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**Bringing Medieval Stories to Life Digitally: Two Performance Websites**  
The Digital World of Art History & the Humanities – Princeton University – July 12, 2012

I am Timmie (Evelyn Birge) Vitz of New York University; here with me is my colleague Marilyn Lawrence. We cofounded and codirect the two performance websites that we will discuss today in something of a dog-and-pony show. In the case of each website I will first explain why we set it up and what is on it, then Marilyn will explain how the site works and how it can be used.

**Performing Medieval Narrative Today: A Video Showcase**

*Performing Medieval Narrative Today: A Video Showcase* <<http://mednar.org/>>  
(henceforth *PMNT*) was created in large part to accompany a book titled *Performing Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2005;  
<<http://www.boydellandbrewer.com/store/viewItem.asp?idProduct=10925>>) that, in 2004, Marilyn and I were coediting with a colleague at NYU, Nancy Freeman Regalado. Many things said in the book about the performance of medieval narrative needed, we felt, to be demonstrated visually: it was necessary to show that these things were in fact possible. In particular, I found that when I argued for strongly dramatic/semi-theatrical performance possibilities for many works of medieval narrative, people gave me blank looks. It simply was unimaginable to them—and even to some degree to me, at the start—that works that today we all read silently and privately were, in the past, strongly performed. Moreover, if they were performed—if these

stories were “told”—didn’t that make them rather like children’s literature? Today, “storytelling” is for children. To many people, storytelling means the infantilization of a work.

Thus the *PMNT* website had, in its creation, in part a rhetorical purpose of persuasion: to show that these medieval works—epics, romances, *lais*, fabliaux, and many other genres—could have been, and can still be today, performed in a variety of ways that are aesthetically, and in other respects, satisfying.

Why video—why not just audio? Again, we wanted to demonstrate that medieval works as performed were generally not just “books on tape.” They weren’t just voiced—told and sometimes sung. Rather, they often had a strongly visual component, like drama and dance. They were part of medieval visual, as well as auditory, culture.

We turn now to what is on the website: it currently contains over 200 clips, and there will soon be a good many more (we have dozens in the pipeline). The majority of the clips are generated by a course I began to teach in conjunction with all our thinking and discussion about performance. The course, titled Acting Medieval Literature, began as a sort of workshop on the performance of medieval narrative, and it still retains that character in my eyes: the students and I are experimenting. Many of the students are in the various Drama studios at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, and are extremely talented undergraduates. Others, often no less gifted, come from various departments in NYU’s College of Arts and Science.

When I realized how interesting—indeed, how exciting—the students’ performances often were, I began to video them in the classroom. This was in large part to counteract the evanescence of performance: to preserve these performed scenes. These clips are also part of the demonstration of the performability of many medieval works.

We do not just have students' work on the site: we are fortunate to have received permission from a number of distinguished professional performers, such as Benjamin Bagby, Katarina Livljanic (of Dialogos), Linda Marie Zaerr, and others, to include scenes from their work. This is an important component of the website.


Thanks to various colleagues, we also have clips from performances still taking place today in various parts of the world, from works that resemble those of the Middle Ages. For example, we have clips of performers from Egypt and Turkey singing traditional epics while accompanying themselves on musical instruments. These performances provide valuable analogies to medieval performances.

I turn now to Marilyn, who will explain how this site works.

As Timmie mentioned, we first began *PMNT* in 2004. At that time it was a real challenge to construct a website for video clips. There were very few sites with video on the Internet and YouTube had yet to be created. We worked with Jennifer Vinopal and her team at the Digital Studio of New York University Libraries and with Faculty Technology Services at NYU to create a custom-built website with custom-tailored programming. We made the videos streaming to prevent users from downloading the performances. This was especially important to professional performers who agreed to contribute clips from their work only if the material could not be copied by users. The technologies initially used to construct this database of streaming videos did not allow the clips to be viewed on smartphones, but because smartphones had only recently been invented and had not yet taken off, this did not concern us at the start. In fact, in the beginning we were more focused on how users with a dial-up internet connection would view the clips—technologically we were eons away from the smartphone question!

In spring 2011, *PMNT* was hacked. Apparently the fact that *PMNT* was custom built made it vulnerable to attack. Moreover, the development of new technologies meant that our website code was becoming increasingly outdated and unsupported. The hacking incident forced us to take down our website, migrate it, and redesign it. As a result, we now have a more stable website that is better safeguarded from attack and that offers users improved functionality. We have just now launched this new website, on the WordPress platform, with the URL <mednar.org>. We hope to get a NYU URL for the site soon, at which point the <mednar.org> URL will automatically forward users to the new NYU URL.

The new and improved *PMNT* features a clear, straight-forward home page that allows users to begin their search immediately.



