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A Report on the Sabbatical “Devotion and Courtliness: The Manuscript W_2 in the Thirteenth Century and Beyond”

Mary E. Wolinski

Monograph

My work in the academic year 2013-14 has resulted in a manuscript of approximately 75,000 words. The monograph, entitled *The Making of W_2 : Musical Compilation and Intention in the Shadow of Notre Dame*, is a study of the creation of the thirteenth-century Parisian manuscript 1099, known as W_2 and preserved in the Herzog-August-Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Germany. It is one of three extent medieval manuscripts that preserve a repertory of music for two to four voices made for Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris and known as the *Great Book of Organum* (*Magnus liber organi*). The other two manuscripts have been studied extensively. W_1 , manuscript 628 in the Herzog-August-Bibliothek, was made in Scotland for St. Andrew’s Monastery and is an important testifier to the spread of Parisian polyphony to other lands. The Florence manuscript, preserved in the Biblioteca-Mediceo-Laurenziana, is clearly Parisian and lavishly illuminated for a patron of importance. Various arguments have been made regarding its destination ranging from Notre-Dame Cathedral itself, the court of King Louis IX of France, to an eminent member of the University of Paris. W_2 , however, has spawned much less literature and seems even more difficult to place than the others. For one thing, it is not an institutional service book, for it contains both Latin music for worship, as well as French love songs suitable for entertaining. It was created in Paris around the middle of the thirteenth century for use in a household of some sort, either of a noble, a patrician, or a high-ranking cleric connected with a church or the University in Paris. While manuscripts of sophisticated polyphony containing

music known to be for use in a court begin to appear only in the fourteenth century, *W*₂ seems to be an earlier model for that type of book.

Although many questions remain open, I have been able to view *W*₂ as a window on thirteenth-century devotion and courtly pastimes. My monograph has an introduction and six chapters. The introduction considers the difficulties faced in studying the manuscript and how the liturgical and social context of its music can provide insight into its use. There is also a review of the state of research on the book and related issues, ranging from the physical structure of the manuscript, to its music and decoration.

The following six chapters deal with the creation, repertory, and aftermath of *W*₂. Chapter 1, “The Repertory and Its Presentation,” provides an introduction to the three main types of music (genres) contained in the collection: organa for the Mass and Offices, conductus settings of Latin poetry used flexibly for devotional purposes, and motets, which can be spiritual, when setting Latin sacred poetry, or worldly, when setting French poems of courtly love or scenes of daily life. A description of the repertory is followed by an explanation of how they are organized within the manuscript. Next comes the process by which the manuscript was created, with some comparison with similar medieval manuscripts for the sake of understanding the world from which this book emerged. Aspects of producing the manuscript that are covered in this chapter consist of its size and shape, the arrangement of gatherings and fascicles, parchment, ruling, scribal hands, and artwork. In the course of this study, some important new discoveries were made. While generally it has been understood that each genre was copied by a distinct text and music scribe—one each for the four-voice organa, the three and two voice organa, and the conducti with melismas—I am able to prove that the scribe who copied both the music and text of the conducti of gathering 6, also copied the music of all the motets after other scribes entered

the texts. It is an interesting view into the collaboration between several copyists, which, until now, had escaped notice. The reason for the collaboration probably was to save time. As the text scribes were copying the words of the motets, the music scribe followed, entering the music. Thus, they halved the time it would have taken to copy 260 folios.

The next three chapters deal with matters concerning the repertory of W_2 . Chapter 2, “Organum: The Grand Tradition” presents an analysis of problems concerning the copying of the organa and the liturgical services for which they would have been sung. Organata are relatively large-scale multi-voice compositions based on sacred chant. They were sung as musical elaborations of chant at the Mass and Divine Offices. W_2 's collection was still a work in progress for blank folios were left for the entry of compositions that were never copied. In addition W_2 's organata represent a rather small selection of pieces compared to the body of works at large. This suggests that W_2 's pieces were carefully chosen according to what the editor of the manuscript considered necessary for his household. The organata chosen were all appropriate for use in Paris. One piece, however, *Alleluia, Sanctissime Iacobe*, was sung in Paris, not at the Cathedral, but at the church of St. Jacques de la Boucherie. This suggests that W_2 could have been made for that church, although it is possible that *Alleluia, Sanctissime* could have been sung in other locations frequented by members of the confraternity of St. James. In addition, some of the organata may have been used for the veneration of certain Franciscan saints, such as St. Francis himself (*Sint lumbi. Vigilate ergo*) and St. Elizabeth of Hungary (*Regnum mundi. Eructavit*). I put this possibility forward in view of the presence of two Latin motets in W_2 that praise St. Francis and his order.

