Poliziano and the Language of Lament from Isaac to Layolle

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In Florence around 1475, the manner preferred by the city’s literati for performing Tuscan poetry would have been solo, improvisatory song. By 1525, the polyphonic madrigal had become the pre-eminent vehicle. This is a striking development since solo singing was a venerable Florentine practice intimately tied to its literary history, and this same literary history—particularly the late Quattrocento refinement of Tuscan vernacular poetry as cultivated by Angelo Poliziano and other poets in Lorenzo’s circles—was celebrated in the early Cinquecento academies that fostered the early madrigal. There is every indication that relations between poetry and music during the intervening half century were as dynamic, complex, and contested as one would expect. Poliziano himself bore witness to this condition in a letter written around 1490, probably from Rome. At a banquet in the Medici circles of the Orsini family, Poliziano recounts having heard the eleven-year-old Fabio Corsini perform first, “together with some experts, certain of those [polyphonic] songs which are put into writing with those little signs of music,” followed by a more flexibly-declaimed solo performance of “an heroic song which he [Fabio] had himself recently composed in praise of our own Piero de’ Medici.”

Poliziano waxes rapturous about Fabio’s sweet voice and his monodic performance, but expresses indifference, at best, to the polyphonic singing of the “experts.” Pirrotta’s discussion of this passage is focused upon Poliziano’s contrasting attitudes, but of equal interest is the Janus-faced nature of the event, with its calculated juxtaposition of polyphonic and solo song; one might even suppose that this elite audience was being invited to judge the relative merits of the two styles against the common backdrop of Fabio’s sweet voice, and at a historical moment when the scales were balanced between them. Poliziano was at the center of a later event involving a confrontation between these two styles, one that reveals how much the Florentine musical scene had changed by the 1520s.

This event involves a text that literate Florentines might have regarded as the locus classicus of the solo singer’s art: the final lament of Orpheus from Poliziano’s

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Fabula di Orfeo. At its Mantuan premier in 1480, the title role of Orfeo was sung by the famous Florentine solo singer Baccio Ugolini.2 Sometime during the 1520s, three different madrigal composers set the same, single ottava from Poliziano’s play, Qual sarà mai si miserabil canto, the first of four stanzas that constitute Orpheus’ complete lament (see Example 1a).3

Ex. 1: Poliziano, Fabula di Orfeo (lines 261-268)

a. TEXT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Qual sarà mai * si miserabil canto</td>
<td>Qual sarà mai * si lacrimabil pianto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>che pareggi il dolor * del mio gran danno?</td>
<td>che pareggi ’l dolor * del mio gran danno?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>O come potró mai * lacrimar tanto</td>
<td>Hor come potró mai * lacrimar tanto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>che sempre piange * il mio mortale affanno?</td>
<td>che ponga fin * al mio crudel affanno?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Starommi mesto * e sconsolato in pianto</td>
<td>Starommi mesto * e sconsolat’im pianto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>per fin ch’e cieli * in vita mi terranno:</td>
<td>perfìn ch’i cieli * in vita mi terranno.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>e poi che si crudele è mia fortuna,</td>
<td>Da poi che così vuol la mia fortuna,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>già mai non voglio amar * più donna alcuna.</td>
<td>già mai non vogl’amar * più donn’alcuna.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[* marks caesura within poetic line]

How can ever such woeful song equal the pain of my great suffering?
How can I ever find enough tears to mourn constantly my mortal affliction?
I shall remain sad and disconsolate in my lament as long as the heavens keep me in this life.
And since my fate is so cruel, I do not wish ever again to love any woman.

b. MUSIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Edition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constanzo Festa (c. 1485/90-1545)</td>
<td>(c. 1485/90-1545)</td>
<td>3-part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francesco Layolle (1492-c. 1540)</td>
<td>(1492-c. 1540)</td>
<td>4-part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippe Verdelot (c. 1480/5-after 1530)</td>
<td>(c. 1480/5-after 1530)</td>
<td>5-part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Mattio Rampollini (1497-c. 1553)</td>
<td>(1497-c. 1553)</td>
<td>3-part</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brussels, Bibliothèque du Conservatoire Royal de Musique, MS FA VI.5 (1530s), 154218
Cinquanta canzon à quatre voce (Lyons, 1540)
Libro primo a cinque (Venice?, c.1536-37) [altus & bassus only]
Della scelta di madrigali...Libro primo (Florence, 1582)]

3 The source of Poliziano's edited text is Stefano Carrai, Angelo Poliziano: Stanz, Fabula di Orfeo (Milan: Ugo Mursia, 1988), 155; the variant text used by Layolle is in Frank D’Accone, ed. Music of the Florentine Renaissance, Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae 32 ([Rome]: American Institute of Musicology, 1969), 4: xiii. The Verdelot text is very close to Carrai's edition, except for the substitution of pianto for canto in the first line.
Each employed a different texture (see Ex. 1b): Verdelot, five voices (of which only the altus and bassus partbooks survive); Francesco Layolle, four; and Costanzo Festa, three. Assuming Verdelot is the composer of the five-part setting, which seems likely, all three composers had strong connections to Florence, though we don’t know if they were ever there at the same time. Verdelot was in Florence during the 1520s, and Festa was in Rome by 1517 (if not sooner), where he served two Medici popes and maintained close contacts with prominent Florentines. Before Verdelot’s arrival Layolle had left Florence for Lyons, where he was at the center of a Florentine exile community with close ties to the Florentine cultural and intellectual community, through which channels he may have obtained his different version of Poliziano’s text (see Example 1). Nevertheless, a Florentine context, perhaps even a commission, is suggested by the subject matter, the composers’ Florentine connections, and the apparent nature of the project: three composers, three different textures, one very Florentine text. There is a clear precedent for such a project from the previous decade involving similar circumstances: progressive polyphonic settings by contemporary Florentine composers based on Quattrocento poetic models. In this case, Poliziano’s ballata *Questo mostrarsi adirata di fore,* and its original setting by Heinrich Isaac, began a “direct line of descent” leading to a setting of Poliziano’s poem by Bartolomeo degli Organi, and to five other musical settings by, among others, the Florentines Bernardo Pisano, Bartolomeo, and Layolle of a ballata text closely modeled on Poliziano’s *Questo mostrarsi lieta a tutte l’ore,* by Lorenzo Strozzi.  

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4 See *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* 2nd ed., s.v. “Verdelot,” where it is listed among Verdelot’s works. For a more cautious approach, see James Haar and Iain Fenlon, *The Italian Madrigal in the Early Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 304-5. Regarding a later, but possibly related, setting by the Florentine composer Mattio Rampollini, see Ex. 1b, and n. 10 below.


7 Frank D’Accone, “Transitional Text Forms and Settings in an Early 16th-Century Florentine Manuscript,” in *Words and Music: The Scholar’s View,* ed. Laurence Berman and Elliot Forbes (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Dept. of Music, Harvard University, 1972), 29-58, esp. 35-36, and 54-55. All settings of *Questo mostrarsi* but Isaac’s are transmitted in Florence, Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Musica, MS Basevi 2440, probably copied in Lorenzo Strozzi’s circles around 1515. Lorenzo was brother to the above Filippo, who commissioned Festa for settings in the late 1520s. For modern editions, see D’Accone, ed., *Music of the Florentine Renaissance,* 1: 5-7 (Pisano), 2: 31-35 (Bartolomeo), 2: 47-49 (anon.), and 3: 66-67 (Layolle).
A glance at the music of *Qual sarà mai* strengthens the argument for the workings of a guiding hand, for all three settings share melodic material (see Example 2). 

