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The *cantastorie* and his music
in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy[*]

The *cantastorie*, singers of tales, were widespread across the Italian peninsula and its outlying islands from the thirteenth century onwards. With their varied repertoires, they were active until the 1970s, in parallel with the *contastorie* – storytellers – who can, however, still be heard today in Sicily. The latter use a specific declamatory technique that has connections with that of the *cantastorie*,[1] and the two categories of musicians have been recorded in history throughout the world. However, I would like to focus on the Italian *cantastorie* of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century, analysing their performance, the social mobility of their art, and the music for the *ottava rima*.

1 Roberto Leydi, *L'altra musica* (Milan, 1991), pp. 150–156: p. 305; Mauro Geraci, *Le ragioni dei cantastorie: poesia e realtà nella cultura popolare del Sud* (Rome, 1996); Sergio Bonanzinga, "Le forme del racconto. I generi narrativi di tradizione orale in Sicilia", *I sentieri dei narratori*, ed. Carmelo Alberti and Roberto Giambrone (Palermo, 2004), pp. 13–44; id., "Narrazioni e narratori", *Lingue e culture in Sicilia*, ed. Giovanni Ruffino (Palermo, 2013), pp. 61–76. The singing on the ottava rima is still practiced in Italy, see Giovanni Kezich, I poeti contadini: Introduzione all'ottava rima popolare: immaginario poetico e paesaggio sociale. *Etnomusicologica* 5 (Rome, 1986); Cristina Ghirardini, "L'improvvisatore in genre scenes by foreign and Italian artists in the 19th century", *L'Idomeneo* 21 (2016), pp. 37–62,
http://sibaese.unisalento.it/index.php/idomeneo/article/view/16767/14416, and ead., "La 'naturale acuta sensibilità all'armonia, al numero ed al metro'. L'improvvisazione poetica in ottava rima in Italia centrale dal Settecento alla prima metà del Novecento", *Fonti Musicali Italiane* 22 (2017), forthcoming. Brian Richardson, professor at the University of Leeds, directs the ERC project Italian Voices, which deals with the use of speech and songs in the textual culture of early modern Italy. See their website for a rich bibliography on the topic:
http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/italianvoices/.

The *cantastorie*'s public performances: origins, repertoires, and techniques

In Italy, the thirteenth century provides us with a rich body of documentation regarding the *cantastorie* (also called *canterini* or *cantimpanca*[2]) thanks to public acclaim at that time for the *cantari* – poetic compositions in *ottava rima* recounting epic tales of knights, and historical, religious and mythological themes. Much of this documentation was published in 1914 by Ezio Levi, but as yet no analysis of its descriptions of the music and performance has been attempted.[3]

According to the available sources, the *cantastorie* were first heard in the northern regions of Italy (Piedmont, Lombardy, and Emilia-Romagna), which were already familiar with the art of the troubadours.[4] From there, the singing of tales began to spread southwards towards the end of the fifteenth century. The Neapolitan humanist Giovanni Giovano Pontano bore witness to the presence of *cantastorie* in southern Italy in the dialogue *Antonius*, which he wrote in 1483 and published in 1491. Encountering a performance being given by a singer of tales in the streets of Naples, he declared:

Et hoc quoque recens Cisalpina e Gallia allatum est! Deerat unum hoc civitatis nostrae moribus tam concinnis.[5]	And this also has recently been imported from Cisalpine Gaul! This one lacked the refinement of the customs of our country.[6]

The fashion of the *cantari* was therefore considered, up to that point at least, as having originated far from the south of Italy, in Cisalpine Gaul, i.e. the regions we now know as Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto, and Emilia-Romagna. A narrative repertoire inspired by the *chansons de gestes* and the Matter of Britain was spread throughout Italy by so-called *canterini*. An earlier document from

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2 For other terms see James Haar, "'Improvvisatori' and their Relationship to Sixteenth-Century Music", id., *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music in the Renaissance, 1350–1600* (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 76–99, and Blake Wilson, "The 'Cantastorie/Canterino/Cantimbanco' as Musician", *Italian Studies* 71 (2016), pp. 154–170.

3 Ezio Levi, *I cantari leggendari del popolo italiano nei secoli XIV e XV. Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, Supplemento 16 (Turin, 1914).

4 F. Alberto Gallo, *Musica nel castello. Trovatori, libri, oratori nelle corti italiane del XII al XV secolo* (Bologna, 1992), pp. 17–58; *Music in the Castle: Troubadours, Books, and Orators in Italian Courts of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Centuries* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 11–46.

5 Giovanni Giovano Pontano, *Dialogues*, ed. Julia Haig Gaisser (Cambridge, MA, 2012), vol. 1: *Charon and Antonius*, p. 272, paragraph 106; Benendetto Soldati, "Improvvisatori, canterini e buffoni in un dialogo del Pontano", *Miscellanea di studi critici pubblicati in onore di Guido Mazzoni*, ed. A. Della Torre and P. L. Rambaldi (Florence, 1907), vol. 1, pp. 321–342.

6 This and all subsequent translations, unless otherwise specified, are my own.

Bologna, dated 1289, calls such performers *cantatores françiginorum,* i.e., singers of French stories.[7] Their inspirational origins are also emphasized in another document published by Levi, which states explicitly that in the thirteenth century the stories were sung in French. Furthermore, an epistle by Lovato de' Lovati (1241–1309) tells us about a performance in Treviso of a *cantastorie* who sang in Franco-Italian, a mixture of French and Italian dialects, distorting the pronunciation of French poems on Charlemagne:

> Fontibus irriguam spatiatur forte per urbem,
> que tribus a vicis nomen tenet, ocia passu
> castigans modico, cum celsa in sede theatri
> karoleas acieis et gallica gesta boantem
> cantorem aspitio: pendet plebecula circum
> auribus arrectis: illam suus allicit Orpheus.
> Ausculto tacitus: Francorum dedita lingue
> carmina barbarico passim deformat hiatu,
> tramite nulla suo, nulli innitentia penso
> ad libitum volvens; vulgo tamen illa placebant.[8]

> I was walking at random through a city watered by fountains
> and named for three alleys [Treviso], criticizing leisure time
> at a moderate pace, when high on a stage
> roaring about Carolingian battle order and Gallic deeds
> I spy a singer. The little people hang on all sides
> ears alert as their Orpheus entrances everywhere;
> I listen in silence: songs consigned to the Franks' tongue
> he ruins with barbaric interruptions everywhere;
> song with no plot, dependent on no thread,
> he spins spontaneously, and yet the crowd liked them.[9]

The *canterini* enriched their stories with elements from fairy-tales and proverbs, as well as moral messages and observations. They also gave their individual contributions to the technical approaches to mnemonic composition,[10] and lent

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7 E. Levi, I cantari (cf. fn. 3), p. 6.

8 Cesare Foligno, "Epistole inedite di Lovato de' Lovati e d'altri a lui", Studi Medievali 2 (1906), pp. 37–59: p. 49; Guido Billanovich, "Lovato Lovati: l'epistola a Bellino, gli echi da Catullo", *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 32 (1980), pp. 101–153.

9 English translation from John Ahern, "Dioneo's Repertory: Performance and Writing in Boccaccio's 'Decameron'", *Performing Medieval Narrative*, ed. Evelyn Birge Vitz, Nancy Freeman Regalado, and Marilyn Lawrence (Cambridge, 2005), p. 43.

10 A large bibliography covers oral composition techniques in the cantari since Giovanni B. Bronzini, *Tradizione di stile aedico dai cantari al 'Furioso'* (Florence, 1966). See in particular Luca

their compositional skills to classical topics (like Orpheus, Perseus and Medusa, Jason and Medea), Roman history, and lyrical and religious poetry (about, for example, Judith, the Holy Face, Susanna, Saint Martin, and other saints).[11] These stories were transmitted by written sources to which the *cantastorie* had access either directly or thanks to the mediation of writers or humanists. Afterwards the *cantastorie* himself would have adapted the poems to suit his personal style and the local taste, adding specific formulaic hemistichs or syntagmas, selected on the basis of his repertoire.[12]

The *cantastorie* were without doubt both alphabetically and musically literate, as the *cantare* were generally based on a reference text, often in Latin or French, as revealed by Antonio Pucci (Florence, 1310 *c.*–1388) in *Il Gismirante* (II, 2):

per darvi diletto chiaramente   to let you enjoy clearly any
di novità, cercando vo le carte   new composition, I am going
e quel che piace a me, vi manifesto.[13]   to look for my papers and
     what I like I will perform.

