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6MHS 121

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Josquin the Innovator: Paradigm Shift in *Mente Tota*

His birth shrouded in mystery, knowledge of his early childhood speculative at best, his life story riddled with large gaps, Josquin des Prez manages to maintain a sense of mystique even in the modern day and age. A choirboy in Cambrai, a singer in the south of France, a choir member at the Sistine Chapel, it is clear he was trained well in the musical arts. In the employ of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, Dukes Ludovico Sforza and Hercules d'Este, and King Louis XII, he attracted all manner of high-class patronage, since he was regarded as the best composer of his time.[1] In the mid-1480s, while working for Duke Ludovico Sforza, Josquin wrote a cycle of *motetti missales* entitled *Vultum tuum. Motetti missales,* or motets on religious texts sung as the priest recites traditional texts during mass, became popular under the Duke's predecessor Galeazzo.[2] *Mente tota*, the fifth motet in Petrucci's 1505 printing,[3] is representative of the cycle. Although not yet a world-renowned composer, Josquin had already developed a distinct and innovative style representative of a larger trend. With such traits as equality of voices and flexible phrase length, his style enabled him to match the nature of his setting with the meaning of the text. By looking at *Mente tota,* we can examine the unique style of Josquin and see how he helped bring about the paradigm shift of changing music from a measuring art to a language art.

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[1] Macey, Patrick. "Josquin des Prez: New Chronology, reflecting archival discoveries since 1998." Handout. Music and Society, 800 – 1750. (Patrick Macey.) Eastman School of Music. Mar. 2014. Print.
[2] Patrick Macey, *Music and Society*, vol. 2. Unpublished. p. 15.
[3] Patrick Macey, "A Musical Detective Story: Josquin's Motet Cycle for the Sforza Rulers of Milan," *American Choral Review* 44 (2002): 1-8. p. 4.

Even a quick glance at the piece reveals that Josquin is not breaking with tradition entirely. *Mente tota* very firmly begins on G and, looking to the tenor, ends on G. Knowing that the final is G and that the key signature has one flat reveals that we are using a transposed dorian mode. Given that the range is from G to G (with the exception of an F natural resulting from imitation in m. 38), *Mente tota* must then be in "high range" – or mode 1. Although Josquin wrote in a polyphonic language completely unrecognizable to the original chant composers, his composition shows that the original concept of mode has been carefully preserved through the centuries. However, according to the theorist Zarlino, common cadence pitches for mode 1 are D, F, G, and A; transposed to G as Josquin has done, these would be G, Bb, C, and D. [4] However, looking at important cadences in Example 1 (as defined by texture and text), the only cadence pitches are G, A, and D, distributed fairly evenly throughout the motet. Thus, although Josquin incorporates the medieval idea of mode, he does not treat it in quite the traditional manner. Notably, the only "strong" cadences on A and D are Phrygian – and are therefore weak by definition, compared to leading tone cadences. Thus, the only truly strong cadences are on G – which is appropriate, considering that G is the final. (Also noteworthy is that A, D, and G have a ii – V – i relationship in Classical tonality. These fifth-relations show that Josquin may have been a part of the gradual paradigm shift from modality to diatonic tonality as well.)

In polyphonic compositions before Josquin, the tenor retained its dominance in defining the composition, a trait held over from the days of organum. It is with Josquin that all voices develop independence, a new trait in music. This independence can be seen from the very beginning of *Mente tota*, where the four voices enter in imitation at the fifth and octave – all equal. This texture is, in fact, a Josquin "trademark": the technique of paired imitation, where an

[4] Patrick Macey, *Music and Society*, vol. 1. Unpublished. p. 14.

imitative duo is itself imitated in the remaining two voices.[5] The piece continues on in various forms of independent, imitative textures, such as imitative duos (e.g. mm. 14 – 23) or imitative trios with a fourth voice free (e.g. mm. 22 – 33). Set within such an established imitative texture, the moments of homophony thereby become all the more striking. The first appears about halfway through the piece (mm. 47 – 54). Then, mm. 68 to the end is primarily homophonic as well, a total texture change that would not have been commonly found in earlier works.

This free use of voices and texture allows Josquin the freedom to match the music with the meaning of the text: that is, to set the text rhetorically, the largest paradigm shift occurring in music at the time. The generation of composers that came before Josquin treated music as a measuring art, a tradition handed down from the ancient Greek school of Pythagoreans who considered all intervals as simple numeric ratios. Dufay's motet *Nuper rosarum flores* is a prime example of this way of thinking. The motet consists of eight rigidly 28-bar phrases representing the eight sides of the dome on the Florentine cathedral, and its cantus firmi are cast in a rhythmic ratio of 6:4:2:3 at each successive appearance, representing the relative dimensions of the cathedral.[6] Josquin has clearly differentiated himself from this compositional style. By looking at Example 1, we can see that not only are the phrases of highly irregular length (ranging from 4 to 13 bars), but they also frequently overlap, quite neatly obscuring exactly where one phrase ends and the next begins. This overlap is achieved by having some voices enter with the new text as other voices are cadencing – or even before (e.g. mm. 22 – 23, where "domino" enters in the tenor before "tuo" cadences in the alto and bass).

