence around 1464, depicts a player of the *viola da mano* performing alone.

At least through the 1460's, the lute would have been responsible for only a single line and would have been played with a plectrum. This method extended into the sixteenth century. As late as 1523, a well-known entry in the diary of Marin Sanudo states that Giovan Maria Giudeo played with a plectrum for Pope Adrian VI, and Tinctoris states that Pietrobono played with a plectrum as well.

But the same author, writing in Naples around 1487, (in his work *De inventione et usu musicae*) describes another method of playing the lute, namely polyphonic playing with fingers:

Others do what is much harder [than playing one line], namely, they play / the whole / song, and most skilfully, not only in two voices, but even in three or four. For example, Orbus the German or Henry / Bouclers / who was recently in the service of the Duke of Burgundy Charles: The German was superior in playing this way.

Prizer notes that no one has yet found a way to bring this style of playing to Italy, although this passage has long been known to music historians. It could have been that it happened in 1470, more than a decade before Tinctoris' treatise, and that it happened at the court in Mantua. There was active a musician who perfectly fits the description of one of Tinctoris' players, an "Orbo Tedesco" (blind or one-eyed German) from Munich, "marvellous on any instrument", who appears in 1470 and is immediately sought after by Galeazzo Maria Sforza of Milan and Ferrante I of Naples. In a letter dated March 11, 1470, to Galeazzo Maria, Marchese Ludovico Gonzaga called the musician

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[84] B. Wilson, ibid .: *Col mio debile ingegno, introduco nuovo, inaudito et inusitato modo di sonare, con nuova et inusitata forma di lyra, con ciò sia cosa io adgiunga corde al complimento al numero di Xll, parte nel suo tempo oportuno dal piede, et parte dalla mano tastabili in perfecto et consummate consonantia*; Mantua, Archivio di Stato B. 1105, fol. 610, ed. and trans. Prizer, "Isabella d'Este and Lorenzo da Pavia," 107-108. As Prizer notes, the instrument sounds like a prototype of the lira da gamba, or lirone, which will appear in regular use only later in the century.

[85] William F. Prizer, The Frottola and the Unwritten Tradition, *Studi Musicali*, Anno XV - 1986 no. 1, pp.3-38.

[86] IP: Which, however, does not have to be the" rule"; if we imagine that the plectrum is a substitute for a bow, then when we "pull" with it, we pull through all (or only a part of the strings, in some chords) and thus we do not depend on a tenorista, who for any reason did not arrive on time ...

"lo Orbo, sonatore da Monicho" … An unpublished entry in the Mantuan Chronicle of Andrea Schivenoglia reflects these statements about his nationality and lack of sight, and also reports that he played plucked string instruments:

> [In] the month of June 1470 35 there came to Mantua a blind man from Germany, who had never seen [in his life], and he played every instrument. And if he heard a verse or a song he knew how to play it [by ear] either on the organ, or the bagpipe, or on plucked string instruments ("chitarrij"), or on the harp, or on shawm.[87]

This musician also went to Naples, for in 1475 Ferrante I mention that Ludovico helped him to have in his service "that blind German musician who was here before." Prizer thinks it could only have been the famous German organist and lute player Conrad Paumann (ca. 1410-1473), since he (like "Orbo Tedesco") was from Munich, where he was in the service of Duke Albrecht IV. In addition, Paumann was also blind from birth, and he played all the instruments listed by Schivenoglia. His tombstone in Munich's Frauenkirche includes depictions of lute, portable organ, recorder, *viella*, bagpipes and harp, and a German chronicle mentions him as a musician who can play "*in organis, lutina, cytera, fidella, ac fistula Tibiis ac Buccina et in omnibus Instrumentis Musicalibus*».

> Paumann therefore played lute, and there is evidence that he played it in a polyphonic manner. Sebastian Virdung, writing in 1511, believed him to be the inventor of the German lute tablature,[88] for which there would have been little use in monophonic performance. More conclusively, there is one work by Paumann, an arrangement of Binchois's *Je loe amours* from the Buxheimer Orgelbuch, which bears the rubric « in cytaris vel etiam in organis », that is, for plucked string instrument or organ. …

> These findings concerning performance practices can also be applied to the frottola. That the genre was performed by lute playing polyphonically is clear: Petrucci published two books of frottole for voice and lute, Antico published one, and there exists a manuscript of frottole for voice and lute, now in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris under the collocation Res. Vmd. Ms. 27. In all these books, the lute omits the Altus and plays only two of the three lower voices written in other, mensural sources. Indeed, to play all three lower parts on lute is possible but somewhat awkward because of the similarity of range in Altus and Tenor and the frequent voice crossings and notes on the same course that result.[89]

Tenoristi and their function:

Several musicologists who have intensively studied improvisers mention *tenoristi*. This primarily applies to Lewis Lockwood, James Haar, William Prizer, and Reinhard Strohm. Interestingly, Blake Wilson, on whose research and book I base (not only) the new version of Chapter 6 of my study on improvisation, does not mention them at all. The reason is most likely the fact that *tenoristi* were simply not needed by singer-poets who accompanied themselves on the lira da braccio (*cantori ad lyram*, as Wilson calls them)...

Tenoristi, if they appear at all, are only associated with (initially relatively few) improvisers who sang (or recited) with their own accompaniment on the lute or some other, unidentified plucked instrument. They did this, most commonly, on some bowed or other (usually deeper) plucked instrument.

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[87] William F. Prizer, The Frottola,...
[88] Which would mean that he was not blind, or?
[89] William F. Prizer, The Frottola,...

American musicologist Lewis H. Lockwood (1930) devoted a significant portion of his scholarly work (aside from L. v. Beethoven) to Italian Renaissance music, especially in Ferrara and about lutenist Pietrobono. We are interested here in the improvisational career of this musician:[90]

> His [Pietrobono's] continued presence at the court in the last years of Leonello's reign is again confirmed by documents, several [of them] 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]

What bothers or confuses me in this case is the following question: if Pietrobono (and this applies to all his colleagues regardless of whether they used a bowed or plucked instrument) accompanied his singing[92] - with improvised accompaniment on the lute (or some other plucked instrument), with or without a *tenorista*, then it probably didn't involve adding new "parts" or playing "with" or "against" each other - as in the case of composed polyphonic (homophonic or contrapuntal) music, but rather improvisation, which could be slightly, moderately, or completely different with each performance. For me, the fact that lutenist used the plectrum doesn't necessarily mean that he could play only single line of melody because moving it (the plectrum) through all or part of the strings (on only one using the finger, other sound open) he produces a kind of drone-like self-accompaniment.

<u>James Haar</u>, in his article "Improvivisatori and their attitude towards sixteenth-century music"[93] says about *tenoristi*:

> In more refined circles the improviser might have played a guitarlike instrument or the lute; in the latter case, since the lute was until the end of the fifteenth century used as a single-line melodic instrument[94], he would probably have been accompanied by a *tenorista* playing a viol or a large, plucked instrument.

> The mid-sixteenth-century *tenores* of Diego Ortiz are a late reflection of what must have been a long-established tradition of support by a *tenorista*, under a freely elaborated vocal or instrumental part.[95]

> The performance of Pietrobono at the court of Francesco Sforza, probably in 1456, is documented by Antonio Cornazano, who tells us that "*Piero Bono, . . . che in musica le stelle havean dotato*," sang to the *cetra*, accompanied by a *tenorista*, a kind of verse described as "*ordinata frotta*" (this

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[90] Lewis Lockwood: Pietrobono and the Instrumental Tradition at Ferrara in the Fifteenth Century,
Rivista Italiana di Musicologia, Vol. 10 (1975), pp. 115-133. On Pietrobono, see in Chapter 6, p.23
[91] LL: This seems to be reinforced by Tinctoris 'reference to his" modulorum superinventiones, "which can be a variation of the high register on a particular melody or an improvisation of a tenor treble; on this and Cortese's call for his "repetition in the high register" see Pirrotta, Music and Cultural Tendencies ..., p. 157-58; also K. Dorfmüller, Studien zur Lautenmusik in der Ersten Hiilfte des 16. Jahrhunderts (Tutzing 1967), p. 104. Dorfmüller brings iconographic sources on the basis of which it can be assumed that before 1500 solo performances on lute were rare.
[92] Whether it was really improvised as in the case of the Brandolini brothers and a number of other famous improvisers or performed by heart, as in case of some of them.
[93] Haar, James, *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music* ..., Chapter 4.
[94] See my comment above.
[95] JH: *Tenores* by D. Ortiz are given in a four-part texture for a keyboard instrument, but one can easily imagine his viols' improvisation over another viol playing a bass part.

could have been a form of *ballata, terza rima,* or even *ottava* stanzas) on the loves of various fifteenth-century notables, including members of the Sforza family. We are even told that his song was "*tucta in semitoni, proportionando e sincoppando sempre, e fugiva el tenore a i suoi cantoni.*"

This description, hard to take at face value, nevertheless informs us that Pietrobono's song was real music, with some melodic fioritura, either vocal or on the lute, over a supporting bass.

Unlike James Haar, I believe that, at least in the case of such a detailed description (which is itself very rare in the case of live performances of both medieval and Renaissance music), this could be taken " at face value." "*Ordinata frotta*" could represent the so-called formes fixes of Italian poetry, "*tucta in semitoni, proportionando e sincoppando sempre, e fugiva el tenore*" could mean that Pietrobono, while singing or playing on his (perhaps lute - in any case plucked) instrument, performed rapid passages (at that time called *perfidie*) in a sequence of semitones, observed rhythmic proportions, used syncopation, and "escaped" the *tenorista* who was trying to follow him...

In this case, it was about the lute, but the same thing could have been done (without the need for an additional *tenorista*) on the lira or viola da braccio.[96] From my own practical experience, however, I can add that, both with the lira da braccio and the lira da gamba, lirone, the participation of a "bass" (whether bowed or plucked) instrument, while not necessarily essential, is never superfluous, as it complements those chords on both instruments that instead of the root or third have a fifth in the bass. Following author, W. Prizer, in a way, confirms this practice.

William F. Prizer, in his already quoted article "Frottola and the Unwritten Tradition"[97] says:

> Shortly before 1450 a new method of performance arose, perhaps adopted from the written tradition. Now, a new player was added to the improviser: a *tenorista* who played lute, *viola da mano,* or fiddle. Presumably, the *tenorista* played the tenor part and the improviser himself played a new contratenor line. Pietrobono of Ferrara was listed alone during the earlier part of his career, but from 1449 was always provided with a *tenorista*. In 1456 «Pietrobono del Chitarinj » is paid for the whole year, as is « *Francesco de Biasio de Malacise, tenorista de chitarinj* ». Both names are included in essentially the same way in 1475 and 1478. In Milan, the same practice is evident after mid-century:

> On 12 November 1461 two florins were paid to « a player of the lute and another who plays the tenor »; in 1469, a payment is recorded to a German lutenist and to « his companion, player of the *viola* »; and the same is recorded again in 1475, when Galeazzo Maria Sforza writes to Giovanni di Castelnuovo, requesting « Johannes the German, player of the lute, and his companion who plays the *viola* »

> Such records continue much later as well. In 1493, during a banquet in Innsbruck, Italian musicians played « *liutto cum viola*, and there is even some evidence that the famed poet and improviser Serafino dall'Aquila had a *tenorista*: in an unpublished letter of 1498, written from Urbino, Silvestro Calandra informs Isabella d'Este that "*Serafino and Fidele* are here to

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[96] IP: In practice, all chords that can be performed on the lira da braccio can also be performed on instruments higher register of the violin family (in fact, the viola da braccio family), lacking the tones of the octave by deepest strings G-g and C-c on the fingerboard, and the bass strings in the octave D-d or G-g. It is also possible that at least some of the improvisers also used the viol.

[97] William F. Prizer, The Frottola and the Unwritten Tradition, *Studi Musicali,* Anno XV – 1986 no. 1, pp.3-38.

entertain». Although this statement is not amenable to a definite interpretation, it is probable that Serafino and Fidele were performing in the traditional manner of lutenist and *tenorista*.[98] …

There is, however, evidence that the lutenist-*tenorista* duo was still functioning in this repertory. An early sixteenth-century manuscript in the Biblioteca Marciana of Venice, Ms. It. XI, 66, includes in its oldest gatherings a *ballata* with the incipit. *E' un buon cantar suave*. This is a simple, didactic poem containing a few brief musical passages intended to teach the methods of singing; it includes the phrase «This tenor that I jot down can be played on any *viola* », suggesting that the practice ot the *viola*-playing tenorista was still alive in the early Cinquecento.

Mantua and Ferrara, the two greatest centres of the frottola, also offer proof of the continuing tradition of the lutenist-*tenorista* duo. Marchetto Cara, one of the leading frottolists, was provided with a t*enorista*, the lutenist and *violist* Roberto d'Avanzini. In fact, Mantuan documents rarely mention d'Avanzini in a musical context without also mentioning Cara, and they seem to have formed a consistent performing duo.

Prizer also mentions examples of similar practices from Ferrara; the payroll of Cardinal Ippolito I d'Este for 1507 includes "*Zoro Maria nostro Halmano, musico*" on March 14th and "*Zoan Maria Judio, sonadore*" on March 15th. ... Importantly, the same payroll contains the name of a certain "*Galeazo de Joane Maria*," probably a lute player, while the payroll for the previous year explicitly mentions "*Galeazo de Zoanne Maria che sona de lira*" and "*Zoanne Maria che sona de liuto*"...

The author believes that the basic performance of *frottole* should have been as follows: the singer-lutenist would sing the cantus, playing either the structural voices (bass and tenor) or the embellished line of the altus, while his *coadiutore* or accompanist would play the voice or voices omitted by the singer. If the accompanist was not present, the singer-lutenist would simply play the structural parts, thereby losing only a certain fullness of harmony and rhythmic liveliness. These methods of performance would align well with the musical nature of the frottola and would explain the presence of coadjutors in the works of Cara and Pesenti. Moreover, this was the most common way of writing for two lutes during the early sixteenth century, as in duets and in Spinaccino's and Dalza's lute books, where one lute plays polyphonically and the other monophonically.[99]

Perhaps, but judging by the aforementioned, the only surviving source of music for the lira from Pesaro,[100] which contains a "bank" of chords for the lira da braccio in direct comparison with chords for the lute, I think such a practice would be unnecessary. Like my colleagues and I have done for years, I accompanied my singing (frottola) using chords from the Pesaro manuscript at least semi-ad hoc; my performance material, besides the composed melody and text, consisted exclusively of chords labelled with letters,[101] which allowed me (especially in the case of the lirone and to a lesser extent with the lira da braccio) to make some variations or engage in a rudimentary form of improvisation.

In his work "*The Rise of European Music*", 1380-1500,[102] Reinhard Strohm says:

Singers like Pietrobono were occasionally assisted by a *tenorista*, in this case an expression for another instrumentalist who could take an optional third voice, i.e. a countertenor. ....

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[98] WP: Although Serafino may have played other instruments like the lira da braccio, he seems to have been basically a lute player.

[99] So, the second one played a melody with rich decorations (quasi - improvised) and the first one took care of the accompaniment.

[100] Manuscript from Pesaro, Oliveriana, no. 1144 (olim 1193).

[101] Using the capital letters for major and lowercase letters for minor chords; in addition, numbers 4-3 for the suspension or 7 for the seventh chord, etc.

[102] R. Strohm: *The Rise of Europena Music*, 1380-1500, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993.

As the century progressed, the countertenor *bassus* gained in importance and was usually performed by a *tenorista*, for example on a lute.[103]

I reiterate that for improvisers, if something was not significant, it was the system upon which the composed, written music of their time functioned. If they had wanted differently (some of them, like Serafino Aquilano in his youth, received a good enough education in the composition of so-called "learned" music)[104], they could have embarked on that path, which, however, would have led them outside the orbit of the improvised practice or art of *cantare ad lyram*.

But, if someone is proficient with all the typical Renaissance combinations, sequences, and chords, then that technique may not necessarily be required. The role of a potential *tenorista* in that case would be to "understand" the chords and add (missing) bass or tenor to them. Conversely, if the *tenorista* plays *tenores* (such as late 15th century dances, *basse danse, bassi ostinati*, or Gregorian melodies - all well-known to musicians of that time[105]), then it would be up to the singer to add appropriate modulated declamation (or melody) and chords to it through improvisation.

I reiterate that I am still not convinced about the role of the *tenorista*, that is, why they were needed in the first place, as most improvisers performed solo. Both singers who accompanied themselves by the lira da braccio or the lute, harp, or similar instruments in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, played polyphonically, in chords. In some chord progressions on the lira (such as the aforementioned quart-sixth chord, for example), it may be helpful if another musician adds or doubles the bass line on the lute or any other plucked (other string) or even a wind instrument, but this is not a mandatory "necessity" ...

To conclude, it seems to me that the only reason could be that such or similar duets of improvisers involved the use of two- or three-voice improvised counterpoint of the first kind (note against note) or possibly the second kind (two notes against one of the cantus firmus). In that case, the *tenorista* performed the tenor melody (from secular, dance, or spiritual, Gregorian, repertoire - depending on the occasion and purpose of their performance) familiar to both,[106] and the singer - lute or lira player - added their modulated declamation/melody in a florid style and corresponding notes between it and the tenor melody. Professional musicians, even capable amateurs of that time, learned techniques of improvised counterpoint during their musical education (most often already in their boyhood, in church choirs), so the idea of using that knowledge outside the church and liturgy did not have to be far-fetched.

7.4. Frottola as a relic of improvisation and its relation to the unwritten tradition and other alternatives

Several authors who have explored the topic of improvisers and their art have connected this to the vast repertoire of early 16th century frottola, primarily with the editions of O. de' Petrucci. Their opinions naturally vary, although a larger number of them believe that this connection was possible. Some authors suggest the century-old repertoire of Italian Ars Nova, or *trecento*, as a (better) alternative. Although I have a sceptical opinion about this, it is not impossible that some of the improvisers (especially the more educated *canterini* in the early 15th century) made such attempts.

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[103] IP: Although I do not exclude such a possibility, given the amount of information we received from Lockwood, it seems to me that *tenoristi* most often played various bowed instruments and accompanied lutenists, or singers - players of other plucked instruments.

[104] Which led several musicologist to various speculations on the type of his performances.

[105] Much like various "changes" and "standards" are familiar to blues, jazz, and top rock musicians of our time

[106] The *tenorista* in the practice of *contrapunto alla mente* sang from a choral book, hence the name of this practice.

I begin with W. Rubsamen and his already cited article *The Justiniane or Viniziane of the 15th Century* [107] in which the author, among other things, mentions connections with the music of the *trecento*:

> The only musical source of the 15th or early 16th centuries which names the *Justiniane* as a category of secular song is Petrucci's *Frottole Libro Sexto*, published in 1505. The index heading of this print reads: *Frottole Sonetti Stramboti Ode. Iustiniane numero sesanta sie* (*sic*), but the publisher does not specify which of the 63 compositions in the volume are *Justiniane*. …

> The Justiniane in Petrucci (see Ex. 1) [108] were improvised from simple models like the *Aime sospiri* of the Escorial Ms. As actually performed, with improvised ornamentation of the upper voice, the *Justiniana* of the mid-15th century may be defined as a three-voiced composition for solo voice and instrumental accompaniment, in which long *colorature* alternate with shorter declamatory phrases in the elaborately melismatic *discantus*. The metrical scheme is generally irregular, alternating freely between duple and triple, although triple meter may prevail throughout.

> Proof that the melismatic *Justiniane* described above are examples of written-down improvisation from simple models can be found in the aforementioned Escorial Ms. IV. a. 24, which contains an earlier, rudimentary version of *Aime sospiri* on fol. 85v—86. …

> Upon examination, it will be seen that Petrucci's discant is a highly florid version of the simple original…

> It need hardly be pointed out that the unpretentious little *Aime sospiri* of the Escorial Ms. and its elaboration in *Frottole Libro Sexto* are of some historical importance. They prove conclusively that some of the simple Italian compositions of the mid-15th century were not performed as written, but in the richly ornamental style of the Ars Nova. They document a continuation of *trecento* floridity until at least the last quarter of the *quattrocento*, with all that implies in respect to stylistic influence upon Northern musicians who were in Italy at the time; and they provide the only example now known of a written-down vocal improvisation in the 15th century. …

> In conclusion, it has been established that the simple *Justiniane* of the mid-*quattrocento* were not performed as written, but served as a framework for improvisatory ornamentation, thus continuing on a new harmonic basis the richly melismatic style of the Ars Nova. Petrucci's publication of four examples shows that *trecento* floridity lived on in Italy as an improvised style until at least the turn of the century, having dropped from sight but not from sound.

Nino Pirrotta, in his article "Oral Tradition and Written Tradition in Music"[109] gives an outstanding comparison between oral and written music based on an iceberg:

> The music we study, the written tradition of music, can be compared to the visible part of an iceberg, most of which remains submerged and invisible. The part that emerges certainly deserves our attention because it is all we have left of the past and because it represents the most consciously elaborated part; but our evaluations must also always take into account the seven octaves of the iceberg that remain submerged, the music of the unwritten tradition. Furthermore, it is sometimes possible that the general, purely negative consideration of the submerged mass is

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[107] Walter H. Rubsamen: The Justiniane or Viniziane of the 15 th Century, *Acta Musicologica* 29 (1957), pp.172-84.
[108] See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-1 Rubsamen ex.1-1 to 1-3.
[109] Nino Pirrotta, "Tradizione orale e tradizione scritta nella musica", u *L'ars nova italiana del trecento*, II (Certaldo, 1969), pp. 431.

supplemented by elements that, by emerging in the written tradition, allow us to glimpse what was happening beneath it.

