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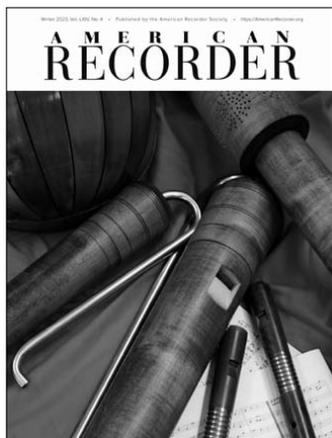


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# A M E R I C A N R E C O R D E R

## ON THE COVER

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**Editor's Note** • GAIL NICKLESS

This issue takes us on a trip into the past, to encounter what is for some of us an undiscovered source of solo (or even ensemble) music to play on recorder.

In the article by Beverly Lomer and Sian Ricketts, the life of the remarkable Hildegard of Bingen is described, and her chants offered in recorder versions in print and sound (visit <https://youtube.com/americanrecordermag>). As I worked on this article, I was mesmerized by Hildegard's music. (At the Boston Early Music Festival in June, I also heard the all-female Tiburtina Ensemble sing an entire concert of Hildegard's chants—to a standing ovation with thunderous applause! They utilized Medieval harp and *dulce melos*, like a hammered dulcimer, both with the singers and in instrumental selections.) I hope you will use the Hildegard Society web site's free resources to play and hear more of her lush music.

Only slightly more recent in our musical history, Renaissance diminutions is the topic in this issue's LEARN department by Lobke Sprengeling. Her concise examples give us the tools to create these elegant ornaments on our own.

Perhaps an ARS Business Member (featured in this issue) has Renaissance music you could buy to practice adding diminutions, or has recordings to hear more music from our distant past. ❁

**President's Message** • CAROL MISHLER

Did you get a request this fall from the ARS to update your Membership Profile? Before you relegated the message to Trash, I hope you took a moment to consider why the ARS wants a profile of its members.

The Membership Profile, which new members complete and current members were asked to update, provides the ARS Board with important information used to create new programs, and tweak or even discontinue existing ones. Recently, these particular profile items were added or reworded:

- **Demographics.** You are now asked for your race or ethnicity, age and broad income range. By analyzing demographic data, the ARS can evaluate its progress in supporting recorder playing among members from all backgrounds.
- **Recorder experience.** This item is now reworded to give a fuller picture of your recorder journey. We now have an answer when a Board member asks: "what percentage of ARS members first took up the recorder in retirement?"—and maybe ultimately a better program, service or outreach.
- **Recorder teacher status.** At a recent Board meeting, someone asked: "how many of our members are teachers in K-12 schools?" With the information we now collect, we can plan outreach efforts for this and other membership groups of people who make a living through recorders.

Other questions include basic contact information, even a seasonal address; and whether you belong to a chapter and which one(s). In its monthly data analysis, the Executive Committee noticed that many new members don't belong to a local chapter. This led to the startup of the North American Virtual Recorder Society ([www.navrs.org](http://www.navrs.org)), which celebrated its 200th member in September—one example of how knowing our members led to a new ARS program.

If you did not update your Membership Profile in the fall, it's not too late. Go to the website below. You have the option to not answer any particular item—but when all ARS members answer accurately, it creates a cumulative Membership Profile that is helpful in making the ARS even better. ❁

<https://americanrecorder.org/update>



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# ON THE RECORD(ER)

News about the recorder

## CONGRATULATIONS

### Lindsey Macchiarella receives Early Music America award

At its October event in Boston, MA, the Early Music America (EMA) Board of Directors honored Lindsey Macchiarella and other individuals nominated by their colleagues in the early music community.

Macchiarella received EMA's Thomas Binkley Award, which honors individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the study and performance of early music in their roles as leaders of collegiate early music ensembles. Founder and director of the University of Texas–El Paso early music ensemble and collegium musicum, Macchiarella is also an early music performer on viola da gamba and recorder with the El Paso group Sprezzatura. In March 2024, she will host participants in a free festival and workshop of Latin American early music, supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (see LISTEN & PLAY in this issue for information on applying to attend, as well as to receive a travel subsidy).

Macchiarella holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California, Riverside, and a master's degree in musicology and certificate in early music studies from Florida State University, where she also was awarded a Ph.D. in musicology in 2016. She serves on the Board of the Viola da Gamba Society of America.

Other EMA awards presented and their recipients were:

- Howard Mayer Brown Award for lifetime achievement in



▲  
Lindsey Macchiarella

the field of early music: harpsichordist Arthur Haas

- Laurette Goldberg Award for outstanding achievement in early music outreach: Ruben Valenzuela and Bach Collegium San Diego

The awards were conferred on October 24 during a ceremony at the 2023 EMA Summit at Emmanuel Church in Boston. ❁

[www.earlymusicamerica.org/web-articles/ema-announces-2023-annual-award-winners](http://www.earlymusicamerica.org/web-articles/ema-announces-2023-annual-award-winners)

Lindsey Macchiarella:  
<https://lindseymacchiarella.com>;  
<https://sprezzaturaensemble.com/lindsey-macchiarella>

### Allen Garvin honored at Viola da Gamba Society Conclave

ARS member Allen Garvin, also a long-time member of the Viola da Gamba Society (VdGSA), was honored in July during the annual VdGSA Conclave at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston. Garvin received the “Golden Flashdrive”

for his achievement in creating editions of music that are freely available at [https://imslp.org/wiki/Category:Garvin,\\_Allen](https://imslp.org/wiki/Category:Garvin,_Allen).

A computer programmer by profession, Garvin first played recorder before taking up the viol. Many of his pieces, largely from the Renaissance, are playable on recorders or viols. ❁

More about Allen Garvin in Ashley Mulcahy's interview with him:

[www.earlymusicamerica.org/emag-feature/art-of-the-amateur-a-computer-programmer-uploads-a-lifetime-of-renaissance-music](http://www.earlymusicamerica.org/emag-feature/art-of-the-amateur-a-computer-programmer-uploads-a-lifetime-of-renaissance-music)

### An anniversary and an award

- Port Townsend Early Music Workshop, held biennially, celebrated its 40th anniversary year during its July 2023 event. ❁
- Teachers/music publishers Greenblatt & Seay were honored in October 2023 by the Nebraska Arts Council. The husband-and-wife folk music duo—Deborah Greenblatt, bowed strings and recorder, and David Seay, banjo plus a dozen more instruments—was awarded the Heritage Award. The biennial award is given to an individual, group or organization that exemplifies excellence within a cultural tradition. ❁

Port Townsend Early Music Workshop:

[www.seattle-recorder.org/pt-workshop-2023](http://www.seattle-recorder.org/pt-workshop-2023)

Greenblatt & Seay:

[www.greenblattandseay.com](http://www.greenblattandseay.com);  
[www.artscouncil.nebraska.gov/2023-nebraska-state-arts-awards](http://www.artscouncil.nebraska.gov/2023-nebraska-state-arts-awards)

## LIFEM announces recorder contest finalists

Three finalists played in the biennial recorder competition organized by the UK's Society of Recorder Players (SRP) with Moeck and the London International Festival of Early Music (LIFEM), held November 8-11.

Results were not known at press time.

The finalists were Jiyeon Bang from South Korea, and Nura Natour and Mathis Wolfer from Germany.

The purpose of the competition is to encourage young recorder players of talent, and to help them in their professional aspirations. Besides cash prizes donated by Moeck and the SRP, first prize is a recital at LIFEM in the year following the competition. ❁

London International Festival of

Music: <https://lifem.org>

Jiyeon Bang: <https://lifem.org/pages/finalist-jiyeon-bang>

Nura Natour: <https://lifem.org/pages/finalist-nura-natour>

Mathis Wolfer: <https://lifem.org/pages/finalist-mathis-wolfer>

AND FINALLY:

MORE CONGRATULATIONS

## S'Cool Sounds group wins at Kenya National Music Festival

In August, 65 students and 10 teachers traveled to Dedan Kimathi University for the 95th Kenya National Music Festival. The young musicians and their teachers were from two Crossing Thresholds schools in Kibera, a low income neighborhood in Nairobi, Kenya.

First established in 2010, the S'Cool Sounds (SCS) project to teach music in Kenya is now in residence in three primary/middle schools in the Kibera neighborhood: FAFU (Facing the Future School), MOBJAP School (Garden of Hope), and The Center of Hope School. The New York nonprofit also teaches in New York City public

schools (including in historic Harlem) and provides online music curriculum materials. The SCS founder is Nina Stern, 2023 ARS Distinguished Achievement Award recipient.

An annual event under the Ministry of Education, the Kenyan festival encourages artistic talents in music, dance and elocution. To qualify, students aged 12-16 from the FAFU and MOBJAP schools first had to advance

through county and regional rounds.

This entailed everyday training with S'Cool Sounds Kenyan teaching artists, with rehearsals taking place after school and on weekend afternoons.

After arranging and transcribing music, and creating practice recordings, the intense rehearsal process culminated in dress rehearsals performed for each school before going to the festival. Contending with unpredict-



- ▲
- 1: Erickson Maboko (left) and Jacob Saya hold the MOBJAP school's first prize trophy and a certificate, earned by their recorder students in August.
  - 2: The MOBJAP students bow to the judges at the end of their contest performance. The Kenyan recorder group is sponsored by S'Cool Sounds.

able power outages and noisy environments, the students and teaching artists rose to the challenge to qualify to play at the national competition.

When the scores were tallied, the FAFU group ranked sixth nationally among African-Western instrument ensembles. In the recorder ensemble category, the FAFU group came in third, and MOBJAP musicians took home first prize.

The MOBJAP students were conducted by Erickson Maboko, who is an alumnus of the FAFU school and the S’Cool Sounds music program. Erickson was a member of the first FAFU ensemble to win first prize, at the 2016 national festival. He has now led the next generation of students to victory with his skillful and committed direction.

When asked about the overall experience, S’Cool Sounds Kenyan Music Director Jacob Saya remarked,

“

Instead of picking a weapon, the children pick a musical instrument.

“The children get a chance to get out of Kibera to experience the other world. It is invaluable, rejuvenating and exhilarating. Going out fused with winning disrupts the status quo that people from Kibera are limited. It has triggered behavior change for the better... Instead of picking a weapon, the children pick a musical instrument.” ❁

[www.scoolsounds.org/news/scsct-students-win-first-prize-at-kenya-national-music-festival](http://www.scoolsounds.org/news/scsct-students-win-first-prize-at-kenya-national-music-festival)

YouTube video of MOBJAP performance: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwgUXNbBOZo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwgUXNbBOZo)

Kenya Music Festival:

[www.kenyanews.go.ke/president-hosts-95th-kenya-music-festivals-winners](http://www.kenyanews.go.ke/president-hosts-95th-kenya-music-festivals-winners)

“The Recorder Takes a Stand: Music Connects Students in U.S. and Kenya,” AR November 2010: <https://americanrecorder.org/docs/ARnov10body.pdf>

CONCERT PRICING

**SFEMS offers “pay-what-you-can” tickets**

The San Francisco (CA) Early Music Society (SFEMS) has set up a “pay-what-you-can” ticket model for its 2023-24 concert season, making it the largest classical arts organization in the Bay Area to join this effort to build a new community of concertgoers.

SFEMS executive director Derek Tam describes this as a “major step forward in eliminating income as a



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STTB (optional voices) Motet LMP0214

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barrier to enjoy world-class live performances.” As performing arts organizations continue to grapple with lingering revenue issues from the pandemic, as well as issues of equity in the arts, SFEMS has recognized the diversity of the Bay Area early music community. Lack of income can be a major barrier to enjoyment of live performance. Tam commented. “We are hoping that this new model will help break the perception of the enjoyment of classical and early music as an ‘elite’ entertainment.”

The organization’s 47th concert season includes seven concerts across the Bay Area, plus the biennial Berkeley Festival and Exhibition of early music, set for June 9-16, 2024. Recorder-related series events include:

- January 12-14, 2024: Musica Pacifica (Judith Linsenberg, recorders)
- March 22-24, 2024 Ciaramella (Adam Gilbert and Rotem Gilbert, recorders and early winds) ✨

[www.sfems.org/pay-what-you-can](http://www.sfems.org/pay-what-you-can)  
[www.sfems.org/berkeley-festival](http://www.sfems.org/berkeley-festival)

BACK IN CIRCULATION

### Well-Tempered Woodwinds

*Well-Tempered Woodwinds* by Geoffrey Burgess has been out-of-print for some time. The acclaimed biography of recorder builder Friedrich von Huene (1928–2016) and cultural history of the early music movement in America, which was excerpted in *AR*, is soon to be released in a paperback edition on Amazon. ✨

“Why Recorders?,” taken from *Well-Tempered Woodwinds*, *AR* Fall 2014:  
<https://americanrecorder.org/docs/ARFall14body.pdf>

A brief excerpt from Geoffrey Burgess’s book-related presentation during the 2015 Boston (MA) Early Music Festival (with music clips):  
[https://americanrecorder.org/docs/von\\_Huene\\_ARS\\_FIN.pdf](https://americanrecorder.org/docs/von_Huene_ARS_FIN.pdf)



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Silke "Katze" and Jo Kunath are certainly among the people who can rightly be called "recorder enthusiasts." Over the last 40 years they have built up the "recorder paradise" in Europe with the Kunath

group—the workshops Kunath, FEHR, Paetzold by Kunath; the store <https://blockfloetenshop.de>; a radio station; online forum on the recorder; and organization of Europe's largest recorder festival (Blockfloetenfesttage).

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## ARS Board of Directors honors Adriana Breukink

On October 8, during its fall Board meeting, the ARS Board of Directors voted to recognize the late recorder maker Adriana Breukink:

- Whereas: Adriana “Adri” Breukink (1957-2022) was a visionary recorder maker who served and loved the recorder community, and
- Whereas: she produced the “Dream” Recorder series, the Eagle-Ganassi, the Eagle Recorder and the Sub-contra Bass Recorder in B flat “Big Babe,” and

- Whereas: she pursued development of the recorder throughout her life with dedication, hard work, and genius that perhaps produced the most important improvements to the recorder since Baroque times, and
- Whereas: the American Recorder Society, Inc. wishes to honor and recognize her life-long and valued service as a recorder maker

Be it therefore resolved on this eighth day of October 2023, the Board of Directors of the American Recorder Society, Inc., expresses its gratitude and appreciation to Adriana Breukink. ❁

## ARS 2022-23 Fiscal Year Income and Expense

The ARS has examined its financial results for the fiscal year that ended on August 31. The pie charts accompanying this article present a positive picture of ARS financial income and expenses.

Membership dues and your donations continued to be our main sources of income, accounting for the lion’s share of the revenue. Another source of revenue—“program revenue,” in the pie chart of income—also contributed to income: money from the sale of ads in the *American Recorder* magazine, subscriptions to



▲  
**Adriana Breukink and Big Babe.** Photo by Aad Mosch, 1997, Enschede (NL) cemetery.  
 Memories of Adriana Breukink: [American Recorder Winter 2022](#).

the magazine such as from libraries, and sales of music and other items that the ARS offers in its online store.

Finally, income was earned from investments that have been made when a fund is established in someone’s memory by family and friends. That income—“investment fund releases” in the pie chart—is typically used for a specific purpose, such as scholarships or recorder music publication. Altogether, these sources produced an income of \$215,958, as shown in the pie chart of ARS income.

The ARS spent this income on programs that benefit members and potential members. The largest share of expenses went for production of *AR*, as well as programs launched since the pandemic. For instance, the Play-the-Recorder Month video featuring a multi-tracked performance of the Play-the-Recorder Month special music, used in the Recorder Day webinar, was established during the pandemic and continues into present day.

Other programs in the pie chart make up the second-largest category of expenditures. An example of this type of program is offering virtual recorder classes for beginners. People taking these classes often become ARS members as they start to learn to play the recorder.

Administration is a relatively small piece of the expense pie, as are membership and fundraising expenses.

The ARS submits its financial results to an organization called Candid, a source of factual information on private foundations and philanthropy in the U.S. For the prior fiscal year (FY2021-22), the ARS received Candid’s Gold Star rating. We plan to submit this fiscal year’s results soon.

