



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Source: *Early Music*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Feb., 2003), pp. 145-147

Published by: [Oxford University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3137933>

Accessed: 19/10/2013 17:49

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Ardal Powell

Renaissance flute renaissance

Renaissance Flute Days/Renaissanceflötentage, Basel,
Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 6–8 September 2002

David Munrow brought the Renaissance flute consort to wide notice for the first time since the 16th century in the LP set that accompanied his influential book *Instruments of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (OUP, 1976). The early-music revival, in his assessment, had left the Renaissance flute 'sadly neglected today in comparison to the Renaissance recorder'—though it had been 'tremendously popular' during the 16th century.

Instead it was the Baroque flute that enjoyed popularity in the 1970s. Having first appeared in the 1880s and been recorded since the 1930s, it had already engaged the interest of some mainstream musicians (as those unable to play period instruments were called at the time), and now regularly featured at concerts in London and other centres. Within just a few months of Munrow's recording, no fewer than three LP sets of the Bach flute sonatas appeared (by Stephen Preston, Frans Brueggen and Leopold Stastny). Dale Higbee's discography of the Baroque flute, published in this journal in 1979, listed repertory by Vivaldi, Quantz, Telemann, Handel, Hotteterre and others in releases by two dozen artists. In the United States the National Flute Association embraced the Baroque flute almost from its foundation in 1973, even if American flautists saw it more as a tool for exploration and pedagogy than as a vehicle for performance. As the flurry of Bach recordings indicates, the Baroque flute gave modern performers a compelling new perspective on repertory they thought central to their heritage.

But no such forces benefited its Renaissance counterpart. Earlier flutes did appear now and then, in English 'broken' consorts (Consort of Musicke, 1972), and even in whole consort (Peter Thalheimer and others, 1973). Yet polyphonic vocal music, the staple of the Renaissance flute's repertory whether in whole or mixed ensembles, remained relatively uncommercialized compared with later works.

Munrow's text made much of the difficulty of sounding a Renaissance flute, and of playing it in tune, and certainly early flutes were harder to play convincingly than

recorders, the common denominator of Renaissance winds. Their difficulty set a special hurdle for Boehm flautists, as it reinforced a Victorian view many of them still held that unmechanized flutes were utterly useless for musical purposes. But even historically, the flute seemed to have been a special case. Sources presented puzzlingly inconsistent and contradictory instructions, particularly about transposing. Because the Renaissance flute's fingering system was less self-evident than those of other woodwinds, at least one maker altered it in his version so that recorder-type fingerings could be used. Indeed, Bernard Thomas noted in this journal in 1975 that the era's 'copies' bore little relationship to original instruments.

Anne Smith, an American who entered the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in 1973 to study medieval and Renaissance music, made the first effective attempt to tackle these difficulties in the comprehensive survey of the Renaissance flute's technique and repertory she published in the *Basler Jahrbuch* in 1978. The Italian engineer and instrument-maker Filadelfio Puglisi took further essential steps at the same time: he studied and copied flutes preserved since the 16th century in Verona's Accademia Filarmonica, publishing details about the provenance and construction of these and other specimens in a series of articles in the *Galpin Society journal* (1979–88). Also in the late 1970s Nancy Hadden, an American flautist resident in London, began to make a career as a specialist in Renaissance flute playing. Beginning in 1984 with a programme of music by Frescobaldi, van Eyck, Crecquillon and others, she made several pioneering recordings, including a 1988 release featuring a flute consort with other London specialists. A tiny but growing band of devotees including Anne Smith and her students in Basel, as well as a 50-member, mostly Anglo-Italian, Renaissance Flute Circle (1988–90), persevered with theoretical questions of mode, cleffing, pitch, transposition and other matters crucial to the performance of Renaissance music on the period's flutes. And as the market for Baroque flutes became narrower and more stratified in the 1990s, more replica makers began to apply what they had learned from Baroque flute making to the challenge of building instruments that played as well as the best surviving 16th-century examples.

