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Jean-Paul C. Montagnier, *The Polyphonic Mass in France, 1600–1780: the Evidence of the Printed Choirbooks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). xxv + 331 pp. £80 (hb). ISBN 9781107177741

This book is to be warmly applauded, for it is the first study devoted to a corpus that has been largely neglected owing to the notorious rarity of the French religious musical sources of the ancien régime that have come down to us. Following in the footsteps of Denise Launay (1993), Montagnier's work is based on a very specific repertoire: the 90 volumes of polyphonic masses published between 1607 and 1767 by about 50 composers in both a capella version and choirbook format, a unique collection established and maintained over a span of more than two centuries by the hegemonic dynasty that was the Ballard music-publishing house. The author expands beyond the Ballard collection with a complementary corpus of choirbooks, including twelve engraved impressions from other publishers (all from 1758 onwards, with the exception of one mass by Annibal Gantez, published by Sanlecque around 1642); twelve copies of masses stencilled between 1775 and 1780; and ten more or less complete manuscript copies, nine from the seventeenth and one from the eighteenth century (see Montagnier's Appendix 1, pp. 277–92). While one may regret that the author's decision to focus on choirbooks means that he omits the corpus of masses in parts that has come down to us, the published masses in choirbook format do themselves form a coherent body deserving of study, in large part because it implies shared uses and practices across the great French cathedrals, collegiate churches and large parishes that maintained maîtrises (choirboys).

Along with Thierry Favier's *Le Motet à grand chœur* (2009), we now have two books that tackle complete musical corpuses from this period, each representative of an aspect of the religious musical practice of ancien régime France. The earlier volume benefitted from numerous editions and related research, thanks to the interest aroused by the grand motet genre's proximity to the French court; in contrast, the paucity of previous research on his subject renders Montagnier's work all the more laudable. The lacuna can be explained mainly by the fact that recent studies have focused on music and musicians more or less closely linked to the court and, with respect to the mass in particular, have centred specifically on those of Marc-Antoine Charpentier. The lack of transcriptions of masses in score form was another barrier to be overcome.⁽¹⁾ The compositions collected in the choirbooks not only bring to light some of the forgotten figures of this musical era – for example, Pierre Lauerjat, Pierre Menault, Jean-Louis Bordier and Jean-Marie Rousseau – but also reveal a practice of integrating polyphonic music into a liturgical framework that was widespread throughout France.

The volume's other great merit is that it is published in English, which not only will widen its audience but will also link French and Anglophone research

programmes (something that is rarely done, especially by French musicologists), as reflected in the book's extensive and wide-ranging bibliography. Another point is to be commended in this respect is that all the quotations from writings of the period are both given in the original French and translated into English. This intercultural approach reflects Montagnier's larger academic and scientific trajectory.⁽²⁾

In *The Polyphonic Mass in France*, Montagnier identifies all the particularities of the corpus – historical, material, human and musical – through eight chapters rich in information and analysis. It is impossible to enumerate here all the layers of historical detail they provide, which are presented via a series of tables, numerous figures and musical examples, and very useful appendices which provide a comprehensive overview of the current knowledge of the entire corpus, including partbooks (Appendix 2, pp. 293–4) and manuscript scores and parts (Appendix 3, pp. 295–8).⁽³⁾ The first three chapters set the stage, providing detailed information about the contexts in which these editions were produced (Ch. 1), how the choirbooks should be used from the perspective of the musical practices of the time (Ch. 2) and the composers and their networks (Ch. 3). Chs 4–7 focus on specific music-analytic projects: the relationship between music and liturgy (Ch. 4), the ways in which Lassus's work functioned as a compositional model (Ch. 5), the stylistic specificities of the mass and its evolutions (Ch. 6) and a specific examination of François Cosset's *Missa Gaudeamus omnes* and André Campra's *Missa Ad majorem Dei gloriam*, two works distinguished in particular by the frequency of their republication (Ch. 7). The author ends with an analysis of the few *missae pro defunctis* that appear in the collection (Ch. 8).

