Abstracts

Theme
The Alamire Complex
Guest Editor: Zoe Saunders

Plus oultre, Pierre de la Rue, and the Emperor’s Music
Honey Meconi

The manuscript Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Handschriftensammlung, Ms. 9814 includes a section compiled under the supervision of Petrus Alamire that contains five motets and one anonymous chanson, Plus oultre. The works are anomalous within Alamire’s output, copied as they are on a series of separate paper folios. The essay demonstrates that the anonymous chanson, inspired by the motto adopted by Archduke Charles at the age of sixteen, is unlikely to be by the recently retired court composer Pierre de la Rue. It further documents how most of the non-Alamire works included in the manuscript are directly connected to later members of the Habsburg dynasty, strengthening the likelihood that the Alamire portions of the manuscript were not transmitted through the Fugger family, as usually assumed, but via imperial channels. The texts of the Alamire motets are shown to reflect the image of the young Charles and to mirror the sentiments of the Plus oultre chanson, thereby unifying the collection.

The Apotheosis of the Salve regina and the Purpose of Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Mus.ms. 34
Aaron James

The richly decorated musical manuscripts produced in the famous workshop of Petrus Alamire represent the highest standard of craftsmanship in early sixteenth-century manuscript production, serving not only as practical performing scores but also as political gifts symbolizing Habsburg prestige. Among Alamire’s manuscripts, however, is a collection whose contents set it apart from its neighbours: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Mus. Ms. 34 [MunBS 34], a choirbook containing twenty-nine settings of the Marian antiphon Salve regina. Because of the repertory it contains, the manuscript has typically been linked to the practical needs of Marian devotional culture, particularly the Salve service. However, close examination of the layout of the manuscript and conspicuous clues left by the scribe suggest that the manuscript was not intended primarily as a performing score, nor does it show signs of having been used in the chapel of Wilhelm IV of Bavaria, the manuscript’s recipient. Instead, the collection’s significance lies in its demonstration of a wide range of approaches to setting the venerable Salve regina text, deploying the chant melody independently or in combination with secular chanson tunes to imply numerous
possible intertextual meanings. This lavish and varied elaboration of a single text suggests that, for the aristocratic owners of MunBS 34, the Salve regina was understood as a distinct and prestigious genre capable of sustaining a rich and varied theological discourse.

A Virgin, a Lineage, and an Elector: Ancestry and Imagery in Thüringer Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Ms. 22
Hannah Mowrey Clarke
Created between 1500 and 1505 and acquired by Elector Frederick the Wise, Jena, Thüringer Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, Ms. 22, an early Habsburg-Burgundian manuscript, is distinguished for its large collection of masses by Pierre de la Rue. Manuscripts that left the Habsburg-Burgundian workshops often boasted impressive artwork, including splendid borders, inked calligraphic initials, and intricate miniatures. The artists who painted the miniatures frequently offered a stunning visual portrayal of the music’s theme. At first glance, JenaU 22 appears slighted in this respect, since the choirbook contains only one miniature. Furthermore, this miniature, which accompanies Jacob Obrecht’s Missa Sicut spina rosam, is placed unusually late—on fol. 102—seemingly as an afterthought. Despite much commentary on the cantus firmus, musical structure, date, and origin of the Missa Sicut spina rosam, the miniature accompanying this mass has been overlooked. Yet by examining the intricate correlation between the miniature and the themes in Obrecht’s mass, this paper suggests that the image/mass combination reflects upon the doctrine of the Virgin Mary’s Immaculate Conception, one of the most contentious theological debates of the early sixteenth century. The subtle aural and visual theological clues found in JenaU 22 point almost prophetically to important themes that run not only throughout Frederick’s impressive collection, but the entire corpus of Habsburg-Burgundian manuscripts.

Free papers

Reading Hagiographic Motets: Christi nutu sublimato, Lamberte vir inclite, and the Legend of St. Lambert
Catherine Saucier
Two fifteenth-century motets, Christi nutu sublimato ascribed to Johannes Brassart and the anonymous Lamberte vir inclite, are assumed to originate from the city of Liège on account of their common addressee, the diocesan patron St. Lambert. This resemblance is matched by notable similarities in manuscript transmission and musical style. Copied adjacently in two sources, I-AO 15 and I-TRmp 87-1, these works share distinct melodic motives and similar patterns of textural variety. Yet what do the texts of the two motets reveal about their shared saintly subject?

A comparative reading of Christi nutu sublimato and Lamberte vir inclite uncovers previously unidentified hagiographic parallels originating from late-medieval accretions to St. Lambert’s life, strengthening the possibility that this music was written and sung in fifteenth-century Liège. We find the tools with which to interpret enigmatic references to legends and miracles related to Lambert’s youth, episcopate, and death in studies of literary and pictorial hagiography. By analyzing the symbolism and complementary function of these equal discantus motets, we
recognize how freely composed votive polyphony draws from and enhances hagiographic narrative.

Research and Performance Practice Forum

Time Travel and its Discontents: Historical Performance, Historical Reconstruction, and Culture Tourism
Joshua Rifkin
Mediating between the past and the present has always presented a challenge to practitioners of early music. If they no longer face the charges of historical escapism, or even fetishism, that once burdened their existence, the recognition of how much they reflect predilections very much of our own time brings its new questions and problems. To what extent do we seek to ‘recreate history’; to what extent do we choose to ignore it? Does our interest focus on contexts or on works—or does it do so differently under different circumstances, and if so, why? Consideration of this last dichotomy in particular suggests that, in practice at least, some currently favoured trends in presentation reflect criteria at odds with the motives that supposedly underlie them.