University of Massachusetts Amherst

Mapping Machaut's Mass and its Recording History: Ensemble Organum, Postmodernism, and Musical Multiplicity

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Mapping Machaut's Mass and Its Recording History: Ensemble Organum, Postmodernism, and Musical Multiplicity

A Thesis Presented

by

DOMINIC GENTILE

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ABSTRACT

MAPPING MACHAUT'S MASS AND ITS RECORDING HISTORY: ENSEMBLE ORGANUM, POSTMODERNISM, AND MUSICAL MULTIPLICITY

SEPTEMBER 2024

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Since 1982, Ensemble Organum has disrupted the early music scene with performances that have challenged audiences to listen to medieval music in new contexts. Directed by Marcel Pérès, the Ensemble draws from living chant and polyphonic traditions as well as from period sources to reimagine the sonic landscape of medieval music. Their 1996 recording of Guillaume de Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame* caused such a stir that critic Xavier Lacavalerie called the controversy the "Machaut affair." For example, musicologist Andrew Kirkman claimed that the recording "smack[ed] more of the bazaar than the rarefied sound-world which most listeners [would] have come to associate with the performance of 14th-century western polyphony." Other critics have described Organum's unconventional style—influenced by traditional Corsican singing—as eastern, Arabic, or exotic, emphasizing the "distant" sonic world evoked by the recording. Despite these strong reactions, few have attempted to analyze their performance beyond surface-level description. In Chapter 1, I fill this lacuna by transcribing passages of Organum's recording that best represent their use of Corsican ornamentation and timbres. I consider what Kirsten Yri calls "distancing features"—musical qualities that alienate the listener from Organum's performance—drawing

comparisons to Corsican music. To do so, I borrow from the ethnomusicological work of Caroline Bithell, who has documented this tradition in detail. Lastly, I show how Organum has established a new performance tradition, comparing how newer ensembles have followed in their footsteps.

In Chapter 2, I place Organum's recording within larger cultural trends, notably the globalist, postmodern aesthetics of the 1990s musical market—when medieval and world musics alike morphed from niche into mass phenomena. For example, plainchant albums like *Chant* and *Vision* became highly popular, topping the pop charts. Drawing on Johannes Fabian's and Timothy Taylor's work, I investigate how in the 1990s medieval and world music were often used to signify "the Other," enabling listeners to rationalize their place in the world. By analyzing Organum's performance practice and placing it in 1990s culture, I show how Organum's rendition marked a milestone in the Mass's recording history, still generating interest and controversy almost 30 years after its release.

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INTRODUCTION

Ensemble Organum's recording of Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame* is a striking and controversial rendition of this work, reflecting the group's bold and eclectic approach to Medieval music.[1] Released in 1996, this recording marked a watershed moment in the distinguished recording history of Machaut's Mass.[2] Departing from the traditions established by earlier groups, Ensemble Organum and their director, Marcel Pérès, employed ornamentation and improvisation conspicuously, often drawing from Corsican traditions. In addition, they often resorted to unconventional vocal production practices, such as their emphasis on nasal sounds, which offered a radically different perspective on the timbre of the Mass. Andrew Kirkman suggested that "the result [of their recording] smack[ed] more of the bazaar than the rarefied sound-world which most listeners [would] have come to associate with the performance of 14th-century western polyphony."[3] Fabrice Fitch, providing a more optimistic account, exclaimed that "[he] suspect[ed], a few listeners may have to overcome a powerful urge to switch off pretty early on. Which would be a great shame."[4] Xavier Lacavalerie—a music critic and publicist for the

[1] Guillaume de Machaut, *La Messe de Notre Dame*, Ensemble Organum and Marcel Pérès, Harmonia Mundi HMC 901590, 1996.

[2] Throughout my thesis, I use "Mass" to refer to Machaut's composition and "mass" when referencing the genre.

[3] Andrew Kirkman, "Early Polyphonic Masses," *Early Music* 25, no. 2 (May 1997): 321–22.

[4] Fabrice Fitch, "Machaut Messe de Notre Dame," Gramophone: The World's Best Classical Music Reviews, February 1997, https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/machaut-messe-de-notre-dame.

Ensemble—called the resulting negative press from French and Anglophone publications "l'Affaire Machaut"—the "Machaut Affair."[5] Lacavalerie expressed that:

> The version proposed by Marcel Pérès possessed something absolutely radical and unheard of, in the most etymological sense of the term…from the unacceptable and the audible…with [...] Corsican singers enormously stamping their voice and continually flirting with the exactness, clashing, and sliding of micro-intervals.[6]

These techniques combined with a lower tessitura established a new interpretation that defied the uniform vocal texture (devoid of ornamentation and timbral contrast) representative of the Mass's usual vocal performance practice. Organum's style, defined by its wandering melismatic lines, unmetered pulse, and nasal timbre, polarized audiences and critics alike while codifying a novel performance style. Despite its initial reception, this recording has left an indelible impression on ensembles such as Graindelavoix and Compagnie La Tempête.

Machaut and the Mass

This thesis examines how Organum's recording of Machaut's Mass resonates with cultural and musical ideals of the 1990s, seemingly removed from the work's original medieval context. However, this project would be remiss to ignore the Mass's composer and the culture from which his music originated. The Mass was written by Guillaume de

[5] Xavier Lacavalerie, "Le temps de la réception: Organum et la presse," in *Le Chant de la mémoire: Ensemble Organum (1982-2002)*, ed. Marcel Pérès and Xavier Lacavalerie (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2002), 172.

[6] "La version proposée par Marcel Pérès possédait quelque chose d'absolument radical et d'inouï, au sens étymologique du terme a la limite...de l'irrecevable et de l'audible…avec ces chanteurs corses timbrant énormément leur voix et flirtant en permanence avec…la justesse, les frottements et les glissements des micro-intervalles." Lacavalerie, "Le temps de la réception," 5.
All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

Machaut (b. 1300), canon of the Cathedral of Reims, sometime before 1365.[7] Scholars often tout this Mass as one of the fourteenth century's most important pieces and because of this, it is one of the better-known and most frequently performed examples of medieval music. The Mass was originally thought to commemorate the coronation of Charles V in 1364, but this assumption has long been disregarded.[8] It is now believed that Machaut desired the Mass to be performed as a commemoration for him and his brother, Jean, on a side altar of the Cathedral during the Saturday Mass for the Virgin Mary (occurring 35 to 40 times a year).[9]

Machaut's works are unique in the context of medieval practice in that they have been remarkably preserved in multiple sources by the composer himself, who went as far as to specify the order in which his music should be arranged. The Mass's title comes from a rubric in **MS Vg** stating, "Ci Commence la Messe de Nostre Dame" (or "Here Begins the Mass of Our Lady)."[10] While the Mass appears in five sources, **MS Vg** is the only source that assigns a title for the work. Despite modern performers treating the Mass as a complete unit, the work comprises only a portion of the liturgy of the mass. Each of its movements come from the Mass Ordinary (the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, and Ite Missa Est) and would have been interspersed with chants from the Mass

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[7] Ursula Günther, "Contribution de la musicologie à la biographie et à la chronologie de Guillaume de Machaut," *Guillaume de Machaut: Poète et compositeur. Colloque-Table Ronde organisé par l'Université de Reims (19–22 avril, 1978), Actes et Colloques* (1982), ed. Jacques Chailley et al. (Paris: Klincksieck, 1982), 95–116; quoted in Lawrence Earp, *Guillaume de Machaut: A Guide to Research* (London: Routledge, 1995), 274–75.

[8] Earp, *Guillaume de Machaut*, 43–44.

[9] Ibid., 49.

[10] Ibid, 50; MS 1, Machaut (Vogüé, Wildenstein, Machaut Vg), fol 283v, Private Collection of James E. and Elizabeth J. Ferrell, Kansas City, available online through the Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music, accessed August 22, 2024, https://www.diamm.ac.uk/sources/3774/#/images?p=283v.

Proper. Despite his pieces being well-documented, there are a number of issues surrounding his music for which sources do not provide definitive solutions. For example, Machaut's original notation does not represent important musical features like unwritten chromatic alterations (known as *musica ficta*), vocal timbre, and ornamentation; accordingly, ensembles have attempted to address these issues in a variety of ways in their performances.

Recording History

Over the course of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries numerous ensembles have performed the Mass, each lending a unique interpretation. Kirsten Yri notes that from 1951 to 2010 there have been 31 full recordings and 26 partial recordings.[11] Additionally, she identifies three airplay listings of the Mass in the 1950s, 13 in the 1960s, and 46 in the 1970s.[12] Yri suggests that, while it has received a number of contrasting interpretations, "[e]ach of the directors treats Machaut's mass with the utmost respect, demonstrating [that] there is always a market for the reception of 'just one work' if each new addition promises a different story than one we have heard before."[13] Daniel Leech-Wilkinson has identified an instrumental/vocal split in early music performance practice. He suggests that as the twentieth century progressed ensembles preferred renditions that only featured voices and not instruments. Early groups preferred instead to

[11] Kirsten Yri, "Performing Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame*: From Modernist Allegiances to the Postmodern Hinterland," in *A Companion Guide to Guillaume de Machaut*, ed. Deborah McGrady and Jennifer Bain (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 333.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 375.

perform medieval music with the addition of instruments. The Mass's recording history aligns with this "acapella" hypothesis, which tracks the revival of solely acapella medieval music at the expense of mixed vocal/instrumental renditions towards the latter part of the twentieth century.[14] From 1981 to 2010 only four recordings have featured instruments. Beginning with the Taverner Consort's 1984 recording (directed Andrew Parrott), most recordings have featured a small vocal ensemble containing five (or fewer) vocalists.[15] Beforehand, from 1950 to 1980, there had been only two acapella recordings of the Mass, with thirteen others featuring instruments.[16]

These early recordings used instruments to create contrast—qualities that later groups sought to achieve vocally. Directors of the earliest Mass recordings worked under the coronation assumption, employing large ensembles of vocalists and instrumentalists (winds, brass, and percussion) to match its perceived ceremonial function.[17] These recordings' vocal qualities align more closely to the "Western classical vocal technique," including ample use of vibrato.[18] The recordings produced by Pro Musica Antiqua directed by Safford Cape (1956), the Deller Consort directed by Alfred Deller (1961), and The London Ambrosian Singers with Les Ménestrels de Vienne under John McCarthy (1966) are indicative of this approach. In these recordings the instruments serve as a primary source of timbral contrast. This is especially evident in McCarthy's recording,

[14] Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 88.

[15] Yri, "Performing Machaut," 337.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 338.

[18] Katarina Livljanic and Benjamin Bagby, "The Silence of Medieval Singers," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Music*, ed., Mark Everist and Thomas Forrest Kelly (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 213.

where the instruments' intonation often clashes with the voices. Instrumentalists and vocalists alike employ short articulations, emphasizing Machaut's hocketing rhythms. While the coronation theory had been put to rest by the time these renditions were recorded, McCarthy, Deller, and Cape still opted for a grandiose character over the tranquil, somber quality representative of later recordings. Cape preferred vocal soloists while McCarthy preferred a full choir, but both included historical (if anachronistic) instruments such as shawms and sackbuts.

More recent recordings from the Taverner Consort (Parrott, 1984), the Hilliard Ensemble (Hillier, 1987), and the Oxford Camerata (Summerly, 1993) have foregone instruments, preferring a solely acapella approach. The Hilliard Ensemble, often touted as the gold standard of the Oxbridge choral style, presents Machaut's Mass in a high vocal register with no ornamentation and a homogenous timbre. These performances employ much less vibrato compared to the ones from Cape, McCarthy, and Deller. Parrott's and Summerly's recordings share this static vocal timbre and sparse use of melodic embellishment with Hillier's. Organum's watershed performance disrupted the uniform sound concept that these groups established. Despite the apparent contrasts, however, Ensemble Organum did continue with some of the practices of earlier performances. For instance, Yri notes that they, along with the Taverner Consort, placed more emphasis on the role of liturgy than previous groups did.[19] Additionally, both recordings are set in a lower range. In Pérès's recording, however, the timbrical homogeneity of Parrott's interpretation is replaced with ornate ornamentation, contrasting timbres, and a more

[19] Yri, "Performing Machaut," 350.

flexible sense of musical pulse.[20] While Tavener's musical pulse features a slight push and pull, these changes are typically used to emphasize the structural layout of the Mass. At the local level, on the other hand, Taverner's pulse is generally consistent throughout the measure, while Organum's ebbs and flows.

Harmonia Mundi

Ensemble Organum's recording was produced by Harmonia Mundi, a music label founded in 1958 with French and German divisions. The label specializes in medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque music and prides itself for its collaboration with Alfred Deller and the role it played in the "Baroque Revolution."[21] Deller's Mass was released on the label's German division, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, 35 years before Organum's release.[22] Organum began its collaboration with the label in 1983/1984, a collaboration that continues to this day, with a hiatus occurring in the first two decades of the 2000s.[23]

One of the distinctive features of Ensemble Organum's aesthetics and sound concept has been their collaboration with musicians from different traditions, such as the Corsican singing tradition. As a result, their sound palette is remarkably diverse, changing significantly in relation to the repertoire they perform. Their 1984 recording *Polyphonie Aquitaine du XII^{e} siècle (Saint-Martial de Limoges)* is an example of a

[20] Yri, "Performing Machaut," 351.

[21] "Harmonia Mundi, a Passion for Excellence," Harmonia Mundi, accessed August 16, 2024. https://www.harmoniamundi.com/en/label/.

[22] Guillaume de Machaut, *Messe de Notre Dame*, the Deller Consort and Alfred Deller, HM 25 148, 1961.

[23] Marcel Pérès, "Sympathies concertantes," 25. On their website Organum cites this collaboration beginning in 1983, see "Harmonia Mundi a Historical Partner," Association Organum, accessed August 21, 2024, https://organumcirma.com/en_GB/harmonia-mundi/.

radically different style that better aligns with Parrott, Hillier, and Summerly's sound concepts.[24] As I will demonstrate in this thesis, their recording of Machaut's Mass is instead heavily influenced by the Corsican tradition. As Kirkman has noted, vestiges of Organum's Corsican-influenced style emerge in their recording of the Tournai Mass released in 1991.[25] Kirkman suggests that the "vocal timbres, if nowhere near as strident as in [their Machaut recording], are nevertheless very strong, and here and there…vocal inflections give a hint of the much more vigorous ornamentations of the Machaut."[26]

In 2001, the Ensemble began releasing their recordings on labels such as Ambroisie, Zig Zag Territoires, and Aeon, separating ties with Harmonia Mundi.[27] In 2018, "after almost twenty years of interruption," the Ensemble resumed its collaboration with Harmonia Mundi with a series of reissues.[28] Their 2021 album, *In Memoria Eterna: Chant Mozarabe et Samaa Marocain* marked the beginning of another era of new releases with the label.[29] The renewed collaboration between Ensemble Organum and Harmonia Mundi documents "[their] whole musical journey...[one] most dedicated to forgotten master-piece works that reveal unexpected aspects of the relationship that

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[24] *Polyphonie Aquitaine du XIIe siècle (Saint-Martial de Limoges),* Ensemble Organum and Marcel Pérès, Harmonia Mundi, HMC 1134, 1984.

[25] *Messe de Tournai*, Ensemble Organum and Marcel Pérès, Harmonia Mundi HMC 901353, 1991. Like in the Machaut setting, all the movements in the Tournai mass were intended to be performed together in the context of a single performance of the Mass liturgy. However, the Tournai Mass is attributed to multiple anonymous authors, instead of a single known one.

[26] Kirkman, "Early Polyphonic Masses," 322.

[27] François Velde and Todd M. McComb, "A Discography of Ensemble Organum," Medieval Music and Arts Foundation, last updated February 18, 2024, http://www.medieval.org/emfaq/performers/ens_orga.htm.

[28] "Harmonia Mundi a Historical Partner," Association Organum.

