III COMPOSERS AND REPERTORY: AN OVERVIEW

HONEY MECONI

The entrance of Petrus Alamire into the chapel of the Habsburg-Burgundian court, in the official capacity of scribe (*escripvain*) and keeper of the books (*garde des livres*), heralded a change in the manuscripts that transmitted the repertoire of the court.[1] Earlier manuscripts that claim some connection to the court – whether through repertoire that featured their composers or through a patron's relation to Habsburg-Burgundy – matched norms of the time in the substantial number of compositions they contained and in their mixture of genres. For example, the so-called Chigi Codex (I-Rvat Chigi 234), compiled for Philippe Bouton, a Burgundian courtier from the days of Philip the Good to Philip the Fair, contains twenty masses, a Credo, and a dozen motets. B-Br 9126, made for Philip the Fair and his wife Joanna of Castile, includes nine masses, three Magnificats, and ten motets, while A-Wn 1783, presumably a gift from Philip to Emanuel I of Portugal and his wife, Maria of Spain, consists of eighteen masses, a Kyrie, and a Credo.[2]

In contrast, the manuscripts that Alamire began to supervise, often richly elaborate, frequently concentrated on a single genre – most often masses – and included relatively few compositions. The influence was surely the pioneering series of mass prints the first commercial printer of music, Ottaviano Petrucci, had begun in Venice in 1502. Alamire's

1 For basic information on Alamire, his manuscripts, and those preceding his time at court, see Kellman (ed.), *The Treasury*. Many of the manuscripts can be consulted online at http://idemdatabase.org/. A list of no-longer-extant Alamire manuscripts that we know from archival documents is found in Meconi, "The Unknown Alamire", which also catalogues lost manuscripts likely to have been Alamire products.

2 Other early manuscripts include the chansonniers I-Fc 2439 and GB-Ob 831 (the latter fragmentary), along with D-Ju 22 and I-VEcap 756.

cache of new manuscript creations includes those such as D-Ju 2 (seven masses), D-Ju 3 (eight masses), I-Rvat 34 (five masses and a Credo), A-Wn 15495 (seven masses), A-Wn 15497 (six masses and two Kyries). Mech, with its seven masses, fits perfectly into Alamire's new practice of manuscripts with a smaller and more coherent repertoire. It contains music of just two composers: Matthaeus Pipelare and Pierre de la Rue.

As is the case for many Renaissance composers, the biography of Pipelare is filled with gaps.[3] Estimates for his birthdate vary widely: from 1440 to 1455. He probably spent time in Ghent early on, but his first confirmed place of employment is the Grote Kerk in Dordrecht, where he served as sexton and possibly *zangmeester* from around 1482 to around 1490.[4] He later occupied the post of *zangmeester* in the famed Confraternity of Our Lady at 's-Hertogenbosch from spring 1498 to around 1 May 1500, coming there from Antwerp. After 's-Hertogenbosch his whereabouts are unknown, as is the date of his death. Three manuscripts containing his music (B-Br 215-216, D-Ju 2, and D-Ju 20) provide a cross by his name, indicating his decease, and as the earlier two of these (B-Br 215-216 and D-Ju 2) were completed before March 1516, "c. 1515" is usually given as Pipelare's death date.

Only twenty-five works by the composer survive: ten masses, a Credo, six motets, a Magnificat, and seven secular works. More than half survive in a single source, and at least one mass is lost. Although we know of no formal connection between Pipelare and the Habsburg-Burgundian court, fifteen of his pieces come down to us through manuscripts connected with the court from both Alamire's time and earlier. For nine of these compositions, court manuscripts are, in fact, the only place where they survive. The court thus seems to have had ready access to Pipelare's music. La Rue was clearly familiar with it, as his *Missa de Sancto Job* is modelled on Pipelare's *Missa Floruit egregius*.[5]

We know much more about La Rue, though again little about his early years. La Rue was likely born in Tournai; his brother came from there and other close family connections exist.[6] His birthdate is uncertain; his father died between 1507 and 1516 and his mother was still alive when

3 See Cross, "Pipelare, Matthaeus", and Lempert, *Studien*.
4 Van Tour, "De Organisten van de Grote Kerk in Dordrecht", 305–7. I am grateful to David Burn for bringing this article to my attention.
5 Bloxam, "In Praise of Spurious Saints".
6 On La Rue's life, see Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue*.

