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Eugeen Schreurs

Instrumental Music and Performance Practice  
in the Low Countries

The Case of Agricola's »D'ung aultre amer« in Context

At the end of the fifteenth century several places in Western Europe witnessed the rise of what we in contemporary musicology could call »independent instrumental chamber music«, often – but not always – intended for homogeneous ensembles of instruments.<sup>1</sup> At present there are no unambiguous answers to questions concerning (social) function (court, city, church, education, private use) of this music, its scoring (is some of this music eventually to be interpreted as a kind of vocal solmization exercise?), manner of performance, organology, or acoustics. Often there are indeed more questions than answers. The Low Countries, among other regions, appear to have played an important role, albeit not an exclusive one, in this complex story, in which Agricola's part is not to be underestimated.

The Low Countries have a long tradition with regard to the use of instruments, on which we are fairly well informed from the fourteenth century on, both iconographically and archivally.

(1) First of all, there are the processions on ecclesiastical feasts such as the patron saint's day, the dedication of the church, and *Corpus Christi* in particular. Such public events witnessed the performance of quite large groups of musicians, whose social status (amateur versus professional) could be rather heterogeneous. Proof of the mixed composition of performers, viz. professionals and amateurs, can be found in the size of the groups which all had to play on the same feast days – it is hardly imaginable that so many professional players would have been available in the Low Countries – as well as in the sometimes rather meagre remuneration for certain categories of musicians. The type of treat (e. g. tripses also points in the direction of amusement.<sup>2</sup>

1 I wish to thank Pieter Mannaerts (Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek Vlaanderen – Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) for reading through this contribution and Peter Van Dessel for the translation.

2 E. g. Brussels, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Kerkarchief Brabant, Zoutleeuw, kerk, 1214, [fol. 43] Junius [1454]: »Item doe men Sinte Leonaerde omdroech aen die pipers metter trompetten: 15 st.« (»to the pipers and trumpeters, for the procession of St Leonard: 15 st.«), »Item noch aen 8 gesellen die speelden snaerspel: 8 st.« (»to 8 string players: 8 st.«), »Item aen die

Thus in Mechelen in 1418–9 mention is made of no less than 215 players participating in the procession of St Rombout, among them 24 trumpeters, 72 pipers, 61 string players and 58 »other« musicians.<sup>3</sup> Very often the louder wind instruments appear to play primarily for the municipal magistrate, whereas the quieter string players march in front of the statue of Mary. In a similar context, the situation in Leuven is fairly clear from archival evidence; we even have an illustration, albeit from a later date (1594), but in line with a centuries-old tradition. At least the shawm players seem to be professional city minstrels, on account of the municipal blazon on their shoulders (Figures 1 and 2).<sup>4</sup>

In some archival sources, e. g. in Maastricht in the fifteenth century, a distinction is sometimes drawn between *lusores principales* (89 players) and *alii* (46 players). Conspicuous, once again, is the large number of musicians (a total of 135 in this case).<sup>5</sup> But in what do the two groups differ? Is there a distinction between players residing (and recognized) in Maastricht, including the four or five permanent city musicians, and itinerant players from outside the city? Or is the difference defined by their respective roles in the procession (place, amount of playing time)? Could this be yet another indication of a distinction between professionals and amateurs, or is it merely a distinction within the group of amateurs? As already mentioned, there are more questions than answers; in any event, there is again an unexplained difference in payment. In addition, the available data are not consistent enough to permit definite conclusions, thus allowing for several hypotheses.

gesellen van den spele: 1 peter« (»to the fellows of the play: 1 peter«), »Item smorgens aen pensen de gesellen ende verteert: 6 st. 1 oert« (»in the morning for tripe consumed by the players: 6 st. 1 oert«), »Item Jan der Hane [minstrel]: 1 st.« See Lieve De Mecheleer, *Rekeningen van de kerkfabriek van de Sint-Leonarduskerk van Zoutleeuw (1405, 1452–1599)*. Fontes historiae artis neerlandicae 3 (Brussels, 1997).

3 Raymond van Aerde, *Ménéstrrels Communaux & instrumentistes divers établis ou de passage à Malines, de 1311 à 1790*, (Mechelen, 1911), p. 4. The following terminology is used to indicate the various categories of players: 1485–6: *Trompers, trompet* (trumpeters), *trompet slaeger* (drummer), *pipers, pijffers* (pipers); 1487–8: *Heeren pipen* (lords' piper), *biscops pipen* (bishop's piper), *stadtpijpers* (city piper); 1495–6: *snaerspeelders* (string players), *luyters* (lutenists), *ministreerders, ministrelen, speelluyden* (minstrels). Other examples: 1414–5: 24 *trompers*, 58 *pipers*, 69 *snaerspeelders*, 51 minstrels; in total 202 musicians; 1428–9: 24 *trompers*, 35 *pipers*, 64 *snaerspeelders*, 24 [minstrels]; in total 147 musicians.

