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Preface

Manuscript fragments are medieval musicologists' old acquaintances. *Membra disiecta* of music codices often constitute the only surviving corpus of sources for entire periods, styles, or genres in the history of early European music. There is hardly any historian working on pre-1500 music who would not have directly studied a fragment, or a fragment's content, or even discovered one at some point in their research. Yet, despite the long familiarity with this type of source material, there has never before been a wide-ranging reflection on fragments as a particular object of study within the discipline, and especially on their role in last century's musicological research. While it is largely acknowledged that the set of techniques and processes required for the analysis of fragmentary sources relies on a particularly wide range of skills and data to counterweigh the inherent lack of information, a collective, up-to-date, and comprehensive discussion of the various techniques and approaches for their study was still lacking.

In recent years, attention to fragments has surged considerably across all disciplines that share manuscripts not only as primary carriers of a textual tradition, but also as material objects and agents of cultural interactions and historical dynamics. Narratives evolving around ideas of exclusion and neglect, rejection, marginalisation, and utilitarianism can be easily constructed, and the ex-centricity of this material, its unexpectedness, can constitute a strong element of fascination. Fragments, however, clash decidedly with our idea of a past in which a richly decorated missal, for example, would necessarily acquire an almost absolute status as a sacred, precious, and untouchable object. No matter how aware we are that this was evidently not the case in medieval society, fragments can still challenge our set of values and how we relate to historical artefacts: we would probably expect to see the ruins of a monastery as the result of neglect or destruction, but we are always somehow struck by the sight of a parchment folio being reused as a wrapper or inside a binding. Besides fragments' significance as historical objects, it is possibly also because of such – very modern – projection of a sense of cultural 'self-harming' if specialists, and public alike, have been so powerfully drawn to the remains of destroyed manuscripts. Yet, fragments often offer an answer also to the converse question of survival, especially by providing a glimpse into the remarkably diverse spectrum of grades in manuscript production; with some notable exceptions, fragmentary material predominantly

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represents those categories of compilations that fell outside the highest grades, such as objects of everyday use and/or carriers of widely circulated texts.

Similarly to other types of texts, wear, a repertory going out of fashion, censorship or ecclesiastical reforms were some of the reasons why a music manuscript was neglected and consequently discarded. Overall, however, the re-use of parchment as binding material, thanks to which some of the most important testimonies of musical practice survived, was more related to social and economic historical dynamics than antiquity or artistic taste. Because of their particular volatility, music manuscripts go through an often-overlooked middle phase, occurring between the moment when the original codex, *libellus*, or roll ceases to be of use and its becoming an object of antiquarian interest; a phase in which the object is simply obsolete, yet not valuable enough to ensure its preservation, and during which recycling usually takes place. A manuscript must thus survive this interregnum (as well as fires or other calamities) for it to be handed down to us in its original form; otherwise, fragments start their own, independent existence. Once reused as part of a binding, readers interacted with fragments in multifarious ways. These range from more content-related comments, deletions, or additions of similar nature (e.g. a series of antiphons for a saint's office, inspired by the liturgical content of the fragment), to a more contingent use of the manuscript material to host a table of contents and *exlibris*, including recording texts of transactions, accounts, doodles and pen trials (*probationes pennae*/*calami*). In other words, fragments constituted a presence which was well-noted and that often prompted an 'afterlife' as carriers of information.[1] The study of *membra disiecta* is not only a remarkably valuable source of evidence for both the manuscript cultures that produced the original codex and any 'posthumous' engagement by reader-users, but also on later book cultures, up to eighteenth-century antiquarianism. So, what can fragments tell us about specific manuscript cultures and musical communities in medieval society? What is the 'lesson' that we can learn from them? How did fragmentary material shape our conception of the written transmission of music in the Middle Ages?

