

Peter Woetmann Christoffersen:

The Music Sections of MS Amiens 162 D: Copyists, Purpose, Corbie, Confréries and the Role of Antoine de Caulaincourt. Abstract, paper and handout presented at the **Colloque International »In Seculum Amiens. Les manuscrits musicaux d'Amiens au Moyen Âge«**, November 22-24, 2007 in Amiens.

ABSTRACT

The MS is a mixed collection containing music sections as well as two incomplete missals from Corbie. Its binding was renewed in Amiens in 1826. A nearly unreadable inscription on fol. 1 describes the MS as “Missale imperfectum ... officium proprium Ste Barbare ...”. This description reappears in a late catalogue from the Corbie Abbey: “Missale. Il se trouve à la fin un office de Ste Barbe pour la confrérie de cette sainte qui était dans l’Eglise de Corbie à qui Dom Antoine de Caulaincourt donna ce livre. Antoine de Caulaincourt est mort en 1536.” A reconstruction of the original order of the collection shows that this description is accurate: The volume did open with a fascicle from a late 15th century missal (“Missale imperfectum”) followed by a 14th century missal (still complete in 1826) and the music MS, which can easily be reorganized to have the vespers for St. Barbara as its final item.

From the start the contents of the music MS were carefully planned. A booklet of four fascicles contains simple music (a 3 and one a 2) for funerals or commemoration rites (tropes or verses for “Libera me”, five items), which probably were copied from several sources. The texts and some tunes are known from other French monastic sources from the second half of the 15th century. Before long this small manuscript was enlarged with a collection of two-part sequences. Another section was intended for monophonic music including a tonary and a mass for St. Catherine. With some pieces left unfinished the intended order broke down and music was randomly added on empty spaces and pages. All hands in the MS were trained in copying liturgical books with plainchant – the two original copyists were probably professionals – and a later hand apparently only copied the visual appearance of mensural music having no real understanding of the notation. The music MS can be dated to the years around 1500, a period when the last really independent abbot of the Corbie Abbey, Pierre d’Ottrel, took initiative for the demolition of the Abbatial and the ambitious construction of a new church.

The paper will discuss the work of the copyists and the revisions to the repertory of simple settings, the purpose of the MS and its eventual connection to a *Confrérie de Sainte Barbe*, and what we can deduce concerning the role of Dom Antoine de Caulaincourt in the genesis of MS 162. Caulaincourt was author of *Chronicon Corbeïense*, priest, cellar master and *officialis* of Corbie – and *maître* of a *Confrérie des Saints-Innocens* in Corbie in 1517.

Addendum 2010

Charlotte Denoël made an important find in the MS Amiens 162 when she recognized that what looked as some pen scratches on the top of fol. 2 in fact was Caulaincourt signature. It is written in capital letters “DE CAULAINCOURT” in the same way as he signed his name in the register of the *Officialité de Saint-Pierre de Corbie* (Paris, BN, ms. lat. 17.145, ff. 42v-58) during the years following 1521.

See further Charlotte Denoël, ‘Antoine de Caulaincourt (1482-1536/1540 ?), official de l’Abbaye Saint-Pierre de Corbie, historien et possesseur de livres’, *Scriptorium. Revue internationale des études relatives aux manuscrits* LXIV (2010), pp. 81-94. This article contains much more information on the activities of Caulaincourt.

PAPER

My interest in the MS 162 D of the Bibliothèque Centrale Louis Aragon (Bibliothèques d'Amiens Métropole) primarily concerns its music. I find that not least its series of polyphony for funerals and commemoration points to a neglected music of the second part of the 15th century, a period when composers became professionals and famous artists – with names as Du Fay, Ockeghem, Busnoys, Obrecht and Josquin as standard bearers for generations of musicians. The very simple polyphony survived beside this explosion of art music. Most often it existed as improvised music, not recorded in notation, as *cantus super librum*, but in a few happy instances – as in this MS – it was also written down for singers who did not have sufficient musical education to improvise polyphony, not even the simplest. The MS lets us glimpse the stylistic variety of simple music with roots far back in time, and it demonstrates the solemn sound of the prayer, to which the “great” sacred music so often refers as important parts of its means of expression.