La Rue passed away in 1518; like Pipelare, then, a wide range of birthdates is possible. La Rue's early musical training was surely at Tournai cathedral's choir school, or *maîtrise*, refounded in 1451. Choirboys were tonsured upon joining, with their clerical status providing eligibility for benefices. La Rue eventually attained the status of deacon; he was never ordained a priest.

For an unspecified period in his early years La Rue was a canon at the collegiate church of St. Ode, probably the church in St. Odenrode about twenty kilometres southeast of 's-Hertogenbosch. Other than that, we have no information on his early employment, but he was already a fully accomplished composer by the early 1490s, the time of his first datable works.

Beginning with November 1492, our knowledge of La Rue's life changes dramatically. From this time on (and possibly from an earlier date), La Rue was a member of the court chapel of the rulers of Habsburg-Burgundy, serving in turn Maximilian I, Philip the Fair, Joanna of Castile, and the future Charles V. The chapel dated back to the fourteenth century and the earliest duke of Burgundy, Philip the Bold. Although it waxed and waned in strength according to the interests and financial health of its current ruler, the chapel in full flower was one of the most important musical institutions in Europe. By La Rue's time its performance duties included daily mass, vespers, and compline; other offices were sung on twenty-one important feasts throughout the year as well as daily during Advent and Lent. Perhaps most significantly, the daily mass was polyphonic. In addition, singers of the chapel likely provided secular entertainment as needed.

The Habsburg-Burgundian court during much of La Rue's employment was a peripatetic one. The territories governed by successive rulers were far-flung, and in a time long before film and television, the physical presence of a ruler was important in establishing authority. A large and well-trained choir singing the most up-to-date liturgical polyphony was one of the ways that rulers underscored their wealth and significance, and the chapel consequently accompanied its rulers everywhere. While in the service of Maximilian, La Rue criss-crossed Germany and Austria. Philip marked his ascension to power as archduke in 1494 with a series of entrées into the various cities of his realm and continued to travel regularly thereafter. By the turn of the sixteenth century, then, La Rue had journeyed extensively across northern Europe in the service of the court.

Philip's dynastic marriage to Joanna of Castile in October 1496 was to have unexpected political consequences. Four deaths between 1497 and 1501 – those of John of Aragon, John's child, Joanna's older sister, and her child – meant that Joanna (but in reality Philip) was now next in line for the throne of Castile. To help consolidate this position, Philip embarked on a two-year journey to Spain and back, from November 1501 to November 1503. Because the Habsburg-Burgundians were temporarily on good terms with the French, Philip's entourage traversed France on their way to Spain, meeting with the French royal court. They arrived in Spain in January 1502 and stayed there for a year, with the lengthy journey home made first through France again and then via Maximilian's lands in Austria and Germany.

About a year after Philip's return to the Low Countries, Isabella of Castile died, making Joanna and Philip the new rulers of Castile. Rightly sensing that Ferdinand of Aragon was less than enthusiastic about having a northerner in this position, Philip slowly began preparations for a second journey to Spain in order to secure his power there. With Habsburg-Burgundy and France again on the outs, the trip was to be made by sea, with an embarkation in early January 1506. But storms damaged the fleet and forced a landing in England, where repairs were undertaken while Philip and his entourage dallied as guests of Henry VII for several months.

When Philip and his crew finally made it to Spain in April, tense negotiations with his father-in-law awaited him. His right to rule in Joanna's stead was finally affirmed, but barely three months thereafter, on 25 September, he died unexpectedly, just 28 years old.

His death threw everything into chaos. Of his large chapel, some members returned north, some left the service of Habsburg-Burgundy for good, and some stayed in Spain to serve Joanna. La Rue was one of this last group. For almost two years he led Joanna's chapel (of mixed Flemish and Spanish members) as *primero capellan*, but that position ended in August 1508 when Ferdinand of Aragon finally wrested control from his daughter.

La Rue immediately returned north and was absorbed into the reconstituted northern branch of the chapel that served the eight-year-old Archduke Charles, and, by extension, his aunt Margaret of Austria, who served as co-regent until early 1515. This period of more than six years provided the greatest stability the chapel (and thus La Rue) had known

since at least 1492, with the court residing largely in Mechelen during this time and travelling infrequently. These six-plus years were very likely a time of considerable productivity on La Rue's part, with many of his masses (and other works) almost certainly generated therein.

In January 1515 Charles, though still only fourteen years old, was declared of age, and the chapel embarked yet again on trips around the Low Countries to show off the newly emancipated ruler. In January 1516 Ferdinand of Aragon died, and as it became increasingly clear that Charles, now king of Spain, would be travelling to his new realm in the not-too-distant future, La Rue began his preparations for retirement. By June 1516 (if not earlier), La Rue was ensconced at the church of Onze-Lieve-Vrouw in Kortrijk, where he had held a prebend since 1505. He died there on 20 November 1518.