Their literacy is also confirmed by the long list of books belonging to the *canterino* Michelangelo di Cristofano da Volterra "trombetto" (born in 1464). This shows 68 titles classified into three types: "libri di battaglie" (books on battles), "libri d'innamoramento" (books on love), and "libri per l'anima" (books for the soul).[14] Another source that attests to the literary knowledge of the *canterini* is the codex 2829 in the Biblioteca Riccardiana e Moreniana in Florence. This collection of *cantari*, copied in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, belonged to a *cantastorie*, who very likely copied the volume from another source.[15]

In order to store this extraordinary number and variety of stories in their memory, the *cantastorie* had to employ special recall techniques. In fact, the

Degl'Innocenti, "Verba manent: precisazioni e supplementi d'indagine sulla trascrizione dell' oralità nei cantari dell'Altissimo", *Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana* 39 (2012), pp. 109–134.

11 For a broader explanation and interpretation of the cantari phenomenon and romance epic culture, see Jane E. Everson, *The Italian Romance Epic in the Age of Humanism: The Matter of Italy and the World of Rome* (Oxford, 2001).

12 For concrete examples of these compositional processes see Luca Degl'Innocenti, *I "Reali" dell'Altissimo. Un ciclo di cantari fra oralità e scrittura* (Florence, 2008), pp. 139–172.

13 See E. Levi, I cantari (cf. fn. 3), pp. 21–22.

14 Marco Villoresi, "La biblioteca del canterino: i libri di Michelangelo di Cristofano da Volterra", *Bibliografia testuale o filologia dei testi a stampa? Definizioni metodologiche e prospettive future*, ed. Neil Harris (Udine, 1999), pp. 87–124. The list of books is preserved in Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, ms. Mediceo Palatino 82.

15 Michele Catalano, *La Spagna. Poema cavalleresco del secolo XIV* (Bologna, 1939), vol. 1, p. 229.

zibaldone by Michele del Giogante preserves a treatise on memory transmitted to him by the famous *canterino* Maestro Niccolò Cieco da Firenze in December 1435. He describes a mnemonic technique using storage rooms and architectural structures that have many similarities with the "memory palaces" described in the classical texts by Cicero and Quintilian.[16]

Concerning the musical performance of the *cantastorie*, Alberico da Rosciate, writing a commentary on Dante's *Divine Comedy* between 1343 and 1349, provides us with interesting details in his explanation of the origin of the ancient comedy:

Unde postea apparuerunt co-medi idest socij, qui pariter recitabant comedias, idest magnalia que occurebant, unus cantando alter succinendo et respondendo. Et isti comedi adhuc sunt in usu nostro et apparent maxime in partibus Lombardie aliqui cantatores qui magnorum dominorum in rithmis cantant gesta, unus proponendo, alius respondendo.[17]	Thence afterwards actors appeared, i.e. fellows who performed plays together, i.e. great deeds which happened, one singing, the other following and answering. And these actors are still in our use [performing nowadays] and some singers who sing of the deeds of great lords in rhythms, one proposing the other answering, appear especially in parts of Lombardy.[18]

This piece of evidence is extremely important for several reasons. Firstly, Alberico says that these actors were particularly common in Lombardy, and that they sang to a specific rhythm. Secondly, he explains that more than one shared a performance, taking it in turns to sing poems. As Giulio Cattin demonstrated,[19] in the Medieval and Renaissance eras the term "succinere" was synonymous with singing in polyphony, but, as it comes from "sub canere" (singing one after the other), it could also refer to the *contrasto*, which is still practiced in Italy in the present day.[20]

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16 Dale Kent, "Michele del Giogante's House of Memory", *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, ed. William J. Connell (Berkeley, Ca., 2002), pp. 110–136. Concerning the transfer of mnemonic techniques to musical practice, such as learning and compositional processes, see Anna Maria Busse Berger, *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory* (Berkeley, Ca., 2005).

17 Antonio Fiammazzo, *Il commento dantesco di Alberico da Rosciate col proemio e fine di quello del Bambaglioli* (Bergamo, 1895), p. 11. See also E. Levi, I cantari (cf. fn. 3), p. 10.

18 English translation by J. Ahern, Dioneo's Repertory (cf. fn. 9), p. 49.

19 Giulio Cattin, "'Secundare' e 'succinere'. Polifonia a Padova e Pistoia nel Duecento", *Musica e storia* 3 (1995), pp. 41–120.

20 Maurizio Agamennone, "Modi del contrasto in ottava rima", *Sul verso cantato: la poesia orale in una prospettiva etnomusicologica*, ed. id. and Francesco Giannattasio (Padua, 2002), pp. 163–223.
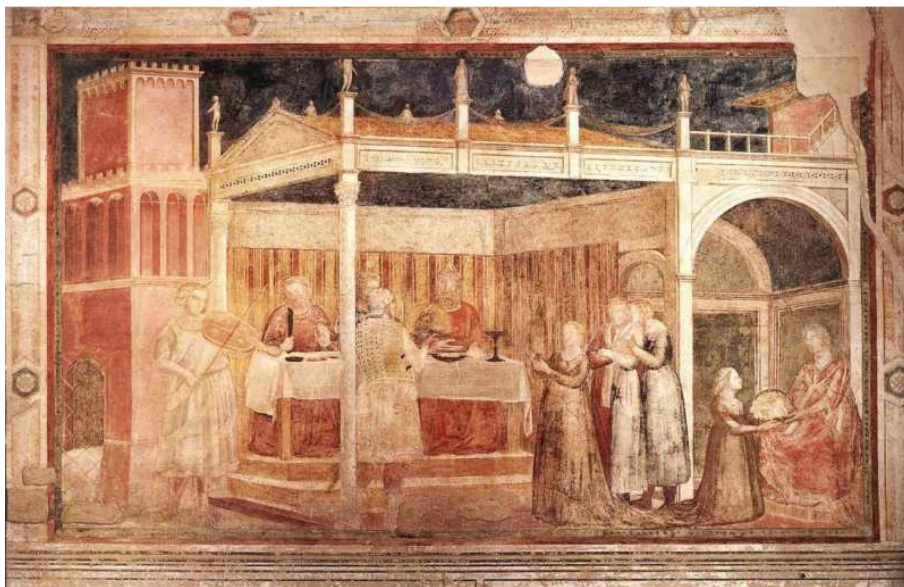
Figure 1: Giotto di Bondone, Scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist: *Herod's Feast*, Florence, Basilica of Santa Croce, Cappella Peruzzi (Photo: Camilla Cavicchi)

We know that the *cantastorie* performed in key gathering places, generally in town centres near busy places of worship. The squares of San Martino in Florence, San Michele in Lucca, the Accademia in Naples, San Marco in Venice, and Porta Ravegnana in Bologna were just some of the more famous arenas that resounded with the notes of their art. Before the show, the *cantastorie* prepared the stage for his own performance, even arranging the benches for the public. However, in the fifteenth century, when this practice became very popular and began to draw larger crowds, the municipal authorities began to offer the benches for the audience and an assistant for the *cantastorie*.[21] Although there are no surviving images from this period showing the *cantastorie*'s stage in public squares, there are some showing a minstrel playing a lyre, a possible predecessor of the *cantastorie* according to many.[22] For example, in the Peruzzi Chapel at the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence, the beautiful frescoes by Giotto, painted around

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21 E. Levi, I cantari (cf. fn. 3), pp. 16–17.

22 Francesco A. Ugolini, *I cantari d'argomento classico* (Florence, 1933), pp. 11–12; Armando Balduino, *Cantari del Trecento* (Milan, 1970), p. 12; J. Haar, Improvvisatori (cf. fn. 2), p. 80; Blake Wilson, "'Canterino' and 'improvvisatore': oral poetry and performance", *The Cambridge History of Fifteenth-Century Music*, ed. Anna Maria Busse Berger and Jesse Rodin (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 292–310.

Figure 2: Arion playing a medieval lyre, Venice, Ducal Palace, Capital 31 in the porch (photo: Giovanni Dall'Orto)

1325, illustrate a lyre player (see Figure 1) at Herod's banquet, a common iconographical theme in medieval art.[23] The presence of the medieval lyre and musician's dress demonstrates that Giotto took inspiration from his surroundings, giving a contemporary look to ancient themes – common practice throughout the history of art.[24] Moreover, according to Pompeo Molmenti, two sculptures on the 31st capital of the façade of the Ducal Palace in Venice, dating back to the end of the 1300s, allude to this kind of outdoor entertainment; they show Arion with a medieval lyre, riding a dolphin, and another musician with a lute (see Figure 2).[25]

Some fifteenth- and sixteenth-century woodcuts illustrate similar performances, but are more evidently specific to the *cantari* context. The engraving accompanying Antonio Pucci's 1498 Italian translation of *Historia Apollonii regis*

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23 G. B. Bronzini, Tradizione (cf. fn. 10), tav. III.

