

The Musical Fragment as a Creative Challenge

Thoughts on the performance practice of medieval music in the 21st-century

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One of the most frequently asked questions after a concert of medieval music concerns the individual creative contributions of the musicians when preparing and performing historical songs and instrumental pieces. How much modern inventiveness is needed to bring medieval music back to life? How much was improvised?

Repertoires and Workshop reports

In order to gain insights into the artistic creative processes involved, I believe it is useful to provide an insight into my own workshop as well as into the working relationships with musical partners and long-term collaborations. These are projects with the ensembles Candens Liliun, Sequentia, Dialogos as well as solo programs by the author. It deals with such diverse repertoires as the Spruchsang repertoire of Master Frauenlob, the improvisational exploration of missing melodies in the Carmina Burana, a new quality level of cooperation between research and musical practice in the recording of Boethius' chants from the 9th to 11th centuries, and the use of ethnic folk songs and regional Gregorian chant styles from Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina in the reconstruction of medieval performance styles in the Balkans. It also describes a way of reconstructing lost 13th-century estampies, making use of the descriptions of the music theorist Johannes de Grocheo. Another topic is early medieval instrumental pieces, which can be filtered out of the so-called sequela tradition. And the phenomenon of spontaneous instrumental improvisation will also be discussed.

With all this repertoire from a long time ago, the aim cannot be to produce a historically "authentic" reconstruction. The sources are too patchy for that and the thread of oral tradition in the Central European musical tradition is unfortunately broken. However, it is worth the effort to work out as coherent as possible an overall picture, with the help of the surviving individual sources from musical manuscripts, treatises, fine art and literature and from today's experience in historical instrument making. However, you won't get very far without using your own creative imagination!

Reconstruction and creativity

Every responsible creative intervention in a historical work requires a framework. This framework can be compared to the artistic restoration of works of fine art. There are sometimes diametrically opposed approaches and methods for their restoration, e.g. the mere fixing of a current, possibly damaged state or the attempt to complete a missing detail in the fragmentary place in a stylistically appropriate manner and to artistically recreate it. The fact that there are successful and unsuccessful attempts at artistic restoration and reconstruction is well known in the field of fine art and is much discussed, including by the public. The assessment of coherence is usually based on today's criteria, such as whether the work fits appropriately and meaningfully into today's interiors or whether the restoration or reconstruction should have a purely technical or independent artistic dimension. Musical reconstruction methods should be approached with a similarly open mind. The quality of a contemporary creative intervention in a historical work will depend on the artistic direction and the creative potential of the project team, who can also introduce modern artistic working methods to early music, for example in the design of programs in which historical music is integrated. In recent years, the classical concert format for the performance of early music has been increasingly

questioned. Instead, one encounters more and more performances of historical music in which a dialog-oriented exchange with other musical styles and other forms of artistic expression takes place, and depending on the openness of the performance format, the question of historical "authenticity" arises with varying degrees of urgency. It should be noted in advance that in my contribution I will treat the questions of fidelity to the original rather conservatively in order to be able to be innovative elsewhere. However, musicological research must never be neglected - especially in the case of medieval music - so that the necessary creative additions do not take place beyond historical plausibility.

Styles and variance in medieval music

Medieval music is approached in a different way in today's early music scene than, for example, in Baroque music with its harmonic foundation in the basso continuo, its contrapuntal penetration and its reference to the rhetorical theory of figures. In medieval music, as it has come down to us, such a frame of reference exists only to a limited extent. This already applies to the musical arrangement from the manuscript with often complex notation transcriptions, which leads to the creation of "working editions". It also concerns the practical handling of medieval instruments, including performance in original languages in a manner known as "ex tempore". This can lead to creative collaborations between research and artistic application, similar to the complementary contrast between *scientia* and *usus* that already existed in the Middle Ages. Thus, due to the diverse challenges in dealing with the fragmentary in the historical performance practice of medieval music, a type of independently researching musician has emerged. There are repertoires of medieval music that need more creative additions today than others due to the fragmentary tradition. Here is a brief comparison of examples: one example of an early repertoire that is almost unknown in our time is the extensive corpus of neumatic settings of ancient texts, above all the texts of the late Roman philosopher Boethius, whose verses - known as *metra* - were sung in medieval cathedral schools and which the ensemble *Sequentia* has made accessible. More on this later. In contrast, Guillaume de Machaut's music and poetry from the 14th century has been handed down legibly in manuscripts, fully researched and documented in today's editions. Open questions of performance practice are much rarer with Machaut than with earlier repertoire, especially before the 13th century.

