So I've been perusing a music book from my local university library, from the Musica Britannica series. This one is <u>Songs in British Sources c.1150-1300</u> edited by Helen Deeming from 2013. It's got 115 songs, half of which haven't been published before. Only a few are familiar - Sumer is icumen in, Angelus ad virginem, etc. - most are new.

There's a lot of interesting things here. First off, the songs are in 3 languages, Latin, Middle English (Chaucer-type stuff), and Norman French, or Anglo-Norman. Second, these are all from manuscripts that weren't mainly about music, but other things; sermon tracts, treatises on law, etc., where they had a few extra pages and wrote one or more songs down. This is the first time they are all together. The editor has ordered them chronologically, and kept the songs in manuscript order (when there is more than one song in a ms.). While there are a lot of solo songs, there is a good number of 2 and even three part pieces.

But there is one thing that might keep people from performing them — no rhythm. She has only edited 2 songs with rhythm, but both are with 2 sets of words - Latin and Middle English, so 4 versions. So what to do with the rest of them? That's what I'd like to address.

One of the great things about living in the future is that so many of these manuscripts are now available online. (Not all, yet, but I'm hopeful.) And a good editor gives you all the info you need to find them (name of ms and page # for song). I'd like to walk you through starting with a song in this book, finding the ms online, and then making decisions about rhythm so we can have a performable piece.

#### #114 Nobilis, humilis

This one is 13c Scottish! It's a 2 part hymn to St Magnus from the Orkney Isles, and the ms is now in Uppsala Sweden. The other song in this ms was written for the wedding of Princess Margaret of Scotland and King Eric of Norway in 1281. The first thing I did here was look at the words - always a good place to start. (No, really the first thing I did was notice that it was 2 part, and that they are mostly in parallel thirds! So cool! And theoretically not medieval. Ha!) The words have a pretty obvious rhythm. It's so obvious that my group decided that we didn't need to notate it - we could sing it as written without the rhythm. Yeah us! We feel more medieval now.

A copy of the song from the book is below. As you look at it you can see groupings of notes. (Those groupings are also in the ms.) We sing the last note of each group twice as long as the other notes. When the last note is slurred (ie is 2 notes), then those each have the same value as all the others, so that the group value is double a regular note. When there are double notes in the middle of a phrase, they are shorter length. So let's say that most of the notes are quarter notes. Then the last note of each grouping is a half note, and slurred notes inside a phrase are eighth notes, while slurred notes at the end of a phrase are quarter notes.



and he desires you to perish from the sting of a trick, with a kiss of peace joined in a treaty of deception. 5. Bearing heavy burdens for the sake of justice, you are snatched, dragged, finally by the wound of death elevated from the depths to the heavens, thus you are joined with Christ through petitions. 6. Eya, with a multitude of banners in glory Christ is celebrated in song, is performed, is blessed, and praise is returned to you in the church; O how happy Orkney is hence considered to be. 7. For all those pursuing your praises, obtain, father, pleasing indulgence and eternal glory, through this perseverance of petitions saving your family from peril. Amen.

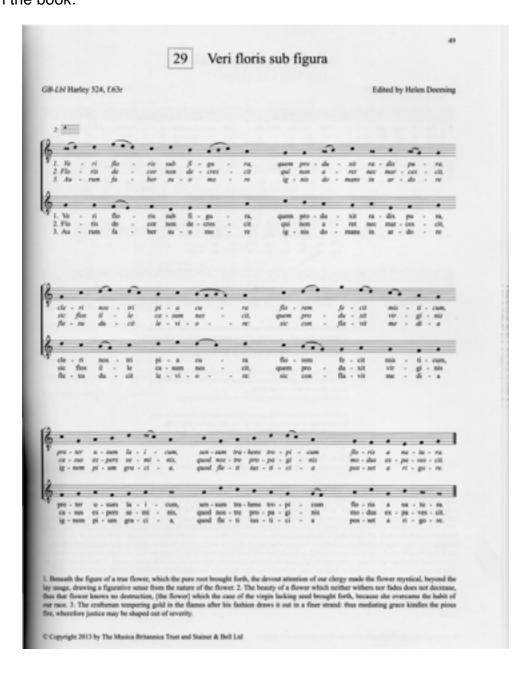
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I did find the ms online: here it is. <a href="http://www.alvin-portal.org/alvin/imageViewer.jsf?">http://www.alvin-portal.org/alvin/imageViewer.jsf?</a> dsId=ATTACHMENT-0019&pid=alvin-record%3A60063&dswid=5390 You can zoom in.

