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In praise of music: motets, inscriptions and musical philosophy in Robert Dow's partbooks

THE partbooks of Robert Dow (Oxford, Christ Church, Mus. 984–8) reflect his positions as Fellow of Laws at All Souls College, Oxford, and a teacher of penmanship, both in the elegance of their copying and in the intellectual culture evoked by the Latin poems and quotations included alongside the music.¹ Inscribed with the date 1581, they may have been begun as early as the late 1570s, and Dow continued to add to this collection of Latin motets, English anthems, consort songs and textless music until his death in 1588.² These books were designed not merely to be functional in communicating musical notation to players and singers, but also to be both witty and visually appealing. Each book begins with a Latin poem in praise of music by Walter Haddon, at one time President of Magdalen College, followed by Latin verses requesting that users treat his books with care, and several quotations attesting to the value and joys of music.³ These Latin inscriptions continue throughout the motet section of the partbooks. Many of them praise particular composers, including Thomas Tallis, William Byrd, Robert White, William Mundy and Robert Parsons.⁴ A few promote the quality of English music, while many others cite myths and commonplaces about the benefits or qualities of music.⁵ The nature of these inscriptions is unique among Tudor sources.⁶ Typically one finds little engagement with specific songs in philosophical treatises about music, and little philosophy in manuscripts or printed collections of music. Dow's combination of notation and inscription therefore presents a rare and intriguing meeting point of musical thought and practice, offering insights into the motivations and philosophies of this amateur Elizabethan musician.

The primary focus of discussion regarding Dow's intentions in assembling this collection has so far concerned his religious convictions. David Mateer pointed to the coincidence of the date 1581 given in the prefatory material with the death of the Jesuit priest Edmund Campion and argued that this event was the inspiration for Dow beginning his collection with Robert White's *Lamentations* and including many motets on themes of penitence, suffering and the hope of deliverance. Such texts, often linked with the Babylonian captivity or the destruction of Jerusalem, could be associated with the expression of Catholic oppression in Elizabethan England.⁷ More recently John Milsom has denied the suggestion that the partbooks express Dow's Catholic identity, pointing out that there is no evidence that Dow was ever a practising Catholic or a recusant, and that neither the prefatory material nor the Latin inscriptions hint at a Catholic subtext.⁸

Robert Parsons's *Ave Maria* is the only motet accompanied by inscriptions that has specifically Catholic associations via its subject of Marian devotion (which had been marginalized by Protestant reform, even if Mary remained a prominent biblical figure).⁹ In the Bassus partbook Dow attaches the phrase 'music rejoiceth hearts', while the Medius has 'everything that lives is captivated by music if it follows nature' (both in Latin).¹⁰ Even if these inscriptions were intended to comment on the piece itself—i.e. *this* music rejoices hearts—it is not clear whether Dow was attracted by this motet's Marian devotion and potential Catholicism, or rather making a more general plea for the continued performance of musically rich repertory regardless of any confessional associations. The latter would be

more in keeping with the overall aims of the body of inscriptions as a whole.

In the midst of this debate, the contentious issues with which Dow's inscriptions do explicitly engage have been overlooked. Dow was copying his partbooks as disputations regarding the relative merits or vices of music were intensifying in Oxford circles. Ex-Oxford student Stephen Gosson had attacked music in his *School of abuse* (1579) to which the newly appointed and (by his own admission) musically ignorant lecturer in music, Matthew Gwinne, responded in his inaugural lecture, 'In laudem musices oratio', of 1582.¹¹ He was soon followed by the anonymous author of *The praise of music* in 1586 and former Fellow of St John's College John Case with *Apologia musices* in 1588.¹² As Dow had family in London and the repertory of the partbooks is London-orientated, he might also have come across Lincoln's Inn (and ex-Oxford) student Thomas Lodge's defensive response to Gosson (1579) and the criticisms of Philip Stubbes's *The anatomy of abuses* (1583).¹³ The controversy was still on-going in the year after Dow's death when William Byrd set to music lyrics by Thomas Watson in praise of John Case's defence of music, printed on a series of single sheets.¹⁴

In opening his partbooks with Haddon's 'De musica', Dow would not only have been drawing on the long tradition of the 'praise of music' topos, but also making a polemical statement in a current debate. This poem praises music for its pleasures, antiquity, powers over the earth, beasts and humanity, and role as the guiding force of the universe.¹⁵ As such it touches in condensed form on the central themes of the tradition and sets the context for the reception of Dow's partbooks as a whole. On the verso of the opening poem Dow copies a couple of biblical verses including *Ecclesiasticus* xl.20 'Vinum et musica lætificant corda' (wine and music rejoice the heart). This theme of wine, music and pleasure is another recurrent one in Dow's selection, in which it is tempting to see the kind of social occasion in which Dow envisaged his musical collection being sung and played for enjoyment. Finally in the *Medius* book Dow also added a quotation from Cicero emphasizing the importance of music for social status and intellectual standing: in Greece 'everyone learnt it [music] and nor was anyone who

did not know it considered sufficiently polished by education' (*discebantque id omnes; nec qui nesciebat, satis excultus doctrina putabatur*).¹⁶ This opening material sets the agenda for the partbooks as a display of musical learning in both the practical and philosophical spheres and a strong statement of praise and justification for music.

