

## INTRODUCTION TO INSTALMENT 4

This instalment presents some of the most interesting and important Masses in Trent 89. Firstly, the *Missa Te Deum* and the *Missa De cuer* seem to bear witness to cross-fertilisation of fifteenth century national styles. My investigations describe the former as a work akin to the late isorhythmic motet, and this is a Mass whose divisi notes represent a strong challenge to those who believe in most polyphony of the period being for one voice per part. Rather jagged in style and with some unexpected harmonic turns, this Mass has an important place amongst earlier cyclic works and may be the work of a continental musician of *ca.* 1450 trying to adjust to the sounds and structures of contemporary and near-contemporary English pieces.

Rather the reverse may be true of the *Missa De cuer*, since recent research by James Cook shows that it may be the work of an English-trained musician. This is supported by the existence of an English-looking *Regina celi* setting in Trent 89 which sounds fairly similar to this Mass even though it is constructed quite differently.<sup>1</sup> The *Missa De cuer* is a 'hexachordal' Mass with a repeating and transposing Tenor, and this type of work has English antecedents from the earlier fifteenth century. It is also an extremely strange piece on account of the harmonies which occur due to successive transpositions of the cantus firmus. Both this and the *Missa Te Deum* also have a shared feature: there seems to be some preoccupation with the number 31 as I previously also found in the Trent 89 *Missa Beati Anthonii*. All three works may have had associations with the Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece and its mid-century total of 31 members.

The other early-looking work in this instalment (the Gloria-Credo pair on *Beata Dei genitrix* plus its rather out-of-place Sanctus) is also important since the first two movements have considerable length and also display some familiarity with the sounds of English sacred music. Some writers have suggested that the Gloria-Credo pair might be a work of Binchois, and in some respects the music looks Anglophile. I hope to demonstrate in the following pages that neither English origin nor composition by Binchois is likely.

Trent 89 also gives us Touront's *Missa Mon oeil* - surely one of the most splendid of mid-century Mass cycles, and which deserves careful study and some good modern performances. The edition here is an improved version of the one given in my 1989 dissertation. Also in this instalment is the *Missa Quand ce viendra* - which may be an early work of Busnois. Consisting of four movements and lacking an Agnus, the successive movements seem to increase their number of sections incrementally. If an Agnus Dei to this Mass ever existed, it would probably have had seven sections to complement the six in the Sanctus, five in the Credo, etcetera. The *Quand ce viendra* Mass seems to have all sorts of echoes of Busnois's sacred music style as we now understand it, and it is probably no accident that one of the works that seems closest to it is Busnois's *In hydraulis*. Although this Mass seems uneven in quality, its extended cantus firmus sections in the Gloria and Credo make impressive use of busy outer voices around the augmented Tenor.

The last two Masses (by Barbingant and 'Jo. Bassere') seem to share an unusual feature. Both look like freely-composed works, but in each Mass part of their opening material may be derivative. The Barbingant Mass seems to allude to Caron's *S'il est ainsi* in many passages, and the first few notes of its Tenor opening - quite irrationally - may be derived from a retrograde inversion of the end of the song's Contra. Likewise, the motto figure that begin the Kyrie only has a resemblance to Caron's Superius opening *at its phrase-ending*, not at its beginning (the opposite of normal practice with a chanson-derived Superius motto). Likewise the Superius opening of the 'Jo. Bassere' Mass may derive from a piece of countermelody to the Superius opening of Basiron's *Nul ne l'a tele*. Whether these are convincing musical finds or not, it cannot be denied that both Masses are fairly close to the stylistic world of the mid-century chanson.

Both of these Masses previously appeared in my Ph. D. dissertation, and since then the editions have also been revised. I am particularly fond of the Barbingant cycle, and it is a more rambling work than his only

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<sup>1</sup> Trent 89 ff. 127v-129r.

other known cycle (the *Missa Terriblement*).<sup>2</sup> I live in hope that a small group of singers might take my score of this Mass and impress us with a performance as fastidious as the music. Over the many years that I have known the works presented here, my views on them have changed somewhat. Nowadays I feel as follows: not only do we need to hear the music presented here performed properly, but we also need to experience associate works such as Barbingant's few but beautifully crafted triple-time chansons and the agile Basiron songs that are stylistically similar to the 'Bassere' Mass. During the years when I first transcribed and investigated these Masses, my head was full of quite different things than it is now. I spent at least three or four years immersed in the world of the mid-century Loire Valley chansonniers which are now published online, and I also studied the secular works of Busnois inasmuch as they used to be available. It is easy for people nowadays to download a transcription at the click of a button. As things used to be, Louis Gottlieb had trouble transcribing the *Missa Te Deum* because of its poor condition, and in the old days copies of rare pieces and microfilms could only be obtained by barter and horse-trading. Sometimes those microfilms (such as old photographs of parts of Trent 88) were of poor quality anyway and not of much use.

Quite how (and why) the Masses in this instalment reached Trento in the middle of the fifteenth century is something that we will never know. Perhaps 'difficult' pieces like the *Te Deum* and *De cuer* Masses (which have performance problems involving Tenor rests and accidentals in their surviving state) were simply collected and then never used.

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<sup>2</sup> Verona 759 ff. 9v-15r and SP B80 ff. 80v-90r.