24 Nico Staiti, "Tempo della musica e tempo delle immagini. Raffigurazioni della musica e tradizione orale", *Antropologia della musica e culture mediterranee*, ed. Tullia Magrini (Bologna, 1993), pp. 183–204.

25 Pompeo Molmenti, *La Storia di Venezia nella vita privata delle origini alla caduta della Repubblica* (Bergamo, 1905), p. 413.

CAPOLLONIO DI TIRO

Omnipotente iDio fignor fuperno
fenza cominciamento & fёza fine
che fol per liberarci dallinferno
portar degnafti corona di fpine
celeftiale di noi o padre eterno
da cui precedon legratie diuine
donami gratia fignore alprefente
di dir cofa che piaccia a tuᴄta gente

Signor chi in quefto mõdo ei fuёturato
rare uolte ei fenza maninconia
& chi crede arricchir dalcun mercato
fe perde poi lafua mercatantia
quefto bene ha da ftare adolorato
& molti lanno tengon quefta uia
& io nefon che in tal cagion fofpiro
che Apollon mifo chiamar di tyro

Anticamente lo Re Dantioccia
crudeliffimo fu piu chalrro affai
pognan che poi finalmente glinoccia
che compero cioche hauea facto mai
che fu punito della mala roccia
contra di Dio non gliualfe trar guai
& come fuffua uita maladecta
fe mafcoltate per me uifia decta

Regnando quefto Re infu larota
haueua una fua figlia molto bella
chaffai baron lauolen fenza dota
delli piu pro che mai mõtaffi in fella
elpadre fuo che leparole nota
guardando lei che luce come ftella
inel fuo cuore diffe inon ho moglie
fiche dilei poffo fatiar mie uoglie

Quefto maluagio Re hebbe penfato
di mãdar fuor tnёta lafua famiglia
& fi come penfo hebbe ordinato
onde ciafcuno fene marauiglia
& quando uide ben chera celato
nella camera fua chiamo lafiglia
& ella ando allui dibuona fede
fi come apadre che peccar non crede

Et come lhebbe dentro alla fua uoglia
ella lodomando quel che uolea
& egli diffe figlia hora tifpoglia
chel tuo conforto nelletto midea
ella tremando come fa lafoglia
fi fece quel che ilpadre ledicea
& timorofamente fe fpogliata
allato alpadre fi fu cotichata

Figure 3: *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*, translated into Italian by Antonio Pucci. Florence: Bartolomeo de' Libri, 1498, Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, FOAN TES 838

Tyri (see Figure 3), for instance, shows a man dressed in Classical garb standing on a platform and playing a *lira da braccio* before a group of elegantly dressed men, some sitting and some standing. The last verse of the second *ottava rima* says that the man playing the lyre is also the author of the poem: "Apollon mi fo

Figure 4: *Varie canzoni alla villotta in lingua pauana. Composte per gli virtuosi compagni al honor delle signorie vostre*, s. l., 16th century, Venice, Biblioteca nazionale Marciana, MISC 2213.09, Frontispiece

chiamar di Tyro" ("I call myself Apollonius of Tyre"), which explains why he is dressed "all'antica", as Apollonius was supposed to be from the Classical era. Of very similar conception is the frontispiece to the pamphlet *Varie canzoni alla villotta in lingua pauana. Composte per gli virtuosi compagni al honor delle signorie vostre* (see Figure 4). The print has only four folios and contains suggestive erotic poems in the Paduan dialect, as well as a rhyme by the famous Ferrarese poet Antonio Tebaldeo (fol. 4ʳ), and the image on the first page again represents

a man standing on a plinth playing a *lira da braccio* before a composed and well-to-do audience. Printed at the beginning of the sixteenth century, it clearly illustrates the contemporary practices of north-eastern Italy.

Although these images show the *cantastorie* performing on a platform alone, we know that he was often accompanied by a small team, comprising, for example, an instrument player and a jester. Indeed, from the description provided by Giovanni Pontano in his *Antonius* dialogue, we learn that a trumpet player was used to herald the performance and capture the audience's attention; documents from Florence and Perugia also speak of "pifferi", "cialamelle" (double-reed instruments), lutes and viols – more likely *lire da braccio* – used for the same purpose.[26] Once their audience was hooked, a jester or *buffone* then presented the plot, promising a glass of wine to those who remained until the end of the show. These enticements were often handed out by the *cantastorie*'s assistants. Once the *cantastorie* himself had stepped upon the plinth, he performed for about an hour before taking a break, subsequently continuing the show for another hour or so. He either sang and played his instrument, or just sang to an instrumental accompaniment provided by another musician.[27] If the story had not been brought to a satisfactory conclusion within the allotted time-frame, the *cantastorie* would take up where he left off the following day.[28] On some occasions two *cantastorie* took turns to recount the narrative on stage, and if another singer was passing through the square, a competition in *contrasto* was assured.

We also know that, in the 1500s at least, the *cantastorie* had another source of income, selling booklets and flyers featuring printed poetry and illustrations.[29] The music, however, was not written down on these sheets, being a melody repeated every stanza and therefore easily memorised by the members of the public at the end of every cycle of the *ottava rima*. Later, starting from the

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26 E. Levi, I cantari (cf. fn. 3), pp. 16–17, 20, quoting Iacopo Passavanti, *Lo specchio della vera penitenza* (Florence, 1863), p. 284, who wrote: "Questi cosi fatti predicatori, anzi giullari e ramanzieri e buffoni a' quali concorrono gli uditori come a coloro che cantano de' Paladini, che fanno i gran colpi pure con l'archetto e con la viuola" ("these so called predicators, that is to say minstrels and tellers of romances and jesters surrounded by listeners as they were singing chivalric tales, who also make loud strikes with the bow and the viol"), J. Haar, Improvvisatori (cf. fn. 2), p. 84.

27 This is the case of Cristoforo l'Altissimo, see L. Degl'Innocenti, I Reali (cf. fn. 12), p. 29.

28 G. Pontano, Dialogues (cf. fn. 5), vol. 1, pp. 274–277, mentioned by E. Levi, I cantari (cf. fn. 3), p. 17 and B. Soldati, Improvvisatori (cf. fn. 5), vol. 1, pp. 321–342.

29 Ugo Rozzo, *La strage ignorata. I fogli volanti a stampa nell'Italia dei secoli XV et XVI* (Udine, 2008); R. Leydi, L'altra musica (cf. fn. 1), pp. 150–156.

seventeenth century at the latest, the *cantastorie* also advertised their perform-ances using a *cartellone*, a poster illustrating key events in their tales.[30]

A virtuoso narrator and storyteller, the *cantastorie* was the lynchpin of mu-sical life in Italian town squares and marketplaces, the main theatres for his performances. Show dates were fixed month-by-month by the municipal author-ities, which, in certain cases, like Bologna and Tolentino, prohibited the *canta-storie* from performing in churchyards, to safeguard public order in the vicinity of sacred places.[31] That being said, from a local government perspective, the *cantastorie* had an important role to play in civil society, as their sung stories were not merely a source of entertainment, but also a showcase for good exam-ples of behaviour from the ancient world, thereby providing a sort of moral education.[32] Undoubtedly, the *cantastorie*'s show had a profound impact on the public. Michele Savonarola (Padua 1384–Ferrara 1468), physician to Borso d'Este, duke of Ferrara, wrote in his *Confessionale* that confessors should reprimand penitents when they preferred to listen to sung tales than go to vespers ("più voluntiera aldire cantare di romanzo che in giesia cantare il vespro"[33]) indicating that people enjoyed the repertoire so much that they neglected their devotional duties. In fact, it seems that some listeners got so involved in the stories that they were even moved to tears. In his *Facezia* number LXXXI, Poggio Bracciolini mentions the story of a bourgeois man from Milan who was so touched by a *cantastorie's* song on Orlando's death that he arrived home crying, and continued to do so for hours. Furthermore, in the following *Facezia* (number LXXXII), Bracciolini tells us about another man, who paid a *canterino* to postpone the death of the Trojan hero Hector in his song for several days.[34]

