

The Polyphonic Mass in France, 1600–1780

This is the first ever book-length study of the *a cappella* masses which appeared in France in choirbook layout during the baroque era. Though the musical settings of the *Ordinarium missæ* and of the *Missa pro defunctis* have been the subject of countless studies, the stylistic evolution of the polyphonic masses composed in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been neglected owing to the labor involved in creating scores from the surviving individual parts. Jean-Paul C. Montagnier has examined closely the printed, engraved and stenciled choirbooks containing this repertoire and his book focuses mainly on the music *as it stands* in them. After tracing the choirbooks' publishing history, the author places these mass settings in their social, liturgical and musical context. He shows that their style did *not* all adhere strictly to the *stile antico*, but could also employ the most up-to-date musical language of the period.

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The Polyphonic Mass in France, 1600–1780

The Evidence of the Printed Choirbooks

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To Raphaël Tassin

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Foreword

Despite the fact that scholars long ago wrote much of the music history of the Roman Catholic Mass, remarkably there remains an important and significant body of musical settings of the Mass Ordinary that has received almost no investigation, specifically the Mass in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Several conditions have contributed to this circumstance. Despite the hegemony that French culture enjoyed during the time of the *ancien régime*, the number of studies on French music of that era remains comparatively small vis-à-vis those of German and Italian music. One reason for this might be traced to Manfred Bukofzer, for in his well-known and widely read *Baroque Music* of 1946, a primary textbook for at least two generations of American musicologists, Bukofzer dismissed the importance of French music other than opera with an uncharacteristically short-sighted declaration, “The opera at the French court held such a dominating position that other forms of vocal music did not develop very vigorously.”¹ But Bukofzer was not in a position to evaluate other forms of French vocal music of the time. The many surviving masses and motets of that era were largely unavailable to him during the war years when he was preparing his book. Writing a few years earlier, and addressing the state of French music of the time, Paul Henry Lang perceptively observed in his *Music in Western Civilization* of 1941 that “church music flourished throughout the country; but the compositions are dispersed in the manuscript collections of libraries, and the whole question represents one of those blank spots on the map of musical and cultural history.”² Thus, for much of the twentieth century the study of French religious music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries lagged behind that of Italy and the German countries. Since the founding of the Centre de musique baroque de Versailles (CMBV) in the 1980s much has been done by librarians and by French musicologists to reveal the contents of those manuscript collections that slept so long in the French libraries.

¹ Manfred F. Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era from Monteverdi to Bach* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1947), p. 161.

² Paul Henry Lang, *Music in Western Civilization* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1941), p. 540.

A great deal has been researched and written in recent decades regarding the French motet, the dominant form in the years of Louis XIV and his successors, but the settings of the Mass Ordinary that were used most extensively in France for the two centuries that followed the Council of Trent, those composed specifically in response to Tridentine tenets, have largely eluded examination. One obstacle that impeded scholars is the simple fact that this body of masses survives primarily in printed copies that were published not in score, but in choirbook layout, to be sung by church musicians gathered around a copy on a lectern. In order to examine these works meaningfully, one must score them, a daunting task indeed for one who wishes to get an overview of this sub-genre and its hundreds of surviving works.

Jean-Paul C. Montagnier has already demonstrated the tremendous dedication and energy necessary to undertake a task as challenging as the study in this volume. One of only a handful of French musicologists to publish both in his native language and in English, Montagnier has produced a steady stream of books and articles dealing with sacred music in the time of the Bourbon monarchs. We can be indeed grateful that he has chosen to publish his study first in English, making a significant contribution to the relatively small corpus of books in this language dedicated to the sacred music of France during its great cultural era under the *ancien régime*.