4 Gilbert Huybens, *Muziek te Leuven in de 16e eeuw* (Leuven, 1982), pp. 20–7.

5 Eugeen Schreurs, »Music for Canons, Emperors, Dukes and Prince Bishops in the Collegiate Churches of Maastricht (c. 1450–1520)«, *Yearbook of the Alamire Foundation* 7 (2007), forthcoming.



Figure 1: City minstrels with loud wind instruments in the procession of 1594 with municipal blazon on the shoulder<sup>6</sup>

Figure 2: Musicians with two different types of stringed instruments, a bagpipe and a harp in the procession of 1594<sup>7</sup>



6 Chronicle *Antiquitates Lovaniensis* of Willem Boonen, Leuven, Stadsmuseum, s.s.; taken from *Petrus Phalesius en het stedelijk muzikleven in de Vlaamse renaissancestad Leuven*, ed. Nele Gabriëls and Eugene Schreurs (Leuven, 2005), p. 15.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Often we can find more detailed information on such musicians in smaller towns that regularly called upon (itinerant) minstrels, for the accounts of these towns are frequently more detailed and specific. Thus in Zoutleeuw in 1453 several musicians are brought into play in the procession of the local patron St Leonard.<sup>8</sup>

(2) Equally important for the consolidation of a permanent instrumental ensemble was the establishment in Antwerp of the municipal evening music in 1483. From that moment the Antwerp city musicians played (polyphonic) music daily as salaried employees of the city. We can only guess at their repertoire, but certain textless works can surely be taken into consideration, although improvisation on a *cantus firmus* will presumably also have played an important role. There were three of them in the fifteenth century, and certainly five from 1530.<sup>9</sup> In Bruges the situation was similar: four municipal players were available from 1457 to 1482, and five until c. 1530. Here too all of the players, city minstrels and other, ›free‹ minstrels formed a guild, which had its own chapel.<sup>10</sup> A daily concert in the form of a *Salve* or *Benediction* was played in the church of St Donaas. Reinhard Strohm also assumes the performance of sacred works, e. g. Marian works and parts of masses. In any event, we know from a variety of sources, e. g. from Bruges, that such players performed polyphonic works (Dutch songs, French chansons, motets, dances).<sup>11</sup> In Ghent, the birthplace of Agricola and

8 June 1460: »Item Johannes van Halle ende sijn sone voir tsakrament ghespeelt: 3 st.« (»to Johannes van Halle and his son for playing before the Sacrament: 3 st.«), »Item die hoechpipers: 15st.« (»to the loud pipers: 15 st.«), »Item 9 gheselle die opt snaer speelden, ellic 1 st., maken: 9 st.« (»9 fellows who played on strings, to each 1 st., making 9 st.«); »Item noch andere speelluden: 2 st.« (»still other minstrels: 2 st.«): De Mecheleer, *Rekeningen* (cf. fn. 2), p. 68.

9 Godelieve Spiessens, »De Antwerpse stadsspeellieden. Deel I: 15e en 16e eeuw,« *De Noordgouw* 10 (1970), pp. 2–4. The other players who lived in Antwerp as citizens were members of the musicians' guild of St Job and Mary Magdalen, which had its chapel in the church of St James. See Godelieve Spiessens, »Geschiedenis van de Gilde van de Antwerpse Speellieden (Deel I: XVIde eeuw),« *Belgisch tijdschrift voor muziekgeschiedenis – Revue belge de musicologie* 22 (1968), pp. 5–26.

10 Pieter Andriessen, *Die van Muziken gheerne horen. Muziek in Brugge 1200–1800* (Bruges, 2002), pp. 88–94. See also Reinhard Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges* [Oxford, 1985], rev. edn. (Oxford, 1990), p. 144.

11 1559: on Sundays and feast days they had to play »telcker reyse twee liedekens ofte motetten« (»every time two songs or motets«): Andriessen, *Die van Muziken*, *ibid.*, p. 86. And upon the release of Maximiliaan in 1488 the players performed, after the »Te deum, Ave Regina Celorum ende meer ander liedekins van muzycke«: *ibid.*, pp. 90–1. The players also possessed partbooks with tenor melodies (*ibid.* p. 90), for the case of the itinerant trumpeter Zorzi Trombetta (mid-15<sup>th</sup> century see the manuscript GB-Lbl,

Jacob Obrecht, whose father Willem was a city minstrel, the situation was much the same. There the chapel of the musicians, dedicated to St Job and St Gummarus, was established in the crypt of the church of St John, later in that of St Nicholas.<sup>12</sup>

(3) Apart from the musicians who performed in processions and the city minstrels, we also encounter, especially from the end of the fifteenth century, individual and itinerant instrumentalists. These were primarily wind players, in most cases probably cornettists. Often they would perform together with the vocal ensemble of a court chapel or collegiate church. A well-known and frequently cited example is that of the German Augustin Schubinger – semi-itinerant since he was also attached to the court – who performed at high mass in the church of St Rombouts in Mechelen in 1501.<sup>13</sup> Similar payments are also found earlier, e. g. in 1496/97 in St Gudule in Brussels, in 1502 in the collegiate church of Our Lady in Tongeren, and in 1503 in St Servaas in Maastricht.<sup>14</sup> In passing it may be pointed out that in St Servaas in the same year Marbrianus de Orto was a canon, that Johannes Ghiselin was ordained a priest, and that Obrecht was treated to white wine for as yet unknown services. All three composed works without text which were possibly intended for instrumental performance. The Burgundian court chapel also visited the city several times, for which they received treats. This undoubtedly resulted in various musical exchanges, e. g. with regard to repertoire, performance practice, etc.<sup>15</sup>

