

Vespers Hymnody as a Context for Organ Composition and Improvisation in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Italy

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Singing liturgical texts in alternation practice gave rise to numerous repertoires of sacred music—both vocal and instrumental—during the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. Alternation practice is based on the principle of contrast, whether the contrast of musical textures (monophonic and polyphonic) or of performance forces (utilizing various combinations of soloists, choirs, or instruments—each musician or group of musicians taking turns by verse or section of the liturgical text). Alternation was employed in various liturgical contexts, both in the Mass and the Offices. In the Office liturgies it was Vespers, with its singing of the Magnificat and a well-defined tradition of Latin hymns, that enjoyed a particular richness in alternation-practice repertoires during these centuries.

Italian organists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were expected to participate in alternation practice with the choir by improvising versets. I will use the long and stable liturgical tradition of Vespers hymns as a window for observing sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian improvisation and composition of organ versets. The organ versets that have come down to us—by way of pedagogical treatises, printed collections, and manuscripts—show significant variety in their use (or non-use) of hymn melodies, and in the way these compositions were organized into collections for use in the Vespers liturgy. Some versets are distinctly *hymn* versets, since they are based on hymn melodies—whether they use only brief portions of the hymn melody as a basis for imitative writing, or whether they state selected phrases of a hymn melody (or indeed the entire hymn melody) as *cantus firmus*. Other versets make no reference whatsoever to hymn melodies but are intended nevertheless for use with a variety of liturgical genres, including Vespers hymns. Such freely composed versets find their identity not on the basis of chant melodies used as *cantus firmus* but rather on the basis of mode; thus, they may be utilized flexibly in a variety of li-

turgical contexts. That is to say, a verset in the dorian mode may be applied equally well in one situation to a Vespers hymn, in another situation to the Magnificat, in a third situation to the Kyrie, and so on. Versets of this type are organized modally in collections, while versets based on hymn melodies may be organized either modally or liturgically. One purpose of this study is to provide a sense of the great variety in this repertory of Italian organ music, extending from the 1543 publication of Girolamo Cavazzoni's (ca. 1525–d. after 1577) hymn settings to the 1645 cycle of hymn versets by Giovanni Battista Fasolo (ca. 1598–d. after 1664), published in his *Annuale*, a collection of organ versets for the Mass and the Offices, covering a broad portion of the liturgical year.

A second purpose of this study is to place the repertory of organ hymn versets into its broader context, namely the well-established tradition of vocal polyphonic Vespers hymns, which flourished from the fifteenth through the early seventeenth centuries. Liturgical keyboard repertories are infrequently linked to these vocal analogues. Conversely, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century polyphonic Latin Vespers hymns are rarely linked to keyboard repertories that are analogous to these functional vocal repertories. Thus, performance medium—whether vocal polyphony or keyboard versets—tends to overshadow the broader liturgical category, such as the Latin hymns appointed for highly-ranked Vespers feasts. Such a liturgical category is a kind of common denominator that allows one to look at both vocal polyphony and organ versets as a single type of functional music for alternation practice, though the former (vocal polyphony) is a composed genre, while the latter (organ versets) is fundamentally an improvised genre. Thus, my intent is to focus on a specific liturgical type, bringing vocal and keyboard repertories together so that the polyphonic hymn cycles of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries provide a contextual and liturgical framework for organ settings of Vespers hymns from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I begin with a brief look at vocal polyphonic Latin hymn cycles for Vespers—from Guillaume Du Fay (1397–1474) through Costanzo Porta (ca. 1528/1529–1601). As a second context for organ settings of Vespers hymns, I draw on early seventeenth-century Italian pedagogical writings by Girolamo Diruta (ca. 1554–1610) and Adriano Banchieri (1568–1634).

Cycles of Polyphonic Vespers Hymn

The genre of polyphonic Vespers hymns flourished particularly during the sixteenth century, though we see the earliest precedent for this genre in the hymn cycle by Du Fay, the earliest manuscript source for this repertory being Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, Ms. Q 15.¹ We study this genre in part by examining the hymn cycles themselves, and in part by studying liturgical books appropriate in time and place to each hymn cycle, especially breviaries—collections of texts for the Office liturgies. We are interested in three variables: feasts, texts, and melodies. Which *feasts* had hymn texts assigned for Vespers? Which *hymn texts* are assigned to those feasts? Which *melodies* are used? In tracing such traditions we are interested in the degree of uniformity and stability, or the degree of difference and variety, from place to place and in various time periods. What is fascinating about hymn cycles found in sources of Italian provenance is the uniformity and stability of the feasts, texts, and melodies that make up these hymn cycles—despite a diversity of liturgical books and local practices, especially prior to the Council of Trent (1545–1563).² (Sources of German provenance show rather different and more diverse traditions of feasts, texts, and melodies.) The hymn cycle of Du Fay from the fifteenth century contains a core of feasts, hymns, and melodies that persists in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century hymn cycles of Italian provenance, and indeed finds a liturgical counterpart in the hymn versets for organ of Fasolo's mid-seventeenth-century *Annuale* (see Table 1). And, in fact, the texts and feasts of Du Fay's hymn cycle can be traced back to a mid-thirteenth-century breviary.³ Thus, Italian organists of the seventeenth century, such as Fasolo and

