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PALESTRINA'S AND PORTA'S CHORAL MASS SETTINGS OF *DESCENDIT ANGELUS DOMINUS*: A COMPARISON

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Abstract
L'obiettivo di questo saggio è di fornire una descrizione e una comparazione delle procedure di prestito evidenti nelle messe di Porta e Palestrina che si basano sul mottetto di Penet Descendit Angelus Domini*. Il saggio esplora le motivazioni dei due compositori nella loro selezione di modelli, incluso il contesto ecclesiastico all'interno del quale entrambi trascorsero la loro vita, la loro modalità di frequentazione di una determinata tradizione artistica – modalità che sono di imitazione, di emulazione, di omaggio e di competizione – e la loro dipendenza dallo stile del modello. Il saggio inoltre affronta questa selezione di modelli da parte dei due autori a paragone di quella dei loro contemporanei, e* come *l'estensione e ramificazione dei loro adattamenti si rifletta sulle loro procedure stilistiche e, più in generale, sul loro sguardo complessivo di compositori.*

Keywords: Palestrina, Porta, Parody, *Imitatio,* Polyphony

Introduction

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Costanzo Porta, two of the most venerated musical exponents of the Italian Renaissance, both wrote mass settings based upon Penet’s motet *Descendit Angelus Domini*[1]. The goal of the present paper is to provide a description and comparison of the borrowing procedures evident in their choral settings, and, in the process, address the following crucial issues: a) what motivated Palestrina and Porta in their selection of model? b) how does their selection of models compare with that of their contemporaries? c) to what extent do the ramifications of their reworking processes reflect on their stylistic procedures and outlooks as composers?

As is well known, the tradition of reshaping existing music for a new use was an extremely important procedure of musical composition in Italy during the Renaissance. This was specifically the case in the extensive literature of the mass which played so prominent a role among the major musical genres of the time[2]. These musical compositions displayed a wealth of invention in recasting their models, freely reworking the musical themes and fabric of another composer’s choral work. However, it has been clearly established that the musical borrowings did not involve a mere appropriation of musical material from other works. The composer’s ingenuity was tested by his ability to discover and exploit new and interesting possibilities of simultaneous alignment of the voice-parts of the model. The more he could transform his model, incorporating as much as possible while creating a new work as different as possible from its source, the stronger a composer he would demonstrate himself to be[3].

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[1] Palestrina’s four-voice mass *Descendit Angelus Domini* may be found in Palestrina (1969:1-31). Note that the first original version was printed by Istituto Italiano per la Storia della Musica, Rome – prior to the Kalmus reprint. Porta’s five-voice mass may be found in Porta (1964-70:1-17). Penet’s motet may be found as a transcription in Quereau (1974:253-257).

[2] The reformulation of pre-existent models was frequently encountered in other genres, apart from the mass, including the chanson, magnificat, motet and instrumental pieces.

[3] Various musicologists have touched on the subject of a possible connection between the practice of basing new musical works on previously composed models and the classical concept of *imitatio* as understood and fostered in Renaissance literature and the visual arts, but they differ amongst themselves as to *imitatio*’s exact meaning, nature, and extent. This concept was first introduced into Renaissance musicology by Lockwood (1966). It was given broader explication by Brown (1982). Further views were explored by Perkins (1984 and 1987); Burkholder (1985 & 1987); Wegman (1989); and Meconi (1994). Meconi gives

While Palestrina (1525-1594) had an essentially Roman career deeply rooted in the papal Rome of the ascendant Counter-Reformation, Porta (1528/9-1601) – both a revered composer, and prominent teacher of north Italian composers – held positions in several Italian cities including Venice, Cremona, Padua and Ravenna. Both composers were inextricably linked to the Church, and their oeuvres were centrally devoted to sacred choral music, especially to the composition of masses[4].

While Palestrina's and Porta's mass settings based on Penet's *Descendit Angelus Domini* are similar with regard to structural delineation, organisational principles, and expressive projection; they differ with regard to overall style and manipulation of texture. Concerning the former aspects, the two masses demonstrate the same carefully balanced and articulated musical phrases, smoothness of line, regularly-used intervals, and – in the area of rhythmic motion – a similar cautious handling of durational components that proceed gradually from longer to shorter note values back to longer values within successive phrases. Secondly, they share a similar judicious use of dissonance and chromaticism to generate forward movement, and, finally, both mass settings focus on the delivery and content of the mass text so that all text segments are clearly defined and are highlighted by their polyphonic textural treatment which in turn reinforces structural and formal articulation.

With regard to overall style and textural manipulation, Palestrina's mass shows taut structural control by allowing each musical motive to permeate all the voices through structural imitation, and by careful cadential planning. Porta's more concise setting, on the other hand,

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us an invaluable synopsis of the divergent views of Lockwood, Brown, Perkins, Burkholder and Wegman: hence no further interpretation of these musicological and analytical contributions is necessary here. Meconi, in her provocative article, questions the link between musical and rhetorical imitation. She feels that there is insufficient proof that compositional practices were inspired by rhetorical theories of *imitatio*. Also see Meconi (2004).

[4] Palestrina's music is subjected to detailed analysis in Jeppesen (1946); and Quereau (1982). Also see the essays on Palestrina commemorating the fourth centenary of the composer's death in *Early Music* (1994) and in Rostirolla, Soldati & Zomparelli (2006). Further recent related studies include Addamiano & Luisi (2013); and Sherr (2016). Porta's masses are given detailed analysis in Pruett (1960 & 1969), Sartori (1977); and Fenlon (1983).

highlights a predilection for brevity and refined homophonic writing, leavened by simple polyphony. Rather than emphasising the development of motivic complexes set in a syntactic imitative contrapuntal style, Porta's mass focuses on sonority and voice grouping involving a conversational type of alternation between subgroups of the main choir[5].

Analysis and Comparison

The musical model selected by Palestrina and Porta was a two-part, aBcB responsory form motet for four voices by the French composer Hilaire Penet. The masses of Palestrina and Porta appear to be the only two works of the period which draw upon Penet's motet. The texture of the model is characterised by pervasive imitation but is not so contrapuntally dense as to obscure clarity and stability of motivic content. Both *Partes* of the motet contain three lengthy textual phrases each of which is accompanied musically by a motivic complex which in turn is further subdivided[6]. While the two masses, as noted above, bear strong resemblances in terms of organisational principles, they differ substantially in their approaches to musical borrowing procedures, reflecting the dissimilarities in overall style and textural manipulation[7].

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[5] Note that the Kyrie, Gloria and Credo of Porta's mass demonstrate a penchant for quasi-homophonic, polychoral writing, while his Sanctus and Agnus are increasingly polyphonic displaying strict contrapuntal writing in line with many of his other compositions, particularly his earlier motets, which are relentlessly polyphonic.

