



A JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR MUSIC THEORY

MTO 31.4 Examples: Weiss, Dispersed Meter in Elizabethan Polyphony

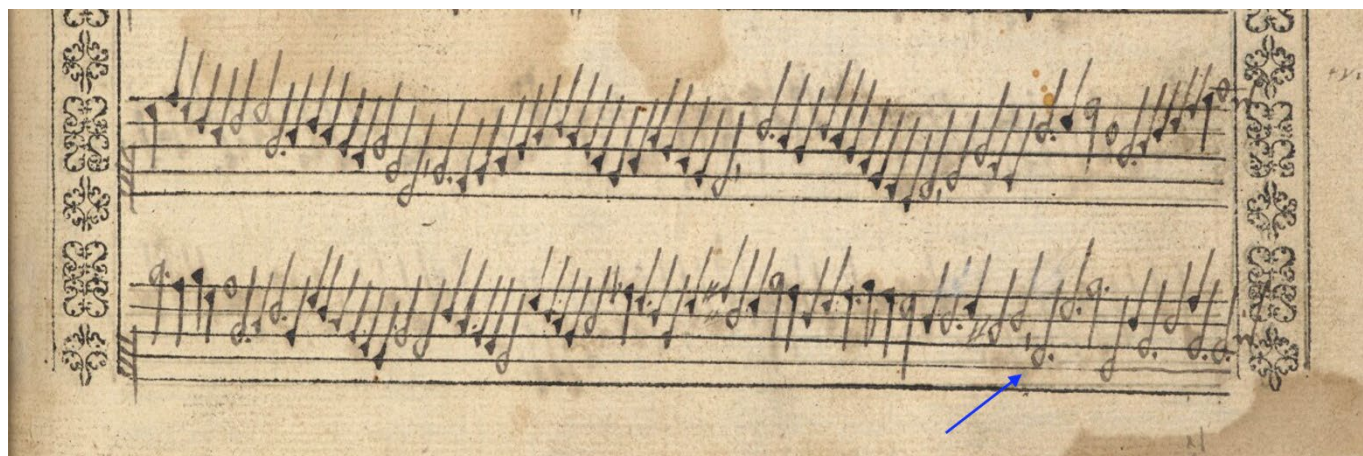
(Note: audio, video, and other interactive examples are only available online)

<https://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.25.31.4/mto.25.31.4.weiss.html>

Example 1. Robert Parsons *Ut re mi fa*. Hamond Partbooks (tenor): GB-Lbl Add. MS 30482, f. 60r. Letter “A” indicates the beginning of the second section of the piece, where a new mensuration indicates groups of three minims (half-notes). At letter “B” the grouping changes to dotted minims.



Example 2. Robert Parsons *Ut re mi fa*. Hamond Partbooks (altus): GB-Lbl Add. MS 30481, f. 64r. The arrow indicates where the altus part changes to dotted minim groupings.



Example 3. Robert Parsons *Ut re mi fa*, score of mm. 116–34 (Audio: Phantasm 2014).

116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125

1 (cantus)

2 (altus)

3 (tenor)

4 (bassus)

126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134

Example 4. Edmund Fellowes (1948, 130). Example from Thomas Morley's madrigal *In dew of roses* (note values original)

[illegible]

Example 5. Otto Gombosi (1952, 166). Example from Jacobus Vaet’s motet *Ecce apparebit Dominus* (note values here are one quarter the length of the original ones)

Ex. 3

The musical score is written for five voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, and Bass. It features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes, as well as rests. The lyrics are written below the staves, with some words appearing in multiple staves. The score includes several measures of music, with some measures containing multiple notes and rests. The lyrics are: "scri- ptum: Rex Re - - gum, Rex Re - (Re) - gum et Dominus - su-o scri - ptum: Rex Re - - gum et Dominus Dominan - ti et ha - - bit Rex Re (in femore...) gum Rex Re - et ha - be - - hit in femore suo scri - - ptum: Rex in femore suo scriptum: Rex Re - gum et Dominus, Rex (Regum)".

