

***Sing aloud harmonious spheres: Music, Philosophy and the
Order of the Universe in the Renaissance***
**12-15 May 2011, Palazzo Papafava, University of Warwick,
Venice**

Abstracts

Linda Baez-Rubi

The following paper aims to explore the Neoplatonic influence of Athanasius Kircher's (1602-1680) world harmony theories in seventeenth-century New Spain. A rich archive of letters between the German Jesuit and some New Hispanic scholars shows us how important was the transmission of philosophical, theological and magical knowledge between both continents. Music theory was a topic which was linked with the conception of heavenly harmony and therefore instruments could also exercise a magical and celestial influence on human beings. Robert Fludd's (1574-1637) cosmological and musical organ, which served as inspiration for Athanasius Kircher's instruments, is a very interesting example which can be found in Sor Juanas de la Cruz (1651-1695) musical reflexions too. The nun was one of the most well-known thinkers of her age and her philosophical and theological thought reflects the tensions between the naissance of modern science and Neoplatonic magic in a milieu most dominated by the Jesuit culture.

David Bryant

This paper will address cosmic harmony as part of official Venetian State propaganda and its reception in music and musical life during the Renaissance.

Charles Burnett

This paper will address the influence of Arabic cosmological and musical theories on Western ideas of the harmony of the spheres, from Hermann of Carinthia in the mid-twelfth century, via Michael Scot and Pietro d'Abano in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, to Marsilio Ficino in the fifteenth century. Included will be the progression from the idea of static harmonies produced by the distances of the planetary orbs, to an ever-change harmony produced by the individual movements of the planets, and the conception of spiritual or numinous entities dwelling in the heavens.

Francesco Cera

This paper will address the influence of the doctrine of the music of the spheres on 16th-century Italian vocal and instrumental music.

Floris Cohen

By 1600 cosmic harmony, albeit not beyond dispute, was still a living presence in music making as well as in musical theory. By 1700 it no longer was. In my conference contribution I explore the various forces that made for its destruction. Among these forces were the humanist recovery of Aristoxenos' treatise on music, which made the Pythagorean account of the consonant intervals less obvious; empirical probings of musical intervals that worked in the same direction; the emancipation of the dissonance in musical composition of the monodic variety; the increasing autonomy of the keyboard instrument, which called for temperament and other compromise solutions to the increasingly apparent problem of the inherent instability of just intonation; sustained ranges of scientific investigation, both mathematical and fact-finding experimental, into phenomena of sound in general;

novel conceptions of the human body, which made the idea of an intimate microcosm/macrocosm analogy increasingly far-fetched. By way of a conclusion I shall explore what, if anything, these quite diverse forces, all at work to drive cosmic harmony out, may in the final analysis have had in common.

Tom Dixon

By the end of the seventeenth century, claimed John Hollander some decades ago, the victorious march of practical music's domination had 'un-tuned the sky in the sense that it ha[d] already rendered the notion of heavenly music...as trivial as it rendered silent the singing spheres'. As regards the latter in particular, Hollander's conclusion seems more than borne out by the emphatic rejection of the idea by Baconian empiricists such as John Wilkins, who as early as 1640 could confidently claim that the music of the spheres was 'not now I think affirmed by any'. The widespread adoption of the Copernican worldview by mid-century, and the arrival of the mathematical sophistication of the Newtonian synthesis before its end, would seem to have left no room for the singing of planetary sirens. The literal-minded dismissal of the strains of heavenly harmony had provided one common response ever since Aristotle's earth-shattering explanation. Yet such hard-headed (not to say mind-numbing) realism scarcely does justice to all of the positions taken at the turn of the eighteenth century. As we have also been aware for some decades, harmony did retain an important function within the Newtonian planetary system, and even if in Newton's own case the harmonious implications of his natural philosophy were mitigated by his apparent lack of practical musicality this did not apply to all of his followers. By way of demonstrating this point, my paper will take as its central focus a little-known manuscript essay on the music of the spheres emanating from a strongly Newtonian context. I aim to show how the acceptance of Newton's mathematical physics did not preclude an aesthetically based response to this issue, and how, through the supposedly defunct concept of the heavenly music, the Newtonian ambition to recover ancient wisdom could be reconciled with a no less Newtonian confidence in the advancement of modern knowledge.