Ex. 2: *Qual sarà mai* motives

1. **C. Festa**

(a) cantus, mm. 1-6

(b) cantus, mm. 40-43

2. **Layolle**

(a) cantus, mm. 1-7

(b) cantus, mm. 26-28

3. **Verdelot**

*altus & bassus*

It is unfortunate that the unique extant print of the Verdelot madrigal is missing its cantus partbook (along with tenor and quintus parts), but the surviving altus and bassus parts indicate that Verdelot employed melodic figures very similar to those of Frederick Sternfeld first drew attention to the thematic links between these three works, particularly to the use of the descending tetrachord, but in the context of a discussions focused upon the rhetorical use of repetition: “Poliziano, Isaac, Festa: Rhetorical Repetition,” in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell’Europa del ’500*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1983), 2: 562-64; “The Lament in Poliziano’s *Orfeo* and Some Musical Settings of the Early 16th Century,” in *Arts du spectacle et histoire des idées: Recueil offert en hommage à Jean Jacquot*, ed. Jean-Michel Vaccaro (Tours: Centre d’Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, 1984), 201-4; *The Birth of Opera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 147-51, where Festa’s setting is published in its entirety and discussed. Modern editions consulted for this study are Albert Seay, ed., *Costanzo Festa: Opera Omnia*, Corpus Mensurabilis Musicac 25 (Stuttgart: American Institute of Musicology, 1977), 7: 12-13; D’Accone, ed., *Music of the Florentine Renaissance*, 4: 8-11 (Layolle).
of Festa and Layolle at identical places in the text. In the Festa and Layolle settings these figures are shaped by the prevailing Phrygian mode: the basic form of the theme that permeates both works is a tetrachord that descends stepwise from A to E (marked "T" in Ex. 2), which emphasizes the expressive semitone between e and f. An ascending form of the tetrachord opens all three settings, and forms a gesture suited to the poem’s opening question, qual sarà mai? The hexachords found in all three settings are extensions of descending tetrachord, and these always involve a dotted rhythm lengthening the note that signals the beginning of the descent (marked “H” in ex. 2). In each case these hexachords are fashioned to suit a longer poetic sub-phrase, the central orphic image of the lament, si miserabil canto, and in the Verdelot and Layolle settings nearly identical hexachordal figures recur with the parallel phrase at the end of line 6, e sconsolato in pianto. While our three composers clearly, perhaps deliberately, pursued highly individualized solutions to setting this text—most obviously the differing textures of three (Festa), four (Layolle), and five (Verdelot) voices—what piques interest are the shared features that suggest a common purpose: the poetic text, the tetrachordal figures, and their Florentine context.

1. The Poetic Text

In the context of Poliziano’s play, the stanza set by our three composers is technically an ottava within a longer series of ottave that are the dominant poetic form of Orfeo, but in isolation such a single stanza becomes a strambotto, or what Poliziano more precisely called a rispetto spicciolato (a detached rispetto, or octave). By the time Baccio Ugolini stepped onto a Mantuan stage in 1480, the strambotto was closely associated with the soloistic art of the improvvisatori, and would remain the most prestigious form of sung poetry in Italy during the half century we are considering. By the 1520s it was a venerable form in sharp decline, but with a history no poet or musician in Italy could ignore.

9 The term hexachord is used here in the broader sense of any six-note scalar figure, regardless of its solmisation form based on “ut.”

10 A setting of Qual sarà mai by another Florentine composer, Mattio Rampollini, is probably related to these other versions (see Ex. 1b). It remains unpublished, but the published incipit in Harry B. Lincoln, The Italian Madrigal and Related Repertories: Indexes to Printed Collections, 1500-1600 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 525, indicates a three-part madrigal in the Phrygian mode, opening with an interlocking series of ascending tetrachords, with the opening entries in the outer voices tracing the e to a Phrygian tetrachord. While the date of the work is uncertain (it first appears in a 1582 print), and I was unable to consult a complete version, circumstantial evidence supports the musical evidence to indicate that Rampollini may have composed his setting in direct relation to the others: he worked closely with Verdelot at the Florentine cathedral, and the publication of his Petrarchan canzoni cycles by Moderne in Lyons suggests a previous relationship with Layolle; see Haar and Fenlon, The Italian Madrigal, 80-81; D’Accone, “Matteo Rampollini and his Petrarchan Canzoni Cycles,” Musica disciplina 27 (1973): 77.

11 Poliziano in fact uses a variety of verse forms in Orfeo, but the text is cast primarily in ottave, and so invokes a long tradition of cantari and their performance by solo singers.

That this was true for Verdelot is apparent in one of his few other attributable strambotto settings, *Quando Madonna io vengo a contemplarte*. As Colin Slim has shown, Verdelot’s setting probably dates from the early 1520s, and exhibits stylistic features that allude clearly to the older strambotto as found in sources dating from the peak years of the genre, ca. 1495-1515: a declamatory melody that moves within a relatively narrow range, a homophonic texture built on a cantus-tenor framework and exhibiting frequent parallel imperfect consonances between the cantus and a lower voice, and the musical economy of recycling for subsequent pairs of lines the music of the first two lines. The association of this strambotto with the unwritten practice of its greatest practitioners, like Serafino Aquilano and Benedetto Gareth (*il Cariteo*), is reinforced by the iconography of the painting that is the subject of Slim’s article: just behind a woman’s outstretched hand resting on a music book open to Verdelot’s strambotto, we see the image of a *lira da braccio*, the instrument *par excellence* of the *improvisatori*. As we shall see, the settings of *Quel sarà mai* by Layolle and Festa exhibit some of these same stylistic markers (the absence of Verdelot’s cantus part makes it impossible to judge his version in this regard). Thus the prominence of the strambotto as a vehicle for singing Italian poetry in the decades preceding the rise of the madrigal, its lingering presence in these early madrigals, and its dual nature as both an unwritten, soloistic and written, polyphonic form suggests that it may have functioned in Florence as a medium of transition to the polyphonic madrigal.

As a sung genre, however, the strambotto is generally associated more with areas to the north and south of Florence; what presence did it have in late fifteenth-century Florence? Very little, to judge from the extant musical sources, but these sources are chansonniers which typically did not include native Italian forms. We know the strambotto led a double life at this time as both a written and an unwritten musical form, and while it was rejected from the city’s written musical sources, it was absorbed into its oral traditions. Feo Belcari’s autograph copy of his own laudario with singing rubrics was completed by about 1478, and shows little interest in the form. But among those works datable to after 1478 and prior to Belcari’s death in 1484 is a significant number of laude in this form, and these all drew on secular strambotti as singing models (including many in extant polyphonic settings). The city’s vast repertory of devotional songs with singing rubrics, the so-called *cantasi come* sources, record a broad shift at this time, from the use of generic models for poetic modeling and musical borrowing, to the customized modeling

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13 H. Colin Slim, “An Iconographical Echo of the Unwritten Tradition in a Verdelot Madrigal,” *Studi musicali* 17 (1988): 33-56, esp. 46; the older settings typically provide music only for the first two lines, with the expectation that this will serve the remaining three pairs, whereas Verdelot repeats this music only for poetic lines three and four.


of lauda verse upon single strophes of Italian poetry in polyphonic settings. The strambotto emerges as a prime mover in this shift of the city's oral singing culture towards the use of customized musical settings for single stanzas of Italian poetry, a condition directly relevant to the early madrigal. These same sources show that sung strambotti entered Florence in two waves that correspond exactly to the geography and chronology of the polyphonic sources: Neapolitan strambotti during the 1480s, and north Italian settings after about 1495.

