

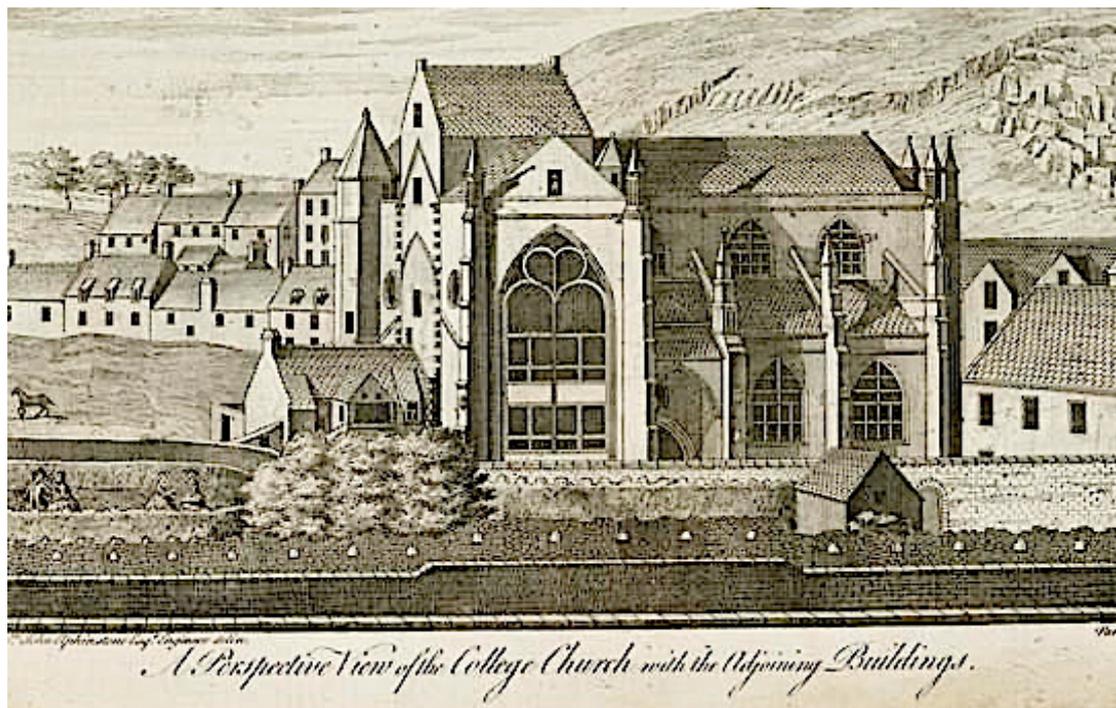
‘A Few Loose Ends :
Some Unresolved Issues in Early Scottish Music’
D James Ross

1. Scotland, Burgundy and the Cult of St Katherine -
The Earliest Works in *The Carver Choirbook*

On 26th April 1461 a remarkable scene unfolded in the Aberdeen Council Chambers. ⁱ The Cheveran Pursuivant, one of four such knights in the Heralds’ Office of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, appeared on behalf of the Duke to reclaim a debt from local shipmaster Robert Gray. This striking event serves as a useful reminder that, far from being ‘a faraway country of which they knew little’, the Duchy of Burgundy enjoyed lively trade links with the Kingdom of Scots, regularly reinforced by cultural exchange and royal marriage.

As it happens, Robert Gray was the grandfather of the Renaissance composer Robert Carver, and the oldest works in *The Carver Choirbook* (the manuscript which preserves most of Carver’s compositions) include the Mass *L’Homme armé* by Guillaume Dufay and the anonymous Masses *Rex virginum amator* and *Deus Creator omnium*. This last Mass, hitherto known by its Kyrie trope, has recently been identified by Dr James Cook as incorporating the chant *Horrendo subdenda rotarum machinamento* associated with the cult of St Katherine, widely practised throughout mediaeval Europe. ⁱⁱ While the Dufay Mass can be directly associated with the Court of Burgundy, the situation with the two anonymous Masses is more complicated – the newly identified *cantus* is a Sarum chant, a rite associated primarily, but not exclusively, with Scotland and England, whereas Dr Isobel Woods Preece has demonstrated that the Kyrie tropes of both Masses have continental features. ⁱⁱⁱ For some reason, there has been a general assumption that this early repertoire would have come north from England in 1503 with James IV’s future bride, Margaret Tudor. This has always seemed perverse to me – why would Margaret be bringing fifty-year-old music, at least some of it continental, along with her collection of up-to-date English music, which would make up the next layer of *The Carver Choirbook*? Besides, there seems to me a much more plausible route of transmission.

In 1460, just before the Cheveran Pursuivant paid his visit to Aberdeen, Mary of Guelders founded Trinity Collegiate Church in Edinburgh in memory of her husband James II, killed earlier that year by an exploding cannon at the siege of Roxburgh. Although the original building project was never completed (see below), it was deemed the finest Gothic church in Edinburgh until it was dismantled to make room for Waverley Station in 1848. ^{iv} Perhaps more indicative of the prestige of this important establishment than the reconstructed Trinity Apse, a travesty of the original building, are the four surviving panels of the exquisite Trinity altarpiece, painted (1478-9) by Flemish painter Hugo van der Goes. These panels represent the Holy Trinity ; the Trinity College Provost, Edward Bonkil, in prayer, accompanied by two angels playing an organ, one of whom is believed by some to represent Mary of Guelders ; Mary's son, James III, at prayer with his son, her grandson, the future James IV ; and Margaret of Denmark, wife of James III, and Mary's daughter-in-law.



