



Medieval music for fun

Vít Hrachový <http://kastilie1312.cz> - <http://facebook.com/kastilie1312> Feb 18 2025

Contents

- Obstacle course
- Fundamentalists
- What do we have
- Approach, time, energy
- Artificial obstacles
- Pronunciation
- Music selection
- Style selection
- How to
- Sources
- Instrument selection
- Instrument catalogue
- Sources & Credits



Invitation to the world of music

- I'd like to play medieval music.
- Where to start?
- Is it complicated?

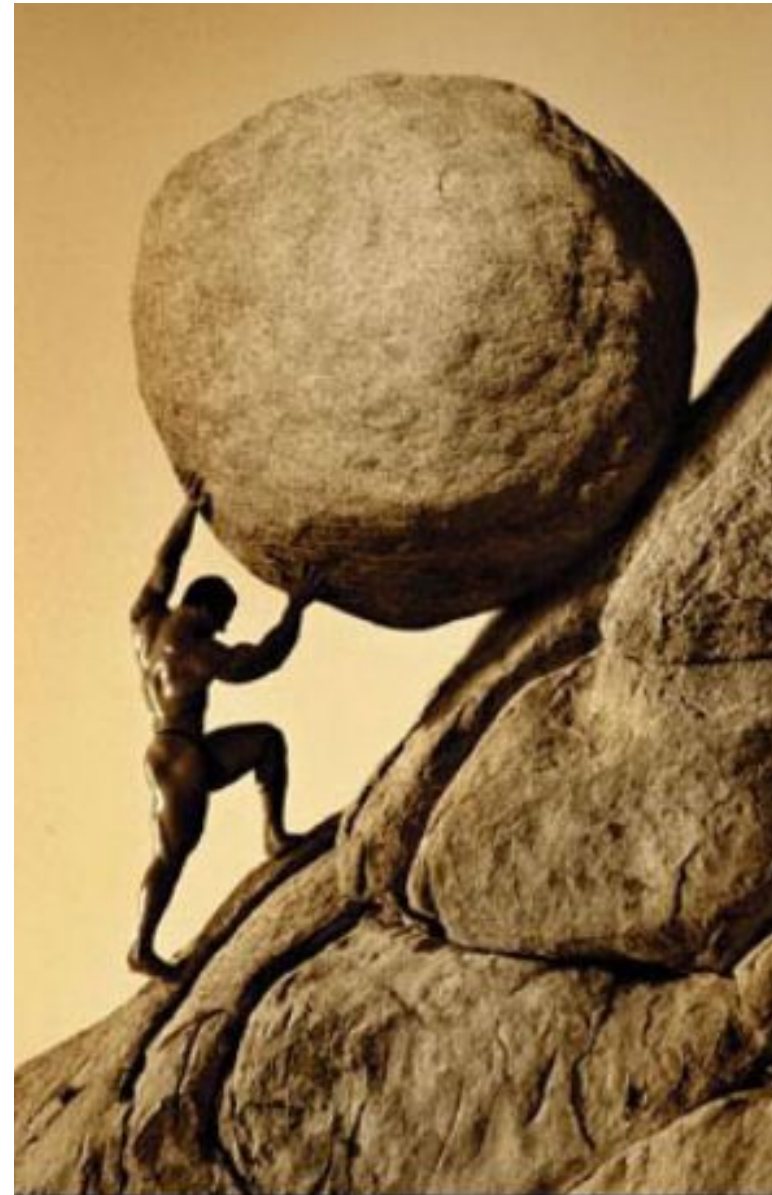


Obstacle course

- Laying obstacle fields
 - you have to earn entry into elite
 - you have to endure hardships
 - if you wouldn't do it this way, it's wrong

versus

- Reducing obstacles
 - **Don't be afraid**
 - **Play**



Fundamentalists

- There is no single correct way to do it.
- No extant medieval recordings available.
- Everything is just an interpretation.



What do we have

- Sheet music.
 - What note it starts with?
 - Tuning based on cantor, bells.
 - Single voice line.
 - Frequently repetitive - boring?
- Pictures of musicians.
- Pictures of instruments.
- Extant instruments.
- Mentions in medieval written sources.
 - 1250 Salamanca: Music taught at university.
 - Instrument selection according to music style.
 - Ornamentation.



Approach, time, energy

- Hobby, fun.
- PLAYing, experimenting.
- Professional.
- Scientific.
 - Archeological.
 - Musicological.
 - Online university - Besalu/Lleida,
<https://www.medievalmusicbesalu.com/>
- Next on here: Hobby, free time activity.



Artificial obstacles

- **What obstacles can we avoid?**
- Do I need to hear the pitch or rhythm?
 - No. Both are skills improved by exercise.
- I do have, I know how to play a bit on some instrument.
 - I will start learning new music using it.
- Can I read sheet music?
 - It's useful, but not necessary.
- Be considerate, know your limits, don't make people suffer:
In public, consider others. When I learn, I don't play well enough, I play at home or with friends or teacher.
Before playing in public, I'll ask multiple friends for real feedback if it's OK to listen to. I can play silent instruments somewhere aside, without interfering.
- What about pronunciation of the old lyrics?
 - Old languages have different pronunciation.
 - OK to study ancient philology, but takes plenty of time.
 - Simplification: Copy pronunciation from recordings.
 - Risk: Recordings can be wrong too.
 - We're not academics:
 - **World won't fall. To err is to be human.**
 - **We do play.**



Music styles

- Silent
 - Chamber, soft, courtly.
- Loud
 - Dancing, marching, marketplace, drinking, student, folk ...
- Church.
- Secular.
- Europe.
- Oriental.
 - Affects instrument selection.
 - 1330 Ruiz: It's ridiculous to play Christian music using Moorish instruments and vice versa.



Music style selection

- **Authentic medieval as much as possible.**

- **Song form** - composition using refrain and stanzas is frequent for all societal strata.
- Composition without refrain is much less frequent.
- Mensural notation. No given metre, tempo. Merry & serious variants of single song.
- **One melodic line.**
- No accords in medieval sheet music and no records on their usage till 15.c.
- Two and more voice lines were used in 12., 13. and 14. century.
 - Less frequent, more complex. More in church music. Fuga 1330. Counterpoint 10.c.+
- Tablature notation is available in 13. and 14.c.
- **Melody isn't etched in stone. It's a theme, a base for improvisation.**
- Making a repeating base theme more interesting using improvisation:
 - Ornamentation.
 - More instruments playing together, each ornamenting itself.
 - Percussion accompaniment.
 - Solo variations based on base melody...

- **Modern, fantasy, folk, metal, jazz, anything inspired by medieval tunes.**

- I take melody as a base and I create my own variation.
- I can use accords, accordic harmonies, select instruments, anything as I like.
Working like with kinder modeling clay.
- Next: Silent, secular, European, authentic as possible.



How to

- Find/read the sources.
- Listen plenty of recordings.
- Select recording I like.
- Play with recording.
 - Playing by ear.
 - According to sheet music.
- Would I like to play with others?
 - Playing by ear.
 - Find sheet music.
 - Write sheet music based on recording.
- No punishments for mistakes. To err is to be human.
- It's a PLAY.
- Writing alternate lyrics to existing piece is O.K. It was done all the time.

