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Recommended Citation

Jones, Margaret (2011) "Well-Traveled Tunes: The Lives of Chansons in the Sixteenth Century," *Nota Bene: Canadian Undergraduate Journal of Musicology*: Vol. 4: Iss. 1, Article 4.

Available at: <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/notabene/vol4/iss1/4>

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Erratum

An error was detected in the article. A revised version was released for download on Nov. 1, 2011.



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In 1560 Lassus's setting of the chanson *Susanne un jour* appeared in print for the first time in three separate books, each published in Paris.¹ Though Lassus's *Susanne un jour* was not the first publication of a setting of Guillaume Guérault's chanson,² the more than fifty publications in the following century attest to the popularity of his setting. The piece appeared in many different vocal configurations, and can be found in intabulations for lute, cittern, and organ. Sometimes the chanson was published in a volume of collected works; in others it was copied by hand into court manuscript collections. In some cases, though the structure of the music resembles Lassus's 1560 setting, the authorship and title of the chanson are omitted.

The obvious popularity of the chanson, combined with the apparent lack of importance placed on the identity of the

¹ According to the Lute Society of America, these three books were a supplement to Tielman Susato's *Quatorziesme livre a quatre parties*, Pierre Phalèse's *Tiers livre des chansons a quatre, cinq et six parties composez par Orlando di Laisus*, and Adrian LeRoy's *Livre des meslanges*. Though Lassus did not self-publish his works, the quantity of publications containing this work attest the popularity of the tune. See The Lute Society of America, "*Susanne un Jour*," <http://www.cs.dartmouth.edu/~lsa/associated/Susanne/index.html> (August 7, 2007), Accessed 10 November 2010.

² An earlier version of the chanson was published by Didier Lupi Second in 1548. See Howard Mayer Brown, *Instrumental Music Printed before 1600*,

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work and its composer, raises questions about music reception in the sixteenth century. For example, one might ask why this chanson in particular achieved such a great amount of popularity, and whether other similar examples of this phenomenon can be found in the body of works that emanate from this time period. Furthermore, given that music was disseminated throughout Europe through printed publications, manuscripts, and an oral tradition that must have had - and continues to have - influence, the evidence we can gather from studying these popular chansons might give us insight into the reception of music transmitted orally in the sixteenth century. What conclusions can we draw about the reception of a piece from its loss of identity and authorship, and can we then conclude that the tune had gained independence through its aural recognition by the audience of its time? If other chansons share a similar degree of popularity with *Susanne un jour*, do they exhibit the same loss of authorial identity and attribution? A study of *Susanne un jour*, provides insight into music consumption and reproduction in the sixteenth century, and suggests that oral culture was still relevant in this period despite the rising popularity of printed music.

While print and manuscript music survives into the twenty-first century, there is little record of the orality of musical culture that surely must have been present in the sixteenth century. I suggest the use of a model taken from French linguist Paul Zumthor for understanding the way orality may have functioned in Europe during this time. His writings suggest ways in which societies, both completely oral and partially literate, create, appreciate, and transmit texts.³ I will show that this model for the reception of a verbal text may also be applied to a musical one to provide structure for research in an area for which factual data is limited to what primary documents are extant, and extend

³ Paul Zumthor, *Oral Poetry, An Introduction*, 89-90.

this structure to help bind together concepts of print, manuscript, and oral music in sixteenth-century Europe.

The Origins and Popularity of *Susanne un jour*

Guillaume Guérout based his 1548 poem *chanson spirituelle* on the story of Susanna and the Elders from the Apocrypha of the Old Testament (text of this poem may be found in appendix 1).⁴ Unlike other chansons Lassus set to music, which sometimes contained explicitly sexual content, the text of this *chanson* stressed piety and chastity. Despite Susanna's chastity and piety the story of Susanna and the Elders still contained a sensuous subject matter with a pious protagonist, the juxtaposition of which may have contributed to this *chanson's* popularity above others.⁵ In the story, Susanna the fair, married to a man named Joachim, is spied upon while bathing and later accosted by two town elders who demand that she sleep with them. If she refuses, they threaten to accuse her of adultery anyway - a crime punishable by death. When Susanna refuses, claiming that she would rather die than offend God, the

⁴ The Story of Susanna and the Elders falls under different categories in different versions of the Bible: In protestant texts the story is included in the Apocrypha, while in Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity the story is presented as a thirteenth chapter in the book of Daniel. See Sus1 (Revised Standard Version) and Daniel 13 (New American Bible).

