# VIII WORK DISCUSSION 5:

## Pierre de la Rue, *Missa de sancta cruce*

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According to a legend that originated not long after the event, the True Cross was found by St. Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, on Mount Calvary in the 320s.[1] In honour of the discovery, she and Constantine ordered the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which still stands today in the old city of Jerusalem. The building originally housed a portion of the Cross that Helena had found. Veneration of this relic in Jerusalem is described in the nun Egeria's account of her pilgrimage to the Holy Land around the year 380, making it one of Christianity's more ancient traditions.[2]

By the end of the Middle Ages, when the Mechelen Choirbook was made, veneration of the Cross had reached unheard-of heights. Along with churches, basilicas, and confraternities, there was, as Jean Calvin sarcastically remarked in his 1543 *Traité des reliques*, not a church that did not claim to have a piece of the Cross, such that, if all were collected together, they would fill a large ship.[3] In the course of the church year, there were two Cross feasts, with largely identical liturgies: the Invention of the Holy Cross, on 3 May, celebrating its finding;[4] and the Ex-

1 The story is documented from the late fourth century; see Blackburn and Holford-Strevens, *The Oxford Companion to the Year*, 338. Socrates Scholasticus's version, recounted in his continuation of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclestical History*, from c. 440, was cited with approval by the most popular medieval collection of saints' legends, and a source very likely known to La Rue, Jacobus de Voragine's *The Golden Legend* (modern ed., vol. 1, 280).

2 McClure and Feltoe (eds. and trans.), *The Pilgrimage of Egeria*, 74–76.

3 At the same point in his treatise, Calvin called the Cross the "principal relic of our Lord"; see his *Traité*, ed. Autin, 111ff.

4 First testified to in Gaul in the seventh century; see Blackburn and Holford-Strevens, *The Oxford Companion to the Year*, 195.

altation of the Holy Cross, on 14 September, commemorating Emperor Heraclius's recapturing, in 628 C.E., of the Holy Sepulchre's piece of the True Cross, which had been plundered by the Persian Emperor Chosroës thirteen years previously.

At the Habsburg-Burgundian court, lavish celebration of the Cross feasts was doubtless particularly appealing, given the Cross's ability, already mentioned in the legend of its finding, to grant victory over enemies both spiritual and temporal. A votive mass of the Holy Cross was also part of the weekly cycle (for Fridays) of the Order of the Golden Fleece, a chivalric order of which the Habsburgs were head.[5] La Rue's *Missa de sancta cruce* is suitable for any or all of these occasions, and he was not the first to provide polyphony for them: important precedents, that he could well have known, include a cycle of mass propers perhaps by Guillaume Du Fay (c. 1397–1474), and the *Missa O crux lignum triumphale* by Antoine Busnoys (c. 1430–c. 1492).[6]

Besides Mech, La Rue's *Missa de sancta cruce* survives in six other manuscripts. All were produced in the Alamire workshop associated with the Habsburg court, and all contain mass settings exclusively.[7] Five of the six are similar to Mech in containing works only, or with one exception, by La Rue;[8] the remaining source, E-MO 766, contains masses by several other composers as well, including Mathurin Forestier and Jacobus Barbireau.[9]

With seven appearances within the Alamire manuscripts, the *Missa de sancta cruce* is among La Rue's best-represented masses in that source-group. Only three of his other mass cycles – the *Missa de feria*, the *Missa pascale*, and the *Missa Ave sanctissima* – survive in the same number, and just two, the *Missa Conceptio tua* and the *Missa Ista est speciosa*, survive in more. This, along with the fact that at least six of the sources – B-Br 6428, B-Br 15075, E-MO 766, E-MO 773, A-Wn 15496, and Mech it-

5 Prizer, "Music and Ceremonial", 116.

6 For a modern edition of the propers, see MRM 12. The *Missa O crux lignum* survives uniquely in I-Rvat 51; it is edited in BCW 2. More contemporary with La Rue, both feasts of the Holy Cross receive settings in the mass propers transmitted in Heinrich Isaac's *Choralis Constantinus*, for Emperor Maximilian I and the cathedral at Constance, composed in the later 1490s and the first decade of the sixteenth century.

