Title
Fortuna Vincincta, a Song or a Duet?

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6zz25783

Journal
Lute News: Lute Society Magazine, 55

Author
Minamino, Hiroyuki

Publication Date
2000

Peer reviewed
Table 2: other principally textless sources, c.1480–1510 (in approximate chronological order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Supposed provenance</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Supposed provenance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Cantil C</td>
<td>Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Bologna Q18</td>
<td>Bologna (poss. for viola)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>Florence 2439 (Bauvi Codex)</td>
<td>Flanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferrara (probably for wind band)</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Florence 1076s</td>
<td>Florence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Augsburg 142a</td>
<td>Augsburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Florence 121</td>
<td>Florence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands or Italy</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Other sources containing substantial instrumental repository</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>Florence 176</td>
<td>Firenze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Italy</td>
<td>Montecassino 87</td>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>Naples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Paris 676</td>
<td>Mantua</td>
<td>Mantua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Florence Panc.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FEATURES

Fortuna Vincincta: a song or a duct? by Hisayuki Minamino

Late 15th century music presents many questions relating to performance practice, in matters such as instrumentation, text underlay, musica fissa, pitch, tempo, and intonation. There is a large number of compositions where it is hard to be certain whether they were composed for voices or instruments. Are we failing to detect the difference between 'vocal' and 'instrumental' styles? Late 15th-century compositions usually lack any directions regarding the intended performance medium. A currently accepted method of determining the performance media—though cogently questioned by Jon Banks in the foregoing paper—is the presence or absence of text. There is clearly some ambiguity in the practice of the late 15th-century scribes regarding the way the texts are treated, especially when vocal compositions lack their texts or when the appearance of the text differs from source to source. Moreover, there is the problem of language, notably in Italy in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Although the northern composers and singers dominated the musical establishments and their compositions were the most sought after, Italian patrons of music had difficulty in understanding and performing secular songs in foreign languages, especially French chansons. This may be one of the reasons why the texts in foreign languages are left out in the Italian music books and manuscripts of the period.

To complicate the matter, late 15th-century instrumentalists seem commonly to have played compositions originally conceived for voices. This practice may have been arisen not only from the instrumentalists' desire to expand their repertory but also (notwithstanding Jon Banks's arguments that many professional singers also played instruments) by the need to perform when singers were not available. Was this practice a product of a musical style that was constructed with one musical language for both voices and instruments? We must also consider the possibility that the concept of strict fidelity to the composer's intentions was foreign to the players of the late 15th and early 16th centuries. They may or may not have fully complied with those intentions regarding performance media even if they knew what they were. Was it customary for composers to leave to the performers' discretion the choice of performance media and other details? [Consider the 16th-century story of Josquin scolding a singer for adding his own ornamentation, p. 21 below—Ed.] It seems that the presence or absence of text cannot be used as first evidence to determine the intended realization in performance.1

The notation in which a composition is preserved may also not offer such concrete evidence regarding performance media as one might hope. A case in point is a piece entitled 'Fortuna vincincta' in a manuscript now preserved in Bologna University Library (shelfmark, MS. 596 HH2/4). The Bologna MS is a fragment, now consisting of just three leaves of paper. It contains a tuning diagram (headed 'La mano a la viola') and a short untitled piece in Neapolitan tablature on f. 1, a piece entitled 'Fortuna vincincta' in mensural notation and Neapolitan tablature on ff. 1r–2r, a blank page on f. 2r, an example of so-called old German organ tablature (headed 'Tabula et intavolature del canto di organo'), two intabulations in that notation of the opening of Juan de Leon's villancico 'Ay, que non se remediarn' on f. 3, and a prayer entitled 'Oratio de venmbus' on folio 3. The dates of the vocal models for the intabulations and the activities of their composers indicate the late 15th or early 16th century for the date of its composition and Naples as its provenance.2 The Bologna fragment may be the earliest extant source for the viola da mano.3 The piece entitled 'Fortuna vincincta' is an arrangement of Johannes Vincetius's rondeau 'Fortune par ta cruculet'. The superius is noted in mensural notation, while the lower two voices (the tenor and the contratenor) are noted in 'Neapolitan' tablature (the same way up as French tab, but with numbers for letters, staring at / for an open string).4