[Trinity Collegiate Church, Edinburgh, pictured in the mid-18th century. It is clear that the planned nave was never built.]

We can safely assume that this important Royal Collegiate Church boasted a musical establishment similar in quality to its altar piece, and indeed a letter of Mary of Guilders dated 25th March 1462, ^v outlining her wishes regarding her new

establishment, mentions provision for a suitably impressive College of ‘eight Priests to serve God for ever, with two boys or clerks’ who ‘shall every day in the year sing matins, high mass, vespers, and compline *with notes*’ (i.e. in polyphonic settings). To ensure consistently excellent standards among these singers, no-one was to be appointed ‘unless he shall be capable of reading and singing plainchant and descant’ (i.e. polyphony). Clearly, this élite choir would require appropriate repertoire to sing, and that at relatively short notice.

Fortunately, the patroness of this whole project, the widowed Mary of Guelders, had some impressive family connections of her own. She was the daughter of Arnold of Guelders and Katherine of Cleves (niece of John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy). From the age of 12, Mary had lived at the Burgundian Court of her great-uncle, Philip the Good, who even provided the dowry for her marriage on 3rd July 1449 to James II, King of Scots. As a favoured ward of the Duke and Duchess, up until then she served as lady-in-waiting to their daughter-in-law, Katherine of Valois (daughter of Charles VII of France), the child-bride of the future Duke Charles the Bold. Like Mary’s mother Katherine, Katherine of Valois was probably a devotee of the cult of her virgin martyr namesake, and a possible focus for masses associated with devotions for St Katherine, such as the two early Masses in *The Carver Choirbook*. We certainly know that her aunt, a previous Katherine of Valois, and the wife of Henry V of England, was very active in her devotion to St Katherine, and hugely influential in the propagation of her cult in England. ^{vi}

There is another potential musical link between Scotland and the Court of Burgundy - the composer Walter Frye may have spent some time there in the mid-15th century. Although it has to be said no proof has been found of his employment there, the manuscript which preserves three of his Mass settings, Brussels 5557, has been associated with the marriage of Charles the Bold and his second wife, Margaret of York in 1468. ^{vii} I have proposed as early as 1993 that Walter Frye may have been a Scotsman, taking advantage of those close cultural links between Scotland and Burgundy around this time. ^{viii} Dr Kenneth Elliott’s identification of features of Frye’s compositional style in the Mass *Deus Creator omnium/ Horrendo subdenda rotarum machinamento* seems to add credibility to this idea. ^{ix} Furthermore, Dr Elliott is of the opinion that both anonymous Masses are probably the work of the same composer

(probably Frye), while endorsing my suggestion of Frye's Scottish credentials. It is certainly compelling that the *cantus* of the Mass Kyrie *Rex virginum amator*, a celebration of virginity worthy of a royal wedding, is also appropriate for St Katherine - 'King, lover of virgins, God, Mary's glory : have mercy.' Perhaps the generous dowry provided by Philip the Good Duke of Burgundy for his beloved great-niece, Mary of Guelders, on her departure for Scotland included a collection of wedding music fit for a ward of Burgundy, including two wedding masses by a composer with connections to her future home, Scotland, and a familiar presence at the Court of Burgundy, to celebrate the virginal virtues of the bride. ^x



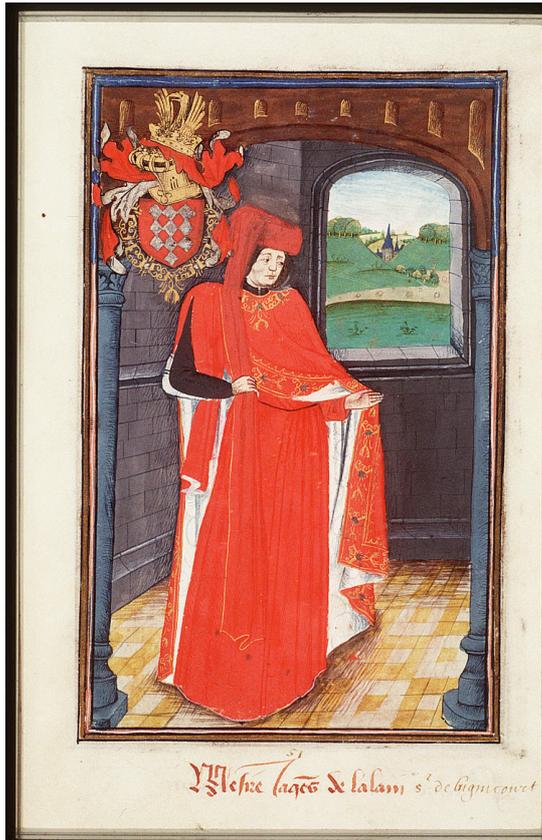
[An anonymous 15th-century continental depiction of key events from the life of St Katherine of Alexandria. Her vision of the Virgin Mary and the Christ-child persuades the young Princess to become a Christian ; wounds, inflicted on her when she is tortured on the orders of the Emperor Maxentius, are miraculously salved ; she enters into a mystical marriage with the Christ-child.]

