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Music, Notation, and Embodiment in Early Sixteenth-Century Italian Pictures

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As practicing musicians we value scores first and foremost for their accurate representation either of particular sounds, or of the actions required to produce particular sounds. By this measure, the scores represented in Italian Renaissance paintings are bad scores indeed: upside-down, half-obscured, foreshortened, often simply illegible. A painting attributed to Vittore Belliniano offers an excellent example (fig. 1; Shearman 1983, 43-46 (cat. 38); Clayton and Whittaker 2007, 182-184). Of the two sheets of music notation visible in this painting, that facing the young lady can be read only faintly through the translucency of the paper, whilst only fragments of notation can be seen on the rolled-up sheet held by the elderly man—and in both cases, the notation that can be made out is clearly fake. Yet these musical scores shape the actions and interactions of the figures occupying all the remaining space in the picture. Clearly their value to the painter (and, from the painter's point of view, to the viewer) was not compromised by removing their musical functionality.

[FIGURE 1 HERE]

Musicologists have often responded to the representation of musical notations and techniques in visual art with an expert evaluation of their accuracy and realism. A deep vein of literature sets out to transcribe and identify musical works represented in Renaissance paintings, often without offering any substantive comment on the role and significance of music in the image (Scherliess 1972; Slim 2002; McGee 2007). A separate strand uses images straightfowardly to investigate musical instrument design and playing techniques (Winternitz 1965; Bryan 2008; Young 2018).

Although work of these kinds is evidently necessary and useful, in some respects it represents a misunderstanding of the valence and cultural power of such images. If most Renaissance paintings are clearly not made by musical experts, it is equally clear that most of the people who saw these pictures in the period were also not musical experts. After all, the perspective of the professionally trained musician is shared by a vanishingly small proportion of the musically engaged population at any and every point in history. The majority of contemporary viewers did not scrutinise these images for an accurate bow-hold; rather, they accepted musical pictures for what they were as part of the hermeneutic field within which their own domestic musical engagements took place. Very likely a musical picture already conveys something recognisable about the character of music-making when you first buy it; and even if not, displayed alongside authoritative and instructive pictures of saints and family members in the domestic environment, its particular characterisation of music would inevitably come to inflect the understanding of those living around it (Shephard 2013; Shephard 2014, 141-142). In pictures like Belliniano's we see a culture reflecting back to itself core assumptions about musical practices, their meanings, and their value.

As Richard Leppert pointed out in his classic study of the representation of music in eighteenth-century British portraiture, using visual art to investigate the social and cultural meanings of music in this way inevitably entails a focus on conventions (Leppert 1988, 4). It is understandable that musicologists have given particular attention to musically exceptional images—those in which a specific music book can be identified, or an instrument design is seen for the first time, for instance—and it is only too easy to dismiss oft-repeated features in musical images as derivative and therefore uninteresting. But, as Leppert has argued, pictorial conventions are 'never "innocent" or accidental'; rather, they are 'the product of efforts to naturalise, hence deproblematise, the hegemony of certain modes of action or behaviour'. It is precisely the most ubiquitous representations of music 'as a socialised activity' that are 'informative of a group's or society's perceptions of music's cultural locus and its ideological use value'.

Musical scores represented in pictures engage in a multi-layered materiality. They are by their nature components of objects – in this case, paintings and illustrated books – that occupied prominent positions in the material economy of home and church. At the same time, they are representations of material objects – books and sheets inscribed with music notation – whose physical analogues also participated in domestic and religious life, as the equipment of musical pastimes and rituals. Meanwhile, in the course of their use, both real and represented, musical scores through their size and design impose particular physical configurations and attitudes upon the bodies of the individuals who collaborate to make music from them. Thus, both in pictures and in lived experience, the human body itself forms a part of the material field over which musical scores exert an influence.

Over the course of this essay we consider all of these aspects of musical materiality, including their interaction, whilst maintaining a particular focus on the conventional ways in which represented scores interact with human figures—both those represented within an image and those viewing that image in the course of their lived experience—causing them in some way to embody the musical information they present. In this latter respect our approach to scores is close to that adopted in recent studies by Richard Wistreich and Kate van Orden (Wistreich 2011; van Orden 2015), in which the social interactions mandated by music books are highlighted. We begin with a brief review of the kinds of music scores found in Italian paintings in the early sixteenth century, highlighting their material features as books and noting the relationships between music books represented in paintings and those used in practice. Then, in the remainder of the essay, we identify three prevailing conventions governing how musical scores interact with and organise the figures appearing in an image. For each of these three conventions, we sketch out briefly some of the ways in which they might relate to other kinds of evidence surviving to document the dominant ideologies of contemporary musical culture. Our hypothesis is that these visual conventions reflect fundamental assumptions about music that were widely shared by those who commissioned, made, owned, and viewed musical images.

