

# *Tu es Petrus – super hanc petram aedificavi cursum meum*<sup>1</sup>

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Paweł Gancarczyk, *Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz i muzyka Europy Środkowej XV wieku*, Warszawa 2021.

This handsomely produced book, replete with map, eighteen full-page colour plates, complete listing of works and sources, discography, and exhaustive bibliography, represents the synthesis of fifty years' research into an undoubtedly influential, yet still teasingly enigmatic, composer-poet. For specialists in the field, it will provide a convenient compendium of up-to-date data and information on research into Petrus Wilhelmi. For non-specialists with a taste for fifteenth-century music and keen to discover new old music from some of Europe's less tilled musicological fields, the book can be recommended as an excellent introduction to the musical forms and distinctive features of Central-European music, and to the composer who best exemplifies them. And for anybody who simply delights in persuasively argued, insightful scholarship, this is a book that can be savoured on many levels.

Heading off into unfamiliar terrain, there could be no better way to mentally orient oneself in the Europe of Petrus Wilhelmi than to first take a mental snapshot of Jarosław Suproniuk's map: *Central Europe*

*ca. 1450*<sup>2</sup>. Bordered at the top left by the North Sea, it extends eastwards past the Kingdom of Denmark, past the Monastic State of the Teutonic Knights, to the adjoining Grand Duchy of Lithuania. At the bottom of the map, lie the Venetian Republic, the top of the Adriatic and central Hungary. The map's eastern border extends just past Lemberg<sup>3</sup>, while its western reach is demarcated by the cities of Aachen and Trier. Locations associated with Petrus's biography are highlighted for us as grey dots; red dots designate places-of-origin of the sources of his works; and in both cases, the size of the dots reflects the locations' degree of significance. At the very centre of the map, like a red bull's eye, lies Prague. Three observations strike one immediately. First, we have far more information about the provenance of Petrine sources than we do about places associated with his biography. Secondly, fourteen of the source locations are clustered within the Kingdom of Bohemia; and thirdly, the only centre rivalling Prague in terms of number of sources is Breslau. Across this expanse of Central

<sup>1</sup> „...a cultural phenomenon worth devoting part of my scholarly life to” / „...fenomenem kulturowym, któremu warto poświęcić część naukowego życia”. P. Gancarczyk, *Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz i muzyka Europy Środkowej XV wieku*, Warszawa 2021, p. 13; hereafter cited as *PWG i muzyka*.

<sup>2</sup> The map is included in Chapter Two, *Sources of his Works*, §2.4 Scope of Reception, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> The multi-confessional city of Lemberg [Lwów], at the time of Petrus Wilhelmi, was home to a large community of Latin-rite Catholics from Silesia and other German-speaking regions of Central Europe.

Europe, from the most easterly source location of Petrus's music (Lviv) to the most southerly location (Trent), spans a distance of more than 1400 km.

Organised along traditional lines as a life-and-works study, the book's weightiest chapters, II–IV, are those dealing with Sources (early, late, and dissemination), Genres (*cantiones*, motet, *rotulum* and *katschetum*), and Works (six case studies). Matters biographical covered in the first chapter are selectively recalled in the Conclusion, reinterpreted now in the context of what we have learnt about Central European music. In his Introduction, the author leaves us in no doubt as to the twin purpose implicit in the book's title: it is about the distinctiveness of fifteenth-century Central European music as much as it is about the composer-poet who exemplifies many of those distinctive traits. Twenty years ago, in his first book, *Musica Scripto, Latter Fifteenth-Century Mensural Codices from the Eastern Regions of Latin Europe*<sup>4</sup>, Gancarczyk took issue with the unsatisfactoriness of the commonly used names for the part of Europe displayed in the map just referred to: Eastern Europe or East-Central Europe. The issue comes up again in the introduction to his latest book. On this occasion, the preferred label is Central Europe and it now serves two functions: as a geographical tag and as a nascent style descriptor. The composer's name, too, has been a bone of contention in some quarters. As a native of the Kulmerland town of Graudenz, then part of the Monastic State of the Teutonic Knights, his mother tongue was German (probably Mittelniederdeutsch), but his hometown is now Polish and he chose Cracow for his university education. Cleric, as he was, he used the *lingua franca* of his milieu; accordingly, he preferred the Latin form of his name, Petrus Wilhelmi. In today's EU *lingua franca*, he would be Peter Williamson. In short,

Petrus was not a "Polish" composer any more than he was a "pan-European" composer. He's a problematic individual who does not really fit anywhere – not readily into those two categories nor forced into traditional established moulds<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> P. Gancarczyk, *Musica scripto. Kodeksy menzuralne II połowy XV wieku na wschodzie Europy Łacińskiej*, Warszawa 2001. Six of the sources investigated in this study are included in the author's latest book.

<sup>5</sup> „Nie był on kompozytorem «polskim», tak jak nie był twórcą «ogólnoeuropejskim». Jest postacią kłopotliwą, nigdzie nie pasującą –

Gancarczyk presses the point that issues to do with notions of national identity and language, compounded by post-World War II politico-ideological divisions<sup>6</sup>, have proven unhelpful to our grasping the importance of the multifarious intellectual, artistic and creative networks that linked key centres like Prague and Cracow with Vienna, Leipzig and Erfurt, and, similarly, that linked regions like Silesia with German-speaking lands.

Central Europe is key to understanding Petrus and Petrus is likewise one of the keys to understanding fifteenth-century Central Europe. In him we find many of the attributes which seem to define the musical culture of the region so clearly and in such a concentrated way, that, in point of fact, a better exemplification of this region would be hard to find. Making that connection apparent lay at the core of the idea for this book<sup>7</sup>.

Also unhelpful in 'making that connection apparent' is a textbook historiographic tradition that has long portrayed the evolution of European art music from the perspective of Western European centres, courts, repertoires, and big-name composers. Seen from that perspective, music from Central Europe (in so far as it comes into consideration) had been regarded as outside the mainstream, with the negative connotation of being less developed, lacking technical finesse, and derivative. To be sure, Gancarczyk is not the only musicologist who has been arguing that the sources tell a very different story<sup>8</sup>. By and large, however, their findings have appeared as individual items,

albo niewidoczną dla tych dwóch nurtów, albo wtłaczaną na siłę w utrwalone tradycją ramy". *PWG i muzyka*, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> In his Epilogue (Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz in contemporary culture), Gancarczyk describes the ideologically-tinted nationalistic posturing that ensued after Černý's discovery of the Petrus acrostic.

<sup>7</sup> „Europa środkowa jest kluczem do zrozumienia Petrusa, ale również Petrus jest jednym z kluczy do zrozumienia Europy Środkowej XV wieku. Skupia on w sobie wiele wątków, które zdają się definiować kulturę muzyczną regionu, w sposób tak wyraźny i intensywny, że trudno doprawdy o lepszą jej egzemplifikację. Dostrzeżenie tego związku legło u podstaw idei niniejszej książki", ibidem, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Reinhard Strohm, for one, has published extensively on topics relating to music in Central Europe. See *European Politics and the Distribution of Music in the Early Fifteenth Century*, in which Prague, Cracow, Olomouc, Vienna and Central Europe generally are treated on an equal footing with Western European centres. „Early Music History" 1982, vol. 1, pp. 305–323.

as journal articles or chapter contributions dealing with a specific source or compositional feature. And few of Gancarczyk's colleagues can rival his prolific output, be they webinars, informal talks, liner notes, or published articles<sup>9</sup>. What has been lacking is a synthetic monograph-length study that takes a synoptic view of the current state of knowledge of Central European music: its sources, forms, and repertoires. The book under review assimilates a welter of diverse information and makes sense of it in terms of music history. In so doing, Gancarczyk enables us to begin to grasp the originality and cultural significance of Petrus Wilhelmi's works.

