A Player's Introductory Guide to the Medieval Vielle

by

Corey Green

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Approved

Dr. Angela Mariani
Chair of Committee

Dr. Christopher Smith

Dr. Peter Martens

Peggy Gordon Miller
Dean of the Graduate School

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Chapter 1
Introduction

This document is a manual for the player of bowed-string instruments to learn the introductory practices and processes in the modern performance of medieval music. Although applicable to almost any medieval bowed-string instrument, the ideas and exercises in this manual are aimed specifically toward the medieval fiddle, also called the vielle. Working through the following exercises and musical examples over the course of this manual, the player should be able to learn new and different playing techniques on the instrument itself, attune the ear to a new theoretical organization of melody, and embrace ideas for experimentation within the performance. After working through the document, it is expected that the player will be able to draw upon and expand any technique and process for his or her own personal artistic preferences for instrumental arrangement and presentation.

I as the author chose this topic because I have an interest in teaching and have experience teaching this music on this instrument as well as folk, or traditional, Irish music on the modern violin. Throughout my experience playing both types of music without a resident teacher of the instrument has provided both insight and noticeable problems when learning an instrument. While providing me with a variety of experience with different techniques and methods for performance, the lack of a resident teacher has shown the problems associated with interpretting performance practice with instrumental idiosyncrasies specific to the vielle along with how and what changes to make in technique when transitioning from modern to medieval, reconstructed instrument.

Although applicable to a varied audience, this document is aimed toward the young professional, specifically the bowed-string instrument player in the shoulder position such as the modern violin or viola player. Ideally used as a supplement to a live teacher, either resident or workshop-based, this document can be be a stand alone if needed for the basic techniques and first steps. In addition to the document that would have been helpful to me in learning this process, this document gives the reader the tools to adopt and adapt material from a wider range of materials on his/her own. Prior experience trained in classical performance in shoulder position is optimal for this manual, but this method presumes a player with little familiarity with the repertoire, with basic competency on bowed strings, some facility with rudiments of phrasing and bow position.

Each section covers a different point in the building of a performance for a player on the vielle. The document, while presented together as a whole, is structured into two parts. The first two sections, comprising the first part, cover the fundamental structure of medieval music and technical considerations of the instrument. This part contains an explanation of the eight medieval church modes, exercises for the player to familiarize himself or herself with the instrument, issues of tuning, placement of fingers, and the first steps to use when building a performance. The second part, which pertains to the last three sections of the manual, contains approaches to performance practice. Each section discusses the specific techniques and procedures associated with the specific roles played by the vielle player in performance of song accompaniment, dance music, and instrumental arrangements of medieval vocal works.

The first section of the manual covers the historical background that pertains to the instrument and the structure of medieval melodies. Included in this section are the sources for information on the instrument, variations of instrument design, issues of tuning, and methods to adjust the ear to the different melodic organization of the music for the performer.

The second section covers considerations of the physical characteristics of the instrument and basic techniques for performance. This section discusses issues of playing position, ornamentation, vibrato, and bowing. Along with these physical characteristics, this section also includes the first steps in performance that can be used for any of the following approaches to performance practice. The first steps include:

1.) Identify the range of the melody and play through the notes
2.) Take note of and practice repeated material
3.) Practice melodic material in various rhythmic patterns

The third section begins the second part of the manual and is concerned with approaches to performance practice. This section is about the accompaniment of vocal song performance. The section involves first the strategies for accompanying a singer, including learning the melody, reducing the melody to long tones/structural components, using parallel melodic lines, and creating a countermelody. Secondly, the section covers strategies for building the performance itself.

The fourth section covers the issues a player needs to address in the performance of dance music. Since this is the one type of instrumental music with extant examples that can be feasibly performed on the vielle, it begins with a review of these examples and the forms used to create dance music. The section continues with a discussion of

performance practice choices and processes for inventing new dances in the style of medieval music for the player to consider when building a performance.

The fifth and last section covers instrumental arrangement of vocal works. This section examines techniques for the player to use when converting texted melodies to purely instrumental performances. This includes issues of bow technique, phrasing, and rhetorical organization and devices.

This manual presents introductory material from which the individual bowed player can construct different performances of specific pieces in a variety of situations while still maintaining a sense of individual style and aesthetic choice for the player.

Chapter 2
The Manual for Historical Performance on the Medieval Fiddle for Modern Players

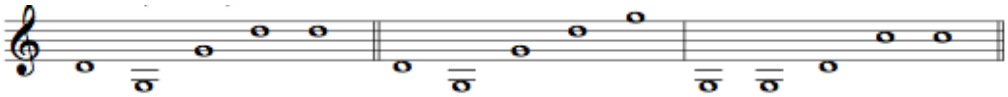
Historical Considerations

The medieval fiddle, also commonly known as the vielle, is an incredibly versatile and expressive instrument. The vielle flourished during the 12th and 13th centuries in Western Europe as one of the most popular instruments for song performance across much of Europe including regions of France, Spain, Italy, and Germany. Though no extant instrument exists from the time period, luthiers have made reconstructions of these instruments from various iconographic and manuscript sources.

There are a number of paintings in manuscripts, as details in larger works, and sculptural portrayals of the medieval vielle, with variations in design across geographical regions and performance situations. The types of variations include a differing number and placement of the strings, size and shape of the instrument, length and curvature of the bow, and shape of the bridge. Standardization was not a priority in the performance of music with this instrument, and therefore each individual instrument will provide its own set of idiosyncratic characteristics that the player can exploit to his or her own advantage in performance. For this reason, this document is structured to provide the introductory methods and ideas upon which a player may build and experiment with his or her own instrument.

Tuning

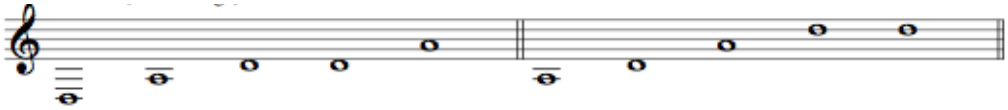
There exists one treatise that includes information about tuning the vielle, written by Jerome of Moravia at approximately the beginning of the fourteenth century. This treatise, titled *Tractatus de Musica,* provides very little for the player wishing to reconstruct a twelfth-century performance, but it is invaluable for the descriptions of and tunings for the instrument itself, as seen in Example 1.1.[1] This example depicts the relative pitches as stated by Jerome of Moravia.



Example 1.1 Different tunings as presented by Jerome of Moravia in *Tractatus de Musica.*

In contrast to what we might read in a twentieth-century manual, Jerome of Moravia's tunings are intended to indicate relative rather than absolute pitches.[2] The same was true in the written vocal music of the era. Though the specific tunings mentioned by Moravia might be one option for one individual instrument in one individual mode, or even a specific tune, it is understood that the intervallic proportion of the perfect fourth, fifth, and octave is the organizing principle, rather than a fixed pitch. Therefore a player might interpret those tunings similarly to these as seen in Example 1.2. In contrast to Example 1.1, this example shows the ways in which Jerome of Moravia's tunings can be altered for a specific instrument to optimize upon a particular mode.

[1] Margriet Tindemans, "The Vielle Before1300" in *Performer's Guide to Medieval Music*, Ross W. Duffin editor, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 297.
[2] Ibid.



Example 1.2 Tuning variants that might be employed with different specific vielles to exploit a particular mode.

Beyond these general tunings for a specific instrument and mode, there are variables for specific pitches for a given piece. Due to the greater elasticity of gut strings versus modern steel string design, a player has greater freedom to change the tuning without overly wearing the strings. This malleability means that a player can capitalize on the open strings without transposing a melody simply by changing the tuning of a given string up or down the range of a major third.[3]

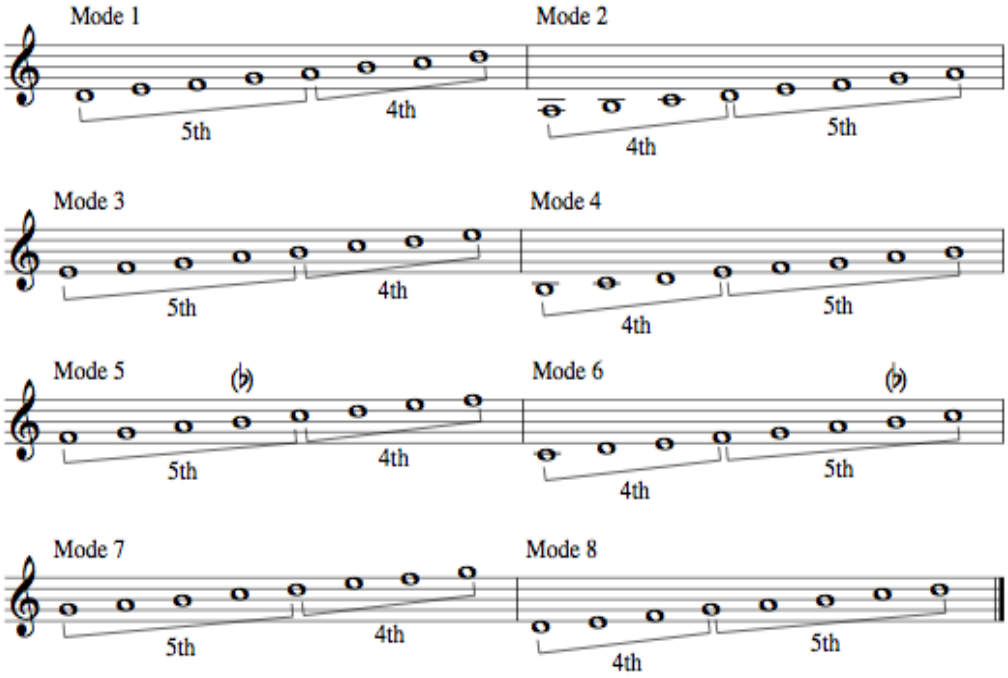
Modes

Medieval music is not based on the scale patterns of whole and half steps to which we modern players are accustomed. Instead, this music is based on the eight Church modes, which are determined only partly by their own unique pattern of whole and half steps. These modes are identified by their finals, reciting tones, and characteristic melodic gestures.

Although they look like modern modal scales when written out, it is helpful to think about them more as a combination of the notes that make up a fifth and a fourth. The notes comprising the span of a fifth or fourth is called the species, such as demonstrated by Table 1.1.

[3] The exact range of the string depends on the tension, gauge, and shape of bridge. Given the variations between instruments, this range should be determined carefully by the individual player.

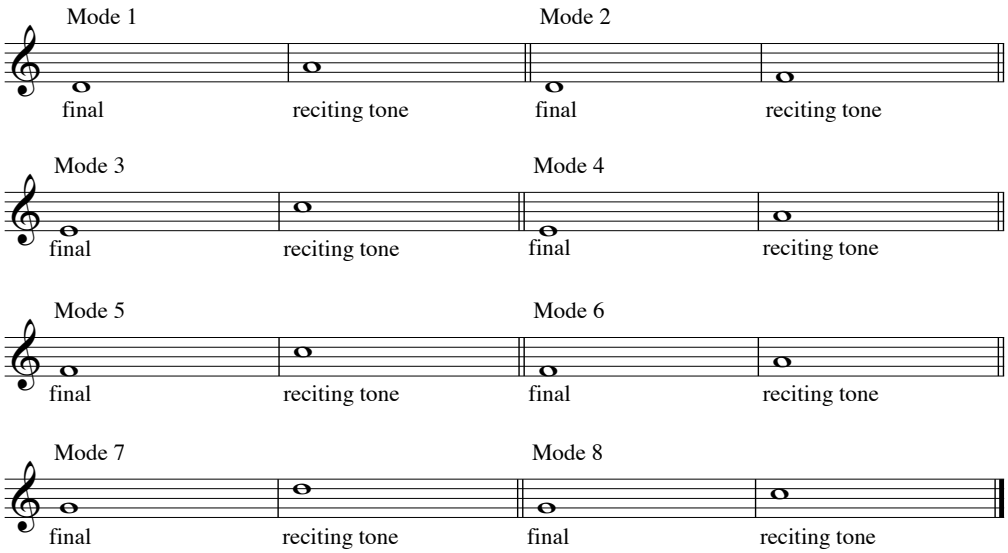
Table 1.1 The eight church modes.



