

*The Motet Around 1500 (2012) and Josquin and the Sublime (2011)*

THOMAS SCHMIDT-BESTE (ED.), *THE MOTET AROUND 1500: ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF IMITATION AND TEXT TREATMENT?* Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance. Collection 'Épitome musical' (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2012). ISBN 978-2-503-52566-2. 569pp, €100.

ALBERT CLEMENT AND ERIC JAS (EDS), *JOSQUIN AND THE SUBLIME. PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOSQUIN SYMPOSIUM AT ROOSEVELT ACADEMY. MIDDLEBURG 12–15 JULY 2009.* Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance. Collection 'Épitome musical' (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2011). ISBN 978-2-503-54271-3. 247pp, €75.

The two volumes under review here arose from conferences that focused on musical culture from the time of Josquin des Prez. Published in close succession by Brepols, they do much to advance our understanding of a diverse range of questions concerning contexts, processes and reception while also pointing to new avenues of research in a field that can both perplex the scholar and yield rich findings across musical and other domains. The collection of essays in *The Motet around 1500* originates from a conference held in 2007 at Bangor University in Wales that took as its starting point Ludwig Finscher's pioneering work in the late 1970s on the complex relationships between text setting and imitative procedures. In his Introduction, Thomas Schmidt-Beste suggests that the time had come to take stock of research into motet repertoire in the decades on either side of 1500 because no systematic attempt to explain the major shifts in this repertoire had yet followed Finscher's work, notwithstanding the large body of scholarship on different aspects of music from this period. The crucial questions revolve around how and why the motet changed so suddenly and radically in terms of style, quantity and text setting. The scholars assembled at Bangor tackled these issues from a variety of perspectives that are reflected in the structure of the resulting publication. While no claim is made to resolve the enigmatic history of the motet, the chapters by twenty-five of the conference presenters are grouped into six broad categories—Fundamentals, Text, Compositional Process, Composers, Repertoires, Context and Meaning—that permit exploration of many wide-ranging and often thorny issues, and offer directions for future research. The book itself comes with the physical dimensions of a doorstep and is elegantly set out with generous margins populated by scrupulously edited footnotes, while the musical examples, tables and other figures are clearly presented and always easy to navigate alongside the main text.

The first section contains the longest and most wide-ranging contribution, Joshua Rifkin's 'A Black Hole? Problems in the Motet Around 1500'. Developed from the conference keynote address, Rifkin reflects on many key issues: the likely loss of manuscripts from France and the Low Countries (which may or may not have contained motets), the elusive characteristics of motets c1500 that 'seem almost never to coalesce

into a set of consistent markers' (25), the problems of Josquin's biography (especially as it relates to the development of the motet), the status of the French court motet, and our unsatisfactory state of knowledge about the composer Jean Mouton. Rifkin's chapter is essential reading because of the scope of ideas and materials that he interrogates and his uncanny knack of raising new questions and wringing alternative perspectives even when rehearsing familiar topics (such as paired duos, located separately in Appendix 1 to the chapter). The other contribution to the 'Fundamentals' first section of the book is Julie E. Cumming's 'Text Setting and Imitative Technique in Petrucci's First Five Motet Prints', where the author pursues a quantitative analysis of the Petrucci materials in order to arrive at a closer understanding of how motet style changed over the course of the last decades of the fifteenth century. Cumming's work is perhaps best studied alongside her other publications, including her joint work with Peter Schubert, on the rise of pervasive imitation and text setting more generally. Her chapter in the present volume is richly supported with facsimile reproductions and annotated musical examples.

