Recovering the Music of Serafino Aquilano

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Abstract

Serafino Aquilano was the most famous poet-improviser of the fifteenth century. He worked at most of the major Italian courts and was widely acclaimed for his poetry and improvised music. After his death, twenty editions of his poetry were published (Marrone 2007). Though his poetry has been collected and has received attention from literary scholars (Kolsky 1990), there has been little study of the music associated with his poetry and of what it might reveal about musical culture in the late fifteenth century. I have assembled a corpus of thirty-five anonymous musical settings[1] of his *strambotti*. By analyzing these works, I provide new insights into the music and performance practices of poet-improvisers like Serafino Aquilano.

Born in Aquila in 1466 to a family of minor nobility, Serafino studied music with composer Guillaume Garnier in 1476 while serving as a page in the Count of Potenza's court. Upon his return to Aquila in 1481, Serafino began to study and sing Petrarchan verses to the lute. By 1491 Serafino was known widely in artistic and academic communities for his virtuosic abilities as a poet-improviser (Wilson 2020). From 1494 to 1500, the year of his death, Serafino worked in northern Italian cities and was supported by patrons of the arts such as Cardinal Ascanio Sforza (Kolsky 1990).

In 1504, Vincenzo Calmeta (1460–1508) wrote a biography of Serafino. Thanks to this resource, more is known about Serafino than any other poet-improviser of the period (Rossi 2002). I have

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[1] This number does not include all of the anonymous musical settings in the Naples repertory, see (Elmi 2023) for a detailed study of the repertoire.

found twenty-four poems by Serafino set to music, all of which use the text form known as the *strambotto*. The *strambotto* (also known as *ottava rima*) has eight eleven-syllable lines: a sestet followed by a couplet. The rhyme scheme is ABABABCC, and the entire text is set to two lines of music repeated four times: abababab. Serafino's *strambotti* are a formidable representation of musical economy. I have located forty-three surviving musical settings of his *strambotti* in manuscripts and prints. Most are anonymous and some are attributed to other musicians, including Bartolomeo Tromboncino, Marchetto Cara, and Jacopo Fogliano. Musical settings of Serafino's *strambotti* can be found in more than eighteen prints and manuscripts copied or printed between 1495 and 1510.

Anne MacNeil's article "'*A Voice Crying in the Wilderness*': Issues of Authorship, Performance, and Transcription in the Italian Frottola" (2020) and Blake Wilson's book *Singing to the Lyre in Renaissance Italy: Memory, Performance, and Oral Poetry* (2020) illuminate new approaches to authorship and the role of Renaissance poet-musicians in civic life. MacNeil discusses the problems surrounding the authorship of Serafino's *strambotti* found in Petrucci's *frottola* prints, suggesting that musicians watching Serafino's live improvisation could have transcribed what they heard. Wilson's book discusses in brilliant detail the lives, environments, and relationships of performers belonging to the *canterino* tradition and the humanist practice of *cantare ad lyram*, to which Serafino belongs. In addition to a cultural and historical investigation of oral poetry, Wilson brings attention to the modes of learning, memory, and performance that a poet-musician would have relied on during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.

Other settings of Serafino's *strambotti* might be original improvisations or compositions by other composers. Building on the work of Anne MacNeil (2020), Nino Pirrotta (1984), William Prizer (1975), and Blake Wilson (2020), and Bianconi and Rossi (1999), I transcribe and analyze these musical settings to explore the practice of improvising polyphony in the period.

I base my analysis of the music on the work of Julie E. Cumming and Peter Schubert and their explication of Renaissance improvisatory practices. A notable characteristic of Serafino's musical settings is the use of the cantus-tenor framework (Cumming 2013). The role of musical instruments is also of interest, as they relate to the embodied aspect improvisation, following Prizer's (1975) model to consider how finger shapes and patterns influenced improvisation practices.

Based on my study of this corpus of musical settings of Serafino's *strambotti*, I re-create a possible performance of poet-improvisers, composing and performing a historically informed musical setting of a *strambotto* text by Serafino for voice and viola da gamba. In the process, I embody Serafino's creative practices through my own improvisation and performance.

Résumé

Serafino Aquilano est reconnu comme étant le poète-improvisateur le plus célèbre du quinzième siècle. Il a travaillé dans la plupart des grandes cours italiennes et a été largement acclamé pour sa poésie et sa musique improvisée. Après sa mort, vingt éditions de sa poésie ont été publiées (Marrone 2007). Bien que sa poésie ait été recueillie et ait reçu l'attention des spécialistes de la littérature (Kolsky 1990), la musique associée à sa poésie et ce qu'elle peut nous apprendre sur la culture musicale de la fin du quinzième siècle n'ont guère été étudiés. J'ai rassemblé un corpus de trente-cinq mises en musique de ses *strambotti*. Grâce à l'analyse de ces œuvres, j'apporterai un nouvel éclairage sur la musique et les pratiques d'interprétation des poètes-improvisateurs comme Serafino Aquilano.

Né à Aquila en 1466 dans une famille de petite noblesse, Serafino a étudié la musique avec le compositeur Guillaume Garnier en 1476 alors qu'il était page à la cour du comte de Potenza. Dès son retour à Aquila en 1481, Serafino commença à étudier et à chanter des vers de Pétrarque au luth. En 1491, Serafino était largement connu dans les communautés artistiques et académiques pour ses capacités virtuoses de poète-improvisateur (Wilson 2020). De 1494 à 1500, l'année de sa mort, Serafino travailla dans les villes du nord de l'Italie et a bénéficié du soutien de mécènes tels que le cardinal Ascanio Sforza (Kolsky 1990).

En 1504, Vincenzo Calmeta (1460-1508) a écrit une biographie de Serafino. Nous en savons donc plus sur lui que sur n'importe quel autre poète-improvisateur de l'époque (Rossi 2002). J'ai trouvé vingt-quatre poèmes de Serafino mis en musique, qui utilisent tous la forme de texte

connue sous le nom de *strambotto*. Le *strambotto* (également connu sous le nom d'*ottava rima*) comporte huit lignes de onze syllabes : un sestet suivi d'un couplet. Le schéma de rimes est ABABABCC, sur deux lignes de musique, entendues quatre fois : abababab. Les *strambotti* de Serafino sont une formidable représentation de l'économie musicale. J'ai trouvé quarante-trois mises en musique de ses *strambotti* dans des manuscrits et des imprimés. La plupart sont d'origines anonymes et certaines sont attribuées à d'autres musiciens, dont Bartolomeo Tromboncino, Marchetto Cara et Jacopo Fogliano. Les mises en musique des *strambotti* de Serafino se retrouvent dans plus de dix-huit estampes et manuscrits, copiés ou imprimés entre 1495 et 1510.

L'article d'Anne MacNeil, « *"A Voice Crying in the Wilderness" : Issues of Authorship, Performance, and Transcription in the Italian Frottola*, » et le livre *Singing to the Lyre in Renaissance Italy : Memory, Performance, and Oral Poetry* (2020) de Blake Wilson éclairent de nouvelles approches de la paternité et du rôle des poètes-musiciens de la Renaissance dans la vie civique. Anne MacNeil a récemment discuté des problèmes entourant la paternité des *strambotti* de Serafino trouvés dans les gravures de *frottola* de Petrucci, suggérant que les musiciens observant l'improvisation en direct de Serafino auraient pu transcrire ce qu'ils entendaient (MacNeil 2020). D'autres arrangements des *strambotti* de Serafino ont pu être des improvisations originales ou des compositions d'autres compositeurs. J'ai transcrit et étudié ces arrangements musicaux pour comprendre la pratique de l'improvisation polyphonique à cette époque. Je m'appuie sur les travaux d'Anne MacNeil (2020), de Nino Pirrotta (1984), de William Prizer (1975) et de Blake Wilson (2020).

Je baserai mon analyse des pièces sur les travaux de Julie E. Cumming et Peter Schubert et leur explication des pratiques d'improvisation de la Renaissance. Une caractéristique notable des arrangements musicaux de Serafino est l'utilisation du cadre *cantus-tenor* (Cumming 2013). Le rôle des instruments de musique est également intéressant car il s'étend à l'incarnation de l'improvisation, impliquant des formes et des motifs de doigts (Prizer 1975).

Après avoir étudié mon corpus de mises en musique des strambotti de Serafino, je recrée un possible pratique de performance des poètes-improvisateurs, en composant et en interprétant une mise en musique historiquement informée d'un strambotto de Serafino pour voix et viole de gambe. Dans ce processus, j'espère incarner la pratique de performance de Serafino à travers ma propre improvisation et ma propre performance.

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In December 2024, I presented an abbreviated version of this thesis at the international symposium *Serafino Aquilano tra poesia e musica: nuove prospettive di ricerca,* hosted at the Galleria Borghese and Biblioteca Angelica in Rome, Italy. I want to thank Stanislas Germain-Thérien for his musical collaboration as *tenorista* in this project. While in Rome, I was grateful to meet Blake Wilson and Elizabeth Elmi, who have since then provided valuable feedback and insight on my research.

I want to dedicate this thesis to my wonderful grandparents, Hilde and Stanley Weitzner. They were here to witness the start of this journey and encouraged me until their last breath. Even though they are no longer here, they remain forever in my heart. I am honored to carry their memory with me.

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And last, I want to thank my parents for everything.

Notes to the Reader on Transcriptions and Note Names

The musical examples and transcriptions in this thesis feature added bar lines and reduced note values (i.e., halved note values: a semibreve in the source is transcribed as a half note) and use standardized clefs for each voice (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Clefs used in thesis transcriptions

Voice	Clef
Cantus	Treble clef
Altus	Octave tenor clef
Tenor	Octave tenor clef
Bassus	Bass clef

In my analyses of musical examples, I refer to notes by their abbreviated Guidonian hand note names. There are a few instances in the Corpus of notes falling below or above the range of the Guidonian hand, which are indicated in *italics* in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Note names used in musical analysis

Note name (used in thesis)	Full note name	International Pitch Notation
EE		*E2*
FF		*F2*
Gamma	ut	G2
A	re	A3
B	mi	B3
C	fa ut	C3
D	sol re	D3
E	la mi	E3
F	fa ut (Bass clef)	F3
G	sol re ut	G3
a	la mi re	A3
b	fa mi [natural]	B3
c	sol fa ut (C clef)	C4
d	la sol re	D4
e	la mi	E4
f	fa ut	F4
g	sol re ut	G4
aa	la mi re	A4
bb	fa mi [natural]	B4
cc	sol fa	C5
dd	la sol	D5
ee	la	E5
ff		*F5*
gg		*G5*

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Introduction

In medieval Europe, poet-musicians entertained and informed their communities by singing in the streets while playing an instrument. They would comment on municipal matters and provide oral histories to the public. Poetry was a standard mode of communication, typically sung or recited to a group in the vernacular (Martines 2001, 234). At the turn of the sixteenth century in Italy, a prolific poet-musician named Serafino Aquilano gained much renown for the moving nature of his performances (Kolsky 1990, 165). Upon Serafino's premature death in 1500, numerous editions of his vernacular poetry were published, a testament to his cultural impact across all social classes.

Musical settings of Serafino's poetry are primarily found in Northern Italian manuscripts such as MS Trivulziana 55 (I-Mt 55), MS Panciatichi 27 (I-Fn Panc 27), and MS F-Pn Rés.Vm7 676, as well as in Ottaviano Petrucci's four-voice *Frottola* prints (Bianconi and Rossi 1999). Serafino settings also exist in the earliest sources of lute tablature, including Bossinensis prints published by Petrucci (1509 and 1511) and the Capirola lute manuscript (c. 1517). Serafino was best known for his *strambotti,* and their extant musical settings will be the focus of this thesis. The music set to Serafino Aquilano's texts provides insights into how poetic and musical improvisations might have sounded to listeners and imitators. These sources raise questions of authorship since none of the musical settings are attributed to Serafino; most are in fact anonymous. Some settings are attributed in the sources to other Italian composers such as

Marchetto Cara, Jacopo Fogliano, and Bartolomeo Tromboncino (Bianconi and Rossi 1999).

Nonetheless, Serafino may have composed some of the musical settings himself (Haar 2001).