scri- ptum: Rex Re - - gum, Rex Re - (Re) - gum et Dominus

— su-o scri - ptum: Rex Re - - gum et Dominus Dominan - ti

et ha - - bit Rex Re (in femore...) gum Rex Re -

et ha - be - - hit in femore suo scri - - ptum: Rex

in femore suo scriptum: Rex Re - gum et Dominus, Rex (Regum)

Do-mi-nan-ti-um, et Do-mi-nus Do-mi-nan-ti-um.

um, et Dominus Dominan-ti-um, Rex Regum et Do-mi-nus Do-mi-nan-ti-um

- gum et Dominus, Rex Re - gum et Dominus Dominantium

Re-gum et Dominus Domi-nan-ti-um Rex Regum et Dominus Dominanti-um.

et Dominus Rex Re - gum et Dominus Dominantium.

Example 6. Mallorie, *Yf Man in Care*, Add. MS 31390 f.22r (part 1). The arrow indicates the beginning of the new section where the minim groupings are no longer transcribable into 42.

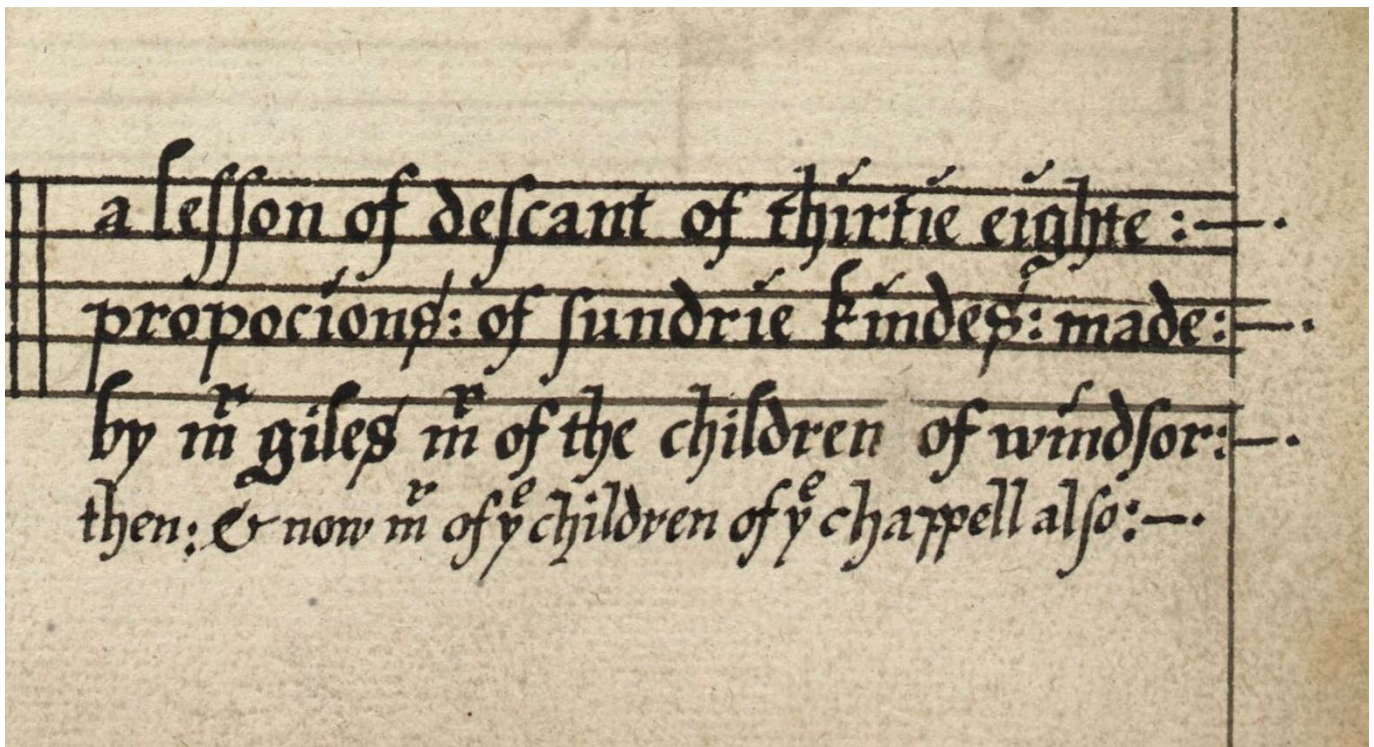


Example 7. The table book GB-Lbl Add. MS 31390, ff. 30v–31r. This piece is in five parts oriented to the four cardinal directions, plus the center. In the annotations, part numbers reflect the usual score order, with 1 as the highest part and 5 the lowest. Arrows indicate the direction of reading for each part. Note that adjacent outer parts (1 and 2, 4 and 5) are placed opposite each other. Part 3 can be physically situated between parts 2 and 4 or between parts 2 and 5 to read their part.

Example 8. GB-Lbl R.M.24.d.2, f.101r. It is not clear in this example that the 61:3 proportion is playable in an exact way. It has not been set up through a series of transformations (nor could it be, as 61 is a prime number).



Example 9. GB-Lbl R.M.24.d.2, f.103r. The last line of text here was added later when Giles was appointed Master of the Children for the Chapel Royal.



Example 10. GB-Lbl R.M.24.d.2, f.102v. A sequence of proportional transformations based on groups of five begins at letter “A.”



Example 11. Brewster In Nomine a4 mm. 35–44 in four parts

Part One:



Part Two:



Part Three:



Part Four:



A musical score for the song 'The Rose Tree'. It consists of four staves. The first staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The second staff is an alto clef with a key signature of one flat. The third staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The fourth staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The score includes measures 35 through 44. Measure 35 starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. Measure 36 starts with an alto clef and a key signature of one flat. Measure 37 starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. Measure 38 starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. Measure 39 starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. Measure 40 starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. Measure 41 starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. Measure 42 starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. Measure 43 starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. Measure 44 starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

Minime, crochet & minime.

Chrotchet - minimum. & Chrotchet.

Cliff Chongas.

Example 15. Pretty Wayes. GB-Lbl Add. MS 29996 ff.196r. This example is labeled *subsesqui altas* to describe the 4:6 proportion found here.



Example 16. Pretty Wayes. GB-Lbl Add. MS 29996 ff.192v. This example creates the same 4:6 proportion as Example 15 but does so with note lengths. It is mysteriously labeled “indenting counter poynte.” The term “indenting” does not appear to refer to the regrouping or the proportional relationship between the parts, as the subsequent example, also labeled indenting, does not contain either of these features.



Example 17. William Mundy *In Nomine* a5 no. 1, mm. 47–51

This musical score is for a five-part setting (a5) of a 'In Nomine' by William Mundy. It consists of five staves, numbered 1 to 5 from top to bottom. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). Measures 47 through 51 are indicated by numbers above the staves. The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and accidentals. The parts are written in a style characteristic of the English Renaissance, with a focus on melodic and harmonic interplay between the voices.

Example 18. Christopher Tye *O lux beata Trinitas* mm. 47–58, part three

This musical score is for a three-part setting (part three) of 'O lux beata Trinitas' by Christopher Tye. It consists of two staves, numbered 3 and 5 from top to bottom. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). Measures 47 through 58 are indicated by numbers above the staves. The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and accidentals. The parts are written in a style characteristic of the English Renaissance, with a focus on melodic and harmonic interplay between the voices.

Example 19. Robert Parsons *Ut re mi fa*, mm. 116–125 with images from GB-Lbl Add. MS 30481, GB-Lbl Add. MS 30482, and GB-Lbl Add. MS 30483. Note that the bassus part uses two different proportional mensural symbols to notate the grouping changes, while the altus and tenor parts use only note values to communicate identical grouping changes.