In the fifteenth century, the appeal of the *cantastorie* depended mainly on their undisputed ability to tell stories, with the aid of music and gestures, but during the sixteenth century some of their techniques were adopted by a wider

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30 See for examples the paintings by Pietro Longhi (Venice, Museo del '700 veneziano, Palazzo Ca' Rezzonico, Il ciarlatano, inventory number Cl. I N. 0129), Alessandro Magnasco (online: Foto-teca Zeri, entry number 66114 and
http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2008/old-master-paintings-sale-l08031/lot.88.html), and Gian Domenico Tiepolo (Fototeca Zeri, entry number 66599 and https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Il_Cantastorie_(The_Ballad_Singer)_by_Giovanni_B attista_Tiepolo.jpg).
31 E. Levi, I cantari (cf. fn. 3), p. 16.
32 B. Wilson, Canterino (cf. fn. 22), p. 293.
33 Giulio Bertoni, L'"*Orlando furioso*" e la Rinascenza a Ferrara (Modena, 1919), p. 31.
34 Gian Francesco Poggio Bracciolini, *Facezie* (Lanciano, 1912), pp. 60–61. See also E. Levi, I cantari (cf. fn. 3), p. 3.

range of street performers and vendors such as the *imbonitori* or *ciarlatani*, who saw an opportunity to augment their income.[35] It is therefore essential for any kind of historical analysis to draw a clear distinction between these street artists and sellers and the *cantastorie* themselves.

Upward mobility: from the town square to the ducal court

The fifteenth century was undoubtedly the golden age of the *cantastorie* tradition, and in his famous letter, dated 24th May 1454, the poet Michele del Giogante explains to Pietro di Cosimo de' Medici that the *cantastorie* attracted not only a popular audience, but also the elite. Indeed, the letter talks about Simone di Grazia da Firenze, a 16-year-old boy who sang in San Martino, improvising with such natural skill and imagination that del Giogante introduced him to high society, in particular to Lionardo Bartolini Salimbeni, a very powerful personage in Cosimo de' Medici's Florence. Del Giogante tells us that he gave Simone a little notebook containing some written poems by the blind *cantastorie* Niccolò Cieco, which he sung in Saint Martin "per mottetto" (literally "by motet"), giving an extremely moving performance.[36]

It was not only this prodigy who found an aristocratic audience – *canterini* were familiar figures in all the important courts. Even the account books of Pope Leo X document a payment of 41 ducats made on 4th September 1518 to "quello che canta d'Orlando"("to he who sings of Orlando"),[37] while at Ferrara, for example, Borso d'Este had several *cantastorie* in his employ. These included Nicolò and Zoane from Bressa, as well as Giovanni Orbo and Francesco Cieco from Ferrara,[38] and we know that the illustrious singer Nicolò d'Aristotele Zoppino was in Ferrara around 1520, when he was paid to sing *in banco* before the court, and for procuring music books for the children of the duke:

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35 Tomaso Garzoni, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo*, ed. Paolo Cherchi and Beatrice Collina (Turin, 1996), vol. 2, pp. 1192–1193, and Ivano Cavallini, "Sugli improvvisatori del Cinque-Seicento: persistenze, nuovi repertori e qualche riconoscimento", *Recercare* 1 (1989), pp. 23–40.

36 Francesco Flamini, *La lirica toscana del Rinascimento anteriore ai tempi del Magnifico* (Pisa, 1891), pp. 600–601, on Simone pp. 241–243. This letter has been partially published in Bianca Becherini, "Un canta in panca Fiorentino, Antonio di Guido", *Rivista musicale italiana* 50 (1948), pp. 241–247; B. Wilson, Canterino (cf. fn. 22), p. 295.

37 Hermann-Walther Frey, "Regesten zur päpstlichen Kapelle unter Leo X. und zu seiner Privatkapelle. Fortsetzung", *Die Musikforschung* 9 (1956), pp. 139–156: p. 143, also quoted by Anthony M. Cummings, "Three 'gigli': Medici Musical Patronage in the Early Cinquecento", *Recercare* 15 (2003), pp. 39–72: p. 49.

38 Lewis Lockwood, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara, 1400–1505: The Creation of a Musical Center in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1984), p. 105.

5 febbraio 1521: Al Zuppino che canta per tanti libri di canto havuti per li figlioli illustri li portò Sebastiano suo figliolo lire 3.16.0	To "Zoppino who sings" for the many chant books we received for the illustrious sons, which were brought by his son Sebastiano …
27 marzo 1526: Al Zupin che canta in banco a conto de suo credito lire 1.2.067[39]	To "Zupin who sings on a bench" for his credit …

We know of Zoppino from illustrious writers such Celio Calcagnini, Pietro Aretino and Teofilo Folengo, who immortalized his singing in piazza San Marco in a poem. The documentation regarding Nicolò d'Aristotele Zoppino found in the Este court registers also attests that he was a literate musician.[40]

Although these are but a few cases of *cantastorie* who found popularity in the lofty realms of the Italian courts, we must bear in mind that humanists such as Cristoforo Landino also performed, reciting their own poems, on the same stages as the *cantastorie*. This musical practice – connected with the transmission of stories with specific poetic forms (mainly *ottava rima*, but also *sonetti*, *capitoli*, and other forms of rhyme) – was widespread across Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the presence of *cantastorie* at court and the humanists in the town squares promoted a complex series of cultural exchanges between the streets and the palaces. Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* is just such an example – its stanzas were first sung on the streets, to be printed at a later date. This is attested to by Giovanni Battista Pigna, who recounts – in his observation LII of the *Scontri de luoghi* of 1554 – that Ariosto modified his original text on the basis of the interpretations given by *cantastorie* in the city squares.[41] Interest in this poem was so great that Bartolomeo Tromboncino set to music the *ottava rima* "*Queste non son più lagrime che fore*", certainly before the *editio princeps* of *Orlando furioso*, dated 1516.[42] Thus the *cantastorie* held the role of mediator of a literary and musical practice that stretched across all levels of society. Moreover, as Bruno Pianta suggested, "the cantastorie along with the ambulant vendors in the square – being considered the historical aristocracy of the sub-proletariat – is

39 Camilla Cavicchi, "Musici, cantori e 'cantimbanchi' a corte al tempo dell''Orlando Furioso'", *L'uno e l'altro Arioste in corte e nelle delizie*, ed. Gianni Venturi (Florence, 2010), pp. 263–289: p. 282.
40 Ibid., pp. 282–284.
41 Giovanni Battista Pigna, *I Romanzi*, ed. Salvatore Ritrovato (Bologna, 1997), pp. 165–166.
42 Marco Dorigatti, "Il manoscritto dell'Orlando furioso (1505–1515)", *L'uno e l'altro Arioste in corte e nelle delizie*, ed. Gianni Venturi (Florence, 2010), pp. 1–44: pp. 25–27.

an intermediary between the hegemony and the subaltern classes, between cultured and uncultured, presenting himself always as someone who comes from a different social status from his public".[43]

Due to the large diffusion and variety of performers, scholars identify several distinct categories of singers. James Haar in particular found three categories of musicians practising as *improvvisatori*: 1. recognized poets who cultivated a style imitating popular culture; 2. musicians, improvising music on verse by others (such as Pietrobono dal Chitarrino); and 3. itinerant street singers.[44] Blake Wilson, on the other hand, distinguished only two groups: 1. professional singer-poets of modest, usually mercantile, origin and education; and 2. well-educated humanists for whom this practice could have been a part of their education (as suggested in Guarino Veronese's school).[45] Although classification can be made on the basis of the *improvvisatori*'s musical and literary production – mainly humanistic or popular, to better understand their role in society, it is helpful to consider them also from a socio-economic perspective. This leads us to distinguish three categories of performers: 1. professional musicians who earned a living through their musical talent as *cantastorie*; 2. semi-professional musicians, who had a double status and alternated the singing of tales in public with another profession – barbers, for example, but also humanists who liked to present their poems in such a popular context; and 3. non-professional musicians, who sang tales as amateurs, in court or in family settings.[46] These distinctions become relevant when one observes how the repertoires were transmitted to different layers of society.

