

Stylistic characteristics of the Italian mature Trecento music: The case of Francesco Landini

İtalyan olgun Trecento müzik akımının üslupsal özellikleri: Francesco Landini Trecentoları örneği

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ABSTRACT

The Italian Trecento represents a pivotal stage in the evolution of secular polyphony, marking the emergence of a distinct national musical style within the broader framework of European Ars Nova. This period witnessed the flourishing of indigenous forms that reflect poetic refinement, cultural specificity, and stylistic experimentation at the intersection of the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. Trecento music is distinguished by its modal diversity, lyrical expressiveness, and innovative use of rhythm – especially in genres such as the madrigal, caccia, and ballata. Objective. The aim of this article is to analyze the stylistic traits and genre development of Trecento music and assess its broader impact on the evolution of musical culture in Europe. The study investigates the internal features of key secular forms, tracing their transformation from monophonic precedents to mature polyphonic structures. It focuses on both prominent and lesser-known composers, with particular emphasis on Francesco Landini, whose works exemplify melodic fluency, structural refinement, and rhythmic nuance. The article sheds light on the emergence of regional musical idioms and their role in shaping early Renaissance aesthetics. Special attention is given to the interplay between music and poetry. The article takes into account the works of composers from different generations of the Trecento era, including both early representatives and those whose output marks the culmination of the style and the transition to a new historical stage. By situating Trecento music within a wider cultural and historical narrative, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of its legacy and relevance for historically informed performance today.

Keywords: Trecento, Francesco Landini, genre, style, madrigal, caccia, ballata

ÖZ

İtalyan Trecento'su, Avrupa Ars Nova akımı çerçevesinde özgün bir ulusal müzik üslubunun ortaya çıkışını simgeleyen, dünyevi çok sesliliğin evriminde dönüm noktası teşkil eden bir dönemdir. Bu süreçte, şiirsel incelik, kültürel özgünlük ve geç Orta Çağ ile erken Rönesans'ın kesişiminde stilistik deneyler yansıtan yerli biçimler gelişme göstermiştir. Trecento müziği, özellikle madrigal, caccia ve ballata gibi türlerdeki modal çeşitlilik, lirik anlatım ve yenilikçi ritmik yapı kullanımıyla dikkat çeker. Bu makalenin amacı, Trecento müziğinin üslup özellikleri ile türsel gelişimini analiz etmek ve bu müziğin Avrupa müzik kültürünün evrimindeki genel etkisini değerlendirmektir. Çalışmada temel dünyevi biçimlerin içsel özellikleri incelenmekte; bu biçimlerin tek sesli örneklerden olgun çok sesli yapılara dönüşümü takip edilmektedir. Araştırma, hem tanınmış hem de daha az bilinen bestecilere odaklanmakta; özellikle Francesco Landini'nin eserleri melodik akıcılık, yapısal incelik ve ritmik nüans açısından örnek olarak ele alınmaktadır. Makale, bölgesel müzik lehçelerinin ortaya çıkışına ve bunların erken Rönesans estetiğinin biçimlenmesindeki rolüne ışık tutar. Müzik ile şiir arasındaki etkileşim özel olarak ele alınmaktadır. Çalışma, Trecento döneminin hem erken temsilcilerinin hem de üslubun doruk noktasını ve yeni tarihsel evreye geçişi simgeleyen bestecilerin eserlerini göz önünde bulundurmaktadır. Trecento müziğini daha geniş bir kültürel

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ve tarihsel bağlamda ele alarak, bu geleneğin günümüz tarihsel icra pratiği açısından taşıdığı anlam ve mirasa dair daha derinlemesine bir anlayışa katkı sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Trecento, Francesco Landini, tür, üslup, madrigal, caccia, ballata

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, the Trecento was a relatively short era, lasting slightly more than a century – approximately from 1300 to 1420. The artistic output of this period is marked by its richness and distinctive features that underscore its cultural uniqueness. The aim of this article is to analyze the stylistic characteristics and genre development of Trecento music, explore its theoretical foundations, and assess its impact on the evolution of musical culture in subsequent historical periods. To achieve this aim, the study sets the following objectives: to investigate the specific characteristics of Trecento artistic development, and to identify the stylistic and generic features of musical works by prominent composers of this period.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of Trecento music as a phenomenon that served as the foundation for the formation of a national style within the broader context of European Ars Nova. In particular, the research aims to address the following objectives:

1. To characterize the historical context of Trecento music, identifying the cultural and intellectual factors that influenced its development
2. To analyze the stylistic characteristics and genre specificity of Italian Trecento music
3. To outline the evolution of key secular forms (madrigal, caccia, and ballata), particularly in the work of Francesco Landini as a leading figure of the mature trecento style.