As a literary form, the strambotto was hardly new to Florence. Luigi Pulci and Angelo Poliziano in particular cultivated the genre during Belcari's lifetime. Poliziano's 100 or so strambotti (rispetti spicciolati) are of particular importance, not only because a number of them were set to music, but because they were for Poliziano a site of linguistic experimentation, aligned with the broader Laurentian project to elevate and refine Tuscan vernacular lyric. In large part through delicate inlay of language and vocabulary drawn from Petrarch and other Tuscan poets, Poliziano shifted the strambotto from the regions of popular, oral poetry, towards a more cultivated tradition, thus preparing the way for the strambottisti. Serafino's modeling has been shown to be directly dependent upon Poliziano's poetry, as in the case with a Poliziano strambotto, Contento in foco sto come fenice, which survives in a polyphonic setting in three north Italian sources. The polyphonic settings applied to both Poliziano's and Belcari's strambotti thus appear to represent the musical side of this very same shift towards a more cultivated and literate tradition. In Dean Mace's well-known article on the origins of the Italian madrigal, his argument that Petrarchan poetry prompted more ambitious music in fact seems much more suited to the late fifteenth-century strambotto.

One sixteenth-century writer noted the kinship of the strambotto and madrigal when he observed that "above all else the madrigal and strambotto must have lovely wit and invention, just like an epigram." Compared to other forms

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16 Pirrotta, "Before the Madrigal," *Journal of Musicology* 12 (1994): 244: "...we have no hint that an 'aria per cantar strambotti' ever existed, as each strambotto appears to have had its own music particularly composed for its text, ...a point on which strambotti anticipate madrigals."


of late fifteenth-century Italian lyric poetry, the strambotto was distinguished by its epigrammatic concision and sentimental tone. The strambotto also shares with madrigal texts a kind of through-composed rhetorical quality, a tendency to develop a conceit, often amorous, that crests in a witty point at the end. Of the unwritten music cultivated by the likes of Serafino we know only what contemporary descriptions tell us: that the strambotto was distinguished by a particularly refined style of singing and accompanying, and that, according to Serafino’s biographer Vincenzo Calmeta, the strambotto’s “words and music were intertwined with perception.”22 In their brief discussions of the extant written settings, Nino Pirrotta and James Haar have drawn attention to the ways in which the strambotto resembles the madrigal. Both are characterized by customized musical settings, flexible declamation, rhetorical treatment of individual poetic phrases, and similar functions, that of “condensing in a concise statement some precious literary thought or compliment to be set to music.”23

The “dual nature” of the strambotto, and its role as a kind of portal between the worlds of solo song and polyphonic madrigal, is suggested by its placement within an important manuscript collection of Florentine secular songs copied around 1515. D’Accone has described MS Basevi 2440, of the Florentine Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Musica, as “from the transitional period leading to the rise of the madrigal.”24 It is dominated by the poetry of Lorenzo Strozzi (1482-1551), in whose literary circles the collection probably originated, but it opens with a short run of strambotti that are a clear nod to the solo singer’s art.25 The poet of the first two, Francesco Cei, was himself a celebrated improvisatory singer and friend of both Strozzi and the composer Bartolomeo degli Organi. A witness to a Florentine wedding that took place prior to Cei’s death in 1505 recorded hearing Cei sing one of his own ballate “in sul la lira, the way Baccio degli Organi taught him.”26 This is intriguing, for it means either that Bartolomeo was instructing Francesco in solo singing to the accompaniment of the lira da braccio, or, more likely given Bartolomeo’s credentials, that Cei was singing accompanied song in an unusual way that required the instruction of a polyphonic composer.27 Bartolomeo’s setting

25 Ibid., 54, where the index shows that four of the first five settings are strambotti: 1. Amo gl’inganni tua (Cei), 2. Pieta, pieta (Cei), 3. Ecco la notte (Serafino), and 5. Se ben el fine (anon.).
27 On Bartolomeo as a teacher of “singing, playing, and three-part counterpoint” to Niccolò Machiavelli’s son in 1527, see ibid., 53.
of Cei’s strambotto Pietà, pieta may reveal something of the process of hybridization that was underway in these collaborations: the character of the cantus melody and the provision of music for only the first pair of lines points to Cei’s world and reveals Bartolomeo’s familiarity with it, whereas the infusion of counterpoint into the traditional domain of the solo singer is probably what Bartolomeo had taught Cei to do.28

For Verdelot, Layolle, and Festa, the strambotto was thus a genre that invited both traditional and progressive approaches to musical setting. Discernible in the settings of Layolle and Festa are the traditional elements already exhibited in Verdelot’s Quando madonna io vengo: declamatory cantus melodies of narrow compass (that tend both to descend, and gravitate to ‘A’ as a reciting tone), pairs of voices that often proceed in parallel imperfect consonances, and melodic repetition across the whole form (see Appendix, nos. 1 & 2). Repetition of the tetrachordal and hexachordal formations in all three settings has already been noted (and identified in the full transcriptions in the appendix), but Layolle (like Verdelot in Quando Madonna) retains a vestige of the strambotto’s old habit of repeating music for subsequent lines: lines 1 and 3 resemble each other (though line 3 begins with the semitone oscillations with which line 1 ends, and ends with the ascending tetrachord with which line 1 begins), while lines 2 and 4 are even more clearly aligned. A particular marker of strambotto settings, absent from Verdelot’s Quando Madonna but present in all three settings of Qual sarà mai, is the construction of melodic sub-phrases that observe the poetic caesura, the tendency of the strambotto’s hendecasyllabic lines to subdivide into a short and long phrase (see Ex. 1).29 All three composers clearly understood and drew upon the musical conventions of the strambotto, but their training and experience as polyphonists also enabled them to look beyond the strambotto in fashioning more complex musical responses to Poliziano’s text.

2. Tetrachords and Laments

The use of the descending tetrachord as an “emblem of lament” is generally assumed to have surfaced in early seventeenth-century vocal music.30 The immediate antecedents of this soggetto appear to be associated with the passacaglia in Spanish guitar books of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, and perhaps a bit earlier in the Italian dance ritornello (ripresa); in this context, the tetrachord seems to coalesce from the world of improvised instrumental music based on formulaic harmonic patterns like the ruggiero and romanesca.31 However, our three settings of Qual sarà mai present a very different use of tetrachordal figures.

28 Bartolomeo’s music is ed. in D’Accone, Music of the Florentine Renaissance, 2: 27-88; Cei’s text is ed. on p. xix of this edition, but more recently (and with significant textual variants) in Marta Ceci, ed., Francesco Cei: Il Canzoniere (Rome: Zauli Arti Grafiche, 1994), 102.

29 For analysis of a sampling of strambotto melodies, see Wilson, Singing Poetry, 139-42, and La Face Bianconi, Gli strambotti, 163-73.


Both the Festa and Layolle settings are cast clearly in the Phrygian mode, which in humanist concepts of modal ethos was generally understood as appropriate to lament.\textsuperscript{32} In Festa’s three-part version, we hear simple and embellished forms of the tetrachord nineteen times in the space of 47 measures (see Appendix, no. 1). These are mostly descending figures, and are shaped to clear syntactic units (e.g., \textit{Giamai non vogli’amar}) that involve the most expressive words of the lament, such as \textit{danno}, \textit{lagrimar}, and \textit{sconsolato}. Twelve of these are cast in one of the two specifically Phrygian forms of the descending tetrachord (a-g-f-e, or e-d-c-b), with its poignant semitone between the last two notes of the descent. These figures spread throughout all the voices as the piece unfolds; their density within the overall texture increases as Festa stacks them in pairs near the end, and finally he underpins the harmony with two final statements in the lowest voice, where we hear Orpheus twice utter his fatal rejection of \textit{più dann’alcuna}.