Today I shall not talk much about the music itself. My main topic is a discussion of the MS – or the collection of MSS, which MS 162 in reality consists of – and of its context. It poses important questions concerning music performance and musical expertise in an environment where we usually do not expect these competencies. The discussion builds on my present knowledge – it is a work in progress.

First I shall try to formulate the most important questions:

- Can we with any certainty connect the MS to the great Benedictine Abbey in Corbie, which had a glorious past as a centre of learning and book production? And what role did confraternities play in the internal life of the abbey as well as in its connections with the surrounding city?
- Was a monastery, which was fighting its last, hopeless struggle against royal power for self-government and independence, really able to obtain a new musical repertory and a usable knowledge of polyphony? Or do we here see a reflection of past practises, which we are not in any way able to document?
- How extended was the exchange of repertory between the monasteries and between the different orders?

Antoine de Caulaincourt is a central figure if we want to throw a little light on these questions. He was born around 1480 in a noble family and entered the monastery of Corbie as a novice in 1489 – as the youngest, number 46, and last in the hierarchy of the monastery. He went through the *scola* of Corbie, studied in Amiens, and he probably also studied for 10 months in Paris in 1502. In the same year he was ordained as a priest, however without the right to celebrate the Mass due to his deficiency in age. Two years later this privilege was accorded him on dispensation. In the following years his career developed fast passing through the ranks from master of the novices in 1505 to *officialis* in 1521. Caulaincourt died in either 1536 or 1540.

All through Caulaincourt's youth Pierre d'Ottrel was the elected abbot of the monastery. The times were turbulent, and d'Ottrel had to fight the king and his appointed *abbé commendataire*, François de Mailleur, in order to confirm his own position as abbot. Later d'Ottrel vigorously fought for the independence and recovery of the monastery against the crown, the bishop of Amiens and the invading English troops. He tightened morale and regulated and extended the daily services, and shortly after the Jubilee year 1500 he began the demolition of the old *Abbatiale* and the building of a new and bigger church. This enormous enterprise became very difficult after the death d'Ottrel in 1506 and the financial breakdown of the monastery and its activities. St-Pierre was not finished before nearly two hundred and fifty years later.

Caulaincourt was a staunch supporter of abbot d'Ottrel, and he stubbornly fought on for Corbie's independence and glory. In his Latin chronicle of Corbie, a history of the monastery from 662 until 1529, he remains a strong proponent of its traditions, and on the topic of the latest years his writing turns into a personal vendetta where he cites his own speeches in French.

Everything indicates that the production of manuscripts at Corbie was very sparse up to the year 1500. A working *scriptorium* was apparently no longer in existence, as already Léopold Delisle pointed out; instead books were bought or ordered from professional copyists in among other places Amiens or Paris. Neither does Caulaincourt mention a *scriptorium* during the last 150 years nor a person responsible of the library. Of course this function could have been part of the positions as *Camerius*, *Thesaurarius* or *Officialis*. Caulaincourt himself occupied two of these positions during his career. Anyway he certainly used the monastery's archives as well as its books to write his detailed chronicle.

As mentioned before MS 162 D must be regarded as a collection of MSS, which at some time were bound together. It consists of a single fascicle from a 15th century missal and a missal from the 14th century, which follows Corbie's Ordo missae, and which probably still was intact at the rebinding in 1826, and in addition a collection of music. The order of the original binding is easy to reconstruct in accordance with the description of the volume in a catalogue of Corbie's books from the end of the 17th century (see my abstract and **the handout** – see also Addendum 2010).

