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La Cetra Cornuta : the horned lyre of the Christian World

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Citation

Young, R. C. (2018, June 13). *La Cetra Cornuta : the horned lyre of the Christian World*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/64500>

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Issue Date: 2018-06-13

CHAPTER 2: La Cetra Cornuta c. 1100-c. 1535 : Romanesque to Renaissance

2.1 La Cetra Romanica

The progression of instrument forms in the ancient and Christian Mediterranean world through the Ottonian period to c. 1000 presented in **Chapter 1** ended with the advent of the bow, from Byzantine Greece during the 10th c., into Italy and other areas of the northwestern Mediterranean basin, including Spain and southern France. It was a new way of playing lutes and lyres which would forever change the sound of Western music, and five centuries later, an historian of European music referenced the introduction of the bow. Johannes Tinctoris writes with a special fondness about the bowed *viola*, a lute with incurved sides: it was

“devised (as they say) by the Greeks, differing from the lute not only in shape (like that) but also in the disposition and striking of the strings.....these two instruments (viola and rebec) are mine, mine I say, that is the ones among the rest with which my spirit lifts up to the affection of piety, and which most warmly kindle my heart to the contemplation of heavenly joys.”¹

The bow’s Byzantine heritage from earlier centuries was known to Tinctoris, but in his description he was also thinking of a very fashionable instrument of his own day, the *lira da braccio*, a modern (15th c.) take - like the cetra - on the Classical chelys-lyra or cithara. His endorsement of the bowed viola as an instrument suitable for heavenly contemplation seems to echo the identity of another type of cithara - the *psalterium* - for the Church Fathers, who had distinguished it from the cithara, which they associated more with earthly humility.² And while our modern culture might be somewhat puzzled at Tinctoris’ coupling of piety with what could be seen as an ancestor of the violin, he clearly knew his exegetical texts.

¹ Johannes Tinctoris, *De inventione et usu musicae*, translation from <http://earlymusictheory.org/Tinctoris/texts/deinventioneetusumusicae/#paneo=Translation> accessed 23.08.2017. The treatise was compiled most likely during the 1470’s and finished by c. 1483.

² Humility was also associated with the lowly tortoise, whose shell was used as the original resonator for the chelys-lyre (see Chapter 1).

In **Chapter 1** we have seen how, in Byzantine iconography, the bow was used on oval and waisted lutes, and on the fingerboard lyre in Italian and northwest Mediterranean iconography. By the early 12th c., the short-necked spade lute is also found played with the bow as in **Pl. 78**:



Plate 78: Mantova, Biblioteca civica PS C III 20, f. 2 (San Benedetto de Pado; first half 12th c.)³

³ Photo: <https://www.lessingimages.com/> (accessed 05.10.2017).

The bowed spade lute in **Pl. 78** resembles another north Italian miniature of the same period which may suggest that this type is morphologically close to an evolving, shoulder-held fingerboard lyre (compare **Pl. 71** in **Chapter 1**) as shown in **Pl. 79**:



Plate 79: Paris BN lat 2508, f. IIv (early 12th c., north Italian)⁴

Whether one says the instrument above evolved from a fingerboard lyre which lost its arms and gained a bow, or that the Byzantine bowed lute became modified in Italy under the influence of the fingerboard lyre, there are no records of a fingerboard lyre as

⁴ Photo: Bachmann 1969, Pl. 23.

an instrument in Byzantine culture. The few records that survive point to Italy for the fingerboard lyre, although an Italian provenance for the instrument type cannot be conclusive.⁵ Lyre without fingerboards were well-known north of the Alps from the 5th. c. in the form of the so-called Alemannic lyre.⁶ Indisputable, however, will be the morphological resemblance between **Pl. 80-81** and **Pl. 78-79** above. In recognizably similar north Italian style of illumination, we see in **Pl. 80** the plucked version of **Pl. 78** from the so-called Bibbia di Santa Cecilia Trastevere, dated variously between 1073 and 1119:



Plate 80: Rome, Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, Barb lat 587, f. 194r

⁵ See p. 25 above and footnote 44 for an Italian gloss on Cassiodorus which mentions five stringed instruments c. 1000, including four instruments known from Italian iconographical sources (Harp / *arpa*, bowed *vitula* / fiddle, the cithara played with a plectrum (= Byzantine short-necked lute?), and Italian *rotta* (fingerboard lyre?); the fifth, Barbaric lyre, might refer to the Alemannic lyre of which we have surviving examples dated to the 6th c., much later seen played with a bow in German 13th-c. iconography. See Seebass 1973, Pl. 100-101.

⁶ See Theune-Grosskopf 2006 for a description of a surviving 6th-c. Alemannic lyre.

⁷ Photo: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Barb.lat.587 (accessed 10.08.2017).



Plate 81: Rome, Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, Barb lat 587, f. 194, detail.

The years around 1100, then, provide a rough date for the presence of plucked spatulate chordophones, a prototype cetra, in Italian culture. The catalog of images from this period is richly enhanced by the Hamilton Psalter, dated from the second half of the 12th c., copied at a Vallombrosian monastery in the region of Florence or Fiesole, but based on north Italian miniature models from the second half of the 11th c. (Pl. 82-84):⁸



Plate 82: Stuttgart, f. 88r.

⁸ Augustyn 1989, 119. See CE 3 below.



Plate 83: Stuttgart, f. 125r.

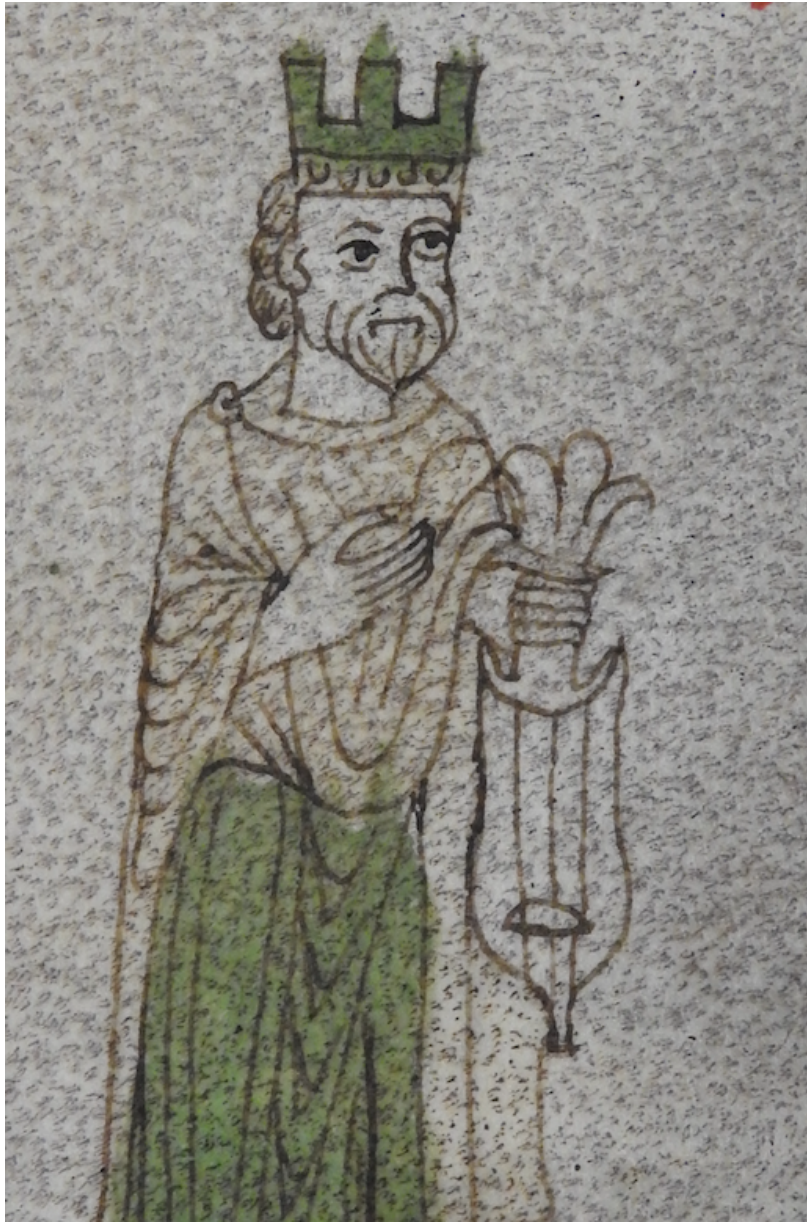


Plate 84: Stuttgart, f. 94v.

With the Hamilton images we have spatulate chordophones with prominent forward-pointing shoulder ornaments. They were dubbed “wings” by Winternitz and other researchers, which is perhaps more suggestive of shoulder ornaments at an angle of 45 degrees or more outwards, rather than short, thin projections following a parallel orientation to the sides of the neck, as in **Pl. 82-83**.⁹ There are at least two other descriptive terms for these projections which might be more appropriate than “wings”: “leaves”, as in the outer two leaves of the three-leaved trefoil form so often found as an attribute of David, or “horns”, in reference to the chelys-lyre as mentioned above. Regarding “leaves,” the projections sometimes take a curved, tulip-shape form, as seen for instance in the Utrecht Psalter drawings (**Pl. 65-66**), or in later examples where the peghead suggests the center leaf of the trefoil (see **CE 12**). Such shoulder shapes may also remind us of the *spadix* or palm branch leaves discussed earlier in the context of late Roman / Byzantine *pandurae* (see **Pl. 29, 34**). “Horns,” on the other hand, is a term, specific to the *cetra*, found in 16th c. Italian literary sources which makes the chelys-lyre reference unequivocal, and we shall use this term in the present study for the full period under consideration.