Petrus Wilhelmi confounds received historiography, challenges its assumptions, and provokes us to question the way we look at the musical past – the fifteenth century especially. Are we not stuck in conceptual categories which delude us into believing we've grasped the truth of the matter when, in fact, a significant part of it remains obscured? Since we're ever fretting over the paucity of sources, perhaps we ought to at least try looking at them from a perspective different from that of our predecessors, and taking cognisance of sources set aside as marginal and hitherto overlooked, their significance not fully appreciated<sup>10</sup>.

## PETRUS RESEARCH UP TO 2004

Before we embark on the four core chapters, a brief retrospective is offered of what might be termed Petrus Wilhelmi's 'pre-Gancarczyk phase': discoveries and research breakthroughs, from the publications of Jaromír Černý in the early 1970s up to the 2004

'Petrus Wilhelmi' special issue of „Muzyka” edited by Paweł Gancarczyk<sup>11</sup>.

Composers' use of acrostics as a clever device for encoding a dedicatee's name or making extra-textual references or just 'signing' one's own name, has a very long history<sup>12</sup>. The technique enjoyed a renewed surge of popularity amongst composers from the mid-fifteenth through the Renaissance period. Long before Jaromír Černý fortuitously lit upon the full version of the Petrus acrostic in the polytextual motet, *Pneuma eucaristiarum*, he had been taking note of the distinctive stylistic traits found in a number of compositions which were attributable to certain 'Petrus'. Although not unique to him, Petrus Wilhelmi's encoding technique does differ appreciably from the norm: he employs the first letter of each successive word in the opening text line(s) to spell out his name, in whole or in part<sup>13</sup>.

Once revealed, the acrostic became a primary tool in the discovery and authentication of Petrus's works; the pace of research soon quickened<sup>14</sup>. At the beginning of the 1980s, Cambridge University Press launched its musicological annual, „Early Music History”. The inaugural issue and the following year's issue as well, published studies of a remarkable music book compiled by Hermann Pötzlinger, a schoolmaster-priest who collected for his own use music that was old and new, some of it well-known pieces by famous composers but mostly works by anonymous or little-known composers, amongst whom is Petrus

<sup>11</sup> „Muzyka” 2004, no 2: *Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz konteksty źródłowe*. Contributors: Martin Staehelin, Martin Horyna, Bernhold Schmid, Paweł Gancarczyk, Lenka Mráčková, Ryszard J. Wieczorek, Zofia Dobrzańska-Fabiańska, and Izabela Bogdan.

<sup>12</sup> See K. Schiltz, *Music and Riddle Culture in the Renaissance*, Cambridge 2017.

<sup>13</sup> The polytextual four-voice motet *Pneuma eucaristiarum* sets three different texts simultaneously. First voice: *Pneuma eucaristiarum / terram rigans veniarum / supernorum* [PETRVS]. Second voice: *Veni, vere illustrator / lux honoris, erogator / luminis muniminis / iugum* [VVILHELMI]. Third voice: *Dator eia graciaram / rex virtutis, dux eorum / numinum celestium / zeli* [DE GRVDENCZ]. Table 2, p. 27–28 presents a list of other fifteenth-century composers who use the same form of acrostic as Petrus. The seventeen listed names might, in fact, be no more than eight individuals.

<sup>14</sup> J. Černý, *Petrus Wilhelmi of Grudziądz – An Unknown Composer of the «Age of Dufay»*, „Musica Antiqua. Acta Scientifica”, t. 4, Bydgoszcz 1975, p. 91–103. In the Index of Petrus Wilhelmi's Works, p. 325–327, title incipits not beginning with the letter 'P' (with the exception of *Kyrie fons bonitatis*) are contrafacts.

<sup>9</sup> Many of his articles and chapters on Petrus that have been appearing since 2005 are in English, in admirable translations by John Comber or Zofia Weaver.

<sup>10</sup> „Petrus Wilhelmi rozsada dotychczasową historiografię, podważa jej założenia i prowokuje do postawienia pytania: czy w naszym widzeniu przeszłości muzycznej – zwłaszcza XV wieku – nie tkwimy w schematach myślowych, które dają nam złudzenie dotarcia do prawdy, choć w istocie znaczna jej część pozostaje dla nas niewidoczna? Skoro utyskujemy na niedostatek źródeł, to może chociaż spróbujemy spojrzeć na nie z innej perspektywy niż nasi poprzednicy, uwzględniając źródła pozostawione na marginesie, dotąd pomijane i niedoceniane”. *PWG i muzyka*, p. 15. To cite but one example of a manuscript once given short shrift as marginal or peripheral because so many of its pieces are anonymous and unica – the «St Emmeram Codex», Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14274.

Wilhelmi<sup>15</sup>. The career and personal reflections of Hermann Pötzlinger provided a glimpse, inferentially, into the milieu in which Petrus, himself, would most likely have moved. In 1984, Charles Brewer, another scholar alert to the distinctive character of Central European musical culture, entered the field with what has subsequently proven to be a much-cited PhD dissertation, *The Introduction of the Ars Nova into East Central Europe*<sup>16</sup>.

In the mid-1980s, years particularly testing for Poland, Černý's colleague, Mirosław Perz, made a major contribution with his publication on the Lviv fragments, a source in which the music of Petrus Wilhelmi keeps company with that of DuFay and Josquin<sup>17</sup>. Progress towards the production of a tri-lingual (Czech–Polish–English) critical edition of Petrus's *Opera Omnia*, all the works that were known in the late 1980s, found itself stymied by political circumstances. It finally appeared in 1993<sup>18</sup>. Just before the turn of the millennium, two more discoveries further raised the profile of Petrus Wilhelmi. Tom R. Ward's study of Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek MS 1084, a manuscript associated with that university community, revealed works by leading composers of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (DuFay, Dunstable, Binchois, etc.) plus four compositions by Petrus, all of them *unica*<sup>19</sup>. Martin Horyna's study of a 16<sup>th</sup>-century codex, purchased by the National Library of Czechia

in 1994, revealed eight previously unknown four-voice cyclic Masses by the Flemish composer, Heinrich Isaac, amongst which is one which employs Petrus's round, *Presulem ephebeatum*, as its *cantus firmus*<sup>20</sup>.

A shift in thinking about musical traditions in Central Europe and due recognition of Petrus Wilhelmi as a central figure in that tradition, can be seen in the thoroughly revised and much expanded third volume of *The New Oxford History of Music* which appeared in 2001. As the editor, Reinhard Strohm, explains in his Introduction, the chapter by Tom Ward, *Polyphonic Music in Central Europe, c.1300–1520*, was commissioned in order to „historicize repertoires which earlier historians had considered as peripheral – and therefore ignored”<sup>21</sup>. And in that same year Martin Staehelin published a cache of fragments from the Nachlaß of Friedrich Ludwig: *Neues zu Werk und Leben von Petrus Wilhelmi. Fragmente des mittleren 15. Jahrhunderts mit Mensuralmusik*. In one fell swoop, Petrus's oeuvre grew by 19 items, from 23 to 42. And so, by the turn of the millennium, to the net number of Petrus compositions in Černý's edition (15 cantiones + 7 motets & rotula + 1 liturgical item) had been added 5 pieces found by Ward in Leipzig 1084; 11 from the Göttingen fragments; and 3 musical items found cited in contemporary theoretical texts<sup>22</sup>.