It is interesting to note that, in a striking parallel to the anonymous Mass *Deus Creator omnium/ Horrendo subdenda rotarum machinamento* in *The Carver Choirbook*, Walter Frye's Mass *Nobilis et pulchra* preserved in Brussels 5557 (the manuscript associated with the marriage of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York) uses the Kyrie *Deus Creator omnium*, while the *cantus* itself, *Nobilis et pulchra*, is the first responsory at matins on the Feast of St Katherine. So a St Katherine Mass composed by Walter Frye has evidently been chosen to celebrate a wedding at the

Burgundian Court. In the legend, which grew up around St Katherine, she undergoes a mystical marriage to Christ, and comes to be regarded as a patron saint of marriage, while her royal blood gives her a special affinity with royal weddings.

But how might the two anonymous Masses in *The Carver Choirbook* have come into association with the Dufay Mass *L'Homme armé*? We would recall that in addition to Guillaume Dufay the Burgundian Court employed several other celebrity composers in the 1440s, and inspired the earliest Mass settings based on the recruiting tune *L'Homme armé*. This tune was associated with the Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece and Philip the Good's son Charles, Count of Charolais (later Charles the Bold), who had been a member of the Order since he was a baby. Dufay's setting is thought to be one of the earliest of the whole genre of *L'Homme armé* Mass settings. David Fallows has observed a radically new treatment of the voice parts by Dufay in his Mass *L'Homme armé* - a single voice in the highest range, two in the lower and a fourth one in the bass range, a fifth below. This radical new style, was spearheaded by Dufay some time around 1450, leaving open the possibility that the Mass might in fact have been composed as early as 1449, perhaps in anticipation of Charles, Count of Charolais turning 16. If this is the case, a presentation copy of the brand new Dufay Mass would have been available with the two anonymous Masses to accompany Mary of Guelders to Scotland – a pair of royal wedding Masses along with a chivalric gift to flatter a royal bridegroom?

In this context, it is perhaps not insignificant that this important dynastic marriage between James II and Mary of Guelders was anticipated on 25th February 1449 with a tournament featuring two very special guests, Burgundian knights, one of them none other than Jacques de Lalaing, the most celebrated knight-errant of his day – the very embodiment of *l'homme armé*. De Lalaing began his chivalric career at the Court of Mary of Guelders' grandfather, Adolph I, Duke of Cleves, before he too was inducted into the Order of the Golden Fleece and entered the service of the Duke of Burgundy, eventually becoming the subject of his own famous *livre des faits*. Clearly, this pre-wedding tournament in front of the Scottish Court was a glittering chivalric affair of European significance. Whether Scotland's own celebrated 15th-century authority on all matters chivalric, poet and author sir Gilbert the Hay was also in attendance is sadly not recorded.



[The celebrated Burgundian knight-errant, Jacques De Lalaing, wearing the scarlet robes and the insignia of the Order of the Golden Fleece. His participation in the tournament of 25th February 1449 at the Scottish Court raises the event to a whole new level of prestige. Might this exhibition of chivalric bombast have provided the context for a performance of a Burgundian Mass *L'Homme armé*?]

However, if Dufay's Mass *L'Homme armé* is of a later date than 1450 - and some scholars associate the piece with a blossoming of the *L'Homme armé* tradition after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman empire on 29th May 1453. - we know that Dufay was back in Cambrai in the orbit of the Burgundian Court from the late 1450s until his death in 1474. In that case, his Mass is much more likely to have found its way to Scotland in response to an urgent request from Mary around 1462 for music for her newly established Trinity Collegiate Church. Perhaps its martial *cantus* might have been deemed particularly appropriate for an establishment built in memory of a King, who had died heroically - while in arms. It is interesting to note in passing that of the moneys donated in exchange for the absolution of sins by those visiting the Collegiate Church in the Octave of its foundation, one third was to pass directly to the Papal treasury for fighting the infidel in the wake of the fall of Constantinople^{xi} - might not the singing of Dufay's Mass *L'Homme armé* by the Trinity College have proved an eloquent fundraiser for this martial project?

In her letter of 25th March 1462 Mary required that an anniversary service should be held annually 'for the late most illustrious prince, James King of Scots, our most

tender husband ; and after our decease, on the days of his and our decease, (the College) shall sing and celebrate his and our anniversaries'.^{xii} While these anniversary services may have taken the form of requiem masses, we have many examples from the 15th century of polyphonic settings of the mass ordinary, combined with chanted propers, being sung in this context. In any case, these anniversary services were just a small part of the liturgical duties Trinity College would have undertaken in the Church and in its related Hospital – we have noted that Mary stipulates that the College should sing high mass every day to polyphonic settings, and she goes on to require that a weekly mass should also be performed for the poor and infirm in the Hospital. The two St Katherine Masses would have provided the ideal soothing accompaniment to the salving of wounds, while a *L'Homme armé* Mass would undoubtedly be better for patient morale than any requiem!

