

Abstracts for the conference “Gaspar van Weerbeke: Works and Contexts”
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The *Missa O venus bant* as Song Cycle

Clare Bokulich (Washington University in St. Louis)

Most famous for his pioneering contributions to the Milanese *motetti missales* repertory, Gaspar van Weerbeke is known primarily for his sacred music. Our understanding of the composer’s secular output has been severely hampered by conflicting attributions and incomplete sources. A small portion of Gaspar’s resolutely sacred compositions, however, circulate in manuscripts comprised almost entirely of secular music. Examining the diverse generic guises in which Gaspar’s works circulate enhances our understanding of the composer’s output and contemporary reception.

One of the most striking cases is the *Missa O venus bant*. The songbook Florence 229 preserves the “Et incarnatus est,” “Pleni sunt celi,” and “Benedictus” sections of this mass. Appearing successively and without text, these three-voice settings blend in with the works that surround them in the Florence manuscript. Though well camouflaged, the three-voice sections of Gaspar’s mass are not without parallel. Florence 229 contains similar reduced-texture settings from an additional two masses, and at least a dozen other manuscripts from the late-fifteenth century transmit three-voice mass sections in a largely secular context.

We are accustomed to theorizing the relationship between songs and masses in terms of borrowing: indeed, the *Missa O venus bant* is based on a monophonic Flemish song. In such contexts, the song is usually portrayed as being elevated into the mass. But cases like the *Missa O venus bant* invert this paradigm, subsuming the mass into the world of secular song. What are we to make of such works that, by virtue of their new context, have plummeted down the genre hierarchy? I examine the breadth of this tradition, noting that only song-based masses circulate in this fashion, and that such reduced-texture sections are largely bereft of antecedent song material. Within this context, Gaspar’s mass stands out on account of the successive appearance of its three-voice sections. I conclude by theorizing these sections in terms of a textless “song cycle” derived from the mass.

Caught in the Web of Texts: The *chanson* Family *Bon vin/Bon temps*

Carlo Bosi (University of Salzburg)

The variability and fluidity of melody and text transmission in late fifteenth/early sixteenth-century *chanson* is at times baffling and any attempt to recover an “original”, pristine version is doomed to failure, since it assumes a static work concept, which at the time was at most exemplified by chant and classical authors, and, most importantly, since it does not take into account the role of orality in its dissemination. A case in point is the family of songs on *Bon vin/temps, je ne te puis laisser* and *Bon temps, ne (re)viendras-tu jamais*, to which many years ago Helen Hewitt devoted a concise, yet still essential study. The sources transmitting this song in one form or another—two of which were not considered by Hewitt—are extremely varied and span at least 40 years, if not more. One of these is a *quodlibet* à 4 in I-Fc, Basevi 2442 attributed to “Gaspart” and combining both *Bon temps, je ne te puis laisser* and *Bon temps, ne viendras-tu jamais* in two different voices (cantus and altus), with the tenor being based on another hit of the period: *Adieu, mes amours*. This being an *unicum*, the composition is however incomplete, given that *Basevi 2442* lacks the bassus partbook. On the other hand

the drinking song variant, *Bon vin, je ne te puis laisser*, is transmitted in its most complete textual form in the monophonic *Bayeux Chansonnier*, likely compiled for Charles III de Bourbon-Montpensier, probably in or around 1516, although the first line of text is briefly quoted in a much earlier source. Trying to extricate the panoply of relationships among the different variants, the paper will also try to situate the song or songs within their wider historical context, also drawing on a purely textual transmission in an early sixteenth-century theatrical farce.