Among many interesting things in the two missals I want to call attention to just one: A single, more recent bifolio has been placed in the middle of the second fascicle of the old missal. [**Overhead 1-2**, MS 162 D ff. 72v-73 with the added piece of parchment, f. 72bis, in two different positions] It has been moved from another MS. Its central opening contains two not very interesting pictures, but on the reverse we find a prayer and two votive masses "Pro regis catholici contra turcos" and "Pro subsidio christianorum contra turcos". The beginning of the first mass has been copied on a small piece of parchment, which is glued to the page, so that the integral text could be moved from a discarded MS. The votive masses refer to the situation after the battle of Otranto in 1480, to king Ferdinand of Aragon as defender of the faith, and the masses most probable originated around 1505-07 when the Christian world still hoped that France and Spain would instigate a crusade against the Turks. One cannot help to compare the careful preservation of this bifolio to the terror of the Turks that permeates Caulaincourt's telling of contemporary history, and to the role of king Ferdinand in this story.

The same catalogue description connects the MS's Vespers for Saint Barbara and maybe the MS itself with a "Confrérie Sainte Barbe", which was located in the church of Corbie. According to current research and literature it is very difficult to establish the existence of any confraternity in Corbie. Again Caulaincourt comes to help as he incidentally mentions at least three confraternities: In the year 1501 Pierre d'Ottrel made fixed yearly incomes available to among other beneficiaries a *Confraternitas Sancta Maria Magdalona* [sic!] and a *Confraternitas Sancta Barbara*. The context is not very clear, as the text in this passage must be corrupted during copying. Later in 1517 Caulaincourt was *princeps* for a *Confraternitas Sancti Innocentes* whose relics were worshiped in St-Pierre.

With this information the MS seems securely placed in Corbie just after 1500. But it is difficult to perceive where in the daily routines of the monastery it could be of use. The number of priests was almost not high enough to take care of the daily services, and the old organization *Les Caritables*, which rather was a prebend for 20 local priests who twice a day prayed in the church St-Etienne, took care of intercessory prayers for the monastery's own clients. However, it is highly conceivable that the enterprising abbot took the initiative to found at least two confraternities who could unite the monastery and the well-to-do segment of the area's inhabitants. It was not unusual that such confraternities arose in support of new churches or restoration work following troubled periods. The saints were carefully chosen: Marie Madeleine protected all sincere penitents, and Barbara was

patroness of artillery and building workers – many of the last mentioned came to Corbie to work on the erection of the new St-Pierre.

The existence of the music MS may be caused by this great effort. As something very special on offer to take care of the souls, offering music which could be heard at occasions, but also – and maybe not least – something visible for the contributors in the shape of a well-made musical collection of big format and with big, easily readable notation.

Originally the musical part of the MS consisted in booklets or loose collections of fascicles made by two professional copyists with expert knowledge of simple polyphony. The main copyists (Hands A and B, see the Handout) are easy to discern based on differences in working methods and use of initials and emphasizing colour. On the other hand it is nearly impossible to discern Hand B from later additions by Hands C and D.

As an example of the scribe's or the compiler's expertise we can take a look at the four fascicles (1-4), which Hand A made and which contain five very different polyphonic compositions for use at funerals or in *Officium pro defunctis*. We find some quite unusual features considering that the repertory consists of anonymous music in very simple notation: For three out of five compositions the tunes are known from other sources ("Quando deus", "Creator omnium" and "Juxta corpus"), the texts of three of the five are known in one or more contemporary or recent polyphonic settings ("Bone Ihesu", "Lugentibus" and "Juxta corpus"). Among the five compositions only one sets a text and tune from the older liturgical repertory ("Creator omnium"), which on the other hand has the most "modern" setting, while we for the remaining four only know the texts from the 15th century and in particular in slightly different versions from other monasteries in French speaking regions ("Bone Ihesu" changes an original Franciscan text into one acceptable to Benedictines, "Juxta corpus" has a Dominican leaning, but has been changed into an Augustinian text in a MS from the monastery Grand-Saint-Bernard etc.).

Hand B and Hand A have worked together on the two next fascicles, which expanded the collection with four sequences and a prosula. They were copied from a set of exemplars just as carefully selected containing very old-fashioned two-part music. Hand B has then alone been responsible for the monophonic repertory including vespers for S. Barbara, and a tonary and the unfinished mass for Saint Catherine in two further fascicles.

