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Introduction

Gallus Dressler: An Overview of His Works

Gallus Dressler is known today primarily for his theoretical writings on music, and without doubt he was one of the most important and influential German theorists of the mid- to late sixteenth century. Three textbooks are known to have been composed by him: *Practica modorum explicatio* (1561),¹ his manuscript *Praecepta musicae poëticae* (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, shelfmark Mus. ms. autog. theor. G. Dressler), and the print *Musicae practicae elementa in usum scholae Magdeburgensis edita* (Magdeburg, 1571, with later editions in 1575, 1584, and 1601). The *Praecepta musica poëticae*, considered Dressler's most important and original contribution to musical thought, was delivered as a series of lectures to the more advanced students at the Latin school in Magdeburg, where Dressler was cantor, between 21 October 1563 and 29 February 1564. Dressler notes in the preface that the lectures were delivered on Thursdays between noon and 1 p.m., the topic of *musica poëtica* having been requested specifically by some of the students. He further mentions that two years previously he had drawn up precepts on this subject and lectured on them but now welcomes the opportunity of revisiting the topic, expanding on his earlier ideas and illustrating them with musical examples, and through these copious annotations and corrections the treatise represents the author's mature reflections on this subject. Consequently, this treatise, with its emphasis on the art of musical composition, has received considerable scholarly attention. Various modern editions of the work and articles discussing it

1. Gallus Dressler, *Practica modorum explicatio: Adjecta sunt praeceptis exempla figuralia a probatis autoribus composita* (Jena: Donatus Richzenhain, 1561). For a modern edition, see Gallus Dressler, *Practica modorum explicatio – Explication pratique des modes: Édition nouvelle et traduction française*, ed. Olivier Trachier (Sampzon: Éditions Delatour France, 2014). There is still no modern edition of *Musicae practicae elementa*.

have appeared since 1914, and it is frequently referred to in the musicological literature.²

This modern concentration on Dressler the theorist does not reflect the perceptions of his contemporaries, since during his lifetime he was celebrated primarily as a composer. To date, only a few of his works have appeared in modern editions, and of these more are German texted than Latin texted. This edition aims to fill this lacuna. Seventy-eight of the eighty-three motets it contains come from Dressler's three most important motet editions, all printed in Nuremberg: *Sacrae cantiones quatuor, quinque et plurimum vocum* (1574) and two subsequent editions titled *Opus sacrarum cantionum quatuor, quinque et plurimum vocum* (1577 and 1585).³ These volumes primarily reissue earlier works by Dressler and may not have been supervised by the composer, though it is notable that they were all

2. Gallus Dressler, *Praecepta musicae poëticae*, ed. Bernhard Engelke, *Geschichtsblätter für Stadt und Land Magdeburg* 49 (1914–15): 213–50; Dressler, *Praecepta musicae poëticae*, ed. and trans. Olivier Trachier and Simonne Chevalier (Paris-Tours: Minerve, 2001); and idem, *Praecepta musicae poëticae—The Precepts of Poetic Music*, ed. and trans. Robert Forgács (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007). See also Bernhard Engelke, "Einige Bemerkungen zu Dresslers *Praecepta musicae poëticae*," *Geschichtsblätter für Stadt und Land Magdeburg* 49–50 (1914–15): 395–401. In addition, a summary of the treatise in German appears in two important publications: the major biographical study by Wilhelm Martin Luther, *Gallus Dressler: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des protestantischen Schulkantorats im 16. Jahrhundert* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1941), 78–108; and Ernst Apfel, *Geschichte der Kompositionslehre, von den Anfängen bis gegen 1700* (Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshofen's Verlag, 1981), 1:295–301. Several of Dressler's compositional rules have been quoted in Latin and translated into English in Ellen S. Beebe, "Text and Mode as Generators of Musical Structure in Clemens non Papa's *Accesserunt ad Jesum*," in *Music and Language* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1983), 93.

3. Full details of these publications can be found in "Sources" in the critical report and in the works lists in Luther, *Gallus Dressler*, 152–53; and *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online (hereafter *GMO*), s.v. "Dressler, Gallus," by Walter Blankenburg (rev. Clytus Gottwald), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.08165>.

