Tudor Dedications to the Blessed Virgin: History, Style, and Analysis of Music from the Eton Choirbook

- Vincent C. K. Cheung

An interesting phenomenon in the history of music is that many pieces now regarded as great compositions had suffered long periods of neglect before they began to receive the attention they deserve. A great majority of Mozart's piano concerti were very rarely performed before the Great Wars; J. S. Bach's cello suites were practically unknown to the musical world until Casals' rediscovery of them in the 1920's; similarly, the glorious Eton Choirbook, containing Magnificats and Marian antiphons for expressing Catholic sentiments, had been left virtually untouched on the shelves of the Eton College Library since around 1558 when the last Tudor monarch, Elizabeth I, restored Protestantism as the official religion of England, until the end of the 19th century.

The existence of the Eton manuscript was first brought to musicologists' notice by M. R. James. Once the Provost of Eton, James published in 1895 his *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Eton College* which contains not only a description of the Choirbook, but also a transcription of its index. Following James' catalogue were two detailed accounts of the manuscript, presented respectively by W. B. Squire in 1898 before the Society of Antiquaries, and D. A. Hughes in 1927 before the Musical Association. Both Squire and Hughes came across the Choirbook while searching for a missing link in the history of English music: that between the glory of Dunstable in the 1440's and the rise of the Fayrfax school in the early 16th century. It is surprising that they were not impressed at all by the quality of the compositions in the Choirbook. While Hughes regards the nine-part *Salve Regina* and the thirteen-part canon of Wylkynson as "two separate and musically uninteresting experiments,"[1] Squire even comments in his paper, "that this music would sound beautiful to our ears is

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[1] Dom Anselm Hughes, "The Eton Manuscript," *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 53 (1926-27): 71.

extremely improbable, and in this respect...the Englishmen were possibly inferior to their Netherlandish contemporaries."[2]

Despite Squire's and Hughes' derogatory remarks, many musicologists were starting to realize the high calibre of the Eton compositions soon after their presentations. In 1951, for the first time after the rediscovery of the Choirbook, the works of John Browne and Walter Lambe, two of the composers represented in the collection, were performed in the chapel of Eton College.[3] Five years later, Frank L. Harrison even published in three volumes all pieces in the Choirbook in modern notation. More recently, The Sixteen, under the direction of Harry Christophers, has recorded nineteen pieces from the Eton Choirbook; their recordings are quickly becoming the favourite CDs of early music lovers.

Very few historians have written on the style of the Eton music. To the best of this author's knowledge, until now not even one detailed analysis of a piece by an Eton composer has been published. In this article we will embark on the task of characterizing the style of a piece in the Choirbook as specifically as possible. But before that, a review of the history of this manuscript and its relationship with Eton College is in order.

History

The Founding of Eton College

The English concept of a college during the early fifteenth century was very different from that of today. It was an institution not only for higher education, but also for devotion, and sometimes, charity. Many colleges at that time were in fact chantries, and the main duties of the priests there were to say Masses and to pray for the patrons of the secular churches with which the chantries were associated. Some of these chantry colleges even had resident clerks and choristers. The college founded by Edward III and associated with the Royal Chapel of St. Stephen in the Palace of Westminster, for example, had four clerks and six choristers.[4] At Fotheringhay there was a college of chantry priests with twelve chaplains, eight clerks, and thirteen choristers in 1412; it even had a

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[2] W. B. Squire, "On an Early Sixteenth Century MS. of English Music in the Library of Eton College," *Archaeologia: or Miscellaneous Tracts relating to Antiquity* 56 (1898), 102.

[3] Frank Llewellyn Harrison, Preface, *Musica Britannica, Vol. X: The Eton Choirbook: I* (London: Stainer and Bell, 1956), xiii.

[4] Frank Llewellyn Harrison, "The Eton Choirbook – its Background and Contents," *Annales Musicologiques* 1 (1953): 152.

statute specifically stating that the antiphon *Salve Regina* should be sung by the choristers every evening at seven.[5]

An important turning point in the history of English colleges came when William of Wykeham founded, in 1379, New College as an institution within Oxford University, and in 1382, Winchester College as a grammar school supplying scholars to New College. Both education and devotion were emphasized in both colleges, and the chapels of both were provided with priests, clerks, and choristers.[6] Inspired by Wykeham, Henry Chicheley, the Archbishop of Canterbury, also founded in 1422 a grammar school at Higham Ferrers with four clerks and six choristers, and in 1438 All Souls' College at Oxford with three clerks and six choristers.[7]

Meanwhile, King Henry VI, crowned in 1429 at the age of sixteen, was reaching adulthood. Unlike his father, he was "fitter for a coul than a crown; of so easie a nature that he might well have exchanged a pound of patience for an ounce of valour,"[8] and thus was not interested in politics and wars at all. Perhaps because he himself was well versed in literature, he believed that his subjects should be given opportunities to acquire knowledge. Born on the festival of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, he was especially interested in the training of youths.[9] Wykeham's idea of uniting education and devotion under one roof must have impressed the young ruler. In order to celebrate his reaching adulthood[10] and to show his generosity, Henry, following the examples of Wykeham and Chicheley, founded in 1440 two colleges, one at Eton and one at Cambridge, both of which were established "to the praise, glory, and honour of our Crucified Lord, to the exaltation of the most glorious Virgin Mary, His Mother, and the support of the Holy Church, His bride."[11] Henry also ordered the original Eton parish church to be converted into the chapel for the then newly founded Eton College, dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin.

As stated in the statutes of 1440, Eton College was conceived by the monarch as an institution consisting of a provost, seventy poor scholars, ten priest-fellows, ten chaplains, ten clerks, sixteen choristers, a schoolmaster, an usher, and thirteen poor men,[12] and thus, it was at the same time a college for

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[5] Harrison, "The Eton Choirbook," 153.

[6] Harrison, "The Eton Choirbook," 153.

[7] Harrison, Preface, xv.

[8] H. C. Maxwell Lyte, *A History of Eton College* (London: Macmillan, 1911), 3.

[9] Lyte, 3.

[10] Magnus Williamson, "The Early Tudor Court, the Provinces and the Eton Choirbook," *Early Music* 25 (1997): 229.

[11] Lyte, 5-6.

[12] As quoted in Lyte, 577.

priests, a grammar school for boys, and an almshouse for the needy. The statutes also specify the musical skills with which the chaplains, clerks, choristers, and scholars had to be equipped:

> There shall be four Clerks skilled in chant, of whom one only, the organist and instructor of the Choristers, may be married. There shall also be a Parish Clerk...skilled in chant, in the Ordinal of Sarum, and in the peculiar ceremonial of the College......There shall be four lower Clerks, able to read and sing......There shall be sixteen poor Choristers...to sing in Church and to serve the priests at the daily masses......The Scholars shall be poor and needy boys of good character with a competent knowledge of reading, of the grammar of Donatus, and of plainsong...[13]

The choristers and clerks must have spent most of their time at Eton singing. In addition to their daily liturgical duties, the choristers at Eton, like those at the chantry college of Fotheringhay, were required to sing evening antiphons every day in praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary to whom both their college and their chapel were dedicated. The statutes of 1444 states that

> [e]very day at a suitable time in the evening...all sixteen choristers of our Royal College...walking two by two in surplices shall reverently go into chapel, accompanied by the master of the choristers...They shall kneel before the crucifix and say *Pater noster*; then they shall rise and sing before the image of the Blessed Virgin in the time of Lent the antiphon *Salve Regina* with its verses; outside of Lent and also on feast days during Lent the sixteen choristers shall likewise sing in the best manner of which they have knowledge some other antiphon of the Blessed Virgin...[14]

It is evident that the Virgin Mary lay at the conceptual heart of Eton College. Henry's veneration of Mary is understandable considering that by the eleventh century, many Christians prayed to her for help and consolation much more than to the saints, and perhaps even more than to God or Jesus, because the mother of Christ, as a human being, seemed to them more approachable than Christ himself,

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[13] As quoted in Lyte, 580-582.

[14] As quoted in Harrison, Preface, xv.

