Guillaume Du Fay

Opera Omnia 01/22

O beate Sebastiane

Edited by Alejandro Enrique Planchart

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Guillaume Du Fay

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01/22a O beate Sebastiane
Version of Q 15

Guillaume Du Fay

Canus

Tenor

Contratenor

Contratenor
Guillaume Du Fay, O beate Sebastiane: 4

01/22b O beate Sebastiane

Version of ModB

Guillaume Du Fay

Contratenor

Tenor

Cantus
Guillaume Du Fay, O beate Sebastian: 5

D-OO

stum, ut a pе

Chri stum ut a pе

D-OO
Guillaume Du Fay, O beate Sebastiane: 7

Collated version

Guillaume Du Fay

01/21c O beate Sebastiane

Contratenor

Tenor

Cantus
01/22 O beate Sebastiane

Sources
ModB, fols. 58v-59r (new 61v-62r), “dufay.” Text in all voices.

Clefs and mensuration

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Text

| O beate Sebastian, magna est fides tua: intercede pro nobis ad dominum Iesum Christum ut a peste et epidemicæ et morbo liberemur. Amen. | O blessed Sebastian, great is your faith: intercede for us with the Lord Jesus Christ so that we may be delivered from the epidemic plague and sickness. Amen. |

The text is a variation of a widely known antiphon that went back to the Old Roman repertory,¹ but was used in the Gregorian repertory as a vespers antiphon for St. Denis (CAO 3999) as well for a number of other martyrs. Du Fay’s motet does not make any reference to the plainsong, but the nature of the text supports the hypothesis made by Hamm and Scott that the motet was intended to be interpolated into the Vespers of St. Sebastian.² This use for a motet was traditional at Cambrai, and Du Fay would have known of it from his days as a choirboy and later as a chaplain of St. Géry.³

The versions of the motet in Q 15 and ModB present a number of differences concerning text underlay and above all the use of signed fa or mi notes. Karol Berger has published an insightful and detailed analysis of the piece and contends persuasively that the version in ModB may be a revision by Du Fay connected with the symbolism of St. Sebastian.⁴ Although Berger argues that what he calls “the radically colorful reading” of the motet is “unlikely” (or rather, was unlikely in the mid fifteenth century), it was not impossible then and it remains a very attractive alternative for performers, all the more so in that it does not materially alter the symbolism involved in the version in ModB. For that reason I am presenting three separate editions of the work, the version in Q 15, that in ModB, and a collated version of both versions. In this last version the source of each signed note is indicated in the score. The text of the cantus follows the source in the first two editions. The third follows generally ModB (with some adjustments).

This is one of the very rare instances of a work by Du Fay with an initial ϕ sign, but the metric organization of the piece into pairs of breves is typical of those sections of his music that were signed with ϕ. The beat should fall on the perfect breve, which should move between MM 40 and 60.

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² Charles Hamm and Ann Besser Scott, “A Study and Inventory of the Manuscript Modena, Biblioteca Estense, a. x. 1. 11 (ModB),” Musica Disciplina 24 (1972), 102 and 114-5.