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Editorial

The last few years have seen a resurgence of research in the lute and lute music from medieval times through to the end of the fifteenth century. The place of the lute in European society in this period is well-known through large numbers of art works, literature, and historical documents of diverse kinds. Despite such information, there are still vast gaps in our knowledge of the sounds that came from these lutes and the music that was played on them. Through traditional research combined with performance-based investigation and experiment, there is reason to hope that some of the remaining mysteries will be revealed and that we will acquire a greater understanding of lute music prior to Petrucci and the lute books of the first decade of the sixteenth century. Earlier fragments of lute music have been examined closely by Crawford Young and Martin Kirnbauer in Early Lute Tablatures in Facsimile (Winterthur: Amadeus, 2003). Several articles in the Lute Society of America Quarterly in the last few years have contributed further. Marc Lewon’s monographic study of the Wolfenbüttel manuscript (JLSA, vol. 46, 2013) offers an in-depth scholarly study of the most recently discovered pre-sixteenth-century lute tablatures. Victor Coelho and Keith Polk’s Instrumentalists and Renaissance Culture, 1420–1600 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) provides further essential reading, and gives a rich background to the detailed study presented here by Bonnie J. Blackburn. Her archival work in Italy has brought many discoveries, including information about lute players such as the famed Pietrobono, who occupies center stage in this issue.

About the Author

Bonnie J. Blackburn is a member of the faculty of music at Oxford University. She specializes in music and music theory of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. She has edited the music of Johannes Lupi and two volumes for the New Josquin Edition. Together with Edward E. Lowinsky and Clement A. Miller she edited A Correspondence of Renaissance Musicians (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Since 1993 she has been general editor of the series Monuments of Renaissance Music (University of Chicago Press). She is also the author, together with Leofranc Holford-Strevens, of The Oxford Companion to the Year. Her interest in Pietrobono stems from her ongoing research on music at the court of Ferrara in the fifteenth century and her chance discovery in the Venetian archives of the wills of several German lute makers in the early sixteenth century.
“The Foremost Lutenist in the World”: Pietrobono dal Chitarino and His Repertory

BY BONNIE J. BLACKBURN

Were there virtuoso performers in the fifteenth century? Most certainly yes, if we consider the long career of the Ferrarese virtuoso lutenist Pietrobono, who dazzled all those who heard him perform on the chitarino. When we first catch sight of him, in 1441, he is already “pulsator optimus citarini.” Born around 1417, he was still performing in his seventies: in 1489, according to a contemporary chronicler, he was “primo homo del mondo di sonar liuto.” No other fifteenth-century Italian musician was accorded similar praise, and reading these words makes us ruefully aware of the great gap in our knowledge: how can we judge Pietrobono’s fame as a musician when we have not a note of the music he played? Performance is elusive, and even more so in an age when instrumentalists did not normally play from written notation.

But all is not lost. To our good fortune, a number of eyewitness accounts of Pietrobono as a performer survive. Interpreting them is not easy,

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1 This article had its origins in a paper presented at the Medieval and Renaissance Music Conference in Brussels in July 2015, as part of a panel organized by Evan MacCarthy at which he and Crawford Young also spoke. I gave an expanded version at the University of Vienna on June 2, 2016, and again in the Seminar in Medieval and Renaissance Music at All Souls College, Oxford, on November 11, 2016. Over the last three years Evan and I have profitably shared documents and literature on Pietrobono, and it was he who spurred me to investigate the question of how Pietrobono performed. He kindly read the final draft and offered many valuable suggestions. I have had many useful exchanges with Marc Lewon, whose expertise in playing the gittern and plectrum lute have helped clarify my remarks. Ross W. Duffin has also been helpful, especially with regard to improvisation. Lastly, I am immensely grateful to Leofranc Holford-Strevens for assistance with the Latin text and translations; this article could never have been written without the help of a classicist.

1 The traditional birthdate is based on the statement in the anonymous “Diario ferrarese dal 1409 al 1502”: at his death in 1497 Pietrobono was “cavaliero et sopra tuti li excellenti del sonare leuto, et era et etade de anni octanta” (a knight and exceeding all others in playing the lute, and he was about eighty years old); this is likely to be a rounded figure. This passage is not in the original edition of 1738 but in the edition by Giuseppe Pardi, Diario ferrarese (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1928), pt. 5, p. 204.

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since many are couched in humanistic Latin verse; others raise puzzling questions about his repertory and manner of performance. Eyewitnesses are not always reliable, as we know in other contexts, and after centuries have passed, how are we to evaluate their reports? Modern suppositions of the way Pietrobono performed are quite contradictory. It is only by returning to the sources and to the context in which they were created that we may be able to paint a fuller picture of the lutenist of humble beginnings who became “prince of all.”

How did one become a star in the fifteenth century? Once Pietrobono found favor at the court of Ferrara, his career developed rapidly. He was constantly in demand at all the grandest social occasions, from wedding festivities at home in Ferrara and in other Italian courts to the reception of foreign dignitaries, including popes and emperors. We would be mistaken, however, in thinking that he was on tour. Pietrobono dal Chitarino differs from star performers of the past not in musical terms or degree of adulation but in the trajectory of his career: he was not a free agent. A lifelong resident of Ferrara, he served under four rulers of the Este dynasty: Niccolò III, Leonello, Borso, and Ercole I. As his

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2 Though the modern exigencies of concert tours mean that contemporary virtuosi are very much constrained by their managers.

fame grew, he was frequently requested to perform at other north Italian courts. In the social mores of the time, if a fellow ruler asked to borrow your musicians, you sent them as a matter of course. This was especially true in the case of noble weddings, when it was customary for the trumpet and shawm players of many of the north Italian courts to be in attendance. State visits required an impressive delegation, augmented by musicians from other courts.

To cite one example, when the young Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan, traveled to Florence in 1471, he asked the Marquess of Mantua, Ludovico Gonzaga, to lend him his piffari, since he had thrown his own piffari into prison for unspecified offenses (“havendo loro commisso certo delicto”). But by the time he left on the trip, he had released them, realizing what a poor impression he would make by not being able to show off the Milanese piffari, and the delegation ended up with forty trumpeters and shawm players. It would be churlish to refuse a request from another court; after all, one expected the same courtesy in return.

At the same time, acceding to such a request showed one’s own magnanimity and magnificence, essential elements of the self-presentation of rulers. Thus we can easily believe reports claiming that as many as fifty trumpeters and shawm players took part on such occasions. At their own court musicians were necessary not only for greeting the various visiting dignitaries as they entered the city, but also indispensable for supplying the music for dancing at the accompanying festivities, which went on for hours and hours, and, in the case of the grandest weddings, day after day.

At neither of these occasions would Pietrobono have performed: the small sound of the chitarino would be lost in the din made by the wind instruments and the clatter of dancing feet in a large hall. Instead, he

5 Ibid., 48.
6 A rare exception: when Bianca Maria Sforza, Galeazzo’s mother, requested Borso d’Este, Duke of Modena and Reggio and Marquess of Ferrara, to lend his piffari for the proxy marriage celebrations of her daughter Ippolita with Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, in Milan in April–May 1465, Borso explained with profuse apologies that the occasion was too close to the “Solennità de San Zorzo” (St. George’s Day, April 23), and his piffari were “necessarissimi” in Ferrara. For the letter (of March 25, 1465, misdated 1456) see Motta, “Musici alla corte degli Sforza,” 46–47.
7 For example, see the list of fifty named trombetti and piffari present on New Year’s Day in Milan in 1468 in Guglielmo Barblan, “Vita musicale alla corte sforzesca,” in Storia di Milano, vol. 9 (Milan: Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri per la Storia di Milano, 1961), 787–852, at 791–93. All told, they received 312 ducats as gifts; their food and lodging would have been covered as well.
was listened to attentively at banquets or in small chambers: “Whoever wishes to pass from one world to the next, let him hear Pietrobono,” remarked the poet Antonio Cornazzano in 1455. From at least 1449 Pietrobono was accompanied by a tenorista. Over the course of his lifetime four are named in the Ferrarese accounts: Zanetto (1449, 1452), Francesco Malacise (1455–84), Francesco dalla Gatta (1467–89), and Bartolomeo Albaresano dicto Zamara (1490). The function of the tenorista, and specifically what instrument he played, is poorly understood, since he is hardly ever mentioned in a performance context, and again modern scholars have imagined a variety of scenarios.

We know more about Pietrobono’s career than we do for any other fifteenth-century musician, thanks to the comparatively ample Ferrarese court archives, contemporary chroniclers and poets, and diplomatic correspondence. We also know what he looked like from the medal cast in 1457 by Giovanni Boldù (see Figure 1 on p. 33), where he is acclaimed as “the prince of all” (OMNIVM PRINCEPS), written across the stone bench on which the winged genius sits, and “exceeding Orpheus” (ORPHEVM SUPERANS). Such praise is echoed in contemporary reports of his playing, where he is likened to a whole host of ancient musicians. But just

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8 On Cornazzano and his praise of Pietrobono, see below. Ross W. Duffin is not so sure that a lute would not have been used in performing dances, suggesting that both bas and haut ensembles were used; see his discussion of the performance of dance music at Ferrara in “Ensemble Improvisation in the Fifteenth-Century Mensural Dance Repertoire,” in Instruments, Ensembles, and Repertory, 1300–1600: Essays in Honour of Keith Polk, ed. Timothy J. McGee and Stewart Carter (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 195–233, esp. 207–16.

9 See the chronological list of instrumentalists and singers in Lockwood, Music in Renaissance Ferrara, Appendix V, to which I have added additional sightings in Ferrarese documents in the Archivio di Stato in Modena, Camera ducale (hereafter ASMo). Francesco Malacise might have been hired earlier; there is a gap in the records between 1451 and 1455. In notarial documents Malacise is called both the son of Malacise and the son of Biagio from Montepulciano. It is possible that Francesco Malacise and Francesco dalla Gatta are the same, since their service overlaps. In 1491 a new tenorista was hired, Zeno- vese (Urbano da Zenova), but he is not specified as Pietrobono’s tenorista; moreover, the term “tenorista” can apply to piffero players as well as singers.

how and what he performed have remained elusive, as is the case for all musicians who do not play from written notation. In what follows I set out the reasons why I believe that speculations by modern authors about how and what Pietrobono played are just that; reexamination of the evidence for his performances and his repertory, some of which has come to light only recently, has led to a better understanding of the art of this star musician of the fifteenth century.

Evaluating Pietrobono’s performance presents us with five interrelated questions:

- What exactly is a chitarino?
- Did Pietrobono play the lute as well, and in a different manner?
- How did Pietrobono perform? Did he sing while he played?
- What was Pietrobono’s repertory?
- What did his tenorista do: sing, or play an instrument, and if the latter, what?

I shall take these questions up in turn.

The Chitarino and Its Players: Problems of Terminology

Pietrobono was not the first chitarino player at the court of Ferrara: during the marquisate of Niccolò III (1393–1429) he was preceded by Leonardo dal Chitarino in 1424, who is probably identical with the “Leonardo tedesco” present at the court in 1416, since in 1424 he is being rehired.\(^1\) He may be the German lutenist Leonardo (“dal leuto,” “sonadore da liuto”) at the Malatesta court in Brescia in 1409–11 and 1419.\(^2\) In later years other chitarino players appear in the Ferrarese court records alongside Pietrobono: Giovanni (Zohane) del Chitarino in 1447, 1450, and 1452; Biagio dal Chitarino in 1452 (Biagio Montolino, present till 1488); and Rainaldo dal Chitarino, 1471 to at least 1499. Salvatore de

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\(^1\) Lockwood, “The Foremost Lutenist in the World,” 16 and 315. The document of July 23, 1424, which Lockwood did not publish, is now ASMo, Mandati in volume 2, fol. 27v: “Nui havemo retolto ad restare cum nuy Leonardo dal chitarino cum provisione de libre xv M. el mese secondo che lera usato de havere” (We have taken back into our service Leonardo dal chitarino, with a salary of 15 LM a month, as he used to have). Provision is also to be made for his wife, and the rental of his house is to be paid.

Bonfïoli, “maestro de chitarino,” is mentioned once in 1466.\textsuperscript{13} Nowhere is it suggested that two chitarino players performed together, unless Pietrobono’s tenorista played the chitarino, which is never specified in Ferrarese documents. It is possible, however, given the popularity of the lute duo, especially in Germany, that Pietrobono’s instrument, the chitarino, was played with Early Fino Lute, which is never specified in Ferrarese documents. It is possible, however, given the popularity of the lute duo, especially in Germany, that Pietrobono’s instrument, the chitarino, was played with

It is clear that the chitarino is a string instrument played with a plectrum. The name has suggested to some that it might be a gittern, in which the back, neck, and pegbox are made of one piece of wood, with a curved pegbox, and three to five courses of strings. The gittern is not a high-status instrument, and during the fifteenth century it was overtaken by the lute.\textsuperscript{15} Pietrobono was the son of a barber, and at first he followed in his father’s profession (his first tenorista, Zanetto, was also a barber). He may have learned to play a gittern in that context, entertaining his father’s customers (or distracting them if under the care of a barber-surgeon, as it appears his father was\textsuperscript{16}), but when he became an accomplished musician his instrument was the lute. Pietrobono’s instrument can be seen on the reverse of his medal, which shows a winged genius with a small lute (see Figure 1 on p. 33). The details of the body and strings are not very clear, but the pegbox is not curved and seems to be bent back. More revealing is the four-course lute played by a cupid with a plectrum in the marginal decoration of a manuscript of Ugolino of Orvieto’s Declaratio musicati disciplinate illuminated

\textsuperscript{13} See Lockwood, Music in Renaissance Ferrara, 316–26 passim; the cumulative listing does not give individual sources nor indicate how many payments (or gifts of clothing) occur in one year; moreover, there are gaps in the documentation. It is not clear whether Giovanni was a musician; “Dal Chitarrino” is also the surname of a Jewish family in Ferrara: Abramo, son of Angelo dal Chitarrino, was a professor of Hebrew grammar in 1491; see Adriano Franceschini, Fresenza ebraica a Ferrara: Testimonianze archivistiche fino al 1492, ed. Paolo Ravenna (Florence: Olschki, 2007), 432, 438. A “Servadio dal Chitarrino” is listed in a payment document of Dec. 8, 1465 (ASMo, Conto generale 13, fol. 107), and he may have been a member of the same family, not a musician (Servadio is frequently a Jewish name). There was also a Ferrarese family with the surname “de Leutis.”


\textsuperscript{16} The document of August 5, 1441 mentioned at the beginning of this article, the first we have for him, calls Pietrobono the son of Magister Baptista Barberius; Lockwood, “Pietrobono and the Instrumental Tradition,” 118, n. 11. The source is now ASMo, Mandati in volume 6, fol. 81r. Lockwood did not quote the part indicating the reason why Pietrobono was given 20 gold ducats; it was for clothing for his wife (“in subsidium vestiendi uxorem suam”), and may indicate that he married in that year.
in Ferrara in 1453 for Rinaldo Maria d’Este (see Figure 2 on p.41). The pegbox is bent straight back and the neck appears to be a separate piece. What better model for a lute at the Ferrarese court was there than that played by Pietrobono, who was surely known to the illuminator?

The similarity of the name “chitarino” to “cittern” or “gittern” may in fact be misleading.18 The names “cittern,” “gittern,” and “chitarino” (not to mention “guitar”) all ultimately derive from the Greek word for the lyre, kithara, a term used equally in Latin (cithara) from antiquity onward. The person who plays this instrument is a kitharistes or citharista, or a kitharoi- dos or citharoedus (the difference between the two terms is discussed below). As a Latin term it was used for the official palace citarista in Perugia in 1407.19 One duty of these multitalented herals was to recite or sing verse at official social occasions; in Tuscany they were known as canterini.20 In the early years their instruments are described as citera, guitarra, or viola (the Italian term for a vielle or fiddle, which I shall use in this article), but the later humanist improvisers are most often portrayed holding a bow, accompanying themselves on a viola or lira da braccio.21 Dante uses the

17 Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Rossi 455, fol.1r. The illustration was kindly brought to my attention by Evan MacCarthy. The miniature (from the title page) is by Giorgio d’Alemagna, as MacCarthy discovered from payment documents, and the book was made for Rinaldo d’Este, an illegitimate son of Niccolò III and commendatore of the Abbey of Pomposa; see Evan A. MacCarthy, “The Sources and Early Readers of Ugolino of Orvieto’s Declamatio Musice Discipline,” in Beyond 50 Years of Ars Nova Studies at Certoaldo, 1959–2009, ed. Marco Gozzi, Agostino Zilio, and Francesco Zicmi, L’Ars Nova Italiana del Trecento 8 (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2014), 401–23, at 421–22.

18 For an attempt to sort out these and other names, for example guitar, see Laurence Wright, “The Medieval Gittern and Citole: A Case of Mislaid Identity,” Galpin Society Journal 30 (1977): 8–42. He concluded that the citole was the ancestor of the gittern, and that “the relationship of the gittern to the lute needs further investigation” (p. 32). On the classification, construction, tuning, and playing technique of these instruments, see Crawford Young, “Lute, Gittern, & Citole,” in A Performer’s Guide to Medieval Music, ed. Ross W. Duffin (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 355–75.

19 Frank A. D’Accone, The Civic Muse: Music and Musicians in Siena during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 659. The overlapping roles of trumpeters, heralds, poets, and canterini, some of whom played the lute and others the viola, are discussed on pp. 456–59.


21 In 1432–33 Niccolò cieco d’Arezzo is described in his Perugian contract as “citerista et cantore rimarum . . . ac multiplicium ystoriarum” (player of the cithara and a singer of verse . . . and of many stories); Blake Wilson, “Cantinerino and improvisatore: Oral Poetry and Performance,” in The Cambridge History of Fifteenth-Century Music, ed. Anna Maria Busse Berger and Jesse Rodin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 292–310,
term “citarista” in Italian: “come a buon cantor buon citarista / fa seguitar lo guizzo de la corda” (“as a good cithara player follows the good singer with the vibration of the string”; Paradiso xx. 142); here the instrument itself is not specified. In Milan, where Pietrobono visited in 1456 and perhaps the previous year, Duke Francesco Sforza addressed him by the Latin term citharista.\(^{22}\) The letter concerns one of the duke’s musicians who was studying with Pietrobono in Ferrara, Stefano Teuttonico, who is also called cytharista. In his response to the duke, Pietrobono signed himself “Suus petrusbonus cytharista.”\(^{23}\) Pietrobono was much in demand as a teacher, and in 1457 a Milanese courtier sent his son to him to learn “l’arte de sonare,” specified in another letter as “sonare de layuto.”\(^{24}\) The passport issued on May 30, 1463 in Milan to the German lutenists “Ianni Bertoldo de Basilea” and “Stefano de Monachis” calls them “alamans citharistis.”\(^{25}\) Thus, at the Sforza court, the instrument of a cytharista would appear to be the lute. Without other evidence, however, it is not possible to tell precisely what instrument is intended when a citharista is mentioned. It could be a chitarino or a lute, a viola, or even a lira da braccio.

