

Gordon Athol Anderson's Conductus Edition
and the Rhythm of Conductus

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A few years ago, I had occasion to react to an interesting article on «Musical Declamation and Poetic Rhythm in Notre Dame Conductus» by Janet Knapp.¹ Now that several volumes of Gordon Athol Anderson's *Notre Dame and Related Conductus: Opera omnia* have been issued,² it is necessary to appraise that author's approach to these works. The entire répertoire will occupy eleven volumes, of which four have now appeared, two of monophonic pieces and two of two-part works. Six other volumes were completed by Anderson before his untimely death, and work on the final volume was well enough underway to permit its posthumous completion. However, it is well possible that, had Anderson continued to live, he might have revised much in this edition.

Each volume starts with a complete presentation of all texts, although these are also included later in the section of «Transcriptions». But here they are accompanied by helpful footnotes, which clarify references to Scripture, religious doctrine, persons, or places. In either place, only one manuscript source is listed, nor are other versions compared or referred to; this is done in the final section, the «Critical Notes». A complete listing of manuscript sources as well as of modern transcriptions of text and/or music and of discussions of each work was, to be sure, published previously by Anderson in a «Catalogue raisonné,» which furnishes the structure for the Edition;³ it would have been valuable to incorporate that Catalogue raisonné into this Edition, because it will hardly be available to most readers, having appeared in a not too accessible periodical.

The edition of the texts is followed by an alphabetic «Index of Titles,» *id est*, incipits with references to the Catalogue raisonné, the number in the preceding list of texts, and the page number in the section of «Transcriptions,» which follow. This list would have been more conveniently placed at the beginning.

The «Transcriptions» follow the order established in the «Catalogue». Each reflects a single source. Where there are several stanzas using the same music, the music for only the first stanza is given, but all other stanzas, presumably sung to the same music, follow. Again no reference is made to other versions. Below, the musical renditions will be scrutinized in some detail; unfortunately they leave much to be desired.

1 See *The Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. XXXII (1979), pp. 383-407; *confer* Hans Tischler, «Versmaß und musikalischer Rhythmus in Notre-Dame Conductus,» in the *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, vol. XXXVII (1980), pp. 292-304.

2 By the *Institute of Mediaeval Music*, (Henryville-Ottawa-Binningen, 1979 ff).

3 See *Miscellanea Musicologica, Adelaide Studies in Musicology*, vol. VI (1972), pp. 153-229 and vol. VII (1975), pp. 1-81.

The final section, the «Critical Notes,» is not very helpful. In some volumes, it omits a complete list of manuscript *sigla* and the author's own abbreviations, which the reader is supposed to gather from other volumes and in part from the «Transcriptions». Here, however, all parallel sources are listed. Inconsistently, variants in the text are cued by verse or line (L) number, but in the transcriptions no verse numbers are given. The helpful bibliographic references to modern literature, carried in the Catalogue, are omitted here. Thus, while on the one hand redundant, *videlicet*, in the double printing of the texts, the Edition is lacking in the Critical Notes in this respect as well as in others.

But the most regrettable aspect of the work is the frequently poor treatment of the music and the consequent distortion of the texts. It is impossible to furnish here even a fraction of the many needed new transcriptions of entire pieces or portions thereof. A small selection of glaring examples must suffice to show the necessity for a thorough revision of many of these songs, before good performances can be based on them and valid studies of their style can be undertaken.

Five successive pieces from the simple rondeaux in vol. VIII (not all are actually rondeaux) may serve as our first illustration. They appear as M51-M55 on pp. 24-26 and are taken from manuscript *F* f. 270^{r-v}.⁴

M51: The versification of:

a	<i>a</i> ⁵
7	9
a	<i>b</i>
7	u5
<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>
9	u5

calls for a transcription in the second rhythmic mode throughout, not for an irregular mixture of second, third, and fifth modes. The second mode, rather than either the first or fifth, is vouchsafed by the distribution of the ornaments, all of which fall on unaccented beats, which in the second mode are long. Two possible renditions are suggested for vv. 4 and 6.⁶

4 Abbreviations and sigla used herein are: *F* = Ms. Firenze, *Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana*, Pluteo 29,1; *W*₁ = Ms. Wolfenbüttel. *Herzog August- Bibliothek*, 677; f. = folio; v. = verse (or line of poetry).