Music for the *ottava rima*

One of the main difficulties we have in understanding precisely which music was used by the *cantastorie* stems from the oral method used for their transmission and the transfer of musical repertoires from the streets to the court and vice versa. Although documents attest to several terms used to describe the music

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43 Bruno Pianta, "Ricerca sul campo e riflessioni sul metodo", *La Ricerca Folklorica* 1 (1980), pp. 61–65, in particular p. 64: "Il cantastorie dunque come tutti gli imbonitori di piazza, aristocrazia storica del sottoproletariato, è mediatore tra egemonia e subalternità, tra colto e inculto, presentandosi sempre come altro rispetto al pubblico che gli sta di fronte".

44 J. Haar, Improvvisatori (cf. fn. 2), pp. 78–79.

45 B. Wilson, Canterino (cf. fn. 22), p. 297.

46 For this kind of practice see also Brian Richardson, "'Recitato e cantato': The Oral Diffusion of Lyric Poetry in Sixteenth-Century Italy", Theatre, Opera, and Performance in Italy from the Fifteenth Century to the Present: Essays in Honour of Richard Andrews, ed. id., Simon Gilson, and Catherine Keen (Leeds, 2004), pp. 67–82.

performed by the *cantastorie* in the fifteenth century, for example Michele del Giogante talks about singing "per mottetto",[47] a document from Perugia mentions "cantare de improviso cantilenas",[48] and Alberico da Rosciate and Giovanni Giovano Pontano use the verb "succinere", as discussed above,[49] but what precisely do these expressions correspond to in practical terms? Due to oral transmission of their repertoire, until recently we had no extant musical sources linked to fifteenth-century *cantastorie*, and were therefore forced to base our hypotheses about this era on sixteenth-century sources.[50] However, a manuscript has recently and fortuitously come to light in the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati in Siena, and to this date remains the only source preserving music for *cantari*. The manuscript in question, miscellaneous L.XI.41, measures 20 cm x 15 cm, and preserves two notated folios.[51] The music is part of an originally independent fascicle of paper folios containing: 1. the so-called *Credo di Dante* by Antonio da Ferrara (fols. 1–4); 2. two polyphonic pieces for two voices, the first on fol. 4^v and the second – stored separately at the end of the collection – on fol. 78^r (see Figures 5–6); and 3) a rhymed calendar of saints by Giorgio da Firenze OFM on fol. 78^v.

It seems clear that the fascicle was prepared for the purposes of transcribing the *Credo*, and that the remaining blank spaces were eventually filled up with the polyphonic music and calendar. Between fol. 4^v and fol. 78^v, the miscellaneous manuscript also collects: the office of Saint Trinity; some treatises on mixing colours, making stained glass and miniatures; notes; astronomical and mathematical tables; a tonary to sing the *Magnificat*, and psalms accompanied by the *De modo psallendi* attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux (fol. 56^v–57^r).[52] No watermarks or dates are visible on the fascicle that bears the notated polyphonic

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47 F. Flamini, La lirica (cf. fn. 36), p. 600.

48 E. Levi, I cantari (cf. fn. 3), p. 12.

49 G. Pontano, in his Antonius, describes the singing with the lyre as "aliquid succine", see B. Soldati, Improvvisatori (cf. fn. 5), p. 325.

50 J. Haar, "Arie per cantare stanze ariostesche", *L'Ariosto, la musica, i musicisti, ed. Maria Antonella Balsano* (Florence, 1981), pp. 31–46; C. Cavicchi, Musici (cf. fn. 39); Iain Fenlon, "Orality and Print: Singing in the Street in Early Modern Venice", *Interactions between Orality and Writing in Early Modern Italian Culture*, ed. Luca Degl'Innocenti, Brian Richardson, and Chiara Sbordoni, (London, 2016), pp. 81–98.

51 For a more complete description of the manuscript see http://www406.regione.toscana.it/bancadati/codex/#.

52 Institutio Sancti Bernardi abbatis Clareuallis quomodo cantare et psallere debeamus, see Chrysogonus Waddell, "A Plea for the 'Institutio Sancti Bernardi quomodo cantare et psallere debeamus'", *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux: Studies Commemorating the Eighth Centenary of His Canonization*, ed. M. Basil Pennington (Kalamazoo, MI, 1977), pp. 187–188. See also the online edition in *Thesaurus Musicarum Latinarum*.

Figures 5 and 6: Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, ms. L.XI.41, fols. 4v–5r and 77v–78r

music, which we can, however, date around the first half of the fifteenth century.[53] It appears that there was once a title, now erased, at the end of the *Credo*, but its faint traces are no longer legible, even with the aid of a Wood-lamp. As for the music itself, the first piece, for alto and tenor (respectively clefs C2 and C3), is written in black mensural notation and starts on fol. 4^{v}, ending in the last stave on fol. 78^{r}.

The accompanying poem is the first *ottava* of *La passione,* a *cantare* by Niccolò Cicerchia (1335 *c.*–after 1376), who was a famous *canterino* from Siena (see Example 1). Comparison of the poem in this source with the critical edition by Giovanni Varanini (see Tables 1a and 1b) shows that lines 3 to 6 are omitted in the Siena manuscript, meaning that the first section of music – which we call section A – was almost certainly also used to sing lines 3 to 6, while lines 7 and 8 were sung to section B.

The other polyphonic piece, also for alto and tenor, respectively in clefs C3 and C4 (see Example 2), is notated in the first five staves of fol. 78^{r}, accompanied by a poem with the incipit "Menato fu Yhesù dentral diserto", part of an ottava rima toscana (Tables 2a and 2b). The four lines written down tell of the temptation of Christ in the desert, and are taken from a rhyming version of the Gospel of Luke 4, 1–2,[54] which is preserved as anonymous in another Tuscan manuscript LIX.6.8 (inv. 6562) held in the Biblioteca Comunale Guarnacci in Volterra.[55] Comparison of the Siena and Volterra manuscripts shows that lines 3–6 are once again omitted, indicating that the polyphonic pieces in the Siena manuscript both have the same musical structure (A A A B).

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53 The termine *a quo* of the miscellaneous manuscript is 1393.

54 My thanks to Luca Degl'Innocenti for having brought this detail to my attention. To give a comparison to the reader, this is a fifteenth-century translation of the Bible in the vernacular: "Et Iesus pieno de spirito sancto partisse dal Iordano, et era menato dal spirito nel deserto per quaranta giorni. Et era tentato dal diavolo, et in quelli giorni non mangiò alcuna cosa, et finiti quelli giorni hebe fame." See *Biblia vulgare istoriata*, transl. Niccolò Malerbi (Venice: Lucantonio di Giunta, 1490), p. 363. For other Italian translations of the Bible see Alma Huszthy in Vági, *Volgarizzamenti biblici nella Toscana medievale. Una versione anonima dei Vangeli*, PhD diss., Piliscsaba, Péter Pázmány University, 2010 (http://mek.oszk.hu/09200/09261/09261.pdf).

55 Giovanni Giannini, *Inventario dei manoscritti della Biblioteca Guarnacci di Volterra. Inventari dei manoscritti delle biblioteche d'Italia* 2, ed. Giuseppe Mazzatinti (Forlì, 1892), p. 183, n. 32; *IUPI. Incipitario unificato della poesia italiana*, ed. Marco Santagata, vol. 2 (Modena, 1988), p. 948: "Menato fu Gesù dentro al diserto". The Volterra ms. 6562 (dated around 1475) preserves two poems by Antonio Beccari called Antonio da Ferrara (fols. 51r–53r): the *Credo* di Dante ("Io scrissi già d'amor più volte in rima" in terza rima, poem n. XXII) and "O pater Noster che se' sì amabile". See Maestro Antonio da Ferrara (Antonio Beccari), *Rime*, ed. Laura Bellucci (Bologna, 1967), p. XXVIII, fn. 223, poems number XIX and XXII.

Example 1: Transcription of Anonymous, "*O increata maestà di Dio*", Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, ms. L.XI.41. Poem from *La passione* by Niccolò Cicerchia Senese (1335 *c.*–after 1376)

Text in the alto part	Text in the tenor part	Music
O increata *mastà* di Dio O infinita eterna potença	O increata *maestà* di Dio O infinita eterna potença	A
E *cho* la gratia tua in me discende De la passion sancta cor m'ac- cende.	E *co* la gratia tua in me discende De la passion sancta *'l* cor m'ac- cende.	B

Table 1a (italics indicate variants in the texts)

O increata magestà di Dio,
o infinita eterna potenza,
O Iesù santo, forte, giusto e pio,
el qual se' pien di somma sapïenza,
Spirto Santo, a lo 'ntelletto mio
dona virtù, fontana di cremenza;
e co' la grazia tua in me discende,
de la passïon santa 'l cor m'accende.[56]

Table 1b: Niccolò Cicerchia, *La passione*, first ottava, from *Cantari religiosi senesi del Trecento*

Both pieces also present several peculiar notational details, such as additional bar lines (half, simple and double) used to separate the melody of each poetic line, and some thin diagonal signs which link notes to specific syllables, mainly in cadences. Some similarities in the musical hand to the monophonic passions transcribed in the Comutius manuscript in Cividale, enable us to date the notation to around 1450.[57] "*Menato fu Yhesu*" also presents erased notes, especially in the second line of the tenor part,[58] and comparison of this transcription of the piece to the Volterra literary source reveals several variations, such as "lame" (blades, which makes no sense here) instead of "rame" (branches), and the suppression of the conjunction "o" (or) in the phrase "per spiritu o per atione". In all probability these are mistranscriptions of the original text arising from the oral method of transmission.