⁵ Dan Clanton observes in his book, *The Good, the Bold, and the Beautiful: the Story of Susanna and its Renaissance Interpretations*, the depiction of Susanna as a model for the purity of womens' souls in the sixteenth century. He also notes, however, her portrayal in visual art in a sensuous, sexual manner, and also the imagery of the lustful elders in these visual mediums. Though Clanton's discussion is mostly limited to the visual arts and to literature, I extend his reasoning to music as well. See Dan Clanton, *The Good, the Bold, and the Beautiful: the Story of Susanna and its Renaissance Interpretations* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006).

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elders are true to their threats and accuse her of adultery. She would be executed except for the divinely inspired actions of Daniel, who suggests that the judges interview each elder separately. When they each tell a different account of Susanna's infidelity, the elders are revealed as frauds and are executed in Susanna's place.

Several elements of this story lend themselves as reasons for its popularity: Susanna's liberation supports the ideas of social justice and vindication of the faithful, which would have been appealing to audiences of the Protestant Reformation and Counter-Reformation alike. The story also demonstrated a risqué sensibility through its demonstration of the elders' lust for Susanna. The juxtaposition of the vindication of the story's denouement against the eroticism presented by the elders' lust, along with the biblical origins of the text, perhaps made the story attractive to a wide audience.⁶

Music Publishing in the Sixteenth Century

A large part of the dissemination of music in sixteenth century Europe depended upon music publishers, who sometimes also fulfilled the roles of composers and arrangers. Despite the growing use of printed music, and the ease of music reproduction given by a printing press, the raw materials for books and the labor still required to print one volume caused the books to remain expensive, even though they were more affordable than previous forms of publication. As a result, hand-

⁶ I use Clanton's observations about the role of women and marriage in Reformation-era Europe again here. Clanton notes that marriage was to be a solemn, reverent event, and not a wild celebration. See Clanton, 104-108. I also refer here to his observations about the visual representations of the elders and their lust by Rembrandt, Tintoretto, and others during the Renaissance. See Clanton, 121-167.

written manuscripts, previously the only practical way to record music, remained a popular and, for the individual working in a court, an inexpensive means of music dissemination.⁷ Poole notes the discrepancy between the widespread use of printing technology to reproduce words and the comparative lack thereof in the reproduction of music (manuscripts were still sold until the nineteenth century). This dichotomy raises both technological and social questions for Poole, considering not only the technical difficulties of printing music with wood blocks or movable type but also “the spread of musical literacy”.⁸ Why would music dissemination fall behind printed words in the progress of printing technology, and what repercussions would this discrepancy have on music dissemination?

The circulation of hand-written copies of music allows for more musical variation in a musical composition than strictly printed copies. Peter Woetmann Christoffersen describes one music scribe’s music copying activities, citing how, in his excitement over a new composition, he copied it into his manuscript collection without realizing he had already acquired the piece.⁹ Like the children’s game of telephone, each reiteration allowed for further deviation from the first copies. Evidence of this transformation appears in the variety of chansons originating from Paris and Lyon during the middle years of the sixteenth century, especially in the case of *Susanne un jour*. The most

⁷ I draw upon Poole’s description of music printing and copying methods here. My speculation enters into the financial reasons for manuscript copying. It must have been less expensive for a court musician to make their own personal copy of music by hand than to by the expensive printed copies of music. See Herbert Edmund Poole, “Music Publishing,” *Music Printing and Publishing*, ed. D. W. Krummel and Stanley Sadie (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1990), 3-10.

⁸ Poole, 3.

⁹ Peter Woetmann Christoffersen, *French Music in the Early Sixteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Copenhagen: Musicum Tusculanum Press, 1994) 313.

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striking of these differences can be found between Didier Lupi Second's 1548 version of the chanson and Lassus's 1560 setting (Fig. 1). Though both share the same melodic contour during their opening phrases, Lassus's polyphonic setting deviates sharply from Lupi's homophonic setting. The similarity of the opening phrases suggests that Lassus used Lupi's tune as a basis for his own composition, but then continued to write the chanson in his own style.

