

# On the Dating of Franco's *Ars cantus mensurabilis*\*

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by

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The current view on the dating and chronology of Lambertus and Franco appears to be based on the following. According to Bessler the authors were active very much around the same time<sup>1</sup>; Franco's treatise was thought to date from around 1250 or 1260 because of its connection with the stylistic development of the motet at Paris (a connection which naturally could only help to establish a *terminus post quem*). After H. Sowa published the Anonymous St Emmeram,<sup>2</sup> a treatise completed in 1279, it was generally agreed that Lambertus had written his own treatise not too long before that year. Yet the date of Franco's treatise was not revised accordingly (Reaney, who follows Bessler's dating, even allows the possibility that Franco might have written his treatise as early as the 1240s<sup>3</sup>). As a consequence, the idea that Franco's *Ars* predates the treatise by Lambertus has become firmly established, without a careful review of their relationship to each other. – Yet there are several indications which suggest that Franco's treatise must be later than Lambertus, and probably later even than the Anonymous St Emmeram.

The first clue to the relative chronological positions of Franco and Lambertus comes from a passage in which Franco criticizes "some people" (*quosdam*) for dividing up the *brevis altera* into three semibreves:

Pro altera autem brevi minus quam quatuor semibreves accipi non possunt . . . nec plures quam sex . . . , eo quod altera brevis in se duas rectas includit. Per quod patet quorundam error qui quandoque tres semibreves pro altera brevi ponunt, aliquando vero dua (Cserba 238, 10–15).

Yet it is not possible to admit fewer than four semibreves in the place of an *altera brevis* . . . nor more than six . . . , since the *altera brevis* contains within itself two *rectae*. Which shows the error of some people who notate sometimes three semibreves in place of an *altera brevis*, and sometimes two.

The doctrine censured by Franco was propagated by Lambertus, who may also have initiated it:

Quarta differentia est ligatura duarum figurarum, tam ascendendo quam descendendo, retinens proprietatem non propriam, ut hic: ♩ . . . Prima autem minor semibrevis dicitur, secunda major vel e converso, quia ambe nisi solo tempore mensurantur. Quod si aliquando pro altera brevi ponantur, tunc enim duo tempora compleantur (CS I, 274a).

The fourth distinction is the ligature of two notes, ascending as well as descending, with a *proprietas* that is not proper, as here ♩ . . . Now the first semibreve is called *minor* and the second *major*, or the other way round, since both semibreves measure only one *tempus*. So that if they are sometimes notated in the place of a *brevis altera*, then they fill two *tempora*.


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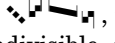
\* This essay was written in connection with my work on the *Handwörterbuch der musikalischen Terminologie* of the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz.

<sup>1</sup> Article *Franco von Köln*, MGG IV, 1955, col. 692, 695.

<sup>2</sup> *Ein anonymer glossierter Mensuraltraktat 1279*, Königsberger Studien zur Mw. IX, Kassel 1930.


<sup>3</sup> *The Question of Authorship in the Medieval Treatises on Music*, MD XVIII, 1964, p. 13 f.

. . . quodocunque ternarie ligature seu conjuncture reperiuntur, ut hic: , omnes semibreves equales et indivisibiles proferuntur, nisi in tertio loco quarti modi pro altera brevi reperiantur; nam sicut altera brevis tenet affinitatem recte brevis, sic etiam tales affinitatem inter se tam in forma quam proprietate tenebunt (CS I, 275b).

. . . whenever one finds three-note ligatures or *conjuncture*, as here: , they are all reckoned equal and indivisible semibreves, unless they are notated in the place of an *altera brevis*, on the third *locus* of the fourth mode; for just as the *altera brevis* has a kinship with the *recta brevis*, so shall such notes maintain the affinity between them both in form and in propriety.

This doctrine is so peculiar to Lambertus that Franco could only have been referring to him. Indeed the Anonymous St Emmeram, who attacks the same doctrine in two passages of his own treatise (p. 52, 6–13; 63, 8–18), refers unequivocally to Lambertus.

Further indications that Franco’s treatise is later than Lambertus can be found in the treatise of the Anonymous St Emmeram. The latter depicts Lambertus as a radical revolutionary – he blames him,<sup>4</sup> above all, for having brought ruin on the established teachings (“destroying that prose work which has a precise sequence of modes in almost every single chapter”), for frequently bringing changes to the shapes of notes (“they often designate different kinds of notation for the figures”), and for labelling the *recta longa* as *imperfecta* (“and assert with prejudicial arguments that those figures which we say are perfect are imperfect”).<sup>5</sup> He evidently does not know Franco’s *Ars* [which could have been criticized for the same reasons].