Whether these three pieces of music – the Masses *Rex virginum amator* and *Deus Creator omnium/ Horrendo subdenda rotarum machinamento*, both credibly attributed to Walter Frye, and the Mass *L'Homme armé* by Guillaume Dufay - came from Burgundy to Scotland with Mary of Guilders in 1449 as a wedding gift from the Duke and Duchess, or around 1462 in response to a request from Mary for repertoire for her Trinity Collegiate Church, it seems almost inevitable that such fine music with royal associations would subsequently end up in a Chapel Royal manuscript, *The Carver Choirbook*.^{xiii} And in the early 16th century, Robert Carver would exercise his prerogative as a royal composer to add to this Burgundian tradition by composing his own Mass *L'Homme armé*^{xiv} for his patron, Mary of Guelders' grandson, James IV, copying it into the later pages of the *Choirbook*. Burgundy and Scotland both shared the problem of overweening neighbours, and it seems clear to me that Scottish monarchs of the 15th and 16th centuries regarded their Burgundian heritage as a valuable counterbalance to the powerful cultural and political presence of England. This Burgundian strand in the history of Scottish music is something we ought to acknowledge and celebrate.

2. *'The hevinly melody & Concord of the spheris and planetis'* - Robert Carver's Penchant for Music in Many Parts

Three of the earliest works in *The Carver Choirbook* composed by Robert Carver are the 6-part Mass *Sine nomine*, the 10-part Mass *Dum sacrum mysterium* and the 19-part motet *O bone Jesu*. I have recently suggested that the direct inspiration for this polyphony in a large number of voice-parts might possibly be traced to the College of the Parish Church of St Nicholas in Aberdeen. In 1492 it boasted 22 canons (of whom at least one was the composer's uncle and another his cousin) as well as boy choristers. At the time it was probably the largest choir in Scotland, larger even than the Chapel Royal, which may account for Bishop Elphinstone's later ruling that the choral forces at services in St Nicholas be limited to 16 canons - 'and no more'!^{xv} Even after the Bishop's edict, they could still have performed these early large-scale works by Carver. While Thomas Tallis's 40-part motet *Spem in alium* and a number of associated and similarly opulently-scored pieces highlight the flowering of lavish polyphony in the late 16th century, at the beginning of the century, music in 10 parts, let alone 19 parts, was something of a rarity.^{xvi} So where might Carver have encountered and been seduced by the art of composing music in many parts?

When we look at the very exclusive club of early-16th-century choral works for large numbers of voices, we might immediately think of the 12-part Mass *Et ecce terrae motus*, the celebrated 'earthquake mass' by Antoine Brumel. This leads us to the Mass *Tempore paschali* in 6, 8 and 12 parts by Nicolas Gombert, and not just because of its large number of voices. Extraordinarily as Gombert's setting goes into 12 parts for the first time in the *Agnus Dei III*, the music alludes to the Brumel setting as well as adopting, just for this one section, Brumel's *cantus firmus*, *Et ecce terrae motus*. Clearly, the Gombert is a homage to the Brumel. But there is a further important link between these two composers – they were both students of the great Josquin Desprez.

By 1504 Josquin had to all intents and purposes retired from a hectic international career to Condé-sur-l'Escaut, although he held a number of musical posts locally and probably also continued composing and teaching until his death in 1521. There is some evidence that he was experimenting in these final years with large-scale

polyphony, and an extraordinary setting by him of *Qui habitat in adjutorio altissimi* for six 4-part choirs in canon (so in effect in 24 parts) probably dates from this period, while an anonymous 12-part setting of *Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria*, which combines smooth Franco-Flemish polyphony with chordal flourishes reminiscent of *The Eton Choirbook*, has in the past been attributed to Josquin.

The discovery by Dr Isobel Woods Preece of what is almost certainly Robert Carver's name in a matriculation list of 25th February 1503/4 for Louvain University has proved of supreme significance here.^{xviii} It seems to me very likely that as a student in Louvain at this time, Carver could have come under the influence of the 'Josquin inner circle', or may even himself have been a student of Josquin. It is certainly significant that although he would have been familiar with Dufay's Mass *L'Homme armé* in fascicle 3 of *The Carver Choirbook*, to which he would add his own *L'Homme armé* setting, we would look in vain in his work for the influence of Dufay, finding instead to my ear the influence of the two Masses *L'Homme armé* by Josquin.



[The Archangel Michael supported by the nine orders of angels in an anonymous late-15th-century painting, much as Carver represented them in music in his Mass 'Dum sacrum mysterium'. In his 9-part *Salve Regina* in *The Eton Choirbook*, Robert Wylkynson had associated each of the voice--parts with an order of angels, but the music he wrote for them is harmonically relatively static compared to Carver's lithe polyphonic lines and complex textures.]

Carver's 10-part Mass *Dum sacrum mysterium* is a St Michael Mass, specifically dedicated to the archangel, probably composed for his feast and performed at the coronation of James V. There is evidence that the 10 voices represent the 9 orders of angels joined by mankind - one flamboyantly wide-ranging baritone part probably represents the archangel Michael himself, while the other relatively static baritone part, which bears the *cantus*, probably represents the modest earth-bound contribution of mankind.^{xviii} Working on this remarkable music with my choir, Musick Fyne, has clarified the fact that Carver deploys the 10 parts in two matching groupings, each comprising bass, baritone, tenor, alto and soprano. Carver both contrasts these two cohorts and juxtaposes the upper and lower voices across this divide, while regularly combining all ten voices in impressively extended contrapuntal *tours de force*.