### #29 Veri floris sub figura

Another 2 part piece and the ms is online. I should say a word about how to decide rhythms. There are 2 basic approaches with non-mensural notation. One is that every syllable gets the same amount of time; the other is to look for a rhythm in the text and copy that. So if the poem is iambic or trochaic the music should match. On this piece I'm going with equal length syllables.

This ms is easy to read. All the single notes are the same, and the 2 parts are written in score with lots of "measure lines" to line up the parts. Take a look, here is the page: <a href="http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley\_ms\_524\_f063r">http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley\_ms\_524\_f063r</a>
One interesting thing to note is that some of the notes are squiggly. I've transcribed those with a squiggle above them - one interpretation is that they get vibrato. Here's the song in the book:



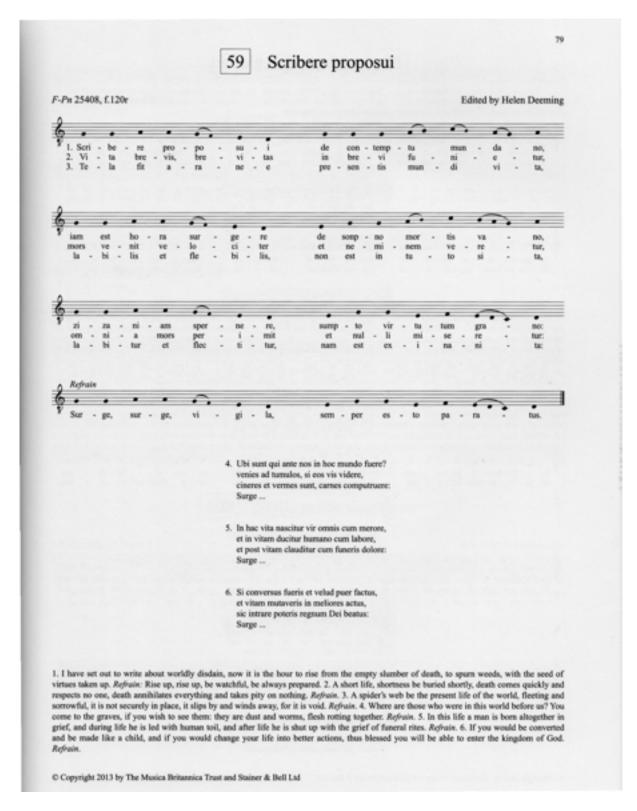
### Now here is my transcription:



I didn't have room for the 3rd verse, but you can see it and the translation above.

### #59 Scribere proposui

Yeah, I picked this one for the chorus - always be prepared. It's like a boy scout hymn. Here it is in SfBS:



The rhythm was a little trickier with this one - I played it but couldn't get a feel for a definitive rhythm. Time to look at the ms. Here it is: <a href="https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/">https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/</a> btv1b9063366p/f122.item It starts partway down the right page.

At first all the notes have the same shape - square with a stem (in Gregorian chant a *virga*, which becomes a *longa* in mensural notation), but then partway through the scribe switches to alternating those with stemless diamonds (a *punctum*, which becomes a *breve*, half the length of a *longa*). Hmm, does the song change rhythm in the middle? Here's how I transcribed it assuming mensural notation:

# Scribere Proposui



So it starts in 4/4 and then switches to 3/4. Seems kind of stupid. What if we make the whole thing in 3/4? Now it doesn't match the ms, but I think it makes more sense. So that's 2 different possible rhythms for this one, or 3 if you keep the whole thing in 4/4.

# Scribere Proposui (more logical rhythm)



Which version is right? I don't know, maybe none of them, but you have to pick something when you do it.

That's enough songs for today. I hope that I have encouraged you to try this for yourself. Do go look at the manuscripts via the links and compare them to the book and my transcriptions. If I get positive feedback, ie y'all like me doing this, I can do more in the future. Let me know please. You can email me at espreichardt at gmail dot com.

Keep making music! Mistress Amelie d'Anjou mka Emilysue Reichardt