Circa 1100, horns become a salient feature of the spatulate plucked chordophone in Italy. We must underscore that they are found on plucked instruments only; they are never found on bowed instruments during this period, and bowed and plucked can be very similar indeed, as we have seen in the examples above. Oval short lutes, including examples with *cornered* shoulders, are seen in both plucked and bowed forms. *Horned* short lutes seem to be exclusively Italian, in all probability as a reference to the Roman/early Christian lyre, perhaps (?) with a more distant cultural nod to the native Etruscan lyre (“cylinder kithara”). Although their bodies are of general spade form (with cornered shoulders), horns are not present on the surviving Byzantine *pandurae* discussed above, and they are not seen in iconographical images after the 9th-c. Utrecht Psalter until we come to the Hamilton Psalter (**CE 3**). Remembering that the Utrecht drawings are based on earlier Italo-Byzantine models, it is possible that there were horned chordophones in use in Italy during the centuries preceding the Utrecht Psalter, although there is no first-hand evidence to support the theory.

The main point, however, is that horns manifested themselves in the 11th c. both as a direct response to the new Byzantine fashion of bowing, which by 1100 was being applied to virtually

⁹ Winternitz 1961, 224.

all chordophones except the harp and psalter, and as an emblem of something specifically Italian. They identified a lute as being plucked, not bowed, and being something not foreign or exotic, but rather native to Italy, and tied to Christian culture centered in Rome. The cultural identification may also be considered as a manifestation of what might be called “Crusade culture”, that is, the focused opposition of Christians versus Muslims which culminated in the First Crusade of 1096.

And so the “Romanesque cythara” has come into being.¹⁰ It is found in Christian iconography of the Psalms or in the hands of the Elders of the Apocalypse only. The iconographical examples shown thus far from the 8th c. (Dagulf Psalter., **Pl. 46**) and later are all within the context of Psalter illumination, with two important exceptions, **Pl. 50, 67**. The Apocalypse scenes - which include lute images - begin in Italy in the 11th c., and we may remind ourselves that all of these Psalter/Apocalypse images graphically crystallise the name cithara and not *lira*, for example, for the latter term is not present in the relevant Bible passages.¹¹ The two exceptions we have seen which are outside of Bible iconography (**Pl. 50, 67**) are related to music theory, which, together with Christian iconography, forms the theoretical background out of which the “Romanesque cythara” manifests itself. As the cithara of Bible art, the necked, plucked *cythara* has by 1100 assumed an iconographical presence of (at least) equal importance to the psalter/lyre/harp in Italy, but it has also found a place in the study of musical science of far greater importance than any other instrument.¹²

Music historian Susan Boynton, following Lawrence Gushee, pointed out in 1999 that the 10th century witnessed an “apparently sudden and dramatic turn to ‘scientific’ or ‘technical’ music theory”, while Calvin Bower “has shown the development of glosses on Boethius’ *De institutione musica* in the first half of the ninth century, and the reception of these glosses in treatises as early as Aurelian of Reome’s *Musica Disciplina*.”¹³ The tenor of the times, amongst

¹⁰ This 12th-c. spelling is the earliest I have found; see Appendix II, XII-1.

¹¹ See p. 123 above, as well as the discussion of Patristic commentary on musical instruments in Chapter 1.

¹² For an overview of these stringed instruments in Romanesque art, see Seebass 1973.

¹³ Boynton 1999, 53-54, makes reference to Gushee 1975, 395, and Bower 1997. Bower divides the influence of Boethius in the ninth century into three stages: reception (800-830), demonstrated by the early glosses on *De institutione musica*; reaction (830-60), evidenced by Aurelian’s use of glosses on Boethius; and redaction (860-900), exemplified by the synthesis of *musica* and *cantus* in the *Enchiridis* treatises.

educated clerics, was well expressed by Regino Prumiensis (Prüm or Trier c 900? or late 9th c.):

“But behold, while we attempt to make known the tones, we have strayed rather far in the very vast and deep forest of musical instruction, which is wrapped in the obscurity of so much mist that it seems to have receded from human knowledge. For while there are very few who judge its force and nature with firm reasoning, nevertheless they are unable to demonstrate clearly with their skill that which they understand about it. On the contrary, there are many who play music with their fingers or produce it with the sound of the voice, but do not at all understand its force and its nature. In short, if you ask one of the lute or lyre players, or anyone else possessing a knowledge of musical instruments, to explain the tones, semitones or consonances, or to show knowledge of strings, how one string is associated to another by a fixed numerical proportion, he will give you no response to any of these questions. He will admit only this: that he does these things in this way, just as he has received and learned from his master.¹⁴ Therefore music to a very great extent hides itself from the knowledgeable and the ignorant alike; it lies as it were hidden in a deep mist.”¹⁵

Clearly, Regino’s words are an exhortation for fostering education in musical science, also for players of stringed instruments. But which instruments did Regino’s “lute and lyre players” of the 9th c. actually play? We have existing lyres from the period, the so-called “Alemannic lyres” found via archeological excavation in Alemannic grave-sites in southern Germany from the 6th-8th centuries. These found a corresponding presence in German iconographical

¹⁴ Regarding music education specific to the cetra, see App. II, XIV-1.

¹⁵ *'Sed ecce dum tonos ostendere conamur, per vastissimam et profundissimam musicae institutionis silvam longius evagati sumus, quae tantae caliginis obscuritate involvitur ut a notitia humana recessisse videatur. Namque cum perpauca sint qui eius vim et navidum certa ratione perpendant, tamen quod de ea intellegunt, manuum opere ad liquidum demonstrare non possunt. Rursus cum multi sint, qui eam digitis operentur, vel vocis sono promant, eius tamen vim atque naturam minime intellegunt. Denique si roges cytharaedum sive lyricum vel alium quemlibet instrumentorum musicorum notitiam habentem, ut tibi pandat tonos, semitonia vel consonantias, ostendat cognitionem cordarum, qualiter illa corda ad aliam rata numerorum proportione societur; nullum tibi penitus ex his dabit responsum. Solum hoc confitebitur, quod hec ita faciat, sicut a magistro accepit et didicit. Cum igitur a scientibus et a nescientibus se musica ex permaxima parte abscondit, quasi in profundo oblecta caligine iacet'.* Epistola XVIII 1-6 Clavis Gerberti, 70-71.

sources of the 12th and 13th c., whereas they are all but absent from Italian sources of the same period, and unknown in sources of Regino's time. Two 9th-c. fingerboard lyres were discussed in the Carolingian miniatures shown in **Chapter 1**, and were plausibly present to some extent in Italy before the 9th c. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Byzantine bowed necked chordophone came under the influence of the fingerboard lyre by c. 1100 to manifest as a shoulder-held proto-vielle in Italy. The few known images of this instrument (**Pl. 79**) show three strings and no frets. In any case, Regino's period had not yet seen the bow. His cithara and lira were plausibly a necked chordophone and lyre (the latter with or without fingerboard; harp is a further possibility but it carries less presence in music iconography of the Carolingian period), and of these, the former recommended itself as the Boethian cithara of the study of *musica*. By the time of Guido d'Arezzo (the famous monk and music teacher who lived in Arezzo during the first quarter of the 11th century), who mentioned it three times in his treatise *Micrologus*, the *cythara* had become the dominant Italian chordophone suitable for the demonstration of music theory, with the following points to recommend it:¹⁶

1. **Tortoise-based body + string number.** The four-stringed necked chordophone was the logical available morphological candidate to be considered analog to the four-stringed cithara mentioned by Boethius for literate, educated (=clerical) musicians from the 9th c. onwards, with an oval or half-oval (spatulate) resonator.¹⁷ A four-stringed instrument conforms to the description in Boethius of the quintessential musical instrument, the so-called "quadrichord of Mercury", mentioned earlier in **Chapter 1** in conjunction with the mythological origin of the chelys-lyre, the instrument made from a tortoise-shell,

¹⁶ Babb 1978, 70. (Chapter XIV): *Et item alius quidam citharae suavitate in tantam libidinem incitatus, ut cubiculum puellae quaereret effringere dementatus: moxque citharoedo mutante modum voluptatis poenitentia ductum recessisse confusum. Item et David Saul daemonium cithara mitigabat, et daemonicam feritatem huius artis potenti vi ac suavitate frangebatur.* ("Also that another man was roused by the sound of the cithara to such lust that, in his madness, he sought to break into the bedchamber of a girl, but, when the cithara player quickly changed the mode, was brought to feel remorse for his libidinousness and to retreat abashed. So too, David soothed with the cithara the evil spirit of Saul and tamed the savage demon with the potent force and sweetness of this art.")

¹⁷ Four-stringed lutes are shown in the Stuttgart Psalter, as for example in Pl. 54., although three strings are seen in a majority of depictions, surely symbolic of David, the Trinity, etc. In the Stuttgart Psalter, as in the Utrecht Psalter and elsewhere, there is often a discrepancy between the number of pegs on the peghead and the number of strings shown running over the body (see also the Hamilton Psalter, Pl. 83, for four strings on the body and three pegs). Fingerboard lyres are documented in noticeably fewer iconographical sources, and at the present time I am not aware of any showing four strings.

by Mercury.¹⁸ The four-stringed instrument, as a horned cetra, is documented from the late 12th c. on (see Catalog in **Chapter 3**).

2. **Monochord with frets.** A necked chordophone is by definition a kind of monochord, albeit with more than one string; any stoppable string stretched over a resonating chamber is, in fact, a monochord of sorts. As Boethius and countless other later theorists repeated, by changing the points of stopping the string, various pitches are found.¹⁹ These can be quantified mathematically, that is, in terms of measurable length to ascertain a proportion of the length of the stopped string against the length of the same unstopped string. The points of stopping the string are, on the monochord, determined by a moveable bridge. While some necked chordophones (including the fingerboard lyre) used fretless fingerboards upon which the left-hand finger was simply pressed, the lute is the only early chordophone type with unequivocal fretted examples, the frets serving as multiple bridges for each string to obviate the necessity of changing pitch by actually moving a single bridge, as would be the case on a monochord. It is the ideally practical instrument for the demonstration of intervals and tetrachords as related to the modes.