## ON SOURCES AND GENRES

Now to the core chapters of Gancarczyk's new book. Chapter Two, 'Sources of his Works', is divided unequally into early and late transmissions: those produced during his lifetime, 1420–1460 (net 17), and those produced posthumously, 1465–1726 (net 33). The chapter is dense in detail both general and specific, with myriad internal cross-references and generous

<sup>15</sup> T. Ward, *A Central European Repertory in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14274*, „Early Music History”, 1981, vol. 1, p. 325–343; and I. Rumbold, *The Compilation and Ownership of the “St Emmeram” Codex (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14274)*, *ibidem*, 1982, vol. 2 p. 161–235.

<sup>16</sup> C. Brewer, *The Introduction of the Ars Nova into East Central Europe: A Study of Late Medieval Polish Sources*, PhD diss., City University of New York, 1984.

<sup>17</sup> M. Perz, *The Lvov Fragments. A Source for Works by Dufay, Josquin, Petrus de Domarto and Petrus de Grudencz in 15th-century Poland*, „Tijdschrift van de Vereeniging voor Nederlandsche Muziekgeschiedenis” 1986, no. 1, pp. 26–51.

<sup>18</sup> Mirosław Perz's Foreword is dated July 1982, and Černý's Introduction, March 1986. Both publications, the *Opera Omnia* edition and the monograph under review, were financially supported by a subvention from the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation, Federal Republic of Germany. A new critical edition has been announced. It is to appear in the series, Monumenta Musicae in Polonia (Polska Akademia Nauk): *Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz Opera Omnia, wydanie źródłowo-krytyczne, wstęp i komentarz w języku polskim i angielskim*, ed. P. Gancarczyk.

<sup>19</sup> T.R. Ward, *Music in the University: The Manuscript Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 1084*, [in:] *Gestalt und Entstehung musikalischer Quellen im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. M. Staehelin, Wiesbaden 1998, pp. 21–34.

<sup>20</sup> For Ryszard Wieczorek's lively review of Horyna's 2002 critical edition of Isaac's *Missa 'Presulem ephebeatum'*, see „Muzyka” 2004, no. 2, pp. 111–114.

<sup>21</sup> *Music as Concept and Practice in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. R. Strohm, B. Blackburn, *The New Oxford History of Music*, vol. III part. 1, Oxford 2001, p. xxviii. Horyna's discovery appeared in print too late for Ward to take account of it.

<sup>22</sup> M. Staehelin, *Neues zu Werk und Leben von Petrus Wilhelmi*, p. 51–52; *PWG i muzyka*, p. 97. For complete listing, see Annex 2, pp. 281–289: 25 cantiones; 4 motets; 4 rotula & katschetum; 1 liturgical piece; 7 doubtful works.



acknowledgements of other scholars' work enlivened by the occasional courteous emendation and correction. Not the sort of material, one might think, that lends itself readily to narrative presentation. But quite the contrary. With ever a sure feel for what is intrinsically significant in each source, Gancarczyk handles this cornucopia of information with enviable aplomb. Be it a badly damaged folio fragment, a Utraquist choirbook codex, or a schoolmaster's idiosyncratic personal collection, each artefact's distinctive traits and what they contribute to our knowledge of Petrus Wilhelmi's music, are succinctly presented. Fascinating, too, is the intellectual reach of the multi-lingual 'parenthetical conversations' taking place in the 149 footnotes. The chapter repays methodical, attentive reading; it also affords a taste of the arcane pleasures of codicology and music paleography.

The canon of Petrus Wilhelmi sources now stands at net 50, one-third of which date from during his lifetime. Moreover, the balance has tipped since Černý's edition: manuscripts produced during Petrus's lifetime now account for the great majority of his oeuvre – only four works are to be found exclusively in fifteenth- or sixteen-century transmissions. This represents a drop in the percentage of manuscripts of Czech provenance from 58% to 46%. In short, the current state of knowledge conveys a quite different picture from that which Černý observed, and nowhere more so than in the chronology of works. Particularly instructive are Tables 8 and 9, early and late sources respectively, which align in chronological order, source + date of copying of Petrus's work(s) + provenance. Of the several observations one might make, noteworthy in particular is the preponderance of user-produced manuscripts and the fact that seven of the seventeen manuscripts produced during his lifetime are associated with universities: Cracow (c1420), Vienna (1431–34 & 1437–44), Erfurt (1449–57), Leipzig (c1450s twice), and finally Prague (c1460). Conversely, for manuscripts in the posthumous category, university provenance is completely absent. In this case, the dominant association is with Utraquist communities which account for no less than twenty of the net thirty-three items<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Utraquists became the dominant Hussite sect in Bohemia (not Moravia or Silesia) after a reconciliation reached with the Catholic Church at the Council of Basel (1431–36).

The Central European provenance of sources of Petrus's works, together with the late date of many of them, might suggest we are primarily dealing with sources transmitting repertoire that is essentially local or retrospective. That is clearly the impression one gets from the Utraquist manuscripts. Polyphonic items were still being added to them using a type of notation, black mensural, that had long ago dropped out of usage elsewhere<sup>24</sup>. [...] While it is true that many of the sources described here do have a local, retrospective character about them, yet, at the same time, we also find in certain sections of these codices, up-to-date international repertoire. In some manuscripts Petrus Wilhelmi's works keep company with those of his most distinguished contemporaries: John Dunstable, Guillaume DuFay and Gilles Binchois. Works of composers belonging to the next generation start to appear around the 1450s: Walter Frye, Johannes Pullois, Johannes Ockeghem and also Josquin Desprez. And it so happens that these manuscripts are the ones preserving the oldest copies of those masters' works<sup>25</sup>.

Chapter Three, 'Musical Genres', deals with the major vehicles of musical expression in 15<sup>th</sup>-century music. It starts with a survey of pertinent Latin treatises written by 15<sup>th</sup>-century Central European music theorists – a specialist field, to be sure, and one still awaiting a thoroughgoing comprehensive study.

Central-European [music] theory derives from French theory and from Italian, too, for a certain period. However, in

<sup>24</sup> The illustration of an Utraquist literary brotherhood provided for this chapter (#11) is in the public domain (Teplice, Regional Museum, MS 1, f. 190v). It can be accessed at [www.zamek-teplice.cz/library](http://www.zamek-teplice.cz/library)

<sup>25</sup> „Środkowoeuropejskie pochodzenie źródeł twórczości Petrusa, a także późne datowanie wielu z nich, może sugerować, że mamy tu do czynienia przede wszystkim ze źródłami o lokalnym i retrospektywnym profilu repertuarowym. Wrażenie to mogą zwłaszcza wywoływać rękopisy utrakwistyczne, w których – jak wiadomo – jeszcze w XVI wieku do zapisywania polifonii używano dawno już gdzie indziej zarzuconej czarnej notacji menzurальной [...] Co prawda wiele z omawianych tu źródeł ma taki właśnie lokalny i retrospektywny profil, ale w sporej ich części znajdujemy jednocześnie aktualny repertuar międzynarodowy. Utwory Petrusa Wilhelmiego sąsiadują w niektórych rękopisach z dziełami jego najwybitniejszych rówieśników: Johna Dunstable'a, Guillaume'a DuFay i Gillesa Binchois. Poczawszy od lat pięćdziesiątych XV wieku pojawiają się dzieła twórców należących do kolejnych generacji: Waltera Fry'a i Johanna Pullois, Johanna Ockeghema, a także Josquina des Prez. Zdarza się, że są to rękopisy zawierające najstarsze kopie utworów tych mistrzów”. *PWG i muzyka*, p. 138ff.

the way it defines, understands and illustrates specific genres through examples, it was virtually unique unto itself<sup>26</sup>.