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the son of God.[15]   The general reverence for Mary during late medieval times may also explain the emergence of the Marian antiphons and the practice of celebrating a Mass for the Blessed Virgin on Saturdays during the eleventh century.[16] A hint of the old Etonian custom of respecting the mother of Christ had apparently survived until at least early twentieth century.   During the February meeting of the Musical Association in 1927 when D. A. Hughes presented his paper on the Eton manuscript, a Sir Richard Terry in the audience mentioned that an Eton boy would raise his hat when he passed by a certain part of the college. The explanation of this peculiar Etonian custom, as Terry claimed, is that at that spot there used to be a statue of the Virgin Mary which was saluted by everyone who passed by; the statue was, unfortunately, destroyed long ago, but this act of reverence had survived.[17]

It is natural, then, to wonder what Marian antiphons the Eton choristers had in their disposal for fulfilling their daily singing duties. The Eton Choirbook consists almost entirely of Magnificats and motets in praise of the Blessed Virgin; in particular, fifteen of the ninety-three pieces in the collection are settings of the *Salve Regina* text. It is thus very probable that the Choirbook was compiled for the daily singing of the choristers as described in the statutes. We shall now turn our attention to the contents of the Eton manuscript.

The History and Contents of the Eton Choirbook

The present condition of the Eton manuscript (Eton College Library Ms. 178) has been previously described in detail by W. Barclay Squire in 1898. It is a choirbook measuring 23¼ by 17 inches and consisting of 125 leaves of vellum. The leather binding of the Choirbook is stamped with the Tudor rose and the letters "H. R.", which probably were the initials of a binder in London active during the second half of the sixteenth century.[18] The first page of the manuscript is an index to the Choirbook, containing (i) the number of voices required in each piece, (ii) the first words of each composition, (iii) the composer's name, (iv) the folio on which each piece begins, and (v) the number of notes in the compass of each piece. Since all folios in the manuscript are numbered, it is possible to deduce that there were originally 224 parchment leaves, and thirteen double

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[15] Bryce Lyon, Herbert H. Rowen, and Theodore S. Hamerow, *A History of the Western World* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969), 252.

[16] Jeremy Yudkin, *Music in Medieval Europe* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989), 204.

[17] In the same meeting, however, Prof. E. J. Dent asserted that having spent six years at Eton, he had never heard of such a custom as described by Terry. See Hughes, 80-81.

[18] Harrison, "The Eton Choirbook," 162.

sheets plus nine quaternions (i.e., a total of 98 leaves) are currently missing. Forty-three out of the ninety-three pieces[19] in the Choirbook have survived complete, and at least fourteen of them are based on a *cantus firmus*.[20]

As F. L. Harrison[21] points out, the contents of the Choirbook were laid out in six divisions in the following order: (i) antiphons for more than five voices, (ii) antiphons for five voices, (iii) antiphons for four voices, (iv) Magnificats for more than four voices, (v) Magnificats for four voices, and (vi) the Passion according to St. Matthew by Richard Davy and the thirteen-part canon *Jesus autem transiens* by Wylkynson. Following the canon of Wylkynson is a second index to the Choirbook which is shorter than the first one: it does not include all the Magnificats and several of the antiphons. This abbreviated list probably reflects the contents of the choirbook when it was at an intermediate stage in its compilation process, as Harrison suggests.[22] His conjecture is supported by the fact that all the pieces not listed in the second index do not have illuminated initials. The nine-part *Salve Regina* and the thirteen-part canon of Wylkynson are not in both indexes. It is possible that they were the last two pieces added to the collection. In fact, the initials of Wylkynson's *Salve Regina* were painted on a kind of vellum different from that of the rest of the Choirbook, and were subsequently cut out from the original leaf and pasted onto the music.[23] That this antiphon is also the only piece in the manuscript written in white breves and semibreves (while all the rest have black or red notes for the same note-values), and that the thirteen-part canon is the last piece of the collection, also suggest that both of them were inserted at a later date.

As for the text, with a few exceptions the words in the sections for fewer than the full number of voices were written in red, and that in the full sections, in black. As a rule, the sections with red words should be sung by one voice in each part, and those with black words, by the full choir. Thirty-three different texts are found in the Choirbook. The three texts which appear most frequently in the manuscript are *Salve Regina*, *Gaude flore virginali* and *Stabat Mater*.

The copying and compilation of the Choirbook were probably carried out between 1490 and 1502. The lower time limit is set by a note at the end of Davy's *O Domine caeli terraeque*, stating that Davy composed the piece when he

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[19] Squire's claim that there were originally ninety-seven pieces in the Choirbook (p. 94) is most likely a mistake or a typo.
[20] For a complete list of *cantus firmus* employed in Ms. 178, see Harrison, "The Eton Choirbook," 169-175.
[21] Harrison, "The Eton Choirbook," 163.
[22] Harrison, "The Eton Choirbook," 163.
[23] Squire, 90.

was at Magdalen College, Oxford, at which Davy was the master of the choristers between 1490 and 1492.[24] In the mean part of the same piece, there is an illuminated initial bearing the arms of Henry Bost, who was elected provost of Eton College in 1477, and died on February 7th 1502.[25] His death thus marks the upper time limit. That 1502 was probably the latest date for the writing of the main part of the Choirbook is supported by another fact: in the collection there is a piece by Browne called *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem* in which the composer used Edmund Turges' carol *From stormy windes* as a *cantus firmus*. Turges' carol is essentially a prayer for the safety and health of Prince Arthur, a brother of Henry VIII, and was probably composed in 1501, as suggested by a note written beside the lowest voice of the carol in the Fayrfax manuscript.[26] Prince Arthur died on April 2nd 1502, and very possibly, Browne's antiphon was composed shortly after the Prince's untimely death. The Latin text of Browne's motet is about the sadness of the Virgin Mary when she saw her son Jesus Christ being crucified; this could be a reference to the grief of Queen Elizabeth of York, the Prince's mother. Furthermore, the motet is scored for six men's voices with a fairly low compass (*F* to *e'*), indicating a possible connection between the antiphon and death.[27] These two pieces of evidence hence imply that *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem* was composed in 1502, in agreement with the upper time limit of the Choirbook's compilation as suggested by the appearance of the arms of Henry Bost in the manuscript. As two later insertions, the *Salve Regina* for nine voices and the canon of Wylkynson could have been added to the Choirbook anytime between 1502 and Wylkynson's death in 1515.[28]

The pieces in the Choirbook must have been known outside of Eton. Following his deposition of Henry VI, Edward IV ordered in 1463 the annexation of Eton to St. George's College, Windsor[29] although this idea was later abandoned. Since then, Eton and St. George's almost enjoyed "a symbiotic relationship,"[30] and there was certainly exchange of choristers and scholars between the two colleges and King's College, Cambridge, Eton's sister college. For instance, Richard Hampshire was a chorister at St. George's (1474-79), and

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[24] Harrison, Preface, xvi.

[25] Squire, 92.

[26] Hugh Benham, "Prince Arthur (1486-1502), a Carol and a *Cantus firmus*," *Early Music* 15 (1987): 464.

[27] Benham, "Prince Arthur," 465.

[28] Roger Bray, "Sacred Music to Latin Texts," in *Music in Britain – the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Roger Bray (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 58.

[29] Lyte, 63.

[30] Williamson, 231.

later a scholar at Eton (1479-83) and at King's (1483-86).[31] Presumably, those scholars and choristers at King's and St. George's coming from Eton would spread the Eton compositions to their new residences. Many composers represented in Ms. 178 were from other institutions in England, too. Richard Davy, as mentioned above, was the master of the choristers at Oxford's Magdalen College, and Williamson argues that it was Walter Smythe, an Etonian fellow from Magdalen, who brought Davy's music from Oxford to Eton and sponsored the compilation of the Eton Choirbook.[32] Walter Lambe was originally from Salisbury; he became a scholar at Eton in 1467, and later a lay clerk at College of the Holy Trinity, Arundel. Nicholas Huchyn, like Lambe, spent most of his life at Arundel College as a chorister. Sygar, the composer of two Magnificats in Ms. 178, was a chaplain-conduct at King's from 1499 to 1501. Wylkynson, unlike the other composers, probably spent his entire adult life at Eton, and his compositions did not seem to have travelled widely.[33] It should be noted that Eton College had strong connections not only with the other English colleges, but also with the royal family. We have already seen that Browne's *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem* was possibly composed on the occasion of Prince Arthur's death. The earlier part of the text of Banester's *O Maria et Elizabeth*, on the other hand, appears to be a reference to the pregnancy of Elizabeth of York with the boy who was eventually to become Prince Arthur. The latter part of the same text is also a prayer for the health of the King and for peace.[34]

Most probably, the great Choirbook was in use at Eton College from 1502 onwards until 1547 when the Protestant Edward VI ordered that "[the choristers] shall henceforth omit to sing or say *Stella caeli*, *Salve Regina*, or any such like untrue or superstitious anthems."[35] Pieces in the Choirbook might be revived during the brief reign of the Catholic Mary Tudor from 1553 to 1558, but almost certainly, they ceased to be sung after the Protestant Elizabeth I succeeded to the throne. It is conceivable that around that time, the Choirbook was already falling apart. Sometime between 1558 and 1600, the surviving pages of the Choirbook were taken to London and rebound, as evidenced by the initials "H. R.", those of a contemporary London binder, in the stamp of its leather binding. The manuscript was subsequently stored in the Eton College Library.