3. **Christian icon of Old and New Testaments.** The lute was, by the later 11th c., better established in Christian iconography, both within and outside of the Italian peninsula, than any other stringed instrument.

4. **Earthly, humble instrument of cleric and everyman.** The four-stringed lute is a more humble, practical musical tool than the fingerboard lyre, or for that matter, the Alemannic lyre; lyres carried an association of courtly nobility, whereas music instruction took place in cathedral schools and monasteries, thereby conforming to the Patristic commentaries on the nature of the cithara.

5. **Ubiquitous as icon of music notation.** Last but not least, the association of the lute with music theory resulted in the invention of the four- or five-lined staff used in Western music notation. This point alone would suffice to establish the connection between the lute and music theory, in the earliest context, to be able to record chant melodies by writing them

¹⁸ Bower 1989, 29-30.

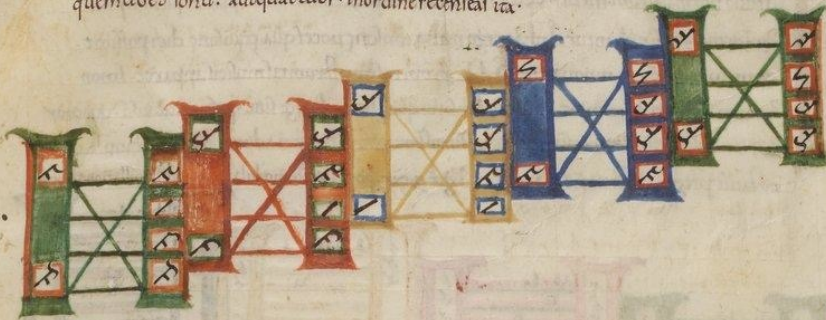
¹⁹ Bower 1989, 128-130.

down on parchment. The use of parallel horizontal lines used to record graphic symbols of pitch was derived from the horizontal playing position of the instrument; indeed the theorists speak of the strings of the cithara, for late 9th-c. treatises such as Hucbald's *De harmonica institutione* and the *Musica enchiriadis* use *chordae* as the term for "staff lines".²⁰ An example from the latter source is this (Pl. 85-86):²¹

²⁰ The invention of lute tablature is universally considered to be a phenomenon of the Renaissance, i.e., the 15th century. Virdung attributes the origin of tablature specifically to "Meister Conrad from Nuremberg" (Conrad Paumann, c. 1410-1473), yet the basic idea of a graphic line system representing the strings of the instrument, in its practical playing position, as a basis for pitch representation, goes all the way back to these 9th c. sources. For the passage on Paumann, including the translation cited here, see Bullard 1993, 156.

²¹ Photo: gallica.bnf.fr (accessed 21.06.2016).

quemlibet sonū. aut quatuor. in ordine recensitas ita.



Ita mutua pars. quatenus uarietate pcedit. ac rursus noua pessione redeunt. Diapente interpretatur ex quinque. quod ut quinque sonorum conexione constat. ut in quinto loco concordet sibi uoces respondeant ad subiectas descriptiones has.

Ad hanc descriptionem. quoque sonorum **DIAPENTE** quatuor usque ad quintum quod eiusdem nominis pars. et est finis. ut ipsa utriuslibet singulorum duas in ordine diapente potest uocari symphonia.

DESCRIP TIO
SYMPHONIAE



Porro secundum quaternas et quaternas sequentes descriuntur. si quid ceceuerit. idem consonantem quinta diapente regione responderet. quod magis proprium est.

ITEM ALIA de quinque diapente



Sic et diapason quod ex omnibus interpretatur octauam ad octauam fit consonantia duas superiores

Plate 85: Paris, Bibl.nat., ms latin 7212, f.5r: *Musica enchiriadis* diagram of *chordae* (strings) showing tetrachords (? Abbott Hoger, c. 900, Werden).

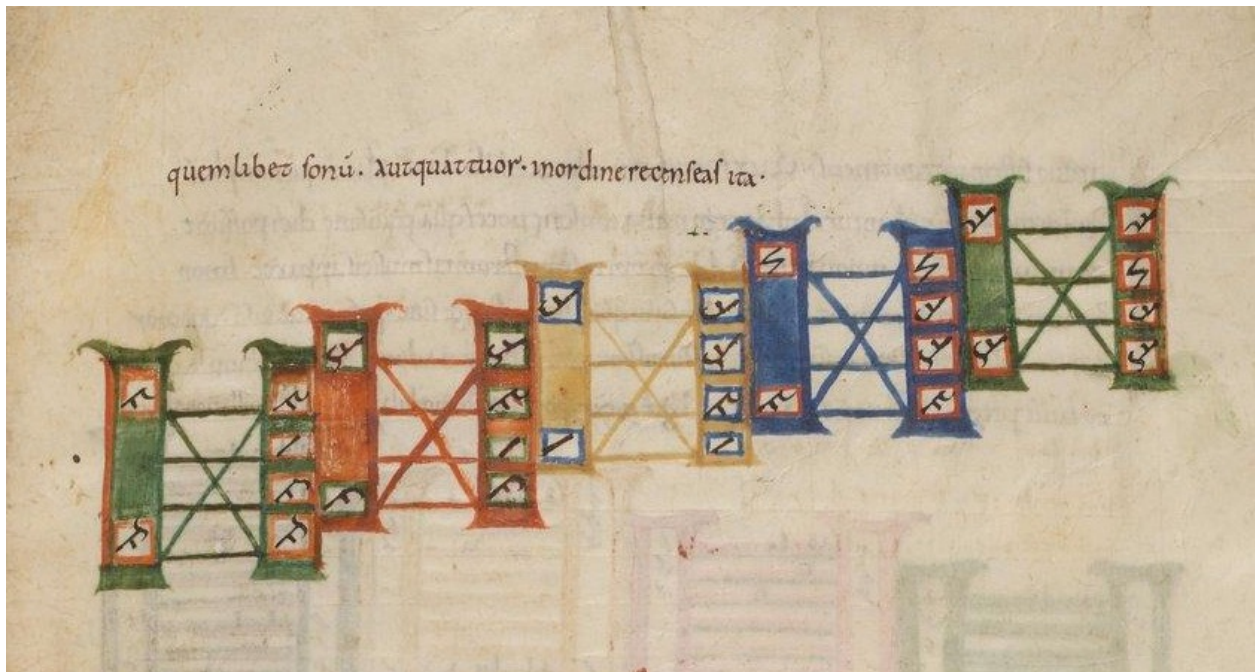
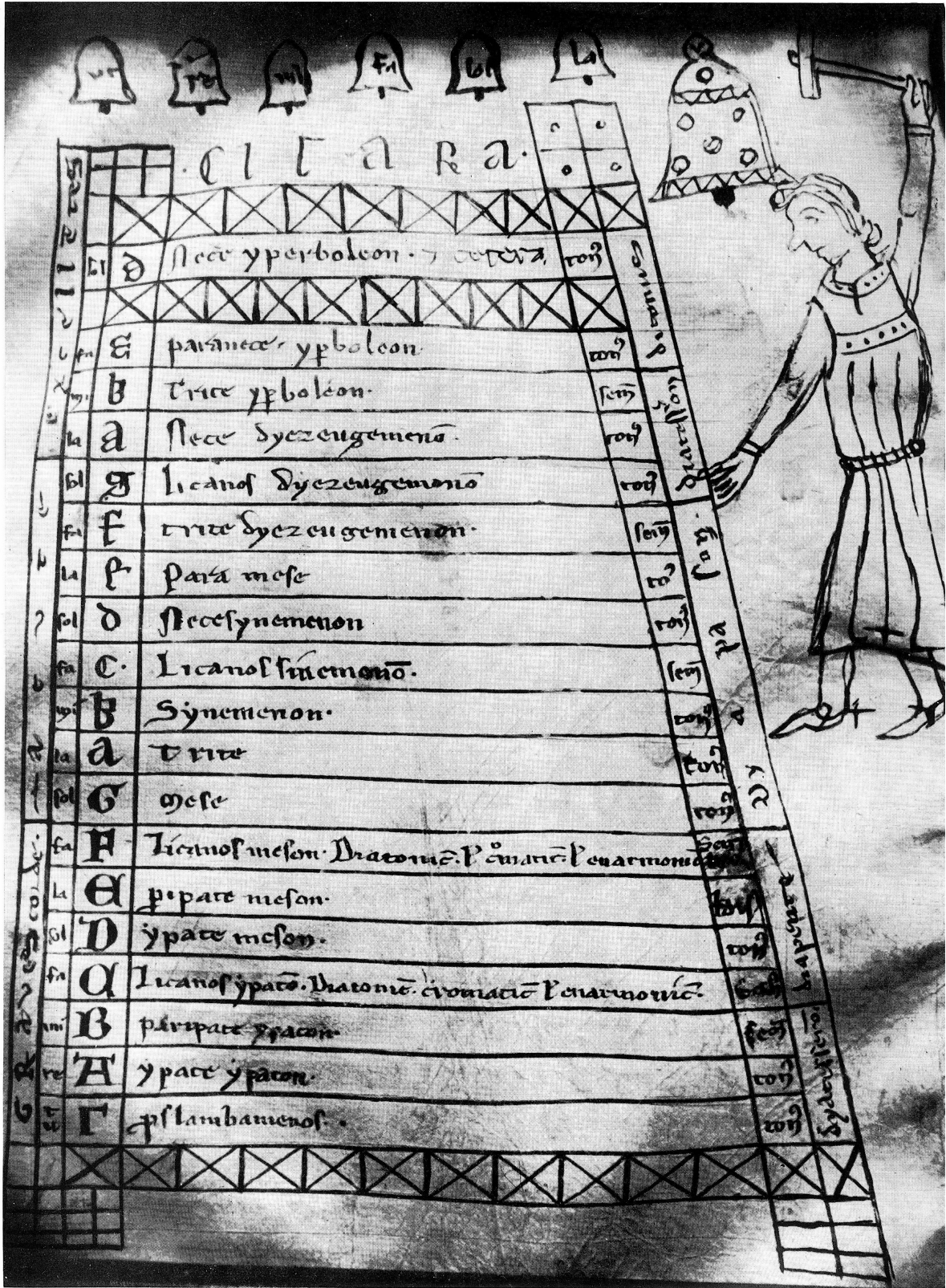


Plate 86: Paris, Bibl.nat., ms latin 7212, f.5r: *Musica enchiridis* detail, diagram of chordae (strings) showing tetrachords (? Abbott Hoger, c. 900, Werden).