Natacha Fabbri

This paper deals with Mersenne's thought on cosmic harmony by examining some neglected works, such as the *Traité de l'Harmonie Universelle* (1627) and the manuscript *Livre de la nature des sons* (a first draft of the *Harmonie Universelle*). A careful recognition of the excerpts on the relationship between cosmology and music in Mersenne's numerous writings will enable us to follow the emergence of different interpretations and to single out the reasons underlying such shifts. From the 1623 *Quaestiones in Genesim* to the *Harmonie Universelle* (1636-1637) and its numerous marginalia, this topic underwent a reappraisal, which was largely due to the contemporary debates concerning different fields: music, theology, metaphysics, and astronomy. In this regard, Mersenne's interlocutors – direct and indirect – were Johannes Kepler, Vincenzo and Galileo Galilei, Francis Bacon, Tycho Brahe, Robert Fludd, René Descartes, La Mothe Le Vayer, and his main sources were Pythagoreans, Plato, Aristotle, Boethius, Augustine, Ficino, Salinas, Gaffurius, Zarlino, and Francesco Giorgi. After having dropped the theory of *species intentionales*, Mersenne tried to define sounds only in terms of movement. I shall deepen Mersenne's survey on the nature of sound in order to examine whether the changes in his musical theory affected his idea of cosmic harmony. Also in view of the fact that the ever-intensifying debate on the certainty of science brought about by scepticism, the

emergence of different models of cosmos (Copernican, Tychonic, Keplerian, Cartesian, etc.), as well as the increasing importance attached to Descartes' epistemology, involved a progressive lack of conviction in the possibility of finding out the mathematical proportions of such harmony. Yet Mersenne did not give up advocating the harmonious pattern of the natural world. If in the second decade of the Seventeenth century he undertook a rebuttal of (among others) Plato, Giorgi, Ficino and Fludd's interpretations so as to praise the Keplerian model, in the thirties he dissociated from the latter as well. The parallelism between cosmic harmony, divine archetypes and *musica instrumentalis* had indeed come into question by one of Mersenne's favourite sources, Vincenzo Galilei. It will be argued that Mersenne's studies on the nature of sounds, the voluntarist theology, the cosmological debate, as well as the discussion on the relationship between physics, mathematics and metaphysics urged him to reappraise his idea of harmonious universe and planetary music.

Joscelyn Godwin

This paper brings together two phenomena: the harmonic diagrams of Renaissance musical theorists and the Venetian façades of Mauro Codussi. Renaissance architects thought in proportional terms and demonstrably based both floor plans and elevations on simple ratios such as 1:2, 2:3, 3:4, 4:5, 5:6. The same ratios are basic to harmonic theory, there expressed as string lengths; they give the intervals respectively of the octave, fifth, fourth, major and minor thirds. In the musical textbooks of the time, both in editions of classical authorities (especially Boethius) and in the new works by Gafori, Glareanus, and Zarlino, these proportions are illustrated as they were drawn with the compass: as semicircular arcs of varying ratios. The arcs enclose each other, intersect, and generally form attractive patterns. Venetian architecture before Palladio is dominated by the figure of Mauro Codussi, who was responsible for San Michele in Isola, San Zaccaria, San Giovanni Crisostomo, Palazzi Grimani, Corner-Spinelli, Vendramin-Calergi, the completion of the Scuola di San Marco, among other buildings both in Venice and the Veneto. Whether or not he was responsible for it, his period saw the evolution of the medieval tripartite facade with angled wings and gable (e.g. San Giovanni Evangelista) through the transitional stage of the Frari, to the familiar scheme of a central, semicircular gable flanked by two arcs (e.g. San Giovanni in Bragora, Chiesa Parrocchiale di Sedrina, and the churches named above). At the same time, Codussi was designing palazzi whose facades featured semicircular-arched windows in various proportions and repetitive combinations. Contemporary works by other architects, both named and anonymous, dutifully follow these principles. Three things occur to the author: 1) These features are strongly reminiscent of the diagrams in the musical treatises; 2) the design process must have been the same in both cases, using a compass to draw proportional arcs on paper and assemble them into a diagram, either illustrating harmonic laws or as an architectural blueprint; 3) to the educated person of the time, schooled in the Quadrivium (Arithmetic, Geometry, Harmony, Astronomy) with its large contribution from Boethius, points 1) and 2) would have been obvious. These facades would have been readable as virtual billboards advertising (to the cognoscenti) the presence of harmonic proportions in the architectural plan, in a way far more easily perceptible than in the similarly governed ground plan. Interdisciplinary researchers in the Pythagorean and Hermetic fields tend to universalize a personal theory and drive it to absurdity, seeing evidence for it everywhere they look. A case in point is theories of the Golden Section, which is not in question here since it has no harmonic significance. This paper, in contrast and even resistance to that trend, is purely

phenomenological. Having noticed this correspondence myself, I merely suggest that it could not have escaped the far more sensitized eye and mind of the Renaissance viewer and added an intellectual dimension to the aesthetic impact of these imposing works.

