

So I've been perusing a music book from my local university library, from the Musica Britannica series. This one is Songs in British Sources c.1150-1300 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.

114 Nobilis, humilis

S-Uw C 233, ff.19v-20r

Edited by Helen Deeming

1. No - bi - lis, hu - mi - lis, Mag - ne mar - tyr sta - bi - lis, a - bi - lis, u - ti - lis, co - mes ve - ne - ra - bi - lis,
 2. Pre - di - tus ce - li - tus do - no sanc - ti spi - ri - tus, vi - ve - re te - me - re sum - mo ca - ves o - pe - re,
 3. So - ci - a re - gi - a ti - bi vi - ri nes - ci - a tra - di - tur, sub - di - tur cas - ta, cas - to iun - gi - tur,

1. No - bi - lis, hu - mi - lis, Mag - ne mar - tyr sta - bi - lis, a - bi - lis, u - ti - lis, co - mes ve - ne - ra - bi - lis
 2. Pre - di - tus ce - li - tus do - no sanc - ti spi - ri - tus, vi - ve - re te - me - re sum - mo ca - ves o - pe - re,
 3. So - ci - a re - gi - a ti - bi vi - ri nes - ci - a tra - di - tur, sub - di - tur cas - ta, cas - to iun - gi - tur,

3, 4:

et tu - tor lau - da - bi - lis, tu - os sub - di - tos ser - va, car - nis fra - gi - lis mo - le po - si - tos.
 car - nis mo - tus pre - me - re stu - des pe - ni - tus, ut car - nis in car - ce - re reg - nat spi - ri - tus.
 nam neu - ter il - lu - di - tur sic de - cen - ni - o, ru - bus non com - bu - ri - tur in in - cen - di - o.

3, 4:

et tu - tor lau - da - bi - lis, tu - os sub - di - tos ser - va, car - nis fra - gi - lis mo - le po - si - tos.
 car - nis mo - tus pre - me - re stu - des pe - ni - tus, ut car - nis in car - ce - re reg - nat spi - ri - tus.
 nam neu - ter il - lu - di - tur sic de - cen - ni - o, ru - bus non com - bu - ri - tur in in - cen - di - o.

7: A - men.
 A - men.

4. Turbidas, invidus, hostis Haco, callidus
 sternere, terere, tua sibi subdere,
 te cupit et perdere doli spiculo,
 iuncto fraudas federe pacis osculo.

5. Gravia tedia ferens pro iusticia,
 raperis, traheris, demum icu funeris
 ab ymis extolleris ad celestia,
 sic Christo coniungeris per supplicia.

6. Eya, gloria signorum frequencia
 canitur, agitur Christus, benedictur,
 et tibi laus redditur in ecclesia,
 O quam felix cernitur hinc Orchadia.

7. Omnibus laudibus tuis insistentibus,
 gratiam veniam et eternam gloriam,
 precum pro instanciam, pater, optine,
 hanc salvans familiam a discrimine.
 Amen.

1. O martyr Magnus – noble, humble, steadfast, well-fined, beneficial, venerable earl and praiseworthy protector: guard your subjects, the fragile placed under the weight of the flesh. 2. Furnished from heaven with the gift of the holy spirit, you are careful to live heedlessly with the greatest effort, you strive to subdue the impulse of the flesh within, that the spirit might rule in the prison of the flesh. 3. A regal companion without knowledge of a man is handed over to you, the chaste one is put under you, is joined with the chaste, for thus neither one is mocked for a decade, the bush is not consumed in the fire. 4. O enemy Hakon, wild, hostile, shrewd to lay prostrate, to crush, to subject your [dominions] to himself, 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.

I did find the ms online: here it is. <http://www.alvin-portal.org/alvin/imageViewer.jsf?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:

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_524_f063r

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:

49

29 Veri floris sub figura

GB-Lbl Harley 524, f63r Edited by Helen Deeming

2.

