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direzione e redazione / *editorial office*

Fondazione Italiana per la Musica Antica

via Col di Lana, 7 – C.P. 6159 00195 Roma (I)

tel/fax +39.06.3210806

recercare@libero.it – www.fima-online.org

autorizzazione del Tribunale di Roma

n. 14247 con decreto del 13-12-1971

layout e copertina / *layout and cover*

Ugo Giani

LIM Editrice srl – via di Arsina 296/f, I-55100 Lucca

tel/fax +39.0583.394464 — lim@lim.it – www.lim.it

abbonamenti e arretrati / *subscriptions and back issues*

Italia / *Italy* € 30 – estero / *abroad* € 40

pagamenti a / *payments to* LIM Editrice srl

c/c postale / *postal account* n° 11748555

carta di credito / *credit card* Eurocard; Mastercard; Visa

ISSN 1120-5741 ISBN 978-88-5543-423-2

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Rethinking the chronology of the Italian *Ars nova*

The musical period conventionally referred to as the Italian *Ars nova* is normally characterized by the advent of the Trecento mensural notation and a predominantly polyphonic repertoire designed to enhance its application. However, the scarcity of documentation and the survival of sources only up to 1410–1415¹ have led scholars to view it — according to Nino Pirrotta's evocative metaphor — as

an island appearing on the horizon after a long voyage through centuries of silence and obscurity. The sudden and brilliant rise of this island delights us, but as we near it and are able to make out the configuration of its shore line, we see that after it there is another expanse of silence and obscurity separating it from the larger and more solid continent, the music of the Italian Renaissance.²

The ongoing exploration of this shadowy area, further supported by significant discoveries, has nevertheless allowed us to shed new light on the tradition and performance of this repertoire, enabling us to demonstrate that the Italian *Ars nova* actually had a much longer-lasting persistence and a

1. This is the time frame generally associated with the compilation of what is certainly the most iconic *Ars nova* collection, the Florentine *Codex Squarcialupi*, often regarded as already 'retrospective'. See in this regard, among others, AGOSTINO ZIINO, «*Magister Antonius dictus Zacharias de Teramo*»: alcune date e molte ipotesi, «*Rivista italiana di musicologia*», XIV, 1979, pp. 311–348: 334; JAMES HAAR, *The Trecento*, in ID., *Essays on Italian music and poetry in the Renaissance, 1350–1600*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986, pp. 1–21: 9; JOHN NÁDAS, *Song collections in late-medieval Florence*, in *Trasmissione e ricezione delle forme di cultura musicale. Atti del XIV Congresso della Società Internazionale di Musicologia (Bologna, 27 agosto-10 settembre 1987)*, a c. di Angelo Pompilio – Donatella Restani – Lorenzo Bianconi – F. Alberto Gallo, Torino, EDT, 1991, I, pp. 126–137: 135 (*Discussion*); MARIA CARACI VELA, *La filologia musicale. Istituzioni, storia, strumenti critici*, vol. 1, Lucca, LIM, 2005, p. 80.

2. NINO PIRROTTA, *Marchettus de Padua and the Italian Ars nova*, «*Musica disciplina*», IX, 1955, pp. 57–71: 57.

more fluid course than previously supposed. In the following articles, we will present two emblematic cases: one focusing on the vitality of Trecento music, especially through to the oral knowledge of its religious *contrafacta*, at least until the end of the fifteenth century; the other showing the clear preponderance of the *Ars nova* repertoire in a 1486 Sienese *capitolo ternario*, constructed with quotations of musical incipits.

Lucia Marchi and Francesco Zimei

SOURCE SIGLA: *Antico* = *Canzoni, sonetti, strambotti et frottole*, Libro Quarto, Roma, Andrea Antico e Nicolò de Iudicibus, 1517; *Atri* = Archivio Capitolare, Sala Innocenzo IV, Cartella A, Ms. fragm. no. 5; *Ber* = Berlin, Staatliche Museen der Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, Ms. 78.C.28 (Margherita Castellani's songbook); *Bg37* = Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica "Angelo Mai", Ms. Σ.IV.37; *Bg589* = Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica "Angelo Mai", Ms. 589; *Bon1485* = *Laude facte e composte da più persone spirituali*, Firenze, Bonaccorsi, 1485; *Br5* = Brescia, Biblioteca Querinana, Ms. C.VI.5; *Bu* = Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, Ms. 2216; *Cas* = Roma, Biblioteca Casanatense, Ms. 2151; *Ch* = Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, Ms. 564; *Chig266* = Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. Chigi L.VII.266; *Cord* = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Rothschild 2973; *Esc* = Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo del Escorial, Biblioteca y Archivo de Música, Ms. IV.a.24; *Faenza* = Faenza, Biblioteca Comunale, Ms. 117; *Fp* = Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Ms. Panciatichi 26; *Gall* = *Laude spirituali di Feo Belcari, di Lorenzo de' Medici, di Francesco d'Albizzo, di Castellano Castellani e di altri comprese nelle quattro più antiche raccolte* [a cura di Gustavo Camillo Galletti], Firenze, Molini e Cecchi, 1863; *Gr224* = Grottaferrata, Biblioteca del Monumento Nazionale, Ms. Kript. Lat. 224; *Grey* = Cape Town, National Library of South Africa, Grey Collection, Ms. 3.b.12.; *Ivrea* = Ivrea, Biblioteca Capitolare, Ms. 115; *Lo* = London, British Library, Ms. Add. 29987; *Lu* = Lucca, Archivio di Stato, Ms. 184 + Perugia, Biblioteca Comunale Augusta, Ms. 3065; *Magl30* = Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Ms. Magliabechiano VII, 30; *Magl130* = Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Ms. Magliabechiano XXXVIII, 130; *MC871* = Montecassino, Biblioteca dell'Abbazia, Ms. 871; *PadA* = Padova, Biblioteca Universitaria, Ms. 684; *PadC* = Padova, Biblioteca Universitaria, Ms. 658; *Panc* = Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Ms. Panciatichi 27; *Pix* = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. fr. 15123 (*Pixérécourt Chansonniér*); *Pit* = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. fonds it. 568; *Prague9* = Prague, Národní knihovna České republiky, Ms. XI.E.9; *Q15* = Bologna, Museo internazionale e Biblioteca della musica, Ms. Q.15; *Q18* =