Gaspar and Japart: the secular works, with particular reference to Basevi 2442

David Fallows (University of Manchester)

That Gaspar van Weerbeke and Johannes Japart were two different people is quite clear, not least because they both appear in the Milan court payment records at the same time in the early 1470s. We have no earlier information about either, but they were probably of about the same age; and both seem to have been born in the the Low Countries. The main difference between the two is that Gaspar van Weerbeke has a well-documented career at least until 1517 whereas Johannes Japart seems to disappear from the record in 1481. But there seems room for asking whether the distinction was always clear to contemporaries: broadly speaking, the works are ascribed “Gaspar” or “Japart”. Allan Atlas’s recent edition of Japart’s music (all secular songs) rigorously excludes the six pieces ascribed “Gaspar”, “Jaspar” or “Gaspart” but fails to note that the music has remarkable similarities in terms of style, dates of the sources, and favoured genres. I wish to propose that the situation is extremely complicated.

Gaspar’s Lost Voice

Richard Freedman (Haverford College)

The job reconstructing pieces like Gaspar’s chansons from the Florence MS is not so formidable to scholars versed in the style, or to singers with long and direct experience of bringing the music to life. Many of us, after all, have internalized the conventions of early sixteenth-century secular music to the point that in many situations the likely behavior of a single voice when given three others is not apt to be in much doubt. Indeed, during the last several years, the many participants in *The Lost Voices Project* (<http://digitalduchemin.org>) discovered much the same effect as we considered the problem of reconstructing the contratenor and bassus parts from dozens of chansons from books issued in Paris by Nicolas Du Chemin in the years around 1550.

We realized that our work was not simply the restoration of such missing voice parts (even if we for the moment set aside the aesthetic value or ontological status of the pastiches we might create along the way). No less important was the articulation of our assumptions and methods, and the search for ways to expose the very process of restoration for others to study, critique, and adapt. Each attempted reconstruction was linked to growing digital thesaurus of contrapuntal and melodic figures (our database contains over 11,000 such instances of various conventions) drawn from corresponding pieces elsewhere in Du Chemin’s chanson albums, in theoretical literature of the period, and in the explanations that modern scholars have offered for the contrapuntal conventions themselves. I would like to share a selection of these methods and tools with participants in the Weerbeke conference, and to suggest ways in which passages from his chansons could be profitably explored and discussed from the standpoint of

related musical corpora: other pieces from the Florence MS, other works by Gaspar himself, and the larger corpus of music from the years around 1500.

Another “most laudable competition”? Gaspar, Josquin, and the Virgin in distress

Wolfgang Fuhrmann (University of Mainz)

In a paper published in 2010, Agnese Pavanello has plausibly argued that Gaspar and Josquin composed their *Stabat mater* settings for the same institution: the confraternity of the Seven Sorrows of Mary, founded by Jean de Coudenberg and promoted by the Burgundian duke (and Imperial heir apparent) Philip the Fair. If, as Pavanello has speculated, Josquin’s and Gaspar’s settings were commissioned by the confraternity or Philip himself in the 1490s, they must have been composed in what Glarean would have called “a most laudable competition” (as he did in the case of Josquin’s and Brumel’s *Missae de beata virgine*). Indeed, the two works bear at least a superficial resemblance: both are five-voice motets of considerable dimension built around a cantus firmus set out in long notes in the tenor. But here the resemblances end; in almost every other respect these are vastly different works—except for their aspiration to set the highly affective sequence text in the most appropriate manner. The sources suggest that Josquin’s setting came first—it is included in the confraternity’s manuscript B-Br 215/216 together with a chant setting of Pierre Duwez’ newly composed office for the Seven Sorrows feast, and it precedes Gaspar’s setting in the Chigi codex. But however the relative chronology, it seems worthwhile to compare the two compositions as two ambitious musical reactions to a text that composers had only rarely (and comparatively recently) tried their hands on.

Belle promesse e facti nulla:

Ludovico Sforza, Lorenzo de’ Medici, and a Singer Caught in the Middle

Sean Gallagher (New England Conservatory)

Many of the northern singers who served at Italian courts and churches in the fifteenth century are today little more than names in pay lists. Details of their careers, where these are known, derive mainly from institutional documents of various sorts. Few letters written by the musicians themselves are known to survive. Similarly, the circumstances surrounding the poaching of singers—a practice Italian rulers regularly engaged in—have mostly been gleaned from documents generated by those in power, rather than those who would have been most directly affected, the singers. To a large extent, then, we lack a singer’s perspective on what it was like to be caught between competing rulers, each intent on bolstering the status of his chapel.