In support of *frottola* he says:

> The popular singer tends towards the greatest economy of means; like the improviser (and the two qualities often coincide), he must <u>memorize</u> a vast repertoire; he tends therefore to simplify it, to reduce to the indispensable what he needs to memorize. …

With this quote, my improvisation reached its final point, suggesting that in the frottola repertoire of the late 15th century, we can and should see the emergence in the written tradition of forms and manners that had previously been practiced in the oral tradition of music. Among the so-called frottola forms, the *strambotto* had in the 15th century an importance comparable to that which the madrigal assumed during the following century; there were certainly also popular forms of *strambotto*, but above all its courtly and refined formulation was exalted. Serafino Aquilano, the major star of Italian music at the end of the century, was admired especially for singing *strambotti*, the nec plus ultra of music at that time, which we tend instead to discredit as baroque avant la lettre. Musically, the *strambotti*, even those that found a place in manuscripts and prints, are among the most notable examples of economy of means; the intonation of the first two verses is simply repeated for the three subsequent distichs with only slight modifications, not recorded but certainly introduced by the performer to adjust the melody to the various verbal accents; if then it was a matter of stanzas, that is, of a series of *strambotti*, the same music was repeated as many times as there were distichs in all the stanzas. To our amazement, we find the use still in force in Florence in 1539, at the wedding of Cosimo dei Medici with Eleonora di Toledo. The print of the music performed on that occasion includes a series of polyphonic madrigals sung in honour of the newlyweds by groups impersonating the various cities of Tuscany, but the presentation of the groups was once again entrusted to a singer "on the lyre," who as Orpheus sang forty octaves, the print gives the text but not the music, which once again falls within the unwritten tradition.

Similar procedures apply in the capitolo and in the ode, both related to what in the 15th century had been called *sirventese*; in both, the intonation of the first three verses is repeated for the subsequent symmetrical groups. We find greater variety in the sonnet, both because the written examples belong to a period in which new solutions of the relationship between poetry and music were already emerging, and because the relative brevity of the form (14 verses) lent itself to intonations not generally intended for every sonnet, but specifically appropriate to a particular text. However, there is still a predominance, especially in the " *aeri da cantar sonetti*," of an economical solution whereby the music of three verses serves for the entire poem. The intonation is given for the first, second, and fourth verse; the third verse, which rhymes with the second, repeats its music; the same three musical phrases serve for the second *quartina* and (omitting the repetition of the second phrase) for the two *terzine*."

In the case of *Ars nova*[110] (and in a way of *contrapunto alla mente*) Pirrotta says:

> One of these cases is represented by a composition from the late 14th century (but on a text so much older that it has been attributed to Emperor Frederick II or his son Frederick of Antioch), which is the subject of an article I wrote some years ago and appeared in 1968 under the auspices of the meritorious *Centro di Studi di Certaldo*. In my opinion, the composition reflects a type of music different from that of the cultivated music normally recorded in manuscripts, cultivated music to which the majority of the repertoire of the codex from which my example is drawn

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[110] After Rubsamen, another author who connects the art of improvisers of the second half of the 15th century with the style of Ars Novae.

belongs (the so-called Reina codex, Paris, Bibl. Nationale, nouv. acq. frç. 6771). An unusual characteristic is the type of polyphony employed, with two voices that often begin their phrases proceeding in unison (more rarely in parallel fifths) and then continue "a bellows," moving away and approaching each other in contrary motion, from unison to third, to fifth, and more rarely to octave, and vice versa to fifth, third, and unison. ...

It is obviously a mechanical procedure, different from the more ingenious and varied choices of artistic polyphony; I also think that it was used in church for improvised polyphonic performances, as it allows for the easy addition of a "contrapunto alla mente" to an already known melody; however, there are sporadic occasions when it was recorded in writing.
In addition to employing this unique polyphonic procedure, the composition I published has an unusual way of reciting the text: it fragments it into minute segments, repeated several times and often introduced with the interpolation of a vocalization (*e o o*) that serves as a vocal attack to the fragment but interrupts and corrupts the metric of the verses, a characteristic whim of popular or popularizing singers. ...

A characteristic of these polyphonies is the tendency to reuse the same musical elements several times during the composition. The popular singer tends towards the greatest economy of means; like the improviser (and the two qualities often coincide), he must <u>memorize</u> a vast repertoire; he tends therefore to simplify it, to reduce to the indispensable what he needs to memorize.

Regarding unwritten and written music James Haar in his article "Monophony and unwritten tradition"[111] says:

The question of how unwritten music was performed, be it played and sung from memory or in varying degrees improvised, may seem a fruitless one to ask. If we do not know what the music itself was like, what good are speculations as to how it was performed? Hard evidence on the nature of orally transmitted music and on the technique and style of improvisers can come only from fragments of actual music that were for some reason written down.

Still, it seems useful and not unduly optimistic to postulate that written and unwritten music, at the level of the professional performer, may not have been two very different things.

One of the most important genres in the unwritten tradition during the Renaissance was the use of melodic <u>formulas</u> for singing epic and lyrical poetry *all'improvviso*. ...

The music consisted of melodies, if such a precise term for them may be ventured, known as *aere* or *arie*. They differed not only from singer to singer but by locale.

Arie appear from time to time in printed collections, individually in madrigal prints, and in sources such as the manuscript songbook of Cosimo Bottegari, a lutenist—singer at the Medici court in Florence in the late 16th century. The genre changes less than one might expect since *arie* tend to avoid extremes in melody, rhythm and harmony. Tunes must have come and gone, had moments of popularity and then vanished; the basic approach remained fairly constant. Bottegari's songs have been called `some of the earliest known monodies'; but the line between *aria* and monody is a thin one if it exists at all. Any accompanied solo song is after all a form of monody.

The celebrated *arie* called *passamezzo, romanesca, ruggiero* etc, found without their names in the *Tratado de glosas* of Diego Ortiz (1553) and common in the music of the late 16th and early 17th

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[111] J. Haar, Monophony and the Unwritten Traditions, in: *Performance Practice, Music before 1600*, ed. H.M.Brown and S. Sadie, The New Grove Handbooks in Music, Macmillan Press, London 1989.

centuries, appear from their regularity of construction and sturdiness of harmonic design to be instrumental in concept, …

Zarlino speaks of 'these *modi* on which we now sing the sonnets and *canzoni* of Petrarch or the *rime* of Ariosto'.[112] The stanzas of *Orlando Furioso* were popular with madrigalists; they also gave a new repertory of chivalric lore to the *cantastorie*, material vibrant in imagery and written in clear, refinedly Petrarchistic language that was of great appeal to courtly improvisers and their patrons. Although madrigals on texts from *Orlando Furioso* were written in a variety of styles, a favoured idiom was a <u>declamatory, chordal structure</u> emphasizing the textual rhythms of Ariosto's endecasyllabic verse. Many of these pieces are polyphonic equivalents to *arie*; some of them use melodies, or melodic types, that recur often enough to suggest that well-known tunes are being cited. This is an unmistakable feature of Jacquet Berchem's *Capriccio*, a set of four-voice madrigals based on about 90 stanzas from Ariosto's poem. Berchem's collection, dedicated to a member of the Este family, patrons of Ariosto, is clearly designed as a composer's version of the art of the *improvvisatore*.

Contrafactum[113]

Another kind of music-making dependent at least in part on <u>memory</u> rather than on written notation involves the use of melodies, or of whole polyphonic pieces, for texts other than those for which they were originally intended. *Laude* were made from madrigals and *ballate* in the *trecento*; 15th-century chansons appeared with German and Italian texts; secular tunes were used for Flemish psalm settings; chansons and madrigals were 'spiritualized' through substitution of pious for amatory texts; motets written for specific occasions were reused with partially or totally new texts; *noëls* used *timbres*, chanson tunes well enough known so that citation of their opening words sufficed to remind singers of their melodies. These are only some of the textual substitutions used in the Renaissance. ...

An *improvvisatore* could make something fresh and individual out of a composition originally designed for quite different purposes. Here some musical adjustments and a good deal of individual style in performance would essentially <u>re-create</u> a piece, not just use it as a contrafactum. What seems to have been regarded as unusual was to compose ex nihilo and invent everything — what Zarlino called composing '*di fantasia*'

The roots of *frottole* are in the poetry and songs (melodies) of improvisers. …

[*Frottola* composers] also attached musical models that were to serve others to recite poetry; in Petrucci's ten surviving books of frottola, there are twelve compositions called "*modo*" or "*aer*", which provide music for sonnets and *capitoli* and, non-specifically, for Latin verses. There are none for *barzellete*, probably because this form of verse was less regular than the others; and, oddly enough, none for that form so beloved in the art of improvisation: *strambotto*. The model [module] of this aria is given in Example 14, anonymous and without the text "*modo di cantar sonetti*", providing *frottola* amateurs with simple means to sing their own or their friends 'verses.[114] The highest voice seems to have been designed for singing, above the supporting bass and two filling voices, which may have been performed exactly as they were written. *Quatrine* of sonnets would be sung by repeating the middle phrase for two inner lines; *terzine* would use three phrases sung throughout. Many repeated notes in the melody would allow for different accents in the words and thus give the performer a good dose of flexibility. …

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[112] JH: G. Zarlino, *Le istitutioni harmoniche* (Venecija, 1558).
[113] I explained this technique and my practical experiences with it in Chapter 1 of this study, p.32/ Foot.78, and later in this chapter, on p.75, where I mentioned its use in practice.
[114] See Appendix / Musical examples, B.5 From the edition of Ottaviano de' Petrucci: Modi

The composers of the frottola were sometimes church musicians, and some of them, like the Cara, underwent a real musical education.[115] … However, frottolists were considered composers, not improvisers.

The origins of the frottole are not entirely clear, but among them must be the vocal and instrumental tradition of improvised music of northern Italy, *strambotto* from the south, and perhaps some Spanish music [arriving in Italy] through the Neapolitan court, where contemporary *villancico* was well known.[116] The octosyllables of the *barzelletta* were sung to a lilting dance rhythm that matches and gives real verve to the singsong text rhythms, suggesting the popular appeal of the improviser's art but giving it in composed, "corrected", form, with inner voices written in contrapuntal style, … Carretto asked in a letter from 1497, to have this and other *barzellete*, as set by Tromboncino, sent to him, along with the new "*aerea de capitolo.*" …

The aristocratic musical amateur as depicted in Castigliones *Cortegiano* knew something of the art and had been taught to sing, to play a lute or viol,[117] to read music. These people could not compete with virtuoso improvisers or with northern polyphonic singers, but they were more than just listeners; they wanted music they could perform themselves. And since many of them were amateur poets or had friends who were, they wanted not only French chansons, but settings of the fashionable verse of the moment.

In the second article (chapter of his book) "Improvisers and their attitude towards sixteenth century music"[118] James Haar continues:

These patrons, especially the rulers of Ferrara and Mantua and their cousins, supported the poets and musicians who created the repertoire of frottola; and within this repertoire there are many works suitable for solo singing, including an *aria* conceived to be suitable for any sonnet, any *capitolo*, or any Latin verse (of right meter and line length). Frottola is certainly a link between the tradition of improvisation and written polyphony. ...

Petrucci's *arie* must have been commissioned in order to give amateurs material on which to base their own improvised singing. We have already seen one of these *arie*, designed for sonnets. How close it is to what professional *improvvisatori* actually sang we do not know, but surely it was intended to sound like the real thing. The *strambotti* printed by Petrucci often contain a lot of vocal fioritura, suggesting that they are meant to sound "composed"—though flexibility in performance is always possible since there is usually music only for a single couplet and this music must be repeated four times. Some of the *strambotti* in the frottola books are so simple melodically and so close to speech and/or dance rhythms that they suggest, even demand, a kind of lively spontaneity in performance that would create at least part of the sense of *aria*. Two examples will help to illustrate this. The first, a setting by Tromboncino, opens with a mock-solemn monotone, followed by a call for attention at a higher pitch, sinking to a half cadence to prepare for the message, which

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[115] JH: Cara probably attended the *Scuola degli accoliti* in Verona, and for a time was the *maestro di cappella* of the Gonzaga court chapel..

[116] JH: The *villancico* seems a strong candidate as a genre influencing the frottola, especially those barzellette of fairly simple chordal texture. (The influence could of ourse have been recprocal.) Bass patterns characteristic oft the villancico, often close to later-sixteenth-cesury patterned basses such as the Romanesca and folia, can be found in the frottola as well. See Edward E. Lowinskv, Tonality and Atonality, in Sixteenth-Century Music (Berkeley, 1962), chap. 1, and the literature cited there. Lowinsky inclines to think that the direction of influence was from Italy to Spain; but Italian music earlier than the frottola repertory shows these characteristics only in pieces emanating from the South, where Spanish musical culture was strong.

[117] IP: Viola, lira da braccio or viol.

[118] Haar, James, Essays on Italian Poetry and Music ..., Chapter 4.

is delivered in bits and pieces and with an amusing imitation in the textless parts, surely playable by a singer-lutenist with a *tenorista* to help (Ex. 20).[119]

The second, by Filippo Lurano, contains the alternating triple and duple beats characteristic of the *barzelletta*; not an actual dance, but full of rhythmic lilt (Ex. 21).[120] The melody, circling around its keynote, F, could hardly be simpler (except for the spontaneous-sounding flourish on "*quanto*"). Notice that the declamation is faithful to the sound of the words and to divisions within the line but not to the line as a unit; internal repetitions and word splitting in Example 20, and stretching of the line to twelve syllables in Example 21, cause some distortion. As a feature of improvisatory art this seems more suitable for short lyric verse, such as *strambotti*, than for the *ottave* of epic verse, the performance of which one would expect to move rather crisply by the line.

It would be reassuring to think that *strambotti* such as these represent the improvisatory art of the *strambottisti*—deprived, of course, of the all-important elements of personal style in delivery. The chances of this being so seem a little better than in the case of the *giustiniane* discussed in chapter 2. For one thing, the frottola repertory appears in part to be designed as a reflection of improvised song. Musicians like Pietrobono included frottolas in their repertory; Pietrobono is known to have taught his pupils pieces from the earlier layers of this repertory, among them a *Scaramella* that might be the setting of a "Scaramella" text by Josquin or one by Loyset Compère.

Speaking of frottola and the unwritten tradition, William F. Prizer[121] says:

> The problem of the « unwritten tradition» in Quattrocento Italy has drawn the attention of many scholars, but principally that of Nino Pirrotta, who with his customary insight has both defined the problem and pointed toward its solution, finding in manuscripts throughout the fifteenth century written examples of the basically oral practice. He shows that it is only through the acceptance of the existence of the unwritten tradition that the seeming dearth of native composition in Quattrocento Italy can be explained satisfactorily. …

> The purpose of this study is to examine in detail the relationship between the unwritten tradition and the early frottola, concentrating on the period of about 1450 to 1505. Its thesis is that the *frottola* was the direct outgrowth of the unwritten tradition, representing in its early stages a precious written record of it. By examining the basic similarities in text form, musical form and style, manner of performance, and repertory between the pieces of the unwritten tradition and the frottola, it is apparent that the two genres are closely enough analogous to be viewed as the same genre. The first three areas, poetic form and musical form and style, are treated more briefly here, since these are the principal focus of Pirrotta's arguments. A final portion of this study attempts to show that the early frottola was itself transmitted by oral as well as written means and to link the increasing subtlety of the textual and musical form of the frottola to the decision to begin writing down the pieces. This development represented both a severing of the frottola from the unwritten tradition and a turn toward a new art tradition that would result indirectly in the madrigal.

> Through literary references, collections of *poesie per musica*, and musical manuscripts, it is evident that there were four text forms found frequently in the unwritten tradition: *sirventesi*, also

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[119] JH: "Voi che passati qui fumati el passo", taken from Petrucci, *Frottole libro septimo* (1507), fol. 19 .;
See Appendix / Musical examples: VII-2 Haar ex. 20.

[120] JH: "Vana speranza mia che mai non vene", taken from Petrucci, Frottole libro quarto (1505), fol. 9 .; IP: See Musical Examples A, Ch.VII-2 Haar ex. 21. IP: See later on p.69 what Prizer say about this supposedly for frottola typical *hemiola* rhythm, and in the Appendix, see Mus.examples VII-14 Prizer ex.1 Cara.

[121] William F. Prizer, The Frottola and the Unwritten Tradition, *Studi Musicali,* Anno XV – 1986 no. 1, pp.3-38.

called *canzonette* (long strophic poems in stanzas of three or four lines); *strambotti* (lyric poems of a single strophe of eight lines); *barzellette* (octosyllabic variants of the *ballata);* and the *ballata* itself, which, although often found in the art tradition, is also associated with oral practice.
Ms. Bologna Universitaria 2216, for example, contains eleven Italian-texted pieces, of which nine are anonymous *ballate*. Several of these works reveal their ties to the unwritten tradition through their two-voice frameworks, note-against-note counterpoint, and in their series of simultaneous *corone*, intended perhaps to allow time for vocal embellishment.

The *strambotto* illustrates the bond between the unwritten tradition and the frottola particularly clearly. …

Further text-forms of the oral tradition can also be linked to the frottola. The *sirventese* or *canzonetta* sung by Giustinian became the *oda* and the *capitolo* of the frottola.. …

Another bond between the oral tradition and the frottola is musical form and style. In any music that is transmitted primarily through oral means, there are two requisite factors: simplicity and redundancy. These elements are necessary because the performer, with a large repertory, must have <u>memorized</u> not only the music, but also the text, which was often quite long. A striking example is that of Cristoforo, called « l'Altissimo» (d. 1500), who composed and sang from memory his *Primo libro de' Reali* of ninety-eight cantos. In such a work, the melodic and harmonic material must have been simple, including a large measure of redundancy, or better yet patterned redundancy, in which the performer would know in advance exactly which segment of music accompanied a given poetic line. Pirrotta has shown, for example, exactly this patterned redundancy in a *siciliana* from the early Quattrocento, *E vantènde, segnor mio* from the Reina codex. He notes that the singer has reduced the musical material of his *siciliana* to only two elements, the second of which is actually a slightly varied version of the first.

This kind of structure, which I call «<u>*mnemonic form*</u>», is precisely that found in the frottola, where there is a strong tendency toward the re-use of melodic elements within the setting. Since these repetitions are linked to the rhyme scheme of the poem, they serve both to reduce the number of phrases the performer must learn and to provide a kind of *mnemonic key* through which a given melody is associated with a given rhyme. *Barzellette*, for example, show a clear use of this patterned repetition, for they tend to adopt the same melodic segment for the rhyming middle lines of the *ripresa* and to re-use the same music for the rhyming lines in the stanza. Marchetto Cara's *Defecerunt, donna, hormai*, from Petrucci's first book of frottole, although simple, is typical:

Ripresa	Piedi	Volta
a b b a	c d c d	d a
1 2 2 3	1 2 1 2	2 3

Also illuminating are the musical forms given the *strambotto*: composers most often set all eight lines of the poem (rhyming ABABABCC) with only two melodic segments. Even when they add new music for the concluding couplet, there remains the strong link with rhyme, for the form that results is 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 3. There are even musical settings within frottola manuscripts and prints that must stem directly from the unwritten tradition: the pieces entitled *Modo de cantar sonetti*, *Aere de capitoli*, and the like. These are *formulae*, often untexted in the sources, for singing any text in a given poetic form..[122]

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[122] WP: Petrucci's fourth book of frottole (RISM 15055), for example, includes "Modo de cantar sonetti" (fol. 14), "Aer de versi latini" (fol. 36) - both without text and Un solicito amor, marked " Air of the Chapter ”(fol. 55c). Manuscript in Florence, Biblioteca del Conservatorio, Ms. 2441, contains one work, Pensieri in fuocho, entitled "Sonnets" (fol. 39v-40).

The musical style of the frottola also tends to mirror an *improvised practice*, for poetic forms of a single strophe often have much more elaborate and melismatic musical settings than those with many strophes. This functions not only as an element of economy, but also as an aid to memory, for long poems in an oral practice would hardly have featured highly elaborate settings. Thus, *ode* and *capitoli*, with many strophes, tend to be set simply: their melodies are almost entirely syllabic except for occasional, mild *fioriture* at the ends of lines, and their accompanying voices are sparse and almost homorhythmic with the upper voice. *Strambotti*, of a single strophe, and isolated stanzas of longer poems, however, often have much more elaborate melodic lines that include long *melismata* and more complicated accompaniments. The same is true of *ballate* that mirror the *unwritten tradition*. …

A further tie between the frottola and the *oral tradition* is the manner of performance. Although there were clearly various methods of performing works in both repertories, the most prevalent one was the accompanying of a vocal line by *one or two bowed or plucked string instruments*. The problems to be explored, then, are which instruments were used, how they were played, and what parts of the composition they executed. …

Repertory is another way in which the *unwritten tradition* can be tied to the *frottola*. Since the improvisers performed many different kinds of music, however, it is necessary first to define which of their repertories were of importance to the frottola. First, the improvisers sang long, narrative verse. Antonio di Guido in Florence sang paraphrases of biblical stories, l'Altissimo sang of the Royal Houses of France and of the Overthrow of Ravenna,[123] and Pietrobono sang stories of contemporaneous lovers.

Second, the improvisers even sang prose. Giovanni da Verona, for example, in 1465 « sang in prose of the months of May, June, and the others ». Third, they must have played instrumental music, especially for the dance.[124] Except for the last category, none of these repertories is important for the frottola. The tradition of singing narrative verse, for example, seems to have continued on its own, unwritten way, to emerge later in what Professor James Haar has recently defined as «*arie per cantar stanze* » *formulae* for singing the narrative verse of Ariosto and others. [125] Most important for the frottola was the improvisers' singing of lyric verse, discussed above in connection with the *strambotto* and other forms. …

Another of the basically *unwritten repertories* that appears in the *frottola* is the *dance tune*. Jeppesen has pointed out that Giovanni Ambrosio's ballo entitled *Voltate in ça, Rosina* is found in a quodlibet by Ludovico Fogliano in Petrucci's ninth book of *Frottole*, and Beatrice Pescerelli has noted that *Se non dormi, donna, ascolta*, from Petrucci's third book of *Frottole*, is included as a *ballo* in a copy of Guglielmo Ebreo's dance treatise. [126] To these two tunes can now be added a third: the refrain of Cara's *Poiché in van* includes a tune, the text of which is «*Vegnando da Bologna* »; this same tune appears again as a *cascarda* in Caroso's *Il Ballarino* of 1581, now entitled *Fedeltá*.

/Example VII-3, Prizer ex. 2a. Marchetto Cara, Poiche in van. Cantus, mm. 13-18 (reprise). First book, fol. 14V. Rome, 1526/[127] …

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[123] 476 AD.