[29] *In Memoria Eterna: Chant Mozarabe et Samaa Marocain,* Ensemble Organum and Marcel Pérès, Harmonia Mundi HMM 905319, 2021.

humans build between memory, the different dimensions of time and contemporary consciousness."[30]

Organum and Musical Multiplicity

Ensemble Organum brings a variety of eclectic elements—including ornamentations and timbres from Corsican chant and polyphony—into a unique and striking performance style. Combining historical research on medieval sources and influences from living traditions, they present a mixture of musical ideas that resonates with the burgeoning trends of global multiplicity and diversity that emerged in the postmodern, globalist zeitgeist of the 1990s. This eclectic approach provides a highly original perspective on Machaut's Mass and on a musical past that leaves so many questions open or unanswered. The creativity and originality of their approach to recreating this work are ultimately what has drawn so many listeners, myself included, to their recording.

In my study, I explore musical influences in Ensemble Organum's recording of *La Messe de Notre Dame*, placing its eclectic musical style in the context of postmodern and globalist trends. The Ensemble regularly engages with many musics outside of the canon, emphasizing the importance of Mediterranean styles in their reconstructions.[31] This emphasis on Mediterranean traditions is apparent in their recording of Machaut's Mass,

[30] "Harmonia Mundi a Historical Partner,"Association Organum.

[31] "Through these chants, Organum retraces and synthesizes a history of spiritual currents that flourished around the Mediterranean Basin and radiated to the East and West of Europe." ("Au travers de ces chants, Organum retrace et synthétise une histoire des courants spirituels des civilisations qui ont fleuri autour du bassin méditerranéen et rayonnèrent à l'Est et à l'Ouest de l'Europe.") "L'ensemble Organum," Association Organum, accessed August 23, 2024, https://organumcirma.com/en_GB/a-propos/histoire/.

which is influenced by Corsican traditions, even though many reviewers of their recording of Machaut's Mass have described it as eastern- or Arabic-sounding.[32]

I situate Pérès's assertion—that his stylistic choices were foregrounded in twelfth- and thirteenth-century chant sources—within the globalist, postmodern context of the 1990s. My thesis will address the following questions in an attempt to frame this recording:

1. Which elements of Ensemble Organum's recording of *La Messe de Notre Dame* fit within the emerging globalist and postmodernist trends that grew to new levels in the 1990s when it was recorded? How do musical borrowings and appropriations in the Mass compare to the larger (early) music revival and postmodern movements?

2. How does Ensemble Organum and the larger postmodern movement treat difference in terms of style, timbre, voices, and traditions? How do they celebrate, objectify, or appropriate the various musical traditions that they incorporate?

3. How can this postmodern outlook be expanded to embrace more recent conceptions of multiplicity, difference, and contrast?

4. What effect does the categorization of Corsican music as medieval, ancient, or timeless have on its perception in late-twentieth and twenty-first century society?

Examining music revival trends in relationship to postmodern musical ideals, I investigate how Organum interprets contemporary and historical influences. My research seeks to develop and expand the conversations that situate Pérès and Ensemble Organum within this postmodern paradigm.

[32] Yri, "Performing Machaut," 354; Ivan Moody, "Assuming identities," *Early Music* 41, no. 1 (40th Anniversary Issue, February 2013): 49; Allan Kozinn, "Early Mass, with Its Exoticism Intact," *The New York Times*, December 11, 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/11/arts/music/11ensemble.html.

Pérès and Organum's Background

Marcel Pérès (b. 1956) was first introduced to the Catholic Latin liturgy as well as chant and sacred polyphony as a child singing in the choir of the Cathedral of Nice.[33] His musical training continued at the Nice conservatory where he studied organ and composition.[34] A modernist by training, he was soon captivated by early vocal music with the intent to restore the sound of medieval repertories and to determine notation's role in the medieval soundscape. He expresses that "during my training as a composer I used to hear chords with lots of notes and dissonances, and I wanted to go back to another perception of sound, to discover again what the perception of a man from the Middle Ages might be."[35]

Ensemble Organum was formed in 1982 under the direction of Pérès as a way to investigate the sound of medieval music. While the name "Organum" implies a connection to the style of twelfth- and thirteenth-century polyphony, the Ensemble's name originally took inspiration from the organ as an instrument. The Ensemble's early pursuits focused on the role of the organ in the recreation of medieval tuning systems.[36] Throughout their career, Organum's central focus has been to restore (or speculate about) the sound of chant repertories. They have often focused on the chants of specific liturgies (both Catholic and non-Catholic). At the center of these investigations is the concern for the place of these liturgies and musics within western (medieval) culture and the role of

[33] Marcel Pérès, "An Interview with Marcel Pérès," interview by Tom Moore, *Fanfare* 19, no. 5 (May 1996): 20.

[34] Marcel Pérès, "An Interview with Marcel Pérès," 20.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Pérès, "Une utopie musicale: comment se forme un ensemble?," in *Le Chant de la mémoire*, 17–21.

liturgies/cultures in the periphery of the west. This is, in part, what has led to their focus on Byzantine (Greek) Orthodox chant and Corsican polyphony and chant. Although focusing on recreating the soundscape of past repertoires, Pérès and Organum have also embraced living traditions, establishing a dialog between past and present. As Kozinn suggests, "Mr. Pérès's research and his view of history as a fluid continuum in which diverse influences mingle [has] led him to unusual and sometimes provocative ideas about how early church music might have sounded in its time."[37]

Organum's musical journey has been supported by organizations devoted to gathering musicologists, historians, and performers to investigate, discuss, and perform early music. These pursuits began under ARIMM (l'Association pour la Recherche et l'Interprétation des Musiques Médiévales), lasting from 1984 to 1999.[38] This organization was briefly known as CERIMM (Le Centre Européen pour la Recherche sur l'Interprétation des Musiques Médiévales) from 1999 to 2001.[39] Since 2001, this organization has gone under the name CIRMA (Le Centre Itinérant pour la Musique Ancienne), because of "changes introduced in the cultural politics of the foundation [Fondation Organum, their fundraising body]." These changes responded to growing demand from researchers and public interest in medieval music.[40]

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[37] Kozinn, "Early Mass."

[38] Translated as "the Association for the Research and Interpretation of Medieval Music."

[39] Translated as "the European Center for the Research and Interpretation of Medieval Music."

[40] Translated as "the Itinerant Center for Early Music"; "…cambios introducidos en la política cultural de la fundación." Pérès, "La interpretación de las músicas antiguas y la necesaria reevaluación de las herramientas historiográficas," in *Los últimos diez años de la investigatión musical*, ed. Jesús Martín Galan and Carlos Villar-Taboada (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2004), 186.

Year	Colloquium Title
1985	Music Teaching in the Middle Ages and Renaissance
1986	Musical Connections Between the Eastern and Western Churches in the Middle Ages
1987	The Notre Dame School at its Influence
1988	Music Avignon in the Fourteenth Century
1989	Jerome of Moravia: Music Theorist in the Parisian Intellectual Milieu of the Thirteenth Century
1990	Oral Polyphonies in History and Traditions Still Alive
1990	Corsican Singing: State, Comparisons, Points of View
1991	Rationalizing Time in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: Musics and Mentalities
1992	The Octoechos
1993	Aesthetics and Rituals of European Cathedrals
1993	Liturgical Chant in Rome from the Eleventh to Fourteenth Centuries
1993-1995	Medieval Instrumentarium
1994	Medieval String Instruments
1995	Gothic Organs
1996	Byzantine Chant: Current Research
1997	Italian Music from the Trecento
1998	Spanish Music from the Thirteenth Century
1999	La celebration, par la France, du “Temps du Maroc”
2000	Sic Transit Harmonia Mundi

Table 0.1 Colloquia organized by Ensemble Organum and ARIMM from 1985–2000.[41]

Royaumont was the home to Ensemble Organum and their scholarly organizations from 1984 to 2001. Originally an abbey, it has been converted into a publicly funded cultural foundation that engages in regional, national, and international outreach. After 2001, Ensemble Organum moved its operations to Moissac, where it currently holds its residency. They receive support from the town, le Ministère de la Culture par la Direction régionale des affaires culturelles (DRAC), le Conseil régional Midi-Pyrénées, le Conseil

[41] See Marcel Pérès, “Royaumont: un lieu pour une musicologie expérimentale,” in *Le Chant de la mémoire*, 119–43.

général du Tarn et Garonne, and through individual memberships.[42] The Abbey de Moissac, owned by the town council, hosts three festivals open to members of l'association Organum and the wider public.[43]

Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into two chapters that examine Ensemble Organum's musical and cultural influences. Chapter 1 examines the stylistic elements of Organum's recording. Building on previous transcription attempts, I transcribe notable passages of Organum's recording featuring the Corsican ornamentation that Pérès incorporates in his interpretation. I define the performing style unique to Organum through direct analysis of their recording. Additionally, I examine Ensemble Organum's invitation of Corsican singers, provide an overview of Corsican chant and polyphonic traditions, and examine their integration into Organum's performance practice. Timbre and ornamentation are the focus of this analysis (given that these elements are not notated and are thus the most open to interpretation). Finally, I examine some recordings that have followed in Ensemble Organum's footsteps.

In Chapter 2, I consider how the stylistic features discussed in Chapter 1 relate to the larger global, postmodern musical sphere of the 1990s. I place Ensemble Organum's recording in the context of the larger early music revival movement—and more specifically the tremendous success achieved by some recordings of medieval music on

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[42] "L'association Organum," Association Organum, accessed August 10, 2024, https://organumcirma.com/en_GB/soutenez-nous/association-organum/.

[43] "Legal Notices," Abbaye de Moissac, accessed August 10, 2024, https://www.abbayemoissac.com/en/legals; "L'association Organum."

the mainstream musical market of the 1990s. In addition, I examine Pérès's engagement with Corsican traditions, considering the role and reception of Corsican singing within the early music movement and the problematic relationship between Corsica and mainland France. In so doing, I draw on Johannes Fabian's concept that non-western cultures are often treated as ancient and "Other"—two terms that have been often ascribed to Corsican cultural traditions. Against this cultural and political backdrop, I offer a nuanced interpretation of Pérès's view of the Corsican tradition as an "echo" of medieval performance practice and his rationale for incorporating it in Organum's recording of Machaut's Mass.

Rich in musical and extra-musical implications, this recording continues to generate controversy and interest some 30 years after its release. Paired with recent live performances, reissues of their 1996 recording suggest that this it has established itself as a mainstay in the Mass's performance history that will continue to inspire future generations.

CHAPTER 1

CREATING DISTANCE

Introduction

"I think the revival of ancient music is a sort of equation. On one side are the documents. On the other side is the performer, with his personality, voice, education, and skill in doing music and living with it. And then you have the understanding of the source. By that I mean all that the performer, and the scholars he refers to, have understood—not only of the music and its function but also of the nature of the tools they are using today to re-create the past."[44]

Pérès reveals a two-fold approach to understanding and performing medieval music: one governed by historical evidence—where treatises, notation, and other historical documents come into play—and one governed by the perspectives of the modern-day performer. According to Pérès, this two-fold dimension represents what is needed to critically investigate, understand, and perform medieval music. Pérès's ideas have served as a foundation for musical interpretations that have not only caused a stir within the relatively small community of medieval music critics and scholars but have also introduced this music to new non-specialist audiences. Bernard D. Sherman suggests that Ensemble Organum's audiences overwhelmingly share a feeling of "mesmerization" when confronted with their performances.[45] Numerous reviews, ranging from praise to criticism, have appeared in scholarly journals, CD liner notes, and newspapers remarking on the Ensemble's unique performance choices.

Organum's Mass recording has amassed an array of responses from both scholars and journalists alike. However, these critics have provided only qualitative descriptions

[44] Pérès quoted in Bernard D. Sherman, "A Different Sense of Time: Marcel Pérès on Plainchant," in *Early Music: Conversations with Performers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 29.

[45] Ibid., 27.

of Organum's performances of Machaut's Mass. Allan Kozinn comments (of their 2010 performance at the Baryshnikov Arts Center) that its harmonies "can sound exotic and otherworldly" to listeners today and that the "modal turns of Syriac and Byzantine chant, as well as Jewish and Islamic styles, […] give this early Christian setting a Middle Eastern accent," without delving into what specifically constitutes those harmonies or "modal turns."[46] Such reviews recognize Organum's artistic intentions without placing the recording in its proper music-theoretical and historical contexts. These accounts provide cultural commentaries that identify notable aspects of their performance practice, like timbre, voicing, ornamentation, staging, ritual, and liturgy, but neglect to examine these aspects on a deeper theoretical level.

At time of writing, there are no comprehensive studies that consider Organum's Mass interpretation through the lens of music analysis.[47] Despite a lack of in-depth musical observations, these reviews provide signposts to the most salient qualities of the Ensemble's musical interpretations, as well as an opportunity for a more comprehensive investigation of these qualities. In this chapter, I fill this lacuna by describing, transcribing, and analyzing novel musical aspects of Ensemble Organum's recording.[48] I devote special attention to the Ensemble's use of ornamentation, transcribing it, and considering its function within the Mass's structure and texture.[49]

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[46] Kozinn, "An Early Mass."

[47] Asa Trimble Horvitz's Bachelors thesis examines the role of the voice with Organum's Mass performances. He includes some brief transcriptions of Corsican ornamentation. See Horvitz, "Singing the Body, Singing the Other, and Ensemble Organum's *Messe de Nostre Dame*" (Bachelor's thesis, Wesleyan University, 2010), 49.

[48] Although the main focus of my analysis is the recording, I also include reviews from live performances that occurred after this recording's release.

[49] In this analysis I use "harmony" and "harmonic" to refer to vertical sonorities within the Mass.

A thorough cultural and theoretical understanding of Machaut's Mass requires careful consideration of its recording and performance history. Kirsten Yri has provided the most recent commentary on Organum's recording, contextualizing it within the Mass's performance and recording history since 1950. After walking us through seminal recordings, Yri pauses to analyze Organum's performance, contextualizing the recording's reception history and highlighting features that set this recording apart from its predecessors.[50] Most importantly, she describes musical "distancing features" that risk alienating listeners from Organum's performance. Yri suggests that the Ensemble's performance style strays from listeners' conceptions of standard medieval performance practice by employing features that have been often described as exotic, Eastern, or Arabic, such as:

1) Ornamentation that contains "microtonal inflections and vibratory ornaments that most listeners do not associate with medieval French music,"

2) An interpretation of *musica ficta* and other chromatic alterations that emphasize augmented and diminished intervals, and

3) The use of vocal timbres (considered to fall outside of western early music performance practice) that are overly "nasal."[51]

Such distancing features often correlate to specific aspects of Corsican singing from which Organum drew inspiration in their interpretation of Machaut's music. Caroline Bithell suggests that:

[50] Yri highlights Safford Cape's modernist allegiances in his 1956 performed by Brussels Pro Musica Antiqua. Cape aimed for an "objective" interpretation, designing a performance that highlighted the Mass's structure and counterpoint. See Yri, "Performing Machaut," 339–41. She recognizes a "postmodernist interest in spirituality" after 1980 that can be seen in performances from the Taverner Consort and Organum. See Ibid., 350.

[51] Ibid., 353–54.

> "the oldest layer of vocal music indexes a family tree that has its roots firmly in the Mediterranean. Its characteristic timbres, melismatic treatment of the melodic line, modal inflections, intervallic relations, and incantatory style are all suggestive of genres found in other parts of the Mediterranean region—some listeners hear Greek or Turkish resonances, others Andalusian or North African."[52]

Pérès and Organum draw heavily from living Corsican chant and polyphonic traditions, directly working with Corsican singers to blend their approach to singing with historical sources. Medieval music scholars and practitioners alike have suggested that modern Corsican chant and polyphony and medieval singing share similarities. For the Ensemble, the study of Corsican chant and polyphonic singing practices provides a window into a better understanding of certain medieval performance practices. Pérès notes that "traditional Corsican chant has indeed conserved old vocal gestures well," while Jacques Chailley suggests that "the analysis of this traditional polyphony continues to meet face-to-face with that of Middle Age polyphony."[53]

Pérès found such vocal gestures in the *paghjella*, a style of Corsican polyphony. Caroline Bithell notes that this style retains "a number of archaic features" that include the "absence of a strict meter, staggered entry of the voices, varying degrees of melismatic ornamentation in the two upper voices, the use of notes outside the even-

[52] Caroline Bithell, *Transported by Song: Corsican Voices from Oral Tradition to World Stage* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 14.

