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A FESTSCHRIFT FOR JAAP VAN BENTHEM ON HIS 80th BIRTHDAY

INHOUD

Jacob Barend (Jaap) van Benthem (23-12-1937). List of publications

5

PETER WRIGHT: A deleted Sanctus in the Aosta codex 11

ALEJANDRO ENRIQUE PLANCHART: The case of a unique Alleluia for Cambrai

31

AGNESE PAVANELLO: Fortuna on the dolphin. Notes on an iconographic motif in Cappella Sistina 14 and 51

51

BONNIE J. BLACKBURN: Conrad Paumann in Ferrara 69

FABRICE FITCH: On compositional process and the Missa Prolacionum 83

M. JENNIFER BLOXAM: Ockeghem's presence in Obrecht's Masses 103

WILLEM ELDERS: Johannes Ockeghem. Some 'identifications' 125

PAWEŁ GANCARCZYK & LENKA HLÁVKOVÁ: The Lviv fragments and Missa L'homme armé sexti toni. Questions on early Josquin reception in Central Europe 139

DAVID FALLOWS: A new Josquin ascription. The four-voice Au bois, au bois ma dame, previously credited only to Moulu 163

> PAUL KOLB: Divisions of dots and dots of division. History, theory, and practice 177

JOHN MILSOM: Dots before the eyes. Regional preferences for the placement of dots of addition 191

ANDREA LINDMAYR-BRANDL: Gaudeamus, bibe, bibe! Singing from partbooks with a baton? 213

STEFAN GASCH: Fiktion und Fakt. Anmerkungen zu verlorenen Beständen der Münchner Hofkapelle und einem wiederentdeckten Chorbuch (D-Mbs Mus.ms. 2759) 223

> HONEY MECONI: The Munich connection. Extreme singing in Lassus and La Rue 247

BERNHOLD SCHMID: Ein fälschlich Lasso zugeschriebenes Salve Regina à 2 in der Staats- und Stadtbibliothek Augsburg. Vorlage und Autorschaft 259

> AGNIESZKA LESZCYŃSKA: Jacob Regnart's connections with Silesia and Poland 279

Fabrice Fitch

ON COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS AND THE MISSA PROLACIONUM*

Of the many landmarks in Jaap van Benthem's long and distinguished career, the most significant to date is his edition of the Masses and Mass sections that make up the lion's share of Ockeghem's surviving output.¹ At the time of my first meeting with Jaap at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the summer of 1992, he had just embarked on it, and I was privileged to follow its progress closely until its completion some thirteen years later. Among the most impressive of its twelve volumes is the one with which Jaap presented me at the Ockeghem quincentenary conference at Tours in 1997, containing the *Missa Prolacionum*.² Jaap's virtuoso reading of the sources led him to propose so precise a reconstruction of the putative archetype that an exact physical or virtual facsimile reproduction, based on his suggestions, ought to be possible (a note in passing to any enterprising expert calligraphers or computer graphic designers!).³ The *Missa Prolacionum* is, in addition, one of the two Ockeghem

- * I thank Lois Fitch (Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester), David Fallows (Basel/ Manchester), Martin Iddon (University of Leeds) and Warwick Edwards (Glasgow University) for commenting on draft versions of this study. An abbreviated version was read at the 45th Medieval and Renaissance Music Conference, Charles University, Prague, 4–8 July 2017. I thank the Research Committee of the Royal Northern College of Music for making my attendance at the conference possible.
- ¹ Johannes Ockeghem. Masses and Mass sections, ed. J. van Benthem, 3 vols. in 12 fasc. (Utrecht 1994-2005).
- ² Johannes Ockeghem. Masses and Mass sections. Missa Cuiusvis toni upon fa-ut. Missa Prolacionum, III/4 (1997), viii-xvii and 60-63 (commentary) and 25-59 (edition). The two complete sources for Missa Prolacionum are Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. Chigi C VIII 234, fols. lxxxxviiiv-cvi^r (facsimile in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. Chigi C VIII 234, ed. H. Kellman, Renaissance Music in Facsimile 22 (New York & London 1986) and Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Handschriften- und Inkunabelsammlung, Ms. 11883, fols. 208^v-221^r.
- ³ For a challenge to the view of Chigi's transmission of *Missa Prolacionum* as representative of Ockeghem's notational archetype, see M. Friebel, '*Missa Prolationum*. Auf der Suche nach einer Originalnotation', in *Johannes Ockeghem. Actes du XL^c colloque international d'études humanistes*, ed. P. Vendrix (Paris 1998), 433-464 and the more extended argument in *idem, Johannes Ockeghems Missa Prolationum*. Quellenstudien und Analysen (Ph.D. diss., Universität Wien 2004). Friebel's arguments are too complex to rehearse here, but he regards Chigi's two-voice notation as a later re-casting of an original four-voice layout closer to the transmission in Vienna 11883. This view seems to me to rest on a distinction between 'mensural' and 'successive' canon that may not have been pertinent to Ockeghem and his contemporaries. Further, the casting of *Prolacionum*'s sister work, *Missa Cuiusvis toni*, on a similar 'encoded' notation is strong circumstantial evidence in favour of Chigi's reading, notwithstanding the significant corruptions identified by Van Benthem and Friebel.

