

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Marian antiphon

Guillaume Du Fay

PERSONAL PRAYER

Chapter: CHAPTER 13 Middle and Low

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

These Marian antiphon settings sound a conspicuously personal note that we have not previously encountered in liturgical music. That is another aspect of “middling” tone; but it accords well with the votive aspects of Marian worship, the component of the Christian liturgy that in those days was most intensely “personal.” That, too, was something that could be thematized by a knowing composer, especially a knowing churchman-composer. The supreme case in point for a fifteenth-century motet is the third and most splendid setting Du Fay made of the Marian antiphon *Ave Regina coelorum*, copied into the choirbooks of Cambrai Cathedral in 1465. It is as impressive a motet as Du Fay or anyone ever composed, but it is impressive in an altogether different way from his earlier large-scale motet settings. Where the isorhythmic *Nuper rosarum flores* (Ex. 8-8) had impressed by its monumentality, *Ave Regina coelorum* impresses with an altogether unprecedented expressive intensity—unprecedented, that is, within the motet genre.

The personal and votive aspect of this motet are epitomized in a moving set of tropes that Du Fay interpolated into the canonical text of the antiphon, representing a prayer for his own salvation that he wanted sung at his deathbed, and that he wanted to go on being recited after his death in perpetuity, for which, a rich man, he provided an endowment in his will:

Ave regina coelorum,	Hail, O Queen of Heaven!
Ave Domina angelorum,	Hail, O Ruler of the Angels!
<i>Miserere tui</i>	<i>Have mercy on</i>
<i>labentis Dufay</i>	<i>Thy failing Du Fay,</i>
<i>Ne peccatorum</i>	<i>throw him not into the</i>
<i>in ignem fervorum.</i>	<i>raging fire of sinners.</i>
Salve radix, salve porta	Hail, blessed root and gate,
Ex qua mundo lux est orta;	From whom came light upon the world!
<i>Miserere genitrix Domini</i>	<i>Have mercy, mother of God,</i>
<i>ut pateat porta coeli debili.</i>	<i>that the gate of heaven may be opened to the weak.</i>
Gaude, virgo gloriosa,	Rejoice, O glorious Virgin,
Super omnes speciosa;	That surpasses all in beauty!
<i>Miserere supplicanti Dufay</i>	<i>Have mercy on thy suppliant Du Fay,</i>

<i>sitque in conspectu tuo</i>	<i>that his death may find</i>
<i>mors ejus speciosa.</i>	<i>favor in Thy sight.</i>
Vale, valde decora	Hail, O most lovely of beings,
Et pro nobis Christum exora	And pray to Christ for us.
<i>In excelsis ne damnemur,</i>	<i>Let us not be damned on high</i>
<i>miserere nobis</i>	<i>but have mercy on us,</i>
<i>Et juva ut in mortis hora</i>	<i>and help us that in our last hour</i>
<i>Nostra sint corda decora.</i>	<i>our hearts may be upright.</i>

The beginning of the motet, containing the opening canonical acclamation and the first of the votive interpolations, is shown in Ex. 13-3a. Again there is a teasing ambiguity between the old cantus-firmus style and the newer paraphrase technique. Both of the duos that together make up the introitus contain paraphrases of the Gregorian antiphon, first in the superius and then in the altus. When the tenor finally makes its dramatic entrance, it, too carries a chant paraphrase, albeit in longer note-values as befits a cantus firmus in the older tradition. But when the tenor intones the canonical chant, the other parts immediately switch over to the trope, so that a kind of old-fashioned polytextualism sets in.

1
A - ve re -

6
gi - na coe - lo rum,

11
A - ve do - mi - na an - ge -

16
lo

20
Mi - se - re - re tu - i la -
rum, Mi - se - re - re tu - i la -
A ve
rum, Mi - se - re - re tu -

25
ben - tis Du - fa y,
ben - tis Du - fa y,
re - gi - na coe - lo rum,
i la - ben - tis Ne

ex. 13-3a Guillaume Du Fay, *Ave Regina coelorum* III, mm. 1-29

The most dramatic touch of all, of course, is the sudden introduction of the E-flat in the superius on “Miserere,” dramatizing in the most tangible way the shift from the impersonal diction of the liturgical chant to the personal voice of the composer. It is hard to ignore its affective significance in light of the text, which speaks of the composer’s frailty and his fears. And so we have an early instance, and in this unexpected context a shattering one, of major–minor contrast in what would become its traditional mood-defining role. The association of the Dorian interval-species with woe and Lydian/Mixolydian with joy was as old as the Marian antiphons themselves (as the contrast of *Salve Regina* and *Regina coeli laetare* in Ex. 3-12 sufficed to indicate). But forcing the Dorian interval species into Lydian pitch space, as Du Fay does here, was new and startling in a motet context (although, minus the “straightforward symbolism” of affect, we encountered it two chapters back in Ex. 11-25, Du Fay’s chanson *Craindre vous veuil*), and, in a newly “middling” way, expressive. Du Fay here speaks to Mary as human to human, seeking a human response (and getting it, at least, from his mortal listeners).

Was Du Fay aware, at such a poignant moment, of the inadvertent, irrelevant in-joke of having the added flat

(which, to a fifteenth-century singer, meant “sing *fa*”) occur on the text syllable “Mi-”? No doubt he was as aware of it as any singer would be, and found the irony irresistible—so irresistible that he strove to make it relevant to the affective content of the motet. Ex. 13-3b shows the way in which Du Fay set the one other text line that contained his name: *Miserere supplicanti Dufay* (“Have mercy on thy suppliant, Du Fay”). This time the tenor, which never partakes of the tropes, is silent. Superius and altus engage in a little canon, both entering with E-flat on “Mi-” as the superius had done before. Even the bassus gets into the act, with a flatted “Miserere” at the fifth, that is on A-flat, which takes it even farther into flat space, and even closer to an adumbration of an actual major–minor “tonal” contrast.

The image shows a musical score for two systems, numbered 67 and 68. Each system has four staves: Superius (top), Altus (second), Tenor (third), and Bassus (bottom). The lyrics are in Latin. In system 67, the Superius and Altus parts sing "Mi - se - re - re, mi - se - re - re sup - pli -" and "Mi - se - re - re, mi - se - re - re" respectively. The Bassus part sings "Mi - se - re - re, mi - se - re - re sup - pli -". In system 68, the Superius part sings "can - ti Du - fa - y". The Altus part sings "sup - pli - can - ti Du - fa - y". The Bassus part sings "can - ti Du - fa - y". There are sharp signs (#) above the notes for "sup - pli -" in system 67 and "can - ti" in system 68.

ex. 13-3b Guillaume Du Fay, *Ave Regina coelorum* III, “Miserere supplicanti Dufay”

The flats persist until the cadence, where the superius evades occursus with the altus by means of a temporary escape to the third. That third, to remove any doubts caused by the previous infusion of flats, is designated major by specific sign—what we would call a “sharp” or “natural,” which to a fifteenth-century singer meant “sing *mi*.” And of course it comes on the “-fa-” of the name “Du Fay”! (And that is why the composer signaled his insistence on a three-syllable pronunciation of the name with the modified letter “ÿ.”) It was an inescapable pun for a composer who enjoyed signing his name, both in letters and in musical documents, with the rebus shown in Fig. 13-1. The note on the staff, a C, is “fa” in the “hard” hexachord specified by the composer’s first initial, G.

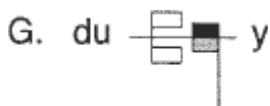


fig. 13-1 Du Fay's
rebus signature.

64
qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun -
pec - ca - ta mun -

69
di, mi - se - re - re, mi - se - re - re,
di, mi - se - re - re, mi - se -
mi - se - re - re, mi - se - re - re,

76
mi - se - re - re no bis,
re - re, mi - se - re - re, no bis.
mi - se - re - re, no bis.

ex. 13-4 Guillaume Du Fay, *Missa Ave Regina coelorum*, Agnus II

This solmization-inversion, paltry musicians' in-joke though it may be, nevertheless sparked the creation of one of the most affecting passages in the pre-Reformation sacred repertory. Nor is this the first time we have found the lowest form of wit producing, or helping to produce, the highest level of expression. Du Fay certainly recognized the pathos of what he had created and quoted it in the Mass he wrote to accompany his *Ave regina coelorum* motet at memorial services after his death (Ex. 13-4). Almost needless to say, the quotation comes in the second Agnus Dei, the only *tenor tacet* section of the Mass that includes the word "Miserere." There is no analogue to the second pun on "Du-fa-y" here; the harmonic shift, though suggested by the pun, is no longer dependent on it for its effect.

The effect of anguished mortality is heightened in the Mass through additional chromaticism: a specifically signed F-sharp right before a specifically signed B-flat in each of the two voices in imitation. The resulting diminished fourth was something that might have been introduced into the motet by daring singers exercising their rights, so to speak, when it came to *musica ficta*—especially if those singers knew Du Fay's very late chanson *Hélas mon deuil, a ce coup sui je mort* ("Alas, my woe, at this blow I die"), where the same tortured interval is demanded for the very same expressive purpose (Ex. 13-5). No contrapuntal situation could demand such a rash of accidentals. It must answer to someone's specific expressive intent.

The image shows a musical score for three voices: Tenor and Contra. The top system contains the first four measures of the piece. The Tenor part has two lines of lyrics: "1.5. Hé - las mon deuil, a ce cop sui je mort Puis -" and "4. [lost]". The Contra part has one line of lyrics: "1.5. Hé - las mon deuil, a ce cop sui je mort". The bottom system contains measures 5 through 8. The Tenor part has one line of lyrics: "que Re - fus l'es - ra - gié si me mort." The Contra part has one line of lyrics: "Puis - que Re - fus l'es - ra - gié si me mort." The score is written in a medieval style with square neumes on a four-line staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The piece is in a minor mode.

ex. 13-5 Guillaume Du Fay *Hélas mondeuil*, mm. 1-8

Du Fay's *Agnus Dei* represents a new relationship between a Mass setting and its "raw material": it is not just a plainchant or a single line extracted from its polyphonic context that lies behind the Mass setting, but a preexistent polyphonic passage that is being cannibalized in its entirety. We are at the borderline between contrafactum—the fitting out of old songs with new texts for new purposes—and the kind of intricate polyphonic remodeling that in the next century would be called "parody."

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Motet: England

William Cornysh

THE ENGLISH KEEP THINGS HIGH

Chapter: CHAPTER 13 Middle and Low

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The musical cult of Mary reached its zenith in the place where the new-style motet began, in England. As usual, precious little pre-Reformation source material survived the sixteenth-century holy wars, but just as with the Old Hall manuscript at the front end of the century, a single enormous volume survives to tell us about British worship music at the back end. That book is the so-called Eton Choirbook, compiled for evensong (Vespers) services at Eton College during the reign of Henry VII (1485–1509), the first Tudor king of England, but containing a repertory that had been forming since Dunstable's time. (A motet by Dunstable himself is listed in the index to the manuscript, but about half of the original contents, including Dunstable's work, is lost.)

Eton College was founded by King Henry VI in 1440 to educate future government officials. It has long been famous as the largest of the so-called British "public schools," which are in fact private schools that charge tuition and to which entry is gained by competitive examination. Eton was founded jointly with King's College, Cambridge, and has ever since been a sort of preparatory school for King's, which still reserves a certain number of scholarships each year for Etonians. Both schools were (and King's still is) famous for their men-and-boys choirs.

Eton was officially franchised as "the College Roiall of our Ladie of Eton," and its charter, addressed to the Virgin Mary herself, proclaims its dedication "to thy praise, thy glory, and thy worship" (*ad laudem gloriam et cultum tuum*). The school's large choral endowment was specifically authorized by its statutes, as was the choir's daily obligation to serenade the Blessed Virgin, as it were, with a polyphonic votive antiphon. Every evening, the statutes directed, the choir was to enter the chapel in formal procession, two by two, sing the Lord's Prayer before the crucifix, and then proceed to the image of the Virgin, there to sing a Marian antiphon *meliori modo quo sciverint*, "as well as they know how."

The *Salve Regina* excerpted from the Eton Choirbook in Ex. 13-6 was specifically composed for this very purpose. Its author, William Cornysh (d. 1523), ended his life as the head of the Chapel Royal under Henry VIII. He was one of a brilliant generation of late fifteenth-century English chaplain-musicians; some of the others were John Browne, Richard Davy, Walter Lambe, and Robert Wylkynson, to name only those few who are more copiously represented in the Eton Choirbook than is Cornysh himself. Their works now barely survive, and so they do not command historical reputations comparable to those of either their continental counterparts or their English predecessors. Since 1961, however, when Frank Llewelyn Harrison published a modern edition of the complete manuscript, it has been apparent that, as Harrison put it, "the Eton music, like the chapel for which it was created, is a monument to the art and craftsmanship of many minds united in the object of carrying out the founder's vision of perpetual devotion."¹

Shown in Ex. 13-6a and b are the beginning and end of this exceedingly lengthy motet. That length is the product of two characteristically English factors. One, which may easily be appreciated from the music as printed, is a veritable jungle growth of melismatic proliferation. The parts shown are not even the most florid sections of the antiphon, and yet they exceed in melodic extravagance any other music illustrated in this book except for the Notre Dame organa with which the Eton music is still clearly vying, at a time when

continental motets have taken another expressive tack. Perhaps that is why Tinctoris, having praised the English for providing the stimulus that transformed continental style, immediately took it all back by complaining that “the English continue to use one and the same style of composition [he means the lofty style, of course], which shows a wretched poverty of invention.”²

The image displays a musical score for a motet, consisting of three systems of staves. Each system includes a vocal line (soprano and alto) and a lute accompaniment (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are written below the vocal lines.

System 1:
Vocal line: Sal
Lute accompaniment: Sal

System 2:
Vocal line: ve re - gi - na ma - ter mi - se - ri - cor
Lute accompaniment: ve re - gi na
Lute accompaniment: Sal - ve re - gi - na ma - ter mi - se - ri -

System 3:
Vocal line: di - ae
Lute accompaniment: ma - ter mi - se - ri - cor di - ae
Lute accompaniment: cor - di - ae

12
Vi - ta dul - ce - do et spes no
Vi - ta dul - ce - do et spes no
Vi - ta dul - ce - do et spes no

16
stra Sal - ve!
stra Sal - ve!
stra Sal - ve!
Sal - ve!
Sal - ve!

ex. 13-6a William Cornysh, *Salve Regina*, beginning

A corollary to the melodic proliferation is the use of shorter note-values than anywhere (yet) on the continent. The boys in the famous Eton choir needed to be proper vocal athletes to negotiate their passagework in music like this, so that the official choral endowment of the college and the requirement that it be well staffed, amounted, then and now, to a kind of athletic scholarship for qualified students. And yet what the use of semiminims (sixteenth notes in transcription) accomplishes, in seeming paradox, is not the speeding up of the music, but just the opposite, its effective slowing down. That is because adding a new level of motion at the high end simply represents the limit of speed with a new symbol, increasing the spread of notated durations, while more of the change in actual note-lengths takes place at the opposite end, among the slow-moving “structural” voices.

123
O dul
O dul
O dul
O dul cis
O dul cis Ma-ri

126
cis Ma-ri
cis Ma-ri
cis Ma-ri
Ma-ri

129
a Sal-ve.
a Sal-ve.
a Sal-ve.
a Sal-ve.
a Sal-ve.

ex. 13-6b William Cornysh, *Salve Regina*, end

The main lengthener of English votive antiphons, however, was the exceptionally rich larding of the canonical texts with tropes. Any text that embodied prayer, and hence even potentially “votive” (like Kyries, for example), gave rise to another sort of jungle growth in the form of additional words. The concluding triple acclamation of the *Salve Regina*, shown in Ockeghem’s already highly melismatic setting in Ex. 13-2, is an especially indicative case, since the tropes on “O clemens,” and “O pia” so dwarf the canonical ejaculations. Cornysh set the text in this version:

O clemens:	O gentle one:
<i>Virgo clemens, Virgo pia,</i>	<i>Clement Virgin, holy Virgin,</i>
<i>Virgo dulcis, O Maria,</i>	<i>sweet Virgin, O Mary,</i>

<i>Exaudi preces omnium</i>	<i>Hear the prayers of all</i>
<i>Ad te pie clamantium.</i>	<i>who cry to thee devoutly.</i>
O pia:	O holy one:
<i>Funde preces tuo nato</i>	<i>Pour forth our prayers to thy</i>
<i>Crucifixo, vulnerato,</i>	<i>crucified son, wounded</i>
<i>Et pro nobis flagellato,</i>	<i>and scourged for us,</i>
<i>Spinis puncto, felle potato.</i>	<i>pierced with thorns, given gall to drink.</i>
O dulcis Maria, salve.	O sweet Mary, hail.

Imagine all of these words set with the same soaring melismatic abandon as the canonical ones, and it will be clear why the music of this motet could not be given here in its entirety. Even the concluding “Salve” is an interpolation, tacked on to give expressive meaning even to the final cadence, which now matches verbally the first grandly impressive “tutti” in the piece.

And that is yet another way in which the style of the Eton antiphons has been amplified: in terms of sheer sonority. The phenomenal upward extension of range in this music testifies to the Eton choirboys’ astounding proficiency. Their ample numbers are suggested not only by the augmented complement of voices—five parts being the Eton norm, with several pieces going to six or even more—but also by the frequency with which the parts are split into “gymels” or twin songs (in the original meaning of the terms), for final cadential chords like the one in m. 10, for even greater richness of sound.

All that magnificence comes at a price. The Eton music is thoroughly “official,” collective, impersonal. It is institutional devotion *par excellence*. It makes no concession whatever to the “middling” tone that had long since begun to distinguish the continental votive motet and give it its compelling mien of personal urgency. That heightened expressivity came in part from a simplification of means. That simplification had originally come, as Tinctoris found it so ironical to recall, from England; but it was abandoned there as the English church became, under the Tudors, increasingly the partner and agent of royal authority.

And that especially necessitated the high style—a style that, as David Josephson, a historian of English music of the early Tudor period, describes it, “does not elicit the understanding, much less the participation, of the congregant. It is music of the High Church. It awes, overwhelms, and perhaps oddly, comforts, as did the ritual to which it was attached, and the buildings in which it was sung.”³ The comfort was the comfort that comes from knowing and believing in something bigger, more powerful, more lasting, more important than ourselves—something with which our presence at worship puts us in touch, and something to which we pray, as embodied and personified in Mary. But note that the prayers addressed to her in the trope to the Salve Regina are collective, not personal: they use the first person plural, never singular; and they are generalized, never particular, rendered on behalf of the community for the salvation of all and for the common good.

The very peak of the High Church style came early in the next century, when English and continental music contrasted even more starkly than they are doing in this chapter, owing to continued continental drift, in the name of personalization, toward simplicity of texture and clarity of declamation. By the time of the English Reformation (or rather, just before it), when we will sample them again, the English and continental styles, particularly in the Mass, will appear downright antithetical despite their common ancestry. That musical divergence reflects a larger divergence in ecclesiastical mores. The one cannot be understood historically without taking due account of the other.

Notes:

(1) Frank L. Harrison, *Music in Medieval Britain* (2nd ed., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 328.

(2) Tinctoris, *Proportionale musices*, in Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 195.

(3) David S. Josephson, *John Taverner: Tudor Composer* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979), p. 124.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Milan

Motet: Later 15th century

THE MILANESE GO LOWER STILL

Chapter: CHAPTER 13 Middle and Low

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

A further step in the continental transformation—and stylistic “lowering”—of motet style was taken in Milan in the 1470s, when a custom was instituted within the Ambrosian rite of actually substituting votive motets addressed to Mary, more rarely to Christ or to local saints, for all of the Ordinary texts of the Mass (and in larger cycles, some of the Propers as well). Cycles of these *motetti missales*, or substitute motets for the Mass, were turned out in quantity. They are affectionately known by scholars as “*loco* Masses,” from the word meaning “in place of,” found in the rubrics that identify such pieces.

The most accomplished and widely disseminated cycles were those composed by the Flemish musicians employed at the court of the Sforzas (the brazenly self-styled “Usurpers” or “Governors-by-force”), a family of mercenary soldiers who in the middle of the century had suddenly risen from the peasantry to become by violent insurgency and advantageous marriage-making the ruling family of Milan. Among this clan of ruthless parvenus were some astute and enthusiastic patrons of the arts, notably the despotic Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza, the temporal ruler of the city from 1466 until his assassination ten years later, and his brother, Cardinal Ascanio Maria Sforza (d. 1505), the city’s ecclesiastical dictator.

Galeazzo’s chief court-and-chapel composer was a very eminent and influential musician indeed, yet one whose current historical reputation does not adequately reflect his eminence and influence. Gaspar van Weerbeke, a Dutchman, was recruited, possibly from Busnoys’s choir at the court of Charles the Bold, to lead the Milanese ducal chapel in 1471. From 1474 to around 1480 he was the Maestro di Cappella at the Milan Cathedral, and then went on to Rome, where he rose eventually to the leadership of the papal choir. His *motetti missales* seem so decisively to reject the lofty tone and the architectural genres of the Franco-Burgundian tradition that his style is often described as having been influenced by Italian popular (hence oral, undocumented) styles and genres. That may be one reason for his comparative neglect by historians and revivers of early music in performance, who have understandably tended to find most of interest in the loftiest and the lowest, and to take the stylistic middle for granted.

There is no real evidence to warrant the assumption that the music of the *motetti missales* is truly “popular” in style, but plenty of evidence that its style is, in the Tinctoris sense, “low.” There is also evidence that the liturgical practice of substituting votive motets for Mass sections—and indirectly, then, the musical style of the result—was dictated by Duke Galeazzo himself, the grandson of an illiterate farmer, and may have reflected his plebeian personal tastes. The leading Italian member of the choir, later to make a great name for himself as a theorist, was Franchino Gaffuri (known from his treatises as Gaffurius), who inherited Weerbeke’s position around 1490 and had three enormous choirbooks inscribed with the court chapel repertory for use at the cathedral (the so-called Milan *libroni*, the “big books”), thus insuring the survival of the *motetti missales* into our day. In a treatise written in the early 1480s, that is, shortly after the fact, Gaffuri refers to Weerbeke’s motet cycles as the *motteti ducales*, the “ducal motets.”⁴



fig. 13-2 Milan Cathedral (*Il duomo*).

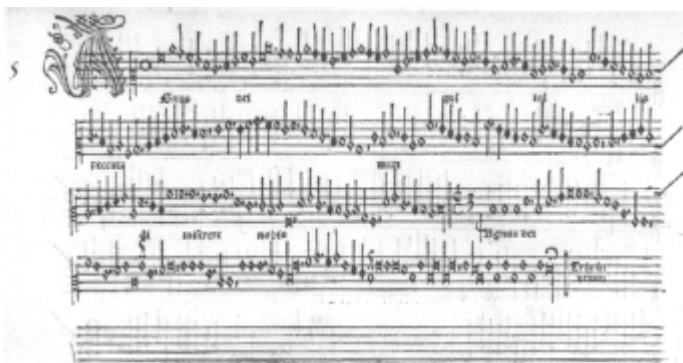


fig. 13-3 The second Agnus Dei (starting in the middle of the third system) from Josquin des Prez's *Missa L'homme armé super voces musicales* as printed in *Missae Josquin* (Venice: Ottaviano Petrucci, 1502). The three parts are to be realized from the single notated line as a triple mensuration canon.

What kind of motets are ducal motets? For one thing, their texts are mostly not canonical liturgical texts. Rather, they tend to be informal composites or pastiches of individual verses drawn from the Bible, from various liturgical items, or from rhymed Latin *versus*, sometimes specially composed. For another, the music generally avoids all suggestion of the “tenor cantus firmus” style. Instead, it tends to resemble the style and some of the constructive methods of the *tenor tacet* sections that relieved and contrasted with the *cantus*.

firmus bearing sections in cyclic Masses, especially those of Busnoys.

In such pieces, the absence of a foundational tenor had been compensated by the use of pervading points of imitation, in which the voices were treated as functionally equivalent, each providing the “authority” for the next. The beginning of Gaspar’s airy-textured *Mater, Patris Filia* (“O Mother, daughter of the Father”), a motet *loco Agnus Dei* from one of his Mass substitution-cycles (Ex. 13-7), seems a clear application of this “tenorless” technique to a full four-part complement. The text, composed of three rhyming verses of votive supplication to the Virgin, reflects the threefold prayer of the Agnus Dei text. The inconsistent rhymes, scansion patterns, and syllable-counts in the verses meanwhile betray the origin of the text in an “extralitururgical” pastiche of stock Marian epithets.

Mater, Patris filia,	O Mother, daughter of the Father,
mulier laetitiae,	O woman of gladness,
stella maris eximia,	O peerless star of the sea,
audi nostra suspiria.	Hear our sighs.
Regina poli curiae,	O Queen of the remotest regions,
Mater misericordiae,	O Mother of mercy,
sis reis porta veniae.	Fling open, please, the gates of forgiveness.
Maria, propter filium	O Mary, for Thy son’s sake
confer nobis remedium.	Grant us Thy aid.
Bone fili, prece matris	Good daughter, grant a mother’s prayer
dona tuis regna Patris.	To us Thy people under Thy Father’s rule.

The image shows a musical score for a sacred composition. It consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system contains the first two lines of the text: 'Ma - - ter, Pa - - tris fi -' and 'Ma - - ter,'. The second system contains the next two lines: 'Ma - - ter, Pa - -', 'li - a,', 'Pa - - tris fi - li -', and 'tris fi - li - a,'. The notation includes various rhythmic values and rests, indicating a complex but structured setting of the text.

ex. 13-7 Gaspar van Weerbeke, *Mater, Patris Filia*, mm. 1-11

Nowhere else have we seen a sacred composition in which the text is set as straightforwardly, line by line, as here. Every line begins with a fresh texture and comes to a full cadence. The first line, as already noted, begins with a full, four-part, regular, but very short-breathed point of imitation, succeeded by a cadential phrase after only ten measures (Ex. 13-7). The next couple of lines are set in what would have been fairly strict homorhythm but for the somewhat more active and decorative altus. Following that there are three short-breathed duos in a row, each of which comes to a full cadence, to bring the first verse to a close. A semblance of continuity is maintained by the retention of a common voice to link successive duos (the common presence of the superius links the first and second; the common presence of the altus links the second and third).

Part of another, somewhat shorter and very lively motet *loco Agnus* from a different cycle of replacement motets (Ex. 13-8) shows a few more favorite textures and devices, from what might be called “paired imitation” at the beginning (the same little duo twice repeated, superius imitating altus, and tenor imitating bassus), rapid homorhythmic “pattersong” (“claustrum Mariae...”), and, finally, the sudden switch from duple to triple subdivisions of the beat, producing a high-energy, dancelike payoff (often called the “proportion” because of its strict common-pulse relationship to the previous tempo).

Contratenor altus
 Quem ter - ra pon - tus ae - the - ra co - lunt ad -

Tenor
 Quem ter - ra pon - tus ae - the - ra co - lunt ad -

Contratenor bassus
 Quem ter - ra pon - tus ae - the - ra quem ter - ra pon - tus ae - the - ra co - lunt ad -

6
 o - rant prae - di - cant tri - nam re - gen - tem ma - chi - nam,

o - rant prae - di - cant tri - nam re - gen - tem ma - chi - nam,

o - rant prae - di - cant tri - nam re - gen - tem ma - chi - nam, ———

o - rant prae - di - cant tri - nam re - gen - tem ma - chi - nam,

11
 clau - strum Ma - ri - ae ba - ju - lat se - cre - ta quae non no - ve - rat. Cui lu - na

clau - strum Ma - ri - ae ba - ju - lat se - cre - ta quae non no - ve - rat.

clau - strum Ma - ri - ae ba - ju - lat se - cre - ta quae non no - ve - rat. Cui lu - na

clau - strum Ma - ri - ae ba - ju - lat se - cre - ta quae non no - ve - rat.

16
 sol et o - mni - a de - ser - vi - unt per tem - po - ra.

sol et o - mni - a de - ser - vi - unt per tem - po - ra per - fu - sa cae - li gra - ti -

Per - fu - sa cae - li gra - ti -

21

Be - a - ta

Be - a - ta

a ge-stant pu - el - lae vi - sce - ra.

a ge-stant pu - el - lae vi - sce - ra.

ex. 13-8 Gaspar van Weerbeke, *Quem terra pontus aethera*, mm. 1-23

Notes:

(4) Franchinus Gaffurius, *Tractatus practicabilium proportionum* (ca. 1482), published as Book IV of *Practica musicae* (Milan, 1496).

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Gaspar van Weerbeke

Loyset Compère

FUN IN CHURCH?

Chapter: CHAPTER 13 Middle and Low

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Gaspar van Weerbeke presided over a stellar group of young musicians in Milan, testifying to his employer's zeal in patronizing nothing but the best as an aspect of princely self-aggrandizement. That is to say: with great acuity, the Sforza dukes managed (in part through Gaspar's scouting "nose") to recruit at early phases of their careers a pleiad of future stars, including at least two whose future fame would eclipse Gaspar's own. They included Johannes Martini (d. 1498), who served briefly in Galeazzo's chapel choir in 1474, between stints at the rival court of Ercole (Hercules) I, Duke of Ferrara, where he eventually directed the chapel choir. In all likelihood, and in time-honored fashion, he used his invitation to sing at Milan as a stepping-stone toward the betterment of his rank at Ferrara.

Even more illustrious than Martini was the youngest northern star who trained under Gaspar van Weerbeke at Milan in the 1470s, a Frenchman named Loyset Compère (d. 1518) who eventually went back home to serve in the court chapel of King Charles VIII in Paris. It was on Compère that Gaspar van Weerbeke and his specially crafted Milanese music made the strongest immediate impression. An even greater number of *motetti missales* survives from Compère's pen than from Gaspar's, and Compère continued to develop this style and to apply it to new genres. His Marian pastiche, *Ave Maria*, is about as low in style as a motet can go, leading one to suspect a double purpose, hailing both Maria Virgo and Galeazzo Maria, both Virgin protectress and noble patron. In its patchwork of texts and tunes it is a virtual send-up of the ancient *ars combinatoria*, cast in very up-to-date patter declamation—syllables placed on minims!—that renders the texts with a dispatch bordering on flippancy.

In the motet's *prima pars* (first half), a cantus firmus is sneaked into the altus, the least "essential" (and therefore, so to speak, least conspicuous) voice, and paraphrased in such a way as virtually to disappear into the contrapuntal warp and weft. It was a familiar melody, however, and no doubt meant to be noticed (at second hearing, perhaps, with a furtive smile of recognition). The plainsong original, a sequence for the Feast of the Assumption (but often sung at other Marian services and appropriated, as it is here, for votive purposes), begins with the familiar words of the daily "Hail, Mary!" prayer, entered above the polyphony in Ex. 13-9.

Meanwhile, the tenor, the voice most likely to carry significant preexisting material, is confined to a monotone recitation of the prayer that the sequence quotes, as if mimicking the mumbling of a distracted communicant going through the rosary, the string of beads on which one counted off the "fifteen decades" ($15 \times 10 = 150!$) of Aves that a pious Christian was expected to recite each and every day. When the rosary recitation in Compère's tenor reaches the name of Jesus, the prayer shifts over to a patchwork of all-purpose litanies: "Kyrie eleison," "Hear us, O Christ," "Holy Mary, pray for us," and so on. The texture, meanwhile, gathers itself up from the opening fairly fragmented state through paired voices (beginning, of course, with the "structural vs. nonessential" opposition), proceeding through an opposition of high and low voices, and ending with an emphatic homorhythm.

A - ve Ma - ri - a gra - ti -
A - ve Ma - ri - a gra - ti - a ple - na
A - ve Ma - ri - a gra -
A - ve Ma - ri - a
A - ve Ma - ri - a, A - ve Ma - ri - a gra -
a ple - na Do - mi - nus te - cum,
Do - mi - nus te - cum Vir - go se -
ti - a ple - na Do - mi - nus te - cum
gra - ti - a ple - na Do - mi - nus te - cum
ti - a ple - na Do - mi - nus te - cum Do - mi - nus

8 Vir - go se - re - na Be - ne - di - cta tu
 re - na Be - ne - di - cta tu
 vir - go se - re - na Be - ne - di - cta tu in mu - li -
 te - cum, Vir - go se - re - na Be - ne - di - cta tu in mu - li -

12 in mu - li - er - i - bus
 in mu - li - e - ri - bus et be - ne - di - ctus
 e - ri - bus, in mu - li - e - ri - bus et be - ne - di - ctus
 in mu - li - e - ri - bus et be - ne - di - ctus fruc -
 e - ri - bus, in mu - li - e - ri - bus et be - ne - di - ctus

15 fru - ctus ven - tris tu - i Ky - ri - e - lei - son
 fru - ctus ven - tris tu - i
 tus ven - tris tu - i Je - sus. Ky - ri - e - lei - son
 fru - ctus ven - tris tu - i

ex. 13-9 Loyset Compère, *Ave Maria*, mm. 1-18

The *secunda pars* expands the litany to include a wide variety of patron saints, mirroring the crowd of new names with a pervasively imitative texture in which the order and interval of entries, and the rhythmic values, are unpredictably varied. The motet explodes at the end into a long and exceptionally virtuosic triple “proportion.” This is truly something new: funny church music—funny, but still pious. Piety of this kind, though, is “humane”—pitched to the level of its hearers, rather than (like the English High-Church polyphony sampled earlier) way, way over their heads.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Bergerette

Johannes Ockeghem

Josquin des Prez

LOVE SONGS

Chapter: CHAPTER 13 Middle and Low

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

These effects of whimsical, humanized religion seem to suggest the influence of the secular, vernacular genres of literate music—the official “low” style, according to Tinctoris. The vernacular genres, too, were undergoing significant change in the later fifteenth century, in stylistic terms aiming both higher and lower than before, and making many new points of contact across the generic and stylistic boundaries.

There was a new genre on the horizon, called the *bergerette*. Although its name (“shepherdess”) suggests a pastoral style, it originated in French court circles, and so it is not surprising that Ockeghem was its first eminent practitioner. It was a sort of high-toned synthesis of two earlier “fixed forms,” the *rondeau* and *virelai*. Its stanzaic structure was similar to the latter: a refrain enclosing a pair of shorter verses and a turnaround sung, when the poem was set to music, to the same music as the refrain, thus: A b b a A. Unlike the *virelai*, however, which could go on forever, the *bergerette* was a self-contained single strophe, in which the refrain and turnaround (the “A” sections) were ample five-line stanzas in their own right, comparable to *rondeaux cinquaines*.

An early classic of the genre was Ockeghem’s *Ma bouche rit et ma pensée pleure* (“My mouth laughs but my thoughts weep,” Ex. 13-10)—a classic by virtue of its wide dissemination (seventeen extant sources, a veritable record, indicating an original distribution in the hundreds) and its later emulation by younger composers, in one case as the tenor of a *cantus-firmus* Mass. The dates of its earliest sources suggest that Ockeghem’s *chanson* was composed by the beginning of the 1460s.

1., 5. Ma bou - che rit et ma pen - sé - e pleu - - -

Ma bouche rit

Ma bouche rit

- - - re, Mon oeil s'es - joye et mon cueur mau - dit l'eu - re

Qu'il eut le - bien qui sa - san - té - des -

- chas - se Et le plai - sir que la -

— mort me pour - chas - se Sans res - con -

- fort qui - m'ai - de ne - se - queu - re.

2. Ha, cuer per - vers, faul - saire et men - son - ger, Dic -
3. Puis qu'en ce point vous vous vou - lez ven - ger, Pen -

Ha, cuer pervers
Puis qu'en ce point

Ha, cuer pervers
Puis qu'en ce point

ex. 13-10 Johannes Ockeghem, *Ma bouche rit*

The outstanding textural novelty here is the use of almost systematic imitation entirely confined to the superius and the tenor, the voices that make up the structural pair. The incipits of both musical sections are imitations at the octave at a time interval of two tempora. They could hardly be more conspicuous. Thereafter, the alerted ear will pick up the imitation at the fourth on the final melisma of the second line of the refrain, at the last line of the refrain (“Sans reconfort...”), and (more subtly) at the last line of the second musical section, the very end of the music as notated. This final one is less pronounced not only because it is shorter but also because it is covered up by the movement of the other voices. Elsewhere, Ockeghem is careful to lay bare the points of imitation by having the second entering voice rest while the first enunciates the motif that will be imitated.

This kind of superius–tenor imitation, in which the nonessential voice or voices do not participate, could be called “structural” (as opposed to “pervading”) imitation. We have already observed it in Gaspar’s substitution motet, *Mater, Patris filia* (Ex. 13-7). It became a standard practice in motets (especially Milanese motets) as well as chansons, and typifies the convergence of the middle and low genres—a convergence that, depending on the context, can be construed as the lowering of the middle or the raising of the low.

In the case of the bergerette, it is clearly a case of raising the low, for raising can be observed in other ways as well. We have already noted the textual enlargement. No less significant is the casting of the music in two absolutely self-contained sections, with the second (here, the *residuum*, “the rest”) actually labeled as such. That amounts to mimicry of the musical structure of the motet, or even of the two-part motet’s model, the individual cyclic Mass “movement.” In later bergerettes, including those of Busnoys, the *residuum* is often set off from the refrain by the use of a contrasting mensuration, again mimicking the motet or Mass section.

From the “tonal” point of view, too, Ockeghem’s *Ma bouche rit* is novel and exceptionally “high.” It is one of the earliest polyphonic compositions to incorporate a final “Phrygian” cadence, by way of a sighing tenor half step down to E, as an emblem of special melancholy or seriousness. At least as reflected in the surviving sources, on which alone we can base our knowledge of the past, Phrygian polyphony seems to have been a special predilection of Ockeghem, who bequeathed it as a standard resource to succeeding generations (and even Du Fay, possibly, who wrote a handful of Phrygian pieces at the very end of his career, probably after Ockeghem had already set the standard.) The earliest Phrygian Masses and motets, as well as the earliest Phrygian chansons (all bergerettes), were Ockeghem’s.

Josquin des Prez, who was reputed to be (or, at least, who cast himself as being) Ockeghem's star pupil, made a great production of emulating Ockeghem's Phrygian music, among many other emblematic things, in his *Missa L'Homme Armé super voces musicales*, already familiar to us as an Ockeghem tribute (see Ex. 12-17). The ground plan of that Mass required pitching the final of the cantus-firmus melody on each of the six notes of the natural hexachord in turn. E's turn came in the Credo, and Josquin announces the arrival of the Phrygian mode by positively screaming out the Phrygian half-step progression at the outset (Ex. 13-11).

To acquire the versatility required to compose polyphony in any mode, one must study models. Josquin slyly tells us what model he studied for the Phrygian in the *Agnus Dei II*, a famous tour de force that, owing to the fascination it exerted on theorists in Josquin's day and on textbook writers since, has become the most famous part of the Mass. Outwardly an emulation of the *Missa Prolationum*, this mind-boggling little piece exponentially outstrips Ockeghem's example by "answering" the older master's two-part mensuration canon (Ex. 12-7b) with one in three parts, immeasurably more difficult to devise. And the tempo relationship of the three simultaneous parts—1:2:3—has been a famous challenge to performers since the sixteenth century. Josquin's single notated line is reproduced in Fig. 13-3 directly from Petrucci's volume of *Josquin Masses*, while Ex. 13-12 gives a transcription.

Where have we seen the beginning of Fig. 13-3 before? Look again at *Ma bouche rit* (Ex. 13-10), this time paying attention to the part to which no attention was paid the first time around. The contratenor, the "nonessential" voice that keeps out of the "structural imitation" that monopolized our gaze, is the source (the cantus firmus, if you will) for Josquin's amazing melodic line that reproduces itself in counterpoint at three different speeds and at two different pitch levels. It was probably a special joke to appropriate a lowly contratenor, a joke underscored for those who got it by the "laugh" embodied in the name of the parent song, springing unexpectedly to mind in the midst of Mass.

Pa - trem o - mni - po - ten - tem, fa - cto - rem
 Pa - trem o - mni - po - ten - tem, fa - cto - rem

coe - li et ter - rae, vi - si - bi - li - um o - mni - um et
 coe - li et ter - rae, vi - si - bi - li - um o - mni -

Pa - trem o -

Vi - si - bi - li - um o - mni - um et

in - vi - si - bi - li - um Et in u - num
 um et in - vi - si - bi - li - um

mni - po - ten - tem fa -

in - vi - si - bi - li - um Et in u - num

ex. 13-11 Josquin des Prez, *Missa L'Homme Armé super voces musicales*, Credo, mm. 1-13



fig. 13-4 Lorenzo de' Medici, "the Magnificent" (1449–1492), depicted among the artists whom he patronized by the Florentine painter Ottavio Vannini ca. a century after Lorenzo's death.

ex. 13-12 Josquin des Prez, *Missa L'Homme Armé super voces musicales*, Agnus II, realized in three parts

Josquin, trickster supreme, had a special fondness for contratenors, where one is least likely to look for anything special. The altus voice in his motet *Christe, Fili Dei* ("Christ, O Son of God"), a *loco Agnus Dei* substitute that comes at the end of a cycle of Milanese-styled *motetti missales*, carries a hidden message very

much like the one in the Ockeghem-based Agnus Dei just considered. The motet is laid out in three well-defined sections corresponding to those of the Agnus Dei chant. The first two sections end with the Agnus Dei prayer itself (*miserere nobis*), and the motet is thus ostensibly addressed to Christ (the Lamb of God) himself. Section 1 is given in Ex. 13-13a.

The threefold invocation “Christe fili Dei” is set each time to the same music. It consists of what by now we might fairly expect, namely an imitative duo for superius and tenor, the “structural pair.” That is what arrests the immediate attention and occupies the mind’s foreground. Yet the very end of the text gives away the votive game: if Christ is to hear our prayers, they must be mediated by his *sanctissima mater*, his “most holy Mother, Mary,” ever our intercessor.

And now we notice the subliminal message that the altus has been insinuating all along; for it carries, throughout, a borrowed melody, and a very famous one—the superius of the rondeau *J’ay pris amours* (“I’ve taken love as my motto”), probably the most popular French chanson of the late fifteenth century (Ex. 13-14). The altus, then, crooning this love song in the midst of prayer, is in effect sending a secret love letter to the Virgin while the text ostensibly addresses her Son. In a much less formal way, Josquin is doing what Du Fay had done in his *Missa Se la face ay pale*. Where Du Fay’s Mass had displayed the borrowed secular tune as an emblem, Josquin allows it to infiltrate his texture as an inconspicuous “nonessential” voice.

ex. 13-13a Josquin des Prez, *Christe, Fili Dei* (loco Agnus Dei in cycle *Vultum Tuum deprecabuntur*), mm. 1-11

The borrowed melody’s big moment comes at the end, where Mary is finally alluded to in the text, and the altus and bassus treat the final phrase of *J’ay pris amours* to a fully exposed point of imitation (Ex. 13-13b). This reference, one must assume, was meant to be heard and recognized, and to color retrospectively the whole motet. Josquin’s ostensibly secular song-phrase within the ostensibly sacred genre of the motet.

though novel in method and effect, was not really a new idea. It was only the latest manifestation of what by the fifteenth century was already a fairly ancient practice—the fusing of the popularized sacred and the sacralized secular—whose tradition reaches back some four hundred years, all the way to the original *Salve Regina* chant, cast in the form of a *canço*, a courtly love song to the Virgin.

The image shows a musical score for Josquin des Prez's 'Christe, Fili Dei' (loco Agnus Dei in cycle). The score is in G major and 4/4 time, featuring four staves: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The lyrics are: 'pre - ci - bus san - ctis - si - me ma - tris ad - iu - va nos et tol - le tri - bu - la - ti - o - nem no - stram.' The score includes a key signature change to G major and a time signature change to 4/4. The lyrics are written below the staves, with hyphens indicating syllables across measures. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

ex. 13-13b Josquin des Prez, *Christe, Fili Dei* (loco *Agnus Dei* in cycle *Vultum Tuum deprecabuntur*), mm. 28-end

Thus it would be a mistake to regard this fusion of sacred and secular as an “essential” (meaning an *exclusive*) trait of the burgeoning “Renaissance.” Its significance is far more inclusive than that, suggesting that categories and oppositions we may be inclined to regard as hard and fast—sacred vs. secular, spiritual vs. temporal, high vs. low, literate vs. oral—were never quite as firm or constant as we might like to pretend. Unless policed (by churchmen, by schoolmen, by snobs, and by “theorists” of all kinds) they tend to merge and fecundate one another.

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Chanson

Duo

Bicinium

Absolute music

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC BECOMES LITERATE AT LAST

Chapter: CHAPTER 13 Middle and Low

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Superius

1. 4. J'ay pris a - mours _____ à ma de - vi - - - -
 3. S'il est au - cun _____ qui m'en des - pri - - - -
 5. Il _____ me sem - ble que c'est la gui - - - -

Tenor

Contratenor

7 A B

- - se Pour con - qué -rir joi -
 - - se Il _____ me doit _____ e -
 - - se Qui _____ n'a rien, _____ il _____

13 C

- - stre - cu - se té, 2. 8. Eu - -
 _____ par - don - né. _____
 est de - - bou - té. 6. Et _____

18 D

- reux _____ se - ray en cest _____ e - sté, _____
 _____ n'est _____ de per - son - ne _____ ho - no - ré. _____

23

se puis ve - nir _____ a mon em - pri - - - - se. _____
 N'est - ce point droit que je y vi - - - - se? _____

ex. 13-14 *J'ay pris amours* (anonymous rondeau)

The elegantly crafted *J'ay pris amours* seems the perfect late fifteenth-century chanson, and so it was evidently regarded at the time. Its popularity was something phenomenal, to judge by the usual standards of

wide dissemination and emblematic or emulatory recycling in later music—so phenomenal, in fact, that its present-day status as an anonymous composition is something of a phenomenon in itself. Its nearest rival for favor was *De tous biens plaine* (“Full of all good things”), by the Burgundian court composer Hayne van Ghizeghem, whose surviving output consists entirely of rondeaux. Like *Jay pris amours*, Hayne’s song was appropriated as a Marian emblem for cantus-firmus Masses and motets, including a famous motet by Compère that translated the opening words into Latin (*omnium bonorum plena*), addressed them directly to the Virgin, and called down her blessings on a whole honor roll of French and Flemish musicians.

Jay pris amours is conceivably another song by Hayne, or one by his Burgundian colleague Busnoys, but any of the leading French-speaking composers of their generation would be a plausible candidate. Despite the song’s anonymous status, its quality leaves little doubt that its composer was a major figure. The opening phrase, in a manner that became increasingly popular (possibly as a result of this very song’s success), starts with a motto or *devise*, just as the text says: a five-note phrase, very strongly profiled in rhythm and contour, that is set off from what follows by a short rest.

It is set off in another way as well, since it is held immune from the systematic “structural imitation” that unifies the rest of the song. Starting with the second phrase, the superius and tenor move in pretty strict imitation at the octave, with occasional freer imitation at the fifth (as in mm. 8–10—the kind of thing one calls a “tonal answer” in a fugue), and with one ingenious spot where the tenor recalls a prior motif from the superius (compare mm. 20–23 with mm. 3–4). Structural imitation briefly becomes pervasive in the final “point”: the phrase initiated by the superius in m. 23 is matched not only by the tenor, as expected, but also by the contratenor (end of m. 25).

The paramount historical significance of favorite songs like *Jay pris amours* and *De tous biens plaine* lay in the later work they inspired, which led to a new genre, born in the late fifteenth century without precedent in the literate tradition, but probably reflecting the longstanding practice of virtuoso improvisers. In his treatise called “On the invention and use of music” (*De inventione et usu musicae*), Tinctoris described the work of “two blind Flemings,” obviously barred by their handicap from involvement in literate repertoires, who nevertheless put their learned colleagues to shame with their flamboyant improvisations on standard tunes, reminiscent in Tinctoris’s description of jazz solos: “At Bruges I heard Charles take the treble and Jean the tenor in many songs, playing the fiddle (*vielle*) so expertly and with such charm that the fiddle has never pleased me so well.”⁵

That would have been in the writer’s youth, before he went south to serve the king of Naples. Could these blind brothers have been the same blind fiddlers that, according to Martin le Franc in *Le champion des dames*, astonished and abashed the court musicians of Burgundy, including Binchois and Du Fay, with their amazing virtuosity? Probably not; the one description relates to the 1430s, the other to the 1460s; but that only strengthens our impression that virtuoso fiddling on the trebles and tenors of familiar chansons had a long history before its earliest reflections in the written sources.

Three such early reflections are found in a manuscript now kept at the municipal library of Perugia in northern Italy. It is a compendium of music treatises, including one, called *Regule de proportionibus* (“Rules of proportions”), that contains dozens of little problem pieces, mainly in two parts, of which so many are known to be by Tinctoris himself that the assumption is inescapable that so are the rest. Each one introduces some new difficulty of notation, preparing the way for a three-part monster called *Difficiles alios* (translatable in this context as “The hardest ones of all”) that Bonnie J. Blackburn, its discoverer, wittily describes as “the musical equivalent of a bar examination,” having passed which one could claim the title of *musicus*—a fully trained musician.⁶

Three of the study-pieces on the way to the exam are textless duos in which one part consists of the superius of *Jay pris amours*—a well-known tune whose familiarity makes it an effective “control”—and the other consists of a virtuosic counterpoint to it, after the fashion of those blind fiddlers’ teams described above. The difference, of course, is that Tinctoris’s duo is a proving ground for literate, rather than “oral” virtuosity—virtuosity not just in singing and playing *per se* but also in reading and using complicated notation. The easiest and most straightforward of the three duos is given in Ex. 13-15.

ex. 13-15 Instrumental duo on *J'ay pris amours*

From duos that test and display virtuoso reading skills it is but a step to untexted chanson arrangements that test and display virtuoso compositional skills—and a familiar step indeed, given the tradition of competitive compositional *tours de force* with which we have been acquainted since the thirteenth century. The one by Henricus Isaac whose beginning is given in Ex. 13-16a is found in a late fifteenth-century Florentine manuscript, and must therefore date from the composer's period of service to the great Florentine Duke Lorenzo de' Medici ("il Magnifico"). The original treble is preserved against a new and very florid tenor that may represent the type of brisk and airy counterpoint with which the itinerant Flemish fiddlers used to wow their audiences. The compositional tour de force, however, is in the contratenor, which Isaac has fashioned entirely out of repetitions and transpositions of the opening *devise*, the memorable five-note motto that distinguished the original tune.

An even more ambitious tour de force is the one whose beginning is shown in Ex. 13-16b, by Martini, found in the same Florentine manuscript. It consists of the original structural pair, the treble and tenor together,

with their many intricate imitations and motivic interrelationships, accompanied by a new contratenor that runs against itself in strict canon at the unison, at a mere minim's time lag. Needless to say, the original notation is in only three parts with a rubric denoting the canon, so that the piece turns into a tour de force for the reading musicians as well as the composer. There is another bizarre canonic arrangement of precisely this kind by Josquin, based on the superius and tenor of that other great hit, *De tous biens plaine*. Obviously, the two pieces represent a sort of informal competition ("If you can do it on *De tous*, I'll do it on *J'ay pris!*") between friendly rivals.

ex. 13-16a Henricus Isaac, *J'ay pris amours*, mm. 1-13

ex. 13-16b Johannes Martini, *J'ay pris amours*, mm. 1-4

Besides these, there is a *J'ay pris amours* setting by a minor contemporary of Martini and Josquin named Jean Japart in which the original superius is actually performed as the bassus, transposed down a twelfth and sung back to front (the rubric simply says *Vade retro, Sathanas*: "Get thee back[wards], O Satan"). There is one by Buzonno, titled *J'ay pris amours tout en rebours* ("I have taken love the wrong way round") in

which the original tenor is inverted, so that all its intervals are turned *au rebours*. There is one by Obrecht, clearly meant to be the chanson arrangement to end all chanson arrangements, in which the superius and tenor are each used as the cantus firmus twice, migrating systematically throughout a four-part texture. There is even an anonymous arrangement in which the treble of *J'ay pris amours* is shoehorned into counterpoint with the tenor of *De tous biens plaine*.

What was the purpose of all this beguiling ingenuity? Amusement for the composer? Yes, of course, but not only for the composer. There was an audience to sustain it, a public audience that was soon to become, in the classic economic sense, a “market.” The existence of that audience is attested by a new kind of musical text-source called a partbook: a volume, or rather a set of volumes, each of which contains a single part—superius, tenor, contratenor, etc.—from a polyphonic texture. The earliest set of partbooks is the so-called *Glogauer Liederbuch* (“Songbook from Glogau”), a set of three books compiled and copied in the late 1470s in or near the town of Glogau in Silesia, a border district between Germany and Poland, which has often changed hands between the two countries. (Glogau is now Glogów, Poland, and the partbooks now belong to the old Royal Library in Kraków.)

The *Glogauer Liederbuch* contains a huge miscellany of Latin-texted, German-texted, and textless compositions, with which, evidently, the retired canons and brothers at the local Augustinian monastery amused themselves in convivial singing and playing. That has been the chief use of partbooks ever since. Nowadays we associate them with what we call chamber music—string quartets and the like—a genre that, while by now thoroughly professionalized, began as a convivial one. The music in the *Glogauer Liederbuch*, whether texted or not, can be regarded as the earliest extant chamber music—for chamber music can be vocal as well as instrumental, if it involves an ensemble and if its primary or original purpose was convivial. The genre of vocal chamber music has more or less died out, but there was an enormous literature of it, attesting to an enormous market for it, in the sixteenth century. We will take a close look at it shortly.

For now, though, let us concentrate on the textless and (presumably) chiefly instrumental repertory. Significantly, the *Glogauer Liederbuch* contains no fewer than three textless arrangements of *J'ay pris amours*. They are not found elsewhere and are thus probably the work of local composers, which testifies all the more strongly to the widespreadness of the genre and its attendant practices. These arrangements are identified not by the original French words but by a German tag, *Gross senen* (“Great longing”).

Their beginnings are lined up for comparison in Ex. 13-17. The first consists of the original superius and tenor plus a new contratenor, placed, very unusually, in the topmost position. The other two are based on the original tenor only, accompanied by two new voices. In Ex. 13-17b, the tenor is in the traditional tenor position, in the middle. Ex. 13-17c replaces the contratenor bassus of Ex. 13-17b with a contratenor altus, retaining both the tenor and the superius of the previous arrangement. There is even a fourth *Gross senen* piece in the *Glogauer Liederbuch*, as shown in Ex. 13-17d. It is based on the superius of the preceding pair of arrangements and thus contains no original *J'ay pris amours* material at all, but is still demonstrably a part of the famous song's tradition. It is not the musical child of *J'ay pris amours*, but its grandchild. The family resemblance can be discerned only by those who are familiar with the middle generation.

ex. 13-17 *Gross senen* (*J'ay pris amours*) settings from the *Glogauer Liederbuch*

A musical score for three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, marked 'c.f. (original tenor)'. The middle and bottom staves are instrumental lines in bass clef. The music is in common time (C) and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and dynamic markings.

ex. 13-17b Original tenor with two new voices

A musical score for three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, marked 'c.f. (original tenor)'. The middle staff is a vocal line in treble clef, and the bottom staff is an instrumental line in bass clef. The music is in common time (C) and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and dynamic markings.

ex. 13-17c Superius and tenor of the preceding with a new contratenor

cf. (original tenor)

A musical score for three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef. The middle and bottom staves are instrumental lines in bass clef. The music is in common time (C) and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and dynamic markings.

ex. 13-17d Superius of the preceding with two new voices

So the chanson arrangement (or *Liedbearbeitung*, as the composer(s) of the *Gross senen* pieces would have called it) was a very important genre historically. A few scattered predecessors aside (like the “vielle players’ *In seculum*” given in the Bamberg motet manuscript discussed in chapter 7), it was the earliest form of instrumental chamber music, in effect the earliest form of “functionless” or “autonomous” instrumental music.

The word “functionless” should not be misunderstood: obviously, everything that is used has its use. If the Glogauer chanson arrangements were played for recreation and enjoyed, then recreation and enjoyment were their function. But providing the occasion for active (players’) or passive (listeners’) enjoyment of sound patterns is a very different, far less utilitarian sort of function from marching or dancing or worship. It emphasizes leisure, contemplation, pleasure in sensuous diversion and abstract design—in a word, “esthetics.”

We are witnessing, in short, the earliest manifestation of the condition of “absolute” art or art-for-art’s-sake as defined a good three centuries later by the German thinkers who invented and named the philosophical

category known formally as esthetics, or inquiry into the nature of the beautiful—particularly Immanuel Kant, who coined the phrase “purposeless purposiveness” (*Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck*) to capture its paradoxical fascination. Anybody who attends concerts and sits still, intently watching and listening while people on stage zealously hit skins with sticks, blow into brass tubes or cane reeds, and scrape horsehair over sheep gut, will know what purposeless purposiveness is all about without elaborate explanations, and the skin-hitters, tube-blowers, and gut-scrappers know best of all.

Of course the modern concept of “absolute music” is not completely or even accurately defined if we do not emphasize the supreme value placed on it as an art-experience since the nineteenth century. By contrast, the fifteenth-century forerunner, compared with a cyclic Mass or a motet or even with a texted courtly song, was of all genres the lowest and the lightest, mere fluff. And yet the leisured clerical senior citizens who sat around amusing themselves with the *Glogauer Liederbuch* in the last decades of the fifteenth century could nevertheless be described as the earliest literate “music lovers” in the modern, esthetic sense.

Notes:

(5) Tinctoris, *De inventione et usu musicae* (Naples: Nathias Moravus, ca. 1482), ed. K. Weinmann: *Johannes Tinctoris und sein unbekannter Traktat 'De inventione et usu musicae'* (Regensburg, 1917), p. 31.

(6) Bonnie J. Blackburn, “A Lost Guide to Tinctoris’s Teachings Recovered,” *Early Music History* I (1981): 45.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

MUSIC BECOMES A BUSINESS

Chapter: CHAPTER 13 Middle and Low

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

It was the spread of that kind of music-loving that supported the earliest music business—written music as a commodity possessing monetary exchange value. It is no accident that the very earliest printed publication containing polyphonic music was largely given over to textless chanson arrangements, including some of those on *Jay pris amours* with which we are now familiar. It was brought out in 1501 by Ottaviano Petrucci, the same enterprising Venetian printer who the next year brought out the volume of Josquin Masses mentioned at the end of the chapter 12. Its highfalutin pseudo-Greeky title was *Harmonice musices odhecaton A*, which means, roughly, “A Hundred Pieces of Polyphonic Music, Vol. I.” Petrucci knew his market. The next year he issued his second volume of chamber music, called *Canti B numero cinquanta* (“Songs, vol. II, numbering fifty”), and in 1504 came *Canti C numero cento cinquanta* (“Songs, vol. III, numbering one hundred and fifty”), equal in size to the other two collections combined—proof positive of successful marketing.

The production of printed music books, and the new music-economy thus ushered in, was a crucial stage in the conceptualizing of a “piece” or “work” of music as an objectively existing thing—a tangible, concrete entity that can be placed in one’s hands in exchange for money; that can be handled and transported; that can be seen as well as heard; that can be, as it were, gazed upon by the ear. This “thingifying” of music (or reification, to use the professional philosopher’s word for it), leading to its commodification and the creation of commercial middlemen for its dissemination—this was the long-range result of literacy, and the vehicle of its triumph.

From this point on, music would be defined, at least for the urban and the educated, as something that was *primarily* written: a text. So fluff though it was, the instrumental chanson arrangement—the commercialized, middle-class by-product of the high-purpose, high-class genres of the day, amounting to the bastard offspring of Mass, motet, and chanson—was indirectly of decisive importance to the future of literate music and music-making in the West.

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Printing and publishing of music

Ottaviano Petrucci

Canto

Henricus Isaac

Fantasia

“SONGS” WITHOUT WORDS

Chapter: CHAPTER 13 Middle and Low

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The word *canto* (“song”), as used by Petrucci in his titles, refers specifically, if paradoxically, to something that was not sung—namely, textless, instrumental items of chamber music. The usage was in fact common at the time; in the *Glogauer Liederbuch* and other German sources, the Latin equivalent of Petrucci’s Italian word—*carmen* (plural *carmina*)—was used in the same meaning: an instrumental piece based on, or in the style of, a song: a “song without words.”

The actual chanson arrangement was, by Petrucci’s time, only one kind of *carmen* (to adopt, as less confusing, the Latin term for our descriptive purposes). Another, equally popular kind consisted of *tenor tacet* subsections extracted from Masses and motets, sometimes identified as such, more often not. The *tenor tacet* piece, we may recall, was the hotbed of pervading imitation—a “purely musical” sort of patterning if ever there was one, which could sustain a “purely musical” listener’s interest. One famous example, published in Petrucci’s *Odhecaton* and found in many manuscripts as well, was a Benedictus by Isaac (Ex. 13-18). It came from a Mass based on the tenor of Busnoys’s chanson *Quant j’ay au cuer* (“Since I hold in my heart...”) that was probably meant for Marian feasts and votive observances. The tenorless Benedictus contains no hint of the cantus firmus, however. Its emphasis on pure patterning pleasure, as well as its floridity, conspired to make it appear a very paradigm of “instrumental style” in the opinion of modern scholars—until, that is, the Mass from which it was extracted was discovered and notions of “instrumental” vs. “vocal” style had to be radically revised.

The image displays five systems of musical notation, each consisting of three staves. The top staff of each system is in a treble clef, the middle in an alto clef, and the bottom in a bass clef. The music is written in a minor key, indicated by one flat in the key signature. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and rests. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs at the end of the fifth system.

ex. 13-18 Henricus Isaac, *Benedictus* from *Missa Quant j'ay au cuer*, as it appears (without text) in Petrucci's *Odhecaton*

The final stage, of course, consisted of specially composed songs-without-words in a style adapted from those of chanson arrangements and *tenor tacet* sections, but without preexisting material. Such pieces amounted to the earliest repertoire of “abstractly” conceived chamber music, intended for an audience of playing and listening connoisseurs. The earliest important contributors to this genre were the same composers already encountered in connection with the chanson arrangement. The most prolific was Henricus Isaac (d. 1517), a Fleming who worked in Florence, later at the Austrian court of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. The runners-up were Martini, Josquin des Prez, and Alexander Agricola (d. 1506), who wrote his share of Masses, motets, and songs for the courts and churches of France and Italy, but whose chief claim to fame was a whole raft of *carmina* that eventually found their way to the commercial presses of Petrucci, including (to give an idea of his fertility) no fewer than six instrumental arrangements of *De tous biens plaine*. Agricola also wrote *carmina* in the more modern imitative style, free (as far as anyone knows) of borrowed material.

Ex. 13-19 shows the beginnings of two late fifteenth-century *carmina* of the latter type—original *carmina* without known prototype. Both have significant titles. *La Alfonsina* (13-19a), from Petrucci’s *Odhecaton*, was the work of Johannes Ghiselin (alias Verbonnet), a Picard or northern French composer who worked in Italy alongside Obrecht and Josquin at the court of Ferrara. The title translates as “Alfonso’s little piece,” after the composer’s patron, Alfonso I d’Este, Duke of Ferrara (and husband of the notorious Lucrezia Borgia).

A similar piece by Josquin in Petrucci’s *Canti C* is called *La Bernardina* (“Bernardo’s little piece”). Giving *carmina* the names of people was a handy way of getting around the problem of what to call a piece in this “purposeless” genre, and could be applied to producers as well as consumers. One of Martini’s best-disseminated pieces of this kind (found in a dozen manuscripts, including the *Glogauer Liederbuch*) was called *La Martinella* (“Martini’s little piece”). Somewhat later, Ludwig Sennfl (ca. 1486–ca. 1543), a Swiss-German pupil of Isaac, identified a few of his *carmina* by naming their finals: *Carmen in la* (“Song in A”), *Carmen in re* (“Song in D”), and the like, anticipating the practice of identifying abstract or “functionless” instrumental music by naming its key (“Sonata in A major,” “Symphony in D minor”).

La Alfonsina and other pieces of its type were in essence a kind of souped-up version of (or “answer” to) Isaac’s Benedictus. The opening point of imitation in *La Alfonsina* is a veritable rewrite of Isaac’s, disguised (or rather, displayed) by reversing the order of its constituent phrases. The brisk minim motion that came in the middle of Isaac’s opening “theme” now comes at the beginning, and it is carried through the entire rising octave for additional virtuoso verve. The attractive passage near the end of the Benedictus in which the tenor sings florid sequences against the sustained parallel tenths of the outer voices is mirrored in Ghiselin’s piece near the middle: two parts cast in imitative sequences against one part, the superius, cast in descending dotted longs that crosscut the prevailing meter. Ghiselin adroitly tightens things up into a pair of strettos (points of imitation at a reduced time lag and with overlapping entries) in conclusion. It is a brilliant little piece.

The image displays a musical score for Johannes Ghiselin's *La Alfonsina*, measures 1-19. The score is presented in three systems, each consisting of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in alto clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The music is in 3/4 time and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes with some rests.

ex. 13-19a Johannes Ghiselin, *La Alfonsina*, mm. 1-19

Ile fantazies de Joskin (Ex. 13-19b) is found in a manuscript thought to contain the repertoire of the ducal wind band (or *alta*, “loud ensemble”) at Ferrara. Like most pieces of its type (or of its parent types) it fluctuates between pervasive and structural imitation, with fanfare-like strettos reflecting the probable medium of performance (sackbuts or trombones and double-reed instruments called shawms or bombards, depending on range).

The image displays a musical score for Josquin des Prez's 'Ile fantazies de Joskin', measures 1-12. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system features three vocal staves: Soprano, Tenor, and Bass, all in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The second system consists of three instrumental staves, likely for lute or keyboard, also in treble clef with the same key signature. The music is characterized by its imitative polyphony, with various voices and instruments entering and responding to each other.

ex. 13-19b Josquin des Prez, *Ile fantazies de Joskin*, mm. 1-12

The significance of the title is in the use of the word *fantazie* (fantasia). The word has had several musical meanings. The earliest one was a textless musical theme or idea, something produced out of imagination rather than on the basis of an earlier authority like a cantus firmus. Later the word came to denote an instrumental composition in a systematically imitative style. (Still later it came to denote a demonstratively “free-form” composition, ruled by imagination rather than strict formal procedure.) Josquin’s little piece, probably composed around 1480, links the first meaning with the second. The transfer of imitative texture to the instrumental medium was the real signal of its ascendancy. It was now polyphony’s basic *modus operandi*, and so it would remain throughout the sixteenth century, which might appropriately be called the century of imitative polyphony. In any case, as we are about to see, the perfection of imitative polyphony in the sixteenth century meant for contemporary musicians the perfection of the art of music itself.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 14 Josquin and the Humanists

Josquin Des Prez in Fact and Legend; Parody Masses

Chapter: CHAPTER 14 Josquin and the Humanists

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

WHAT LEGENDS DO

As with Machaut in chapter 9, we are going to take time out, so to speak, and devote a whole chapter to a single composer. This time the close-up will be on Josquin des Prez (d. 1521), whose work has already figured, alongside that of Busnoys, Ockeghem, Obrecht, Isaac, Martini, and others, in chapters 12 and 13. It is appropriate to single him out at this point, not only because of the intrinsic quality of his music (although that is axiomatic) but also — and mainly — because Josquin became a legend in his own time, remained a legend throughout the sixteenth century, and became one again when he was discovered by modern historians. Burney, in the late eighteenth century, called him “the type of all Musical excellence at the time in which he lived,” and so he has remained in the eye of history.¹ His supreme legendary status has caused Josquin to be studied more intensively, and in greater detail, than any contemporary. Yet in seeming (but only seeming) paradox, that same legendary status has also worked to hide him from view.

To the student of history, the Josquin legend is if anything even more important than the composer himself, because in describing it and accounting for its formation we may gain some critical insight into certain momentous changes that took place in the sixteenth century affecting attitudes toward music and its creators. These changes, in their relationship to the body of contemporary thought known as humanism, provide whatever justification there is for the use of the word “Renaissance” as applied to music.

In his unprecedented stature and his undisputed preeminence in the eyes of his contemporaries and posterity, Josquin has never failed to remind recent historians of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), who was similarly regarded three centuries later, and who retains a similar quasi-legendary aura. Drawing parallels between them is easy; doing so has become traditional in music historiography. Unease with this tradition has occasionally been expressed by those who see in it a danger to an unprejudiced view of Josquin and his time. Certainly we learn little if we merely assimilate what is less familiar to what is more familiar. To think of Josquin merely as a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century Beethoven would be like placing him behind the nearer figure and thereby obscuring him from view.

Worse, drawing parallels between historically remote figures simply on the basis of their perceived greatness may lead to the perpetuation of what many regard as an insidious art-idolatry that discourages critical thinking about artists and their work. Unease is certainly justified if unwarranted parallels are drawn between the two composers as persons, or if such parallels lead to (or even result from) an ahistorical, contingent but mistakenly universalized concept of “essential” musical greatness. Yet at the same time drawing parallels between Josquin and Beethoven as cultural figures can also shed light on the ways in which “cultural figures” are constructed.

The kind of legendary or symbolic status that both Josquin and Beethoven achieved in their times can tell us a lot about those times. Both composers broke through to plateaus of prestige and cultural influence beyond the reach of their predecessors. It can seem that by the sheer force of their example they caused the world to look not only upon their music but upon music itself, with new eyes, and to listen with new ears. A more accurate way of putting it, perhaps, would be to say that they each provided an apt focal point for the crystallization of new attitudes about music and about artistic creation



fig. 14-1 Jean Perréal, *The Liberal Arts: Music*, a fresco from the cathedral of Le Puy in Auvergne, France. The shorter figure, possibly because of his characteristic hat, has been speculatively identified as Josquin des Prez. The one extant representation of Josquin that was possibly rendered from life—a woodcut published in 1611 copied from a panel portrait in oil that once adorned the walls of the church of Sainte Gudule in Brussels—is often reproduced; it shows a somewhat similar headdress and features that are not incompatible with those in the Le Puy painting.

Josquin was the first composer to interest his contemporaries and (especially) his posterity as a personality. He was the subject of gossip and anecdote, and the picture that emerges again resembles the popular conception of Beethoven: a cantankerous, arrogant, distracted sort of man, difficult in social intercourse but excused by grace of his transcendent gift. Josquin, like Beethoven, was looked upon with awe as one marked off from others by divine inspiration—a status formerly reserved for prophets and saints. Among “musicians,” it had formerly been reserved for Pope Gregory alone (at least when his dove was present).

This, indeed, is the kernel of our popular conception of artistic genius to this day. But saying “to this day” implies a false continuity. Josquin was so regarded, and Beethoven was so regarded, but between Josquin’s time and Beethoven’s there were other times (and, of course, places) in which artists were not so regarded or valued. The “humanistic” sensibility that elevated Josquin and the “romantic” one that elevated Beethoven had an important component in common, though: namely a high awareness and appreciation of individualism. In both cases, moreover, that high awareness and appreciation stemmed on the one hand from cultural and social conditions, and on the other from economic and commercial ones.

Here the parallels must end, because the applicable conditions were not the same in Josquin’s and Beethoven’s times. For now the task will be to understand Josquin against the background of his time—a time that formed him, to be sure, but one that he helped form as well. Powerful individuals and historical conditions are never in a fixed or static relationship. Their formation is inevitably reciprocal, and for that reason all the more inexhaustibly fascinating.

Notes:

(1) Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, Vol. I, ed. Frank Mercer (New York: Dover, 1957), p. 752.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Josquin: Works

Printing and publishing of music

Nikolaus Listenius

Giovanni Spataro

A POET BORN NOT MADE

Chapter: CHAPTER 14 Josquin and the Humanists

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

On the most worldly level (as forecast in chapter 12), Josquin was able to achieve an unprecedented reputation thanks to newly available means of dissemination, through which his works achieved an unprecedented circulation. He was the chief protagonist and beneficiary of the nascent “music biz,” the dawn of commercial music printing. He was, in short, the first composer who made his reputation—and especially his posthumous reputation—on the basis of publication. And as his reputation grew to legendary proportions Josquin became the first musical object of commercial exploitation. One of the chief tasks of modern Josquin scholarship has been to weed out the many spurious attributions made to him by sixteenth-century music publishers in an endeavor to capitalize on what we would now call his name-recognition. “Josquin” became a commercial brand name, music’s first. The section given over to “Doubtful and Misattributed Works” in the catalogue that follows the article on the composer in the latest edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, the standard English-language music encyclopedia, lists 14 Masses (as against 18 authenticated ones), 7 separate Mass sections (as against 7), a whopping 117 motets (as against 59), and 36 secular songs or instrumental pieces (as against 72). Most of the spurious items come from posthumous prints.

Yet that commercial exploitation was linked inextricably with the loftier aspects of the Josquin legend. The lion’s share of the sixteenth-century Josquin trade took place in the German-speaking countries, where the music business especially flourished, and where most of the doubtful attributions were made. Sixteenth-century Germany was both a hotbed of humanistic thought and the cradle of the Protestant reformation. Both were individualistic movements, and Protestantism placed a high value on the achievement and expression of subjective religious faith.

Certain qualities of Josquin’s music—none of them qualities he invented but ones at which he particularly excelled—were interpreted as personally expressive and communicative. Turning that around, they were also interpreted as the inspired expression of a forceful personality. Martin Luther, the founder of German Protestantism, famously declared that Josquin alone was “master of the notes: they must do as he wills; as for other composers, they have to do as the notes will.”² The qualities humanist thinkers valued so highly in Josquin were mainly qualities we have so far associated with Italy and with the “lowering” of style—lucidity of texture, text-based form, clarity of declamation. As these qualities were reinterpreted in the sixteenth century, Josquin became willy-nilly the protagonist of a new ordering of esthetic values. Through the writings of German humanist theorists like Henricus Glareanus (Heinrich Loris, 1488–1563), his most enthusiastic exponent, his works became the classics on which the new esthetic rested. Glareanus went so far as to declare Josquin the creator of an *ars perfecta*: a “perfected art” that could never be improved. That is exactly the definition of a classic.

When Josquin began his long career, sometime during the third quarter of the fifteenth century, music was still traditionally ranked alongside arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy as part of the quadrivium, the arts of measurement. By the time of his death in 1521, music was already more apt to be classed with the arts of

rhetoric. Glareanus, in 1547, asserted the new classification outright. He placed music among the “arts dedicated to Minerva,” the Roman goddess of handicrafts and the creative arts. These included what we now would call the fine arts, such as painting and sculpture, but also the arts of poetry and eloquence. Music was now to be regarded as a branch of poetic eloquence, an art of persuasion and disclosure. Although his works could be (and often were) cited as exemplifying it, Josquin was hardly responsible for this change; it was a by-product of classical humanism, the rediscovery of old texts (particularly those by Roman orators like Cicero and Quintilian) that stressed the correspondence between music and heightened speech and defined its purpose as that of swaying the emotions of listeners. Josquin was, however, immediately cast by the promulgators of musical rhetoric as the chief model for emulation.

The first unequivocal musical rhetorician, predictably enough, was a German humanist with Lutheran leanings: Nikolaus Listenius, who in 1537 published a musical primer for use in German Latin schools. The little book, straightforwardly called *Musica*, was very popular and influential. In less than fifty years it went through more than forty editions. Basically a method for training choirboys, it contained dozens of short musical illustrations, mostly cast in the form of little duets called *bicinia*, either specially composed or extracted from the works of famous masters. (Though a Latin word, the term *bicinium*, along with its three-voice counterpart, *tricinium*, was coined by German pedagogues like Listenius in the sixteenth century to specify a piece devised or culled for use at singing schools.)

Listenius’s *bicinia* were mostly of his own composition, but the same year as his *Musica* appeared, another German singing master, Seybald Heyden, published a competing text called *Artis canendi* (“On the art of singing”), in which the illustrations were duos “sought out with especial care,” as the author put it, “from the best musicians,” with Josquin in pride of place.³ Beginning in 1545, the early German music publisher Georg Rhau issued several books of *bicinia* for the Lutheran Latin schools, and he was followed by many competitors, whose books kept coming out in quantity until the second decade of the seventeenth century. Thanks to all these publications, the music of Josquin remained on the lips of choristers and in the minds of composers (who trained as choristers) throughout the sixteenth century and beyond. They circulated well beyond the borders of Germany, moreover, crossing back into the countries where Josquin had actually lived and helping to assure his immortality there as well. The age of printing made such cross-fertilizations easy and normal.

As a pedagogical aid, Listenius’s primer was one among many, albeit one of the first and perhaps the foremost. Its unique distinction, and its enduring importance in music history, lay in its humanistic revision of musical values. This was a side issue for Listenius, who was mainly concerned simply with teaching boys how to sing. He could not possibly have attached anything like as much significance to it as we are about to do. But then, authors are not always the best predictors where the import of their works is concerned.

In his prefatory chapter, Listenius divided the realm of music not into the traditional two branches—*musica theoretica* (rules and generalizations) and *musica practica* (performance)—but into three. The third item, the humanistic novelty, he called *musica poetica*, a term borrowed from Aristotle, for whom *poetics* was the art of constructing or making things. *Musica poetica* could be translated simply as musical composition (or, more literally, as “making music”), but that would not capture its special import. Composition, after all, had been going on for centuries without any special name. It had been regarded as the application of *musica theoretica* and the arbiter of *musica practica*. In a sense it was the nexus between the two, at least within the literate practice of music. Within that practice it could be taken for granted.

But once music was taken to be a form of rhetorical expression—of a text, of emotion, or of a composer’s unique spirit or “genius” (which originally meant exactly that: spirit, whence “inspiration”)—it could no longer be regarded simply as the application or the result of rules and regulations. There had to be something more in a composition that moved its hearers—something put there by a faculty that (as experience certainly attested) went beyond what could be learned by anyone. And that, of course, is our familiar definition of talent or genius—something essentially unteachable yet developable through education. It is a notion that we owe to the humanists.

Josquin was the main protagonist of this new idea from the moment of its earliest formulation, albeit

posthumously. One of the earliest musicians to put the thought in writing was Giovanni Spataro (c. 1460–1541), the choirmaster of the Cathedral of San Petronio in Bologna. Like Tinctoris, whom we met in chapter 12, he was a minor composer but an encyclopedic theorist, described by one writer as “the epitome of the experienced and informed Renaissance musician.”⁴ And indeed, his work does sum up the musical attitudes to which the idea of “The Renaissance” can be most fruitfully applied, if only retrospectively.