## Performing Medieval Narrative Today

### A Video Showcase

HOME ABOUT BIBLIOGRAPHY VIDEOGRAPHY TEACHING TIPS


#### Find Performances

Performances	Original Works
Performance Descriptors <input type="text"/>	Title of Work <input type="text"/>
Musical Instruments <input type="text"/>	Author <input type="text"/>
Performer Categories <input type="text"/>	Genre <input type="text"/>
Performer/Ensemble <input type="text"/>	Subject <input type="text"/>
Language of Performance <input type="text"/>	Period <input type="text"/>
Setting <input type="text"/>	Language of Work <input type="text"/>
Geographical Location <input type="text"/>	
Title of Clip <input type="text"/>	

#### Search Keywords

Search for:

[Advanced Search](#) | [List All Search Criteria](#) | [List All Videos](#)

 We welcome your feedback on this site: [PMNT@nyu.edu](mailto:PMNT@nyu.edu)  
[View this site's rights information](#)

[Home](#)

Drop-down boxes organize search criteria specific to performances and to the medieval narratives:

## Find Performances

Performances	Original Works
Performance Descriptors ▼	Title of Work ▼
Musical Instruments ▼	Author ▼
Performer Categories ▼	Genre ▼
Performer/Ensemble ▼	Subject ▼
Language of Performance ▼	Period ▼
Setting ▼	Language of Work ▼
Geographical Location ▼	
	<input type="button" value="Search"/> <input type="button" value="Reset"/>

Users may search according to performance descriptors (the number in parentheses refers to the number of clips matching that feature):

### Performances

Performance Descriptors ▼
Performance Descriptors
Animals (17)
Comic/Parodic Reworking (7)
Costumes (40)
Dance (12)
Free Adaptation (12)
Illustrations (6)
Instruments (30)
Mime (7)
Modern Technology (5)
Performers, Multiple (38)
Performers, Solo (165)
Props (41)
Puppets (8)
Reading Aloud (31)
Recitation from Memory (182)
Song (27)
Theatrical Staging (10)

musical instruments:

Musical Instruments
Musical Instruments
Aerophones (8)
Chordophones (23)
Idiophones (2)
Mechanical & Electrical (2)
Membranophones (2)
Multiple Instruments (3)
Recorded Music (27)
Without Musical Accompaniment (148)

type of performer:

Performer Categories
Performer Categories
Academic/Professional (5)
Academic/Teacher (2)
Professional Performer (19)
Student/Alumni (182)
Other (2)

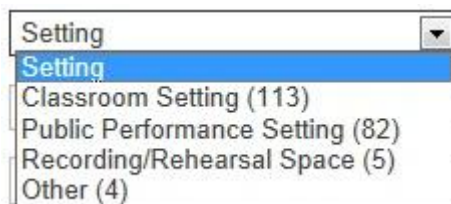
specific name of performer or ensemble:

Performer/Ensemble
Abd aj-Jalil Ali, Awadallah (1)
Abourizk, Michael (4)
Alvarez, Andrea (3)
Bagby, Benjamin (2)
Bates, Ryan (1)
Bazarov, Jumabay (1)
Becker, Peter (1)
Benko, Julie (3)
Benzaken, Danielle (1)
Bernstein, Catesby (1)
Beyer, Elyse (3)
Bjornsti, Karen (1)
Bleeke, Mark (2)
Blyweiss, Jessica Bay (1)
Boyle, Giarcara (1)
Brodsky, Jordan (1)
Broman, Brad (1)
Brown, Tiffany (1)
Burt, Vanessa (1)
Butnik, Brian (1)
Caliendo, Kevin (1)
Cantave, Stephane (1)
Carei, Jessica (3)
Carlton, Abigail Blythe (1)
Carr, Bailey (1)
Cerino, Stephanie (1)
Chavez, George (1)
Chazelle, Anna (2)
Chianesi, Chris (3)

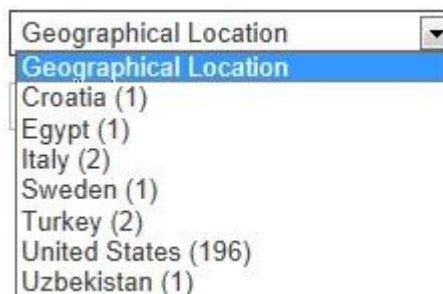
language of performance:



performance setting:



and/or the geographical location of the performance:



Users can also search using criteria specific to the narrative itself, including title of work:



#### Title of Work

Amir Khafaji: Abu Zayd (1)  
Aucassin et Nicolette (Aucassin and Nicolette) (3)  
Ballad of Tam Lin (2)  
Beowulf (8)  
Berangier au long cul (Berangier of the Long Ass) (1)  
Bouchier d'Abeville (Butcher of Abbeville) (2)  
Canterbury Tales (7)  
Chanson de Roland (Song of Roland) (7)  
Chevaliers, les clers et les vilains (Knights, Clerks and Churls) (1)  
Chtenie svetogo Ivana Zlatoustogo (Legend of St. John Chrysostom) (1)  
Commedia (Divine Comedy): Inferno (1)  
Convoiteux et l'envieux (Greed and Envy) (1)  
Culhwch ac Olwen (Culhwch and Olwen) (1)  
Disciplina clericalis (Scholar's Guide): Lay, or Tale, of the Little Bird (1)  
Edige (1)  
Erec et Enide (Erec and Enide) (9)  
Fables (2)  
Gesta Romanorum (Deeds of the Romans) (3)  
Helen Queen of Sparta (1)  
Ic þis giedd wrece (Wife's Lament) (1)  
Jataka (2)  
Judita (Judith) (1)  
Karagöz (1)  
King Artus (1)  
King Orfeo (1)  
Lai d'Aristote (Lay of Aristotle) (1)  
Lai de Chevrefoil (Lay of the Goatleaf) (1)  
Lai de Laostic (Lay of the Nightingale) (2)  
Lai del fresne (Lay of the Ash Tree) (1)

author of the narrative:

Author

**Author**

Anonymous (78)

Bérout (10)

Chrétien de Troyes (41)

Dante Alighieri (3)

Durand (4)

Eustache d'Amiens (2)

Fioroni (1)

Geoffrey Chaucer (8)

Giambattista Cinzio Giral di (1)

Guerin (1)

Guillaume de Lorris (14)

Heldris of Cornwall (11)

Henry d'Andeli (1)

Jacobus de Voragine (5)

Jean Bodel (1)

Jean Renart (1)

Judah Al-Harizi (2)

Marie de France (6)

Marko Marulic (1)

Matteo Maria Boiardo (1)

Ovid (P. Ovidius Naso) (1)

Pedro Alfonso (1)

Peire Cardenal (1)

Pierre de Saint-Cloud (6)

Romolo (1)

Rutebeuf (1)

Skipitares (1)

Theodora (1)

Watriquet de Couvin (2)

genre of the work:

Genre

**Genre**

Allegory (21)

Ballad (5)

Chantefable (3)

Epic (46)

Fable (3)

Fabliau (17)

Hagiography (12)

Lai (5)

Lament (1)

Romance (101)

Satire (3)

Song (2)

Tale/Collection of Tales (43)

Other (7)

narrative subject:

Subject 

Subject
Arthurian Legends (74)
Bible (8)
Charlemagne/Roland (12)
Christian Legends/Saints/The Virgin (18)
Islamic Legends/History (1)
Jewish Legends/History (2)
Mythology: Anglo-Saxon/Germanic (20)
Mythology: Buddhist (2)
Mythology: Celtic (8)
Mythology: Classical (13)
Renart (6)
Robin Hood (2)
Tristan (13)
Other (51)

time period from which the work dates:

Period 

Period
Antiquity, Greek (1)
Antiquity, Latin (1)
Early Middle Ages: 5th-8th Century (10)
Early Middle Ages: 9th-11th century (22)
Middle Ages: 12th-13th Century (144)
Middle Ages: 14th-15th Century (30)
Modern: 16th-18th Century (5)
Modern: 19th-21st Century (2)
Unknown (2)

and the original language of the narrative:

Language of Work

- Arabic, Egyptian (1)
- Croatian, Medieval (1)
- Croatian, Renaissance (1)
- English, Lowland Scots (1)
- English, Middle (23)
- English, Modern (1)
- English, Old (10)
- English, Shetland Dialect (1)
- French, Old (125)
- German, Middle High (14)
- Hebrew (3)
- Irish, Old (1)
- Italian, Medieval (1)
- Italian, Modern (2)
- Italian, Renaissance (2)
- Karakalpak (1)
- Latin, Classical (1)
- Latin, Medieval (10)
- Norn (1)
- Occitan (1)
- Pali (2)
- Russian, Medieval (1)
- Turkish (1)
- Welsh, Medieval (1)