Paolo Gozza

This paper aims to provide an historical and intellectual context for the following question: when and how the classical idea of Cosmic Harmony, *i.e.* the idea of a tempered, musical structure of the world - dating back to Classical and Christian European culture - first collapse? It was a collapse which enabled a shift towards the culture we live in today, in which the idea of harmony has become something awkward, and the old-fashioned ‘music of the spheres’ (Boethius’ *musica mundana*) at best stands for the noise originated by dead astral bodies, recorded by contemporary astronomers and cosmologists. It thus seems that the huge gap of billions of astronomical years between the sound of those dead astral bodies and our aural sensorium amounts almost to the same gap, at the intellectual level, between the classical views of the ‘music of the spheres’ and contemporary scientific ones. Since the efforts to destroy World Harmony run alongside its perennial history, one can find instances of them in different ages of the European intellectual tradition. Thus the present-day historian, when he or she raises the question of the “Destruction of Cosmic Harmony”, should, on the one hand, study his or her sources in order to picture a correct historical and conceptual framework around them; and, on the other hand, have a look at the present, in order to understand what insight the sources might offer into our current intellectual stage in the dialectic between Cosmic Harmony and its Destruction—and all the more so, since in the history of ideas the theme stems here and there from the most dramatic phases of Western culture (*e.g.*, Spitzer’s unacheivable *Stimmung*, which was conceived of by its author during the Second World-War), and mainly as an attempt to find inside the European cultural tradition the spiritual forces able to face the cyclical loss of sense in Western humanity. This might also be true for my eighteenth-century philosophical source, Denis Diderot (1713-84), whose intellectual achievement in the field of musical learning might be correctly described in the terms of the title of this paper: *i.e.*, as a way from Classical and Renaissance Harmony to the destruction of the European World-Soul—in Diderot’s terms: from the aesthetics of pleasure and beauty as *perception des rapports* (Diderot’s *Principes généraux d’acoustique*, 1748; and *Traité du Beau*, 1751) to the *cri animal* and the dis-harmonies of *Rameau’s Nephew* (1762-78). How did Diderot conceive of this dramatic, cultural change? What were the intellectual powers that altered Diderot’s musical ideas? Is it thinkable that just music brought Diderot’s mind to the *musical* destruction of European World-Soul? And, finally, if things went thus, what can we learn about the question raised at the beginning of this *resumé* from *Rameau’s Nephew* and his literary *alter-ego*?

Laura Moretti

Fra Francesco Zorzi was one of the intellectual giants of early sixteenth-century Venice. His interests ranged from the Neoplatonic philosophies of Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola to hermetic and cabbalistic ideas. Zorzi was the guardian of the friary of San Francesco della Vigna from 1500 to 1509, and had become the provincial general of the Observant Franciscans by 1513. According to Marin Sanudo, he still held this post in 1523. Zorzi was the author of the celebrated treatise *De harmonia mundi totius*, published in Venice in 1525. This complex work develops the ideas of Pythagoras, Ptolemy and Plato, who had explored the link between harmonies in music and ratios in space, using the length of a vibrating string to generate the spatial dimension. This philosophy underpinned a *memoriale* written by Zorzi in 1535 on the design of the church of San Francesco della Vigna. This church, rebuilt from 1534 onwards with direct impetus from doge Andrea Gritti, was designed by the architect Jacopo Sansovino. The main aim of Zorzi's report was to elucidate the proportions of the plan, but he also made two specific acoustic recommendations: first, that the side chapels and choir should be vaulted to improve the singing of sacred music; and second, that the nave should be covered by a flat, coffered, wooden ceiling to allow the voice of the preacher to be clearly heard.

