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CATHOLICUS NON CANTAT? REFRAMING COMMUNAL SINGING IN EARLY MODERN CATHOLICISM

Music historiography has traditionally understood and described collective singing in the early modern era as an almost exclusive prerogative of Protestant communities. Recent and less recent studies, however, have recorded numerous occurrences of Catholic communal singing, for instance during processions, pilgrimages or popular missions. In spite of this, and even though several traditions (such as the Italian lauda) have been investigated in some depth, a comprehensive assessment of such singing practices and of their role in the surrounding soundscape is still wanting. Starting from a discussion of the causes of this 'selective deafness' in historiography, and moving on to a case study of late-fourteenth- to early-seventeenth-century Milan, the present article aims to start filling the lacuna and to demonstrate that communal singing was an important (if not always uncontroversial) element of Catholic sonic cultures in the early modern era.

Did the Catholic faithful sing in the early modern era? Was communal singing part of the soundscape in which they were immersed, both before and after the Reformation? Did communal singing give them agency to contribute to shape that soundscape? And how did they understand the relationship between singing practices and ideas of community? These and similar questions do not normally find an

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answer, or rather are not even addressed, in standard accounts of music history in the Renaissance or the early modern era; in articles and essays, on the other hand, the occurrences of communal singing have been more often recorded than properly thematised. To be sure, some specific traditions of communal singing have been brought to light by monographic studies or have formed the subject of entire 'compartments' of musicological research, as is the case for the Italian lauda, the German Leisen and Rufe or Jesuit missionary songs. A certain historiographical deafness to this subject, however, (whose causes I shall try to explain later on) is among the reasons that have made those traditions look rather as unrelated emergences than as manifestations of a common practice in the longue durée.

The absence of a specific musicological reflection on the phenomenon of communal singing per se and in its longue-durée developments is jarringly at odds with the abundance of testimonies scattered in archival sources and documents, as well as in recently (and indeed less recently) published research material.[1] Picking an example among the many possible options, some contemporary accounts of Holy Year processions in Rome seem particularly telling, given the international provenance of the pilgrims involved. Giovanni Briccio's *Le solenni e devote processioni* describes the Holy Week procession organised by the famous confraternity of Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini (one of the main agencies for the reception of foreign pilgrims in Rome) during the Jubilee Year 1625. After illustrating the huge cortège (allegedly of sixteen thousand pilgrims) lit by lanterns and torches, the chronicler notes:

> tutti lieti andar cantando letanie con diversi modi & arie, secondo che costumavano ne' loro paesi, alcuni intonando, altri rispondendo, le quali voci per essere così numerose riempivano l'aria di devoti accenti.[2]
>
> all [the pilgrims] went happily singing litanies in diverse modes and tunes, according to the customs of their countries – some starting, others responding – and their voices, being so numerous, filled the air with devout accents.[3]

[1] As a reviewer for this journal noted, 'Almost without exception, scholars who have worked with printed descriptions and manuscript chronicle accounts which include details of, for example, processional forms as practiced in sixteenth-century Italy, will have encountered frequent mentions of communal singing, particularly of litanies.' My point is precisely that in spite of this evident ubiquity, there is to my knowledge no substantial and specific assessment of Catholic communal singing in the literature.

[2] G. Briccio, *Le solenni e devote processioni fatte nell'alma città di Roma, l'anno del giubileo 1625: Con la sontuosa festa fatta la matina di Pasqua di resurrettione in piazza Navona* (Rome, [1625]), p. 21.

[3] Translation from R. M. San Juan, *Rome: A City Out of Print* (Minneapolis, 2001), p. 97, with slight changes.

An earlier report, regarding the processions organised by the same confraternity in the Holy Year of 1575, is even richer. Every morning, the various groups of pilgrims were led processionally to the Vatican, in order to receive the papal blessing, then to St Peter's Basilica, where they venerated the relics, confessed and communicated, and to other churches:

> Era ogni mattina in quelle processioni sino a San Pietro cosa bellissima il sentir quelli Peregrini d'ogni natione (che separati se accomodavano) a cantar in lingua sua Letanie, & Salmi Italiani, Franzesi, Spagnoli, Ongari, Schiavoni, Svizzeri, Todeschi, Armenii, e fra l'Italiani li tan[t]i diversi accenti che veramente alzando le mano al Cielo ogn'uno diceva: Omnis spiritus laudet dominum.[4]

> Each morning, during those processions to St Peter's, it was a beautiful thing to hear those pilgrims of each nation (disposed in separate groups) sing in their tongue litanies and psalms: Italians, French, Spaniards, Hungarians, Slavonians, Swiss, Germans, Armenians and even the Italians, of so many diverse accents, that truly raising their hands to Heaven everybody said: 'Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!' [Psalm 150:6][5]

Such passing remarks about 'litanies and psalms' sung in 'diverse modes and tunes, according to the customs of their countries' indicate that communal singing in the vernacular during processions was a widespread practice, familiar to pilgrims from all over Europe.[6]

In extra-European missions, we find, again, plentiful evidence about the implementation of communal singing as one of the most pervasive missionary strategies. As this phenomenon is elucidated in a growing literature,[7] suffice it to choose a striking example from seventeenth-century New France. A Jesuit missionary reported in 1637:

[4] *Ragguaglio del numero de peregrini, et dell'ordine tenuto in riceverli e governarli … raccolto da Pomponio Castani* (Rome, 1576), sig. E^{v}.

[5] Again, I take the translation from San Juan, *Rome*, p. 112, with integrations and slight changes.

[6] According to J. E. Glixon, *Honoring God and the City: Music at the Venetian Confraternities, 1260–1807* (Oxford and New York, 2003), pp. 242–4, during the Holy Years 1700 and 1725 groups of Venetian pilgrims made sure to be accompanied by professional singers, either by bringing them along from Venice or by hiring them in Rome. Although it is possible that even in earlier periods some pilgrim groups did the same, the explicit reference to the various tongues, accents and tunes in the quoted accounts clearly points to non-Roman traditions. In any case, the 'embedded singers' very likely acted both as cantors in inclusive practices and as performers in exclusive ones.

[7] Which, however, often forms a sort of 'watertight compartment': a truly comparative approach between musical practices in the missions (and colonies) and musical practices on European soil is still heavily underdeveloped. See D. V. Filippi, 'Songs in Early Modern Catholic Missions: Between Europe, the Indies, and the "Indies of Europe"', in *Vokalpolyphonie zwischen Alter und Neuer Welt: Musikalische Austauschprozesse zwischen Europa und Latein-Amerika im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. K. Pietschmann, *Troja: Jahrbuch für Renaissance-Musik*, 14 (2018), pp. 39–67.

afin de les animer davantage, nos François en cantent une Strophe en nostre langue, puis les Seminaristes une autre en Huron, et puis tous ensemble en chantent une troisiesme, chacun en sa langue avec un bel accord; cela leur agrée tant qu'ils font retentir par tout cette chanson saincte et sacrée … J'ay ouy chanter les François, les Montagnez et les Hurons tous ensemble les articles de nostre creance, et jaçoit qu'ils parlassent en trois langues, ils s'accordoient si gentiment qu'on prenoit grand plaisir à les ouïr.[8]

In order to further encourage them [the natives], our Frenchmen sing a stanza in our language, then the Seminarians sing another stanza in Huron [Wendat], and then they sing all together a third stanza, each in their own language with a beautiful consonance; they like it so much that they make this song resound everywhere … I have heard Frenchmen, Montagnais [Innu] and Hurons sing together the articles of our faith, and even though they used three [different] languages, they harmonised so nicely that it was a great pleasure to hear them.

Based on these and myriad other documents, thus, we know that pilgrims from many different European countries sang 'litanies and psalms' in processions,[9] that the faithful and newly converted in Europe and in missionised countries learned to sing doctrinal songs (and more),[10] that German-speaking lands (and other Central European areas) had a rich tradition of vernacular religious songs predating the Reformation,[11] and that virtually every spiritual movement in the late Middle Ages and the early modern era – from the Franciscans[12] to the Devotio moderna[13] to

[8] Quoted in P.-A. Dubois, *De l'oreille au cœur: Naissance du chant religieux en langues amérindiennes dans les missions de Nouvelle-France, 1600–1650* (Sillery, Québec, 1997), p. 121.