"To play a wrong note is insignificant; to play without passion is inexcusable."
Beethoven



Music sources - 12.c.

- A selection of sheet music for inspiration, not complete listing.
- Apart from authored pieces there is plenty of great anonyms.
- 1140-1212 OC: Beatriz de Dia (1)
- 1145 OC: Marcabru (4)
- 1147 OC: Jaufre Rudel (4)
- 1150-1207 PROV: Raimbaut de Vaquerias (8)
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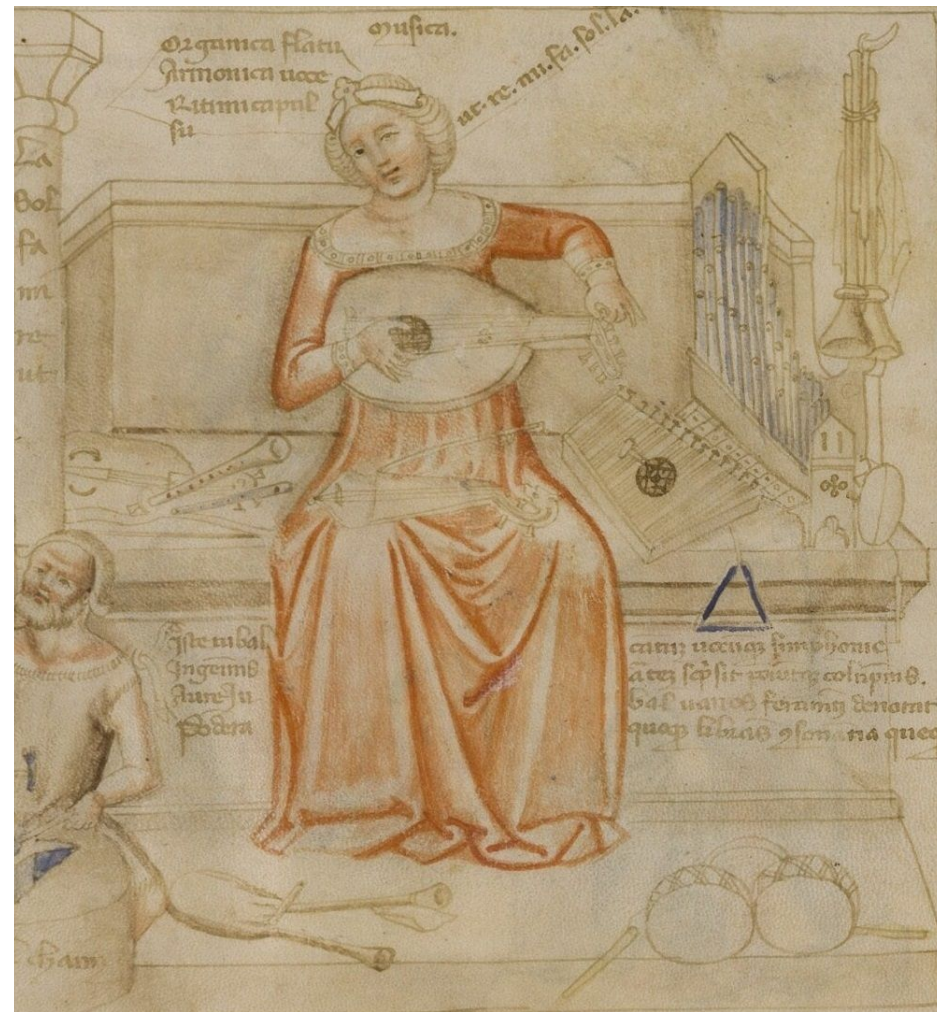
Music sources - 13.c.

- 1160-1220 OC: Peirol de Auvernha (17)
- 1160-1220 OC: Raimon de Miraval (22)
- 1170-1230 DE: Walther von der Vogelweide (5)
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Music sources - 14.c.

- 1330 FR: Guillaume de Machaut (59+)
- 1399 SP: Llibre Vermell de Montserrat (10)
- 1340+IT: Italian dances from Trecento, British Museum Add 2998 (116)
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- 1360+CZ: Jan z Jenštejna (2)

