VI WORK DISCUSSION 3

Pierre de la Rue, *Missa Conceptio tua*

STRATTON BULL

The "conception" referred to in the title of the third mass in the Mechelen Choirbook, Pierre de la Rue's *Missa Conceptio tua*, is that of the Virgin Mary. The nature of her conception – specifically, whether or not it was free from the stain of sin – had been a hot topic throughout the Middle Ages, and was reaching fever pitch during La Rue's lifetime. A consideration of this mass thus lands us in the realm of theology and ecclesiastical politics, and shows once again how polyphonic compositions, and Alamire's manuscripts, often played a part in larger agendas that went far beyond the simple creation of musical adornments for the liturgy. This is a mass on a mission.

The mass aims to promote the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. The debate around this doctrine centres on the mechanics of inserting deity into the human realm. How can the perfection of deity remain perfect when it participates in the fallen world? In the debate on the Immaculate Conception this question was applied to the manner in which Jesus's grandmother, Anne, conceived her daughter Mary. If Mary was "full of grace", as Gabriel pronounced, then by definition there could be no room for traces of imperfect origins. It was St. Augustine who set the stage for the debate by stating that Mary was free of sin. However, he made no pronouncement about whether her conception had also been spotless.[1] A long-standing popular belief that viewed the conception as immaculate was championed by the Franciscans, with their customary feel for religious sentiment. The more cerebral Dominicans took the

1 This outline of the debate is based on Blackburn, "The Virgin in the Sun", esp. 175–79 (see also further literature there).

opposing view, arguing, among other things, that if Mary's origins were perfect, then she would not need to be saved through the crucifixion of her son and thereby could not participate in the process of redemption.

The debate between "immaculists" and "maculists" raged on through the later Middle Ages and played into the larger devotion to the Virgin Mary. By the fifteenth century, this devotion had reached fanatical levels. New feasts, such as the Seven Sorrows and the *Recollectio*, were entering the church calendar, and the proponents of the Immaculate Conception campaigned for their own feast.[2] This campaign reached a successful conclusion when Pope Sixtus IV (a Franciscan) officially sanctioned the feast in 1477, and assigned it to 8 December. However, the doctrine was not yet official church dogma – indeed, it gained this status only in 1854 – and the two sides continued to set out their cases throughout the sixteenth century and beyond. Our mass is a voice in this debate.

Although it is impossible to know the exact circumstances surrounding the *Missa Conceptio tua*'s composition, it is clear that a mass in support of the Immaculate Conception fits well into the context of the Habsburg-Burgundian court. Implied in the veneration of this doctrine was the recognition of a holy and authoritative lineage. In their desire to create a dynasty of European proportions (a desire that would reach fruition in the person of Emperor Charles V), the Habsburg-Burgundians were quick to associate themselves with such a lineage. This association is demonstrated, among other ways, by the many times the doctrine figures in the music manuscripts that Petrus Alamire produced within the court's orbit, either for local consumption (as with Mech) or for presentation further afield. This presence of the Immaculate Conception can be seen not only in the eight occurrences of the *Missa Conceptio tua* in the Alamire sources (ranking it among the masses most frequently represented in the complex; ▶ Appendix 4), but also in the many instances of La Rue's *Missa de Sancta Anna*, his motet setting Pope Sixtus's immaculist prayer *Ave sanctissima Maria*, and his mass based on that motet.[3]

▶ p. 221

One member of the court had a particular connection to the Immaculate Conception: Margaret of Austria. The governor of the Low Countries would have learned to practise the veneration of St. Anne during her

2 For more on these feasts see, Thelen (ed.), *The Seven Sorrows Confraternity of Brussels* and Haggh, "The Celebration".

3 For more on *Ave sanctissima Maria* and the iconography associated with it, see Blackburn, "The Virgin in the Sun".

upbringing at the French court in the 1480s.[4] Her mother figure at that court was Anne of Brittany – linked, not coincidentally, to the tradition through her name. As an adult Margaret also favoured the Franciscans, strong advocates of the Immaculate Conception, as already noted.[5] As her life unfolded, parallels with the life of St. Anne only became stronger. First, Margaret would have wanted to invoke a sacred lineage as descendent of the house of Valois.[6] As the mother of Mary, Anne's chief attributes are her intellectual qualities and her role as teacher: Margaret was also a woman of culture and learning with a taste for the finer things, and she played the role of educator to her ward, the future Charles V.[7] Strikingly, like Anne, Margaret was married three times, and saw the death of two of her husbands. The governor must surely have related very personally to this saint. They differed, however, in that Anne bore a celebrated child, whereas Margaret remained childless.