These modes span the range of an octave, and the beginnings of each of the fifth and fourth species is a perfect interval from the lowest note. The odd-numbered modes in the above chart represent the authentic modes, meaning the range of the piece is based on the octave from low final to the final above. The even-numbered modes above represent the plagal modes, meaning the octave ranging from the fifth below the final to the fifth above. However, in actual practice, pieces based on these modes often extend a note below the final in the authentic modes and above the fifth in plagal modes.

The final and reciting tones are the most important notes in the mode. Although the reciting tone is not always on the fifth of the mode, it is the second most important and often repeated. Table 1.2 demonstrates the final and reciting tone for each mode.

Table 1.2 The final and reciting tones of the modes.



The final is the most important note of any mode and is the fundamental point against which every note in the melody can be compared and/or sounded. Second only to the final in importance, the reciting tone is often the note upon which the melody rests in the middle of phrases. The term reciting tone comes from the recitation of psalm tones where the psalm was literally recited on one tone. In some cases, even if the text was not recited on one tone exclusively, the melody might come back repeatedly to land on the reciting tone until moving toward the final at a cadence.

"Gestures" are characteristic melodic patterns often built around the final or reciting tone that are used formulaically to indicate the mode and organize the specific melody. For performers, these gestures can also be used to improvise or to vary different sections of a performance. Identifying gestures can be difficult in the beginning, but generally repeated material and the material at the incipit and cadence of a melody are the

most significant gestures to borrow for improvisational purposes.

A Note on Notation

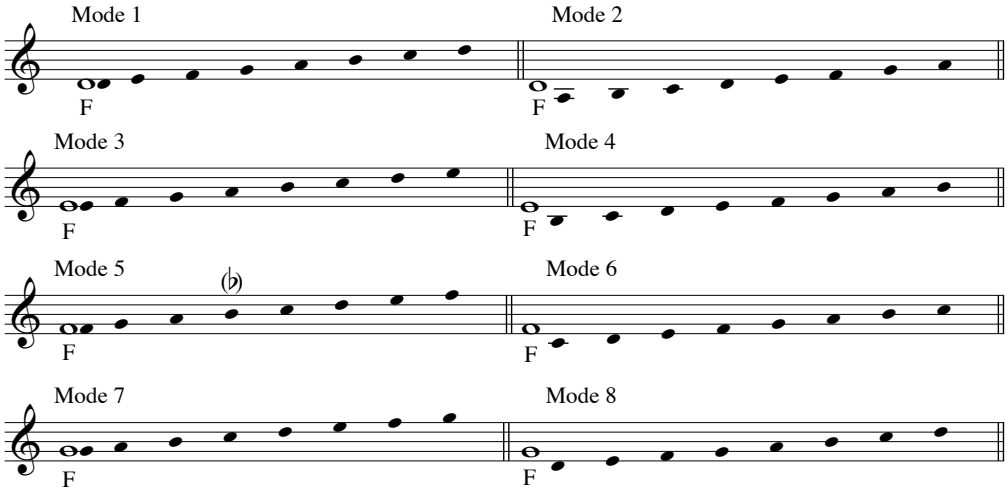
Much of medieval music is unmetered. To preserve, in as much as is possible, the spirit of the original notation while maintaining familiarity with our modern western notational system, all unmetered examples and exercises throughout the rest of this document are presented in notehead form. Black notes indicate less emphasized notes in the mode, or the original notes of the melody where applicable. White, or open, notes indicate more emphasized notes in the mode, or the possible added notes a vielle player might add when presented against the melody.

Adjusting the ear

When learning a new type of music, it is important to train the ears as much as it is to train fingers and performance practice. Most of the repertoire for medieval music is monophonic song. It can be difficult for modern musicians to hear a monophonic melody and not automatically infer a harmonic accompaniment. Since this music is more about the contrast of dissonance resolving to consonance against the final rather than about tonal function and harmonic development, it is important retrain the expectations of the ear with exercises that prioritize gestures and ranges of a particular mode, and hearing each note of a melody as it sounds in relation to the final. This can be done with any individual melody, or as the player familiarizes themselves with the music and the instrument, or just the notes in the modes themselves, such as can be seen in Table 1.3. [4]

[4] Jeremy Yudkin, *Music in Medieval Europe* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 68.

Table 1.3 The modes presented against their final.



The preceding material is the basis upon which the rest of the performance is built. The points about mode and techniques on the instrument are used in nearly every type of medieval performance made by a player on vielle. The more facility a player can acquire in getting the modes "under the fingers" on his or her specific instrument, the better and more natural a performance will become.

Physical Characteristics and Basic Techniques

Despite the many variations that were found in the physical instrument design of the vielle, there are a few characteristics that are consistently different from the modern violin. There is no chin or shoulder rest, the bridge is most often wider and less curved, the strings are thicker and closer to the fingerboard, the bow is shorter and lighter, and the sound of the gut string is much more responsive than its modern steel counterparts.[5]

[5] The responsiveness of the gut strings against the hair of the bow striking the string is due to the lighter, less massive construction of gut strings. It takes quite a bit more power of muscle and friction of the bow to move the thicker, louder steel strings.

Beyond these, there will be idiosyncratic differences unique to an individual instrument, such as size of the body, number of strings, width of the fingerboard, thickness of the neck, and curvature of the bow.

Because of these differences, players have to familiarize themselves not only with the scales, or modes, and the repertoire, but also with the instrument itself. Therefore, the exercises in this section are structured so that each uses the gestures of a specific mode that a player would need to know when performing most melodies in that mode. For consistency, all are selections based on mode 1. Although tailored to this specific mode, each of these examples and exercises can be expanded to each individual mode. Each exercise can be practiced in the standard tuning of a particular instrument as well as with any pitch changes a player wishes to employ as long as the specific arrangement of whole and half steps are kept consisent.

Playing Position

There are two main playing positions for the vielle; one placed on the shoulder like a modern violin or viola, and one placed on the knee like a viola da gamba. There are advantages to both positions, but it is ultimately up to the preference of the player which position is used on a regular basis. The shoulder position is often more familiar to players, and since each singer moves differently in performance, it is often easier to follow the singer as they move and turn in performance. This movement often cannot be followed just with the eyes as the singer might unknowingly turn away from an instrumentalist, and this can be a disadvantage in knee position playing since the player is

stuck in one place. Given the lack of shoulder and chin rest, a player needs to readjust the left hand hold for comfort and make sure not to squeeze the neck. The knee position is often easier if there is a need to shift hand position, and it is possible to be much more precise with the bow tension and pressure. In this position, it is important to find the balance point on the lap that allows the left hand to remain loose. For the purpose of consistency, the exercises in this document will be described from the perspective of the shoulder position, although most of the exercises can be applied to the knee position as well.[6]

Just as different sizes and shapes are found in the body of the vielle, the shape and curve of the bow may differ substantially from one to another. It can be held overhand like a violin or viola in the most comfortable grip position. Depending on the extremity of the curve and the thickness of the wood, it can be very helpful to experiment with the placement of the grip. Most modern players will hold the bow at the frog in the beginning as they would with a modern bow, but often the balance is quite a bit different with a vielle bow. Therefore, it can be beneficial to choke up the bow hold along the length of the bow. To experiment for optimum comfort, see Table 1.3 from the previous section, but with each note shift the grip upward along the bow.

Technical Exercises

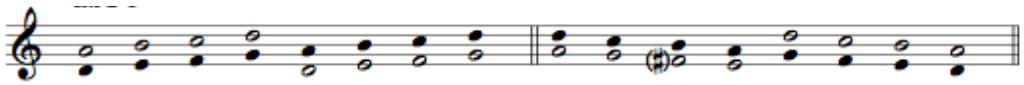
The technical exercises that follow in Examples 2.1 through 2.4 are structured for a particular mode so the player can become familiar with both the sounds of the music

[6] For players seeking exercises in knee position, see Christopher Simpson's *Division Viol*, which is a manual tailored to exercises and playing tips for that instrument. London, J. Curwen, compiler, *Lithographic Facsimile of the Second Edition of the Division Viol* (New york: Schirmer, 1955).

and the physical feeling of the fingers on the instrument. The examples given are depicted using the intervals specific to the first mode, but can be applied to any mode. Any player should feel free to alter or expand any exercise for individual preference and the mode of the specific piece to be played. On this instrument, almost everything is played in first position, although it can be helpful to practice shifting for the rare piece that will extend beyond the range of first position. However, it is important to remember that the open sonorities of the unfretted strings are the priority in this music rather than fingering the open note's equivalent. Finally, it is important to remember that the exercises are suggestions, and not meant to be prescriptive.

Ornaments

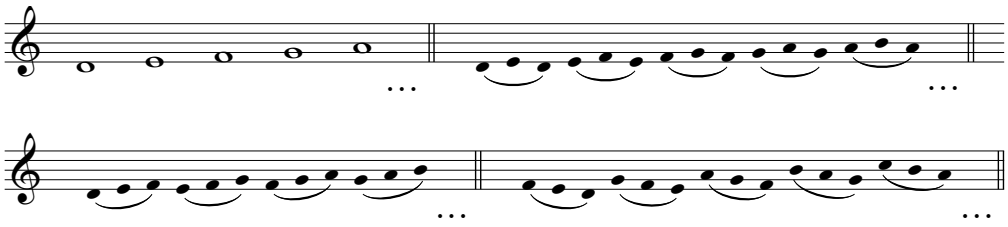
Ornaments figure prominently in the performance of medieval music. Double stops and melodic embellishments are the most common. Double stops are the simultaneous sounding of two or more notes at once. In medieval music, it is not uncommon for the vielle player to exploit the perfect intervals of the fifth, fourth, and octave through double stops. It can be very helpful in the familiarization of the instrument to practice moving through these fifths and fourths, such as in Example 2.1.



Example 2.1 Exercise showing parallel fourths and fifths presented above and below the ascending and descending scale.

The most common melodic embellishments fill in leaps in the melody or fill in repeated notes with passing tones, mordents, and neighbor tones. The method of interpreting these

embellishments is often the way to vary between different singers or verses within a specific piece. Some of these ornaments in notated form can be seen in Example 2.2.



Example 2.2 Exercise derived from common embellishments with which the student will need to be familiar.

On Vibrato

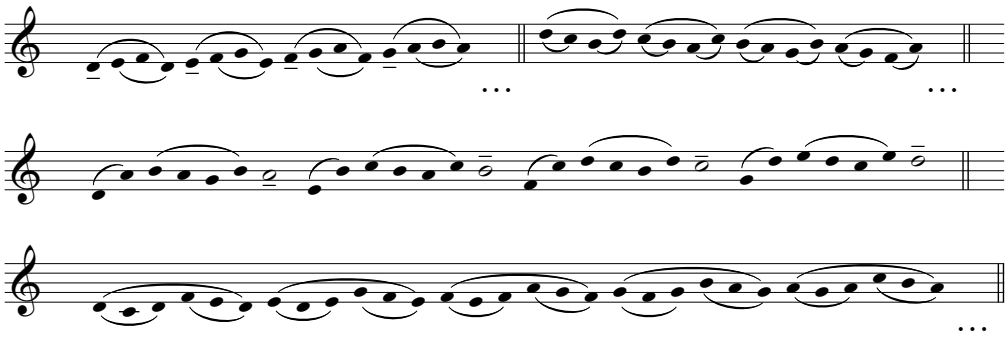
Vibrato in medieval music is often considered an ornament. It is used sparingly to emphasize a particularly important note or point in the melody. For everything else, it is important to use more of a straight tone. The perfect consonances will be brought out with straight tone, which is the objective in a performance; if too much vibrato is used, it will obscure those perfect sonorities. With the emphasis on perfect vibrato in modern music, and the amount of time modern performers spend practicing different types of vibrato, it may be necessary for the player to practice simply using straight tone. Try playing the exercises in this section with a straight tone, including the modes against the final, and then try ornamenting the final note of each cadence with vibrato to get the sound in the ear.

Bowing

Bowing in this music is much more individualized than it is in modern orchestral

playing. This is partly due to the differences in the instrument and bow and partly due to the fact that there are usually many fewer players involved, so there is more freedom to be expressive and find an individual method of bowing each particular line in a melody. Since the vielle bow is often much lighter in weight than modern bows, there is some adjustment the player has to make with tone over the gut strings. However, it is often important to know how to capitalize on specific different tones the bow can make.

Along with adjusting to the weight, the player also needs to familiarize himself or herself with the idea of using the bow to exploit different groupings of notes rather than a meter or other internalized bowing pattern. These groupings are a way of moving through repeated melodic material. Just as the grouping of different speech patterns affects the meaning the words, grouping different bowed patterns with a melodic gesture changes the meaning and mood of the gesture. This can be used to the player's advantage in performance as illustrated in Example 2.3.