7 Sources listed in Appendix 4. See also the useful table in Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue*, 98–99, which indicates all the masses of La Rue that survive only in court manuscripts. In A-Wn 15496 and E-MO 773, the *Missa de Sancta Anna* includes a motet, *O salutaris hostia*, in place of the first "Osanna". This can be considered an addition to the mass, rather than a generic departure.

8 Ten court manuscripts are devoted entirely or mainly to La Rue. The *Missa de sancta cruce* appears in six of them, the most of any of the masses in Mech.

9 See Kellman, "Monserrat, Biblioteca del Monastir MS 766", in Kellman (ed.), *The Treasury*, 114.

self – seem to have been intended for members of the Habsburg family, suggests that the *Missa de sancta cruce* was frequently performed at a variety of Habsburg households. It regularly travelled as part of a number of "reportorial pods" for which the same can be said of its companions: with the *Missa pascale* and *Missa Conceptio tua* in B-Br 6428 and B-Br 15075; with the *Missa Alleluya* and *Missa Ave Maria* in A-Wn 15496, D-Ju 12, and E-MO 773; and with the *Missa de feria* in B-Br 15075 and E-MO 773.[10]

Five of the *Missa de sancta cruce*'s sources attribute the piece unambiguously to La Rue, and none gives a conflicting attribution (▶ Appendix 4). ▶ p. 221 Authenticity is thus beyond doubt. When La Rue composed the mass, however, is not known. Mech is in all likelihood the earliest of the sources, and presents the best reading of the piece.[11] Three sources – A-Wn 15496, E-MO 766, and E-MO 773 – include errors that preclude performance without correction. B-Br 15075 includes a number of textual errors, as well as apparently initially omitting part of the contratenor and bassus voices for the second "Agnus Dei". On the basis of the source-datings, Meconi tentatively includes the *Missa de sancta cruce* among La Rue's "middle" group of masses, from somewhere between 1508 and 1516, during which time the Habsburg-Burgundian court was stably based in Mechelen, and when La Rue seems to have reached a peak of productivity.[12] That the piece was composed in the earlier part of this period is suggested by its use of some old-fashioned characteristics, such as perfect (triple) mensuration at the start of each movement, rather than the more modern duple time (Table 1; after the opening *tempus perfectum,* ○, each movement then later moves into *tempus imperfectum diminutum*, written either as ¢ or ⊂2).[13]

The *Missa de sancta cruce*'s function, in honour of the Cross, is explicit in the title of the piece, which is preserved identically in all non-mutilated sources (▶ Appendix 4). ▶ p. 221 This function is sometimes reinforced by rich illumination, with appropriate imagery (notably in B-Br 15075 and

10 The term "reportorial pods" is Meconi's; see her "Range, Repertoire, and Recipient". Weaver makes the same suggestion in relation to the *Missa de feria* in his chapter in the present book. The conclusion of the Agnus Dei of the *Missa de feria* also appears in E-MO 766, but is included only because it was part of an added parchment fascicle, rather than a reportorial pod.

11 CMM 97/3 takes Mech as its basis.

12 Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue*, 98. See also Meconi's chapter in the present book on "Composers and Repertory". It should be noted that the datings of the sources are far from secure.

13 See also Meconi's remarks at the start of her chapter on the *Missa Alleluya* in the present book.

**TABLE 1.** Pierre de la Rue, *Missa de sancta cruce*, cantus firmus layout

| MOVEMENT | SECTION | MENSURATION | CHANT PHRASE(S) IN TENOR | CANTUS FIRMUS DIVISION |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kyrie | "Kyrie" I | ○ | A | Nos autem<br>gloriari<br>oportet in<br>cruce domini |
| | "Christe" | ¢ | B | nostri Iesu Christi:<br>in quo est salus,<br>vita,<br>et resurrectio<br>nostra: |
| | "Kyrie" II | ⌀ | C | per quem salvati, et liberati<br>su-<br>mus. |
| Gloria | "Et in terra" | ○ | A (b. 9–section end) | Nos autem<br>gloriari<br>oportet in<br>cruce domini<br>[+ free final phrase] |
| | "Qui tollis" | C2<br><br>3 | B (bb. 54–124)<br><br>+ C (b. 129–section end) | nostri Iesu Christi:<br>in quo est salus,<br>vita, et resurrectio nostra:<br>per quem salvati, et libe-<br>rati<br>sumus. |
| Credo | "Patrem" | ○ | A (bb. 15–35)<br><br>+ B (b. 42–section end) | Nos autem<br>gloriari oportet in cruce<br>domini<br>nostri Iesu Christi:<br>in quo est salus,<br>vita, et resurrectio<br>nostra: |