Pl. 86 represents five overlapping tetrachords within the octave D - d. Each tetrachord is designated by four horizontal lines, the *chordae* or strings which stand for pitches. Letters written in the boxes are Greek pitch names, the column on the left of each four-string tetrachord names the stabiles or limits of the tetrachord, while right-hand columns name each pitch. Left to right: **D** / E / F / G; **E** / F / G / a; **F** / G / a / b; **G** / a / h / c; **a** / h / c / d (letters in bold show the finales of each of the church modes).

A 10th-c. manuscript of the same treatise now at the Nationalbibliothek Wien includes a drawing, added in the 13th c., showing the musical scale as a series of parallel horizontal lines labelled at the top CITARA.²² These are all the notes which can be found on the Pythagorean monochord, so-called *musica recta* (**Pl. 87**):

²² Reproduced in Smits van Waesberghe 1969, 84-85.



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Plate 87: Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek., (Cpv) 55, f.167v: *Musica enchiriadis* (10th c., Benediktbeuern?); diagram of *musica recta* scale as CITARA.²³

²³ Photo: Smits van Waesberghe 1969, 85.

Renaissance music theory continued the use of the cithara image initiated for the Latin Middle Ages by Boethius. The treatise *Musices Opusculum* of Nicolaus Burtius in 1487 contains an interesting diagram reminiscent of a cetra fingerboard with wooden frets (**Pl. 88**). The “frets” in this case are the consonances of music, perfect and imperfect, with the ends of each fret marked by a note on two vertical staves, one to the left and one to the right. The right-hand staff uses the pitches D - d (just as *Musica enchiriadis* above), the staff on the left uses the same notes an octave higher. This is not a depiction of a cetra per se (nor are the “frets” placed in any real or literal distance to each other), but it does reference elements, consciously or unconsciously, of earlier cithara iconography; apparent “wooden frets” under vertical strings, shortening as they progress up the “neck”, a triangular form at the top of the “neck”, a projection (“stringholder”) at the bottom, and a “Roman lute peghead” ornament within the triangle (two points projecting up).

A native of Parma, Burtius would have seen many times the distinctive carving of the cetra found in the Baptisterium next to the Cathedral, the late Romanesque work of Antelami mentioned at the beginning of **Chapter 1**. He apparently knew Giovanni Maria Lanfranco, another Parma native, as a teacher or younger colleague; Lanfranco’s later treatise of 1533 *Scintille di musica* conveys precious information to us about the *cethera* (see **Appendix II**).²⁴ In their works as music pedagogues, the heritage of the cithara continues to manifest itself as it rides the wave of the Humanistic world view so prevalent during this period.

²⁴ See the dedication of *Scintille* (Lanfranco 1533).

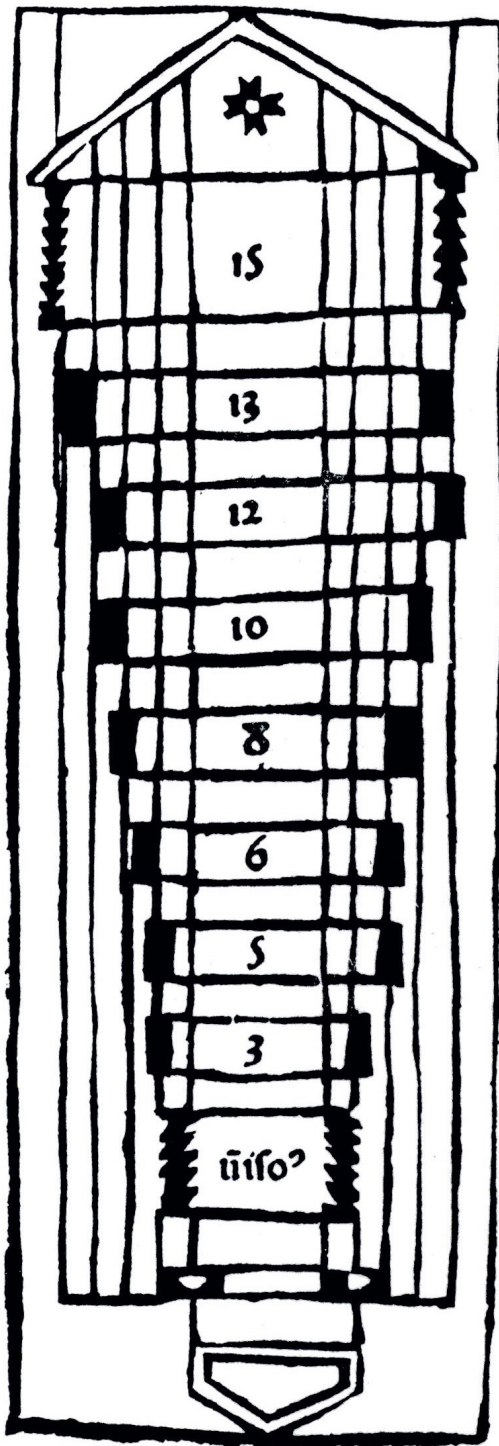


Plate 88: Nicolaus Burtius *Musices Opusculum, tractatus secundus*, f.eiiijr (Bologna: Ugo Ruggeri, 1487), diagram of musical consonances.²⁵

²⁵ Photo: <http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tml/15th/BURMUS2> (accessed 05.05.2016).

The Romanesque period witnessed the rise and establishment of Antelami's cetra as Italy's unique member of the lute family. It was generated out of two repository streams, Christian lore and Quadrivium science / *Musica*, and was sanctioned and cultivated by proponents of both. It seems to have had little, if any, competition from other members of the lute family; with very few exceptions, these do not appear in Italian iconography before the later 13th century. One such exception is a long-necked lute in two manuscripts now in Milano and Piacenza containing illustrations of instruments in the section of the treatise on musical instruments by Boethius (the instrument groupings actually conform to the text on instruments by Cassiodorus).²⁶ Both sources are drawn from a common earlier Byzantine (Italian?) prototype believed to be from c. 1000.²⁷ The Milano manuscript (**Pl. 89**) was copied perhaps during the first half of the 11th c., whereas Piacenza (**Pl. 90**) is dated later from c. 1200. As mentioned in **Chapter 1** (see footnote 47), an 11th-c. Latin gloss may shed light on the names of instruments used in Italy c. 1000: a bowed *vitula*, *arpa* (harp), a lyre which is called an Italian instrument (*itala rotta*), a non-Christian *lira* of some kind, and a cithara played with a plectrum. The lute is clearly the cithara (with plectrum), the *vitula* is the bowed lyre lower left, the *arpa* is the triangular instrument, leaving us unsure as to which of the two instruments placed center and upper left in the Milano MS (these are the top two in Piacenza) is the *itala rotta* and which the barbaric *lira*:

²⁶ See Footnote 4 for a caveat regarding "long-necked" lute depictions in art of the periods covered by this study. The Milano MS is

²⁷ For further discussion on these sources, see Smits van Waesberghe 1969, Teviotdale 1988, Bower 1989, Ferrari 2013.



Plate 89: Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS C 128, f. 46.²⁸

²⁸ Photo: Teviotdale 1988, 10.



Plate 90: Piacenza, Biblioteca Capitolare, ms. 65, f. 262v.²⁹

²⁹ Photo: Teviotdale 1988, 13.

The three-stringed long-necked lute from the prototype source c. 1000 seems to reflect a Byzantine influence, although from how much earlier, it is difficult to say. The bowed instrument in the Milano and Piacenza MSS (see detail of Piacenza MS in **Pl. 91**) may be fundamentally the same kind of bowed lyre pictured in **Pl. 73**, although it looks closer, especially in the Milano drawing, to being a pandura derivative:



Plate 91: Piacenza, Biblioteca Capitolare, ms. 65, f. 262v, detail.

One other iconographical source strengthens the Byzantine long-necked lute connection for the Milano/Piacenza miniatures and their presumed prototype model c. 1000: a pair of lutes from the miniatures of one of the Cantigas de Santa Maria codices at El Escorial (**Pl. 92**):



Plate 92: El Escorial, Biblioteca de El Escorial MS B.I.2, miniature illustrating Cantiga 140.³⁰

³⁰ Photo: http://www.thecipher.com/viola_da_gamba_cipher.html (accessed 22.11.2016).

