# Extended Play: Reflections of Heinrich Isaac's Music in Early Tudor England

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A wealth of manuscript anthologies dating from the decades around 1500 presents a rich repertoire of late-fif-teenth- and early-sixteenth-century "songs without words" by composers of the stature of Isaac, Josquin, Martini, and Agricola, mostly Northerners working in the competitive atmosphere of the courts of noble Italian patrons where instrumental consort music appears to have first flourished as an independent musical art form.[1] The far-flung geographical spread of the manuscript sources across Europe attests to the rapid dissemination of this repertoire among many different cultural centers: many of the pieces contained in them were copied and recopied over a number of generations, their musical components often ingeniously reworked by composers paying homage to or vying with each other.[2] After the turn of the sixteenth century, much of this repertoire

[1] This terminology is now generally accepted for the repertoire of pieces from ca. 1500 transmitted in textless formats and was originally coined by Warwick Edwards in "Songs without Words by Josquin and His Contemporaries," in *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Patronage, Sources and Text*, ed. Iain Fenlon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 79–92. Sources originating from the immediate environment in which this repertoire appears to have been first cultivated include Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, MS 2856; Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, MS Q17; and Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Magliabechi XIX. 178.

[2] Sources that demonstrate the dispersal of songs without words to geographical centers remote from Northern Italy include Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 1494; Segovia, Archivo Capitular de la Catedral, MS without call mark; and St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 462.

became available to an increasingly wide audience through published collections such as Ottaviano Petrucci's groundbreaking *Harmonice musices Odhecaton A* (Venice, 1501) and its successors elsewhere in Europe.

Although it is not yet clear exactly how these pieces may have been performed and admired by Renaissance musicians and their patrons, they do present a particular problem to modern concert performers and promoters accustomed to longer musical spans. For on the whole they are miniature in scale; each lasts no more than a minute or two at the tempos adopted by most players today. The majority of the composers of these songs without words were certainly capable of creating extended musical structures, as witnessed by their expansive Mass movements and motets formed over cantus firmi, or the grandiose musical architecture of late-fifteenth-century secular songs in *formes fixes* including the rondeau. Such extended structures are rare, however, in the repertoire of textless pieces intended primarily for instrumental players.[3]

So it is understandable that the relatively small number of instrumental pieces that do stand out from the crowd by nature of their grand design and extended scale attract particular attention. These include *Der Hundt* by Heinrich Isaac (ca. 1450/55–1517), *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* by Alexander Agricola (1445/6–1506), and *Fa la sol* by the English composer William Cornyshe (d. 1523). Each consists of two (or in Cornyshe's case three) substantial *partes*, and their durations range from about five to six minutes.[4] It appears quite possible that these relatively extended pieces were a deliberate attempt by composers to create a textless equivalent to the large-scale forms of contemporary sacred music and the increasingly antiquated chansons in *formes fixes*.

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[3] A distinction needs to be made between those pieces that were initially conceived as settings of liturgical or secular texts and that were subsequently anthologized without words and the large number of pieces that have survived without any literary texts and may never have been intended to be anything other than textless. Most of these are relatively short pieces.

[4] Modern editions: *Hieronymus Formschneyder Trium Vocum Carmina*, ed. Helmut Mönkemeyer, vol. 1 (Celle: Moeck Verlag), no. 2 "Das Kind lag in der wiegen" (pp. 8–11); *Opera Omnia Alexandri Agricola*, ed. Edward R. Lerner, vol. 5 (American Institute of Musicology, 1970), no. 68 "Cecus non judicat de coloribus" (pp. 102–5); *Music at the Court of Henry VIII*, ed. John Stevens, Musica Britannica, vol. 18 (2nd rev. ed. London: Stainer & Bell, 1973), no. 6 "Fa la sol" (pp. 7–10); one manuscript source (Hradec Králové, Museum, Codex Speciálnik, fols. F1v–3r) attributes *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* to Isaac rather than to Agricola (the two composers worked together in 1491–92 as members of the choir of the Florence Cathedral). Of the eight surviving sources of Agricola's *Cecus non judicat de coloribus*, only three have Latin texts in two or more parts ("Regali quam decet" in Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, MS 40021, fols. 49v–51r; "Gaude virgo singularis" in Leipzig, Universitäts-Bibliothek, MS 1494, fols. 171v–72r; "Ave ancilla trinitatis" in Hradec Králové, Museum, Codex Speciálnik fols. F1v–3r). The other five sources transmit the piece as a song without words, and it is now impossible to prove categorically in what format Agricola originally conceived the music.

TABLE 1

First six items: London,
British Library Add. MS 31922

| 1. | f. 3v–4r | *Benedictus* | Heinrich Isaac |
| 2. | f. 4v–5r | *Fortune esperee* | Antoine Busnois? |
| | | | [with *si placet* contratenor] |
| 3. | f. 5v–6r | *Alles regretz* | Hayne van Ghizeghem |
| 4. | f. 6v–7r | *En frolyk weson* | Jacobus Barbireau |
| 5. | f. 7v–9r | *La my* | Heinrich Isaac |
| 6. | f. 9v–14r | *Fa la sol* | William Cornyshe |

Although Cornyshe's English piece proves distinct in many respects from its continental partners, there are a number of ways in which it shares compositional ideas and processes with them. This suggests that it would be fruitful to examine the extent to which music by Isaac and Agricola may have been known to Cornyshe and other composers in early Tudor England. Might the reception of Isaac's music in England—particularly an awareness of some of his compositional strategies in creating his more extended pieces, many of which were transmitted in textless format—have provided an impetus to English composers' own music in the early days of what would later flourish as the Elizabethan and Jacobean fantasia for consort of viols?

One early Tudor source in which textless English and continental pieces rub shoulders is London, British Library Add. MS 31922, the so-called King Henry VIII's Book.[5] Although previous commentators have pointed to some of the obvious connections between continental and native compositions in this manuscript, these have not been explored in any great depth.[6] The first six items in the manuscript are unattributed; and it is possibly a significant pointer to the cultural milieu for which Lbl 31922 was copied that the first composer to be named is none other than "The. Kinge. h. viii," whose *Pastyme with good companye* stands as the seventh item in the collection. Fortunately, each of the anonymous first six items in the manuscript can be attributed from other sources, and they do appear to constitute a coherent group (table 1).

