

# Guillaume Du Fay

Opera Omnia 02/01

## Vasilissa, ergo gaude

Edited by Alejandro Enrique Planchart



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## Opera Omnia

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02/01 Vasilissa, ergo gaude - Concupivit rex

Guillaume Du Fay

♩ = ♩

Cantus 1  
Va - - si - lis - sa, er - - go gau - de,

Resolutio  
Va - - si - lis - sa,

Cantus 2

Contratenor

Tenor

7

Qui - a es di - - gna om - - ni  
er - - go gau - de, Qui - a es di - -

16

de,  
gna om - - ni lau - de,

25

Cle - o - phe, cla - ra ge - stis A tu - is de Ma - la - te - stis, \_\_\_\_\_  
Cle - o - phe, cla - ra ge - stis A tu - is de Ma - la - te - stis, \_\_\_\_\_  
Concupivit rex decorem tuum  
I

34

\_\_\_\_\_ In I - ta - li - a prin - ci - pi -  
\_\_\_\_\_ In I - ta - li - a prin - ci - pi - bus Ma -

40

bus Ma - gnis et no - bi - li - bus! Ex tu - o vi - vo cla - ri -  
- gnis et no - bi - li - bus! Ex tu -

46

or, Qui - a cun - ctis est no - bi - li - or: \_\_\_\_\_  
o vi - vo cla - ri - or, Qui - a cun - ctis

52

Ro - mae - o - rum  
est no - - bi - li - or: Ro - mae - o - rum

58

est de - spo - tus, Quem co - - lit mun - dus to - tus;  
est de - spo - tus, Quem co - lit mun - dus to - tus;

64

In por - phy - ro est ge - ni - tus, A de - o mis - sus cae - li - tus.  
In por - phy - ro est ge - ni - tus, A de - o mis - sus cae - li - tus.  
Quoniam ipse est dominus tuus  
II

73

Iu - ve - ni - li ae - ta - te Pol -  
Iu - ve - ni - li ae - ta - te Pol - les et

79

les et for - mo - si - ta - - te Mul - tum in - - ge - ni -  
for - - mo - si - ta - te Mul - tum

85

o fe - cun - da Et u - tra - que lin - gua fa - - cun - da  
in - ge - ni - o fe - cun - da Et u - - tra - - que

91

Ac cla - ri - or es  
lin - - gua fa - cun - - da Ac cla - ri - or

97

vir - tu - ti - bus Prae a - li - is his om - ni - bus.  
es vir - tu - ti - bus Prae a - li - is his om - ni - bus.

## 02/01 Vasilissa, ergo gaude – Concupivit rex

### Sources

Q15 (I), fols. A 276v-277r, R 247v-248r, M 273, “G. du fay.” Full black notation. Text in cantus 1 and 2, no text in the contratenor, full text in the tenor but set down as incipits rather than underlaid.

Ox 213 (9), fols. 132v-133r, “Guillermus dufay composuit.” Text in cantus 1 and 2, incipit in the contratenor: “Cleophe etc.,” Full text in the tenor but set down as incipits.

Tr 87<sub>1</sub>, fols. 57v-58r, “dufay.” Text in cantus 1 and 2, no text in the contratenor, incipit in the tenor.

### Clefs and Mensurations

		1
Cantus 1	c2	-
Cantus 2	c2	-
Contratenor	c4	-
Tenor	c4	-

### Text

Cantus 1 and 2	
Vasilissa, ergo gaude, Quia es digna omnis laude, Cleophe, clara gestis A tuis de Malatestis, In Italia principibus Magnis et nobilibus,  Ex tuo viro clarior, Quia cunctis est nobilior: Romaeorum est despotus, Quem colit mundus totus; In porphyro est genitus, A deo missus caelitus.  Iuvenili aetate Polles et formositate <Ingenio> multum fecunda Et utraque lingua facunda Ac carior es virtutibus Prae aliis hominibus.	Empress, therefore rejoice, For you are worthy of all praise, Cleofe, glorious from the deeds, Of your Malatesta kin, Leading men of Italy, Great and noble.  More glorious from your husband, For he is nobler than all; He is the despot of the Rhōmaioi, He whom the whole world reveres; He was born in the purple, Sent by God from heaven.  In youthful bloom You abound and in beauty, Very fertile <in your wits> And eloquent in both tongues, And you are more glorious for your virtues Above all human beings.
Tenor	
Concupivit rex decorem tuum Quoniam ipse est dominus tuus.	The King has conceived desire for your beauty; For he is your Lord.

