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Intabulation Techniques in the Faenza and Buxheim Keyboard Manuscripts

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Much has been written about the Buxheim Organbook,¹ and a complete edition of it has existed since 1959.² The Codex Faenza, however, has only been known since about 1950,³ though it too has been published in its entirety.⁴ It is particularly valuable because it is the first important source of keyboard music, although preceded by the six pieces of the Robertsbridge Codex.⁵ The Faenza and Buxheim manuscripts are separated by about 50 years chronologically, and represent two traditions, one German and the other Italian. They also use different types of notation, the Italian source having a short keyboard score, and the German one the old German tablature. The Codex Faenza dates from c. 1410–1420,⁶ Buxheim from c. 1452–1470.⁷

In spite of these distinguishing points, the two manuscripts have many similarities. In both, the technique of transcription is quite advanced in the realm of polyphonic song, and both set Gregorian chants for Mass and Office with a highly ornamented upper part over the cantus firmus in even note values in the Tenor. Basic techniques are therefore often deceptively alike. The later German source is, however, much less isolated,⁸ and its techniques show development and greater flexibility. Even so, the artistic achievement is certainly as great in the Faenza manuscript, which displays at times amazing virtuosity within the limits of two-part writing.⁹ It contains far less compositions, contrasting a mere 48 pieces with Buxheim's 251. In addition, Buxheim contains a series of 4 Fundamenta,¹⁰ instruction books on elementary keyboard composition, playing and intabulation.

It is clear that German organ music from the earliest 15th century fragments was also in two parts,¹¹ and indeed one of the Buxheim Fundamenta,¹² probably the earliest, limits itself to two-part writing. Most if not all these Fundamenta are

1 Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Ms Cim. 352b. Cf. in particular E. Southern, *The Buxheim Organ Book* (New York, 1963) and H. Zöbele, *Die Musik des Buxheimer Orgelbuchs* (Tutzing, 1964).

2 B. A. Wallner, ed. *Das Buxheimer Orgelbuch* (Kassel and Basel, 1958–59). 3 vols. (*Das Erbe deutscher Musik*, vols. 37–39).

3 Faenza, Bibl. Comunale, Ms 117. For bibliography, cf. K. von Fischer and M. Lütolf, RISM B IV⁴ (Munich, 1972), p. 898. Also M. Kugler, *Die Tastenmusik im Codex Faenza* (Tutzing, 1972).

4 D. Plamenac, ed. *Keyboard Music of the Late Middle Ages in Codex Faenza*, American Institute of Musicology 1972, (*Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae*, 57).

5 London, British Library, Add. 28550. New edition in W. Apel, ed. *Keyboard Music of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, American Institute of Musicology, 1963, pp. 10ff. (*Corpus of Early Keyboard Music*, vol. 1).

6 Cf. RISM B IV⁴, p. 898.

7 Cf. Zöbele, p. 18f.

8 Cf. the list of 15th century German sources in W. Apel, *History of Keyboard Music to 1700*, Bloomington, Indiana, 1972, pp. 33f.

9 For example, the first *Benedicamus domino* setting and the intabulation of Jacopo da Bologna's «*Sotto l'imperio*», Plamenac, nos. 24 and 25.

10 Wallner, nos 189, 190, 231 and 236.

11 Cf. W. Apel, *Keyboard Music*. . . , pp. 10ff.

12 Wallner, no. 190. However, it begins with three three-part chords.

closely connected with Conrad Paumann, and in fact two are directly attributed to him.¹³ Similarly, his *Fundamentum organisandi*¹⁴ is for only two voices, and the links between the Berlin manuscript of it and Buxheim are further shown by the inclusion of some pieces from the former source in the latter.¹⁵ The use of only two parts in Italy, in view of its early date, is therefore not surprising. To be sure, after the mid-15th century, one might expect three-part writing to be more established, as in Buxheim, which in fact even contains four four-part pieces.¹⁶ In any case, it is well known that the Germans developed the pedal-board quite early, and certainly by the late 15th century, however sceptical one may be about Praetorius' Halberstadt organ of c. 1361, which was in any case rebuilt in 1495.¹⁷ The pedals might well have been used for playing the more modern low Contratenors,¹⁸ though with crossing parts the Buxheim intabulator seems to decide for himself which part will be placed lowest in the lines of tablature letters.¹⁹ It is a fact, at all events, that the old German tablature is particularly convenient in accommodating the textless Tenors and Contratenors of three-part French and Italian songs. Nevertheless, a famous example of multiple intabulation, Binchois' «*Je loe amours*» with 7 different versions in Buxheim,²⁰ still has one two-part setting.²¹ Also, many of the pieces following the oldest two-part *Fundamentum* are themselves in two parts.²²