Representing Scores in Early Sixteenth Century Italy

Music books and their physical properties have received less attention in studies on music in art than instruments, which appear in paintings significantly more often. Written music sources appear in all shapes and sizes, though, and broadly speaking their representation in art reflects the range of

physical properties found in actual surviving sources. The great music library of the heavens displays the most variation in formats, as angel choirs hold a great variety of notated scores, including books, sheets, scrolls and banderols; but music books are also seen in images of classical subjects, allegories, and portraits.

The presence of music books raises several possibilities for the viewer to engage with the artwork. Music books as material objects can evoke a sense of familiarity with the viewer's own musical material culture through identification of distinctive formats and their uses in musical practice. They can also reveal something about the relations between the figures depicted, depending on how the book is engaged with and by whom. Additionally, they can draw the viewer into the narrative of the image, as their gaze is guided by the books, responding both to their contents and their material properties.

Although their contribution is dwarfed by that of the lute, in early sixteenth-century Italian portraits music books form part of the repertoire of props that help to represent aspects of the sitter's identity. For members of the cultural and educated elite, the decades around 1500 presented new opportunities to amass personal libraries, comprising both traditional manuscripts and the products of the recently established printing press. Although the arrival of printed books was not the dramatic revolution scholars once claimed, it provided a definite increase in the quantity of books and other written materials in circulation and accessible to the educated strata of society. Contemporary accounts reveal a pleasure in owning material goods, and the conspicuous consumption of select items increased the cultured status of their owners.

Although the actual practice of reading books could differ considerably depending on their contents and physical properties, owning books most likely meant a desire to interact with written text. Sabba da Castiglione remarks in his *Ricordi* published in 1554 that 'I would want the books to be used and studied, and not so dusty that one could write on the boards with one's finger. For to have books and not use them, is as good as not having them' (Castigione 1554, fol. 53v; Thornton1997, 109-110). Whether music books were bought to fuel a passion for performing, or received as gifts, the ownership of refined and relatively specialised items such as books of polyphony, tablatures or theoretical treatises formed a part of the self-fashioning of a highly sophisticated individual.

Music books in visual art are usually easily identified by their oblong shape, which is relatively unusual in any other type of book from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Oblong quarto and octavo volumes contained notated part-songs laid out in choirbook format—with all parts visible in separate zones of a single opening—or partbook format—with separate volumes for each voice part, usually (though not always) bound separately.

The partbook was finding new popularity in Italy around 1500. The small upright music books seen in Lorenzo Costa's *Concert* of around 1490 (fig. 2; Wallace 2008) correspond with the material properties of partbooks surviving particularly from the early sixteenth century and from areas north of the Alps; no book of this particular type has survived with Italian repertory, although given the survival rates of any kind of book from the late fifteenth century the absence of evidence is not in this case evidence of absence. Oblong partbooks, such as can be seen in Callisto Piazza's *Concert* of the 1520s (Philadelphia Museum of Art; Bayer 2004, 131 (cat. 39)), quickly became a favoured format for printed music, growing exponentially in numbers from the 1530s as a single-impression moveable-type printing process for music became increasingly popular throughout Europe.

[FIGURE 2 HERE]

[FIGURE 3 HERE]

The layout of the notation in the music book appearing in Bacchiaca's *Portrait of a Woman with a Music Book* of about 1540 indicates it to be one of a set of manuscript partbooks, though no other books are present on the table or anywhere else in the image (fig. 3; La France 2008, 226-229 (cat. 68)). The notation has distinctive teardrop-shaped noteheads, which are present in some surviving early sixteenth-century Italian manuscripts, such as the partbook Bologna, Museo internazionale e biblioteca della musica di Bologna, MS Q 27 II°, probably copied in Bologna in the 1520s. The book faces the sitter, who is not singing in the portrait but addresses the viewer with her gaze; its contents are partially obscured by her hand, inviting the viewer to peer over her shoulder and imagine an introspective display of musical skill.