1.2. Importance of the Study

This research is significant for advancing a deeper understanding of the emergence of regional musical identities in medieval Europe. Trecento music exemplifies a rich synthesis of poetic and musical forms, and its rhythmic and melodic innovations – such as the Landini cadence and the Italian rhythmic system – played a decisive role in shaping early polyphonic thought. Furthermore, the study contributes to the growing interest in historically informed performance and offers valuable insight for performers, scholars, and educators seeking to engage with early polyphonic repertoire and its enduring legacy in Western music history.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study of the music of the Italian Trecento draws on a wide range of contemporary musicological literature. One of the key sources is Willi Apel's *The Notation of Polyphonic Music 900-1600* (Apel, 1953), which traces the formation of polyphonic thinking in the 14th century. Richard Hoppin's *Medieval Music* (Hoppin, 1978) pays special attention to the Italian Trecento as a phenomenon that developed in parallel with the French Ars Nova. A significant role in the formation of the theoretical foundations of the study of Trecento was played by the works of von Fischer (1961), which examined the evolution of polyphony, genre features and compositional techniques of Italian artists of the 14th century. Frank D'Accone's *The Musical Patronage of the Florentine Republic in the Fourteenth Century* (D'Accone, 2006) analyzes the functioning of music in the secular environment of Florence. A comparative perspective is opened by the monograph of John Nádas and Michael Cuthbert *Ars Nova: French and Italian Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Nádas & Cuthbert, 2009), which systematizes the rhythmic, metric and genre features of both national schools. The primary sources *Codex Rossi* and *Codex Squarcialupi* are considered as basic material for the music-theoretical analysis of the works.

This study employs a combination of historical, source study, analytical, and comparative methods in order to investigate the stylistic and structural features of Italian Trecento music.

1. Historical method – examination of the cultural, poetic, and intellectual background of fourteenth-century Italy, with particular reference to the late Middle Ages, early Renaissance, and the interaction between literature, visual arts, and music.
2. Source study – with reference to primary manuscript collections such as Rossi Codex and Squarcialupi Codex, which provide the most comprehensive evidence of Trecento secular polyphony and preserve representative examples of the repertory.
3. Analytical method – used to examine the formal and stylistic features of the main Trecento genres (madrigal, caccia, and ballata), with reference to characteristic techniques such as the Landini cadence, rhythmic flexibility, and the interaction between text and melody.
4. Comparative method – used to juxtapose Italian and French Ars Nova traditions in order to highlight the distinctive features of *ars italicus*.

The methodology thus integrates historical contextualization with selected analytical observations. In doing so, it aims to move beyond descriptive aesthetics towards a systematic account of Trecento style, supported by references to primary sources, and musical illustrations.

3. FINDING

3.1. Historical Context of Trecento Music

The Trecento (It. Trecento) refers to a period of significant cultural development in Italy, encompassing painting, architecture, literature, and, notably, music – often referred to as the Italian Ars Nova. It should be noted that the term Trecento was introduced by Italian musicologists to describe the style of Italian music of the XIV century. Today, music researchers often replace it with Ars nova, which originated in France and was used to describe French music of the same century. The use of the term Ars nova in relation to Italian music remains controversial to this day. “We do not find the name Ars nova in either any Italian treatise or in the sources of ancient music, although many music historians have adopted this term in the same way to describe the style of Italian music of the XIV century” (Khominsky & Vilkovska-Khominska, 2015, p. 157).

The traditions of Trecento art are closely connected with the Italian art of previous eras. However, the change in worldview affected the development of Italian culture. Thus, in the literature of Trecento there was a decisive turn to the philosophy of humanism and the appeal to the national (Italian) language in the works of outstanding poets Francesco Petrarca and Giovanni Boccaccio. The fine arts of that time were characterized by a struggle between realistic aspirations and strong Gothic tendencies of the previous era.

In the 1450s, the center of musical activity moved to southern Italy, to Florence, which became the cultural center of the early Renaissance. The unprecedented rise of literary art, inspired by the emergence of new aesthetic postulates, had an impact on the development of musical art. It was the Trecento era that created a few musical and poetic forms that played an entertaining role in the aristocratic society of that time. The musical art of the Trecento was distinguished by a clear rhythm and extraordinary mobility of individual melodic lines of voices. It was Florence that became the cradle of vocal and instrumental music, which developed due to close ties with secular literary and poetic creativity.