The Renaissance Flute Days at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in September 2002, nearly a quarter century after Smith published her article, indicated that the Renaissance flute's revival had come of age. In January

2002 Smith and her colleague Liane Ehlich circulated an invitation to all whose names they could associate with research, playing, or making of Renaissance flutes, 'to give ourselves the opportunity of exchanging ideas about this instrument with other people who have devoted themselves to it.' Around a hundred individuals attended, to hear performances by five fully fledged flute consorts, Ensemble Rafi (Italy), I Fifferi di Basilea (Switzerland), Modena Consort (Netherlands), Il Desiderio (Germany) and Attaignant Consort (Netherlands), as well as solo recitals by Janice Beauford (US) and Nancy Hadden (UK), and chamber music groupings with voice and/or other instruments featuring Philippe Allain-Dupré (France), Liane Ehlich (Switzerland) and Anne Smith (Switzerland). Programmes presented a rich and broad variety of vocal and instrumental music of the late 15th to the early 17th centuries. Familiar vocal music by Arcadelt, Banchieri, Claudin, Crecquillon, Janequin, Lassus, de Rore, Willaert and others was well represented. But a stronger impression came from less familiar works, including German *Lieder* by Schein, Senfl, Hofhaimer and Isaac, and English songs and instrumental pieces by Baldwin, Byrd, Cornysh, Holborne, Henry VIII and Morley. Solo pieces by Cima, Bassano, Boësset, O'Carolan, Ockeghem, van Eyck and

Virgiliano received performances that, like the consort playing, seemed finer and more present than anything so far captured on a recording.

Papers on the design, construction and use of instruments, on interpreting documentary difficulties, on iconography, and on the flute in Renaissance culture were read by Philippe Allain-Dupré, Janice Beauford, Boaz Berney, Nancy Hadden and Gianni Lazzari. In other papers Ardal Powell, Giovanni Tardino and Rudolf Tutz addressed an issue that clearly fascinates the makers: that of proportion in the design of Renaissance flutes. Interest in the tenor flute, which covers a much larger range than the other woodwinds, focused on the way in which it plays the roles of high and low voices in one and the same instrument by exploiting an ability to overblow at the 12th as well as the octave. Various types of military flute, it appeared, seem to have specialized in one or the other of these modes. Boaz Berney presented insights into the pitch-relationships among extant instruments, covering a 4th from $a' = 480$ to $a' = 360$. He suggested that in German music by Schein, Schütz, Knüpfer and Praetorius in which a tenor flute takes a part in a mixed consort, this wide range of pitches allowed transpositions of a whole tone ($a' = 480/430$ or $460/408$) and a minor 3rd ($a' = 480/408$ or $460/380$), so that the flute could always play in its most favoured modes.

Other activities at the symposium included a thorough and well-organized iconographic exhibition of the Renaissance flute assembled by Albert Jan Becking, Kathrin Bopp and Liane Ehlich. Martin Kirnbauer arranged tours of the Musikmuseum Basel, including a study session of the Bassano flute in its collection for the benefit of makers. Véronique Daniels led a Renaissance ball of branles, pavans, galliards and other dances to the music of an *alta capella* of shawms and trombone, and of various groups of flutes and drums that formed throughout the evening.

Detailed documentation (in English and German) of many of the presentations is being assembled at <http://www.enterag.ch/anne/Renaissanceflute/flutedays.html>. But one really had to be there to feel the extraordinary spirit of co-operation and joy the symposium engendered. This sort of openness and sense of discovery seems rare or absent at meetings in more highly developed musical fields, where standards—rights and wrongs—of how instruments should sound are already established, where committees try to predict every detail, and where the entertainment industry exerts a relentless influence. Fascination with the instrument and the music were the prime attractions to Basel for all participants, including the



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organizers: the symposium was run on a shoestring, and no fees were paid to performers or presenters. If the meeting's success signals that the Renaissance flute's period of neglect is over, we must hope that this marvellous co-operative spirit among those in the field will live on.