The bulk of Spataro’s theoretical works dates from the period immediately following Josquin’s death. They constantly celebrate Josquin as the master of all masters. Spataro is best known, however, for his letters, which are voluminous (his recently published collected correspondence running more than a thousand pages), just as encyclopedic as his treatises, and very lively. In one letter, sent on 5 April 1529 to a Venetian musician named Giovanni del Lago, Spataro vividly summed up the quality or faculty to which Listenius would shortly give a name: “The written rules,” Spataro wrote,

can well teach the first rudiments of counterpoint, but they will not make the good composer, inasmuch as the good composers are born just as are the poets. Therefore, one needs divine help almost more than one needs the written rule; and this is apparent every day, because the good composers (through natural instinct and a certain manner of grace which can hardly be taught) bring at times such turns and figures in counterpoint and harmony as are not demonstrated in any rule or precept of counterpoint.⁵

Utterly new as a philosophical thought, if not as a musical reality, was the idea of a music that cannot be defined by rules (that is, by *musica theoretica*) yet is not therefore inferior (as Boethius, for example, would have assumed) but actually superior to rule-determined craft. The gap between the rules and the art, the part that requires “natural instinct,” “divine help,” even *grace*—that is, the free, unmerited favor or love of God—that is what the term *musica poetica* was invented to cover. The idea of grace, of course, is a Christian idea (and one to which Protestantism would give a whole new definition). But the idea of genius is pre-Christian; it was genuinely an idea recovered from the ancients, and thereby qualifies as a “Renaissance” idea. It is related to the Platonic notion that artists create not by virtue of rational decision but because they are gifted with “poetic frenzy.” The ancient idea most precisely embodied in Spataro’s letter is the idea that one is born to art. It is a knowing paraphrase of an aphorism attributed by tradition to the Roman poet Horace: *poeta nascitur non fit*, “a poet is born not made.”⁶ Josquin was the first “born” composer in this new sense, the first composer “by grace of God.” He did not know that he was that, of course. The terms, as well as the humanistic discourse or belief-system that undergirded them, arose in his wake and were applied to him retrospectively, which is to say anachronistically. But that is just the point. Because he was made retroactively, anachronistically, the emblem of the new discourse, Josquin was able to have the posthumous historical influence that so conditioned the development of sixteenth-century music. It was (as far as Josquin the man was concerned) a distinction entirely unasked-for and unmerited. In that sense it was indeed a state of grace.

Notes:

(2) Martin Luther, *Table Talk* (1538), quoted in Helmut Osthoff, *Josquin Desprez*, Vol. II (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1965), p. 9.

(3) Sebald Heyden, *Musica, id est Artis canendi* (Nuremberg, 1537), p. 2.

(4) Frank Tirro, “Spataro (Spadario), Giovanni,” in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. XVII (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 819.

(5) Trans. Edward E. Lowinsky in “Musical Genius: Evolution and Origins of a Concept,” *Musical Quarterly* L (1964): 481.

(6) The phrase has been traced back to a seventh-century commentary on Horace’s *Ars Poetica* by William Rindler in “*Poeta Nascitur Non Fit: Some Notes on the History of an Aphorism*” *Journal of the History of*

Ideas II (1941): 497–504. It became a commonplace in the sixteenth century.

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Josquin des Prez

JOSQUIN AS THE SPIRIT OF A (LATER) AGE

Chapter: CHAPTER 14 Josquin and the Humanists

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

With few exceptions, the many literary encomiums that form our idea of Josquin's personality all date, like Luther's, from after the composer's death and more likely reflect the ideas and values of the writers than they do Josquin's own. One exception is a jovial sonnet, "To Josquin, his Companion, Ascanio's musician," by Serafino dall'Acquila, a poet who served alongside him in the entourage of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza toward the end of the fifteenth century. It consists of some friendly advice to the composer not to envy finely dressed courtiers, because he has something more valuable than they: namely his *si sublime ingegno*, his "talent so sublime."⁷ That may give a hint of what later became more seriously known as the "aristocracy of talent"—something, again, that we are apt to associate with the Beethoven legend—but if so, it is a hint as slight as the mood is light.

The posthumous Josquin anecdotes embody a fully formed humanist ideology, and are therefore as biographically suspect as they are culturally illuminating. One of them was retailed by a minor Flemish composer and theorist named Adrian Petit Coclico, who claimed in the preface to his *Compendium musices* of 1552 that he had studied composition with the master himself. The claim is generally written off as braggadocio, not only because of its self-congratulatory implications but also (and mainly) because it is a classic application of the new, three-pronged, conceptualization of music as an art that was first propounded by Listenius in 1537. According to Coclico, Josquin taught *musica theoretica* along with *musica practica* to one and all; but only the elect were worthy of instruction in *musica poetica*. "Josquin," he wrote, "did not judge everyone capable of the demands of composition. He felt that it should be taught only to those who were driven by an unusual force of their nature to this most beautiful art."

From an even later source, a "commonplace book" (a collection for writers of miscellaneous items for quotation) issued in 1562 by a Swiss humanist who wrote under the Roman patrician name of Manlius, we get another revealing glimpse of "Josquin"—revealing, that is, of humanists rather than of Josquin. In this story he supposedly takes a singer roughly to task for having had the temerity to add ornaments to one of his compositions in performance: "Tu asine!" Manlius has him shout, "You ass! Why do you decorate my music? Had I wanted embellishments, I'd have written them myself. If you wish to improve upon well-made compositions, compose a piece yourself and leave mine alone!"⁸

This, no doubt, was the kind of thing sixteenth-century choirmasters and composers did shout at their singers, under the influence of humanist ideals of eloquence as implying "divine simplicity." Putting the thought in Josquin's mouth lent it authority, and publishing it in a commonplace book made that authority available to all who wished to invoke it. But one may doubt whether Josquin ever said it, especially since the attitude it embodies toward the sanctity of the literal text is obviously beholden both to "print culture" and to Protestant fundamentalism—both of them cultural phenomena that rose to prominence and eventual dominance only after Josquin's time.

Notes:

(7) Quoted by Burney in *A General History* (ed. Mercer), Vol. I, p. 752.

(8) Trans. Edward E. Lowinsky, in E. Lowinsky and Bonnie J. Blackburn, *Josquin des Prez*, trans. Edward E. Lowinsky (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 682.

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Humanism

Henricus Glareanus

RECYCLING THE LEGEND BACK INTO MUSIC

Chapter: CHAPTER 14 Josquin and the Humanists

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The greatest popularizer of the Josquin legend, however, was someone who was also concerned to popularize (or repopularize) Josquin's music. This was Glareanus, the author of a great treatise that circulated piecemeal in manuscript for decades and was finally published in 1547 under the title *Dodekachordon*. Glareanus was a different sort of theorist from most of those whom we have encountered. He was neither a composer nor a practical musician but rather an all-round scholar of the purest humanistic type, a disciple of Desiderius Erasmus and a professor at the University of Freiburg im Briesgau in what is now the southwest corner of Germany, where he held chairs not in music but in poetry and theology. As a music theorist he consciously modeled himself on Boethius, the classical prototype of the encyclopedic humanist. But his actual musical views differed radically from everything Boethius had stood for.

Glareanus's main theoretical innovation, reflected in the pseudo-Greeky title of his book ("The Twelve-Stringed Lyre"), lay in the recognition of four additional modes beyond the eight modes established by the Frankish theorists of Gregorian chant. These modes, which Glareanus christened Ionian and Aeolian (together with their plagal or "hypo-" forms), had their respective finals on C and A, and hence corresponded to what we now know as the major and minor scales. Neither was a necessary invention. Through the use of B-flat, a fully accredited tone in the gamut since at least the eleventh century, the Lydian had long since provided the theoretical model for the major and the Dorian for the minor. But Glareanus's terminology made it unnecessary to account for the use of C and A as finals by calling them transpositions of other finals. Very typically for a humanist, Glareanus sought to represent his innovation as a return to authentic Greek practice. It was anything but that.

Glareanus illustrated all twelve modes by citing the works of Josquin, and he was among the first theorists to use mode theory (as adapted by himself) to analyze polyphonic music. As Glareanus conceived of modal polyphony, the various strands of a polyphonic texture were (usually) cast alternately in the authentic and plagal variants of the modal scale represented by the composition's final. Typically, the structural pair of superius and tenor represented the authentic and the contratenors (altus and bassus) the plagal.



fig. 14-2 Heinrich Loris, who wrote as Henricus Glareanus, in a sketch by Hans Holbein found in the margin of a copy of Desiderius Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* (1515) at the Kunstmuseum, Basel, Switzerland.

Again, it is questionable whether Glareanus's novel terms and methods contributed materially to the understanding of contemporary music. But he certainly did succeed in grounding contemporary music in a discourse of classical authority, turning Josquin into the musical equivalent of a classical master like Horace or Cicero. That being the essential humanist task, Glareanus, musically insignificant though he may appear, was culturally very significant indeed. It was he, if anyone, who brought "the Renaissance" to music, and made Josquin des Prez the first "Renaissance" composer.

Glareanus's anecdotes are mainly of the "aristocracy of genius" variety, centering on Josquin's reputed service at the court of King Louis XII of France, and on the audacity, tempered with wit, with which the composer supposedly comported himself in the presence of his royal patron. To remind the king of a

forgotten promise, for example, Josquin is said to have composed a motet on the words *Memor esto verbi tui servo tuo* ("Remember these thy words unto thy servant") from the very lengthy Psalm 118. And when the king, thus reminded, made his promise good, "then Josquin, having experienced the liberality of a ruler, immediately began, as an act of gratitude, another Psalm"⁹—a motet on the words *Bonitatem fecisti servo tuo, Domine* ("Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word"), which actually come from the same Psalm.

By now, this second motet is definitely known not to be a work of Josquin's. *Bonitatem fecisti* is securely attributed to a younger, minor contemporary of Josquin named Elzéar Genet, alias Carpentras, under whose name it was published in 1514 by the very authoritative Petrucci, in a volume called *Motetti della corona* ("Crown motets") that supposedly contained the repertory of the French court chapel, including *Memor esto*. There is, however, a manuscript that attributes both motets to Josquin: a songbook compiled in the 1540s by another Swiss humanist named Aegidius Tschudi, where the two motets mentioned in Glareanus's story are entered side by side. And who was Tschudi? A pupil and disciple of Glareanus.

The whole story begins to look fishy. Having noticed the textual relationship between a motet of Josquin's and a motet of Carpentras, Glareanus (or some member of his immediate circle) probably invented the tale that linked them so symmetrically around Josquin and the King, in the process fabricating the second attribution to Josquin as well. It is another case, and a very telling one, of *se non `e vero, `e ben trovato* ("not true, perhaps, but well made up"), and what it reveals, precisely, is how the Josquin legend was constructed: when, and why, and by whom.

Notes:

(9) Glareanus, *Dodekachordon* (Basle, 1547), p. 441.

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Josquin des Prez

Motet: Josquin Des Prez

Mass: The polyphonic mass to 1600

WHAT JOSQUIN WAS REALLY LIKE

Chapter: CHAPTER 14 Josquin and the Humanists

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

But is the story wholly false? Even if the attribution to Josquin of *Bonitatem fecisti* is obviously an embellishment, the authenticity of *Memor esto* (Ex. 14-1) is well attested. It is a prime example of Josquin's characteristic "paired imitation" style, in which an opening imitative duo (here the tenor and bassus) is answered, when it reaches its cadence, by a complementary duo (here the superius and altus), and is entirely typical of his psalm motets, just as its high degree of "motivicity" (to use an ugly but handy word coined by Joshua Rifkin to denote the building up of long melodies and dense textures out of repetitions and transpositions of a tiny—here, a four-note—phrase) is generally typical of Josquin's mature style. Can the motet's connection with Louis XII and his forgotten promise be confirmed or, more decisively, disproved?

Not really. There is no documentary corroboration that Josquin wrote the motet during his period of presumed service at the French court, somewhere between 1494 and April 1503. The only guide we have to dating the work is the age of its sources, always a rough and potentially treacherous criterion. The oldest manuscript containing *Memor esto* is a Sistine Chapel choirbook of uncertain but (for our present purpose) uselessly late date. It was copied during the reign of the Medici pope, Leo X, who ascended the papal throne in 1513 and who died in 1521, which is also the year of Josquin's death. The manuscript contains the work of several members of a distinctly younger generation—Jean Mouton, Antoine de Févin, Adrian Willaert—whose relationship to Josquin was confessedly discipular. And it contains Josquin's last Mass, the famous *Missa Pange lingua* on the venerable Phrygian hymn melody we have known since chapter 2 (see Ex. 2-7b), which was presumably written too late for inclusion in Petrucci's third and last volume of Josquin Masses, which came out in 1514.

That classic work is worth a parenthetical quote at this point (Ex. 14-2), since it is so securely associated with Josquin's latest period, and therefore exemplifies his latest technique: that of subjecting a chant paraphrase to the same paired imitation technique we have just observed in *Memor esto*. The *Missa Pange lingua* takes the paraphrase technique a step further than the point where we left it: the chant paraphrase is no longer confined to the "cantus" voice alone, but through imitation suffuses the entire texture.

Superius

Alrus

Tenor

Bassus

Me - mor es - to ver - bi tu - i ser - vo tu - o, in quo mi - hi spem de - di -

Me - mor es - to ver - bi tu - i ser - vo tu - o, in quo mi - hi spem de - di -

6

Me - mor es - to ver - bi tu - i ser - vo tu - o, in quo mi - hi spem de - di -

Me - mor es - to ver - bi tu - i ser - vo tu - o, in quo mi - hi spem de - di -

sti. _____

sti. _____

11

sti. in hu - mi - li - ta -

sti. in hu - mi - li - ta - te me -

Haec me con - so - la - ta est in hu - mi - li - ta - te me - a,

Haec me con - so - la - ta est in hu - mi - li - ta - te me - a,

ex. 14-1 Josquin des Prez, *Memor esto*, mm. 1–14

Ky - ri - e e -

Ky - ri -

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, e - lei - son,

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son,

7

le - i - son, Ky - ri -

e e - le - i - son, e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le -

Ky - ri - e e -

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son,

12

e e - le i - son.

i - son.

le i - son.

e - le i - son.

ex. 14-2 Josquin des Prez, *Missa Pange lingua*, Kyrie I

As we have already seen, the year 1514, in which the third volume of Josquin's Masses appeared, was also the year in which Petrucci issued both Josquin's *Memor esto* and Carpentras's *Bonitatem fecisti* in his *Motetti della corona*, and there is no demonstrably earlier source for either motet. The probable earliest source for *Memor esto* turns out to be not a manuscript but a print. And since even that print long postdates the events recounted by Glareanus, it can neither corroborate nor refute them. Indeed, a modern biographer of Josquin has found another version of the story about Josquin and the king, only this version involved a different king, Francis I (reigned 1515–47), Louis's successor, whom Josquin could never have served.¹⁰

That sort of confusion is the usual situation with Josquin, alas. Determined research has produced an intermittently detailed but stubbornly gapped picture of his career. The details, moreover, have fluctuated greatly over the years, as more recent findings have not only supplemented earlier ones but at times invalidated them. The facts, then, have always, and necessarily, been complemented by an ever-changing web of speculation and inference.

According to the most recent scholarly consensus (summarized by Richard Sherr, the editor of *The Josquin Companion*, published by the Oxford University Press in 2000), Josquin was born in or near the town of St-Quentin in Picardy, a northeasterly region of France, about 20 miles south of the cathedral city of Cambrai where Du Fay had worked. The first document to mention him is a bequest of land from his uncle and aunt, dated December 1466 and executed in the town where they lived, Condé-sur-l'Escaut, a fortified town in northernmost France, right across the river from Belgium. This deed, first reported by the Canadian archivists Lora Matthews and Paul Merkley in 1998, gives the future composer's name as Jossequin Lebloitte dit Desprez.¹¹ Only since then has even so basic a fact as his original family name, Lebloitte, been known to modern scholarship.

The first documents to mention Josquin as a musician place him, from 1475, at the opposite end of France: in Aix-en-Provence near the Mediterranean coast, where he served in the chapel choir of René, King of Sicily and Duke of Anjou, who was then living in semi-retirement and devoting himself to artistic pursuits. "Good King René" died in 1480. The last document placing Josquin in Aix is dated 4 August 1481. In February 1483 he reappears in Condé to claim the land bequeathed to him in 1466. The next year, as noted above, he entered the service of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, a Milanese aristocrat and churchman who made many trips to Rome accompanied by his full entourage.

For a period of about 40 years it was thought by modern scholars that Josquin had been at Milan much earlier than 1484. In 1956, the Italian musical bibliographer Claudio Sartori published an article in which he reported a document that attested to the arrival of "Iudochus de Picardia" as a *biscantor*, or singer of polyphony, at the Cathedral of Milan in 1459.¹² This Iudochus (sometimes called Ioschinus in the documents) went from the cathedral to the personal chapel of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, the duke of Milan (and Ascanio's brother) in 1474. Inasmuch as there was an already established connection between Josquin des Prez and Ascanio, the assumption that Galeazzo's Iudochus—who hailed, like the famous composer, from Picardy—was in fact the same man was irresistibly attractive, for it managed to fill in a decade and a half of the composer's early biography.

To make it possible for Josquin to have been a *biscantor* in 1459, Sartori postulated a birth date for him around 1440. There was no document to preclude the new birth date and it became an accepted fact, even though it introduced an unexplained anomaly into his biography: namely, that the works of the most famous composer of his time only began to appear in the extant sources when he was in his forties, normally the point at which a composer's "late" period, in those days, began. It was not until 1998 that Matthews and Merkley were able to produce documents showing conclusively that Jossequin Lebloitte dit Desprez and Sartori's Iudochus de Picardia (known to be active in Milan until 1479) had different fathers, and therefore had to be different men. (They also discovered documents attesting to the death of Iudochus in 1498.) Josquin's birth date was duly re-emended to ca. 1450–55, just where the Belgian musicologist Edmund vander Straeten, the first modern scholar to attempt a reconstruction of the composer's biography, had located it in 1882.¹³

That would put Josquin in his mid- to-late thirties when, as a document dated June 1489 attests, he joined the papal chapel choir in Rome. It was here, as a member of the most prestigious musical establishment in western Christendom, that he began to make his mark as a composer and his music began to circulate, most conspicuously in the output of Ottaviano Petrucci, the pioneering Venetian music printer. Petrucci's initial offering, the *Odhecaton*, was issued in May 1501 and contained six carmina attributed to Josquin. In February 1502, the first printed music book devoted to a single composer (*Liber primus missarum Josquini*, "The first book of masses by Josquin") came off Petrucci's presses, followed in May by *Motetti A numero cinquanta* ("First book of motets, numbering fifty"), in which a motet by Josquin was given pride of place.

At this point Josquin seems to have left the papal service. In April, 1503, a document lists "Jusquino/Joschino cantore" as a member of the choirs attending Louis XII of France and Philip the Fair, Duke of Burgundy (and later King of Spain), at Lyons. That is the only literary evidence (besides Glareanus's anecdotes) of Josquin's possible service to the French royal court. Meanwhile, in September 1502, an agent from the court of Ercole (Hercules) d'Este, the Duke of Ferrara, advised his employer, in a letter that has become famous, to hire Isaac as *Maistro della cappella* rather than Josquin since Isaac is "more sociabile"

and “composes new things more quickly,” while Josquin, though he “composes better,” does so “only when he pleases not when he is requested to, and has demanded 200 ducats in salary, while Isaac is content with 120.”¹⁴

Court payment records from June 1503 to April 1504 show that the Duke ignored his scout’s advice and hired Josquin. Duke Ercole has received much praise from historians for showing such keen artistic judgment, but he was probably acting on less lofty impulses. For one, there was the lure of conspicuous consumption—the same impulse that motivates the purchase of expensive designer jeans or luxury cars. Indeed, a rival scout had recommended Josquin to the Duke a month earlier, advising him that “there is neither lord nor king who will now have a better chapel than yours if Your Lordship sends for Josquin,” and that “by having Josquin in our chapel I want to place a crown upon this chapel of ours.”¹⁵ Lewis Lockwood, a scholar who did extensive research on the rich musical establishment at Ferrara, comments that Josquin was being touted to the Duke as “a crowning figure, and the implication is that, by hiring him, Ercole can aspire to higher status than most dukes can claim.” Very shrewdly, Lockwood noted a further implication: “the musician of great reputation can confer upon a patron the same measure of reflected glory that had traditionally been attributed to poets and painters.”¹⁶ This represented a new level of prestige for music itself, and Josquin was its protagonist. The Josquin legend had been born, and was already doing its historical work.

The most immediate evidence of that work was a Mass in which Josquin kept the implied promise to memorialize his patron the same way poets and painters had traditionally done it. One of his most famous and widely disseminated works, both in his own day and in ours, it bore the title *Missa Hercules Dux Ferrariae* (“The Mass of Hercules, Duke of Ferrara”) and was published by Petrucci in his second volume of Josquin Masses (1505), when—assuming dangerously for the moment that it was actually composed at Ferrara—the work was almost brand new. The Mass continued to circulate, in whole or in part, in manuscripts and prints until the 1590s. Since Josquin’s rediscovery by music historians, it has had several modern editions and many recordings. More than anything else, perhaps, this Mass has served to keep alive the name of Hercules, the Duke of Ferrara.

One of the reasons for the Mass’s popularity is the clever way in which Josquin fashioned its cantus firmus out of his patron’s name and title. It is an abstract series of pitches, usually presented in the tenor in long notes of equal value, arrived at by matching *voces musicales* (that is, solmization syllables) to the vowels (or *vocali*) in the phrase *Hercules, Dux Ferrari(a)e*, thus:

or

a. in natural hexachord (ut = C)

re ut re ut re fa mi re

b. in hard hexachord (ut = G)

re ut re ut re fa mi re

c. in soft hexachord (ut = F)

re ut re ut re fa mi re

ex. 14-3 “Hercules, Dux Ferrari(a)e” in musical notation

Ho - san - na, ho -
Ho - san - na, ho - san -
c.f.
Ho -
Ho -

6
san - na in ex -
na, ho - san - na in
san - na in ex - cel - sis
san - na in ex - cel - sis,

11
cel - sis, Ho - san - na, ho -
ex - cel - sis, Ho - san - na, ho - san - na,
Ho - san - na in ex - cel - sis,
Ho - san - na in ex - cel -

17
 san - na in
 ho - san - na in ex - cel -
 sis. Ho -

22
 ex - cel - sis, Ho -
 sis, Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho -
 sa - na in ex - cel - sis, Ho - san - na in ex - cel - sis,
 san - na in ex - cel - sis. Ho -

27
 san - na in ex - cel - sis, in ex - cel - sis.
 Ho - san - na in ex - cel - sis, Ho - san - na in ex - cel - sis.
 Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in ex - cel - sis.

ex. 14-4 Josquin des Prez, *Missa Hercules Dux Ferrariae*, Hosanna

fig. 14-3 Josquin, *Vive le roy*, from *Canti C numero cento cinquanta* (Venice: Petrucci, 1504),

fol. 131v–132.

Ex. 14-4 is the Hosanna from the *Missa Hercules*, in which the *soggetto cavato dalle vocali* (“the theme carved out of the vowels,”¹⁷ as the Italian theorist Zarlino would later call it) is put through some basic exercises like transposition (from the natural hexachord up a fifth to the hard hexachord) and diminution. fig. 14-3 shows a page from Petrucci’s third *carmina* collection (*Canti C*, 1504), containing another piece based on a *soggetto cavato*, a little fanfare, almost certainly meant for a wind band, based on the vowels of the phrase *Vive le roy* (“Long live the King!”), treating the *V*, as per Latin usage, as a *U* (and the *y* as an *i*), thus:

This bit of fluff is actually the only evidence we have, beyond the single document and Glareanus’s gossip, to place Josquin at the court of Louis XII, the only patron he is supposed to have served whom one would have greeted with the words of this *soggetto*. But of course there is no reason why the king so greeted had to be the composer’s patron. The evidence is no “harder” than the stories.

By May 1504, Josquin is listed as provost, or head canon, of the collegiate church of Notre Dame in his ancestral home town of Condé-sur-l’Escaut. There he died on August 27, 1521, probably aged about seventy. Josquin had done as many aging musicians of eminence, like Machaut and Du Fay, had done before him: he retired to a clerical sinecure, where he continued to compose on commission up to the end of his life.

At the very end, again like Du Fay, he also composed for himself. His will, discovered by the musicologist Herbert Kellman in the French government archives at Lille and first described in 1976, contains a provision that after his death the Notre Dame choir was to stop before his house during all festival processions and sing his polyphonic setting of the Lord’s Prayer in his memory.¹⁸ The beginning of that eloquent piece, composed in six tightly woven parts and found only in sources that were copied or printed after the composer’s death, is shown in Ex. 14-5. It may be fairly taken as his swan song and dated around 1520.

Thus Josquin’s professional career spanned some 45 busily creative years and yielded a preserved output that dwarfed that of any earlier composer (plus an attributed output, as we have seen, that dwarfed the preserved one). The hugely, exasperatingly ironical fact is that, with only a tiny number of exceptions or possible exceptions like the ones discussed above, we cannot correlate Josquin’s enormous musical legacy with the sketchy biographical framework just outlined, and so we have no reliable chronology of his work.

Lacking the evidence on which to base a strictly documentary chronology, historians have had to construct a stylistic chronology—that is, a chronology based on our ideas about the evolution of Josquin’s style. And here we have to contend not only with the absence of facts but with the presence of myth. It is no wonder that many mistakes have been made and many agonizing reappraisals necessitated. We are still nowhere near a wholly reliable chronology and unlikely ever to reach it.

Pa - ter no - ster, pa - ter no - ster
 Pa - ter no - ster,
 Pa - ter no - ster, pa - ter no - ster,
 Pa - ter no - ster,
 Pa - ter no - ster, pa - ter no -
 Pa - ter no - ster,
 10
 qui es in cae - lis,
 pa - ter no - ster, qui es in cae - lis,
 pa - ter no - ster, qui es in cae - lis, qui es in cae - lis,
 pa - ter no - ster, qui es in cae - lis,
 ster, qui es in cae - lis, sanc - ti - fi - ce -
 pa - ter no - ster, qui es in cae - lis, qui es in cae - lis,

ex. 14-5 Josquin des Prez, *Pater noster*, mm. 1–17

But the ultimately encouraging thing about mistakes is that one learns from them. The history of Josquin chronology has not yet produced a good Josquin chronology, but it has yielded a number of excellent cautionary tales. They tell us more about ourselves, and the way in which we come to know what we know, than they do about Josquin. One of them is particularly rich in implications about the relationship between perception and prejudice.

Notes:

(10) Osthoff, *Josquin Desprez*, Vol. II, 39.

(11) L. Matthews and P. Merkley, “Iudochus de Picardia and Jossequin Lebloitte dit Desprez: The Names of the Singer(s),” *Journal of Musicology* XVI (1998): 200–226.

(12) C. Sartori, "Josquin des Prés, cantore del duomo di Milano (1459–1472)," *Annales Musicologiques* IV (1956): 55–83.

(13) See Emond vander Straeten, *La Musique aux Pays-Bas avant le XIXe Siècle*, Vol. VI (Brussels: G.-A. van Trigt, 1882; rpt., New York: Dover, 1969), 79n.

(14) Letter from Gian di Artiganova to Hercules of Ferrara, 2 September 1502, in Osthoff, *Josquin Desprez*, Vol. I (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1962), 211–12. For a translation of the full text of the letter, see Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*, 2nd ed., p. 84.

(15) Girolamo da Sestola (alias "il Coglià"), letter to Hercules of Ferrara, 14 August 1502, quoted and translated in Lewis Lockwood, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara, 1400–1505* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 203.

(16) Lockwood, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara*, p. 204.

(17) Gioseffo Zarlino, *Le istituzioni harmoniche*, Vol. III (Venice, 1558), p. 66.

(18) Herbert Kellman, "Josquin and the Courts of the Netherlands and France: The Evidence of the Sources," in Lowinsky and Blackburn, *Josquin des Prez*, p. 208.

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Marian antiphon

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Chapter: CHAPTER 14 Josquin and the Humanists

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Ever since the sixteenth century, the motet *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena* has been not only Josquin's most famous work but also, in at least two senses, his exemplary opus. One meaning of "exemplary" is *representative*. On this work, above all, generations of musicians, music students, and music lovers have formed their idea of Josquin's methods, his characteristics, and his excellence. Another meaning of "exemplary" is *example-setting*. The whole "perfected art" of sixteenth century sacred music, it sometimes seems, was formed on the example of this one supreme masterpiece. Its stylistic influence was enormous and acknowledged. To a degree previously unapproached by any one composition, it was regarded as a timeless standard of perfection, a classic.

This is the motet that Petrucci chose in 1502 to open his first motet collection, the earliest such printed collection in history. In 1921 the Dutch Jesuit musicologist Albert Smijers chose *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena* to open the inaugural volume in his pioneering edition of Josquin's complete works. It is found in almost two dozen manuscript sources from half a dozen different countries, including the present-day Czech Republic and Poland. It was the basis for many later compositions. It was arranged for keyboard instruments and for the lute. In our time, it has been recorded more times than any other work of Josquin, to say nothing of his contemporaries. Except for *Sumer is icumen in*, perhaps, it is the piece of "early music" today's music-lovers or concertgoers are most likely to know.

The text is a pastiche of three different liturgical items: a votive antiphon to the Blessed Virgin Mary, framed by a prefacing quatrain that quotes both the words and the music of the sequence for the Feast of the Annunciation (commemorating the occasion at which the archangel Gabriel uttered the original "Hail, Mary!"), and a closing couplet that voices a very common prayer formula of the day:

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, Virgo serena.

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, virgin serene.

(1) Ave, cujus CONCEPTIO, solemnata plena gaudio, coelestia, terrestria, nova replet laetitia.

Hail, thou whose conception, full of solemn joy fills all things in heaven and earth with renewed gladness.

(2) Ave, cujus NATIVITAS nostra fuit solemnitas, ut lucifer lux oriens verum solem praeveniens.

Hail, thou whose birth became our solemn rite, a light arising like the morning star going before the true sun.

(3) Ave, pia humilitas, sine viro fecunditas, cujus ANNUNTIATIO nostra fuit salvatio.

Hail true humility, fruitfulness without man, whose annunciation has become our salvation.

(4) Ave, vera virginitas, immaculata castitas, cujus PURIFICATIO nostra fuit purgatio.

Hail, true virginity, immaculate chastity, whose purification has become our cleansing.

(5) *Ave, praeclara omnibus angelicis virtutibus,
cujus ASSUMPTIO nostra fuit glorificatio.*

Hail, most glorious one in all angelic virtues, whose
assumption has become our glorification.

O mater Dei, memento mei. Amen.

O mother of God, remember me. Amen.

The central antiphon is a metrical hymn that echoes Gabriel's "Ave"—one of the prime emblems in Christian theology and art—through five stanzas that recall in turn the five major events of Mary's life, each of them commemorated by a major feast in the church calendar: The Immaculate Conception (December 8), Nativity (September 8), Annunciation (March 25), Purification (February 2), and Assumption (August 15). There was even a latter-day Marian votive office called *La Recollection des Fêtes de Notre Dame*, which originated in the dioceses of the Burgundian Netherlands, near Josquin's native turf, wherein each of these feasts was recalled, and where this antiphon would have been especially appropriate.

Entirely in keeping with the humanist rhetoricians' ideals of clarity and force of expression, Josquin's music is shaped closely around the words of the antiphon. The shaping process may be observed and described at three distinct levels. The most concrete is that of *declamation*, the fit between notes and syllables. Then there is the level of overall structure or *syntax*, the ways in which the various parts of the text and those of the music relate to each other and to the whole. Finally, there is the level of textual illustration, ways in which the shape of the music or the manner of its unfolding can be made to parallel or underscore the *semantic* content of the words.

The image displays a musical score for Josquin des Prez's *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena*, measures 1-8. It consists of five systems of polyphonic vocal parts. Each system includes a vocal line with lyrics and a corresponding instrumental line. The lyrics are: "A-ve Ma-ri-a, gra-ti-a ple-na, Do-mi-nus te-cum, Vir-go se-re-na, se-re-na, Vir-go se-re-na, -cum Vir-go se-re-na". The notation is in a mensural style with a treble clef and a common time signature.

ex. 14-6a Josquin des Prez, *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena*, mm. 1-8

All three aspects of the new text-music relationship are vividly exemplified by the setting of the opening prefatory quatrain. It is based not only on the text of the Gregorian sequence for the Annunciation, but on its melody, too, as set forth over the polyphony in Ex. 14-6a. The preexisting tune is not treated as a traditional cantus firmus, borne by the tenor. Neither is it paraphrased by the superius in cantilena style. Instead, just as in Josquin's very late *Missa Pange lingua*, the four phrases of the paraphrased chant melody are each made in turn the basis for a lucid, airy point of imitation, so that the texture is fully penetrated and integrated by shared melodic material, and the voices are made functionally equal. Relatively little fifteenth-century music unfolds in this way, but in the sixteenth century it became the absolute norm.

The first phrase of the melody is quoted quite literally from the chant, even in terms of its rhythm. The declamation is nearly syllabic. Thereafter the chant is more or less decoratively paraphrased: but melismas tend to come at or near the ends of phrases, and accented syllables are placed on longer note-values, both procedures being calculated to maintain the intelligibility of the text.

The final entry, in the bassus, is in each case the least adorned and the most straightforwardly declaimed. It is the “crown” of the point. The fact that the crown comes at the bottom of the pitch range, and that the first three points proceed as identical straightforward descents from top to bottom, can be interpreted as a “semantic” illustration of Gabriel’s descent, as divine messenger, from God’s abode in heaven to Mary’s abode on earth.

The image displays a musical score for Josquin des Prez's *Ave Maria*. It consists of two systems of four staves each, representing four different vocal parts. The lyrics are in Latin and are written below the notes. The first system covers the first two staves, and the second system covers the last two staves. The lyrics are: "A-ve cu- jus con-ce- pti - o So- lem- ni ple - na gau - di- o, ce - le - sti - a, ter - re - stri - a, no - va re - plet lae - ti - ti - a".

ex. 14-6b Josquin des Prez, *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena*, mm. 9-14

As a final point about shaping, and about Josquin’s exemplary craftsmanship, note the difference between the final point, on “*virgo serena*,” and the three previous ones. The order of entries is varied at last; but more importantly, so is the time interval between the entries, which is subtly tightened, *stretto*-fashion—the tenor following the superius after only one beat instead of two, and the four voices all gathering in to sound together for the first time at the cadence. All of these effects, so carefully and subtly planned, serve to mark off the prefatory quatrain from what follows. It is an ideal instance of the way in which the shape of the text “humanistically” governs, and is reflected by, the shape and syntax of the music.

Every succeeding textual unit is marked off cadentially in similar, but never identical, fashion. And each one is purposefully shaped around its words, often by artful “scoring” devices. The first stanza of the votive antiphon (“*Ave, cujus conceptio*,” Ex. 14-6b) begins with a homorhythmic superius/altus duo that is immediately imitated by the complementary tenor/bassus pair in what we have already seen to be typical Josquin fashion. After the first two notes, however, the altus slyly joins them in a mock-fauxbourdon texture, so that there is not only a “paired” repetition of the opening phrase but also an increment from two voices to three, preparing for the emphatically homorhythmic four-voice tutti on “*solemni plena gaudio*,”

which just happens to coincide with the first “affective” or emotion-laden word in the text. All three levels of textual shaping have been cunningly made to work in harness to produce a simple, “natural” rhetorical effect. The tutti having been achieved, it is maintained through the full-textured syncopated sequences that dramatize the word “filled” and achieve cadential release at a melodic high point coinciding with the next affective word, “laetitia.” The stanza beginning “Ave, cujus nativitas” opens with another pair of duos that introduce close imitation at the fifth rather than the octave or unison, and the new, harmonically richer contrapuntal combination persists through the next tutti (“Ut lucifer”), the superius/tenor and altus/bassus pairs here operating internally at the octave and reciprocally at the fifth. The third stanza of the votive antiphon (“Ave pia humilitas,” Ex. 14-6c) is foreshortened by splitting the text between rigorously maintained high and low voice-pairs, setting off the total integration of the lilting fourth stanza, which moves in dancelike trochees and chordal homorhythm throughout.

A-ve-pi-a hu-mi - li - tas cu - jus an-nun-ti-a - ti - o

A-ve-pi-a hu-mi - li - tas cu - jus an-nun-ti-a - ti - o

Si-ne vi-vo fe-cun - di - tas No-

Si-ne vi-vo fe-cun - di - tas No-

d = d.

A-ve ve-ra vir-gi - ni-tas, im-ma-cu-la - ta ca - sti-

A-ve ve-ra vir - gi - ni-tas, im-ma-cu-la - ta ca - sti-

-stra fu-it sal-va - ti - o A-ve ve-ra vir-gi - ni-tas, im-ma-cu-la - ta ca -

-stra fu - it sal-va - ti-o A-ve ve-ra vir-gi - ni-tas, im-ma-cu-la - ta ca - sti-

d = d.

-tas, cu-jus pu-ri - fi-ca - ti - o No-stra fu - it pur - ga - ti - o

-tas, cu-jus pu-ri - fi-ca - ti - o No-stra fu - it pur-ga - ti - o

-sti-tas, cu-jus pu-ri - fi-ca - ti - o No-stra fu-it pur-ga-ti - o

-tas, cu-jus pu-ri - fi-ca - ti - o No-stra fu - it pur-ga - ti - o

ex. 14-6c Josquin des Prez, *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena*, mm. 20-28

But not quite. Closer examination by eye reveals what the ear perceives with delicious immediacy: within the seeming rhythmic unanimity, the superius and tenor are actually engaged in a canon at the fifth, at a mere semibreve's interval, and a "triplet" semibreve at that. Where all the other voices have trochees, the tenor has iambs (or perhaps better, considering the words, displaced trochees). This fourth stanza, poised as it is between the chordal and the canonic, is a little miracle of textural balance and a *locus classicus* of the artful simplicity (or "natural" artistry) humanists prized as evidence of genius—the "poet born not made." It exemplifies to perfection another ubiquitous Latin maxim popularly ascribed by the humanists to Horace: "art lies in concealing art" (*ars est celare artem*).

The fifth, climactic stanza ("Ave praeclara," Ex. 14-6d) is set in the most traditional texture to be found in Josquin's motet, one that we observed first in the chansons of the previous generation: the "structural pair," superius and tenor, are in strict imitation throughout, phrase by phrase and at a fixed time interval, while the "nonessential" voices, altus and bassus, supply fanciful nonimitative counterpoints. It is also the most heterogeneous texture to be found in the motet, and gives rise, in the nonessential voices, to the most ornate (albeit still relatively modest) melismatic tracery to be found anywhere in the motet. The suitability of the melodic ascent in the structural pair to the meaning of the word "assumptio" is self-evident, just as the floridity of the nonessential pair matches the word "glorificatio."

The musical score consists of three systems of four staves each. The top staff is the Superius part, the second is the Tenor part, the third is the Altus part, and the bottom is the Bassus part. The lyrics are written below the staves. A vertical dashed line is placed between the first and second measures of the third system.

System 1:
 Superius: A - ve prae - cla - ra o - mni - bus An - ge - li -
 Tenor: A - ve prae - cla - ra o - mni - bus An - ge -
 Altus: A - ve prae - cla - ra o - mni - bus
 Bassus: A - ve prae - cla - ra o - mni - bus

System 2:
 Superius: - cis vir - tu - ti - bus cu - jus fu - it as - sum - pti - o
 Tenor: - li - cis vir - tu - ti - bus cu - jus fu - it as - sum -
 Altus: An - ge - li - cis vir - tu - ti - bus cu - jus fu - it as - sum - pti -
 Bassus: An - ge - li - cis vir - tu - ti - bus cu - jus fu - it as - sum - pti -

System 3:
 Superius: No - stra glo - ri - fi - ca - ti - o
 Tenor: - pti - o No - stra glo - ri - fi - ca - ti - o
 Altus: - o No - stra glo - ri - fi - ca - ti - o
 Bassus: - o No - stra glo - ri - fi - ca - ti - o

ex. 14-6d Josquin des Prez, *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena*, mm. 28-35

O ma-ter De - i me-men-to me - i. A - men.
O ma-ter De - i me-men-to me - i. A - men.
O ma-ter De - i me-men-to me - i. A - men.
O ma-ter De - i me-men-to me - i. A - men.

ex. 14-6e Josquin des Prez, *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena*, mm. 36-end

But meaning is never entirely inherent. It is also relational. The textural intricacy of the climactic stanza offsets the really stark homorhythm of the concluding prayer (Ex. 14-6e). The starkness comes about by virtue of the entrance of all four parts together on a “hollow” or “open” perfect consonance on “O.” Everywhere else, four-part homophony implied triadic harmony. Here the four voices are absorbed into the perfect consonance so as to sound like an amplification of a single voice. And once again, the motivation is textual: for the one and only time in this composite text, the first person singular pronoun (*mei*, “of me”) replaces the plural (*nostra*, “our”). There can be no question that the composer of this motet saw himself as the “performer” of the words, a musical rhetorician par excellence.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Ludwig Sennfl

Antoine de Févin

Parody mass

PARODIES

Chapter: CHAPTER 14 Josquin and the Humanists

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

And for that he was supremely valued by the humanist musicians of the sixteenth century, who were inspired by Josquin's example and propagated it zealously. Glareanus reproduced the whole motet in his treatise, ostensibly as an illustration of the Ionian mode with its final on C, but in fact as an example to his readers of "genius" at work. Its impact on Glareanus's contemporaries was profound. Where Glareanus verbally proclaimed the work an emblem of perfected style, his friend and colleague the Swiss composer Ludwig Sennfl proclaimed it so by musical deed.

Sennfl (ca. 1486–1543) had been a pupil of Henricus Isaac, and succeeded his teacher as the court chapel composer to the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I. His *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena* was published at Nuremberg in 1537, by which time Sennfl had joined the court and chapel establishment of Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria at Munich. In his *Ave Maria* motet, Sennfl did on a vast scale what we have already observed in miniature on the level of carmina and chanson arrangements. It is a gigantic "parody" or reworking of Josquin's motet, in which the younger composer did everything in his considerable power to monumentalize the work of the older composer, and with it, posthumously monumentalize its creator.

The texture is expanded from four voices to six; the length of the work is trebled by means of overlapping imitative repetitions and transpositions of Josquin's melodic motives; and most impressive of all, the opening six-note chant-derived motto that carries Gabriel's words "Ave Maria" is turned into a motto that recurs like a clarion in the tenor part throughout the length of the piece. Josquin's "Ave" had been to Mary, but Sennfl's, clearly, was to Josquin. The younger composer's resourcefulness in exhausting the contrapuntal potential of the motivic material bequeathed him by Josquin, and the finely wrought textures that balance imitative polyphony with rich harmony, are clearly meant to display both Josquin's genius and his own. Sennfl not only admires Josquin's legacy but claims it.



fig. 14-4 Ludwig Sennfl, drawn by Hans Schwarz in 1519.

A single excerpt, the final prayer (Ex. 14-7; compare Ex. 14-6e), will give an idea of the way sennfl replaces Josquin's spareness with opulence: note particularly how Josquin's ascetic open fifths at the concluding "Amen" have been enlarged into a gorgeous plagal cadence.

O Ma - ter De - i me - men - to
 O Ma - ter De - i, O Ma - ter De - i me -
 O Ma - ter De - i me - men - to
 A - ve Ma - ri -
 O Ma - ter De - i me - men - to
 O Ma - ter De - i,
 me - i me - men - to me - i A - men.
 men - to me - i me - men - to me - i me - men - to me - i A - men.
 me - i me - men - to me - i me - men - to me - i A - men.
 a A - ve Ma - ri a.
 me - i me - men - to me - i me - i A - men.
 me - men - to, me - men - to me - i A - men.

ex. 14-7 Ludwig Sennfl, *Ave Maria... Virgo serena*, mm. 76-80

Even before Sennfl paid his tribute to Josquin's emblematic motet, it had been reworked into an entire Mass by Sennfl's somewhat older, unhappily short-lived contemporary Antoine de Févin (ca. 1470–1512). Most unusually, Févin was of aristocratic birth but nevertheless pursued a professional career as a musician—which is to say, a career in service. He was a member of Louis XII's musical establishment at the time when Josquin is popularly supposed to have worked there, and it was on the basis of their presumed relationship that Glareanus called Févin "Josquin's happy follower" (*felix Jodoci aemulator*).

Whether or not Févin and Josquin enjoyed a personal relationship, Glareanus accurately described their musical relationship. And yet Févin, while basing his technique and his stylistic preferences squarely on Josquin's, was nevertheless an innovator. His Mass on *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena*, published by Petrucci in 1515, bears a novel relationship to its musical model, in a manner dictated by the very nature of the model (which is to say dictated, albeit indirectly, by Josquin).

In the new style exemplified by Josquin's motet the texture is so mobile and protean—now imitative, now

homorhythmic, now proceeding by one sort of pairing, now by another—that no single voice-part has enough self-sufficiency to bear appropriation either as a tenor for cantus-firmus treatment, or as a melody for paraphrase. Instead, the polyphonic reworking of such a piece has to adopt the whole polyphonic texture as its model. The adaptation consists of a thorough reweaving of the texture, producing a new polyphonic fabric from the same fund of melodic motives.

Févin and his contemporaries called this new technique *imitatio*, and called a Mass in such a style a *Missa ad imitationem* (“Mass in imitation of”) or simply a *Missa super* (“Mass on”) followed by the name of the model. A fairly obscure late-sixteenth century German composer in the humanist tradition, Jakob Paix, published a mass in this style in 1587 under an affected pseudo-Greeky equivalent, *Missa parodia*, which means exactly the same thing as *Missa ad imitationem*. Since “imitation” already meant something else in modern musical parlance, modern scholars have adopted Paix’s term for the polyphonic reweaving technique. We now call such Masses “parody Masses,” and try to forget that the term now ordinarily suggests some sort of caricature or lampoon.

The image displays a musical score for a parody mass, consisting of four systems of vocal staves. Each system includes four parts: Soprano, Alto/Tenor, Tenor, and Bass. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with the lyrics "Ky - rie e - lei". The second system continues with "i - son. Ky -". The third system has "son. Ky - rie e - lei i -". The fourth system concludes with "son. Ky - rie e - lei". The music is written in a style characteristic of the late sixteenth century, with a focus on polyphonic texture and imitation.

The image shows a musical score for a four-voice setting. The top staff is the Superius part, starting with a whole note 'rie' followed by a melismatic extension of 'e - le' that rises in pitch. The second staff is the Altus part, which begins with 'e - lei - son,'. The third staff is the Tenor part, starting with 'e - lei' and then 'son.'. The bottom staff is the Bassus part, which begins with 'e - lei' and then 'son.'. The score is in a common time signature and features various rhythmic values including minims, crotchets, and quavers.

ex. 14-8 Antoine de Févin, *Missa super Ave Maria*, Kyrie, first section

The Kyrie from Févin's *Missa super Ave Maria* (Ex. 14-8), one of the earliest true parody Masses, gives a good idea of the new genre and its possibilities. ("True" parody Masses are distinguished here not from false ones, but from earlier works—like Du Fay's *Missa Ave Regina Coelorum*, quoted in chapter 13—which are basically tenor cantus-firmus Masses but which might occasionally draw informally on additional voices from a polyphonic prototype; such Masses were also composed by Ockeghem, Martini, Faugues, Obrecht, and Josquin himself.¹⁹) It is set in three parts, following the structure of the text. The "Christe section," like the outer "Kyries," uses the whole four-voice complement. (There is no need for a "tenor tacet" reduction where there is no tenor cantus firmus to withhold for effect.) The first section (Ex. 14-8) opens with a superius/altus duo on the opening motto-phrase of Josquin's motet, with a melismatic extension that takes it one scale degree higher for its climax. The tenor enters with what sounds like a repetition of the same point, but in fact the tenor sings an elision of the first two phrases from the motet, imitated by the altus and then by the superius, while the bassus enters at the lower fifth, providing a harmonization that reemphasizes the F reached by the superius in the first phrase. The closing phrase reiterates the opening, but only in the superius. The other voices sing nonimitative counterpoints, the tenor making a brief recollection of "gratia plena" just before the final cadence.

The "Christe" appears to begin with a new point woven out of the "gratia plena" motive, but it is actually the altus counterpoint, derived from "cujus assumptio" near the end of Josquin's motet, from which most of the fabric is actually woven. The final "Kyrie" is especially ingenious. The motivic material for its first point of imitation is provided by the tenor's version of the third phrase ("Dominus tecum") in Josquin's motet. What had been an accompanying melisma—part of the background, as it were—in the original motet is moved on reweaving into the foreground. Févin's final point is woven more straightforwardly out of Josquin's "Virgo serena" phrase. In its general effect, the Mass Kyrie is a reworking of the opening quatrain from the motet, but with subtle variants and digressions at the reworker's discretion.

Notes:

(19) For a study of this in-between genre see J. Peter Burkholder, "Johannes Martini and the Imitation Mass of the Late Fifteenth Century," *JAMS XXXVIII* (1985): 470–523.

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FACTS AND MYTHS

Chapter: CHAPTER 14 Josquin and the Humanists

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Févin was “Josquin’s happy follower” chiefly in matters of texture—the texture exemplified in *Ave Maria*, with its rhetorically supple alternation of pervading imitation and emphatic chordal declamation. The full integration of musical space—rather than the hierarchical stratification of parts found in older music, with each part carrying out its own particular functional assignment—implied not only a new technique but a whole new philosophy of composition.

The technique as such was given an early general description in 1523, two years after Josquin’s death, when the Florentine theorist Pietro Aaron published his compendium *Thoscanello de la musica*. Aaron, a Jew, was the first major writer on music to use the Italian vernacular rather than Latin, for which reason he is often looked upon as the first “Renaissance” music theorist. His book went through several editions, the last of which was published in 1539, when the new style Aaron was the first to recognize theoretically was fully established in practice.

The description in the *Thoscanello* was actually foreshadowed by Aaron himself in an earlier treatise published in 1516, a year after Févin’s Mass was published; it is a less detailed and distinctive formulation than the one now classic, but it mentions Josquin explicitly as one of the composers whose methods it describes. No wonder, then, that Aaron is looked upon as the literary harbinger of “high Renaissance” music, and Josquin as its master architect.

Both aspects or poles of the “*Ave Maria* style” are represented in Aaron’s discussion. The functionally integrated, imitative style of the opening quatrain is reported as a recent innovation, replacing the older discant practice in which the voices were laid out one at a time. “The moderns,” Aaron somewhat gloatingly observed, “have considered better in this matter,” his complacent tone recalling Tinctoris, whose works Aaron had studied well. “Modern composers,” he continued, “consider all the parts together rather than by the method described above.” And when all the parts are considered together, each is free to play whatever role composer may wish to assign it.

As to the homorhythmic, declamatory style, Aaron is the first theorist to consider what we would call chords as autonomous harmonic units that may be described and crafted individually. The theorist devotes much attention to matters of spacing and doubling in four parts, and to making cadences—in short, to what is still taught today in “harmony class.” The ideal of integrated musical texture or “space,” and the ideal of compositional freedom and mastery in tandem, have seemed to many influential modern scholars to be closely allied to notions we now associate with the “Renaissance” mentality, especially as contrasted with that of the “Middle Ages.” In an ingenious and seminal article of 1941, Edward Lowinsky radically opposed the “medieval view of space” (as solidly layered and bounded) to the “Renaissance concept of space” (as free, wide open, yet “organically” integrated and harmoniously proportioned) and claimed that the transition from the one to the other had taken place around the time of the Copernican revolution in astronomy, suggesting a time-frame of 1480 to 1520. At the beginning of this period, Lowinsky maintained, the medieval view of space and the world was unquestioned; by the end, it had been decisively overthrown.

The “exact parallel” to the Copernican revolution, on this view, was the modification in compositional method that Aaron described near the end of the period of cosmological transformation. “Of all the changes in the manner of composition since the emergence of polyphony,” Lowinsky concluded, this was “the most vital and the most fateful one.”²⁰ Josquin, in Aaron’s account as interpreted by Lowinsky, assumed truly colossal stature as a culture hero, becoming a veritable musical Copernicus. And *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena* acquired a renewed—indeed, a magnified—emblematic status as the prime musical embodiment of its *Zeitgeist*, to use a word common in discussions of the “history of ideas” to denote the essential spirit of a time.

It became customary to link up Josquin’s motet with Aaron’s description of “simultaneous conception” and to assume their chronological proximity. And that automatically made Josquin’s motet a relatively late work, one that demonstrated the composer’s “perfect technical mastery, stylistic maturity, and profundity of expression,” in Lowinsky’s eloquent words. So obviously did it exemplify Josquin’s “mature motet style,” as Lowinsky put it in another study, that the historian allowed himself a categorical assertion.²¹ The work had to be written, he contended, after the change Aaron had described was essentially completed, and when composers had begun relying on what the German humanist Lampadius of Lüneburg, writing (like Listenius and Heyden) in the vintage year of 1537, called the *tabula compositoria*—a preliminary draft in full score that preceded the copying of the individual parts in choirbooks.

“A glance at this music,” Lowinsky wrote of the *Ave Maria*, “will be enough to suggest how greatly the conception of such a piece must have been facilitated by the introduction of the score.” Even more strongly, he claimed that “a polyphonic texture of this density can scarcely be manipulated without the aid of a score.” Since Lampadius implied that the use of scores had begun around 1500, and since an archival search yielded no full scores that could be dated much earlier than that, the turn of the century became by extension the presumed date of Josquin’s motet.

A highly erudite and resourceful scholar, Lowinsky refined the date still further, and even managed to infer the exact occasion for which *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena* had been composed. He suggested that it was written for a votive service held on 23 September 1497 at the Church of the Blessed Virgin in Loreto (a shrine near Rome much favored by pilgrims), at the behest of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, then Josquin’s patron, who had just recovered from a prolonged and serious illness, in fulfillment of a sickbed vow (*voto*, whence “votive”).

This was an admirably crafted hypothesis. The proposed date fell within the time frame stipulated by the “Copernican revolution” the motet was held to typify; it came close to the origins of the *tabula compositoria* as described by Lampadius; it was just early enough to account for the motet’s earliest sources, yet late enough to qualify as the work of Josquin’s full maturity. (According to his then extrapolated birth date, the composer would have been nearing sixty.) The proposal fit the facts insofar as facts were known (or at least believed), and also fit in with, and supported, an inventive and intellectually fertile assessment of the culture that produced it.



fig. 14-5 The tomb of Cardinal Ascanio Maria Sforza, Josquin's employer (1509; in Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome).

Imagine both the excitement and the consternation, then, when a young American scholar named Thomas Noblitt asserted—in an article written in German and published in 1974, mainly consisting of a detailed physical description of a German manuscript that was one of the motet's remoter sources—that *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena* had reached Germany and was copied there no later than 1476.²² All at once the work went from being the very paradigm of Josquin's ripest and most "humanistic" style to being his very earliest datable work. It now predated, in some cases by decades, all the developments it had formerly exemplified: musical humanism, "simultaneous conception," the *tabula compositoria*, the "northern Renaissance" itself. The innocent redating of a source turned into a threat—to some, an intolerable threat—to the Josquin legend.

One reaction to the shattering news was denial. The article on Josquin des Prez in the 1980 edition of the *New Grove Dictionary*, the one that followed Noblitt's report, dismissed his claim out of hand (as resting on unspecified "questionable assumptions") and proceeded to argue on purely stylistic grounds that the famous

motet “can hardly have been composed much more than 15 years earlier” than its publication by Petrucci, who had accorded it the place of honor.²³ “In fact,” the venerable dictionary declared, Josquin’s *Ave Maria* self-evidently typified “the motet style of Josquin’s middle years,” namely “the mid-1480s.” The conclusion, and the evident premise on which the dating relied, was that “the musical form precisely mirrors that of the text, yet without any sense of constraint.” Of course, to base conclusions on premises is the very definition of circular reasoning. And the introduction into the argument of the inescapably value-laden concept of “constraint” and its overcoming gives considerable insight into the way myths arise and how they function. It begins to suggest what may have really been at stake, and what sort of a culture hero Josquin had really become.

Lowinsky, too, had charged his discussion of musical space and its changing conceptualization with matters of high cultural and ethical (not to say political) import. “Simultaneous conception,” as preached by Aaron and practiced by Josquin, meant “the emancipation of the composer from the *cantus firmus* technique.”²⁴ Not only that, but “the principle of imitation,” as it “gradually penetrated all the voices,” was also an emancipating force, for “imitation was based on motives freely invented by the composer, who could now obey fully the impulses and inspiration he received from the text.” Josquin’s late works, of which *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena* was one, were “great musical structures freed from all the shackles of the medieval tenor.”

We have, it seems, come back to the view of Josquin as a surrogate Beethoven: Beethoven as the voice of the French revolution, who proclaimed liberty and equality and in so doing became “The Man Who Freed Music,” to quote the subtitle of what was for a long time the standard popular biography of the great composer (by Robert Schaufler, first published in 1929). But we return to the Josquin/Beethoven nexus from a new perspective that allows us to see that the correspondence so often drawn between the two legendary figures is not drawn so “simply on the basis of their greatness,” but reaches much farther down into the stuff of the culture that does the drawing.

That culture—our culture—is one wedded to the ideal of personal liberation. That is a value that arose alongside modern historiography itself in the nineteenth century. It expresses above all the aspirations of a socially mobile, economically empowered, highly educated but nonpatrician segment of the population: in short, the expanding and optimistic nineteenth- and twentieth-century middle class. That is the class that has mainly supplied the world with its professional historians, and so it is not surprising that the stories professional historians have told express the values of that class, a class undreamed of in Josquin’s day.

If, having been brought up in a middle-class culture that professes social justice and equality of opportunity, we have learned to place a high value on political and personal freedom and on emancipation from shackles and constraints of every kind, then we are liable to see manifestations of these values in all areas of life, including art, as progressive, and will try to abet them. The converse of this tendency is the tendency to see all sequent narratives, including the narrative of musical style-evolution, as metaphors for the master narrative of progress and liberation.

If we are now becoming more acutely aware of this tendency and are taking steps (and alerting our students and readers) to spot it and possibly avoid it, it is neither because we are suddenly wiser than Lowinsky (as great a music historian as ever lived) and his contemporaries, or because our class-bred values have necessarily changed, or because we are no longer wedded to high ideals, but because the exponential increase in the amount of available (and often apparently contradictory) information, and the occasionally dramatic consequences of that growth (such as the controversy surrounding the re-dating of *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena*) have forced a confrontation with basic questions of epistemology—questions of how we know what we know, and whether we really know it.

It is because commitment to high ideals, and the tendency to universalize them, can themselves shackle empirical perception and impede rational inference that we try to bring them to full consciousness and surmount them in our professional work. It betokens not the abandonment of emancipation as a goal but rather its application at a higher conceptual level, the one that conditions our own beliefs and actions. It is much easier to see how values become prejudices on the lower levels of scholarly work than at the higher ones. If, therefore, we raise our conceptual sights higher than before, it is in hopes of being freed to engage

more directly with the perceptual materials of our trade (like manuscripts), and derive concepts from them (like the dates of their contents) with more confidence.

That is why it has been thought valuable to devote so much space in a book like this to so relatively dry and inconsequential a matter as the date of Josquin's *Ave Maria*. Its ramifications are anything but inconsequential. They can alert us to the dangers of looking for "good vibes" in history. When Lowinsky's excellent hypothesis was shown no longer "to fit the facts insofar as facts were known," continued commitment to it is exposed as prejudice, no longer fitting facts but only a predefined notion of a Zeitgeist.

Thus, to believe that pervading imitation "emancipated" music or its composers from the "tyranny" of the cantus firmus, however thrilling or gratifying it may be to us personally, only makes problems for us as historians. For one thing, it renders us unable to understand how it is that imitation and cantus firmus techniques can coexist so happily—and especially in Josquin's work, as we may see in Ex. 14-9, the beginning of *Benedicta es, coelorum regina* ("Blessed art thou, O Queen of the Heavens"), a sequence motet that circulated mainly during Josquin's "posthumous" period (that is the period of his widespread dissemination in German prints). *Benedicta es* was a particular favorite of Glareanus himself, and popular, thanks to him, with all the German humanists.

Be - ne - - di - - cta

Be - ne - - di - - cta

Be - ne - di - - cta

Be - ne - - di - -

Be - ne - di

Detailed description: This system contains six staves. The top staff is a vocal line with the lyrics 'Be - ne - - di - - cta'. The second staff is another vocal line with the same lyrics. The third staff is a keyboard accompaniment line with the lyrics 'Be - ne - di - - cta'. The fourth and fifth staves are empty. The sixth staff is a keyboard accompaniment line with the lyrics 'Be - ne - di'.

es, cœ - lo - rum re - gi - - na

es, cœ - lo - rum re - gi - - na

Be - ne - di - cta es, cœ - lo - rum re - - gi - na cœ - lo - rum

Be - ne - di - cta be - ne - di - cta es, cœ - lo - rum

- - - cta es, cœ - lo -

Be - ne - di cta es, cœ - lo -

- cta es, cœ - lo - rum re - gi - na

Detailed description: This system contains six staves. The top staff is a vocal line with the lyrics 'es, cœ - lo - rum re - gi - - na'. The second staff is another vocal line with the same lyrics. The third staff is a keyboard accompaniment line with the lyrics 'Be - ne - di - cta es, cœ - lo - rum re - - gi - na cœ - lo - rum'. The fourth staff is a keyboard accompaniment line with the lyrics 'Be - ne - di - cta be - ne - di - cta es, cœ - lo - rum'. The fifth staff is a keyboard accompaniment line with the lyrics '- - - cta es, cœ - lo -'. The sixth staff is a keyboard accompaniment line with the lyrics 'Be - ne - di cta es, cœ - lo -'. The bottom-most staff is a keyboard accompaniment line with the lyrics '- cta es, cœ - lo - rum re - gi - na'.

Et mun - di to - ti - us Do - mi - na,
Et mun - di to - ti - us do - mi - na,
(rum) re - - gi - na et mun - di to - ti - us do - mi - na,
re - - gi - na Et mun - di to - ti - us do - mi - na, et mun -
- - rum re - gi - - na Et mun -
- - rum re - gi - - na Et mun -
Et mun - di to - ti - us do - mi - na,
Et ae - gris me - di - ci - na.
Et ae - gris me - di - ci - na _____
et mun - di to - ti - us do - mi - na
- - di to - ti - us do - mi - na Et ae - gris me - di - ci - na
- di to - ti - us do - mi - na Et ae - gris me - di -
- di to - ti - us do - mi - na Et ae - gris

2. Tu prae - cla -

Tu prae - cla -

Et ae - gris me - di - ci - na Tu prae - cla - ra

Tu prae - cla - ra

ci - na

me - di - ci - na

Et ae - gris me - di - ci - na Tu prae - cla - ra

ex. 14-9 Josquin des Prez, *Benedicta es, coelorum regina*, mm. 1-10

In fact, like so many ancient musical techniques, cantus firmus writing has never died out at all. Imitation no more replaced cantus firmus than (to recall an analogous discussion in the first chapter of this book) literacy replaced oral practices. The one joined the other, affecting it, to be sure, but never altogether supplanting it. Cantus firmus technique is still an available option, and one universally studied by aspiring composers even now. So neither literacy nor pervading imitation can be simply understood as liberations. Their histories are far more complex—and far more interesting—than that. And that is one more reason why the narrative in this book is making such strenuous and self-advertising efforts to avoid concepts like “The Middle Ages” and “The Renaissance.” When turned into dueling Zeitgeists they are obstacles, not aids, to seeing things, let alone understanding them.

What happens now if we accept the date that Thomas Noblitt’s physical evidence (specifically, the watermark in the paper on which it was copied) assigned to Josquin’s *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena*? Nothing very terrible. Quite the contrary: all at once it takes its place in a new and telling context, that of the Milanese *motetti missales*. Compare it with the works of Gaspar van Weerbeke sampled in the previous chapter (Ex. 13-7, Ex. 13-8), or especially with Compère’s *Ave Maria* (Ex. 13-9), and its membership in their family becomes obvious. The reader may already have noticed, in fact, that Josquin’s opening quatrain is based on the very same sequence melody that Compère appropriated in the altus of his litany motet: a local favorite, no doubt.

Ave Maria ... Virgo serena thus stands revealed as belonging to the tradition of the Milanese “ducal motets” identified in chapter 13 with Galeazzo Maria Sforza, the brother of Ascanio Sforza, Josquin’s sometime patron. Far from the revolutionary work that Lowinsky sought and found in it, it now appears to be fully representative of its fifteenth-century parent repertory, even if, as we are all likely to agree, its artistic quality far outstrips that of its companions. Though exceptionally realized and full of idiosyncratic detail, its style nevertheless reflects its time and place. Both in its avoidance of a cantus-firmus-bearing tenor and in its close-fitting text-music relationship it resonates less with lofty humanism than with its near-opposite, the stylistic “lowering” associated in chapter 13 with the influence of local, nonliterate popular genres.

When Noblitt’s article was published, Josquin des Prez was still erroneously identified with the Iudochus de

Picardia who had sung in the Milanese cathedral choir as early as 1459. For a while, it was argued that the famous *Ave Maria* was actually intended for use in a “loco Mass” as described in the previous chapter. Now that Josquin’s early presence in Milan has been disproved, the relationship between his motet and the Milanese tradition is no longer quite so obvious. But Josquin certainly was in Milan during his time of service to Ascanio Sforza, most securely documented for the period 1484–85. Some scholars have tried to reconcile Noblitt’s source evidence with this later date, reasonably arguing that music copied on paper with a 1476 watermark need not have been entered immediately after the paper was procured, and that the year 1476 should not be regarded as anything more than a “terminus post quem”—the earliest possible date rather than necessarily the actual one.²⁵

Even 1485, however, is too early a date to support the claims that Lowinsky made for the motet, or for its composer’s intentions. To acknowledge this, however, is by no means to deny the status of *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena* as an exemplary (or even “prophetic”) sixteenth-century composition. It survived in print, in memory, and in use, and achieved renewed currency thanks to the work of the humanists who appropriated it. It did indeed play an important part in establishing a genuine tradition of musical humanism. Works of art certainly can and often do transcend their time and place of origin (as anyone attending concerts today can attest), and works that have so survived can exert influence at the farthest, most improbable temporal and geographic remove.

In the nineteenth century, for example, the first century to have a “modern” historical sense, the century-old vocal works of J. S. Bach were revived and had a far more direct impact on contemporary composition than they ever had during the composer’s lifetime. In the twentieth century, an even more history-obsessed age, much older repertoires exhumed by musicology (including “medieval” and “Renaissance” ones) have often influenced the newest music.

The survival and posthumous influence of Josquin des Prez, and certain of his works, was an early example of this process of “remote reception”—perhaps the earliest. But if *Ave Maria ... Virgo serena* was an exemplary sixteenth-century composition, it was not Josquin who made it so, but the sixteenth century.

Notes:

(20) Edward E. Lowinsky, “The Concept of Physical and Musical Space in the Renaissance,” *Papers of the American Musicological Society* (1941): 57–84; rpt. in E. Lowinsky, *Music in the Culture of the Renaissance and Other Essays*, ed. Bonnie J. Blackburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 6–18 (quote is on p. 11).

(21) E. Lowinsky, “On the Use of Scores by Sixteenth-Century Musicians,” *JAMSI* (1948): 21 (rpt. in *Music in the Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 800).

(22) T. Noblitt, “Die Datierung der Handschrift Mus. Ms. 3154 der Staatsbibliothek Munchen,” *Die Musikforschung* XXVII (1974): 36–56.

(23) Jeremy Noble, “Josquin Desprez,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. IX (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 719.

(24) Lowinsky, “The Concept of Physical and Musical Space in the Renaissance,” in *Music in the Culture of the Renaissance*, p. 12.

(25) The point was made first by T. Elizabeth Cason in an unpublished paper (“The Dating of MS Munich 3154 Revisited”) presented at Duke University in 1999, and later elaborated by Joshua Rifkin in “Munich, Milan, and a Marian Motet: Dating Josquin’s *Ave Maria...virgo serena*,” *JAMSLVI* (2003): 239–350.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

Sixteenth-Century Church Music; New Instrumental Genres

Chapter: CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

ALL IS KNOWN

- *In this splendid, noble art*
- *So many have been famous in our age*
- *They make any other time seem poor.*¹

The lines quoted as epigraph were penned in 1490 by Giovanni Santi, court painter to the Duke of Urbino, when his son Raffaello Santi, known to us as Raphael, was seven years old. That boy, of course, whose gifts were recognized early and stimulated with papal patronage, would soon make his father's time seem poor. The art of Raphael is now a standard of perfection in painting, "the clearest expression," according to one modern authority, "of the exquisite harmony and balance of High Renaissance composition."² That standard of perfection has remained in force, so to speak, whenever and wherever "perfection," as a standard, has been valued (see Fig. 15-1)

Something similar may be observed in the music of the sixteenth century, particularly as practiced in Italian centers of patronage. Fifteenth-century writers—Tinctoris, for one—were often as complacently sure as Giovanni Santi was of the unprecedented richness of their age. But in the sixteenth century there was an enormous striving after an objective standard of perfection—of surpassing "harmony and balance"—that, once achieved, would remain good for all time.



fig. 15-1 Raphael (Raffaello Santi or Sanzio, 1483–1520), *Alba Madonna*, ca. 1510.

This happy status quo, many musicians of the latter half of the sixteenth century believed, had been reached in their time. Music, they argued, was now an *ars perfecta*, a “perfected art.” After floundering in the “lowest depths” of decay during an age of barbarism (what those who believe in the Renaissance call the Middle Ages), it had rescaled the “heights of perfection” it had known in ancient times.³ Its technique now admitted of no further development. What was needed was codification: the casting of the perfected style in permanent rules so that it might never be lost again, so that its harmony and balance might be preserved and passed along even to those who had not the genius to discover it for themselves. For no one needed to rediscover what had already been discovered. The age of discovery was past. All was known. An age of “classicism”—of conformity with established excellence—had dawned. It was a great age for theorists.

The outstanding codifier of the *ars perfecta* was Gioseffo Zarlino (1517–90), from whose great treatise *Le Istitutioni harmoniche*, first published in 1558 and reissued twice thereafter, the historical judgments in the preceding paragraph were taken. The title of Zarlino’s four-volume manual was itself a sign of the times. Often translated as “Elements” or “Principles of Harmony,” or something equally neutral, it really means “The Established Rules of Harmony.” And harmony, both in the narrow musical sense and in the wider esthetic sense, was what it purported to impart by methods tried and true. “If we follow the rules given up to now,” Zarlino promised at the conclusion of his third volume, on counterpoint, “our compositions will be free of reprehensible elements, purged of every error and polished, and our harmonies will be good and pleasant.”⁴ Harmony and balance are matters of proportion, and proportion is a matter of quantities. Therefore it will not surprise us to find Zarlino writing that “music is a science

subordinate to arithmetic.”⁵ He even appended one final chapter to the last volume that carried the cautionary heading, “The Senses are Fallible, and Judgments Should Not Be Made Solely by Their Means, but Should Be Accompanied by Reason.”⁶ That begins to smack of Boethius. If we are hasty to invoke the dueling Zeitgeists, we may be tempted to slap the label “medieval” on the quintessential “Renaissance” theorist.



fig. 15-2 Gioseffo Zarlino, anonymous portrait at the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, Bologna.

But like most paradoxes, this one is only seeming. Zarlino was merely trying to lend authority to his rules and discourage whimsical experimentation on the part of his students. New ideas, to say nothing of thrill-seeking, could degrade a perfected art. Elsewhere he invokes something that would never have occurred to Boethius to invoke, namely “natural philosophy.” That is what we would call *science*, in the modern empirical (or “Galilean”) sense that is thought to have arisen during the “Renaissance” as a by-product of its secularism. Those who think of the sixteenth century as the cradle of modern science tend to call it the “early modern” period. Zarlino was the first “early modern” theorist.

The really valuable fruit of Zarlino’s rationalized empiricism was his recognition of harmony, as it actually functioned in “early modern” music, as being worthy of theoretical attention, and his ingenuity in devising a

rationale for it. For a long time now—at least since the beginning of the fifteenth century, and most likely before that in unwritten repertoires—the triad, first imported into continental music from England, had been the de facto normative consonance for all European polyphonic music. Before Zarlino, however, no theorist had recognized it as an entity, given it a name, or legitimized its use.

Notes:

(1) Giovanni Santi, *Cronaca rimata* (1490), l.424–26.

(2) *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Raphael” (6th ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

(3) Gioseffo Zarlino, *Istitutione harmoniche* (Venice, 1558), Vol. I, *Proemio*; quoted in Jessie Ann Owens, “Music Historiography and the Definition of ‘Renaissance,’” *MLA Notes* XLVII (1990–91): 314.

(4) Zarlino, *The Art of Counterpoint (Istitutione harmoniche, Vol. III)*, trans. G. Marco and C. Palisca (New York: Norton, 1968), p. 289.

(5) Zarlino, *On the Modes (Istitutione harmoniche, Vol. IV)*, trans. V. Cohen (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 102.

(6) Zarlino, *On the Modes*, p. 104.

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Harmony: Basic concepts

THE TRIAD COMES OF AGE

Chapter: CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

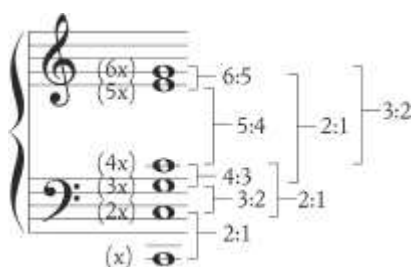
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

All theory we have studied up to now has been discant theory, in which two voices (the “structural pair”) define harmonic norms and in which only perfect consonances enjoy full freedom of use. If nowhere else, composers of written music still honored this ranking of consonances at final cadences, where as we have seen, triads had to be purged of their thirds for full cadential finality. Zarlino was the first theorist to accept the triad as a full-fledged consonance. Not only did he accept it, he dubbed it the *harmonia perfetta*—the “perfect harmony.” He rationalized giving the triad this suggestive name not only on the basis of the sensory pleasure that triadic harmony evoked, nor on the basis of the affective qualities that he ascribed to it, although he was in fact the first to come right out and say that “when [in a triad] the major third is below [the minor] the harmony is gay, and when it is above, the harmony is sad.”⁷ Along with these factors Zarlino cited mathematical theory, so that he could maintain, like a good Aristotelian, that according to his rules reason held sway over sense. The “perfect harmony,” he asserted, was the product of the “perfect number,” which was six.

Just as Glareanus had come to terms with modern practice by adding two more finals to the Frankish four to account for contemporary melodic styles, Zarlino added two more integers to the Pythagorean four in order to generate the harmonies of contemporary music that he now wished to rationalize. The perfect Pythagorean harmonies could all be expressed as “superparticular” ratios of the integers from 1 to 4. That is, they could be expressed as fractions in which the numerator was one more than the denominator, thus: $2/1$ = octave; $3/2$ = fifth; $4/3$ = fourth. But, said Zarlino, there is nothing special about the number four, and no reason why it should be taken as a limit.

Ah, but six! It is the perfect number because it is the first integer that is the sum of all the numbers of which it is a multiple. That is, one plus two plus three equal six, and one times two times three also equal six. So a harmony that would embody all the superparticular ratios between 1 and 6 would be a perfect harmony, and a music that employed such harmony would be a perfect music. In effect, that meant adding a major third (harmonic ratio $5/4$) above the fourth and a minor third (ratio $6/5$) above the major third, producing a very sonorous spacing of tones, a kind of ideal doubling of the triad in six voices (three roots, two fifths, one third), as shown in Ex. 15-1.



ex. 15-1 Gioseffo Zarlino's
senaria (chord of six), based on
C

Nowadays this configuration is recognizable as the beginning of the natural harmonic series (or “overtone” series), which since the eighteenth century has been the standard method of explaining the triad and asserting its “naturalness.” Zarlino, needless to say, would have jumped for joy to see this confirmation of his rational speculation in the realm of “natural philosophy.” But nobody knew about overtones as yet in the sixteenth century.

What people certainly did know is that when pitches were stacked up in this way they sounded good. In rich textures of five and six voices, which were increasingly common by the late sixteenth century, this ideal spacing and doubling was widely practiced, and compositions ended more and more frequently with full triads sonorously spaced. (See the end of Sennfl's luxuriant parody of Josquin's *Ave Maria* in Ex. 14-7 for an illustration of the practice in advance of the justification for it.) Now both of these harmonically enriching practices—larger vocal complements, triadic endings—had a properly “theoretical” support. They were among the finishing touches, so to speak, that defined the *ars perfecta* as the last word in harmony.

Notes:

(7) Zarlino, *The Art of Counterpoint*, p. 70.

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Harmonics

“IL ECCELENTISSIMO ADRIANO” AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Chapter: CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin



fig. 15-3 Adrian Willaert, in a woodcut that served as frontispiece to *Musica nova* (Venice, 1540), a collection of ricercars for organ or instrumental ensemble by Willaert and several of his Italian disciples.

The other main finishing or perfecting touch that distinguished the “classic” polyphony of the mid-sixteenth century higher genres (Mass and motet) was the full rationalization and codification of dissonance-treatment, a polishing or smoothing-out process if ever there was one. Here again, Zarlino was the authoritative theorist, but in matters of high gloss he confessed his particular indebtedness to his revered teacher and mentor, to whom he never referred except as *il eccellentissimo Adriano*, “the most excellent Adriano.” We know him as Adrian Willaert. Thanks in part to Zarlino, Willaert looms in history as the great mid-century stylist.

Born around 1490 in West Flanders (now Belgium), either at Bruges or in a smaller town to the south, Willaert was the last in the line of Flemings and Frenchmen who dominated Italian court and chapel music since the early fifteenth century. In a way he was Josquin’s creative grandchild, for his primary teacher was Jean Mouton (ca. 1459–1522), a member of the French royal chapel under Louis XII and Francis I and an important composer of motets. The poet Ronsard, writing in 1560, called Mouton Josquin’s best pupil.⁸ Other writers, too, called attention to their special affinity.