A-Wn 15496; in Mech, the mass is decorated quite soberly, with inked grotesque initials).[14] This function is not simply notional, but also embedded into the music itself: each movement of the mass uses as cantus firmus the antiphon section of the Gregorian introit for the feasts of the Inven-

14 See images online at the *Integrated Database for Early Music* (http://idemdatabase.org/). The mutilated state of D-Ju 12, E-MO 766, and E-MO 773 makes it impossible to know if they once also contained appropriate miniatures. The mutilation suggests that they did.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | "Et resurrexit" | C2<br><br><br><br>3 | A (bb. 90–119)<br>+ B (bb. 125–64)<br><br><br>+ C (b. 164–section end) | Nos autem gloriari oportet in cruce domini<br>nostri Iesu Christi: in quo est salus,<br>vita,<br>et re-<br>surrectio nostra:<br>per quem salvati, et liberati<br>sumus. |
| Sanctus | "Sanctus" | O | A (b. 8–section end) | Nos autem<br>gloriari oportet in cruce domini |
| | "Pleni" | O | - | - |
| | "Osanna" | ¢ | B (bb. 58–84)<br><br><br>+ C (b. 85–section end) | nostri Iesu Christi: in quo est salus, vita, et<br>resurrectio<br>nostra:<br>per quem salvati,<br>et liberati sumus. |
| | "Benedictus" | ¢ | - | - |
| | ["Osanna"] | [C] | [B + C] | [nostri …. sumus] |
| Agnus Dei | "Agnus" I | O | A (b. 7–section end) | Nos autem gloriari<br>oportet in<br>cruce domini<br>[+ free final phrase] |
| | "Agnus" II | C2 | B (bb. 38–86)<br><br><br><br><br>+ C (b. 86–section end) | nostri<br>Iesu Christi:<br>in quo est salus,<br>vita, et resurrectio<br>no-<br>stra:<br>per quem salvati, et liberati<br>sumus. |

tion and Exaltation of the Holy Cross, *Nos autem gloriari* (▶ Ex. VIII.1).[15] ▶ p. 212
Selecting a chant cantus firmus, rather than a secular melody, as mass model, is typical for La Rue, but less so for his contemporaries. The full introit also includes a Psalm verse, but La Rue does not use this part of the chant model in his mass.[16]

15 The source used for the example is online at http://mazarinum.bibliotheque-mazarine.fr/. Apart from the major feasts, *Nos autem* is also sometimes assigned to other, minor occasions. In the *Graduale Pataviense*, for example, it also appears for the Tuesday after Palm Sunday (fol. 65).

16 The Psalm verse is: "Deus misereatur nostri, et benedicat nobis: illuminet vultum suum super nos, et misereatur nostri." ("May God have mercy on us, and bless us: may He cause the light of His countenance to shine upon us; and may He have mercy on us."; Psalm 67:1).

The introit antiphon text, derived from Galatians 6:14 and, probably, 1 Corinthians 1:28–31, reads:[17]

> *Nos autem gloriari oportet in cruce domini nostri Iesu Christi: in quo est salus, vita, et resurrectio nostra: per quem salvati, et liberati sumus.*
>
> *But it behooves us to glory in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ: in whom is our salvation, life, and resurrection; by whom we are saved and delivered.*

As will be seen later, La Rue takes care in his setting to bring these words into meaningful conjunctions with those of the mass ordinary. The melody, with its finalis of E and limited range of a seventh, from *d* to *c'*, is customarily classified as in mode 4. Like all Gregorian chant melodies in La Rue's time, *Nos autem* differs in its details from source to source, including aspects such as individual pitches, note repetitions, and decoration.[18] The exact form that La Rue was using cannot be determined with security.[19]

In the mass, the cantus firmus appears primarily in the first tenor voice, transposed up a fourth. La Rue divides the chant into three main sections (▶ Ex. VIII.1; and see Table 1). The placing of the first division between "domini" and "nostri" at first sight seems eccentric in relation to the text. Perhaps the choice was motivated by two opposing concerns: on the one hand, La Rue knew that, in the mass, exact verbal relations with the model would be blurred; and, on the other, "domini" is one of the few words in the chant that ends on a pitch on which it is possible to build a stable cadence (*a*, the *repercussa* of the mode; *d'* in transposition). The choice has the additional, attractive benefit of allowing the second section to start on the highest pitch in the chant, and a pitch that appears only once elsewhere in the melody (*c'*, becoming *f'* when transposed).