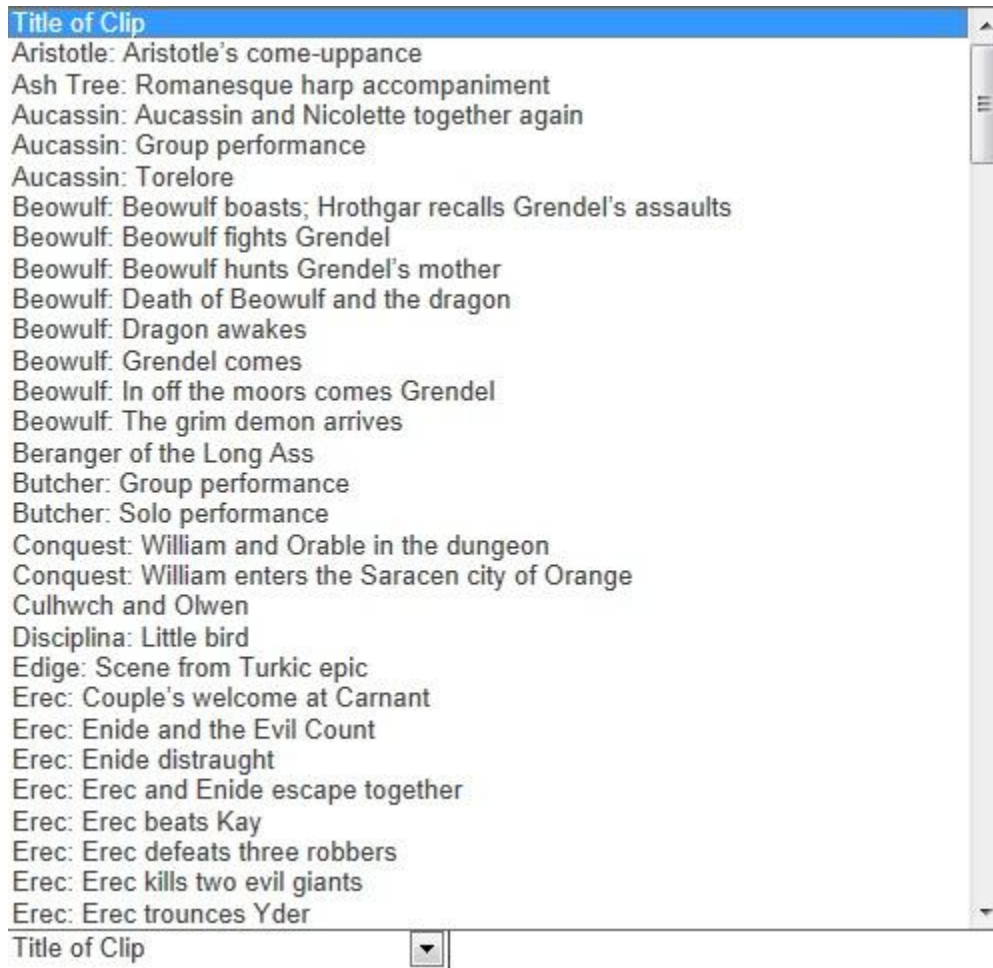
Language of Work

Users may activate a search for one feature or multiple features from different drop-down boxes. They may also click on the Advanced Search link at the bottom of the home page to create an even more specific search query. Alternatively, users may use the Search Keywords box on the home page to customize their inquiry and search for features not included in the drop-down boxes. For example, one could search for all clips that somehow contain or pertain to angels:

## Search Keywords

Search for:

If the user already knows the title of the clip, he may use the title of clip drop-down box to go straight to that specific clip:



At the bottom of the home page there is also a link to pages listing all search criteria on the website, as well as a link to a page listing all videos:

[Advanced Search](#) | [List All Search Criteria](#) | [List All Videos](#)

Once the user instigates a search, he is brought to a results page listing corresponding videos, each with a brief description. For example, if the user searches for “Christian Legends/Saints/The Virgin” under subject of work and “Medieval Latin” under language of work

## Original Works

Title of Work	▼
Author	▼
Genre	▼
Christian Legends/Saints/The Virg	▼
Period	▼
Latin, Medieval (11)	▼

the search results page lists clips of performances of stories in medieval Latin with Christian themes, including a brief description that includes clip title, language of performance, title and author of the work, and the names of the performers:

## Search Results: Christian Legends/Saints/The Virgin; Latin, Medieval



### *Gesta: Devil*

[English, Modern] Gesta Romanorum (Deeds of the Romans) by Anonymous;  
Performer(s): Mazziotti, Donna; Shorts, Dorian.

[View / Read More](#)



### *Gesta: Magician*

[English, Modern] Gesta Romanorum (Deeds of the Romans) by Anonymous;  
Performer(s): Dalton, Alexandra.

[View / Read More](#)



### *Gesta: Of fidelity, or young prince rescued from pirates*

[English, Modern] Gesta Romanorum (Deeds of the Romans) by Anonymous;  
Performer(s): Fithian, Zach.

[View / Read More](#)



### *Golden Legend: Martyrdom of St. Felicitas and Her Seven Sons*

[English, Modern] Legenda Aurea (Golden Legend) by Jacobus de Voragine;  
Performer(s): Goodman, Brandon.

[View / Read More](#)

To get more information on a particular clip, the user clicks on the View / Read More link at the bottom of the brief description box. That brings the user to a page with detailed information specific to the particular clip:



## Golden Legend: Martyrdom of St. Felicitas and Her Seven Sons



Viewing our videos requires the free [Adobe Flash player](#).  
(No need for Flash on mobile devices.)

### The Performance

**Performance Descriptors:**

Performers, Solo; Recitation from Memory

**Instruments:**

Without Musical Accompaniment

**Performer Category:**

Student/Alumni

**Performer(s) / Ensemble(s):**

Goodman, Brandon

**Language(s) of**

**Performance:**

English, Modern

**Setting:**

Classroom Setting

**Geographical Location:**

United States

### The Work

**Work Title:**

Legenda Aurea (Golden Legend)

**Author:**

Jacobus de Voragine

**Genre:**

Hagiography; Tale/Collection of Tales

**Subject:**

Christian Legends/Saints/The Virgin

**Period:**

Middle Ages: 12th-13th

**Language:**

Latin, Medieval

**About the scene and clip:**

The solo performer, both dramatically and soberly, tells the story of the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons: Felicitas encouraged her sons, one by one, to endure torture and suffer martyrdom for their faith in Christ, and then finally received the crown of martyrdom herself. She is, we are told, to be admired for her extraordinary courage.

**About the work:**

The work known as the *Legenda Aurea* (*The Golden Legend*) is a massive compilation of stories about the saints by an Italian Dominican, Jacobus of Voragine (or Varazze), Archbishop of Genoa, writing around 1260. Organized around the Catholic liturgical year, *The Golden Legend* tells the lives and stories of many important saints, as well as of Christ and the Virgin Mary. It was very widely known; preachers and storytellers often told stories from *The Golden Legend*, and it inspired much medieval art. The work as a whole and stories drawn from it were translated into many vernacular languages. About 900 manuscripts of the *The Golden Legend* survive, and at the end of the Middle Ages it was even more frequently printed than the Bible.

