

Thomas Lee Noblitt—*The Motetti Missales of the Late 15th Century*

Ann Arbor: University Microfilms (UM order no. 64-100), 1963. (University of Texas diss.)

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Although many of the motets of Josquin's era have been subjected to abundant scholarly investigation, one of the most rudimentary questions usually remains unanswered: under what circumstances were these works performed? This question is compounded by a phenomenal increase in the number of motets composed in Josquin's time and also by the diversity of texts employed. Therefore, the *motetti missales* are of special interest, for here are several motet cycles which were used as substitutions at Mass.

Chapter I lists the contents of the cycles, their manuscript sources, and concordances. Professor Noblitt identifies the following cycles as *motetti missales*:

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|----------|----------------------------------|--|
| Mi 2267. | 125 <sup>v</sup> –135            | <i>Missa Galeazescha</i> <sup>1</sup> by Compère   |
| Mi 2268. | 100 <sup>v</sup> –110            | <i>Missa Quarti toni</i> by Gafurius (essentially a normal Mass Ordinary, but preceded by a motet for the Introit and concluding with a motet in place of <i>Deo gratias</i> ) |
| Mi 2269. | 84 <sup>v</sup> –93              | <i>Salve mater salvatoris</i> <sup>2</sup> by Gafurius   |
|          | 126 <sup>v</sup> –134            | <i>Ave mundi Domina</i> by Weerbecke   |
|          | 134 <sup>v</sup> –143            | <i>Quam pulchra es</i> by Weerbecke  |
|          | 162 <sup>v</sup> –170            | <i>Ave Domine Jesu Christe</i> (Compère)   |
|          | 171 <sup>v</sup> –179            | <i>Hodie nobis de virgine</i> (Compère)  |
| Mu 3154. | 38 <sup>v</sup> –43              | <i>Gaude flore virginali</i> (Martini?)  |
|          | 43 <sup>v</sup> –48 <sup>v</sup> | <i>Natus sapientia</i> (Martini?)  |

The function of these cycles is explained either by a rubric for the given motet (*loco Introitus*, *loco Gloria*, etc.) or by a listing of *motetti missales* in a table of contents at the beginning of Mi 2269. The motet texts usually bear no relationship to the Mass texts which they replace, except for the motet associated with the Elevation. In every cycle, the text of the motet for the Elevation mentions Christ or the Body of Christ. Within a cycle, however, the texts are related to some central idea and are frequently obtained from closely related liturgical sources. Each cycle is composed in one mode throughout, normally employs one combination of clefs, and is frequently unified by mensural patterns and thematic material.

Chapter II is devoted to the cycles of Weerbecke and Compère. Most of this material, the biographies, text identifications, and musical analyses, derives from other scholars,<sup>3</sup> but Professor Noblitt does acknowledge his in-

debtedness. The important observation is made that all of the Elevation motets contain fermata-marked chords, probably intended to coincide with the Elevation of the Host (p. 58).

Chapter III deals with the two anonymous cycles in Mu 3154. Professor Noblitt believes that the composer may have been Martini, and he bases this possible attribution upon three points: Martini's residence at Milan in 1474, the fact that other music of Martini can be identified in Mu 3154, and stylistic features in the two cycles which can be found in works known to be by Martini. Unfortunately this commendably original conclusion, although perhaps correct, is developed inadequately. The first point is relevant if *motetti missales* were practiced at Milan in the early 1470's; in no case is that early date clearly demonstrable and a later date remains possible. Mu 3154 seems to be a heterogeneous collection of fascicles from several periods and repertoires. A thorough analysis of this volume might significantly support or dispute Professor Noblitt's case. Such an analysis is not presented, and so the strength of the second point is contingent upon study yet to be fulfilled. The discussion of musical style singles out two traits which allegedly point to Martini's authorship. One of these is the use of *divisi* at the final cadence to form a complete triad, "so unusual and otherwise unknown in its time" (p. 148). In fact, other composers were using *divisi* in this manner; for example, the practice can be found seven times in Weerbecke's *Missa de Ave Regina Caelorum* (preserved in Mi 2268 and elsewhere). The second stylistic feature is a 3-4 escape-tone formula in a two-part texture. The significance of this formula is reduced after a glance at the Credo of Dufay's *Missa Caput*, where it occurs five times.