[6] When referring to the use of borrowed material, Roman numerals are used to designate motivic complexes, and letters their subdivisions. Thus, in the *Prima Pars*, the textual phrases with accompanying musical motives may be enumerated as follows: "Descendit angelus Domini" (musical motive 1a) "ad Zachariam dicens" (musical motive 1b), "accipe puerum" (musical motive 2a) "in senectute tua" (musical motive 2b), "et habebit nomen Joannes Baptista" (musical motive 3). In the *Secunda Pars*, motivic complexes are designated as follows: "Ne timeas" (musical motive 4a), "quoniam exaudita est" (musical motive 4b) "oratio tua" (musical motive 4c), "et Elisabeth uxor tua pariet tibi filium:" (musical motive 5), "et habebit nomen Joannes Baptista" (musical motive 6). Note that motivic complexes are defined predominantly by their text content rather than their musical content. Also note that musical motives 3 and 6 – representing the concluding sections of each *pars* of the motet – are the same, as *Descendit Angelus Domini* is a responsory motet.

[7] Note that the two masses of Palestrina and Porta vary slightly with regard to the subdivisions of their movements. The subdivisions within the Kyrie, Gloria and Agnus Dei follow standard patterns. Both Credos are divided into three divisions: "Patrem

Palestrina’s *Missa Descendit Angelus Domini*

Palestrina’s four-voice mass is intensely reliant upon the fabric of the model and borrows extensively from all voices of the motet. Original material alone, i.e. material not derived from the model, is seldom found within his mass. The dependence of mass on model is also seen in the number of times that extensive polyphonic borrowing occurs. There are more instances of three, four and five-voice borrowings than of two-voice or linear borrowing. Moreover, these polyphonic borrowings frequently encompass a substantial number of bars in succession. Thus, Palestrina skilfully manipulates all voices of the model, reworking the latter’s characteristic musical motives and general structure in each movement of his mass – borrowing, transforming and interweaving contrapuntal relationships between successive entries of motives. (See Examples 1a, b, c and 2a, b below with accompanying analytical discussion).

As was the norm in many 16th century imitation masses, the opening and closing phrases of each movement of Palestrina’s mass, the openings of most subdivisions and the material used in several other sections are determined by the opening and conclusion of the model and by the order of points of imitation within the model. For example, the opening of all divisions of the mass borrow from the opening model point of imitation, and the concluding section of both *partes* of the motet serves to conclude all movements of the mass excluding the Sanctus. Furthermore, the opening of many subdivisions of Palestrina’s mass – including the *Qui tollis,* the *Et iterum*, *Benedictus*, and *Agnus Dei* II – borrow the opening motivic complex of the *Secunda Pars* of Penet’s motet. Palestrina’s tendency to borrow the original sequence of model motives in order is notable, particularly in his earlier imitation masses. This cyclic distribution of pre-existent material may be seen,

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omnipotentum”, “Crucifixus” and “Et iterum” in the case of Palestrina; and “Patrem omnipotentum”, “Crucifixus” and “Et in Spiritum” in the case of Porta. Both masses employ a three-fold division of the Sanctus with subdivisions at the “Sanctus”, “Benedictus” and “Hosanna”. Also note that in the Palestrina mass, written for four voices, the “Benedictus” is written for a reduced number of voices, while the number of voices is increased from four to five in the second “Agnus Dei”. In the Porta mass, written for five voices, there is a reduction of voices at both the “Crucifixus” and “Benedictus”.

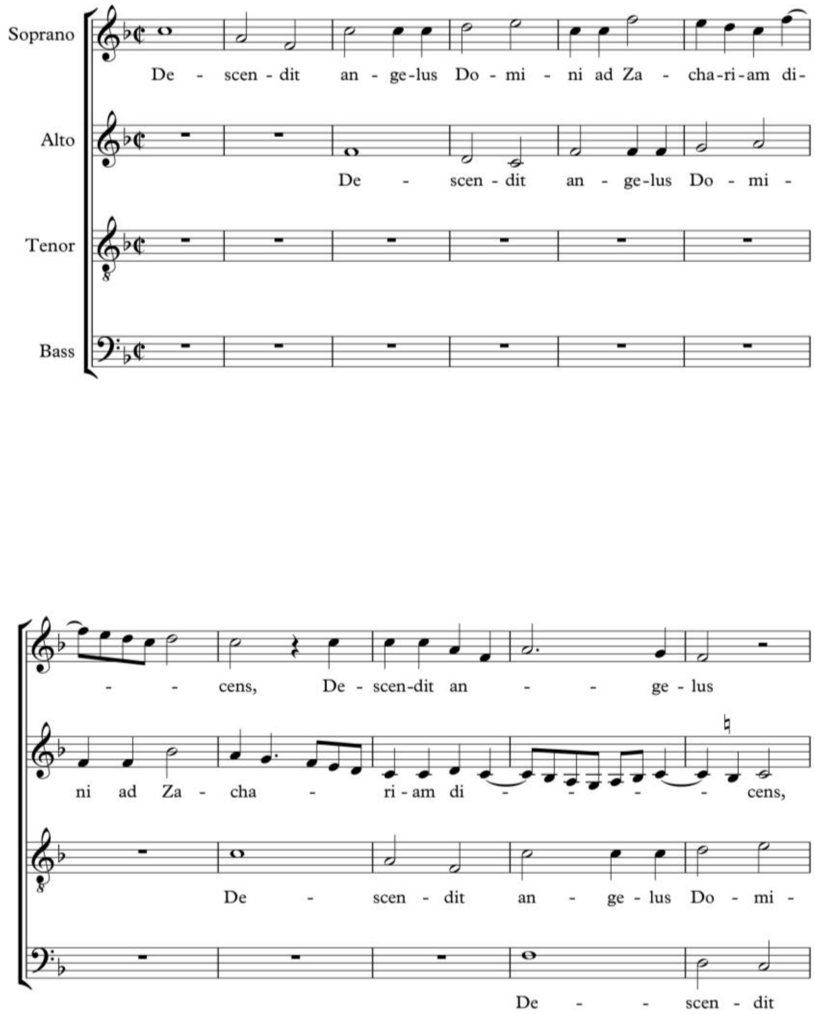
for instance, in the Kyrie where the first five model points of imitation from the *prima pars* of the motet (motives 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, and 3) are employed in order; in the first subdivision of the Gloria (bars 1-57) where the first five model points appear consecutively; in the final subdivision of the Credo (bars 191- 217) where motivic complexes 4a, 4b, 5, and 6 are borrowed in succession; and finally at the openings of the Sanctus and Agnus Dei where motives 1a, 1b and 2a appear.