The volume's stated objective of being 'the first book-length study to explore this neglected field' (p. xx) must be respected as such, so the remarks that follow should be understood as pointing towards future research that, while stemming from Montagnier's interventions, requires a different mode of attention to historical contexts that needs to be clarified. Since, unlike motets, both Ordinaries and masses for the dead are intended to be closely integrated into the liturgical and ceremonial cursus, an in-depth study of such compositions can be carried out only by taking into account liturgical practices and their local divergences. Montagnier takes this essential parameter into account throughout his study, notably by devoting a full chapter to relations between music and liturgy in general and by turning in his last chapter to specific details of requiem masses. Particularly noteworthy is his Table 4.6, 'Celebrant's actions accompanying the Mass Ordinary' (p. 137), which Montagnier then brings into dialogue with the rules of composition of Pietro Cerone (*El melopeo il maestro* [Naples 1613]; one wishes the author had specified and justified Cerone's authority, given the broad use he makes of it in his argument). This is then deployed as one of the themes for the ensuing musical analysis. He also examines, through the lens of Cerone's rules, the link between the titles given to the different masses to distinguish them from one another and the liturgical texts, plainsongs and feasts to which they might refer, concluding that these links

are ultimately rather tenuous.

However, more thorough knowledge of the most recent research by musicologists and historians (see e.g. Bisaro 2011; Bisaro and Hameline 2008; Davy-Rigaux 2004 and Dompnier 2009), particularly over the last two decades in the framework of the Muséfrem (Musiciens d'Église en France à l'époque moderne/French Church Musicians in the Modern Era) project, would have enabled the author to treat this link between music and liturgy – fundamental aspects of which he has clearly engaged in his book – with more depth and accuracy.⁽⁴⁾ Still in progress, this research has nevertheless already made it possible to establish a series of contextual facts, several of which contradict some of Montagnier's assertions, summarised in this excerpt from his Introduction:

Contrary to what might be expected, concerted mass settings were not so much performed in the French parishes of the ancien régime, mainly because of a lack of human and financial resources, and a genuine taste for plainchant, be it Gregorian or newly composed at the Gallican Church's request. The number of wealthy cathedral and collegiate and parish churches was not legion, and even in such places canons and clerics favored a cappella singing [...] of polyphonic mass settings on main ceremonies and solemnities. (p. 4)

There are three problems with this claim. First, of course, presenting extraordinary music with a large, well-trained instrumental and vocal ensemble is expensive, and every church that maintained *maîtrises*, whether cathedrals, collegiate churches, large parishes or abbeys, would probably have had difficulty supporting a consistent ensemble of instruments on a par with those of the great royal or princely chapels. But above all – and this is what often differentiates these other institutions from the princely chapels – this generally parsimonious use of voices and complementary instruments is directly linked to the solemnity of each religious ceremony. It is on the occasions which each establishment considers to be the most important in the liturgical year that the most exceptional means are provided. Each religious community therefore decides how the importance of the ceremony – whether common, festive or extraordinary – will fit in with the musical forces at its disposal, which it will then adapt as needed. In all cases, the local liturgical calendar governs the choice of which type of music is to be employed. There is therefore nothing to prove, as Montagnier asserts, that the choice of a capella masses was guided by questions of means, nor that these masses were not adaptable to multiple situations and needs, including extensions with instrumental accompaniment. This is attested by the extant examples Montagnier cites of Sébastien de Brossard's adaptations for the Strasbourg Cathedral, logically made for exceptional ceremonies.

Second, the assertion – based solely on Charles Burney's (1773) testimony – that the French have a 'genuine taste for plainchant' must be qualified. Let us recall that Gregorian chant – with its local variants – was considered by the Catholic Church at the time, as long before and since, to be its proper

and primary chant; it is therefore normal to find it functioning as the musical foundation of all local liturgies, each more or less developed or enriched according to the particular needs of the place and time. Moreover, Montagnier does not take into account the wide range of forms that plainchant assumes. At the most basic level, there are cantillation, psalmody and 'ordinary' plainsong with added ornamentation that grew up in accordance with local traditions and liturgical occasions. But one also finds simple polyphonic developments of plainsong, whether vertical (fauxbourdon) or horizontal (contrapuntal writing of the chant sur le livre), as well as more complex polyphonic musical compositions that are lie somewhere between simple contrapuntal writing and polyphonic composition. Finally, the varied interventions of the organ on Sundays and feast days are also part of these practices.

Indeed, it is above all the fundamental principle of sonorous contrasts, so highly cultivated in post-Tridentine religious places, that favours the alternation of these different forms of musical enunciation. This is itself governed by the unfolding of the meaning of the ceremonial words, and it is in this context that composed and measured polyphonic music, whether vocal or instrumental (that is, played on the organ), complements this palette of varied forms of expression as the most brilliant sound ornament of the ceremony. Thus, depending on the liturgical and ceremonial prescriptions, the singers' voices may be accompanied by a few low instruments (serpent, cello, double bass, bassoon), which corresponds to the compositions as they appear in the choir books, or, for exceptional moments, by orchestral instruments.