Part of the difficulty in determining what instrument a citharista plays is that there is no standard Latin term for “lute,” which derives from Arabic al-ṭūd, nor for lutenist. Late in the fifteenth century Tinctoris used the term “leutum” in his De inventione et usu musicæ, IV.iii: “Quid sit lyra populariter leutum dicta.”\(^{26}\) Writing in Latin, Tinctoris was constrained to find Latin terms for contemporary musical instruments, and “populariter” indicates that he is Latinizing a vernacular term. (Other authors, including humanists, use the term “testudo”, “tortise shell”; Tinctoris himself uses the

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\(^{22}\) Letter of December 18, 1455 addressed “Petrobono cithariste.” Barblan, “Vita musicale alla corte sforzesca,” 803. While the letter itself is in Italian, the salutation and closing, as was customary, are in Latin.

\(^{23}\) He wrote to Francesco on December 26, 1455 that he had taught Stefano “duo avantagiate cose” (two advantageous things). See Lockwood, “Pietrobono and the Instrumental Tradition,” 125.


\(^{25}\) Ibid., 40.

word merely to describe the shape of the lyra.) The other instruments he mentions as derived from the ancient lyra—the “viola,” “ghittera,” “cetula,” and “tambura”—could be translated nearly literally, and the rebec becomes “rebecum.” “Leutum” was not a word that gained much currency. However, it had already been used by Petrarch in his will dated April 4, 1370, written when he was nearly sixty-six years old and contemplating a trip to Rome. Among a number of personal bequests, he left to Tommaso Bombsi, a native of Ferrara, “leutum meum bonum,” with the wish that he play it “not for the vainglory of this fleeting world, but in praise of God everlasting.”

Petrarch, writing in Latin, might have been expected to use the term cithara. However, as we have seen, that term is ambiguous; it could also apply to a viola or lira, even to a harp. Thus by using the term “leutum” Petrarch could specify that he meant a lute, of which it seems he had more than one.

In his extensive list of string instruments Tinctoris does not include the chitarino. When he refers to Pietrobono, whom he heard in Naples in 1473 and perhaps in 1479 in Ferrara, he calls him “Herculis Ferrarie ducis incliti lyricen,” and prefers him above all others. Just as “lyra” (like kithara) is a generic term for string instruments, so is “lyricen,” a humanist variant of “citharista,” the generic term for a player of string instruments. In the context of Tinctoris’s discussion of Pietrobono, however, the instrument is the lute. Either the chitarino had gone out of fashion by Tinctoris’s time, or it was in fact a lute all along.

A more promising line of inquiry regarding the chitarino turns out to be the use of the Italian terms “citara” or “chitara” and the diminutive “chitarino.” The Italian term “citara” is rare in the fifteenth century.

27 A search in the Thesaurus musicarum latinarum database (http://www.chmptl.indiana.edu/tml/index.html, accessed August 14, 2017) yielded only the references in Tinctoris’s treatise. “Lutinista” is found in the sixteenth century, especially in German and Hungarian sources.

28 “Magistro Thome Bambasie de Ferraria lego leutum meum bonum, ut eum sonet, non pro vanitate seculi fugacis, sed ad laudem Dei eterni.” Petrarch’s Testament, ed. and trans. Theodor E. Mommsen (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1957), 82–83. The original will has not been found; it was published in Venice in a small pamphlet by Bernardino de’ Vitali in 1499 or 1500, but there are a few earlier and later manuscript sources. Mommsen reported no variants for “leutum.” Bombasi is mentioned in a letter of Petrarch’s of 1364 as having gone to Venice to help arrange an equestrian performance. Petrarch likens him to the Roman actor Roscius, which suggested to Mommsen that he was “a combination of stage director, actor, and musician” (p. 28).

29 De inventione et usu musicae, IV. 5. On this passage see also below.

30 Tinctoris does not suggest that it is a gittern. He describes the “guittera” or “ghittera” as a Catalan instrument with a thin sound (De inventione et usu musicae, IV.4) and remarks that Catalan women sang love songs to it (ibid., IV.v).
When Galeazzo Maria Sforza was in Florence in 1459 he described Maestro Antonio as singing "con la citara," and he used the term "cithara" for the instrument to which another famous improviser, Malagise, recited or sang ("dixe ne la cithara") when he heard him in Venice in the same year; he remarks that such a performance, in which Malagise praised Galeazzo's father Francesco and his love of Venice "with many Roman examples," was entirely new to the Venetians and astonished them. Since both Antonio and Malagise were improvisers of verse, *canterini*, it is likely that they accompanied themselves on the viola or lira da braccio, not a chitarino; as mentioned above, a number of contemporary woodcuts of such improvisers always show them holding a lira da braccio. That the Italian term "cithara" could apply to this instrument can be confirmed through the correspondence of Isabella d'Este. In 1493, having decided to learn to play what she termed the "citharra," she ordered a small one that would fit her arm from her agent in Venice, and at the same time another one from Atalante Migliorotti in Florence. It is only from a

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31 This is the famous *canterino* Antonio di Guido; for the report see Wilson, "*Canterino and improvisatore*," 298.

32 Letter of June 4, 1459 to his mother Bianca Maria Sforza, describing a dinner at the home of Andrea Dandolo: "ne a questa cena creda vostra Excellentia che cosa alcuna vi manchasse, ne de soni, ne de canti, dei quali el cantare del Masarata ne avanzo però tutti, per dolceza di melodia. Ma per gravita de sententia, cosa nuova et inaudita da quistì [ati] citadini Malagise, quale dixe ne la cithara, tante laude di questa III. mo S. ma, de la cita, de lo III. mo S. mio patre, de la benvolentia, et cordiale amore di esso, verso essa cita con Introductione de molti esempi romani che ogniuno di maraviglia fece obstupire . . ." (your Excellency may believe that during this dinner nothing at all was missing; neither sounds nor songs, of which Masarata's singing exceeded all the others for its sweetness of melody. But for the seriousness of pronouncement, something new and unheard-of for these citizens, Malagise, who declaims to the cithara, amazed everyone, who marveled at the many praises of this Signory, of the city, of the illustrious Lord my father, and of his benevolence and cordial love towards this city, introducing many Roman examples; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, it. 1488, fol. 239). Masarata is Filippo Macerata or Maccrato, a singer, not a reciter of verse. He was in the service of Luca Vendramino in 1454 when Francesco Sforza requested that he come to Milan; see Motta, "Musici alla corte degli Sforza," 296. I do not believe that this Malagise is identical with Pietrobono's tenorista Francesco Malacixi. He must be the "Malacixi da Fiorenza, el quale canta de giesta de le storie romane" (Malagise from Florence, who sings narrative verse on Roman history), who received a very large payment of LM 27.15.0 for singing before Borso d'Este in Ferrara on July 2, 1466. At that time he was in Francesco Sforza's service. See Adriano Franceschini, *Artisti a Ferrara in età umanista e rinascimentale: Testimonianze archivistiche. Parte I dal 1341 al 1471* (Ferrara: Gabriele Corbo Editore, 1993), no. 1604d, p. 662. I wish to thank Evan MacCarthy for drawing this document to my attention.


34 June 22, 1493: to Antonio Salimbene: "una citharra picola che fusse bona per el brazo nostro" (a small cithara that would be good for our arm); to Atalante Migliorotti: "una
letter of Niccolò da Correggio, who had received the instrument from Atalante, that we learn what the “citharra” was: a lira da braccio. Atalante with his lira had been intended to sing the part of Orfeo in Poliziano’s Orfeo in Mantua in 1490 and 1491. Since Orpheus would have played the kithara, the transfer of the name to the modern instrument is logical (as is also the alternative name for a kithara, lira for lyra).

The instrument that Pietrobono and his colleagues played is always called a chitarino, never a citara. I have found the term “citara” only once in Ferrarese sources. In 1497 the writer Sabadino degli Arienti, describing the Este palace called Belfiore, noted that the frescoes showed young men and women dancing “al suono de cythare et tibie,” using a rather Latinate term for shawms as well; from the context it is not possible to tell what he had in mind by a “cythara” (the palace was destroyed during the war with Venice in 1483). Having surveyed a considerable number of documents from Milan, Ferrara, Brescia, and other northern Italian courts, I was able to determine that the term “chitarino” was used almost exclusively at the court of Ferrara. Elsewhere, the most common term for a plucked instrument is “lute.” (These references are collected in Table 1.) The chitarino player Leonardo mentioned above is described in Brescia in 1409 as “sonadore da liuto.” In Milan, from 1453 on, when we have more documentation, the lute is called by a bewildering variety of spellings: “leguto,” “laguto,” “layuto,” “leyuto,” “lijutto,” which finally becomes standardized as “liuto” by 1461, though yet other spellings are found. Although in Ferrara Pietrobono continued to be referred to as a player of the chitarino, in foreign courts he was called a lutenist. In Naples in 1476 King Ferdinand (Ferrante) asked Ercole d’Este if he could borrow Pietrobono, “vostro sonatore di liuto,” for the summer. By the 1480s “liuto” was the standard term everywhere, including in Ferrara.

Thus it appears that “chitarino” is simply another name for the lute, especially a small lute since the word is a diminutive, and it owes its enduring

bona et bella cithara piccola per uso nostro . . . de quante corde parera a uii” (a good and beautiful little cithara for our use . . . of as many strings as you think fit). Excerpts from both letters are published in A. Bertolotti, Musici alla Corte de Gonzaga in Mantova dal secolo XV al XVIII (Milan: Ricordi, 1890), 15.


57 See above, nn. 11–12.

58 Quoted in Lockwood, “Pietrobono and the Instrumental Tradition,” 127, n. 38. It is not known if he went.
Table 1. The terminology of plucked instruments in fifteenth-century Italian sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Vernacular</th>
<th>Latin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1409–11</td>
<td>Brescia</td>
<td>liuto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.1415</td>
<td>Orvieto</td>
<td>liuto, chitarra, cetera</td>
<td>(Prodenzani)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1416</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before</td>
<td>Rimini</td>
<td>quitarra, liuto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1419</td>
<td>Ferrara</td>
<td>chitarino</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1420s</td>
<td>Ferrara</td>
<td>citharinus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1430s</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>liuto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1440s</td>
<td>Brescia</td>
<td>liuto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ferrara</td>
<td>chitarino</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fano</td>
<td>liuto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1450s</td>
<td>Ferrara</td>
<td>citarino, chitarino</td>
<td>testudo, lyra, chelys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>liuto</td>
<td>(Battista Guarino)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>liuto, leguto, laguto,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>layuto, citara, cithara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cetera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cornazzano; in verse)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1460s</td>
<td>Ferrara</td>
<td>chitarino, chitarrino,</td>
<td>testudo, chelys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>chitarin, liuto</td>
<td>(Battista Guarino)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>leyuto, lijutto, liuto,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>liuto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Siena</td>
<td>leiuto</td>
<td>liutus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>liuto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1470s</td>
<td>Ferrara</td>
<td>chitarino, chitarin</td>
<td>cythara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>liuto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>layuto, leyuto, leguto,</td>
<td>cithara, lyra</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ligato</td>
<td>lyra (Aurelio Brandolini)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>liuto, laut</td>
<td>lyra, chelis, testudo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bologna</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Beroaldo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1478–79</td>
<td>Capua</td>
<td></td>
<td>cythara (Aurelio Brandolini)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1480s</td>
<td>Ferrara</td>
<td>chitarino, chitarrino,</td>
<td>lyra, cithara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mantua</td>
<td>leuto</td>
<td>lyra (Ramos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>cythara (but = viola)</td>
<td>testudo, cithara, lyra,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bologna</td>
<td>liuto</td>
<td>lyra, leutum, viola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td></td>
<td>sine arculo, ghiterra,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cetula, tambura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>lauti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1489</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>lauta (in an Italian account)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1490s</td>
<td>Ferrara</td>
<td>chitarino; cythara</td>
<td>cythara (Poliziano)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mantua</td>
<td>liuto, leuto</td>
<td>lytus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>citharra (but = lira da braccio)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>liuto</td>
<td>cythara (Poliziano)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>lautos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>lauto, liuto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verona</td>
<td></td>
<td>cithara (Aurelio Brandolini)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCES. The information is drawn from many different sources, manuscript (mainly the Ferrarese and Milanese sources) and printed; for the latter see the books and articles listed in the footnotes. For terms used in prose and poetry the name of the author is given in parentheses.
renown to Pietrobono himself, who is always called "dal Chitarino," from his first appearance in 1441 to his death in 1497. True, in the early years he needed to be distinguished from two other contemporaries named Pietrobono (though he does have a family name, Burzelli), but the instrument by which he is known never changes. I propose that the term "chitarino" was invented or used by humanists at the Ferrarese court in the early fifteenth century. The great luminary was Guarino Guarini, who had been hired by Niccolò III in 1429 as the tutor of Leonello, Niccolò’s illegitimate son and designated successor. Searching for a suitable Latin term for the lute, a humanist would have chosen either kithara or lyra, both from the Greek: these indicate essentially the same instrument, the ancient lyre, although the humanists may not have been aware that kithara is the professional version, lyra the amateur one. Both were played with a plectrum. It is perhaps telling that the Italian word is spelled with chi rather than ci, ensuring the sound of a hard c, matching the k in kithara.

Pietrobono was in Leonello’s service even before Leonello became marquess in December 1441, and was the recipient of gifts from him in addition to his salary, including LM (lire marchesan) 50 to purchase a house in 1446. In that same year Leonello ordered that 20 soldi be
added to Pietrobono’s salary every month “to buy the necessary strings for the chitarini (citharinis) he plays.” Leonello knew how likely it was for the strings to break, especially the top strings, on which Pietrobono specialized; he himself owned a chitarino, and we have a record of strings being purchased for it in 1437. Pietrobono might indeed have been his teacher. In Angelo Decembrìo’s dialogue De politia litteraria, written in 1462 but set at the court of Ferrara in the 1440s and 1450s, Leonello is made to say, in Latin, that “it is not unfitting to have a cithara in the library, if you sometimes take pleasure in it.” Throughout the century humanists used the Latin terms cithara and lyra interchangeably for the lute (see Table 1 above), just as they understood the two terms to refer to one instrument, the ancient lyre. The word lyra is favored in the context of Latin metrical verse: it fits perfectly as the last word of a pentameter (see examples below). Although “cithara” could also be used in Latin verse, this term occurs much less often, perhaps because the poets wanted to avoid the likeness to a lower-class instrument such as the gittern.

Thus I propose that the answer to the first problem is that the chitarino is not a gittern, except perhaps in Pietrobono’s young years, but a small lute, and it was as a lutenist that he achieved his fame. As to the second,
in Pietrobono’s early career and at least until 1473 it was played with a plectrum, as noted by the poets. By the end of the century, especially in the context of teaching songs to his pupils, he probably played with his fingers as well; the reports of his performances do not clarify this question.

How Did Pietrobono Perform?

Did Pietrobono sing, or did he only play the lute? This is perhaps the most vexed question, and scholars have come up with a number of different and conflicting opinions. In a few cases these were based on contemporary reports of Pietrobono’s performances as they became available, but mostly they derive from the pure imagination of what lutenists did in the fifteenth century. The most common idea is that Pietrobono improvised on his chitarino over a tenor melody played by his tenorista, as the name suggests. He had several tenoristi over his lifetime, as mentioned earlier, but it is never said exactly on what instrument they played or how they performed; this is part of the problem. There is an important exception, however, to which I shall return.

Terminology muddies the question, just as it did with the question of the chitarino, because sometimes Pietrobono is called a citaredo (Latin citharoedus). In classical usage, a citharode or citharoedus is one who sings to the kithara, not one who merely plays it. When the term citharoedus is used by ordinary people, however, including Pietrobono himself, it is more likely intended as the standard Latin term for a lutenist. Even the humanists were sometimes prone to misunderstand the difference. The Bolognese humanist Filippo Beroaldo, for example, in his epigram on Pietrobono, calls him a citharoedus, but he nowhere mentions singing, though many of the ancient musicians to whom he likens Pietrobono did sing to the lyre:

see Victor Coelho and Keith Polk, Instrumentalists and Renaissance Culture, 1420–1600: Players of Function and Fantasy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 234–38. The three-stringed lute in the Palazzo Schifanoia fresco shown in their Fig. 6.2 (p. 236) appears to be an artistic anomaly; the lute shown in Figure 2 on p. 41, dating from 1453, already has four double courses.  
50 In addition to a number of Ferrarese documents that call him “citaredu,” Pietrobono signs a letter to Francesco Gonzaga, Marchese of Mantua, in January 1488 as “Petrus Bonus Ferrarien. Citaredus.” The autograph signature is reproduced in Bertolotti, Musici alla Corte dei Gonzaga, 13.
Epigramma ad Petrum bonum Cytharedum

Iam cedat Thamyras: iam Methymneus Arion:
   Cedant Threicìq plectra canora lyrè.
Cedat et Amphion Dirceus: cedat Olympus.
   Et Timothei docta Linique chelis.
Et cum Terpandro cedat crinitus Ioppas:
   Blandaque Chironis barbyta nubigenae.
Cedat et archadicus deus: et Patareus Apollo
   Et lyrici vates: Thespiadumque chorus.
En Citharoedus adest çvi nova gloria nostri:
   Petrus cognomen ex bonitate trahens.
5
Hic celeri dulces percurrit pollice nervos:
   Et movet artifici mobilitate manus.
Exprimit hic fidibus resonantia verba canoris:
   Est testudo loquax huius in arbitrio.
Perstringunt acies oculorum et lumina fallunt
   Petri docta manus articulique leves.
Hunc post fata volet summi regnator Olympi:
   Hunc volet infernus Tartareusque pater.
O Bone ter foelix: qui post tua fata: tonantis
10
Aut Iouis Elysii qui cytharoedus eris.51
Hunc post fata volet summi regnator Olympi:
   Hunc volet infernus Tartareusque pater.
O Bone ter foelix: qui post tua fata: tonantis
15
Aut Iouis Elysii qui cytharoedus eris.51

Epigram to Pietrobono the citharode

Now let Thamytras yield, now Arion of Methymna;
let the singing plectra of the Thracian [Orpheus's] lyre yield.
Let the Dircean Amphion, too, let Olympus yield,
and the skilled lyre of Timotheus and Linus.
And let Terpander and long-haired Iopas yield,
and the soothing lyre of cloud-born Chiron.
Let the Arcadian god [Pan] and Apollo of Patara yield,
and the lyric poets, and the choir of the Muses from Thespiae.
Lo, a citharode is here, the new glory of our age,
Pietro, who derives his surname from his goodness.
He runs over the sweet strings with his swift thumb [= plectrum],
and moves his hands with skillful speed.

