

Santiago a cappella

Pilgrimage routes were important, particularly during the Middle Ages and Early Modern periods, as channels not only of trade but of culture. In the Iberian peninsula the two most important destinations, Santiago de Compostela and Montserrat, attracted visitors and traders from all over Europe, who brought with them cultural artefacts and their own, often quite distinct, music and dance. Pilgrims to the Marian shrine at the Benedictine monastery of Montserrat danced and sang for entertainment and to express their devotion to the Virgin Mary, and some of their music, both monophonic and polyphonic, was written down in the fourteenth-century manuscript known as the ***Libre Vermell*** ('Red Book'), still preserved in the monastery today. It is from this collection that the three-voice *Mariam matrem virginem* is taken, its strongly melodic character pervading the polyphonic texture.

Most of the pilgrims' music was transmitted orally and has therefore been lost to us. Yet the pilgrimage routes formed part of a broader network of cultural and commercial connections between ecclesiastical institutions throughout Spain and Portugal, and also helped link this internal network to centres of musical activity in the rest of Europe. It is surely not by chance that some of the main centres for music printing in Europe were established in major pilgrimage destinations or hubs, cities such as Rome, Venice and Lyons with an international profile and a more or less constant turnover of potential customers. Although music printing was established in Spain in the 1540s it never had the resources or continuity to produce music books in substantial quantities, and generally played to the local markets which included, as the sixteenth century progressed, the New World. Yet the demand for music in all the major ecclesiastical institutions of the peninsula, from cathedrals to collegiate and parish churches, from royal or aristocratic chapels to monasteries, was at its height during this

period. An expansion in musical resources had been stimulated by the reorganisation that followed the mid-century reforms arising from the Council of Trent, and those initiated in the reign of the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabel half a century earlier. This expansion was supported by increased revenues and a new apportioning of ecclesiastical benefices: cathedral prebends were divided to accommodate the increased number of singers and instrumentalists considered requisite to the ceremony of divine worship. It is not surprising that the sixteenth century came to be considered the Golden Age (*Siglo de Oro*) of Spanish polyphony. Never had the church in the Spanish kingdoms required so much polyphonic music, nor provided so adequately for the musical resources to perform it.

Two of the period's leading figures, though overshadowed today by the towering reputation of Victoria, were Francisco Guerrero and his successor as *maestro de capilla* at Seville Cathedral, Alonso Lobo. **Francisco Guerrero** served at Seville Cathedral, one of the best endowed musical establishments in the peninsula, from 1542 until his death over fifty years later, first as an alto, then as assistant to the long-lived *maestro de capilla* Pedro Fernández, and from 1574 as chapelmaster himself. In 1555 he published a collection of motets (*Sacrae cantiones*) in Seville, but since music printing failed to gain more than a temporary foothold in the city he took subsequent volumes of his works, in part underwritten by the Seville cathedral chapter, to be printed in those major centres of music publication, Rome and Venice. By the latter part of the sixteenth century Guerrero had more than sufficient musical resources at his disposal in Seville to compose and have performed polychoral pieces such as his setting of *Duo Seraphim* for twelve voices distributed in three choirs. This impressive work was first printed in Venice in 1589 and shows his awareness of spatial effects and of contrast yet balance in vocal scoring. The motet *Ave virgo sanctissima* is written on a smaller scale but was undoubtedly one of his

best-known works. The text hints at the then disputed doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin; with its distinctive canon in the upper voices the motet is extraordinarily beautiful, and was to serve as the model for parody Masses by Géry de Ghersem and Juan Esquivel.

The printing of Guerrero's music in centres outside Spain — not only Venice and Rome, but also Paris, Leuven and, later, Nuremberg — did much to facilitate its transmission throughout Counter-Reformation Europe. The volume of masses and motets published in Madrid in 1602 by **Alonso Lobo**, Guerrero's assistant and, slightly later, successor as chapelmaster in Seville (1604-17), was less widely circulated internationally, though it was acquired by many ecclesiastical institutions throughout the Iberian world. His funerary motet *Versa est in luctum*, written for the exequies of Philip II in 1598, is one of the most poignant and moving polyphonic settings of the Golden Age. Lobo's superb control of dissonance within the six-voice contrapuntal texture creates a sense of inner weeping and loss perfectly in keeping with the despair of Job's words. His setting of the *Lamentations* for the first lesson of Holy Saturday is preserved in an eighteenth-century copy at Seville Cathedral; here the sentences of Jeremiah are set in a quasi-recitational manner punctuated by the more melismatic and sustained polyphony of the Hebrew letters *Heth*, *Teth* and *Jod*. These interjections serve as moments of repose and contemplation, the whole being framed by the arching phrases of the opening and closing sections.

Tomás Luis de Victoria's setting of another lamentation text, *O vos omnes*, is an equally sustained and dramatic example of the blend of declamatory and meditative writing. Victoria spent much of his career in Rome before returning to Spain to spend his final years as a royal chaplain and choirmaster in the service of the dowager-empress María, sister of Philip II, in Madrid; as with Guerrero, Victoria's music was largely published outside Spain and was widely distributed, quickly becoming a staple of cathedral music in the peninsula and remaining so

well into the eighteenth century. Victoria's setting of the antiphon for the feast of St James, *O lux et decus Hispaniae*, draws on a canonic structure in the upper voices, much in the manner of Guerrero's *Ave virgo sanctissima*, giving the texture an airy, spacious feel.

Philippe Rogier was born in Arras and travelled to Spain as a choirboy, spending the rest of his life in the service of the royal chapel in Madrid, although he returned to Flanders to recruit choirboys and was granted, on royal request, several non-residential benefices in the Low Countries. His setting of *Salva nos, Domine* is concise but affirmative, despite its valedictory message. On his death Rogier entrusted the publication of his Masses to his assistant chapelmaster Ghersem and also left him a large collection of music by himself and other composers such as de Wert, Giovannelli and the Gabrielis. Most of Rogier's own music has been lost; almost 250 works are listed in the catalogue of the vast and comprehensive music library of **John (João) IV of Portugal**, himself a composer as well as an avid collector of music, both printed and manuscript. João IV's love of the *stile antico* of the Golden Age shines through his simple but inspired setting of *Crux fidelis*. This by then conservative musical idiom had found a new lease of life in the late-flowering Portuguese school perhaps best represented by **Manuel Cardoso**. Many of Cardoso's works, including his richly contrapuntal *Non mortui qui sunt in inferno*, were printed in Lisbon in the first half of the sixteenth century.

There can be no doubt that many of these 'classics' of the Golden Age found their way to and were performed in the cathedrals, churches and monasteries along the pilgrimage route to Santiago, which in places coincided with one of the main channels for the book trade. With the advent of music printing, transmission of musical repertory to every corner of the Iberian peninsula was no longer largely dependent on the travels of individual pilgrims, although those who continued to flock to the altar of St James and the shrine at Montserrat would surely still

have taken their own music with them. The movement of peoples in search of spiritual fulfilment brought with it opportunities for cultural exchange and commerce, as well as for music-making, whether for the purposes of devotion or just for simple enjoyment.

Tess Knighton, 2010