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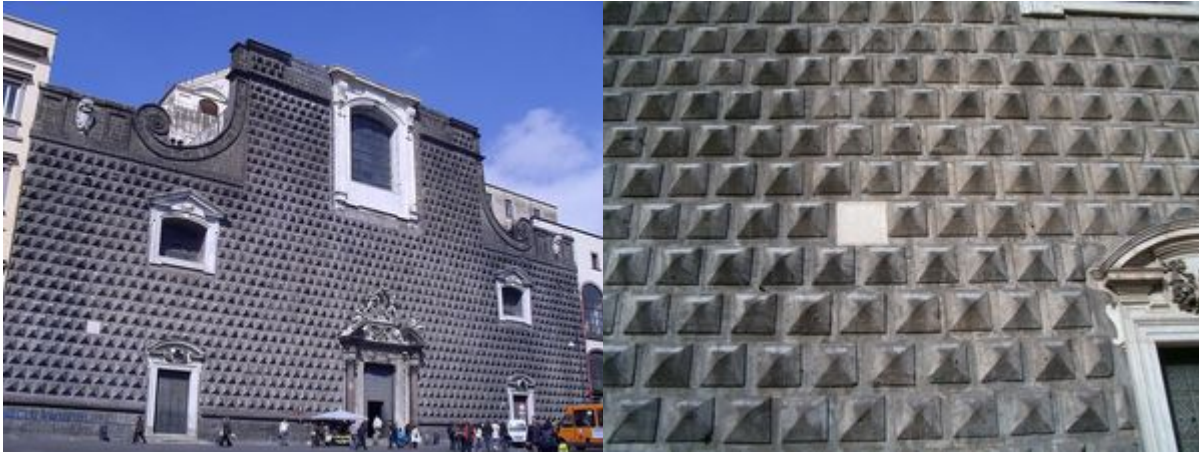
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Renaissance score engraved in church's exterior



One of the most beautiful churches in Naples, Italy, conceals a musical score within its unusual stone-clad facade, a new study has concluded. Famous for its triumphant Neapolitan Baroque interior and lavishly decorated with colored marble and frescoes, the fortress-like church of Gesù Nuovo has long puzzled historians for the mysterious symbols engraved on the diamond-shaped stones protruding from its facade. "It was believed that these symbols represented the names of caves of a volcanic rock called piperno from which the stones were made," art historian Vincenzo De Pasquale told Naples daily *Il Mattino*. "Instead they are Aramaic letters [an alphabet adapted from Phoenician]. We have seven letters, and each of them corresponds to a musical note," De Pasquale said. Read from right to left and bottom to top, the coded engraved notes form a 45-minute concert for stringed instruments. "It's a Renaissance music score which follows a Gregorian canon," said De Pasquale, who conducted the study with Csar Dors, a Jesuit expert on Aramaic, and Hungarian musicologist LőrBnt Réz.

According to De Pasquale, the use of some sort of coded signs to compose a musical score wasn't unusual for that time. "Another palace of the Sanseverino princes features musical notes engraved in its stones. Named "Enigma," the newly discovered music has been transcribed for organ rather than for plectrum (stringed) instruments.

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