Despite the contemporary success of the partbook, the choirbook format was by a considerable margin the more popular choice among artists. Regardless of the realities of performance practice, a single book of music allows for a composition that draws all the figures together towards one focal point, an arrangement of potential symbolic utility, from underlining erotic undertones through musical experience shared between men and women, to representing community among generations in images now often titled *Three Ages of Man*. Despite the increasing popularity of partbooks especially towards the mid-sixteenth century, small-format choirbooks and tablebooks were still printed continually throughout the first half of sixteenth century. Indeed, the small choirbook seems to have been particularly popular in Italy over the first three decades of the century: of the 31 known titles of small-format choirbooks printed between 1501 and 1530, 29 were published in Italy.

Liturgical music books are also represented in Italian art of this period, although they are rarely legible and usually appear together with a clerical choir represented undertaking their duties in church. An exceptional case in this regard is presented by Bernardo Licinio's *Portrait of a Man with a Missal* of 1524, in which an older man is shown interacting with a large service book (fig. 4; Tsoumis 2013, 81-2). The book is painted facing the sitter, but it is easy to identify its contents as liturgical chant, with its occasionally rubricated text passages alternating with red four-line staves containing neumatic notation preceded by a large decorative initial. A closer study of the page, as if over the shoulder of the sitter, reveals that the chant melody is a simulacrum rather than any actual passage of music, and most of the text is treated with similar artistic license. Some legible elements do appear: a legible passage in the column of text reads 'Orate fratres', a request for a mutual prayer, and the chant melody starts with a doxology, 'Per omnia secula...'. These small cues refer to the beginning of the canon of the Mass, the holiest moment at which the transubstantiation takes place. Although music books only very rarely indicate a professional involvement with music in Italian portraits before the middle of the sixteenth century, in this case it is a fair assumption that the man depicted is a member of the clergy; service books such as this one were generally owned by institutions, and only rarely as private possessions.

[FIGURE 4 HERE]

Inaccurate notation such as can be seen in Licinio's portrait has sometimes been met by musicologists with criticism, or perceived to reflect a lack of musical understanding on the part of

the artist; yet, when written text is treated with a similar loose touch, nobody asserts that the artist could not read or write, or that the image is inaccurate or carelessly executed. In fact, questions about the accuracy of otherwise of music notation are perhaps the least productive and interesting in interpreting musical pictures. Like instruments, music books in images are not always a transparent representation of realistic performance practices and situations; instead, they make a versatile contribution to the symbolic economy of the image, the conventions of their representation reflecting the values of the musical culture in which they were created to operate. The material properties of a book can direct the viewer's gaze through its placement and its interaction with the figures in a picture; and the notation – regardless of its accuracy – stimulates the viewer's aural memory and imagination. In the remainder of this essay, we will consider three common strategies in representing the interaction between the material properties of a musical score and its agency in organising the bodies of musical participants—both real and represented— into a material embodiment of both its musical and its symbolic functionality.

Looking Up

The three best-selling books about music in Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century were Bonaventura da Brescia's *Regula musice plane* (15 editions to 1520), the anonymous *Compendium musices* (five editions), and Franchino Gafori's *Practica musicae* (five editions). The first two are short tutor books covering singing and basic music theory, designed specifically to help teach clergy, religious, and choirboys how to sing plainchant; both are largely compilations of material borrowed from the best-known late medieval treatises on the subject. Gafori's volume is much longer, and presents an account of musical practice that is fully engaged with the contemporary fashion for the antique, of interest to secular amateurs and literary humanists as well as music professionals.

The title pages of many editions of all three books are graced with woodcut images showing a clerical choir gathered together and looking upward to sing from a service book placed on a tall lectern (fig. 5). From a musician's perspective, these are certainly bad scores, too small and indistinct to hold much meaningful musical information for the viewer. Ironically, though, the service books they represent were actually exceptionally large, both in their dimensions and in their notation, so that they might be readily visible to the singers gathered before them. Similar scenes were common in the historiated initials of manuscript service books themselves (fig. 6). They reflect common practice in the choir of a church: singers were often allotted stalls with clear access to the centre of the space, where a large lectern awaited equipped with a service book whose large format and exceptionally large notation were intended to aid visibility for those towards the back of the group (Allen 2009).