[9] On the litany as a hinge between popular and learned practices, see R. L. Kendrick, 'Honore a Dio, e allegrezza alli santi, e consolazione alli putti: The Musical Projection of Litanies in Sixteenth-Century Italy', *Sanctorum*, 6 (2009), pp. 1000–32.

[10] See N. O'Regan, 'Music, Memory, and Faith: How Did Singing in Latin and the Vernacular Influence What People Knew About Their Faith in Early Modern Rome?', *The Italianist*, 34 (2014), pp. 437–48; Filippi, 'Songs in Early Modern Catholic Missions', with further literature.

[11] See at least W. Bäumker, *Das katholische deutsche Kirchenlied in seinen Singweisen von den frühesten Zeiten bis gegen Ende des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts*, i (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1886); H. Schmidt, 'Gemeindegesang. A: Katholisch', *MGG Online*, ed. Laurenz Lütteken (2016–), https://www.mgg-online.com/mgg/stable/46901; C. Möller (ed.), *Kirchenlied und Gesangbuch: Quellen zu ihrer Geschichte; Ein hymnologisches Arbeitsbuch* (Tübingen, 2000). See also A. J. Fisher, *Music, Piety, and Propaganda: The Soundscapes of Counter-Reformation Bavaria* (New York, 2014), who offers important materials and reflections on the role of song cultures within the confessional issues of early modern Bavaria.

[12] A good place to start is F. Guilloux, 'Les mouvements franciscains et la chanson religieuse (XIII^{e}–XVI^{e} siècles): Prospectives bibliographiques', *Études franciscaines*, n.s. 2 (2009), pp. 189–204.

[13] See U. Hascher-Burger, *Singen für die Seligkeit: Studien zu einer Liedersammlung der Devotio moderna: Zwolle, Historisch Centrum Overijssel, coll. Emmanuelshuizen, cat. VI* (Leiden and Boston, 2007), and other publications by the late Dr. Hascher-Burger.

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the Jesuits[14] – generated a copious repertoire of songs, at least partly destined to communal singing. The list of more or less documented practices and traditions could continue: it is, in a certain sense, a puzzle in which many of the dots are already there, only waiting for us to draw the connecting lines and make sense of the resulting picture, reflecting specifically on the practice of communal singing. This contribution aims to be an effort in that direction, in three steps: first I will suggest the possible causes of the historiographic deafness just mentioned, then I will offer a case study about late-fourteenth- to early-seventeenth-century Milan, and finally I will tentatively summarise the phenomenology, and attempt an interpretation, of communal singing in early modern Catholicism.[15]

AN INAUDIBLE SINGING?

The first, perhaps obvious, reason why music historiography has yet sufficiently to recognise the fuller extent and meaning of shared singing practices in early modern Catholic communities lies in the discipline's predominant focus on learned practices, especially those attested by extant written sources. Only in the last two decades has research on sacred music in the early modern era started to give attention to the musical experiences and practices of larger communities vis-à-vis the long-established emphasis on the elites.[16] This re-orientation derives from the reception of broader historiographical trends and scholarly developments of the last four decades, including the rise of social history, the renewed interest in 'popular culture' and in its interaction with other layers of the cultural system

[14] For a review of the abundant literature, see D. V. Filippi, 'Retrieving the Sounds of the Old Society: For a History of Historiography on Jesuits and Music', *Jesuit Historiography Online* (2016), https://referenceworks.brill.com/display/entries/JHO/COM-192554.xml.

[15] Whereas this historiographical label might seem too generic or ambitious, and at risk of overlooking the differences between different areas and periods, I tend to think – in the footsteps of its inventor, the historian John O'Malley – that it allows a unique insight into the 'variety and vitality' of Catholic things, invites fresh comparisons and encourages the adoption of a longue-durée perspective, breaking hackneyed periodisation schemes. See Kathleen M. Comerford and Hilmar M. Pabel (eds.), *Early Modern Catholicism: Essays in Honour of John W. O'Malley, S.J.* (Toronto, 2001), Preface, p. ix.

[16] Two remarkable examples are X. Bisaro, *Chanter toujours: Plain-chant et religion villageoise dans la France moderne (XVIe–XIXe siècle)* (Rennes, 2010) and Fisher, *Music, Piety, and Propaganda*. See also the studies collected in S. Nanni (ed.), *La musica dei semplici: L'altra Controriforma* (Rome, 2012), and in D. V. Filippi and M. Noone (eds.), *Listening to Early Modern Catholicism: Perspectives from Musicology* (Leiden, 2017).

and the holistic attention to sonic phenomena prompted by historical sound studies.

A second reason resides, in my view, in the prevailing compartmentalisation of music-historical research, both in terms of synchronic intradisciplinary boundaries and of diachronic periodisation. As to the synchronic aspect, only rarely is the abundant work of 'hymnologists' incorporated into standard music-history narratives.[17] Diachronically, it is only by embracing a longue-durée perspective, cutting across the artificial boundaries of epochs (Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque) and centuries, that we become better aware of the persistence of certain phenomena (sometimes even repertoires) and of their almost constant presence within the religious experience of Christian communities. Similarly, a more intensive interdisciplinary collaboration with historical ethnomusicologists would allow to include in the picture practices that lay outside or on the border of the learned tradition.[18] A case in point is that of the Italian lauda. Musicological studies of this genre have insisted particularly on its origins and early developments,[19] as well as on its fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century polyphonic manifestations, especially in Florence and in the Veneto.[20] The prevailing focus on the written repertoire and on the lauda-sponsoring institutions, frequent dependence on literary studies of the genre, and the privileging of institutional and administrative sources rather than descriptive and contextual ones have at times obscured the variety of performance and reception options and downplayed the role of communal singing. Although some longue-durée continuities have been tracked, notably between the earlier Florentine (and Savonarolan) repertoire and the first

[17] See e.g. Walther Lipphardt and Markus Jenny, 'Hymnologie', *MGG Online*, ed. Laurenz Lütteken (2016–), https://www.mgg-online.com/mgg/stable/421628.

[18] See e.g. I. Macchiarella, 'Le manifestazioni musicali della devozione cristiana in Italia', in *Musica e culture*, Enciclopedia della musica, 3 (Turin, 2003), pp. 340–71; P. G. Arcangeli, R. Leydi, R. Morelli and P. Sassu (eds.), *Canti liturgici di tradizione orale*, 2nd edn (Udine, 2011). The forthcoming proceedings of the conference 'Ethnographical and Historical Perspectives on Music: Calling Disciplinary Distinctions into Question' (convened by Lars Berglund and Søren Møller Sørensen at the Royal Academy of Letters, Stockholm, in Sept. 2024) promise to offer further stimuli in that direction.

[19] M. Gozzi, 'Sulla necessità di una nuova edizione del laudario di Cortona', *Philomusica online*, 9/2 (2011), pp. 114–74, https://doi.org/10.6092/1826-9001.9.790, is a useful gateway to the vast literature.

[20] See, among others, F. Luisi (ed.), *Laudario Giustinianeo*, 2 vols. (Venice, 1983); B. Wilson, *Music and Merchants: The Laudesi Companies of Republican Florence* (Oxford and New York, 1992); W. F. Prizer, '"Laude di popolo, laude di corte": Some Thoughts on the Style and Function of the Renaissance Lauda', in P. Gargiulo (ed.), *La musica a Firenze al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico* (Florence, 1993), pp. 167–94; P. P. Macey, *Bonfire Songs: Savonarola's Musical Legacy* (Oxford and New York, 1998); G. Cattin, *Studi sulla lauda offerti all'autore da F. A. Gallo e F. Luisi* (Rome, 2003).

collections promoted by Filippo Neri's Oratorians in Rome from the 1560s,[21] there is a dearth of information regarding the wider dissemination and especially the concrete use of the lauda (how, where and when laude were performed) in other parts of Italy, and about the interconnections between different lauda repertoires and lauda 'users' – notably the Schools of Christian Doctrine, the confraternities, the Jesuit network, other religious orders or communities and the local dioceses. Furthermore, if the Oratorian and Jesuit lauda of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is reasonably well studied,[22] the lauda of later periods, up to the nineteenth century (and beyond?), is known only through scattered sampling.[23] The interaction between old and new lauda repertoires and other layers of confraternal and 'popular' religious song remains virtually unexplored.[24]

[21] See L. Schmidt, *Die römische Lauda und die Verchristlichung von Musik im 16. Jahrhundert* (Kassel, 2003); A. Piéjus, 'Artistic Revival and Conquest of the Soul in Early Modern Rome', in Filippi and Noone (eds.), *Listening to Early Modern Catholicism*, pp. 149–72.