Although not by as much as in the past, income exceeded expenses, giving us reserves to be put away for special projects and needs that arise. ❁

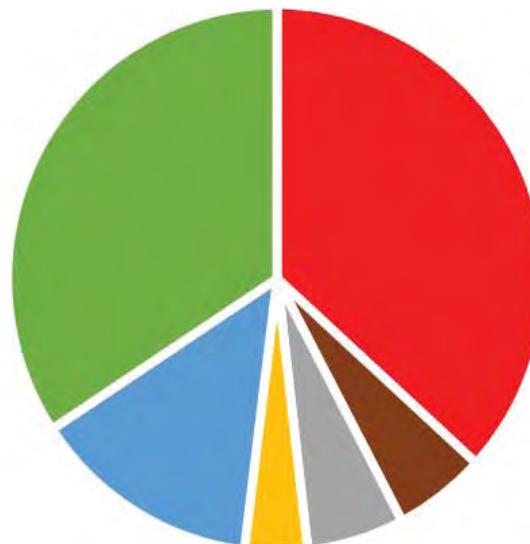
Carol Mishler, ARS President

**ARS Fiscal Year 2022-23 Income: Total approximately \$215,958.44**



- PROGRAM REVENUE (Ads/Subscriptions/Sales) 12%**
- DONATIONS 36%**
- MEMBERSHIP DUES 46%**
- INVESTMENT FUND RELEASES 6%**

**ARS Fiscal Year 2022-23 Expenses: Total approximately \$202,269.60**



- PROGRAM: American Recorder, publications, video 37%**
- PROGRAM: Scholarships & grants 6%**
- MEMBERSHIP & FUNDRAISING 6%**
- PROGRAM: Website, events 4%**
- ADMINISTRATION 13%**
- PROGRAM: Other 34%**

## HISTORY AND PERFORMANCE

# CELESTIAL INSTRUMENTS: MUSIC OF HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

BY BEVERLY R. LOMER AND SIAN RICKETTS

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**BEVERLY R. LOMER, Ph.D.**, is an independent scholar and recorder player whose special

interests include performance from original notations and early women's music.

She is currently collaborating on the transcription of the *Symphonia* of Hildegard of Bingen for the International Society of Hildegard von Bingen Studies.

Previously, she taught Women's and Gender Studies and Music and Gender courses at Florida Atlantic University. She teaches recorder and plays with several local ensembles in Florida.

Besides reviewing music and books for *American Recorder*, she occasionally writes features like this one. See her popular article on madrigals in [AR Fall 2018](#) and her extensive article on articulation in [AR Fall 2020](#). Her article on notation in the *Ars subtilior* in [AR Spring 2022](#) demystified the exquisite music of the late 14th and early 15th centuries.



**SIAN RICKETTS** is a co-founder and co-managing director of the Medieval ensemble

Alkemie, [www.alkemie.org](http://www.alkemie.org).

In her multi-faceted career as a singer and period woodwinds specialist, she has performed Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque chamber music and orchestral repertoire with ensembles such as Trobar, Bach Collegium Fort Wayne (IN), Apollo's Fire, Dallas Bach Society, Piffaro, Forgotten Clefs and Labyrinth Baroque. She is also a co-founder of the nascent group Freelance Nun, which creates new works that transcend boundaries of genre and time period.

A Visiting Medieval Fellow from 2019-20 at Fordham University, she is co-director with Tracy Cowart of Fordham University's collegium.

She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in historical performance practice from Case Western Reserve University with concentrations in voice and Baroque oboe.

This collaborative article is an introduction to the style of the compositions found in Hildegard of Bingen's *Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum* (*Symphony of the Harmony of Celestial Revelations*), with some guidelines and pathways for successfully interpreting her songs on recorder.

BEVERLY IS INSPIRED TO TRY HILDEGARD'S MUSIC ON RECORDER

The idea of playing these 12th-century chants on recorder first came to me for serious consideration when I received a sound file from Australian ethnomusicologist Riley Lee. Using editions of the *Symphonia* songs that Latin scholar Nathaniel Campbell and I have edited for the website of the International Society of Hildegard von Bingen Studies, Lee played several pieces on the shakuhachi, a traditional Japanese bamboo flute.

Lee was curious to know what I thought about the result. The effect was stunning. In spite of the absence

of words, the flute articulated the melodies in a way that just “fit.”

I had been researching, transcribing and writing about Hildegard’s *Symphonia* songs for quite some time, but I had given only passing attention to playing them on recorder. That changed with the onset of the pandemic. This was in many ways a transformative period; being alone, many of us took a new interest in solo music.

It was in this context that I began to experiment with her music on recorder. The fortunate arrival of Lee’s recording gave a new impetus to that effort.

The close relationship between text and music is a distinctive feature of Hildegard’s songs—one that has shaped a great deal of my own work. Yet the melodies are also beautiful, ethereal, complex and compelling in their own right. Playing them on a wind instrument like the recorder, in which the music is created by the breath, resonates with the significance Hildegard assigns to the breath/wind as an animating force of the natural world. This idea is eloquently expressed in the title of Lee’s now-completed album of 35 of her songs on shakuhachi, *Breath of the Earth*.

As serendipity would have it, I learned that the 2022 Amherst Early Music Festival was offering a class on the instrumental performance of Hildegard’s chants, led by Sian Ricketts and Tracy Cowart. The class coincidentally also used the Society’s transcriptions.

SIAN RECOUNTS THE APPEAL OF THE MUSIC OF HILDEGARD Tracy Cowart (who gave input on this article) and I had been interested in interpreting Hildegard’s music instrumentally since 2019, when we began planning a concert of Hildegard’s music with our ensemble Alkemie plus vielle player Shira Kammen. This resulted in concerts in 2021 and 2022.

Simultaneously, Alkemie was composing and recording music for the

historically-informed video game *Pentiment*, which contains both instrumental and vocal renditions of several of Hildegard’s songs. Tracy and I also led semester-long workshops focused on Hildegard’s music at Fordham University in New York.

Our 2022 Amherst class represented the culmination of several years of exploration of performing Hildegard’s music with strings, winds and voices.

### Beverly gives us background on Hildegard and her music

Hildegard of Bingen, who was canonized as a saint and declared a Doctor of the Church in 2010, was an extraordinary figure in the 12th century and remains so today. As a visionary, she gained the right to public speech and writing that was otherwise denied to women in her time.

She was born in 1098 in Bermersheim near Mainz, in what is now Germany, the 10th child of noble parents. From childhood she displayed an unusual spiritual sensitivity and a physical frailty that might have made her an unlikely candidate for marriage. This could have been the reason that she was given to the religious life at the age of eight.

She was consigned to the care of Jutta of Spanheim, a learned holy woman who had entered into an unvowed religious life at the home in Spanheim of a devout widow, Lady Uda. It is likely that Jutta remained with Lady Uda after taking charge of Hildegard, as there were as yet no provisions for an anchorhold at the monastery of St. Disibodenberg.

Some years later, on November 1, 1112, Hildegard and Jutta entered the anchorhold at St. Disibodenberg and at the same time professed their vows as Benedictines. As anchoresses, they were committed to a solitary life in a simple dwelling attached to the monastery, with only a small window positioned to hear Mass, make confession and take communion.



◀ Hildegard of Bingen speaks with her confessor Volmar through a window.

Image from

[www.hildegard-society.org](http://www.hildegard-society.org)

“

In 1141 Hildegard heard the voice of God commanding her to write down all that she had seen and heard.

During the consecration of an anchoress, the Rites of the Dead would have been read, as she would from then on be “dead” to the world.

Over time, other young women were admitted to join them in the anchorhold. Eventually they were released to form a small female community within the monastery.

Under Jutta’s direction, Hildegard learned the basics of Latin and to play the 10-stringed psalter. The extent of her knowledge is not fully known. Hildegard would claim throughout her life that she was unlearned, an ignorant woman. However, given her vast accomplishments as a writer and composer, this declaration is better understood as a protective screen in an era that largely denied women the right to public speech. She only confided her continuing visions to Jutta and to Volmar, her confessor.

After Jutta’s death, Hildegard was elected *magistra* of the female community. In 1141 Hildegard heard the voice of God commanding her to write down all that she had seen and heard. As this was a generally prohib-



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ited activity for women, an ecclesiastical commission investigated the legitimacy of her visions. It was concluded that they were authentic; she was then free to write and to compose.

Hildegard was able to transcend the prohibitions against female authors/composers through the visionary path. As Hildegard's fame as a mystic and theologian spread, pilgrims sought her counsel at Disibodenberg, and new entrants were attracted to the community. In 1148, after a struggle for control with the monks of St. Disibod, Hildegard moved her community to Rupertsberg, where they enjoyed more independence and less scrutiny from male authority. The community continued to grow; in 1165 a daughter house was established at Eibingen.

During her long life (she died in 1179), Hildegard wrote three books of theology: *Scivias* (*Know the Ways of the Lord*), *Liber vitae meritorum* (*Book of the Merits of Life*) and *Liber divinorum operum* (*Book of Divine Works*). The books described her visions and articulated her own theological world view. She engaged in extensive correspondence (preserved) with prominent secular and church leaders as well as with a variety of others. She also wrote two books of medicine, *Causae et curae* (*Causes and Cures* or *Book of Compound Medicine*) and the *Physica* (*Book of Simple Medicine*). Toward the end of her life she undertook a most unusual endeavor for a woman—a series of preaching journeys.

Hildegard's musical output consists of two large works: the song cycle, *Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum* (*Symphony of the Harmony of Celestial Revelations*); and the first musical morality play, *Ordo virtutum* (*Play of the Virtues*). While both are fascinating, this article will focus on the *Symphonia*, as it better represents the diversity of her musical style.



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## Manuscript sources for the Symphonia

The 77 songs and their original Latin texts of the *Symphonia* are preserved in two primary sources: *Dendermonde* (Belgium, province of Eastern Flanders, St.-Pieters-&-Paulusabij, Codex 9) and the *Riesencodex* (Wiesbaden, Hessische Landesbibliothek, Hs.2), as well as in several secondary ones. The *Dendermonde* manuscript was prepared in the Rupertsberg scriptorium, most likely under Hildegard's direct supervision, and contains 57 songs. The *Riesencodex* records 75 songs as well as a lone *Kyrie* (Hildegard's only composition for the Mass).

The genres include antiphons, responsories, hymns and sequences. They are dedicated to a hierarchy of celestial figures, in order of importance:

- Father and Son
- Mother and Son
- The Holy Spirit
- The Celestial Hierarchy (patriarchs, prophets and others)
- Patron Saints, Virgins, Widows and Innocents
- Saint Ursula and Companions and Ecclesia (the body of the faithful, including her own nuns).

The sections appear in this hierarchical order in *Dendermonde*. Because the songs to Mary were unconventionally positioned between those to the Father and those to the Holy Spirit, the ordering was changed in the *Riesencodex*—possibly with a view to Hildegard's potential canonization, a process initiated during the Medieval era but only completed in modern times.

The melodies are notated on a four line staff, on which a yellow line indicates the pitch C, and a red line represents the F below (as shown in example 1 on page 16). The style of neumatic notation falls chronologically between earlier, northern Sankt Gallen and the Gothic (Hufnagelschrift) commonly used in later Medieval Germany.

The notation consists of multiple

types of neumes (the primary element of Medieval musical notation). These can be very broadly categorized as: single; ligated (tied and sung on one breath); liquescent (sometimes interpreted as a kind of grace note); and ornamental. (Sian will explain more about how to play these figures later in this article, starting on page 20.)

Neumes and words run continuously in Hildegard's music. There are no titles and no punctuation of either poetry or music. Capital letters delineate the beginning of each song. In those with verses, large letters also signal the start of each new section (for instance, the large red letters A and O in example 1). Also, as is typical of neumatic notation, there are no indications as to how long notes are to be held.

Flats never appear at the beginning of a piece or line. B<sup>b</sup> is indicated selectively within individual songs, primarily in those that employ A and C as finals (see more on that below).

The sources are mostly consistent, but some differences appear (in a few cases, substantial). Most are minor, such as the signing of B<sup>b</sup>, pitch disparities, and individualistic use of compound, liquescent or ornamental neumes.

## Transcriptions and performance scores

The transcriptions used in this article appear on the website of the International Society of Hildegard von Bingen Studies. They are part of an open scholarship program, available for free download, and also include sound files. These transcriptions aim to replicate the originals as closely as possible. Flats are indicated only where they appear in the manuscripts. All differences between the sources are identified by notes above the staff and/or by *ossia* staves (small staves showing alternative phrases).

The only area in which editing is applied is phrasing. In general, each



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“

Each line of the modern edition represents a musical phrase.

line of the modern edition represents a musical phrase. Some long phrases have been extended to a second line with a tick bar line at the end.

In addition to the transcriptions, the Society's website includes transcription notes and translations of the texts with commentary by Latin scholar Nathaniel M. Campbell.

Because the Society's transcriptions do not include edits other than phrasing that would be important to playing the music on recorder, performance scores were made for this article, including a three-part version created by Sian as example 5.

Transcription of early music notations into the modern system requires interpretation, as the two do not neatly align. Readers who play recorder from original notation know this quite well. The section below gives a brief overview of Hildegard's musical style, to provide better understanding of her songs—outlining issues that might arise, whether playing from facsimiles of the originals, the Society's "raw" editions, or those of other editors who have made their own interpretive decisions.

### Hildegard and music

Though nowhere specifically articulated in its entirety, Hildegard's philosophy of music can be discerned from commentary interspersed throughout her writings. Music is described as the fundamental force that orders the cosmos, unifies the body and the soul, and is mankind's ultimate means of communication with the divine. The angels possess the most perfect of singing voices, which are portrayed in *The Book of Divine Works* as brighter than all the splendor of the universe

and which encompass all of the harmonies of the cosmos. This goes back before the Fall (which is described in the Bible); Hildegard considered that Adam also had a heavenly voice and knew all kinds of music.

Because Hildegard regarded the soul as itself symphonic, she considered music to be the means through which humans are able to recall the celestial harmony and perfection of paradise and to strive toward it. Earthly subjects are called to praise God—not only with their voices, but also with the sound of instruments. Hildegard expressed her ideas in a letter to the prelates at Mainz: it is "through the form and quality of the instruments, as well as through the meaning of the words which accompany them, [that] those who hear might be taught ... about inward things ...[to] recall to mind that divine melody of praise which Adam, in company with the angels, enjoyed in God before his fall."

Though there is no record of instrumental performance of the *Symphonia* songs, Hildegard's comments about the importance of instruments in delivering divine praise—and the fact that she, and most likely others of her nuns, played the 10-stringed psaltery—raises the possibility that they might have accompanied the music on whatever instruments were available to them. We know that the poetic texts of some works appear without their music in *Scivias* and other sources. So it is not inconceivable that the music might have been performed independently of the texts, as well.

Latin scholar Campbell writes more about the significance of her music:

*Hildegard's musical corpus can be understood as a summary of her whole body of visionary writings.*

*With the symbolic density of her poetic language set to music that she understood as reflecting the sounds of heaven, her Symphony of the Harmony of Celestial Revelations crystal-*

“

Hildegard regarded the soul as itself symphonic.

*lizes the ideas and themes of her work.*

*Her first book, Scivias, sets the model for this. Its final vision is, in fact, musical: she hears the symphony of heaven as it shall be in eternity, after the end of the world. Each of the songs that Hildegard composed for the Scivias symphony draws together images and ideas from the rest of the book, to offer to Hildegard's readers (first and foremost, the nuns of her community) a reprise of its central message.*

*In Scivias, that means the songs summarize the role of each rank of heaven (the Virgin Mary, the angels, the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, and Hildegard's own virgins) in the history of salvation.*

*Beyond the Scivias songs [in the Symphonia], Hildegard's numerous compositions devoted to the Virgin Mary highlight the central place that Hildegard saw for her in bringing salvation into the world through the "golden material" of her womb. Songs for the Church use similar language to show that the Church continues Mary's role in bearing the light of Christ.*

*Pieces devoted to God the Father and God the Son often highlight Hildegard's views on God's "eternal plan" to become a human being, a move into time that God had always intended from before time. Compositions for the Holy Spirit, meanwhile, emphasize the Spirit's life-giving role in creation, including Hildegard's concept of viriditas, "viridity"—the greenness that is the hallmark of fertile life.*

*Her various works for saints and virgins, finally, offer to her nuns role models in how to live the life of holy virtue.*

## Musical style of chant

Since its rediscovery, Hildegard's music has regularly been described by scholars, performers and others as decidedly unique. Its ornate, elaborate configurations are a wholly innovative departure from the restrained paradigm of traditional plainchant.