Bologna, Museo internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica, ms. Q.18; **Reina** = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. n.a.f. 6771; **Ricc2224** = Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, Ms. 2224; **Ricc2871** = Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, Ms. 2871; **Rsmt** = Roma, Archivio storico del Vicariato di Roma, *Capitolo di S. Maria in Trastevere*, Armad. I. Cell. A., no. 3, ord. IV; **Sev** = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. n.a.f. 4379 (Seville Chansonnier); **SG** = Rimini, Archivio di Stato, Ms. San Gaudenzo, III (binding fragments); **SL** = Firenze, Archivio del Capitolo di San Lorenzo, Ms. 2211; **Sq** = Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. Palatino 87; **Str** = Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 222 C. 22; **To** = Torino, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, Ms. T.III.2; **Tod93** = Todi, Biblioteca Comunale Lorenzo Leoni, Ms. 93; **Tr87** = Trento, Museo Provinciale d'Arte, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Ms. 87; **Tr90** = Trento, Museo Provinciale d'Arte, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Ms. 90; **Tr92** = Trento, Museo Provinciale d'Arte, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Ms. 92; **Triv535** = Milano, Biblioteca Trivulziana, Ms. 535; **Urb1411** = Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. Urb. Lat. 1411; **Ven** = Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms. Cl. it. IX.145 (=7554).

The authors would like to collectively acknowledge the friends and colleagues who have supported them in various ways during the writing of their respective articles: Elena Abramov-van Rijk, Margaret Bent, Jacques Boogaart, Enrico Correggia, Marco Gozzi, Barbara Haggh-Huglo, Lachlan Hughes, Robert Kendrick, Matteo Leonardi, Thomas Persico, Giacomo Pirani, Yolanda Plumley, Angelica Vomera, Blake Wilson, Agostino Ziino.

Rethinking the chronology of the Italian *Ars nova*. I – Evidence of long-term continuity in the lauda repertoire

The supposed ‘end’ of the Italian *Ars nova* is typically linked to the compilation of the *Squarcialupi Codex*, now datable with greater precision, at least regarding the organization of Antonio Zaccara’s section.¹ Its contents are confined within well-defined chronological boundaries — a theoretical division reinforced by the absence of later sources documenting the transition from an older generation of composers to a younger ones.

Only recently the discovery of another Florentine source, the *San Lorenzo Palimpsest*, now made legible,² has allowed this boundary to be pushed forward by a few years. This shift is due only in part to the manuscript’s date of production — created by a single scribe in the third decade of the fifteenth century — and mainly because of the inclusion, in its last three gatherings,



Funded by the European Union (Horizon Programme for Research and Innovation 2021–2027, ERC Advanced Grant “The Italian Lauda: Disseminating Poetry and Concepts Through Melody, 12th–16th centuries”, acronym LAUDARE, project no. 101054750). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

1. Whose headnote, «chantor domini nostri Pape», refers to his recent appointment as *magister capelle* of John XXIII and can be dated between March 1411, when the Roman obedience curia moved to Rome passing through Florence, and 9 June 1413, when the composer decided not to follow the antipope in the latter’s flight to the North. Although this is an additional section inserted during the work, the progressive compilation and adjustments of *Sq*, even left unfinished, reflect a haste perhaps linked to the transitory nature of the recipient’s stay in Florence, who has not yet been identified. Therefore, it is likely that the manuscript’s project did not date back much earlier.

2. *The San Lorenzo Palimpsest. Florence, Archivio del Capitolo di San Lorenzo, Ms. 2211*, introductory study and multispectral images, ed. Andreas Janke – John Nádas, Lucca, LIM, 2016 (*Ars Nova*, new series, 4).

of composers and works not preserved elsewhere:³ the theorist Ugolino da Orvieto from Forlì (†1452), previously known only for three pieces in a mid-century Ferrarese source (*Cas*), with a larger body of work — including even a madrigal — traceable to 1417–18, when he sang at Santa Maria del Fiore; Giovanni Mazzuoli (†1426), whose section in *Sq* had remained unfilled; and his son Piero (†1430), who succeeded him as organist at Orsanmichele and could have plausibly been responsible for the collection.