The image displays a musical score for four voices: 1 (cantus), 2 (altus), 3 (tenor), and 4 (bassus), spanning measures 116 to 125. The score is written on five-line staves. Above the staves, three manuscript images are shown, each enclosed in a colored box and connected to the score by arrows:

- Purple box:** A manuscript image showing a group of notes in the cantus part, corresponding to measures 116–121. An arrow points from this box to the cantus staff.
- Blue box:** A manuscript image showing a group of notes in the cantus part, corresponding to measures 122–125. An arrow points from this box to the cantus staff.
- Green box:** A manuscript image showing a group of notes in the bassus part, corresponding to measures 116–121. An arrow points from this box to the bassus staff.

The score itself shows the following details:

- 1 (cantus):** Treble clef, C major. Notes are mostly half notes and whole notes.
- 2 (altus):** Treble clef, C major. Notes are mostly quarter notes and half notes.
- 3 (tenor):** Alto clef, C major. Notes are mostly quarter notes and half notes.
- 4 (bassus):** Bass clef, C major. Notes are mostly quarter notes and half notes.

Example 20. Christopher Tye *In Nomine a5 Seldom Sene*, mm. 33–41 (Audio: The Spirit of Gambo 2014)

The image displays a musical score for five voices: 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, spanning measures 33 to 41. The score is written on five-line staves. The following details are visible:

- 1 (cantus):** Treble clef, C major. Notes are mostly half notes and whole notes.
- 2 (altus):** Treble clef, C major. Notes are mostly quarter notes and half notes.
- 3 (tenor):** Alto clef, C major. Notes are mostly quarter notes and half notes.
- 4 (bassus):** Bass clef, C major. Notes are mostly quarter notes and half notes.
- 5 (bassus):** Bass clef, C major. Notes are mostly quarter notes and half notes.

Measure numbers 33 through 41 are indicated above the staves. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, key signatures, and note values.

Example 21. Blankes *A Phancy*, mm. 13–19 (LeStrange Viols 2018)

A musical score for five staves, numbered 1 to 5. The staves are arranged vertically. Above the staves, measures 13 through 20 are indicated. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is common time (C). The score shows a complex rhythmic pattern with many eighth and sixteenth notes, and some triplets.

Example 22. Typical regroupings found in C and C

Two musical staves illustrating regroupings in common time. The top staff is labeled 'tactus:' and shows a sequence of notes with brackets indicating regroupings. The bottom staff is also labeled 'tactus:' and shows a similar sequence of notes with brackets indicating regroupings. The notation uses common time (C) and includes various note values and rests.

Example 23. Thomas Morley *A Plaine and Easie Introduction* (1597), p. 152

A musical score for four staves, showing examples of syncopation. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is common time (C). The score shows a complex rhythmic pattern with many eighth and sixteenth notes, and some syncopated rhythms. The text 'Examples of Syncopation.' is written to the left of the staves.

Example 24. Christopher Tye *O lux beata Trinitas*, mm. 48–end (Audio: LeStrange Viols 2018)

Example 24 shows a musical score for Christopher Tye's *O lux beata Trinitas*, measures 48–end. The score is for five staves (1–5). Staves 1 and 2 are in treble clef, 3 and 4 in alto clef, and 5 in bass clef. The music features complex polyphonic textures with various note values and rests. Measure numbers 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, and 58 are indicated above the staves.

Example 25. John Baldwin *In Nomine* a4, mm. 1–8 (Audio: Fretwork 2019). The mensuration sign here (©) designates perfect semibreves (i.e., an undotted semibreve contains three minims rather than two) as can be seen in the cantus firmus in voice two. It also implies a metrical organization of the semibreve tactus being subdivided into three minims. This is, in fact, the metrical organization of the majority of this piece, though not the opening.

Example 25 shows a musical score for John Baldwin's *In Nomine* a4, measures 1–8. The score is for four staves (1–4). Staves 1 and 2 are in treble clef, 3 and 4 in bass clef. The music features a cantus firmus in voice two, marked with a mensuration sign (©). Measure numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 are indicated above the staves.