[124] WP: The repertoire of improvisers is discussed in Haraszti, La Technique des improvisateurs, cit., P. 15-25; IP: see 5.1. in this study.

[125] WP: J. Haar, Arie per cantar stanze ariostesche in *L'Ariosto, la musica, i musicisti*, edited by M. A. Balsano, Florence, 1981, p. 31-46.

[126] He is an author who was initially known as Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro, and later as Giovanni Ambrogio. Interestingly, I (not even unaware of this double connection between his dances and frottola) very early in my career as a researcher and lira da braccio player harmonized a series of his monophonic dances for performance on my *lira*.

[127] See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-3 Prizer Unwritten ex.2.a, b

There is also a different kind of evidence that the frottola is tied to the *unwritten tradition*, for it seems to have been transmitted not only through written means, but also *orally*. This simultaneous dissemination of a repertory through oral and written transmission is not a new occurrence. Hendrik Van der Werf, for example, has already noted the same situation in the chansons of the *trouvères*. As he so aptly puts it, if one is dealing in that repertory with a purely written transmission of pieces, then scribes copied more wrong notes than right ones. On the other hand, if one assumes a tradition in which written and oral transmission exist side by side, then variants between two versions of the same work are not only logical, but are also testimonies in themselves to the existence of the two modes of transmission. …

There is a striking parallel within the frottola to the pattern that Van der Werf describes. The manuscript Res. Vmd. 27 of the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, formerly belonging to Genevieve Thibault, seems to have functioned as an *aide-memoire* of a professional lutenist, probably in the Veneto during the first decade of the *cinquecento*. The recent availability of this source makes possible for the first time an examination of its repertory and readings. Particularly important is the second section of the manuscript, which includes frottole arranged for voice and lute. It has already been noted that this source omits the altus, like all lute intabulations of the repertory, and it also omits the mensural cantus parts, which the lutenist was expected to know from memory. This in itself is an important testimony to the survival of an *oral tradition*, for he would hardly have been expected to perform from two manuscripts of music at once. The crucial factor here, however, is that the versions of the frottole included in the Thibault manuscript are often very different from those in other sources. The accompanying lines have frequently been ornamented, and, in some cases, lines that seem almost entirely new have been added that still fit with the vocal cantus. A particularly telling example of this process is seen in the anonymous *A la fé, sí a la fé bona*, which includes a virtually new tenor and bassus to accompany the mensural Cantus found in Petrucci's third book of *frottole* and elsewhere.

Equally as important, the lutenist has changed the form of many of the *barzellette* so that the pieces are considerably simpler, perhaps to make them easier to memorize. …

The decision to fix the repertory through writing it down changed the basic nature of the genre. Even among the simpler text forms, later settings are frequently more elaborate than earlier ones. Cara, for example, in works published in Petruccis's first book of *frottole*, tends to set *barzellette* using the same music for the *ripresa* and the stanza, like the lutenist of the Thibault manuscript. In later works, however, he most often composes new music for the stanza. In retrospect, it seems that Isabella d'Este may have sounded the symbolic death knell for this particular branch of the unwritten tradition in 1504, when she wrote to the poet Niccolò da Correggio asking him to choose a *canzone* of Petrarch that she could have set to music. Niccolò responded with *Sì è debile il filo*, and a setting of this poem by Tromboncino is in Petrucci's seventh book of *frottole* of 1507. From this date there is first a trickle and then a stream of settings of this higher quality verse. At the beginning, these pieces are schematic, attempting to use the mnemonic form associated with the early frottola and with the *unwritten tradition*. Composers found quickly, however, that the *canzone, ballata*, and poetic madrigal with their frequent shifts in line-length were not suitable to the kind of schematic music that they had been writing. The results of this discovery were frottole that set the «new», more subtle forms and that themselves were more subtle, often being composed nearly or completely in a through-composed manner. The attraction of setting rhyming lines with identical music meant that traces of the mnemonic form remain in the frottola and indeed in the early madrigal, but these occur much less frequently and eventually almost die out. [128] The shift

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[128] WP: On the increase of through-composed settings in the frottola and the structural repetitions in the early madrigal, see PRIZER, Courtly Pastimes, cit., pp. 129-136. On the repetitions in the madrigal, see also H. C. SLIM, A Gift of Madrigals and Motets, Chicago and London, 1972, vol. I, pp. 162-164.

from frottola verse to madrigalesque verse, then, was the first step in the process that led eventually to the madrigal and was closely linked with a turn away from the previous *unwritten tradition* and toward a written one.

The frottola is therefore bonded to the *unwritten tradition* through several strong ties, including the adoption of the same text forms, the use of a <u>mnemonic musical form</u>, the differentiation of short poems from longer, strophic ones through musical style, the presence of the same manner of performance, and even through specific works occurring in both repertories. The process of moving from an *oral tradition* to a written one was a gradual one, involving the simultaneous transmission of the works both through writing and through oral means during the last years of the *quattrocento* and the first years of *cinquecento*. After this point, the text forms become increasingly more subtle, and the music becomes increasingly more complex and dependent on written transmission.[129]

The German musicologist Reinhard Strohm (known primarily for his epochal work, *The Rise of European Music, 1380-1500*,)[130] has repeatedly written about the ambivalent relationship between oral and written music. Here are a few quotes from his article on the subject:[131]

In almost any kind of music, certain elements are not usually written down: at the beginning of Western musical notation it was pitch, and today it is voice production or text pronunciation. Many other elements of the musically-organized sound exist which were not always granted written codification - think not only of rhythm but also tempo, dynamics, embellishments, *musica ficta*, instrumentation, absolute pitch or tuning. Some of these elements were, accordingly, left quite undecided by the composer. It was not 'the piece' that remained unwritten, but very important aspects of it. ...

The effect of so-called 'improvisation' makes sure that many variant versions existed of these songs, only some of which were recorded in script. Which of them is 'the piece'? Oral transmission was so strong that the version written down in a book could occasionally have been the only one that was never sung. But since nobody can prevent music from being written down at some stage, even if that was not the intention of its creator, strictly speaking, 'unwritten music' cannot exist as a category at all. …

We should not assume that all the gaps in our knowledge of early music are the result of its "unwrittenness." …

In the later Middle Ages, a steep increase in general literacy took place, fostered mainly by town life and commerce, by centralist administrations and, above all, by the improvement of paper production. …

For that reason, the forms of music-making which had gained the privilege of usually being written down started to become everybody's music, for example mensural (rhythmically-codified) polyphony. About ten times more music of this kind survives from the fifteenth century than from the fourteenth, and the number probably decupled once more in the sixteenth century with the introduction of music printing. …

Music stemming from oral tradition is often, once written down, surprisingly sophisticated. No wonder: the most compelling reason for such music to be written down is precisely because it

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[129] See Musical Examples A, Ch.VII-4 Prizer, Table of Textual and musical forms in frottola

[130] R. Strohm: *The Rise of European Music*, …

[131] Reinhard Strohm: Unwritten and written music, *Companion to Medieval & Renaissance Music*, ed .: T. Knighton and D. Fallows, J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd, London 1992.

has become too complex to be remembered with ease. The musically literate minstrel codified not his weekday exercises but his Sunday pieces.

In his above-mentioned epochal work,[132] Reinhard Strohm returns on several occasions to the question of the unwritten in relation to the written musical tradition of the past and the phenomenon of Italian improvisers in the late 15th and early 16th centuries:

> The most elusive type of music-making in the hall - iconographic evidence seems to be lacking - is the solo appearance of singer-poets.[133]

Timothy J. McGee in his article "Cantare all 'improvviso: Improvisation of Poetry in Late Medieval Italy"[134] on the improvisation of poetry and its accompaniment during the 15th century:

> There has never been any doubt that a large share of the music heard in Italy throughout the Medieval and Renaissance periods was improvised. Instrumentalists improvised music for dancing and processing, singers improvised melodies to accompany their poetry, and on some occasions poetry too was improvised. ...
>
> There is extensive testimony concerning the existence of the unwritten *cantare all'improvviso* tradition, but what is missing, unfortunately, is a clear indication of exactly what type of music the musician-poets actually performed on these occasions. Although some of the performers wrote down their poems, not one of them left a single note of music to show us how they set the lines. ...
>
> The only secure musical evidence we have is present in some sample settings published in the first years of the sixteenth century by Ottavio Petrucci in his books of *frottole.* Petrucci provides four- part musical settings for *strambotti, odi, capitoli,* and *sonetti* that could be used to set any poem in those poetic forms. Each of his settings is formally constructed in order to provide music in a format that parallels the structure of the poetic type. …
>
> A number of musicologists have dealt with the subject of setting poetry to these Petrucci models; most recently William Prizer has written on the relationship of these pieces to the Italian compositional style of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. He has demonstrated convincingly that the Petrucci models are identical in their musical structure—melodically, harmonically, and formally—to the surviving composed frottola repertory of the period.[135] There is no doubt, therefore, that by the end of the fifteenth century at least one of the musical models for setting poetry would be identical in sound to the written frottola repertory of the time.[136] What Petrucci provides, of course, is not a guide to improvisation but a collection of generic musical settings that can be used by anyone unable to improvise, although they undoubtedly also reflect the style in which one could improvise. But without denying this conclusion, one may still wonder to what extent Petrucci's models were related to the tradition of improvisation—that is, how widely they were used, and how far back in the century can we project this relationship

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[132] R. Strohm: *The Rise …*
[133] R.St .: Figures 83-5 in E. Bowles, Pratique musicale may be relevant. The first two show a duo of vielle and harp, the last soloist, a player of lira da braccio. This cassone image may be relevant to what is said below about Italy.
[134] T. J. McGee: *Cantare all' improvviso*; Improvising to Poetry in Late Medieval Italy, u
Improvisation in the arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, Kalamazoo, Mich. : Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2003.
[135] TMG: W. Prizer, "The Frottola and the Unwritten Tradition," 3-37.
[136] TMG: This connection between the frottola and the improvisatory tradition is also affirmed by Haar, *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music,* 87, and Anthony M. Cummings, "The Sacred Academy ofthe Medici and Florentine Musical Life ofthe Early Cinquecento," in *Musica Franca: Essays in Honor of Frank A. D 'Accone,* ed. Irene Aim, Alyson McLamore, and Coleen Reardon (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon, 1996), 72.

between the improvised tradition and the style of the music that was eventually written down in the frottola repertory at the end of the fifteenth century.

My reasons for questioning the extent of the relationship are two: one is that the melodies of the models are all quite simple and not sufficiently flexible to be adjusted to specific texts in a manner that would inspire the kind of praise some improvisors received; the other is that the frottola style of the late fifteenth century, when it first emerges in written form, bears little resemblance to the style of the written repertory of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries; compare Example 2.[137]

To state the most obvious differences between the two repertories: the early works, as exemplified by Example 2, are for two voices instead of four; and they have extensive florid sections as compared to the rather sparse melodic material of the later frottola style. A more detailed musical analysis yields the information that the two melodic and harmonic practices are also quite different, with the earlier compositions far more closely related to the modal practices of the earlier centuries (a topic to which I will return). It has been suggested that the frottola style itself was a new musical form in the late fifteenth century, and therefore, although the Petrucci models are definitely a part of this new style, a direct relationship between the frottola and the traditional improvisational style cannot be established. Further, even allowing for the probability that singers improvised in the frottola style by the end of the fifteenth century, we should also ask if that would have been the only style of improvised poetry setting at that time. …

When discussing improvisation, scholars also have included certain related traditions that were associated with specific repertory, for example the *cantasi come* practice, in which a new *lauda* text (or even an old one) was sung to the music of another composition. This custom continued over a long period of time, and therefore the choice of musical setting would have included whatever was the most popular secular music of the time as well as traditional material. A similar practice adhered to the frottola repertory. For those who could not improvise in the late fifteenth- century frottola style, a new text could be sung to music already existing, including the generic models provided by Petrucci for just such a purpose. The *cantasi come* and Petrucci models should not actually be regarded as *improvisation,* however; they more closely fit the musical category of *contrafactum*[138] in which an existing musical setting is borrowed for a new text.[139]

Contrary to the prevailing thought on the matter, the results of this study indicate that there does not seem to have been a direct relationship between the Petrucci models and the traditional improvisation practice. Instead, I suspect that Petrucci was providing stock settings for amateurs who wished to set poetry in the new style of the *frottola* but who were not capable of inventing a setting of their own—and who for some reason did not wish to adopt an already existing setting that was associated with another text.[140]

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[137] IP: See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-5 McGee-Cantare ex.2-1.

[138] See also under Contrafactum, p.30.

[139] IP: "I believe that back then, just as today, it depended on the quality and creativity of the individual improviser; an excellent musician can play excellently even on an instrument of lesser quality, but a bad musician won't achieve much even with the best instrument available.

[140] TMG: The adoption of a Petrucci setting would not necessarily result in the sterile performance that this might at first suggest. It was also the Italian practice to ornament whatever the musicians performed, and thus a musical singer would be able to adjust such a stock setting to provide creative and fresh expression for each new text. For a discussion of the sixteenth-century ornamentation practice, see Howard Mayer Brown, Embellishing Sixteenth-Century Music (London:Oxford University Press, 1976); and Richard Erig, Italian Diminutions, Prattica Musicale 1 (Zurich: Amadeus,1979).

There is no question that texts would have been set to these models; in printing them Petrucci undoubtedly was supplying a needed service, but I do not believe that they would have been the setting of choice for an improvisor.[141] Talented musicians in every era are capable of imitating what they hear, and there is no doubt that such people existed in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance who could improvise a song or instrumental composition in the image of any known style. ....

To take this investigation one step further, I would like to propose a practical model for the reconstruction of the format used for improvisation in Italy during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Rather than a complete polyphonic setting with all notes and harmonies as in the Petrucci models, what I propose is considerably simpler, allowing (and requiring) the performer to fill it in. …

This investigation of the breadth and popularity of the improvisatory tradition as well as the variety of occasions on which *cantare all'improvviso* was practised expands and revises the conclusions of earlier investigations in that it suggests that there probably were many techniques as well as styles of improvisation. It also points out the need to refine what we understand by the term ' improvisation, ' separating the long-lasting bardic tradition from the more ephemeral types rather than grouping all such events together as if they were a single phenomenon with a single background, technique, and purpose.

The traditional style sought to preserve a legacy and therefore employed a musical format which was basically unchanged throughout the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance and which was used on formal and ceremonial occasions precisely to establish the link with the past. This is the improvisational technique that I have described above. At the same time, improvised music also would have been created in whatever were the contemporary styles of the time. Improvisation was associated with almost every occasion in which music was employed, and many of the instrumentalists and vocalists would have been capable of matching spontaneously whatever was the popular repertory and style of the time. On the occasion of a dance, for example, instrumentalists would have improvised a *saltarello, piva,* etc. in the latest style, which in the year 1500 would have been stylistically different from that of a century or even fifty years earlier. Since much of the popular repertory at any time was unwritten, the surviving written repertory provides only a very faint image of the variety of kinds and types of music in which a musician would have improvised.

On those occasions that called for the traditional art of *cantare all'improvviso,* the singer most likely would have chosen the technique based on modal elaboration as described above. Having chosen that approach, the actual style of the improvisation undoubtedly would have been adjusted to fit the poetry, the occasion, and the musical ability of the improvisor. …

Although it may at first seem unusual to suggest that in the sixteenth century a *cantimpanca* would reject the Italian frottola and the Netherlandish style models in favour of a medieval format for his improvisations, I believe that is exactly what would have been done, and the documents mentioned above in conjunction with Alfonso de'Pazzi tend to support that belief. Tradition was an important and powerful influence, and the connection with the age-old role of the Italian improvisor would have been the most compelling reason for a sixteenth-century *cantimpanca* to improvise in the inherited style. As one of the few areas in which the foreign influence had been avoided, it therefore identified the singer with his own Italian heritage.

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[141] IP: I completely agree, but I think that we will be happy today if we manage to reconstruct even what competent amateurs were able to achieve at the beginning of the 16th century in terms of partial or complete improvisation.

Cantare all 'improvviso was a popular and well respected Italian tradition that flourished throughout the late Middle Ages and on into the seventeenth century and later.[142]

It was a vehicle for serious commentary as well as entertainment, and was employed in a wide variety of social and political functions. No public ceremony would have been complete without verses sung in honour of the occasion, nor would Sunday be complete without the diversion of the *cantimpanca.* During those centuries the performances of the singing poets were probably the most frequently heard musical events in the lives of city dwellers. The ephemeral nature of the improvisors' art has deprived us of a clear impression of their presentation, but perhaps the foregoing discussion will aid us in a better understanding of the musical tools and techniques that they employed.

About practical proposals made by McGee see later in paragraph 7.6.Possibility of reconstructing the art of improvisers on the lira, practical considerations I., p.53

In his already quoted book, Blake Wilson says on frottola:[143]

Though [Isabella d'Este] herself owned, played, and sang to a *lira da braccio*, and no doubt was first exposed to the singing of Italian poetry through the art of the *canterino*, the arrival of the composers Bartolomeo Tromboncino in 1489 and Marchetto Cara in 1494 were the harbingers of a sea change in Italian musical life. Both were lutenist/singers whose practice, like the frottola itself, had strong roots in oral tradition and *canterino* practice, but in Mantua and Ferrara they became two of the first native Italian polyphonic composers to set vernacular verse in musical settings fixed in musical notation. Though the frottola builds on the older oral practice of accompanied solo singing, that practice now entered the written tradition, and was fundamentally altered by the separation of the roles of poet and composer. …

In 1493, Niccolò da Correggio sent Isabella d'Este a pastoral eclogue in the form of a *capitolo* in *terza rima*:

I am sending to Your Ladyship a *capitolo* for singing in it which I wrote some years ago, and if you like it, you can keep it for this purpose ... The *capitolo* is a pastoral eclogue where the shepherds Mopso and Dapni converse together. Mopso laments over fate; Dapni glories in it. I shall explain to Your Excellency the allegorical meaning in person on the earliest occasion.

Isabella was just learning to play the *lira da braccio* that year, and on an instrument that Niccolò was procuring for her from Atalante Migliorotti, so that Niccolò's play, probably his *La semidea*, was likely intended at least in part for her to sing. [144]

And as a novice *cantatrix ad lyram* she would have done well to avail herself of a pre-existent *aria per cantar capitoli* which, in fact, may have arisen at just this time to serve the increasing ranks of amateur *cantores ad lyram*, the rapidly expanding repertoire of pastoral verse, and the

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[142] TMG: References to nineteenth-century improvisors are cited in Haar, *Essays in Italian Poetry and Music,* 81. Bianca Becherini reports an improvised performance of *ottava rime* in a village near Pistoia as late as the first quarter of the twentieth century ("Un canta in panca Fiorentino," 241). C. Cavicchi: The Cantastorie…, p.130.: In particular, the airs used by twentieth-century *improvvisatori* are devoid of refrains, involving, instead, four melodic phrases, each one destined for four hendecasyllables and repeated for the entire cycle of *ottave* to be sung. The melody is markedly syllabic, declamatory, and linked to the eleven syllables of the verse. The example by Vittorio Lorenzi, also known as "il Poetino" (a *cantastorie* from Treppio, near Sambuca Pistoiese), recorded by Alan Lomax on 28th November 1954 (Roma, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Raccolta 240, 12) demonstrates the practice (please listen to the following audio link): http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:hbz:6-02259747035.

[143] Wilson, Blake: *Singing …*
[144] BW: Niccolò's remark implies that his *capitolo* may not have been intended for singing to the end (*uno capitulo da cantarli drento*), and in fact it is not clear whether such works were sung all the time (which risked monotony, especially if the music was not varied) or only on more lyrical peaks. This problem is solved in works such as Orpheus, and later in Arcadia, where verse forms differ, and clearer differences between sung and spoken text are drawn.

need to sing the longer sequences of *terza rima* generated in pastoral plays, including large swaths of the poetry in Sannazaro's *Arcadia*.

Calmeta in fact noted the problem of testing the listener's patience with overly long strings of tercets in his discussion of the relationship between singing, *terza rima*, and (pastoral) elegy:

> Our modern and contemporary [poets] have attributed to ternari the function of the elegy, either for the sonorous quality of *terza rima*, or because the tercet is more suitable to music ... the elegy cannot be less than fifteen tercets so that it is distinct from the sonnet and madrigal in length, and everything has its order and measure, as Latin [poets] do, who do not want the epigram to be longer than twenty lines to avoid assuming the form of elegy. Moreover, [the elegy] must not exceed twenty-five or thirty tercets at most, so that, since it is a form suitable to music, when sung by *citaredi*, its length does not bore the listeners.

Whether the music came from these formal templates, the distinctive *arie* of more expert singers, or from the deeper oral traditions of improvised or pre-existent melodies (*terza rima* had been sung since Dante's day), "the use of *terza rima* unmistakably linked the modern eclogue to contemporary traditions of solo singing."

Occupying an ambiguous middle ground between oral and written tradition were the several kinds of *aria* (or *modo*) *da cantare*, notated formulae for singing those poetic forms that retained a link to oral practice. Beginning with Petrucci's *Frottole libro quarto* (Venice, 1505), sixteenth-century music sources began to provide simple melodic and harmonic settings for the instrumentally accompanied singing or reciting of sonnets, *stanze* (*ottava rima*), *capitoli* (*terza rima*), and even *versi latini*. The vernacular templates usually provided enough music for two to three lines of hendecasyllabic verse, which were to be repeated as they were back to *arie* used by singer-poets. However, these plain and affectively neutral materials likely had nothing to do with the ineffable music of the singer-poet who cultivated personal musical styles, and were more likely created for use by musically unskilled poets or consumers of poetry. Viewed from this perspective, these *formulae* represent not a persistence of orality, but its erosion through the intrusion of written music on the purely oral musical realm of the singer poet, and by removing music from the poet's complete creative control, they contributed to the separation of the once inseparable roles of poet and composer….