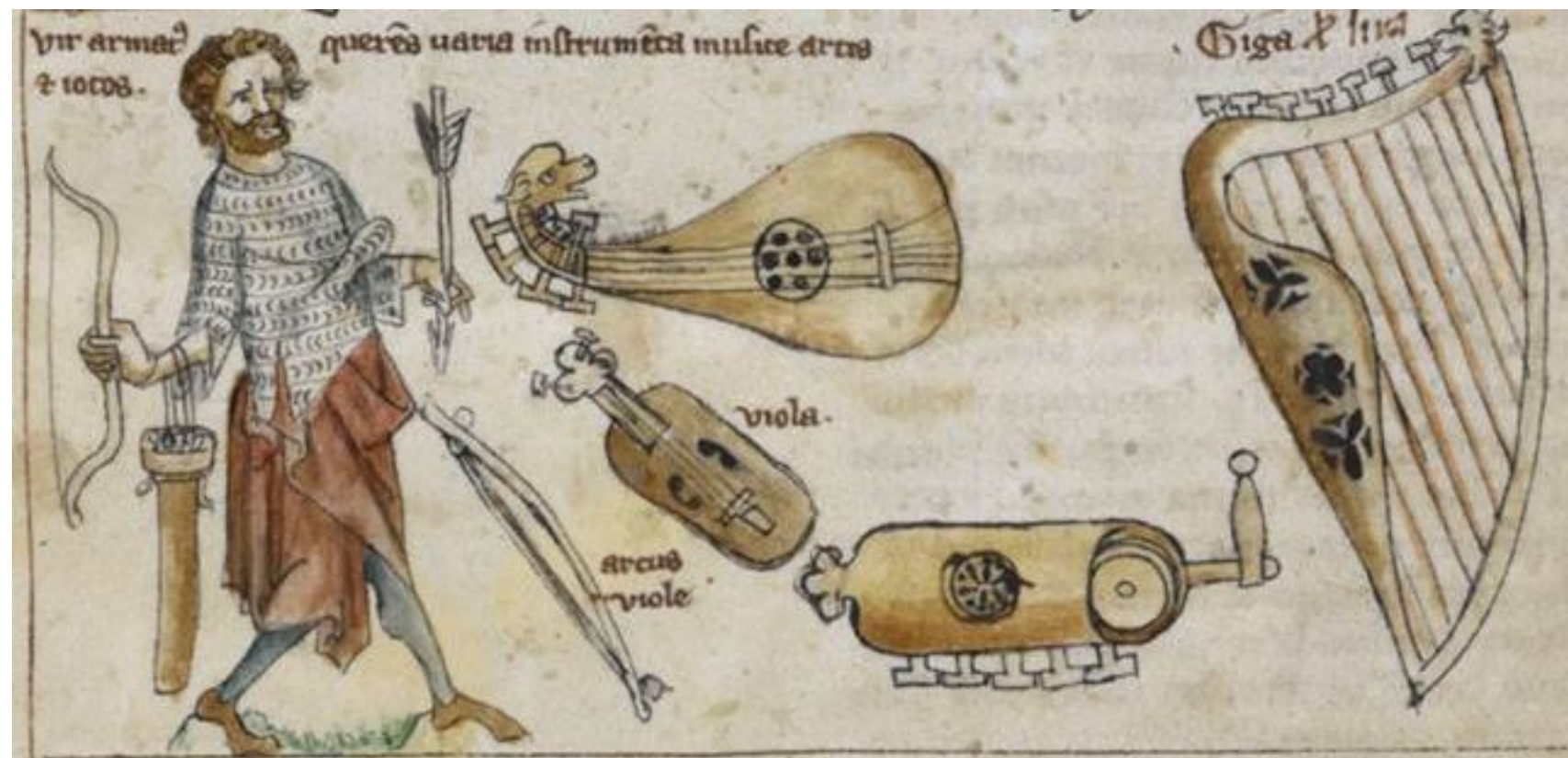


Songbooks with sheet music

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12xx	France	Bamberg Codex	108
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1415 (13st)	England	Trinity Carol Roll	13
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12-16st	France/Swiss	Puy Manuscript	27+

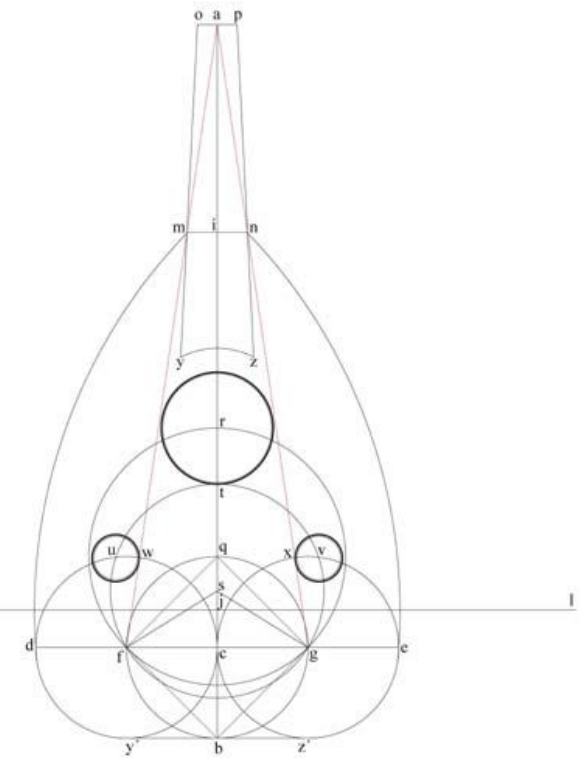
Czech lyrics

- Hanuš Jelínek: Zpěvy sladké Francie
- Radovan Krátký: Středověké písně cechu žákovského
- Alfons X.: Sto písní o Marii (Matouš Jaluška)
- Juan Ruiz: Kniha pravé lásky (Antonín Přidal)



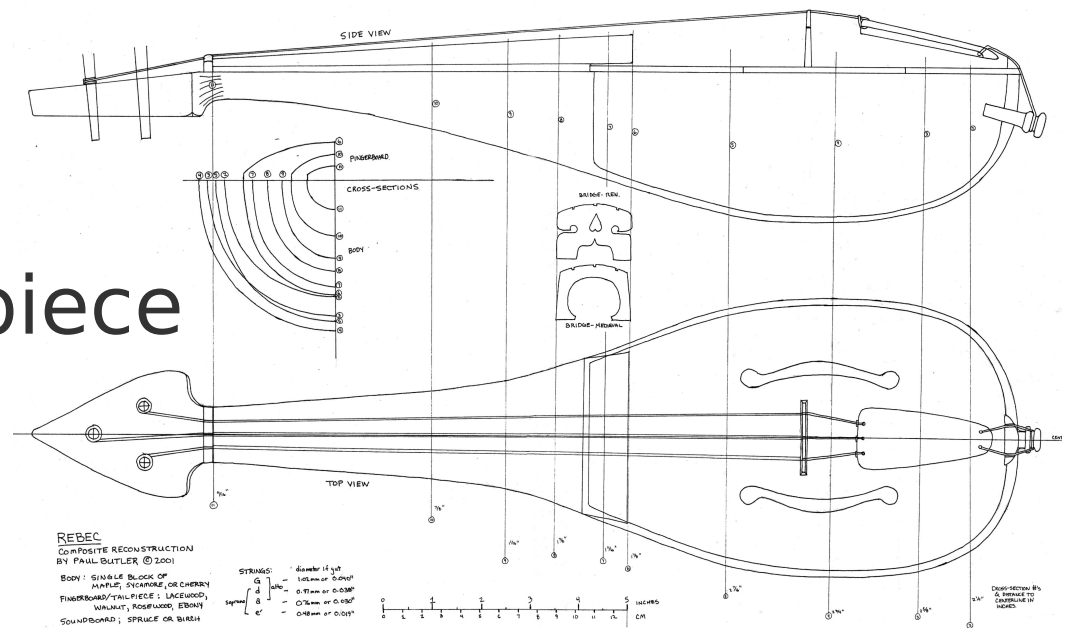
Instrument selection

- Do I want to play a **replica** of medieval instrument?
 - Modern instruments are easier to tune.
 - Every instrument has different sound.
 - Visually-extant instrument:
 - Better fit for reenactment events.
 - Surprisingly can hold tuning better.
 - We don't have findings of all instrument types.
 - Instrument construction based solely on images^k can be completely astray, having different sound, function and looks.
- Instrument names.
 - No order, no standards. Local, temporal, names.
 - Same terms for different instruments.
 - Different terms for same instruments.
 - In addition - terminology changed during time.



Instrument selection - params

- Easy to play and service.
 - Does it hold tuning or need retuning frequently?
- Simple to service.
- Availability.
- Price.
- Replica of extant piece or inspiration.