It appears obvious that this expertise belongs to monastic surroundings with an active network of connections able to supply the sources. But where would it be possible to order such a collection? In Corbie? Hardly. But maybe in Amiens or in Paris.

If the music collection reached Corbie in half finished condition with some empty pages and staves and a mass for which it turned out to be impossible to obtain the needed sources, it was not different from many other commissions. On the other hand it means that the added repertory (Hands C, D and others) stems from the collection's use at the monastery or from the activities of a confraternity.

As an example of the added repertory we can take a glance at a very special piece copied at the end of the section prepared for chant. "O miranda dei caritas / Kyrie eleyson" is a three-part 13th century motet well known from the so-called Bamberg and Las Huelgas codices and many other sources [Overhead 3, MS 162 D ff. 123v-124]. It appears here in a simplified version, reinterpreted as simple polyphony in the spirit of the 15th century. Below this piece the copyist later added the ending of a two-part setting of Credo IV in simple polyphony in very dense writing because the scribe knew that the space was restricted. These examples show that the same sort of repertory as the ones the main copyists worked from, was accessible on the site where MS 162 was used.

One of the most important features of MS 162 is that the music has been used, and that some of its music has been reworked on the pages of the MS. Notes have been erased and changed, and the

part writing has been reworked. For example, the sound of nine musically identical stanzas of the long trope “Juxta crucem” have been carefully varied by many small changes, which furthermore ensured a clear declamation of the texts.

This means that also the users of the MS possessed a considerable, even if somewhat limited expertise of simple polyphony. The limitations can be illustrated by the *Credo* we just looked at [Overhead 4, MS 162 D ff. 121v-122]. It was copied with the voice parts in reverse order: the counter-voice is placed on the left page of the opening and the *Credo* tune to the right. Assuming that the right-hand voice part was the counter-voice, the user has extensively revised the well-known *Credo Cardinalis* – incompetence or musical preferences? It is hard to know.

Another interesting feature is that the late Hand D has inserted four small compositions by Agricola, Obrecht and Prioris as well as one anonymous. The versions of these widely circulated pieces best agree with versions found in French sources around 1500. It is remarkable that all four pieces are also found in the slightly later collection of music from Lyons, now in The Royal Library in Copenhagen. They are written in a careful mensural notation, but the copyist was trained in plainchant and only copied what his eyes interpreted as the most important traits. In Obrecht’s “Parce, Domine” for example he reproduces the pitches correctly, but doesn’t care much about such things as punctus additionis or stems on minimae [Overhead 5, MS 162 ff. 17v-18]. The result is impossible to sing. Probably it did not matter, as singers able to read mensural notation were rare. On the other hand the pieces look nice on the otherwise empty pages. Maybe these pieces most of all should be regarded as visual proof that the organization was up-to-date in musical matters. In Corbie it was impossible not to be aware of secular or courtly trends as the French king often visited and lived at the Abbey with his retinue of nobles and servants.

Of course the entire collection of music could be a “used” MS, which Caulaincourt had got hold of from a monastic centre. However, the margins of the dating of the repertory and of the period of interest for Corbie – that is during the first decade of the 16th century – are rather narrow. The MS cannot be dated much before the last decade of the 15th century, and the last additions not much later than the first decade of the next century. Therefore it is not very likely that the music collection was acquired in its entirety from another institution.

The hypothetical scenario, which I prefer, can shortly be described as follows: During the resurgence of the abbey’s activities just around 1500 it was decided that confraternities and music should support the public image of the abbey. A monk was responsible for ordering the copying of the MS from professional scribes – maybe using originals he himself had a hand in collecting. This person was really interested in polyphony and made additions and corrections on the pages of the MS – and maybe he was identical to Hand B.

It is conceivable that the young Caulaincourt or one of his fellows among the monks was this musically involved person. What I’m sure of is that Caulaincourt was closely connected to the *Confrérie Sainte Barbe* and to the music MS, and that he, when such undertakings were no longer possible in Corbie, took care that the traces of the activities of the confraternity in the shape of missals, music and masses against the Turks were collected, bound and preserved in the monastery library. This fits perfectly the profile he presents in his chronicle: that he most of all wanted to document his own achievements for the future.