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[31] Williamson, 231.
[32] Williamson, 231.
[33] Williamson, 234.
[34] Frank Llewellyn Harrison, *Music in Medieval Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 309.
[35] Harrison, Preface, xiii.

The names of twenty-five composers are listed in the index of the Choirbook. However, there are only eighteen of them with at least one piece surviving complete in the Choirbook, four of them with only fragmentary portions of their works surviving, and three of them with nothing surviving. One of the lost works, Dunstable's *Gaude flore virginali*, is even his only five-part work known to have existed. The Choirbook also preserves the only known music of ten composers, including Hygons, Kellyk, Sutton, and Wylkynson, and the only known complete motets of Browne and Davy.

The lives of most of the Eton composers have remained obscure. Below is a summary of what we know about the lives of three of the contributors – John Browne, William Cornysh, and Richard Davy.

Composers

John Browne

Considering the number and quality of his compositions preserved in the Eton Choirbook, John Browne is without question the most important of all composers represented in the collection. Unfortunately, nothing about his life, including even his identity, is known for certain. At least four John Browne's were active around Eton between 1440 and 1500. If we accept the argument that Browne's *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem* was composed in 1502, and assume that all the John Browne's listed in the Choirbook's index were indeed the same person, then the three John Browne's who flourished before this year – the one who was King's Scholar at Eton from *c.*1442 to 1445, the one who died in *c.*1498 and was Rector of West Tilbury from 1480 to 1490,[36] and the John (or William?) Browne (*d.* 1479) who was a clerk at St. George's in 1473 – were certainly not the person in question. By elimination, the remaining John Browne from Coventry who was elected to be King's Scholar at Eton in 1467 at the age of fourteen[37] could well be the composer of the antiphons although there exists no other evidence supporting this identification. The Browne who composed the three carols in the Fayrfax manuscript may not be the same John Browne represented in Ms. 178; it is possible that they were composed by the William Browne who was Gentleman of Chapel Royal from 1503 to 1511.[38]

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[36] W. H. Grattan Flood, *Early Tudor Composers* (London: Oxford UP, 1925), 40.

[37] Harrison, Preface, xvii.

[38] Hugh Benham, *Latin Church Music in England, c.1460-1575* (Londond: Barrie and Jerkins, 1977), 82.

William Cornysh

At least two musical William Cornysh's were active in England when the manuscript was being compiled. One of them died in *c*.1502, and the other, in 1523. Three pieces in the Fayrfax manuscript were ascribed to a "William Cornyssh Junior,"[39] implying that there must have existed a "William Cornysh Senior," and thus, it is likely that the Cornysh who died in *c*.1502 was the father of the other.[40] It has been assumed by a number of musicologists (including Greer[41] and Harrison[42]) that Cornysh Junior was the William Cornysh represented in the Eton collection. However, recently David Skinner has presented evidence suggesting that it was Cornysh Senior "the clerk" who composed all existing Latin church music ascribed to the name Cornysh.[43] Almost nothing is known about the life of Cornysh Senior. He was an instructor of choristers at Westminster Abbey in 1479, and was apparently musically active from this time onwards at least until 1491.[44] If Cornysh Senior had indeed held a position at St. Stephen's sometime after 1491, as Skinner speculates,[45] and if he was indeed the William Cornysh represented in Ms. 178, it is possible that his pieces were transmitted from St. Stephen's to Eton via St. George's, which was St. Stephen's twin foundation.

Richard Davy

Both Flood[46] and Harrison[47] mention that the Richard Davy listed in the index of the Eton Choirbook was chaplain to Sir William Boleyn and his son of the same name from 1501 to 1516. There was also a Davy associated with Magdalen College, Oxford who apparently was another Richard Davy.[48] We know that from 1490 to 1491 this Davy was both an *informator choristarum* and an organist at Magdalen, and from 1497 to 1506, he was a member of the College

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[39] "Cornysh," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians – Vol. 4*, 1980, by David Greer.

[40] Flood's conclusions that the two William Cornysh's were indeed the same person, and that John Cornysh was the father of this William Cornysh, seem to this author ungrounded. See Flood, 20-22.

[41] Greer, 795.

[42] Harrison, Preface, xvii.

[43] David Skinner, "William Cornysh: Clerk or Courtier?" *The Musical Times* 138 (May 1997): 5-12.

[44] Skinner, 8.

[45] Skinner, 8.

[46] Flood, 60-61.

[47] Harrison, Preface, xvii.

[48] "Davy, Richard," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians – Vol. 5*, 1980, by John Caldwell.

of Vicars Choral at Exeter, where he died in *c*.1507.[49] Either Davy could be the one composing for the Eton Choirbook.

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Style

Number of Voices

In a modern performance of any piece from the Eton Choirbook, a naïve audience would most probably be impressed by the music's unusual richness and the textural variety across different sections of the piece. These two features owe much to the Eton composers' fondness of settings for more than four voices. During the time of Dunstable, most of the English sacred compositions were scored for three or four voices, exemplified by pieces preserved in the Old Hall manuscript. Most of the Eton pieces, however, were written for five voices, with a treble, a mean, two tenors, and a bass. This basic five-part layout may owe its provenance to the three-part scoring of many chansons in the early fifteenth century in which there are two frequently crossing parts in the tenor range, and a third part pitched about a fifth higher[50] (e.g., Dunstable's *Quam pulchra es*). This basic three-part arrangement was augmented in the 1440's by Dufay who added a fourth part below the two tenors as a true harmonic bass (e.g., his *Missa Se la face ay pale*). The Eton composers then further expanded this four-part structure in the 1490's by adding a fifth voice on top of the *triplum* as a true treble. They must have been inspired by Dunstable, whose four-part motets have two higher voices above the two tenors (e.g., his *Veni sancte spiritus / Veni creator*).

An obvious consequence of employing more than four voices is an expanded compass. As Harrison points out, a typical four-part piece in the Old Hall manuscript has a range of around seventeen notes (from *C* to *e''*)[51] while a typical five-part antiphon in the Eton Choirbook has more than twenty. Such a compass is indeed wider than many continental five-part works composed around the same time. Josquin's *Miserere mei, Deus* (à 5), for example, has only nineteen (from *G* to *d''*). The Eton composers' use of more voices also allows greater contrast between the full and solo sections. As a result of more number of voices, more voice combinations, and hence more tonal colours, are at the composer's disposal. For example, in Wylkynson's nine-part *Salve Regina*, twelve different combinations of voices can be identified in the solo sections

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[49] Caldwell, "Davy," 285.
[50] Benham, *Latin Church Music*, 62.
[51] Harrison, *Medieval Britain*, 311.