Two letters of the northern singer Guillaume Steynsel—one addressed to Lorenzo de’ Medici, the other to the composer Gaspar van Weerbeke—offer a vivid account of the difficulties a singer could face in such a situation and the frustration these could engender. A member of the Habsburg-Burgundian chapel (where he sang alongside Antoine Busnoys), Steynsel left the court without permission in 1481 and soon made his way to Florence. There he served as one of the *cantori di San Giovanni*, the singers responsible for polyphony at the Duomo and other churches in the city who were under the effective control of Lorenzo de’ Medici. By 1485 Steynsel had left Florence, having been lured (as the letters reveal) to serve in the Sforza chapel in Milan. The earlier of the two letters, written in Milan, is a response to Lorenzo de’ Medici’s attempt to bring Steynsel back to Florence. While the letter contains the expected measure of flattery, the language is not that of a polished courtier. Steynsel details

the poor treatment he has received in Milan and is even rather brash in suggesting the terms under which he might return to Medici service. He would eventually go back to Florence, but the move brought with it further difficulties. Writing to Weerbeke in Milan, Steynsel describes problems he has had in collecting money owed him for his earlier service to the Sforzas. He asks Weerbeke, whom he addresses as a dear friend, to intervene on his behalf. The letter mentions other members of the Sforza chapel and contains some surprising details. Written in a mixture of Dutch, Italian, and Latin, the letter is a rare and revealing example of informal communication between two fifteenth-century musicians.

Josquin, Gaspar and Franchinus: Style, Structure, and Performance of the Motet Cycles

Matthew Gouldstone (UK) and Jennifer Thomas (University of Florida),
Joint Paper and Lecture Recital

Josquin Des Prez and Gaspar van Weerbeke's careers often intertwined within significant musical cultures. Between 1470 and 1500 these northerners both had contact with the Sforza court in Milan and the papal chapel in Rome, and each was courted by Ercole d'Este for the Ferrara chapel (Gaspar declined, Josquin served briefly). However, their musical *oeuvres* overlap only slightly: both set substantial *Stabat mater* motets, and both created motet cycles, a musical practice associated with the Milanese court.

In his 1508 treatise *Angelicum ac divinum opus musicae*, Franchinus Gaffurius recounts a 1489 meeting with both composers in which he questioned their habits of mensural notation usage. His objections must relate to the performance of music from the pen of these two star musicians. The Milan Choirbook Archivio della Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo Librone 4 contains adjacent motet groups by both composers. Josquin's works beginning with *Vultum tuum* appear near Gaspar's *Spiritus domini replevit*; both cycles subsequently appear again in close proximity, but with added movements, in Petrucci's 1505 *Motetti* 4. Scholarly studies (e.g., Fallows, Finscher, Macey, Noblitt, Ward) brought them to wider attention, yet the works continue to stand outside the perceptual norms for the period. How might close readings and comparison of structural, style, and performance analysis of the motets, both as separate entities and within their cyclic groups, help to contextualize these and other works in the output of Josquin, Gaspar, and their contemporaries?

Our joint paper will present close readings of both sets of motets, seeking deeper understanding of compositional choices and their implications for interpretation and performance. The performance element will present portions of the motets to explore important issues of continuity and coherence.

La stangetta—Weerbecke or Isaac?