Layolle’s beautifully crafted four-part setting is even more saturated with Phrygian tetrachords and their hexachordal extensions (Appendix, no. 2). As mentioned above, strambotto melodies tend to observe the caesura of the individual, eleven-syllable line. The two basic melodic units identified in these madrigals—the tetrachord and hexachord—pervade all four voices of Layolle’s setting; the tetrachord is usually assigned to the short, and the hexachord to the

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{New Grove Dictionary}, s.v. “Déploration,” and s.v. “Mode,” III, 4, (iii), where Harold Powers quotes Zarlino on the Phrygian mode having “the character of moving to tears; therefore they set it freely to words that are tearful and full of laments.” By Isaac’s day, there was a long-standing confusion between ancient Greek and medieval chant modes, especially concerning the nature of Dorian and Phrygian. Even the ancients seem not to have agreed: Gaffurius followed Plato in attributing warlike affects to the Phrygian mode, whereas Aristotle found Phrygian more suited to material of a languid and soft nature; see Claude Palisca, \textit{Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought} (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1985), 100, 344-48, 407.
long subphrases of Poliziano's lines. The repetition of the tetrachord in the bass line throughout the first half of the poem (mm. 9-27 are formed entirely from it) begins to assume the function of a *basso ostinato* not unlike Monteverdi's *Lamento della Ninfa* and its early operatic relations. The strambotto-like repetition of this melodic material across the first four lines has already been mentioned (line 3 resembles 1, line 4 resembles 2), and this mirrors the typical paired-line rhetoric of strambotto texts, in this case framed as a pair of questions. In the second half of the poem (lines 5-8) questions give way to declarations, as Orpheus commits himself to a life of misery and celibacy. This rhetorical shift is matched by a change in the structure of the cantus melody (see Example 3). These last four melodic lines are all variations of one another: the first half of the caesura in each line consists of a compact up and down traversal of the upper register between a¹ and c², while the second half (with the exception of line 7) returns to the lower register by means of the descending hexachord. Line 7 stands apart as a dense field of

Ex. 3: Layolle, *Quai sarà mai*, cantus
polyphonic thematic allusion: between measures 47 and 52, each voice traces a descending tetrachord (cantus c-g; altus a-e, etc.). Here, as fortuna spreads her web across Orpheus’ fate, the tetrachord is extended across the entire musical texture. In the more extended setting of line 8, the work’s predominantly chordal texture comes unraveled; amidst overlapping cascades of descending hexachords, the dismemberment of the texture perhaps evokes Orpheus’ ultimate fate at the hands of the Dionysian maenads as punishment for his rejection of women. Layolle’s madrigal is an impressive synthesis of two traditions. The strambotto’s melodic and formal economy here have been accommodated to the rich thematic, harmonic, and textural possibilities of the new polyphonic style; the music is at once full of repetition and yet through-composed, and it is difficult to say whether the natural and clear declamation heard in every part owes more to the aging strambotto or to the upstart madrigal.

There is a clear sense in these three settings that the tetrachord and its variants have assumed the role of expressive rhetorical figurae; they have become emblems of lament, albeit in the purely melodic sense appropriate to a work cast in Renaissance counterpoint, rather than as harmonic patterns of the kind that would emerge across the sixteenth century.⁵³ To understand how these figures acquired their meaning, however, we must turn to a slightly older secular tradition of polyphonic laments,

### Table 1: Tetrachord-Based Laments, ca. 1485-1530

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title (no. of voices)</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Tetrachord disposition</th>
<th>Final (flats)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Chansons &amp; Motets with Latin cantus prius factus [cpf]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ce povre mendiant/Pauper sum ego (3)</td>
<td>Josquin</td>
<td>cpf?: transposing ostinato (B)</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cœurs désolés/Dies illa (5)</td>
<td>de la Rue</td>
<td>cpf. + imitative motive</td>
<td>d (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cœurs désolés/Plorans ploravit (5)</td>
<td>Josquin</td>
<td>imit. motive</td>
<td>f (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nymphes, nappés/Circumdederunt me (6)</td>
<td>Josquin</td>
<td>cpf + imitative motive</td>
<td>f (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nymphes des bois/Requiem aeternam (6)</td>
<td>Josquin</td>
<td>imit. motive</td>
<td>a (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proch dolor/Pe Jhesu (7)</td>
<td>anon.</td>
<td>cpf in triple canon + imit. motive</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Chansons without cpf.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je me complaints (5)</td>
<td>Josquin</td>
<td>imit. motive</td>
<td>g (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milles regretz (4)</td>
<td>Josquin?</td>
<td>imit. motive</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaine de duel (5)</td>
<td>Josquin</td>
<td>imit. motive</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus nulz regretz (4)</td>
<td>Josquin</td>
<td>imit. motive (T/B)</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plusieurs regretz (5)</td>
<td>Josquin</td>
<td>imit. motive</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plusieurs regretz (4)</td>
<td>anon.</td>
<td>imit. motive</td>
<td>g (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secrétz regretz (4)</td>
<td>de la Rue</td>
<td>T/B canon + imit. motive</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁵³ An even clearer example of Verdelot’s appropriation of these lament figurae is his Gran dolor di mia vita, a four-part setting of a true madrigal text (aBAaBCcDD), first published by Antico in 1534.⁴⁶
Table 1 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title (no. of voices)</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Tetrachord disposition</th>
<th>Final (flats)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II. Florentine/Early Madrigal Tradition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Secular funeral motet with cpf.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quis dabit capiti meo aquam? / Et requiescamus (4)</td>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>imit. motive (STB) + transposing ostinato (B)</td>
<td>a/e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Madrigals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gran dolor di mia vita (4)</td>
<td>Verdelot</td>
<td>(migrating) ostinato (all parts)</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qual sarà mai (3)</td>
<td>C. Festa</td>
<td>imit. motive</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qual sarà mai (4)</td>
<td>F. Layolle</td>
<td>imit. motive + ostinato (all parts)</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qual sarà mai (5)</td>
<td>Verdelot</td>
<td>imit. motive</td>
<td>d (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Qual sarà mai (3)]</td>
<td>Rampollini imit. motive?</td>
<td></td>
<td>a?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The déplorations and chansons des regretz cultivated by Josquin and his contemporaries. The list of works in Table 1 is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather indicative of the environment in which the descending tetrachord first might have acquired its association with mourning. Not all such works in this tradition feature tetrachordal motives, but all the works examined that exhibit a significant, motivic use of these figures are indeed laments, and these fall into one of two broad categories: chansons des regretz without borrowed material, which tend to be amatory complaints (though intensely melancholy ones); and more formal laments based on a Latin cantus prius factus, among which are some funeral laments (déplorations) for specific individuals. Here we find a very similar complex of attributes: a prevailing Phrygian mode, tetrachordal figures that often dissolve in the later stage of the work into more extended melodic cascades (initiated by a dotted rhythm), semitone oscillations, and the association of these figures with highly expressive and characteristic words such as plainte, complains, plongez, desolation, regret, and lamentation (See Example 4 on pp. 98-99).

There is no uniform deployment of these figures within and among these works. Some open with clear tetrachordal figures arrayed as imitative entries; the most conspicuous example is the descending tetrachord that opens Josquin's Je me

The work is austerely Phrygian, and so thoroughly permeated by the single e-a form the of the descending tetrachord that it gives the impression of a migrating ostinato; the music is ed. in Jesse Ann Owens, ed., Philippe Verdelot: Madrigals for Four and Five Voices, Sixteenth-Century Madrigal 28-30 (New York: Garland, 1989), 1: 96-99. See also Stefano La Via, “Eros and Thanatos: A Ficinian and Laurentian Reading of Verdelot’s Si lieta e grata morte,” Early Music History 21 (2002): 75-116, a discussion of Verdelot’s understanding of Florentine poetics of the Quattrocento, and his expressive application of Phrygian modal materials to a melancholic text.
Ex. 4: Tetrachordal motives

a. Cueurs desolez (Josquin)

b. Cueurs desolez (de la Rue)

Cueurs de-solez par tou-tes na-ti-ons Ains vous:plon-gez en de-so-la-tion

c. Je me complains (Josquin)

Je me com-plain Qui me sou-lait tant ve-nir veo-ir

d. Mille regretz (Josquin)