51 From Varia Philippi Baroaldi [sic] opuscula (Paris: Jean Petit, 1510), sig. D5v (first published in Bologna, 1491 as Orationes et quamphares appendiculae versuum); I have normalized the capitalization. A facsimile from another edition is in Émile Haraszti’s article on Pietro Bono in Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 2 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1952), 118. Gallo published only an excerpt (ll. 9–14) in Musica nel castello, 114. The translation here is by Leofranc Holford-Strevens, which differs in some aspects from the passage published in the English translation of Gallo’s book, Music in the Castle, 88. The English edition of this book has the considerable advantage not only of including a translation of the Latin texts (Gallo left them untranslated) but also of an index.
He performs sounding words on songful strings, 
and the tortoise shell [i.e., lute] is vocal under his dominion. 
Pietro’s skilled hand and light fingers 
blind the eyesight and deceive the eyes. 

Him after death shall the ruler of highest Olympus covet, 
him the father of the underworld and Tartarus. 
O thrice-happy Bono, who after thy death wilt be 
the citharode of Thundering Elysian Jove.

Encomiastic verse frequently veers toward the hyperbolic, and this 
youthful effort by Beroaldo proves no exception. Pietrobono exceeds near-
ly all the famed musicians of ancient Greece, mythological and historical: 
Thamyras (who came to a woeful end, having dared to compete with the 
Muses—not the best augury for Pietrobono), Arion (truly the first star 
performer, and the comparison with Pietrobono is apt), Orpheus, Am-
phion, Olympus, Timotheus, Linus, Terpander, Iopas, Chiron, Pan, and 
Apollo, as well as all the lyric poets and the Muses. Coveted after death by 
Pluto and Jupiter, Pietrobono will be won by the latter, and will become 
his citharode. But not a word is said about Pietrobono singing, which 
would be the province of the citharode. Instead, Beroaldo marvels at the 
dazzling swiftness of his fingers and the plectrum: the resounding words 
are emitted not through his mouth but by the singing strings of his lute. 
Sight and sound play equal parts in descriptions of Pietrobono’s perfor-
manences: these are the mark of an eyewitness.

Beroaldo, as Alberto Gallo suggests, possibly heard Pietrobono in Bo-
logna in 1473. In that year the Ferrarese delegation traveling to Naples for 
the marriage of Eleonora d’Aragona to Ercole d’Este passed through the 
city. The marriage was an especially important state occasion: Ercole, a 
duke, had won the daughter of a king, Ferdinand of Aragon, King of Na-
ples, and thereby forged a crucial alliance between the two states. It is to 
the festivities in Naples, where the marriage took place by proxy, that we 
owe our most specific knowledge of Pietrobono’s manner of performance. 
Altogether 518 horses and mules were needed to transport the Ferrarese 
party, their luggage, and gifts for the bride. The delegation was headed 
by Ercole’s brothers Sigismondo and Alberto, with seventy and fifty horses 
each respectively. Matteo Maria Boiardo, the author of Orlando innamora-
to, was allotted ten horses, and the university lecturer and orator Ludovico 
Carbone, on whom below, was given three. The “Sonaduri” on the list are

52 Iopas’s fame as a musician is the subject of a forthcoming article by Evan MacCarthy. 
53 A facsimile of the “Lista de la Cometiva che va a Napoli per la Ill.ma Madona Duchessa 
de Ferrara” was published by Francesco Luisi in “Contributi minimi ma integranti: Note su
headed by “Pietrobono cum lo Suo tenorista,” with three horses, followed by Bernardo todescho and Pedro cantadore, with two horses each; three “sonaduri de viola,” Andrea da Parma, his brother Zampolo, and Rainaldo,\(^{54}\) with one horse each; then five piffari and ten trumpeters.

In his epigram, Beroaldo says nothing about Pietrobono’s tenorista, although the two constantly appear as a pair in the Ferrarese records. The most common idea among scholars is that Pietrobono was a lutenist who played duos with a tenorista, who himself played the lute or a viola. This is uncontroversial; all the contemporary reports concur on this type of performance in general; lute duos and lute and viola duos are very well attested, especially in Germany.\(^{55}\) Reinhard Strohm, however, has suggested that Pietrobono may have played against a vocal tenor.\(^{56}\) We know that some singers were styled “tenorista,” but according to the payment records, Pietrobono’s tenorista was an instrumentalist, though the instrument itself is never specified. (As mentioned above, at the Ferrarese court even some piffari were categorized as “tenorista.”)

The more thorny question is whether Pietrobono himself sang, and this is not so easily answered. Various possibilities have been suggested. Some scholars think of him only as a lute player, while others accept that he also sang, but differ on the nature of that singing. A search through the literature since 1949 yielded the following suppositions, which can be divided into three categories:

1. Pietrobono as purely a lute player:
   - He played solo, embellishing popular melodies.
   - He played duos with a tenorista (a lutenist or viola player).
   - He embellished a cantus against a tenor provided by the tenorista (a lutenist).

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\(^{54}\) Rainaldo is usually called Rainaldo dal Chitarino in Ferrarese documents, though once he is named as “Raynaldus a viola” (ASMo, Mandati in volume 23bis, which unfortunately is only an alfabeto). Bernardo sonadore, who played lute and harp, appears in Ferrarese records in 1472–73, and Pedro the singer is probably Pedro de Nantes de Bretagna soprano, present 1472–76.

\(^{55}\) For ample evidence see Polk, “Voices and Instruments,” esp. 180–81.

\(^{56}\) Reinhard Strohm, *The Rise of European Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 349: “There was also a German–Italian tradition of playing a high part (on lute, harp or chitarino, i.e. gittern) against a vocal tenor; performances of Pietrobono and uses of ‘tenori todeschi’ [referring to a lost Ferrarese manuscript] seem to belong to it.”
2. Pietrobono as a solo singer and instrumentalist:
   - He accompanied himself on the lute while singing.
   - He sang the tenor and played an embellished cantus above it.
   - He was a singer accompanying himself in his early years, then a player of string instruments.

3. Pietrobono as a singer and/or instrumentalist performing with a tenorista:
   - He improvised a discant as a singer or as a lutenist with his tenorista.
   - He played and perhaps sang in a high register, the tenorista playing the tenor.
   - He sang lyric or narrative texts, and played a melodic line in diminution, accompanied by a tenorista (three-part music).
   - He elaborated a cantus on the chitarino from musical motifs provided by the tenorista.

The sheer variety of these proposals stems not only from suppositions about performance practices in the fifteenth century but also from the interpretations of historical sources that mention Pietrobono’s performance. These sources have only gradually become available in modern editions, some as recently as 1992; others are still unpublished. In the first major article to be written on Pietrobono, in 1949, Émile Haraszti quoted from or mentioned the following contemporary sources:

- Aurelio Brandolini, *De laudibus musicae et Petri Boni Ferrariensis* (manuscript in the Biblioteca Capitolare, Lucca; the beginning and ending lines of one poem are quoted)
- Johannes Tinctoris, *De inventione et usu musicae* (the passage on Pietrobono)
- Antonio Cornazzano, *Libro dell’arte del danzare* (the proverb on Pietrobono cited above)
- Battista Guarino, distichs “Ad Petrum Bonum chitaristam rarissimum” (mentioned only)
- Filippo Beroaldo, the epigram cited above (given in full)
- Paolo Cortesi, *De cardinalatu* (the passage on Pietrobono)

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57 Haraszti, “Pietro Bono, luthiste de Mathias Corvin.”
Haraszti mostly let the documents speak for themselves but did suggest that Pietrobono transcribed and developed “popular melodies,” referring to Tinctoris’s mention of “superinventiones.”

By 1955 Haraszti had become aware of the long narrative poem by Antonio Cornazzano dedicated to Francesco Sforza, the Sforziade, and he quoted from it the lines describing Pietrobono singing Viola Novella, the story of an adulterous wife killed by her husband, as well as other stories about Giovanna II of Naples and Attendolo Sforza and about Isotta and Sigismondo Malatesta. Cornazzano’s description suggests that Pietrobono is a canterino, a poet who declaims narrative verse to the accompaniment of a lute or lira da braccio. It is Cornazzano’s epic poem, completed in 1459, that made scholars aware that Pietrobono not only played the lute but also sang. This source, however, and another poem by Cornazzano dedicated to Borso d’Este are problematic as eyewitnesses for Pietrobono’s performance, as I shall show below.

Once it was realized that Pietrobono sang as well as played the lute, scholars put forth a variety of ideas on the nature of his vocal performances. Many say that he accompanied himself on the lute while singing, or that he improvised a discant as a singer to the accompaniment of his tenorista. Reinhard Strohm suggested various other possibilities: that he “probably sang a tenor line—his own register—while playing an ornamented discant line on the instrument,” as would a singer to the lira da braccio, though “the lira could be bowed, producing simple chords above and below the voice.” Alternatively, against his tenorista he “could sing

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58 “Bono transcrit et développe les mélodies populaires, tirant parti, en véritable virtuose, de toutes les possibilités que lui offrait le luth. C’étaient là sans doute, ces superinventiones qu’admirait tant Tinctoris!” (Ibid., 82). Haraszti erroneously refers to Battista Guarino “the elder”; it is Battista, the son of Guarino Guarini (Guarino of Verona), who is meant.

59 Émile Haraszti, “Les Musiciens de Mathias Corvin et de Béatrice d’Aragon,” in La Musique instrumentale de la Renaissance, ed. Jean Jacquot (Paris, 1955), 35–59, at 49. In another article published in the same year, “La Technique des improvisateurs de langue vulgaire et de latin au quattrocento,” Revue belge de musicologie/Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Muziekwetenschap 9 (1955): 12–31, at 25–26, Haraszti again mentions these “principal pieces of his repertory,” Battista Guarinò’s distichs, and the passage from Tinctoris, again suggesting that Pietrobono played “des mélodies populaires” (p. 25). He wondered whether there were any “citharistes” who did not sing, supposing that the two German lutenists mentioned by Tinctoris “étaient également des chanteurs,” although nothing Tinctoris says suggests this. Haraszti also cites Paolo Cortesi’s passage on the style and technique of lutenists in his De cardinalatu of 1510. Pietrobono, Haraszti concludes, was a virtuoso on the lute “qui dépassait de loin les habituels accompagnateurs [i.e., those who sang narrative verse to their own accompaniment], ceux-ci se limitant à quelques accords ou arpèges” (p. 26).

60 The Rise of European Music, 550–51; see also p. 349.
the cantus line, or play it on another lute or gittern (chitarrino).”61 It concerned Strohm, however, that “if he did not perform the tenor, then he would have taken a place in the hierarchy of the music less important than that of his assistant,” and thus he thought it more likely “that Pietrobono sang the tenor line himself and also played an embellished cantus above it.”62 The tenorista, in that case, had responsibility for the contratenor and/or the contratenor bassus. The unspoken assumption is that Pietrobono was singing and playing music from the known repertory, for three voices (if for four voices, leaving out the contratenor altus). Moreover, if he wanted to perform textless music, Strohm suggests, “a professional such as Pietrobono would not be caught mumbling a garbled or incomplete French Bergerette or rondeau, as the Ferrarese manuscript Cas [Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, MS 2856] has it. Instead he would work out a suitable Italian text—a barzelletta or other ballata species for the Bergerette, a strambotto or any other symmetrical pattern for the rondeau quatrains, treated as two strains.”63

Just how Pietrobono improvised has also been a matter of speculation. We have no treatises on instrumental improvisation at his time, as we do for the sixteenth century.64 Up to that point, when improvisation is discussed, it takes the form of singing “super librum,” that is, adding at sight one or more contrapuntal lines above a chant melody, read from written notation in a book, or in special cases against a melody from a polyphonic composition.65 Instrumental improvisation at the time of

61 Ibid., 365.
62 Ibid. On one lutenist’s reaction to this notion, see below, n. 87.
63 Ibid., 565.
64 Howard Mayer Brown’s Embellishing 16th-Century Music (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) only briefly mentions improvisation in the fifteenth century, referring to Ernst T. Ferand, Die Improvisation in der Musik (Zurich, 1938) and his anthology Die Improvisation in Beispielen aus neun Jahrhunderten abendländischer Musik (Cologne, 1956); see pp. vii–viii. For the fifteenth century, see the wide-ranging article by Philippe Canguilhem, “Improvisation as Concept and Musical Practice in the Fifteenth Century,” in The Cambridge History of Fifteenth-Century Music, ed. Busse Berger and Rodin, 149–63, which discusses instrumental as well as vocal improvisation. The closest we might come to understanding improvisatory practices may well be the practical sources, such as Conrad Paumann’s Fundamentum organisandi. Ross W. Duffin, however, has given careful attention to procedures of improvisation in fifteenth-century music and provided an enlightening set of instructions for two to four voices, both simple and diminished, in “Contrapunctus Simplex et Diminutus: Polyphonic Improvisation for Voices in the Fifteenth Century,” Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis 31 (2007): 69–90.
65 The prime source is Tinctoris’s Librer de arte contrapuncti, where he distinguishes between singing “super librum” and singing a res facta, a fully notated polyphonic composition, an “opus perfectum et absolutum,” as Nicolaus Listenius was to call it in 1537. The literature on this topic is now substantial. Fauxbourdon and faburden can also be
Pietrobono suggests two things: (1) a solo performance in which the performer is completely free, or (2) something similar to singing super librum, where the performer knows the exact duration of the notes of the fundamental melodic line against which he is playing or singing and may counterpoint against it as he wishes. The first possibility is less likely in Pietrobono’s case, though Cornazzano suggests it: lyric or narrative verse sung to the accompaniment of a lute or lira da braccio. Such a performance is probably dependent on various melodic formulae appropriate for singing verse: it is the words that are important, not the music. As far as I am aware, we have no precise knowledge of the musical aspect of such a performance, which suggests that for the listeners it had little impact. Pietrobono, however, normally performed with a tenorista, although the latter’s role may have been so overshadowed by his companion’s dazzling performance that most observers fail to mention it. Thus, the second possibility, and one that is suggested by more of the contemporary reports, is more plausible: Pietrobono heavily ornamented the melodic line of a known song on his chitarino against a slower-moving tenor played by the tenorista. For those scholars who believed that Pietrobono declaimed narrative verse to his own accompaniment, the function of a tenorista presents a conundrum, and has been ignored.

With so much speculation and so little foundation for it, it is imperative to evaluate the contemporary reports of Pietrobono’s performances.

**Contemporary Witnesses**

At the time Émile Haraszti wrote his articles on Pietrobono, only a few of the eyewitness reports on his style of performance were known, and most of those only partially. More have become available since then and some only recently. The best sources, it turns out, are not letters or diplomatic dispatches, but the reactions of poets to hearing Pietrobono perform. These are mostly in verse and, except for one author, in humanistic Latin. Although they may sound excessively flowery and flattering to modern tastes, they may accurately reflect specific aspects considered improvisation, though the strict rules leave little leeway to the singer.

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66 Haraszti’s article on “La Technique des improvisateurs” has many references to declaiming narrative verse with the accompaniment of a musical instrument, but is in fact very unspecific about “la technique,” suggesting merely that the singer played a few chords or arpeggios (pp. 27–28).

67 For example, Haraszti was either unaware of Pietrobono’s tenorista or did not know what to make of the term; it is not mentioned in either of his articles.
of Pietrobono’s performance, especially when the poets themselves were musicians.

Antonio Cornazzano

Although Haraszti cited a few lines from Antonio Cornazzano’s Sforziade as evidence of Pietrobono’s repertory as a singer of tales,68 it was only with Nino Pirrotta’s publication of a substantial passage from this lengthy narrative poem, dedicated to Francesco Sforza and his exploits, that Cornazzano’s very interesting remarks became available.69 Antonio Cornazzano (c.1432–1483 or 1484), a poet from Piacenza, was attached to the Sforza court for a period during the 1450s and 1460s. He is better known to musicologists as the author of the Libro dell’arte del danzare, dedicated to Francesco Sforza’s nine-year-old daughter Ippolita Maria in 1455, the year in which she was betrothed to Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, from which it is presumed that Cornazzano was her dancing master.70 The Sforziade was

70 The treatise was based on that of Domenico da Piacenza, from whom Cornazzano claims he learned to dance. The original has not survived, but a copy dedicated to Ippolita’s half-brother Sforza Secondo in 1465 is in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Capp. 203, and is available online at http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Cappon.203. This version was somewhat revised for the new recipient, but how remains unknown. The Cornazzano scholar Diego Zancani believes that the second version of the treatise was originally intended for Galeazzo Maria Sforza, since the dedication fits his biography better than that of Sforza Secondo; he interprets “secondo” to mean that Galeazzo would eventually become the second Sforza duke, as heir presumptive; see Roberto L. Bruni and Diego Zancani, Antonio Cornazzano: La tradizione testuale (Florence: Olschki, 1992), 31–32. Perhaps Cornazzano discovered that his intended dedication to the young Galeazzo had been pre-empted by the treatise of the more professional dancing master Guglielmo Ebreo, De practica seu arte tripudii, dedicated to Galeazzo in 1463. On this treatise see Guglielmo Ebreo of Pesaro, De practica seu arte tripudii. On the Practice of Art of Dancing, ed., trans., and intro. by Barbara Sparti (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). For a modern edition of Cornazzano’s treatise see Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music: Twelve Transcribed Italian Treatises and Collections in the Tradition of Domenico da Piacenza, i: Treatises and Music, trans. and annotated by A. William Smith, Dance and Music Series no. 4 (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1995). Although it might be wondered how fa-
written over a period of time and finished, he stated, in 1459.\footnote{On Cornazzano see the article in the \textit{Dizionario biografico degli italiani} by Paola Faren-ga (1983), online at www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-cornazzano_(Dizionario-Biografico)/, and Bruni and Zancani, \textit{Antonio Cornazzano}.}

Cornazzano is the only witness to Pietrobono's performances who wrote in Italian, but even so his verse is not easy to decipher. He set his “Laudes Petri Boni Cythariste” in Canto VIII of the \textit{Sforziade} at the wedding of Francesco Sforza and Bianca Maria Visconti, which took place in Cremona in 1441. After the banquet, Pietrobono was “called from a far distance . . . to delight the ears with sweet harmony.” After comparing him with Apollo and Orpheus, Cornazzano claims that he could, with “his struck string,” awaken the dead and mollify stubborn souls. With his “happy voices” he could arrest rivers and build walls, and with his “learned and sweet hand” turn all to stone (the specific aspects of his performance, here and below, are italicized):

\begin{verbatim}
A questo alto triumpho era chiamato
un Piero Bono da lontana via,
che in musica le stelle havean dotato
pascer l'orechia di dolce armonia.
Non havrá el mondo el più prestante deo,
ni accender fiama in cor, ch'el là non sia.
Ancho di forma el primo cithareo
è questi, apena cavo fu vivendo,
excepto Apollo, el bel corpo d'Orpheo.
E per quanto da lui de ciò m'intendo
a soa comparation nullo reservo,
e l'armonie che i ciel fano suspendo.
Quest'un già puote col percosso nervo
svegliar gli corpi nelle sepolture,
et adolcire ogni'animo protervo;
gli attracti sensi da tucte altre cure
subvertir puote e con sue voci liete
fermar gli fiumi e dar strada a le mure.
Quasi ebriati nel fonte di Lethe
trava a sè il cor la man si dolce dotta
e convertia ciascun a Anaxarethe.
\end{verbatim}

To this high triumph one Piero Bono was called from a distance, to whom the stars had given the gift to nourish the ear with sweet harmony. The world will not have a greater god, nor inflamer of the heart, than him. Even in beauty he is the first citharode, just below Apollo if he were still living and
the fair body of Orpheus. And for how much I understand of this from him, I reserve no one to compare with him, and suspend the harmonies that the heavens hold. This is one who can, with his struck string, awaken the dead in their graves and sweeten every stubborn soul; he can overturn all senses distracted by other worries, and with his happy voices stop rivers and cause walls to be built. His sweet and learned hand drew all to him, as if they were inebriated by Lethe's fountain, and everyone was turned into Anaxarete.