Indeed, all attacks in his treatise that could have been aimed just as well at Franco are targeted exclusively at Lambertus. When he criticizes the ligature  (p. 42), for example, the Anonymous St Emmeram can only be referring to Lambertus, not Franco (who also teaches these ligature forms), first, because he mentions only the *binaria* that are so shaped, whereas Franco adds tails of this type to all ascending ligatures *sine proprietate*, and second, because he criticizes Lambertus almost in one breath for the lack of any clear distinction between perfect and imperfect ligatures, a reproach that could not have been levelled against Franco.

If the Anonymous St Emmeram had known Franco’s treatise, it is difficult to think of a plausible reason why he might have wanted to exempt him, especially given that he does criticize other authors and notators besides Lambertus.<sup>6</sup> And, by this time, Franco’s teachings were already held to be above criticism, then many points made by Lambertus (like the concepts of *longa perfecta* and *imperfecta*, for instance) should have enjoyed immunity from criticism as well.

Similarly, if the Anonymous St Emmeram had known about Franco’s solution to the problem of the graphic distinction between plicated perfect and imperfect ligatures (p. 57, ll. 14 ff.), then he would very probably have discussed it. [But such is not the case.]

And when the Anonymous St Emmeram writes: “Elsewhere, the treatise [*ars*] says: *breuium et semibreuium idem est in ordinatione iudicium*” (Sowa, 52, 1–2), he cannot be quoting Franco here, even though the latter does use somewhat similar formulations in two places (Cserba 235, 5: *Et nota, hic* [sc. in ordinatione figurarum

<sup>4</sup> Ed. SOWA, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> The points on which the Anonymous St Emmeram criticizes Lambertus are itemized in H. SOWA, p. XVI f.

<sup>6</sup> For example, p. 16, ll. 35ff; 21, 4ff; 45, 17ff; 48, 3ff; 66, 32ff; 93, 10ff; 117, 15ff.

ad invicem] *idem esse iudicium de brevibus et semibrevis*; 237, 14–15: *De semibrevis autem et brevibus idem est iudicium in regulis prius dictis*). [There are three reasons why the Anonymous St Emmeram must be quoting an author other than Franco.] First, by *ars* he specifically understands teachings in the tradition of Garlandia (from which Lambertus had allegedly strayed). Second, the rule in question does indeed belong to the *ars* predating Lambertus and Franco: it stipulates that semibreves must be performed in the *modi per ultra mensuram* by analogy to the performance of breves. However, a rule according to which breves and semibreves are to be treated analogously would have been of very limited use in connection with Franco's *ordinatio figurarum ad invicem*, and would lack all justification precisely at this first location (Cserba 235, 5). Third, Franco's formulation refers to something altogether different from what the Anonymous St Emmeram had in mind, namely, that it is possible for several semibreves collectively to assume the place and function of a breve.

Nor do we need to see Franco as the source for the following remark: *Item notabile est quod ubiconque est longitudo, ibi est perfectio in hac arte, et ubi non est longitudo, ibi nec perfectio decet esse* (p. 44, ll. 20–22). First, the Anonymous St Emmeram is not actually citing anybody here, but simply volunteers a remark of his own (*item notabile est*); secondly, nearly every “complete” regular ligature has a longa as the final note. To make this observation, then, he could scarcely have needed Franco to make it first.

The indications that the Anonymous St Emmeram wrote before Franco are not weakened by the knowledge of his apparent connections to Anonymus 4 (who mentions Franco in two places<sup>7</sup>). For when the Anonymous St Emmeram criticizes the theory of *ordines*,<sup>8</sup> he is surely not referring to this English treatise,<sup>9</sup> which in all probability was unknown on the Continent. The doctrine in question is set forth also in the revision of Garlandia's treatise transmitted by Hieronymus.<sup>10</sup> It seems that the *ordines* theory was one of the extensions of Garlandia's *ars* as it was taught in Paris.<sup>11</sup> It is fair to conclude, in sum, that the Anonymous St Emmeram has no knowledge of any treatise written by Franco, and that he was writing, probably, before its appearance. For him it is Lambertus who has brought ruin on the *ars*; it is only in relation to Lambertus that he criticizes the concepts of *perfectio*, *longa perfecta* and *longa imperfecta*.