[FIGURE 5 HERE]

[FIGURE 6 HERE]

[FIGURE 7 HERE]

In all these images a single music book with very large notation is placed on a high lectern. This performance format constrains the performers to stand together in a group, and to look up—some images seem even to exaggerate the relative height of the lectern to emphasise this last point. On

one level this is clearly a practical requirement of the performance practice: a service book presented below eye level would be obscured for those at the back of the group by those at the front. But it is equally clear that the upturned gaze is an unambiguously prayerful gesture, visible in many contemporary images showing people at prayer, including some found in service books themselves (fig. 7). Italian sacred art of this period often appears to have been designed to be seen from below, very likely to impose upon the viewer precisely the same up-turned gaze when addressing a divine figure (Motture and Syson 2006, 278; Johnson 1997, 4).

There are several respects in which the configuration of liturgical song as prayer perfectly suited the ideologies of sacred music in circulation in Italy around 1500. Liturgical song was understood to be an imitation of the songs of the angels in heaven. Its enactment was widely considered both to require and to prompt an elevation of mind and spirit toward the divine. Johannes Tinctoris, a church musician working in Naples in the late fifteenth century, wrote that

> Music uplifts the earthly mind. So St Bernard says in *Super cantica*: "The jubilation of praise exalts the eyes of the heart." Certainly the mind is led by the sweetness of concord to that contemplation of celestial joys which is the summit of a better life; and thus it forsakes that concentration on earthly things which, concerned as it is with practical living, causes anxiety and disturbance (Cullington 2001, 62 (*Complexus effectuum musices* 94-7)).

However, this quality of elevation was not an inevitable outcome of sung prayer; the orant must cultivate it conscientiously. Contemporary advice on devotional practice cautions the reader repeatedly to attend to the quality of their prayer, praying not only in word but in mind, heart or spirit. A popular manual called the *Stimulo de amore*, attributed in its printed editions to St Bonaventure (incorrectly, but persistently), describes at length how 'prayer is to be offered to God by two methods, that is, vocally and mentally', concluding that mental prayer especially 'greatly pleases God'. The orant must prepare for effective mental prayer by using meditative techniques to examine their soul and prompt sentiments of gratitude and devotion, praying 'with pure and affective moans and tears of the heart' rather than with well-composed and elegant phrases (Pseudo-Bonaventure 1501, fols. biii^{r-v}). The biblical anchor for this discourse, cited and paraphrased by the author, is explicitly musical: St Paul writes of 'Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord' (Ephesians 5:19, Douay-Rhiems translation).

Later in the same chapter, the *Stimulo de amore* cautions the pious to cultivate a disciplined practice of sensory restraint, avoiding stimuli that might 'inflame the flesh' and 'nourish greed, or rather luxury'; among other auditory snares the reader is advised to 'flee worldly songs' (Pseudo-Bonaventure 1501, fol. biiii^{v}). The ambivalent nature of music, in equal parts worldly allure and angelic imitation, lent a particular urgency to the prayerful quality of liturgical song. The Florentine theologian Giovanni Carioli, for example, cautioned in the 1470s that sacred songs should be sung 'with dignity and devotion, and with fervor of heart, with reverence and honor of the Deity'; only when sung thus do they 'acquire a certain invisible power to draw the souls of men and to inflame them with divine love' (Wegman 2008, 27). The reformer Girolamo Savonarola, enormously influential in the 1490s and a bestselling author, similarly favoured an inner state of worship, and

vehemently disapproved of the elaborate, sensuous beauty of contemporary sacred polyphony (Macey 1998, 92).

The upward motion of correctly executed sacred song, as an imitation of the angels and as a turning toward the divine, is neatly summarised by the philosopher Marsilio Ficino in his popular *Three Books on Life*: 'when music imitates the celestials, it also wonderfully arouses our spirit upwards to the celestial influence and the celestial influence downwards to our spirit' (Kaske and Clark 1989, 359 (*De Vita Libri Tres* 3.21)).