This discovery sheds light on the role of the last known generation of *Ars nova* composers active in Florence, including Paolo da Firenze, who died after 21 September 1436 and is now definitively identified as the compiler of *Pit*.⁴ These composers played a key role in collecting and transmitting a repertoire of songs, some of which were over eighty years old at the time of their copying. Consequently, it is increasingly difficult to describe this manuscript tradition as purely ‘retrospective’, given that the repertoire was clearly intended for practical use at the time.

The involvement of the Mazzuoli father and son as organists at Orsanmichele is particularly noteworthy, especially when considered alongside the religious poet Vanni di Martino, who was active there as a professional singer before moving to the Compagnia di San Pietro Martire for similar duties. Through the practice of *contrafactum*, Vanni composed numerous lauda texts set to secular *Ars nova* melodies.⁵ These have survived in several Florentine *cantasi come* collections (poems marked with rubrics indicating they were to be sung “to the tune of...”), compiled during the second half of the century and still in use well into the early decades of the next: it is the case, for example, of *Chig266*, completed in 1464 and also containing twelve laude as old as the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries, likely intended to be sung according to their original monophonic settings, or the lauda collections which Gustavo Camillo Galletti edited in 1863 from four early prints (*Gall*).

3. See biographies, context, and editions in ANDREAS JANKE, *Die Kompositionen von Giovanni Mazzuoli, Piero Mazzuoli und Ugolino da Orvieto im San-Lorenzo-Palimpsest (FSL 2211)*, Hildesheim, Olms, 2016 (*Musica mensurabilis*, 7).

4. FRANCESCO ZIMEI, *The Ordinarium missae of Pit Between Compilation and Liturgy (With Some Insights Into Paolo da Firenze’s Role)*, in *Liturgical books and music manuscripts with polyphonic settings of the Mass in Medieval Europe*, ed. Oliver Huck – Andreas Janke, Hildesheim, Olms, 2020 (*Musica mensurabilis*, 9), pp. 81–107.

5. On this figure and his works, see BLAKE WILSON, *Song collections in Renaissance Florence: the cantasi come tradition and its manuscript sources*, «Recercare», x, 1998, pp. 69–104; ID., *Music and merchants: The laudesi companies of republican Florence*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 251; and ID., *Singing poetry in Renaissance Florence: The cantasi come tradition (1375–1550)*, Firenze, Olschki, 2009.

These sources document the activity of author-performers who extended the vitality of older music well beyond the artificial boundaries often imposed by modern musicology's 'partitioned' approach. In fact, such continuity was a widespread phenomenon. In his 2009 database, Blake Wilson listed as many as fifty-four old melodies adapted to over seventy lauda texts.⁶ Of these, twenty-nine — most of them composed by Francesco Landini — are preserved in *Sq* itself. This demonstrates that its repertoire remained so popular in Florence decades after the composers' deaths that it was still sung by heart. After all, this was the very purpose of the aforementioned rubrics: they catered to semi- or total illiteracy of confraternity members and provide irrefutable evidence of the oral dissemination of a specific poetic-musical culture.

These percentages can be increased. In the following table, which concerns secular compositions up to the mid-fifteenth century indicated as *cantasi come* in lauda collections compiled in Florence or more broadly within the Tuscan area, the information presented in Wilson's database have been verified and slightly updated.⁷ The addition of new entries has been emphasized in bold, and certain details — such as the normalized spelling of incipits, the genre (ballata, madrigal, canzone), the composer, and the preservation of the music⁸ — have been clarified:

incipit	genre	composer	music	cantasi come source
<i>Altri n'arà la pena et io lo danno</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>Alzando gli occhi vidi una donzella</i>	B	?	–	<i>Chig266</i>

6. WILSON, *Singing poetry*, pp. 42–43. Another list restricted to the Florentine *Ars nova* repertoire is given in ID., *Dante's forge: poetic modeling and musical borrowing in late Trecento Florence*, in *Beyond 50 years of Ars nova studies at Certaldo, 1959–2009*, atti del convegno (Certaldo, 12–14 giugno 2009), a c. di Marco Gozzi – Agostino Ziino – Francesco Zimei, Lucca, LIM, 2014, pp. 25–55: 46–48.

7. Some additional information comes from WILSON himself, especially *Dante's Forge*, pp. 49–55, and from the work in progress carried out by the ERC (European Research Council) AdG LAUDARE project. Among the achievements made so far, it is worth mentioning the book by THOMAS PERSICO, «*Cantasi come*»: *l'eco della poesia musicale del Trecento nelle laude imitative dei secc. XIV-XV. Studio ed edizione dei testi*, Roma, Sapienza Università Editrice, 2025, in press.

8. In this regard, I am glad to announce that the fragmentary SG codex from Rimini, recently discovered and currently undergoing virtual reassembly by the LAUDARE team itself, contains, among other pieces, the previously unknown two-voice setting of the ballata *Né te né altra voglio amar giammai*, composed by Landini to a text by Franco Sacchetti.

