

Insights into the Chronology and Reception of Philippe de Vitry's Ars nova Theory

David Catalunya

Early Music 46/3 (2018), pp. 417–438 · Philippe de Vitry and the Ars nova Special Issue

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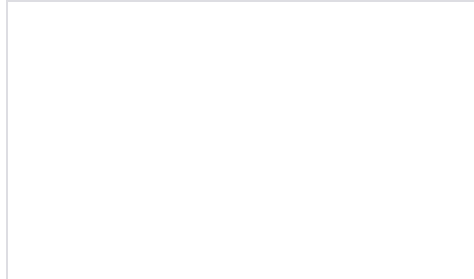
Abstract

Barcelona Cathedral preserves a 14th-century manuscript whose only contents are a treatise on mensural notation traditionally dated c.1350. This article argues that many details in the text rather point towards the 1330s, and suggest a possible Parisian influence. This revised dating highlights the treatise's historical significance as a witness of the development of Ars Nova theory during the first half of the 14th century. Specifically, the Barcelona treatise appears to be one of the earliest compendia that report the systematization of the 'four prolations', a mensural system that was developed in music theory during the 1330s and remained the foundation of musical notation for centuries to come.

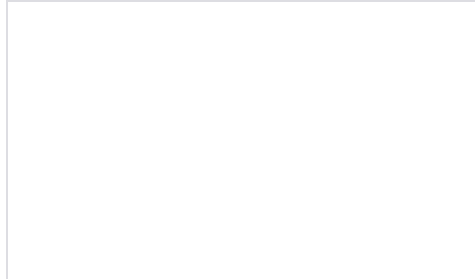
Key takeaways ✨ AI

- 1 The Barcelona treatise may date to the 1330s, challenging previous assumptions of a 1350 dating.
 - 2 It represents an early compilation of the 'four prolations' system crucial to musical notation.
 - 3 The manuscript's preservation suggests it was likely never used, indicating a pedagogical purpose.
 - 4 The treatise indicates a blend of old and new notation practices, reflecting contemporaneous musical theory.
 - 5 The author likely had Parisian influences, suggesting a cross-regional exchange of musical ideas in 14th-century Europe.
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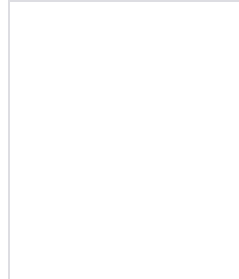
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1 Barcelona, Arxiu de la Catedral, Miscel·lanea 23-4, fol.3r (© Catedral de...



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 - 2 Johannes Aegidius de Zamora: Ars musica, ed. M. Robert–Tissot, CSM 20 (Rome, 1974), p.108.
 - 3 Tarragona, Arxiu Històric Arxidiocesà, Ms. 12 (Janini 44). On the 'semi-mensural' notation of this manuscript, see N. Bell, 'Between mensural and non-mensural notation in sequences in the fourteenth century' , in Il canto fratto: L'altro gregoriano, ed. M. Gozzi and A. Scotti (Rome, 2005), pp.347–57.
 - 4 Gerona, Arxiu de la Catedral, Ms. 9, fols.25r, 30r, 122v. 51 '[organa] multum decorant divinum officium' (the plural organa refers to a single instrument);
 - 5 Baucells, 'Les notícies' , p.69. 52 'més de VII tro en VIII de migs punts'; Baucells, 'Les notícies' , pp.70–72.
 - 6 See examples from 13th-century Burgos and 14th-century Toledo in D. Catalunya, 'Thirteenth-century organistae in Castile' , Orgelpark Research Reports #4, pp.105–40 (the pages refer to the printed version; e-book available at www.orgelpark.nl).
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FAQs ✨ AI

What key insights does the Barcelona treatise provide about Ars Nova notation? +

How does the manuscript's watermark inform its dating and provenance? +

What discrepancies exist in the treatment of semibreves within the treatise? +

How does the Barcelona compositor engage with earlier theoretical works? +

What role did royal patronage play in the reception of Ars Nova in Catalonia? +

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