Example 2.3 Exercise demonstrating different methods of bowed groupings within the context of common embellished figures.

In learning this process, it is important to be patient, have fun, and always be open

to experimentation. The possibilities for different sounds on the instrument, executing techniques, and creating new procedures in performance are only limited to the player's imagination.

First Steps

There are a few general steps that a player can follow when organizing any performance regardless of mode or form. It is a good practice to begin a performance regardless of experience level as well.

1.) Identify the range of the melody and play through the notes

The range of a given mode is often the span of an octave, but sometimes it goes beyond the octave. There are times when a melody might include a note outside the prescribed pitches or ranges of the mode. Similarly, there are melodies in which only a selection of the prescribed pitches will be presented. Sometimes, for the sake of the singer, a mode might be transposed to a range that fits the individual voice better. These differences arise because just like modern scales, the modes were originally guidelines for the organization of preexisting material, rather than rigid rules to which composers conformed. The modes are a relative set of whole and half steps rather than set pitches. For example, mode 1 begins on the note D, but the mode can easily be transposed to A or G with the addition of accidentals.

Therefore, for the instrumentalist, it is important to practice the notes of the mode in the form in which they appear in a specific melody. This exercise will also provide the

foundation for improvisation and any original added material the player wishes to include in the performance.

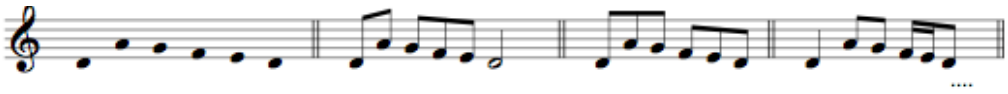
2.) Note and practice repeated material

Repetition of material is an indicator of importance. Given the sparseness of the texture of most medieval music, anything that is repeated is magnified in importance. A good exercise is to practice the notes of the mode as they appear in the melody, as mentioned above, but alternating each note with a return to the final and then again with the reciting tone. Depending how long or short the melody is, it can also be very helpful to find any figures, or groups of notes that are repeated and practice them.

3.) Practice melodic material in various rhythmic patterns

Much medieval music is written in a type of notation in which the rhythm of the melody is not indicated. The rhythm can be interpreted a number of ways, but most commonly either by deriving the rhythm from the patterns created by the text or by overlaying a rhythmic pattern to the notes of the melody. Since different patterns will fit better with different verses or individual singers, it can be very helpful to practice rhythmicizing melodic material. Rhythmicizing does not necessarily mean applying a meter, though it can. More often, these rhythms are applied in performance more like gestures, or spoken phrases, such as those seen in Example 2.4. This example shows the different interpretations a player may choose to employ when building a performance from noteheads. Experiment with phrasing and bowed groupings. It is helpful to practice

alternating starting with an up bow and a down bow, adding slurs, and finding ways to express the different groupings presented with single bows in different ways.



Example 2.4 Exercise showing different phrase groupings derived from noteheads.

There are many different ways to practice this type of exercise shown in 2-4. Imagine any combination of rhythmic values and/or bow groupings and practice playing the notes of the mode using just this pattern. The text itself can be very helpful with practicing rhythmic patterns as well. Imagine saying any spoken phrase like, "What is this?" How might the rhythmic emphasis change in the mind's ear if the same phrase appears like this: "What *is* this?" or like this: "What is *this?*" Imagine every different way that one phrase might be said and practice those rhythms.

This exercise is invaluable in creating a performance since the languages of medieval song are often different enough from their modern counterparts that the stressed syllables come in unexpected places. Practicing different rhythmic emphasis in a single phrase can help the player and singer entrain their performance much faster and can provide a rhythmic basis for any improvisation that might be added.

In conclusion, this section is designed to provide the player with an overview of the different types of variations in physical instrument design and playing positions, along with technical exercises to practice on any variation of instrument, and first steps

for building a performance. Any of the exercises or steps in this section can be used and adapted to a specific piece the player chooses to perform in any mode. Once comfortable with the instrument and placement of the fingers, a player should carry these ideas and experience into the next sections.

Song Accompaniment

One of the most common roles a bowed instrument plays in medieval music is to accompany a singer. The purpose of the following guidelines is to provide strategies for the accompanist to begin the process of creating a successful performance. Considerations of technique, working with different singers in context, metered song versus unmetered, and the standard practices of historical performance are incorporated with suggested exercises and models from which to learn.

It is also significant to note that a performer should familiarize himself or herself with the form of the song they would like to play, and there are a number of forms from which to choose. While beyond the scope of this document, a few examples of the most common monophonic song forms are virelai, sequence, pastourelle, and courtly love song.[7]

[7] Margriet Tindemans, "Improvisation and Accompaniment before1300" in *Performer's Guide to Medieval Music*, Ross W. Duffin editor, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 455.

Strategies for Accompanying a Singer

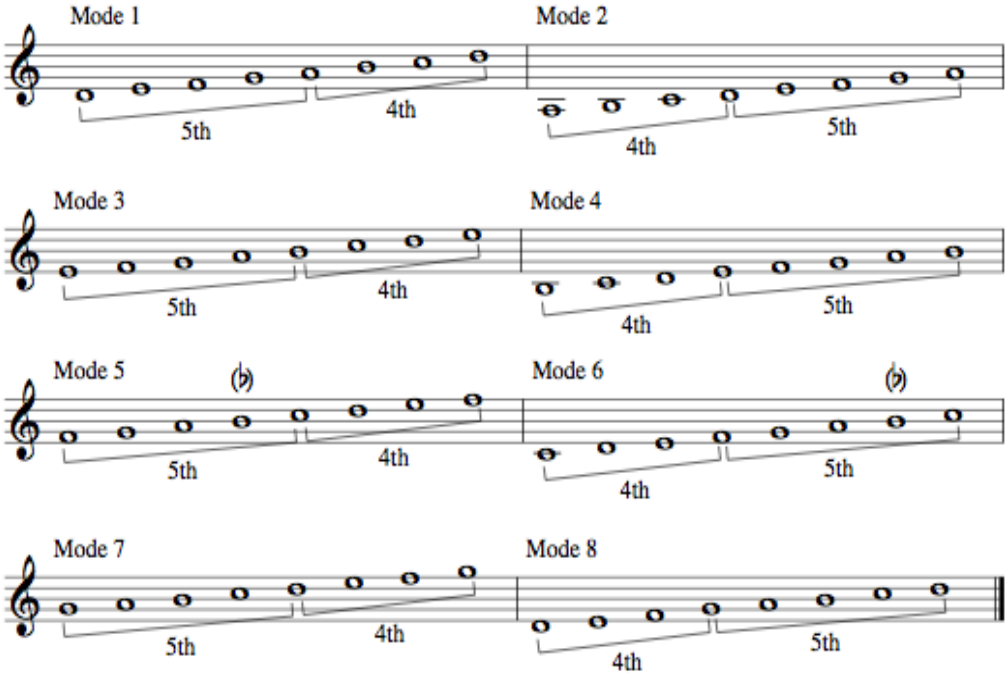
1.) Learn the Melody.

Second only to the text, the melody is the most important element of medieval monophonic song for the accompanist. Just as is the case with the voice, the melody on the instrument must follow the text. By knowing the melody and the text of the song, the player is better able to follow what the singer is doing and draw on the melodic and textual material to aid the singer. Any accompanimental part created by an instrumentalist must be subsidiary to that of the voice, but an engaging part can add to the effectiveness and presentation of the song.

To begin with, many melodies can be categorized in a particular mode. Table 3.1, a replication of Table 1.1 for convenience, shows the eight standard church modes with their divisions of 5ths and 4ths.[8]

[8] Based on description in Jeremy Yudkin, *Music in Medieval Europe*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1989), 68-69.

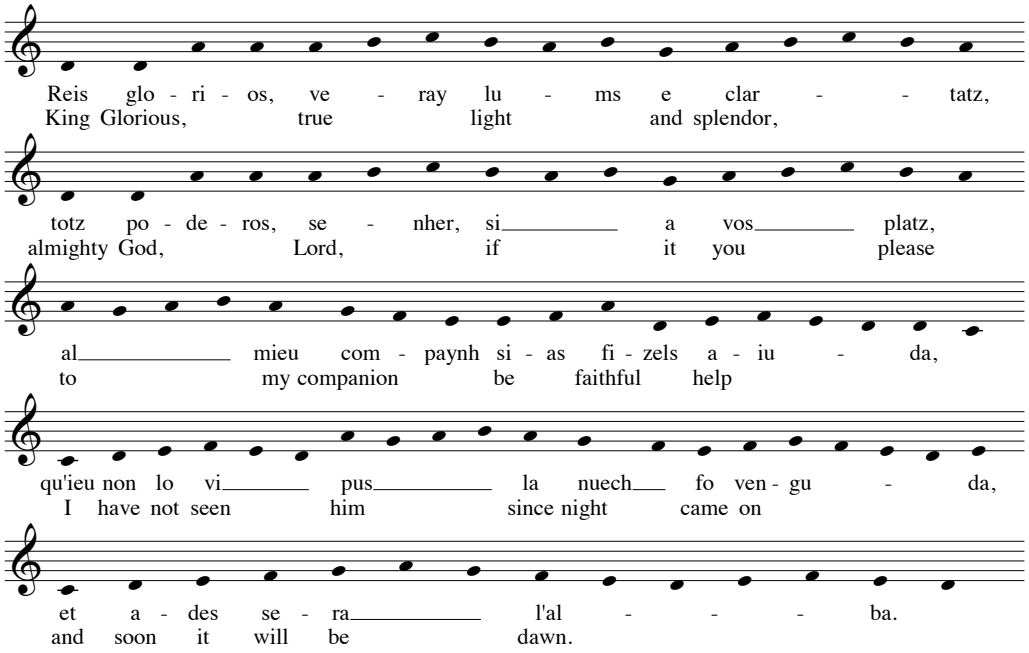
Table 3.1 Church modes presented with species of 4th and 5th.



For many modern players, it is difficult to disassociate any scale from the harmonic implications that music from the common practice onward has taught us to hear. Instead, the player must become accustomed to hearing the melody against the final of the mode without harmonic implications. One of the ways to train the ear to hear the final instead of a chord progression is to play the scale and eventually the melody against the final itself.

For example, with an unmetered melody such as the troubadour song *Reis Glorios*, a player might learn the melody as seen here in Example 3.1. [9]

[9] Elizabeth Aubrey, *The Music of the Troubadours*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 103.



Example 3.1 *Reis Glorios* presented with melody in noteheads, text, and translation.

Then, either with piano, voice, or another instrument, play the melody against the final. In the case of *Reis Glorios*, as shown in Example 3.2, this would be D, since the song is in Mode 1.

Example 3.2 First line of melody from *Reis Glorios* presented with final.

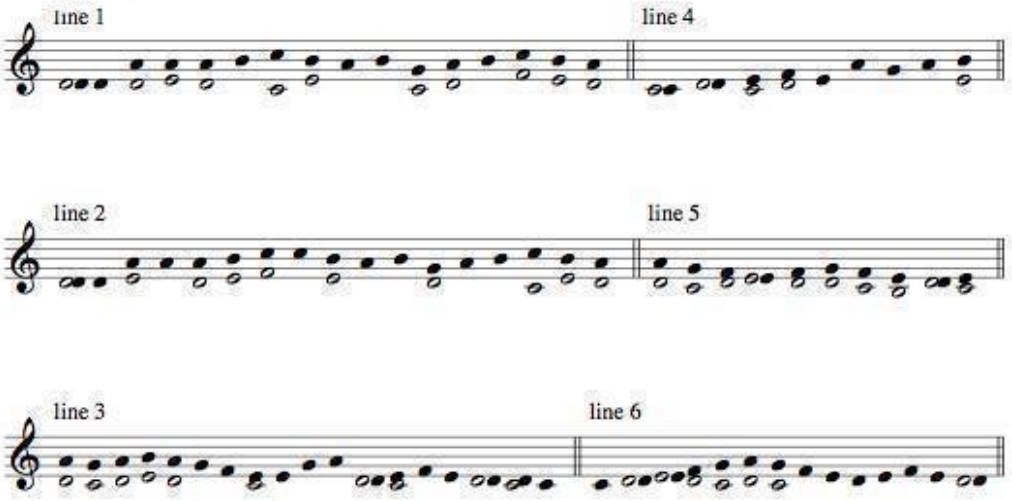
2.) Reduce the melody to long tones/structural components

Long tones, or "Changing Drones," are used as a technique to provide alternative textures within the piece without the danger of obscuring the melody. For varying degrees of complexity or basis for improvisations, the player can use the technique of reducing the melody to its structural components as well. The idea is to create a version

of the melody that is less dense than the original melody and serves to thicken the texture. Reducing the melody can be interpreted in a number of different ways and is up to personal taste as to the extent of the reduction. If we use the same troubadour song as an example, a melodic reduction could be as simple as the final and occasionally the subfinal such as Example 3.3.