(4) Fourthly, we note that c. 1500 the homogeneously composed music ensemble gradually gained ground, in sacred (for example trombones) as well as secular contexts (viols). At the beginning of the sixteenth century the

Cotton Titus A.xxvi). In connection with Maximilian see also Keith Polk, »Susato and Instrumental Music in Flanders in the Sixteenth Century,« *Tielman Susato and the Music of his Time*. Bucina 5 (Hillsdale, NY, 2005), p. 77.

12 Paul Trio and Barbara Hagg, »Confraternities in Ghent and Music,« *Musicology and Archival Research. Colloquium Proceedings, Brussels ... 1993*. Archives et Bibliothèques de Belgique Numéro spécial 46, ed. Barbara H. Hagg (Brussels, 1994), pp. 54–6. See there also further information concerning the players' guilds in the Low Countries in general, pp. 54–63. For a synthesis with regard to the minstrels see esp. Polk, Susato (cf. fn. 11), pp. 61–100.

13 Keith Polk, »Innovation in Instrumental Music 1450–1520,« *Music in the German Renaissance. Sources, Styles, and Contexts*, ed. John Kmetz (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 205–10. His brother was noted as a performer on the viol, and another brother, Michel, owned a *viola* and a lute.

14 Schreurs, Music for Canons (cf. fn. 7).

15 Ibid.

English court of Henry VIII employed five trombonists, a number that dropped, probably by chance, to four in 1504. Contacts between the English and Burgundian courts were intensive, and so some parallels may be assumed. Accordingly, it is no surprise to find, at the court of Philip the Fair, five trombonists as well, in addition to players of *musette*, *vielle*, *flutes allemandes* and *tambourin*. Besides these musicians we find, listed separately and with an annual salary of 26 pounds, Augustin Schubinger, cornett player and lutenist of the king.<sup>16</sup> There are no explicit archival references to a homogeneous string ensemble, but we may logically assume its existence (see below).<sup>17</sup>

It is within this briefly sketched ›musical biotope‹ that Agricola, who according to his *epitaph* enjoyed fame as a string player,<sup>18</sup> together with the organist Henricus Bredemers and singers/composers such as Pierre de la Rue, de Orto and Johannes Braçonner, thrived and that his works are to be situated. As already said – apart from the five trombonists – there is no explicit archival reference to a homogeneous consort of instruments at the court, but in view of the versatility of the aforementioned instrumentalists and singers in this period its existence cannot be ruled out. By way of illustration: in 1515, Petrus Alamire, scribe and *garde de livres* at the Burgundian court, singer, composer and also known for his ›diplomatic‹ activities, sold thirteen crumhorns to the English king.<sup>19</sup> This fact, together with the existence of pieces which because of the tessitura can be played on the crumhorn, allows us to assume the existence of a homogeneous crumhorn consort in North European courts. In this connection it may be pointed out that Alamire himself composed a five-part *Tandernaken*, and the Copenhagen version (DK–Kk, 1872) specifically stipulates ›crumhorn‹ for the bass part. The ambitus as well as the writing of the other voices seem to indicate that this piece was specifically intended for crumhorns. This diversity of

16 Bruno Bouckaert and Eugeen Schreurs, »Hans Nagel, performer and spy in England and Flanders (ca. 1490–1531),« Tielman Susato (cf. fn. 11), pp. 101–15.

17 The term »vielle« can, in principle, refer to several types of bowed strings. Moreover, it may be assumed, by analogy with the versatility of the city minstrels who could play several instruments, that this was also the case with court musicians. See e.g. Andriessen, *Die van Muziken* (cf. fn. 10), pp. 78–91.

18 Rob Wegman, »Agricola, Alexander,« *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edn. (London, 2001), vol. 1, p. 225.

19 There is also a reference to a certain Alexander Aurifabri, possibly to be identified with Agricola? See Eugeen Schreurs, »Petrus Alamire: Music Calligrapher, Musician, Composer, Spy,« *The Treasury of Petrus Alamire: Music and Art in Flemish Court Manuscripts 1500–1535*, ed. Herbert Kellman (Ghent, 1999), p. 20.

specific but varied homogeneous scoring should cause no surprise, for also outside the court context (e. g. among the Antwerp city musicians) there are sufficient indications that players mastered more than one instrument.<sup>20</sup> Maximilian had four viol players during his reign († 1519), and his son Philip the Fair probably had a small group of string players, just like Margaret of Austria.<sup>21</sup> This would seem to indicate the beginning of a tradition at the Burgundian-Habsburg court, whereby the string consort gradually took shape. Literary sources, too, make reference to musical performances which have been termed *whole consort* in later English secondary literature. Thus a Brussels dialogue booklet dating from c. 1540 mentions four German traverso players.<sup>22</sup> Viols are clearly mentioned in Tielman Susato's *Sixiesme livre contenant trente et une chansons nouvelles des chansons convenables & propices a jouer sure les violes & aultre instrumentz musicales* (Antwerp 1545, RISM 1545<sup>14</sup>).<sup>23</sup> A bit later, in 1562, we even find, in a confraternity context, an English viol (or violin?) consort at 's-Hertogenbosch.<sup>24</sup>