**About the genre:**

Stories about the saintly wisdom, heroism, or miracles of remarkable men and women exist in many religious traditions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Such stories are termed "hagiography." In medieval Europe, the saint's life or legend was an extremely popular type of work. A great many stories (and plays) about male and female Christian saints exist in Latin and in all the vernacular languages. These works may focus on the saint's dramatic death by martyrdom, or recount the remarkable miracles performed by the saint, or may relate the entire life of the holy man or woman. Among the most important collections of saints' lives and legends is *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus of Voragine. Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale" in *The Canterbury Tales* is a tale of martyrdom. Miracle and pious tales about the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, constitute a special, and highly important, category of saintly legends.

This story also belongs to the tale tradition. The tale, like the epic, is an ancient genre and one found everywhere in the world.

A box to the right of the video screen lists basic features of the clip:



The Performance	The Work
<b>Performance Descriptors:</b> Performers, Solo; Recitation from Memory	<b>Work Title:</b> Legenda Aurea (Golden Legend)
<b>Instruments:</b> Without Musical Accompaniment	<b>Author:</b> Jacobus de Voragine
<b>Performer Category:</b> Student/Alumni	<b>Genre:</b> Hagiography; Tale/Collection of Tales
<b>Performer(s) / Ensemble(s):</b> Goodman, Brandon	<b>Subject:</b> Christian Legends/Saints/The Virgin
<b>Language(s) of Performance:</b> English, Modern	<b>Period:</b> Middle Ages: 12th-13th Century
<b>Setting:</b> Classroom Setting	<b>Language:</b> Latin, Medieval
<b>Geographical Location:</b> United States	

A larger box below the clip gives pertinent information about the particular scene performed, the work and its genre, the edition of the work used by the performer, and the performer and production:

**About the scene and clip:**

The solo performer, both dramatically and soberly, tells the story of the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons: Felicitas encouraged her sons, one by one, to endure torture and suffer martyrdom for their faith in Christ, and then finally received the crown of martyrdom herself. She is, we are told, to be admired for her extraordinary courage.

**About the work:**

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This story also belongs to the tale tradition. The tale, like the epic, is an ancient genre and one found everywhere in the world. Many tales are firmly rooted in oral tradition and are recited or told by amateur and professional storytellers and performers. Other tales are the work of literarily sophisticated authors and are often intended to be read aloud or silently from written texts. Some tales circulate separately, while others are part of collections, which may be set in complex frames (as in the case of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*). There are many sub-groups of tales with specific characteristics; see for example the "lai" and the "fabliau."

**About the edition/translation:**

From *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine*, translated by William G. Ryan and Helmut Ripperger, New York Press, 1969, p. 347. Latin: Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, 2nd ed., Firenze, SISMEL, Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1998, 2 vols.

**About the performer/ensemble:**

Brandon Goodman is a Drama student in the Experimental Theatre Wing at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts (2009).

**About the production:**

This performance was created for "Acting Medieval Literature," taught by Prof. Timmie (E.B.) Vitz in spring 2009. It was videoed in the classroom by a fellow student.

The video clips themselves can be played using Adobe Flash player, which users can download for free. One significant advantage of our new website is that the *PMNT* videos can now also be viewed on smartphones and other mobile devices. Here I am playing the Renaissance Croatian clip "*Judith*: Judith prepares to kill Holofernes," featuring singer Katarina Livljanic of the music ensemble Dialogos, on my iPhone:



In addition to offering over 200 clips of performances, *PMNT* also provides a bibliography of relevant recent scholarship on medieval narrative and its performance

## Bibliography

### ***Useful studies bearing on performance of medieval narrative***

*Note:* For more extensive bibliographies on related issues of orality and literacy, see the work of Joyce Coleman and Evelyn Birge Vitz.

Ahern, John. 2005. "Dioneo's Repertory: Performance and Writing in Boccaccio's *Decameron*." Vitz, Regalado, and Lawrence. 41-58.

—. 1981. "Singing the Book: Orality in the Reception of Dante's *Comedy*." *Annals of Scholarship* 2: 17-40. Rpt. 1997 in *Dante: Contemporary Perspectives*. Ed. Amilcare A. Iannucci. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 214-39.

Allen, Rosamund. 2000. "Performance and Structure in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*." *New Perspectives on Middle English Texts: A Festschrift for R. A. Waldron*. Eds. Susan Powell and Jeremy J. Smith. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer. 133-47.

Azéma, Anne. 2005. "'Une aventure vous dirai': Performing Medieval Narrative." Vitz, Regalado, and Lawrence. 209-22.

Bagby, Benjamin. 2005. "*Beowulf*, the *Edda*, and the Performance of Medieval Epic: Notes from the Workshop of a Reconstructed 'Singer of Tales'." Vitz, Regalado, and Lawrence. 181-93.

and a videography of available videos of performances of medieval narrative.

## Videography

### ***Videos of performances of medieval narrative available for purchase***

*Note: Very few videos of performances of medieval narrative are at present commercially available. We welcome information on new video recordings.*

Bagby, Benjamin. 2006. *Beowulf*. DVD. Koch Vision/Charles Morrow Productions LLC and Jon Aaron.