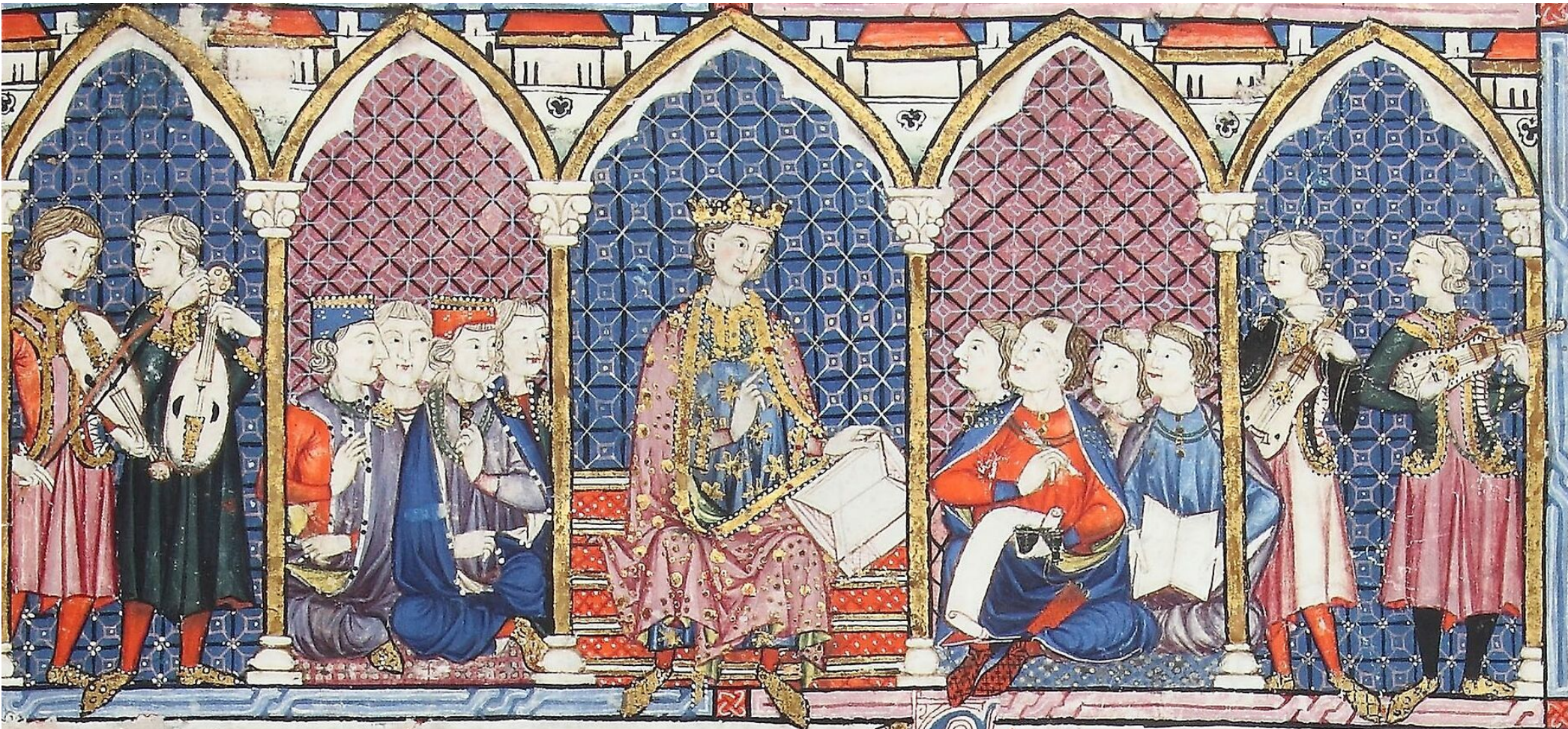


Instrument selection

- Instrument types: Strings, air, percussion.
- Wood, horn, hair, skin & gut are living things.
- Strings: Bow much more complex than plucking.
 - More strings = more work with tuning.
- Air complexity scale:
 - Recorder > Reed > Traverse > Trumpet.
 - Need inner humidity maintenance to prevent mold.
- Percussions: Bells, Tabors, Drums, Shakers, Jingle bells...
 - Biological membranes take in air humidity.
 - Waxed bag, placing in chest helps reducing humidity intake when not playing.
- Instrument picture catalogues:
 - Cantigas de Santa Maria, codex Escorial, called musicians codex.
 - Inspiration, not full listing. Regional differences.
- Thousands of illuminations, sculptures, extant findings...