That it is not Franco but someone else (Lambertus) who had developed these concepts and the outlook they represent, is clear also from Franco's treatise itself. In his preface,<sup>12</sup> Franco makes a distinction between the writings of the *antiqui* and *novi*: “For when we considered that there are many, both young and old, in their treatises on measurable music . . .” (*Quoniam cum videremus multos, tam novos quam antiquos, in artibus suis de mensurabili musica . . .*). In his third chapter he

<sup>7</sup> Ed. RECKOW, BzAfMw IV, p. 46, ll. 23f., and p. 50, l. 29.

<sup>8</sup> SOWA, 93, 10–21.

<sup>9</sup> RECKOW, 23, 13ff.

<sup>10</sup> Just as it also shares the expression *modus obliquus* (for *ultramensurabilis*) with Anonymus 4.

<sup>11</sup> In view of this, the treatise of Anonymus 4, whose *terminus post quem* is 1272, and which has been dated around 1275 on the basis of palaeographic evidence provided by its earliest surviving manuscript (Fr. RECKOW, BzAfMw V, p. 2), must have originated at a later date as well, within the margin of tolerance of the manuscript dating, and in any case after 1279.

<sup>12</sup> CSERBA, 230f.

even speaks<sup>13</sup> expressly of a quarrel between *antiqui* and *aliqui moderni*, a quarrel that he wishes to resolve: “. . . for the sake of ending the controversy between the old and some of our own time” (*propter antiquorum et aliquorum modernorum controversiam compescendam*).<sup>14</sup> According to Franco, both the *novi* and the *antiqui* had said much that was right, but they had also been wrong about many things, above all about “the accidental aspects of this discipline” (*accidentia ipsius scientie*). It was his intention to support and adopt what was correct, and to reject what was in error; and if he himself were to introduce anything new, he intended “to uphold it and prove it with good reasons” (*bonis rationibus sustinere et probare*).

The argument that Franco wished to settle had to do with the number of rhythmic modes:<sup>15</sup>

Modi autem a diversis diversimode enumerantur. Quidam enim ponunt VI, alii VII. Nos autem V tantum ponimus, quia ad hos V omnes alii reducuntur.

Primus enim procedit ex omnibus longis, et sub isto reponimus illum, qui est ex longa et brevi, duabus de causis: prima est, quia isti duo in similibus pausationibus uniuntur; secunda est propter antiquorum et aliquorum modernorum controversiam compescendam.

The modes are however numbered and ordered in different ways by different people. For there are some who posit six modes, and others seven. Yet we posit only five, since all the others are reducible to these.

The first proceeds by longas only, and under it we place the one that proceeds by longa and brevis, and this for two reasons. Firstly, these two modes are united in having similar rests; and the second is for the sake of ending the controversy between the old and some of our own time.

The central question at issue here was this: which is the true first mode – the one known thus far as the first (a *modus rectus*) or the one known thus far as the fifth (*ex omnibus longis*)?<sup>16</sup> Now since the fifth mode had always been viewed as a *modus per ultra mensuram*, that is, an irregular one, it could scarcely have been granted the distinction of the real first mode, at least not before the new concept of the *perfectio* rendered it perfectly regular – and among Franco’s contemporaries, only Lambertus propagated that concept.<sup>17</sup> The compromise proposed by Franco, namely that the old modes 1 and 5 be conflated into a single first mode, affirms the concept of *perfectio* and at the same time preserves the traditional ranking of the modes.

With regard to the number of modes, a system of seven modes is not positively known to have been taught anywhere. Franco may have meant the six-mode system expanded with the “English” variant of

<sup>13</sup> CSERBA, 232, 20f.

<sup>14</sup> Given the conventions of citation, *aliqui moderni* is probably to be understood as just one *modernus*; in the same way, the Anonymous St Emmeram refers to LAMBERTUS (whenever he does not mention him by name) as *quidam* (plural). See also the citations of MURIS, VITRY and others in Jacques de Liège.

<sup>15</sup> CSERBA, 232, 15–21.

<sup>16</sup> See also the revised version of Garlandia’s treatise, transmitted by HIERONYMUS: “Sed aliqui volunt, quod quintus noster modus sit primus omnium. Et bona est ratio, quia per istum modum praecedit omnes nostros modos” (ed. E. REIMER, *Johannes de Garlandia: De mensurabili musica*, Ph.D. diss, Freiburg 1969, typewritten, p. 168, 25–26; CSERBA, 195, 36–38).