Dow's inscriptions arise within the culture of commonplacing, in which key quotations or examples were excerpted from authoritative sources and stored in an ordered format from which they could be extracted and used as the framework on which to discourse on particular topics. Such techniques were an essential part of the humanist education, but the practice of collecting such epigrams, aphorisms, *sententiae* and other kinds of sayings also had broader cultural influence as they were likewise collected in less organized, miscellaneous compilations and deployed in genres such as emblems, poetic epigrams and letter writing.¹⁷ Drawn from the Bible, humanist writers, and classical tradition or mythology, Dow's inscriptions were typical statements that one might gather in a commonplace book under the heading 'on music', and we shall see that several can be found deployed in other contemporary defences of music.¹⁸ They exemplify the same conventional themes found in Haddon's poem, including an emphasis on musical pleasure, its moral and medicinal benefits for humanity and its effects on nature, while eschewing others such as the music of the spheres and the pantheon of ancient musicians. Moreover, the inscriptions introduce two more typical topoi, also traceable back to classical encomia: music's role in praising God and condemning the unmusical man.¹⁹ The emphasis of Dow's selection is therefore on the naturalness, godliness and practical advantages of musicality for humanity.

With their combination of media, however, the partbooks have more in common with the emblem tradition in which text and symbolic image combined to communicate moral, religious or political values, often drawing on the same kinds of sayings and quotations collected in commonplace books.²⁰ Just as in emblems the juxtaposition of different media allows more complex and nuanced meanings to arise, so too in Dow's combination of music and text. Whereas emblems often include a longer poetic epigram that helps elucidate the combined

meaning of image and motto, however, Dow leaves his readers to draw their own connections based on their broader knowledge of the musical discourse surrounding the inscription and the adjacent piece.

Whether or not Dow had a specific meaning in mind for each juxtaposition, in a culture used to emblems, allegory and witty conceits these inscriptions would have invited users to reflect on the connections between the philosophical discourse evoked by the quotation and the musical practice represented by the notation and its performance. Differences in ink colour suggest that at least some of these quotations were copied later than the motets they now accompany, so they were not necessarily part of his initial conception for the books. In many cases, there is a clear connection between the motet and inscription, indicating that these were not merely random space fillers. For others, though, the connections are less obvious, requiring a greater degree of interpretation and opening up a wider range of possible readings. Indeed, inviting discussion may have been more Dow's intention than any precise meaning. The learned Elizabethan was expected to be able to discuss music as eloquently as they might perform it.²¹ In the opening of Thomas Morley's *A plain and easy introduction to practical music* (1597) the protagonist Philomathes is shamed for his incapacity to enter into musical debate over dinner as much as his inability to hold his part in the after-dinner singing.²² Indeed according to the influential authority on music, Boethius, the true musician was not the performer or composer, but rather the one able to judge music through reason and thought.²³ With no direct evidence of how individual readers responded to Dow's books, the interpretation that follows suggests possible ways an intelligent musical amateur might have drawn connections between motets and inscriptions in light of both the themes and rhetoric of contemporary musical debate.

One of the more obvious connections between inscription and motet is on the theme of divine praise. Robert White's *Appropinquet deprecatio mea* is accompanied in the Superius partbook with a verse from Psalm 103 (illus.1): 'Cantabo Domino in vita mea, psallam Deo meo quamdiu sum' (I will sing to the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being).²⁴ This verse picks up the theme of singing to God from White's motet on verses from Psalm 118:

Eructabunt labia mea hymnum: cum docueris me iustificationes tuas. Pronunciabit lingua mea eloquium tuum: quia omnia mandata tua sunt aequitas.

My lips shall pour out [thy] praise: when thou hast taught me thy statutes. My tongue shall sing of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.²⁵

Both the motet and the inscription illustrate the appropriateness of music for divine praise, a central point in the defence of music. As *The praise of music* (1586) argued: 'the vent and only end of music is immediately the setting forth of God's praise and honour'.²⁶ Even music's critics usually allowed this point.²⁷

Alongside divine praise, music's beneficial effects were another important defence, including its comforting and curative properties. Dow's inscriptions point in this direction when he copies a line from Haddon's poem—'Musica mentis medicina moesta' (music is the medicine of the sad mind)—next to the bassus part of William Byrd's motet *Tribulatio proxima est*.²⁸ Byrd's text (a pastiche of several Lenten responses and Psalm 69.6)²⁹ laments the tribulation, reproaches and terrors that the protagonist suffers and calls on the Lord to be their deliverer.³⁰ Again there are parallels between the sorrowful subjects of both motet and inscription, but the inscription suggests the motet's therapeutic potential. Music was regarded as a cure for melancholy, a disease that was believed to have spiritual as well as physical consequences as a means through which the devil could torment the godly.³¹ Explanations for how music enacted this cure varied: some pointed to its ability to arouse cheerful passions that would disperse the melancholic humour, including the 1586 *Praise of music* and Robert Burton's *Anatomy of melancholy* (1621). The latter cites as evidence the same verse from *Ecclesiasticus* on wine and music that Dow had copied in his opening pages.³² Poet George Puttenham, however, pointed to the cathartic effects of being able to express one's suffering as the means of relief:

yet is it a piece of joy to be able to lament with ease, and freely to pour forth a man's inward sorrows and ... griefs ... This was a very necessary device of the Poet ... to play also the Physician, and not only by applying a medicine to the ordinary sickness of mankind, but by making the very grief itself (in part) cure of the disease.³³



1 Oxford, Christ Church, Mus. 984, after no.28 [p.83]. The Latin inscription accompanying Robert White's *Appropinquet deprecatio mea* in the Superius partbook (© Governing Body of Christ Church, Oxford. Digital imaging by DIAMM; this image is not covered by the terms of the Creative Commons licence of this publication)

Pairing the motet and inscription, then, raises the suggestion that singing motets of lamentation like Byrd's could have therapeutic properties.