Then Cornazzano turns to Pietrobono’s repertory. He sang to the “cetra ad ordinata frotta” tales of modern lovers: how the Lord of Rimini had Isotta, praising the Venetian shore where she was born; how the King of Aragon had the most beautiful Lucretia; the sad end of Viola Novella, condemned to the underworld, followed by her righteous lover; and a veiled reference to an inconstant woman, by whom he meant Queen Giovanna of Naples, among whose lovers he seems to place “the great Sforza.” Cornazzano ends with a more specific tale about Francesco’s amorous exploits in Acquapendente:

Cantava in cetra ad ordinata frotta
l’amor d’alcun moderni chi s’appretia:
come el Signor d’Arimini hebbe Ysotta.
Laudava la marina de Venetia
ov’ella naque, e quinci entraiva in canto
come el re d’Aragona hebbe Lucretia.

A questa de le belle dava el vanto,
e dicea, in aer più d’altro superno,
de Viola novella el fine e ’l pianto.
Metea costei dannata al campo Averno
e comendava el giustissimo amante
che andò a vederla fino entro lo ’nferno.
D’una madonna assai poco constante
dicea l’ardor con la corrente spanna,
e per coprirla molto andava errante;
pur s’intendea la regina Giohana,
e fra gli suoi amator par che mettea
el magno Sforça chi la vide a canna.
Molto mostrava che tacito ardea,
ma a ciò che pervenisse el cuore ardente
lassò in dubio el si e ’l no, s’el la tenea.

Per singular canzone estremamente
dicea d’unaltra l’inflammationi
passando el Conte sotto Aquapendente.72

He sang to the cithara to an attentive audience the loves of some moderns that are [most] praised, such as how the Lord of Rimini obtained Isotta. He praised the shore of Venice where she was born, and then began to sing how the king of Aragon had Lucrezia. He exalted her above the other beauties, and [then] declaimed, in a more celestial vein, the end and the grief of Viola Novella. He put her, damned, in the field of Avernus and commended her most righteous lover, who went to see her all the way to hell. Of a highly inconstant woman he declaimed the ardor with his agile hand, and to cover it up he greatly wandered; nevertheless, one understood Queen Joanna, and among her lovers it appeared that he placed the great Sforza, who saw her at Canna. He indicated that he burned for her in silence, but of what became of his burning heart he left in doubt the yes and no, whether he had her. For a singular song at the end he sang of another woman’s flames of love, as the Count passed under Aquapendente.  

One wonders about the reaction of Francesco’s bride to these tales! But here we can detect Cornazzano’s propensity to fictionalize for the sake of a good story. Certainly, 1441 is an implausibly early date for him to be an eyewitness, since he was born c.1432. Moreover, the protagonists of these stories can be identified, and some of the events postdate 1441. In his commentary on the passage, Pirrotta identified Isotta degli Atti and Sigismondo Malatesta, Lucrezia d’Alagno and Alfonso of Aragon, Viola Novella and Malatesta Ungaro (Galeotto Malatesta), Joanna II of Naples and Attendolo Sforza (Francesco’s father), and Francesco’s long-standing mistress Giovanna, called la Colombina, who was the mother of his children Polissena (b. 1428), Sforza Secondo (b. 1433), and two others who died young. The story of the adulterous Viola Novella, killed by her husband, and her lover Malatesta Ungaro was recounted in ballads and can be dated to 1358, the year of Malatesta’s pilgrimage to St. Patrick’s Purgatory in Ireland. Queen Joanna II of Naples, who was rumored to have many lovers, died in 1435. The love affairs of Isotta degli Atti and Sigismondo Malatesta and of Lucrezia d’Alagno and Alfonso of Aragon, however, took place later than 1441. Isotta gave birth to Sigismondo’s first son in 1448, and eventually married him in 1456. Lucrezia’s relationship with Alfonso V probably dates from 1448; Alfonso failed in his attempt in 1457 to get Pope Calixtus III to annul his marriage with his estranged queen, who remained in Spain, in order to marry Lucrezia. These were fairly recent events when Cornazzano was completing his poem in 1459. Clearly, he was a firm believer in poetic license.

73 The translations are mine. I am very grateful to Diego Zancani for his help in interpreting, as he put it, Cornazzano’s contortions.
74 Pirrotta, “Music and Cultural Tendencies,” 145.
Cornazzano’s report about Pietrobono’s singing narrative verse thus can be discounted on chronological grounds. It is not inconceivable, however, that Pietrobono was in Cremona at the wedding in October 1441; the relations between Niccolò III and Francesco Sforza were cordial, and both Francesco and his bride Bianca Maria Visconti had spent time at the Este court. Moreover, it is very likely that a princely delegation from Ferrara attended the festivities. But that Cornazzano had heard Pietrobono in Cremona is highly unlikely. Cornazzano perhaps expected no one to have been at the festivities who could have contradicted him, and besides, all poets lie; we do not expect footnotes. In fact, Cornazzano is being very conventional: such performances of narrative verse were a set feature at banquets. There might well have been a singer at the wedding feast, but it was not Pietrobono.

If not in Cremona in 1441, when might Cornazzano have heard Pietrobono perform? Perhaps in Milan. From a letter of Francesco Sforza to Borso d’Este of November 17, 1456, we know that Pietrobono had been in Milan on a visit; Francesco commends him highly, “both for his virtues and especially for his playing; we believe the world has no one comparable.”75 Quite possibly he was also in Milan the previous year, when Beatrice d’Este, the daughter of Niccolò d’Este and Borso’s half-sister, married Tristano Sforza; in the Libro dell’arte dei danzare Cornazzano held up Beatrice as a model for Ippolita as “regina delle feste.”76 Cornazzano probably heard Pietrobono perform when he was in Milan in 1455, and he certainly heard Pietrobono’s performances in Reggio in June 1465, when Borso d’Este received Ippolita Maria Sforza and her entourage as she passed through the city on her journey to Naples to join her new husband, Alfonso, Duke of Calabria; Cornazzano evidently was part of the delegation. The occasion is celebrated in one section of his long narrative poem De excellentium virorum principibus, of which he wrote two versions, one in Italian and the other in Latin. Both are dedicated to Borso d’Este, and the presentation copies survive in the Biblioteca Estense e Universitaria in Modena. Again the occasion is a banquet. Now Pietrobono is said to have played the lute and sung about Vulcan’s entrapment of Venus and Mars:

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75 “Petro Bono è venuto qui da nuy ad visitarne quale habiamo veduto volentieri, sia per le soe virtuti et maxime del sonare, che crediamo il mondo non habia el suo paro”; Barblan, “Vita musicale alla corte sforzesca,” 803.

76 This may have been the occasion when Francesco engaged Pietrobono to teach his German lute player Stefano; see above at n. 23. See below on Cornazzano’s description of the wedding festivities.
And the one who brings Paradise down to earth and encloses all the angels within a lute, Pietrobono, plays to the seated throng. He opens the ears to the longing-for fruit, and against love to obstinate hearts with that graceful hand suddenly sings of Venus, the shameful thief, trapped nude in the net, and of the flocks the transformed Jove lines up in a squadron.

The expression is slightly ambiguous: with his “graceful hand” Pietrobono “sings of Venus . . . caught nude in the net” by Vulcan. It is the lute playing, however, that “brings Paradise down to earth,” and in an especially felicitous expression, Pietrobono is admired for “enclosing all the angels within a lute.”

The Latin version is slightly different:

Discumbunt dapibus: tum discumbentibus astans
petrus celesti personat arte bonus. [Petrusbonus]

Idalii surdas ad iussa cupidinis aures
pandit: sub tremula cor salit omne manu. [Mars]

Tum religat s^uum Vulcani ad re^tia Martem.
dii rident: lachrymat nuda pudore Venus. [Venus]

Deprehensumque Iouem furto meretrice iuuencia
concinit: in celebres omnis it aula iocos. [Jupiter]

They leave the feast; then standing by them as they leave Pietrobono resounds with heavenly art. He opens deaf ears to the commands of Idalian Cupid; under his quick-moving hand every heart leaps. Then he ties savage Mars to Vulcan’s nets; the gods laugh; naked Venus weeps for shame. He sings of Jupiter caught in adultery with the harlot heifer; the whole hall falls into abundant jests.

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77 De excellentium virorum principibus, Modena, Biblioteca Estense, MS α.P.6.4, fol. 70v. The MS is online at http://bibliotecaestense.beniculturali.it/info/img/mss/i-mo-beu-alfa.p.6.4.html.

Here the “graceful hand” becomes the “quick-moving (trembling) hand,” a visual marker that indicates an eyewitness report. There is no mention of the lute (apart from the reference to the hand), but Pietrobono still sings of the entrapment of Venus and Mars and the laughter of the gods.

The same poem also includes a section on the wedding of Tristano Sforza and Beatrice d’Este. The marriage took place in Ferrara on April 6, 1455, followed by extensive celebrations in Milan that went on into May. The episode is effusive in its praise of Beatrice; Cornazzano mentions that he had seen her dancing, “appearing to be an angel suspended in air.” This recalls his praise of Beatrice quoted earlier (framed as a “Ferrarese proverb”) in the Libro dell’arte del danzare: “Chi vole uedere el paradiso in terra / ueggia Madonna Beatrice in su una festa.” Nothing is said about Pietrobono on this occasion; I hypothesize that he was in Milan as part of the Ferrarese delegation bringing the bride, but he was surely at the festivities accompanying the wedding in Ferrara. Cornazzano himself may have been in Ferrara from time to time in the 1450s, since his father Bonifacio occasionally held office there.

How likely is it that Pietrobono could sing narrative verse, as Cornazzano claims? Pirrotta took the phrase “cantava in cetra ad ordinata frotta” to mean that he sang a ballata, or poems with irregular line lengths (frottola being a diminutive of frotta), such as a capitolo or terza rima, or sirventese. “Ad ordinata frotta,” however, might mean the ordered arrangement of the songs, or as translated here, “to an attentive audience”; perhaps it was a stretch to find a rhyme word to go with “dotta” and “Ysotta.” As the son of a barber-surgeon, following in his father’s footsteps in his early career, it is very unlikely that Pietrobono’s education encompassed the rhetorical skills that would have enabled him to improvise narrative verse, let alone to possess the historical knowledge involved in recounting these tales. Not a single later eyewitness report of Pietrobono’s performances mentions.

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80 De excellentium virorum principibus (Italian), fol. 68v: “Et io lo uista alcuna volta in ballo / tal che d’uno Angel per aer suspenso / e chi intende el mistre l’ha tolta in fal-lo.” The much shorter Latin version does not mention her dancing. (While Cornazzano wished to flatter Borso by dedicating the poem to him in both languages, he knew that the marquess did not read Latin.)

81 Diego Zancani (pers. comm. February 8, 2016).

82 Pirrotta, “Music and Cultural Tendencies,” 146.
singing. Hence some scholars have suggested that he sang in the early part of his career, but then turned to instrumental performance. I do not mean to suggest that Cornazzano had no knowledge of Pietrobono as a performer and that his account was purely fictional. By the 1460s Cornazzano had certainly had the opportunity to hear him perform in Milan, Reggio, and probably Ferrara. But he may have thought that the status of a player of musical instruments was too low to justify praise, on a par with minstrels, and that mere instrumentalists were unworthy of being featured at a noble banquet, as opposed to playing in the background. He may therefore have inflated Pietrobono’s status by attributing to him the admirable qualities of an improviser of narrative verse, though he stopped short of claiming that he sang Latin verse.

The more interesting, but equally problematic, part of Cornazzano’s characterization of Pietrobono as a performer concerns the technical terms he used to describe his performance on the lute. I mentioned above Beroaldo’s evocation of the “percusso nervo” that could awaken the dead, and the sweet and learned “hand” that could turn listeners to stone. Less clear is Cornazzano’s “sue voci liete,” “his happy voices,” that can stop rivers and build walls: the plural form suggests that he means the sounds emitted by the plucked strings, not Pietrobono’s own singing voice; indeed, other witnesses specifically call these instrumental sounds “voices.”

Cornazzano deems Pietrobono’s last song at the 1441 banquet a “singular canzone,” which indirectly refers to Francesco Sforza’s mistress La Colombina, who lived in Acquapendente. This performance moves him to use technical musical terms. Pietrobono is said to have performed in the following manner:

E la guidava tucta in semitoni,
proportionando e sincopando sempre,
50
e fugiva el tenore a i suoi cantoni.

Tanto expedita, chiare e dolce tempe
s’udiron mai, oymé ch’io el posso dire:
quale cor si temprato è che amor non stempre?

Quinci scendeva in languido finire,
tal che fe’ punto fino in su la rosa
55
e una pausa per duol vene a tegnire.83

And he guided it all in semitones,
always using proportions and syncopations,
and he imitated the tenor on his cantoni.

83 Ibid., 145. The translation is mine.
Such quick, clear, and sweet temperings
were never heard—alas, I can say it:
what heart is so tempered that love does not unsettle it?
Thence he descended to a languid finish,
such that he came to a stop on the rose,
and a dolorous pause was sustained.

Pirrotta was very skeptical about Cornazzano’s musical knowledge. First, he found it hard to believe that the song was “all in semitones,” “made extensive use of proportions and syncopations, and had its tenor fugally imitated on the lower strings of the accompanying instrument.” He continued:

It seems to me that we have here one more instance of a poet (Cornazzano) using technical terms just because of their sound; or even inventing them, for I have never found before the lower strings of an instrument called cantoni (Cornazzano must have derived this term from cantino, a diminutive of canto, which is the proper name for the upper string). . . . He describes the languid descending end of the song as coming to a “fine point on the ‘rose’”; but, of course, the nearer Pietro Bonò’s fretting fingers came down to the “rose” of his instrument, the higher must have been the sounds produced by the strings. Should we suppose that what Cornazzano had in mind was the converging motions of a descending vocal part and an ascending instrumental accompaniment?\(^\text{64}\)

The only problematic term here is “cantoni.” The highest string of a lute was the “canto,” “cantino,” or “cantarello”; Cornazzano may indeed have invented the name “cantoni,” grasping for a rhyme with “semitoni.”\(^\text{65}\) We know from other sources that Pietrobonò favored playing in the high range, and therefore with a small lute.\(^\text{66}\) Technically, he would not have played “all in semitones,” but the very fast notes of his heavy ornamentation, indeed using proportions and syncopations (see below on Pietrobonò’s repertory),

\(^{64}\) Ibid.
\(^{66}\) Paolo Cortesi, in his De cardinalatu of 1510, singles him out in this respect: “Petrus Bonus Ferrariensis, and those who derived from him, often availed themselves of the repetition in the high region” (Pirrotta, “Music and Cultural Tendencies,” 154). Cortesi’s ornate Latin reads: “Petrus Bonus Ferrariensis & hi qui ab eo manarunt, frequenter, per hyperboleon iteracione uetebantur” (ibid., 150). “Hyperboleon” is the highest of the Greek tetrachords. Cortesi contrasts this style, played with the plectrum, with the more modern practice of playing polyphonically with the fingers, allowing “the sense of the ear” to “be filled with perfect sweetness” (ibid., 154).
might strike a listener as a whirl of sounds in which the individual notes were hardly distinguishable. Pirrotta is right that “descending” to the rose is a contradiction, because the highest pitches occur when the top string is stopped near the rose. But “scendere” can also mean “terminare, finire,” or just possibly Cornazzano meant “ascendere.” Alternatively, he could have been thinking in terms of the position of the right hand, not pitch; this would result in a softer, sweeter, and more languid sound. 87 Despite Cornazzano’s claim that this is a song sung by Pietrobono, the description evokes a purely instrumental performance. Moreover, we need to consider this performance in practical terms: it would simply be impossible to perform a heavily diminished melodic line and at the same improvise narrative verse that listeners would be able to understand. 88 In the balance between eyewitness and poet, Cornazzano represents the latter.

Battista Guarino

Battista Guarino (1434–1503) was a younger contemporary of Pietrobono in Ferrara. He was the youngest son of the famed teacher Guarino da Verona. Himself a humanist, who succeeded his father as university professor in 1460, he had close connections with the Ferrarese court. His collection of epigrams, published in Ferrara in 1496 under the title Poema Divo Herculi Ferrariensium Ducit Dicatum, 89 includes a poem “To the rarest citharist Pietro Bono” on fol. 81r:

In Petrum Bonum citharistam rarissimum

Non qui dirceos struxit testudine muros
Dulcibus acquauit te Bone Petre modis.
Nec qui ceruleas curuo Delphine per undas
Fugit ab attonitis carmine remigibus.
Nec te qui siluas traxit Rhodopeus heros:
Ipse nec arguta uincet Apollo lyra.
Siue refers claro laetos modulamine cantus:
Siue refers humili carmina moesta sono:
Exprimis humanas festino pollice uoces
   Et subigis blandam fundere uerba chelym.
Tu potes aerias deducere montibus ornos
   Et saevas querula uoce mouere feras.

