Tu Solus, Qui Facis Mirabilia

TTBB a cappella

Josquin des Prez (1442–1521)
Edited by Jameson Marvin
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(c.1442–1521)

The greatest composer of his generation, Josquin’s pre-eminence, throughout his lifetime, was made clear by the inclusion of his works in positions of great prominence among the first printed editions of music from Italy, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. Among the earliest are the first four motet books by Ottaviano Petrucci: 1502, 1503, 1504, 1501, that stand alongside of his publication in 1502 of Misse Josquin, the first collection of printed music by a single composer. This collection of masses in fact was so highly regarded that two more volumes of Josquin masses followed, in 1505 and 1514. No other composer during Josquin’s lifetime had more than a single volume published of his works.

Josquin’s esteem is made clear by documentation of his masses and motets sung in cathedrals throughout France, Italy, Spain and Germany throughout the 16th century. Nearly 100 years after his death, his setting of Psalm 90 was still being sung on the second Sunday of Lent by the Choir of the Sistine Chapel. [Recently a discovery was made during the restoration of Michelangelo’s frescoes in the Chapel – Josquin’s name was found carved in the wall.]

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Research has not yet revealed, however, the full extent of Josquin’s employment and travels. He was probably born near Saint Quentin in about 1442, and was likely a choir boy there, or in Conde. Records first indicate that Josquin was employed as a singer in 1477, in the chapel of Rene, duke of Anjou, and perhaps in 1480 at the Ste Chapelle of Paris, in the service of King Louis XI of France.

While returning frequently to France, as Josquin’s fame spread he became increasingly associated with the most prominent Italian courts of his day. Throughout the 1480s he
was in the service of the Sforza family and contemporary accounts of him reveal that he
was likely in Milan, Rome and Ferrara between 1480-1488. From 1489-1495, Josquin
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This editor has performed *Tu solus* many times with the Harvard Glee Club using several transpositions (pitched on F#, or F, or E); thus, conductors should feel free to transpose the motet below the written pitch for practical vocal circumstances. It is clear that Josquin conceives this work for low voices (ie. all men – the original high “d” of the *Superius* well within falsetto range of male altos). Thus, in modern performance it seems most appropriately sung by male chorus. This new edition presents the four voices in traditional TI, TII, BI, BII score format. Performing *Tu Solus* with all male voices projects Josquin’s chordal textures in balance, and the richness of the resulting homogenous sonority especially makes expressive the chords at the “devotional” fermati.

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Josquin’s expressive use of fermati in the opening 39 bars will, with brief exceptions, make necessary a performance that feels nearly “pulseless”. The start and stop nature of Josquin’s homophonic setting offers much time for reflection and little time for a regular rhythmic pulse to be felt. The first verse (bars 1-39) in fact constitutes a kind of “prelude” – a devotional prayer to God, Father and Son.

It is at the beginning of the second verse (Ad te solum configimus) that we begin to feel “pulse” made clear by the uninterrupted rhythmic gestures; and it is no coincidence that in this verse, verbs of action are announced. It is here that this editor suggests a pulse (derived from the *alla breve* tempo) of whole note = c.44; the pulse clearly coincides with the strong Latin syllables on each down beat, each bar being equal to a breve in the original. [In this light, one may consider this pulse as a guide line for the opening verse of *Tu solus*, with many points of forward motion and slowing down, i.e. using expressive *rubato*].
This tempo expressively accommodates the 3/2 proportion at bar 55, and also makes clear the inherent dance rhythms of the galliard (bars 54-62) which is preceded by the (typical) dance pairing of the rhythm of the pavan (bars 40-47). Josquin borrows these well known dance rhythms to animate the text, all directed to Christ in whom “we seek refuge, place our trust, adore,” and at 3/2, to whom “we offer prayers, beg that we are heard, and grant what we request.” Josquin’s use of the sesquialtera (bars 54-71 and 89-114), thus emphasizes in both cases the urgency of the text.

The “pleading” nature of the text “Hear our supplications” is highlighted in bars 59-62 in the old fauxbourdon style. [Josquin inserts a middle (TII) part; TI & BI duplicate (up an octave) the BI & II parts bars 55-58]. This original “improvised” style was well known to Josquin and his predecessors Ockeghem and Du Fay. Thus, this editor suggests a “double leading-tone” inherent in this style, by placing musica ficta above both the Tenor I and II at the cadence at bar 61.