It is unlikely, though, that Mouton could actually have studied with Josquin. He could have known the older man only in the period of his own relative maturity—and even at that, only if Josquin really was in residence at the French court, for which there is no clear evidence. It is certain, however, that association with Josquin, the greatest luminary of the day, was as good for Mouton’s reputation as it would be for anyone else’s, and that Mouton consciously emulated Josquin’s motets in his own. The style characteristics he deduced from Josquin—paired imitation, clear declamation, a rhetorical approach to form—he passed on to Willaert in turn.

He also passed on what Glareanus, who admired Mouton the most of all the composers of the immediate post-Josquin generation, called his *facili fluentem filo cantum*: his “leisurely flow of melody,”⁹ the result of a studied regularity of rhythmic motion and a sophisticated technique for evading or eliding cadences, an important development about which there will be more to say in connection with Willaert and Zarlino. Willaert was by no means its only inheritor, or (by that token) Josquin’s only creative grandchild. Before looking closely at his work, we can create a context for it by briefly inspecting that of his two most important contemporaries, both slightly younger than Willaert but shorter-lived. Between them, they succeeded in developing Mouton’s leisurely flow into a majestic sound-river, in which the various component voices, no longer functionally distinguished in any obvious way, constantly enter and leave, contributing their individual, elegantly shaped lines to a generous yet impervious texture that leads a seemingly inexhaustible life of its own.

Notes:

(8) Pierre de Ronsard, *Livre des mélanges*, in Ronsard, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. P. Laumonier (Paris, 1914–19), Vol. VII, p. 20.

(9) Glareanus, *Dodekachordon* (Basel, 1547), p. 450.

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Adrian Willaert

Nicolas Gombert

Motet: Josquin's contemporaries and successors

GOMBERT

Chapter: CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The “post-Josquin” style at its most seamless and luxuriant can be sampled in the work of the Fleming Nicolas Gombert (ca. 1495–ca. 1560). Gombert, too, was reputed to have been Josquin’s pupil, but the information comes from a late, remote observer—a German theorist named Hermann Finck, writing in 1556—and is very likely just another use of “Josquin” as a brand name.¹⁰ Finck probably drew an erroneous conclusion from Gombert’s humanistic elegy for Josquin (*Musae Jovis*, “O Muses of Jove!”) that had been commissioned in 1545 by the Antwerp publisher Tylman Susato to adorn a book of Josquin’s chansons.

In fact, Gombert was a member of the élite chapel choir of Charles V, the greatest of the latter-day Holy Roman Emperors, and from 1529 the master of the choirboys. In 1540 he was dismissed from his post for sexually abusing one of the boys in his charge and spent some time thereafter in penal servitude as a galley slave on the high seas. He seems to have retired afterward to the Belgian cathedral town of Tournai as a canon of the same church of Notre Dame where the famous composite Mass Ordinary now known as the “Mass of Tournai” had been sung a couple of centuries earlier (see chapter 9). During this final period of relative calm and modest material security he was something like a freelance composer specializing in motets. More than 160 survive from his pen, of which more than half evidently date from after 1540.

One such is *In illo tempore loquente Jesu ad turbas* (“While Jesus was speaking to the crowd”), a six-voice gospel motet that was first published in Antwerp in 1556. Example 15-2 contains its opening point of imitation, and the beginning of the next. To speak of pervading imitation here would be an understatement. The texture is woven out of motives (*fantazies*) of the composer’s invention, but there is no longer any correspondence (as there had been in Busnoys or Josquin) between the number of voices and the number of imitative entries. The music proceeds deliberately, in great wavelike sections. Each is woven out of countless entries large and small, and all entries begin recognizably (though not literally) alike. Zarlino’s term for this kind of highly redundant approximate imitation with free continuation was *fuga sciolta*, which might be translated as “free imitation,” as opposed to what he called *fuga legata* (what we would call canon).

The image shows a musical score for a piece by Gombert. It consists of five vocal staves and one basso continuo staff, all in common time (C). The lyrics are: "In illo tempore, in illo tempore, in illo tempore, in illo tempore, in illo tempore." Each vocal part has a circled '1' above the first measure, indicating a first ending or a specific performance instruction. The basso continuo line is in the bass clef and provides a harmonic foundation for the vocal parts.

① In il - lo tem - po - re,

① In il - lo tem - po -

① In il - lo tem - po - re in

① In il - lo tem - po - re, in il - lo

① In il - lo tem - po -

7



in il - lo tem - po - re, in il - lo tem - po -
re, in il - lo, in il - lo tem - po - re, in il - lo
il - lo tem - po - re, in il - lo tem - po - re, in il - lo
tem - po - re, in il - lo tem - po - re
In il - lo tem - po - re, in il - lo tem -
re, in il - lo tem - po - re, in

8



re: Lo - quen - te Je - su, Je -
tem - po - re: Lo - quen - te Je - su, lo - quen - te Je - su, lo -
tem - po - re: Lo - quen - te Je - su, lo - quen - te Je - su
Lo - quen - te Je - su ad tur - bas, lo - quen - te Je -
po - re: Lo - quen - te Je - su ad tur -
il - lo tem - po - re: Lo -

18

su, lo-quen-te Ie-su ad tur-bas,

quen-te Ie-su, lo-quen-te Ie-su, ex-tol-lens vo-

ad tur-bas, lo-quen-te Ie-su, ex-tol-lens vo-

su ad tur-bas, lo-quen-te, lo-quen-te Ie-su ad tur-bas, ex-tol-

bas, lo-quen-te Ie-su, ad tur-bas,

quen-te Ie-su ad tur-bas, lo-quen-te Ie-su, ex-tol-lens vo-

ex. 15-2 Nicolas Gombert, *In illo tempore*, mm. 1-23

The musical phrase associated with “in illo tempore” enters sixteen times, as shown. The next phrase, on “loquente Jesu ad turbas,” will have fourteen entries in all, more closely spaced in time. The number of statements of a given motif and their rate of entry are Gombert’s primary means of both formal articulation and rhetorical emphasis. Varying them, often quite markedly and asymmetrically, allows the composer to monitor and control the shape of the composition without resorting to stark contrasts of texture. Rhetoric remains as a shaping force, but within new limits defined by a proud emphasis on craftsmanship. Expression is sublimated into “finish.”

The texture might be compared with a finely wrought tapestry: a weave of melodic strands that are given a high profile at their beginnings, receding from there into the harmonic warp and woof. What brings the river metaphor to mind, with its suggestion of placid, time-forgetful flow, are the harmonic and rhythmic dimensions. The harmonic or tonal plan is extremely stable. Its stability is achieved by a strong emphasis on what might be called the “structural pitches,” so defined on the basis of their function within the built-instructure of the mode, in this case what Glareanus had dubbed “Ionian,” with *Cas* final.

Every entry of the first phrase (“in illo tempore”) is either on the final or on the *tuba* or reciting tone (to recall some Frankish terminology from long ago), namely G. Entries on the final proceed by a rising fifth to the *tuba*, describing the modal pentachord. Entries on the *tuba* proceed not in literal but in reciprocal fashion, by a rising fourth to the final, describing the modal tetrachord. The second phrase (beginning “loquente”) seems to vary the scheme a bit: entries are on G or its fifth, D; but the finishing or cadential notes are again in every case either G (the *tuba*) or C (the final).

This modal regularity is reinforced by range-deployment (*tessitura*): the old structural pair, *cantus* and *tenor* (plus the “quintus” or fifth voice, which coincides with the *tenor*’s range) are the first to enter, moving from *tuba* up to final. That suggests a plagal ambitus (to recall the old chant-theorists’ term), and the suggestion is confirmed by the overall range of those parts, with the initial G functioning as a lower limit and the final located in midrange. The remaining parts—the old nonessential pair of high and low *contratenors*, plus the “sextus,” or sixth voice that doubles the range of the bass—are pretty strictly confined to the “authentic” octave. For them the final is the lower

limit.

The other factor suggesting an endless stream is uniformity of texture and, above all, of rhythm. Once all six voices have entered, they remain constantly in play until the end. The nearly three-tempus rest in the bass between its last “in illo tempore” and its first “loquente” is about the longest rest in the entire motet; there are no radical contrasts in texture, whether for structural delineation or for rhetorical effect. Even more tellingly, once the six voices are in play, there is steady motion on every minim (quarter notes in transcription) until the very end.

That is to say, some voice moves on every minim pulse, so that the “resultant,” were the moving parts to be summarized on a separate staff for analytical purposes, would be a steady stream of quarter notes, occasionally decorated by eighths. As the motet proceeds, moreover, the regularity of the minim pulse is progressively emphasized by the increasingly syllabic text-setting. Harmonic smoothness is assured by the pervading use of consonance on every minim, cadential suspensions alone excepted. Otherwise, once the six voices are all in play, the only dissonances are on the “weak” eighths, and are all of them fully classifiable according to our modern harmonic terminology: mainly passing notes and incomplete neighbors (*échappées*).

One can readily see the sort of stylistic perfection at which Gombert was aiming. We have little information about the way in which such music struck listeners, but we do know that it enjoyed great prestige among composers, who found Gombert’s technical control impressive enough to go on vying with it for several generations. Indeed, as late as 1610, more than fifty years after Gombert’s motet first saw the light of day, Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643), who will get lots of attention later in this book but who was not yet born at the time of Gombert’s death, published a parody Mass that rewove and recast *In illo tempore* on a truly heroic scale. Gombert was first and last a composer’s composer.

Notes:

(10) Hermann Finck, *Practica musica ... exempla variorum signorum, proportionum et canonum, iudicium de tonis, ac quaedam de arte suaviter et artificiose cantandi continens* (Wittenberg, 1556), quoted in George Nugent with Eric Jas, “Gombert,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2nd ed., New York: Grove, 2001), Vol. X, p. 119.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Jacobus Clemens

Motet: Josquin's contemporaries and successors

Metical psalms

CLEMENS

Chapter: CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Willaert's other important contemporary was the fantastically prolific Jacobus Clemens (or Jacob Clement, ca. 1510–56), jestingly dubbed “Clemens non papa” by his Antwerp publisher, Tylman Susato, as if anyone would confuse a Dutch composer with the Roman pope. The silly nickname, however, has stuck. His sacred music falls into two very different groups. The larger portion consists of the traditional Latin Masses, of which he wrote 15, and motets, of which he wrote a staggering 233—a proportion that gives an extreme but not inaccurate idea of the relative weight of the two genres in the output of most “post-Josquin” church composers: the opposite of what it had been pre-Josquin. It is a fair measure of their “rhetorical,” which is to say humanist, orientation. In these works Clemens uses the same integrative techniques that we have observed in Gombert, if with a somewhat less determined rigor and a bit more caprice.

One of Clemens's best known motets is *Qui consolabatur me recessit a me* (“He who once consoled me has abandoned me”), first published in 1554, of which the beginning and end are given in Ex. 15-3. The text is what is known as a Biblical cento, a patchwork of Bible quotations put together for votive, possibly even nonliturgical, expressive purposes. Such centos, very common at the time, are enigmatic to us since we do not really know their purpose. They may have served for votive services in church, or they may signal the advent of a new genre, made available by music-printing, of “pious chamber music” (as Joseph Kerman has christened a somewhat later English repertory) meant for performance at home.¹¹

Qui con -

Qui con - so - la - ba -

Qui

Qui con - so - la - ba - tur me re -

Qui con - so - la - ba - tur me qui con - so - la -

so - la - ba - tur me

tur me

qui con - so -

con - so - la - ba - tur me re - ces - sit a me (re -

ces - sit a me qui con - sa -

ba - tur me qui con - so -

13 (1)

qui con - so - la - ba - tur me re - ces - sit a me

la - ba - tur me re - ces - sit a me re - ces -

ces - sit a me) re - ces - sit a me qui con -

la - ba - tur me re - ces - sit a me re - ces - sit a

la - ba - tur me (qui con - so - la - ba - tur me) re -

19

re - ces - sit a me

sit a me (re - ces - sit re - ces sit a me) quae -

so - la - ba - tur me re - ces - sit a me quae -

me re - ces - sit a

ces - sit a me quae - ro quod

ex. 15-3a Jacobus Clemens, *Qui consolabatur me recessit a me*, mm. 1-24

Many if not most motet texts in this great age of motet writing were nonstandard and nonliturgical. Even Gombert's *In illo tempore* is an example: described above as a gospel motet, it is really just a "gospel-style" motet, in which a narrative formula much used in the gospels (*In illo tempore*, literally "At the time when") is appropriated to introduce a fairly torrid paean to the Virgin Mary disguised as praise of her son: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the breasts that gave Thee suck." We might hazard a guess, therefore, that Gombert's motet was intended for use at a typical pre-Reformation "Lady Mass." But it is no more than a guess.

78

di - ne a - ma - ri - tu - di - ne.

ri - tu - di - ne a - ma - ri - tu - di - ne a - ma - ri - tu - di - ne.

tu - di - ne (a - ma - ri - tu - di - ne).

ple - tus sum a - ma - ri - tu - di - ne (a - ma - ri - tu - di - ne).

ne — qui - a re - ple - tus sum a - ma - ri - tu - di - ne.

ex. 15-3b Jacobus Clemens, *Qui consolabatur me recessit a me*, mm. 78 - end

By the same token, the *Qui consolabatur me* patchwork was presumably designed to beautify or symbolize a mournful occasion; the textual fragments assembled in it speak of tears, bitterness, and loss. So spectacularly affect-laden are its words that the motet was once a mainstay in an elaborate hypothesis according to which the mid-century composers of Catholic Holland and Flanders often expressed a covert leaning toward Lutheranism, with its emphasis on personal religious feeling, by engineering secret chromatic modulations to color their music through the wholesale infusion of unwritten *musica ficta* accidentals.¹² That theory has been, if not disproved, at least shelved for lack of supporting evidence. But even without secret chromaticism Clemens's motet is a strikingly affective work, in which expressivity is heightened and buttressed by what we may—at least in direct contrast with Gombertian rigor—fairly term poetic license.

On the face of it, Clemens's procedures seem just as rigorous as Gombert's, even more so. There is the same redundancy of overlapping interwoven entries in the opening point of imitation. Clemens, in fact, brings each voice in exactly twice, producing a precisely calculated, symmetrical “double point,” the second part in rhetorically effective stretto. But the rhythm does not settle when expected into Gombert's regular minim pulse. Indeed, that second statement in stretto is a moment of unexpectedly arrested rhythmic motion: a rhetorical pause, so to speak, that serves (as pauses do) to focus attention. On what?

On some unusual pitch relationships, to begin with. The reader may already have noticed that the piece carries an unusually flat-full key signature. That in itself is no indication of chromaticism: quite the contrary, in fact. What key signatures do is transpose diatonic modes intact. That is what they do nowadays with modern major and minor scales, and that is what they did in the sixteenth century, too, when major and minor scales, under the rubrics Ionian and Aeolian, were incipient. Looking at Clemens's first point of imitation in terms of its cadence, it is evident that the two flats in the superius, contratenor, and bassus have simply transposed the Ionian mode down a whole step—most likely to “darken” it in keeping with the prevailing affect. That first point, just like Gombert's in Ex. 15-2, establishes the regularity of the mode by alternating entries on the tuba and the final. (Where Gombert had paired his entries at the octave, Clemens pairs the first two at the descending fifth, making a direct, rhythmically regular and highly affirmative progression from full-tempus tuba to full-tempus final.)

But in the second point, the one in stretto, the entries are highly irregular. The tenor, exactly repeating its first phrase with another entry on the final, is the only voice to reiterate one of the structural pitches, as we have been calling them. The contratenor does not imitate it but actually enriches it harmonically by doubling it at the third, beginning on D, so that its intervallic structure departs from precedent. The next voice to enter is the “quinta vox” or “fifth voice,” imitating not the tenor but the contratenor at the fifth below. It is forced by the curious extra flat in its signature to imitate the nonstandard intervallic configuration as well.

And that, of course, is why that extra flat is there: the normal rules of *musica ficta* would not have demanded it. It has to be explicitly signed because it is a departure from modal regularity. Thus it is a true “chromaticism,” if a mild one. Finally, the outer voices both enter on E-flat, in their respective octaves. Here the normal rules of *musica ficta* do demand the A-flat that had to be specifically supplied by signature in the quinta (and, as we now notice, in the tenor as well). The A-flat is no part of the Ionian scale. It is a “Mixolydian” infusion. The mode of the motet has been “commixed” and rendered unstable.

That instability is confirmed (to put things a bit paradoxically) at the other end of the motet. The final cadence is made, unexpectedly, on G, retrospectively coloring the motet Dorian, possibly because the last word of the text—*amaritudine*, “bitterness”—called for a dark harmonization, or possibly because the composer, for all his harmonic daring, remained a bit squeamish about ending the motet somewhere other than on one of the four traditional finals. He was not squeamish, however, about ending on a full triad. By the middle of the century, as Zarlino would report, such endings were standard; indeed, the presence of the third in the final chord was routinely dramatized, as it is here, by suspensions and lower neighbors.

The other branch of Clemens’s sacred output is at the opposite stylistic extreme from the loftily expressive motet just sampled. His four volumes of *Souterliedekens* (“Little psalter songs”), published in 1556–1557, contain three-voice polyphonic settings of all 150 Psalms in what was then a recent translation (or rather, a paraphrase) into Dutch verse. The translation and publication of “metrical psalms,” as they are generally called, in vernacular languages became a virtual craze in the wake of the Reformation, even in countries that did not immediately participate in the rise of Protestantism. They were meant both for public worship in the form of congregational singing and for home use, and were a bonanza for publishers.

The psalm translations Clemens set (on commission from his publisher, the enterprising Susato) had first been issued in 1540 by an Antwerp printer named Simon Cock. It was the first complete set of metrical psalms to appear anywhere in Europe. To make it even more useful and marketable, Cock’s book provided popular or folk tunes—love songs, ballads, drinking songs, and familiar hymns—to which each of the metrical paraphrases could be sung. One of these tunes was printed above each psalm. They were in fact the first music ever printed in the Low Countries from movable type. But the whole purpose of their inclusion was that they were widely known by heart.

This kind of appropriation from oral tradition is known in the scholarly literature as “contrafactum” (literally, a “makeover” or counterfeit). Latin terminology makes anything sound arcane, but this is one practice everybody knows. It is what we informally call “parody,” and it is familiar to anyone who has attended a revival meeting, learned a school or camp song (which rarely have their own tunes), or participated in a convivial “roast.” The practice obliquely acknowledges the fact that verbal literacy is far more widespread than musical literacy in most societies, including our own. The idea is to get everyone singing together as quickly as possible, without wasting any time on frills. Familiar tunes, whatever their origin, can be sung by everyone immediately, without any special instructions.

Accordingly, Clemens did not just set the texts published by Cock. Presumably on orders from Susato, he incorporated the familiar tunes as well, either in the tenor, following tradition, or in the superius where it would be all the more conspicuous. As published by Susato, then, the psalms became musically semiliterate, so to speak: still available for unison singing as contrafacta but also available in an elegant harmonization for the literate. The one selected for inclusion here (Ex. 15-4) is a setting of Psalm 71, “In Thee, O Lord, have I placed my hope” (or *In te, Domine, speravi*, as it was traditionally sung in church). Clemens’s superius voice incorporates an old Dutch love song, *O Venus bant*, which begins “O shackles of Venus, O burning fire! How that lovely gracious girl has overwhelmed my heart!” Again, there was no question of incongruity between the nature of the original text and the utilitarian purpose to which its tune was being adapted. Togetherness in prayer was the objective—indeed it was the vision that motivated the whole religious reform—and anything that facilitated togetherness in prayer was meet and righteous.

(c.f.)

In u staet al myn hoep o Heer Laet mi be-sca-men nem-mer meer Vryt my met

In u staet al myn hoep o Heer Laet mi be-sca-men nem-mer meer Vryt my met

In u staet al myn hoep o Heer Laet mi be-sca - men nem-mer meer Vryt my met

[A]

u ghe - na - den Ver - lost mi hier wt mi-nen seer

u ghe-na - den Ver - lost mi hier wt mi-nen seer, wt mi - - nen

u ghe-na - den Ver - lost mi hier wt mi-nen seer wt mi - nen seer

[B]

(seer) U oo-renneycht coemt tot mi neer Be-waert mi van den qua - den

seer U oo - renneycht coemt tot mi neer Be-waert mi van den qua - den Weest

U oo - ren neycht coemt tot mi neer Be-waert mi van den qua - den Weest

Weest myn voer-stan-der Ghi en de gheen an der Als ick ben be - la - den.

myn voer- stan-der Ghi en de gheen an der Als ick ben-be-la - - - den.

myn voer- stan-der Ghi en de gheen an der Als ick ben-be - la - - - den.

ex. 15-4 Jacobus Clemens, *Souterliedekens*, Psalm 71 (*In te, Domine, speravi*)

Needless to say, this homely domestic psalm is not an example of *ars perfecta* but a contrast or alternative to it. It can serve here as a preliminary reminder that the *ars perfecta*, despite Zarlino's claims and the undeniable quality of the music he espoused, was never truly a universal style. And more, it shows that even as the *ars perfecta* was being perfected, there were forces at work that would compromise and eventually supplant it. The popularization of religious art in the name of reform was only one of these forces.

Notes:

(11) Joseph Kerman, "On William Byrd's *Emendemus in melius*," *Musical Quarterly* XLIX (1963): 435.

(12) Edward Lowinsky, *Secret Chromatic Art in the Netherlands Motet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946).

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WILLAERT AND THE ART OF TRANSITION

Chapter: CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

And yet the perfection of the *ars perfecta* shows up all the more clearly against its rough-hewn rival. Of course the rough-hewn metrical psalm was just as deliberately rough-hewn as the perfected style was deliberately perfected. We have just seen examples of both from a single composer, who chose his styles according to his purposes. The difference shows up particularly well at the “joints”—the line ends and cadences: pronounced and emphatic in the metrical psalm, artfully smoothed over in the Latin motet. Indeed, there is no place where Ex. 15-3a, the opening of *Qui consolabatur me*, could have broken off without interrupting something in progress.

The place chosen to break it off, the spot where the setting of the line “recessit a me” ends, is a particularly vivid case in point. A cadence on B-flat is elaborately foreshadowed and contrapuntally prepared to take place between the superius and the “quinta vox” in m. 23 and thus bring the first section of the motet to a graceful conclusion. But the quinta fails to follow through with the expected B-flat, leaping instead to E-flat. The superius, as if surprised, veers off into a little melisma to mark time till the next available B-flat harmony. But the next point of imitation (its words—*quaero quod volui*, “I seek what I desire”—almost seeming to mock the poor superius) has already got ten underway, introduced right under the surprising tenor E-flat by the bass, and the superius finally trails off without full cadential support.

This sort of thing was where the true art of “perfected” composition lay. As Richard Wagner would put it many years later, the art of composition was the art of transition. Here is where Willaert was the supreme technician, and that is why, for Zarlino and all who read his treatise, Willaert was the perfecter of music and the preceptor supreme.

In part, of course, Willaert owed his supremacy to the fact that in Zarlino he had what Josquin had in Glareanus, namely an ardent propagandist. Partly, too, it was a matter of favorable location and business acumen. Willaert lived and worked in Italy, at once the focal point of patronage and the center of the burgeoning music business. He was lucky enough to find an admirer in Andrea Gritti, the doge (chief magistrate) of republican Venice, who chose him, over several candidates with more seniority, for one of the most prestigious and lucrative cathedral posts a musician could aspire to—*maestro di cappella* at the splendid eleventh-century church of St. Mark’s, one of Europe’s architectural glories. He was installed in 1527, when he was in his middle thirties, and served until his death in 1562.



fig. 15-4 St. Mark's Cathedral, Venice.

He also struck up a profitable relationship with the local music printers, Antonio Gardane and the brothers Scotto, the undisputed captains of the sixteenth-century Italian music trade. Beginning in 1539, Gardane and the Scottos brought out about two dozen volumes devoted to Willaert's works, comprising Masses, motets, and several genres of secular vocal and instrumental music. The man became a one-man music industry.

And yet Willaert's preeminence did depend at least in equal part on the specific qualities of his music. His secret, the thing that made him, rather than Gombert or Clemens, the true "classic" of his time, and the arbiter supreme of established excellence, was his stylistic moderation and lack of idiosyncrasy. Moderation, and a certain impersonalism, are traits commonly correlated with classicism. Willaert possessed them, one might almost say, to an extravagant and individualizing degree.

He achieved the extraordinary balance, clarity, and refinement identified with perfection by avoiding Gombert's density and Clemens's conceits. In effect, he leapfrogged backwards over the achievements of his "post-Josquin" contemporaries and deliberately restored some basic elements of Josquin's own style, as idealized and propagated by the humanists. The result was a leaner, cleaner idiom that Zarlino could more easily codify and that could then become a true lingua franca, a medium of international commerce. Thus it was Willaert, above all, who made Josquin (or rather, "Josquin") a truly representative sixteenth-century composer.

Be - ne - di - cta es cœ - lo - rum Re - gi -

Be - ne - di - cta es cœ - lo - rum Re - gi - na,

Be - ne -

- na, Et mun - di to - ti -

Re - gi - na, Et mun - di to - ti - us Do -

Be - ne - di - cta es cœ - lo - rum Re - gi - na, Re - gi - na,

- di - cta es cœ - lo - rum Re - gi - na, Et

ex. 15-5a Adrian Willaert, *Benedicta es, coelorum regina*, mm. 1-15

et æ - gris me - di - ci - na. Tu præ - cla - ra ma -

æ - gris me - di - ci - na. Tu præ - cla - ra ma - ris

- na, [me - di - ci - na,] me - di - ci - na, Tu præ - cla - ra ma -

- di - ci - na, [et æ - gris me - di - ci - na, et æ - gris me - di - ci - na.]

ex. 15-5b Adrian Willaert, *Benedicta es, coelorum regina*, mm. 24-31

The image shows a musical score for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in mensural notation. The lyrics are: "In cœ-le - sti pa - tri - a, in cœ-le - sti pa - tri - a, a - men." The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The Soprano part starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The Alto part starts with a treble clef. The Tenor part starts with a treble clef. The Bass part starts with a bass clef. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across measures.

ex. 15-5c Adrian Willaert, *Benedicta es, coelorum regina*, mm. 144-50

The process can be most keenly illustrated by a motet of Willaert's that parallels a motet of Josquin's with which we are familiar. His *Benedicta es, coelorum regina*, published by Gardane in 1545 (Ex. 15-5), draws its melodic material from the same Gregorian sequence that had previously served as motet source both for Josquin (see Ex. 14-9) and for Mouton, Willaert's teacher. The two settings, Josquin's and Willaert's, would thus seem related in a direct line of succession. And yet they are actually quite dissimilar. Josquin's setting observes a radical functional distinction between the cantus firmus voices and the "free" ones, each group treated separately, if equally, in imitation. In Willaert's motet the chant material is thoroughly absorbed into the imitative texture, and there are no essential functional distinctions among the voices.

But this observation, even as it puts distance between the two settings of *Benedicta es*, links Willaert's with the opening of Josquin's *Ave Maria*, the model of models. That is the work with which Willaert's *Benedicta es* (like most of his other motets) has most in common. There is the same varied pairing of voices, the same canny deployment of the texture so that tuttis are rare and climactic. That texture, in consequence, is airier and simpler than Gombert's or Clemens's, and for that reason all the closer to Josquin's.

Texting is more often on the semibreve than on the minim, and it is more nearly syllabic (hence more intelligibly declaimed) than in the work of Willaert's immediate predecessors. There are even suggestions, at times, of Josquin's rhetorical use of homorhythm for emphasis. Willaert was famed for his attention to declamation. Zarlino included a famous, nearly unprecedented set of declamation rules in his treatise that is widely presumed to reflect Willaert's explicit teaching.

Where Willaert is nevertheless recognizably a "post-Josquin" composer is in his use of harmony. The obvious giveaway is the final chord of the piece, a full triad approached plagally—even now the most typical sort of "Amen" cadence (see Ex. 15-5c). Note that Willaert's spacing of the final chord, with the intervals progressively smaller as the pitch ascends—octave, major third, minor third reading up—corresponds to the theory of the *senaria* (six-as-perfect-number) as set forth by Zarlino. Were there a fifth part, it would certainly take the D between the Gs, so that the intervals of the *senaria* would line up even more completely: fifth, fourth, major third, minor third. (A sixth voice, theoretically, would go an octave below the low G, but in practice it is freed by the limitations of human vocal range to double one of the existing Gs.)

There is also the more disciplined and regular handling of dissonance—more regular not only than Gombert's or Clemens's, but even more regular than Josquin's. As one example of a dissonance that might occur in any of the others but not in Willaert, see m. 21 in Gombert's *In illo tempore*, near the end of Ex. 15-2. The dissonance is in the superius: before moving to B, its C is held against the Gs in the tenor and sextus, producing a 4–3 suspension, and against the D in the quintus, producing a 7–6 suspension—but also against the B in the bassus, which produces a 9–8 suspension against what we would call the leading tone. Today's students learn to avoid that one by applying the rule that one does not sound the resolution tone (in this case B) against the suspended tone (in this case C). Zarlino's readers were the first students to be so instructed in writing, and Zarlino must have learned the rule from

Willaert.

The most important way in which Willaert's style differs from Josquin's, however, is that Willaert (like Gombert and Clemens) was at all times concerned to maintain a seamless, "leisurely flow of melody," as he had learned to do from his teacher Mouton. And so he was at all times concerned with mitigating, eliding, or actually evading cadences. Even without benefit of Zarlino, Willaert's motet is already a veritable textbook on smooth cadence-avoidance.

Sometimes the avoidance is achieved by what we still call the "deceptive cadence." The first example of this comes at the very first cadence in Ex. 15-5: the end of the opening superius/altus duo (m. 8). The altus drops out instead of sounding its octave G against the one in the superius, and at the same time the bassus sounds an unexpected E a third below the final. That E, however, while unexpected harmonically, is very much expected melodically: the deceptive cadence arises right out of the bassus/tenor imitation of the opening point. Nothing could be smoother. Sometimes the avoidance is more subtle. The phrase "Et mundi" (first heard in the superius in mm. 13–14) is calculated to enter against, and draw attention away from, cadences that have been prepared in the other parts.

An especially ingenious cover-up is the one that hides the literal repeat of the opening superius/altus duo in m. 28 (Ex. 15-5b) behind continuing, harmonically diversionary action in the lower parts. Where earlier composers, including Josquin, had often inclined toward overtly modeling the shape of their chant-derived motets on that of the chant itself (in this case the "double versicles" of the sequence), Willaert, while actually honoring the melodic repeat, tries to obscure the fact. The aim seems always to be the avoidance of anything that will sectionalize the music, except where the composer expressly wishes to sectionalize it. The abstractly conceived, "purely musical" or composerly form of the polyphonic motet, in two cadentially articulated halves expressly labeled "first part" and "second part," takes precedence over the form of the liturgical model. The result is a music that is carefully and expertly controlled in every dimension, yet one without a hint of flashy tour de force. That is as good a description as any of a "classic" style.

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Cipriano de Rore

Jacques Buus

Ricercare

THE PROGRESS OF A METHOD

Chapter: CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Classicism, by definition, is teachable. We can be sure that every one of the technical observations just made about Willaert's music corresponds to the composer's conscious practical intentions because the techniques involved were abstracted and explicitly transmitted as methods by Zarlino. A fairly hilarious instance of this abstraction and transmission is a *bicinium* that Zarlino devised to demonstrate "how to avoid cadences" (*Il modo di fugir le cadenze*). Its object is to give as many examples as possible of Willaert's technique of making the voices "give the impression of leading to a perfect cadence, but turn instead in a different direction"¹³ (Ex. 15-6).

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled 'The Progress of a Method' (Ex. 15-6). The score is written in two staves, likely representing a vocal line and a lute accompaniment. The music is in a common time signature (C) and features a series of rhythmic patterns and melodic lines. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals, illustrating the technique of avoiding cadences as described in the text.



ex. 15-6 Gioseffe Zarlino, *Il modo di fugir le cadenze (Istitutione harmoniche, Book III)*

Because he was so obviously and enthusiastically a perfecter of method, and because like many methodical types he seems to have had both a flair and a taste for pedagogy, Willaert enjoyed an enormous celebrity as a teacher. No previous composer left behind so distinguished a list of pupils or so explicit a technical legacy. The pupils included two famous Flemings. One of them, Cipriano de Rore (ca. 1515–65), was appointed to succeed Willaert as St. Mark's choirmaster, no doubt owing to the lingering preference given northerners, like the lingering preference for Europeans as orchestra conductors that can still be observed in America today. Partly owing to ill health, Rore was unsuccessful in the St. Mark's post and withdrew after a couple of years. He died in 1565 and was replaced by Zarlino, a fellow pupil of Willaert but an Italian, who held it until his death in 1590. Afterward the musical leadership at St. Mark's remained in native hands, reflecting a lessened sense that high art music was an imported product. Largely thanks to Willaert, Venice was full of outstandingly learned Italian musicians: Nicola Vicentino, Girolamo Parabosco, Costanzo Porta, and above all Andrea Gabrieli, to name only his most famous Italian pupils. It was Willaert's very supremacy in Venetian music and his very success as a teacher that finally overcame the Franco-Flemish hegemony. Indeed, by the end of the century Italy would become the great training center for musicians in the literate tradition.



fig. 15-5 Francesco Spinacino's *Recercare de tous biens* as it appears in his *Intabolatura de Lauto* (Venice: Ottaviano Petrucci, 1507).

The other important Fleming whom Willaert trained, or at least decisively affected, was the Ghent-born Jacques (or Jachet, or Jakob) Buus (ca. 1500–65), who in the 1540s worked under Willaert as second organist at St. Mark's and published three books of music for his instrument. The fact that Buus was the first distinguished musician in the literate tradition to be chiefly concerned with instrumental music gives him considerable historical significance, and a place in this narrative a little out of proportion, perhaps, to his actual musical achievement. But he, too, played a role of some consequence in the perfecting of the *ars perfecta* and its further cleansing, so to speak, by dint of transference to a wordless medium.

That medium was the *ricercare*. The word, etymologically related to our word “research,” connotes seeking and finding. That is an old metaphor for what we now think of as artistic “creation,” familiar to us at least since the days of the troubadours, the “finders” of courtly love songs. Terminology based on the seeking rather than the finding end of the process may go all the way back to the Vulgate, the standard (fourth century) Latin translation of the Bible, where the term “composer” is rendered in one place (Ecclesiasticus 44:5) as *quirentes modos musicos*, “seekers of tunes.”

As a musical term, the word *ricercare* goes back to the beginning of the sixteenth century and is first encountered in early printed lute tablatures. A tablature or intabulation is a form of notation, still used to indicate guitar or ukulele chords in popular sheet music, that prescribes not the sounds to be produced but the hand placements or other actions that go into producing them. The *Intabolatura de lauto* by Francesco Spinacino, published in Venice by Petrucci in 1507, contains the very first known use of the term (in a variant spelling, *recercare*) and also illustrates the use of tablature (Fig. 15-5). What looks like a staff in this source is actually a stylized picture of the neck and fingerboard of the lute, each line representing a string. The numbers superimposed on the lines represent the frets behind which the player's fingers are to be placed, and the headless stems above show the rhythm.

Early lute tablatures like this one are only marginally a part of the literate tradition. What they really contain are recordings, as it were, of the kind of performances virtuoso instrumentalists gave of vocal music. Practically all the pieces in Spinacino's collection are arrangements of currently fashionable motets and chansons. The book opens, in a manner that will hardly surprise us, with an *Ave Maria* by Josquin (not the famous piece discussed in the previous chapter but a short setting of the traditional prayer), and goes on to provide intabulations of the most popular songs of the day, including both *J'ay pris amours* and *De tous biens playne*.

The only original compositions in the collection are the *ricercari*, and they are minimal, consisting mainly of finger-flexing scale segments and flourishes. The first one, shown in Fig. 15-5, suggests by its title, *Recercare de tous biens*, that it was intended as a prelude before playing the intabulation of the song itself. It, too, was probably a transcription of an unwritten virtuoso practice, and the whole book probably served as a primer—a book of notated examples for emulation as a part of one's training in that unwritten practice—rather than a collection of finished texts.

Some of Spinacino's *ricercari* have minuscule points of imitation, to show another kind of thing that virtuoso improvisers were expected to toss off. Whether these impulsive little passages underlie the development of the kind of *ricercare* that Buus practiced, which was composed “strictly”—that is, in pervading imitation throughout—is hard to say. It is worth remembering, though, that a great deal of what a church organist does today is still improvised—such as grinding out music by the yard to accompany liturgical actions of indeterminate or unpredictable length: communions, for example, where the length of the ceremony depends on the number of mouths to fill. That is where church organists probably played their *ricercari*. The first organ *ricercari* were published in Venice in 1523 by Marco Antonio Cavazzoni, then the organist at St. Stephen's Church in that city. They still resemble the fairly raw written-out improvisations of the lutenists. But eventually the Venetian organ *ricercari* began aspiring to the style of the *ars perfecta* motet. And just as the first published lute *ricercari* appeared in Venice, the strict church motet-*ricercare* seems also to have been a Venetian innovation and one perhaps attributable to Willaert and his immediate circle.

The earliest strictly composed *ricercari* appeared in Venice in 1540, in a set of four partbooks called *Musica Nova*. Eighteen of the 21 textless pieces in the collection are called *ricercari*. Although the title page calls them “suitable for singing or playing on organs or other instruments,” and the partbook format made possible home performance by ensembles, there can be little doubt that they were primarily composed for the organ and for church, and that performance by ensembles was a secondary option offered by the publisher to stimulate sales. All of the composers represented in the collection were church men. Pride of place, naturally, went to Willaert. One of his *ricercari* is printed first, but only two of the remaining twenty were his. The lion's share, thirteen in all, were by composers

called "Julio da Modena" in the edition, but identifiable by comparison with other sources as the organist Julio Segni, who did indeed hail from Modena, but who from 1530 to 1533 served as Willaert's first organist at St. Mark's and probably composed his *ricercari* at that time. (The remaining composers represented in *Musica Nova*, Girolamo Parabosco, and Girolamo Cavazzoni, Marco Antonio's son and a future luminary of the instrument, were then teenagers receiving instruction from Willaert.)

So Buus, Willaert's second organist at St. Mark's, was following in a tradition perhaps established by Segni, Willaert's former first organist, in composing *ricercari* for the keyboard in the clean "perfected" style of a Willaert motet—*ricercari* so nicely crafted and precisely voiced that they could be published in partbooks and marketed as actual ensemble music. It was a complete about-face from all previously known keyboard practice, and its justification cannot be sought within the domain of the keyboard. There is no reason why keyboard music should ape the contrapuntal consistency of contemporary vocal music save an ideological reason: that the perfection of style achieved by the high art music of the literate tradition was held to be a universally valid achievement. The hegemony of the literate tradition had begun. Academic music had been born.

Notes:

(13) Zarlino, *The Art of Counterpoint*, p. 151.

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Jacques Buus

Ricercare

ACADEMIC ART

Chapter: CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

An academic style is one in which the process of making is considered to be of paramount value, and therefore one in which the maker's technical apparatus is at all times on display. It is a species of tour de force in that its "art" is demonstratively advertised, never concealed, but it has a different character from other tours de force that we have encountered because the primary addressee of the compositional display is not the casual beholder (or ordinary "consumer"), but rather the initiated connoisseur of craft, which in practical terms means the composer's fellow practitioners or producers. It is an art of guild secrets, of tricks of the trade, of a self-selected and exclusive professional class. It is a new, inner-directed manifestation of the aristocracy of talent. Its remuneration comes not in the form of public acclaim but in professional prestige.

The all but interminable fourth item from the 1547 collection *Ricercari di M. Jacques Buus, Organista in Santo Marco di Venetia da cantare, & sonare d'Organo & altri Stromenti...*, *Libro Primo, a quatro voci* (Ex. 15-7) has long been a famous piece because of the way it takes things to extremes. A motetlike ricercare will generally proceed like a motet through several points of imitation, each based on a new *soggetto* or "subject" (to use Zarlino's word) as if crafted to fit a new line of text. Buus's fourth ricercare proceeds similarly and at unusual length, but with every one of its points based obsessively on the same five-to seven-note motivic "head." Ex. 15-7a shows the beginning of the ricercare with the motivic heads set off by brackets. Ex. 15-7b tunes in again at the very end, some 83 measures (and a good ten or a dozen minutes) later, to find the same motive still chugging away. While applying a technique that had its origins in text-setting, Buus's ricercare has thus clearly and deliberately transcended those origins and has entered the utopian realm of abstracted technique. The aim now is not to match a *soggetto* to a phrase of text but to show everything that can be done with a given *soggetto* within the technique normally applied to texts. It is, in effect, the great motet in the sky. The irony, of course, is that a technique devised to particularize the musical potential of a specific text—that is, in the humanistic sense, to enhance its content through rhetoric—has left rhetoric behind in its pursuit of an ideal, exhaustive (which means, ultimately, a generalized) consummation. From text-realization the technique has turned toward self-realization. Depending on one's point of view, that turn can be seen as an ascent or a descent—or, perhaps, just a deviation. At any rate, the name of the genre seems eminently justified: the composer's aim has indeed been deflected from expression or communication to pure "research." It will not be the last time.

In pursuit of its own exhaustion, Buus's *soggetto* appears in myriad variants. Most entries are rhythmically unique, all have independent continuations, and a few have independent preparations (for example the bassus in m. 7 and m. 10). The whole piece has a rudimentary "macrostructure" or overall form, shaped around a section in the middle that features rhythmic augmentation of the *soggetto* and counterpoint in syncopes. Enlargement in another dimension is achieved by varying the pitch of entries far beyond what can be found in any texted piece. The vast majority of entries are made exactly where one would expect to find them in a motet: on G, the final, and at the higher fifth or tuba (D). A large number also take place at the reciprocal—that is, lower—fifth (C). Yet in the course of the piece the *soggetto* is transposed to every note of the scale, even B. At times the secondary pitches stake out little contrasting tonal regions. Thus the tonal contrast, too, announces a sectional division and contributes to the perception of an overall shape. Rhythmic and tonal contrasts, in short, function in this ricercare the way the words of the text do in a motet, as formal articulators.

System 1 of the musical score. It consists of four staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a D major chord symbol above it. The second staff is in treble clef with a G major chord symbol above it. The third staff is in treble clef with a G major chord symbol above it. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a D major chord symbol above it. The music features a mix of quarter and eighth notes with some rests.

System 2 of the musical score. It consists of four staves. The top staff is in treble clef with an F major chord symbol above it. The second staff is in treble clef with a G major chord symbol above it. The third staff is in treble clef with D major, A major, and G major chord symbols above it. The bottom staff is in bass clef with D major and G major chord symbols above it. The music continues with various rhythmic patterns and rests.

System 3 of the musical score. It consists of four staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a C major chord symbol above it. The second staff is in treble clef with a G major chord symbol above it. The third staff is in treble clef with G major and C major chord symbols above it. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a C major chord symbol above it. The system concludes with a final cadence.

ex. 15-7a Jacques Buus, *Ricercare* no. 4, mm. 1-15

ex. 15-7b Jacques Buus, Ricercare no. 4, mm. 98-110

Yet the overall impression is one not of sections succeeding sections but rather the ultimate “leisurely flow of melody”—so leisurely as to attract a great deal of censure over the years from modern writers who have found it dull. Listened to the way modern listeners are encouraged to listen to “classical” music—that is, as object of one’s full attention, with no other purpose than to repay that attention—Buus’s *ricercare* can indeed seem dull. Given its technical rigor and its uneventfulness, it is easy to write it off as music that only a composer could love; and that is actually not too bad a characterization of much academic composition.

But while academic, Buus’s *ricercare* is not “absolute music” in the our modern sense of the term; such a thing did not yet exist, even if a certain amount of sixteenth-century music is now listened to in that way. Rather, Buus’s *ricercare*, like virtually all the music of its time, had a definite role to play within a social occasion. Its primary purpose was to fill time otherwise empty of sound in church. Viewed as accompaniment to action—yes, as background music—the piece seems quite apt to its purpose. That purpose, in fact, explains the curious fermatas that appear about two-thirds of the way through the piece. They denote not a “hold till ready,” but an alternative ending—to be used, we may assume, on days when there was a light turnout for Mass and the communion ritual could be correspondingly curtailed.

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Vespers

SPATIALIZED FORM

Chapter: CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Julio Segni has been identified as someone who held the position of “first organist” under Willaert and Buus as one who, somewhat later, served under him as “second organist.” The terms were not solely indications of rank. Since the late fifteenth century, St. Mark’s Cathedral actually had two organ lofts, each with its designated player. It was inevitable that antiphonal music-making would be cultivated there, with the cathedral cappella split into two groups, one standing in a hexagonal enclosure called the *pergolo* (when it wasn’t occupied by the Doge and his retinue), the other across the nave in the Gospel pulpit.



fig. 15-6 St. Mark's Cathedral, interior view showing the *pergolo* (hexagonal enclosure) and the Gospel pulpit, where two choirs sang antiphonal psalms.

It was also inevitable that such performances took place primarily at Vespers, because that is where the singing of full psalms was prevalent. Psalms were antiphonal by biblical tradition, after all, and were even characteristically structured (in "hemistichs") according to that implied performance style. Willaert was not the first *maestro di cappella* to set Vespers psalms for "split choirs" (*cori spezzati*); he had an important predecessor, for one, in Francesco Santacroce, the choirmaster at the nearby city of Treviso. But, typically, it was Willaert who "classicalized" the practice and gave it an orderly procedure. In his settings, the two four-part choirs alternate verse by verse, then come together in eight parts for the concluding doxology, turning a formulaic termination into an impressive musical climax. Published by Gardane in 1550 and reprinted in 1557, Willaert's Vespers Psalms were exemplary not only from the sonorous and formal point of view but also from the standpoint of declamation, increasingly an "issue" for sixteenth-century church musicians, as we shall see. Here, too, "il eccellentissimo Adriano" established a standard of perfection.

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John Taverner

Mass: Earlier 16th century

Marsilio Ficino

ALTERNATIVES TO PERFECTION

Chapter: CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

But let us conclude this chapter with some reminders that perfection, as a standard, is a matter of attitude and values. The ideals implicit in the *ars perfecta* were not universally shared at any time or in any place, as we have only to glance across the English Channel to discover. When last we looked, English church music had already diverged significantly in style from the continental variety, and the stylistic differences, it was already evident, indicated a difference in attitude. But if Josquin's style and Cornysh's already made for a striking contrast, just compare two excerpts from the Sanctus of a Mass by John Taverner (1490–1545), Willaert's exact contemporary (Ex. 15-8).

in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni - in no - mi - ni - in no

mi - ni - in no - mi - ni - in no - mi - ni - in no

The image shows a musical score for a section of John Taverner's *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas, Benedictus*, measures 7-21. The score is written for multiple voices and instruments. The lyrics are: "mi-ne, mi - ne in no - mi-ne Do mi - ni Do mi - ni mi - ne Do mi - ni". The music is characterized by its melismatic and polyphonic nature, with long, flowing lines and intricate rhythmic patterns.

ex. 15-8a John Taverner, *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas, Benedictus*, mm. 7-21

The luxuriant melismatic cantus-firmus polyphony that characterized the Eton Choirbook antiphons has continued its jungle growth. Neither textual declamation nor structural imitation play anything like the role they had long since come to play in the humanistically influenced church music of continental Europe from the Low Countries to Italy. None of the music examined up to now in this chapter sported anything so old-fashioned as a traditional plain-chant cantus firmus in long notes. Taverner occasionally unifies the texture with repetitions among the voices, but such imitations are still close to their conceptual origins in such “medieval” devices as voice-exchange and hocket (see in particular the higher moving parts at “Domini” in Ex. 15-8a).

The impression is of a music—and a religious attitude—supremely untouched by “Renaissance” humanism. Such music is still a loftily decorative art rather than one expressive of its occasion. And it is still one that insists upon the difference—or rather the distance—between the human and the divine.

That was explicitly the reaction of a Venetian diplomat who was privileged to attend High Mass at one of Henry VIII’s royal chapels, sung by choristers “whose voices,” he marveled, “were more divine than human.” His other comment is best left in his own Italian words: *Non contavano ma giubilavano*, “they did not so much sing as jubilate,” the last being a word that has carried a charge of religious emotion for us since the days of St. Augustine, who described jubilus-singing as “a mind pouring itself forth in a joy beyond words.”

At the most basic level, it came down to a difference in how music and words were supposed to connect. Where continental musicians strove to make their music reflect both the shape and the meaning of the texts to which it was set, and none more successfully than Willaert, the insular musician remained true to an older attitude, according to which the music contributed something essentially other than what human language could encompass. The English melismas continued to hide the text, so to speak, from aural view, and thus preempt it. Next to the work of Taverner, the *ars perfecta* is revealed as a fundamentally rationalized art, an art whose tone had been lowered in the name of reason, brought down to earth.

The English still sought the opposite. Their music, aspiring to raise the listener's mind up above the terrestrial, provided a sensory overload: higher treble parts than anywhere else, lower bass parts, richer harmonies—including that special English tingle, the suspended sixth (given a spotlight at the very end of Taverner's *Sanctus*; see Ex. 15-8b). Motivic imitation—an orderly, rational procedure if ever there was one—is only a sporadic decoration here, never a structural frame.

(na) in ex - cel - sis.
 ex - cel - sis in - ex - cel - sis.
 in ex - cel - sis.
 (in) ex - cel - sis.
 (ex) - cel - sis.
 ex - cel - sis.

ex. 15-8b John Taverner, *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas, Benedictus*, mm. 26-end

The heaviest overload of all came in the guise of length, a heavenly expanse in which the listener is lost by design. An early Tudor setting like Taverner's of the Mass Ordinary—a text that can be recited in a couple of minutes—will typically last about three-quarters of an hour, and that is minus the Kyrie, which in Tudor England was always full of tropes, left in plainchant, and considered a part of the Proper. A Tudor polyphonic Mass setting begins with the Gloria. And even so, it is half again as long as a full five-section continental Ordinary from the sixteenth century, which will usually clock in at under thirty minutes if sung straight through at a comparable tempo.

It is often said (and even echoed, somewhat ironically, here) that the English music of the early sixteenth century represented a survival of medieval attitudes that had, owing to the so-called Renaissance, become outmoded on the continent. Dueling *Zeitgeists* again: they simplify the story but do not clarify it. For the “Renaissance” *Zeitgeist* is represented in this dichotomy in a very selective and tendentious guise. As students of humanism have long agreed, humanism as a mode of thought is by no means to be equated, in its totality, with rationalism or “modern” empirical attitudes. It retained a great deal of magical thinking about nature and about human nature, and about the influence of the cosmos on the human constitution, all of it fully sanctioned by a different strain of classical thought from the one on which the *ars perfecta* theorists relied. The god of the perfectionists was orderly Aristotle, the great observer and classifier and logician. The god of magical thinkers was Plato, who believed in a realer reality than that which either our senses *or* our empirical logic can grasp.

The transrational and transsensible powers of music that the ancients described—its *ethos*, to use their word for it—lay altogether outside the Aristotelian ken of those highly professionalized musicians of the *ars perfecta* like Zarlino or Willaert. But they attracted the keen attention of neo-Platonist humanists (mainly literary men), many of whom practiced astrology and tried to harness the occult power of music to aid them in calling upon cosmic forces. Chief among them was the Florentine physician, classical scholar, and musical amateur Marsilio Ficino, the founder of the Platonic Academy of Florence, a bastion of humanism and an emblem of “The Renaissance” if ever there was one. He thought that music was the best avenue available to humans for “capturing celestial benefits,” and even tried to codify the practice of “channelling astral influxes” in a treatise called *De vita libri tres* (“Three books on life”).

Needless to say, Ficino's treatise has little in common with Zarlino's. It prescribes no actual method of composition, but instead gives three rules by which to judge the products of composition, drawing on the magical powers of correspondence or analogy—that is, of shared attributes. A three-sided relationship is set up between the active force, the stars, and the passive receiver, the human organism, with the song, which imitates the attributes of the stars in a form assimilable by the human organism, as the effective mediator of the influx. As translated by Gary Tomlinson, the leading modern investigator of the occult branches of musical humanism, Ficino's rules are these:

- (1) To examine what powers in itself and effects from itself a given star, constellation, or aspect has, what these remove and what they provide; and to insert these into the meanings of our words so as to detest what they remove and approve what they provide.
- (2) To consider what star chiefly rules what place or person, and then to observe what sorts of tones and songs these regions and persons generally use, so that you may supply similar ones, together with the meanings just mentioned, to the words which you are trying to expose to the same stars.
- (3) To observe the daily positions and aspects of the stars and investigate to what speeches, songs, motions, dances, moral behavior, and actions most people are principally incited under these, so that you may imitate such things as far as possible in your songs, which aim to agree with similar parts of the heavens and to catch a similar influx from them.¹⁴

Thus, to channel the benefits of Venus, one makes a song that is “voluptuous with wantonness and softness”; to channel the sun's influence one makes a song that has “grace and smoothness” and is “reverential, simple, and earnest”; and so on. Not technical perfection but uncanny efficacy is the goal. What did these songs sound like? Who sang them? Did they work? Wouldn't we like to know! But Ficino never wrote down any of his astrological songs, and (as Tomlinson has emphasized) they are irrevocably lost behind the oral curtain to those, like us, who depend on our literacy (and on empirical reasoning rather than analogy) for knowledge.

Not only Ficino's explicitly astrological songs, but a great deal of more ordinary music-making, too, was credited with irrational magical force during what we now call the Renaissance. There is a famous memoir by a French diplomat, published in 1555, of the playing of the Italian lutenist Francesco da Milano (1497–1543), that resonates with what Ficino called *raptus* or trance, what modern anthropologists call “soul loss,” and what the more recent language of spiritualism calls “out-of-body experience.” Francesco had been hired to entertain the company at a noble banquet:

The tables being cleared, he chose one, and as if tuning his strings, sat on the end of the table seeking out a fantasia. He had barely disturbed the air with three strummed chords when he interrupted the conversation that had started among the guests. Having constrained them to face him, he continued with such ravishing skill that little by little, making the strings languish under his fingers in his sublime way, he transported all those who were listening into so pleasurable a melancholy that—one leaning his head on his hand supported by his elbow, and another sprawling with his limbs in careless deportment, with gaping mouth and more than half-closed eyes, glued (one would judge) to the strings of the lute, and his chin fallen on his breast, concealing his countenance with the saddest taciturnity ever seen—they remained deprived of all senses save that of hearing, as if the spirit, having abandoned all the seats of the senses, had retired to the ears in order to enjoy the more at its ease so ravishing a harmony; and I believe that we would be there still, had he not himself—I know not how—changing his style of playing with a gentle force, returned the spirit and the senses to the place from which he had stolen them, not without leaving as much astonishment in each of us as if we had been elevated by an ecstatic transport of some divine frenzy.¹⁵

The last phrase in this description of musical shamanism or sorcery, about “ecstatic transport” and “divine frenzy,” is rife with neo-Platonist buzzwords. At the other end of the passage we get a valuable clue to the music through which the sorcerer wielded his magic. To “seek out” (*chercher* in French, *cercar* in Italian) is the root word behind *ricercare*, and a *fantasia*, as we already know, is an early way of describing “made up” (as opposed to quoted) music. We get a glimpse of a *ricercare*-in-action, the kind of thing that only occasionally got written down, and the kind of effects it could produce, not on the permanent page but in ephemeral performance. The passage celebrates the power of the artist-improviser, the diametrical opposite from the artist-creator of the literate *ars perfecta* ideal. It celebrates the power of music in performance, something lost when music becomes text, and therefore lost to the historian's direct experience.

Lest we think for that reason that the account must be wholly fictional, and lest we therefore despise it, we might reflect on other manifestations of musical soul-loss as experienced by the audiences of charismatic performers throughout history and into our own time. Similar uncanny mesmeric effects were achieved by Romantic virtuosi like Paganini on the violin and Liszt on the piano—effects that, in the twentieth century, have largely been ceded to what are now known as popular entertainers: Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Michael Jackson. These are the names of Francesco da Milano's most recent heirs.

Like him, and like Paganini and Liszt did when performing, they work primarily in an oral medium. While there is certainly some contact between their art and preserved musical texts of various kinds, it is a secondary contact of a sort already available to Francesco da Milano. But it did not constitute his art, the way the music text of a Willaert or a Buus constituted the *ars perfecta* in Francesco's time, or a symphony by Beethoven in Paganini's time, or a string quartet by Arnold Schoenberg in Frank Sinatra's time.

The *ars perfecta*, the Beethoven symphony and the Schoenberg quartet, being primarily textual, are more adequately recorded in history than the performances of Ficino, Francesco, Paganini, or Sinatra. The historical record is partial (in more than one sense). It leaves out a lot—not necessarily because it wants to but because it has to. The danger is that we will forget that anything has been forgotten, or value only what is not left out, or think that that is all there ever was. As the fox who couldn't reach the grapes reminds us, there is a tendency to despise what one can no longer have. What we no longer have (until the twentieth century) are recoverable performances. It is a bad mistake to think that texts can fully compensate their loss, or that they tell the whole story, or that the story that texts tell is the only story worth telling.

Notes:

(14) Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 113.

(15) Jacques Descartes de Ventemille, quoted in Pontus de Tyard, *Solitaire second ou prose de la musique* (1555), trans. Joel Newman in "Francesco Canova da Milano" (Master's thesis, New York University, 1942), p. 11.

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Notation: History of Western notation

Jacques Buus

PEEKING BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Chapter: CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

In its penetration (through publications like *Musica Nova* or Buus's *ricercari*) of the instrumental domain, long the bastion of the unwritten and the spontaneous, the *ars perfecta* can seem to embody a crowning triumph for literacy. All that was captured, though, was the elite protruding tip of a huge iceberg. The vast majority of instrumentalists continued as before to perform by a combination of ear, hand, and memory. Even church organists more often improvised their accompaniments to liturgical action than read them off their music rack. (And they still do; organists are perhaps the only literate musicians who still receive training in the art of improvisation.) Even those who did read their music (or rather, Buus's or Willaert's music) off the rack did not read it literally, the way we might imagine them doing on the basis of our own education and experience. Again a reminder is due that literacy has never totally eclipsed orality, even in those repertoires and fields of practice where it can seem most firmly ensconced. And there is no reason to expect that it ever will.

Which is by no means to disparage the degree of ready literacy that existed among sixteenth-century church musicians. Choral sight-singing, practiced since Guido's time, will hardly amaze us nowadays. We can do that. But the idea of an organist putting four separate partbooks on his music rack to play a *ricercare* at sight is somewhat stunning. Yet any sixteenth-century organist could do it, even a mediocre one. For anyone aspiring to a professional post it was considered a requisite, not an exceptional, skill.

Nevertheless, we should not suppose that what came out of the organ under those circumstances were the notes in the partbooks and nothing but the notes. No performer treated musical texts in those days with the scrupulous reverence our contemporary practice sanctions and enforces; and this, too, is evidence that despite the burgeoning availability of music books and the academization of certain composerly techniques in the sixteenth century, oral performance practices remained alive and well.

We have very specific evidence of what we would call freedom even in the performance of Buus's *ricercari*. Less skilled organists, or lazy ones, liked to copy the music they played into keyboard tablatures rather than go through the brainy effort of mentally "scoring" a set of partbooks. Music publishers catered to this set with publications containing transcriptions of favorite organ pieces into the kind of notation that simply tells you at a glance, like a modern keyboard score, where all your fingers have to go. One of Buus's *ricercari* was published both ways (Ex. 15-9, Fig. 15-7).

a. scored from partbooks

b. version in *Intabolutura d'organo di ricercari* (Venice: Gardane, 1549)

The image displays two musical systems, labeled 'a' and 'b', each containing four staves. System 'a' is titled 'a. scored from partbooks' and features four staves in bass clef. The top three staves are grouped by a brace on the left, and the bottom staff is a separate bass line. System 'b' is titled 'b. version in *Intabolutura d'organo di ricercari* (Venice: Gardane, 1549)' and features four staves. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom three staves are in bass clef, with the top two staves grouped by a brace on the left. Both systems show the opening point of the piece, with system 'a' showing a more sparse, chordal texture and system 'b' showing a more active, keyboard-oriented texture with many sixteenth-note passages.

ex. 15-9a Jacques Buus, *Ricercare no. 1* from *Il secondo libro di ricercari* (Venice: Gardane, 1549), opening point, scored from partbooks



ex. 15-9b Jacques Buus, *Ricercare no. 1*, opening point, as it appears in *Intabolatura d'organo di ricercari* (Venice: Gardane, 1549)

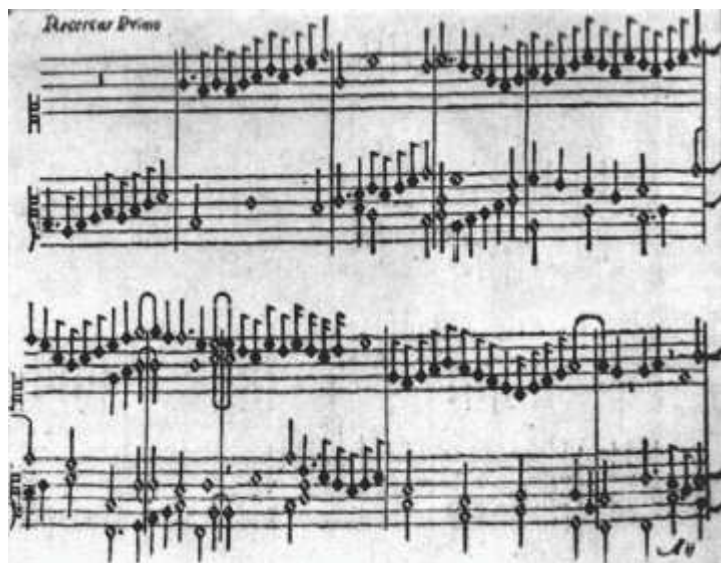


fig. 15-7 Jacques Buus, *Ricercare no. 1* from *Intabolatura d'organo di ricercari, Libro primo* (Venice: Gardane, 1549).

The differences between the two versions are the differences between, on the one hand, an idealized conception or premise in writing from which all performances will derive (the piece set down for all time), and on the other, an actual performance—that is, a once-only “oralized” and ephemeral realization (the piece as we are hearing it right now). Our age tends to minimize the distinction and try to realize all pieces in performance just the way they have been set down, thinking in this way to capture their timeless essence. Such a performance is often called an “authentic” one. A better term for it might be a “literalistic” one, were that term not burdened with a negative connotation in ordinary usage; for what such a performance really represents is a fully “literacized,” text-dominated concept of music.

That was certainly not the sixteenth-century way, and we have to keep it constantly in mind that the music we know from its written traces—the music we know by sight, so to speak—was not the music that anybody in the sixteenth

century actually heard. That great submerged iceberg of sound is gone forever from today's ear, hand and memory. All we have to go on if we wish to hear it again are a few didactic guides, some scattered practical examples like the one in Ex. 15-9b, and our imaginations.

The didactic guides, especially, give a tantalizing glimpse of a lost world of music-making. The two earliest authors of printed method books for instrumentalists were Silvestro di Ganassi dal Fontego (1492-ca. 1550), who actually worked alongside Willaert in St. Mark's, and Diego Ortiz (ca. 1510-ca. 1570), a Spaniard who worked at the court of Naples. Ganassi published two books. The first, a method for wind players called *Fontegara* (Venice, 1535), deals mainly with the vertical whistle-flute or recorder. The second, a double volume for string players called *Regola rubertina* (Venice, 1542-43), mainly deals with the "leg-viol" or viola da gamba. (Its title, "Ruberto's rules," is a tribute to Ruberto Strozzi, a member of a celebrated Italian family of noble musical amateurs.)

After some rudimentary instruction on playing technique, both manuals shift over to the more creative aspects of instrumental performance, which grew directly out of the kind of music-making Tinctoris had described a hundred years earlier, when he wrote about the two blind brothers who converted famous songs into dazzling instrumental displays (see chapter 13, Ex. 13-15). In the sixteenth century, the virtuoso instrumentalist's repertoire was still largely parasitic on vocal music. The art of instrumental virtuosity was the art of *passaggi* or passage work, in which the plain "classical" lines of sacred or secular songs in the *ars perfecta* style were converted into flamboyantly ornamental sonic cascades and necklaces. One learned the technique by systematically breaking down a song into its component intervallic progressions—up a third, down a fourth, and so on—and memorizing dozens of note patterns to decorate each interval, which one could later apply in actual performance to any song, and on the basis of which one could eventually evolve one's own personal style of playing "diminutions" (or "divisions"), as this process of substituting many short notes for each long one was called.

The *Regola rubertina* also contains a number of "preludizing" pieces called "recercars" like Spinacino's (or Francesco's) for the lute. Such pieces were evidently better suited to string technique, whether plucked or bowed, then wind. Ortiz's *Trattado de glosas* or "Treatise on embellishments" (Rome, 1553), which like Ganassi's *Regola rubertina* is addressed to viol players, also contains "recercadas" galore, in addition to even more systematic instruction in diminution. Ortiz's methods are more sophisticated and detailed, and give us an even more embarrassing sense of how little we know of old music when all we know is what was written down—and, even more important, what is lost from music as well as what is gained in the process of its becoming literate.

The first half of Ortiz's text is devoted to diminution technique in the abstract. The second half consists of model *recercadas* for every occasion, showing how diminution technique, once internalized, was applied in practice. First come the "free" improvisations—actually strings of little cadence formulas subjected to transposition, sequential treatment and diminution. Then there are *recercadas* based on individual voice parts extracted from polyphonic classics. This is just a more thoroughgoing application of the embellishment practices shown in Ex. 15-9b.

Then come the really creative exercises, the ones that really give a glimpse of a vanished musical culture. They begin with *recercadas* in the *cantus firmus* style (or as Ortiz has it in his native language, *recercadas* over a *canto llano*, a "plainsong"). Here the player had to be able at one and the same time to imagine a discant against a familiar tenor and to embellish it with diminutions. What is particularly interesting and instructive about Ortiz's examples is the source of his *cantus firmus*. Although he says that the technique he is imparting may be applied to any church chant (and might well have provided music to accompany the same moments in the service as Segni's or Buus's organ *ricercari*), the actual tenor Ortiz selected on which to compose his illustrative examples was one that had been used for over a century by dance bands.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Dance: Late Renaissance

Henricus Isaac

Passamezzo

Diego Ortiz

DANCES OLD AND NEW

Chapter: CHAPTER 15 A Perfected Art

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

We have seen written traces of instrumental dance music going back to the thirteenth century (Fig. 4-8). But of course dance music, being an eminently functional genre, was one of the slowest to “go literate” in any major or transforming way; and when it did, it did so piecemeal. The earliest extensive manuscript collections of instrumental dances come from the fifteenth century and were devoted to the noblest and courtliest ballroom dance genre or the time, a processional dance for couples known in Italian as *bassadanza* and in French as *basse danse*. The English equivalent would be “low dance,” the adjective referring to the dignified gliding steps—low and close to the floor—that the noble ballroom dancers employed. The lower the steps, one might say, the higher the social rank of the dance. Peasant dances—oftentimes mimicked by the nobility for their fun and games—were the ones for leaping and prancing.

The appearance of the music in the early *bassadanza* collections was strange, and for a long time it succeeded in misleading historians. It consisted of long strings of unaccompanied square notes that looked for all the world like Gregorian chant, arranged over weird strings of letters (Fig. 15-8). Comparison with a few scattered polyphonic *bassadanza* settings finally cracked the code: what the collection contained were bass lines (or rather, in contemporary parlance, tenors) over which musicians trained in the specialized art of dance accompaniment improvised discant by ear. (The letters under the notes in some sources represented the dance steps.)



fig. 15-8 *Il re d'Espagna*, from Michel de Toulouze, *L'art et instruction de bien dancer* (Paris, 1496); here it is titled "Casulle la novele" ("New Castile").

Although an unwritten practice, this sort of ensemble improvisation by reed and brass instruments was a high art indeed. The standard ensemble, as depicted in Fig. 15-9, was a trio consisting of a pair of shawms (early oboes) and a slide trumpet or trombone. This little band was called the *alta capella*, a term that (confusingly enough) means "high ensemble," even though it was used exclusively for accompanying "low" dancing. (As usual, there is less paradox here than meets the eye: when applied to instruments, the terms "high" and "low"—*alta/bassa* in Italian, *haut/basse* in French—distinguished loud from soft; the *alta capella* was thus a "loud" ensemble.) "Alta" musicians formed something of a guild and treasured their techniques as guild secrets; no wonder there is no written source of instruction in their craft. It was passed along for generations by "word of mouth"—by example and emulation. As far as we are concerned, it is irrecoverably submerged in that unheard and unhearable "iceberg." We don't have any theoretical guide to it; all we have are a few written specimens (or imitations) of the practice, few of them actual dances.

If not dances, then what? Carmina, bicinia, lute intabulations—even Masses! From these chance survivors we know that the most popular *bassadanza* tenor of all (the one shown in Fig. 15-8) was traditionally called *Il re d'Espagna* ("The King of Spain") or simply *La Spagna*. That may even be why Ortiz, a Spaniard working abroad, selected it for his specimen improvisations. But long before Ortiz, Henricus Isaac had taken it into his head to flatter and amuse his *bassadanza*-loving patron, the magnificent Lorenzo de' Medici of Florence, with a Mass built over the *Spagna* tenor as *cantus firmus*.



fig. 15-9 Loyset Liedet, *Ball at the Court of King Yon of Gascony* (Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Manuscripts Français 5073, fol. 117v).

For the most part Isaac hid the dance tune behind a thicket of paraphrase and polyphony. But all at once the second *Agnus Dei* gives away the game. Convention decreed that this middle section of the last part of the Mass Ordinary be

cast as a “tenor tacet” setting, in three voices, and so it is. But very whimsically and unconventionally, Isaac transferred the tenor tune to the bassus voice, where it is laid out in a series of even breves just as it would be in a *bassadanza* collection. And it is accompanied by the superius and the altus in a polyphony so rough and ready—glorified antiphony, hocket-like exchanges, sequences that track the tenor down the scale—that it simply has to be a sly send-up of an actual *alta capella*, caught in the act of improvising, perhaps even drawn “from life” (Ex. 15-10).

Ortiz provides six different *recercadas* over the *Spagna tenor*, the idea being that after having mastered them the pupil can then go on to make up his own. Ex. 15-11 shows the beginnings of all six. This is another way in which the written can suggest to us the unwritten, although Ortiz was not training anyone in the art of dance accompaniment. Like virtuosos both before and after him, in a tradition that continues to this day, he appropriated a sublimated dance style—dance music, not for active dance use but for receptive listening—as his vehicle for a display of dexterity.

The musical score consists of three staves: Superius (top), Altus (middle), and Bassus (bottom). The time signature is 2x3/4. The lyrics are as follows:

Superius: A - gnus De - i

Altus: A - gnus De - i

Bassus: A - gnus De - i

Superius (measures 4-6): i qui tol - lis, qui tol - lis, qui tol - lis

Altus (measures 4-6): qui tol - lis, qui tol - lis, qui tol - lis pec -

Bassus (measures 4-6): i qui tol - lis

Superius (measures 7-9): pec - ca - ta mun -

Altus (measures 7-9): ca - ta mun - di qui tol -

Bassus (measures 7-9): pec - ca - ta mun -

10

di pec - ca - ta mun - di mi - se - re - re, mi - se - re - re no -

di mi - se -

13

bis, mi - se - re - re no - bis, mi -

re - re no - bis, no -

16

se - re - re no - bis, mi - se - re - re no - bis,

bis, mi - se - re - re no - bis mi - se - re -

bis, mi - se

19

mi - se - re - re no - bis,

re, mi - se - re - re no - bis, mi - se - re - re no -

re - re no -

22

mi - se - re - re no - bis,

bis, no bis,

bis, no bis,

ex. 15-10 Henricus Isaac, *Missa super La Spagna*, Agnus II

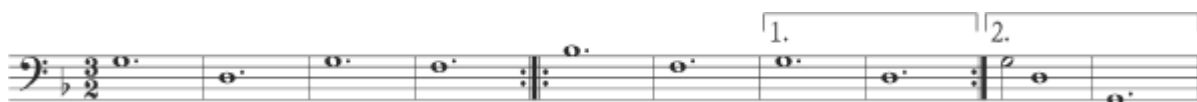
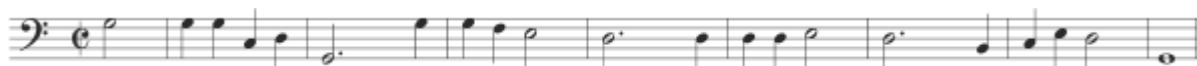
ex. 15-11 Diego Ortiz, *Tratado de glosas* (1553), six ricercadas on *La Spagna*

The same principle operates in the final portion of Ortiz’s book, which gives another sort of peek into the world of the unwritten, and a truly momentous one. “The better to complete this work,” he writes, “I thought I’d include the following ricercadas on these bass lines (*cantos llanos*) that are usually called tenors in Italy, but that are mainly played as written here, in four parts, with the ricercada over them.”¹⁶ What follows is a series of ricercadas in which the model solo improvisation is accompanied not by a single *cantus firmus* line playing itself out in abstract long notes from beginning to end, but rather by short, very rhythmic ostinato chord progressions: harmonic templates or frameworks that are repeated as often as necessary to fill out the time required for the improvisation (as in “real life” they were repeated as often as necessary to fill out the time required for dancing).

Ortiz’s instruction method for viol players is the earliest written source to contain these “tenors,” for which the standard historian’s term is *ground bass* (or simply *ground*). Five grounds, all quite similar in their harmonic structures, were in especially widespread use; they are given, together with their traditional names, in Ex. 15-12. The duple-metered pair called *passamezzo*—old (*antico*) and new (*moderno*)—were the ones most closely associated in Ortiz’s time with actual ballroom dancing: the *passamezzo* (from *passo e mezzo*, “a step and a half”) was the somewhat livelier couples dance that replaced the *bassadanza* at sixteenth-century Italian courts. “Composed” *passamezzos* first appeared in lute tablatures in the 1530s. But the Spanish violist’s frozen improvisations were the first written compositions to suggest the traditional use of these repetitive cadential formulas, which were employed in Italy not only to accompany dancing but also to guide the extemporaneous singing of popular poetry since at least the beginning of the fifteenth century (as we may learn from any literary account of court life, such as Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*).

a. *Passamezzo antico*

ex. 15-12 Traditional ground-bass tenors

ex. 15-12b Romanesca**ex. 15-12c Folia****ex. 15-12d Passamezzo moderno****ex. 15-12e Ruggiero**

Until Ortiz published his handbook in 1553, all of this activity had gone on behind the curtain of the unwritten. Ortiz brought it comprehensively into the visible world of notation for the first time, whence it proliferated hugely in ways that would in time utterly transform literate practice. We have only to observe that the Italian word for poetry sung over a ground bass like the Romanesca (Ex. 15-12b) or the Ruggiero (Ex. 15-12e) was *aria*, or that the harmonic scheme itself was then called an *aria per cantare* (literally a “space for singing”), to realize the extent of that transformation, since from the seventeenth century onward the aria has been one of the ubiquitous genres of “art” music in the West.

But the creation of new genres is only a part, and not even the most important part, of the revolution in Western music-making wrought by the use of grounds. For grounds are the first indisputably harmony-driven force in the history of Western music-making. They are the first musical frameworks, in other words, to be defined *a priori* in harmonic and cadential terms, hence the first musical structures to which the modern term “tonal” can be fairly applied. Their tonality in the mid-sixteenth century was not yet precisely congruent with modern major-minor tonality. The *passamezzo moderno* progression employed by Ortiz in his *Recercada segunda* (Ex. 15-13) is still unmistakably “Mixolydian” in its use of a triad built up over F, a note that is not even part of the modern G-major scale. And yet it makes its cadence through a modern G-major dominant chord (even preceded by the subdominant), for which purpose a leading tone (F#) had to be imported from outside the “pure” modal scale. Ex. 15-13 shows the first two of six run-throughs of the ground.

ex. 15-13 Diego Ortiz, *Recercada segunda* (on the *passamezzo moderno*)

That F#, by the way, is no longer to be explained by the old rules of *musica ficta*, which were based on rules of discant voice leading. There are no longer any “voices” to speak of in that sense; harmonies are now functioning as independent perceptual units produced by strumming strings or striking keys, quite unconfined by counterpoint. It seems virtually certain that harmonic progressions as such were developed on—indeed, right “out of”—strumming and striking instruments for which no notation existed at the time. A leading tone strummed or struck within a chord belongs to no particular voice. It is a harmonic free agent, a necessary component in a closing formula that by recurring regularly articulates a structurally significant span of time.

But what makes the cadence recognizable as a closing formula, hence grammatically effective, is not just its regular recurrence but the way it “telegraphs” its ending—that is, the way it signals its ending in advance. It does this not only by the use of the leading tone but also by means of an increased rate of chord change—what modern theorists call an accelerated “harmonic rhythm.” Harmonic rhythm as a structural articulator is an eminently “tonal” concept, not a modal one. We seem poised right on the cusp, as it were, between the older modal system, with a different scale species on each final, and the modern tonal (or “key”) system, with only two scales, each of which can be transposed to any pitch (the transposition itself defining the pitch as a final or “tonic”).

Yet it should not be thought that the “tonal revolution” was a sudden thing, just because it has swung so suddenly into our historical purview. That is an illusion created by our source material, which is of necessity confined to the literate sphere. What is suddenly made literate and visible can be cooking behind the curtain for centuries, and in this case certainly was. For all that time, literate music-making had been proceeding on a discant basis and a modal one, while much unwritten music had surely been operating on a strophically cadential basis and a tonal one. The watershed that now looks to us like a “tonal revolution” was in fact the meeting place of two long coexisting traditions

The meeting could only take place because the traditions were now both at least partly literate ones. It was because his "Treatise on Embellishments" was the first overt act of "tonal insurgency" that Ortiz (otherwise hardly known as a composer) looms so large in the present discussion. It was a giant step in the direction that now seems favored by history. It was a step, however, that neither the author nor any of his contemporaries could have known he was taking. That, of course, is not because he or they were in any way obtuse. Nor is it because we see things more clearly than they could. It is merely because the "step" can only be perceived as such in hindsight. The step as such is something created by our perspective.