In her article "A Voice Crying in the Wilderness: Issues of Authorship, Performance, and Transcription in the Italian *Frottola*," Anne MacNeil argues that Petrucci's attributions are only sometimes accurate (2020, 468). She suggests that Petrucci's composer attributions may refer to composers who would have attended Serafino's performances and transcribed Serafino's works into music notation. It cannot be definitively proven that any of the surviving musical settings of Serafino's *strambotti* were composed by Serafino; however, one can discern the basic style features of the genre by examining the music of the surviving settings.

I have gathered thirty-three poems by Serafino set to music, all using the text form known as the *strambotto* (Appendix A). The *strambotto* (also known as *ottava rima*) comprises eight eleven-syllable lines: a sestet followed by a couplet. The rhyme scheme is ABABABCC, and the text is set to two lines of music (a and b) repeated four times: abababab. The anonymous musical settings of Serafino's *strambotti* appear in more than eighteen prints and manuscripts (see Appendix A: The Corpus of anonymous musical settings), copied or printed between 1490 and 1510 (Bianconi and Rossi 1999).

My analysis of the pieces is based on the work of Julie Cumming and Peter Schubert and their explication of Renaissance improvisatory practices. A notable characteristic of Serafino's musical settings is the use of the cantus-tenor framework (Cumming 2013, 178). Cumming's work on two-part imitation and modules within this framework provide a model for deciphering

what material is structural and what could have been improvised in Serafino's musical settings. Poet-musicians would sing the cantus while playing the tenor on a lute or bowed string instrument, often adding another voice on the same or a different instrument. The role of the musical instruments is therefore of particular interest for studying the embodiment of improvisation since finger shapes and interval patterns on the fingerboard would have affected the improvised instrumental voices (Prizer 1975, 232).

This thesis will discuss anonymous musical settings of Serafino's *strambotti* and throughout I will refer to the corpus of anonymous settings of Serafino's *strambotti* as 'the Corpus' (with a capital C). Chapter 1 contains background information on Serafino Aquilano, the impact of his performances, and the dissemination of vernacular poetry. Chapter 2 discusses the music manuscripts and prints that contain his *strambotto* settings. Chapter 3 analyzes four anonymous settings of Serafino's *strambotti* focusing on their compositional processes. Chapter 4 details how to write and perform a musical setting of a *strambotto*, which is followed by the conclusion in Chapter 5.

Serafino Aquilano

Serafino Aquilano was born in Aquila (central Italy) in 1466 to a family of minor nobility and became known as one of the greatest poet-improvisers of the late fifteenth century. At age ten, his family sent him to study music with the Franco-Flemish singer and composer Guillaume Garnier, while also serving as a page to the Count of Potenza, Antonio de Guevara (Harran 2001; Wilson 2024, 159). Upon his return to Aquila in 1482, Serafino began to study and sing Petrarchan verses, accompanying himself on the lute. By 1491, he was widely known in artistic and academic communities for his virtuosic abilities as a poet-improviser (Wilson 2020, x).

In 1485, Serafino entered the service of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, beginning a period of work in Rome (1485–1491). During this time, he connected with the literary circle of Paolo Cortese, a Ciceronian humanist and papal secretary. Cardinal Sforza had a significant influence on Cortese, shaping the views on music that would later appear in Cortese's treatise *De cardinalatu* (Weil-Garris and D'Amico 1980, 48). Serafino frequented Cortese's salon gatherings and became close with Vincenzo Calmeta (c. 1460–1508), an author, literary critic, and secretary to Beatrice Sforza. In 1490, Serafino left Ascanio's service and returned to Aquila to visit family. A year later, Ferrandino, Prince of Capua and *governatore* of Abruzzo, invited Serafino to the Aragonese court in Naples, where he stayed until 1494.

In 1495, Serafino moved to Milan in anticipation of the installation of Lodovico Sforza as Duke. He served Beatrice d'Este Sforza until her death in January 1497. After traveling among the northern courts, he returned to Rome. Serafino entered the service of Cesare Borgia, joining Calmeta, who was already in his employ (Wilson 2024, 161). Serafino died in Rome of a quartan

fever in 1500. He was buried with a grand ceremony in the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo, funded by the banker Agostino Chigi, who was associated with the Borgia (Rowland 1998, 99).

Calmeta would eventually write Serafino's biography, *Vita del facondo poeta vulgare Seraphino Aquilano per Vincentio Calmeta composta*, published in 1504. He established the unique political and artistic duality of Serafino's career as both poet and performer. It is thanks to Calmeta's biography that more is known about Serafino than any other poet-musician of the period. Serafino's ability to network with powerful figures brought him opportunities to inspire and develop his craft.

Serafino through the lens of patronage

Patronage was vital for Serafino as a poet-improviser since he did not have the social networks essential for working as a "freelance" composer and performer. Calmeta places the court and its patronage system at the center of Serafino's *Vita*, making Serafino the first musician whose principal concern was patronage to have a biography written about him (Wilson 2020, 382 and Wilson 2024, 141). In doing so, Calmeta emphasizes Serafino's strong creative presence in the political, humanist, literary, and musical spheres, together with the mystical forces that made his performances magical and ineffable: "In performing his poems he was so passionate, and intertwined words and music with such perception, that he moved the very souls of his listeners, no matter whether they were learned, or middle-class, or plebeian, or women"[2] (Wilson 2024, 156).

From 1487 to 1490 Serafino lived in Rome sponsored by Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, with whom he had a strained relationship. Serafino found creative ways to inform the people of Rome of their uneasy relationship. For example, Serafino would attach poems to the cardinal's hunting dogs and set them free in Rome (Rowland 1998, 95 and Wilson 2024, 21). Such tactics allowed Serafino to spread awareness of his predicament.

Nevertheless, Cardinal Sforza also provided opportunities for Serafino that would revolutionize his artistic practice. Serafino's travels took him to various courts, including Rome, Naples, Urbino, Mantua, Milan, Venice, and Genoa, where he interacted with prominent court poets such

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[2] "Nel recitare de' sui poemi era tanto ardente e cum tanto giudizio le parole cum la musica consertava che l'animo de li ascoltanti, o docti o mediocri o plebei o donne, equalmente commoveva…" (Wilson 2024, 156).

as Benedetto Gareth (also known as Cariteo) and the Florentine brothers Aurelio and Raffaele

Brandolini, and their patrons. Serafino was also influenced by his visit to Milan in 1489, during

which he heard Andrea Coscia singing a Cariteo *strambotto* with a lute (Wilson 2024, 144):

> Around this time Cardinal Ascanio went to Lombardy, and finding himself in Milan Serafino became friends with a notable Neapolitan gentleman named Andrea Coscia, a soldier of Duke Ludovico Sforza, who sang very sweetly to the lute, and among the other ways [of singing was] a sonata in which he performed strambotti by Cariteo with great sweetness. Serafino not only adopted and polished the musical style, but dedicated himself to composing his own strambotti with such passion and diligence that he achieved great fame and had his greatest success in that style.[3]

Encounters such as these allowed Serafino to keep up with the latest innovations in court poetry

and integrate them into his own musical and performance style (Wilson 2020, 390).

Serafino's success as a poet-improviser allowed him to momentarily break free of his patron,

Cardinal Sforza. In his *Vita*, Calmeta details Serafino's calculated move to sing a *strambotto*

about the greed and other detestable vices of the Roman court at a Carnival dinner party at which

other prominent cardinals were present (Calmeta et Rossi 2002, 301; Rowland 1998, 97).

After leaving the cardinal's service, Serafino quickly learned that a career outside the patronage

system could be more difficult than a career within it. During this time, he was periodically

unhoused and at one point was stabbed in the throat. Shortly after the incident, he reconciled

with and returned to the service of Sforza:

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[3] "Occorse in quelli tempi al cardinale Ascanio andare in Lombardia et essendo Seraphino in Milano, prese amicicia con un notabile gentilhomo napolitano chiamato Andrea Coscia dil duca Ludovico Sforza soldato, il quale molto soavemente cantava nel liuto, e tra li altri modi una sonata ne la quale dolcemente strammoti di Chariteo esprimeva, la qual cosa non solo Seraphino il modo li tolse più limatione aggiungendoli, ma accomporre strammoti con tanto ardore et assiduità se dède, che de conseguire gran fama in quello stile hebbe somma felicitade" (Wilson 2024, 144).

Having considered that living without a protector had brought him only harm and ignominity, and that his friends reproached for him going about begging in this way, and having learned by experience that the prelates of Rome were more likely to offer a benign ear to hear his compositions than a compassionate hand to help with his needs, he decided to try his luck again in service. And reconciled once again with Cardinal Ascanio he returned to his service, where, with greater respect and improved conditions, he was given enough to live with honor.[4]

Despite Serafino's inordinate success and noteworthy fame, he faced difficulty in maintaining reasonable service environments amongst his patrons. Calmeta's *Vita* brings forth rare detail in the day-to-day conditions of a musician living in the fifteenth century.

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[4] "Havendo Seraphino tra lui considerato che 'l stare senza protettore li era danno et ignominia e tuttavia da' suoi amici improperato che per tal modo andasse mendicando, et havendo lui medesimamente provato per experientia che da li prelati di Roma più presto il erano prestate benignamente l'orecchie ad ascoltare le soe compositioni che offertoli le piatose mani a subvenire alli suoi bisogni, deliberò un'altra volta con servitù la soa fortuna experimentare e con il cardinale Ascanio de novo racconciliato, alli soi servitii fece ritorno, dove con più risguardo e miglior conditione honoratamente li era dato da divere;" (Wilson 2024, 148).

The impact of Serafino Aquilano

Serafino's presence in humanist circles played an important role in his rise to fame. Serafino became associated with papal secretary Paolo Cortese and his academy in 1490. Cortese hosted learned discussions at his home, during which Serafino sang *strambotti* (Pirrotta 1966, 156). Serafino's relationship with Paolo Cortese benefitted the poet-improviser since it allowed his work to reach higher cultural classes. In Serafino's biography, Calmeta describes how Serafino's poetry recitals turned into a religious experience: "all of his work was with mystical ardor."[5] (Kolsky 1990, 165).

Cortese wrote about Serafino in his treatise for cardinals titled *De cardinalatu libri tres*, which was published posthumously in 1510 by Simeone Nardi of Siena. Cortese declared Serafino the star of secular music (Pirrotta 1966, 143). He writes that Serafino instigated the renewal of sung poems (*carmina*) in the style of Petrarch, self-accompanied on the lute (Pirrotta 1966, 155). The following passage from *De cardinalatu libri tres* proclaims Serafino as a powerful and influential performer whose practices were imitated by court singers around Italy:

> But of late Seraphinus Aquilanus was the originator of the renewal of this genre, by whom such a controlled conjunction of words and songs was woven that there could be nothing sweeter than the manner of his modes. And so, such a multitude of imitative court singers emanated from him that whatever is seen to be sung in this genre in all Italy appears to be born out of the model of his sung poems and modes (Pirrotta 1966, 155).

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[5] My translation

According to Cortese, Serafino's moving style of singing is the "simple" style, whereas the "complex" style of singing involving intricate harmonies and melodic structures (i.e., masses and motets) would be heard at the funerals of cardinals and popes (Pirrotta 1966, 156). Cortese positions Serafino's humanist approach alongside the most highly regarded genres of sacred music, honoring his own identity as a humanist while upholding the socio-religious expectations of his position as a cardinal.

In 1503, aspiring literary editor and humanist Angelo Colocci published an anthology of Serafino Aquilano's poetry with a preface (*Apologia*) in which he asserted Serafino's status as an artist of first rank. In the years that followed, Colocci published seven editions of vernacular verse, using Serafino's career as proof of a new standard for vernacular literature (Rowland 1998, 101). In 1504, antiquarian, poet, and musician Giovanni Filoteo Achillini[6] compiled a "*Colletanee*" (*greche, latine e vulgari, per diversi autori moderni nella morte di Seraphino Aqulilano*) containing over 300 poems written in Greek, Latin, Italian, and Castilian in memory of Serafino, as well as a biography of the poet-improviser. This was the first such commemorative compilation devoted to a single musician (Bologna 2009, 10). Like Colocci, Achillini was inspired by Serafino's poetry and went on to promote vernacular writing, publishing eight volumes of poetry in the *lingua vulgare* by 1536.