Gancarczyk outlines the defining features of major musical forms (sectional arrangement, tonality and cadences, music–text relationship) and makes observations on related aspects such as melody, rhythm, counterpoint, and expressive conventions. This is the stuff of musical analysis, the theoretical aspects of music that have engaged theorists for centuries. On 15<sup>th</sup>-century music, no theorist is more quoted than the German-educated Johannes Tinctoris (1435–1511). His hierarchy of musical genres – Mass, motet, and songs – reflects relative expansiveness of expression and duration but also the relative status attached to each. The music theorists of Central Europe (eight are cited) present a different hierarchy. Not one of them mentions the Mass; the motet is always assigned pride of place, followed by songs, canons and other *cantilene*. Some theorists, in addition to the *rondellus*, also include *trumpetum* and *rotulum*.

To these categories, Gancarczyk proposes adding as a sub-genre, the Central-European motet, in recognition of stylistic traits that make it peculiar to this region.

They fulfil the definitional criteria in terms of polytextuality and being unisectional – with certain exceptions to which I'll return. As compositions, they are appreciably shorter and more straightforward than *ars nova* motets, particularly the range of metrical and rhythmic features. In terms of the way musical form is very much bound up with the structure of the text, they come close to songs. In contrast to other motets, however, the tenor melody does not derive from plainchant and is invariably texted; moreover, it is not rhythmically differentiated from the other voices<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> „Środkowoeuropejska teoria wywodziła się z teorii francuskiej, w pewnym zakresie też włoskiej, jednak sposób definiowania, rozumienia i egzemplifikowania poszczególnych gatunków w znacznym stopniu był unikatowy”, *ibidem*, p. 148.

<sup>27</sup> „Spełniają one kryterium definicji w zakresie politekstualności, a także – z pewnymi wyjątkami, do których jeszcze powrócę – jednoczęściowości. Są to kompozycje znacznie krótsze i prostsze od motetów *ars nova*, zwłaszcza w zakresie cech metroritmicznych, zbliżające się do pieśni z uwagi na bliską zależność formy od struktury tekstu. W odróżnieniu od innych motetów melodia tenoru nie pochodzi z chorału gregoriańskiego i jest konsekwentnie opatrywana tekstem; nie odróżnia się rytmicznie od pozostałych głosów”, *ibidem*, pp. 175–176.

Canons and canonic writing are a well-known feature of Petrus's compositions; so, too, are the *arcana* of many of his Latin texts<sup>28</sup>. This latter topic Gancarczyk confronts in his Introduction:

...composer and poet, he combined these two talents like many other medieval composers, though in this book he is presented primarily as the author of music. On the one hand, that has to do with my area of competence as a musicologist; on the other hand, it is in the nature of his poetry: only in conjunction with the music does it take on meaning and [artistic] merit, so it would seem<sup>29</sup>.

The issue comes to the fore in discussion of the *unicum katschetum*, *Panteleon eleon* and the *rondellus*, *Proclivi evi temporis*. To some extent at least, problems to do with intelligibility would appear to be bound up with the choice of vocabulary (at the opening especially), constrained as it is by the demands of the 'Petrus' acrostic, in addition to the composer-poet's proclivity for certain types of esoteric allusions and metaphors. 'So how should we assess Petrus Wilhelmi as a poet?' – asks Bartosz Awianowicz, classical philologist and language consultant.

In the first half of the fifteenth century, he was certainly not an innovator. He based his poetical craftsmanship on treatises of the *artes poetriae*, which underlay education in rhetoric and poetics throughout Central Europe at that time<sup>30</sup>.

As a consequence, the great majority of his poetical texts, i.e., those with the acrostic, adhere to the versification scheme for rhythmic poetry as laid down in *ars poetriae* textbooks. Exceptions to the scheme are

<sup>28</sup> In his CD liner notes, Michał Gondko observes: „Numerous text passages were found to be exceedingly problematic to translate unambiguously. A certain amount of educated guesswork was necessary and is certainly justified. All English translations are by Michał Gondko with advice from Leofranc Holford-Strevens”. *Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz. Fifteenth-century Music from Central Europe*, La Morra, Basel: Glossa / Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 2016, p. 48.

<sup>29</sup> „kompozytorem i poetą, łączył dwie umiejętności podobnie jak wielu innych twórców średniowiecznych, przy czym w książce tej ukazany jest przede wszystkim jako autor muzyki. Z jednej strony wynika to z zakresu moich kompetencji jako muzykologa, z drugiej – z natury jego poezji, która zdaje się zyskiwać na znaczeniu i wartości dopiero w połączeniu z muzyką”, *PWG i muzyka*, p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> B. Awianowicz, *Texts by Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz in the Context of Late Medieval «ars poetriae»*, „Muzyka” 2017, no. 3, p. 45.

rare and can be attributed, so Awianowicz believes, to Petrus's inventiveness or nonchalance.

It should be admitted, however, that Petrus moved very freely within the bounds set by Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* and Eberhard the German's *Laborintus*, fluently employing different variants of versification *rithmica/rigmica* and introducing elaborate metaphors based mainly on allegory and antonomasia, and less frequently on comparison [...] At the court of Frederick III, the very mediaeval – in both form and content – poetical output [of Petrus Wilhelmi] would not have been appreciated. However, it perfectly adhered to the aesthetic canons of the universities of those days, which only began to depart from mediaeval *poetria* in the second half of the century<sup>31</sup>.

Moreover, as Leofranc Holford-Strevens has observed, subtleties that are compatible with ungrammatical or hyper-contorted diction, and that are imperceptible to listeners may be able to be appreciated by the singers,

if they pay attention to the sense of the words that not only they but also their fellows are singing. How far the fact should inhibit the analysis of the written texts is a matter of dispute, since poets and composers were and are capable of building in features that only they, and God, would notice.

All of which is suggestive of a particular learned milieu – an in-group of persons, who knew each other's work and competed to better it.<sup>32</sup>

## SIX CASE STUDIES

### 1) In Praise of Mary: *Prelustri elucencia*

What was it, one wonders, that imbued certain works of Petrus Wilhelmi with an appeal which delighted successive generations across different confessional and social milieux, an appeal which accommodated changes of language, poetic character, rhythm, metre and scoring? The question goes to the notion of the work-concept in music; Gancarczyk's first example –

*Prelustri elucencia*, a *cantio* of just 30 bars' length on a Marian text – provides a case in point.<sup>33</sup> Twenty copies of the piece exist in fifteen manuscripts and three printed editions. A favourite with Catholics, Utraquists and Lutherans alike, it attracted settings in Czech (retaining the Marian theme) and German. In the process of reworking, the *cantio*'s PETRUS acrostic occasionally gets mangled, which suggests the acrostic was not recognised or that preserving the name 'Petrus' was of no consequence. In Utraquist sources, both metre and disposition of voices are altered: the discantus is lowered to the same register as that of men's parts. In its last reworking, for Lutheran usage (1605), the *cantio* once again incorporates a *cantus firmus*. There is ample evidence of *Prelustri elucencia*'s long performance history, and yet, as Gancarczyk notes, that cannot be the whole story. He believes the work almost certainly came about considerably earlier than the date of the earliest extant copy from Košice (1465). Moreover, the occurrence of many minor variants in the various copies is redolent of works which are part of an oral-written tradition – a dynamic of transmission that may well pertain to other works of Petrus. As Reinhard Strohm has observed:

The so-called *contrafactum* practice, usually a substitution of sacred texts for secular ones, was not necessarily a primarily *textual* manipulation but a *performative* one, where a poet or musician would sing the song with newly invented words, or the words with a newly-invented tune, fitting them together in his head<sup>34</sup>.

This very well-known and frequently recorded *cantio* underwent a personality change with the discovery of the Košice fragment. No more the unsteady rhythmic gait found in Černý's edition (transcribed as four bars of 2/4, four of 3/4, one of 2/4, three of 3/4, etc.) but rather major prolation (3/4) stably maintained throughout. With due correction of rhythm and metre, the scansion of the texts (*versus* and *repetitio*) now

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, pp. 47 and 52–53.