▶ p. 212

Within each section, La Rue does not simply present the melody unaltered, but, rather, subjects it to one of his preferred practices, flexible

17 See McFarland, *Announcing the Feast*, 185–88.

18 A comparison of the chant in a number of early sources can be found at the University of Regensburg's *Graduale Synopticum* project, http://gregorianik.uni-regensburg.de/gr/#id/112.

19 The Habsburg court followed the Use of Paris (Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue*, 115). Nonetheless, the extent to which this impacted on the melody forms used for mass cantus firmi is unclear.

rhythmic and melodic paraphrase.[20] Despite this sometimes very heavy manipulation of the chant, he nonetheless usually places rests in the cantus firmus line between words and according to the textual sense-units (Table 1). Both Mech and other sources indicate the parts of the chant model used in red ink alongside the words of the standard mass ordinary. However, the cantus firmus words are not indicated systematically enough to allow them to be sung.[21]

To the cantus firmus, La Rue adds a second tenor voice in a similar ambitus and three further voices, each in its own distinct register: a bassus, around a fourth below the tenors; a contratenor, stretching up to around a fourth above the tenors; and a discantus around an octave above the tenors. The result is a rich, bottom-heavy, five-voice texture that lends the mass an imposing gravitas. La Rue clearly enjoyed such expanded sonorities, which were novel in his time: perhaps under the influence of the dominant senior composer in his formative years, Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1410–97), who seems to have led the way in this respect, he was among the first to regularly use scorings of five or more voices.[22] Appreciation of this aspect of La Rue's work is clear in Mech, where all but one of his masses that it includes is for five voices. In Mech, the fifth voice is almost always labelled "tenor secundus". One of only two exceptions occurs in the *Missa de sancta cruce* : in the "Kyrie" II, the fifth voice is labelled "bassustenor", while the bassus bears the strange name "ipostbasis".[23] There is no obvious reason for this exception: neither the "bassustenor" nor the "ipostbasis" differs in range from their more normally labelled counterparts in the rest of the mass. As in the example of the *Missa Alleluya* discussed by Meconi elsewhere in the present book, it is possible that the exception has something to do with mise-en-page: while the rest of the mass places three voice-parts on the left-hand page, and two on the right, the Kyrie places two on the left and

20 La Rue is an important pioneer in this respect; see Meconi, "La Rue".

21 Polytextuality is a possibility in some cantus firmus masses; see Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue*, 109. In the case of the *Missa de sancta cruce*, however, no source indicates the cantus firmus text consistently throughout, and D-Ju 12 includes no model text at all, but only the words of the mass ordinary.

22 Meconi ( *Pierre de la Rue*, 113) sets out clefs, signatures, and finals in all La Rue's masses. Ockeghem's influence can be clearly seen in La Rue's *Requiem*. He was also influential on Pipelare, the composer of the first work in Mech; see Borghetti's chapter in the present book.

23 Thomas Schmidt suggests that this is probably a blend of "basis" and "ipostasis", "that which stands below"; see chapter I. The other exception is in the *Missa Alleluya*, where the added voice is labelled "bassus primus" in the opening "Kyrie"; Meconi offers an explanation, partly musical and partly visual, in her chapter on the *Missa Alleluya* in the present book.

three on the right.[24] The *Missa de sancta cruce* contains one other irregular layout: the final "Agnus Dei" places all five voices on a single verso, uniquely for the manuscript. The total length of the mass, 730 breves, is average for La Rue.[25]

## INDIVIDUAL MOVEMENT DISCUSSION

The Kyrie is divided into the three sections typical both for La Rue and his contemporaries: a "Kyrie", a "Christe", and a second "Kyrie".[26] Before the first tenor enters with the cantus firmus proper, the movement begins with an allusion to the chant model's opening rising minor third in each of the four non-cantus firmus voices. In the three lower parts, this is in longer note values, while the discantus decorates the interval with an arresting flourish (▶ Ex. VIII.2).[27] All but the final one of the subsequent movements will also begin with material based on this same opening chant phrase, thus creating obvious aural unity as the mass progresses.