Despite this overlap, Josquin's setting still manages to clearly convey the text. In the imitative sections, the voices are independent enough that the successive entrances are clearly

[5] Patrick Macey, *Music and Society*, vol. 2. Unpublished. p. 15.
[6] Patrick Macey, *Music and Society*, vol. 1. Unpublished. p. 88.

distinct, and one line of text can be followed aurally. Since the text is identical in all four voices, one can grasp the text this way. In these textures, sometimes one voice will rise up out of the texture for a moment, as in the soprano, mm. 8 – 10. This high F is actually the highest pitch in the entire piece (matched in mm. 60 and 77). This extremity of range places a distinct emphasis on the word "supplicamus" – "we beg", drawing the listener's attention to the piety and humility of the text. In some cases, the imitation results in the text being heard multiple times, more than the usual overlapping that imitation naturally engenders. This occurs, for instance, in mm. 14 – 19 followed by mm. 18 – 23, where the two imitative duos barely overlap. We thus hear "ut sicut filio tuo" ("just as we have to your Son") twice, building up anticipation for the naming of "our Lord Jesus Christ" in the next phrase. The other place that this most notably occurs is in mm. 59 – 67, on the words "virgo mirabilis", or "wondrous virgin". Given that the entire text is addressed to the Virgin Mary, it certainly makes sense to emphasize this particular clause.

In the homophonic sections, the text is clearly declaimed by virtue of the transparent texture. The first homophonic section (mm. 47 – 54) is brief and set to a descending musical sequence. The music matches well with the text, "in finem ei complaceamus" ("may we be pleasing to him until the end"), creating a comforting, settling affect as the homophony emphasizes this fervent hope. The other homophonic section is much more extended, from m. 68 to the end. Music is repeated in short 4- (mm. 68 – 83) or 2-bar (mm. 86 – 93) phrases of alternating voices. This repetition allows the text to flow more so than in the imitative passages, preserving the longer ideas ("thus do not despise [our prayers], for with unworthy mouth your holy name we presume to invoke" and "Holy Mary, pray for us, holy mother of God, pray for us") through the homophonic setting. Combined with the powerfully unexpected homophony,

this final section becomes one of the most powerful in the piece – appropriately emphasizing the direct invocation of the Virgin Mary.

But if Josquin is employing rhetoric, what exactly is it that he is trying to convey? Textually, the Virgin Mary is emphasized. According to Patrick Macey, the motet cycle was written for the Sforza family – who venerated the Virgin Mary to such a degree that all Sforza children, male and female, bore the middle name "Maria".[7] Musically, however, it is a brief motive that is emphasized. Many letters and anecdotes portray Josquin as devoted to his art, composing not on demand, but rather when struck with a certain *fantasia* that would inspire a work.[8] This piece opens on "G – F – G" – or "sol fa sol" in the parlance of the time, a brief descending neighbor motion. At first it is seemingly innocuous, merely helping to establish the modal character of the work. However, as the piece develops, this motive keeps recurring, as shown in Example 2, where each instance is boxed. Example 3 summarizes this information, showing that the motive occurs no fewer than 63 times – more often than once every two bars. Admittedly, given the brevity of the motive, some of these restatements are surely coincidental and non-intentional. For instance, imitation at the beginning requires that the motive appear at least three more times in the other three voices. Cadential figures often have this motion, and so these instances may have occurred regardless of Josquin's motivic intention (hence G – F# – G being separated out in the table). Even accounting for these mitigating factors, though, the motive is virtually omnipresent – and therefore a strong candidate as Josquin's inspirational *fantasia*. It is also worth noting that it occurs most often on G, A, and D; this matches with the cadences noted earlier, further supporting the notion that these pitches are structurally important.

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[7] Patrick Macey, "A Musical Detective Story: Josquin's Motet Cycle for the Sforza Rulers of Milan," *American Choral Review* 44 (2002): 1-8. p. 2.

[8] Rob Wegman, " 'And Josquin Laughed…' Josquin and the Composer's Anecdote in the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of Musicology* 17 (1999): 319-57. p. 339-40.

Now, if this motive occurred in *Mente tota* only, it could likely still be written off as a solely musical device to unify the movement. However, the motive occurs in all seven of the original Petrucci parts of the *Vultum tuum* cycle, as well as Patrick Macey's two additions to the cycle, as shown in Example 4. All examples are taken from the beginning of their respective part, with the exception of *Sancta Dei Genitrix* and *Ave Maria* (B and H), which are taken from where the movement goes into triple meter – a structurally important mid-section. Each and every one has this motive, at pitch. To be fair, in a few instances, the motive is modified – either by inserting notes in the middle as in *Christe, Fili Dei* and *Te lumen* (G and I) or by creating the motive by overlapping voices, as in *Ora pro nobis* (F). However, the essential structure of the motive remains.