87 I am grateful to Uri Smilansky for this suggestion (pers. comm. August 29, 2016).
88 I once asked a lutenist whether he could do that; he looked aghast.
89 Online at http://bibliotecaestense.beniculturali.it/info/img/stp/i-mo-beu-alfa.&.2.28.3.html.
Figure 1. Portrait medal of Pietrobono dal Chitarino by Giovanni Boldù, dated 1457. ©Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

Figure 2. Miniature of a cupid playing a lute in Ugolino da Orvieto, Declaratio musicae disciplinae, illuminated in Ferrara in 1453. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Rossi 455, fol. 1r (detail). ©2017 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana by permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved.
Figure 3. Miniature of a cupid playing a viola in Ugolino da Orvieto, Declaratio musicæ disciplinae, illuminated in Ferrara in 1453. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Rossi 455, fol. 1r (detail). ©2017 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana by permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved.
Figure 4. Johannes Tinctoris, *D’un autre amer* (Segovia, Catedral, MS s.s., fol. 204r). From imslp.org/wiki/Cancionero_de_Segovia.
Figure 5. Anon., *[Gentil madona]*, Perugia, Biblioteca comunale Augusta, MS 1013, fols. 104v–105. Reproduced by permission of the Biblioteca comunale Augusta, Perugia.
Flumina tu sistes placido torrentia cantu:
   Et silicem cogens fila canora sequi.
Quid moror? immites poteris tu flectere manes:
   Duraque flexanmis rumpere fata modis.\(^{50}\)

He who built the walls of Thebes with his lyre [lit. tortoise]
will not match you, Pietrobono, on sweet music,
nor he who fled through the blue waves
on the arching dolphin from oarsmen amazed by song,
nor the Thracian hero who enticed forests to follow him,
nor will Apollo himself best you with his high-sounding lyre.
Whether you present happy songs with a bright tune,
or sad verses with a soft sound,
you produce human voices with your hastening thumb [plectrum],
and make your sweet lyre bring forth words.
You can draw down the lofty elms from the mountains,
and with complaining voice move wild beasts.
You will stop rushing rivers with your calm song,
and compel flint rock to follow your singing strings.
Why do I waste time? You will be able to bend the cruel gods of the underworld,
and break the harsh fates with melodies that sway the spirit.\(^{91}\)

Up until line 8 one might think that Guarino was praising Pietrobono both
as a lutenist and a singer, comparing him to Amphion, who built the walls
of Thebes with the music of his lyre; Arion, whose song attracted a dol-
phin, bringing about his rescue from the sailors who threw him overboard;
Orpheus, who moved trees with his voice and lyre; and Apollo with his
“high-sounding” lyre. “Cantus” and “carmina” too indicate song. Indeed,
Alberto Gallo believed that the poem seems “to refer to the earliest phase of
Pietrobono’s career, when he sang and accompanied himself on the lute.”\(^{92}\)
But then comes the telling phrase: “You produce human voices with your
hastening thumb [plectrum], and make your sweet lyre bring forth words.”

\(^{50}\) Gallo included the poem in his Music in the Castle, 87, but omitted the title and the last six lines. He took it from a MS source, Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, MS lat. XII 135 (= 4100), fol. 54v, where the poem is headed “Eiusdem versus ad Petrum Bonum citharistam.” There are a few differences: in l. 2 Gallo reads “aequabit”; in the printed edition a later hand has changed “aequabit” to “aequavit”; “aequavit,” however, is correct. Line 7 reads “letos claro.” Evan McCarthy kindly supplied me with the last six lines of the MS version, on fol. 55r, in which the last line has “mellifluis” rather than “flexanmis,” and “sonis” has been corrected to “modis.”

\(^{91}\) The translation of the portion presented by Gallo is that by Kathryn Krug in Music in the Castle, revised by Leofranc Holford-Strevens, who also supplied a translation of the last six lines. In line 13 “torrentia” has been emended to “torrentia.” “Torpid” makes no sense in the context, and may either be a typographical or a polar error.

\(^{92}\) Gallo, Music in the Castle, 86–87.
It is the lute that sings, not Pietrobono. These lines are a striking counterpart to Beroaldo’s “He performs sounding words on songful strings, and the tortoise shell is vocal under his dominion.” We do not know about Battista’s practical musical formation, but in his De ordine docendi ac studendi, written in 1459 but published in 1474, he remarks that “One who has attained some knowledge of his art enjoys the playing of an excellent citharode more than one who is ignorant.”93 Like some others, Guarino incorrectly applies the term “citharode” to one who only plays an instrument.

Ludovico Carbone

The Ferrarese humanist Ludovico Carbone (1430–1485) was knowledgeable about music. He studied philosophy, Greek, and Latin in Ferrara, the latter with Guarino da Verona, receiving his doctorate in arts on June 10, 1456. Leonello d’Este, who had been a pupil of Guarino, sent his two half-brothers Rinaldo and Gurone to study with Carbone. He too taught at the university, becoming professor of rhetoric and humanae litterae in 1456.94 His English student John Tiptoft hoped that he could lure him to England in 1460, but Carbone declined.

At a young age Carbone developed the ability to give Latin orations that pleased even those not knowledgeable in Latin through his choice of easily understandable words. He was thus much in demand for orations on many occasions, including the opening of the academic year, funerals, and state visits. The emperor Frederick III conferred on him the title of poet laureate during his visit to Ferrara in 1469 and in his oration, Carbone claimed to have delivered more than 200 orations and written 10,000 lines of verse. His most famous and widely distributed oration is the one he delivered at the funeral of Guarino da Verona. Not surprisingly, he was selected to be part of the delegation sent to Naples in 1473 for the proxy wedding of Ercole d’Este and Eleonora d’Aragona, where he delivered the official oration; he described the journey in his dialogue De Neapolitana profectione.

93 Cited ibid., 97: “pulsante optimo citharoedo magis delectatur qui eius artis cognitio-nem aliquam attingit quam qui ignorat.” The remark arises in the context of knowing long and short vowels, because in poetry the words cannot be distinguished if the meter is ignored; thus in reading poetry, those who know the meter enjoy it more than those who do not. See Battista Guarino, De ordine docendi ac studendi, ed. and trans. Luigi Piacente (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1975), 52.
94 What follows is based on the article by Lao Paoletti in the Dizionario biografico degli italiani, 19 (1976).
Carbone, who came from a mercantile family, must have been a colorful figure at court: he had a mania for wearing elegant clothing and surrounding himself with paintings, statues, and musical instruments, on which he spent extravagantly (Borso often paid his debts). He frequently mentions that he himself sang Latin verses, accompanying himself on an “Apollonian cithara,” and others also noted his facility.95 We have no evidence that his teacher Guarino da Verona did so, except for a remark Carbone put in Guarino’s name as an epitaph in his funeral oration: “Texere perdocui resonanti carmina plectro”; “I taught [them] well how to weave verses with sounding plectrum.”96

Carbone was a keen music lover, and in his oration on the inauguration of Rainaldus de Guarneriis as rector of students at the University of Ferrara (probably in 1458), he praises Rainaldus’s ability to take up the “lyra” at moments of relaxation, finding not absurd the opinions of philosophers that the soul is composed of musical proportions; a well-composed work marvelously captures the ears, whereas they are offended by discordant sounds. He compares perspective to music in this regard as being true to nature: as such, neither deserves to be numbered among the mechanical arts; indeed the Latins and Greeks held both in the highest esteem. (He must have had in mind musical performance, because music itself, that is speculative music, is part of the liberal arts.) Then, in a surprising turn, Carbone directly addresses Duke Borso, taking him to task for letting go of his chapel singers, who used to fill the temple with divine music and the songs of angels.97 If it were in his power, Carbone says, he would do everything possible to persuade Borso to recall his musicians for the greatest delectation of the populace. His fondest desire is to show all men what his feelings are about musicians and painters, music and painting being his great delight after literature.98 In contrast, in his Dia-

95 Gallo, Music in the Castle, 70: “Ego certe versus meos ut plurimum facio apolleneam citharam in manu tenens.”
96 Gallo has brought together various references to Carbone and his appreciation of music; see Music in the Castle, 70–72.
97 Lewis Lockwood notes that at the beginning of his rule (1450) Borso let his chapel singers go and retained only a small cohort of secular musicians; Music in Renaissance Ferrara, 95.
98 Gallo (Music in the Castle, 73) quotes only the passage on taking up the lyra for relaxation. The whole passage, from Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Ottob. lat. 1153, fol. 189r, reads as follows: “Si quando laxandi animi gratia concessam aliquam hilaritatem peteret: lyram sumebat in manus: et continuo labore defessos spiritus dulci harmonia recreabat experimento cognoscens non penitus absurdam esse philosophorum illorum sententiam qui animum musica proporcione constare crediderunt propertea quod temperato concentu mirifice capiantur nostrae aures: inepto vero et absurdo sono
logus de felicitate Ferrarie deque optimo Divi Herculis principatu Carbone praises Ercole for his desire to make the divine cult as magnificent as possible, employing at his own expense “as many outstanding musicians, both German and French, as there are in the Roman Curia so they would artfully sing sufficient Masses and Vespers with such sweet distinction of voices and variety of compositions that, as the poets say, one would seem to be transported to the Blessed Isles.” He does note, however, that many find irksome the length of the masses, though others are impatient to fill their ears with the music as a relief from weightier affairs.99

In the oration Carbone delivered on the occasion of receiving his

 graviter offendantur. Sive in pictura formarum liniamenta considerandus et vivas imaginines defixis oculis intuens aeculum naturae artem contemplabatur quae quidem duae res musicae. et perspectiva nullo modo inter mechanicas artes comnumerandae sunt cum a verissimarum disciplinarum fundamentis orientarum quae apud maiores nostros et latinos et graecos summo in practico et honore furent: quibus et clarissimi principes incredibiliter sunt delectati: quo magis de te certe miratus sum Inclyte Dux [Borso] qui cum omni genere laudis antecessores tuos superare contendas: hoc solum negligere videaris: quia musicae id est cantores illos apud te non retinuere quos totiens divinis modulationibus suis et angelicis cantibus pulcherrimium hoc templum impleverunt. Si quid esse in me facundiae sentirem: totam libenter in eo consumercem ut tibi persuaderem atque in mente ponerem revocandos esse omnino musicos ad maximam populi tui delectationem: nec ob aliam causam cupio ego dari mihi aliquando magnam fortunam nisi ut omnibus hominibus apertissime possim ostendere quals sit animus meus erga musicos et pictores post litteras tamen quae meae deliciae sunt.”

99 “omnes intelligunt: cum videamus cum divino cultui tam sollemniter intendere, sacra magnificentissime facere, tot praestantes musicos & germanos & gallos sumptibus suis tenere qui in romani pontificis curia satis super essent missas & vesperas artificiosae psallentes & concinnentes tanta suavissimam vocum distinctione, modulationalisque varietate servata ut in beatorum insulas ut poetae dicunt transferrir videar cum eis aures adhibeo, quamquam plerisque displicere intelligo tantam missarum longitudinem, sed ii sunt quibus animus iam dudum est impatus [sic for impatient], at sonis & cantibus generosa corda pascuntur, demulcenturque musica, quae ad levandos recreandosque labores a natura tributa est, ut curas cessare faciat... ” Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 8618, fols. 104v–105r. It was Ercole’s habit to have his own singers perform at whatever service he attended, including in the cathedral; this custom is frequently mentioned by the chroniclers, notably Ugo Caleffini. In 1475 Caleffini also remarks that the masses were so long that Ercole’s brothers and the Ferrarese gentlemen rarely attended because they made dinner so late: “La celsitudine del duca ogní matína audiva la sua messa da li suoi cantori in canto cum la sua famiglia et mai non mancò zorno non la audisse mo’ ad una chiesia, mo’ ad un’altra, sed ut plurimum in Nostra Donna de corte, a la quale messa de raro che li fratelli de sua signoria et zentilhominí stesseno, perché durava assai la messa et lo signore molto tardi manzava” (The magnificence of our duke every morning heard Mass sung by his singers with his family and never a day passed that he didn’t hear it, now at one church, now at another, but mostly in Our Lady in the court; his lordship’s brothers and the gentlemen rarely stayed, because the mass was rather long, and the Lord ate very late; Ugo Caleffini, Groniche 1471–1494, ed. Francesco Bocchi et al. (Deputazione provinciale Ferrarese di Storia Patria, Sacri Monumenti, 19; Ferrara, 2006), 108.
doctorate in June 1456 he provides an amusing glimpse of Pietrobono performing during the Corpus Christi procession a few days earlier, “playing his *lyra*, afire like one inspired by a divine power”: *furor poeticus* can equally apply to musical performance.\(^{100}\) Followed by a large and enthusiastic crowd, composed of common people and learned men,

he exulted to no small degree, he cavorted, he could not contain his joy, he tried to outdo himself when he saw that no one was [paying attention to the sacred things, no one to the ceremonies, no one to the prayers, no one] looking at Christ, but everyone had turned toward him, and fixed in his gaze, they marveled at such unheard-of musical allurement that stole each one’s heart away.\(^{101}\)

Is there a god in him, they asked? Who would not scorn Arion, Timotheus, or Orpheus, hearing him? But there is a sting in the tail in Carbone’s remarks, for they end: “Then indeed he thought up new kinds of melodies, [then he repeated the same song with different twistings of the voices], then sweat poured freely from his face; his strings could not take it, and broke from his excessive desire for praise.”\(^{102}\) This is the nightmare of every string player: to have a string break in mid-performance. It is no wonder that Pietrobono received a payment supplementary to his monthly salary to purchase strings for his chitarino! Do we detect an undertone of jealousy in Carbone’s final remark? Carbone himself did not lack in appreciative listeners, but as a university professor he could not become the exhibitionist that Pietrobono was.

Carbone singles out two aspects of Pietrobono’s performance: his physical appearance and his musical technique. Many eyewitnesses remark on Pietrobono’s swift hands as they run up and down and across the strings of the lute; this is commonplace for Carbone, who instead highlights the physical effort that Pietrobono puts into playing his instrument. One could easily substitute the name of any famous rock star in this passage, including perhaps the concomitant “excessive desire for

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\(^{100}\) “*lyra psallendo inflammari quasi divino numine afflatum,*” I quote from the passages given in Gallo, *Music in the Castle*, 89–90, taken from MS Ottob. lat. 1153, fol. 128r. Gallo inadvertently left out some phrases, which I have restored in brackets.

\(^{101}\) “Gaudebat non mediocriter, gestiebat, laetitiam suam capere non poterat, se ipsum superare capatur cum videret neminem ad [sacra, neminem ad ceremonias, neminem ad supplicationes, neminem ad] Christum aspicere, sed in cum omnes conversos, in eius obtutu defixios mirari tam inauditas modulorum illecebras quae cuique animum eripiebat.” Ibid., 89–90.

\(^{102}\) “*tum vero nova melodiarum genera exegitbat, tunc [eandem cantilenam variis vocum flexionibus repetebat:] sudor ab eius ore affatim manabat, nervi sufficere non poterunt, obrumpebantur chordae prae nimia laudis cupiditate.”* Ibid., 90.
praise.” Pietrobono had his fans: Carbone emphasizes the wide social range of the listeners, rapt with attention. Musically, he confirms what we shall find in other reports: Pietrobono thinks up new melodies, probably meaning new ways to ornament the melodic lines, and then repeats the same music with different “twistings of the voices,” different ornamentations. Unusually, this performance took place out of doors. Pietrobono would not have been part of the procession of the clergy on Corpus Christi, but was probably stationed at a point where the host (“Christ” in the description) would pass by.

Aurelio Brandolini Lippi

By far the most specific description of Pietrobono’s playing is by Aurelio Brandolini Lippi (1454–1497), himself a humanist singer to the lira, who heard Pietrobono in Naples in 1473. In a collection of poems dedicated to King Ferdinand, the Libellus de laudibus musicae et Petriboni ferrariensis, he describes in detail what it was like to see and hear Pietrobono perform. Gallo published extensive extracts in the Appendix to his book, from which I select those that refer specifically to Pietrobono’s performance practice.103

In the 200-line poem headed “Lippi Brandolini ad serenissimum regem Ferdinandum de laudibus musicae et Petriboni libellus,” Brandolini first calls attention to the physical aspects of Pietrobono’s performance, describing his skill with the plectrum and the flying fingers of his left hand, running up and down the fingerboard, with close-packed notes and crowded rhythms, stressing the different ways he performs:

Pende animo, citharam laeva decurrat ut omnem,
transigat ut celeri fila sonora manu.

Hic digitos volitare simul miraberis omnes,
inque locis unam tot simul esse manum.

Nunc ruit ad summam fidium, nunc currit ad imam,
summaque nunc digitis, nunc tenet ima lyrae.

103 The dedicatory manuscript has not survived, but a contemporary copy made for Lorenzo de’ Medici is in the Biblioteca Capitolare in Lucca, MS 525, fols. 175v–184r. Two of the sections not published by Gallo are in Tammaro de Marinis, La biblioteca napoletana dei re d’Aragona (Milan: Hoepli, 1947–52), 1:75–77: a poem addressed to Pietrobono’s tenorista Francesco Malacise and another to Ercole d’Este. Three of the poems are addressed to King Ferdinand. The collection ends with an epigram by Giovanni Francesco Arcofilo in praise of Pietrobono, not published by Gallo. It does not offer any information on Pietrobono’s style of performance.
Quin iures haud illi unam esse manumve lyramve, 85
mille volare manus, mille sonare lyras.
Subiice nunc animo plectro quum pulsat eburno,
qua movet is plectrum, qua movet arte fides.
Hic quoque praeceleres dextrae mirabere motus,
pulset ut ad digitu consona fila modos. 90

Pay close attention, as his left hand runs over the entire cithara, as his hand swiftly travels over the tuneful strings. You will marvel at how all his fingers fly simultaneously, how one hand is in so many places at once. Now it dashes to the topmost of the strings, now it runs to the lowest. You would swear he has not just one hand and one lyre, but a thousand hands flying, a thousand lyres sounding.

Attend closely now as he strikes with his ivory plectrum, see with what art he moves the plectrum, with what art he moves the strings. Here you will also marvel at the exceedingly swift movements of his right hand, as it strikes the harmonious strings to the rhythms of each finger. 104

Aurelio Brandolini and his brother Raffaele were both nearly blind from childhood (hence their appellation “Lippi,” bleary-eyed), but Aurelio could see well enough to notice how Pietrobono’s hands moved over the lute, top to bottom (perhaps indicating that it was held in a more vertical position). It is the speed with which he does so that astonishes the poet; when he himself performed, it would have been to the accompaniment of his lira, punctuating his declamation, possibly providing a drone here and there.

Brandolini then discusses Pietrobono’s repertory, to which I shall come back. He has more to say, however, about his manner of performance:

Aspice quam varios numeros concurseet codem 115
carmine, quam densas contrahat arte notas.
Contrahit attenuatque notas numerosque frequentes
et variat multis et replete usque notis.
Decurrat peragitoque fides, mox rursus eadem
mutatis repetit terque quaterque modis.
Iteque reditque lyra, vario tamen ordine semper,
perque alios numeros itque reditque lyra.
Densentur numeri nullis in cantibus idem,
densentur simili conditione notae.