The series of Cantigas miniatures from the El Escorial manuscript is quite unique in the history of Western music iconography, and it has had as much of an influence on modern interpretations of medieval music as it has for the history of medieval organology.³¹ A full discussion of this source is thematically outside of the history of the cetra (although we shall return to it later for a discussion of the citole in relation to the cetra), however a few basics about the miniature series may help to shed some light on the one-of-a-kind instruments shown in **Pl. 92**. The four manuscripts containing the Cantigas de Santa Maria all come from the court of Alfonso X of Castile (1221 - 1284), whose royal scriptorium housed an international stable of Arabic, Jewish and Christian scholars and illuminators. The more than four hundred songs of the collection are songs of praise of the Virgin Mary, which follow the model of the Old Testament songs of praise, the Psalms of David, in using the association of musical instruments as symbols of the magnificence of the Heavenly Court. Because the Book of Psalms cites praising the Lord with the sound of many instruments, i.e., instrument types in the plural (*tubae, citharae*, etc), two of each type are typically shown in the miniatures; a literal daily performance grouping at a court in 13th c. Spain was not the artist's purpose.³² All the world's instruments unite in one voice to give praise Mary, including a selection of instruments of non-Christian heritage, for example, the long-necked Arabic *tambur*.³³ The presence of such instruments in the miniatures is due, at least in part, to the presence of manuscript painters who were familiar with them, whether from first-hand experience in their homelands, or from having seen them at court or in other multi-cultural regions of Spain.

A second important aspect of the context of the Cantigas miniatures has been discussed by Peter Loewen concerning the presence of the Franciscan music theorist Egidius de Zamora, who was the music teacher of the son of Alfonso el Sabio.³⁴ Zamora's treatise contains the

³¹ For a useful summary of what the El Escorial miniature program meant to performers, organologists, instrument builders and music historians in 1989, see Brown 1989, 17.

³² Similarly, the concept of all of the represented instruments playing together as a kind of medieval orchestra was an idea of the 1960's, as in the work of *New York Pro Musica, Studio der frühen Musik* and *Hesperion xx*, not of the 13th century. A particularly influential recording among performers in the 1970's and 1980's was *Estampie: Instrumentalmusik des Mittelalters (Studio der frühen Musik, Thomas Binkley, EMI Reflexe 1974)*.

³³ For a brief comment on how performers, following Thomas Binkley's recordings of the 1970's, have misunderstood the long-necked Arabic *tambur* as an instrument in the Cantigas miniatures, see Young 2015, 102, footnote 16.

³⁴ Loewen 2013, 218 - 232.

exposition on musical instruments of another Franciscan, Bartholomaeus Anglicus (essentially based on Isidore of Seville; see p. 45), with added passages on Moorish instruments that reflect an interest paralleled by the wide variety of Christian and non-Christian instruments shown in the miniatures. This may also account for the difference in iconographic programs (organologically speaking) between the Cantigas miniatures and the regional cathedral sculptures of 100 (+/-) years earlier, the former showing a broader range of instruments than the latter.

Pl. 92 presents an organological puzzle. Here is a plucked, long-necked ovoid lute form with two support arms connecting the neck with the body, arms much shorter than the body-to-peghead arms seen on the Milano/Piacenza instruments. A similar lute form illustrating Cantiga 130 has no arms, no overlapping fingerboard, no bridge or tailpiece and smaller hole-clusters on the soundboard. The differences between the two lute types cannot be conclusively resolved from the images; perhaps the miniature for Cantiga 130 represents an instrument carved from one piece of wood, and Cantiga 140 depicts a lute where a separate neck has been joined to the body (of gourd, or a wooden bowl?), requiring “arm stabilizers”. This is a best guess for the moment about a provocative morphological detail of the later evolution of the Byzantine pandura, which evokes the arms of the fingerboard lyre in a constructional gesture both symbolic and, one imagines, functional. In any case, the Cassiodorus material (text gloss and illustrations) demonstrates that the term *cithara* was used for the lute, also in a context where a vernacular name (*vitula*) was mentioned.

There is one further source which confirms that the Latin term *cithara* meant a kind of lute in Italy in the 12th c., according to the commentaries of Gioacchino da Fiore (Joachim of Fiore, c. 1130-1202, Calabria) in his writings. Describing the treatise *Psalterium decem cordarum*, art historian Beatrice Hirsch-Reich wrote in 1966,

“the ten-stringed psaltery is praised as the foremost and most famous musical instrument, but the cithara is mentioned as nearly its equal. The cithara which often occurs in the Old Testament together with the psaltery or by itself is not represented as a figure in Joachim’s works (*editor’s note: there is a diagram of a psaltery in most of the manuscripts containing Joachim’s treatise*), but it is described as a stringed instrument with a pear shaped body and three ‘general’ strings. Joachim refers to both

instruments....the confrontation of these two famous biblical musical instruments, the symbolism of which forms the greater part of all the symbolism of musical instruments in the Church Fathers, particularly in the Commentaries to the Psalms, is one of its characteristic features. Usually the stress is on the superiority of the psaltery which had the sound box placed above the ten strings, radiating from the top, while the cithara had it below. This statement was invariably repeated by most authors and even in the Middle Ages when the arrangement of the strings of the psaltery had changed, Joachim discontinues that comparison, for he knew the structure of these instruments at his time.”³⁵

Whereas the Church Fathers always maintained the superior, more heavenly status of the psaltery, Gioacchino allows the cithara to be equal or even superior, to the psaltery.³⁶ There are many things still to be discussed in detail about this “cetra romanica” - tuning, fret system(s), string materials, musical use, influence outside of Italy, as examples - but these points will be dealt with later in this study’s exposition. We shall proceed to the next phase of the cetra story, which takes place in the 13th century in Umbria.

2.2 The Vision of the Cithara

In the early 13th c., events were happening in central Italy which would profoundly affect the history of Christianity and Christian art in the Middle Ages. A friar who had become a spiritual leader died in 1226 on the plain just below the hill-town of Assisi and was canonized in 1228 as San Francesco. The order that he had established effectively rejuvenated the Church in Italy, following a dynamic path of growth and contributing to new artistic currents in European culture. The success of the Franciscan movement is more or less unparalleled in the history of the Church, and it was an international success with far-reaching implications for the culture of education in Europe in the Middle Ages. One can speak of an explosion of

³⁵ Hirsch-Reich 1966, 543-544. A footnote on p. 545 quotes the relevant passage describing the number of strings and body form of the cithara: “...cuius summa mysterii in tribus superextensis chordis et concavitate consistit”.

³⁶ Hirsch-Reich 1966, 545.

Franciscan establishments: within sixty years of the founding of the order in 1210, more than 700 convents were operating within Europe.³⁷

The original seat of the movement was of course the town where Francis came from, Assisi. Here one of the most beautiful churches in all of Christendom was built beginning in 1228, when Pope Gregory IX laid the foundation on July 16, one day after St. Francis was canonized. The Lower Basilica was finished in 1230 and the Upper Basilica saw its completion in 1253. The iconographic decoration of both Upper and Lower parts of the mother church of the movement includes, as would be expected, many scenes from the life of St. Francis. The replication of various sections of this iconographic program has been well documented in the vast body of modern literature concerning Franciscan art of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and it is not without reason that more than one modern commentator has referred to, iconographically speaking, the dispersal of “Franciscan propaganda”.³⁸

Students of music iconography will know the Assisi Basilica for its famous Investiture of St Martin, a fresco series painted by the Sienese artist Simone Martini around 1320.³⁹ The series includes a depiction of two musicians playing double flute and gittern, with meticulous detail and attention to realism. Even more striking, organologically speaking, is a series of plucked, necked chordophones in the hands of the Elders of the Apocalypse on the transept of the Altar of the Lower Basilica. These are cetre from c. 1310-1315, in total 16 different examples (**CE 15**), somewhat less ornate but just as impressive, in terms of workmanship, as the Martini works found not far away. As if 16 cetre were not enough, two more are found upstairs in the Upper Basilica in a fresco - badly damaged but still of great value for our study - by Cimabue (**CE 10**).

A sharper glance at the entries in the catalog of collected iconographic sources in **Chapter 3** reveals that many more monuments than those just mentioned were produced by Franciscan artists or workshops. The earliest cetra example which has an unequivocal Franciscan iconographical context and a solid dating is **CE 10** (Cimabue, from c. 1280), but the earliest

³⁷ Loewen 2013, 2.

³⁸ To mention two useful studies, see Blume 1983 and Bourdua 2004.

³⁹ Brown 1985, 256-257, catalog entry 291.

Franciscan source for the instrument in the current catalog is very likely **CE 6** (Vat. lat. 39; see discussion in **Chapter 3**, 225–226), dated in all likelihood thirty or more years earlier.

Virtually *all* catalog entries between the mid-13th and mid-15th centuries (**CE 5-26**) in any medium - stone carving, manuscript illumination, fresco, altar panel - can be associated with Franciscan churches, artists, workshops and influence.

There is good reason to associate St. Francis with the cithara, called *cetera* or *cetra* in both 13th c. vulgar and modern Italian usage. As brother Thomas of Celano told the story in his *Vita secunda* (1244-1247):

CAPITOLO LXXXIX

ASCOLTA UN ANGELO SUONARE LA CETRA

Al tempo in cui soggiornava a Rieti per la cura degli occhi, chiamò un compagno che, prima d'essere religioso, era stato suonatore di cetra, e gli disse: 'Fratello, i figli di questo mondo non comprendono i piani di Dio. Perché anche gli strumenti musicali, che un tempo erano riservati alle lodi di Dio, sono stati usati dalla sensualità umana per soddisfare gli orecchi. Io vorrei, fratello, che tu in segreto prendessi a prestito una cetra, e la portassi qui per dare a frate corpo, che è pieno di dolori, un po' di conforto con qualche bel verso'. Gli rispose il frate: 'Mi vergogno non poco, padre, per timore che pensino che io sono stato tentato da questa leggerezza'.

Il Santo allora tagliò corto: 'Lasciamo andare allora, fratello. È bene tralasciare molte cose perché sia salvo il buon nome'.

La notte seguente, mentre il Santo era sveglio e meditava su Dio, all'improvviso risuona una cetra con meravigliosa e soavissima melodia. Non si vedeva persona, ma proprio dal continuo variare del suono, vicino o lontano si capiva che il citaredo andava e ritornava. Con lo spirito rivolto a Dio, il Padre provò tanta soavità in quella melodia dolcissima, da credere di essere passato in un altro mondo.