Most points of editorial placement of musica ficta directly relate to the well-documented singers’ performing practices (and subsequent rules) of the Renaissance: 1) to create cadences—a singer sings a sharp on the middle note in melodic formulii such as G, F, G—transposed in this edition: E, D#, E; 2) to avoid tri-tones (vertical and horizontal) 3) to create a 1/2 step interval when a melodic line ascends by a whole step and returns to the same note; thus, in this (transposed) edition B, C#, B, becomes B, C natural, B. This occurs frequently in the BI part especially when the C# is in close juxtaposition with one of Josquin’s C naturals in an adjacent part; and 4) to make perfect (in Renaissance terms) the vertical concentus at the word “Christe” by placing a sharp above the TII in bar 54. Christ in Renaissance Christian Theology is “perfect”; thus a “major” chord is necessary to avoid the imperfect minor chord at the final cadence of the preceding phrase.

Especially noteworthy is Josquin’s borrowing of Ockeghem’s renowned chanson, D’ung aultre amer to contrast “Earthly Love”: “To Love Another” with “Christian Love”: “Would be Delusion, Profound Ignorance, and Sin”. [The irony of the placement of Ockeghem’s famous chanson would have been clear to Josquin’s Christian listeners.]

Throughout Tu solus qui facis mirabilia, Josquin employs chromaticism as a means of text expression: TII bar 13; BI bars 60 and 98; BII bars 14, 21, 56, and 98. The words these insertions accompany create a sentence fragment that underlies the affect of the text of the complete motet: “Creator”, “only”, “King”, “hear”, “our prayers”. Thus, through the use of harmonic color, Josquin highlights the words. Following Josquin’s lead this editor employs harmonic color (with musica ficta) at bar 108 to avoid the tri-tone and most especially to inflect the word “joy” (laetitia).
Tu Solus Qui Facis Mirabilia

Tu solus, qui facis mirabilia,
Thou alone, who dost wonders:

Tu solus Creator, qui creasti nos
Thou sole creator, who created us;

Tu solus Redemptor, qui redemisti nos
Thou sole redeemer, who redeemed us
with Thy most precious blood.

Ad te solum configurimus,
In Thee alone we seek refuge;

In te solum confidimus,
In Thee alone we place our trust

Nec alium adoramus, Jesu Christe;
And we adore no other, Jesus Christ.

Ad te preces effundimus
To Thee we offer our prayers.

Exaudi quod supplicamus,
Hear our supplications

Et concede quod petimus,
and grant that which we ask,

Rex benigne.
O benign King.

D’ung aultre amer,
To love another

Nobis esset fallacia
would be delusion;

D’ung aultre amer,
To love another,

Magna esset stultitia et peccatum.
would be profound ignorance and sin.

Audi nostra suspiria
Hear our sighs;

Reple nos tua gratia.
Fill us with Thy grace,

O Rex regum.
O King of Kings

Ut ad tua servitutia,
That in Thy service

Sistamus cum laetitia in aeternum.
we remain with joy forever.

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In Thee alone we place our trust

In te so-lum con-fi-di-mus, Nec

Tu so-lus, qui fa-cis

Thou alone, who doest wonders:

Thou sole creator,

And we adore no other, Jesus Christ.

a-li-um ad-o-ra-mus, Je-su Chri-ste.
Thou sole redeemer, who redeemed us

nos, Tu so lus Red e m ptor, qui re de

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nos, Tu so lus Red e m ptor, qui re de

nos, Tu so lus Red e m ptor, qui re de

with Thy most precious blood.

mi sti nos san gui ne tu o pre

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mi sti nos san gui ne tu o pre

In Thee alone we seek refuge;

Ad te so lum con

Ad te so lum con

Ad te so lum con
who created us;

Tu solus Redemptor, qui redemistinos, with Thy most precious blood.

In Thee alone we seek refuge;
In Thee alone we place our trust

In te solo... fascis mirabilia

Tu Solus, Qui Facis Mirabilia
TTBB a cappella

Prima pars

Thou alone, who doest wonders:

Tu sole creator,

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Thou alone, who doest wonders:
Tu solus Creator, qui creasti nos
Thou sole creator, who created us;
Tu solus Redemptor, qui redemisti nos
Thou sole redeemer, who redeemed us
sanguine tuo pretiosissimo.
with Thy most precious blood.

Ad te solum configimus,
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