1284 Cantigas de Santa Maria



1284 CSME Percussion



1284 CSMT Percussion, Extant



1314 Al Jazarí



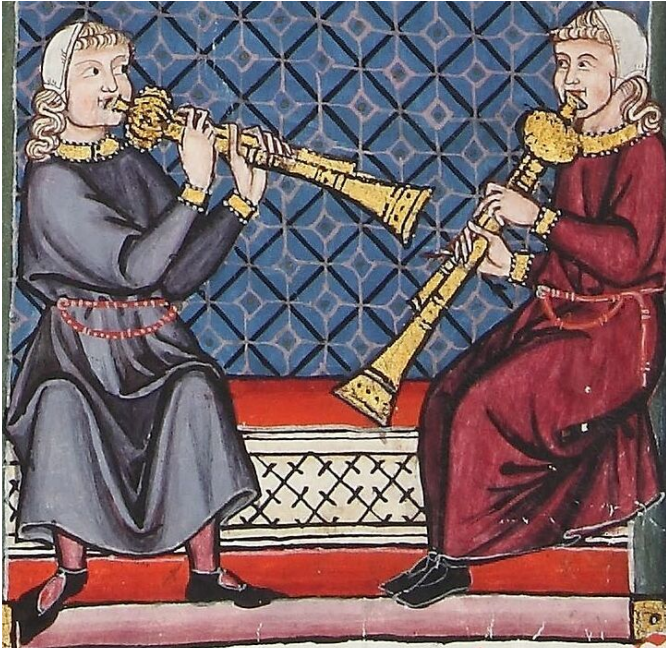
1284 CSME - Aerophones



1284 CSME - Aerophones



1284 CSME - Air + Extant



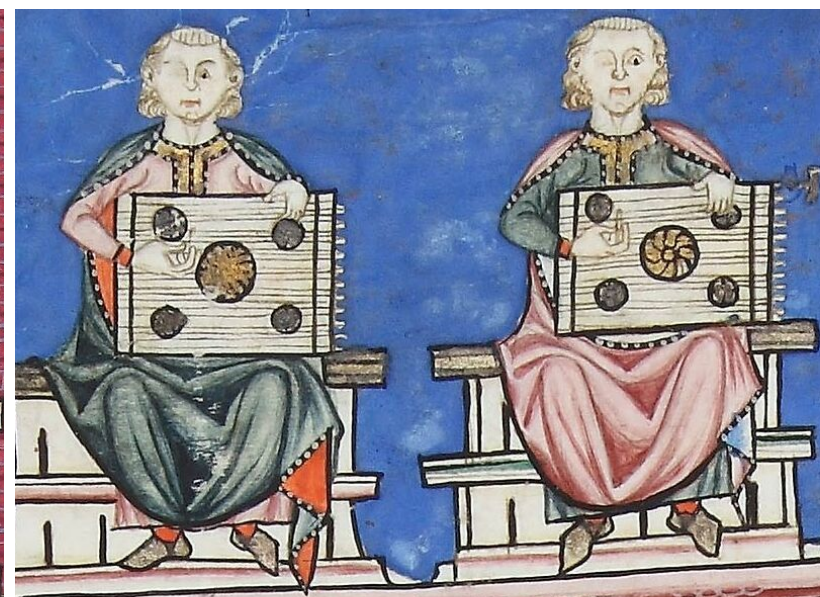
Extant pieces



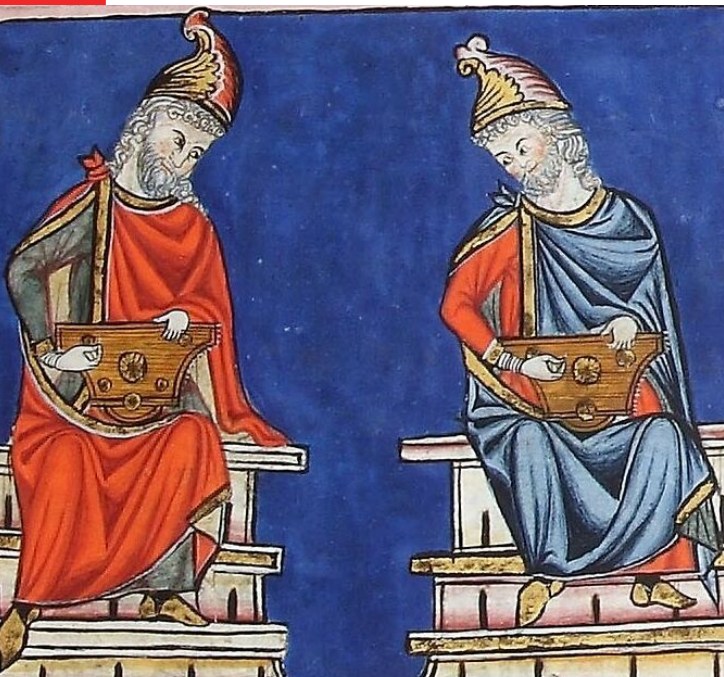
Extant & ethnical pieces



1284 CSME - Strings



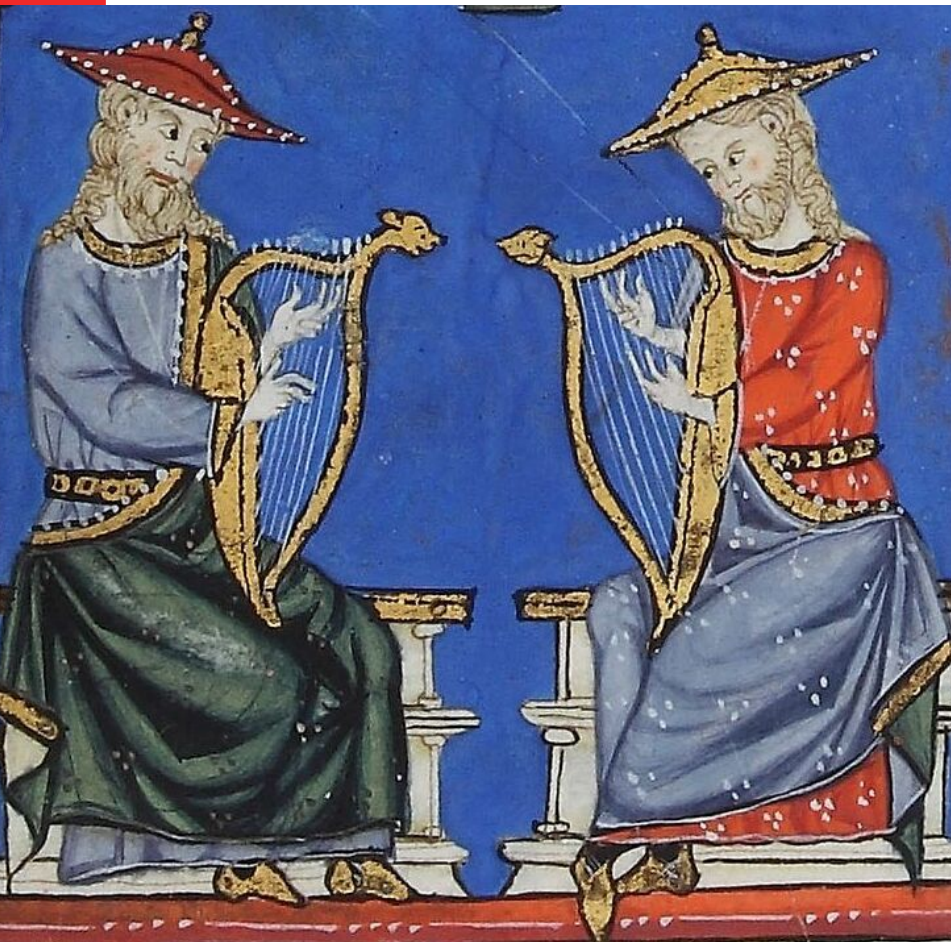
1284 CSME - Strings



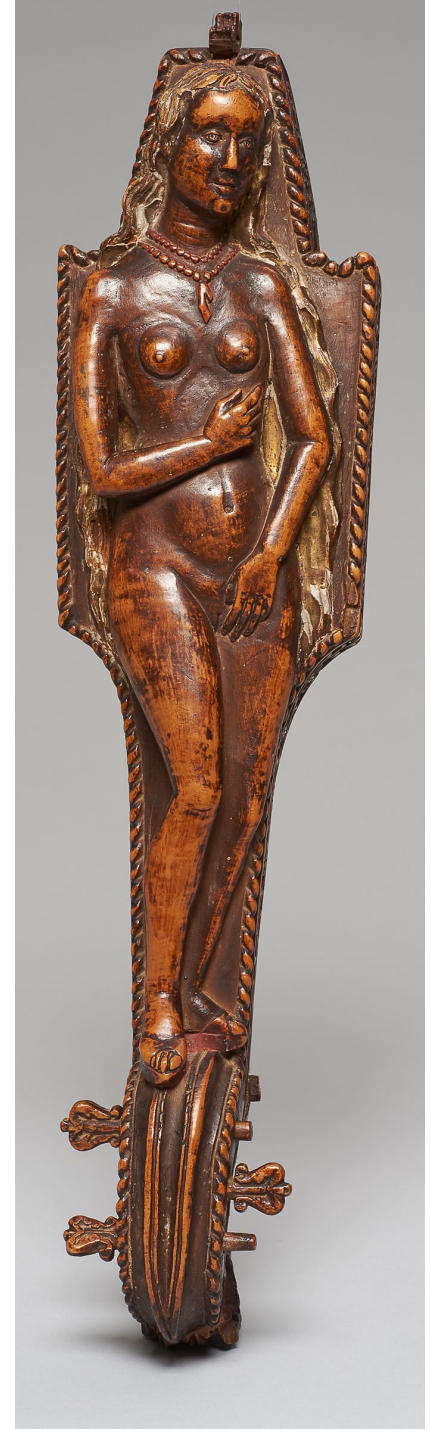
1284 CSME - Strings



1284 CSME - Strings



Extant pieces



References

- European medieval musical instruments:
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_European_medieval_musical_instruments
- Web Archive: Instruments depicted in Cantigas de Santa María
 - <https://web.archive.org/web/20200807003716/cantigas.webcindario.com/imagenes/albuminstrumentos/indice.htm>
- Frederick Crane „Extant medieval musical instruments catalogue“ 1972
 - <https://archive.org/details/extantmedievalmu0000cran/>
- Medieval composers:
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_medieval_composers
- Saint Cecilia Press, Pre-1700 Music Editions and English Translations
 - <https://stcpres.org/>
- Cantigas de Santa Maria for Singers: <http://www.cantigasdesantamaria.com/>
- Gaita: Publishing old music: <http://www.gaita.co.uk/publications.html>