Zorzi was attracted by the belief that these universal mathematical ratios could integrate all the dimensions of the natural world into a harmonic unity, extending from macrocosm to microcosm. The music theorist Franchino Gaffurio had already published three works on the subject, including woodcut diagrams of the relationship between musical ratios and the length of the string. It is significant that Zorzi's recommendations on the acoustics of the new church of San Francesco della Vigna were contained in a report largely concerned with issues of mathematical proportion, for he apparently hoped that the church itself, as a microcosm of universal harmony, would become a sounding box for expressions of the divine in word and music. Zorzi's theory of divine harmony embraced the celestial hierarchies of Pseudo-Dionysus as well as hermetic and cabbalistic beliefs. Under the influence of Neoplatonic thought, especially Marsilio Ficino, he incorporated man into the hierarchy of cosmic harmony, so that the human soul could become united with the divine.

Claudia Olk

The musicality of Shakespeare's plays does not only reside in their numerous allusions to music and their inclusion of instrumental pieces and songs. It also consists of the inaudible music that emerges in the plays' structures and arrangements, and their harmonious sets of relationships. This paper first of all examines Renaissance theories about the nature and power of music and relates them to discourses of materiality. It traces contemporary conceptions of music, their origins in Greek philosophy and the ways in which they were mediated by Macrobius and Boethius and gained new momentum by Neoplatonic philosophy. In looking at music in *The Merchant of Venice* I shall start from the notion of music as a non-referential discourse and I would like to explore what is at issue when a dramatic text attempts to emulate the effects attributed to music without imitating them.

Francesco Pelosi

The idea that the perfection of musical structures can powerfully express the harmony of the cosmic order, probably stemmed from the Pythagorean milieu, is developed by Plato and broadly exploited by Neoplatonic philosophers. By analysing some crucial passages in Plato's *Republic* and *Timaeus*, and some passages on this topic in Neoplatonists' works, the paper aims to investigate both the role that the notion of cosmic harmony might have played in Plato's philosophy and its reception in Neoplatonic thought, with due attention to the peculiar combination of Pythagorean and Platonic notions in late ancient philosophy. In particular, I will focus on the relationship between perception and intellect in the experience of 'hearing' the harmony of the spheres and the links between harmonics and astronomy.

Mischa von Perger

Paracelsus did not bother whether the heavenly spheres sing. He cherished, however, the concept of man's being an image of the universe, a microcosm. The relationship between the two "kosmoi" includes, says he, a direct influence of the planets on the individual human beings. Human illness and disease, far from any dependence on the four humors, are inspired by ill and malignant planets. Such an influence must not universally be succumbed to. Men ought to be strong enough to maintain their good habits even under bad planetary inspiration. As there is no simple automatism, the physician can help to reduce an infection and restore health. Thus the microcosm may be maintained in or restored to a harmonious order which here or there even surpasses the harmony of the macrocosm. Men who live a healthy life and physicians who help them to do so are priests: They display the harmony of the creation, they work on it and may even, on a modest scale, improve it. According to a modern, critical point of view, we have to put this theory the other way round: Paracelsus noticed shortcomings in the bodily harmony of ill people, and from that he deduced the illness of planets. It's men's "singing" which tells of the spheres' harmony and of their occasional discordant "notes".

Renata Pieragostini

Humanist and statesman Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406) is well known mainly for his political writings -- produced at the time of his chancellorship of Florence in defence of the city's liberties against Giangaleazzo Visconti --, and as one of the initiators of the humanist tradition of textual criticism. However, Salutati also had a deep interest in other fields, more traditionally associated with scholastic learning, such as natural philosophy, theology and logic. He also left interesting observations on music -- only in part known to musicologists -- interspersed in letters and other writings. At times, these observations are closely related to direct experiences of music listening, but more often they elaborate on long-standing notions largely dependent on the Boethian tradition. In the context of the latter, Salutati's deep knowledge of and interest in the Pythagorean-Boethian concept of musico-numerical harmony emerges in particular in his discussion of poetry, which forms the opening book of the treatise *De laboribus Herculis*. Here the notion of a universal order founded on numerical proportions is introduced as a metaphor to explain the musical quality of poetry; the existence of the music of the spheres *stricto sensu* is rejected, along the lines of the Aristotelian tradition. This paper explores Salutati's original interpretation of celestial harmony as inherent in poetic composition, considering the humanist's early training in schools of grammar and rhetoric and, later, his personal readings, certainly also influenced by his contacts with scholars and natural philosophers active in Florentine intellectual circles of the time.