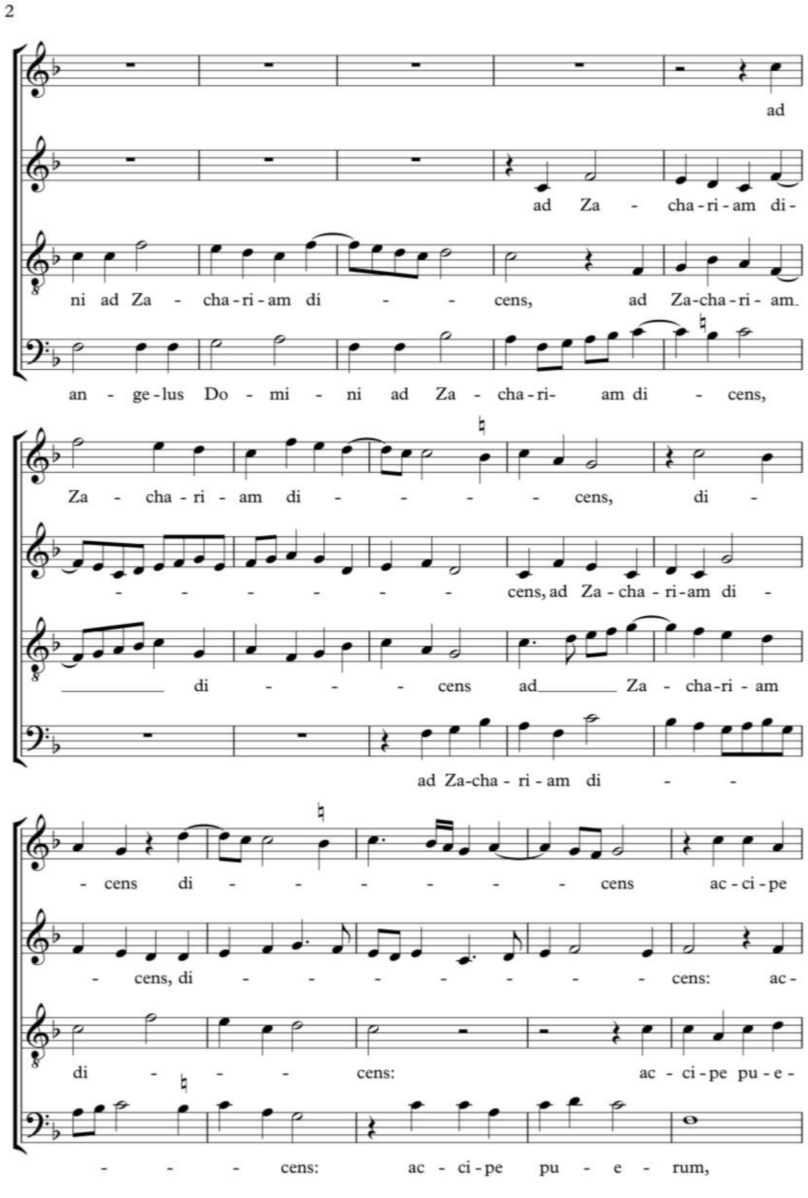
As did many other 16th century mass composers, Palestrina frequently reinforces text repetition by immediately repeating the same model motivic material. He points out, for instance, the following verbal symmetries in the Gloria and Credo: "Laudamus te, Benedicimus te, Adoramus te, Gorificamus te", all of which borrow the same model motive 1b; the two "Qui tollis" phrases that use the same model material from motive 4a; "visibilium … et invisibilium" which repeat motive 1b; "Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero", all of which utilise motive 5; and "Et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam" which use motive 2b.

In his process of borrowing, Palestrina shows great respect for the linear integrity of the melodic lines he borrows. He thus tends to preserve the melodic and rhythmic content of his borrowed motive entries so that they present the same linear profile in his mass. Another factor which dominates Palestrina's patterns of distribution of model material involves the relationship of musical characteristics of specific model motives to the meaning of certain sections of the mass text. A good example is the upward leap of the interval of a fourth between the third and fourth notes of motive 4b to coincide with the phrase "et resurrexit tertia die".

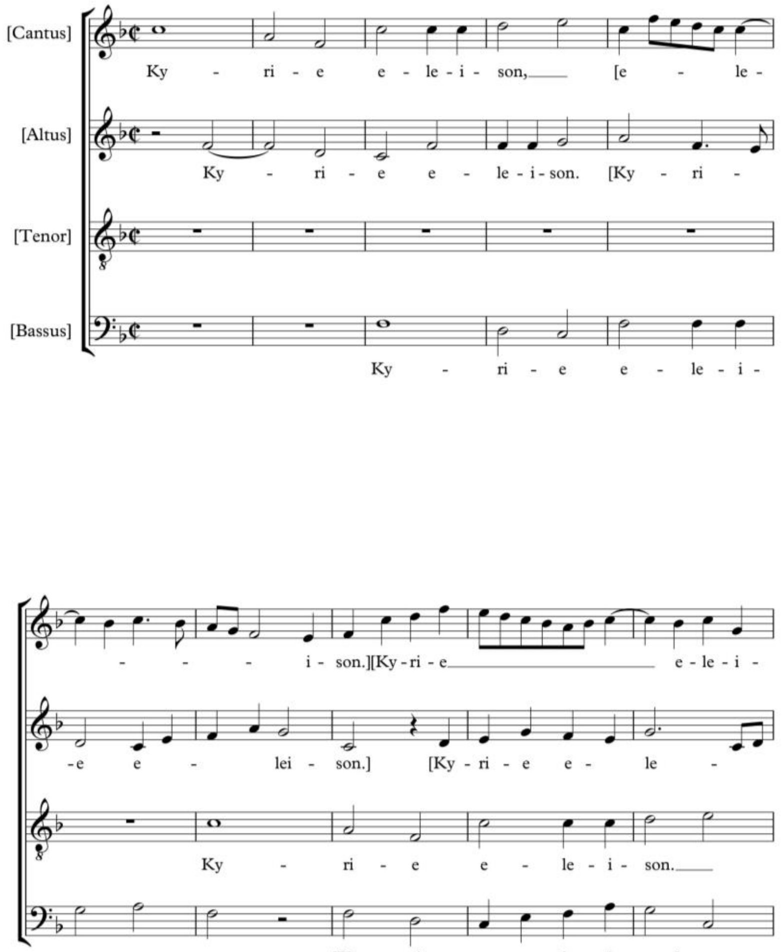
Example 1 shows the opening of Penet's motet followed by Kyrie I of the masses by Palestrina and Porta so that we may draw a comparison of the borrowing procedures between the two composers. Palestrina's manipulation of model motivic polyphonic complexes and his interweaving of the contrapuntal relationships between the various entries of the voice parts of the model are clearly illustrated and described below. Porta's use of the same borrowed material is discussed later in the present paper.

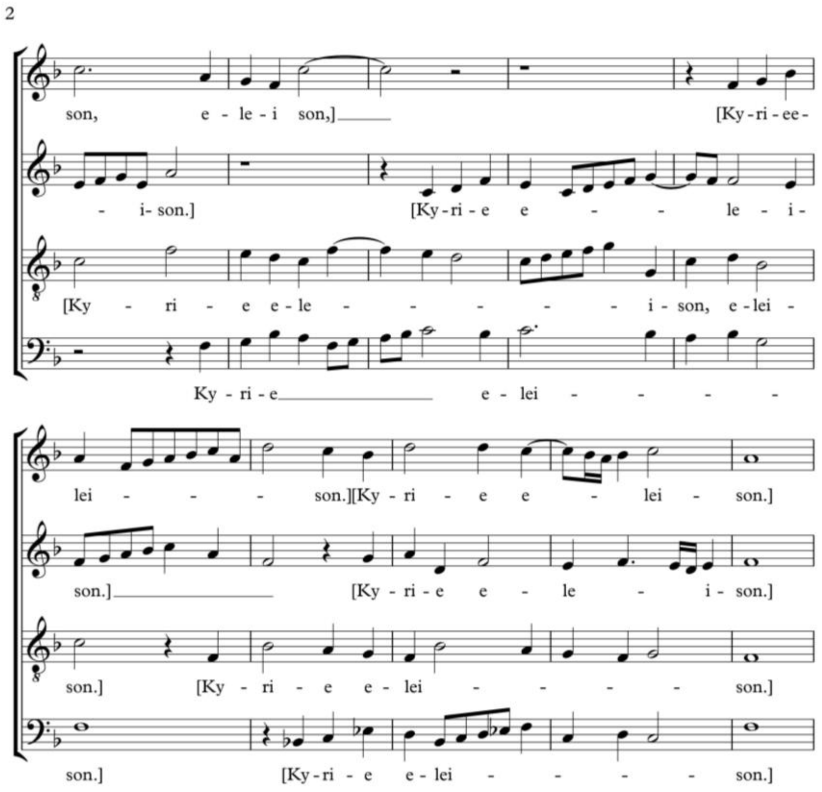
EXAMPLE 1a: Penet: *Descendit Angelus Domini*, bars 1-26


Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass
De - scen - dit an - ge - lus Do - mi - ni ad Za - cha - ri - am di -
De - scen - dit an - ge - lus Do - mi -
- - cens, De - scen - dit an - - - ge - lus
ni ad Za - cha - ri - am di - - - - - cens,
De - scen - dit an - ge - lus Do - mi -
De - - scen - dit

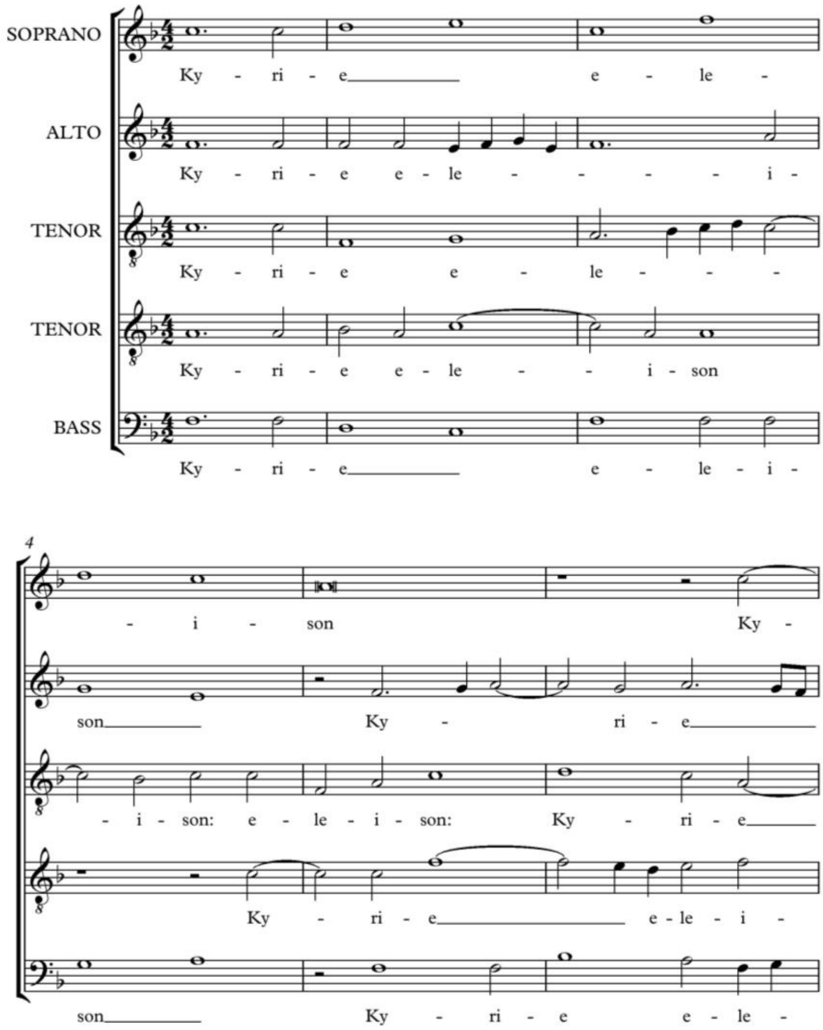

2
ad
ad Za - cha - ri - am di -
ni ad Za - cha - ri - am di - - - cens, ad Za - cha - ri - am
an - ge - lus Do - mi - ni ad Za - cha - ri - am di - cens,
Za - cha - ri - am di - - - - cens, di -
- - - - - - - cens, ad Za - cha - ri - am di -
di - - - cens ad Za - cha - ri - am
ad Za - cha - ri - am di - -
- cens di - - - - - - - cens ac - ci - pe
- cens, di - - - - - - - - cens: ac -
di - - - cens: ac - ci - pe pu - e -
- - - cens: ac - ci - pe pu - e - rum,

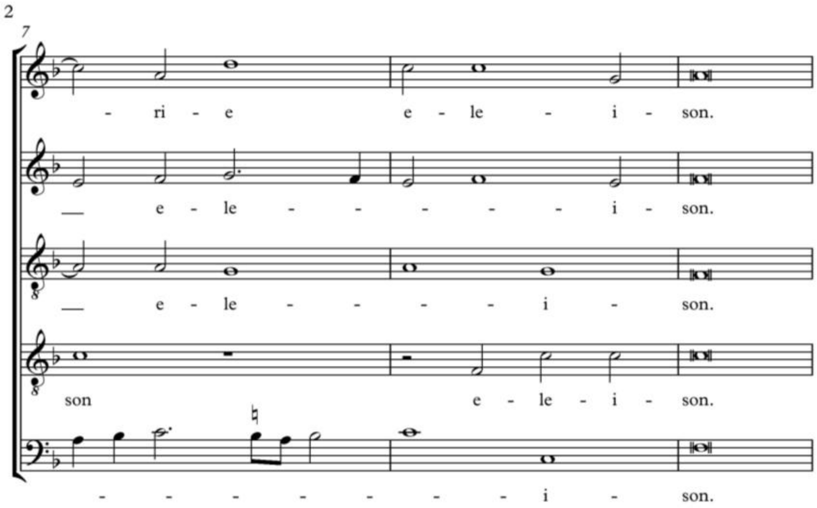
EXAMPLE 1b: Palestrina: Kyrie, *Missa Descendit Angelus Domini*, bars 1-20


[Cantus]
[Altus]
[Tenor]
[Bassus]
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, [e - le -
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. [Ky - ri -
Ky - ri - e e - le - i -
- - - i - son.][Ky - ri - e e - le - i -
-e e - lei - son.] [Ky - ri - e e - le -
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
son. [Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.]


2
son, e - le - i son,]
[Ky - ri - ee -
- i- son.]
[Ky - ri - e e - - le - i -
[Ky - ri - e e - le - - - - - i - son, e - lei -
Ky - ri - e e - lei - - - - -
lei - - - son.][Ky - ri - e e - lei - son.]
son.] [Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.]
son.] [Ky - ri - e e - lei - - - - son.]
son.] [Ky - ri - e e - lei - - - - son.]

