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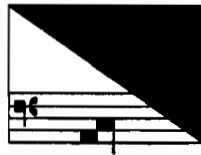
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WALTER ODINGTON

*DE SPECULATIONE MUSICAE*

PART VI

Translated by  
JAY A. HUFF



AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MUSICOLOGY

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ARMEN CARAPETYAN

General Editor

A TRANSLATION OF

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## INTRODUCTION

Collectively, the medieval treatises on music make available two essentially different kinds of information. On the one hand, we have the *practical*, i.e., information that a contemporary musician, as artist, would presumably have found useful; and on the other hand, the *abstract* or "speculative" (basically a recapitulation of ancient Greek theory as transmitted to the Middle Ages by Boethius), information that only the more scientifically minded would have been concerned with. The two kinds often appear in the same treatise, as they do in the *De speculatione musicae* of Walter Odington (*fl. intra ca. 1280-1320*), a monk of Evesham Abbey near Worcester, England. However, as its title suggests, Odington's work is heavily weighted in favor of the speculative. Only the last two of its six parts deal with "practical" matters. In the earlier sections, Odington treats of such things as numerical proportions, the application of those proportions to the determination of the sizes of intervals, divisions of the monochord, and so on. Furthermore, part V, though certainly of practical import, being in essence a tonary or theoretical guide to plainsong, still presents merely conventional material within the purview of its subject. It is only in part VI that we get something substantial that is not also obtainable from other sources. This last section, though less than satisfactory for many reasons, nevertheless contains the only contemporaneous discussion of English mensural polyphony in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries that we have.\*

\* The content of *De speculatione musicae* is discussed at length in *The Summa de Speculatione Musicae of Walter Odington: A Critical Edition and Commentary* by Frederick Fisher Hammond (University Microfilms, 1965).

A critical edition of the full text of *De speculatione musicae* by F. F. Hammond is published as No. 14 in the series *Corpus Scriptorum de Musica* of the American Institute of Musicology.

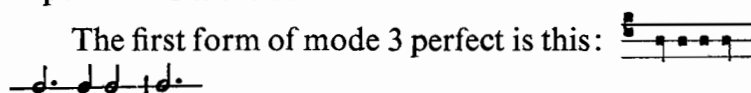
A TRANSLATION OF PART VI OF WALTER  
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[Here] begins the sixth and last part. It has 18 *capitula*: Longs, breves, and semibreves — Plicas — The various ways in which the long is said to be perfected and imperfected — The various ways in which the breve is said to be true (*recta*) or altered — Rests — The modes used in part-music — The perfection and imperfection of modes, and mutation [of mode] — Ligatures — Ligature values — How each mode is to be notated in ligatures — Types of part-music — On the composition of organum [part-music], and of pure organum first — The rondellus — The conductus — The copula — The motet — The hocket — On the [proper] manner of singing [pure organum].

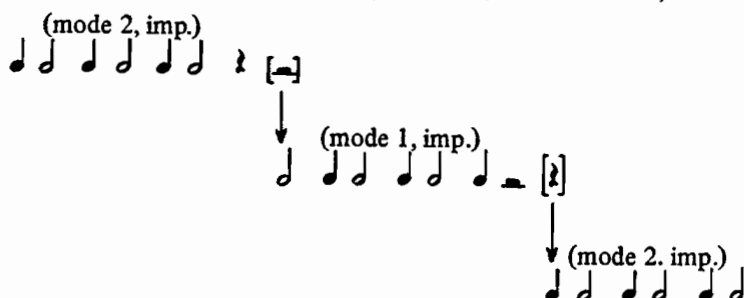
*Longs, breves, and semibreves*

We have finished with simple harmony [monophonic music]. It remains now to explain multiple harmony [part-music], which I call *diaphony*. Diaphony is a consonance-dissonance (*concors discordia*) of lower parts with higher; and it is said to be this because, rather than moving by consonances throughout, a subsequent consonance is used to alleviate the harsh effect of a preceding dissonance. And this is the sort of composition commonly called *organum*. In this part, then, there are three things of significance, namely: consonance and the consonant intervals, discussed already; unequal time values in

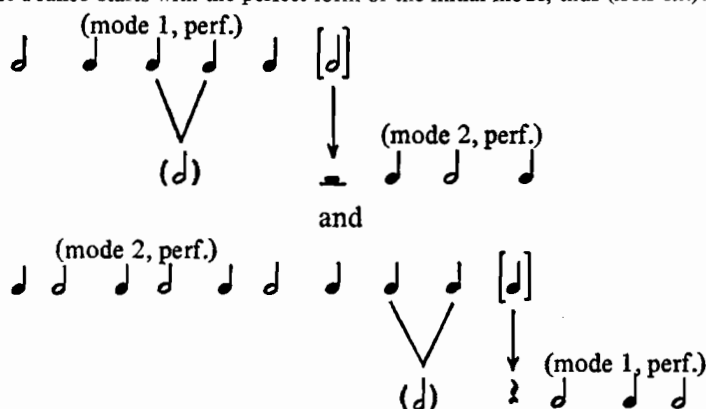
omission of the long rest, and the first [changes to the second] imperfect with the removal of the breve rest.<sup>12</sup>

The first form of mode 3 perfect is this: 

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Franco (HM, p. 245; Strunk, p. 150). If the words "iste modus" are presumed to refer to the mode just described, that is, the imperfect form of mode 2, then Odington must mean that the rest omitted from an ordo of this mode is replaced by a note of the same value and that this note then becomes the first of an ordo in the new mode, thus:



It will be noted that Franco's description is based on the opposite relation of note and rest; i.e., an omitted note is replaced by the same value in rests. However, the result is the same because Franco starts with the perfect form of the initial mode, thus (*locis cit.*):



It is probably significant, too, that both here and later in a similar statement about modes 3 and 4 (see n. 14) Odington says explicitly that the new or resultant mode is of the imperfect form. There seems to be no reason for this specification unless Odington is talking about a regular or cyclic alternation of modes such as Anonymous IV describes (CS, I, 329; MTT, I, 11), a situation which requires of course that both modes be, in effect, imperfect.

Finally, it has been questioned whether the examples in Franco actually do represent a change of mode. For any consideration of this subject it is important to keep in mind, as Professor Theodore Karp has pointed out ("Towards a Critical Edition of Notre Dame Organa Dupla," *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. LII, No. 3, p. 362), that thirteenth-century