Although La Rue was apparently never in Italy, unlike many of his contemporaries, he had first-hand acquaintance of music-making across Europe through the chapel's extensive travelling, and he quite possibly met other leading composers of his time: certainly Obrecht, and perhaps Isaac and Josquin. Some of his fellow chapel members were composers as well, including Alexander Agricola, Marbriano de Orto, Gaspar van Weerbeke, Nicolas Champion, Antonius Divitis, Jean Braconnier, Jacobus de Clibano, Gilles Reingot, Rogier Herben, Johannes Molinet (not the poet), and Alamire himself. And both through the court's travels and Alamire's web of connections, the chapel was constantly supplied with a ready stream of the best music of the day. No matter what constituted La Rue's early training or first professional appointments, joining the court chapel enabled him to be constantly in touch with the latest stylistic developments.

La Rue responded by becoming one of the most productive composers of his day, and by leading the way in some of the ongoing style changes. We have thirty-one surviving masses; eight mass movements; what appears to be the first complete set of Magnificats in all eight church modes (though the *Magnificat tertii toni* is missing today); at least two dozen motets, including an unprecedented six *Salve regina* settings (remember that the chapel sang vespers daily); and around forty-two secular works (although eighteen of those survive without ascription, and have been attributed to La Rue based on style). He was a leader in the expansion of the number of voice-parts, the use of canon as a foundation for a composition, and the regular exploration of low ranges. He drew on sacred

models more often than secular ones, but was fond of paraphrasing his chant models, making their original forms difficult to determine. Noteworthy, too, are a series of masses using multiple cantus firmi; one of these, his *Missa de beata virgine*, appears to be the first of its kind. He was a pathbreaker as well in the dawning practice of "parody", eschewing cantus firmus construction in favour of the intensive use of multiple voices of a polyphonic model throughout a derivative piece.

Of composers at the court, La Rue was easily the most prolific. Not surprisingly, most of his works are found in the many manuscripts prepared by Alamire's team and his predecessors, and, conversely, those manuscripts feature his music more than that of any other composer. Four court collections consist exclusively of La Rue's music: A-Wn 15496, E-MO 773, I-SUss 248, and B-Br 15075, while one fragmentary manuscript and several lost manuscripts may have been dedicated to La Rue's work as well.[7]

Still other collections are "La Rue + 1" volumes, where a manuscript otherwise focused on La Rue includes a single work by a second composer. Mech falls into this category. The others are: I-Rvat 34, which opens with Pipelare's *Credo de Sancto Johanne*; I-Rvat 36, with an anonymous *Te decet laus* appended to La Rue's *Missa Ave sanctissima Maria* "loco Deo gracias"; D-Ju 5, with Antoine de Févin's Requiem; D-Ju 12, which includes an anonymous *sine nomine* mass;[8] and B-Br 6428, where Isaac's *Missa Virgo prudentissima* is the addition. A collection of fragments recently discovered in Büdingen might originally have been a "La Rue + 1" volume as well, for it once held four La Rue masses and Pipelare's *Missa Fors seulement*.[9]

That mass takes pride of place in Mech, where it is added to six of La Rue's masses: *Missa pascale*, *Missa Conceptio tua*, *Missa Ave Maria*, *Missa de sancta cruce*, *Missa de feria*, and *Missa Alleluya*. Given that Alamire surely had all of La Rue's music at his disposal, and evidently much of Pipelare's, why might these specific seven works have been chosen? And what was the purpose of Mech? Why was it compiled?

7 The fragmentary manuscript is found under two shelf numbers: B-Amp Ms. B 948 IV and B-Amp Ms. M 18.13. For lost manuscripts of La Rue's masses, see Meconi, "The Unknown Alamire", 54–60.

8 Scholars have wondered whether this work could be La Rue's, but that is unlikely given various stylistic anomalies.

9 D-BÜ 1600, 1601, 1603, 1604, and Kasten 1. On these fragments, see Brinzing, *Fragmente mit mehrstimmige Musik*.

The manuscript opens with a famed miniature of the enthroned Charles accompanied by his siblings and a series of symbolic figures, while the opening of the second mass includes a portrait of his grandfather Maximilian in prayer.[10] Both provide direct links to the Habsburg-Burgundian court. The iconography and heraldry match the period after Charles came of age (January 1515) and before he was recognised as king of Spain (March 1516). An obvious interpretation is that Maximilian commissioned the book as a gift to Charles (but more on this below). In any event, everything points to this being an object for internal use, not intended to be sent elsewhere.

