'For musike meueþ affecciouns': Interpreting Harp Performance in Medieval Romance

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Abstract: Performances are focal points in medieval romances with musical protagonists. Whilst these performances may not necessarily be accurate representations of medieval music, such episodes in popular literature are valuable to early music practitioners because they describe the whole context of the performance. These scenes preserve a snapshot of the medieval experience of music: the physicality of the performance, the sounds created and the emotional responses to the music. The hyperbolic tendencies of popular literature are effective at communicating imagined performance contexts because of the use of language that deliberately presents and evokes extremes of emotion, involving the reader or listener in a simulacrum of musical affect. When used alongside surviving musical notation, musical treatises, accounts of performances in historical records, and iconography, these romances are, I argue, a highly valuable and informative source for medieval performance. They reveal to the modern reader how music was perceived and represented in the medieval popular imagination. This paper will examine harp performances in several music-focused romances and I will set alongside these examples my own amateur reconstructions of the performances as described.

Musical episodes in romances preserve simulacra of the medieval experience of performance.[1] While treatises and surviving musical notation preserve factual details about performances, and reconstructions of medieval instruments allow for practical investigations, neither of these can truly record or recreate the lost sound of medieval music. Musical examples in popular literature are often discounted as evidence in reconstructions of early music because of their tendency to exaggerate and cloud the musical performances with rhetorical embellishments. Yet it is these fictional accounts of performance that are the closest approximation of the experience of musical performance in the Middle Ages. Fictional accounts encapsulate the whole moment of performance — sound, physicality, emotional affect — preserving multidimensional imagined performance contexts. Moreover, the rhetorical heightening of the scenes serves to depict performance in an affective manner that echoes the affective power of the musical performance itself. The emotions inscribed in such depictions of performance are a perceptible connection to the past for early music practitioners who wish to understand or recreate medieval performance. By recounting the emotions associated with the affective power of music, the romances preserve a fuller account of performance practice that allows us to experience and potentially recreate fictional music according to the emotions it evokes and to use this evidence alongside more 'trusted' sources, particularly musical treatises. Throughout my investigation, I will set beside some of the fictional performances a video of my own amateur reconstruction of the performance. These reconstructions do not make claims about whether the romances themselves were performed, nor are they advocating a particular practice of early music; I am, of course, taking something of a license in recreating performances which are, by most accounts, inventions. They are not so much performances as echoes of performance, transmitted and transformed through a textual lens, presumably several degrees removed from 'real' performance. Yet the attention to details in

performance episodes hints at some degree of accuracy: fictional medieval performers still take the time to tune their instruments and warm up. These performance reconstructions are, to use a medieval analogue, seeking the *trouthe* — the textual truth — rather than *sothe* — the objective reality.

In the range of romances surveyed in preparation for this article, it is possible to divide music into two categories: professional performance and amateur performance. This division extends to the location of the performance and, arguably, even the instruments used. Professional musicians (to whom we may apply the terms minstrel, *jongleur*, *histrio*, *joculator* and *gleeman*, amongst others) earn their living by performing, and within the romances this most commonly takes the form of musical performances. Historical minstrels were viewed poorly: they were of low social standing and demeaned as 'jacks of all trades'.[2] Giraud de Calanson, a thirteenth-century Provençal troubadour described in a poem that a true *jongleur* should 'speak and rhyme well, be witty, know the story of Troy, balance apples on the points of knives, juggle, jump through hoops, play the citole, mandora, harp, fiddle, psaltery'[3] Performers could be hired as household musicians or employed by noble patrons, but for the most part, they were usually little better than servants.[4]

Amateur musicians in the romances are nobles who have learnt music as a refined courtly achievement. Their performances are for pleasure only and must never be motivated by mercenary needs. The 'minstrel disguise' motif, which features frequently in the romances studied, allows the noble protagonists of the romances to alleviate their temporary social disadvantages by disguising themselves as minstrels and using music to gain entrance to private spaces. For example, in the Anglo-Norman *Roman de Horn* and the Middle English *King Horn*, Horn uses the minstrel disguise to regain entrance to his own castle and save his lover, Rymenhild/Rigmel, from marriage to the dastardly Fikenhild/Wikele.[5] This

disguise motif blurs the line between professional and amateur musicians and, as such, the texts are careful to emphasise that the minstrel disguise is a last resort and that nobles never take on more than the appearance of minstrelsy (except, perhaps, in *Roman de Silence*, where Silence runs away to become — albeit, temporarily — a minstrel).[6]