▶ p. 212

Once the tenor has entered, the five-part texture is largely uninterrupted. During the rest of the opening "Kyrie", consistency is achieved not through imitation, but rather by motivic integrity. In particular, a characteristic rhythmic pattern, of a dotted minim followed by a semiminim and another minim, is present in almost every bar, coupled with either a *cambiata*-pattern melody (a falling step followed by a falling third) or a rising scale (▶ Ex. VIII.1: discantus bb. 3–4; tenor 2 b. 4; contratenor bb. 4–5). The section closes with an increase in rhythmic activity that produces a drive to the cadence (bb. 13–14), a technique often associated with La Rue's distinguished predecessor Ockeghem. The effect is all the more exhilarating given the relative paucity of cadences in the preceding music, and the reinforcement by the near-simultaneous reaching of registral extremes: the bassus touching its lowest note, *A*, at the end of b. 12, and the discantus reaching its highest one, *f*", for only the second time in the section, immediately after, at the start of b. 13.

▶ p. 212

24 In five-part textures, Mech as a whole is not consistent in how it distributes the voices across the openings.
25 Meconi, (*Pierre de la Rue*, 98), offers a useful comparative table.
26 There are a small number of exceptions to this division in La Rue's output, suggesting in those instances an *alternatim* performance. For general remarks on division, structure, voice-use in La Rue masses see Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue*, 94f. Fallows, "The Last Agnus Dei", usefully traces the normal divisions in the various mass movements from c. 1450–c. 1600.
27 Here and throughout, bar numbers refer to the standard critical edition, CMM 97/3. Note values are given in their original form, double that of the CMM edition.

The "Christe" moves from the opening triple time into duple metre, a procedure repeated in every subsequent movement of the mass as well. The opening passage sets up a way of working that will continue throughout the section: sustained, long-held harmonies alternate with more rhythmically active passages sometimes involving imitation between the voices (this latter phenomenon first noticeable from b. 21 onwards).

The final "Kyrie" moves back to triple time, but now at a faster tempo. It opens with arresting slow chords, coloured by remarkable flatward harmony (with signed E♭ in the lowest voice). Like the opening section, this one too is characterised by motivic integrity: here a dotted minim followed by a scale, usually descending, of three or more semiminims (first appearing in the altus, b. 65). That the section is coming to its conclusion is indicated by a striking and exceptional repeat of an entire contrapuntal module, together with a falling sequential melody in the uppermost voice (bb. 74–76).

After its opening chant intonation, the Gloria employs the customary split of the ensuing polyphony into two sections, dividing at "Qui tollis". In contrast to the Kyrie, this movement, with its longer text, is more word-driven. As such, it is characterised by phrases that are more clearly articulated by cadences, by an alternation between passages with and without tenor cantus firmus, and by prominent imitation among the four non-cantus firmus voices. This difference of approach is apparent from the first entry of the cantus firmus, at b. 9, articulated by the first strong cadence in the section. The techniques are employed to give a greater degree of rhetorical shaping than in the Kyrie: particularly emphatic are the spotlighting of "magnam gloriam tuam" with triplets (bb. 21–23), and the arresting standstill, at b. 41, for the name of Jesus at the words "Iesu Christe". Not coincidentally, this latter moment occurs simultaneously with the beginning of the word "domini" in the cantus firmus (▶ Ex. VIII.3).

▶ p. 213

The "Qui tollis" section of the Gloria proceeds similarly. Imitation continues to play a prominent structuring role, with phrases clearly marked by cadences, and strategically deployed rhetorical emphasis throws particularly important moments into the spotlight: the dramatic simultaneous syllabic declamation against a held pitch in the cantus firmus at "Quoniam tu solus sanctus" (bb. 103–) and "Tu solus altissimus" (bb. 112–) are especially noteworthy.