In these images, the location of the score constrains the performers to look up, a simple action which nonetheless powerfully embodies the values underlying their task of song. The force of this conception is neatly emblematised in Raphael's famous *Ecstasy of St Cecilia* (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna), in which the saint's raised gaze signifies an elevation of mind, spirit and senses as she attends not to an earthly service book, but to the angelic song it imitates (Zarri 1983; Connolly 1994). The angels, meanwhile, unlike their earthly imitators, balance their songbooks on their knees, requiring them to look down, sending their song downward to join with that sounding on Earth in Cecilia's heart.

Crowding Round

A painting of a singing group by Lorenzo Costa (fig. 8) purports to represent members of the Bentivoglio family, rulers of Bologna, making music together with retainers and associates (Wallace 2008). The score in this painting, if it was ever completed, has long since been replaced with a loose impression of much later notation. Nonetheless, a counterpoint of heads and glances dances to its tune, as a group crowds intimately together to sing in consort. Figures lean and gesture toward one another often in art of this date, of course, demonstrating their relations and interactions; but in the context of music-making these inevitably become ensemble gestures, the physical communications through which ensemble members co-ordinate both the notes and the passions of their music— leaning together, moving together, turning an ear, exchanging glances, tapping the meter.

On the title page of a songbook printed in Rome in 1510, four singers crowd in around their score with an intimacy approaching an embrace, bodies tessellated, heads craning together, feeling the meter in common through their tapping fingers (fig. 9). In this instance their choirbook is entirely invisible to the viewer, but the implications of its four-voice texture are spelled out clearly on the bodies of the performers. Of course, in this case the image appears at the front of a book that is itself an oblong quarto choirbook, a format in which the four voice parts appear separately in the four quarters of a two-page opening, offering secular part songs in relation to which the cover image has the quality of a serving suggestion.

[FIGURE 8 HERE]

[FIGURE 9 HERE]

Unlike the large size and high position of the service books used in liturgy and sacred polyphony, secular choirbooks like this one are placed below the musicians' gaze, both here and in other images of the period. Their small notation, tessellating all the parts on a single opening, requires close

attention, constraining the performers to crowd round in a matching tessellation of bodies. Perhaps, in fact, notation presented in choirbook format is not merely a realistic musical prop, but in itself a physical instantiation of the ensemble's musical accord—they are all on the same page, as it were, both metaphorically and literally.

Viewing a similar, lost musical painting made by Lorenzo Costa for his next employers, the sixteenth-century artist Giorgio Vasari reported that 'In one [scene] is the Marchesa Isabella portrayed from the life, who has with her many ladies, who, singing, make sweet harmony from divers sounds' (Vasari 1878-85, 3:134). In fact, the apprehension of 'harmony' is the standard critical response to a musical image in the period, especially within the secular sphere.

In the first ever printed musical dictionary, published in Treviso in 1494, Tinctoris defined harmony and the closely related concept of concord in the following terms (Tinctoris 1494, fols. aiii^r and aiiii^{r-v}):

> Harmony is a certain pleasantness caused by a coming together of sound.

> Concord is diverse sounds brought together to mix sweetly in the ears.

These definitions make harmony about materials brought together into pleasing accord. The same definition, expressed in pithier terms, can be found on the cover of Gafori's book on harmony, *De harmonia*, printed in 1518: 'harmonia est discordia concors' (harmony is the agreement of variance; Gafori 1518, title page).

This core principle of harmonic thinking around 1500 made out of harmony a powerful metaphor for any circumstances that involve elements brought into some sort of rational and pleasing co-ordination (Shephard 2022). Poets mobilised it to represent the accord among lovers, and to explain the pleasing arrangement of words in a poem. Artists and architects used it to describe the attractive combination of lines, shapes and colours in a picture or a building. For moralists harmony emblematised conjugal and familial relations, whilst to the physician it described the proper balance of the humours and the passions. Statesmen made of it a metaphor for the well-governed state and even the international balance of power, and to the philosopher it described the nature of the heavens.

Images of singers crowding round and exchanging ensemble intimacies represent another, visual, implementation of the harmony metaphor, applying it to the relations among a group, achieved by allowing the implications of a non-functional musical score to ripple out and configure several bodies in its own image as they crowd round to sing. Importantly, this process leaves the metaphor's broad applicability partly intact. The intimate quality of ensemble sociability is a musical assumption that can encapsulate communality across many possible domains – that of the family, of the salon, of friends after dinner.