Cavallo, Jo Ann. 2003. *Il Maggio Emiliano: Ricordi, Riflessioni, Brani*. Idealizione, interviste, represe e montaggio di Jo Ann Cavallo. DVD. Purchase information: Prof. Jo Ann Cavallo, Italian Department, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027, [jac3@columbia.edu](mailto:jac3@columbia.edu). (The "Maggio" is a form of traditional Italian popular entertainment—including singing, instrumental accompaniment, and costumed actors—inspired from such narratives as the story of Roland at Roncevaux and of Tristan and Isolde. This website includes clips from both: see *Roncisvalle* and *Tristano e Isotta* under Title of work on home search page.)

Zaerr, Linda Marie. 2011. *Music and Medieval Narrative*. DVD. (A complete performance of the Middle English *Tournament of Tottenham* with fiddle, and a 32-minute lecture demonstration with excerpts in Old French and Middle English.) Provo: Chaucer Studio.

—. 1999. *The Weddyng of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell*. DVD & VHS. TEAMS/Provo: Chaucer Studio.

—. 2002. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, with Shira Kammen and Laura Zaerr. DVD & VHS. TEAMS/Provo: Chaucer Studio.

### ***Videos of narratives from analogous traditions***

Documentary Educational Resources distributes many films of interest. Among them are:

Emigh, John and Ulrike. *Hajari Bhand of Rajasthan: Jester without Court*. Distributed by Documentary Educational Resources. <http://www.der.org/films/hajari-bhand-of-rajasthan.html>

Grabias, David. *Asiklar: Those Who Are in Love*. Distributed by Documentary Educational Resources. <http://www.der.org/films/asiklar.html>

Kishore, Shweta and Yask Desai. *Of Bards and Beggars*. Distributed by Documentary Educational Resources. <http://www.der.org/films/of-bards-and-beggars.html>

Because we intend for *PMNT* to be a tool for teachers, as well as a resource for scholars and performers, we have included a Teaching Tips page that provides suggestions on how *PMNT* can be used in the classroom and in assignments for students:



## Teaching Tips

### ***Why is performance practice useful to teachers and students? A few thoughts:***

- Students who read with the prospect of performance in mind tend to do the assigned reading on time and to read it carefully. As a student in the course "Acting Medieval Literature" said, "I always read your assignments first because I know I'll have to perform them!"
- Students who perform medieval literature often come to a more intensely personal relationship with the works. As another student said, "I feel that in this course I have heard voices from the past."
- Works tend to become highly memorable by being performed. Many students and teachers will never forget performances they have seen. By contrast, it is rare that mere classroom discussion is so powerfully memorable.
- Performance promotes a pleasurable atmosphere in the classroom since performances generally produce some laughter. Almost all works leave at least some opening for comedy—and even the most serious works can on occasion receive parodic send-ups.
- Performance promotes bonding among the students in the class: they take turns serving as audience for each other and can collaborate on joint performances.

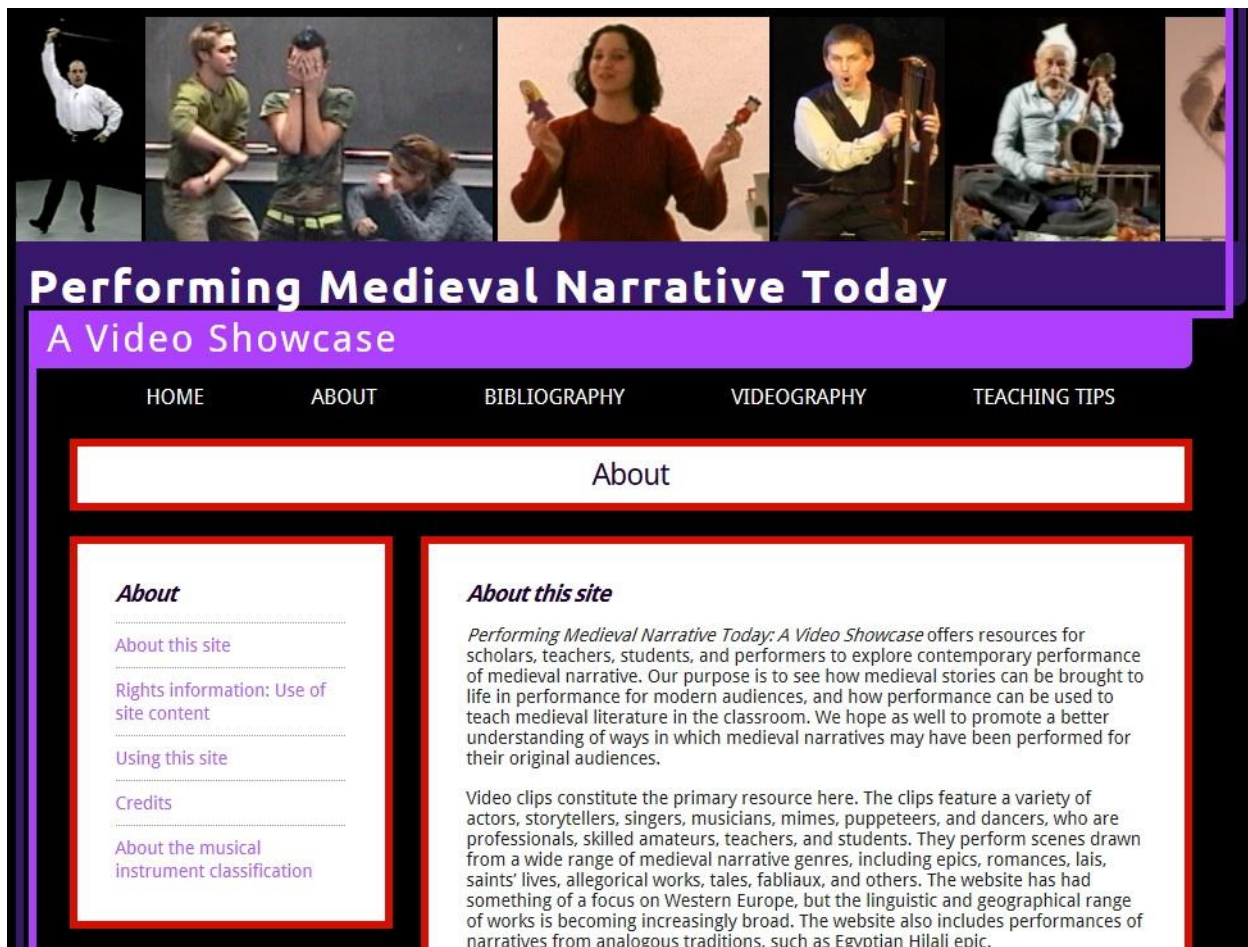
### ***Why use this website in teaching? Some basic points:***