Masses that I hadn't addressed in my dissertation, which dealt only with those cycles based, or in my view plausibly based, on *cantus prius facti* (the other being the *Missa Cuiusvis toni*).⁴ For all these reasons, it seems fitting that my contribution to this celebratory volume should address this enigmatic work, which Jaap's ingenuity has done so much to elucidate.

The twenty years since the publication of Jaap's edition have witnessed much groundbreaking research into *fuga* in its various forms,⁵ but as far as I am aware there have been no concrete attempts at elucidating the intricate workings of this most daunting and sustained of canonic experiments.⁶ The research into questions of *fuga* more broadly offers some hints as to the reasons for *Prolacionum*'s relative neglect. The Mass' gradual unfolding of canonic pitch-interval from section to section is well rehearsed, but just as distinctive, indeed unique, is the diversity of time-intervals between *dux* and *comites*, which varies from one perfect tempus (in the 'Pleni sunt celi') to twelve

⁴ F. Fitch, Johannes Ockeghem. Masses and models (Paris 1997).

⁵ For reasons of space only a selection of the literature on the topic can be listed here. See the examination of fifteenth-century fuga in J.E. Cumming & P. Schubert, 'The origins of pervasive imitation', in The Cambridge history of fifteenth-century music, edd. A.M. Busse Berger & J. Rodin (Cambridge 2015), 200-228, together with other studies on later periods listed in the bibliography (at 226-228); D. Collins, "So you want to write a canon?". An historically-informed new approach for the modern theory class', in College music symposium 48 (2008), 108-123; I. Ott, 'Model-based canonic writing in Brumel's Missa A l'ombre d'ung buissonet', in Journal of the Alamire Foundation 7 (2015), 50-71 and idem, Methoden der Kanonkomposition bei Josquin Des Prez und seinen Zeitgenossen (Hildesheim 2014); J. Milsom, "'Imitatio", "intertextuality", and Early music', in Citation and authority in medieval and Renaissance musical culture. Learning from the learned, edd. S. Clark & E.E. Leach (Woodbridge 2005), 141-151 and idem, 'Making a motet. Josquin's Ave Maria... virgo serena', in The Cambridge history of fifteenth-century music, 183-199, together with other studies listed in the bibliography; and many studies by Peter Urquhart, beginning with Canon, partial signatures, and 'musica ficta' in works by Josquin and his contemporaries (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University 1988), most particularly the study cited in fn. 6 below; and finally the collection of studies exploring canon from all aspects in Canons and canonic technique, 14th-16th centuries. Theory, practice, and reception history, edd. K. Schiltz & B.J. Blackburn (Leuven 2007).

⁶ In addition to the studies by Michael Friebel previously cited in fn. 3 above, see M. Eckert, 'Canon and variation in Ockeghem's *Missa Prolationum*', in *Johannes Ockeghem. Actes*, 465-479, which differs from the analytical approach adopted here, being predominantly descriptive and diagnostic; P. Urquhart, 'Calculated to please the ear. Ockeghem's canonic legacy', in *TVNM* 47 (1997), 72-98, which draws attention to Ockeghem's role in propagating diatonic canon at the fourth and fifth; and L.F. Bernstein, 'Ockeghem as "the Bach of his day"', in *Uno gentile et subtile ingenio. Studies in Renaissance music in honour of Bonnie J. Blackburn*, edd. M.J. Bloxam, G. Filocamo & L. Holford-Strevens (Turnhout 2009), 577-591, whose hermeneutic approach addresses issues both related to and independent of the work's canonic agenda.