Knowing the context, then, one can deduce that the value of Ballard's collection of choirbook masses lies in the fact that it offers a set of a capella polyphonic Ordinaries and some *missae defunctorum* which are varied in terms of mode, style and number of voices, but which can serve as models for learning choral singing and composition and can moreover be adapted to a variety of local liturgical situations. Thus, in the absence of appropriate compositions by the maître de musique in any given place, or employed in alternation with those available locally, these Ordinaries may be sung at Sunday and feast-day masses in certain churches, or at certain major feasts and extraordinary solemnities in others, according to the range of musical hierarchies agreed upon locally at a given period.

The addition of instrumental parts for such occasions is therefore probably not as rare as one might think. This is clearly suggested by the Dole archives discovered by Montagnier (pp. 58–9) regarding the *maître de musique* Prothade Amidey's dispute with the canons who employed him. The very fact that a given ceremony was of an exceptional nature meant that copies of the specific separate parts would be made which would not be intended to be repeated exactly for subsequent, similar events. These liturgical and material facts help to explain the loss of so many of these sources, which are by their nature ephemeral.

The third problem has to do with the question of plainchant ‘newly composed at the Gallican Church’s request’ (p. 4). If a clearly affirmed Gallicanism on the political level during the 1680s (see the ‘Déclaration des quatre articles’, prepared by Bossuet in 1682) undoubtedly contributed to the legitimisation of certain dioceses, such as Paris in 1680, or French branches of monastic orders, such as Cluny in 1686 – to mention only the first and most striking reforms of this period – and thus to a radical revision of Paris’s or Cluny’s own particular liturgy, then it cannot be considered the origin of a hypothetical uniform ‘Gallican Church’ fundamentally opposed to Rome. Let us recall some fundamental historical landmarks concerning the history of the post-Tridentine liturgy in the great churches of the kingdom. First of all, the first move made by many diocesan churches (such as Paris’s), which could claim a 200-year tradition and which would therefore not be obliged to adopt the new Roman liturgical books promoted by Pius V (see the papal bull *Quod a nobis*, 1568) and his successors, was to revise their local liturgies, taking into account the latter Roman reform principles to a large extent. At the time, the Roman reform would indeed have been considered a model of a modern liturgy, and it should not be forgotten that in Rome itself liturgical revisions were taken up several times. This would later serve as an argument for the French dioceses to justify their own reforms, which became more and more widespread especially after the second Parisian reform, realised under Archbishop Vintimille in 1736. Moreover, the decrees of the Council of Trent were favorably received by the French clergy in 1615, despite the opinion of both the king and parliament (p. 8). Finally, it should be remembered that the Chappelle Royale had abandoned the Parisian liturgy for the Roman one in 1583. The so-called neo-Gallicism of the French dioceses must therefore be put into perspective and measured in terms of its multifaceted aspects and its evolution over the two centuries studied here.

Understandably, then, it is very difficult to determine the geographical origin and dating of the plainchant integrated into these masses, and although Montagnier is right to take this issue into consideration (see Chs 4 and 8), his analyses are far from complete or accurate: ‘A quick glance at the *Missae pro defunctis* printed by Ballard is enough to understand that there were at least two rites available in the French kingdom: the Roman rite “secundum Concilium Tridentinum” and the Parisian rite’ (pp. 122–3). It is not possible to reduce the variants noted in the plainchant and the liturgical texts observed in the *missae defunctorum* to a sole binary belonging to Rome or Paris and to analyse the masses only from this angle; a specific study that includes the available liturgical books of the various dioceses contemporaneous with these editions remains to be carried out. On the other hand, the Ordinary of the mass is one of the most stable texts and does not change from one liturgy to another: it is therefore unnecessary to state that ‘[s]ince the Ballard choirbooks had to fit all these rites, it clearly was out of question to associate Mass ordinary settings to specific ceremonies: many of the Maîtres singled out [...] adhered to their own local regulations!’ (p. 123). But stencilled books, which, unlike engraved editions, are made for a specific

community, may therefore contain musical elements particular to that place. Certainly this feature of stencilled books will have to be taken into account to a far greater extent in future analyses.