Credits

- **Alfonso X.** - Cantigas. Relationship with music and culture.
- **Pavel Alekseychik** - Sources from hundreds of manuscripts.
- **Pero Cornel** - References to great music.
- **Abbé Farina** - Gregorian choirs & church music. <https://gregobase.selapa.net/>
- **Adalbert** - Sources - Machaut & others, Besalu, oud, ... Thanks a lot!
- **Gábina Houšková** - Church music sources.
- **Violka** - Gemshorn :)
- **Kateřina Hanušová** - Voice training lessons.
- **Tomáš** from DDM - Trumpet lessons.
- **World Drum Club, Ibrahím Malik, Carmine.com** - Darbouka, shakers, arabian rhythms lessons.
- **Vít Kašpařík, Číp a synové** - Beautiful aerophones.
- **Anton** from Příbram - Gittern, rebab, harps ...
- **Vitus Přibylus, Rui Silva** - Pandero cuadrado/adufe.
- **Playing together:** Adalbert, Ďáblík, Gábina H., Gemini, Constanza, Hobit, Klára, Martin B., Raava, Violka, Vlára.
- **Beautiful interpretations:** Eduardo Paniagua, Emilio Villalba, Ensemble Sreteniye, Gothart, Grupo Sema, Jordi Savall, Pepe Frana, ...
- +Many others willing to share experience.



Thanks for your attention





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SP Cantigas de Santa Maria, Codice
Rico, cantiga 120-5

dancers
rota
alto recorder
canune
psaltery
fiddle

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1255-1265 UK Add MS 62925 Rutland Psalter

carillon, organ, organistrum

Invitation to the world of music

- I'd like to play medieval music.
- Where to start?
- Is it complicated?



This talk aims to invite hobbyists into the world of medieval music and provide possible paths how to start enjoying the music and play with it.

1215-1240 FR Grenoble Bibliothèque municipale
Ms0041

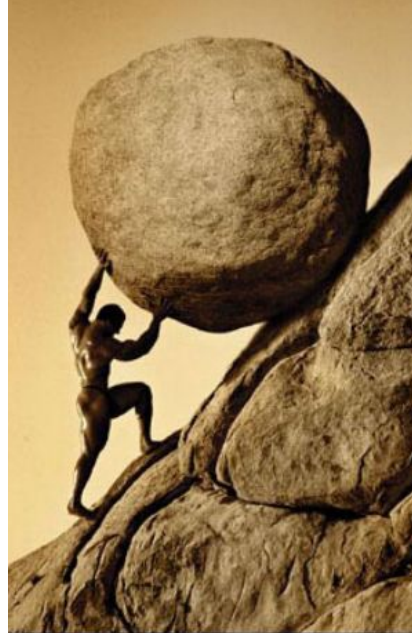
fiddle,
adufe/pandero cuadrado,
tejoletas/claves
horn
harp
acrobat

Obstacle course

- Laying obstacle fields
 - you have to earn entry into elite
 - you have to endure hardships
 - if you wouldn't do it this way, it's wrong

versus

- Reducing obstacles
 - **Don't be afraid**
 - **Play**



Fundamentalists

- There is no single correct way to do it.
- No extant medieval recordings available.
- Everything is just an interpretation.



5

820 DE Stuttgart psalter, f097v
- ?, singer, organ, horn

Elites of the Frankish empire were great supporters of music and culture and strove to preserve Roman civilisation.

In France after 1100 AD theatre was state sponsored activity with performances free of charge for spectators.

There are many kinds of music.
Single opinion cannot cover everything.

What do we have

- Sheet music.
 - What note it starts with?
 - Tuning based on cantor, bells.
 - Single voice line.
 - Frequently repetitive - boring?
- Pictures of musicians.
- Pictures of instruments.
- Extant instruments.
- Mentions in medieval written sources.
 - 1250 Salamanca: Music taught at university.
 - Instrument selection according to music style.
 - Ornamentation.



Initial note was set by first singer-cantor.

Notes weren't considered absolute pitches, rather a pointer how much to move.

Troubadour had to learn how to invoke joy, sadness, muse. Entertain wide spectrum of public - all society classes, that were meeting together during festivities. Richard Heege Mss, 1480, EN. <https://historyfirst.com/medieval-minstrels-very-modern-shtick-found-hiding-in-plain-sight/>

Arabic Andalusian musical practices. According to them, the Arabic word *ṭaraba* "music" (from the triliteral root *ṭ-r-b* ط ر ب "provoke emotion, excitement, agitation; make music, entertain by singing" as in *طرب أندلسي*, *ṭarab 'andalusī*) could partly be the etymon of the verb *trobar*.

Approach, time, energy

- Hobby, fun.
- PLAYing, experimenting.
- Professional.
- Scientific.
 - Archeological.
 - Musicological.
 - Online university - Besalu/Lleida,
<https://www.medievalmusicbesalu.com/>
- Next on here: Hobby, free time activity.



1270-90 FR BNF Français 95 Arthurian romances
portative

Artificial obstacles

- **What obstacles can we avoid?**

- Do I need to hear the pitch or rhythm?
 - No. Both are skills improved by exercise.
- I do have, I know how to play a bit on some instrument.
 - I will start learning new music using it.
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- Be considerate, know your limits, don't make people suffer:
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- What about pronunciation of the old lyrics?
 - Old languages have different pronunciation.
 - OK to study ancient philology, but takes plenty of time.
 - Simplification: Copy pronunciation from recordings.
 - Risk: Recordings can be wrong too.
 - We're not academics:
 - **World won't fall. To err is to be human.**
 - **We do play.**



1240 FR Morgan Bible, king David as a shepherd, pipe, bell, harp

Je utrpení pro celý tábor, když se na akci začnu učit na hlasitý nástroj, trumpetu, dudy, smyčce a neumím to.

Motivace: Jsem do velké míry samouk. Když jsem začínal, hudební sluch byl nula a cit pro rytmus jako poleno. Podle některých jsem pořád strašný a neposlouchatelný a mimo rytmus a neměl bych vůbec lézt na veřejnost. Já si tím ale dělám radost primárně sobě, a když si hraju pro sebe, občas se najdou lidi, kteří netrpí a dělá to radost i jim. Bylo by mi líto přijít o možnost dělat si navzájem radost, kdybych dal jen na to, že nejsem dokonalý. Nikdy nebudu dokonalý. Bez ohleduplnosti by ale muzika nebyla radost, ale utrpení, než přelezu přes nějaké, řekněme tomu larvální stadium.

Music styles

- Silent
 - Chamber, soft, courtly.
- Loud
 - Dancing, marching, marketplace, drinking, student, folk ...
- Church.
- Secular.
- Europe.
- Oriental.
 - Affects instrument selection.
 - 1330 Ruiz: It's ridiculous to play Christian music using Moorish instruments and vice versa.



1201-1300 PER Maqqamat al-Harírí, s.344

oud, lute
albogue

Music was performed in courts for nobility, but on markets as well as in pubs, garden parties and harbours next to the cities. Festivals of solstice and equinox, lore, carols...