This raises the question: Why this particular motive? At this point we must by necessity veer off into the realm of pure speculation (pending the discovery of any more primary sources). However, it is well-known that Josquin would construct themes by linguistic means. For instance, taking the vowels of "Hercules, Dux Ferrariae" yields the theme "re ut re ut re fa mi re", which was used in his *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae*.[9] Under the employ of the Sforza family at the time he wrote the *Vultum tuum* cycle, there is a certain dearth of available vowel sounds in the name of his patrons. But, if he were to have turned to consonant sounds – well, "Sforza" might sound remarkably like "sol fa sol", the very motive in question.

Although far from certain, the idea that Josquin might have embedded the name "Sforza" into his *Vultum tuum* cycle is certainly alluring. Regardless of its plausibility, however, the "sol fa sol" motive is undoubtedly treated rhetorically, uniting the piece and presenting a musical "argument" for whatever it might represent. Combined with his free treatment of text and texture, it is clear that Josquin sought to enhance the meaning of the text with his setting thereof.

[9] Patrick Macey, *Music and Society*, vol. 2. Unpublished. p. 29.

While not totally breaking with past traditions, Josquin has made this rhetoric, both musical and extra-musical, an integral part of his compositional style, thereby pushing music forward into the realm of a language art.

Example 1. *Mente tota*, Line Chart
Weaker cadences (e.g. tones in resolution outside 5th and 8ve, m6 -> P8, etc.) are shown in parentheses.

Bar #	1 - 13	14 - 19	18 - 23	22 - 28	27 - 33	33 - 40
Text	Mente tota	Ut sicut	Ut sicut	Domino nostro	Aliquando	Modo viceversa
Texture	4 vv. Imit.	S/T imit. duo	A/B imit. duo	3vv. Imit./Free A	3vv. Imit./Free A	A/S duo; 3vv. Imit.
Cadence	(A Phr.)	A Phr.	(D)	(G)	D Phr.	G

Bar #	39 - 44	43 - 46	47 - 54	54 - 59	59 - 67	68 - 71
Text	Moribus	Per te usque	In finem	Preces nostras	Virgo mirabilis	Ideo ne
Texture	TS imit. BA	Stretto motive ->	4 vv. Hom. (Seq.)	BT imit. AS/Free	T imit. S/Free AB	S/A duo ("Hom.")
Cadence	(42-A Phr.) (D)		G	D Phr.	A Phr.?	(D)

Bar #	72 - 75	76 - 79	80 - 85	86 - 93	94 - 101
Text	Quia ore	Nomen sanctum	Invocare	Sancta Maria	Santa virgo
Texture	4 vv. Hom.	S/A duo ("Hom.")	4 vv. Hom.	Paired duos	S/A duo -> 4 vv. Hom.
Cadence	(D)	(D)	G	(F -> G motion; no cad.)	G

Example 2. G-F-G Motive in "Mente Tota"