If notation is a faithful reflection of the arrange's intent of performance media, the notation for 'Fortuna vincincta' would suggest the ensemble of singer and instrumentalist.5 The combination of mensural notation and tablature was the standard notational characteristic for the 'lute songs' of the early sixteenth century; for instance, the arrangements of Frocolto by Francisco Bossiceniss and by Andrea Antico, the arrangements of German Lieder by Arnold Schlick, and those of chansons by Pierre Blotet published by Pierre Artaignan.6 These extant examples are all arranged for solo voice and lute accompaniment. The superius is presented in mensural notation while the lower voices, usually the tenor and the bassus, are arranged for a single instrument and notated in tablature. Indeed, at the time of the compilation of the Bologna fragment, the 'viola song' was cultivated in Naples; there is a reference in 1492 to singing with 'la viola'.7

The major argument against 'Fortuna vincincta' in the Bologna fragment being a viola da mano song is that it does not include any text, either the chanson's original French text or a contracaractera. One slightly later source, however, supports our hypothesis that the lack of text does not necessarily disqualify 'Fortuna vincincta' from being an accompanied solo song.
Arnolt Schlick in his Tabulaturen etlicher lohgenang und lidlein uff die orguin und lauten (Mainz, 1512) included arrangements of German Lieder for voice and lute. The superius is notated in mensural notation and the lower voices are insubatted in German lute tablature. Though Schlick did not provide any text for the superius, there is no doubt that the part was to be sung: Schlick says so. His instruction given at the beginning of this section of the work reads: 'Hienach fahet an Tabulatur uff die Lauten. Ein stum zu zingen die andern zwicken.' (Here follows the tablature for lute. One voice is to be sung, while the others are to be played.)

Johannes Vincenet had a long association with the Aragonese court of Naples, and his rondeau 'Fortuna par ta cruaulté' was popular there. Vincenet's Neapolitan service may have begun in mid-1460s; he was recorded as a singer working for Ferdinand Ferrante I in 1479. 'Fortuna par ta cruaulté' was copied both in the Mellon Chansonnier, compiled in Naples around 1475, and in a manuscript preserved in the Biblioteca Comunale at Perugia (MS 45) which was compiled in Naples in the 1480s. Vincenet's presence and the popularity of his chanson in Naples in the late 15th century suggests that his chanson's lyrics would have been available at the time the Bologna fragment was compiled. Why were the lyrics of 'Fortuna vincinecta' omitted? Perhaps the compiler did not have access to them or was not fluent in the French language.

If 'Fortuna vincinecta' was intended as a solo song with the viola da mano accompaniment, how was the superius sung? One could imagine the superius being sung with syllabification but not support. This performance practice may be adequate for amateurs practising singing the song but in my opinion (and that of Thomas Morley, and others), is not very artistically satisfying. Did the compiler know the lyrics by heart? We cannot answer to this question, since we do not know who the compiler was. Was there a book or a scrap of paper that contained the lyrics? Considering that the Bologna fragment, as will be discussed below, is a private notebook of an amateur who jotted down whatever he or she acquired, it is reasonable to assume this is where the words would have been written if they were available.

The problem of the textless superius leads us to consider another possibility: that the intended performance medium for 'Fortuna vincinecta' is an ensemble of two instruments, a melody instrument and the viola da mano. Among the several sources of the chanson, the title 'Fortuna vincinecta' appears in few other sources. One of them, a two-voice arrangement in the MS preserved in Segovia Cathedral, shows some signs of being composed for instrumental ensemble performance.