Jacomien Prins

Francesco Patrizi's (1529-1597) philosophy of music presents a curious synthesis of traditional and 16th-century views and practices. He continued to support the traditional view that the cosmos was revealed in musical ratios and that musical harmony mirrored God's harmony. This profoundly theological viewpoint, however, was combined in his *Poetics* (1586) with rather terrestrial, innovative ideas about the affective and rhetorical nature of music, which he borrowed from contemporary scholars. Patrizi was oriented on the one hand toward language, poetics and rhetoric, while he dealt with its acoustic aspects in his philosophy of nature. This split in the nature of music was a side effect of the sixteenth-century naturalization of music. This process brought about a reformulation of the relationship between music and language, which until then were understood as two manifestations of one archetypal harmonic language of creation. Music then, which was traditionally seen as one of the mathematical disciplines, became a rhetorical art in Patrizi's philosophy. I will argue that this transformation in musical thought brought about a loss of explanatory power for the doctrine of music as key to the universe, but also resulted in new theoretical possibilities to study the musical origins of language. I will explore how Patrizi updated classical ideas on the relation between music and language to grant the requirements of his own time.

Donatella Restani

The *Commentary* on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, where Macrobius (IV/V b.C.) introduces for the first time the expression *musica mundana* (II 4), is one of the main sources for a research about the visual and verbal representations of music in Renaissance imagery. With its notes, rubrics, diagrams and indexes, the text of the *Commentary* was widely spread in early modern Europe both as a manuscript and in its printed editions. For instance, in Italy, Francesco Petrarca, Angelo Poliziano and Christopher Columbus had a copy in their own libraries. From 1472 to the end of the 16th century, more than thirty editions of the *Commentary* were published, half of which in Venice, Brescia and Florence. The aim of this paper is to discuss the history of Macrobius' text about the representation of music as reported by its first editors, philologists and printers, like Niccolò degli Angeli, Donato di Verona, Ioachim Camerarius and Johannes Isacius Pontanus.

Amnon Shiloah

The Singing of angels and the theme of cosmic harmony are mentioned already in the Scriptures. But only in later exegeses of post-biblical time they gained a specific dimension. Thus one finds in the *Midrash* - a particular genre of rabbinic literature - a meaningful reference related to the story of creation that happens at sundown of the six day when the concrete creation of the world was over and the history of mankind began. It says: "The celestial light, Whereby, Adam could survey the world from end to end, should properly have been made to disappear immediately after his sin. But out of the consideration for the Sabbath, God had let this light continue to shine, and the angels, at sundown on the sixth day, intoned a son of praise and thanksgiving to God, for the radiant light shining through the night, Only with going out of the Sabbath day the celestial light ceased, to the consternation of Adam, who feared that the serpent would attack him in the dark." [L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, p. 45]. On this spiritual ground the early ideas of links between micro and macro cosmos developed in Judaism and Islam in three major conceptual directions. One was under the Impetus of Greek philosophy and scholarship which became available thanks to

the project of translation from the Greek and Aramaic into Arabic. A strong influence of the Pythagoreans and the neo-Pythagoreans has been exerted on Ikhwan al-Safa, a brotherhood that flourished in Basra in the second half of the tenth century as a society for the pursuit of holiness, purity and truth, exalted the notion of harmony in its broadest sense, in their Epistle on music they maintained that musical harmony in its most exalted and perfect form is embodied in the heavenly spheres and the music they make; earthly harmony that is realized in the music made by man is only a pale reflection of that same lofty universal harmony. This approach also argues that harmony, wherever it is found in nature, cannot be described concretely without being subordinated to the ideal laws of music. One finds at the opposite extreme the hostile attitude of radical Muslim and Jewish religious authorities against music and music making which gave birth to the second conceptual direction. The latter consisted of the promise that those who abstained from musical pleasure on earth will enjoy in Paradise the most beautiful music of angels and King David who is described in Koran as having the most beautiful voice. The third conceptual direction to which the bulk of my presentation will be devoted is the one which have received its impetus and basic ideas from the doctrine of the Kabala that emerged in Southern France Spain in the thirteenth c. and attained one of its summits in the sixteenth century in the small Palestinian town of Safed. This kabbalistic school had its wellsprings in the teachings of Isaac Luria reverently called "Saint Ari". One of its central ideas has been developed in the writings of authors during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is that extolling the theme of the resonance between micro and macro cosmos.