1 For a relatively recent consideration of this repertory and source, see Michael Alan Anderson, "The Organization and Complexes of the Q 15 Hymn Cycle," *Studi musicali* 35 (2006): 327–62. Anderson dates the copying of Du Fay's hymns into Q 15 at ca. 1433–1435. See also the *Census-Catalogue of Manuscript Sources of Polyphonic Music, 1400–1550*, Renaissance Manuscript Studies 1 (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: American Institute of Musicology/Hänssler Verlag, 1979–1988), 69.

2 The fundamental work concerning polyphonic Vespers hymns of the fifteenth century is by Tom R. Ward; see his "The Polyphonic Office Hymn from the Late Fourteenth Century until the Early Sixteenth Century" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1969); "The Polyphonic Office Hymn and the Liturgy of Fifteenth-Century Italy," *Musica Disciplina* 26 (1972): 161–88; and *The Polyphonic Office Hymn, 1400–1520: A Descriptive Catalogue*, Renaissance Manuscript Studies 3 (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1980).

3 The "Ordo breviarii" of 1243–1244, compiled by Haymo of Faversham (ca. 1175–1244). See S. J. P. Van Dijk and J. Hazelden Walker, *The Origins of the Modern Roman Liturgy: The Liturgy of the Papal Court and the Franciscan Order in the Thirteenth Century*

Table 1
 Vespers Hymnody: Cycles of Organ Versetti/Polyphonic Latin Hymn Cycles

Feast	Hymn	Diruta 1593	Banchieri 1605	Bottazzi 1614	Fasolo 1645	Dufay ca. 1440	Festa 1539	Palestrina ca. 1582/1589	Porta 1602
Advent	Conditor alme siderum								
Christmas	Christe redemptor omnium/Ex patre	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Holy Innocents	Salvete flores martyrum		x						
Epiphany	Hostis Herodes impie	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Transfiguration	Quicumque Christum quaeritis			x					
Lent (Weekdays)	Audi benigne conditor					x	x	x	x
Lent (Sundays)	Ad preces nostras		x						
Lent (Sundays)	Aures ad nostras					x	x	x	x
Passion Sunday	Vexilla regis prodeunt								
Octave of Easter	Ad coenam agni providi	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ascension	Jesu nostra redemptio	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pentecost	Veni creator spiritus	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Trinity Sunday; Saturdays per annum	O lux beata Trinitas	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Corpus Christi	Pange lingua gloriosi	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sundays per annum	Lucis creator optime	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

others, participated in a quite stable liturgical tradition dating back more than four centuries.

It was the sixteenth century that produced an abundance of polyphonic hymn cycles based around this Italian tradition.⁴ During the first half of the century Carpentras [Elzéar Genet] (ca. 1470–1548), Costanzo Festa (ca. 1485–90–1545), Adrian Willaert (ca. 1490–1562), and Francesco Corteccia (1502–1571) all composed hymn cycles. The early 1580s saw a remarkable confluence of hymn cycles by Orlando di Lasso (1532–1594), Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525/1526–1594), Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611), Francisco Guerrero (1528–1599), and Giammateo Asola (?1532–1609), among others. Hymn cycles from the early seventeenth century come from Costanzo Porta, Orazio Vecchi (1550–1605), Orfeo Vecchi (ca. 1551–1603), and others. It was typical in the sixteenth century for a composer to provide multiple settings for each hymn, most frequently for the even-numbered stanzas, though Palestrina consistently set the odd-numbered stanzas.

In Table 1 I have chosen the hymn cycles by Du Fay (Bologna MS Q 15, ca. 1433–1435), Festa (MS Cappella Sistina 18, 1538–1539), Palestrina (MS Cappella Giulia XV 19, 1582; 1589 print), and Porta (1602 print) as being representative of the Italian tradition at different time periods. The temporal cycle (Advent through Corpus Christi) shows remarkable uniformity in its correlation of feasts and texts. The sanctoral cycle, too, is quite uniform through the common of saints. Festa, Palestrina, and Porta add some feasts and hymns for specific saints that go beyond the core of the Italian tradition, but clearly the hymnic content is quite uniform in these cycles of Italian provenance. (Though Table 1 does not show it, the melodic uniformity is also very high.)

(Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1960); and S. J. P. Van Dijk, *Sources of the Modern Roman Liturgy*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963).