104 Gallo, Music in the Castle, 122, with the translation on p. 123, adjusted by Leofranc Holford-Stevens. Gallo misread “manus” in l. 80 and “mirabere” in l. 89. We cannot be sure that by “ivory plectrum” Brandolini definitely knew what the material was; perhaps Pietrobono had a quill plectrum that merely looked like ivory: a quill, with its greater flexibility, would be more plausible. On the materials used for plectra, see Young, “Lute, Cittern, & Citone,” 362.
Multiplicat magis atque magis turba ipsa notarum, 125  
quo magis hic pulsat, densa fit illa magis.  
Haud aliter quam quam crepitat densissima grando  
et salit assiduo tecta peruda sono,  
nunc furit insano perrumpens pectine chordas  
torrentisque modo fila per ipsa ruit.  
Nunc aedit placidos lenito pectine cantus  
labitur et tacitae more fluentis aquae.

Look how varied are the rhythms he beats out to the same song, how close-packed are the notes he executes by his art. He packs together the notes and the crowded rhythms, and he draws them out, and he varies them and he fills them yet again with many notes. He runs along and travels the whole length of the strings, and immediately goes back to them in three or four different ways. He goes back and forth along the lyre, but always with a different arrangement, and thus using different rhythms he goes back and forth along the lyre. The rhythms are not put together the same in any of his songs or the notes put together in the same arrangement. That crowding throng of notes grows ever greater and greater, the stronger the rhythm, the thicker the crowd of notes. Just as when dense hail crackles and leaps on wet roofs with unceasing sound, now he rages, pounding the strings with a frenzied plectrum, he goes rushing along on his instrument like a torrent. And now he gives forth quiet songs with pacified plectrum and glides silently in flowing water.105

Brandolini’s passage seems rather repetitive when read as prose: essentially all he says is that Pietrobono varies his dense ornamentation in various ways, melodically and rhythmically, and differently for each song, but also he pays attention to tempo, speeding up and slowing down at the end. The poet’s strategy is deliberately rhetorical, seeking to match the effect of Pietrobono’s performance in his choice and repetition of words, especially in lines 121–26, repeating “itque reditque lyra” (recalling Aeneid 6.122, “itque reditque viam totiens”), and “densetur . . . densetur . . . densissima.” The multiplication of “magis atque magis . . . magis . . . magis,” simulates hurrying motion toward a climax. The phrase “nunc furit insano perrumpens pectine chordas” recalls Carbone’s “then sweat poured freely from his face; his strings could not take it.” One can hear the relaxation at the end with Brandolini’s use of proparoxytone words to imitate the ripples in the water: “Nunc aedit placidos lenito pectine cantus / labitur et tacitae more fluentis aquae.”

105 Gallo, Music in the Castle, 124–25; translation adjusted. Gallo misread “conculcat” in l. 115, “alter” in l. 127, and “tactae” in l. 132. In l. 115 the MS erroneously has “quam densitas”; Gallo read “quas densatas.”
The other Italian poet who was an eyewitness to Pietrobono’s performances, unnoticed so far, is Gambino d’Arezzo, about whom little is known. “Gambino” is probably a nickname from his small stature; he was otherwise called Bernardo di Stefano. He was probably born in Arezzo between 1420 and 1430, and was in the service of the condottiere Carlo Fortebracci between 1470 and 1477; it is not known when he died. At Fortebracci’s suggestion he composed a long poem to Borso d’Este, perhaps in an effort to find a post at the Ferrarese court. But there is no mention of Borso at all: it is a praise of the famous men of Arezzo and Italy. Very likely the lengthy poem was not finished at the point when Borso died, 1471; it never gets beyond Arezzo.

In chapter 12 of the second book Gambino, without introduction, begins speaking of Pietrobono; here we can detect a nod to Borso:

Quella dolce armonia, dolce concerto,
Che mi concesse Apol, quando ascoltai
Di Pierbon da Ferrara l’istromento!
O quanto magno me ne gloriai:
Ch’a mia contemplazion piú di due ore
Mostrò de lira i suoi superni rai!
O quando al Catedral tempio maggiore
Nostro, men vo talor soletto tutto
Che di dolcezza me si strina el core!
Quand’io odo così dolce dedutto
Sonar con arte e con moderno stile,
Che si può dirli: benedetto frutto,
O clarissimo mio spirto gentile,
Il quale ho sedegnato in mezzo ’l petto,
Lume ed onor del nostro bel covile!
Tal mi fec’ io quando ’l duce ebbe detto
L’opere singolar divine e sante
De quel de’ Fortebracci, in cielo eletto.107

What sweet harmony, sweet sounding together, that Apollo granted me when I listened to the instrument of Pietrobono of Ferrara! O how greatly

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106 He can be found under this name in the Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, 9 (1967), in the article by Giuseppe E. Sansone. What little we know of his life mostly comes from his poems, published in Versi di Gambino d’Arezzo con un carme di Tommaso Marzi, ed. Oreste Gamurrini (Bologna: Gaetano Romagnoli, 1878).

107 Versi di Gambino d’Arezzo, 65–66. It is not clear to which Fortebracci he refers; the previous capitolo was dedicated to Braccio de’ Fortebracci of Perugia, who died in 1428.
I gloried in it: for my contemplation for more than two hours he demonstrated the celestial rays of his lyre! O when I go all alone to our great Cathedral church, what sweetness sings my heart! When I hear such a sweet diversion played with art and with modern style, so that one can say: blessed fruit, O my famed gracious spirit, which I have disdained in my breast, light and honor of our beautiful den! Thus I experienced it when the leader had declaimed the singular divine and holy works of that Fortebracci, elect in heaven.

The performance seems to have taken place in the cathedral of Arezzo (“tempio maggiore nostro”) and sounds surprisingly like a concert since it lasted more than two hours. This description invites skepticism. Gambino calls Pietrobono’s instrument, which emitted celestial rays, a “lira,” but in the 1470s it is unlikely to be a lira da braccio. He praises Pietrobono’s artful playing and his “modern style”: can he have meant that Pietrobono was now playing with his fingers? We have no knowledge of Pietrobono in Arezzo, but perhaps the delegation that went to Naples in 1473 passed through Arezzo after the stop in Florence.

Gambino also wrote a sonnet in praise of Pietrobono:

Sonetto a laude de Pier-bono

Quando nel ferrarese Apollo spira
    La sua dolce armonia, soave e piana,
    Che par cosa divina e non umana;
    Tanto dolce licor vien da quell’lira!
Anfione ed Orfeo forte suspira:
    Veggon la fama lor povery e vana.
    Costui farebbe innamorar Diana,
    Quando el musicu stil lo spinge e tira.
I’ vo peregrinando; e questo e quello
    Mi son d’intorno e fanmi pappolate,
    Che sirìa meglio udir rodere un tarlo.
Così solo in esilio e poverello,
    Ho le mie carni tutte lacerate.
    O Dio fammi tornar dal conte Carlo!108

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108 Ibid., 186. Curiously, although the editor had correctly identified Pietrobono as a Ferrarese lutenist in the poem on the citizens of Arezzo, here he claims that this Pietrobono is the astrologer "Pietro Bono Avogari di Ferrara"; evidently he thought they were the same person.
When in the region of Ferrara Apollo breathes his sweet harmony, soft and even, which appears a thing divine and not human, such sweet liquor comes from that lyre! Amphion and Orpheus sigh loudly: they see their fame poor and vain. That man [Pietrobono] would make Diana fall in love, when the musical style pushes and pulls him. I go a-wandering; and this fellow and that one who are around me make silly tedious talk; it would be better to hear a woodworm gnawing. Thus alone and in exile and poor, my flesh is completely lacerated. O God, make me return to Count Carlo!

The praise in the quatrains is very conventional. The abrupt change in the tercets gives a measure of Gambino the poet: wandering, he complains that those around him bore him with their tedious talk, and that it would be better to hear a woodworm gnawing (both these phrases can also be read metaphorically as feeling jealousy); he longs to return to Carlo Fortebracci’s service.

**Johannes Tinctoris**

The northern music theorist and composer Johannes Tinctoris (c.1435–1511) probably heard Pietrobono perform in Naples at the same time as Aurelio Brandolini heard him: in 1473 at the celebration of the proxy marriage of Eleonora d’Aragona and Ercole d’Este. Tinctoris had arrived in Naples, where he was a singer-chaplain to King Ferdinand, some time in the early 1470s. In his *De inventione et usu musicae*, of c.1482–83, after discussing contemporaneous instruments, he mentions Pietrobono in connection with playing the lute (Book IV, ch. 5):

> Usus autem ipsius lyrae quam **“leutum”** vulgo nuncupari prediximus festis, choreis, et convivis privatisque recreationibus apud nos inservit. In qua plurimi precipue Germani eximie sunt eruditi. Siquidem nonnulli associati supremam partem cuiusvis compositi cantus cum admirandis modulorum superinventionibus adeo eleganter ea personant ut profecto nihil præstantium inter quos Petrus bonus Herculis Ferrarie ducis incliti lyricen (mea quidem sententia) ceteris est preferendus.¹⁰⁰

The use, however, of the *lyra* that we have said before is commonly called the “lute” serves among us for feast-days, dances, and banquets and pri-

¹⁰⁰ Possibly he also heard Pietrobono during his visit to Ferrara on May 7–11, 1479, on which see Lockwood, “Pietrobono and the Instrumental Tradition,” 128 n. 39.

¹⁰¹ I cite the edited Latin text and the translation from www.carlymusictheory.org.
vate recreations. In this many, especially Germans, are exceedingly accomplished. Indeed, some play in ensemble the soprano part of any polyphonic piece of music with wonderful divisions of the melodies so elegantly that truly there is nothing more outstanding. Among these Pietrobono, the lutenist of the renowned Ercole duke of Ferrara (in my opinion, of course) is to be preferred to the rest.

Curiously, Tinctoris says nothing about the tenorista, except for the ambiguous reference to “associati.” But what does he mean by “superinventiones”? This appears to be a word he made up, and he must have in mind the inventions above the tenor line, not just “divisions,” which does not encompass the prefix “super,” meaning “above.” Indeed, he specifies that it is the soprano part of a composition (“cantus compositus”) that Pietrobono ornaments. This is an important clue to Pietrobono’s performance and his repertory.

The Change from Plectrum to Fingers

Tinctoris goes on to contrast Pietrobono’s performance of a single line, using a plectrum, with the more difficult—and more modern—performance of plucking the strings with the fingers. Such a technique allows the lutenist to play chords, even separate polyphonic lines. Some, Tinctoris says, can even play four notes at once, singling out for particular praise “the blind German player,” alluding to Conrad Paumann, and a certain Henricus, who lately served Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy (d. 1477):

Alii (quod multo difficilibus est) soli cantus non modo duarum partium, verum etiam trium et quatuor, artificiosissime promunt. Ut orbus ille Germanus, ac Henricus Carolo Burgundionum duci fortissimo nuper serviens. Quem etiam Germanum huc sonandi peritia celebrem pre omnibus effecit.

Others (which is much more difficult) by themselves most artfully produce not only two parts of a piece of music, but even three and four, such as that blind German [Conrad Paumann] and Henri, recently serving the most strong Charles, duke of Burgundy. Furthermore, this skill in playing makes the German celebrated above all.

Conrad Paumann (c.1410–1473), a native of Nuremberg, was more famous as an organist, serving at the Munich court from 1460 until his death. He visited Italy in 1470 and left an indelible impression on the court of Mantua. Soon word spread to other courts. Ferdinand of Naples
requested Marchese Ludovico Gonzaga that he be allowed to visit Naples. Galeazzo Maria Sforza also asked the Marchese to allow the blind musician from Munich (his name is never given) to visit Milan. Here was another request to borrow a musician from a fellow sovereign that had to be turned down, but for a different reason. Ludovico explained that he would be happy to accommodate Galeazzo but he doubted it would be possible: he had had the greatest trouble in persuading the “cecho sonatore” to travel to Mantua, and moreover he was so suspicious that he would be poisoned by Italian musicians that he would not eat anything that had not been prepared by the ladies-in-waiting of Ludovico’s daughter-in-law, Margherita of Bavaria. Pietrobono, however, succeeded in persuading Paumann to come to Ferrara in July 1470, where the “ceco todescho” who played all sorts of instruments was rewarded with splendid clothing and 50 gold ducats. Paumann’s style of playing the lute must have astonished the Italians.

Tinctoris subsequently mentions another instrument used for performing songs that is more common in Italy and Spain: the viola without a bow (i.e., the vihuela) and the viola with a bow. It is the latter that is used to accompany the recitation of narrative verse “in many parts of the world”:

Et quamvis aliqui ad hoc instrumentum idest leutum quaslibet cantilenas (ut supra tetigimus) iocundissime concinuant, ad violam tamen sine arculo in Italia et Hispania frequentius. Viola vero cum arculo non solum ad hunc usum sed etiam ad historiarum recitationem in plerisque partibus orbis assumitur.

And although some sing any songs (as we touched upon above) most pleasantly to this instrument, that is the lute, nevertheless in Italy and Spain more often to the viola without a bow. But the viola with a bow is adopted not only for this use but also for the recitation of stories in many parts of the world.

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111 The letter of May 20, 1470 is transcribed in Bertolotti, Musici alla corte dei Gonzaga, 8; there is a second letter of July 6, 1470 (ibid., 8–9). Ferdinand tried to obtain the services of Paumann once more in 1475 (ibid., 9), but we know that Paumann had died by then.


113 I report on this visit in Conrad Paumann in Ferrara, Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlanse Muziekgeschiedenis 67 (2017): 69–81. Paumann was accompanied by his son and nephew (“nipote”) and two servants. Pietrobono himself received a reward of LM 1200 from Borso d’Este.
The vihuela would have been known in Rome and Naples because of the Spanish influence, but it was unknown in the northern courts until the 1490s, if we can judge from Isabella d’Este’s correspondence with Lorenzo da Pavia in 1497, discussing her wish for a lute in the Spanish style, which she did not receive until 1500, when Lorenzo sent her a “large lute in the Spanish fashion.” It is unlikely that Pietrobono played anything other than a small lute, suited to his “superinventiones.” Thus, it seems that his specialty was a dying art. The vihuela, without or with bow, was well suited to accompanying lyric song, and the stars of the next generation, such as Serafino Aquilano, accompanied themselves while singing. As with narrative verse, it is the words that are important, and elaborate ornamentation was not called for. Lutenists were not eclipsed, however. Even by the 1470s many had stopped playing with the plectrum, as Tinctoris mentions, and now performed polyphonic music, ushering in a glorious new age, amply documented with the expansion of music printing.

**Pietrobono’s Repertory**

Scholars have long wondered what Pietrobono played: monophonic music? The highest part of a composition? The tenor? Both? Aurelio Brandolini provides an answer:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Quos vero fidibus numeros, quae carmina plectro concinit? Aut quid non concinit ille lyra?} \\
\text{Quaecumque a Musis dilecta Britannia cantat, et quae non Musis Gallia gratr minus,} \\
\text{quaque gemit latis supplex Hispania terris, quaequegravis concinit Italia,} \\
\text{denique Musarum quicquid toto extat in orbe, quicquid habent omnes, musica quicquid habet,} \\
\text{concipit hic solus plectro fidibusque canoris, omnia threicia concinit ipse lyra.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[\text{105}\]

\[\text{110}\]

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115 An early reference to discarding the plectrum in favor of the fingers is Alonso de Palencia’s *Perfección del triunfo militar* of 1459, speaking about the *guitarra*: Apollo played many musical instruments and “señaladamente la guitarra con su propio pulgar, dexada la péñola.” I owe this reference to John Griffiths; it is quoted in his richly documented article “Las vihuelas en la época de Isabella Católica,” *Cuadernos de música iberoamericana* 20 (July–December 2010): 7–36, at p. 16.
But what tunes does he play on his strings? what songs with his plectrum? Rather, what does he not play on his lyre? Whatever songs Britain sings, beloved of the Muses, and France, no less favored by the Muses, the beseeching laments of Spain in her wide lands, and the songs of serious Italy. Finally, whatever belongs to the Muses throughout the whole world, whatever belongs to all of them, whatever belongs to music, this one man produces with his plectrum and his singing strings; he plays all of them on his Thracian lyre.\footnote{Gallo, 196.}

The melodies Pietrobono plays are English, French, Spanish, and Italian songs.\footnote{Brandolini makes the same comment in his shorter poem, “Eiusdem de laudibus Pietroboni” (ibid., 130–31): “Seu gallos peragit numeros, numerosque britannos, hesperios gemitus, italicosque modos.”} By this Brandolini means specifically identifiable songs, not free improvisation. English songs may seem startling in this context, but they were known in Naples at the time: the Mellon chansonnier, prepared a few years after the 1473 occasion when Brandolini and Tinctoris heard Pietrobono, preserves two English-language songs by Walter Frye, Zo ys emprentid and Alas, alas, alas is my chief song, and one by John Bedyngham, Myn hertis lust. Unusually, the complete English texts are underlaid.\footnote{The Mellon Chansonnier, ed. Leeman Perkins and Howard Garey, 2 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), nos. 46–47 and 55. The scribe made a valiant attempt to copy the English words, but clearly the language was unfamiliar to him. The manuscript also includes French-texted songs by Robert Morton (nos. 24, 34, and 41) and an Italian song by John Bedyngham (no. 46), plus another song by Frye with a French text (no. 35).} We now know that there was another possible source of English music at the Neapolitan court: the repertory of the English singer Anna, whose Italian career spanned the years 1465 to at least 1499. Records place her in Naples in 1472, 1476, 1480, and 1499, where she is called “madama Agna Anglesa” and designated as a musician of the king.\footnote{Ibid., 1:7–8.} The first sighting of her is at the Este court in Ferrara in 1465, where she was known as “Anna cantarina Anglica.” There she would have been acquainted with Pietrobono, and perhaps even have studied with him.\footnote{Bonnie J. Blackburn, “Anna Inglese and Other Women Singers in the Fifteenth Century: Gleanings from the Sforza Archives,” in Sleuthing the Muse: Essays in Honor of William E. Prizer, ed. Kristine K. Forney and Jeremy Smith (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2012), 237–52, at 242. Owing to the loss of many documentary sources, it is impossible to tell whether she was there continuously.} But Pietrobono could also have learned English songs from other musicians in Ferrara:
during the 1440s–1460s three English musicians served the Este court or the cathedral: the priest Johannes cantor, son of another John, of London, Giovanni dall’arpa Inglese, and Roberto Inglese, who was very likely the compiler of the chansonnier Porto 714, which includes songs by Galfridus de Anglia and John Bedyngham as well as his own.\textsuperscript{122} Moreover, there were English students at the university in Ferrara: John Tiptoft was only one of the five Englishmen mentioned by Battista Guarini in his funeral oration on Guarino of Verona.\textsuperscript{123} And we should not forget that Pietrobono must have heard English songs when he went to England in 1466.

