Eugeen Schreurs

Instrumental Musica nd 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 wit-
nessed the rise of what we in contemporary musicology could call »independent instrumental chamber music«, often – but not always – intended for homogeneous ensembles of instruments.¹ At present there are no unam-
biguous 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 par-

cular. 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 musi-
cians. The type of treat (e.g. tripes also points in the direction of amusement.²

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] Juniùs [1454]: »Item doc men Sint e Leonarde omdroeoch aen die pippers 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. 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).

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). 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 penter« («to the fellows of the play: 1 peter»), «Item smorgens een pensen de gesellen ende verteert: 6 st. 1 oert» («in the morning for tripes consumed by the players: 6 st. 1 oert»), «Item Jan der Hane [minstre]»: 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).

Raymond van Aerde, Ménstrés 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 slanger (drummer), pipers, pijfers (pipers); 1487–8: Heeren pipen (lords’ piper), biscope pipen (bishop’s piper), stadtpijpers (city piper); 1495–6: snauerpelders (string players), lutiers (lutenists), ministreder, ministrelen, speelijden (minstrels). Other examples: 1414–5: 24 trompers, 58 pipers, 69 snauerpelders, 51 minstrels; in total 202 musicians; 1428–9: 24 trompers, 35 pipers, 64 snauerpelders, 24 [minstrels]; in total 147 musicians.


Figure 1: City minstrels with loud wind instruments in the procession of 1594 with municipal blazon on the shoulder.

Figure 2: Musicians with two different types of stringed instruments, a bagpipe and a harp in the procession of 1594.


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.8

(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 1530.9 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.10 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).11 In Ghent, the birthplace of Agricola and

8 June 1460: «Item Johannes van Halle ende syne sone vooz tsakrament gespeelt: 3 st.» (<to Johannes van Halle and his son for playing before the Sacrament: 3 st.>), «Item die hoechpiper: 15 st.» (<to the loud pipers: 15 st.>), «Item 9 gheselle die opt snar 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 Mechelen, Rekeningen (cf. fn. 2), p. 68.

9 Godelieve Spiessens, «De Antwerpse stadsspellelieden. Deel I: 15e en 16e eeuw,» De Noordpauw 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: XVde eeuw),» Belgisch tijdschrift voor muziekgeschiedenis – Revue belge de musicologie 22 (1968), pp. 5–26.


11 1559: on Sundays and feast days they had to play «tecker reyse twee lieckens 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 lieckens van muzycye»: 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-15th century see the manuscript GB-Lbl,
Jacob Obrecht, who’s 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.  

(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. 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. 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 whine 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.

(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.


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. There are no explicit archival references to a homogeneous string ensemble, but we may logically assume its existence (see below).

It is within this briefly sketched «musical biotope» that Agricola, who according to his *epitaph* enjoyed fame as a string player, together with the organist Henricus Bredemers and singers/composers such as Pierre de la Rue, de Orto and Johannes Braçonnière, thrilled 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. 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 *Tandemakens*, 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

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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.
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. 20 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. 21 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. 22 Viols are clearly mentioned in Tielman Susato’s Sixie[n] livre contenant trente et une chansons nouvelles des chansons convenables & propices a jouer sur les violes & autre instrumentz musicales (Antwerp 1545, RISM 154514). 23 A bit later, in 1562, we even find, in a confraternity context, an English viol (or violin?) consort at ’s-Hertogenbosch. 24 

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 vioole«. The term »vioole« is somewhat ambiguous and can refer, depending on the context, to a violin or a viol.
22 C. 1540: »ick hoorde oock seer gheenechelijck spelen met vier duytsche fluyte ... My dunkt dat Duystche waren, want die van onsene lande en spelen in sulck manieren niet als sy-lieden speelden, offt het moest zyn van ’s Keysers volck, naer myn verstand« (»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«): Réne Bernard Lenaerts, Het Nederlands polyfonisch 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 zangeren. Meestenijnde 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 maichen in Engeland een cofferen met vyff violen, [samen met een] vyffcanten lessenai dai 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, voride zangers opte sitten als 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 illu-
mination, 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 15022) and Canti C
(Venice, 1504, RISM 15043), seems to have seen advantage in it. Similarly,
Pierre Attaingnant, in his Paris chanson book of 1533, apparently con-
sidered 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 15334) as well did Susato in 1545 as mentioned
above.25

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.26 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.27

25 See Howard Mayer Brown, Instrumental music printed before 1600 (Cambridge, 1965),
pp. 43–4.
27 For the rise of instrumental music see also Strohm, ibid., pp. 358–9, 568–70. For
Tandernaken/Tandernack see Schreurs, Petrus Alamire (cf. fn. 19), p. 20.