In rehearsing Brumel's Mass *Et ecce terrae motus*, my singers and I have noticed broadly the same strategies in play. As in the Carver Mass, Brumel's choir is distinguished by its deep sonorities – 3 bass, 3 baritone, 3 tenor and 3 low soprano parts, deployed and contrasted in three matching four-part groups, but more often in broader juxtapositions of the upper and lower voices. Gombert mirrors Brumel's scoring in his *Agnus Dei III*, while the former's famous fascination with lugubrious low sonorities echoes Carver's habit of 'lifting the top off' his music, to reveal the cavernous workings underneath. Furthermore, where Carver conjures up a cosmic panorama of angelic forces, led into battle by their dynamic general, including vocal representations of the trumpets mentioned in the *cantus*, Brumel equally graphically evokes the shaking, seething earthquake of his *cantus firmus*. In the second psalm antiphon at lauds on Easter Day, *Et ecce terrae motus*, a great earthquake is caused not by St Michael, but by an unnamed 'angel of the Lord', descending to earth to roll back the stone from Jesus's tomb. Now we can see why Gombert chose this music for his homage - what more appropriate music to allude to in an Easter Mass than a vivid choral representation of the dramatic events just prior to the Resurrection?

These settings by Brumel and Carver, and the related music by Gombert, all display extraordinary skill in consistently deploying so many voices in dense, active polyphony, while all three men clearly revel in the rich sonorities offered by their large groupings of predominantly deep voices. We would also notice in the Brumel a number of specific features which recall Carver's idiom, which are not just the

consequence of writing in so many parts - adjacent tonics, unusually ambitious vocal ranges and a pervading mood of triumphalism. There is one final loose end left to tie up, a further thread linking Carver to the Josquin circle. In his later 5-part Mass *Fera pessima*, Carver employs a very obscure *cantus firmus* – this is also found in a work by the French composer Loyset Compère – another of Josquin’s students.

When *Robertus de Sto Johanne in Scotia* matriculates on 25th February 1503/4 at the University of Louvain – ‘St John’s Toun’ being at that time the name for Perth - this may be the young Carver’s way of identifying himself as a novice of Scone Abbey. However, the fact that once he was a full canon of Scone, he regularly appended ‘*de scona*’ to his signature suggests to me that at this earlier stage he is simply indicating that he is ‘a Perth boy’. Then again, Carver may be being slightly more specific, declaring himself a pupil from the song school of Perth’s only Parish Church, St John’s. Throughout the 15th century, an extensive programme of expansion and renovation at St John’s Kirk enjoyed financial support from James IV, and had just reached a conclusion in the 1490s.^{xix} That Carver was raised in Perth and possibly attended the St John’s song school is reinforced by the fact that Johannes Grant, who matriculates later that same day at Louvain, signs himself *de Archadia* (of Argyll), even though at the time he too may well have been a novice of Scone Abbey, where he went on to serve as a monk, witnessing many of the same documents as Carver.^{xx}

The matriculation of these two Scottish youths at Louvain University in 1503/4, along with a number of other Scottish students, some from ‘St John’s’, suggests they might well have been just part of the wider royal project to revitalise the Chapel Royal. Making provision for a choir of 16 canons and 6 boy choristers in 1501 would be something of a pointless exercise without also providing an infrastructure, which would necessarily include composers of spectacular new music for them to sing. The fact that we know from the Aberdeen Records that James IV secured financial support for Carver’s studies and subsequent career as a composer suggests to me a concerted system of targeted royal head-hunting and hot-housing of promising young musicians. In Carver’s case, this certainly paid dividends in the form of the 6-part and 10-part Masses and the 19-part motet with which he so spectacularly announced himself in his early twenties, and a subsequent lifetime of superlative compositions, many of them written specifically for his patron, James IV.

3. Pinning Down an Earworm - Three Late Masses by Robert Carver?

Over some forty years of singing and conducting choral music, I have performed all of the music composed by and attributed to Robert Carver. Some of it I have become very familiar with. I am currently working with my choir Musick Fyne on the 6-part Mass *Cantate* attributed to Carver, and was yet again confronted with a short motif which has puzzled me for years. Similar reiterations occur in two other Masses, the 5-part Mass *Fera pessima* signed by Robert Carver, and the 6-part Mass *Felix namque*, usually classified as anonymous. I had previously used this recurring motif to propose that all three masses might be by Carver. ^{xxi}

Like all earworms, this short but highly distinctive motif is maddeningly haunting, and over the years I have developed the impression that it is some sort of identification stamp, applied to the music like a personal seal. We would recall that in *The Carver Choirbook*, Carver regularly identifies his work with an actual signature and occasionally also with a brief comment. Renaissance composers rarely bother to do this, and in sources other than the choirbook he largely copied himself, such as *The Dowglas/Fischar Partbooks*, which feature the Masses *Felix namque* and *Cantate*, there is unsurprisingly no such identification. Nowadays, Carver's music seems pretty distinctive, but perhaps when it was written, a plethora of similar contemporary Scottish music, since lost, would have made it less so. Is it possible that the composer is using a distinctive motif as a sort of musical signature?

In performance, the motif stands out for a number of reasons. It is usually, though not exclusively, placed in the alto part, allowing it to cut through the texture. While harmonically it seems to conform to the 'adjacent tonics' system beloved of Carver (and a feature of much traditional Scottish music), it is an eccentric phrase, perhaps instrumental rather than vocal in inception, and it certainly stands distinctively outside Carver's normal musical vocabulary, or indeed any such musical idiolect that I am aware of.



[Three instances of the 'earworm' motif from alto lines of the Masses 'Felix namque', 'Cantate' and 'Fera pessima' respectively.]