All this music is very close to the social life of the period. It is, for example, the sort of music which was used in the daily interludes of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The growing prosperity of the independent cities of northern Italy, through their extensive commercial interests and their comparative freedom from the interference of the Holy Roman Empire, gave rise to a class of people who had leisure time to devote to an interest in art, letters, and music. The humanist movement, which found expression in literature and education, is reflected in the writings of the musical theorists of the time to a greater degree than is often realized (Ellinwood, 1945, p. 13).

During the Trecento period, Italian composers abandoned the tradition of using Gregorian chant as a fixed basis (cantus firmus). Instead, they created original melodies, deeply connected to the poetic content of the texts, which emphasized the character of each work.

In the 14th century, national schools were formed in European music, because of which two leading national schools were formed, each of which formed its own system of genres and stylistic approaches to composition, notation and rhythmic organization. If in France polyphonic song forms prevailed – rondo, ballade and virelai, then in Italy the ballata, madrigal and caccia came to the fore. Liturgical polyphonic music in Italy developed more slowly and was associated with the formation of the genre of polyphonic mass.

At the end of the 13th – beginning of the 14th century, there is a departure from anonymous art, because of which we have the flowering of authorial musical styles: the names of specific poets and musicians began to appear in manuscripts. The number of authorial works increases sharply in the second half of the 14th century. Thus, in the study of musical works, the following are important:

...problems of interaction of the style of the era and authorial techniques, the ratio of general norms of writing with their individual solutions – those problems that become more and more relevant in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Proto-Renaissance and the High Renaissance (Evdokimova, 1983, p. 110).

During the 13th century, the one-voice genres of lauda and ballata, borrowed from the French trouvères, dominated Italy. In the late 13th and early 14th centuries, there was a shift to polyphony, with two-voice practice becoming the standard, and the only truly popular three-voice genre was the caccia. It was only after the 1340s, thanks to the work of Jacopo da Bologna, that three-voice madrigals appeared, and later, in the middle of the century, the three-voice ballatas of Francesco Landini.

Secular genres (madrigal, caccia, ballata) laid the foundation for the development of polyphony in Italy (Decameron Web, n.d.), but already in the first half of the 14th century, heterophonic and contrapuntal techniques began to penetrate church music. Early Italian manuscripts, which record the first examples of polyphonic liturgical works, are evidence of this.

The transition from monophonic to duophonic in the Trecento period seems rather abrupt, since we have few musical samples from the previous century. However, some researchers associate the emergence of duophonic with certain historical events, namely the Cathar Crusade, during which secular lyrical songs appeared in northern Italy under the influence of the art of the troubadours. On the other hand, the emergence of polyphonic works is associated with the forms of the French *ars antiqua* – the conduct, the clause and the organum. However, Trecento researchers von Fischer (1958) and Pirrotta (1954) point to an independent path of origin of Italian polyphony. One of the prerequisites for the transition to polyphony was the widespread practice in Italy of performing solo songs accompanied by an instrument. As a result, the monody was accompanied by instrumental accompaniment of an improvisational nature. This practice did not lose its relevance even when two-part works appeared in composers' work (i.e., when moving to *res facta*). The appearance of three-part Trecento compositions is associated with the genres of madrigal and caccia around the 1340s. Only in the second half of the 14th century do three-part ballatas appear in the work of Francesco Landini.

Given the above performance practice, Italian music is characterized by two-voice, which is perceived much more vividly than three-voice. It is two-voice that embodies the specifics of the Italian style, reflecting the beauty of Italian melos. The tradition of solo vocal performance, which underlies polyphonic music, determined not only the nature of the melody, but also the peculiarities of the ratio of voices. Thus, most two-voice compositions are heterophonic in their composition. The lower voice carries the main thematic material (melody), and the upper voice creates a mobile, melismatic-rich melody based on it. The heterophonic texture is formed by splitting the unison sound (Figures 1, 2).

Figure 1

J. da Bologna. "Non al suo amante" (mm. 18-19)



(Marrocco, 1954)

Figure 2

J. da Florentia (G. da Cascia). "Donna gia"



(Pirrota, 1954)

Also, in the works, movement in parallel fourths and fifths is often found (Figures 3, 4), which, with the appearance of three-voices, turns into movement in parallel sixth chords (Figure 5).