There are several cases in which Dow provides varying inscriptions for the same motet in different partbooks, evoking several different lines of musical debate familiar from the traditional critiques and defences of music that users could explore in connection with these motets. This occurs particularly in relation to motets that focus on Christian behaviour: Robert White's *Portio mea, Domine* concerns the promise to keep God's commandments using verses from Psalm 118³⁴ and Nicholas Strogers's *Non me vincat* is a plea for God's help in turning away

from worldly and devilish temptations taken from Thomas à Kempis's *The imitation of Christ*, a widely read spiritual handbook written in the 15th century and available in English translation from 1580.³⁵ As music's detractors often condemned it as inciting frivolous and lustful behaviour, counter-examples of its virtuous effects were a central defence from its supporters.³⁶ In the Bassus partbook, Dow pairs White's *Portio mea* with a story from Homer's *Odyssey* in which Agamemnon left behind a skilful musician to ensure that his wife Clytemnestra was faithful while he was away at the Trojan War, a strategy that was successful until her lover Aegisthus killed the musician.³⁷ This tale was often cited in

defences of music, appearing several times in John Case's *Apologia musices*, for example. Here it is used to dispute the suggestion that music is a 'dependent of whoremongers' by showing it instead to be a 'guardian' of chastity, to illustrate music's power over the human mind, and to argue that music 'teaches us to rejoice over good things and feel pained by their opposites' (the latter idea inspired by book 8 of Aristotle's *Politics* and book 3 of Plato's *Republic*).³⁸ To readers aware of how this example was used within musical discourse, the pairing might suggest the potential for singing motets like White's to act as an aid to keeping God's commandments.

The inscriptions accompanying this motet in the Superius book would require more interpretative effort to draw connections, but might be read as commenting on a similar theme. Dow copies two biblical verses 'wine and music rejoice the heart' (familiar from the opening material of all the part-books) and 'Spiritus tristis exiccat ossa' (a sorrowful spirit drieth up the bones), part of *Proverbs* xvii.22.³⁹ The link between these opposing statements of joy and sorrow becomes apparent when the *Proverbs* verse is considered in its entirety:

A merry heart maketh a lusty age [margin: or, causeth good health] but a sorrowful mind drieth up the bones.⁴⁰

The inscription therefore returns to the health-giving properties of music seen earlier, suggesting that musical joy can bring good health. Yet those familiar with arguments relating to music and virtue might also have connected the text to the motet's theme of following God's commandments. In *Apologia musices*, Case considers music's role in the devotional and contemplative life, arguing that:

the way of virtue ... is more difficult, it has more need of a sweeter companion ... whereby it may be refreshed. And music is the sweetest companion, since it removes all the tedium of this most arduous and difficult way of life, and inspires the traveller ... For music teaches us to be heedless of vanity's shadows, pleasure's torches, fortune's tricks, the world's miseries.⁴¹

Music is credited not only with sweetening the path of virtue and enabling the Christian to rejoice despite earthly suffering, but also—as in the Clytemnestra example—teaching one to rise above temptations and misfortunes. One implication that

could be drawn, then, is that joy and the educative value of singing a motet such as White's can assist the Christian in their mission to keep the commandments sung of in the motet, thereby maintaining their spiritual health.

Music's moral position was rather more complicated, however, and the inscriptions accompanying Strogers's *Non me vincat* might be read as addressing this. This motet is coupled with three different inscriptions (*illus.2*). That in the Contratenor (*illus.2b*) bears no clear relationship to this motet, but forms part of a separate subset of inscriptions concerning the status of English music that will be considered below. In the Bassus (*illus.2c*), the motet is accompanied by another biblical reference (*Ecclesiasticus* xxxii.8) on the theme of music and wine:

Sicut in fabricatione auri signum est smaragdi: sic numerus musicorum in iucundo et moderato vino

As a signet of an emerald in a work of gold so is the melody of music with pleasant and moderate wine.⁴²

This seems a strange verse to have copied here. The motet text is a plea to God not to let the protagonist be overcome or deceived by flesh and blood, the world and its vain glories, or Satan.⁴³ Surely wine and music are just the kind of worldly pleasures that the motet text condemns? This juxtaposition was perhaps intended to evoke just this debate. In Thomas Becon's *Jewel of joy* (1550) this biblical verse is cited within a similar context considering spiritual versus carnal things. The character Philemon regards music as a worldly vanity 'because the sound straight way perish, and we receive none other commodity than loss of time'. This sparks a reply from Theophile that cites precisely the verse we find in Dow (as well as another that Dow copied in the opening and with White's *Portio mea*, above):

The wise man sayeth like as the carbuncle stone shineth that is set in gold, so is the sweetness of music by the mirth of wine. Again wine and minstrels rejoice the heart.⁴⁴

In Becon the argument continues with Philemon pointing out that the latter verse continues 'but the love of wisdom is above them both'. Nevertheless even Philemon admits that 'this sentence of the wise man doeth not condemn music nor wine, so that the use of them be moderate and exceedeth not measure'.⁴⁵



2 The three different inscriptions accompanying Nicholas Strogers's *Non me vincat* (no.25): (a) Superius: Mus. 984 (© Governing Body of Christ Church, Oxford. Digital imaging by DIAMM; this image is not covered by the terms of the Creative Commons licence of this publication)

Aware of this controversy, the reader must decide whether singing a moral text set to sophisticated polyphony such as Strogers's *Non me vincat*—perhaps during an evening of communal music-making with wine—would be within the bounds of such moderation.

