

Guillaume Du Fay

Opera Omnia 01/02

Alma redemptoris mater 2

Edited by Alejandro Enrique Planchart



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01/02 Alma redemptoris mater 2

Guillaume Du Fay

Cantus $[\Phi] \diamond = \text{♩}$
Al - - - - -
Tenor $[\Phi]$
Alma redemptoris
Contratenor $[\Phi]$
Alma redemptoris

9
ma re - demp -
re - demp -
re - -

19
to - - ris ma - ter, quae per - - vi - -
to - - ris ma - ter quae per - - vi - -
demp - to - ris ma - ter, quae per - vi - a

29
- - - a cae - - - li Por - - - ta
- - - a cae - - - li Por - ta
cae - - - li por - ta

39
ma - - - nes et stel - - -
ma - - - nes et stel - - -
ma - - - nes et - - - stel -

49

la ma - ris suc - cur - re ce - den -
la ma - ris suc - cur - re ca -
la ma - ris suc - cur - re

59

ti Sur - ge - re qui cu - rat po - pu - lo;
den - ti sur - ge - re qui cu - rat po - pu - lo;
ca - den - ti sur - ge - re qui cu - rat po - pu - lo;

68

tu quae ge - nu -
tu quae ge - nu -
tu quae ge - nu -

72

i - sti Na - tu - ra mi - ran -
i - sti Na - tu - ra
i - sti Na - tu - ra mi - ran -

77

te tu - um san - ctum ge - ni - to - rem;
mi - ran - te tu - um san - ctum ge - ni - to - rem;
ran - te tu - um san - ctum ge - ni - to - rem;

82

Vir - - - - - go - - - - - pri -

Vir - - - - - go - - - - -

Vir - - - - - go - - - - - pri -

89

- - - - - us ac po - - - - - ste - - - - - ri - us, Ga -

pri - - - - - us ac po - - - - - ste - - - - - ri - us, - - - - -

- - - - - us po - - - - - ste - - - - - ri - us, - - - - -

97

bri - - - e - - - lis ab o - - - re

Ga - bri - - - e - - - lis ab o - - - re

Ga - bri - - - e - - - lis ab o - - - re

105

Su - - - mens il - - - lud A - ve,

Su - - - mens il - - - lud A - ve,

Su - - - mens il - - - lud A - ve,

108

pec - ca - to - - rum mi - se - re - - re.

pec - ca - to - - rum mi - se - re - - re.

pec - ca - to - - rum mi - se - re - - re.

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Sources

ModB, fols. 57v-58r (new 60v-61r), “Dufay.” Full text in the cantus throughout, text in the lower voices for measures 69-82 and 106-112.

Tr 92₂, fols. 178v-179, “Dufay.” Full text in the cantus, text in the (unlabeled) contratenor for measures 106-112.

Clefs and mensurations

		1
Cantus	c1	○, Tr 92
Tenor	c3 ^b	-
Contratenor	c4 ^b	-

Text

Alma redemptoris mater, quae pervia caeli Porta manes, et stella maris succurre cadenti Surgere qui curat populo: tu quae genuisti, Natura mirante, tuum sanctum genitorem: Virgo prius ac posterius, Gabrielis ab ore Sumens illud Ave, peccatorum miserere.	Loving mother of the Redeemer, who are the open Door of heaven and the star of the sea, help the people, Fallen but striving to rise up. You, who to the astonishment of nature gave birth to your own creator, Virgin before and after, who heard the “Ave” from the mouth of Gabriel, have mercy upon the sinners.
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The plainsong is paraphrased in the cantus. In the modern liturgy the *Alma redemptoris* is sung at the end of Compline from Saturday before the first Sunday in Advent until the second vespers of the Purification (February 2). In the middle ages its function varied considerably, either as part of the suffrages for the Virgin, as part of the series of antiphons, for one her feasts, usually the Assumption or the Nativity, at the end of Compline, as in the modern liturgy, or as part of a procession. In this last manner it was often included in a number of special offices endowed by benefactors of a given church, which specifically call for the singing of “the Alma” or “the Salve.” Du Fay’s setting probably was intended for such special offices, which became very frequent in the fifteenth century.

The text is in hexameters; both it and melody had been traditionally ascribed to Hermannus Contractus (1013-54), but the most recent scholarship makes his authorship of the piece improbable.

The ending is notated differently in both sources. The edition reflects the notation in ModB, reading the ligatures in the standard manner. In Tr 92 virtually all the notes are isolated breves, while the first rest in the cantus is a long rest. The two versions are given at the end of these notes (see Example 1).

The version of ModB, as the *lectio difficilior*, is to be preferred, but the version of Tr 92 would suggest that these passages were sometimes performed as a series of relatively slow moving sonorities, which to some ears would appear to be undifferentiated in length.

The metric organization of measures 1-105 is by imperfect longs, and the metric shift in measures 69-82 is achieved through coloration in all parts.¹ This implies a relatively fast tempo for the entire work, I would suggest a tempo of ca. MM 60 for the perfect breve, which makes the coloraturas at *stella* and *virgo* into virtuosic passages. The suggestion of ϕ at the start can be a contentious issue. Du Fay seldom used this sign as an opening mensuration even though there are a number of pieces that are organized in minor *modus* at the start,² and Tr 92 has \circ at the start of the cantus, but the metric organization of the piece is that which Du Fay signs usually with ϕ , which causes

¹ The one exception is measures 84-86, that add to a perfect long. This occasional expansion of the *modus* is common in Du Fay’s music in duple meter, but infrequent in the triple meter music. Although it occurs in a few instances (e.g. *He compaignons*). The slower triple meter in Du Fay’s music is almost never organized in *modus*.

² A work where all sources give this mensuration at the start is *O proles Hispaniae – O sidus Hispaniae* (01/10 in this edition). Regarding the rhythmic and stylistic world these works cf. Julie Cumming, *The Motet in the Age of Du Fay* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 99-124.

Cumming to note that the piece “looks like cut circle.”³ Du Fay’s original, like most of his cut circle works, was most likely unsigned.

Some scholars have also raised the possibility that the *coronae* were intended to provide a locus for improvised ornamentation;⁴ this is not impossible, but the medieval references are too unclear and contradictory and thus far all modern attempts at such ornamentation I have heard sound very unsatisfactory. Robert Nosow, instead, argues for careful attention to the mensural notation of such endings.⁵

Example 1

ModB

106

Su - mens _ il - lud _ A - ve, pec - ca - to - rum _ mi - se - re - re.

Tr 92

106

Su - mens _ il - lud _ A - ve, pec - ca - to - rum _ mi - se - re - re.

The text underlay in the manuscripts is not consistent. I have included all the text in ModB in Roman, and added the remainder in italics. Singers who prefer to vocalize the textless sections of the tenor and contratenor can just ignore the underlay. On the other hand, the breaking of some words by rests would not have surprised any fifteenth century singer who had any experience singing isorhythmic motets.

³ Cumming, *The Motet*, 196.

⁴ Charles Warren, “Punctus Organi and Cantus Coronatus in the Music of Dufay,” *Papers Read at the Dufay Quincentenary Conference, Brooklyn College, December 6-7, 1974*, ed. Allan W. Atlas (New York: Brooklyn College Music Department, 1976), 128-143.

⁵ Robert Nosow, “The Florid and Equal-Discantus Motet Styles of Fifteenth-Century Italy,” Ph.D. Dissertation (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1992), 156, note 6.