(in the 'Qui tollis' and 'Sanctus').⁷ It is clear from the studies previously mentioned that devising a canon at close or very close time-interval (and *a fortiori stretto-fuga*) is a very different matter from one where it is remote or very remote. Thus, it is unlikely that any single template would suffice to answer the essential question, 'how did Ockeghem set about composing the *Missa prolacionum*?'

But there is a more fundamental reason why the Mass seems so forbidding. Alongside its ambiguous location within Ockeghem's historiography (which adversely coloured his reception-history for centuries⁸) is a paradox at the heart of his output, which *Missa prolacionum* supremely embodies; namely, that a composer whose melodic style has so often been described – along with so much else in his music – as *unsystematic* (recall Van den Borren's remark, 'il n'a pas de système'⁹) should have mastered so thoroughly the most systematic form of invention available to him. In other words, implicit within the general view of Ockeghem's melodic style is the virtual absence of footholds from which to unravel anything resembling a systematic approach; and yet a systematic approach is an implicit condition of the canonic enterprise. Hence the temptation to regard *Missa Prolacionum* as hermetically sealed, a supremely reified object (more '*res*' than '*facta*') whose operations cannot be explained, only described.

It is a truism of composition that one must start somewhere (and no doubt the same might be said of analysis); but where a conceptual problem is involved, the first step in the compositional process need not be concretely musical. Given the technical challenge at the heart of the work it is reasonable to assume a degree of advance-planning, particularly for the lengthier sections comprising the Gloria and Credo. In what follows I am concerned with the form that such pre-compositional decisions might have taken and their possible role in shaping musical ideas. If it seems unlikely that a single precept or set of precepts could account for the operations of the entire Mass, then each section must be approached on its own terms. Here I will focus on just one, albeit with a view to extrapolate a few principles that may be more widely applicable.

It is not Sherlock Holmes but Edgar Allan Poe's great fictional creation, C. Auguste Dupin (clearly a model for Holmes), who first observed that the more outré the crime the more distinctive the clues left behind, and thus the greater likelihood

⁷ Strictly speaking the time-intervals in the 'Christe' and 'Benedictus' are longer still, but these sections are special cases, since the overlap between the *dux* and *comites* statements consists of no more than a single pitch.

⁸ L.F. Bernstein, 'Ockeghem the mystic. A German interpretation of the 1920s', in *Johannes Ockeghem. Actes*, 811–845; *idem*, ''Singender Seele'' or ''unsingbar''? Forkel, Ambros, and the forces of the Ockeghem reception during the late 18th and 19th centuries', in *The Journal of Musicology* 23 (2006), 3–61; and *idem*, 'The modern reception of the music of Jean d'Ockeghem', in *The Cambridge history of fifteenth-century music*, 811–822.

⁹ C. van den Borren, Études sur le quinzième siècle musical (Antwerp 1941), 168.

of detection – and that conversely, it is the most commonplace crime that is least susceptible of solution.¹⁰ From that perspective there is little doubt that of all the challenges that Ockeghem sets himself in the course of the Mass, the most outré is the canon at the upper fifth of the 'Et resurrexit', whereby the upper canonic pair proceeds as a mensuration canon, the lower canonic pair remaining fixed (see the Appendix). Unlike other sections, in which the desired time-interval between the canonic pairs is attained after a half-dozen bars or so, here the maximum distance (eight perfections, rendered as bars in modern notation) is achieved in stages through a series of 'tectonic shifts', and is not reached until just about halfway through the section's ninety-six perfections. The discantus' perfect long (mm. 50-51) serves as an audible marker of this mid-point: past that point, the distance between the two pairs of canonic voices does not change. (The layout of Jaap's edition makes the mid-point very clear, there being eight systems either side of it, always with six bars per system.¹¹)

I want to focus on the bars surrounding this mid-point (see Example 1). In the measures immediately preceding it (mm. 45-48) the two middle voices (upperpair dux and lower-pair comes) have a near-exact imitative passage at the unison, accompanied by a near-identical statement of the same point in the lower-pair dux at the fifth below. This is a wonderful moment and a splendid piece of virtuosity, since the imitation involves a canonically related pair and a voice that is canonically unrelated to either; more particularly, it is the canonically unrelated pair whose imitation (at the unison) is the more audible and prolonged. This imitative point can be subdivided into two components, the first a descending five-note motif (a) the second a phrase beginning with a neighbour-note motion and return (b) In the two unison statements, b follows a, whereas in the lower-pair dux this order is reversed. In the measures on the other side of the mid-point (mm. 49-54) the material just discussed in relation to the *dux* pair plays itself out in the *comites*, but the contrapuntal context has changed, due to two circumstances: first, the entry of the discantus, and second, the change in time-interval within the upper pair. Bearing this in mind, we now find the descending five-note motif (a) in each voice of the upper canonic pair. Between these statements is a separate connective figure (c) a rising and descending fourth presented as stretto imitation at the semibreve. Thus, the upper-pair dux presents the two points in the order ac and the comes presents them as ca.