Example 3.3 First line of melody from *Reis Glorios* presented with a sparse melodic reduction.

A reduction can be also interpreted more densely, such as in Example 3.4.



Example 3.4 One stanza of the melody of *Reis Glorios* presented with a more dense melodic reduction

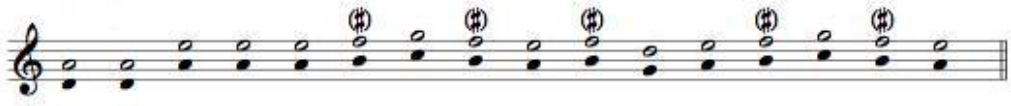
It is significant to note that the more complicated and intricate the melody of the song, the more the reduced texture can be used and manipulated to maintain the energy of the performance and the declamation of the text. Where the changes in pitch and bowing

fall will depend on the specific melody chosen, but also to some degree on the specific phrasing of the singer. The closer any accompanist can work with their singer, the better an ensemble any piece and performance will have.

When reducing a melody, it is important to balance interest for the instrumentalist and space in the arrangement for the singer to present freely. However, it can be too easy to create a line that becomes incredibly boring for the instrumentalist. The evidence of the effectiveness of the line will be indicated by the reception of the performance: if it is boring for the player, it will be boring for an audience. We are accustomed in many cases to much more movement, rhythmically, melodically, and even harmonically, in a performance, and it can be very difficult to remain engaged while playing long strings of highly static notes. However, there are several techniques to help a player keep the energy no matter how static the line. The instrumentalist must always pay attention to the singer, to the text, to the phrasing, and to the melody. The closer the attention paid to all aspects of the performance, the more energy that performance will have, regardless of the number of notes being played. Complementing the amount of attention employed, playing with intensity will increase the energy of a piece, but measuring intensity is often fairly subjective. However, the extent of the intensity will come from the use of the bow. Swelling into and out of notes via increasing and decreasing the speed and weight of the bow are a few key areas of concentration for building the intensity. Even though the instrument is supporting the voice, the accompaniment still plays a part in conveying the story or the affect of the song to the audience, which is the goal of performance in the first place.

3.) Use of parallel melodic lines

There are other textures to draw from when creating an accompaniment. Another method of thickening the overall texture is the use of parallel melodic lines. Many treatises in the early part of the medieval period discuss the use of what is called parallel motion as an acceptable method of varying the melody.[10] Parallel motion is where the melody is played transposed at the fourth, fifth, or octave, such as in Example 3.5. By experimenting with doubling or transposing the mode at the fourth or the fifth, one usually will find which options work most smoothly and naturally within the mode, as shown in Example 3.5a and 3.5b:



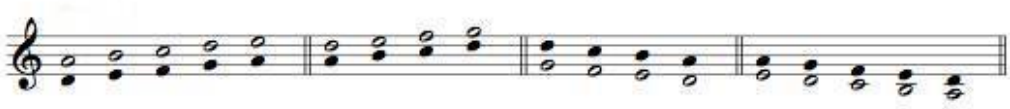
Example 3.5 a. First line of the melody of *Reis Glorios* presented with parallel fourth above the melody.

Example 3.5 b. First line of the melody of *Reis Glorios* presented with parallel fifth above the melody.

As opposed to the long tones, the use of parallels is not a texture that a player would use constantly, but it can be very effective to move into and out of the parallels at

[10] These manuscripts include anonymous treatises *Musica Enchiriadis* and *Schola Enchiriadis*, the *Vatican Organum Treatise*, and Anonymous II *Tractatus de Discantu*. Raymond Erickson, translator, *Musica Enchiriadis and Scolica Enchiriadis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.) Steven C. Immel, "The Vatican Organum Treatise Re-Examined," *Early Music History* 20 (2001), 121-172. Albert Seay, editor and translator, *Tractatus de Discantu* (Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1978.)

certain points in a given line of text. However, to be able to move seamlessly into and out of parallel motion, a player needs to be intimately aware of the motion of the original melody and the placement of the parallel lines. Practicing with an exercise such as the Example 3.6 will help with smoothing transitions. [11]

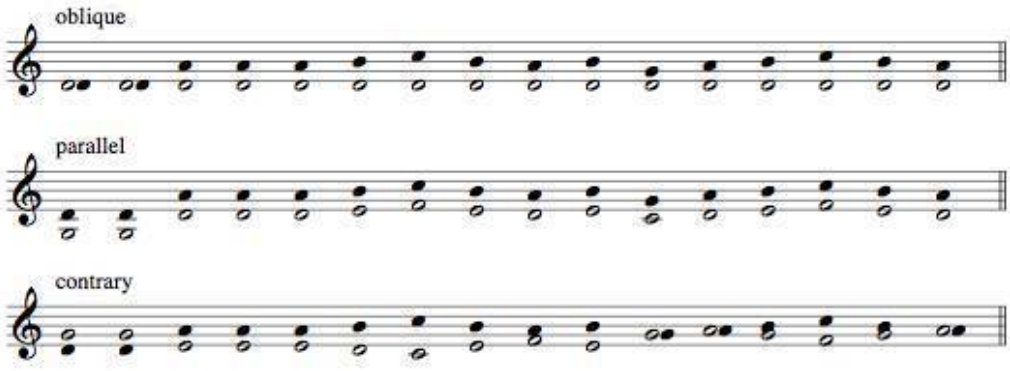


Example 3.6 Exercise with which to practice parallel motion ascending and descending the scale.

Often the smoothest way to transition between the melody and parallel motion is through contrary motion, which brings us to the last and most complex of the textures,

4.) Create a countermelody

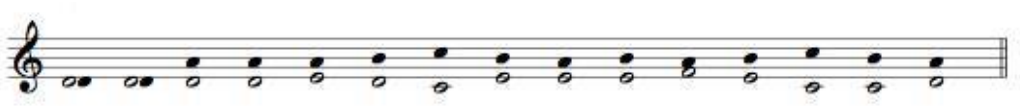
Contrary motion, parallel motion, and oblique motion or repeating the same note, can all be used to create a countermelody. The three different types of motion can be seen in Example 3.7.



[11] Based on a similar exercise provided by Norbert Rodenkirchen in an instrumental accompaniment workshop given at Vancouver Early Music's Mediaeval Programme, 2008.

Example 3.7 First line of the melody of *Reis Glorios* presented with parallel, oblique, and contrary motion.

The use of contrary motion is often the most difficult texture to create because it is so easy to make the countermelody so dense or complex that the text and the original melody become muddied or less clearly presented. It can be an advantage to make a part too dense, since it then becomes easier to take material out rather than the alternative of spontaneously creating material for a part that has proven too sparse. Any created line can be reduced back to long tones again, as seen in Example 3.8.

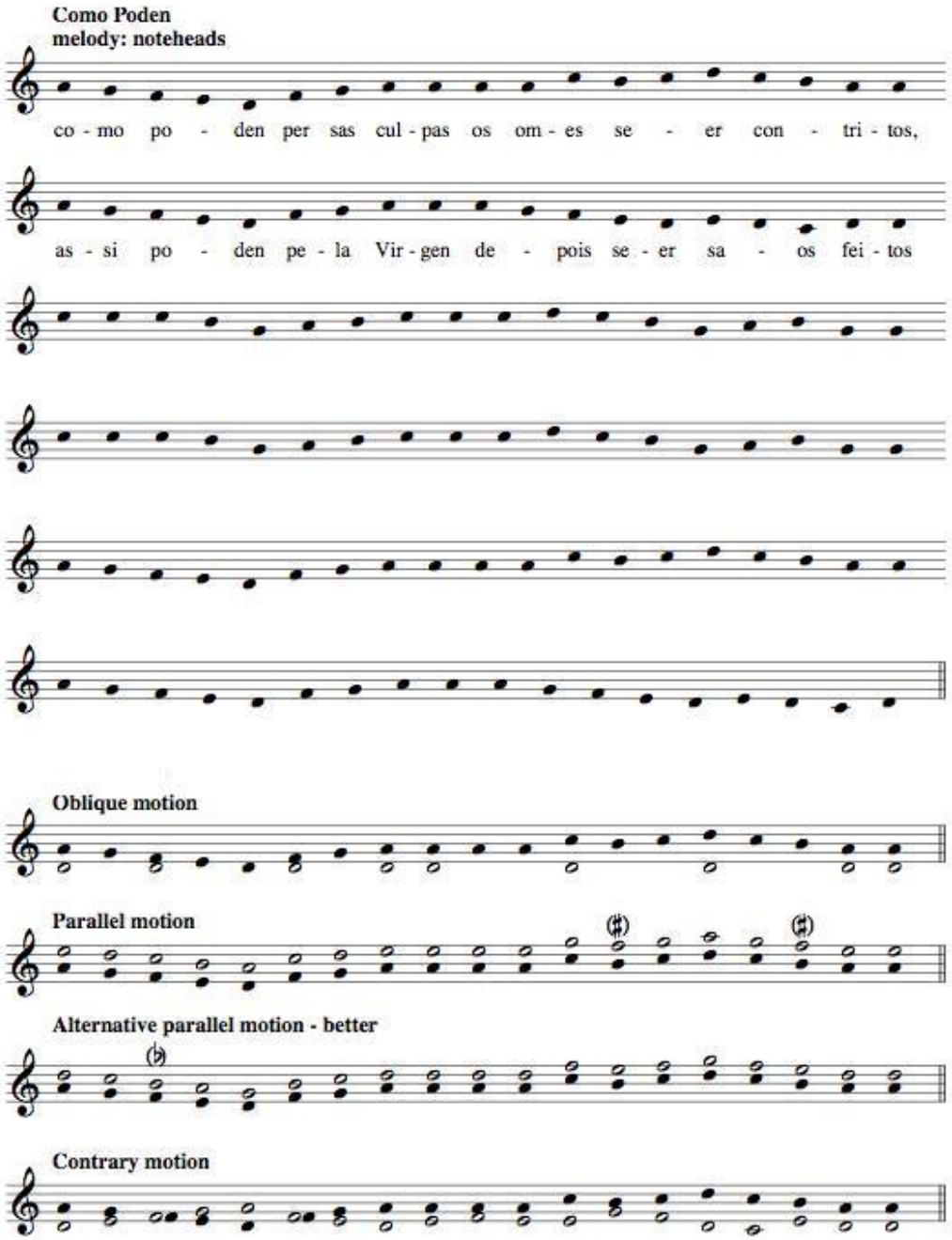


Example 3.8 First line of the melody of *Reis Glorios* presented with a sparser melodic reduction.

Another method to use in creating a countermelody is to combine smaller sections of the original melody to create new figures or melodic patterns. These small fragments can be invaluable in connecting material, but parsing them out of the original can be challenging at first. There are many ways in which a player might decide to organize these melodic patterns, but often in a given melody, a few figures will be repeated throughout the course of the presentation. Also, incipits and cadences will often be optimal figures to borrow. If we were to perform this type of parsing to the melody of *Reis Glorios*, we might end up with patterns such as those seen in Example 3.9.

Example 3.9 Gestures pulled from the melody of *Reis Glorios* and presented in noteheads.

These figures can also be used alone at the end of phrases, lines of text, or whole stanzas to lead into the next section or give the singer time to breathe, and can also create a countermelody concurrently with the text. Finding the right combination that works with a given melody sung by a particular singer is something that can only be realized with lots of practice and collaboration with the instrumentalist, but can be immensely rewarding in performance as well. Below, in Example 3.10, is an example of each of the above steps given for a metered song, such as Cantiga #166 *Como poden per sas culpas*.



Example 3.10 Melody of "Cantiga #166" presented in noteheads, with the first line afterward showing oblique, parallel, and contrary motion within the context of a metered melody.