Notes:

(16) Translation adapted from Peter Farrell, "Diego Ortiz's *Tratado de Glosas*," *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America* IV (1967): 9.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Palestrina, Byrd, and the Final Flowering of Imitative Polyphony

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

UTOPIA

Before turning our attention to the many other ingredients in the seething cauldron that was sixteenth-century music, it will make sense to pursue the *ars perfecta* to the end. For indeed, the perfected art had an end, and it was near at hand. It had to be, for anything perfect, in this world, is doomed. Perfection cannot change, yet nothing in human history stands still. The only way to preserve the perfected art was to seal it off from history. This was done, but the price was high. The *ars perfecta*, as we shall see, still exists, but not in a way that matters anymore. In the sixteenth century it claimed all the greatest musical minds in Catholic Christendom. Later, it harbored nonentities, and the church that maintained its artificial life-support system gradually lost its significance as a creative site for music. The sixteenth century was the last in which the music of the Catholic church made history. From then on it was history.

The *ars perfecta* came about because musicians had something timeless, universal, and consummate to express: God's perfection as embodied and represented by God's own true church, the institution that employed them. Although nowhere stated by Zarlino, still less by Willaert (who wrote a quantity of secular music in genres we will soon be taking up), the values of musical perfection, however mediated by humanism, implied and reflected belief, as the Credo of the Mass puts it, *in unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam*: "one holy universal church, sent by God." The standards to which musicians serving such an institution aspired transcended the relativity of taste, just as the doctrines of religion are held by believers to represent an absolute truth, mandating in turn an absolute standard of behavior—one that does not aim to gratify the individual and that cannot be altered to suit the wishes or purposes of individuals, or the changing values and fashions of secular society.

Therein lay both the beauty and the despair of the *ars perfecta*. It was the music of Utopia—a term coined by Thomas More, not at all incidentally, during the sixteenth century. The world was its enemy. Perfection had to be enforced in order to exist at all. And yet music, a human product, did inevitably change. Many deplored the changes; the word used to sum them up—"Baroque"—though now regarded as a neutral identifying tag like "Renaissance," was originally a term of opprobrium, used by jewelers to describe a misshapen pearl or by critics to describe a bombastic utterance. It meant "distorted."

That is what music surely became from the perspective of the *ars perfecta*, as would anything that deviated from a standard of perfection. By the second half of the sixteenth century the forces of "distortion" were rife, and some of them had arisen within the church itself. Others were the result of literary movements. Still others were the outcome of a radical turn within musical humanism, which had always been an uneasy ally of religious transcendentalism. There were also pressures brought by the burgeoning music trade, pressures that reflected the overall rise of mercantilism and that militated further against the prestige of religious art. As we shall see, moreover, in every one of these responses that led away from perfection and toward the "Baroque," it was Italy that took the lead. What is usually called the "Baroque" period might more truly be called the period of Italian dominance in music.

By century's end the *ars perfecta* was only one style among many—no longer privileged, no longer where the action was. In a way its fate mirrored the larger fate of the Roman Catholic Church, which was left at the end of the sixteenth century a transformed institution—no longer truly "catholic," but much more truly "Roman." It was no longer truly "catholic" because it was no longer the undisputedly universal Western church; now it had to compete for adherents with a whole variety of Reformed churches that had sprung up to the north for a variety of reasons, doctrinal (Germany, Switzerland) and political (England). It was more truly Roman because its power, having

become more localized, was more and more strongly concentrated among the Italian bishops and cardinals. The last non-Italian pope before the election of John Paul II in 1978 was Adrian VI, a Netherlander who was elected in 1522 and reigned, rather ineffectually, for only twenty months. For more than 450 years, from Clement VII to John Paul I, the nationality of the Roman pope was a more or less foregone conclusion. The same sixteenth-century transfer from Netherlandish to Italian leadership took place in Roman Catholic music.

The two composers to be chiefly treated in this chapter—Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (ca. 1525–94) and William Byrd (1543–1623)—were the outstanding members of the last generation of musicians who kept the *ars perfecta* faith unquestioningly. Theirs was the last generation of musicians who unanimously saw the highest calling of their art in divine service, and whose primary social relation as artists was to institutions of the Catholic religion. They brought the *ars perfecta* to its greatest stylistic heights even in the period of its cultural decline. Their actual relationship to religious authority differed diametrically. Palestrina was the quasi-official musical spokesman of Catholic power, Byrd its clandestine servant in adversity. The difference is reflected in their music, to be sure, and with intensity; but that difference found expression within a fundamental stylistic agreement, which after all is what the *ars perfecta* was all about.

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Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Responsory

Mass: The Counter-Reformation; Palestrina

PALESTRINA AND THE ECUMENICAL TRADITION

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The first native Italian to be a major creative player in this narrative (as opposed to theorists like Aaron or Zarlino), Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina—the name means “Giovanni Pierluigi, from Palestrina”—was born either in Rome or in the nearby ancient town whose name he bore, called Praeneste by the Romans. He died in Rome, by tradition in his 69th year, on 2 February 1594. By then he had been either directly in the papal service or at the musical helm of one of the major Roman churches for more than forty years, beginning in 1550 with the election of Pope Julius III (formerly the bishop of Palestrina), and ending ten popes later, with Clement VIII. That is the central fact of Palestrina’s career. He was the pope’s composer, a veritable papal institution in his own right.

That status made him the recipient of an amazing and paradoxical commission: in 1577, at the height of his fame, Palestrina (then choirmaster of the Cappella Giulia at the Vatican, named after Julius III, his original patron) was enjoined by Pope Gregory XIII to revise the plainchant that bore the sainted name of the pope’s predecessor and namesake, Gregory I. That chant was supposed, by long tradition going back to the Franks, to be divinely revealed (as we have known since the first chapter of this book). Yet it was now subjected to a “modern” stylistic and esthetic critique, and purged of its “Gothic” impurities completely in the spirit of the *ars perfecta*. Palestrina did not complete the project, which reached publication only in 1614; indeed it is not known how much of the revision he (or his appointed assistant, Annibale Zoilo) actually accomplished. The result, however, was exactly what one might expect: a simpler, less tortuous, more “directed”—in short, a more “classic”—melodic line.

In Ex. 16-1, a matins responsory for Easter is given in two versions. The one printed below is the “perfected” version published in 1614 by the Medici Press in Rome (and therefore called the *Editio Medicaea*), which remained standard until the end of the nineteenth century. The one above is the “restored” text prepared in the nineteenth century by the Benedictines of Solesmes expressly to supplant the *Editio Medicaea* and put back the “barbarisms, obscurities, inconsistencies, and superfluities” Gregory XIII had ordered pruned away.¹ By then, of course (and under the influence of Romanticism), the “Gothic impurities” had taken on the aura of authenticity.

a. Liber responsorialis (Solesmes, 1894)

b. Editio Medicea (1614)

lo et ac - ce - dens re - vol - vit la - pi - dem etc. (69 notes)

lo et ac - ce - dens re - vol - vit la - pi - dem (47 notes)

ex. 16-1 Responsory *Angelus Domini*, in Medicean and Solesmes (Roman) versions

Both the Medici and the Solesmes editions carried the papal imprimatur, and so each in its respective time carried the only authority that mattered so far as the church was concerned. What was different was the source of authority the editors themselves relied upon to guide their work. In the nineteenth century it was “scientific” philological method: historical evaluation and comparison of sources. In the sixteenth century the authority came from within: from the religiously informed musical sensibility of the editors, especially the one originally appointed to execute the task, who had become something like the gatekeeper of the church’s musical utopia.

That same status as a virtual musical pope—the musical head of what Catholic reformers pointedly referred to in those days of religious unrest as the Hierarchical Church—made Palestrina the most prolific composer of Masses that ever lived. Complete settings of the Ordinary securely attributed to Palestrina number 104 (exactly the same number, by bizarre coincidence, as that of symphonies traditionally attributed to Haydn) and another dozen or so survive with disputed attributions to the composer, whose fame, like Josquin’s before him, had made him a brand name. Forty-three were published during his lifetime, in six volumes beginning in 1554. Another forty were posthumously issued, in another six volumes, the last appearing in 1601. The resurgence of the Mass as dominant genre is striking after such a long period—beginning with Josquin and Mouton and encompassing all the mid-century composers whose works we examined in the previous chapter—when motet composition had decisively overshadowed the Mass. It testifies to the quasi-official, “papal” and hierarchical character of Palestrina’s activity.

Not that he neglected the motet by any means, with upwards of four hundred to his credit, including a celebrated book of fairly lively works based on the Song of Songs and another fifty with Italian rather than Latin texts, called “madrigali spirituali.” Palestrina also composed two ambitious books of service music that sought to outfit the whole church calendar with items of a particular type: the first of these was a book of Vespers hymns that appeared in 1589; the other, considered by many to be his masterpiece, was a complete cycle of Mass Offertories that appeared in the last full year of his life, 1593. Finally, and definitely least, come two books of secular part-songs (madrigals)—but even in this genre, which Palestrina devalued in his devout maturity and even went so far as to recant, he wrote one indisputable “classic” (*Vestiva i colli*, “The hills are bedecked”).

The man couldn’t help setting an example, it seemed. His staggering output is not only in itself exemplary (of industry, the opposite of one of the deadly sins) but implies commitment to what has already been identified as the “classical” ideal, that of conformity with established excellence—or, better yet, the refinement of existing standards. To do best what everybody does is the aim of a classicist. One does not question aims, one strives to improve one’s performance. Practice makes perfect. Continual striving after the same goal is the kind of practice that results, at the very least, in facility. That is how one becomes prolific, and why certain historical periods (the “classical” ones) are so full of prolific composers. The sixteenth century was the first of them.

Palestrina exemplified that aim and that facility, perfected his style to a legendary degree, and in so doing brought the *ars perfecta* to its final niche. But no matter how you explain it, that output of Masses remains a fairly

mind-boggling—and a very telling—achievement. The idea of setting the same text to music a hundred times is on one level the ultimate stylistic exercise, the supreme expression not only of the *ars perfecta* but of the religious and cultural attitudes that undergirded it. It bespeaks a ritualized and impersonal attitude toward composing—a “catholic” attitude. The aim is not to express or illuminate the text, as one might seek to illustrate the unique text of a votive motet, but rather to provide an ideal medium for it. A body of work produced under such ritualized conditions and with such transcendent aims will constitute a *summa*—an encyclopedic summation of the state of the perfected art.

And that seems only just, because no composer ever harbored a more demanding sense of heritage than Palestrina. He practiced the branch of Western musical art that had the longest written tradition, and that had just begun to monumentalize its great figures. Hence Palestrina was easily the most historically minded composer we have as yet encountered. He was the first to do what so many have later done in his name (in counterpoint class, if no longer in church schools)—that is, deliberately master archaic styles as a basis for contemporary composition.

Notes:

(1) Raphael Molitor, *Die nach-Tridentinische Choral-Reform zu Rom*, Vol. I (Leipzig: F. E. C. Leukart, 1901), p. 297. The complete document is translated in Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Western World*, 2nd ed., p. 117.

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Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

L'homme armé

Jacques Colebault

BESTING THE FLEMINGS; OR, THE LAST OF THE TENORISTAS

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

All but six of Palestrina's hundred-odd Masses are based on preexisting music. That in itself is not remarkable; the polyphonic Mass Ordinary cycle was from the very beginning a cannibalistic genre. But Palestrina was the only late sixteenth-century composer who retained an active interest in the techniques of the early fifteenth-century composers whose work he discovered in the manuscripts of the Sistine Chapel, where he worked in the years immediately preceding the publication of his first volume of Masses in 1554. (He was pensioned out of the Sistine Chapel choir in 1555 owing to Pope Paul IV's decision to enforce the long-dormant rule of celibacy there; Palestrina was one of the three married members who had to be let go.)

That first volume (Fig. 16-1) was dedicated to Palestrina's protector, the recently elected Pope Julius III, and opened with a Mass based on the Gregorian antiphon *Ecce sacerdos magnus*—"Behold the great priest"—presumably composed in celebration of Julius's investiture. It was an old-fashioned tenor cantus-firmus Mass, written in imitation of the oldest music preserved in the Vatican manuscripts and possibly still performed there on occasion in Palestrina's day. The final *Agnus Dei* even has some old "poly-mensural" tricks such as we have not seen since Josquin's early days.

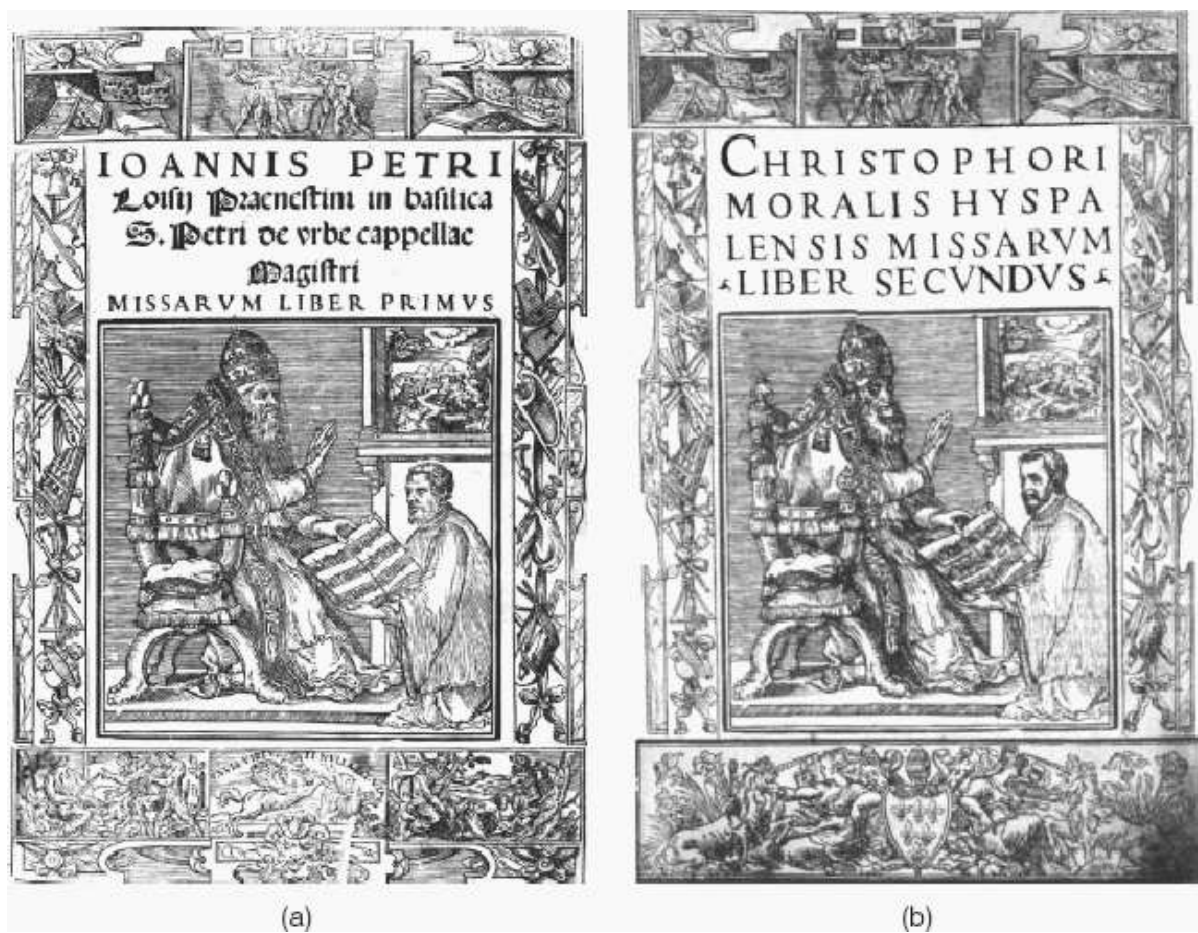


fig. 16-1 (a) Title page of Palestrina, *Missarum liber primus* (Rome: Dorico, 1554), showing the composer kneeling before Pope Julius III. (b) Title page of Cristobal de Morales, *Missarum liber secundus* (Rome: Dorico, 1544), showing the composer kneeling before Pope Paul III. It is obvious that the printer recycled and retouched the earlier plate to produce the second.

Palestrina demonstrated his intimate familiarity with the work of Josquin (dead before Palestrina was born) and also his lively, somewhat jealous admiration for it, in the most explicit and traditional way: by basing a Mass on Josquin's celebrated sequence motet *Benedicta es*. He was the latest composer to pay this sort of direct homage to Josquin. But he often reached back further yet for his models, rooting himself as deeply as he knew how in the Franco-Flemish legacy, even taking part, enthusiastically if belatedly, in its ancient emulatory games as if staking a claim to the tradition on behalf of Italy.

This retrospective strain comes particularly to the fore in Palestrina's third book of Masses, published in 1570. Of its eight Masses, two were as old-fashioned as could be. One of them, called *Missa super Ut re mi fa sol la*, was based on the old solmization hexachord, the *voces musicales* on which Josquin had playfully based a *L'Homme Armé* Mass almost a hundred years before. And sure enough, the other tenor Mass in the volume is a *Missa super L'Homme Armé*, one of the very latest contributions to the noblest emulatory line of all. (Palestrina's most recent predecessor had been the Spanish composer Cristóbal de Morales, who had worked before him at the Sistine Chapel and published a pair of *L'Homme Armé* Masses in the 1540s.) In so demonstratively bringing up the rear, so expressly establishing a connection between his work and the half-forgotten wellsprings of the Franco-Flemish art, Palestrina could not have staked his claim on tradition more plainly.

That he regarded himself not as an antiquarian—a mere caretaker of the tradition—but as an active emulant within it is clear from the nature of the compositions themselves. They are cast on a grand scale, combining feats of ancient contrapuntal craft with the sonorous, mellifluous style that had come into vogue only during the Willaert period. The *Missa L'Homme Armé* is scored for a five-part chorus and the *Missa super Ut re mi fa sol la* for one in six parts. In both cases the final Agnus Dei adds a part, as was by then customary, for an extra-grand finale. In the hexachord Mass the extra (seventh) voice is cast as a canonic part against the cantus firmus, shadowing it at the lower fifth. Ex. 16-2 gives the beginnings of both of these final Agnus settings. In them we may see the blazing sunset of the Franco-

Flemish tradition in its Italianate "perfected" phase.

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Agnus Dei". It consists of two systems of music. Each system includes six staves: five vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass) and one piano accompaniment staff. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves. The music is in a major key and 3/4 time. The first system covers measures 1 through 3, and the second system covers measures 4 through 6. The lyrics include: "A - gnus De - i, A - gnus De -", "A - gnus De - i, A - gnus De - i A -", "A - gnus De - i, A - gnus De - i qui", "A - gnus De - i qui", "i qui tol -", "gnus De - i A - gnus De - i", and "A - gnus De - i A - gnus De - i qui".

A - gnus De - i, A - gnus De -

A - gnus De - i, A - gnus De -

A - gnus De - i,

A gnus De -

A - gnus De - i, A - gnus De - i A -

A - gnus De - i,

i, A - gnus De - i qui

i, A - gnus De - i qui

A - gnus De - i A - gnus De - i qui

i qui tol -

gnus De - i A - gnus De - i

A - gnus De - i A - gnus De - i qui

7
tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di,
tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di _____ qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta
tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta
lis pec
qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di
tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, qui tol - lis

ex. 16-2 Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missarum liber tertius* (1570)

a. *Missa L'Homme Armé*, final *Agnus Dei*

Cantus I
A - gnus _____ De - i,
Canon in subdiapente
Cantus II
A - gnus _____
Altus I
A - gnus De - i, A - gnus _____
Altus II
Resolutio A - gnus _____ De - i
Altus III
A - gnus _____
Tenor
A - gnus _____
Bassus
A - gnus _____ De - i,

6

A - gnus De - i, A - gnus De - i,
 — De - i,
 De - i, A gnus De - i,
 i, A - gnus De - i, A - gnus De - i,
 gnus De - i,
 De De i, A - gnus De - i,
 A - gnus De - i, A - gnus De - i

ex. 16-2b *Missa super Ut re mi fa sol la, final Agnus Dei*

The most spectacular Mass in Palestrina’s third book, though, and the most telling instance of emulation, is his *Missa Repleatur os meum laude* (Mass on “May my mouth be filled with praise”), ostensibly based on a motet by Jacques Colebault (1483–1559), a French composer who worked in Italy and was known there as Jacquet (or Jachet) of Mantua. Jacquet’s motet was itself a contrapuntal tour-de-force, embodying throughout a chant-derived canon at the fifth between the “structural” voices. Palestrina, using the same basic material, constructed a vast canonic cycle in which both the pitch interval and the time interval progressively contract toward unison. In the Kyrie, sampled in Ex. 16-3, the opening section has a canon at the octave at a time lag of eight semibreves.

Re -
 Re - ple - a -
 Re - ple - a - tur os me - um lau - de tu - a, lau -
 Re - ple - a - tur os me - um lau - de tu -

9

ple - a - tur os me - um lau - de tu - a, et hy -
 tur os me - um lau - de tu - a, lau - de tu - a, et
 Re - ple - a - tur os me - um lau - de tu - a,
 de tu - a, re - ple - a - tur os me - um lau - de tu -
 a, lau - de tu - a, et hy -

ex. 16-3a Jacquet of Mantua, *Repleatur os meum laude*, opening point

Cantus
 Ky - ri - ee - le - i - son, e - le
 [Resolutio]
 Quintus (Cantus II)
 Altus
 Canon in Diapason Ky - ri - ee - le - i - son, e -
 Tenor
 Bassus

7

i - son. Ky - ri - ee - lei - son. Ky -
 Ky - ri -
 le i - son. Ky - ri - e e -
 Ky - ri - ee - le - i - son, e - lei son.
 Ky - ri - ee - le - i - son, e -

13 etc.

ri - e e - le i - son. Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. e - le -
 e e - le - i - son, e - lei - son. Ky - ri - e e -
 le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. e - le -
 Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. e - le - i - son.
 le - i - son, e - lei - son.

ex. 16-3b Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa Repleatur os meum laude*, Kyrie I

37

[Resolutio] Chri - ste e - le i -
 Chri - ste e -
 Chri - ste e - le - i - son, e - le - i - son. Chri -
 Canon ad Septiman 8.
 Chri - ste e - le - i - son, e - le - i - son.
 Chri - ste e - le - i - son. Chri - ste e - le - i - son, e - le -
 43
 son. Chri - ste e - le - i - son. Chri - ste e - le - i -
 le - i - son, e - le - i - son. Chri - ste e -
 ste e - le - i - son. Chri - ste e - le - i - son. Chri -
 Chri - ste e - le - i - son, e - le - i - son.
 i - son. Chri - ste e - lei

49 etc.

son. Chri - ste e - le - i - son. Chri - ste e - le - i - son,
 le - i - son, e - le - i - son.
 ste e - le - i - son. Chri - ste e - lei - son. Chri -
 Chri - ste e - lei - son.
 son. Chri - ste e - lei - son. Chri - ste e - lei - son.
 son. Chri - ste e - le - i - son.

ex. 16-3c Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa Repleatur os meum laude*, Christe

66

[Resolutio]
 Ky - ri - e e - lei - son, e -
 Ky - ri - e e - lei
 Canon ad Sextam
 Ky - ri - e e -

72

le - i - son, e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e -
 Ky - ri - e e - lei - son.
 son, e - le - i - son. Ky - ri -
 lei - son. Ky - ri - e e -
 Ky - ri - e e - lei - son, e - le -

78 etc.

lei - son, e - le - i - son, e - le - i - son.

Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Ky - ri - e e - lei - son, e -

e - e - le - i - son. Ky -

lei - son.) Ky - ri - e e - lei - son, e - lei - son.

i - son, e - le

ex. 16-3d Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa Repleatur os meum laude*, Kyrie II

(In characteristic art-conceals-art fashion, the canon is hidden behind a general point of imitation for the five voices in the texture, in which the two canonic parts are the third and fifth entries, the latter further obscured by being placed in an inner voice.) In the middle section (*Christe eleison*), the canon is at the seventh at a time lag of seven semibreves, and in the closing section, the canon is at the sixth, at a time lag of six semibreves.

Palestrina is not vying here merely with Jacquet. He is after much bigger game: none other than Ockeghem, whose *Missa Prolationum*, another progressive canonic cycle (but with expanding pitch intervals) had set the Netherlandish benchmark for artifice, and whose preeminence had lately been decreed anew in Italy, in a specifically humanistic context. The famous Florentine polymath or “Renaissance man” Cosimo Bartoli, in a commentary to Dante called *Raggionamenti accademici*, wrote that “in his day Ockeghem was, as it were, the first to rediscover music, then as good as dead, just as Donatello discovered sculpture.”² Bartoli’s observations, published in 1567 (three years before Palestrina’s Mass), echo all too clearly the famous theses of Giorgio Vasari, whose “Lives of the Painters” (1550) virtually created the popular notion of the Renaissance in the visual arts. Now there was such a notion for music, too, and Palestrina was getting in on its ground floor.

Notes:

(2) Cosimo Bartoli, *Ragionamenti accademici* (Venice, 1567), Vol. III, f.35’; trans. Jessie Ann Owens in “Music Historiography and the Definition of ‘Renaissance,’” *MLA Notes* XLVII (1990–91): 311.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Parody

Mass: The Counter-Reformation; Palestrina

PARODY PAIRS

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

More than thirty of Palestrina's Masses are of the paraphrase type—pioneered by Josquin in his late *Missa Pange lingua* and standard practice (as we have seen) for *ars perfecta* motets—in which a Gregorian chant is absorbed into a pervadingly imitative texture. But the lion's share, accounting for almost exactly half of Palestrina's output in the genre (fifty-three to be exact), are parody Masses, in which the motives of a polyphonic model are exhaustively rewoven into new textures. The sources of these Masses were most often motets by composers whose works were popular in local liturgical use during Palestrina's youth. More than twenty times, though, Palestrina based a Mass on one of his own motets (or even madrigals, including *Vestiva i colli*).

When this is the case, it suggests that both the motet and the derivative Mass may have been meant for performance in tandem on the same major feast. Palestrina provided three such motet-plus-Mass sets for Christmas. The one on *O magnum mysterium* ("O great mystery!"—motet published 1569, Mass in 1582) has become particularly famous, and with good reason. The motet begins with a marvelously effective rhetorical stroke: a series of colorful (i.e., chromatic) chords and a reiteration of "O!" that conspire vividly to portray a state of wonder. The chords are connected for the most part along an ordinary circle of fifths (the C being elided)—ordinary, that is, to us; in Palestrina's time it was a striking novelty, and the speed with which the implied bass progression traverses the tritone from E to B-flat is still a little disorienting and "uncanny." The string of successive leading tones (Gé–Cé–Fé–B), each contradicting the last, does the very opposite of what a leading tone is supposed to do in "common practice" (known as such to us but not, of course, to Palestrina). Far from tightening the focus on any particular harmonic goal, it keeps the tonality of the music blurred until the cadential suspension, coinciding with the "uncanny" B-flat, concentrates expectations on A (Ex. 16-4).

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of the Mass 'O magnum mysterium' by Palestrina. The score is for six voices: Cantus, Quintus (Cantus II), Altus, Sextus (Altus II), Tenor, and Bassus. The music is in G major and 4/4 time. The lyrics are 'O magnum mysterium'. The Cantus part begins with a long note on 'O' followed by 'ma - gnum my - ste'. The other voices enter in various parts, with the Bassus part starting with a long note on 'O'.

ex. 16-4 Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *O magnum mysterium*, opening phrase

That is the sort of thing one fairly expects in a “humanistically” conceived motet, especially one with a text as charged as this one is with emotion. The composer “recites” the text like an orator, highlighting its meaning by modulating his harmonies as an orator modulates his tone of voice. When colorful harmonies or effects imitative of speech patterns occur in tandem with affective words, they seem to “point to” or refer to those words, ultimately to symbolize them. Such symbolism, in which signs point to something “outside” the system of sounds themselves (in this case to words and their embodied concepts) is called “extroversive” symbolism (or, more formally, *semiosis* —“signing”). Humanistic, rhetorical text setting encourages such effects, which became increasingly prevalent during the sixteenth century.

When the motet is transformed through parody technique into a Mass, what had been affective and rhetorical becomes syntactical and structural. The “uncanny” progression that launches the motet on a note of awe serves the Mass as a suitably ear-catching “head motive.” Each of its five constituent liturgical units opens by invoking the phrase before proceeding to other business, stirring memories of its predecessors and thus integrating the service by structuring its duration around a series of strategic returns to symbolic, hence inspiring, sounds (Ex. 16-5). Within the Mass, the symbolism or semiosis is entirely “introversive” (inward-pointing). What is emblemized or signaled is precisely the integration of the service—already an emotionally intensifying, uplifting, effect, but one that carries no external concepts with it.

(This remains true even if, as suggested, the motet is also performed as part of the same Mass service. Places where motets might be sung, so far as we know, are the same sorts of places as those where a *ricercare* might be played: during the elevation of the host or during Communion, when there is an activity that takes up time that is otherwise unfilled by sounds. Thus the motet *O magnum mysterium*, if performed at Christmas Mass, would be performed only after three or four Ordinary items had already been sung. Once it has been performed, of course, the referents for its harmonic and declamatory effects will be both introversive and extroversive at the same time. That kind of mixture or complexity of reference is the normal state of affairs for music, which is why musical symbolism or “expression” has always been such a complicated, contentious, and even mysterious issue.)

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Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Roman Catholic church music

Vincenzo Ruffo

PALESTRINA AND THE BISHOPS

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of the Kyrie in Palestrina's *Missa O magnum mysterium*. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features five vocal parts: Cantus, Altus I, Altus II (Quintus), Tenor, and Bassus. The lyrics are: "Ky - ri - e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e - lei - son. Ky - ri - e - lei - son. Ky - ri - e - lei - son." The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 8. The music is characterized by its polyphonic texture and the use of mensural notation.

ex. 16-5a Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa O magnum mysterium*, Kyrie, beginning

Palestrina placed the ancient elite and ecumenical art to which he claimed the key at the service of “the one holy, catholic and apostolic church” at the very moment when the church, under pressure from the northern Reformation, was renewing its age-old mission as the “Church Militant” (*ecclesia militans*). As we will see in a later chapter, that rekindled militancy was ultimately subversive of the *ars perfecta*. But in its early stages it created the demand for a new clarity in texture that could be seen as the ultimate refinement—the ultimate perfecting—of the traditional style.

Clearly that was how Palestrina saw it. By seizing the opportunity to satisfy that demand, he created a prestigious masterwork, an influential style he could call his own, and a durable personal legend.

At least as early as the 1540s, and particularly in Roman circles, some churchmen had taken a negative attitude toward the music of the post-Josquin generation, which for all its technical excellence ran counter, they thought, to the proper role and function of church music. To put their concerns in a nutshell, they thought that the elegantly wrought imitative texture that had gained universal currency was far too artistic, and therefore not sufficiently functional. Such music, in its preoccupation with its own beauty of form, exemplified the sin of pride, and interfered with the intelligibility of the sacred texts to which it was meant to be subordinate.

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of the Gloria "Et in terra..." from Palestrina's *Missa O magnum mysterium*. The score is in G major and 4/4 time, featuring five vocal parts: Cantus, Altus I, Altus II, Tenor, and Bassus. The lyrics are: "Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te. Benedicimus te. Bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te. Benedicimus te. Bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te." The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 6. The Cantus part begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a half note G4. The other parts follow in a similar pattern, creating a rich, imitative texture.

ex. 165b Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa O magnum mysterium*, Gloria ("Et in terra..."), beginning

The image shows a musical score for five voices: Cantus, Altus I, Altus II, Tenor, and Bassus. The lyrics are: "Pa - trem omni - po - ten - tem, fa - cto - rem coe - li et ter - rae". The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The Cantus part starts with a whole note "Pa", followed by a half note "trem", and then a series of eighth notes for "omni - po - ten - tem". The other voices enter with similar rhythmic patterns, creating a polyphonic texture. The lyrics are written below the staves, with some words split across lines.

**ex. 16-5c Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa O magnum mysterium*,
Credo ("Patrem omnipotentem..."), beginning**

The complaint, as such, was nothing new. We have heard it before from John of Salisbury, who railed at the vainglory of the singers at Notre Dame, and even from Saint Augustine, who had nothing more than the seductive beauty of Gregorian chant to contend with. Made against the music of the incipient *ars perfecta*, however, it carried considerable conviction, because imitative texture was an artistic value first and last, and was hardly reconcilable with the demands of textual intelligibility no matter how much attention a composer like Willaert paid to correct declamation. As one indignant bishop, Bernardino Cirillo Franco, put it of contemporary composers (and with the text of the Mass Sanctus in mind), "in our times they have put all their industry and effort into the compositions of fugues, so that while one voice says 'Sanctus,' another says 'Sabaoth,' still another 'Gloria tua,' with howling, bellowing, and stammering, so that they more nearly resemble cats in January than flowers in May."³

The part about howling, bellowing, and stammering was just all-purpose invective, but the point about imitation was a fair one, and it proceeded, moreover, from a genuine, specifically Italian humanist impulse—"specifically Italian," because as we have seen, English musicians, for one example, could be every bit as devout and yet quite indifferent to the matter of textual intelligibility, seeing music as serving another sort of religious purpose that had little to do with humanism. In Italy, though, what had been a crotchety minority opinion in the 1540s had become a concern of powerful "mainstream" Catholics by the middle of the next decade, when Palestrina was beginning to establish himself as a papal musician.

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of the Sanctus from Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina's *Missa O magnum mysterium*. The score is written for five vocal parts: Cantus, Altus I, Altus II, Tenor, and Bassus. The music is in G major and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "San - ctus, San - ctus, Do - mi - nus De - us, Sa - ba - oth, Do - mi - nus De - us Sa - ba - oth." The score is divided into three systems, with measures 7 and 12 marked at the beginning of the second and third systems respectively. The Cantus part has a fermata over the first measure. The Altus I part has a fermata over the first measure. The Altus II part has a fermata over the first measure. The Tenor part has a fermata over the first measure. The Bassus part has a fermata over the first measure.

ex. 16-5d Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa O magnum mysterium*, Sanctus, beginning

Cantus
A - gnus De - i, A - gnus De -

Altus I
A - gnus De - i, A - gnus _____

Altus II
A - gnus De - i, A - gnus _____ De -

Tenor
A - gnus A - gnus De -

Bassus
A - gnus,

6
De - i, A - gnus De - i

De - i, A - gnus De - i

A - gnus De - i

A - gnus De - i

ex. 16-5e Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa O magnum mysterium*, Agnus Dei, beginning

According to Bishop Cirillo Franco himself, writing a quarter of a century later around 1575, one of these mainstream figures was Cardinal Marcello Cervini, who in 1555 was elected pope, and who promised his friend the bishop that he would do something about the problem. Cirillo Franco claimed that in due course he received from Rome “a Mass that conformed very closely to what I was seeking.”⁴ Cardinal Cervini reigned, as Pope Marcellus II, for only twenty days before his sudden death; but there is nevertheless evidence that corroborates Cirillo Franco’s testimony about the pope’s concern for “intelligible” church music. The diary of Angelo Massarelli, Pope Marcellus’s private secretary, contains an entry dated Good Friday (12 April) 1555, the third day of the pontiff’s brief reign. Marcellus came down to the Sistine Chapel to hear the choir, of which Palestrina was then a member, sing the gravest liturgy of the church year. “Yet the music performed,” Massarelli noted,

did not suit the solemnity of the occasion. Rather, their many-voiced singing exuded a joyful mood...

Accordingly, the pope himself, having beckoned to his singers, directed them to sing with proper restraint, and in such a way that everything was audible and intelligible, as it should be.⁵

Palestrina was one of the singers who heard this fatherly lecture from the pontiff. His second book of Masses, published in 1567, is prefaced by a letter of dedication to King Philip II of Spain (best remembered in English-speaking countries as Queen Elizabeth’s rejected suitor and later her military adversary), in which Palestrina testified to his resolve, “in accordance with the views of most serious and most religious-minded men, to bend all my knowledge, effort, and industry toward that which is the holiest and most divine of all things in the Christian religion—that is, to adorn the holy sacrifice of the Mass in a new manner.”⁶ The seventh and last item—the valedictory, as it were—in the book that had opened thus, with the composer’s statement of pious or chastened resolve, was a Mass entitled *Missa Papae Marcelli*, “The Mass of Pope Marcellus,” or even “Pope Marcellus’s Mass.” And indeed, it was a Mass that conformed very closely to what Bishop Cirillo Franco had been seeking, for it set the

sacred words “in such a way that everything was audible and intelligible, as it should be.”

Was this the Mass that Bishop Cirillo Franco received from Pope Marcellus, as promised? To believe that one would have to imagine Palestrina writing the Mass, and Pope Marcellus dispatching it, within seventeen days, which was all the earthly time the pope had left. That is certainly not impossible. But by 1567 the “intelligibility movement” had gathered a powerful impetus, and the dedication to Pope Marcellus may have been commemorative, honoring the unlucky and lamented pontiff whose reign had been so abruptly terminated, but who was now looked back upon as the spur that had set an important musical reform in motion.

That reform had reached a critical point in the year 1562, when the Nineteenth Ecumenical Council of the Western Church (popularly known as the Council of Trent, after the north Italian city where it met), finally got around to music. The Council of Trent was an emergency legislative body that had been convened in 1545 by Pope Paul III to stem the tide of the Protestant Reformation. Music, clearly, was not terribly high on the Council’s agenda, but it, too, could play a part in the general effort to revitalize the church through modesty and piety, to some extent to personalize its religious message, and by so doing to steal some of the Protestants’ thunder. Appropriate music could be of assistance in the project of adjusting the traditionally unworldly, impersonal (and indeed rather haughty) tone of Catholic worship to the point where it might meet the comprehension of the ordinary worshiper halfway.

That, ideally, was the purpose that motivated the “intelligibility” crusade, and it was explicitly formulated by the Council in its “Canon on Music to be Used in the Mass,” promulgated in September 1562. The singing of the Mass, this document decreed, should not be an obstacle to the worshipers’ involvement but should allow the Mass and its sacred symbolism “to reach tranquilly into the ears and hearts of those who hear them.”⁷ Music was not provided in church for the benefit of music lovers: “The whole plan of singing in musical modes should be constituted not to give empty pleasure to the ear, but in such a way that the words be clearly understood by all, and thus the hearts of the listeners be drawn to desire of heavenly harmonies, in the contemplation of the joys of the blessed.” It was left to musicians to find the means for implementing these general guidelines, but it was up to the bishops and cardinals to make sure that those means were found. In the years immediately following the Council’s Canon, several important princes of the church took an active part in overseeing the work of composers. One of them was the redoubtable Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, the Archbishop of Milan and the chief enforcer, as papal secretary of state, of the Council’s decrees. Borromeo directly charged Vincenzo Ruffo, the *maestro di cappella* at Milan, “to compose a Mass that should be as clear as possible and to send it to me here,” that is to Rome, where it might be tested.⁸

This commission was issued on 10 March 1565. Several weeks later, on 28 April, according to the official diary of the Papal Chapel Choir, “we assembled at the request of the Most Reverend Cardinal Vitellozzi at his residence to sing some Masses and to test whether the words could be understood, as their Eminences desire.”⁹ That Ruffo’s Mass was among these seems virtually certain; the effort of this composer, famed earlier for his contrapuntal skill, to conform to the dictates of the Cardinals is touchingly evident (see Ex. 16-6).

Whether Palestrina’s *Missa Papae Marcelli* was among the Masses tested that day is a matter of conjecture, but the notion is made plausible by the date of the Mass’s publication two years later, and it has formed the basis of one of the most durable myths in the history of European church music. The legend exaggerated the test at Cardinal Vitellozzi’s into a public trial, thence into a virtual musical Inquisition, with music coming “very near to being banished from the Holy Church by a sovereign pontiff [Pius IV], had not Giovanni Palestrina found the remedy, showing that the error lay, not with music, but with the composers, and composing in confirmation of this the Mass entitled *Missa Papae Marcelli*.”¹⁰

Cantus
Et in ter - ra pax ho-mi - ni - bus bo - nae

Altus
Et in ter - ra pax ho-mi - ni - bus bo - nae

Tenor
Et in ter - ra pax ho-mi - ni - bus bo - nae

Bassus
Et in ter - ra pax ho-mi - ni - bus bo - nae

7
vo-lun-ta - tis. Lau - da-mus te. A - do - ra - mus

vo-lun-ta - tis. Lau - da-mus te. Be - ne - di - ci-mus te. A - do - ra - mus

vo-lun-ta - tis. Be - ne - di - ci-mus te. A - do - ra - mus

vo-lun-ta - tis. Be - ne - di - ci-mus te. A - do - ra - mus

14
te. Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus te. Gra - ti - as a - gi-mus ti - bi

te. Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus te. Gra - ti - as a - gi-mus ti - bi

te. Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus te. Gra - ti - as a - gi-mus ti - bi

te. Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus te. Gra - ti - as a - gi-mus ti - bi

ex. 16-6 Vincenzo Ruffo, *Missae Quatuor concinate ad ritum Concilii Mediolani*

The words just quoted are from an aside by Agostino Agazzari, the *maestro di capella* of the Jesuit Seminary in Rome, in the course of a treatise on instrumental music that he published in 1607, a dozen years and more after Palestrina’s death. It is the first report of the post-Council intervention by the hierarchy of the Church Militant in the affairs of music to cast it in such radical and confrontational terms, and the first explicitly to associate the *Missa Papae Marcelli* with those events. It is hard to know whether Agazzari was drawing on “oral history” here, or on unsubstantiated rumor, or on his imagination.

But if he was the first to cast Palestrina as music’s heroic savior, he was certainly not the last. The legend passed from pen to pen throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, until it reached a seemingly unsurpassable peak in 1828 in the first full-length biography of Palestrina, by the priest Giuseppe Baini, a papal musician and composer in his own right and a follower in Palestrina’s footsteps as a Sistine Chapel chorister. “*Povero Pierluigi!*,” Baini wrote: “Poor Pierluigi! He was placed in the hardest straits of his career. The fate of church music hung from his pen, and so did his own career, at the height of his fame....”¹¹

But Baini’s account was only seemingly unsurpassable. It has been surpassed many times over in popular history

—“Church music was saved forever. Italian music was founded at the same time. What if Palestrina had not succeeded? The mind staggers”¹² —and was even worked up into an opera. The latter, a “musical legend” in three acts called *Palestrina*, by the German composer Hans Pfitzner (to his own libretto), was composed in 1915, and first performed in Munich two years later, while World War I was raging. Not only Palestrina (tenor) but Cardinal Borromeo (baritone), Pope Pius IV (bass), Angelo Massarelli (transmuted into the general secretary to the Council of Trent) and even Josquin des Prez are cast as characters (the last as an apparition). Women’s roles are entirely incidental: Palestrina’s daughter, his deceased first wife (another apparition), and three angels.

In act I, Cardinal Borromeo issues the commission to a reluctant Palestrina, whom he has to cajole with actual imprisonment and threatened torture. The spirits of the dead masters (including Josquin) exhort the composer to add “the last stone” to the jeweled necklace of musical perfection, and an angel intones the first motive from the Kyrie of the *Missa Papae Marcelli*, followed by the whole angelic host who dictate to Palestrina the music that saved music (see Fig. 16-2). Act II shows the assembled Council of Trent engaged in luridly acrimonious debate over music, with a sizable faction calling for its outright abolition. Act III shows the outcome of the musical show trial: Palestrina, released from prison but tormented by self-doubt, receives the plaudits of the singers and compliments from the pope himself, for having emerged victorious as the savior of music.

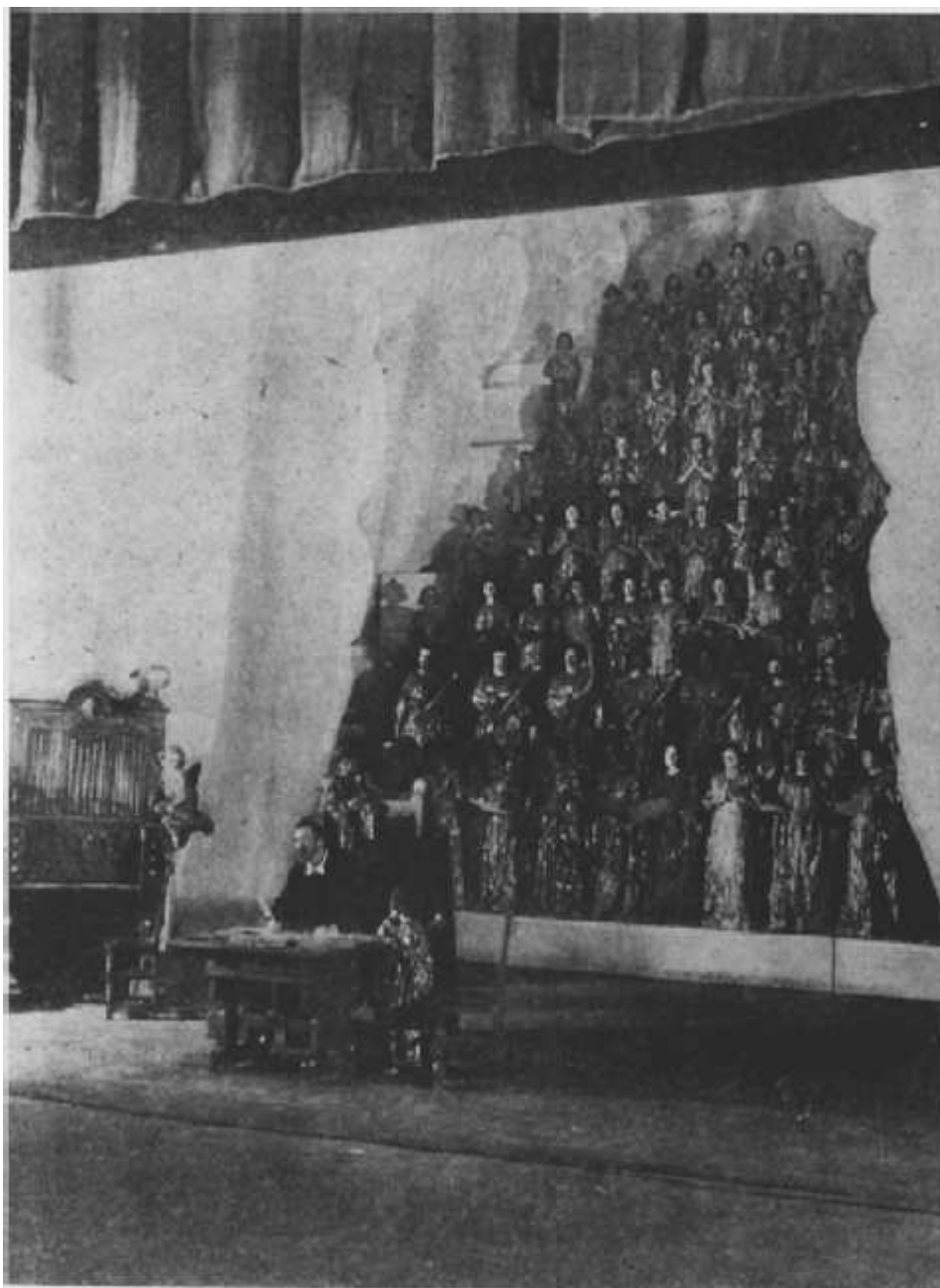


fig. 16-2 Angelic dictation scene from Pfitzner, *Palestrina* (Munich, Prinzregententheater, 12 June 1917).

Pfizer's *Palestrina* is an important work—or rather, at the least, a work that raises important issues. They are issues, admittedly, that were probably more consciously pondered in Pfizer's time than in Palestrina's, but they are issues that are still hotly contested today. They are spelled out in a quotation from the nineteenth-century German philosopher Artur Schopenhauer that the composer placed at the head of the score as an epigraph: "Alongside world history there goes, guiltless and unstained by blood, the history of philosophy, science and the arts."¹³ The question thus raised—whether the history of art is an idyllic parallel history, a transcendent history that is separate from that of the (rest of the) world, or whether world history and art history are mutually implicated—has been the urgent subtext of this book from the very first page.

The Palestrina legend was a good symbolic medium for broaching this enormous question because the bishops' call for "intelligible" church music, backed up by the legislated decrees of the Council of Trent and the implied power of the Inquisition and of the "Holy Roman Empire" under whose auspices the Council was convened, was a clear instance of public political intervention in the affairs of art and its makers, as opposed to the accustomed pressures of private patronage. It brings to mind—to our contemporary mind, at least—many other such interventions, some of which have had serious and even tragic implications.

Notes:

(3) Letter from Cirillo Franco to Ugolino Gualteruzzi, trans. Lewis Lockwood in *The Counter-Reformation and the Masses of Vincenzo Ruffo* (Venice: Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 1970), p. 129.

(4) Trans. Lewis Lockwood, in Palestrina, *Pope Marcellus Mass* (Norton Critical Scores; New York: Norton, 1975), p. 26.

(5) Trans. Lewis Lockwood, in Palestrina, *Pope Marcellus Mass*, p. 18.

(6) Trans. Lewis Lockwood, in Palestrina, *Pope Marcellus Mass*, pp. 22–23.

(7) Trans. Gustave Reese, in *Music in the Renaissance* (rev. ed.; New York: Norton, 1959), p. 449.

(8) Trans. Lewis Lockwood, in Palestrina, *Pope Marcellus Mass*, p. 21.

(9) Trans. Lewis Lockwood, in Palestrina, *Pope Marcellus Mass*, pp. 21–22.

(10) Agostino Agazzari, *Del sonare sopra il basso con tutti gli stromenti*, trans. Oliver Strunk, in *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 430.

(11) Giuseppe Baini, *Memorie storico-critiche della vita e delle opera di Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina* (Rome, 1828), p. 216; trans. Lewis Lockwood, in Palestrina, *Pope Marcellus Mass*, p. 35.

(12) Luigi Barzini, *The Italians* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), p. 308.

(13) Artur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena* (1851), 2:§52.

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Roman Catholic church music: The Reformation and the Council of Trent

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FREEDOM AND CONSTRAINT

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Such parallels are only too easy to overdraw, and we may take comfort on behalf of poor Pierluigi that he never suffered the imprisonment or mortal duress that the operatic Palestrina had to endure. Not only that, but Palestrina's third book of Masses, published in 1570, contained the extremely complicated and "artificial" works in Netherlandish style already discussed and sampled in Ex. 16-2 and 16-3. Clearly there was never any actual inquisitorial ban on any form of Catholic worship music, at least in territories subject to the strictures of the Council of Trent.

Still and all, the style of the *Missa Papae Marcelli* remains arguably a coerced, official style—not a style, in other words, that Palestrina or Ruffo or any other composer would have adopted spontaneously (to judge by their prior output and the values implied therein) but one imposed by an external force to suit purposes that arguably ran counter to the interests of composers, but that were not negotiable. And yet the style was (or could be made) a very beautiful and moving one, and one that later artists found sufficiently inspiring to emulate willingly. As Pfitzner implied in his melodramatic way, it was a tribute to Palestrina's artistic imagination to have found so successful a means of reconciling artistic and ecclesiastical criteria—a manner, moreover, that was very much in the spirit of the Church Militant.

As the Credo and the Agnus Dei from the *Missa Papae Marcelli* especially confirm, Palestrina's post-Council-of-Trent style was not a chastened, ascetic, quasi-penitent affair like Ruffo's but a style of special opulence, grace, and expressivity. *Missa Papae Marcelli* is a "freely composed" Mass, one of the few by Palestrina that incorporates no preexisting material—or, at least, none that has been acknowledged by the composer or subsequently detected. The composer's shaping hand is all the more crucial, then, and the Mass is given a musical shape more elegant than ever, in demonstrative compensation for the loss of the usual external scaffold.

Cantus
Ky - ri - e - le - i - son, e - le - i - son.

Altus
Ky - ri - e - lei - son, Ky - ri -

Tenore I
Ky - ri - e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e - lei -

Tenore II
Ky - ri - e - le -

Bassus I
Ky - ri - e -

Bassus II
Ky - ri - e - lei - son.

7
i - son. Ky - ri - e - lei - son.
e - lei - son. Ky - ri - e - e - le - i - son. Ky -
son. Ky - ri - e - e - le - i - son.
i - son. Ky - ri - e - e - le - i - son. Ky -
lei - son. Ky - ri - e - le - i - son. Ky - ri -
Ky - ri - e - lei - son. Ky -

ex. 16-7 Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa Papae Marcelli*, opening Kyrie

The opening idea of the Kyrie, the one intoned by the angel in Pfitzner's opera, is both the subject of the Mass's first point of imitation (Ex. 16-7) and the Mass's main melodic building block; and it embodies the quintessence of Palestrina's style, as identified by the many who have studied it with an eye toward extracting from it a compositional method. That quintessence is the "recovered leap." This model motif (we'll call it the "Ur-motif," German-style) begins with an ascending leap of a fourth, which is immediately filled in, or "recovered," by descending stepwise motion. (Fascinating never-to-be-answered questions: Was the similarity of this phrase to the opening phrase of the old *L'Homme Armé* tenor (Ex. 12-10) fortuitous or emblematic; and if emblematic, of what?) It is the double reciprocity—immediate reversal of contour after a leap, the exchange of leaps and steps—that creates the "balanced" design with which the name Palestrina has become synonymous. The wealth of passing tones (many of them accented), vouchsafed by the stepwise recovery of skips, is what gives Palestrina's texture its much-esteemed patina. Otherwise the style of Palestrina's Kyrie does not differ especially from the *ars perfecta* idiom with which we are familiar, because the Kyrie is a sparsely texted, traditionally melismatic item where textual clarity was not of paramount concern.

It is in the "talky" movements of the Mass—the Gloria and Credo—that the special post-Tridentine qualities emerge.

The setting of the very first phrase of polyphony in the Credo (Ex. 16-8) can serve as paradigm. The bass has the Ur-motif, its first note twice reiterated (or, to put it more in sixteenth-century terms, its first note broken into three) to accommodate two unaccented syllables. Four of the six voices sing the phrase in choral homorhythm, with melodic decorations taking place only where syllables are held long, so as not to obscure the text. The top voice uses its chance for decoration to mirror the Ur-motif, substituting a reciprocal fifth from C to G (embellished with passing tones) for the bass's fourth from G to C. That fifth having been achieved, the contour is reversed and the melody descends to its starting point, just like the Ur-motive in the bass.

The musical score for Ex. 16-8 shows six vocal parts: Cantus, Altus, Tenor, Tenor, Bassus I, and Bassus II. The lyrics are: "Pa - trem om - ni - po - tén - tem, vi - si - fa - ctó - rem coe - li et ter - ræ, vi - si - fa - ctó - rem coe - li et ter - ræ, vi - si -". The score illustrates the Ur-motif in the bass and its reciprocal fifth in the Cantus.

ex. 16-8 Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa Papae Marcelli*, Credo, mm. 1-8

The second phrase of text (“factorem coeli...”) employs another sort of reciprocity: it is scored for a different four-voice sample from the six available parts, chosen for maximum contrast. The two voices that had played the most conspicuous melodic role in the first phrase are silenced and replaced by the two voices that had been silent before. The result is a kind of ersatz antiphony within the single choir, and it is a device that will in effect replace imitation as the prime structural principle for the Credo. The replacement bass, meanwhile, sounds the Ur-motive a second time, its notes broken up into a new rhythmic configuration to accommodate another set of words, and it is again doubled homorhythmically by remaining voices.

The close on the final (C) at “terrae” is emphasized by a gorgeous, and very characteristic, double suspension (7–6 in the alto over the bass A, 4–3 in the first tenor over the bass G). This ornamental approach to functional articulation is one of the secrets of the post-Tridentine style: to create opulence out of sheer grammatical necessity is a high rhetorical skill. It reaches a peak in the Sanctus, characteristically the most luxuriant movement of all, since it is identified by its liturgical Preface as a portrayal of the heavenly choirs (the source, evidently, of Pfitzner’s sentimental representation).

The music at the beginning of Palestrina’s Sanctus (Ex. 16-9), so magnificently evocative of infinite space, is in essence just a rockingly reiterated cadence with a decorated suspension (passed from Cantus to Bassus II to Bassus I). Again, reiteration and varied choral distribution take the place of imitation. Ever increasing spaces are then suggested by extending the span between suspension-cadences from two bars to three (mm. 7–9) and then moving the cadential target around from C to F to D to G (mm. 10–16) so that when C finally comes back (not until m. 32, not shown) it carries enormous articulative force and effectively finishes off a section.

The image shows a musical score for six voices: Cantus, Altus, Tenor I, Tenor II, Bassus I, and Bassus II. The lyrics are "San ctus, San ctus, San ctus". The score is written in a single system with six staves. The lyrics are placed below the corresponding staves. The music is in a common time signature and features various melodic lines and rests.

Cantus
San ctus, San

Altus
San ctus, San

Tenor I
San ctus, San

Tenor II
San ctus, San ctus,

Bassus I
San ctus, San

Bassus II
San ctus, San

7

ctus, San ctus, San

ctus, San ctus, San

ctus, San

San ctus, San

ctus, San

ctus, San

13

ctus ...

ctus ...

ctus ...

ctus ...

ctus ...

ctus, San - ctus, San - ctus ...

ex. 16-9 Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa Papae Marcelli*, Sanctus, mm. 1-16

This sort of tonal planning, necessitated by the absence of a cantus firmus and the need to keep the music “in motion” without the propulsion that pervasive imitation can afford, amounted to something quite new. The harnessing of tonal tension by delaying cadences (or, more subtly, delaying points of necessary arrival) undoubtedly depended on aural memories—on the composer’s part and that of his audience as well—of the sort of improvisatory music over ground basses that we observed briefly at the end of the previous chapter.

Returning to the Credo, we can summarize its structure as a strategically planned series of cadential “cells,” or “modules,” each expressed through a fragment of text declaimed homorhythmically by a portion of the choir in an iridescently shifting succession and rounded off by a beautifully crafted cadence. In the middle section (“Crucifixus”) Palestrina apes the tenor-tacet sections of old by scaling down the performing forces to a four-voice “semichoir,” but the nature of the writing does not differ; it still consists of a kaleidoscopic interplay of homorhythmically declaimed, cadenced phrases.

The third and last part (“Et in spiritum”) returns to the full six-part complement, which is deployed more frequently than before at full strength, reaching a massive tutti at the final “Amen” (Ex. 16-10) that develops the arching “recovery” idea—upward leaps followed by downward scales—into a thrilling peroration. (The first tenor attempts for a while to swim against the tide with downward leaps and upward scales, but is finally caught up in the cadential

undertow; the plagal cadence at the very end is an embellishment of the long-sustained final C in the second tenor—an archly deliberate whiff of the old, decisively superseded cantus-firmus texture.)

The expressivity of this music arises out of the cadence patterns, not to say the “tonal” progressions. It is with Palestrina that we first begin to notice—and, more, to feel the effects of—strategic harmonic delays. It is an expressivity that is based almost entirely on “introversive” (inward-pointing) signification and the emotion that delayed fulfillment of expectations produces in the listener. There is little or no extroversive symbolism in this—or any other—Mass setting by this time. As one can readily imagine, relying on extroversive symbolism when setting the same text repeatedly would drastically restrict rather than enhance one’s creative choices.

The image shows a musical score for six voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2. The lyrics are: "A - - men, a - - men, a - -". The score is a six-part setting of the text "A - - men, a - - men, a - -". The music is characterized by long, sustained notes and complex harmonic textures, typical of the Palestrina style. The lyrics are: "A - - men, a - - men, a - -".

ex. 16-10 Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa Papae Marcelli*, Credo, mm. 186-97

Cantus

Altus

Tenor I

Tenor II

Bassus I

Bassus II

ex. 16-11 Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa Papae Marcelli*, *Agnus Dei*, mm. 1-15

The only text-derived symbolism one can point to in the Credo are the virtually inescapable contrasting melodic contours on the phrases “*descendit de coelis*” and “*et ascendit in coelum.*” To contradict the implied “directions” in the text at these points would be bizarre. The reason why this particular pair of images has become such a compulsory trope or “figure” for translation into sound seems to be precisely that it is a pair—or rather, an antithesis. (By way of contrast, look back at Ex. 16-1, the Easter responsory chant, and note how the single word “*descendit,*” in the absence of its opposite, is allowed to ascend melodically.) As we shall see in the next chapter, figural symbolism in music thrives on antithetical relations, and antithetical figures in texts seem to demand musical illustration.

Musical score for Ex. 16-11, showing the beginning of the *Agnus Dei* in the *Missa Papae Marcelli*. The score is for seven voices: Cantus I, Cantus II, Altus I, Altus II, Tenor, Bassus I, and Bassus II. The lyrics are "Agnus Dei". The score shows the first few measures of the piece, with various musical notations including clefs, time signatures, and dynamics.

Musical score for Ex. 16-12a, showing the beginning of the second section of the *Agnus Dei* in the *Missa Papae Marcelli*. The score is for seven voices: Cantus I, Cantus II, Altus I, Altus II, Tenor, Bassus I, and Bassus II. The lyrics are "Agnus Dei". The score shows the first few measures of the piece, with various musical notations including clefs, time signatures, and dynamics.

ex. 16-12a Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa Papae Marcelli*, *Agnus II*, mm. 1-10

The opening point in the *Agnus Dei* (Ex. 16-11) recapitulates the beginning of the *Kyrie* (compare Ex. 16-8), an effect calculated to give this “freely” composed Mass an especially rounded and finished shape. The technique of composition, not only here but in all the melismatic sections of the Mass, reverts to the freely imitative style Zarlino called *fuga sciolta*. Only phrase-beginnings are imitated; continuations are “freely” adapted to the harmonic design. The concluding *Agnus* (designated “II” but meant for the third section, with its separate textual ending “*Dona nobis*

ex. 16-12b Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa Papae Marcelli*, Agnus II, mm. 40-53

The payoff comes at the end. The last phrase of the canon begins with the Bassus's "Dona nobis pacem" in m. 40. Its progression from the final (I) to the subsemitonium or leading tone (vii) by way of an initial descent to the subdominant or lower fifth (IV) elegantly prepares the final cadence in the second Cantus a ninth above: supertonium (ii) to the long-held final (I) by way of an initial descent to the tuba (V). These sequences of degree functions, modeled on those of the ground basses and reinforced by constant use, were eventually stereotyped into the familiar tonal cadences of what we, looking back on it, call the "common practice." Palestrina's I–IV–vii//ii–V–I, arising out of his strange canon-by-two-fifths, is none other than the essential frame of the common-practice circle of fifths, lacking only the middle pair (iii–vi) for completion.

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Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Offertory: Post-medieval developments

Palestrina: The last phase

Johann Joseph Fux

CRYOGENICS

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The final stage in Palestrina's texturally clarified, harmonically saturated, motivically economical—in a word, “classical”—*ars perfecta* polyphony is reached in the book of Offertories that he published in the last year of his life. *Tui sunt coeli* (Ex. 16-13) is the one for Christmas. Compared with the *Missa Papae Marcelli* this pervasively imitative composition might seem a relapse into some bad old pre-Tridentine habits. But this is pervasive imitation with a difference. The points are tightly woven out of laconic motives that are precisely modeled on the pronunciation of the words.

The image displays a musical score for the offertory 'Tui sunt coeli' by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina. The score is arranged in five systems, each containing five staves. The vocal parts are labeled as Cantus, Altus, Tenor I, Tenor II (Quintus), and Bassus. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves, and the basso continuo line is at the bottom of each system. The music is in a simple, homophonic style characteristic of the High Renaissance.

System 1:

- Cantus: Tu - i sunt coe - li.
- Altus: Tu - i sunt coe - li. te - i sunt
- Tenor I: Tu - i sunt
- Tenor II (Quintus):
- Bassus:

System 2:

- Cantus: tu - i sunt coe - li.
- Altus: coe - li. tu - i sunt
- Tenor I: coe - li. tu - i sunt coe -
- Tenor II (Quintus): Tu - i sunt coe -
- Bassus: Tu - i sunt coe - li.

System 3:

- Cantus: et tu - a est ter - ra.
- Altus: - i sunt coe - li. et tu - a est ter - ra.
- Tenor I: li. tu - i sunt coe - li. et tu - a
- Tenor II (Quintus): - li. tu - i sunt coe - li. et tu -
- Bassus: - tu - i sunt coe - li. et tu - a

System 4:

- Cantus: et tu - a est ter - ra: or -
- Altus: et tu - a est ter - ra: or - bem ter - ra - -
- Tenor I: est ter - ra: or - bem ter - ra - rum or - bem ter - ra -
- Tenor II (Quintus): a est ter - ra: or - bem ter - ra - rum,
- Bassus: est ter - ra: or - bem ter - ra - rum, or -

ex. 16-13 Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Tui sunt coeli* (Offertory), mm. 1-22

Many motives (“et tua est terra,” “orbem terrarum,” etc.) are well-nigh syllabically texted in all parts. Elsewhere, Palestrina deploys the *fuga sciolta* technique in a way that maximizes intelligibility. The words are concentrated at the heads of the motives, the parts that all the voices have in common. In the first point, for example, the syllabically texted head exactly coincides with the verbal phrase; everything that follows is freely molded melisma. Thus every entrance stands out in note-lengths, in texting style, and by virtue of its wide skips, from the placid melismatic note-river that murmurs in what is definitely the aural background.

At the same time that this sense of perspective has been introduced into the polyphonic texture, a similarly hierarchical sense of perspective orders the harmony as well. It is virtually taken for granted by now that imitation will be “tonal” rather than literal. The setting of the text incipit (“Tui sunt coeli”), for example, contains entries on the final (D) and on the tuba (A). In every case, the downward contour is adjusted so that the two notes in question will define its limits: either A proceeds downward to D by way of G (producing the intervallic succession step+fourth) or D proceeds downward to A by way of C (producing the intervallic succession step+third).

In a way that is almost shocking for Palestrina, the next interval, while reversing direction as expected, does so by means of a spectacular leap that emphatically requires a full “recovery.” The ensuing stepwise melismatic “tail” (*cauda*) supplies precisely that. And it does not come to rest until full recovery—return to the starting note—is achieved, which is how Palestrina is able to maintain melodic tension over a considerable melismatic span, and why the tunes in his late compositions, however decorative, always have a pressing sense of direction.

To pick one example: the altus, entering first, has to recover the whole sixth from B-flat to D in its descending melisma; it proceeds immediately as far as E, but then reverses direction; it then overshoots its top and skips down from C so as to require another recovery before it can go farther; that recovery having been made, it teasingly moves down again to the E; finally it gives the ear what it craves, through a circle of fifths; the D having at last been regained, the voice now—and only now—can rest. The line is complex and tortuous, but as it keeps making and (eventually) keeping promises, it sounds at all times purposeful, never meandering.

The high tonal definition and tonal stability established at the outset is maintained throughout the motet, and the projecting and achieving of tonal goals are among the factors contributing fundamentally to the impression of the music’s overall “shape,” the coherence of its unfolding. We are, in other words, just about at the point where it makes sense to start replacing the old “modal” terms like “final” and “tuba” (first employed some seven centuries earlier to assist in a purely melodic classification) with modern terms like “tonic” and “dominant,” which refer to harmonic functions. The age of functional tonal harmony, it can be argued, begins with pieces like this, although the full panoply of tonal functions will not come into play until complete diatonic circles of fifths become standard—in about a century’s time, and also in Italy.

The extraordinary lucidity and rational control that Palestrina achieved in his late work corresponds quite closely with the ideals of the Society of Jesus, popularly known as the Jesuits, a religious order founded by Palestrina’s older contemporary Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556, canonized 1622), devoted equally to learning and to the propagation of the faith. The use to which Palestrina’s music has been put in educational institutions both sacred and secular substantiates the affinity. The incipient tonal functionalism one finds in his music does seem to have something to do with his being an Italian composer—the first to achieve parity with the northern masters of the literate tradition, and for that reason an inspiring historical figure for Italian musical nationalists in years to come, especially after the period of Italian musical hegemony that began quite soon after his death had ended. (To Giuseppe Verdi in the nineteenth century, Palestrina was not only the pure spring of Italian melody but the best shield against the “German curse.”)

The relevance of Palestrina’s nationality to his tonal practice, and the way the latter inflected his style, had to do above all with the nonliterate musical culture that surrounded him in his formative years, as it did every Italian—the art of *improvvisatori*, whether poets declaiming their stanzas (*strambotti*) to stock melodic-harmonic formulas (*arie*) or instrumentalists making their brilliant divisions and *passaggi* over ground basses, all defined by regularly recurring, cadential chord progressions. The earliest written “part music” to emulate these improvisations were settings of Italian poetry that began appearing near the end of the fifteenth century, and were published in great quantities in the early 1500s by Petrucci and the other early printers. These simple part songs called *frottole* have long been viewed as a major hotbed of functional or “tonal” harmony, and we will see some specimens in the next chapter. Palestrina, being (after Ruffo) the first important native-born Italian composer of church music, was among the first to transfer something of their tonal regularity to the loftiest literate genres. And it was the technical regularity of his music, along with its towering practice, that made Palestrina the basis of the most enduring

academic style in the history of European music. At first this was a matter of turning the Sistine Chapel—the pope’s own parish church—into a musical time capsule, sealing it off from history by decree and freezing the perfected polyphonic art of Palestrina into a timeless dogma, as it were, to join the timeless dogmas of theology. Long after the “concerted” style that mixed separate vocal and instrumental parts (the topic of a coming chapter) had become standard for Catholic church music, especially in Italy, the Sistine Chapel maintained an *a cappella* rule that forbade the use of instruments and mandated the retention of *ars perfecta* polyphony as its standard repertory.

Palestrina remained the papal staple: he is thus the longest-running composer in Western musical history, the earliest composer whose works have an unbroken tradition in performance from his time to ours. What is even more remarkable, composers continued to be trained to compose in the *a cappella, ars perfecta* style (or what was taken as the “Palestrina” style) for Roman church use long after Palestrina’s time. By the early seventeenth century, two styles were officially recognized by church composers: the *stile moderno*, or “modern style,” which kept up with the taste of the times, and the *stile antico*, or “old style,” sometimes called the *stile da cappella*, which meant the “chapel” style, which is to say the timelessly embalmed Palestrina style, a style that had in effect stepped out of history and into eternity.

Ex. 16-14 is the opening of *O magnum mysterium*, a setting of the same text Palestrina himself had set (Ex. 16-4) and then made the basis of a Mass (Ex. 16-5). It was composed for the Sistine Chapel by a member of the choir named Balthasar Sartori, and it is preserved in a Sistine Chapel manuscript alongside the works of Du Fay, Ockeghem, Busnoys, Josquin, and of course Palestrina. The manuscript’s date, however, is 1715—a century and a quarter after Palestrina’s mortal expiration. When it was put together, the streets and theaters of Rome were filled with the sounds of Vivaldi concertos and Scarlatti operas. Inside the Sistine Chapel, though, it was as if Palestrina had never died. In the most literal sense he had been canonized.

O ma - gnum my - ste - ri - um, et ad - mi - ra - bi - le

sa - cra - men - tum,
 ra - bi - le sa - cra - men - tum, sa - cra - men - tum,
 ma - gnum my - ste - ri - um, et ad - mi - ra - bi - le

O ma - gnum my - ste - ri - um, et ad - mi - ra - bi - le sa - cra - men - tum,
 et ad - mi - ra - bi - le sa - cra - men - tum,
 sa - cra - men - tum, et ad - mi - ra - bi - le sa - cra - men - tum,
 et ad - mi - ra - bi - le sa - cra - men - tum,
 et ad - mi - ra - bi - le sa - cra - men - tum,

tum et ad - mi - ra - bi - le sa - cra - men - tum, et
 cra - men - tum, et ad - mi - ra - bi - le sa - cra - men - tum,
 cra - men - tum, et ad - mi - ra - bi - le sa - cra - men - tum,
 et ad - mi - ra - bi - le sa - cra - men - tum

ex. 16-14 Balthasar Sartori, *O magnum mysterium*, mm. 1-10

Of course a connoisseur can easily tell an eighteenth-century imitation like this one from a Palestrina original; but that it is a studied attempt to write in “the Palestrina style” is nevertheless patent. Interestingly enough, it is not the style of Palestrina’s own *O magnum mysterium* that Sartori’s motet imitates, but the much more rarefied, cerebral, and impersonal—one might even say “Jesuitical”—style of the late Offertories like *Tui sunt coeli* (Ex. 16-13). Only such a style, rather than an “expressive” one, could aspire convincingly to “timelessness.” But the *stile antico* lived on longer still and has assumed another role entirely in Western musical culture. In 1725, ten years after the manuscript containing Sartori’s motet was compiled, an Austrian church composer named Johann Joseph Fux (1660–1741), who as it happened was trained in Jesuit schools and colleges, published a treatise called *Gradus ad Parnassum* (“Stairway to Parnassus,” that is, to the abode of the Muses). Like many Catholic musicians of his time, Fux composed “bilingually,” turning out operas and oratorios in the *stile moderno* of the day, and Masses and motets in the immutable *stile antico*. His treatise was a brilliantly successful attempt to reduce the *stile antico* to a concise set of rules, which Fux accomplished by dividing the realm of old-style polyphony into five “species” (as he called them) of rhythmic relationships, as follows

- 1. Note against note (or *punctum contra punctum*, whence “counterpoint”)
- 2. Two notes against one in cantus firmus style
- 3. Three or four notes against one in cantus firmus style
- 4. Syncopation against a cantus firmus
- 5. Mixed values (“florid style”)

—and prescribing the “dissonance treatment” for each. Fux’s rationalization of the *stile antico* gave it a new lease on life, not only as an artificially preserved style of Roman Catholic church music but also as basic training for composers. As the bible of the “strict style,” Fux’s *Gradus ad Parnassum* became the first “counterpoint text” in the modern sense and the greatest schoolbook in the history of European music. Starting with the generation of Haydn, musicians—at first in Austria, gradually everywhere—used it to gain facility in “the first principles of harmony and composition,” which were regarded by teachers as an eternal dogma in its own right, a bedrock of imperishable lore that “remains unaltered, let taste change as it will.”¹⁴ Thus the *stile antico*, in the form of Fux’s rules, became the gateway to the *stile moderno*.

Its derivation from Palestrina, far from being forgotten in the course of its transformation, was emphasized for its prestige value. Indeed, Fux cast the whole treatise in the form of a dialogue between the master “Aloysius” (= Palestrina, “Petroalloysius” being the Latinized form of Pierluigi) and the pupil “Josephus” (= Fux). Either in itself or as absorbed or cribbed by later writers, Fux’s treatise remained current into the twentieth century, when several other major counterpoint texts educed from Palestrina were written, further updating the *stile antico* as a purely pedagogical style, no longer in active use even in church.

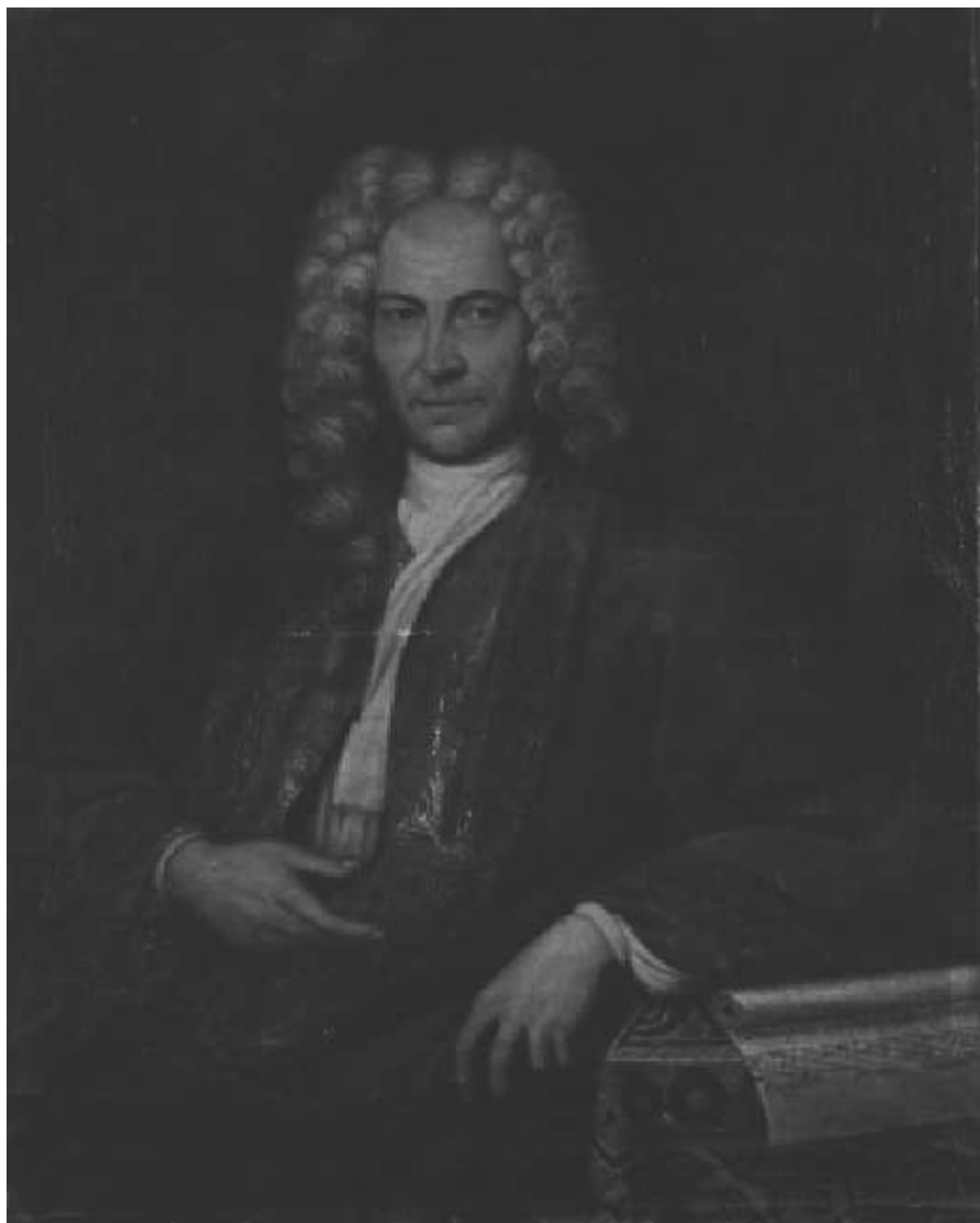


fig. 16-3 Johann Joseph Fux, author of *Gradus ad Parnassum*.