To summarize on this remarkable passage, a few observations: first, both pairs of

¹⁰ The first statement of this axiom is in E.A. Poe, *The murders in the Rue Morgue*, in *The complete works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. J.A. Harrison, 17 vols. (New York 1902; repr. 1965), vol. 4, 146-192, at 168. It appears countless times in the Holmes canon, individual instances being too numerous to list here.

¹¹ Johannes Ockeghem. Missa Cuiusvis toni upon fa-ut. Missa Prolacionum, 43-48. In the annotated reproduction of Jaap's edition in the Appendix of this article bar numbers have been changed for ease of reference. References to other sections of the work follow the barring of Jaap's edition.



Example 1. Ockeghem, Misa Prolacionum, 'Et resurrexit', mm. 45-54.

canonic voices feature points of imitation whose components appear reversed from one statement to the other (one voice 'stealing a march' on the other); second, these points of imitation are not always exact but are always perceived as imitative. Both gambits are familiar from previous studies of Ockeghem's treatment of imitation.¹² More broadly, this passage suggests that its canonic *obligo* notwithstanding, *Missa Prolacionum* is consistent not just with Ockeghem's approach to imitation, but with his melodic style in general. (That makes the paradox referred to at the start concerning the relationship between systematic and asystematic tendencies within his melodic style the more remarkable.) A more obvious point is the prevalence of motif *a*, which occurs six times within these twelve measures, with two further corresponding statements in adjoining *dux* and *comes* voices on either side of the section's mid-point, on six different pitch levels altogether. Barring a minute, contrapuntally inessential variant (a cambiata), its rhythmic and melodic shape is always the same. In imitative terms it is the most saturated passage of the entire Credo. But the ramifications of motif *a* don't end there.

For as Michael Eckert was the first to notice, motif *a* is present from the very start of the 'Et resurrexit' (Example 2).¹³ The section begins with the upper pair in mensuration canon: motif *a* occurs twice in succession (with the last pitch of the first statement being elided with the first pitch of the second), sounding simultaneously in both voices: four sounding statements, then, in the space of six perfections. The notated values are augmented in relation to the imitative statements in the passage considered earlier (semibreves become longs or breves, minims become semibreves), but otherwise motif *a*'s profile is identical; the sounding durations are different in each voice (owing to the imperfection and alteration brought about by reading the notation under different signs). But this discrepancy permits a form of consistency on the dyadic level: the interval content against each statement of the discantus (*comes*) is identical: 6 5 6 8 6. Furthermore, in the three-voice imitative passage with which we began, the bassus' statement of motif *a* supplies an 'essentialised' reading of this two-voice 'interlock' (to use John Milsom's term)¹⁴ against the unison imitation in the voices above it. This interlock is a not insignificant marker of motif *a*'s identity.¹⁵

¹² For the principles underlying what follows see I. Godt, 'An Ockeghem observation. Hidden canon in the "Mi-mi" Mass', in *TVNM* 42 (1991), 79-85 and Fitch, *Johannes Ockeghem. Masses and models*, 171-176 and 185.

¹³ Eckert, 'Canon and variation', 476.

¹⁴ On Milsom's concept of interlocks see the literature cited in fn. 5 above.

¹⁵ Eckert does not associate the pitches of motif *a* with its distinctive rhythmic configuration or note its presence elsewhere in the section. Instead he notes the similarity of the beginning of the section with that of the lower canonic voice in the opening duo of the 'Christe' (see Eckert, 'Canon and Variation', *loc. cit.*). I view this correspondence as fortuitous, for there are also significant rhythmic and contrapuntal differences between them (not least the context provided by the upper voice of the Christe and the fact that the Christe's phrase adds an extra pitch to the double embedding of motif *a*).

Example 2. Ockeghem, Missa Prolacionum, 'Et resurrexit', mm. 1-6.