<sup>17</sup> The author of the revised version of Garlandia’s treatise, who may already have known Franco’s teachings (cf. REIMER, p. 181ff.), seems to be referring also (or: only) to LAMBERTUS, since he invokes the latter’s rationale (which in FRANCO is no longer expressly provided): “Iste primus dicitur / et juste preponitur / aliis venturis; / nam ad hunc reducitur, / et in hunc resolvitur / quivis ex futuris” (CS I, 279b).

the third mode (LLB);<sup>18</sup> it remains uncertain whether the revised version of Garlandia's treatise, cited by Anonymus 4, propagated a system of seven modes.<sup>19</sup> It seems also possible (and perhaps more plausible, given that Franco alludes to the controversy surrounding the first mode), that "septem" in Franco's text should be read as "novem," in which case he would have meant the nine-mode system of Lambertus. Yet this question must remain open at present.

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According to this reading of the evidence, then, the concepts of *perfectio*, *longa perfecta* and *imperfecta* would have originated in Lambertus, and were subsequently adopted by Franco, who upheld them in response to his critics.

What was newly invented by Franco, by the criteria offered in his Prohemium, was his ligature theory. True to his word, Franco did indeed take extraordinary care to "uphold [it] with good reasons," and he used the modes to demonstrate their usefulness (ch. X – just as Garlandia had done in his chapter *de probatione modorum per figuras*<sup>20</sup>), and thereby "to prove" them. His concern in this regard may well be a reflection of his disapproval of those who had erred *maxime in accidentibus ipsius scientie*. Compared to this, the trouble he takes to underpin the concepts of *longa perfecta* and *perfectio* is comparatively slight: on this point he can evidently take the extensive argumentation of Lambertus for granted.

The *bonae rationes* with which Franco supports his new ligature theory are advanced mainly by clarifying the ligature modifications of *cum proprietate*, *sine proprietate*, *cum opposita proprietate*, *cum perfectione* and *sine perfectione* as *differentiae essentialis et specificae ipsis ligaturis*. As *differentiae essentialis* these demand consistency of meaning, and this criterion is what justifies the innovations made by Franco. As *differentiae specificae ipsis ligaturis* they also support the classification of the *figurae*. There are two *genera* of *figurae*: *simplices* and *ligaturae*. Just as the *genus* of the *simplices* is divided into three *species* (*longae*, *breves* and *semibreves*), so does the *genus* of the *ligaturae* include several *species*. These arise from the *differentiae specificae*. Yet they have no designation of their own, and are designated instead by *genus* (*ligatura*), and described with reference to the *differentiae specificae* (*cum proprietate et perfectione* etc.) (*Species quoque consistunt sub genere; ipsis tamen speciebus non est nomen impositum, sed eas dictae differentiae et suum genus circumloquuntur*<sup>21</sup>). Although a comment on the *species ligaturarum* was certainly not inappropriate at this point, Franco does seem to treat them far more extensively than would have been necessary, especially given that on this issue, he positioned himself squarely in the tradition of Garlandia. One cannot rule out, then, that Franco was actually responding to Lambertus, who had classified ligatures by the purely external criterion of numbers of notes (*plicae*, *binariae*, *ternariae*, *quaternariae*, *quinariae*), had presented each of the forms which he labeled *differentiae* in isolation, had understood by *proprietas* only the *tractus* at the beginning of a ligature, and had completely neglected (as the Anonymous St

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. the revised version of GARLANDIA's treatise transmitted by HIERONYMUS: "Aliqui addunt modos alios, sed non est necessarium illos numerare, ut duae longae et brevis, quia per istos sex sufficientiam possumus habere" (ed. REIMER, 167, 7; CSERBA, 195, 9–11), and Anonymus 4: "Iterato sunt et alii modi, qui dicuntur modi inusitati, quasi irregulares, quamvis non sint, ut in partibus Angliae et alibi, cum dicunt longa longa brevis, longa longa brevis" (ed. RECKOW, 23, 2–5).

<sup>19</sup> See the previous remark. Their formulations suggest that we are dealing with more than a merely supplementary mode.

<sup>20</sup> REIMER, p. 99ff; CS I, 179ff.

<sup>21</sup> CSERBA, 240, 18–20.

Emmeram had already noted with disapproval) the distinction between perfect and imperfect ligatures.

The thesis presented in this article can be summarized as follows: Franco's treatise is later than Lambertus, probably even later than the Anonymous St Emmeram (1279), and must date around 1280. He intervenes in conciliatory fashion in the quarrels provoked by the revolutionary doctrines of Lambertus, quarrels to which the treatise by the Anonymous St Emmeram amply testifies, and adopts and defends Lambertus's concepts of *perfectio*, *longa perfecta* and *imperfecta*. His ligature theory, however, represents an innovation of his own.