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5 Stevens ed., *Music at the Court of Henry VIII*.

6 John Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961); Warwick Edwards, "The Instrumental Music of Henry VIII's Manuscript," *The Consort* 34 (1978): 274–82; Theodor Dumitrescu, *The Early Tudor Court and International Musical Relations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

Theodor Dumitrescu, noting that the first five items are by con-
tinental composers, considers the influence that this music may have
exerted on native composers, including Henry VIII himself.[7] Like
Petrucci's *Odhecaton* and a number of other contemporary manuscript
collections whose primary purpose seems to have been to assemble sec-
ular music for domestic consumption, Lbl 31922 begins with a piece
that has religious connotations, as if to dedicate the anthology in a way
more usual for sacred collections. In this case the copyist chose the
Benedictus from Isaac's *Missa Quant j'ay au cueur*, whose elegant imita-
tive opening and delicately flowing sequential passages were eagerly
transcribed into nearly twenty surviving sources.[8] Then follow three
secular songs, each of which was among the most copied and imitated
in continental songbooks. Two of these songs also have resonances in
further works from Isaac's own oeuvre: his *Missa Een vrolic wesen* is based
on the same song as Lbl 31922's item 4, and he also left a number of
skillful reworkings of *Fortuna* (item 2). With item 5 we return to Isaac's
own music: *La my* [*la sol, la sol la mi*], the bipartite four-voice piece that
is the "moteto sopra una fantasia" he famously completed in two days
in Ferrara in 1502, and which reappears in the Credo of his *Missa O
praeclara.*[9]

The final item in this opening group of pieces is the first by a native
composer to be copied into the manuscript, but it is clearly connected
by its position in the manuscript (at least in the mind of the so far
unidentified copyist) to Isaac's *La mi la sol la sol la mi* through its hexa-
chordal title and multipartite structure. It also belongs in this opening
group by virtue of having no underlaid text. (*Alles regretz* is the only one
of these six pieces to have any text underlaid at all, and even in this case
it is little more than an incipit.) The attribution of *Fa la sol* to William
Cornyshe comes from the only other known source for the piece, a sole
surviving part from the printed set of partbooks *XX Songes*, published

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[7] Dumitrescu, *The Early Tudor Court*, 164.

[8] See *Heinrich Isaac Collected Works*, ed. Edward R. Lerner, vol. 7 (Neuhausen-Stutt-
gart: American Institute of Musicology, 1984), xx–xxi. Although Isaac's *Benedictus* was
unequivocally composed as music for a liturgical text, it swiftly became part of the "core"
repertoire of pieces transmitted as textless songs without words. Isaac's setting of liturgi-
cal text to *Benedictus* is of such an abstract nature that Edwards in "Songs without Words
by Josquin and His Contemporaries" comments that "because . . . Isaac makes no attempt
to match textual and musical phrases, the piece is still 'instrumental' in the sense that it
was conceived without words" (p. 90).

[9] As recorded in the letter of 2 September 1502 from Gian d'Artignova to Ercole
d'Este, Modena, Archivio de Stato, MM, b. 1. See Lewis Lockwood, "Josquin at Ferrara:
New Documents and Letters," in *Josquin Desprez: Proceedings of the International Josquin Festi-
val-Conference*, ed. Edward E. Lowinsky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 103–36.
*La mi la sol la sol la mi* was also transmitted as a motet, setting the text "Rogamus te, piis-
sima virgo" (*prima pars*); "O Maria O regina" (*secunda pars*), published by Petrucci in
*Motetti C* (Venice, 1504).

in London in 1530, the bassus now housed at the British Library, London.[10] The version transmitted in *XX Songes* omits the third section of the piece as copied in Lbl 31922 but is otherwise virtually identical.

William Cornyshe was well placed to know the music performed by and for King Henry VIII and his inner circle of privy musicians, and therefore to have access to material such as the songs without words by Isaac and his continental contemporaries copied into the first leaves of Lbl 31922. He had already been providing pageants and other entertainments for the Tudor court for more than fifteen years when Henry acceded to the throne, and as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal (and master of the choristers from 1509) would have had access to some of the finest performers in the land. Cornyshe was at the center of both courtly musical entertainment and the king's daily sacred rituals until his death in 1523. Notably he traveled with the monarch and his musical entourage to France and the Low Countries in 1513, where they were entertained by Margaret of Austria, and again for the meeting with François I at the Field of Cloth of Gold in 1520.[11]

No piece by Agricola is contained alongside Isaac's music in the initial openings of Lbl 31922. However, the manuscript's copyist certainly did know at least one composition by Agricola, as the motet-chanson *Belle sur tautes/Tota pulcra es* appears on fols. 99v–100. It is not attributed in this source and is in fact a reworking in four voices with an incomplete bassus part that John Stevens aptly describes as "often conspicuously inept."[12] So although it is less easy than with Isaac to establish direct source connections between Agricola and Cornyshe, there is considerable circumstantial evidence to place the two composers in close proximity. In the years 1516–17 Henry VIII employed Matthew van Wilder as a player "upon lewte and veoldes."[13] Van Wilder had previously been a minstrel for Duke Philip the Handsome of Burgundy and had been in the Duke's entourage when they sheltered in England early in 1506 following a shipwreck that interrupted

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[10] For further information about this print, see Howard Nixon, "The Book of XX Songs," *British Museum Quarterly* 16 (1951): 33–36; and Christine Saunders, "A Study of the Book of *XX Songes* (1530)" (M.Mus. thesis, King's College, University of London, 1985).

[11] For further details of Cornyshe's biography and his career at the Tudor court, see Andew Ashbee, et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians 1485–1714* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), vol. 1, 304–8; David Skinner, "William Cornysh: Clerk or Courtier?," *Musical Times* 138 (May, 1997): 5–12; Fiona Kisby, "A Courtier in the Community: New Light on the Biography of William Cornish, Master of the Choristers in the English Chapel Royal, 1509–1523," *Bulletin of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 16 (1999): 8–17; David Greer (with Fiona Kisby), "Cornysh," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. 6, 491–92.