The Middle Ages encompass a wide range of musical styles. Here we will take a closer look at those areas in which the topic of creativity comes into focus. This is the case, for example, with non-liturgical medieval monophony. This is monophonic music that developed parallel to and out of Gregorian chant. This special repertoire unites many interesting genres between sacred and secular, between vocal and instrumental or mixed performance, which can be used in a particularly exemplary way to demonstrate the special practical performance possibilities of the musical material itself.

The development of an "ex tempore" performance style

Medieval music, whether well-known and researched like the works of Guillaume de Machaut or the still relatively unknown terrain of the settings of Boethius' *Metra*, in most cases requires improvisation, ornamentation, expansion and lively interaction between the performers. It often needs an instrumental or vocal accompaniment, which was not written down in the Middle Ages and therefore has to be recreated in a stylistically faithful manner. Without their own invention, minstrels - today as then - would only be filling in templates. They must and had to develop a way of playing that goes beyond the manuscript, which in the Middle Ages was only rarely intended for performance, and creates space for necessary artistic expansion.

The ideal approach proved to be a historically reflected oral practice, which is of course not documented or documented in a different way than the primary sources, namely internalised learning, improvisational creation of one's own musical version, priority of listening interaction over written

arrangement. This is summarised under the dazzling term "ex tempore", which is of central importance for the composition of medieval music. Ideally, the sequence of work in medieval music should always lead from a first phase, the study of sources, to a second phase of extemporisation, which merges seamlessly into the development of a personalised performance style.

In forgotten "tones", the songs of Master Frauenlob

A workshop report on dealing with the "tones" of the Middle High German song poets can illustrate this approach in a first step. The main focus is on Heinrich von Meißen, known as Frauenlob, and his multifaceted work in the so-called Sangspruch. Together with the singer Sabine Lutzenberger, this study led to my 2014 CD production *In vergessenen Tönen*.

In the Sangspruch, a "tone" not only referred to the melody, but also consisted of an individually defined form of verse, rhyme scheme and precisely matching tone sequence. Frauenlob wrote a large number of song sayings which, with a few exceptions, he presented in his own "tones". These "tones" - there are almost 20 of them - have survived in clearly legible manuscripts in musical notation on lines. Professor Horst Brunner's extensive "repertorium" (see: literature) provides information on the sources (Brunner 2002). The older manuscripts, the Jena Lieder manuscript and the Vienna Frauenlob Codex, are considered particularly reliable. There are significant differences between the later Colmar manuscript and the earlier ones. This very often concerns the third part of the melodies in bar form (Stollen, Stollen, Abgesang). In Colmar there are rhythmically concise phrases that almost lead to a dance-like style. In Jena and Vienna, on the other hand, the melodies are much more melismatic, not only in the Abgesang. It therefore makes sense to add ornaments and melismas to certain notes - for example Frauenlob's prominent long tone - and to de-rhythmise the Abgesang. This process is important in order to achieve melodic stylistic uniformity in Frauenlob's style for a concert performance. Of course, the question arises here: is it more authentic to reconstruct an earlier - more melismatic - Frauenlob style by inserting missing melodic elements into a version from a later tradition or to remain with the respective original text from the various sources, which was not regarded as such even at the end of the Middle Ages? No one can answer this question from a purely musicological perspective. In the broad field of "Arts Practice As Research", it is certainly possible to provide one or more artistically coherent answers.

A further challenge in dealing with the chant repertoire is to bring together and interpret the melodies that have survived in various places with the often separate text documentation. The Codex Manesse, also known as the Great Heidelberg Song Manuscript, for example, is an important source for this repertoire. Here the pieces of Middle High German poetry are written down in a text form without melody notation, but organised according to "tones". It is now important to compare the verses with the melody versions from other manuscripts, like the Jena Lieder manuscript, the Colmar manuscript or other sources and to bring text and music together, tone by tone, syllable by syllable. Due to small text and melody variations in the different manuscripts, this transcription work is often tricky and requires musical skill, experience and patience. However, performing this task yourself is already a useful step towards an extemporised style of performance.

