

POST ELEVEN



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Two mid-sixteenth-century Cecilian parody masses

When speaking of Cecilian music, one generally has the idea of the nineteenth-century movement, mostly centred in Germany, that pushed a reformation of Catholic church music, aiming to restore a more traditional religious feeling and the authority of the church in regard to the sacred music repertoire. This movement of the 1800s was in great part inspired by the fifteenth-century *Congregazioni Ceciliani* (Gmeinwieser, 2001). This meant that in the fifteenth century there were already movements of composers and musicians in praised of the Saint (whose feast is celebrated 22 November), and there are several references to festival celebrations of her feast day throughout several European regions which also prompted the foundation of associations to that end. One of these association was established in 1570 at Evreux (Normandy) – *Le Puy de musique* – which celebrated the Saint’s Day with several liturgical performances followed by a banquet after the mass and prizes would be awarded

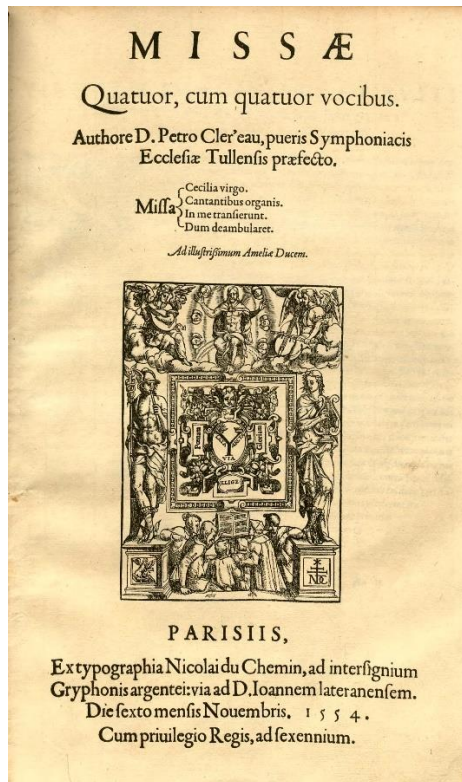
for the best motets, songs, airs and sonnets composed for the occasion (Husk, 2001).

Many music settings were composed honouring St Cecilia, notably by sixteenth-century composers. One of the most popular and widely known texts was the Vespers antiphon *Cantantibus organis*, set to polyphony (generally as a motet) by numerous composers; Jacquet de Mantua, Cipriano de Rore, Constanzo Porta, Jean de Castro, Orlando di Lasso, Pierre de Manchicourt, Luca Marenzio, and Palestrina, only to mention some more familiar names. Probably not so familiar to the Cecilian musical literature are the names of Pierre Certon and Pierre Clereau. The first is author of that least two motets that I know of – *Cantantibus organis* and *Cecilia virgo gloriosa* – which were used as models for two parody masses by Clereau.

Pierre Certon, mostly known as one important contributor to the *chanson* musical literature, was also a composer of sacred music, centred around the motet and the mass, of which he published a book for each of these genres (in 1542 and 1558 respectively). His 24 motets were printed in 1542 – the *Recens modulorum editio* – by Pierre Attaignant in Paris. His sacred works were viewed as derived from the stylistic model of the French *chanson*, full of declamatory rhythms and homophonic textures. But a closer look at his motets show that these compositions are less like Parisian chansons than are the sacred works of this genre by Claudin de Sermisy and, in this way, should be viewed in a less isolated context of models and influences. He follows Sermisy in the concern for the syntactic organization in his Latin works, but his contrapuntal idiom is closer to the Flemish polyphony than to the lyric Parisian *chanson*. In his motets he used a

wide range of musical procedures and textures, frequently writing for five and six voices and relying on canons and ostinatos. He frequently makes use of the paraphrase of plainchant as his main source of melodic material (Agnel, 2001).

The two motets, models for the masses of Clereau, are present in the 1542 book and are both for four voices. The motet *Cantantibus organis* is set in high clefs (SAAT) whilst the *Cecilia virgo gloriosa* is set using the regular clef combination (ATTB). They are both two-*partes* motets being relatively extended works with *Cantantibus organis* 180 breves-long and *Cecilia virgo gloriosa* 176 breves-long, which make them interesting works to explore in terms of the above-mentioned imitation and texture procedures.



Pierre Clereau, *Missae quatuor, cum quatuor vocibus*, 1554 (front page).