The intabulations of Codex Faenza do not invariably retain the Tenor of the original vocal piece as the lower of the two parts. As Nino Pirrotta pointed out, sections of the Contratenor are included in the bottom part of the Faenza version of Jacopo da Bologna's «*Sotto l'imperio*».²³ To be sure, this is an exceptional case, and, for example in Machaut's «*Honte, paour*» and «*De toutes flours*», the three-part vocal texture²⁴ obviously did not influence the Faenza versions.²⁵ In other words, only the Cantus and Tenor were used as the basis for the intabulations. And it's unlikely that only the two parts used were known to the Faenza intabulator, for Italian sources usually preserve all three parts of three-part French chansons.²⁶ Incidentally, it's worth noticing that French chansons predominate in the first half of Codex Faenza.²⁷

13 *Ibid.* nos. 189 and 236.

14 Berlin, Staatsbibl., Mus. ms. 40613, pp. 45–92. New edition in Apel, *Keyboard Music...*, pp. 32ff.

15 For instance, «*Ellend*» (Wallner, nos. 48–50 and 94–96) and «*Vil lieber zit*» = «*Annasavanna*» (*Ibid.*, nos. 89–93), etc.

16 *Ibid.* nos. 1, 111, 159 and 205. Three more (nos. 141, 170 and 229) have isolated four-part harmonies.

17 Cf. P. Williams, *A New History of the Organ*, London, 1980, pp. 51, 53, 75.

18 Such as we find in Dunstable's «*Puisque m'amour*» (cf. *John Dunstable, Complete Works*, edited by M.F. Bukofzer, revised 1970, no. 55, Contratenor b).

19 Wallner, no. 61. The Buxheim version follows the vocal piece in the complete Dunstable edition.

20 Wallner, nos. 16–18, 168–170, and 202.

21 *Ibid.* no. 202.

22 *Ibid.* nos. 196, 198–200, 202–204.

23 «*Note su un codice di antiche musiche per tastiera*», *Rivista Musicale Italiana* 56 (1954), pp. 333ff.

24 Cf. L. Schrade, ed. *Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century* 3, Monaco, 1956, pp. 106f. and 118f.

25 Plamenac, nos. 4 and 5.

26 For instance, mss Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, Panc. 26 and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ital. 568.

27 Plamenac, nos. 3–9, 11–14, 16, 18, 19, 24.

Although two-part writing prevails throughout the Faenza codex, an increase in sonority is occasionally created by the use of double notes, mainly in the Cantus but also in the Tenor, for instance in the first Kyrie setting.²⁸ The placing is usually cadential, but not always. The technique is reminiscent of the Robertsbridge Codex, where the right hand of the final chord takes not only the final but the fourth below as well.²⁹ In Faenza, however, the interval may just as well be a third as a fourth, but in any case there is never more than one pair of double notes at a time.³⁰ The Buxheim ms, on the other hand, tends to strengthen two-part writing in some cases by the use of two double notes in fourths on both the penultimate and final chords of a cadence, e.g. in Binchois' «*Adieu, mes tres belles*».³¹

The prevailing three-part texture in Buxheim does not mean that the original Contratenor has been used in the intabulation. Sometimes it is, as in both settings of Frye's «*Ave, regina*».³² The second setting, however, wanders a good deal from the original vocal Contratenor, in order to assert the fact that the new Contratenor is indeed a Bass. The original Contratenor was just as often above as below the Tenor. In other cases, the Buxheim intabulations completely eschew the original Contratenor, as in Dufay's «*Se la face ay pale*».³³ Even in a work like Binchois' «*Adieu, mes tres belles*»,³⁴ which is mainly in two parts, with an occasional hint of a third part at cadences, the opening does suggest that the intabulator knew the original Contratenor.³⁵ In any case, the Buxheim compiler, working with material he may have considered antiquated, often moved a Contratenor Altus to a lower region. This can even mean changing harmonies, as in bars 15–16 of the Binchois piece. Here the original Phrygian cadence from B flat to A becomes an imperfect cadence G to D, while the «Landini» cadence in the Cantus on A becomes a simple descent from A through G to F sharp. Incidentally, where the intabulator wants a greater degree of ornamentation in the Cantus, he may replace one bar of the original with two of his own. At cadences, to avoid a break, he may employ the reverse procedure.