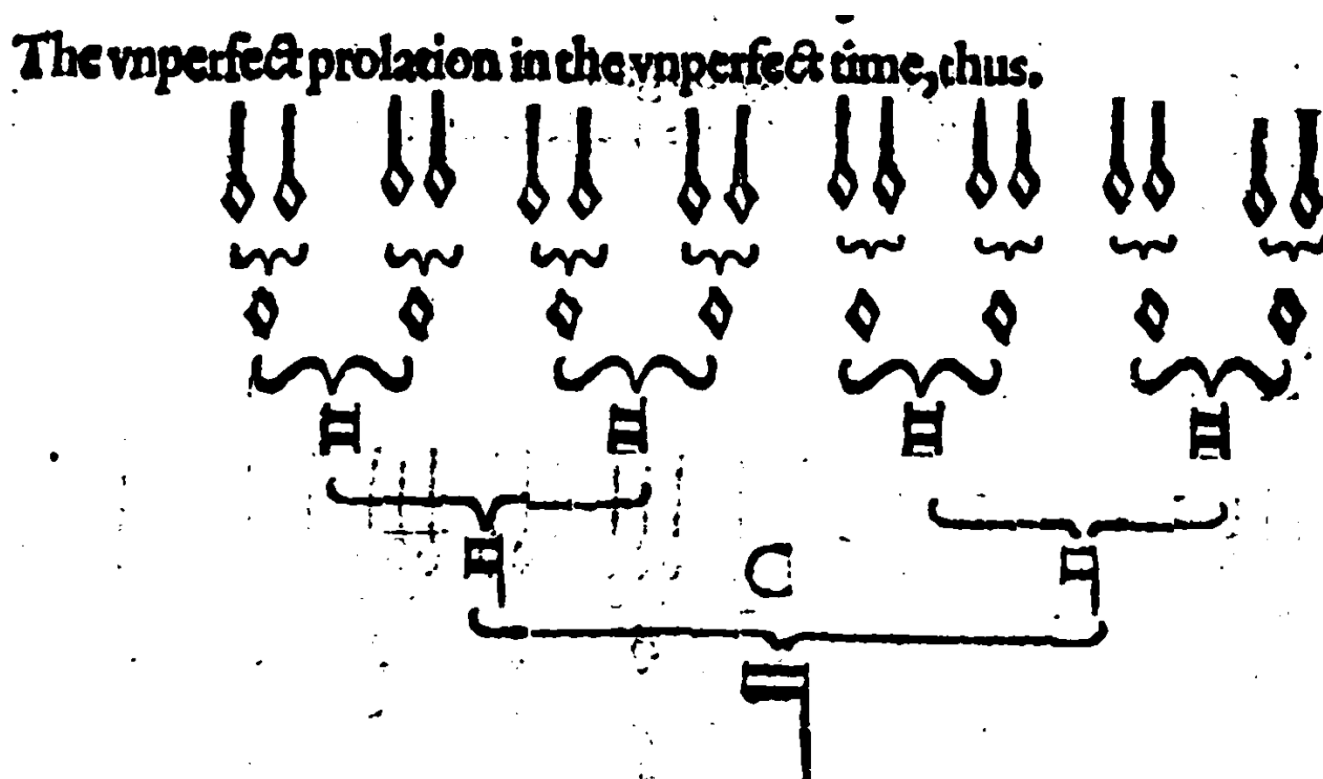
Example 26. Charles Butler *The Principles of Musik*, pg. 69. The notes here are identical to Morley's example (Example 12), but Butler uses regular barlines every three semibreves so the coordination between the two parts is visually clearer.