HANDOUT

Amiens, Bibliothèque Centrale Louis Aragon (Bibliothèques d'Amiens Métropole), ms. 162 D

Contents of the reconstructed MS

I A single folio (probably half of a bifolio originally wrapped around the music collection - at present glued to fasc. 1; fragmentary description of the MS in Latin):

f. 1	<i>Le grant pena</i> a 3 [Anonymous]	Hand D
f. 1v	<i>O salutaris hostia</i> a 3	Hand ?

II Fragment of missal (15th century; Fasc. 7)
ff. 46-54v (last part of Proprium sanctorum)

III Missal (14th century; Fasc. 8-12)
ff. 55-112v (*Temporale, Ordo missae, Proprium sanctorum, Commune sanctorum* - 2 pages torn out at the end)

IIIa A bifolio inserted in the middle of Fasc. 9:
ff. 72bis/73-74v Two full-page pictures (late 15th c.), two masses [*Pro*] *regis catholici contra turcos* and *Pro subsidio christianorum contra turcos* (f. 72bis-73), and the Holy Land Clamor: *Letatus sum ...* (f. 74). F. 72bis is a scrap of parchment glued to f. 73.

IV Music collection

(a section originally containing tonary and plainchant; fasc. 13-14):

ff. 113-116v	Tonary (incomplete) 2.-8. toni + peregrinus	Hand B
f. 116v	<i>Ecce quam bonum</i> a 2 & a 4 (kanon)	Hand C
f. 117	[Without text] a 4 (erased)	Hand D?
f. 117	[Cantus planus] (erased)	Hand ?
f. 117	Invitatories (cantus planus)	Hand ?
f. 117v	<i>Dulcis amica dei</i> a 3 [Prioris]	Hand D
ff. 118-121	Missa de S. Katharina (cantus planus)	Hand B
f. 121	[Without text] a 4	Hand D
ff. 121v-124	<i>Credo</i> a 2	Hand C
ff. 123v-124	<i>O miranda / Kyrie</i> a 3 [Anonymous]	Hand C
f. 124v	<i>Sedentem in superne</i> (cantus planus)	Hand C

(A section containing mainly polyphony; fasc. 1-4: music for funerals and commemoration; fasc. 5-6: sequences etc.):

f. 2	<i>Da pacem, domine</i> a 3 [Agricola]	Hand D
ff. 2v-10	<i>Bone Ihesu dulcis cunctis</i> a 3 (8 stanzas)	Hand A
ff. 10v-13	<i>Lugentibus in purgatorio</i> a 3 (3 stanzas)	Hand A
ff. 13v-16	<i>Quando deus filius virginis</i> a 2 (3 stanzas)	Hand A
f. 16v-17v	<i>Creator omnium rerum</i> a 3	Hand A
f. 18	<i>Parce domine</i> a 3 [Obrecht]	Hand D
ff. 18v-28	<i>Juxta corpus spiritus stetit</i> a 3 (10 stanzas)	Hand A
ff. 28v-30	<i>Virgine Marie laudes</i> a 2 (sequence)	Hand B
ff. 30v-35	<i>Stabat mater</i> a 2 (sequence)	Hand A

ff. 35v-37	<i>Veni sancte spiritus</i> a 2 (sequence)	Hand B
ff. 37v-41	<i>Veneremur virginem</i> a 2 (sequence)	Hand B
ff. 40v-41	<i>Bone Jesu dulcissime</i> a 4 [Anonymous / Gascongne?]	Hand C
ff. 41v-42	<i>Sospitati dedit egros</i> a 2 (prosula)	Hand B
ff. 42v-45v	Officium de S. Barbara (cantus planus)	Hand B
f. 45v	<i>Michael, Gabriel</i> a 3	Hand C
f. 45v	<i>Kirie eleyson</i> a 3	Hand ?