Joining In

On the ledge at the front of Costa's famous *Concert* (fig. 2), a rebecchino and a recorder project forward into the viewer's space, whilst beneath the musical score read by the painted lutenist lies a

second music book awaiting use. Taken together with the engaging gaze of the woman in green, these features constitute an unmistakable musical invitation to join in. Similar prompts and invitations to join a music-making ensemble, often taking the form of a partbook awaiting use on a ledge in front of the viewer, can be found elsewhere, for example in Dosso Dossi's rhomboid *Allegory of Music* (Galleria Estense, Modena) and an early-sixteenth century *Music Party* at Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.

Whilst many have made this observation before in relation to Costa's painting (e.g. Wallace 2008), few have explored its most obvious implication. In order to join in, one must know how to sing, how to play rebec or recorder, how to accompany song, how to improvise, how to read music notation. In other words, one must possess musical training matching that of the elite trio who are already enjoying their ensemble sociability in the picture. Whilst the invitation to join in opens the image up to the viewer's interaction, at the same time it acts as a gatekeeper, excluding those whose social circumstances have not afforded them the opportunity to enjoy expensive music tuition. Through its invitation to join in, this image turns music into a powerful symbol of belonging, and also of excluding.

Music notation is quite often used to break the picture plane and address the viewer directly in Italian art of the early sixteenth century, but in almost every instance it also sets up a customs post to check the viewer's credentials. A case in point is an anonymous portrait dated to the 1510s, probably originating in Emilia Romagna or the Veneto (fig. 10; Lorenzetti 2011, 18-19; Beltramini et al. 2013, 146). The sitter holds up for the viewer to inspect a book in which is written a single line of legible music notation, setting the text 'O quante cose qui tacendo passo[,/ che mi stan chiuse al cor sì dolcemente!]' (Oh how many things I pass over here in silence[, that I keep so sweetly closed up in my heart!]), from Pietro Bembo's *Gli Asolani* (Bembo 1991, 195/328 (*Gli Asolani* 3.10)).

A dialogue on love adopting the neoplatonic stance common in early sixteenth-century Italian treatments of the topic, in which love is understood as an earthly echo of the innate longing of the soul for the beauty of God's created universe as experienced in heaven (Hyde 1986, 92-104), across the three books of *Gli Asolani* three courtly gentlemen discourse in turn in company with ladies. In book 1 Perottino complains of love's bitterness, and Gismondo in book 2 celebrates its joys; but in book 3 Lavinello shows the error in both his companions' perspectives and instead expounds the view that love is the desire for heavenly beauty, to the extent that it can be contemplated through its earthly manifestations (principally, women who are both beautiful and virtuous). Lavinello encapsulates his views in three 'songs' (canzoni), the third of which, reflecting upon the solitary contemplation of the beloved, is the source of the quote in the painting.

Whilst clearly this device invites the viewer to identify the sitter with the subject position and wise philosophy of the young Lavinello, it also invites the viewer to join in with the sitter's song. The single line of music notation in fact contains three musical parts. The first section furnishes a restrained syllabic setting of Lavinello's words, with a rest placed so as to stress the sixth syllable (*endecasillabo a maiore*). A *signum concordantiae* appears above the fourth note indicating the entry point for a potential second voice in canon at the unison. The second and third sections of the musical line together constitute a simple sustained harmonic accompaniment appropriate for a bowed stringed instrument, characteristic of secular song accompaniment in the period. The *custos* at the end of the melodic line, indicating the next pitch to be sung, conveys what would have been

obvious in any case: that this twelve-note melody can be repeated with its accompaniment to deliver as many of Bembo's hendecasyllabic lines as may be desired. The invitation to musical ensemble presented by this portrait requires the viewer to read music notation, own a bowed stringed instrument and know how to play it, and have handy on the shelf a copy of *Gli Asolani*. For all that the viewer is encouraged to join his voice to the sitter's in canon in a musical representation of the harmony of love, the invitation is extremely selective. Such communion is available only to those equipped with the trappings of elite culture.

[FIGURE 10 HERE]

[FIGURE 11 HERE]

Some fascinating pictures purposefully highlight the sophisticated nature of the musical skills required to cross the bridge and join in with the music of the image by presenting the viewer with a riddle to solve (Shephard 2012; Schiltz 2015). In another portrait probably from the Veneto, dated to c.1520, the sitter holds a music book in which can be seen a three-part perpetual canon setting the text 'Spes mea in deo est' (My hope is in God) beneath the inscription 'A.P.' (fig. 11; Scherliess 1972, 108-9). A.P., whoever he was, presumably wished to be seen as a sophisticated contrapuntalist as well as a pious and sober individual. Similarly to the portrait discussed above, the sitter's musical companionship was available only to viewers equipped with a comparable degree of musical understanding that allowed a correct reading and successful execution of the canon.