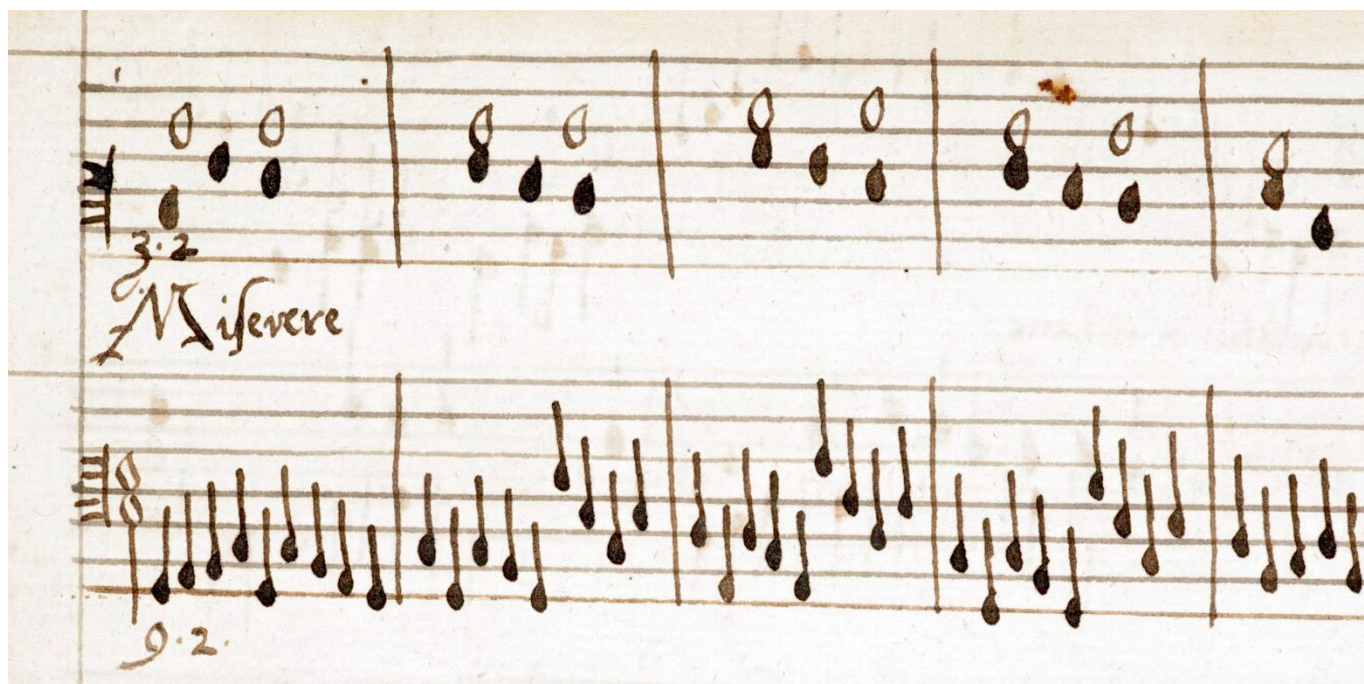
Example 27. Fernando de las Infantas *Plura Modulationum* (1579), mm. 1–7., a work that demonstrates over a hundred different ways of setting the nine-note plainsong “Laudate Dominum omnes gentes” in a variety of styles and textures. Number ninety-two uses the serialized rhythm technique in fully binary subdivisions: longs, breves, semibreves, minims, and semiminims.

This image displays a musical score for five staves, numbered 1 through 5 on the left. The top staff (1) contains a sequence of notes with numbers 2 through 7 above them, indicating a specific rhythmic pattern. The subsequent staves (2-5) show different rhythmic notations, including minims, crotchets, and quavers, illustrating the serialized rhythm technique mentioned in the text. The notation is in a historical style, likely from the 16th or 17th century.

Example 28. Thomas Morley *A Plaine and Easie Introduction* (1597), pg. 16. Illustration of C mensuration which is imperfect in both *tempus* and *prolatio* and thus has only binary subdivisions.