(Figure 1). He essentially treats his choir as a "vocal orchestra," achieving different timbres by recombining the voices in different ways.
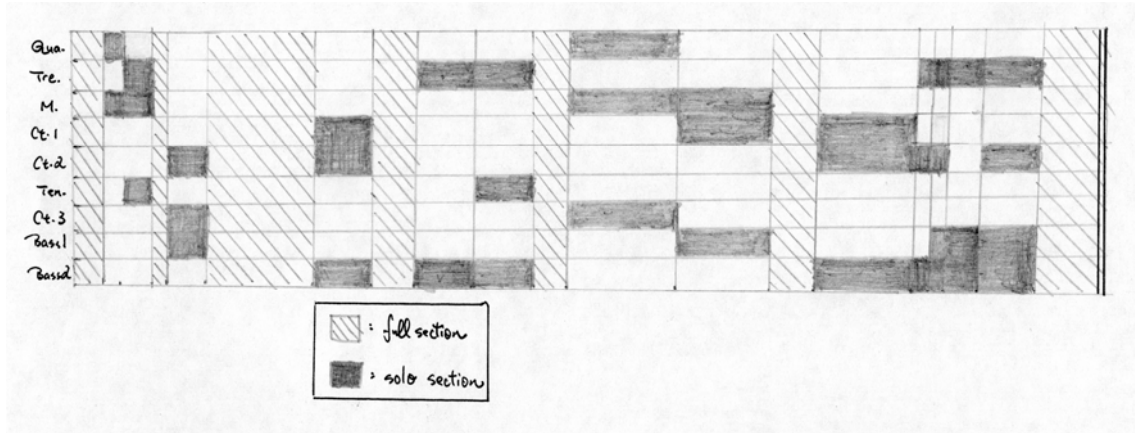

FIGURE 1. Vocal orchestration scheme in Wylkynson's *Salve Regina* for nine voices. Active voices in the solo sections are shaded solid gray. There are twelve different combinations of voices in the solo sections across the entire antiphon.

False Relations

Like many earlier English composers, the Eton composers had a preference for imperfect consonance. Complete triads in the 5/3 and 6/3 positions are used extensively in the Eton pieces. Unlike their contemporaries on the continent, they also tend to avoid using bare fifths to begin and end a piece (compare Cornysh's *Salve Regina* with the Kyrie of Josquin's *Missa Pange lingua*, for example; see Ex. 1). Dissonance is avoided as much as possible.[52] However, false relations between semitones do occur quite frequently (Ex. 2). There presence can be explained by noting the composers' general aversion to the tritone. In order to avoid the devilish interval, in a piece structured by a *cantus firmus*, any *f* in the plainsong necessitates flattening the low *B*-natural to *B*-flat; similarly, in a piece without *cantus firmus*, any 5/3 chord formed over *B* requires flattening the bass note by a semitone.[53] However, the upper voices are not fettered by these harmonic rules and can tolerate the unflattened B, a note used regularly in the antiphon's mode; these higher B-natural's thus form false relations with the *B*-flat's in the bass. Pushing the above argument further, these

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[52] The example of "bold, biting dissonance" in William Cornysh's *Salve Regina* cited in pp. 535-6 of Atlas' *Renaissance Music* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998) seems more like an exception than a rule.

[53] Benham, *Latin Church Music*, 63.

false relations thus indirectly reflect that the Eton composers were thinking in church modes (rather than the major and minor scales of the later centuries) when they were writing their motets and Magnificats. Sometimes, the special effect created by these semitones is used to create and maintain tension, especially in the final full section. In the penultimate measure of Browne's *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem*, the clash between the *e'*-flat's in the mean and the *e*-natural's in the two countertenors at the word "gaudia" (Ex. 3) may suggest "joy is not to be won easily," as Caldwell speculates.[54]

EXAMPLE 1. Comparison of the opening and concluding measures of Cornysh's *Salve Regina* with those of Josquin's *Missa Pange lingua* (Kyrie).

EXAMPLE 2. An example of false relations in John Browne's *O Maria salvatoris mater*, mm. 32-34.

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[54] "Browne, John," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians – Vol. 3* , 1980, by John Caldwell.

EXAMPLE 3. John Browne, *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem*, mm. 194-195.

A point also worthy of note is that most pieces in Ms. 178 were composed in modes with F or G as finals (modes five to eight). Modes three and four, having E as their finals, were never used by the Eton composers, perhaps because the 5-3 chord over B, the "dominant", is diminished,[55] and any flattened B cannot be used to remedy this situation since it forms a tritone with E, the final. Browne's *O regina mundi clara* is the only piece in the collection using a *cantus firmus* originally written in the third mode (the *Pange lingua* hymn), but Browne transposes the hymn from E to A, and writes it without the flattened B's; thus, the hymn is essentially in the first mode (transposed a fifth higher) in the antiphon.

Rhythms

Another conspicuous trait of the Eton pieces is their rhythmic complexity. A very wide range of note values can be found in every piece in the collection. For instance, in Browne's six-part *O Maria salvarotis mater*, there are fifteen different note values ranging from the demisemiquaver[56] to 3/8 of a crotchet to the dotted semibreve. It seems that the Eton composers, when writing the antiphons, were constantly trying to avoid using the same note value at the same time in two or more voices, or using the same note value repeatedly in a single voice, as suggested by the following excerpt from Browne's *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem* (Ex. 4). The dotted note values, and particularly the dotted quaver and crotchet, occur much more frequently in the Eton pieces than in continental compositions of the same period. Rhythmic figures like a dotted crotchet followed by two semiquavers and a dotted quaver followed by three semiquavers are almost habitually employed by John Browne (Ex. 5). The Eton composers are

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[55] Benham, *Latin Church Music*, 63.
[56] All note values we will refer to in this essay are quartered values, that is, the note values used in Harrison's transcription of the Eton Choirbook.

fond of triplets, too; they sometimes surprise the audience (or more likely, the singers) by superimposing a triplet on two quavers, as in Davy's *Salve Regina* (Ex. 6). As a general rule, the solo sections contain more notes of short duration and more complex rhythmic figures than the full sections.[57] Such uses of shorter notes are sensible, because not only are the textures of the solo sections lighter, but they were also presumably sung by the more skilled singers of the choir.[58] The complex rhythms employed by the Eton composers surely tend to obscure the words, but they did not seem to see this as a compositional problem: their pieces were not originally intended for preaching or teaching, but for expressing their devotion to the Virgin Mary.

EXAMPLE 4. John Browne, *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem*, mm. 40-44.

EXAMPLE 5. John Browne, *O Maria salvatoris mater*, mm. 1-6.

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[57] That this rule holds at least in Browne's *Salve Regina I* will be demonstrated with statistics in the next section of this essay.

[58] Benham, *Latin Church Music*, 70.

EXAMPLE 6. Richard Davy, *Salve Regina*, mm. 130-134.

Imitation

Imitation is scarcely utilized as a means of organization between voices in the Eton pieces. As Benham rightly observes, it is employed "on the whole incidentally, rather than structurally"[59] as in the Masses of Josquin. Nonetheless, the opening phrases of the solo sections and the final full section do have a higher probability of containing an imitation than the other sections (e.g., Cornysh's *Salve Regina*, Browne's *Salve Regina I* and *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem*; see Ex. 7-8). In most instances of imitation, only a short sequence of notes in the original voice is imitated by the others, and thus it is more like an "imitative gesture" than a true imitation. The most common intervals between the imitative entries are the unison and the octave, reminding us of the English fondness for rounds and canons.

EXAMPLE 7. Use of imitation in the opening phrase of a solo section of Cornysh's *Salve Regina* (in mm. 96-98). Note also the false relation in m. 92.

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[59] Benham, *Latin Church Music*, 67.

EXAMPLE 8. Use of imitation in the final full section of John Browne's *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem* (mm. 184-189).

The effects of long melismata, on the other hand, are fully exploited. Usually, the words in the beginning of a sentence are set syllabically, and the melisma comes on the penultimate syllable of the sentence. Almost certainly, setting syllables melismatically was conceived by the Eton composers as a way of intensifying expression of emotions in the music, though extended melismata were also inevitable in large-scale choral works when the composers were reluctant to repeat words or sentences in their antiphons. As Harrison points out, the singing of a syllable on the first note of a group of several notes (Ex. 9) is a common idiom in the Eton Choirbook as well.[60]

EXAMPLE 9. Wylkynson, *Salve Regina*, countertenor 2, m. 25.

Word Painting

Instances of word painting are found at scattered corners of the Eton Choirbook. The most admirable example is Browne's musical depiction of the clamour from an excited but confused mob, at the word "crucifige" of his *Stabat Mater*, via fast repeated notes and strong rhythmic contrast between voices (Ex. 10). Benham also suggests that the undulating phrase in mm. 91-94 of

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[60] Harrison, *Medieval Britain*, 323.

Fawkyner's *Gaude rosa sine spina* may be a musical portrayal of the serpent (Ex. 11).[61]

EXAMPLE 10. John Browne, *Stabat Mater*, mm. 145-151.

EXAMPLE 11. Fawkyner, *Gaude rosa sine spina*, mm. 91-94.

