Apr 12th, 1:00 PM - 1:30 PM

Scholarly Debates: The Development of Early Polyphony

Eleanor G. Raquet
Cedarville University, eleanorgraquet@cedarville.edu

Scholarly Debates: The Development of Early Polyphony

The records of early polyphony show development that progresses over time. How did these developments come about, and what caused polyphony to develop the way that it did? When one researches this topic, one discovers that most scholars have a different opinion on the factors that led to the development of polyphony. In this paper, I will prove that the development of early polyphony is not a simple linear process and is highly debated among scholars. Specifically, this paper examines and summarizes different scholars' opinions on the role of notation versus the oral tradition in the development of polyphony. It seems that notation and oral tradition both have a role, but scholars debate about whether polyphony developed because notation progressed, or whether the oral tradition drove the development of polyphony forward and notation simply recorded after the fact what had already happened orally. To seek to express accurately the opinions of scholars, this paper will also summarize views on whether the development of the concept of a composer as an individual contributed to the progression of notation and thus the evolution of polyphony. To accomplish this goal, I will used the method of historical documentation to discover the different opinions of scholars and compare and contrast their views. This paper will provide some clarity in future research of this complicated topic, by providing a summary of the past research in this area, so that future researchers can more clearly understand the work that has already been done, and build their work off of this knowledge.