Margaret's fingerprints are thus all over the *Missa Conceptio tua*, and it is not difficult to imagine her personally giving Pierre de la Rue the assignment of producing a work that would hold great importance for her.[8] If that was what indeed occurred, La Rue obliged with a composition that became a core part of the Habsburg-Burgundian repertoire.

If the Immaculate Conception is difficult enough to explain in words, it is even less susceptible to depiction in sound or image. However, the *Missa Conceptio tua* accomplishes just that in spectacular fashion, particularly as it is presented in Mech. This is achieved, first, by the very prominent use of the antiphon *Conceptio tua* as cantus firmus. This chant was shared with another Marian office celebrated during the Renaissance, the feast of the Nativity (8 September). For that feast it functioned as Magnificat antiphon at first vespers, and started with the words "Maternitas tua". When the feast of the Conception was established in 1477, this chant also functioned as a Magnificat antiphon, but with the opening words changed.

The composer restricts his model to the antiphon's opening portion. This keeps the focus on the Virgin, rather than moving on to her son, the

4 See Anderson, *St. Anne in Renaissance Music*, 84–87.
5 Blackburn, "Messages in Miniature", 183–84.
6 Anderson, *St. Anne in Renaissance Music*, 91.
7 Anderson, *St. Anne in Renaissance Music*, 9.
8 Blackburn, "Messages in Miniature", 184.

subject of the rest of the text. The complete antiphon text is as follows, with the portion used in the mass marked in red:

> ***Conceptio tua, Dei genitrix virgo, gaudium annuntiavit universo mundo:*** *ex te enim ortus est sol justitiae, Christus Deus noster, qui solvens maledictionem, dedit benedictionem et confundens mortem donavit nobis vitam sempiternam.*
>
> ***Your conception, Virgin Mother of God, has announced joy to the whole world:*** *for from you has arisen the sun of justice, Christ our God, who has broken the curse and bestowed blessing, and he has confounded death and given us eternal life.*

As Michael Anderson points out, the text does not explicitly support the Immaculate Conception.[9] However, the championing of this moment of conception is clear enough, and the pictorial context of the opening pages leaves no doubt about the intention. On those pages the stately figures of six popes, in official robes and impressive headgear, present papal bulls in support of the Immaculate Conception doctrine (▶ p. 168 ▶ Fig. II.5). And the opening "K" of the Kyrie in the superius part depicts St. Anne herself, with the tiny Mary on her lap – or rather, miraculously visible in her womb (▶ p. 165 ▶ Fig. II.2).[10] The identity of this matronly figure is confirmed by a banderole above her head, with the words "Sancta Anna orate pro no[bis]". The *mater matris* is flanked by King David and King Solomon, a reference to her holy lineage according to popular medieval tradition.[11] Another visual reminder of the doctrine at hand is the unusually liberal presentation of the antiphon text in red letters in the tenor part throughout the mass (and in the superius in the final "Agnus Dei"). We are not allowed to forget what is at stake here.

La Rue keeps the focus on Mary's conception in the sonic presentation of the antiphon as well: he starts almost all sections of the mass with the opening of the *Conceptio tua* melody (for a discussion of this melody, see below), like an advocate hammering home an argument. This is a

9 Anderson, St. *Anne in Renaissance Music*, 134.
10 See also the discussion of both images in As-Vijvers's chapter in the present book.
11 Most famously formulated in Jacobus de Voragine's thirteenth-century *Golden Legend*; modern ed.: De Voragine, *The Golden Legend*.

procedure found in few other masses by La Rue or any of his contemporaries.