The plain style of chant that was established in the ninth century—which British musicologist David Hiley refers to as the Gregorian standard—was derived from the ecclesiastical prohibitions against musical excess. The function of the music in this model was to deliver the texts without distraction: melodies moved primarily by step or small interval, and generally remained within the boundaries of an octave (or less) or sometimes a tenth. Text settings were syllabic (one note to a syllable of text) or neumatic (several notes to a syllable of text); lengthy melismas (extended series of notes setting one syllable of text) were rare. The relationship between melody and words was grammatical rather than rhetorical—the music was not designed to emphasize the messages encoded in the texts, but rather aligned only with their grammatical structures.

In the 11th century, a new and more elaborate style of chant emerged that pushed the restrained boundaries of the Gregorian model. These chants, exemplified by the works of German composer Hermannus Contractus, include some of the ornate figurations that Hildegard employed. It is not known whether Hildegard was aware of this type of chant—but if she were, it would not have been unusual for her (or any composer) to adopt to her own compositional process the features of music she knew—and to creatively elaborate on them as well.

An overview of the 77 songs that make up the *Symphonia* reveals a diversity of formats in which some adhere more closely to the traditional plainchant protocols, while others

employ a mixture of plain and ornate styles; several are highly elaborate. As far as the question of Hildegard's originality is concerned, two distinctive features stand out.

The Latin texts are her own, and they are characterized by vivid, exuberant imagery. They are constructed so as to express selected aspects of her theological and cosmological worldviews, thus functioning as smaller musical analogues of her visionary experience.

Second, the relationship between melody and text is both grammatical and rhetorical. By rhetorical it is meant that the presence of the signature ornate gestures that are characteristic of Hildegard's works—expanded ranges, large intervallic leaps, lengthy and ornate melismas—are not random constructions, but are strategically positioned. The musical architecture is designed not to deliver the words without distraction, but rather to specifically interact with the texts to highlight and emphasize the messages contained within them.

So what does that mean for recorder performance? The Medieval theorists writing about instrumental performance of vocal music regularly advised that the sense of the words must prevail. Though instruments cannot directly convey the ideas embodied in language, they can come close, through expressive techniques.

The relationship between melody and texts in Hildegard's works actually makes bringing out those ideas on a recorder somewhat easier. The important images, words and themes are already underscored by the musical structure.

## Modes: patterns of pitches

Hildegard's monophonic chants are modal. While modes are often described today as loosely analogous in modern music to key signatures (without sharps or flats) or as scale forms, they were not understood that way in the Medieval period.

Each mode is associated with and organized around a specific pitch (known as the final) and is characterized by a particular arrangement of whole and half steps that give it a unique sound. There were four accepted modes, built on the finals D, E, F and G.

Each mode also has a plagal form, which extends to a fourth below the final (A below the final D, B below E, C below F, D below G). The final and the note a fifth above (the co-final) acted as musical punctuation in accordance with the grammatical organization of the text. As advised by the treatise writers of the time, the co-final functioned as a comma would in language, while the final acted as a period.

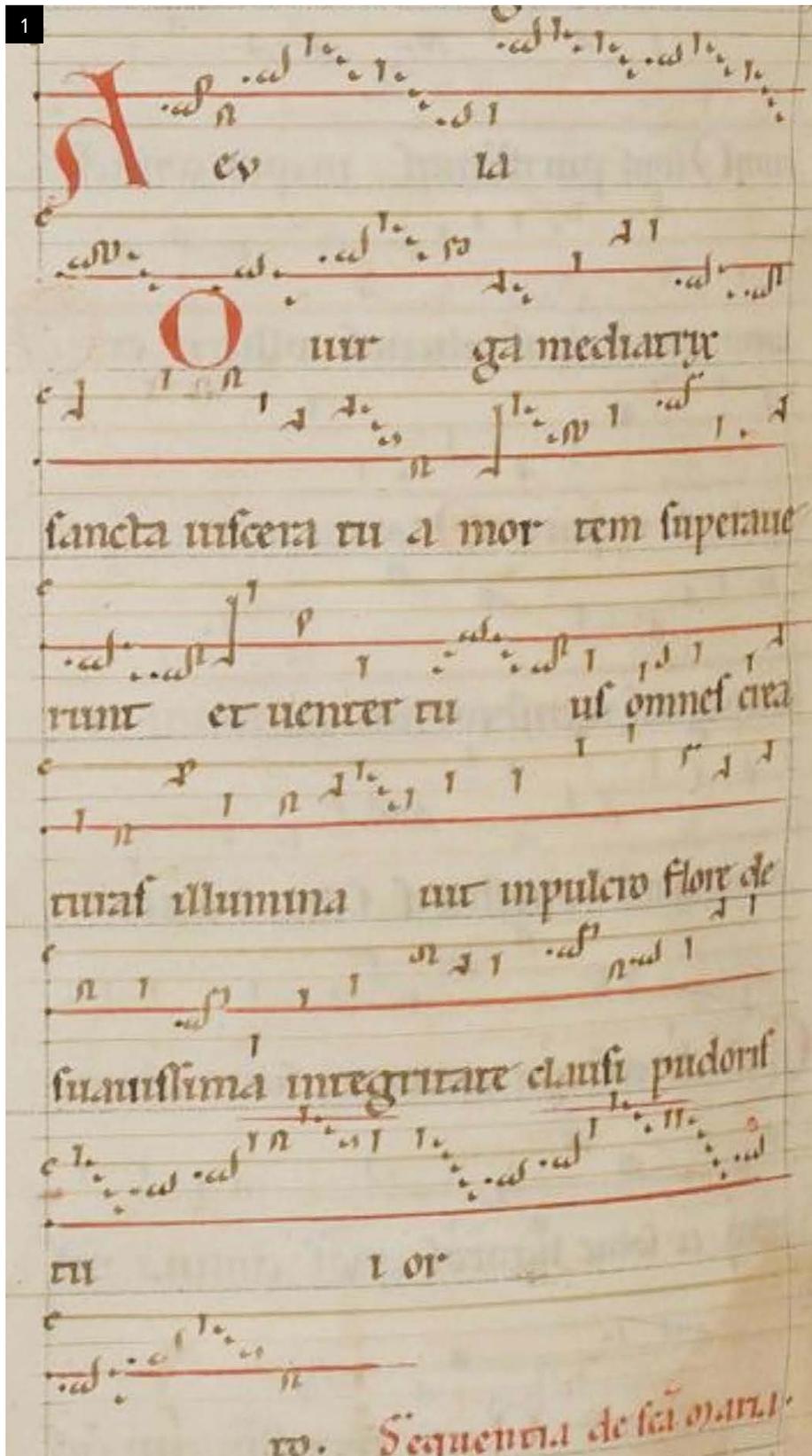
Hildegard's music generally adheres to the standard modal format, but there are differences. While most of the *Symphonia* songs are composed in the regular modes, a substantial number employ C and A as finals. Though these tones also acted as finals in the larger chant repertory, they were not accepted as official modes; instead, they were indicators that the chant had been transposed.

One of the signifiers of a transposed mode is the presence of B<sup>b</sup>, which would have been necessary to preserve the whole and half step pattern of the original. Hildegard's C and A songs, however, do not use the B<sup>b</sup> consistently, which complicates things.

It was common not to notate flats in all locations where they would be required. Singers in that era knew the circumstances that called for B<sup>b</sup> or B<sup>♮</sup>. However, Hildegard's idiosyncratic treatment of the B<sup>b</sup> goes a bit further and thus presents some real questions for an advanced modern performer.

## Musical structure and text

The *Symphonia* songs share certain organizational frameworks. All of the pieces are addressed to a celestial *persona* who is praised and sometimes petitioned. They begin with a salu-



▲  
**1: O virga mediatrix, in facsimile.** Medieval melodies are notated on a four line staff, on which a yellow line indicates the pitch C, and a red line represents the F below. This piece is also included in this issue in modern transcription as example 2, and in a three-part version for C recorders as example 5.

tation, which is outlined by the final of the mode. It also serves as the first phrase and the title (in examples 1 and 2, *O virga mediatrix*). Somewhat atypically, in this song, *Alleluia* acts as a sort of prelude or extended salutation.

A narration follows. In the more elaborate works, a conclusion is composed of a long melisma, which repeats the previously stated, significant musical material. In this way the music recalls and reinforces those key themes and images for the audience one final time.

The subtleties of musical messaging of this type might not be immediately apparent to the modern audience. In that era, when primarily oral culture still persisted, Hildegard's nuns would have been finely attuned to the nuances.

Three types of text settings appear in the *Symphonia*: syllabic, neumatic and melismatic. There is considerable diversity in the ways that Hildegard uses text settings. While some works are composed in a primarily syllabic or syllabic/neumatic format, others are floridly melismatic (as in the last text of *O virga mediatrix*, the words *tui orto*). Many of the songs contain more than one type of text setting, and the shifts from one to another follow the sense of the words. Ideas or themes that are of lesser importance often receive simpler treatment.

It is typical to find that the style moves from restrained to elaborate as the narration approaches or arrives at the song's most significant theme. Progression to the main ideas or important words is regularly accompanied by an ascent to the highest register, with the key word or image attaining the uppermost pitch. These ascents sometimes progress stepwise, and at others they are accomplished by a sequence of leaps, such as a fifth followed by the fourth to reach the octave.

The ranges of the *Symphonia* melodies extend from one octave to two and a half octaves. Though the proper range for chants, as defined by the

2

Al - le - lu - ia

O - vir - ga -

me - di - a - trix.

sanc - ta vis - ce - ra - tu - a

mor - tem su - pe - ra - ve - runt

et ven - ter tu - us om - nes cre - a - tu - ras

il - lu - mi - na - vit

in pul - chro flo - re de - sua - vis - si - ma in - te - gri - ta - te

clau - si - pu - do - ris tu -

or - lo

▲ 2: *O virga mediatrix, R473a*. Composed by Hildegard of Bingen, transcribed by Beverly R. Lomer and Sian Ricketts. Two versions of example 2 are played by Sian Ricketts at [www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag](http://www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag): for solo recorder; and a second version adding an improvised countermelody, using the ideas described on page 25 (starting/ending each phrase on an interval that is consonant to the melody, moving through both consonant and non-consonant intervals).

theorists, was between an octave (or less) and a 10th, 10 of the *Symphonia* songs remain within the octave, and 30 extend to a 10th or 11th. Extensions to a 12th or 13th occur in 24 pieces, 10 reach a 14th or 15th, and one extends to two and a half octaves.

### Repeated melodic motives and phrasing when playing

One of the most distinctive features of Hildegard's musical style is the way in which she deploys repeated melodic motives. In 1922, German scholar Ludwig Bronarski categorized these motives by mode and pronounced them to be artless centonization (random repetition of melodic fragments). Bronarski's assessment, however, was based only on a study of the musical architecture. When the placement of repeated melodies is examined in relation to the text, it is frequently found that they are specifically positioned to link images, words or ideas.

Because phrases are not specified by either musical or textual punctuation in the sources, editors and performers must make their own interpretations. In general, several patterns are useful in determining how to phrase the *Symphonia* songs.

The primary method is her use of specific pitches to demarcate phrases. This is not always straightforward, however; two other clues are also useful.

Phrases frequently begin with an upward leap of a fifth and/or successive repetition of selected melodic motives. Most often, phrases begin and end with the final of the mode. The co-final or other secondary tone regularly serves this function as well. Phrases might open and close with the co-final, or it might work together with the final: one pitch would begin the phrase, and the other finish it.

These options are fairly straightforward, but Hildegard is anything but consistent—and she makes frequent excursions into other tonal centers. It

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Several patterns are useful in determining how to phrase the *Symphonia* songs.

is in these cases that the relationship between text and melody becomes complicated and must be examined as part of the interpretive process.

Word order in Latin is not fixed, and therefore does not in itself produce meaning as it does in English and other languages. In Hildegard's songs, two ideas operate simultaneously.

On one hand, the poetry has its own rhythms and can be phrased accordingly (as when it stands alone). At times text segments or words clearly belong together, and so the musical punctuation sometimes has to defer to that.

Alternatively, when the melodic strategy is clear, the musical punctuation takes precedence over words. Thus there are many cases in which phrasing decisions require a negotiation between melody and words; more than one interpretation might be possible. Each piece has its own idiosyncrasies—which makes for fascinating music, but a challenge for performance.

The first line of *O mirum admirandum* (example 3, an antiphon for St. Disibod) illustrates the typical rendering of the salutation. Lines 4 and 5 show the combined use of the primary (E) and secondary (A) modal tones.

Lines 2 and 3, however, demonstrate the complexities in phrasing when Hildegard veers into other tonal territory. The setting of *quod* (“that”) on the note D might be considered a connector and not a grammatical marker.

In that case, one solution would be to create one long phrase, *absconsa forma precellit ardua* (“surpasses the steep places with its form hidden”), that would be punctuated by the final (here, an E). In this transcription the

decision was made to temporarily shift that section to D, so as to have the musical sections conform to the poetic division. This case is included to show that there is not always one clear path.

Hildegard gives us two other hints in determining phrases. One is the use of repeated melodic gestures to open phrases. Sometimes these happen in consecutive phrases, but not always. When one encounters an ambiguity, the presence of repeated motives might offer a solution.

An upward leap of a fifth, usually as a conjoined neume (written as a tie in modern notation), regularly serves as an indicator of a new phrase opening. This gesture is frequently repeated, which is also quite helpful. While downward leaps occur, they are not used to begin phrases. Example 4 (the text *mater sancte*) illustrates both of these features.

In Barbara Newman's acclaimed critical edition of the *Symphonia* texts, example 4 is identified as *O clarissima mater*, and most sources refer to it this way. It is a designation based on analysis of the text alone. Newman is not necessarily incorrect, as a number of the song texts did appear without their music in Hildegard's writings. Phrasing based on poetic rhythms makes sense in those instances.

The musical format, however, suggests something different. Placing *mater* as the final gesture of the opening statement not only creates a very long salutation, it is musically ungainly. *O* and *mater* share the same opening melodic fragment, a typical indicator of consecutive phrases.

In addition, beginning the second phrase with *sancte medicine* would be out of character for Hildegard. While the upward fifth is commonly used to open a phrase, downward leaps of a fifth are only employed internally.

Finally, we might interpret in this a very subtle statement of the independent agency that Hildegard assigns to

3

O mi - rum ad - mi - ran - dum  
 quod ab - scon - sa for - ma  
 pre - cel - lit ar - du - a  
 in ho - ne - sta sta - tu - ra  
 u - bi vi - vens al - ti - tu - do

The musical score for 'O mirum admirandum' consists of five staves of music in G-clef, 8/8 time. The melody is a single line with lyrics underneath. The notes are mostly quarter and eighth notes, with some slurs and ties. The lyrics are: O mi - rum ad - mi - ran - dum quod ab - scon - sa for - ma pre - cel - lit ar - du - a in ho - ne - sta sta - tu - ra u - bi vi - vens al - ti - tu - do.

4

O cla - ris - si - ma  
 ma - ter sanc - te me - di - ci - ne

The musical score for 'O clarissima mater' consists of two staves of music in G-clef, 8/8 time. The melody is a single line with lyrics underneath. The notes are mostly quarter and eighth notes, with some slurs and ties. The lyrics are: O cla - ris - si - ma ma - ter sanc - te me - di - ci - ne.

▲

**3:** Excerpt from an antiphon for Saint Disibod, *O mirum admirandum*. Transcribed by Beverly R. Lomer. The full transcription and translation can be accessed at [www.hildegard-society.org/2022/07/o-mirum-admirandum-antiphon.html](http://www.hildegard-society.org/2022/07/o-mirum-admirandum-antiphon.html).

**4:** Excerpt from a transcription of a piece often identified as *O clarissima mater*. Also transcribed by Beverly R. Lomer and found on the Hildegard Society web site at [www.hildegard-society.org/2014/09/o-clarissima-responsory.html](http://www.hildegard-society.org/2014/09/o-clarissima-responsory.html).

The full versions of these two musical examples can be heard, played by Sian Ricketts at [www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag](http://www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag). Follow along with the PDF editions mentioned above, from the web site of the Hildegard Society (also available on the ARS web site at <https://americanrecorder.org/extra>).