In this context it is understandable that at the end of the fifteenth century a specific literature was created for instrumental ensemble, homogeneous or not. At the birth of this genre, however, a strict distinction was not always drawn between instrumental exercise material based on vocal models (e. g. mass parts), where the focus is on rhythmic (e. g. mensural proportions),

20 See Andriessen, *Die van Muziken* (cf. fn. 10), pp. 78–91.

21 Polk, Susato (cf. fn. 11), pp. 62–7. In 1524–5 there is even a mention of a »groote vyoole«. The term »vyoole« is somewhat ambiguous and can refer, depending on the context, to a violin or a viol.

22 C. 1540: »ick hoorde oock seer ghenoechelijck spelen met vier duytsche fluyte ... My dunckt dat Duytsche waren, want die van onsen lande en spelen in sulcker manieren niet als sy-lieden speelden, oft het moest zyn van 's Keyzers volck, naer myn verstandt« (»I also heard playing by four German flutes ... I thought they were German, for our [own] countrymen do not play like they do, lest they be of the Emperor's folk, in my view«): René Bernard Lenaerts, *Het Nederlands polifonies lied in de zestiende eeuw* (Mechelen, 1933), p. 155.

23 Kristine K. Forney, »New Insights into the Career and Musical Contributions of Tielman Susato,« *Tielman Susato* (cf. fn. 11), p. 16.

24 Véronique Roelvink, *Gegeven den sangeren. Meerstemmige muziek bij de Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap te 's-Hertogenbosch in de zestiende eeuw* ('s-Hertogenbosch, 2002), pp. 87–8. Mention is made of the purchase of English »violen«, to be played by the singers while seated during mealtimes of the Confraternity. Hence the assumption that these were viols (da gamba): »laeten maicken in Engelant een cofferen met vyff violen, [samen met een] vyffcanten lessenair dair die sangers vyff boecken op leggen als zy opte violen speelen« (»Have made in England a case with five viols, [together with a] five-sided lectern as the singers put five books on it when they play the viols«). In addition, chairs are purchased: »vyff scabellen, voirde zangers opte sitten alse opte violen speelen« (»for the singers to sit upon when they play on the viols«). See *ibid.*, pp. 279–80.

melodic or combined difficulties and purely instrumental pieces. In some cases one could even assume that we are not dealing with instrumental music, but with solmization or »passaggi«-exercises for singers, although some works may of course have served a double purpose and were thus multifunctional.

In any event, this nascent instrumental music and its ›hybrid relatives‹ enjoyed an increasing success and the literature was adopted and stimulated by minstrels and the citizenry, which in turn led to a greater demand for manuscripts, and later for prints, of such music. However, few of these manuscripts have survived. Since these partbooks often contained no illumination, there was no art-historical reason to preserve them. Despite the many losses it is still possible to draw up a limited list of manuscripts from the Low Countries with instrumental or at least ›instrumental-looking‹, textless music. Needless to say, this list must be viewed in the context of the much greater number of similar manuscripts preserved in Western Europe (e. g. I–Bc, Q17; DK–Kk, 1872; I–Fn, B. R. 229; CH–SGs, 461 and CH–SGs, 462; A–Wn, Mus. 18810). In time, instrumental music also came to be printed: Ottaviano Petrucci, in his *Harmonice musices Odhecaton A* (Venice, 1501, RISM 1501), *Canti B* (Venice, 1502, RISM 1502<sup>2</sup>) and *Canti C* (Venice, 1504, RISM 1504<sup>3</sup>), seems to have seen advantage in it. Similarly, Pierre Attaingnant, in his Paris chanson book of 1533, apparently considered the time right to publish vocal chansons for recorder and/or *traverso* consort: *Vingt et sept chansons à quatre parties a la fleuste dallement ... et a la fleuste a neuf trous* (RISM 1533<sup>1</sup>) as well did Susato in 1545 as mentioned above.<sup>25</sup>

The textless pieces or the works displaying instrumental features (e. g. extended ambitus, leaps, runs) are characterized by the fact that they are mostly in three or four parts. Exceptions are the two-part rhythmic ›exercises‹ from the *Segovia Manuscript* and a few five-part compositions such as the already mentioned *Tandernaken* by Alamire.<sup>26</sup> In addition, these textless pieces in three or four parts often contain rhythmically lively passages and an exchange of thematic material that goes beyond the use of the same *cantus firmus*.<sup>27</sup>

25 See Howard Mayer Brown, *Instrumental music printed before 1600* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 43–4.