- *Performing Medieval Narrative Today: A Video Showcase* can serve as a basic introduction to medieval literature. Students at various levels have found it an informative and exciting way to make contact with a wide range of works from the Middle Ages. (Note also *PMNT's* recently launched sister website devoted exclusively to Arthurian material, much of it performed in the original languages: "Arthurian Legend in Performance" – <https://vimeo.com/user6874655>)
- This website helps students and teachers alike come to a deeper appreciation of the basic "performed" character of medieval literature. Works were meant to be voiced, and to be accompanied with gestures and other physical movements. Many narrative works were intended for a strongly dramatic handling.

### ***How to use this website? A few suggestions:***

- Ask the students in a class on Arthurian literature to view clips featuring Arthurian material and to consider what interpretation of the work (or scene, themes or characters) is implicit in the performance; whether they agree with this interpretation, and thus with the performance; whether the performance showed them things about the work or scene that they had not noticed before; whether the performer missed things that seem important to them; whether they find it useful to see a scene performed, or prefer to read it for themselves, aloud or silently.
- Ask students to watch a variety of clips from one work (e.g. *The Song of Roland*) or on one subject (e.g. Arthurian legend), and to compare how characters (e.g. Roland or the famous and on-going Arthurian characters) are depicted in the work(s).
- Ask the students in a class on medieval literature to view all the clips featuring a certain type of performance—for example, performances using puppets, or instruments, or recorded music. They can then discuss the use of this particular performance style: How is it attractive, effective? What are its limitations?
- Ask students to examine the full range of performances styles and strategies, viewing an example of each of the available "performance descriptors." They may then evaluate the appeal and usefulness of different performance strategies with regard to a particular work or set of works (which may or may not be represented on this site). What does each performance style bring to our appreciation of the work or works in question?
- Ask students to explain why they like or dislike a particular clip. Explaining why a performance does, or does not, conform to

More information about *PMNT* can be found on its About page:



We invite you to explore *PMNT* and to send us your feedback at [PMNT@nyu.edu](mailto:PMNT@nyu.edu).

Timmie will now introduce to you our other website: *Arthurian Legend in Performance*

<<https://vimeo.com/ArthurPerform>> (henceforth *ALP*).

### Arthurian Legend in Performance

Several years ago Marilyn and I decided that it would be useful to create a new performance platform that would contain exclusively Arthurian material—much of it done in the original languages: Welsh, Latin, Old French, Middle English, German, Italian, Spanish, Hebrew, etc.—with subtitles where necessary. It would also, where appropriate, have music of the period, played on period instruments. It would be produced at a more consistent and uniform level of videography than the clips filmed in the classroom.


Originally we were going to produce DVDs—but we soon realized that DVDs are going the way of the dodo. We then turned to Vimeo—which (for those who don’t know about it yet) is somewhat like YouTube, but at a higher, more artistic level.


So in fall of 2011, with generous funding from the Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages, we launched *Arthurian Legend in Performance* <<https://vimeo.com/ArthurPerform>> on Vimeo. Clips from this performance platform can be viewed not only on your desktop, but also on your smartphone. At present, we have 18 clips, with more coming soon; several of them can be viewed either with or without the original written text and subtitles. We intend to expand the site soon in various ways, bringing in more Arthurian traditions and languages, as well as more music and song.


Marilyn will now walk through the site with you.

The profile page of *ALP* briefly explains the project and displays the most recent video clips:




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## Arthurian Legend in Performance


Joined 1 year ago

This collection features performances from Arthurian Legend in both original medieval languages (with subtitles) and Modern English by students, academics, and professional performers.


