“Rhythmic Riddles of the Late 14th Century and the Birth of the Modern Composer”

Abstract
The repertory of the late 14th century is known for its rhythmic complexity, ambiguity, notational deceptions and self referentiality. Among other devices, canons were added in the interest of eliminating notational ambiguities and facilitating musical performances. To contextualize the use of canons and to explain the bizarre characteristics of late medieval music I will discuss contemporaneous innovative approaches to language and literary works and suggest that in music, as in the new linguistics the attention to the surface, brought forth the creative, man-made and dynamic character of writing literary and musical compositions, as well as the need to admit the inherent falsity of human language (purposeful deceptions or unavoidable misunderstandings). On the basis of this finding I will suggest that the 14th century saw the birth of the modern composer and affirmed music’s autonomous presence: original musical sensation is legitimized as music’s sufficient meaning, yet meaning and interpretation has turned into a major problem.

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