INCIPIIT	GENRE	COMPOSER	MUSIC	CANTASI COME SOURCE
<i>Ama, donna, chi t'ama 'n pura fede</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	<i>Ricc2871</i>
<i>Amor, se ti diletta</i>	B	?	–	<i>Ricc2871</i>
<i>Appress'un fiume chiaro</i>	M	Giovanni da Cascia	•	<i>Ricc2871</i>
<i>Ara' tu pietà mai</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>Ben lo sa Dio se son vergine e pura</i>	B	Antonio Zaccara	•	<i>Triv535 et al.</i>
<i>Benché partir da te molto mi doglia</i>	B	Nicolò del Preposto	•	<i>Ricc2871</i>
<i>Chi guasta l'altrui cose fa villania</i>	C	?	quoted	<i>Magl130 et al.</i>
<i>Chi mi terrà, Amor, che io non canti</i>	B	Andrea Stefani	–	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>Ciascun faccia per sé</i>	B	Nicolò del Preposto	•	<i>Chig266 et al.</i>
<i>Con lagrime bagnandome nel viso</i>	B	Johannes Ciconia	•	<i>Chig266 et al.</i>
<i>Come tradir pensasti, donna, mai</i>	B	Jacopo Pianellaio	•	<i>Ricc2224</i>
<i>Cosa crudel m'ancide</i>	B	Andrea dei Servi	•	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>De sospirar sovente</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>Dedutto sei a quel che mai non fusti</i>	B	Antonio Zaccara	•	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>Deh, luce del mio cor, non voler ch'io</i>	B	?	–	<i>Chig266 et al.</i>
<i>Deh, volgi gli occhi tuoi piatosi in giù⁹</i>	B	?	–	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>Di', perché non ti piace il servir mio</i>	B	?	–	<i>Magl130</i>
<i>Dimmi per tuo onore</i>	B	?	–	<i>Magl130</i>
<i>Dio mi guardi di peggio</i>	B	Nicolò del Preposto	•	<i>Chig266 et al.</i>

9. Doubtful, since perhaps it is already a lauda. WILSON, *Singing poetry*, p. 42, mentions this entry with a partial incipit, «Dè volgi gli occhi», but he identifies it as Landini's ballata *Deh, volgi gli occhi a me, donna, per cui*, whose music has been preserved.

incipit	genre	composer	music	cantasi come source
<i>Dolce Fortuna, omai rendime pace</i>	B	Johannes Ciconia	•	Chig266
<i>Donna, che d'amor senta, non si mova</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	Chig266 et al.
<i>Donna, s'ì t'ho fallito</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	Ricc2871
<i>Ecco la primavera</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	Chig266
<i>Era tutta soletta</i>	B	?	–	Chig266
<i>Giorno, perché'n mi fai</i>	B	?	–	Chig266
<i>I' mi son pargoletta bella e nova</i>	B	?	–	Ricc2871
<i>I' vo' bene a chi vuol bene a me</i>	B	Gherardello da Firenze	•	Magl130
<i>La bionda treccia di fin or colore</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	Chig266
<i>Leggiadra damigella, o signor mio</i>	B	?	•	Chig266 et al.
<i>Mercé te chiamo, o dolce anima mia</i>	B	?	•	Chig266
<i>Miserere, lagrimando</i>	B	?	–	Magl130
<i>Nel mezzo già del mar la navicella</i>	M	Nicolò del Preposto	•	Ricc2871
<i>Né per dormire, né per fuggire</i>	B	?	–	Magl130 et al.
<i>Né te né altra voglio amar giammai</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	Chig266 et al.
<i>Non al suo amante più Diana piacque</i>	M	Jacopo da Bologna	•	Ricc2871
<i>Non creder, donna, che nessuno sia</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	Chig266 et al.
<i>Non credo, donna, che la dolce fiamma</i>	B	Antonio Zaccara	•	Chig266
<i>O cuor del corpo mio, perché me fai</i>	B	?	•	Chig266
<i>O lasso me, tapino sventurato</i>	B	?	–	Magl130
<i>Or è'ttal l'alma mia</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	Magl130
<i>O rosa bella, o dolce anima mia</i>	B	Johannes Ciconia	•	Chig266
<i>Parteti e non dimorare</i>	B	?	–	Magl130
<i>Per allegrezza del parlar d'amore</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	Chig266

INCIPIIT	GENRE	COMPOSER	MUSIC	CANTASI COME SOURCE
<i>Per un verde boschetto</i>	B	Bartolino da Padova	•	<i>Ricc2871</i>
<i>Perla mia cara, ay dolce amore</i>	B	?	•	<i>Gall</i>
<i>Po' che partir convienmi, donna cara</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	<i>Ricc2871</i>
<i>Poi ch'io non trovo in te, donna, mercé</i>	B	?	–	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>Poi che da te mi convien partir via</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	<i>Ricc2871</i>
<i>Provare el possa chi a me nol crede</i>	B	?	–	<i>Chig266 et al.</i>
<i>Questa fanciulla, Amor, fallami pia</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>Questa leggiadra stella</i> ¹⁰	B	?	–	<i>Magl130</i>
<i>S'avesse forza o sdegno quant'amore</i>	B	Bonaiuto Corsini	•	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>S'i' ti son stat'e vogli'esser fedele</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>S'io t'ho fallito, donna, me dispiace</i>	B	?	–	<i>Chig266 et al.</i>
<i>Se m'ascoltate, donne innamorate</i>	B	?	–	<i>Chig266 et al.</i>
<i>Se per durezza tu morir me fai</i>	B	?	•	<i>Magl130</i>
<i>So ben perché tu m'hai lassato, Amore</i>	B	?	–	<i>Magl130</i>
<i>Tu non vuo' ch'io ti guardi</i>	B	?	–	<i>Magl130</i>
<i>Tutta soletta si già mormorando</i>	B	Guglielmo di Francia	•	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>Va' pure, Amor, e colle reti tue</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	<i>Chig266</i>
<i>Vidi una forosetta in un boschetto</i>	B	?	quoted	<i>Ricc2871 et al.</i>
<i>Vita non è più misera e più ria</i>	B	Francesco Landini	•	<i>Ricc2871</i>
<i>Vivo per voi, madonna, in gran pensiero</i>	B	?	–	<i>Chig266 et al.</i>