5 In this and in the following schematic outlines, the letters stand for rhymes and the numbers for the syllabic count from first stressed syllable to last in the verse; u indicate either anacrusis or feminine endings. Thus, «7» normally indicates a trochaic catalectic dimeter: / u / u / u /, «u7» an iambic dimeter: u / u / u / u /, and «5u» a trochaic tripod: / u / u / u. Cursive type (italics) indicates refrains.

6 For comparative transcriptions of this piece and those discussed below, see pp. 568 ff.

M52: Here the versification runs in completely regular lines of $\cup 5\cup$ with the most standard rondeau rhyme scheme: *a b a a a b a b*. A transcription in anacrustic two-measure phrases easily parallels this structure; a second transcription is also possible. But Anderson destroys this simple song by alternating four- and three-measure groups, which, in addition, scan the text poorly.

M54: The versification of this song is very simple:

a	a
7	7
b	b
3	3
	c
	5 \cup

yet the musical transcription completely vitiates this simple song, which calls for a phrasing in four regular groups of two measures in second or first mode; instead the editor presents phrases of $2\frac{1}{2}$, $2\frac{1}{2}$, 4, and 3 measures. Here, the first mode may be preferable because of the anacrustic verses 8-9 in the second part of the poem:

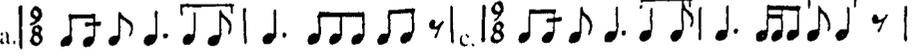
a	a
7	7
d	d
$\cup 1\cup$	$\cup 1\cup$
	c
	5 \cup

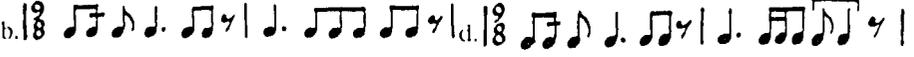
Anderson's transcription separates portions of v. 1 and does not separate vv. 1 and 2; it also destroys the melodic parallelism between vv. 7 and 10.

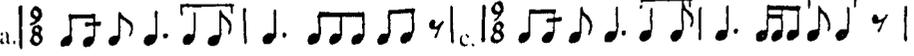
M55: This little song has the structure:

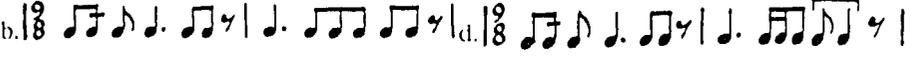
a	b
$\cup 7$	3 \cup
b	b+c
$\cup 7$	5 \cup

Anderson's transcription chooses alternating second and fifth mode, the former completely distorting the scansion of the text, which calls for iambs expressed through the upbeat first mode in vv. 1 and 3. Moreover, the corresponding lines (1:3, 2:4) do not correspond in Anderson's rendition. Instead of groups of 2:2 and $1\frac{1}{2}$: $1\frac{1}{2}$ ($+1\frac{1}{2}$) measures, he writes groups of 2:3 and $2:1\frac{1}{2}$ ($+2$) measures. The last double phrase allows for four logical resolutions, *videlicet*:

a. 

b. 

c. 

d. 

Thus in this group of five songs, four require radical changes. This high proportion of faulty renderings is not necessarily general throughout the Edition, but it is sufficiently high everywhere to require a thorough reconsideration of the entire work with regard to the musical scores.