Professional and amateur musicians also perform in different spaces. For amateurs, music is a noble pastime, to be pursued in private chambers or at court.[7] Professional musicians entertain noble households in more formal settings, such as feasts. Edmund A. Bowles reconstructed the role of musicians at medieval feasts, mostly relying on information from popular literature, but supported by iconography and written records. Musicians were often positioned in a raised gallery and specific instruments marked phases of the banquet. For example, trumpet fanfares would announce the entrance of the food and accompany the serving. Stringed instruments would play while the guests ate and then general entertainment (*gestours*, minstrels, romance-readers) would conclude the festivities.[8] The Pentecost feast at Westminster in 1306, for instance, reportedly hired a total of 169 minstrels (including twenty-six harpers).[9] In 1309, a rather smaller number of minstrels sang with harp accompaniment at the feast following the investiture of Ralph, the Abbot of Saint Augustine's in Canterbury.[10] Sylvia Huot extends the division of professional/amateur musicians to their repertoires and even the instruments they used. Nobles tended to play the harp or sing unaccompanied. They favoured monophonic love lyrics and the occasional *lai*. Professional musicians in romances most commonly played the vielle and used this instrument to accompany their singing. Minstrels tended to sing narrative songs like *chansons de geste* and Breton *lais*. Playing and singing at the same time was a mark of great musical skill and tended to be reserved for professionals or unusually talented nobles.[11]

Overall, string instruments dominate performances in romances — perhaps their nature makes it easier for a performer to accompany their own singing. Linda Marie Zaerr suggests that the quality of sound produced by string instruments mimics the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in medieval verse and thus chordophone accompaniment was favoured as it emphasised the words.[12] Furthermore, string instruments offered a model for the morally sound and well-balanced human soul in early musical treatises, the most well-known of which is Boethius' *De Musica*. Boethius writes that 'the whole structure of our soul and body has been joined by means of musical coalescence.'[13] The Greek musical theorist Aristides Quintilianus expresses a similar view: 'instruments made of tuned strings are somewhat similar to the ethereal, dry, and simple part of the cosmos and to the soul itself.'[14]

In this paper, I will focus on harp performances by noble amateurs and disguised protagonists in a selection of romances dated between 1150–1350. The harp in the modern imagination is a powerful symbol of the romanticised past. However, the medieval or 'Romanesque harp' is a good deal humbler than modern pedal or lever harps. It has a long resonating body, a neck with tuning pins and a column/forepillar that braces the frame of the harp and may be straight or curved. The harp could have between seven and thirty strings made of gut, horsehair, silk or wire.[15] The later Gothic harp was a little larger and fitted with 'brays', which gave the harp a buzzing, nasal tone.[16]

We have extant examples of the wire-strung Irish harp (known as the Queen Mary or Brian Boru harp) and the Gothic harp (the Wartburg harp).[17] However, most of our information about the Romanesque harp is drawn from iconography and from descriptions of harps in musical treatises. Evidence from the Berkeley Theory manuscript, a fourteenth-century compendium of musical theory, verifies that the Romanesque harp was tuned diatonically.[18] Pierre of

Peckham's poem *Lumiere as Lais* describes in detail how the medieval harp is tuned:

> He who wishes to tune the harp aright
>
> And make it sound harmoniously
>
> Must arrange the strings
>
> So that each one agrees with its fellow
>
> According to true proportion.
>
> Let the ear judge the sound
>
> Both according to skill
>
> And according to the demonstrable laws of music,
>
> So that two accord in an octave
>
> And two in a fourth
>
> And two in a fifth[19]

When investigating medieval performance practice, modern attitudes to the harp technique must be re-evaluated. Iconographic evidence suggests, according to Herbert W. Myers, that the harp was mainly played using the thumb, index finger and middle finger. Myers supports this by noting that later written sources view the use of the ring finger as an innovative technique.[20] As for arrangements, an instrument with seven to thirty strings is hardly able to play the sweeping arpeggios that dominate the modern harp repertoire. Instead, the medieval harp seems more suited to closely-placed harmonised patterns and chordal accompaniment. Benjamin Bagby, the early music performer and scholar, proposes, furthermore, that a modern style of harp playing would not create the hypnotic effect so often mentioned in the romances. Bagby borrows the techniques of African mbira players, who play in a complex overlapping style with various repeating patterns.[21]

[Video 1: 'Comparison of modern and historically informed styles'](#) compares these two different styles of harp arrangement. Ideally, reconstructions

of medieval performances would use historically informed instruments. The instrument I use here, unfortunately, is of modern construction and materials with nylon strings and tuning levers. However, the number of strings (twenty-six) does lie within the range of the Romanesque harp and it is tuned diatonically.