Early signs of the separation of these roles can be detected in a number of arenas with strong ties to oral and improvisatory practices. By the late fifteenth century the *strambotto*, the preferred lyric form of singer-poets, was being set to notated polyphonic music by composers who were not the authors of the poems. The *arie da cantare* for singing sonnets, *ottave, terza rima*, and other forms circulated orally in the late fifteenth century, and increasingly in print after the turn of the century, and these probably were conceived for the very purpose of enabling poets who were not musicians (or even performers who may not have authored either poem or music) to access generic and independently conceived musical settings as a ready-made vehicle for the singing of poetry. In the Mantuan environment of the frottola under the patronage of Isabella d' Este, singing to the lyre, practiced by her and her court poet Niccolò da Correggio, coexisted with but eventually yielded to other forms of instrumentally accompanied solo singing in which poets, composers, and performers played clearly demarcated roles. In 1504, Niccolò sent Isabella four of his sonnets *per il liuto della marchesa Isabella* ("for the lute of the marchioness Isabella"), and that same year Niccolò responded to her request for a Petrarch *canzone* suitable for musical setting, which she would "have made" (no doubt by a resident court *frottola* composer like Tromboncino or Cara), and then perform herself.

7.5. Tonality and frottola?

As I have been studying the technique, performance, and improvisation on the lira da braccio for more than 40 years[145], from the very beginning, in addition to the chord catalogue from the Pesaro manuscript,[146] I have also used the repertoire of frottole - especially those already "adapted" for voice and lute by Franciscus Bossinensis (from Bosnia). However, there is a slight discrepancy between the chordal nature of my instrument and the majority of (mostly) four-part frottole, which often begin with some pseudo-imitative (contrapuntal) introduction,[147] followed by predominantly homophonic texture. In my analysis of numerous frottole from both of Bossinensis's books, it turned out that for a larger number of them, they give more of an impression of tonality than modality, which I found confirmation for in the work of American musicologist Edward Lowinsky.

His article[148] is very interesting because it discusses and demonstrates how through the Italian frottola and the Spanish *villancico*, tonal thinking gradually emerges in music within the modal practice.

> The effect of melodic changes of modal degrees by *musica ficta* was powerfully supported by the emerging sense of *harmony* as the basis of polyphonic composition. Successive invention of voices gave place to simultaneous conception of triadic harmony with the root in the bass. Early illustrations can be found in the Italian polyphonic *lauda*, the *falsobordone*, and the frottola; in the Spanish *villancico*; and in works of Netherlanders living in Italy. The musical definition of the mode is given through the cadence. The rules of *musica ficta* operate with particular force in the cadence, which is the place in which the inroads of tonal thinking upon modal practice can be most conveniently studied. …

> A feeling for tonality manifests itself first in the consolidation of a tonic. The cadence is the cradle of tonality. The smaller a musical form is, the more important the cadence is in creating a feeling of tonal definition. If we take the Dorian cadence and repeat it, we get the strongest possible concentration on a tonic within the smallest musical form (ex. 2.a). The sense of logical conclusion is strengthened when the second cadence has greater force than the first one. This can be realized by inserting a subdominant into the last measure (ex. 2.b). The phrase is still rather monotonous owing to the unrelieved repetition, but if one single chord in the second phrase is replaced—an F major chord substituted for the D minor in measure five—the phrase gains in fluency (ex. 3). What we

Example VII-6 Lowinsky Ex. 2.a and 2.b/[149]

> now have is the famous *passamezzo antico* bass, and the evolution outlined here reflects the actual historical development. …

> The *passamezzo antico* bass was, according to his brilliant analysis, the matrix of *Romanesca* and *folia*, and Italy was the home of all *ostinato* patterns. The point I wish to make here is this: the *passamezzo antico* has its origin in the four-chord Dorian cadence described above; it is, in fact, nothing but a repeated cadence—the repeat being slightly varied. If the cadence may be

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[145] Since 1981.
[146] Oliveriana, No. 1144 olim 1193.
[147] "What can be achieved in terms of playing technique with a particular adaptation for the instrument or with the aforementioned special bowing technique.
[148] Edward E. Lowinsky: Frottola and Villancico, in *Tonality and Atonality in Sixteenth-Century Music*. (California University Press; Cambridge University Press, 1961.)
[149] See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-6 Lowinsky ex. 2 and 3.

regarded as the cradle of tonality, the ostinato patterns can be considered the playground in which it grew strong and self-confident. …

/Exampl VII-6 Lowinsky Ex.e 11.a Passamezzo moderno/[150]

It is tempting to interpret the term *passamezzo moderno* as indicating awareness on the part of the sixteenth-century musician that the "tonal" pattern of the *passamezzo moderno* constitutes something novel. Free variants of this pattern appear in a series of frottole demonstrating clear use of Ionian. One example is *Guarda donna el mio tormento* in Petrucci's second book. We observed in Ponce's *villancico* (ex. 4) liberties in the treatment of *dissonance* explicable only by the *harmonic* and *tonal* character of the piece. Such liberties abound in the frottola, in which dissonances flourish like wild flowers in an untended garden. Indeed, one has the impression that a popular polyphony now forgotten must have been a potent source

/ Example VII-7 Lowinsky Ex.12. Anonymous, Guarda donna el mio tormento/

/ Example VII-7 Lowinsky Ex. 13. Rossinus Mantuanus, Lirum bililirum. A sonar in the fahinesco/[151]

of inspiration for the Italian frottolist. Rossinus Mantuanus, in his *Lirum bililirum*, points clearly in this direction when he writes above his *frottola*: *Un sonar de piua in fachinesco* which one might translate "in the manner of the bagpipe playing of the low populace." The beginning of his frottola appears in example 13. …

The presence of eight frottole and one *contrafactum* of an Italian model in the *Cancionero*, the numerous points of contact between *frottola* and *villancìco*, the immense diversity and exuberance of the frottola in a harmonic and formal sense as compared with the control and moderation, the concentration of patterns, and the greater clarification of harmonic language in the *villancìco* seem to suggest two things: that the creative impetus for the new harmonic language and for modern tonality came from Italy, and that the actual compilation of the *Cancionero* took place later than is usually assumed, although it comprises a repertory spanning two generations. But this much is clear: the first nation to take up the new Italian ideas and transform them in a highly individual fashion was Spain. The *villancico* is a quieter, broader, and more flexible art form than the frottola. Technically, it is more unified; expressively, it is more diverse than its Italian counterpart, allowing for a vein of lyric contemplation and seriousness of feeling that is very rare in the music of the frottola. In the advance of tonality in European music, both frottola and *villancico* take a place of honour.

Reinhard Strohm, in The Rise of European Music, 1380-1500:[152]

Pirrotta and Prizer seem undecided whether to make more of the idea, already considered by Lewinsky, that tonal harmonies emerge in the frottola, and that this is connected with the chordal style. They do emerge, as they emerge in other genres and other countries. Tonal harmony, which is not so much a manner of putting voices above each other as a manner of connecting subsequent sonorities, developed in secular music of several countries simultaneously. Unwritten traditions neither furthered nor delayed it: the performers followed the same stylistic trends as the composers. Despite significant differences flowing from the different languages, European polyphonic song around 1500 was developing along parallel lines.

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[150] See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-6 Lowinsky ex. 11.
[151] IP: See Appendix / Musical examples: VII-7 Lowinsky examples 12 and 13.
[152] R. Strohm: *The Rise of European Music,* 1380-1500, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993.

7.6. Possibility of reconstruction of the art of improvisers on the lira, practical considerations I.

At the beginning of this chapter, I posed the question of whether, to what extent, and in which way it would be possible to reconstruct the "lost" practice of Italian[153] improvisers of the late *quattrocento* and early *cinquecento*. Based on my practical experience and intensive study of numerous (secondary) sources, I believe that this is at least theoretically possible - in practice, it would require immense efforts and dedication rarely found among those who engage in early music "professionally" - that is, for career and additional income rather than out of love.

Here are the thoughts of several musicologist who tried to solve this problems. Most of them have been following the path of frottola and some of them the reconstruction on the basis of even earlier music, that of Italian *trecento*.

Ernest Ferand:[154]

> Theoretical treatment of such self-accompaniment is explicitly addressed by Ganassi in the second part of his "Regola Rubertina," which appeared in 1543 under the title "Lettione seconda pur della prattica di sonare il Violone d'arco da tasti" etc. In the 16th chapter, polyphonic playing on the violone with singing is discussed, and the player is expressly allowed to occasionally omit or add something in "composed" music, although the sung voice, apart from occasional diminutions, should remain as written. …

Benvenuto Disertori:[155] also deals with the rules of Silvestro Ganassi from his work *Lettione Seconda*"... Chapter XVI of the *Regola Rubertina*, published by the author 1543 in Venice:[156]

> [Ganassi] [… explains the permitted modifications of musical texts allowed for the practice of *dire i bassi* (singing the bass), "accompanied by the sound of the *lira*", which should perform the remaining voices, with the possibility of omitting some notes that cannot be performed on the violin[157] in certain combinations of strings or to add new notes not written by the composer, which is sometimes inevitable when it is impossible to cross one or more middle strings to produce the necessary chord, ... all due to the limited technical possibilities of the *lira*. An immediate results of our attempts have been two perhaps not useless remarks: first ... if a deep voice must be used [if the singer sings in the bass] it means that we inevitably have to take the highest voice (superius) and transpose it an octave lower, instead of the voice that was originally written as a bass - composed mainly in notes of longer duration, which does not offer a sufficient number of notes for each syllable of text.[158] Another finding is that a diminished seventh chord with a modulation function (even if the basic tone is sometimes omitted) is often implicitly used in these two frottolistic models, the *modi* mentioned by Ferand: this circumstance could largely coincide with the chords that can be performed on the *lira*, which we reconstructed from ancient paintings of the 16th century and will be described later.[159]

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[153] Probaly also Croatian?

[154] Ferand, Ernest: *Die Improvisation in der Musik*, …

[155] Disertori, B.: Pratica e tecnica della lira da braccio, *RMI*, 45, (1941) Rome: p.150-75.

[156] Partly already mentioned earlier in this chapter in the writing of I. Woodfield, see p.16.

[157] As Dissertori was a violinist the technique of playing the lyre that braccio observes "through the eyes" of the violinist.

[158] As can be seen from my realization of Bossinensis's work "Haimè per che mai privo" for lira da braccio, even using the original bass part is this possible with some rhythmic adjustments; see all of the Dissertori's musical examples together with my appendices in the Appendix / Musical Examples B.5. etc.

[159] From Dissertori's writing it is not clear how many iconographic sources he analyzed for the needs of his reconstruction, but I assume that there must have been ten of them.

It is self-evident that in similar cases, in order to avoid any monotony, the singer would have to prove his inventive abilities by embellishing the *fulcrum* of given scheme with variations; ... Preceded by the indication on the tuning of the alto lira, here we give three examples of recitation (one for the *Capitoli*, *Poemetti* and songs in *terza rima*, another for the *Ode* and a third one for the *Sonetti*): the sung part is provided with text and separated from the other three voices, …

The reader, after taking note of the tuning of the lira and having mentally classified the simple chords coming from the fusion of the voices, will be able to judge by himself, with the help of this musical examples, which notes can certainly be played with the lira, which ones shall be transposed or repeated in the octave, which ones shall be omitted for technical reasons and finally which notes, harmonically not heterogeneous and not written, should be added to allow the bow to perform the chords. Please, consider the undisputed fact that even the thumb should be used, in a progression of at least four chromatic tones, on the pairs of strings, tuned in the octave, of the 4th and 5th string.

In some cases, anyway, the thumb touches only the 5th string, either leaving the 4th string resonate as an open one or touching this [4th] string with another finger. The first two mentioned examples (the "*Aer de Capituli*" of Filippo de Lurano and the Ode "Se la gran fiamma") will adequately show as a hypothesis the function of the two <u>drone strings</u>,[160] that cannot be modulated because outside of the fingerboard, tuned G - g on the alto lira. These <u>drones</u> come into play to give majesty to the closing chords. …

The technique of [playing] the lira da braccio remains somewhat shrouded in mystery, for Ganassi's promise (given at the end of Chapter XVI of his *Lettione Seconda*) that he would [soon] give us a complete method [of this instrument] remained unfulfilled. The mentioned chapter deals with the way of reducing [intabulation] of madrigals in three, four and up to five voices for singing accompanied by *viola* [da gamba or viol], giving the example of Jacopo Fogliano's three-part madrigal, deftly reduced to normal musical notation and tablature. Ganassi also mentions some very skilful bow movements used by lira da braccio players to oppose the ornamented voice [melody] to *cantus firmus*, i.e., playing faster notes of the highest voice above the harmonies [chords] of other sounding strings, perhaps in long note values, perhaps played arpeggio as on a lute, perhaps in broken chords. In Ganassi's opinion, these bow movements are very difficult to imitate and apply to the viol.[161] This statement is too vague anyway to give us a more concrete idea of this particularly virtuoso skill. …

From all other subjects written by Ganassi, we can deduce as follows:

1) that the art of the lira da braccio was founded on a very advanced chordal technique, in order to help the occasional performance of rapid passages (called *perfidie* by the lute players, i.e. notes running *per fides*, from string to string), and much less (if not at all) on the performing of simple expressive cantilenas by one single voice;

2) that the *lira* was mounted with fingerboard, tailpiece and bridge that were hardly curved, or even almost flat to facilitate simultaneous playing of more strings; [IP: About that see by Sterling Jones in his book on Lira da braccio or in the text of my project on both Lire.][162]

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[160] In fact bass strings because lira, unlike the medieval viella, or modern bagpipes or hurdy-gurdy, was NOT a drone instrument!

[161] Sterling Scott Jones gives a detailed explanation of this technique of the right hand and bow in his study of the lira da braccio, see latter and in the Bibliography.

[162] See more about it in the book, Sterling Jones: *Lira da braccio* or in the text of my project about both Lira.

3) that the bow used had to be longer than usually,[163] [see the same source as for no.2] and that hair shouldn't be too tight, so that you will be able to move it gently over the strings, as is necessary when you play the chord."[164]

4) that the tension of bow's horsehair could sometimes be regulated during the performance by pressing the forefinger on horsehair to determine its contact with one, two, three, four or more strings according to the specific need (When fewer strings or indeed only one string is used you must draw the bow but with your finger as you see fit.)

5) the bowing technique was specially advanced both for variety and for virtuosity: this is confirmed completely or partly by the images of players of lira da braccio in the paintings of that time. And precisely these paintings will give us further information about this subject. …

Probably a certain sudden declamation with the lira proceeded for brief periods sung by solo voice, but was preceded or alternated with great chords, using the whole bow [and a range] of the lira, that should remain in the auditive memory of the listeners and offer to the declamation the necessary harmonic substratum: this is a performing way that, *mutatis mutandis* and in more explicit realisations, was chosen for the musical interlude from the beginning, and then prospered, even excessively, for more than two centuries in the music drama under the name of *recitativo*.[165]

As an example: see F. Bossinensis: *Se mai per la maraveglia*, in the 8.Appendix/ Music Examples B.5.3.Various forms/ 3 Capitoli, no.3. (p.201…

Sterling S. Jones[166]

The poet-musicians of Italian courts used the instrument to accompany the singing of their recitations, narrative verses, and epics, imagining themselves to be emulating ancient Greek tradition. Ganassi talks about the practice of singing basses accompanied by the lira. …

Poet-musicians of the Italian courts in some cases sang in a range below the lira da braccio accompaniments, playing the instrument themselves, as in the dalla Viola recitative. The accompaniment was thus in a higher range than the sung part, which fulfilled the role of the bass line. …

How the lira da braccio was employed in the frottole one can only guess, since this music usually provided a treble melody with accompaniment rather than a bass melody with accompaniment, a performance practice documented for the lira da braccio. This placement of melody on top and harmonies below was sympathetic to the capabilities of the lira da braccio, which was able to bow only the top one or two strings separately and the lower strings in groups, depending on the curvature of the bridge and the spacing of the strings. The one surviving complete piece for lira da braccio, the *Romanesca* in the Pesaro Ms. has chords of the bass pattern, some in inverted positions, interspersed with melody on the top strings.

Another bit of interesting evidence is provided by a piece written by Biagio Marini in the early 17th century, *Capriccio per Sonare il Violino con tre corde â modo di Lira* (Capriccio for violin

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[163] Ibid. Disertori, Pratica...
[164] Here I replaced Dissertori's translation with the English translation of Ganassi's Rugola's Rule; which is based on the German by Daphne and Stephen Sylvester. Published by R. Lienau, Berlin, German version 1972, English 1977.
[165] This could be compared and enlarged with what I wrote about this subject in my Lira project, Final version 2018.
[166] Jones, Sterling Scott: *The Lira da braccio*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1995.

with three strings used in the style of the lira). The composer notes that the two lower strings need to be close together (*bisogna che le due corde grosse sijna vicine*). Accompanied by a basso continuo, the violin plays chordal sections set off by florid passages on the top string. The piece was written at a time when the lira da braccio was certainly already out of fashion, but its sounds were still remembered.

In his essay entitled "*Improvvisatori* and their attitude towards the music of the sixteenth century"[167] James Haar specifically addresses improvisers, their artistry, and their role, attempting to find a connection between this and the frottola repertoire. Here, he joins colleagues (such as William Prizer and others, as mentioned before) who have tried to hypothesize about what the art of improvisers might have looked like, how it might have functioned, and whether it would be possible to reconstruct it today, I shall start with what Haar wrote about lira da braccio:

> Lira da braccio can actually create a rather loud chordal sound, and these singers-poets, musicians, if not virtuosos, had to know how to use their instruments with good effect throughout the performance. …

> As for the style of this accompaniment, bass lines like those used for *villancico* and simpler forms of frottola can serve as models. It was expected that any competent musician in that period would devise a counterpoint against the melodic line without writing it down; why not accompanied by a song? Viewed in this way, even a partially chordal accompaniment like that which can be played on a lira da braccio would be a counterpoint to the melody, and a monophonic song with an *ad libitum* accompaniment would not be radically different from the structure of a two-part *discantus.* Part of the mystery surrounding improvisation was certainly created by us, as a result of what must be a false assumption that improvised music was very different from that which survived in written form.[168] …

How can we learn about this side of Renaissance musical activity? Orally transmitted music has not had a very long life in Western culture—unless there were special reasons for preserving it, as was the case with the corpus of plainchant, kept intact [?] and gradually added to for several centuries before it began to be written down in the ninth century. (Nothing survives of the secular music of this period.) Even children's songs change, though slowly; and it is well known that the texts of folk songs survive, not of course unaltered, far longer than their melodies. The unwritten music of the Renaissance is lost and can never be recovered in any substantial way; nevertheless a good deal has been said, and still more can be said, about this vanished art.

> There seem to me to be two ways of approaching the subject. One is to collect whatever information can be found about poet-musicians who specialized in *cantari*, the generic name for poetry designed for improvised musical performance. …

> The second approach, somewhat risky but possibly more rewarding, is to search for clues in written music of the material, perhaps even the style, of the improvisatory tradition. I shall try to show that such clues exist, more, I think, for the sixteenth century than for earlier periods, and that they tell us a good deal, though nothing like the whole story. …

> However large the repertory of a single performer may have been, some kind of musical dress must have been welcome both to him (for support and as aide-mémoire) and to his audience (for

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[167] Haar, James: *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music 1350-1600* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986).

[168] Haar, Monophony ... see in the Appendix/ 8.1. Bibliography: on the possibility or assumption that a part of improvisers (especially those from the ranks of church musicians - singers) used the techniques of the so-called *contrappunto alla mente*, in their improvisations - see Chapter 4.

variety). We do not know whether improvisers sang in any formal sense or merely declaimed verses to the sporadic sound of a plucked or bowed instrument. If they used pre-existing melodies, as seems likely, these must have been stock tunes that were easily varied, easily slipped in and out of. We would of course very much like to have these melodies in written form; and for the sixteenth century it is possible that we do indeed have a few. But if the notated scores of *trecento* music tell us less than we need to know about how this music sounded, written *arie* on which poetry was improvised tell us far less still. Part of the essence of *aria* was melody, but much of it was style, personal and untranscribable. (The English word *air* has the same double meaning.) The style of *improvvisatori*, often praised, was almost never described in meaningful detail, and this would not have been easy to do even if it had been attempted. How would we, if we had no recordings, describe the personal style of Piaf or Burl Ives? How could we make clear in words the different *arie* of Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby?

The improvisers are called not only *dicitori* and *cantori*, which could imply lively declamation without formal melody, but also *cantatori, sonatori*, and, more explicitly, *pulsatori*, players of percussion [?] and especially of stringed instruments. …

There are indications that the skills of some *improvvisatori* were as much musical as anything else. Antonio di Guido, the Florentine *canterino*, impressed everyone who heard him and was said by Luca Landucci (at the time of Antonio's death in 1486) to have "*passato ognuno nell'arte di cantare.*" He was heard singing of the deeds of Orlando by Michele Verino, who said Antonio's verses sounded to him like Petrarch; surely it was the *aria*—music and personal style of performance—and not the words that made this impression. Some improvisers, like Pietrobono, were probably known primarily as musicians; others, like the Niccolò Tedesco who served at the Ferrarese court in the mid fifteenth century, were probably admired for the totality of their skills.

