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Breaking into Song

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The goal of art historian Clara Bargellini's (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) insightful paper on the circulation of Flemish and Italian prints that served as models for paintings in the New World, was to take the idea of the 'model' at face value, but subvert the model's assumed status as the superior work of art. While prints of famous European works were turned once again into paintings by Mexican artists, they were also re-envisioned by these artists for different spiritual emphases in the New World. The continuity of transgressions in the religious art of the Hispanic world was explored by art historian Charlene Villaseñor Black (University of California, Los Angeles). She suggested that censorship involving recent works of art in Santa Fe and Los Angeles responded to the same anxieties that galvanized the Inquisition and the Council of Trent in their attempts to control representatives of the Virgin's body, and prevent incursion of indigenous religion, myth and imagery into Catholicism in New Spain.

Archival and related sources were the focus of several musical presentations. Emilio Ros-Fàbregas (Universitat de Girona) argued compellingly for a comprehensive re-reading of the numerous 16th-century 'Chronicles of the Indies' as documents of music-making in the New World. Maria Gembero-Ustároz (CSIC [Spanish National Research Council], Barcelona) explored the results of her extensive research in Seville's Archive of the Indies. After 1582 every traveller to the Americas had to apply for a permit, providing information about who they were and what they carried with them, including music. Similarly, both official narratives and surviving music document the careers of mulatto musicians and composers in colonial Brazil, as discussed in a thought-provoking presentation by Rogério Budasz (Universidade Federal do Paraná). Historical evidence of their fluctuating ethnic status invites reinterpretation of earlier scholars' construction of a 'mulatismo musical', with musical activity linked to racial identification.

Musicologist Paul-André Dubois (Université Laval, Québec) explained that missionaries in New France used song to transmit values to native peoples, following the practice of missionaries in Central and South America. However, surviving music examples show they went much further in incorporating Indian languages into religious and liturgical music, both monophonic and polyphonic. Germanist Vanessa Agnew (University of Michigan) pointed out that even as 18th-century European critics and scholars maintained the idea of the civilizing powers of European music embodied in the Orpheus story, they were slow to come to any but pejorative interpretations of traveller's

eyewitness accounts that showed surprising effects of indigenous music on European listeners.

New World figures and images crept into the European political imagination early, and stayed. Art historian Catherine Zerner (Brown University) described the Aztecs as 'relentless mappers' of their kingdom (and cosmos). The well-known Nuremberg map (1524) of the city of Tenochtitlan uses a tiny but powerful patch of Aztec imagery in the centre of an otherwise Europeanized representation to turn the map into a piece of political propaganda asserting the right of conquest over Aztecs using some of their own visual language. Musicologist Pierpaolo Polzonetti's (University of Notre Dame) found the title character of Vivaldi's *Montezuma* to be portrayed in the music of the recently recovered 1733 score. Montezuma was depicted as an enlightened leader in a scenario sketched by Frederick II in Berlin, who was all too happy to portray the Catholic Cortéz as a monster. After the libretto was set by Graun in 1755, the gate was opened to Montezuma as opera subject, although subsequent settings all staged in Catholic Italy rehabilitated Hernando Cortéz's character.

To close, anthropologist Bruce Mannheim (University of Michigan) emphasized themes that override the academic boundaries with which we all live, explaining that there are no corresponding barriers in culture. Boundaries shift or slip away in the circulation of media and among communities of users, discovering 'a folding of the world in ways we do not assume'. This conference's focus on the circulation of music, visual arts and texts across the Atlantic and throughout the Americas offered a valuable counterbalance to scholarly visions of the world too often bounded by geography, nationality and discipline.