In the Superius partbook (illus.2a) Dow takes a different tack with an inscription originally from Marsilio Ficino's *Epistolae*, 'Non est harmonice compositus qui Musicam non delectatur' (he is not harmoniously composed who does not delight in music).⁴⁶ The same verse is cited in the 1586 *Praise of music* in a passage concerning the harmonious soul and is followed by the voice of Nature declaring: 'If I made

any one which cannot brook or fancy music, surely I erred and made a monster'.⁴⁷ The monstrosity of the unmusical man is a trope traceable back to the *laudes musicae* of antiquity.⁴⁸ Read against the inscriptions in other partbooks one might link this inharmonious human to the musical critic who would categorize music among the worldly pleasures condemned in the motet text.

This inscription also resonates with a quotation in the Superius and Medius books following William Byrd's *O Domine adiuva me*: 'Musicam capit omne quod vivat si naturam sequitur' (everything that lives is captivated by music if it follows nature).⁴⁹ Again the phrase is echoed in *The praise of music*:



(b) Contratenor: Mus. 986 (© Governing Body of Christ Church, Oxford. Digital imaging by DIAMM; this image is not covered by the terms of the Creative Commons licence of this publication)

daily experience doth prove unto us, that not only men but all other living creatures, are delighted with the sweet harmony and consent of music.⁵⁰

Although the context in *The praise of music* is musicality in the natural world, reading the inscription alongside the motet gives the phrase ‘everything that lives’ a rather different resonance. *O Domine adiuva me* is a motet about salvation in which the protagonist pleads with the Lord to save them from eternal death because He has died that sinners might live.⁵¹ The life here is eternal and in this context the living who are captivated by music might be read as those who will have salvation. If the idea of musicality as an indicator of salvation

seems stretched, it is not unique in the ‘praise of music’ tradition. A more negative variant of this sentiment is found in the poem ‘A Song in praise of music’ from c.1603, which explicitly links music’s critics with devils:

They [puritans] do abhor, as devils do all,
the pleasant noise of music’s sound

Moreover the poem goes on to contrast heaven, in which God’s praise is continually sung, with hell in which ‘all pleasant noise they do detest’, connecting musical affinity with godliness and the saints.⁵²

Furthermore, another juxtaposition might also be read as a comment on music and salvation. Byrd’s



(c) Bassus: Mus. 988 (© Governing Body of Christ Church, Oxford. Digital imaging by DIAMM; this image is not covered by the terms of the Creative Commons licence of this publication)

In resurrectione tua—using alleluia verses from the Easter season—is paired with a line from the motet text ‘Musica, Dei donum optimum’ set by many continental composers including Jacobus Clemens non Papa, Orlande de Lassus and Jacobus Vaet: ‘Musica vel ipsas arbores et horridas mouet feras’ (music moves even trees and fearsome wild beasts).⁵³ The effects of music on the natural world were a conventional part of music’s defence, but the specific examples in the inscription evoke the figure of Orpheus. He had long been paralleled with Christ in early Christian and medieval thought, and this comparison can still be found in sources into the mid-17th century.⁵⁴ Orpheus’s taming of beasts was typically likened to Christ’s bringing of the Gentiles to true

religion, while Orpheus’s underworld failures were paralleled with Christ’s successful harrowing of hell.

Dow’s inscriptions engage not only with the topics of musical praise, but also the rhetoric. The annotations in praise of English music in particular seem to have taken inspiration from the prefatory material to William Byrd and Thomas Tallis’s *Cantiones sacrae* (1575), a publication that John Milsom has suggested was specifically designed to showcase English musical achievement with an international audience in mind.⁵⁵ It is likely that Dow knew this publication as he copied four of Tallis’s motets in versions derived from this print (*Candidi facti sunt*, *O sacrum convivium* and two settings of *Saluator mundi*).⁵⁶ At the opening of the *Cantiones*, the anonymous poem

'De Anglorum musica' imagines British music contemplating its journey via print into the world and fearing 'the distant regions and voices of no foreign people' (*Oras nullius gentis, & ora timet*) due to the patronage of Queen Elizabeth and the compositional abilities of Tallis and Byrd.⁵⁷ Another poem by Richard Mulcaster portrays an England that has marvelled at the music of other nations, now bringing its own talents into the light and judgement of foreign peoples.⁵⁸ Similarly defensive of English musical achievement, Dow commends Byrd as the one whom the 'British Muse' would make 'ensign of her troops' (*suos iacet si Musa Britannia clientes; Signiferum turmis te creet illa suis*) and who frees England from Cicero's aspersion that one would not expect 'anyone educated in literature or music' from that island (*nullos puto te literis aut musicis eruditos expectare ... Unus Birdis omnes Anglos ab hoc conuicio prorsus liberat*).⁵⁹ Other quotations evoke national comparisons, including 'the French sing, the Italians bleat, the Germans howl, the English whoop' (*Galli cantant Itali caprizant Germani ululant Angli iubilant*) after Strogers's *Non me vincat* (*illus.2b*), a phrase traceable back to Gaffurius's *Theorica musicae* (1492).⁶⁰ Dow was clearly alert to the varied contemporary musical discourses and rhetorics being used in music's defence, and these influenced the inscriptions he chose for these partbooks.