Surviving notation allows the modern performer access to the melodies of the past; however, the ornamentation used in medieval music is significantly more difficult to recreate. Musical ornaments were not normally written down, but were part of the performance itself — improvised flourishes added by the musician and, presumably, highly individualised. A treatise by Johannes de Garlandia, a musical theorist working in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, offers a few clues about types of ornamentation:

> Ennoblement of a sound is the expansion or diminution of it by means of pride; by expansion so that it may be perceived more easily; in magnitude so that it may be heard better; with invention (*fictione*) so that is may be attractive; and in performance so that the spirits may be refreshed.[22]

Also, he advises,

> put colours in place of unfamiliar proportionate sounds [i.e. melodic phrases], for the more you colour it, the more the sound will be familiar, and if it is familiar, it will be pleasing. Or in the place of any colour in the region put a familiar cantilena, phrase (*copula*), or section (*punctum*) or a descending or ascending instrumental phrase of some instrument, or a phrase from a *lai*. (p. 9)

From these examples we can infer that ornamentation encompasses tone, dynamics, adding sections of other tunes and embellishments, and by varying the performance (*musica ficta/falsa musica*). Additionally, 'colour' can be added to the music by selecting 'well-ordered' intervals (harmonies) and by repetition (p. 9).

The depictions of performances in the romances appear to follow a conventionalised progression. The musician takes up the harp and will initially

tune it (perhaps also playing snippets of other pieces) before beginning to play in earnest. The remarkable skill of the musician and emotional responses to the music will be noted, perhaps by the narrator or by the in-text audience. The music inspires a display of emotion and often physical reactions as all those who hear the music are drawn towards it. The episodes often tend to focus on the physicality of the musician's performance, for example describing the performer's hands in particular detail, as in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan and Îsolt*.[23] These conventions of performance scenes appear to have early roots, as Christopher Page notes an Old English precedent in *Apollonius of Tyre*:

> Then there was stillness and silence in the hall. Apollonius took his tuning-key (*hearpenaegl*) and then began to stir the harpstrings with skill and to mingle the sound of the harp with joyful singing. And the king himself and all those who heard him called out with great cries and praised him.[24]

The incorporation of tuning as part of the performance seems a fairly plausible feature and may be assumed to reflect historical performance practice; it is a musical necessity, as anyone who has ever played on gut strings will affirm (see [Video 2: 'Tuning and scordatura'](#)). The tuning may also be an example of *scordatura*, where the strings are tuned to alternative pitches. Pierre of Peckham suggests that *scordatura* was a well-known practice, whereby notes in the diatonic scale can be altered, as long as the basic intervals (octave, fourth and fifth) are retained.[25] *Scordatura* enables a musician to easily play in different modes on an instrument limited by its number of strings. This practice of re-tuning is particularly demonstrated in Thomas' *Roman de Horn*, when Lenburc 'tuned her harp: she raised it a whole tone in pitch'.[26] Benjamin Bagby rather romantically interprets the re-tuning of the harp as a symbolic assertion of self over the instrument and over performance.[27] Yet for the literary performances, this may not be far from the truth. The act of tuning sets the protagonist apart as they

impose their authority — their tuning — on the performance setting. Tuning aligns the 'well-tuned' *musica humana* of nobles with their *musica instrumentalis*, making the soul and the instrument reach 'a certain harmony […] a careful tuning of low and high pitches as though producing one consonance'.[28] Indeed, Pierre of Peckham's poem focuses in such detail on the harp purely because of the typological connection between the well-tuned instrument and the charitable and worthy Man.[29] As to the extreme reactions of the audience, we may take this to be a literary embellishment, but it is a reminder of how important and powerful music was perceived to be in the period. Conventionalised outburst of praise and the drawing in of the audience are used to codify and emphasise the emotional impact of music.

Turning to performance episodes in the romances, *Sir Orfeo*'s two disguised harp performances are internally quite similar. In the first, Orfeo, masquerading as a poor minstrel, plays his harp before the Fairy King and his court. Orfeo begins by tuning his harp ('[he] tok his harp so miri of soun, / And tempreþ his harp')[30] and then fills the palace with 'blissful notes' (l. 438). The Fairy King and Queen take great pleasure in Orfeo's song and all those who hear the harp run towards the sound and sit at his feet. This provides an interesting parallel to an earlier (non-disguised) performance by Orfeo when exiled in the wilderness. Orfeo plays the harp 'at his owhen wille' (l. 271) and the music draws in and pleases 'all the wilde bestes that ther beth' (l. 272). In the second disguised performance, Orfeo (now masquerading as a poor heathen harper) is welcomed to play at a feast in his own hall by his steward. After the other musicians play ('trompours & tabourers, / Harpours fele, & crouders', ll. 521–2), Orfeo takes up his harp and, after tuning it, once more enchants those listening with 'Þe blissefulest notes' (l. 528). The notable repetition of the term 'blissful' (l. 438) emphasises Orfeo's connection to divine power through his music (blissful being

a term commonly used to describe heaven). In the first performance, the harp creates what the Fairy palace can only imitate — the glory of Heaven — and Orfeo's music succeeds in influencing events and rescuing Heurodis where military power and kingship have failed. In the latter performance, the affective power of Orfeo's harping prompts the steward to recognise his master's harp and to prove his loyalty in an outburst of emotion.