56 Niccolò Cicerchia, "La Passione", *Cantari religiosi senesi del Trecento. Neri Pagliaresi, Fra Felice Tancredi da Massa, Niccolò Cicerchia*, ed. Giovanni Varanini (Bari, 1965), p. 309.

57 Cividale, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Ms. XXIV (by Commuzzo della Campagnola, 1448). My thanks to Michael Scott Cuthbert for having pointed out this aspect and brought this manuscript to my attention. See Pierluigi Petrobelli, "Four Passions in 'Cantus Fractus' Notation", *Ars Musica – Musica Sacra*, ed. David Hiley (Tutzing, 2007), pp. 57–68.

58 The melody was first written a third higher, then erased and rewritten a third down.

Example 2: Transcription of Anonymous, "*Menato fu Yhesù dentr' al diserto*", Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, ms. L.XI.41

Text in the alto part	Text in the tenor part	Music
Menato fu Yhesù dentral diserto Per *espirto* sancto per atione	Menato fu Yhesù dentral diserto Per *spirto* sancto per atione	A
Giacendo terra fra fresche *lame* Finito questo tempo gl'*ebbe* fame.	*Iacendo* terra fra le fresche *lame* Finito questo tempo egl'*ebe* fame.	B

Table 2a (italics indicate variants in the texts)

Menato fu Yhesu dentro al diserto
Per spirtu sancto o per atione
Secondo che'l vangel ci mostra aperto
Perch'el dimonio gli disse tentatione
Quaranta di et nocti fermo et certo
Et digiuno con molta divotione.
Giacendo in terra fralle fresche rame
finito questo tempo egli ebbe fame.

Table 2b: Volterra, Biblioteca Comunale Guarnacci, ms. LIX.6.8 (inv. 6562), fol. 59v

The origin and function of this music, however, are not so obvious, as the presence of music alongside *cantari* poems in this manuscript is, as previously mentioned, unique. Although the textual variants suggest that the music was very likely transmitted together with the poem, supporting the hypothesis that both came from the *cantastorie* milieu, intriguing questions still remain. For instance, both pieces transcribed in the Siena manuscript are for two voices; does that mean we can assume that *cantastorie* performed polyphonic settings? Or, are these two pieces a polyphonic version composed on traditional *cantastorie* monodies? Bearing in mind Alberico da Rosciate's assertion that talks about two *cantastorie* "unus cantando alter succinendo et respondendo", we could interpret the term "succinere" as singing polyphonies,[59] but, if both poems – Cicerchia's *Passione* and the rhymed Gospel of Luke – were popular in the cantastorie's repertoire, their presence in such a manuscript, alongside the *Credo* by Dante and the calendar of saints, could also be linked to devotional practice. If this is indeed the case, this music could have had an autonomous existence outside the *cantastorie*'s activity, perhaps as *lauda* for devotional circumstances. Indeed, we know that the *cantastorie* themselves also composed *laude*.[60]

59 See A. Fiammazzo, Il commento (cf. fn. 17) and G. Cattin, 'Secundare' (cf. fn. 19).
60 Francesco Luisi, "Minima fiorentina. Sonetti a mente, canzoni a ballo e cantimpanca nel Quattrocento", *Musica Franca. Essays in Honor of Frank A. D'Accone*, ed. Irene Alm, Alyson McLamore, and Colleen Reardon (Stuyvesant, NY, 1996), pp. 79–95.

Whatever the original function of this music, comparison with sixteenth-century formulas for the ottava rima shows continuity with this fifteenth-century tradition. In particular, while writing about the dithyramb in his *Istitutioni armoniche* (1558), Gioseffo Zarlino explained that the music for some specific poetic compositions, for instance sonnets, *ottave rime*, and *capitoli*, was called "aria", "aere" or "modo":

La quale Harmonia era terminata, & costituita sotto vn certo Modo, ouero Aria, che lo vogliamo dire, di cantare; si come sono quelli modi di cantare, sopra i quali cantiamo al presente li Sonetti, o Canzoni del Petrarca, oueramente le Rime dell'Ariosto. Et cotali Modi non si possono mutare, ouero alterare in parte alcuna fuora del loro terminato Numero, o Metro, senza offesa dell'vdito;[61]	The melody consisted of a certain mode or "aria di cantare", as we would say, such as the airs on which we now sing the sonnets or *canzoni* of Petrarch or the *rime* of Ariosto. These airs cannot be changed or altered in any particular from their determined meter, or they would offend the ear, just as we are disturbed if the meter in a dance is even slightly altered.[62]

In Zarlino's time, the *aere* was therefore a syllabic chant, which involved perfect correspondence between the meter of the text and the rhythm of the melody. Furthermore, ten years before Zarlino, Tuttovale Menon published, in his *Madrigali d'Amore*, two *aeri* for *ottava rima*, one in duple and the other in triple meter. Unfortunately, only the tenor part remains,[63] but these *aeri* present similarities to those mentioned by Zarlino, possessing striking syllabation features based around the hendecasyllable.

This music also bears two musical features in common with the Siena manuscript; firstly, the rhythm of the melody underscores the hendecasyllable accentuation on the main verse accents, such as the fourth (hendecasyllable *a*

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61 Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le istitutioni harmoniche* (Venice, 1558), Terza Parte, cap. 79, p. 289.

62 Gioseffo Zarlino, *The Art of Counterpoint. Part Three of "Le istitutioni harmoniche, 1558"*, translated by Guy A. Marco and Claude V. Palisca (New Haven, 1968), pp. 285–286.

63 Tuttovale Menon, *Madrigali d'Amore* (Ferrara: Giovanni Buglhat & Antonio Hucher, 1548) [RISM A I: M2271], see
http://www.bibliotecamusica.it/cmbm/viewschedatwbca.asp?path=/cmbm/images/ripro/gaspari/_T/T095/
(the item with the heading "Aere da cantare stantie" on fol. 23v is image 30/32). The tenor partbook is preserved in Bologna, Museo e biblioteca internazionale della musica. Girolamo Scotto republished the madrigals by Menon in 1549, but he selected only 38 madrigals from the previous 43 and suppressed the two aeri. An extant exemplar of the cantus and the tenor partbook from this edition is in the Accademia Filarmonica di Verona [RISM A I: M2272].

minore), sixth (hendecasyllable *a maiore*) and tenth syllables. Moreover, the musical structure has two sections – A and B, where A is used for the first six lines, while the last two are sung on B. Based on the two sources mentioned above, these features seem to be characteristic of the music for the *ottava rima*, at least in the mid-sixteenth century.

Around the same time, the practice of improvisational composition of poems became very popular. In 1558, the same year as Zarlino's *Istitutioni*, Girolamo Ruscelli published in Venice *Del modo di comporre in versi nella lingua italiana*, a treatise which also describes how to compose *ottava rima*.[64] Ruscelli recounts a performance by Silvio Antoniano, a famous musician and lawyer who sang to the lyre, as well as the lute, with an extremely gracious voice, facial expressions and gestures, which, alongside pronunciation, were all fundamental elements of this kind of performance. Antoniano was apparently able to improvise *ottava rima* on any subject that people proposed,[65] a skill that was also practiced by *cantastorie* and *ciarlatani* – people from different social backgrounds who adopted this art to entrance their public, which included humanists, diplomats and politicians, such as Nicolò Machiavelli (who was himself an excellent *canterino*).[66]

Despite this universal appeal, scholars of the time were well aware of the distinction between the worldly and more down-to-earth ways of setting *ottave* to music. This is illustrated in a speech by Giovanni Bardi, given at the *Accademia degli Alterati* on 24th February 1583,[67] in which he defended Ariosto's poetry against the scathing criticism that some highbrow scholars had levelled against it, due to the fact that it was recited in the streets to and by the "common" people. He emphasised the distinction between music "figurata" or "fatta dall'arte" (polyphony), and that "a aria" or "secondo natura", which was sung monodically without instrumental accompaniment:

64 Girolamo Ruscelli, *Del modo di comporre in versi nella lingua italiana* (Venice: Giovanni Battista & Melchiorre Sessa, 1558/1559), pp. CVI–CXIII. On this treatise see Luca Degl'Innocenti, "Machiavelli canterino?", *Nuova Rivista di Letteratura Italiana* 18 (2015), pp. 11–67.