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Mary in the songs. To refer to her as "O most sacred mother, of sacred healing" is more conventional. To salute her as "O most brilliant (one), mother of sacred healing" arguably bestows upon her just a hint of status in her own right.

Hildegard's music is equal parts beautiful, compelling and complex. Its characteristic wide ranges, reaches to the uppermost register, frequent large leaps and ornate melismas are not only musically exciting but also serve an organizational and/or rhetorical goal. Understanding both the structures and the ways in which text and melody operate together is essential to interpretation and thus to successful performance.

This part of the article is a starting point for recorder players to use in approaching her songs. The next step, translating that knowledge into effective performance on recorder, is addressed by Sian. ❁

**Sian considers how to interpret Hildegard's music on the recorder**

**B**efore discussing the practicalities of approaching Hildegard's music on the recorder, we should explicitly outline the challenges that face any interpreter of early monophony. Upon first contact with even a beautiful modern transcription like Beverly's, one is likely to have numerous seemingly pressing questions, many of them already mentioned.

Although the editor has to make critical decisions about phrasing, text alignment and punctuation, the performer is faced with a cascade of other decisions to make.

- How long should individual notes be held, and how fast should the music proceed?
- What do slurs indicate, and how should you articulate non-slurred notes?
- What dynamics should be used?
- What ornaments, if any, are

appropriate?

- Should monophony be performed as a single soloist, or can it be accompanied—and, if so, how?
- Can unmeasured music be performed in a rhythmic manner?
- And finally: how do we make these decisions?

From a modern performer's perspective, these questions can feel overwhelming. Our musical education has trained us to assiduously follow a composer's many instructions, and to exalt their intention as paramount.

Medieval musicians, however, were expected to engage in a kind of asynchronous collaboration with the composer—a responsibility that, depending on one's disposition, knowledge and experience, can feel either daunting or liberating. The information here seeks to provide players of Hildegard's music with tools to help us find our own answers to these questions—ones that will yield different results for each of us.

Although we unfortunately don't have audio recordings that can definitively answer our questions, we do have many other resources that can help us understand Hildegard's music, as well as the ways in which we might execute it as recorder players.

Knowledge of Hildegard's musical and textual idioms forms a basis upon which we can build our scaffolding. Consultation of Medieval musical treatises and time spent with the recorder itself can further strengthen the bridge between us and the musicians of the Medieval period.

For the purposes of this article, I have depended greatly upon Timothy McGee's invaluable survey of extant Medieval performance practice treatises, *The Sound of Medieval Song*. He discusses and provides English translations of excerpts from dozens of treatises written in Western Europe between 600 and 1497. Although these works mainly focus on vocal

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Medieval writers made it clear that the practices they discuss apply to instrumentalists as well as to singers.

performance practice, Medieval writers made it clear that the practices they discussed apply to instrumentalists as well as to singers.

### How to play Hildegard's music on recorder using advice from the treatises

Let's familiarize ourselves a bit better with the score of Hildegard's antiphon, *O virga mediatrix* (example 1 in the original facsimile and example 2, a performance edition created for this article). Although the graphic symbols in our modern edition will most likely be recognizable to modern players, some of the ways that they are combined and used may be unfamiliar: they represent notation strategies that are quite different from our modern ones.

While 12th-century composers didn't use slurs, they did use symbols called ligated neumes to indicate which notes should be separately articulated and which notes should be connected. Jerome, writing in France around 1300, tells us that "...notes that are joined in notation shall be joined together in singing, but disjunct notes shall be separated. That separation is not a rest but a breath, and this is nothing other than the semblance of a pause or an entity the length of one instant [*instantia*]." Although Jerome's description of an "instant" still leaves quite a bit open to personal interpretation, we can securely proceed with the knowledge that we should slur notes that are slurred and tongue notes that are not.

Unstemmed notes with tenuto marks (like the note C in the word *Alleluia*

in example 2) can be interpreted in a similar way to tenuto marks in modern scores—although here length is contextual, not absolute. In the original notation, some single-note neumes are written as long vertical lines, and some as small, comma-like dots (both types are visible in the first line of example 1, following the large red A). While it is graphically clear that the notes with longer lines should receive values that are longer or otherwise be made more important than the notes represented with smaller dots, the difference in length between the longer and shorter notes is up to the discretion of the performer.

One further observation: although the edition for *O virga mediatrix* that accompanies this article contains notes both with and without tenutos, currently the Hildegard Society editions do not make this distinction, as these neumes are often interpreted as indicating range, and not quality. Performers wishing to know which single notes are longer or shorter will need to consult the appropriate facsimile.

The remainder of the symbols in this edition represent liquescent neumes—a category that McGee understands to include ornamental neumes. These include notes joined together with both glissandi and slurs, as well as slurred notes that appear smaller than the main melodic notes (both are visible in the first syllable of the word *Alleluia* in example 2). Also included are mordent symbols, which occur above two notes of the same pitch level that are tied together (visible toward the end of the first syllable of the word *virga* on line 3 of example 2). These symbols denote rather ambiguous musical gestures that do not correspond to any used in modern musical notation or performance.

Fortunately, however, Medieval theorists provide a few clues as to how these mysterious neumes may have sounded. First, because liquescent

neumes are also “joined in notation,” they should be slurred in the manner of ligated neumes. Writing in 1028, Guido of Arezzo (who laid the groundwork for modern notation of music) elaborates that, when executing a liquescent neume, “...the passing from one note to another in a smooth manner does not appear to have a stopping place.” Guido goes on to assure us that “if you should wish to perform the note more fully, not making it a liquescent, no harm is done; in fact, it is often more pleasing. Indeed, you should do everything that we have said neither too seldom nor too constantly, but with good judgment.” From Guido’s description, we can infer both that liquescent neumes involve an element of sliding between pitches, and that they are also executed somewhat less than “fully.”

When interpreting liquescent neumes, recorder players are a bit more limited than singers, who are capable of sliding between any interval and in any direction, and can also affect substantial changes in vocal quality and production. However, sliding between pitches (especially ones that involve lifting or placing only one finger) and modifying one’s air pressure and sound are certainly feasible on the recorder, and are well worth investigating as possibilities when playing liquescents. Guido’s appeal to our “good judgment” assures us that if a particular liquescent proves unwieldy to execute, we need not despair—he trusts us to decide whether or not to perform liquescents as notated, depending on our musical preferences and technical facility.

Guido’s instructions to perform liquescents with a less than “full” sound are most easily applied to the notes that are notated as smaller, grace-like notes in our modern edition. These notes, which occur at the end of slurred phrases (lines 1, 3, 7, 8, 9 and 10 in example 2), typically coincide with words that end with voiced consonants, making it possible for the

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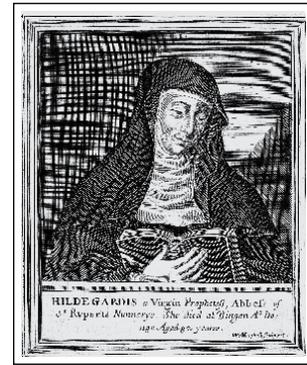
Sliding between pitches (especially ones that involve lifting or placing only one finger) and modifying one’s air pressure and sound are certainly feasible on the recorder.

singer to close the consonant while still producing sound on the correct pitch. Recorder players can mimic this by reducing their air pressure at the end of the slur, and by playing these notes quite short and without accent.

Musical figures that appear in our modern edition as notes of the same pitch level connected by a glissando, underneath a larger slur, are described vividly but ambiguously by Medieval writers. Writing in France in 850, Aurelian describes this figure (called a *quilisma*) as a “tremulous and ascending note.” The anonymous writer of the 13th-century German *Summa musice* further says that “the *quilisma* is called ‘crooked’ and it contains three or more small notes, sometimes ascending and again descending, or the reverse.”

Two oblique but ultimately helpful references to this figure assist us in proposing how it might be executed. Aribon (in late-11th-century Germany) says that the *quilisma* is similar to an unnotated ornament called a *tremula*. The anonymous writer of the *Commentarius* (Liège, 1100) says that the *tremula*, fittingly for its name, is “brought forth with now a greater, and now a lesser impulse of the voice, as if trembling.”

From these descriptions, and from the shape of the neume itself (visible as the very first neume of the piece in example 1), it is possible to hypothesize that the *quilisma* could be performed as an articulated short note. It is followed by a note that is longer and played with vibrato or with a trill. This could then slide (if desired and



◀ Hildegard of Bingen. A line engraving by W. Marshall, 1648.

possible) up to the pitch of the neume.

As with the other liquescents, when playing a *quilisma*, a recorder player could also use less air pressure to create a less full sound—although simultaneously coordinating all of these aspects of the *quilisma* has proven quite challenging in my personal practice. Note that in the Hildegard Society’s editions, this figure is notated with a slur that connects two notes of the same pitch, underneath a larger slur (for instance, on the occurrences of the note F in the word *mirum* in the first line of example 3).

The final combination of symbols appearing in this edition is two notes of the same pitch level that are tied together, with a mordent symbol above them (as in the third line of example 2, on an A). These notes are then slurred to the smaller, grace-note-like notehead. This combination denotes either an upward or downward mordent that is connected to a short, unaccented descending note, which phrases in the same manner as Guido suggests regarding liquescents, with a less than “full” sound.

As with the single notes with tenutos, this figure is not notated in the Hildegard Society’s editions—although one could consider using a mordent as a possible ornament in situations where two notes of the same pitch level are slurred together, followed by a descending, smaller notehead. (You could also consult the facsimile to find occurrences of this figure, which looks like an “M”;

“

Just because there are no explicit indications of tempo or affect, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't determine for ourselves what overall speed and what mood the piece should express. We should look to the text to help us make those decisions.

you can find one in the middle of the second line of example 1.)

### Beyond the notes to musical affect in *O virga mediatrix*

Now that we have some basics of the notation of this piece, let's consider other, unnotated elements like tempo, pacing and ornamentation. Guido tells us, "Likewise, let the affect of the song express what is going on in the text, so that for sad things grave neumes are used, for serene ones they are delightful, and for auspicious texts exultant, and so forth." While he does not enlighten us as how to literally depict "grave," "delightful" or "exultant" neumes, it's important to remember that, just because there are no explicit indications of tempo or affect, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't determine for ourselves what overall speed and what mood the piece should express.

We should look to the text to help us make those decisions. Here is the text of *O virga mediatrix* (in a translation by Nathaniel M. Campbell for the International Society of Hildegard von Bingen Studies):

*Alleluia!*

*O branch and mediatrix,  
your sacred flesh has conquered death,  
your womb all creatures  
illuminated in beauty's bloom  
from that exquisite purity  
of your enclosed modesty sprung forth.*

This text is regal and exultant, with imagery that depicts life bursting forth, as in a time-lapse video of a flower blooming. In interpreting this piece, one might choose a tempo that moves quickly enough to capture this sense of burgeoning growth. The player might also accelerando through the final long melisma that ends the piece, before bringing it to a close.

Medieval writers also urge the performer to delineate phrases through rubato, as well as by lengthening certain notes and inserting pauses for rhetorical effect.

Guido says that, "like a running horse, the notes should always approach the place of breathing at the end of the phrase more slowly, so that as if in grave manner they approach the resting place in a weary state. Notes crowded together or spaced out thinly as appropriate will often be capable of indicating this." He also advises that we should place "a hold [*tenor*] that is, a delay [*mora*] on the last note—which however small it is for a syllable, is large for a section, and longest for a phrase..."

Jerome provides us with even more circumstances where notes can and should be lengthened in comparison to other notes, including:

- the first note of the chant, if it starts on the modal final
- the second note of a syllable when the syllable has a melisma (unless it is preceded or followed by another of the other lengthened notes)
- and the penultimate note.

From Giorgio Anselmi (writing in 15th-century Italy), we learn, "For just as the orator often soothes the weary listener with some joke and makes him well-disposed, so the trained singer mixes some delays with the melody and makes the listener more eager and attentive to the rest of the phrases of the song."

### Playing and ornamenting from modern editions

In applying these principles, we are deeply indebted to the work of editors like Beverly, who do the crucial work of determining where the textual and musical phrases are, and of laying them out graphically in a way that helps us plan for the end of each phrase and the start of the next. Even with these guidelines, however, there are many decisions that must be made.

- How long should spaces be between phrases, or how long should breaths be within a phrase?
- When should phrases start to become slower, and how long should the final notes be?
- How should lengthened notes and pauses in different phrases relate to one another?

Although these myriad decisions await us in each piece (or even each time we approach a piece), the music and text serve as guides through this thicket of queries.

To perform example 2, it might make sense to separate it into roughly three sections, with the longest pauses between those sections:

- the first being the opening *Alleluia* (lines 1 and 2)
- the second going through *superaverunt*
- the third and final section starting with *et venter*.

When choosing places to breathe within phrases, one should try not to break any ligatures (slurs in our modern edition), and not to breathe in the middle of words that are syllabically set. A possible exception would be the necessity to breathe in the middle of the long, melismatic second line.

Ideally, one should also avoid breathing in the middle of a word like *sancta* or *viscera* in the fifth line. All the while, it would help to keep in mind the text stress of the Latin words, and to first practice speaking or singing the text before playing it. Although

following these guidelines may yield very different results for different performers, we should trust in our own “good judgment.” The goal is not that we arrive at a single correct interpretation, but that we make choices that are informed by text, music, neumes, ideas, and our own bodies and instruments.

Once we have decided which notes we want to lengthen, we can consider whether to adorn them with unnotated ornaments such as vibrato, trills or repercussive ornaments (where the same note is repeated: an example is Giulio Caccini’s *trillo*, described in this issue’s LEARN department article).

In addition to using vibrato in the context of the *quilisma*, Jerome also says that vibrato can be added to the final note (of a phrase or of a piece):

*It [the last note], however, is to end with a procellaris, which is no more than the slow vibration of a voice or [an instrumental] sound in the form of a semitone. Thus it belongs to the class of long flowers. The procellaris is so called because, just like a turbulence on the river when air is set in motion by a slight moving breeze without breaking the water, so the sound of the procellaris must be performed in song, with the appearance of movement but without the interruption of the [instrumental] sound or the voice.*

Jerome then goes on to relate that certain French singers “generally reject the [constant] use of the vibrato (*procellares*), claiming that all people using it have trembling voices.” While he clearly does not recommend constant vibrato, his framing of it makes clear that some people were indeed using much more vibrato than he would recommend—an implication that belies our modern conception that Medieval music was sung and played completely without vibrato.

Other possible embellishments to lengthened notes include the *morula* and the *trill*. The *Commentarius* (Liège, 1100) elaborates on Guido’s guidance to clarify that the *morula* is a repercussed

note, consisting of a “repeated tone,” by means of a repeated impulse, “but not changing pitch.” McGee interprets this to mean that the *morula* could be performed much like the later *trillo*. Although the *trillo* is performed vocally using repeated glottal articulations, using tongued articulations would approximate this effect on the recorder. (As with all of these topics, however, personal exploration is encouraged!)

Jerome describes trills as “flowers”: “By ‘harmonic flower’ is meant an ornamental and extremely fast and wave-like vibration of the voice or sound [of an instrument]. Some of the flowers are ‘long,’ some ‘open,’ and others ‘quick.’” He explicitly states that the trill should be performed with the main note and the note above it, and gives three different varieties of trills that are appropriate for instrumentalists: “Those flowers are ‘long’ whose vibration is slow and

does not exceed the limits of a semitone.... There are ‘open’ [flowers] whose vibration is slow and does not exceed the limits of a tone.... There are ‘quick’ [flowers] whose vibration is slow in the beginning, and is extremely fast in the middle and at the end, and does not exceed the limits of a semitone.”

Taken together, these represent myriad possibilities for expressing the affect of the text and enhancing the power of the music.

### Accompanying monophony

Having developed strategies for approaching Hildegard’s music as a solo musician, let’s turn to the topic of accompanying monophony. Based on the liturgical context of Hildegard’s works, it is clear that multiple nuns were almost certainly singing her melodies together, although some chants or parts of chants may have been sung by soloists.