[53] "Le chant corse traditionnel a, en effet, conserve beaucoup de gestes vocaux anciens." Pérès, "Un ensemble en constante modulation," in *Le Chant de la memoire*, 55; "L'analyse de cette polyphonie traditionnelle ne cesse d'appeler la confrontation avec celle de la polyphonie du Moyen-Age"; Jacques Chailley, "La messe polyphonique du village de Rusio," *Revue de Musicologie* 68, no. 1/2 (1982): 168.

tempered scale and a *tierce de Picardie*-type ending."[54] Specifically, in singing the mass "à paghjella," Bithell identifies a few characteristic features that define the genre:

1) "The voice entries are staggered and occur in the same order, and the individual voices—*secunda (seconda, siconda), bassu and terza*—have similar functions…"

2) "The range of the *secunda* is normally restricted to a fifth and movement is predominantly by step with occasional leaps of a third."

3) The *secunda* and *terza* voices employ characteristic melismatic patterns, leading in many instances to the type of textual deformation found in the secular paghjella (albeit of a less radical nature)."[55]

Chailley compares the three standard voices in *paghjelle* to the voice parts of medieval polyphonic music, likening the *secunda* to the tenor and the *terza* to the triplum.[56] Pérès has emphasized the role of the motetus by making it the most ornamented line in the "Kyrie" and omitting the triplum to make the motetus stand out more prominently.

Despite the analogies that many have drawn between medieval and Corsican music, the practice of using Corsican ornamentation, known as *rivuccate*, to embellish medieval polyphony stands against the recording history of the Mass, which has previously emphasized a smooth, unornamented vocal quality.[57] For instance, central to the Organum's sound is their unapologetic and pronounced use of ornamentation, for which Pérès draws inspiration from the discrepancies between parallel chants from the Gregorian and Old Roman repertories. Although these repertories share many similarities,

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[54] Caroline Bithell, "Polyphonic Voice: National Identity, World Music and the Recording of Traditional Music in Corsica," *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 5 (1996): 43.

[55] Id., "Musical Archaeologists: The Revival and Reconstruction of Polyphonic Settings of the Latin Mass in Corsica," *Ethnomusicology Forum* 15, no. 1 (June 2006): 119.

[56] Chailley, "La messe polyphonique," 168.

[57] See Introduction for examples.

Old Roman chants are much more florid, Pérès often interprets the florid character of such chants as ornamental formulas that can be applied to other medieval repertories.[58] In personal correspondence to Yri, Pérès claims that the Ensemble's ornamentation style is not influenced by Arabic or Eastern styles but is instead rooted in the practices of the Notre Dame school.[59] Pérès cites the writings of theorists associated with the Notre Dame school like Anonymous IV, Jerome of Moravia, and Franco of Cologne as primary authorities, but revives their theories on ornamentation by drawing on living singing practices. Pérès suggests that by doing so, singers can restore ornamental formulas as they may have been performed in the past:

> A sign, whatever it may be, is always interpreted as a function of the cultural background of those who describe it. An experience carried realized with the help of Greek singer, Lycourgos Angelopoulos, will show us how certain formulas, which for a Westerner from the twentieth century represents nothing other than a succession of sounds where it seems impossible to find a rhythmic framework, will on the contrary awaken in our singer the echo of different ornamental formulas that still exist in their repertoire.[60]

[58] Helmut Hucke, "Old Roman Chant," revised by Joseph Dyer, in *Oxford Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed August 24, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.11725.

[59] At time of writing Ensemble Organum acknowledges the influence of both western and eastern chant repertories in their work. Yri's correspondence with Pérès took place in 2009. More recently Ensemble Organum has worked on Moroccan Samāa (chant). In many ways Corsican and Greek (Byzantine) traditions sit at the periphery of the West. See Chapter 2 for an in-depth analysis of this issue.

[60] "Un signe, quel qu'il soit, est toujours interprété en fonction de l'acquis culturel de celui qui le décripte. Une expérience réalisée avec le concours d'un chanteur grec, Lycourgos Angelopoulos, va nous montrer comment certaines formules, qui pour un Occidental du xxe s. ne représentent rien d'autre qu'une succession de sons où il semble impossible de trouver une armature rythmique, vont au contraire éveiller chez notre chanteur l'écho de différentes formules ornementales qui existent toujours dans son répertoire." Marcel Pérèz [sic], "L'interprétation des polyphonies vocales du XIIe s. et les limites de la paléographie et de la sémiologie," *Cahiers de civilization médiévale* 31, no. 122 (April–June 1988): 175.

Pérès asserts that engaging with Corsican singing practices to inform their performances of medieval chant (and by extension polyphony) restores practices that are in fact global and innately human.[61]

A crucial element of Pérès and Ensemble Organum's philosophy is the prioritization of performance as a method of musical research and inquiry. Since the early 1980s Pérès has used performance to better understand what twelfth- and thirteenth-century theories on chant. This approach resonates with Nicholas Cook's warning that "[t]o begin an analysis with the score is effectively to rule out of consideration, before you have even begun, any aspects of music as performed that do not have some direct correlate in notation."[62] Describing this "performative turn," Cook emphasizes the importance of turning away from written text to focus instead on recordings and performances, taking into account the "physical attributes of the score and […] the social practices of reception and interpretation."[63]

Supporting the activities of Ensemble Organum, Le Centre Itinérant de Recherche sur les Musiques Anciennes (CIRMA) serves as the catalyst for this exploration, holding yearly colloquia that foster communal scholarly inquiry of early music issues. This initiative brings together musicians, musicologists, and historians to discuss, reconstruct,

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[61] "Generally, it is preferable to take a global approach in a repertoire of study, in order to situate it in its aesthetic context…Chant is only a vibratory activity on a human level through which one can observe the same laws that govern the course of the stars or the changing of the seasons."
("D'une manière générale, il est préferable de tenter une approche globale du repertoire étudié, pour le situer dans son contexte esthétique…Le chant n'etait qu'une activité vibratoire à l'échelle humaine, dans laquelle on pouvait observer les memes lois qui régissent la course des astres ou l'alternance des saisons.")
Pérès, "L'ensemble au quotidien," in *Le Chant de la memoire*, 37.

[62] Nicholas Cook, "The Ghost in the Machine: Towards a Musicology of Recordings," *Musicae Scientiae* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 3–21.

[63] Ibid., 16.

and recreate theoretical and practical issues that emerge from the study and performance of medieval music.[64] Performances and CD releases by Organum often accompany or precede these events, offering a musical exploration of the repertories, singing traditions, and other musicological issues discussed. Pérès and Organum believe that "historical consideration of music [should be] confronted materially with the object of its study. This works as a process of methodological redefinition in that sound is at once a tool of this reflection and also its object."[65] Along these lines, Pérès's musical reconstructions center on the physicality of music considering the environment in which the music was performed (architecture and lighting), social formations (the interactions and musical transmission between peoples and organizations), and most importantly, the physicality of the body in voice production.[66]

This physicality emerges from Organum's use of ornamentation, bringing an increased level of energy to the music. Ensemble Organum has devoted considerable effort to performing local (non-Gregorian) chant repertoires. In their years of practice, the Ensemble has developed an idiosyncratic and controversial method of embellishing medieval chant and polyphony. Only two weeks before Organum recorded the Mass, Pérès remarked on the insights he gained from Corsican singers who were invited to perform with their group:

> In Corsica they have a tradition of oral singing of polyphony, polyphonic singing with ornaments. For me that's the next step, to figure out how ornaments work in polyphony. Medieval and Renaissance music was highly ornamented, but

[64] See the Introduction for more detail on the role of Colloquia and CIRMA.

[65] "En este trabajo la reflexión histórica sobre música se confronta materialmente con el objecto de su estudio. Se opera asi un proceso de redefiniación metodólogica en el que el sonido es a la vez herramienta de esta reflexión y tambien su objecto." Pérès, "La interpretación de las músicas antiguas," in in *Los últimos diez años*, 185.

[66] Ibid., 183.

> nowadays all the standard groups just sing the skeleton of this music…These singers bring first, an art of ornamentation in polyphony, secondly, a different way of approaching the music, since they're used to working only by ear. I love working with them. I think it's now an open field. It doesn't mean that the sound is that of the fourteenth century, but it's something different from the standard tradition that we're used to hearing nowadays. Very quickly we go back into our usual routine preconceptions.[67]

Despite Pérès's convictions, it is unclear how or to what extent medieval singers would have ornamented music. Many have remained skeptical regarding Pérès's interpretations.[68] Additionally, many of the sources that Pérès relies upon center around the singing of chant or organum, but do not extend to the music of Machaut's time. Pérès's comfort in making such extensive speculations stems in part from the central role that chant played in medieval music and ecclesiastical life more generally. Pérès seems to assume a musical uniformity between chanted portions of the Mass proper that would accompany the polyphonic sections of the Mass ordinary, thus providing a rationale to extend their practice of ornamenting chant to polyphony. Furthermore, he may see *Ars Nova* polyphony as an extension of Notre Dame polyphony, extrapolating from Notre Dame music theory for his performances of mid-fourteenth-century polyphony. Xavier Lacavalerie asserts that "[t]he ideal of homogeneity is so totally contrary to the polyphonic universe of Machaut's time."[69] Luckily, Machaut's works are well-documented, as he took great care to have them copied and preserved in meticulously curated sources. From around 1350 to 1420 several manuscripts were produced that

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[67] Marcel Pérès, "An Interview with Marcel Pérès," 28, 30.

[68] Ivan Moody calls the ornamental style on their Old Roman chant album (ZZT081001, 2008) a "fictional *oecumene.*" He suggests that recent recordings have fulfilled "Peres's prophecy" that singers would place greater importance on ornamentation. See Moody, "Assuming Identities," 50.

[69] "L'idéal d'homogéneité est donc totalement contraire a l'univers des polyphones du temps de Machaut." Xavier Lacavalerie, "Le temps de la réception," in *Le Chant de la memoire,* 176.

contained his works organized by genre. The Mass appears in five existing manuscripts that were copied between 1370 and 1390:[70]

Sigla	Source	Year	Folios
US-KCferrell MS 1	Vg	Ca. 1370	Fol. 283-296r
F-Pnm Français 1585	B	Ca. 1370-72	Fol. 281v-294r
F-Pnm Français 1584	A	Ca. 1370	Fol. 458-451r
F-Pnm Français 22545-22546	G	Ca. 1390	Fol. 125-133v
F-Pnm Français 9221	E	Ca. 1371 or 1390	Fol. 164v-170r

Table 1.1 Earp's chronology of Machaut's Mass sources.

However, these sources do not provide any insight into Machaut's preferred singing or ornamentation styles. Though Pérès's method is partly grounded in research on historical sources, he still takes large and speculative leaps to conceptualize the sound that Ensemble Organum uses in their performance of the Mass. He justifies his approach by asserting the naturalness of Corsican vocal production, suggesting (even more speculatively) that it captures "echoes" of fourteenth-century vocal practices.[71] His musical philosophy is ecumenical in the most literal sense: he combines different styles by linking chant and polyphonic singing from different Christian traditions and attempts to find commonalities and shared origins between them.[72] This is reflected in practice by

[70] Earp, *Guillaume de Machaut*, 73.

[71] Pérèz [sic], "L'interprétation des polyphonies vocales," 171. This theory, too, has its roots in his use of twelfth- and thirteenth-century sources, more specifically Jerome of Moravia, from whom he has drawn to experiment teaching a young Corsican singer to apply *rivuccate* to Notre Dame chant. He concludes that Corsican singers have an easier time applying the methods of medieval theorists, than do "continental" musicians.

[72] Peter Jeffery has called for a more holistic, global, and historically oriented examination of chant in *Re-envisioning Past Musical Cultures: Ethnomusicology in the Study of Gregorian Chant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

bringing together musicians from living chant traditions in a speculative attempt to revive fourteenth-century performance practice. These distancing features resulting from the incorporation of Corsican singing are a focus in my analysis, as they reflect the most conscious and intentional choices of Pérès and Organum. Additionally, they contribute to a rendition of Machaut's Mass that is grounded in an oral tradition still in practice today, combined with a written tradition that dates back 650 years.

Despite the speculation that Pérès takes to reach his ideal sound concept, many scholars have argued that ornamentation was central to the vocal practices of the time. For instance, Timothy McGee points out that chant neumes have ornamental information encoded in or suggested by their very shapes. This neumatic notation was reflective of a practice inherent in medieval vocal production, suggesting that "the entire early vocal style *itself* is ornamental."[73] McGee suggests that:

> Ornamentation was both the duty and privilege of every composer and soloist; it was the way in which a composer approached his art and the performer executed what was given; it was embodied in the vocal style of the period and undoubtedly in the instrumental style as well.[74]

He continues by specifying three types of embellishment: written ornaments, specific ornamental gestures that stem from neume shapes; graces, embellishments "added directly to a particular note"; and *passaggi*, elaborate passages that connect or replace written notes.[75]

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[73] Timothy McGee, *The Sound of Medieval Song: Ornamentation and Vocal Style According to the Treatises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1. It is interesting to note that McGee's book was published only two years after Organum's recording.

[74] McGee, *The Sound of Medieval Song*, 4.

[75] Ibid., 43, 62, 88.

One problem that complicates this assertion is that square notation had replaced neumes by Machaut's time and, because of its more uniform shape, this new notation could no longer convey vocal nuances or embellishments implied in neumatic notation. Chant, however, did continue to play a central role, as sacred polyphonic compositions typically integrated it into their contrapuntal fabric, using melodic portions of chant in repeating patterns (*colores*), often set to repeating rhythmic patterns (*taleae*). Chants were still commonly passed down orally and would have formed a significant portion of a fourteenth-century musician's professional upbringing.[76] Machaut's musical memory likely consisted of a wealth of repertoire and traditions, from which he drew more or less extensively in his compositions. Possibly the "echoes" of medieval practice that Pérès sees in Corsican singing were transmitted through chant, rather than polyphony. Accepting McGee's suggestion that neume shapes convey vocal embellishment in addition to pitch content, perhaps ornamental practices were continued orally and transferred to polyphonic practices even as square notation replaced neumes.

Similar to McGee's speculations of structural ornamentation in medieval performance practice, *rivuccate* are not treated as surface-level ornaments to be added to the music; melodic embellishment is not separate from the notes themselves. As a practice, Corsican ornamentation is flexible and varies from musician to musician and from moment to moment. Bithell classifies *rivuccate* into three types:

1) "Motives that are melodically significant and can therefore be seen as an intrinsic part of the musical phrase" employing "combinations of neighbor notes, passing notes, and arpeggio notes."

[76] By this time chant existed in both oral and written traditions. Bradley suggests that discrepancies parallel chants in different sources could reflect the continued presence and importance of the oral tradition. See Catherine Bradley, *Polyphony in Medieval Paris: The Art of Composing with Plainchant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

2) "Smaller scale melismatic figures resembling turns and extended mordents that could be notated with a reasonable degree of accuracy if listened to a slower speed," and

3) "Pronounced vibrato or oscillation around a note."[77]

Pérès and the Corsican vocal ensemble E Voce di u Cumune (EVC) have used similar terminology when referring to and transcribing melodic embellishment.[78] Pérès identifies terms signifying flowering or flourishing (derived from *flos* in Latin) in Anonymous IV ("Longa florata"), Jerome of Morava ("Flor harmonicus"), and Franco of Cologne ("In floratura").[79] Bithell notes that EVC's transcriptions of Corsican singing employ *fiori*,which are diacritical marks encompassing performative gestures that fall outside of main pitch content such as melismas and glissandos. Whether this current use of *fiori* was truly intended to invoke this medieval conception of melodic embellishment, Pérès is surely thinking about Corsican music in this way.[80] Pérès was eager to learn and incorporate Corsican singing into Ensemble Organum's performance practice. Additionally, some members of Ensemble Organum, including Jean-Pierre Lanfranchi, were members of EVC before joining Organum.

[77] Bithell, *Transported by Song*, 67. Bithell refers to these gestures as micro-*rivuccate* or *modulation.*

[78] Corsican singing is an entirely oral practice, but Nando Acquaviva's created a tablature to reconstruct and document local Corsican songs, hymns, chants, and masses. See Figure 1.1 for an example.