The most influential of these books was *Kontrapunkt*, by Knud Jeppesen (1892–1974), a Danish musicologist and composer, who based his method on his doctoral dissertation, a fresh description of Palestrina's style that was published in English in 1927 as *The Style of Palestrina and the Dissonance*. Either in the original or in its English language edition, published in 1939, Jeppesen's *Counterpoint* was standard pabulum in European and American conservatories and universities at least until the early 1960s, when the author of this book worked his somewhat lugubrious but finally profitable way through it. Many have questioned its relevance to modern composition by now, and its hold on the curriculum has loosened. But for historians traditional counterpoint training is invaluable. His territory has been shrinking, but Palestrina lives.

Notes:

(14) Johann Joseph Fux, *Gradus ad Parnassum, Sive Manuductio ad Compositionem Musicae Regularum, etc.* (Vienna: Typis Joannis Petri van Ghelen, 1725), p. 278.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

BYRD

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The fate of William Byrd, Palestrina's somewhat younger, longer-lived English contemporary, was rather different. He was a far more versatile composer, adept in every contemporary genre both sacred and secular, who made an important contribution to the early development of instrumental chamber and keyboard music, realms about as far removed from Palestrina's sphere of interest and influence as can be imagined. In this chapter, however, we will concentrate on the side of Byrd's output that overlapped with Palestrina's, and on his position as a late—arguably, the very latest—great master of polyphonic service music in the Catholic tradition, of all European musical traditions the most venerable.

With Byrd we truly reach the end of the line. His work was never canonized the way Palestrina's was but had to await revival by musical antiquarians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The reason was simple and cruel: the church he served had also reached the end of the line in England. Far from the official musical spokesman of established religious power, Byrd became the musical spokesman of the losing side in a religious war: that of the so-called recusants or refusers, loyal Catholics in an England that had anathematized the pope and persecuted his followers. Byrd's latest, greatest music, on which we shall focus, was the music of a church gone underground.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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William Byrd

Henry VIII, King of England

Thomas Tallis

CHURCH AND STATE

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin



fig. 16-4 (a) Henry VIII, portrait by Hans Holbein the Younger (1540). (b) Elizabeth I bestriding the map of England, portrait by Marcus Gheerhaerts (1592).

The English reformation was totally unlike the German and Swiss ones whose musical effects we have yet to consider. It was led from above by the monarch; it was as much a political as a religious commotion, and it carried a portentous tinge of nationalism. Its origin was a quarrel between King Henry VIII and Pope Clement VII, who had refused Henry's request for annulment of his marriage to his first wife, Katharine of Aragon, for failing to produce a male heir to the throne. (Behind the pope's ostensibly ecclesiastical judgment there lurked another political power: Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, Katharine's nephew, whose troops had already sacked Rome once, taking Clement prisoner, and threatened to do it again.) When Henry divorced Katharine in defiance of the church, the pope excommunicated him, and the king retaliated in 1534 with the Act of Supremacy, which made the king the head of the Church of England.

This act of treason against the church hierarchy polarized English opinion (to put it as mildly as possible) and had to be enforced by violence. The author of *Utopia*, Sir Thomas More, who had served Henry as Lord Chancellor of the realm, was the most notorious victim: he was imprisoned and beheaded in 1535 for his principled refusal to recognize Henry's religious authority and was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church as a martyr on the four hundredth anniversary of his execution. The English monasteries, loyal to the traditional church, were forcibly dissolved beginning in 1540.

Musical repercussions were inevitable—and decisive. They were not quite immediate, however. Henry himself was an enthusiastic music lover. He played the organ, lute, and virginals (a small harpsichord-like instrument), and even composed in a modest way; thirty-four small compositions attributed to him survive, all but one in a single manuscript. The inventory of his property at his death in 1547 listed a fabulous instrumentarium for the use of his “waits” (household musicians): 56 keyboard instruments, nineteen bowed strings, 31 plucked strings, and upwards of 240 wind instruments of all descriptions.¹⁵ He took great pride in the virtuosity of his chapel choir (as we know from the amazed reaction of an Italian diplomat, quoted in the previous chapter). We have already had occasion to admire the music that choir performed (see the works of Cornysh, Henry's own court composer, and Taverner, quoted in Exx. 13-6 and 15-8). The activities of this choir did not cease when the Church of Rome gave way to the Church of England, nor did the performance of the Latin liturgy. Except for its repudiation of the pope's authority, the newly established national church did not at first differ much, doctrinally or liturgically, from the “universal” one.

It was during the reign of Henry's son, Edward VI, who became king at the age of nine and died six years later, that the Church of England began to show real signs of doctrinal Protestantism. Henry's loyal Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, now asserted his own half-Lutheran, half-Calvinist objections to the Catholic liturgy, chief among them being his widely shared antagonism toward the idolatrous worship of the Virgin Mary, the very aspect of Catholic worship that, as we know, had produced some of the greatest glories of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century polyphony, and especially in England. It was at Cranmer's instigation, in conjunction with Henry's suppression of the monasteries, that the notorious search-and-destroy missions against books of “Popish ditties”—particularly Marian votive antiphons—took place, thanks to which so little early English polyphony survives. Under Edward, organs were destroyed as well; English organ-building did not resume until the seventeenth century.

Cranmer also shared the hostility of many Catholic churchmen toward the impious overelaboration of polyphonic music at the expense of the holy word, no doubt sharing Erasmus's sarcastic view that the attention of English monks was entirely taken up with music. He collaborated with a zealously anti-Catholic composer named John Merbecke (d. ca. 1585) on a new English liturgy, with texts translated into the vernacular and with strict limits placed on the style of the music. The Anglican ideal was an ascetic polyphonic style more radically stripped down than anything ever imagined by the Council of Trent. “Anglican chant” consists of chordal harmonizations of traditional chant, but a traditional chant that had itself been rigorously purged of all melismas.

Cranmer and Merbecke's first strike against the so-called Sarum (or Salisbury Cathedral) rite, the gorgeous Catholic repertoire of the English church that Henry took such delight in showing off, came in 1544, with a book of stripped-down litanies in English. This was truly drab stuff, and Henry wouldn't buy it. Under Henry's weak successor, the real development and stabilization of the Anglican liturgy got under way.

The first collection of metrical psalms in English appeared in 1548, but no music attended it. The need for new music became urgent that same year, though, when Edward VI, or rather Cranmer acting in the boy-king's name, issued an injunction finally abolishing the Sarum rite. English choirs, the statute read, “shall from henceforth sing or say no Anthems of our lady or other saints but only of our lord, and them not in Latin but choosing out the best and most sounding to Christian religion they shall turn the same into English setting thereunto a plain and distinct note, for every syllable one.”¹⁶



fig. 16-5 Title page of *Cantiones*, published by Thomas Tallis and William Byrd in 1575.

In 1549, Cranmer published the first *Book of Common Prayer*, a comprehensive translation of the liturgy. It was accompanied by the Act of Uniformity, making its use mandatory, and consequently making the celebration of the traditional Latin Mass a criminal act, grounds for persecution. Merbecke finally followed up in 1550 with *The Booke of Common Praier Noted*, providing the only legal liturgical music for the Church of England. These publications, while quickly superseded, set the tone for the Anglican musical reform.

Not that a style founded on “plain and distinct note, for every syllable one” necessarily precluded good music, or even masterworks. Consider the hymn *O nata lux de lumine* as set by Thomas Tallis (1505–85), the greatest composer in England after the death of Taverner, who was organist at the chapel royal all through the period of reform (Ex. 16-15). Though fantastically adept at the most grandiose and intricate polyphonic designs—he celebrated the fortieth birthday of Queen Elizabeth I with a truly elephantine motet, *Spem in alium*, for forty independent voice parts deployed in eight five-part choirs!—Tallis also developed a sideline in Reformation austerity that he continued to cultivate even after the height of stringency had passed.

Soprano
O na - ta lux de lu - mi - ne, Je - su re - demp -

Alto
O na - ta lux de lu - mi - ne, Je - su re -

Tenor 1
O na - ta lux de lu - mi - ne, Je - su

Tenor 2
O na - ta lux de lu - mi - ne, Je - su re -

Bass
O na - ta lux de lu - mi - ne, Je - su re -

- tor sae - cu - li, Di - gna - re de - mens sup - pli -

- demp - tor sae - cu - li, Di - gna - re de - mens sup - pli -

re - demp - tor sae - cu - li, Di - gna - re de - mens sup - pli -

- demp - tor sae - cu - li, Di - gna - re de - mens sup - pli -

- demp - tor sae - cu - li, Di - gna - re de - mens sup - pli -

- cum Lau - dea pre - ces que au - me - re.

- cum Lau - dea pre - ces que au - me - re.

- cum Lau - dea pre - ces que au - me - re.

- cum Lau - dea pre - ces que au - me - re.

- cum Lau - dea pre - ces que au - me - re.

ex. 16-15 Thomas Tallis, *O nata lux de lumine*, mm. 1-9

O nata lux, published in 1575 but (to judge by its archaic original notation) composed a good deal earlier, fulfills every condition set forth in the Edwardian statute of 1548 save that of language (no longer insisted upon by the 1570s). Yet it remains one of Tallis's most impressive works for the subtlety of rhythm and (particularly) harmony with which he was able to compensate the absence of contrapuntal interest. Let this hymn, rather than one by Merbecke or another equally gifted, represent the officially approved music of the Anglican reformation. It shows as clearly as the *Missa Papae Marcelli* that coercion can be met with creative imaginativeness, and that artists can find opportunity in constraint. The music of the Anglican church did not develop in any more smooth or orderly a fashion than did the church itself. After Edward things took a dialectical turn, to put it a little euphemistically. The boy-king was succeeded by his half-sister, Mary I ("Bloody Mary"), Henry VIII's daughter by Katharine of Aragon. She was a loyal Catholic and undid the whole reform except for the confiscation of monastic property. What was instituted through violence had to be suppressed through violence. Cranmer was burned at the stake. Protestantism again became an illegal heresy. Mary died in 1558 after a reign even shorter than Edward's, but one that brought the country to the brink of a religious civil war.



fig. 16-6 “Persecutions Carried Out against Catholics by Protestant Calvinists in England,” sixteenth century.

It was in this atmosphere that Mary’s half-sister Elizabeth I ascended the throne. She achieved a compromise—a synthesis, so to speak, known as the Elizabethan Settlement—between the antithetical religious factions, that by letting English politics simmer down allowed the nation’s economy to surge, its international prestige to bloom, and the arts to flourish. One of her first decisions was to reinstitute the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, but with far less anti-Catholic doctrinal and liturgical zealotry. “Mariolatry” and “popish ditties” were no longer actively persecuted, and the Book of Common Prayer was actually translated, for the use of colleges, into Latin (as *Liber Precum publicarum*). While the Catholic Church remained legally abolished, recusants were not to be subject to legal reprisal, at least for a while.

Gradually, however, tolerance of recusants was withdrawn, and penal measures against them reinstated, following numerous rebellious plots and attempts on the childless Elizabeth’s life that would have placed Mary Stuart (Mary Queen of Scots), a loyal Catholic, on the throne. Pope Pius V and his successor Gregory XIII (both of them major patrons of Palestrina) also did their best to destabilize Elizabeth, the former by formally (and superfluously) excommunicating her in 1570; and the latter by authorizing a clandestine army of English Jesuit missionaries, who began to infiltrate the British isles from their base, the English college at Douai in the north of France, beginning in 1580. This gave rise to new reprisals, including grisly public executions. Matters reached a head (so to speak) with the decapitation of Mary Stuart herself in 1587, after which life could be easily as dangerous for Catholics in England as it had been under Edward.

Notes:

(15) London, British Library, MS Harley 1419; transcribed in F. W. Galpin, *Old English Instruments of Music* (London, 1910), pp. 292–94.

(16) Lincoln Cathedral Injunctions, 14 April 1548; quoted in Peter Le Huray, *Music and the Reformation in England, 1549–1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 9.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Anglican and Episcopalian church music

Philip van Wilder

Alfonso Ferrabosco

THE FIRST ENGLISH COSMOPOLITE

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The religious predicaments of the Elizabethan period and its steadily eroding religious “settlement” were epitomized in the recusant William Byrd’s long career as the country’s foremost musician, a career that spanned virtually the whole of Elizabeth’s reign. At the beginning, Elizabeth’s tolerance of ritualism within the Church of England made it possible for a high art of Latin polyphony to flourish again. Yet it was a changed art nevertheless. It had been affected—one might even say contaminated—by continental styles, and proudly so. Byrd was the great protagonist of this change, which in the face of English withdrawal from the universal church might seem a bit paradoxical. Yet it reflected in its particular domain the same heightened cultural commerce with continental Europe that distinguished the Elizabethan age generally.

Henry VIII had begun importing continental musicians for his personal entourage as early as 1520. One of them, Philip van Wilder, a Fleming brought over as a “lewter” (lutenist), was a particularly gifted composer. His lovely *Pater noster* for high voices (Ex. 16-16), though published in Antwerp in 1554 (a year after the composer’s death), was probably composed for the “young mynstrells” at Henry’s court, a boys’ ensemble in Philip’s charge. It counts as one of the earliest *ars perfecta* compositions to be written on English soil.

Pa - ter no - ster qui es in coe - lis, san - cti - fi - ce -
 Pa - ter no - ster qui es in coe - lis, qui es in coe -
 Pa - ter no - ster qui es in coe -
 Pa - ter no -
 tur, san - cti - fi - ce - tur no - men tu - um, Ad -
 lis san - cti - fi - ce - tur no - men tu -
 lis san - cti - fi - ce - tur no - men -
 ster qui es in coe - lis san - cti - fi - ce -

8

ve - ni - at re - gnum tu - um,

um. Ad - ve - ni - at re - gnum tu - um, fi -

- tu - um. Ad - ve - ni - at re - gnum tu -

tur no - men tu - um. Ad - ve - ni - at re - gnum tu -

11

fi - at vo - lun - tas tu - a si -

at vo - lun - tas tu -

um, fi - at vo - lun - tas

- um, fi - at vo - lun - tas tu -

ex. 16-16 Philip van Wilder, *Pater noster*, beginning

Another famous émigré was Alfonso Ferrabosco (1543–88), a Bolognese composer whom Elizabeth hired in 1562. According to a Venetian intelligence report a dozen years later, Alfonso had become “one of the grooms of the Queen’s privy chamber, [who] enjoys extreme favour with her Majesty on account of his being an excellent musician.”¹⁷ Royal favor meant royal protection, which could be a critical matter for Catholics like Alfonso—and like Byrd, who was able to hold high official positions, at least for a while, without converting to the new faith (although he did furnish it with some excellent music, including a Great Service for “Evensong,” the Anglican Vespers-plus-Compline).

Even later, though cited for recusancy, and perhaps fined (and although at least one recusant was actually arrested for owning one of Byrd’s late books), he was never greatly troubled by the law—although, as we shall see, he gave good cause for trouble—because Elizabeth did not think it impossible for her favorites (such as the Earl of Worcester, one of Byrd’s patrons) to be “a stiff papist and a good subject.”¹⁸ Despotisms have arbitrary beneficiaries as well as victims.

Alfonso’s impact on the new English church music was particularly pronounced, as Byrd’s first important publication makes clear. This was a volume of motets called *Cantiones quae ab argumento sacras vocantur*, which Byrd published jointly with his mentor (and possible teacher) Tallis in 1575, five years after his appointment as organist to the royal chapel. (Tallis’s “Onatalux,” quoted in Ex. 16-15, comes from this book.) Amazingly enough, it was the first book of Latin-texted music ever printed in England, and Tallis and Byrd were themselves literally the publishers, having been granted a patent from the queen giving them a monopoly on English music-printing and staved manuscript paper.

Dedicated (naturally) to Elizabeth (and, it follows, probably used in her chapel), the volume opens with a series of prefatory and dedicatory poems that positively trumpet rapprochement between the musicians of England—formerly insular and print-shy but now aggressively modern and entrepreneurial—and the great names of ecumenical Europe: Gombert, Clemens, even the relative newcomer Orlando (de Lassus; see the next chapter), and their ambassador, as it were, to the English, “Alfonso, our Phoenix.”¹⁹ What the poem proclaims the music confirms. Joseph Kerman, who took the trouble to go through the work of Alfonso Ferrabosco for the first time since the sixteenth century, was able to establish that William Byrd owed his virtuosity in the techniques of the *ars perfecta*—a virtuosity the older Tallis never quite achieved—directly to the example of Alfonso, his Bolognese contemporary and companion in the royal service. The works of Byrd that show Ferrabosco’s impress most faithfully, moreover, were precisely the ones he chose for his debut appearance in print.²⁰ The Italianate motets in the 1575 *Cantiones*, most of which have liturgical texts (though of course not Marian ones) and were clearly meant for official service use, assert Byrd’s claim as a contender on the ecumenical stage.

As his career went on, however, he had less and less opportunity to play the role of official church composer in the *ars perfecta* style. There was obviously no room for a Palestrina in England. There was no chance to make one’s reputation composing Masses, and the range of suitable texts for motets was stringently circumscribed by the narrow limits of Catholic-Anglican overlap (mainly psalms). A composer like Byrd was thus confronted with a choice. One could shift one’s career focus over to the Anglican sphere altogether, which (given Byrd’s connections) would by no means have required personal conversion, but would have entailed renunciation of the calling for which one had trained—and renunciation, too, perhaps, of a sense of personal authenticity. Or one could renounce the official arena and withdraw into the closet world of recusancy.

As life became more difficult for Catholics in England, Byrd took the latter course. He and Palestrina were comparably devoted to the universal church, but where Palestrina’s devotion brought him worldly fame and fortune, Byrd’s meant the virtual relinquishment of his career. In contrast to Palestrina, Byrd’s pursuit of the *ars perfecta*, while it arguably brought the style to its climax of perfection, ran entirely counter to the composer’s worldly self-interest. There is not another case like it in the history of Western church music, which, through Byrd, reached a stylistic climax on an agonizing note of personal sacrifice and risk.

Withdrawal took place in stages. In 1589 and 1591, Byrd published two volumes of *Cantiones sacrae*, the first dedicated to the Earl of Worcester. These were motets of a very different sort from the ones in the book of 1575. Their texts, no longer liturgical, were biblical pastiches, mostly of intensely plaintive or penitential character: *O Domine, adjuva me* (“Deliver me, O Lord”), *Tristitia et anxietas* (“Sorrow and distress”), *Infelix ego* (“Unhappy am I”). Others, with texts lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity, easily support allegorical readings that may covertly have expressed and solaced the sentiments of the oppressed Catholic minority. One in particular—*Circumspice, Jerusalem*—has been linked persuasively with the arrival from France of a party of Jesuit missionaries with whom Byrd is known to have consorted: “Look around toward the East, O Jerusalem,” the text proclaims, “and see the joy that is coming to you from God! Behold, your sons are coming, whom you sent away and dispersed!” These pastiche motets, it is now widely believed, were never meant for service use, but rather provided (under cover of the irreproachable source of their individual verses) a body of “pious chamber music,” as Kerman has called it, for the use of recusants at home.

Notes:

(17) Richard Charteris, *Alfonso Ferrabosco the Elder (1543–1588): A Thematic Catalogue of His Music with a Biographical Calendar* (New York, 1984), p. 14.

(18) Memoir of Elizabeth Hastings, Lady Somerset and Countess of Worcester (<http://www.kugelblitz.co.uk/StGeorge/Documents/2002%20biographies.pdf>).

(19) Ferdinand Richardson, “In Eandem Thomae Tallisii, et Guilielmi Birdi Musicam,” *Cantiones, Quae ab Argumento Sacrae Vocantur* (London, 1575), facsimile edition (Leeds: Boethius Press, 1976), n.p.

(20) See Joseph Kerman, “Old and New in Byrd’s *Cantiones Sacrae*, in *Essays on Opera and English Music in Honour of Sir Jack Westrup*, ed. F. W. Sternfeld, N. Fortune, and E. Olleson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), pp. 25–43.

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William Byrd

THE MUSIC OF DEFIANCE

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The final stage was devoted to the setting of forbidden liturgical texts, coinciding with Byrd's effective retirement, at the age of fifty, from the royal chapel and his removal to a country home, where he joined a recusant community headed by a noble family named Petre. It was for this community and others like it, evidently, that his late work was intended. From 1593 to 1595, Byrd issued three settings of the Mass Ordinary, one a year, respectively for four, for three, and for five voice parts. This, finally, was music that could only be sung behind closed doors. The first Mass Ordinary settings ever printed in England, they were issued without title pages (but as Kerman observes, "Byrd's name was coolly entered as author at the top of every page").²¹

In 1605 and 1607, Byrd followed up with two ambitious volumes of Propers, called *Gradualia*. In them, he supplied England's clandestine Catholics with a comprehensive body of gorgeously wrought but modestly scaled polyphonic music for their whole liturgical year—a veritable *Magnus Liber*, to recall the first such attempt, at Notre Dame de Paris, as long before Byrd's time as he is before ours. More immediately, Byrd was following in the footsteps of Henricus Isaac who about a hundred years earlier had received a commission from the Swiss diocese of Constance to set the whole Graduale to polyphonic music, and responded with three big books called *Choralis Constantinus*; they were finally published between 1550 and 1555, long after Isaac's death in 1517, in an edition by his pupil Ludwig Sennfl, who put the finishing touches on the last items.

Isaac's settings, based on Gregorian chants as advertised by the title of his book, used the cantus-firmus and paraphrase techniques of his time. Byrd's settings, employing no traditional melodies, were (like his Ordinaries) the concise and tightly woven epitome of a half-century's striving after imitative perfection. (Between 1586 and 1591, another Proper omnibus, the *Opus musicum* by the flamboyant Austrian Catholic composer Jakob Handl, containing a record-breaking 445 motets in an ostentatious variety of styles, many of them avant-garde for the time, was published in Prague.)

Byrd's preface to the *Gradualia* contains one of the most eloquent humanistic descriptions of musical rhetoric ever penned. Sacred words, he wrote, have an *abstrusa et recondita vix* (translatable as "a cryptic and mysterious power"). Yet what Byrd affected to attribute to the words, however, was really the power of his own musical inspiration. "As I have learned by trial," he continued, "the most suitable of all musical ideas occur as of themselves (I know not how) to one thinking upon things divine and earnestly and diligently pondering them, and suggest themselves spontaneously to the mind that is not indolent and inert."²² One pictures the composer walking about, pen in hand, mulling and muttering the words he is to set, deriving his musical ideas from their sound as uttered in his own earnest voice, and weaving the polyphonic texture out of motives so acquired. It is the consummate balance of distinctive personal enunciation and lucid formal design that is so affecting in Byrd's last works. His way of shaping musical motives—so closely modeled on the precious, threatened Latin words—into contrapuntal structures of such dazzling technical finish at once sums up the whole notion of the *ars perfecta* and raises it one final, matchless and unprecedented notch.

In the case of the Masses, the works are literally without precedent. The tradition of Mass composition in England was decisively broken by the Reformation. Nor were the grandiose festal Masses of Taverner and his generation—implying a secure institutional backing and leisurely confidence in execution—suitable models for Masses that would be sung by undercover congregations in rural lofts and barns, using whatever vocal forces the congregation itself could muster up. Nor is there any indication that much continental Mass music—unprintable stuff in England—could have come Byrd's way. This was a wheel that he would have to reinvent.

He did it on the basis of his own motet writing experience, in which he had worked out a very personal synthesis of

ars perfecta imitation and rhetorical homophony. Byrd's Masses are in effect extended, multipartite "freestyle" motets of this kind, affording a whole new way of approaching the text, a manner unprecedented on the continent where composers wrote their Masses by the dozen. Byrd was one composer—the one Catholic composer, as Kerman has remarked—who did not take that text for granted, but who set it with unexampled and unparalleled awareness of its semantic content: a very idiosyncratic awareness, in fact, as befitted his plight and that of his community.²³

The only continental Mass, as it happens, that is in any significant way comparable to Byrd's settings is the *Missa Papae Marcelli*, where Palestrina had also, if for very different reasons, adopted a cell- or module-oriented technique of composing, playing imitation off against homorhythm. Since the most revealing comparisons are those that discover difference in a context defined by similarity, it will repay us to concentrate on the same two sections from Byrd as we did from Palestrina: the Credo and the Agnus Dei (Ex. 16-17). And the first difference we discover is that where Palestrina had segregated the two techniques (systematic imitation, declamatory homorhythm), Byrd integrates them with singular terseness and word-responsiveness.

The contrast shows up particularly in the Agnus Dei, where the one by the official Catholic was contrapuntally rich and calmly imposing, the ones by the closeted Catholic (besides being leaner, not necessarily by choice) are rhetorically complex and restlessly significant. "Restlessly," because the rhetoric and the signification of the setting changes radically, as Kerman has keenly observed, from Mass to Mass. To make the comparison finer yet, then, let us contrast Byrd with Byrd as well as Byrd with Palestrina.

Notes:

(21) Joseph Kerman, *The Masses and Motets of William Byrd* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), p. 188.

(22) Dedication of *Gradualia*, Book I (1605) to King James I, adapted from Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 328.

(23) See Joseph Kerman, "Byrd's Settings of the Ordinary of the Mass," *JAMS* XXXII (1979): 416–17.

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Mass: Late 16th century

William Byrd

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

MUSICAL HERMENEUTICS

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The Mass in Four Parts, the earliest of the settings, was composed almost immediately after Byrd's second volume of protest-motets was issued, and retains something of their tortured mood. The mode—transposed Dorian, but with a specified E-flat that “Aeolianizes” it into something more nearly resembling plain G minor—contributes to the mood, of course; but more potent by far is the astonishing degree of dissonance, which grates most where it is least expected, in the *Agnus Dei*, a text outwardly concerned with gentleness, deliverance from sin, and peace.

Byrd's setting, unlike practically any continental setting, is one continuous piece, not a triptych. The three invocations of the Lamb, all strictly if concisely imitative in texture, are nevertheless distinguished from one another by the progressive enrichment of their “scoring”: the first for a duo, the second for a trio, and the last, with its new words (*dona nobis pacem*, “grant us peace”) for the full complement. It is when those very words are reached, amazingly, that the voices begin rotating in a stretto based on a syncope, and the dissonance level—a suspension on every beat, emphasizing the sharpest discords (major seventh, minor second, minor ninth)—begins to approach the threshold of pain. The music (Ex. 16-17) is unprecedented both in its sheer sensuous effect and in its exceptional rhetorical complexity.

do - na no - bis pa - - cem, do - na no -
- di, do - na no - bis pa - - cem,
- ca - ta mun - di, do - na no - bis pa -
- di. do - - na no - - bis pa -

- bis pa - cem, pa - - cem, do -
do - na no - bis pa - cem, do - na no - bis pa -
- - - cem, do - na no - bis pa - - - cem.
- - - - - cem, do - na no - bis

A - gnus De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, A -

A - gnus De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, A -

A - gnus De - i, qui tol - lis, A -

A - gnus De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, A -

A - gnus De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, A -

- gnus De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di,

- gnus De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di,

- gnus De - i, qui - tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di,

- gnus De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di,

- gnus De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di,

ex. 16-18 William Byrd, Mass in Five Parts, Agnus Dei, mm. 33-42

The kind of detailed interpretive analysis these descriptions of Byrd's Agnus Dei settings have attempted is what literary scholars call hermeneutics. Byrd's is the earliest music—certainly the earliest Mass Ordinary music—to have called forth such interpretations from modern critics, because his Masses and his alone seem to offer true interpretive readings of their texts. These are the kinds of readings “official” settings like Palestrina's do not encourage, precisely because they are official. That is, precisely because they are official they take meaning as something vested and given rather than as something that arises out of a human situation. Byrd's Masses, precisely because they are written out of a very extreme human situation, open up new levels of musical meaningfulness. It goes without saying (but better, perhaps, with saying) that the only meaningfulness we can speak of meaningfully is the meaningfulness the music has for us now. But that meaning includes our impressions (impressions conditioned by specific historical awareness) of what meaningfulness the music may have had for Byrd and his co-congregants.

The Credo from the Mass in Five Parts also invites hermeneutic reading, and such reading is of course to be recommended as an exercise in “historical imagination.” Here let it suffice to call attention to one particular phrase, since it resonates so strongly with the premises on which this chapter is based. At the beginning of the chapter, when justifying the pursuit of the *ars perfecta* to its end, it was pointed out that the “perfect art” would have had no reason for being were it not for the artist's belief in the perfection of God's church as an institution: belief *in unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam*.

Compare Palestrina's setting of these words in the Credo of the *Missa Papae Marcelli* (Ex. 16-19a) with Byrd's (Ex. 16-19b). Palestrina sets them gracefully but somewhat perfunctorily as a double module—a parallel period in five parts, the basses exchanging at the repeat. The line is both preceded and (especially) followed by more dramatic music. The “confiteor,” the personal acknowledgment of one's baptism, that comes after the lines about the church is set off by longer note values and a higher high note. The *et unam sanctam* passage, one feels, was something on the way to something bigger. At any rate, Palestrina's very evenly paced recitation is clearly the work of a man for whom this text is a comforting ritual formula, not a risky personal declaration.

- tas. Et u - nam san - ctam ca - tho - - li -

- tas. Et u - nam san - ctam ca - - tho - li -

- tas. Et u - nam san - ctam ca - tho - li - cam

- tas. Et u - nam san - ctam ca - tho - li

(- tas) Et u - nam san - ctam ca - tho - - - - li -

- tas.

- cam et a - po - sto - li - cam Ec - cle - - si - am.

- cam et a - po - sto - li - cam Ec - - cle - si - am.

et a - po - sto - - - li - cam Ec - cle - si - am.

- cam et a - - - po - sto - li - cam Ec - cle - si - am.

- cam

et a - po - sto - li - cam Ec - cle - - - si - am.

ex. 16-19a Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Missa Papae Marcelli*, Credo, mm. 145-53

Et u - - nam san - - ctam, Ca - tho - li - cam,
 Et u - - nam san - - ctam, Ca - tho - li - cam,
 Et u - - nam san - - ctam, Ca - tho - li - cam,
 Et u - - nam san - - ctam, Ca - tho - li - cam,
 Et u - - nam san - - ctam, Ca - tho - li - cam,
 et A - po - sto - li - cam Ec - cle - si - am, et A - po - sto - li - cam Ec - cle - si - am.
 et A - po - sto - li - cam Ec - cle - si - am, et A - po - sto - li - cam Ec - cle - si - am.
 et A - po - sto - li - cam Ec - cle - si - am, et A - po - sto - li - cam Ec - cle - si - am.
 et A - po - sto - li - cam Ec - cle - si - am, et A - po - sto - li - cam Ec - cle - si - am.
 et A - po - sto - li - cam Ec - cle - si - am.

ex. 16-19b William Byrd, Mass in Five Parts, Credo, mm. 157-68

Byrd's setting of the line begins with a violent chordal tutti that disrupts a pair of elegant polyphonic trios, and continues in agitated homorhythmic declamation replete with a near-bombastic repetition of the words *apostolicam ecclesiam*—"a church sent by God" (not instituted by a king!)—that sends the passage to its melodic peak. After this shriek of Catholic defiance, the concluding Amen, entirely set apart from the rest by a cadence and a fermata, comes across as no mere ending formula but as a genuine intensifier, the very essence of affirmation. The whole history of the English Reformation and the plight of the recusants seems to be contained in this Credo as in a musical microcosm. At the very least, for Byrd these words were just what they were not (because they did not need to be) for Palestrina: a personal, rather than an institutional, Credo; a profession of dangerous personal faith.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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William Byrd

False relation

THE PEAK (AND LIMIT) OF STYLISTIC REFINEMENT

Chapter: CHAPTER 16 The End of Perfection

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Passages from two pithy motets in Byrd's *Gradualia*, one from each book, show the ultimate degree of refinement not just of Byrd's art but of the whole art of Catholic church polyphony. *Ave verum corpus*, the sacramentary hymn for the feast of Corpus Christi, is probably the best known piece from these late books, possibly Byrd's best known sacred work outside of the Masses. Partly because its text is a hymn, and partly because of the way (reminiscent of the ending of Josquin's *Ave Maria*) it addresses Christ using the first person singular, it is one of Byrd's most unwaveringly chordal settings. Not only that, the motet is virtually without conventional dissonance; even cadential suspensions are often avoided. At the same time the harmony is famously wayward and, by implication, discordant. Why the seeming contradiction between the stark simplicity of the texture and the fractious harmonic ambience? As usual, the answer is to be sought in the domain of rhetoric.

The subject of the motet is one of the great marvels of Christian dogma: the transubstantiation of the Communion Host into the body of Christ. We have already seen Palestrina using unusual harmonies to delineate a *magnum mysterium*; but where Palestrina uses a chromaticism that arises out of a speeded-up sequence of ordinary fifth-relations, Byrd exploits with special expressive intensity a harmonic usage that, while not unknown in continental music, was cultivated with special gusto by English composers and is for all practical purposes an English trait.

That special feature is called the "false (or cross) relation"; it consists in the immediate juxtaposition or brief simultaneous occurrence in two voices of a diatonic scale degree and its chromatic inflection (often pitting the major vs. the minor third in a triad). Successive cross relations pervade the motet; simultaneous cross relation occurs at the moment of prayer, *miserere mei* (Ex. 16-20), in which the bass's F rubs directly against F \acute{e} , the sustained chord third in the tenor, creating a dissonance to add urgency to the words addressed to God.

The image displays a musical score for a five-part vocal setting of the Gradualia 'Non vos relinquam' by William Byrd. The score is arranged in five systems, each corresponding to a vocal part: Cantus Primus (top), Cantus Secundus, Contratenor, Tenor, and Bassus (bottom). The music is written in mensural notation on five-line staves. The lyrics are printed below the notes. The text includes: 'Non vos re - lin-quam Or - pha-nos. Al-le-lu - ia.', 'Al-le-lu - ia.', 'Or - pha-nos. Al-le-lu - ia.', 'Non vos re - lin-quam Or - pha-nos. Al-le-lu - ia.', and 'Al-le-lu - ia. Al-le-lu - ia. Al-le-lu - ia.' The score shows intricate polyphonic textures with overlapping vocal lines.

ex. 16-21 William Byrd , *Non vos relinquam* (Gradualia, Book II)

Our comparative survey of Palestrina and Byrd at the latest extremity of the *ars perfecta* has shown nothing if not the extraordinary versatility that pliant medium had achieved over the century of its growth since the humanist embrace of Josquin. Why was it abandoned? It is not enough simply to invoke progress (at best) or change (at least) as the general, inevitable condition of human history. One must try to account for changes, especially changes as fundamental as this one, in specific terms, as responses to specific pressures.

In the three chapters that follow, three such pressures will be identified and described in turn. There was the joint pressure of the new markets opened up by printing for secular music, and of the literary movements that influenced the ways in which secular poetry was set. There was the pressure, already a haunting presence in the last two chapters, of religious unrest. And there was the pressure of what might be called “radical humanism,” the true Renaissance idea, which (paradoxically in the light of conventional style-periodization and its attendant labels) actually brought about the loss of faith in “Renaissance” styles and ideas, leading to their disintegration and the birth of the “Baroque.”

None of these pressures accomplished their evolutionary work suddenly. To account for each of them it will be necessary once again to step back in time and renarrate the story of sixteenth-century music from a new perspective.

Breaking down a complex story of change into several perspectives is admittedly an artificial analytical technique, and one not normally available to those who actually live through the change in question.

Therein lies both the advantage and the disadvantage of retrospect. We can perform our dissection, if we are lucky, to our satisfaction, and persuade ourselves that we understand the change better than those who experienced it. But they are the ones who felt (or resisted) its necessity, suffered the losses, and rejoiced in the gains. Our understanding is rationalized, articulate, and imaginary; theirs was immediate, real, but inarticulate. The reconciliation of the two, as well as the resynthesis of all the different stories our analytical perspectives entail, must take place in the reader's mind.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 17 Commercial and Literary Music

Vernacular Song Genres in Italy, Germany, and France; Lasso's Cosmopolitan Career

Chapter: CHAPTER 17 Commercial and Literary Music

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

MUSIC PRINTERS AND THEIR AUDIENCE

Alongside the Masses, motets and instrumentalized chansons for which Ottaviano Petrucci is best remembered, the enterprising Venetian printer also issued Italian songbooks for the local trade. That trade was exceedingly brisk. The first such book, *Frottole libro primo*, came out in 1504, the fourth year of Petrucci's business activity. It was his seventh publication. A scant decade later, in 1514, Petrucci issued his eleventh Italian songbook, in addition to two volumes of *laude*, Italian part-songs of a similar style but with sacred texts, and two volumes of previously published songs arranged for a single voice with lute accompaniment.

The fifteen volumes described thus far, each containing about fifty or sixty songs, accounted for more than half of the printer's total output as of 1514. Four books were issued in the year 1505 alone, and by 1508 three of the four had sold out and been reissued. When Petrucci's first competitor, the Roman printer Andrea Antico, set up operations in 1510, his cautious maiden outing was yet another book of Italian songs. *Canzoni nove*, it was called: "New songs." But most of them were not new. They were pirated from Petrucci, whose copyright was good only in Venice. Clearly we are dealing with a craze that was created by the music printing business and that in turn sustained it. It was the first great instance in the history of European music of commodification: the turning of artworks, through mass reproduction, into tangible articles of trade—items that could be bought, stockpiled, and sold for profit.

Although books of Latin church music and Franco-Flemish court music were Petrucci's and Antico's prestige items, the humble vernacular songs were their moneymakers. The same held true in every other country to which music printing, and with it the music business, spread. The first music book printed in Germany, by the Augsburg printer Erhard Öglin, was a prestige item: Latin odes by Horace set by a humanist schoolmaster, Peter Treybenreif (alias Petrus Tritonius), to illustrate the classical meters. The moneymakers began appearing a little later with part books issued by Öglin (1512), Peter Schöffler in Mainz (1513), and Arnt von Aich (Arnt of Aachen) in Cologne (1519), all with flowery sales puffs in place of titles.

Arnt von Aich's title page, for example, says *In dissem Buechlyn fynt man LXXV. hubscher Lieder myt Discant. Alt. Bas. und Tenor. lustick zu syngen* ("In this little book you will find seventy-five pretty songs with superius, altus, bass and tenor [parts] to sing for fun"). The first musical incunabulum to appear in England (London, 1530) was similar. A gorgeously appointed effort in the Petrucci style, its title page read, "In this boke ar conteynd. XX. songses. ix. of iiiii. partes, and xi. of thre partes" (twenty partsongs, nine for four voices, and eleven for three). It contained vernacular settings by many of the famous composers of Henry VIII's chapel royal (Cornysh, Taverner, etc.) but it survives, alas, only in fragments.

In France, music printing got under way when Pierre Attaignant set up shop in Paris in the mid-1520s and secured for himself a royal patent or monopoly (a necessary protection for such a risky undertaking). His first book was a breviary, a book of Mass texts, issued in 1526. His first music publication followed two years later: *Chansons nouvelles en musique*, "New Songs with Music," imprinted 1527 but actually issued in 1528. That same year he issued five more sets of part books, averaging thirty songs apiece, and one set of dance music, plus one volume of motets. That would remain Attaignant's effective ratio between the universal sacred and the local secular repertory for the duration of his career as printer, which lasted until 1557.

Attaignant was more than a printer, and had an impact on the music trade that far exceeded his activities as publisher. For he was the inventor of a new labor-saving and cost-cutting method for music typography that went

Europe in the 1530s and completely transformed the business, making real mass production and high-volume distribution possible. The method employed by Petrucci and the other early Italians had required a triple impression. A page was fed to the presses once for the staves, again for the notes, and yet again for the titles and texts. The result was stunning, and Petrucci's early books were never surpassed as models of printerly art, but the process wasted time and was overly exacting: a great deal of spoilage took place due to "misregistration" (failure of the impressions to line up exactly with one another).



fig. 17-1 Above: Specimens of Pierre Attaignant's movable music type (Plantin-Moretus Museum, Antwerp). Opposite: Superius and tenor parts from Claudin de Sermisy's *Tant que vivray*, in *Chansons musicales, esleues de plusieurs livres par ci-divant imprimés, les tous dans un seul livre ... réimprimées par P. Attaignant [sic], imprimeur et libraire de musique* (Paris, 1536). The typically wordy title translates as "Songs with Music, Chosen from Several Books Printed by the Above-Named, All in One Book Reprinted by P. Attaignant, Printer and Seller of Musical Books."

Attaignant's method was much more like alphabetic typography. Every possible note- and rest-shape was cast along with a short vertical fragment of the staff on a single piece of type. When these were placed in a row by the compositor like bits of letter type and printed, the staff-lines joined together, or nearly so. The result was far less elegant than Petrucci's, but so much more practical and economical that the older typographical method could not stand a chance against the new. Attaignant's method remained standard as long as typography was the print medium of choice for music—until the eighteenth century, that is, when copperplate engraving came into widespread use.

Who bought the early printers' wares? Petrucci's early volumes, with their cumbersome production methods and handsome appearance, were luxury items. We know something about their prices because of the meticulous purchase records kept by Ferdinand Columbus, the explorer's son and one of the great early bibliophiles. (His collection, more or less intact, became the basis of the famous Biblioteca Colombina in Seville, Spain.) No musician, Columbus nevertheless acquired several Petrucci items on a buying expedition to Rome in 1512; and in the words of

Daniel Hertz, whose study of Attaignant remains virtually the only investigation of early music printing from the consumption as well as the production standpoint, “for the price of any one of them he might have acquired several literary works of equivalent size.”¹

Thus the practical utility of the early Petrucci volumes was at least matched, and probably exceeded, by their value as “collectibles,” items of conspicuous consumption—and in this they did not differ appreciably from the twelfth- to fifteenth-century presentation manuscripts of polyphonic music with which we are familiar. The very fact that Petrucci’s volumes, particularly of court and church music, survive today in greater quantities than those of his eventual competitors shows that their primary destination was not the music stand but the library shelf.

The trend, however, was toward economy and utility, which is why Attaignant was so successful. Even before the Paris printer revolutionized the trade, Antico experimented in Rome with smaller, less decorative formats, single woodblock impressions, and (consequently) lower prices, to meet the needs “especially of students of music,” as he stated in his application for a permit. He managed to undersell Petrucci by more than fifty percent, forced down the price level of the whole industry, and eventually squeezed Petrucci, the immortal founder, out of the music trade altogether.

Few surviving music books testify to their household use, partly because such use itself led to deterioration: Hertz, lamenting the large number of lost Attaignant prints, has rather pessimistically suggested that, as a rule, “an inverse ratio exists between the popularity of music prints and their chance of survival.” Nevertheless, we know from literary accounts that household entertainment—both aristocratic and bourgeois, both as provided by professional entertainers and by convivial amateurs—was the chief use to which vernacular songbooks were put, increasingly so as the sixteenth century wore on and printed music became less a bibliophile’s novelty or prestige purchase and more a normal household item.

Diaries, prefaces, and treatises make reference to the ritual of passing out part books at social functions or around the table after meals. The ability to sing at sight and play an instrument increasingly became a vital social grace on a par with dancing. Self-tutors, like the *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (London, 1597) by Thomas Morley, the musician-entrepreneur who inherited William Byrd’s monopoly on the British music trade, were a favorite sales item in and of themselves—the sixteenth century’s popular and commercial answer, so to speak, to the learned theoretical treatise of old.

Morley’s book opens with a preface in the form of a dialogue in which one gentleman confides to another his social embarrassment when “supper being ended and the music books (according to the custom) being brought to the table, the mistress of the house presented me with a part earnestly requesting me to sing; but when, after many excuses, I protested unfeignedly that I could not, every one began to wonder; yea, some whispered to others demanding how I was brought up.”² Conversation manuals, etiquette books in which upwardly mobile burghers were trained in the manners of genteel society, often contained model dialogues to teach their readers how to take part in such a musical party: how in polite company, each member with a part book in hand, one inquires who is taking which part, who begins the song, on what pitch, and so on (for an example from a Flemish etiquette book of around 1540, see Weiss and Taruskin, *Music in the Western World*, 2nd ed., pp. 126–127).

Finally, one of the main consequences of the music trade and its commodifying practices was that music traveled faster, farther, and in greater volume than before. Particularly was this true of Attaignant’s aggressively marketed editions and those of his competitors in Paris and Lyons, the other main French publishing center, who did a booming international business, particularly in northern Italy. As we shall see, this ease of travel led to some surprising hybrid styles and genres.

Notes:

(1) Daniel Hertz, *Pierre Attaignant, Royal Printer of Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 107.

(2) Thomas Morley, *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music*, ed. Alec Harman (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 9.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Frottola

Barzelletta

Marco Cara

Josquin: Italy and France (1498–1503)

VERNACULAR SONG GENRES: ITALY

Chapter: CHAPTER 17 Commercial and Literary Music

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

And what were the songs like that the early printers printed, the early collectors collected, and the early consumers consumed? They differed markedly, like their languages, from country to country, in contrast to the sacred lingua franca of the *ars perfecta*. At first they all reflected the earlier courtly fixed forms in their poetry, but their novel musical textures reflected the new conditions of trade.

The Italian part-song or *frottola* as published by Petrucci in the early years of the century was a lightweight affair; the name was derived from the Latin *frocta*, meaning a motley group of trifling objects. A whiff of that slightly pejorative nuance clung to the genre. The best translation of *frottola* might be “a trifling song.” Formally speaking, it was very much like the last Italian vernacular genre we encountered, several chapters back, in the late years of the fourteenth century. That was the *ballata*, the “dance song,” which (like the French *virelai*) consisted of a number of strophic ballade-like stanzas (aab) and a *ripresa* or refrain with music corresponding to the “b” of the stanza. As noted in chapter 4, a representation of the form that truly reflected its structure would be B aab B, but since convention requires that the first letter in any representation of a formal scheme be an A, the scheme usually given is A bba A.

With the *frottola*—or, to be a little more precise, the *barzelletta* (possibly named after the French *bergerette*), the most popular refrain form of several—the scheme is actually a little simpler, since the refrain now takes in all the music of the stanza. Thus the *barzelletta* can be straightforwardly represented as AB aab AB, which begins to look a little like the old French *rondeau*. If it helps, then, one could think of the *barzelletta* as a modified ballata or a hybrid *virelai/rondeau*. As that old-fashioned pedigree attests, of all sixteenth-century vernacular genres the *frottola* was the most aristocratic. As a sample, Ex. 17-1 contains a *barzelletta* from Petrucci’s seventh book of *frottole* (1507).

Verses

(Mutazioni)

1. O-gni co - sa sua na - tu - ra Se-gui-tar-e di me-sti - e - ro;
 2. L'ar-me-lin per non man-chiar - se Pria al ne-mi - co vien in ma - no;
 3. Or-na ben di sel - la e fre - no Las-si nel mi - se-ro e vi - le;

(Altus, Tenor, Bassus)

Non è ar - te nè mi - su - ra Che mai fa - ci el fal - sa ve - ro;
 Mal la ra - na vi - le a - par - se Lie - ta fo - ri del pal - ta - no;
 Chè per que - sto non è a - pie - no Un ca - val a - clo e gen - ti - le;

(Volta)

1. Non è bien - cho quel ch'è ne - ro, Co - me chiar ve - de la vi - sta;
 2. Chi è gen - til chi è vi - le - no A - la fin si ma - nis - fes - ta;
 3. Sta el por - cho nel por - ci - le, Glie con - vien che gli è el suo lo - co;

Non si pen - te un al - ma tri - sta Can - gie el tem - po pur suo a - spec - to.
 Non a - rar la re - gal ve - sta Can - gie el tem - po pur suo a - spec - to.
 Sem - pre da ca - lo - re el fe - cho Can - gie el tem - po pur suo a - spec - to.

Refrain

Mal un mu - ta per ef - fe - cto El suo pro - prio na - tu -

- ra - le, El suo pro - prio na - tu - ra - le.

ex. 17-1 Marco Cara, *Mal un muta per effecto*

The suave but simple music of this song was the work of Marco Cara (d. ca. 1525), one of the two leading frottolists employed at the smallish court of Mantua in the north-central Italian area known as Lombardy. The mistress of that court was the duchess Isabella d'Este, the daughter of Ercole I of Ferrara, famous in music history as the patron whose name Josquin des Prez turned into a Mass tenor (see Ex. 14-3). Isabella, who probably would have hired famous Flemings if she could have afforded them, instead became the patroness who oversaw—through Cara and his colleague Bartolomeo Tromboncino (“the little guy with the trombone”)—the rebirth of Italian song as a literate tradition.

Everything about Cara's song, however, bespeaks its origin in oral practice. And that is the answer to the famous question posed by the apparent gap between the late fourteenth-century ballata, obsolete by 1430, and the early sixteenth-century frottola. What happened to the fifteenth century, the *quattrocento*, when Italian music seemed to disappear? The answer is that the frottola *was* a quattrocento genre that for want of prestige and noble patronage had not managed to establish itself as a literate one. The sudden explosion of frottola writing was just that: an explosion of *writing* (or writing down), stimulated by the printing trade, not a sudden or unprecedented explosion of creativity.

Oral genres, as we have long since learned, are formulaic genres. The attractively lilting or dancelike rhythms in Cara's frottola are all stock formulas, common to dozens of barzellette, that were originally devised for the musical recitation of poetry in the so-called *ottonario*, a popular eight-syllable trochaic pattern favored by Italian court poets and musicians. The original rhyme scheme of the *ottonario* verse (somewhat modified in Cara's song) is abab/bcca; the music supplies three phrases—a, b, and c (plus a decorative flourish for the end of the refrain)—keyed to the specific requirements of the rhyme scheme. Each line or pair of lines takes the musical formula corresponding to its place in the rhyme scheme; and each formula ends with a cadence, made emphatic by a pitch-repetition on the last trochee. The cadences thus create a pattern of open and closed phrases that works tonally to define and project the poem's formal scheme. Such formulas were “popular” both in the sense that they were widely used and enjoyed and in the sense that, compared with the lofty poetry of the *trecento*, they represented in their obvious and jingly rhythms a debased poetic tone—even an “antiliterary” one, as their leading American historian, James Haar, has put it.³

A musical composition like the one in Ex. 17-1, then, was not so much a song as a kind of matrix for song-making; a melodic/harmonic mold into which countless poems could be poured. The song as it appears in print is a sort of transcription from life: a snapshot of an improvisation, or of a pattern abstracted from countless improvisations. The “improvisatory hypothesis” is strengthened by the inclusion in several Petrucci frottola prints of textless *aere* or *modi*—“arias” or “ways,” recitation formulas for declaiming poems in various meters (see Ex. 17-2 for the “way of singing sonnets” as given textlessly in Petrucci's fourth book)—and by the inclusion of what the publisher called *giustiniane*: lavishly ornamented “Giustinian songs,” named after Leonardo Giustiniani or Giustinian (1383–1446), a Venetian courtier who was famous for extemporizing florid impromptu arias to his own accompaniment on the *lira da braccio* or “arm-held lyre,” a sort of bowed lute much favored by humanists for its pseudoclassical associations. Again the impression is that of a model for decorative singing, a style of improvisation that could be learned from such examples and applied to other songs—indeed, to any song.

The appearance of Cara's songs in Petrucci's book as four-part polyphonic settings in correct if rudimentary counterpoint might seem to contradict the improvisatory hypothesis. Anything is possible with practice, of course, but improvisation is generally a soloist's domain. Closer inspection of Ex. 17-1 lessens the apparent contradiction. Only the cantus part is texted. The other parts do not always have enough notes to accommodate the words, particularly at cadences. Now there is no reason to think that singers could not easily have adapted the lower parts to the words for a fully texted vocal rendition; but that does not seem to have been the primary medium for these songs. Rather, putting them in part books was just the most versatile or adaptable or presentable (or—perhaps more to the point—saleable) way of marketing them.

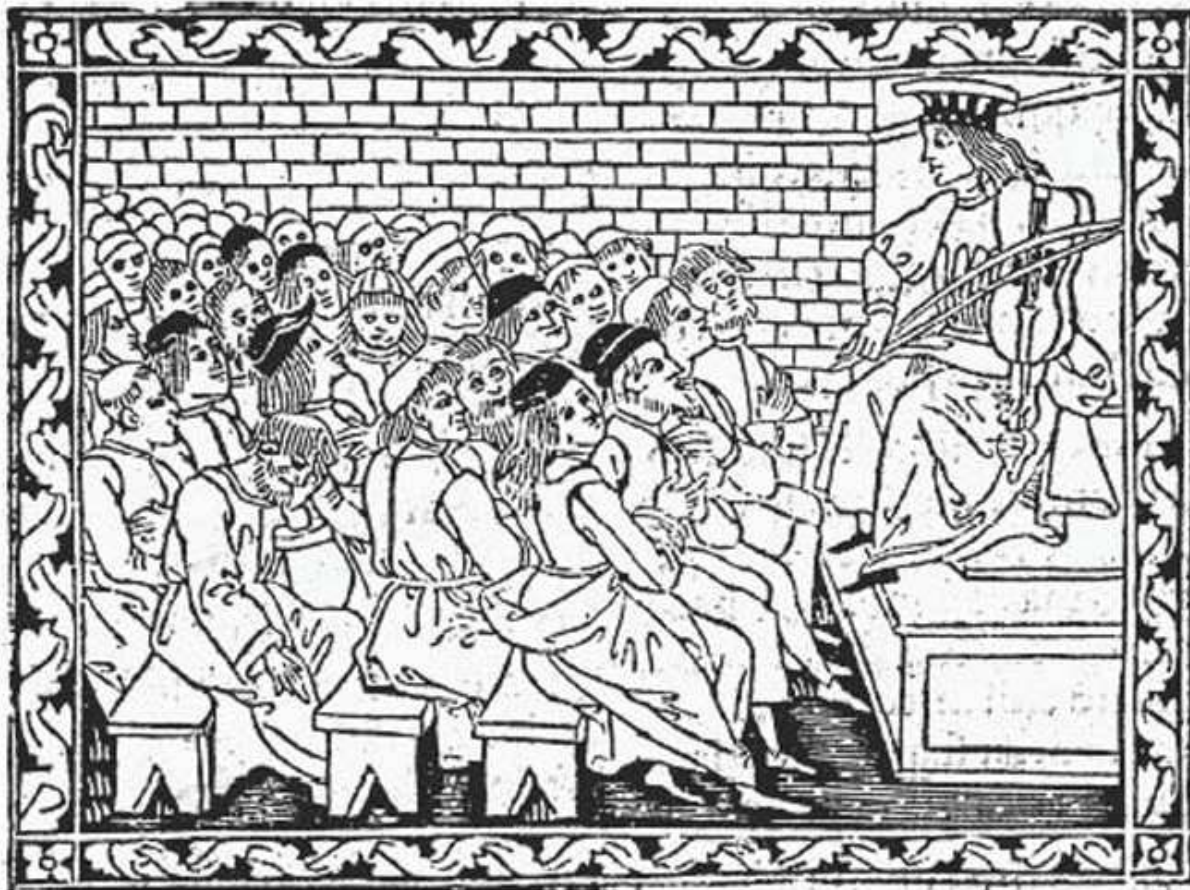


fig. 17-2 Poetry recitation to the accompaniment of a lira da braccio: woodcut from Luigi Pulci's epic *Morgante maggiore* (Florence, ca. 1500).

As to the primary medium, connect these facts. Petrucci issued three books of frottole arranged by a lutenist named Franciscus Bossinensis ("Francis from Bosnia") *con tenori et bassi tabulati et con soprani in canto figurato*, "with the tenors and basses written in lute tablature and the sopranos in staff notation." One of the primary tasks for which the *Regola rubertina*, Silvestro di Ganassi's mid-century viol treatise, trained its readers was that of reducing notated part-songs to solo songs with instrumental accompaniment. Especially pertinent: in several contemporary writings, including Baldesar Castiglione's famous *Book of the Courtier*, Marchetto Cara is described as a renowned "singer to the lute"⁴ — that is, a self-accompanied vocal soloist, if not an improviser.

The image displays a musical score for a four-part setting. The staves are labeled Cantus, Tenor, Altus, and Bassus. The music is written in mensural notation on a four-line staff. The first system includes a tempo marking $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$. The second system begins at measure 5 and features fermatas over the final notes of each voice part. The third system begins at measure 9 and includes repeat signs and fermatas at the end of the piece.

ex. 17-2 “Modo di cantar sonetti” from Ottaviano Petrucci, *Strambotti, ode, frottole, sonetti. Et modo de cantar versi latini e capituli. Libro quarto (1505)*

The conclusion is virtually inescapable that frottole were originally and primarily solo songs for virtuoso singers to lute or other instrumental accompaniment; that Bossinensis, far from arranging Cara’s and Tromboncino’s part-songs for a secondary medium, was in fact returning them from a printer’s all-purpose adaptation to their original medium for the benefit of amateurs—parvenus who could not “intabulate” by ear or at sight like professionals (or true aristocrats); and that this soloistic mode of performance was a standard option throughout the century. (From which it will follow that the “monodic revolution” of the early seventeenth century that, as we shall soon see, ushered in the “Baroque era” was no revolution at all, and that “Baroque” singing styles—“improvised” ornaments and all—were perfectly familiar and available to “Renaissance” musicians.)

The frottola was the first literate musical genre since the fourteenth century to be produced by Italians for Italians. Its style was so different from that of the *oltremontani*, the northerners (from “over the mountains”) in Italy who furnished the wealthier Italian courts and churches with polyphonic music, that one senses a deliberate opposition of taste, one that was maintained all through the *quattrocento* when, as Haar has observed, “one expected the polyphonists to be *oltremontani*, the improvisatory music makers to be Italian.”⁵ Only in the sixteenth century did crossovers begin to occur. The Italian pupils of Willaert and others of their generation eventually took over the *ars*

perfecta genres, as we have seen. Crossover in the opposite direction was much rarer. The very act of converting the frottola repertory into a written repertory like that of the *oltremontani* could of course be viewed as a crossover phenomenon; but frottole actually composed by *oltremontani* were veritable hen's teeth.

It is quite revealing of some stubborn biases of music historiography that these hen's teeth—especially the two items out of the six hundred or so in Petrucci's collections that bear the name of "Josquin Dascanio"—are now the most famous representatives of the genre. And very unrepresentative representatives they are! This is especially true of the one frottola that every "early music" enthusiast is likely to know: *El Grillo* ("The cricket"), from Petrucci's third book (1504), of which the refrain is given in Ex. 17-3.

Josquin Dascanio, if re-spelled with an apostrophe after the "D," translates as "Ascanio's Josquin"—in other words, Josquin des Prez during his period of service to Ascanio Sforza, the bishop of Milan. It would be too much to say that *El Grillo* would never have become famous were it not for the brand name it bore; it is a delightfully amusing composition and deserves its popularity. And yet the fact remains that it was not singled out for popularity in its own day. It is found only in the one source from which it is quoted here, whereas many other frottole and related items (including the other Josquin Dascanio number printed by Petrucci, a Latin-refrained but otherwise Italian lauda called *In te Domine speravi*) were copied and recopied dozens of times.

And the fact also remains that the piece shows Josquin Dascanio to have been very much of an outsider where the frottola was concerned, perhaps even a little "unclear on the concept." Cara's song (Ex. 17-1), a typical frottola, is basically an elegant medium for the poem. It does not compete with the words, so to speak, in rendering their meaning. It is not, to recall Haar's useful distinction, a "literary" song. Josquin's setting is literary through and through. It was probably meant as a carnival song, to be sung in costume, and with appropriate (not overly decorous) gestures.

Superius
El gril - lo, el gril - lo è buon can - to - re che tie - ne lon - go

Altus
El gril - lo, el gril - lo è buon can - to - re che tie - ne lon - go

Tenor
El gril - lo, el gril - lo è buon can - to - re che tie - ne lon - go

Bassus
El gril - lo, el gril - lo è buon can - to - re che tie - ne lon - go

7
ver - so. Da - le be - ve gril - lo can - ta,
ver - so. Da - le be - ve gril - lo can - ta,
ver - so. Da - le be - ve gril - lo can - ta,
ver - so. Da - le be - ve gril - lo can - ta,

15
da - le da - le be - ve be - ve gril - lo gril - lo can - ta. El gril - lo, el gril - lo è buon can - to - re.
da - le da - le be - ve be - ve gril - lo gril - lo can - ta. El gril - lo, el gril - lo è buon can - to - re.
da - le da - le be - ve be - ve gril - lo gril - lo, can - ta. El gril - lo, el gril - lo è buon can - to - re.
da - le da - le be - ve be - ve gril - lo gril - lo can - ta. El gril - lo, el gril - lo è buon can - to - re.

ex. 17-3 “Josquin Descanio,” *El Grillo*, mm. 1-21

The music corresponds in clear (and clearly intentional) ways with the semantics of the text: *chi tiene longo verso* (“he holds out his verses long”) is illustrated by literally holding out the verse long; the hockets and the patter on *dale, beve grillo, canta* (“go on, cricket, drink and sing”) is so clearly meant as a literal imitation of the cricket’s actual “chirping” (or leg-rubbing) that we get the point even though the imitation is far from literal or even in any way accurate. Such “imitations of nature” are delightfully amusing. It will be well to keep in mind, though, when we come shortly to a later Italian repertory that relied heavily on “musico-literary” imitations and illustrations, that no matter how seriously they may be intended, such things operate, as they do in Josquin’s clever nonsense song, on mechanisms of wit—the drawing of unexpected or unlikely correspondences—and are basically a form of humor.

Notes:

(3) James Haar, *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music in the Renaissance, 1350–1600* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), p. 32.

(4) Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles S. Singleton (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday [Anchor

Books], 1959), p. 60.

(5) Haar, *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music*, p. 36.

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Tenorlied

Peter Schöffler

Ludwig Sennfl

GERMANY: THE TENORLIED

Chapter: CHAPTER 17 Commercial and Literary Music

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The German counterpart to the frottola, as purveyed in the printed songbooks that appeared in Germany from 1507 (making that country chronologically the second to take up the music trade), is now known as the *Tenorlied*. That is the modern scholarly term for what contemporary musicians called a *Kernweise* (roughly, “core tune”): a polyphonic setting of a *Liedweise*, a familiar song-melody, placed usually in the tenor—or else a song that resembled a *Liedweise* setting in texture. In other words, it was a cantus-firmus setting of a lyrical melody, either traditional or newly composed, in what by the early sixteenth century would have been considered in other countries a fairly dated style.

That is no surprise. We know that Germany took up the monophonic courtly song a bit later than its western and southern neighbors. The earliest German composer of polyphonic courtly songs, the latter-day Minnesinger Oswald von Wolkenstein (see chapter 4), had been dead for little more than half a century when the print revolution transformed German music; the earliest German printed songs merely continued the process he had fairly recently initiated of adopting courtly love lyrics to the polyphonic literate tradition. Again we may observe that there is no uniform march of styles, and that styles arise and decline in particular historical and social contexts.

The Tenorlied makes its earliest appearance in the form of folksong settings in manuscripts from the second half of the fifteenth century, beginning around 1460. The earliest such manuscript, the source of the three earliest identifiable Tenorlieder, was called the Lochamer Liederbuch and came from Nuremberg in the south of Germany. The biggest source of early *Liedweisen* settings is the vast miscellany called the Glogauer Liederbuch from around 1480, familiar to us as the earliest surviving set of part books, which came from the German far east.

By the print period Tenorlieder were more often newly composed songs than settings of traditional *Liedweisen*. The one printed in Ex. 17-4 comes from Peter Schöffler’s first *Liederbuch* (Mainz, 1513), the third set of printed part books to see the light in Germany. Its very curious history recommends it for inclusion in a history book like this, rather than one, say, on a more famous tune or by a more famous composer. The shapely, stately tune is evidently a *Hofweise*, a newly composed melody in a courtly, vaguely Minnesingerish style. About the composer, Jörg Schönfelder, all that is known is that he *may* have been a member of the court chapel choir in Stuttgart (since other songs in the same book are by known members of that choir).

Von edler Art

1. Von ed-ler Art, auch rein und zart, bist du ein Kron,
 2. Wie ich auch tu, hab ich kein Ruh, ohn dein Ge-stalt,
 3. Seit du die bist, gen der ich Lutz nit brau-chen soll,

der ich mich hat er - ge - ben gar, glaub mir für - wahr,
 die mich mit Gewalt ge - lan - gen hat. Herz - lieb. gib Rat.
 das weißt du wohl: ohn al - len Scherz will dir mein Herz

Das Herz in mir kränkt sich nach dir, drum ich be - gehr all dei - ner
 des ich mich je zu dir ver - seh in Hoff - nung viel; nit mehr ich
 in Treu - en sein. Dar - um ich dein kein Stund im Tag vor Leid und

Ehr- hilf mir, ich hab nit Tro - - - - - sten mehr.
 will, al - lein serz mir ein güt - - - - - diges Ziel.
 Klag, auch noch - ter Lieb ver - ges - - - - - sen mag.

ex. 17-4 Jörg Schönfelder, *Von edler Art* (1513)

Soprano *Grazioso* *p*

1. Von ed - ler Art, auch rein und zart, bist du ein
 2. Wie ich ihm tu, hab ich kein Ruh, ohn dein Ge-
 3. Seit du die bist, gen der ich List mit brau - chen

Alto *p*

1. Von ed - ler Art, auch rein und zart, bist du ein
 2. Wie ich ihm tu, hab ich kein Ruh, ohn dein Ge-
 3. Seit du die bist, gen der ich List mit brau - chen

Tenor *p*

1. Von ed - ler Art, auch rein und zart, bist du ein Kron,
 2. Wie ich ihm tu, hab ich kein Ruh, ohn dein Ge - stalt,
 3. Seit du die bist, gen der ich List mit brau - chen soll

Bass *p*

1. Von ed - ler Art, von ed - ler Art, auch rein und zart, bist du ein
 2. Wie ich ihm tu, wie ich ihm tu, hab ich kein Ruh, ohn dein Ge -
 3. Seit du die bist, seit du die bist, gen der ich List mit brau - chen

6 *poco cresc.*

Kron, der ich mich han er - ge - ben gar, glaub mir für - wahr;
 stalt, die mich mit G'walt ge - fan - gen hat: Herz - lieb, gib Rat,
 soll, das weißt du wohl: ohn al - len Scherz will dir mein Herz

poco cresc.

Kron, der ich mich han er - ge - ben gar, glaub mir für - wahr;
 stalt, die mich mit G'walt ge - fan - gen hat: Herz - lieb, gib Rat,
 soll, das weißt du wohl: ohn al - len Scherz will dir mein Herz

poco cresc.

— der ich mich han er - ge - ben gar, glaub mir für - wahr;
 — die mich mit G'walt ge - fan - gen hat: Herz - lieb, gib Rat,
 — das weißt du wohl: ohn al - len Scherz will dir mein Herz

poco cresc.

Kron, der ich mich han er - ge - ben gar, glaub mir für - wahr;
 stalt, die mich mit G'walt ge - fan - gen hat: Herz - lieb, gib Rat,
 soll, das weißt du wohl: ohn al - len Scherz will dir mein Herz

ex. 17-5 Johannes Brahms, *Von edler Art* (1864), mm. 1-10

Peter Schöffler did not include any attributions in his original print. (The authorship of its contents, where known, was determined by comparison with other sources.) Therefore, when the young Johannes Brahms came upon the book in the early 1860s (when on the lookout, as a struggling choir director in Vienna, for “a cappella” material that would not require the hiring of any extra musicians) he mistook its contents for folk songs, then the object of a craze in romantic-nationalist Europe. Struck by the stately beauty of Schöffler’s melody, he made it the first item in a collection of *Deutsche Volkslieder*, German folk songs for mixed chorus dedicated to his Vienna choir and published in 1864 (Ex. 17-5). Brahms placed the tune where tunes went in the nineteenth century (that is, on top), and considerably enriched the harmony and the contrapuntal texture, but the melody is Schöffler’s exactly, precluding the possibility that the tune was in fact a folk song in oral circulation rather than an old *Hofweise* that Brahms found in its actual printed source.

Brahms was a canny arranger and a very knowing one. He was a true connoisseur of old music and a virtuoso contrapuntist, perhaps the most history-obsessed composer of the whole history-obsessed century in which he lived. The technique he employed at the beginning of his arrangement of Schöffler’s tune—that of prefiguring the tune’s first entry with preliminary imitations (*Vorimitationen* in German scholarly jargon) at the octave and the fifth—was one he picked up from the actual practice of sixteenth-century composers, especially Ludwig Sennfl.

Sennfl, whom we already know as the author of a magnificent tribute to Josquin des Prez, was the great master of the Tenorlied. He kept the German music presses rolling, publishing more than 250 such songs by the time of his death in 1543. In keeping with the side of him that we have already observed, Sennfl strove to bring this peculiarly German genre into the international mainstream of music as he knew it, which really meant reconciling it with the style and technique of Josquin, the “universal” paragon. He wrote Tenorlieder that subjected familiar tunes to bizarrely inventive manipulation, the way Flemish composers treated Mass tenors: by canon, by inversion, in quodlibets (“whatnots,” name-that-tune medleys or contrapuntal combinations), in contrasting modes, whatever. Even when not showing off, Sennfl fashioned his Tenorlieder with a “Netherlandish” finesse, and that ultimately meant integrating the texture.

Nowhere is this more the case than in *Lust hab ich ghabt zuer Musica* (Ex. 17-6), Sennfl’s clever autobiography in song. It is all about his apprenticeship at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor with Henricus (by then known as Heinrich) Isaac, second only to Josquin as international Flemish star; and the music actively demonstrates the fruits of Sennfl’s learning as described in the text. The text is a tour de force in its own right. The initials of its twelve stanzas are an acrostic of the composer’s name. (It is from this acrostic that we know he spelled his name “Sennfl,” rather than “Senfl,” as given in most sources of his work and in most modern reference books.) The tune, plainly a newly invented *Hofweise*, is cast in the retrospective ballad or “Bar” form of the Minnesingers, with its repeated opening phrase (all that our limited space allows Ex. 17-6 to display). But the opening of the song obviously apes the *ars perfecta* motet with an elaborate point of “Vorimitation,” in which the actual entrance of the tune sounds at first like just one voice out of four.

Lust von hab' ich ghabt zuer Mu - si - ca, zuer
 von erst ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la, a

Mu - si - ca, zuer Mu - si - ca, zuer Mu - si - ca, zuer Mu - si - ca, zuer Mu - si - ca von
 - ca, zuer Mu - si - ca, zuer Mu - si - ca, zuer Mu - si - ca von Ju - gend
 hab' ich ghabt zuer Mu - si - ca von Ju - gend
 erst ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la ge - übt, dar -

Lust von hab' ich ghabt zuer Mu - si - ca von
 von erst ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la - ca von ge -

Ju - gend auf, von Ju - gend auf wie noch - bis - her, Lehr'
 - übt dar - nach, ge - übt dar - nach durch wei - ter

auf - nach wie durch noch - bis - her, Lehr'
 auf - nach wie durch noch wei - ter, Lehr' durch her, Lehr'

Ju - gend auf wie noch bis - her, Lehr'
 - übt dar - nach durch wei - ter, Lehr'

ex. 17-6 Ludwig Sennfl, *Lust hab ich ghabt zuer Musica*, mm. 1-15

The tune itself is a little odd, a little contrived. It literally turns the Palestrina ideal of recovered motion on its head, what with its funny downward skip of a fifth after a step, outlining a major sixth that must then be laboriously recovered by stepwise ascent. A systematic stepwise ascent of a sixth, of course, is the old Guidonian hexachord. And sure enough, Sennfl pitches his entries so that they alternately count off the notes of the “soft” hexachord on F and the natural one on C. And then, when the *Stollen* or opening phrase is repeated, we see the reason for the odd contrivance: the poem spells out the actual *voces* of the hexachord—ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la—each syllable assigned to the proper note. A “literary” device if ever there was one, it nevertheless could only have occurred (or appealed) to a practical musician. But it’s just a little joke, and Sennfl apparently did not mind that on all the subsequent stanzas of his song, the rising scale is detached from its textual referent and no longer has any illustrative role to play. The fast descending scales in the accompanying parts, some of which are in the same hexachord positions as the thematic ascending scales, also stop being illustrative after the first stanza, becoming instead one of many superb craftsmanly touches in the consummately worked-out texture.

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Chanson

Claudin de Sermisy

THE "PARISIAN" CHANSON

Chapter: CHAPTER 17 Commercial and Literary Music

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

During the fifteenth century, the word "chanson" connoted an international courtly style, an aristocratic lingua franca. A French song in a fixed form might be written anywhere in Europe, by a composer of any nationality whether at home or abroad. The French chanson was thus nearly as ecumenical or "travelable" a style within its rarefied social domain as the Latin motet. In addition to the examples given in previous chapters (Du Fay in Italy, Binchois in Burgundy, Isaac in Austria, Josquin everywhere), one could add the names of two English composers, Robert Morton and Walter Frye, both of whom wrote French rondeaux in the purest "Burgundian" style (although only Morton is known to have actually worked on the continent).

The age of printing brought a change: a new style of French chanson that was actually and distinctively French the way the frottola was Italian and the *Hofweise* setting German. Its centers were the printing capitals: Paris to the north and Lyons to the south, with Paris (through Attaignant) sufficiently out in front that the genre is generally known as the "Parisian" chanson. Its great master was Claudin de Sermisy (ca. 1490–1562), who served King Francis (François) I as music director of the Chapel Royal and furnished the voracious presses of Attaignant with dozens of chansons for publication as household music.

Attaignant's very first songbook, the *Chansons nouvelles en musique* of 1528, opens with a run of eight songs by Claudin (as his pieces were signed), plus another nine scattered later in the volume for a total of seventeen, more than half the total contents. The second item in the collection, Claudin's *Tant que vivray* (Ex. 17-7) to a text by Francis I's court poet Clément Marot, has always been *the* textbook example of the new chanson for the sake of its memorable, very strongly harmonized tune.

The image shows a musical score for the chanson "Tant que vivray" by Claudin de Sermisy. The score is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a basso continuo line. The lyrics are: "Tant que vi-vray en aa-ge flo-ris-sant. Par plu-sieurs fois m'a te-nu lan-guis-sant." The music is in G major and 4/4 time. The score is presented in a standard musical notation with a treble clef for the upper voices and a bass clef for the lower voices and continuo. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes.

Je ser - vi - ray d'a - mours le roy puis - sant
Mais a - pres deul m'a faict re - jo - ys - sant

Je ser - vi - ray d'a - mours le roy puis - sant
Mais a - pres deul m'a faict re - jo - ys - sant

Je ser - vi - ray d'a - mours le roy puis - sant
Mais a - pres deul m'a faict re - jo - ys - sant

Je ser - vi - ray d'a - mours le roy puis - sant
Mais a - pres deul m'a faict re - jo - ys - sant

En fais en - ditz en chan - sons et ac - cordz.
Car j'ay l'a - mour de la belle au gent corps.

En fais en - ditz en chan - sons et ac - cordz.
Car j'ay l'a - mour de la belle au gent corps.

En fais en - ditz en chan - sons et ac - cordz.
Car j'ay l'a - mour de la belle au gent corps.

En fais en - ditz en chan - sons et ac - cordz.
Car j'ay l'a - mour de la belle au gent corps.

Son al - li - an - ce C'est ma fi - an - ce, Son cueur est mien, Le mien est sien.

Son al - li - an - ce C'est ma fi - an - ce, Son cueur est mien, Le mien est sien.

Son al - li - an - ce C'est ma fi - an - ce, Son cueur est mien, Le mien est sien.

Son al - li - an - ce C'est ma fi - an - ce, Son cueur est mien, Le mien est sien.

ex. 17-7 Claudin de Sermisy, *Tant que vivray*, mm. 1-16

The interesting historical question is where this sudden new style could have come from. It did not rise up like the frottola from subterranean improvisatory depths; it wasn't there all along in oral tradition, so far as we can tell. It really was a new invention. Hypotheses about its origins include the impact of Italian musicians who were welcomed at the French court following King Francis's conquest of Milan in 1515 (this would reinstate the frottola as a stimulus on the chanson). Another guess is that court musicians, possibly spurred by the King's taste, began to copy the style of urban popular music (this would give the chanson an oral ancestry after all). A third conjecture is that the print market and the chance to make a quick profit caused musicians to lower their sights: this could be called the sell-out theory.

These theories, while they all allude to factors that may have had a bearing on the situation and are hence all plausible in some degree, are nevertheless completely speculative and somewhat circular. That is, they are inferences drawn not from any evidence of the processes they describe, but from the nature of the perceived result, the Parisian chanson itself. And they are all subject to refutation in some degree. For one thing, the later history of sixteenth-century secular music (as we shall see) suggests that by the 1530s Italian musicians were learning as much from the French as the other way around. For another, no composer seems to have gotten rich during the sixteenth century on the basis of publication, printers generally paying authors in kind, in printed copies rather than in cash.

The main generative influence on the new chanson style may not have been musical at all; it may well have been the newly humanistic poetic idiom of Marot and his contemporaries that spurred the musicians. Claudin's chanson clothes the syllabification of its poem in a musical scansion that seems as strict and formulaic as those we observed in the frottola. As Howard Mayer Brown, an important historian of the genre, has noted, "some chanson melodies are virtually isorhythmic, so closely do they fit the patterned repetitive rhythms of the poetry."⁶ This sharp observation tends not so much to confirm the direct influence of the frottola on the chanson as it confirms the more general notion that national musical styles arose out of vernacular poetic idioms, in this case the *chanson rustique*.

The opening long–short–short rhythm seems to suggest a dactylic meter, and its ubiquitous presence at the beginnings of chansons has even misled some commentators into assuming that chanson verse was largely made up of dactyls. But it is not a dactyl, and the reason why it became so conventional is worth a small digression. For one thing, the initial "pseudodactyl" became an identifying tag, a sort of trademark that identified the Parisian chanson and (more to the point) some later derivations from it. And for another, it offers a stunning illustration of how from the very beginning of the "music business," the business side of music affected the artistic side.