1. Ve - ri flo - ris sub fi - gu - ra, quem pro - du - xit ra - tis pa - tris,
2. Flo - ris de - cor non de - cres - cit, qui non a - ret nec mar - ces - cit,
3. Au - rum fa - ber su - o mo - re ig - nis do - mans in ar - do - re

1. Ve - ri flo - ris sub fi - gu - ra, quem pro - du - xit ra - tis pa - tris,
2. Flo - ris de - cor non de - cres - cit, qui non a - ret nec mar - ces - cit,
3. Au - rum fa - ber su - o mo - re ig - nis do - mans in ar - do - re

cle - ri non - tri pi - a cu - ra flo - rum fi - cit mis - si - cum,
sic flus il - le ca - sum nes - cit, quem pro - du - xit vir - gi - nis
fle - su da - cit le - vi - o - re sic con - fla - vit me - di - a

cle - ri non - tri pi - a cu - ra flo - rum fi - cit mis - si - cum,
sic flus il - le ca - sum nes - cit, quem pro - du - xit vir - gi - nis
fle - su da - cit le - vi - o - re sic con - fla - vit me - di - a

pre - ter u - num lu - i - cum, sen - sum tra - hens tro - pi - cum flo - ris a - na - tu - ra,
ca - sus ex - pers se - mi - nis, quod nos - tre pro - pa - gi - nis mo - dus ex - pa - ves - cit,
ig - nem pi - um gra - ti - a, quod fle - ti fas - ti - ci - a pos - set a - ri - go - re.

pre - ter u - num lu - i - cum, sen - sum tra - hens tro - pi - cum flo - ris a - na - tu - ra,
ca - sus ex - pers se - mi - nis, quod nos - tre pro - pa - gi - nis mo - dus ex - pa - ves - cit,
ig - nem pi - um gra - ti - a, quod fle - ti fas - ti - ci - a pos - set a - ri - go - re.

1. Beneath the figure of a true flower, which the pure root brought forth, the devout attention of our clergy made the flower mystical, beyond the lay usage, drawing a figurative sense from the nature of the flower. 2. The beauty of a flower which neither withers nor fades does not decrease, thus that flower knows no destruction, [the flower] which the case of the virgin lacking seed brought forth, because she overcame the habit of our race. 3. The craftsman tempering gold in the flames after his fashion draws it out in a finer strand: thus mediating grace kindles the pious fire, wherefore justice may be shaped out of severity.

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Now here is my transcription:

Veri floris sub figura

London, British Library, Harley MS 524 anon. 13c English
#29 in *Songs from British Sources* rhythm redacted by Amelie

f.63r

The image shows a musical score for a medieval song. It consists of five systems of music, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a lute line (treble clef). The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The score is in 4/4 time and features various musical notations such as neumes, rests, and accidentals. The lyrics are in Latin and are arranged in three verses. The first verse is on lines 1-4, the second on lines 5-8, and the third on lines 9-12. The third verse is partially obscured by a note in the original image, which has been corrected in this transcription.

Ve - ri flo - ris sub fi - gu - ra quem pro - du - xit
Flo - ris de - cor non de - cre - cit qui non a - ret

ra - dix pa - ra, cle - ri nos - tri pi - a cu - ra,
nec mar - ces - cit. Sic flos il - le ca - sum nes - cit,

flo - rem fe - cit mis - ti - cum. Pre - ter u - sum
quem pro - da - xit vir - gi - nis. ca - sus ex - pers

la - i - cum. Sen - sum tra - hens tro - pi - cum
se - mi - nis, quod nos - tre pro - pa - gi - nis

flo - ris a - na - tu - ra. flo - ris a - na - tu - ra.
mo - dus ex - pa - ves - cit. mo - dus ex - pa - ves - cit.