Al mattino alzatosi, il Santo chiamò il frate e dopo avergli raccontato tutto per ordine, aggiunse: ‘Il Signore che consola gli afflitti, non mi ha lasciato senza consolazione. Ed ecco che mentre non mi è stato possibile udire le cetre degli uomini, ne ho sentita una più soave.’⁴⁰

Chapter LXXXIX

THE ANGELIC CETRA HE HEARD

In the days when he was staying at Rieti for the treatment of his eyes, he called one of the companions, who in the world had been a cetra player, and said to him:

‘Brother, the children of this world do not understand the divine sacraments. Human lust has turned musical instruments, once assigned to the divine praises, into enjoyment for their ears. But I would like you, brother, to borrow a cetra secretly and bring it here and to play some decent song to give some consolation to Brother Body, which is filled with pain.’

⁴⁰ Italian translation at <<http://www.santuariodelibera.it/FontiFrancescane/framevitaseconda.htm>> VITA SECONDA DI SAN FRANCESCO D’ASSISI di Tommaso da Celano; PROLOGO Nel nome del Signore nostro Gesù Cristo. Amen; Al ministro generale dell’Ordine dei frati minori. (accessed 23.09.2017).

Latin version from Thomas de Celano, *Vita II, Pars II, Caput LXXXIX*, 126: *Diebus quibus pro cura oculorum apud Reate manebat, vocavit unum de sociis, qui fuerat in saeculo citharista, dicens: Frater, filii saeculi huius divina non intelligunt sacramenta. Instrumenta quippe musica, divinis quondam laudibus deputata, in aurium voluptatem libido humana convertit. Vellem ergo, frater, ut secreto citharam mutuatus afferres, qua versum honestum faciens fratri corpori doloribus pleno solatium aliquod dares. Cui respondit frater: Verecundor non modicum, pater, timens ne levitate hac suspicentur homines me esse tentatum. Cui sanctus: Dimittamus ergo, frater, binum est multa dimittere, ne laedatur opinio. Nocte sequenti, vigilante sancto viro et meditante de Deo, repente insonat cithara quaedam harmoniae mirabilis et suavissimae melodiae. Non videbatur aliquis, sed transitus et reditus citharoedi ipsa hinc inde auditus volubilitas innuebat. Spiritu denique in Deum directo tanta in illo dulcisono carmine sanctus pater suavitate perfruitur ut aliud se putet saeculum commutasse. Mane surgens sanctus vocat fratrem praedictum, et narrans ei cuncta per ordinem subdit: Dominus qui consolatur afflictos, numquam me sine consolazione dimisit. Ecce enim qui citharas hominum audire non potui citharam suaviolem audivi. (Analecta Franciscana, Tomus X, Legendae S. Francisci Assisiensis, Florentiae: Ad Claras Aquas, 1926-1941, 204-205). See also Loewen 2013, 32. Loewen mentions the problem of translating “cithara” and correctly criticizes translations that render it as “lute”; he correctly considers the meaning to be “a short-necked chordophone” - although this definition could also mean a vielle - but also offers “harp” as a possibility.*

But the brother answered: 'I would be quite embarrassed to do this, father, for I fear people will suspect me of being tempted to my old levity'.

And the saint said to him: 'Then, brother, let's let it go! It is good to let go of many things to avoid offending people's opinion'.

The following night, as the holy man was keeping vigil and meditating on God, suddenly a cetra was playing with wonderful harmony an extraordinarily sweet melody. He could see no one, but the changes in his hearing suggested that the cetra player was moving back and forth from one place to another. At last, with his spirit turned to God, he enjoyed such delight in that sweet-sounding song that he thought he had exchanged this world for the other.

When he arose in the morning, the saint called the brother in question and told him everything from beginning to end, adding: 'The Lord, who consoles the afflicted, has never left me without consolation. See, since I could not hear the cetra of humans, I have heard a more delightful cetra'.⁴¹

In addition to Thomas of Celano's version, the tale of Francis' vision was recounted by S. Bonaventura in the *Legenda maior S. Francisci* and in the anonymous *Legenda perusina*.⁴² Dieter Blume argued convincingly that there was an *Ordenspropaganda* ("Franciscan propaganda", or fixed and consistent iconographic programming) at work in the decoration of central Italian Franciscan churches, described by another Franciscan historian, Louise Bourdua, as painting which "conformed to set plans engineered centrally by the Order and distributed from the mother house at Assisi."⁴³ In any case, St. Francis' Vision of the Cetra does not receive its own treatment by artists until well into the 16th c. (it became especially popular in 17th c. Spanish painting and later), and by this time the "cetra" has turned into a

⁴¹ This is the translation published in Armstrong 2000, 330; my source of the edition is Armstrong 2013, 248. Note that the English translation of Regis Armstrong *et al.* uses "lute" for where the term cetra occurs, referencing a 16th- or 17th-c. shift to translate *cethera* as *lauto* or *liuto*. My thanks to Dinko Fabris for pointing this out to me.

⁴² For the *Legenda maior S. Francisci*, see *Analecta Franciscana, Tomus X*, S. Bonaventure Caput V, 11 (p. 581); for the *Legenda perusina*, see Brooke 1970, 24, and Braunfels 1974, 259.

⁴³ Bourdua 2004, 149; see also Blume 1983.

High Renaissance *chitarra* (four- or five-course guitar) or *violetta* (violin), of no direct relevance to the present study.⁴⁴

The cetra (cithara) was described by the Church Fathers in **Chapter 1** as a humble instrument appropriate to man's lowly place in God's Universe, and many centuries later, music theorist Johannes Tinctoris said it was appropriate for rustics who made their simple music upon it.⁴⁵ The cetra was thus a most fitting musical attribute for St. Francis, the saint of humility and poverty. The lute, on the other hand, was an instrument with associations of refinement and courtly splendor, and the gittern (*chitarra*) shared this, plus perhaps even more of an exotic, Moorish fashion.⁴⁶ Neither of these instruments is found in Christian iconography of Italian origin much before the 14th c., whereas the cetra can provide multiple earlier examples, invariably of Biblical context.

Gioacchino da Fiore, the 12th c. Calabrian mystic mentioned previously, was embraced by the Franciscans, who considered him a kind of prophet and prefiguration of St. Francis. A second text of Gioacchino, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, contains (like *Psalterium decem cordarum*) passages commenting upon the cithara, where the author "advances the idea that the true monk possesses nothing except his cithara, i.e. the new man created *secundum Deum* (Eph. 4, 24) or by the operation of the Holy Ghost, while the three strings symbolize, once again, Faith, Hope and Charity."⁴⁷ Thus the "monk's cithara" - here prefiguring St. Francis' *cetra* - is an oval-bodied plucked instrument with three strings.

St. Francis was also associated with the concept of *Joculator Domini* or "minstrel-jongleur of God", following a vision he had at San Damiano in 1224. According to the author of *Speculum perfectionis*, while recovering from an eye illness, God told Francis that he would receive greater treasure than all the riches of the world, upon which Francis composed his *Canticum*

⁴⁴ Braunfels 1974, 303.

⁴⁵ Tinctoris wrote, "Cetula tantum uti quosdam rusticos ad eam nonnullas leves cantilenas concinentes choreas quoque ducentes in Italia quandoque comperi" ("I have sometimes known peasants to use only the cittern, singing some light songs to it and also leading dances in Italy", translation from EMT website, <http://earlymusictheory.org/Tinctoris/texts/deinventioneeetusumusic/#paneo=Translation>; Baines 1950, 25, translates the same passage as "The cetula is used only in Italy by rustics to accompany light songs and to lead dance music").

⁴⁶ See Young 2015 for a discussion of the Arabic association in 14th c. Paris with the gittern.

⁴⁷ Hirsch-Reich 1966, 544-545.

fratris Solis (Canticle of Brother Sun).⁴⁸ He then told his brothers, in particular Brother Pacifico, to go out in the world preaching and singing praises of God (*Laudes Domini*) as *Joculatores Domini*; for an example of a sacred image of a jongleur with a cetra, see CE 26 below.⁴⁹

Other references suggestive of the cetra can be found in the medieval canon of the Francis Legend. Chapter CXLVIII of the same *Vita secunda* contains a passage describing the effect that hearing the phrase “amore di Dio” (“the love of God”) had upon St. Francis, who immediately became inflamed with excitement as if a plectrum sounded the strings of his heart (“Subito infatti, al suono di questa espressione ‘amore di Dio’ si eccitava, si commoveva e si infiammava, come se venisse toccata col plettro della voce la corda interiore del cuore”).⁵⁰

St. Francis was associated with a second musical instrument, *il corno di San Francesco*, an animal horn which remains in the collection of the Cathedral (Basilica inferiore: Antica Sala Capitolare, containing relics of St. Francis). The attribute of horns on the cetra may be entirely coincidental with the saint’s predilection for the *corno*, or perhaps not.⁵¹

More medieval Franciscans besides St. Francis mention the cetra in their writings. The Franciscan Giuliano da Spira uses the term in a text for a Vespers antiphon to Psalm 150 (*al suono della tromba, del timpano, della cetra, del salterio*) during the first half of the 13th century.⁵² The chronicler Salimbene de Adam (1221-1288), another Franciscan, described in his *Chronica* a group of young people performing in a courtyard in Pisa with *cythare*.⁵³ These two examples illustrate the two sides of the cetra’s identity in the 13th c., as Christian symbol but also as a traditional instrument of the population, equally well suited for popular dancing

⁴⁸ Loewen 2013, 57-60.

⁴⁹ Loewen 2013, 59.