Texts and Translations

The orthography of the Latin texts has been normalized in accordance with standard ecclesiastical Latin, though Dressler's writings and publications often used a more classical version of the language. The sources' use of diacritical marks on vowels (acute and grave accents, the diaeresis) has not been retained. Capitalization, sometimes inconsistent among partbooks, has been standardized. All the translations are by the editor and seek to reflect the meaning of the texts as closely as possible. Translations of sacred texts are strongly influenced by traditional English translations, among them the Psalter in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549, rev. 1552 and 1662) and the Douai-Rheims (1582, 1609–10) and King James (1611) biblical translations. Biblical chapter numbering follows the Vulgate. Information on text sources is provided wherever possible; the introduction provides further information on these sources. When applicable, "Comments" describes notable variant readings of the texts, whether from their original literary sources or near-contemporary versions of note (e.g., the 1592 *Vulgata Clementina* edition of the Bible issued by popes Sixtus V and Clement VIII; see "Dressler's Latin Motets and Their Context" in the introduction). The edition retains the source orthography of the German texts used in the cantus firmi of nos. 39 and 40.

Motets for Five Voices

1. *Unam petii*

Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut habitem
in domo Domini, omnibus diebus vitae meae, ut
videam voluptatem Domini, ut visitem templum
ejus.

One thing have I sought of the Lord, which I will
require, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all
the days of my life, that I may see the delight of the
Lord, that I may visit his temple.

Secunda pars

Quoniam abscondit me in tabernaculo, in die malorum
protexit me in abscondito tabernaculi sui, et in petra
exaltavit me.

For he has concealed me in his tabernacle; he has
sheltered me in the hidden place of his tabernacle,
and exalted me on stone.

Source. Psalm 26:4–6 (Vulgate).

Comment. *Vulgata Clementina* (1592) has "ut inhabitem" for "ut habitem" and "et visitem" for "ut visitem" and "in tabernaculo suo" for "in tabernaculo."

2. *Non est bonum*

Non est bonum hominem esse solum. Faciamus ei
adjutorium simile sibi.

It is not good for man to be alone. Let us make for him
a helper similar to himself.

Motets for Five Voices

1. Unam petii

Cantus 1

Cantus 2

Altus

Tenor

Bassus

6

C1

C2

A

T

B

U- nam pe- ti- i_____

U- nam pe- ti- i_____ a Do- mi- no, u- nam pe- ti- i, u-

U- - nam pe- ti- i a Do- mi- no, (u-

U-

— a Do- - mi- no, u- nam, _____ u-

-nam pe- ti- i a Do- mi- no, _____ u- - nam pe- ti-

- nam pe- ti- i a Do- mi- no,) u- nam pe- ti- i_____ a Do- mi-

- nam pe- ti- i a Do- mi- no, (u- nam pe- ti- i a _____ Do-mi- no,)

U- nam pe- ti- i_____ a Do- mi-

21. Regnum mundi

Cantus 1

Re- gnum mun- di et om- - nem or- na-

Cantus 2

Re- - gnum mun-

Altus

Re- gnum mun- di, re-

Tenor

Re- gnum mun- di et om- nem or- na- tum,

Bassus

Re- gnum mun- di, (re- gnum

6

C1

- - tum, or- - na- tum, et om- nem or- na- tum sae- cu-

C2

- di et

A

- gnum mun- di et om- nem or- na- tum, et om- nem or- na- tum sae- cu- li

T

et om- nem or- na- tum, (et om-

B

mun- di) et om- nem or- na- tum,

Motets for Six Voices

39. Subditus esto Deo

Cantus 1

Cantus 2

Altus

Tenor 1

Tenor 2

Bassus

Sub- di- tus e- sto

Sub- di- tus e- sto De-

Sub- di- tus e- - sto De- o, sub- di- tus e- - sto De-

5

C1

C2

A

T1

T2

B

Sub- di- tus e- sto De- -

De- o, (sub- di- tus e- sto De- o,) sub- - di- tus e- sto

- - - - - o, man-

-o, sub- - di- tus e- sto De- - - o, man-

Thu recht laß Gott wal-

Sub- di- tus e- - sto De- - o, (sub- di- tus e- sto De-

Critical Report

Sources

Primary Source

Cantiones 1574. The primary source for all the motets in this edition, unless noted otherwise, is the second of Dressler's major motet collections, published in 1574:

SACRÆ CANTIONES | QVATVOR, QVINQVE ET PLVRIMVM | VOCUM, IN GRATIAM MVSICORVM | COMPOSITÆ | A | Gallo Dresslero Nebræo, Cantore Magdaburgensi. | [PART NAME] | CVM PRIVILEGIO CÆSAREÆ MAIESTATIS ET | DVCIS SAXONIÆ ELECTORIS. | Imprimebat Noribergæ, cum consensu Autoris, Theodoricus | Gerlachius, sibi & D. Vuolffgango Kirchnero. | M. D. LXXIII.

I consulted the Cornetto-Verlag facsimile edition of this source (ed. Wolfgang Schäfer, Stuttgart, 1997), which is based on the exemplar in the Schermer-Bibliothek, Ulm (shelfmark Misc. 98). The five partbooks are designated Discantus, Altus, Tenor, Bassus, and Vagans (which contains additional parts for the five- and six-voice motets). All have the same title page except the Tenor, whose title page reads:

OPVS SELECTISSIMVM | SACRARVM CANTIO= | NVM, QVATVOR, QVINQVE ET PLVRI- | BUS VOCIBUS IN GRATIAM MVSICORVM | COMPOSITARVM | A | Gallo Dresslero Nebræo, Cantore Magdaburgensi. | TENOR | CVM PRIVILEGIO CÆSAREÆ MAIESTATIS ET | DVCIS SAXONIÆ ELECTORIS. | Imprimebat Noribergæ, cum consensu Autoris, Theodoricus | Gerlachius, sibi & D. Vuolffgango Kirchnero, | M. D. LXXIII.

The foliation of the partbooks is as follows: Discantus a2-x3, Altus aa3-tt3, Tenor A2-T3, Bassus AA2-QQ3, Vagans Aa2-Kk3.¹

1. A barely legible inscription appears on one of the back flyleaves of the Discantus partbook belonging to the Ulm copy of this source. Alexander Rosenstock, of the Stadtbibliothek Ulm, very kindly offered advice on this inscription; after consultation with a handwriting expert among his colleagues, he came to the conclusion that the

Secondary Sources

DRESSLER'S MAJOR MOTET PUBLICATIONS

These sources contain all the same pieces as *Cantiones 1574*. The musical readings are for the most part identical; any slight differences are reported in the critical notes below. One notable difference, however, is that the ordering and numbering of nos. 37–41 are updated and regularized in *Opus 1577* and *Opus 1585*; the edition follows the numbering and ordering of these sources for these motets (for further information, see “Dressler's Latin Motets and Their Context” in the introduction).

XC Cantiones 1570. Dressler's first collected edition of motets, comprising all his previously published Latin-texted pieces:

XC. CANTIONES GALLI DRES= | LERI NEBRÆI, CANTORIS MAGDEBVR= | GENNIS, QVATVOR ET PLVRIVM VOCVM. | TENOR | CVM GRATIA ET PRIVILEGIO | ILLUSTRISSIMI PRINCIPIS AC DOMINO | D. Augusto Ducis Saxoniae Electoris, &c. ad quinquennium. | Magdeburgi excudebat Wolffgangus Kirchnerus, 1570.

The five partbooks are designated Discantus, Altus, Tenor, Bassus, and Quinta Vox, and title information varies among the partbooks. While the Tenor has the title page given above, the title pages of the Discantus and Bassus are as follows:

XC. CANTIONES QVATVOR, QVINQVE ET PLVRIVM VO= | cum, Galli Dressleri Cantoris Scholæ Mag = | deburgensis. | [PART NAME] | Magdeburgi excudebat Wolffgangus Kirchnerus, Anno 1570.

words made no sense and were simply “scrawling” or an exercising of the quill (email of 9 July 2021). The same opinion was given by Professor Wolfgang Kofler of the Leopold-Franzens Universität Innsbruck, Zentrum für Alte Kulturen, Institut für Klassische Philologie und Neulateinische Studien (email of 14 July 2021).