Within the 'Et resurrexit', motif a or its near-identical analogues occurs a total of ten times in notated form, and twenty in sounding form (Plate 1). In the majority of cases, these statements are twinned so that a statement in one canonic voice is placed against (or in close proximity to) a statement in the other canonic voice. Only two such pairings remain to be examined. The first is worth mentioning because it is the only one for which I have stretched the definition of motif *a* to include a slightly expanded version (given in the upper canonic pair). At face value, this interpretation may arouse skepticism, but my reasons for doing so may be clearer if the passage is taken in its contrapuntal context. The beginning of this statement presages an answer to the one immediately preceding it in the lower canonic pair (Example 3a). That this expectation is partly frustrated and partly fulfilled is significant on two counts: first, it is another distinctive feature of Ockeghem's imitative practice to suggest, set up, or initiate an imitative statement, only to deviate from it after a couple of pitches (as here, that expectation is created through the contrapuntal context — the imitation is implied, not literal); second, the extension in question amounts to little more than 'vamping' the initial neighbour-note motion. This also is an Ockeghemian melodic staple, perhaps the most memorable instance of which is the opening discantus phrase of the Missa Ecce ancilla (Example 3b).¹⁶ The distinctive placement of the cambiata figure seals the similarity between the two phrases, and underlines yet again the consistency of Missa Prolacionum with its composer's melodic practice. The second coupled statement (see Appendix, mm. 94-96) is remarkable simply for its location. Given its profile, motif a can serve as the *tenorizans* component of a cadence, with the arrival onto the final omitted.¹⁷ This is precisely what happens in this final pairing: first appearing in the discantus (upper-pair comes), motif a is the very last thing one hears in the lower-pair comes. (The final cadential pitch is supplied by the lower-pair dux. Not only does motif a occur at regular intervals throughout the 'Et resurrexit', it is its alpha and omega.)

¹⁶ Johannes Ockeghem. Masses and Mass sections. Missa Ecce ancilla domini I/2 (1995), 1. This passage is further discussed with respect to Ockeghem's melodic design in F. Fitch, "Who cares who is speaking?'. An essay in style criticism', in AcM 82 (2010), 49-70 at 57-58.

¹⁷ In several places (e.g. the unison imitation of mm. 45-47) motif *a* appears with the final cadential pitch added.



Plate 1. Ockeghem, Missa Prolacionum, 'Et resurrexit' (Chigi codex, fols. ciiiv-civr)

Example 3a. Ockeghem, Missa Prolacionum, 'Et resurrexit', mm. 73-77.



Example 3b. Ockeghem, Missa Ecce ancilla domini, Kyrie, mm. 1-4.



The word 'symmetry' is so seldom met with in descriptions of Ockeghem's music that its pertinence here is worth testing further. Taken together with its presence at either end of section, the cluster of statements of motif a distributed round the midpoint of the 'Et resurrexit' is strongly suggestive of conscious design. (This symmetry is reinforced by the overlapping statements of motifs ϵ (upper canonic pair, mm. 51-3) and b (lower canonic pair, mm. 44-5), these two points being symmetrically equidistant from the section's exact midpoint (mm. 49).) At the same time, the most audible formal marker of the midpoint, the discantus' perfect long, appears to be fractionally off-center, coming a bar later than it ought to (m. 50). It is primarily the reading of higher-value durations as perfect or imperfect that brings about the gradual increase of time-interval within each pair of canonic voices, and this long is the final stage of that process. But on its own it does not suffice to arrive at the 'target' time-interval for the upper canonic pair: it needs to be taken together with the four breve rests that precede it. If the resulting group of six perfections is taken for a central axis, as shown in Figure 1, there result two groups of 45 perfect breves, one on either side. For the 45 breves preceding it, the time-interval of the upper canonic pair undergoes staged expansion; for the 45 breves following the central axis, it is fixed (the central axis is shown in the Appendix).¹⁸

¹⁸ These two large sections are further differentiated in terms of scoring, since the first consists of reduced sections of varying combinations whereas a nearly unbroken use of full texture predominates in the second. Further on the role of scoring and texture in the 'Et resurrexit', see point 4 of the concluding points below and fn. 25.