Serafino Aquilano's prolific musical-poetic output was preserved in multiple sources created during and after his lifetime. Calmeta's *Vita* reports that Serafino's "melodies were widely admired and occasionally transcribed" by observers of his performances in manuscripts and later

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[6] Younger brother of famous philosopher Alessandro Achillini, who was defined as his contemporaries as the "second Aristotle" (Bologna 2009, 13). Alessio Bologna.

prints (Wilson 2020, 384). Although he desired his poetry to be widely known, there are no musical settings of Serafino's poetry where the music is attributed to Serafino. Calmeta details in his *Vita* (Bologna 2009, 72) that Serafino wanted his poetry to be recited all over Rome, writing that "he not only recited his compositions, but he also gave many copies of them so that all over Rome no poems but his were recited."[7] Many observers sought to imitate the nature of Serafino's performances. In *Frottole libro quarto* (RISM 1505|5), Ottaviano Petrucci published musical settings assigned to different poetic forms so that others could follow Serafino's performance practices in setting their poetry to music (Figure 1.1). These rubrics known as *modo de cantar*, provided music to accompany underneath a particular poetic meter. Figure 1.1 is an example for the *sonetto*, the number of notes correspond to the number of syllables.

Figure 1.1: *Modo de cantar sonetti* from RISM 1505|5, xiiii
        RISM B/I 1505|5: *Modo de cantar sonetti*, xiiii
        Retrieved from IMSLP https://imslp.org/wiki/.
        Used under Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike 4.0 International License
        https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/

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[7] "...non solo recitava le soe compositioni ma davane copia tanta che per tutta Roma altro che soi poemi non si recitavano" (Bologna 2009, 73).

Serafino was a highly respected poet-improviser in the late fifteenth century. He left a lasting

impression on the world of vernacular poetry and secular music, as evidenced by the many

period sources that mention his performances, editions of his poetry, and the poetry and literary

collections dedicated to his memory (Wilson 2020, 382). These textual sources with attributions

to Serafino also valuable references for identifying the unattributed musical settings of Serafino's

poems found in music manuscripts and prints.

Chapter 2: Musical Sources for Settings of
Serafino Aquilano's *strambotti*

Musical settings of Serafino Aquilano's poetry preserved in manuscripts and prints reflect the prominence of his musical career in Italy and beyond. Building on the work of Bianconi and Rossi (1999), I have compiled a corpus of thirty-five anonymous musical settings (spanning the Italian peninsula) of thirty-three Serafino *strambotti*, which are listed along with their sources in the appendices of this thesis. I focus on sources with anonymous settings of Serafino's *strambotti* because it is more likely that Serafino performed or composed these settings than the settings attributed to other composers. The high volume of musical settings of Serafino's *strambotti* produced in northern Italy around the turn of the sixteenth century, both anonymous and attributed to known composers, indicates that Serafino's texts were widely disseminated in the region during this period.

Though no known musical settings are attributed to Serafino in the sources, it is possible that he composed at least some of them. Anne MacNeil recently discussed the potential authorship of the *strambotti* with texts by Serafino in Petrucci's *frottola* prints, suggesting that musicians watching Serafino's live improvisations may have transcribed what they heard (MacNeil 2020, 468). Other composers and musicians may also have composed or improvised some of the settings of Serafino's *strambotti* in my corpus. Nonetheless, studying these musical settings reveals the kind of music Serafino might have created, even if none are by Serafino.

The Corpus of Serafino anonymous musical settings appear in many manuscript and print sources (Appendix 6.1), among which seven manuscripts and two Petrucci *frottola* prints include

anonymous settings. Some settings also appear in more than one source, and two texts have more than one musical setting (*Ah lasso, ad quante fier la sete toglio* and *Non te smarir cor mio va' passo passo*).

I focus on anonymous vocal settings found in manuscripts. However, due to the nature of Serafino's music, it is essential to note that arrangements of some of the vocal settings also appear in the earliest sources of lute intabulation, including the Pesaro codex (I-PESo MS 1144) and the Capirola manuscript (US-Cn MS VM 140.C25). The Pesaro codex only contains the text incipit of the musical setting and the Capirola manuscript does not contain any text. In the *strambotto* settings in Petrucci's intabulations for lute and voice (RISM 1509|3 and RISM 1511|1), the full text and melody of the cantus line is written above each intabulation.

Table 2.1 features the Serafino *strambotti* settings with attributions in their sources, which I excluded from my selected corpus. All bibliographical information on the manuscript sources listed in the tables in this chapter comes from DIAMM (the Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music) and information on the printed sources comes from RISM (Répertoire International des Sources Musicales).

Table 2.1: Serafino *strambotti* with composer attributions (excluded from the Corpus analyzed in this thesis)

Title of *strambotto*	Composer attribution	MS/print source	Folio no.
Consumo la mia vita a poco a poco	Johannes Prioris	GB-Cmc MS 1760	90v–91r
Consumo la mia vita a poco a poco	Johannes Prioris	GB-Lbl Add. MS 35087	27v–28r
Consumo la mia vita a poco a poco	Johannes Prioris	US-Wc M2.1.L25	136v–137r
Consumo la mia vita a poco a poco	Johannes Prioris	CH-SGs Cod. Sang. 463	
Consumo la mia vita a poco a poco	Johannes Prioris	F-Pnm Français 1597	78r
Consumo la mia vita a poco a poco	Alessandro Mantovano	RISM 1513|1	27v–28r
Del mio si grande et del tuo amor si poco	Marchetto Cara	RISM 1526|6	14r
Ecco la nocte il ciel tutto si adorna	Hieronymo del Lauro	RISM 1516|2	35v–37r
Ecco la nocte il sol soi ragi asconde	Bartolomeo Organista	I-Fn Banco Rari 230	32v–33r
Non te smarir cor mio va passo passo	Josquin des Pres (Gallico 1961)	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	
Quanto piu copro lo amoroso foco	Giacomo Fogliano	I-Fn Banco Rari 230	15v–16r
Scoprirte mille volte o fatto prova	Giacomo Fogliano	I-Fn Banco Rari 230	16v–17r
Silencio mio lingua	Bartolomeo Tromboncino	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	7v–8r
Voi che passate qui	Bartolomeo Tromboncino	RISM 1507|3	19r
Voi che passate qui	Francesco d'Ana	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	20v–21r

Corpus of anonymous settings for analysis

The collected Corpus represents all of the anonymous Serafino *strambotto* settings found in

manuscripts and prints. Table 2.2 shows the number of anonymous musical settings of Serafino's

texts in each source (excluding lute intabulations), representing thirty-five individual musical

settings (not including *Consumo la mia vita*)[8].

Table 2.2: Anonymous Serafino *strambotto* settings in manuscript/print sources

MS/Print name	No. of anonymous Serafino *strambotti*	Provenance	Date
GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	12	Florence	c. 1500
F-Pn Vm7 676	9	Mantua or Ferrara	1502
I-Fn Panc 27	5	Florence	c.1500
RISM 1505|5	5	Venice	1505
I-MOe F.9.9	4	Padua	1495–6
I-Mt 55	4	Milan	c. 1510
I-PEc 431	2	Naples	c. 1485
I-Fn BR 230	1	Florence	After 1513
RISM 1509|2	1	Venice	1509

The manuscripts in Table 2.2 were copied in northern Italy and contain mostly Italian secular

music. Four manuscripts feature the most disseminated anonymous setting: the anonymous *Mille*

prove aggio fatto per levarme (see Table 2.3)*.* Additionally, several of Serafino's strambotti were

published in Venice in Petrucci's *frottola* prints. The anonymous settings of Serafino's

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[8] While most of the sources containing anonymous Serafino settings are of northern Italian origin, one of Serafino's *strambotti* traveled well beyond Italy. Of the Serafino *strambotti* texts set to music, the setting of *Consumo la mia vita poco a poco* attributed to the French composer Johannes Prioris was the most broadly disseminated (see Table 2.3). It appears in six sources, all of primarily French or Dutch origin and otherwise containing only a very small percentage of Italian secular music amongst their miscellaneous repertoires.

strambotti with full text appear in *Frottole libro quatro* (RISM 1505|5) and *Frottole libro nono* (RISM 1509|2).

Table 2.3: *Strambotti* with most concordant sources (including *Consumo la mia vita*)

Incipit	Provenance	MS/Print source
Consumo la mia vita a poco a poco	France	GB-Cmc MS 1760
Consumo la mia vita a poco a poco	Bruges	GB-Lbl Add. MS 35087
Consumo la mia vita a poco a poco	France	US-Wc M2.1.L25
Consumo la mia vita a poco a poco	Glarus, Switzerland	CH-SGs Cod. Sang. 463
Consumo la mia vita a poco a poco	Paris	F-Pnm Français 1597
Consumo la mia vita a poco a poco	Paris and Florence	I-Fn MS Magl. XIX.117
Mille prove aggio fatto per levarme	Mantua or Ferrara	F-Pn Vm7 676
Mille prove aggio fatto per levarme	Florence	I-Fn 230
Mille prove aggio fatto per levarme	Florence	I-Fn 27
Mille prove aggio fatto per levarme	Padua	I-MOe a.F.9.9
Soffrire ison disposto ogni tormento	Mantua or Ferrara	F-Pn Vm7 676
Soffrire ison disposto ogni tormento	Florence	I-Fn 27
Soffrire ison disposto ogni tormento	Naples	I-PEc 431
Non te smarrir, cor mio, va' passo passo	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051
Non te smarrir, cor mio, va' passo passo	Milan	I-Mt 55
Non te smarrir, cor mio, va' passo passo	Venice	RISM 1505|5
Linfermo allhor piú se consuma e scalda	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051
Linfermo allhor piú se consuma e scalda	Venice	RISM 1505|5
La nocte aquieta ogni fiero animale	Florence	I-Fn 27
La nocte aquieta ogni fiero animale	Venice	RISM 1505|5
Gridan vostri occhi al mio cor fora for a	Padua	I-MOe F.9.9
Gridan vostri occhi al mio cor fora for a	Milan	I-Mt 55

Though Bianconi and Rossi (1999) identified most of the Serafino *strambotto* settings, there remain several Serafino *strambotto* settings they did not include. Table 2.4 lists the *strambotto* settings that were not included in Bianconi and Rossi's study.

Table 2.4: Musical settings of Serafino's *strambotti* not mentioned in Bianconi and Rossi (1999)

Name of *strambotto*	MS source	Folio no.
Andate accesi mei sospiri al loco	F-Pn Vm7 676	39v–40r
Dal ciel non hebbi mai altro che guerra	F-Pn Vm7 676	38v–39r
Fortuna, che te giova de straciarme	I-Fn 27	22r
La nocte aquieta ogni fiero animale	I-Fn 27	33v
Linfermo allhor piú se consuma e scalda	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	12v–13r
Me stesso incolpo	RISM 1505|5	xx
Ò voi che seguitate il van cupido	F-Pn Vm7 676	56v–57r
Quando la fiamma	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	13v–14r
Rendi quella alma insidiosa morte	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	15v–16r
Risguarda el viso mio palido e afflicto	F-Pn Vm7 676	34v–35r
Se'l pastor con affanno el dí gli armenti	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	14v–15r

Analyzing the musical settings of Serafino Aquilano's *strambotti* provides insights into the

nature of improvised music in Italy at the turn of the sixteenth century. Among the distinct style

features in the Corpus of musical settings of Serafino's *strambotti*, the most significant is the

consistent use of improvisable contrapuntal models (to be discussed in Chapter 3). These models

consist of parallel movement in imperfect intervals between the cantus and tenor (e.g., parallel

sixths and thirds), and cantus and bassus (e.g., parallel tenths). Each phrase ends with a cadence,

normally marked by a pause or fermata, to accommodate the structure and expression of the text.