[79] Pérès, "L'interprétation des polyphonies vocales," 175.

[80] Pérès juxtaposes his examination of Notre Dame sources with his experiments in Corsican polyphony. See Pérèz [sic], "L'interprétation des polyphonies vocales."

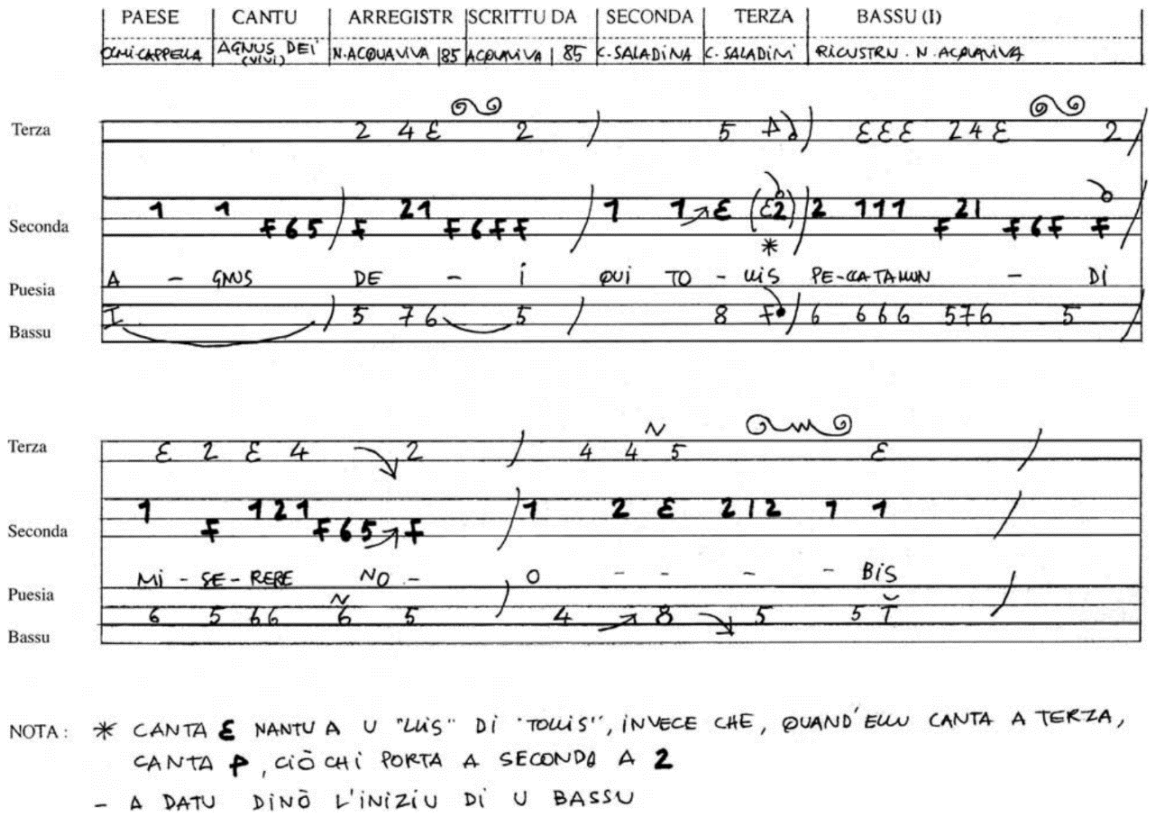

Figure 1.1 An example of a tablature transcription compiled by Nando Acquaviva.[81]

Given these varied approaches to identifying and understanding ornamentation, I use the term in my analysis to include the widest variety of musical embellishment. I have transcribed selected passages from Organum's recording to gain a fuller understanding of the role of ornamentation in their performance of Machaut's Mass. I classify this ornamentation in Organum's recording as *rivuccate*, borrowing from Bithell's classification, with some adaptations. Transcription of these ornamental passages proves especially difficult, which explains the no one has attempted to provide a

[81] Centre d'Ethnologie Française-Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires and E Voce di u Cumune, *Contributions aux recherches sur le chant corse I: Polyphonies vocales et orgue* (Paris: CEF-MNATP, 1992), 115 quoted in Bithell, "Musical Archaeologists," 122.

full transcription of Ensemble Organum's performance. I hope that by providing a detailed transcription of excerpts from their performance, scholars and performers can better examine the role of ornamentation and provide critical commentary on their performance.

Transcribing Ensemble Organum

Asa Trimble Horvitz and Nathaniel Craddock have provided the only transcriptions of any portion Ensemble Organum's recording.[82] Horvitz transcription serves as a preliminary attempt to understand ornamentation in the second "Ihesu christe" section in the Gloria. Horvitz's transcription does not always accurately capture all the nuances of their performance, omitting many of the ornamental figures he originally seeks to capture. Yet, one benefit of his transcription is that it invites comparisons with features of Corsican singing as rendered by Ensemble Organum (including its flexible pulse and microtonal inflections).

[82] Nathaniel Craddock, "Medieval Made Modern: Marcel Pérès' Ensemble Organum and the Medieval Sound," unpublished manuscript, November 28, 2012, typescript.

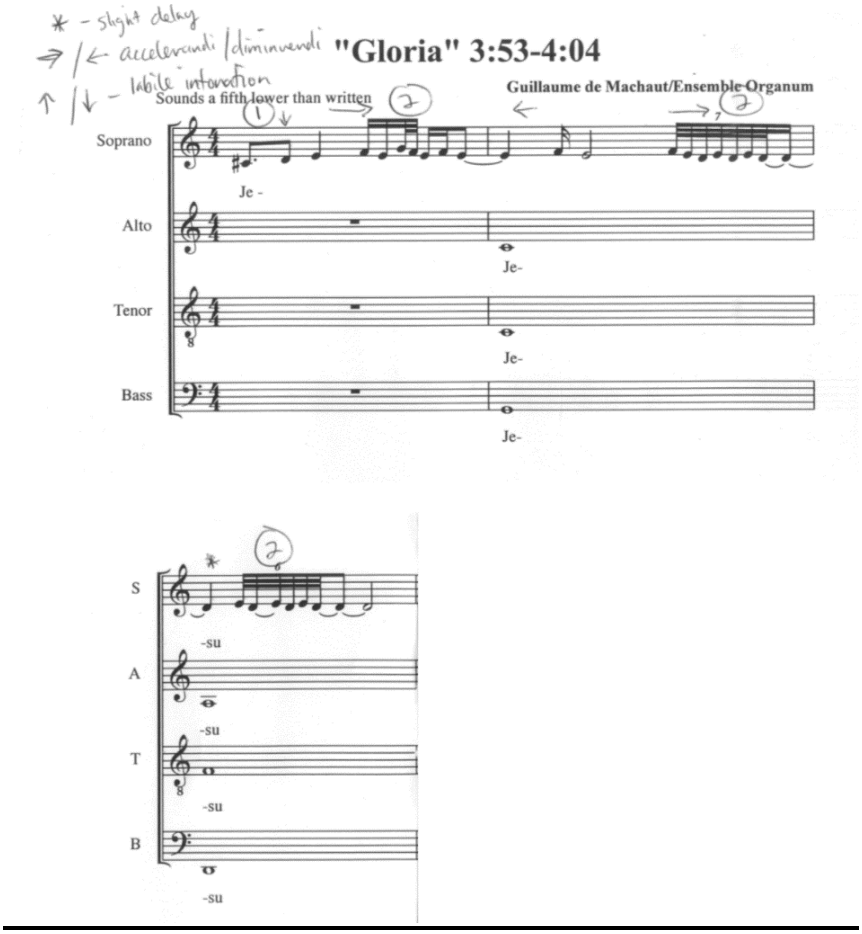

Figure 1.2 Transcription completed by Horvitz of Jean-Pierre Lanfranchi.[83]

My attempt at transcription is more extensive than Horvitz's, but it is still tentative and open to interpretation.[84] The challenge of transcribing this music comes not only from the rapid succession in which these ornaments occur but also from the microtonal intervals that are a standard feature of Corsican singing. Organum's use of microtonal tuning falls outside the scope of this thesis and therefore I represent all microtonal inflections with common accidental markings.

[83] Horvitz, "Singing the Body, Singing the Other," 49.

[84] For instance, Horvitz misses some of the ornamental passages in his transcription.

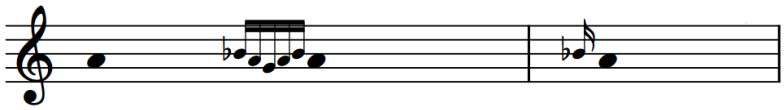

Figure 1.3 Most common ornamentations appearing in Organum's rendition of the "Gloria."

I found Bithell's classification of *rivuccate* most useful in transcribing Organum's performance. However, it was necessary to adapt her schema to better understand how ornamentation works in the Ensemble's performance. For example, Bithell's third category relating to "oscillation or vibration around a note" is useful for defining embellishments around a sustained tone but should be divided into two subcategories to account for instances where pitch content can and cannot be determined. To this end, I propose two subcategories, Types 3a and 3b, that better account for these differences. Type 3a describes a figure that rapidly oscillates around a sustained note by stepwise motion—either by half or whole step. Despite the rapidity of these patterns, their pitches can still be determined. Type 3b refers to any oscillations where pitch content is undistinguishable to the human ear from the sustained note that it embellishes. In the case of this recording, this describes any type of wide vibrato. As these pitches cannot be determined, I mark instances of this ornamentation with a vibrato marking. Aside from Type 3 embellishments, Bithell does not account for short grace notes followed by a sustained note, which occur often enough to be documented. These embellishments often occur within extended ornamental passages but are distinct enough to be classified as separated entities, albeit with some difficulty. Melismatic passages often employ a combination of these *rivuccate* types.

In Ensemble Organum's recording, ornamental passages often bring to the fore changes in texture. For example, in the Kyrie Ensemble Organum highlights the motetus (the second voice from the top) as the main embellishing voice, emphasizing the repetition and variation suggested by the music. The structure of the text—three repetitions of "Kyrie eleison," three of "Christe eleison," and finally, another three repetitions of "Kyrie eleison"—is equally conducive to musical repetition and contrast. For instance, this musical embellishment emerges most clearly in the "Kyrie" during the performance of even numbered verses. Machaut uses the chant "Kyrie cunctiponens genitor" as the primary structural device. This chant divides the movement into three sections as outlined in the figures below:

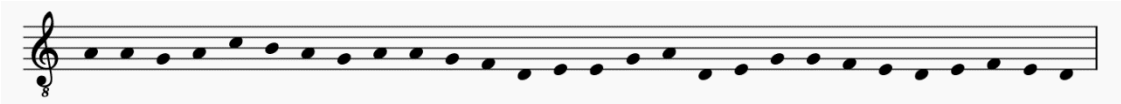

Figure 1.4 "Kyrie I."[85]

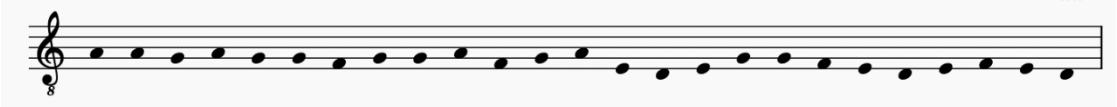

Figure 1.5 "Christe."

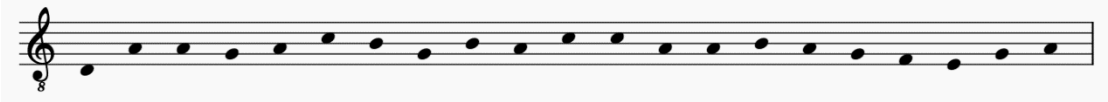

Figure 1.6 "Kyrie II."

[85] Leech-Wilkinson, *Machaut's Mass*, 18.

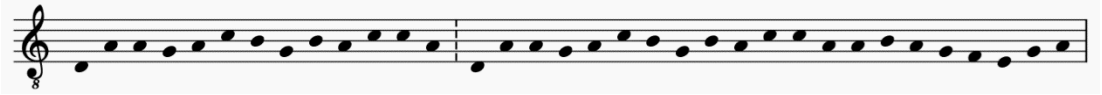

Figure 1.7 “Kyrie III.” The excerpt after the dotted barline indicates a continuation of the first statement.[86]

Text	Section	Texture
Kyrie eleison	Kyrie I	1) Full
		2) Reduced
		3) Full
Christe eleison	Christe	1) Reduced
		2) Full
		3) Reduced
Kyrie eleison	Kyrie II	1) Full
		2) Reduced
	Kyrie III	3) Full

Table 1.2 An outline of the large sectional divisions of the Kyrie movement. Repetition of verses alternate between a full four voice texture and a reduced three voice texture with the triplum removed (motetus, tenor, and countertenor only). Pérès intends the reduced texture to emphasize the structural role of the heavily ornamented motetus line.

Ensembles generally interpret the repetitions in the “Kyrie” by either alternating the polyphony with plainchant (from the tenor) or with a reduced polyphonic texture. In Pérès’s interpretation, the triplum line is omitted, bringing out the ornately embellished motetus. He justifies the omission of the triplum citing Machaut’s correspondence (in *Le Voir Dit*) to his love interest, Péronne d’Armentières. He suggests (in Lacavalerie’s words) that she can “remove or add a voice, to better appreciate the overall architecture [of the music].”[87] Pérès suggests that since Machaut wrote *Le Voir Dit* and *La Messe de Notre Dame* around the same time, he could have applied this principle to the Mass itself. This logic stems from Machaut’s ballades (and other *forme fixe* settings), which were

[86] Leech-Wilkinson, *Machaut’s Mass*, 18.

[87] Xavier Lacavalerie, "Le temps de la réception," 176.

often monophonic. If his ballades did contain multiple voices, they typically only contained three; therefore, many have argued that the fourth voice was purely ornamental and therefore could be removed.[88] Pérès's omission of the triplum to "highlight the architecture" of the Mass and the Corsican ornamentation in the motetus, creates a texture that more closely resembles *paghjelle*. However intriguing, like other performance choices by Pérès this hypothesis remains speculative.

Ensemble Organum provides some of the most extensive and experimental instances of ornamentation in Machaut's "Gloria" setting. Syllabic in structure, this movement vastly differs from the "Kyrie" before it. Pérès offers some of the most expressive and divergent instances of melodic embellishment in the entire work. The opening chant incipit, "Gloria in excelsis deo," features only two brief ornamental figures descending stepwise that connect the antepenultimate and penultimate notes.[89]

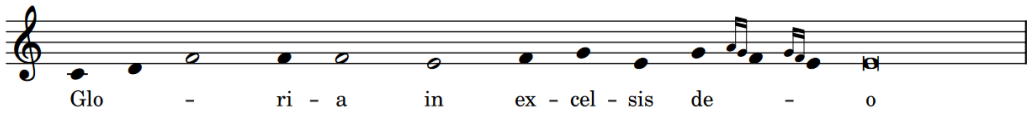

Figure 1.8 Transcription of Jean-Pierre Lanfranchi. Guillaume de Machaut, "Gloria" from *La Messe de Notre Dame*, recorded by Ensemble Organum, 0:00–0:13.

The sustained note of the opening incipit is contrasted by the preceding passage on "Et in terra pax." All four voice parts enter on a louder dynamic; Lanfranchi again is heard embellishing the triplum line with distinct oscillating pitches (Type 3a). The first four measures introduce an important musical trope used by Organum, namely applying ornamentation to homophonic block chords—thus foregrounding ornamentation. These

[88] Wulf Arlt, "Machaut [Machau, Machault], Guillaume de [Guillelmus de Machaudio]," in *Oxford Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed August 18, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.51865.

[89] Throughout this analysis I use Leech-Wilkinson's edition, including when referencing measures.

passages occur in three places within the Gloria: from measures 1 through 4 on the words "Et in terra pax," measures 43 through 46 on "Ihesu christe," and 93 through 97 again on "Ihesu christe." The musical setting of "Et in terra pax" marks the first of three such sections that highlight the movement's structure and the concurrent use of conspicuous ornamentation.