Leen Spruit

Francesco Giorgio's (1466-1540) two principal works, *De Harmonia Mundi* and *In Scripturam Sacram Problemata*, were published in Venice in 1525 and 1536. Subsequently, they appeared in several Parisian editions. *De Harmonia Mundi* described the universe as a musical harmony governed by numerical laws, thus combining Hermetic, Platonic and Cabalistic ideas, musical theory, psychology, and cosmology. *In Scripturam Sacram Problemata* was possibly considered his most dangerous work, especially with regard to the heterodox implications of his exegesis. Here, Giorgio made extensive use of the Zohar that he had probably become familiar with in the translation by Egidio of Viterbo. This paper discusses Giorgio's view of creation in the context of patristic, medieval and Renaissance theological doctrines, including the Jewish and Christian exegetical tradition, as well as relevant contemporary philosophical interpretations of Genesis, such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Heptaplus* and Agostino Steuco's *Cosmopoeia*. Particular attention will be paid to the intermingling of biblical, cabalist and philosophical elements in Giorgio's view of human nature and to the extensive censorial assessments of his heterodox anthropology by the Congregation for the Index.

Stéphane Toussaint – Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the notion of harmony in Ficino's works, and more specifically in his *Third Book on Life*. The paper will examine the different meanings of the term 'harmonia' and attempt to establish a reconstruction of the concept and of its cultural reception in Ficino.

Maude Vanhaelen

This paper will address the themes of music' and harmony in the work of Francesco Catani da Diacceto.

Cornelia Wilde

In this paper I would like to investigate the ways in which the Renaissance concept of the music of the spheres is transformed in Cecilia Day odes of the late 17th century. Cecilia Day odes are occasional poems written in order to be set to music and to be performed in honour of music's patron saint. These poems present a specific category of early modern musical texts: They assemble, amalgamate, and codify philosophical, mythological, and practical knowledge about music. John Hollander read John Dryden's two Cecilia Day odes ("Song for St. Cecilia", 1687/ "Alexander's Feast", 1697) – amongst others – as texts exemplifying his notion that poetic interest was shifting from the Pythagorean idea of *harmonia mundi* and the music of the spheres to doctrines of the affective power of music at the end of the 17th century (John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky. Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1961). Still, references to the value of harmony and the music of the spheres appear frequently in these poems. Musical harmony is presented as a basic principle ordering and uniting the cosmos; it is employed as a metaphor for aesthetic and moral perfection, and it is elaborated in musical terminology within the context of the odes' potential musicalisation and performance. With Hollander's general notion in mind, I would like to focus on the transformations of the Renaissance concept under the specific textual and contextual conditions of the Cecilia Day ode: How does the concept of the music of the spheres change within the generic and performance tradition of the Cecilia day ode? What are the elements of the cosmological concept that are versified in these occasional texts and to what purposes? There seem to be two tendencies at work: On the one hand, there is a focus on the religious and spiritual significance accorded musical harmony in these texts that praise the patron saint of music and legendary inventor of the organ. On the other hand, poetic interest concentrates on the elaborate description and imitation of musical features of contemporaneous *musica instrumentalis*. Thus, while the Cecilia Day odes present the concept of the music of the spheres as quote conventionally as angelical harmonious song and choral performance, at the same time, they seem to be making claims for music as an independent art.

Laurence Wuidar

I would like to give one example illustrating the relation between music and astrology: an old couple born from the relation between music and astronomy. The correspondence between music and astrological principle finds its roots in the Ptolemaic tradition but known a increasing success in Renaissance period, until the 17th Century coexisting with the scientific revolutions. As a counterpart to the musico-matematical structure of the universe, astrology gives the practical use of correspondence between music and the spheres.

Brigitte van Wymeersch – Abstract

This paper will explore how music theoreticians and 16th-century thinkers justify the use of music and the rules of composition through an analogy with the music of the universe and the harmony of the spheres. Therefore, I will look into the case of Zarlino - Italian theoretician of the 16th century-, and of the French thinker Pontus de Tyard, with the aim of showing how this tradition of the harmony of the spheres is fundamental to understand the role of music and its effects in the 16th century.