Chapter 3, “Devotional Poetry as Polyphony,” considers the compositions that are religious in subject, but that do not have official liturgical functions within the services. Such

musical pieces are often called paraliturgical. They might have been sung at Mass and Offices, but they also could have been sung for the delectation of select laymen and clerics, as the theorists Johannes de Grocheio and Jacobus maintain. There are two types of devotional polyphony represented here: the conductus and the Latin motet. Conducti are strophic poems sung by multiple voices in harmony, although *W*₂ presents only the first strophe of its conducti. Here again the conducti form a select collection, with an emphasis on Christ's incarnation and sacrifice, devotion to Mary, and, interestingly, aspects of good (*Presul nostri*) and bad (*Deduc Syon uberrimas*) church governance. The Latin motets, on the other hand, are very numerous (105) and topically wide-ranging. Constructed by building a musical setting of a Latin poem above a section of sacred chant, the Latin motets are also organized in an unusual way. The motets for two voices are divided into three groups, each ordered alphabetically according to the Latin poem of the voice above the chant. Why were there three alphabetical groups, instead of just one, as in the Bamberg manuscript? It appears that the three collections are not random repertoires, but were compiled deliberately. The first alphabet consists of twenty pieces, with only one piece per letter of the alphabet. The second alphabet has many more pieces with texts appropriate for many more religious feasts than the first alphabet. The third alphabet duplicates the subject matter of the second alphabet for the most part. In addition, most of the motets in the third alphabet are unique and appear to be retextings of preexistent French motets. Thus, the third alphabet of motets seems to have been created for a purpose.

The fourth chapter, "The Courtly French Motet," considers motets that set a French courtly song simultaneously above a sacred chant melody in the lowest voice. For the most part, the French song concerns courtly love, the pastorelle, and scenes from daily life, although a few praise the Virgin Mary. Most likely these motets were intended for the refined entertainments

described by Johannes de Grocheio and Jacobus. There is a vast secondary literature on the meanings behind the French motet, with its odd juxtaposition of the courtly and the sacred. There is, nevertheless, something to be gained from the organization imposed on these motets. One of the most striking ways in which motets were structured was the simultaneous performance of two different songs above a sacred chant. The ninth fascicle of W_2 contains such pieces in French. This chapter, in part, considers the type of themes that were considered appropriate to be sung simultaneously. Some have a humorous tone, such as *En ce chant qe je chant / Roissolles ai roissolles / Do*, in which the top voice depicts dancing, while the middle voice sings of the fleshly delights of meat pies, all above the syllable *Do*, from the chant *Benedicamus domino*. *Do* aptly creates assonance with the *o* sounds of the middle voice “*Roissolles ai roissolles*” (“Meat pies, I have meat pies”). More profound is the three-voice motet *Tanquam suscipit vellus / Quant nest la flor / Tanquam*, whose two upper voice are both joyous and loving, with different objects of affection, one spiritual, the other earthly. The Latin *Tanquam suscipit vellus* contemplates the Virgin Mary, who untouched by man, conceived the very nature of man. *Quant nest la flor* sings of joy and love at springtime. The chant *Tanquam* celebrates Christ’s incarnation at Christmas. The French three-voice motets are followed by three alphabetically arranged groups of French two-voice motets, which parallels the three groups of Latin two-voice motets. As with the Latin motets, the first alphabet of French two-voice motets features one motet per letter of the alphabet, creating an elite, selective group. The second alphabet is much larger. The third French alphabet, unlike the Latin one, is rather short and is missing several letters of the alphabet.

Chapter 5, “The Uses of the Motets of W_2 : An Hypothesis,” moves towards a consideration of how and for what purposes the motets had been performed. My hypothesis is

that the organization of motets in W_2 was prepared to facilitate sequential performance of selected motets. With the Latin two-voice motets, for example, a motet of the first alphabet could have been followed by one from the second alphabet, and one from the third. The Latin motets may have been selected according to their devotional themes, for similar ones appropriate for a liturgical feastday can be found in motets in all three alphabets. The motets may have been sung at three points within a liturgical service, three different services, or three points within a refined entertainment within a given feast day. While the French motets were unlikely to have been performed at religious services, their three alphabets may have facilitated the choice of three pieces without duplication for an intimate sort of concert. Having before us the French three-voice motets as models for the sort of topics that medieval motet writers considered apt for simultaneous juxtaposition, it would take only some imagination to select French two-voice motets from the three alphabets to create a series to be performed consecutively instead.