Mil-le re-gretz Et d’es-lon-ger brief mes jour de-fi-ner et pai-ne dou-lo-rou-se

e. Nymphes des bois (Josquin)

de sou-tes na-ti-ons d’ha-bis de dou-é et tram-pe en su tram-pe

f. Nymphes mappés (Josquin)

ve-nez plon-ner ma de-so-la-tion sont plus mo-e que ma-la-des

g. Plaine de duel (Josquin)

Et qu’en la fin la sur-plus de ma vi-e pluz ne le puis por-ter

h. Plus nul regretz (Josquin)

fur-ren plain-ctez et crys n’ay-ons plus nulz re-gretz
complaints (Example 4c). In Josquin’s *Plaine de duel* the motive is not introduced until m. 18, but in various forms it thereafter dominates the texture to the end, interrupted only by several statements of extended scalar descents (Example 4g). Pierre de la Rue’s *Secret régret* opens with the imitative treatment of an elemental figure that also belongs to the affective world of the lament, an oscillation that emphasizes the semitones between e-f and b-c. Among the ensuing florid contrapuntal lines of de la Rue’s chanson, the tetrachord motives in both descending (mm. 9-13) and ascending (mm. 37-45) forms are thrown into relief by being cast in slower, more even rhythms (Example 4k). In Josquin’s *Plusieurs regretz* the descending tetrachord is heard fifteen times during the first 24 measures of the piece (Example 4j), and an anonymous setting of the same text opens with a motive identical to that which opens Layolle’s *Qual sarà mai* (Example 4i) and Josquin’s *Mille regretz* (Example 4d). So
much attention has been paid to issues of authorship regarding the most famous of *chansons des regret* that discussions of *Mille regret* overlook the fact that this compact work is built almost entirely of tetrachordal motives. The superius and altus parts are saturated with the motive, and nearly half the work is constructed from stacked pairs of descending tetrachords harmonized by a bass that itself leaps down twice by a fourth (Ex. 4d^2•3), configured to cadence on the primary Phrygian tonal centers of e (mm. 7-12) or a (mm. 12-15, 34-38). Pairs of hexachordal cascades initiated by dotted rhythms make a conspicuous appearance exactly halfway through the work (mm. 19-24; Ex. 4d^4).39

### Table 2 Possible Liturgical Sources of the Descending Tetrachord

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cantus prior factus</th>
<th>Composer/primary title</th>
<th>Music source/text source (LU = Liber usualis)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiatus est me</td>
<td>Moulu, <em>Fiere etropos</em></td>
<td>Good Friday Lauds, antiphon/Ps. 142:4 (LU 691)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circundederunt me</td>
<td>Josquin, <em>Nimphes, nappés</em></td>
<td>?/Ps. 18:5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dies illa, dies irae</td>
<td>de la Rue, <em>Cueurs desolez</em></td>
<td>Burial Service, responsory <em>Libera me</em>, 3rd verse (LU 1767)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?Pauper sum ego</td>
<td>Josquin, <em>Ce pove mendiant</em></td>
<td>8th psalm tone (cadence)/Ps. 87:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pie Jesu</td>
<td>Festa, <em>Super flumina Babylonis</em></td>
<td>Mass for the Dead, sequence <em>Dies irae</em>, final verse (LU 1813)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florans ploravit</td>
<td>Josquin, <em>Cueurs desolez</em></td>
<td>?/Lamentations 1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requiem aeternam</td>
<td>Josquin, <em>Nymphes des bois</em></td>
<td>Mass for the Dead, introit (LU 1807)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et requiescamus in pace Isaac, <em>Quis dabit capit such me aquam</em></td>
<td>Compline, antiphon <em>Salva nos, Domine</em>, final phrase (LU 272)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39 David Fallows, ed., *The New Josquin Edition: Secular Works for Four Voices* (Utrecht: Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 2005), 28: 25 (hereafter, NJE). Osthoff, Noble, and Picker favor attribution to Josquin; Lätterick does not ("Chansons for Three and Four Voices," in the *Josquin Companion*, 374-76). Fallows recently has come out in favor of Josquin in "Who Composed *Mille Regret*?" in *Essays on Music and Culture in Honor of Herbert Kellman*, ed. Barbara Haggh (Paris: Minerve, 2001), 241-52, where he also states his belief that the chanson was among Josquin’s last works and probably written for Charles V (252). Owen Rees, in "*Mille regret* as Model: Possible Allusions to ‘The Emperor’s Song’ in the Chanson Repertory," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 120 (1995): 44-76, characterizes the motives of *Mille regret* as "built from…common-place elements" too simple to form the basis of determining correspondences with other works (43). Rees’s goal of determining specific instances of modeling and borrowing is indeed made difficult by the "common-place" nature of the material (the Phrygian tetrachordal motives discussed in this article, for example, emerge quite naturally from the mode). More attainable is the goal of showing...
The more formal group of cantus firmus-based laments is similar to the *chansons des regretz* with respect to the varied deployment of tetrachordal motives among the non-cantus firmus voices. This is most evident in the two settings of *Cueurs desolez* by Josquin (Ex. 4a) and de la Rue (Ex. 4b), and in Josquin’s *Nymphes des bois* (Ex. 4c) and *Nymphes, nappés* (Ex. 4d). However, they differ in that they use texts and melodies borrowed primarily from the Latin liturgy (see Table 2). That all but one of these Latin texts concern death and suffering suggests that they might be a source of our lament emblems, but in fact only one of them—*Pie Jesu*—is promising. This cantus firmus for *Proch dolor/Pie Jesu*, an anonymous seven-voice setting of a Latin elegy mourning the death of Maximilian I (d. 1519), is the final verse of the sequence *Dies irae* from the Mass for the Dead. Its first four notes form an a\textsubscript{1} to e\textsubscript{1} descending tetrachord in the Phrygian mode, and this figure is arrayed in triple canon and repeated across the first 56 measures of this massive motet. This cantus firmus appears in two other funeral laments: Ockeghem’s *Mort tu as naore/Miserere* (for the death of Binchois), and C. Festa’s *Super flumina Babylonis/Pie Jesu*, but the absence of tetrachordal motives in the non-cantus firmus voices in all three *Pie Jesu* works (and their absence in the cantus firmus melodies of the other works in Table 2) suggests that these particular liturgical melodies were chosen for the affective resonance of their texts, not their music.

The pieces in Table 1, part I, appear to be the work of composers associated with the French royal court, and are mostly datable to the period ca. 1505-20. A number of these can be found in the chanson album, MS 228 of the Royal Library, Brussels, copied around 1520 for Marguerite of Austria, where they share the pages with the most doleful collection of music and poetry ever assembled. The collection as a whole almost certainly is a reflection of Marguerite’s “melancholy disposition” and unhappy life, and given her discerning taste in music and the rhetorical sensitivity of the more progressive composers represented in the collection, particularly Josquin, it is entirely possible that Marguerite was in some way the muse of this musical emblem.

these works as “drawing upon the same elements of a general musical language” (46), though I would argue “shared” rather than “general,” since this material develops quite specific rhetorical significance in the context of these texts. Rees also identifies three primary motives in *Mille regretz* (48-50), though none of them is a descending tetrachord.

*See* Patrick Macey, “An Expressive Detail in Josquin’s *Nymphes, nappés*,” *Early Music* 31 (2003): 400-11, esp. 409, where his analysis reveals the pervasiveness of the Phrygian tetrachordal motives he identifies as “y” and “z.”


*Ibid.,* 4, argues the MS was copied between 1516 and 1523, and certain portions were added in or after 1519; the earliest datable works in the collection he assigns to 1508. Howard M. Brown and Jaap van Bentheim, *JE 27: Secular Works for Three Voices, Critical Commentary* (Utrecht: Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1991), 31: “copied in Mechlin by members of the scriptorium of Alamire before 1516; small portions of the manuscript were added no earlier than 1519.” *See* The Chansons Albums, 9-20 for a summary of the tragedies in Marguerite’s life.