<sup>32</sup> L. Holford-Strevens, *Latin Poetry and Music*, [in:] *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Music*, ed. M. Everist, Cambridge 2011, p. 239.

<sup>33</sup> In Černý's *Opera Omnia*, I/7, *Prelustri elucencia* numbers 33 bars. See Gancarczyk's YouTube presentation in which he discusses this work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuTFRAJHu8c>

<sup>34</sup> R. Strohm, *Late-Medieval Sacred Songs: Tradition, Memory and History* «2006 Gordon Athol Anderson Memorial Lecture», [in:] *Identity and Locality in Early European Music, 1028–1740*, ed. J. Stoessel, London 2009, p. 145.

produces a charming echo effect on the word 'Maria'. Gancarczyk's exegesis of the text setting captures the subtlety of Petrus's *cantio* and illustrates 'the fusion of simple musical means with undoubted invention':

The most important element differentiating the *repeticio* from the *versus* is the introduction of an echo on the word, 'Maria': first the tenor sings it and then, with the same notes, the *discantus* repeats it. In this way the composer highlights the name of the dedicatee and emphasises it is for her intention, while at the same time serving to relieve the composition's unwavering two-part texture. This effect is repeated many times over in performance since the refrain is sung after every *versus*. Maria has also been musically exalted above the chorus of angels (*super choros angelorum...exulta*) by her association with a musical motive based on the highest pitches in the song (*e'-f'-d'*)<sup>35</sup>.

## 2) New Sounds: *Prodigiis eximiis*

From a piece with multiple transmissions to a unicum: the *cantio* rondellus *Prodigiis eximiis* is found only in the collection of manuscripts that belonged to the Leipzig academic, Johannes Klein. Two other works by Petrus, *Presulem ephebeatum* and *Pax eterna* are also in this collection<sup>36</sup>. The piece is striking for its use of *fauxbourdon*, a technique of extemporised harmonisation associated with the Burgundian school (DuFay, Binchois) whereby the contratenor (middle voice) moves in parallel fourths with the superius and the untexted tenor provides the counterpoint accompaniment. The resultant preponderance in the harmony of the interval of a third produces a distinctively euphonious quality.

<sup>35</sup> „Najważniejszym jednak elementem odróżniającym *repeticio* od *versus* jest wprowadzenie echa na słowie «Maria» (b. 21–23): najpierw śpiewa tenor, a potem z tymi samymi dźwiękami powtarza je *discantus*. W ten sposób kompozytor uwypuklił imię adresatki kompozycji, zaznaczył przeznaczenie utworu, przełamując zarazem konsekwentną dwugłosowość kompozycji. Efekt ten przy wykonaniu utworu powtarzany jest wielokrotnie – chodzi wszak o refren, śpiewany po każdym *versus*. Maria została muzycznie wyniesiona ponad chóry anielskie (*super choros angelorum...exaltata*) również dzięki skojarzeniu z motywem muzycznym zbudowanym na najwyższych dźwiękach pieśni (*e'-f'-d'*)”. *PWG i muzyka*, pp. 208–209.

<sup>36</sup> Johannes Klein was born in 1430 in Löbau [Lubowa], 77km from Grudziądz. He was educated at Greifswald and Leipzig Universities and pursued a career in teaching. His collection of four printed books and fifteen manuscripts was left to the University of Leipzig.

Analysing the text of *Prodigiis eximiis*, a panegyric to an unidentified personage, Gancarczyk draws attention to a subtle infelicity between the end-rhyme of the first and third lines of the refrain: *Exultet iam ecclesia // leteturque Almaniam*. Given the great store Petrus put by correctness of rhyme, never sacrificing precision despite the difficulties associated with his acrostic, and given that changing dedicatee to meet changed circumstances was not an uncommon occurrence, Gancarczyk draws the conclusion that 'Almaniam' has been substituted for what was originally 'Silesia' –

In this context, changing the word 'Silesia' to 'Almaniam' in *Prodigiis eximiis* would have been quite a straightforward, routine procedure designed to render the work's text more in keeping with where it was being disseminated, which, in this case, was the University of Leipzig<sup>37</sup>.

As to the circumstances that gave rise to the work, Gancarczyk posits a connection with the cult of relics of one of Silesia's patron saints: St John the Baptist, St John the Evangelist, or St Vincent the Deacon. He sees a link between Petrus's visit to Silesia in 1448 and the cathedral's prized relic, the head of John the Baptist, patron saint of the cathedral, the diocese and of all Silesia.

## 3) On the Side of Tradition: *Pneuma eucaristiarum*

Composed around 1440, this is the composition in which Petrus chose to encode his full name. In terms of structure, the work is a fusion of motet (part A polytextual) with conductus-like song (part B monotextual); however, given that part A is repeated *ad libitum*, it might also be regarded as reminiscent of some *cantiones*, although no other *cantio* characteristics, such as *cauda*-like melismatic openings and cadences, are present. The piece's individualistic bipartite construction suggests it might be based on a model: another work dedicated to the Blessed Trinity, namely, the anonymous *Veni sancte spiritus*/

<sup>37</sup> „Zmiana słowa «Silesia» na «Almaniam» w *Prodigiis eximiis* byłaby w tym kontekście zabiegiem dość prostym i rutynowym, który pozwalał uczynić treść utworu bardziej adekwatnym do miejsca jego rozpowszechniania, czyli w tym przypadku uniwersytetu w Lipsku”, *PWG i muzyka*, p. 218.



*Da gaudiorum / Veni sancte spiritus*, one of the most copied works in all Central Europe.

Gancarczyk analyses the many close correlations between the works and draws the conclusion –

It would appear that such an overt association with a piece widely disseminated throughout Central Europe was also a declaration of *Pneuma eucaristiarum*'s belonging to the regional musical tradition. While the 'joyful singing of the clergy' and 'supplication of simple folk' expressed in *Pneuma eucaristiarum* may not have resounded as long as in the motet, *Veni sancte spiritus*, nonetheless – thanks to Černý's decoding his acrostic – they have given Petrus the opportunity of a new life in contemporary culture<sup>38</sup>.

#### 4) Double entendre: *Probitate eminentem*

On 4 March 1480, Andreas Ritter returned to his Augustinian convent drunk. When the waiting prior, Martin Rinkenbergh, took him to task, Ritter reacted violently wounding his superior with a knife. Filled with remorse and convinced he had killed the prior, Ritter thereupon committed suicide by defenestration. This piece of local scandal is key to understanding the *double entendre* in Petrus's four-voice isorhythmic motet, *Prohibitate eminentem / Ploditando exarare*, one his most discussed works. The piece is transmitted in only two sources and found complete in just one: the Żagań [Sagan] Partbooks<sup>39</sup>. On first acquaintance in score, the piece has much about it that brings to mind contemporaneous grand *ars nova* isorhythmic motets from Western Europe. This musical association is key to understanding a second, more subtle *double entendre* in Petrus's composition.

After presenting an analysis of the motet's structural features – the properties of the *talea* and *color*,

their correlation in terms of numerical ratios with the two texts, the unusual bipartite division with section B repeated and concomitant effect on ratios and structural proportions, the absence of plainchant, characteristics of the melodic material, and the abounding number symbolism – Gancarczyk addresses himself to the text-setting mechanism whereby *double entendre* is created. Specific passages in the texts are correlated such that when the first voice pauses for a measure, the text of the second voice dovetails grammatically as if it were a logical continuation of the first voice's text. And vice versa: when the second voice pauses, the text of the first voice dovetails grammatically with the text of the second voice. These four-measure alternations occur eight times throughout the piece and effectively create a composite third text. The humour resides in the fact that the succession of text segments 'overheard' in the other voice (the *de facto* composite third text) provides a satirical contradiction of the motet's ostensibly laudatory tone, addressed as it is to the unfortunate Andreas Ritter.