The six masses by La Rue are on sacred themes; all fulfil specific liturgical functions. The *Missa pascale* celebrates the Resurrection, while the *Missa de sancta cruce* honours the finding and exultation of the Holy Cross. Two masses are Marian in focus: *Missa Conceptio tua*, which underscores the then still-controversial doctrine of the Immaculate Conception; and *Missa Ave Maria*, whose model refers to the Annunciation. The *Missa de feria* is an all-purpose mass (albeit a rather fancy one) for daily services. This leaves the *Missa Alleluya*, whose model remains unidentified but whose recurring "Alleluya" callouts appear to place the mass within Paschaltide.

The single mass based on a secular model is the opening composition: Pipelare's *Missa Fors seulement*, his most popular mass and one based on one of his own chanson settings. The mass was well-known at the Habsburg-Burgundian court, and it appears in three other Alamire creations.[11] As Vincenzo Borghetti demonstrates in his essay in the present book, the mass provides a fitting opening to the manuscript, as the alteration of the model's original text (highlighted in red at the mass's opening) generates a message that underscores the symbolic opening miniature.

Most of the masses in the volume are for the up-to-date texture of five voices; while many of La Rue's masses use this texture, the *Missa Fors seulement* is the only one of Pipelare's to do so – an additional reason for its inclusion here. The one mass for four voices, La Rue's *Missa Ave Maria*, appears in the middle of the collection, with the other masses

10 See As-Vijvers's contribution in the present book.
11 D-BÜ 1601, D-Ju 2, E-MO 766.

arrayed symmetrically around it. The symmetry of placement extends to the *Missa Ave Maria* itself, for its Credo, the central movement, expands to five voices. Alamire has also positioned the two Marian masses side-by-side, and the masses on sacred models begin and end with those with direct connections to the Paschal season.

Of the La Rue masses in Mech, the *Missa Ave Maria* became the most popular, ultimately appearing in fourteen other manuscripts and prints.[12] The other La Rue masses were copied multiple times as well, but (to our knowledge) only in other Alamire collections. Curiously, three of the masses contained in Mech – the *Missa Ave Maria*, *Missa de sancta cruce*, and *Missa Alleluya* – are found in two other parchment Alamire manuscripts created at approximately the same time, both of which are "all La Rue" collections: A-Wn 15496; and E-MO 773.[13] The latter manuscript is heavily mutilated, confirming that it was once elaborately decorated, like Mech. This mutilation means that no miniatures or coats of arms survive to provide identification of the intended recipient. But Margaret of Austria remains the most likely candidate. We know that E-MO 773 was once owned by Mary of Hungary; Mary succeeded Margaret as regent of the Low Countries after the latter's death in 1530; and she inherited Margaret's manuscripts. E-MO 773 was presumably one of those.

Unlike E-MO 773, A-Wn 15496 has remained intact and, like Mech, documents a connection to Charles. Its first opening contains both his coat of arms and the inscription "Karolus Archiduc Austrie, Dux Bourgundie, Princeps Castelle etc." Also like Mech, A-Wn 15496 is linked to Maximilian, for the second mass contains both his arms and his motto. Mech and A-Wn 15496 thus share three masses and the Charles/Maximilian decorative links. E-MO 773, which likewise shares three masses with Mech, is even closer to A-Wn 15496 in its contents. Of the seven masses in A-Wn 15496, six appear in E-MO 773 as well.[14]

These repertorial choices thus present an interesting conundrum.

12 See the list of concordances for this and the other masses in Appendix 4.

13 E-MO 773 shares a fourth mass with Mech, the *Missa de feria*. On Alamire's practice of what I call repertorial "pods" in his collections, see Meconi, "Range, Repertoire, and Recipient". D-Ju 12 also includes the same three masses as A-Wn 15496, but it comes from a later period.

14 Only La Rue's *Missa Sub tuum presidium* is absent. E-MO 773 contains nine masses: the three not found in A-Wn 15496 are *Missa O gloriosa domina* (as *Missa O gloriosa Margareta*, thus providing another link to Margaret), *Missa O salutaris hostia*, and *Missa de feria*.