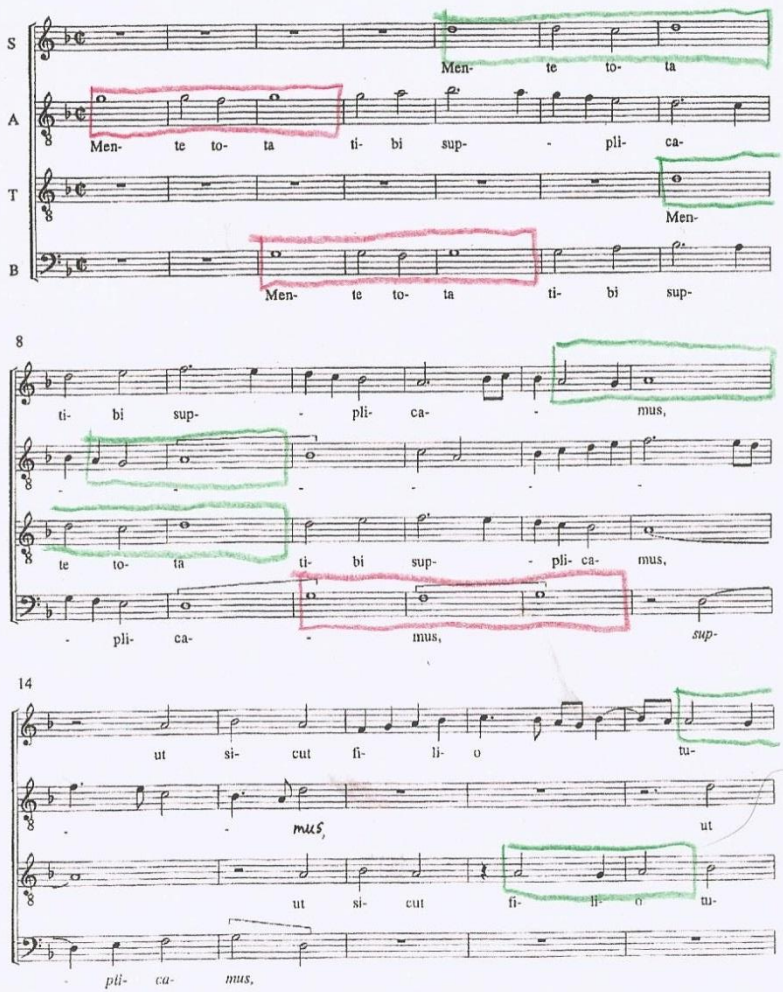
= At pitch

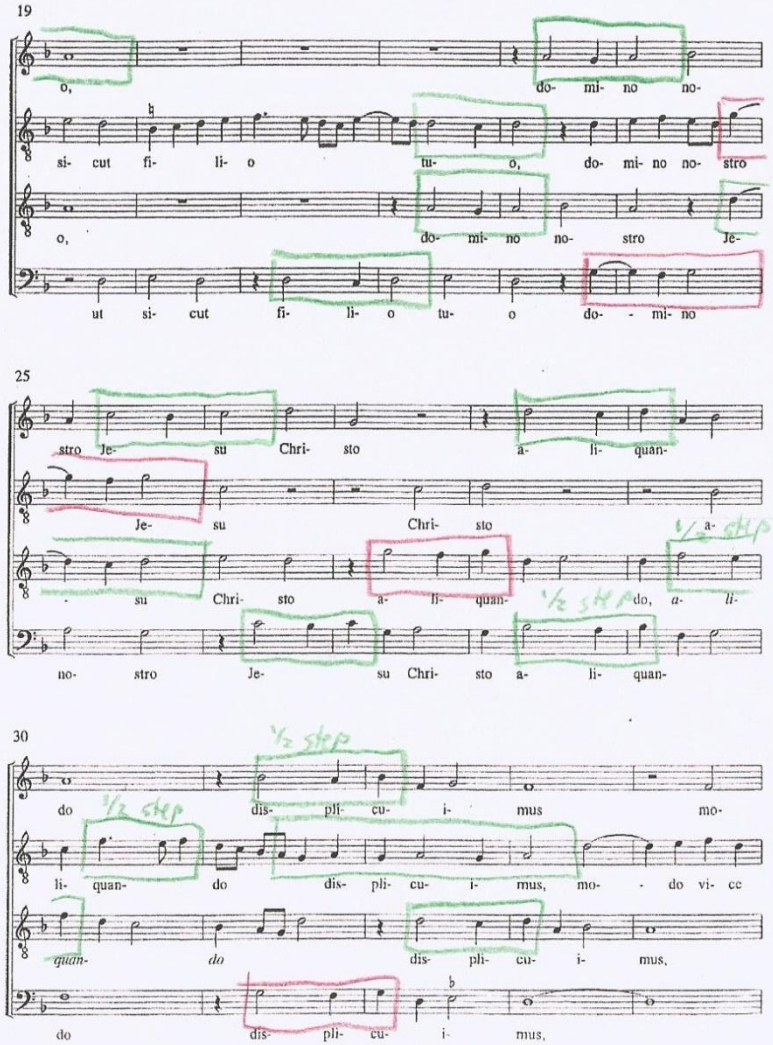
= Transposed

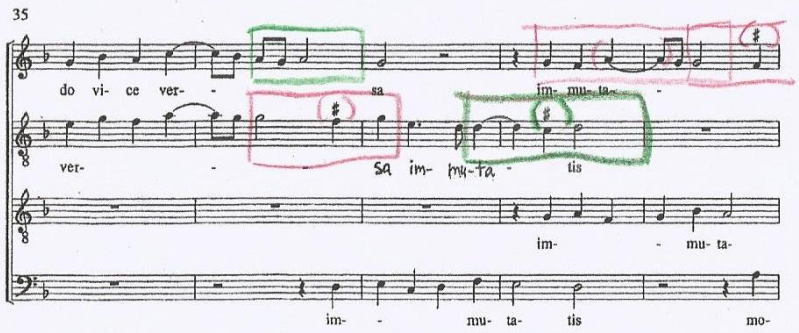
6. Mente tota [Post Elevationem]