Figure 3

J. da Bologna. "Non al suo amante" (m.8)



(Marrocco, 1954)

Figure 4

J. da Florentia (G. da Cascia). "La bella stella"



(Pirrota, 1954)

Figure 5

F. Landini. "Amar si li alti"



(Evdokimova, 1983)

Italian manuscripts contain musical samples. The *Rossi Codex* contains works from the 1430s and 1440s, which are examples of purely Italian notation, while the *Squarcialupi Codex* contains 352 works, which are examples of "mixed notation" (Apel, 1953), which combines Italian and French elements.

The most beautiful of these, and the most important for posterity, is the *Squarcialupi codex*, named after a prominent organist who owned it in the fifteenth century. The organization of this manuscript exemplifies the collecting principles seen (albeit to a lesser degree) in the other Tuscan sources: a chronological progression by composer; careful selecting of, and grouping by, genre; and intelligent editorship by the scribes who prepared it – it can be considered a critical edition of its time (Nádas & Cuthbert, 2009, p. 17).

The *Rossi Codex* contains works by the first generation of Trecento composers, who contributed to the formation of a distinctly Italian musical style. Although many compositions from this period are anonymous, a significant portion has been attributed to figures such as Maestro Piero (b. before 1300 – d. shortly after 1350) and Giovanni da Cascia, among the earliest known composers of the Italian Ars Nova. Later generations are represented by musicians like Vincenzo da Rimini and Jacopo da Bologna (b. ca. 1340 – d. 1386), whose works reflect the stylistic maturation of the period. These composers, primarily known for their contributions to the madrigal, were often connected to aristocratic courts in northern Italy, especially in cities such as Milan and Verona. Several additional composer names – though frequently challenging to read due to the deterioration of manuscript sources – have been preserved in later records. One of these is Bartolo da Firenze (active circa 1330-1360), who is considered possibly the earliest Italian composer to write a polyphonic *Credo* for two voices in the Trecento style (Evdokimova, 1983).

3.2. Musical genre of Trecento

3.2.1. Madrigal

The madrigal became the original genre of polyphonic music of Italian Trecento, which has no analogues in European art. It reached its peak in the period from about 1300 to 1370, with a brief revival around 1400. It is a composition for two (rarely for three) voices, often written on an everyday, pastoral theme. The Trecento madrigal was not complicated in structure, it consisted of three sections: the first two stanzas (terzetti) contained the same melody, and the last stanza (ritornello) formed a metrical contrast with the previous ones (aab).

The performance of madrigals required high skill of the singers, because the upper solo voice (cantus) contained bright ornaments, while the counterpoint parts of tenor and countertenor were written for longer durations and served as an accompaniment. The themes of madrigals cover a wide range: from love lyrics to historical events. Encrypted messages to a beautiful lady quite often are found in madrigals.

Early examples of the genre are represented in the works of the first generation of Italian composers Piero da Casella (Maestro Piero), Jacopo da Bologne and Giovanni da Cascia (Johannes da Florentia). The madrigals of Giovanni da Cascia are striking examples of the genre, which demonstrate the features of the *dolce stilo nuovo* and the typical features of Italian two-voice singing (Figure 6). "In the madrigals, subtextual syllabic sections take turns with large melismatic episodes, and, accordingly, the principle of composition is similar to the large conductus (cum caude) with a similar alternation of syllabic and melismatic moments" (Evdokimova, 1983, p. 180).

Figure 6

J. da Florentia (G. da Cascia). "Donna gia fu'leggiadr'annamorata" (mm. 1-13)

Don- na gia fu' leg- giadr' An - na - mo - ra - ta, ta,

(Pirrotta, 1954)

Polymelodicity, with the leading role of the upper voice, reveals all the beauty of the *dolce stilo nuovo*, imitating the art of monophony. The flexible and light melody in the madrigals clearly corresponded to the peculiarities of the text and rhyme, which were leading in the formation of its rhythm. Thus, changes in the time division are frequent, which creates the impression of free rhythmic movement. The most melismatic part is the ritornello, which is a kind of coda of the work. In the ritornello, the thematic material is updated, the texture, rhythm, size change, imitation episodes, small canons are introduced. The originality of the early duet two-voice is reflected in the peculiarities of the voice leading and the ratio of voices. If the upper voice is the leader, then the lower one is its counterpoint, less mobile, but no less melodious. In syllabic episodes, the voices merge into a single rhythm, while the polyphonic intensity increases in imitative moments, hocket, which are based on complementary addition between the voices (Figure 7).

