

Guillaume Du Fay

Opera Omnia 02/06

Balsamus et munda cera

Edited by Alejandro Enrique Planchart



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02/06 Balsamus et munda cera - Isti sunt agni novelli

Guillaume Du Fay

Cantus 1

[C] $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$

Bal - sa mus et mun - da ce - ra cum chri - sma - tis un - da

Cantus 2

[C]

Bal - sa mus et mun - da ce - ra cum chri - sma - tis un - da

Contratenor

[C]

Tenor

[Forward]

Isti sunt agni novelli
 Tenor dicitur de modo perfecto et tempore imperfecto, simili modo retrogradendo
 I, I

7

Con - fi - ci - unt a - - gnum, quem do ti - bi mu - ne - ri ma - gnum

Con - fi - ci - unt a - - gnum, quem do ti - bi mu - ne - ri ma - gnum

13

Fon - te vel - ut na - - tum per my - sti -

Fon - te vel - ut na - tum per

19

ca san - cti - fi - ca - - tum:

my - sti - ca san - cti - fi - ca - - tum:

25

Ful - gu - ra de - sur -

Ful - gu - ra de -

31

sum de - pel - - lit et om - - ne ma - - li - -

sur - sum de - pel - - lit et om - - ne ma - - li - -

37

gnum, _____

gnum, _____

40

Prae - - gnans ser - va - - tur, si - ne ve par - tus li - be - ra - tur; _____

Prae - - gnans ser - va - - tur, si - ne ve par - tus li - be - ra - tur;

[Retrograde]

I, 2

46

Por - ta - tus mun - - - dae ser - vat a flu - cti - bus un - - - dae,

Por - ta - tus mun - - - dae ser - - - vat a flu - cti - bus un - - - dae,

52

Pec - ca - tum fran - - - git ut Chri - sti

Pec - ca - tum fran - - - git ut

58

san - - - guis et an - - - guit

Chri - sti san - - - guis et an - - - guit

64

Do - na re - fert di -

Do - na re - fert di -

70

gnis, vir - tu - - tem de - - stru - xit i - - - - -

- - gnis, vir - tu - - tem de - - stru - - - xit i - - - - -

76

gnis, _____

gnis, _____

79

— Mor - te re - pen - ti - na ser - vat Sa - tha - nae - que ru - i - - - - na.

- te re - pen - ti - na ser - - - vat Sa - tha - nae - queru - i - - - - na. _____

[Forward]

Ist sunt agni novelli
Tenor dicitur per semi et odem modo retrograditur, accipiendo pro fine nigras
II, 1

85

Al - - le - - - - -

Al - - le - - - - -

91 Φ MS d d.

102

105 C

Si quis ho - no - ret e - um, re - ti - net ab ho - ste tri - um - phum.

Si quis ho - no - ret e - - um, re - ti - net ab ho - ste tri - um - phum. _____

[Retrograde]

II, 2

111 C

Al - - le

Al - - le

117

lu
lu

128

ia.
ia.

02/06 *Balsamus et munda cera* – *Isti sunt agni novelli*

Source

Q15 (III), fols. A 207v-209r, R 191v-193r, M 204-205: “du fay.” Black notation with void coloration and flagged semiminims. Text in cantus 1 and 2. Tenor canons (the tenor is copied once in each opening): I. Tenor dicitur de modo perfecto et tempore imperfecto, simili modo retrogradendo. II. Tenor dicitur per semi et eodem modo retrograditur accipiendo pro fine nigras.

Clefs and mensurations

		1	79	85	92	105	111	118
Cantus 1	c1	[C]	-	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Cantus 2	c1	[C]	-	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Contratenor	c3	[C]	⊙	-	-	-	-	-
Tenor	c3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Text

Cantus 1 and 2	
Balsamus et munda cera cum chrismatis unda Conficiunt agnum, quem do tibi muneri magnum Fonte velut natum, per mystica sanctificatum: Fulgura de sursum depellit et omne malignum. Praegnans servatur, sine vae partus liberatur; Portatus mundaeservat a fluctibus undae, Peccatum frangit ut Christi sanguis et angit, Dona refert dignis, virtutem destruit ignis, Morte repentina servat Sathanaeque ruina. Alleluia. Si quis honoret eum, retinet ab hoste triumphum. Alleluia.	Balsam and wax with the pure water of consecrated oil (chrism) Make the lamb that I give you in his greatness as a gift, As if born of the fountain, sanctified by mysteries; It deflects lightning from above and everything evil. The pregnant woman is kept safe, she is delivered without the woe of birth; He who was carried chastely keeps us safe from the floods of water, Even as Christ’s blood breaks and torments sin: He returns gifts to the worthy, destroys the power of fire, And saves us from sudden death and Satan’s ruin. Alleluia. If any honor him, he will triumph over his enemy. Alleluia.
Tenor	
Isti sunt agni novelli.	These are new lambs.