[12] Stevens ed., *Music at the Court of Henry VIII*, 109.

[13] For further detail, see Dumitrescu, *The Early Tudor Court*, 80.

their journey to Spain.[14] The elderly Agricola (highly regarded both as a singer and as an instrumentalist) was also a member of the ship-wrecked party, which spent three months under the protection of King Henry VII at royal houses across southern England, including those at Windsor and Richmond, and Philip's musicians were rewarded by the king's mother Margaret Beaufort on several occasions.[15] Although no copy of Agricola's *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* is known in sources that can be directly associated with England, it is possible that Cornyshe was acquainted with the piece, for at the time of the enforced visit of Philip the Handsome and his musicians in 1506, he was already at the center of music-making at the Tudor court.[16]

A detailed investigation of Cornyshe's *Fa la sol* shows a number of ways in which the piece reflects or adapts stylistic elements and struc-tural principles that can also be found in the extended compositions of both Isaac and Agricola transmitted in textless format. The first and most significant is its ambitious scale, unmatched by any other English secular composition of this period (table 2). Isaac's vocally conceived *Benedictus*, by comparison, is a mere fifty-seven breves long.

Each of these pieces uses a variety of compositional strategies to create a sense of organic coherence across long spans of music. The most straightforward method is that employed by Isaac in *La mi la sol la sol la mi*, whose overall structure is contingent on the use of an eight-note cantus firmus constructed from two four-note cells, each of which can be further subdivided into two-note units: *La mi/la sol//la sol/la mi*, the four-note cells being separated by a rest, as is each eight-note group from the next.[17] Each repetition of the eight-note pattern is subjected to a progressive reduction in temporal value, the note lengths always

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[14] Honey Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue and Musical Life at the Habsburg-Burgundian Court* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 38–39.

[15] Dumitrescu, *The Early Tudor Court*, 34; Georg Rhaw, in his 1538 *Symphoniae ju-cundae*, described Agricola as "Clarus vocum manuumque" (distinguished in voice and hand).

[16] Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue and Musical Life* (32–33) describes the informal contact between visiting and host groups of court musicians as "the norm." Another, if more ten-tative, point of contact between Agricola and the textless pieces copied into Lbl 31922 is the composer's own engagement with one of the pieces collected in the manuscript's opening section. Agricola's version of *Alles regretz* appeared in *Odhecaton* (no. 48); fols. 53v–54, where he takes Hayne's tenor and works two new high and equal-ranged voices above it.

[17] It should be noted that Isaac did not necessarily conceive the eight-note cantus firmus in *La mi la sol la sol la mi* but may well have borrowed it from an anonymous frot-tola *La mi lasò, lasola mi*, later published by Petrucci in *Frottole libro nono* (Venice, 1509). This frottola also appears in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Département de la Musique, Fonds du Conservatoire, MS Rés. Vm7 676, a manuscript associated with Mantua or Fer-rara and dated 1502, the very time and place that Isaac composed his "fantasia." The seg-mentation of the eight notes into shorter units and the thematic manipulation of them are, however, unique to Isaac.

TABLE 2

Comparison of lengths of compositions
by Isaac, Agricola, and Cornyshe

| Isaac | *La my* | 2 *partes* | 68 + 52 breves |
|---|---|---|---|
| Isaac | *Der Hundt* | 2 *partes* | 116 + 116 breves |
| Agricola | *Cecus* | 2 *partes* | 118 + 128 breves |
| Cornyshe | *Fa la sol (XX Songes)* | 2 *partes* | 62 + 104 breves |
| Cornyshe | *Fa la sol (Lbl 31922)* | 3 *partes* | 62 + 104 + 100 breves |

EXAMPLE 1.  Tenor: Isaac, *La mi la sol la sol la mi*, mm. 44–50

being halved. After five repetitions, the tenor breaks free from its re-
striction of four pitches and cadences on the final (ex. 1). A player of
the tenor part is likely to be especially aware of the explosively liberat-
ing effect of arriving on this previously untouched note.

There follows a brief superius/contratenor duet (the superius tak-
ing up the eight-note theme, mm. 51–52) and a homophonic coda
underpinned by a further three repetitions of the pitches of the cantus
firmus in the bassus, each in a different rhythmic pattern, concluded by
a final cadence (mm. 52–58). Throughout the whole piece the three
free parts make pervasive reference to the melodic content of the can-
tus firmus, either in its eight-note totality or in one or the other of its
four-note segments, thereby giving the piece an unusually high degree
of melodic integration.

It is possible that Cornyshe was attracted by the symmetrical recom-
bination of small motivic cells that form the cantus firmus of Isaac's
*La mi la sol la sol la mi:* a disposition of two-note units that not only
creates a peculiarly satisfying arch-like shape (*La mi*[A]/*la sol*[B]//*la
sol*[B]/*la mi*[A]) but that also hints at an underlying suggestion of retro-
grade structural methods. In Cornyshe's only other textless piece in Lbl
31922, fols. 63v–64r, an intriguing, untitled three-voice composition
that may be intended as a *catholicon* (capable of being performed in

EXAMPLE 2. Bassus: Cornyshe, untitled piece, mm. 9–29



EXAMPLE 3(a, b). Tenor: Cornyshe, *Fa la sol,* mm. 23–25; bassus, mm. 7–9



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more than one mode), the majority of the bassus part consists of segments of music that alternate original and retrograde versions of each phrase palindromically (ex. 2).[18]

There are also momentary uses of palindromic pitch organization in *Fa la sol* (tenor, mm. 23–25; bassus, mm. 7–9; see ex. 3). Although these much shorter episodes are of less structural significance than the construction of the bassus of Cornyshe's *catholicon,* they nevertheless provide evidence of the English composer's fascination with some of the types of motivic process also observable in the music of Isaac.

The repetition of fragmentary motives that underpins and unifies the structure of *La mi la sol la sol la mi* is also utilized, though in a less systematic way, in both *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* and *Fa la sol.* Agricola unifies the two *partes* of *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* by including in each a section where the tenor is constructed on the notes of the rising and falling hexachord, using an additive principle that gives these

[18] Stevens ed., *Music at the Court of Henry VIII,* no. 60, 46–47.