The Buxheim Organ Book is so much larger as a collection than Faenza that it reveals a variety of styles more easily, and these range from almost literal renotation to very elaborate paraphrases. It is especially interesting that some of the more ornate versions have been attributed by the compiler to Paumann himself. In other words, Paumann seems to anticipate to some extent the so-called colorists of the 16th century. A good example is his version of Ciconia's «*Con lagrime*», with its often continuous sixteenth notes in the upper part.³⁶ All four Buxheim intabulations³⁷ are based on the *Fundamentum organisandi* version,³⁸

28 *Ibid.*, no. 1, bar 72.

29 Cf. Apel, *Keyboard Music*. . . , pp. 1 ff.

30 Cf. Plamenac, no. 2, bars 28, 58, 63 and 109.

31 Wallner, no. 196.

32 *Ibid.*, nos. 159 and 257.

33 *Ibid.*, no. 255.

34 *Ibid.*, no. 196.

35 Cf. W. Rehm, ed. *Die Chansons von Gilles Binchois*, Mainz, 1957, no. 5.

36 Wallner, no. 38.

37 *Ibid.*, nos. 38 and 137–139.

38 Apel, *Keyboard Music*. . . , p. 48f. Dated 1455 at Reims.

which is almost identical with Buxheim, no. 139. This, however, has three parts much more of the time. Strangely enough, there are no pieces by Ciconia in the Codex Faenza, but a piece associated with «*Con lagrime*» does occur there. This is the Ballata «*Dedutto sey*»,³⁹ which, according to Prodenzani, was performed by the virtuoso Sollazzo together with «*Con lagrime*».⁴⁰ The very low range of «*Dedutto sey*» probably accounts for its unusual transposition in Faenza, namely up an 11th⁴¹. Tenor C is clearly the lowest note of the keyboard used for the Faenza pieces. Even so, the Buxheim scale does not go much lower, usually only a semitone below Tenor C. Transpositions occur in both manuscripts, though in Faenza there are rarely duplicate or varying arrangements of one and the same vocal work.⁴² The second version of «*Jour a jour la vie*» seems to be a literal copy of the first one, while the two versions of «*Rosetta*» are very different. The second is no longer in diminished values, and is transposed up a fifth.

A curious case is Bartholomeus Brollo's «*Entrepris suis*», a 21-line French Rondeau.⁴³ The tablature is in only two parts, but as in other cases has a third part at main cadences, though even then only on the final chord each time. This is certainly reminiscent of the Faenza double notes, rare as they are. The Germans evidently preferred duple subdivisions rhythmically, and changed Brollo's 9/8 to 3/4. This rhythm also appears in the vocal piece as it is found in the Schedel⁴⁴ and Glogau Liederbücher,⁴⁵ as well as the Strahov manuscript.⁴⁶ These all transpose the work up a fifth and renew the Contratenor. Glogau's Contratenor is a very up-to-date, lively voice which takes no part in the imitation. The imitation in the Buxheim version is clearly borrowed from the vocal model, and ornamentation is mainly restricted to turns except in the penultimate bar. Imitation is in fact generally rare in Buxheim, though the «*Pange, lingua*» by Johannes Touront⁴⁷ has canon between the Cantus and Tenor throughout, while the Contratenor is new.

In the Codex Faenza, imitation might well be expected in pieces like Jacopo da Bologna's «*No al suo amante*», and in fact the delayed entry of the vocal Tenor is duplicated in the keyboard setting.⁴⁸ In contrast, the imitative entry of the two upper voices of Jacopo's «*Aquila altera – Creatura – Uccel di Dio*» is disregarded in the keyboard setting, as are further entries of the second voice.⁴⁹ This is doubly surprising, considering that a two-bar rest in the Tenor is filled by borrowing this Contratenor part in Faenza.⁵⁰ That imitation is not neglected in Fa-

39 Plamenac, no. 15.

40 S. Debenedetti, *Il «Sollazzo»*, Turin, 1922, p. 175.

41 Cf. Plamenac, p. XIX.

42 Duplication occurs in three pieces altogether, namely Plamenac, nos. 8 and 22 (bars 27–41), 12 and 19, 20 and 39. The first 26 bars of no. 22 represent the preceding piece.

43 Wallner, no. 106.

44 Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Cod. germ. 810, f. 14v–16.

45 Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, mus. 40098, f. 116, 122, 125.

46 Prague, Strahov Monastery, D.G. IV. 47, f. 239v–240. Cf. my edition of all 5 sources in *Early Fifteenth-Century Music 5*, American Institute of Musicology, 1975, pp. 70ff. (*Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae*, 11).

47 Wallner, no. 163.

48 Plamenac, no. 33.

49 *Ibid.*, no. 30 (bars 1–12 and 29–36).