Chapter 3: Compositional Process

Introduction

As established in Chapter 2, the Corpus comprises twenty-four anonymous settings of Serafino

poems from thirteen music manuscripts (see Appendix 6.1). In this chapter, I analyze these

polyphonic settings, focusing on the melodies to which their texts are set and their contrapuntal

structures, which are largely based on improvisatory practices. I will first discuss the

improvisable contrapuntal techniques used in the settings of Serafino's texts. In the second

section of this chapter, I will discuss four settings of Serafino's texts in detail:

- Strambotto I, *Ah lasso, ad quante fier' la sete toglio* (from I-Mt 55, fol. 66v–67r)

- Strambotto II, shares the same text as Strambotto I (from I-PEc 431, fol.53v–54r)

- Strambotto III, *Mille prove aggio fatto* (from I-MOe a.F.9.9 fol. 97v–98r)

- Strambotto IV, *Ite, sospiri, dove Amor vi mena* (from F-Pn Vm7 676, fol. 74v–75r)

In the surviving sources for these works, each setting is notated in separate parts (Cantus, Tenor, Altus, Bassus) in choirbook format. The voices can be performed by four separate musicians, or by a single performer singing the cantus while playing the bottom two or three voices on lute or a bowed string instrument. The latter mode of performance is found in two books of lute intabulations, *Tenori e contrabassi intabulati col sopran in canto figurato*. The example in Figure 3.1 was composed by Bartolomeo Tromboncino (B.T.), arranged by lutenist Franciscus Bossinensis, and published by Petrucci in 1509 (RISM 1509|3). Here, the bottom two voices (tenor and bassus) are intabulated, with the cantus written above it in staff notation (Figure 3.1). Bar lines facilitate the alignment of the lute and voice parts. Figure 3.2 shows the four-voice version of the musical setting found in Petrucci's *Frottole libro septimo* (RISM 1507|3) with a different text, and without bar lines.

Figure 3.1: Lute intabulation of Serafino *strambotto* attr. Bartolomeo Tromboncino
    RISM B/I 1509|3: *Tu dormi io veglio*, xxii.
    Retrieved from IMSLP https://imslp.org/wiki/.
    Used under Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike 4.0 International License
    https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/.

Figure 3.2: Four-voice musical setting of *Tu dormi io veglio* (with different text)
RISM B/I 1507|3: *Ecco che per amarte*, xxvii.
Retrieved from IMSLP https://imslp.org/wiki/.
Used under Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike 4.0 International License
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/

Improvisable contrapuntal models

Serafino improvised the music to which he set his poetry. The settings that survive consist largely of improvisable contrapuntal techniques below the cantus, using two to three accompanying voices. These settings are based on a cantus/tenor framework (usually built from parallel thirds or sixths), a cantus/bassus framework of parallel tenths, or a combination of these techniques. They also feature cadential formulas and some use improvisable canon, or stretto fuga (Cumming 2013a), as in Strambotto IV, *Ite, sospiri, dove Amor vi mena* (see Example 3.30).

Contrapuntal models using parallel imperfect intervals are central to the music that accompanies Serafino's poetry. In his treatise *De preceptis artis musicae,* written in the late fifteenth century, Renaissance music theorist Guilielmus Monachus discusses some of the improvisable techniques that are also found in the Serafino Corpus (Park 1993; Schubert 1999; Cumming 2013). Monachus proposes a method for parallel sixths in the cantus/tenor as follows: "The cantus is locked in parallel sixths above the tenor, with the bassus alternating thirds and fifths below the tenor, while the altus sings thirds and fourths above the tenor" (Park 1993, 188 and Schubert 2007, 192) (Example 3.1). Another parallel-sixth model involving the cantus and tenor is fauxbourdon, in which the altus sings only thirds above the tenor/fourths below the cantus (Park 1993, 324). Example 3.2 shows an unusual variant of fauxbourdon, as it puts the bassus underneath the usual three-voice structure. The parallel-third model between the cantus and tenor inverts the parallel-sixth model at the octave. When the cantus and tenor run in parallel thirds, the bassus alternates tenths and octaves below the tenor, and the altus alternates thirds and fourths below the tenor (Schubert 2007, 192) (Example 3.3). A final improvisable model features

parallel tenths between the cantus and bassus. While outer voices move in parallel tenths, the altus and tenor sing consonances above the bass, moving in contrary motion with the outer voices to avoid parallel perfect intervals (Cumming 2013, Schubert 2007, Young 1969) (Example 3.4).

Example 3.1: All voices in the parallel-sixth model
Example from Schubert 2007, 192. All intervals shown are in relation to the Tenor.

Example 3.2: Fauxbourdon in *Gridan vostri occhi,* mm. 13–14 from I-Mt 55, 1v–3r.

Example 3.3: Parallel-third model (the parallel-sixth model inverted at the octave)
from *Consumo la mia vita* (GB-Cmc cod. 1760, 86v, mm. 18–23).
Parentheses indicate intervals below the tenor.

Example 3.4: Parallel-tenth model in the outer voices
from Strambotto III: *Mille prove aggio fatto*

Also important are cadences, which connect the text and music of each section. In Serafino's

strambotti, cadences are improvisable formulas at the end of a musical phrase, which most often

lead to a moment of arrival during performance and are usually indicated with a fermata in the

strambotto settings. Cadences usually feature a suspension between cantus and tenor that

resolves to a perfect interval: 7-6-8 or 3-2-Unison. In Example 3.5, the parallel third model shifts

to parallel sixths creating a 7-6 suspension between the cantus and tenor in the antepenultimate measure, ornamented with a diminution in the cantus; the voices then move in contrary motion to the octave at the cadence. Cadences with a 7-6 suspension moving to the octave are extremely common and appear in every example in this chapter.

Example 3.5: Cadence with 7-6 suspension (mm. 21–23) *Consumo la mia vita*
From GB-Cmc cod. 1760, 86v. Parentheses indicate intervals below the tenor.

The Corpus also features other cadence types. Strambotto I (Example 3.6) includes anticipation of the cadential arrival note in the cantus to create dissonance. These "anticipated cadences" are also common in the *frottole* found in Petrucci's prints. Example 3.6 is the first cadence of *Ah lasso, a quanti fiere la sete toglio* from I-Mt 55 (Strambotto I) featuring an anticipated cadence in mm. 3–4. Here, the cantus moves to the final g a beat early, creating a dissonant seventh with the tenor's F#, before resolving to a unison g with the cantus.

Example 3.6*: Anticipated cadence in mm. 3–4 of *Ah lasso, a quante fiere la sete toglio*
from I-Mt 55

Example 3.7, from *Ah lasso, ad quante fier' la sete toglio* (I-PEc 431), includes extended and

ornamented cadences at the end of each line of the couplet. At the end of the first line is a

deceptive cadence to C in m. 6, in which the cantus and tenor feature the standard 7-6 suspension

leading to an octave; however, the bassus moves up to A instead of down to C, resulting in a

deceptive cadence. The deceptive cadence is followed by descending motion in the outer voices

for an arrival on F, without cadential motion. Evaded cadences, like deceptive cadences, are used

to weaken cadential resolutions. The cadence is evaded by not sounding the expected cadential

arrival in one of the principal voices (Schubert 2007, 140). Example 3.8, an excerpt from *Ite,*

sospiri, dove Amor vi mena, shows an evaded cadence to G in m. 11, where the cantus leaps to

Bb instead of moving up by step to G on the downbeat of m. 11. The evaded cadence is then

followed by a strong cadence to D in m. 15.

Example 3.7: Deceptive cadence (mm. 5–6) followed by descending non-cadential motion in outer voices from *Ah lasso, ad quante fier' la sete toglio* (I-PEc 431)

Example 3.8: Evaded cadence (m. 11)
from *Ite, sospiri, dove Amor vi mena* (F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676)

Detailed Discussion of Four Serafino Settings

The four *strambotti* (Strambotti I-IV) that I discuss below demonstrate the basic improvisable contrapuntal structures that are typical of the genre. Strambotto I, *Ah lasso, ad quante fier' la sete toglio* (I-Mt 55), is based primarily on the melody of the cantus voice in the first four measures. Strambotto II, *Ah lasso, ad quante fier' la sete toglio* (I-PEc 431) features the same text as Strambotto I, set to different music with a different rhetorical structure. Strambotto III, *Mille prove aggio fatto* (I-MOe a.F.9.9), varies the strengths of cadences in an outer-voice parallel-tenth model. Strambotto IV, *Ite, sospiri, dove Amor vi mena* (F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676), follows several models and ends with a *stretto fuga* (Cumming 2013, 199). In the analyses of these works that I present throughout the remainder of this chapter, I annotated various contrapuntal features in different colors as indicated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Guide to annotations in Chapter 3 for Strambotti I–IV

Colour	Musical indication
Black	Cadence
Gray	Evaded cadence
Purple	Parallel-third model
Red/Pink	Parallel-sixth model
Orange	Fauxbourdon
Green	Parallel-tenth model (cantus/tenor and cantus/bassus)
Blue	Stretto fuga

Strambotto I: *Ah lasso, a quante fier' la sete toglio* **from I-Mt 55**

Ahi lasso, a quante fiere la sete to<u>glio</u>	**A**	Alas, I quench the thirst of so many wild beasts
per far de gli ochi un fiume in ogni lo<u>co</u>!	**B**	by making a river in every place from my eyes!

Strambotto I sets the lament text *Ah lasso, a quante fiere la sete toglio* to a plaintive melody. The text describes the narrator's own emotional and embodied suffering *in ogni loco* (in every place) using elements of nature as metaphors for the narrator. Strambotto I's textual rhetoric and musical repetition would have facilitated its memorization. At the time of performance, Serafino's public may therefore have remembered the tune and accompaniment upon hearing the text alone (Rowland 1998, 96).

The melody of Strambotto I's couplets demonstrate considerable musical economy. In the first line, the melody is divided into two parts, consisting of sections A and B (Example 3.9). These first four measures of melody repeat transposed down a fourth in mm. 5-9 The second line of text introduces a brief section of new material (section C, mm. 10-11)—two measures (mm. 12–13) of free scalar motion followed by a return of the C melody transposed down a third, and an exact repetition of B as heard in mm. 3–4. At this point, the entire text has been recited, but the last phrase of the text, *in ogni loco* is repeated, sung to melody C transposed down a third and melody B transposed down a fourth, as already heard at the end of the first line (Example 3.10). The repetition on the text *in ogni loco* (in every place) suggests the narrator's prolonged grief. The melodic and tonal structures for both lines of the couplet are outlined in Table 3.2 and annotated in Figure 3.3.

Example 3.9: Strambotto I melody (mm. 1–8) and text underlay for first line
mm. 5–8 repeats the music down a fourth.

Example 3.10: Strambotto I melody (mm. 9–20) and text underlay of the second line

Table 3.2: Structure of Strambotto I melody by section

Line 1	A	B	A (-4)	B (-4)
Line 2	C	Free + B	C (-3)	B (-4)

Figure 3.3: Cantus of *Ah lasso, a quante fiere la sete toglio* from MS I-Mt 55, 66v.
Retrieved from https://trivulziana.milanocastello.it/
Markings in blue by Leah Weitzner
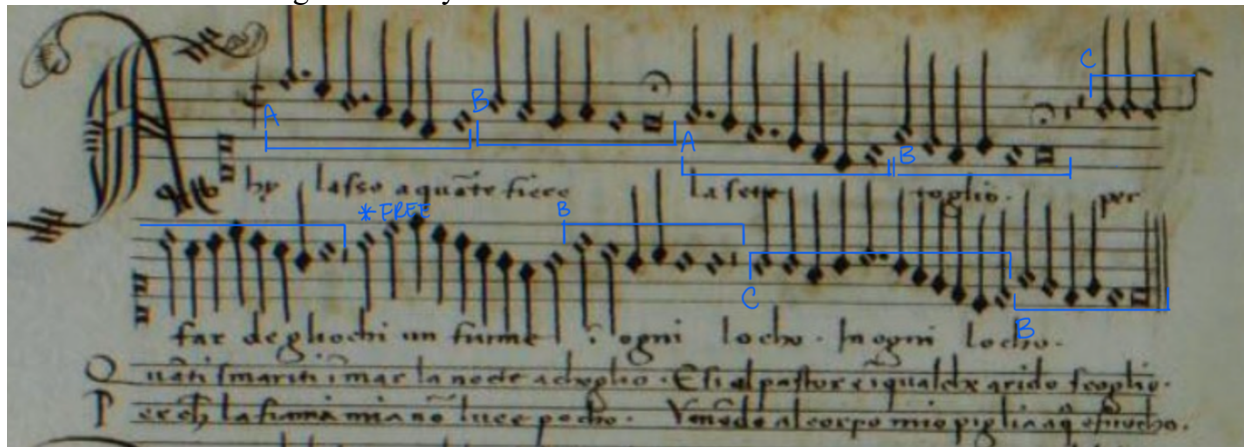
Serafino may have composed the polyphony *alla mente,* using the improvisable parallel-third model (see vertical interval annotations in examples 3.11-3.13 below) followed by an anticipated cadence. Cadencing on G, the module (a chunk of counterpoint in two or more voices that is repeated) repeats transposed down a fourth (Example 3.11 and Example 3.12). Section C features new material and no cadence (Example 3.13), and the last two cadences in the second line of text are exact repetitions of the G and D cadences in the first line of text (Example 3.14). Strambotto I's musical structure makes efficient use of pre-existing material, thus exemplifying the musical economy typical of improvisatory practices. In addition to maintaining the same improvisable parallel third model throughout, the symmetrical musical material repeated at different pitch levels demonstrates variety and a clear presentation of the text's two-line structure.