Another rhetorical influence occurs in Dow's opening instructions to users, which draw on metaphors of the literary creation as a child. These were common in literature and print, including one of the published praises of music. While impressing the need for careful handling of his books, Dow asks users to 'consider that you are handling the female ward of the master'.⁶¹ Printer John Barnes similarly presents the *Praise of music* as a parentless child under his guardianship as 'an Orphan of one of Lady Music's children'.⁶² Barnes is publishing another author's work and bids Sir Walter Raleigh to become its protector, while Dow is copying his own manuscript and places himself in the position of guardian, cautioning others to be respectful. Nevertheless, the shared image of guardianship is another example of how Dow's collection was influenced by the rhetoric of other contemporary literature.

Those aware of the rhetorical devices in the opening of recent praises of music might also have seen

subtle parallels in the juxtapositions Dow created in relation to the opening piece, Robert White's *Lamentations*. Dow paired the piece with two different inscriptions: the first, in the Contratenor and Tenor books, praises the music's expressive qualities: 'Non ita mæsta sonant plangentis verba Prophetæ, quam sonat authoris musica mæsta mei' (not so sad do the words of the weeping prophet sound as the music of my author sounds).⁶³ In the Medius, however, Dow references the story of Ateas the Scythian, who preferred the neighing of his horse to the playing of the outstanding musician Ismenias.⁶⁴ The latter inscription is similar to earlier examples that assert the inhumanity of those who cannot appreciate music. On one level, therefore, it can simply be read as implying the barbarousness of listeners who do not appreciate this expressive music. As John Case put it, 'those who scorn music are not men ... but are said to be stones, such as Anteus [*sic*] the Scythian'.⁶⁵

Yet there are also subtle resonances between Jerusalem's oppression by her enemies in *Lamentations* and the plight of Ismenias as the prisoner of Ateas. Images of music's oppression often occur at the beginning of 'praise of music' texts, some of which also personify music as a lady, just as Jerusalem is anthropomorphized in *Lamentations*. Matthew Gwinne began his defence of music with an image from Plutarch's *De musica* (referring to a play by Pherecrates) in which Musica appears 'with torn garments, a filthy face, and a body pierced with wounds, ruined by starvation, and afflicted with diseases' (*musicam conscissis vestibus, facie deformata, corpore vulneribus confosso, inedia confecto, morbis afflicto*). Gwinne argues that music suffered similarly in his own time: 'not only mutilated but quite mute, since she is hated by most men and studied by few' (*non solum mutila sed plane muta sit musica, cum a plerisque odium, a paucis studium reportet*).⁶⁶ John Case too bases his dedication around an image of a widowed music and an orphaned concord, both in exile.⁶⁷ There are parallels here with figure of the filthy, naked and despised Jerusalem of the motet text from *Lamentations* i.8–9:

omnes qui glorificabant eam spreverunt illam quia viderunt ignominiam eius, ipsa autem gemens est conversa retrorsum. Sordes eius in pedibus eius, nec recordata est finis sui: deposita est vehementer, non habens consolatorem.

all they that had her in honour despise her, for they have seen her filthiness, yea she sigheth and is ashamed of herself. Her skirts are defiled, she remembered not her last end, therefore is her fall so wonderful, and there is no man to comfort her.⁶⁸

This is one of those pieces which David Mateer described as a ‘thinly disguised metaphor for the bondage of the Catholic Church in England’ and therefore indicative of Dow’s Catholic sympathies.⁶⁹ Yet given the context set by the prefatory poem in praise of music, White’s *Lamentations* might be read as evocative less of Catholic persecution than of music’s perceived oppression, in a manner typical of the opening rhetoric in this genre.

So through his partbooks Dow displayed his musical learning in both the practical and the philosophical spheres. His intention to praise and justify music is clear. He made no attempt to provide balanced statements on music’s virtues or vices, and chose numerous quotations explicitly condemning music’s detractors. The stories and arguments raised by his choice of quotations are wholly conventional and influenced by the rhetoric of other contemporary encomia. Yet his justification is founded primarily on the pleasurable, moral and religious advantages of musicality, inviting reflection on the

roles music might play in Christian living, honest pleasures and ultimately salvation.

Where Dow’s partbooks are most distinctive, however, is in prompting users to consider how singing these motets might bring specific benefits. With the inscriptions interspersed throughout the books, performers would stumble across them in the course of singing, potentially prompting communal discussions of music’s effects in relation to the motets just sung. In his *Plain and easy introduction*, Morley would describe the motet as a ‘grave and sober’ genre of the highest art that ‘causeth most strange effects in the hearer’, drawing them to devout contemplation of God.⁷⁰ Dow’s juxtapositions similarly suggest that one might sing these motets to achieve the beneficial effects alluded to in the inscriptions. Moreover Morley argues that such effects would be most powerfully felt by the ‘skilful auditor’—presumably musically educated men like Dow.⁷¹ Engaging communally with the multimedia contents of these partbooks, Dow and his co-performers could cultivate both their performance abilities and those esteemed skills of musical knowledge, judgement and reasoning, seeking ultimately to reap the benefits of the powers of music.

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Sixteenth-century spelling and grammar have been modernized throughout.