Figure 7

J. da Bologna. "O in Ifalia" (mm. 43-60)

(Marrocco, 1954)

Madrigals use a variety of vertical ratios of voices. In addition to the parallelisms of perfect consonants and the parallel unisons characteristic of Italian music, which arise because of heterophonic division of voices, movement in parallel thirds, sixths and tenths is widely found. Typical for Italian works is the use of dissonances that arise between voices during smooth conduction. In contrast to the French tradition of emphasized sounding of dissonance due to the use of syncopated rhythm, in Italian music the use of free, unprepared dissonances is typical.

3.2.2. Caccia

Another musical and poetic form that was widespread in Italy in the 14th and early 15th centuries was the caccia (from the Italian caccia – hunting). The caccia, as a rule, were three-voiced, the upper two voices sang the canon, the third – the tenor (sometimes performed on the instrument) formed with them a non-canonical free counterpoint. In some places, the caccia could be performed entirely on an instrument. Their form had two sections: the first canon, the second – ritornello (canonical). As a rule, caccias were performed at a fast pace, which requires high skill from the performers. In addition, they contained rich melisma and insets of hocket technique. The sense of the technique is that the melodic line is broken into individual sounds or groups of sounds, which are distributed in different voices or instruments, making the performance intermittent, as if with a hiccup. The most famous composers of this genre are Gherardello da Firenze, Lorenzo da Firenze, Jacopo da Bologna. Later, any two-voice canons with instrumental bass began to be called caccias.

A characteristic feature of caccia is the intervallic ratio of voices: each of the two upper voices is consonant with the tenor, but they often form dissonances with each other. Thus, it is believed that the main voices of caccia are the tenor and one of the upper voices. Caccia were originally created as two-voice non-canonical compositions, and only later was a canonical voice added (von Fischer, 2001). The *Rossi codex* preserves the caccia Pietro da Casella *Or qua compagni*, which is an example of a typical composition of the early Trecento period. The work is built as the canonical ratio of the two upper voices (canon with a mixture of 9 bars), which is violated only in the final part (Figure 8).

Figure 8

P. da Casella. "Or qua compagni"

The image displays a musical score for the caccia "Or qua compagni" by Pietro da Casella. It consists of three systems, each with three staves. The top staff is the upper voice, the middle staff is the Tenor, and the bottom staff is the lower voice. The lyrics are: "Or qua com - pa - gni qua cum gran pia - ce - re chia - ma - ti chan qua - ro - sto bo - cha ne - gra Or qua com -". The score is in G-clef and 3/4 time. The first system shows the beginning of the piece, with the Tenor and lower voice starting on a whole note, and the upper voice starting on a half note. The second system shows the continuation of the piece, with the Tenor and lower voice starting on a whole note, and the upper voice starting on a half note. The third system shows the end of the piece, with the Tenor and lower voice starting on a whole note, and the upper voice starting on a half note.

(Husmann, 1955)

A representative late example of the genre is the caccia *Con brachi assai* by Johannes da Florentia. The rhythmic organization *ottonaria*, typical of Italian music, fully corresponds to the melismatic nature of the melody, which develops in a variant manner in all three voices. The caccia is written in a form typical of a madrigal, the final ritornello contains two canonical phrases (Figure 9).

Figure 9

J. da Florentia (G. da Cascia). "Con brachi assai" (mm. 34-39)

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 34-36) shows the Soprano, Alto, and Bass staves. The Soprano part has a measure number '35' above it. The lyrics for the first system are 'So - la e - ra li, on - de fra' for the Soprano and 'So - la e - ra li, on -' for the Alto. The second system (measures 37-39) continues the melody. The lyrics for the second system are 'me di - ce - a: Ec -' for the Soprano and 'de fra me di - , ce - a:' for the Alto. The Bass part provides a harmonic foundation with sustained notes and some melodic movement.

(Pirrota, 1954)

The caccia and the madrigal were the most widespread musical genres in Italian culture. However, if in the first half of the 14th century they had certain stylistic differences, then in the second – their rapprochement occurs. Thus, in terms of the nature of the melody and form, the caccia becomes like the madrigal, in turn, the canonical-imitative principles of the caccia penetrate the madrigal (Figure 10).

