

MISCELLANEA

Josquin and Louis XI

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The research of Sartori in the archives of the Cathedral of Milan conclusively establishes that city as Josquin's residence as early as July 1, 1459.¹ Although our knowledge of the periods and places of his employment is incomplete, he would seem to have been in Italy (Milan, Rome, and Ferrara) almost continuously from 1459 to about 1500, when the troops of Louis XII again asserted French claims in Italy. With many of the major centers of the North in French hands, perhaps it is not too surprising that within a few years Josquin found his way into Louis' service. However, as this article will show by means of a piece ascribed to Josquin in the *Dodecachordon*,² it may be possible to connect him with an earlier French king, Louis XI (R. 1461—1483).

In the closing pages of his great theoretical treatise, Glareanus lightens its scholarly character by relating a humorous anecdote in which Josquin figures. According to Glareanus, this great composer was approached by Louis XII, his King and employer, and asked to write a song having several voice-parts in which he, the King, could participate. The task was not easy because the King had a poor voice and was completely ignorant of music.³ But, the following day after breakfast, when it was the King's custom to refresh himself with music, the composer produced a song in fulfillment of the royal request. The *Regis vox*, as the tenor was designated, consisted of but one note! The other parts were only slightly more difficult. The story reports that the King was amused by the jest and that he rewarded the composer.

Glareanus notes that the piece originally had a Latin text, but he publishes the work without text or title. The reader, he says, is free to add whatever text he wishes. However, since the author disliked the French language (he remarks that the French tongue more truly stammers than speaks), it is fair to assume that he did not mean to suggest that a French text be added.

The composition does have amusing aspects, and it does fit the circumstance of Glareanus' narrative; however, one must consider the possibility that part or all of the story may be apochryphal.

A most interesting second source for this work exists. This source is St. Gall Ms. 462, the *Liederbuch* of Johannes Heer.⁴ Like his more famous friends Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Loris (Glareanus), Heer was a citizen of Glarus but, unlike these two, he was a musician. More important for our purposes, we know that for six years (1510—1516) he was a student in Paris.⁵ St. Gall 462 appears to have been his copybook. It contains many famous chansons of the time, unfortunately lacking attributions, and included among them is Josquin's royal piece with a complete French text. Moreover, a marginal note at the end of the bass part dates the entry precisely. It reads, "Parisius 1510 pro festo corpore [Christi?]."⁶ The title

¹ *Josquin des Pres cantore del duomo di Milano (1459—1472)*, in: *Annales musicologiques* IV, 57.

² GLAREANUS (HEINRICH LORIS), *Dodecachordon*, 1547. The story paraphrased above appears on p. 468; the piece is on the following page.

³ Loc. cit., *Admodum exili voce . . . Musices prorsis ignarum*.

⁴ The page on which the piece appears is currently designated by the Stiftsbibliothek of St. Gall as 101. ARNOLD GEERING in his *Die Vokalmusik in der Schweiz zur Zeit der Reformation (Schweizerisches Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft VI, 1933)* cites the location as f. 47.

⁵ This information is provided by GEERING, op. cit., 50. The dates are derived from the Ms.

⁶ We are indebted to Dr. J. Duft of the St. Gall Stiftsbibliothek for permission to use the accompanying facsimile from Ms. 462 and for his assistance in deciphering some of the marginal inscription, which seems to be more clear in the Ms. than it is in this facsimile.

attracts one's attention even more. It is "Carmen gallicum Ludovici xi regis Francorum." With this title Heer (living in Paris during the reign of Louis XII) places the piece during the reign of Louis XI. It is most unlikely that a resident of Paris in 1510 would mistake the ruling monarch, Louis XII, for a king already dead twenty-nine years.

If the title, Glareanus' attribution to Josquin, and some of the circumstances of the story are correct, a connection, if only a passing one, existed between Josquin and the court of Louis XI. One is tempted to go further and speculate that Josquin may have had some contact with the retinue of the future Louis XI before 1459.

Sartori attributes the influx of French musicians into the Milanese chapel beginning about 1460 to the personal interest of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, whose education, including music, was French.⁷ His wife, Bonne de Savoie, was the younger sister of Charlotte, the second wife of Louis XI, and Galeazzo was actually in France at the time of his father's death.⁸ The message calling him back to Milan found him in Dauphiné, the province where Louis, as dauphin, had spent the years 1447–1456 in exile. There is no doubt that at this time there was a strong connection between the house of Sforza and the court of Louis XI. However, if we assume that Josquin was recruited for service in the cathedral of Milan by the youthful prince (he was fifteen in 1459) or by another Milanese among the followers of the Dauphin, geography makes it more logical to suggest that the contact took place in Brabant, where the future king Louis XI had fled in 1456 for the protection of Philip the Good of Burgundy. Josquin's native province of Hainaut is immediately adjacent, and St. Quentin where he was a choirboy is not far distant. Perhaps this is the way in which Josquin started his journey to Milan.

⁷ SARTORI, *op. cit.*, 68.

⁸ SUZANNE CLERCK in her *Lumières sur la formation de Josquin et d'Obrecht*, in: *Revue Belge de Musicologie* XI (1957), 155, speculates that it may have been Bonne who was responsible for sending Josquin to Milan.