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# Ricercar Projects and the Musical Heritage

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## *Introduction*

Around 2010, when building the new scientific programme of Ricercar, a research group in musicology supported by the Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique and the Ministry of Culture within the Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance in Tours, it seemed essential to rethink our objectives by taking into account new or to be created elements in the scientific and cultural landscape of musicology and heritage studies. It was not a question of abandoning projects of which the publications in the Epitome series as well as the websites were traces. To deepen the understanding of a corpus such as the French chanson of the 16th century, to discover with new eyes sources of music for the lute, to explore the concept of geographical area rather than that of a court or a city, to deliver a repertoire neglected because anonymous, such as that of masses without an author preserved in 15th century manuscripts: these were among others the topics on which Ricercar was and still is working.

However, other questions have arisen during the development of these projects, questions that are as much a matter of scientific interrogation as of the desire to place musicological work in a dynamic of research development. I will outline the process that we

followed before leaving it to Camilla to illustrate some of the results obtained. I will then conclude by raising a series of questions relating to these orientations, which fall into the category of reconstructions.

I say category because reconstructions can indeed take radically different paths depending on the material that is manipulated, the objectives that are targeted and the public that would be concerned.

It all started with the material. In 2010, most heritage libraries had included the digitisation of their collections in their programme. And these digitizations have generated tools for visualization, indexing, and recognition that continue to feed our own research. At the same time, DIAMM was doing fabulous work on manuscripts. It was therefore unnecessary for Ricercar to embark on a systematic approach to the sources.

What no one was doing at the time was creating a virtual library in which to discover a source whose entirety was never accessible in one place. This kind of problem occurs with some of the 16th century separate publications. And within this corpus, the song books printed by Du Chemin intersected our interests: songs, on which we have been working since the early 1990s, sources that had been partially published in facsimile by a close company, the Centre de musique ancienne de Tours. The first reconstitution therefore resulted in the creation of a virtual library, the issues of which were more administrative than scientific. Once the reproduction authorisations had been obtained, we had to take advantage of the

advances made by some heritage libraries, mainly in terms of visualisation.

These songbooks by Du Chemin were not only scattered! Some were also incomplete. The case of Du Chemin then crosses another question. Has the loss of one or even two vocal parts not given rise to fragile evaluations of a composer's style, of the representation of a genre at a given time, of the practice in certain places? Why not try to reconstitute an incomplete polyphony and try to measure the consequences at an obviously micro level (the chansons in the 50's, the repertoire of the Sainte-Chapelle, the work of Gesualdo)? Micro level, for it was inconceivable to reconstitute missing parts in an industrial way. Very quickly, and Richard Freedman spoke to you about this, an attempt at automation was grafted onto this set of questions: would there be a way to create an artificial intelligence of 16th century polyphony?

In parallel with the work on the song, the Ricercar programme had initiated other research projects. One was to address how to conceive the musical history of a multi-site institution whose musical dimension was only very incompletely known. The Saintes-Chapelles were at the heart of a vast project which made it possible to excavate archives, to follow in the footsteps of musicians, from Paris to Tours, from Chambéry to Bourges, via Dijon and other cities. At the same time as this project was taking shape, questions of a new nature were emerging, which fall into two fields: one technological, the other political. But the two are closely intertwined.

When I was working with Camilla Cavicchi on a text on music collections and their spaces in the Renaissance, I was able to measure the staggering silence in which the heritage sites that are today at the heart of cultural tourism in our countries are immersed. And when they are not silent, they are wrapped in a musical message whose scientific basis makes musicologists shudder, but which constitutes a reality of experience against which any scientific claim cannot visibly impose itself. The questions were numerous: how to convince the decision-makers (owners, public authorities, curators) that it is important to deliver a musical message in connection with the place? How to think about this musical experience to avoid it being only an aesthetic experience? How can we make the musicological message "transportable"? How to react with conceptual, material and sonic flexibility to the diversity of places and circumstances?

In ten years, we have gone through various experiences. The *cubiculum musicae* - this *in-situ* place designed to live a musical experience - has gone from an experimental space with sophisticated visual pretensions to a dedicated room in an exhibition route or even to a mobile structure. The heart of the demonstration was a work for a place (Blois 1501, Ockeghem at Saint-Martin), a composer or a character (Lassus at Mons, Da Vinci), a place and its music (Fontevraud). The demonstration was musicological, historical and organological. But the idea remained unchanged: to allow the discovery of the musical dimension of a place at a moment in its history through a musicological approach. A second experience, which was explored with the Sainte-Chapelle in Dijon and recently

continued with the Basilica of Saint-Martin in Tours, concerns the restitution of a vanished place, the desire to bring the spectator into it for the duration of a short projection. Here too, there is a concern for musicological precision, an invitation to explore a little-known type of music, and a capacity to integrate into a wider tour that contributes to forging the heritage identity of a place without neglecting its sonic dimension.

### *Projects*

I'm going to tell you a little more about the programs mentioned by Philippe.