65 G. Ruscelli, ibid., p. CVIII: "cantar sopra la lira o sopra il liuto, et con infinita gratia di voce, di volto et di maniere facendo stanze d'ottava rima all'improviso sopra qualsivoglia soggetto che gli fosse apposto".

66 L. Degl'Innocenti, Machiavelli (cf. fn. 64).

67 For further considerations on Bardi's speech and on the success of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* in music see James Haar, "From 'Cantimbanco' to Court: The Musical Fortunes of Ariosto in Florentine Society", *L'arme e gli amori. Ariosto, Tasso and Guarini in Late Renaissance Florence*. Villa I Tatti 20, ed. Massimiliano Rossi and F. Gioffredi Superbi (Florence, 2004), vol. 2, pp. 179–197.

Or di qual poeta si cantano più parole messe in musica e composte da eccellenti uomini, figurata e come si dice a aria che di questi e del Petrarca? Le stanze del Bembo che sono cotanto miracolose, furono pur messe tutte a cinquanta in musica da uomo peritissimo, e sono continuamente, come altresì le poesie del Petrarca, per la bocca d'ognuno. Meritano dunque biasimo questi eccellenti uomini per esser cantati da tutto il mondo, e figuratamente e ad aria? No di vero, anzi loda, poiché sono adoperati per quello sono stati fatti dall'arte e dalla natura. Farò qui un poco di digressione dicendo, che l'arie che si cantano non son altro che musica e composte da uomini periti in quella scienza e se sono cantate da uomini idioti, adivie-ne per la loro facilità, nella quale consiste l'eccellenza della cosa; ... Dico ancora che le nostre arie sono più secondo la natura che quelle chiamate musicali, e che più s'appressano alle antiche tanto celebrate dalli scrittori, e in particolare dell' arie che si cantano senza accordo.[68]

Now, whose poet more often than this one [Ariosto] and Petrarch do we sing their poems set to music and by excellent musicians composed as polyphonic pieces or, as we say, as airs? Bembo's stanzas, which are so extra-ordinary, were all fifty set to music by a very expert composer, and everyone regularly sings them, as well as Petrarch's poems. Should we blame these excellent men, because their poems are sung by everybody, as "figurata" [in polyphony] or as airs? Not at all, we have indeed to praise them, because they suit art and nature. I will explain better this concept by saying that the airs that we sing are nothing else than music composed by expert musicians, and that if poor people sing them it is because of their simplicity, and this fact demonstrates that this music is excellent. ... I also say that our airs are more close to nature than those called "musical", and they are more similar to the ancient airs so celebrated by the writers, and in particular to the airs which we sing without instrumental accompaniment.

Like Giovanni Bardi, Zarlino also considered the airs similar to ancient sung poetry, being musically simpler than polyphony, more natural, and therefore more akin to ancient music. This confirms that the intellectuals of sixteenth-century Italy perceived the airs sung by *cantastorie* as a living reminder of an-

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68 Giovanni Bardi, *Della imp. villa Adriana e di altre sontuosissime già adiacenti alla città di Tivoli* (Florence, 1825), pp. 60–61.

cient music. These considerations also fuelled the famous discussions which gave rise to the advent of pseudo-monody and the origins of opera.

In the fifteenth century, the music of the *cantastorie* certainly provided inspirational models for court musicians. At the Este court, for example, different types of profane monody were heard, as in the humanist practice of singing accompanied by the lyre previously recommended by Paolo Vergerio and Guarino Veronese and later taken up by Marsilio Ficino in his Orphic song.[69] Court performers also borrowed the use of monody in the intonation of classical poetry, as suggested by Francesco Negri in his *Brevis grammatica* (1480), in which some examples of this type of monody have survived.[70] In Negri's "grammar", the rhythmic model of the melodies did not correspond to the metrics of classical poetry. However, according to Fiorella Brancacci, Negri's melodies ("harmoniae") did not aim to teach quantitative classical metrics, unlike the 1499 edition.[71] Instead, Negri's "carmina composita" organization of the rhythm was a stylized metric transposition, an up-to-date interpretation of classical metrics, which in all probability reflected a musical practice that had already been consolidated.

In parallel with this monodic tradition of the *cantastorie* and humanistic solo singing accompanied by a string instrument (lute, rebec, lyre), Ottaviano Petrucci, in the early 1500s, printed *aeri per capitoli*, *aeri per sonetti*, and *aeri per versi latini*, all arranged for four voices and destined for professional musicians and amateurs.[72] Similar settings of *aeri*, but textless, appear in sixteenth-century manu-

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69 Daniel P. Walker, "Le chant orphique de Marsile Ficin", *Musique et poésie au XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1954), pp. 17–33.

70 Francesco Negri (Franciscus Niger), *Brevis Grammatica* (Venice: Theodor Franck, 1480; see http://inkunabeln.digitale-sammlungen.de/Ausgabe_N-186.html); id., Grammatica (Basle: Jakob Wolff 1499, see http://inkunabeln.digitale-sammlungen.de/Ausgabe_N-187.html). Francesco Negri was teacher to the future powerful cardinal Ippolito I d'Este.

71 Fiorella Brancacci, "Dal canto umanistico su versi latini alla frottola. La tradizione dell'ode saffica", *Studi musicali* 34 (2005), pp. 267–318.

72 *Strambotti, Ode, Frottole, Sonetti. Et modo de cantare uersi latini e capituli. Libro quarto* (Venice: Ottaviano Petrucci, 1504, RISM B I [1505]5, see http://stimmbuecher.digitale-sammlungen.de/view?id=bsb00082310), which collects: an anonymous *Aer de capituli* "*Li angelici sembianti*" (n. 10, fol. 8v); an anonymous *Modo de cantar sonetti* (n. 19, fol. 14r); Antonio Capirola's *Aer de uersi latini* (n. 62, fol. 36r); Filippo de Lurano's *Aer per capitoli* "*Un solicito amor una gran fède*" (n. 91, fol. [106]v). In *Frottole Libro Nono* (Venice: Ottaviano Petrucci, 1508, RISM B I 15092, see http://stimmbuecher.digitale-sammlungen.de/view?id=bsb00082315): Marchetto Cara's *Aer de capitoli* "*Nasce la speme mia*" (n. 2, fol. 2v). And finally, in *Frottole Libro Undecimo* (Venice: Ottaviano Petrucci, 1514, RISM B I 15142), the *Aer da capitoli* "*Poi che son di speranza al tutto privo*" (n. 45) by Ioannes Lulinus Venetus. On this music see Francesco Luisi, *Del cantar a libro*

scripts for lute and keyboard.[73] James Haar has argued that although no Italian popular music from this period is extant, having been part of an oral tradition, the melodies from these performances were re-used by composers in written genres such as the *frottola* and madrigals. In the polyphonic repertoire in *ottave* from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, Haar isolated the music that would have enabled the *ottave rime* of the *cantastorie* to be intoned. In his search for an *aere* model, James Haar focussed mainly on the recurrence of a melodic profile that would precisely fit the *ottava*, which was frequently used in polyphonic compo-sitions accompanying Ariosto's poems. He specifically identifies what he be-lieves to be the source melody for both "*Alcun non puo saper*" and "*Come la notte*", sug-gesting its pre-existence as an aria in the Ferrarese tradition of *improvvisatori*.[74] Haar also identified a theme for laments that first appeared in Tromboncino's "*Queste non son piu lachryme che fore*", then in "*Dunque baciar sì bell'e dolce labbia*" by Jacques de Wert· and in the *Lamento di Sacripante per la fugga d'Angelica* by Jacquet Berchem, as well as uncovering the use of several melodic formulas that he considered to be linked to the oral tradition, specifically a lament tune in the upper voice alone (a); the Ruggiero tune (b), a descending-fourth lament for-mula (c), and a melody already used in a setting by Serafino Aquilano (d).[75] Moreover, Haar considered a song by Enriquez de Valderrábano on "*Ruggier qual sempre fui tal esser voglio*" as "the most striking melody that … can be identified with the improvisatory tradition".[76]

Haar's attempts to recover the context of the lost *aeri* show the existence of two types of music, namely formulas and melodies, both based on declamation. Interesting enough, some pieces of music categorised as the latter present simi-lar characteristics to those found in the Siena manuscript, where the rhythm of the melody follows the specific accents of the hendecasyllables. This trait is also common to the *Aria da cantare ottave* by the noble Sienese Claudio Saracini (1586–1630), the most ancient monodic *aere* to feature sung stanzas. Published

… *o sulla viola. La musica vocale nel Rinascimento: studi sulla musica vocale profana in Italia nei secoli XV e XVI* (Turin, 1977), pp. 351–362; J. Haar, Improvvisatori (cf. fn. 2), pp. 87–88.