The "Metra" of Boethius

A collaboration between Dr Sam Barrett from the University of Cambridge and the Ensemble Sequentia, in particular Hanna Marti and Benjamin Bagby, in their joint work on the Metra of Boethius, dealt with similar questions of a sound form verified by artistically creative testing and trying out different versions. The Boethian "Metra" provide a rich repertoire from the 9th to 11th centuries, documented exclusively in manuscripts with line-free neumatic notation. These adiastematic neumes do not provide any clear information about the pitches, but do give indications of the progression of the notes and in some cases also markings of the semitone step that determines the respective mode. There are several

"settings" of most of Boethius' texts in different sources, so that it was possible for Sam Barrett to present different versions in a synopsis together with the text and to make melodic suggestions. The transcription results were then examined and optimised for coherence in an artistic process together with Hanna Martin and Benjamin Bagby. This differentiated practical test resulted in a highly acclaimed CD production, which was created in collaboration with the University of Cambridge, the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis and the Ensemble Sequentia, in which I was honored to participate as a flautist.

A multifaceted exchange process of melodies and texts: the contrafactum

From the tasks that arise when combining text and musical phrases, either in the case of line-less notation as in the Boethius Metra, or in the sometimes still to be found assignments of a "tone" in the repertoire of the Sangspruch, one can seamlessly transition to the related phenomenon of the contrafactum, which one encounters as an important element in many medieval repertoires, namely the vital possibility of exchanging certain texts and melodic fragments or entire melodies.

The contrafactum can be seen as the main motor of melodic development in the Middle Ages, without which the essence of medieval monody would be misjudged. At the same time, it is also important for the creative expansion of fragmentary surviving chants. Borrowing complete melodies and borrowing shorter modal phrases was just as important as to create an individual new composition. This was especially true for the music of the 12th and 13th centuries where mostly text was interchanged but melody borrowed sometimes into a completely different context (f.e. from a devotional sequence to a lamenting planctus). The traditions of the Occitan troubadours and the northern French trouvères were combined with the Latin conductus poems of the Parisian Notre Dame school, but also with the Middle High German minnesingers. The partial rootedness of these modal traditions in Gregorian chant is equally significant.

The medieval Carmina Burana, methods of exploration in creative hybrid forms

Carmina Burana Today with the ensembles Candens Liliium and Les Haulz et les Bas was a project which, in addition to the possibility of transcribing chants from difficult-to-decipher, line-less neumes, also focussed on contrafacts. The material basis was the collection of goliard songs from the 12th and 13th centuries in the Benediktbeuern manuscript (Clm 4660, 4660a), also known as the medieval Carmina Burana. Many of the pieces have also survived in other manuscripts with similar texts. Others can be made accessible for today's performance through a variety of methods, namely through a combination of new transcription, Gregorian determination of the tune based on verse comparisons but also idiomatically informed improvisation on the surviving song texts without musical notation. It is about a creative application of all these methods. The verse meter method, which is not yet very widespread in the medieval music scene, consists of assigning texts to traditional melodies elsewhere with a focus on Gregorian chant, i.e. a repertoire with which the vagantes (goliards), who often came from cathedral schools, were familiar. This is based on the realisation that a certain melody was always already intended for a certain meter. Good examples of accurate melodic determination in the Carmina Burana include the frequent use of the Stabat Mater scheme or the Pange Lingua scheme. An example of a contrafact in which this metrical coherence method leads to good results is the prominent poem *O fortuna velut luna*, which Carl Orff used as the framework for his cantata. The verses largely correspond metrically to the sacred hymn *Pange Lingua* by the early medieval poet Venantius Fortunatus. It must have been obvious to medieval vagantes that *O fortuna* should be sung to one of the well-known *Pange Lingua* melodies. Often several original medieval melodic variants are offered in the verse measure method, which is perceived as a welcomed variety of possibilities for today's practice. This method can claim to interpret the old texts with authentic tone sequences from their time of origin, which frees them from the fate of being silenced for centuries.

Similarly, in the Carmina Burana Today project, knowledge of the art of melismatic ornamentation was essential for creative reconstruction work. This applies not only to the work at the desk, but also in the rehearsal room during the joint musical exploration of the fragments. In such processes, it becomes clear time and again that the paradigm of a single possible sound form does not apply to medieval music and should not be aspired to.