Strategies for building the performance

1.) Keep it simple.[12]

As stated previously, the melody and the text are the primary focus in medieval monophonic music. Keeping in mind that every musical choice should help the declamation of the text, and clarity of the melody can help when creating an accompaniment.

One of the ways to practice keeping an accompaniment simple is to record the melody, either instrumentally or vocally, and play various combinations of accompaniment against the recording. In addition to recording, writing down specific variations or combinations of accompanimental passages can be very helpful to prevent creating a part that is too dense. It is also important to remember that with either of these techniques, some flexibility is required in the arrangement when putting it together with the singer.

2.) *Working with singers of different experiential levels*

There are singers of every level of experience, and there will be times when a singer knows exactly what they want to hear in an accompaniment as well as times when a singer might not know. Just as with keeping it simple, it is easier to take material out than to find that one needs more at a moment's notice. If unfamiliar with a singer's preferences, then in the recording and notating exercises, it can be very helpful to create several different versions of a given arrangement, ranging from more sparse to more dense. Here, in Example 3.11, is an example of some of the ranges with which to begin.

[12] Tindemans, "Improvisation," 454.

Example 3.11 First line of the melody of *Reis Glorios* presented with a possible accompaniment choice.

The final decision can then be reached in rehearsal with the actual singer. Most of the arrangements will end up as a compromise between the singer and accompanist, so the more tools at a player's immediate disposal, the more the performers can experiment with the arrangement. Lastly, many of the songs are fairly long, and having multiple textures and contrasting sections of accompaniment can provide interest in the unfolding of the text.

3.) *Prelude/Postlude*

Preludes and postludes are unique tools for the instrumentalist. Mentioned in several manuscript descriptions with different instruments, such as the harp in *Tristan en Prose* and vielle in *Le Somme de Roi*, the prelude is therefore firmly rooted in historical performance practice.[13] However, we really have no idea what the performance really entailed. To reconstruct the practice, we turn to many modern traditional music that uses similar techniques to create similar rhetorical effect. It has become customary for the accompanimental instruments to play a prelude, postlude, or both.

Preludes are perhaps the most common and serve one of the most important functions of the performance. The prelude not only introduces the mode, and the common figures of the melody, but also sets the mood and builds the energy to hand over

[13] Ibid., 468. Friedrich Maurer, editor, Gottfried von Strassburg, "Tristan and Isolde," (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977.)

to the singer when he or she enters with the text. For example, if we take the melodic patterns from the previous section on building a countermelody, these same patterns can be combined and developed to create a prelude as well, as shown again in Example 3.12.

Example 3.12 (3.9) Repeated presentation of gestural material for convenience.

Often the prelude is unmetered even if the song itself is in a meter. The transition between the unmetered section into the metered is one of the catalysts for the energy and informs the audience that something is coming next.

Building the energy and intensity can be a bit difficult to do at first with players and audiences who are accustomed to hearing big, loud orchestras and other full timbres we have at our disposal in modern times. Therefore, it can be intimidating to plan a prelude on a single instrument, and creating an effective performance takes some practice and experience. However, there are a few guidelines we can use to advantage in creating a prelude.

The first is the use of dynamics. The quieter a melodic line or even initial note begins, the more the audience is encouraged to listen closely to the part being played. From there, building the dynamics as one builds the energy produces the kind of effective attention and energy that makes the performance engaging.

Along with dynamics, bowed instruments have the ability to play multiple notes at once, and that fact can be manipulated to achieve a greater range of dynamics and texture of the prelude. One of the reasons the vielle is tuned according to a mode is to

maximize the amount of open strings that can be played at a given time. Double stops, sweeping the bow across all the strings, pedal tones, and even harmonics can all be used individually or combined to build the intensity, dynamics, and energy.

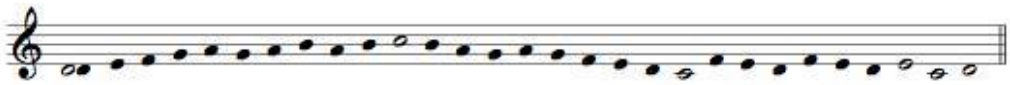
Finally, one of the ways to continue the effect of building energy and intensity and moving a piece forward is to increase the rhythmic subdivision as the prelude unfolds. As previously mentioned, preludes are often unmetered, but they can be in a meter depending on the preference of the performers. If unmetered, beginning with longer notes, and perhaps even incorporating rests, then moving to more and more notes of smaller proportion gives the impression building toward a climax. Within a meter, this diminution can have the same effect without speeding up the pulse.

The methods used for a postlude would be the same as described for the prelude, only reducing the energy rather than building it. The postlude concludes and releases the energy of the piece. Sometimes it is as simple as playing a tag from a line of the melody, or something similar to denouement toward a sense of ending. Again, most audience members will be unaccustomed to hearing a piece without harmonic progression, so any way the performers can help give the sense of resolution, or finality, the more accessible a performance will be to the audience. Also, keep in mind, many of the songs may be in an archaic language unfamiliar to one's audience, so the clearer the accompaniment can convey to the audience the mood, the progression of the story, and the ending of the piece, the more effective the performance will be as a whole.

4.) *Breaks and fills*

One of the advantages to playing a bowed string instrument is the ability to create continuous, almost uninterrupted sound. However, a singer still needs to breathe; so in those places where the singer needs a breath, or between phrases of the text, the accompanist can provide continuity or transition to the next section. The material the player uses is often very short and moves continuously from the end of the last word to the beginning of the next. This continuity has the ability to prevent the loss of energy, give the singer a break, and can even provide the singer with the note they will come in on. All of these effects can be invaluable in a performance.

To create musical "fills" for these places, the instrumentalist often draws from the melody itself, or from scalar passages linking one note to another. For example, combining the list of patterns from *Reis Glorios* with other filler passages might give us something like Example 3.13 below. In this example, the open notes depict the structural points of the mode that a player can exploit in performance, and the black notes depict a possible combination of existing figures from *Reis Glorios* and scalar passages within the mode to create a new melodic line.



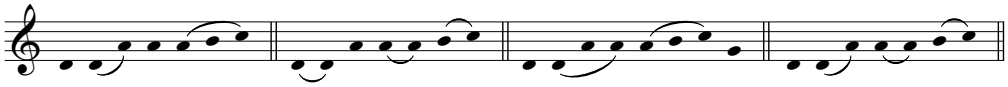
Example 3.13. Combination of existing figures and scalar passages to create new musical material.

A player can choose one of these patterns, or combine several in different repetitions of the melody, or different figures for different parts of the melody.

5.) *Changing bow strokes*

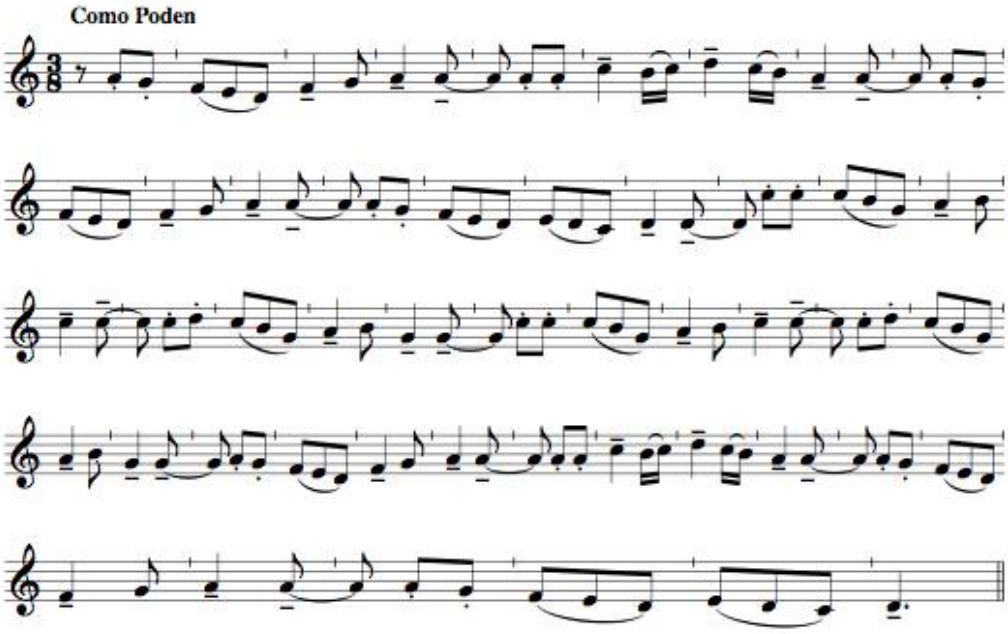
When accompanying a singer, one must take care that due to the subtlety of the genre, motions such as changing bow strokes become much more prominent. It is important to know what the singer is saying so that a player can "bury" the bow change in the articulation of the singer. This technique sounds more difficult than it is. We tend to think of consonants and vowels as pertaining to language alone, but if we listen closely, bowed instruments can make some of these sounds as well. The timbre of the vielle is much more nasal than modern bowed instruments, and therefore makes a kind of "nyah" sound when the bow is drawn across the strings in a stroke. This fact can work to the advantage of the player if they time the bow change to coincide with a hard consonant pronounced by the singer, such as 't,' 'b', 'd,' and especially nasals such as 'm' or 'n.' In the case of *Reis Glorios*, we might time bow changes to fit the syllable being presented, which will then change with any repetition of the melody.

Since different players will hear and execute these vocal sounds differently, it is good to experiment with different bowings and bow techniques to find an individual method to successfully match the singer's words and tone. Example 3.12 is an exercise to experiment with different groupings of notes. In particular, the groupings across strings crossings and repetitions of the same note are the most important. Experiment with bowings that address these issues in as speech-like a manner as possible, such as those shown in Example 3.14.



Example 3.14 First phrase of *Reis Glorios* presented with different bowed groupings. Burying the bow strokes is particularly important in unmetered songs.

Contrastingly, in metered songs, often the changing of the bow strokes can clarify and maintain the sense of the meter by bringing out the changes, such as in this rhythmicization of *Como Poden* seen here in Example 3.15.



Example 3.15 The melody of *Cantiga #166* presented with indications of suggested meter and bowed groupings.

While the specific placement of the bow stroke is up to personal preference and might be varied throughout the piece, knowing and listening for the possible changes is incredibly important in working with a singer. Refer back to Example 3.13 and see what

different groupings are possible, and then note which ones work better for the specific situation.

The examples in this section are the building blocks for the rest that are to come in the next sections, but are used the most often in the context of song accompaniment as presented here. Nearly all can be used in combination with other techniques or ideas of the student.

Dance Music

This section is divided into three main parts: an overview of extant medieval dances, performance practice choices the player will need to address, and guidelines for inventing new dances.[14] There are a number of ways to approach a performance of medieval dance, and the player will have to make certain choices about playing technique, ornamentation and variation, and improvisation that are ultimately up to the individual. However, it is important to know what materials from which a player can choose. Along with these choices, the player can also choose to write new dance pieces that draw upon the form of extant dances and the modes commonly used in the period.

Extant Dances

The largest corpus of extant instrumental music from the medieval period is dance music. Three main types mentioned in the 12th century treatise, *De Musica,* by Johannes Grocheio, are estampie, ductia, and nota.[15] Grocheio's treatise is significant for providing

[14] One of the best sources for transcription and description of extant medieval dances is Timothy McGee's book, *Medieval Instrumental Dances.* Since this source is out of print and increasingly difficult to find, some of the most important points will be referenced in this document.