26 Reinhard Strohm, *The Rise of European Music, 1380–1500* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 606.

27 For the rise of instrumental music see also Strohm, *ibid.*, pp. 358–9, 568–70. For *Tandernaken/Tanndernac* see Schreurs, Petrus Alamire (cf. fn. 19), p. 20.

Table 1:  
 Sources from the Low Countries containing textless compositions (c. 1485–1550)<sup>28</sup>

PLACE	ORIGIN	PURPOSE/ OWNER	NUMBER OF PIECES/ CONTENT	DATE	FASCIMILE/ EDITION
Tongeren, St Nicholas, s.s.	LC	didactic use by »zangmeester«/ choirboys?	9 vocal/ textless (incomplete)	c. 1485	Schreurs, Anthologie, pp. 66–7
B–Br, II/270	LC	monastery (?) ( <i>Devotio moderna</i> movement)	29 vocal/ textless	c. 1500	Bouckaert-Schreurs, Collectie <sup>29</sup>
E–SE, s.s.	Spain/ LC	court	204 vocal/ textless	c. 1502	Segovia Chansonnier
NL–M, s.s.	LC	private use/ church musician?	11 vocal/ textless (incomplete)	c. 1505	Smits Van Waesberghe <sup>30</sup>
GB–Lbl, Add. 35087	LC	Lauweryn van Watervliet	78 vocal	c. 1505–6	McMurtry <sup>31</sup>
I–Fc, Basevi 2439	LC / Italy	Agostini Ciardi family / Siena	87 vocal/ textless	c. 1505–8	Meconi <sup>32</sup>
B–Br, IV.90/ B–Tv, 94	LC	private / Bruges	22 vocal	1511	Kessels <sup>33</sup>

28 Some of the sources are not yet repertoried in RISM or *Census Catalogue of Manuscript Sources of Polyphonic Music 1400–1550*. Renaissance manuscript studies 1, 5 vols. (Neuhausen-Stuttgart, 1979–88). For most of these sources see *Anthologie van muziekfragmenten uit de Lage Landen (middeleeuwen – renaissance)*. Polyfonie, monodie en leisteefragmenten in facsimile, ed. Eugene Schreurs (Peer, 1995) where also references will be found to modern editions or commentaries. LC in column 2 is an abbreviation for »Low Countries«.

29 *Collectie middelnederlandse en latijnse geestelijke liederen*. Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS II 270, ca. 1500. Monumenta Flandriae musica 7, ed. Bruno Bouckaert, Eugene Schreurs, Jeske Van Dongen, Andries Welkenhuysen, and Jeanine De Landtsheer, Leuven 2005.

30 Jozef Smits Van Waesberghe, »Een 15de eeuw muziekboek van de stadsminstrelen van Maastricht?«, *Renaissance-Muziek 1400–1600. Donum natalicium René Bernard Lenaerts* (Leuven, 1969), pp. 247–73.

31 *Chansonnier of Hieronymus Lauweryn van Watervliet*. London, British Library Ms. Add. 35087, facs. edn., introd. William McMurtry (Peer, 1989).

32 *Basevi Codex*. Florence, Biblioteca del Conservatorio, MS 2439, facs. edn., introd. Honey Meconi (Peer, 1990).

33 Leon Kessels, »The Brussels/Tournai-Partbooks: Structure, Illumination, and Flemish Repertory«, *Tijdschrift van de vereniging voor Nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis* 37 (1987), pp. 82–110. Bernard Huys, »A Recently Rediscovered Sixteenth-Century Illuminated Manuscript: A Study of the Sources and Concordances of the Third ›Tournai‹ Partbook«, *Musiology and Archival Research* (cf. fn. 12), pp. 522–35.

B-SNabbeel	LC	?	3 vocal/ partly textless (incomplete)	early 16 <sup>th</sup> century	Schreurs, forthcoming
B-BR, Stadsarchief, 538, muziekfragmenten A-F	LC	composer (?)	9 vocal/ textless (incomplete)	c. 1530	Schreurs, Anthologie, pp. 87–96
F-CA, 125–8	LC	Zeghere Van Male	224 vocal/ textless, dances	1542	Diehl <sup>34</sup>
B-OU, 50a	LC	composer (?)	2 vocal/ textless (incomplete)	before 1549	Schreurs, Anthologie, p. 103
B-BR, Stadsarchief, 539, ms. 41	LC	Bass partbook	65 vocal/ textless	finished c. 1556	Vanhulst <sup>35</sup>

One of the most creatively reworked chansons is undoubtedly the *rondeau quatrain* »D'ung aultre amer« of Johannes Ockeghem, which in this article will be further discussed primarily in view of Agricola's contribution. In homage to Ockeghem numerous anonymous composers, as well as such masters as Johannes Tinctoris, Alexander Agricola, Philippe Basiron, Marbrianus de Orto, Jean Le Brun and Pierre de la Rue, wrote compositional variations on this widely circulated piece, the basic version of which is known from seventeen manuscript sources.<sup>36</sup> Most of the known composers can be linked in one way or another to the Burgundian court, the Low Countries or the French court. The arrangements — by chance also seventeen in number — have been published together in modern edition by Richard Taruskin in the series *Ogni Sorti* with the individual parts in original mensural notation.<sup>37</sup> These are compositionally very ingenious variants, and highly inventive contrapuntally, melodically, as well as rhythmically.