The *motetti missales* of Gafurius are presented in Chapter IV. Although most cycles contain eight motets, *Salve mater salvatoris* includes only five, and the rubrics are inadequate; thus the precise role of these works at Mass seems uncertain. Fermata-marked chords occur at the end of the fourth motet; their presence suggests that that motet, concluding with the Elevation would have been sung in place of the Sanctus (p. 155).

In Chapter V Professor Noblitt proceeds to the difficult problem of motet groups in the Milanese codices which bear no external designation as *motetti missales*. There are six groups, all of which had been suggested as possible *motetti missales* by Finscher.<sup>4</sup>

- |          |          |  |
|----------|----------|--|
| Mi 2267. | 162v-167 | <i>Beata et venerabilis</i> (five motets), anon.         |
|          | 167v-173 | <i>Ave Regina caelorum</i> (five motets), anon.          |
| Mi 2269. | 67v-71   | <i>Sponsa Dei electa</i> (four motets), Gafurius         |
|          | 71v-75   | <i>Quando venit ergo</i> (four motets), Gafurius         |
|          | 98v-106  | <i>Verbum sapientiae</i> (eight motets), Gafurius, anon. |
|          | 154v-162 | <i>Nativitas tua</i> (seven motets), anon.               |

Two criteria are employed by Dr. Noblitt for the identification of *motetti missales*, "(1) the presence of textual unity between all motets of the group which in turn allows them to be used at a single feast or festival group during

the Church year, and (2) the inclusion of a suitable text for the Elevation, set in fermata-marked block chords" (p. 211). Each of the cycles is described, and each fails to qualify as *motetti missales*. I believe that these requirements, if met by a motet cycle, would surely indicate that the composer intended those motets as *motetti missales*. The criteria apply to systematized repertoires, but they deny recognition to any less standardized practice. It would be difficult to envision a systematic practice without related procedures as forerunners or contemporaries. The second criterion, for example, requires a motet at the Elevation. No Elevation motet occurs in Gafurius's *Missa Quarti toni*, which contains two substitution motets.

Chapter VI is devoted to the development of Ambrosian liturgy but reveals no precedent for the *motetti missales*. As other illustrations of the substitution concept, the well-known examples by Josquin and La Rue are cited (p. 255). Portions of the dissertation rely too heavily upon secondary sources, and this is a shortcoming painfully obvious in this chapter. Only the standard liturgical sources are consulted and no new insights emerge. The entire account of the Ambrosian Mass (pp. 242-43) derives, unacknowledged, from Apel's *Gregorian Chant* (pp. 469-70) even to the point of reproducing Apel's table comparing Ambrosian and Gregorian musical items. Milanese libraries abound with liturgical manuscripts and prints of the 15th and early 16th centuries. An authoritative approach to the Gafurius codices will have to deal with those primary sources. Related to this methodological deficiency is the total reliance upon secondary sources for a description of Mu 3154 (pp. 59-64). On one question, Professor Noblitt reports that an answer cannot be obtained "because of the lack of a complete catalogue of this MS" (p. 251). Perhaps this apparent failure to consult a microfilm<sup>5</sup> of the manuscript also explains why all of the many other motets in Mu 3154 are completely ignored. It may be true that the volume was intended for practical use, but the only supporting evidence which Professor Noblitt provides is to claim that this conclusion is strongly suggested by the choirbook format (p. 241). That format demonstrates only that the copyists observed the most common practice of their day.

The final chapter contains transcriptions of the two Munich cycles. By 1963 modern editions of all the other repertoires either already existed or were being prepared.