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Analysis

We have described above, in general terms, some defining and interesting aspects of the style of the Eton music. To understand further how complex antiphons of such incomparable beauty might possibly be conceived and composed by the Eton choristers, a more detailed analysis of individual pieces is certainly necessary. For pieces in the Eton Choirbook, standard tonal, formal, or harmonic analytical techniques are of little use, because they were originally described for dissecting pieces from later times. Below, we shall attempt to

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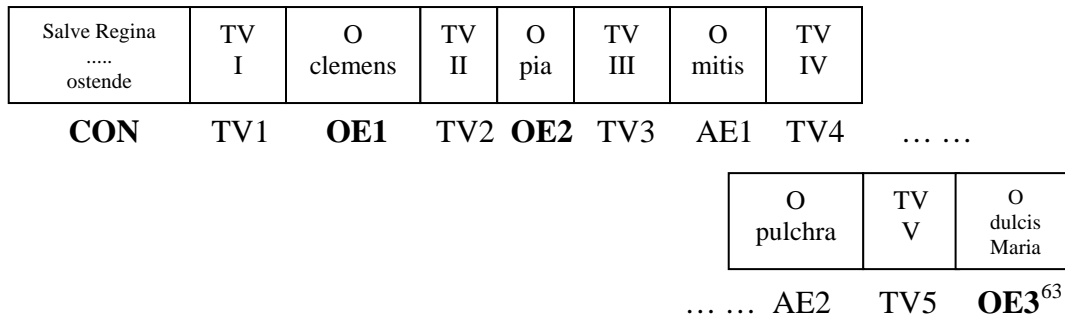[61] Benham, *Latin Church Music*, 61.

characterize one antiphon – John Browne's First *Salve Regina* – with some unconventional methods specifically tailored for these Eton pieces. Among the several large scale antiphons in the Choirbook, this piece of Browne is more subtle, both in its expression and structural characteristics; it is thus easier to see how analysis could shed new light on elements perhaps not so obvious to the ears. In our analysis, we will focus on five aspects of the antiphon – (i) the structure of the text, (ii) the different sections of the antiphon and their relationship with the *cantus firmus*, (iii) rhythmic contrast between the full and reduced sections, (iv) the melodic shape of each voice, and (v) the use of imitation.

The *Salve Regina* Text

One of the four Marian antiphons, the *Salve Regina* text was probably written by Hermannus Contractus (1013-1054).[62] It comprises nine lines of free poetic text with the sixth line ending with the word "ostende," and the last three lines being the exclamations "O clemens, / O pia, / O dulcis Virgo Maria." The chant for the text, printed on p. 276 of the *Liber Usualis*, was probably composed also by Contractus.

The *Salve Regina* text as it appeared in the Sarum rite, however, has a different text structure. After the word "ostende" there are five troped verses punctuated by two of the original exclamations – "O clemens" and "O pia" – as well as two added exclamations – "O mitis" and "O pulchra." The antiphon is then concluded with the cry "O dulcis Maria." The structure of the Sarum version of the *Salve Regina* text is summarized below in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2. Structure of the Sarum Version of the *Salve Regina* text. Each section of the text is labelled with an abbreviated name for easy referencing later. CON, the nine lines written by Contractus; TV, troped verse; OE, original exclamation; and AE, added exclamation.

Salve Regina ..... ostende	TV I	O clemens	TV II	O pia	TV III	O mitis	TV IV			
CON	TV1	**OE1**	TV2	**OE2**	TV3	AE1	TV4	… …		

						O pulchra	TV V	O dulcis Maria
					… … AE2	TV5	**OE3**[63]

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[62] Carol J. Williams, "The Salve Regina Settings in the Eton Choirbook," *Miscellanea Musicologica - Adelaide Studies in Musicology* 10 (1979): 28.
[63] The word "virgo" is omitted in the Sarum version.

The structure of the text of Browne's *Salve Regina I* basically follows that of the Sarum version with a few modifications – AE1, TV4, AE2, and TV5 are omitted, but the word "Salve" is added after the final exclamation "O dulcis Maria," providing the text some structural symmetry. In fact, among all surviving *Salve Regina* settings in the Eton Choirbook, only two use TV5, one uses AE1, and none uses TV4 and AE2.[64] But all have the three troped verses in addition to CON, reminding us of the statutes of Eton College which specifically require the choristers to sing the antiphon *Salve Regina* "with its verses" every evening.

Structure of the Antiphon and Disposition of the *Cantus firmus*

The relationship between the different sections of the antiphon and the *cantus firmus* may best be seen if we represent our piece schematically in the way we represent Wylkynson's *Salve Regina* earlier. Figure 3 shows that in Browne's *Salve Regina I*, the exclamations (OE1, OE2, and OE3) are sung by the full choir, and the three added verses (TV1, TV2, and TV3), by the soloists. This design may originate from the tradition of reserving the troped portions of a plainsong for a soloist, and the original text and music, for the choir.[65]

Figure 3 also shows that the overall structure of the antiphon is very well balanced. The antiphon is divided into two halves, the former written in triple meter, and the latter, in duple meter. While the former contains the original text by Contractus (CON), the latter contains the troped verses and the exclamations. The *cantus firmus* (the plainsong *Maria ego unxit),*[66] used only in the full sections, is stated twice in the *Salve Regina* with one statement in each half of the antiphon. The first and second statements of the plainsong consist of 47 dotted minims[67] and 45 semibreves, respectively, and if we assume that the dotted minim of a perfect measure was equivalent to the semibreve of an imperfect measure,[68] the two statements of the *cantus firmus* have roughly the same length. The closeness in length of the two solo sections in the first half (S1 and S2), of the three troped verses (S3, S4+S5 and S6), and of the three exclamations (T4, T5 and T6) also contribute to the structure's balance, albeit less obviously. Also, the full   sections   take   up   roughly   half   of   the   *Salve   Regina*,   for

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[64] See Williams, 36-37 for a detailed comparison of the different *Salve Regina* texts in the Choirbook.

[65] Frank Llewellyn Harrison, "An English Caput," *Music and Letters* 33 (1952): 205.

[66] Harrison, "The Eton Choirbook," 170.

[67] Harrison's claim that there are 45 dotted minims in the first statement (p. 314) appears to be a typo.

[68] Harrison, *Medieval Britain*, 314.

(6+2+42+10+11+24)/(75+130) = 0.46 ~ ½. How this antiphon is sectionalized appears to have been carefully worked out by the composer.