Figure 1. Ockeghem, *Missa Prolacionum*, 'Et resurrexit': symmetrical design of the upper canonic pair.

upper canonic pair mobile	central axis	upper canonic pair fixed
\leftarrow	\Downarrow	\rightarrow
45 [O]	6 [O]	45 [O]

This symmetry likely holds the key to Ockeghem's pre-compositional planning of the 'Et resurrexit'. It is no accident that its densest imitative passage (with which I began) exactly coincides with the central axis, during which the 'tectonic plates' regulating the distance between upper-pair dux and comes undergo their final shift (from six to eight breves).¹⁹ Unlike the (2 + 2) contrapuntal framework that normally obtains in double canon (whereby the alignment of the dux and comites replicate the same two-voice construct), the contrapuntal relationships at these moments of flux are not duplicated. It goes without saying that these moments represent the greatest challenge from a contrapuntal perspective. Furthermore, of all the upper canonic pair's tectonic shifts, this central axis is the only one in which more than two voices sound (first three, then four when the discantus enters with its final long).²⁰ Whilst one cannot know which guiding principle preceded which - the symmetrical placement of motif a throughout the section or the arrival at the upper canonic pair's 'target' time-interval at the section's midpoint - I suspect that their mutual conditionality may have been the first step in Ockeghem's compositional planning.²¹ More specifically, I propose that the possibility of this three-voice imitative episode would have been in Ockeghem's mind at a very early stage, precisely because of the heightened technical challenge it embodied; and that he would have foreseen that its optimal placement might correspond with the final tectonic shift in the upper canonic pair, bearing in mind that its comes would at that point be silent (for four breves), then static (the final long). Hence the idea of placing this imitative episode within the central axis. He would thus have begun by composing this axial passage

¹⁹ My reference to tectonic shifts is not entirely fanciful: the unprepared and unresolved minim dissonance in the lower-voice *dux* at the start of the Credo (m. 2) is an audible 'fault-line' testifying to the voices pulling apart. In no other context than this would such an outlandish sonority be permissible. (Similarly fleeting dissonances may be observed in the three- and fourout-of-one 'Agnus II' canons of Josquin's *Missa L'homme armé super voces musicales* and La Rue's *Missa L'homme armé*.)

²⁰ The penultimate tectonic shift, also consisting of six perfect breves (mm. 33–39), is masked by the upper-voice *comes* being entirely silent and the lower-voice *comes* only entering towards the end.

²¹ The attainment of the target canonic distance by the section's exact midpoint could easily have been achieved on its own by placing the final tectonic shift at bars 43-48, resulting in two sections of 48 bars apiece, the first being mobile with respect to the upper canonic pair and the second fixed. The placement of the final tectonic shift as a central axis indicates a wish to distinguish the section's midpoint not just structurally (in the abstract) but musically (concretely).

with reference to the section immediately preceding it (mm. 39-45), in which the time-interval between the dux and *comes* voices of each canonic pair is fixed but differs for each pair (six bars for the upper canonic pair and eight for the lower one). This section too would have required the closest attention, albeit that the presence of motifs *a* and *b* in the lower pair dux would constitute something of a foothold. At some point he would have turned to the beginning, with its multiple embeddings of motif *a*, by then established as the section's guiding thread. (Alternatively, he might have started at the beginning and gone a certain way, perhaps even as far as the first entry of the lower-voice pair (m. 29); but at some point, the central axial passage would have to be tackled, and worked back from).

A few points by way of conclusion:

1. The presence of rigorous structural and motivic symmetry in the 'Et resurrexit' is a surprising corrective to the received view of Ockeghem's compositional practice, and is reflected in smaller-scale features of the Mass.²² Since so much of the foregoing analysis hinges on the status of the central axis, it is worth noting that the penultimate tectonic shift at mm. 33-39 (see the Appendix) consists of an identical number of breves (six) and results in the same increase of two breves in the distance between *dux* and *comes* (from four to six). This seems to confirm that these staged, incremental increases informed the section's pre-compositional planning; and it is firm evidence that the six breves of the central axis are the lynchpin of both the pre-compositional planning and the section's structure. (Note, however, that intriguingly a slight *asymmetry* persists in the central axis: the discantus consists of four perfections of silence plus the perfect long: 4 + 2, rather than 3 + 3.)