Like several other masses, the *Missa Conceptio tua* appears repeatedly in the Alamire complex, and as such may be considered part of the court's core repertory (▶ Appendix 4). This mass is also one of a number of La Rue's masses found today only in Habsburg-Burgundian sources. As Mech remained in the city for which it was made, it might be said to present the "hometown version". Many of the sources that include this mass (leaving aside two fragments, one in Antwerp and one in Büdingen, whose recipients are not clear) found their way to major European figures and institutions. In this latter context the mass becomes a projection of the Habsburg-Burgundian position on a controversial doctrine. In two of these sources, B-Br 6428 and B-Br 15075, the *Missa Conceptio tua* takes pride of place as the first mass, while in another, D-Ju 4, it starts a new gathering. This latter source also includes another depiction of the line-up of ecclesiastic figures presenting immaculist propaganda, though slightly different from the ones in Mech.[12] In I-Rvat 34, produced for Pope Leo X's Sistine Chapel choir, and D-Ju 5, produced for Frederick the Wise of Saxony, the first two pages of our mass have been torn out, perhaps because they too were lavishly decorated (with immaculist iconography?). Finally, the same liberal use of rubrics for the antiphon text is found in all the other versions of this mass. Certain errors found consistently in all extant sources of the *Missa Conceptio tua* suggest that all eight surviving versions of the mass are based on the same, now-lost "alpha" version.[13]

▶ p. 221

Honey Meconi places the *Missa Conceptio tua* among a central group of masses composed roughly between 1508–15, leading up to La Rue's retirement.[14] In this period the court was relatively stationary, providing ideal conditions for a productive period in La Rue's career. La Rue's Immaculate Conception mass takes its place among a five-voice repertoire that was established in the later fifteenth century and was blossoming into a fully fledged genre in the early years of the sixteenth, when the mass was most likely composed. Composers created a five-voice texture by adding an extra voice to one of the three general ranges found in four-

12 This source is viewable online at http://idemdatabase.org/.
13 CMM 97/2, xv–xvii.
14 Meconi, *Pierre de la Rue*, 98–99 and 106–10.

voice works: high (superius), middle (contratenor and tenor), and low (bassus). In the present mass it is the middle range that is expanded, with a second tenor. This choice aligns the mass with a particular five-voice texture sometimes called the "axial tenor".[15] In this texture, a central tenor voice bears a cantus firmus, usually in long notes, flanked by two higher and two lower voices. These surrounding voices often pair off into higher and lower duets, but other combinations are possible, including the rich texture of all voices together. As a master of *varietas*, that virtue extolled by the fifteenth-century theorist Johannes Tinctoris, La Rue does not slavishly follow this pattern: here as elsewhere in his output, the composer shows a tendency to avoid rigidity.[16] While at some moments the tenor fulfils its axial duties, it often abandons this role to join in as an equal voice with the other four.

Like a number of La Rue's other works, this mass is characterised by its low range. The voice-parts in the *Missa Conceptio tua* are generally a fourth lower than the "normal" ranges for this period: the top voice only goes up to *a'* while the lowest goes down to *D*. Meconi shows how La Rue sometimes uses these dark sonorities in order to represent mourning, the theme of a number of these low pieces.[17] However, the present mass is not related to death and mourning, but rather is an affirmation of a joyful belief. Here the low pitch would seem to result from the desire to place a low cantus firmus (with a range of *c*–*a*) in the "axial tenor" position, thereby pulling the pairs of voices above and below it into lower than normal ranges.

The mass is also striking by the shortness of its phrases, with frequent, clear-cut cadences. La Rue segments the music this way throughout the mass. Within the context of this mass as a plea for a theological position, we may experience this highly articulated phrasing like an orator's argument, built up point by point. This contrasts with other works of this period (by La Rue and others) in which phrases are often long and extravagant. The mass presents its case seriously and methodically. At the same time, the graceful musical phrases and masterful counterpoint support the argument through the sheer beauty typical of so much of La Rue's oeuvre.

15 For more on this phenomenon, see Pack, "Obrecht's Approach to Five-Voice Composition".
16 For more on the concept of *varietas*, see Luko, "Tinctoris on Varietas".
17 See Meconi, "The Range of Mourning".