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### RESOURCES AND LINKS OF INTEREST:

- International Society of Hildegard von Bingen Studies (many resources including free transcriptions with sound files): [www.hildegard-society.org/p/music.html](http://www.hildegard-society.org/p/music.html)
- Nathaniel M. Campbell, Latin scholar: <https://unionky.academia.edu/NathanielCampbell>
- Recordings of musical examples related to this article: [www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag](http://www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag)
- Pentiment game soundtrack: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cGhCyr8sPg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cGhCyr8sPg); list of music used in each track: <https://americanrecorder.org/extra>
- Digitized versions of the Riesencodex and Dendermonde manuscripts: [www.hs-rm.de/de/service/hochschul-und-landesbibliothek/suchen-finden/sondersammlungen/the-wiesbaden-giant-codex](http://www.hs-rm.de/de/service/hochschul-und-landesbibliothek/suchen-finden/sondersammlungen/the-wiesbaden-giant-codex) and [https://repository.teneo.libis.be/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE9129581&](https://repository.teneo.libis.be/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE9129581&)
- Anchorite: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anchorite>
- Guido of Arezzo: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guido\\_of\\_Arezzo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guido_of_Arezzo)
- Neume: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neume>
- Hiley, David. *Gregorian Chant* (Cambridge Introductions to Music). Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Mariani, Angela. *Improvisation and Inventio in the Performance of Medieval Music*. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- McGee, Timothy, *The Sound of Medieval Song*. Clarendon Press, 1998. All three books can be expensive to purchase, but are available in both hardcover and sometimes as an e-book from libraries.
- Riley Lee (including a list of his shakuhachi recordings): <https://rileylee.com>; <https://rileylee.com/store/breathofearth3cd>

While it is possible (and impressive) to imagine the members of her abbey singing together in unison, did these singers (or other performers of notated monophony) ever play or sing other pitches besides those that were notated? Although it's impossible to know for certain, various evidence supports the idea that early monophony could have been performed in a more than monophonic manner.

First, it's important to recognize that, in the Medieval period, there were no boundaries between people who played (or sang) music, people who composed music, and people who improvised music. Musicians were expected to possess all of these skills.

The barriers between written and aural music were also much looser in the Medieval period. Written music most likely served more like a memory aid than a prescriptive musical score, and musicians learned music both by sight and by ear. Given that the first written instructions for composing polyphony appear as early as the ninth century (in the *Musica enchiriadis*), it is not unreasonable to assume that Medieval musicians understood both how to compose and improvise polyphony, and that they could have applied these skills to expand upon written monophony.

Medieval instruments themselves support the contention that monophonic music could have been played polyphonically. Instruments like hurdy gurdies and bagpipes are built to sustain a drone note in addition to a melody note. Vielles, harps and organs are all constructed to easily allow players to play more than one note at a time. Jerome gives several tuning options for vielles that include two adjacent strings tuned to the same pitch—one to provide a drone and the other a melody.

Recorder players experimenting with improvising or composing additional lines to Medieval monophony can be similarly guided by the idiomatic qualities of our instruments.

“

Medieval instruments themselves support the contention that monophonic music could have been played polyphonically.

While it is easy for a hurdy gurdy or bagpipe to sound the note of the modal final throughout an entire piece, the breathing demands of the recorder do not support the same approach. The recorder is better suited to playing a line that could be thought of as a countermelody—one that starts and ends each phrase (or subphrase) on an interval that is consonant to the melody, and moves through both consonant and non-consonant intervals in the middle of each phrase.

In the early Medieval period, particularly in continental Europe, the unison, fifth and octave were considered to be the most consonant intervals. Intervals such as the second, third, sixth and seventh were considered to be equally dissonant. While not as consonant as the fifth, the fourth was also treated as fairly consonant; the first documented polyphonic strategies show the melody being shadowed at the interval of either a fourth or a fifth. Modern musicians, for whom harmonizing in thirds and sixths may feel more natural, will have to adapt their ears to this approach—but it is one that has proved quite fruitful in my personal practice.

This approach can be combined with one of imitating or foreshadowing melodic motives, as well as creating completely new musical lines that nonetheless support the melody. (Listen to the YouTube sound files for example 2, both in a solo version and with an improvised countermelody.) As with all things, decisions should be guided by the musical and textual shape and meaning of each phrase, as well as the piece as a whole.

## Rhythmicizing unmeasured monophony to create a three-voice piece

One additional area of possible exploration for the modern musician is that of incorporating rhythm in the performance of unmeasured monophony. Although the first rhythmic musical notation is not recorded until the 12th century, the existence of rhythmic dances (as well as iconography of drums and other percussion instruments) implies that the lack of rhythmic notation did not indicate a lack of rhythmic sounds.

Hildegard herself refers to both celestial instruments and dance in her first account of her visions, *Scivias*:

*... Outer realities teach us about inner ones—namely how, in accordance with the material composition and quality of instruments, we can best transform and shape the performance of our inner being toward praise of the Creator. For the song of rejoicing softens hard hearts. And their song goes through you so that you understand them perfectly. When the psalter sounds, the harp follows ... and after the harp sounds, the timbrel exults, and after the timbrel, the dance ... after the dance of joy, the voice of the stringed instruments and the flute emerge.*

In Western music, the first rhythmic notation arose toward the end of Hildegard's life, in the circle of composers, theorists and musicians centered at Notre Dame in Paris, France. This early notation system used ligatures to indicate that pitches should be sung in one of six rhythmic modes, which combined patterns of long and short notes. These could be represented in today's notation in 6/8 time as quarter notes, eighth notes, and dotted quarter notes. To briefly summarize the rhythmic modes:

- Mode 1 is long + short (quarter + eighth)
- Mode 2 is short + long (eighth + quarter)

5

▲  
**5: A three-voice rhythmicized setting for C recorders of *O virga mediatrix*.** Based on the chant composed by Hildegard of Bingen, voices added by Sian Ricketts. The top line could be played as a solo, or as a duet with the bottom line—or as a trio with all voices. A three-voice version of this piece is played by Sian Ricketts on the ARS YouTube channel, [www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag](http://www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag).

- Mode 3 is long + short + short  
(dotted quarter + eighth + quarter)
- Mode 4 is short + long + long  
(eighth + quarter + dotted quarter)
- Mode 5 is long + long  
(dotted quarter + dotted quarter)
- Mode 6 is short + short + short  
(eighth + eighth + eighth)

In practice, the notes could be broken into smaller (shorter) units, or combined into larger ones, as long as the triple grouping was maintained.

In the rhythmicized arrangement of *O virga mediatrix* (example 5), Mode 1 is applied to Hildegard's melody to create the top line. The bottom line was composed using a combination of Modes 1 and 2, and employing the previously-discussed accompaniment strategies (beginning and ending each line with a consonant interval, and also prioritizing consonant intervals for strong beats). The same ideas helped create the middle line, also set in rhythmic Mode 1.

As in early Medieval polyphonic works, the top and bottom lines can be played together on their own, or with the addition of the middle line. The top line could also be played by solo recorder.

Try playing this celestial music on your own. While this article seeks to provide recorder players and other musicians with tools to approach Hildegard's music, there is no tool or scholarly source that can replace the experience of spending time with the music itself. Although research and analyses can point us toward fruitful paths, they cannot substitute for the act of musical exploration.

It is our hope that, empowered with knowledge and inspired by the luxuriant beauty of Hildegard's music and texts, we can join Hildegard in her "dance of joy," discovering ways to perform her music that embody her sublime vision. ❀

## Live events feature recorders

Jamie Allen and Bonnie Kelly report on SoHIP concerts; Gusty Winds May Exist in two performances

### Jamie's dispatch

My first tour with the Boston Recorder Orchestra (BRO) was part of the delightfully named SoHIP (Society for Historically Informed Performance) 2023 concert series—which also included performances by other wonderful early music ensembles such as Hesperus and Mystic River Baroque. The series presents unique and intriguing concerts throughout the summer in some of the loveliest churches in Massachusetts.

I was excited to go on the road with my new BRO friends and colleagues. Perhaps the most special concert of the tour was in June in the Chapel at West Parish, in Andover, MA.

When I arrived on the grounds of this picturesque little stone chapel in a beautiful garden setting, it was lightly raining, which only added to the magic of the atmosphere. Inside, I was taken by the interplay between the rich red oak paneling and the exquisite collection of Tiffany stained glass windows. The small space was fairly brimming with life and color.

After figuring out how to fit our 17-member ensemble into the tiny

apse (we spilled out onto the floor by the front pews), we started to warm up. The acoustics were so good that it added palpable joy to the playing.

The title of our program was "Many Voices." Director John Tyson is fond of pointing out to audiences that the musical perspective of the Renaissance was often very different from today's. Where we tend to think of, and listen to, music as a melody (or interplay of melodies) rooted in a harmonic progression, the Renaissance listener tended to focus more on the trajectory of individual lines—relishing moments of both agreement and disagreement equally, using art to experience the richness of human interaction at its best.

The BRO is known for its use of a handmade, matched set of nine sizes of Renaissance recorders, made by Italian master craftsman Francesco LiVirghi. It is a truly blended, musical *E pluribus unum*, if you will; this is always the holy grail of this passionate group of professionals and amateurs.

The program ranged from early Ukrainian hymn settings to works by the newly rediscovered Portuguese master, Vicente Lusitano. There was a



◀ Cover of the SoHIP program.



▲  
**1: Gusty Winds May Exist in an outdoor performance at the Bay Area's Albany Bulb.** Tom Bickley plays an Eagle alto recorder (by Adriana Breukink/Küng) near bottom right.

**2: An opportunity to see three types of end blown flutes played side by side in one performance.** (from left) Tom Bickley, Eagle alto recorder; Ivette Roman-Roberto, voice; Nancy Beckman, shakuhachi; Aryn Ward, Native American flute.

#### LINKS OF INTEREST:

- Watch the Boston Recorder Orchestra and Hesperus, *The Three Musketeers*: [www.youtube.com/@SoHIPBoston](http://www.youtube.com/@SoHIPBoston)
- Silent Movie Superhero, an article with comments by Tina Chancey: [www.earlymusicamerica.org/emag-feature/silent-movie-superhero](http://www.earlymusicamerica.org/emag-feature/silent-movie-superhero)
- They, Who Sound: [www.namelessound.org/concerts/they-who-sound](http://www.namelessound.org/concerts/they-who-sound)
- Tom Bickley: <https://soundcloud.com/tom-bickley>; <https://tigergarage.org>
- Ivette Roman-Roberto: <https://ivetteromanroberto.com>

strong set of music from the Renaissance and earlier by more familiar names—such as Josquin des Pres, John Dunstable, Claude Gervaise and Juana Inés de la Cruz. Perhaps the most surprising moment in the program was a performance of the Josquin favorite, *El Grillo*, which featured the sound of atmospheric winds from some of the lower instruments, and some cheeky crickets channeled by Tyson simultaneously on two sopraninos. (As director, his back was to the audience as he did this, thus adding to the mystery and surprise!)

Judging from the enthusiastic audience response, the “Many Voices” concert was an unqualified success. Form your own opinion: the performance is freely available online. While I’m sorry you may not have been able to enjoy the music and atmosphere in person, perhaps the video will inspire you to do so next summer if you are in the area! ✨

#### Bonnie takes over the tale

An alternative to watching fireworks on July 4 was experiencing a delightful combination of a silent movie with the ensemble Hesperus providing well-planned background music.

It is far more common for a silent film to be accompanied by organ or piano. Hesperus—whose members include Julie Bosworth, soprano voice, percussion; Tina Chancey, director, Renaissance violin, viol, recorder; Daniel Meyers, baritone voice, record-

ers, bagpipe, douçaine, percussion, flute; and Cameron Welke, lute—employed French Renaissance and traditional music performed on early instruments, reflecting the mood of each scene.

The Hesperus score for the 1921 film, *The Three Musketeers* (starring Douglas Fairbanks), contained pieces arranged by Claude Gervaise and Pierre Phalèse; composed pieces from *Theatrical Chansons of the 15th and early 16th Centuries* (Howard Mayer Brown); and others they arranged themselves. There were “copious amounts of spontaneous improvisation and ornamentation, to reflect the energetic, boisterous and ardent spirit of the film” (according to Chancey). Since their backs were to the screen, Hesperus used a laptop to watch the film while performing, allowing them to react to the action on the screen.

Meyers commented: “The way Tina scored the movie, there were some scenes (like the big fight scenes or the more romantic moments) where we played complete pieces of polyphony, or traded back and forth playing Renaissance dances; but there were also many places where our script simply called for one of us to underscore a scene either by improvisation over a ground, or by improvising on one of the recurring ‘leitmotif’ tunes used for the various characters (you probably noticed Tina, Cameron, and me all doing this at various points). The improvisations changed each night, but we always knew whose job it was to underscore a particular scene or part of a scene.”

The audience reacted with cheers, laughter and much applause. It was clearly a hit for everyone there.

This program was one of a SoHIP seven-week series of concerts, with each concert performed at three Boston-area locations every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. ❁

“

Seven dogs, including a huge Great Dane, were there—all seven silent during the performance!

### Recorder events out West

In August the Bay Area (CA) duo Gusty Winds May Exist—Nancy Beckman, shakuhachi, and Tom Bickley, recorder—had a capacity audience for an outdoor performance at the Albany Bulb. “Water, Wind, Birds” was played for 70 people in a 45-minute set of meditative pieces. Seven dogs, including a huge Great Dane, were there—all seven silent during the performance!

The event was part of the Alternating Currents Event Series. The duo’s program comprised an improvised long-tone processional and recessional; two traditional shakuhachi pieces (*Phoenix Bell* and *Cranes in Their Nest*); on recorder, Jakob van Eyck’s *The Nightingale* and three pieces from the *Bird Fancier’s Delight*, plus Bickley’s own composition, *Basho*; and a duo version of *In Consideration of the Earth* by Pauline Oliveros.

On September 25, Gusty Winds May Exist offered an improvisation performance as part of “They, Who Sound,” a series sponsored by Nameless Sound and Lawndale Art Center in Houston, TX.

The multicultural flute and voice evening included the Gusty Winds duo of shakuhachi and recorder playing one set; then the duo of Ivette Roman-Roberto, voice, with Native American flute and modern flute played by Aryn Ward (who is Native American).

The event ended with an improvised quartet. ❁

## Early Music Latin America Festival

### FESTIVAL

March 1-4, 2024

EARLY MUSIC LATIN AMERICA  
FESTIVAL AND WORKSHOP

University of Texas, El Paso

Director: Lindsey Macchiarella

Faculty/performers: Daniel Meyers,  
recorders; LeStrange Viol Consort plus  
Mary Springfels, viol; Estelí Gomez,  
soprano voice

The free festival is supported by a National Endowment for the Arts grant, with partners Early Music America, the Viola da Gamba Society of America and the ARS, to which participants may apply for travel support.

Besides an evening concert on March 2, free daytime workshops will host upper intermediate/advanced amateur early musicians (wind and string instruments, and voice; recorder and viola da gamba preferred). Recorder players will work in wind-only classes and mixed classes with the versatile multi-instrumentalist Dan Meyers, founding member of the classical early music/folk crossover group Seven Times Salt.

Apply by December 31:

[www.utep.edu/liberalarts/music/outreach/musicology-area/emlaf-workshop.html](http://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/music/outreach/musicology-area/emlaf-workshop.html)

CONTACT:

Lindsey Macchiarella,  
[lmacchiarella@utep.edu](mailto:lmacchiarella@utep.edu)

# Technique Tip: Diminutions

## How to start using Renaissance ornamentation



**WRITTEN BY  
LOBKE  
SPRENKELING**

Lobke Sprenkeling obtained her Bachelor's and Master's

degrees as a recorder player and theatrical performer at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague and Utrecht Conservatory, Netherlands. She continued her studies at the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya, Spain, with a national scholarship from the *Dutch Prince Bernhard Culture Fund*. In 2016 she earned her music Ph.D. *cum laude* at the Universidad Politècnica de València. She also studied multidisciplinary theater from a musical perspective (Carlos III University, Madrid, and the Yale University Summer Program); her specific interest in the relationship between musician and body has led to her performing in and creating multidisciplinary works. She taught recorder at the pre-conservatory program (ages 8-18) of Conservatorio Profesional de València (2007-16), and has taught in Europe, Mexico and the U.S. (sessions with the recorder societies in Phoenix, AZ, and Seattle, WA, and for Amherst Early Music).

She currently teaches recorder at the Real Conservatorio Superior de Música de Madrid. Recently she released a CD and taught at Lyon National Conservatory in France, in an Erasmus Program collaboration with recorder pedagogues Pierre Hamon and Sébastien Marq.