Eric Jas (Utrecht University)

La stangetta is the only instrumental composition among the secular works in Weerbecke's oeuvre. The piece is attributed to three different composers in the sources: to Weerbecke, to Obrecht, and to Isaac. No doubt these conflicting attributions caused early writers such as Gerhard Croll and others to be cautious in accepting *La stangetta* as an authentic piece by Weerbecke. In 1980 Dietrich Kämper published a fine study of *La stangetta* arguing for Weerbecke's authorship and suggesting that the title of the work might be related to Marchesino Stanga, a "cameriere d'onore" of Gian Galeazzo Sforza. Since the publication of this study, the work seems to have been commonly accepted as a piece by Weerbecke. However, some uneasiness remains. After all, the source that ascribes the work to Isaac is the

Segovia cancionero (SegC s.s.). In this famous collection the piece is found among a host of Isaac's juvenalia. The scribes of the Segovia cancionero were evidently well informed about the Flemish repertory they copied and this raises the question why Isaac's authorship of *La stangetta* has been rejected without much discussion. It is the purpose of this paper to find out if Isaac was rightfully ruled out as the composer of *La stangetta*.

Gaspar in French Circles: The Poetic Witness of Guillaume Crétin

Jeannette Jones (Boston University)

The death of Ockeghem in 1497 inspired eulogies by contemporary poets, most notably Jean Molinet and Guillaume Crétin. Molinet's brief lament, *Nymphes des bois*, was famously set to music by Josquin Desprez. Crétin's much longer poem, *Déploration ... sur le trépas de Jean Okeghem*, while never used in a musical composition, demonstrates familiarity with musical repertoire and figures in his circles. He calls on a specific group of musicians to lament Ockeghem as the "maître et bon père": Agricola, Verbonnet, Prioris, Josquin, Gaspar, Brumel, and Compère. The rationale behind this list has proved elusive. According to David Fallows, Crétin "seems to name the leading composers active in 1497." Yet seen from this perspective, as Fallows also notes, the list reveals several gaps. However, discoveries in recent years have edged the group closer to the French royal court, hinting at a rationale behind Crétin's inclusions and omissions. Indeed, only one of those named has thus far remained without any known connection to the court: Gaspar van Weerbeke. Inevitably, this has prompted speculation about a possible relationship between Gaspar and France. I consider afresh what could have led Crétin to include Gaspar in this company, contextualizing the poem in light of Crétin's perspective as someone close to the orbit of the French royal court.

A New Mass and Its Implications for Gaspar's Late Mass Style

Paul Kolb (University of Salzburg)

Today Gaspar van Weerbeke is best known for his motet cycles, a musical phenomenon apparently stemming from the unique liturgical practices of Milan, but his surviving output of conventional mass cycles, all unambiguously composed for the Roman Rite, is much larger. Details of transmission attest to a significant performance tradition of nearly all of Gaspar's masses in Rome, even if perhaps only half of them were composed while he was resident in the city. His masses from the 1470s and 1480s fit more or less easily within the contemporary tradition of cantus-firmus masses. The masses from the following two decades, however—including the *Missae octavi toni*, *N'as tu pas*, and *brevis* and the independent *Credo cardinale*—have structural, textural, and stylistic aspects which stand out among the mass settings of Gaspar's contemporaries at the Sforza court and in the Papal Chapel.

An anonymous mass, surviving *unica* in Jena, Universitätsbibliothek MS 21, may shed some light on this somewhat idiosyncratic repertoire. Immediately following Gaspar's *Missa brevis* in the manuscript, the unnamed mass shares many of the characteristics which make the composer's late masses unusual. Direct parallels with the *Missa brevis* make it clear that these two masses could not have been composed in isolation: indeed, Gaspar was probably the composer of both. A partially cut-off inscription may provide the missing attribution. If attribution by modern scholars based on style is often problematic, this case is unusually clear because certain elements of Gaspar's late style are so unique. Looking at this mass alongside the composer's other late masses, this paper will propose new theories about their compositional origins amidst the contradictions of their transmission.