Montagnier reveals much to us in his study. Although all the works under examination share qualities in common, as they adhere more or less to the Tridentine model of Lassus, like any musical genre that received composers' attention over two centuries, the masses in France took on attributes in response to the needs of those who employed them and the inclinations of those who composed them. Montagnier's efforts identify several distinct stylistic categories. Some of these works were composed for churches of modest musical resources, and thus served two roles: they provided performable music for their services, and probably also served as pedagogical tool materials for the choristers and their *maîtres*. Other masses, Campra's *Missa Ad majorem Dei gloriam* for example, clearly required musicians of much greater skill. Thus, composers produced works for the range of church music programs found throughout the kingdom. Demand persisted for these works over many decades, as the several reprints of the works, which Montagnier thoroughly documents, testify: François Cosset's *Missa Gaudeamus omnes*, which saw four printings in all, was published first as early as 1649 and then as late as 1725, more than a half-century after the composer's death. That work's popularity may have stemmed from its relative ease of performance. Campra's highly popular, but musically more challenging

Missa Ad majorem Dei gloriam saw print three times, the last printing three years after the composer's death. Its reputation no doubt derived from its exceptional musical qualities. These works, despite their obscurity today, enjoyed a lasting place in the repertory of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French religious ceremonies.

Lecerf de La Viéville observed that “these Masses ... being shorter than our Opera[s], have less need to be very varied.” Montagnier points out that these mass movements, having actually been employed for certain Sunday high-feast Masses and other major celebrations, are less varied than their contemporary stage works in a number of respects, but particularly in that each part of the Ordinary tends to end on the same final. Like Haydn's masses, which were similarly structured because they actually were composed for use in the Mass celebration and served to unify the mass (i.e., their movements are all in the same key), the French masses may not always please the ears of modern audiences due to this characteristic – we are accustomed to tonal variation among movements of works. Nevertheless, this consideration should not dissuade choir directors from performing these works: the audience simply needs to be informed, and organ interludes can be added if tonal contrast is wanted. There are many beautiful moments in these works, as listeners are discovering as recordings become increasingly available.

Montagnier's study thoroughly examines, analyzes and describes a large number of these works – more than 110 still extant from at least forty composers. He examines the use of plainchant, including its employment as cantus firmus, in these works. He reveals the changes in style that occurred over the history of these mass settings, including the rise of tempo indications, and the specifically French influences that emanated from the secular music in France, including those from the chanson and from the Lullyian *tragédies en musique*. It is from these influences that these works become markedly distinct from their German and Italian counterparts despite their common Tridentine characteristics.

In *The Polyphonic Mass in France, 1600–1780*, Jean-Paul Montagnier presents us with a ground-breaking study of a body of music that has received little systematic attention. His work examines a large sub-genre with precision and thoroughness. This study provides a building block for future studies of the role of music in the French religious culture in the time of those *Très-Christien* Bourbon monarchs of the *ancien régime*.

John Hajdu Heyer

Preface

... c'est par le chant que l'on glorifie Dieu ...¹
 ... it is through singing that we glorify God ...

For the Catholic Church the Mass is the most important office of the day, as it repeats the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Attendance at Mass is crucial to the believer’s salvation. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this celebration also performed a political role, by establishing the superiority of Christianity above all other religions. As it was taught in some catechisms:

par le moien du Sacrifice de la Messe, la Religion Chrétienne est infiniment relevée au dessus de toutes celles, qui ont jamais été. ... Parce que la fin de la Religion étant d’honorer Dieu, nul n’à pû rien faire pour cela qui approche de ce que la Chrétienne fait, par le Sacrifice de la Messe.²

By means of the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Christian Religion is infinitely above all others that ever existed ... Because the purpose of Religion being to honor God, no one has been able to do anything about it that comes close to that the Christian one does by the Sacrifice of the Mass.

If Christians never missed a chance “to attend the Mass,”³ the event itself was also a place where music could be heard and enjoyed by all parishioners, be they rich, poor, noble, bourgeois or peasant. As Jean-Laurent Lecerc de La Viéville claimed in his *Discours sur la musique d’Église*, “Music draws to Churches and makes them liked.”⁴ To enhance the solemnity of the

¹ *Ceremonial de Toul, dressé par un chanoine de l’église cathedrale, et imprimé par ordre d’illustrissime et reverendissime seigneur, Monseigneur Henry de Thiard-Bissy eveque comte de Toul* (Toul: Alexis Laurent, 1700), p. 49.

² *Grand catechisme de Verdun imprimé par l’ordre de Monseigneur l’illustrissime et reverendissime Messire Hippolyte de Bethune, eveque comte de Verdun* (Verdun: Jean Jacquet, 1685), p. 245.