Info: <https://lobke.world>.

**W**ould you like to ornament the Renaissance pieces you're playing, but you don't know where to start? When we play music of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century, an important part of ornamentation is diminutions. This article will explore the basics of diminutions, plus other pre-Baroque ornaments you might play in music of that period. It will also give you practical advice on how to play pre-Baroque music.

### A bit of history

In the Renaissance, florid passages were added to a melody in an improvised fashion. These ornaments are called diminutions (in Italian, *diminuzione*) or divisions. They diminish, or subdivide, the longer notes into a series of shorter notes.

Although diminutions were improvised, several authors of treatises of the time composed beautiful ornamented versions of existing pieces. These not only serve as an example of diminutions, but are also marvelous compositions on their own.

In 1535, Sylvestro Ganassi wrote *La Fontegara*, a treatise with highly complex diminutions that seem to be closer to 15th-century practice. The next one in time is the treatise by Diego Ortiz in 1553, a versatile and excellent diminution guide. Ortiz adopted a simpler and more regular style than Ganassi did with his diminutions, a fashion that continued in treatises throughout the 16th century.

“

In 1535, Sylvestro Ganassi wrote *La Fontegara*, a treatise with highly complex diminutions.

In the second half of the 16th century, Giovanni Bassano, Girolamo Dalla Casa, Riccardo Rognoni and Giovanni Luca Conforto (sometimes spelled Conforti) each published a treatise. They wrote smoothly flowing diminutions, using little rhythmic variety and employing extensive use of sequences.

From 1600 on, some important changes led to the “new style” (Italian, *stile nuovo*), bringing with it an extension of ornaments based on the already existing ones. This is the time of the first operas and the first solo or chamber instrumental forms with basso continuo (sonata, canzona, toccata, fantasia); instrumental dances also existed in the 16th century. This new style can already be observed in Giovanni Battista Bovicelli's *Regole, passaggi di musica...* of 1594, which was influenced by the Florentine Camerata and their insistence on correct and emotive declamation in vocal works. The diminutions were for the most part relegated to the penultimate syllables of the verses, where they did not obscure the meaning of the words.

In general, the ornaments of that time included more varied rhythms, so the diminutions were less predictable and less sequential than before. According to the authors of that time, if the eighth notes were sung rhythmically, they lacked grace or elegance. The search for the expression of emotions, the affect, was much more important than just adding beauty to the melody.

Authors of this new style are Giulio Caccini, Antonio Brunelli and Francesco Rognoni di Taeggio, the son of Riccardo, among others.

### How to begin

The most important rule to start is that these ornaments are not slurred, but articulated. They tend to be quite fast, so it is best to use double tonguing, such as a soft *D-G* articulation or *did'l*. The ornaments should be played as if they were the original long note—that is, in a “horizontal” way that leads to the next note, without stretching beats beyond the value of the original note. What we want to do is extend the feeling of the long note by creating lots of short notes, so we must make it “sing” as if we were singing a long note, not make it jump as if it were a dance.

The role of the airstream (and thus our strong air support) is very important: it is the foundation for a light tongue and should create one beautiful smooth tone, stitching together all our small notes. Of course, there is a speed limit to the tongue, so very fast notes could end up being slurred.

A second very important rule is that, when playing diminutions, we should always search for scale-like movement in seconds as much as possible. This means that patterns like arpeggios should be avoided. When we do leap, it should be done from a consonant to another consonant in the harmony—for example, from the tonic note to the third, fifth or octave above.

As we will see later, trills as a concept didn’t exist yet.

Diego Ortiz wrote in 1553 that there are three levels of diminution procedures, which can help us to get started.

1. The first way (example 2) is the simplest. The diminution begins and ends on the original note. This was considered the safest, because it preserved the original harmonic counterpoint of the music.
2. The second way (example 3) is to start on the original note—but, instead of ending on it, continue the conjunct movement and join the ornament to the next note. Although this way could result in contrapuntal

errors, such as forbidden dissonances or parallel fifths, the listener was not supposed to hear them since they were very short passing tones.

3. The third way (example 4) consists of a freer interpretation: perhaps adapting a longer segment of the original line in the diminution, or substituting for the main melodic note a pattern that does not pass

through that note. Although not mentioned in diminution treatises, this technique can be found in the ornamented works shown in the same treatises. It often involves motivic or sequential patterns. It will only work if you know what is going on in the other voices in the piece. Strive to use contrary movement (motion in opposite directions) where possible.



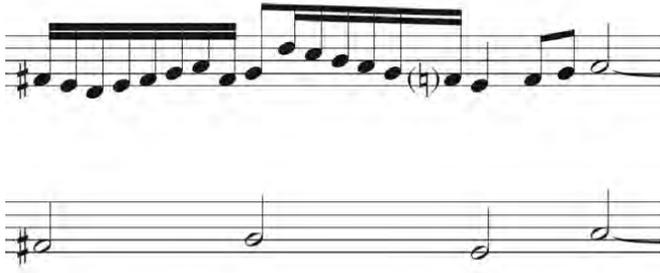
▲ 1: Title page of La Fontegara by Sylvestro Ganassi



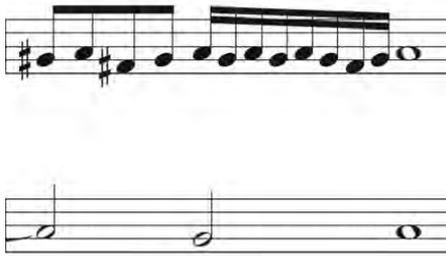
Diminutions (ornamentation shown on the top line for original bottom line—all three examples are from Rognoni, Ung Gay Bergier)

- 2: Beginning and ending on same note, then moving to the next note
- 3: Joining the first and second notes
- 4: Free diminution

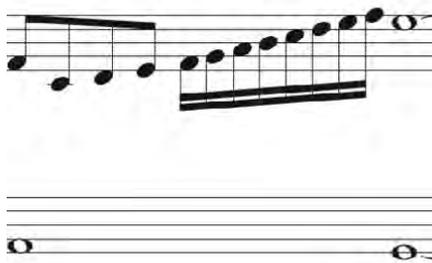
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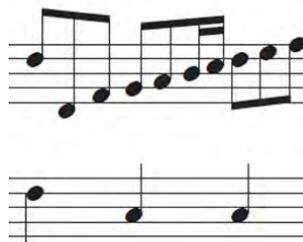
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no: Ouan - do



Diminutions (ornamentation shown on the top line for original bottom line)

5: General use of passaggi (from *Ancor che col partire*, an Italian-language madrigal composed by Flemish composer Cipriano de Rore while he was in Italy, also used by Rognoni)

6: Gropo

and

7: Tirata

(both are from Rore/Rognoni, *Ancor che col partire*)

8: Accented and dotted rhythm (as used by Lodovico Zacconi and Girolamo Diruta)

9: Gropo rafrenato (Giovanni Battista Bovicelli)

10: Bridge (in *Vestiva i colli* by Rognoni)

## Tempo

For Renaissance music, where bar lines don't exist yet, the concept of the *tactus*, or underlying pulse, is essential. This is a basic, natural beat that easily allows for changes in its subdivision (for instance, from duple to triple).

Especially in 16th-century music, you should keep a steady *tactus* in general, breaking up the long notes into rhythmically regular diminutions. In 17th-century music, this changes a bit, allowing for more expressive tools and for some flexibility in tempo.

## Types of 16th- and 17th-century ornaments

Let's have a look at the different types of diminutions:

1. General diminutions or *passaggi* unite the notes of the original melody in mostly adjacent movement (example 5).
2. A special ornament called a *groppo* (or group, as in example 6) is a cadential ornament, employing an alternation between seconds with a turn at the end. For example, movement from B to C can become *BCBCBABC*. This basic form can be extended. If it's on a descending interval, C to B, then it's often played as *CBCBCBCD B*.
3. According to Michael Praetorius in *Syntagma Musicum*, another diminution is the *tirata* (tirade, as in example 7): "Tirate are long rapid runs in a graduated manner up and down." From the 17th century on, additional ornaments came into use:
4. The *trillo*—not to be confused with the Baroque trill!—is a figure subdividing one long note. Caccini calls the *trillo*: *Ribattuta di Gola* (throat articulation). He writes, "The trillo that I describe is on a single note...; One starts with the first quarter note and then each note is articulated with the throat over the vowel à until the final whole note." Rognoni (1620) also writes: "The trillo is struck with the throat." For recorder players, there are

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The trillo—not to be confused with the Baroque trill!—is a figure subdividing one long note.

different approaches to this ornament:

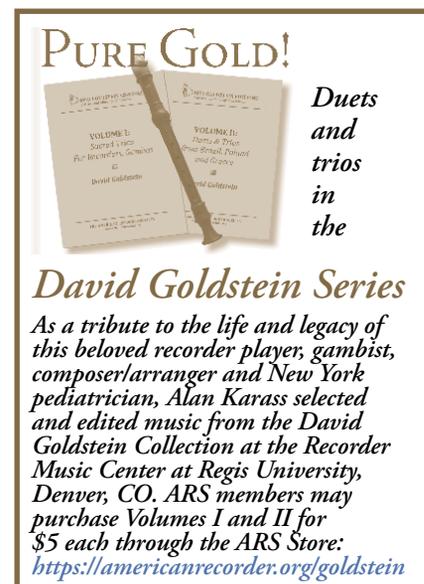
- Double articulation used like a bouncing ball—gradually going faster, but leaving some room for the last note to sound a bit longer
  - Finger vibrato
  - Lifting the finger in a highly dotted rhythm, also going faster and faster. This variant may end up as a kind of trill, even if it doesn't have the same concept as the Baroque trill (a much different ornament that always starts on the note above the written note).
5. The *accento*, a passing note ornament, is usually a variation of two basic types—one for ascending intervals (especially thirds), and one for descending seconds. Example 8 shows both types, as used by Lodovico Zacconi and Girolamo Diruta. The *accento* was applied to places where diminutions were not appropriate: moments of strong affect, especially of sadness or pain; or at the beginning of an imitative piece where a solo voice starts.
  6. In the *groppo rafrenato* (Bovicelli, *Regole, passaggi di musica*), faster notes like 16ths slow down before the final note (example 9).
  7. Dynamic effects such as the *mesa di voce* (crescendo—decrescendo)
  8. Dotted the rhythm of diminutions (long-short and short-long, called lombardic/lombard rhythm). This was seen as much more graceful in the 17th century than playing just regular diminutions.
  9. Ornaments of note and intensity fluctuation such as the tremolo, literally a "shaking of the voice." We could call this a kind of vibrato—but it is used only as an ornament.



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11

ung gay ber-gier pri-ait u - ne ber - - - - -

11: Fragment with a number of types of diminutions, following the words in a vocal piece (Rognoni, Ung gay bergier)

#### LINKS OF INTEREST:

- Lobke Sprenkeling's web site: <https://lobke.world>
- Articles in her recorder technique series: <https://americanrecorder.org/extra>. Sprenkeling's versions of the scores for *Belle qui tiens ma vie* and *Triste España*, both mentioned in this article, are also found there.
- Videos for some articles in this series: [www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag](http://www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag)
- Lobke Sprenkeling's recording, *Pulchra Es*, demonstrates diminutions plus sonatas and canzonas of the Renaissance: reviewed in *AR Summer 2023*; <https://lobke.world/products>; stream via Spotify, iTunes, etc.; [www.youtube.com/@LobkeSprenkeling/videos](http://www.youtube.com/@LobkeSprenkeling/videos)
- Most of the treatises mentioned here can be found by searching for the author or for "diminution" on <https://imslp.org> or <http://cpdl.org/wiki>
- Passaggi app: about \$18.50 at [www.passaggi.co.uk](http://www.passaggi.co.uk)
- Embellishment Workout by Cat on the Keys Music: about \$11.70 at [www.catonthekeysmusic.co.uk/embellishments-workouts](http://www.catonthekeysmusic.co.uk/embellishments-workouts)
- *L'Art de Diminuer* by Philippe Matharel: \$50, sold by many music vendors including [www.vonhuene.com](http://www.vonhuene.com)
- Critique for *AR Summer 2022* includes reviews of two commercial publications to help you learn diminutions written by Diego Ortiz and G.P. Palestrina.

This piece is part of Sprenkeling's technique series.

#### PART 1: "Use of Air and Breath Control: The Respiratory System" /

[AR Spring 2021](#) Use of air in everyday breathing and for good musical tone; exercises for correct breathing.

**PART 2: "More on Breathing plus Posture and Hands" / [AR Summer 2021](#)** Additional breathing exercises, good posture, embouchure and hand position.

**PART 3: "Articulation" / [AR Fall 2021](#)** added articulation to previous skills.

**PART 4: "A Toolbox for Coordination of Air, Fingers and Articulation" / [AR Winter 2021](#)** covered all skills learned so far.

**PART 5: "Daily study habits & how to work on a new piece of music" / [AR Spring 2022](#)** applied skills in daily practice.

**PART 6: "How to play air and finger vibrato" / [AR Fall 2022](#)** added an expressive element.

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ALSO: "Using a metronome" / [AR Summer 2023](#); "After your first recorder lesson or workshop" / [AR Fall 2023](#)

## How to add diminutions to your daily practice

We are lucky to have examples of amazing diminutions composed by the authors of the time. Play as many as you can. The most important thing to keep in mind as you work on these diminutions is to get to know the original melody as well as possible. Sing and play the original before really starting to play the diminished version.

If the original has a text, follow its musical phrasing as much as possible for your diminutions. We shouldn't forget that these were the hits of the time, so the original was well-known. It would be as if we diminished *Yesterday* by the Beatles—you would instantly know when the diminutions weren't following the phrases!

In the same way, diminutions should respect and even magnify the character of the original. We can see this in Rognoni's diminutions on *Ung gay bergier*, which are very playful, as is the original text (example 11). On the other hand, the diminutions by Bovicelli on Palestrina's *Io Son Ferito* augment the intensity of the pain of love expressed by the text.

Analyze the diminutions in all of the available examples. Observe where the different types of ornaments are used by the author of each treatise in order to understand how you can apply such ornaments yourself.

The authors didn't always notate ornaments for cadences. Sometimes these require some sort of *gropo* or, if it's a 17th-century diminution, a *trillo*.

Ortiz with his 1553 treatise has a great versatile guide. Play through all of his examples and improvise on the ostinato bass patterns (grounds) that he provides for the *Recercadas sobre tenores italianos*. Improvising on a ground is always an excellent exercise!

The "Passaggi" app provides the accompaniments for Ortiz's treatise, as well as drones to use for practice and accompaniment tracks for several

Renaissance works, diminished by authors of the time. Other handy materials are the *Embellishment Workout*; and also *L'Art de Diminuer* by Philippe Matharel, a summary of the diminutions for individual intervals, given by several authors from the 16th and 17th centuries—and, of course, consult the historical treatises themselves.

## How to diminish from scratch

Now it's your turn! Start with easy Renaissance songs, diminishing the top voice. Good examples are the popular 16th-century pavane *Belle qui tiens ma vie* (on page 36) or *Triste españa* by Juan del Encina (both scores are on the ARS web site). Here are some steps to follow:

1. Add diminutions and other ornaments to obvious moments first, like cadences and changes in the melody where you feel it would be very natural to add some decoration. For instance, the interval *DE* may be diminished with *D cd E*.
2. Start small. Add only one or two notes, and extend that little by little. Begin by just filling up an interval. It's about building bridges of mostly seconds between one note and another.
3. Start at an easy tempo—don't go faster than your brain can follow. Try to relax; be comfortable and playful!
4. Follow the phrasing of the piece as much you can. If it's originally a vocal work (like example 11), try to breathe where a singer would breathe—don't forget that there's a text, a meaning, an ambience. Try to respect those qualities, to keep the intent of the original. Is the original a madrigal, a chanson, or a dance form like a pavane?
5. If you've got a motive that works, don't be afraid to repeat it. This will only add cohesion to your diminutions. If you never repeat a motive, the result could actually lack cohesion. It's not a bad idea to use a motive twice, even three or four times. If you get bored with that pattern, probably there's a reason—that's when you

In LEARN for AR Fall 2023, "What Now?," I mentioned that we should play a new piece perfectly the first three times—because if we repeat the same mistake those three times, it will stick in our muscle memory. My friend Dennis wondered: how can we play it perfectly if it's a new piece and we're not able to play the entire piece perfectly? I'd like to give some hints about how to do that when learning a new piece.