Mech shares more than half of its repertory with E-MO 773; A-Wn 15496 shares almost all of its pieces with E-MO 773. The overlap suggests different owners, and Margaret for E-MO 773 and Charles for A-Wn 15496 presents no problems. Where, then, does Mech fit in? Was it intended for Maximilian, with the opening miniature commemorating the achievement of one of his goals, having Charles now a ruler in his own right?[15] Mech is the largest and most impressive of the three, which would be fitting for Maximilian as both Holy Roman Emperor and the senior member of the family.

Let us think for a moment about practical elements. If Maximilian commissioned these manuscripts – or at least Mech and A-Wn 15496 – he was not in the Low Countries during their time of production. But Margaret was, and was (temporarily) out of a job after Charles's attainment of his majority.[16] Was Margaret perhaps acting on Maximilian's instructions, and thus directly involved in the planning of decoration, or possibly the choice of contents? This is just about the time that Alamire was preparing Margaret's most sumptuous chansonnier, B-Br 228. Did she commission her own book of masses (E-MO 773) at the same time, inspired by Mech and A-Wn 15496?

Here is another scenario: that Maximilian commissioned Mech for Charles,[17] and that the unwieldy Mech (with its huge page dimensions of 645 × 435 mm) was then replaced by the (slightly) more practical A-Wn 15496 (not small, but somewhat more compact at 515 × 265 mm) at Charles's request. Charles, who by all accounts was quite knowledgeable about music, could perhaps have asked for his special favourites for A-Wn 15496 (*Missa Sub tuum presidium*, for example, is a mass Charles would have heard almost all his life, and it is one of La Rue's most compelling in its incredible rhythmic verve).

Such a hypothesis requires some attempt to use Mech as a performing vehicle. The question of "display vs. use" is a perennial one,[18] but it is possible to perform from Mech,[19] and, if Charles were seeking to

15 Suggested in Meconi, "Range, Repertoire, and Recipient".
16 See Meconi, "Margaret of Austria", 23–24.
17 This hypothesis is supported in As-Vijvers's contribution in the present book.
18 See, for example, Boorman, "The Purpose of the Gift" and Meconi, "The Function of the Habsburg-Burgundian Court Manuscripts".
19 As demonstrated by the ensemble Aequalis during the 2015 Antwerp AMUZ Festival, *Petrus Alamire: Meerstemmigheid in Beeld*.

impress, having his chapel members singing from a choirbook of this staggering size would certainly have achieved that goal. But Charles was often on the road,[20] Mech would have required a massive lectern for support, and the manuscript shows little sign of use.[21] Plus, it is not clear that it ever actually left Mechelen. In contrast, A-Wn 15496 is somewhat more portable, is somewhat plainer in design (though far from plain), and shows definite signs of use. To muddy the waters still further, however, it appears to have resided in Maximilian's residence in Innsbruck rather than with Charles.[22] Perhaps Maximilian and Charles simply "traded" manuscripts; certainly several of Alamire's creations ended up with someone other than their originally planned recipient.[23]

Mech's masses are varied not only in their specific liturgical ties, but also in terms of musical style and construction. Three are modern in their reliance (sometimes complete) on *tempus imperfectum* (duple metre) throughout (*Missa Fors seulement*, *Missa Ave Maria*, *Missa pascale*); the others use the more traditional practice of beginning most or all movements in *tempus perfectum* (triple metre) before switching to duple. Variety exists in both mode and cleffing/range, with two "high" masses (*Missa Ave Maria* and *Missa de sancta cruce*, both with finals on A); two "normal" masses, though each in fact descends to low *E* (*Missa pascale* and *Missa de feria*, with finals on G and E, respectively); and three "low" masses, all of which extend to *C* below the staff, and two of which use the F5 clef (*Missa Fors seulement*, *Missa Conceptio tua*, and *Missa Alleluya*, with finals respectively on D, D, and F). And Alamire generated another form of symmetry in the layout of the masses, with strict cantus firmus masses opening and closing the manuscript (*Missa Fors seulement* and *Missa Alleluya*), multiple-cantus firmus masses adjacent to them (*Missa pascale* and *Missa de feria*), and the central three masses each treating their models now with strictness, now with freedom. Although Mech may never have been used for actual performance, its contents present a musically satisfying and appealingly varied collection of the mature work of its two composers.

20 See Meconi, "Alamire, Pierre de la Rue, and Manuscript Production", Appendix 1, for Charles's whereabouts up to 1532.

21 *Missa de feria* appears to have an accidental added to the altus at the end of the Credo; see Weaver's contribution in this volume.

22 See Jas, "Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Musiksammlung, MS Mus. 15495".

23 For example, D-Ju 7, 9, and 22.