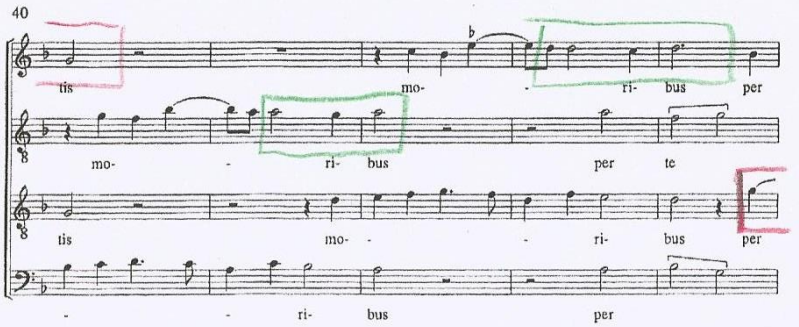
MilanD 4, f. 106'-107

Josquin






35
do vi- ce ver- - sa im- mu- ta- -
ver- - - sa im- mu- ta- tis
im- - mu- ta-
im- - mu- ta- tis mo-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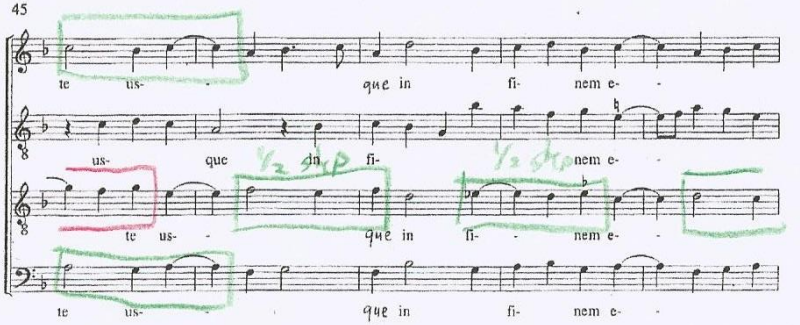
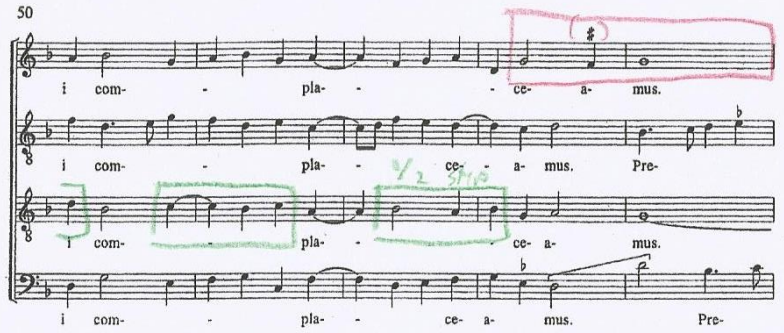
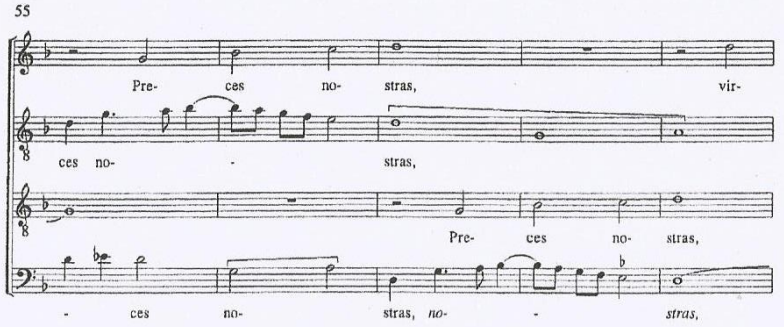
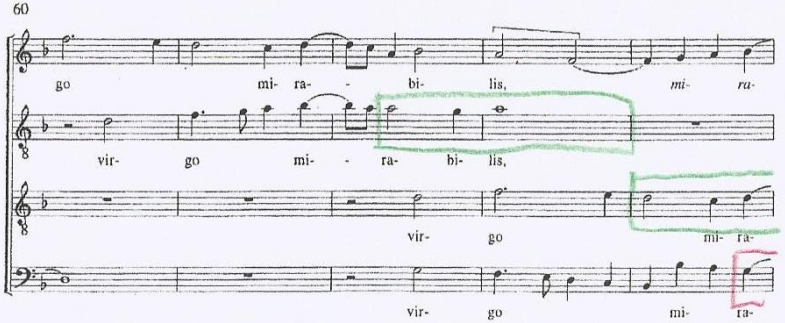
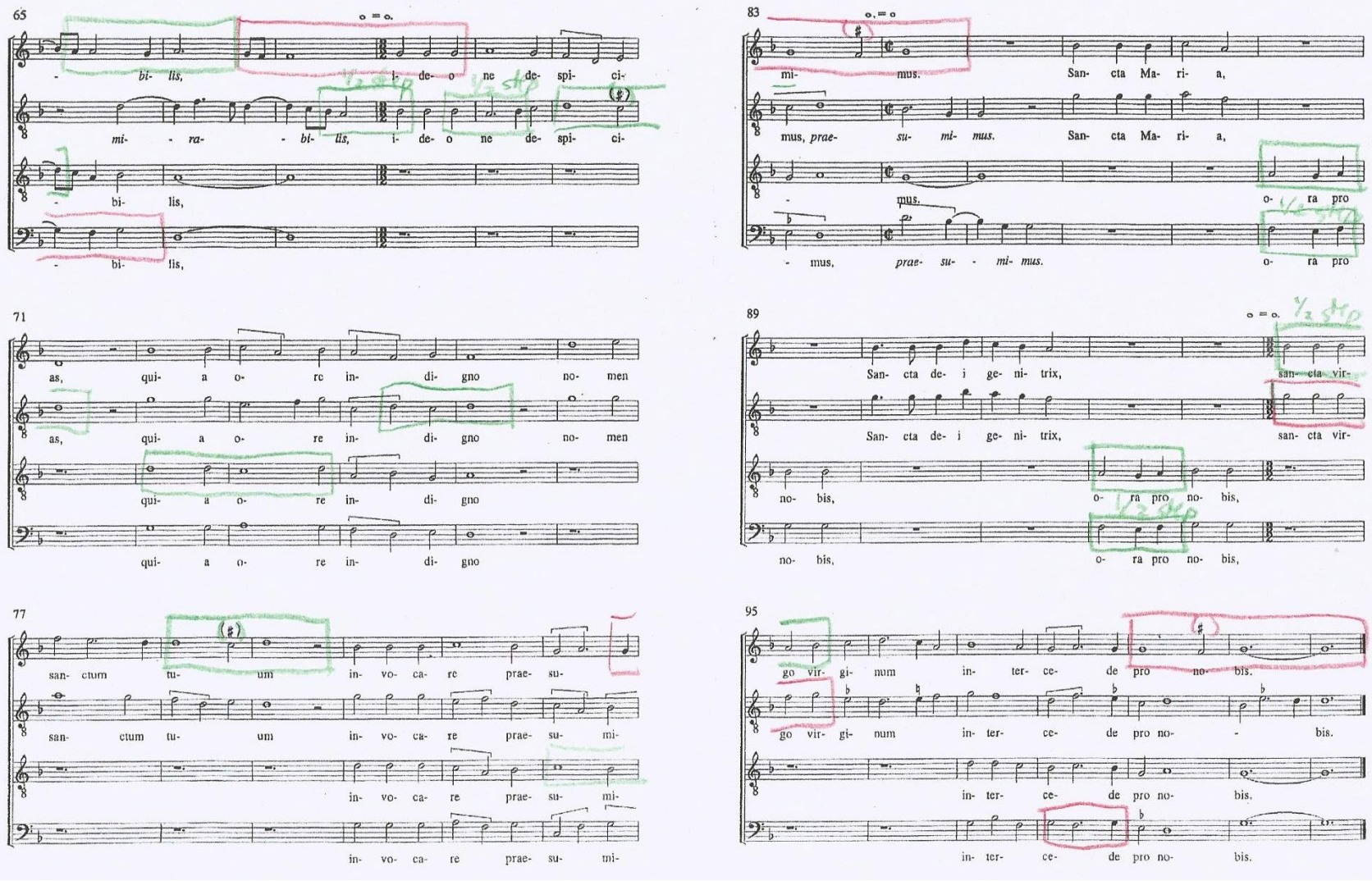
tis mo- - ri- bus per
mo- - ri- bus per te
tis mo- - ri- bus per
- - ri- bus per