*Brown,* “Josquin and the Fifteenth-Century Chanson,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 71 (1985): 119-58, esp. 136-37, argues that the earliest examples of regret chansons and motet chansons predate Marguerite, and may have originated south of the Alps, perhaps in Milan.
There is, however, one anomalous piece from this tradition that complicates the above picture, Josquin's motet-chanson, *Ce povre mendiant/Pauper sum ego*. Presumably it was included in Marguerite's collection because it is a lament of sorts, but it stands apart for several reasons: there is no known source for the melody, and the casting of a beggar's complaint about economic status in the more formal guise of a motet-chanson suggests a mock-serious tone. *Ce povre* is also the only three-part piece in Table 1, part I; it probably predates all of them, datable most likely to Josquin's Milan period (ca. 1484-9), if not earlier, and so was composed not for the French royal court, but in Italy. The structure is distinctive: a transposing ostinato squarely based on a descending Phrygian tetrachord (see Example 5a) is stated six times in a stepwise descent from a to d, with a final return to a. This supports two florid upper voices in non-imitative counterpoint that are thematically unrelated to the cantus firmus in the bassus.

**Ex. 5: Josquin and Isaac, transposing ostinati**

a. Josquin, *Ce Povre mendiant/Pauper sum ego*

![Example 5a: Josquin, transposing ostinato](image)

b. Isaac, *Quis dabit capiti meo aquam/Et requiescamus*

![Example 5b: Isaac, transposing ostinato](image)

There does happen to be another piece that employs an identical structure, also composed in Italy, and it is the most famous polyphonic lament of the late fifteenth century. Upon the death of Lorenzo de' Medici in 1492, Poliziano wrote a Latin funeral elegy, *Quis dabit capiti meo aquam*, which was set to music by Heinrich Isaac. As Martin Staehelin has shown (and Taruskin confirmed), Isaac borrowed music from his own *Missa Salvos nos* in creating the two outer sections of his three-part motet, including the plainchant phrase *Et requiescamus in pace* (the final section

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44 For autobiographical interpretations of the texts of *Ce povre mendiant/Pauper sum ego*, see Brown, “Josquin and the Fifteenth-Century Chanson,” 131-38 (as a plea for a position in the Hapsburg court), and of *Fortune destrange plumage/Pauper sum ego*, see Litterick, “Chansons for Three and Four Voices,” 339, and *NJE* 27, *Critical Commentary*, 34.

45 Litterick, “Chansons for Three and Four Voices,” 338-39. Brown dated the work to the 1470s or earlier, based in part on style, but also the belief, now no longer valid, that Josquin was in Milan around that time; “Josquin and the Fifteenth-Century Chanson,” 135. Fallows has recently argued for a later date for the work, in *Josquin, Epitome musical* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 305, 330. For a modern edition, see *NJE* 27: 5, and Picker, *The Chansons Albums*, 389-90. Most commentators, including *NJE* 27, *Critical Commentary*, 33, follow Picker (143) in seeing the ostinato melody as related to the cadence formula of psalm tone VIII (Liber usualis, 133). While the Mode VIII cadence formula (c-c-c-b-a-g-g) resembles the melodic shape of Josquin’s ostinato, it is unlikely to have been a model, since the interval content and modal character are quite different from the Phrygian version found in *Ce povre*. 
of the Compline antiphon Salve nos upon which the mass is based), which migrates continuously among the cantus, tenor, and bassus voices of these sections.\(^{46}\) In the middle section of Quis dabit, however, the tenor part, marked “tenor laurus tacet,” falls silent as Poliziano’s text invites the reader to ponder Lorenzo’s death (“Lightning has struck our laurel tree, our laurel so dear to all the muses and dances of the nymphs”). While the upper two voices weave gracefully in florid, non-imitative counterpoint, the et requiescamus melody (bearing the antiphon’s original text)—a slightly decorated version of a Phrygian descending tetrachord—symbolically sinks downwards in precisely the same manner as Josquin’s Pauper sum ego, in stepwise descent from a to d, with a return to a (see Example 5b). That this middle section is an entirely original work is suggested by the particular circumstances of its composition: the plainchant melody was borrowed from Isaac’s own prior mass, the tenor part was eliminated in response to the text, and the downward-spiraling ostinato was inspired by the death of Isaac’s great patron to give structure to the only part of the motet composed entirely from scratch.

What, then, are we to make of the relationship between Josquin’s Ce povre mendiant and the middle section of Isaac’s Quis dabit, which are so alike in mode, texture, and the shape and deployment of the transposing ostinato? Josquin’s is almost certainly the earlier work, but its source tradition (it appears in no extant sources before the first decade of the sixteenth century) suggests that it achieved limited circulation in the late fifteenth century.\(^{47}\) While the possibility of direct modeling cannot be ruled out, Isaac may have gotten his ideas from elsewhere. The texture of the motet-chanson is found in a group of works by Compère and


The unusually prominent role of the “et requiescamus in pace” phrase in the original Missa Salve nos remains unexplored. Taruskin’s table 2 (p. 86) shows the disposition of the “Salve nos” antiphon phrases in the tenor voice of Isaac’s mass, but not its migrations to the other voices. From this latter perspective, it becomes clear that this final phrase (Taruskin’s phrase “E”) is given special prominence: it appears more frequently (often out of the sequence the first four phrases [A-D] tend to observe), migrates more aggressively among all the voices, and more thoroughly saturates the textures of certain sections (e.g., the Credo beginning with the Crucifixus).

\(^{47}\) Moreover, the work appears in Florence, Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Musica “Luigi Cherubini,” MS Basevi 2439 (copied in Brussels/Mechelen, ca. 1508; hereafter Florence 2439) with a different French incipit, _Fortune destrange plumage_, and there seems to be no consensus among scholars about which French text Josquin set originally, or whether the work is even by Josquin; see Brown, “Josquin and the Fifteenth-Century Chanson,” 124-25; Litterick, “Chansons for Three and Four Voices,” 339; and _NJE_ 27, _Critical Commentary_ 34.
Agricola probably originating in Milan during the 1470s or early 1480s, and though still rare in the 1480s, transposing ostinati had been used in mass settings by several composers, including Isaac. Clearly Isaac drew his cantus firmus, its text, and even chunks of its original polyphonic setting from his own Mass, and the similarity to the *Pauper sum ego* cantus firmus may be coincidental, due to the relative ubiquity of its Phrygian melodic formula (a tetrachordal descent cadencing on e), found alike in the final phrases of the *Salva nos* antiphon, *Dies irae* sequence (*Pie jesus*), and psalm tone IV. Despite (or perhaps because of) its occasional nature, the Poliziano/Isaac *Quis dabit capiti meo aquam* seems to have attracted widespread attention. Petrucci included it in his *Motetti B* print (1503), and subsequent settings of *Quis dabit* texts by Pierre de la Rue (*Quis dabit pacem*), Jean Mouton and C. Festa (*Quis dabit oculis meis*), and Nicholas Payen (a setting of Poliziano’s text), as well as adaptations by German composers, all pay homage both to Isaac’s Poliziano setting, as well as his setting of a second lament for Lorenzo, *Quis dabit pacem*. The

48 Brown, “Josquin and the Fifteenth Century Chanson,” 136-41. Since Brown’s article, recent evidence has removed Josquin from Milan until the 1480s, but his main arguments about the style and its origins remain valid.