The second section opens with Warwick Edwards's 'Text Treatment in Motets around 1500: The Humanistic Fallacy'. This absorbing and provocative contribution questions many generally assumed functions of humanism and its relation to music around 1500, and it invites a more nuanced approach to how composers managed not only textual details of syllabification and accent but also broader issues of musically projecting the sentiment or significance of a chosen text. Stephen Rice's chapter, entitled 'Reverse Accentuation', complements this approach by questioning earlier claims of incorrect or insensitive accentuation in music (often levelled, for instance, at the music of Nicolas Gombert) and then proceeding to examine different kinds of pronunciation and word-stress. The proposed taxonomy of reverse accentuation that forms the bulk of this chapter will be of equal use to scholars and performers. The second section is rounded off by Leofranc Holford-Strevens's 'The Latin Texts of Regis's Motets', in which he concludes that the Flemish composer Johannes Regis very probably authored a number of Latin poems whose numerous false quantities and licences with scansion demonstrate his limited capability with classical metre.

The next six chapters investigate compositional processes from different angles. In 'Josquin des Prez and the Combinative Impulse', John Milsom applies his innovative methodology for uncovering principles of Renaissance *fuga* using Josquin's motet *Virgo salutiferi* as the primary analytical vehicle. This article is rich and informative especially in its survey of twentieth-century scholarship on Renaissance counterpoint, where there was an unfortunate lack of systematic analytical methodologies for imitative procedures. The approach demonstrated by Milsom is likely to set the standard against which all future forensic scrutiny of the repertoire will be measured. A contrasting approach is adopted in Philip Weller's 'Some Ways of the Motet: Obrecht

and the Paths of Five-Voice Composition', where reflections on the state of Obrecht scholarship and close readings of this composer's motet output often combine in a kind of advocacy for the remarkable 'audacity of the composer when arriving at musical solutions which bristle with contrasts and (often unmediated) new ideas' (275). Mary Natvig's 'Imitation in the Motets of Antoine Busnoys' confronts the changing status of imitation towards the end of the fifteenth century through an examination of this tool in Busnoys's motets *In hydraulis* and *Anthoni usque lumina*. Rob Wegman's 'Compositional Process in the Fifteenth-Century Motet' likewise examines the growing impact of imitation on compositional planning, especially in how it represented a conceptual shift from a *cantus fractus* framework arising from the whole notes of simple counterpoint to a different contrapuntal paradigm that took shape from the basic material arising from motives. The remaining two chapters in this section probe other aspects of counterpoint: Timothy Pack provides useful tabular data on ostinato-tenor motets from c1450 to c1600, and Stefano Mengozzi explores how attitudes towards hexachordal pitches and pitch labels interacted with what the author regards as the primacy of the diatonic *septem discrimina vocum* found in the modal octave.

To this point in the book, the music of Josquin has received considerable scrutiny: Mengozzi analyses passages from the *Missa L'homme armé super voces musicales* and *Ut Phebi radiis*; Pack and Cumming include Josquin's works in their chronological sweeps; Wegman uses Josquin's *Ave Maria ... virgo serena* to illustrate the dichotomy in approaches to counterpoint in the late fifteenth century; Edwards cites *Huc me sydereo* while probing contemporary attitudes to text setting; and Milsom interrogates Josquin's *fuga* writing in minute detail. This is not to say that Josquin dominates the book, notwithstanding the stature he achieved in large part through his new approaches to counterpoint and text setting. The still uncertain status of Josquin the innovator is captured in Rifkin's remark, in relation to the French court motet, that 'we cannot really determine the extent to which Josquin led, or merely rode with, the development of the new manner' (54). Put another way, Rice notes that his fame 'rests in part on his uniqueness ... Influential though he undoubtedly was, Josquin thus cannot be assumed to have established a universal rule' (140). It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Josquin is mostly absent in the next group of essays (in section four, 'Composers'). Some contributions in this and later sections move beyond the book's core questions on imitation and textual treatment. For instance, in this section, Marie-Alexis Colin provides a comprehensive overview of Mathieu Gascongne's motets, with questions of text setting and imitation addressed only towards the conclusion. Murray Steib and Adam Gilbert explore issues of musical patrimony, the former in a study of Johannes Martini's motets and their possible connections to Josquin, while the latter investigates some shared compositional traits between Senfl and Isaac (in this essay, Examples 5a and 5b are switched around, one of the very few formatting errors that I spotted in the

book). David Fallows argues convincingly that Moulu's *Mater floreat florescat* was neither intended for a royal event nor associated with the French royal court. Daniele Filippi offers a revised view of expressivity in the motets of Gaffurio and includes some comparisons to works by Ockeghem and Josquin.