Think of what your strengths and weaknesses are. Do you need to reinforce rhythm? If so, practice the rhythm separately before playing it. You can clap it, or speak it using the Takadimi or Kodály system. Listening to the piece and getting acquainted with it is also a great idea. How does the rhythm flow? How does the melody go? What do the other instruments do, if there are any?

Are the notes difficult for you? In that case, you can practice saying, or even better singing, the note names, while staying in the rhythm. You can also clap the rhythm while you sing the notes. You can write in the names of the notes—try to get to know them well enough to erase them after a while, so that you don't become dependent on this visual aid. Another tool is to rest the mouthpiece of the recorder on your chin, and sing the note names while you silently finger the notes.

Divide the piece into smaller sections; focus on one small section and get it right. Here is where you can work on air, articulation and coordination. Don't rush! The brain has to be able to follow the fingers, the breath support, and the tongue.

Analyze what you're doing: feel, listen, and be aware of what's going on. Also analyze the music: where do the phrases begin and end? Is there a comma in the middle? Of course, when you play slowly, you will have to breathe in more places than when you speed up. Even so, it's important to establish at least certain breaths that go with the musical phrases.

Don't start at the beginning all the time. If you do, you may be very familiar with the start of the piece and not so much with the rest of it.

I hope these ideas clarify what it means to play "perfectly" the first few times, and that they help you relax and enjoy the journey more!

Soprano  
Bel - le qui tiens ma vi - e, cap - ti - ve dans tes yeux Qui m'a l'a -

Alto

Tenor

Bass

S  
me ra - vi - e, d'un sou - rire gra - ci - eux, Viens tôt me se - cou - rir Ou me - fau -

A

T

B

S  
dra mou - rir, Viens tôt me se - cou - rir Ou me - fau - dra mou - rir.

A

T

B

▲ **Belle qui tiens ma vie** by Thoinot Arbeau (Orchesography, 1589). Transcription by Lobke Sprenkeling.

Translation: Beauty, you who hold my life captive in your eyes,

You who make my soul delighted with a gracious smile,

Come soon to rescue me, or I shall die.

need to do something else *or* create something that's an extension of that original motive. Repeat the motive, but vary its rhythm; or repeat a rhythmic motive and change the notes.

6. Normally in written-out diminutions of the time, you will see that the ornamentation doesn't start on the first note of the piece. It's a good idea to give space to the beginning of the melody before adding ornaments.
7. Keep your diminutions regular. Try not to play a long note and a couple of rapid notes, creating a constant irregular rhythm. Divide the notes over the musical space. Think of eighth notes instead of a rhythm using a dotted quarter note and 32nds.
8. Simplicity is better. We tend to want to do too much. Don't get too far away from the original notes. I think of getting back to the written notes about halfway through my diminution.
9. Look at the other voices to make sure that your diminution isn't in conflict with them or creating parallel intervals with them like fourths, fifths or octaves. Also if you're playing the highest voice, limit your distance to a fifth below the written note. If you go down too far, you'll cross into the range of a lower voice.
10. Don't diminish the last note of a phrase, except when you choose to make it a bridge leading into the next phrase, as you might do in *Vestiva i colli* by Rognoni (example 10).
11. If the original melody repeats itself, don't go big with your diminutions during the first time through; save something for later. Make your diminutions grow organically as part of your musical narrative.
12. For 17th-century music, add dotted rhythms, *trillos* and other ornaments of that time.

Your efforts won't always be perfect, but that is part of improvising diminutions. You'll find that it's about puzzling your way from one place to another, which can be very pleasurable! ❁



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# Music

Rapturous music, some from centuries ago plus a new memorable piece and easier duets

<b>01</b>	<b>Her Rapture for Descant [Soprano] Recorder</b>	by Robin Walker
<b>02</b>	<b>Das Buxheimer Tabulaturbuch (1460/70)</b>	edited by Martin Erhardt
<b>03</b>	<b>Mozart Family Duets for Alto Recorders Mozart Family Duets for Soprano Recorders Baroque Tunes for Two Soprano Recorders Baroque Tunes for Two Alto Recorders</b>	edited by Deborah Greenblatt
<b>04</b>	<b>Ukrainian Fiddle Tunes for Two Soprano Recorders Ukrainian Fiddle Tunes for Two Alto Recorders</b>	compiled/arranged by Deborah Greenblatt
<b>05</b>	<b>Gagliarda e Sonata "Secondo Tuono"</b>	by Francesco Turini
<b>06</b>	<b>Branlen and Fagott for three instrumental choirs</b>	by Tielman Susato, arranged by Susan M. Francis

**KEY:** rec=recorder; S'o=sopranino; S=soprano; A=alto; T=tenor; B=bass; gB=great bass; cB=contra bass; Tr=treble; qrt=quartet; pf=piano; fwd=foreword; opt=optional; perc=percussion; pp=pages; sc=score; pt(s)=part(s); kbd=keyboard; bc=basso continuo; hc=harpsichord; P&H=postage/handling.

01

Her Rapture for

Descant [Soprano] Recorder

by Robin Walker

Peacock Press PJT209, 2021.

Soprano solo. Sc 3 pp. Abt. \$6.30.

[www.recordermail.co.uk](http://www.recordermail.co.uk)

REVIEWED BY:

Beverly R. Lomer

British composer Robin Walker has studied the folk traditions of England and India, including Buddhist temple music and Indian religious dance music. All are influences on his style. He has also worked in symphonic music and opera. Prior to moving to the Pennine village of Delph to concentrate on composing, he taught at the Royal Academy of Music and the universities of London and Manchester.

*Her Rapture*, composed in memory of Dorothy Pilling, is a challenging contemporary piece for solo soprano. Structurally, it is composed of melodies alternated with might be called more virtuosic segments: passages based on intervals and scalar progressions, liberally sprinkled with chromatic notes.

The opening metronome tempo is ♩=96, but it changes throughout, as do the time signatures. The basis of the meter, however, remains the quarter note, so there are no tricky changes or equivalences.

The piece covers the range of the C instrument, from middle C to the high D. Chromatic additions are a hallmark of the work, and they can be quite difficult. The only "modern" technique employed is the tremolo.

There are numerous instructions as to dynamics and mood. The edition is clearly printed, but the layout does require a page turn after the first page.

Though demanding, *Her Rapture* is engaging. The melodic material is quite nice, and the changes of tempo,

dynamics and themes give it an appealing character.

It is definitely a piece for experienced players who enjoy modern styles. Working it up to performance level will be a challenge, but worth the effort. ❁

**Beverly R. Lomer, Ph.D.**, is an independent scholar and recorder player whose special interests include performance from original notations and early women's music. She is currently collaborating on the transcription of the Symphonia of Hildegard of Bingen for the International Society of Hildegard von Bingen Studies. She occasionally writes features for *AR* like the one in this issue.

02

### Das Buxheimer

#### Tabulaturbuch (1460/70)

edited by Martin Erhardt

*Edition Walhall EW1110, 2020.*

*Various AT trios. Sc 44 pp. Abt. \$28.*

[www.edition-walhall.de](http://www.edition-walhall.de)

REVIEWED BY:

**Beverly R. Lomer**

This modern edition presents practical performing scores of selections from *Das Buxheimer Tabulaturbuch*, also known as the *Buxheim Organ Book*. The editor Martin Erhardt describes it as the most extensive collection of instrumental music from the 15th century.

The *Buxheim* contains over 250 pieces representing a cross-section of genres from liturgical music to secular vocal works from Germany, France, Italy and England. Created between 1460 and 1470 in Buxheim, the manuscript has sometimes been attributed to Conrad Paumann, a well-known blind organist and multi-instrumentalist. It is housed in Germany's Bayerische Staatsbiblio-

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This collection offers a wealth of opportunity for the understanding of ornamentation and divisions. While it is intended to be played in three parts ... the superius is also useful on its own as a self-study in diminution.

thek in Munich (Mus. 3725).

There is a facsimile from the 1950s by Bertha Antonia Wallner. However, there is no performance score explicitly devised to use only instruments. It is the intention of the editor to provide an initial sampling of scores for instruments other than organ.

The edition opens with a comprehensive introduction written in German. Erhardt discusses the history of the manuscript and gives extensive information on the performance practices for this repertory, including such things as cadences, articulation, phrasing and ornamentation. He also explains the choices for transcribing/creating parts for the performing scores.

There are 25 two-voice and three-voice pieces from both sacred and secular music. Composers represented include Guillaume Dufay, Johannes Ciconia and John Bedyngnam/John Dunstable. The scoring is for superius (highest), tenor (the line containing the chant or borrowed melody on which the polyphony is based) and contratenor (the voice going “counter” to the tenor in the counterpoint). The tenor parts appear in black on the second staff, along with the contratenor in red. The superius is found on the top staff and includes numerous diminutions. For the sacred music, the original chant is given and is played by the tenor.

This collection offers a wealth of opportunity for the understanding of ornamentation and divisions. While it is intended to be played in three parts in

various combinations of alto and tenor recorder, the superius is also useful on its own as a self-study in diminution.

A drawback of the book for our American recorder audience is that the information is all written in German. For those who do not read German, Google translate is clunky but useful. Also it is necessary to understand the format in order to grasp how to perform the pieces. The quality of the scores is worth the extra effort. ❁

03

### Mozart Family Duets

#### for Soprano Recorders

#### Mozart Family Duets

#### for Alto Recorders

edited by Deborah Greenblatt

*Greenblatt and Seay, 2019.*

*SS or AA. 60 pp each. \$15 each.*

#### Baroque Tunes

#### for Two Soprano Recorders

#### Baroque Tunes

#### for Two Alto Recorders

edited by Deborah Greenblatt

*Greenblatt and Seay, 2021.*

*SS or AA. 56 pp each. \$15 each.*

[www.greenblattandseay.com](http://www.greenblattandseay.com)

REVIEWED BY:

**Beverly R. Lomer**

Deborah Greenblatt is a prolific and talented editor of multiple editions of duets that span a wide variety of styles. A Master Artist with the Nebraska Arts Council's Artist-in-the Schools/Communities Program, she received her degree in violin performance from Boston University School of Fine Arts and plays more than 10 instruments. She tours with her husband, David Seay, through the Nebraska Arts Council.

These two sets of duet editions follow a similar format (one that



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is also typical of many of the other Greenblatt and Seay publications). The soprano and alto versions are in the same key, with the alto version essentially written up an octave.

Some of the selections are entire pieces; others are excerpts from larger works. They are not especially difficult. Some are accessible to beginners as well as more experienced players.

There are no explanations as to how the two parts in these editions are derived from the originals, and the parts are not always equivalent in terms of interest. In some, the second line is definitely less complex; in others, the lines trade off taking the lead.

The books are spiral bound, clearly laid out with minimal page turns, and the print is a good size and dark.

The *Baroque Tunes* comprise 27 pieces in each version for the soprano and alto recorders. The represented composers are mostly, but not all, well known. Some examples are: Thomas Arne, J.S. Bach, G.F. Handel, Elisabetta de Gambarini and G.P. Telemann. Also included are some figures from the late Renaissance like Jacob van Eyck.

The genres are diverse, with many dance forms, such as the gavotte, minuet, sarabande, jig and courante. In addition, there are airs, allegros, a sinfonia, a fantasia, and others.

The keys are not difficult, with most containing only one or two sharps or flats. Rhythms are generally straightforward. There are no tempo indicators, but some dynamic instructions are found. At the end of the volume, there is a section that presents short biographies and dates of each composer.

The *Mozart Family Duets* edition contains 38 short works, mostly composed by W.A. Mozart and his father Leopold. Two pieces give the composer as Franz Xaver Mozart—a partial rendering of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's full name, Franz Xaver Wolfgang Mozart.

There are also two menuets by J.S. Bach and Johann Adolph Hasse that

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Some are accessible to beginners.

were arranged by Leopold Mozart. Most of the works are simply titled Duet or Violin Duo. Those by W.A. Mozart give the *K.* number, a categorization system of his works developed by musicologist Ludwig, Ritter (knight) von Köchel.

In addition, the Mozart duets include dance forms, a fantasia, and a work for French horn, among others.

Tempo indicators and dynamic markings are found in some of the Mozart selections. As in the *Baroque Tunes*, the keys are easy and rhythms are not complex. Some selections have more complicated melodies.

In general, the works included in both the Mozart and Baroque editions are pleasant and charming. Though many are only excerpts, they are nevertheless fun and enjoyable to play, and nice additions to a concert repertory. ❁

04

### Ukrainian Fiddle Tunes

for Two Soprano Recorders

Ukrainian Fiddle Tunes

for Two Alto Recorders

compiled/arranged by  
Deborah Greenblatt

*Greenblatt and Seay, 2022.*  
*SS or AA. 65 pp each. \$15 each.*

[www.greenblattandseay.com](http://www.greenblattandseay.com)

REVIEWED BY:  
Victor Eijkhout

Deborah Greenblatt's collection of arranged Ukrainian fiddle tunes is very apt, with the ongoing interest in, and appreciation of, all things Ukrainian. However, this 2022 release may have been something of a coin-

cidence, given its dedication to the arranger's grandfather, a fiddler who emigrated from Ukraine to the U.S.

Musically, this is a fun collection, where most tunes are easily imagined to serve for folk dancing. The predominant time signature is 2/4 with a clear up-down feel to them. (There are also more lyrical compositions.)

Melodies are sometimes in an awkward range, or make register shifts to prevent them going out of range. This is related to the direct transposition from soprano to alto. The second player regularly has voice crossings with the first. A creative player might adapt the second voice to play it on the next lower recorder type and thus resolve some of the problems.

Guitar chords are indicated, and addition of a guitar (or other chordal accompaniment) would greatly add to the character of these pieces. One might even consider these pieces to work at least as well with a single player and chordal accompaniment. ❁

Victor Eijkhout resides in Austin, TX, where he plays recorder in the early music ensemble The Austin Troubadours. The multi-instrumentalist and composer has two titles in the *Members' Library* Editions, as well as the Play-the-Recorder Month 2023 music. His other compositions can be found at <https://victorflute.com> and you can support his work through [www.patreon.com/FluteCore](http://www.patreon.com/FluteCore). See and hear samples of some of the music that Eijkhout reviews posted at [www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag](http://www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag).



05

### Gagliarda e Sonata

“Secondo Tuono” by Francesco Turini

*Girolamo G12.025, 2022. TTB bc.*  
*Sc 13 pp, 3 pts 3-4 pp ea. Abt. \$23.*

[www.girolamo.de](http://www.girolamo.de)

REVIEWED BY:  
Victor Eijkhout

Francesco Turini (1589-1656) was an early Baroque composer who was born in Prague (now in the Czech Republic), but whose musical life largely took place in northern Italy. Educated in Venice and Padua, he later worked in Venice and Brescia, as the latter city's cathedral organist until his death.

This volume, *Gagliarda e Sonata*, contains both a galliard, an older dance form using six beats to the measure from the 16th century; and a more forward-looking sonata. The two pieces included here are taken from a publication of 1624, which is now held in the Austrian National Library.

The latter term in the title, sonata, needs some explaining. The *Sonata a Tre* in this publication is a single movement, with only tempo changes (*piu mosso/meno mosso*) indicated. This structure may seem unusual if you are only used to Baroque sonatas with three or four movements of distinct character. However, this scheme is quite similar to that of the duo sonatas of (the somewhat better known) Venetian composer Dario Castello, Turini's junior by a dozen years. Such similarity may be partly explained by the above-mentioned Venice connection.

These early Baroque composers stood at the cradle of the modern sonata form. The tempo changes and sections with different motives would later become separate movements with clearly distinguished themes.

Since the whole sonata is a single movement with an uninterrupted flow, ensemble play is of prime importance here. All players need to synchronize their tempo changes exactly!

Prior to a performance, some further issues need to be settled regarding this music, starting with the instrumentation of the melody parts. The top parts,

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The *Gagliarda a tre* ... is considerably less adventurous,... a gentle intro to the *Sonata*, or an exercise in ornamentation.

marked “violino,” fit recorders in C very nicely—with only the second part hitting a single high C, but for the rest playing in a comfortable range. So do you play this with two sopranos? The music has quite a few suspended dissonances, which may be a little harsh on two sopranos. I found that a combination of soprano and tenor works fine. In a few places, the second instrument plays in thirds over the first, which becomes a sixth below when played on a lower instrument. Pairing a soprano on the top part with a violin on the second could work equally well.