10. WILSON, *Singing poetry*, p. 43, mentions this entry as «Questa leggiadra stella [luce?]» raising the doubt that it might be *Questa leggiadra luce* by Andrea dei Servi, whose music is known. Actually the scribe of *Magl130* transmits a much more detailed text of the melodic model, which is completely different: «Questa [*Il desiderio di quella*] si canta come quella che comincia così: Questa leggiadra stella · che tanto è relucente».

As can be observed, apart from a few settings of texts by Leonardo Gius-tinian that can be dated with certainty to the mid-fifteenth century but are known only from later sources, nearly all the pieces can be traced back to the *Ars nova* period or even earlier: this is the case with the ballata *I' mi son pargoletta bella e nova*, on a poem by Dante Alighieri;¹¹ *Chi guasta l'altrui cose fa villania*, the canzone of Lisabetta da Messina which according to Boccaccio «ancora oggi si canta»;¹² and *O lasso me, tapino sventurato*, clearly inspired by the sonnet *O me lasso, tapin, perché fui nato*, also of Sicilian origin.¹³

From these examples as well as others that we will examine later, it can be inferred that the prolonged use of such poetic-musical materials persisted even in the face of the evolution of genres and forms; on the contrary, it actively supported this process precisely through singing. Meanwhile, forms considered obsolete by the Trecento, such as the canzone and madrigal, continued to survive, at least through the lauda *contrafacta* derived from them. This is also true for the caccia: it is enough to note that in the text of the *Devotione et festa de sancto Petro Martire*, composed in Aquila by Buccio di Pietruccio di Petracca da Collebrincioni shortly before 1470, this imitation technique — referred to in the caption as «ad caccia» — continued to be employed to convey the intensity of certain heated dialogue scenes.¹⁴

The main challenge in addressing phenomena of persistence like these lies in the gap between the practice of writing down *Ars nova* music — a behavior that seemingly ceased as early as the first decades of the fifteenth century but was likely hindered by unforeseen events and historical upheavals — and its continued performance, which took place almost exclusively

11. See also THOMAS PERSICO, *Appunti sulla fortuna di I' mi son pargoletta bella e nova nelle laude del ms. Riccardiano 2871*, «Critica del testo», XXIII/2, 2020, pp. 37–60.

12. *Decameron* IV, 5. It even continued to be sung a century and a half later, still in the form of a canzone, in the various lauda *contrafacta* derived from it. Its musical incipit survives incorporated in the anonymous four-voice quodlibet *Fortuna disperata*, dating to the late fifteenth century.

13. See *Sonetti anonimi del Chigiano*, a c. di Riccardo Gualdo, in *I poeti della scuola siciliana*, Milano, Mondadori, 2008, vol. III (*Poeti Siculo-toscani*, a c. di Rosario Coluccia), pp. 1039–1118. After the two *siciliane* transmitted by the codex *Reina* — including the ballata *Dolce lo mio drudo e vaintende*, derived from a canzone by «Re Federigo» — this represents another striking clue suggesting, contrary to the prevailing opinion, that the expressive culture of the Sicilian School of poetry also made use of music.

14. FRANCESCO ZIMEI, *I «cantici» del Perdono. Laude e soni nella devozione aquilana a san Pietro Celestino*, Lucca, LIM, 2015, pp. 36–37. The edition of this and other sacred plays from Aquila of the period is given in VINCENZO DE BARTHOLOMAEIS, *Il teatro abruzzese del Medio Evo*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1924 (reprint Sala Bolognese, Forni, 1979).

in the realm of orality, leading to outcomes that are inherently difficult to evaluate.

A rare but crucial exception, further highlighted by its frequent reuse within the devotional repertoire across central and northern Italy, is the ballata mezzana *Ben lo sa Dio se sum vergine e pura*. Until recently, its melody was known only from versions dating between the 1470s and the early sixteenth century. These include:

1. A three-voice setting in the heart-shaped French songbook of Jean de Montchenu, likely compiled in Geneva in 1475 (*Cord*);¹⁵
2. The three-voice lauda *Cum desiderio vo cercando* by Bianco da Siena, which, as we shall see, is the result of adaptations both in the text and the music, transmitted with a specific setting in *Grey* (ff. 68r-69v) and *Panc* (f. 79r), both dating to early sixteenth century;¹⁶
3. The *ripresa* of the ballata quoted as a refrain in the four-voice frottola *Se mia trista e dura sorte* by Nicolò Brochus (*Antico*);¹⁷

What makes this work exemplary for the purposes of our study is that, through multispectral photography, an earlier two-voice version (*Be'llo sa Dio*) has just been deciphered. It is preserved in both the SL palimpsest (f. 135r) and the Abruzzese fragment *Atri* (*verso*), and was composed around 1410 by Zaccara. In its two stanzas the author advocates for the moral integrity and

15. Edited by Edward L. Kottick in *The unica in the Chansonnier Cordiforme* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Rothschild 2973), [n.p.], American Institute of Musicology, 1967 (Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae, 42), p. 1; and Geneviève Thibault in *Chansonnier de Jean de Montchenu*: (Bibliothèque nationale, Rothschild 2973 [I.5.13]), commentary by David Fallows, Paris, Société française de musicologie, 1991, pp. 4–5. See also the edited text and comments in DAVID FALLOWS, *Chansonnier de Jean de Montchenu* (ca. 1475). *Kommentar zum Faksmile der Handschrift Rothschild 2973* (I.5.13) in der Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Münster, Bibliotheca Rara, 2010, pp. 66–67.