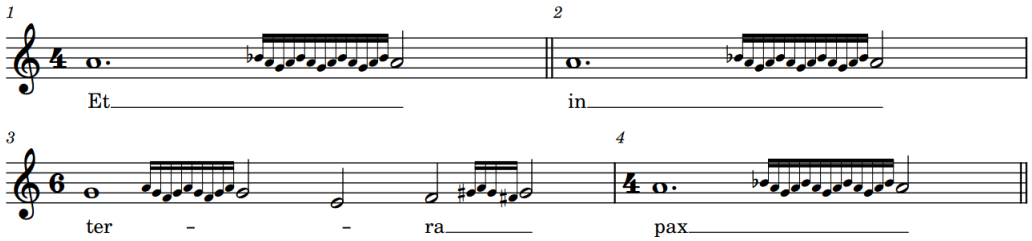

Figure 1.9 Transcription of Jean-Pierre Lanfranchi. Guillaume de Machaut, "Gloria" from *La* Messe *de Notre Dame*, recorded by Ensemble Organum, 0:13–0:29 (mm. 1–4).

The passages set to "Ihesu christe" provide structural signposts that break the movement into two parts. In many ways, they serve as a points of rhythmic respite from the continuous syllabic text setting that precedes it. Citing Jerome of Moravia, McGee suggests that sections such as these—exemplified by long sustained notes in block "chords"—provide ideal musical moments for extended *passaggi*. Places for embellishment would be implied by fermatas over the notes or would be near cadences, but any passage that contains long note values and whose text is of particular import could be conducive to this treatment.[90] This logic of ornamenting polyphonic passages also resonates with Corsican singing, where chords are punctuated by entering voices and their melodic embellishments (often occurring at the same time or in close proximity to one another). In both instances, there is less emphasis on a consistent pulse, providing an open space for melodic improvisation in one or multiple voices. In other recordings

McGee, *The Sound of Medieval Song*, 104–105.

(listed in the Introduction) this section is often left unembellished to emphasize the delivery of the text. These sections are less textually dense than others of this movement, spreading the declamation of five syllables ("Et in terra pax") or four syllables ("Ihesu christe") over four or five measures.

Additionally, both "Ihesu christe" passages contain similar harmonic language, leading to a closed cadence. During the fourteenth century closed cadences (a cadence ending on the final, D) were commonplace in the *formes fixes* and other song forms, indicating the strongest sense of closure.[91] In the first iteration ("Ihesu christe 1"), Ensemble Organum does not linger on this passage, but instead uses it as a brief pause before moving on to the next section of the text. In this passage, Lanfranchi's elaborate but subtler melismas foreshadow what is to come in "Ihesu christe 2."

Section	Measure	Syllable	Sonority	Pitches	Cadence
Jesu Christe 1	43	"je-"	Major third with octave doublings	[C3, E3, C4, E4]	
Jesu Christe 1	44	"-su"	Minor triad	[D3, F3, A3, D4]	
Jesu Christe 1	45	"chri-"	Major triad	[C3, E3, G3, E4]	
Jesu Christe 1	46	"-ste"	Perfect fifth with octave doublings	[D3, A3, D4]	Closed cadence (on D)

Table 1.3 "Ihesu Christe 1" vertical sonorities.

[91] The open cadence typically ended on a sonority rooted a second away from the final, leaving the form and textual meaning incomplete or "open." "Ouvert [overt, vert] (Fr.: 'open')," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, accessed February 25, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.20605.

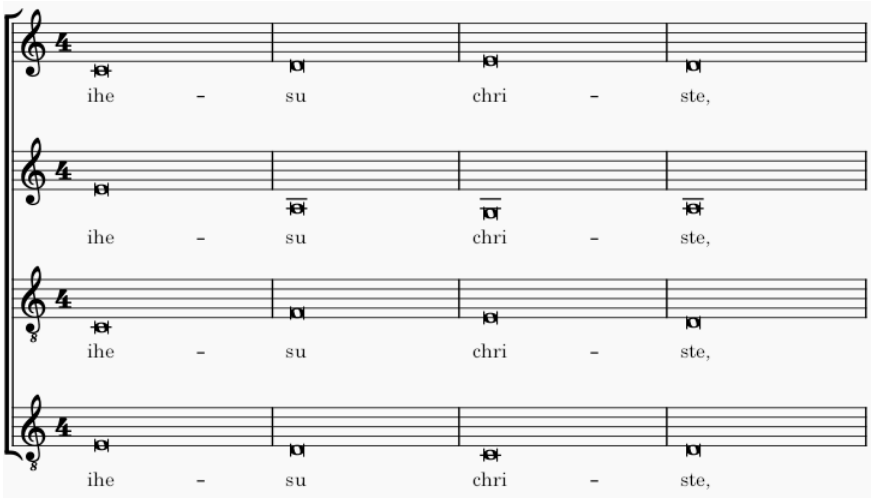

Figure 1.10 “Ihesu Christe 1” from *La Messe de Notre Dame*, “Gloria” mm. 43–46.

“Ihesu christe 2” is more elaborate than its first iteration. This passage contains a similar chord progression but features an additional chord that further prolongs the final cadential gesture. Lanfranchi takes a truly soloistic role by emphasizing this prolongation with even more elaborate ornamentation.

Section	Measure	Syllable	Sonority	Pitches	Cadence
Jesu Christe 2	93	“je-”	Major triad	[C3, G3, C4, E4]	
Jesu Christe 2	94	“-su”	Minor triad	[D3, F3, A3, D4]	
Jesu Christe 2	95	“chri-”	Minor triad	[E3, G3, B3, E4]	
Jesu Christe 2	96	“-i-”	Minor triad	[C#*3, E3, G#3, C#*4]	
Jesu Christe 2	97	“-ste”	Perfect fifth with octave doublings	[D3, A3, D4]	Closed DLT cadence (on D)

Table 1.4 “Ihesu Christe 2” vertical sonorities.

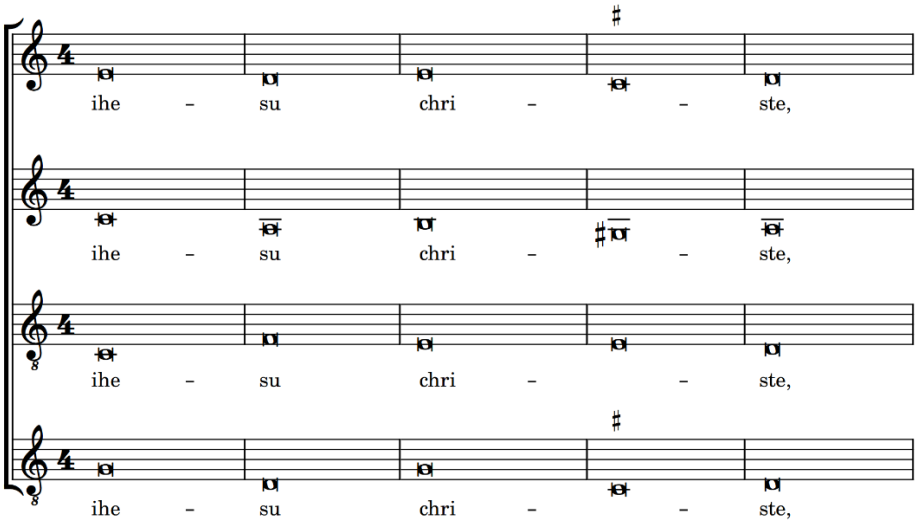

Figure 1.11 “Ihesu Christe 2” from *Messe de Notre Dame*, “Gloria” mm. 93–97.

Lanfranchi embellishes these five notes (mm. 93–97) as an ornate passaggio leading to a cadence. The Ensemble drops out at the beginning of the passage (3:52). Lanfranchi enters on a C# and ascends to the first written note of the passage, E. The notated music resumes (3:56): the rest of Organum enters filling out the block chords written in breves, while Lanfranchi continues his embellishment over this texture.

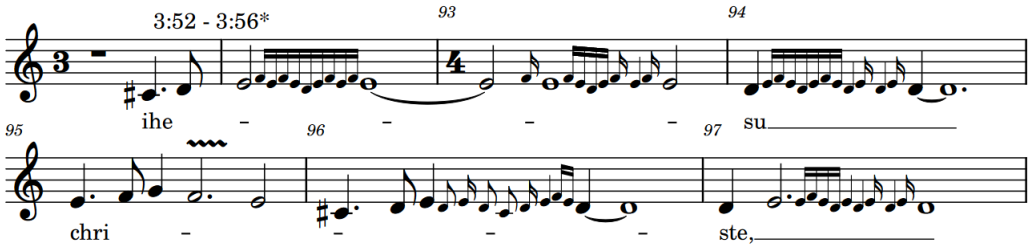

Figure 1.12 Transcription of Jean-Pierre Lanfranchi. Guillaume de Machaut, “Gloria” from *La Messe de Notre Dame*, recorded by Ensemble Organum, 3:53–4:18. 3:52–3:56 (indicated by asterisk) are added by Lanfranchi taking place before measure 93.

Under Pérès’s assumption that the triplum line is decorative, Lanfranchi’s embellishments do bring to the fore this supposed character of the line. Whereas the omission of the triplum in the Kyrie brought out the importance of the motetus, Lanfranchi’s solo

entrance in the Gloria's triplum demonstrates the full scope of Corsican ornamentation. In fact, this line, being the most improvisatory, bares the closest resemblance to Corsican polyphony.

Chromatically Altered Notes Emphasizing Augmented Intervals

An additional feature discussed by Yri is Ensemble Organum's extensive use of augmented intervals that result from their choices in *musica ficta*. The issue of ornamentation is more apparent given its extensive usage, but these chromatic choices also play into Pérès's speculative musings. Fourteenth-century notation did not always account for every chromatic alteration, leaving modern-day performers to speculate on whether to sharpen or flatten certain pitches. The uncertainties surrounding *musica ficta* have caused significant problems for interpreters of early music and therefore have led to contrasting interpretations, including of Machaut's Mass. Parrott suggests that *ficta* "presents exceptional problems."[92] Performers and scholars have long studied the work of medieval music theorists to attempt to resolve issues with chromatic alterations. Parrott suggests that by the time that Machaut wrote the Mass "notes were not normally sharpened or flattened at the mere whim of singer or director; explicit notation was expected."[93] Parrott takes a more conservative approach applying *ficta,* whereas Pérès applies these chromatic alterations more liberally. Kirkman suggested that Pérès's "wayward ficta is often demonstrably opposed to the rules of counterpoint which was

[92] Andrew Parrott, "Performing Machaut's Mass on Record," in *Composers' Intentions?: Lost Traditions of Musical Performance* (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), 366.

[93] Ibid.

standard by the time."[94] Parrott acknowledged that these alterations often forced modern interpreters to alter notes in other lines.[95] Therefore, it is up to modern-day performers to interpret how certain passages may have been performed. Applying *ficta* is more obvious in some places than others, such as at cadences where the leading tone of the mode would have been raised.

In this sense, many of Ensemble Organum's *musica ficta* choices are just as speculative as their decision to use Corsican ornamentation. Additionally, Pérès has discussed these choices less extensively, instead foregrounding Corsican ornamentation and polyphonic singing as core influences. In their recording Ensemble Organum applies alterations that emphasize augmented seconds and diminished thirds. Whether Pérès intended to emphasize these intervals, these choices evoke exoticist tropes that have caught the attention of many critics.[96] Pérès's decision to emphasize augmented and diminished intervals would require more scholarly justification since applying *musica ficta* is speculative.

The first appearance of one such *ficta* choice occurs in measure 16 of the "Kyrie." Pérès decides to flatten the B and sharpen the G that surround the A to outline a diminished third. On a larger level, this gesture mirrors the oscillating gestures highlighted in the Gloria, where the B-flat and the G-sharp center around A. Not all *ficta* Pérès chose are unconventional, however. For example, at the final minim of measure 16, the triplum's G-sharp resolves upwards to an A while the motetus's C-sharp leads up to a

[94] Kirkman, "Early Polyphonic Masses," 322.

[95] Parrott, "Performing Machaut's Mass on Record," 366.

[96] See review in the Introduction.

D (the final of this movement). The countertenor's complements the upward resolutions in the triplum and motetus, descending from E to D to form a double leading tone cadence on the final.

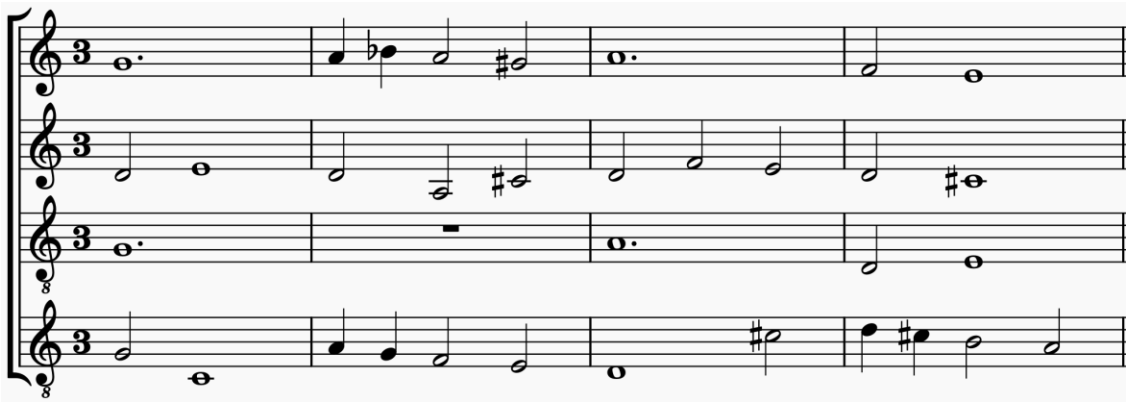

Figure 1.13 "Kyrie 1," mm. 15–18.

Another unusual choice is instead the G-sharp appearing in measure 25 of the Kyrie in the triplum line. The step from the F in the previous measure to the G-sharp creates an interval an augmented second. This G-sharp appears against a C-sharp in the countertenor line, avoiding a tritone on a strong beat. However, rather than ascending to an A, this G-sharp descends to an F-natural. This progression (F-natural to a G-sharp)

appears again in measure 26, preparing a resolution to A. Here the raised G is a less controversial choice because it forms part of a cadence that resolves in measure 27.

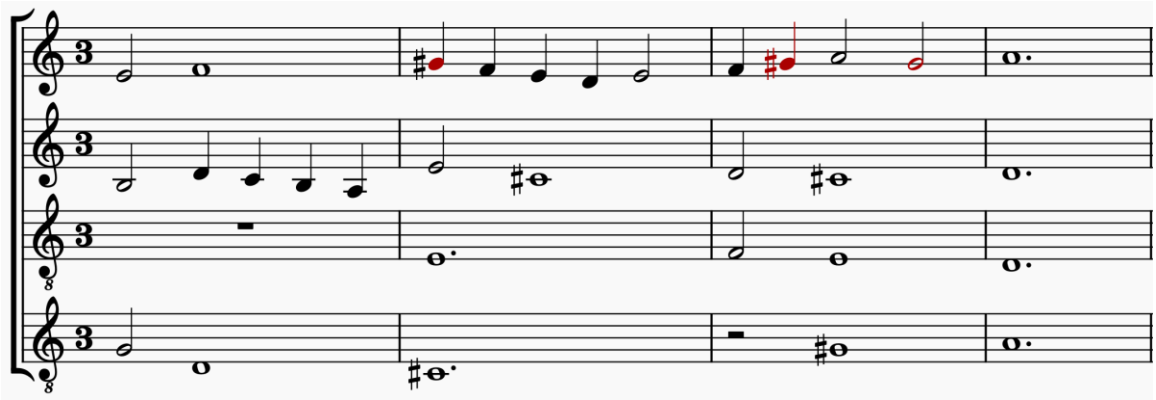

Figure 1.14 "Kyrie 1," mm. 24–27. Raised G-sharps resulting in augmented seconds are shown in red.