[22] See at least, besides the titles quoted in the previous note, G. Rostirolla, D. Zardin and O. Mischiati, *La lauda spirituale tra Cinque e Seicento: Poesie e canti devozionali nell'Italia della Controriforma* (Rome, 2001); A. Piéjus, *Musique et dévotion à Rome à la fin de la Renaissance: Les laudes de l'Oratoire* (Turnhout, 2013); F. Cantone (ed.), *La lauda dell'Oratorio: Aspetti e funzioni* (Rome, 2018). Notice, however, the virtual lack of critical editions. The project 'LAUDARE – The Italian Lauda: Disseminating Poetry and Concepts Through Melody (12th–16th centuries)', funded by an ERC Advanced Grant for 2022–7 and directed by Francesco Zimei at the University of Trento, promises to generate significant new tools for the study of this repertoire.

[23] See e.g. F. Ghisi, 'Antiche canzoni popolari nella "Corona di sacre laudi" di Matteo Coferati (1689)', in *Liber amicorum Charles van den Borren* (Antwerp, 1964), pp. 69–81; E. Østrem and N. H. Petersen, *Medieval Ritual and Early Modern Music: The Devotional Practice of Lauda Singing in Late-Renaissance Italy* (Turnhout, 2008); B. Over, '"Convertire l'anime": Die Rolle der Musik in der inneren Mission Italiens', in R. Matheus, E. Oy-Marra and K. Pietschmann (eds.), *Barocke Bekehrungen: Konversionsszenarien im Rom der Frühen Neuzeit* (Bielefeld, 2013), pp. 195–235. See also D. D. P. Paulovich, 'La lauda spirituale in Istria dall'epoca rinascimentale ai giorni nostri', *Atti del Centro di Ricerche Storiche, Rovigno*, 39 (2009), pp. 95–166. The recent and invaluable account of the lauda from the perspectives of literature and of the history of spirituality, M. Leonardi, *Storia della lauda: Secoli XIII–XVI* (Turnhout, 2021), neglects the late developments, in spite of alluding to 20th-c. survivals of the lauda tradition (see p. 205).

[24] See the thought-provoking case of a mid-17th-c. collection from the northern Italian region of Trentino still including laude from the Roman-Oratorian repertoire of the previous century: R. Morelli, '"Promesso avea già di scoprirsi a noi . . . ": Don Giambattista Michi di Tesero e le ricerche sui canti di questua natalizio-epifanici in Trentino', in R. Morelli (ed.), *Dolce felice notte . . . : I sacri canti di Giovanni Battista Michi (Tesero 1651–1699) e i canti di questua natalizio-epifanici nell'arco alpino, dal Concilio di Trento alla tradizione orale contemporanea* (Trento, 2001), pp. 21–70. For connections with confraternal multipart song and other local traditions (including those based on texts in dialect, Sardinian, Corsican etc.), see I. Macchiarella and R. Milleddu, '"Bella festa si fa ncelu": Jesuits and Musical Traditions in the Heart of the Mediterranean', in *'Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth': Music and Sound in the Ministries of Early Modern Jesuits*, ed. D. V. Filippi, *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 3 (2016), pp. 415–36. For a non-strictly-academic approach

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Finally, a third reason for the scarce historiographical visibility of Catholic communal singing is connected with the fact that collective singing in the vernacular has been traditionally understood and described as a prerogative of Protestantism. Unquestionably, the Reformation did mark a turning point in the history of Christian singing and was a crucial accelerating factor for the spread of communal singing: so much so that in the subsequent period many Catholic singing practices manifestly responded to, or even explicitly aimed to counter, Protestant initiatives. Other traditions, however, continued, developed and systematised elements from the already rich pre-Reformation substratum, as some Catholic authors did not fail to point out.[25] It should be noted, in this connection, that the emphasis on liturgical life (strictly speaking) in the historiographical characterisation of early-modern confessions has contributed to maximise the difference: as is well known, whereas Luther embedded communal singing in the vernacular *within* the liturgy, thus further empowering the voice of the laity, the Catholic Church stuck to Latin as the official liturgical language and, with marginal though not negligible exceptions,[26] reserved communal singing for extra- and para-liturgical occasions. That, however, such occasions, increasingly explored by recent interdisciplinary research, were highly meaningful for the religious experience and the identity construction of believers goes, at this point, without saying.

'CHI IN PAROLE, CHI IN CANTO, E CHI IN CONTRAPONTO': COMMUNAL SINGING IN MILAN

In order to substantiate my above claims about the spread and variety of communal singing practices, I will now gather together some

to the problems of Italian (and European) religious song in the longue durée, see B. Scharf, *La canzone religiosa europea dal IV al XIX secolo* (Vatican City, 2020).

[25] E.g. the French Jesuit Michel Coyssard in his *Traicté du profit, que toute personne tire de chanter en la doctrine chrestienne, & ailleurs, les hymnes, & chansons spirituelles en vulgaire* (Treatise of the profit that everyone derives from singing, in the [classes of] Christian doctrine and elsewhere, hymns and spiritual songs in the vernacular), written in 1606 and printed (separately paginated) at the end of his *Sommaire de la doctrine chrestienne mis en vers françois: Avec les hymnes, & odes spirituelles, qu'on chante devant, & apres la leçon d'icelle* (Lyon, 1608); see esp. pp. 4–7. On Coyssard, see D. V. Filippi, 'A Sound Doctrine: Early Modern Jesuits and the Singing of the Catechism', *Early Music History*, 34 (2015), pp. 1–43, at p. 14, and the literature given there.

[26] Examples range from the inclusion of French *noëls* in Advent and Christmas liturgies to the performance of vernacular songs during the celebration of low Masses in Germany, France and other European countries; see D. V. Filippi, 'Hearing the Mass in the Early Modern Era: Three Variations', *Die Tonkunst*, 16 (2022), pp. 15–22.

evidence about such practices in Milan – as a representative (if not necessarily 'typical') centre of Catholic Italy – between the late fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries.[27]

One of the oldest and most curious singing traditions in Milan concerns the so-called 'cantegole' or 'cantegore'[28] (also 'cantilene' in Latin documents). The phenomenon is often mentioned in interdisciplinary literature, but has not received any attention by musicologists so far.[29] Attested at least from the late fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the cantegole consisted of begging songs performed around the city, normally by groups of girls (and sometimes women), on the vigils and feasts of St John the Baptist (24 June) and Sts Peter and Paul (29 June). Since the foundation of the Duomo (Milan's new cathedral) in 1387, the alms thus collected were primarily destined to finance the ongoing construction of the church.[30] The songs were performed in the cathedral and around the city by groups belonging to the different parishes, and the payment of the alms was duly recorded in the Duomo account books. The vestry board paid artists for decorating with images of the Madonna the torches and candles held by the singing girls.[31] Other documents indicate that sometimes even boys sang the cantegole: it is unclear whether these boys, for which the vestry board occasionally provided surplices, were in fact the Duomo choirboys.[32] No evidence has surfaced so far as to what kind of songs were actually performed, but it was certainly a practice involving non-specialised performers (notably girls) and attracting popular praise. Its association with sanctoral festivities occurring in late June, close to the summer solstice, suggests that the cantegole should be studied in comparison with other canti di

[27] The standard treatments of music and soundscape in Milan in the period are C. S. Getz, *Music in the Collective Experience in Sixteenth-Century Milan* (Aldershot, Hants., 2005) and R. L. Kendrick, *The Sounds of Milan, 1585–1650* (New York, 2002). See also M. Bizzarini et al. (eds.), *Vita musicale nella 'gran città' di Milano: Dagli Sforza all'età spagnola*, Studia Borromaica, 34 (Milan, forthcoming).

[28] The accent falls on the first *e* (cantégole). According to the *Lessico etimologico italiano*, vol. x, fasc. 93, ed. M. Pfister (Wiesbaden, 2008), col. 1513, the term derives from the Latin canticula (plural of canticulum, a diminutive for canticum, song).