Icelandic epic recitation, recitation patterns from the Rímur tradition

But what is to be done with works that were certainly performed musically in the Middle Ages and have survived with a complete text, but for which there is almost no musical notation and no evidence of contrafacta, underlying Gregorian hymns or chant "tones" can be found, i.e. when the question of references for a reconstruction and recomposition arises in a completely different way? This is also the case with part of the Carmina Burana, whereby my main focus was on the chants that could be transcribed or otherwise conclusively analysed. The CD production *Der Fluch des Rheingolds* by *Sequentia* in collaboration with WDR, DLF and New York's Lincoln Center was an exemplary project of how a historically informed re-imagination can take place, enabling a lost musical tradition to be heard again. This was a reconstruction of the performance of the Icelandic Edda epic. Benjamin Bagby, together with the Icelandic linguist Heimir Pálsson, established that the recitation formulae in the Edda text correspond to those in the Rímur tradition, which has been passed down orally for centuries and of which there are tape recordings. Another important question was the use of instruments, which were specially reconstructed based on historical models, as well as the original pronunciation of Old Icelandic. The Edda project was thus also an example of how inspiration from so-called "world music" can be utilised for medieval repertoires.

Slavonic traditions as practical performance guidance and inspiration

In a completely different way, the Ensemble Dialogos and its director, the singer and musicologist Katarina Livljanić, integrate elements of Eastern European traditional music and regional church singing, especially from Dalmatia, Istria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, into their programmes. The study of sources is the starting point of the work, on the basis of which Livljanić and her ensemble dare to cross borders, especially into the more open area of music theatre. Almost every programme tells a story. Additional texts are also inserted into the narrative stream and musicalised - in other words, newly composed in the style of the surrounding historical pieces of music. Many of the ensemble's programme themes are set in Eastern Europe, which is why the inclusion of ethnic playing and singing techniques as well as the inclusion of Slavic songs in original languages and traditional performance styles is an obvious choice. This type of more open programme design shifts the focus of interpretation from the aspects of purely historically informed performance practice to today's dramatic dimension of a timelessly oriented, epic performance.

In today's endeavours to create an interesting programme, it is always interesting to observe that the most courageous concepts for reconstructing and reinventing lost musical parts, which then also show a proximity to today's avant-garde, come from experts who themselves have a comprehensive knowledge of the traditional music of the Middle Ages. The essential experience here is that the intensity of musicological background research and innovative performance formats are not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually beneficial.

Heterophonic accompaniment ad hoc

Up to now, we have dealt with the first two phases of the process of artistic appropriation of medieval music, the musicological research in dealing with the fragmentary and the subsequent extemporisation of the music and texts that have now been made accessible, i.e. brought into a performance version. In the following, we will look at what happens in musical work when musicians begin to engage

practically with the catalogued pieces and prepare for performances or recordings. What exactly happens in the rehearsal room during the process to develop a convincing medieval performance form? Should the music be performed a cappella or accompanied? Instrumental accompaniment was generally not written down in the Middle Ages but was the creative task of the performers. Are there ad hoc additional ornaments and tone changes, expanding melismas, interspersed improvisations, preludes, postludes, sustained notes, echoes, drones? All these aspects belong to the technique of heterophonic accompaniment, as we know it from many traditional musical styles. Heterophony means following the same modal line, but not playing it exactly in unison, but with variations.

The aim of heterophonic accompaniment is always to intensify and reinforce the modal resonance. This means that each mode - in short, the modal frame of reference consisting of Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian and Mixolydian (each in plagal and authentic register) - has a number of centres of force that can be intensified in the accompaniment. A mode is not simply a scale. There is an initial phrase, a repercussion note that is usually played again and again, a final note, the finalis, and often a cadential note called subfinalis that precedes the final note. The position of the semitone mi-fa within the eight modes also plays a role. Over the centuries, typical modal phrases have emerged from Gregorian chant, which follow these force relationships and form the basic structure of most modal chants and instrumental pieces. A fund of heterophonic accompaniment techniques can be developed from the extemporised knowledge of these phrases. Stylistically unfamiliar forms of accompaniment should be avoided, such as harmonisations in the sense of later triadic harmony, which did not exist until the 13th century.