³ *Grand catechisme de Verdun*, p. 245: “je ne perdrai jamais les occasions d’entendre la Messe.”

⁴ Jean-Laurent Lecerc de La Viéville, “Discours sur la musique d’Église,” in *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise* (Brussels: François Foppens, 1706; reprint edn, Geneva: Éditions Minkoff, 1972), part 3, p. 104: “la Musique attire aux Eglises & les fait aimer.” La Viéville’s statement is based on Saint Augustine’s *Confessions* (book x, chapter 33). On the various types of masses sung in cathedrals and collegiate churches, see Philippe Loupès, *Chapitres & chanoines de Guyenne aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Éditions de l’École des

Holy Sacrifice, music had been called for since the origin of Christianity. Consequently, the history of the Mass and of the musical settings of the *Ordinarium missæ*⁵ and of the *Missa pro defunctis* – two of the most important genres in the western music heritage – have been the subject of countless studies these two past centuries.⁶ Yet the stylistic evolution of the polyphonic masses composed in France from the last years of the reign of Henri IV to the eve of the Revolution has hitherto remained under researched, perhaps simply because of the physical nature of their sources (mainly printed choirbooks). At first glance, it seems that these are mere Renaissance-like *messe da Capella*, that is “masses which are sung entirely by the full choir, and usually filled with fugues, double counterpoint, and other artful devices.”⁷ A close examination of the music these sources contain, however, shows a rather different picture and reveals at least five first-class composers – Bournonville, Cosset, Helfer, then Campra and Madin – and several masterpieces including the *Missæ Tu es Petrus*, *Sappi madonna*, *Grata sum harmonia*, *Super flumina Babylonis*, *Deliciæ regum*, *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*, *Dico ego opera mea regi*, *Fiat pax*, *Collaudate canticum* and *Lætamini in Domino*.

The present work is the first book-length study to explore this neglected field, and it focuses on the music *as it stands* in the choirbooks published in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It has indeed become indispensable to assess afresh today’s biased aesthetical perception of the *a cappella* works thus printed, a perception negatively forged in response to the very specific procedures used for the Mass of Louis XIV, in the course of which lavish concerted works were performed. This assessment, however, will reveal that the masses issued by the Ballards *et alii* did *not* all adhere strictly to the *stile antico*, but could also employ the most

hautes études en sciences sociales, 1985), pp. 264–265; there were three main daily Masses: the morning Mass (*messe matutinale*) said around 7am, the parish Mass (*messe paroissiale*) around 8am (8:30am in winter), and the high Mass (*grand-messe*) sung between 8 and 10am.

⁵ As Sébastien de Brossard writes in his *Dictionnaire de musique*, 3rd edn (Amsterdam: Estienne Roger, ca. 1708; reprint edn, Geneva: Éditions Minkoff, 1992), p. 59, a musical mass contains the five liturgical parts of the Mass Ordinary, that is “le Kyrie & *Christe*, le *Gloria*, le *Credo*, le *Sanctus*, & l’*Agnus* mis en Musique.” Two prayers were often added to these five movements, and are thus available in several sources studied in the present book: the hymn *O salutaris hostia* to accompany the elevation of the Holy Host, and a prayer for the king’s good health, *Domine salvum fac Regem* (Psalm 19:10), to conclude the service.

⁶ See in particular the influential book by Peter Wagner, *Geschichte der Messe. I. Teil: bis 1600* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1913; reprint edn, Hildesheim, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1972).