Gancarczyk makes lofty claims for the work's importance:

In many quite distinctive ways, this is a very important piece in Petrus's oeuvre, both in the context of Central European music and of all European polyphony<sup>40</sup>. [...] He has composed a serious, complex work which was supposed to give the impression of being a true panegyric, as if designed to laud some prince or bishop or lend prestige to the ceremonial dedication of a new cathedral. Only upon closer acquaintance with the work do we find out that it is mock-serious, a camouflage, a sort of game with conventions designed to lead the listener astray while, at the same time, making the work's true meaning all the more surprising and entertaining. It is important to note that Petrus Wilhelmi is making fun here not only of the addressee's vices; he is also lampooning the very manner of composing, one with which he was well familiar, of course, but clearly not one that he identified with. [...] *Pneuma eucaristiarum* was a type of declaration-of-belonging to a regional musical tradition. *Probitate eminentem* would seem to be a similar declaration, though carried out in reverse: by means of contradiction. Cultural identity is defined not only

<sup>38</sup> „Wydaje się, że tak wyraźne nawiązanie do rozpowszechnionego w Europie Środkowej utworu było zarazem deklaracją przynależności do regionalnej tradycji muzycznej. Wyrażany w *Pneuma eucaristiarum* «duchowieństwa śpiew radosny» i «prośba prostego ludu» nie wybrzmiewały może tak długo jak w przypadku motetu *Veni sancte spiritus*, jednak – dzięki odszyfrowaniu akrostychów przez Černego – dały Petrusowi szansę na nowe życie we współczesnej kulturze”, ibidem, p. 227.

<sup>39</sup> Cracow, Biblioteka Jagiellońska. Mus ms, 40098. The second source is Poznań, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Ms. 7022 – the Lviv fragments.

<sup>40</sup> „To bardzo ważny utwór w dorobku Petrusa, pod wieloma względami osobliwy, nie tylko w kontekście muzyki Europy Środkowej, ale i całej polifonii europejskiej”, *PWG i muzyka*, p. 228.

through affirmation of conventions and norms recognized as one's own, but equally through negation of that which is perceived as foreign and remote<sup>41</sup>.

### 5) Saint Martin and Geese: *Presulem ephebeatum*

By any measure, Petrus Wilhelmi's round, *Presulem ephebeatum* is a remarkable composition; indeed, Gancarczyk believes there is nothing comparable in all fifteenth-century music. Like many complex pieces, its appeal is multifaceted. It can delight musicologists and analysts with its technical virtuosity, as it must have amused quick-witted bilingual listeners and fortified the devotions of Utraquist communities (with an ironic *auto-da-fé* twist). And, as we now know, it recommended itself to an indubitably 'big name' composer – Heinrich Isaac (1450–1517) – who used it as a *cantus firmus* upon which to base a setting of the Mass.

While the canon melody, itself, is very long (41 bars in transcription), intrinsic rhythmic variety is limited; it can be reduced to four basic patterns or cells. The work comprises four complete statements of the melody, 164-bars *in toto*. Most of the notable complexities occur in the second half of the piece, i.e., from the entry of the third voice, a fact which goes to the manner of composition of such canons. As Jason Stoessel has observed, "The final three- and four-voice sections provide insight into Petrus's compositional technique which basically worked up these sections first and then reverse-engineered them to produce the round. This process – an age-old technique, already

well developed by the English in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century – is especially clear in the case of Petrus's four-voice motets which are closely based on *Presulem ephebeatum*<sup>42</sup>.

When the fourth voice enters in bar 124 with the final statement of the melody, we are hearing simultaneously the following texts:

IV	line 1	<i>Presulem ephebeatum</i>
III	line 11	<i>salvatoris pisticus</i>
II	line 19	<i>hiis denegans</i>
I	line 27	<i>atque nimis</i>

At particular moments, certain text phrases are given prominence, articulated and made clearly intelligible through repetition and through Petrus's strategic use of rests [above], sometimes of up to two full-bars' length. This draws the listener's attention to the bi-lingual word play and imagery that is one of the work's most arresting and amusing features. An appreciation of Petrus's wit and cleverness, however, presumes an understanding of the following facts, all of which Gancarczyk carefully lays out:

- The work is in honour of the widely venerated St Martin of Tour. His Feast Day falls a fortnight before the beginning of the penitential season of Advent. His iconographic emblem is a goose.
- Tradition has it that celebratory feasting marking the Saint's day (11<sup>th</sup> November) involved eating roast goose.
- The name of the Czech religious reformer, Jan Hus, who was burnt at the stake on 6 July 1415, is an abbreviation derived from the name of his hometown, Husinec. In Czech, the word *husa*, means goose<sup>43</sup>.

Petrus's text highlights a number of phrases in which the Latin words can be understood as homonyms in German, all of which pun on 'goose' [*Gans*] and feasting on goose:

<sup>42</sup> On very long temporal distances between voice entries in complex canons, see J. Stoessel and D. Collins, *New Light on the Mid-Fourteenth-Century Chace: Canons Hidden in the Tournai Manuscript*, „Music Analysis” 2019, no. 1–2, pp. 155–203. I am grateful to Dr Stoessel for his observations on Petrus Wilhelmi's canonic technique. Private communication, 30/11/2021.

<sup>43</sup> Hus, fatefully, alluded to the possibility of his own roasting in a letter of 10 November 1414 addressed to Jan Cardinal of Rejnštejn: „The goose is not roasted yet and is not afraid of it because this year the famous fast falls on the Saturday before St Martin when geese are not supposed to be eaten”.

<sup>41</sup> „Skomponował poważny, rozbudowany utwór, który miał wyglądać jak prawdziwy panegiryk, tak jakby jego celem było sławienie jakiegoś księcia czy biskupa lub uświetnienie ceremonii poświęcenia nowo zbudowanej katedry. Dopiero po bliższym zapoznaniu się z utworem dowiadujemy się, że to kpina, kamuflaż, rodzaj gry z konwencją prowadzonej po to, by zmylić odbiorcę i tym samym uczynić prawdziwe przesłanie dzieła bardziej zaskakującym i zabawniejszym. Trzeba jednak zauważyć, że Petrus Wilhelmi żartuje tutaj nie tylko z przywar adresata, lecz również parodiuje styl komponowania, który był mu co prawda znany, ale z którym najwidoczniej się nie identyfikował [...] *Pneuma eucaristiarum* był rodzajem deklaracji przynależności do regionalnej tradycji muzycznej. *Probitate eminentem* wydaje się być świadectwem podobnej deklaracji, uczynionej jednakże *à rebours*, przez zaprzeczenie. Kulturową tożsamość określa bowiem nie tylko afirmacja zwyczajów i norm uznanych za własne, lecz również negacja tego, co postrzegane jest jako obce i odległe”, ibidem, p. 238.

- line 29 – Lat: *mitem mos te, mitem pro te* || Ger: *mir dem Moste, mit dem Brote* [with apple sauce, with bread]
- line 19 – Lat: *hiis denegans – nimis denegans* || Ger: *hier, ist deine Gans – nimm, iß deine Gans!* [here is your goose – take it, eat your goose]

Gancarczyk provides a table of these occurrences including homonyms in fifteenth-century German and highlighting of the paired phrases where voice-crossing simulates dialogue.