16. Edited respectively by Giulio Cattin in *Italian Laude & Latin Unica in Ms. Capetown*, *Grey 3.b. 12*, [n.p.], American Institute of Musicology, 1977 (Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae, 76), p. 24, and in FRANCESCO LUISI, *Laudario Giustiniano. Musiche a modo proprio, ricostruzioni e "cantasi come" nella tradizione musicale dei secoli XV-XVI-XVII per le fonti delle laude attribuite a Leonardo Giustiniano*, 2 vols., Venezia, Fondazione Levi, 1983, II, p. 32; in ELISABETH DIEDERICH, *Die Anfänge der mehrstimmigen Lauda vom Ende des 14. bis zur Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Münchner Veröffentlichungen zur Musikgeschichte, Tutzing, Schneider, 1986, p. 302; and in GIOIA FILOCAMO, *Florence, BNC, Panciatici 27. Text and context*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2010 (Monumenta Musica Europea, II/1), pp. 596–598.

17. In the concordance list of the ballata, Andreas Janke and I had erroneously included «a four-voice untexted setting in Q18 (ff. 15v-16r)», which, despite some similarity, is actually the anonymous frottola *Come el piombin quel semplice ucelletto*. See JANKE – ZIMEI, *The Atri fragment revisited II: From the manuscript's context to the tradition of the ballata Be'llo sa Dio*, in *Liturgical books and music manuscripts*, pp. 135–156: 138.

purity of an unjustly accused maiden — a likely metaphor for the Church of Roman-obedience within the context of the Great Schism. However, later traditions interpreted them with a more broadly moral meaning.

Aside from the text, this version shares large portions of its melodic outline in the *cantus* with the later attestations, maintaining nearly complete consistency in cadential sequences.¹⁸ What changed over time, apart from inevitable semiographic adaptations to white notation, is the rhythmic structure. This evolved, though still within the framework of *tempus imperfectum*, towards a simplified mensuration, shifting from *prolatio maior* — a hallmark of many of Zaccara's ballatas — to *prolatio minor* (Ex. 1):

Atri

Be' llo sa di o che so vergene et pu et

Cord

Ben lo sa di o se sum vergi ne e pu ra che en

en ben fa re spe ro che falsa infamia non remove ro

ben fa re spe ro Che falsa infamia non remove el ve ro

Ex. 1: The cantus ripresa of *Be' llo sa Dio* in Atri and Cord
(from JANKE – ZIMEI, *The Atri fragment revisited II*, pp. 144–145)

It is quite plausible that, over the time elapsed between the copying of the two versions, the melody of the ballata — a vehicle for conveying the text and its semantic aspects through singing — underwent the transformations made

18. JANKE – ZIMEI, *The Atri fragment revisited II*, p. 150.

evident by the multiple and elusive stages of its oral transmission. Beyond the process of ‘formalization’ of a composition at the time it was set down in writing — often determined by the author’s own intent — the textual differences it displays over time reflect some of the modes of performance and reception in which it circulated during that period. It is through this process that the coexistence of poetry and music takes shape and evolves, mutually influencing one another.

This frequently occurs from the mid-fifteenth century onwards in the practice of *cantasi come* applied to the lauda repertoire, particularly when associated with older hits. The most frequent alteration involved using only the *prima pars* of the musical setting, which covers the *ripresa*, and adapting it — like a module — to the subsequent stanzas, thereby redefining the latter’s length exclusively according to this melodic parameter. This explains why, in some lauda sources with music dating from the mid-1400s onward, the amount of notated music is apparently insufficient to cover the poems compared with their original structure. Suffice it to look at this two-voice version of the Giustinian lauda-ballata *Anima benedecta* whose setting covers only the *ripresa*, even though the text is complete (Ex. 2).

Sometimes, this kind of arrangement is somehow specified by the *cantasi come* rubric, but in terms that could sound somewhat ambiguous today and may lead to misunderstandings. An emblematic case concerns another lauda from the Giustinian tradition, *Madre che festi colui che te fece*, preserved in a single manuscript (Ven) in a two-voice setting, which had already been confined to the four-line *ripresa* of what should originally have been a ballata maggiore. Nevertheless, we are dealing with the structure specifically implied by the numerous laude that reused its melody. In the heading of some of them, like the pseudo-Iaconic *Amor Iesù, perché’l sangue spandesti*, we specifically read: «Cantasi in su *Madre che festi colui che-tti fecie* et poi le stanze come *rispetti*».¹⁹ This description, resulting from the connection with the genre *rispetti*, has been interpreted as «an interesting hybrid formula», that «drew on the quarta rima form of Giustinian’s lauda *Madre che festi* for the performance of the four-line *ripresa* [...] coupled with the formula for *rispetti* to perform the remaining eight lines of the strophe».²⁰ However, it would be unsustainable on both stylistic and structural grounds to combine an *Ars nova* setting with some of the standard melodic formulas used for improvised poetry, still typical of certain rural areas of the Peninsula: in this