For the Love of Venus: Gaspar's Mass *O Venus bant* and choirbooks of mass music in the late 15th century

Brett Kostrzewski (Boston University)

The Mass *O Venus bant* of Gaspar van Weerbeke appears in various degrees of completeness and precision in nine extant choirbook sources of great diversity in provenance, appearance, and repertorial organization. The mass is complete in two of its Italian choirbooks, VatS 51 and ModE M.1.13; two others, VerBC 755 and VatSM 26, while incomplete, at least demonstrate an attempt at completeness and contain mostly complete masses otherwise. FlorBN BR 229, a collection mostly of tricinia, accordingly contains the three-voice sections of the mass only. The transmission differs dramatically in choirbooks from north of the Alps: BerlS 40021, HradKM 7, and WarU 5892 omit entire movements and, while closely related to each other, display an imprecision of readings. LeipU 1494 contains a contrafactum of just one three-voice section of the mass. Furthermore, all of these northern sources contain much repertoire besides polyphonic masses, in contrast with the genre-exclusive tendency of the Italian books.

This study places the uneven transmission of Gaspar's Mass *O Venus bant* in the context of the manner in which the sources themselves were compiled and constructed. In his study of fifteenth-century manuscripts from what he calls "eastern Latin Europe," Paweł Gancarczyk has observed some ways in which they differ from contemporary Italian and Netherlandish sources in their production, use, and respective "open" and "closed" repertoires. Through the lens of Gaspar's mass, this study will refine and reassess some of those observations not central to Gancarczyk's study, primarily regarding the compilation and construction of the books. Northern sources suggest, at least in some of their early stages, a level of planning and repertorial assembly not so dissimilar from their Italian counterparts; the differences manifest themselves more visibly in the relative importance accorded the books in their physical appearance and use over time—i.e., in largely bibliographic ways.

I suggest that the transmission of Gaspar's mass reveals a cultural understanding of the polyphonic choirbook in Italy as possessing bibliographic value that transcends the liturgical or practical usefulness of its musical contents, unsurprising when situated in the context of the rapid flourishing of institutional music on the peninsula during these years. Implications of this observation for our understanding of how music books were produced, used, and valued in the late fifteenth century—on both sides of the Alps—will be explored.

Petrucchi's Gaspar

Andrea Lindmayr-Brandl (University of Salzburg)

The sources for the works by Gaspar van Weerbeke include fifty-four manuscript sources and twenty music prints, and more than half of the latter were published by Ottaviano Petrucci. This is somewhat misleading, however: the number of prints is the number of editions, not the number of surviving physical copies. The thirteen Petrucci prints including works by Gaspar can be found today in forty-five different copies. Seen in this way, there is a significantly different relationship between manuscript transmission and printed transmission.

This also rebalances the importance of Petrucci's prints with respect to Gaspar's reputation and the distribution of his works. The forty-five copies from his workshop are the surviving remains of approximately four thousand exemplars that contained compositions by Gaspar, all of which were published during his lifetime. Most of these works are ascribed with his name, and each of the three hundred copies of a single edition transmits the same music.

This overwhelming number of mostly identical music sources does not mean that the readings of Petrucci's versions are "better" than those of other sources. As with the manuscripts, they also depend on the quality of their models and the competence of the editor at hand. Nevertheless, their reading must have had a much greater impact than the handwritten versions because there were so many copies and they were distributed so far.

In my paper I will concentrate on Petrucci's only print devoted exclusively to Weerbeke: the *Misse Gaspar* from 1507. Using Boorman's seminal Petrucci catalogue and the Critical Comments of the Gaspar van Weerbeke Edition as a basis for my research, I will consider the following questions: who was responsible for the publication? How wide were the copies distributed and who owned them (and thus had access to Gaspar's music)? In what way do Petrucci's musical readings stand out from the manuscript sources? Are their musical idiosyncrasies due to limitations of printing technique or can they be traced back to the editor (or even to the composer himself)? And finally, how do Petrucci's prints fit into the network of Gaspar's mass transmission?