[15] Yudkin, 434-435.

the only surviving theoretical description of these dances.[16] The difference among the three is the number and length of variation of the form. Along with having the largest number of extant examples, the estampie is the only type of dance form in which both a description by Grocheio and specifically labeled examples survive.[17] The estampie is a verse and refrain form, with verses of unequal length followed by the refrain with first open and then closed endings.[18] This makes the estampie form the most often used and mentioned of the medieval dances, so the estampie will be the focus of this section. The form itself is as described by Grocheio:

> The parts ... are commonly called *puncta*. A *punctum* is a systematic joining together of concords making harmony in ascending and descending, having two sections alike in their beginning, differing in their end, which are usually called the close and open.[19]

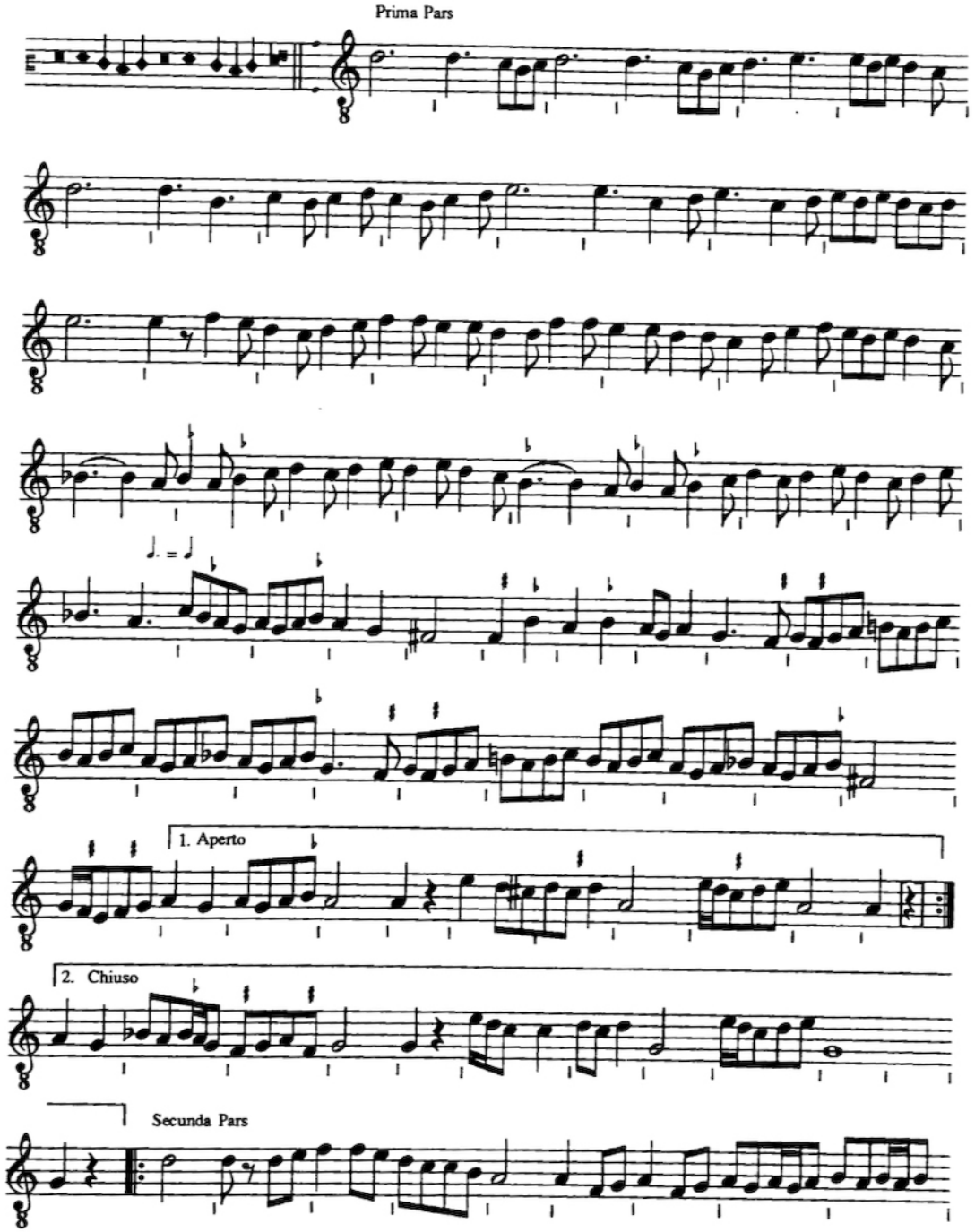
According to Grocheio's description, the ductia is very similar to the estampie, only with verses of even length.[20] The nota is significant in that it is the only form listed that does not have a refrain.

The terms "open" and "close" use by Grocheio about the estampie form refer to the note on which the refrain ends, the "close" being the on the tonic, or final, and the open being on any other note, though most often scale degree seven or two. Grocheio's description provides us with the basics of estampie form, a repeated verse with an open and close-ended refrain, but the subtleties between types can only be seen in the music

[16] Timothy McGee, *Medieval Instrumental Dances*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 7.
[17] Number based on the table of extant instrumental dances, Ibid., 18.
[18] Ibid., 8, 11.
[19] Ibid., 8.
[20] Rohloff, 136; Seay, 20; McGee, 8.

itself. One such example can be seen here in Example 4.1 from the Italian Istampitta "Ghaetta." [21]

[21] Ibid., 71.



Example 4.1 Excerpt from Timothy McGee's transcription of the Italian estampie "Ghaetta"

The formula for the extant estampies from France and Italy vary somewhat, but essentially conform to the following pattern.[22]

Verse (or Puncta)	1	Open
Puncta	1	Close
Puncta	2	Open
Puncta	2	Close
Puncta	3	Open
Puncta	3	Close
Etc...		

The number of punctae, and amount and complexity of repetition within each puncta are different between the extant examples of French and Italian estampies. With these differences in mind, performers have two options for performance. The first is to play one of the extant pieces as written, or to write new pieces using the formula described by Grocheio. Both have been frequently done.

Performance Practice Choices

Whether or not a player decides to write his or her own music, there is much that can and arguably should be added to extant pieces. The existing repertoire not only comes from different regions and culture groups, but different time periods as well. The timespan separating the thirteenth-century French manuscript Paris BN fonds français 844 (Chansonnier du Roi) that contains eight "Estampie Royale" and the late fourteenth-century Italian manuscript London, BL Additional 29987 that contains eight individually

[22] "Each *punctum* of a French estampie has completely new melodic material, followed by common open and close ending." Whereas, the more complex Italian formulae employ more material in varied repetitions, followed by open/close. Ibid., 9.

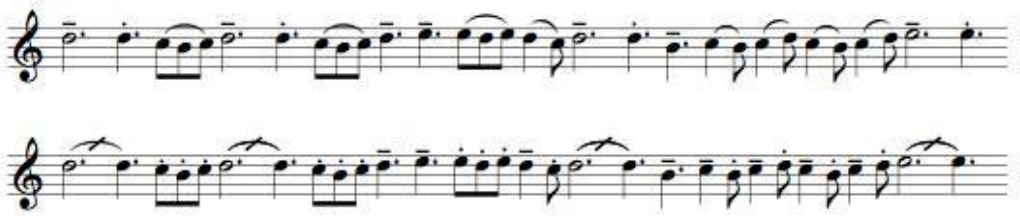
named "Istampitta" is fifty to seventy years. [23] How long each existed in the aural memory of the players before being written can only be guessed. These disparities mean there cannot be a single performance practice applied to all examples.[24] Some freedom in terms of playing techniques, specific bowings and type of bowings, amount and variety of ornamentation and variation, tempo and meter are all decisions the performer must make himself or herself.

For the later works, an indication of meter is represented in the notation, but the player must make it "lift," as if one were to actually dance. We know very little about the actual dances performed to the estampie form, though we think perhaps that it was a couple dance "more suitable for all ages than the energetic carol, but that it required irregular and complicated figures."[25] These features can be easily recognized in the melodies themselves, but it is much more difficult to make them "dance" without being able to observe how the dancers' feet realize the figures. To overcome this difficulty, players often turn to world music practices for the aforementioned "lift."

Lift is the term given to many forms of traditional dance music that has an almost infectious sense of the beat that makes dancers want to perform. Often emphasizing the upbeat of a given meter, lift is achieved by one of several techniques used by the bow arm. One method is to actually lift the bow off the string, thereby creating rhythmic space that when alternated with the expectation and sense of the pulse becomes very energetic and engaging to the dancer or listener. In this music, the transition between up and down bows, combined with the addition of various groupings of different notes on a single bow stroke, can be also used to create lift as well as interest and variation in the

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., 23.
[25] Ibid., 21.

repetition of parts, such as in Example 4.2 below. What is depicted is the difference in stylistic performing with dashes representing full length, connected notes, and dots indicating shorter, detached, more highly accented notes.



Example 4.2 The first phrase of "Ghaetta" presented with different suggested methods of phrasing.

Though the exact way in which ornamentation, variation, and improvisation would have been performed in these pieces can only be speculated, it can be assumed that they would be employed. One way in which a player might find places to alter existing melodies is to analyze the extant pieces themselves. Analyzing the subtle notated variations within repeated material, as seen in the Italian estampie "Ghaetta," we can substitute existing variations in different places to create new ones. The Example 4.3 below, drawn from the first puncta of "Ghaetta," shows the repeated material with rhythmic values removed.

Example 4.3 Repeated material from the first puncta of "Ghaetta" extracted with rhythmic values removed.

Analyzing the differences in these notated variations often provides a set of

melodic alternatives that closely resemble techniques described by Jerome of Moravia in his treatise, *De Musica*.[26] The techniques that Jerome describes in this treatise are for singers, not necessarily for players of instruments. However, as often happens with medieval performance practice, instrumentalists can borrow from descriptions of vocal technique and apply as much as is possible given the idiosyncrasies of their own instrument.

Several scholars have also theorized that the estampies are comprised of ornamental embellishments over a basic modal melody. Ewald Jammers proposes a theory of melodic reduction that is similar to the Schenkerian technique of analysis.[27] Creating a melodic reduction can be very useful for the performer as they learn to improvise and reduce or embellish melodies. It is important to remember that this method is a modern tool for analyzing old music and would not have been used by original performers and theorists in the medieval period. However, using a method of melodic reduction such as Jammers or Schenker propose as a tool for arranging can be invaluable for the modern player.

Inventing New Dances

Since the number of extant pieces is limited, performers often choose to write their own estampies in the manner of historical pieces. There are several methods that can be used to create new music in the style of medieval music. These methods are:

1. To base a new piece on a pre-existing work.
2. To choose a combination of specific melodic figures
3. To manipulate individual notes in a specific mode to make the patterns

[26] Summarized for instrumental performers by McGee, 27-29.
[27] Ibid., 44; Jammers, 89; Gushee, 165-91.

None of the methods mentioned above are mutually exclusive, and they can be combined effectively into one performance. It is also helpful to sketch ideas on paper rather than trust the ability to remember improvised parts. Even if a player is moving toward a goal of exclusively drawing upon memory and improvisation, it is best to begin with writing down the music that might be then memorized and internalized.

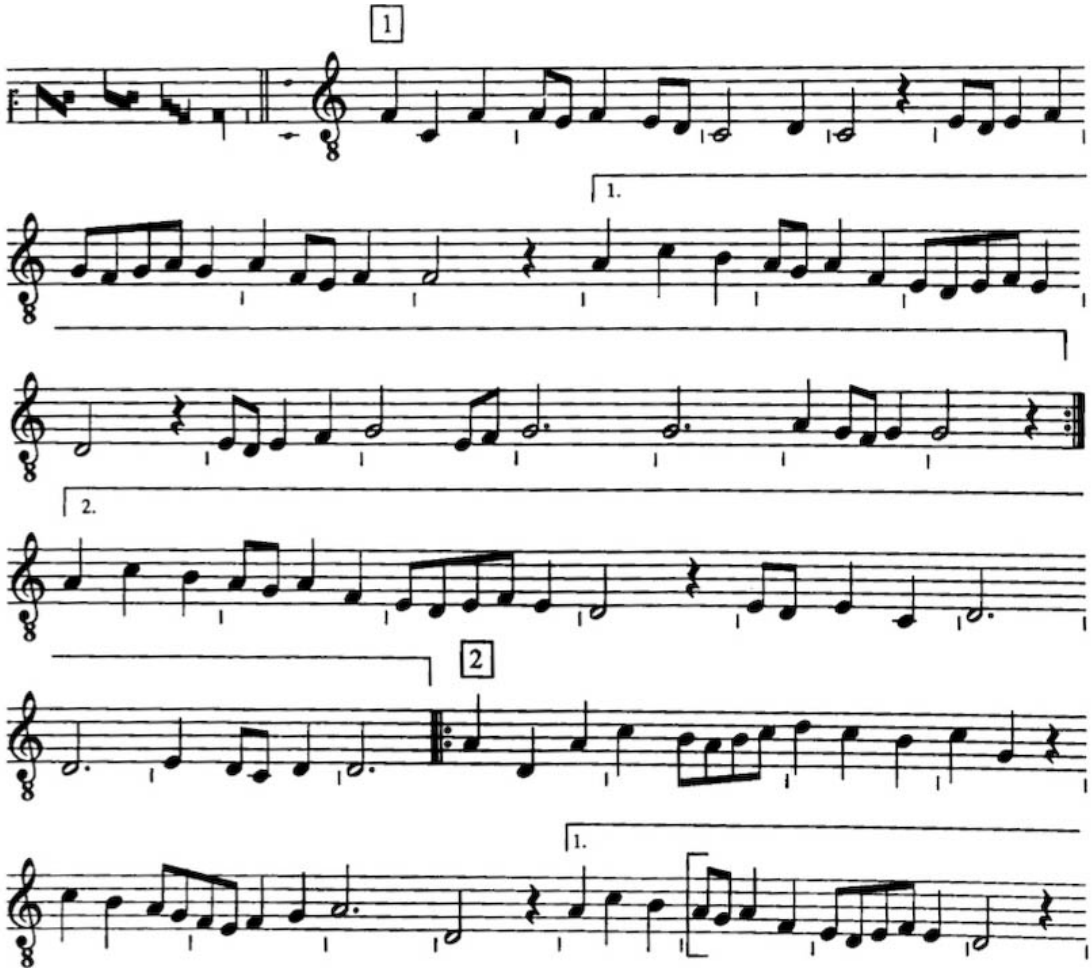
When a player chooses to use a pre-existing work as the basis for a new dance piece, it is important to decide whether to use characteristic melodic figures or the collection of the pitches in the mode. If a player chooses to base new material upon melodic figures of a pre-existing work, it is helpful to know where to find those figures that are characteristic to the melodic structure. To find these characteristic figures in a pre-existing work, look at the opening phrases and closing phrases most of all. Along with these, notice which figures are repeated most frequently and which figures that fall on important words as well.