Another indication that instrumental performance was intended may lie in the fact that the superius is transposed up a tone from the vocal original. The transposition would appear to comply with the intabulator's intention of enciphering the two lower voices for an instrument nominally tuned in A. The transposition results in a change of key signature from twice-transposed authentic protus mode with two flats in the key signature to non-transposed authentic protus mode with no key signature. If the intabulator uses an A-tuning to intabulate the two lower voices in twice-transposed mode, it results not only in some difficult fingering but also in the intabulation of many accidentals. The process of arrangement becomes much easier by transposing the chanson up a tone. The intabulator can eliminate B flats and E flats in the key signature as well as A flats produced as musica ficta; otherwise their presence would make it difficult to match the matching of notes and tablature characters more complicated. Moreover, this transposition helps the player find less troublesome fingerings, with many notes on the open courses or in first position.

A combination of mensural notation for a single voice and tablature for the arrangement of polyphony on a single stave may be the most suitable notational system for the lute or viola da mano ensemble style of the late 15th century, where at least two players were involved. The virtuoso instrumentalist did not perhaps play from a written notation, but may have used notation to aid his memory of the pre-composed music on which he based his improvisation. Mensural notation in a single stave would suffice. The accompanist (called tenorista in some documents) needed the simultaneous notation of the polyphony if his part consisted of polyphonic arrangement of the original composition without any elaborate ornaments. Tablature may have been appropriate for the fully written-out transcription of the lower voices of the original music. Thus, the combination of mensural notation and tablature may be the most suitable notational system for such a style of performance. Therefore, while the Bologna MS is certainly not the work of a virtuoso, the notational style of 'Fortuna vincinecta' might perhaps supply a missing link between the now lost music of Pietrobono de Burzeillis and the printed lute duets of Francesco Spinacino. The surviving tablatures for plucked instruments transmit only the intabulators' final versions. Many intermediary sketches and preliminary versions must have been lost. Although some intabulators made intermediate vocal scores or tablature scores to intabulate vocal music, it was a more common practice to intabulate the original composition voice by voice directly (a practice described in detail in some of the treatises). Then, the intabulator reworked what cannot be realized in tablature. Discrepancies such as the omission or premature termination of notes are thus inevitable. Finally, the lutenist's artistic licence stimulated the addition of ornaments and rearranged the original counterpoint in order to facilitate practical fingerings.

The arrangement of the two lower voices of Vincenet's chanson is not an example of the first stage of intabulation, but a finished version. The compiler was careful to add bar lines (or 'phrase divisions') to relate the mensural notation and the tablature symbols (some of the bar lines in the tablature are curved at the places where the notes and the ciphers do not align! 'Tenuto' is indicated by a sign which looks like the letter u. Several rhythmic signs in tablature are erroneously applied.

The tenor is intabulated almost literally. Several minor changes are made from the vocal original: the re-percussion of long or dotted notes (bars 1–2; bar 21), the combination of repeated notes (bar 17), the addition of a passing note (bar 46), the use of upper or lower auxiliary notes (bar 19; bars 28–29; bar 47), and the addition of the modest ornaments at the final cadence (bars 49–50). The intabulation of the contratenor, on the other hand, shows more varied treatment resulting in the disfiguration of the original voice. Besides the common features in intabulation techniques such as the repercussion of a long note (bar 18) or the addition of a passing note (bar 14), the most noticeable characteristic is the omission of notes or phrases, in many cases resulting in creating improper voice-leading, incomplete phrases, or thinness of harmony.

Technical considerations in intabulating all the notes are not the reason for these changes, for there would be no difficulty in intabulating the tenor and contratenor literally to be played on a single instrument. Although some tablature characters may have inadvertently been left out in the process of encoding or copying, there are traces of the intabulator consciously arranging the original voices. This may be seen by the change of counterpoint (bars 28; bar 41), the delayed entrance of 'chord notes' (bar 40; bar 48), and the octave replacement (bars 46–47). It is true that the arrangement does not meet the standards of vocal counterpoint. But this very trait, whether it be considered as reflecting the inferior musicianship of the
intabulator or a distinction in musical style, may be a clue in establishing if there was the concept of 'solo instrumental style' in the Renaissance.