And there must have been performers in the piazza who neither had nor required much in the way of musical expertise to hold their audience with the spell of an old story told anew, over some modest strumming. …

... It would be a mistake to think that *arie* must have been so simple and so stereotyped that they lacked individuality and consisted of little more than a few basic melody types.[169] …

Arie, identified as such, turn up from time to time in madrigal prints of the sixteenth century, where they are usually designed for *ottave*. In the later part of the century whole collections of *arie*, such as the *Aeri raccolti insieme . . . dove si cantano sonetti, stanze et terze rime* published in Naples in 1577, are to be seen. In the lute-book of the Florentine lute singer Cosimo Bottegari we even have a kind of notebook of *arie* used for a variety of poetic types. These sixteenth-century *arie* are, apart from some inevitable change in harmonic language, not really very different from those published by Petrucci. If one of the latter, written at the beginning of the sixteenth century, is compared to an *aria* from Bottegari's book, which is dated 1573, the melodic and rhythmic similarities are clear—as they would not be if one compared a frottola of circa 1500 to a madrigal of 1570 (Ex. 23).[170]…

If composers could cite popular song tunes, one wonders if they might also have quoted the melodies of the *improvvisatori*. I think it likely that they did, perhaps often; our failure to

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[169] Haar,Monophony... ibid.
[170] JH: ex. 23: (a) Marchetto Cara, Aer de capitoli, taken from Petrucci, Frottole libro nono (1508 [= 1509]), fol. 2v; (b) Cosimo Bottegari, Aria in terza rima (Modena, Bibl. Est. MS C 311, fol. 24v), according to MacClintock, The Bottegari Lutebook, p. 75. I have added bar lines and *fermate* in ex. 23b . IP: See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-8 Haar ex.23.
IP: see in the appendix/ Musical examples B.7.

recognize this kind of practice is one of the many things separating our rather abstract knowledge of Renaissance music from the multiple resonance it actually had. A quotation of this type could be used where the text quotes or paraphrases a proverb; an example is Giovan Domenico da Nola's *Proverbio ama chi t'ama è fatto antico* (Ex. 24),[171] …

The chief use of melodies that I think can be identified as taken from *improvvisatori* is in settings of *ottava rima* stanzas, especially those drawn from epic romance and in particular from the *Orlando furioso*. Before discussing these tunes I should say something about the tremendous rise in popularity of epic poetry in the late fifteenth century. The materials of the chivalric epic had of course been made use of by *cantastorie* for centuries, and the tradition of singing *ottave* on the exploits of Orlando or Rinaldo was a firmly established one. …

As I have said, madrigalists of the mid sixteenth century frequently use melodic formulas that may come from the art of the *improvvisatori*, especially in settings of the narrative stanzas of the *Orlando furioso*. This connection between the oral and written traditions reaches its apogee in the enormous madrigal cycle of Jacquet Berchem, called *Capriccio* (1561), consisting of three books of ninety-odd stanzas from Ariosto's poem. Berchem chose a sequence of texts that makes narrative sense, reducing the poem to some of its major themes—especially those involving Orlando himself, Ruggiero, and Bradamante. This was deliberately done; attention is called to it by the printing of single-line plot synopses as running heads in the partbooks. The madrigal cycle is thus equated with a choice of stanzas such as that a *cantastorie* might make out of Ariosto's vast poem. In this sense Berchem's division of the *Capriccio* into three books is like a three-day performance by an *improvvisatore*. Even the unexplained title *Capriccio* might refer to the composer's attitude, one of playful (though often highly contrapuntal) adaptation of the art of the *piazza*. As if to underscore his intention by musical means, Berchem makes much use of the melodic formulas I have been talking about. One final example may be cited (Ex. 34)[172]; in a setting of lines 3 — 8 of the first canto, stanza 41, subtitled "*Lamento di Sacripante per la fugga d'Angelica*," Berchem introduces in the upper voice alone a lament tune (a), the "Ruggiero" tune (b), a descending-fourth lament formula (c), and the melody we first saw used in a setting of verses of Serafino (d).

William F. Prizer in his article "Frottola and the Unwritten Tradition" says about lira:

Now, however, Professor Howard M. Brown has transcribed the sole remaining tablature for the instrument and has shown the kind of music playable on the instrument, at least in general outlines. The works in this source are characterized by triple and quadruple stops forming full chords, the top of which are elaborated with simple *passaggi*.[173]…

… It would be logical, then, for this instrument to have been used to accompany long, strophic poems (*ode* and *capitoli*) within the frottola repertory, as well as long narrative verse, such as *terze* or *ottave rime*, which would of necessity be simpler in musical style. Tinctoris, in his *De inventione et usu musicae*, supports this view, writing that « the true *viola with bow* is used not

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[171] JH: Pr. 24 is taken from the edition of Madrigali a 4V di I. D. da Nolla (1545), p. 27. The text of the madrigal is the third stanza of Petrarca's canzone Mai non vo 'più cantar com'io soleva;
IP: See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-8 Haar Impro ex. 24.
[172] See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-9 Haar Impro ex. 34.
[173] WP: Pesaro, Biblioteca Oliveriana, MS. 1144 (olim 1193). See H. M. Brown, *Sixteenth Century Instrumentation*: The Music of the Florentine Intermedii, American Institute of Musicology, 1973, p. 41-45 and 223-225. On this manuscript see also W. Rubsamen, The Earliest French Lute Tablature, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XXXI, 1968, p. 286-299.

only for this ['any type of song'], but also, in many parts of the world, for the recitation of epics[174]…

The discrepancy between polyphonic lute playing in the frottola and the presence of a *coadiutore* can be reconciled through an examination of the musical nature of the genre. Professor Lowinsky has shown that the frottola was one of the first genres to be conceived partially in a simultaneous fashion as opposed to the earlier successive method of composition. In his opinion, the Cantus and the Bassus were composed at the same time and the Tenor and Altus were added afterwards. This view, deriving partly from a series of unpublished lectures of Alfred Einstein, was later discussed in detail in the latter's monumental *Italian Madrigal.* Lowinsky's and Einstein's observations are certainly valid, for, in a certain sense, the frottola substitutes a Cantus-Bassus framework for the Cantus-Tenor framework of the contemporaneous chanson: the Bassus consistently provides the harmonic underpinning and forms a rhythmic pair with the Cantus.

Speaking of improvisers and dance music, Reinhard Strohm[175] says:

Performers such as Pietrobono were usually called ´improvvisatori´; a term which should not simply be translated as 'improvisers', because their art was largely premeditated and wholly <u>mnemonic</u>. They relied on textual as well as musical patterns which they knew by heart. The <u>musical patterns</u>, which in performance needed little adjustment or melodic elaboration to fit changing texts, were most probably not grounds nor bass lines as in the sixteenth century, but *tenori* - melodic lines in the range of the tenor voice which characterized all European secular and sacred monophony. These melodies were also sometimes called *aere* ('modes or manners of singing').[176] …

…we gather from Cornazano´s and other descriptions that Pietrobono sang to bis own accompaniment on the lute (or gittern, *chitarrino*), and that therefore two lines were sounded. Pietrobono probably sang a tenor line - his own register - while playing an ornamented discant line on the instrument. This was also the practice of the singer on the lira da braccio, a characteristically Italian instrument, with the sole difference that the lira could be bowed, producing simple chords above and below the voice. Singers like Pietrobono were occasionally assisted by a *tenorista*, in this case the term for a second instrumentalist who could take an optional third line, i.e. a contratenor. …

See what about this says Haar latter on p.54.

A perfect example of the use of memorized patterns in performance is, of course, dance. The Italian courts - but also the non-Italian courts and the Italian and foreign urban middle class - were extremely fond of stylish dancing, which they did themselves or had performed for them by male and female minstrels. ... This /written of dances etc./was first done in Italy by the dancing master Domenico da Piacenza (d. after 1472), in his treatise *De arte saltandi et choreas ducendi* (Of the art of dancing and leading collective dances). ... He had a number of students, the most

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[174] WP: A further function of the *lira* had to be to accompany the lute player in polyphonic performance; "Galeazzo" accompanied lute player Giovan Maria Giudeo on the *lira*. IP: If we know the manuscript from Pesaro and its contents, we must be clear of two things; if the lira da braccio played in chords then it means that the musicians were able to "harmonize" without any preparation any unanimous melody, they accompanied themselves or the lute player who needed it (necessarily?). Else; as I have always done myself (and, I suppose, all my colleagues Sterling Jones, Joseph M. Skeaping as well as several younger colleagues too) the original structure of the three-part villanelle or four-part frottole has to be necessarily adapt to a new, in this case bowed, idiom, just as it happens with lute or keyboard intabulations.

[175] R. Strohm: *The Rise …*

[176] R.St .: The *aere veneziano* quoted above can be either a particular melody or a type of melody, which comes to the same if the melody is used to adapt to different songs, i.e. poetry.

important of whom were Antonio Cornazano (see above) and the Jew Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro. ... The distinction *ballo/ bassadança* affects the musical performance practice: the stately, elaborate balli may have to be combined with dance-songs, whereas the tenors for bassadanza and saltarello are clearly instrumental - they are tunes on which minstrels improvised everywhere in Europe. The balli tunes are notated in the tenor register as well (Bb-g").   ... Lute and lira da braccio are actually more often seen in miniatures of Italian dancing; in the treatise *De pratica seu arte tripudii 'Vulgare opusculum* (1463) by Guglielmo Ebreo, there is even a harp. Guglielmo (also called Giovanni Ambrosio) was perhaps the most famous of these intellectuals and artists of dance; he taught at Ferrara, Naples and Montefeltro, developing the choreographies of Domenico and adding to them.[177] …

Whether performed by professionals or not, the polyphonic song might lose dispensable contratenors, or only one structural voice (cantus or tenor) might be used, provided with a possibly improvised instrumental accompaniment. This could be chordal and simple - when played on the bowed lira da braccio - or melodic, such as a new, ornamental cantus line played on the lute against a given vocal tenor. This 'dismantling' of pre-existent polyphonic music had happened for at least a century by then; no doubt, it happened now. As the century progressed, the contratenor bassus gained in importance and was usually performed by a *tenorista*, for example on the lute.[178]

In this way, much of the written polyphonic repertory in the Italian chansonniers could enter the realm of 'unwriten' practice. …

The words were extremely important in the frottola, and were usually given to the cantus line in clear, declamatory rhythms with some melismatic extensions. Partly because of the regular use of the ottonario metre in the text, the musical phrases tend to be metrically even, and often have the rhythmic stereotype of <u>double upbeats and hemiolic cadences</u> ... Prizer claims that the frottola descended from the practice of singing on the lute, played polyphonically. Given a particular affinity of the frottola to lute performance (which is, however, only a claim), this would explain why the genre was almost invariably written in four voices rather than three. ...

Timothy J. McGee in his study "Cantare all 'improvviso: Improvisation of Poetry in Late Medieval Italy"[179] says:

From the material I presented it is obvious that there were numerous kinds of improvisors, ranging from amateur to professional, in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance and that there was a variety of occasions on which it was appropriate to improvise music to poetry. It would seem to follow, therefore, that more than one style of singing was involved, and that the singer probably would have chosen a style for his improvisation that would fit the poetry and the occasion. Although this last point would seem to be a logical consequence of the preceding discussion, most of the attempts to reconstruct what could possibly have been the style of improvised singing have begun with the assumption that there was a single style, one that would have been comparatively simple— perhaps close to the level of only one note for each syllable

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[177]Interestingly, from the very beginning of my practical engagement with the lira da braccio (aside from frottole), I chose a series of monophonic dances by Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro for my experiments, later included in my repertoire.

[178]Although I do not rule out such a possibility, considering the information we have received from Lockwood, it seems to me that *tenoristi* most commonly played various bowed instruments while accompanying lutenists or singer-instrumentalists of other plucked instruments.

[179] T. J. McGee: *Cantare all' improvviso*; Improvising to Poetry in Late Medieval Italy, in Improvisation in the arts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, Kalamazoo, Mich. : Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2003.

of text—and that the music would have been based on a traditional simple setting or possibly on commonly known *formulae*. …

All of these pieces of circumstantial evidence, when taken as a whole, provide a background to support the conclusion that the practice of *cantare all 'improvviso* from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century was directly related to the same practice in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. …

<u>Reconstruction in the style of trecento music:</u>

Several scholars have looked at fourteenth-century composed music for possible models of the early improvisational style.[32] One possibility was suggested by Howard Mayer Brown, who cited the early *lauda* repertory (see Example 3).[180]…

A somewhat different source of the early improvisatory style has been pursued by Nino Pirrotta, who suggested that clues may exist in the music of southern Italy and Sicily. …

It is interesting to note that the fourteenth-century *siciliana* was a completely improvised form and that one of its characteristics is a florid melody similar to that found in some of the composed northern repertory of the period such as those presented in Examples 2 and 4.[181]

Pirrotta's conclusion that "a Sicilian style of singing was practiced and imitated in northern Italy" suggests the possible existence of a basic traditional Italian musical approach that allowed refinement and adaptation according to regional style characteristics. Following this line of reasoning, I would like to explore the possibility of discovering just such a basic organizational idea by investigating some of the oldest surviving Italian secular repertory that appears to reflect an older practice.
...
James Haar has noted that certain of the early monophonic *ballate* seem to be elaborations of an outline rather than sculpted melodies, and he refers to the melodic style of many of the fourteenth-century secular compositions as "highly declamatory.". ....

What I have done here is to provide analytical details that support the observations of others concerning the possible connection between one type of late medieval Italian secular monophonic composition and the improvisatory style. My purpose, however, has been somewhat different from that of earlier writers: whereas their interests were directed toward an understanding of the extant written repertory, mine has been to use the written repertory in order to discover the unwritten art of the improvisor. …

… Analysis of two-part Italian compositions reveals that they follow the same basic construction principle of adherence to a modal outline as the monophonic compositions, although with some further refinements. For an example I have chosen a madrigal from one of the earliest sources of Italian secular music, the anonymous *Su la rivera* from the Rossi Codex (Example 5).[182] The most serious implication for modal analysis in this repertory derives from the fact that the two voices commonly occupy ranges that are a fourth apart. The reason for the separation probably is to allow flexibility within each of the lines without constant voice overlapping, but the result is that the two voices cannot equally express the same mode; to do that would require identical ranges. The modal consequence that results from the different ranges is exemplified in *Su la*

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[180] IP: See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-10 McGee-Cantare ex. 3.
[181] IP: See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-5 and 6 McGee-Cantare, ex.2-1 and 2-2, VII-11 McGee ex.4.
[182] TMG: Rome, Bibl. Ap. Watt. Rossi 215 (Rossi Codex), fol 6r; for a contemporary facsimile edition, see Il Codice Rossi 215, edited by Nino Pirrotta (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana Editrice 1992).
IP: See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-12 McGee-Cantare ex.5.

rivera: the voices present both the authentic and piagai version of a modal pair (known as a *maneria*[183]). *Su la rivera* is in *maneria* III, sharing the final f; the upper voice is in the authentic mode 5 (range f to f with reciting tone c), whereas the lower voice is in the associated plagal, mode 6 (c to c, reciting tone a). Similar to the melodic style of *Per non far lieto,* the individual lines of *Su la rivera* proceed by decorating the notes of the modal species.

To take this investigation one step further, I would like to propose a practical model for the reconstruction of the format used for improvisation in Italy during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Rather than a complete polyphonic setting with all notes and harmonies as in the Petrucci models, what I propose is considerably simpler, allowing (and requiring) the performer to fill it in. It is an example of what I believe any trained musician could have invented in the early centuries without the need for such a written guide. Example 6[184] is applicable to the poetic form of a sonnet, and for purposes of clarity I have set the first stanza of a sonnet in praise of Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici, probably written in 1434 by the Florentine civic herald Anselmo Calderoni: I have chosen *maneria* I, with the melody in the authentic mode 1 and the accompaniment in its plagal, mode 2. The first and third sections of the outline are intended to set one line of a stanza. For the first two stanzas, in which there are four lines, the second section must be repeated as marked. For the remaining three-line stanzas, no repeats are necessary. My outline suggests the range of notes (the modal species) that should be used in each section; the first and last notes in each section are those to be used to begin and end the section and are to receive the most emphasis through repetition and decoration. For a model of how to proceed melodically—the kinds of melodic, rhythmic, and ornamental gestures that would be appropriate to the style—I recommend the monophonic *ballate* of the fourteenth century such as in Example 4.[185] For the accompanying part I suggest the simplest possible line. Ideally both parts should be performed by a single musician, but experimentation has demonstrated that with a bit of rehearsal it is possible to coordinate the efforts of two people who work from a common outline.

Example VII-13 McGee, ex. 6, Cantare all´improvviso

2a. O speranza dei ghrandi e dei piccini
b. o socchoroso d'ongun ch'è bisongniante
b. o de' poprilli e vedove aiutante
c. o forte schudo de Toschan chonfini!

3a. O sopra ongn'altro a Dio charitativo
b. o prudente, o temperato, giusto e forte
c. o padre al buono, e patrigno al chattivo!

4a. O di somma pietate larghe porte
b. o aversario d'ongni atto lascivo
c. o tu che rendi per mal buone sorte!

5a. Dobbian fino alla morte
b. per Chosimo e Lorenzo tutti noi
c. poveri, preghar sempre Iddio per voi.

Author's proposed musical improvisation model for a sonnet in *maneria*. Opening and closing notes of each phrase establish the mode. Notes in parenthesis delineate the species of mode and therefore

[183] In Gregorian chant, the mixed mode refers to the mode that includes both the authentic and its plagal counterpart.
[184] See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-13 McGee ex.6
[185] See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-11 McGee ex.4

should be emphasized, although not in any specific order. Sonnet *O lume de'terrestri cittadini* by Anselmo Calderoni.

Next, there are quotes from B. Wilson's book:[186]

> [Andrea da Barberino:] was characterized by *compilatio*, adaptation and synthesis of diverse materials, use of simile, long lists of *names* and *places*, detailed and visual descriptions of fights, itineraries, exotic locations, peoples, and beasts, idiosyncratic insertions and digressions (in Andrea's case from non-chivalric sources). His syntax is occasionally Latinate, but generally "simpler, resembling the freshness and directness of a storyteller," and he borrows and adapts the formulaic phrases of canterini. …

> As Giovio's biography of ca. 1539 suggests: [Leonardo] … sang masterfully to his own accompaniment on the lyre, he miraculously pleased all the princes throughout his life.

On the performances of Cristoforo Fiorentino (L'altissimo):

> Of particular interest to his audiences would have been not only Cristoforo's *ottava rima* recasting of familiar elements of Andrea's *cantare*, but the many digressions, insertions, and alterations by which Altissimo established his own register. These borrowed and inserted materials extend far beyond the scope of the story per se, and many take the form of speeches placed in the mouths of various characters triggered by specific events in the story: disputations on theology; exhortations on virtues and vices, living well, diligence; teachings by example (*ammaestramenti*) addressed to soldiers, princes, et al.; discourses on fortune, friendship, strength, fame, providence, the nature of man, god and soul, etc.; invectives against traitors, hypocrites, ingratitude, rashness, pride, judging on appearances, etc.; eulogies of youth, old age, virtuous women, and the power of speech; and lectures on science and history. …

> As Giovio wrote, "many of his poems *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."

Raffaele Maffei… on the performances of the Brandolini brothers:

> There are two blind brothers from Florence named Philippus [sic] and Raphael, both called Lippo; in Rome they both perform elegies to the lyre on all kinds of subjects ... they improvise while not always inelegantly singing.

Speaking about his brother's singing, Raffaelo Brandolini says that his brother employed *variato carmine* in the performance of papal eulogies, philosophical texts, and sacred histories. The context suggests that *carmine* here refers not to the texts, but to the music, which was *variato* and worthy of attention, rather than <u>formulaic</u> and melodically featureless. This, coupled with Maffei's earlier remarks about the brothers' improvised and "not inelegant" singing (and Calmeta's remarks about the music of Cariteo and Serafino), reminds us that the singing [accompanied by lyre and lute] of at least the more expert practitioners involved both actual musical improvisation and the creation of musical materials that rose above the level of <u>formulaic</u> *modi* and *aere* (presumably involving no improvisation) and simple recitational chanting.

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[186] Blake Wilson: *Singing to the Lyre in Renaissance Italy*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019

On the performances of Cariteo and Sannazaro at the Aragonese court in Naples, see in the Chapter 6, pp.63 and 65.

Naples humanist Antonio Beccadelli, *Il Panormita*, described how his friend Tommaso Tebaldi (so-called Ergotele) "sang the most elegant verses accompanied by a lyre" for his guests at the dinner. …

Raphael's teacher in Urbino, Timoteo Viti, "enjoyed playing all kinds of instruments, especially the lyre, with whose accompaniment he sang *all'improvviso* with extraordinary grace."[187]

Even if this is not linked with lira da braccio improvisation but the probable music of *canterini,* I decided to include here again writing of Camilla Cavicchi from her already cited article on *Cantastorie*:

Due to oral transmission of their repertoire, until recently we had no extant musical sources linked to fifteenth-century *cantastorie*, and were therefore forced to base our hypotheses about this era on sixteenth-century sources. However, a manuscript has recently and fortuitously come to light in the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati in Siena,[188] and to this date remains the only source preserving music for *cantari*. The manuscript in question, miscellaneous L.XI.41, measures 20 cm x 15 cm, and preserves two notated folios. The music is part of an originally independent fascicle of paper folios containing:

1.the so-called *Credo* di Dante by Antonio da Ferrara (fols. 1-4);

2.two polyphonic pieces for two voices, the first on fol. 4v and the second - stored separately at the end of the collection - on fol. 78r . … No watermarks or dates are visible on the fascicle that bears the notated polyphonic music, which we can, however, date around the first half of the fifteenth century. …

The accompanying poem is the first *ottava* of *La passione,* a *cantare* by Niccolò Cicerchia (1335 c-after 1376), who was a famous *canterino* from Siena. …

The other polyphonic piece, … , is notated in the first five staves of fol. 78r, accompanied by a poem with the incipit "*Menato fu Yhesù dentral diserto*", part of an *ottava rima* Toscana. …

The origin and function of this music, however, are not so obvious, as the presence of music alongside *cantari* poems in this manuscript is, as previously mentioned, unique. Although the textual variants suggest that the music was very likely transmitted together with the poem, supporting the hypothesis that both came from the *cantastorie* milieu, intriguing questions still remain. For instance, both pieces transcribed in the Siena manuscript are for two voices; does that mean we can assume that *cantastorie* performed polyphonic settings? Or are these two pieces a polyphonic version composed on traditional *cantastorie* monodies?

Bearing in mind Alberico da Rossciate's assertion that talks about two *cantastorie* "unus cantando alter succinendo et respondendo", we could interpret the term "succinere" as singing polyphonies, but, if both poems - Cicerchia's *Passione* and the rhymed Gospel of Luke - were popular in the *cantastorie'*s repertoire, their presence in such a manuscript, alongside the *Credo* by Dante and the calendar of saints, could also be linked to devotional practice. …

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[187] See more in Chapter 6, pp.48-9.
[188] See Musical Examples A, Ch.VII-14 Cavicchi figs. 5 and 6.