EXAMPLE 1c: Porta: Kyrie, *Missa Descendit Angelus Domini*, bars 1-9

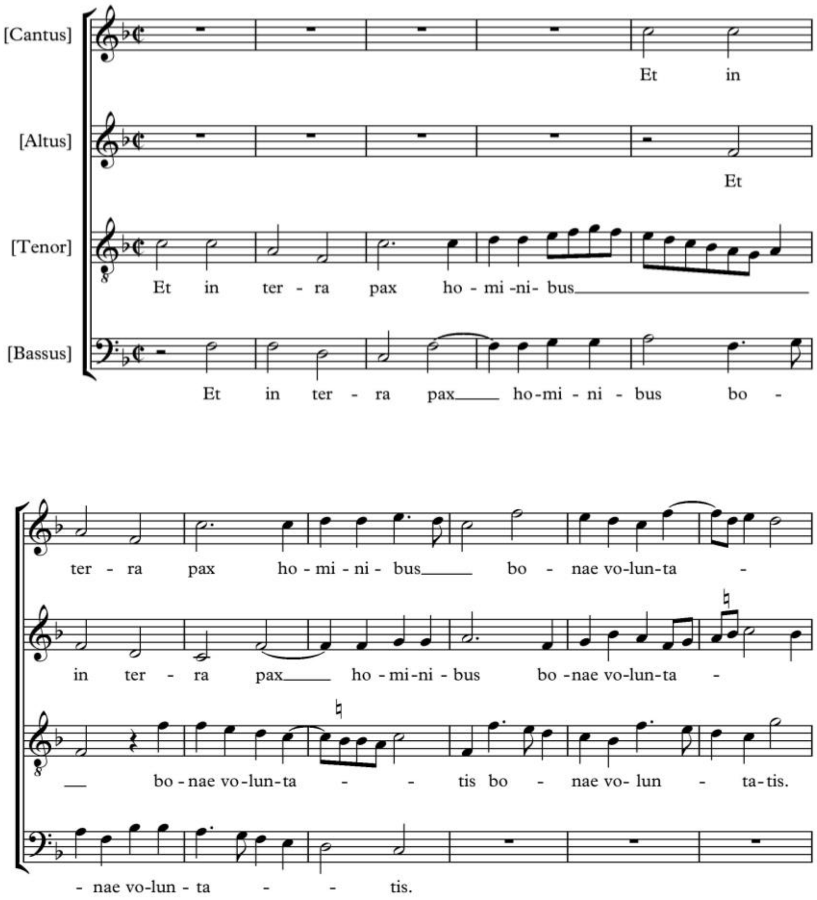

SOPRANO
Ky - ri - e___ e - le -
ALTO
Ky - ri - e e - le - - - - i -
TENOR
Ky - ri - e e - le - - -
TENOR
Ky - ri - e e - le - - i - son
BASS
Ky - ri - e___ e - le - i -
4
- i - son
Ky -
son___
Ky - ri - e___
- i - son: e - le - i - son: Ky - ri - e___
Ky - ri - e___ e - le - i -
son___
Ky - ri - e e - le -

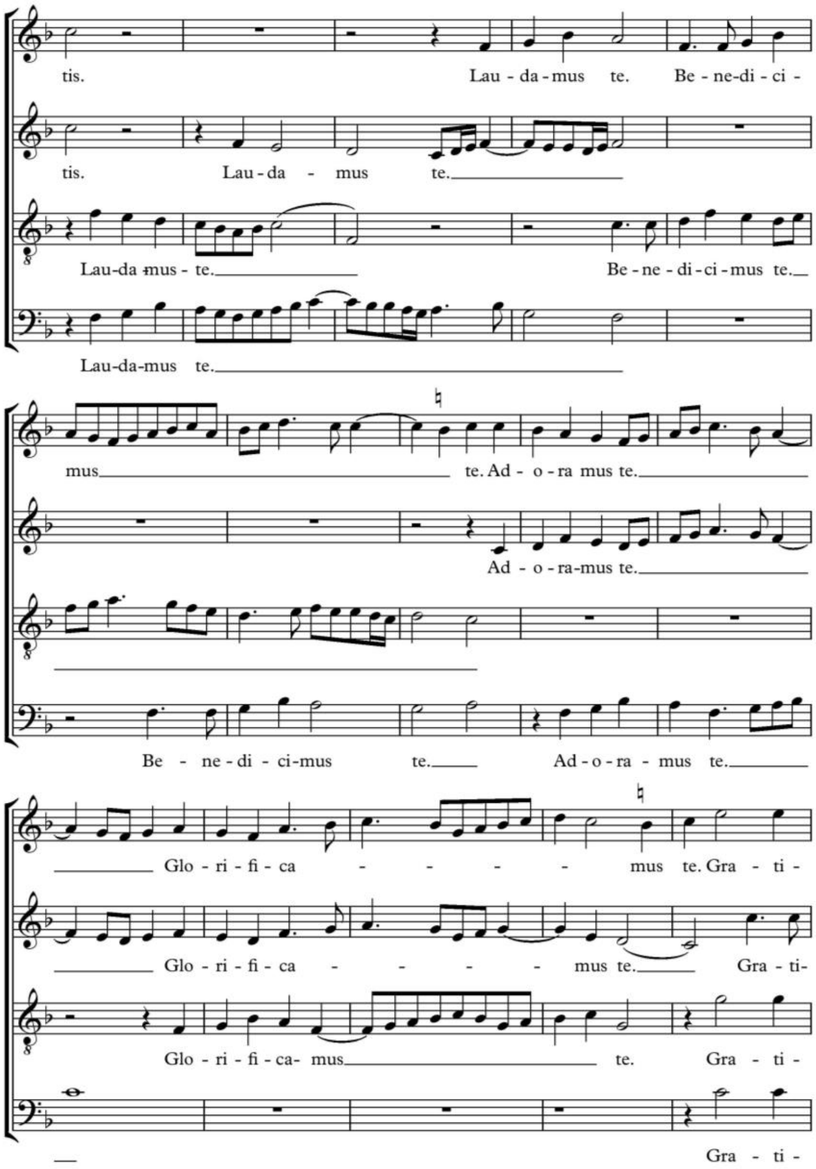

2
7
- ri - e e - le - i - son.
— e - le - - - - - i - son.
— e - le - - - - i - son.
son e - le - i - son.
- - - - - - - i - son.

As shown in Example 1a, Penet uses paired voices at the outset of his motet, and continues with a strict contrapuntal setting. The opening full melodic subject is constructed from two motives which may be designated 1a and 1b respectively. Musical motive 1a accompanies the phrase “Descendit angelus Domini” and musical motive 1b the words “ad Zachariam dicens”. In Palestrina’s mass (Example 1b), the opening soprano and bass voices borrow the same relationship that exists between the soprano and alto of motive 1a of the model. The alto entry of bar 1 of Palestrina’s mass seems to function as an auxiliary entry, anticipating the bass entry in bar 3. Subsequently, the tenor (bar 7ff) of Palestrina’s mass borrows intact the tenor of Penet’s motet (bar 8ff), and is paired with the bass entry, as in the model, but with a single bar’s imitative temporal distance instead of two bars distance. There are also slight rhythmic and melodic modifications in order to enhance easier perception and to accommodate the text and vertical sonorities.