Was the compiler of the Bologna fragment also the intabulator of 'Fortuna vincinest'? The inclusion of two attempts at en-ciphering a villanicko for keyboard strongly suggests that the compiler was a student or practitioner of intabulation. The lack of any preliminary stage of intabulation (such as attempts at making a voice-by-voice intabulation) for the two lower voices of Vincenti's chanson, on the other hand, suggests that the compiler simply copied an already existing version into his manuscript as it came into his possession.24 Judging from the internal evidence of the surviving portion, the Bologna fragment is not a manuscript used by a professional instrumentalist as an aide mémoire for his performance. It is more likely a private notebook of an amateur dilettante. The music fragment appears to contain the music lessons taken by a student of the viola da mano and keyboard instruments. The Bologna fragment is a remnant of a commonplace book that once belonged to a courtier, a clergyman, a student, an artisan, a wealthy merchant, or his wife, who noted major events in his or her life, interests and pastimes.

I have considered various arguments as to whether 'Fortuna vincinest' in the Bologna fragment is a viola da mano song or a viola da mano duet. If it is a viola da mano song, it is the earliest of its kind. If it is an ensemble piece for two viola da mano, it is a rare example showing us a transitional stage of notation for viola da mano or lute duets. One other possibility is that the notational style found in 'Fortuna vincinest' served as a sort of multi-purpose notation that could be used in more than one way, the combination of voices and instruments or the combination of various instruments, available at the time of performance.25 In any case, 'Fortuna vincinest' in the Bologna fragment is an important source for understanding the instrumental ensemble style, solo songs, performance practice, and notation of the late 15th century, and deserves to be studied extensively.

Editor's footnote
There are some interesting parallels with Elizabethan sources here. Regarding untitled songs and the language problem, French and Italian vocal music often appear without texts, in sources also containing also untitled songs in English and Latin. Regarding transposition in lute songs, transposition of the voice part in a lute-song arrangement is virtually unheard of—why bother, in an age when 'perfect pitch' was unknown, and singers read by intervals anyway? The only exception I know of is a song in the Dallis Ms which, perhaps significantly, appears to have been orally transmitted.

Notes

2 For the manuscript, see David Fallows, '15th-Century Tablatures for Plucked Instruments: A Summary, a Revision and a Suggestion,' JSY 19 (1977), pp. 18-20, Plates 3-6 (reproduction in facsimile). The folio numbers follow Fallows' reconstruction. The sources for Jussa de Leodi's villanico came from a Neapolitan manuscript of the late 1480s or early 1490s and two Spanish manuscripts. See Allan W. Atlas, The Cappella Giulia
5 For the invention of tablature for the vihuela in Spain, see idem, 'The Valencian Vihuela de Mano Tablature', *LQA* 33, no. 3 (1998) pp. 4-6. For the invention of tablature for the vihuela da mano in Italy, see idem, 'Neapolitan (Vioha da Mano) Tablature', *LQA* 34, no. 3 (1999) pp. 8-18.


7 Francisco Bassini, *Tenore e contrabasso insabbiati col sopran in sesta figura per canto e sonare con lauta libbre prine* (Venice, 1509) and *Tenore e contrabasso insabbiati in canzoni per canto e sonare con lauta libro secundo* (Fossombrone, 1511); Arnold Schlich, *Tabulaturen etlicher lichesing und liden* (n.d.); and Allan W. Atlas, *Music at the Angevine Court of Naples* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 104-8.