In *King Horn*, music is first mentioned as part of Horn's education when fostered in the court of King Ailmar. Harping is set among other knightly skills like hunting, hawking and serving: 'Stiwarde, tak nu here / Mi fundlyng for to lere / Of þine mestere, / Of wude and of riuere / And tech him to harpe / Wiþ his nayles scharpe'.[31] The worth of this musical education is proved at the end of the romance when Horn must gain entry to his own castle to prevent his lover, Rymenhild, marrying his enemy, Fikenhild. Horn disguises himself and his men as minstrels (purely, it seems, by carrying instruments and playing). Once inside, '[Horn] sette him on þe benche, / His harpe for to clenche. / He makede Rymenhilde lay, / And heo makede walaway. / Rymenhild feol yswoȝe; / Ne was þer non þat louȝe' (ll. 1595–1600). They are granted entry to the hall and Horn supports his disguise with a performance of a *lai* — a form that combines sung or spoken words and musical accompaniment. Rymenhild is overcome with emotion and Horn is stirred to kill Fikenhild. The lack of detail about the disguise and its almost unexpected success are quite typical of the romance, which overall feels abbreviated and episodic. What is clear, however, is the power of music to raise emotions and enable action.

The Anglo-Norman *Roman de Horn* by Thomas, in contrast, grants music greater prominence in the narrative. The importance of musical education (and its connection to nobility) is emphasised: 'In those days everyone knew how to play the harp well: the higher the rank, the greater the knowledge of the art'.[32] Horn

once again uses the minstrel disguise to gain entry to his castle and reclaim Rigmel (Rymenhild in the Middle English poem), from Wikele (Fikenhild). Horn and a hundred companions carry instruments ('Some carried harps, most fiddles', p. 135) and don 'cloaks of different colours' (p. 135), but are also armed and dressed in hauberks.[33] There is no musical performance once inside the hall as Horn wastes no time in slaying Wikele. Instead disguise and reality converge as their violent actions figuratively become the songs promised by the false minstrels: 'Now they would turn Wikele's joy into grief, and the songs they made would finish in misery', and Horn threatens, 'I'll play him a Breton lay with my steel sword'.[34]

Horn's earlier harp performance is of more interest to us here. A group of nobles have gathered in Lenburc's chambers (Lenburc is the daughter of King Gudreche of Ireland) and are passing her harp around, playing for pleasure. Horn's modest protests are ignored and he is asked to play. Horn first tunes the harp by playing melodies ('chanter') and chords ('organer'), then alters the pitch of the strings ('he began to raise the pitch and to make the strings give out completely different notes', p. 95). He then sings the *lai* of Baltof in the Breton manner ('loudly and clearly', p. 96), alternating between singing, then harping.[35] Horn's playing is praised:

> whoever then watched his knowledgeable handling of it, how he touched the strings and made them vibrate, sometimes causing them to sing and at other times join in harmonies, would have been reminded of the harmony of heaven! [36]

The details in this passage are telling. Horn makes the strings 'join in harmonies' as well as 'causing them to sing' which suggests that he is accompanying his melody with a mixture of intervals and playing in unison. The antiphonal style seems to be the most common arrangement in other accounts of *lai* performances. For example, when a musician plays before King Alexander in the twelfth-century

epic *Alexandre*, 'the harpist sat at the king's feet and began a lai, of which he had learned many, on the harp and flute'.[37] In *Roman de Silence*, Silence gives a similarly multi-instrumental performance when he returns home from his overseas travels and minstrel training: 'Then he took his harp and viele / and sang beautifully as he played. / Everyone from all around / came running to the inn.'[38] This passage is most likely literary exaggeration, as Silence can hardly play two instruments and sing at the same time. An antiphonal style of playing makes this example more plausible: for example, the harp could accompany sung verses and the vielle could play refrains or interludes. Perhaps one of the instruments could offer a different tune as a counterpoint, much like Johannes de Garlandia's suggested ornamentation.[39] Silence's ability to accompany his own singing acknowledges his skills as a professional musician, and so the addition of another instrument to his performance serves to demonstrate his skill beyond that of ordinary professionals. This scene clearly demonstrates how performance can be stylised for literary effect whilst still resembling plausible historical performance practice (See Video 3: 'Demonstration of antiphonal playing').