The image shows a musical score with two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Lupi Tenor' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Lassus Superius'. Both staves are in G-clef and 4/4 time. The Lupi Tenor staff has a melody starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7. The Lassus Superius staff has a melody starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7. The lyrics for Lupi are 'Sv-sanne 'vn iour d'a-mour so - li - ci - té - e,' and for Lassus are 'Su - san - ne un jour ——— d'a - mour so - li - ci - té - e'.

Figure 1: Comparison of Tunes from the Didier Lupi Second and Orlande de Lassus versions of *Susanne un jour*

On the Oral Transmission of Music

Printed music and manuscripts in the sixteenth century represented a great deal of music and its dissemination, but it certainly did not represent all means of musical transmission. An oral tradition of music was just as alive then as it was centuries before, and continues to be now. It is impossible, however, to empirically analyze an oral culture that existed centuries ago. Therefore, any discussion of such orality needs to be addressed through an empirical model based on cultures that can be observed. Such a model can be found in the writings of Paul Zumthor. Although Zumthor's work dealt specifically with oral poetics, his research provides a model for oral transmission that

can be modified to deal specifically to deal with music.¹⁰ Zumthor describes five phases in the existence of an oral poem:

1. Production
2. Transmission
3. Reception
4. Storage
5. Repetition (in general)¹¹

According to Zumthor, orality can exist in any of these stages, or at any point the poem can be transcribed into a literate form. If all of the stages are oral, one has an entirely oral tradition, but this orality can be intruded upon at any point by an “intermediary of an inscription destined for visual perception.”¹² Such an intermediary in this case would be printed music or a manuscript.

The shift between written and oral tradition may have occurred at different stages of this process depending on the musical traditions of the household into which the music arrived, and the region in which the music was moving. In particularly literate parts of Europe during the sixteenth century the switch from written music to orality may only have occurred during the final stage, or the repetition of the piece after its initial creation or copying. In regions where orality was more present, orality could have occurred as early as phase two, as many recipients of music may never have seen a manuscript or published copy of the music.

¹⁰ As Zumthor notes, the line between oral poetics and song is very blurry. In many cases poems in an oral tradition are sung, and can resemble recitatives in longer poems shorter poems can be quite melodic. Although they are not written down they contain specific plot points in their construction that are “embellished” with details differently in each repetition of the poem. See Paul Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*, trans. Kathryn Murphy Judy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990) 89-90.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹² *Ibid.*, 23.

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The form of such transmission is another point Zumthor stresses. The oral tradition of a culture functions differently than mere vocalizations; it is an organized utterance of society as a whole.¹³ Music, in this sense, was and continues to be one of the clearest remaining example of an oral tradition in the Western World. Music, even for many highly literate people, is still an art form that can be disseminated through a largely oral tradition, not just because of its almost purely aural reception, but because literacy in one's language is not any guarantee of literacy in music. After all, when considering a piece of music, one does not usually see the notes on the page as an identifier of the piece before one imagines how the music would "sound."

Zumthor's concept of the "poet" can also lend a model for the nature of orality and music transmission in the sixteenth century. Zumthor defines "poet" as:

One who, executing a performance, is at what is perceived as the source of the oral poem... Poet subsumes several roles, depending on whether it is a matter of composing the text or speaking it; and, more often, in more complex cases it is a matter of composing it, composing the music for it, singing it or accompanying it with instruments.¹⁴

While Zumthor constructed his model to address the twentieth century, the concept of the performer as a principal source of music is equally valid for previous centuries. Zumthor expands his opinion further, stating that "a song rarely belongs to the exclusive repertory of a singer: one of the roles is then, in fact, mobile."¹⁵ Such is the case for *Susanne un Jour*.

¹³ Zumthor, 23.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 168.

One such example of the mobility of *Susanne un Jour* is the publication of a setting composed by Nicholas Ammerbach in the *Orgel oder Instrument Tablatur: ein nützliches Büchlein* (Leipzig, 1571).¹⁶ This transcription in German organ tablature contains a highly embellished version of Lassus's melody (fig. 2). The melody no longer represents a song meant to be sung, and yet it is still recognizable as *Susanne un jour*, although it is nearly hidden by the extensive embellishment.

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff, labeled 'Lassus', shows a simple melody in G major (one sharp) with a treble clef and a common time signature. The bottom staff, labeled 'Ammerbach', shows a highly embellished version of the same melody, featuring complex rhythmic patterns, ornaments, and a more intricate bass line, characteristic of 16th-century organ tablature.