The tenor is the entire respond of the gradual *Concupivit rex* (LU 1230, GT 408), used today in the common of the BVM and before Vatican II in the common of virgins. It is a post Gregorian gradual, which apparently originated in the seventh century for the feast of St. Sabina (29 August) as a loose contrafact of the gradual *Ecce quam bonum* for Sts. John and Paul.<sup>1</sup> In Cambrai and northern France it was used for the Assumption

<sup>1</sup> René-Jean Hesbert, *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex* (Brussels: Vromant & Co., 1935. R: Rome: Herder, 1967), civ-cv.

or the Nativity of the Virgin,<sup>2</sup> but in Italy (where its use was not common) it was used for St. Sabina (29 August) or sometimes St. Euphemia (6 September).<sup>3</sup> The tenor is divided into two taleae, the isorhythmic section is preceded by a canonic introit sung by a divided cantus 1 and followed by a cadence of two notes. After the introit all voices are isorhythmic. Structure: I + c/2t + P.

The motet celebrates the upcoming marriage of Cleofe di Malatesta, daughter of Malatesta di Pandolfo, lord of Pesaro (and sister of Archbishop Pandolfo di Malatesta, for whom Du Fay wrote *Apostolo glorioso* and *O sancte Sebastiane*, as well as sister of Carlo di Malatesta, for whom Du Fay wrote *Resvelliés vous*) to Theodore II Palaiologos, Despot of Morea and son of the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaiologos. They had been betrothed since 1419, but Cleofe, together with Sofia de Montefeltro, who was to marry the eldest son John, set sail from Rimini for Constantinople on 30 August 1420. The actual details of the journey are not entirely clear, but on 16 July 1420 the Venetian senate authorized the Byzantine ambassador to accompany Cleofe in a Venetian galley from Fano (about 12 Km south of Pesaro), to Chioggia (about 28 Km by sea from Venice), and on 30 August it gave Orsato Giustiniano, commander of the galleys, the necessary instructions to start the journey to Byzantium, including allowing *two* ladies on board, Cleofe and Sofia de Montefeltro.<sup>4</sup> If there were ceremonies in Pesaro or Fano before Cleofe set sail for Chioggia they took place in July of 1420, and it is most likely that this was the occasion for Hughes de Lantins, who was in the service of Cleofe's father in Pesaro, to write the ballata *Tra quante regione*.<sup>5</sup> Rimini would have been the most logical scale for the galley between Fano and Chioggia, and surely Carlo di Galeotto Malatesta, lord of Rimini received and feted his cousin, and it is for these perhaps for these festivities that Du Fay most likely wrote *Vasilissa*.<sup>6</sup> The text of *Vasilissa*, with its line implying that Cleofe was already fluent in Greek and Latin,<sup>7</sup> has given pause to some scholars as to the date of the work,<sup>8</sup> but the line may be mere poetic

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<sup>2</sup> Thus in Cambrai, Mediathèque Municipale, Missals, MSS 146, fol. 153r; 151, fol. 175r; 232, fol. 42v; and Graduals, MSS 60, fol. 84r; 12, fol. 51r, and *Missale parvum secundum usum venerabilis ecclesiae Cameracensis* (Paris: Simon Vostre, 1507), fol. 54v (all for the Nativity), in Arras it was used for Assumption, Cambrai, Mediathèque Municipale, MS 75, fol. 111r, and in Lille for St. Cecilia, Cambrai, Mediathèque Municipale, MS 61, fol. 123r.

<sup>3</sup> Thus, for example, in Ivrea, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS 60 (91), fol. 112r; Modena, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS O.I.7, fol. 171r; Padua, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS A 47, fol. 208v; Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, MS 123, fol. 135v; Rome, Biblioteca Valliceliana, MS C 52, fol. 120r (all for St. Sabina), and Piacenza, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS 65, fol. 220v (for St. Euphemia).