The motet *Cantantibus organis* uses the text of the first antiphon for the Vespers office. The text usually appears in a shorter version, usually in nineteenth-century compositions, and in a longer version mostly used by sixteenth-century composers, such as the settings by Lasso, Manchincourt or Marenzio. In the case of Certon, for the first part of the motet, he uses the shorter version and in the second part adds four verses (“Est secretum Valeriane quod tibi volo dicere [...] est a latere meo”) before the final verse “Fiat Domine [...] ut non confundar.” In the first part there isn’t much text repetition. The composer opens with a “classical” point of imitation, repeating the text “Cantantibus organis” (and associated motive) two times before passing to another imitative section, far more extended than the first one. He ends this segment with a very strong cadence at the word “dicens”, preparing the following text (“fiat cor meum”) which is presented in imitation, a moment that later composers would definitely set in homophony. This segment also ends with a very strong cadence (as that of the previous segment with three *formulae*) which is followed by imitation, in a very thin textures as to whisper the words “est secretum”. The following segments make a wide use of *seminimas* in almost all voices, and we do not see much homophony throughout this *parte* of the motet. Certon sets the entry of voices in the points of imitation in a variety of ways, frequently upwards or downwards from the highest to the lowest voice (and vice-versa) avoiding the superius-tenor/altus-bassus entries, although he keeps the fifths and octaves relations between the voices. He begins the second part of the motet with a long motive introduced by the bassus with the voices following (tenor, altus, and superius) at very spaced entries. The following segments use shorter rhythmic figures, returning to the same imitative style of the last segments of the first

part, although he keeps the spaced voice entries in each point of imitation.

The text used for *Cecilia virgo gloriosa* is adapted from the antiphon *ad Magnificat*, which precedes the closing canticle of the Vespers office. Contrary to the opening of *Cantantibus organis*, in *Cecilia virgo* there's a more spaced entry of the voices, although following the order of entry from the highest to the lowest (superius, altus...). The end of the first segment is not so obvious like that of the previous motet, with *cantizans* formula appearing in the altus, and the voices (superius and altus) which initiate the following segment overlapping the lower voices. In general, this motet follows the trends of the previous one, differing in the wider beginning of the points of imitation. It also maintains an intricate and sometimes confusing counterpoint resulting from more close imitative sections and the use of shorter rhythmic values.

As mentioned earlier, these two motets by Certon were used as models for parody masses by Pierre Clereau. This composer, although like Certon not much is known about him, was active in Lorraine in mid-sixteenth century. He may be considered a contemporary of Certon by all means and, like him, was an important contributor to the French chanson musical literature. Like Certon, he was closer to the Northern musical idioms, following the imitative style of Willaert or Crecquillon (Dobbins, 2001). This last composer, together with Certon and Maillard, served as model for his parody masses of the 1554 book. The *Missae quatuor, cum quatuor vocibus* was published in Paris at the workshop of Nicolas du Chemin. In the same year, du Chemin published a collection of music – the *Missae Duodecim, cum quatuor vocibus, a celeberrimis*

authoribus conditae... – comprising 12 masses, 11 motets, and 8 *Magnificat* of famous composers of the time, including Gombert, Janequin, Certon, Goudimel, Coli, Maillard, among others, where all the 1554 masses of Clereau were included. The front page of the collection even uses the same central wood-carved plate also used in Clereau's book.

Clereau's book comprises the masses *Cecilia virgo*, *Cantantibus organis*, *In me trasierunt*, and *Dum deambulet*. For the two masses based on Certon's motets, the composer follows the same voice combination used in the motets (SAAT and ATTB), as well as some of its textures. For this study we have selected the first two masses, intended for the feast of St Cecilia on the 22nd of November.

In the first Kyrie of *Missa Cantantibus organis*, Clereau used the whole imitative material from the first segment of Certon's motet, even the space of voice entries. He opens the *Christe* with material from the beginning of the motet's second segment but develops it in free-invented counterpoint, although the shape of the motives used are very close to that used by Certon. For the second Kyrie Clereau adopted the same use of material from the beginning of the third segment of the motet, developing it throughout the section.

The opening of the *Gloria* uses the same spaced point of imitation that opens the second part of the motet, although Clereau halves the rhythmic values. The motet material is rapidly abandoned in favour of more freely composed counterpoint, make use of some homophony, in the "Laudamus" "benedicimus..." sections. At "Domine Deus..." he returns to the use (although altered) of material from the second segment of the first part of the motet. For the "Qui sedes" he used the point of imitation of the motet's first part last

segment (“cutodit corpus...”). It follows with material derived from the middle of the second part of the motet. The “Quoniam” seems to be set in freely invented counterpoint, and he follows in “Cum Sancto Spiritu”, Clereau with material derived from the end of the first part of the motet.

The opening of the Credo uses the motet’s first point of imitation with halved rhythmic values but retaining the eighth note ornament that first appears in the tenor. The “visibilium” uses the point of imitation of the motet’s third segment, but he soon develops it in freely invented counterpoint. The “Et incarnatus est” section is set in a more influenced homophonic way, and he follows with the “Crucifixus” set in a tight three-voice (SAA) texture counterpoint. The four-voice texture returns in the “Et iterum...”. He uses material from the second segment of the second part to end the “et vitam venturi”, which closes with a different cadence.

