

# O quam dulcis

Jean Richafort (c.1480 – after 1547)

Attaignant, *Motettorum Liber II* [Paris, 1534] (RISM 1534/4)

*'Plurimorum martyrum'*

**SUPERIUS**

**CONTRA-TENOR**

**TENOR**

**BASSUS**

O quam  
dul - - - - -  
cis et quam be - a - - - - -  
ta,  
ta et quam be - a - - ta, be -  
O quam dul - - - - -  
quam dul - - - - - cis et quam be -  
et quam be - a - - - - -  
a - - - - - ta,  
cis et quam be - a - - - - -  
a - - - - - ta

19

ta, Hie - ro - ny - me Fer - ra - ta Hie - ro - ny - me, Hie - ro - ny - me Fer - ra

24

ro - ny - me Fer - ra - ri - en - sis, - ri - en - sis, Hie - ro - ny - me Fer - ra - ri - en - sis, - ri - en - sis, Do - mi - ni -

29

Do - mi - ni - ce, Sil - ve - Do - mi - ni - ce, Sil - ve - ster, fra - ter - ni - tas, Do - mi - ni - ce, Sil - ve - ster, fra - ter - ni - tas,

34

ster, fra - ter - ni - tas, fra - ter - ni - tas, O ce, Sil - ve - ster, fra - ter - ni - tas, O fra - ter - ni - tas, O quam



56

quam fe - lix es me - ri - tis tan - to - rum mar - ty - rum in -  
*a,* quam fe - lix es me - ri - tis tan - to - rum mar - ty - rum in -  
 quam fe - lix es me - ri - tis tan -  
*a,* quam fe - lix es me - ri - tis

62

- cly - ta, tan - to - rum mar - ty - rum,  
 - cly - ta, tan - to - rum mar - ty - rum, tan - to - rum  
 to - rum mar - ty - rum, tan - to - rum mar - ty - rum in -  
 tan - to - rum mar - ty - rum, tan - to - rum mar - ty -

66

qui per mul - ta pœ - na - rum ge -  
 mar - ty - rum in - cly - ta, qui per mul - ta,  
 - cly - ta, qui per mul - ta pœ -  
 rum in - cly - ta,

71

ne - ra  
 qui per mul - ta pœ - na - rum ge - ne - ra  
 na - rum ge - ne - ra  
 qui per mul - ta pœ - na - rum ge - ne - ra

76

ho - di - e re - gna me - ru - e - runt cœ - le - sti - a,  
 ho - di - e re - gna me - ru - e - runt cœ - le - sti - a,  
 ho - di - e re - gna me - ru - e - runt cœ - le - sti - a,  
 ho - di - e re - gna me - ru - e - runt cœ - le - sti - a,

81

a, ho - di - e re - gna me - ru - e - runt cœ - le - sti - a,  
 a, ho - di - e re - gna me - ru - e - runt cœ - le - sti - a,  
 a, ho - di - e re - gna me - ru - e - runt cœ - le - sti - a,  
 ho - di - e re - gna me - ru - e - runt cœ - le - sti - a

86

[o = o.]

a. Ec - ce quam bo - num  
 a. Ec - ce quam bo - num  
 a. Ec - ce quam bo - num  
 a. Ec - ce quam bo - num

92

et quam io - cun - dum ha - bi -  
 et quam io - cun - dum ha -  
 num et quam io - cun - dum  
 num et quam io - cun - dum

98

ta - re, ha - bi - ta - re fra - tres in u - num, ha - bi -  
 bi - ta - re, ha - bi - ta - re fra - tres in u - num, ha -  
 ha - bi - ta - re fra - tres in u - num,  
 ha - bi - ta - re fra - tres in u - num,

104

ta - re, ha - bi - ta - re fra - tres in u - num. [o = o]  
 bi - ta - re, ha - bi - ta - re fra - tres in u - num.  
 ha - bi - ta - re fra - tres in u - num. Al -  
 ha - bi - ta - re fra - tres in u - num.

110

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu -  
 Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu -  
 le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu -  
 Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,

115

ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.  
 ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.  
 ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.  
 al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

O quam dulcis et *quam* beáta,  
 [*Hierónyme Ferrariénsis*,  
*Domínice, Silvéster*],  
 fratérnitas,  
 O quam gratis et colénda  
 cristiánitas,  
 O urbs [*Floréntia*],  
 quam felix es méritis  
 tantórum mártýrum ínclýta,  
 qui per multa poenárum génera  
 hódie regna meruérun't coeléstia.