Perhaps it is time to speculate about the possible derivation of our motif. We know that in the 10-part Mass *Dum sacrum mysterium* and the thematically related 6-part Mass *Sine nomine* Carver imitates trumpet figures, and may be quoting actual fanfares. It would seem perfectly natural in a Mass dedicated to the general of the heavenly host, the Archangel Michael, and based on a *cantus* which mentions a trumpet, to quote royal fanfares – this would also be entirely appropriate in the related 6-part Mass *Sine nomine*, which may have been performed at the launch of James IV's flagship *The Great Michael*.^{xxii} Could our motif also represent a stylised trumpet call? Unfortunately, although we know that James IV employed fanfare trumpeters, none of the fanfares they played have survived. So the nearest we have to early 16th-century Scottish trumpet fanfares are Carver's renditions of them in his two martial Masses. Our motif does rely on the open fourths and fifths redolent of the valveless fanfare trumpet, and so prominent in the *L'Homme armé* tune, but it has to be said that our earworm seems fundamentally different in character from trumpet music.

Like most Renaissance princes, the Stewart monarchs were keen huntsmen and huntswomen, and next I wondered whether our motif might be a significant hunting horn call, which any self-respecting Renaissance Scottish courtier would instantly have recognised. Again no such specifically Scottish calls survive from the period, while the earliest surviving horn calls from elsewhere appear to rely on distinctive

rhythmic patterns on a single note. It is just possible that our motif could represent the upward whoops of a fourth and a fifth used to articulate horn calls, but it also has a rudimentary if eccentric melodic shape, which seems to set it apart from the world of the hunting horn.

It may be the case that the full meaning of our 500-year-old motif is simply lost in history, or perhaps it is just a musical mannerism, a stylistic tic devoid of meaning – some might even contest that the three instances I have quoted represent the same motif. However, there is one final possibility, which might seem like the most outrageous suggestion of all. To misapply the wisdom of Sherlock Holmes, ‘When you have eliminated all which is possible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.’ In the Mass *Fera pessima*, possibly the earliest of the three masses, the motif occurs most obviously in the *Pleni sunt celi* section of the *Sanctus*, an extraordinary episode in which two ornate lines, soprano and alto (which features our motif), and a less dynamic bass line frame a protracted single-note tenor drone, which lasts for the whole 51 pulses! Surely it is not entirely implausible to suggest that this movement is evoking the sounds of bagpipes?

If we can conceive of this, another element falls into place. The twitching dotted figures of a fourth and a fifth, which occur more or less distinctly in all three instances of our motif, have always reminded me of the distinctive articulations of the ‘big music’ of the pipes, the legendary *pibroch* (*piobaireachd*). No bagpipe *pibrochs* survive from as early as the 16th century, and indeed it has always been assumed that the ancient roots of *pibroch* lie in early harp repertoire, in pieces such as the mesmerising and mysterious *ports*, some examples of which probably even predate the 16th century. However, we would look in vain for anything like our motif in this body of work. I can’t help feeling that this may be because the distinctive nature of our motif lies more in the detail of its articulation than in the broader harmonic patterns, which is what most early sources record.

James IV was one of the last Stewart monarchs to understand and respect the culture of the Highlands and Islands of his Kingdom – he spoke Gaelic and employed players of clarsach and bagpipes at court. Is it conceivable that this musical monarch had spotted a favourite phrase in his traditional music, a motif which came to be identified

with the Stewart dynasty, an aural clan badge if you like, and which his favourite court composer, a man of infinite versatility, aspired to display in a series of Mass settings? It would be a wonderfully symbolic emblem of the uniting of two Scottish cultures, which by the end of the 16th century would have drifted irreparably apart.

Working in Scone Abbey, just outside Perth ('the gateway to the Highlands'), and with family connections in Aberdeen, Robert Carver might well have been familiar with the traditional music of the Highlands and Islands. In his music preserved in *The Carver Choirbook*, as well as the pieces attributed to him in *The Dowglas/Fischar Partbooks*, we see how readily Carver is able to absorb the latest musical trends without losing the striking individuality of his idiom. How natural it would seem to him to distil the essence of a musically exotic culture, like that epitomised by Highland harpers and pipers, into an unforgettable earworm, and blend it into the familiar mix of Renaissance Scottish polyphony.

Conclusion

Although the choral music composed by and attributed to Robert Carver is a relatively small body of work, its superlative quality and the deplorable paucity of Scottish choral music surviving from this period make it incomparably valuable. It has been interesting to speculate in section 1 regarding the source and context of the music that precedes Carver's in *The Carver Choirbook*, while his monumental early compositions, composed by a youth of around 21 and yet so supremely confident and distinctive in style, beg the question I have addressed in section 2 - what musical forces might have helped nurture the early development of this precocious genius? Finally, section 3, addressing one very specific recurrent motif in Carver's music, has served primarily as therapy for myself, but may also, I hope, have shed some potential light on the thought processes of this remarkable eclectic musician.

Acknowledgements

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in relation to the first section of this paper,
to Bill Taylor for his overview of early harp repertoire in part three,
and to Dr Jim Reid Baxter for his detailed and helpful observations
on all three parts.

Editions of the Scottish music under discussion.