The French and Italian songs that Pietrobono could have known are ubiquitous. While he was in Naples he could have picked up Spanish (and Catalan) songs, but such songs were also known in the northern Italian courts, especially in Milan: many of the chamber singers in the 1460s and 1470s came from Naples, and three Spanish songs were sent to Galeazzo Maria Sforza by his canterino Rainero in 1473.\textsuperscript{124} The characterization of Spanish music as “lamenting” is a strikingly early use of this trope. For Franchinus Gaffurius, and a number of later writers who depend on him, the English jubilate, the French sing, the Spaniards weep, the Germans howl, and some Italians (the Genoese) bleat like goats.\textsuperscript{125} Tinctoris too thought that the English jubilate and the French sing; he did not venture an opinion on the Germans and Spanish.\textsuperscript{126} That Italian songs are considered “gravis” is somewhat surprising; one wonders which ones Brandolini had in mind. Only one Spanish song made it into the Mellon chansonnier, \textit{La pena sin ser sabida}, but it is by a northerner, Vincenot (Vincent du Bruecquet). It has a dolorous text: “Pain suffered in secret is incurable.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 241, with further evidence of the English notation in the MS and with reference to recent literature.


\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Theorica musicae} (Milan: Filippo Mantegazza, 1492), sig. k5. According to a contemporary chronicle, Gaffurius had spent a year in Genoa, 1477–78, having been invited to teach there by Doge Prospero Adorno. His rather jaundiced view of Genoese singing probably dates from this time. See Alessandro Caretta, Luigi Cremaescoli, and Luigi Salamina, \textit{Franchino Gaffaria} (Lodi: Edizioni dell’Archivio Storico Lodigiano, 1951), 59.

\textsuperscript{126} See the prologue to his \textit{Proportionale musices}. 


woe,” but the mode is D Dorian (with B-flats and sometimes E-flats), not the more typical Phrygian of Spanish music. Brandolini does not indicate whether Pietrobono played the superius or the tenor, but judging from the comments by other witnesses on his preference for playing in the high range, and as is stated by Tinctoris, it is the superius. The tenor was left to the tenorista.

**Pietrobono’s Tenorista**

The testimony of Aurelio Brandolini is especially valuable for Pietrobono’s manner of performance because he alone of all the witnesses refers to his long-serving tenorista, at this time Francesco Malacise. Since Brandolini himself played the lira, he would have paid very close attention to how and what the tenorista performed. As a solo performer, what struck him in particular was the partnership of the two, to the point that they almost blended into one body.127 This long excerpt is crucial for understanding how Pietrobono and his tenorista worked together.

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Interea immotum retinet servatque tenorem,
    fidus in arte comes, fidus amore magis.
Illius ipse manu metatis gressibus ambas
    comprimit et certos cogit inire modos.
Ni faceret, non ullaes essent in carmine leges,
    musicaque in terris maxima nulla foret.
Illius hic servat numeros, ille huius habenis
    flectitur, alterius sic canit alter ope. 135
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During all this his faithful companion holds firm and maintains the un-moving tenor, a faithful companion in art, even more faithful in love. He restrains the other’s hands with measured steps and forces them to go in fixed ways. If he did not do this, there would be no laws in song, and there would be no great music in the world. The one maintains the rhythms of the other; the latter is swayed by the former’s reins; thus, the music of each aids the other.128

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127 Their mutual love (“dulcis in arte comes, dux in amore potens”) is the subject of Brandolini’s epigram “ad Franciscum Petriboni Comitem,” not published by Gallo but available in de Marinis, *La biblioteca napoletana*, 1:76. There are no technical details of performance in the poem.

128 Gallo, *Music in the Castle*, 126. Gallo misread “hebenis” in l. 139, which in the translation was rendered as “ebony fingerboard.” “Habenis,” “reins,” preserves the image of the tenorista restraining Pietrobono.
The tenorista does indeed play the tenor part, and possibly the contratenor too, or some notes from it.\textsuperscript{129} He follows the mensural rhythm of the song exactly, implying that Pietrobono observes the necessary concords on the main beats, being free to ornament between them. Yet, as in any good performance, the players are flexible, observing each other carefully; long practice together would have made such subtle adjustments second nature for Pietrobono and Malacise.

Brandolini continues:

\begin{quote}
Inchoat hic varios edocto pectine cantus  
perpetuisque carmina tota modis  
componensque viam qua gressus dirigit ille  
metato incedit per sua fila gradu.  
Ille iter ingeditur dextra levaque volanti,  
haec digitis, plectro concinit illa levi.  
Egreditur toto praescriptos carmine fines  
continuoque novos invent ipse modos.  
Impatiensque iugi superatam despicit artem,  
hanc tamen alterius despicit artis ope.  
Despicit artis opem atque artem conculcat ab arte,  
sed tamen est coepti carminis usque memorn  
Quaque semel coepti mensuram carmine toto  
servat et ad certos itque reditique modos.  
Metato graditur spatio finesque pererrat  
temporibusque suis ad loca certa redit.  
Fine etenim modo spatisque includitur acquis,  
stat meta haud illa praeterundà via.  
Hanc habet ante oculos nullo non tempore fixam,  
hanc fixam memori pectore semper habet.  
Sed tamen hanc alia superat (quis eredeter?) arte  
et velut effracto carcere liber abit.  
Nunc fugit ante suum, sequitur nunc ille tenorem,  
nunc linquit proprium, nunc capit ante locum.
\end{quote}

Mille habet, inque dies plures hic inventit artem,
sed tamen in tota dedecet arte nihil.

One [the tenorista] begins various songs with his learned plectrum and plays whole songs in consistent measures; and constructing the way along which the other directs his steps, he sets out with measured tread along his instrument. The other sets out on his journey with left and right hand flying, the fingers of one and the nimble plectrum of the other working in harmony. Throughout the song he goes beyond the prescribed boundaries and he continually invents new rhythms. Impatient of the yoke, he looks down on the art he has surpassed; he scorns one art, however, with the aid of another. He scorns the aid of art and walks roughshod over art by means of art, but he is always mindful of the song he has begun. Throughout the whole song he maintains whatever meter he began with, and he journeys and returns to fixed measures. Within a measured interval he goes along and travels to the end; in his own time he returns to fixed spots. For he is kept within the boundaries of the measure and uniform intervals; there is a limit not to be crossed on that journey. He has this fixed before his eyes at all times; he has this always fixed in his breast's memory. But he nevertheless goes beyond this (who would believe it?) with another art, and goes free like one who breaks out of prison. Now he runs ahead of his tenor, now he follows him; now he leaves his own place, now he gets there first. He has a thousand arts, daily he invents more, but still in all his art he does nothing unbecoming.  

Brandolini is astonished by Pietrobono's ability to observe the measure, something that he himself as a reciter to the lira does not need to do: Pietrobono maintains the meter throughout the song and "journeys and returns to fixed measures." No matter how dizzying his ornamentation, he keeps within the boundaries of the mensuration and the concord demanded on the main beats. "There is," Brandolini says, "a limit not to be crossed in that way": the music is "always fixed in his breast's memory." That is, between the changing notes of the tenor, Pietrobono plays, as Cornazzano said, proportions and syncopations in addition to myriad small notes. The mention of "his breast's memory" is telling: both players would of course have performed from memory, so Pietrobono must be completely familiar with the melody and rhythm of the tenor part, besides keeping in mind the superius melody.

130 Gallo, *Music in the Castle*, 126. In line 146, I have added a comma after "digitis" and changed "ille" to "illa." The translation has been adjusted by Leofranc Holford-Strevens, specifically making clear the distinction between "ille" and "hic," the one and the other. 131 "Modus" has many meanings in classical usage, but with music it normally means "rhythm," "measure," "meter," though it can also mean "melody" or "song." Aurelio uses it in the sense of measure, not the post-classical melodic scales. Hence I have altered Krug's translation as "mode" to "measure" or "rhythm."
that he is ornamenting. Running ahead of his tenor and lagging behind suggests that he is taking motifs from the song and working them in imitation. It also might suggest that he is ornamenting not just the superius of the song but also the tenor.

It has never been clear whether the tenorista plays a lute or a viola. Quite likely he plays both. In this passage we might think he is playing a lute because Brandolini says he “begins various songs with his learned plectrum,” although in classical usage pecten can also refer to the instrument itself by metonymy. If it is a lute, what might it suggest about the tempo of the performance? It would make a difference, I believe, whether a lute or a viola played the tenor. If the former, the tenor should not be much slower than that of the original chanson, to make space for Pietrobono to perform his ornamentation, and yet not leave gaps in the tenor melody when the vibration of the string fades. Alternatively, the string could be restruck as needed. Contrary to the common assumption, playing a plectrum lute does not necessarily confine the player to monophonic lines, making it possible to add notes from the contratenor. But does Brandolini in fact mean a plectrum? He might possibly use the same word to describe, in humanistic Latin, the bow of a viola. If the performance were with a viola, the tenor could be slower because the sound could be sustained; that would allow Pietrobono more leeway to ornament. The ranges of the instruments too must be taken into consideration, because a viola held on the arm, such as that played by the cupid on the title page of Ugolino of Orvieto’s Declaratio musicae disciplinae (see Figure 3), would not be able to

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132 This is how Francesco Spinacino retained resonance in the lower voice of a lute intabulation, dividing long notes into semibreves in his two books of Intabulatura de lauto (1507).

133 Marc Lewon has shown that the Wolfenbüttel tablature, an early plectrum source (c.1460), intabulates three-voice compositions. See “A (Re-)Construction of the Wolfenbüttel Lute Tablature Fragments,” Lute Society of America Quarterly 51/1 (Spring 2016): 12–25, and his later article “The Earliest Source for the Lute: The Wolfenbüttel Lute Tablature,” Journal of the Lute Society of America 46 (2013; published 2017): 1–70. He explains how to achieve chords with the plectrum. The results can be heard in the CD Kingdom of Heaven—Heinrich Laufenberg by the Ensemble Dragma (Ramée, 2014). In a personal communication (Feb. 23, 2017) he suggested that the position of the fingers of the lute-playing cupid in Figure 2 above might even suggest that he is combining the fingers with the plectrum. Crawford Young contests the view that the ability to play polyphonic music on the lute using fingers and plectrum was new even in the mid-fifteenth century, suggesting that it may have been practiced as early as the late fourteenth century; “Lute, Gittern, & Cistole,” 363.

134 The term “arcus” (used by Tinctoris) is a diminutive derived from the Latin arcus, a bow (for shooting arrows). It is not used in this sense in classical Latin, since the musical bow was unknown.
play a tenor that went down to $d$ or $c$, as commonly happens in chansons of this period.\textsuperscript{135} Considering the high range of Pietrobono’s lute, transposition up a fourth or fifth would have been needed.\textsuperscript{136}

Brandolini then turns to the physical act of Pietrobono’s playing, which struck all observers:

\begin{quote}
Adde quod et vultu cantum gestumque decorat,
   quaque canit cithara, corpore et ore refert.
Nunc caput in terram curvat, nunc tollit in auras,
   et vultum ad citharam, labra pedesque movet.
Lumina cum fidibus flectit pariterque reflectit,
   totus cum cithara concinit ipse sua.
\end{quote}

Add to this that he dresses up his song with facial expression and gesture; whatever he plays on the cithara he also presents with his body and face. Now he bends his head to the ground, now he lifts it to the skies, and he moves his face and his lips and his feet to the cithara. He turns his eyes this way and that in accord with this instrument; his whole being acts in harmony with his cithara.\textsuperscript{137}

It is striking how well this description concords with modern rock and pop performances. We only wish we had a video! Pietrobono was not merely a lutenist: his body became the music. He was an exhibitionist who thrived on adulation. And yet he did not have one mode of performance; he could play lamenting Spanish songs, perhaps with tears in

\textsuperscript{135} The oval-shaped viola has four strings and six frets and a pegbox more like that of a viola da braccio, but no drone strings. In fact the illuminator seems to have produced a hybrid instrument: the fixed bridge and the soundboard with a single rose, without other sound holes, are characteristics of the lute; the flat bridge would make it difficult to bow the strings. The trilobate pegbox resembles that of much older fiddles. It would seem that the illuminator did not have a model of an instrument in front of him but used a lute, changing the pegbox and adding a bow. (I am grateful to Anne-Emmanuelle Ceulemans for her comments on this instrument and comparative examples.) The illuminator of the page was intent on displaying a variety of instruments: viola, lute, organ, psaltery, and hurdy-gurdy, plus a chorus of angels with a music book (the music is illegible): in this context a bowed string instrument was needed. In the 1450s we have no record of a viola player at the Este court. The famous and long-serving pair of viola players, the brothers Andrea and Zampolo from Parma, were not hired until 1466.

\textsuperscript{136} These questions became acute at my presentation in the Seminar in Medieval and Renaissance Music at All Souls College, Oxford. The Duo Pietrobono (Jean-Paul Bazin and Catherine Perrin) kindly volunteered to come from Paris to provide live illustrations on the gittern and lute. When I wanted to illustrate how a piece would sound with the gittern and viol (a tenor viol played by Michael Fleming, Oxford), we were limited in the repertory we could choose to allow the necessary transposition.

\textsuperscript{137} Gallo, Music in the Castle, 128–29. In line 172 I have corrected “labia” to the manuscript’s “labra.”
his eyes. When he visited the Hungarian court at Beatrice d’Aragona’s
invitation in 1487–88, he gave the queen “very great relief in her illness,”
as Beatrice reported to her sister Eleonora, wife of Ercole d’Este.138 His
chamber performances must have been very different from his playing
before large crowds.

Pietrobono’s Songs

With the information we now have from contemporary sources, it is
tempting to try to reconstruct some of Pietrobono’s repertory in the same
period as the eyewitness reports, the 1450s–1470s.139 We do in fact have
some written-out examples of something similar to his type of perform-
ance in two manuscripts dating not long after his lifetime and preserv-
ing an earlier repertory, the Segovia codex and Perugia 1013.140

The earlier is the Segovia codex of c.1500, which includes a section
of twelve duos, mostly based on chanson tenors, with highly ornamented
superius lines:141

138 Letter of May 11, 1488 from Vienna, which had recently been conquered by Matthias
Corvinus. “El magnífico Pierbono, sonator de liuto, quale sta qui con me . . . m’ha dato
grandissimo refrérgio in questa mia infirmità.” Il carteggio tra Beatrice d’Aragona e gli Estensi
(1476–1508), ed. Enrica Guerra (Rome: Aracne editrice, 2010), 145. The purpose of the
letter was to urge the duchess to be mindful of Pietrobono’s wife and to see that his usual sal-
ary and provision were paid while he was in Hungary. Sadly, his wife died during that time,
and when he returned to Ferrara he discovered that his salary had not been paid and he was
in debt for his wife’s medical expenses. ASMo, Mandati in volume 27, fol. 155v (28 Sept.
1488) and fol. 181r (Oct. 10, 1488). Pietrobono was accompanied to Hungary by his teno-
rista, Francesco dalla Gatta. Together with the two viola players and Rainaldo dal Chitarino,
their tenorista, they were part of the Ferrarese delegation accompanying the eight-year-old
Ippolito d’Este, newly elected Archbishop of Esztergom, to his Hungarian court. The viola
players and Rainaldo returned shortly thereafter, but Pietrobono and Francesco remained.

139 For this reason I leave out of consideration the earlier repertory of the Faenza codex,
which has been proposed as music for two lutes or for lute and harp by Timothy J. Mc-
Gee in “Instruments and the Faenza Codex,” Early Music 14 (1986): 480–90, though
this theory has not been widely accepted. Similarly beyond the scope of this article are
the intabulations for two lutes published by Francesco Spinacino in 1507, which do not
strike me as virtuoso music; on these see Coelho and Polk, Instrumentalists and Renais-
sance Culture, 78–85.

140 Segovia, Catedral, MS s.s. and Perugia, Biblioteca comunale Augusta, MS 1013. David
Fallows referred to these two manuscripts in “15th-Century Tablatures for Plucked Instru-
ments.” On p. 65 he suggests: “These seem to correspond more closely to descriptions of
what Pietrobono played even though their relatively thin texture suggests that we are still
at one remove from the lute duet style of the time.”

141 Fols. 200–205v. Eduardo Sohns has produced a modern edition of this repertory: Canc-
cionero de la Catedral de Segovia: Duos (Buenos Aires: Eduardo Sohns, Libros de Musica,
Apart from the two motets, the Magnificat fragment (a simple duo), and the textless piece, these duos are based on the hit songs of the fifteenth century, and all except *D'ung aultre amer* appear in the Mellon chansonnier. They are based on a slow-moving chanson tenor and an ornamented discant, of which there are several styles. Some fill in all the melodic gaps with fast-moving notes (mostly semiminims in diminution; Agricola and Roelkin); others are didactic, stuffed with a variety of proportions achieved through numbers or mensuration signs; the rest combine the two styles. In none does the top line reach higher than $f''$, and several would only be suitable for a large lute, going down to $f$ or $e$. Adam's *De tous biens playne* has a two-octave range, $f$–$f''$. Tinctoris's *Tout a par moy* nearly reaches that range ($g$–$f''$), and his *Le souvenir* has the greater range of $c$–$f''$. Roelkin’s setting has an exceptional range of $G$ to $d''$; the notation requires a double staff.

It is not surprising that Tinctoris is the main composer: he had to devise a number of duos to illustrate proportions in his *Proporionate musices*, and even some of the duos in his *Liber de arte contrapuncti* exhibit

2002). Outside this section is another duo by Isaac (fol. 176v), which is a quodlibet: the chanson *De tous biens playne* is in the superius, unornamented, but the tenor consists of snippets from fifteen contemporary chansons (ed. Sohns, pp. 24–25). Both Kenneth Kreitner and I consider this repertory in The Segovia Manuscript: A European Musical Repertory in Spain c.1500, ed. Cristina Urchueguía and Wolfgang Fuhrmann (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, forthcoming).

142 Especially Obrecht’s *Regina celè*, in which the proportions are achieved with numbers and are also labeled, and Adam’s *De tous biens playne*, which runs through 3, 4, 5, 6/3, 8/9, and 3.
proportions. The textless duo on fol. 204 in fact is an illustration in the latter treatise, as an example of counterpoint over a measured plainchant, in this case an Alleluia melody.\footnote{143} 

The duos in the Perugia manuscript, Perugia, Biblioteca comunale Augusta, MS 1013, all anonymous and without text, illustrate proportions, following on a brief treatise, \textit{Regule de proportionibus}.