Gaspar van Weerbeke as a member of the Burgundian chapel of Maximilian I

Grantley McDonald (University of Vienna)

Following his marriage to Mary of Burgundy in 1477, Maximilian I spent several years in the Low Countries, and maintained close political ties with the region even after he gradually moved his court to Innsbruck in the 1490s. Here he established a court chapel that contained several members who had previously served both Charles the Bold and his own father Friedrich III, as well as several new members, including Gaspar van Weerbeke. The present paper will provide an overview of the personnel of Maximilian's chapel during his time in the Low Countries, building upon on previous work by Honey Meconi and David Fiala, as well as new archival work undertaken as part of the project *The court chapel of Maximilian I: between art and politics*. It will also present material from the archive of the church to suggest that Gaspar may have worked for a short time as choirmaster at Our Lady's Church in Antwerp, as a replacement for Obrecht.

Weerbeke in Milan: Court and Colleagues

Paul A. Merkley (University of Ottawa)

Research in Milanese archives has turned up a wealth of information on Gaspar, revealing a new kind of composer-client, in his negotiation of Sforza patronage and his personal and professional mobility. The first period of his Milanese service is characterized by the rapid accumulation of several ecclesiastical benefices, most of which he resigned to other candidates in return for a substantial pension, probably in order to avoid the canon-legal limit of two benefices with cure of souls (Weerbeke held pensions on several benefices). The sudden need for an indult *super defectu natalium*, some two years into his Milanese beneficial career, is a puzzling development—why did the question not come up sooner for him? The documents of the first ducal gift of a house, and his successful petition to sell it just a short time before his transfer to the papal chapel, form not only an important point of clientage, but also evidence for his precise duties. The composer wrote that the house was too far from the patron for him to walk to the ducal mass every day.

Notarial documents speak to his connections to other figures in Milan, and to his numerous properties and benefices. The evidence of his real-estate transactions and another commercial venture (a laundry) expands and revises our picture of his clientage and

circumstances. Very different from the musicians of the 1460s, who had to follow the formalities of exiting a ruler's service or face the consequences of imprisonment, Weerbeke exercised a great deal of mobility. This is especially evident when he left the service of Ludovico Sforza in 1495 to enter that of the Archduke of Burgundy. Ludovico seized the house he had given him on the grounds of "ingratitude," but could do little else. By that time the luxurious house represented only a small proportion of the composer's wealth. Indeed Ludovico invited him back in 1498. All of these notices paint the portrait of a composer consistently in demand, sought by the Sforzas, the pontiff, and those in imperial circles. This in turn highlights the importance of his musical style to this period.

Weerbeke's records reveal how a prominent musician navigated the new economy. The resulting portrait is one of an important composer, sought after by many courts, whose impact on the history of music has been underestimated by many.

Weerbeke's Styles: Motets, Texts, and Chronology

Agnese Pavanello (Schola Cantorum Basiliensis)

Weerbeke's motets are stylistically extremely various. Whereas the broad range of compositional technique and style register are related to the different kind of intoned texts, which were intended for various contexts and functions, the use (or lack thereof) of some structural elements seems in more cases to be the result of an autonomous choice not directly depending on the textual structure. In my paper I will discuss some aspects of Weerbeke's compositional technique with particular attention to the problem of the chronology of his motets. In particular I will focus on the use of sequences and sequential patterns in Weerbeke's vocabulary, analysing the means and locations of their occurrence. This inquiry aims to add new elements to define Weerbeke's compositional style and to propose a chronological frame for particular pieces.

Weerbeke versus Isaac: Differing Approaches to Polyphonic Quotations

Murray Steib (Ball State University)

Both Weerbeke and Isaac used the anonymous chanson "Et trop penser" as the cantus firmus for a four-voice mass, and both composers also used polyphonic quotations of the model in their mass. However, their approach to both the cantus firmus and polyphonic quotations differ markedly: Weerbeke derived his cantus firmus solely from the tenor of the chanson whereas Isaac used both the tenor and superius; Weerbeke always stated the cantus firmus at pitch whereas Isaac occasionally transposed it; Weerbeke made fewer changes to the cantus firmus than Isaac; and each composer incorporated polyphonic quotations in a distinctive manner.