EXAMPLE 4(a, b, c). Tenor: Agricola, *Cecus non judicat de coloribus*, mm. 42–49, 51–53, and 66–72



sections a sense of irrepressible organic growth (mm. 42–49, 51–53, and 66–72; see ex. 4).[19]

Much of the melodic writing in *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* is constructed on the scale-wise motion explored by these additive hexachord sections: for example, the bassus and tenor parts (mm. 14–17), or the superius and tenor at the opening of the *secunda pars* (mm. 60–61; ex. 5).

Elsewhere Agricola teases the listener by repeating tiny motifs in an almost minimalist manner: the motif may be as short as one note (tenor, mm. 108–10) but more usually consists of an oscillation between two notes (superius, mm. 86–87, bassus, mm. 87–89, and tenor, mm. 89–91). Occasionally a more extended phrase is repeated two or more times (tenor, mm. 61–66). These repetitions not only extend the overall structure of the piece but build tension that requires some form of release in a way that corresponds closely to that seen in the manipulation of the tenor in Isaac's *La mi la sol la sol la mi* (ex. 6).

Although Isaac's *Der Hundt* makes more use of imitation as a structural principle than the other pieces under consideration here, it too relies heavily on hexachord or scale patterns to create consistency between its two *partes* and to give a clearly audible structure to its extended length. In the *prima pars*, measures 32–40, the superius descends slowly through a ninth with sequential patterns in the lower parts. This procedure is also used in the *secunda pars*, measures 32–37, where it is the

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[19] The additive hexachord technique used by Agricola in *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* was also employed by Isaac, for instance, in the motet *O decus ecclesiae*, as well as by Josquin in *Ut Phebi radiis* where the hexachord's solmization names provide some textual puns. A closer link between this technique and one of the textless compositions contained in Lbl 31922 is Ludwig Senfl's four-part setting of *Fortuna ad voces musicales*, published by Formschneider in *Der erst Teil: Hundert und ainundzweintzig newe Lieder* (Nuremberg, 1534). This setting takes the well-known *Fortuna* tenor and adds a superius part entirely derived from the hexachord using the additive principle. As Isaac's student and colleague, Senfl was surely aware of the older composer's skill in manipulating such techniques.

EXAMPLE 5(a, b). Agricola, *Cecus non judicat de coloribus,* mm. 14–17, and 60–61



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EXAMPLE 6. Agricola, *Cecus non judicat de coloribus,* mm. 86–92

EXAMPLE 7. Isaac, *Der Hundt*, mm. 42–45



EXAMPLE 8. Tenor: Cornyshe, *Fa la sol*, mm. 1–2

tenor that descends, though only through four notes. Scales rising and falling across the whole octave are used by Isaac toward the end of each main section (superius, mm. 45–49, and *secunda pars*, mm. 53–55) as a way of providing something of an end goal to the musical structure. This device occurs also in the bassus at the end of *Benedictus* (mm. 27–29). *Der Hundt* also shows Isaac playing with the repetitive ostinatos heard in *Cecus non judicat de coloribus*, for example, in the *secunda pars*, measures 41–42 in superius and tenor voices, and in all three voices in the first section, measures 42–45 (ex. 7).

Like both *La mi la sol la sol la mi* and *Cecus non judicat de coloribus*, Cornyshe's *Fa la sol* opens with relatively long note values before increasingly complex rhythmic activity builds up. The tenor begins with exactly the same phrase as that of Hayne van Ghizeghem's ubiquitous chanson *De tous biens plaine*, a piece that also appears in Lbl 31922, fols. 40v–41r—perhaps another indication of Cornyshe's cognizance of currently popular continental repertoire (ex. 8).

The last three notes of this phrase (spelling "fa" in the soft hexachord, "la" and "sol" in the natural hexachord) then suffuse the whole piece, unifying its three *partes* and showing Cornyshe's contrapuntal skill and ability in creating a constantly varying aural landscape from an apparently uninspiring building block.[20] It is possible that the choice of

[20] This methodology sets *Fa la sol* apart from the two other solmization pieces that surround it in its later source, *XX Songes* (London, 1530). The evidence of the sole surviving bass part suggests that both Fayrfax and Cowper made use of extended statements of the hexachord in slow note values in their four-part *Ut re mi* pieces in this source.

EXAMPLE 9. Cornyshe, *Fa la sol*, mm. 94–97



pitches may be a reference to a patron's name, such as that of Charles Brandon (ca. 1484–1545), Duke of Suffolk and King Henry's brother-in-law, or even Katherine of Aragon, Queen of England. The latter is a distinct possibility since *Fa la sol* was most likely composed some time after Duke Philip the Handsome's visit to England in 1506 and was certainly written before the Queen began to fall from Henry's favor following his infatuation with Anne Boleyn in 1525.

Cornyshe frequently uses the additive melodic principle observed in *Cecus non judicat de coloribus,* extending his three-note motif into four (superius, m. 14) or as many as ten notes (superius, mm. 59–62) and thus exploiting the possibilities of long phrases underpinned by a scale pattern, just as Isaac had done in *Der Hundt.* Cornyshe also takes up the use of the ostinato as a means of building a kind of tension that will be released only when one part breaks out of the restricted register of its motto. Isaac used this device after the fifth repetition of his eight-note tenor in *La mi la sol la sol la mi*; Cornyshe has two measures of oscillation (mm. 94–95) whose termination sets off a strong rising sequence in the lower two parts (mm. 96–97) and some frenetic activity in the superius (ex. 9).

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In his *Dodecachordon* (Basel, 1547), Glareanus drew attention to Isaac's propensity for combining harmonic stasis with surface animation: "It also gave him pleasure to show his versatility especially in tones remaining unchanged in any one voice, but with the other voices running about and clamoring around everywhere, just as the waves moved by the wind are accustomed to play about a rock in the sea."[21] We can clearly hear this technique at play in Isaac's *Benedictus* (ex. 10, mm. 18–20).