2. The role of very brief cells in larger-scale melodic design, observed throughout this analysis, is consistent with observable practice elsewhere in the Mass: melodic gestalts expand, contract, are multiply embedded or split into sub-components which are themselves recombined. These recursions often coincide with the recurrence of the previous statement in the *comes* voice. Though not systematic, this happens often enough to be indicative of a broad generative strategy. It suggests that *Missa prolacionum* is cut from the same cloth as Ockeghem's other surviving canonic essay, the rondeau *Prenez sur moy*, for which David Fallows' analysis has proposed a similar

²² The Kyrie I and II both begin with unfolding intervallic patterns in each canonic pair, the one a mirror-form of the other (upper canonic pair f'-c'-f'-a' or 4-4-3 (Kyrie I) and e'-c'-e'-a' or 3-3-4 (Kyrie II); lower canonic pair f-a-f-c' (Kyrie I) and a-f-a-d (Kyrie II), both 3-3-5). (See also Eckert, 'Canon and Variation', 475 and Bernstein, 'Ockeghem as "the Bach of his day"', 583.) The book-ending of outer sections of the Kyrie has a counterpart in those of the Agnus dei: the opening bar of the Agnus I is an exact intervallic inversion of the Agnus III (1-4-6 for 8-5-3). This symmetry of incipits between outer sections thus engenders a further, embedded symmetry between the Mass's outer movements (bookended bookends).

modus operandi.²³ And it confirms the consistency of Ockeghem's melodic style, whose lines of force the canonic process seems not to dilute but intensify.

3. Motif *a* is confined to four-voice sections where the canon is at the fifth or the fourth (Gloria, Credo, Agnus dei), and its appearance outside the 'Et resurrexit' is limited to single notated instances – further proof, if any were needed, of its conscious deployment in the 'Et resurrexit'. At the same time, the way its appearances in that section are masked is remarkable: they are typically embedded in the surrounding polyphony, and disguised at the start, paradoxically, by being self-embedded both synchronically and diachronically (and in augmentation). The central axis is the only place at which motif *a* appears as audibly motivic. This calls to mind another celebrated trope from Poe's Dupin trilogy, that of 'hiding in plain sight,' which resonates with Ockeghem's approach to imitation.²⁴

4. The handling of texture and form is one of *Missa Prolacionum*'s most distinctive features. Whereas form in mid-fifteenth-century Masses is often conditioned by the deployment of a *cantus firmus* (specifically, the alternation of its presence and absence, and hence of full and reduced texture), the absence of borrowed material in *Missa Prolacionum* entails that form and texture be re-thought on their own terms. Notwithstanding the role of the canonic *obligo* in shaping these decisions, Ockeghem's handling of them boasts remarkable variety, for which the exceptionally lengthy major sections comprising the Gloria and Credo offer the greatest scope. The start of each section, for example, configures the canonic pairs differently: upper canonic pair on its own ('Et resurrexit'), *dux* pair on its own ('Qui tollis'), both pairs together ('Patrem'), and upper pair together with lower pair *dux* ('Et in terra'). Furthermore, this variety is observable in both local and large-scale decision-

²³ D. Fallows, 'Prenez sur moi. Ockeghem's tonal pun', in Plainsong and Medieval Music 1 (1992), 63–75, repr. in idem, Songs and musicians in the fifteenth century (Aldershot 1996).

²⁴ E.A. Poe, *The purloined letter*, in *The complete works of Edgar Allan Poe*, vol. 6, 28-52, at 47-48, in which the malefactor conceals the theft by leaving the letter in plain sight, a stratagem that fails to deceive Dupin. I have previously invoked the same principle (to distinguish the respective approaches to cadence of Ockeghem and Agricola, albeit with the 'hidden in plain sight' tag applied to the latter rather than the former) in F. Fitch, "Who Cares Who is Speaking?", at 53-55. Apart from its foundational role in the genre of detective fiction, this short story is the subject of a celebrated essay by Jacques Lacan, 'Le séminaire sur «La Lettre volée»' (J. Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris 1966), 11-61; English transl. in J. Lacan, 'Seminar on "The purloined letter", in *idem, Écrits. The first complete edition in English*, ed. and trans. M. Fink, with H. Fink and R. Grigg (New York 2006), 6-48).

making,²⁵ and extends to the motivic workings examined above. The succession of dovetailed duos at the beginning of the 'Et resurrexit' is similarly varied (from m. 1, upper canonic pair; from m. 29, lower-pair *dux* with upper pair *comes*; from m. 33, *dux* pair, and very briefly (mm. 37-38), lower-pair *comes* and upper-pair *dux*). The juncture between the last two pairings is the more seamless that motif *b* (neighbournote motion and return) is both the final gesture of the lower-voice *dux* and the opening gesture of the lower-voice *comes* (mm. 36-38). (Given the elegance of these arrangements, it is worth recalling their structural role in increasing the time-interval in the upper canonic pair.) Even more than the programmatic increase of canonic pitch-interval, it is this exhaustive exploration of the textural possibilities of canon that motivates Dragan Plamenac's description of the Mass as an "Art of the *fuga*" of the 15th century'.²⁶