34 George Karl Diehl, *The Partbooks of a Renaissance Merchant, Cambrai Bibliothèque Municipale, MSS 125–128* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1974).

35 Henri Vanhulst, »Le manuscrit 41 des Archives communales de Bruges,« *Le concert des voix et des instruments à la Renaissance. Actes du XXXIV<sup>e</sup> Colloque International d'Études Humanistes, Tours ... 1991*, ed. Jean-Michel Vaccaro (Paris, 1995), pp. 231–42.

36 Eugeen Schreurs, »New Findings on Music Fragments from Tongeren with two Chansons by Ockeghem,« *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke vereniging voor Nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis* 47 (1997), pp. 119–138.

37 *D'ung aultre amer. Seventeen settings in two, three, four, and 5 parts (modern score), 5 partbooks in original notation, notation guide*. Renaissance Standards 6, ed. Richard Taruskin (Miami: Ogni Sorte, 1983).

The image displays a musical score for a tenor instrument, consisting of 14 staves. Each staff is labeled with a source sigla: WLab, Wol, Dij, Cop291, FR2356, PPix, Sev, R.Cas, FR2794, PBN2245, Tong, BQ17, RCG, FBNC178, Frankf [Tenor lost], and Cop1848. The notation is in a single system, showing the first four bars of a piece. The music is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The notation includes various rhythmic values such as minims, crotchets, and quavers, along with rests and accidentals. The first four bars are specifically identified as 'longae' in the caption.

Figure 3: Table with the first four bars (longae) of the tenor<sup>38</sup>

38 Taken from Schreurs, *New Findings* (cf. fn. 36), p. 121. The sigla refer to the *Census Catalogue* (cf. fn. 26).

The base is always one of the three voices of the model, so in fact we are dealing with a series of variations on a variable *cantus firmus*. In the following overview, which is based on the numbering of Taruskin, the seventeen compositions are grouped according to resemblant criteria (increasing number of parts, sometimes according to compositional procedure). It will be clear from the following survey that Agricola, with no less than four versions to his credit, was a key figure in this *D'ung aultre amer* tradition. The overview also sets the Agricola versions in a broader compositional context and shows that he elaborates the theme in a very original and highly varied way, and also that he undoubtedly must have been acquainted with (a number of) the versions enumerated in Figure 3.

First of all, there is the basic version 1 (F–Dm, 517, fol. 42<sup>v</sup>–43<sup>r</sup>) by Ockeghem, preserved – as said above – in at least seventeen manuscripts (aside from the printed settings for solo lute by Francesco Spinacino, Venice, 1507, RISM 1507<sup>5</sup> and 1507<sup>6</sup>). A simple comparison of the first four bars (with two semibreves per imaginary ›bar‹) of the tenor in the basic version reveals that only three of the sixteen versions (the tenor of the anonymous version no. 16 from Frankfurt is lost) are wholly identical in notation (colours, ligatures, rhythmic variants in the further course of the piece).<sup>39</sup> The anonymous Tongeren version (no. 12, c. 1472–85) is in a sense somewhat unique in that tenor and superius are written out in score notation, possibly for didactic reasons.<sup>40</sup> Also in this version the *f*<sup>2</sup> of the superius at the end of the first phrase is raised to *f*<sup>3</sup> sharp. This is quite unusual: indeed, since for Johannes Tinctoris the addition of *musica ficta* was to singers (and instrumentalists) an »ass's mark« (*asininum*).<sup>41</sup> Besides I–Fr, 2794 (c. 1480–8, no. 10) and I–Rc, 2856 (c. 1480–90, no. 9), both ascribed to Ockeghem, it is also the only version not to begin with a colour.

Version 2 (E–Sc, 5–1–43, fol. 51<sup>v</sup>–53<sup>r</sup>), anonymous, is based on a kind of substitution technique: the upper voices of Ockeghem's chanson are pre-

39 Schreurs, *New Findings* (cf. fn. 36), pp. 120, 123–6.

40 Schreurs, *Anthologie* (cf. fn. 26), p. 66–7.

41 Tinctoris regards avoidance of the tritone as a matter of course (see Robert Toft, *Aural Images of Lost Traditions. Sharps and Flats in the Sixteenth Century* (Toronto, 1992), p. 11; see also *Thesaurus Musicarum Latinarum*: <http://www.chml.indiana.edu/cgi-bin/chml/isearch.html>): »Ut autem evitetur tritoni durities necessario ex quarta specie diapente isti duo toni formantur. Neque tunc b mollis signum apponi est necessarium, immo si appositum videatur, asininum esse dicitur, ut hic probatur« (»Nor then is it necessary to mark the sign *bmollis* [to remove the tritone]; rather, if it is seen to have been marked, it is said to be asinine«).

served, but the countertenor is replaced by a more lively and lower bass part: in other words, it is a kind of parody.