19. Chig266, f. 30r.

20. WILSON, *Singing poetry*, p. 70.



Ex. 2: *Anima benedecta*, laid out in two columns: the music on the left and the text on the right. Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Ms. Pal. 472, f. 22r
(by courtesy)

solution, even the musical rhyme between the *ripresa* and the *volta* typical of ballata forms would be lost. Much more simply, such a rubric refers to the need to sing the stanzas to the same musical section — precisely in the manner of *rispetti* — and no longer to use two, including the one for the *mutazioni*, as in the *formes fixes*.²¹

The reduction of melody thus resulted in fragmenting and reshaping the original poems into smaller groups of lines, marked — albeit through the preservation of the same materials — the gradual transition from the ballata to other forms more closely aligned with the Renaissance frottola

21. Sometimes in *cantasi come* practice even alternative options have survived: «cantasi come rispetti o a ballo», which leave open the possibility of singing the old ballata arranged only to the music of the *prima pars* or in its original form.

genre ‘constellation’, ranging from the isostrophic canzonetta to the terza rima and the strambotto.²² This process of stylizing musical patterns, evidently carried out with the aim of simplifying the mechanisms of popular communication, perhaps found its roots on the one hand in the experience of *cantimpanca*, and on the other in the rhetorical strategies of the great preachers — especially those of the Franciscan Observance — characterized by several forms of vernacular eloquence, always carried out «cum brevitare sermonis», according to the instructions of Francis of Assisi.²³

The most skilled among the latter began therefore incorporating lauda singing into their sermons, giving rise to true public spectacles, often in open competition with the minstrels who typically performed in the same spaces. Bernardine of Siena, a champion of this preaching style, provides evidence of that rivalry — evidently due to the use of the same practices — in Florence’s Piazza Santa Croce during Lent in 1424, invoking divine condemnation upon those who preferred to cultivate less edifying forms of entertainment in that area: «El cantare de’ paladini el di’ delle feste comandate, e massimamente la quaresima, è peccato mortale a chi canta e a chi lo sta a udire» (singing about paladins on holy feast days, and especially during Lent, is a mortal sin for both those who sing and those who listen).²⁴

The transformation of an old lauda ballata into a new canzonetta text, mainly achieved by preserving only the music for the *prima pars*,²⁵ sometimes implied adapting the layout by graphically dividing the poem into shorter stanzas or marking them with paragraph signs, while maintaining the original rhyme scheme unchanged. This resulted in a distortion of their formal consistency. However, there were exceptions. One particularly notable case concerns John of Capistrano, a distinguished colleague and friend of Bernardine. A small lauda source dating to shortly after 1456 (*Tod93*) attributes to him a reworking of *Amor Iesù, perché’l sangue spandesti*, reformulated into proper quatrains by changing its rhymes in an appropriate direction in order to fit the *cantasi come* reference to *Madre che festi colui che te fece* (Ex. 3):²⁶

22. On this phenomenon, see FRANCESCO ZIMEI, *Forma vs performance. (Tras)mutazioni della lauda-ballata*, «Il Saggiatore musicale», XXVI, 2019, pp. 5–24.

23. *Regula Bullata*, IX, 4.

24. LINA BOLZONI, *La rete delle immagini. Predicazione in volgare dalle origini a Bernardino da Siena*, Torino, Einaudi, 20092, p. 156.

25. But there are ballatas in which the music that was preserved is from the *secunda pars*, directly eliminating the *ripresa* and leaving only the stanzas. A handful of examples is discussed in ZIMEI, *I «cantici» del Perdono*, pp. 147–148.

26. ZIMEI, *Forma vs performance*, pp. 16–17.

1	Amor Iesù, perché 'l sangue spandesti	[A]mor Yhesù, perché 'l sangue spargisti	1
2	per me, ingrato verme sconoscente:	per me, malvascio, ingrato et scongnoscente:	2
3	chi ti sforzò, splendore della mia mente,	chi te sforsò, splendore della mia mente,	3
4	che tante pene per me sostenesti?	che tanta pena per me sostenisti?	4
5	O magno, Dio tu t'umiliasti	Tu magno Dio et io facto de niente,	5
6	com'agnellino stando fra 'lla gente	o dolce amore Yhesù, quanto me amasti!	6
7	e del tuo sanghue me riconperasti	O summo Dio, per me te humiliasti	7
8	versandol tutto in crocie pendente,	ad stare como agnello fra la gente.	8
9	piangiendo et sospirando amaramente.		
10	«Sizio» a me gridasti sulla crocie	Collo sancto sangue me recomparasti,	9
11	orand'al Padretterno ad alta vocie	spargendolo tucto su la sancta croce,	10
12	e 'l Padre irato placato rendesti.	piangendo et suspirando ad alta voce:	11
		el Patre irato contra me placasti.	12

Ex. 3: The text of *Amor Iesù* in its original form (*Chig266*) and reworked into quatrains (*Tod93*) after correcting the rhymes