\footnote{144} In every case the scribe specifies in writing not only the proportion shown by the sign but the number of notes per tactus (e.g., under “3”, meaning “sexquialtera tre semibrevi per battere”). A large number of the examples, some for three voices, derive from Tinctoris’s treatises on counterpoint and proportions, and others are extracts from masses by Tinctoris, Guillaume Faugues, and Du Fay. Of the remaining, six duos are based on chansons and two are settings of \textit{La Spagna}, all of which appear to be unica except the first:

\begin{itemize}
\item fol. 89v: [Tinctoris], [\textit{D'ung autre amer}] (= Segovia, fol. 204)
\item fol. 91: Anon., [\textit{J'ay pris amours}] (chanson superius melody in superius)
\item fol. 97v: Anon., [\textit{J'ay pris amours}] (chanson superius melody in superius)
\item fol. 99v: Anon., [\textit{J'ay pris amours}] (chanson superius melody in superius)
\item fol. 100v: Anon., [\textit{La Spagna}]
\item fol. 102v: Anon., [\textit{La Spagna}]
\item fol. 103v: Anon., [\textit{Le serviteur}] (chanson superius melody in superius)
\item fol. 104v: Anon., [\textit{Gentil madonna/Fortune}] (melody in tenor)
\end{itemize}

Only the setting based on John Bedyngham’s \textit{Gentil madonna} (in some settings \textit{Fortune}) is similar to the Segovia duo, with a straightforward tenor melody and an active superius with many changes in proportions. Of the \textit{J'ay pris amours} settings, the first presents the chanson superius


\footnote{144} See the inventory and discussion of this manuscript in Bonnie J. Blackburn, “A Lost Guide to Tinctoris’s Teachings Recovered,” \textit{Early Music History} 1 (1981): 29–116, at 31–45; repr. in Blackburn, \textit{Composition, Printing and Performance: Studies in Renaissance Music} (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000), essay I. The manuscript, copied in Venice in 1509 by the professional scribe and calligrapher Johannes Materanensis (from Matera), is the unique source of Tinctoris’s didactic motet \textit{Difficiles alios delectat pangere cantus} and Busnoys’s \textit{Conditor alme siderum} (for four voices). It also includes excerpts from music theory treatises, especially on proportions.
melody unornamented in the superius; the tenor traverses sesquialtera, subsesquitertia, dupla, and sesquitercia. The second matches the superius in its notation except for two changes in proportion and a passage in coloration, but introduces a passage in the middle that is not part of the chanson melody, and when it reaches the end it continues with new material, changing proportions more frequently. It cadences on G, rather than the chanson’s A. The third melody replicates the chanson superius all the way to the end but it too continues differently, with more proportions, but cadences on A. In all three settings the tenor generally has shorter notes and runs through various proportions. Only the last setting has written note values smaller than a semiminim: two fusae.145

All these duos, especially those in the Segovia codex, with the unadorned chanson melody in the tenor, probably represent a pale echo of Pietrobono’s performance. It is unlikely that these pieces are transcriptions from performance: most of them have named composers, and placing so many changes of mensuration and proportions in a piece seems to have been more of a game than a musical invention. The composers had to make use of a variety of proportions, using both ratios (as Tinctoris counseled) and mensuration signs (to which he objected). Some of the duos in the Segovia manuscript attributed to Tinctoris designate proportions in another way he found repugnant, using a single figure in place of a proportion, for example 3 for 3, on the basis that it is mathematically illiterate since proportions cannot be indicated by a single figure. Nevertheless, it was common practice at the time.146 Moreover, some duos have passages in “minor color” and coloration indicating imperfection that do not agree with his practice.147 I should not wish to rule out the attributions to Tinctoris, however, since scribes can change mensuration signs and coloration, and there is always a correct way to designate the proportion in Tinctoris’s system. An example is the setting of D’ung autre amor on fol. 204r of the Segovia codex (see Figure 4). The 3 in the second staff of the superius is likewise 3 in the Perugia manuscript (fol. 89v; here designated “sexquialtera” as well), but in a

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147 I owe this observation to Jeffrey Dean (pers. comm., March 31, 2016).
third manuscript that also includes a number of duos, Bologna, Museo Internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica, MS A.71, p. 297, the sign is $\frac{3}{2}$. All three manuscripts have the mensuration sign $\mathfrak{O}$ in the third stave; it indicates $\frac{3}{4}$ proportion (canceling the previous sesquialtera and creating proportio dupla with the initial signature); Tinctoris would have preferred using the ratio.

It is worthwhile examining the duo on *Dung auttre amer* in more detail to see how it might concord with the description of Pietrobono’s performance of chansons. Example 1 is a transcription of the first nineteen measures of the composition (up to the medial point) in unreduced notation as given in the Segovia codex, with Ockeghem’s original chanson superius in the top staff for comparison. Brandolini states that “Throughout the whole song [Pietrobono] maintains whatever meter he began with, and he journeys and returns to fixed measures. Within a measured interval he goes along and travels to the end; in his own time he returns to fixed spots. For he is kept within the boundaries of the measure and uniform intervals; there is a limit not to be crossed on that journey.” Brandolini is not specific about the meaning of “measure” and “interval”: these could encompass more than one mensural unit; the important point is that there are fixed spots. In order to keep time with his tenorista, Pietrobono must not only observe the mensuration but also keep in mind what notes his companion will be playing in each measure so he does not clash with him. The most practical way to achieve this result would be to preserve the pitches of the chanson melody at the beginning of every measure, especially on longer notes; appoggiatura dissonances of short

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148 On this manuscript of about 1515–20, which apparently originated at the Spanish College in Bologna, see Blackburn, “A Lost Guide,” 46–53. It is a composite manuscript, including music theory treatises (by Gaffurio and Guillermus de Podio), motets and chansons by Andreas de Silva, Willaert, Antonius Marlet, and Josquin, and several sections of music examples. Ten come from Tinctoris’s *Liber de arte contrapuncti* and his *Proporionale musices* (all anonymous and mostly without text). All ten are concordant with examples in the Perugia manuscript, but only the duo on *Dung autre amer* with the Segovia manuscript. Somewhat curiously, the Bologna scribe has written all the semiminims as white flagged minims; this is common practice when the prolongation is perfect, but that is not the case here.

149 The versions in the Perugia and Bologna manuscripts largely agree. Most of the differences from the Segovia version concern different ligature patterns in the tenor. In measure 11 of the tenor the last minim is two semiminims EF, and in measure 14 the last minim is two semiminims FE; this agrees with most readings of Ockeghem’s chanson. In measure 13 of the superius, Perugia gives the last three notes as a dotted minim and two fusec. The chanson superius is taken from Johannes Ockeghem, *Collected Works*, 3, ed. Richard Wexler with Dragan Plamenac (Boston: E. C. Schirmer for the American Musicological Society, 1992), 61, after the Dijon chansonnier.
duration would be allowed, and instrumental music is far more free in this respect than vocal music. In the example I have placed a vertical bar where the notes of the ornamented version coincide with the chanson superius (twenty altogether). The opening is striking in this respect; of all the duos based on chansons, the ornamented superius in this one is closest to the chanson melody, especially at the opening, using the same rhythm as the chanson. Brief appoggiaturas occur on the main beats of measures 5, 8, and 15.

Ornamentation of the melody has the result that the melodic lines lead away from the chanson pitches; in such cases they need to concord with the tenor. Thus the style of these duos is a compromise between ornamenting the soprano and making good counterpoint with the tenor when the melodic line deviates from that of the chanson. A second consideration is that the contratenor is the ghost in the room. In Ockeghem's *D'ung auttre amer* the contratenor is in the same range as the tenor and the two frequently overlap. As in most music of this time, the contratenor is not contrapuntally necessary, yet it supplies more harmonic interest by allowing intervals that are missing from the superius and tenor duo. Some of the pitches in the ornamented melody replicate those of the missing contratenor, displaced by an octave: these are marked with a small x in Example 1. The B♭ in measure 2 and the B♭ on the first beat in measure 12 supply a third mediating an otherwise bare octave, and the B♭ minim in measure 13 and semibreve in measure 14 a third filling in a fifth. The melody in measures 12–14 largely replicates the contratenor pitches an octave higher. Ockeghem’s tenor moves in relatively slow values, mostly breves and semibreves; therefore it is incumbent on the composer (or performer) to keep interest by supplying passages of running notes. Sometimes these lead to cadences where there are none in the original chanson. In *D'ung auttre amer* Ockeghem provided cadences only at the midpoint and the end (a syncopated seventh resolving to an octave). The ornamented version, however, introduces a cadential progression in measure 8 (resolving to a third). As a consequence of proceeding in this manner, choosing at least one pitch from either the original superius or the contratenor in all but two measures (5 and 10), the impression of the original chanson remains, though more strongly at the beginning and the end. We hear a nearly steady progression of stepwise motion in small notes, but with few exceptions the note values of a minim and larger replicate a pitch from the superius or contratenor of the original chanson. This duo is indeed the work of a composer, not an improviser.

Cornazzano claimed that Pietrobono proceeded “proportionando e sincoppando sempre, e fugiva el tenore a i suoi cantoni.” The duo
Example 1. Johannes Tinctoris, *D'ung aultre amer*, mm. 1–19 (Segovia, Catedral, MS s.s., fol. 204r), with Ockeghem’s original chanson melody superimposed. Verticals indicate points of congruence between Tinctoris’s and Ockeghem’s melodies, x the use of a pitch from the contratenor.
on *D'ung aultre amer* (as well as most of the other duos) employs both proportions and syncopations; there is no need to doubt Cornazzano's musical acuity on this point. The running passages could indeed strike the listener as “fleeing the tenor,” whether on the high strings or the low. Pietrobono may have dazzled listeners with unusually high pitches, but he could hardly have omitted playing on the lower strings as well; as Brandonini stressed, he was always inventing new ways of playing the same melody. The original chansons are relatively short (Ockeghem's *D'ung aultre amer* has only forty-five measures, not counting the repetitions); Pietrobono probably repeated the chanson with new ornamentations, or possibly he even respected the customary repeat patterns in rondeaus.

While the Segovia duos give us an idea of the way Pietrobono may have ornamented chansons, they can provide no more than a ghost of his energetic style of playing: a lutenist would hardly run the risk of
perspiring and breaking his strings with these duos. The level of ornamentation much have been considerably greater.

The examples in the Perugia manuscript are less similar to what Pietrobono may have played: these are didactic duos, intent on puzzling the performer who sees the written notation. One of the duos based on Bedyngham's *Gentil madona/Fortune* (fols. 104v–105, without text) is shown in Figure 5. In Example 2 I have transcribed the first thirteen measures, together with Bedyngham's superius from the Mellon chansonnier. The mensuration of Bedyngham's song is perfect. Unlike the examples in the Segovia manuscript (except Tinctoris's *Le souvenir*), the voices in the Perugia setting start in different mensurations. Ç against Ô means that the singer or player of the superius needs to reduce the note values by half, fitting four minimis to each semibreve of the tenor. This procedure is fairly straightforward. The complication comes in measure 5 with the change to sesquialtera; the Perugia manuscript helpfully labels all the proportions, here “Sexualtera tre semibrevis per battere”; the “battere” is the semibreve of the tenor. No help, however, accompanies the switch to black notation in breves at measure 7, which causes syncopation: four and a half black breves must be proportioned to three semibreves in the tenor. Eventually, subquadrupla brings the superius back into sync with the tenor at measure 11. In this piece twenty-seven pitches in the first thirteen measures coincide with the pitches of the original superius melody (marked with a vertical line), more than those in Tinctoris's *D'un autre amer* (twenty in nineteen measures). Nine pitches (marked x) are chosen from the absent contratenor (sometimes at the octave), far fewer than in the Tinctoris example, where the proportion of superius to contratenor pitches is about 2:1. Bedyngham's song is more “empty” harmonically than Ockeghem's: there are many fifths, octaves, and duplicated pitches between the tenor and the contratenor. Bedyngham's cadences at measures 6 and 13 are observed, though without ceasing motion in the superius, but new cadences might be created in the ornamented version in measures 2 and 10 if the B♭ is raised.

Most of the duos in both manuscripts have continuous motion between the two voices; where the tenor has longer notes, the upper voice has many shorter notes. An uncharacteristic gap occurs in *Gentil madona* in measure 11, the first ending of the original song, ignored in the duo setting. Pietrobono would never have let his part come to such a halt; this is another indication that the Perugia duos are more didactic than musical.
Conclusion

My conclusion is that we have no plausible written version of what Pietrobono’s performances would have sounded like. Still, there are hints: it is very likely that he would have incorporated the pitches of the chanson melody on many of the main beats; at any rate, he would have avoided any dissonance except a short appoggiatura dissonance with the notes of his tenorista at those points. Where the harmonies were bare, the tenorista could have supplied extra notes, more easily if playing a lute with his fingers, but probably not to the extent of replicating the complete contratenor: this would have restricted Pietrobono unduly. To David Fallows, who has given considerable thought to the practical implications of Pietrobono’s performance,

it seems clear enough that the tenorista, also playing a plucked instrument, played both lower parts in the standard three-voice chanson: to select only the tenor part would surely have seemed unfair to the original composition, would have provided insufficient support for the discantor if it was played on a lute, and would moreover have seemed rather too simple a feat alongside the magnificent embellishments of the discantor.  

To this I would observe that we have plenty of duos to show that it was not felt unfair to a composition to leave out the contratenor; indeed Pietrobono could have incorporated notes from the contratenor in his improvisation, as the two duos I have examined above did. Moreover, in the early years at least the tenorista, if playing on a lute, would have used a plectrum, largely precluding a third voice. There is also another consideration: many chanson tenors, as those we have seen above, would seem thin on the lute, especially if played slowly to allow for Pietrobono’s rapid passagework. I believe that a viola is more likely to be the tenorista’s instrument, allowing the notes of the tenor to be sustained. Moreover, the contrast in sound between a plucked and a bowed instrument seems to have been liked, since the two long-serving Ferrarese viola players, Andrea and Zampolo da Parma, had as their tenorista a lutenist, Rainaldo dal Chitarino (who, incidentally, is never paired with Pietrobono). The same may have been the case at the court of Milan, where “magistro Johanes Todesco, sonatore de leguto,” had a “compagno che sona la viola.”

151 On April 16, 1475 Galeazzo Maria Sforza requested that they come to Abbiato Grasso
Example 2. Anon., *Gentil madona*, Perugia, Biblioteca comunale, MS 1013, fols. 104v–105, mm. 1–12, with Bedyngham’s superius melody superimposed. Verticals indicate points of congruence between Tinctoris’s and Ockeghem’s melodies, x the use of a pitch from the contratenor.
The Foremost Lutenist in the World

69

na de non mi habando

tre semibrevi per battere

Sexiquarta quattro semibrevi subquadrapla una semibreve

per battere

per battere
Whether the tenorista played the lute or viola, it is clear that he always had a very minor role; it would be near impossible for two players of Pietrobono’s virtuosity to play together. We can judge the contribution of the tenorista not only from the tenor voice part itself but also from the many contemporary descriptions of Pietrobono’s performances that make no mention of the tenorista. Corroboration of another sort is found in the payment records of the court of Ferrara: we often find Pietrobono and his tenorista paid in tandem, but Pietrobono’s salary is generally four times as much as that of his tenorista. For example, on July 4, 1455, Pietrobono was paid LM 16 monthly as salary and Francesco Malacise LM 4.\(^{152}\) By 1488 their salaries had increased to LM 18 monthly for Pietrobono and LM 7 for Francesco dalla Gatta.\(^{153}\) Moreover, the tenorista did not earn as much as the two viola players or their companion, Rainaldo dal Chitarino. In 1486 the annual salary of each of them was LM 238 s. 15 d. 5.\(^{154}\) The instrumentalists were paid higher than the singers, whose normal salary was LM 6 monthly, though some at least could count on income from benefices.\(^{155}\) Wages are not the whole story, however, since the musicians were sometimes given gifts of clothing and provided horses, and debts owing to merchants and taverners were forgiven. Some of the musicians also received subsidies for their housing.\(^{156}\)

\(^{152}\) ASMo, Libri camerali diversi 17, fol. 52 left. On December 30, 1455 Pietrobono received LM 20 and Francesco Malacise LM 5 (ibid., fol. 106 left).

\(^{153}\) ASMo, Bolletta dei salariati 11, fol. 113 right.

\(^{154}\) ASMo, Memorale del soldo 7 (1486–87), fol. 57 left, under December 1486: "A Andrea dala viola l. doxento tcentaocto s. quindex d. quinque m. per la sua provisione del anno predicito 1486 principiato a Kl. de zenaro et finito ad ultimo de decembre deto anno sono di 365 a ragioni de l. 132 m. ——— 238. 15. 6." The same wording accompanies the notices for Zampolo dalla Viola and Rainaldo dal Chitarino, as well as Francesco tamburino alias da Orthona. Elsewhere their salary is listed as LM 20 per month. In 1491, however, the salaries were LM 200 per year (ASMo, Memorale del soldo 12, fol. 161 right, 162 left and right). Trumpeters did equally well; in 1484 they earned LM 18.13.4 or 13.6.8 per month; see the table in Lockwood, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara*, 140. It is difficult to be sure of the exact compensation because payments were often in arrears, and frequently they were offset against credits owed to others, for example taverners.

\(^{155}\) For example, ASMo, Memorale del soldo 10 (1488–89), fol. 59r: "Li infrascritti canturij del nostro i. s. toliti dalla camera . . . cum provisione de L. 6 il mese."

\(^{156}\) Lockwood devotes a chapter to "Social and Economic Status of the Musicians" in *Music in Renaissance Ferrara*, 173–84. Especially revealing are the promises made to singers when Ercole was supplementing his chapel in the 1470s, involving salary, benefices, travel supplements, a horse, and clothing, in one case totaling as much as LM 888 per year (pp. 176–77).
Fallows also raised the question of score notation, believing that “the tenorista, playing or learning the two lower parts of a chanson, would need some kind of score reduction,” which could be tablature, though it would be impossible to capture Pietrobono’s performances in tablature.\(^\text{157}\) I think we can rule out a score or tablature for Pietrobono and his tenorista; they had the music, as Brandolini said, fixed in their “breast’s memory.” For the tenorista, this would be the tenor line in the first place, but possibly concordant notes as well. Pietrobono’s long experience in playing with his “faithful companion in art” would have ensured that each knew what the other was intending to play: “the music of each aids the other,” as Brandolini remarked.

What Pietrobono did not do was to sing narrative verse; Cornazzano’s purported eyewitness report, I maintain, is fictional; moreover, his technical description of Pietrobono’s playing applies only to instrumental performance. It is telling that no one else among the many other contemporary witnesses reports that Pietrobono sang, either narrative verse or the superius or the tenor of his songs to his own accompaniment or that of his tenorista. He dazzled listeners with the virtuosity of his performance on the lute; it is very difficult to imagine how he could sing at the same time. The singing, as several writers mention, was performed by the resounding strings of his instrument. Pietrobono’s enduring fame was as the “primo homo dil mondo di sonar liuto.”

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