As he said, since 2011 the program "Ricerca" in Tours has been working on scientific projects designed to study musical performance in space and to enhance Renaissance music in public exhibitions. These projects aim indeed on one side to use reconstruction as a methodological tool for the musicological research, and on the other side they aim to disseminate the results of the research among our society. You will find an overview of these projects in the website "Virtual Music Heritage" (SLIDE 2)

Our first endeavor focused on the restitution of musical experiences in lost Renaissance spaces, which were destroyed during the French Revolution. This was achieved by creating 3D renderings of the lost Sainte-Chapelle in Dijon, in 2014, and the lost Saint Martin Collegiate in Tours, produced in 2019 for public exhibition. (SLIDE 3)

In the case of the 4D Saint-Martin Collegiate restitution, David Fiala and Vasco Zara proposed to reconstruct the rehearsal for the funeral

ceremonies of King René d'Anjou in Tours on 10 August 1480, according to the historical sources. Johannes Okeghem, master of the royal choir and treasurer of the collegiate Saint Martin, and his singers sang the *Requiem* on the 9th of August 1480. Destroyed in the seventeenth century, the majestic building of Saint-Martin, has been reconstructed in 3D, and the virtual experience is accompanied by the Requiem performed by Dominique Vellard and his musicians. We can watch a minute of the movie, just to give you a better idea of this reconstruction (SLIDE 4)

MINUTES 3:24-05:05

This reconstruction was possible thanks to a collaborative work by a team of musicologists, archaeologists, historians, historians of art, acoustic engineers, performers specialized in the fifteenth-century music, informatic designers and many other experts who worked together for five years to reconstruct the space and the human behaviors, on the base of the historical sources. You will find further information in the page dedicated to this project and especially in the press kit and in the making-of (SLIDE 5)

In a similar vein, in 2013 we also developed an immersive installation, called the *Cubiculum musicae* SLIDE 6: an innovative exhibition space that can be custom-designed for specific events. SLIDE 7 + click The *Cubiculum musicae* is a mobile unit in which selected pieces of music are played and explained to the public with the aid of visuals, technological tools, interactive software, and web applications (SLIDE 8 + click+click). Inside, the visitor finds themselves in a dark, acoustically isolated room which features a

central screen and tailored sound diffusion all around the walls, to optimise their experience of the music. Indeed the term *cubiculum musicae* was originally coined by Paolo Cortese, the apostolic secretary to Pope Julius II, in his 1510 *De cardinalatu libri tres*, to describe a room for listening to music. Later on during the 16th century, the term was used to describe specific rooms in aristocratic abodes that housed precious collections of musical instruments, as well as pertinent books and portraits of musicians.

Five hundred years later, in 2010, the *cubiculum musicae* concept was reinvented by Philippe, with whom I was co-authoring an article about music collections in the Renaissance (SLIDE 9). His inspired idea was to build a mobile and interactive space in which Renaissance music could be listened to in optimal acoustic conditions—a means of providing an immersive Renaissance ‘experience’ to a wider public.

Through our endeavours, the *Cubiculum musicae* was totally transformed; from a mere private repository for the elite to a space of sensorial experience and musical immersion that would explain and promote the musical heritage of the Renaissance to all. Since 2015 the *Cubiculum* has hosted 8 different programs, whose descriptions you can find on the website (SLIDE 10) Like our previous project, the *Cubiculum* is a multidisciplinary achievement. Images in particular play a fundamental role, enhancing the musical experience and promoting the discovery of cultural heritage. As well as this pedagogical function, images create a connection between the music and the cultural and historical context in which it was composed.



It is quite interesting to have a look at the number of visitors of some *cubicula* that you can see on this slide (SLIDE 10)

Here you see a little more about how public lives this experience (SLIDE 11)

We also worked on another program concerning the reconstruction of the musical performance in Renaissance Palaces, a project coordinated by Vasco Zara (SLIDE 12). With the collaboration of specialized ensembles and engineers, this program aimed to experience the acoustics of Royal Palace spaces where music was usually played. But you will find more about this, on the website Virtual Music Heritage.

### *Conclusions*

After ten years of experience in the world of re-enactments, I would like to conclude by raising a series of questions. They are presented here without prioritisation: all of them imply complex answers, transformations both in our conceptions and in the way musicology is perceived by public decision makers.

Embarking on the path of recomposing the missing parts very quickly led to a question concerning the modalities of dissemination. As much as the principle of a shared language for musical data, the MEI, has made its way, the idea of producing open, freely accessible online editions that can be improved at any time has yet to convince as demonstrated by the reception of our Gesualdo on-line. Some publishers, and not the least, have perceived this. Can our communities commit to it with a shared conviction? Open access should not only concern analysis and reflection, but

also data and metadata, some of which are used to visualise the score.

Reconstructing missing parts engages musicology in the field of artificial intelligence. With a multitude of questions ranging from the definition of style to the procedures of attribution or de-attribution, etc. And beyond that, these reconstructions initiate a profound reflection on the pedagogical approach affecting the musicologist as much as the performer, and even any curious person who does not master the metadata, can nevertheless play, manipulate and taste the data.

Heritage restitutions raise the question of the model and format. How to balance aesthetic experience and scientific message? How can we perpetuate a hypothesis of heritage reconstruction when the technologies used present strong risks of rapid obsolescence? How can the sharing of experiences be thought out on the basis of a measure of their reception by the target audiences?

And finally, is it not through all the experiments in reconstruction that we will enable musicology to participate in the cultural and creative industries?