The purely instrumental genres of medieval music

It is a well-known fact that almost only vocal music has survived from the Middle Ages, with or without instrumental accompaniment documented exclusively in text and visual sources. The special case of purely instrumental music will be discussed below. There were no records of genuine instrumental music before the 13th century. It must therefore be assumed that these first notated instrumental pieces are the recording of the highly developed late form of a centuries-long oral tradition of "ex tempore" playing, which was orientated towards the common melodies of vocal genres such as lai, planctus and sequence. These are related to the genre of the estampie through the typical double verse form and common melodic features. There are also interesting references to the estampie in a Latin treatise by Johannes de Grocheo from the late 13th century on the instrumental practice of the time. He describes two different instrumental genres, namely on the one hand the Ductia, a dance form, and on the other a contemplative form of improvisation called Stantipes or Estampie (from "stante pede" = spontaneously and immediately performed), which had a differentiated, presumably labyrinthical form. According to Grocheo, unlike the Ductia dances, the stantipedes were not rhythmised and were therefore performed either partly or throughout in a rhythmically free-flowing manner, followed by a so-called "neupma" (sic). The "neupmata" are based on a Gregorian melisma, for which Grocheo precisely prescribes the basic tones to be used in all eight modes and explicitly invites the listener to change and optimise them creatively. He wrote: "They [the neupmata] can [...] be refined and embellished (subtiliora et pulchriora), also with regard to the respective tonal range (ad latitudinem cuiuslibet toni)". In his playing instructions, Grocheo thus formulates a request for improvisational expansion in relation to this postlude of an Estampie called "Neupma". Elsewhere, he talks about the artistic intention behind an estampie performance: The stantipes/estampie should distract the listeners from bad thoughts through the active listening task of following the various musical parts in their minds. It is therefore a kind of musical exercise in concentration.

The eight Estampies Royales handed down in the Chansonier du Roi are now regarded as prominent examples of the genre, but Grocheo probably did not know them, otherwise he would certainly have mentioned them in his treatise. He himself described other pieces: a *Stantipes Res Tassini* and a *Ductia*

Pierron, which in turn do not appear in any of the surviving manuscripts today and thus are lost. However, *Res Tassini* can be easily reconstructed on the basis of the title mentioned by Grocheo, which corresponds to four surviving tenor melodies called *La chose Tassin* in the Codex Montpellier. These four tenor melodies go back to the melodies of the minstrel *Tassinus* and form the lower parts of three-part motets in the Codex Montpellier. Grocheo's description of the form of a seven-part Estampie, for which there is also no musical tradition, is also interesting. I have presented an attempt at reconstruction on my CD *Medieval Echoes*, as well as the fragmentary first piece from the *Huit Estampies Royales*.

On the basis of the musical tradition and if one follows Grocheo, it is unclear whether the Estampies are to be regarded as completed works or rather as improvisation exercises. Grocheo remains ambiguous: although he describes specific estampies - i.e. pieces known in his time - on the one hand, at another point he explicitly calls for the composition of an estampie or ductia. He thus places the estampie in a didactic context and formulates the handling of it as a creative musical task.

Instrumental versions of vocal repertoire

Numerous textual sources provide information that, in addition to the improvisational development of purely instrumental music without any vocal models, it was also common practice to perform vocal pieces instrumentally. For example, the minnesinger Hermann, also known as the Monk of Salzburg, added an invitation to instrumental performance in the subtitle of his piece *Taghorn* (preserved in the Mondsee-Vienna song manuscript). It says that it is also good to blow, and that if you put the "Pumhart" on the first note, the lower octave overlaps strongly. This can be interpreted differently and probably refers to a drone hummed with the voice for flute or shawm playing or the drone of a pommer pipe on a bagpipe. In addition to the practice of instrumental performance of chants, the fascinating acoustic phenomenon of difference tones is also described here. In fact, the recommended blown performance style clearly adds a third voice in the lower octave. The result is similar to the ancient Slavic technique of humming into wind instruments.

About rhythm and metre in instrumental performance

Until the 13th century, it was usually the song text and not the musical notation that provided information about the rhythm in the instrumental performance of a song, as the text usually provides a very clear metrical structure. The sequence of accents for the musical performance is derived from this, as are the rhythms for the instrumental performance. However, if there is no piece of music notated as a song or chant with a clear relationship between the syllables of the text and the notes, the question arises as to what the stress structure within the melody looks like. Without this metrical information, an instrumental style cannot be performed convincingly. Rhythms were not precisely notated in mensural notation until the late Middle Ages. In the textless pieces of the *Chansonnier du Roi*, more or less clear rhythms can still be transcribed because they have survived in an early form of Franconian mensural notation, a very useful novelty in the 13th century that was originally developed for polyphonic music of the *Notre Dame* period. For even earlier vocal pieces in the character of an estampie, only the text structure of the surviving song versions remains to determine the metrical and rhythmic balance for an instrumental performance. One example of this is the estampie-like manner with the enigmatic name *Note Martinet*, a melody title that was added separately by another hand in the Middle Ages above the musically and textually notated version of the trouvère chanson *J'ai trouvé et prouvé*. Another example is the Latin-language, estampie-like song *Olim in harmonia* in the mystery play *Ludus super Anticlaudianum*. There is also an additional reference to an Old French counterfactual, namely: *Notula super illam que incipit "De juer et de baler"*. In both cases, the song text also provides information about the rhythm of the instrumental performance.