45
te us- - que in fi- nem e- -
us- que fi- nem e- -
te us- - que in fi- - nem e- -
te us- - que in fi- nem e- -


50
i com- - pla- - - ce- a- mus.
i com- - pla- - ce- - a- mus. Pre-
i com- - pla- - ce- a- mus.
i com- - pla- - ce- a- mus. Pre-


55
Pre- ces no- stras, vir-
ces no- - stras,
Pre- ces no- stras,
- ces no- stras, no- - stras,


60
go mi- ra- - bi- lis, mi- ra-
vir- go mi- - ra- bi- lis,
vir- go mi- ra-
vir- go mi- ra-


65
- bi- lis,
mi- - ra- - bi- lis, i- de- o ne de- spi- ci-
- bi- lis,
- bi- lis,
71
as, qui- a o- re in- di- gno no- men
as, qui- a o- re in- di- gno no- men
qui- a o- re in- di- gno
qui- a o- re in- di- gno
77
san- ctum tu- um in- vo- ca- re prae- su-
san- ctum tu- um in- vo- ca- re prae- su- mi-
in- vo- ca- re prae- su- mi-
in- vo- ca- re prae- su- mi-
83
mi- mus. San- cta Ma- ri- a,
mus, prae- su- mi- mus. San- cta Ma- ri- a,
- mus. o- ra pro
- mus, prae- su- - mi- mus. o- ra pro
89
San- cta de- i ge- ni- trix, san- cta vir-
San- cta de- i ge- ni- trix, san- cta vir-
no- bis, o- ra pro no- bis,
no- bis, o- ra pro no- bis,
95
go vir- gi- num in- ter- ce- de pro no- bis.
go vir- gi- num in- ter- ce- de pro no- - bis.
in- ter- ce- de pro no- bis.
in- ter- ce- de pro no- bis.