A player also has the choice to base a new dance piece on the individual notes in a specific set of pitches rather than any specific combination of melodic figures. The set of pitches can be the prescribed set in one of the eight church modes, or drawn from a specific pre-existing work. As illustrated by the first steps exercises in section 2 (*Physical Characteristics,* see pg. 17) on familiarizing the player with pitches on the instrument, there are melodies that draw upon a unique set of pitches. This set might leave out some pitches within the mode and/or include pitches outside the mode. If a player chooses to draw upon these unique pitch sets, it is probably best to start with

extant melodies.

Creating an estampie from newly composed melodic material can be more difficult, but can provide more avenues for experimentation. However, the difficulty is often maintaining cohesiveness throughout the piece as a whole. Repetition is the key, but as can be seen in French and Italian examples of extant pieces, the concept of repetition can be interpreted differently. In the eight French estampies, "all the phrases are generated from a small number of melodic-rhythmic motives."[28] A classic example of these melodic-rhythmic motives can be seen in the excerpt of the "Seconde Estampie Royal" in Example 4.4a.[29] Along with this excerpt, examples of repeated figures, apart from the open and closed endings, have been drawn from the first two punctae and can be seen in Example 4.4b.

[28] Ibid., 10.
[29] Ibid, 58.



Example 4.4 a Excerpt from Timothy McGee's transcription of the French estampie ″Seconde Estampie Royal."

Example 4.4 b Repeated material from the first and second puncta of "Seconde Estampie Royal" extracted with rhythmic values removed.

The repeated figures, such as those demonstrated above, can also appear in exact repetition or in transposition.

In contrast, the Italian estampies "are not modal but based on a contrast of tetrachords that include chromatic variation" that is repeated within a punctum and in

several punctae throughout the entire piece.[30] Although it does not appear in its entirety, a diagram analysis of "Ghaetta" will demonstrate this repetition, such as that seen below.

Verse	Ending
ABC	x/y
DEC	x/y
F EC	x/y
GBC	x/y[31]

Notice the amount of repetition employed among each puncta in this piece. That amount of repetition can be employed in new pieces as well, not only as a basis for structure and cohesiveness for the performers, but for the audience to recognize as well.

Mode

Though some melodies are not based on a specific mode, such as "Ghaetta" above, it is helpful when improvising or inventing new dances to choose a mode on which to base the new dance. Improvisation and composition often use similar processes for creating new musical material. If a player wishes to improvise new melodies, he or she either has to base that improvisation on gestures from the melody upon which they are based, the harmonic structure drawn from a melody or agreed upon beforehand, or from the expectations in the pitches of the mode itself.

Since the tension and release of sonorities in medieval music are based on intervals against the final rather than progressions of triads, the process is somewhat different from improvisations over a series of chord changes. The player then has a

[30] Ibid., 10.
[31] Ibid., 9.

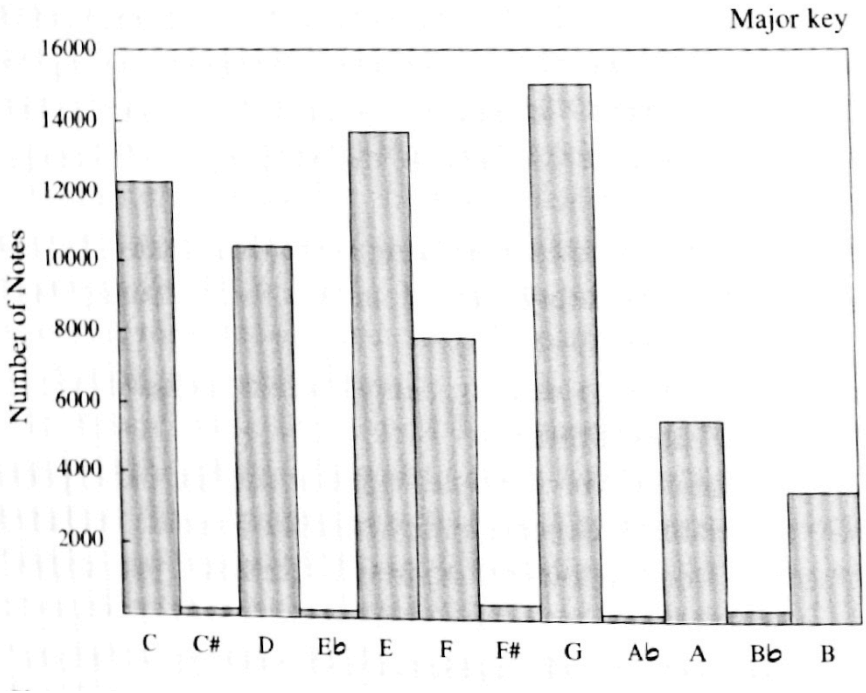
choice to use the melodic gestures or pitch expectation of the notes in the mode as the basis for an improvisation. The use of gestures has been discussed in greater detail in section 3 (*Song Accompaniment)* of this document, so the following suggestions refer to the use of pitch as the basis for creating new musical material.

In his book, *Sweet Anticipation,* David Huron explains pitch expectation as the organization of pitches in a scale in which each pitch has a tendency for repetition and toward intervallic movement. To elaborate, each pitch in the scale will have a specific expectation of movement to the next pitch when sounded in conjunction with the previous pitches played. While Huron's work is written from the perspective of modern folk music and expectations of tonality, there are enough similarities that a player can borrow these techniques and apply them to medieval melodies. Huron sums up the expectations around pitch and tonality in the diagram on "distribution of scale tones" for melodies in major and minor keys, seen in graphs 4.1a and 4.1b.[32]

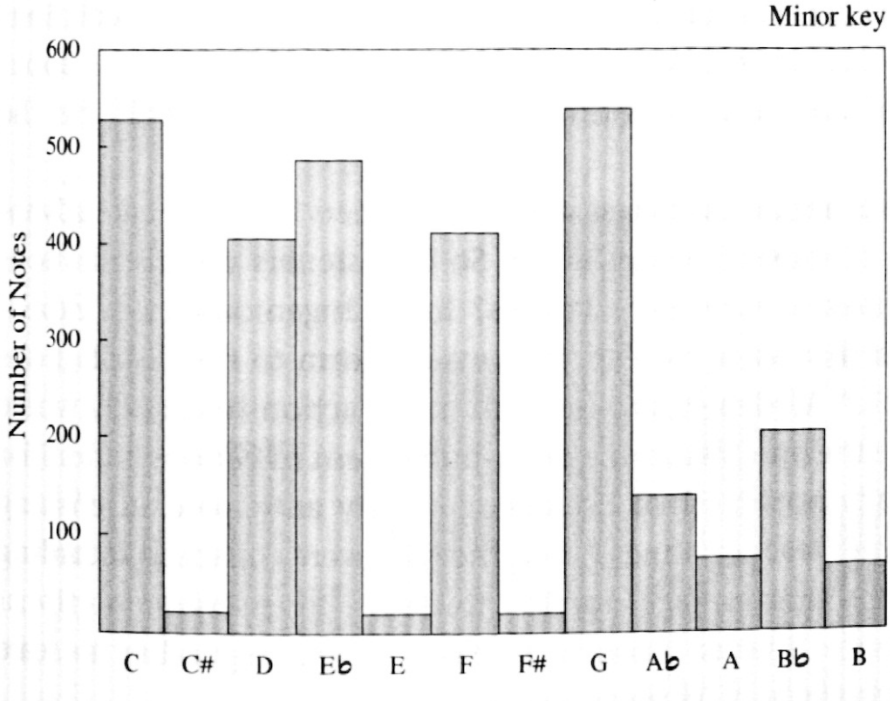
These graphs show the distribution of pitches from a selection of Western folk melodies from a collection of folk songs held in Essen, Germany. All melodies represented in the graph have been transposed to C. The amount of repetition of each pitch in both major and minor melodies are clearly represented, and this information can be used to the player's advantage when creating new musical material.

[32] Huron, 148 (major); 149 (minor). These are generated from a selection of Western folk melodies primarily diatonic and from the Essen folksong collection.

Graph 4.1a Major Keys



Graph 4.1b Minor Keys



These graphs show the distribution of repetitions of a given note in a melody. In major and minor melodies, the first, third, and fifth scale degrees are shown with the highest number of repetitions throughout the melody. The main difference is the number of repeats in scale degrees two and four is much higher in minor melodies than in major.

In closing, remember that any technique and suggestion for performance in this chapter require a lot of patience, practice, experimentation, and experience by the player to achieve. Whether performing extant works or newly composed in the style of medieval dances, dance music is one of the most commonly played by instrumentalists. The techniques described for improvisation, either melodic figures or collections of pitches from the mode, can be valuable to use with any improvisational situation, medieval or not. Experiment and notice what the individual performer finds comfortable and aesthetically pleasing.

Instrumental Arrangements of Vocal Works

While there are extant examples of music that can be identified as instrumental arrangements of vocal pieces, there are very few, and very little information about performance. The purpose of this section is to provide the student with the tools to build an instrumental performance from extant vocal works. Building upon the skills discussed in previous chapters, this section discusses the differences in bow technique, phrasing, and use of rhetoric with the vielle.

No extant instrumental music exists specifically for the vielle, and therefore many performers make their own arrangements. Both metered and unmetered monophonic

songs can be adapted for instrumental playing, but the two types would be played differently. Just as in song accompaniment, a player must make decisions about the text, melody, and rhythmic interpretation of the piece. However, in creating an instrumental arrangement, the sole responsibility for delivery is with the instrumental player. Since we can theorize that the performance of metered song and dance, like the previously mentioned Cantiga #166, may have had elements that are reflected in the modern folk or traditional style of their region of origin, one method is to look to the music of those region for information about bow technique, ornaments, articulation, and phrasing.

The second type of song often made into instrument arrangments is the unmetered, such as the troubadour song *Reis Glorios*. The unmetered songs present an interesting challenge to instrumental performers, because although they are often intensely expressive, the asymmetrical, unpredictable melody can be difficult for the audience to follow without the aid of the text. The player has to keep the energy very high in performance and use a variety of different techniques that mimic the voice. This type of performance can be executed very similarly to the slow airs played by modern traditional Irish or Scottish musicians. In both medieval and traditional Anglo-Celtic unmetered song, the interpretation of the performance is up to the individual and therefore can be as stark or elaborate as the player chooses.

Often this type of performance is called "singing" on the instrument by traditional players, suggesting a thought process that might be important for medieval players as well. Ethnomusicologist Kari Veblen suggests in her article "Truth, Perceptions, and Cultural Constructs in Ethnographic Research" that "being an oral music, Irish traditional

music is more fluid than fixed notated musics."[33] In other words, in music that is carried and transmitted aurally/orally, be it medieval or modern traditional music, both vocal and instrumental music may display a certain amount of variation. Often players learning music by ear will vocalize tunes first before putting them to an instrument, so it is natural to view the boundary between tunes that have words and those that do not as more variable.