FIGURE 3. Voice combinations in the different sections of John Browne's *Salve Regina I*. The text labels for the antiphon's seven sections match those shown in Fig. 2. The number of dotted minims (section 1) or semibreves (sections 2 to 7) within each segment of the *cantus firmus* (represented in the diagram by black horizontal lines below the shaded block) is indicated by the number above each horizontal line.
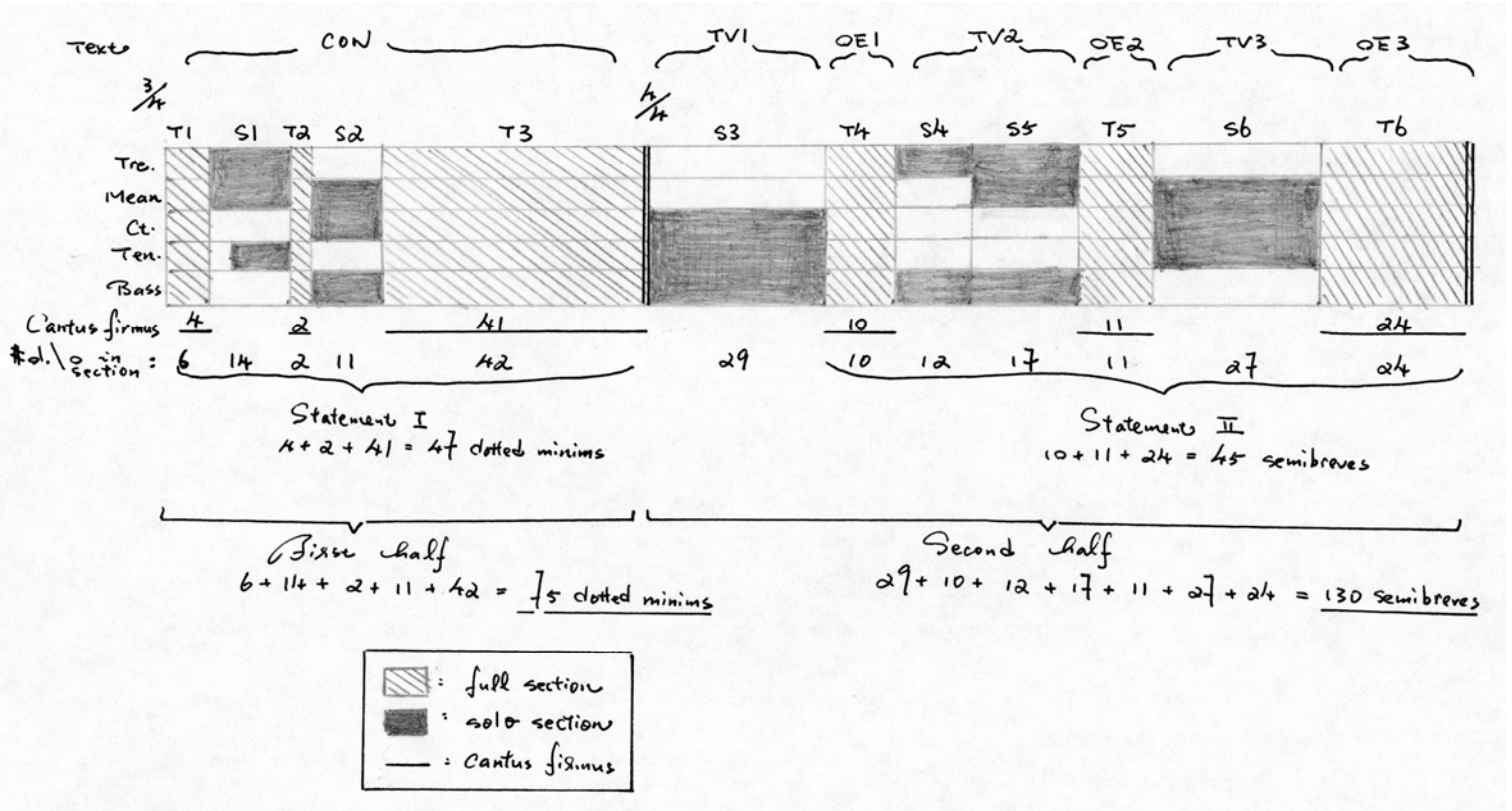
Rhythmic Contrast between the Solo and Tutti Sections

As mentioned in the previous section, in a piece from the Eton Choirbook the solo sections tend to have notes of shorter note values as compared with the tutti sections. In the First *Salve Regina* of John Browne, this observation may be demonstrated with statistical means. In each voice, the number of notes in each measure was counted, and the frequency of notes in each measure calculated by the formula,

Note frequency =

Number of notes present ÷ Number of crotchets in the measure .

The average note frequency of each voice was calculated for each section of the antiphon. The values were then plotted (Fig. 4) and compared. In the figure, the

bars of each panel represent the average note frequencies of the tutti and the solo sections, coloured blue and red, respectively. The dotted horizontal line marks the lowest frequency attained by the red bars. In all voices except the treble, all the blue bars are below the dotted line, suggesting clearly that the solo sections tend to have faster notes than the full sections. That the difference in average note frequency between the full and reduced sections is especially obvious in the tenor voice reminds us of the tradition of setting the *cantus firmus* in long notes. The two unusually low note frequencies in S4 and S5 of the treble voice, however, should be regarded as two exceptions to the rule.

FIGURE 4. Average note frequencies of the different sections of Browne's *Salve Regina I*. Section labels are the same as those shown in Figure 3. The bars representing note frequencies of the solo sections are coloured red, and those representing the full sections, blue. In each histogram, the dotted horizontal line marks the lowest note frequency attained by the red bars.
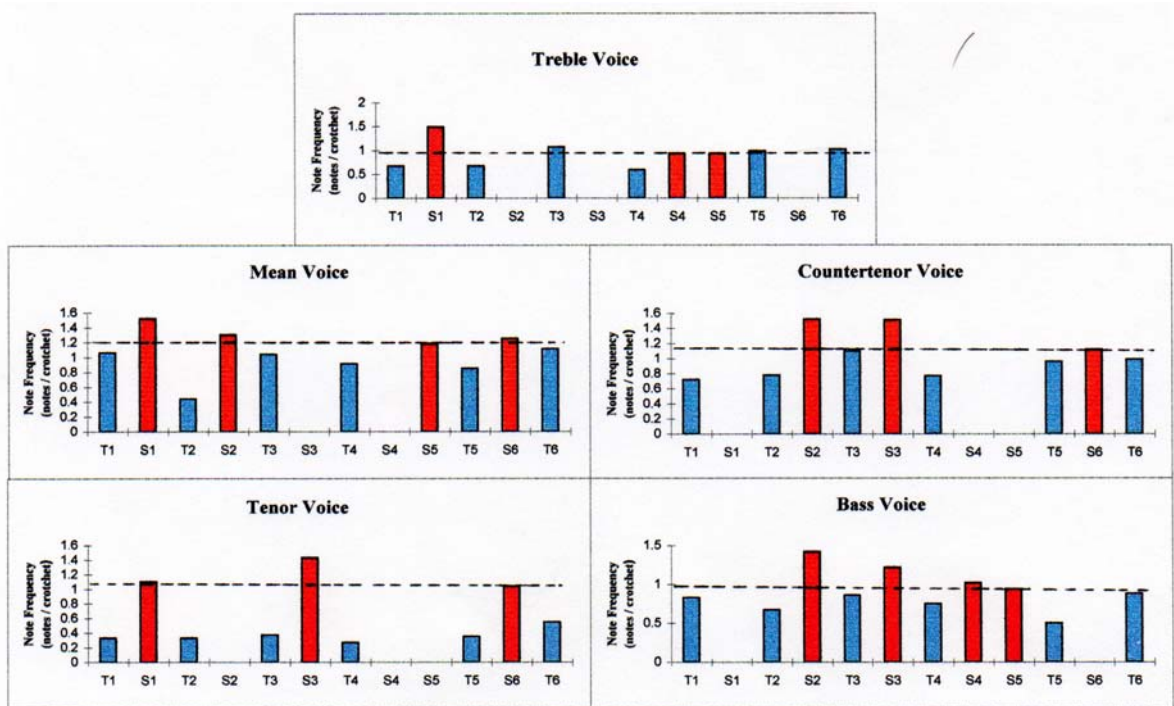

Melody and Rhythm

It is perhaps not surprising that a melodic analysis begins with segmentation of the melody in question (as implied by the meaning of "analysis"). For pieces of the Classico-Romantic tradition, a melody may be conveniently divided into smaller modules according to the distribution of melodic motives or

the melody's underlying harmonic progression.   Concepts of harmony and motivic development as we understand them today, when applied to pieces composed by Eton choristers living in the reign of Henry VIII, are obviously much less useful. Indeed, the choristers' ways of organizing melodies (if they had any) have remained obscure to historians and analysts alike. As Benham remarks, in an Eton piece an "individual melodic line is marked by irregular phrasing and a generally unpredictable, one might almost say irrational, progress."[69]   A systematic method for dividing an Etonian melody into segments is in order.

        We shall use the following strategy of segmentation in our analysis of Browne's *Salve Regina I.* Any melody is regarded as a sequence of ascending and descending lines alternating with each other, and thus, is dividable into unidirectional segments according to the melodic contour. As an example illustrating this segmentation scheme, the melody in the treble voice in the opening tutti section of the antiphon,

EXAMPLE 12a. John Browne, *Salve Regina I*, treble, mm. 1-6.
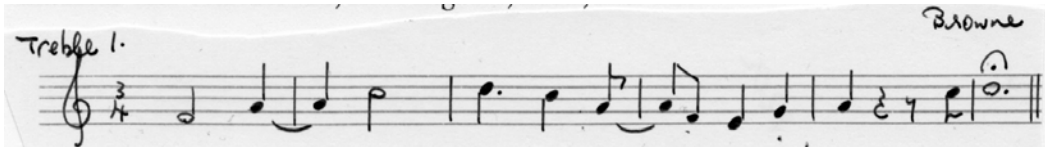
can be separated into three unidirectional lines – an ascending line from *f'* to *d''*, followed by a descending line from *d''* to *e'*, and then another ascending line from *e'* to *d''*:

EXAMPLE 12b. The three unidirectional segments in mm. 1-6 (treble) of Browne's *Salve Regina I.*

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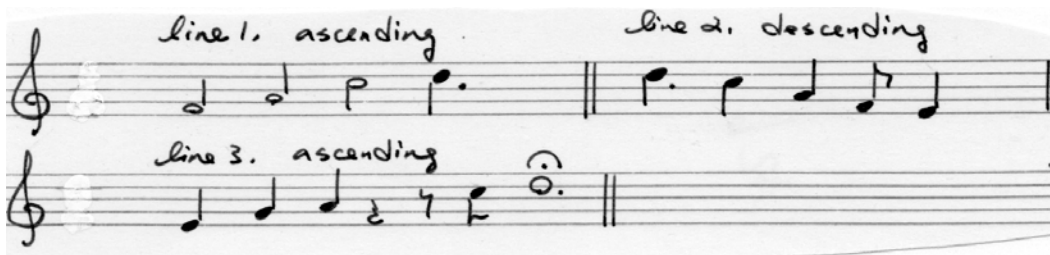
[69] Benham, *Latin Church Music*, 67.