[29] See the brief descriptions (with some imprecisions) in M. Saltamacchia, *Costruire cattedrali: Il popolo del Duomo di Milano* (Genoa, 2012), p. 34; P. Grillo, *Nascita di una cattedrale, 1386–1418: La fondazione del Duomo di Milano* (Milan, 2017), pp. 186–8. I plan to reassess the cantegole tradition more thoroughly in a forthcoming study.

[30] The officials of the Veneranda Fabbrica (the Duomo vestry board) obtained a privilege for the cantegole from Duke Filippo Maria Visconti in 1437: see *Annali della Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano dall'origine fino al presente*, 9 vols. (Milan, 1877–85), ii, pp. 72–3.

[31] See e.g. a document from 28 June 1410 published in *Annali della Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano*, App. i, p. 297.

[32] See e.g. a document from 31 Dec. 1435 in *Annali della Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano*, App. ii, p. 35.

questua (begging songs) traditionally performed in crucial moments of the liturgical and astronomical calendar in other Italian regions.[33]

As to the performance of laude in fifteenth-century Milan, the existing musicological literature says almost nothing.[34] A series of little-known manuscripts held at the Biblioteca Trivulziana, however, demonstrates that at least two confraternities of disciplini (or disciplinati) included the singing of laude in their mixed Latin/vernacular offices.[35] The manuscript Trivulziana Triv. 383, dated and subscribed on 17 September 1476, contains various offices of the disciplini di Sant'Agata.[36] Some well-known lauda texts are easily recognisable, and the rubrics make clear that they were sung (although the manuscript has, unsurprisingly, no notation). At fol. 31[r], for instance, we read the following:

Così come nuy havemo pregato el nostro salvatore in parolle, così lo pregaremo con alcuni versi in canto, dicendo:
Quando Signore Yhesù serò y may/grato e cognoscente
De li excelente doni che dato m'ay . . .

As we have prayed to our Saviour in words [i.e. reciting the prayers], we shall now pray to him by singing some verses, namely:
Quando Signore Yhesù serò y may . . .[37]

Similarly, the manuscripts Trivulziana Triv. 416, 417, 418 and 419 (again from the late fifteenth century, with signs of later use in the

[33] See Morelli (ed.), *Dolce felice notte*.

[34] Interdisciplinary studies regarding the lauda in Lombardy and Piedmont do not seem to have thematised performance issues, focussing instead on problems of philology, linguistics, history of literature or history of spirituality. See e.g. the bibliography given in P. G. Longo, *Letteratura e pietà a Novara tra XV e XVI secolo* (Novara and Borgomanero, 1986).

[35] For a broader treatment of the Milanese disciplini, see now my study '"In parole" and "in canto": The Songs and Prayers of the Disciplinati in Early Modern Milan', in Tess Knighton (ed.), *Listening to Confraternities: Spaces for Performance, Patronage and Urban Musical Experience* (Leiden, 2024), pp. 326–55. For previous discussions of the laude of the disciplinati outside Milan, see C. Barr, *The Monophonic Lauda and the Lay Religious Confraternities of Tuscany and Umbria in the Late Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, 1988); Prizer, 'Laude di popolo, laude di corte', pp. 170–1; and W. F. Prizer, 'Popular Piety in Renaissance Mantua: The Lauda and Flagellant Confraternities', in A. Zayaruznaya, S. Boorman and B. J. Blackburn (eds.), *Qui musicam in se habet: Studies in Honor of Alejandro Enrique Planchart* (Middleton, WI, 2015), pp. 183–221. The distinguished Italian philologist Ignazio Baldelli's 'La lauda e i disciplinati' (1960), now in his *Non dica ascesi, ché direbbe corto: Studi linguistici su Francesco e il francescanesimo*, Medioevo francescano: Saggi, 12 (Assisi, 2007), pp. 157–86, is typical in its complete disregard for performance issues.

[36] See G. Porro, *Catalogo dei codici manoscritti della Trivulziana* (Turin, 1884), p. 222; C. Santoro, *I codici medioevali della Biblioteca Trivulziana: Catalogo* (Milan, 1965), p. 57; and the relevant entry in Manus Online, https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/cnmd/0000196889.

[37] A widespread and long-lived lauda, attributed to Leonardo Giustinian and attested in many sources, up to Serafino Razzi's *Libro primo delle laudi spirituali* (Venice, 1563): see Luisi (ed.), *Laudario Giustinianeo*, index under *Quando Signor Iesù sarò*.

post-Sforza period),[38] containing the offices of the disciplini di Santa Marta, include several Latin songs, hymns, litanies and Italian laude, again with explicit rubrics about singing for several items. All in all, the five Trivulziana manuscripts demonstrate that confraternities in late-fifteenth-century Milan sang laude and Latin songs during their prayer gatherings. That Italian laude were part of a shared Milanese culture at different levels is further demonstrated by the presence of two polyphonic laude in the fourth of the Gaffurius Codices (*c.* 1507),[39] and by the quite frequent quotations from laude (as well as from Latin songs) in the sermons of such popular preachers as the Franciscans Bernardino Caimi (*c.* 1425–1500), Michele Carcano (1427–1484) and Bernardino de' Busti (*c.* 1450–*c.* 1513/15).[40]

For the decades of the 1520s and 1530s, a few testimonies inform us that the singing of children and that of confraternity members were among the main sonic ingredients of Milanese processions.[41] The chronicler Giovan Marco Burigozzo reports, for instance, about a procession of February 1521, organised in order to implore divine help against the imminent attack of Swiss forces: an Augustinian preacher, embracing the cross, opened the cortège marching under the snow, and was followed by

> uno numero innumerabile de puti, con le tonicelle bianche indosso, et andavano dreto cantanto et orando per la salute della città[42]
>
> an innumerable number [sic] of children, wearing white tunics, who walked singing and praying for the salvation of the city.

[38] See Porro, *Catalogo dei codici manoscritti della Trivulziana*, p. 222; Santoro, *I codici medioevali della Biblioteca Trivulziana*, pp. 71–2.

[39] *Facciam festa e giulleria* at the opening of the volume (see *Liber capelle ecclesie maioris: Quarto codice di Gaffurio*, Archivum musices metropolitanum Mediolanense, 16 (Milan, 1968), pp. v–vi; the corresponding folios were destroyed in a fire in 1906) and *Ognun driza al ciel el viso* at the end (facs., ibid., pp. 286–7 (fols. 143^{v}–144^{r}); online at https://www.gaffurius-codices.ch/s/portal/item/6562). On the important set of musical manuscripts prepared in the Duomo environment under Franchinus Gaffurius, see most recently *Reopening Gaffurius's Libroni*, ed. A. Pavanello, Studi e saggi, 40 (Lucca, 2021).

[40] See Longo, *Letteratura e pietà*, pp. 75–8, 423–6. Several other documents attest to this 'culture of the lauda' in the city: see my article 'The Culture of the Lauda in Early Modern Milan', *Music & Letters*, 106 (2025, forthcoming).

[41] On the music of Milanese processions in our period, see especially Getz, *Music in the Collective Experience*, ch. 4; Kendrick, *The Sounds of Milan*, pp. 142–52. In both cases, the focus falls on the comprehensive description of the rituals and on the sonic contributions by the clergy and by professional musicians, whereas communal singing is mentioned only in passing.

[42] G. M. Burigozzo, *Cronica milanese … dal 1500 al 1544*, edited in *Archivio storico italiano*, 3 (1842), pp. 421–60, at p. 436.