Instead of a dactyl, the tag in question is just a three-syllable pickup that has been distended so that the piece need not begin with a rest. In a scoreless notation without bars, upbeats could not be indicated in relation to what followed; they could only be identified as "off the beat" by preceding them with a rest. Example 17-8a shows an alternative, "undistended" version of the pickup, notated the only way it could have been at the time. The reason why such a rhythm was considered undesirable at the beginning of a piece had nothing to do with any "purely musical" consideration. It was a purely practical matter having to do with the way in which music was packaged for sale.

People singing a chanson together sang from printed part books, each of which contained only a single line. The social consequences of that drab little fact are illustrated in the Flemish etiquette manual mentioned above, which gives a model polite conversation for domestic music-making:

Rombout: Give me the bass part.

Antoni: I'll do the tenor.

Dierick: Who'll sing alto?

Ysaias: I, I'll sing it!

Dierick: Who begins?

Ysaias: No, not I. I've a four-beat rest.

Antoni: And I one of six.

Ysaias: Well then, you come in after me?

Antoni: So it seems. It's up to you then, Rombout!⁷

If a piece began with a rest in all parts, the answer to the preliminary question, "Who begins?" would be a chorus similar to that elicited by the Little Red Hen (not I... not I... not I). To avoid confusion and wasted time, then, all the parts began at the beginning. Everyone could "be first." Even pieces that began with points of imitation had to be similarly adjusted if published in part books. In Ex. 17-8b, the opening point from a motet by Clemens non Papa (published in part books by Susato of Antwerp in 1553) is laid out in score. The motif on which the point is based is a syncopated idea. The first voice in, however, begins at the beginning, the first note being extended back, as it were, to remove the rest (and with it, the syncopation) just so that there would be someone to answer the question, "Who begins?"

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Tant que vi-vray". It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics "Tant que vi - vray" are written below the treble staff. The music is a simple, homophonic setting of the text.

**ex. 17-8a Hypothetical beginning
for *Tant que vivray***

Notes:

(6) H. M. Brown, *Music in the Renaissance* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 213.

(7) Roger Wangermée, *Flemish Music*, trans. R. E. Wolf (New York: F. Praeger, 1968), p. 134.

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Clément Janequin

Chanson

MUSIC AS DESCRIPTION

Chapter: CHAPTER 17 Commercial and Literary Music

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

A new sort of “literary music”—or rather a possibly unwitting revival of an old sort—came into being when Attaignant, still in his first year of publishing activity, brought out a slim volume devoted to the works of a single composer. The title page read *Chansons de maistre Clement Janequin*, and it contained only five items. Those five, however, took up as much space as fifteen had occupied in Attaignant’s first collection. Four of them became famous and vastly influential all over Europe, and (most amazingly of all) remained in print for almost a century.

Mu - si - ca De - i do - num

Mu - si - ca De - i, Mu - si - ca

Mu - si - ca De -

Mu - si - ca De - i do - num o - pti - mi,

o - pti - mi, do - num o - pti - mi,

De - i do - num o - pti - mi, o - pti - mi, do - num o -

i, mu - si - ca De - i do - num o - pti - mi,

Mu - si - ca De - i, mu - si - ca De - i do -

ex. 17-8b Clemens non Papa, beginning of motet *Musica dei donum*

The composer, Clément Janequin (ca. 1485–1558), was a provincial priest from Bordeaux in the south of France, who never held a major appointment either at a large cathedral or at court. Despite his clerical calling, he was almost

exclusively a chanson specialist: he wrote two Masses (both of them based parody-fashion on chansons of his that had become popular) and a single book of motets, but more than 250 chansons, many of them broadly humorous or racy or downright lewd. When thinking of Janequin it is hard not to recall his near-exact contemporary, François Rabelais, the novel-writing monk whose name became synonymous with gross drollery. It was Janequin who gave the “Rabelaisian” mood its musical embodiment.

The four big chansons of 1528 define the Rabelaisian genre. Broad they certainly are, in more ways than one. Where the average length of a “Parisian,” semi-courtly chanson like *Tant que vivray* is thirty to forty measures (counting the breve or “tempus” as a measure), the longest item in the 1528 book, divided into two “partes” as if it were a motet, totals a whopping 234 measures, six times the normal length. What could be the text of such a monster chanson? Here is where things get even curiously, because if “text” is taken to mean something meaningful written in French words, then these colossal pieces have hardly any text at all.

In the original publication of 1528 the contents are listed the normal way, by incipits (first lines). Nine years later, the volume was reissued in a deluxe “quarto” edition with double-sized pages, and with each item most unusually given a title, so popular had they become. The first (excerpted in Ex. 17-9), called *La guerre* (“The war”) is the 234-measure monster. It commemorates the battle of Marignano, the Milanese conquest of 1515, and its text, once past the opening salute (“Hear ye, gentlemen of France, of our noble King François”) consists almost entirely of battle sounds: guns and cannon-fire, bugles, war whoops, laments for the fallen. (It must have been written a good deal earlier than its publication date, since by 1528 Francis had been defeated, captured, ransomed, and forced to give up all his Italian territorial claims.)

The second item, *La chasse*, is a hunting piece full of horn calls and barking dogs. We know (as Janequin possibly did not) that such pieces, written in the form of canons both in France (where they were called *chace*) and Italy (where they were called *caccia*) were a popular genre close to two centuries before. The fourth item in the Janequin chanson book, called *L'alouette* (“The lark”), begins with the line “Or sus, vous dormez trop” (“Get up, you sleepyhead”), which we encountered in another fourteenth-century genre, the “birdsong virelai.” But there is nothing in the fourteenth century to compare for sheer ornithological frenzy with Janequin’s third item, *Le chant des oyseux* (“The song of the birds”), a huge composition in which another refrain about lovers awakening alternates with five different birdsong collages.

These orgies of onomatopoeia, sheer imaginative play on a par with Rabelais’s hilarious lists, amount at times to long stretches of what might best be described as pure texture. The beginning of the second part of *La guerre* (quaintly listed in 1528 by its incipit, “Fan Frere le le lan fan”), which depicts the height of battle, holds a single chord for a veritable eternity (Ex. 17-9). The singers have nothing resembling a tune to sing, and nothing resembling words to say, just a concatenation of lingual sound effects—a virtuoso turn for performer and composer alike. As befits such a stunning tour de force, it inspired emulation on a grand scale, beginning with Philippe Verdelot, a Flemish composer active in Italy, who at the request of the publisher Susato skillfully added a fifth voice to the piece to augment its already loaded textures and, no doubt, promote sales. Janequin liked Verdelot’s added voice well enough to include it in his own revised edition of the work, and that is how it is presented in Ex. 17-9.

Fan Fre re le le lan fan fre re le le lan fan fan fan fan fey - ne fre re le le lan fan fre re le le lan fan fan fey - ne Fan fan fan

fey - ne fan fre re le le lan fan fre re le le lan fan fan fey - ne fre re le le lan fan fre re le le lan fan fey - ne fan fre re le le lan fan fre re le le lan fan fey - ne fan fan

ex. 17-9 Clément Janequin, *La guerre*, a 5, with Verdelot's extra voice (secunda pars, mm. 1-6)

To call a piece like Janequin's *La guerre* "literary" is to interpret the word a little loosely. It would make no sense to say that such a work "expresses" its text. (How do you express "fan frere le le lan fan"?) Rather, the text and the music work together to evoke the sounds (and not only the sounds) of the world at large, and in so doing point outside the work in a way that the music of *Tant que vivray* had no business or interest in doing. But construing the word more strictly, in terms of the relationship between the music and the text, Janequin's onomatopoeic chansons are not literary. The music is still basically a medium for the recitation of the text; the two components still touch mainly on the phonological (or declamational) level, not the semantic one. Onomatopoeia is presentation, not representation. It has no semantics.

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Orlando di Lasso

Villanella

LASSO: THE COSMOPOLITE SUPREME

Chapter: CHAPTER 17 Commercial and Literary Music

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Real literary music—indeed a virtual literary revolution in music—is looming up on our horizon, but before immersing ourselves in it and becoming absorbed in its consequences, there is a loose end to tie up. “Loose end” hardly does justice to a composer thought by many of his contemporaries to be the most brilliant musician alive, but Orlando di Lasso is a blessedly unclassifiable figure who sits uncomfortably in any slot. It was his unparalleled versatility, the very quality that makes him retrospectively a loose end, that made him such a paragon in his day.

One of the last of the great peripatetic Netherlanders, Lasso was born in Mons, now an industrial town in southern (French-speaking) Belgium, in 1532. His baptismal name was Roland de Lassus, but by the age of twelve he was already a professional chorister in the service of the Duke of Mantua, where he adopted the Italian name by which he was and remains best known. By the 1570s he was the most famous composer in Europe, hailed by the French poet Pierre de Ronsard as “the more than divine Orlando, who like a bee has sipped all the most beautiful flowers of the ancients and moreover seems alone to have stolen the harmony of the heavens to delight us with it on earth, surpassing the ancients and making himself the unique wonder of our time.”⁸ From a humanist there could scarcely be any higher praise.



fig. 17-3 Orlando di Lasso in an engraving published in 1599 by a printer who did not know that the composer (described as being “in the 67th year of his age”) had been dead for five years.

From 1556 until his death in 1594 (the same year as Palestrina’s), Lasso served faithfully as court and chapel musician to the Dukes of Bavaria in Munich. Thus he was born a French speaker, was educated in Italy, and reached his creative maturity in Germany, making him the very model of the cosmopolitan musician of his age. But whereas the earlier cosmopolitan ideal—the ideal of the *ars perfecta*, brought to its peak by Palestrina—had been ecumenical (that is, reflective of religious universalism and hence nation-transcending), Lassus was brought up in the age of music-printing and was an eager and ambitious child of the burgeoning age of worldly music-commerce. Thus his brand of cosmopolitanism was not ecumenical but polyglot. He and Palestrina were complementary figures, and in many respects incommensurable ones; between them they summed up the contradictory ideals and leanings of a musical world in transition.

Lasso’s appointments were secular, though they did entail the writing of huge quantities of service music, and his allegiance was always a dual one: to his patrons (with whom he was on terms of unprecedented familiarity and from whom he actually received a patent of nobility in his own right), and to his many publishers. During his lifetime a staggering seventy-nine printed volumes of his music (and only his music) were issued, a total that leaves his

nearest competitors in a cloud of dust; and his work was included in forty miscellaneous publications as well. Lasso volumes continued to be issued posthumously all over Europe—Graz, Munich, Paris, Antwerp—until 1619. His output covered every viable sacred and secular genre of continental Europe: Masses (almost all of them parody settings), motets (including many full calendrical cycles in various genres), and vernacular settings in all the languages he spoke. His work has never been published in its entirety; his sons tried to issue his entire backlog after his death but gave up in despair. Nobody knows exactly how much music Lasso wrote, but his published works, including those published only in modern times, number more than two thousand items.



fig. 17-4 Concert at the Bavarian court chapel directed by Orlando di Lasso from the keyboard (frontispiece by the Bavarian court painter Hans Mielich to a manuscript now in the Bavarian State Library, Munich).

From this vast assortment any selection at all would be invidious and unrepresentative. So without undue hand-wringing we will limit ourselves to what was most representative of the age rather than the man. We will get our most vivid quick impression of Lasso's special character if we forgo his magnificent legacy of Catholic church music (where, after all, he had competitors and counterparts) and sample the full range of his secular work, which was unique, choosing a single piece in each of four languages. Each of them, moreover, illustrates this cagey chameleon-composer's bent for witty mixtures and juxtapositions of styles.

Je l'ayme bien (Ex. 17-10) is from Lasso's very first publication, a miscellany called *D'Orlando di Lasso il primo libro dovesi contengono madrigali, vilanesche, canzoni francesi e motetti a quattro voci* ("The First Book by Orlando di Lasso, containing madrigals, vilaneschas, French chansons, and motets for four voices") published in Antwerp by Susato in 1555, when the composer was 23 years old. The Parisian chanson style, by then a quarter century old, has been elegantly reconciled to the *ars perfecta* in Lasso's setting, in which a striking melody that might have prompted an exquisite harmonization from Claudin is given an elaborate imitative exposition, which supplies the exquisite harmonies all the same.

Matona (i.e., "Madonna") *mia cara* (Ex. 17-11), informally known as "the lansquenet's serenade," was printed rather late in Lasso's career, in a 1581 volume of "low style" Italian songs (*Libro de villanelle, moresche, et altre canzoni*) published in Paris. It is thought, however, to date from an earlier period, perhaps Lasso's earliest, when he accompanied his first employer, Ferrante Gonzaga of Mantua, on expeditions throughout Italy. *Lansquenets* were Swiss or German lance-bearing mercenaries (soldiers of fortune) who enlisted as infantrymen in foreign parts. The word itself is a jocular French corruption of *Landsknecht*, German for "trooper" or "foot soldier". There was also an Italian variant, *lanzicheneco*, and Italian armies such as Ferrante's were full of them.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Je l'ayme bien" by Orlando di Lasso. It consists of three systems of four staves each, representing four voices. The lyrics are in French and are written below the corresponding vocal lines. The music is in a simple, elegant style characteristic of the 16th-century chanson.

System 1:
 Voice 1: Je l'ay - me bien et l'ay - - -
 Voice 2: Je l'ay - me bien et l'ay - - me - ray, et l'ay - me -
 Voice 3: Je l'ay - me bien et l'ay - me - ray, je l'ay - me
 Voice 4: Je l'ay - me bien et

System 2:
 Voice 1: - me - ray, je l'ay - me bien et l'ay -
 Voice 2: - ray, je l'ay - me bien et l'ay - me - ray, et l'ay - me -
 Voice 3: bien et l'ay - me - ray, je l'ay - me bien et l'ay - - -
 Voice 4: l'ay - me - ray, je l'ay - me bien et

System 3:
 Voice 1: - me - ray, je l'ay - me bien et l'ay - - - me - ray,
 Voice 2: - ray, je l'ay - me bien et l'ay - me - ray,
 Voice 3: - me - ray, je l'ay - me bien et l'ay - me - ray, et l'ay - me - ray,
 Voice 4: l'ay - me - ray, je l'ay - me bien et l'ay - me - ray,

ex. 17-10 Orlando di Lasso, *Je l'ayme bien*

There could be no better emblem of Lasso's inveterate cosmopolitanism than this silly Italian song written by a

Fleming in imitation of a clumsy German suitor who barely speaks his lady's language. The genre to which it belongs, called *villanella* or town song (or to be excruciatingly precise, a *todesca*, meaning a villanella with a ridiculous German accent), was a strophic song with refrains and hence the direct (and deliberately debased) descendant of the frottola or "trifling song" of old. The refrains are usually nonsensical or onomatopoeic; here, it takes the form of the lovesick lansquenet's feeble attempts to serenade his lady on the lute.

Ma - to - na mi - a ca - ra, mi fol - le - re can - zon,

Ma - to - na mi - a ca - ra, mi fol - le - re can - zon,

Ma - to - na mi - a ca - ra, mi fol - le - re can - zon,

Ma - to - na mi - a ca - ra, mi fol - le - re can - zon,

Ma - to - na mi - a ca - ra, mi fol - le - re can - zon can -

Ma - to - na mi - a ca - ra, mi fol - le - re can - zon can -

Ma - to - na mi - a ca - ra, mi fol - le - re can - zon can -

Ma - to - na mi - a ca - ra, mi fol - le - re can - zon can -

- tar so - to fi - ne - stra, Lan - tze buon com - pa - gnon. Don, don,

- tar so - to fi - ne - stra, Lan - tze buon com - pa - gnon. Don, don,

- tar so - to fi - ne - stra, Lan - tze buon com - pa - gnon. Don, don,

- tar so - to fi - ne - stra, Lan - tze buon com - pa - gnon. Don, don,

don, di - ri - di - ri, don, don, don, don, Don, don, don, di - ri - di - ri, don, don, don, don.

don, di - ri - di - ri, don, don, don, don, Don, don, don, di - ri - di - ri, don, don, don, don.

don, di - ri - di - ri, don, don, don, don, don, Don, don, don, di - ri - di - ri, don, don, don, don, don.

don, di - ri - di - ri, don, Don, don, don, don, di - ri - di - ri, don, don, don.

ex. 17-11 Orlando di Lasso, *Matona mia cara*

Another jokey piece is the one shown in Ex. 17-12 that begins “Audite nova” (“Hear the news!”) in the solemn manner of a Latin motet, but that quickly shifts over to a preposterous tale about a dimwitted farmer (“Der Bawr von Eselskirchen,” literally “The farmer from Ass-Church”) and his honking goose, the latter rendered musically in the manner we have come by now to expect. The song comes from a volume of miscellaneous items in various languages that Lasso published in Munich in 1573. German songs suffered the most precipitous decline in tone between the heyday of the Tenorlied, about a half- or quarter-century earlier, and the rustic, mock-homespun *Lieder* of Lasso’s time, which were really villanelle set to German words. The nobler Tenorlied, as we will see in the next chapter, had gone out of the secular tradition into a new sacred domain.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Audite nova" by Orlando di Lasso. It consists of four staves, each with a vocal line and corresponding Latin lyrics. The lyrics are: "Au - di - te no - va!" (top staff), "Au - di - te no - va, au - di - te, au - di - te no - va!" (second staff), "Au - di - de, au - di - te no - va!" (third staff), and "Au - di - te no - va!" (bottom staff). The music is written in a simple, rhythmic style with various note values and rests.

Der Bawrvon E-selss-kir - chen, der hat ein fai - ste ga - ga — Gans, das

Der Bawrvon E-selss-kir - chen, der hat ein fai - - ste ga - ga Gans, das

Der Bawrvon E-selss-kir - chen, der hat ein fai - ste ga - ga Gans, das

Der Bawrvon E-selss-kir - chen, der hat ein fai - ste ga - ga Gans, das

gy-ri gy-ri, ga - ga Gans, das gy-ri gy-ri, ga - ga Gans, die hat ein lan - gen,

gy-ri gy-ri, ga - ga Gans, das gy-ri gy-ri, ga - ga Gans, die hat ein lan - gen,

gy-ri gy-ri, ga - ga Gans, das gy-ri gy-ri, ga - ga Gans, die hat ein lan - gen, fai -

gy-ri gy-ri, ga - ga Gans, das gy-ri gy-ri, ga - ga Gans, die hat ein lan - gen, fai -

fai - sten, di - cken, wai - de - li - chen Hals, bring her die — Gans!

fai - sten, di - cken, wai - de - li - chen Hals, bring her — die Gans!

- sten, di - cken, wai - de - li - chen Hals,

- sten, di - cken, wai - de - li - chen Hals,

ex. 17-12 Orlando di Lasso, *Audite nova*

Finally, as if to atone for representing so imposing and varied an output as Lasso's with fluff (albeit the kind of fluff no one else could have composed), it is time to consider a serious Latin setting. But here, too, there were genres in which Lasso stood virtually alone by virtue of his wit and intellectual elan. One of them was the setting of classical or classicistic texts, the latter being the work of humanist writers in imitation of the classics. His most notorious work in this category was the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* ("The sibylline prophecies"), published posthumously in 1600 but perhaps written as early as 1560. (They were performed before King Charles IX of France, whom they astonished, in 1571.)

The sibyls, according to one authority, were in antiquity "women who in a state of ecstasy proclaimed coming events, generally unpleasant, spontaneously and without being asked or being connected with any particular oracle site."⁹ Over the formative years of Christian religion, the tradition of the sibyls was assimilated to that of biblical prophecy. The sybilline prophecies—originally collected in a book supposedly sold in the sixth century bce by the Cumaean sibyl, who lived in a cave near Naples, to Tarquin, the last of the legendary kings of Rome—came to be read increasingly as foretelling not natural disasters or the like but the coming of Christ and the Last Judgment. (Hence the reference to the sibyl in the *Dies Irae* sequence, known to us since chapter 3.)

In the fifteenth century, the number of sibyls was stabilized at twelve, a number full of Christian resonances (the

minor prophets, the apostles). The twelve sibyls are best known today from Michelangelo's renderings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The twelve anonymous prophetic poems Lasso set to music appeared for the first time as a supplement to a 1481 Venetian edition of a treatise on the sibyls as prophets of Christ by Filippo Barbieri, the Inquisitor of Sicily. They were reprinted in Basel, Switzerland, in 1545, and that, presumably, is how they found their way to the composer.



fig. 17-5 The Cumaean sibyl, as rendered by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

Car - mi - na Chro - ma - ti - co, quæ au - dis mo - du - la - ta te - no -

Car - mi - na Chro - ma - ti - co, quæ au - dis mo - du - la - ta te - no -

Car - mi - na Chro - ma - ti - co, quæ au - dis mo - du - la - ta te - no -

Car - mi - na Chro - ma - ti - co, quæ au - dis mo - du - la - ta te - no -

- re, Hæc sunt il - la, qui - bus no - stræ o - lim ar - ca - na sa - lu -

- re, Hæc sunt il - la qui - bus no - stræ o - lim ar - ca - na sa - lu -

- re, Hæc sunt il - la qui - bus no - stræ o - lim ar - ca - na sa - lu -

- re, Hæc sunt il - la, qui - bus no - stræ o - lim ar - ca - na sa - lu -

- tis Bis se - næ in - tre - pi - do, ce - ci - ne - runt, ce - ci - ne - runt o - re si - byl - læ.

- tis Bis se - næ in - tre - pi - do, ce - ci - ne - runt, ce - ci - ne - runt o - re si - byl - læ.

- tis Bis se - næ in - tre - pi - do, ce - ci - ne - runt, ce - ci - ne - runt o - re si - byl - læ.

- tis Bis se - næ in - tre - pi - do, ce - ci - ne - runt, ce - ci - ne - runt o - re si - byl - læ.

ex. 17-13a Orlando di Lasso, *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*, Prologue

These venerable quasi-pagan mystical texts as summarized by a Christian classicistic poet obviously demanded some form of unusual musical treatment to render their uncanny enigmatic contents. Drawing on a kind of humanistic musical speculation that was just then rife in Italy (and to which we will return in a couple of chapters), Lasso adopted a style of extreme, tonally disorienting chromaticism (as he proudly proclaims in a three-line poetic prologue of his own contriving), coupled with a starkly homorhythmic, vehemently declamatory manner that brought the weird words and the weirder harmonies very much to the fore. The result is hair-raising, not only as an expression of religious mysticism, but as the revelation (so to speak) of an alternative path for music that challenged the absolute validity of the *ars perfecta*. The two extracts included in Ex. 17-13 are the prologue, with its brash expository sweep by fifth- and third-relations from triadic harmonies on the extreme sharp side (as far as B major) as far flatward as E-flat major; and the end of the Cymmerian sibyl's prophecy, which contains the most radical single progression in the cycle, entailing the direct motion in the altus, on the last line of text, through a diminished third (now how are you supposed to solmize *that?*).

Notes:

(8) Ronsard, *Livre des mélanges* (2nd ed., 1572), in Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 289.

(9) Alfons Kurfess, "Christian Sibyllines," in E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha* (Philadelphia, 1965); quoted in Peter Bergquist, "The Poems of Orlando di Lasso's *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* and Their Sources," *JAMS* XXXII (1979): 521.

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Orlando di Lasso

Madrigal: Italy, 16th century

THE LITERARY REVOLUTION AND THE RETURN OF THE MADRIGAL

Chapter: CHAPTER 17 Commercial and Literary Music

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Ob - jī - ci - ent pu - e - ro myr - rham au -

Ob - jī - ci - ent pu - e - ro myr - rham au -

Ob - jī - ci - ent pu - e - ro myr - rham au -

Ob - jī - ci - ent pu - e - ro myr - rham au -

- rum thu - ra Sa - bae - a.

- rum thu - ra Sa - bae - a. thu - ra Sa - bae - a.

- rum thu - ra Sa - bae - a. thu - ra Sa - bae - a.

- rum thu - ra Sa - bae - a. thu - ra Sa - bae - a.

ex. 17-13b Orlando di Lasso, *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*, *Sibylla cimmeria*, mm. 35-46

The extremity of style represented by Lasso's sibyls, while eerily astonishing as befits the subject, is not unintelligible in musical terms, relying as it does on harmonies and progressions that, taken singly, were part of ordinary musical language. (The progressions are not even "chromatic" to any huge extent, as the sixteenth century defined the term, since even where accidentals are involved, the voices usually move by half step from one scale degree to another—the definition of diatonic motion—rather than by inflecting single scale degrees.) It is in the aggregate that they overwhelm. Still, although musically intelligible, such a style is not easily explained on purely musical grounds: that is, it would be hard to account for Lasso's musical decisions or their motivation without taking the text into consideration. Are the motivations then "extra-musical"? Is the result "literary"? Do such motivations or such results make the product artistically impure? And is artistic impurity an artistic vice?

These questions have been debated for centuries, and no matter what we may resolve or agree upon among

ourselves, they will go on being debated for centuries, for the question behind all the other questions is a fundamental question of values. The best we can do is to try to understand the various positions that have been taken (including our own, whatever they may be) in their historical context.

In the sixteenth century the contention was between the proponents of the *ars perfecta*, a wholly or autonomously musical style founded on a specific musical history and valued for its universality (which meant its relative indifference to words), and the proponents of stylistic mixture in the name of expression, which implicitly denied universal or autonomous musical values. Many composers, Lasso emphatically included, saw no need to choose between the two principles, but adapted their style according to functional and textual requirements. Partisan positions were more apt to be espoused by theorists and patrons.

Still, even within the relativist camp distinctions and nuances can be observed. Even Lasso's sibylline style was addressed more to the overall character of the text—its supernatural origin, its quality as mysterious utterance—than to the specifics of its semantic content. Indeed, when it came to the mechanics of the word–music relationship, Lasso came down in this case on the side of phonology and rhetorical declamation, just like the chanson composers. If “literary” music means music that embodies or is responsive to semantic meaning, Lasso's sibylline motets do not qualify.

But a great deal of sixteenth-century music did qualify, and it is to that style, and to the movement that supported it, that we now turn. It was a revolutionary movement, and it transformed music fundamentally and irrevocably.

Its first fruits did not look very revolutionary, and the origins of the movement remain unclear. The trend toward literary music, which first involved settings of Italian verse, was long viewed as a slow evolutionary outgrowth of the frottola. More recently, however, it has been proposed that the trend was the product of two other currents—or rather, that it was the product of their confluence, which took place not in the main centers of frottola activity (Mantua for composition, Venice for publication), but in Florence, during the 1520s, when the frottola craze had already begun to subside.¹⁰

These two currents were (1) the “Petrarchan movement,” a literary revival of archaic (fourteenth-century) poetic genres, and (2) the application to settings of Italian texts of styles and techniques previously associated with “northern” polyphony, both sacred (Latin motets) and secular (“Franco-Flemish” chansons).

The influence of the Petrarchan revival is already suggested by the revival of the word *madrigal* to identify the new style of Italian verse setting. There is no musical connection at all between the sixteenth-century madrigal and its *trecento* forebear. The latter had quite died out and been forgotten. It was initially brought back to sixteenth-century consciousness not as a musical genre but as a literary one, a species of pastoral verse discussed with examples in a fourteenth-century manuscript treatise on poetry, the *Summa artis rithimici vulgaris dictaminis* (“Survey of the art of vernacular poetry”) by Antonio da Tempo, published as a printed book in 1507.

The influence of “northern” musical idioms on the new genre is betokened by the simple fact that the first sixteenth-century “madrigalists” of note were not Italians but *oltremontani* who like so many of their musical contemporaries had found gainful employment in Italy. It is to the confluence of high old literary ideals with sophisticated imported musical techniques that we owe, in the words of James Haar, the madrigal's leading “revisionist” historian, “the beginnings of a musical vocabulary adequate to meeting the intellectual and emotional demands of the verse.”¹¹

The protagonists of the literary revolution in its earliest phases were the humanist scholar (and later cardinal) Pietro Bembo (1470–1547), the chief instigator of the Petrarchan revival, and the composers Philippe Verdelot (ca. 1480–ca. 1530), a Frenchman, and Jacques Arcadelt (d. 1568), a Walloon or French-speaking Fleming. Verdelot's first book of madrigals was published in 1533, though he was mainly active in the 1520s and wrote five times as many madrigals as he published. Between 1539 and 1544, Arcadelt published five books of madrigals for four voices and one for three. By the mid-1540s, the madrigal had been established as the dominant musical genre for Italian poetry and retained its supremacy for over a century, albeit with many modifications along the way to accommodate changing styles and social functions. By the end of the sixteenth century, moreover, madrigals were an international craze, both in the sense that Italian madrigals were eagerly imported and performed abroad, and in the sense that they inspired emulations in other countries and other languages, particularly English.

Notes:

(10) For the main revisionist account see James Haar and Iain Fenlon, *The Italian Madrigal in the Early Sixteenth Century: Sources and Interpretation* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

(11) Haar, *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music*, p. 74.

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Pietro Bembo

Jacques Arcadelt

“MADRIGALISM” IN PRACTICE

Chapter: CHAPTER 17 Commercial and Literary Music

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Bembo’s revival of Petrarch was a watershed for Italian poetry and for the reestablishment of the Florentine or Tuscan dialect as a standard literary language. Precociously erudite, the future cardinal published an edition of Petrarch’s complete works in 1501, when he was thirty. Four years later, he published a dialogue on courtly love that included a selection of illustrative verses of his own composition in the style of Petrarch, demonstrating what Bembo took to be the great poet’s essential devices and themes. The most famous part of the book was the chapter devoted to lovers in conflict, in which the device of antithesis—the immediate confrontation of words, feelings, and ideas with their opposites—was exploited in spectacular fashion. In a later work, *Prose della volgar lingua*, Bembo drew out of Petrarch the idea of an antithesis of styles (“heavy” vs. “light”) as well. His polar categories—*gravità* (gravity or dignity) and *piacevolezza* (pleasingness or “charm”)—were to be realized technically by the mechanics of the verse: phonology or sound-content, rhyme-scheme, meter.

These theories were enormously stimulating to musicians; Bembo’s poems, and eventually those of Petrarch himself, became a *locus classicus*—an endlessly returned-to source—for composers of madrigals, who began to specialize in the expression of violent emotional contrasts that could be effectively linked with musical contrasts—high/low, fast/slow, up/down, consonant/dissonant, major/minor, diatonic/chromatic, homo-rhythmic/imitative—as bearers (or at least suggesters) of semantic meaning. Musical tones all by themselves may not possess much in the way of semantic reference; in other words, they may not *denote* objects or ideas with much precision. But antithetical relationships between tones and tone-constructs can *connote* plenty. (We have already seen this, of course, in the predictable “ascendit/descendit” contrasts in sixteenth-century Mass settings like Palestrina’s: this convention may already have been a “madrigalism,” an extension of the “Petrarchian antithesis,” first exploited in madrigals, to another textual realm.)

An ideal starting point for observing the growth of “literary music” through the madrigal, and its growing antagonism to the impersonal universalism of the *ars perfecta*, would be *Il bianco e dolce cigno* (“The white delightful swan,” Ex. 17-14), the first item in Arcadelt’s first book of madrigals (1539), the most frequently reprinted music book of the whole sixteenth century (some 53 times, the last in 1642!). It was possibly the sixteenth century’s most famous single piece of art music, surely the one that most people knew by heart (as they did not and could not know a legendary but rarely heard work like the *Missa Papae Marcelli*).

Like most madrigal poems, the text of Arcadelt’s swan song is *inordinato*, to use the contemporary word: it consists of a single stanza in lines of varying length, without refrain or any other obvious formal scheme, and the music does not impose one either. This is the most dramatic way in which the madrigal differs from the other vernacular genres of the sixteenth century. Most of the others were in some sort of fixed form, descended mainly from the ballata: to those already mentioned one could add the Spanish *villancico*, a dance-descended song that enjoyed a big burst of polyphonic creativity under Ferdinand and Isabella (whose main court composer, Juan del Encina, composed upwards of sixty). Even where the poems were devoid of refrains or strophic repetitions, like many “new style” chansons, composers were more observant of their forms, and certainly of their meters, than of their contents.

A madrigalist, by contrast, went after content and its maximal musical representation, and, as time went on, was more and more willing to commit what offended humanists like Vincenzo Galilei called a “laceramento della poesia”—mangling or trampling on the form of the poem—in order to get at that content. Composers of Arcadelt’s generation, and especially *oltremontani* like Willaert and (later) Lasso, tended to recite the poem fairly straightforwardly, aiming at a general mood of gravity or charm. Their settings are mild compared to what came

later. But even Arcadelt's swan poem is built `a la Petrarch around an antithesis (the swan's sad death, the poet's happy "death" in love), and the composer gives two vivid hints of the particularizing impulse that would later become such a fetish among madrigalists. Both of them involve (implicit) antitheses.

The first high-powered affective word, *piangendo* (weeping), receives the first chromatic harmony (Ex. 17-14a). There is nothing intrinsically weepy about the chord itself: it is just another major triad. But in context it contrasts with the diatonic norm and is therefore, like the word with which it coincides, a "marked" feature (to use a modern linguists' term). As to the second hint, there could be nothing more ordinary, or less particularly "expressive," in music of the sixteenth century than a point of imitation (although we should note that points of imitation were not common in Italian secular music before the motet-writing *oltremontani* began putting them in.) Yet Arcadelt's imitative setting of the thrice-repeated last line (Ex. 17-14b), by standing out from the homorhythmic norm, becomes "marked," and therefore illustrative of the sense of the line, which refers to a multiple, repetitive act—and underscores the "charming" double entendre: *lo piccolo morte* ("the little death") was the standard Italian euphemism for the climax of the sexual act.

Because it so privileged the humanistic axiom that music should be the servant of the *oratione*, the sense of the poetry, and therefore "imitate" it, the madrigal became a hotbed of musical radicalism and experimentation. Because of its "literary" premises, it was tolerant of audacities that in any other genre would have been thought blunders or (at the very least) lapses of style. Any effect, however bizarre or however it transgressed the rules demanded by the universal standard of the *ars perfecta*, could be justified on a "literary" basis.

Canto
Il bian co_e dol-ce ci-gno can-tan-do mo-re Et

Alto
Il bian co_e dol-ce ci-gno can-tan-do mo-re Et

Tenore
Il bian co_e dol-ce ci-gno can-tan-do mo-re Et

Basso
Et

io pian-gen-do giung'al fin del vi-ver mi-o.

io pian-gen-do giung'al fin del vi-ver mi-o.

io pian-gen-do giung'al fin del vi-ver mi-o.

io pian-gen-do giung'al fin del vi-ver mi-o.

ex. 17-14a Jacques Arcadelt, *Il bianco e dolce cigno*, mm. 1-10

Real crimes against perfection begin to show up in the 1560s, beginning with the madrigals of Cipriano de Rore (1516–1565), the Flemish associate (and pupil?) of Willaert. He was unusual among the *oltremontani* for the enthusiasm with which he followed the literary premises of the madrigal into uncharted musical terrain. *Dalle belle contrade d'oriente* ("From the fair regions of the East") comes from Rore's fifth and last book, published posthumously in 1566.

di mil - le mort' il di sa -

di mil - le mort' il di, di mil - - le mort' il di,

di mil - le mort' il di, di mil - le mort' il di sa -

di mil - le mort' il di sa -

-rei con-ten - - to, di mil - le mort' il di sa -

di mil - le mort' il di, di mil - - le mort' il di,

-rei con-ten - to, di mil - le mort' il di, di mil - le mort' il di sa -

-rei con-ten - to, di mil - le mort' il di sa -

-rei con-ten - - to.

di mil - le mort' il di sa - rei con-ten - - - to.

-rei con-ten - to, di mil - le mort' il di sa - rei con-ten - to.

-rei con-ten - to, di mil - le mort' il di sa - rei con-ten - to.

ex. 17-14b Jacques Arcadelt, *Il bianco e dolce cigno*, mm. 34-46

The whole poem consists of one sustained, multileveled antithesis: narrated recollection of physical pleasures at the beginning and the end as against the sudden outpouring of emotional anguish in the middle, expressed in “direct discourse” or actual quoted speech. The multiple contrast is expressed with unprecedented violence in the music. The narrative portions at the two ends are full of delightful descriptive effects: the rocking rhythms where the poet speaks of enjoying bliss in his lover’s arms (“fruiua in braccio...”), the tortuous imitative polyphony where the intertwining of the lovers’ limbs is compared with the snaky growth of vines.

Musical descriptions like these, as observed in the previous chapter, usually depend on the uncovering of unsuspected correspondences and are basically humorous no matter what is actually described. That is why the middle section (Ex. 17-15), with its serious content and agonized mood, adopts a wholly different approach to the task of “imitating nature.” Here the imitation is no easy matter of analogy or metaphor: what is imitated is the actual speech of the disconsolate lady, replete with sniffles and sobs, especially poignant when, after an unexpected rest representing a sigh, she blurts out her harmonically wayward, syncopated curse upon Eros (“Ahi, crudo Amor”). In keeping with the agonized mood, the soprano part (corresponding in range to the lady’s voice) makes a direct “forbidden” progression through a “minor semitone” from C-sharp (as third of an A major triad) to C-natural (as root of a C minor triad). It is a supremely calculated effect, needless to say, but it is fashioned to resemble a spontaneous

ejaculation, following an old theory of Aristotle’s that, speech being the outward expression of emotion, imitation of speech is tantamount to the direct imitation of emotion.



fig. 17-6 Cipriano de Rore, anonymous portrait in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

The direct imitation of tortured speech, evoking a single subject’s extreme personal feeling by the use of extreme musical relationships, is as far from the aims of the *ars perfecta* as can be imagined. The musical means employed, judged from the standpoint of the *ars perfecta*, are full of bombastic exaggeration and distortion—in a word, they are “baroque.” But Rore’s exaggerations and distortions only begin to suggest the violence that the last generations of madrigalists, working around the turn of the century, would wreak on the consummate musical idiom their fathers had perfected.

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Cipriano de Rore

Madrigal: Italy, 16th century

Luca Marenzio

PARADOX AND CONTRADICTION

Chapter: CHAPTER 17 Commercial and Literary Music

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Just as it was in the realm of Catholic sacred music, when the generation of Willaert gave way to that of Palestrina, so it was in the realm of the madrigal: native Italian talent gradually took possession of the elite genres. The first of the great Italian-born madrigalists was Luca Marenzio (1553–99), who spent most of his career in Rome, with short forays in other Italian centers and, at the end of his rather short life, at the royal court of Poland. He published nine books of madrigals over a period of nineteen years beginning in 1580; his reputation was so far-reaching by the time of his death that all nine books were reissued together in a collected memorial edition, published in Nuremberg in 1601.

Spe - ran - za del mio cor, dol - ce de - si - o. Te'n
 Spe - ran - za del mio cor, dol - ce de - si - o. Te'n vai,
 Spe - ran - za del mio cor, dol - ce de - si - o,
 Spe - ran - za del mio cor, Te'n
 Spe - ran - za del mio cor, dol - ce de - si - o. Te'n vai,

vai, hai - me, so - la mi la - sci, a - di - o. Che sa - rà
 hai-me, te'n vai, hai - me, a - di - o. Che sa -
 Te'n vai, hai - me, a - di - o. Che sa - rà
 vai, hai - me, a - di - o. Che sa - rà
 hai-me, hai - me, a - di - o.

qui di me scu - ra e do - len - te? Ahi cru - do A -

- rà qui di me scu - ra e do - len - te? Ahi cru - do A -

qui di me scu - ra e do - len - te? Ahi cru - do A -

qui di me scu - ra e do - len - te? Ahi cru - do A -

- mor, ahi cru - do A - mor, ben son du - bio - se e cor - te Le tue dol - cez - ze,

- mor, ahi cru - do A - mor, ben son du - bio - se e cor - te Le tue dol - cez - ze,

- mor, ahi cru - do A - mor, ben son du - bio - se e cor - te Le tue dol - cez - ze,

- mor.

Ahi cru - do A - mor, ben son du - bio - se e cor - te Le tue dol - cez - ze,

ex. 17-15 Cipriano de Rore, *Dalle belle contrade d'oriente*, mm. 26-48

Solo e pensoso (“Alone and distracted,” Ex. 17-16), from Marenzio’s ninth and last book (1599), has for its text a famous verse by Petrarch himself, one that was frequently set by the madrigalists. Marenzio’s setting of the opening couplet, a stroke of “nature-imitating” genius, illustrates another possibility for “painting” a text musically, one to which the late generation of madrigalists had increasing recourse. Music “moves,” and in its movements it can analogize physical movement, even physical space. The opening image of the poem is that of numbly wandering “with slow and halting steps.” The steady tread of semibreves in the accompanying voices suggests the steps pretty clearly. But what are they accompanying?

They are accompanying a soprano voice moving in semibreves (whole notes) through perhaps the first complete chromatic scale in the history of European art music. (The part ascends through fifteen semitonal progressions, covering more than an octave, and descends through eight.) What better way to indicate unpremeditated movement through deserted fields, parts unknown? The soprano’s half steps are unpredictably treated as diatonic or chromatic, as sixteenth-century terminology would have it. In modern terms, and perhaps somewhat oversimply, the diatonic semitone is the one that progresses from one scale degree to another (every diatonic scale has two), and the chromatic semitone is the one that inflects a single degree and (by definition) cannot be found in any diatonic scale.

Using chromatic semitones is obviously incompatible with modal integrity, though it would be a gross overstatement to call madrigalistic chromaticism “atonal,” as some have done. Marenzio takes care to bring things into tonal focus at the end of the couplet (making use, in fact, of techniques of tonal focusing that were as new as his chromaticism) and by extending the last note long enough to sustain a normal authentic cadence. But the new freedom of movement did play hob with modal theory—and even more so with tuning systems: it was precisely this kind of harmony that made tempered tuning, which finally eliminated the actual difference in size between the two kinds of semitone, a necessary invention.

Canto

S So - - lo e pen - -

Alto

A So - lo e pen - so - so i più de - ser -

Quinto

T1 - - - -

Tenore

T2 - - - - So - lo e pen - so - so i

Basso

B - - - -

- so - - - so i più de - -

- - ti cam - - pi, i più de -

- - - - So - lo e pen - so - so i più de - ser - ti -

più de - ser - ti - - - cam - pi, i più de -

- - - - So - lo e pen - so - so i più de -

The image displays a musical score for a madrigal by Luca Marenzio, consisting of four systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line (soprano and tenor) and a lute accompaniment (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are written below the vocal lines. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are: - ser - ti cam - pi Vo mi - su - ran - do, a pas - si tar - di_e len - ti, a pas - si tar - di_e len - ti, e len - ti, a pas - si tar - di_e len - ti, tar - di_e len - ti.

ex. 17-16 Luca Marenzio, *Solo e pensoso*, mm. 1-24

The free intermixture of major and minor semitones was something the madrigalists pioneered, because they were

the first musicians to have need of such a device for their pictorializing purpose. They had some predecessors in a certain crackpot brand of musical humanism that sought to recover the nondiatonic modes of Greek music (the “chromatic genus,” which used minor semitones, and even the “enharmonic genus,” which used quarter tones). A radical humanist named Nicola Vicentino built himself around 1560 a monster keyboard instrument called the *arcigravicembalo*, with fifty-three different pitches within the octave, on which he could experiment in search of the miracles of *ethos* (emotional contagion and moral influence) that the ancient Greek musicians were reputed to have achieved with their music. But it came to nothing.

There was also a negligible tendency on the part of some sixteenth-century musicians to experiment with complete circles of fifths as another way of encompassing the totality of chromatic pitch space. This tendency, too, demanded a radical revision of tuning systems if it was to work. It produced some curious little pieces, in particular a motetlike composition by the German composer Matthias Greiter (ca. 1495–1550) that transposed the beginning of a song called *Fortuna desperata* (“Hopeless fortune”) twelve times by fifths in order to symbolize the rotation of Dame Fortune’s wheel. But it, too, came to nothing. The chromaticism of the madrigalists came to something because its purpose was communication (or representation) of feeling, not pure (or mere) research. It was at first something that only unaccompanied voices, able to adjust their tuning by ear, could effectively perform.



fig. 17-7 Enharmonic keyboard comparable to Vicentino’s, by Vito Trasuntino (Venice, 1606), now at the Museo Civico Medievale in Bologna.

Yet in its very realism, the expressivity of the madrigal contained the seeds of its own undoing. The opening couplet of Marenzio’s setting of *Solo e pensoso* is miraculously precise in depicting the poet’s pensive distraction, but can an ensemble of five voices represent his solitude? One makes allowances for convention, one can easily answer, but in that case why the chromatic experimentation? Its purpose, clearly, was to surmount convention in the interests of expressive exactness. It was a literary, not a musical exactness that was sought, and it exposed a contradiction between literature and music, the two media that madrigal composers were trying to fuse. The motivating “literary” idea brought literalism in its train; and once literalism was admitted, absurdity had to be confronted. There was no way out of the bind.

Another composer who set *Solo e pensoso* to music was Giaches (originally Jacques) de Wert (1535–96), an Antwerp-born composer who was taken to Italy as a child, became a naturalized citizen of Mantua, and grew up to all intents and purposes an Italian composer. A very prolific madrigalist, he published eleven books by the time of his death, and a twelfth was issued posthumously in 1608. *Solo e pensoso*, from his seventh book, was published in 1581, when Marenzio was only beginning his career. It, too, is full of the sort of expressive distortion music historians sometimes designate as “mannerism,” borrowing a term from art history (think of El Greco’s blue-skinned elongated saints).

Wert portrays the poet’s distraction by the use of crazy intervallic leaps that utterly mock the smooth recuperative gestures of “perfected art.” The madrigal’s opening motive (Ex. 17-17) proceeds through two successive descending fifths, a rising major sixth (an interval for which you’ll search all of Beethoven in vain), a falling fifth, a falling third

and two rising sixths. And by beginning with a point of imitation, Wert contrives to have the word *solo* actually sung "solo." But when the other parts enter, the illusion of solitude is broken even more decisively than in Marenzio's setting, because the five voices move so much more independently of one another. No way out.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Giaches de Wert

Madrigal: Italy, 16th century

Claudio Monteverdi

Carlo Gesualdo

EXTERIOR “NATURE” AND INTERIOR “AFFECT”

Chapter: CHAPTER 17 Commercial and Literary Music

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

A particularly vivid example of antithesis, and of the audacities the use of musical metaphors could sanction, is *A un giro sol* (“At a single glance”), first published in 1603 in the fourth madrigal book by Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643). The long-lived Monteverdi had a multifaceted career that included pioneering work in genres that properly belong to the seventeenth century; we will review his biography and survey his output in a later chapter. Here we will consider him as a late madrigalist exclusively, who attracted particular hostile attention from proponents of the *ars perfecta* who saw him as a particular threat precisely because his work was so persuasive.

The poem on which Monteverdi based his madrigal is cast in an unusual form that mirrors its rhetorical content. Its eight lines divide into two quatrains in differing rhyme schemes (abab *vs.* aabb)—but that is the least of their differences. The first quatrain is an “objective” nature description, and a cheerful one; the second is a subjective internal portrait, and miserable. The two quatrains are linked by a play on the word *occhi* (eyes). In the first, the eyes are the sun’s, a metaphor for rays of light. In the second, the eyes are those of the poet, shedding tears.

Musical score for "Solo e pensoso" by Giaches de Wert. The score is in Italian and features five vocal parts: Canto, Alto, Quinto, Tenore, and Basso. The music is in a simple time signature and features a melismatic passage. The lyrics are: "So lo e pen - so - so i piu de - ser - ti cam - pi i lo e pen - so - so i piu de - ser - ti cam - So - lo e pen - so - so i piu de - ser - ti cam - So - lo e pen - so - so i piu de - ser - ti cam - cam - pi i piu de - ser - ti cam piu de - ser - ti cam".

ex. 17-17 Giaches de Wert, *Solo e pensoso*, opening point

This particular outer/inner antithesis—all the world is happy; only I am miserable—was a veritable madrigalian cliché because it was so perfectly suited to musical imagery of every kind. The “objective” description in the first part employs devices of the simpler sort. There is straightforward onomatopoeia in the “laughing” melismas. There are metaphors of motion and direction: the wavelike undulation of the sea—a spatial metaphor that would have a long musical life indeed—is portrayed at first at a leisurely pace, then more lively in response to the wind (Ex. 17-18a). And there is a slightly more complex analogy to qualities of light (the brightening day) by means of shared attributes: as the sun rises, so does the vocal tessitura.

The big turnaround on “*sol io*” (I alone) is signaled by a brusque chromaticism, signaling a new tonal and emotional terrain. Really intense dissonance will follow when the bitter complaint against the lady’s cruelty is enunciated. Monteverdi well understood the paradox of “*persona*” in the madrigal—a group of singers impersonating a single poetic sensibility—and exploited it. The line beginning “*Certo!*” is set on every occurrence for two singers in unison, so that it sounds like a single voice that “breaks” into a grating minor second when *cosi crudelera* (“such a heartless one”) is recalled (Ex. 17-18b). Thereafter, the two voices move in a suspension chain to a cadence, but a cadence that is trumped and frustrated every time by the next semitone clash. The dissonance is kept gnashingly high at all times and can seem excessive even now; this lover’s pain remains palpable after four centuries.

p
 E'l Mar s'ac -
 p
 E'l Mar s'ac -
 p
 E'l Mar s'ac -
 p
 E'l Mar s'ac - que r'e i ven'
 p
 E'l Mar s'ac - que

- que - ta e i ven - ti
 - que - ta e i ven - ti
 - que - ta e i ven - ti e i ven - ti
 ti, e i ven - ti e i ven - ti
 ta e i ven - ti

ex. 17-18a Claudio Monteverdi, *A un giro sol*, mm. 16-27

Monteverdi's "baroque" dissonances were notorious. His madrigal *Cruda Amarilli*, published in 1605 in his fifth book, had already been a cause célèbre for five years because it had been angrily attacked by Giovanni Maria Artusi (1540–1613), a pupil of Zarlino and a latter-day proponent of the *ars perfecta*, in a treatise published in 1600 and pointedly titled *L'Artusi, ovvero Delle imperfettioni della moderna musica* ("Artusi's book concerning the imperfections of modern music"). Like most treatises it is in dialogue form. Artusi puts his criticisms in the mouth of a wise old monk, Signor Vario, to whom the other character, Signor Luca, has brought the unnamed Monteverdi's latest. "It pleases me, at my age," says Signor Vario, "to see a new method of composing, though it should please me much more if I saw that these passages were founded upon some reason which could satisfy the intellect. But as castles in the air, chimeras founded upon sand, these novelties do not please me; they deserve blame, not praise. Let us see the passages, however."¹² Then follow seven little extracts from *Cruda Amarilli*, each containing some offense against the rules of counterpoint as laid down by Zarlino. The most famous infraction is the first, a skip in the most exposed voice, the soprano, from an A that enters as a dissonance against the bass G to an F that is also a dissonance: two sins at a single stroke. What Artusi left out of his discussion, however, is the very thing that motivated the trespasses, and that alone can explain them—namely the text. This testifies either to a devious strategy on the author's part or, more likely, to his inability to comprehend the literary basis of the new style or admit that musical procedures could legitimately rest on textual, rather than musical grounds. In this position he has had successors in every subsequent century, right up to the present.

ste Cer - to
ste Cer - to
Cer - to quan - do na - sce - ste co - si cru - de - le - ri -
Cer - to quan - do na - sce - ste co - si cru - de - le - ri -
ste

quan - do na - sce - ste co - si cru - de - le - ri - a Nac - que la
quan - do na - sce - ste co - si cru - de - le - ri - a Nac - que la mor -
a Nac - que la mor - te
a
Nac - que la mor - te mi - a

ex. 17-18b Claudio Monteverdi, *A un giro sol*, mm. 43-55

The all-determining text of *Cruda Amarilli* ("Cruel Amaryllis"), like those of countless other madrigals, is an excerpt from *Il Pastor Fido* ("The faithful shepherd"), a play by the contemporary courtly poet Giovanni Battista Guarini (1538–1612). A classic of the "pastoral" mode, in which the purity and simplicity of shepherd life is implicitly contrasted with the corruption and the artificiality of court and city, Guarini's "tragicomic" play (i.e., a play about the sufferings of "low" characters) was one of the most famous Italian poems of the sixteenth century. In a fashion that may recall the competitive or emulative practices of the early generations of Mass composers, Guarini's play attracted more than one hundred composers great and small. That spirit of competition—to achieve the most accurate depiction of the poem's emotional content or (to give the same idea a more ordinary human twist) simply to come up with the most far-out setting of a given text—should certainly not be discounted as a force driving radical experimentation.

The image displays a musical score for Claudio Monteverdi's madrigal "Cruda Amarilli". It consists of two systems of five staves each. The first system covers measures 1 through 9, and the second system covers measures 10 through 14. The lyrics are written below the staves. The music is in a common time signature (C) and features a mix of vocal lines and a basso continuo line. The lyrics for the first system are: "Cru - da A - ma - ril - li cru - da A - ma - ril - li che col no - me an -". The lyrics for the second system are: "co - ra D'a mar ahi las - so...". A circled number '1' is placed above the first staff in the second system, marking the beginning of the first "spot" (a lamento).

ex. 17-19 Claudio Monteverdi, *Cruda Amarilli*, mm. 1-14, encompassing the first of Artusi's "spots"

What proved so stimulating to the musical imagination was the new "affective" style in which the poet cast his "pathetic" monologues, that is, the monologues depicting the *affetti* or sentiments of suffering lovers, expressed not only in words but in sighs and tearful ejaculations like *ohimè!* ("oh me oh my") or *ahi lasso!* ("ah, weary me," whence "alas")—the very phrase to which Monteverdi's main "transgression" (Ex. 17-19) was set. Thus composers were encouraged to develop an "affective" style of their own, analogizing the one that was being developed (also to the consternation of classicists) in literature. The remarkable thing is the way the new musical style came into its own just as—or even because—the poetry was becoming less "articulate" in its eloquence, more given over to elemental plaintive sounds, rhetorical "music." The two arts seemed to be converging, meeting in the middle; each giving something up (stylistic "perfection," exalted diction), each gaining something else (heightened expressivity). Out of that nexus a momentous style transformation was bound to occur.

The ultimate madrigalian stage was reached by Carlo Gesualdo (1560–1613), the Prince of Venosa near Naples in southern Italy. A colorful figure, himself a nobleman in no need of patronage (and with a biography rich in lurid anecdote as only a nobleman's could be), Gesualdo's name derives equal notoriety from his having ordered the murder of his unfaithful first wife and from his astonishing musical compositions. It would be the wiser course, perhaps, to resist the temptation to link the two sides of his fame, but there is no gainsaying his music's lurid aspect, reported in his day (by a diplomat slightly annoyed by Gesualdo's "open profession" of an art better practiced by his

employees) as being an art "full of attitudes."¹³

Gesualdo brought to its peak the tradition of "uncanny" chromatic artifice initiated fifty years earlier by Lasso, and applied it to the new, supercharged vein of erotic love poetry. *Moro, lasso* ("I shall die, O miserable me") comes from his sixth and last book, published in 1611, about the latest date at which continental music in the "a cappella" polyphonic style could claim to represent a current idiom rather than a *stile antico*. Before we even touch upon the music, it would be well to take a look at the poem, just to satisfy ourselves that it is indeed a poem with meter and rhyme:

Moro, lasso, al mio duolo I shall die, O miserable me, in my suffering,

E chi me puo dar vita, and the one who could give me life,

Ahi, che m'ancide alas, kills me and is unwilling

e non vuol dar mi aita! to give me aid.

O dolorosa sorte, O painful fate!

Chi dar vita me puo, The one who could give me life,

ahi, mi da morte! alas, gives me death.

Gesualdo's harmonic progressions, more fully saturated than any predecessor's with true chromatic voice leading (often in two, sometimes even in three voices at once), is often compared with much later music (most often, perhaps, with Wagner's). Those inclined to make such comparisons—such as Igor Stravinsky, the famous Russian composer then living in Hollywood, who became fascinated with Gesualdo in the 1950s and even orchestrated three of his madrigals—are also inclined to look upon Gesualdo as a "prophetic" composer, so far ahead of his time that it took two and a half centuries for the rest of the world to catch up with him.

As ought to be clear, even without a peek at Wagner's work, such ideas are based on dubious historical assumptions. The most groundless one is that all of music is moving in one direction (say, toward Wagner and beyond), and therefore some music is farther along the path of destiny than other music. But of course Wagner's chromaticism depends for its effect (and even its sheer intelligibility) on a great deal of aural conditioning that Wagner's contemporaries had all been subjected to (as have we), but that Gesualdo's contemporaries had not. Gesualdo's harmony, however radical, was in no sense ahead of its time. As in the case of Lasso, its ingredients were familiar and its progressions not unprecedented. What was unique in his music was not its sound or its syntax, but its concentrated intensity.

Within the terms of sixteenth century style, moreover, Gesualdo's greatest audacities are not harmonic *per se*, but consist rather in the frequent pauses that disrupt the continuity of his lines, often followed by harmonically disconnected resumptions that coincide (as in *Moro, lasso*) with the *ahi*'s, the affective or downright suggestive exclamations of desire or (given their proximity to words invoking death) of satiation (Ex. 17-20). This linguistic realism, betokening emotional realism and even physiological realism, can still make us uncomfortable when listening to Gesualdo in public. That discomfort has led many writers, even modern ones, to write the Prince of Venosa's extravagances off as being inartistic, even (as befits a prince) "amateurish."¹⁴ Poetry lovers also resist Gesualdo, for his fragmented, discombobulated music completely devours the poem in the course of realizing its *affetti*, turning it into what often sounds like fairly inarticulate prose.

Gesualdo's modern reputation (or modernist reception) poses interesting historical questions. On the one hand, as suggested above (and as the Italian scholar Lorenzo Bianconi has eloquently complained), by drawing factitious connections between Gesualdo and other daring harmonists, the modern revival of interest in him has fueled the invention of "an imaginary, heroic history of visionary prophets"¹⁵ (Lasso → Gesualdo → Wagner → Stravinsky, or something of the sort) and has obscured rather than illuminated the actual historical and cultural conditions that nourished their various activities. On the other hand, without benefit of some of these false historical notions, interest in Gesualdo would never have quickened in the twentieth century the way it did; his works would have been studied and performed far less than they have been, and probably with a far less sympathetic understanding.

Which is not to say that modern understanding of Gesualdo (or any cultural figure from the past) is or can ever be the same as contemporary understanding. It is motivated by new interests and a different intellectual climate, and the passage of years or centuries irrevocably alters the context in which any artifact of the past is perceived. Modern understanding, then, cannot be anything other than new understanding and—if difference is automatically equated with loss (which of course it need not be)—it can only be “misunderstanding.”

The image displays a musical score for a madrigal by Carlo Gesualdo. It consists of three systems of music, each with five staves representing different vocal parts: Canto (Soprano), Quinto (Alto), Alto, Tenore (Tenor), and Basso (Bass). The lyrics are in Italian. The first system shows the vocal entries with the lyrics "E chi mi può dar vi" and "Mo - ro, las - so, al mio duo - lo". The second system continues the vocal lines with lyrics like "ta, e chi mi può dar vi" and "vi - ta, e chi mi può dar vi". The third system features the vocalists singing "Ahi, che m'an - ci - de".

ex. 17-20 Carlo Gesualdo, *Moro, lasso*, mm. 1-12

But it is an inevitable misunderstanding, even a necessary one. There is little to be gained in complaining that the disproportionate interest we now take in Gesualdo’s chromatic madrigals, at the expense of his sacred music or his instrumental dances or any other less spectacular side of his output, is “a mistaken overemphasis,” as Bianconi so challengingly puts it.¹⁶ Our modern (mis)understandings of the past are not mistakes but the products of changed historical conditions. We value in Gesualdo something his contemporaries could not have valued, because we know what they (and he) did not—namely, their future, which is now our past. That knowledge can hardly be erased from our consciousness.

So what interests us now bespeaks our condition and no one else’s. No amount of historical learning can replace new understanding with old understanding. All one can hope to do is add depth and detail to our misunderstanding. (That is where the sacred music and the instrumental music can usefully fit into even the most biased modern

appreciation of Gesualdo.) If that seems a paradoxical thing to say, that has been precisely the intention.

Notes:

(12) G. M. Artusi, *L'Artusi, ovvero, Delle imperfezioni della moderna musica* (Venice, 1600), in Strunk, *Source Readings*, p. 394.

(13) Alfonso Fontanelli to Duke Alfonso II of Ferrara, 18 February 1594; in Glenn Watkins, *Gesualdo: The Man and His Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), pp. 245–46.

(14) Haar, *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music*, p. 144.

(15) Lorenzo Bianconi, "Gesualdo," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (rev. ed., New York: Grove, 2001), Vol. IX, p. 783.

(16) Bianconi, "Gesualdo," p. 781.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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English madrigal

William Byrd

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POSTSCRIPT: THE ENGLISH MADRIGAL

Chapter: CHAPTER 17 Commercial and Literary Music

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Both the music printing business and the cultivation of vernacular art music had a relatively slow start in England. The beginning, splendidly signaled by the publication of XX. *Songes* in 1530, did not take hold. William Byrd, who with Thomas Tallis sought and received monopoly rights on music printing, turned out to be an ineffectual or indifferent businessman. He did not publish even his own settings of English poetry until he had turned his patent over to a printer-musician named Thomas East, who finally made a go of it. Apart from compositions for the Anglican liturgy, Byrd's vernacular settings can be found in two volumes printed by East in 1588 and 1589: *Psalmes, sonets and Songs of sadness and pietie*, and *Songs of sundrie natures, some of gravitie, and others of myrth, fit for all companies and voyces*. Most of the songs are grave and semireligious; they are mainly set for solo voice with instruments and show no interest in the new directions being taken on the continent toward "literary" experiment.



fig. 17-8 Detail from the huge painting *The Wedding at Cana* (1562) by Veronese, which now faces Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre, Paris. The players of the viols were secret portraits of the painter and his colleagues, the size of the instruments they play corresponding to their ages: Tintoretto (Jacopo Robusti) is at left, bowing a tenor viol held lute-style. Opposite him, the aged Titian (Tiziano Vecellio) is sawing away at a gigantic bass viol. Between them, holding a little viol on his shoulder, is Veronese himself (real name Paolo Caliari).

Byrd's songs were representative. Little of the English song literature that circulated in manuscript during the sixteenth century was set for vocal ensembles, but consisted rather of instrumentally accompanied solo "ayres," either with "consorts" of viols or with lute as backup. Whether for viols or for lute, the accompaniments were often contrapuntally intricate, the texts melancholy, the style basically motetlike, but respectful of the structure of the poem in a way that the madrigal was not.

The most important sixteenth-century composer of English verse settings untouched by madrigalian influence was not Byrd but the lutenist John Dowland (1563–1626), like Byrd a recusant Catholic who, upon being refused the post of lutenist to the court of Elizabeth I in 1594 (because of religious discrimination, he claimed) went abroad and spent the early years of the seventeenth century at various German and Danish courts, returning to England in 1609 and

finally securing appointment as one of the King's Lutes at the court of James I in 1612.

Dowland was a supreme virtuoso of his instrument, who could write for it in a very strict contrapuntal style. For this reason he found it easy to arrange his lute ayres, most effectively, for publication as vocal ensembles after the madrigal had caught on in England. But his work belongs to the earlier tradition, a tradition that goes back (like most pre-madrigalian continental vernacular genres as well) to the strophic dance song. Most of Dowland's ayres are cast in the form of one of the two main ballroom dances of Elizabeth's time: the stately duple-metered *pavan* and the lively triple-metered *galliard* with which the pavan was often paired in the ballroom, characteristically full of lilting "hemiola" syncopations. Both pavan and galliard consisted formally of three repeated "strains" or cadenced phrases, the middle cadence (or half-cadence) being on a contrasting harmony.

The pavan was originally an Italian dance called *paduana* after Padua, its putative city of origin. (There is also a theory, no longer much believed, that it was originally a Spanish dance named after the *pavón* or peacock because of its proud movements.) The most famous of all pavans is Dowland's song "Flow My Tears" (see Ex. 17-21 for its first strain), which he not only arranged as a part-song but also transcribed for five-part consort of viols without voice under the title "The Lachrymae Pavan" (*lachrymae* being Latin for tears), in which form he published it in 1604 together with six more pavans all based on the same head motive: a falling tetrachord, traditionally emblematic of lamenting (Ex. 17-22).

The *galliard* was also originally a north Italian court dance; its name derives from *gagliardo*, Italian for "robust." Dowland's galliard songs are wonderful examples of expert English text-setting. They are based on poems in iambic pentameter, the Shakespearean meter, with hemiolas—the breaking of a normal triple bar (say,) bar into two smaller ones () or grouping two of them into one larger bar ()—allowing for interesting inversions and cross-accents that adapt the regular meter to the normal enunciation pattern of English speech. The witty lover's complaint, *Can shé excúse my wróngs with virtue's cloak?* (i.e., can she claim virtue as her excuse for thwarting me) is a particularly complex—and therefore a particularly delightful—example (Ex. 17-23a). The title as just given is marked to show the normal iambic-pentameter scansion. Example 17-23b shows how Dowland's hemiolas actually stress the words in performance. This is English musical prosody at its most original and authentic.

Slow $\text{♩} = 46-48$

Voice

Flow my teares fall from your springs,
Downe my vaine lights shine you no more,

Lute

legato

Ex - ilde for ev - er, let me mourne Where
No nights are dark e - nough for those That

nights black bird hir sad in - fa - my sings, There
in dis - paire their lost for - tuns de - plore, Light

let mee live for lorne.
doth but shame dis - close.

decresc.

decresc.

ex. 17-21 John Dowland, “Flow My Tears,” first strain

The situation changed, very abruptly, in 1588, the year of the great sea battle with the Spanish Armada, hence a year usually associated in English history with victory and conquest. In music it went the other way. It was the English who were conquered by the Italians, to the point where a decade later Thomas Morley could complain, in his *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke*, that “such be the newfangled opinions of our countrymen, who will highly esteem whatsoever cometh from beyond the seas, and specially from Italy, be it never so simple, contemning that which is done at home though it be never so excellent.”¹⁷

a. Lachrimae antiquae b. Lachrimae antiquae novae

(Flow, my tears)

c. Lachrimae gementes d. Lachrimae tristes

e. Lachrimae coactae f. Lachrimae amantis

g. Lachrimae verae

ex. 17-22 John Dowland, "The Lachrymae Pavan," opening

Voice

Can shee ex - cuse my wrongs with ver - tues cloake:
Are those cleere fiers which van - nish in - to smoake:

Lute

poco marcato

Shall I call her good when she proves un - kind.
Must I praise the leaves where no fruit I find.

ex. 17-23a John Dowland, *Can shee excuse my wrongs*, first strain

Can shee ex - cuse my wrongs with vir - tue's cloak? Shall I call her
good when she proves un - kind?

ex. 17-23b John Dowland, *Can shee excuse my wrongs*, voice part rebarred to show hemiola scansions

Morley (1557–1602) had scant right to grumble so. As translator, as arranger, as monopolistic publisher and as literary propagandist he deserves most of the credit or the blame for the English craze for Italian music that flared up after the 1588 publication of *Musica Transalpina* (“Music from across the Alps”). This was a large anthology of fifty-seven Italian madrigals (grouped in sections for four voices, for five, and for six) with their texts translated into English by a London music lover named Nicholas Yonge, who had long made it a hobby to sing Italian madrigals at home and to translate their texts for his friends, knowing that so literary a genre as the madrigal will only be sung “with little delight” by those ignorant of the language. (One of the madrigals Yonge Englished was Palestrina’s ubiquitous *Vestiva i colli*.) Yonge’s bestseller was followed two years later by *Italian Madrigals Englished*, mainly containing Marenzio, freely paraphrased by a well-known poet, Thomas Watson. And then it was Morley’s turn to make a killing. Aiming for the widest possible appeal, he concentrated at first on the lighter submadrigalian Italian genres that had descended from dance songs, becoming ever more frivolous as the madrigal became ever more serious: *canzonetti* (little homorhythmic songs), *balletti* (little dances), and the like. These are the genres that have the *falala* nonsense refrains (parodying solmization) that are so firmly associated with English “madrigals” as commonly defined (and as sung by glee clubs). Their continued currency goes all the way back to Morley’s popularizing efforts.

Morley’s first book of Italian translations, *Canzonets, or Little Short Songs to Four Voices: Selected out of the best and approved Italian authors*, came out in 1597. His *Madrigals to Five Voices: Selected out of the best approved Italian authors* appeared the next year, and also consisted, for the most part, of canzonets. But his Italianate composing activity actually preceded his editorial work. In 1593, Morley had published a book of two-voiced canzonets of his own: in 1594 he put out a book of four-part madrigals under his own imprint as publisher: and in

1595 he issued a shady little book that bestrode the borderline between composing and arranging: *The first book of ballets to five voyces*, issued in both English and Italian versions, in which no name is given as author except Morley's, but in which almost every item is so closely based on an Italian model as to amount to plagiarism, except that Morley very skillfully amplified the "falas" far beyond anything in his models.

Morley's dance-song "Now is the month of Maying," for example, now a glee club evergreen, was really a balletto, *So ben mi c'ha bon tempo*, that Morley found in a goldmine of a book published five years earlier in Venice, called *Selva di varia ricreatione* ("Forest [i.e., a big bunch] of various recreations") by Orazio Vecchi, the great Italian master of submadrigalian frivolity (including "madrigal comedies"—farces with texts made up entirely of madrigal spoofs). Ex. 17-24 shows the first strophe, complete with falas, from both pieces.

Morley's publications are a fitting conclusion to a chapter all about early musical entrepreneurship. Once he got the commercial ball rolling, there was no stopping it, or so it seemed. Between the mid-1590s, when Morley began, and the early 1620s, when Thomas Tomkins (1572–1656) published his last madrigal book, about fifty prints containing madrigals or "madrigals" (that is, songs the English called madrigals but which the Italians would have called something else) were issued, by almost as many composers, some of whom were remarkable musicians indeed, fully worthy of their transalpine forebears. Emblematic of the whole movement was a collection published by Morley in 1601: *The Triumphes of Oriana*, consisting of madrigals by 21 composers, all in praise of Queen Elizabeth and ending with a common refrain, "Long live fair Oriana." Thus nationalism, public relations, and entrepreneurship conjoined to turn the century's most quintessentially Italian musical genre, or at least a lightened variant of it, into a genre the English accepted as their own.

The most eminent English madrigalists, or at least the most serious, were the three W's: John Ward (1571–1638), John Wilbye (1574–1638), and Thomas Weelkes (1576–1623). They combined the kind of musico-literary imagination that marked the best of the Italian madrigalists with outstanding contrapuntal techniques, making them absolutely the last composers whose work exemplified the sixteenth-century polyphonic style as a living, rather than an embalmed, tradition. To illustrate their work, Ward's *Upon a Bank* (Ex. 17-25), published in 1613, makes an apt counterpart to Monteverdi's *A un giro sol* (Ex. 17-18). It is based on the very same kind of overall "Petrarchian" antithesis—a jolly description of nature followed by a lament—and features a wealth of delightfully subtle imagery in the opening pictorial part. Here is the text of that part, with the words most ingeniously "painted" set in italics:

- Upon a bank with roses set about,
- Where pretty turtles [i.e., turtle doves] *joining bill to bill*,
- And gentle springs *steal softly murmuring* out,
- Washing *the foot* of pleasure's sacred hill.....

Cantus
Now is the month of May - ing, When

Altus
Now is the month of May - ing, When

Quintus
Now is the month of May - ing, When

Tenor
Now is the month of May - ing, When

Bassus
Now is the month of May - ing, When

4
mer - ry lads are play - ing, Fa la la la la la

mer - ry lads are play - ing, Fa la la la la la

mer - ry lads are play - ing, Fa la la la la la

mer - ry lads are play - ing, Fa la la la la la

mer - ry lads are play - ing, Fa la la la la la

7
la la la. Fa la la la la la la

la. Fa la la. Fa la la la la la la.

la. Fa la la la la la la.

la. Fa la la la la la la

la. Fa la la la la la la.

ex. 17-24 Thomas Morley, “Now is the month of Maying”

Allegro vivace

Soprano
1. So ben mi ch' à bon tem - po, so ben mi ch' à bon

Alto
1. So ben mi ch' à bon tem - po, so ben mi ch' à bon

Tenor
1. So ben mi ch' a bon tem - po, so ben mi ch' à bon

Bass
1. So ben mi ch' à bon tem - po, so ben mi ch' à bon

tem - po, Fa la la la, la la la la la la,

tem - po, Fa la la la, la la la la la la,

tem - po, Fa la la la, la la la la la la,

tem - po, Fa la la la, la la la la la la,

ex. 17-24b Orazio Vecchi, *So ben mi c'ha bon tempo*

The most impressive thing about Ward’s descriptive technique is its strategy. In order to paint “joining” with a sudden homorhythm, he precedes it with a passage of hocketing text repetition. In order to paint “the foot” with a bass entrance, he withholds the voice from the whole preceding line. The strategy, of course, is based on a particularly fine awareness that relationships are what impart musical meaning, and that the simplest sort of relationship to contrive is an antithesis. Pictorialisms that seem more “direct” or “essential” are in fact the opposite, resting on specifically musical conventions that must be learned before their effects can be perceived. Thus Ward’s brook “murmurs” by way of a melisma whose down-and-up contour may seem self-evidently (like Monteverdi’s) to describes a wave. But that is because we have all internalized a spatial (up/down) analogy that is by no means given in the sounds themselves. Even more convention-bound is Ward’s depiction of “stealing softly”: it is ingeniously matched to a suspension, the lowest voice stealing softly to a dissonance beneath the higher ones. But to get this particular joke one needs concepts that come only with technical musical training.

where pre-ty Tur-tles, where pret-ty Tur-tles:
Tur-tles, where pret-ty Tur-tles, where pret-ty Tur-tles
where pret-ty Tur-tles, where pret-ty Tur-tles, where pret-ty Tur-tles, where pret-ty Tur-tles
where pret-ty Tur-tles, where pret-ty Tur-tles, where pret-ty Tur-tles, where pret-ty Tur-tles
where pret-ty Tur-tles, where pret-ty Tur-tles

join-ing bill to bill, And gen-tle springs steal —
join-ing bill to bill, And gen-tle springs steal —
join-ing bill to bill,
join-ing bill to bill, And gen-tle springs steal
join-ing bill to bill,

The image displays a musical score for a madrigal by John Ward. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a vocal line with lyrics: "soft - - ly mur - - mur-ing out, Wash -". Below it are two more vocal lines with the same lyrics, and a bass line with lyrics: "soft - - ly mur - - mur - ing out, Wash - ing the". The second system continues the vocal lines with lyrics: "- ing the foot of plea - - sure's sa - cred hill, Wash - ing the foot of plea -" and "Wash - ing the foot of plea - - sure's sa - cred hill, of". The bass line continues with "foot of plea - - sure's sa - cred hill,". The score features various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like *cresc.* (crescendo).

ex. 17-25 John Ward, *Upon a Bank*, mm. 12-27

The pictorialism in Ward's first quatrain show an enormous affinity for those in Monteverdi's. It is the second quatrain, the affective one depicting the wounded cupid, that suggests the difference between the English madrigalists as a school and their Italian counterparts. Or rather, it reinforces our sense of that difference, amounting, it could almost be said, to a deficiency or a blind spot on the part of the English. Compared to the Italian, the English madrigalists deliberately curbed emotional intensity (here, for example, by deflecting love, as suffered subjectively, to "Love" as objectified in the adorable, unthreatening form of Cupid), and avoided any but jocular references to sex. In other words, what had fueled the most powerful moments in the most serious Italian madrigals, and in particular provided the impetus for the most extreme chromatic experiments, was anxiously relegated by the English madrigalists to the lighter vein.

A typical example is the coy double entendre in *Fair Phyllis*, a mock-pastoral by the minor madrigalist John Farmer (and yet another glee-club perennial), in which the shepherd "wanders up and down" in search of the shepherdess, finds her, kisses her, and then, because of a repeat sign, "wanders up and down" and "finds her" again. No need for chromaticism here, thank you; and there is generally far less interest in chromaticism among the English than among the Italians, which more than anything else hints at what all that Italian chromaticism really meant.

Was this reticence a national characteristic? It certainly did not arise out of religious scruples alone (for all that Weelkes and Ward were churchmen by profession). The church to which the Italian composers confessed was assuredly no less officially censorious of illicit sex than the Church of England. Was it "purely musical"

conservatism? Or was it (as Joseph Kerman suggests) “a fundamental dislike of stopping the composition abruptly for the purpose of momentary word-painting”?¹⁸ But if so, why? Kerman, ostensibly restating the same proposition more succinctly, may in fact suggest the reason: the English, he writes, “saw chromaticism as a disruptive force and tended to reject it accordingly.”¹⁹ But of course Gesualdo, too, saw chromaticism as a disruptive force—and embraced it enthusiastically. Was it only musical continuity that the English saw as threatened? Now that chromaticism has been established as both a musical and an expressive resource, it will be something to watch—indeed to monitor—as time goes on.

Notes:

(17) Morley, *A Plain and Easy Introduction*, ed. Harman, p. 293.

(18) Joseph Kerman, *The Elizabethan Madrigal: A Comparative Study* (American Musicological Society: Studies and Documents, no. 4, 1962), p. 217.

(19) Kerman, *The Elizabethan Madrigal*, p. 220.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 18 Reformations and Counter Reformations

Music of the Lutheran Church; Venetian Cathedral Music

Chapter: CHAPTER 18 Reformations and Counter Reformations

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

THE CHALLENGE

What we now call the Protestant Reformation was in fact a series of revolts against Roman Catholic orthodoxy and the authority of the hierarchical church with roots going back to the fourteenth century (John Wyclif in England, Jan Hus in Bohemia, both successfully suppressed). They took radically different forms in different places. (The one sixteenth-century Reformation movement with which we are already familiar, the English, was the most “radically different” of all, since it was, uniquely, led by the Crown.) They did, however, reach a joint peak in the first half of the sixteenth century and achieved a lasting rupture in the history of European Christendom, for which reason they now appear in retrospect to have been a concerted movement, which they were not.

What the continental reform movements had in common was an antifeudal, antihierarchical individualism; a zeal to return to the original revealed word of scripture (a by-product of humanism, which encouraged the learning of Greek and Hebrew, the original scriptural languages); and confidence that every believer could find a personal path to truth based on scripture. They shared a disdain for formulaic liturgical ritual or the “caking up” of scripture with scholastic commentary; they reviled the worldliness of the professionalized Catholic clergy and its collusion with temporal authority, especially that of the supranational Holy Roman Empire, the very existence of which testified to that collusion.