Four essays then follow that explore repertoires from different parts of Europe, from the Vatican to central and northern Europe and the Iberian peninsula. Lenka Hlávková-Mráčková begins with a brief overview of the Co-dex Speciálník that draws upon several earlier studies of this manuscript that are published in Czech and English. Her discussion of an anonymous unica, *Ave Maria – Ave ancilla Trinitas*, is usefully supported by a full transcription of this work. Kenneth Kreitner begins likewise with an overview of manuscript sources for motets in Spain before focusing on specific works in which he identifies possible links between older and newer styles among Spanish composers. Richard Wexler tackles the role of compositions in the Medici Codex, specifically their possible use as private devotional pieces for Pope Leo X for performance by members of the private chapel, the *cantores secreti*. This chapter is nicely supported by a full-page reproduction of Raphael's *Pope Leo X with Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Luigi de' Rossi*, and a detail from this picture, also full-page, showing the opening of the Gospel according to St John—a passage that was set by Boyleau in the second composition of the manuscript. Laura Youens's 'The Last Motet-Chanson' reminds us of the fragile state of sources for Jean Courtois (fl. c1530–1545?) and discusses in detail the canonic *Tout le confort/Deus adjuva me*. Interesting connections between Cambrai and composers of motet-chansons are also explored.

The final section of the book dwells upon contexts of different sorts for motet repertoire, including symbolism and allegory. The reader's arithmetical skills are tested in Jaap van Benthem's 'A Triumph of Symbiosis: Angelo Poliziano, Josquin des Prez, and the Motet *O Virgo prudentissima*', where detailed numerical tables support an interpretation of the work that reveals Josquin's complex responses to the structure of the text and indicates something of his personal beliefs in the combinative powers of the divinity. In 'Reflecting on the Rosary: Marian Devotions in Early Sixteenth-Century Motets', Jane Hatter notes the high proportion of Marian motets in Petrucci's publications and gives a wide-ranging account of the cult of the Virgin and its expression in urban spaces, especially in Venice. An interesting thread running through this article is how Marian motets could find very different performance contexts, from ecclesiastical to domestic or civic settings. Remi Chiu's discussion of the Song of Songs ('You Have Wounded My Heart! Song of Songs, Motets, and the Wound of Desire') casts its net wide and dwells especially on the influential exegeses by St Bernard of Clairvaux. These provide a platform for examining how a setting such as the anonymous *Vulnerasti cor meum* could utilize the compositional tools of cadential evasion, repetition and motivic disposition to reflect the text's complex interplay of dialogue

and allegory. The final essay, by Melanie Wald ('Between Heaven and Earth: Some Thoughts on Possible Semantics of the Cantus Firmus Motet'), takes on the history of the cantus firmus motet and makes a case for its ongoing liturgical potential in music after 1500. This contribution is especially valuable for its comparisons between widely known glosses of Scripture and specific techniques employed by composers, including visual representation of the music through its notation, to provide commentary on the significance of the chosen text.