Figure 10

F. Landini. "De! Dinmi tu" (mm. 1-18)

De! din-mi tu che se' co-si' fre-gia-

te

De! din-mi tu che

Di per-le d'o-ro

De! din-mi tu che

se' co-si' fre-gia-

quan-do tu ti ve-di

se' co-si' fre-gia-

te

Di

(Schrade, 1958)

3.2.3. Ballata

The Ballata is an Italian poetic and musical form that existed from the end of the 13th to the 15th century. The term derives from the verb ballare – “to dance”, and the ballata itself, of course, originated as a form of dance music. The early ballata contained in the *Rossi Codex* are one-voice. Later we find two-voice and three-voice ballatas. Ballata became one of the most popular musical forms of secular music of the late 14th century. This is confirmed by many ballatas that have survived in manuscripts (over 400). The ballata has a specific form, it consists of two sections, where solo poems alternate with a choral refrain. Its form can be defined as AbbaA. Such designation of the ballata form, using both uppercase and lowercase letters, can be found in many scholarly studies, including those of Apel (1953) and Hoppin (1978). Some authors use a different designation — all uppercase letters, ABBAA (Evdokimova, 1983). However, in our view, this contradicts the logic of the poetic text (Table 1, Figure 12).

Table 1

Structural Scheme of the Italian Ballata (AbbaA)

Section		Function	Formal Designation	Textual Element
Ripresa		Refrain (opens and closes the piece)	A	Opening section
Stanza	Piede 1	First line of the stanza	b	piede aperto
	Piede 2	Second line of the stanza	b	piede chiuso
	Volta	Conclusion of the stanza	a	Links back to the ripresa
Ripresa		Repetition of the refrain	A	Same as opening section

The ballata typically opens and closes with the same ripresa (A), framing a three-line stanza composed of two piedi (b–b) and a volta (a).

The first section (deemed ‘A’ for modern nomenclature purposes) has a ripresa (refrain) and the third and fourth lines of a strophe (volta, turning). Section B contains the first and second lines of the strophe (piedi, feet) sung twice with the first ending (aperto) and the second ending (chiuso). The form follows the AbbaA (Decameron Web, n.d.).

Despite the similarity in name, the musical structure of the Italian ballata (AbbaA) is formally analogous to the French virelai, rather than to the French ballade. Both forms are characterized by the repetition of a refrain at the beginning and end, framing a single stanza composed of two repeated lines followed by a closing line that leads back to the refrain (Hoppin, 1978).

3.3. Madrigals and ballatas by Francesco Landini

The most famous composer of the Trecento is Francesco Landini (1325–35 – 1397). He is the author of 141 surviving ballatas and 12 madrigals; his works are found in historical monuments in all corners of the Italian Peninsula. Landini's music is particularly captivating for its lyricism and exceptional expression: its popularity does not subside to this day; there are many modern recordings of his music. He is one of the experimenters in the madrigal genre. In his work we find an example of the canonical madrigal *De! dimni tu*, which combines the form of the madrigal and the technique of the caccia. Another madrigal *Sì dolce non sonó* is an example of isorhythm, and the polytextual *Musica son* combines three texts that are different in content at the same time.

Landini's two-part madrigals are written in the traditions of the early Trecento style, contain a melodically developed tenor part and frequent motivic imitations. The music fully corresponds to the test, often the beginnings of the stanzas open with imitations. Imitations are also used in the chants. In the madrigals, the role of ritornellos increases, the texture of which becomes more complicated, the character of the melody changes, the contrast between the main part and the ending deepens.

Landini's compositions were highly elaborate and used patterns, syncopated rhythms, and vocal runs. There was also a distinctive lack of emotional connection between the music and the words. Performances of his music included vocal performances, instrumental, or a mixture of both. Among these, over a hundred of his ballatas were monostrophic, which makes it questionable whether this structure was intentional or consequential. In his polyphonic ballatas, however, the music employs more dramatic tension (Szelogowski, 2018).

Francesco Landini actively turned to genre of ballata. He is the author of 90 two-part ballatas and 50 three-part ones, which vividly demonstrate the evolution of composer's writing.

The two-part Trecento ballatas were written under the influence of early madrigals. Landini uses the melodic turns typical of the early Trecento period and diversifies them. In his works, constant cadential-melodic turns appear (the so-called *Landini cadenzas*).