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This is remarkable, because it predates by fifteen years the official foundation of the Schools of Christian Doctrine by Castellino da Castello in 1536,[43] and shows that the tradition of teaching children to sing basic prayers (such as litanies and the like) and of showcasing their 'angelic' voices in public processions was already established in Milan. Another procession of April 1529, summoned by the Spanish Dominican preacher Tommaso Nieto in times of renewed military threats, was opened by 2,500 'putini et putine' (little boys and girls), with white tunics and, on their heads, silk bands with twigs. The cortège, including hundreds of men and women in sackcloth and barefoot, the confraternities, the regular clergy, the canons of the Duomo, the gentlemen and the secular authorities, carried around the city a tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament, concluding the procession in the cathedral. Interestingly, Burigozzo annotates that by listening to the preacher on that same day, he was able to understand that the procession was modelled on the Old Testament one that propitiated the fall of the walls of Jericho (see Joshua 6); here, however, the tabernacle substituted for the Ark and the voices of children (crying mercy) played the role of the famous trumpets: 'et in iscontro delle trombe volse che fossero le vose de' putini' (and instead of the trumpets [the friar] wanted the voices of the children to resound).[44] In the same procession, the disciplini (battudi) sang their litanies and prayers ('loro litanie et preghere').[45]

An entry of August 1568 in the journal of Giambattista Casale (a teacher and official in the Schools of Christian Doctrine) regarding the procession to the Duomo organised by the different porte, or districts, of the city and rechoreographed by Cardinal Archbishop Carlo Borromeo, shows that the singing of the children (litanies) and of the disciplini (psalms)[46] were once again among the relevant sonic ingredients:

prima andava avanti li piferonni: poi il confalone [di] Santo Ambrosio nostro patrone: poi tutti li figlioli de tutte le scholle de la dotrina christiana de quella porta: poi tutti li parochiani a doi a doi de quella porta: poi tutti li cilostri de le parochie: poi li cavaglieri, cioè li putini a cavalo: poi il cilostro di scutti: poi li

[43] P. F. Grendler, 'The Schools of Christian Doctrine in Sixteenth-Century Italy', *Church History*, 53 (1984), pp. 319–31, at p. 320; P. F. Grendler, 'Fifteenth-Century Catechesis, the Schools of Christian Doctrine, and the Jesuits', *Studia Borromaica*, 26 (2012), pp. 291–319, at pp. 302–3.

[44] Burigozzo, *Cronica milanese*, pp. 488–9.

[45] Ibid., p. 487. The procession is valuably discussed, although with some misinterpretations of the original text, in Getz, *Music in the Collective Experience*, pp. 126–7.

[46] Pending more accurate lexicological evaluations, 'psalms' might also have the generic meaning of 'sacred songs' here.

trombetti: et in mezo li era unaltra cobia de violonni: et passava posso la messa granda del domo con grande honor di Dio et de la Madona: et grande edificatione de tutto il populo: perché non se sentiva se non a lodare il Signor. Li fanciulli cantavano le lettanie: et li disciplini cantavano de belli Salmi, che certo era una iubilatione granda da sentire.[47]

first came the pifferi (pipers), then the gonfalon (banner) of St Ambrose, our patron saint; then all the children of all the Schools of Christian Doctrine of that porta; then the parishioners of that porta, two by two; then the processional torches of the parishes; then the cavalieri, that is the little boys on horseback; then the torch of the escutcheons;[48] then the trombetti; and in the middle there was another pair [*or* number] of violins: and [the procession] paraded after the High Mass at the Duomo, with great honour of God and Our Lady, and great edification of the whole people, since nothing else was heard except praises of the Lord. The children sang the litanies and the disciplini sang beautiful psalms: surely it was a great joy to hear them.

The Schools of Christian Doctrine were boosted from the mid 1560s under Borromeo, and the synergy with the Society of Jesus (whose adoption of singing in catechism classes had Spanish roots)[49] led to the publication of several significant lauda collections.[50] Some earlier catechetical booklets included one or a few laude as a complement to the main contents: for instance, the lauda *Miserere Redemptore/Jesu nostro dolce e santo* was printed at the end of the earliest extant such Milanese booklet, the *Interrogatorio del maestro al discipulo per instruir li fanciulli, et quelli che non sano, nella via de Dio*, from the mid 1530s.[51] By 1576, instead, entire publications (already known to scholars thanks especially to the studies of Giancarlo Rostirolla)[52] were dedicated to the laude:

[47] I quote the text as published by C. Marcora, 'Il diario di Giambattista Casale', *Memorie storiche della diocesi di Milano*, 12 (1965), pp. 209–437, at p. 215.

[48] The phrase is unclear: it might refer to the companies of disciplini (I thank Danilo Zardin for this suggestion).

[49] Filippi, 'A Sound Doctrine'.

[50] See Getz, *Music in the Collective Experience*, pp. 248–55.

[51] The publication has no imprint except for 'si vendeno sul corso de Porta Tosa' (sold on the Corso di Porta Tosa); Grendler, 'Fifteenth-Century Catechesis', p. 304, has proposed a dating after *c.* 1533–6; the *EDIT16* census of 16th-c. Italian editions has instead 'not earlier than 1537', based on G. B. Castiglione, *Istoria delle Scuole della dottrina cristiana fondate in Milano e da Milano nell'Italia ed altrove propagate* (Milan, 1800), pp. 23, 343. An exemplar of the *Interrogatorio* is in the Biblioteca Braidense, Milan, 24.19.A.9/1; two images are online at https://edit16.iccu.sbn.it/titolo/CNCE026873.

[52] See especially G. Rostirolla, 'Laudi e canti spirituali nelle edizioni della prima "controriforma" milanese' (1997), now in Rostirolla, Zardin and Mischiati, *La lauda spirituale tra Cinque e Seicento*, pp. 563–94.

1. *Lodi e canzoni spirituali per cantar insieme con la dottrina christiana* (Milan, 1576),[53] a collection including the notated monodic versions of six laude and further texts to be sung on the same tunes (according to the practice of 'cantasi come', sung to the tune of); significantly, the exemplar at the Biblioteca Braidense in Milan (Musica.B.39/3) is part of a contemporary miscellany binding it together with the Jesuit Diego de Ledesma's *Modo per insegnar la dottrina christiana* (Rome, 1573) and *Dottrina christiana, a modo di dialogo* (Milan, 1576), with manuscript additions;[54]
2. the companion *Li canti o arie conforme alle Lodi spirituali stampate, per cantar insieme con la dottrina christiana*, which contains four-voice polyphonic settings of the six laude already printed in *Lodi e canzoni* plus additional polyphonic items including litanies and falsobordone versicles;[55] the Milanese edition by Paolo Gottardo and Pacifico da Ponte of 1578 is now lost,[56] but its Turinese re-editions of 1579 and 1580 are extant;[57] a note printed on the title page is significant as to the inherent flexibility and accessibility of the repertoire: 'Et chi non volesse cantarle a più voci, si serva del canto solo' ('And whoever does not want to sing them in polyphony can use the canto part alone');
3. *Lodi devote per cantarsi nelle scole della dottrina christiana raccolte novamente* (Milan, 1586), containing only the texts of a selection of laude in most part different from that of the previous Milanese collections.[58]

[53] Listed as '1576b' in O. Mischiati and G. Rostirolla, 'Bibliografia delle fonti a stampa della lauda post-tridentina', in Rostirolla, Zardin and Mischiati, *La lauda spirituale tra Cinque e Seicento*, pp. 741–84.

[54] See D. V. Filippi, 'Gli attrezzi letterari e musicali di un catechista cinquecentesco: Appunti sulla miscellanea braidense Musica.B.39', in S. de Salvo Fattor and G. Rostirolla (eds.), *Tientalora: Studi per Francesco Luisi in occasione del suo 80º compleanno*, 2 vols. (Rome, 2023–4), i, pp. 115–28.

[55] The six polyphonic settings of the laude already printed monodically in the *Lodi e canzoni* of 1576 are transcribed in the appendix to Rostirolla, 'Laudi e canti spirituali nelle edizioni della prima "controriforma" milanese'.

[56] It was still extant in the late 17th c. according to Castiglione, *Istoria delle Scuole della dottrina cristiana*, pp. 117–18, n. 1, to which both Turrini and Rostirolla make reference: see M. Turrini, '"Riformare il mondo a vera vita christiana": le scuole di catechismo nell'Italia del Cinquecento', *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento/Jahrbuch des Italienisch-Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Trient*, 8 (1982), pp. 407–89, at p. 485, and Rostirolla, 'Laudi e canti spirituali nelle edizioni della prima "controriforma" milanese', p. 577.

[57] See Mischiati–Rostirolla 1579/1b and 1580/1c. There are two exemplars at the Biblioteca Braidense: Musica.B.33/2 (listed in *La musica nelle biblioteche milanesi: Mostra di libri e documenti 28 maggio–8 giugno 1963* (Milan, 1963), p. 11, no. 26, but temporarily unavailable as of 2023) and Musica.B.31/3.

[58] Mischiati–Rostirolla 1586/1. See Rostirolla, 'Laudi e canti spirituali nelle edizioni della prima "controriforma" milanese', pp. 578–80. In the unicum at the Braidense (ZY.1.41), five melodies are handwritten on the blank fols. 23^{r}–24^{r}.