Isaac does similar things in *Der Hundt* (mm. 30–32) and in *La mi la sol la sol la mi* (much of the opening section, where the tenor is moving in longs). It is a feature that also appears, if less strongly, in Agricola's

[21] Heinrich Glarean, *Dodecachordon,* trans. and ed. Clement A. Miller (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1965), I, 278.

EXAMPLE 10. Isaac, *Benedictus*, mm. 18–20



EXAMPLE 11(a, b). Isaac, *Der Hundt*, mm. 30–32; Agricola, *Cecus non judicat de coloribus*, mm. 107–8

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a)

b)

*Cecus non judicat de coloribus*, for example, in measures 107–8, where a tenor holds a pedal over which the superius and bassus have decorative running passagework (ex. 11).

This technique of surface activity over static harmonies significantly makes an impressive appearance in Cornyshe's *Fa la sol*. Here a five-measure passage (104–8) consists entirely of alternating pedals on C and G that underpin scurrying imitative lines from the other two voices (ex. 12). The effect achieved by Cornyshe fits exactly with Glareanus's

EXAMPLE 12. Cornyshe, *Fa la sol*, mm. 104–8



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EXAMPLE 13. Cornyshe, *Fa la sol*, mm. 124–28



description of what he noticed in Isaac's music and is unlike anything to be found elsewhere in Cornyshe's English texted song repertoire.

Another trait that *Fa la sol* shares with Isaac's music is the employment of rhythmic manipulation of motifs to create some highly complex syncopated passages, especially where triple-time groupings are superimposed upon a prevailing imperfect duple pulse. In Cornyshe's piece this occurs most obviously just before the end, starting at measure 125, where all three voices move independently in dotted semibreves (or subdivisions), so that they are free from any sense of the underlying tactus until they reunite on the second half of measure 128. Here the effect of a call to order is emphasized by the bassus's returning to the core pitch motif originally outlined by the tenor in measures 1–2 (ex. 13; mm. 127–28).

TABLE 3

Comparison of ranges of individual voices
and overall compositions

| Part | Isaac Benedictus | Isaac La my | | Isaac Der Hundt | | Agricola Cecus | | Cornyshe Fa la sol | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | I | II | I | II | I | II | I | II | III |
| Superius | 11 | 7 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| Contratenor | | 11 | 10 | | | | | | | |
| Tenor | 9 | 4 | 5 | 11 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Bassus | 10 | 9 | 11 | 10 | 12 | 13 | 12 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Total overall | 18 | 18 | 19 | 21 | 21 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 21 |

An almost identical technique is employed by Agricola at exactly the same point in *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* (mm. 113–16), although here it is less extreme in that the superius and bassus move together but are at odds rhythmically with the tenor. In the *secunda pars* of *Der Hundt* (mm. 31–37), Isaac places the superius and bassus in triple rhythmic groupings dislocated from each other by one beat, while the tenor sticks rigorously to its held notes in imperfect time.

In contrast to these syncopated passages, and as if to restore metric order, Cornsyhe, Isaac, and Agricola all make use of deliberately simplified textures. In the case of *Fa la sol* (mm. 129–30) it is the well-worn convention of using movement in parallel tenths in the outer parts and similar rhythms in all voices, whereas Isaac in particular favors concluding sections in a fully homophonic texture (for example, *La mi la sol la sol la mi*, mm. 52–60; *Der Hundt*, *prima pars*, mm. 57–60). Agricola is perhaps notorious for his use of parallel-tenth movement in outer parts, and there are many instances of this in *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* (e.g., mm. 42–45, 95–96), where he also emphasizes the drawing of a section to a close in homophonic movement, especially following more complex rhythmic interaction between the parts (m. 118). Agricola also employs a strong homophonic texture to emphasise the start of the *secunda pars* of *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* (mm. 60–61).

If Cornyshe's *Fa la sol* shares several structural and stylistic musical characteristics with certain compositions by Isaac and Agricola, it is also instructive to compare the ambitus of individual voices and the overall range of each piece (table 3). *Fa la sol*'s tenor part is particularly interesting as its ambitus gradually expands as the music unfolds. (The tenor of Isaac's *La mi la sol la sol la mi* is of course necessarily restricted in ambitus by its function as cantus firmus.)

TABLE 4

Ranges of voice parts in works by William Cornyshe
in London, British Library Add. MS 31922

| No. | Folio | | S | CT | T | B | total |
|-----|-------|---|---|----|---|---|-------|
| 6. | f. 9v–14r | *Fa la sol* | 11 | | 12 | 10 | 21 |
| 8. | f. 15v–17r | *Adieu mes amours* | 9 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 18 |
| 16. | f. 23v–24r | *Adieu, adieu my heartes lust* | 7 | | 8 | 10 | 19 |
| 25. | f. 30v–31r | *My love she mourneth* | 7 | | 7 | 10 | 15 |
| 27. | f. 32v–33r | *Ah, the sighs* | 11 | | 6 | 10 | 17 |
| 35. | f. 39v–40r | *Blow thy horn* | 7 | | 6 | 8 | 18 |
| 38. | f. 42v | *Adieu, corage* | 7 | | 8 | 8 | 18 |
| 39. | f. 43v–44r | *Trolly lolly* | 10 | | 9 | 10 | 18 |
| 41. | f. 45v–46r | *You and I and Amyas* | 6 | | 7 | 10 | 18 |
| 49. | f. 53v–54r | *Ah Robin, gentle Robin* | 8 | | 8 | 9 | 11 |
| 50. | f. 54v–55r | *Whiles life or breath* | 6 | | 8 | 10 | 19 |

Cornyshe's use in *Fa la sol* of relatively wide ranges similar to those exploited in the works of Isaac and Agricola makes a telling comparison with the ranges he uses in his other compositions in Lbl 31922, all of which have texts (table 4). None of these songs shows Cornyshe using an ambitus for an individual voice comparable to the twelve notes that he employs in the tenor of *Fa la sol*, nor does any song approach the total range of twenty-one notes that this piece shares with Isaac's *Der Hundt*.