The project is directed by Evelyn (Timmie) Birge Vitz and Marilyn Lawrence of New York University with funding by TEAMS: The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages.

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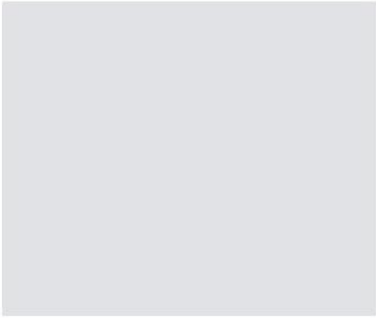
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Users may choose to watch one of the most recent videos displayed on the profile page, or they may click on the link under the Browse & Connect header on the right-hand side of the page



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2 weeks ago



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Canto V: Dante meets Francesca da Rimini...

1 year ago



Then users click directly on the still image or on the title below the image to access the clip's page, which includes basic information on the performance and work, as well as the video itself.



The video player shows a woman in a black dress singing and gesturing, with a harpist seated to her left. Subtitles at the bottom of the video frame read: 'Artur', fet ele, 'entent a mei, e cist barun que jeo ci vei !'. The video player interface includes a play button, a progress bar at 03:41, and icons for Like, Later, and Share.

### Lai de Lanval: The fairy comes to rescue Lanval (with Old French subtitles)

by **Arthurian Legend in Performance** · 1 year ago

"Arthurian Legend in Performance"  
Project managers: Evelyn (Timmie) Birge Vitz & Marilyn Lawrence – French Department, New York University, New York, USA

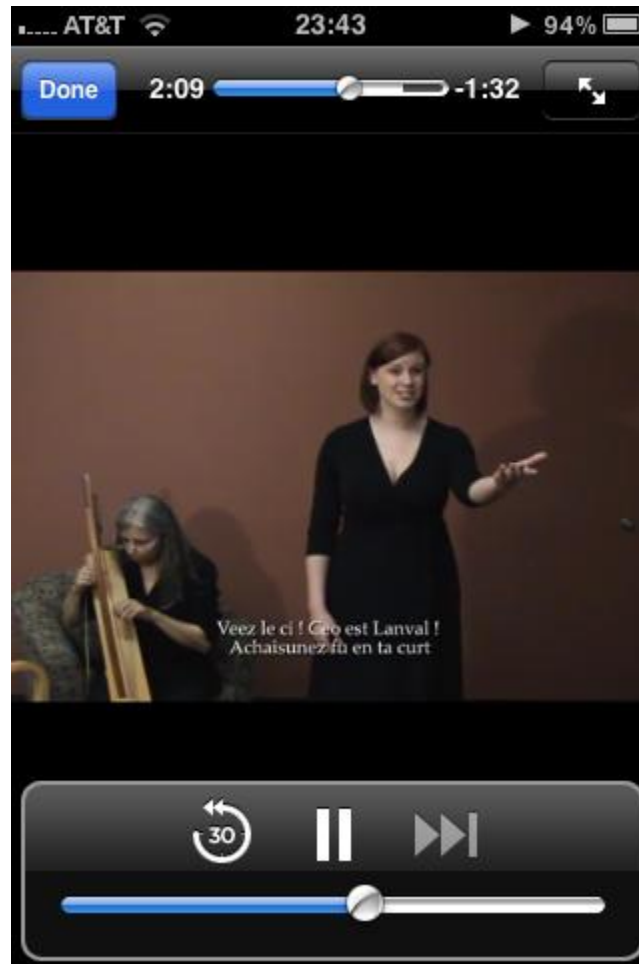
This scene is the closing scene of the "Lai de Lanval" by Marie de France, slightly abridged.  
Text: English translation by Judy Shoal ([clas.ufl.edu/users/jshoaf/Marie](https://clas.ufl.edu/users/jshoaf/Marie)). Original text: Lais de Marie de France, ed. Karl Warnke, trans. (into Modern French) Laurence Harf-Lancner. Paris: Lettres Gothiques/Livre de Poche, 1990.

Performer: Jessica McVea  
Harp: Christa Patton

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As Timmie noted, *ALP* can also be viewed on smartphones, such as my iPhone:



### Partnership Possibilities

As part of our work to expand the contents of *PMNT* and *ALP*, we seek to partner with sites that focus on medieval music and instruments, such as “Musiconis” (<<http://musiconis.blogspot.fr/p/compte-rendus-des-seminaires.html>> and <<http://www.plm.paris-sorbonne.fr/musicastallis/liens.php>>), as well as with the Index of Christian Art <<http://ica.princeton.edu/>>, the Morgan Library <<http://corsair.themorgan.org/>>, and perhaps other repositories of medieval images. With regard to partnering with the Index and Morgan—which would be very exciting!—we are interested, for example, in the possibility of

constructing narratives based on a set of images of some major figures from the Bible or Christian tradition that occur frequently in medieval works.

We invite you to explore *Performing Medieval Narrative Today: A Video Showcase* <<http://mednar.org/>> and *Arthurian Legend in Performance* <<https://vimeo.com/ArthurPerform>>, and welcome your ideas for clips, contributions of videos (particularly of performances in original medieval languages), and suggestions for future partnerships as we continue to add to the offerings on our websites.