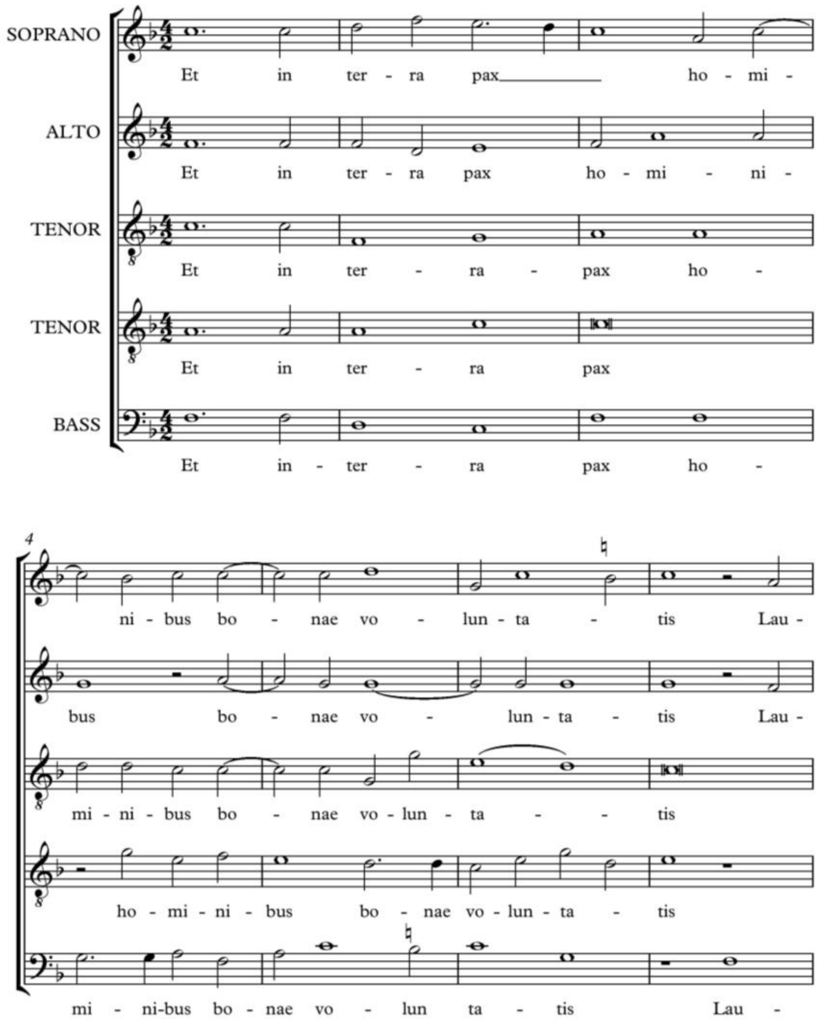
Model motive 1b, accompanying the phrase “ad Zachariam dicens” is employed from bar 11 through to the final cadence of Palestrina’s Kyrie I. Here the tenor, bass and alto entries (bars 11-14) imitate the same entries in bars 12-16 of the motet (see Example 1a and 1b). There are slight alterations, particularly with respect to the imitative temporal distance of the voices. The soprano entry of bars 15-16 of Palestrina's Kyrie I borrows the bass entry of bars 19-20 of Penet's motet. This linear entry together with the new entries of model motive 1b (tenor and bass entries of bars 16-20) round off Kyrie I, creating new vertical relationships which do not exist in the model.

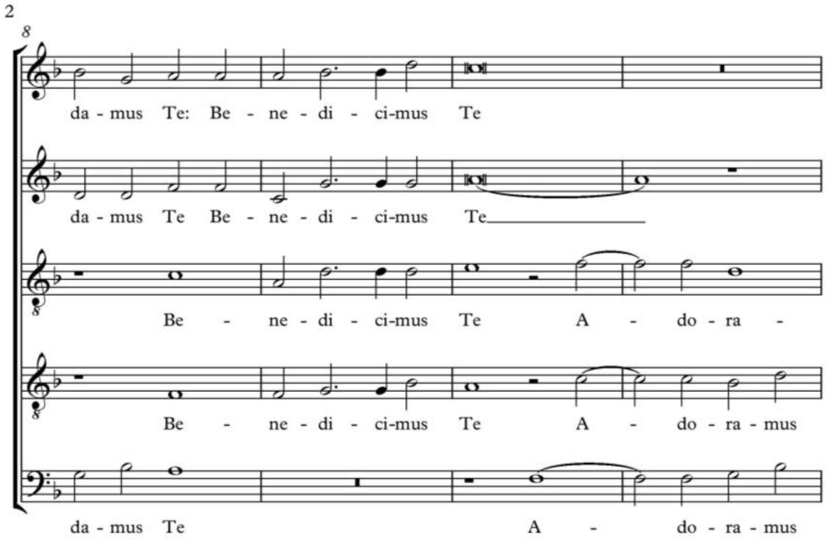
EXAMPLE 2a: Palestrina: Gloria, *Missa Descendit Angelus Domini*, bars 1-26

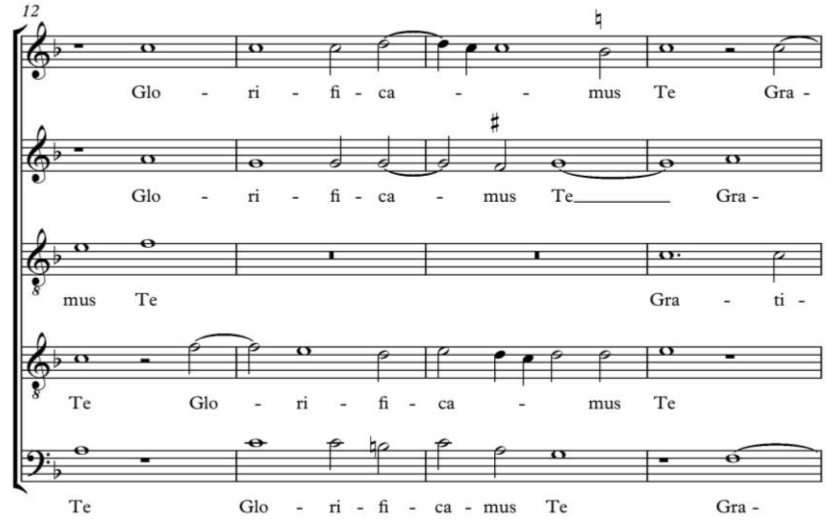

[Cantus]
Et in
[Altus]
Et
[Tenor]
Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi -ni- bus
[Bassus]
Et in ter - ra pax ho-mi - ni - bus bo -
ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus bo - nae vo-lun-ta -
in ter - ra pax ho - mi-ni - bus bo -nae vo-lun-ta -
bo - nae vo-lun-ta - - tis bo - nae vo- lun - ta-tis.
- nae vo-lun - ta - - tis.


tis. Lau - da - mus te. Be - ne - di - ci -
tis. Lau - da - mus te.
Lau - da - mus - te. Be - ne - di - ci - mus te.
Lau - da - mus te.
mus te. Ad - o - ra mus te.
Ad - o - ra - mus te.
Be - ne - di - ci - mus te. Ad - o - ra - mus te.
Glo - ri - fi - ca - - - - mus te. Gra - ti -
Glo - ri - fi - ca - - - - mus te. Gra - ti-
Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus te. Gra - ti -
Gra - ti -