1st 4 1/2 measures of v2 written out in ms: NB 1st note

Cesperichardt 2020

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:

79

59 Scribere proposui

F-Pn 25408, f.120r Edited by Helen Deeming

1. Scri - be - re pro - po - su - i de con - temp - tu man - da - no,
2. Vi - ta bre - vis, bre - vi - tas in bre - vi fu - ni - c - tur,
3. Te - la fit a - ra - ne - e pre - sen - tis man - di vi - ta,

iam est ho - ra sur - ge - re de somp - no mor - tis va - no,
mors ve - nit ve - lo - ci - ter et ne - mi - nem ve - re - tur,
la - bi - lis et fle - bi - lis, non est in - tu - to si - ta,

zi - za - ni - am sper - ne - re, sump - to vir - tu - tum gra - noc:
om - ni - a mors per - i - mit et nul - li mi - se - re - tur:
la - bi - tur et flec - ti - tur, nam est ex - i - na - ni - tac

Refrain
Sur - ge, sur - ge, vi - gi - la, sem - per es - to pa - ra - tus.

4. Ubi sunt qui ante nos in hoc mundo fuerunt?
venies ad tumulos, si eos vis videre,
cineres et vermes sunt, carnes computruere:
Sarge ...

5. In hac vita nascitur vir omnis cum merore,
et in vitam ducitur humano cum labore,
et post vitam clauditur cum funeris dolore:
Sarge ...

6. Si conversus fueris et velad puer factus,
et vitam mutaveris in meliores actas,
sic intrare poteris regnum Dei beatus:
Sarge ...

1. I have set out to write about worldly disdain, now it is the hour to rise from the empty slumber of death, to spurn weeds, with the seed of virtues taken up. *Refrain*: Rise up, rise up, be watchful, be always prepared. 2. A short life, shortness be buried shortly, death comes quickly and respects no one, death annihilates everything and takes pity on nothing. *Refrain*. 3. A spider's web be the present life of the world, fleeting and sorrowful, it is not securely in place, it slips by and winds away, for it is void. *Refrain*. 4. Where are those who were in this world before us? You come to the graves, if you wish to see them: they are dust and worms, flesh rotting together. *Refrain*. 5. In this life a man is born altogether in grief, and during life he is led with human toil, and after life he is shut up with the grief of funeral rites. *Refrain*. 6. If you would be converted and be made like a child, and if you would change your life into better actions, thus blessed you will be able to enter the kingdom of God. *Refrain*.

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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: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/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

Paris, Bibliotheque nationale de France, fonds francais 25408 anon. 13c. English
rhythm redacted by Amelie

f. 120r

Voice

Scri - be - re pro - po - su - i, de con - temp - tu - mun -
Vi - ta bre - vis, in bre - vi - tas, in bre - vi - ni -
Te - lae - fit a - ra - ne - e, prae - sen - tis mun - di -

7
da - no, iam est ho - ra sur - ge - re, de som - pro - mor - tis
e - tur, mors ve - nit ne - lo - ci - ter, et ne - mi - nem ve -
vi - ta, la - bi - lis et fle - bi - lis, non est in tu - to

14
va - no, Zi - za - ni - am sper - re - re, sump - to - vir - tu - tum
re - tur, Om - ni - a mors per - i - mi, et nul - li - mi - se -
si - ta, La - bi - tur et fle - bitur, nam est ex - i - na -

22
gra - no, Sur - ge sur - ge vi - gi - la, sem - per es - to pa -
re - tur, ta;
ni - ta, tus.

30
ra - tus.

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)

Paris, Bibliotheque nationale de France, fonds francais 25408 anon. 13c. English rhythm by Amelie

f. 120r

Voice

Scri - be - re pro - po - su - i, de com - temp - tu mun - da - no,
Vi - ta bre - vis, bre - vi - tas, in bre - vi fu - mi - e - tur,
Te - la fit a - ra - ne - e, pre - sen - tis mun - di vi - ta,

9
iam est ho - ra sur - ge - re, de son - pro mor - tis va - no.
mors ve - nit ne - lo - ci - ter, et ne - mi - nem - ve - re - tur.
la - bi - lis et fle - bi - lis, non est in tu - to si - ta.

17
Zi - za - ni - am sper - ne - re, sump - to vir - tu - tum gra - no.
Om - ni - a mors per - i - mit, et nul - li mi - se - re - tur.
La - bi - tur et flec - ti - tur, nam est ex - i - na - ni - ta.

25
Sur - ge sur - ge vi - gi - la, sem - per es - to pa - ra - tus.

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@gmail.com.

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