Before focusing on the romances of Tristan — the most detailed depictions of performance to be discussed here — it is worth continuing to examine *lais*. As previously noted, most musical performances in romances are of *lais*: narrative or lyric verses associated with the Breton tradition. Although it seems clear that they have words, performances of *lais* are frequently described by the instrument that plays them, rather than any reference to them being sung or recited. In *Roman de Silence*, we are granted an account of a performance by two itinerant musicians: 'One fiddled a Breton *lai*; / the other harped "Gueron".'[40] J. A. Westrup states:

> Whether or not the *lai* is Celtic in origin […] it clearly derives from an old tradition of minstrelsy in which persistent repetition similar to that of the *chanson de geste* is combined with the variety of structure to be found in the *puncta* (or contrasted sections) of dance forms such as the *estampie*.[41]

The *estampie* also features in romance texts and is defined by Johannes de Grocheio in his fourteenth-century treatise on secular music as:

> a textless melody having a difficult structure of agreements and distinguished by its sections [*puncta*]. […] it causes the mind of anyone who performs it – and of anyone who listens – to dwell upon it and it often diverts the minds of the powerful from perverse reflection.[42]

In *Bevis of Hampton*, Josian plays 'staumpes, notes, garibles gay' on her vielle.[43] Similarly, Isolde in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan and Îsolt* plays at court for the delight of her father the King and his nobles: 'she sang, she wrote, and she read for them […] she fiddled her estampie, her lays, and her strange tunes in the French style' (pp. 147-8). Despite this clue as to the instrumentation and arrangement of the *lai*, the indiscriminate use of the term in the romances suggests that it is being used to refer to tales in general, especially those set to music and commonly with fantastical subjects (just as the term *geste* is used to refer to any kind of narrative tale). The preoccupation with the Breton *lai* in romances, particularly in *Le Roman de Silence*, the Tristan romances and *Sir Orfeo*, parallels a general tendency for nostalgia about music and musicians in the romances. Tristan's enrapturing harp performance in the court of King Mark and Horn's performance in Lenburc's chambers are played 'in the Breton style'.[44] The opening of *Sir Orfeo* describes Breton *lais* of mirth, woe and 'old aventours' played with a harp.[45] Indeed, the romance of Orfeo is itself presented as such a *lai* by the narrator.

In romances of Tristan, particularly those by Gottfried von Strassburg and Thomas of Britain, we have particularly detailed and artful accounts of performance. Tristan's harp performance in the court of King Mark is exquisitely and meticulously described and is often cited in accounts of historical performance practice due to its detail and poetic resonance. As is the norm,

musical entertainment takes place 'a little after supper' and a professional Welsh harper is entertaining the gathered populace with his skill.[46] Tristan is 'engrossed in the lay and its sweet music' (p. 89) and correctly identifies it as Breton *lai* of Sir Gurun (which, interestingly, is also played and sung by Ysolt in Thomas' *Tristan* and is probably the same *lai* of Geuron in *Le Roman de Silence*).[47] The Welsh harper is surprised by Tristan's knowledge and asks him to take up the harp. Tristan protests with customary modesty — 'my skill is now so feeble that I dare not play in your hearing' — but finally agrees to play.[48]

The narrative first focuses on the physicality of the performance. It describes Tristan's hands — 'When Tristan took the harp it was as if [it were] made for his hands, which (as I have said) were of surpassing beauty; for they were soft and smooth, fine and slender and dazzling white as ermine' (p. 89) — romanticising them to the point that they are as beautiful as the music they create. Tristan begins with snatches of multiple tunes, flitting through the repertoire of a skilled harper with 'preludes and phrases' and *lais* of Arthur (p. 89). Then he tunes the harp carefully with a 'key' (p. 89), plays the pieces again and embellishes them (See Video 4: 'Closeup of hands').

After focusing on Tristans' fingers, Gottfried von Strassburg's text switches to the emotional impact of the performance. Tristan's playing is 'so melodious with lovely string music' (p. 89) that any who hear the music are physically drawn towards it at a run. The melody that Tristan entices from the harp is so enchanting that 'many a man sitting or standing there forgot his very name. Hearts and ears began to play the fool and desert their rightful paths' (p. 90). The text then reverts to the focus on Tristan's hands ('nimbly his white fingers went dipping among the strings' p. 90) and describes the reactions to the music in physical terms — 'Nor was there sparing of eyes: a host of them were bent on him, following his hands' (p. 90).