Fig. 2: Lassus Version vs. Ammerbach version

In the context of the rest of Ammerbach's volume, the title of this setting raises questions about the recognition and reception of *Susanne un jour* in sixteenth century Europe. Four compositions by Lassus appear in this volume. Of these four compositions, three are given their titles and attributed to "Orlandus" [Lassus]. The only piece not to receive this treatment is the setting of *Susanne un jour*. This single lack of attribution suggests that *Susanne un jour* had a different place in Lassus's oeuvre than other tunes. Zumthor's insight on the anonymity of a text in oral cultures suggests one way to interpret this omission of attribution:

¹⁶ Brown, *Instrumental Music printed before 1600*, 251-4.

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Calling on the anonymity of a text or melody indicates not the simple absence of a name but rather an insurmountable lack of knowledge about it. For this reason performance itself is never anonymous. There are in fact two causes for the lack: either the thickness and opacity of the time span or the manifold disparity wherein several persons have one by one adjusted elements of the work.¹⁷

Perhaps the lack of attribution to Lassus in Ammerbach's volume despite the three other instances of accurate attribution suggests that by 1571, *Susanne un jour* had essentially become an anonymous work in parts of Europe. Considering the number of times the chanson had been modified by this point, perhaps it is more accurate to omit an attribution to Lassus. When considering the identity of a piece that has been altered by many composers, how does one attribute authorship in modern terms? In this sense, songs in the sixteenth century without attribution do not represent irresponsibility during print-making; rather, pieces of music could evolve over time and become independent of specific authorship.

While reinterpretation by different authors obscures attribution, geographic considerations also affect both the authorial identity and content of a work. Different publications in different locations would have developed differently, so the versions of *Susanne un jour* at the end of the sixteenth century vary by geographic region as well as by the date. Publications emanating from Paris and Lyon in the middle of the sixteenth century resemble each other more than those from the century's end. (fig. 3) Although they have different tonal centers, the two settings from the 1560s have the same basic melodic contour.

¹⁷ Zumthor, 169.

Anthoine Francisque's setting from *Le Tresor d'Orphée* (1600), though it is attributed to Lassus, barely resembles Lassus's 1560 setting of the chanson.

Lassus Version (1560) - Paris

Superius from "Susanne un jour a 5" - Pierre Phalèse transcription for lute in *Theatrum Musicum* (1563) - Paris

Superius from "Susanne un jour d'orlande" - Anthoine Francisque in *Le Tresor d'Orphée* (1600) f.2 -

Figure 3: Comparison of Mid-century settings and 17th Century settings

The Wickhambrook Lute Manuscript and its Susanna Intabulation

The Yale University, Irving S. Gilmore Library Music Deposit 1 manuscript (formerly MS Ma 21.W632), commonly known as the Wickhambrook Lute Manuscript (henceforth the WMS), serves as an excellent example of this loss of composer attribution. The actual date of the manuscript's completion can only be narrowed down to the late 1580s – more than thirty years since Didier Lupi Second's version of *Susanne un jour* first appeared in print, and nearly twenty years since the first publication of Lassus's setting of the chanson. Although imports from the continent were common, the time it took *Susanne un jour* to gain popularity in England may have spanned as much as three decades. The fact that the chanson exists in manuscript form, probably taken from another manuscript or publication that traveled to the area (since no copies of the chanson were published in London until 1587),¹⁸ provides a possible reason for the lack of attribution to Lassus and for its further deviance from the original print version of the chanson. In any case, this

¹⁸ Brown, *Instrumental Music Printed Before 1600*.

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manuscript represents one of the first appearances of *Susanne un Jour* in England.

In the WMS, works are attributed to Anthony Holborne, John Johnson, John Dowland, and Peter Philips, but the manuscript's other composers, such as Lassus, are labeled incorrectly. That *Susanne un jour* was included in this collection of otherwise English compositions indicates that the copyist held this piece in high regard - probably at least in part due to an oral recognition of the chanson.

The attribution of *Susanne un jour* is further complicated in the WMS by the penmanship of the manuscript's creators. According to Ian Harwood in his preface to the Lute Society facsimile of the WMS, three scribes can be identified in the manuscript. Two are responsible for the intabulations, one of whom is much more skilled than the other, and the third is responsible solely for the titles of each of the intabulations.¹⁹ If the titles were added at a later date by a different scribe, it is possible that the original intabulation of *Susanne un jour* in this manuscript was not even given a title, nor were any other pieces in the WMS. If this is the case, the WMS would be another example of the loss of attribution in manuscript copies from the end of the sixteenth century.