The discussion of the fundamental influence of Lassus versus Palestrina should also be reconsidered in this context. The argument put forward by Montagnier of a refusal to accept the Tridentine decrees – the inaccuracy of which I pointed out above – cannot be used as the sole explanation for the failure of French churches to assimilate the Palestrina model, in contrast to their Italian and Austrian neighbours (pp. 8–9, 152, 165 and 238). As the author's excellent analysis of the direct filiation of the composers in this collection with Lassus proves, everything leads us to understand that the French *maîtres de musique* simply and quite naturally inscribed themselves in the Franco-Flemish cultural tradition, still predominant in the kingdom and conveniently synthesised by the work of Lassus.

Indeed, while Montagnier's analysis is extremely valuable, it is unfortunate that he does not offer a working definition of *stile antico* (pp. 164–71). Indeed, rather than considering that in France 'music masters did not have a strong historicised approach to the genre' (p. 171) and were only interested in going from the *stile antico* to the *stile moderno* ('strict or loose counterpoint'), should we not rather consider what Brossard ([1708] 1992, p. 135) defines as the *stile ecclesiastico*: 'full of majesty, grave and serious, able to inspire devotion and to prompt the soul to God' (p. 171)? This should actually lead us to assume that the reality of a transgenerational transmission finds its own balance between the permanence of compositional know-how and the evolution of musical language, which composers do not fail to take into account. But the corpus of masses studied does not reflect this in the most obvious way, since it is undoubtedly one of the most conditioned by its inclusion in the liturgy. Montagnier proposes the first systematic and in-depth study of this compositional know-how – in particular, of the stylistic turn taken with André Campra's *Missa Ad majorem Dei gloriam* – which lays a solid foundation for all future studies. One wonders, however, about the systematic comparison that Montagnier makes with opera to justify the origins of this change of style without ever referring to a genre that is closer: the *motet à grand chœur*, also promoted by Lully. To cite just one example: regarding the introduction of frequent changes of time signature from duple to triple metre, Montagnier associates this stylistic evolution in polyphonic writing with the influence of the metrical variations characteristic of the recitatives in Lully's *tragédies en musique* (p. 198), an assertion that should at least have been better substantiated.

Today we still have to work to place these achievements in the context of what we can rediscover regarding the practices of this music, and this cannot be done without leaving behind our modern post-Romantic reflexes, which lead to anachronisms: '[The few remaining arrangements of masses with instruments] did not mirror the original printed sources as approved by their authors [and] did not reflect the common practice' (p. xxi). In my opinion, Montagnier neglects to take into account the historical reality that the work, no matter how

highly regarded it (or its composer) was at the time, was not fixed and lent itself to all manner of arrangements. This is all the more true and necessary in the world of religious music, in which *maîtres de musique* must confront multiple imperatives of a liturgical, musical (which can also touch on questions of taste), institutional, pedagogical and social nature. This is the strength of the Ballard collection: to make this repertoire, which is both a model and fundamentally adaptable, available for every necessity over a long period of time.

ACHILLE DAVY-RIGAUX

NOTES

1. We must therefore also salute Montagnier's own history of producing musical editions and other pioneering works, without which this synthesis would have been impossible. Indeed, Montagnier is recognised as an expert on religious music in France: he has brought several figures and works to light, in particular compositions by Pierre Tabart (Montagnier 2002), and especially Charles-Hubert Gervais (Montagnier 2001) and Henry Madin (Montagnier 2008).

2. Although Montagnier is currently a professor at the University of Lorraine and an adjunct professor at McGill University, he received his PhD from Duke University.

3. To this list should be added the very important collection of scores and separate parts for the collegiate church of Soignies preserved in Belgium, mainly connected with its French-born maître de musique Pierre-Louis Pollio (see Guilloux 2016), as well as the stencilled choirbooks found since in the cathedral of Beauvais, thanks to research on Pollio carried out at the Institut de recherche en Musicologie (IReMus), Paris.

4. Conducted by historians and musicologists working in close association, the Muséfrem project (supported by the French Agence nationale pour la recherche from 2009 to 2013) aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms and challenges of musical creation for the church outside the court and the conditions linked to its ceremonial dimension. As a direct result of this project, a 'prosopographical' database, enriched by nearly twenty years of archival research, is being completed. It is devoted to the musicians who worked daily in these churches and cathedrals at the end of the ancien régime: <http://philidor.cmbv.fr/Publications/Bases-prosopographiques/MUSEFREM-Base-de-donnees-prosopographique-des-musiciens-d-Eglise-en-1790> (last visit: 19 July, 2021).

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