4 For comparative repertorial studies of sixteenth-century hymn cycles related to the Italian tradition of feasts and texts, see Daniel Zager, "The Polyphonic Latin Hymns of Orlando di Lasso: A Liturgical and Repertorial Study" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1985), 35–64, 155–79.

Hymn Cycles in the Keyboard Pedagogical Works of Diruta and Banchieri

Girolamo Diruta's *Il Transilvano* was published in two parts: part one appeared in 1593 and was reprinted in 1597, while part two did not appear in print until 1609.⁵ Subsequent reprintings of part one date from 1612 and 1625; part two was reprinted in 1622—all of these editions testifying to the continuing influence of this treatise over a period of more than three decades. Diruta's work, dedicated to the Prince of Transylvania, Sigismund Báthori (r. 1588–1598), is subtitled "Dialogue on the true manner of playing organs and stringed keyboard instruments." Diruta had studied organ with Claudio Merulo (1533–1604), who contributed a letter to the 1593 edition of part one, praising his student Diruta by stating: "I take boundless pride in the fact that he has been my student, for in this treatise he has brought singular honor both to himself and to me, as one would expect from a person of great talent."⁶ Diruta also studied with Porta, whose 1602 polyphonic hymn cycle is summarized in Table 1.

Part two of *Il Transilvano* is divided into four books, which include topics such as intabulating vocal compositions, counterpoint, and the modes. In book four he turns to the topic of alternation practice, drawing on musical repertoires associated most prominently with Vespers—Latin hymns and the Magnificat. In book four Diruta notes that "The organist is obliged to answer the choir and imitate what they sing, whether it be figured music or plainsong."⁷ Thus, Diruta assumes that the organist will incorporate the hymn melodies into his improvised versets. He goes on to provide twenty-one examples of organ versets based on Vespers hymns, though he makes clear that he is providing only abbreviated examples, stating:

I shall only point out with a few intabulated notes the beginning and end of all the hymns. Each student, then, with this secure guide will be able to respond to the choir in a brief or lengthy manner, according to what he prefers.⁸

5 Girolamo Diruta, *The Transylvanian (Il Transilvano)*, vols. 1 (1593) and 2 (1609), trans. and ed. Murray C. Bradshaw and Edward J. Soehnlén, Musicological Studies 38 (Henryville, Pa.: Institute of Mediæval Music, 1984).

6 Diruta, *Il Transilvano*, 1:40.

7 Diruta, *Il Transilvano*, 2:119.

8 Diruta, *Il Transilvano*, 2:119.

Diruta, always the thorough teacher, is providing organ students not with finished compositions but with short examples to kindle their improvisatory imaginations, short examples that he assumed would be expanded by each student.

The examples he provides are always in a four-part texture, and are consistently sixteen semibreve measures long. Frequently Diruta uses the opening melodic profile of each hymn as the basis for a brief imitative treatment of these crucial pitches—crucial in the sense that the opening pitches of these well-known hymn melodies are sufficient to link the organ verset to a specific hymn melody, thus bringing to mind by way of an associative communication process the text of that hymn, and its customary place within the liturgical year. In a few hymns Diruta foregoes imitative treatment in favor of harmonizing the opening pitches; see, for example, the Epiphany hymn “Hostis Herodes impie,” in which Diruta harmonizes the first two phrases of the hymn.⁹

Diruta gives his hymn examples not in a meaningful liturgical order but in order by mode—surely a helpful pedagogical strategy for the young organist. For the order of hymns by mode, see Table 2. For the hymns rearranged in a meaningful liturgical order and placed in the context of other hymn cycles, see Table 1.

Adriano Banchieri also wrote an important treatise for organists, his *L'Organo suonarino* appearing in three separate editions published in 1605, 1611, and 1622.¹⁰ The 1611 edition was reprinted once, and the third edition of 1622 was reprinted twice. Banchieri emphasized that his treatise was concerned neither with rules for playing the organ (he refers the reader to Diruta's *Il Transilvano*) nor with the rules of counterpoint (he refers the reader to Gioseffo Zarlino [1517–1590] and Giovanni Maria Artusi [ca. 1540–1613], among others). Instead, his treatise is intended to provide “whatever is usually required for organ players, in order to alternate the organ [*corista* = at the pitch of the choir] with the *canti fermi* for all the

9 Diruta, *Il Transilvano*, 2:125.

10 Adriano Banchieri, *L'Organo Suonarino (Venezia 1605)*, ed. Edoardo Bellotti, *Tastata: Opere d'intavolatura d'organo e cimbalo* 31 (Latina: Il Levante Libreria Editrice, 2014). For a facsimile edition see Adriano Banchieri, *L'Organo suonarino*, *Bibliotheca Organologica* 27 (Amsterdam: Frits Knuf, 1969). For English translation and commentary see Donald Earl Marcuse, “Adriano Banchieri's *L'Organo suonarino*: Translation, Transcription and Commentary” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1970).

