

*The Captive Scribe:
The context and culture of scribal and notational
process in the music of the ars subtilior.*

by

Jason Stoessel, B.Mus./B.A. (UNE), B.A.Hons (UNE).

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Certification by Candidate

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.



Signature of Author

2 - 8 - 2002

Date

UXORI CARISSIMÆ FILIOLAEQUE MEAE
HUNC OPUSCULUM DAMUS

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Abstract

The extant scribal record of the music of the *ars subtilior* is considered in terms of the reception of this musical style within particular cultural contexts. The first part of this study re-examines the two principal sources (F-CH 564 and I-MOe5.24) of a partially shared *ars subtilior* repertoire and concludes that, despite the presence in part of a repertoire ostensibly composed north of the Alps (c. 1380-1395), these manuscripts were compiled in or close to major centres on the Italian peninsula (Florence and Pisa/Bologna/Florence respectively). These conclusions form the background to the second part of this study that identifies cultural tendencies/influences in the notation of musical rhythm in the *ars subtilior* repertoire. Notational process as a whole is conceptualised according to neo-Aristotelean ontology present in musical theory of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Notational process in relation to special note shapes is split into two groups: a northern Italian school originating in Lombardy and extending at least as far as Tuscany which employed an arithmetic process in the construction of new note shapes; and a tradition stemming from proportional processes with origins in France which were subsequently adopted and modified by scribes and composers from Italian centres. In relation to mensuration signs, variation in forms and meanings in datable works suggest the existence of a notational school of thought c. 1380 which bridges the earlier modes of intrinsic signification with the increasingly extrinsic modes that emerged at the end of the fourteenth century. A major revision of the received view concerning the influence of the mathematical process of algorism upon notational process is argued with the conclusion that algorithmic concepts were already present in the notation of the *ars subtilior* before the end of the fourteenth century. A new edition of pertinent works also accompanies the study.

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Key to Abbreviations

B	<i>Ballade</i>
V	<i>Virelai</i>
R	<i>Rondeau</i>
Mot	<i>Motet</i>
Cac	<i>Caccia/Cacce</i>
Can	<i>Canon</i>
itB	<i>Ballata</i>
Mad	<i>Madrigale</i>
OM	<i>Ordinarium missae</i>
H	<i>Hymn</i>
iso-	<i>Isorhythmic</i>
S	<i>Vox superius</i>
Ct	<i>Contratenor/contreteneur</i>
T	<i>Tenor/teneur</i>
C ¹ , C ²	<i>Cantus primus, Cantus secundus</i>
p.p.	<i>punctus perfectionis</i>
p.d.	<i>punctus divisionis</i>
Br	<i>brevis</i>
Sbr	<i>semibrevis</i>
Min	<i>minima</i>
Smin	<i>semiminima</i>
c.o.p	<i>cum opposita proprietate</i>
f., ff.	<i>folium, folia</i>
[3,3]	<i>tempus perfectum cum prolationis maioris</i>
[2,3]	<i>tempus imperfectum cum prolationis maioris</i>
[3,2]	<i>tempus perfectum cum prolationis minoris</i>
[2,2]	<i>tempus imperfectum cum prolationis minoris</i>

┌ ┐ (red coloration)

┌ ┐ (white/void black coloration)

┌ ┐ (void red coloration)

dim. *diminutum*, diminished

t. *tempus*

B., BB. *brevis, breves*

Vol. Volume

App. Appendix.

Pitch names follow the conventions of medieval nomenclature: CC-GG, A-G (*graves*), a-g (*acutes*), a'-e'(f') (*superacutes*), whereby c=middle c.