In the Sanctus, the composer uses various voice combinations which brings an interesting colour to the mass as a whole. He begins with a four-part texture, using freely invented materials. In the “pleni sunt”, texture was reduced to two voices (AT) as happens in several of Josquin’s masses. Some isolated motives were used from the motet’s third segment of the second part, notably the second altus and tenor motives, which are set in closer imitation in the mass. In Hosanna texture is augmented to four voices in a seemingly free-invented section. The Benedictus sees the texture reduced to three voices (SAA), which seems to be freely invented with some recurrences to the motet’s material, especially the middle of the second part. The composer writes a second Hosanna different from the previous but using a common motive shape for the points of

imitation.

Clereau provided two Agnus Dei, a four-voice with the termination “miserere nobis”, and an expanded texture to five voices (SAATT) with the termination “dona nobis pacem”. Both are brief sections with almost no text repetition. In the first Agnus, he opens with material from the third segment of the motet, but soon develops into freely invented counterpoint. For the second Agnus, he seems to have used new materials, although we find some resemblances to the last segment of the motet in the motive construction of the “dona nobis pacem”.



Pierre Clereau, *Missa Cecilia virgo* (excerpts), 4vv.

For the *Missa Cecilia virgo*, Clereau maintained the original texture of the motet which, in comparison with the previous mass, suggests a mass for high voices and another for low voices. In general, it pretty much follows the standards set for the *Missa Cantantibus organis*. It features much of the same borrowing procedures present in the previous mass, although in some parts counterpoint is not so intricately laid down as in sections of the other mass as the Credo.

For the first Kyrie the opening imitative material of the motet was used, further develop in the last measures of the section. He freely uses the motives of the motet’s fourth segment in the Christe, again, developing them throughout the section. The second Kyrie uses the material of the last segment of the first part of the motet, keeping very close to the original imitative source.

The Gloria begins with the motet’s opening point of imitation

further developing into more freely counterpoint. Clereau keeps borrowing from the model in the “Qui tollis” section, using material from the fifth segment of the second part. Again, he further develops it into free counterpoint. He borrows from the second segment of the second part for the “Qui sedes”. He then writes an unusual homophonic section with the text “Tu solus Dominus...” after a brief reduced three-voice texture at “Quoniam tu solus Sanctus”. The Gloria ends with musical material derived from the fourth segment of the motet for the “Cum Sancto Spriritus”.

As in the Gloria, the Credo also uses the opening point of imitation of the motet, but soon develops into freely invented counterpoint. Clereau makes use of homophony throughout this movement in order to advance with the text, especially in this first section. We can add the “Et incarnatus” to this since it was all set in homophony. Texture is reduced to two voices (AT) in the “Crucifixus”, making use of the opening point of imitation of the motet’s second part. The composer switches the relation between the voices with the altus entering with the tenor motive in the motet and the tenor vice-versa. After this brief section, texture is again changed, this time to three voices (ATT) borrowing material from the fifth segment of the motet’s first part. He, again, recurs to homophony at “Et iterum...”, which maintains an influence homophonic texture until the final “Amen”, where quotation of the musical material of the motet’s final “Alelluia” occurs in an almost *ipsis verbis* way.

Interestingly, the Sanctus opens with derived material of the motet’s final “Alelluia”, developing into more melismatic free invented counterpoint. He then reduces the texture to two voices (AT) at “Pleni sunt”, using derived material from the motet’s second

segment. The “Hosanna” is set in a four-voice texture with seemingly new material being used. For the Benedictus he borrows musical material from the opening segment of the motet’s second part, with an interesting combination of motives in a three-voice texture (ATT).

The Agnus Dei is divided into two parts: the “miserere nobis” and “dona nobis pacem”. For the first part the point of imitation uses derived material from the motet’s fifth segment with a brief development towards the final. Texture is expanded to six voices for the second Agnus (ATTTBB). New material seems to have been used in this section although most of the motives shapes are familiar and seem to be derived from several imitation sections of the model.

A further analysis would be required to examine the symbolism related to which music materials Clereau used from the models and their integration in the masses texts, notably in the praising sections. Hopefully this may be developed in a future post since these two works present a very interesting perspective on imitation techniques previous to the more widely known post-Tridentine ones. Both Pierre Certon and Pierre Clereau present four musical works that don’t seem to have much worldwide performance (from what I searched in terms of performances). However, together, or individually, for their complexity and intricate compositional technique, they make an interesting *corpus* of music that could be further explored in the usual Cecilian commemorative performances.

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