A bass instrument is indicated, but can be omitted, since it largely doubles the bass part of the continuo. If you are contemplating playing this music as a trio with the bass part on a contra, know that the official bass part drops out in a few places; you would have to play from the score. For a trio performance using either great bass or contra, the range of the bass part needs a couple of octave transpositions. The continuo realization is unexceptional, only very occasionally injecting melodic material in the right hand.

The *Gagliarda a Tre* with which the *Sonata* is paired is considerably less adventurous, hewing close to the galliard form that we know from many sources of Renaissance dances. This can be played as a gentle intro to the *Sonata*, or an exercise in ornamentation.

Most of the *Sonata* is of an intermediate difficulty, except for two measures that have 32nd-note runs, which are unfortunately synchronized between the two parts. Since this passage is a sort of cadenza, less accomplished players can easily rewrite it, playing 16th notes.

Whether you stick to the score, or make adaptations, either way this makes for a very enjoyable piece. ❁

06

### **Branlen and Fagott** for three instrumental choirs

by Tielman Susato, arranged  
by Susan M. Francis

Peacock Press P720, 2019.  
SATB SATB string trio/TiTB viols.  
Sc 6 pp, 11 pts 2 pp ea. Abt. \$11.75.

[www.recordermail.co.uk](http://www.recordermail.co.uk)

REVIEWED BY:  
**Victor Eijkhout**

Tielman Susato (c.1510-c.1570) is a familiar name to recorder players as the composer/publisher of a large body of Renaissance dance music. Susato means “de Soest” or of the town of Soest. While his birthplace is unknown, speculation places it near one of two towns called Soest: in Westphalia or in the Netherlands.

After starting as a calligrapher, in 1543 Susato founded the first music publishing house using movable music type in the Low Countries. Until he started his Antwerp business, most music was printed in Italy, France and Germany. After his son Jacob took over the business, Tielman moved to Alkmaar, North Holland. The last known mention of him is in 1570 in Sweden.

Besides publishing, the multi-instrumentalist Susato composed music. His editions of his own music and that of others were popular among his contemporaries, and remain staples for recorder players today. This is especially true of his *Danserye*, *Het derde musyck boexken*, a “third book” of dance music published in 1551 (available for SATB, London Pro Musica LPM101).

The *Branlen and Fagott*, combined here into a composition in ABA

form, are numbers 23 and 24 from his *Danserye* of 1551. The *Branlen* is a sprightly dance in 4/4 time, though with phrases that are too irregular for use in actual dancing. The *Fagott* is in 6/8 time. As to be expected, both are harmonically simple, but enjoyable for both player and listener.

The matter of the time signatures raises the immediate and eternal question of how to relate the tempi of the two sections. Since they are independent compositions and from a bygone era, there is certainly no help to be expected from the composer. I was disappointed that the arranger makes no comment on the matter. Since the *Fagott* changes harmonies more slowly than those in the *Branlen*, I tried equating a full 6/8 measure to half of a 4/4 measure. This works quite well, except when there is a dotted figure that is hard to play.

I also found this arrangement less than perfect in the matter of instrumentation. It is scored for two SATB quartets and a string trio of violin/viola/cello, with a note that treble/tenor/bass viols can be used. The strings are not optional, since they have a number of solo measures. The recorder quartets play together nearly 75% of the time, with either quartet taking a solo on occasion. However, this alternation between ripieno and concertino passages comes out sounding less impressive than I had anticipated, since it’s merely a slight thinning out of the texture rather than a register change or a change in material. One solution would be to use low choir recorders for the second quartet. This would put it in the range of the strings—but because of the way the strings double the original material, this is not a serious conflict.

This is attractive music, as to be expected from Susato, but less than satisfyingly arranged. At a good two-and-a-half minutes, it does not overstay its welcome. ❁

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- 01 The Whistling Book: English Music for Recorder and Piano**  
John Turner revisits music recorded in 1998, plus more recent additions.
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- 02 Ronald Stevenson and Friends**  
Happy birthday, John Turner, is the theme of this collection of music showcasing the recorder in chamber music.
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- 03 27 Hebrew Melodies for Recorder**  
Traditional music arranged by the late Hans Lewitus, played by Inbar Solomon and Adi Silberberg.
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- 04 Zenith**  
Anna Stegmann, recorders, and Jorge Jiménez, bowed strings and electronics, elevate old music and new music to an uncharted high point.
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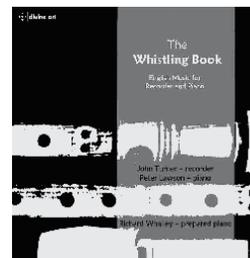


### REVIEWED BY TOM BICKLEY

American Recorder Recording Reviews Editor Tom Bickley is a multi-instrumentalist/composer/teacher in Berkeley, CA. He grew up in Houston, TX; studied in Washington, D.C. (recorder with Scott Reiss, musicology with Ruth Steiner, and listening/composition with Pauline Oliveros); and came to California as a composer-in-residence at Mills College.

A frequent workshop faculty member and leader at chapter meetings, he teaches recorder at the Bay Area Center for Waldorf Teacher Training; and Deep Listening for Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. His academic library career included service with the Smithsonian Institution Libraries, the National Endowment for the Arts, and California State University East Bay (as their Performing and Visual Arts Librarian). He performs with Three Trapped Tigers (with recorder player David Barnett), Gusty Winds May Exist (with shakuhachi player Nancy Beckman), Doug Van Nort's Electro-Acoustic Orchestra, and he directs the Cornelius Cardew Choir.

His work can be heard at <https://soundcloud.com/tom-bickley>, and is available on CD on Koberecs, Quarterstick and Metatron Press. Visit his web site at <https://tigergarage.org>.



**01**

### The Whistling Book: English Music for Recorder and Piano

In *The Whistling Book*, our remarkable English colleague John Turner provides a rather encyclopedic survey of music composed for the recorder—solo and with piano—in the late 20th century. This album is a remastered reissue of the 1998 album *John and Peter's Whistling Book*, combined with tracks recorded in 2017 and 2021.

Across the two CDs, works by 16 composers (including Turner himself) display diverse styles, all related to the mainstream of “classical” music in our time. As such, this is a collection that will delight attentive listeners in the humor, grace, wit, beauty and depth of melodic material, compositional structure, and timbral approaches.

Spot-on use of musical quotations and variations on folk song motives provide ready accessibility to a number of the 18 works. I find particular satisfaction in Alan Rawsthorne's *Suite* (Disc A, tracks 11-14), Robin Walker's *Her Rapture* (Disc A, track 31; sheet music reviewed in this magazine's CRITIQUE: Music), Turner's *Four Diversions* (Disc B, tracks 13-14), and Robert Whalley's *Kokopelli* (Disc B, track 23).

That is not to suggest that any of the works on this album are lacking! ❁

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

*The Whistling Book: English Music for Recorder and Piano.*  
John Turner, recorder; Peter Lawson, piano; Richard Whalley,

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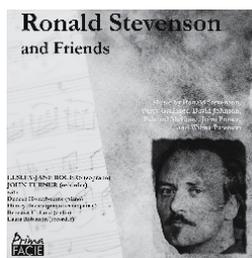
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02

Ronald Stevenson  
and Friends

The album *Ronald Stevenson and Friends* is part of the celebrations for John Turner's 80th birthday in 2023, and honors Scottish composer/pianist Ronald Stevenson (1928-2015). The 31 tracks include all of Stevenson's works for recorder, as well as several songs; and also pieces by Wilma Paterson, John Purser, David Johnson, Edward McGuire and Percy Grainger.

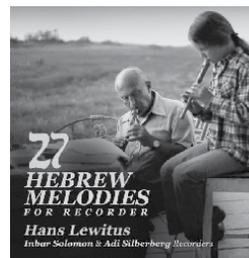
In this collection of chamber pieces, the recorder takes its place in a small ensemble with modern piano, violin and soprano voice. While the styles have much in common with the panoply of works on *The Whistling Book*, the

timbres are more varied.

A great treat is the two versions of the classic, *Country Gardens* by Percy Grainger, in his setting for two recorders (tracks 1 and 31). This album is a collection of substantial music that merits inclusion for performance in the U.S. as well as in the UK. ✨

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

*Ronald Stevenson and Friends*. John Turner, recorder; Laura Robinson, recorder; Benedict Holland, violin; Lesley-Jane Rogers, soprano voice; Duncan Honeybourne, piano; Harvey Davies, piano accompanist. 2023, 1 CD, 67:00. Prima Facie PFCD202. [https://ascrecords.com/primafacie/ronald\\_stevenson\\_friends.html](https://ascrecords.com/primafacie/ronald_stevenson_friends.html) (includes track samples and listings), CD about \$22.20; notes available at <https://primafacie.ascrecords.com/blog/2023/03/27/from-the-sleevenotes-ronald-stevenson-and-friends>. Streaming and downloads from iTunes/Apple Music, mp3 download \$9.99. Also Spotify, Amazon Music, mp3 download \$8.99; and other services. Full album streamable for free on YouTube via [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy\\_IJxBpTk62th7NStAycwOHcbjJwsu8bJrk](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_IJxBpTk62th7NStAycwOHcbjJwsu8bJrk) John Turner turns 80, AR Fall 2023



03

27 Hebrew Melodies  
for Recorder

Inbar Solomon and Adi Silberberg bring to joyful life these arrangements by Hans Lewitus (1905-98) of Jewish

melodies. Lewitus drew from ancient religious sources as well as modern secular sources, with some lyrics in Yiddish and some in modern Hebrew.

Besides playing recorders, Solomon and Silberberg also sing, and they employ guitar, violin and clarinet. The result is a delightful collection, with the recorders in the mode of folk music instruments, played with great technique and musicianship.

Familiar tunes here are *Mazel Tov* (track 7), *Dayenu* (track 11) and *Hava Nagila* (track 27). They sound wonderful in conversation with the melodies that are less familiar but equally engaging. I'm grateful to Ricardo Lewitus for bringing his late father's work to a wide audience. ❁

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

*27 Hebrew Melodies for Recorder*. Hans Lewitus, arranger; Inbar Solomon, musical director, recorder, voice; Adi Silberberg, recorder, guitar, violin, clarinet, voice. 2023, digital album, 33:00. Ansonica Records, [www.ansonicarecords.com/catalog/ar0020](http://www.ansonicarecords.com/catalog/ar0020). Available for download and streaming: Amazon Music, mp3 \$8.99; Apple Music/iTunes, mp3 \$11.99; also Spotify, Tidal; etc. Full album streamable for free on YouTube via [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy\\_1OUyE1dLKZ-TdVy-MDTvfTAHlyQetMmY](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_1OUyE1dLKZ-TdVy-MDTvfTAHlyQetMmY)



04

### Zenith

Moving from the late 20th century art music offerings by John Turner

“

Early and new music dance together in a 34-minute journey enhanced by brilliant arrangements plus compelling use of electronic sound and audio processing.... The magic occurs in the way this duo weaves the pieces together. The effect is immersive and dreamlike.

and company, and then through the ancient and modern folk melodies arranged by Hans Lewitus, we next encounter an amazing postmodern concept album by Anna Stegmann, recorders, and Jorge Jiménez, bowed strings and electronics.

A member of The Royal Wind Music, Stegmann is a co-organizer of the biennial Open Recorder Days Amsterdam in the Netherlands, and since 2014 has served as the recorder professor at the Royal Academy of Music in London, England. She and Jiménez were both educated in the field of historically informed performance practice. They now combine early music expertise with the repertoire of other centuries, unconventional arrangements and improvisation.

On the album *Zenith*, early and new music dance together in a 34-minute journey enhanced by brilliant arrangements, plus compelling use of electronic sound and audio processing. Composers on this album are Jiménez, transforming 18th-century music by Heinrich Biber; Johannes Ciconia from the 14th century; Chick Corea of the 20th/21st century; 20th-century Hungarian composer Béla Bartók, whose work is heavily influenced by Eastern European folk music; anonymous Medieval; the

Italian 20th-century composer Luciano Berio; Greek-Canadian composer Christos Hatzis of the 21st century; and French 20th-century composer Erik Satie.

However, the magic occurs in the way this duo weaves the pieces together. The effect is immersive and dreamlike. I highly recommend watching Lukas Zerbst's beautiful 19-minute video, *Zenith*, to gain a fuller sense of this album (<https://youtu.be/cNxulIA-TDQ?si=obnPM1hzddgcVysC>).

Worthy as well is the duo's earlier album *Lunaris*. Their approach is one that crosses boundaries of genre and period to make connections in a very persuasive way. ❁

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

*Zenith*. Anna Stegmann, recorders; Jorge Jiménez, violin, viola, vielle, electronics. 2022, 1 CD, 33:34. gwk records GWK158, <https://gwk-online.de/zenith> (includes promotional videos by Lukas Zerbst). Available from [www.jpc.de/jpcng/classic/detail/-/art/ciconia-zenith/hnum/11012389](http://www.jpc.de/jpcng/classic/detail/-/art/ciconia-zenith/hnum/11012389), CD \$19.50 including S&H; [www.prestomusic.com/classical/products/9364866--zenith](http://www.prestomusic.com/classical/products/9364866--zenith), mp3 \$10, FLAC 16-bit/44k \$13, Hi-Res FLAC lossless 24-bit/96k \$17.50; downloads include the digital booklet. Stream on Apple Music/iTunes, mp3 \$9.99; also Spotify and other services. *Lunaris*, <https://gwk-online.de/lunaris>

The four recordings reviewed here reflect quite a variety of approaches to use of the recorder in various genres. All four albums bear repeated listening, thanks to engaging performances and marvelous recordings.

After you've listened to all four separately, take a chance and put all four on shuffle play! ❁

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### STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

*American Recorder* magazine. Publication 0003-0724. 10/1/2023. Quarterly. 4 issues. \$42 per year. Association and Publisher address: Susan Burns, American Recorder Society, 3205 Halcott Ln, Charlotte, NC 28269-9709; 704-509-1422; Editor: Gail Nickless, 4116 Inca Avenue, Las Cruces, NM 88005-0852; Owner: American Recorder Society, PO Box 480054, Charlotte, NC 28269-5300. No bond holders, mortgagees, or other security holders. Purpose, function, and nonprofit status of American Recorder Society has not changed during preceding 12 months. Circulation Fall 2023: (Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months/ Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date): (a) Net press run (2343.75/2350); (b) Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail): Outside county mail subscriptions (2010/2014) (2) In-county mail subscriptions (0/0) (3) Sales through dealers, carriers, street vendors, counter sales and other non-USPS (0/0) (4) Other classes mailed through USPS (145.75/139); (c) Total paid distribution (2155.75/2153); (d) Free or nominal rate distribution by mail (samples, complimentary and other free): (1) Outside-county USPS rate (0/0) (2) In-county USPS rate (0/0) (3) Other classes mailed through USPS (80/65) (4) Free distribution outside the mail (10/10); (e) Total free or nominal rate distribution (90/75); (f) Total distribution (2246/2228); (g) Copies not distributed (98/122); (h) Total (2344/2350); (i) Percent paid and/or requested circulation (95.98%/96.63%). Electronic Copy Circulation: (a) Paid electronic copies (182/202); (b) Total paid print copies + Paid electronic copies (2337.75/2355); (c) Total print distribution + Paid electronic copies (2428/2430); (d) Percent paid (both print & electronic copies) (96.28%/96.91%).

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AMERICAN RECORDER (ISSN 0003-0724) is published 4 times a year: February (Spring), May (Summer), August (Fall), November (Winter), by American Recorder Society, Inc., 3205 Halcott Ln, Charlotte, NC 28269-9709. Periodicals Postage Paid at Charlotte, NC, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to American Recorder Society, PO Box 480054, Charlotte, NC 28269-5300. TEL: 704-509-1422 | TOLLFREE: 1-844-509-1422 | FAX: 1-866-773-1538 [ARS.Recorder@AmericanRecorder.org](mailto:ARS.Recorder@AmericanRecorder.org) | <https://AmericanRecorder.org> Copyright©2023 American Recorder Society, Inc.

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