50 Until Staehelin’s correct identification of the source of Isaac’s ostinato, a number of differing plainchant sources had been proposed: the verse of the respond *Libera me* from Matins in the Office for the Dead, in Osthoff, *Theatergesang und darstellende Musik*, 1: 177(*Liber usualis*, 1799); a respond from the office of St. Cecilia, in Atlas, “A Note on Isaac’s *Quis dabit*,” 106; and the fourth psalm tone, in Martin Just, *Studien zu Heinrich Isaac’s Motetten* (Ph.D. diss., Tübingen, 1961), 162 (*Liber usualis*, 130). The relatively generic nature of this cadential figure may explain the mystery of how a scribe ignorant of the *Salva nos* antiphon came to enter and erase the St. Cecilia text in the Cappella Giulia chansonnier; of the several possible sources, this happened to be one known or provided to him. Its character as a cadential figure, and thus a symbol of finality, or death, may have contributed to its rhetorical force.

The first of many printings of Poliziano's poem was issued by Aldus Manutius at Venice in 1498, and these typically bore a rubric alluding to Isaac's setting: "Monodia in Laurentium Medicem, intonata per Arrighum Isaac." It may well be that Isaac's inspired setting of Poliziano's seminal elegy forged the first significant association between lament and its musical emblems, including ostinato, for this is the earliest and most famous work in which we find the essential ingredients assembled together: tetrachordal motives cast in the Phrygian mode, and deployed both throughout the musical texture (parts I and III), and as a transposing ostinato in the bass (part II), all in response to a classicizing lament text. The latent association of the *Et requiescamus* text and melody with Compline themes of sleep and departure, and the potential of the descending Phrygian tetrachord, with its poignant half-tone cadence to represent a descent into silence, mourning, and eternal rest, are explicitly realized in *Quis dabit capiti me aquam*. About a decade later, while in the service of the Ferrara court (1503-4), Josquin composed an extraordinary work that suggests he, too, now understood these lament emblems as appropriate to the elevated rhetoric of a motet associated with death. In both mood and mode, *Miserere mei, Deus* is an elegiac work that ostensibly reacts to the dark tone of a penitential psalm, but it also may have functioned both as a work for its dying patron, Ercole d'Este (d. 1505), and a lament for the death of Girolamo Savonarola. Macey has demonstrated its structural links to Savonarola's own meditation on Psalm 50, and the likelihood that the pious Duke would commission such a work is strengthened by his known admiration for the friar: he corresponded with Savonarola beginning in 1485, and intervened in vain with the Florentine Signoria to prevent his execution in 1498. Musically the motet is cast in the Phrygian mode, uses a transposing ostinato throughout (based on a semitone oscillation), and is built from motives identified by Patrick Macey that include a tetrachord as well as a cascading descent commencing with a dotted rhythmic figure.

3. The Florentine Context

At this point it is tempting to posit an evolutionary development of our musical emblems that begins with their forging in the humanist circles of Poliziano, Isaac, and Lorenzo, passes to Burgundian-Hapsburg court circles through the agency of Josquin and his fellow Hapsburg court composers, and having there undergone a

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54 See ibid., 186-92; and more recently, idem., "Josquin and Musical Rhetoric: *Miserere mei, Deus* and Other Motets," in *The Josquin Companion*, 492-523, where he offers a detailed analysis of the motet's four principal motives. It was with reference to the motets of both Josquin and Isaac that Reinhard Strohm observed a link between ostinato and "serious matters, such as life and death;" *The Rise of European Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), 635-38.
more varied and refined motivic treatment in the chansons des regretz and déplorations, then returns to Italy through chanson collécionismo to form a strand that crosses over into the strambotto-laments of our three composers. Doubtless the reality is much messier and more complicated; music and musicians traveled constantly in both directions throughout this period, many works are lost to us, and other composers and patrons probably had a hand in gradually shaping a musical lingua franca of lament. However they were forged and synthesized, the primary strands seem clear, and are directly relevant to the musical language of our three settings of Qual sarà mai.

The significance of the Isaac/Poliziano Quis dabit can be measured by the enduring fame it achieved both abroad and within Florence. Alexander Agricola and Johannes Ghiselin were in Florence in Medici employment immediately after Lorenzo’s death, and upon their subsequent return north to pursue their careers at the French and Burgundian courts, they surely would have brought with them knowledge of Isaac’s Quis dabit capiti meo aquam, if not an actual copy of the music. Both of Isaac’s Lorenzo laments circulated actively in Florentine sources right up to the 1520s, and their juxtaposition with the Quis dabit laments of Mouton and de la Rue is entirely consonant with a Florentine political and cultural temperament of the period that exalted the pre-eminence of their Laurentian past, and that measured Medici aspirations and accomplishments on a European scale following the ascendancy of Leo X. Florentine sources also record the influx into Italy of French royal court music and musicians arising from the repeated incursions of French armies, and in particular the historic event of December 1515 in Bologna, when Leo X and Francis I met to discuss peace. Among the musically literate in Florence, polyphonic chanson literature had been avidly collected and well-known since the late fifteenth century, and increasingly it came from French royal court circles. The earliest of the surviving manuscripts from Burgundian-Hapsburg court, the “Basevi Codex,” was actually prepared in the Alamire workshop for a Tuscan patron, and transmits a number of déplorations and chansons des regretz, as well as Josquin’s Ce povre mendiant (though with a different French text, Fortune d’estrange plummaige). Florence chanson manuscripts of the period ca. 1505-25 generally

55 On the frequent movement of Isaac’s music to northern Europe, and northern music to Florence, both through commercial courier networks, see my “Heinrich Isaac among the Florentines,” Journal of Musicology 23 (2006): 97-152.
56 Both Isaac motets as well as Mouton’s are preserved in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MSS Magliabechi XIX. 164-167 (ca. 1515-20); Cortona, Biblioteca Comunale, MSS 95-96/Paris, Bibliothèque National de France, Nouvelles Acquisitions Français, MS 1817 (ca. 1519-23); and Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II. I. 232 (ca. 1516-21), which also includes La Rue’s Quis dabit pacem. On the dating, provenance, and contents of each see, respectively, the studies of Anthony Cummings: Ms. Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Magl. XIX. 164-167 (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006); “Giulio de’ Medici’s Music Books,” Early Music History 10 (1991): 65-122; “A Florentine Sacred Repertory from the Medici Restoration,” Acta musicologica 55 (1983): 267-332, esp. 280, 291-92 concerning Isaac’s Quis dabit motets.
57 Lockwood, “Jean Mouton,” passim.
include, among other repertoire stemming from the French courts, a cluster of *chansons des regrets*, and a favorite seems to have been Josquin's *Plus nulz regretz* (Ex. 4h), an occasional piece commemorating the Treaty of Calais (21 December 1507), and based on a text by Margaret's court poet and Josquin intimate, Jean Lemaire.\(^\text{59}\) Exposure to French court repertory can have been no less vital by the time our three composers were contemplating Poliziano's Orpheus lament: Layolle was living in Lyons, where he was involved in music publishing with Jacques Moderne; Verdelot was French; and as the composer of a *Quis dabit oculis* motet commemorating the death of Anne of Brittany, Queen of France (1514), as well as *Super flumina Babylonis/Pie Jesu*, Festa clearly had experience with northern motet procedures, probably acquired in the Roman circles of Leo X.\(^\text{60}\) The opportunities for all three to encounter French court music were manifold,\(^\text{61}\) and was abetted not only by Medici papal tastes, but also by their direct contact with other influential Florentines like Filippo Strozzi who were keenly interested in French music.\(^\text{62}\)

To return to the music of our three *Qual sarà mai* settings, I believe we can now see these in greater detail as products of the eclectic, experimental environment in which the early madrigal arose. As a Poliziano lament for Lorenzo, and cast in

\(^{59}\) Fallows, *NJ E 28: Secular Works for Four Voices, Critical Commentary*, 342-68; Picker, “Josquin and Jean Lemaire: Four Chansons Re-Examined,” in *Essays Presented to Myron F Gilmore*, ed. Sergio Bertelli and Gloria Ramakus, Villa I Tatti 2 (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1978), 448; Litterick, “Chansons for Three and Four Voices,” 374-76. The music is ed. in Picker, *The Chanson Albums*, 280-4, and Fallows, ed., *NJ E 28: 28. Josquin may have set the poem at Lemaire's request, and text and music were probably performed at the celebration marking the return of Maximilian's ambassadors to Mechelin (Malines) on 1 January 1508. *Plus nulz regretz* is transmitted in three Florentine sources of the time, two in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence, MSS Magliabechi XIX. 164-167, and MS Magliabechi XIX. 117 (1513-18), and in Florence, Biblioteca del Conservatorio Luigi Cherubini, MS Basevi 2442 (“Strozzi Chansonnier,” ca. 1518-28; hereafter Florence 2442). Clusters of *chansons des regrets* can be found in these latter two sources, as well as in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Magliabechi XIX. 107 (ca. 1505-13). On an earlier cluster of *regiet: chansons* in a Florentine source of the early 1490s, Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, MS Q 19, see Irena Cholij, “Borrowed Music: *Allez regrets* and the Use of Pre-existent Material,” in *Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Music*, ed. Tess Knighton and David Fallows (New York: Schirmer, 1992), 165-76.