Even more subtle is the case of Titian's *Bacchanal of the Andrians*, created for the study of Duke Alfonso I of Ferrara, a painting modelled on an image described in self-consciously musical terms in Philostratus' late-antique *Imagines* (Prado, Madrid; Lowinsky 1982; Shephard 2014, 115-37). In the middle of the painting, among the drunken dancers and singers, is a piece of paper with a short notated phrase of music, setting a French text which asserts that 'Qui boyt et ne reboyt, Il ne scet que boyre soyt' (Who drinks and doesn't drink again, he knows not what drinking is). The music is a canon, probably composed by Adrian Willaert, who served in Alfonso's household around the time the painting was made and subsequently found enormous fame as the director of music at San Marco, Venice. Entry points for the canonic voices are visible above and below the notes, indicating that the song is in four parts; and a repeat mark at the end suggests that the music can continue indefinitely. However, to realise the full texture one must first solve the puzzle and understand that each part should rise in pitch upon repeating, otherwise the result in performance is an embarrassing cacophony. Even when fully understood, the song is tricky to execute in performance, and the viewer who has already partaken of Bacchus' gifts is certain to fall into its dissonant trap.

Curiously, this riddle-canon is carefully designed to function when read from the right way up, as it appears to the figures in the painting, or upside down, as it appears to the viewer, or even both at the same time. In principle, it offers a point of access to the image, a bacchic song shared between Andrians and viewer. And yet, its riddle is so obscure that even contrapuntal expertise is not sufficient quickly to unlock it. As seems appropriate to an image for the study-room of a duke, the canon refers inescapably back to Alfonso himself as the ideal, presiding viewer, keeper of the key that allows entry to the world of the Andrians and their music-filled party.

At first glance, such devices use musical scores to bring the viewer into counterpoint with the figures in the image, joining in with their performance. On closer inspection, however, the role of these

scores is as much exclusive as inclusive, making of musical participation an act of belonging, or not-belonging, to a particular social group. Participation in particular musical practices, including those represented in these pictures, was thoroughly integrated into elite identity in Italy in this period, forming a part of the ethical framework sustaining contemporary constructions of nobility (Lorenzetti 2003; Shephard and McMahon 2019). One of the most oft-printed books on education in Italy around 1500 was Pier Paolo Vergerio's *The Character and Studies Befitting a Free-Born Youth*, its very title already integrating questions of education into questions of social status. Vergerio is happy to recommend the study of music as a subject that 'is indeed worthy of a free mind,' noting that it was favoured by the 'liberally educated' of ancient Greece and citing the specific examples of the philosopher Socrates and the hero Achilles (Kallendorf 2002, 53 and 85 (*De ingenuis moribus* 43 and 70).

The availability in Italy of both musical instruments and printed music books expanded dramatically across the first few decades of the sixteenth century, driving 'courtly' musical practices down the secular social order into the lives of middle class professionals, administrators and artisans (Dennis 2006). Simultaneously, expanding production of domestic multiple-copy media such as printed images and books, historiated maiolica, and tabletop statuary created proliferating opportunities for the population of the middle-class home with motifs and tokens of elite, classicising musical culture. Over exactly the same decades, musical objects—especially, though not exclusively, lutes and music books—decisively entered the repertoire of props used in Italian portraiture, reflecting a renewed investment in music in the fashioning of the elite self, both established and aspirant. At this moment, the dialogue of musical membership and exclusion playing out in these North-Italian images works at the boundaries of elite status, placing musical bulwarks around the harmony of ethical nobility.

Conclusions

The scores in a majority of these images convey little functional information about musical sounds, and when they do the music notated is usually brief and schematic. But whilst these music books might fail to create a counterpoint of melodies, they succeed in generating a counterpoint of people, giving roles to the individuals who fill the picture space, and placing them into ensemble relationships that are at the same time powerfully evocative of the viewer's embodied musical experience, and richly symbolic. In a sense the act of making music from a score becomes the organising principle, both of the artist's composition and of the viewer's response, making a musical logic out of a juxtaposition of figures that might otherwise seem ambiguous or even arbitrary.

