Dr. Angela Mariani is Associate Professor of Musicology at the Texas Tech University School of Music and director of Texas Tech Early Music Ensemble. She has MM and DM degrees from the Early Music Institute (now the Historical Performance Institute) at Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music; her doctoral document examined issues of improvisation and “invention” in the performance practice of medieval music. Dr. Mariani studied medieval performance practice with the groundbreaking early music scholar and performer Thomas Binkley and with Benjamin Bagby and Barbara Thornton of Sequentia, with additional voice and performance practice studies with Paul Elliott, Wendy Gillespie, and Elisabeth Wright. Dr. Mariani also has a Certificate in Medieval Studies from Indiana University.

Since the early 1990’s Dr. Mariani has hosted the nationally-syndicated public radio program Harmonia. She has published on the topics of early music performance practice, public radio, and rock and roll, and has appeared on National Public Radio, Deutsche Welle, Radio Netherlands, and the CBC. She has recorded and toured internationally with Altramar medieval music ensemble (7 CDs on the Dorian Group label), and also performs and records traditional Irish music with the group Johnny Faa. She co-founded the local non-profit group Caprock Early Music, and is a longtime member of the Board of Directors of Early Music America.

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Improvisation &

INVENTION

in Medieval Music

A series of weekend workshops with Dr. Angela Mariani

SAT Aug 30  Improvisation and Invention in Medieval Music: Introduction
SUN Aug 31  Mode: The Vocabulary of Medieval Melody
SAT Sep 6   Improvising and Inventing Polyphony, Medieval Style
SUN Sep 7   Arranging Medieval Music: Not just “Game of Drones”

All sessions meet in Merrill Hall 205, 2 - 4 PM
Improvisation and Invention in Medieval Music

A series of weekend workshops with Dr. Angela Mariani
Historical Performance Institute / Indiana University Jacobs School of Music

Saturday, August 30, 2-4 PM, MU205

Improvisation and Invention in Medieval Music: Introduction
In western medieval music, a great deal of performance information never made it to the page, a fact that suggests a musical culture that valued orality, improvisation, and invention. Hence our conundrum as historical performance practitioners: we cannot re-create a performance of medieval music “exactly as it would have been done,” because the elusive element of invention must always be provided by the performer in the present. What, then, are our models? If a musical repertoire does not exist in a vacuum separate from the process used to create it, what is our part in that process? In this introductory lecture and discussion, we will interactively explore the process of performing medieval music, and lay the foundation for the upcoming three workshops.

Sunday, August 31, 2-4 PM, MU205

Mode: The Vocabulary of Medieval Melody
When we attain fluency in a language, we internally catalogue and categorize data about that language until one day we are able, as if by magic, to stop thinking about the meaning of every word. In like manner, it is a non-verbal catalogue of internalized musical data that allows a blues guitarist to improvise in the blues idiom, or an Irish fiddler to improvise on a slow air, or compose her own air in the traditional style. If we wish to improvise, invent, or arrange music in the context of medieval performance practice, the “thumbprints” of the medieval modes comprise one of our most important collections of data. In this workshop, we will learn to “speak Modal” by immersing ourselves in the eight medieval modes, singing and playing patterns, formulae, cadences, songs, and chants, all drawn from medieval sources.

Saturday, September 6, 2-4 PM, MU205

Improvising and Inventing Polyphony, Medieval Style
From doubling a melody with parallel intervals to spontaneously creating full-blown Notre Dame-style organum, the topic of improvisation in medieval polyphony has received a lot of attention in the past couple of decades. In fact, there are a number of medieval treatises that give directions in how to invent organum—but are we talking about improvisation, or composition? Leo Treitler states that “Even in the late Middle Ages, composing and performing could be thought of as a single act.” In this workshop we will explore the idea of “improvising” polyphony, using “flash cards” created from the Vatican Organum Treatise, and perhaps even venturing into the world of “invented” motets. Both vocalists and instrumentalists are encouraged to join in.

Sunday, September 7, 2-4 PM, MU205

Arranging Medieval Music: Not just “Game of Drones”
It’s a single piece of melody, of debatable rhythm and meter, unattributed, and you want to create an engaging, moving performance that will grab your twenty-first-century audience. You turn to the vielle player and say, “Well, it’s in seventh mode...can you just maybe like hold a G for 8 minutes?” No! No! Don’t go there! In this workshop we will wrestle with the demons of rhetoric, text, structure, mode, and meaning, and talk about how to create performances of medieval repertoire that simultaneously honor what we know about historical performance practice and still allow us to “authentically” be the twenty-first-century musicians that we are.

During the week of Sep. 1—5, Dr. Mariani will be available for students who wish to embark upon a medieval music performance project. She will return the first week of October for additional coachings.
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A native of the state of Massachusetts, Dr. Mariani began her professional music career in the world of rock and folk music. Following an undergraduate Music Theory degree from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, she taught and performed for a decade in the Boston area, and co-founded the folk-rock band Reynardine in the 1980s. In addition to directing the Early Music Ensemble at Tech, Dr. Mariani teaches seminars on medieval music and early performance practice and graduate and undergraduate music history courses. She also designed and inaugurated Tech’s very popular, large-enrollment History of Rock and Roll course, and designed and implemented the School of Music’s Graduate Certificate Program in Early Music Performance Practice. She has also begun exploring a secondary research area in Contemplative Practices in Higher Education, an approach to pedagogy that seeks to integrate techniques of contemplation, meditation and mindfulness into the process of teaching and learning at the university level, and most recently gave a lecture on “Mindfulness in the Large Classroom” for TTU’s Teaching, Learning, and Professional Development Center. Since 2007, she has been an elected member of TTU’s prestigious Teaching Academy.

Since the early 1990's, Dr. Mariani has hosted the nationally-syndicated public radio program Harmonia. She has published on the topics of early music performance practice, public radio, and rock and roll, and has appeared on National Public Radio, Deutsche Welle, Radio Netherlands, and the CBC. She has recorded and toured internationally with Altramar medieval music ensemble (7 CDs on the Dorian Group label), and also performs and records traditional Irish music with the group Johnny Faa. She co-founded the local non-profit group Caprock Early Music, and is a longtime member of the Board of Directors Early Music America.