Landini's cadences contain a characteristic melodic turn, a movement from a sixth in two voices, or a sixth chord in three voices, which pass into the final octave. This is a type of cadence (Figure 11) in which a major sixth (dissonance) in two voices was resolved into an octave (consonance) by moving the melody a tone down, forming a fifth with the lower voice, and then, passing a third up to an octave (Ellinwood, 1945).

Figure 11

Landini's cadence



Such a cadence existed in medieval composition, but Landini was the first to use it in almost every one of his works, thereby making it the "calling card" of his music.

Although the Landini, or "under-third" cadence survived as a convention in polyphonic song for more than a century, the two- and three-voice ballatas of Landini represent the first body of polyphonic works in which it appears with systematic regularity and structural weight, accounting for nearly three-quarters of the ripresa cadences in Landini's three-voice ballatas and approximately half of those in the two-voice ballatas» (Long, 1987, p. 31).

Similar melodic cadences are also frequently encountered in French music of the late 14th century. It is difficult to determine which country or which composer played the primary role in the stabilization of these cadences, given the close interrelation between French and Italian musical practice at that time. "Later, these cadences were adopted by Ciconia, the composers of the early Burgundian school, Binchois and Dufay, as well as in English music" (Evdokimova, 1983, p. 191).

The polymelodic texture of ballatas has certain characteristics: the upper voice is the leading one, which is distinguished by greater mobility and melodic brightness, while the second voice is restrained both rhythmically and melodically. As a result, the texture is stratified into melody and instrumental accompaniment. A vivid example of this type of texture is the ballata *Amor con fede*. In Landini's later ballatas, the lower voice becomes more developed. Therefore, the role of the contrasting rhythmic ratio of voices decreases, and the lower voice sometimes becomes leading. "In the works of the 1880s, when French and Italian elements were assimilated into a single late Italian style, the lower voice no longer has a vocal but an instrumental character in the style of the French countertenor (although both voices may have text)" (Evdokimova, 1983, p. 192).

A new type of homorhythmic or syllabic texture is formed in Landini's ballatas. This type of texture is also used in three-part ballatas, and in the 15th century it becomes characteristic of polyphonic laude – a genre of Italian music. Many of the composer's ballatas are written in homorhythmic texture, for example, the ballata *Ecco la primavera*. This work differs from other ballatas of the madrigal type in the ratio of voices, the character of the upper voice, which is close to monophonic laude.

The first three-part compositions that appeared in Italy were written in the madrigal genre, however, they did not gain popularity. As already mentioned, the cacci were three-part, but the specificity of their canonical voice limited their penetration into other genres. Therefore, Landini's three-part ballatas are compositions of various types of voice ratio, in some of them they combine features of Italian and French polyphonic. These works belong to the 80s, when the influence of French music was obvious.

The composer's three-part ballatas contain an expressive polymelodic composition, traditional for Italian music. In terms of its melodic type, the middle voice (countertenor) is close to the upper one. The mobile upper voices are opposed by the melodic, but more restrained, tenor. The appearance of the third voice is associated with the widespread practice of adding an additional voice to a two-part composition. In this way, the voices are increased by introducing the middle voice (countertenor), which forms a pair of melodically mobile voices with the upper one, close in rhythm and intonation. Unlike the French vocal-instrumental three-part, the Italian is entirely vocal in the type of melodic line of each voice. The examples of three-part that we find in manuscripts differ in the presence or absence of a verbal text in the voices.

In the ballata *Muor' oramai*, which was written in the late period of the composer's work, the melodically bright upper voices become rhythmically more complicated. In contrast, in the ballata *Orsun gentili spiriti*, the tenor part loses its vocal nature and approaches the instrumental type. This work is a vivid example of the late Italian style, which is characterized by the vocal melodic style of the countertenor, free melodic development of the voices. At the end of the 14th century, a new type of three-voice music emerged in Italian repertoire – cantilena-style polyphony, which was similar in character to the French tradition. Its distinct feature was the grouping of the countertenor and tenor voices, which together contrasted with the upper solo voice. A separate group of works consisted of ballata-laude, marked by a syllabic texture.

One of the most representative works of Francesco Landini, *Ecco la primavera*, demonstrates the characteristic features of the Trecento ballata. The piece is organized in the AbbaA structure, typical of the genre, in which the refrain (*ripresa*) (A) frames two *piedi* (b+b) and a *volta* (a). Following the numbered annotations aligned with the text, one can trace how the words correspond to the music (Table 2).