It is evident that underlying this entire discussion is the assumption of a particular rhythmic approach to mediæval répertoires, which reach us in what is variously known as square, pre-mensural, or *cum-littera* notation, *id est*, a notation which does not indicate rhythm but is paralleled by répertoires of polyphonic music notated in an earlier phase «modally» and later mensurally, in both instances symbolizing the rhythm. Whereas this assumption will hardly raise serious objections when it comes to these simple, dance-related songs, it often has met resistance from scholars when applied to such more sophisticated répertoires as larger monophonic conductus, songs by troubadours, trouvères, and Minnesänger, or the cantigas; though no-one seems to object to rhythmic renderings of polyphonic conductus, many of which are variant versions of monophonic songs. What the above discussion implicitly assumes is that different transcriptions of these répertoires are not merely a matter of disagreement, a difference of individual opinions, but the result of either permissible flexibility of interpretation within the groundrules accepted also by those who first performed this music or in part wrong approaches to them. It assumes that there exist reasonable rhythmic solutions and wrong-headed ones, though there may well exist several reasonable interpretations for particular phrases or entire pieces. In fact, many examples for a reading of the same music in different rhythms and even meters exist in mediæval music. A well-known one, one among many whose modal and/or mensural versions leave no doubt about the intended rhythm, is the hocket motet *In seculum*, easily available in both the editions of the Montpellier codex, as N° 2 and 3, and in *The Earliest Motets*, as N° 99.⁷ Here, the identical music appears once in fifth mode and then in second; elsewhere identical melodic material appears respectively in modes 1 and 2, or in modes 3 and 6. Even in these rondeaux, many phrasers lend themselves to two or even more possible interpretations (see M51 and M55 *supra*)—and to even more numerous fanciful or wrong ones. For example, in the songs cited above, the scanning of the clearly iambic lines 1 and 3 of M55:

Iam lucis orto sidere
Deum precemur supplices

as trochaic, as Anderson does, is definitely wrong and disturbing. On the other hand, his rendering in the same song of v. 2, *fulget dies*, in «isochronous» mode 5 is, seen by itself, just as reasonable as presenting it in mode 1; mode 2 would also be possible, as far as the poetic scansion is concerned, but is negated by other considerations, as will become clear from what has been written below. Even the third mode is possible for this line, as Anderson has it in v. 4, but the parallel with v. 2 and the wrong scansion thereby imposed on the following word render this interpretation unacceptable.

7 Respectively: Yvonne Rokseth, *Polyphonies du XIII^e siècle (Manuscrit H 196 de Montpellier)*, 4 vols., (Paris, 1935-1939); H. Tischler, *The Montpellier Codex*,

As this discussion implies, one of the chief considerations in the determination of a rhythmic interpretation of premensural notation, which is always texted but is not necessarily always «square,» as it also occurs in neumatic shapes, is, it would seem, the scansion of the text, which does, however, allow for occasional «misaccentuations» such as *Máriá*. The latter are quite frequent in contemporary motets, whose rhythm, either when derived from clausulæ or when mensurally notated, admits of no doubt. Thus, *exempli gratia*, in M51, v. 3 starts with *résurgít*. Nevertheless, the normal accentuation of the majority of words is surely one of the determining factors of the poetic meter and therefore also of the musical one.

A brief aside: Whereas scholars generally agree that mediæval Latin poetry follows traditional metric patterns, they mostly insist that Old French poetry relied entirely on syllabic count for establishing its versification. This seems rather strange and can only be the result of the ignorance of, or neglect by, Old-French scholars of the many interrelationships between French and Latin poems of the period—the contrafacta in the motet literature and in the trouvère répertoire—and of the music of the many motets and trouvère songs which appears in mensural notation and proves the strong metric coincidence between the music and the poetic scansion.

A second factor, once the overall meter—iambis, trochees, dactyls, tribachs, spondees, anapests, and frequent combinations of them—has been established, is the placement of ornaments, that is of groups of two or more notes over single syllables. Usually a majority of such ligatures will mark longer notes within the metric pattern and thereby suggest either a first- or second-mode interpretation, once an iambic or trochaic meter has been established. If ornaments fall with about equal frequency on stressed and unstressed syllables, the fifth mode may be preferable. Similar ornaments employed almost exclusively on the first or third syllables of a dactylic meter suggest the third mode, whereas the lack of ornaments or their even distribution would indicate mode 6. Changes of mode from phrase to phrase are perfectly acceptable, just as trochaic, iambic, and other verse meters often alternate in the poems. And where meters combine within a line, the music will follow with similar flexibility. Moreover, what is highly unusual in motets, which are based on rigidly repeated rhythmic patterns of a cantus firmus or tenor, namely the alternation of unrelated modes within a piece—*id est*, primarily that of modes 1 and 2—seems to be much more freely introduced into the monophonic répertoires, if changing patterns of ornamentation can be taken as witness.