73 Victor Coelho, "Raffaello Cavalcanti's Lute Book (1590) and the Ideal of Singing and Playing", *Le Concert des voix et des instruments à la Renaissance*, ed. Jean-Michel Vaccaro (Paris, 1995), pp. 423–442; Robert Nosow, "The Debate on Song in the Accademia Fiorentina", *Early Music His-tory* 21 (2002), pp. 175–221.

74 See James Haar, "Rore's Settings of Ariosto", *Essays in Musicology: A Tribute to Alvin Johnson*, ed. Lewis Lockwood and Edward Roesner (Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 100–125.

75 J. Haar, Improvvisatori (cf. fn. 2), pp. 95–99, and the related musical examples 26–27 and 34 in the appendix, pp. 189–190 and 193.

76 Ibid., p. 97.

in his *Le terze musiche* in 1620,[77] the poem set to this music is "*Strane guise d'amar d'amor fedele*", an *ottava* by Giovan Battista Marino.[78] Saracini's *aria*, with the basso continuo, is a melody without internal sections and repetitions: a quatrain of hendecasyllables is sung, repeated in the following quatrain, and then for an indeterminate number of stanzas, as necessary. Within this musical structure, there is a melodic line for every hendecasyllable, featuring a melodic profile characterised by a declamation on the same note (first line on *d"*, second line on *c"*, third line *b*-flat*"*, the fourth line around *f'*) and a conclusion of the melody on the lower fourth and lower fifth. The melody is syllabic, and its rhythm follows the accents of the hendecasyllable, as in the Siena manuscript and Menon's *aeri*. In Saracini's *aere*, however, the absence of a musical structure with refrains and the strong declamatory connotation of the *aria* bring to mind Jean-Jacques Rousseau's transcription of the popular Italian song *Psalmodie nouvelle sur le Tasse*,[79] revealing features in common with the Italian tradition of the *cantastorie*.

In particular, the airs used by twentieth-century *improvvisatori* are devoid of refrains, involving, instead, four melodic phrases, each one destined for four hendecasyllables and repeated for the entire cycle of *ottave* to be sung. The melody is markedly syllabic, declamatory, and linked to the eleven syllables of the verse. The example by Vittorio Lorenzi, also known as "il Poetino" (a *cantastorie* from Treppio, near Sambuca Pistoiese), recorded by Alan Lomax on 28th November 1954 (Roma, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Raccolta 240, 12) demonstrates the practice (please listen to the following audio link):
http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:hbz:6-02259747035.
Il Poetino sings "*Le donne, i cavallier, l'arme e gli amori*", the first *ottava* from the *Orlando Furioso* by Ariosto. The first line starts with an interval of ascending major second *e*-flat*'*–*f'*, declamation on *e*-flat*'* and conclusion on *a*; the second

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77 Claudio Saracini, *Aria da cantar ottaue, Le terze musiche … per cantar et sonar nel chitarrone, arpicordo et altri stromenti* (Venice: Alessandro Vincenti, 1620, RISM A I S912), p. 24, see http://www.bibliotecamusica.it/cmbm/viewschedatwbca.asp?path=/cmbm/images/ripro/gaspari /BB/BB310/, image 28/40. This aria has been first pointed out by M. Agamennone, Modi (cf. fn. 20), pp. 169–171. On Saracini see Nigel Fortune and Peter Laki, "Saracini, Claudio", *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/24577 [23. Sep. 2016].

78 Giovan Battista Marino, *Della lira del caualier Marino. Parte terza* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Ciotti, 1616), *L'amante ruffiano*, p. 272.

79 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les consolations des misères de ma vie* (Paris, De Roullede de la Chevardi-ère, 1781), n. 94 p. 198 (http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84525654/f222.image). Concerning the transmission of this air and of the *Ottava fiorentina* in Rousseau's collection, see C. Ghirardini, La naturale (cf. fn. 1).

line starts with an interval of ascending minor third *e'–g'*, declamation on *e'* and *f'* and cadence on *b*; in the third line the declamation is on *e'* and *f'*, then the fourth line has declamation on *e'* and cadence on *a*. The melody is embellished at the end of each verse. A similar profile also appears in the declamations of Sicilian *contastorie* (storytellers).[80]

If we consider the fact that Claudio Saracini was from Siena, a town where the tradition of the *cantastorie* had been established in the thirteenth century and was still going strong in his time, we can argue that he likely took inspiration from the popular tradition of singing *ottave rime*. On the other hand, this *aria* is very similar to the *recitativo* style and declamation that were very much in vogue at Saracini's time. Indeed, his *aria* inevitably brings to mind several passages from the *recitativo* in Monteverdi's *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* on the chivalric poem *Gerusalemme liberata* by Torquato Tasso. One of the best monodists of his time, Saracini was indeed a follower of Monteverdi, and dedicated a monody to him – on "*Udite lagrimosi Spirti d'Averno*" from Giovanni Battista Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido*.[81]

We know from Zarlino and Bardi's letter that *cantastorie* airs were the subject of discussion in academic debates, defended as echoes of ancient music and representative of the natural style. Could we speculate that, like other composers of his time, Monteverdi took inspiration from this street music? In support of this hypothesis, Roberto Leydi, after having studied the Sicilian *contastorie* repertoire for years, pointed out surprising parallels between the specific rhythm used by *contastorie* to tell battles and the *genere concitato* invented by Monteverdi.[82] Unfortunately, even if, as Haar demonstrated, many famous courtly composers were inspired by and used melodies from the *cantastorie* repertoire, we do not currently have knowledge of any sources that would further investigation in this field.

That being said, combining the available historical evidence with findings from ethnomusicological research reveals that the *cantastorie* drew from a fairly large repertoire of melodies, none of which appears to be linked to a particular poetic *ottava*.[83] The oldest sources document the use of music featuring refrains

80 S. Bonanzinga, Narrazioni (cf. fn. 1), p. 74.
81 Claudio Saracini, *Le seconde musiche … per cantar et sonar nel chitarrone, arpicordo et altri stromenti, et nel fine il Lamento della Madonna in stile recitativo* (Venice: Alessandro Vincenti, 1620, RISM A I S911), pp. 1–2. See *The Monteverdi Companion*, ed. Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune (London, 1968), pp. 120–121, 204.
82 R. Leydi, L'altra musica (cf. fn. 1), pp. 142–143.
83 This calls into question the considerations regarding the famous aria del Ruggiero, which historical musicologists have long considered linked to the ottava "Ruggier qual sempre fui tal esser voglio", and which ethnomusicologists instead maintain is a descant formula linked to dance.

and repeated verses emphasizing the accent of the hendecasyllable verse like in the Siena manuscript, in Tromboncino's *strambotti* and in Menon's *aere*. Later sources, such as Saracini's *aria*, are, however, devoid of refrains and adopt a stark declamatory style, being sung on a repeated note. In addition to bearing witness to the continuity of the transmission of this musical knowledge, such close parallels with the tradition of the improvisational poets illustrate that this type of formula was suitable for recitation of cycles of *ottave*, a practice that persisted into living memory. Although we have lost much of the music of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century *cantastorie*, we can re-evoke the context in which they performed, as well as their manner of singing and their poetic compositions. This, alongside a comparison of the popular and cultured traditions of the time, enable us to confirm that the *cantastorie* drew on a rich and diverse repertoire of monodic formulas with different musical specificities and connotations.

See, for example, J. Haar, Arie (cf. fn. 50), and Nico Staiti, "La formula di discanto di Ruggiero", *Culture musicali. Quaderni di etnomusicologia* 6 (1987), pp. 47–79.