INDIVIDUAL MOVEMENT DISCUSSION

The *Missa Conceptio tua* presents the melodic material of its chant model chiefly in the first tenor part. Perhaps in keeping with the orator's art as suggested above, La Rue presents the plainchant model on which the mass is based according to a rational, ordered plan. The decision only to use the opening of the antiphon (as noted above) limits the musical material to four cogent musical phrases. ▶ Ex. VI.1 shows this portion of antiphon (in the melodic variant used by La Rue), with the four phrases marked and labelled.[18] Each of these phrases has a clearly identifiable shape: phrase A begins with a downward step that acts as a springboard propelling the melody up to its first resting-point on *a*; phrase B descends windingly from the *a* back to the home-base *d*; phrase C rocks between *d* and *f*, which sets up a repeat of the springboard motive of A, except that this time the melody does not rest on *a* but sinks stepwise back down to *d*; phrase D also rocks, but this time on *e*–*g*, after which the melody subsides back to *d*. In the course of the mass these four phrases structure the musical argument, supply certain motivic material for the non-cantus firmus voices, and even provide a commentary to the mass text. The following discussion of the individual movements will be largely framed by the way these four phrases are distributed and employed throughout the mass.[19]

▶ p. 207

The mass opens with a gracefully ornamented version of the head-melody of the chant, sung in succession by the four upper voices. Only the bassus does not participate, offering a counter-melody instead (a classic La Rue move). Once phrase A has been fully introduced, the first tenor presents the descending melody of B (b. 10) within a full texture in which the other voices offer contrasting material. Immediately striking in this opening section are the short phrases and frequent cadences, as mentioned above: in the eighteen bars (54 breves) of "Kyrie" I there are no fewer than eight cadences. These "orator's statements" might also be seen to mirror the pithy theological arguments presented in the papal bulls on this first opening.

The "Christe" begins with the *d*–*f* movement of C in all voices but the contratenor. The first tenor assumes its frequent role as axis, continuing

18 This version of the chant has been extracted from the mass based on the two identical and clear statements in the Credo and the Agnus Dei (see Figures 1 and 2).

19 In what follows, the voices will be designated as "superius", "contratenor", "tenor 1", "tenor 2", and "bassus" (as in the modern edition, CMM 97/2, 1–50) even though their names sometimes vary in Mech (for instance, "baricanor" instead of "bassus").

the cantus firmus in deliberate breves as the other voices peel off into free melodies. In b. 34 the second tenor echoes the slow descending tail of C, the end of which coincides with a very audible presentation of the *e–g* motion of D's opening in the superius. The tenor responds with a complete statement of D, bringing the section to a conclusion.

"Kyrie" II begins with phrase A in the contratenor, answered immediately by B in the first tenor. A syncopated version of C's rocking figure follows suddenly in the superius (with stretto imitation in the contratenor), breaking off to be completed by the tenor with the descending figure. Once the cadence of this phrase has been reached, the superius and contratenor repeat their stretto version of the rocking figure, but this time on the *e–g* opening of D. The section is rounded off by the tenor's more stately presentation of D. The whole Kyrie has thus efficiently introduced us to the four phrases of the *Conceptio tua* chant: "Kyrie" I with A and B, "Christe" with C and D, and then "Kyrie" II telescoping all four phrases in quick succession. Our orator has completed his opening statement.

The contratenor opens the Gloria with the *Conceptio tua* motto countered by the bassus singing the same contrasting tune heard at the outset of the Kyrie. This suggests that the pairing will form a head-motive throughout the composition, a procedure encountered in many late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century masses. The bassus drops out, to be replaced by the superius, which enters into a spirited duo with the contratenor, leading up to the more formal introduction of motive A in the first tenor (b. 10). A trio of the lowest voices ensues. Once the first tenor has completed A, the trio is reduced to a low duo – neatly balancing the upper duo just heard. Here is that alternation between higher and lower combinations, typical for La Rue, and indeed for the axial tenor formula on which this mass is loosely based. As if to confirm the use of this formula, the first tenor presentation of B that follows includes the very long notes found in axial tenor pieces. The two top voices then repeat their stretto treatment of the opening of C before the first tenor interrupts the order of things by seeming to return to the opening theme of B – especially confusing since the rubric text at this point comes from C, "gaudium annuntiavit". The true arrival of C, in text *and* music, occurs shortly thereafter (b. 35), again with the stretto effect between the upper voices. The expected arrival of D is only hinted at in the superius entry on *e'* in b. 39, after which the full choir brings the section to a close.