While there is some overlap in the techniques presented in the song accompaniment chapter of this document, the placement and delivery of those techniques will be different when the instrumentalist is the only voice. It is important to remember that the song arranged for instrumental performance was a song first and foremost, and therefore, players can approach the performance similarly to the way that singers approach it. Bow technique, ornamentation, phrasing, and textual considerations will be helpful for the student as he or she makes their own performance decisions.

Bow Technique

Bow technique is essential to the presentation of expression in any type of playing, but in arranging unmetered music, the bow is especially important to the transmission of the mood and meaning of the piece. This type of performance is highly individualized and therefore has a lot of room for experimentation with sounds and techniques not commonly used in bowed playing. These techniques include different amount of pressure and speed exerted on the bow, angles to the strings and the bridge,

[33]Kari K. Veblen, "Truth, Perceptions, and Cultural Constructs in Ethnographic Research: Music Teaching and Learning in Ireland," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 129 (Summer 1996), 44.

and the amount and fullness of tone. Along with these techniques, there are a few exercises that might help a player get an idea of the different sounds that can be used with this type of performance, such as experimenting with different bow grips, hand placement, and looseness or tightness of the grip itself. The suggestions that follow can also be applied to dance and to song accompaniment, if the player wants to experiment, keeping in mind that in dance music the priority must be in rhythmic steadiness, and in song accompaniment the priority must be to work in cooperation with the expression and phrasing of the singer.

In contrast to the light, short bow strokes that are used to create 'lift' in dance music and some metered song, in this type of performance, it is helpful to think of 'grounding' the sound by using longer, fuller strokes that span the entire length of the bow. The idea is to achieve a quality of sound that mimics the vocal quality of the singer. For this, practice the scale of the piece using the full length of the bow and leaving each finger down until the change of note requires the fingers to move. This exercise is also good to experiment with tone.

Despite what most bowed players work towards in many musics, different tone qualities in this music can be used as a tool to match the vocal quality of the singer, and even the specific vowels and consonants present in the text. To experiment with tone production, changing the angle of the bow to the strings and the bridge are a few places to start. Also, speeding up and slowing down the bow, especially within one stroke, will provide different tonal qualities.

Similar to tone, bowed players are taught a right way to grip the bow to achieve a

particularly desired sound. However, when the desired sound is different, or variable within a performance, then it can be helpful to experiment with the bow grip. In general, the grip is to be kept light and looser than what might be used for later styles of classical music. There is an intimate quality to much of medieval music that can be ruined if the bow grip is too heavy or dense. Experiment with holding the bow at different angles to the strings and lifting fingers off the wood of the bow. Notice if, when, and how tension appears when changing the grip, and alter the result for comfort.

Ornamentation

Ornamentation and embellishment in medieval music are important for many performances, but there are many ways to approach the process. A full discussion of ornamentation can be found in Chapter 2 of this document.

Vibrato

In this music, the treatment of vibrato is most oftened considered a type of ornament to be used sparingly and with a narrower range of pitch than is generally used for some later music. The main reason is to avoid obscuring the perfect consonances that define the melodic organization. Rather than rely on harmonic progression, medieval music is more often about the contrast between consonant and dissonant intervals against the final of the mode. If there is a pitch wavering, then the interval is no longer perfectly in tune. However, a player has some freedom to use vibrato, especially if there is only one note sounding at a time, to approximate the sound of the natural vibrato of the voice.

Phrasing

Phrasing is often drawn from the individual lines of text, combining the accents of the line with the melodic gestures linked together. These lines, and therefore phrases, are often short and asymmetrical, which can be exploited for the purposes of expression. Since there is no singer present, the interpretation of the text can be more and less exaggerated, depending on the amount of expressivity a player wishes to give to each line.

This expressivity of unspoken text is where the most variation in bow technique can be heard and used effectively. A player should feel free to experiment within their own range of comfort and aesthetic tastes, but techniques mentioned in previous chapters such as placing the bow at different distances from the bridge, holding the bow at different angles from the bridge, rotating the bow to different angles from the strings, holding the bow at different points along the wood, and applying different amounts of weight and pressure are all points of experimentation. Again, always pay attention to the placement and amount of tension that any experiment creates in the body. It is better to avoid tension than to continue with new techniques that might create problems later.

Along with specific techniques for the bow itself, a player should also experiment with the use of silence. These songs are often performed with great intensity and intimacy, and the use of silence can increase both of these factors if used effectively. To be effective, a player will have to find the amount of silence that feels comfortable for the individual within each phrase. However, it can be helpful to take the text itself as a guideline for the placement of silences.

Rhetoric

The text is the reference point for almost every aspect of the performance. From word meaning to guide the mood of the piece to word stress to guide the discrete poetic lines, the text is an essential source for the instrumentalist. Though the player can use the text very literally to organize a performance, such as bowing techniques to approximate the voice or incorporating the specific vowels and consonances, the interpretation is up to the individual. However, some basic rules of rhetoric can be helpful as well to understand the general organization of the text and therefore the performance.

Rhetorical organization exists on two main levels: the overall structure of a piece of text and the specific presentation of a particular phrase. The overall structure is drawn from classical methods of organizing persuasive speech, such as Cicero's *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*.[34] Originally this method was used to create the speech, though for modern performers, it is most helpful as a tool to analyze an already existing piece of text. The text is divided into distinct chapters that serve different purposes within a piece, such as those seen in Table 5.1 below.

[34] Judy Tarling, *Weapons of Rhetoric,* St. Albans, Hertfordshire, UK: Corda Music Publications, 9-10.

Table 5.1 Quintilian's rhetorical organization.

Introduction	Declaration of subject or main characters
Statement of Facts	The narrative
Division	This section is the outline of major points.
Proof	Main portion of the text, or presentation of the story.
Refutation	Refute, or invalidate, any argument that might be made against the main points of the text.
Conclusion	Summary or petition to the listener to action.[35]

This organization can be included wholly or segmentally into the structure of a given song. When using this organization to analyze a piece of poetry and then build a performance based upon that analysis, there is some freedom of interpretation given to the individuals. For the instrumentalist, this might mean completely different interpretations when accompanying a singer or arranging a song for strictly instrumental performance. For example, when accompanying a singer, a player might create an introduction that is much more improvisatory, interweaving many of the characteristic melodic elements to build the energy and mood to then hand off to the singer to present with the text. Alternatively, when arranging a vocal work for instrumental performance,

[35] Gideon O. Burton, "Silva Rhetoricae," Bringham Young University, updated February 26, 2007. Accessed March 17, 2012, http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Canons/Arrangement.htm. Henry Caplan, translator, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981.) Harold E. Butler, translator, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921.)

a player might create an introduction that follows the extant melody in a much more straightforward, declamatory fashion as if presenting the text itself.

In different song forms from different time periods and geographic regions, the presence of this organization might be more or less apparent, and the performer needs to be careful of over-analyzing or wishful interpretation. However, the structural analysis provides a guideline for a parallel performance structure for the player to organize phrases, level of intensity, and division points to change texture, dynamics, variation, etc.

The other side of rhetoric concerns delivery of specific phrases within the overall structure. In her book, *Weapons of Rhetoric*, Judy Tarling tells us that "monotony should be avoided. Clarity, a variety of tone quality and dynamic, length of note either written or delivered, choice of tempo and subtle humor can all be used to hold the listener's attention."[36] Even beyond attention, these rhetorical devices can be used musically to emphasize the structural points in the performance of the piece as a whole. Remember back to the exercise in section 2, (*Physical Characteristics)*: how would the emphasis change if one phrase were written "What is this?" versus "What *is* this?" or "What is *this*?" How might each of the three presentations differ if they appeared in succession? There are a number of specifically named rhetorical devices with specific purposes that Tarling explains in her book, and knowing these can be very helpful to a performer. However, taking the time to think out an individual interpretation can be just as important as a beginning step for the player.

Each concept, technique, and skill set discussed in this chapter, whether exclusive to instrumental arranging or drawing from other chapters, are suggestions for the vielle

[36] Tarling, viii.

player to use in order to create their own performance, satisfying and individualized to each player. Through practice and experiment, a player should feel free to draw upon any that resonates with him or herself particularly and to the degree that feels natural and effective in performance.

Chapter 3
Conclusion

This document has demonstrated that a player of modern bowed stringed instruments can utilize a combination of techniques, exercises, and methods to become familiar with the sounds and melodic organization of medieval music as it is performed on the vielle. Additionally, this document provides the means for the vielle player to obtain the basic skills necessary to employ ideas for experimentation within the context of historically-informed performance.

Working through the preceding exercises and musical examples over the course of this manual, the player should be able to incorporate these new and different playing techniques on the instrument itself, train the ear to new theoretical organization of melody, and embrace ideas for experimentation within the performance. At this point, the player should feel the freedom to draw upon and expand any technique and process for his or her own personal artistic preferences for instrumental arrangement and presentation to build a satisfying performance.

From here, a player needs to continue practicing and listening to other players. There are a number of individual vielle players with their own style that a beginning player can use as a model. Below are listed a small number of these that might provide the student a few influential examples to emulate. All possess incredible artistry and control within the performance, though the individual styles are very different.

Jann Cosart, with the ensemble Altramar on their 1997 recording, "Iberian Garden, Volume 1," is an excellent example of the detached style of playing in shoulder

position with both metered and unmetered pieces represented in this album.[37] Her playing is usually sparser in arrangement, emphasizing the relationship between the instrumental notes against those of the vocal melody and providing a raucous quality to the dance pieces. Cosart uses a very crisp tonal quality and a large range of contrast in dynamics, bow speed, and rhythmic divisions to convey emotional intensity and the rhetorical mood to the audience.

Shira Kammen, with Ensemble Alcatraz on their 1992 recording, "Danse Royale," is another example in a contrasting style of the shoulder playing position.[38] Kammen uses more extended techniques to achieve a more improvisational style combining scalar runs or glissando, rhythmic pulses with the bow, double stops, silences, and sometimes even tapping the wood of the bow on the strings to increase the emotional intensity and provide continuous links between phrases. Her arrangements tend to be more dense providing a very fluid, rhythmic foundation within the confines of the rhetorical emphasis above which the voice can freely float.

Mary Springfels, with the Newberry Consort on their 1993 recording, " Wanderers' Voices: Medieval Cantigas & Minnesang," is an excellent example of the knee position vielle playing.[39] While extremely energetic and driving in intensity and rhythmic subdivision, her style possess a much more vocal-like quality that blends with the voice in a very organic style contrasted highly against the short, detached phrases she provides in the pauses between phrases. Because of these textural contrasts she employs

[37] Altramar, "Iberian Garden, Volume 1," Dorian Recordings: ASIN B000001O9W, 1997. Compact disc.
[38] Ensemble Alcatraz, "Danse Royale," Nonesuch: ASIN: B000002ZKI, 1992. Compact disc.
[39] Newberry Consort, "Wanderers' Voices: Medieval Cantigas & Minnesang," Harmonia Mundi: ASIN: B0000007DN, 1993. Compact disc.

with the use of the bow, dynamics, and double stops, the arrangements tend to be less dense and more connected bow strokes.

Margriet Tindemans, with the Cologne Sequentia Ensemble for Medieval Music on their 1982 recording, " Hildegard von Bingen: Symphoniae," is another example of the knee position of vielle performance.[40] Her style is very light, extremely fluid, and vocal-like in quality, and legato in execution. Combined with the subtle changes of bow stroke, bow pressure, dynamics, and pitch each serve to enhance the emotional intensity and mood of the performance.

As the student develops skill on the instrument, he or she will begin to incorporate elements of individual personal style into arrangements and performances. Whether vocal or dance-like, sparse or dense, there is great freedom in this music to express distinct emotional creativity and artistry on the instrument. This is a kind of intensity upon which to capitalize, no matter the musical subject, era, genre, or provenance.

From here, a student should be able to understand the fundamentals of medieval music, such as mode, exercises for the player to familiarize himself or herself with the instrument, issues of tuning, placement of fingers, first steps to use when building a performance, as well as the specific techniques and procedures associated with the specific roles played by the vielle player in performance of song accompaniment, dance music, and instrumental arrangements of medieval vocal works.

[40] Cologne Sequentia Ensemble for Medieval Music, "Hildegard von Bingen: Symphoniae," Deutsche Harmonia Mundi: ASIN: B0001HQ2SQ, 1982. Compact Disc.

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