Note that the first *d''* in Ex. 12 is both the last note of the beginning ascending line and the first note of the following descending line. Similarly, the *e'* in the example is both the last note of the descending line and the first of the second ascending line.

We then proceed to divide each of the five voices of the antiphon into unidirectional segments, ignoring the intervening rests in the segmentation process. These segments may then serve as basic melodic units for further analyses and line characterizations. We may, for instance, define the following quantifiable characters for each segment, and subsequently gather a statistic for each quantity summarizing the values of all ascending and descending segments in each voice.

(a) The *span* (*S*) of a line is the number of semitones between the first and last notes of the line. For example, the span of the first ascending line in Ex. 12 is nine.

(b) The *number of notes* (*N*) in a line is the number of pitches composing the line. Any repeated note is not counted.

(c) The *average interval* (*I*) of a line is defined by the following quotient:
$$I \equiv S \div (N - 1) \, .$$
For example, the first ascending line of Ex. 12 has an *I* of $9 \div (4 - 1) = 3$ semitones.

(d) The *time* (*T*) of a line is the number of crotchets in the line.

(e) The *starting pitch* (*P*) of a line is the pitch of the first note of the line. The *P* of the *F* note, the lowest pitch used in Browne's *Salve Regina I*, is defined to be 1. A note which is *k* semitones above *F* will have a *P* of $1 + k$ (e.g., the *P* of the *G* note = 1+2 = 3).

To characterize the lines of a particular voice in a particular section of the antiphon, we can simply determine the *S*, *N*, *I*, *T*, and *P* of each unidirectional segment in that section, and calculate an average value for each variable, separately for the ascending and descending lines. Table 1 lists the average values accounting all lines from all full sections in the antiphon. The average values for *S*, *T*, and *P* in Table 1 are graphically presented in Figure 5, and those for *I*, in Figure 6. Values characterizing the lines in the solo sections may be obtained similarly.

TABLE 1. Characterizing the melodic lines in the full sections of John Browne's *Salve Regina I*. All values shown are average values. Abbreviations: ↑, ascending; ↓, descending; Tre., treble; Ct. , countertenor; Ten., tenor.

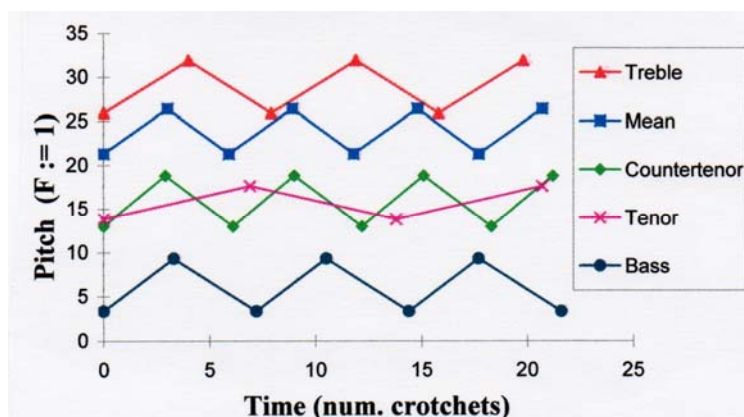| Voice	Span (*S*) (semitone)		Num. Notes (*N*)		Avg. Int. (*I*) (semitone)		Time (*T*) (num. crotchets)		Starting Pitch (*P*)
	↑ lines	↓ lines	↑ lines	↓ lines	↑ lines	↓ lines	↑ lines	↓ lines	
Tre.	6.0	5.9	3.0	3.8	3.5	2.5	4.0	3.9	25.9
Mean	5.1	5.1	2.6	2.8	3.5	3.2	3.0	2.9	21.3
Ct.	5.9	5.7	2.7	2.9	3.8	3.7	2.9	3.2	13.0
Ten.	3.8	3.7	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.4	6.9	6.9	13.8
Bass	6.0	5.9	2.4	2.9	4.7	3.9	3.3	3.9	3.3

FIGURE 5. The five-part texture of the full sections of Browne's *Salve Regina I* as summarized by the *S*, *T* and *P* values in Table 1. For each voice, the difference in *S* between the ascending and descending lines is assumed to be negligible. Note that in the figure, the *P* of the *F* note is defined to be 1.
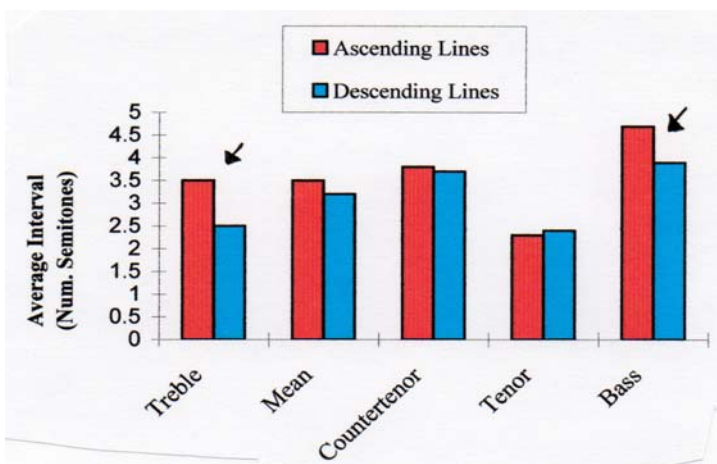

FIGURE 6. Average intervals of the five voices in the full sections of Browne's *Salve Regina I*. Note that for both treble and bass, the *I*'s for the ascending lines are greater those that for the descending lines.

Figure 5 shows clearly why the treble sounds separated from the rest of the voices in the tutti sections. Firstly, the narrow compass of the tenor lies within that of the countertenor, and thus, these two voices are blended with each other by moving in similar ranges. At the same time, the mean and countertenor ascend and descend with almost the same frequency, resulting in their blending by moving in similar directions. The treble, on the other hand, not only has a very high range, but also has lines longer than those of the mean and countertenor. The net result is thus a highly conspicuous treble floating above a homogenously sounding texture.

Another feature of the five-part texture in the full sections of the antiphon is shown in Figure 6. Both the treble and bass have their *I*'s for the ascending lines greater than those for the descending lines (as indicated by the two arrows in the figure), suggesting that they tend to ascend with larger steps, and descend with smaller. However, the three inner voices ascend and descend with about the same *I*'s. This difference between the treble and the inner voices in melodic intervals further reinforce the very distinguishable character of the treble. In view of this difference in melodic shape between the outer and inner voices, it is tempting to speculate that Browne composed the treble and bass around the *cantus firmus* first before he filled in the middle range with the mean and countertenor parts.

Rhythm is also an important element in melody. We compare here the distribution of note values in the ascending lines with that in the descending lines, shown graphically in Figure 7 (for the treble) and Figure 8 (for the bass). In both figures, the crotchet and quaver occur more frequently in the ascending lines than in the descending, and the dotted crotchet, dotted quaver, and semiquaver, less frequently. To confirm whether these observations are underpinned by recurring rhythmic figures in either the ascending or descending lines, we identify rhythms appearing repeatedly in the antiphon, and count their occurrences in the ascending and descending lines. The rhythms and their associated numbers of occurrences are tabulated below (Table 2).