The next section ("Qui tollis peccata mundi") begins with the by now familiar opening motto. However, here La Rue engages in some polyphonic gamesmanship. La Rue's rhythmic and contrapuntal presentation of the *Conceptio tua* melody makes the passage practically identical with the opening of an almost certainly earlier three-voice motet, *Mater patris et filia*, by his contemporary, Antoine Brumel (c. 1460–1512/13). ▶ Ex. VI.2 compares the opening of the "Qui tollis" with the opening of Brumel's motet. La Rue has condensed the model, quoting the opening gambit and foreshortening it with a cadence strongly reminiscent of the second close in Brumel's piece (*Mater patris et filia*, bb. 20–21; the opening and cadence are indicated in each fragment). Beyond being the kind of playful homage in which composers frequently engaged in this period, the quote perfectly fits the theological programme of the mass. The opening text of *Mater patris et filia* describes the Virgin as both "mother and daughter of the father". This genealogically confusing designation refers to Mary as both descended from the deity (through God's choice of her as his vessel) and as bearer of that same deity (in the person of Jesus). What is not confusing is the focus on Mary's place in a holy lineage, which by association invokes the sanctity of her mother Anne and supports the Immaculate Conception. Brumel may have been referencing the highly appropriate *Conceptio tua* antiphon himself in his motet. La Rue has ingeniously woven a colleague's material into his mass (typically, for him, tucking it away in an inner section), thereby further strengthening the case for the Immaculate Conception.

▶ p. 208

After this dramatic opening of the Gloria's second section there are, for the first time in this mass, no clear statements of the chant model over a sustained period, as a full section gives way to another call and answer between upper and lower groups. This alternation leads to a final section in triple time. Although final sections frequently make this metrical shift in works from this period, it is hard not to be reminded of a similar shift at the end of Brumel's motet. However, instead of quoting the melodic material from the conclusion of *Mater patris et filia*, La Rue employs a melodic turn seemingly plucked directly from the conclusion of the offertory from his own *Requiem* (which was likely composed first). The two passages are compared in ▶ Ex. VI.3. Although this could simply be a case of re-using a good tune (with appropriate transposition), it is tempting to recall the words at that point in La Rue's *Requiem* in the context of present mass: "Ut mereamur ultra sine fine in requiem sempi-

▶ p. 209

ternam gaudere" ("That we may be worthy hereafter to enjoy eternal rest without end"; the underlining marks the moment of the melodic quote). The "glory of God the Father", the sanctity of Mary's conception, and the joy of eternal peace would seem to be all bound up together in the rich sonorities of the Gloria's conclusion.[20]

The Credo opens as we have come to expect, with a clear rendition of the *Conceptio tua* motto, this time as a duo between the two highest voices. And yet this is not completely without surprises: the bassus counter-melody heard at the beginning of the Kyrie and Gloria is now absent. Ever the master of *varietas*, La Rue follows his tendency to abandon patterns when they become too predictable. The long upper duo is answered by an equally extended lower duo that sets up the arrival of the cantus firmus in the first tenor. From here this first section of the Credo offers the clearest presentation of the chant model so far – at least visually. ▶ Fig. VI.1 shows how the first tenor sings an unadorned version of all four phrases of the *Conceptio tua* melody in straight breves. This section is also the clearest example of the axial tenor formula, as the non-cantus firmus parts alternate in different combinations (frequently upper and lower duos), coming together several times in resounding tutti sections. The non-cantus firmus voices do not participate in the chant melody, instead offering free material, often with strong syllabic openings.

▶ p. 207

The entry of C, with its text "gaudium annuntiavit" ("has announced joy") coincides with the mass ordinary text "Et incarnatus est" ("And was incarnate"). Here we might be able to speak of deliberate "intertextuality", as the added text provides a commentary on the standard mass text. The incarnation of Jesus is clearly the cause for joy, particularly in its manifestation as the continuation of the holy lineage so central to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. This expression of joy continues into the full declamation of "ex Maria Virgine" ("from the Virgin Mary"), the core statement of this holy lineage in the mass ordinary text. The non-cantus firmus voices all participate from here to the end of the section, joined by the presentation of D in the tenor and coming to a dramatic conclusion with the recollection of Christ's death.