1 For detailed descriptions and inventories of these partbooks, see D. Mateer, ‘Oxford, Christ Church Music MSS 984–8: an index and commentary’, *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, xx (1986/7), pp.1–18; J. Milsom, ‘Introduction and indexes’ to the DIAMM facsimile edition *The Dow partbooks: Oxford Christ*

Church Mus. 984–988 (Oxford, 2010); I. Fenlon and J. Milsom, “‘Ruled paper imprinted’: music paper and patents in sixteenth-century England”, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, xxxvii (1984), pp.139–63, at pp.148–9. On Dow’s biography, see Mateer’s article cited above as well as D. Mateer, ‘Dow, Robert (1553–1588)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [ODNB] (Oxford, 2004) (www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/70097; accessed 19 May 2016).

Images of these partbooks are available at: www.diamm.ac.uk/jsp/Descriptions?op=SOURCE&sourceKey=2353.

2 J. Milsom, ‘Sacred songs in the chamber’, in *English choral practice 1400–1650*, ed. J. Morehen (Cambridge, 1995), pp.161–79, at p.165.

3 Milsom, ‘Introduction and indexes’, pp.29–31; Mateer, ‘Oxford, Christ Church Music MSS 984–8’, pp.5–6; G. Bray, ‘Haddon, Walter

- (1514/15–1571), ODNB (Oxford, 2015) (www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1185; accessed 19 May 2016).
- 4 M. C. Boyd, *Elizabethan music and musical criticism* (Philadelphia, 2/1962), pp.74–82; D. Gibbs, “Your Muse endures forever”: memory and monumentality in Robert Dow’s partbooks, forthcoming.
- 5 Translations can be found in Boyd, *Elizabethan music*, pp.312–17, and in Milsom, ‘Introduction and indexes’, pp.29–38, translated by L. Holford-Strevens. This article uses those of Holford-Strevens.
- 6 Those inscriptions found in John Sadler’s partbooks are not on explicitly musical themes: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Mus. e. 1–5.
- 7 Mateer, ‘Oxford, Christ Church Music MSS 984–8’, pp.6–7.
- 8 Milsom, ‘Sacred songs in the chamber’, pp.165–6, and ‘Introduction and indexes’, pp.20–2. Other sets of partbooks with Latin sacred music have similarly suffered from contentious identifications of Catholic sympathies, including those of John Sadler: J. Blezzard, ‘Monsters and messages: the Willmott and Braikenridge manuscripts of Latin Tudor church music, 1591’, *The Antiquaries Journal*, lxxv (1995), pp.311–38; D. Mateer, ‘John Sadler and Oxford, Bodleian MSS Mus. e. 1–5’, *Music & Letters*, lx (1979), pp.281–5; Milsom, ‘Sacred songs in the chamber’, pp.164–5.
- 9 Paul Doe has speculated that Parsons’s *Ave Maria* might be addressed to the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots. There is no firm evidence to support this, nor to securely date this piece to the reign of Elizabeth rather than Mary Tudor. Parsons, *Latin sacred music*, p.xvi; O. Rees, ‘Latin polyphony by Robert Parsons’, *Early Music*, ii/3 (1995), pp.322–5, at p.322.
- 10 Mus. 985 and Mus. 988, after no.48 (pp.93 and 87, respectively).
- 11 A. Kinney, ‘Gosson, Stephen (bap. 1554, d. 1625)’, ODNB (Oxford, 2007) (www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11120; accessed 19 May 2016); I. Wright, ‘Gwinne, Matthew (1558–1627)’, ODNB (Oxford, 2008) (www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11813; accessed 19 May 2016).
- 12 Stephen Gosson, *The school of abuse containing a pleasant invective against poets, pipers, players, jesters, and such like caterpillars of a commonwealth* (London, 1579); Matthew Gwinne, ‘In laudem musices oratio’ (1582), first published in John Ward, *The lives of the professors of Gresham College* (London, 1740), pp.81–7 of Appendix; *The praise of music wherein besides the antiquity, dignity, delectation, and use thereof in civil matters, is also declared the sober and lawful use of the same in the congregation and church of God* (Oxford, 1586); John Case, *Apologia musices tam vocalis quam instrumentalis et mixtae* (Oxford, 1588).
- 13 Milsom, ‘Introduction and indexes’, pp.5 and 19; Philip Stubbes, *The anatomy of abuses containing a discovery, or brief summary of such notable vices and imperfections, as now reign in many Christian countries of the world* (London, 1583); Thomas Lodge, ‘Protogenes can know Apelles’ [no title-page extant] (London, 1579).
- 14 William Byrd and Thomas Watson, *A gratification unto Master John Case, for his learned book, lately made in the praise of music* (London, 1589). In fact Byrd and Watson seem to have been confused about the authorship of the anonymous *Praise of music*, which does not appear to have been the work of John Case, author of the *Apologia musices*. On this authorship debate, see H. B. Barnett, ‘John Case, an Elizabethan music scholar’, *Music & Letters*, l (1969), pp.252–66; J. W. Binns, ‘John Case and *The praise of musicke*’, *Music & Letters*, lv (1974), pp.444–53; E. E. Knight, ‘The “Praise of musicke”: John Case, Thomas Watson and William Byrd’, *Current Musicology*, xxx (1980), pp.37–59.
- 15 Oxford, Christ Church, Mus. 984–88, opening matter [p.1]. These partbooks are unfoliated. There is original numbering for the motet section but more recent attempts to extend this throughout the book are erroneous. Page numbers in square brackets therefore refer to the DIAMM facsimile and also relate to image numbers on the DIAMM website, cited above.
- 16 Mus. 984, after no.28 [p.83] citing Cicero’s *Tusculan disputations*, i.4.
- 17 See, for example, E. Havens, *Commonplace books: a history of manuscripts and printed books from antiquity to the twentieth century* (New Haven, 2001), pp.8–11, 25–53, 65–80; M. T. Crane, *Framing authority: sayings, self, and society in sixteenth-century England* (Princeton, 1993); M. Bath, *Speaking pictures: English emblem books and Renaissance culture* (London, 1994), pp.31–45.
- 18 L. P. Austern, ‘Words on music: the case of early modern England’, *John Donne journal*, xxv (2006), pp.199–244, at pp.218–19, 223. For an example of a printed commonplace book’s gatherings on the subject of music, see N. L., *Politeuphuia wits common wealth* (London, 1598), fols.195v–197r.
- 19 J. Hutton, ‘Some English poems in praise of music’, in *Music and the Renaissance: Renaissance, Reformation and Counter-Reformation*, ed. P. Vendrix (Farnham, 2011), pp.145–207, at pp.147–74. For a broad account of the discourse on music in Elizabethan England, see J. Willis, *Church music and Protestantism in post-reformation England: discourses, sites and identities* (Farnham, 2010), pp.11–37.
- 20 Bath, *Speaking pictures*, pp.72–4; or on music-themed emblems, E. L. Calogero, *Ideas and images of music in English and continental emblem books* (Baden-Baden, 2009).
- 21 Austern, ‘Words on music’, pp.205 and 218–19.
- 22 Thomas Morley, *A plain and easy introduction to practical music set down in form of a dialogue* (London, 1597), p.1.
- 23 Boethius, *Fundamentals of music*, trans. C. M. Bower, ed. C. V. Palisca, (New Haven, 1989), p.51.
- 24 Mus. 984, after no.28 [p.83].
- 25 Robert White, I: *Five-part Latin psalms*, ed. D. Mateer, Early English