FIGURE 7. Distribution of note values for the ascending and descending lines of the treble voice of Browne's *Salve Regina I*.
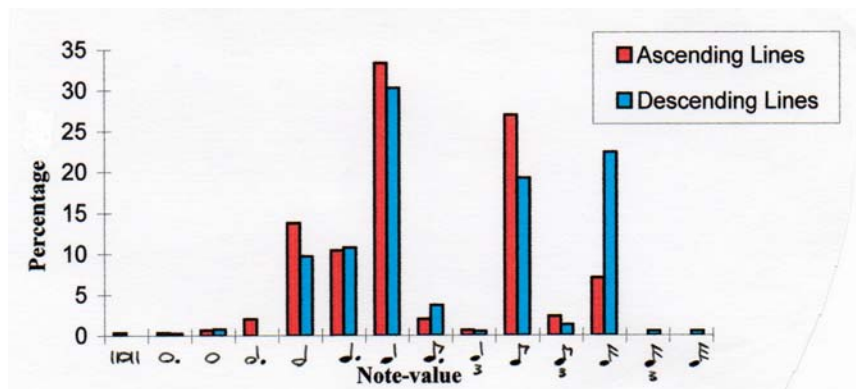
FIGURE 8. Distribution of note values for the ascending and descending lines of the bass voice of Browne's *Salve Regina I*.
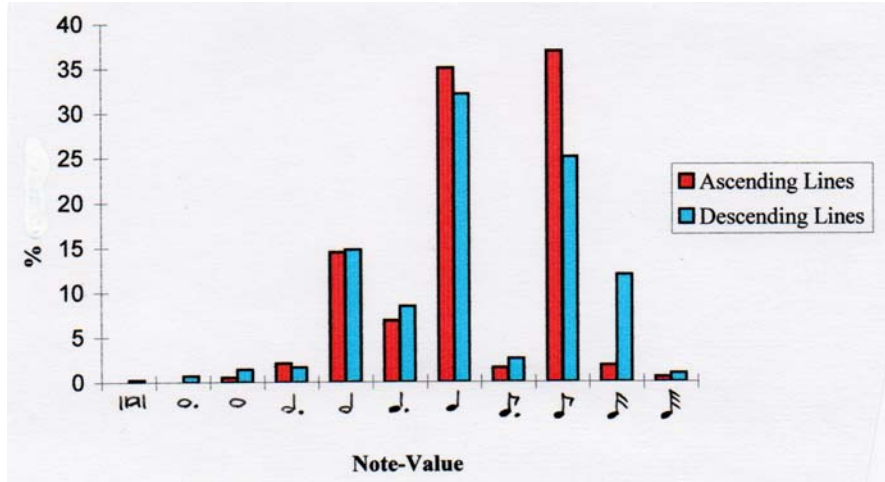

TABLE 2. Number of occurrences of different rhythms in the ascending and descending lines of the treble and bass voices of John Browne's *Salve Regina I*. Each rhythm is labelled with a capital letter for easy referencing. Any number shown in parenthesis refers to the number of occurrences of that rhythm counting also instances in all compound rhythms (A-A, B-B, B-D etc.) associated with that rhythm.

Rhythm		Treble		Bass	
		↑ lines	↓ lines	↑ lines	↓ lines
A		0	13 (16)	0	7 (9)
B		2 (4)	3 (12)	2	6 (7)
C		0	3 (7)	0	1 (2)
D		1	7 (14)	7	7 (16)
E		1 (2)	2 (10)	0	3 (4)
F		0	2 (5)	0	3
G		0	2	0	3 (4)
H		0	1	0	2
I		0	1	0	0
J		0	3	0	1
K		2 (5)	2	10	4
L		1 (2)	1	1	2
M		6 (7)	2	17	5
N		1	0	0	0
A-A		0	1	0	0
B-B		0	3	0	0
B-D		0	1	0	1
B-E		0	1	0	0

B-K	2	0	0	0
C-A	0	1	0	0
D-C	0	3	0	1
D-D	0	0	0	4
E-D	0	1	0	0
E-F	0	3	0	0
E-M	1	0	0	0
G-A	0	0	0	1
G-E	0	0	0	1
K-L	1	0	0	0
B-D-E	0	1	0	0
E-E-D	0	1	0	0

The above table shows that in both treble and bass, those rhythms consisting of a longer note value (which, in most cases, is a dotted note value) followed by several shorter note values (rhythms A to I in Table 2) tend to occur more frequently in the descending lines; those rhythms consisting of repeated note values (rhythms J to N in Table 2) are mostly found in the ascending lines. This observation is consistent with our earlier finding that the descending lines have more dotted note values, and the ascending lines, more crotchets and quavers. Furthermore, most of the compound rhythms (rhythms A-A to E-E-D in Table 2) occur when the melodic line is going downwards, and the treble also has more combinations of rhythms than the bass. The two conclusions that can be drawn from Table 2 are: (i) in both the treble and bass, the descending lines contribute more to the rhythmic variety of the melody, and (ii) the treble is more rhythmically dynamic than the bass. Owing to its rhythmic activities in the descending lines, it is thus no wonder that the treble tends to descend with short intervals, as we have seen in Fig. 6. The reliance on the descending lines in forging rhythmic vitality and fluidity of the uppermost voice, itself already very distinguishable from the inner voices owing to its high range and longer lines, may be viewed as a hallmark of Browne's compositional style.

Imitation

Like the other Eton composers, Browne treats imitation with much flexibility and freedom. In most instances of imitation in his *Salve Regina I*, only a short sequence of notes in the original voice is imitated by the other participating voices, as shown in the following example. Another interesting feature of this example is that even though the mean voice is not a *cantus firmus*,

it bears similarity in shape to a Sarum plainsong excerpt (shown above the mean in the example) set to a text the same as that to the antiphon in those measures.

EXAMPLE 13. Browne, *Salve Regina I*, mm. 27-30.

Sometimes, a variation on the original voice introduced in one of the imitative voices is copied by the other voices following.[70] In Ex. 14, the third minim in the countertenor is omitted in both tenor and bass; the rhythmic figure   ,   introduced by the tenor, is imitated by the bass, resulting in a continuously descending line from *d''* to *G* (marked by an arrow in the example).

EXAMPLE 14. Browne, *Salve Regina I*, mm. 76-80.

Finally, it is worthy of note that the *cantus firmus* can also participate in imitative sequences, as shown in Ex. 15.

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[70] For an example of this in Browne's *Stabat Mater*, see Tom Borugian, "Use of Imitation in John Browne's *Stabat Mater"* (MUSC 524 Term Paper, U. of British Columbia, 1998), 3.

EXAMPLE 15. Browne, *Salve Regina I*, mm. 190-195. Notes marked with * are part of the *cantus firmus*.

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It is easy for us to forget that the pieces preserved in the Eton Choirbook were originally composed, and sung, for expressing the choristers' devotion to the Catholic church and the Blessed Virgin as we listen to modern performances or recordings of them. It may be difficult to imagine how the choristers united their inner religious sentiments with music of such complexity and floridity, but, as the Catholic Elizabethan William Byrd writes, "as among artisans it is shameful in a craftsman to make a rude piece of work from some precious material, so indeed to sacred words in which the praises of God and of the Heavenly host are sung, none but some celestial harmony (so far as our powers avail) will be proper."[71] Perhaps, to the Eton choristers, the texture of a fluid, melismatic treble floating on top of dense layers of inner voices burying a slowly-moving *cantus firmus* is a representation of celestial harmony in sound. Approximating this order in an art work can itself be an expression of piety.

As evidenced by the recent Eton recordings of Harry Christophers and The Sixteen, these Eton pieces, when sung skilfully, do carry a spiritual dimension that transcends time and different religious tenets, a facet not captured by our analyses and descriptions. The sonic spaciousness of the well-proportioned *Salve Regina*'s mirrors the architectural splendour of cathedrals; the contrapuntal nuances of the many antiphons, on the other hand, compare well with the

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[71] William Byrd, Dedications and forewords to *Gradualia* (1605-1607), as cited in *Source Readings in Music History – The Renaissance*, ed. Oliver Strunk (New York: Norton, 1965), 137-138.

beautiful and elegant calligraphy on the Eton manuscripts themselves. Lubricating these qualities are an English sweetness in the harmonies, and an angelic transparency in the texture, making the music at times sensuously exquisite. This unique sound created by the Eton choristers must be counted as one of the most significant contributions of England to the heritage of Western classical music.

For Prof. J. Evan Kreider
May 1ˢᵗ, 2000 (Rev. October 2008)

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