In his hagiographic and elegantly written *Vita Caroli Borromei* of 1586, Agostino Valier, bishop of Verona and friend of the late Milanese cardinal, praised Borromeo's dedication to the Schools of Christian Doctrine and to the confraternities, and remarked on its sonic outcomes:

Sic enim interdum diebus festis innumerabiles puerorum et puellarum voces emittebantur, suaviter canentium et laudantium Deum, ut angelorum chori representari viderentur.[59]

In fact sometimes on festive days innumerable voices of boys and girls resounded, sweetly singing and praising God, so that the choirs of angels seemed to be made present.

From other documents we learn that the participation in communal singing was not limited to schoolchildren and confraternity members. Summoning the faithful of the various parishes to the Quarantore (Forty Hours') Eucharistic adoration in the Duomo in Lent 1582, Cardinal Borromeo explained in a circular to the priests that they should lead the faithful in procession to the cathedral:

nella qual processione canteranno salmi e litanie, tutti quelli che sapranno; e gli altri con silentio diranno ciascheduno per sé la corona o il rosario della Madonna.[60]

and during that procession those [of the faithful] who know how to sing will sing psalms and litanies; the others will silently recite the crown[61] or the rosary of Our Lady each on their own.

During the lockdown in the terrible plague of 1576, Borromeo instituted a seven-fold outdoor daily prayer, announced by the pealing of bells: people could participate from their homes, staying at the windows, while specially appointed persons led the prayer from the streets and squares in each neighbourhood.[62]

Ordinò ... che 'l popolo dalle dette finestre, balconi o porte respondesse a certi deputati ... alle litanie, o salmi, over orationi, chi in parole (altamente però), chi

[59] A. Valier, *Vita Caroli Borromei* (Milan, 1587), pp. 35–6.

[60] *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis a Carolo cardinali S. Praxedis archiepiscopo condita, Federici card. Borromaei archiepiscopi Mediolani iussu undique diligentius collecta, & edita* (Milan, 1599), p. 1011.

[61] Probably the Franciscan Crown of the Seven Joys of Mary, on which see L. Bracaloni, 'Origine, evoluzione ed affermazione della Corona francescana mariana', *Studi francescani*, 29 (1932), pp. 257–95.

[62] See R. Chiu, 'Singing on the Street and in the Home in Times of Pestilence: Lessons from the 1576–78 Plague of Milan', in M. Corry, M. Faini and A. Meneghin (eds.), *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy* (Leiden and Boston, 2018), pp. 27–44. Borromeo's instructions are included in *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, pp. 244–6.

in canto, e chi in contraponto sonoro e musicale compassionoso e divoto; cantandosi e rispondendosi da l'una e l'altra parte a vicenda, e choro a choro d'esse contrade da gli huomini, donne, fanciulli e fanciulle, grand'e piccioli, giovani e vecchi, a tal che la gran città parve la gran chiesa del Paradiso.[63]

He ordered … that the people, from the said windows, balconies or doors, should answer to the litanies, or psalms, or prayers [intoned by] some appointed persons, either in words (aloud), in chant or in a piteous and devout musical counterpoint; men, women, boys and girls, grown-ups and children, young and old, singing and answering each other in alternating choirs from the aforementioned quarters, so that the great city resembled the great church of Heaven.

It seems especially remarkable that this testimony distinguishes three kinds of vocal response to the cues of the prayer leaders: recitation ('in parole'), monodic singing or chanting ('in canto') and polyphonic singing ('in contraponto sonoro et musicale'), the last one probably referring to falsobordone-like improvised practices, potentially of 'popular' origin, that might have been cultivated in confraternities. Other sources, notably Bascapè's life of Borromeo,[64] explain that the songs and prayers were included in specially printed booklets[65] and that the archbishop himself sometimes personally selected the singing leaders: 'qui praecinerent ipse deligebat'.[66]

On more festive and less exceptional occasions too Borromeo promoted communal singing, for instance before and after the celebration of the sacrament of confirmation. In a printed avviso of May 1583, the archbishop ordered the parish priests of the diocese

di condur tutti loro [i.e. i cresimandi] processionalmente alla chiesa deputata ove faremo questo santo ministerio, cantando letanie, salmi, et altre devote orationi, e poi cresimati, et data la benedittione li ricondurrete col medesimo ordine a casa.[67]

[63] G. Bugati, *Aggiunta dell'historia universale et delle cose di Milano … dal 1566 fin'al 1581* (Milan, 1587), p. 156. The passage is quoted and translated in C. S. Getz, *Mary, Music, and Meditation: Sacred Conversations in Post-Tridentine Milan* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2013), pp. 314–15, 70–1, respectively: I have double-checked the text in the original and accordingly made a new translation. A similar testimony is in U. Monti, 'Delle cose più notabili successe nella città di Milano', i: Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, ms. P 248 sup., fol. 109^{v}.

[64] C. Bascapè, *De vita et rebus gestis Caroli S.R.E. cardinalis tituli S. Praxedis archiepiscopi Mediolani libri septem* (Ingolstadt, 1592), book 4, ch. 7.

[65] In all likelihood the *Antiphonae, psalmi, preces, et orationes, ad usum supplicationum tempore pestis* (Milan, 1577), as suggested by Chiu, 'Singing on the Street', p. 32.

[66] See also D. V. Filippi, 'Carlo Borromeo e la musica, "a lui naturalmente grata"', in F. Luisi and A. Addamiano (eds.), *Atti del congresso internazionale di musica sacra (Roma, 26 maggio–1 giugno 2011)*, 3 vols. (Vatican City, 2013), ii, pp. 665–76, at p. 673.

[67] Milan, Biblioteca del Capitolo Metropolitano, Fondo liturgico, cartella 2, fasc. 5, fol. 27b^{r}.

to lead all [the candidates for confirmation] in procession to the appointed church where we shall perform this holy function, singing litanies, psalms and other devout prayers; after the confirmation and the blessing you will lead them back home in the same way.

Furthermore, as we can read in the journals of the masters of ceremonies of the Duomo,[68] Borromeo, with his characteristic attention to detail, commanded that the faithful should not be dismissed immediately after receiving confirmation, but rather:

iussit quod viri confirmati introducerentur in capellam lateralem ubi aliquis parochus caneret cum illis litanias, et ita factum est. Idem deinde fecerunt mulieres.[69]

he ordered that the men who had received confirmation be ushered into a side chapel, where a parish priest would sing the litanies with them, and so it was done. Afterwards the women did the same.

Examples could be multiplied. In his fervent *Libretto de i ricordi al popolo della città et diocese di Milano* (Little book of reminders to the people of the city and diocese of Milan) of 1578, Borromeo recommended to the faithful:

Negotiando o lavorando, procura di occupar la mente in qualche cosa spirituale, come in quel che faceva o diceva Christo nostro Signore o alcun santo, o in salmeggiare o cantare cose spirituali.[70]

While attending to your business or work, try to engage your mind in something spiritual – for instance what Christ our Lord, or some saint, used to do or say – or in singing psalms or spiritual songs.

And especially to fathers and mothers:

Veda che in casa non vi siano libri cattivi o pitture dishoneste, et non si cantino canzone lascive, ma vi siano delle spirituale e christiane, et si cantino delle laude et cose divote.[71]

See to it that in the house there are no bad books or indecent paintings, but spiritual and Christian ones, and that no lascivious songs are sung, but laude and devout pieces.

Clearly, Borromeo, just like many other early modern Church authorities, aimed at implementing a shared culture of devotional

[68] The series of manuscripts is held in the library of the Metropolitan chapter: see F. Ruggeri, 'I diari dei cerimonieri del Duomo di Milano: Inventario del fondo liturgico dell'archivio del capitolo metropolitano (cartelle 1–23)', *Ricerche storiche sulla Chiesa ambrosiana*, 21 (2003), pp. 199–232.

[69] Milan, Biblioteca del Capitolo Metropolitano, Fondo liturgico, cartella 2, fasc. 5, fol. 31^{v}.

[70] Carlo Borromeo, *Libretto de i ricordi al popolo della città et diocese di Milano* (Milan, 1578), fol. 16^{v}.

[71] Ibid., fol. 23^{v}.