Example 3.11: Strambotto I Sections A and B (mm. 1–4)

Example 3.12: Strambotto I Section A and B repeated down a fourth (mm. 5–8)

Example 3.13: Strambotto I Section C (mm. 9–11)

Example 3.14: Strambotto I Last section with reprise (mm. 12–20). Free section and B section with G cadence followed by C and B sections.

Ah lasso, a quante fier' la sete toglio

I-Mt 55, 66v-67r

Serafino Aquilano

Ahi las - so, a quan - te fie - re

la se - te to - - - glio

per far de gli'o chi un fiu - me in o-gni lo -

2

co,   in o – – – gni   lo – co!

Strambotto II: *Ah lasso, a quante fiere la sete toglio* from MS I-PEc 431

The expressive quality of this *strambotto* text provides many options for setting it to music. Strambotto II shares the same text as Strambotto I, but is set to different music to accommodate a slightly different structure, with the first fermata appearing after *Ah lasso* instead of at the end of the line. The insertion of the fermata responds to the exclamation *Ah lasso* (Alas!) in the text. Figure 3.4 compares the text setting and fermatas in Strambotto I and Strambotto II. Strambotto I presents a rhetorical gesture using repeated text, while Strambotto II gestures to the exclamation in the text with a fermata.

Table 3.4: Comparison of text settings in Strambotto I (I-Mt 55) and Strambotto II (I-MOe 431)
Repeated text in italics and <u>fermatas</u> are underlined

I-Mt 55 text	I-MOe 431 text
Ah lasso, a quante fie<u>re</u> la sete to<u>glio</u>	Ahi la<u>sio</u> ad quanti fe<u>ri</u> la sete to<u>glio</u>
per far de gli o<u>chi</u>, un fiume *in ogni loco*	per far de gli o<u>chi</u> un fiume in ogni loco

Strambotto II: Melody

In Strambotto II, the melody in both lines of text covers a narrow range, with each section (as indicated by fermatas) spanning no more than a fourth. The simple melody centers on the notes F, G, and A, with an F final. The first and second lines of text can each be divided into two sections (Example 3.15). Section 1 includes two fermatas, one after the stepwise ascent of a third on the exclamation *Ahi lassio* and one after *ad quanti fieri*, which mirrors the previous melody with a stepwise descent through the third. The melody of Section 2 moves to a higher range, cadencing on C before returning to A. Section 3 begins with material heard after the first fermata

in Section 1. Finally, Section 4 is an expansion of Section 1, ending on a stronger cadence with a suspension.

Example 3.15: Strambotto II melody

Strambotto II: Counterpoint

Section 1 uses the parallel-third model, and its music after the first fermata (mm. 3-4) constitutes a melodic inversion of the tune in the first two measures. In measure four, the tenor and cantus execute a 3-1 cadence (the contrapuntal inversion of the 6-8 cadence) to F (Example 3.16); the cantus and tenor are in unison at the cadential resolution with no third in the harmony. Essentially, Section 2 is comprised almost entirely of a cadential model. It starts immediately with parallel thirds in the cantus and tenor, while the bassus moves to A instead of C in the second half of m. 6 to produce a deceptive cadence. Two measures later, all voices move to F without a proper cadence (Example 3.17). During the descent to the arrival on F, the altus and bassus briefly move in parallel thirds.

Example 3.16: Strambotto II Section 1 (mm. 1–4)

Example 3.17: Strambotto II Section 2 (mm. 5–8)

Section 3 starts with the same voice leading (parallel thirds between tenor and cantus) as the

beginning of Section 2. The tenor and bassus move in parallel octaves in m. 10, and the end of

the section lacks a cadence (Example 3.18). The octave doubling of the tenor and bassus, along

with the altus leaping to the unison E shared with the cantus at the fermata, indicate that the

purpose of this section is to set up the cadential descent in the final section. The cantus descent

of a fourth from aa to e in mm. 10–11 is an unsuccessful cadential attempt that is not resolved

until the final cadence in Section 4. Section 4 begins with the parallel-sixth model; then, the

descending material in Section 3 reappears. This time, however, the altus and tenor are in unison

leading to a strong cadence with a 7-6 suspension at the end of the section (Example 3.19). The

bassus is lightly ornamented while the inner voices remain in unison.

Example 3.18: Strambotto II Section 3 (mm. 8–11)

Example 3.19: Strambotto II Section 4 (mm. 11–16)

Strambotto II differs from Strambotto I in its declamatory pause in the first phrase, its break away from the parallel-third model during the expanded cadential figure in Section 2, and its brief parallel-sixth passage leading to the final cadence. Strambotto II also features many repeated notes, with less transposition and no contrast between sections; and a melody with a narrow range, hovering between C and F with little harmonic variety. There is a considerable amount of illegal counterpoint (parallel octaves and unisons in mm. 13) in the strambotto, indicating that correct counterpoint was not the primary concern.

Ah lasso, a quante fier' la sete toglio

I-PEc 431, 53v-54r

Serafino Aquilano

Cantus: Ahi la - sio, ad quan-ti fe - ri la se-te to - - - glio! Per far de gli'o-chi un fiu - me in'o-gni lo - - - co!

Strambotto III: *Mille prove aggio fatto* from I-MOe alpha F.9.9.

Strambotto III illustrates the level of variety that is possible when combining more than one of the compositional devices identified in Strambotto I and Strambotto II. The musical setting of *Mille prove aggio fatto* features two improvisable techniques in alternation: the parallel-sixth model between the cantus and tenor, and the parallel-tenth model between the outer voices (Schubert 2007, 192–93). The parallel-tenth model is a compositional technique famously used by Josquin des Prez, who was a close contemporary of Serafino (Schubert 2007, 192–93; Cumming 2013, 189; Young 1969, 145–46). Unlike the parallel-sixth and parallel-third models observed in Strambotto I and Strambotto II, the parallel-tenth model is based on the outer voices. While the cantus and bassus run in parallel tenths, the tenor and altus move in contrary motion.

Before delving into the counterpoint, it is important to understand the melodic structure of Strambotto III. The couplet of Strambotto III is divided like Strambotto II: it contains three musical sections in the first line of text, and two in the second. The first line of the couplet is divided, through the presence of fermatas, into three two-word sections: 1) *Mille prove*; 2) *aggio fatto*; and 3) *per levarme.* The second line of the couplet is divided into two three-word sections: 1) *Da tanta servitù*; and 2) *per tua durezza* (Example 3.20). In the first line, the melody of each section revolves around a descent through a fourth: A to E, G to D, F to C#, and finally F to C# expanded and ending with the arrival on D.[9] The second line begins with an ascending sequence, F to A, followed by G to B, and then descends again from C down to G#. The melodic diminished fourths (F to C# and C to G#), which arrive on the leading tone of the cadence, create

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[9] *Musica ficta* accidentals in the cantus are not included in I-MOe a.F.9.9.

a lot of tension. The last section (mm. 24–32) moves up to a higher range, reaching dd, and then

descends to aa. Measures 27–32 resemble the end of Section 3 (mm. 12–15) but transposed up a

fourth. The melodic range of each phrase of Strambotto III stays within or fourth or a fifth and

borrows from the material that precedes each section.

Example 3.20: Strambotto III, Cantus melody in five sections (mm. 1–32)

Turning to the counterpoint, section 1 (with the text *Mille prove*) begins with parallel tenths

between the cantus and bassus until the half-cadence on A at the first fermata. In m. 2, while the

outer voices move in tenths, the tenor and altus fill in harmonies in contrary motion (Example

3.21). Section 2 (*aggio*) begins with the cantus and tenor in parallel thirds, and then continues

with parallel tenths in the cantus and bassus, which leads to a Phrygian cadence (with no

suspension) on A at the second fermata (Example 3.22). The outer voices remain in parallel

tenths for Sections 3 and 4. Section 3 (*per levarme*) cadences (with a suspension) on D after two measures in parallel tenths (Example 3.23). Section 4 continues with parallel tenths in the cantus and bassus, breaking for one measure to set up a weak arrival between the bassus and tenor on E (with no suspension) (Example 3.24). Section 5 concludes the *strambotto* with the cantus and tenor in parallel sixths, leading to a final cadence (with suspension) on A (Example 3.25).

Example 3.21: Strambotto III Section 1 (mm. 1–4)

Example 3.22: Strambotto III Section 2 (mm. 5–11)

Example 3.23: Strambotto III Section 3 (mm. 12–16)

Example 3.24: Strambotto III Section 4 (mm. 18–23)

Example 3.25: Strambotto III Section 5 (mm. 24–32)

In sum, Strambotto III, *Mille prove aggio fatto*, features sections of parallel tenths in the outer voices, and others with parallel thirds or parallel sixths between the cantus and tenor. Parallel motion between the other voices requires different voicings for the cadences. As a result, cadential motion often appears in the tenor and bassus while the cantus adds the third above. Notably, the cantus melody in Section 2 and Section 4 contains the leading tone for the stronger cadences that follow, respectively, in Section 3 and Section 5.

Mille prove aggio fatto

I-MOe alpha F.9.9 (97v-98r)

Cantus: Mil — — le pro — ve

Cantus (m.5): ag — — gio fat — — to

Cantus (m.12): per le — var — — me
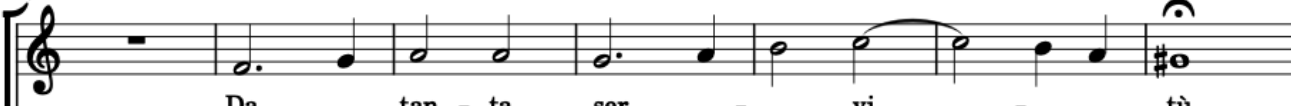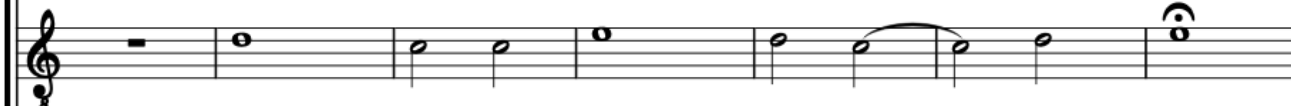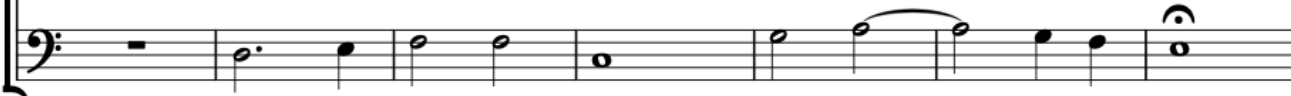
Da tan - ta ser - vi - tù

per tu - a du - re - - - za.