In the lauda adaptation of *Ben lo sa Dio* transmitted by *Panc* and *Grey*,²⁷ the resulting relationship between music and poetry is different yet again. First of all, the formal structure of *Cum desiderio vo cercando* is actually divided into quatrains, which are also metrically heterogeneous among themselves. The difficulty, however, was not only in resolving the conflict between the hendecasyllabic and heptasyllabic lines of Zaccara's ballata ($y_{11} z_7 z_{11} / a_{11} b_{11} a_{11} b_{11} b_{11} z_7 z_{11}$) and the octosyllabic lines of that by Bianco da Siena ($z_8 y_8 y_8 z_8 / a_8 b_8 a_8 b_8 b_8 c_8 c_8 z_8$) — a gap easily compensated for through short melismas and word repetitions — but also in aligning a three-line refrain with a four-line one (Ex. 4):

27. Other lauda texts that use this melody — referred to in the rubric as *cantasi come* and generally preserved in its complete form — are mainly found in Feo Belcari's repertoire and a in section of the laudario *Triv535* which was specifically compiled in Cortona after December 1466, although it also contains poems composed before the mid-fifteenth century. See JANKE – ZIMEI, *The Atri fragment revisited II*, pp. 152–153, for the context, and PERSICO, «*Cantasi come*», for the editions. On the dissemination of *Ben lo sa Dio* as a melodic model for laude, see also BLAKE WILSON, «*Transferring tunes and adjusting lines*»: *Leonardo Giustinian and the Giustiniana in Quattrocento Florence*, in *Uno gentile e subtile ingenio: Studies in Renaissance music honour of Bonnie Blackburn*, ed. M. Jennifer Bloxam – Gioia Filocamo – Leofranc Holford-Strevens, Turnhout, Brepols, 2009, pp. 547–567.

1	Ben lo sa Dio se sum vergine e pura,	Cum desiderio vo cerchando	1
2	che en ben fare spero:	de trovare quel amoroso	2
3	che falsa infamia non remove el vero.	Yhesu Christo dilectoso	3
		per cui amore io vo suspirando.	4
4	Se ialosia me pone falsa casone		
5	non posso contra la Fortuna rea.	Suspirando per amore	5
6	Altra vindicta non quero che rasone,	vado cerchando el mio dilecto;	6
7	che la virtù serà l'eschusa mya;	posa non trova il mio core,	7
8	benqué 'l pensare dolore me sya	tanto è per amor constreto.	8
9	el no se passa cussi de legero		
10	a tollere grandio suspecto del mal pensare.	Cum desiderio pur aspeto	9
		de trova' da lui mercede;	10
		dato li ò il cor e la fede,	11
		sempre a lui me ricommando.	12

**Ex. 4: The text of *Ben lo sa Dio* according to *Cord* and that of *Cum desiderio*
as it was reshaped into a *canzonetta* form**

In this case, the author of the *contrafactum* decided to employ the entire setting of *Ben lo sa Dio*, using the *prima pars* — with an appropriate modification to its cadence — to cover the first three lines, and the music of its *mutazioni* — corresponding to the first two lines of the stanza — for the last one, which is therefore sung twice (Ex. 5).

Through the filter of the genuine lauda corpus²⁸ and in the unsuspected guise of the transformations outlined here — symptomatic of the emergence of new forms and styles — Italian music of the Trecento, and sometimes even that of the previous century, continued to live and thrive in the following periods. It benefited from the support of orality: that is, an underground world still much to be explored, at least in relation to certain phenomena of historical musicology — yet it occasionally resurfaces, leaving small but precious deposits of knowledge in the depths of manuscript tradition.

28. Another striking piece of evidence comes from the following article by LUCIA MARCHI, *Rethinking the chronology of the Italian Ars Nova: The long life of the Trecento repertory in late fifteenth-century Siena*.

The image displays a musical score for two parts, *Cord* and *Panc*, of the lauda *Ben lo sa Dio*. The score is written on two staves for each part, with lyrics in Italian. The *Cord* part is in G major (one sharp) and the *Panc* part is in F major (one flat). The melody of the *Cord* part is reused in the *Panc* part, as indicated by the caption. The lyrics are: *Ben lo sa Dio - - - o se sum ver-gi-ne e pu Cum de-si-de - - - rio vo cer-chando, vo cer - - ra, che en ben fa-re spe - - - ro: chan - - do de tro-va-re quel a-moro - - so che fal-sa in-fa-mi-a non re-move el ve - - - ro. Yhe-su Chri - - - sto di-lec-to - - - - so Se ia-lo - si-a me po-ne fal-sa ca-so - per cui a-mo-re io vo su - - spi - ran - ne non pos-so con-tra la For-tu-na re-a... do, per cui a - - mo-re io vo su-spi-ran - - - - do.*

Cord

Ben lo sa Di - - - o se sum ver-gi-ne e pu

Panc

Cum de-si-de - - - rio vo cer-chando, vo cer -

- - ra, che en ben fa-re spe - - - ro:

chan - - do de tro-va-re quel a-moro - - so

che fal-sa in-fa-mi-a non re-move el ve - - - ro.

Yhe-su Chri - - - sto di-lec-to - - - - so

Se ia-lo - si-a me po-ne fal-sa ca-so -

per cui a-mo-re io vo su - - spi - ran -

ne non pos-so con-tra la For-tu-na re-a...

do, per cui a - - mo-re io vo su-spi-ran - - - - do.

Ex. 5: The melody of *Ben lo sa Dio* in *Cord*
compared to its reuse in *Panc*