Table 2

Structural Scheme of Francesco Landini's Ecco la primavera

Italian text	Structure	Poetic form	Musical form	Musical material	Measures
Ecco la primavera, Che'l cor fa rallegrare, Temp'è d'annamorare E star con lieta cera.	ripresa (R)	a b b a	A	a	1-3 4-5 6-8 9-11
Noi vegiam l'aria e'l tempo Che pur chiam' allegria In questo vago tempo Ogni cosa vagheça.	piedi 1 (P) piedi 2 (P)	c d c d	b b	b b1	12-15 16-18 12-15 16-18
L'erbe con gran frescheça E fior' coprono i prati, E gli albori adornati Sono in simil manera.	volta (V)	d e e a	a	a1	1-3 4-5 6-8 9-11
Ecco la primavera Che'l cor fa rallegrare Temp'è d'annamorare E star con lieta cera	ripresa (R)	a b b a	A	a	1-3 4-5 6-8 9-11

The piece begins with *ripresa* (**A**), based on the first melody (**a**), which concludes at the double bar line. This is followed by a new melodic idea, introduced in *primo piede* (**b**) and then immediately repeated identically in *secondo piede* (**b**). The *volta* (**a**) returns to the original melody A – notably the same one used in the refrain's (*ripresa*) setting of *Ecco la primavera*. The piece ends with a repetition of the initial *ripresa* (**A**). The double bar line and the difference in verse length between the sections (four lines in the first part, two in the second) help to distinguish the two musical materials (Figure 12).

Figure 12

Francesco Landini. Ecco la primavera (mm. 1-18)

845. E - cho la pri - ma - ve - ra, Che'l cor fa ral - le
4. L'er be con gran fres - che - ça E fior' co - pro - no i

8 - gra - re Ten - p'é d'an - na - mo - ra - re E star
pra - ti, E gli al - bori ador - na - ti So - no in

10 con lie - ta ce - ra. 2. No' ve - giam l'a - ria e'l
si - mil ma - ne - ra. 3. In que - sto va - go

15 ten - po Che pur chiam' al - le - gre - ça.
tem - po O - gni co - sa à va - ghe - ça.

(Schrade, 1958)

4. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Trecento on the one hand retained the characteristics of the previous era, on the other - outlined the way of development of musical art of the next era - the Renaissance. Italian polyphony emerged later than in France and developed primarily in secular contexts, bypassing the liturgical foundations typical of northern traditions. As a result, genres such as the madrigal, caccia, and ballata became the core expressions of Italian Trecento music. Even sacred works of the period reflected stylistic features derived from secular models.

During the heyday of the Italian Trecento, we can observe certain synthesizing tendencies associated with genre mutual influences. Thus, the polyphonic ballata genre arises based on the synthesis of monophonic ballata forms and polyphonic madrigals. The interpenetration of genres is vividly presented in the canonical madrigal, which combines the form of the madrigal and the technique of combining voices of the caccia. In turn, under the influence of the madrigal, in the caccias we have a free interpretation of the canonical technique, especially in the final sections of the form – the ritornello. For the polyphonic forms of the Trecento, which were formed as purely vocal, it is characteristic that by the end of the century they become vocal-instrumental.

The Trecento also marked a turning point in the cultural status of composers. Figures such as Francesco Landini, Jacopo da Bologna, and Giovanni da Cascia were among the first in Italy to be acknowledged by name, signaling the transition from anonymous medieval craftsmanship to the recognition of individual artistic identity. Their works, often preserved in codices such as Rossi and Squarcialupi, demonstrate not only technical mastery but also a high degree of personal style and innovation.

Ongoing research may continue to illuminate the broader cultural functions of Trecento music and its lasting influence on early Renaissance aesthetics.

Ethical approval

This study does not require ethics committee approval as it does not involve human, animal or sensitive data.

Author contribution

Study conception and design: KC, OT; data collection: KC, OT, OP, MB, NS; analysis and interpretation of results: KC, OT, OP, MB, NS; draft manuscript preparation: KC, OT. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the article.

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Yazarlık katkısı

Çalışmanın tasarımı ve konsepti: KC, OT; verilerin toplanması: KC, OT, OP, MB, NS; sonuçların analizi ve yorumlanması: KC, OT, OP, MB, NS; çalışmanın yazımı: KC, OT. Tüm yazarlar sonuçları gözden geçirmiş ve makalenin son halini onaylamıştır.

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