Tristan continues to perform more *lais*, such as the *lai* of Thisbe, *lais* of Arthur, and the *lai* of Graland, and his singing in many languages is praised. When questioned, Tristan reveals his international musical education: 'Parmenians taught me the fiddle and orgnaistrum, Welshmen the harp and rote — they were two masters from Wales; Bretons from the town of Lut grounded me in the lyre and also in the sambuca' (p. 91).[49] Once again, the performance of Tristan appears to follow literary conventions, drawing attention to the skill of a noble 'amateur' who can out-play a professional Welsh harper and describing the physical pull of music on listeners. Tristan's music induces a heightened emotional state as Tristan's performance causes signs of madness: men are driven to distraction and forget their names. By grounding the audience both in the text and of the text in a microcosm of the physicality of performance — the musician's hands — the romance augments the enchanting affective power of music.

Isolde the younger, Tristan's pupil and (later) lover, is also musically talented and well-educated: she plays the lyre, harp, sings and 'played the fiddle excellently in the Welsh style'.[50] 'Her fingers touched the lyre most deftly and struck notes from the harp with power. She managed her ascents and cadences with dexterity' (p. 147). Isolde plays at court for the delight of her father the King and his nobles: 'she sang, she wrote, and she read for them […] she fiddled her estampie, her lays, and her strange tunes in the French style' (pp. 147–8). The romance gives more details about her performance:

> she struck her lyre or her harp on either side most excellently with hands as white as ermine […] She sang her "pastourelle", her "rotruenge" and "rondeau", "chanson", "refloit", and "folate" well, and well, and all too well. For thanks to her many hearts grew full of longing; because of her, all manner of thoughts and ideas presented themselves (p. 148).

Such a list of musical achievements seems like rhetorical amplification, using

Isolde's talents to reinforce her worthiness as Tristan's lover and to embellish the romance as a whole. Isolde's ability to accompany her singing with the harp marks her as a musician of particular skill.

Music plays a further role in the romance as Tristan's musical talents also enable him to rescue Isolde from the Irish baron Gandin. Gandin, a noble amateur rote-player, arrives at King Mark's court. Instead of graciously protesting his lack of skill when asked to play (as Tristan does), Gandin impertinently refuses to play unless he knows what his reward will be (p. 215), a clear indication of his poor morals and hence — according to the Boethian model — inferior musical ability. Gandin plays two *lais* on the rote then claims Isolde as his prize. Tristan pursues the baron and while they wait for the tide, Tristan plays a *lai* 'of such surpassing sweetness that it stole into Isolde's heart and pervaded her whole consciousness to the point where she left her weeping and was lost in thoughts of her lover' (p. 217). Gandin demands to hear the 'Lay of Dido' and Tristan's performance is so enrapturing that the tide becomes too high to reach the boat (p. 217). Tristan offers to carry Isolde out on his horse then takes his chance to escape with her (pp. 217–18). Music enables action when used cunningly by the musician, but this power can be abused. It is fitting then that Tristan's music is used to undo Gandin's trickery and to soothe Isolde. Tristan himself is aware of the symbolic symmetry of this episode, telling Gandin, 'what you tricked from Mark with your rote, I now take away with my harp!' (p. 218).

Ultimately, these performance accounts cannot ever truly recount medieval performance. What we can see, however, is another side to the practical and methodological information from musical treatises and other surviving non-literary evidence. The harp is a powerful force in the Middle Ages, both as an instrument and as a symbol. Its suitability as an instrument for the high-born and its prevalence in romances attest to the harp's versatility and (musical) nobility.

The harp is the perfect instrument for the multitalented romance protagonist whose many skills serve to enrich the fictional world they inhabit. Their music has the power to directly influence narrative events and to bring about the resolution of the story, whether this be returning from exile (for Horn and Orfeo) or accompanying their death (for Tristan). Performance is a phenomenon that can only be truly experienced in its performance context, else it is fundamentally and irrecoverably changed. As Isidore of Seville writes, 'If a man does not remember sounds, they perish, for they cannot be written down'.[51] Walter Ong echoes this nearly a millennium and a half later in stating that: 'sound exists only when it is going out of existence'.[52] The stylised performance moments in the romances I have discussed preserve the medieval experience of music by encoding its affective power in words and granting music narrative significance. Most importantly, these performance episodes in popular literature remind us why music (and, of course, popular literature itself) is created: to please the listeners and to elicit emotional responses.