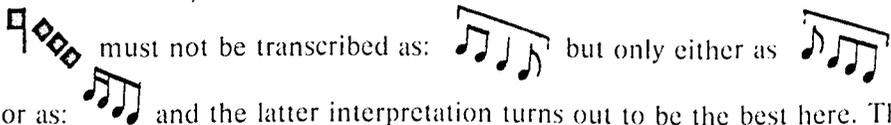
A third factor is obviously the notation found in the manuscripts and their flexible interpretation. Here (a) any note or figure in premensural writing may stand for a brevis, a longa imperfecta of a two-breves value, or a longa perfecta, though ligatures of four or more notes very

3 vols., A-R Editions, (Madison, Wisconsin, 1978); and Hans Tischler, *The Earliest Motets (to circa 1270): A Complete Comparative Edition*, 3 vols. Yale University Press (New Haven, Connecticut, 1982).

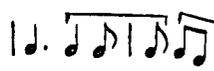
rarely stand for a brevis value; (b) a bar may mean a rest of any of these three values, the end of a musical phrase (*suspirium*) or of a poetic verse, without meaning a rest, and sometimes none of these, being due to scribal quirk or error; (c) a lengthened note head may, or may not, symbolize an unusually long note, a longa or a duplex longa; (d) a *coniunctura*, or combination of notes containing lozenges, has no particular meaning that would differentiate it from a standard ligature; (e) a *plica* represents a gliding tone, *id est*, a note connecting those preceding and following, and can therefore not be followed by a rest, though it is often followed by a bar; its rhythmic value is determined by the prevailing modal pattern. It probably need not be stressed that, whatever the meaning of particular notational signs may be or is assumed to be, everything seen in a manuscript must be reflected in the transcription or in a critical note. It also seems inconsistent to transcribe mediæval notes and rests into modern ones, but not clefs; similarly, to avoid bar lines or to place accidentals, where they would not stand normally in modern scores, seems merely anachronistic and is unhelpful to performers.

The fourth determining factor is musical logic, operating, as must be assumed, then as now. The flow of a melody should therefore not be interrupted by overlong rests or note values; irregular musical phrasing of regular verses should be a warning sign and prompt reconsideration; similarly a «jerky» rhythm usually indicates that something needs to be rethought; parallel poetic or musical passages should not be rendered as that the parallelism is obscured. In addition to rhythm, editorial accidentals should be carefully considered and always marked as such. Thus the single *B* in M51, v. 5, *exempli gratia*, should carry an editorial flat; likewise, the scribe obviously merely forgot to place a *B_b* at the beginning of M54, as he did in the other two staves, and an editorial flat is needed above the *B* in v. 2.

The analysis of the above randomly selected group of five monophonic rondeaux is unfortunately borne out by that of the treatment of the longer monophonic conductus in vol. VI and the two-part works in vols. III and V of Anderson's Edition. The first two two-part pieces in vol. V may serve as our last examples. The very first conductus, taken from *W*, ff. 100^v-101^r, suffers from multiple errors. The rendering of the opening *cauda* contains three wrong interpretations, one of which is wholly erroneous, the others being possible, though wrong in the context:

 must not be transcribed as:  but only either as  or as: 

and the latter interpretation turns out to be the best here. The second correction concerns Anderson's rendition of measures 3-4 in

the tenor, which, instead of reading: , should be

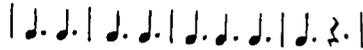
rendered as  or even better as 

and this phrase is concluded by the next note, which, in Anderson's duplum is disturbingly separated from the body of the the phrase by a

long rest. This *cauda* of four measures represents a lengthened upbeat for the iambic v. 1, a function which is obscured by the wrong barring in what follows. The poetic lines are iambic dimeters throughout, which should be consistently barred:

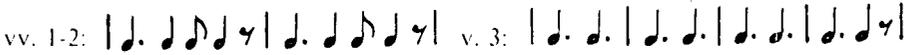


but Anderson bars consistently, as if he were dealing with trochees, and is therefore forced to interpret the phrasing bars in the manuscript as longa rests, which interrupt the smooth flow of the music and lead to phrases of nine longa values:



He writes a longa rest even when in v. 6 a bar appears unfunctionally in the middle of the verse, which consequently appears as a five-measure unit with an internal rest, whereas the other verses all consist of four and one-half measures. Being syllabic, the texted portion is otherwise mostly correct and incidentally employs several times the very four-note *continctura* discussed above in connection with the starting *cauda*, confirming our interpretation. But when in v. 9 a short *cauda* intervenes and v. 10 ends with another *cauda*, misinterpretations immediately spoil the score.