- Church Music (hereafter EECM) 28 (London, 1983), pp.108–22. Translation from the ‘Bishops’ Bible’ (where it is numbered as Psalm 119): *The Holy Bible containing the Old Testament and the New* (London, 1568), fol. xxxr.
- 26 *The praise of music*, p.151. See also Willis, *Church music and Protestantism*, pp.20, 22, 40–1, 48, 51 and 69.
- 27 For example, Stubbes, *The anatomy of abuses*, sig.[04v].
- 28 Oxford, Christ Church, Mus. 988, after no.27 [p.52].
- 29 J. Kerman, *The Masses and motets of William Byrd*, Music of William Byrd 1 (Berkeley, 1981), p.174.
- 30 William Byrd, *Cantiones sacrae* (1591), ed. T. Dart, *Collected Works of William Byrd* 3 (London, 1966), pp.59–67.
- 31 See, for example, K. Gibson, ‘Music, melancholy and masculinity in early modern England’, in *Masculinity and Western musical practice*, ed. I. Biddle and K. Gibson (Farnham, 2009), pp.41–66; P. Gouk, ‘Music, melancholy, and medical spirits in early modern thought’, in *Music as medicine: the history of music therapy since antiquity*, ed. P. Horden (Aldershot, 2000), pp.173–94; K. Butler, ‘Divine harmony, demonic afflictions, and bodily humours: two tales of musical healing in early modern England’, in *Perfect harmony and melting strains*, ed. C. Wilde and W. Keller, forthcoming; and J. Schmidt, *Melancholy and the care of the soul: religion, moral philosophy and madness in early modern England* (Aldershot, 2007), pp.48–9.
- 32 *Praise of music*, p.61; Robert Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy: what it is, with all the kinds, causes, symptoms, prognostics, and several cures of it* (Oxford, 1621), p.372.
- 33 George Puttenham, *The art of English poesie contrived into three books* (London, 1589), pp.37–8.
- 34 White, I: *Five part Latin psalms*, pp.62–74.
- 35 Thomas à Kempis, *Of the imitation of Christ, three, both for wisdom, and godliness, most excellent books*, trans. T. Rogers (London, 1580).
- 36 For an example of music being accused of causing lust, frivolity and vice, see Stubbes, *The anatomy of abuses*, sig.03v–[04r].
- 37 Mus. 988, after no.7 [p.21]. The tale is found in *Odyssey*, book 3, lines 267–72, though Dow quotes Girolamo Cardano’s *De sapientia*.
- 38 Case, *Apologia musices*, pp.5 and 25. Translation by D. F. Sutton at www.philological.bham.ac.uk/music (accessed 19 May 2016). Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. E. Baker, rev. R. F. Stalley (Oxford, 1998), Book 8.5, 1340^a14–38, at pp.309–10; Plato, *The republic*, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari, trans. T. Griffith (Cambridge, 2000), Book 3, 401e–402a, at p.92.
- 39 Mus. 984, after no.7 [p.24].
- 40 *The Holy Bible* [‘Bishop’s Bible’] (1568), fol.1v.
- 41 Case, *Apologia musices*, pp.29–30.
- 42 Mus. 988, after no.25 [p.49]. This quotation is also copied after Byrd’s ‘Ah golden hairs’ in the Contratenor partbook, the only non-motet to be paired with an inscription (Mus. 986, [p.132]).
- 43 Mus. 984–8, no.25; Kempis, *Of the imitation of Christ*, pp.179–80.
- 44 Thomas Becon, *Jewel of joy* (London, 1550), [sig.E8v].
- 45 Becon, *Jewel of joy*, sigs.[E8v]–F1r.
- 46 Mus. 984, after no.25 [p.55]; Milsom, ‘Introduction and indexes’, p.35 n.24.
- 47 *Praise of music*, pp.73–4 (the latter misnumbered as p.46).
- 48 Hutton, ‘Some English poems’, pp.7, 29–30, 42–3.
- 49 Mus. 984, after no.10 [p.31]. This is adapted from Regino of Prüm, *De harmonica institutione*: Milsom, ‘Introduction and indexes’, p.34 n.20.
- 50 *Praise of music*, p.38.
- 51 William Byrd, *Cantiones sacrae* (1589), ed. E. Fellows and rev. T. Dart, *Collected Works of William Byrd* 2 (London, 1966), pp.29–36.
- 52 ‘A Song in praise of music’, London, British Library: Add. Ms. 15225, fols.35r–36r (at fol.35r–v); edition in *Old English ballads, 1533–1625*, ed. H. Rollins (Cambridge, 1920), pp.142–6, at p.144. In this period the designation ‘song’ does not necessarily imply that these verses were to be sung. On music as a sign of predestination, see also Willis, *Church music and Protestantism*, p.22.
- 53 Mus. 988, after no.34 [p.64]. Milsom, ‘Introduction and indexes’, p.35 n.23. For Byrd’s motet, see Byrd, *Cantiones sacrae* (1589), pp.134–8. Lassus’s setting was published in 1594, but these words could have been known to Dow via various prints set by Tylman Susato in *Selectissimae necnon familiarissimae cantiones* (Augsburg, 1540); an anonymous composer in *Liber secundus ecclesiasticarum cantionum* (Antwerp, 1553); Clemens non Papa in *Liber tertius ecclesiasticarum cantionum* (Antwerp, 1553); Jean Louys in *Liber octavus ecclesiasticarum cantionum* (Antwerp, 1553); Joannes Gallus and Nicolaus Rogier in *Liber nonus ecclesiasticarum cantionum* (Antwerp, 1554); Jacobus Vaet in *Modulationes II* (Venice, 1562) and *Thesauri musicus IV* (Antwerp, 1564); and Jean de Castro in *Chansons et madrigales* (Leuven, 1570). See W. Kirsch, ‘“Musica Dei donum optimi”: Zu einigen weltlichen Motetten des 16. Jahrhunderts’, in *Helmuth Osthoff zu seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag* (Tutzing, 1969), pp.105–28. Vaet’s setting also exists in an orphan partbook in Essex record office: Ms. D/DP Z6/2 copied for John Petre, c.1596.
- 54 J. Block Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1970), pp.38–85, 125–8; *Orpheus, the metamorphoses of a myth*, ed. J. Warden (Toronto, 1982), pp.51–62, 70–2. Parallels between Christ and Orpheus were less frequently drawn in the Renaissance, but still continued. See, for example, the conflation of Christ and Orpheus in Giles Fletcher’s *Christ’s victory, and triumph in heaven, and earth, over, and after death* (London, 1610), p.49; Edward Vaughan, *A plain and perfect method, for the easy understanding of the whole Bible containing seven observations, dialogue-wise, between the parishioner, and the pastor* (London, 1617), pp.143–4 (but first published 1603 in an edition