Although there is no formal break, the "Qui tollis" splits into two as

a result of a switch to so-called *sesquialtera* proportion for the final text phrase, "Cum sancto spiritu": the time previously taken by two semibreves is now filled by three. The result is a change from duple to a quick, dance-like triple time that moves at a faster tempo than that of the opening section. The change not only readily identifies the beginning of the third main division of the chant model (phrase C, from "per quem"), but also brings the movement to a lively conclusion. Imitation is less noticeable here, but a rhythmic pattern consisting of a dotted semibreve followed by a minim and a semibreve is present in almost every bar. While the tenor cantus firmus elsewhere in the mass usually stands out due to its longer note values than the surrounding voices, here it is rhythmically more of a piece with the rest, and absorbed into the texture. As with the close of the Kyrie, here too the final cadence is heralded by remarkable and rare literal repeats in several voices (tenor 1, bb. 144–49; bassus, bb. 146–49).

Like the Gloria, the Credo begins with a chant intonation and is then divided into two. The split, at "Et resurrexit", is not uncommon in La Rue masses.[28] The first section takes cantus firmus phrases A and B together, for the first time in the work. The distinctive identities of the two phrases are preserved, however, by separating them with six bars of rests – the longest time for which the tenor is silent in the section, once it has entered (see Table 1). The separation is made yet more audible by a severe textural reduction at that point in the other voices as well, including some rare moments of duet and trio texture (▶ p. 213 ▶ Ex. VIII.4).

At b. 48, the chant model is exposed for the first time in the mass as the uppermost sounding voice (the tenor) for an entire phrase. There is possibly a symbolic intent here: just as the mass ordinary text at this point speaks of how Jesus was made man – "et homo factus est" – so too does the chant model, that has lain hidden up to this point, momentarily become the primary melodic and motivic material, taken over in imitation by the contratenor and discantus. The original words of the antiphon provide a simultaneous commentary, that the incarnation contains salvation, life, and the hope of resurrection ("in quo est salus, vita, et resurrectio nostra").

Surprisingly, the Creed's second section does not pick up the cantus firmus where the previous section has left off, but sets it complete, with

28 Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue*, 95.

all three of its phrases, for the first and only time in the mass. Nonetheless, as in the Gloria, the phrases are clearly separated: by the insertion of long rests between A and B (six breves, bb. 119–24); and by a mensuration change at the start of C (b. 164). The section begins with a long series of alternating high and low imitative duets, without the cantus firmus (bb. 63–89). This is the first time in the mass that scoring contrasts are used with any frequency. Up to this point, and again in the Sanctus and Agnus Dei that follow, the texture remains surprisingly dense: either all five voices, with only momentary and occasional relief, or four voices, without the chant-bearing first tenor, again with little use of further contrast. Breaking up the primarily imitative texture with declamation, most notably at "qui ex patre" (bb. 105ff.), provides additional variety.

At b. 112, the cantus firmus is again exposed as the uppermost voice of a duet for an entire phrase. From here to the end, the first tenor no longer moves in rhythmically distinct, more extended values than the rest, but rather is integrated with the other voices by imitatively shared material. At b. 137, a brief trio passage with parallel 6/3 chords recalls the sound-world of *fauxbourdon*. As in the Gloria, the Credo switches into *sesquialtera* proportion to close, coinciding with the beginning of the third of main chant model subdivision.

The Sanctus uses La Rue's standard structure, with a separate "Pleni", "Osanna", and "Benedictus", finishing with a repeat of the "Osanna".[29] With this movement we return to the procedures and sound-world of the Kyrie. The more sharply chiseled phrases of the Gloria and Credo are replaced by melismatic, dense textures, and relatively infrequent cadences.

Typical for La Rue's five-voice masses, the "Pleni" is the first section in the mass in reduced scoring:[30] both tenors drop out, leaving a strangely polarised texture between the bassus, on the one hand, more or less in its own territory, and the more closely matching contratenor and discantus, on the other, above it. The section is characterised by the continual, and highly unusual, repetition of a short rhythmic motive, announced at the outset in an imitative theme, and present continually in one or another of the voices thereafter until almost the end of the section. The pattern becomes more sporadic only from b. 52, heralding the final cadence at

29 Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue*, 95.
30 Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue*, 96.