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Breaking into song

The Medieval Song Project is a result of the Institute for Music Research's encouragement of collaboration between music researchers working at different institutions, in this case three musicologists who, between them, have expertise ranging across the period c.800–c.1500: Sam Barrett (University of Cambridge), Helen Deeming (University of Southampton) and Elizabeth Eva Leach (Royal Holloway,

University of London). The two-day conference 'Breaking into song', held at Pembroke College, Cambridge (25–6 January 2008), aimed to open the project to medievalists working within music scholarship and the humanities more generally. It attracted an audience of researchers and instrument makers from the United Kingdom and beyond, which is testimony not so much to the project itself—which is still in its infancy—but to the enthusiasm that researchers feel for developing innovative ways of approaching early song. The title of the conference was deliberately double-edged: delegates were invited to consider the history of song from a primarily musical perspective, but there was also a distinctively mischievous tone to several of the papers, dwelling on the analysis of individual songs with a vague air of criminality, 'breaking into' examples to explore them from new angles.

A pleasing feature of the programme was the blend of subjects and songs that were reasonably familiar with more obscure examples. Sam Barrett and Gundula Bobeth explored secular monophonic Latin song, including items from the later Cambridge Songs, Boethius's *Consolation of philosophy* and conductus found in German-speaking regions concordant with those found in 13th-century Paris. Both speakers considered primary sources alongside how the pieces might have been realized in performance. Thomas Payne's examination of two pieces of music that had been inspired by the relics of the Crucifixion stolen from, then miraculously returned to, the Parisian Abbey of St Denis, located text and music within the religious and literary culture of Paris in 1233. The monophonic conductus *Clavus clavo retunditur* and the two-part *Clavus pungens acumine* may have been written by Philip the Chancellor, and the appearance of the polyphonic item in a different version within the *Roman de Fauvel* was one of several examples given by presenters of the reappearance of songs in new guises during the later Middle Ages. Susan Rankin's discussion of organum based on the plainchant *Alleluia. Pascha nostrum immolates est Christus*, including the generically 'problematic' song *Latex silice*, was an impressive blend of analysis, source studies and historiography. Mark Everist's contribution concentrated on two songs, *Bien m'ont Amors* and *Volez oyer le castoy*, and how they elucidate ways in which vernacular polyphonic song developed, and was disseminated, in the early decades of the 14th century. The fragmentary nature of many medieval song collections is lamentable, but all the more so when one considers that the only copy of the 'embryonic polyphonic balade' *Voles oyer le castoy* is contained in what is now just four folios of music, but within which five genres are represented; what further clues to the

nature of polyphonic song development might have been contained in the original codex?

The genres available to composers in the late 13th and 14th centuries, not only the motet but also monophonic and other polyphonic song forms, often encompass a wealth of musical and textual borrowings, from the use of a common *cantus firmus* to the employment of refrain material. Suzannah Clark's close examination of one such collection of 'texts', ranging from the plainchant *Flos filius eius* to the subsequent Latin- and French-texted pieces that used it as a tenor, demonstrated skilfully how the subtle and inventive reworking of previous ideas was central to the creative mind of the period. Given that a great number of medieval songs existed in a number of readings, and that many songs are based on a combination of old and new materials, the picture that emerged clearly from the conference was one of fluidity, in which any concept of 'definitive' song texts was alien to the era.

The history of medieval song is chronologically vast, the range of musical styles represented within it wide, and its terminology often peculiar to each corner of the subject specialism. Participants could easily have been baffled by detailed discussions of early neumes, conductus and motet analysis. This risk was addressed in part by the ample space for papers and further discussion, but perhaps more so by the advanced circulation of materials, from abstracts and textual translations to music transcriptions and whole papers. Not only did this mean that delegates could swot up on unfamiliar territory, it also lent the proceedings a distinctly open and welcoming atmosphere. Speakers were generous in their distribution of work-in-progress, enabling audience members to ask relevant and probing questions. In the round table discussion, without the stimulus of specific case studies, there was less focus, though the session provided an important opportunity for individuals not presenting at the conference to reflect on 'Breaking into song's' implications for their own research. The formal response to the conference, delivered by Nicolette Zeeman, drew thematic threads from across the two days as well as offering a welcome philological spin on the songs already examined. Participants in the 'Breaking into song' conference came away brimming with fresh ideas, new life having been breathed into song studies by scholars whose willingness to consider their topic from the point of view of someone working within different stylistic, chronological or disciplinary parameters made this one of the most encouraging academic fora that I have attended in some time.

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