While many of the essays in this volume move away from an interrogation of the relationships between imitative techniques and text setting suggested by the title and outlined in the opening pages of the Introduction, the result overall is a panoply of scholarship that encompasses the richness of enquiry in one of the most fertile fields in the history of musicology. The same level of praise can be applied to the second volume under review, *Josquin and the Sublime*. This comprises twelve papers arising from a symposium held at Roosevelt Academy in the Netherlands in 2009 that aimed to 'investigate and discover elements in Josquin's style that have won the composer his unequalled reputation ... from the beginning of the 16th century onwards' (xi). In their Introduction, Albert Clement and Eric Jas link the quality of Josquin's works with the notions of high aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual appeal coupled with grandeur and beauty that are embodied in the concept of the sublime. The volume investigates ways in which compositions by Josquin may be viewed through criteria associated with the sublime, each contributor doing so with reference to a number of specific works grouped according to the volumes of the *New Josquin Edition*. The result comprises a set of six chapters exploring aspects of sacred music and three chapters each on secular works and reception history. The book is edited to the highest standards, with a generous number of musical examples and facsimiles, and is further enhanced by an Index of Compositions arranged by composer.

The contributors approach the idea of sublimity in the music of Josquin and his time from a variety of perspectives. The most thorough-going investigation of how the sublime intersected with approaches to composition during Josquin's lifetime is provided in Wolfgang Fuhrmann's 'The Simplicity of Sublimity in Josquin's Psalm-Motets', the third essay in the collection. Fuhrmann examines the interactions and tensions between the characteristics of sublimity as interpreted and transmitted by Longinos (spelled 'Longinus' in other chapters of this book) and the modest style of biblical prose that often troubled educated elites in the medieval and early modern periods. The contributions of St Augustine did much to advance the understanding of how a humble style can convey great ideas, and it is this strand of theological discussions of sublimity, rather than humanism, that Fuhrmann connects to the importance of psalm motets in Josquin's output: 'the austere and ascetic tone of these works correlates to the ideas of sublime simplicity in the Bible' (59). Growing interest by



composers around 1500 in texts that convey the sufferings and spiritual needs of the psalmist led to a new approach: 'the musical expression of dolorous, woeful, plaintive moods, an innovation almost without precedent in sacred polyphony' (53). Fuhrmann traces the technical means by which Josquin accomplishes this task, with particular consideration of what he terms 'anti-varietas', which is evident in a work such as *Miserere mei, Deus* through litany-like pleadings and monotonous rotations of a plain ostinato. Fuhrmann reminds us of the importance of investigating the various means available to a composer at any historical moment to signify or articulate a chosen text.

Other contributors refer to the idea of the sublime in less detail. After a brief nod to Longinus, Willem Elders divides his 'On the Sublime in Josquin's Marian Motets', the opening essay in the volume, into sections exploring the particular ways in which chant, *musica ficta*, number symbolism and gematria are treated in motets published in volumes 23–25 of the *New Josquin Edition*, with some references also to volumes 20 and 21. Elders's very polished and insightful discussions of these motets point to the complexities of Josquin's compositional planning while at the same time revealing the sophisticated connections between works that may escape a less astute observer. Not all authors can find such clear connections with the sublime in their chosen repertoire for investigation. For instance, Nicole Schwindt acknowledges that demonstrating the sublime in Josquin's three-part secular works poses challenges due to their perceived association with pedagogy, improvisation or as preparatory works for larger-scale enterprises. Nevertheless, she presents a reading of these works that demonstrates ways in which they are informed by abstract rhetorical processes and contain refinement of execution, notwithstanding the fact that such pieces were 'no showroom for sublimity' (153). Richard Freedman's essay, 'Josquin, the Multi-Voice Chanson, and the Sublime', touches on many wide-ranging issues pertaining to structural details of specific canonic chansons, mid-century sources for Josquin's secular works and the significance of the renewed awareness of Longinus. These diverse subjects come together in the concluding paragraphs in reflections that offer possibilities for potentially fruitful further research, namely 'the possibility that the idea of the sublime, re-emerging in mid-century, could find in Josquin and his music a ready cultural vessel for a new and captivating idea' (188).