My main goal in this paper is to develop a borrowing profile for Weerbeke and compare that with Isaac. A borrowing profile for Weerbeke could serve as a fundamental theoretical construct for future research and may be useful in determining authenticity in cases of conflicting attributions. I concentrate on *Missa Et trop penser*, but bring in other masses by both composers (including Weerbeke's *Missa Se mieulx ne vient* and *Missa O Venus bant*). I focus on their polyphonic quotations: Isaac preferred lengthy quotations that were paraphrased, although he used several techniques to help organize his quotations and make them more audible (such as repeating a pitch after a melodic excursus but before moving on to the next pitch and aligning quoted notes of the tenor and superius); Weerbeke used shorter quotations that were sometimes literal and sometimes paraphrased, and he used those techniques to organize his quotations far less often than Isaac.

Sequences and (dare I say it) tonality in Weerbeke

Peter Urquhart (University of New Hampshire)

Sequential passages arise in music by many composers of the late 15th century, and perhaps become overused in music by some. Brumel, Ghiselin, and Obrecht relied on the technique, sometimes reaching exuberant lengths in their sequential passages, with as many as seven repetitions. This is also the repertory where some of the most difficult passages for *musica ficta* are to be found, as linear considerations are pitted against harmonic propriety.

Weerbeke's use of sequence is more circumscribed than others', but his use of the device in the motets *Ave mater omnium*, *Ave verum corpus*, *Dulcis amica Dei*, and the Missa *Ave regina caelorum* clarifies a model that can be applied to a wide range of such passages. The function of most sequential passages in this music is the definition of the final as a cadential goal; thus sequences typically occur as part of the drive towards the final cadence.

Sequential patterns moving through tonal space in later music normally present intervals in constant flux: minor 3rds become major and vice versa, 2nds change from major to minor, and so on; less often, perfect 5ths will become diminished, and perfect 4ths become augmented. The same may be true in sequences from the 15th and 16th centuries, and only if it is true will the ear not lose "sight" of the goal, the pitch towards which the sequence is aiming.

Saving Appearances? Sketching a profile for the secular Weerbeke

Philip Weller (University of Nottingham)

Weerbeke's group of secular pieces, it can be said, hangs together by a thread. As recently as 1999, the old cautionary tale could still be told: "all of [Weerbeke's] 6 secular works either have a persuasive conflicting ascription, or have been doubted – [not least in] Gerhard Croll's... suggest[ion] that the ascriptions 'Gaspart' in FC 2442 could refer to Johannes Japart. It is hard to resist noting that Japart is known only by secular works and documented only during the time when Weerbeke cannot be traced" (Fallows 1999, p. 724).

This carefully sceptical yet finally inconclusive view perhaps is not—or ought not to be—the only story. The present paper sets out to sketch a profile for Weerbeke that may help to make sense, in broad interpretive terms, of the extant attributions of chansons and associated secular pieces to him. What evidence could make his composition of songs and instrumental pieces seem possible, even plausible, and within what kind of historical environment? Our starting point is the (wider) context implied by Basevi 2442, including the predominance within that manuscript of songs by Josquin, Ninot le Petit, and Antoine Bruhier, and its repertorial span—on which topic we now need to consider Wexler (2014) and the fresh perspectives this new study offers (not least the theory that Bruhier may, just possibly, have been the scribe of the collection). More generally, it may seem important not to forget the important chanson sources for five of his polyphonic masses (four French, plus "O Venus bant").

The purpose is not so much to consider philological and codicological factors in scientific isolation as rather to offer, interpretively, a kind of subprofile of Weerbeke's historical presence and activity within which songs, and the types of songs that might be indicated as being possibly his, seem most persuasive. This in turn may help to suggest an environment making the existence of the small, heterogeneous group of "Gaspar(t)" songs not just possible but thought-provoking and productive for our wider view.