Notes

[1] The title of this article, 'For musike meueþ affecciouns', is taken from Bartholomaeus Anglicus' thirteenth-century *De Proprietatibus Rerum* and expresses the widespread belief in the affective power of music (see, for example, the story of David curing Saul by playing the cithara or of a madman being restored to sanity by the music of Asclepiades, both of which are cited frequently in musical treatises). Bartholomaeus Anglicus in Merritt R. Blakeslee, *Love's Mask: Identity, Intertextuality, and Meaning in the Old French Tristan Poems* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 27–28.

[2] Take for example the comments of John of Salisbury: 'Concerning actors and mimes, buffoons and harlots, panders and other like human monsters, which the prince ought rather to exterminate entirely than to foster, there needed no mention to be made in the law; which indeed not only excludes such abominations from the court of the prince, but banishes them from among the people of God'; and, 'our own age, descending to romances and similar folly, prostitutes not only the ear and heart to vanity but also delights its idleness with the pleasures of the eye and ear. […] Does not the shiftless man divert his idleness and court slumber with the sweet tones of instruments and vocal melody, with gaiety inspired by musicians and with the pleasure he finds in the narrator of tales…?' John of Salisbury in John Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel* (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1989), pp. 5–6.

[3] Giraud de Calanson in Nigel Wilkins, *Music in the Age of Chaucer: With Chaucer Songs*, 2nd edn, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995), p. 126; and Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 103–4.

[4] Southworth, pp. 46–47. Specific references to household musicians begin in earnest around the fourteenth century: musicians are hired in the French court of Louis X (1314–15), in the court of King Edward III in England (1327–77) and in the Spanish royal court from the mid-fourteenth century. Edmund A. Bowles, 'Musical Instruments at the Medieval Banquet' *Revue Belge de Musicologie/Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Muziekwetenschap*, 12.1–4 (1958), 41–51 (p. 41).

[5] Anon., 'King Horn', in *King Horn, Floriz and Blauncheflur, The Assumption of our Lady*, ed. by G. H. Knight (London: Oxford University Press, 1901), pp. 1–69 (following Cambridge, University Library MS Cambridge Gg.4.27.2); and Thomas, 'The Romance of Horn' in *The Birth of Romance in England: Four Twelfth-Century Romances in the French of England*, trans. by Judith Weiss (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2009), pp. 45–137. Citations will be given in Weiss' translation in-text, with the original French text provided in footnotes.

[6] Heldris de Cornuälle, *Silence: A Thirteenth-Century French Romance*, ed. by Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), ll. 2739–71.

[7] For example, Eustache Deschamps references private and secret performances by nobles. Eustache Deschamps, *L'Art de dictier*, ed. and trans. by Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi (East Lansing, Michigan: Colleagues Press, 1994), p. 65.

[8] Bowles, pp. 41–46.

[9] Southworth, pp. 93, 91.

[10] Linda Marie Zaerr, *Performance and the Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2012), p. 57.

[11] Sylvia Huot, 'Voices and Instruments in Medieval French Secular Music: On the Use of Literary Texts as Evidence for Performance Practice', *Musica Disciplina*, 43 (1989), 63–113 (pp. 87–93).

[12] Zaerr, p. 21.

[13] Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, trans. by Calvin M. Bower, ed. by Claude V. Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 7.

[14] Aristides Quintilianus in John Block Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 81.

[15] Herbert W. Myers, 'Harp' in *A Performer's Guide to Medieval Music*, ed. by Ross W. Duffin (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 330–5 (p. 333); and Christopher Macklin, 'Approaches to the Use of Iconography in Historical Reconstruction, and the Curious Case of Renaissance Welsh Harp Technique', *Early Music*, 35.2 (2007), 213–24 (pp. 214–15).

[16] Myers, p. 331.

[17] Joan Rimmer, 'The Morphology of the Irish Harp', *The Galpin Society Journal*, 17 (1964), 39–49 (p. 39); and Macklin, p. 214.

[18] Christopher Page, 'Fourteenth-century Instruments and Tunings: A Treatise by Jean Vaillant? (Berkeley, MS 744)', *The Galpin Society Journal*, 33 (1980), 13–35 (p. 31).

[19] Translated from the Anglo-Norman by Christopher Page. Pierre of Peckham, cited in Christopher Page, *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages: Instrumental Practice and Songs in France 1100–1300* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1987), p. 115.

[20] Myers, p. 334.

[21] Benjamin Bagby, 'Imagining the Early Medieval Harp' in *A Performer's Guide to Medieval Music*, ed. by Ross W. Duffin (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 336–44 (p. 342). Examples of this playing style can be found in Benjamin Bagby's rendition of *Beowulf* as well as on *Lost Songs of a Rhineland Harper X & XI centuries,* Sequentia (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, 82876-58939-2, 2005) [on CD] and *Edda: Myths from Medieval Iceland,* Sequentia (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, 05472-77381-2, 1999) [on CD].