Indeed, we know that the *cantastorie* themselves also composed *laude*. …

In the fifteenth century the music of the *cantastorie* certainly provided inspirational models for court musicians. At the Este court, for example, different types of profane monody were heard, as in the humanist practice of singing accompanied by the *lyre* previously recommended by Paolo Vergerio and Guarino Veronese and later taken up by Marsilio Ficino in his Orphic song. Court performers also borrowed the use of monody in the intonation of classical poetry, as suggested by Francesco Negri in his *Brevis grammatica* (1480), in which some examples of this type of monody have survived. In Negri's "grammar", the rhythmic model of the melodies did not correspond to the metrics of classical poetry. However, according to Fiorella Brancacci, Negri's melodies ("*harmoniae*") did not aim to teach quantitative classical metrics, unlike the 1499 edition. Instead, Negri's "*carmina composita*" organization of the rhythm was a stylized metric transposition, an up-to-date interpretation of classical metrics, which in all probability reflected a musical practice that had already been consolidated.[189]

In parallel with this monodic tradition of the *cantastorie* and humanistic solo singing accompanied by a string instrument (lute, rebec, *lyre*), Ottaviano Petrucci, in the early 1500s, printed *aeri per capitoli, aeri per sonetti,* and *aeri per versi latini*, all arranged for four voices and destined for professional musicians and amateurs. Similar settings of *aeri*, but textless, appear in sixteenth-century manuscripts for lute and keyboard.[190]

James Haar has argued that although no Italian popular music from this period is extant, having been part of an oral tradition, the melodies from these performances were re-used by composers in written genres such as the frottola and madrigals. In the polyphonic repertoire in *ottave* from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, Haar isolated the music that would have enabled the *ottave rime* of the *cantastorie* to be intoned. In his search for an *aere* model, James Haar focussed mainly on the recurrence of a melodic profile that would precisely fit the *ottava*, which was frequently used in polyphonic compositions accompanying Ariosto's poems.[191]

7.7. Lira (da braccio and da gamba) in Croatia during the Renaissance and early Baroque:[192]

Many years ago (1978 at the Sorbonne University in Paris) I started working on a never completed doctoral dissertation dedicated to the performance practice of Renaissance and early Baroque music in Dalmatia.[193] This chapter of my study could be considered as a partial realization of this idea, a kind of re-dealing with it ...

Obviously, due to its scope, this topic would deserve a separate article (which is in an "eternal" preparation…) - here I decided to make only a brief report on the appearance of *lire* in art and written sources in the Croatian art and language, from 1470 to 1650, and possible real use of instruments on Croatian coast.

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[189] Also Negro, Niger (Pescennius Franciscus Niger Venetus Liburnus) Italian humanist of Croatian origin (Senj), polymath (Venice, April 17, 1452 – Italy, after 1523). He was educated in Venice and Padua. He engaged in rhetoric, philosophy, law, theology, music, natural and occult sciences, as well as languages. I performed with the lira da braccio several of his melodies. See in Appendix/ More Music/ Niger for examples of his melodies.

[190] Raffaello Cavalcanti's Lute Book (1590).

[191] See James Haar, "Rore's Settings of Ariosto", *Essays in Musicology*: A Tribute to Alvin Johnson, ed. Lewis Lockwood and Edward Roesner (Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 100-125.

[192] Pomykalo, Igor: Lira da braccio and lira da gamba: Reconstruction of playing Technique and the repertory, FINAL REPORT, 2018 (first version February 2001).

[193] For me, certainly the most beautiful and (during the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and early Baroque also culturally) most important part of my homeland, Croatia.

As is well known, the area of today's Croatia in the historical period covered by our research was divided between several major powers: its continental part was ruled by Hungary (since 1527 the Austrian Habsburg dynasty) and the Ottomans, almost the entire coast of Istria, Croatian coast, Dalmatia and all the islands have been ruled by the Venetians since 1415. The coastal hinterland, i.e., the Dalmatian Zagora, was occupied by the Turks.

During this (and later) period, a rare and happy exception was the independent Republic of Dubrovnik/ Ragusa with its coast, islands and hinterland. Despite all the problems and possible negative connotations, this political and economic situation explains the fact that most of coastal Croatia (i.e., Istria and Dalmatia - including the Republic of Dubrovnik) in that period was in direct contact with Italian culture and Renaissance and Baroque art. In continental Croatia, a similar (at least partial, albeit indirect) contact with Italian culture could be assumed due to its strong influence on the Hungarian and later on the Viennese court. Of course, when I use the name "Italian" for the period in question, I am thinking primarily of the culture and art of Venice. In the case of the Republic of Dubrovnik, it could be Florentine, and through the Aragonese court in Naples, even Spanish cultural influence. Together, this explains the emergence of the instrument *lira* in iconographic and written (archival and literary) sources in Croatia.[194]

It is also interesting to note that in the period 1450 -1600. in Dalmatian cities and Dubrovnik there was (confirmed by numerous sources) the practice of improvised reciting or singing accompanied by lute (*leut* in the Dalmatian local dialect) and the translation of Italian poetic forms, for example *strambotti*, into Croatian, more precisely into the local "Čakavian"[195] idiom. Let us remember that in Italy at that time there was a terminological confusion regarding the use of the terms *lira* (*lyra*) and lute ...

In the past fifty years, Croatian musicology has given several important scientific papers (articles, books, and theses) in which we can find a number of relevant information and get some new ideas where further research may be needed. This refers to Dr. Koraljka Kos's doctoral dissertation,[196] in which she primarily deals with iconographic representations, but also provides an interesting overview of written sources. In short, we can say that Kos tries to interpret all mentions of *lira* in Dalmatian literature and other written sources, primarily as an instrument of antiquity or as a Dalmatian traditional folk instrument *lijerica* or *lirica*, which is probably present there only since 1800, and until recently was limited to the surroundings of Dubrovnik (Konavle).[197] This can be explained by the fact that at that time, i.e., in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the knowledge of modern musicology about the lira da braccio was very limited. In his iconographic study, Kos finds only one source depicting two (rudimentarily drawn) lire da braccio.[198] Of course, if to the materials from her dissertation and book were applied the similar criteria which guided Sterling Scott Jones (or even more so, the Slovenian musicologist Primož Kuret)[199], many iconographic depictions of medieval *viella* could be identified as a kind of (proto-) lira da braccio. During my work at the

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[194] Based on the (recently read) book *Storia dell'Adriatico*, Un mare e la sua civiltà (Ed. Il Mulino, 2019) by Italian scientist and author Egidio Ivetic, it seems that the connections and exchange between both coasts of the Adriatic were even more intense than previously thought.

[195] Or "Chakavian". The name comes from the most common word for "what", which is in Čakavian "cha" or "ca" and in the Croatian literary language or "štokavian"," što".

[196] Published as a book in German as Musikinstrumente im mittelalterlichen Kroatien, Zagreb, 1972.

[197] In the last twenty years, the situation has improved so much that now we find the *lijerica*-player (again) on the island of Hvar and around Metković.

[198] The second depiction is an edge decoration in manuscript no. 633, Psalterium Romanum, which is kept in the treasury of the Split Cathedral, and was made probably in northern Italy in the 15th century and partly in Split in the 17th century.

[199] Primož Kuret: *Glasbeni instrumenti na srednjeveških freskah na Slovenskem* / Musical Instruments on Medieval Frescoes in Slovenia, Slovenska Matica, Ljubljana 1973. See pictures on p. 25 and 84.

"Summer Academy for Early Music, MAGUS"[200] I have by chance discovered a typical depiction of the lira da braccio in the local church of St. Stephen.[201] In any case, even if we do not take into account the relatively scarce iconographic sources (which are not always reliable and often appear in Croatian regions as a transmission or imitation of Italian models), in Dr. Kos's dissertation remain some other sources, especially interesting ones in the 3rd chapter: Instruments in the light of archival data, literature and theatre.

The first source refers to the lament "On the death of Marin Držić, a citizen of Dubrovnik", composed by (another famous poet from Dubrovnik) Mavro Vetranović after the death of the great playwright writer (1567)[202] in which he says that Apollo, Orpheus and Arion played the *lira* and cried. Of course, all these mentions can be interpreted with the instrument of antiquity, but let us remember that in Italy (in Italian) of that time in such cases the lira da braccio was usually meant.

In Marin Franičević's study "Čakavian Poets of the Renaissance" I found an interesting mention where the famous Hvar poet Petar Hektorović[203] (in his letter to Vincenzo Vanetti; in Italian and undated) tells his Muse: "It's been a long time since my *lira* hangs on the wall."[204] Then Muse said "... because I heard you in your youth, several times in Latin and in the language of your Homeland, with great admiration of the listeners, that you sing sweetly." It is possible that the above is just a repetition of the usual phrase that describes the lack of inspiration of the poet, on the other hand, this source, linking the *lira* with sweet singing, could represent data from living contemporary performing practice ...

Many interesting sources and ideas can be found in the book (doctoral thesis) of Dr. Miho Demović and in several outstanding works of colleague Dr. Stanislav Tuksar, for example in his books "Croatian Renaissance Music Theorists" and "Croatian Music Terminology in the Baroque Age." Here I would like to refer to the dictionary (of the five European languages, which the author himself called "the five noblest European languages"/ "*quinque nobilissimarum Europæ linguarum*" - one of them Croatian or more precisely Dalmatian Chakavian), by Faust Vrančić, published in Venice in 1595. He translates the Latin term *lyra* with Italian *lira*, German *Harpff* (very interestingly) with Croatian *guszlè*. And further: he translates Latin *lyricen* into Italian as *sonatore*, into German as *Harpffenschlager* and into Croatian as *guszlar*. Latin *Cithara* translates with Italian *Cithara*, German *ein Harpff* and Croatian *Gußle*. Consequently, the Latin *citharoedus* becomes in Italian *citharista*, in German *ein Harpffenschlager*, but in Croatian *gudacz*! In the case of the Latin *fidicen* Vrančić gives the Italian translation *citharist*, the German *Geyger* and again (as in the case of the *cithara*) in Croatian *gudacz* ... Even today the term *gusle* is used in Croatian for normal violin or for traditional folk instrument accompanying heroic, epic, songs.[205] Therefore, the person who plays this later instrument is called a *guslar*, and in the so-called serious music, *guslač* or *gudač*. The name *gudac* (at least in literary language) is not used today, except for the violin player in traditional folklore.

From the above we can assume that at least the lira da braccio (for the lira da gamba we have no reliable data for now) was not only known, but also very likely used in everyday musical practice of coastal Croatia in the 15th and 16th centuries. This primarily refers to the circles of humanists, artists, musicians, and poets, i.e., the Croatian cultural elite in cities such as Zadar, Šibenik, Trogir,

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[200] In the Stari Grad on the island of Hvar, in the summer of 1997.
[201] Oil on canvas by Francesco Santa Croce (1516-1546): angel-musician plays lira da braccio; see Appendix/ Images
[202] See in the dissertation K. Kos: dissertation, p. 242, in her book, p. 92.
[203] Author of the work *Ribanje i ribarsko prigovaranje* /"Fishing and Fishermen's Complaints", written in 1556 and published in Venice in 1568.
[204] In the original: "et gia gran tempo è, che la mia lira pende al muro. … perche ve ho udito in vostra giovinezza piu fiate, et in lingua latina et in quella della vostra patria con grandissimo favore de gli ascoltanti dolcemente cantare. "
See in the bibliography, Franičević, Marin: "Čakavski pjesnici renesanse", Matica hrvatska, Zagreb 1969
[205] See latter in this chapter, p.62.

Split, Hvar, Korčula and Dubrovnik.[206] To this comes, of course, a number of our intellectuals and artists who (known in Venice and the rest of Italy as *schiavoni*) spent their lives working in the diaspora - some of them in strong contact with their homeland.

In my study "How to improvise on Liras (da braccio and da gamba)" (2018) I have mentioned and quoted two books written by two Croatian scientists, musicologist dr. Ennio Stipčević and ethnomusicologist dr. Jakša Primorac.

In his book[207] Stipčević stressed several times that the main reason for scarce number of (especially secular) music of the Renaissance in Croatia could be that the majority of written (and printed) poetry has been sung to the improvised accompaniment on the *leut* (lute in Dalmatian dialect of Croatia). To that we have to know that unlike music, a bulk of (secular and sacred) poetry and theatre pieces written mainly in Croatian but also in Latin and Italian has been preserved from the same period. There is even some information on use of the lira da braccio for the same, improvised, purpose.

Quoted from Primorac´ book[208] this information appeared for the first time in the doctoral thesis by dr Koraljka Kos, 1969:

> "Frano Božićević Natalis, in his biography of Marko Marulić[209], mentions that /their friend/ Jerolim Papalić sung his songs/poetry to the accompaniment of lira in very vivid rhythms, in original: … *carmina sua ad lyram argutissimis modulis decantare solebat* … "

Stipčević[210] discovered previously unknown fact that Franciscus Bossinensis made the second edition of both of his *Libri* in 1515, which hasn't been preserved and so we don't know if he just repeated the whole thing because of the evident interest of the public or even made some changes or additions…

It should be mentioned (a quote from Primorac' book) what one of the most important Croatian musicologists of the older generation, Dr. Dragan Plamenac said[211] about Dalmatian poetry and (not existing) music. He does not mention improvisation, but between the lines gives us a hint that this could be one of the solutions for the almost complete absence of music - in the case of what we know existed:

Primorac: Dragan Plamenac's sentences he uttered at the opening concert entitled "From the Croatian Musical Past", held at the Croatian Music Institute on December 19, 1935, are very encouraging:

> "If we turn to secular music, we should first touch the music that the earliest literary monuments of our humanism, the works of the old Dubrovnik Petrarchists, suggest. The love poetry of Šiško Menčetić, Džore Držić and his companions is closely connected with his

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[206] Data for Istria, Rijeka and the islands of the northern Adriatic do not confirm this for now but the existence of several academies there would not exclude this possibilities either.

[207] Ennio Stipčević: *Renaissance Music and Culture in Croatia*, Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance de Tours, Collection "Épitome musical", Brepols Publishers, Turnhout, 2015.

[208] Jakša Primorac, *Poj ljuveni - pučko pjevanje u renesansnoj Dalmaciji*,("Amorous Singing" - Folk Singing in Renaissance Dalmatia) Književni krug, Split 2013.

[209] IP: Split, 1450 - 1524, one of the most important poets and writer of Split and the whole Venetian Dalmatia, who wrote mainly in Croatian and Latin.

[210] My former colleague from the Zagreb ensemble USZ, musicologist and leading Croatian and European authority on this issue.

[211] Opening the historical concert under the title „From Croatian Musical Past" (»Iz hrvatske muzičke prošlosti«) held in the HGZ concert hall on December 19th 1935.

musical correlate, and it can be hardly imagined without its musical complement. Like the Italian 'rispetti e strambotti', these songs of our old poets were sung to the then popular and omnipresent *leut*. Unfortunately, we are not happy enough to have even a small fragment of music preserved, to which the learned lyrics of our Dubrovnik 'leutari' were sung. But let's think about what the music must have been like, to which our Petrarchists sang their love songs. It was folk music, simple and straightforward; the text was not composed, but the music included only the first two verses and was repeated accordingly, in a typical stanza of eight verses, four times. Architecturally, this primitive form was revived by instrumental interludes and postludes, played on the *leut*. This type of artistic song for one voice, accompanied by a *leut*, has been maintained for several decades and appears to us even after 1500 in the first printed collections of the so-called frottole. The frottole are written in four voices, but only the upper voice under which the text is placed is really sung, while the other voices are intended for instrumental accompaniment. The style and texture of these pieces are homophonic and often raw and unworked. Only a little, but in a completely natural way, as if by itself, the frottola around 1520 turns into a new, classic form of madrigal."[212]

In one of his articles, Dr. Dragan Plamenac also described the so-called violin tablature from the island of Hvar (written in the early 17th century) the part of which I performed on the lira da braccio. It recently occurred to me that, although meant for a normal (early Baroque) four-string violin, it could also serve as a reminder to some Dalmatian lira da braccio player who to this rudimentary melody could add a couple of chords (as I did) and some ornaments, which (similar to chords) could be at least a little different in each later performance.

I return to both already mentioned books, written relatively recently; the one from Stipčević[213] 2015/2017, and the one from Primorac, 2013.[214]

Stipčević:

> "One of the outstanding features of Croatian Renaissance culture [IP: especially in Dubrovnik, Venetian Dalmatia, and Istria] is its relation to Italian language. Since the Middle Ages the curriculum of the religious schools was taught as a rule in the Latin language. In the course of the 15th and 16th centuries along the Croatian Adriatic coast the students at the public schools in the urban centres were taught mostly in the Latin and Italian language. … This explains why the Croatian writers, apart from writing in Croatian, wrote books in Italian and Latin, differing in subject matter and genre, and including history, law, economy, theology, philosophy, poetry, etc. These books were mainly brought out by the Italian publishers [IP: mostly in Venice, sometimes Rome] and contributed to a certain measure in a wider European milieu.
>
> Renaissance poetry in Italian language produced in Dalmatia, Dubrovnik and Boka Kotorska (which continued to flourish in the 17th and 18th centuries), has been a subject of comparative studies and research of Italian and Croatian scholars for quite a while." [215]…

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[212] Ibid; see also: D. Plamenac, *Music of the 16th and 17th Centuries in Dalmatia*, edited in Croatian by E. Stipčević, MIC, Zagreb and Književni krug, Split, 1998.

[213] The book was first published in English in 2015 (something that is so lacking in Croatian culture in general and science in particular; as long as a number of outstanding papers, doctoral theses and books exist exclusively in Croatian, the international scientific community - with the exception of a few Slavists - simply does not know for them!) entitled "Renaissance Music and Culture in Croatia", in collaboration with Music Information Center MIC, Zagreb and the Centre d'études superieures de la Renaissance de Tours, Collection "Épitome musical", by Brepols Publishers, Turnhout. The Croatian original was published in 2017 by the V. Lisinski Concert Hall and the MIC in Zagreb.

[214] Jakša Primorac, *Poj ljuveni*, ibid.

[215] Stipčević, ibid. p.181.

"Trilinguality was not only a phenomenon in literature, but was also part of the everyday life in Dalmatia and Dubrovnik. …"

"Not only in Dalmatia, but along the entire eastern Adriatic coast, all the way from Istria to Dubrovnik and further down to Boka Kotorska, a trilingual literature developed during the Renaissance, written in the Croatian, Latin and Italian languages [IP: several among Croatian Humanist in Dubrovnik and Dalmatia, wrote or translate in ancient Greek language too].[216] …"

"… the shows performed [in Venice] by the *buffoni* and *improvvisatori* were the rage of the widest public. One of the most outstanding protagonists of the Venetian *Commedia dell' Arte* was Zuan Polo (Ivan Pavlović Liompardi) from Dubrovnik (or Korčula?), a *buffone* and skilful player of the violin (lira da braccio?) and lute, dancer and unsurpassable entertainer, who was enthusiastically applauded by the crowds of the city squares, but who also performed in the palazzi, and several times before the Doge. He signed two booklets, maybe one or two more, in the language of the Croatian settlers in Venice, the so-called *lingua schiavonesca*.[217]…"

Zuan Polo is shown as a player of the lira da braccio, surrounded by figures of dancers, on the front cover of his book *Libero del Rado Stixuzo*, where he signed his name as *Ivan Paulavichio (...) in schiavonisco cusi chiamado in ttalian Zane Polo nominando*." …[218]

"The Croatian Renaissance theatre relied on its native public, mostly performing in open city spaces, the squares and streets, or at weddings in middle class and aristocratic houses, in the presence of guests. The performers often made critical allusions to the government, in a form which could be understood by the common public even when the allusions were veiled. …"

"In Croatian Renaissance tragedies music was rarely used, appearing mostly in the function of intermediums or postludiums, as commentaries of sorts, ornaments, or afterthoughts which are not firmly bound to the basic dramatic texture. In pastorals, however, music played a different role." …

"The Croatian Renaissance theatre reached its apogee in 1612, when the City of Hvar (Lesina) built one of the first communal theatre buildings in Europe." …

"Most probably the music related to Croatian early Renaissance poetry functioned as "unwritten /oral/ tradition" , which is also true of the use of music in the Renaissance theatre in Dubrovnik. …"

Angelo Poliziano was well known to a citizens of Dubrovnik, he declined the offer to become Rector of the Dubrovnik grammar school.

The "kick" dr Primorac ideas gave to me, confirming my own ones, consisted primarily in the probability that (especially younger student of the lira da braccio, interested in the really creative improvisation "in the style" of their Italian, Dalmatian, French etc. colleagues from the late 15th and early 16th centuries) could learn how to improvise – as it was always the case in the non-European music and is still "normal" in our blues, jazz, rock even traditional folk music…

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[216] IP: Some of the Croatian humanists in Dubrovnik and Dalmatia also wrote or translated from the ancient Greek language. It existed and has been spoken in everyday life the fourth language, the Dalmatian or Dalmatic, belonging to the Romance group of languages but latter supplanted by Croatian and Venetian.
[217] Stipčević, ibid. str.121.
[218] Ibid.p.123; this author printed in Venice two booklets in 1533 and 1535.see Appendix / Images; the title page of a book with his portrait.

In his already mentioned book under the tittle "*Poj ljuveni*" (Amorous singing) dr Primorac searches for possible connections between the love poetry of late 15th, 16th and 17th centuries in Venetian Dalmatia and Dubrovnik and their supposed improvised musical performance and the *klapa* singing[219] tradition today. For his ideas author uses the theory which American scholar, Albert Bates Lord, put under the name of **formulaic memorising,** studying (among others) the art of singing heroic epos to the accompaniment of *gusle* - tradition which still exist in Croatia, Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.[220]

Primorac:

> Although it was meant to be universally applicable primarily on the research field of epic, especially in the context of its comparative appliance in the homerological research, Lord theory could be extended on any poetic genre of narrative character and of longer length. …
>
> Especially interesting are Lord chapters on the process of learning of epic singers in their younger years and about formula: Lord, leaning back on Milman Parry, defines oral-poetic formula as a group of words which have been used in the same metric conditions to express specific basic idea, and the oral-poetic theme defines as a group of ideas which have been regularly used by telling the story in the formulaic style of a traditional song. …
>
> Young singer imitating [elder ones] learns the poetic verses, phrases, patterns, formulas, and themes as well as the playing technique and the basic principles of ornamentation. Therefore, the primary element of the form is the rhythm and the melody of the verse, and everything have to remain within the border of rhythmic pattern which includes metric, syntactical and acoustic elements. …
>
> Versification is actually the specific grammar within the general grammar of the language, made out of formulas. At learning (process) the most important is to adopt the capability of creation of verses during the performance, and not learning of formulas by heart. There exist special patterns for the beginning of the song, to maintenance of the narration, for stopping before the break, to continue after the interval and for the ending of the song.
>
> It is very important to respect the accents of language and *caesura* in the middle of the verse(s). The singer may sometimes make some mistakes building the verses and his verse could be a one syllable longer or shorter of the prescribed meter because he adjusts his verse to the musical aspects of a melodic pattern. In the oral technique the crucial ability is making phrases on the basis of formula(ic) patterns. With stable phrases the formulas will be determined in the singers memory and new formulas occur when the singer puts the new words into the old patterns. Since the singer forms his phrases on the basis of traditional patterns, his phrases are sometimes involuntarily equivalent to other phrases. He is not seeking the originality which in the oral epic genre is not crucial. The "stock" of the formulas presents the usual and most useful ideas in the oral poetry and gives to the traditional songs specific homogeneity which the literate researcher usually immediately notices."