b. 56. La Rue's peculiar treatment here seems to be inspired by a work of Josquin's, the second "Agnus Dei" of his *Missa L'ami baudichon*, which employs a similarly obsessive rhythmic ostinato (▶ Ex. VIII.5).[31] This is one of a number of what Meconi has called "hidden borrowings" from Josquin in La Rue's works – borrowings that betray a competitive edge, and a desire to respond to contemporaries in unexpected ways.[32]

▶ p. 214

At the same time, the procedure in the "Pleni" can be viewed as a distillation of the looser motivic integrity explored, notably, in the earlier Kyrie, and in the following "Osanna". The latter movement is set as an almost uninterrupted tutti of rich harmonies, enlivened with a recurring rhythmic motive first announced at the beginning and then regularly heard throughout much of the rest of the section (b. 59; thereafter usually coupled with a melodic pattern of a regular descending scale). The cantus firmus in the first tenor is unusually compressed, such that the original melody is almost untraceable by the section's end.

The "Benedictus" is also, typically for La Rue's five-voice masses, in reduced scoring, this time for four voices, without the cantus firmus. The opening seems intent on confusing the listener: structurally, arranging each voice to enter in succession, rather than simultaneously, suggests imitation. The voices, however, though related in their melodic contours, each begin differently. Exact imitation only begins to play a role with the final, discantus entry, which echoes the bassus phrase of two bars earlier. As the movement continues, more regular imitation alternates with a more motivic way of working, in which a characteristic syncopated melody is treated with as many different counterpoints as La Rue can invent (b. 114, tenor 2; b. 119, tenor 2; b. 122, contratenor; b. 124, tenor 2; b. 127, tenor 2; b. 131, tenor 2).

Typically for La Rue, the mass contains two "Agnus Dei"s.[33] The first ends with "miserere nobis", and the second with "dona nobis pacem". Possibly, in order to bring this into line with the liturgical structure of the Agnus Dei, with its two "miserere nobis" invocations, the first section

31 The connection was first noted in Sparks, *Cantus Firmus in Mass and Motet*, 355.

32 Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue*, 121ff; with discussion of the *Missa de sancta cruce* at 124ff; and further on Josquin and La Rue's relationship at 172ff. La Rue's most famous attempt to outdo Josquin is his four-voice mensuration canon in his *Missa L'homme armé*, in response to Josquin's similar three-voice canon in his *Missa L'homme armé super voces musicales*. The relationship was already noted by Glarean, in his *Dodecachordon* of 1547.

33 Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue*, 96. See also Andrew Weaver's discussion of the Agnus Dei of the *Missa de feria* in the present book.

was intended to be repeated, or one of the invocations was supposed to be sung in chant.[34] For the first time in the mass, a movement begins with a theme not derived from the opening of the chant model, but rather that seems to be freely composed with the aim of contrasting with the previous movement openings: instead of the cantus firmus's opening rising - third, La Rue creates a melody with a prominent falling third instead, from which a remarkably melismatic imitative duet is then spun. The decorative exuberance is brought dramatically to a standstill as the first tenor enters with the cantus firmus at b. 7. As in the Kyrie and the fully scored sections of the Sanctus, from this point on, there is little relief from the full, five-voice texture. Against the backbone of the cantus firmus, the free voices are united, albeit unpredictably, by shared motivic patterns: especially prominent is a characteristic cadence formula, taken over from the opening duet, with a dotted minim, then a semiminim and minim repeated pitch a step beneath that of the dotted minim, and a final pitch that returns up a step (bb. 4–5, discantus; then b. 9, contratenor and frequently thereafter).

The second "Agnus Dei", as the mass's final movement, must bring the setting to an appropriate close. It moves one last time from triple into duple metre, where the music will now stay. The cantus firmus follows on from the first section, and provides the two remaining phrases necessary to bring it to completion. Significantly more imitation and textural variety are used than in the preceding section, including two long duets (bb. 59–65 and bb. 74–79) and two trios (bb. 65–74 and bb. 79–85). This all seems to be intended as a foil to the arresting treatment of the final text phrase, "dona nobis pacem", whose rhetorical long notes and remarkable lack of rhythmic activity end the setting with an emphatically grand peroration (▶ Ex. VIII.6).

▶ p. 214



34 Fallows, "The Last Agnus Dei". 57–62.