References to goose, construed as allusions to Jan Hus, clearly resonated with the Utraquist Hussite community. They reworked the four-voice section of *Presulem* as a Latin contrafact with a text more devotional in character. In the process, the piece metamorphosed from a round into a motet. Heinrich Isaac was not alone in being drawn to *Presulum*; to his Mass can be added a Latin hymn to St Martin by Thomas Stoltzer (c. 1480–1526), and two songs in Georg Forster's songbook that intermix Latin and German 'goose' phrases – a phenomenon not as uncommon as one might imagine, as Gancarczyk points out: word-play on 'goose' can be found in even later works devoid of any reference to Petrus Wilhelmi's piece, for example, Lassus's *Audite, audite nova* (1573) that includes onomatopoeic cackling.

Both its variety of versions (canon, motet, Latin and German contrafacts) and its serviceability as a source of quotations, attest to the cultural durability of *Presulem ephebeatum*. One might say that it has become, quite simply, musically symbolic of Central Europe in the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth centuries. It deserves to be recognised as one of Petrus's most accomplished works; uniting simplicity and sophistication, it is indicative of the wealth of musico-poetical invention its author possessed<sup>44</sup>.

## 6) A Case Apart: *Kyrie fons bonitatis*

The foregoing seven case studies leave one in no doubt as to the originality of Petrus Wilhelmi's approach

<sup>44</sup> „Rozmaitość wersji (kanon, motet, kontrafaktura łacińska i niemiecka), a także posłużenie jako źródło cytatów, świadczy o jego kulturowej sile. Można wręcz powiedzieć, że *Presulem ephebeatum* stało się muzycznym symbolem Europy Środkowej XV i pierwszej połowy XVI wieku. Należy go uznać za jeden z najbardziej znanych utworów Petrusa, łączący prostotę i wyrafinowanie, wskazujący na dużą inwencję muzyczno-poetycką autora”, *PWG i muzyka*, p. 249.

to musical form and text. The final study merits including by dint of the fact that, among his oeuvre, it is his only work lacking his trademark acrostic and the only polyphonic setting of the Ordinary of the Mass, namely, the well-known *Kyrie fons bonitatis / Christe unice dei / Kyrie ii ignis divine*<sup>45</sup>. In Petrus's three-voice setting, the paraphrased chant in the top voice is supported by contratenor and tenor. The plainchant melodies, both *Kyrie's* and *Christus*, become almost identical as they approach the cadence. Petrus's setting emphasises this similarity through the use of *fauxbourdon* which imparts the character of a rondellus-like reprise. Most intriguing is his interpolation into the existing 'Christe' trope of an additional segment – *Ihesu Christe miserere* – from an unrelated trope; effectively, a troped trope. What makes this brief interpolation all the more noteworthy is the fact that in the Graduals transmitting this 'second' trope, the nine-note interpolation is notated mensurally, thereby providing a moment of rhythmised plainchant [*cantus fractus*]. And secondly, the fact that Petrus's setting of that segment preserves the *cantus-fractus* rhythm, precisely.

Gancarczyk provides additional examples that bear witness to the active engagement of different users with Petrus's *Kyrie*, be it incorporation of different tropes (*Kyrie virgininitatis amator; Kyrie sacerdos summe*) or effecting minor corrections. This brief *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of Petrus's only liturgical work leads to the conclusion that

These additions attest to the fact that this work was, at the time, actually in musical use in Vienna and Trent, and subject to changes and adaptations to meet new purposes. It was not – as once it may have seemed – a composition copied purely for the sake of collecting. We have here yet another example of the way Petrus's music used to function in different locations around Central Europe, broadly understood. In this instance, it is very clearly indicative of the liturgical context and the important sacral space that was Trent's St Vigilius' Cathedral<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> It appears as *Kyrie #2* „For solemn feasts”, in the *Liber Usualis*, Tournai 1956.

<sup>46</sup> „Dopiski te świadczą, że był to utwór obecny w żywej praktyce muzycznej Wiednia i Trydentu, podlegający przemianom i adaptacjom do nowych celów, a nie jedynie – jak to się zdarzało – kompozycja skopiowana z pobudek kolekcjonerskich. Mamy zatem kolejny przykład funkcjonowania muzyki Petrusa w różnych miejscach szeroko pojętej Europy Środkowej, tym razem jednak bardzo wyraźnie

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Nothing is known of Petrus Wilhelmi's early life in Grudziądz. He was eighteen when the Battle of Grunwald (1410) visited a humiliating defeat on his countrymen. Eight years later, aged 26, he arrived in Cracow to begin his university studies. This was not the usual choice for students from the Monastic State of the Teutonic Knights; indeed, he was one of only three who enrolled in 1418. His studies were unusually long: he was already thirty-three years of age by the time he received a Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree (1425) and he took another five years to complete the Masters degree – graduating in 1430 with no great distinction. The mostly likely explanation for the atypical duration of his studies was the need to earn a living. Between the completion of his studies and his appointment to the court of Frederick III Habsburg, a ten-year lacuna exists in his biography.

Whether he had already taken minor orders before arriving in Cracow or did so sometime later, Petrus was not ordained until around 1452 by which time he had been in the employ of Frederick III for over a decade. In the absence of any evidence, one can only speculate on how Petrus supported himself before he entered the service of the Habsburg court. It may be that, like hundreds of other men in minor orders with a university education, he moved from one position to another in quest of a patron, a collator to a benefice. Securing a position as curate (vicar) to an incumbent parson, for example, provided a modicum of income (negotiated) and set the freelance clergyman on the first rung of the progression through subdeacon to Holy Orders. If a better offer came up elsewhere, there was little that could be done, other than applying moral duress, to oblige him to stay. Among this floating population of anonymous aspirants to a career in the church was a group of men who made do, by choice or necessity, with the lowly position of schoolteacher [*scholirega*]<sup>47</sup>.

A consequence of the dearth of documentary evidence about Petrus is the contingent nature of what fills in the many unavoidable lacunae: plausible

deductions, logical inferences, balance of probabilities. The challenge is not unique to Petrus Wilhelmi; it is faced by many researchers into fifteenth-century music. Determining to which social stratum/strata the composer belonged can go some way to explaining the paucity of historical evidence and also give a clue as to what audiences he wrote for, what milieux he moved in, and what employment possibilities might have been open to him. In this context, Gancarczyk makes effective use of a unique document, a 'scale of social hierarchies' copied by Hermann Pötzlinger into one of his music books. It represents Pötzlinger's personal view of where schoolmasters such as himself sat in relation to other professional groups.

It divides the world first into the secular and the spiritual realms, and each of these into 'upper', 'middle', and 'lower' categories; it placed schoolmasters in sixth position in the lowest category of the spiritual realm, immediately above arts students, but below university graduates. According to this scheme of things, he had taken but one step up the social ladder by matriculating at the University of Vienna in 1436, and indeed one step down by accepting a post as *rector scholarum*<sup>48</sup>.

If we relegate Petrus to a professional milieu and social status similar to that of Pötzlinger, then a considerable degree of social mobility must be presumed to account for his ascendance to an appointment at the court of Frederick III. What might account for his rise in the hierarchy and what duties he performed at court are unknown. He was not a member of the music cappella, and nor is there any evidence that his music was ever heard at court. As one of many rank-and-file chaplains, his duties could have included chancery work in an advisory or diplomatic capacity. Despite the lack of information about Petrus, Gancarczyk is able nonetheless to flesh out the international artistic atmosphere of the imperial court by drawing on accounts of musicians who served under Frederick's predecessor and successor, Albrecht II and Maximilian I, respectively: a select few from north-western areas of the empire, notably the Liège composers, Johannes

<sup>48</sup> I. Rumbold & P. Wright, *Hermann Pötzlinger's Music Book: The St Emmeram Codex and its Contents*, Woodbridge 2009, pp. 243–244. See also P. Wright, *The Rise of Polyphony in Vienna*, [in:] *A Companion to Medieval Vienna*, eds. S. Zapke & E. Gruber, Leiden 2021, pp. 579–583.

wskazujący na kontekst liturgiczny i ważną przestrzeń sakralną, jaką była trydencka katedra św. Wigilijusza", *PWG i muzyka*, p. 257.