<sup>4</sup> Zakythinos, *Le Despotat*, 188-89.

<sup>5</sup> Ox 213, 36v, edited in Charles Van den Borren, *Pièces polyphoniques profanes de provenance liègeoise (XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Brussels: Éditions de la librairie encyclopédique, 1950), no. 32. Questions that have been raised about the date of this poem are based, by and large, on a misunderstanding of the “Elena” mentioned in it. As Holford-Strevens notes, she is neither Cleofe's daughter nor her husband's mother, but rather Helen of Troy, mentioned to note that Cleofe was even more beautiful. See Leofranc Holford-Strevens, “Du Fay the Poet? Problems in the Texts of his Motets.” *Early Music History* 16 (1997), 106, note 19.

<sup>6</sup> This is no longer absolutely certain. The assumption of most historians had been that Du Fay was in the service of Carlo di Galeotto, but the most recent evidence is that he was actually in the service of Cleofe's brother, Pandolfo di Malatesta, see Margaret Bent, “Petrarch, Padua, Malatesta, Du Fay, and *Vergene bella*,” *Bon jour, bon mois, bon an et bonne estraine*, ed. Fabrice Fitch and Jacobijn Kiel (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> *Et utraque lingua facunda* [And eloquent in both tongues], a standard idiom for “Latin and Greek,” see Holford-Strevens, “Du Fay the Poet?”, 106.

<sup>8</sup> The date of August 1420 for the work was established by Bessler in “Neue Dokumente zum Leben und Schaffen Dufays,” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 9 (1952), 161, with Fallows, *Dufay*, rev. ed. (London: Dent 1987), 21 in agreement. Lütken, *Guillaume Dufay und die isorhythmische Motette Gattungstradition und Werkcharacter an der Schwelle der Neuzeit*, Schriften zur Musikwissenschaft aus Muenster 4 (Karl Dieter Wagner: Hamburg and Eisenach, 1993), 270, agrees with the general date, and posits a proxy wedding at Pesaro as the occasion, which could be possible but for which we have no secure documentation. Cleofe's Italian years spent mostly in Rimini, which is where she embarked for Constantinople. Nino Pirrotta, “On text Forms from Ciconia to Dufay,” *Aspects of Medieval and Renaissance Music: A Birthday Offering to Gustave Reese*, ed. Jan La Rue (New York: Norton, 1966. Reprinted New York: Pendragon, 1978), 677-78, suggests a later date.



exaggeration of Cleofe's linguistic abilities. Cleofe probably began studying Greek from the time her marriage contract was signed as Bessler suggests,<sup>9</sup> and that alone would have sufficed to a court's poetaster to pronounce her eloquent; such hyperbole has always been a commonplace of certain kinds of court poetry.<sup>10</sup> The wedding took place, most likely in Constantinople, on 19 January 1421.<sup>11</sup>

Du Fay was at Cambrai on Ash Wednesday<sup>12</sup> and it is more than likely that he remained at Cambrai until Easter, so that after he was contacted by Pandolfo di Malatesta who was to become his patron for the next four years he probably reached Italy in late spring or summer of 1420. The opening of the cantus firmus provides proof that he wrote the motet after arriving in Rimini. *Concupivit rex* opens with one of the most common intonations for chants in mode 1:



This is the form the opening has in the modern chant books and medieval manuscripts copied west of the Rhine and in Western Italy. But east of the Rhine and in sources east of Rome and from the Adriatic coast, the opening reads:



And that is the melodic pattern that Du Fay uses in his motet.