Example 3. Prevalence of G – F – G Motive in *Mente tota*

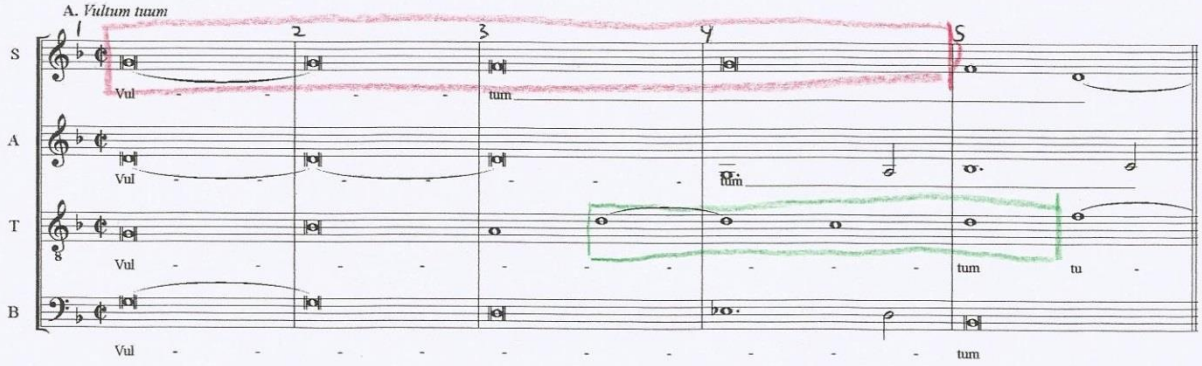
Voice	G-F-G	G-F#-G (1/2 step)	A-G-A	Bb-A-Bb (1/2 step)	C-Bb-C	D-C-D	Eb-D-Eb (1/2 step)	F-E-F (1/2 step)
S	2	4	4	2	2	4	0	0
A	3	1	4	2	0	4	0	1
T	2	0	4	1	2	6	1	2
B	6	0	1	1	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	13	5	13	6	5	15	1	5

Total occurrences of motive: 63

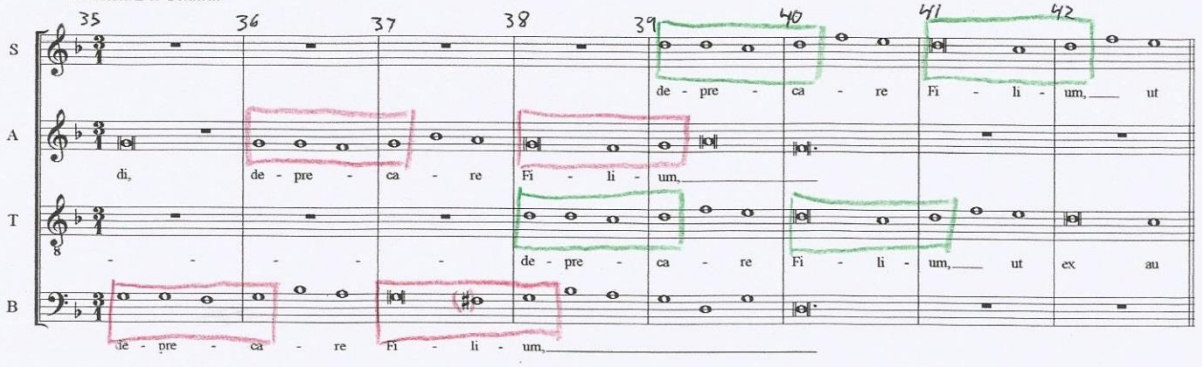
NB: The motive does not occur on E-D-E in the piece, likely because this would form a tritone with the Bb in the key signature. The one instance of Eb-D-Eb occurs but once, in the context of a sequence.

Example 4. G - F - G motive throughout the *Vultum tuum* cycle (ordered as given in Petrucci printing, with two Macey additions at end)