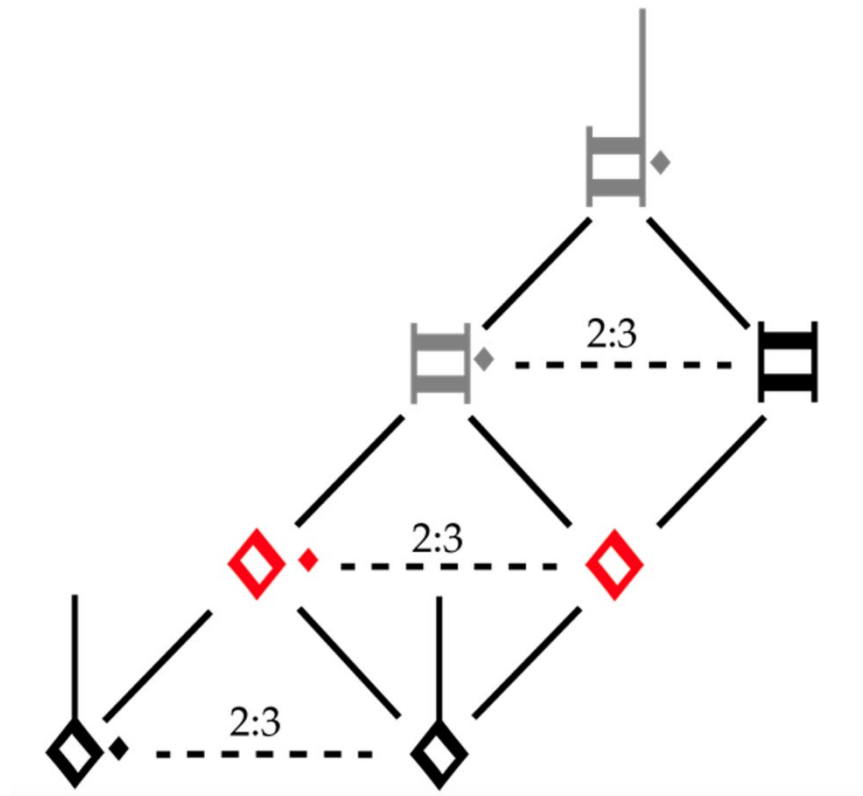
Example 29. Shelby *Miserere*, GB-Lbl Add. MS 30513, f.47v



Example 30. Picforth In Nomine, mm. 1–9 (Audio: LeStrange Viols 2018)

Example 31. Picforth In Nomine notated with proportions, mm. 1–9. Part 3 is notated in the “standard” C mensuration. Part 4 moves twice as slow in C . Part 1 moves twice as fast in D (redundantly marked 2:1 as Baldwin usually does though placed vertically on the staff as Morley places his proportions). Part 5 is notated in C which indicates perfect (ternary) semibreves. Part 2 I’ve notated in D as a diminution of part 5 as well as adding the redundant 4:3. Baldwin uses at least eight different notational conventions to indicate *sesquitertia* proportions in the proportion pieces of his commonplace book of which D is one of the more common.

Example 32. Ski Hill Graph of Picforth In Nomine. Note values not represented in the piece are colored grey. Note values that could be felt as the tactus are colored red.



Example 33. Osbert Parsley *Spes Nostra*, mm. 71–80 (Audio: LeStrange Viols 2018) Whether the notated minims in the cantus firmus line are intended to be rearticulated or tied together with the preceding breve is an open question. The manuscript Add. MS 31390 does not contain ties, though it also does not contain bar lines so ties are generally unnecessary except in an instance like this where the length of the note cannot be written with a single notehead. Just twenty years later, Morley’s *Plaine and Easie Introduction* contains both bar lines and notated ties. In our preparations for recording and performing this piece, LeStrange Viols experimented with both options but found that restriking the final minim was too disruptive to the texture and decided to treat it as a single cantus firmus pitch five minims long.

A musical score for five staves, numbered 1 to 5. The staves are labeled with measure numbers 71 through 80. Staff 1 is a treble clef, and staves 2 through 5 are bass clefs. The music consists of various note values, including minims and breves, with some notes tied across measures. The notation is in a historical style, with some notes having multiple stems or flags.