Strambotto IV: *Ite suspiri, dove Amor vi mena* **from F-Pn Vm7 676**

Of the four *strambotti* discussed in this chapter, Strambotto IV employs the most contrapuntal techniques, including an embellished three-voice *stretto fuga* in the final section. A *stretto fuga* is a canon in which the imitative voices enter in close succession (after one time unit in first species counterpoint) after the primary voice (Cumming 2013a; Collins 2008). Given a certain pitch interval of imitation (such as a fifth), constructing the melody from specific melodic intervals (unison; ascending thirds and fifths, descending seconds and fourths) results in correct counterpoint. Strambotto IV demonstrates the possibilities of moving in and out of this and other contrapuntal models.

Section 1 and Section 2 of Strambotto IV remain within the same melodic range (f-dd), though section 1 descends, and section 2 mostly ascends. Section 3 expands on the material of Section 1, extending the descent to complete the full octave, and ending on d. Section 4 repeats a motive consisting of ascending seconds surrounding a descending third, and then moves to cadence on G (Example 3.26).

Example 3.26: Strambotto IV Melody in four sections (mm. 1–33)

This melody is set to several contrapuntal models. Section 1 begins with parallel tenths, first briefly between the cantus and tenor starting at m. 2, then between the outer voices a measure later. The section ends with a sixth-to-octave Phrygian cadence on D in the altus and bassus in m. 5 (Example 3.27). Section 2 features parallel sixths in the cantus and tenor for two and a half measures, leading to a cadence on D in the lower three voices. After an evaded cadence on G (Schubert 2007, 140), brief parallel thirds between the cantus and tenor precede a cadence on D (Example 3.28). Section 3 corresponds to the beginning of the second line of the couplet, expanding on the cantus's melodic material in Section 1. Here, the cantus and bassus move in parallel tenths, followed by a measure of parallel thirds between the cantus and tenor (Example 3.29). With these two models, the voice leading in mm. 17–20 sets up an inverted cadence on D. At the end of this section, instead of a pause, the altus connects to the final section: the three-voice *stretto fuga.*

Example 3.27: Strambotto IV Section 1 (mm. 1–6)

Example 3.28: Strambotto IV Section 2 (mm. 7–15)

Example 3.29: Strambotto IV Section 3 (mm. 17–21)

Section 4 consists of an eight-measure *stretto fuga* in three voices. The tenor enters first on A,

with the cantus imitating at the fourth above (starting on d), and the bassus entering a seventh

below (starting on E) (Example 3.30). The melodic intervals of the subject are: up a step, down a

third, then up a step. The four-note sequence is followed by a half rest and then repeated. When

each voice has the rest, the two other voices first sound an octave, then move to a fifth until the

third voice re-enters on the following beat. Considering that this *stretto fuga* follows after

various parallel models heard in earlier sections, Strambotto IV is an example of how elaborate

and varied compositions based on improvisable contrapuntal models can be. Its melody responds

to the models, but also features the flexibility that is inherently required to do so.

Example 3.30: Strambotto IV Section 4 (mm. 22–33)

Ite, sospiri, dove Amor vi mena

F-Pn Vm7 676, 74v-75r

Serafino Aquilano

Cantus: I – ti, su – spi – ri,

là do – ve A – mo – re vi me –

- na, E di - te che per le - i

la mia vi - ta, la mia vi - ta, la mia vi - ta_é tol - ta.

Conclusion

Surviving musical settings of Serafino's poems point to the frequent and varied use of

contrapuntal models based on parallel motion and improvisable frameworks. The analysis of the

settings discussed in this chapter provides strong evidence for an *alla mente* compositional

process. The mixing and matching of different improvisatory techniques requires sophisticated

command of counterpoint and embodied cognitive knowledge of the instrument(s) being played.

While some *strambotti* use only one or two models, others move between several. The variety of

approaches to articulating *strambotto* couplets, with cadences and fermatas dividing the eleven-

syllable lines of text in different ways, also evinces significant individuality and artistry.

Chapter 4: How to Create and Perform a Musical Setting of a *Strambotto* Text

Based on my study of the Corpus, outlined in the previous chapters, in this chapter I will

demonstrate how to compose two phrases of music to set the first couplet of *O sacro Apollo*

(Rossi 2002, 5) in the style of the settings of Serafino's *strambotti*. As in almost all *strambotto*

settings, the same two phrases are repeated for the three succeeding couplets. The melody

appears in the cantus while the lower voices provide a simple improvisable accompaniment in

which, with a few exceptions, the tenor or bassus move in parallel with the cantus.

Step 1: Plan the roadmap for setting the text

Prepare to set music to a couplet (two eleven-syllable lines of text). The ends of both lines of the

couplet are marked by strong pauses indicated with fermatas, and additional fermatas indicate

pauses within the line. The majority of Serafino's *strambotti* are in the *strambotto toscano* form,

with the rhyme scheme *ABABABCC,* meaning that the last couplet features a different rhyme

than the previous three couplets. Musically, there might be a cadential tag or other device at the

end of the final couplet (*CC*), but usually each of the four couplets is set to the same music. This

can create issues for text underlay of the succeeding verses but aligning text and music, either at

sight or while improvising, was standard practice for singers of the period.

Gridan vostri ochi al mio cor 'fora fora!' (see text and translation in Table 4.1) provides a model

for understanding how *strambotti* texts are structured. One of this *strambotto*'s distinguishing

features is the presence of multiple repeated words in each line, which evoke the chaotic

atmosphere of a battle of love (Zanovello 2016, 18). As seen Table 4.2 and Example 4.1,

fermatas divide the first line of the couplet into three sections and the second line into two

sections, a common pattern among the Corpus of Serafino *strambotto* settings.

Table 4.1: *Gridan vostri occhi al mio cor 'fora fora!'* text from (Rossi 2002, 54)
Translation from Zanovello 2016, 18

Gridan vostri occhi al mio cor 'fora fora!'	**A**	Your eyes scream to my heart, 'out out!,
ché le diffese sue son corte corte;	**B**	since its defences fall so short, short;
'su suso, a saco a saco, mora mora,	**A**	'go go, sack sack, die die,
arda, arda, el fredo fredo, forte forte!'	**B**	burn, burn, cold cold, strong strong!'
Io pian pian dico dico allora allora	**A**	I then then say say softly softly:
'vien vieni, acurri acurri, o Morte Morte!,	**B**	'Come come, rush rush, o Death Death!'
or grido grido alto alto or muto muto	**C**	and scream scream loudly loudly or quietly
'acqua acqua, al foco al foco, aiuto aiuto!'	**C**	'Water water, fire fire, help help!'

Table 4.2: First couplet of *Gridan vostri occhi* with inclusion of fermatas

Gridan vostri occhi al cor mio 'fora fora'	**A**	Your eyes scream to my heart, 'out out!'
C'ha le diffese sue sì corte corte	**B**	since its defences fall so short, short;

Example 4.1: Anonymous Cantus melody and pauses in *Gridan vostri occhi al mio cor 'fora fora!'* with variants in the text from I-Mt 55

When deciding how to divide the lines of text with fermatas, focus on the structure of the text. If

there are exclamatory words in the text (ex: *Ah, lasso* or *Ite, sospiri*) insert a fermata before the

following word. Weaving the text and music together was important for poet-improvisers and

impacts the delivery of the musical performance. Analyzing the Corpus revealed that most

strambotti settings contain one pause in each line of the couplet (Appendix B). The inclusion of

pauses during this step will help establish a clear structure of the cantus melody. For my setting

of the first couplet of *O sacro Apollo*, I planned one fermata in the first line of the couplet and

one fermata in the second line of the couplet, as shown in Table 4.3 (underlined syllables have

fermatas).

Table 4.3: First couplet of *O sacro Apollo* with inclusion of fermatas

O sacro Apollo, che con dolce lyra,	O holy Apollo, who with sweet lyre
Facto hai mover le selve e gli animali.	caused the woods and the beasts to move,

Step 2: Create the Cantus Melody

Once the text structure is set, choose the tonality and range: What is the final pitch? Is there a B-

flat signature, or no signature (i.e., B-natural signature)? Table 4.3 shows the frequency of finals

and signatures of the cantus in the Corpus, which includes *Strambotti* with finals on every

diatonic note except for B/B-flat. The most common combinations of finals and signatures are G

with no signature flat (7 examples), and D with no signature flat (6 examples). The range of the

cantus should be comfortable for a singer, spanning between a sixth and tenth. The most

common cantus ranges among the Corpus of settings of Serafino's *strambotti* are an octave (10

examples) and a ninth (7 examples) (See Appendix 6.3).

Table 4.4: Frequency of pitch finals and signatures in the Serafino corpus

Final	No. of *strambotti*
C	2
D	**6**
E	0
F (B-natural)/no signature	0
F (B-flat)	3
G (B-natural)/no signature	**7**
G (B-flat)	2
A	3

Strambotti usually begin on the final, or a third or fifth above the final, and their melodies move primarily in stepwise motion. Closed cadences are reserved for the final cadence of the second line of the couplet. The first line of the couplet normally ends with a cadence on the third or fifth degree; however, in a few examples the first line cadences a step below or above the final. Additionally, *strambotto* settings often include internal open cadences, especially at fermatas in the middle of lines. The pitches of the internal open cadences most often relate to each other in stepwise motion, and do not correspond to the pitch of the final cadence. It is likely that improvisers or composers of these settings chose the cadential arrivals before coming up with the tune to establish a cohesive tonal framework.

Additionally, the melody should be "catchy," easily adjustable for the tonic syllables of the following verses, and should move mostly in stepwise motion. An excellent extant example is the first eight measures of *Ah lasso, ad quante fier' la sete toglio* from I-Mt 55. This melody could be easily embellished since the first four measures are repeated a fourth lower in the next four measures (see Example 3.7 in Chapter 3).

I created a cantus melody for *O sacro Apollo* with an F final and a B-flat signature. The range

spans an octave from d to dd, but the melody mostly remains between f and cc, making it a

plagal melody (Example 4.2). Every phrase starts with syllabic text setting, the penultimate

syllable is set to a melisma, and the last syllable falls on a fermata. The first phrase fills in a

descending fifth from cc to f. The melody then moves by stepwise motion to dd, ending on the

third degree at the end of the first line of text. Like the beginning of the first line, the second line

starts on the fifth degree, descends to g, then ascends again to dd. A stepwise descent to g leads

to a fermata on e, the seventh degree, creating an open cadence with a lot of tension. For the final

phrase, *e gli animali,* the cantus leaps a sixth to cc, then descends with ornamentation through a

fifth to a cadential figure to reach the final of f.

Example 4.2: Cantus melody of *O sacro Apollo* by Leah Weitzner

Step 3: Add the Tenor Voice - Establish a Cantus/Tenor Framework

The tenor is the most important voice to consider when harmonizing a melody. Essential

compositional devices employed to construct the tenor include the parallel-sixth model and its

inverted counterpart, the parallel-third model (see Chapter 3). Use one contrapuntal model per

section (as defined by fermatas) and break out of the model only at cadences. It should also be

noted that when using the parallel-tenth model in the outer voices, one should focus on the

cantus and bassus voices rather than the cantus and tenor. My setting of *O sacro Apollo* uses one

model in each section, as detailed below in Table 4.4 and Example 4.3.

Table 4.5: Relationship of Cantus and Tenor (and Bassus)
From *O sacro Apollo* by Leah Weitzner

Couplet text	Contrapuntal model
O sacro Apollo	Parallel-third model
che con dolce lyra (end of first line)	Parallel-sixth model
Facto hai mover le selve	Parallel-tenth model in outer voices
e gli animali	Parallel sixth-model

Example 4.3: Two-part framework in *O sacro Apollo* by Leah Weitzner

Step 4: Cantus/Tenor Cadence Types

As mentioned in Chapter 3, internal and final cadences are either simple (sixth-to-octave, note-

against-note or with 7-6 suspension, and their inversions). Plan to always put a cadence at the

end of each line of the couplet, and sometimes at a fermata in the middle of the line. Once the

cadential motion of the cantus and tenor are established, it will be straightforward to add the bassus voice. *O sacro Apollo* uses a combination of the cadence types shown above as well as the cadences discussed in Chapter 3 (Table 4.5 and Example 4.4).