> Often used phrases have the practical purpose because they help by the performance which is taking place at great speed. By the elaboration of a theme the skilful singer will take care of order and balance, level of ornamentation, the whole of the song and other aspects. During the

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[219] *Klapa* music is a form of traditional *a cappella* singing with origins in Dalmatia, Croatia. The word *klapa* translates as "a group of friends" and traces its roots to littoral church singing. The motifs in general celebrate love, wine (grapes), country (homeland) and sea. Main elements of the music are harmony and melody, with rhythm very rarely being very important.
[220] As well in the Albania.

performance, equipped with his "stock" of formulas, themes, and the technique of compiling, he follows "his" plan. Each performance is the new creation and not merely a reproduction. By that, the oral poet strongly differs from the writer, therefore even songs which have been read to him, he is experiencing as an oral one. …

In fact, much of what Primorac conveys from the Lord sounds like it was taken from Renaissance treatises on the art of memory, on which the practice of not only *canterini* but all humanistic *cantori ad lyram* was based…

> The majority of Lords cognitions are realised in Croatian renaissance *canzoniere* or point on the potential possibilities of learning, memorising and performing of many loves narrative songs collected in these collections. Particularly characteristic are the compatibilities in compliance of *caesura* in the middle of the verse, in the fact that the renaissance distich is often one syllable longer or shorter than the prescribed dodecasyllabic meter and the general recognition that in the Renaissance, same as in the oral epic, the originality wasn't crucial, but the imitation have been regarded as a supreme canon of Art. …

> But finally, what could have been the melodic patterns for singing of songs written in the dodecasyllabic meter found in eleven Croatian renaissance *canzoniere*? The music and written traces which I follow are leading over the sea to Italy, unlike of before considered epic genre flourishing in the Dinaric hinterland of Dalmatia.

And further Primorac:

> If all information about singing of *frottola* in Dubrovnik we connect with intense relations of early Croatian love poets (from second half of the 15th and first half of the 16th centuries) with contemporary Italian courtly poets and according to that with musicians - improvisators, it is easy to think that in the noble contexts love poets and performers of serenades of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia, nobility and rich commoners, … could have been inspired with musical dimension of the creativity of their Italian colleagues, and this were especially *frottole*. I could imagine that *frottole* have been performed in Dubrovnik, partly in "Italian way", same as many Dalmatian poets have parallel written poetry in Croatian in "domestic" style but also in Italian [IP: and Latin too], following consciously contemporary Italian styles. But the music of "imported" music styles for sure has experienced bigger or lesser transformations, blending with local traditions.

It seems that Dubrovnik poet Šiško Menčetić[221] was an active singer and lute (*leut*) player

> Which in many ways has been reflected in his poems. … Menčetić was very unbridled and conflict… person in his youth, as well as poet who has been intensely linked to the popular culture. His collection of more than five hundred poems presents the oldest and probably the most comprehensive Croatian *canzoniere* in general. Only twenty of them are not love songs.

> Based on the previous analysis it is possible to suppose that the love poetry has been performed in an improvised way. It could, certainly, be performed completely recited and not sung, with or without music accompaniment on *leut* (or other stringed instruments[222]). In this case on those instruments, it was possible to improvise melodies in *arpeggiato* style, like that the music served to underline the sensual and intimate atmosphere. But Croatian poetry of the Renaissance similar to the *frottole* could be put to the music in a semi-recitative (declamatory) music style with usual

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[221] In the nineties I made one *fusion* of Bossinensis´ music and one of Menčetić's songs, see latter in this Chapter on the p.68.
[222] IP: for instance, lira da braccio.

melodic models, <u>formulas and patterns</u> which could be varied. Also, we could suppose that both, the texts by Croatian poets and the texts of *frottole*, probably have been set to music more syllabic than melismatic.

About simple <u>melodic formulas</u> by love songs which could be improvised, are speaking directly the names *rujer* and *ripresa*, which appeared in Dalmatian and other coastal songbooks later, in 17th and 18th centuries. But similar melodic patterns could exist and function in the same way already in the 15th and 16th centuries because *ruggiero* and *ripresa* have been the part of medieval and renaissance dance and music tradition in Italy and it is possible that in the same period have been performed in Dalmatia too. [223]

Primorac also quotes the writing (of the already mentioned American musicologist) Howard Mayer Brown.[224] Given the choice and importance of his quotes for our topic, I decided to quote his quotes:

... I was surprised by the many similarities in the musical processes and shapes of genres and styles that took place in the second half of the 15th and 16th centuries in Italy with those on the other, Croatian coast of Adriatic, ... The performers of those poetic forms [frottola] set to music were court and city poets-musicians called *improvvisatori* who sang and improvised them, singing to a stringed instrument, lute, harp or lira da braccio, a bowed instrument adapted for playing chords.

The first book of printed frottole from 1504 offered the improvisers a skeleton of melody and chordal pattern in formulas. They probably decorated the basic melody with *fioriture* and especially tried to emphasize words. Indirectly it can be concluded that Italian 15th-century improvisers varied chordal patterns similar to those in the 1504 book, such as blues and jazz musicians in the 20th century.[225]

Of particular note is the corpus of eleven volumes of *frottole* published in Venice between 1504 and 1514 by the music printer Ottaviano [de '] Petrucci. These volumes may have had the function of instructions, <u>models, and formulas</u> for composing and arranging court and love literature. According to literary critics, the very poetic level of frottola's texts was insignificant - it was only *poesia per musica*.

Due to their texture and chord, the frottole were suitable for solo singing accompanied by lute or instrumental composition and were often performed in this way, as they repertoire-wise and stylistically relied on the songs of court improvisers of the 15th century. It was the lute player Franciscus Bossinensis, probably of Croatian origin, who arranged two volumes of frottolas for solo voice and lute and published them in 1509 and 1511.

In the first decades of the 16th century, "high-art" literary texts, especially Petrarch's canzones, were increasingly set to music on the melodies of the frottola, and the frottola began to lose touch with the world of old court improvisers. In frottolas, the text was usually set to music syllabically or with a few short melodies to accentuate accented syllables. There was a <u>melodic formula</u> for singing recitations and semi-improvisations, which was harmonized with simple tonal chord progressions, mostly dominated by chords built on tonal scales (I, IV and V). The bass line harmoniously followed the main melody and often had

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[223] Primorac, ibid., Pp.62-63. Here I would like to remind you that Ferand mentions the folk melodies of Aria di Ruggiero and Romanesco from Naples in several places in his book on improvisation.
[224] Howard Mayer Brown and Luise K.Stein: *Music in the Renaissance,* translated in Croatian by S. Tuksar. Zagreb: Croatian Musicological Society, 2005.
[225] JP: ibid. pp. 47-49.

octave jumps in the final cadences. The inner sections had the function of harmonious fulfilment between the main melody and the bass line. But the conception of the frottole cannot be considered purely chordal, but rather superficially counterpoint. …

In addition, it should be noted that semi-recited or semi-sung musical styles were highly esteemed in Petar Zoranić *Planine* (Mountains), where the shepherd Vlade "poem singing said", and in *Governo della famiglia* by Nikola Vitov Gučetić, where according to Aristotle the heroic deeds of ancient heroes should be sung reciting (*narrando cantare*).[226] Also, these styles are well known in the music and folklore practice of Dalmatia from the 19th and 20th centuries, for example in women's singing of narrative songs, singing from the book or from the hat,[227] crying, etc.

Due to the special interest in our topic and later consideration and my proposals for reconstruction, I quote here from the passage that Primorac (very significantly) called:

Humanist love *lira* in Marulić's Split[228]

Marulić made an excellent translation of the famous last poem of Petrarch's canzoniere *Vergine bella* from Italian into Latin (*Ad Virginem Beatam*), which is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and he was inspired by other Petrarch's sonnets of a spiritual nature. His friend, the musician and humanist Jerolim Papalić, encouraged him in this endeavour and later set Marulić's translation to music. Jerolim Papalić (15th - 16th century) was a skilled singer and player of the lute, *cythara*, and *lira*. He sang love and religious songs accompanied by these instruments. In a Latin epistle to his biographer and younger friend Frane Božićević Natalis, Marulić mentions that Jerolim plays the *cythara* excellently.[229] Božićević, in his biography of Marko Marulić, states that Papalić "used to sing his songs accompanied by the *lira* in very lively rhythms".[230]

All three documents are interesting because they directly show us what kind of musical rhetoric and practice regarding love singing were cultivated by the noble-humanists of Split in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. They sang their own verses written in Latin, Italian, and Croatian languages accompanied by the *leut*/lute, *citara*, and *lira* …

While Ivan Bošković assumes that *cythara* is Marulić's humanistic name for lute due to his reminiscence of ancient instruments, Koraljka Kos believes that Božićević's *lyra* in the context of ancient themes could mean a Greek stringed lyre played by Orpheus, but in the context of living Renaissance practice it could also denote the bowed lira da braccio, which was popular in Italy from the 15th to the 18th century [*sic*!] or the traditional Dalmatian *lijerica*, which corresponds to the type of early medieval lyra.[231] …

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[226] IP: In this regard, I would like to mention that in my opinion, Zoranić in the mentioned work combines "real" folk instruments such as *diple* (bagpipes) with those from the art music such as lute and *rebega* (rebec). When he mentions *gusle*, if it is a soloist performance or singing to them, it can be that he means a traditional instrument known under that name until today, but when he says that several *gusle* players sang to their own accompaniment (and before that they carefully tuned their instruments) I suppose it could have been a bowed instrument from the art music, such as the viol, lira da braccio or even lira da gamba/ lirone.

[227] Pjevanje iz libra ili kape.

[228] Primorac, ibid., pp.65-67.

[229] Ibid.: "Francisco Natali Marci Maruli in Valle Surda commorantis responsio
(…) Hyeronimum cythara clarum (. ..)"

[230] Ibid .: "Vita Marci Maruli Spalatensis per Franciscum Natalem, conciuem suum, composita
(...) carmina sua ad lyram argutissimis modulis decantare solebat (…) ". This information first appeared in the doctoral dissertation of Dr. Koraljka Kos, 1969.

[231]IP: As I have already written in my project "Lira...", while the first two possibilities theoretically come into consideration (I believe that in this context it certainly refers to the Renaissance *lira da braccio*), there is no evidence

Once again, thinking of the possibility of a practical reconstruction of the art of improvisation on the lira da braccio (and lirone) associated with the re-creation of the (lost but well-documented in theory…) musical component of the extensive opus of Dalmatian Renaissance poetry, I find the following lines of Primorac very interesting and useful:

Love poems of short meter, especially with eight syllables, by Croatian Renaissance poets[232]

However, the entire poetic expression, vocabulary, phraseology, and motifs of older love poetry from the late 15th and early 16th centuries were woven into newer and more modern metrical and strophic forms, primarily the eight-syllables verse organized usually into *quatrine*, *sestine* or eight-line stanzas. This change in love lyric took place slowly during the 16th century to be dominated by eight-syllables and strophic organization in the early 17th century.[233] Thus, love poetry, which carried a strong literary continuity of Šiško Menčetić and Đore Držić in Dubrovnik and Marko Marulić in Venetian Dalmatia, slowly transformed into poetry that was much more suitable for ensemble music performance. In some important literary elements, as we will see, it is related to today's traditional *klapa* song.

7.8. How to improvise on the lira (da braccio and da gamba)

As an introduction to my proposal for the reconstruction of the art and the practice of improvisation[234], on the lira da braccio and on the lira da gamba/ lirone, I decided to use the (renewed and expanded) version of the text I wrote in autumn 2018 and published it on my website www.igorpomykalo.eu as well as on scientific platform www.academia.edu entitled "How to improvise on the lire, da braccio and da gamba?"

As we have seen and emphasized several times, improvisation in the music of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque had the same importance as it does in our modern era in blues, jazz, rock, traditional folk, as well as in so-called "world" and "contemporary" music. In "normal" (often erroneously called "classical" or "serious") music, except for one important exception concerning organ and organists, improvisation did not have the same significance. Those who have read the autobiography of Arthur Rubinstein (born 1887) know that even during his youth, some embellishment of composed (piano and other) music was permitted, appreciated, and practiced...

In Chapter 1, we saw that improvisation, in Eastern classical and traditional music, [235] has been practiced since its beginnings up to the present day. It is learned and still taught for at least ten years by renowned teachers (who are usually or have been outstanding performers themselves), known in India as *gurus* or *ustad*.

Speaking of improvisation, we should also mention the practice (present in the world of early music from its great "boom" in the 1960s to the present day) which could be called fake or pseudo improvisation, where even some brilliant soloists or ensembles present their compositions to the public as "true" improvisation, written down and then learned by heart. Let me be clear, my intention is not to criticize anybody; this practice is always better than the performance of Early

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regarding the *lijerica* that would suggest its uninterrupted presence in coastal Croatia from the Middle Ages to the present day. According to several Croatian ethnomusicologists, instrument likely arrived in our region from Greece during the 18th or early 19th century.

[232] Primorac, ibid., pp.113-114.

[233] Ibid.: from Primorac's Table 1 (See Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-15) it is clear that "the abundance of twelve syllable verses of Croatian Renaissance poets ... leaves the impression of monotony ..."

[234] Which was practiced by my colleagues the so-called *improvvisatori* in Italy in the late 15th and during the first third of the 16th century.

[235] By the very nature of things, it was naturally never written, but it was all the more organized in numerous rules and fashions.

Music in its (most often) written version - a bare skeleton that in that form probably could never be heard in live performance of its time.

Undoubtedly, this practice has often resulted (or still sometime results) in beautiful and inspired performances (as well as great recordings, which are still worth listening to!) played with excellent taste and virtuosity. Here, I fondly recall my teachers and idols from the Munich "Studio der Frühen Musik" (one of my favourite ensembles to which I owe a lot...) or my early music "father" and long-time friend dr René Clemencic.

So, this practice may be everything except the true and creative improvisation, which we know (without any material evidence or "recordings," which is understandable) was practiced for centuries in our Western, both sacred and secular, music. Like the improvisation in non-Western music and jazz this was not "free" improvisation because it also depended on certain (sometimes strict like in the *contrapunto alla mente* or *canto sul libro*) rules and <u>melodic formulas</u> which could be learned or in our case re-created.

I shall not repeat here what I already wrote and publish in my Lira project as you can find it easily on my home page www.igorpomykalo.eu (together with lot of other interesting information, materials, recordings etc.) as well as on the American scientific platform www.academia.edu but to remind you what we could conclude from texts by various authors cited in this and previous chapters.

Reconstruction or better re-creation of improvisation on the lira da braccio could be realised in several and different ways:

1. Using the models from late medieval Italian *trecento* music

2. Using the techniques of the *canto sul libro* or

3. Using the *frottola* and related forms as a relics of improvisation practice of the late 15th century music.

Not wanting to exclude anything, I gave you enough information in the case somebody would like to try one of the first two possibilities[236] but I personally believe in the third one and so all my very elaborated advices are concentrated on the frottola repertory.

It is clear (and all authors supporting the frottola "solution" concord with that) that we cannot take literary various modules, *modi*, *aeri* (as well as somewhat later *arie*) in the editions of the frottola as a key for re-creation of the improvisation on the lira (or other bowed or plucked instruments) because they have been intended for (sometimes very competent, sometimes not) amateurs to accompany (their own or other people's) poetry without music.

Consequently, those models cannot mirror what the average or especially the best *canterini* and in consequence humanist *cantori ad lyram* have performed every day, on squares, in humanist academies, on the court gatherings and banquets throughout Italy of their time.

But, I think it would simply be wrong not to use this huge repertoire of *frottola* (regardless of the fact if they are preserved as a manuscript, as a print, in the "original" or arranged version for voice and lute) which could give to us the opportunity to somehow "enter" this world and start to learn (and probably understand?) what it is all about. And, going further, help us to make our own *modi*,

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[236] See also in Appendix D.Additional Exercises.

as one of a number of possibilities (hypothetical, of course) how to reconstruct, to re-create, the art of ancient *improvvisatori* or *cantori ad lyram*.

In Chapter 6 we saw how important role and high reputation improvised *cantare ad lyram* played in the humanities (*studia universitatis*) and numerous Italian academies in the late 15th and first third of the 16th century. Thanks to the outstanding scientific work of my colleague Ennio Stipčević (and his book, about which I already have spoken in this chapter [237]), we know that at the same time a humanist study existed on our Dalmatian coast, that a number of our humanists studied at Italian universities such as Padua, and that there were numerous academies on the Adriatic coast including Istria. These (along with the iconographic and written sources I talk about later) are the basic conditions and environments in which the practice of singing accompanied by *lire* (regardless of whether it was religious or secular music) could be and most likely have been practised on our coast and islands too.

Inspired by Ferand and Disertori, I started to study and perform the *frottola* repertory already in mid-eighties. Then, in mid-nineties, I made some experiments (following Disertoris´ basic ideas) and tried to combine the music composed (probably) by Bossinensis and published by Petrucci in 1509 and 1511 with the words by one of the most prolific Croatian poet of the Renaissance, Šišmundo (Šiško) Menčetić (1457 - 1527) from Dubrovnik. As we know, the poetry of poets from Dubrovnik and Venetian Dalmatia have been often sung to the accompaniment of *leut* (the name they used for the lute) but as it seems sometimes to the lira da braccio too.[238] The results of this experiment have been absolutely encouraging and I cannot explain why I didn't continued with this then but decided to come back to same problematic only some 25, almost thirty, years later…

During the work on my scientific project (with practical scope), devoted to both *liras*[239] emerged various ideas how to "improvise" on those instruments. The fact is that, once the basic chords and their combinations have being learned by heart, I played sometimes with no chord information at all (for instance when performing dances of the late 15th century, by Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro) or writing under the melodies only the letters; upper case for major and lower case for minor chords, as for instance in the case of the dances from 16th century, *frottole, villanelle* and madrigals. To this I was often adding my not written, really improvised, ornaments.

And then, coming to the end of the above-mentioned last version of my project, in the early Spring of 2018, I decided to make a kind of method for both *liras* and started to write down all kind of ideas deriving from my long years of experience and active performances. This Method is on the way to be finished and published soon; first part is devoted to learning how to play lira da braccio and second one will follow, devoted to lira da gamba i.e., lirone.

Working on my first attempt to offer a solution how to improvise on both liras (in late 2018) I made various analysis of frottola chords etc.

This chordal analysis showed[240] that similarly to our blues main chords of tonic, subdominant and dominant (I, IV, V) are prevailing but that the substitutes are also often used. Another important

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[237] See footnote no. 208. and 214.

[238] See more about that under paragraph 7.7.Lira (da braccio and da gamba) in Croatia during the Renaissance and early Baroque and, in the case you understand the language, in the Croatian Edition from 2021, at the end of Appendix D.

[239] I started it in 1996 and "officially" finished it in 2001, but continued with various versions, translations, and additions until 2018 - when I finished and posted its latest, English, version on the web.

[240] Of course, one could go on analysing whole corpus of eleven books (of which only ten are preserved) of *frottole* published by Petrucci. More material has been analysed, closer the supposed re-creation we come.

feature of many frottolas is the rhythm combining the duple and triple time, quoting W. Prizer (in his article, Performance practices in the frottola (published in Early Music, July 1975):

> "The rhythmic nature of the frottola strongly affects the performance, both within the cantus and in the lower voices as well. Most of the works are written in duple time, the mensuration being either C crossed or C; many compositions, however, have a rhythmic logic that is opposed to the metre. Phrases tend to begin in duple time, to move to a triple, *hemiola* rhythm for the middle of the phrase, and then back to two for the typical feminine cadence (Ex. I: I :7 the rhythmic stress): Ex. 1. Marchetto Cara: *Io non compro piu speranza Frottole, libro primo*. Venice: Petrucci, 1504)" [241] …

Several songs in our Supplement belongs to this type…

The chords found in the famous Pesaro manuscript fit perfectly when used for accompaniment of *frottola* and *villanella* repertory on both *lire*. What is missing is the ornamentation of the melody, which of course changes - starting in last decades of the 15th, through entire 16th and coming to the first decades of the 17th centuries. This is especially true if the piece is performed instrumentally or you need the material for introductions, interludes or postludes. As possible source to resolve this problem, we have already mentioned tablatures for organ (in fact all keyboard instruments of the period, see by A. Antico, *Frottole Intabulate da sonare organi, Libro Primo,*1517) or even better the ornamentation which could be deduce from the *ricercari* composed by Bossinensis for both of his books arranged for voice and lute, numerous editions of lute dances (Dalza, Spinacino ecc.) as well as excellent and detailed instructions given by S. Ganassi. Diego Ortiz and many others.

I think that already the first version of my study "How to improvise on the lire (da braccio and da gamba)" (2018) gave those who have some prior knowledge in playing the liras (or at least the violin) and performing Early Music[242] enough ideas and materials to "get started". The entire material was available for three years to all really interested in the scientific platform academia.edu, on my website (where for many years there is a lot of useful information about playing both instruments and sheet music related to all my videos on YT, my CD production - from 2016 onwards, etc.) and on my four FB groups dedicated to Lira or EM in Croatia. So far, I have not received a single reaction, be it positive or negative, criticism, remark, or the like.[243]

In my book in Croatian "*All'Improvviso*"[244] I gave new information, enlarged the text and added many more music examples and advices which are again substantially adjourned in this English version.

