

Quinto ciclo di seminari interdisciplinari Levi per i dottorati di ricerca con discipline musicologiche
Il tempo nella Musica, della Musica, per la Musica

14 gennaio, ore 9.00

Seminario 7

The invention of modal rhythm

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ABSTRACT

Over one hundred years ago, the great German musicologist Friedrich Ludwig was the first to analyze Notre Dame polyphony, the earliest repertoire that indicates rhythmic values. He assumed without a doubt that the repertoire was transmitted in writing and attributed it to two composers, Leonin and Perotin, even though the evidence for the attribution was very thin. In the last years, I and a number of other scholars have shown that much of the Notre Dame polyphony was transmitted orally. Yet, there is also strong evidence that the tripla and quadrupla were transmitted in writing.

In this seminar I intend to discuss how singers could have both improvised this music *and* also created written compositions suitable for literal transmission. Written and oral transmission do not exclude one another, they existed side-by-side. Singers were able to improvise because they had memorized countless formulas, formulas appropriate for beginnings, continuations, and cadences. Repetitive rhythmic patterns made memorization easy. The same tools that helped musicians to improvise were also used to memorize worked-out pieces that were transmitted in writing.

LETTURE CONSIGLIATE

BUSSE BERGER Anna Maria, 2008, *The evolution of rhythmic notation*, in CHRISTENSEN Thomas, 2008, *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.