⁵⁰ Regis 2013 op. cit. ftnt. 176, 291; Italian text at <<http://www.santuariodelibera.it/FontiFrancescane/framevitaseconda.htm>> (accessed 22.09.2017)

⁵¹ The *corno* of St. Francis was included in the iconographical program of the Gubbio *studiolo* (CE 32), showing a clear Franciscan background to the intarsie; see Raggio 1999, 141.

⁵² Gamboso, Vergilio, ed., *Giuliano da Spira, Officio ritmico e vita seconda*, Padova: Edizioni Messaggero (1985), 213-215.

⁵³ Gallo, F. Alberto, article “Salimbene de Adam,” Grove Music Online <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/24380?q=salimbene&search=quick&pos=1&start=1#firsthit>> (accessed 23.09.2017).

and singing devotional songs, whether as a group in a confraternity, or in a private setting. The cultivation of these *laude spirituali* became closely associated with the Franciscans.

The cetra as a Franciscan iconographical phenomenon is unique inasmuch as it provides the earliest example of a specific musical instrument type with a mendicant Order. The adoption of the cetra by the Franciscans is consistent with the bigger picture of the Christianization of the cithara over many centuries, that is, it represents a logical step in the process. I will argue elsewhere in this exposition that the rise of the citole hinged upon the dissemination of the proto-cetra, primarily via pilgrim traffic, from Italy to Santiago da Compostella, and that the rise of the citole in Spain and northern Europe was due, as with the cetra in Italy, in no small part, to the Franciscan movement.

That the cetra still carried an implied Franciscan association or heritage into the 16th c. is suggested by the theorist Giovanni Maria Lanfranco in his treatise *Scintille di musica* (Brescia 1533), who refers to it as “that instrument that is called cetra by the Perugians” (*quello instrumento che da Peruggini Cethera e chiamato*), which specifies a geographically-oriented identity with the province of Perugia, the larger town lying close to Assisi.⁵⁴ Lanfranco’s work includes extensive material on the instruments of his day, and it participates in the tradition of *inventio* - who first cultivated the instrument - shared by Johannes Tinctoris, Egidius de Zamora, Bartholomaeus Anglicus and others going all the way back to Isidore of Seville.⁵⁵

During the course of the 15th c., the specific context of Franciscan art as the breeding ground of the cetra becomes more diffused. There are still important Franciscan works being created, such as magnificent churches whose decoration includes the instrument (CE 23, 25), but in the 15th c., the cetra presents itself in a new role: as a courtly, refined tool for secular entertainments, rather than exclusively as a symbol of the Church. If one had to summarize Franciscan artistic activity by type with known cetra sources, one might refer to the 13th c. (and first years of the next) as the period of Umbro-Tuscan fresco painting and Bolognese

⁵⁴ Lanfranco 1533, 139; see also Lee, Barbara, *Giovanni Maria Lanfranco’s Scintille di Musica and its Relation to 16th C Music Theory*, (diss. Cornell University 1961), 264, where Peruggini is incorrectly understood as a possible reference to a painter.

⁵⁵ For references on Tinctoris’ treatise, see Footnote 1, p. 13 above; on Anglicus and Zamora, Loewen 2013, Chapters 7 and 8.

manuscript illumination, the 14th. c. as the period of Neapolitan illumination (strongly influenced by Bolognese styles), and the 15th c. as anything and everything - sculpture, painting, wood inlay, woodcuts for print, and miniatures.⁵⁶ We would also note the emergence c. 1350 of a new Florentine cetra fashion amongst painters (**CE 19, 22**) which, assuming these represent a real instrument and not, as musicologist Howard Mayer Brown put it in 1978, “the product of some modern restorer’s fancy” or the inventiveness of the painters, deviated from the Perugian model in its markedly rectangular body shape.⁵⁷ One of the three sources, **CE 22**, comes (unsurprisingly) from a fresco in the main Franciscan church of Florence, S. Croce. The new variety of Florentine body shapes will receive further discussion in **Chapter 4**.

Physical differences between the Romanesque and Franciscan cetre are subtle, so much so that it might be argued that the three periods outlined in this chapter (Romanesque, Franciscan and Humanist) should be combined into just two, for example Christian and Humanist. Yet three physical features appear on the Assisi cycle (**CE 15**) which differ markedly from Romanesque examples: chromatic frets (on a handful of instruments), frets with a triangular profile, and inlaid roses. When we add to these the new developments in musical repertory (chromatic pitches, for example) and new focus on Franciscan iconography, the separation between Romanesque and Franciscan seems well-justified.

Franciscan connections to individual sources will be noted in each Catalog Entry in **Chapter 3** as applicable, and will come up again in discussions related to sources found outside of Italy. Music theorists, such as Bartholomaeus Anglicus and Egidius de Zamora (both 13th c.), and music schools, naturally, also participated in the movement. Concerning the latter, Paris was a Franciscan stronghold of clerical and university educators of all kinds, including music: “Among the music schools of the order, Paris must be singled out as superlative, blessed and supported by Haymo of Faversham and Giovanni da Parma, including Julian von Speyer.”⁵⁸ It is there we will encounter elements in music theory sources that may bring weight to arguments concerning the identity and tuning of our Italian instrument in the 14th c., but for

⁵⁶ For bibliographic references to Bolognese and Neapolitan manuscript illumination, see individual Catalog Entries.

⁵⁷ Brown 1978, 131.

⁵⁸ Schmidt, Hans, article “Franziskaner, Geschichte” MGG Online, < <https://mgg-online.com/article?id=mgg15395&v=1.1&q=salimbene&rs=id-80a59d8b-1a19-1675-a1cf-51b18f5283ao> > accessed 23.09.2017

now we shall move on to the third and final phase of the evolution of the cetra, which will “fix” the instrument in a number of ways vital to what it becomes by the mid-16th century.

2.3 The Humanist Muse

The cliché of “The Renaissance” is perhaps the best-known concept since the 19th c. which has been associated with European history. The re-birth or re-discovery of an earlier, purer Golden Age is in fact a premise of Christianity: Man enjoyed a much better existence, without suffering, long ago - for a while at least - in the Garden of Eden. He always must strive to go back to a better culture, a happier time. He can conduct himself, with God’s grace and mercy, in such a way during his earthly sojourn that finally, upon death, he can return to a better existence without suffering and pain.

Indeed, the usefulness of the term “Renaissance” in the study of European history has been vigorously debated since the 19th c., and rightfully so. Historian Charles Homer Haskins published *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* in 1927, while scholars such as Lynn Thorndike debated whether or not one could speak of a Carolingian Renaissance.⁵⁹ In truth, every century since the Carolingian period (before, in fact) looked to the distant past for ancestral Authority, as the most fundamental condition of any literate culture. The earliest body of material came from the Greeks and filtered into Roman culture, hence Greco-Roman learning representing the *other* authority, besides Scripture, already from the time of the Church Fathers. This continued, as a world view, throughout the entire Middle Ages and on through to the so-called Enlightenment.

The on-going process of looking back represents a continuing dialectic between the old and the new, which has carried many cultures through many centuries of Western European civilization. When that dialectic takes the form of anything formally “created”, whether a painting, poem, musical composition or piece of constructed furniture, it becomes a thing, a story, an argument, i.e., a manifestation following the Greco-Roman discipline of Rhetoric. We call such a creation “art”.

⁵⁹ Haskins, Charles Homer, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927; Thorndike, Lynn, “Renaissance or Prenaissance?”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (1943), 65.

Although the term *ars nova* (new art) is commonly used in medieval music history to denote a new kind of early 14th. c. mensural notation (as opposed to the *ars vetus*, older notation of previous decades), a perception of change was increasingly in the air by the late decades of that century. Dramatic, catastrophic shifts in society, religion and nature were afoot: France and England were locked in the devastating and seemingly endless Hundred Years War, the Church had ruptured into opposing divisions with multiple popes, each claiming Heavenly Authority, and the population was decimated swiftly, and without rhyme or reason, by the dreaded Black Death. As if this were not enough, terrible earthquakes wreaked havoc by destroying urban structures of all kinds in multiple cities in Europe.⁶⁰

Faced with uncertainty and abandoned to Fortune, some, like the Tuscan poet Petrarch (1304 - 1374), took refuge in ancient learning and philosophy. When the distinguished Greek scholar Manuel Chrysoloras was contacted in 1395 by Coluccio Salutati, Chancellor of Florence, about teaching Greek literature and grammar in that city, Salutati's invitation paraphrased Cicero, stating that the Romans either made wiser innovations than those of the Greeks, or they improved on them, at the same time conceding the superiority of the Greeks in culture and the Romans in war. The Florentine's personal opinion, he wrote, was that both Greeks and Latins had always taken learning to a higher level by extending it to each other's literature. Chrysoloras subsequently became the first important teacher of Greek in Italy, functioning as a stepping-stone into the period of Humanism.

The same fascination with ancient authorities which the writing of Petrarch had displayed was at hand in the education and artistic work of the painter Gentile da Fabriano (c. 1370-1427).⁶¹ It is during his lifetime that the cetra begins to manifest a new identity which can be seen on different levels, including (1) for the first time, a non-Christian iconographical setting of Classical Antiquity, (2) a hitherto unseen literary context, also inspired by Antiquity, of laudatory poems and chronicles praising performances of contemporary poets, musicians and

⁶⁰ For one account of events in the 14th c., see Tuchmann, Barbara, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century*, New York: Ballantine (1978).