Most typographical errors are self-evident, but a few flaws in workmanship depreciate the dissertation's appeal and usefulness. Weerbecke's *Anima mea liquefacta* is found in the manuscript Fl 178, not Fl 176 (p. 12). The manuscript Wa 2016 now resides at Warsaw, not Breslau (p. 12). In the list of motets within each cycle (p. 7), a motet by Compère is given the incipit *Hodie Christus nobis*, but the second and third words are transposed in all subsequent references.<sup>6</sup> Three liturgical models are cited for *Ave Regina caelorum* on p. 26, only one for the same text on p. 218. Josquin's tenure at Milan begins in 1459 (p. 254), but the date of his birth is given incorrectly as 1450 (p. 63). Motet texts are reproduced in full, except for two ellipses (p. 23). This

inconsistency raises a reader's curiosity and forces him to confirm both the original text and its identification.

Spot checking indicated that the identification of texts was usually satisfactory, although several oversights occur. The third portion of Gafurius's *Quando venit ergo* (p. 227) quotes the Vespers hymn *Jesu nostra redemptio*, Stanza I. Several polyphonic hymn cycles of the period employ this text for the feast *In Vigilia Ascensionis*. Gafurius's *Hoc gaudium est* (p. 227) begins with Stanza IV of the Trinity Vespers hymn, *In maiestatis solio*.<sup>7</sup> The text format should be revised to reflect the *a b a b* rhyme scheme.

In these motets, numerous internal cadences occur simultaneously in all voices, and the cadences are often emphasized by double bars in the manuscripts. The dissertation devotes no systematic attention to these caesuras, even though they may be intimately connected to the Mass ritual.

Although attention is devoted to musical styles, only in the case of the Munich cycles do those analyses lead to conclusions of historical interest. Ludwig Finscher's succinct statement of historical and aesthetic peculiarities in Compère's *motetti missales*<sup>8</sup> escapes Noblitt's attention. Both Finscher and Lowinsky<sup>9</sup> think that Compère's Milanese works anticipate an Italian-inspired style not commonly practiced before the 1490's. Lowinsky refuses to believe that Compère, arriving in Milan at the approximate age of twenty-four in 1474, could have composed at that time these three cycles of *motetti missales*, employing a style to which apparently neither he nor other composers would return for another two decades. Lowinsky also points out that Weerbecke, who served at Milan from 1472 to 1481, returned to Milan in 1489, the latter date being a possible one for Weerbecke's *motetti missales*. Then Lowinsky goes even further, proposing "that the 'substitution Masses' contained in the Gafuri codices are simply motet cycles adapted by Gafuri *loco missae* to suit his own taste and preference." However, in all eight cycles which Noblitt accepts as *motetti missales*, the special character of the Elevation text and its unique musical treatment is consistent. Since this could not be coincidental either (1) the composers originally intended their cycles to conform to a known *motetti missales* practice, or (2) the Elevation motets are imposters, interpolated into pre-existent motet cycles. No evidence supports the latter possibility.

Professor Noblitt believes that Compère's *Missa Galeazescha* was composed between 1473 and 1476 or 1477 (p. 36), being dedicated to Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza or to his son, Gian Galeazzo Sforza (born 1469). This is a BMV cycle, identified texts stemming mostly from Marian sequences. The texts, especially the apparently non-liturgical interpolations, are usually doleful laments, thoughts which I believe contradict the unrestrained behavior and despotic rule of Galeazzo Maria. It also seems unlikely that the cycle would have been inspired by his frail son, Gian Galeazzo, whose political authority was usurped by Lodovico il Moro in 1480, when Gian was only eleven years old. On December 26, 1476, Duke Galeazzo Maria was murdered, and such texts could be appropriately associated with the Galeazzo

name in the wake of that murder. The exclamation "O Maria" appears in four of the eight motets; this may be a thinly disguised reference to Duke Galeazzo Maria. Also intriguing is the use of several texts from the sequence *Verbum bonum et suave* and, in the seventh motet, the expression *mater bona*. Could these be a play on the widow's name, Bona di Savoia?

Bona was faced with two grave problems. She eventually failed in the power struggle to preserve the strife-torn duchy for her son. Her other concern was for her husband's soul, which she thought to be in jeopardy because of his many misdeeds. Bona even petitioned Pope Sixtus IV to intercede in his behalf and paid the Pope generously for his aid. The *Missa Galeazescha* can be interpreted as an eloquent prayer for Bona's success in both of her missions. Limitations of space permit only one illustration, the end of the first motet:

Reis ergo fac, regina,  
O virgo pura  
Apud regem ut ruina  
Relaxentur debita.