Peter J. D. Scott

'Med & Ren' 2002

Medieval and Renaissance Music Conference, University of Bristol, 18–21 July 2002

The University of Bristol provided the setting for the 2002 Medieval & Renaissance conference, organized by Elizabeth Eva Leach. Delegates heard a total of 35 papers; the decision to avoid parallel sessions was warmly welcomed, despite the intensity of some sessions. It was heartening that so many scholars from outside Europe made the journey, considering the ongoing effects of 11 September 2001.

The first session, "'Seen, sung and heard": music in private spaces in *Cinquecento* Italy', provided a racy beginning. Donna Cardamone Jackson traced the effects of Neapolitan poets and composers on the Roman market, outlining the effects of various salacious metaphors in a selection of songs. Their latent eroticism appealed to a wide Renaissance audience that included clerics. Leofranc Holford-Strevens did, however, wonder whether too much was being interpreted from these apparent *double entendres*. Melanie Marshall's exploration of the connections between dancing, music and sex within the Italian courtly sphere demonstrated that the level of innuendo in the Paduan *villotte* could equal the more popular Neapolitan versions. Katherine Powers provided a metaphorical 'cold shower', turning our attention to the non-profane activities of the Italian bourgeoisie, particularly the confraternities. She suggested that the simple musical style of these works provided a conduit to greater spirituality. The session closed with Laurie Stras's paper on the musical puzzles of the Ferrarese priest and composer Lodovico Agostini. She took Agostini's inherent courtly maxim that to play and not necessarily to win was the ultimate achievement, and tested this against the writings of the humanist Lodovico Castelvetro, who advocated humour and entertainment among the priesthood. One of Stras's conclusions was that the Counter-Reformation did not eradicate erotica but transformed them.

The second session focused on medieval theory.

Catherine Lloyd's succinct study of Petrus de Cruce argued his possible status as an early Ars Nova theorist. Dorit Tanay re-examined Marchetto da Padova's *Lucidarium* (1318) and *Pomerium* (c.1319), drawing a clear distinction between the more scholastic approach of the Northerners and the humanism of the Italians, concluding that Marchetto's place was probably somewhere between the two. The day closed with Ruth DeFord's paper on the sign Φ in Du Fay; this focused on its performing implications rather than its theoretical standing.

The first session of the second day considered musical style in the 15th century. Peter Wright proposed several new English Mass pairings from Trent, presenting convincing musical, configurational and numerical findings. Robert Mitchell's work questioned authorship of Du Fay's *Salve regina* in Munich 3154, and noted similarity in style to some motets in Trent 89. Just one important fact that Mitchell revealed was the frequent Teutonic scribal practice of assigning initials to a piece; 'G. D.' might have been incorrectly amplified by the scribe of 3154 to Du Fay. (Mitchell also supplied stylistic and contextual evidence.) The rest of the morning was dedicated to a weighty session on 16th-century theorists. Kateljine Schiltz's laconic examination of compositional theory and practice tested Vicentino's concept of composing the end of a piece before its beginning. Stephen Rice assessed the importance of the work of the Spaniard Mateo de Aranda in establishing Portuguese music; he concluded that Aranda's 1533 treatise was the work of a competent and accomplished musician. Theodor Dumitrescu concluded the session with an analysis of a transcription of Gaffurio's *Practica musica* by the little-known English composer John Dygon. Dumitrescu meticulously threaded his way through Dygon's interpretation on proportions, prompting Kevin Moll to enquire whether this work would have implications for other English manuscripts such as the Eton Choirbook.

The two afternoon sessions concentrated on Machaut. David Maw opened the first with an examination of harmony. Margaret Bent warned of the danger in applying such a technique to a work with variant readings, particularly where parts were substituted or omitted. The effect of Machaut's chromaticism in a monophonic and polyphonic context was illustrated by Jennifer Bain, whose findings will undoubtedly influence *music ficta* decisions in future editions of 14th-century music. Kevin Moll presented his extensive research on Ars Nova dissonance levels; his approach encompassed the effects of dissonance at the breve as well as semibreve. He placed particular