: “The Barbarino Lutebook”

Susanne un Jour is found in another volume of manuscript intabulations originating from Naples²⁰. In this

¹⁹ Ian Harwood, Introduction to *The Wickhambrook' Lute Manuscript, US-NH – New Haven (CT) Yale Library Irving S. Gilmore Music Library Music Deposit 1 (Formerly Rare Ma21 W632)* (Dorchester, GB: The Lute Society, 2008), vi-xii.

²⁰ This manuscript is currently in Kraków, Biblioteka Jagielonska.

manuscript, the chanson takes on the style of a parody fantasia.²¹ Griffiths and Fabris suggest that the fantasia, although also not attributed to any composer, is likely to have been penned by Fabrizio Dentice (ca.1539 – ca. 1581). Like many of the other chanson intabulations in other volumes, this setting begins with the signature opening motive G-Bb-C-D, and then develops in a direction different than Lassus's setting. Several other pieces in this collection present further evidence for the use and reception of familiar tunes in music of the sixteenth century. Three other fantasias in this collection begin with an identical figure (both melodically and rhythmically) to the opening motive of *Susanne un jour*. A familiar aural cue would have been an effective way to grab the attention of one's audience, even if the rest of the piece did not follow the familiar chanson setting.

Conclusions

Whether or not Guérout, Lupi, and Lassus continued to receive recognition for *Susanne un jour* as it traveled across Europe in the sixteenth century, it is clear that *Susanne un Jour* transcended reception based solely on performances from printed music. Using the information we have about this chanson one can postulate a model for orality in music similar to that of epic poetry proposed by Paul Zumthor, which incorporates extant print and manuscript sources of the chanson but also allows for some speculation to be made about the nature of song recognition and appreciation in the sixteenth century. Our musical language depends upon our aural experience. Almost

²¹ Griffiths and Fabris suggest that the opening motives of the parody fantasias in this manuscript are deliberately imitating *Susanne un Jour*. The fantasia takes the initial entry of the motive and transforms it into different variations. See John Griffiths and Dinko Fabris, *Neapolitan Lute Music*, (Middleton, Wisconsin: A-R Editions, Inc. 2004), xv.

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anyone can hum Harold Arlen's Somewhere Over the Rainbow, but fewer can identify Arlen as its composer. When speaking of oral societies, Zumthor claimed that, "writing stays put and stagnates; voice flourishes. One belongs to itself and preserves itself; the other pours out its feelings and destroys itself."²² In the context of sixteenth-century European music, we see a society flowing between orality and literacy. Zumthor's description does not quite fit: The writing did not stay put – it was copied, re-published, and carried across a continent - and it certainly did not stagnate. Voice, on the other hand, did indeed flourish. In doing so it did not destroy itself, but instead changed the nature of the writing it touched. What resulted was a diversity of interpretations of the same chanson that spanned decades, nationalities, and an entire continent. Acknowledging the prevalence of orality in sixteenth-century society allows for an interpretation of attribution that is more fair to the people of that time. The lack of authorial attribution in many cases of music copying was not due to carelessness or deliberate omission. Instead we see an appreciation of voice that transcends paper and written thought and has a profound effect on the judgment of the value of art.

²² Zumthor, 227.

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Appendix 1: The Text of Guillaume Guérault's *Susanne un Jour*²³

*Susanne un jour d'amour sollicitée
Par deux vieillards convoitans sa beauté
Fut en son Coeur triste et déconfortée
Voyant l'effort fait à sa chasteté.
Elle leur dit: "Si par desloyauté
De ce cors mien vous avez jouissance,
C'est fait de moy; si je fay resistance,
Vous me ferez mourir en deshonneur;
Mais j'aime mieux périr en innocence,
Que d'offenser par peché la Seigneur."*

Susanna, one day solicited of love
By two old men coveting her beauty,
Was in her heart sad and discomforted
Seeing the effort made on her chastity.
She said to them: "If by dishonesty
You take my body with pleasure
That is the end of me; but if I resist
You make me die in dishonor;
But I would prefer to die in innocence,
Than to offend the Lord by sinning."

²³ Dan W. Clanton, *The Good, the Bold, and the Beautiful: The Story of Susanna and its Renaissance Interpretations* (New York: T and T Press, 2006), Appendix 3.