5. For my last point I turn again to the 'Et resurrexit's penultimate tectonic shift at mm. 33-39 and its consequent, mm. 39-45 (see Appendix). To accommodate the shift of the upper canonic pair from four perfections to six, the lower canonic voice must concord with the upper-pair canonic voice at *two* separate points just two bars apart (mm. 31/3 and 33/3 of the lower-pair *dux*, respectively concordant with the entries of the upper-pair *dux* (m. 31/3) and *comes* (m. 39/3), as shown by the arrows. There is a crucial difference between the two dyadic readings, however: whereas the first is a duo and contrapuntally self-sufficient, the second has several fourths, necessitating the presence of a supporting voice (the lower-voice *dux*). (Similarly, the opening section of the Sanctus is predicated on the self-sufficiency of the *dux* pair for exactly half its length; once the *comites* pair enters the *dux* pair remains concordant but no longer self-sufficient.) It follows that the number of voices involved at any given point would need to be established in advance of any notes being written.

²⁵ Each of the four sub-sections is characterised by a distinctive large-scale textural gambit. Full texture prevails throughout the 'Et in terra', barring a staged reduction from four to two voices (mm. 28/10–36/12, with but a single voice left sounding for a minim at m. 36). The 'Qui tollis' is more varied, but once the *comites* are introduced its most consistent feature is a series of similarly staged reductions (mm. 112/38-127/43; 131/45-139-47; 149/51-158/53). Once the canonic time-interval of three perfections is attained in the 'Patrem', about half of it is taken up with a regular alternation of *dux* and *comites* (corresponding with the time-interval between them), an antiphonal gambit that obtains nowhere else in the Mass. (This may have served as a model for later pieces in which it is more systematically applied, such as La Rue's '6 out of 3' motet *Ave sanctissima Maria.*) Note the contrast between this regular antiphony and the variegated succession of duo combinations of the 'Et resurrexit', discussed in more detail in the following passage.

²⁶ Johannes Ockeghem. Collected Works, vol. 2, ed. D. Plamenac (2nd ed., n.p., 1966), xxi. See Bernstein, 'Ockeghem as "the Bach of his Day" for a thoroughgoing exploration of this idea.

This last point has implications for a deeper investigation into Missa Prolacionum's contrapuntal workings, since the distinction between free-standing and supported dvadic pairs entails differences not just of intervallic succession but of melodic design (a case of causa necessitatis on the one hand and causa pulchritudinis on the other, to borrow from the terminology of *musica ficta*); but it also demonstrates that Ockeghem's compositional process here is not coterminous with or solely reducible to the observance of axioms governing intervallic succession.²⁷ (In the foregoing analysis such contrapuntal 'nuts and bolts' have been conspicuous by their absence.) I have sought to illustrate some of the other considerations in play, and offered evidence of their pertinence at the pre-compositional stage. This in no way diminishes the need to investigate Missa Prolacionum's canonic processes (for which a kind of team effort may be required); on the contrary, these findings may provide a secure contextual grounding from which to do so.²⁸ Finally, I hope to have shown that a deeper understanding of this sphynx-like work is within our grasp. As Ockeghem would doubtless have recognised (and as Jaap van Benthem well knows), 'a vaillans cuers riens impossible!'

²⁷ The approach taken in Bernstein, 'Ockeghem as "the Bach of his Day"" is a further illustration of this point.

²⁸ It should go without saying that the approach adopted here does not exclude other hermeneutic readings. In view of the perceived centrality of the moment of elevation within the mass, it may be significant that the canonic ascent from unison interval to octave reaches its climax with the setting of the Osanna, whose two statements (through the usual 'Osanna ut supra' rubric) frame this liturgical moment. One of the first studies to draw attention to its importance for polyphonic settings of the mass ordinary is M. Long, 'Symbol and ritual in Josquin's 'Missa Di dadi''', in *JAMS* 42 (1989), 1-22. The fullest exploration of its liturgical rationale and its musical implications is A. Kirkman, *The cultural life of the early polyphonic mass. Medieval context to modern revival* (Cambridge 2010), especially chapter 3, 'The cradle of the early polyphonic Mass', 167-207.

APPENDIX

The 'Et resurrexit' section from Ockeghem's *Missa prolacionum* in the edition of Jaap van Benthem with annotations

