Ensemble Organum's Legacy

Ensemble Organum's unconventional use of ornamentation and *ficta* choices have served as an inspiration for other ensembles. Many reviewers have treated Graindelavoix's 2016 recording as a kind of successor to Pérès's interpretation. For instance, Fabrice Fitch suggested that:

> [the work of] Graindelavoix would be unthinkable without the pioneering work of Marcel Pérès (as Schmelzer concedes); but whereas Ensemble Organum's recording of this Mass was something of an ugly duckling, I've seldom heard a recording of polyphony that synthesises these elements [ornamentation and timbre] so persuasively. It's the sort of performance that ought to get anyone excited about early music.[97]

This version, directed by Björn Schmeltzer, includes more exaggerated distancing features and has since caused even more controversy than Organum's 1996 recording. D. James Ross expressed his dismay at the recording suggesting that:

[97] Fabrice Fitch, "Machaut: Messe de Nostre Dame," *Gramophone: The World's Best Classical Music Reviews*, June 2016, https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/machaut-messe-de-nostre-dame-2.

> when I reveal that my listening prior to hearing the Graindelavoix recording had led me to the conclusion that Pérès had "gone a bit far" in elaborating upon Machaut's polyphony, you will realize from my comments that Schmelzer goes much further, and that I am reluctantly less than convinced by this approach.[98]

Graindelavoix employs a wider variety of timbres that emphasize ornamental gestures at the expense of vertical sonorities. For instance, the countertenor is doubled at a lower octave, which further brings it out of the texture. Additionally, there are more ornamental figures connecting notes with a noticeable number of *glissandi*. Overall, there is an unsettled feeling to Graindelavoix's recording. There are very few places where chords settle, often filled with ornaments that obscure any sense of discernable pitch. This unsettled treatment of chords resonates with *paghjelle*, where motion to the next chord is governed by a shared feeling between musicians rather than a consistent pulse. In these spaces musicians intuit whether to ornament their lines based off mutual visual and aural interactions.

As the reviewers above suggest, Schmelzer seems to have taken inspiration from Pérès's recording. Graindelavoix, too, omits the triplum line in the "Kyrie" in even verses and retains many of the chromatic alterations as Ensemble Organum does. Schmelzer interprets these alterations in a similar manner as Pérès (for example keeping the B-flat and G-sharp in measure 16) but applies them in a more exaggerated fashion. For example, Schmelzer directly alters the cantus firmus tenor in places. An example of this occurs in measure 2 of the "Kyrie" where the G in tenor is altered to a G-sharp. The logic of this choice is evident: the change in the tenor forces the G to be raised in the triplum to

[98] D. James Ross, "Machaut: Messe de Nostre Dame," *Early Music Review: The Home of HIP opinion*, April 1, 2016, https://earlymusicreview.com/machaut-messe-de-nostre-dame/.

avoid a semitone clash. Both notes lead up to an A while the motetus (with its sharpened C) and the countertenor's E resolve down to the final outlining a cadence.

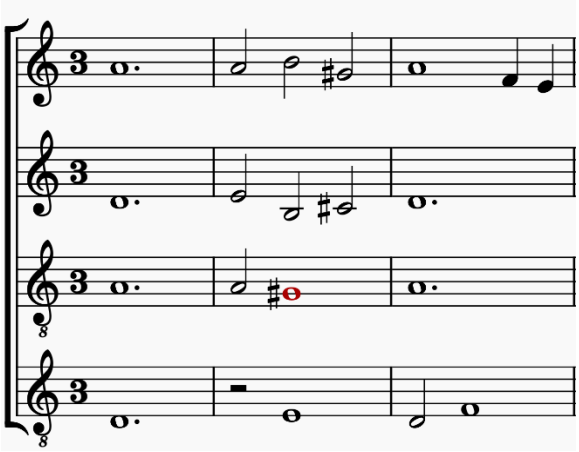

Figure 1.15 Graindelavoix, *La Messe de Notre Dame*, "Kyrie 1," mm. 1–3. Altered tenor is indicated in red.

Most recently, Compagnie La Tempête (directed by Simon-Pierre Bestion) has followed in Graindelavoix and Ensemble Organum's footsteps. The Mass appears on their 2017 album, *Azahar*, interspersed with sections of Stravinsky's Mass. Selections from the Cantigas de Santa Maria bookend this album. This group retains some Corsican-style ornamentation but differs from Ensemble Organum and Graindelavoix by including women's voices.[99] Most drastically, Bestion adds a cornetto, sackbuts, and percussion to their performance to reinforce the voices. Although Grandelavoix and La Tempête display distinctive features, they testify to the tremendous influence of Ensemble Organum and their eclectic, postmodern approach. This legacy alone places the ensemble's contributions, however controversial they may be, as crucial for an understanding of recent trends in early music performance.

[99] La Tempête applies Corsican singing more clearly heard on their album *Hypnos* (Alpha 786, 2022), where they sing Juan de Anchieta's "Libera me, Domine" *à paghjella*.

CHAPTER 2

SITUATING ENSEMBLE ORGANUM

Introduction

Ensemble Organum's performance choices, unique and disrupting as they are, were not formed in a vacuum. The tradition of using music outside of the western canon to inform modern performances of western European medieval music has a history spanning from the turn of the nineteenth century. In this chapter, I situate Ensemble Organum's place within the history of the early music revival movement, at the same time examining how their recording of Machaut's Mass fits within the landscape of the 1990s globalist, postmodern music market. Additionally, I assess Ensemble Organum's engagement with Corsican musical traditions in the context of the complex socio-political relations between Corsica and France, showing how Ensemble Organum's performance style and rhetoric relate to the discourse around local and global identities emerged in the 1990s.

The last three decades of the twentieth century featured growing interest in reviving oral Corsican musical traditions, both locally and globally. Pérès began to work with Corsican singers and manuscripts in the 1980s. His experiences learning and performing Corsican chant and *paghjelle* contributed to Ensemble Organum's ornamental and vocal styles. His adaptation of Corsican and other non-Gregorian chant repertories—and polyphony by extension—demonstrates his philosophy that chant is timeless and innately human, and therefore global.[100]

[100] Though *Le Messe de Notre Dame* is polyphonic, Ensemble Organum primarily engages with chant traditions; therefore, their performances of polyphony are informed by chant practices. Pérès and Lacavalerie, "L'ensemble au quotidien," in *Le Chant de la memoire*, 37.

This vivid interest in traditions that do not belong to mainstream western musics reflected broader cultural trends happening in western academic and popular cultural spaces during the 1980s and 1990s. The final two decades of the twentieth century witnessed increasing desires for global connectivity and cultural syncretism, paralleled with the establishment of a global, neoliberal capitalism that sought to market these new cultures to consumers through the production of albums that catered to ever-growing eclectic musical tastes. Taylor suggests that the "cultural studies" movement was becoming increasingly popular within the academy, encouraging more scholars to interrogate the nature of the times in which they were living: "Was it 'postmodern'? Or a moment best characterized by a change in capitalism…Or was the present an information age? A network society? Or transnational? Global? Postcolonial?"[101] Taylor suggests that "most of these theories and approaches gave way to one—globalization."[102]

Chant scholars and musicians also sought to gain a better understanding of the cultures surrounding the chant repertoires with which they were engaging. For example, Peter Jeffery argued that the study of chant needed to be broadened to include extant oral traditions and that "this transformation of chant research would begin with the recognition that every medieval chant tradition, Eastern and Western, was a complete musical culture, on average as extensive and diverse as we might expect any musical culture to be today."[103]

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[101] Timothy D. Taylor, "Globalized Neoliberal Capitalism and the Commodification of Taste," in *Music in the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 155.

[102] Ibid., 156; Perchard et al., Introduction to *Twentieth-Century Music in the West: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 29.

[103] Peter Jeffery, *Re-Envisioning Past Musicological Cultures: Ethnomusicology in the Study of Gregorian Chant* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 119.

A desire to understand music from distant and far-off cultures was not unprecedented. As early as the sixteenth-century, antiquarians sought to find the "pure" origins of past musics. These figures found inspiration in Indigenous musics—Native American, European folk, and Arabic musics representative of who they considered "noble savages"—that they saw embodied qualities of earlier music from medieval Europe.[104] Taylor suggests that this mentality represented an early form of "cultural relativism" that was indicative of early modern colonialism.[105] However, the idea of "the Other" or "the savage" as simultaneously representing backwardness and pureness remained a pervasive trope well into the nineteenth-century. Taylor suggests that:

> [this] ideological shift happened gradually, proceeding through a number of stages, [but] eventually it was held that contemporary savages had something in common with ancient savages, including those of European antiquity, and that contemporary savages could reveal something about ancient ones.[106]

Nineteenth-century musicologists, employing philological methods, attempted to reconstruct early music's origins. John Haines notes that, given the unreliability of medieval primary sources, they turned to oral traditions in their reconstruction attempts. Haines highlights François-Joseph Fétis, Edward Dent, and Gustave Reese as examples of scholars from this time who turned their eye to Arabic cultures, seeing "the primitive monophony of the Middle Ages [as] filtered from its pure, oral oriental state through the corrupting minds and notation of the West."[107]

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[104] Timothy Taylor. *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 26; John Haines, "Antiquarian Nostalgia and the Institutionalization of Early Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, ed. Juniper Hill and Caroline Bithell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 75–76.

[105] Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 19.

[106] Ibid., 19–20.

[107] John Haines, "The Arabic Style of Performing Medieval Music," *Early Music* 29, no. 3 (August 2001): 370.

The prominence of orality in medieval musical traditions has led many over the years to reconstruct it with influences from the "other," exoticizing the unknowns of medieval music with folk and "world" traditions. For instance, in the 1960s there was increased interest in cultivating a sound concept that included Arabic and European folk elements to fill gaps in musical knowledge of early music.[108] Many sought to dismantle "the myth of Westernness," countering the idea that music and other aspects of culture were free from Arabic influence.[109] Artists such as the Studio der Frühen Musik (directed by Thomas Binkley) and Musica Reservata (notably with singer Jantina Noorman) provided important contributions in this domain, adapting vocal and instrumental techniques from Arabic classical music. Binkley justified his musical borrowings pointing to the extensive contact between Spain and North Africa during the medieval period.[110]

The scope of early music revivalists was not solely focused on Middle Eastern influences. Folk music rapidly became central to the cultural politics of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, as western governments often used it cultivate nationalist sentiment.[111] Beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these revivals

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[108] Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention*, 98; John Haines, "The Arabic Style of Performing Medieval Music," 374.

[109] Kirsten Yri, "Thomas Binkley and the Studio der Fruhen Musik: Challenging 'the Myth of Westernness,'" *Early Music* 38, no. 2 (May 2010), 274. Yri attributes this term to Maria Rose Menocal among others.

[110] Ibid., 274.

[111] Helen Dell outlines English folk and early music revivals to restore a "pure" or "authentic" national culture. Many drew parallels to folk music of the working class as timeless, natural, and representative of English national identity. See, Helen Dell, "'[A] single, true, certain authenticity': The Authenticity Wars in English Twentieth-Century Folk and Medieval Music Revivals," *Postmedieval* 10, no. 4 (December 2019): 439–451.

continued to flourish in the post-World War II era, again reaching new heights in the 1990s.[112] Taylor and Rutherford-Johnson both cite the creation of an emerging market in the 1990s for a wide variety of musics that often played into exoticist and timeless tropes.[113]

Notably, from the 1960s onwards, interest in alterity was not circumscribed to early music performers; rather, it invested western musical culture at large. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson notes that: "Machaut was reworked by pop musicians at just the same moment that 'early' musicians were re-recreating North African habits of playing and decoration and Stockhausen was writing *Stimmung*."[114] Kreutziger-Herr suggested that "the Middle Ages [had] become a kind of treasure trove that [could] be mined in any way we like," suggesting that it "serv[ed] as a reservoir for emotions and feelings…a magic kingdom of secret knowledge and understanding lost in the Renaissance, Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution and twentieth century."[115] This growing interest in "the Other" would continue to develop as the nebulously defined "world music" movement emerged shortly after. Timothy Taylor tracks the usage of the term "world music" to the 1970s and 1980s, noting that this music could include "everything from field recordings made by ethnomusicologists to the latest in pop and rock from outside Europe and North

[112] Juniper Hill and Caroline Bithell, "An Introduction to Music Revival as Concept, Cultural Process, and Medium of Change," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, ed. Juniper Hill and Caroline Bithell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5–8.

[113] Timothy D. Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (London: Routledge, 1997), 3.

[114] Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention*, 98.

[115] Annette Kreutziger-Herr, "Postmodern Middle Ages: Medieval Music at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century," *Florilegium* 15 (1998), 187; Ibid., 200.

America."[116] Robert E. Brown, coining himself the creator of the term, suggested that world music represented "a holistic approach to music and draws attention to the need for a total world view, rather than suggesting the more limiting concepts of ethnography and musicology enshrined in the term *ethnomusicology*."[117] He argued that the "world music" of the popular music market was a watered-down description of something that should apply to all musics (including the predominant music of North American culture).[118] In this new market, it was conceivable to borrow from every culture; eclecticism was pervasive, but there was significant interest especially in musics from places considered temporally and geographically distant from modern western society. In this context, folk, world, and early music all shared constructed associations of timelessness and purity that encouraged musicians to draw from them.

Similarly, audiences of the 1990s were known for their increasing eclectic tastes and preference for individual expression. Rutherford-Johnson notes that "these were listeners who wanted music that was exotic yet unthreatening; music that spoke directly to their contemporary, day-to-day mood…music that could transition easily between popular and more art-oriented formats."[119] Many successful albums from the time represent an eclectic mix of greatly contrasting styles. Importantly, at this time the

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[116] Taylor, *Global Pop*, 3; Tim Rutherford-Johnson, *Music after the Fall: Modern Composition and Culture Since 1989* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 34.

[117] Robert E. Brown, "World Music – Past, Present, and Future," College Music Symposium, May 1, 1992, https://symposium.music.org/29/item/9510-world-music-past-present-and-future.html.

[118] Brown acknowledges the spread of western culture to the rest of the world, but in my opinion, downplays the power imbalance that is created by this imposition.

[119] Rutherford-Johnson, *Music after the Fall*, 33.

marketability of "classical" (western European art) music increased, while many successful albums revolved around the periphery of popular music.

These peripheral musics could be assigned to a number of nebulous musical categories. Taylor notes a "slipperiness" between commercialized music genres, especially for musicians who fell outside "the most prestigious categories."[120] The music industry often labeled the widest variety of music and musicians as "world" or "folk." This slipperiness between genres and cultures was nothing new. Edward Breen, citing David Munrow's interpretations of medieval music as examples, notes that modern early music performers' interest in eastern musics "meant a consideration of instruments and practices that were sometimes also relegated to traditional or folk categories. A certain slippage thus occurs between the categories of Eastern and a geographically wider definition of *folk*."[121] Thus, there is a symmetry between how popular musicians and of medieval music saw the cultures from which they were borrowing, united by a common rejection of modernist ideals.

The eclectic tastes of western audiences often came at the expense of the cultures that musical artists borrowed. On one hand, the increased interest in worldbeat and world music provided a platform for artists who would not have had such wide exposure. On the other hand, it often resulted in unequal exchange between them and their western collaborators.[122] By the 1990s, the pervasiveness of the "world" labeling, as separate

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[120] Taylor, *Global Pop*, 13. Taylor cites Hindustani classical musician Ali Akbar Khan's nomination for a Grammy in the folk category, despite "there [being] nothing 'folk' about Khan's music."

[121] Edward Breen, "Medieval Folk in the Revivals of David Munrow," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Medievalism*, ed. Stephen C. Meyer and Kirsten Yri (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 225.

[122] The most notable case of this is Paul Simon and Ladysmith Black Mambazo. See Taylor, *Global Pop*, 21–22.

from western culture, amplified notions of "the West and the Rest," placing the west at the center and exoticizing cultures outside of it. Taylor suggests that "intersecting discourses [such as] authenticity, exploration, emotionality, universalism, spirituality…" underpinned this music, "which even the most reflexive and sensitive musician would find difficult to overcome, and which most of us as listeners succumb to in one way or another."[123] Taylor's observation suggests that despite efforts, even the most well-meaning western listeners and musicians, fully conscious of western cultural domination, could still engage in practices of subordination and othering.