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Although Isaac's *Benedictus*, his *La mi la sol la sol la mi*, and Agricola's *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* were fully texted in some sources, more often than not they were transmitted without text.[22] It is therefore possible that if Cornyshe became familiar with such pieces in text-less versions, for example those contained in Lbl 31922, he may have regarded aspects of their style and construction as being well suited to instrumental performance and may have conceived *Fa la sol* in purely instrumental rather than vocal terms. In addition to using ranges that exceed those of Cornyshe's texted pieces, *Fa la sol* also consistently employs wide and often angular leaps markedly different from the mostly stepwise writing he uses for his fully texted lines. Leaps of a seventh occur quite frequently, sometimes separated by a rest (superius, mm. 15–16), but more often not (bassus, m. 17; superius, m. 30). Leaps as wide as a tenth occur (superius, m. 22), thereby creating the effect of two different voices within one melodic line. Although leaps occur in all three voices, they are most noticeable in the bassus (especially when

[22] See n. 9.

two consecutive jumps create a widely arching line such as that of mm. 22–23). While it is true that there is nothing in *Fa la sol* that could not have been sung by the boy choristers or choirmen of Cornyshe's Chapel Royal, it is also true that there is nothing in his incontrovertibly vocal music that shows such an experimental approach to melodic writing. If *Fa la sol* was thus conceived as an instrumental piece, what performance forces might Cornyshe have expected or have had available to play it?

It has been suggested that the performance of music on consorts of viols only became firmly established in England with the arrival of a group of Jewish players from Italy in 1540. This would effectively appear to discount *Fa la sol*'s having been conceived as viol consort repertoire.[23] It appears that the immigrant Italian ensemble was certainly an important catalyst for a new upsurge of interest in the instruments, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that a group of three viol players was clearly one strong contender for a possible performance medium for the music of Isaac and Cornyshe contained in Lbl 31922. As early as 1510–11, there is mention of three "mynstrelles with the vyalles" in a court entertainment account, and in 1516–17 the viol-playing Matthew van Wilder was present at court, later to be followed by Peter and Philip van Wilder (possibly his sons). From 1525 to 1526 there are payments to two new foreign viol players at court, "hanse hossenet" and "hanse heighorne" (known as "great Hans"); but the records of musicians' payments for the preceding four years are lost, so it is quite possible that the two Hanses arrived in London with the entourage of the young Emperor Charles V when he visited England in 1522.[24]

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Not only did William Cornyshe provide lodging for eight of the emperor's retinue (presumably including his musicians) during that state visit, but he also wrote a play, performed at court, that commented on the political negotiations between Charles and Henry.[25] Because the most recent dating of Lbl 31922 suggests that it was probably assembled around 1522, there is a strong possibility that even if Isaac's music was not already known in London it could have been transmitted either by

[23] John Stevens, *Music and Poetry*, 109. For the advent of viols in England, see Ian Woodfield, *The Early History of the Viol* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), chap. 14; and on the Italian immigrants, see Roger Prior, "Jewish Musicians at the Tudor court," *Musical Quarterly* 69 (1983): 253–65. An inventory of musical instruments in the royal palaces made on Henry VIII's death in 1547 (Lbl Harley 1419) includes a total of twenty-five viols: see Francis W. Galpin, *Old English Instruments of Music*, 4th ed. (London: Methuen, 1965), 215–22.

[24] Peter Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 70. For records of these early Tudor viol players, see Andew Ashbee, et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians 1485–1714* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 1:594 ("Hossenet"); 1: 573 ("Highorne"); 2:1150–53 ("Wilder").

[25] Kisby, "A Courtier in the Community," 13.

the two viol-playing Hanses or by other musicians in Charles V's retinue to Cornyshe, who was creating entertainments at court and possibly reflecting on Isaac's pieces in his own textless compositions.[26]

In order to support the hypothesis that the reception of Isaac's extended textless compositions in England might be associated particularly with the arrival of the viol consort and that instrument's increasing presence in the Henrician period, evidence is required that viols such as those known from sources close to the transmission of songs without words in continental sources can also be found in England.[27] I have previously suggested that instruments such as those depicted by Lorenzo Costa in his *Madonna and Child enthroned with SS. Augustine, Posidonius, John and Francis* (an altarpiece commissioned by Francesco di Giacomo Ghedini for his family Cappella di S. Agostino in San Giovanni in Monte, Bologna, 1497) possibly represent the types of viol that were used by Isabella and Alfonso d'Este and that Isaac may have known in Ferrara in 1502 when *La mi la sol la sol la mi* was composed (fig. 1).[28]

Practical experience of performing all the pieces considered here using a unique set of viols created from Costa's painting confirms that the instruments are well suited to the technical and expressive demands of the music. To establish whether instruments such as these might have traveled to the court of King Henry VIII in England along with the pieces transcribed into Lbl 31922 requires some iconographic substantiation, since no viols from this early Tudor period have survived.[29]

One piece of iconographical evidence contemporary with the copying of Lbl 31922 is Hans Holbein's portrait of Sir Thomas More and his family, painted in London around 1527, for which a sketch survives (fig. 2).[30] This figure shows the outlines of musical instruments hanging on the rear wall, with a note that these should appear "'uf ein bretz'"

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[26] Dietrich Helms, "Henry VIII's Book: Teaching Music to Royal Children," *Musical Quarterly* 92 ( 2009): 118–35.

[27] This is not to suggest that the viol consort was the only possible performance medium for the textless pieces by Isaac and Cornyshe contained in Lbl 31922. Other instrumental ensembles such as recorders were known at the early Tudor court, and Jon Banks has argued in *The Instrumental Consort Repertory of the Late Fifteenth Century* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2006) that such music may equally have been intended for performance by a trio of lutes.

[28] John Bryan, "'Verie sweete and artificiall': Lorenzo Costa and the earliest viols," *Early Music* 36, no. 1 (2008): 3–18.

[29] The instruments retrieved from the wreck of the Henry VIII's warship the Mary Rose (sunk during the Battle of the Solent in 1545) appear to be more utilitarian "fiddles" than the types of instrument to be found in sophisticated households. For photographs, see plates 150 and 151 in Mary Remnant, *English Bowed Instruments from Anglo-Saxon to Tudor Times* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), and for more detailed description, see Frances Palmer, "Musical Instruments from the Mary Rose," *Early Music* 11, no. 1 (1983): 53–59.

