

# ROBERTSBRIDGE CODEX



*A set of documents that, according to the British Library, includes the earliest known entabulated music for keyboard*

## TRANSCRIPTIONS

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## ROBERTSBRIDGE CODEX

The Robertsbridge Codex is a bound manuscript comprising a set of documents relating to Robertsbridge Abbey from its formation in 1176 to its dissolution by King Henry VIII in 1538.

The Codex was unknown until the chance discovery of a large number of documents at nearby Penshurst Place in the mid-19th century.

The Codex is now housed at the British Library in London - catalogue reference: "*MS Add 28550*".

Two of its leaves are "*estamperies*" – or musical pieces from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. They are written in "*tablature*" form – and have been dated at 1360. According to the British Library, this makes them the earliest surviving music written specifically for keyboard in the World.

Other music in the Codex includes three vocal motets - and one more estampie from a later period.

A discovery in 2021 of a variation on one of the later motets in Karlsruhe, Germany - "*Flos Vernalis*" - included some opening lines that are missing from the Robertsbridge Codex.

### The 1360 Estamperies

- The two early estampies are thought to be based on a Tricento – a dance form imported from Italy. One is in 3/4 time and the other in 6/8 time.
- They are for the most part written for 2 "voices" - with an occasional third note added.
- The most likely keyboard instrument of the period would have been a small table-top pipe organ.
- "Estamperie" is French for stamping – which fits with the 3 beat rhythms of the two dances.





*4 of the music pages in the Robertsbridge Codex*

## Index and Links:

MuseScore transcriptions into modern form - for playback and download:

[Robertsbridge Codex: Estamperie 1 – Anonymous ' Sheet music for Organ \(Solo\) | Musescore.com](#)

[Robertsbridge Codex: Estamperie 2 – Anonymous ' Sheet music for Organ \(Solo\) | Musescore.com](#)

[Robertsbridge Codex: Felix Namque – Anonymous ' Sheet music for Organ \(Solo\) | Musescore.com](#)

[Robertsbridge Codex: Flos Vernilis – Anonymous ' Sheet music for Organ \(Solo\) | Musescore.com](#)

# Robertsbrige Codex

## Estampie 1

c. 1360 - The oldest known pieces for keyboard

Anonymous  
Quatre-Cinque

Primus punctus

7

return

14

21

28

35

overt

The musical score is presented in six systems, each consisting of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The time signature is 8/8. The notation includes various note values (minims, crotchets, quavers), rests, and bar lines. Specific markings include 'Primus punctus' at the beginning, a repeat sign after the first system, and 'return' at the start of the second system. Measure numbers 7, 14, 21, 28, and 35 are placed at the beginning of their respective systems. The word 'overt' appears below the bass staff in the sixth system. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

42

clos

50

Fine

Finis

Secundus punctus

57

61

67

return

Tertius punctus

73

78

83

88

93

99

104

109

115

D.S. al Fine



# Robertsbridge Codex

Anonymous  
Quatre-Cinque

## Estampie 2

c. 1360 - The oldest known written pieces for keyboard

$\text{♩} = 90$

5

10

13

17

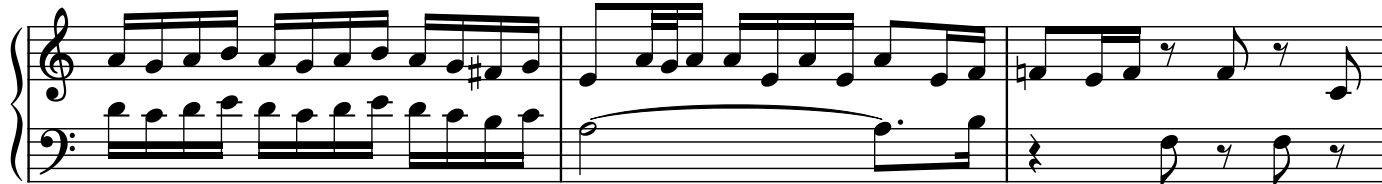
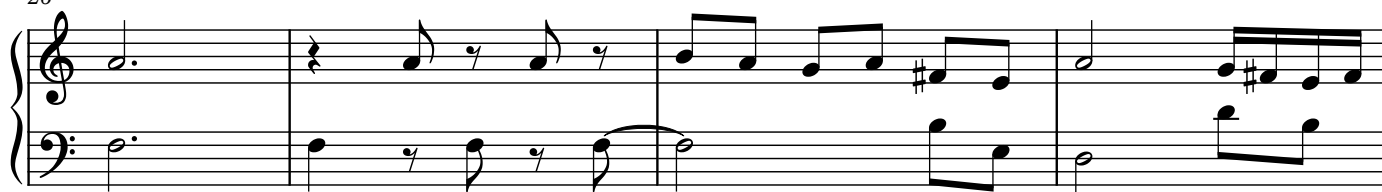
21