Ecce quam bonum et iocúndum  
 habitáre fratres in unum.  
 Allelúia.

*O how sweet and how blessed,*  
*[Jerome of Ferrara*  
*Dominic, Sylvester],*  
*is brotherly love,*  
*O how pleasing and to be worshipped*  
*is Christianity,*  
*O city [of Florence],*  
*how happy you are to be renowned*  
*from the merits of such great martyrs,*  
*who, through many types of punishment,*  
*today have attained the heavenly kingdom.*

*Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is:*  
*brethren to dwell together in unity.*  
*Alleluia.*

[Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498) and Psalm 132:1 (Vulgate)]

Though he was evidently revered in his day, relatively little is known of Jean Richafort's life. His appointments at Sint-Romboutskathedraal in Mechelen (1507–09) and Sint-Gilliskerk in Bruges (1542–47) as *maître de chapelle* are the only periods of his life to be dated with certainty. Between these appointments he is known to have served in the Royal Chapel in Paris around the time of King Francis I's meeting with Pope Leo X in Bologna in 1515.

The heading "*Plurimorum martyrum*" ("Many martyrs") in Attaignant's publication of this motet implies its intended use at any liturgical feast of many martyrs — to which end Attaignant simply prints "[N]" in place of the italicised names in the square brackets above, inviting the performer to, as it were, "insert names of martyrs and the city of their death here". On what basis, then, are these particular names included, and did Richafort have these in mind when he composed the work?

Girolamo Savonarola was born into nobility in Ferrara and entered the Dominican order in Bologna. His preachings of Christian morality found favour in Florence, where he became the guiding spirit of a new republic, styled as a "Christian commonwealth", after the fall of the Medici rule in the late 15th century. However, his rigour and his claim of prophecy led to his being charged with heresy and his eventual excommunication from the Catholic church. His "bonfire of the vanities" in 1497 led to a sharp decline in his popularity, culminating in riots in Florence and the eventual restoration of the Medici to power. Having been found guilty of religious error, sedition, and falsely uttering prophecies, Savonarola was hanged and burned in Florence's Piazza della Signoria on 23 May 1498 alongside his two chief disciples, Fra Domenico da Pescia and Fra Silvestro Maruffi.

The Latinised names of these three martyrs and their city fit neatly into Richafort's music — but this is more than mere coincidence. The opening verse of Psalm 132 with which Richafort concludes his motet was a motto of Savonarola and his followers; moreover, the Superius and Tenor parts quote from the setting of those words in a *lauda* by Luca Bettini (1489–1527), a Dominican and a devotee of Savonarola. Richafort sets Bettini's duple-time melody in a triple-time octave canon between those two parts.

Savonarola's teachings provided inspiration not only to other notable reformers of the Roman Catholic church, including St Philip Neri and John Henry Newman, but also — perhaps ironically — to Martin Luther and his Protestant Reformation only two decades after Savonarola's death. Further irony is to be found in the very fact that Richafort and so many of his contemporaries set Savonarolan texts and melodies in the highly polyphonic Franco-Flemish compositional style of the first half of the sixteenth century: among Savonarola's puritanical views was a strong dislike of High Renaissance polyphony!

#### References:

Byram Wigfield, B., *Refuge from the Flames* (CD booklet notes), Harmonia Mundi HMW906103, 2015

Macey, P.P., *Bonfire Songs: Savonarola's Musical Legacy*, Oxford University Press, 1998

McGeown, M., *Savonarola: "Prophetic" Preacher and Moral Reformer*, <http://www.cprf.co.uk/articles/savonarola.htm#We7KFtt7F24> (accessed 21 October 2017)

#### Editorial Notes:

Consistent with 16th-century convention, the  $\text{C}$  mensuration sign and its modern-equivalent  $\text{C}$  time signature signify a semibreve tactus. In the duple-time sections, original note values have been retained; however, for ease of reading in a modern-notation setting, note values in the *tripla* section have been halved: the  $\text{C}$  3 signature thus indicates three beats in the previous time of two. Bar lines are added only to aid reading and direction: 'strong' and 'weak' beats implied by their position should never take precedence over phrasing or word stress. Ligatures and coloration in the original mensural notation are acknowledged herein with overarching square brackets and open brackets respectively. Editorial accidentals are indicated above the note. Given the ambiguity of word underlay in 16th-century manuscripts, editorial adjustments have been made freely: addition or reiteration of text not explicit in the source is indicated in *italic*.