[30] Hans Holbein, *Study for the Family Portrait of Sir Thomas More*, ca. 1527, Kupferstichkabinett, Kunstmuseum, Basel.

FIGURE 1. Detail from Lorenzo Costa, *Madonna and Child enthroned with SS. Augustine, Posidonius, John and Francis*, Cappella di S. Agostino, San Giovanni in Monte, Bologna, dated 1497

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in the finished painting. Unfortunately Holbein's completed portrait has not survived, but a number of copies by the Elizabethan artist and goldsmith Rowland Lockey (ca. 1566–1616) do show a viol placed on a dresser just as Holbein's marginal note had stipulated.[31] This viol shares a number of important characteristics with those depicted in Costa's altarpiece, including the distinctive constructional method of using concave sides together with overlapping front and back, rather than the flat sides and flush joints associated with later surviving English viols (fig. 3).[32]

[31] Lesley Lewis, *The Thomas More Family Group Portrait After Holbein* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998) gives a detailed account of the different surviving versions of the painting. Although the inclusion of musical instruments in a portrait of this type was often a conventional way of indicating the cultivated artistic tastes of the sitter, there is evidence that Sir Thomas More and members of his family did indeed play viols. His early biographer Stapleton (who claimed to have gathered his information from More's friends and relatives) tells us he was "skilled in music, arithmetic, and geometry, and used, for the sake of recreation, to play on the viol." Thomas Stapleton, *The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More*, ed. E. E. Reynolds (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), 14. For further detail, see Nan C. Carpenter, "A Song for All Seasons: Sir Thomas More and Music," *Comparative Literature* 33 (1981): 113–36.

[32] Rowland Lockey, ca. 1593, after Holbein, *Family Portrait of Sir Thomas More*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

FIGURE 2. Hans Holbein, *Study for the Family Portrait of Thomas More*, ca. 1527, Kupferstichkabinett, Kunstmuseum, Basel

FIGURE 3. Detail from Rowland Lockey, ca. 1593, after Holbein, *Family Portrait of Sir Thomas More*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
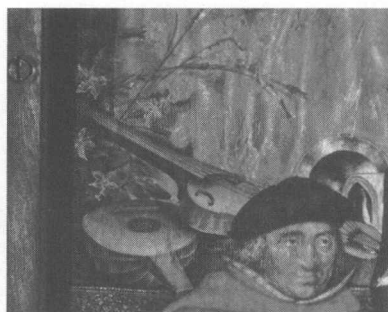
Isabella d'Este's viols were made by an anonymous craftsman in Brescia.[33] So it is significant that one of the most highly paid musicians in Henry VIII's service was the lutenist Zuan/Giovanni Piero de Bustis, usually known in the English court records as Peter of Brescia.[34] Appointed in 1512, he is likely to have been employed at Mantua before arriving in London, since the papal nuncio Francesco Chiericati, who visited London late in 1515, wrote letters to Isabella at Mantua in which he commented on several aspects of the Tudor court: Henry's admiration for Mantuan horses, which the king always used on state occasions; Henry's enthusiasm for and ability at singing and playing musical instruments; and the king's high estimation of the Brescian musician sent with a recommendation from the Marchese of Mantua. In 1517 Zuan Piero acted as Henry VIII's trusted messenger to Isabella d'Este in Mantua and Alfonso d'Este in Ferrara. He brought back a lute as a state gift from Alfonso and remained in court employment until as late as 1536.[35] Given Cornyshe's position as master of the Chapel Royal and court pageant-master, it seems plausible to imagine that through his contacts at the Tudor court with musicians like Peter of Brescia and those from the entourage of Emperor Charles V, he may have become aware of the sorts of viols played in Mantua by noble amateurs and their musicians—and the repertoire enjoyed on them by such composers as Isaac and Agricola. Though admittedly circumstantial, a body of evidence does appear to suggest that Cornyshe might well have written

[33] William Prizer, "Isabella d'Este and Lorenzo da Pavia, 'master instrument maker'," *Early Music History* 2 (1982): 102–5.

[34] See Ashbee, et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians 1485–1714*, 1:186–87.

[35] Dumitrescu, *The Early Tudor Court*, 83.

*Fa la sol* to show what an English composer could do with the resources and compositional ideas he had discovered.

Whoever the intended audience was for these songs without words in the period around 1500, or what their manner of performance in England might have been during the working life of Lbl 31922, it is fascinating that they continued to enjoy a wider currency well into the sixteenth century. Both Isaac's *Der Hundt* (here sporadically underlaid with the text *Das kind lag in der wiegen*) and his *Benedictus,* together with Agricola's *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* (here titled *Cecorum*), appeared in Hieronymus Formschneider's *Trium vocum carmina,* published in Nuremberg in 1538.[36] In England, Cornyshe's *Fa La Soll* was included in the printed anthology *XX Songes* (London, 1530), alongside two extended textless *Ut re mi* settings in four parts by Robert Fayrfax (1464–1521) and Robert Cowper (ca. 1474–ca. 1540), an indication that this type of repertoire was still prized several years after the composers' deaths.[37] It is perhaps significant that it was just around this time during the 1530s that we have increasing amounts of evidence, from both England and the continent, of the consort of viols becoming more firmly established as a privileged ensemble for the performance of contrapuntal instrumental music.[38]

Whatever stylistic similarities may exist between those works of Heinrich Isaac known to have circulated in England in the early sixteenth century and William Cornyshe's *Fa la sol,* it could be argued that the outcomes of some of Isaac's musical concepts can still be heard in the consort repertoire of mid-sixteenth-century composers such as Christopher Tye (ca. 1505–72) and Robert Parsons (ca. 1535–72). Some of Tye's In nomines abound in the complex multilayered syncopations enjoyed by Isaac, Agricola, and Cornyshe—especially the overlapping of different triple-time groupings despite a prevailing imperfect mensuration (for example, in Tye's In nomine *Seldom sene,* London, British Library Add. MS 31390, fols. 71v–72).[39] Other pieces by Tye take the constructivist principles exhibited by the earlier composers to an extreme, for instance, by utilizing one single motto to generate all the polyphonic material in his In nomine *Beleve me* (London, British Library Add. MS 31390, fols.