The aim of this collection of essays is to answer these questions by taking a 'snapshot' of the current state of the art in the study of fragmentary music manuscript sources from the Latin Middle Ages (*c*.800–1500), namely the variety of approaches for the analysis of the repertory and its transmission, musical

1 *Fragments of Note. The Afterlives of Medieval Manuscripts* was indeed the title of an exhibition I co-curated with Daryl Green and that took place at Magdalen College, Oxford in November 2017–April 2018. The exhibition was accompanied by a series of talks; speakers included David Rundle, Christopher De Hamel, artist Janet Boulton, and lutenist Lynda Sayce.

palaeography, codicology, liturgy, historical and cultural contexts, etc.[2] At the basis of this volume there was certainly an emphasis on new discoveries, but it was primarily intended as a hub to reflect on issues of methodology, historiography, and materiality raised by surviving medieval music fragments in Europe. A few scholars actually devoted a significant part of their research only to fragments, be it from the necessity imposed by the state of surviving source material for a specific period or geographical area, or for a particularly vested interest in these relics of our musical past. Reflections emerging from a long-standing and intense engagement with *membra disiecta* of music manuscripts provide the most apt introduction to this volume ('Polyphonic Fragments: Destruction, Recovery, Reconstruction' by Margaret Bent). Most of the twelve authors, moreover, endeavoured to discuss fragments from particular historical regions, corresponding to modern-day Austria, Britain, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Scandinavia, Slovenia, and Spain, thus including areas that have been – for too long a time – considered 'peripheral' to a factitious 'centre'.

The vast majority of musical sources from the early Middle Ages are fragments of liturgical manuscripts, with or without musical notation. The recent identification, study and reassessment of the role and importance of ninth-century fragments, in particular, altered considerably our previous knowledge of the early phase of development of certain book types such as the missal, or the process of codification of processional chants ('Processional Chants in the Early Medieval Period: The Lesson of Fragments' by Susan Rankin). The study of saints' offices too relies quite substantially on fragments. The diffusion of some local saints' cults, their reception and variants, as well as the possibility of considering other material forms of manuscript transmission – such as *libelli* containing a saint's *historia* – are often only answered through a large-scale survey and

2 Almost all contributions in the volume are based on papers presented at the international symposium *Disiecta Membra Musicae. The Study of Medieval Music Manuscript Fragments* took place at Magdalen College, Oxford, 19–21 March 2018. The keynote was delivered by Margaret Bent. The symposium, which was initially conceived as a one-day workshop, saw the participation of more than twenty-five attendees. I would like to thank also the participant-respondents Nicolas Bell, Nigel Palmer, Henrike Lähnemann, Tosca Lynch, and Sean Curran for their contributions and active engagement in the discussions. For conference reports see J. Mason, 'Peering Through the Gaps in Music History', in *Early Music*, 46/2 (2018), 358–359; Nicolas Bell, Report in the *Oxford Medieval Studies Blog* <https://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/disiecta-membra-musicae-conference-report> (accessed 17 May 2020); B. Dolce, Report in the newsletter of the National Early Music Association UK. Papers by Helen Deeming (Royal Holloway), Christian Leitmeir (Oxford), Sean Dunnahoe, and Christoph Flüeler (Fribourg) were not included in this volume. The contribution by Sanna Raninen (Uppsala) was not presented at the conference.

meticulous analysis of surviving fragmentary material ('Some Medieval Relics of Saints' Plainchant Offices' by David Hiley). One such survey, which was carried out in libraries and parish archives across Slovenia, brought to light some unexpected finds like a fragment containing music and liturgy in Old Church Slavonic and written in Glagolitic script. The study of Slovenian *membra disiecta* provided important data to reconstruct the number of original manuscripts from which the fragments came, coming up with at least 140 different volumes, far more than the expected need of ecclesiastical institutions in this territory ('Music Fragments from Slovenia: Towards a Reconstruction of the Medieval Plainchant Manuscript Production' by Jurij Snoj).

Long neglected or partially studied fragmentary sources provide the opportunity to radically rewrite the history of royal and ecclesiastical institutional networks, the spreading of a particular repertory, music production, fruition and performance in areas like the kingdom of Aragon, for which now mostly fragments survive ('Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century in Aragon: Reassessing a Panorama of Fragmentary Sources' by David Catalunya). The importance of investigating the particular historical context in order to shed light on the dynamics behind the dispersion of a repertory of polyphonic music is also crucial, especially in the case of historic regions such as Silesia ('Fragments of Local Polyphony in Late Medieval Central Europe: Towards a Semiotic Interpretation of Musical Sources' by Paweł Gancarczyk). Scandinavian collections have attracted considerable scrutiny in the past twenty years, mainly because of the impressive number of fragments and the relatively few complete surviving manuscripts. By directing our attention to the reuse of parchment in the early modern period it is possible to shed light on what is usually a lost or hidden phase, that of modification and experimentation – and their relative material implications – when dealing with reformed liturgical repertories, including early sacred music in Swedish and Finnish vernaculars ('Make Do and Mend: Reworking Liturgical Parchment Manuscripts in Post-Reformation Sweden' by Sanna Raninen). Manuscript studies have long been exploring the possible interactions between material objects and their reader-users with interesting results. However, this has never been attempted for music fragments in later bindings; looking out for such connections in well-defined intellectual contexts has the potential to challenge our assumptions of a lack of cultural significance of pastedowns and flyleaves, especially in relation to their host volumes ('The Aesthetics of Fragments: Reading Pastedowns in Context or, Late Medieval Bookbinders, Readers, and Their Choices' by Karl Kügle).