The conclusion of the book, Chapter 6, “Aftermath: Matthias Flacius and the Publication of W_2 ,” focuses on the rationale motivating the sixteenth-century editions of its Latin texts. Flacius (1520-1575) was in 1548 a young professor of Hebrew at the Lutheran University of Wittenberg, when he published his first collection of Latin poetic texts from W_2 , titled *Carmina vetusta ante trecentos annos scripta* (*Old verses written over three hundred years ago*). He published them with additional poems twice more, as *Pia quaedam vetustissimaque poemata* (*Certain godly and very old poems*) in 1552, and *Varia doctorum piorumque virorum* (*Various poems of teachers and pious men*) in 1557). Flacius’s rationale for issuing the collections is developed in the prefaces and dedicatory letters. He believed that these medieval poems addressed earlier problems within the Roman Church that had parallels with religious and political problems of his own time. In addition to learning from historical parallels. Flacius

employed the techniques that made him a popular teacher. His intention was to reach the widest number of readers, not learned specialists in history or theology. Not only did Flacius aim to provide an understandable historical context for the reader, but he wanted to arouse enthusiasm for the true doctrine. For this he chose to publish poetic verse, rather than prose, on a variety of themes from which, according to the title of *Varia ... poemata*, “many historical and also most important things can be learned usefully and with enjoyment.” The rhythmic sensation of the verses and the shifts from vituperous admonitions, to joyous praise of Christ, sorrowful meditations on Christ’s passion, and resolutions to do good works provide a certain spiritual entertainment. In this chapter I show how Flacius enhanced his editions through some creative ordering of the poems, which deviates from that of W_2 , and through the explanations of his ideas about the poems in various prefaces in his books, which I have translated from the Latin for the first time. By comparing Flacius’s interpretation of the poems with their liturgical relevance in Paris of the thirteenth century, we can appreciate the different ways, sometimes with opposing meanings, in which literature can be appreciated.

Other projects

During the sabbatical year I also engaged in other scholarly projects and activities.

I read a paper, “Topics of Devotion in the Latin Motets of W_2 ,” at the conference “*Cantum pulcriorem invenire: Thirteenth-Century Music and Poetry*” on Sept. 10, 2013 at the University of Southampton, UK. Based on the research on my monograph, it will be published hopefully as part of the conference proceedings.

Now in the proofreading stage is my article, “Hocketing and the Imperfect Modes in Relation to Poetic Expression in the Thirteenth Century,” in the journal *Musica Disciplina*, vol. 58.

I worked on four other articles during the sabbatical. "Music for the Confraternity of St. James in Paris" is a contribution to the Festschrift *Chant, Liturgy, and the Influence of Rome: Essays in Honor of Joseph Dyer*. I collaborated with James Borders, of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, on the article "Medieval Music" for *Oxford Bibliographies*. I am also preparing another article, "The Notre-Dame School" for the same series. Finally, I am working on "How Rhythmically Innovative Is the Eighth Fascicle of the Montpellier Codex?" This was to have been a paper read at the conference "Montpellier 8" on Mar. 20-21, 2014 at St. Hugh's College, University of Oxford. Unfortunately, I had to cancel my lecture because I had to care for my aunt, who was ill with cancer. I stayed with her over seven months, from early December until July 23. I had been staying in New York, working at the research libraries and using the books and files that I had brought with me. I suddenly had to leave all that to be the sole caregiver to my aunt in Wellesley, MA. There was no internet in her house, but I found ways of connecting at the local library and in the hospital. I wrote and did analytical work whenever possible. While many of my projects are not yet finished, I have been able to think carefully about what I will do when I can return to my research materials. The conference leader Karen Desmond of the "Montpellier 8" conference has requested that I submit my article to the conference proceedings for publication, even though I did not have a chance to read it. That is in itself very encouraging.

During my time in Wellesley I reviewed an article, "Rhythmic Paradigms in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*: French versus Arabic Precedent," submitted to the journal *Plainsong and Medieval Music*. I also commented informally on an article, "Medieval Polyphony in the Cathedral of Sigüenza: a New Identification of a Musical Example quoted in the Anonymous Treatise of St Emmeram (1279)," which was given to me by its author.