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song that might support spiritual life and obliterate the morally dangerous secular repertoire.[72]

The regole (rules) of confraternities, among other documents, demonstrate that the traditions of communal singing continued into the seventeenth century. Those of the Confraternità di San Giovanni Battista del Confalone in 1615, for instance, establish that

> Anderemo tutti in Processione sotto il nostro Confalone, ogni volta che ci sarà dall'Arcivescovo comandato, & ordinato dalli nostri Officiali maggiori … Andando cantaremmo [sic] sempre alcune di quelle orationi che saranno al proposito della festa, o del caso, per la quale si farà la processione.[73]
>
> Each time the Archbishop commands it, and our principal officers give orders, we shall all go in procession under our gonfalon … While marching, we shall always sing some prayers apt to the feast or to the occasion for which the procession is done.

Similarly, in the rules issued in 1625 for the joint processions of the disciplini during Easter Time, the members are recommended to sing the hymn *Veni creator Spiritus*, and then 'the Seven Penitential Psalms with the litany … and other psalms, hymns and prayers … slowly and devoutly, only in order to please God and to edify your neighbour'.[74]

All in all, the available evidence about early modern Milan describes a rich tradition of communal singing. Shared singing expressed collective devotion and individual participation and voiced a sense of belonging and community, even in difficult times. The main but not exclusive circles for its cultivation were the Schools of Christian Doctrine (especially for children) and the confraternities (for adults). Whereas its most striking public manifestations happened during processions, church leaders and pastors encouraged the use of spiritual songs on other occasions, as well as in daily life. As already suggested, the case of Milan is not exceptional: rather, it is exemplary of a largely shared approach to singing, which in the last part of this contribution I shall frame in its general terms.

[72] Contemporary Christian leaders from virtually all denominations voiced similar concerns: see e.g. C. Bertoglio, *Reforming Music: Music and the Religious Reformations of the Sixteenth Century* (Berlin, 2018), ch. 4.

[73] *Regola della Confraternita di S. Gio. Battista del Confalone, erretta da santo Carlo cardinale Borromeo arciuescouo di Milano, nella chiesa di S. Gio. Battista di Porta Tosa* (Milan, 1615), p. 21.

[74] *Ordini da osservarsi per le trè processioni generali che si fanno la 4. 5. & 6. dominica dopò Pasca di Resurrettione di N.S. da li scolari penitenti della città di Milano, & sua diocesi, con le preci et oration da farsi in dette processioni* (Milan, 1625), p. 10 (I have consulted the exemplar at Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, S.N#.E.III.18): 'li Sette Salmi con le Letanie & … altri salmi & inni & preci … adagio & divotamente, solo per piacere a Dio & per edificatione del prossimo'.

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THE WHAT AND WHY OF COMMUNAL SINGING

It may be helpful, in view of further studies and comparative investigations, to compile a short, although surely incomplete, catalogue of communal singing practices in early modern Catholic communities.[75]

Among the institutions that promoted the singing were confraternities, schools, Schools of Christian Doctrine, dioceses and parishes as well as religious orders with a missionary character (e.g. the Jesuits and the Franciscans). The singing was practised by men, women and children alike, often divided into homogeneous groups, and sometimes further subdivided (for instance between married women and widows). They often answered or followed the cues of cantors or clergymen. The most recurrent songs were the 'four main prayers' (Pater noster, Ave Maria, Credo, Salve Regina), which formed the basis for the teaching of Christian doctrine; litanies; hymns, sequences and rhymed prayers; canticles and psalms (notably the *Miserere*); Latin and vernacular songs of the various local traditions (laude, cantiques, cantares, Leisen and so on).

Various forms of singing were used, including alternatim, call-and-response (typically for the litany) and strophic forms. At times, the people answered with refrains to stanzas sung by cantors or clerics. Extending an observation made by Remi Chiu about the litany,[76] it can be said that the 'complete meaning' of all these responsorial forms 'emerges in performance only through the coordinated participation' of a community. Often, appropriate methods for teaching the songs and supporting the performance were implemented: e.g. by preparing and disseminating printed texts in loose sheets or booklets, by having preliminary rehearsals with selected singers and by explicitly prescribing the multiple repetition of stanzas.[77]

Communal singing typically happened during processions (which, as is well known, were quite frequent at the time); before, during and after catechism or school classes; during local pilgrimages (e.g. the Seven Churches itinerary in Rome) and long-distance ones (e.g. Holy Year pilgrimages such as the ones mentioned at the start of the present article); at confraternity gatherings; on the occasion of

[75] Without, of course, implying that any community or group in any period practised *all* the following.

[76] Chiu, 'Singing on the Street', p. 32.

[77] The popular missions conducted by such Jesuits as Paolo Segneri senior (1624–1694) exemplify virtually all of this: see B. Majorana, 'Musiche voci e suoni nelle missioni rurali dei gesuiti italiani (XVI–XVIII secolo)', in Nanni (ed.), *La musica dei semplici*, pp. 125–54; Over, 'Convertire l'anime'; and my forthcoming study 'Sonic Weapons Against Sin: The Sounds and Songs of Early Modern Popular Missions'.

funerals and annuals; during popular missions; at the Forty Hours and other paraliturgical services. In certain environments and situations there was shared singing also during properly liturgical celebrations (including at Mass), as well as in association with more or less orthodox popular rituals.[78]

The environments in which communal singing took place were typically churches, oratories, schools, but also homes, gardens, streets and squares. Geographically, the singing practices were spread both in Catholic Europe and in extra-European missions.

As to the motives for which communal singing was encouraged and practised, different reasons and aims came into play, as more or less explicitly articulated in contemporary texts. First were powerful biblical archetypes associated with communal singing in Christian imagination: from the universal praise of many Old Testament psalms and canticles to Paul's recommendation to 'sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves' (Ephesians 5:19), and to the mention of the 'great multitude in heaven, saying "Hallelujah!"' in the book of Revelation (19:1 and passim). But of course, beyond the biblical and doctrinal background, there were pragmatic advantages. On the one hand, singing was meant to support and focus collective prayer, to help the memorisation and appropriation of catechetical contents and, conversely, to obliterate inappropriate secular songs and their own contents (this is a refrain that recurs over and over again in early-modern discussions of the topic). On the other hand, singing enabled the faithful to actively interact and meaningfully participate in spiritual exercises and collective rituals; it helped unite the participants, forming community through bodily involvement, thus fostering a sense of belonging and a collective identity. This, in turn, resonated with specific aspects of Catholic theology: the Austrian Jesuit Georg Scherer (*c.* 1540–1605), for instance, underscored how the bodily involvement of participants in Corpus Christi processions corresponded and 'answered' to the substantial presence of Christ in the sacramental species.[79]

When different groups of singers were involved, their alternation and interaction also helped them represent and perform their different and complementary roles in the community (e.g. clergy vs

[78] Interesting documents are to be found in the acts of councils and synods: see e.g. C. Corrain and P. Zampini, *Documenti etnografici e folkloristici nei sinodi diocesani italiani* (Bologna, 1970).

[79] See Daniele V. Filippi, 'A Multimedia Response to the Real Presence: The Jesuit Georg Scherer on Corpus Christi Processions in Early Modern Vienna', *Journal of the Alamire Foundation*, 15 (2023), pp. 203–21.

laity, men vs women, adults vs children). Such cross-gender and multi-age singing practices thus helped enact the community in a richer and more representative way than other liturgical, paraliturgical or devotional practices. On a more practical plane, singing was useful in order to discipline the crowds, pace movements during processions and other rituals-in-space, entertain during waiting times and alleviate boredom. Examples from missionary lands also elucidate the special advantage of using songs in multilingual contexts: one and the same tune could unify the prayers of different linguistic groups (this happened also on European soil, especially in rural regions where the people spoke local dialects, not the standard language).

