

The motet *Ecce mulier Chananea* by Fr. Manuel Cardoso¹

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Summary

Fr. Manuel Cardoso was one of the most important Portuguese composers of the first half of the seventeenth century, also being one of the composers who saw their music being printed. Of his last printed book, the *Livro de varios motetes* (Lisbon, 1648), we find the motet *Ecce mulier Chananea* for four voices (SATB). This is a brief analysis text of this work which accompanies a recording made by Oniria – Sacabuxa in an instrumental version following the performance practices of the period.

Manuel Cardoso was baptized on 11 December 1566, in the Parish Church of Fronteira, being most of his biographic details transmitted by the chronicler of the Carmelite Order, Fr. Manuel de Sá, who, in 1724, published the *Memorias historicas... da Ordem de Nossa Senhora do Carmo*, where three pages were dedicated to him.

According to Fr. Manuel de Sá, Manuel Cardoso was sent to Évora, with the intent of studying “grammar and the art of music”, possibly at the Choirboys College of Évora Cathedral. Cardoso took the habit at the Convent of Carmo of Lisbon, on 1 July 1588, having professed in the same convent on 5 July the following year, at 23 years of age. The Carmelite Order chronicler praised the qualities of Cardoso during the years he lived in the Convent of Carmo. Besides considering him as “one of the greatest, and distinguished composers, that ever existed not only in this Kingdom, but the whole Europe,” also enumerated his virtues, stating that in “the eating he was very sparse, in modesty unique, in keeping the silence vigilant, in the essential vows observant, in poverty so punctual, that he never had any belongings.”

His music isn’t unnoticed regarding the concert programmes elaboration of specialized groups in early music performance abroad, even less within the context of the Portuguese sacred vocal polyphonic *corpus* of the first half of the seventeenth century. Manuel Cardoso was one of the Portuguese composers who saw most of his music being printed. In all, five volumes of vocal polyphony were printed at the Craesbeeck workshop through a period of forty years. These volumes include a book of *Magnificat* (1613), three books of masses (one in 1625, and in 1636), and a collection of motets, lamentations and other genres (1648).

The motet *Ecce mulier Chananea* thus appears in Cardoso’s the last printed work, two years before his death, being published in the *Livro de varios motetes... e outras cousas*, printed in Lisbon by the Craesbeeck house in 1648. This work is made by a collection of music which also includes, besides motets, a miscellany of other genres, as masses, lamentation, responsories, hymns, and lessons, among other smaller-size works.

This motet doesn’t include any use or liturgical occasion indication, being found (as, i.e., the motet *Mulier quae erat*) among the motets for the last Sundays of Lent. Contrary to this group of motets, most of them for five voices, *Ecce mulier Chananea* was written for four voices. The text of the motet is divided into five segments:

¹ This text is an English translation of a previously published Portuguese text in the magazine *Glosas online* (2018, February 2).

1. *Ecce mulier Chananea*
2. *a finibus illis egressa*
3. *clamavit dicens:*
4. *miserere mei Domine fili David*
5. *filia mea male a daemonio vexatur.*

Once more as is characteristic in Cardoso's motets, both the first as the last segments are more extended than the intermediary segments generally more short and with less text. The fourth, and fifth segments represent a brief dialogue between the Woman and Jesus, in which she interpellates Him, asking for mercy. Cardoso separated these two segments from the remaining of the motet using a half note rest, which appears in all four voices. The question (segment 4) is made in a homophonic way, being Jesus answer (segment 5) musically resolved through a brief point of imitation, with a sequence of two motives initiated in the *superius*.

Cardoso shows a high rhetorical-musical power in this motet, mostly through the combining of repetition was the strengthening of an idea (repeating the motive in several pitches) and a control of dissonance, allowing the stress of specific textual moments. As an example, in the third segment, the word "clamavit" (calling) is repeated, firstly at a lower pitch, and, afterwards, at a higher pitch as a way to stress the meaning of the word, which frequently occurs throughout the work.



Fr. Manuel Cardoso
Ecce mulier Chananea
 (*Livro de varios motetes*, Lisbon, 1648)

The musical performance of the motet *Ecce mulier Chananea* which accompanies this article was especially recorded by the instrumental group Oniria Sacabuxe, from Málaga. It's a group which in this performance is made by a cornett and three sackbuts. This type of instrumental practices in the context of the musical liturgy were common during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These type of groups also existed in the context of the music activity in the Portuguese cathedrals and churches. As an example, in the case of Évora Cathedral, in a musicians payment sheet of the Cathedral chapel for the year of 1651, several wind instrumentalists were to be found, including a cornett and a sackbut. In this way, despite the performance of this motet is an instrumental representation of a work that would be listened to mostly in a vocal way (since the text transmission would be an important factor), one should not exclude the presence of instruments in this interpretation. In many cases, an instrument (sackbut or cornett) would take one of the vocal parts (or more), with at least a singer securing the transmission of the text used in that musical composition. In other cases, books were copied with vocal works specifically destined to be performed by instrumental groups (the so-called *livros dos charamelas*) also being perfectly possible the presence of a motet such as *Ecce mulier Chananea* in these collections of polyphonic music.

In a general way, listening to this work, it will be important to consider its predominantly vocal structure. There isn't a writing or performance purely instrumental and each instrument is to be found, as a singer, taking each of the four vocal parts and their respective phrasing. This approach is punctuated with embellishment in specific moments, an empirical musical practice which, despite not written in the source, would be one of the decisive factors in the diversity and musical impetus of this kind of groups transmitted in the cathedral chapels to which Manuel Cardoso was not unaware.

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