20 My thanks to tenor Lior Leibovici of Cappella Pratensis for identifying the corresponding passage in the *Requiem*.

The second section of the Credo begins with the lead motto of the chant – no surprises here – again in the upper two voices. As this duo gives way to the inevitable low-voice duo, we seem to have launched into a continuation of the axial tenor formula, and indeed the first tenor arrives at b. 98 with A on a long note, as expected. However, as the tenor's statement of the chant proceeds to B it becomes more playful, taking the melodic cell *e–f–g* and repeating it on quicker notes – a move that is picked up first by the superius and later by the bassus. This signals a long passage in which the first tenor becomes an equal player with the other parts, abandoning its axial role. Except for fragments of the chant model (as in the opening of B, in the first tenor at b. 128, followed by the superius and contratenor), all the voices sing free material in this passage. Especially dramatic in this sequence is the solemn incantation of "one holy, catholic, and apostolic church" starting at b. 154: the full power of ecclesiastical authority seems on display here, like a stamp of approval for the doctrine being espoused.

The Credo's finale is introduced by the expressive word-painting of the descending superius-contratenor duo on the word "peccatorum" ("sins", b. 174) and the even deeper descent of the tenor 2-bassus duo on "mortuorum" ("the dead", b. 179). This sets the stage not only for the full texture with high top voice on "Et vitam venturi seculi" ("And the life of the world to come"), but also the triumphant return of the *Conceptio tua* melodic motto. Here is another moment of intertextuality in the mass: as at the end of the Gloria, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is associated with the reward of eternal life.

Once again the familiar chant head-motive greets us as the Sanctus unfolds in a high-voice duo. As in the Credo, the bassus counter-melody heard in the Kyrie and Gloria is absent. The duo introduces a cascading figure in quick notes, perhaps inspired by the descending gesture from the end of C, which is subsequently passed through all voices. Against this sweet song of the angels and archangels from the Revelation text, the first tenor presents A (b. 11) and B (b. 18) in long notes that recall the axial tenor plan but then dissolve into the flowing texture.

The long "Pleni" picks up on the cascading figure from the "Sanctus" in what is ostensibly a duo between the contratenor and bassus. The chant model is nowhere to be heard, as is typical of this section of the mass. With the two voices well into their song the superius surprises us, entering high in its range, and we come to the realisation that this

is in fact a trio. The voices combine in different pairs before all coming together, as the outer voices settle on their final notes, accompanied by the contratenor's flourishes.

In the "Osanna" that follows, for once La Rue starts not with the *Conceptio tua* motto but with "gaudium annuntiavit" (C) in the first tenor, its rising minor third echoed in all the other voices. The "joy" of the cantus firmus text matches the customary celebratory mood of the "Osanna" – another moment of intertextuality in this mass. This section is also notable for its long phrases (in contrast to the highly segmented style heard through much of the rest of the mass, as noted above), which helps convey the exuberance. This extensive "Osanna" setting reaches its conclusion with a rousing tutti that draws motivic material from the *e–g* motion from the beginning of D.

Like the "Pleni", the "Benedictus" is typical of masses from this period in making no use of the cantus firmus material. La Rue continues the opposition of upper and lower duos by giving "Benedictus qui venit" ("Blessed is he that comes") to the superius and contratenor, and "in nomine Domine" ("in the name of the Lord") to the second tenor and bassus. This time no further voices intrude upon the two-voice texture. The reprise of the "Osanna" completes the Sanctus.

The Agnus Dei has only two sections, as is the case in all but eight of La Rue's thirty-one extant masses. The prominent rubrics in the tenor announcing "Fuga in dyathesarum" indicate a canon at the fourth, the kind of special technique that composers in this period frequently reserved for the final movement of the mass. We are back on familiar ground as the movement opens, with the contratenor's *Conceptio tua* motto accompanied by the bassus melody that initiated the Kyrie and Gloria. As ever, however, La Rue is playing with our expectations. Ingeniously, the composer manages to make the whole cantus firmus chant model work as a canon, as the other voices spin out free material in a texture that remains full throughout. Although we have clearly bid farewell to the axial tenor formula, the final section does offer a variation on that formula, as the cantus firmus in long notes – as in the first section of the Credo, a "pure" statement of the chant model – migrates to the superius part (▶ Fig. VI.2).[21] However, the remaining parts do not split

▶ p. 208

21 The *Missa Alleluya* makes a similar gesture at its close; see Meconi's discussion in the present book.

off into different combinations as previously in the mass, but weave a rich tutti polyphonic texture that supports the cantus firmus as it towers above. The oration on the Immaculate Conception reaches its ringing conclusion, driving home its point with the clearest possible statement of the central argument.