Table 4.6: Sections including contrapuntal models and cadence types
        From *O sacro Apollo* by Leah Weitzner

Fermata	Contrapuntal model	Cadence type
1	Parallel thirds C/T	2-3 suspension C/T with cadence on F
2 (end of first line)	Parallel sixths C/T	Deceptive cadence on C with arrival on F (with bassus)
3	Parallel tenths C/B	4-3 suspension T/B with cadence on C
4 (end of second line)	Parallel sixths C/T	7-6 suspension C/T with final cadence on F

Example 4.4: Cadence types in *O sacro Apollo* by Leah Weitzner

Step 5: Adding the Bassus

In the parallel-sixth model the bassus should alternate fifths and thirds below the tenor, and in the parallel-third model, it alternates tenths and octaves below the tenor, beginning and ending on a perfect consonance in both models (Schubert 2008, 506). Among the settings in the Corpus,

the bassus remains within the range of a ninth to an eleventh. In either parallel model, the bassus

must move in alternate directions as much as possible to avoid illegal parallels. If there are

parallel sixths between the cantus and tenor, one can alternate thirds and fifths (or tenths and

twelfths) between the tenor and bassus. At cadences, the bassus always moves from a fifth to an

octave or unison in relation to the tenor. When the cantus and tenor fall out of the parallel-sixth

model, typically with a third between the voices, the bassus should sound an octave below or in

unison with the tenor. The fourth measure of Example 4.5 demonstrates a transition from a

compound-interval parallel-sixth model to a simple-interval parallel-sixth model, with a third

between the cantus and tenor, and an octave between the tenor and bassus.

Example 4.5: Compound vertical intervals in the bassus in mm. 6–11 of *Se'l zappatore el giorno se affatica*, I-MOe alpha F.9.9, 6v–7r.

Example 4.6 shows the application of the bassus responding to the rules used within each

parallel-model section. For the first line of text, I added alternating tenths and octaves for the

parallel-third model, followed by alternating fifths and thirds for the parallel-sixth model ending

the first line of the couplet of text. The second line of text begins with parallel-tenths in the

cantus and bassus, with the tenor moving in contrary motion. Like the first line of text, the last

line of text ends with the parallel-sixth model alternating fifths and thirds in the bassus.

Example 4.6 Cantus, tenor and bassus in *O sacro Apollo*

Adding an Altus

The altus is generally not structurally important and is less predictable than the other voices. In

some settings, the altus does not appear at all or varies among different sources, as seen in

Strambotto III, *Mille prove aggio fatto* (three-part versions found in I-Fn Panc 27 and F-Pn Rés.

Vm7 676) and *Soffrire son disposto* (three-part version in F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676; see Appendix A).

As a starting place, in the parallel-sixth model the altus can alternate thirds and fourths with the

tenor. The altus can also be used to add a chord tone not present in the other voices or to provide

variety through ornamentation. For instance, if the other voices feature quarter notes, the altus

can be embellished with eighth notes to fill in larger intervals. When the cantus is not strictly

following one of the parallel models, the altus may contain larger leaps and occasional rests to

adhere to contrapuntal rules. In Example 4.7, *Gridan vostri occhi*, intervals in parentheses

indicate intervals below the tenor. The altus mainly alternates between thirds and fourths with

the tenor, both above and below (Park 1993, 188). This example also contains a brief passage of

fauxbourdon in the top three voices at the end of the first line of text (mm. 13–14), and a variant

of fauxbourdon made possible by the bassus in mm. 27–31.

Example 4.7: Tenor and altus in *Gridan vostri occhi*

For my *strambotto,* the altus and tenor voices alternate mostly in fourths and thirds, ending together in unison or thirds at each cadence. In the third section, the altus and tenor move in contrary motion as the cantus and bassus move in parallel tenths (Example 4.8).

Example 4.8: Altus and tenor intervals in *O sacro Apollo* by Leah Weitzner

The musical *strambotto,* by nature, is a simple tune that accompanies the declamation or singing of the poetic form. Notably, its music can be deconstructed into improvisable contrapuntal models. Though modern musicians and music theorists refer to these models, historical improvisers recognized them simply as 'improvising.' Their process was instinctive, but contemporary improvisors can develop the same tools to recreate their historical counterparts' embodied cognition, and thereby their style and performance practices. As the oral tradition of musical improvisation for poetic genres found its way into the written record, Serafino's

strambotti came to be performed by musicians who were not the authors of these texts (Wilson 2020, 417). As a result, the possibilities for performing these works expanded from musicians singing and accompanying themselves, in the humanist style, to a more varied range of performing forces and practices.

Instrumentation

Serafino sang the cantus and played the lower voices on a stringed instrument such as the lute, vihuela, or lira da braccio. This model of performance was practiced by both professional musicians and their patrons, some of whom were skilled amateurs. Alternatively, Serafino and other musicians would perform poetry with varying instrumental forces by adding a *tenorista* who would play the tenor or bass line on a plucked or bowed string instrument (Haar 1986, 86; Prizer 1999, 18). The various formats of written transmission provided professional and amateur performers of *strambotti* with several options for their execution (Wilson 202, 413). Roberto d'Avanzini was a lutenist and singer in Mantua from at least 1512 to 1560. He had a very close working relationship with composer and musician Marchetto Cara. Roberto functioned as the *tenorista* during the performance of Cara's music*,* playing and singing one or more lines of a piece while Cara played the remaining voices (Prizer 1980, 15).

Documentation also survives of Serafino performing in this style (*tenorista*-duo) with the *tenorista* named Fidele in Urbino in 1498 (Prizer 1986, 11). This combination of instruments would bring the bassus voice into a role of greater importance towards the end of the fifteenth century, especially in the context of the development of the *frottola* in Mantua, with which the

strambotti in the Corpus share many prototypical traits (Wilson 2020, 417). Moving to the turn

of the sixteenth century, Table 4.7 lists the many possible arrangements of performing forces,

besides the *tenorista* duo. A *strambotto* performance could even have used different

instrumentation for each of the four couplets. Since the music is repeats four times, it is possible

to change the arrangement for each couplet. For example, *Gridan vostri occhi*, already discussed

above, could be performed by a poet-musician playing a stringed instrument and a *tenorista*

playing lute in several different arrangements (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.7: Possibilities of performing forces (adapted from Prizer 1975, 230)

Option	Performing forces
1	Cantus sung; lower voices played on consort of bowed instruments
2	Cantus sung; lower voices played on a consort of mixed (bowed/wind) instruments
3	Cantus sung; lower voices played on plucked chordal instrument
4	All voices sung or all played (strings or wind)
5	All voices played on a plucked chordal instrument
6	Instrument plays cantus while plucked or bowed chordal instrument plays the lower voice
7	Cantus sung by bassus instrumentalist (plucked or bowed), *tenorista* plays the tenor

Table 4.8: Performance suggestions for *Gridan vostri occhi*

Couplet	Text	Performance suggestion
1	*Gridan vostri occhi al mio cor 'fora fora!'* *ché le diffuse sue son corte corte*	Poet-musician sings cantus, *tenorista* plays lower three voices
2	*'su suso, a saco a saco, mora mora* *Arda, arda, el fredo fredo, forte forte!'*	Poet-musician sings cantus and plays bassus, *tenorista* plays tenor
3	*Io pian pian dico dico allora allora* *'vien vieni, acurri acurri, o Morte Morte!'*	Poet-musician sings cantus and plays tenor line
4	*or grido grido alto alto or muto muto* *'acqua acqua al foco al foco, aiuto aiuto!'*	Poet-musician sings cantus and plays bassus, *tenorista* sings tenor and plays altus

Musical settings of Serafino's *strambotti* (and other poetic forms) frequently appear in literary

manuscripts of *poesie per musica* such as MS A.I.4 (Biblioteca Comunale di Mantova), which is

affiliated with the court of Isabella d'Este around the years 1505–1510. This manuscript seems to

have been used at court as a continuing repository (grouped by poetic genre) of poetry composed

for music, and sent to Isabella d'Este (Prizer 1980, 31). At her *studiolo* in Mantua, Isabella

d'Este had consorts of viols, and various wind instruments, as well as many lutes and *lire da*

braccia. Given her access to these instruments, which would have been played by the musicians

of the court, the texts recorded in the manuscript of *poesie per musica* may have been improvised

on the instruments belonging to her collection (Prizer 1980, 17; Prizer 1999, 33).

Any of the combinations of forces listed in Table 4.1 would be suitable for the interpretation of a

strambotto, but the most effective way would have been to sing the cantus as in the humanist

tradition of "singing to the lyre" (Wilson 2020, 249). When composing music for a *strambotto,* it

is important to consider the options for performing forces, as the embodied cognition of playing

an instrument impacts the possibilities for ranges and may determine musical limitations.

O sacro Apollo

Serafino Aquilano

Leah Weitzner

O sa - cro_A-pol - lo, che con dol - ce ly - ra

Fac - to_haimo - ver le sel - ve e gli_a - ni - ma - li.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Serafino Aquilano was a central figure of Italian culture in the late fifteenth century who created a prolific body of vernacular poetry. His poetry, accompanied by improvised music, was a unifying force that connected observers of every social class across the Italian peninsula. This inclusive approach to his art developed a popular genre that resonated with a wide audience, leaving its mark in multiple prints and manuscripts.

By studying the surviving music for settings of Serafino's *strambotti*, this thesis has provided insights into the nature of his musical improvisation and performances, which were described as magical and moving. The *modo de cantar* rubrics published in Petrucci's *frottole* prints point to a desire to recreate performances like Serafino's and validate the popularity of his musical *strambotti*.

With its four-couplet structure, the poetic form of the *strambotto* served as a canvas for improvisation. The music, repeated four times, was simple and based entirely on improvisable contrapuntal models. However, correct counterpoint was not always the primary concern. It was the text that shaped the *strambotto*'s transformative power, allowing each couplet to shape a performance in a new and unique way and highlighting the dynamic nature of Serafino's art. In this thesis I have provided a guide for re-creating Serafino's musical practice.

Though it cannot be confirmed that Serafino composed any of the extant musical settings of his poetry, the surviving music for the *strambotti* uses improvisable contrapuntal models that

indicate the musical embodied cognition of a poet-improviser. Serafino was known for singing while accompanying himself on the lute. Many amateur and professional musicians, including Serafino, would emulate this practice of self-accompanied by adding a second performer, a *tenorista*, to play the tenor line while the first musician sang and played an improvised bass line.

