



THE NEWBERRY

Center for Renaissance Studies

## Howard Mayer Brown Memorial Lecture

Friday, February 22, 2013, 2:00 p.m.

### *Diuerse lingue: Thomas Morley and the Problem of National Language in Renaissance Music*

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Thomas Morley, in his influential treatise, *A plaine and easie introduction to practiccall musicke* (1597), cites a madrigal by Giulio Renaldi, *Diuerse lingue*, the text of which is drawn from Dante's *Inferno*, to illustrate musical response to text. The term reminds us of a group of madrigals written in *diversi linguaggi*, that is, with multiple characters each speaking in a particular dialect. This paper asks whether we can recognize national language when we encounter serious polyphony. Can we tell Palestrina from Byrd or, to bring the topic closer to home, Morley from his continental peers? Are there recognizable national traits?



A related question concerns national theoretical practices. It may be that Morley's *Introduction* presents different and competing theoretical traditions, from notation to the naming of pitches and even the conception of tonal organization. Is he in fact writing in *diuerse lingue*—English versus continental? Perhaps we should challenge the default assumption of a pan-European theory and a pan-European sound, and listen instead for distinctive languages.

**A reception will follow the lecture.**

**Howard Mayer Brown**, who died February 20, 1993, was a distinguished scholar of medieval and Renaissance music and professor of music at the University of Chicago. As both a practicing musician and musicologist, his work profoundly influenced the study and performance of early music in the United States and Europe.

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