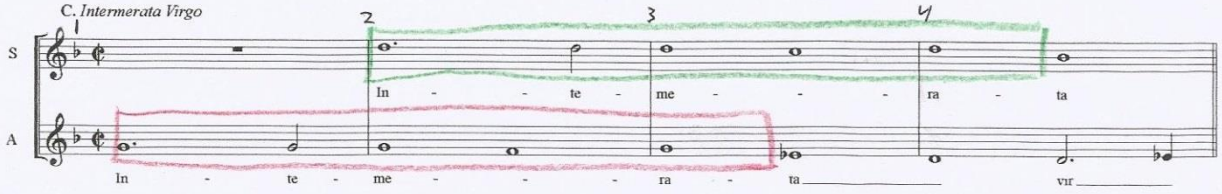
A. *Vultum tuum*



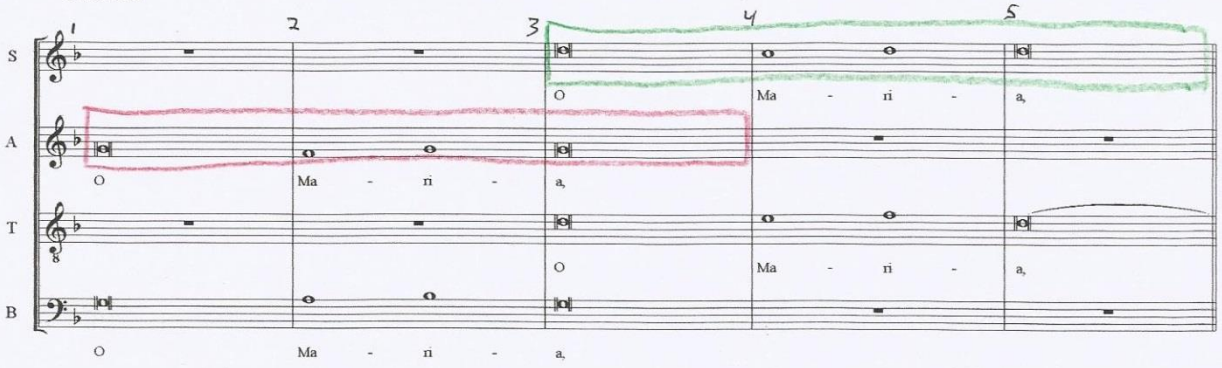
B. *Sancta Dei Genitrix*

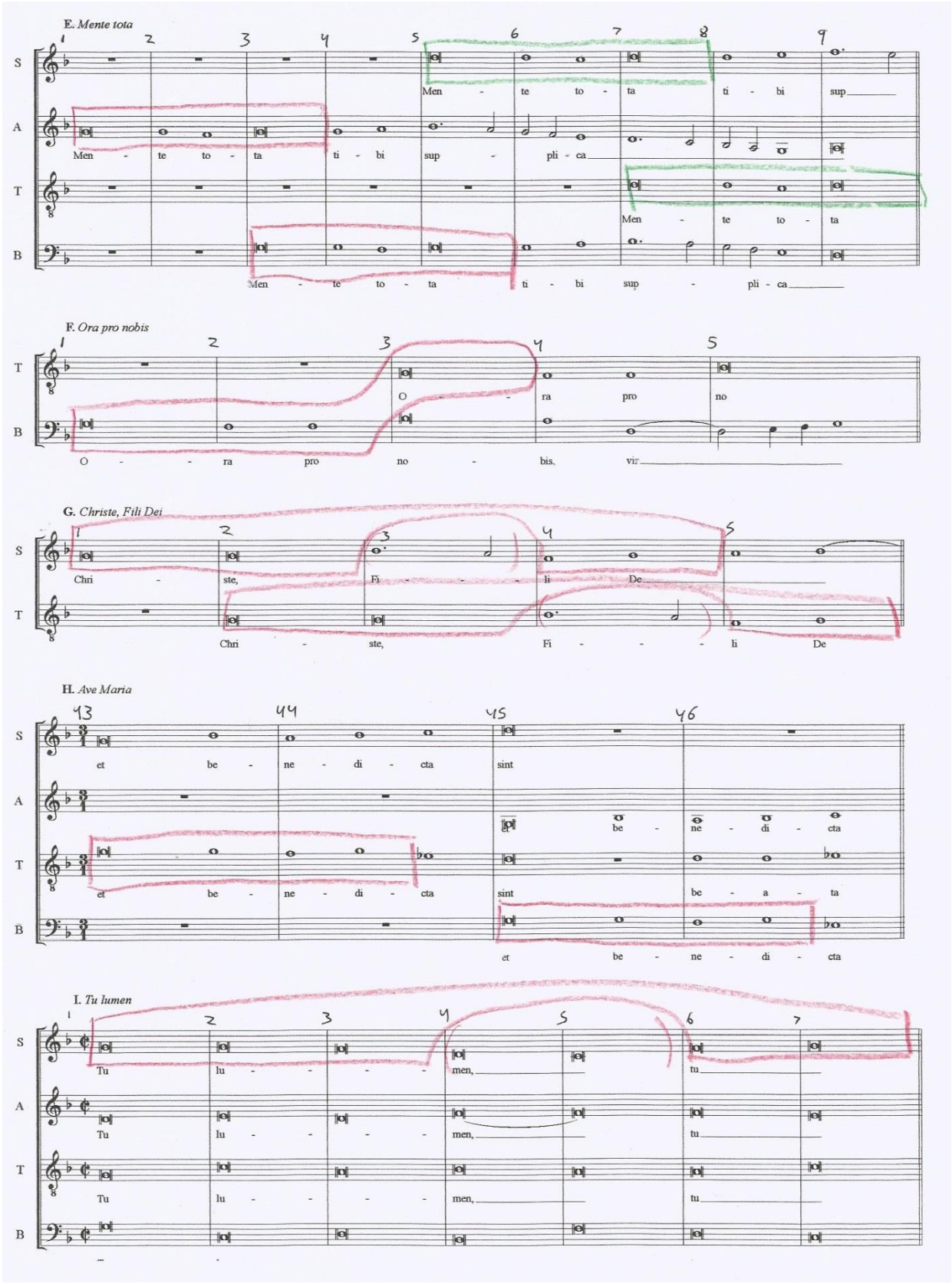


C. *Intermerata Virgo*



D. *O Maria*




E. Mente tota
S
A
T
B
Men - te to - ta ti - bi sup - pli - ca
F. Ora pro nobis
O - - ra pro no - bis, vir
G. Christe, Fili Dei
Chri - ste, Fi - - - li De
H. Ave Maria
et be - ne - di - cta sint
be - a - ta
I. Tu lumen
Tu lu - - - - men, tu