\(^{60}\) Given evidence that the primary sources of Festa's *Super flumina Babylonis* (the Medici Codex) and *Quis dabit oculis* (Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, MS Q 19) are, respectively, of Roman and north Italian (possibly Paduan) origin, the more likely context in which Festa wrote the latter and gained exposure to a wide range French Court music is Leonine Rome. Leo X knew French court music at first hand, and favored Mouton's music in particular, and surely he would have fostered the setting of a funeral text with strong Medicean associations; see *The New Grove Dictionary*, s.v. “Mouton [de Holluigue], Jean.” Festa joined the papal chapel in Rome on 1517, but it is likely that his association with Roman circles dates back at least to ca. 1514, as suggested some time ago by Lockwood, “Jean Mouton and Jean Michel,” 218. The relationship between the Festa and Mouton motets is carefully worked out in Dunning, *Die Staatsmotette*, 93-98.


a famous musical setting still very much in circulation, Isaac’s *Quis dabit* cannot have been far from the minds of all three composers as they approached the text of Poliziano’s *Quia sara mai*. However, it is the setting by the native Florentine among them that bears the most recognizab...
formations, and their extensions into longer, cascading figures appears to be derived directly from the French tradition of *chansons des regrets* and *déplorations* considered above. What is novel, of course, is the casting of these lament emblems within the form of the strambotto, but as we have seen this was a conjunction occasioned by a text clearly associated with the topic of lament, the poetry of Poliziano’s *Orfeo*, and a Florentine cultural environment that combined an interest in contemporary French music with poetic and musical traditions of the Laurentian era.

But what might have been the specific conditions that brought about these interrelated settings? Although there is no record of efforts to mount a production of Poliziano’s *Orfeo* in early sixteenth-century Florence, a new edition of *Orfeo* in 1524 was perhaps the occasion for one; there was a tradition of “theatrical madrigals” composed specifically for dramatic productions, such as Verdelot’s settings of choruses for Florentine productions of Machiavelli’s *La Mandragola* (1524) and *La Clizia* (1525). In the early 1490s, there were plans afoot at the Mantuan court to mount new performances of *Orfeo*, and once again a famous Florentine solo singer, this time Atalante Migliorotti, was sought for the lead role. A Florentine production in the 1520s might have been undertaken as an effort to repatriate a Florentine cultural treasure to which the Gonzagan court laid a defensible (and ongoing) claim. Less clear is why a production of *Orfeo* would call for three different settings of only the first of the lament’s four stanzas, and the mildly contrapuntal styles of all three versions render them less suitable to theatrical recitation. A plausible explanation that arises from circumstantial evidence is that Verdelot’s setting may have been composed first; modally it stands apart from the other two settings, and may be contemporary with his other datable strambotto setting, *Quando madonna*, which Slim placed in the early 1520s. The Layolle and Festa versions thus would come later, but in response to Verdelot’s. The prime candidate as agent in bringing these latter two together is Filippo Strozzi (1488-1538), a keen patron of the early madrigal, and the only one we know to have been in direct contact.


Productions were planned for 1490 and 1491; Migliorotti, traveling from Florence where he was in the service of the Medici, failed to reach Mantua in time in 1490. Migliorotti continued his association with the Medici, both with Pope Leo X in Rome, and through his membership in the Sacred Academy of the Medici in Florence. When he was elected *perpetuo cytharedo* of the Academy in 1515, he was “compared extravagantly to Orpheus” (Cummings, *The Maecenas and the Madrigalist*, 86). This raises the interesting prospect that Migliorotti formed a direct link between the musical traditions of the original Orfeo production and the environment of the early madrigal.

67 See Slim, “Un coro della Tullia di Lodovico Martelli messo in musica e attribuito a Philippe Verdelot,” in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell’Europa del ’500*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1983), 2: 487-511, where he reaches a similar conclusion regarding Verdelot’s *Fuggite l’amorose cure acerbe*, a madrigal (from the same print as his *Quel sarà mai*) that Einstein and Osthoff had suggested might be intended for a performance of a *Medea* play. He also cites evidence (511) that choral singing in tragedies, as opposed to comedies, was a new phenomenon around 1524.
with both composers, ca. 1528-36. As husband to Lorenzo the Magnificent’s granddaughter and Medici supporter through the papacy of Leo X, Strozzi had reason to engage in a project that glorified the Laurentian era. On the other hand, Strozzi also became disillusioned with Medici rule and in 1528 moved to Lyons, home to another republican sympathizer, Francesco Layolle. Given Verdelot’s anti-Medicean position during the last republic (1527-30), and Festa’s close dealings with Strozzi after this time, there remains the intriguing possibility that the Qual sarà mai complex was intended to carry a double political meaning as both a tribute to the Florentine republic of the past, and a lament for its temporary recovery and second loss, a fate not unlike that suffered by Orpheus.

While we cannot be certain of precisely what forces of politics and patronage gave rise to these three settings of Poliziano’s famous lament, we can be more confident about their musical and poetic patrimony. They conjoin elements of the Josquin-era chanson, ongoing efforts (rooted in the works of Isaac) to apply the polyphonic maniera to Florentine poetic texts, a humanist interest in the affective force of rhetorical figurae, a classicizing cultivation of the ancient and recent traditions of lament, and the suggestive history of the strambotto as both a vehicle of a specifically Florentine tradition of orphic solo singing as well as a genre susceptible to musical experiments in text setting. As such, they record something of the highly eclectic and Janus-faced environment in which the musical language of the early madrigal was forged. They are also perhaps a swan-song to the older strambotto tradition; for a literate Florentine audience, the madrigals of all three composers—three of the era’s best interpreters of Italian texts—summoned the image of the archetypal solo singer at the same moment they exhibited the polyphonic transformation of that practice. Orpheus “singer of strambotti” had become Orpheus singer of madrigals.

Festa actively sought texts from Filippo, who in turn received settings from both composers; Agee, “Filippo Strozzi,” 230-37. Filippo certainly would have recalled brother Lorenzo’s earlier involvement with the multiple settings of the latter’s poem Questo mostrarsi (see above), another Poliziano project with which Layolle, too, was involved. Yet another Strozzi-inspired collaboration took place when Layolle, Willaert, Gerolamo Scotto, and Simon Boyleau all wrote musical settings of one of Filippo’s poems, “Rompi l’empio cor;” see Agee, “Roberto Strozzi and the Early Madrigal,” Journal of the American Musicological Society 36 (1983): 11, n.35.

Appendix 1:
Costanzo Festa, Qual sarà mai (RISM 1542\textsuperscript{18}, fols. 51v 52)
Appendix 2:
Francesco Layolle, *Qual sarà mai* (Cinquanta canzoni, no. 5)