<sup>47</sup> J. Kracik, *Kler wędrowny w Małopolsce XVI–XVIII w.*, „Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne” 1981, no. 4, p. 65ff.



de Sarto and Johannes Brassart, and, a contingent of Austrian singers and composers trained in Vienna. The Franco-Flemish group specialised in polyphony, while the larger, German-speaking group of local musicians concerned themselves primarily with performance of the liturgical plainchant.

The last phase of Petrus's life finds him back in Pomerania. Approaching the age of sixty, he still had neither prebend nor pension, but he was now an ordained priest. Probably on compassionate grounds by dint of his age, he was recommended by Frederick III for a canonry in the cathedral chapter of Ermland, when next one became available. The royal proposal went forward bolstered, somewhat unusually, by additional support from the Bishop of Vretslav [Wrocław]<sup>49</sup>. But all to no avail. The Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights held advowsons for these appointments, and it suited his political purposes that the canonry in question should go to Bartholomew Liebenwald. When one realises, however, that supplications to the papal *curia* regarding benefices ran in excess of two thousand a week, there can be little wonder that successful prosecution of a supplication required attentive and astute shepherding of it throughout the process<sup>50</sup>. That was the job of specialist procurators. Occasionally, supplicants would attend to the matter in person, and so it was in the case of Petrus's next supplication to the *curia*. His presence in Rome as a member of Frederick's coronation entourage, March 1452, provided just such an opportunity – duly noted in the curial Register of Supplications.

Eventually, a parish-priest position in the Pomeranian town of Belgard [Białogard] was granted to Petrus but it, too, was not without complications. Papal rescripts from April and July 1452, discovered by Martin Staehelin, present a tale of the elderly Petrus, unable to communicate with his Kashubian/

Polish-speaking flock, requesting that his beneficed position be signed over to a native of the region in exchange for a modest annuity. Nothing further is known about him.

## PETRUS'S POST-MORTEM LIFE

He most certainly was not 'a big name', a person who enjoyed fame and esteem, admired and respected for his accomplishments and rare talent. Rather, his was an unassertive personality. Were it not for his university qualifications and the fact that he was numbered amongst the chaplains of one of Europe's most famous courts, it could be said that he did not stand out as 'somebody special'. There was nothing about him that, in and of itself, would have indicated he belonged to a select core of the elite<sup>51</sup>.

But Posterity holds a different view. It has smiled on Petrus, for in Paweł Gancarczyk he has gained an eloquent and tireless advocate. To retort, the very quality of Petrus's compositions is surely the best advocate – as it obviously once was – would be to ignore the hermetical nature of many of his works, an attribute that can be, at one and the same time, appealing and off-putting. Be that as it may, Gancarczyk makes clear in the epilogue to his book, that after fifty years, Petrus's second life is now well and truly sustainable outside the humidicrib of the musical seminar room. It is to be hoped that having now cast off his anonymity and donned the mantle of Central-European-Composer-Poet-Laureate, Petrus Wilhelmi will emulate his Teutonic-Knight forebears and convert those who remain wilfully ignorant of the Central-European motet<sup>52</sup> and the Central-European *conductus*-like song: *cantio-cantilena-carmen*<sup>53</sup>. The auguries are propitious. With more projects like

<sup>49</sup> Warmia was one of the four dioceses comprising the Monastic State of the Teutonic Knights. It enjoyed a degree of autonomy from the Teutonic Knights in matters affecting the selection of bishop and choice of canons. These special concessions were a bone of contention between the Grand Master and the Pope.

<sup>50</sup> The number is quoted in a letter from Peter of Ornet, General Procurator of the Teutonic Knights and resident at the papal *curia*, addressed to the Grand Master of the Order, Konrad von Jungingen. See A. Radziwiński, *Duchowny na papieskim dworze – czyli jak załatwiano sprawy kościelne na najwyższym szczeblu*, [in:] *Życie i obyczajowość średniowiecznego duchowieństwa*, Warszawa 2002, p. 149.

<sup>51</sup> „...nie był z pewnością jakimś «wielkim nazwiskiem», osobą cieszącą dużą sławą i estymą, podziwianą i szanowaną ze względu na pełnione funkcje i niespotykany talent. Był raczej osobowością «drugiego planu», można nawet rzec «zwykłym człowiekiem», gdyby fakt wykształcenia uniwersyteckiego i znalezienia się wśród kapelanów jednego z najważniejszych dworów europejskich, nie był sam w sobie świadectwem przynależności do wąskiego grona elit”, *PWG i muzyka*, pp. 269–270.

<sup>52</sup> *A Critical Companion to Medieval Motets*, ed. J.C. Hartt, “Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music”, 17, Woodbridge 2018.

<sup>53</sup> M. Everist, *Discovering Medieval Song. Latin Poetry and Music in the Conductus*, Cambridge 2018.

*Sound Memories: The Musical Past in Late-Medieval and Early-Modern Europe* (dir. Karl Kügle)<sup>54</sup>, and *The Jagiellonians: Dynasty, Memory and Identity in Central Europe* (dir. Natalia Nowakowska)<sup>55</sup>, and with more splendid books like Jan Ciglbauer's *Carmina Clericorum: Sacred Latin Songs from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries in the Central-European-University and School Milieu*<sup>56</sup>, and the book under review, *Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz and Central European Music of the Fifteenth Century*, we may one day find ourselves looking back on the publication of Gancarczyk's monograph as a watershed moment, comparable even with the cracking of the Petrus acrostic.

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<sup>54</sup> Headed by Professor Karl Kügle (Utrecht), the project *Sound Memories: The Musical Past in Late-Medieval and Early-Modern Europe* (SoundMe) was part of the HERA Joint Research Programme Uses of the Past. HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) is a collaboration of European research councils in the humanities, including NWO.

<sup>55</sup> Headed by Professor Natalia Nowakowska (Oxford), the *Jagiellonians: Dynasty, Memory and Identity in Central Europe* was a major five-year research project (2013–18), funded by a European Research Council Starting Grant and based at the History Faculty, University of Oxford. <https://www.jagiellonians.com/home>

<sup>56</sup> *Carmina Clericorum. Latinské duchovní písně 14. a 15. století ve středoevropském univerzitním a školském prostředí*, ed. J. Ciglbauer, L. Marek, Chomutov 2020.

## SUMMARY

**Robert Curry**

### Tu es Petrus – super hanc petram aedificavi cursum meum

The book under review is the first monograph-length study devoted to the works of the enigmatic composer, Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz. The paucity of information about the composer's life and about the historical circumstances surrounding his works poses a daunting methodological challenge. The aplomb with which the author, Paweł Gancarczyk, has met this challenge attests to the depth of his knowledge of Petrus Wilhelmi's works; furthermore, it reflects his thorough conversance with a multiplicity of relevant sources, compositions (not a few in fragmentary state), institutions and personalities. The review notes the manner in which Gancarczyk has thoughtfully interwoven contextual inference, logical extrapolation and informed conjecture to sustain a fluent and engaging narrative. Due attention in the review is given to the author's contention that the works of Petrus Wilhelmi can be regarded as archetypical of fifteenth-century Central European music. The review acknowledges Gancarczyk's book as an invaluable compendium of up-to-date data and information about Petrus Wilhelmi and his oeuvre.

#### **Keywords**

Central Europe, motet, *cantio*, round, Utraquist, St Emmeram, Teutonic Knights, Frederick III Habsburg, acrostic, *ars poetriae*, *ars nova*