[The late Dr Kenneth Elliott was an early and a doughty champion of the music of Robert Carver and his contemporaries, and his scholarly editions of the sacred and secular music of Renaissance Scotland remain indispensable.]

Kenneth Elliott (ed.) *Musica Britannica XV : Music of Scotland 1500-1700* (London, Stainer and Bell, 1975)

Mass *Rex virginum* à 4 – anon. attrib. Walter Frye (pp. 9-29)

Mass *Felix namque* à 6 – anon. attrib. Robert Carver (pp. 58-86)

Kenneth Elliott (ed.) *The Complete Works of Robert Carver & Two anonymous Masses* (Glasgow, Musica Scotica, 1996)

Mass *L'Homme armé* à 4 – Robert Carver (pp. 1-45)

Mass *Fera pessima* à 5 – Robert Carver (pp. 63-105)

Mass *Sine nomine* à 6 – Robert Carver (pp. 106-150)

Mass *Dum sacrum mysterium* à 10 – Robert Carver (pp. 151-204)

Motet *O bone Jesu* à 19 – Robert Carver (pp. 219-239)

Mass *Cantate Dominom* à 6 – anon. attrib. Robert Carver (pp. 255-295)

Kenneth Elliott (ed.) *Miscellaneous Pieces* (Glasgow, Musica Scotica 2003)

Mass *Deus Creator omnium* à 4 – anon. attrib. Walter Frye (pp. 1 – 42)

*[This is the Mass recently identified by Dr Cook as also incorporating the cantus firmus *Horrendo subdenda rotarum machinamento.*]*

Footnotes

ⁱ ARO-5-0419-12 in Edda Frankot, Anna Havinga, Claire Hawes, William Hepburn, Wim Peters, Jackson Armstrong, Phil Astley, Andrew Mackillop, Andrew Simpson, Adam Wyner, eds, *Aberdeen Registers Online: 1398-1511* (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 2019).

ⁱⁱ James Cook : *In Search of the Earliest Scottish Mass Cycles*, Medieval and Renaissance Music Conference, Basel (2019)

ⁱⁱⁱ Isobel Woods Preece : *Our awin Scottis use : Music in the Scottish Church up to 1603* (Glasgow 2000) pp. 158-63 We should perhaps be wary of a simplistic division between the ‘spheres of influence’ of the Sarum and continental rites. Many books of Sarum chant were copied in Flanders, part of the Duchy of Burgundy, and musicians throughout northern Europe would have been familiar with Sarum rituals. Dr Cook has observed that Scots composers often used continental Sarum books as sources, and so these often reflect continental practice. The situation with the two early Masses in *The Carver Choirbook* remains ambivalent. Were they composed in Scotland using continentally-sourced Sarum chants, or composed by a Scotsman (?Frye) during a period of residence at the Court of Burgundy?

^{iv} Once the *édimbourgeoisie* had helped themselves to many of its painstakingly numbered dressed stones for their rockeries and garden follies, there was only enough material left to rebuild the transept, and it is in this lamentably sawn-off, rotated and poorly positioned form that it survives as the Trinity Apse – a misnomer for this lamentable rump which can only hint at the magnificence of the original. After a long period of relative neglect, this important royal foundation is the subject of a study to be published soon by Dr Cook and his colleagues.

^v J D Marwick (ed.) : *Charters and Documents relating to The Collegiate Church and Hospital of the Holy Trinity and the Trinity Hospital, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1871) p. 36 In his second Bull of 10th July 1462 for the foundation of the Collegiate Church of the Holy Trinity, Pope Pius II praises the ‘noble church or chapel’ Mary has erected to house the College – it is as yet unfinished, but promises to be ‘magnificent and sumptuous’.

ibid. p. 36 A further Papal Bull of 26th August 1463 mentions a College of ‘one provost and ten or twelve ecclesiastics, presbyters and clerks’. By 1502 a charter of James, Archbishop of St Andrews, laments of Trinity College that ‘there are now only eight prebendaries, and that if the number of prebendaries were increased, it would tend to the great advancement of divine worship, and to the honour and profit of the Collegiate Church itself.’ *ibid.* p. 47. We would note the implication that the College had previously been larger, while also observing the financial imperative for fielding a larger choir.

^{vi} It is interesting to note that by the early 16th century, the magnificent Trinity altarpiece was complemented by paintings of St Margaret and St Katherine.

^{vii} Rob C Wegman, ‘New Data concerning the Origins and Chronology of Brussels 5557’ in *Tijdschrift van de koninklijke vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziek Geschiedenis*, 36 (1986) pp. 5-21. While it is possible Frye may never have set foot

abroad, his music enjoyed widespread popularity in Burgundy and throughout Europe, and it has to be said that both of his English contemporaries who enjoyed similar continental fame, Dunstaple and Power, most probably spent time on the continent. Whether as a result of cunning cultural appropriation at a distance or whether the two men actually worked together, passages in Frye's three Masses in Brussels 5557 sound hauntingly like Dufay. To my ears, this is also undoubtedly the case with passages in the anonymous St Katherine Masses in *The Carver Choirbook*, although other episodes sound quite unlike anything else I know from the period. Dr Cook has pointed out that Frye was at one point probably employed by Margaret of York's sister, Anne of Exeter, providing an alternative explanation for the presence of his music in Brussels 5557.