of which only fragments survive); and Alexander Ross, *Mystagogus poeticus or, the Muses' interpreter explaining the historical mysteries and mystical histories of the ancient Greek and Latin poets* (London, 1647), pp.198–9.
 55 Thomas Tallis and William Byrd, *Cantiones sacrae: 1575*, ed. J. Milsom, EECM 56 (London, 2014), p.xiv.
 56 Mus. 984–8, nos.20, 21, 42 and 43.
 57 Tallis and Byrd, *Cantiones sacrae*, ed. Milsom, pp.xiv and xviii.
 58 Similar nationally tinged sentiments are found in the poems of Ferdinando Richardson: Tallis and Byrd, *Cantiones Sacrae*, ed. Milsom, pp.xx–xxi. Lists of praiseworthy English musicians paralleled with ancient forebears also appear in several sources, including Case, *Apologia musices*, p.44, and

Francis Meres, *Palladia tamia wits treasury* (London, 1598), fol.288v.
 59 Mus. 986, after no.34 [p.66] and Mus. 985, after no.41 [p.81].
 60 Mus. 986, after no.25 [p.50]; Milsom, 'Introduction and indexes', p.34 n.17.
 61 Mus. 984–88, verso of opening leaf [p.2].
 62 *Praise of music*, sig.*iir–v.
 63 Mus. 986 and Mus. 987, after no.1 [p.8].
 64 Mus. 985, after no.1 [p.8].
 65 Case, *Apologia musices*, p.26. See also Byrd and Watson, *A gratification unto Master John Case*, in which they praise him as one who 'soundly blames the senseless fool, / And Barb'rous Scythian of our days'.

66 Gwinne, 'In Laudem musices oratio', pp.82–3. Translation by D. F. Sutton at www.philological.bham.ac.uk/music2 (accessed 19 May 2016).
 67 Case, *Apologia musices*, sig.A2r–A3v.
 68 Robert White, III. *Ritual music and lamentations*, ed. D. Mateer, EECM 32 (London, 1986), pp.62–99. English translation from the 'Bishops Bible': *The Holy Bible* (1568), fol. cxxxvii.
 69 Mateer, 'Oxford, Christ Church Music MSS 984–8', p.7.
 70 Morley, *A plain and easy introduction*, p.179.
 71 Morley, *A plain and easy introduction*, p.179.

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