[22] Johannes de Garlandia in Timothy McGee, The Sound of Medieval Song: Ornamentation and Vocal Style According to the Treatises (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 8.

[23] Gottfried von Strassburg, 'Tristan' in *Tristan: With the 'Tristan' of Thomas*, trans. by A. T. Hatto (London: Penguin, 1960), pp. 40–297 (p. 89).

[24] Page, Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages, p. 103.

[25] From *Lumiere as Lais*: 'One may change the settings / By tuning different notes, / And by different arrangements / Of variously placed semitones. / By this means/There is diverse tuning in the harp. / But wherever it may turn / There will always be need of three: / The fifth and the octave / together with the fourth.' Pierre of Peckham, translated from the Anglo-Norman by Page, in *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages*, p. 116.

[26] Thomas, 'The Romance of Horn', p. 95.

[27] Bagby, pp. 336–44.

[28] Boethius, p. 10.

[29] Pierre of Peckham in Page, Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages, p. 114.

[30] Anon., *Sir Orfeo*, ed. by A. J. Bliss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), ll. 436–37 (following Scotland, National Library of Scotland Advocates MS 19.2.1 [Auchinleck MS]).

[31] Anon., 'King Horn', ll. 245–46.

[32] Thomas, 'The Romance of Horn', p. 95.

[33] 'Harpes porterent asquanz, vieles li plusor'; 'Fors halbers vunt vestuz, dunt grant erc, / E lur chapals desus de diverse color'. Thomas, *Roman de Horn et Rimenhild*, ed. by Francisque Michel (Paris: Maulde et Renou, 1845), ll. 5175, 5177–78.

[34] Thomas, 'The Romance of Horn', p. 135. 'Jà turnerent la joie Wikle en dolor, / E lur chaluz qu'il firent finerent en tristor'. Thomas, *Roman de Horn et Rimenhild*, ll. 5180–81.

[35] 'Apres en lestrument. fet les cordes suner. / Tut issi cum en uoiz. laveit dit tut premier'. [Afterwards he made the strings sound in the instrument, just as he had first sung it with his voice.] Thomas, *Roman de Horn et Rimenhild*, ll. 2842–43.

[36] Thomas, 'The Romance of Horn', p. 95. 'Deu! ki dunc l'esgardast cum il la sot manier, / Cum ses cordes tuchot, cum les feseit tramler, / A quantes faire les chanz, à kantes organer, / Del armonie del ciel li pureit remembrer.' Thomas, *Roman de Horn et Rimenhild*, ll. 2831–34.

[37] Translated by Huot, p. 76.

[38] 'Dont prent sa harpe et sa viiele, / Si note avoec a sa vois biele. / N'i a celui d'illuec entor / Ne face a l'ostel donc son tor'. Heldris de Cornuälle, ll. 3521–24.

[39] Johannes de Garlandia in McGee, pp. 8–9.

[40] 'Li uns viiele un lai berton, / Et li alters harpe Gueron'. Heldris de Cornuälle, ll. 2761–62.

[41] J. A. Westrup in Gilbert Reaney, 'Concerning the Origins of the Medieval Lai', *Music and Letters*, 39 (1958), 343–46 (p. 345).

[42] Christopher Page, 'Johannes de Grocheio on Secular Music: A Corrected Text and a New Translation' in *Plainsong and Medieval Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 17–41 (p. 32).

[43] Anon., 'Bevis of Hampton' in *Four Romances of England*, ed. by Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), pp. 25–95 (l. 3908).

[44] Gottfried von Strassburg, 'Tristan' in *Tristan: With the 'Tristan' of Thomas*, trans. by A. T. Hatto (London: Penguin, 1960), pp. 40-297 (p. 90) and Thomas, *Roman de Horn et Rimenhild*, ll. 2840–41.

[45] Anon., *Sir Orfeo*, l. 8.

[46] Gottfried von Strassburg, p. 88.

[47] Thomas of Britain, 'Tristan', p. 313; Heldris de Cornuälle, l. 2762.

[48] Gottfried von Strassburg, p. 89.

[49] The sambuca is a high-pitched triangular 4-stringed instrument. John in *Hucbald, Guido, and John on Music: Three Medieval Treatises,* trans. by Warren Babb, ed. by Claude V. Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 107.

[50] Gottfried von Strassburg, p. 147.

[51] Isidore of Seville in *Cassiodorus, 'Institutiones', Book II, Chapter V, Isidore of Seville, 'Etymologies', Book III, Chapter 15–23*, trans. by Helen Dill Goode and Gertrude C. Drake (Colorado Springs: Colorado College Music Press, 1980), p. 13.

[52] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 32.