^{viii} D James Ross : *Musick Fyne, Robert Carver and the Art of Music in Sixteenth Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1993) p. 9

^{ix} Kenneth Elliot (ed.) : *Miscellaneous Pieces : Mass Deus Creator omnium for four voices* (Glasgow, Musica Scotica, 2003) Introduction p. vii

^x Dr Cook's work on the Mass *Deus Creator omnium/ Horrendo subdenda rotarum machinamento* has highlighted James IV's personal devotion to St Katherine, and this and the music's idiosyncratic style suggests to him both a local Scottish provenance and a later date, which would seem to rule out Frye as its composer – James IV was born on 17th March 1473, and Walter Frye, whether in Burgundy or in Scotland, was probably dead soon after this. The proposal that this Mass, along with its contemporary companion piece in *The Carver Choirbook*, the anonymous Mass *Rex virginum amator*, may have been composed in 15th-century Scotland, is an exciting one, providing as it would two examples of first-class Scottish composition in the period immediately prior to Robert Carver. While James IV's personal enthusiasm for the cult of St Katherine might provide an alternative context for the composition of the St Katherine Masses towards the end of the 15th century, it is perhaps worth bearing in mind that James was just the latest in a line of Scottish monarchs devoted to St Katherine, starting in the 11th century with St Margaret, Queen of Scots, an early devotee. Moreover, devotion to the cult of the virgin martyr was, as we have seen, by no means an exclusively Scottish phenomenon.

^{xi} J D Marwick (ed) *op. cit.* pp. 42-3 In the decades following the Fall of Constantinople on 29th May 1453, a febrile atmosphere throughout Christendom gave rise to plans for Crusades against 'the infidel' by way of revenge. Although none of these projects got beyond the stage of abstract negotiations and bold declarations, they almost certainly fuelled the burgeoning tradition of *L'Homme armé* Masses.

^{xii} J D Marwick (ed) *op. cit.* pp. 25

^{xiii} There is evidence of some overlap in personnel between Trinity Collegiate Church and the Scottish Chapel Royal, which would have facilitated the exchange of musical repertoire. One particularly colourful example is sir George Clapperton, who in 1520 was a Prebendary of Trinity College in Edinburgh and also Subdean of the Chapel Royal in Stirling. From 1538 until 1542 this aspirational individual was also listed as Almoner to King James V. In July 1540 he was promoted to Provost of Trinity

College and seems to have briefly pursued all three careers, only resigning as Provost in 1566, but retaining his Chapel Royal post until his death in 1574! Clapperton's clerical career may be followed in the documents reproduced in J D Marwick (ed.) *op. cit.* Sir George also found time to write vernacular poetry – one of his poems, *Wa worth Maryage*, survives in the *Maitland Folio* – while he is also cited as a patron of the *Bannatyne Manuscript* and features in George Bannatyne's *Memoriall Buik*.

^{xiv} D James Ross : *op. cit.* pp. 20-4 and Jamie Reid-Baxter : 'James IV and Robert Carver : Music for the Armed Man', in K. Buchanan and L. H. Clarke (eds.) *Medieval and Early Modern Representations of Authority in Scotland and the British Isles* (London: Routledge, 2016) pp. 235-52

^{xv} From 1501 the Scottish Chapel Royal consisted of 16 canons and 6 boy choristers, so it is hard to view Bishop Elphinstone's restrictions on the St Nicholas College in Aberdeen as anything other than an attempt to mollify the monarch – the Bishop was ever the consummate diplomat!

^{xvi} In D James Ross : *op. cit.* p. 31 and p. 35 (and footnote) I have speculated as to the symbolic significance of the numbers of voices Carver chooses to write for in the mass and motet. It is interesting that the 10-part Mass shares musical material with the 19-part motet *O bone Jesu* and a 6-part Mass *Sine nomine*, linking these early works together, almost like a musical portfolio to showcase its young composer's skills.

^{xvii} Isobel Woods Preece : *op. cit.* p. 106 Dr Elliott has pointed out that Louvain University is probably not the most obvious establishment at which to study music at this time – perhaps Carver was primarily studying theology, while pursuing his musical studies 60 miles away in Condé-sur-l'Escaut. Carver's evident devotion to his monastic calling as well as the theological expertise demonstrated in his compositions would seem to confirm this. We know that musicians were prepared to travel surprising distances in this period to study with the best.

^{xviii} As John Ireland puts it in his *Meroure of Wyβdome*, also written for King James IV, and from which I have already quoted in the title of this section, '*The angellis sall sing the haly chansoune and sang of peβ betuix god & man, hevin & erd & paradice.*' For a fuller treatment of Carver's 10-part Mass, see D James Ross : *op. cit.* pp. 29-33

^{xix} My search for evidence of Carver's presence in Aberdeen, where his mother's family the Grays played an active musical role, has largely drawn a blank.

D James Ross : *Shifting Shades of Gray : A Musical Dynasty in Mediaeval Aberdeen* <https://earlymusicreview.com/robert-carver-exploring-his-aberdeen-connections/>

^{xx} Isobel Woods Preece : *op. cit.* p. 106
As a former capital of Scotland with an important royal abbey, inhabitants of Scone (*de sconna*) remained distinct from those of neighbouring Perth (*de Sto Johanne*).

^{xxi} D James Ross : *Musick Fyne, Robert Carver and the Art of Music in Sixteenth Century Scotland* (Edinburgh 1993) p. 78

^{xxii} D James Ross : *ibid.* pp. 27-8