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[36] Formschneider's publication also interconnects with the first few pieces of Lbl 31922 by also including Hayne's *Allez regretz,* Barbireau's *Eyn frölic wesen,* and one of Isaac's *Fortuna* settings ("in mi").

[37] In her "A Study of the Book of *XX Songes* (1530)" Christine Saunders proposed that the best English candidate for the so-far unidentified printer was William Rastell (ca. 1508–65). If this is correct, it provides a material link to Sir Thomas More and the viol illustrated in his family portrait, as Rastell was More's nephew, edited his sermons, and printed his *A dyalogue* (London, 1531).

[38] Woodfield, *The Early History of the Viol,* 207–8.

[39] Modern edition by Paul Doe, *Elizabethan Consort Music II,* Musica Britannica, vol. 45 (London: Stainer and Bell, 1988), no. 171, Tye *Seldom sene* (95–96).

63v–64).[40] Parsons, among a number of other mid-sixteenth-century composers, not only takes up the challenge of writing consort pieces based on the hexachord (his *Ut re mi* is preserved in London, British Library, Add. MSS 30480–3, fol. 57v, the "Hammond" books, dated ca. 1560–90)[41] but also shows a clear awareness of the constructivist approach to building extended structural sections by manipulation and repetition of smaller motivic fragments (for example, in *The Song called Trumpets* in Oxford, Christ Church College, MSS 979–83, the "Baldwin" partbooks, which probably date from around 1580).[42]

Dietrich Helms has proposed that Lbl 31922 was assembled as a pattern book of exemplars for different compositional genres, styles, and processes and may have been used for the education of young composers, including Henry VIII's daughter Princess Mary.[43] If this suggestion is accepted, then it is perhaps not impossible that both Tye and Parsons may have been aware of its contents and paid passing reference to its musical idioms, since Tye is reported to have been involved in the musical education of Mary's younger brother Prince Edward when the composer's mentor, the Archdeacon of Ely, was the prince's tutor. It is likely that Parsons would have been involved in the musical upbringing of the children of the Chapel Royal since he possibly acted as their usher and clearly worked closely with them in providing songs for their dramatic productions at court and elsewhere.[44]

It is then quite possible to hear elements of Isaac's abstract, extended, and coherently articulated polyphonic structures not only be-

[40] Ibid., no. 177, Tye *Beleve me* (184–85).

[41] Several later English consort composers followed Fayrfax, Cowper, and Parsons in structuring extended consort fantasias upon the hexachord, notably Thomas Tomkins (1572–1656) and Alfonso Ferrabosco junior (ca. 1575–1628). Tomkins's piece, known also in two keyboard sources, maintains the hexachord in the same class of pitches, but has it migrating from part to part; Ferrabosco, like Parsons, puts the hexachord in a treble part throughout, but moves it up a semitone at each statement in the *prima pars* (based on ascending hexachords) and a semitone lower at each statement in the descending *secunda pars*, leading to some extraordinary chromatic excursions. For modern editions, see *Thomas Tomkins Consort Music*, ed. John Irving, Musica Britannica, vol. 59, no. 18 (1991), 43–50; and *Alfonso Ferrabosco II The Hexachord Fantasies*, ed. David Pinto (St. Albans: Corda Music Publications, 1992).

[42] Modern editions by Paul Doe, *Elizabethan Consort Music I*, Musica Britannica, vol. 44 (1979), no. 12, *Ut re mi fa sol la* (20–24); no. 70, *The Song Called Trumpets* (136–37).

[43] Helms, "Henry VIII's Book: Teaching Music to Royal Children," 1–18.

[44] For further details of Tye's biography and his career at the Tudor court, see Ashbee, et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians 1485–1714*, 2:1107–9; Paul Doe and David Mateer, "Tye, Christopher," in *The New Grove Dictionary*, vol. 26, 13–16. For Parsons, see Ashbee, et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians 1485–1714*, 2:869; Philippe Oboussier, "Parsons, Robert," in *The New Grove Dictionary*, vol. 19, 162–63. The activities of the choirboy theatrical troupes are well documented in Lynda Phyllis Austern, *Music in English Children's Drama of the Later Renaissance* (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach, 1992).

ing understood and taken up by Cornyshe in *Fa la sol* early in the six-
teenth century, but also exerting a longer-term influence on the de-
velopment of the abstract constructional thinking of composers of the
English instrumental consort music that truly came of age in the later
Tudor period.

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## ABSTRACT

The so-called Henry VIII's Book (London, British Library Add. MS
31922) contains two textless pieces by Isaac—his three-part *Benedictus* and
the four-part *La my*—together with a number of other Franco-Flemish
"songs without words" typical of the contents of manuscripts copied for
the North Italian courts where the earliest viol consorts were being de-
veloped in the 1490s and early 1500s. Alongside these pieces are works
by native English composers, including William Cornyshe, whose ex-
tended three-part *Fa la sol* has a number of stylistic traits in common
with some works by Isaac (for example, his three-part *Der Hundt*) and
Alexander Agricola (his three-part *Cecus non judicat de coloribus*) that
were also transmitted in textless format. The fact that these latter two
pieces were published in Hieronymus Formschneider's *Trium vocum car-
mina* (Nuremberg, 1538) while Cornyshe's *Fa la sol* was published in *XX
Songes* (London, 1530) shows that this type of repertoire was still prized
several years after the composers' deaths.

Analysis of musical connections between the work of Isaac and Cor-
nyshe, as evident in pieces such as those from Henry VIII's Book—in
particular, techniques employed by the composers to extend the struc-
tures of their "songs without words"—sheds fresh light on the reception
in England of Isaac's music and that of his continental contemporary
Agricola. Relevant considerations include the context in which these
pieces were anthologized together and the introduction into England
of viols similar to those Isaac may have known in Ferrara in 1502, when
*La my* was composed. Such pieces are representative of a typical courtly
repertoire that developed into the riches of the later Tudor instrumen-
tal consort music.

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