EXAMPLE 2b: Porta: Gloria, *Missa Descendit Angelus Domini*, bars 1-15


SOPRANO
Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi -
ALTO
Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni -
TENOR
Et in ter - ra - pax ho -
TENOR
Et in ter - ra pax
BASS
Et in - ter - ra pax ho -
4
ni - bus bo - nae vo - lun - ta - tis Lau -
bus bo - nae vo - lun - ta - tis Lau -
mi - ni - bus bo - nae vo - lun - ta - - tis
ho - mi - ni - bus bo - nae vo - lun - ta - tis
mi - ni-bus bo - nae vo - lun ta - tis Lau -


2
8
da - mus Te: Be - ne - di - ci-mus Te
da - mus Te Be - ne - di - ci-mus Te
Be - ne - di - ci-mus Te A - do - ra -
Be - ne - di - ci-mus Te A - do - ra - mus
da - mus Te A - do - ra - mus


12
Glo - ri - fi - ca - - mus Te Gra -
Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus Te Gra -
mus Te Gra - ti -
Te Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus Te
Te Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus Te Gra -

Examples 2a and 2b show the opening of the Gloria both of Palestrina’s and Porta’s mass settings on *Descendit Angelus*[8]. The paired-voice entry between tenor and bass at the outset of Palestrina’s Gloria borrows from the paired-voice entry (motive 1a) between the soprano and alto of the opening of the motet. The imitative temporal distance is reduced to half a bar in the mass versus two bars (in the motet). The subsequent paired-voice entry between soprano and alto in bars 5-12 of the mass proceeds with the same relationship that exists between tenor and bass of the motet (bars 8-16) and encompasses model motives 1a and 1b. “Laudamus te, Benedicimus te, Adoramus te, Glorificamus te” all borrow motive 1b of the motet accompanying the phrase “ad Zachariam dicens”. The bass voice entry of bars 19-23 of the motet is borrowed extensively: at “Laudamus te” (bars 12ff, bass); at “Benedicimus te” (bars 17ff, bass); at “Adoramus te” (bars 20ff, bass); and at “Glorificamus te” (bars 22, tenor). The soprano in bar 14-15 of the mass borrows the tenor entry of bar 15-16 of the motet while the relationship between tenor and soprano in bars 15-19 at “Benedicimus te” and alto and bass in bars 19-22 at “Adoramus te” both invert the relationship existing between alto and tenor (bars 15ff) of the motet[9]. It is clear that Palestrina is borrowing comprehensively from Penet’s motet, both manipulating and interweaving existing complexes of model relationships, and creating new vertical and scaffolding relationships with the surrounding polyphonic material.

Porta’s *Missa Descendit Angelus Domini*

In Porta’s five-voice mass, the five principal movements also commence with material derived from the opening of Penet’s motet. Like Palestrina’s setting, the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo and Agnus Dei conclude with material from the final motivic complex of the motet. Furthermore, the initial motivic complex of the *Secunda Pars* of

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[8] Discussion of Example 2b ensues later.

[9] Note that the bass in bars 20-22 of the Gloria could also be derived from the motet bass (bars 19ff), as noted earlier.

Descendit Angelus is borrowed for the beginning of many subdivisions of the mass including the *Qui tollis*, *Crucifixus*, *Hosanna*, and *Agnus Dei* II. The borrowing of model motivic complexes in order is not as extensive as in the Palestrina setting[10]. Furthermore, Porta does not reflect verbal symmetries in the Gloria and Credo to the same extent as Palestrina, neither does he select model material for its special musical effect in pointing out the meaning of segments in the mass text.

It is evident that Porta's recompositional methods are less comprehensive than those of Palestrina, so that his mass does not exhibit a high degree of dependence upon the model. Thus, the polyphony of the model is not as closely approximated as it is in Palestrina's mass setting which borrows *in toto*, exploiting all antecedent voices simultaneously. Instead, there is a freer development of material derived from the model making Porta's distribution of model passages more random. Thorough working out of derivative material is seldom found. Porta may change the alignment of the parts, change the ordering of derivative passages from the model, and repeat some musical ideas while omitting others. Furthermore, unlike Palestrina who retains the number and disposition of voices of the model, Porta adds a new voice – a second tenor part – to those of the original.

The outer voices of the model are borrowed far more extensively and literally in Porta's mass, especially the bass or lowest-sounding voice. The inner voices are often limited in their reference to borrowed material or they are manipulated with a view to preserving the harmonic foundation of the model. Thus, dexterity comes less from contrapuntal skill than from the refashioning of integral textures of sound. In this process, Porta makes some alterations to the rhythmic and melodic outlines of borrowed motives, subjecting them to fragmentation, telescoping, combination with new material, chordal treatment and imitation. His treatment differs from that of Palestrina, whose interest lies in more literal, contrapuntally-orientated methods of alteration and adaptation and in systematic utilisation of the pre-existent material, rather than in freer, more vertically-orientated methods of emendation.

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[10] The openings of the Kyrie, Gloria and Sanctus of Porta's setting employ motives 1a, 1b, and 2a in succession; and the Qui tollis employs 4a, 4b, 5 and 6 consecutively.

As noted earlier, Example 1c illustrates Kyrie I of Porta's mass. Porta borrows from the same model motivic complex as Palestrina. The differences in procedures are stark. Palestrina retains elements of the basic overall structure of the model's opening point of imitation, borrowing the series of close imitations spanning the upper voices followed by the imitative-entry relationship between the two lower voices. Porta's setting of Kyrie I is very concise, encompassing nine bars as opposed to twenty bars. His borrowing and transformation methods are less systematic, emphasising harmonic dimensions. These methods show Porta's differing approach towards textural manipulation and stylistic processes in which imitative counterpoint is fused into an essentially quasi-homophonic and transparent texture, but with the parts enlivened by short snatches of imitation or rhythmic independence.

Only the bass voice adheres strictly to model motives 1a and 1b (See Examples 1a and 1c and compare with 1b). The other voices are sensitively rearranged with a view to preserving the sonorities of the motet, creating a new balance and rich texture. Contrapuntal manipulation is not evident; rather the example shows Porta's freer, bass dominated re-compositional methods with original material woven into the polyphonic fabric.

Similar procedures are adopted in Example 2b which also exhibits a trend towards the attenuation of polyphonic processes. Porta intersperses antiphonal repetition with *tutti* sections resulting in a polychoral style associated with late 16th century Venetian composers. Again, his setting at the opening of the Gloria is very succinct comprising 15 bars as opposed to the same passage in Palestrina's Gloria of 26 bars. Porta borrows motives 1a and motive 1b successively. The bass of the opening of his Gloria (bars 1-15) utilises the bass of Penet's motet (bars 10-16) but with a certain amount of fragmentation and telescoping. The soprano opens with motive 1b. The other voices have limited references to the motet, displaying greater flexibility and freedom in their melodic lines and reinforcing the harmonic content. Porta's exploration of the expressive potential of the harmonies and of vocal orchestration and tone colour can be seen not only in the succession of chords but in the grouping and spacing of the voices in vertical combinations, always showing sensitivity to the syntax of the text. The voice parts are thus conceived *en bloc*, and not as a combination of independent, self-sufficient lines, all of equal importance.