The cantus firmus is the first 17 notes of the responsory *Isti sunt agni novelli*, sung in Rome as the second responsory for matins of the Saturday *in albis*, but elsewhere in Italy also on Wednesday of Easter week [CAO 7012].¹ Structure: (c/t + retrograde c/t) > (c/t + retrograde c/t) + F [2:1].

This is not strictly speaking an isorhythmic motet or even a mensural transformation motet in terms of the tenor, since the color and the talea are coterminous, but cantus 1 and 2 are isorhythmic within each section. The first tenor canon indicates that the tenor is in perfect *modus* and imperfect *tempus*. The canon calls for the tenor to be sung in the same manner forwards and backwards. The second tenor canon directs the singer to repeat the tenor as in the first part but twice as fast and then take up the final notes. The final instruction of the second canon refers to the final notes as “black” whereas they are void in the manuscript, which has led Margaret Bent to posit that the instruction was most likely taken from a copy in void notation with black coloration.² The tenor uses no notes shorter than a breve, and therefore needs no mensuration sign; the indication of imperfect *tempus* in the first canon affects the relationship between the cantus firmus and the upper voices, but has no internal effect in the cantus firmus itself. On the strength of that canon, however, I have barred the tenor by breves in the edition.

¹ Cf. *Officium hebdomanae sanctae et octavas paschae* (Tournai: Desclée, 1962), 823; *Antiphonaire monastique (XIIe siècle). Codex 601 de la Bibliothèque Capitulaire de Lucques*, Paléographie Musicale 9 (Tournai: Desclée, 1906. Reprint, Bern: Herbert Lang, 1974), 212.

² Margaret Bent, *Bologna Q15: The Making and Remaking of a Musical Manuscript*, 2 vols. (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2008), I, 208.

The tenor is sung forwards and backwards in each section, but only the forward melody is notated, and the notation such that it produces what Olivier Messiaen calls a “non retrogradable rhythm,”³ that is, a perfect rhythmic palindrome, so that the retrograde affects only the succession of pitches.

The motet was written in 1431 for the distribution of the Agnus dei, wax figurines representing the Lamb of God, by Pope Eugenius IV on the Saturday in Albis during the first year of his pontificate. Saturday in Albis in 1431 fell on the 7th of April.⁴ The text of the motet is a prayer in Leonine hexameters that has been attributed to Pope Urban V (1362-70) and was widely known by the 15th century.⁵ Craig Wright notes that the use of the retrograde in the cantus firmus was associated by Du Fay with the idea of the resurrection, and connects it with one of the prayers that the pope said as part of the preparation for the ceremony.⁶

It is quite possible that Du Fay’s original version was copied entirely in a single opening, with the tenor copied only once and a canon that essentially conflated Canons I and II above. There is evidence that this was the format used for another of Du Fay’s motets for Eugenius IV, *Ecclesiae militantis*.⁷

The melody Du Fay used has two small variants from the melody as found not only in the modern chant books but in most medieval antiphoners, even those from Italy. It must reflect the version available to him in Roman books at the time.

Modern chant books
Lucca Antiphoner, p. 212

I - - sti sunt a - - gni no - - vel - - - - - li

Du Fay’s model

I - - sti sunt a - gni no - - vel - - - - - li

The contratenor serves as a foil to the tenor and in some sense as the rhythmic glue that ties the relationship between cantus 1 and 2 to the tenor. It begins unsigned, but clearly in \mathbb{C} , with breve equivalence with the tenor. At the start of the second tenor color the contratenor is copied again but renotated in \odot with the values halved so that the perfect breves of the contratenor equal the perfect longs (sung twice as fast) of the tenor. Despite the change of mensuration and the renotation in the second color, the tempo of the note values of the contratenor remains constant throughout the motet, and this mediates the relationship between cantus 1 and 2 and the tenor.