Fine

overt

clos

Finis



53

56

59

63

67

71

D.S. al Fine

# Robertsbridge Codex

Felix Namque

14th Century: Anonymous  
Quatre-Cinque

$\text{♩} = 120$

Pipe Organ



10

Org.



19

Org.



30

Org.



39

Org.



50

Org.



# Robertsbridge Codex

Flos Vernilis

Anonymous  
Quatre-Cinque

$\text{♩} = 80$

2

4

6

7

9

11

Measures 11-12. Treble clef, key of B-flat major. Measure 11: Treble has eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; Bass has quarter notes Bb2, C3, D3, E3. Measure 12: Treble has eighth notes G5, F5, E5, D5, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Bass has quarter notes F3, E3, D3, C3. Both measures end with a repeat sign. Measure 12 ends with a fermata on G4 in the treble and a half note G2 in the bass, with a 2/4 time signature change.

13

Measures 13-14. Treble clef, key of B-flat major. Measure 13: Treble has eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; Bass has quarter notes Bb2, C3, D3, E3. Measure 14: Treble has eighth notes G5, F5, E5, D5, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Bass has quarter notes F3, E3, D3, C3. Both measures end with a repeat sign.

15

Measures 15-16. Treble clef, key of B-flat major. Measure 15: Treble has eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; Bass has quarter notes Bb2, C3, D3, E3. Measure 16: Treble has eighth notes G5, F5, E5, D5, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Bass has quarter notes F3, E3, D3, C3. Both measures end with a repeat sign.

17

Measures 17-18. Treble clef, key of B-flat major. Measure 17: Treble has eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; Bass has quarter notes Bb2, C3, D3, E3. Measure 18: Treble has eighth notes G5, F5, E5, D5, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Bass has quarter notes F3, E3, D3, C3. Both measures end with a repeat sign.

19

Measures 19-20. Treble clef, key of B-flat major. Measure 19: Treble has eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; Bass has quarter notes Bb2, C3, D3, E3. Measure 20: Treble has eighth notes G5, F5, E5, D5, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Bass has quarter notes F3, E3, D3, C3. Both measures end with a repeat sign.

21

Measures 21-22. Treble clef, key of B-flat major. Measure 21: Treble has eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; Bass has quarter notes Bb2, C3, D3, E3. Measure 22: Treble has eighth notes G5, F5, E5, D5, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Bass has quarter notes F3, E3, D3, C3. Both measures end with a repeat sign.

23

Measures 23-24. Treble clef, key of B-flat major. Measure 23: Treble has eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5; Bass has quarter notes Bb2, C3, D3, E3. Measure 24: Treble has eighth notes G5, F5, E5, D5, C5, Bb4, A4, G4; Bass has quarter notes F3, E3, D3, C3. Both measures end with a repeat sign.

25

Example 10-10

[illegible]

31

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3

3

33

Musical score for 'The Rose Tree'. The score is written for piano (p) and consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The melody is in the treble staff, featuring a series of eighth and sixteenth notes with triplets indicated by a '3' over a bracket. The bass staff provides a simple accompaniment with a whole note chord in the first measure and half notes in the second and third measures.

38

Musical score for measures 38-41. The score is written for piano (p) and features a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The melody in the treble staff consists of quarter notes in measures 38-39, followed by a half note in measure 40, and a whole note in measure 41. The bass staff provides accompaniment with quarter notes in measures 38-39, followed by a half note in measure 40, and a whole note in measure 41. The piece concludes with a double bar line in measure 41.