8 Schilde, *Tabulatures etlicher lobgesang und liden* (cited above).


10 For these manuscripts, see Leto, L. Perkins and Howard Garst, eds, *The Missel Chansonniers* (New Haven, 1979); and Allan W. Atlas, 'On the Neapolitan Provenance of the Manuscript Perugia, Biblioteca Comunale Augustura, 431 (G 2°)', *Musica disciplina* 31 (1977), pp. 45-105, respectively.


12 For the sources and concordances of the chant, see Bertrand E. Davis, *The Collected Works of Vincenzo Mercati*, Recent Researches in the Music of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance, IX and X (Madison, Wis., 1978), pp. xxx-xxvii (critical notes), pp. 107-69 (transcription). Atlas, op. cit., p. 151, suggests the version in Perugia 431 to be the closest vocal source for the version in the Bologna fragment, considering the presence of a passing-note in the contrapunto on the final beat of bar 7 (in the transcription given in the present study) and the combined attribution title.


14 This subject is discussed in Minamino, *Neapolitan (Vioha da Mano) Tablature*, pp. 9-10, where (p. 17, fn. 19), I noted my plan to publish a more detailed study on the practice of playing the recerca and lute vihuela da mano songs. As the research progressed, I came to realize that the subject is more complex than I initially considered, which forced me to postpone the publication of my findings.


16 The lutes do not in Francesco Spinacino's *Intablatura de lute*, *libro primo* and *libro secondo* are arrangements of chansons (except Joaquin's 'La Berardina', which has an instrumental ensemble piece). Both lute parts are embossed in tablature. Spinacino arranged 'Fortuna pars sa custode' for solo lute in *Intablatura de lute*, *libro primo* (Venice, 1507). F. 36, which implies a continuing popularity of the chanson among the Italian lutenists of the first decade of the sixteenth century. The volumes are listed and described in Howard Mayer Brown, *Instrumental Music Printed before 1600: A Bibliography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), at item 1507/1, 1507/2. I am preparing a study on Pietrobono and the ensemble style of the fifteenth century.


18 The tablature part is to be played on the instruments that we capable of producing polyphony such as the vihuela da mano or lute. The tablature of the tenor has significantly fewer notes than the tablature of the contrapunto, which makes it difficult to distinguish one part from another if they are played on two monophonic instruments.

19 On this technique, see Minamino, 'Sixteenth-Century Lute 'Treatises', pp. 13-59.

20 The uncorrected mistakes in rhythmic signs occur in bars 16, 28, 29, 39, and 52, which are indicated by parenthesis in my transcription. The kind of error makes us wonder whether the compiler intended to perform the piece, although the misplacement of ciphers and the mistakes in rhythmic sign were not uncommon in the lute prints and manuscripts of the 16th century.

21 The piece is also transcribed in Atlas, op. cit., pp. 226-27. In my transcription, I did not attempt to restore the missing notes but indicated by the rest signs.

22 The note c on the contrapunto on the second beat of bar 21 cannot be enclosed in first position.

23 The first note of bar 28 (g) does not correspond with the Contraporto of the vocal original. It is the final note of the atonal figure on the Tenor from the previous measure. The most ambiguous case of change of counterpoint is the note g on the contrapunto in bar 45, where the entire phrase in bars 44-45 is missing. The tablature seems to become false when compared with the vocal original. However, the cipher may be placed one line too high. If the intended cipher is on the open fifth, the note is d, which makes a better counterpoint with the Tenor. In the transcription, I did not attempt to restore the missing notes but indicated by the rest signs.

24 There is an instance of the compiler's error and his correction of it. After the piece was completed, there are three solitary ciphers written in a blank space. These ciphers must belong to the tenor in bar 47. The compiler indicated this intention by the cross signs.

25 I once considered 'Fortuna vincitacta' as a preliminary stage of tablature, that is, in the process of making a three-voice tablature in which the two lower voices have been enciphered. I abandoned this theory after having realized that the 16th century tablatures usually enciphered the voices starting from the highest ones.