As can be expected in any volume dedicated to Josquin des Prez, many authors give detailed attention to questions of attribution, transmission and compositional style. John Milsom, Andrea Lindmayr-Brandl and Fabrice Fitch examine the last of these areas from different perspectives. Milsom delves into Josquin's treatment of plainchant in seven motet openings from volumes 19–22 of the *New Josquin Edition*. Using the approach of forensic analysis that he has developed elsewhere, Milsom identifies many instances of technical acuity that suggest a great deal of pre-compositional planning by the composer. The results also raise some 'inconvenient truths' (45);

for example, Josquin's *Pater noster/Ave Maria* lacks the combinative structures and complex *fuga* that are found in abundance in the other motets selected for analysis. This situation prompts Milsom to caution against using forensic analysis exclusively to reveal 'the characteristic touch of Josquin's hand' (45). Lindmayr-Brandl's 'Strange Polyphonic Borrowings: Josquin's *Missa Faysant regretz*' addresses how a simple four-note motive taken from the original chanson model permeates Josquin's mass in astonishingly versatile rhythmic combinations (all helpfully listed on Table 1, pp. 110–11). Fitch's critical review of approaches to Josquin's four-part secular repertoire is managed through in-depth treatment of *Adieu mes amours* and *Plus nulz regretz*. He disputes that the former was an adaptation of a pre-existing instrumental original and provides a new tripartite reading of the latter.

Two chapters probe issues of transmission and attribution. Jaap van Bentem proposes that the psalm setting *Domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo?* deserves to be considered among Josquin's authentic works. This assessment is largely accomplished through scrutiny of the work's correct counterpoint and by making perceptive connections to openings and various internal sections of many other psalm settings by Josquin. Martin Just reaffirms the inclusion of the *Magnificat tertii toni* (NJE 20.1) among Josquin's work list and considers the case for another incomplete *Magnificat tertii toni* (NJE \*20.2) that is still considered a doubtful work. Although there is enough evidence to connect the latter piece with Josquin's time in Rome, Just concludes that at most it can be considered an abandoned attempt that is best retained among the doubtful works.

The final three essays deal with matters of reception history. Stephanie P. Schlagel's 'Fortune's Fate: Josquin and the Nürnberg Mass Prints of 1539' tackles the circumstances and motivations surrounding the publication of Hans Ott's *Missa tredecim* and Johannes Petreius's *Liber quindecim missarum*. While it is difficult to ascertain Petreius's motivations or his thoughts on the repertoire published, the lengthy dedication letter to Ott's collection provides a very useful window into contemporary attitudes towards preserving music of past generations. Helpful also is how works in the *Missa tredecim* correspond to Ott's 'concrete descriptions of compositional procedures and stylistic characteristics' (203). Ott's choice of weaker sources instead of Petrucci's prints suggests another fruitful area of enquiry into Petrucci's limited impact on the dissemination of Josquin's music in German-speaking lands. A short essay by Walter Testolin on a portrait by Leonardo da Vinci of an unknown musician in room 2 of the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana in Milan offers some tantalizing evidence that the sitter may have been Josquin himself c1484. Full-page colour plates at the back of the book include Leonardo's well-known painting and several details that may reveal the musician's identity. The final chapter of the book is Carlo Fiore's 'Josquin Before 1919: Sources for a Reception History', which gathers together all known sources on

Josquin before the year in which the decision was made to undertake a collected edition of his works. Arranged chronologically according to the nature of the texts, this chapter will be an invaluable resource for all Josquin enthusiasts.

In conclusion, these two edited volumes arising from specialist conferences provide a great service to scholarship on the music of Josquin and his contemporaries. It is heartening that the publisher of both volumes, Brepols, took on these projects and facilitated very high-quality outcomes in terms of both the research findings and the editorial excellence. Readers will find especially useful how contributors take stock of the existing state of play in their respective topics and pursue often quite different goals that expand the breadth of methodological enquiry, dispel some previously held assumptions, and encourage ever more nuanced scrutiny of the many levels of musical culture operating upon a rich repertoire. With many avenues of enquiry now clearly identified and more questions than ever posed for often intractable problems associated with this music, the contributions to these volumes will no doubt whet their readers' appetites for further immersion in scholarship on challenging topics in music of the early modern period.

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