O virgo pura,  
pro nobis dulciter ora.

Lines 1, 3, and 4 are taken from the BMV Sequence *Salvatoris mater pia*; others are apparently free insertions.

The three lines from the sequence become a perfect commentary on current instability. The concluding line, *ora pro nobis*, would be common enough, but inserting the emphatic *dulciter* seems to indicate an especially impoverished or bereaved condition. The apparent ambiguity of the rubric "Galeazescha" therefore becomes deliberately meaningful. The Mass prays for the welfare of both males who comprise the legitimate Galeazzo lineage. This motet cycle contains the progressive stylistic features noted by Finscher and Lowinsky. If the work was composed in 1477, then the evolution of Compère's style remains as puzzling as Finscher believed, a puzzle which Noblitt fails to recognize.

One of the engaging features of this topic is its implication for other motet repertories. Finscher suggests that Compère's *Officium de Cruce*, a cycle of nine motets printed in Petrucci's *Motetti de Passione* (1503), might have been used as *motetti missales* or during successive liturgical hours on a given day.<sup>10</sup> Noblitt observes that Compère's texts were also employed in the *Natus sapientia* cycle<sup>11</sup> of Mu 3154 and suggests that Compère intended *motetti missales*, Petrucci having deleted the *loco* designations in order to invite a wider use of the motets. Unexplained is the appearance of *Adoramus te Christe* as the second motet of the cycle in Petrucci, but as the conclusion of the fifth motet in Mu 3154. In the Munich cycle, as well as several other *motetti missales*, this is the text associated with the Elevation. Both Finscher and Noblitt are speculating, and so another possibility might as well be added. The first motet in Petrucci's cycle quotes an Introit text and could be sung at that

occasion. The music for the Mass Ordinary would derive from another source with Petrucci's second motet, *Adoramus te Christe*, interpolated at the Elevation. Motets three through nine would be sung at successive hours on the same day: Matins, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. This agrees with the conventional liturgical roles for the texts of the last seven motets, roles even mentioned within the motet texts. (For example, the last motet begins with *Hora completorii datur*.) My solution also honors Petrucci's caption, *Officium de Cruce*, by not forcing upon it an interpretation more restrictive than its literal meaning. In Mu 3154, where several *loco* designations do exist, the lines of texts specifying the hour are occasionally deleted.

A later Milanese collection, Mi 2266, bearing the date 1527, is simply mentioned by Professor Noblitt as lacking any *motetti missales* cycle (pp. 5, 242). Claudio Sartori's inventory<sup>12</sup> provides thematic incipits for only one voice of the items in this badly burned manuscript, but he nevertheless shows one group of motets which might be discussed. On ff. 76<sup>v</sup>-77 occurs the anonymous motet *Bone Jesu dulcis Christe*, a text appropriate for the Elevation and set to fermata-marked chords. The preceding six anonymous motets are shown at least to begin with the same mensuration, to contain one flat in the signature, and possibly to employ the same clef combinations. Dealing with this mutilated manuscript would be a trying task, but its possible relevance to *motetti missales* cannot be dismissed without further study.

The dissertation provides useful descriptions of the motet repertoires as well as sound criteria for recognizing *motetti missales*. Professor Noblitt's account of the Milanese motets is also constructive, for he corrects some of the inaccuracies published by Jeppesen and the *Archivium Musicum*.<sup>13</sup> The dissertation is marred by technical flaws and especially by a deficient regard for primary sources. Only seven manuscripts of polyphony are cited, and of these Wa 2016 is assigned to the wrong city, Fl 178 is given the wrong shelf number, and inadequate attention is devoted to Mu 3154 and Mi 2266. The account of Martini's musical style was prepared with insufficient knowledge of Mi 2268.

