

Lacunae Ciconiae: re-sounding Ciconia's missing voices

Born in Liège (Belgium) towards 1370, Johannes Ciconia worked for most of his life in Italy, notably in significant cultural and religious centers such as the papal chapel in Rome and the Padua cathedral. He leaves us a large corpus of compositions ranging from madrigals in the north-Italian style to mass movements and motets.

Highly appreciated by both scholars and performers, this diverse corpus of works has given rise to numerous studies, editions and recordings. The musician taking an interest in Ciconia's work is however often confronted with the lacunary state of the piece in the sources, impeding her or his full appreciation of the piece(s) at hand.

The *Lacunae Ciconiae* project aims to reconstruct in an plausible way the voices missing from the works of Johannes Ciconia. Multiple approaches are implemented in order to reach that goal: in a course of action similar to that of experimental archeology, participants rely on both *gnosis* and *praxis* to validate or invalidate their suggested reconstitutions. The *gnosis* constituent of the project consists in a careful examination of both theoretical writing from the period and analysis of Ciconia's non-lacunary compositions.

The *praxis* constituent resides in the re-creation *in vivo* of the practice of composing and improvising polyphony as practiced by musicians around 1400. Such activities include the *ex tempore* singing and playing of one or more voices against a given tenor, but also the training of the “memorial archive”, and experiments with composition without recourse to a traditional modern score. The elaboration of those suggestions, whose aim is to be stylistically plausible, represents the opportunity to imitate the practices of medieval musicians, whose written works represent only a fraction of their compositional output.

By linking analysis, creation and performance in a continuous back and forth motion, the *Lacunae Ciconiae* project opens innovative ways of apprehending late medieval music, be it theory-, composition- or performance-wise, thus building a bridge between past and present.



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Lecturer at the HEM in the domains of counterpoint and artistic research (DMA). As a researcher, Niels has investigated techniques of polyphonic improvisation in the 1300-1500 period. For this he received his doctorate from the University of Leiden in 2017 through the docARTES programme. He has taught the theory and performance of medieval and Renaissance music, at the Royal Conservatoire (The Hague, NL) between 2011 and 2019. Guest-lessons and workshops on polyphonic improvisation have been given at the Russian Gnessin's Academy of Music (Moscow), the Israel Conservatory of Music (Tel-Aviv), the Kodály Institute (Kecskemét), the House of Polyphony (Leuven), and the International School of Improvisation (Verona). Niels is also active as a performer, and regularly appears as a tenor-soloist in cantatas and oratorios in the Netherlands. He is the founder of the Ensemble Diskantores, dedicated to the performance of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century music.



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After initial studies of the flute, Gaëlle Fourré has studied the history of music, analysis and musical composition in different institutions. She holds a licentiate in music and musicology of the Paris Sorbonne University, and has pursued her studies at the Conservatoire Supérieur Musique et Danse de Lyon. Having developed a particular interest for medieval repertoires, which has lead her to follow additional studies in historical flutes and early music at the Haute École de Musique de Genève.