Cantus 1 and 2 begin in an unsigned \mathbb{C} moving exactly like the contratenor. At the start of the second color they remain in \mathbb{C} for six breves, thus ensuring the minim equivalence between \mathbb{C} and the \odot of the contratenor. On the seventh breve they shift to \mathbb{D} , where an imperfect long in cantus 1 and 2 equals the perfect breve of the contratenor, thus yielding a 4:3 shift at the semibreve level. Seven longs later these voices shift to \mathbb{D} moving exactly twice as fast as the contratenor, so that the perfect breve in \mathbb{D} equals the perfect semibreve in \odot . This entire process is then repeated once more in the second upper voice talea of the second color. Both times the passage in \mathbb{D} begins on the third breve of a *modus* unit, and is organized in imperfect *modus*, that is in pairs of breves, producing an extended syncopation that is recovered by the last breve of the section (cf. measures 91-104 and 117-130).

³ Olivier Messiaen, *Traité du rythme, de couleur, et d’ornithologie* (1949-1992), 7 vols. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1994-99), II, 7.

⁴ Craig Wright, “Dufay’s Motet *Balsamus et munda cera* and the Papal Ceremony of the Agnus Dei,” *Music and Medieval Manuscripts, Paleography and Performance: Essays Dedicated to Andrew Hughes*, ed. John Haines and Randall Rosenfeld (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 333-34.

⁵ Cf. Guillaume de Van, *Guglielmi Dufay Opera Omnia*, 4 vols., *Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae* 1 (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1947-49), II, xi-xii; Hans Walther, *Initia carminum ac versus Medii Aevi posterioris latinorum*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 104.

⁶ Wright, “Dufay’s Motet,” 330.

⁷ Cf. Guillaume Du Fay, *Opera Omnia*, 02/03, ed. Alejandro Enrique Planchart (Santa Barbara: Marisol Press, 2011), 13 and 15.

In order to make Du Fay's notation clear to the performer, the transcription maintains a rigid 1:2 reduction in all the voices. In terms of performance the tempo is set by the perfect semibreve at the beginning and it remains constant throughout. This pulse is on the perfect semibreve in the entire first section and the start of the second, in cantus 1 and 2 it becomes the pulse of the imperfect breve in \ominus and the perfect breve in \oplus (as well as the perfect breve for the entire second statement of the tenor). This pulse should move at about MM 72 or even 80 (if the singers can articulate well the final coloraturas).

The motet has a number of traits that hark back to the late fourteenth century, it is the only of his tenor motets where all voices begin together and where the big mensural shifts happen with the entire ensemble singing, and the tenor follows an old fashioned practice of being divided by rests that add up to a third of its length.⁸ Its structure, with a tenor statement in forward and retrograde, and a repetition in diminution, is similar to that of Richard de Loqueville's motet *O flos in divo – Sacris pignoribus*.⁹ Further, as in *Vasilissa, ergo gaude*, cantus 1 and 2 have the same text. Beginning with his next motet, *Ecclesiae militantis*, the relationship between the tempi of the sections became such that beginning with all the voices singing (with its implication that every section began with all the voices singing) became extremely problematic, and Du Fay eventually made it a practice of including the opening rests of the tenors in the isorhythmic pattern of the music.

For all its old fashioned structure, the melodic writing for cantus 1 and 2 in *Balsamus et munda cera* is the most song-like in any of Du Fay's tenor motets,¹⁰ and in the sections in \ominus and \oplus it sounds as though he had been listening to a good deal of Italian late *trecento* music. In later motets there are a good number of divided notes, which indicate that they were not intended to be sung one on a part, but *Balsamus et munda cera* probably should be performed by solo voices.

Errors in the manuscript

Cantus 2, 97, last note e instead of d. I have suggested another emendation in measure 96 of cantus 1, adding an e and removing the dot from the semibreve c. This emendation breaks the strict isorhythmic correspondence between measure 96 and measure 115, but one may note that such small breaks of correspondence are found in Du Fay's other motets, e.g. *Fulgens iubar ecclesiae*, cf. measures 203 and 251.

⁸ This last trait is noted by David Fallows, *Dufay*, rev. ed. (London: Dent, 1987), 114-15.

⁹ Gilbert Reaney, ed., *Early Fifteenth-Century Music*, 7 vols., *Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae* 11 (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1955-1983), II, no. 11.

¹⁰ This is emphasized by David Fallows, *Dufay*, rev. ed. (London: Dent, 1987), 114-15.