The identification of Mass substitutions using motets not preserved as cycles, as well as the identification of other cycles, remains open. Professor Noblitt believes that the history of motet substitutions at Mass involves only Mu 3154, the three Milanese codices, and the two examples by Josquin and La Rue. It seems unlikely to me that the *motetti missales* cycles would have acquired their standardized practice without prior experimentation. Perhaps other motet repertoires provided the music for those experiments. The numerous polyphonic Masses with troped texts should be studied with a view toward *motetti missales*. Another related practice occurs in some tenor Masses which contain liturgical texts from outside the Mass Ordinary underlaid in the *cantus firmus*. Due to the cosmopolitan careers of the many composers associated with Milanese circles, knowledge of *motetti missales* must have been widespread. We still cannot measure the significance of that practice to an era notorious for its ecclesiastical irregularities. It is hoped that new evidence,

or a new interpretation of known information, can someday shed more light on these questions.<sup>14</sup>

### Manuscripts cited

Fl 176	Florence. Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. Magliabecchiana XIX, 176.
Fl 178	<i>Ibid.</i> Magliabecchiana XIX, 178.
Mi 2266-2269	Milan. Archivio del Duomo. Cod. 2266-2269.
Mu 3154	Munich. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. Mus. Ms. 3154.
Wa 2016	Warsaw. Biblioteka Uniwersytecka. Ms. Mf. 2016 (ex Breslau).

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This title derives from the inscription "Galeazescha" which appears above the rubric "Loco Introitus" of the first motet, *Ave virgo gloriosa*.

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of brevity, a cycle of *motetti missales* is frequently designated by the incipit of the first motet. I follow this practice unless otherwise stated.

<sup>3</sup> Gerhard Croll, *Das Motettenwerk Gaspars van Weerbeke* (Göttingen, 1954, typescript) and his article in *Musica Disciplina* (1952) 6:67-81; Ludwig Finscher, *Die Messen und Motetten Loyset Compère*, (Göttingen, 1954, typescript) and his article in *Musica Disciplina* (1958) 12:105-43.

<sup>4</sup> *Loyset Compère: Opera Omnia II*, ed. Ludwig Finscher (1959), p. i.

<sup>5</sup> The question which Noblitt leaves unanswered can be solved through microfilm. Of the incomplete Masses in Mu 3154, only one, the *Missa Salve Regina* on ff. 390-95<sup>v</sup>, lacks both a Kyrie and an Agnus Dei. But this is no confirmation of Ambrosian practice, for folios are missing at the beginning and the end of the Mass. It is likely that the missing folios contained both of the missing movements. For this information I am indebted to Professor Charles Hamm of the University of Illinois.

<sup>6</sup> This confusion started with the copyist in Mi 2269, who gave the version *Hodie Christus nobis* in the cantus, but *Hodie nobis Christus* in the bottom three parts. Professor Noblitt was unable to identify the opening sentence of text. Working from the latter version, which the majority of parts support, the identification is easier to acquire; the sentence is based upon phrases from the Second Responsoy of Matins at Nativity. The final two sentences of the motet, unidentified in the dissertation, also derive from the Nativity Office. These lines are to be found in Responsoy Five of Matins and the Magnificat Antiphon of Second Vespers.

<sup>7</sup> See Suitbert Bäumer, *Geschichte des Breviers* (Freiburg, 1895), p. 362.

<sup>8</sup> *Compère II*, pp. ii-iii.

<sup>9</sup> Review of Osthoff's *Josquin Desprez* in *Renaissance News* (1963) 16:255-262.

<sup>10</sup> *Compère IV* (1961), p. ii.

<sup>11</sup> Page 99, footnote 29. We are misled here; the texts differ in numerous details, although they clearly do derive from the same model.

<sup>12</sup> Claudio Sartori, "Il quarto codice di Gaffurio non è del tutto scomparso" in *Collectanea Musicae Historiae* (Florence, 1956) 1:24-44.

<sup>13</sup> Knud Jeppesen, "Die drei Gafurius-Kodizes der Fabbrica del Duomo, Milano," *Acta Musicologica* (1931) 3:14-28 and *Archivum Musicae Metropolitanum Mediolanense* (Milan, 1958- ).

<sup>14</sup> A synopsis of the dissertation has recently appeared in Thomas L. Noblitt, "The Ambrosian *Motetti Missales* Repertory," *Musica Disciplina* (1968) 22:77-103. That article offers no significant modifications of material in the dissertation.