Textless sequelae, trace elements of early instrumental music

If we go back even further to the early medieval origins of instrumental playing in the context of the genres of sequence and lai, we come across the textless sequela as a precursor to the estampie. Sequelae are textless presentations of sequence models with melody titles, often also instrument names such as *Nostra Tuba*, *Symphonia*, *Cithara*, *Fistula*, *Occidentana*, which have nothing to do with the content of the sequence texts handed down for these melodies. The tradition of this separate presentation of pure music in sequential form (sequela) and music with sequential text (prose) runs through the early Middle Ages from the 9th to the 12th century, i.e. until the first diastematic notations on staves. In addition, even the earliest sequences of the 9th to 11th centuries circulated in their lineless versions due to the great popularity of the chants, often later in versions from the 12th and 13th centuries in more legible notation on lines. This means that melodic comparisons can be made in many cases and the early sequential melodies can also be analysed very precisely in terms of their pitch progression. This favourable situation is a stroke of luck for the reconstruction of the earliest instrumental music, i.e. for the extemporised performance of selected sequela versions.

One of the early examples is the sequela *Tractus iocularis* from the 11th century in the Winchester Tropar. *Tractus iocularis* with the underlying sequence *Consona caterva* is documented in the two manuscripts of the Winchester Tropar in only three versions that have been neumated without lines. However, these versions provide enough clear information to approximately reconstruct the form of the melody in comparison to other known modes of the same repertoire. An attempt at reconstruction can be found on the CD "Medieval Echoes", which I developed with the kind musicological support of Professor Susan Rankin and some years ago with the late Professor Alejandro Planchart. Both are regarded as leading researchers of 11th-century music and encouraged me to make my own compositional additions in places where scholarship could not help.

Idiomatically informed improvisation

The question also arises as to how the medieval minstrels improvised and invented their very own music independently of vocal models and the formal requirements of the sequence tradition. Is it possible today to prepare oneself artistically in a suitable way - for example through one's own exercises - and to approach the practical performance situation of the minstrels of that time? A valuable goal would be to be able to express oneself spontaneously and creatively, but in a stylistically appropriate manner, when performing medieval music, i.e. to improvise with one's own ideas and strive for music-historical plausibility. How much own invention would be convincing and appropriate for the attempt to revitalise this facet of "ex-tempore" playing? There can only be individual artistic answers to this according to the motto: the more thorough the background research, the deeper the insight into the music-historical contexts, the freer the personal improvisation can and may be, because the personal is part of medieval music practice in many repertoires, but especially in what could be described as idiomatically informed improvisation. Once again, therefore, it is a question of the balancing act between scientia and usus.

Afterword by and with Guido von Arezzo

It is not only in this context that it becomes clear time and again that musical notation, neither in the Middle Ages nor later in music, clearly records everything that was desired in terms of ornamentation, details of expressive shading, changes of tone colour and tempo fluctuations. Some musicians and music listeners would rather limit this creative freedom, while others would rather expand it. In this context, it is worth remembering that almost 1000 years ago, the monk Guido of Arezzo made an astonishingly individualistic plea in favour of the independence of personal musical expression in chapter 17 of his main work *Micrologus*: "Know further that every song gains in beauty the more it is used - in the manner of pure silver. The one which at first is less pleasing is later praised when it has

been polished and honed as if by the use of a file. As with the diversity of peoples and mentalities, what is enthusiastically accepted by some is rejected by others. While one person enjoys uniformity, the other finds great contrasts more pleasing. The latter - in keeping with his cheerful nature - demands constant coherence and softness, while the one of a calmer nature is drawn to sober songs. Yet another will delight in intricate, complicated ornamentation. But each will perform most convincingly and melodiously that song which corresponds to his natural character traits." (Guido of Arezzo)

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Excerpts from a chapter in German, provided by the author to the book "Alte Musik Heute" Bärenreiter, 2023)

Translations: The Latin texts by Johannes de Grocheo and Guido of Arezzo appear in this article in German translation by Norbert Rodenkirchen / general translation from German to English with help of DeepL software