Chant and the Market

Recordings of medieval music, whether mainstream or niche, reflected these discourses and fell into the same trap of othering and appropriating the music from which they took inspiration. Two plainchant albums released in 1994 demonstrate how diverse tastes were fused into mainstream culture, exemplifying listeners' preference for mixing styles from different eras. *Chant*, released by Angel Records in 1994, reached the number one spot on Billboard's classical chart and number three on the pop charts.[124] The album, a compilation of Gregorian chants recorded by the Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos from 1973 to 1982, resonated with audiences' increased interest in (New Age) spirituality, a highly malleable phenomenon that could be molded to fit a variety of aesthetics. In his liner notes to *Chant*, David Foil describes the Monks' monastery as if it

[123] Taylor, *Global Pop,* 30.

[124] Ibid., 14.

were frozen in time, where outside "the world spins on ceaselessly."[125] He outlines the historical significance of the monastery—a stop that pilgrims took on their way to Santiago de Compostela—and the myth of Pope Gregory I's role in establishing plainchant.[126] In his description he conflates different aesthetics into a flexible, often amorphous category defined only by distance or separation from the familiar.

This distance could be physical (representing music from other parts of the world) or temporal (invoking ancient or "timeless" spiritual practices). This album is somewhat of an oddity: Bergeron describes it as "stand[ing] apart from the sound world of most music, especially pop music, in which sounds are packaged for consumption in neat, digestible bytes."[127] What made this album unique was the absence of extraneous musical additions, that "seem[ed] to refer, distantly, to a life of ritual (so different from our own) in which there is time: the thing that none of us post-moderns seems to possess in adequate amounts."[128]

The Monks refused to produce a second album much to the dismay of Angel Records. After the unusual homogenous style of *Chant*, Angel's next album*, Vision: The Music of Hildegard von Bingen*, was much more in line with aesthetics of the 1990s.[129] Unlike its predecessor, the album represents an amalgam of times and places. The chants of Hildegard von Bingen are fused with stock worldbeat tracks and altered to conform to

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[125] David Foil, liner notes to "The Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos," *Chant*, Angel Records CDC 7243 5 55138 2 3, 1994.

[126] David Foil, liner notes to *Chant*.

[127] Bergeron, "The Virtual Sacred: Finding God at Tower Records," *The New Republic*, February 27, 1995, 33.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Taylor, *Global Pop*, 15.

western art music standards. In addition, the unmetered original chants are molded to a steady beat track and the monophonic melodies are complemented by chords. Unlike the unwavering monophony of *Chant*, *Vision*'s tracks provide a much wider array of stylistic anachronisms. For instance, "The Anointing" uses choir and organ samples to invoke Christian spirituality. "Song to the Mother (O Viridissima Virga)" begins with sampled harpsichord, features interjecting arpeggiated chords from a harp, along with synth sounds that are characteristic of the 1990s New Age aesthetic.

Ensemble Organum's recording can also be framed within these global and postmodern market paradigms.[130] Yri has suggested that:

> if the Mass's fame was earlier tied to modernist attitudes and compositional practices its fame post 1980 appears to coincide with a postmodernist interest in spirituality that marked the success of music by Hildegard von Bingen, chant recordings, and even contemporary composers John Tavener and Arvo Pärt who composed spiritual music via medieval references.[131]

Ivan Moody emphasizes that the Ensemble was not creating anything novel but was instead working within an established sound concept that was beginning to manifest itself in an oversaturated market.[132] By the time Organum recorded their album, the focus on globalism and eclecticism had been well-established in academic and popular cultural spheres. There are, however, differences between the chant albums and Organum's recording. For example, Bergeron argues that Angel's *Chant* and Ensemble Organum's recordings address different audiences—the former "popular" and "generic" and the latter

[130] Only recently has Ensemble Organum's work reached any sort of popular recognition in Martin Phipps's adaption of "Kyrie eleison" from *Chant Corse: Manuscrits Franciscains* for the show Napoleon hosted by Apple TV.

[131] Yri, "Performing Machaut," 350.

[132] Moody, "Assuming Identities," 49.

"elite" and "esoteric"—"each vying for attention in the same, improbable space."[133] Likewise, Ensemble Organum's musical output originates from a different context from the albums listed above, and Pérès's contributions do not always align with the eclectic musical tastes found in the commercial/popular sphere.[134] Thus, Ensemble Organum appears to participate in the postmodern cultural zeitgeist of the 1990s while maintaining a distinctive identity consistent with its history and the context in which it operates.

Pérès's eclecticism is informed by dedicated research and experimentation of musical styles. Likewise, his spirituality is not a nebulous, one-size-fits-all New Age variant, his work being closely linked with the Catholic church and global Christian denominations. Yri suggests that Pérès's desire to understand multiple Catholic/Christian liturgies demonstrates that he aligns with postmodern ideals of the time.[135] While the albums *Chant* and *Vision* looked to the past primarily as a source of inspiration for present and future culture, with little regard for historical accuracy, Organum has a genuine interest in past musical cultures.[136] Each of Organum's albums centered on a specific repertory (from a particular monastery/church with its own liturgical practice) intent on providing a recreation of what each repertory could sound like. Organum's recording of *La Messe de Notre Dame* reflects the same genuine interest in the past, as even their use of Corsican *paghjelle*, inauthentic as it may be, was in their view motivated by twelfth- and thirteenth-century music theory.

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[133] Bergeron, "The Virtual Sacred," 29.

[134] Moody, "Assuming Identities," 49.

[135] Yri, "Performing Machaut," 354.

[136] The producers neglect to acknowledge the Romantic filter through which this chant has been processed. The monks of Santo Domingo de Silos's interpretations resemble the editions of chant from Solesme during the nineteenth century.

Chant and *Vision*'s success resonated with New Age spirituality, providing opportunities to reach new audiences that would never have considered this music in the first place. What Angel Records attempted to do was not so much tap into Christian spirituality, but rather associate chant with a timeless spirituality that essentially connected the western listener to the whole world. Contrastingly, Pérès sought to discover the origins of the music he performed and acknowledged the musics from which he borrowed to create his desired sound concept. Each has separate overarching goals: to create a marketable product to sell to the widest audience possible versus to create a recording that demonstrates musical solutions to a proposed research question.

These popular chant albums and Pérès's do share a rejection of the modernist values that had pervaded twentieth-century music. Rutherford-Johnson suggests that "the rediscovery of pure tones, triads, repetition, and even melody [was considered] avant garde"—all these features appear to a lesser or greater extent in all three albums.[137] Plainchant is central to each of these albums, though in vastly different ways. In *Chant,* the original music from the Monks is unaltered. In *Vision* it is complemented by worldbeat tracks. In *Le Messe de Notre* Dame, plainchant is integrated into a polyphonic texture, which in turn is filtered through an added layer of Corsican-inspired ornamentation.

Within this anti-modernist framework, however, Ensemble Organum stands out for its interest in historical research. Although the rhetoric of Pérès and *CIRMA* points to a variety of cultures and time periods, it is no question that Pérès's focus was (and still is) to restore French medieval music. This leads to an apparent paradox. On one hand, he

[137] Rutherford-Johnson, *Music after the Fall*, 34.

employs, however unintentionally, globalist and postmodernist rhetoric; on the other hand, he espouses vaguely traditionalist values, concerned with restoring the liturgies and music of Catholicism. At the very least, the turn to tradition suggests a desire to restore and recreate the environment in which medieval music was performed. Pérès has stated the importance of adhering to regional liturgies and religious practices, recording in historic cathedrals, and rehearsing and performing by candlelight.[138]

These traditions are not always stated explicitly but often reflect a focus on French and Catholic traditions. The featured video on Ensemble Organum's YouTube channel states that they are "rediscovering and updating early music" while at the same time "explor[ing] the underlining [underlying] dynamic of our cultural heritage."[139] In the video's description, they state that their project's goal is to "restore forgotten repertoires, link them with living traditions - transmit[ed] through teaching, performances, recordings and edition[s] - renew cultural practices and use the arising discoveries to rethink the fundaments [fundamentals] and spiritual currents of the modern world."[140] This rhetoric surfaces also in the 2014 program to *CIRMA* and Ensemble Organum's activities. Pérès devotes a whole page in the booklet imploring attendees to consider what "fundamentalism" is: "a word that is poorly perceived today; synonymous with intolerance, obscurantism, [and] violence. Yet…We are free to give words the meaning that they have for themselves."[141] He decries the lack of funding that the arts receive from

[138] Pérès, "La interpretación de las músicas antiguas," 183.

[139] Ensemble Organum, "Comme and see-join us (Ensemble Organum)," YouTube video, January 6, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2RegyNEApA, 00:18.

[140] Ibid.

[141] "Fondamentalisme…Mot aujourd'hui bien mal perçu, synonyme d'intolérance, d'obscurantisme, de violence. Pourtant…Nous sommes libres de donner aux mots le sens qu'ils ont par eux-mêmes, témoins

the French government and, by casting culture as a fundamental feature of French society, exclaims that their lack of support for cultural activities is "an expression of a great ignorance!"[142] However, Pérès never fully expands upon his definition of "fundamentalism" or how it differs from its harmful variant; the "our" in Pérès or *CIRMA*'s statement is never entirely defined. Pérès's focus on who funds the group does suggest an outlook devoted to French culture, both past and present. Throughout its 42 years, Ensemble Organum's main source of funding has come from local municipalities and other governmental bodies. Currently, Ensemble Organum and *CIRMA* conduct most of their activities in Moissac; however, their activities do have some international reach.

Corsican Traditions between Early Music and Folk Music Revivals

Ensemble Organum's focus on restoring French cultural heritage makes their interest in other cultures all the more fascinating. By the time Organum released the Mass in 1996, they already had years of experience singing Corsican polyphony. Pérès's involvement in the restoration of traditional Corsican music begins in the 1970s, a time that featured growing violence from nationalist parties but also a cultural revival with global reach. Pérès was directly involved in this revival and spent a considerable amount of time learning local repertoires. A trip to Pigna left an indelible impression on Pérès. He spent time working with Corsican singers, developing and teaching sign gestures (*mimophonie*) to local singers who did not read music, and studying local manuscripts from the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries. In a rather poetic statement, Pérès states

d'horizons d'autrefois et…de demain…Parfois surgit cette question: A quoi sert l'art?" Marcel Pérès, "Programme d'activités," CIRMA, 2014, https://organumcirma.com/pedagogie/stages-adultes/.

[142] "...l'expression d'un bel obscurantisme!" Ibid.

that a night working with singers from the Monticellu confraternity solidified his conviction of the connection between the musical past and the present: "[f]or the first time, I had the feeling that the aesthetics of the past were always alive, somewhere, beyond our thoughts, feelings, and emotions. This evening impressed [this idea] upon us forever, it sealed the connections of our musical pact."[143] The oral nature of this music is supposed to represent an unbroken tradition that provides "echoes" of medieval performance practice. Pérès associates the embodied nature of Corsican singing—its dialogic nature, its setting in churches, its flexible musical pulse, and conspicuous use of melodic embellishment—with twelfth- and thirteenth-century theories of singing and melodic ornamentation.

Music critics, performers, and scholars have often perceived traditional Corsican music as extraneous to the western canon, grouping it instead with cultures from the southern and eastern portions of the Mediterranean basin with the underlying assumption that these regions share linguistic, cultural, and musical qualities.[144] For instance, recall Kozinn's description of Organum invoking "…modal turns of Syriac and Byzantine chant, as well as Jewish and Islamic styles" in their Mass recording, despite Corsican singing being their primary influence.[145] This highly problematic tendency to cast

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[143] "Pour la première fois, j'eus le sentiment que les esthétiques du passé sont toujours vivantes, quelque part, au-delà de nos pensées, nos savoirs, de nos émotions. Cette soirée nous impressionna pour toujours, elle scella les liens de notre pacte musical." Pérès, "Pigna: un terroir pour une musicology vivante," in *Le Chant de la mémoire,* 149.

[144] "The modern Greeks were not only denied the notion of cultural descent from ancient Greece; they were also excluded from the circumscribed cultural geography of modern Western art music."
David R. M. Irving, "Ancient Greeks, World Music, and Early Modern Constructions," in *Studies on a Global History of Music: A Balzan Musicology Project*, ed. Reinhard Strohm (London: Routledge, 2020), 32.

[145] Kozinn, "An Early Mass."

Corsican people and culture as non-western, that is, as "Other," resonates with their subaltern positionality within France. Bithell has suggested that:

> Corsican identities, both personal and collective, are intrinsically fluid, resulting in a constant blurring of the boundaries between familiar oppositions—old/new, traditional/modern, sacred/profane, Corsican/French, island/continent, East/West, rural/urban, local/global, amateur/professional.[146]

Corsicans have occupied a complex positionality as both colonizer and colonized and as French and not-French.

The status of traditional Corsican music seems to be just as complex. For Bithell, "[it] serves as a pivotal point between these different worlds."[147] The revival of Corsican music was driven by native Corsicans who sought to restore cultural practices that were dying out due to the pressures of French nationalism. Once under Genoan jurisdiction, Corsica became a French colony in 1768.[148] Throughout the twentieth century, Corsica has had a volatile socio-political relationship with France. During the post-World War II era, lack of employment and upward mobility, entrenched clannism, and a prioritization of *pieds noirs* (returning Corsican expatriates) ignited separatist and nationalist sentiments. Thus began a series of fractured, often ad hoc, campaigns to assert Corsica's independence from its colonizer. Various groups have fought for decentralization, autonomy, or for the recognition of Corsica as a nation. Throughout its history, violent clashes have often brought issues of Corsican nationalism to the fore but have also served to divide the island's population.

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[146] Bithell, *Transported by Song*, 14.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Patrick Hossay, "Recognizing Corsica: The Drama of Recognition in Nationalist Mobilization," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, no. 3 (2004): 407.

In the liturgical and musical domains, Corsica's fraught relationship with mainland France was further exacerbated by the Vatican II Council's deliberations, following which Latin liturgy was replaced by French. This change threatened and eventually succeeded in killing off oral repertories that had been transmitted in local congregations for generations.[149] After decades of hiatus, when revival efforts began, those who had sung this music as teenagers and young men were now in their later years.[150] This revival extended beyond music. Known as the *riacquistu* (revival), it was part of a broader movement to restore all facets of Corsican culture. The movement soon became a source of pride for locals who were seeking a return to traditional Corsican values, while rejecting the imposition of French ones. This movement also received much attention from music scholars who became interested in transcribing and restoring Corsican music that had fallen into oblivion for decades. Bithell suggests that during the *riaquistu*, "singers now became musical archaeologists, turning over every stone in the collective musical memory in an attempt to uncover ever more forgotten fragments of [Corsican] cultural heritage."[151]

Speculative Medievalism and the Global Middle Ages

The central issue that I wish to highlight is that Pérès and Ensemble Organum often put forth a false equivalency between Corsican chant and *paghjelle* today and the music of medieval France. Along with other Mediterranean traditions, Corsican musical

[149] Bithell, "Musical Archaeology," *Ethnomusicology Forum* 15, no 1 (June 2006): 118.

[150] Ibid., 119.

[151] Bithell, "Musical Archaeology," 120.

traditions have been used as a filler for gaps in our knowledge of music from the Middle Ages. However, the fact that Corsican music represents a continued oral tradition lasting hundreds of years does not exactly correlate to fourteenth-century French performance practice. As Horvitz suggests, he "Corsicanizes" medieval works, while simultaneously medievalizing Corsican singing and culture.[152] Pérès has stated that he "cannot study [western] early music as an ethnologist studies an object that is foreign to him," but he does not seem to extend this courtesy to cultures from which he borrows.[153] This "othering" attitude appears to be at odds with Ensemble Organum's attempt to establish "another approach to the past" one that aims to problematize hegemonic teleological, Eurocentric framings.[154]

Adopting a quasi-anthropological methodology, Pérès, defines music as an object of study and situates it in time. Casting (Christian) chant as this object brings with it certain associations: chant is ancient and timeless. To understand how Pérès frames historical time, it is essential to borrow from anthropologist Johannes Fabian, whose seminal work *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* speaks to how anthropologists have often placed the peoples and cultures they study in a subaltern position through the manipulation of historical time. According to Fabian, anthropologists tend to distance the cultures they study and frame them in a time that is separate from that of the researcher. However, unintentionally, this framing creates an artificial and imposed imbalance between the researcher's culture and the culture they study. By analyzing

[152] Horvitz, "Singing the Body," 48.