What is now thought of as the first overt act of the sixteenth-century religious revolution took place in Germany in 1517, when an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther (1483–1546) nailed 95 “theses” or points of difference with Roman Catholic authority to the door of the castle church in the town of Wittenberg, as a challenge for debate. The precipitating cause of this bold act was Luther’s horror at what he considered the venal abuse by the local church authorities of what were known as indulgences: the buying of “time off” from purgatory for one’s ancestors or oneself by making contributions to the church coffers.

Among underlying factors that brought things to a head in the sixteenth century was the steady growth of mercantilism—that is, of economic enterprise and money-based trade. Protestantism, capitalism, and nationalism went hand in hand, it has often been observed, and renewed Europe in ways that ultimately went far beyond religion. Their mutual interactions were extremely various. One manifestation of mercantilism, as we know from the previous chapter, was the growth of the printing industry. This not only facilitated the dissemination of humanistic learning and secular music; it also allowed the rapid spread of Protestant ideas. In return, the Reformation provided a big new market for printers (and, as we shall see, for music printers).



fig. 18-1 The beginning of the Reformation: Martin Luther posts his ninety-five theses on the church door at Wittenberg.

It cannot be said that music ranked very high on the Reformation agenda, but the effects of the Reformation were felt very keenly in the musical sphere. For it was a revolt within the very stronghold of cultivated music, the source of much or most of its richest patronage. Just think how much of the music we have considered up to now has been bound up with the liturgy that was now coming under attack, and how much the now-suspect opulence of the Roman church hierarchy had meant to the material support of musicians, especially those whose work, committed to writing, forms the basis of music-with-a-history. Under particularly ascetic “reform” conditions, one could imagine music leaving history again. And in some of the reformed churches, it did just that.

For nowhere do the differences among the reformed churches show up more clearly than in their attitudes toward music. What they shared was a hostility to the pope’s music: rich, professionalized, out of touch with ordinary life—just like the hierarchical clergy itself. What they hated, in other words, was the *ars perfecta*, whose very perfection now came under moral suspicion. But musical agreement among the reformers ended there. They had no united positive vision of music’s place in religion.

Most negative of all was John Calvin (1504–64), the Geneva reformer, whose emphasis on austerity and complete rejection of the sacraments left very little room for music in his services, and none at all for professional music. The only musical artifact of the Calvinist or Huguenot Church was the Geneva Psalter, a book of psalms put into metrical verse (partly by the famous poet Clément Marot) for singing to the tunes (or *timbres*) of popular songs. It was first published in 1543 and reissued three times thereafter with various harmonizations by the one-time chanson composer (and eventual Huguenot martyr) Claude Goudimel (ca. 1514–72).

These psalm settings were similar in concept to Jacobus Clemen’s *Souterliedekens*, briefly discussed and sampled in chapter 15, but far simpler. Goudimel’s preface to the last edition, published in 1565, strongly implies that even the simplest polyphonic psalm harmonizations were rejected as frills in Calvinist services, to be allowed only in home devotions. For all practical purposes, then, the Calvinist Church turned its back on music as an art. To the extent that music was cultivated as an art, it had no place in church; to the extent it had a place in church, it was to be

“uncultivated” and unlettered. The same could be said for the Swiss German reformed church of Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), which was of all the Protestant churches the most hostile to liturgy, and which sponsored public burnings of organs and liturgical music-books.

The great exception to this pervasive music-hatred was the largest and most successful of the Reformed churches, the Lutheran; and as Luther was quick to point out, there was a lesson in that. Although he was by far the most spectacular and histrionic of the reformers, Luther was in some ways the most conservative, retaining a far more regular and organized liturgy than his counterparts, and in particular keeping the sacrament of the Mass (renamed the Lord’s Supper in its modified Lutheran form). Unlike his counterparts, moreover, Luther was personally a fervent music lover, who played several instruments, loved to sing and even composed a bit, and who did not fear the seductiveness of melody the way Calvin or Zwingli (following St. Augustine) did, but instead wished to harness and exploit it for his own purposes. His most widely quoted remark on music—“Why should the Devil have all the good tunes?”—speaks directly to this wish.¹ Even more unlike the Swiss reformers, Luther urged the cultivation of polyphonic or “figural” music in churches and schools as well as homes.

But the polyphonic church music he favored was still of a different order from anything we have seen up to now. It was not totally divorced from the music of the *ars perfecta*, since Luther wanted the music of his church modeled after that of Josquin des Prez, which (like many Germans) he treasured; and Josquin had been a great figure for the *ars perfecta*, too. But still, Luther opposed professionalization and hierarchy, seeing his church (in accord with his conception of the original Christian church) as a universal priesthood of all believers.

The music he wanted for it was not the music of a professional choir, but a music of a *Gemeinschaft*—a congregational community. He described his musical ideals in the preface to a schoolbook called *Symphoniae jucundae* (“Pleasant polyphonic pieces”), issued in 1538. All men are naturally musical, he begins by observing, which means that the Creator wished them to make music. “But,” he continued, “what is natural should still be developed into what is artful.” With the addition of learning and artifice,

which corrects, develops, and refines the natural music, then at last it is possible to taste with wonder (yet still not comprehend) God’s absolute and perfect wisdom in his wondrous work of music. Here it is most remarkable that one single voice continues to sing the tenor, while at the same time many other voices trip lustily around it, exulting and adorning it in exuberant strains and, as it were, leading it forth in a divine dance, so that those who are the least bit moved know nothing more amazing in the world. But any who remain unaffected are clodhoppers indeed and are fit to hear only the words of dung-poets and the music of pigs.²

From the previous chapter we recognize the kind of music that Luther is praising here with characteristic delicacy. It is the Tenorlied, or as Luther would have called it, the *Kernweise*, the peculiarly German song genre in which traditional cantus-firmus writing, increasingly outmoded in other European centers, was given a new lease on life by the growth of the printing trade. Luther was a great devotee of the genre, and of its foremost practitioner. Next to the divine Josquin he worshiped Ludwig Sennfl, just the sort of composer the other continental reformers despised. “I could never compose a motet like Sennfl’s, even were I to tear myself to pieces in the attempt,” Luther marveled; “but on the other hand,” he could not resist adding, “Sennfl could never preach as well as I.”³

He said this after receiving an actual musical tribute from Sennfl, with whom he corresponded, and who, while never declaring himself a “Lutheran” or breaking with the religion of the Holy Roman Empire, his employer, sympathized sufficiently with Luther the man to egg him on at a low point in his career (his confinement under arms at Coburg in 1530) with a motet based on Psalm 118, verse 17—“I shall not die, but live, and I shall declare the works of the Lord”—based on the traditional Mode 7 psalm tone as sung in Germany. Luther took the verse forever afterward as his motto, and even tried to make a setting of it himself, as if vying with Sennfl (though never seriously) in the *ars perfecta*.



The image shows a musical score for a hymn. It consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system contains the first four measures of the piece. The second system starts at measure 5 and contains the next four measures. The music is written in a four-part setting (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) with a common time signature. The lyrics are written below the Tenor and Bass staves. The first system's lyrics are "Non mo - ri - ar sed vi - vam et". The second system's lyrics are "nar - ra - bo o - pe - ra Do - mi - ni,". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "c.f.".

Non mo - ri - ar sed vi - vam et

nar - ra - bo o - pe - ra Do - mi - ni,

ex. 18-1a *Non moriar sed vivam* (Ps. 118:7) as set by Martin Luther

Non mo - ri - ar, mo - ri - ar sed vi -
Do - mi - ni, Non mo - ri - ar sed vi - vam, sed vi - vam, sed
Do - mi - ni, Non mo - ri - ar sed vi -
(ni) Non mo - ri - ar, non mo - ri - ar sed vi - vam, sed vi - vam, sed vi - vam,

vam, sed vi - vam, sed vi - vam et nar - ra - bo o - pe - ra Do - mi -
vi - vam, sed vi - vam, sed vi - vam et nar - ra - bo o - pe - ra Do - mi -
vam et nar - ra - bo o - pe - ra Do - mi -
sed vi - vam, sed vi - vam et nar - ra - bo o - pe - ra Do - mi -

ni et
ni, Do - mi - ni,
ni,
ni.

ex. 18-1b *Non moriar sed vivam* (Ps. 118:7) as set by Ludwig Sennfl

In Ex. 18-1a Luther's tiny setting, in traditional tenor cantus-firmus style, is set alongside the portion of Sennfl's motet in which the tenor gets the tune. They make a touching contrast. Luther's is a musically amateurish but eloquent shout of faith and endurance: there are no actual errors, but the outer voices move uninterestingly in parallel tenths (a technique much used in "supra librum" or improvised polyphony, and taught to composition students as a quick fix) and the altus is all too clearly a filler, with little melodic profile. Sennfl's setting is the suave work of a professional, full of subtle stylistic felicities: "Vorimitation" in the soprano, the lilting metric displacement in the outer voices (on "sed vivam") to bridge the gap between tenor phrases, and so on and on.

Notes:

(1) This remark is reliably attributed to the English Methodist preacher Rowland Hill (1744–1833; see *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 3rd ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1979]), only by tradition to Luther. It is resisted by many modern Lutherans. In the January 1997 issue of *Concordia Theological Journal*, Dr. James L. Brauer offered a \$25 reward to any Luther scholar who could find the quote about the devil's tunes in Luther's works (see James Tiefel, "The Devil's Tavern Tunes," Commission on Worship website, www.wels.net/worship)

/art-104.html).

(2) Trans. Ulrich S. Leupold, in *Luther's Works*, LIII (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), pp. 323–24.

(3) *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden*, ed. E. Kroker (Weimar, 1912–21), no. 968 (table conversation recorded 17 December 1538).

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Chorale

Heinrich Isaac

Johann Walther

Lucas Osiander

Sethus Calvisius

THE LUTHERAN CHORALE

Chapter: CHAPTER 18 Reformations and Counter Reformations

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The Tenorlied texture was not only distinctively German—although that was important enough in its own right to emphasize at a time when a German national church was asserting itself against the supranational authority of “Holy Rome” both as ecclesiastical and as temporal power. It was also ideally adaptable to the musical needs of the emerging Lutheran Church. In keeping with the communitarian ideals of the reform, the Lutheran Church at first advocated the use of full congregational singing in place of the traditional service music—or any music, whether plainchant or “figural,” that required the use of a professional choir and thus created a musical “hierarchy.” The lay congregation could thus become its own choir even as the whole congregation of the faithful, not the minister’s ordained authority, now constituted the priesthood. A service in which the minister’s preaching was answered by congregational singing would be more than a mere sacramental ritual; it would become “evangelical”—an occasion for actively and joyously proclaiming the Gospel anew, and affirming the bonds of Christian fellowship.

The unit of congregational singing, hence the distinctive musical genre of the Lutheran Church, was the strophic unison German hymn known as *Choral* (“chorale” in English), a term that originally meant “chant,” as in “*gregorianischer Choral*.” Chorales were meant to take the place of the Gregorian chant, especially the Gradual (in conjunction with the Gospel) and the Sanctus/Agnus Dei pair in conjunction with the Eucharist. Many of the earliest chorales were actually adapted from favorite chants, particularly (but not only) hymns. Some were direct translations. The Latin Advent hymn *Veni redemptor gentium* (“Come, redeemer of the Heathen”) became *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*; the Pentecost favorite, *Veni creator spiritus* (Ex. 2-7c) became *Komm, Gott Schöpfer, Heiliger Geist*.

Others were freer adaptations. One of the most famous of all Lutheran chorales, the Easter hymn *Christ lag in Todesbanden* (“Christ lay in Death’s bondage”), descended from *Victimae paschali laudes*, the Latin Easter sequence, as mediated through an earlier German adaptation—a popular twelfth-century *Leise*, sung mainly in street processions not in church—called *Christ ist erstanden* (“Christ is risen”). Only the first line—the incipit or “tag,” as it were—of the Latin sequence is retained; it is immediately balanced by an answering phrase in the complementary modal pentachord; and the melody thus created is immediately repeated in conformity with the popular “Hofweise” or court-song model, the traditional bar form (*aab*) that now survived only in Germany (Ex. 18-2).

In keeping with the “why should the Devil...” theory, many Lutheran chorales were adapted from secular songs. One with a particular resonance, and a particular irony, was *Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen* (“Innsbruck, I now must leave thee”), a song composed by Heinrich Isaac (ca. 1450–1517) during his period of service to the “Kaiser” (Caesar), Maximilian I, the Holy Roman Emperor, one of whose capitals was the Austrian city of Innsbruck. Ex. 18-3 contains Isaac’s original setting, underlaid both with the original text and with the clever Lutheran *contrafactum*, in which the sentiments of the very worldly original words are, with only a few adjustments, “universalized” and assimilated to a typical expression of Lutheran contempt for the (or rather “this”) world.

a.



Christ lag in To - des - ban - den für uns - re Sünd ge - fan - gen.
Der ist wie - der er - stan - den und hat uns bracht das Le - ben

b.



Vic - ti - mae pas - cha - li lau - des

c.



Christ ist er stan - den von der Mar - ter al - le,
Wär nicht er - stan - den, wär die Welt zet - gan - gen

//

a., continued



Des wir sol - len fröh - lich sein, Gott lo - ben und dank - bar sein, und

c., continued



Des solln wir al - le fröh - sein Christ

//

a., continued



sin - gen Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia!

c., continued



will un - ser Trost sein

ex. 18-2 *Christ lag in Todesbanden* compared with *Victimae paschali* and *Christ ist erstanden*

The image shows a musical score for a four-part vocal choir (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a basso continuo. The music is in a 16th-century style, featuring a simple harmonic structure with a clear melodic line in the soprano part. The lyrics are in German and are presented in two systems. The first system contains the first two lines of the text, and the second system contains the next two lines. The lyrics are: "Inns - bruch ich muss dich las - sen ich O Welt ich muss dich las - sen, ich fahr' da - hin mein' Stras - sen in frem - de Land da - hin. fahr' da - hin mein' Stra - ssen in's e - wig Va - ter - land. fahr' da - hin mein' Stra - ssen in's e - wig Va - ter - land. fahr' da - hin mein' Stra - ssen in's e - wig Va - ter - land. fahr' da - hin mein' Stra - ssen in's e - wig Va - ter - land." The score is written in a single system with four staves for the voices and one for the basso continuo. The time signature is common time (C), and the key signature has one flat (B-flat).

ex. 18-3 Heinrich Isaac, *Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen*, underlaid both with original text and with Lutheran *contrafactum*, mm. 1 - 9

Finally, there were newly composed chorales, but composed as far as possible to resemble traditional melodies. Many of the most famous tunes are attributed to Luther himself, probably as an honorific. The most famous one of all, with an attribution to Luther that dates from within his lifetime and is therefore possibly trustworthy, is *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott* (famous in English as “A Mighty Fortress”), a hearty *Verkündigungslied* (“faith-proclaiming song”) as Luther termed it, for which he adapted a text from his own translation of Psalm 46 (“God is our refuge and strength” in the King James version). The melody, it has been plausibly suggested, was adapted from the formula-stock of the Meistersingers—the contemporaneous German guild-musicians (see chapter 4). Fig. 18-2 shows the famous hymn as it appeared in its first published source, a book of “new, improved sacred songs” (*Geistliche Lieder auff's new gebessert*) issued in 1533 by the printer Joseph Klug in Wittenberg, Luther’s own town. Like almost all the newly composed chorales, it follows the “bar” form of the *Hofweise*.

**Der xlvj. Psalm/ Deus
noster refugium et
virtus/ ꝛc.**

Martinus Luther.

Ein feste burg ist vuser Gott Ein gu
t Erhilff vns frey ans aller not/ die vns
te wehrt vnd waffen/ Der alt bö
se feind

Se feind / mit ernst ers ist meint / gros
(macht vns
viel list/ sein grausam rüstung ist / auff
erd ist
nicht seins gleichen.
Mit vnser macht ist nichts gethan/
wir sind gar bald verloren / Es streit
für vns der rechte man / den Gott hat
selbs

fig. 18-2 Luther's *Ein' feste Burg* (A Mighty Fortress) as printed by Joseph Klug (*Geistliche Lieder*, 1533).

Nine years earlier, also in Wittenberg, the first book of polyphonically arranged chorales had already appeared, the work of Johann Walther (1496–1570), formerly a Saxon (East German) court singer, who had become Luther's main musical consultant and assistant. Essentially a collection of Protestant Tenorlieder (though they were called motets) based on chorale melodies, Walther's *Geystliches gesangk Buchleyn* ("Little sacred songbook"), which boasted a preface by Luther himself, was chiefly intended for use at religious boarding schools, so that "young people," as Luther put it in the preface, "who should and must be trained in music and other proper arts, would free themselves from love songs and other carnal music and learn something wholesome instead."⁴ The book remained standard curricular fare for many years and went through many editions.

Hie ist das rech - te O - ster - lamm da -

Hie ist das rech - te O -

Hie ist das rech - te

Hie ist das rech - te O - ster - lamm das rech - te O - ster - lamm das

Hie ist das rech - te O - ster - lamm das rech - te O - ster -

von Gott hat ge - bot - ten
 ster - lamm da - von Gott hat ge - bot - ten
 O - ster - lamm da - von Gott hat ge - bot - ten
 O - ster - lamm da - von Gott hat ge - bot - ten
 lamm da - von Gott hat ge - bot - ten

ex. 18-4 Johann Walther, *Christ lag in Todesbanden*

The level of musical training at such schools was high, to judge by the sophistication of Walther's settings. His setting of *Christ lag in Todesbanden* (Ex. 18-4), for example, treats the tune to a point of *Vorimitation* before the tenor enters; and the tenor, when it does come in, comes in as twins: up to the double bar the setting is canonic, and remains pretty strictly imitative thereafter. But even at its most elaborate, the Lutheran *Liedsatz* (polyphonic chorale setting) was clearly organized around the cantus firmus and dominated by it. The accompanying parts, though provided with text, were often played on the organ or by ensemble instruments; this set the precedent for the important instrumental genre called "Chorale prelude" (*Choraltvorspiel*) that kept the traditional art of cantus-firmus writing (and improvising) alive among Lutheran composers into the eighteenth century.

The two settings of *Ein' feste Burg* in Ex. 18-5 are at two textural extremes. The first is by Martin Agricola (1486–1556), the choirmaster at the Protestant "Lateinschule" or humanist academy for boys at Magdeburg in Eastern Germany (hence his Latinized pen name). In its homespun simplicity it is almost a discant setting. The other, which sports as much motetlike pseudo-imitation as the composer could work into it without altogether compromising the tenor's ascendancy, is the work of Stephan Mahu, a composer in the service of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand I (a Hapsburg and therefore a member of the ruling family of the Holy Roman Empire), who like Sennfl was probably a sympathetic or nationalistic Catholic, not a Lutheran. The settings are representative of their composers' positions: Mahu's is internationalist, ars-perfected; Agricola's is provincial, wholly indigenous, Lutheran-specific.

That both styles were welcomed and deemed useful within the big tent of Lutheranism is clear from the fact that they appeared together in the most comprehensive musical publication of the early Lutheran church, the *Neue deudsche geistliche Gesenge* ("New German sacred songs"), a collection of 123 four- and five-part settings for school use, published at Wittenberg in 1544 by Georg Rhau, a church musician who became the more or less official printer to the Reformation church, and for whom the Lutheran revolt was a commercial bonanza. Rhau met Luther in 1519, while occupying the position of cantor at the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig (the same position J. S. Bach would hold a couple of centuries later). He wrote the Mass that consecrated the opening of the great theological debate between Luther and Johann von Eck, his main orthodox opponent, which led to Luther's excommunication.

The image displays a musical score for the chorale 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott' by Martin Agricola. The score is arranged in three systems, each with four staves. The top staff of each system is labeled 'Discantus' and the subsequent three are labeled 'Altus', 'Tenor', and 'Bassus'. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves. The first system covers the first two lines of the hymn: 'Ein feste Burg ist unser'. The second system covers the next two lines: 'Gott, ein gute ser, unser Gott, ein gute'. The third system covers the final two lines: 'Wehr und Waf fen, Wehr und Waf fen, gute Wehr und Waf fen, Wehr und Waf fen.' The music is in a simple, homophonic style characteristic of the early 16th-century Lutheran chorale.

ex. 18-5a *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott*, as set by Martin Agricola

Discantus

Altus

Tenor

Vagans

Bassus

Ein fe - ste Burg ist un - ser Gott,

Ein fe - ste

Ein fe - ste Burg ist un - ser Gott, ein gu - te

ein gu - te Wehr und Waf -

Burg ist un - ser Gott, ein gu - te

ser Gott, ein

fe - ste Burg ist un - ser Gott, ein

Wehr und Waf - fen.

fen.

Wehr und Waf - fen.

gu - te Wehr und Waf - fen.

gu - te Wehr und Waf - fen.

ex. 18-5b *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott*, as set by Stephan Mahu

Rhau's close association with Luther cost him his job at Leipzig, but vouchsafed him a second career that made his fortune. Rhau's printing and publishing activity was not confined to music; he also issued books on theology, catechisms, Luther's sermons, even mathematics texts for use in the Lutheran schools. The voluminous music publications, though, are historically the most significant, because they give a complete picture of the early Protestant musical repertory and its surprising wide stylistic reach. Rhau's energetic activities, at once religiously dedicated, nation-centered, "populist," and highly profitable, epitomize the overriding reform doctrine—the so-called "Protestant work ethic"—that initiative and ambition fired by personal faith are the best road to the accomplishment of good works, and that the best insurance of the common welfare is freedom to pursue one's enlightened self-interest.

In the later sixteenth century, Lutheran *Liedsätze* (chorale-settings) developed both in Agricola's direction, so to speak, and in Mahu's and Walter's. Utilitarianism reached an extreme with the publication (Nuremberg, 1586) of a little book with a monster title: *Funfftzig geistliche Lieder und Psalmen mit vier Stimmen auff contrapunctsweise (für die Schulen und Kirchen in löblichen Fürstenthumb Württemberg) also gesetzt, das eine gantze Christliche Gemein durchaus mit singen kann* ("Fifty sacred songs and psalms in four-part counterpoint for the schools and churches of the honorable principality of Württemberg, set in such a way that an entire Christian congregation can

sing along throughout”), arranged by Lucas Osiander, the town pastor of Stuttgart and tutor to the Prince of Württemberg in south-central Germany.



fig. 18-3 Front and back of the title page to *Neue deutsche geistliche Gesänge* (New German Spiritual Songs, Wittenberg: Rhaw, 1544). The portrait is that of the printer, Georg Rhaw.

Osiander was not a professional musician, and his primitive harmonizations of psalm tones and chorale melodies may seem to have little artistic value, but they were the first recognizable “four-part chorales” (or *Cantionalsätze*, “hymn-settings,” as they were officially called) of the kind that remained standard for congregational singing (and not only for congregational singing but for basic harmony instruction) for centuries—indeed, into our own time. Within two or three decades there would be dozens more published *Cantionalsatz* collections, reaching an early culmination in the one—or rather, the three—by an indefatigable Lutheran musician named Michael Praetorius, whose work ethic is reflected in his magnum opus, called *Musae Sioniae*, an encyclopedic compendium of Lutheran music in nine volumes, of which the last three (published in 1609–1610) contained 742 choral harmonizations, based on 458 hymn texts. Ex. 18-6 contains *Cantionalsätze* of *Christ lag in Todesbanden* by Osiander and Praetorius for comparison.

The basic texture of these settings seems to have been adapted from the Calvinist psalters, but the melody is placed consistently in the soprano part rather than the tenor, so that a listening congregation could the more easily sing along by ear, as the title recommends. The idea of transposing the cantus firmus to the soprano may have merely been an obvious solution to a practical problem, but it may also reflect the influence of the villanella or other Italian song styles that were making their way in Germany thanks to the book trade. In any case, Osiander's were the first "Bach chorales." They not only show the antecedents of the practice that J. S. Bach would bring to its stylistic peak a century and a half later, but they also give some idea of the extreme utilitarianism and stylistic conservatism of the atmosphere in which Bach would work his compositional miracles.

1. Christ lag in To - des - ban - den, für un - ser Sünd ge - ge - ben. —
 der ist wie - der er - stan - den, und hat uns bracht das Le - ben. —

1. Christ lag in To - des - ban - den, für un - ser Sünd ge - ge - ben. —
 der ist wie - der er - stan - den, und hat uns bracht das Le - ben. —

1. Christ lag in To - des - ban - den, für un - ser Sünd ge - ge - ben. —
 der ist wie - der er - stan - den, und hat uns bracht das Le - ben. —

1. Christ lag in To - des - ban - den, für un - ser Sünd ge - ge - ben. —
 der ist wie - der er - stan - den, und hat uns bracht das Le - ben. —

11
 Des wir sol - len fröh - lich sein, Gott lo - ben und dank - bar
 Des wir sol - len fröh - lich sein, Gott lo - ben und dank - bar
 Des wir sol - len fröh - lich sein, Gott lo - ben und dank - bar
 Des wir sol - len fröh - lich sein, Gott lo - ben und dank - bar

18
 sein und sin - gen Al - le - lu - ja, Al - le - lu - ja.
 sein und sin - gen Al - le - lu - ja, Al - le - lu - ja.
 sein und sin - gen Al - le - lu - ja, Al - le - lu - ja.
 sein und sin - gen Al - le - lu - ja, Al - le - lu - ja.

ex. 18-6a *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, from Lucas Osiander, *Funfftzig geistliche Lieder* (1586)

Christ lag in To - des - ban - den für un - ser Sünd ge - ge - ben
Er ist wie - der er - stan - den und hat uns bracht das Le - ben

Christ lag in To - des - ban - den für un - ser Sünd ge - ge - ben
Er ist wie - der er - stan - den und hat uns bracht das Le - ben

des wir sol - len fröh - lich sein Gott lo - ben und dank - bar sein

des wir sol - len fröh - lich sein Gott lo - ben und dank - bar sein

und sin - gen Al - le - lu - ja Al - le - lu - ja.

und sin - gen Al - le - lu - ja Al - le - lu - ja.

ex. 18-6b *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, from Michael Praetorius, *Musae sioniae* (1609-10)

Ein fe-ste Burg ist un -

Ein fe - ste Burg ist un -

Ein fe-ste Burg ist un - ser Gott,

- ser Gott, ein fe-ste Burg ist un - ser Gott,

- ser Gott, ein fe - ste Burg ist un - ser Gott, ein gu - te

ein fe-ste Burg ist un - ser Gott, ein

ein gu - te Wehr und Waf - fen, ein gu -

Wehr ein gu - te Wehr und Waf - fen,

gu - te Wehr und Waf - fen, und Waf - fen,

te Wehr und Waf - fen, und Waf - fen.

ein gu - te Wehr ein gu - te Wehr und Waf - fen.

ein gu - te Wehr ein gu - te Wehr und Waf - fen.

ex. 18-7 Sethus Calvisius, *Ein' feste Burg* (1603)

That basic conservatism can also be seen in the more elaborate kind of “chorale motet” that ostensibly sought reconciliation with the international style. In these pieces, each successive line of the chorale was treated as a point of imitation, so that no one voice could be identified unequivocally as *cantus firmus*. A three-part school setting

(*tricinium*) of *Ein' feste Burg* (Ex. 18-7) by Sethus Calvisius, the cantor of Leipzig's St. Thomas Church at the end of the century, is a good example of the new technique whereby the polyphonic texture more or less evenly absorbed the chorale tune ("more or less," because the middle voice, like an old-fashioned *altus*, has less tune and more filler than the others). But the setting, however artful, remains essentially utilitarian, and it hews closely enough to the traditional tune so that no one could possibly miss it. The art of concealment, so dear to the Netherlanders and even to Josquin, was essentially foreign to the Lutheran ideal. And so were all "literary" pretensions, radical experiments, or efforts at rhetorical persuasion. Rarely do the *Choralsätze* of the first Lutheran century indulge in any semantic or illustrative play or aspire to any startling or stirring compositional effect.

A Lutheran musician was an honest tradesman. His aim was not to bowl you over or attempt sublime disclosure but to furnish an attractive, craftsmanly, not overly polished setting for a cherished article of common faith. Even at its fanciest, Lutheran church music was a town music, not a court music, enhancing and solacing the day-to-day life of students, churchgoers, and families at home. Its esthetic ignored the rare and the recondite, seeking beauty in the commonplace. It did not reject the *ars perfecta* but placed limits on its exercise.

Within those limits—within any limits—masterpieces could be created. *Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld* ("A little lamb goes forth and bears the world's guilt"), a chorale tricinium composed by Benedictus Ducis (born Benedikt Herzog), a provincial pastor from the East, for use as a substitute for the *Agnus Dei* at the Lutheran "Lord's Supper," is a tiny masterpiece (Ex. 18-8). Its modest perfection can serve as a foil against which the Catholic response to the Lutheran challenge can be musically assessed.

Notes:

(4) Martin Luther, preface to J. Walther, *Geystliches gesangk Buchleyn* (Wittenberg, 1524).

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Lutheran church music

Jacobus Gallus

Passion

THE RESPONSE

Chapter: CHAPTER 18 Reformations and Counter Reformations

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld der Welt und
es geht und träget mit Geduld die Sünden

Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt Schuld der Welt und
es geht und träget mit Geduld die Sünden

Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die Schuld der Welt und
es geht und träget mit Geduld die Sünden

ih - rer Kin - der Sün - der es geht da - hin wird matt und
al - ler Sün - der der es geht da - hin wird matt und

ih - rer Kin - der Sün - der es geht da - hin wird matt und
al - ler Sün - der der es geht da - hin wird matt und

ih - rer Kin - der Sün - der es geht da - hin wird matt und
al - ler Sün - der der es geht da - hin wird matt und

krank er gibt sich auf die Wür - ge - bank
krank, matt und krank, er - gebe sich auf die Wür - ge -

krank, matt und krank, er - gebe sich auf die Wür - ge -

krank, matt und krank, er - gebe sich auf die Wür - ge - bank, ent -

ent - zieht sich al - len freu - den
bank, die Wür - ge - bank, ent - zieht sich al - len freu - den es

ent - zieht sich al - len freu - den es

ent - zieht sich al - len freu - den es

es nimmt auf sich Schmeck, Hohn, und Spott.
nimmt auf sich Schmeck, Hohn, und Spott.

nimmt auf sich Schmeck, Hohn, und Spott.

nimmt auf sich Schmeck, Hohn, und Spott.

ex. 18-8 Benedictus Ducis *Ein Lämmlein geht*

That response took a turn that could never have been predicted at mid-century, when all that the leading Catholic bishops seemed to want was an intelligible liturgy. That trend, the one associated with Palestrina, could be interpreted as an attempt to meet the Lutheran reform musically on its own ground—grounds of modesty. It did not threaten the *ars perfecta*; on the contrary, it sought to amend and thus preserve it.

But the Catholic reaction to the Reformation, now called the Counter Reformation, eventually took on a mystical, enthusiastic, and antirationalist character that spelled fundamental theological change—and with that, of course, came musical change. This did fundamentally threaten the *ars perfecta*, which was if nothing else a rational style. As the “church militant” turned toward pomp and spectacle, and as Catholic preaching turned toward emotional oratory, church music began to turn toward sensuous opulence and inspirational “sublimity,” the instilling of awe. For the late Counter Reformation, church music became a kind of aural incense, an overwhelming, mind-expanding drug.

“To attain the truth in all things,” wrote St. Ignatius of Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*, “we ought always to be ready to believe that what seems to us white is black, if the Hierarchical Church so defines it.”⁵ God-given though it was, human reason had its limits. To place excessive trust in it was a hubris on which the Devil could play, if it led proud thinkers away from faith. This much of Counter Reformation teaching was in harmony with the spirit of the Reformation that spurred it. To that extent Reformation and Counter Reformation were united in reform. The huge difference was the source of the faith the two churches espoused. The one placed it in the hands of an infallible Hierarchy, the other in the spirituality of the individual believer. It became the job of the Counter Reformation to win souls back from Luther by fostering emotional dependency on the Hierarchy, which (like the feudal hierarchy it supported) viewed itself as God’s own institution among men.

The highest spiritual premium was placed on what was called the ecstasy, or, more loosely, the “religious experience”—a direct and permanently transforming emotional apprehension of the divine presence. The most famous literary description of religious ecstasy, visually immortalized by the seventeenth-century sculptor Giovanni Bernini, is from the *Vida* (1565), or autobiography, of a Spanish nun, Saint Teresa of Avila, an epileptic, whose seizures were accompanied by visions. In one of them (the one portrayed by Bernini), she was visited by a beautiful angel, who, she wrote,

thrust a long dart of gold, tipped with fire, through my heart several times, so that it reached my very entrails. So real was the pain that I was forced to moan aloud, yet it was so surpassingly sweet that I would not wish to be delivered from it. No delight of life can give more content. As the angel withdrew the dart, he left me all burning with a great love of God.⁶

There can be little doubt that—paradoxically though it may appear—it was the extravagant sensuality of Saint Teresa’s description that made it a spiritual classic. (At first her visions, so tinged with the erotic, aroused suspicion: the *Vida* was originally composed as an apologia, at the behest of the Inquisition.) And it is that spiritualized sensuality or sensualized spirituality that Counter Reformation art reflects at its most potent.

In music, that sensuality had two main avenues of expression. One was transfer to the religious domain of the techniques of quasi-pictorial illustration and affective (often highly erotic) connotation that had been developed by the madrigalists. The other was the augmentation of the sheer sound medium and its spectacular deployment, so that sound itself became virtually palpable. Both of these strains can be found at a high level of early development in the *Opus musicum*, the mammoth, calendrically organized collection of Latin liturgical music published in Prague between 1586 and 1591 by Jacobus Gallus (or Jakob Handl, or Jacov Petelin—in all cases the surname means “rooster”), a composer from Slovenia who worked in Bohemia, both Slavic areas within the Austrian dominion of the Holy Roman Empire.



fig. 18-4 Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa of Avila* (1652) at the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. Compare Bernini’s hectic sensuality with the “perfect” art of Raphael in Fig. 15-1.

Mirabile mysterium (Ex. 18-9), a Christmas motet, is literally mystical. That is, it seeks to portray—give direct apprehension of—a mystery that lay at the very foundation of church dogma: the fleshly incarnation of the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ, God become Man. In it, for the first time, we may observe the chromatic techniques of Lasso, Marenzio, and Gesualdo—techniques involving the direct “irrational” inflection of scale degrees—applied to a liturgical text (that is, a text meant, unlike Lasso’s *Sibylline Prophecies*, for actual performance in church) as a way of rendering uncanny secrets and imparting uncanny sensation. It is music that seeks to provide a religious experience.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the motet *Mirabile mysterium*. Each system consists of five staves: four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and one basso continuo staff. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with the lyrics "Mi - ra - bi - le my - ste - ri - um, mi -". The second system continues with "ra - bi - le my - ste - ri - um" and "mi - ra - bi -". The notation includes various chromatic inflections, such as sharps and flats, and unusual intervals, particularly in the basso continuo line.

ex. 18-9a Jacobus Gallus, *Mirabile mysterium*, mm. 1-11

The opening point of imitation, announcing the “marvelous mystery,” already includes a chromatic inflection that gives rise to marvelously mysterious harmonic progressions (Ex. 18-9a). A suggestion of commixture of opposites is already given at the words *innovantur naturae*, where sharpened notes and flatted notes are combined “vertically” in harmonies that had no theoretical explanation—in terms of the *ars perfecta* theory books this was indeed an “innovation of nature.” The thesis is stated in terms of a bald opposition: the distance from God to man is dramatized by a precipitous octave descent in all voices, from which, in emphatic violation of the Palestrina ideal, a further descent is made into a region where the singers’ voices will sound weak and helpless, like man before God (Ex. 18-9b). Where the text says that what God was, God remains, the word *permansit* is stretched out for an “eternity.” And where the text says that what man was not a man shall assume, the word *assumpsit* is “painted” according to its etymological meaning, by strange *rising* intervals—an octave in the soprano, a minor sixth in the tenor, and a weird augmented second (normally forbidden by “nature”) in the bass.

de - cla - ra - tur ho - di - e, in - novan -
 ho - di - e, ho - di - e, in - no - van - tur na - tu - rae.
 de - cla - ra - tur ho - di - e, in - no - van -
 ra - tur ho - di - e, in - no - van - tur na - tu - rae.
 ho - di - e, de - cla - ra - tur ho - di - e, in -
 tur na - tu - rae. na - tu - rae. De - us ho - mo fa - ctus est.
 De - us ho - mo fa - ctus est. Id, quod
 tur na - tu - rae. De - us ho - mo fa - ctus est.
 in - no - van - tur na - tu - rae. De - us ho - mo fa - ctus est.
 no - van - tur na - tu - rae. De - us ho - mo fa - ctus est. Id,

ex. 18-9b Jacobus Gallus, *Mirabile mysterium*, mm. 16-28

But the most esoteric musical effect is reserved for the moment of mystery: the preternatural passing of the one substance into the other “without mixture” calls forth a possibly unprecedented triple chromatic inflection, disguised by false relations (Ex. 18-9c). On *passus* the bass’s B is inflected to B \flat both by direct progression and by transfer to the soprano; The alto’s D \sharp is inflected to D-natural by transfer to the tenor; and the soprano’s F \sharp is inflected to F-natural by transfer to the alto. In the process both soprano and alto sing intervals (diminished fourth and diminished third respectively) that do not exist at all within the rules of the *ars perfecta*. More “innovations of nature.” Simply “side-slipping” from a B major to a B \flat major triad would not have conveyed the “marvelous mystery.” What makes it marvelous and uncanny is the way in which the voices all exchange their positions in passing between those two mutually exclusive harmonies. That exchange, to quote another mystical Christmas antiphon, is truly an *admirabile commercium*: a dazzling interchange. To account for the musical effect takes a musician; to discuss the mystery takes a theologian; but the uncanny experience is available to all through sheer sensory perception.

The other mode of Counter Reformation sensuality is well conveyed by Gallus’s setting of the Passion narrative from the Gospel of John, a grandiose Easter motet in three long sections. Music for multiple choirs, pioneered rather tamely by Willaert and some of his Venetian contemporaries for antiphonal Vespers psalms, became a craze (in churches that could afford it) by the end of the century. Both the spatialized effect and the multiplication of voice parts contributed to the “overbowling” or awe-inspiring result, bypassing reason and boosting faith.

Non com - mix - ti - o - nem pas - sus,

Non com - mix - ti - o - nem pas - sus,

Non com - mix - ti - o - nem pas - sus,

Non com - mix - ti - o - nem pas - sus,

ex. 18-9c Jacobus Gallus, *Mirabile mysterium*, mm. 43-47

The Passion, the Gospel account of Christ’s suffering and death, is recited at Mass during the Holy Week that precedes Easter: on Palm Sunday it is read from the Book of Matthew, on Wednesday from Luke, on Thursday from Mark, and finally, on Good Friday, it is read from the Book of John. The Passion reading was always specially marked by music: originally by the use of special recitation or “lesson” tones, from the fifteenth century on by the use of polyphony. The earliest polyphonic settings were responsorial. The narrative was chanted; only the lines given to the “crowd” (*turba*) were multiplied polyphonically for chorus, usually in a simple style like fauxbourdon. Later the words of other characters who speak directly within the narrative were set polyphonically, and finally the words of Christ were also so set, leaving only the voice of the Gospel narrator or evangelist in chant.

The earliest complete polyphonic setting of the Passion text—including the evangelist narration, the *exordium* or sung title (“The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to...”), and a *conclusio* or final prayer—dates from the first decade of the sixteenth century. Each of its sources names a different composer; Rhau picked it up in 1538 and issued it in print for the first time, attributing it (surely wrongly) to Obrecht. Its Italian origin (or at least its Italianate orientation; some sources attribute it to a French-born composer named Antoine de Longueval) is evident from its use of *falsobordone*, a way of setting psalm tones in four-part harmony (triads in what we now call root position) that was developed “by ear” in imitation of fauxbourdon (see Ex. 18-10). This setting already shows a tendency to treat parts of the choir antiphonally for dramatic effect.

In Gallus’s St. John Passion, two four-part choirs, differentiated in range, are treated in antiphony. The low choir is reserved for the *vox Christi*, the voice of Christ, whose gravity it betokens. The high choir takes the parts of all other characters, such as the thief who speaks to Jesus from the adjoining cross, and also the Evangelist during the narration of the Seven Last Words, when the narrator and the voice of Christ are the only two “characters” in play. The combined choirs represent the *turba*: at these moments the setting takes on the traditional, impressively thundering, harmonically static but rhythmically active quality of the *falsobordone*.

At il - li cla - ma - bant di - cen - tes:

At il - li ma - gis cla - ma - bant di - cen - tes:

At il - li ma - gis cla - ma - bant di - cen - tes:

At il - li cla - ma - bant di - cen - tes:

Re - gem non ha - be - mus ni - si Cae - sa - rem.

Re - gem non ha - be - mus ni - si Cae - sa - rem ni - si Cae - sa - rem.

Re - gem non ha - be - mus ni - si Cae - sa - rem.

Re - gem non ha - be - mus ni - si Cae - sa - rem,

Re - gem non ha - be - mus ni - si Cae - sa - rem.

Re - gem non ha - be - mus ni - si Cae - sa - rem.

ex. 18-10 From the “Longueval” Passion, mm. 10-21

The full eight-part chorus takes over the Evangelist’s role for the conclusion, encompassing the announcement of Christ’s death and the general prayer (Ex. 18-11), where antiphony seems to strengthen the idea of generality (the lower choir “seconding” and joining in with the pleas of the higher). The triple Amen, mandated by the length of the piece it concludes and the need for an appropriate peroration, shows the composer’s high awareness of himself as orator and rhetorician—that is, a persuader. If such a music proclaims it, we may very well believe that what seems to us white is black.

Notes:

(5) *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola*, Article XIII, trans. W. H. Longridge (London: Burns and Oates, 1908), p. 119.

(6) St. Teresa of Avila, *Vida* (1565), in René Fülöp-Miller, *Saints That Moved the World* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1945), p. 375.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Augenmusik

AUGENMUSIK

Chapter: CHAPTER 18 Reformations and Counter Reformations

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Compared with the sheer sonic magnitude of this Passion setting, the inherent drama of the choral characterizations, and the composer's self-dramatization at the end, the use of "madrigalisms" like those in *Mirabile mysterium* is secondary and sporadic. There is a spectacular one at the very beginning of the third and last part of this grandiose work, however, and it is of an especially "literary" kind. At the first mention of the word "crucify" (Ex. 18-12), a really jarring harmony (a C#-minor triad, we would call it) is introduced—simply for its shock-value, it might appear—as a way of underscoring the horror of the event.

The image displays a musical score for a vocal ensemble, likely a choir or soloists. The score is arranged in three systems, each with five staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and a lower staff, possibly for figured bass or a second Bass part). The lyrics are in Latin, with the first system containing "mi - se - re - re no - bis," and the second system containing "A - men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a - men, a - men." The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The score is presented in a standard musical notation format with a white background and black ink.

ex. 18-11 Jacobus Gallus, St. John Passion, tertia pars, end

But there is another dimension to it as well. The harmony is produced by the abrupt and “unprepared” apparition of sharps in all parts. The word for “sharp” in German is *Kreuz*—“cross.” Thus the strange harmony is not only an audible effect; it is a visual effect as well—or rather, a literary pun based on the visual appearance of the notated music. (Another instance of such a visually inspired pun, and a popular one among madrigalists, was setting the word *occhi*—“eyes”—as two semibreves on the same pitch side by side, each representing an eye; yet another was coloring all the notes in a lament or funeral piece black.) The Germans have a word for this sort of thing: *Augenmusik*, “eye-music.” It may seem a particularly trivial or frivolous variety of “madrigalism,” but it carries an important cultural message. Composers who indulge in Augenmusik tacitly equate notation with music, or at least give evidence of regarding the notation as being as much a part of the music as the performance. The music, in short, has become indelibly associated with its written embodiment (not to say “text,” which for music can merely mean the words to be sung). Musicians who think this way have come to regard music as being a primarily literate, secondarily oral medium rather than the other way around. So it has been regarded, by composers in the so-called “classical” or “art music” tradition, ever since. This is, in fact, the most accurate definition possible of that notoriously hard-to-define yet definitely recognizable tradition, the tradition of which this book is a history.

O - ra - bat nu - tem Ie - sus pro cru - ci -
 O - ra - bat nu - tem Ie - sus pro cru - ci -
 O - ra - bat nu - tem Ie - sus pro cru - ci -
 O - ra - bat nu - tem Ie - sus pro cru - ci -

- fi - gen - ti - bus se, di - cens:
 - fi - gen - ti - bus se, di - cens:
 - fi - gen - ti - bus se, di - cens:
 - fi - gen - ti - bus se, di - cens:

ex. 18-12 Jacobus Gallus, St. John Passion, tertia pars, mm. 1-7, high voices only

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Andrea Gabrieli

Concert

“CONCERTED” MUSIC

Chapter: CHAPTER 18 Reformations and Counter Reformations

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The polychoral style and the Counter Reformation attitudes associated with it reached their pinnacle in Venice, the city of its birth, at the hands of two musicians from the same family, both of whom served as organists at St. Mark's under Zarlino. Andrea Gabrieli (ca. 1532–85) competed successfully, after several failures, for the first organist's position in 1566 and held the post until his death. During that period there were several major quasi-secular celebrations held at the cathedral—the outstanding one being the *trionfi* following the naval victory over the Turks at Lepanto in 1571—and Gabrieli's music for these occasions revealed an enormous aptitude for ceremonial splendor, a talent he continued to develop as the cathedral's musical resources were expanded. He also furnished music for theatrical presentations, including a set of choruses for up to six voices performed in March 1585 at a gala performance of Sophocles's tragedy *Oedipus tyrannus*. It is the earliest surviving music specifically composed for a humanist revival of Greek drama, which puts Gabrieli in the line that led, eventually, to opera.

Andrea's collected sacred works, published the year after his death, contain several spectacular Masses and motets that employ larger and more varied forces than any previous written music. Especially indicative of the trend is a Mass for sixteen voices organized into four antiphonally deployed four-part choirs, performed in 1585 to welcome (and impress) a party of visiting Japanese princes. One of the choirs was marked *a cappella*, designating it and it alone as intended for performance by voices (and voices alone) on all four parts. The intended performing medium for the other choirs can be deduced from the title page of the collection: *CONCERTI/continenti Musica DI CHIESA/per voci, & stromenti Musicali; à 6.7.8.10.12.&16*.

Concerti! A momentous word. From Andrea's title page one can learn what it originally meant: works expressly combining voices and instruments—written, that is, in what is still sometimes called the “concerted” style—in which the contrast and interplay of timbres are an integral part of the musical conception. From the employment lists at St. Mark's it is possible to infer that these works by Gabrieli mixed and alternated voices with wind instruments such as cornetti—not modern cornets but instruments held and fingered like oboes but played with a brass cup mouthpiece—on the upper parts (or choirs) and trombones on the lower, with the organ playing along with everything and providing the sonic glue that held the whole timbrally and spatially variegated surface together.

Gabrieli's “concerted” Masses and motets were quickly imitated—so quickly as to suggest that the practice was an established one, at least in the great churches of northern Italy, long before it was specified in print. The very next year, in 1589, the Bolognese musician Ascanio Trombetti, associated with the church of San Petronio, a great center for instrumental music, published *Il primo libro de motetti accomodati per cantare e far concerti* (“The first book of motets arranged for singing in conjunction with instruments”).

The terms *concerto* and *concertato* became standard in titles. Beginning with the double-choir *Concerti ecclesiastici a otto voci* (“Church concertos [= concerted motets] for eight voices”) by the Bolognese organist Adriano Banchieri (Venice, 1595), publishers supplied a new standard feature: a separate part for the organist to assist the player in his new role as omnibus accompanist. Banchieri supplied a primitive score (*spartitura* = “parts extracted”) for this purpose that summarized the basic harmonies of his first choir.

A few years later, in a more modest publication called *Cento concerti ecclesiastici, a una, a due, a tre & a quattro voci* (“One hundred church concertos for 1, 2, 3, and 4 voices,” Venice, 1602) by a peripatetic north Italian friar named Lodovico Viadana, a more streamlined organ part was devised. Since some of Viadana's “concerti” were actually accompanied solo songs (in keeping with yet another sort of radical anti-*ars-perfecta* practice that we will investigate

in the next chapter), there was nothing to “score.” Instead, as the title page advertised, there was a *basso continuo per sonar nell'organo, nova inventione commoda per ogni sorte de cantori, & per gli organisti*: “a continuous bass line to play on the organ, a new invention for the convenience of all kinds [i.e., any number] of singers and for the organists.” The *basso continuo*, a term that caught on and has been standard ever since, was an independent organ part written as one line, but realized in full harmonies (with radical implications: for the first time in “composed” or literate music chordal harmony functioned as a sonorous filler or background, independent of controlled part writing). In effect, the notated line was to be played by the left hand, and the unnotated chords by the right. It was called “continuous” because it played straight through the composition, no matter what went on above it.

In view of the radical harmonic implications of the new style, it should be reemphasized that neither Banchieri nor Viadana suddenly invented any new technique of accompaniment. All they did was publish written aids to help organists do what they did anyway by longstanding “oral” tradition. Organists had been accompanying ensembles since whenever, but previously they had to do it from the same choirbook or part books as the other musicians. As we have already seen, organists had to be able to open a whole set of part books in front of them on the music rack and follow them all at once (unless they went to the trouble of writing out a *spartitura* for themselves, as many did). From around the turn of the century, though, no music print was complete (or competitive) without the new laborsaving device of a separate organ bass-book.

Eventually, the most common kind of organ part for church “concerti”—for example, the pioneering *Prima parte dei salmi concertati* (“First installment of Psalms in concerted style,” 1609) by Girolamo Giacobbi, another musician from San Petronio in Bologna—was something in between Banchieri’s *spartitura* and Viadana’s *basso continuo*. What Giacobbi—or rather his powerful publisher, the Venetian music magnate Antonio Gardano—supplied was a composite bass line, drawn from all the other parts, that showed the lowest note sounding at any given moment. This new organist’s aid was informally called *basso seguente* (“bass that follows”), because it tracked the progress of the vocal parts from start to finish. By using it, the organist could accompany the whole ensemble without even seeing the other parts.

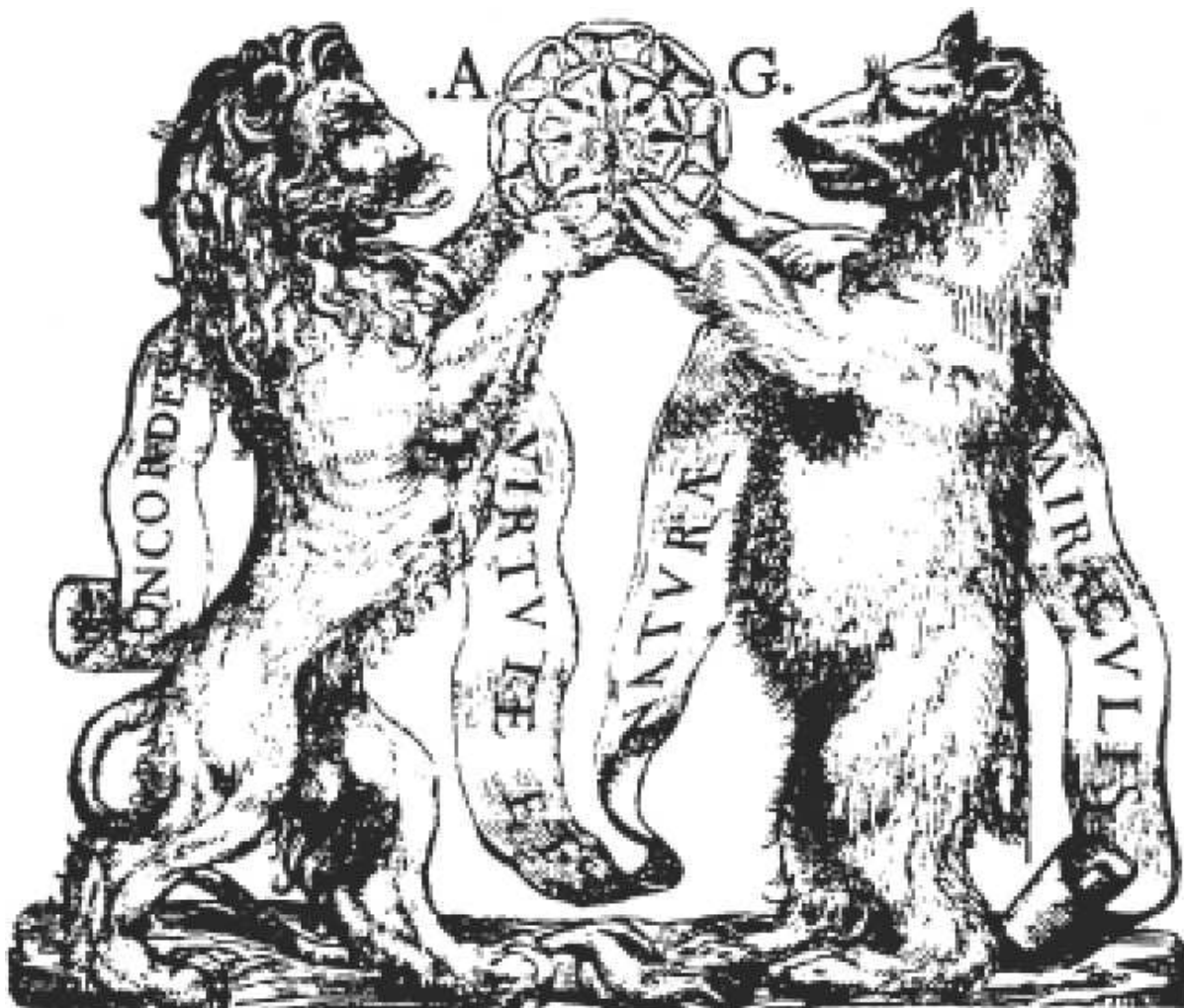


fig. 18-5 Colophon of the Venetian music printer Antonio Gardano.

As always, the introduction of a laborsaving device inspired a backlash from those proud of their laborious skills. Adriano Banchieri himself inveighed against his fellow townsman Giacobbi's publication, sneering that "soon we shall have two classes of players: on the one hand Organists, that is to say, those who practice good playing from score and improvisation, and, on the other hand, Bassists who, overcome by sheer laziness, are content with simply playing the Basso Continuo."⁷ Behind these petulant words lay a profound and legitimate concern that unwritten ("oral") traditions were about to be lost to literate habits that carried literalism and lessened creativity as their undesirable corollary. And so they were.

But there was no stopping the process. The mandate of the marketplace was more compelling than any musician's strictures, and any music publications that remained in print past the date of Gardano's innovation had to be fitted out with a *basso seguente* to remain viable. Thus the popular Viadana's first publication, a collection of Vespers Psalms in five parts (1588) was reissued in 1609 with a note on the title page, in proper church Latin, that *additus est bassus continuus pro organo*, in reality a *basso seguente*; his first book of four-part Masses, published in 1596, was reissued in 1612 *cum basso generali pro organo*, and so on.

Even older music was renovated in this way. Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli*, the prime embodiment of the earlier, less musically radical phase of the Counter Reformation, and almost from the moment of its creation a revered "classic," was arranged in the early seventeenth century both as a polychoral composition (for two four-part choirs) and as a continuo-accompanied one. Re-outfitting was the price of currency; "authentic" performance practice for music in obsolete styles had to await the advent of Romanticism, which had a strong nostalgic component and which despised the marketplace (at least officially).

Notes:

(7) Adriano Banchieri, *Conclusioni nel suono dell'organo* (Bologna, 1609), in Frank T. Arnold, *The Art of Accompaniment from a Thorough-Bass* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 74.

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Giovanni Gabrieli

Instrumentation and orchestration

THE ART OF ORCHESTRATION IS BORN

Chapter: CHAPTER 18 Reformations and Counter Reformations

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Beyond the provision of an organ bass, none of the publications mentioned so far actually specified the instrumentation for concerted compositions—or as perhaps we ought therefore to say, for concerted performances. All the parts were furnished with text, none was “vocal” or “instrumental” to the exclusion of the other possibility, so the assignment of voices and instruments to specific parts had to be made by the director of the performance *ad hoc* (“for the nonce”). The first composer to furnish definite specifications for his concerted works—in other words, the first composer to practice the art of orchestration as we know it—was Andrea Gabrieli’s nephew and pupil Giovanni Gabrieli (ca. 1553–1612), who took the post of second organist at St. Mark’s during the last year of his uncle’s life, and stayed there for the rest of his own. It was Giovanni who edited Andrea’s sacred works for publication in 1587 and included a few concerti of his own. It was a genre in which he would surpass his uncle and, through his own pupils, transform church music thoroughly, in the process dealing a body blow to the *ars perfecta*, no less effective for its being unintended.

Besides the eleven concerted motets of his own that he published along with his uncle’s *concerti*, the only volume of music Giovanni Gabrieli saw fit to publish during his lifetime was a book of what he called *Sacrae Symphoniae* (Venice: Gardano, 1597)—“Sacred Symphonies,” here adapting the new concerto idea of many-different-things-simultaneously-coordinated to an old word (first used, we may recall from chapter 5, in the ninth-century *Scolica Enchiriadis*) with classy Greek roots that meant “things sounding together in harmony,” or (to be equally classy in English) “sacred concinnities.” This was a collection of double-choir motets plus a few for three or four choirs (and some instrumental pieces to be described later), issued in twelve vocal part books (without even a special organ part; at least none survives), but with a title page that calls for the *concertato* mixture of voices and instruments in performance. So far he was perfecting his uncle’s style.

The second book of *Sacrae Symphoniae*, issued posthumously in 1615, was the epoch-maker. Its contents cannot be precisely dated, but all the motets in it were presumably written after the date of the first collection, fixing their *termini* at 1597–1612. The great departure (actually nothing more than making explicit what was formerly implicit, but to spectacular effect) was the exact specification of the performance medium, and the extremely contrastive exploitation of the diverse resources at the composer’s disposal.

In ecclesiis benedicite Domino (“Bless the Lord in the congregations,” Ex. 18-13), probably composed sometime after 1605, shows the younger Gabrieli at the height of his powers. There are fifteen parts in all, deployed in three choirs plus an organ part that combines the roles of *basso continuo* and *basso seguente* in what was customarily called the *basso generale*, the “general bass.” The three choirs are of distinctive, mutually exclusive, composition. There are four parts (SATB) labeled *cappella*, standing for the chorus; there are four parts (SATB) labeled *voce*, standing for vocal soloists; and there are six parts assigned to specific instruments—three cornetti on top, two trombones at the bottom, and a *violino* (then a new instrument, making an early appearance in notated music) in the middle, its range suggesting that it was of a size more like that of a modern viola than what has subsequently been standardized as the violin we now know. The vocal and instrumental parts are distinguished both in style and in function; but so are the choral and solo parts within the vocal contingent. The soloists’ parts have a great deal of written out embellishment that again probably reflects what was previously the unwritten (“oral” or “improvisatory”) norm. Even in bald verbal description the piece makes a vivid impression; but comparing what follows to a recording or a complete score will help.

In ecclesiis begins more or less like a Viadana solo “concerto,” with a single soprano voice supported by an

independent organ (*continuo*) line. In the score as given in Ex. 18-13, the right hand of the organ part is “realized” by an editor for the benefit of modern musicians who are even more the victims of their literacy—i.e., wholly dependent on what is fixed in writing—than those in Gabrieli’s time, when printed music books had been available for only a century. The chorus enters as if in response at *Alleluia*, its music contrasting in every conceivable way with that of the soloist: in texture, in its homorhythmic relationship with the bass, and (most strikingly of all) in its dancelike triple meter. The soprano soloist, meanwhile, sings in alternation with the chorus, emphasizing the ancient responsorial effect and showing its relationship to the novel *concertato* style.

The first system of the musical score is in 2/4 time. It features a soprano soloist part and an organ accompaniment. The organ part consists of a right-hand line with a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, and a left-hand line with a steady bass line. The lyrics for the soloist are: "In - ec - cle - si - is ben - e -".

The second system of the musical score is in 2/4 time. It features a soprano soloist part and an organ accompaniment. The organ part consists of a right-hand line with a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, and a left-hand line with a steady bass line. The lyrics for the soloist are: "di - ci - te Do - mi - no ben - e - dic - te Do - mi - no".

The third system of the musical score is in 3/4 time. It features a chorus part and an organ accompaniment. The chorus part consists of five staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass) with a homorhythmic pattern. The organ part consists of a right-hand line with a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, and a left-hand line with a steady bass line. The lyrics for the chorus are: "al - le - lu - ja al - le - lu - ja".

The image shows a musical score for five vocal parts and a keyboard part. The vocal parts are Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Bass Soloist. The lyrics are 'ja al - le - lu - ja' and 'al - le - lu - ja'. The keyboard part is in the right hand and provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines.

ex. 18-13 Giovanni Gabrieli, *In ecclesiis* (*Sacrae Symphoniae*, Book II) mm. 1-12

But even more basic to the *concertato* idea, and its truly subversive aspect from the standpoint of the *ars perfecta*, is its emphasis on short-range contrast rather than long-range continuity (recall old Jacques Buus from chapter 15 and his ten-mile *ricercari*!). And also indicative of the new style's incompatibility with old ideals is the “general pause”—the rest in all parts—that comes before the choral metric shift and cadence in m. 10. It is not only a rhetorical pause but a pragmatic concession to the reverberent enclosed space that is receiving and reflecting Gabrieli's sonic overload. The grand pauses are there to let the echo clear—an echo that at St. Mark's lasts a good six seconds (as one can learn from “on location” recordings) when the music is on the elephantine scale of a “sacred symphony.” Next the bass soloist sings another little “concerto” to the bare organ's support—and now the chorus is back with another *Alleluia* in response. But whereas the bass's music differed from the soprano's, the chorus's responses are both the same. The *Alleluias*, in other words, are acting as refrains, or, to use the newer word Gabrieli would have used, as *ritornelli*. The use of a *ritornello*, a recurrent musical strain, is as endemic to the *concertato* style as the use of a *basso continuo*. Where the one unifies—or, perhaps better, anchors—the unprecedentedly heterogeneous texture, the other anchors the unprecedentedly heterogeneous sequence of events.

At this point, after two solo verses and two choral refrains, the instruments interrupt the proceedings for a ceremonial proclamation of their own, marked *Sinfonia* to show that they have the stage, so to speak, to themselves. After they have shown off their lips and tongues a bit with dotted rhythms and quick upbeat figures in tiny note values that Gabrieli would have called *semicrome* (and that we call sixteenth-notes—the first we've encountered!), the two remaining vocal soloists, alto and tenor, join them for the next verse. Another aspect of *concertato* writing—the one that has become primary over the years—emerges when the singers begin vying in virtuosity with the cornetti, *semicrome* and all. The verse is capped, by now predictably, with the choral *Alleluia* ritornello, but now the chorus trades off not with one singer but with two, backed up by the full instrumental choir.

The fourth verse ventures yet another combination, pitting soprano against bass over the continuo in a duel of *semicrome* and smart dotted rhythms. The chorus enters on schedule with its ritornello. And now, with only one verse to go, Gabrieli pulls out all the stops: the full three-choir *tutti* is heard for the first time, and to magnify the sublime effect the composer adds some chromatic “madrigalian” harmony, thus combining both techniques of Counter Reformation church-militant bravura in a single irresistible onslaught, to defeat the reasoning mind by overwhelming the senses. The peak is reached when the vocal soloists pour on the virtuosity atop the massed sonority. The final ritornello, needless to say, maintains the *tutti* to the end, reinforcing the sense of arrival by twice repeating the final cadence, capped by the cornetti at the brilliant high end of their range.

What remains to be said after that? Only this: Like any church composer of his time, Gabrieli, who not only studied with his uncle Andrea but also worked for a time in his twenties alongside Lasso in Munich, would have traced his musical ancestry back to the Netherlands—to Willaert, to Mouton, and ultimately, somewhere in the distance, to Josquin des Prez. And yet what is left of their style in his? To see how far behind he has left the *ars perfecta* we need only take note of one amazing fact: from the beginning of this monster motet to the end, there has been not a single point of imitation. There are motives that pass from voice to voice, all right, especially in the vocal soloists' parts. But never are these motives combined into a continuous interwoven fabric; instead, they are forever being tossed back and forth like sonic projectiles, heightening a sense of agitated contrast rather than one of calm commingling.

Further, and to the same general point, the aspect of virtuosity, of executive skill on display, places a new emphasis on the act of performance and its public, hortatory aspect. In a word, the act of making music has been *dramatized*. And it has been more thoroughly professionalized than ever before. From now on, musical performers—whether in church, in aristocratic chambers, or in theaters (a new venue!)—would be public figures on spectacular display. Anywhere that music was made by virtuosi became, in effect, a theater.

That new dramatic element—music making a spectacle of itself—subsuming all the newfangled expressive resources discovered by the madrigalists, the new mixtures of media contrived by the “concertists,” and the new craving for *mimesis* (realistic representation) inspired by the “radical humanists” whose acquaintance we are about to make, was the great conceptual innovation—the “paradigm shift,” as historians of science would call it—lurking behind all the shocking stylistic novelties that doomed the *ars perfecta* and gave rise to that aggressively exteriorized sensibility we now call “baroque.”

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Andrea Gabrieli

Tomás Luis de Victoria

Venice: 1600–1750

“SONGS” FOR INSTRUMENTS

Chapter: CHAPTER 18 Reformations and Counter Reformations

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Even instrumental music was “dramatized” under the new dispensation, and here too the Gabrielis played a decisive role. Ever since the publications of Attaignant began circulating abroad, and even before, Venetian organists had been fond of arranging racy “Parisian” chansons for their instrument and performing them during services alongside the staid, motetlike *ricercari* with which we are already familiar. (The first publication to include such pieces was a 1523 volume by Marco Antonio Cavazzoni, an organist active both as player and as singer in several Venetian churches, including St. Mark’s.) Andrea Gabrieli issued a whole book of *Canzoni alla francese per sonar sopra stromenti da tasti* (“French-type songs for playing on keyboard instruments”) in 1571: it contains arrangements of chansons by Janequin, Lasso, and others (see Ex. 18-14a). By the end of the century, however, the “canzona” (for some reason turned into a feminine noun; the normal Italian word for “song” is *canzone*) had become an independent instrumental genre more or less modeled on the style and structure of the chanson, even taking over its typical “pseudodactylic” opening rhythm as a trademark. The earliest books of independent organ canzonas were published by Claudio Merulo, a now retired organist who had once beaten the elder Gabrieli out for the plum St. Mark’s post (see Ex. 18-14b).

ex. 18-14a *Canzona incipit* by Andrea Gabrieli

ex. 18-14b *Canzona incipit* by Claudio Merulo

Just as in the case of the learned *ricercare* at mid-century, the entertaining *canzona* was soon adapted for instrumental ensembles. The earliest examples are found as fillers or bonuses in madrigal books, suggesting that

they were meant for home use, to spell the singers or provide some variety at convivial music parties. The earliest book devoted entirely to *canzoni da sonare* was by Florentio Maschera, a pupil of Merulo, who worked as cathedral organist at Brescia, one of the more westerly cities in the republic of Venice. Short, simple four-part works for home use, they were published in Venice in 1584 and went through many editions.

By then, however, the Venice organists had begun adapting the canzona to their wonted theatrical purposes. Andrea Gabrieli and his older colleague Annibale Padovano (1527–75), possibly in friendly competition, had each written a canzona-to-end-all-canzonas for eight-part wind ensemble deployed antiphonally in double choirs, based on the old chanson-to-end-all-chansons, Janequin's *La guerre* (alias "La bataille de Marignan"). Like some other big concerted works of Andrea's, they were probably composed for the Lepanto victory celebrations in 1571. The second half of Andrea's *Aria della battaglia* (Ex. 18-15), corresponding to Janequin's "Fan frere le le lan fan" (see Ex. 17-9), and as idiomatic to the wind instruments as Janequin's mouth-music was to tongues and teeth, is one of the earliest examples of real instrumental concert music in something like the modern sense.

The image displays a musical score for Andrea Gabrieli's *Aria della battaglia*, specifically the second part (secunda pars) for measures 1 through 4. The score is presented in two systems, each containing eight staves. The top system covers measures 1 and 2, while the bottom system covers measures 3 and 4. The music is written in 4/4 time and features complex rhythmic patterns and antiphonal textures between the two choirs. The notation includes various rhythmic values, rests, and dynamic markings, illustrating the intricate instrumental concert music of the period.

ex. 18-15 Andrea Gabrieli, *Aria della battaglia*, secunda pars, mm.

1-4

The big band battle-piece became a standard instrumental subgenre in the heyday of the canzona. It even exerted a

curious back-influence on vocal liturgical music. The flamboyant nine-part *Missa pro Victoria* by Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611), a Spanish organist and composer who worked for many years in Rome, was published in Madrid in 1600. Often described as a parody Mass on Janequin’s *La guerre*, it is really more like a big canzona for voices, very much in the highly sectionalized fanfare-like style of Gabrieli’s *Aria della battaglia*. The Benedictus section from the Sanctus (Ex. 18-16) is yet another big blowout on Janequin’s immortal “Fan frere le le lan fan.”

8

... in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi -

... in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi -

... in no - mi - ne Do - mi -

... in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi -

... in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi -

in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in

in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in

in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in

in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in

10

- ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni
 - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni,
 - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni,
 - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni,
 no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne
 no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne
 no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne
 no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni, in no - mi - ne

12

in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni,
 no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni,
 no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni,
 in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni,
 no - mi - ne Do - mi - ni,
 Do - mi - ni.
 Do - mi - ni.
 Do - mi - ni.
 Do - mi - ni.

ex. 18-16 Tomás Luis de Victoria, *Missa pro Victoria*, Benedictus, mm. 7-13

This was precisely the kind of piece the Council of Trent had tried to ban at an earlier phase of the Counter Reformation: “Let nothing profane be intermingled,” so the decree read in 1562, “when Masses are celebrated with singing and with organ.”⁸ That was then. By the turn of the century the “church militant” had decided it had better pack them in by hook or crook. A church service that included battle-pieces along with “concerted” motets or psalms or Masses was to all intents and purposes a “concert.” And indeed, Venetian cathedral services at the height of the Counter Reformation could well be looked upon as the earliest public concerts (for a “mass” audience, so to speak). Huge congregations flocked to them, and their fame was spread abroad so that travelers made special journeys to Venice, already a major tourist spot, to hear the music. Thomas Coryat, an English court jester and travel writer, visited Venice in 1608 and left an unforgettable account of Vespers at St. Mark’s. The most spectacular impression was made not by the singers but by the massed instrumentalists:

Sometimes sixteen played together upon their instruments, ten sackbuts, four cornetts, and two violdegambas of an extraordinary greatness; sometimes ten, six sackbuts and four cornetts; sometimes two, a cornett and a treble viol. Of these treble viols [actually violins, most likely] I heard three several there, whereof each was so good, especially one that I observed above the rest, that I never heard the like before.⁹

For an idea of what these instrumentalists were playing, we can turn either to Giovanni Gabrieli’s first book of *Sacrae Symphoniae* (1597), which contains sixteen canzonas, or to his last (posthumous) publication, *Canzoni et sonate a 3.5.6.7.8.10.12.14.15.&22. voci, per sonar con ogni sorte de instrumenti, con il basso per l’organo* (“Canzonas and other instrumental pieces for 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, or 22 parts, to be played on all kinds of instruments, with a basso seguente for the organ”), printed by Gardano in 1615. As the title already suggests, the contents of the later book cover a wide range of styles, all reflected in Coryat’s descriptions.

The ones for larger numbers are of course polychoral, deploying massed instruments—the first orchestras, in a sense (though with only one player per part)—in antiphonal groups that answered one another in the resonant interior space of the basilica. The ones for smaller ensembles are florid studies for cornetto and violin virtuosos. As the title of the 1615 publication also shows, the word *sonata* was gaining currency alongside *canzona* to designate the newly theatricalized instrumental genre. It did not mean anything special as yet; like *canzona*, it was an abbreviation of the full name of the genre, *canzona per sonare*. From *canzona per sonare* (“a song for playing”) came *canzona sonata* (“a played song”), and then plain *sonata*—something “played.” The word *sonata* still means “something played,” of course, but the thing in question has changed many times since Gabrieli’s time.

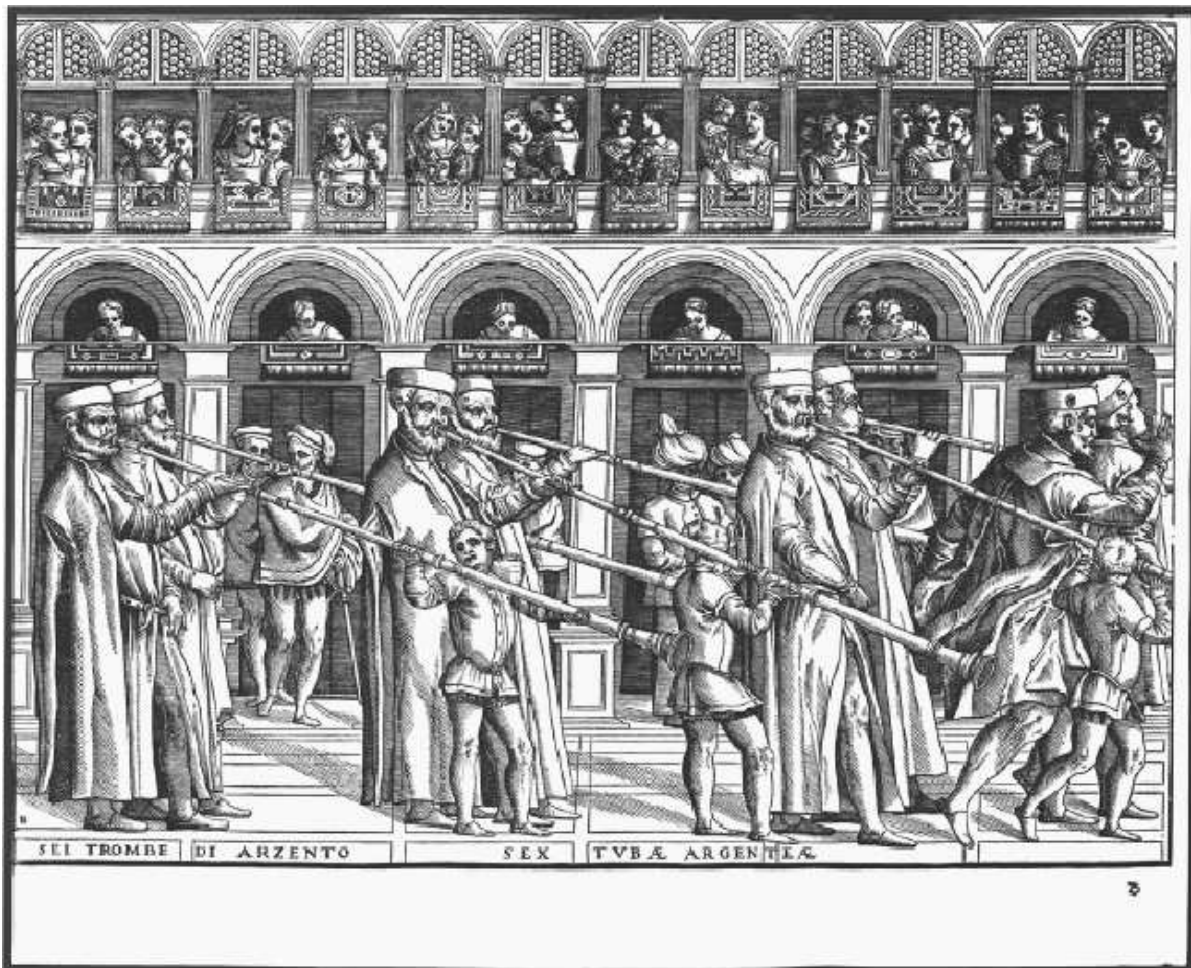


fig. 18-6 Venetian musicians in the service of the doge playing “six silver trumpets” in procession.

One of the items in the 1597 collection is called *Sonata pian’e forte*—“the piece played loud and soft”—and has a big, not quite deserved, historical reputation going back to Carl von Winterfeld’s *Johannes Gabrieli und sein Zeitalter* (“Gabrieli and his time”), one of the earliest scholarly biographies of any composer. The book was published in Berlin in 1834, when (despite its title) great composers tended to be viewed in relative isolation from their times, and when their greatness was apt to be viewed in somewhat anachronistic terms emphasizing innovation and originality—in other words, the traits by which a nineteenth-century composer’s greatness was measured.

Gabrieli’s piece (see Ex. 18-17 for its ending) was touted by Winterfeld as the first sonata, the first work to specify its instrumentation, the first work to use the violin, and the first work to specify dynamics. It was actually none of those things. Contrasting loud and soft passages had been implied for a long time in “echo” pieces, both vocal and instrumental, for which there was such a craze that as early as 1581 Lasso published a famous madrigal for two four-part choirs (“O là o che bon echo,” roughly “O gee, what a nice echo”) making fun of it. In 1596, a year before Gabrieli’s publication, Adriano Banchieri had published a book of four-part *canzoni alla francese* that included one (no. 11, “La Organistina bella: in echo,” roughly “The pretty little lassie at the organ: with echo effects”) in which the echoes were obtained not by contrasting choirs but by explicit *forte* and *piano* markings. Gabrieli’s piece was thus not innovative but symptomatic. It was a symptom of the sensuous delight listeners had begun to take in sonic effects and displays of all kinds in this early period of music-as-spectacle.

62

Musical score for measures 62-66. The score is written for five staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom three are in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Dynamic markings include *f* (forte) and *p* (piano).

67

Musical score for measures 67-71. The score is written for five staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom three are in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music continues with complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings of *f* and *p*.

Musical score for measures 72-75. The score is written for six staves, organized into two systems of three staves each. The top system consists of a treble clef staff, a treble clef staff, and a bass clef staff. The bottom system consists of a bass clef staff, a bass clef staff, and a bass clef staff. The music is in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The notation includes various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Dynamic markings such as *f* (forte) are present throughout the passage.