Appendix A: The Corpus of anonymous Serafino *strambotto* settings

Name of *strambotto*	Provenance	MS/Print source	Folio no.	vv.
Ah lasso, ad quante fier la sete toglio	Milan	I-Mt 55	66v-67r	4
Ah lasso, ad quante fier la sete toglio	Naples	I-PEc 431	53v-54r	4
Andate accesi mei sospiri al loco	Mantua/Ferrara	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	39v-40r	4
Dal ciel non hebbi mai altro che guerra	Mantua/Ferrara	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	38v-39r	4
Deh fusse quí	Florence	I-Fn Panc 27	30v	4
Del mio amar grande et del tuo amor pocho	Milan	I-Mt 55	53v-54r	3
Fortuna, che te giova de straciarme	Florence	I-Fn Panc 27	22r	4
Gratia piú che virtú fá lhomo grato	Venice	RISM 1509|2	xxvii	4
Gridan vostri occhi al mio cor fora fora	Padua	I-MOe a.F.9.9	19v-20r	2
Gridan vostri occhi al mio cor fora fora	Milan	I-Mt 55	1v-3r	4
Guardando alli occhi toi morir mi sento	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	19v-20r	4
Io mando ognor al ciel suspiri ardenti	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	5v-6r	4
Io piango al mio tormento el tempo perso	Padua	I-MOe a.F.9.9	8v	2
Ite, sospiri, dove Amor vi mena	Mantua/Ferrara	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	74v-75r	4
La nocte aquieta ogni fiero animale	Florence	I-Fn Panc 27	33v	4
Linfermo allhor piú se consuma e scalda	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	12v-13r	4
Me stesso incolpo	Venice	RISM 1505|5	xx	4
Mercé, mercé, mercé d'un cor contrito	Mantua/Ferrara	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	98v-100r	4
Mille prove aggio fatto per levarme	Mantua/Ferrara	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	23v-24r	3
Mille prove aggio fatto per levarme	Florence	I-Fn BR 230	58v-59r	4
Mille prove aggio fatto per levarme	Florence	I-Fn Panc 27	56v-57r	3
Mille prove aggio fatto per levarme	Padua	I-MOe a.F.9.9	73v-74r	4

Morte? Che voi, te bramo?	Mantua/Ferrara	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	52v-53r	4
Non te smarrir, cor mio, va' passo passo	Milan	I-Mt 55	44v-45r	4
Non te smarrir, cor mio, va' passo passo	Venice	RISM 1505|5	xxviii	4
Non te stimar se a te ciascun se arrende	Milan	I-Mt 55	18v-19r	4
O preciosa fe si lacerata	Venice	RISM 1507|2	xxxiii	4
Ò voi che seguitate il van cupido	Mantua/Ferrara	F-Pn Vm7 676	56v-57r	4
Peregrinando vo	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	11v-12r	4
Quando la fiamma	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	13v-14r	4
Rendi quella alma insidiosa morte	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	15v-16r	4
Risguarda el viso mio palido e afflicto	Mantua/Ferrara	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	34v-35r	4
S'el zapator el giorno se affactica	Padua	I-MOe a.F.9.9	11v-12r	4
Sel pastor con affanno el dí gli armenti	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	14v-15r	4
Soffrire io son disposto ogni tormento	Mantua/Ferrara	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	83v-84r	3
Soffrire io son disposto ogni tormento	Florence	I-Fn Panc 27	13v	4
Soffrire io son disposto ogni tormento	Naples	I-PEc 431	116v-117r	4
Spesso nascosti stan tra' vaghi fiori	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	17v-18r	4
Spesso nel mezo d'un bel fabricare	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	18v-19r	4
Tu dormi, io veglio e vo peredendo i passi	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	9v-10r	4
Vivo sol de mirarti, ah dura impresa!	Florence	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	16v-17r	4

Appendix B: Table of Cantus/Tenor tonalities at pauses and finals

Incipit	Source	Signature | vv.	Starting tonality	Fermata 1	Fermata 2	End of First Line	Fermata 3	Fermata 4	Final
Morte? Che voi, te bramo?	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676								
Cantus			dd	bb	cc	cc			cc
Tenor			d	d	c	c			c
Non te stimar se a te ciascun se arrende	I-Mt 55								
Cantus			e	g	d	g	d	e	c
Tenor			c	e	b	G	b	G	E
Ah lasso, a quante fier' la sete toglio	I-Mt 55								
Cantus			dd	g		d	g		d
Tenor			bb	g		d	g		d
Del mio amar grande et del tuo amor pocho	I-Mt 55								
Cantus			aa	f#		aa	cc		d
Tenor			d	d		a	c		D
Gridan vostri occhi al mio cor fora fora	I-MOe a.F.9.9, I-Mt 55								
Cantus			aa	e	g	aa	c		d
Tenor			c	c#	e	a	a		D
Sufferir son disposto	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676								
Cantus			d	e		f	c		d
Tenor			d	c		F	a		D
Dal ciel non hebbi mai altro che guerra	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676								
Cantus			aa	aa		dd	d		d

Tenor			d	c		d	d		D
Vivo sol de mirarti, ah dura impresa!	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051								
Cantus			aa			aa			d
Tenor			a			a			F#
Ah lasso, ad quante fier' la sete toglio	I-PEc 431	Bb | T							
Cantus			f	f		aa	e		f
Tenor			f	f		f	c		F
Andate accesi mei sospiri al loco	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	Bb | CATB	aa			e			f
Cantus			aa			e			f
Tenor			f			c			F
Peregrinando vo per mio destino	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	Bb | CATB							
Cantus			aa	f		aa	e		f
Tenor			c	a		f	c		a
Io mando ognor al ciel suspire ardenti	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051								
Cantus			dd	bb		cc	cc#		g
Tenor			g	g		c	aa		d
Ite, sospiri, dove Amor vi mena	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	Bb | CAT							
Cantus			g	f		dd			g
Tenor			G	a		d			G
La nocte aquieta ogni fiero animale	I-Fn Panc 27								
Cantus			bb	bb		f#	bb		g
Tenor			G	G		a	G		G
Mercé, mercé, mercé d'un cor contrito	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676								
Cantus			dd	e		g	e		g
Tenor			g	c		G	c		G
Mentre uno acceso raggio ha in sé l'ardore	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051								

Cantus			cc	g		e	d	aa	g
Tenor			c	e		c	b	f#	b
Non te smarrir, cor mio, va' passo passo	I-Mt 55								
Cantus			cc	g		cc	g	g	g
Tenor			c	G		c	G	c	b
Non te stimar se a te ciascun se arrende	I-Mt 55								
Cantus			g	cc	g	cc			g
Tenor			g	c	e	C			G
Se'l zappatore el giorno se affatica	I-MOe a.F.9.9								
Cantus			g	bb		cc	bb		g
Tenor			e	g		c	d		G
Tu dormi, io veglio e vo perdendo i passi	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	Bb | CATB							
Cantus			dd	aa	f#	f#	d		g
Tenor			d	f	a	a	b		b natural
Fortuna, che te giova de straciarme	I-Fn Panc 27								
Cantus			aa	aa	e	aa	c		aa
Tenor			a	c	c#	a	a		a
Ò voi che seguitate il van cupido	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676								
Cantus			dd			gg	e		aa
Tenor			d			g	c		a
Risguarda el viso mio palido e afflicto	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676								
Cantus			aa	e		cc	g		aa
Tenor			c	c		c	e		a

Appendix C: Voice Ranges of Cantus, Altus, Tenor, Bassus

Incipit	Source	Signature | Bb	Cantus	Altus	Tenor	Bassus	Final Tonality
Morte? Che voi, te bramo?	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676		c-ff 11th	B-b 8ve	a-aa 8ve	c-cc 8ve	C
Non te stimar se a te ciascun se arrende	I-Mt 55		a-aa 8ve	c-gg 12th	c-ff 11th	F-g 9th	C
Ah lasso, ad quante fier' la sete toglio	I-Mt 55		c-dd 9th	F-g 9th	a-bb 9th	Gama ut-G 8ve	D
Del mio amar grande et del tuo amor pocho	I-Mt 55		c#-ee 10th	-	D-f 10th	B flat-d 10th	D
Gridan vostri occhi al mio cor fora fora	I-Mt 55		c-dd 9th	D-aa 12th	D-f 10th	A-a 8ve	D
Sufferir io son disposto	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676		a-aa 8ve	-	D-g 11th	FF-c 12th	D
Dal ciel non hebbi mai altro che guerra	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676		b-dd 10th	g-bb 10th	D-g 11th	A-b flat 9th	D
Vivo sol de mirarti, ah dura impresa!	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051		c-cc 8ve	F-aa 10th	D-f 10th	G-a 9th	D
Ah lasso, ad quante fier' la sete toglio	I-PEc 431	Bb | T	e-cc 6th	F-b flat 11th	G-aa 9th	Gama ut-d 12th	F
Andate accessi mei sospiri al loco	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	Bb | CATB	e-bb flat 5th	F-f 8ve	F-f 8ve	FF-G 9th	F
Peregrinando vo	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	Bb | ATB	c-cc 8ve	a-bb flat 9th	F-f 8ve	B flat-c 9th	F
Io mando ognor al ciel suspire ardenti	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	Bb | AB	e-ee 8ve	F-a 10th	G-aa 9th	C-d 9th	G

Ite, sospiri, dove Amor vi mena	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	Bb | CAT	c-dd 9th	F-aa 10th	G-g 8ve	Gama ut-c 11th	G
La nocte aquieta ogni fiero animale	I-Fn Panc 27		d-dd 8ve	b-aa 7th	G-aa 9th	C-a 6th	G
Mercé, mercé, mercé d'un cor contrito	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	Bb | A	c-dd 9th	F-bb flat 11th	G-g 8ve	Gama ut-d 12th	G
Mentre uno acceso raggio ha in sé l'ardore	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051		c-dd 9th	F-b flat 11th	G-aa 9th	Gama ut-d 12th	G
Non te smarrir, cor mio, va' passo passo	I-Mt 55		c-ee 10th	G-aa 9th	G-aa 9th	Gama ut-b 10th	G
Se'l zappatore el giorno se affatica	I-MOe a.F.9.9		d-ff 10th	G-g 8ve	G-aa 9th	C-d 9th	G
Tu dormi, io veglio e vo perdendo I passi	GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	Bb | CATB	d-dd 8ve	F-g 9th	E-f 9th	B flat-b flat 8ve	G
Fortuna, che te giova de straciarme	I-Fn Panc 27		c-cc 8ve	D-aa 12th	F-f 8ve	A-c 10th	A
Ò voi che seguitate il van cupido	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676		d-dd 8ve	G-aa 9th	G-f 7th	Gama ut-a 9th	A
Risguarda el viso mio palido e afflicto	F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676		e-ff 9th	F-g 9th	G-aa 9th	A-a 8ve	A

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Sigla	Shelfmark or Full MS name	Provenance	Date
GB-Lbl Add. MS 35087	British Library, *Chansonnier of Jérôme Lauweryn of Watervliet*	Belgium	c. 1505-6
I-Fn BR 230	Biblioteca Nationale Centrale, I-Fn MS Banco Rari 230	Florence	After 1513
GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	British Library, GB-Lbl Egerton 3051	Florence	c. 1500
I-Fn Panc 27	Biblioteca Nationale Centrale, I-Fn MS Panciatichiano 27	Florence	c.1500
GB-Cmc MS 1760	GB-Cmc MS 1760	France	c. 1505
I-Fn MS Magl. XIX.117	Biblioteca Nationale Centrale, I-Fn MS Magl. XIX.117	France	c. 1505-15
CH-SGs Cod. Sang. 463	Stiftsbibliothek (Saint Gall), *Tschudi Liderbuch*	Switzerland	c. 1540
F-Pn Vm7 676	Bibliothèque nationale de France -Département de la Musique, F-Pn Rés. Vm7 676	Mantua or Ferrara	1502
I-Mt 55	Biblioteca Trivulziana e Archivio Storico Civico, I-Mt MS 55	Milan	c. 1510
I-PEc 431	Biblioteca Comunale Augusta, I-PEc MS 431	Naples	c. 1485
I-MOe a.F.9.9	Biblioteca Estense, I-MOe MS {alpha}.F.9.9	Padua	1495-6
I-PESo MS 1144	*Pesaro Manuscript*	Pesaro	c. 1490-1511
F-Pnm Français 1597	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, *Lorraine Chansonnier*	Paris	c.1500
US-Cn MS VM 140.C25	Newberry Library, *Vincenzo Capirola Lute Book*		c. 1517

Music Prints: Information in this table is taken from RISM (https://rism.online/?mode=sources)

Sigla	Full print name	Publisher, Provenance	Date
RISM 1505|5	*Frottole libro quarto*	Ottaviano Petrucci, Venice	1505
RISM 1507|3	*Frottole libro quarto* (Second Edition)	Ottaviano Petrucci, Venice	1507
RISM 1507|3	*Frottole libro septimo*	Ottaviano Petrucci, Venice	1507
RISM 1509|2	*Frottole libro nono*	Ottaviano Petrucci, Venice	1509
RISM 1509|3	*Tenori e contrabassi intabulati col sopran in canto figurato libro primo*	Ottaviano Petrucci, Venice	1509
RISM 1511|1	*Tenori e contrabassi intabulati col sopran in canto figurato libro secundo*	Ottaviano Petrucci, Venice	1511
RISM 1513|1	*Canzoni, sonetti, strambotti et frottole libro tertio*	Andrea Antico, Rome	1513
RISM 1516|2	*Canzoni, sonetti, strambotti et frottole libro quarto*	Andrea Antico, Rome	1517
RISM 1526|6	*Libro primo de la Croce*	Valerio Dorico, Rome	1526

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