Music style selection

- **Authentic medieval as much as possible.**
 - **Song form** - composition using refrain and stanzas is frequent for all societal strata.
 - Composition without refrain is much less frequent.
 - Mensural notation. No given metre, tempo. Merry & serious variants of single song.
 - **One melodic line.**
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 - Working like with kinder modeling clay.
- Next: Silent, secular, European, authentic as possible.



10

1190-1200 DE KBR-3897-3919 Guy de Pise „Liber historiarum“

tabor

How to

- Find/read the sources.
- Listen plenty of recordings.
- Select recording I like.
- Play with recording.
 - Playing by ear.
 - According to sheet music.
- Would I like to play with others?
 - Playing by ear.
 - Find sheet music.
 - Write sheet music based on recording.
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- It's a PLAY.
- Writing alternate lyrics to existing piece is O.K. It was done all the time.

"To play a wrong note is insignificant; to play without passion is inexcusable."
Beethoven



1227-1240 SP Hadith Bajád wa Rijád, oud

Important is to know what to seek.

There are often multiple versions

- modern church-like interpretation
- rather dancing interpretation.

Music sources - 12.c.

- A selection of sheet music for inspiration, not complete listing.
- Apart from authored pieces there is plenty of great anonyms.
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1091 SP Beatus de Liebana, cretan lira

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13

Reusing existing melody while providing own lyrics was usual. Most famous songs of Walther von der Vogelweide are based on older occitan melodies available at Navarre songbook.

1148 DE Worms Bible Harley Mss 2803-2804
lyre

Music sources - 14.c.

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- 1399 SP: Llibre Vermell de Montserrat (10)
- 1340+IT: Italian dances from Trecento, British Museum Add 2998 (116)
- 1357 FR: P. des Molins (2)
- 1360+CZ: Jan z Jenštejna (2)



1349 IT Chantilly, Musée de Condé 0599
bagpipes, nakers with mallet, fiddle, chaum,
recorder, oud, psalter, triangle, portative organ,
trumpet

Songbooks with sheet music

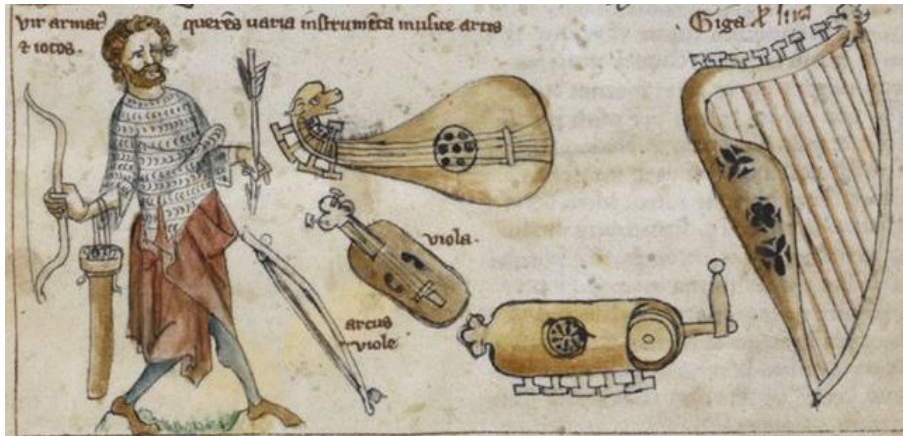
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15

the last column is number of compositions with sheet music available

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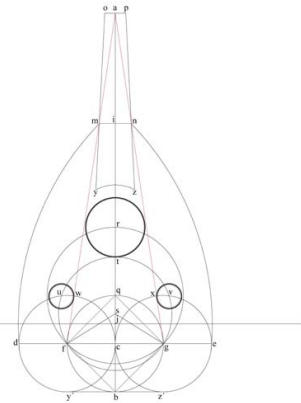
16

1350 BE, Albumazar, Treatise On Astrology 75 f13b

- giga/irish harp
- gittern
- fiddle/viola
- organistrum/symphonie/hurdy gurdy

Instrument selection

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17

Mitra Jahandideh: oud construction fig5

Medieval music is usually played using pythagorean tuning.

"A" note is usually played at 440, 466, 520Hz.

With this in mind we can speak about preferences for selected intervals in melodic progress, mostly in polyphony.

Some intervals were considered beautiful and consonant, for example octave, quart, quint are God's work, because they are physically perfect.

Some are improper, even dissonant (third, sixth) and some others even diabolical - tritone (augmented fourth).

Ondřej Hanuš

- [illegible]

<https://crab.rutgers.edu/users/pbutler/rebec.html>
P. Butler

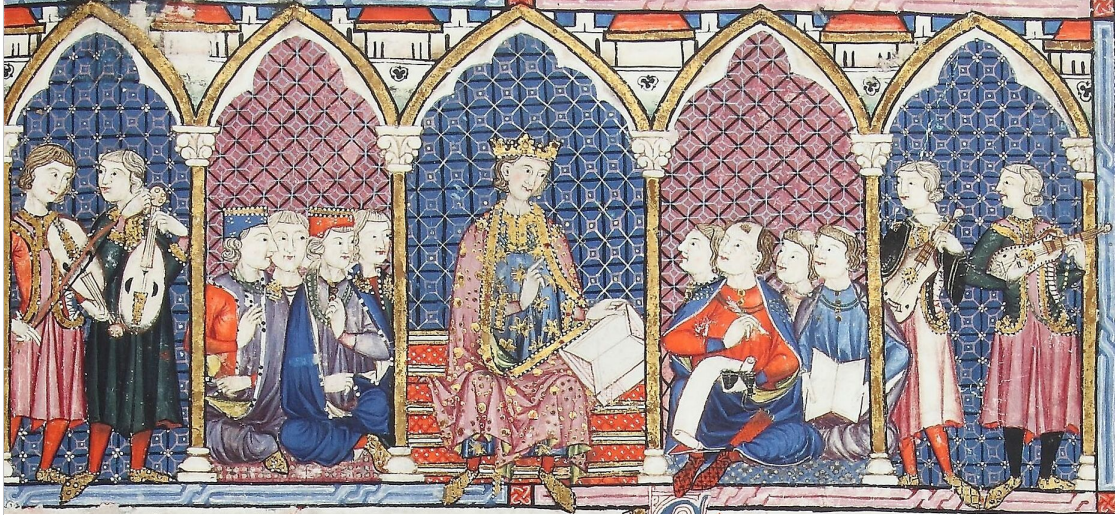
Instrument selection

- Instrument types: Strings, air, percussion.
- Wood, horn, hair, skin & gut are living things.
- Strings: Bow much more complex than plucking.
 - More strings = more work with tuning.
- Air complexity scale:
 - Recorder > Reed > Traverse > Trumpet.
 - Need inner humidity maintenance to prevent mold.
- Percussions: Bells, Tabors, Drums, Shakers, Jingle bells...
 - Biological membranes take in air humidity.
 - Waxed bag, placing in chest helps reducing humidity intake when not playing.
- Instrument picture catalogues:
 - Cantigas de Santa Maria, codex Escorial, called musicians codex.
 - Inspiration, not full listing. Regional differences.
- Thousands of illuminations, sculptures, extant findings...