⁷ Brossard, *Dictionnaire de musique*, p. 59: “*MESSE da Capella*. Veut dire, Messes qui se chantent entièrement par le *Gros Chœur*, remplies ordinairement de *Fugues*, de *Contrepoint doubles* & autres ornemens de l’Art.”

up-to-date musical language of the period. This *stile* was in no way a mere relic of the past, as has been too quickly assumed, but just one of many styles that the French authors in this study could freely choose and combine with others without being embedded in a historicized approach to it, as their contemporary foreign – especially Austrian and Italian – composers were. If one considers that the *stile antico*, grounded on clearly established contrapuntal rules, and the galant style, defined by “a particular repertory of stock musical phrases employed in conventional sequences,”⁸ were both international languages in their own time, then the masses scrutinized in the present book nicely illustrate the major stylistic changes that took place during the baroque era, and the highly idiosyncratic French contribution to this evolution. Accordingly, the few masses arranged for voices and instruments that have come down to us will only be touched upon, since the latter did not mirror the original printed sources as approved by their authors, were likely the result of particular performing circumstances whose details are unknown to us, and did not reflect the common practice in the French choir schools (*maîtrises*) of the period. These arrangements will nonetheless be brought in the discussion when necessary, as will be the other manuscript sources.

In the following pages, the titles of the quoted masses are shortened:⁹ the *Missa quinque vocum ad imitationem moduli Confitebor tibi Domine* by Pierre Lauerjat for instance becomes *Missa Confitebor tibi Domine*. Psalm numbers are those of the *Vulgate*. All musical examples are edited according to exacting scholarly guidelines. In case of multiple sources, these examples are based on the oldest available one unless otherwise stated. Translations of all quoted materials are mine unless otherwise indicated.

⁸ Robert O. Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 6.

⁹ Full titles are given in Appendix 1.

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Abbreviations

A-ST	Zisterzienserstift, Bibliothek und Musikarchiv, Stams
B	<i>Bassus</i> (bass)
Bc	<i>Basse continue</i> (continuo)
B-Asj	De Collegiale en Parochiale Sint-Jacobskerk, Bibliotheek en Archief, Antwerp
B-Bc	Conservatoire Royal de Musique, Brussels
B-Geb	Archief van de Sint-Baafskathedraal, Ghent
B-Mse	Bibliothèque de l'Église Sainte-Élisabeth, Mons
B-Nimep	Institut Supérieur de Musique et de Pédagogie, Namur
BVn	<i>Basse de violon</i> (bass violin)
C	<i>Contra</i> (alto, <i>altus</i> , <i>altus-contr</i> a, <i>haute-contre</i>)
DVn	<i>Dessus de violon</i> (violin)
F-AIXm	Bibliothèque Méjanès, Aix-en-Provence
F-AM	Bibliothèque municipale, Amiens
F-BGS	Bibliothèque du Grand Séminaire, Besançon
F-CA	Bibliothèque municipale, Cambrai
F-LYm	Bibliothèque municipale, Lyon
F-Pan	Archives nationales de France, Paris
F-Pc	Bibliothèque du Conservatoire (now deposited at F-Pn), Paris
F-Pm	Bibliothèque Mazarine, Paris
F-Pn	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
F-Psg	Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Paris
F-PVc	Bibliothèque de la Maîtrise de la Cathédrale, Le Puy-en-Velay
F-RSc	Bibliothèque municipale (fonds de la cathédrale), Reims
F-Sgs	Bibliothèque musicale du Grand Séminaire, Strasbourg
F-TO	Bibliothèque municipale, Tours
F-VA	Bibliothèque municipale, Vannes
GB-Lbl	British Library, London
GB-LF	Cathedral Library, Lichfield
H	Hugh Wiley Hitchcock, <i>Les Œuvres de Marc-Antoine Charpentier: catalogue raisonné</i> (Paris: A. et J. Picard, 1982), Charpentier catalog number.
HCVn	<i>Haute-contre de violon</i> (viola 1)
Ob	<i>Hautbois</i> (oboe)

QP	<i>Quinta pars</i>
Qc-AMAF	Archives du Musée de l'Amérique Française (formely Archives du Séminaire de Québec), Québec City
RISM	<i>Répertoire International des Sources Musicales</i>
S	<i>Superius</i> (cantus, soprano)
SdB	Jean Duron, <i>L'Œuvre de Sébastien de Brossard (1655–1730). Catalogue thématique</i> (Versailles, Paris: Éditions du Centre de musique baroque de Versailles, Éditions Klincksieck, 1995), Brossard catalog number.
SP	<i>Sexta pars</i>
T	<i>Tenor</i> (<i>taille</i> , tenor)
TVn	<i>Taille de violon</i> (viola 2)