The kinds of roles and relationships most often assigned by painted music scores to people, both those inside the picture space and those looking in from the 'real' world, reflect prevailing contemporary views about music, its value, and its meaning. In images of clerical choirs, the height at which the service book is read requires the singers to embody in their upturned gazes the upward trajectory of prayerful song: imitating the angels above, directed to God in heaven, and effecting an elevation of the listener's soul. In the secular realm of the portrait and the 'concert' picture, small format choirbooks organise the figures into a tight-knit group, embodying in their ensemble accord the principle of 'harmony' as the agreement of variance, a metaphor of extraordinary ubiquity in the surrounding culture. The metaphor of harmony had a clear social dimension, used to characterise

relations between individuals and groups of various kinds, at a time when musical understanding was closely allied to an ethical view of elite identity. In some images, musical puzzles as well as unused partbooks and instruments dramatize the socially charged nature of musical participation, by challenging the viewer to embody their belonging within the harmony of elite socialisation through a demonstration their own musical skills.

These three conventions are intimately and inherently concerned with the aspects of musical materiality itemised at the head of this essay. Our overriding contribution has been to show how in early sixteenth-century Italian pictures the material properties of represented musical scores – their design, size, and location in use – are not merely functional, but encode aspects of the meanings given both to music itself and to musical participation in the surrounding culture. Further, through their agency in positioning the bodies of musical actors and shaping their interactions, represented scores cause their musical participants both within and outside the image to embody those meanings, creating a form of musical materiality that plays out in postures, gestures and glances. Even without legible notation, the scores in these pictures offer a powerful witness to the interaction of musical materiality and musical ideology in the Renaissance.

Captions

Figure 1: Vittore Belliniano? *The Concert*, c.1505-15. Oil on canvas, 73 x 95 cm. Royal Collection Trust, Hampton Court. Photograph © Royal Collection Trust / Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021.

Figure 2: Lorenzo Costa, *A Concert*, c.1485-95. Oil on panel, 95.3 x 75.6 cm. National Gallery, London. Photograph © National Gallery, London.

Figure 3: Bachiacca (Francesco Ubertini), *Portrait of a Woman with a Book of Music*, c.1540. 103.2 x 80.3 cm. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Photograph courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.

Figure 4: Bernardo Licinio, *Portrait of a Man with a Missal*, 1524. 90 x 75 cm. York Art Gallery. Photograph courtesy of York Museums Trust / https://yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk / Public Domain.

Figure 5: Bonaventura da Brescia, *Regula musice plane* (Venice: Giorgio Rusconi, 1516), title page. Bologna, Museo internazionale e biblioteca della musica, A.60. Photograph © Museo internazionale e biblioteca della musica di Bologna.
[http://www.bibliotecamusica.it/cmbm/viewschedatwbca.asp?path=/cmbm/images/ripro/gaspari/_A/A060/]

Figure 6: Francesco or Girolamo dai Libri(?), historiated initial cut from a liturgical book, c.1500-1540. Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo, Brescia. Photograph © Brescia Museums Photo Archive.

Figure 7: A monk praying to St Bernard at the beginning of the introit *Gaudeamus omnes*. Venetian, Antophonary, c.1505. Ink and pigments on parchment, 60 x 52 cm. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, W472, fol. 41v. Photograph courtesy of the Walters Art Museum.

Figure 8: Lorenzo Costa, *Bentivoglio Family Concert*, 1493. Mixed media on canvas, 105 x 82 cm. Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection. Photograph © Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza. Madrid.

Figure 9: *Canzoni nove con alcune scelte de varii libri di canto* (Rome: Andrea Antico, 1510), frontispiece. Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, UBH kk II 32. Photograph courtesy of the Universitätsbibliothek Basel.

Figure 10: Emilian or Venetian? *Portrait of a Man with a Music Book*, c.1505-15. Oil on canvas, 56 x 39.9 cm. Galleria Nazionale di Parma. Photograph © Scala, Florence—courtesy of the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo.

Figure 11: Venetian? *Portrait of a Man with a Music Book*, c.1520. Oil on canvas, 78.1 x 59.7 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection, 1917. Photograph courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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