[153] "Je ne pouvais étudier les musiques anciennes comme un ethnologue étudie un objet qui lui est extérieur." Pérès, "Une utopie musicale: comment se forme un ensemble?," in *Le Chant de la mémoire*, 19.

[154] "L'ensemble Organum," Association Organum, https://organumcirma.com/en_GB/a-propos/histoire/.

anthropology's history, Fabian concludes that, "it is by diagnosing anthropology's [read: musicology's] temporal discourse that one rediscovers the obvious, namely that there is no knowledge of the Other which is not also a temporal, historical, a political act."[155]

Corsican culture is coeval with "us," against whom he pits Corsica (whether it be France or western civilization more broadly). Instead, he frames Corsica and its traditional music as if it were still medieval. Pérès has vividly described Pigna's slower, pastoral environment and its tight-knit (religious) communities as an analog to medieval (French) society.[156] By drawing analogies between the medieval period and the island's contemporary culture, Pérès casts the latter as timeless, distancing it from the French culture with it is coeval. Bithell emphasizes that "the trappings of the 21st century seem only a thin veneer" over more seeded traditions that "lay deep in the ancient Mediterranean world."[157] She acknowledges that a confluence of events in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, significant to sociopolitical, cultural, and musical developments, "remain a part of the present."[158]

Within this framing, Corsica is cast as a peripherical region not only geographically, but also temporally. It becomes solely an object of study, its supposed timelessness turning into a fetish. To Pérès's credit, he has done much to amplify the voices of Corsican musicians and has devoted much time to learning oral and written repertories, including Corsican Franciscan manuscripts. Additionally, Pérès does not

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[155] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 1.

[156] See Pérès, "Pigna: un terroir pour une musicologie vivante," in *Le Chant de la memoire*, 145–54.

[157] Bithell, *Transported by Song*, 11.

[158] Ibid., xxxv.

suggest that, by using Corsican music in the reconstruction of French medieval music, Organum is attempting to recreate it, only that the techniques they borrow may offer glimpses into the musical past. Despite this, Bergeron has criticized Organum and Pérès suggesting that they never fully integrate themselves into the musical styles from which they are borrowing, whether this is due to lack of willingness or technical ability.[159] Bergeron remarks on Organum's work with Greek singer Lycourgos Angelopoulos that the Ensemble never "seem[s] able (or willing) to imitate" the "dark, full-bodied, but slightly covered, vocal timbre" of Angelopoulos creating a dynamic that "sets a standard of distance by which we can begin to interpret just what the European singers are trying to do."[160] She further suggests that:

> "[the] authentic oral tradition that Pérès introduces into this performance as something of a homeopathic cure for the ailing chant: thus inoculated, the singers take on the strains of the other style as a means of boosting their interpretive strength. It helps them to maintain their musicological decorum, so that what they sing will be perceived as 'medieval' and not 'Byzantine,' as 'early music' and not 'world music,' and hence will deliver the desired effect."[161]

In the Mass recording, it seems that Jean Pierre Lanfranchi, a native Corsican, is highlighted the most, having the most technical ability to perform the nuanced ornamentation required of the style.

One of the most valuable contributions of Ensemble Organum is that they problematize the preconceived notions of what medieval music is supposed to sound like. Often met with harsh push back from critics, their interpretations force us to see this music in a different light. While their efforts bring dignity and increased international

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[160] Bergeron, "The Virtual Sacred," 30.

[161] Ibid.

attention to non-western musical traditions, their focus on restoring western culture creates dialectic tension between themselves and the "Other" traditions from which they draw. By asserting that Corsican music is a window into the past (or that it represents "echoes" of medieval performance practice), Pérès unintentionally employs rhetoric with "Othering" undertones.

According to Yri, "Pérès partakes in some of the main practices of medievalism and postmodernism that defined the 1990s."[162] Given these observations, I argue that Pérès is constructing a musical medievalism that exaggerates the roles of coeval, but "Othered," music traditions. These musics are treated as temporally displaced objects of scholarship, as if they were coeval to Machaut's France musically and culturally. These pursuits represent what Yri and Stephen C. Meyer define as medievalisms, or "retrospective immersion in the images, sounds, narratives, and ideologies of the European Middle Ages."[163] Medievalisms are often thought to be the interpretation of the Middle Ages as filtered through popular culture, but in many ways, engagement with early music (even the work grounded by scholarship) resonates with this practice. Yri and Meyer highlight that:

> Beginning in the postwar period and accelerating through the 1980s and 1990s…scholars of medieval studies began to recognize that positivist scholarship on the Middle Ages was inevitably informed by the political, nationalist, religious agendas or the subjective experiences of those doing the inquiries. The acceptance of medievalism as an academic discipline thus acknowledges multiple discourses of the Middle Ages, various histories, if you will, going so far as to understand its recovery as one embroiled as much in contextual modes as in scientific methods.[164]

[162] Yri, "Performing Machaut," 355.

[163] Yri and Meyer, introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Medievalism,* 1.
[164] Yri and Meyer, introduction, 2.

Bithell notes further that "the past and its narratives have become polyphonic," highlighting the changing views from the past as "an objective 'truth' to a series of multiple and fragmented pasts whose meanings are partial, equivocal, and subjective."[165]

This view of the past comes with increased engagement with living culture and typically an acknowledgement that there is no true authentic reproduction of the past Pérès has acknowledged the experimental nature of Organum's activities:

> In musicology, like in the sciences, we must have experiments. Too many people are looking for the truth. The truth is not possible, but we can try to see our preconceptions and go further in our reflections. All the performances you can hear are only what the musician [has] been able to imagine about the aesthetic of the music they are doing. That's why it is so important to get as much information as we can about a specific time, always bearing in mind what we present is only the fruit of our imagination.[166]

The experimental nature of Organum's activities speaks to the speculative nature of reconstructing medieval music. In studying medieval chant, one often can only speculate about many of its features: manuscripts are often damaged or lost, notation does not always accurately convey pitch, and little is known about performance practice. Polyphonic sources, such as those preserving Machaut's music, provide a clearer picture as their notation spells out pitch and rhythmic content, but even here uncertainties abound. For example, as Timothy McGee argues, ornamental gestures could not be accounted for in the new square notation.[167] Pérès exaggerated these "intangible" musical qualities (*ficta*, timbre, and ornamentation) which were omitted from Machaut's manuscripts.

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[165] Bithell, "Musical Archaeologists," 116.

[166] Pérès, "An Interview with Marcel Pérès," 30.

[167] See Chapter 1.

Jeffery has described an "impenetrable barrier" created by this gap in our knowledge.[168] He asserts that attempts to "uncover" chant are "fraught with extraordinary methodological problems."[169] Overall, he suggests turning to extant oral, non-western traditions to fill the gaps in our understanding. Speculations, like Pérès's contributions, may hint at certain musical practices but never fully confirm them. A recent collection of essays from the Petropunk collective has emphasized the necessity of speculation to understand the past: "Speculation is…the rigorous exploration of the potentialities of the perceivable, the very foundation and condition of experience and experiment.[170]

The distance and intangibility of medieval ideas and practices have inspired people to draw analogies between medieval culture and their own as a way of filling gaps in knowledge, often in the process conflating temporal and geographic differences. Music camps and organizations devoted to restoring and spreading "traditional music" (and especially "traditional polyphony") have become popular ways for people to experience musics they have not been exposed to before. Though they do not have the same goal of restoring specific medieval repertories, their focus on traditional repertories hints at the desire to understand the culture of the past. Bithell notes that:

> what has been learned is not just a new cache of songs. It is a new way of using the voice, of embodying a musical grammar, of daring to give something of oneself, of relating to others through sound, of reaching an understanding of what those sounds mean in local contexts, of how they weave a thread from past to future; it is a new way of being in the world, of reassessing one's own identity, of exploring the complexities of other identities, of expanding one's understanding of culture and history; it is a way of building bridges, of nurturing empathy, of sharing simple pleasures. Above all it is a chord of optimism. Music is not irredeemably

[168] Jeffery, *Re-Envisioning*, 9.

[169] Ibid.

[170] The Petropunk Collective, "Speculative Medievalisms: A Précis." *Speculative Medievalisms: Discography* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books), ii.

> condemned to become a mere commodity simply because it is admired, appropriated, or embraced by others.[171]

Bithell emphasizes that engagement with world musics can be a positive experience for both those who are exploring new musics and those whose music is now found in the global spotlight. In the same vein, Pérès notes that his experiences working with Greek and Corsican musicians have left a considerable impact on him and fundamentally changed the way that he experiences music. Importantly, Organum has introduced new repertories to those who may not have experienced it before. CIRMA holds workshops that teach fundamentals of the repertories that they typically engage with to wider audiences. Despite the risk of "Othering" the music that they study, this suggests an overall desire to gain a broader understanding of and share music that is unfamiliar to audiences.

[171] Caroline Bithell, "Singing Out of Other Throats," in *The Musical Anthropology of the Mediterranean: Interpretation, Performance, Identity*, ed. Philip V. Bohlman and Marcello Sorce Keller (Bologna: Cooperativa Libraria Universitaria Editrice Bologna, 2009), 11–12.

CONCLUSION

Still active today, Ensemble Organum has left a considerable impact on the early music community. Their interpretation of *La Messe de Notre Dame* has been highly influential, with groups such as Graindelavoix and La Tempête citing the Ensemble as a primary influence to own their Mass interpretations.[172] These groups each bring something unique to the Mass but are fundamentally indebted to Organum and the musical cultures from which they took inspiration. The impact of Organum's rendition of Machaut's Mass is such that the Ensemble has reissued their original 1996 recording on several occasions and continues to perform the Mass in live concerts.[173] In anticipation of an upcoming performance in 2018, critic Michael Schell remarked that:

> [w]hen the Portland-based early music group Cappella Romana announced they would be touring the Pacific Northwest with Marcel Pérès and a program centered on Guillaume de Machaut's **Messe de Nostre Dame**, I wondered if the performances would feature the gruff, Corsican-influenced vocal style and unorthodox ornaments with which Pérès is closely associated.[174]

Despite their work with many different musical traditions, this "gruff, Corsican-influenced vocal style" and ornamentation is now what is expected by audiences.[175]

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[172] Simon-Pierre Bestion, liner notes for *Azahar*, La Tempête and Simon-Pierre Bestion, recorded 2016, Alpha Classics Alpha 261, 2016; Björn Schmelzer, "Guillaume de Machaut: Messe de Nostre Dame," liner notes for Guillaume de Machaut, *Machaut: Messe de Nostre Dame*, Graindelavoix and Björn Schmelzer, recorded 2016, Glossa GCD P32110, 2016, 10.

[173] After its initial release in 1996 there were two additional releases of this recording in the 1990s (in 1996 and 1998 respectively). Notably the recording was reissued in 2008 and 2019, the later serving as a commemoration for the fire of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. "Guillaume de Machaut – Ensemble Organum, Marcel Pérès – Messe de Notre Dame." Discogs. https://www.discogs.com/master/593829-Guillaume-de-Machaut-Ensemble-Organum-Marcel-P%C3%A9r%C3%A8s-Messe-De-Notre-Dame-. For an example of a recent live performance see, "[Concert] 'Messe de Guillaume de Machaut' par l'ensemble Organum," Royaumont, YouTube Video, December 6, 2022.

[174] Michael Schell, "Machaut: Messe de Nostre Dame (performed by Marcel Pérès and Cappella Romana)," *Schellsburg*, http://www.schellsburg.com/MachautMessePeres.htm.

Organum has employed some of these features in their recordings of other works. As Kirkman pointed out, their 1991 recording of the Tournai mass served as a preliminary exploration of a style that the group would cultivate for nearly two decades, featuring prominently in their recording of the Toulouse Mass.[176] Much like in the Machaut, in their recording of the Toulouse mass the Ensemble applies similar ornamental and timbral palettes to highlight the repetitive verse structure of the "Kyrie," alternating between full and reduced polyphonic textures. Arguably, their Toulouse and Machaut interpretations present Corsican musical influences most clearly, but inherent in these recordings are also the vestiges of the other musical practices with which they have engaged, reflecting their fundamentally eclectic approach to the performance of medieval music.[177][178]

Though many of Organum's successors have employed similar musical practices, their philosophies are not always the same. For instance, Bestion expresses that "[he] like[s] the idea of disorientating the listener between different historical periods."[179] This contrasts with Pérès's outlook, which favors creating a dialog between living and medieval musics, not to disorient, but to restore the sonic landscape of past repertories. Overall, though, Organum's emphasis on juxtaposing styles and establishing a dialog between past and present has established a trend that remains central in today's early music scene. Christian Goursaud remarked in a 2020 review that:

> it is somewhat unusual that a review appearing in *Early Music* should justifiably devote as much space to the discussion of 20th- and 21st-century compositions as is necessary for this batch of six recordings. Yet there is good reason here, since these discs are the fruit of provocative and enterprising artistic projects that

[176] *Missa Gotica*, Ensemble Organum and Marcel Pérès, Zig Zag Territoires ZZT090601, 2009.

[178] Notably Byzantine Orthodox chant and Moroccan samāa.

[179] Bestion, liner notes for *Azahar*.

> interrogate the relationships between early and new music, albeit with some strikingly different approaches and priorities.[180]

This dialog between past and present was as much a unifying force in the 1990s as it continues to be today. Kreutziger-Herr suggested that:

> [this] imagined dialogue between the Middle Ages and the twentieth century should convey an assurance to the modern reader that, amidst all the social, cultural, and political chaos present at the dawn of the twenty-first century, there are constants in our cultural understanding of ourselves, in our cultural identity.[181]

Performers and audiences alike continue to find resonances between medieval and contemporary music, grafting their identities on to medieval music while at the same time allowing it to shape them. Moody suggests that early music ensembles such as Organum form legacies that "[are] in a sense […] renewals of the ideas of context and community that create an identity."[182] Additionally, through this established identity, they have inspired a future generation of musicians to think about medieval music in new contexts. Moody suggests that early music ensembles have formed these identities through their recordings, which serve as a permanent account of who they are and how they perform:

> The implications of the effects of recordings on the idea of collective identity are enormous…Ensembles formed in the future will have this kind of procedure as an historical *fait accompli*, preserved in recordings from which they can draw their own conclusions, and in reaction to or in imitation of, which, they can assume their own identities.[183]

Despite the impact that Ensemble Organum has left on the Mass's performance history, there are still many aspects of this performance that need to be examined further. For example, notation remains a thorny issue at the heart of many scholarly and

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[180] Christian Goursaud, "Playing with Historical Time," *Early Music* 48, no. 1 (February 2020): 136.

[181] Kreutziger-Herr, "Postmodern Middle Ages," 187.

[182] Moody, "Assuming Identities," 50.

[183] Ibid.

performance disagreements. While this thesis has primarily engaged with the Mass using modern notation, it would be important in future studies to examine the role that original sources has played in the Ensemble's performances. Examining Organum's engagement with original notation would also help to shed light on text setting, voicing, and ornamentation, issues that are crucial for the performance of early music.

In addition to studying Organum's engagement with original notation, future research would greatly benefit from a complete and reliable transcription of their recording. In this respect, the transcription efforts offered in Chapter 1 could serve a starting point for a more refined and comprehensive transcription project, one that would address all of Organum's chromatic alterations and ornamentations. Given the speed with which Organum's ornamental and chromatic inflections unfold, the transcription process should be aided by sound processing technology. Having a complete transcription of Organum's recording would allow us to investigate how their rendition relates to Machaut's original sources. How faithful or divergent is Pérès's performance practice from the original notation? Can we tell where and how to ornament Machaut's passages based solely on his notation, as some seem to suggest? Such an investigation could take the form of a digital resource that could facilitate comparison between original sources and Organum's rendition. This project could also be expanded to include other recordings of Machaut's Mass, shedding light on the recording history of one of the most iconic musical works from the Middle Ages and the central role played by Ensemble Organum in this distinguished recording history.

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