Selection of Model, Possible Motivation, and Reflection on Outlook as Composers

Palestrina's and Porta's selection of a sacred model by the composer Penet in their mass *Descendit Angelus Domini* may be attributable to personal taste but more likely to their close affiliations with the Roman Catholic church. When we compare their selection of models in their mass outputs generally to that of their contemporaries, interesting details emerge. Palestrina, in particular, borrows from a rather select group of works in his 54 imitation masses – either his own motets, or sacred motets that originate from the mainstream of Franco-Flemish polyphony of the earlier 16th century by Rome-based composers. Penet, for instance, was a French composer who was employed as a papal singer in the Court of Pope Leo X from 1514 to 1521. His motet was published in the renowned *Motteti del Fiore* collection (1532) of Jacques Moderne – an active and prominent music printer, who published on a large scale, and whose music publications were disseminated throughout Europe[11].

That none of Palestrina's imitation masses have been based on a work by his immediate contemporaries, nor any member of the Venetian school, except de Rore, nor notable composers of the Parisian school is striking. Nine of Porta's fifteen masses are parody works. His sources – some of which have not been identified – include madrigals by Palestrina and de Rore, and motets by Penet and Gombert.

The contemporaries of Palestrina and Porta – Lassus, De Monte and Gallus – who stand outside the orbit of the Counter-Reformation, and who were impervious to liturgical directives, show a wider range of taste, modelling their masses on the compositions of their predecessors and contemporaries, selecting sacred motets, and secular compositions (chansons and madrigals) from the Parisian, Roman and Venetian schools. Lassus' selection of models, for instance, includes motets by Lassus himself and others; Italian madrigals by Sebastian Festa, Arcadelt, de Rore, Willaert and Palestrina, and chansons by French and Dutch masters such as Gombert, de Monte, Clemens, de Sermisy, Certon and Sandrin. Approximately 50% of the masses composed by Lassus, Gallus and de Monte use motets while the use of madrigals ranges between 20% and 35%, and that of chansons or liedere between 10% and 30%. This contrasts greatly to Palestrina’s use of motets, madrigals and chansons as models in his imitation masses. Eighty-four percent of Palestrina’s masses borrow motets, 15% madrigals and only a single mass is derived from a chanson.

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[11] Many of the motets from Moderne's anthology were reprinted in numerous later collections.

Continuing with the issue of motivation behind the selection of Penet’s motet, it is possible that the masses and their source motets could have been sung at the same liturgical ceremony and thus conceived of as belonging together. The motet would then have been performed either during the Offertory, Elevation or Communion[12]. As Carter reinforces, documentary and manuscript evidence from the 16th century suggests that motets might have been “liturgically paired with the masses based upon them” (Carter, 1992:70).

Palestrina’s and Porta’s selection of Penet’s motet may also reflect a consciousness on the part of both composers that they were partaking in an artistic tradition – one of imitation, emulation and competition[13]. Certainly musicians could hardly have been ignorant of so widespread and universal a doctrine which pervaded pedagogical and artistic techniques throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Whilst musicologists have not established exact parallels between specific categories of musical borrowing and types of literary borrowing, this should not rule out the possible influence of the concept of rhetorical *imitatio* on that of musical *imitatio*. There are certainly common elements that imply a consciousness of, and association with corresponding procedures derived from rhetorical tradition.

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[12] Anthony Cummings has offered valuable insight into instances of imitation masses being sung in conjunction with their models for the same occasion. See Cummings (1981).

[13] The concept that concerns us here is the meaning of *imitatio* as a doctrine fostering the creation of new works through the imitation of models, particularly literary models. Many 15th and 16th century writers modeled their works not only on writers of their own time but on classical Greek and Latin authors, borrowing words, idioms, phrases, as well as ideas and matters of style.

Rhetorical *imitatio* encompassed to some degree the idea of homage and of emulation – of a sense of competition between elaborator and model that is inherent within the choice of an antecedent and in the refashioning of its material, as the imitator strove to surpass what his predecessor had achieved. Meconi has stated that: “For classical authors of rhetorical treatises as well as their Renaissance followers concepts of emulation (with the implication of homage) and competition are all part of the ongoing debate about whom one should emulate” (Meconi, 1994:153). This influence of emulation and competition may explain the differences in the recompositional techniques of Porta and Palestrina. Thus, their creation of a new musical work through borrowing constituted not only an avenue to exhibit creativity, but a consciousness of engagement with a tradition involving competition with each other. Competitive composition tested their compositional skills as they sought to demonstrate new and individual ways of transforming the pre-existent model.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Palestrina’s and Porta’s selection of Penet’s motet was most certainly dependent upon the style of the model. While their borrowing procedures differ considerably, Penet’s motet, for the most part, conforms to the overall contrapuntal techniques of both composers. In many fundamental areas – including melodic interval progressions, harmonic vocabulary, rhythmic motion, and dissonance treatment – the structural delineation, organisational principles, and expressive projection cultivated by both Palestrina and Porta is similar to that of the model. The similar relationship of Penet’s contrapuntal techniques to the demands of Palestrina’s and Porta’s compositional procedures enabled both composers to borrow from Penet’s motet quite freely.

To conclude, the present essay shows that both Palestrina and Porta, in their mass settings based on Penet’s *Descendit Angelus Domini*, found their roots of inspiration in the devout, restrained, and liturgical atmosphere of Italian Renaissance polyphony. The latter point reflects the influence of the ecclesiastical context within which both composers spent their entire lives. Most importantly, the essay demonstrates that while the formal and organisational principles adopted by Palestrina and Porta are similar in their respective masses, their procedures of borrowing are very different, reflecting their differing stylistic and textural approaches in the two masses, and contributing to the multiplicity of reworking procedures within Renaissance mass settings as a whole.

Palestrina favours detailed re-composition, reflecting his more contrapuntal approach, found particularly in his earlier imitation masses. While reworking and manipulating model material, he ensures that well-defined and readily discernible versions of entries of model points of imitation, all presenting the same linear profile, appear in his mass.

Porta, on the other hand, borrows more frugally. He is more succinct in his approach using refined polyphonic processes whereby the vertical elements dominate the horizontal. His methods of alteration and adaptation are thus not orientated toward the manipulation of contrapuntal relationships between successive entries of model motives. Rather he refashions model material from the lowest voice upwards, manipulating masses of sound rather than threads of melody. This anticipates one of the significant features of the Baroque: the awareness of the bass as the foundation, the fundamental supporting voice.

Whilst the differing approaches to polyphonic borrowing by both Palestrina and Porta may be attributable to autonomous factors generated by overall stylistic and creative procedures of the composers at the time, it seems plausible that Penet's motet *Descendit Angelus Domini* could also have been considered a vehicle for contrapuntal and technical display in a genuinely competitive sense, and as a means of paying homage to a Rome-based, Franco-Flemish composer working in papal circles from the earlier part of the 16th century.

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