Based on both books by F. Bossinensis, I made a (superficial) analysis of melodic-rhythmic types and chord sequences, so I'll bring it here:

1.At the beginning of each (composed) frottola (here used as a generic term) the melody can move up, down, in all possible combinations of this or stay on the same tone - especially in the case of declamatory, "recitative" compositions, which are static, and chords are changing only rarely. In my opinion, similar compositions could derive directly from improvised practice, in any case more than those in dance rhythm. See No. 10 in Libro I and No. 3 (somewhat), 5 and 10 (distinctly) in Libro II.

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[241] See more about that on p.70, and Musical Examples A, Ch. VII-16 Prizer Cara and under B./ 5.7.Hemiola.

[242] Especially those which already performed the repertoire of *frottola* and *villanella*.

[243] Don't take me wrong, I mentioned this not while „offended" but because I believe that the most important steps forward could be achieved together in exchange of ideas, proposals, experiences-even constructive critics.

[244] Present on my home page since the late 2021. I don't want to be polemic, but it seems like people who are interested or even colleagues who play both *lire* prefer to avoid comments or reactions which could move my and "our" case further, pity.

2.The rhythm can be relatively uniform, involving 2 to 4 different note values and/ or more frequent pauses (regardless of where or only at the end of the verse). Cantus and bassus usually have a calmer rhythm (in longer note values) than the inner voices.

In some melodies (see no. 27/ Libro I) there are passages through the entire octave, which can be taken and applied in other or improvised versions.

3.Chords: the main degrees of tonic, subdominant and dominant appear more often, but every now and then the secondary ones, such as; II (or supertonic), III (mediant), VI (submediant) and VII (leading tone or subtonic) degrees too. As we have seen, several authors believe that the tonality was almost from the very beginning related to the musical - poetic form of the frottola or its related forms of *villancico, villota* and *villanelle.*

4.Regardless of that, even as a contrast, instrumental pre-, inter- and postludes come into consideration. As a basis they can use melodic material as in no. 2 and have (depending on the creative and technical ability of the individual) even of more virtuoso kind.

What could we conclude from all of this? I repeat that it is impossible to find any logic or system in all this, from which we could draw any more specific conclusions or rules. In my opinion, this also indirectly indicates the improvised origin of (at least a part of the earlier) written frottole - regardless of whether they were preserved in handwritten or printed form, in three- or four-part version or in the one transcribed for voice and lute.

Given this "freedom" of choice among hundreds of models[245] I would suggest a slightly different and, it seems to me, safer path, see below under examples.

Several authors mention the so-called typical *frottola* rhythm that uses *hemiola.*[246] It is interesting that out of a total of 126 *frottole* from both books arranged or composed by F. Bossinensis, and published by Petrucci - only 13 have this rhythm… In the case of Petrucci's edition of *Frottole Libro XI*, out of a total of 70 frottolas only 5 have this rhythm. Quite by chance (or still as a reminiscence of *improvvisatori*?) we find this rhythm about hundred years later in the second act of Claudio Monteverdi's opera "*Orfeo*", specifically in the aria *Vi ricorda o boschi ombrosi*, see in the Appendix/ Mus. Examples B/ 5.7.Additional/ no.6 Hemiola rhythm and frottola.

After intensive study of numerous sources (mostly authors who wrote their articles and books from the mid-80s until recently), through reflectiong and experimenting, I came to some conclusions that could certainly work. It is "only" about the will and willingness of my younger colleagues to invest a significant amount of time and effort in something for which in our time, most likely, there will be no reward and a relatively small audience…

Also, recently (2023) it came to my mind another suitable comparison: to try to reconstruct the art of *improvvisatori* and *cantori ad lyram* is very demanding but could be compared with great effort when one western musician wants to learn any Eastern musical instrument for instance Indian *sitar,*

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[245] For today's performer, there is a problem, among other things, that only a small part of the huge repertoire is accessible in a modern edition and in the form of a score - which we are used to, I would say; became addicts ... The exceptions are Petrucci's *Frottole libro XI*, both books by F. Bossinensis and some editions of Andrea Antico, while most other material is available exclusively in digital copies of originals or editions from the beginning or middle of the last century (Rudolf Schwarttz: *Frottole*, Buch I und IV, Leipzig, 1935, B. Disertori: *La frottola nella storia della musica*, Atheneum Cremonense, 1954, same author: *Le frottole per canto e liuto intabulate da Franciscus Bossinensis*, 1964, Ricordi, Milano, Knud Jeppesen: *La frottola* , 1968-70.) Which are almost as a rule sold out and only with a lot of luck can be found in a library or (online) antique shop. A happy exception is the edition of F. Luisi and G. Zanovello (eds.) *Frottole libro undecimo* (1514) Padua, 1997, which is still available.

[246] See on the page 69.

sarangi, tabla or *sarod*, Iranian *santur*, arabian *ut* or Turkish *kemençe* and similar. Well, the big difference is that in that case you can find a teacher, a *guru* and in our case those people are dead…

Before we move on to the description of qualitative "levels", it should be said that in the case of any improvisation involving music, there are other levels to consider. Basic or zero level would be mental preparation, concentration.[247] The next, let's call it A. level, are the words and pictures we stored with longer-term preparation. B. level would be acting, movement and mimic and C. level would be melody and its accompaniment. Both can range from very simple, rudimentary, to more complicated ones.

At one point, it occurred to me that we should try to organize (arrange) our "house"[248] considering the floors, which every larger house should have. In further discussion, I call them "levels" again, because that expression about the mind, memory, suits me better. What follows is a kind of sketch from which it should be clear what I am talking about.

NB: I decided, for those very interested in the subject, to collect all sources referring about performances with liras (primarily lira da braccio) left by contemporaries, as well as their and those of today's musicologists reflections on this topic. You shall find this file in the Appendix/ Various adjunctive Texts.

7.9. Qualitative levels of performance practice of early Renaissance music – re-creation of the art of *improvvisatori*, i.e., *canterini* and *cantori ad lyram*.[249]

Levels range from the minimum, the basic, to the highest, which will initially seem unattainable. This what follows could be seen too as a remainder of steps which are already behind you as well as those you decided to realize.

I. Performance of a written repertoire of frottola and villanella with the addition of ornaments:[250]

a) From staff music or (even better!) from tablature

b) The same but by heart and each time with slightly different ornaments and simple rhythmic variations
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II. Contrafactum:[251]

We add a new poetic text from the appropriate period to the already composed music:
a) in Italian (if native speakers or in case of excellent command of this language).

b) in any other language under same circumstances as in a).

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[247] In our folk tradition, especially in Dalmatian Zagora, singers achieve this by concentrating "on libar" (libro) i.e., a book or a hat.

[248] **Here I like to paraphrase a term, a term, which the Renaissance *canterini* as well as the humanist *cantori ad lyram* used in explaining their *arte della memoria* - see Chapter 6, p. …**

[249] In the appendix, interested readers will find, among other things, a more practically oriented text titled "How to (really) improvise on the lira da braccio," taken from my Lira Method. There, you will also find another commented list of musical examples.

[250] Everything I say and support with examples is equally valid for the lira da braccio as for the lira da gamba (lirone) and this principle (with appropriate accommodation) can be applied also to other instruments; lute, some other plucked instrument or harpsichord – always considering particularities of each instrument.

[251] See also in Chapter 1., p.32—footnote 78 and in this Chapter p.31.

c) in the Croatian language (as under V.a latter)

This procedure was often applied during the Renaissance and (together with the preparations from level I) is a very important prerequisite to be able to go further, to level III.

Let's remember the most important tips on *arte della memoria* from the writings of Raffaello Brandolini and others from Chapter 6, pp..[252]

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III. Longer and very important preparatory phase:

a) Choosing one's own (or other people's) modules of chords, melodies and rhythms and learning them by heart, i.e., storing them in a mental or memory "storehouse".

b) For the most ambitious: preparing topics to sing or talk about, on which basis our own poetry or prose (for use in phase V) will be created.

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IV. Simpler (and more complex) partial improvisation:

a) Testing in practice chord sequences and melodies with singing (already written) lyrics, all without rhythm.

b) The same with the addition of typical rhythms of frottola, villanella, etc.

Stocks previously stored, memorized and adopted in phase III are used.

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V. The highest level, ad hoc creation of lyrics and music (which may or may not be our goal):

a) Creation of own (simpler or even more complex) texts on previously selected and sketched topics. In Italian or another language if native speaker or with excellent knowledge of it. In my case it would be Croatian (for colleagues from our coast, preferably; Dalmatian Čakavian or Dubrovnik Štokavian dialect from the late 15th to the end of the 16th century).

b) Same with the combination of melodies, rhythms, and chord sequence as in Level IV (III).

SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

I think that arrive to master all these levels and get to what improvising poets-singers-lira players (almost as a rule united in one person, such as the Brandolini brothers, Baccio Ugolini, Leonardo da Vinci, Benedetto Gareth, Serafino Aquilano on lute and many others[253] have done and lived throughout their professional life) is an extremely difficult and long undertaking, but that their art could be re-created at least to some extent. Naturally, as for us some things, symbolism, and the like (clearly, depending on the individual level of education) are self-evident, so it was in every period, in this case the Renaissance, too.

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[252] See in Appendix/ More Texts the shortened version with most important elements of the *Arte della Memoria*.
[253] See in the Appendix/ Various Lists one with names of proven or supposed players who sang to their improvised accompaniment on the lira da braccio and (some of them) on the lute.

In our case, there are (at least) two possibilities: if we want to "completely" (which is impossible but worth trying…) re-create the world of humanists in which the art of *cantare ad lyram* was born and flourished, our performance must be accompanied by sufficiently clear "instructions for use" otherwise our public will not be able to follow and understand what is happening.

On the other hand, if we decide to actualize and transpose Renaissance (e.g., court or similar themes) in our time, then any additional explanations or instructions will be not necessary.
There are, of course, eternal themes that have occupied, frightened, or enthralled people in the late 15th or 16th centuries as much as they do to us today: love and hate (remember FBook and similar…), war and peace, city and untouched nature, wealth and poverty, disease… If we keep this in mind and in that sense start collecting <u>names and places</u>, pictures, filling first the rooms and then the floors of our "house of memory", it will eventually become a natural process, as it was for our ancient colleagues half a millennium ago.

You could ask, but why then to use lira da braccio at all, wouldn't it be simpler and more actual using guitar or synth? This is absolutely true but let's say that lira da braccio or lute both are giving their particular sonority, atmosphere, its charm – all elements which would guide yourself and the public in another world, another dimension between the times of now and then.

7.10. Comments to the Music examples 2024[254]

From the Supplement of the first version of my text "How to improvise on liras (da braccio and da gamba)[255] I took everything that I thought was important and therefore could remain also in the new (third) version. This refers to the bank of chords for both liras, with the addition of original fragments from the manuscript of Pesaro (in the case of the lira da braccio), fragments by S. Cerreto and M. Mersenne, in the case of the lira da gamba.

Since some ideas or doubts were "spinning in my head" already while working on the first version of my lira project 28 years ago (1996), I decided to include some information about playing the chords on the viol, or about certain connection that (except the one with the lute) seems to have existed between the lira and the viol; lira gamba is, as its name suggests, a kind of viol with "a lot" of strings.[256]

There remain the so-called *aeri* and *modi* from Petrucci's edition of Frottole, Libro Quarto (c. 1505), always brought in facsimile of the original, 4-voice transcription, my arrangement for lira da braccio and the audio file (mp3) of my performance on this instrument. Following are (always from the first version, 2018) chord analyses from both frottola books that F. Bossinensis edited for voice and lute, combined with a selection of frottole in the voice and lira version and a separate melody of cantus. These examples, along with others I have added in the new version, have a double purpose; they serve as a "normal" musical example (for both theorists and practitioners) but also as part of that material that seriously interested practitioners can use as a "Reservoir of Music" in their own experiments.
To this, I add music examples with comparisons between *barzelletta, canzona, oda, sonneto, capitulo* and *strambotto* and charts with degrees in comparison for the same musical-poetic forms. The new supplement consists of six poetic- musical forms of frottola (*barzelletta, canzona* or *canzonetta, capitolo, oda, sonetto* and *strambotto*) which I bring in the following versions:

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[254] NB: the order and content of Music examples given in my Lira da Braccio Method is not identical with this one.
[255] See at www.academia.edu.
[256] In this version there are only the most important and not very detailed information about this last lira; in the near future after already announced Lira da braccio Method (which will be ready soon) I planned to publish the second part, devoted to the Lira da gamba/ Lirone Method, with most detailed information of any kind.

facsimile of four-part original, facsimile of F. Bossanc's arrangement, my version of the Dissertatori's transcription (with chord marks) for lira (da braccio or da gamba), simplified cantus, without text but with chords, rhythmic figures (ev. ornaments and cadences) and the original poetic text and all information. For each of the forms I have attached three examples. To this I add a selection of *ricercari* from both books by F. Bossinensis and the pseudo-improvised (but notated) *Tastar de corde* by J.A. Dalza, from *Intabolatura de lauto libro quarto* (Venice, 1508).

To *Aeri* and *modi* from the 2018 version, I added new ones from Petrucci's edition of *Frottole libro XI* (1514) in the version; transcription of the four-part original, a simplified cantus with chords and ornaments and cadences - for five frottolas. Those *are aeri de sonneti, de capitoli* and *de strambotti* can be used as a basis for improvisation or *contrafactum*. Also new are the arias I found and took from the manuscript of Cosimo Bottegari: *Arie e Canzoni in musica* (the so-called Bottegari's Book for Lute, dating from 1574, consisting of a modern transcription by Carol MacClintock[257] and a separate cantus with chords. Bottegari gives *arie in ottava rima, da stanza* and *terza rima*.

From the 2018 version I leave a selection of music from my rich repertoire on both liras, which I recorded for CD ("Clemecic Consort", 1986, "Micrologus" 1998), performed at a series of concerts with both ensembles, in a duet with German lute player Hans Brüderl and at my solo recitals from 1999 to 2007. In the case of L. Senfl's Horace Ode I am adding (leaving) an audio file, everything else if interested can be watch and listen to on my YouTube channel Igor LIRAFORUM Pomykalo.

As a new contribution to the problem of improvisation on both *lire*, I add:
Reservoir of Music, always with three frottole by F. Bossinensis, *Libro I,* 1509 and eight from *Libro II*, 1511, reservoir of texts from same editions and Petrucci's *Frottole Libro XI*.[258]

In case anyone might be interested, I am adding materials for an improvised counterpoint (which include a reservoir of tenors taken from D.Ortiz, B.Janin and B.Thorn,[259] frottole with imitative beginnings or a homophone structure from Petrucci 's *Frottole, Libro XI*, fauxbordons from B. Janin's edition and examples from McGee.

As a very important introduction to improvisation, I also add examples of how you can make the *contrafactum*, based on examples for each of the six forms of frottola mentioned above.[260]

<div align="center">CONCLUSION</div>

I believe that I have given to you a very comprehensive Compendium of quotes from leading specialist on the field with my comments and at the end abundant ideas and advice how to start to work on your own. As already said, this is a "work in progress" which will be adjourned from time to time, depending on my new ideas and (ideally) your reactions.

Looking recently at the three-part documentation on the five-year reconstruction work on the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, some final thoughts come to my mind that can be applied to the field of practical musicology, specifically Historically Informed Performance (HIP).

This relates to several segments: uncovering the techniques used by medieval cathedral builders to work with stone and combine parts into a whole that has survived for eight centuries or the method

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[257] Carol MacClintock, *The Bottegari Lutebook*, Wellesley, Ma. 1965.

[258] For those originating from the coastal regions of my homeland: in the Appendix of my Croatian edition, there is a selection of poetry from Dalmatia, in eight and twelfth syllables.

[259] See Chapter 7.

[260] For my experiments where I replaced the original Italian text with Dalmatian Renaissance poetry, see in the Appendix of the Croatian version of my book "All'Improvviso" from 2021.

of selecting and processing wood, such as beams and the like, can be somewhat compared to the work of instrument makers then and now. By analyzing original instruments, we come to understand how to build their copies today. In connection with this, an important phrase comes to mind that Tom Binkley used to stimulate his students: "play what the instrument wants to play," which can be explained by the laws and possibilities of every early or modern instrument, which, through long-term study, open the musician's "eyes, ears and hearts" and give the fingers an idea of what is possible to play and sound good and what is not. Iconography also comes into play, supporting or not supporting certain assumptions we have reached through theoretical assumptions.

This can also be applied to improvisation: like in the case of Notre Dame, we possess a large number of elements, stones, mosaic pieces, with which it is possible to assemble puzzles through numerous experiments. Experts-restorers in their work on the reconstruction of Notre Dame often and successfully use the latest computer techniques, algorithms, Artificial Intelligence and the like. It occurs to me that something similar (how, I don't know but it's up to the younger ones to discover…) could be attempted with improvisation. In the case of jazz improvisation, there is (at least) one such program, *Impro-visor*; as far as I know, there isn't one for the Early Music, but I think it could work in a similar way - of course, with appropriate building blocks, elements, modules.

There are also a greater number of sacred and secular spaces where we know that music was often performed, both vocal and instrumental, and in various combinations and for various purposes, and it was true also for improvised music. This is another one of the very important elements that can help us with today's reconstruction or, even better, re-creation of Historical Performance Practice as a whole, and improvisation in particular.

Everything else is up to you, my respected and unknown young colleague – I hope that you will be at least as stubborn as I was.

Translated and adjourned in Tombolo and Birkfeld, late 2023/ Spring of 2024, Igor Pomykalo

To remember and repeat:

7.1.Terminology; lira / lyra - lute etc. p.1

p.3.Plectrum is a "kind of" bow (Ganassi), Haraszti (Tinctoris): lyra means lute,

p.4. Canguihem on genesis of name lyra given to lira da braccio etc., p.5.Wilson.

7.2.Lira da braccio in general, the way of playing, the impressions of the
audience, construction etc. p.5

Hajdecki (1892), p.6.Ferand on lira, p.7.Ferand on *Aeri* and *Modi*, p.8. *Aria di Ruggiero, Romanesca*, Disertori on practice of playing the lira, p.9.Jones on lira, p.10. Rubsamen on the Pesaro Ms etc., p.12. Prizer and Strohm on lira, p.13. Canguihem on Striggio playing the *lira* and my considerations, p.15. Woodfield on links between lira and viol, Ganassi and playing technique, p.18.McGee on *Cantare all'improvviso* 1, Wilson on performances with lira etc., p.20.Cavicchi on lira, Wilson on the construction of the lira and the like, Migliorotti invetor of lirone?,

7.3.About Lute, lira and *tenoristi* p.21

Prizer on old and new technique of playing the lute, Paumann as as a possible inventor of this,
p.22 *Tenoristi* and their function, p.23.My considerations 1, Haar about *tenoristi*,
p.24.My considerations 2, Prizer on *tenoristi,* p.25.My final considerations (3).
7.4.Frottola as a relic of improvisation and its relation to

unwritten tradition and other alternatives p.27

p.27.Rubsamen on *Justiniane* and improvisation, Pirrotta "iceberg", p.18.Pirrotta in support of *frottola* and *Ars Nova*-interpretation, p.29.Haar on unwritten and written music and *Arie* 1, p.30. Haar on Contrafactum: What seems to have been regarded as unusual was to compose ex nihilo and invent everything — what Zarlino called composing 'di fantasia', on frottola-interpretation, p.31.Haar on Petrucci's *arie* (*modi*) for amateur musicians, p.32.Prizer on frottola and the unwritten tradition, *barzeletta* and *strambotto*-structures in practice, p.36.Strohm on ambivalent relationship between oral and written music, p.37.McGee on the improvisation of poetry and its accompaniment during the 15th century, p.40.Wilson on frottola.

7.5.Tonality and frottola? p.42

Lowinsky on links between frottola and Spanish *villancico* and their early tonality,

7.6.Possibility of reconstructing the art of improvisers on the lira, practical considerations I. p.44

Thoughts and advices by Ferand and Disertori (particularly on lira playing technique), p.46.Jones, p.47.Haar (lira accompaniment), p.48.*Aria* 2, p.49.early madrigal (Berchem), Prizer on lira and Pesaro Ms., p.50.Strohm and Haar on improvisers and dance music (G. Ebreo etc.), p.52.McGee on the possibilities reconstruction in the style of trecento music (by others and his own proposal), p.54.Wilson on performances with lira(?), p.55.Cavicchi on *Credo* di Dante etc., p.56.Haar on *Aere* and Ariosto's Orlando furioso.

7.7.Lira (da braccio and da gamba) in Croatia during the Renaissance and early Baroque p.56

p.59. … we can assume that at least the lira da braccio (for the lira da gamba we have no reliable data for now) was not only known, but also very likely used in everyday musical practice of coastal Croatia in the 15th and 16th centuries. p.60.Primorac-Plamenac, p.61.Stipčević trilinguality of Croatian Renaissance culture, p.62.Primorac on Lord's formulaic memorising and Slavic gusla singer-players, p.63.Primorac on singing of *frottola* in Dubrovnik etc., p.65.Primorac on Humanist love *lira* in Marulić's Split,

7.8.How to improvise on the lire (da braccio and da gamba), practical considerations II. p.66

On the fake or pseudo improvisation, p.67.Re-creation of improvisation on the lira da braccio could be realised in several and different ways, p.69."typical" rhythm of frottola, p.70.my chordal and other analysis of frottolas.

7.9.Qualitative levels of performing practice of early Renaissance music - reconstruction of the art of *improvvisatori, canterini* and *cantori ad lyram.* p.72

p.73.Some final considerations

7.10.Comments to the List of Examples 2024 p.74, Conclusion p.75

Reading recommendations:

CANGUILHEM, Philippe: Naissance et décadence de la lira da braccio,
See also in the Appendix, 8.1.GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

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HARASZTI, Emile: La technique des Improvisateurs de Langue Vulgaire et de Latin au Quatrocento, … Ibid, 8.1.

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