Like Roman *spolia* in a medieval wall, traces of fragmentation and fragmentary transmission can be observed even in cases of complete volumes of

miscellaneous content such as anthologies, reflecting the cultural context and intellectual interests of the individuals responsible for their compilation ('A Collection of Fragments, or a Fragment of a Collection? The Musical Appendix of A-Wn Cod. 5094' by Reinhard Strohm). The present book also provided the opportunity for further methodological reflections on known sources, like the earliest song in Italian vernacular found on the back of a charter, an unusual manuscript context for a fragmented musical entry which provides a glimpse into a fascinating, now-lost vocal repertory ('The Unexpected Song. An Early Italian Vernacular Poem, a Neumatic Notation, and How to Detect Their Interrelationships in the Ravenna Charter' by Daniele Sabaino).

To date, the number of musical fragments discovered is enormous, its extent surpassing that of any other forms of manuscript evidence, and new fragments are still being discovered. On-line resources have recently become increasingly important for the identification, study, and textual/musical reconstruction of music manuscript fragments. However, the considerable number of different available databases and digital platforms still calls for the first ever experts' assessment of accessibility and potential for use in musicological research. Collecting, organising, cataloguing, and describing fragments is not – as it is often portrayed – a mere positivistic exercise, but the key to disclosing information as wide-ranging as the number of original manuscripts circulating in a certain historical geopolitical region, its extent and institutional networks, and spreading of notational types, to name but a few. The most challenging operation is often that of setting precise standards for catalographic descriptions within, for the creation of a digital corpus of music fragments ('*Fragmenta Manuscriptorum Musicalium Hungariae Mediaevalis*: From Traditional Methodologies Towards a Digital Corpus' by Zsuzsa Czagány). Since accessing fragments' content may be hindered by wear, mutilation, or rewriting – either before or after their dismembering – the considerable potential of digital image restoration and forensic reconstruction is bound to alter the way we approach the study of damaged sources ('Restoration, Reconstruction, and Revisionism: Altering Our Virtual Perception of Damaged Manuscript's' by Julia Craig-McFeely).

The title of this collection of essays includes the term 'fragmentology'.[3] This is a word that is both new and old, for a field of study that is very much characterised by the same duality: the term is constructed compositely from a Latin root and Greek suffix, but its recent use makes it certainly a neologism; the study of fragments is as old as early philology, yet never before have they received such

3 See William Duba and Christoph Flüeler (2018), 'Fragments and Fragmentology', in *Fragmentology*, 1 (2018): 1–5.

attention, shifting from being mere objects for a most complete *recensio* – as if *ancillae fragmenta philologiae* – to acting as informants of historical and social phenomena, through the looking-glass of particular manuscript and book cultures. Fragmentology is a specific competence, a range of skills benefiting from an ever-growing availability of tools, and now entering fruitful interdisciplinary dialogues as essential components of its scholarship.

Each of the twelve essays in this book explores one or more issues related to the complex topic of music fragments through historical, systematic, and comparative approaches, and by setting it in the broader context of medieval manuscript culture. Senior and established musicologists encounter here colleagues in earlier stages of their careers, showing that the interest in fragments is still very much thriving. Finally, it is appropriate to stress that the community of international scholars who are actively engaged in the study of *membra disiecta* is by all means a larger one, and that only the physical limitations of an edited book prevented it from covering every single aspect of these specific manifestations of the written transmission of music. The hope is that this volume will also contribute to strengthen that very sense of community and that further such initiatives will be undertaken in the future.

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