The piece, as Fallows notes, follows exactly in its isorhythmic section the plan of Ciconia's *Ut per te omnes*,<sup>13</sup> but this is simply a factor of Du Fay setting the cantus firmus as a single color in two taleas, probably the simplest and most straightforward construction for an isorhythmic tenor. The sound of the work, however, particularly in terms of its rhythmic drive, invites comparison with another of Ciconia's work, the motet *O felix templum iubila*.<sup>14</sup> If the surface of *Vasilissa* is inescapably Italian, however, its contrapuntal structure, particularly with its firmly built four voice counterpoint, belongs firmly in a tradition rooted in the French motets of the late 14<sup>th</sup> and the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, a tradition that as Michael Allsen takes pains to point out, includes the large repertory of motets from the Cyprus Codex,<sup>15</sup> where the pervasive anonymity of all of the music in the manuscript hides in all probability the work of two northern French musicians, Gillet Velut and Jehan Hanelle, whose early careers intersected with that of Du Fay at the start of Du Fay's musical life.<sup>16</sup> Allsen also makes a case for connections between this motet and the much earlier *Rex Karole* of Royllart.<sup>17</sup> The planning of the motet, as Margaret Vadrell Sandresky shows, makes considerable use of Fibonacci numbers, the golden section (which for the entire motet falls at the start of the second talea) and the number thirteen, which she argues, on the basis of a long Byzantine tradition, is symbolic of the Byzantine emperor himself.<sup>18</sup> Jaap van Benthem, in his review of Fallows's *Dufay*, notes that the tenor of the motet adds to 100 notes, and the other three voices contain 700 notes. In certain medieval traditions the number 100 was symbolic of charity, the number 700 (or 7) had also religious connotations, and the total number,

<sup>9</sup> Bessler, "Neue Dokumente," 161.

<sup>10</sup> For an assessment of the poetic quality of *Vasilissa* see Holford-Strevens, "Du Fay the Poet?" 105-106.

<sup>11</sup> Fallows, *Dufay*, 250.

<sup>12</sup> Lille, Archives Départementales du Nord, 7G 2926, fol. 7r. Ash Wednesday fell on 29 February in 1420.

<sup>13</sup> Fallows, *Dufay*, 21. Ciconia's motet is edited in Margaret Bent and Anne Hallmark, *The Works of Johannes Ciconia*, Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century 24 (Monaco: Éditions de L'Oiseau-Lyre, 1985), 103-107.

<sup>14</sup> Bent and Hallmark, *Johannes Ciconia*, 68-72.

<sup>15</sup> Turin, BN, MS J.II.9, see Michael Allsen, "Style and Intertextuality in the Isorhythmic Motet, 1400-1440," Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1992), 39-76, summary in 72-73.

<sup>16</sup> Fallows, *Dufay*, 15, Alejandro Enrique Planchart, "The Early Career of Guillaume Du Fay," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 46 (1993), 357.

<sup>17</sup> Allsen, "Intertextuality," 116-23.

<sup>18</sup> Margaret Vadrell Sandresky, "The Golden Section in Three Byzantine Motets of Dufay," *The Journal of Music Theory* 25 (1981), 291-306.

800, was symbolic of permanence and eternity.<sup>19</sup> All these numerological calculations and their number symbolism probably feel much too contrived to modern readers, but we should remember that such a way of thinking was part of the education of medieval and renaissance men and women from their earliest schooling on.

The text of the motet is a rather incompetent poem in three stanzas of six syllables (a structure ignored by Du Fay, who was apparently more interested in setting his bipartite structure based both on the text structure of the Gregorian respond and on number symbolism. It has missing words and corruptions, and the edition and translation are those of Leofranc Holford-Strevens, who offers a perceptive critical study of the text and its modern editions.<sup>20</sup> The only changes I have made are the use of modern liturgical Latin spellings and modern English. Holford-Strevens's prose translation was so careful and cleverly done, that it needed only to be typeset as shown above to make it correspond, line by line, with the Latin.

The motet is organized throughout in perfect *modus*, made explicit by the rests, and despite the considerable use of minims (which are used in a ornamental Italianate manner) calls for a fast tempo throughout. The *mensura* remains on the perfect breve, which should move at a minimum ca. MM 40, but can be taken as fast as MM 48, a tempo that bring out the dance-like rhythms and the obvious virtuosity of the hocket passages. Nominally the piece calls for five parts on account of the divided cantus 1 of the introit, but since cantus 1 and 2 share the same range the *resolutio* was probably sung by the same singer who sang cantus 2.

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<sup>19</sup> Jaap van Benthem, "David Fallows, *Dufay*," *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 33 (1983), 111.

<sup>20</sup> Holford-Strevens, "Du Fay the Poet? 102-6.