Two anonymous two-part works (versions **3** and **4**; E-Sc, 5-1-43, fol. 132<sup>v</sup> and 133<sup>r</sup>) are cleverly based on the technique of the *redicta* whereby a short melody of a few notes is immediately repeated, and this successively in combination with the superius and then the tenor of the model. This *redicta*-principle finds its culmination in the four-part version **13** (*Canti B*, RISM 1502<sup>2</sup>, fol. 27<sup>v</sup>-28<sup>r</sup>) by de Orto in which no less than two voices are based on this repetition technique, albeit that each phrase is repeated a fifth higher.

Tinctoris was also known as an important theoretician. He does himself full justice in the two-part version **5** (I-PEc, 1013, fol. 89<sup>v</sup>-90<sup>r</sup>), a didactic exercise on the proportions, in which *sesquialtera* and *sesquitercia* are applied.

An ingenious canonical technique in the higher fifth is applied from a distance of a semibreve in version **6** (I-Bc, Q 17, fol. 46<sup>v</sup>-47<sup>r</sup>). Imitation between tenor and bass is very intense in version **7** (I-Bc, Q 17, fol. 56<sup>v</sup>-57<sup>r</sup>).

The settings by Agricola are crucial to the composer's *œuvre* because this is the piece of which he wrote the most settings, allowing us to gain insight in his compositional skill(s). Version **8** (E-SE, s. s., fol. 153) (three-part)<sup>42</sup> is particularly striking for its virtuoso leaps and extended tessitura of more than two octaves. Some have argued that these are highly exceptional vocal *passaggi* «avant la lettre», others that these passages reflect the ambitus of viols: *f-a*”; *c-f*”; *F-b*. This music is indeed well adapted to proficient viol players, although it is too early to speak of truly idiomatic writing. The two outer voices (superius and bassus) are the most lively, repeatedly imitate one another and often run in parallel tenths, a procedure regularly applied by Agricola in this type of work. The whole is built around an almost undecorated *cantus firmus* that most closely resembles (in ligatures, *colores*) the version by Ockeghem in the French cluster of manuscripts dating from c. 1460-75 (*Chansonniers Nivelles*, F-Pn, Rés. Vmc.57; *Laborde*, US-Wc, M2.1 L25 Case; *Wolfenbüttel*, D-W, Guelf. 287 Extrav.; *Dijon*, F-Dm, 517; *Copenhagen*, DK-Kk, Thott 291).

Version **9** (I-Fc, Basevi 2439, fol. 70<sup>v</sup>-71<sup>r</sup>), also by Agricola and likewise in three parts,<sup>43</sup> is suited – unlike version **8** – for a low viol consort (alto,

42 *Alexandri Agricola Opera omnia*. Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae 22, ed. Edward R. Lerner, vol. 5: *Cantiones, Musica Instrumentalis, Opera dubia* (American Institute of Musicology, 1970), no. 60, pp. 88-9.

43 *Ibid.*, no. 59, pp. 87-8.

tenor, bass, [eventually three alto's]).<sup>44</sup> In view of the ambitus and the fact that the lute was also established at the Burgundian court (see Schubinger) one cannot rule out a scoring with lute(s).<sup>45</sup> Agricola has now transposed the superius down an octave and uses it as a *cantus firmus*. Octave transpositions are rather uncommon.<sup>46</sup> In addition, this setting is remarkable for its vivid decoration of the *cantus firmus* by means of leaps, runs and ornaments. The capriciousness of these ornaments is a frequent and almost exclusive feature of Agricola's music (e. g. bar 6). Despite the considerable liveliness of the piece Agricola still manages to include some fanciful imitation (e. g. bars 1–2, 4, 6, 7, 11–13).

Version 10 (F–Pn, fr. 15123, *Pixérécourt chansonnier*, fol. 117<sup>v</sup>–118<sup>r</sup>, anonymous, three-part) can be reckoned among the ›free versions‹: only the opening of the composition is recognizable, but it soon deviates, with only incidentally a fleeting reference to the model.

Version 7 (I–Bc, Q 17, fol. 56<sup>v</sup>–57<sup>r</sup>, anonymous, three-part) and Version 11 (I–Bc, Q 17, fol. 55<sup>v</sup>–56<sup>r</sup>; Basiron, four-part, canon between tenor and altus) are characterized by a subtle play of syncopes. In I–Bc, Q 17 the two pieces follow one another, and also because of the stylistic relationship (e. g. octave leaps) one could attribute both works (and even version 6) to Basiron as suggested by Taruskin.

Versions 14 and 15 (I–Fc, Basevi 2439, fol. 7<sup>v</sup>–8<sup>r</sup>, 8<sup>v</sup>–9<sup>r</sup>) are again by Agricola. With three versions of *D'ung aultre amer* in the *Basevi codex*, the piece is well represented in this manuscript, which belongs to the corpus of so-called Alamire manuscripts. He uses the tenor twice as *cantus firmus* and sets it against the three voices which in a rather rhythmically way imitate one another. But this is done in two completely different ways. In version 14<sup>47</sup> Agricola first plays with a figure consisting of a descending leap. A bit further he employs free counterpoint with only incidentally a literal imitation (e. g. bar 9). The strength of the composition lies primarily in the independence of each voice and the play with rhythmic imitation (dotted figures). In notation (ligatures, runs) the *cantus firmus* most closely resembles no. 9 of Figure 3 (I–Rc, 2856).