Musical score for measures 76-79. The score is written for six staves, organized into two systems of three staves each. The top system consists of a treble clef staff, a treble clef staff, and a bass clef staff. The bottom system consists of a bass clef staff, a bass clef staff, and a bass clef staff. The music is in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The notation includes various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Dynamic markings such as *f* (forte) are present throughout the passage.

ex. 18-17 Giovanni Gabrieli, *Sonata pian'e forte*, end

ex. 18-18 Giovanni Gabrieli, *Sonata per tre violini*, end

Another highly symptomatic piece, and perhaps a more significant one, is the *Sonata per tre violini* from the collection of 1615 (see Ex. 18-18 for its concluding fireworks). It may very well have been on the program that Thomas Coryat described, where he mentions “these treble viols” of which “I heard three several there,” playing so impressively. Since all three solo parts in this sonata are treble parts, the *basso per l’organo* in this case is a true basso continuo, an actual fourth part, not a basso seguente. Such a composition, for treble or trebles above an independent bass with a vague harmonic filler to be added in performance, is by standard modern definition a “baroque” sonata. Its inclusion in a book of canzonas testifies conclusively to the genealogy of what has been ever since the seventeenth century the principal genre of soloistic chamber music—instrumental music for “pure” listening enjoyment. After four hundred years, we take such a thing for granted. As we shall see, though, when it was new (and especially when it began to travel beyond the borders of Italy) it raised some knotty esthetic problems. Putting this piece at the end of our chapter on the effects of religious unrest underscores the irony: what would remain for centuries the elite genre of “absolute” secular instrumental music was born in church.

Notes:

(8) Trans. Gustave Reese, in *Music in the Renaissance* (rev. ed., New York: W. W. Norton, 1959), p. 449.

(9) *Coryat's Crudities; hastily gobled up in five moneths travels* (London, 1611), p. 251.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 19 Pressure of Radical Humanism

The “Representational” Style and the Basso Continuo; Intermedii; Favole in Musica

Chapter: CHAPTER 19 Pressure of Radical Humanism

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

THE TECHNICAL, THE ESTHETIC, AND THE IDEOLOGICAL

As hinted in previous chapters, the central irony of the “Renaissance,” as the term is applied to music, is the way in which the Greek revivalism that motivated the “rebirth” of philosophy and the other arts actually undermined the dominant “Renaissance” musical style, if we take that style to be the *ars perfecta*. It would be even sillier to say that the neoclassical revival produced the musical “Baroque,” since that term was never used about art until the middle of the seventeenth century, when it was used to describe Roman architecture, and was only first applied to a musical composition (Jean-Philippe Rameau’s opera *Hippolyte et Aricie*, as it happened) nearly a century later, in 1733, as an insult. “Baroque” is a term that musicians do not need. Trying to justify it in any terms that actually relate to the music of the period has never led to anything but quibbling, sophistry, and tergiversation. All it is now is a commercial logo for a kind of “classical music” that record companies and radio stations market as sonic wallpaper. Let’s try to forget it.

So what shall we call the music that we used to call “baroque”—the repertory that arose in Italy at the end of the sixteenth century and died out in Germany some time past the middle of the eighteenth, and what shall we call the period of its ascendancy? We could simply call it the Italian age, since almost every musical innovation during that century and a half took place in Italy and radiated out from there to other parts of Europe. (There were pockets of resistance, to be sure, but conscious resistance is an acknowledgement of dominion.)

If we want to emphasize its philosophy we could call it the Galilean period, after Galileo Galilei, the great astronomer (1564–1642), who was the world’s first “modern” (that is, empirical or experimental) scientist, and therefore emblematic of what we now call the “Early Modern” period, when for the first time secular thought and secular art reached decisive ascendancy in the West. (That is why the story of Galileo’s persecution by the Inquisition has achieved such mythic resonance.)

We might do even better to call it the Cartesian period, after René Descartes (1596–1650), the philosophical founder of empirical science, whose extreme mind–matter dualism made possible the idea of objective knowledge and representation. A great deal of music between 1600 and 1750 seeks to represent objects (including objectified emotions) rationally and systematically and accurately, and to formulate rules for doing so. The principle of “objective” musical representation that could be formulated as “doctrine” was a very important idea at this time. (Still, the idea of musical representation was neither born with this repertory, nor did it die out afterward.)

If we want to emphasize media, we could call it the theatrical age. Music theater as we know it today was born at the turn of the seventeenth century (a great age for drama generally), precisely under the influence of the neoclassical revival, and it was much abetted by the new emphasis on representation, for that is what theater is: represented action. But we could just as well call it the orchestral age. Orchestral music and large “abstract” instrumental forms were also an innovation of the seventeenth century, and it was also a great age of instrumental virtuosity—which is to say instrumental music made theatrical. (Again, though, both music theater and orchestral music—not to mention virtuosity—are with us still).

If we want to keep the emphasis on musical technique, then the obvious name for the period—and perhaps the best one—would be the continuo age: the basso continuo as a virtually obligatory aspect of any musical performance that

was not a keyboard solo originated around the turn of the seventeenth century, as we learned in the previous chapter, and it died out before the end of the eighteenth. Clearly the presence of the basso continuo (a bass line “realized” in chordal harmony) as a constant factor throughout this period, and its failure to survive the period, in some sense define the period. And that sense has to do with harmony itself, reconceived and newly emphasized as a driving or shaping force in music. It was the development of harmony as an independent shaping factor, and its deployment over larger and larger temporal spans, that made possible the development of “abstract” musical forms.

But were there no connections between the technical and the esthetic and the ideological? Were there no affinities binding the neoclassical impulse, the theatrical impulse, and the rise of the continuo? There certainly were; and to locate them we must turn our attention to the Florentine academies of the late sixteenth century, and to the writings of a remarkable scholar, Girolamo Mei.

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Academy

Girolamo Mei

Vincenzo Galilei

ACADEMIES

Chapter: CHAPTER 19 Pressure of Radical Humanism

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The original Academy, a school located in the gardens of Academus (a legendary hero) near Athens, was founded by Plato early in the fourth century bce and lasted until 529 CE, when, having long since moved to the grounds of Cicero's villa at Tusculum near Rome, it was closed down by the Emperor Justinian as part of an antipagan campaign, an act often associated with the coming of the "Dark Ages." The revival of the term by associations of artists and thinkers—beginning with the Accademia Platonica, an informal circle led by Marsilio Ficino that met at the palace of Lorenzo dei Medici in Florence between 1470 and 1492—was thus one of the most self-conscious, programmatic acts of the humanist rebirth of learning.

During the sixteenth century *Accademie*—literary and artistic coteries supported by noble patronage—flourished in many Italian cities, but Florence would always be the center. The most prestigious one of all was the Accademia degli Umidi, later the Accademia Fiorentina, founded in 1540, which commissioned translations of works by Greek and Latin authors and also treatises on Italian (that is, Tuscan) literary style. Mei (1519–94) was at twenty-one the youngest charter member of this academy. His initial academy-sponsored treatises, though devoted to Italian literature, already reveal some knowledge of Greek music theory. Beginning in 1551, he made Greek music his main subject and completed a four-volume treatise on the modes (*De modis musicis antiquorum*, "On the musical modes of the ancients") in 1573, by which time he was living in Rome.

This enormously erudite dissertation, which draws on classical writers from Aristoxenus and Ptolemy to Boethius, and also summarizes "modern" mode theory up to and including Glareanus, deals both with the tuning and structure of the modes and with their expressive and "ethical" effects. The concluding book is a discussion, based mainly on Aristotle, on the uses of the modes in education, in therapy, and, finally, in poetry and drama. In ancient times, Mei asserted, poems and plays were always sung—and always monophonically, whether by soloists or by the chorus, whether unaccompanied or doubled by instruments. Despite the wealth of information it contains, Mei's treatise contains no actual examples of Greek music beyond the late Delphic hymns mentioned and illustrated near the end of the first chapter of this book.

So despite all his expertise and diligence, Mei's treatise contained everything anyone might have wanted to know about Greek music except an idea of what it sounded like. And that, paradoxically enough, is exactly why it became an important influence on the course of contemporary music. There was no musical evidence to contradict his impressive assertions about what Greek music could do and how it did it, and why contemporary music could no longer equal its effects.

Mei did not know what Greek music sounded like, but he knew (or thought he knew) what it did not sound like. It was not full of counterpoint, the invention of conceited sensualists preoccupied with their own technique and with mere aural titillation. Their music was just a lot of sound and fury signifying nothing, because its many simultaneous melodies "convey to the soul of the listener at the same time diverse and contrary affections."¹ It was precisely because their music was monophonic, Mei believed, and because their modes did not all use the same set of pitches, that the Greeks were able to achieve their miracles of ethos, or moral influence through music.

Mei's researches became known to a group of Florentine humanists who in the 1570s and 1580s were meeting at the home of Count Giovanni de' Bardi, a hero of the defense of Malta against the Turks and a favorite courtier of Grand Duke Francesco I of Tuscany, for whom he had the job of organizing court entertainments, including musical

spectacles. It was in this latter capacity that Bardi became interested in theatrical or dramatic music. He corresponded with Mei about the music of the Greek tragedies and comedies, and also put Vincenzo Galilei (ca. 1530–91), a lutenist-singer in his employ, in touch with the great scholar.

Galilei, who had studied with Zarlino (and whose son Galileo, as we know, made something of a name for himself in another field), was the best-trained musician in Bardi's inner circle. He had already published a treatise on arranging polyphonic music for solo voice accompanied by lute, and had begun a gloss on Zarlino's *Istitutioni harmoniche*, supplemented with information on ancient music theory as it was being disseminated among humanists. It was in connection with this project that Galilei began corresponding with Mei, whose research had revealed the differences between the ancient system of modes and tunings and the modern, contradicting Zarlino's assertion that the new had grown directly out of the old. This challenge to the historical legitimacy of the *ars perfecta* estranged Galilei from Zarlino. It became Galilei's mission to effect a true reconciliation of ancient theory and modern practice.

This he never achieved; indeed such a thing was scarcely achievable. But his correspondence with Mei won him over to the view that the *ars perfecta*, far from the ultimate perfection of music, was a frivolous deviation from the true meaning and purpose of music as practiced by the ancients, and that the only way of restoring to music the expressive powers of which the ancients wrote would be to strip away the purely sensuous adornments of counterpoint and return to an art truly founded on the imitation of nature.



fig. 19-1 Title page of Vincenzo Galilei's *Dialogo della musica antica et della moderna*

Galilei cast this inflammatory thesis into the suitably Platonic form of a dialogue: the *Dialogo della musica antica e della moderna* (“Dialogue on music ancient and modern”), in which the two fictitious interlocutors were named after Count Bardi (to whom the book was dedicated on publication in 1581) and Piero Strozzi, a noble dilettante in Bardi’s circle, called the Camerata. Coming from a practicing musician, and couched in bluntly argumentative language, this formulation of principles derived from Mei’s purely “academic” research caused controversy (Zarlino himself retorting acidly a few years later in an addendum to his treatise called *Sopplimenti musicali*).

Galilei’s strongest invective was reserved for the madrigalists (this despite the fact that he himself had published a book of madrigals seven years earlier and would publish another six years later), because the madrigalists already thought of themselves as the humanist reformers of music. They already claimed to be imitating nature in their work, and they were having an enormous influence even on composers of church music during the Counter Reformation. Galilei, presuming to speak for the Greeks, ridiculed the madrigalists for committing a travesty. “Our practicing contrapuntists,” he sneered, will say

that they have imitated the words, each time they set to music a sonnet, a madrigal, or other poem in which one finds verses that say, for example, “Bitter heart and fierce, cruel desire,” which happens to be the first line of one of Petrarch’s sonnets, and they see to it that between the parts that sing it are many sevenths, fourths, seconds, and major sixths, and that by means of these they have made a rough, bitter, grating sound in their listeners’ ears. Another time they will say they have imitated the words when among the ideas in the text are some that have the meaning “to flee,” or “to fly.” These will be declaimed with such speed and so little grace as can hardly be imagined. As for words like “to vanish,” “to swoon,” “to die,” they will make the parts fall silent so abruptly that far from inducing any such effect, they will move their listeners to laughter, or else to indignation, should they feel they are being mocked.... Finding words denoting contrasts of color, like “dark” versus “light hair,” and the like, they will set them to black and white notes respectively, to express their meaning most astutely and cleverly, they say, never mind that they have altogether subordinated the sense of hearing to accidents of form and color which are properly the domain of vision and touch. Another time, they will have a verse like this: “He descended into Hell, into the lap of Pluto,” and they will make one of the parts descend so that the singer sounds to the listener more like someone moaning to frighten and terrify little girls than like someone singing something sensible. And where they find the opposite—“He doth aspire to the stars”—they will have it declaimed in such a high register that no one screaming in pain has ever equaled it.

Unhappy men, they do not realize that if any of the famous orators of old had ever once declaimed two words in such a fashion they would have moved their hearers to laughter and contempt at once, and would have been ridiculed and despised by them as stupid, abject, and worthless men.²

We have seen all of these techniques and many more of the same sort practiced with utmost seriousness and effectiveness. Even “Augenmusik”—music for the eye, as in Galileo’s example of white and black notes—had a perfectly serious motivation and could produce hair-raising aural effects in the hands a musician like Jacobus Gallus (see his St. John Passion in the previous chapter, Ex. 18-12). But Galilei had a certain point in ridiculing “madrigalisms”: they are indirect and artificial imitations, based on analogies—i.e., shared features—rather than homologies, real structural congruities. As such they are like plays on words, or witticisms. Depending on mechanisms of wit, they can be taken as humor—and indeed, we often do react to a madrigalism, even a serious one, the way we do to a joke: we laugh with delight when we “get it.”

Notes:

(1) Girolamo Mei, letter to Vincenzo Galilei (8 May 1572), trans. Claude V. Palisca in *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 63.

(2) Vincenzo Galilei, *Dialogo della musica antica e della moderna*, ed. Favio Fano (Milan: A. Minuziano, 1947), pp. 130–31.

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Humanism

THE REPRESENTATIONAL STYLE

Chapter: CHAPTER 19 Pressure of Radical Humanism

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The question is, are there any homologies at all between music and nature? There is one, Galilei contended, if by nature we mean human nature: and that is speech, or what linguists still call “natural language.” Plato himself had accounted for the “ethos” of the modes—their ability to influence the soul—on the basis of this homology. In the *Republic*, Socrates asks that just two modes be allowed for music in his ideal state: the one “that would fittingly imitate the utterances and the accents of a brave man who is engaged in warfare or in any enforced business, and who, when he has failed, either meeting wounds or death or having fallen into some other mishap, in all these conditions confronts fortune with steadfast endurance and repels her strokes”; and the one that imitates the speech of “a man engaged in works of peace, not enforced but voluntary, either trying to persuade somebody of something and imploring him—whether it be a god, through prayer, or a man, by teaching and admonition—or contrariwise yielding himself to another who is petitioning him or teaching him or trying to change his opinions, and in consequence faring according to his wish, and not bearing himself arrogantly, but in all this acting modestly and moderately and acquiescing in the outcome.”³ Glaucon, his interlocutor, informs Socrates that he has described the Dorian and the Phrygian modes, respectively.

So human speech—not just words, but intonation, pitch, tone of voice, and every other “paralexical” aspect of speech that communicates over and above the literal meaning of the words (aspects that, in case of contradiction or irony, are to be trusted over words)—is the true object of musical imitation within Galilei’s radical humanism. And notice especially that Plato’s Phrygian mode is the *persuasive* mode. That is the purpose of music: it is the great persuader. So Galilei’s radical humanism is another, particularly literal manifestation of musical rhetoric: music as an art of persuasion. “Therefore,” Galilei concluded,

when musicians go henceforth for their amusements to the tragedies and comedies played by the actors and clowns in the theaters, let them for a while leave off their immoderate laughing and instead kindly observe in what manner the actors speak, in what range, high or low, how loudly or softly, how rapidly or slowly they enunciate their words, when one gentleman converses quietly with another. Let them pay a little attention to the differences and contrasts that obtain when a gentleman speaks with one of his servants, or one of these with another. Let them consider how the prince converses with one of his subjects or vassals; again, how he speaks to a petitioner seeking a favor; how one speaks when infuriated or excited; how a married woman speaks, how a girl, a simple child, a witty wanton; how a lover speaks to his beloved seeking to persuade her to grant him his wish; how one speaks when lamenting, when crying out, when afraid, and when exulting with joy. From these diverse observations, if they are carried out attentively and considered with care, one can deduce the way that best suits the expression of whatever meanings or emotion may come to hand.⁴

What musicians will gain, in short, will be a true *stile rappresentativo*: a true “representational style.” Such a thing was not unknown to the madrigalists: we have already observed some pretty effective and accurate imitation of speech in Cipriano de Rore’s *Dalle belle contrade* (Ex. 17-15). But even in the most effective and rigorously representational polyphonic setting, there is a fundamental contradiction between the singleness of the expressive poetic or textual voice and the multiplicity of actual singing voices. The solution Galilei proposed was not a return to literal monophony but to what he called *monodia*, “monody”—namely, a single voice accompanied by the lute (likened in this context to Apollo’s lyre). In this way not even expressive harmony need be sacrificed to representation.

He was proposing, in short, a kind of music that he had already long since advocated and exemplified: solo singing to the lute, a variety of continuo practice, one might say. But what had long been one performance option among many

(and one rarely committed to writing) now became a high cause. And the vocal style now advocated was new in that, even more than the polyphonic madrigal's, it took its bearings from actual, enacted, enunciated speech rather than from the formal arrangements of verse. Galilei made a setting of some verses from Dante's *Inferno* the next year and performed them for Bardi's Camerata as a demonstration of the monodic style. Neither these nor any other monodic compositions by Galilei have survived, however; the kind of music Galilei imagined on the basis of Mei's research can only be inferred from the work of others.

Notes:

(3) Plato, *Republic*, 399a-c, trans. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961), pp. 643–44.

(4) Galilei, *Dialogo*, p. 162.

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Intermède

Jacopo Peri

INTERMEDII

Chapter: CHAPTER 19 Pressure of Radical Humanism

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

One of the first practical demonstrations, or tests, of the new radical–humanist esthetic came in 1589, when Count Bardi was asked to organize the entertainment for the wedding of the Grand Duke Ferdinando de’ Medici of Tuscany, the brother and successor (some said the murderer) of Bardi’s original patron Francesco, to the Princess Christine of Lorraine. Seizing the opportunity, he put his friends to work on a colossally extravagant set of *intermedii*, allegorical pageants with music to be performed between the acts of a spoken comedy (*La pellegrina*, “The pilgrim girl,” by the court poet Girolamo Bargagli).

Such entr’actes were a North Italian theatrical specialty. Their original purpose was utilitarian and the music correspondingly modest: since the curtain was not lowered between the acts, the musical interludes (often instrumental, played from the wings) merely signaled the divisions of the play. Particularly in Florence, and especially at court celebrations, the *intermedii* became increasingly lavish and costly—a form of conspicuous consumption meant to impress invited guests with their noble host’s wealth and liberality. Their height was reached at Medici family weddings, each successive one striving hard to outdo the last.

The first Florentine ruler to glorify himself in this way was Lorenzo de’ Medici (not “the Magnificent” but his grandson, the Duke of Urbino), in 1518. The first Medici wedding for which the music survives was that of Cosimo I in 1539. It was composed by the madrigalist Francesco Corteccia, and consists of motets and madrigals for up to 24 voices, doubled by full family choirs of instruments. This was “concerted” music before its time, so to speak; but the instruments did not yet have independent parts. Between the concerted numbers, a singer representing Apollo sang to the “lyre,” probably a lute or harp. His music is not notated; presumably it consisted of “arias” improvised over a ground, according to a method that (as we know) went back to the fifteenth century.



fig. 19-2 Ventura Salimbeni, *Wedding of Ferdinand de' Medici and Christine of Lorraine (1589)*. This was the occasion for which members of the Florentine Camerata devised their *intermedii*.

From then until 1589 no *intermedio* music has survived, but souvenir books contain copious illustrations of the sets, descriptions of the action, and lists of participants, from which one can get an idea of the scale on which the musical entertainments were cast. The souvenir book from the 1565 wedding of Francesco I, Bardi's friend and patron, for example, lists thirty-five instruments, including four double manual harpsichords (suggesting that continuo-style accompaniments were already in practical use decades before such a thing was ever written down) and two *lyre da braccio*, chord-playing bowed string instruments that were used to accompany Apollo's solos.

The 1589 nuptial festivities for Ferdinand were the most lavish of the Medici extravaganzas. Texts for the six *intermedii*—composed by, among others, Ottavio Rinuccini, a famous poet and, like Bardi, a noble “academician”—were a sort of mythological history of music. They represented, respectively: the harmony of the spheres; the song contests of the Muses; Apollo slaying the Dragon; the coming of the Golden Age (this one unrelated to the theme but required by noble-nuptials protocol); the story of Arion, a semilegendary poet who, according to a myth, was saved from drowning by a dolphin responding to his song; and a concluding allegory, “The Descent of Rhythm and Harmony from Heaven to Earth.” The staging was by Emilio de' Cavalieri, who had been director of music for Ferdinand during the latter's years as a cardinal in Rome before his accession to the Tuscan ducal throne

The big concerted numbers—for up to thirty voices in seven choirs, often fitted out with instrumental ritornellos or *sinfonie*—were mainly the work of the great madrigalist Luca Marenzio and of Cristofano Malvezzi, the organist of the Medici chapel and a friend of Bardi, to whom he had dedicated a book of *ricercari*. Cavalieri, as Ferdinand's personal musician, was given pride of place. He composed the opening madrigal (*Dalle più alte sfere*, "I, Harmony, come down to you from highest spheres," words by Bardi), with a fiercely embellished part for the virtuoso singer Vittoria Archilei, his protégée (Ex. 19-1a); and, to close the show, a grand panegyric finale directly addressed to the grand duke and his bride (*O che nuovo miracolo*, "O what newest miracle is this!"), a *ballo* or concerted dance-song for the whole company (Ex. 19-1b is the main ritornello) over a ground bass that would live on for a while in other compositions as the "Aria di Fiorenza" (Air of Florence) or the "Ballo del Gran Duca" (the Grand Duke's Ball) or the "Ballo di Palazzo" (the Palace Ball).

And yet Bardi nevertheless managed to work in a few numbers by his younger friends, the musicians who frequented the meetings of his Camerata and were involved with Galilei's neoclassical experiments. Giulio Caccini (d. 1618), a well established singer at the Medici court, later claimed that he learned more from the "savant speeches" of the poets and philosophers who met at Bardi's "than I had in over thirty years' study of counterpoint."⁵ He contributed a solo aria for a sorceress (sung by his wife) to open the fourth intermedio, one of the first original "continuo" compositions ever to be written down (Ex. 19-1c). Jacopo Peri (1561–1633), technically an aristocratic dilettante but a highly accomplished musician, was a pupil of Malvezzi and a self-styled "Orphic singer" who accompanied himself on a specially constructed giant lute (or archlute) that he called the *chitarrone*, after the Greek *kithara* or lyre (Fig. 19-3; more casually, it was known as the *theorbo*, literally "hurdy-gurdy"). He both composed and sang to the *chitarrone* the show-stopper from the fifth intermedio: an aria for Arion, lying at the bottom of the sea, with echo effects to suggest his waterlogged condition (Ex. 19-1d).

38
Quai voi, no va Mi ner va e for

40
te Al ci de, e for

41
te Al ci de,

From the highest spheres,
As friendly escort to the heavenly Sirens,
I am Music, and come to you, O mortals,
After rising to Heaven on beating wings
To carry the noble flame:
For never had the sun seen a nobler pair
Than you, the new Minerva and mighty Hercules.
(Only the last line included in the example.)

ex. 19-1a From the *intermedii* of 1589, opening aria, mm. 5–9

Notes:

(5) Giulio Caccini, preface to *Le nuove musiche* (1601), ed. Angelo Solerti, in *Le origini del melodrama: Testimonianze dei contemporanei* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1903), p. 56, trans. Piero Weiss in Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*, 2nd ed., p. 143.

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Giulio Romolo Caccini

Jacopo Peri

THE "MONODIC REVOLUTION"

Chapter: CHAPTER 19 Pressure of Radical Humanism

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

O che nuo - vo mi - ra - co - lo Ec - co ch'in

O che nuo - vo mi - ra - co - lo Ec - co ch'in ter - ra

O che nuo - vo mi - ra - co - lo Ec - co ch'in ter - ra

O che nuo - vo mi - ra - co - lo Ec - co ch'in ter - ra

O che nuo - vo mi - ra - co - lo Ec - co ch'in ter - ra

B.C.

6 6 6

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of a musical score. It features five staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics. The second and third staves are vocal lines in treble clef with lyrics. The fourth and fifth staves are bass lines in bass clef with lyrics. The bottom staff is a basso continuo line in bass clef with figured bass notation. The music is in common time (C) and the key signature has one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "O che nuovo mi-ra-co-lo Ec-co ch'in ter-ra scen-do-no Cele-ste al-to spet-ta-co-lo".

ter - ra scen - do - no Ce - le - ste al - to spet - ta - co - lo

scen - do - no Ce - le - ste al - to spet - ta - co - lo

scen - do - no Ce - le - ste al - to spet - ta - co - lo

scen - do - no Ce - le - ste al - to spet - ta - co - lo

scen - do - no Ce - le - ste al - to spet - ta - co - lo

B.C.

6 6 4 3

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of the musical score. It features five staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics. The second and third staves are vocal lines in treble clef with lyrics. The fourth and fifth staves are bass lines in bass clef with lyrics. The bottom staff is a basso continuo line in bass clef with figured bass notation. The music is in common time (C) and the key signature has one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "ter-ra scen-do-no Cele-ste al-to spet-ta-co-lo".

13

Gli Dei ch'il mon-d'ac-cen-do-no Ec-co-Hi-me-ne-oe

Gli Dei ch'il mon-d'ac-cen-do-no Ec-co-Hi-me-ne-oe

Gli Dei ch'il mon-d'ac-cen-do-no Ec-co-Hi-me-ne-oe Ve-

Gli Dei ch'il mon-d'ac-cen-do-no Ec-co-Hi-me-ne-oe

Gli Dei ch'il mon-d'ac-cen-do-no Ec-co-Hi-me-ne-oe

B.C.

♭ 4 † † 6 7 5 6 3

19

Ve-ne-re Col-pie-la-ter-ra-hor-pre-me-re.

Ve-ne-re Col-pie-la-ter-ra-hor-pre-me-re.

ne-re Col-pie-la-ter-ra-hor-pre-me-re.

Ve-ne-re Col-pie-la-ter-ra-hor-pre-me-re.

Ve-ne-re Col-pie-la-ter-ra-hor-pre-me-re.

B.C.

7 6 4 4 3 ♭ 6 7 6 4 4 3

ex. 19-1b From the *intermedii* of 1589, main ritornello of closing *ballo* (*Aria di Fiorenza*)

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece by Giulio Caccini. It consists of seven systems of music, each with a vocal line and a lute accompaniment. The lyrics are in Italian and describe a celestial scene. The score is written in a style characteristic of the early Baroque period, with a focus on monodic melody and simple harmonic accompaniment. The lyrics are: "I - o i - o che dal ciel ca - der fa - vei la lu - na a - vei a - vei ch'in al - to se - te e tutt' il - - - ciel ve - de - t'e voi co - man - do il som - m'e - ter - no Gio - ra o - gni su - a gra - ria pio - ve."

ex. 19-1c From the *intermedii* of 1589, Giulio Caccini, *Io che dal ciel cader*, beginning

The arias by Caccini and Peri were the only moves toward “monodic insurgency” (in the words of music historian Piero Weiss) in the 1589 *intermedii*.⁶ The expression is a witty one, because historians have fallen into the habit of calling what happened scarcely a dozen years later the great “monodic revolution,” and because many of the same names as took part in the 1589 festivities—Rinuccini, Peri, Caccini, Cavalieri—are to be found among the turn-of-the-century monodic “revolutionaries.” Yet what actually happened around 1600 was no sudden musical revolution, but only the emergence into print of musical practices that had been in the process of formation over the whole preceding century. These practices had been given an additional impetus by the recent humanist revival with all its attendant neoclassical theorizing, and by the backing of prestigious patrons. They emerged into print in four famous books, as follows.



fig. 19-3 Jacopo Peri as Arion, singing his own compositions in the fifth intermedio of 1589 (costume design by Bernardo Buontalenti at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence).

In 1600, the last year of the sixteenth century, Emilio de' Cavalieri published in Rome his *Rappresentazione di Anima, et di Corpo* ("The [dramatic] representation of soul and body"), a sacred play designed, according to the title page, *per recitar cantando*, "for recitation in singing" (literally, "to recite singingly"). It was meant for performance by a society of Roman lay preachers called the Oratorio del Crocifisso (the Preaching Society of the Crucifix), which met in the assembly rooms of the church of San Marcello where members of the Cavalieri family had overseen the Lenten music for many years, Emilio himself from 1578–1584. (It was actually performed, however, during carnival in the assembly hall of the Church of Santa Maria, the so-called Chiesa Nova or "new church".) In terms of its actual contents, the *rappresentazione* was not all that different from the Florentine *intermedii*, though of course it was more modest by many orders of magnitude. But it was one continuous dramatic whole rather than half a dozen loosely connected episodes.

The solo music consisted of a string of little songs (some strophic, some in florid single stanzas like madrigals, some in dance meters) connected by musicalized prose recitations of the sort that would later be called "*recitativo*." It is notated in score over what was in point of fact (but only fortuitously) the earliest printed "figured bass"—that is to say, a continuo bass line in which the harmonies to be filled in are indicated by little numbers (figures) representing

intervals (Fig. 19-4).

Prima Risposta

Seconda Risposta

Parte Principale

Dun-que fra tor-bid' on - de Gful - ti - mi miei so - spir man - de-rò

fuo - re

fuo - re

fuo re

5

ex. 19-1d From the *intermedii* of 1589, Jacopo Peri, *Dunque fra torbid' onde*, beginning

5. ANIMA. Vovrei riposo pace, Vovrei diletta, e gioia. E trome affanno, e noia. CORPO. Ecco i miei feudi preni, Qui ti riposo a godi. In mille vezze meca.

7. ANIMA. Non vò più lacer quell'acqua, Che la mia li ar ardore l'infama maggioranza. CORPO. Prendi gli honor del mudo, Qui gioir quanto vuoi, Qui far te il puoi. ANIMA. Nò no, Nò no per pena Cò qual'affetto, e fela Capri d'infamia anch. CORPO. Alma d'ogn'altra co-

11. ANIMA. Già non mi feli in feda, E conione potrei. Questar gl'infami miei? CORPO. La fe: che di mi feli. Se stenta nel tuon, Stron e sempre pianto? ANIMA. Quelle co, te m'akati, E fe meo ranti. A pèl'fai d'anti. Tanta periculi tui. Fur à la sono? Ine ignoti vover mio. Et stronda el pefa. ranti in Dio.

14. CORPO. Ah! chi mi dà coraggio? A qual. Cò me m'apprigior? L'anima mi còlata. E feo mi trasporta. La carne mia mi trena. L'a-

fig. 19-4 Dialogue of the body (Corpo) and soul (Anima) over a figured bass (the first to be printed), in Emilio de' Cavalieri's *Rappresentatione di Anima, et di Corpo* (Rome, 1600).

In the late months of 1600 (or, by the calendar now in use, the early months of 1601, the first year of the seventeenth century), two different musical settings of the same mythological play were printed. The authors were Peri and Caccini, who had become jealous rivals. The play was an eclogue or pastoral drama by Rinuccini called *Euridice*, after the story of Orpheus and Eurydice as told by the ancient Roman poet Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*. Peri's was the earlier setting: it was performed (with some interpolations by Caccini, at the latter's insistence) on 6 October 1600 as part of the nuptial festivities honoring the marriage of Maria de' Medici to the King of France, Henri IV. (Caccini's hastily composed setting would not be performed complete for two years following publication: doubtless he was trying to "scoop" his competitor.) The music of both plays was similar in design to that of Cavalieri's *Rappresentatione*, except that it had far more *recitativo*. Dramatic continuity was given greater emphasis than spectacle.

Late in 1601 (or early in 1602 by the new-style calendar), Caccini issued a book of solo songs with figured bass, called *Nuove musiche*. That title has been one of the most oversold in all of music history. All it means is "new songs" or "new musical pieces," but it has been invested with a much deeper significance by those who, misunderstanding

Italian usage, have seen in it the proclamation of a “new music” or the dawn of a new musical epoch. The din of neoclassical propaganda must partly account for the inflation of the volume’s reputation, but surely even more critical was its appearance at the turn of a century. (The influence of the calendar—or just the decimal system, really—on our sense of history should never be underestimated, as anyone who lived through the millennial frenzies of the year 2000 will hardly need reminding.)

Cavaliere’s, Peri’s, and Caccini’s cluster of turn-of century publications—plus Viadana’s *Cento concerti ecclesiastici* of 1602, familiar from the previous chapter, which amounted to “nuove musiche” set to sacred Latin texts—brought the monodic style into the authoritative medium of print. Print spread it far and wide: *that* was what made the difference. And there was also the prestige of high aristocratic patronage behind the publication of the *Euridice* plays, which now have the reputation of being the first operas. Owing to that prestige and that authoritative dissemination, performance practices that had been cooking in Italy for many decades could now become standard *compositional* practices in all the countries of Europe.

And that was a revolution after all. It was not, however, a revolution brought about singlehandedly by a determined composer or band of composers. That is how traditional historiography—bourgeois historiography, lest we forget—represents and celebrates change. Whether in the arts or elsewhere, change is brought about in such narratives by the heroic efforts of superior, visionary (“revolutionary”) individuals. In fact, the monodic revolution was the slowly evolving work of performers, arrangers, patrons, churchmen, scholars, teachers, composers, and printers, to put the overlapping personnel in rough (and again overlapping) chronological order. The only sudden role was that of the printers.

Notes:

(6) Piero Weiss, review of W. Kirkendale, *L’Aria di Fiorenza, id est Il Ballo del Gran Duca* (Florence, 1972), *Musical Quarterly* LIX (1973): 474.

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MADRIGALS AND ARIAS REDUX

Chapter: CHAPTER 19 Pressure of Radical Humanism

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

For a closer look at the early printed artifacts of the “revolution,” the most expedient way to proceed will be in reverse chronological order, which in this case produces an order of increasing size and complexity of genre. Caccini’s *Nuove musiche*, which may contain songs composed (or, possibly, first improvised) decades earlier at meetings of the Camerata, amounts to a sort of showcase displaying the basic elements or raw materials out of which the early continuously musical plays and “representations” were fashioned. Indeed, it contains bits of Caccini’s own larger spectacles, including four arias and two choruses from a musical play called *Il rapimento di Cefalo* (“The jealousy of Cephalus,” after Ovid), which had furnished the main entertainment for the same Medici wedding pomp as witnessed the unveiling of Peri’s *Euridice*.

The larger part of *Nuove musiche* is given over to individual songs and to a treatise that instructs the singer on the properly aristocratic way of tossing them off—with great artfulness, but carelessly. The songs are of two basic types, both familiar to us from previous incarnations. The strophic ones, based on repetition, are the “airs” (*arie*). The others—in single stanzas, or “through-composed,” as we now rather gracelessly say in musicologese (a dialect of German)—are the “madrigals.” Thus we are reminded (and we should remember!) that a madrigal is not necessarily a part-song. Any setting of a single stanza in a word-sensitive style that employs no formulaic repetitions or refrains could be called a madrigal. And when we do keep this fact in mind, then we have a new way of understanding the importance Caccini attached to his madrigals, the songs in which, egged on by the Camerata, he experimented along neoclassical lines and discovered the *stile recitativo*, the style that, better than any other, could *muovere l’affetto dell’animo*: “move the soul’s affection,”⁷ or as we might put it now, move the listener emotionally.

So Caccini claimed or boasted in the preface, where he says the great discovery had taken place some fifteen years earlier, in the mid-1580s (as indeed it would have had to in order to be associated with the Camerata). His claim of priority was hotly disputed by Cavalieri, and need not detain us, since Galilei was probably there first anyway. But Caccini’s madrigals are indeed the place to look first to see “monody” in action.

Amarilli mia bella (Fig. 19-5 [facsimile]; Ex. 19-2 [transcription of the first couplet]) has for a text a typical love lyric from Guarini’s *Pastor Fido*, long a major quarry for madrigal verses. Setting it was a programmatic or polemical act—proof that only monody could really do a madrigal’s job. And yet it is a madrigal without “madrigalism.” Not a single word is “painted.” There is no rapid scale to show the arrow’s flight. There is no thumping throb to show the beating heart. There is only speech, delivered at something close to normal speech tempo and restricted to something like normal speech range: the whole vocal part is confined to an ambitus of a ninth but really an octave since the high note is reached only once, near the end—an obvious correlation of range with rhetorical emphasis.

Ma rilli mia bella Ne crediò del mio cor dolce desi o D'esser tu
 l'amor mi o Credi lo pur è se ti mor rassa le Prendi questo mio firale
 apri'mil petto, è vedrai scritto il co re amaril li ama rù
 li ama rilli e mio amo re Credi lo pur, e se timor r'assile Prendi questo mio
 firale apri'mil petto, è vedrai scritto il co re amaril li amaril
 li Ama rilli e'l mio amo re ama rù li e'l mica

fig. 19-5 Giulio Caccini, *Amarilli mia bella* (*Le nuove musiche*, 1601).

And that rhetorical emphasis is the whole purpose of the song. Everything is correlated with it, including the harmonies specified by the early figured bass. The figures show only what cannot be taken for granted; as time went on, and as habits were established, fewer and fewer figures became necessary, and those that remained became more conventionalized. The first figure, 6 over the bass F#, denotes what we now call the position, a term that actually reflects and recalls the old figured bass notation. (We also call such a harmony a triad in “first inversion,” but the concept of chord roots and inversions would not enter musicians’ vocabulary for another hundred years or more.) Note, however, that by the fourth measure an F# is allowed to imply the same harmony without a figure, since by then (or so the composer assumed), the reader will have caught on that leading tones (or indeed any sharpened note) in the bass normally required a sixth rather than a fifth (in addition to the always implicit third) to complete their harmony.

[♩ = 72]

A - ma - ril - li mia bel - la, Non cre - di, o del mio
cor dol - ce de - si - o, D'es -
ser tu la - mor mi - o?

6 6 11 10
6 11 10 6
6 - 5 11 10 - 11

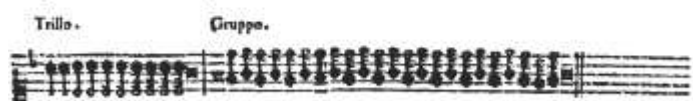
ex. 19-2 Giulio Caccini, *Amarilli mia bella*, first couplet in transcription, mm. 1-10

The expressive harmonies occur at cadences, under long drawn-out notes whose delayed resolutions not only represent but actually evoke in the listener the desire that is the main subject matter of any love poem. Thus the ancient Greek ideal of ethos—affective “contagion”—is realized (not that Plato would have approved of spreading this particular affect around!). At this early stage of continuo practice, the figures represent specific pitches fixed in register, rather than generic intervals. The main cadential formula—11-♯10-14 (occurring six times, beginning with the second system)—would later be represented as 4-♯3-7, subtracting an octave (= 7 steps) from every figure; it is now recognizable as the familiar “four–three” suspension, another term that we have retained from early “thoroughbass” notation. (Later still, the sharp would by itself come to imply a raised third, and the figures would read 4-♯-7. The line cannot come to rest until two dissonances—the suspension fourth and the appoggiatura seventh (not allowed in *ars perfecta* writing)—have been resolved. Such a harmonic intensifier will reinforce any emotion with rhetorical emphasis.

The most obvious rhetorical effect—borrowed from the polyphonic madrigal but vastly augmented—is the textual repetition. Where polyphonic madrigalists liked to repeat the last line or couplet to make the final cadence stick, Caccini repeats the last four lines, amounting to more than half the poem. But what is so rhetorical about literal repetition? Such a thing might sooner pall than enhance expression.



Di quello adunque, che possa essere, con maggiore, o minor grazia intonato nella maniera detta, se ne può fare esperienza nelle soprascritte note con le parole sotto, „ Cor mio deh non languire „, però che nella prima minima col punto si può intonare, „ Cor mio „, scemandola à poco a poco e nel calar della siminima crescere la voce con un poco più spirito, e verrà fatta l'esclamazione assai affettuosa per la nota anco, che cala per grado; ma molto più, spiritosa apparirà nella parola, „ deh „, per la tenuta della nota, che non cala per grado, come anco somissima poi per la ripresa della sesta maggiore, che cala per salto, il che ho voluto osservare, per mostrare altrui, non solo che cosa è esclamazione, e quale nasca, ma che possono essere ancora di due qualità una più affettuosa dell'altra, si per la maniera col la quale sono descritte, o intonate nell'un modo, o nell'altro, come per imitazione di una parola quando però ella ha un significato col il concetto: oltre che l'esclamazione in tutte le musiche affettuose è una regola generale si possono sempre usare in tutte le minime, e semiminime col punto per discendere, e faranno un più affettuoso per la nota susseguente, che corre, che non faranno nelle semibreui, nelle quali sarà più luogo, il crescere, e scemare della voce senza usar le esclamazioni: intendendo per conseguenza, che nelle musiche arie, o canzonette à ballo in vece di esse affetti, si debba usar solo la naturalezza del canto, il quale suole essere trasportato dall'aria istessa, nella quale benché talora si habbia luogo qualche esclamazione, si deve lasciare l'istessa vivezza, e non porvi affetto alcuno, che habbia del languido. Il perché noi venghiamo in cognizione quanto sia necessario per il musico un certo giudizio, il quale suole prevalere talvolta all'arte come altrui possiamo ancora conoscere dalle soprascritte note quanta maggior grazia habbiano le prime quattro come sopra la seconda sillaba della parola, „ languire „, così trattenute dalla seconda oroma col punto, che le ultime quattro uguali, così descritte per esempio. Ma perché molte sono quelle cose, che si usano nella buona maniera di cantar, e che per trovarsi in esse maggior grazia, descritte in una maniera, fanno contrario effetto l'una dall'altra, onde si deve altrui cantare con più grazia, o men grazia mi faranno ora dimostrare prima, in che guisa, e stato descritto da me il trillo, e il gruppo, e la maniera usata da me per insegnarlo à gli uditori di casa mia, e in oltre poi tutti gli altri effetti più necessarij, accio non resti squisitezza da me osservata, che non si dimostri.



Il trillo descritto da me sopra una corda sola, non è stato per altra ragione dimostrato in questa guisa, se non perché nello insegnarlo alla mia prima moglie, e ora all'altra vivente con le mie figliuole, non ho osservato altra regola, che l'istessa, nella quale è scritto, e l'uno, e l'altro, cioè si cominciarsi dalla prima seminima, e ribatter e ciascuna nota con la gola sopra la vocale, „ a „, fino all'ultima breve, e somigliantemente il gruppo, il qual trillo, e gruppo quanto con la suddetta regola fosse appreso in grande eccellenza dalla mia moglie passata lo lascerò giudicare à chiunque ne vuol tempi i suoi cantare, come altrui lascio nel giudizio altrui potendosi udire, in quanta squisitezza sia fatto dall'altra mia vivente, che se vero è che l'esperienza sia maestra di tutte le cose posso con qualche sicurezza affermare, e dire non si poter usare miglior mezzo per insegnarlo, ne miglior forma per descriverlo.

fig. 19-6 Examples of gorgia (trillo and gruppo) from the preface to Caccini's *Le nuove musiche* (1601).

And so it certainly would if it really were literal, but it is not. It just looks literal, and again we have to be on our guard that music cannot be judged by its looks. There is still an oral practice to consider, one to which Caccini devoted a lengthy illustrated discussion in the preface to *Le Nuove musiche*—a preface that is for us a precious document, more famous by far than the actual songs it served to introduce. What it introduces, as far as we are concerned, is not a book of songs but the whole practice of musico-rhetorical embellishment, a constant “oral” factor in almost every musical performance that took place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but one that left scant visible trace in the musical sources.

In this wonderful preface, Caccini, a virtuoso singer long before he became a “composer” (that is, a writer-down of songs), generously divulges to his readers his whole bag of singerly tricks, called *gorgia* (“throat-music,” already a clue to its production), learned in the first instance, he tells us, from his own teacher Scipione del Palla, who guarded them closely as guild secrets. While sternly counseling against their overuse by enthusiastic bumbler, Caccini provides the first systematic survey of the methods by which solo performers (the only kind in monody) were expected to enlarge and dilate rhetorically on written texts. It is a revealing lesson in charisma and a chastening reminder of how much is lost from any performing repertoire that survives only in textual form.

Caccini’s rhetorical embellishments included some that multiplied (or, as the analogy then went, divided) the written notes in *passaggi*,—fast runs and the like. Others were calculated to imitate (or rather, to stylize) various tones of voice or “manners of speaking” that give evidence of strong emotion, and that therefore should be used only when singing “passionate songs,” never in “canzonets for dancing.” The very word Caccini chose for one of them—*esclamazione* (exclamation), described as “the foundation of passion”—shows the directness with which the

emotions were to be physically portrayed.⁸ It consists of a gradual loudening of the voice on long notes into an outcry, made more artful by first diminishing the volume before beginning the increase—“reversed hair pins,” musicians familiar with modern crescendo/descrescendo marks would say. (Where the harmony permits, an *esclamazione* can also be executed by starting a third lower than the actual pitch and gradually sliding up; this, Caccini warns, is not for beginners.) Clearly, the *esclamazione* is the likeness of a sigh.

Caccini then proceeds to the likenesses of unsteady speech—tremblings and catchings of the throat. The artfully simulated vocal tremble or shake, involving the rapid alternation of contiguous notes of the scale, he calls the *gruppo* or “note-group.” We of course would call it a trill. Caccini’s *trillo* is something else: it is the rapid, controlled repetition of a single pitch. (For Caccini’s examples of *trillo* and *gruppo*, see Fig. 19-6.) What it sounded like, whether (for example) the repetitions were entirely detached or whether the *trillo* was more a kind of amplitude vibrato, his words do not convey. He recognizes this lack, inviting the reader to listen to his wife’s singing for a perfect illustration. Modern would-be performers of monodies have had to content themselves with the author’s words and their own experiments.

Finally, Caccini lists some “graces,” ways of modifying a melodic line to heighten the effect of “speaking in harmony” and “neglecting the music.” They mainly involve little rhythmic liberties that put the singer “out of sync” with the bass. In this respect, monody singing seems to have a lot in common with “crooning”—a manner of soft, subtle, highly inflected and embellished singing with intimately expressive intent that was adopted during the 1920s by male nightclub singers in response to the invention of the electric microphone. The word is said to be of Old Scandinavian derivation (*krauna* means “murmur” in modern Icelandic), but the singing style was pioneered and maintained in large part by singers of Italian extraction—Russ Columbo, Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, Tony Bennett (Anthony Benedetto). Imagining how one of these singers would have sung the repeated strain in Caccini’s *Amarilli* might give a better idea of how such a song was actually put over than any verbal description of *gorgia*, even Caccini’s own.

Beginning in 1602, then, madrigals existed—and were available for purchase—in two forms. Traditional polyphonic madrigals remained popular; they continued to be published and reprinted until the 1630s. Continuo madrigals like Caccini’s, and eventually “concerted” madrigals with instrumental parts, gradually gained on the older type, outstripping it in numbers of new publications in the 1620s. (The word *musiche*, incidentally, became standard for continuo songs, further belying the programmatic significance that is often read into the title of Caccini’s publication.) The genre produced a line of specialists in Caccini’s footsteps. Marco da Gagliano (1582–1643) was perhaps the consummate Florentine musician of the early seventeenth century: a churchman of distinction, he was by 1615 (his thirty-third year) a high official of the church of San Lorenzo, the chief court musician to the Medicis, the *maestro di cappella* of the Florence cathedral, Santa Maria del Fiore (celebrated by Du Fay—see chapter 8), and the founder and focal point of a musical Academy, the Accademia degli Elevati, which comprised “the city’s finest composers, instrumentalists and singers,” as well as the poets whose verses the musicians set and performed.⁹

Gagliano’s most famous monody, *Valli profonde* (“Deep valleys,” Ex. 19-3), was published in 1615, the year of his ecclesiastical elevation, in a volume of modern-style *Musiche* that appeared after Gagliano had already published five books of conventional polyphonic madrigals. The poem, a sonnet by the famous sixteenth-century Petrarchist Luigi Tansillo, belongs to the recognized subgenre of “hermit songs” (compare Petrarch’s own *Solo e pensoso* as set by Marenzio in Ex. 17-16). Such a song was a natural for monody, because crazed loneliness in the wild was monody’s most “natural” subject.

Gagliano’s setting shows some reconciliation between the ascetically neoclassical *musica recitativa* proclaimed by the Camerata (and by Caccini) and older madrigalian techniques. A residual interest in counterpoint peeps through almost immediately, when the singer’s opening phrase, full of “hard” intervals and harmonies as befits the bleak general mood of the poem, is taken up by the bass in imitation (Ex. 19-3a). Galilei probably would not have approved of Gagliano’s “serpentine” melisma on the word *serpenti* (“snakes”): this is old-fashioned madrigalism (Ex. 19-3b). But the unprepared dissonances on *pianto eterno* (“eternal weeping”) a few lines later was the kind of thing monody was made for—harmonic effects (apparently) liberated from contrapuntal voice-leading (Ex. 19-3c).

Andante

Val - li pro - fon - di, al sol - me-mi -
che, ru - pi. chiel ciel su - per-be mi nac-cia - le,

This musical score is for the first system of 'Valli profonde' by Marco da Gagliano. It is marked 'Andante' and is in common time (C). The vocal line begins with a half note 'Val' followed by a quarter note 'li', a half note 'pro', a quarter note 'fon', a half note 'di', a quarter rest, a quarter note 'al', a half note 'sol', and a quarter note 'me-mi'. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

ex. 19-3a Marco da Gagliano, *Valli profonde*, mm. 1-8

ser - pen - ti e lu - pi. ser -
pen - ti e lu - pi.

This musical score is for the second system of 'Valli profonde' by Marco da Gagliano, starting at measure 38. The vocal line features a sixteenth-note pattern for 'ser - pen - ti e lu - pi. ser -' and a similar pattern for 'pen - ti e lu - pi.' in the second system. The piano accompaniment includes a sixteenth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

ex. 19-3b Marco da Gagliano, *Valli profonde*, mm. 38-45

51

fie - de, om - bre, son io dan-na - ta al pian-to e-ter - no,

This musical score is for the third system of 'Valli profonde' by Marco da Gagliano, starting at measure 51. The vocal line begins with a half note 'fie - de', a quarter note 'om', a half note 'bre', a quarter note 'son', a quarter note 'io', a quarter note 'dan-na', a quarter note 'ta', a quarter note 'al', a quarter note 'pian-to', a quarter note 'e-ter', and a half note 'no'. The piano accompaniment features chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

ex. 19-3c Marco da Gagliano, *Valli profonde*, mm. 51-54

Pian - ge madon-na et i - o go-dodel pian - to suo ca - ne del mi - o,

ex. 19-4a Sigismondo d'India, *Piange, madonna*, mm. 1-4

Pian - ge madon - na et i - o go - do...

del pian - to sun ca -

me del...

mi - o,

ex. 19-4b Sigismondo d'India, *Piange, madonna*, mm. 8-17

Sigismondo d'India (1582–1629) and Claudio Saracini (1586–ca. 1649) were both noble amateurs. That puts them in Gesualdo's line, and indeed, when writing "passionate" madrigals rather than strophic songs they show the same gift for harmonic affectation as their polyphonic forebear. The beginning of d'India's *Piange, madonna* ("Weep, O My Lady" to a poem by Giovanni Battista Marino) from d'India's *Primo libro di musiche* of 1600 is a study in what

Shakespeare (a contemporary) called “sweet sorrow,” and a real slap in the face of “rules.” It goes Gesualdo one better in containing a triadic progression in which all three pitches are inflected chromatically—except that one of the chromatic passes is merely implied by the bass (as part of its unnotated but conventional harmonic realization) rather than expressed in counterpoint. The two notated voices, meanwhile, make their chromatic pass in the first measure through the baldest parallel fifths imaginable, the octave displacement in the bass notwithstanding (Ex. 19-4a). The first four lines of the poem are repeated (as Caccini had repeated the last four in *Amarilli*) and d’India writes out the *gorgia* (or at least some of it), putting in writing what Caccini had left to the performer’s tasteful discretion (Ex. 19-4b). It is likely that d’India transgressed the boundaries of what Caccini would have deemed tasteful (or, in his vocabulary, properly “negligent”).

Saracini’s *Da te parto* (“I part with thee,” Fig. 19-7; Ex. 19-5), from his *Seconde Musiche* (second song-book) of 1620, is another hermit song, spectacular both for its chromaticism and for its *gorgia*—two “noble” expressive avenues that by 1620 were becoming rather well-trod paths. The opening progressions actually pit major and minor thirds against one another: the bass makes its minor–major inflection in advance of the voice, which, prodded by the changed harmony, is probably meant to slide slowly from natural to sharp on the crest of an *esclamazione* (Ex. 19-5a). The notated effect and the one unnotated are equally necessary to an artful performance of what on the page is crude. The explosion of expressive virtuosity on the final word, *ardente* (ardent, burning), meanwhile, is an ideal illustration of what *gorgia* was all about (Ex. 19-5b). By iconically representing—and of course exaggerating—what happens to the speaking voice when the soul is aflame, the soul’s flame is itself by extension “imitated.”

Intitolato Al Molto Illustre Signor Cavalier Hieronimo Saracini. 7

A te par to cor mio li

io vado Anima mia io vado Anima mia Peregrin sconosciuto

D'ignoti lidi ad habitare Parene Erme campagne abbandona ti horrore Saren delle mie

pene De miei passati ardori De fidi mio perduti Ecco misera e fiabile do

len te Del mio duol del mio ardir memoria arden-

Le Seconde Musiche de Madrigali & arie Di Claudio Saracini. A una voce sola. A 5

fig. 19-7 Claudio Saracini, *Da te parto* (*Seconde musiche de madrigali & arie ... a una voce sola*, 1620).

The strophic aria Caccini used in the *Nuove musiche* to demonstrate the application of *gorgia* is based on the old Romanesca “tenor” (as they had called it in the sixteenth century), now of course a “basso.” Going over an old “ground” like this further demonstrates the continuity that links the monodic “revolution” with earlier unwritten traditions, and provides a link with later written compositions as well, for the Romanesca remained remarkably popular and durable, especially in Florence. In Ex. 19-6 the old tenor is given alongside two composed variants: first Caccini’s (compare Fig. 19-8), in which—again, evidently in accord with long-established extemporizing habits—each successive note of the original controls a measure in the fully realized composition; and second, the variant employed by Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583–1643), the greatest organist of the seventeenth century, in one of his *Arie musicale*, published in Florence in 1630. Ex. 19-7 shows the beginnings of its four strophes.

ex. 19-5a Claudio Saracini, *Da te parto*, mm. 1-4

ex. 19-5b Claudio Saracini, *Da te parto*, end

Notes:

(7) Caccini, preface to *Le nuove musiche*, trans. Piero Weiss in *Music in the Western World*, 2nd ed., p. 144.

(8) Caccini, preface to *Le nuove musiche*, trans. John Playford in *A Breefe Introduction to the Skill of Musick* (London, 1654), in Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 382.

(9) Marco da Gagliano, letter to Prince Ferdinando Gonzaga, 20 August 1607; quoted in Edmond Strainchamps, "New Light on the Accademia degli Elevati of Florence," *Musical Quarterly* LXII (1976): 508.

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Camerata

Opera: Origins

Jacopo Peri

FAVOLE IN MUSICA

Chapter: CHAPTER 19 Pressure of Radical Humanism

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The style developed by Caccini and the others *in camera* (or in Camerata) did not stay long in private chambers but was immediately returned to the theater whence, in a sense, it came. The monodist's objective was to recapture the emotional and ethical contagion of the Greek poet-musicians—in effect, the idea was to resurrect or reinvent the Greek (sung) drama as reimagined by Girolamo Mei. Galilei had exhorted his musician contemporaries to copy the inflections of actors, which implied from the beginning that the ideal destination of the monody would be the mouths of actors—singing actors, who would add the powers of music to their already highly developed histrionic skills.

a. Traditional Romanesca "tenor"



b. Caccini's version



c. Frescobaldi's version



ex. 19-6 Romanesca tenor, with Caccini's and Frescobaldi's variants

The birth of new music out of the spirit of old drama was (like everything else that seems sudden in history) a gradual thing, with phases unrepresented in written sources. The first extant continuo songs that were performed in the course of a stage spectacle were the ones in the 1589 *intermedii*. But they undoubtedly had precedents. As early as the late fifteenth century we hear tell of musicalized dramatic presentations at the northern Italian courts. A *Fabula di Orfeo*, a dramatic representation of the same tale from Ovid that would form the basis of the earliest published musical plays, was composed by the Medici court poet Angelo Poliziano and performed, at least partly sung, during the 1480 carnival season in Mantua. Poliziano (or Politian, as humanistically Latinized) also collaborated with Lorenzo de' Medici on a sacred play (*SS. Giovanni e Paolo*) that was performed with music by Henricus Isaac, Lorenzo's Flemish-born music master, in Florence itself, the eventual hotbed of the "monodic revolution." Between the 1589 *intermedii* that he masterminded and his own *Rappresentazione di Anima, et di Corpo* of 1600, Emilio de' Cavalieri produced in Florence a number of sung pastorals of his own composition, with texts by the same poet, Laura Guidiccioni (née Lucchesini), to whose words he had composed the great concluding *ballo* in 1589. According to Jacopo Peri's own generous remark (in the Preface to *Euridice*), these pastorals were the first stage works to put the style recitative into practice.

Aria di Romanesca.

Hi di pizzato Amor come con
tu ti chio metti vi
ta k pe no, n n a

fig. 19-8 Caccini's *Aria di romanesca* from *Le nuove musiche* (1601).

Prima parte
(Allegro moderato)

Dun - que do - vrò del
pu - ro ser - vir mi - o

ex. 19-7a Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Dunque dovro* (*Aria di romanesca*), mm. 1-6

Secunda parte

O tra - di - te speran - ze

o van - de - si - o,

ex. 19-7b Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Dunque dovro* (Aria di romanesca), mm. 19-24
Secunda parte

Terzo parte
(Più mosso)

Te, fa A - mor, te

so - lo ho - ra - in - col - par daggl - o

ex. 19-7c Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Dunque dovro* (Aria di romanesca), mm. 37-42

Quarta parte
(Più sostenuto)

Tu, te in - o par -
de - gl - o,

ex. 19-7d Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Dunque dovro (Aria di romanesca)*, mm. 55-60

But we do not know these works, just as apart from a few fragments we do not know what is often called the first “true” opera. That distinction belongs to *La Dafne*, after another mythological tale adapted from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which recounts—or rather, represents—the story of the nymph Daphne who, pursued by Apollo, is changed by the earth-mother Gaea into a laurel tree. The music is by the same team later responsible for the 1600 *Euridice*. The poem, by Rinuccini, was an adaptation and enlargement of the third *intermedio* of 1589. The music was by Peri, with some assistance (probably unasked for) from Jacopo Corsi, a noble dilettante who after 1592 (when Count Bardi was summoned to Rome to serve as chief of staff to Pope Clement VIII) cast himself as primary supporter and promoter of neoclassical musico-dramatic experimentation. Corsi maintained at his palace what Claude Palisca, the leading historian of the early musical plays, calls “a kind of semi-professional musical and dramatic workshop.”¹⁰

Peri’s musical plays were hatched in Corsi’s incubator, *La Dafne* possibly as early as 1594. Its first performance took place, possibly at Corsi’s residence and with Peri himself in the role of Apollo, during the Florence carnival of 1597 (1598 by the modern calendar), in the presence of the leading nobles of the city including the resident Medici overlord. It was revived several times thereafter, the latest revival taking place in 1604 at the brand new Pitti Palace. The libretto was set again in 1608 by Marco da Gagliano, and Gagliano’s preface to the published score of his setting, which survives, is our chief witness to the original *Dafne*. It is Gagliano’s insistence on the novelty of Rinuccini’s and Peri’s spectacle that has led to its being accorded the exalted position it now occupies in history as the first opera, in preference to Cavalieri’s pastorals or any previous “musical tale” (*favola in musica*), to use Gagliano’s expression.

Calling the work the first opera, of course, puts it in a line that connects it with us; for opera is the first genre encountered since the beginning of this narrative that has persisted in an apparently unbroken tradition all the way to the present. As we shall see, however, the apparent continuity may be somewhat misleading; and so we shall resist the word “opera” for a while and instead go on calling the early spectacles of Peri, Caccini, Gagliano, and (in the next chapter) Monteverdi “musical tales.”

“The pleasure and amazement produced in the audience by this novel spectacle cannot be described,” Gagliano reports. “Suffice it to say that each of the many times it was performed it generated the same admiration and the same delight.” Then comes a significant remark: “This experiment having taught Signor Rinuccini how well singing was suited to the expression of every sort of affection, and that it not only afforded no tediousness (as many might perchance have presumed) but indeed incredible delight, he composed his *Euridice*, dilating somewhat more in the dialogues.”¹¹ So the difference between Rinuccini and Peri’s *Euridice*, the first musical tale that does survive, and

their previous *Dafne* was the same as the difference between *Dafne* and earlier musico-scenic spectacles. That difference lies in the greater emphasis on the dialogue-music as opposed to the song-and-dance music, and the greater concomitant emphasis on music that imitated speech as opposed to the music that “imitated” (or simply functioned as) musical entertainment. Accepting the speech-music—the *stile recitativo* or *stile rappresentativo*—as dramatically viable, and accepting as credible the act of speaking from the stage in song (what Cavaliere called *recitar cantando*) required an imaginative leap that not all were prepared (or are even now prepared) to take. Peri himself put the esthetic problem in a nutshell when he wrote in the preface to *Euridice* of his paradoxical aim “to imitate with singing whoever speaks (and without doubt no one ever spoke singing).”¹²

So what made the Florentine (and later Mantuan) musical tales the “first operas” was not the mere fact that they were sung continuously. So were Cavaliere’s pastorals, and maybe even Isaac’s *SS. Giovanni e Paolo*. And there have since been many types of opera, especially but not only comic opera, that do not use continuous singing but instead alternate singing with spoken dialogue, the very thing that Rinuccini courageously eschewed in his tales. The novelty of the tales was that they maintained and even accentuated the dialogue aspect of the drama (which is to say they did not make formal concessions for the sake of the music) and nevertheless represented all that dialogue through singing. The essential “operatic” move, then, was the insistence that music function on two levels—as representing music and also as representing speech—which meant that some of the music was coded one way for the characters on stage and another way for the audience. There was a music that both the audience and the stage characters “heard” as music (the songs and dances) and another music that the audience heard as music but that was “inaudible” to the characters on stage who were represented (albeit through music, and sometimes very elaborately!) as speaking. (The further complication presented by the instrumental music can wait for now.) It is a dichotomy that every form of opera, and every opera audience, has had to come to terms with, and different types of opera can (and in this book often will) be distinguished on the basis of how they have negotiated this representational crux.

The critic Carolyn Abbate has adopted a useful (and suitably neoclassical) terminology for the “two musics” that have always coexisted in opera. The kind that is “heard” (i.e., interpreted) both on stage and in the house as music she calls “phenomenal music,” from the Greek *phenomenon*, meaning not an extraordinary thing or occurrence (as in common colloquial usage) but something whose reality exists on the level of sensory perception. The kind that the audience hears as music but that the stage characters do not “hear” that way she calls “noumenal music” from the Greek *noumenon*, the idealized (“Platonic”) essence of a thing—a higher reality that is hidden from the senses and can only be contemplated by the mind.¹³

Of the six scattered fragments that survive from Rinuccini and Peri’s *Dafne* in monody collections, only one counts as “noumenal music” of the kind that distinguishes opera esthetically from other kinds of sung spectacle. (The rest are dance-songs and a strophic “aria” over a ground bass sung by Ovid directly to the spectators by way of prologue.) That singular survivor is the recitative “Qual nova meraviglia!”—“What new marvel is this!”—in which a messenger who witnessed it describes the nymph’s arboreal transformation (Ex. 19-8).

[MESSENGER:]
 Qual' no - va me-ra - vi - glia! Ve - du - ta gl'oc - chi mi - ci
 B.C.
 4
 Sel - vag - gia fron - da far - si - la chio - ma bion - da E'l pie ch'or or fug - gia ve - lo - ce e sciol -
 7
 to Per en - tro'l sud' se - pol - to Ver - deg - giar' ra - m'e fo - glie.
 10
 For - s'al - le ca - sce vo - glie La sa - cra de - a, po - scia ch'an - dar - n'il
 13
 cor - so, Con tal por - ge so - cor - so Che per ga - sci - go no, ma
 16
 per pie - ta - de Can - gia'n no - var - bu - cel' l'al - ma bel - ta - de.

ex. 19-8 Jacopo Peri, *La Dafne*: “Qual' nova meraviglia!”

This is the *stile rappresentativo* at full strength—the earliest surviving example of it that was meant expressly for the stage. The text is madrigalian: a single strophe in irregular meter. The bass line is remarkably static; often whole lines are declaimed over a stationary harmony, and there is no thematic interplay between voice and accompaniment. Since the versification is irregular, the harmonic changes are unpredictable. There is, in short, nothing that can be identified as a “purely musical” pattern or gesture, nothing that aspires to musical wholeness or memorability. Music, far from exulting in its own stylistic perfection, has been ruthlessly subordinated, a music lover might object, to the text. To which a strict neoclassicist might respond, that’s just where it belongs.

If the music has to be so minimal why have it at all, both the music lover and the theatergoer might wonder, to which the dramatist might respond that the musicalization accomplishes definitively what the actor accomplishes only haphazardly, depending on his gifts—namely the surefire transmission of the affective content of the words to the listener. The composer, then, functions like a supreme actor or stage director, able by the use of harmony (especially chromatic harmony, as in the fifth measure) and dissonance to magnify the rhetorical effects of vocal inflection and delivery.

The *Dafne* recitative is a tame one; there is no expressive dissonance to speak of. The ones in *Euridice* show a

marked advance not only in sheer prevalence over the phenomenal music, but also in expressive confidence. Whole scenes are played *recitar cantando*, and dissonance of a harshness that can still sound impressive abounds in proportion to the intensity of the dramatic situation.

Gravest of all is the moment when Orpheus (sung by Peri) gets the news of Eurydice's death from Daphne, sung by a boy at the first performance while Corsi, on the harpsichord, and three gentlemen on *chitarra*, on lute, and on the bowed *lira grande*, a sort of bowed lute, churned out the continuo from behind—yes, behind—the scene. Note that all four instruments were “lyres,”—that is, chord-producers, not melody-makers; as a “line,” the continuo was a figment of notation, not sound). Some excerpts from the scene are given in Ex. 19-9.

The first thing to notice is the rigor with which the composer has spurned every temptation of the text's imagery, jam-packed though it is with opportunities for word painting—flowing water, murmuring water, light, dark, singing, dancing, to say nothing of the serpent's bite. Not one of these images is painted in tones. There is nothing left of wit, nothing to bring a smile of recognition. Instead, the brutal affective contrast is transmitted through the musical analogues of rhetorical delivery and gesticulation. When, for example, Daphne describes the cold sweat that bespattered Eurydice's face and matted her hair during the death throes (Ex. 19-9a), the music is concerned not with the object described but rather with the emotion of the describer, conveyed in a shocking false relation between the voice and the bass. The moment of Eurydice's death, at the end of Ex. 19-9a, is described with even greater, colder horror: the words *i bei sembianti* (“her beautiful features”) are set with hideous irony, using the ugliest harmonies the composer could devise—an augmented triad followed by a blatant harmonic contradiction between voice (on B-flat) and accompaniment (an E-major triad), “resolved” through a descent by a “forbidden” diminished fifth.

Orpheus's lament (Ex. 19-9b) is set with great subtlety, all conveyed by musical “modulations” to match the modulations of his mood. He goes from numb shock (“I neither weep nor sigh...”) through a sudden outpouring of grief (“O my heart! O my hope...”) to firm resolve. The first section has a particularly static bass to match Orpheus's initial torpor. The second section, where lethargy gives way to active distress, is introduced by a brusque harmonic disruption: the cadential “Phrygian” E major replaced out of nowhere by “Dorian” G minor. This most anguished section of the lament has the highest dissonance quotient. Orpheus's lines seem altogether uncoordinated with the bass harmonies. He leaves off after “Ohimè!” (Ah, me!) with a gasp, his line dangling on an A over the bass G. The bass having changed to D as if to accommodate the A, Orpheus reenters (“Dove si gita?”/“Where have you gone?”) with a new contradiction, on E.

39

Et el - la in ab - ban - do - no Tut - ta la - scios - si al - l'or - nel - l'al - trui brac - cia. Spar - gea il bel vol - to, e le do - ra - te chio - me Un su - dor vit più fred - d'as - sai - che ghiac - cio In di s'u - dio l' tuo no - me Tra le lab - bra so - nar - fred - d'e tre - man - ti. E, vol - ti gl'oc - chi al cie - lo. Sco - lo - ri - to il bel vol - to, e bei sem - bian - ti.

B.C.

ex. 19-9a Jacopo Peri, *Euridice*, scene 2, mm. 39-51

63 ORFEO

Non pian - go e non so - spi - ro. O mia ca - ra Eu - ri - di - ce, Che so - spi - rar - che la - cri - mar non pos - so. Ca - da - ve - ro in - fe - li - ce.

B.C. [4]

72
O mio co - re, o mio spe - me, in pa - ce, o vi - ta! Ohi - me! chi mi t'ha tol -

76
to, Chi mi t'ha tol - ro, ohi - me! do - ve sei gi - ta?

81
To - sto ve - drai ch'in va - no Non chia - ma - sti mo - ren - do il tuo con - sor - te. Non

85
son, non son lon - ta - no: lo ven - go, o ca - ra vi - ta, o ca - ra mor - te.

ex. 19-9b Jacopo Peri, *Euridice*, Orfeo's closing monologue

The bass once again moves to accommodate the E, which becomes the cadence harmony. The third section begins with the same disruption as the second: a G-minor chord impinging on the cadential E major. This time, however, the G minor moves through the circle of fifths to a cadence on F, the “Lydian,” still the symbol—after eight hundred years!—of mollitude (the primary association by now is not to Plato’s resurrected theorizing but to everyone’s daily experience in church). At the same time the bass begins to bestir itself iconically, moving rhythmically as one does when animated by determination.

This is no tentative first step like the *Dafne* recitative. By 1600, at least in Peri’s hands, the *stile rappresentativo* was artistically mature, a fully viable *seconda prattica*—a “second practice,” as Monteverdi would shortly call it in response to its critics—that would eventually consign the “first practice,” namely the *ars perfecta*, to the status of a *stile antico*.¹⁴

Did it immediately cause a revolution? By all accounts it did not even cause an immediate sensation, at least with its audience. At the 1600 royal nuptial celebration very few actually heard it. The main entertainment, as we know, was Caccini’s *Rapimento*, more of a song-and-dance affair on the spectacular scale of the traditional Florentine *intermedii*. It was performed before an audience—a real public—of 3,800 in the enormous hall atop the Uffizi gallery. *Euridice* was performed three days later, in a small room in Don Antonio de’ Medici’s apartment on one of the upper stories of the Pitti Palace, for no more than two hundred specially invited guests selected by Corsi. Many of those who were privileged to hear it were unimpressed: a joke that made the rounds afterward likened the music to the monotonous chanting of the Passion on Good Friday (not such a bad analogy, actually, in view of the original purpose of the chant as a sacralized public oration; but of course that was far from the minds of the jokers).

And yet, clearly, a work performed before those specially invited two hundred (nobles all) inevitably commanded greater prestige than one open to all comers as a token of the celebrants’ liberality. And the protocols that applied to *intermedii* and other festive spectacles remained in force in *Euridice*, making a mockery of any claim that the work was a revival of the ancient Greek tragedy. (It is clear from this alone that no such claim could have seriously been

made; the idea is a historians' conceit hatched long after the fact.) The tale is furnished with a prologue that has exactly the same function as the prologues to the old *intermedii*: to cajole the audience and laud the nuptial pair. La Tragedia herself appears before the assembled nobles to say that, while her usual role is to draw sighs, shed tears, and "make the faces and expressions of a crowd in an amphitheater pale with pity," just this once she is going to relent in honor of the wedding pair and their friends in attendance: "I thus adorn myself in the realm of Hymen [the marriage god] and tune the strings [of my lyre] to a gayer mode to give delight to the noble heart."

And indeed, the play is made to end happily: Orpheus gets Eurydice back with no strings attached; there is no second death, no second loss. The play remains, as it had to, within the boundaries of the dramatized *favola pastorale*, the pastoral play, a light genre that did not exist in classical times. Not only would a truly tragic representation have been unfit for a festivity of state, but Ovid's mythological romance could never have supported one. In a tragedy a hero falls in consequence of a flaw; an accidental death like Eurydice's is by no classical definition a tragic one (even if Orfeo does lack the ultimate in self-control). The early musical plays did not—could not—aspire to the tragic style. Tragic opera came later, and elsewhere.

Notes:

(10) Claude Palisca, "The Alterati of Florence, Pioneers in the Theory of Dramatic Music," in W. Austin, ed., *New Looks at Italian Opera: Essays in Honor of Donald J. Grout* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 10.

(11) Marco da Gagliano, Preface to *La Dafne*, trans. Piero Weiss, in *Music in the Western World*, 2nd ed., p. 149.

(12) Peri, Preface to *Euridice*, in Solerti, in *Le origini del melodrama: Testimonianze*, p. 44.

(13) See C. Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

(14) Giulio Cesare Monteverdi, "Declaration" (Postface to Claudio Monteverdi, *Scherzi musicali* (Venice, 1607)).

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ORATORIO

Chapter: CHAPTER 19 Pressure of Radical Humanism

Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Just a brief word now, in closing, about the genre represented by Cavalieri's *Rappresentazione di Anima, et di Corpo*, the sacred play that happened to scoop all the other early figured-bass publications into print. This work, too, has been claimed for consideration as "the first surviving opera" (to quote the *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*). It was produced in Rome in February 1600, about eight months before Peri's *Euridice* saw the stage. It was set to continuous music, though without much recitative, and fully staged.

A - ni - ma mia che pen - si? Per - chè do - glio - sa sta - i,
Vor - rei ri - po - so e pa - ce, vor - rei di - let - to e gio - ia,

A - ni - ma mia che pen - si? Per - chè do - glio - sa sta - i,
Vor - rei ri - po - so e pa - ce, vor - rei di - let - to e gio - ia,

A - ni - ma mia che pen - si? Per - chè do - glio - sa sta - i,
Vor - rei ri - po - so e pa - ce, vor - rei di - let - to e gio - ia,

5 sem - pre tra - en - do gua - i, sem - pre tra - en - do gua - i?
e tro - vo af - fa - no e no - ia, e tro - vo af - fa - no e no - ia.

sem - pre tra - en - do gua - i, sem - pre tra - en - do gua - i?
e tro - vo af - fa - no e no - ia, e tro - vo af - fa - no e no - ia.

sem - pre tra - en - do gua - i, sem - pre tra - en - do gua - i?
e tro - vo af - fa - no e no - ia, e tro - vo af - fa - no e no - ia.

ex. 19-10a *Anima mia che pensi*, the original lauda (pub. 1577)

Corpo

A - ni - ma mia che pen - si? Per - chè do - glio - sa sta - i, sem - pre tra - en - do gua - i?

7 Anima

Vor - rei ri - po - sa e pa - ce, vor - rei di - let - to e gio - ia, e tro - vo af - fa - no e no - ia.

ex. 19-10b *Anima mia che pensi*, beginning of Emilio de' Cavalieri's dialogue setting

The Soul, a soprano, and the Body, a tenor, each with teams of allegorical supporters, advisers, and tempters, struggle against the blandishments of worldly delights, and are finally successful. The work ends with spectacular visions of hell and heaven. This too was a *favola in musica*: the Counter Reformation's answer, perhaps, to the Florentine neoclassical entertainments; and if Peri's pastoral counts as an opera, so does Cavalieri's. They were both musicalizations of existing dramatic genres, neither of them ancient. But the same reservations proposed above—against calling the Florentine musical plays operas—apply to Cavalieri's Roman one.

The *sacra rappresentazione* or sacred play with music had a long history, even if we do not attempt to trace it all the way back to the medieval liturgical dramas described in chapter 3. In the fifteenth century it had developed out of the singing of *laude* that embodied dialogues. Most of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century *rappresentazioni* were declaimed, aria-style, to melodic formulas or over ground basses, with frottolas, madrigals, and instrumental pieces interspersed. Some surviving instrumental works by Henricus Isaac, including a wild Moorish dance and a *battaglia*, are thought to be remnants from such plays, possibly from Lorenzo de' Medici's own *SS. Giovanni e Paolo*.

Cavalieri's *Rappresentazione* was very much in the existing tradition, since it was basically an expansion of an old lauda, *Anima mia che pensi*, that took the form of a dialogue between body and soul. It was, however, the first such play to sport continuous music, some of it in the new dramatic style that the composer had pioneered in his pastorals. The first dialogue between the title characters (some of it shown in Fig. 19-4) is actually a setting of the old lauda, of which a polyphonic version had been published in 1577 (Ex. 19-10a). What had merely been two successive strophes in the lauda now becomes a highly contrasted colloquy (Ex. 19-10b): the question, posed by the body in recitative style, is answered by the soul in a dancelike aria.

At its first performance it was a play in the full sense of the word, but since it was performed immediately before Lent in the assembly hall of an Oratory, it prefigures the specifically Lenten genre of Biblical *favole in musica*, scriptural musical tales in dramatic “*recitar cantando*” form but nonstaged. That genre, which came to be called *oratorio* after its performance venue, arose a few decades later in response to the institution of public musical theaters, which had to close during Lent. It had a distinguished history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and is not wholly extinct even today.

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Further Reading: A Checklist of Books in English

Chapter: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Source:

This listing of recommended further reading in English is a supplement to the literature cited in the Notes sections. It is largely confined to books, rather than journal articles where the cutting edge of research is often found (and which are favored in the citations).

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