The second work in this volume, J2, whose stanza consists of seven verses of trochaic dimeters (7₉), shows the following five interpretations of these regular verses, most of them leading to ridiculous misaccentsuations, except for the fourth one, which provides a correct rendition:



This glaring inconsistency, which completely frustrates the regularity of the poem, is accompanied by a lack of necessary *musica ficta*, which causes frequent harmonic tritones. In fact, B_b is needed throughout as well as a few E_b .

It is regrettable that the valuable research of a fine person and scholar is marred by so many errors. As it now appears, this massive and basically very important edition is largely useless in its present form. It will take a labour of love by another scholar, hopefully one enabled to make use of the material Anderson collected for this work, to produce the necessary corrections. The guide lines presented above and the emendations of the Edition offered herein will, it is hoped, provide a basis for such a revision.

1.

A

T

1. Tem-pus ad-est gra-ti-e, 2. gra-tu-len-tur Sy-on fi-li-e,

3. re-sur-git rex glo-ri-e; 4. psal-lat ec-cle-si-a:

5. Gra-tu-len-tur Sy-on fi-li-e 6. pa-ri con-cor-di-a!

2.

A

T

1. Sal-va nos, stel-la ma-ris 2. et re-gi-na ce-lo-rum!

3. Que pu-ra De-um pa-ris, 4. (sal-va nos, stel-la ma-ris,)

5. et per ru-bum si-gna-ris, 6. ne-sci-ens vi-ri tho-rum,



7. Sal-va nos, stel-la ma-ris 2. et re-gi-na ce-lo-rum!

3.

A

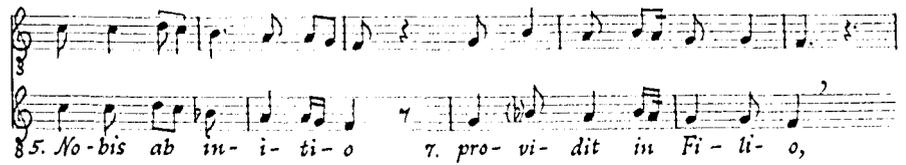


T

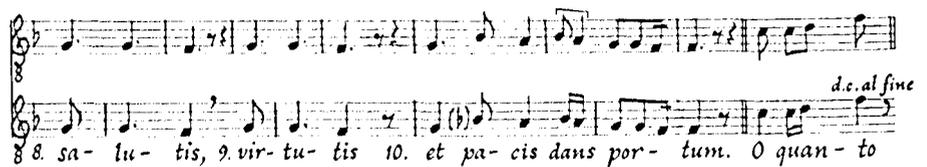
1. O quan-to con-si-li-o 2. De-i mi-se-ra-ti-o!



3. Gra-ti-e, 4. ve-ni-e, 5. glo-ri-e dans or-tum. *fine*



6. No-bis ab in-i-ti-o 7. pro-vi-dit in Fi-li-o,



8. sa-lu-tis, 9. vir-tu-tis 10. et pa-cis dans por-tum. O quan-to *d.c. al fine*

4

A

T

1. lam lu-cis or-to si-de-re 2. ful-get di-es;

3 De-um pre-ce-mur sup-pi-ces. 4. Ful-get di-es 5. i-sta.

or $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$

5

(a)

A

T

m. 1-10

m. 1-9

8 1.0

quo-ti-ens [vos] vo-lu-i 2. blan-de...

(b) (4)

(b) *m. 23-27*

m. 22-25

te-re-re, 6. sed cru-cis fra-cto...

(c) *m. 36-40*

m. 34-37

-qui-re-re, 9. ne san-cto-

(d) *m. 46-55*

m. 42-51

ad-iuor-ge-

*Currentes

re.

6.

A

T

1. Si quis a-mat, quod a-ma-re 2. be-ne iu-vat, non a-ma-re

sa-pit a-mor, sed a-mo-rem 4. et a-mi-cum dat dul-co-rem.

5. Quem, qui pot-est com-pa-ra-re, e. si-ne fru-ctu car-pit flo-rem,

ni-si sci-at hunc ser-va-

re.