50 *Ibid.*, bars 18–19.

enza can be seen by the opening of Antonio Zacara's «*Un fior gentil*»,⁵¹ in any case. But it is not an original feature of the keyboard transcriptions. As in Buxheim, it is simply carried over from the vocal models.

Both Faenza and Buxheim are characterised by an initial upbeat motif of two or four notes respectively. The Faenza motifs is an upward slide, the Buxheim one a turn which ends similarly. The striking feature of the Faenza slides is that they mainly appear in the Italian part of the manuscript. In the French part, which begins at f.36, there is no sign of the slide till f.49v,⁵² after the first 14 French pieces. And in fact the slide can even then only be found in 2 of the remaining 8 pieces in part one of the codex.⁵³ Even the very ornate *Benedicamus Domino* which ends this section,⁵⁴ though it employs some quite new note-forms, does not have it, though admittedly the work is old-fashioned in its use of the mensuration letters «o» and «p» for «octonaria» and «perfecta». The Italian part of Faenza does not use the slide to open every piece, but the ornament is used in 15 out of 23 compositions. The slide also appears frequently to open sections of the Kyrie-Gloria pairs nos. 1–2 and 40–41 in the Plamenac edition. Occasionally, the upbeat ornament is just a single note,⁵⁵ rather like the initial seventh leading to the octave at the beginning of many Notre Dame organa. The situation is similar in Buxheim, for, in spite of the popularity of the initial turn, many pieces open without it.

The degree of ornamentation used in both the Faenza and Buxheim manuscripts varies according to criteria which are not easy to determine. In the simpler pieces, Codex Faenza does not elaborate greatly on the originals, though this may be a question of tempo. For example, the French Virelai «*Or sus, vous dormés trop*»⁵⁶ does no more than fill in some of the eighth or quarter note gaps with passing notes in sixteenths. Another fairly simple intabulation is Bartolino da Padua's «*Qualle leçe move*».⁵⁷ In quite a few places, the original line is kept in the upper voice, especially where hocketing or syncopation is taking place. Otherwise, there are frequent triplet sixteenth notes as well as and adjacent to regular sixteenths in the prevailing 2/4 time. Triplets of probably short value appear frequently in pieces such as «*Non al suo amante*»,⁵⁸ but this is not always the case. For instance, «*Inperial sedendo*»⁵⁹ has hardly any.

In comparison, the Buxheim intabulations seem less spontaneous. Even Paumann's elaborate setting of «*Con lagrime*»⁶⁰ seems much more based on formulas derived from the Fundamenta. Rapid passages in Buxheim often seem more aimless than those in Faenza, in spite of the use of sequence. There seems in fact

51 *Ibid.*, no. 38. Cf. my edition of the original vocal version, the keyboard intabulation, and the parody mass movement in *Early Fifteenth-Century Music* 6, pp. 12 ff., 58 ff. The parody mass movement enabled the original Ballata to be reconstructed.

52 Plamenac, no. 17.

53 *Ibid.*, nos. 18 and 21.

54 *Ibid.*, no. 25.

55 For example, in Plamenac, no. 40, preceding bar 57, and no. 47, opening.

56 Plamenac, no. 16.

57 *Ibid.*, no. 27.

58 *Ibid.*, no. 33.

59 *Ibid.*, no. 31.

60 Wallner, no. 38.

to be more drive to a cadence in Faenza, though there too continuous motion in the same rhythm can become tiring. The use of triplets, common in Faenza, is comparatively rare in Buxheim, and while 6/8 remains frequent in Faenza, Buxheim has the more modern 3/4 or 4/4. Heavy ornamentation is rare in Buxheim, where Cantus parts are usually decorated with occasional turns and passing notes, but it does occur in a piece like «*Se la face ay pale*». ⁶¹ Even there, however, a crucial hocketing passage is left in its original form, ⁶² no doubt to avoid obscuring the rhythmic interplay.

In conclusion, therefore, it must be said that, in spite of many apparent similarities, there are really considerable differences between the intabulation techniques of the Faenza and Buxheim manuscripts. In this respect, it is fascinating to speculate whether Conrad Paumann, on his visit to Mantua in 1470, ⁶³ might have seen the Codex Faenza, for it was certainly there in 1473. ⁶⁴

61 *Ibid.*, no. 255.

62 *Ibid.*, bars 25–26.

63 C. Wolff, «Paumann, Conrad», *The New Grove* 14, London, 1980, p. 308b.

64 Cf. G. Reaney, «The Manuscript Transmission of Hothby's Theoretical Works», *A Festschrift for Albert Seay*, Colorado Springs, 1982, pp. 23, 28.