44 See in this context the existence of a »groote vyoole« (»a big viol/violin«) in Mechelen (cf. fn. 21), however admittedly this reference is from the mid-1520s.

45 On the Schubinger family cf. fn. 16.

46 A similar transposition of an octave is applied, in the Tongeren manuscript, to Ockeghem's »Ma Maistresse« which is only partly preserved. See Schreurs, *New findings* (cf. fn. 36), pp. 130–1.

47 *Alexandri Agricola Opera omnia*, vol. 5 (cf. fn. 42), no. 57, pp. 85–6.

Version 15 (Agricola)<sup>48</sup> shows a more marked structure: in phrases 1 and 2 (following the syntactic structure of the music and of the text) the attention is focused mainly on the imitation of a cadential figure, starting with the altus. This is combined with a more simple imitation of a descending fifth in bar 2, between bass and superius. In phrase 3 Agricola chooses to imitate the *cantus firmus* in longer note values. In phrase 4 he opts for an imitation of the descending figure, ending on a long, lively plagal cadence. The *cantus firmus* resembles version 9 (I-Rc, 2856), but sometimes (e.g. the beginning) even more no. 10 in Figure 3 (I-Fr, 2794).

Versions 12 (I-Bc, Q 17, fol. 57<sup>v</sup>–58<sup>r</sup>, Basiron) and 16 (A-Wn, 18746, no. 17, Le Brun) may be reckoned among the so-called »combinative« chansons. The first combines in masterly fashion »L’homme armé« in the tenor with the *cantus firmus* in the superius. Now and then altus and bass still have room to imitate the »L’homme armé« melody. In view of the repeats and leaps the alto and bass appear less »vocal«. The version by Le Brun, who was active at the French court (Bourges, Sainte-Chapelle), uses the melody as a *cantus firmus* in the superius, but combines it with Colinet de Lannoy’s well-known chanson »Cela sans plus«. Conspicuous in the bass are the repeated leaps of an ascending fifth (*G–d*) and fourth (*G–c*).

La Rue’s version (no. 17; A-Wn, 18746, no. 16) is the most monumental, both for its five parts and for its polyphonic writing, with a fine example of so-called pre-imitation in bars 1 to 5. The base is the *cantus firmus* in the tenor, resembling most closely the tenor of nos. 9–12 in Figure 3.<sup>49</sup>

\*

From the writing of the works and the typology of the sources one may conclude that vocal and instrumental practice pieces began to lead an independent life. In other words, we are probably witnessing the »birth« of instrumental ensemble music, or at least at a pivotal moment in the evolution towards instrumental independence. But it is very difficult, and in part artificial as well, to draw a very strict boundary, for most of these works were multifunctional, sometimes tacking between instrumental – in this context one can also think of the building of stringed instruments in families –, vocal (e.g. solmization exercises to be vocalized, sometimes with a didactic dimension), or written-out vocal improvisation.

48 Ibid., no. 58, pp. 86–7.

49 Schreurs, New findings (cf. fn. 36), p. 121 and pp. 123–6.

At the risk of increasing this ambiguity even further, I would like to draw attention, within the context of an overview of the sources from the Low Countries, to the anonymous three-part *Och voer die doot* from manuscript II 270 of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in Brussels (fols. 130<sup>v</sup>–132<sup>r</sup>).

The musical score is written for three voices: C (Cantus), Ct (Cantus Tenor), and T (Tenor). The C and Ct parts are highly melodic, featuring many eighth and sixteenth notes, while the T part consists of long, sustained notes. The lyrics are: 'Och want voer ster die ven doot ym en mer is we gheen sen'.

Example 1: Beginning of »Och voer die doot« (*Tandernaken*)<sup>50</sup>

Although this work is included in a manuscript of clearly vocal conception (and probably meant rather for ›reading along‹ than for singing) it is very instrumental in character (e. g. the long note values of the tenor, making that part – at least according to modern standards – virtually unsingable). The *cantus firmus* in the tenor is provided with text, and could eventually with a few modifications, perhaps be sung, but it seems to me very unlikely. But the extended tessitura of the other voices, the leaps, the fact that the *cantus firmus* can be identified with the well-known *Tandernaken* melody, indicate that we are dealing rather with instrumental music, albeit that here too – perhaps again purely theoretically – the possibility must be considered that these are *passaggi* meant to be vocalized in an improvisatory manner or at least within an improvisatory tradition, or even a kind of ›solfège-exercises‹.

In the present state of our knowledge I would leave it to the musicians to experiment with possible performance solutions, either instrumental or vocal, but with a personal preference for an instrumental performance of those pieces that appear to be ›atypically‹ vocal, for instance because a text is lacking. Whether or not we are hereby attending the ›birth‹ of instrumental music for *whole consort* – there are arguments *pro* and *contra* – I leave to the discretion of a critical and creative performer.

50 Taken from Collectie (cf. fn. 27), no. 10, p. 98.