We should, however, at least partially rebalance the picture by observing that while communal singing per se (outside the liturgy) raised virtually no objection among Catholics, the very idea of singing religious songs *in the vernacular* was deemed – in certain circumstances and notably in confessionally debated areas – controversial, even suspect, and consequently thwarted. The reason resided in the prominent role that vernacular spiritual songs famously played in Protestant circles. Such influential Jesuit catechists and authors as Diego de Ledesma (1524–1575), Michel Coyssard (1547–1623) and Guillaume Marc (1574–1637/8) felt compelled to caution their readers on the topic, justify themselves and clarify the historical and theological reasons for adopting vernacular songs.[80] Two attitudes coexisted among many early modern Catholics: on the one hand, the awareness that communal singing practices predated the Reformation, and on the other the somewhat uncomfortable realisation of the unprecedented role these played in Protestant life and propaganda. 'Hymni Lutheri animos plures quam scripta et declamationes occiderunt' ('Luther's hymns have killed more souls than his writings and declamations'), the Jesuit Adam Contzen (1571–1635) famously remarked in his *Politicorum libri decem* of 1621.[81] A French author wrote, regarding the success of Huguenot Psalms:

> il n'y a rien qui ayt tant facilité l'entrée aux nouveautez de ces nouvelles religions, ny qui leur ayt acquis l'oreille de la peu caute populace ... que le nouveau chant doux et chatouilleux de ces pseaumes rimez. C'a esté la chaîne et le cordage duquel, comme un autre Amfion Thebain, Luther et Calvin se sont servis pour attirer apres soy les pierres dont ils ont basty et fondé les murs de leur nouvelle

[80] D. V. Filippi, '"Catechismum modulans docebat": Teaching the Doctrine through Singing in Early Modern Catholicism', in Filippi and Noone (eds.), *Listening to Early Modern Catholicism*, pp. 129–48, at pp. 141–2.

[81] Quoted in D.-R. Moser, *Verkündigung durch Volksgesang: Studien zur Liedpropaganda und -katechese der Gegenreformation* (Berlin, 1981), p. 16.

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Babylone. Ils ont attiré les ames par ceste harmonie ainsi que les oyseleurs arrestent dans leur filets les vols entiers des oyseaux.[82]

nothing has facilitated the access to the novelties of these new religions, nor has gained them the ear of the unwary populace, … as the new sweet and beguiling singing of these psalms in rhyme. This is the chain and the rope of which, like Amphion of Thebes,[83] Luther and Calvin availed themselves in order to draw behind them the stones with which they have built and founded the walls of their new Babylon. They attracted souls by means of this harmony just as bird catchers capture with their nets entire flocks of birds.

Such striking success engendered reactions on the Catholic side; there was surely competition and censorship, as well as all those multiple and reciprocal processes of imitation, reworking and cross-fertilisation in the inter-, trans- and multi-confessional spaces which musicological research is increasingly revealing.[84] Xavier Bisaro has rightly spoken of a 'processus de territorialisation hymnodique de l'Europe moderne' (a process of hymnodic territorialisation in modern Europe).[85] A passage from the *Litterae annuae* for the year 1687 from the small Jesuit mission in Protestant Friedrichstadt, Schleswig-Holstein, shows that even in tranquil settings the sonic rivalry between the different confessions was an idée fixe (by the way, it also offers a further example of communal singing of vernacular songs at Mass in German-speaking areas, the so-called Deutsches Hochamt):

profuitque ad pietatem in sacello excitandam cantus in meliorem et faciliorem omnibusque jucundiorem methodum redactus, ita ut ipsi Lutherani palmam, quam in hoc genere sibi hactenus vindicabant, nunc ultro Catholicis hyatibus deferant, cupiantque passim ab iis discere, quos audiunt per totam ecclesiam in officio divino ad Kyrie, et Gloria, Credo, Sanctus etc. resonare tam apposite Germanicis rhythmis ad majestatem compositos hymnos.[86]

The songs adapted according to a better and easier method, more pleasing to everybody, were beneficial in order to excite piety in the chapel, so that the Lutherans themselves, who so far laid claim to the palm [of pre-eminence] in this genre, now spontaneously assign it to Catholic throats, and desire to learn from

[82] Florimond de Raemond, *Histoire de la naissance, progrez et decadence de l'hérésie de ce siècle* (Rouen, 1622), p. 1033, quoted in D. Launay, *La musique religieuse en France du Concile de Trente à 1804* (Paris, 1993), p. 62.

[83] According to Greek mythology, Amphion, son of Zeus and Antiope, 'built a wall around Thebes, by enchanting the stones with his lyre-playing' (A. Schachter, 'Amphion', *Brill's New Pauly*, https://doi.org./10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e118730).

[84] Bertoglio, *Reforming Music*, is an ideal guide to the literature on these phenomena.

[85] Bisaro, *Chanter toujours*, p. 119.

[86] Quoted in A. Heinz, 'Die Jesuiten als Förderer deutscher Messlieder: Ein frühes Zeugnis für die Praxis des "Deutschen Hochamts" (Friedrichstadt 1687)', *Liturgisches Jahrbuch*, 35 (1985), pp. 158–67, at p. 164.

them the hymns to the [divine] Majesty so aptly composed on German verses which they hear resounding in the whole church during the divine service at the Kyrie, and at the Gloria, Credo, Sanctus etc.

CONCLUSION

In this study I have aimed at showing that communal singing was significant and almost ubiquitous (if not always uncontroversial) in early modern Catholicism, despite its neglect in music historical narratives and the scarcity of specific assessments in the scholarly literature. This realisation has of course several implications.

From a musicological perspective, if indeed we expand our historical understanding of music along the lines of Christopher Small's concept of 'musicking',[87] and thus construe it as a spectrum of practices ranging from basic chanting to the most demanding polyphonic performances, we should recognise that collective singing constituted a hidden layer at the base of many Catholics' experience of music. Moreover, this layer intersected in multiple ways with 'higher' levels of musicking: because the same song – say an Oratorian lauda with late-medieval Florentine roots in early-seventeenth-century Rome – could be performed in a polyphonic arrangement by outstanding professional musicians during a public event, or by the members of a devout family at home with a spinet accompaniment; it could be intoned monophonically by the crowds during a pilgrimage to the Seven Churches, or reworked as a small-scale concertato piece by a professional composer of the post-Palestrinian generation.

From an interdisciplinary perspective, the study of collective singing (combined with that of other linguistic and non-linguistic uses of the voice in religious practices[88]) reveals another side of the lay experience, emphasising their active role. Catholic soundscapes tend to be depicted by scholars in passive terms (sometimes all but inevitably, as in the burgeoning scholarship on bells): the faithful are mostly described as *exposed to* or *acted upon by* sounds, not as *agents* involved in the shaping of soundscapes. Thus, the study of communal singing enriches the possible answers to the question 'How did it sound to be a Catholic in the early modern era?' and, more broadly, contributes to a better understanding of the Catholic experience. Work in this direction involves, among other things, re-assessing para- and extraliturgical events as fundamental ingredients of Catholic life,

[87] C. Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, CT, 1998).
[88] See e.g. Majorana, 'Musiche voci e suoni nelle missioni rurali'.

beyond liturgy strictly speaking, and realising the existence of grey areas between devotion and liturgy, with a whole spectrum of situations between the two poles.

It is to be hoped that further musicological and interdisciplinary research will shed new light on the various singing practices of early modern Catholics, first of all by gathering and analysing the evidence scattered in different sources (from general chronicles to the descriptions of processions, from narrative accounts to the rules of confraternities and schools, from missionary reports to song booklets and broadsides). Furthermore, research should better determine the religious, cultural and social meanings of such practices, and track the similarities or differences between the various areas and periods (notably comparing European lands and extra-European missions, as well as confessionally contested vs homogeneous areas). In this sense, the study of the singing practices promoted by the Jesuits seems especially promising, given the variety of situations and at the same time the intensive exchange of experiences within their international network. Another significant field is that of confraternities, which interdisciplinary research is increasingly exploring not only in their medieval heyday, but in the longue durée.[89] Aspects regarding the roles of different voices are also worthy of further investigation: notably the cultural and anthropological connotations of the voices of children, women and specific social groups.[90] It will be also important to consider with renewed attention the relations and interactions between learned and popular, inclusive and exclusive practices – notably for those repertoires, such as the Italian lauda, that cut across those strata, but whose musicological treatment has privileged, so far, the learned/professional layer. Finally, of great promise will be comparing such practices to those of non-Catholic Christian communities, in order to integrate all these phenomena into a more comprehensive understanding of communal singing in the early modern era.

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[89] See Knighton (ed.), *Listening to Confraternities*.

[90] On the voices of children, a good starting point is offered by the rich materials collected in the virtual exhibition 'Vox puerorum: La voix des enfants à l'époque moderne', curated by the late Xavier Bisaro, https://voxpuerorum.cantus-scholarum.univ-tours.fr/.

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