130
Table 1: Sources from the Low Countries containing textless compositions (c. 1485–1550)²⁸

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>ORIGIN</th>
<th>PURPOSE/OбедОwner</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PIECES/CONTENT</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>FASCIMILE/EDITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tongeren, St Nicholas, s.s.</td>
<td>LC</td>
<td>didactic use by «zangmeester»/choirboys?</td>
<td>9 vocal/textless (incomplete)</td>
<td>c. 1485</td>
<td>Schreurs, Anthologie, pp. 66–²²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B–Br, II/270</td>
<td>LC</td>
<td>monastery (?) (Devotio moderna movement)</td>
<td>29 vocal/textless</td>
<td>c. 1500</td>
<td>Bouckaert-Schreurs, Collectie²⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E–SE, s.s.</td>
<td>Spain/LC</td>
<td>court</td>
<td>204 vocal/textless</td>
<td>c. 1502</td>
<td>Segovia Chansonnier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL–M, s.s.</td>
<td>LC</td>
<td>private use/church musician?</td>
<td>11 vocal/textless (incomplete)</td>
<td>c. 1505</td>
<td>Smits Van Waesberghè³⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB–Lbl, Add. 35087</td>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Lauweryn van Watervliet</td>
<td>78 vocal</td>
<td>c. 1505–6</td>
<td>McMurtry³¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I–Fc, Baservi 2439</td>
<td>LC/ Italy</td>
<td>Agostini Ciardi family/Siena</td>
<td>87 vocal/textless</td>
<td>c. 1505–8</td>
<td>Meconi³²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B–Br, IV.90/B–Tv, 94</td>
<td>LC</td>
<td>private/ Bruges</td>
<td>22 vocal</td>
<td>1511</td>
<td>Kessels³³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 leisteenfragmenten in fascimile, ed. Eugeen Schreurs (Peer, 1995) where also references will be found to modern editions or commentaries. LC in column 2 is an abbreviation for «Low Countries».


Eugeen Scheurs

| B-SNaabbeel  | LC  | ?    | 3 vocal/partly textless (incomplete) | early 16th 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 | Diehl34 |
| 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. 1586 | Vanhulst35 |

One of the most creatively reworked chansons is undoubtedly the *rondeau quarain* «D'ung autltre 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.36 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 Sorte* with the individual parts in original mensural notation.37 These are compositionally very ingenious variants, and highly inventive contrapuntally, melodically, as well as rhythmically.

Figure 3: Table with the first four bars (longae) of the tenor

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 autre 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"–43") 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 150725 and 150726). 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 Frankfort is lost) are wholly identical in notation (colours, ligatures, rhythmic variants in the further course of the piece).39 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.40 Also in this version the f of the superius at the end of the first phrase is raised to f 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*).41 Besides I–Fr, 2794 (c. 1480–8, no. 10) and I–Re, 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"–53"), anonymous, is based on a kind of substitution technique: the upper voices of Ockeghem’s chanson are pre-

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39 Schreurs, New Findings (cf. fn. 36), pp. 120, 123–6.
41 Tinctoris regards avoidance of the tritone as a matter of course (see Robert Toft, *Awan Images of Lost Traditions: Sharp and Flats in the Sixteenth Century* (Toronto, 1992), p. 11; see also *Theaurus Musicarum Latinarum*: http://www.chml.indiana.edu/cgi-bin/chml/ isearchhtml): `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, asinimum esse dicitur, ut hic probatur` ('Nor then is it necessary to mark the sign *mollis* [to remove the tritone]; rather, if it is seen to have been marked, it is said to be asinine').

134
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, 5–143, fol. 132v and 133v) 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 1502², fol.27v–28v) 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.

Tintori was also known as an important theorician. He does himself full justice in the two-part version 5 (I–PEc, 1013, fol. 89v–90v), a didactic exercise on the proportions, in which sequenlter and sesquitera 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. 46v–47v). Imitation between tenor and bass is very intense in version 7 (I–Bc, Q 17, fol. 56v–57v).

The settings by Agricola are crucial to the composer’s ouvre 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) 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–a₃; e–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 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, Rév. Vmc.57; Laborde, US–Wc, M2.1 I.25 Case; Wolfenbüttel, D–W, Guelf. 287 Extrav.; Dijon, F–Dm, 517; Copenhagen, DK–Kk, Thott 291).

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

43 Ibid., no. 59, pp. 87–8.
tenor, bass, [eventually three alto's]).

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). Agricola has now transposed the superius down an octave and uses it as a cantus firmus. Octave transpositions are rather uncommon. 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, Pixérecourt chansonnier, fol. 117r–118v, 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. 56r–57v, anonymous, three-part) and Version 11 (I–Bc, Q 17, fol. 55r–56v; 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. 7r–8v, 8r–9v) are again by Agricola. With three versions of Dung autre 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 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 vioole« (= 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)\textsuperscript{48} 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 \textit{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 \textit{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'=58', 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 \textit{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 \textit{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 (\textit{G}–\textit{d}) and fourth (\textit{G}–\textit{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 \textit{cantus firmus} in the tenor, resembling most closely the tenor of nos. 9–12 in Figure 3.\textsuperscript{49}

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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.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., no. 58, pp. 86–7.  
\textsuperscript{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 (fol. 130°-132°).

Example 1: Beginning of »Och voer die doot« (Tandernaken)\(^5^0\)

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.

\(^5^0\) Taken from Collectie (cf. fn. 27), no. 10, p. 98.