⁶¹ Gentile da Fabriano was considered in the 16th c. to have been "the first painter in whom was born the wonderful style which is today in flower" (Francesco Bocchi, *Le bellezze della città di Firenze*, 1591); see the discussion in Hourihane 2012, 657: "The association (by Bocchi) of (Gentile da Fabriano's) *Adoration of the Magi* with the Renaissance revival of antiquity challenges the view first articulated by Alberti that identifies the founding of this revival with Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446), Donatello (1386/7-1466), Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455), Masaccio, and Luca della Robbia (1399/1400-1482)."

statesmen, and (3) new physical features corresponding to the morphology of the ancient cithara. These new components were both structural and decorative, and will be looked at in depth in **Chapter 4**. They include lengthened frets, tapering body depth (becoming shallower toward the bottom end), a projecting point (“tooth”) at the back of the peghead, metal as a string material, string number and tuning. These novel features shall be further discussed in **Chapter 4**. With new features came perhaps a new way of building the instrument, so-called built-up construction, as opposed to the traditional one-piece, carved-out method. It was a logical step for a new kind of cetra, or better said, a newly-re-invented kind of instrument.

The accessibility of ancient works, whether in word or in stone, became a major engine behind creative endeavour in the Quattrocento. The culture of editing, i.e., translating, works of important philosophers such as Aristotle from the Greek, had been the driving force, already since the “Renaissance of the Twelfth Century,” of intellectual pursuits in Western Europe. In addition to transmitting a multitude of aspects of Classical world view, a handful of sources gave details concerning the form of the cithara. These, again, were of two kinds, text and image.

Whereas the history of the cetra, through the proliferation of the Franciscans during the 13th and 14th centuries, had been a clear process of Christianization that had begun many centuries before the mendicant order, under the influence of Humanist culture, the instrument took on elements that were understood to reference the cithara of Antiquity. From the later 14th c, we may speak of a “Classicization process”: the instrument’s Christian identity is exchanged, so to speak, for an “enlightened Antique” one.

The elements of transformation are subtle and they are easily missed. Pietro d’Abano’s commentary *Expositio problematum Aristotelis* is the earliest discussion in the Middle Ages of the music of ancient Greece. D’Abano was “a figure who, though somewhat outside the period of the Renaissance as usually defined, was imbued with the spirit of philologic humanism....his commentaries enjoyed some diffusion in the fourteenth century through manuscript copies, but it was through their publication together with an older translation that they exerted a decisive influence on musical thinkers in the Renaissance.”⁶² The treatise

⁶² Palisca 1985, 51.

of D'Abano underscored the importance of the *cythera* as a fundamental instrument of the Classical world, having four strings, upon which the basic consonances of music could be demonstrated.⁶³ He was “a professor of medicine, philosophy and astrology both at Paris and at Padua, whose writings established a solid tradition of teaching within Italian universities.”⁶⁴ And what began with D'Abano's Aristotle commentary gathered momentum, in terms of interest in Classical writings and art works, with every passing decade of the Quattrocento. By the later 15th c., a first-hand knowledge of existing Roman artifacts was standard equipment for any serious artist.

One artist, active from c. 1480-1525, rose above all others in terms of bequeathing us with major contributions for the history of the Humanist cetra. Fra Giovanni da Verona, a true genius of wood-carving and wood inlay, left three *intarsie* and one relief carving depicting a cetra in detail. Among other churches, he was famously associated with Santa Maria in Organo in Verona. Here we find one *intarsia* and one relief carving of the master, but two other cetra images from Santa Maria in Organo bring the total to four, with a fresco by Domenico Morone, and a miniature painted for a choir book by Morone's pupil Girolamo Dai Libri. The variety of mediums featuring cetra images is unmatched from any other single institution: wood inlay, wood relief carving, fresco and miniature, all works of impressive detail and character done for one Olivetan church in the town of Verona.

The early training and activity of Giovanni da Verona included a period of work in Perugia 1480-1484 (Felicetti 2005). We can assume that Giovanni had closely studied and absorbed the panel inlay work he would have seen in the Umbrian city of Gubbio at the renowned *studiolo* of the ducal residence there, including the cetra (CE 32). He would have undoubtedly encountered the same instrument in the Cimabue fresco at San Francesco in Assisi (CE 10). To the west of Umbria, his association and work at Monte Oliveto Maggiore is attested by two cetra inlays. Whether his preference for the instrument influenced his Verona colleagues Morone and Dai Libri in their work, we cannot say, but Morone's fresco (CE 37) in Santa Maria in Organo clearly agrees in all details with Giovanni's *intarsia* in the same church. A decade after Giovanni's cetra carving was made in Verona, the music theorist Lanfranco, from

⁶³ Page 1986, 149.

⁶⁴ Pieragostini 2006, 199.

the neighboring town of Brescia, called the cetra the instrument “of the Perugians”. Perhaps for Giovanni, there was also an association of the cetra with the heart of Franciscan Italy.⁶⁵

There is no clear line of division between the Franciscan cetra of the 14th c. and the Humanist cetra of the 15th, as there is no clear source in the catalog which can claim to be the first cetra displaying new traits. One reason for this is a total lack of iconographical sources for perhaps three decades, c. 1380 - c. 1410, as well as a dearth of sources before this, especially sources showing clear details.

Still, it may be valid to consider **CE 20** as a candidate manifesting a Humanist influence, or more accurately, occupying a Humanist context. The cetre found in the miniatures of this source are used to illustrate the Tragedies of Seneca (copied at the court of Giovanna I in Naples before 1382), making this the first time the cetra is depicted as an instrument in a Classical text. The new physical traits of the instrument appearing during the second half of the 14th and first half of the 15th c. could include a carved head at the end of the peg-head, kollopes-frets, and metal strings (see **Chapter 4** for a close look at all of these features). **CE 20** clearly shows only one of these features, the carved head; the string material in any case would not be determinable from the miniature. **CE 17**, a tiny image and like **CE 20** of Neapolitan provenance, apparently features a carved head, a number of decades before **CE 20**.

The Seneca manuscript has eluded a precise dating in modern research, and is said to be from the second half of the 14th c., presumably before Giovanna I’s death in 1382.⁶⁶ A second monument should not be excluded as having been painted in the last few years of the 14th c., although the church in which the fresco stands was completed only in 1390. This source, **CE 23**, has kollopes-frets and an incurved lower bout tapering into a prominent base, slightly suggestive of the Mattei sarcophagus carving in Rome (**Pl. 117**); whether the cetra in **CE 23** has a carved head is impossible to say from the photo obtained. The next chronological source displaying any of the new features is **CE 21**, with its kollopes-frets. Head carving, neck hook and string material are all indiscernible. With a dating range of 1408-1412, it gives us the earliest 15th-c. example with any Humanist features.

⁶⁵ Giovanni da Verona was not a Franciscan but a Benedictine friar.

⁶⁶ Lenzo 2011, 157.

With the source **CE 24** (Luca della Robbia, 1430's), the Humanist cetra has fully arrived. The carved head, kollopes-frets and broad base are all found on the two cetre carved by Della Robbia on this monument, a work which has been aptly described as displaying “a profound understanding of antique art, which Luca studied in Pisa and perhaps also in Rome”.⁶⁷

The sources **CE 20**, **21**, **23** and **24** are four chronicles of changes for the cetra, in both identity (Classical context) and form. All of these sources except **CE 23** were either executed in Florence, or have a connection with Florentine artists. Whereas in its Franciscan manifestation, Umbria-Perugia-Assisi were central places geographically for the cetra, Florence assumed a primary position for the rise of the Humanist cetra - which will come as no surprise to students of Humanism and that city.

Our journey's immediate destination, in the next chapter (**Chapter 3**), is to view the iconographical monuments comprising the cetra database. **Chapter 4** will show, part by part, how the heritage of the ancient kithara manifested itself through the modern one. The morphological developments that manifested themselves in the form of the Humanist cetra were dramatically different from the Franciscan era.

2.4 Chapter Summary: Main Points

1. The Byzantine fashion of bowing manifested itself in Italy c. 1000 with short-necked instruments played at the shoulder and with lyres. The popularity and novelty of these forms gave an impetus to the development of a related instrument which was plucked, which could be called a proto-cetra. Its affinity with its bowed cousin will continue all the way into the 16th century, as shoulder-played instruments of the late 15th and early 16th c. manifest pointed shoulders and cetra-style peg-heads.
2. The Hamilton Psalter, using copy models from the second half of the 11th c. for manuscript illumination done at a Vallambrosian monastery in the region of Florence or Fiesole in the second half of the 12th, shows a clear predilection for short-necked plucked chordophones with horns, which four out of six illuminated

⁶⁷ Gentilini 2003.

cetres feature. One of the others (**CE 3b**) shows a clear heritage from the Byzantine pandura.

3. By the time of Guido d'Arezzo c. 1000, there were signs from music theory sources that the *citara* or *cythara* was associated with a necked chordophone. These included the development of horizontal staff lines representing the horizontal playing position of the strings, mentions of the instrument in treatises such as *Micrologus*, and iconographical use of the instrument in music theory illustrations (**Pl. 50**). Additionally, a 12th c. commentary of Gioacchino da Fiore describes the cithara as “a stringed instrument with a pear shaped body and three ‘general’ strings”. The cetra in this period could thus be described as “la cetra romanica”,
4. In the 1220's Francis of Assisi has a vision of hearing an angel playing a cetra, and the success of the Franciscan mendicant order also fosters the cetra in Franciscan iconography, which is why there is a relatively high density of monuments showing the instrument in Umbria. It must also be the reason why Giovanni Lanfranco, writing much later around 1530, identifies the cetra with the Perugians. Even the description of the cetra by Johannes Tinctoris, written during the 1470's, evokes the classic Franciscan humility identified since the time of Francis with the instrument: it is, he says, played by “rustics”.
5. The rise of Humanism, following Petrarch, ushered in a new, third phase for the cetra, a moment of its re-invention. New features appeared, such as over-long frets and metal strings, along with a new constructional method of joining parts which had hitherto been carved out of a block of wood by glueing them together. The instrument's sound and color were by now very different from a century or two earlier, and it, along with the *lira da braccio*, enjoyed popularity as instruments which specialized in accompanying improvised sung poetry.