1319-1321 CZ Pasionál abatyše Kunhuty wing
psalterium A-la Bohemica

1284 Cantigas de Santa Maria



20

CSME 000
fiddle
guitarra latina

1284 CSME Percussion



CSME 180 campanil, carillon

CSME 400 campanil, carillon

CSME 190 platillos, címbalos, cymbals

CSME 300 albogón y darbuka

CSME 330 chirimía y tarrenas, tejoletas, claves

CSME 370 pitos y tamboriles, pipe and tabor

1284 CSMT Percussion, Extant



- CSMT 165b 5 kettledrums and nefar trumpets
12.c. SP darbouka Bitrir/Petrer
11.c. SP tariya, bone flute
13.c. Egypt, kettledrum, Museum of Louvre

1314 Al Jazarí



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1315 PER al-Jazarí, Category I, chapter 2 fig 34 s43
14.c. Egypt, brass kettledrum, British Museum

1284 CSME - Aerophones



CSME 310 albogue, chalmeau, shawm

CSME 340 caramillo, albogue, chirimía
alboka, hornpipe

CSME 270 cornetas, horns

CSME 360 chirimías, shawms

CSME 240 flautas traversas, axabeba, transverse
flute

CSME 350 gaita, bagpipe

1284 CSME - Aerophones



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CSME 220 zummara, double clarinet

CSME 060 launeddas, triple clarinet

CSME 260 odrecillo, bagpipes

CSME 200 organo portativo, portative organ

CSME 250 trompas, cornos, cornetas, horns with bladder, platterspiel - even straight variant

CSME 320 anafil, nafir, nefar, trumpet

1284 CSME - Air + Extant



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CSME 230 - platterspiel

11.c. SP, transverse flute, Museo de Uruena

12-13.c. SP, Valencia, ceramic horn

Extant pieces



1300 UK, Billingsgate trumpet, brass

1300-1500 NL, Heerewaarden, copper horn

15. c. DE, shawm, 28cm

Extant & ethnical pieces



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1350 NL, recorder from Dordrecht

14.c. EE, recorder from Tart

20.c. SP, modern Basque alboka is the same as medieval ones. Dtto launeddas, pipes with tabor and some folk shawms - chirimías.

1284 CSME - Strings



CSME 010 - vihuela, guitarra latina; fiddle, gittern

CSME 020 - vihuela, guitarra morisca; fiddle

CSME 030 - laudes; ouds; lutes

CSME 040 - rota

CSME 050 - salterio, psaltery

CSME 080 - salterio, canunes, psaltery

1284 CSME - Strings



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CSME 070 salterio, psaltery

CSME 090 vihuela de penola/arco, fiddle

CSME 100 fiddle, byzantine lira

CSME 110 rabel, rababa, rebek, rebeb, byzantine lira

CSME 120 baldosa

CSME 130 bandolines, citolas

1284 CSME - Strings



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CSME 140 bandoline, citola,
CSME 150 mandore, guitarra morisca/latina
CSME 160 zanfoña, symfonie, organistrum, hurdy
CSME 170 rebek, rebab, byzantine lira, lute
CSME 210 vihuela de arco, fiddle?, lira
CSME 290 citara, citera, zither

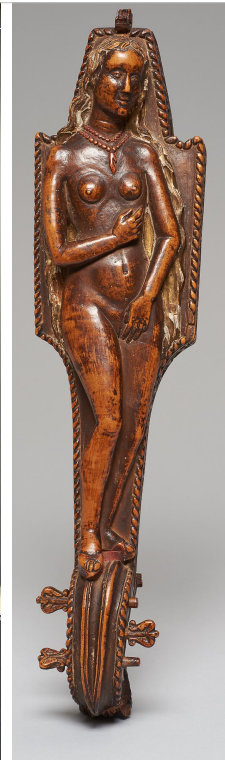
1284 CSME - Strings



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CSME 380 arpas, harp, giga
13.c. SP Santiago de Compostella, organistrum

Extant pieces



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1450 DE Wartburg, gittern of Hans Oth

1480 CZ Praha, hurdy gurdy

1380 DE Wartburg, Oswald von Wolkensteins' harp

15.c. IT Venice, Venus rebek, Vienna

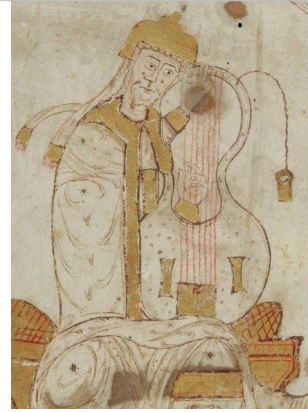


References

- European medieval musical instruments:
– https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_European_medieval_musical_instruments
- Web Archive: Instruments depicted in Cantigas de Santa María
– <https://web.archive.org/web/20200807003716/cantigas.webcindario.com/imagenes/albuminstrumentos/indice.htm>
- Frederick Crane „Extant medieval musical instruments catalogue“ 1972
– <https://archive.org/details/extantmedievalmu0000cran/>
- Medieval composers:
– https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_medieval_composers
- Saint Cecilia Press, Pre-1700 Music Editions and English Translations
– <https://stcpress.org/>
- Cantigas de Santa Maria for Singers: <http://www.cantigasdesantamaria.com/>
- Gaita: Publishing old music: <http://www.gaita.co.uk/publications.html>

Credits

- **Alfonso X.** - Cantigas. Relationship with music and culture.
- **Pavel Alekseychik** - Sources from hundreds of manuscripts.
- **Pero Cornel** - References to great music.
- **Abbé Farina** - Gregorian choirs & church music. <https://gregobase.selapa.net/>
- **Adalbert** - Sources - Machaut & others, Besalu, oud, ... Thanks a lot!
- **Gábina Houšková** - Church music sources.
- **Violka** - Gemshorn :)
- **Kateřina Hanušová** - Voice training lessons.
- **Tomáš** from DDM - Trumpet lessons.
- **World Drum Club, Ibrahím Malik, Carmine.com** - Darbouka, shakers, arabian rhythms lessons.
- **Vít Kašpařík, Číp a synové** - Beautiful aerophones.
- **Anton** from Příbram - Gittern, rebab, harps ...
- **Vitus Přibylus, Rui Silva** - Pandero cuadrado/adufe.
- **Playing together:** Adalbert, Ďáblík, Gábina H., Gemini, Constanza, Hobit, Klára, Martin B., Raava, Violka, Vlára.
- **Beautiful interpretations:** Eduardo Paniagua, Emilio Villalba, Ensemble Sreteniye, Gothart, Grupo Sema, Jordi Savall, Pepe Frana, ...
- +Many others willing to share experience.



12. c. CH, St. Gallen, Cod. Sang. 21
lyre, tuning peg

Thanks for your attention



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1320, SP, Golden Haggadah, f015r

- cymbals
- klaves
- rectangular tabor/pandero cuadrado/adufe
- gittern
- tabor/pandero with jingles