Table 2

Hymn Versets of Girolamo Diruta

Mode 1

Christe redemptor omnium	Christmas; All Saints
Pange lingua gloriosi	Corpus Christi; Consecration of a Church
Ut queant laxis	Nativity of St. John the Baptist
Ave maris stella	Marian feasts
Tibi Christe splendor patris	St. Michael
Jesu corona virginum	Common of Virgins

Mode 2

Deus morum dux minorum	St. Francis
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Mode 3

Deus tuorum militum	Common of One Martyr
Sanctorum meritis	Common of Many Martyrs
Concinant plebs fidelium	St. Clare

Mode 4

Jesu nostra redemptio	Ascension; Transfiguration
Aurea luce	Sts. Peter and Paul
Exultet caelum laudibus	Common of Apostles
Huius obtentu	Common of Holy Women

Mode 7

Veni creator spiritus	Pentecost
Lucis creator optime	Sundays

Mode 8

Hostis Herodes impie	Epiphany
O lux beata Trinitas	Trinity
Iste confessor	Common of Confessors

Mode 11

En gratulemur hodie	St. Antony of Padua; St. Francis
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Mode 12

Ad coenam agni providi	Paschal time
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feasts and ceremonies of the year.”¹¹ Each of the three editions of *L’Organo suonarino* is divided into five books:

Book 1	Mass
Book 2	Vespers Psalms
Book 3	Vespers hymns
Book 4	Magnificat
Book 5	Marian antiphons

Unlike Diruta, Banchieri does not provide examples of hymn versets. Instead, he takes a different pedagogical approach by providing a bass line for each hymn, believing that the organist will have greater success in learning how to improvise versets on chant melodies by working from bass lines rather than the melodies themselves. He makes the bass line (*canto figurato*) rather than the melody (*canto fermo*) the point of departure for improvisation:

Secondly, those who play without knowledge of the *canto fermo*, by having a bass as a most secure guide, the places for beginning [*lonchi di principiare*], the cadences and the choir *finales* to the eight church tones, surely will be able, with practice, to succeed.¹²

Banchieri is taking a very practical approach, noting in the introduction to the third book (on Vespers hymns):

I conclude that all organists have knowledge more or less of the *canto figurato*, but very few of them of the *canto fermo*.¹³

By providing the bass lines (with a system of occasional accidentals) Banchieri is able to assist the improvising organist in understanding matters of the modes and their cadential pitches, thus casting their improvisations within those standard tonal parameters.

By contrast, Giammateo Asola, himself the composer of a polyphonic hymn cycle printed in 1585, compiled a book of chant *canti fermi*—including hymn melodies—that was published in 1592.¹⁴ Asola’s volume thus

11 Banchieri, *L’Organo Suonarino*, ed. Bellotti, 125.

12 Banchieri, *L’Organo Suonarino*, ed. Bellotti, 125.

13 Banchieri, *L’Organo Suonarino*, ed. Bellotti, 129.

14 Giammateo Asola, *Canto fermo sopra messe, hinni, et altre cose ecclesiastiche appartenenti à sonatori d’organo per giustamente rispondere al choro* (Venice: Vincenti, 1592).

allowed the improvising organist to work from the hymn melody as *cantus firmus*, while Banchieri's collection—presuming knowledge of the hymn melodies—allowed the organist to work from a bass line.

Beneath these bass lines Banchieri includes the texts of the hymn stanzas to be sung by the choir. He states that the first verse of the hymn was to be sung by the choir; thus, the second verse would be played on the organ, alternating to the end of the hymn. He also noted that the choir should always sing the last verse; in a hymn with an even number of verses the choir would then sing the last two verses.

Banchieri's treatise is, finally, a treasure trove of liturgical practice for the organist in Italy during the first half of the seventeenth century (and for scholars of music and liturgy in subsequent eras). After the conclusion of the five books in this treatise, Banchieri appends useful tables pertaining to the liturgical year. One is arranged by month and day and lists feasts and their associated Vespers hymns.¹⁵ A second table proceeds through the Sundays of the entire year listing Vespers hymns for the temporal cycle.¹⁶

Table 1 reveals at a glance the content of Vespers hymns in the treatises by Diruta and Banchieri, and places them in the context of polyphonic Latin hymn cycles from the mid-fifteenth to the early seventeenth century. Unlike Diruta, Banchieri recognized a more complete temporal cycle, providing for the standard Vespers hymns associated with Advent, Holy Innocents, Sundays of Lent, and Passion Sunday—in addition to the other temporal feasts and hymns included by Diruta. Within the sanctoral cycle Banchieri provided for additional feasts and hymns associated with Sts. Peter and Paul, as well as two hymns for the common of saints in paschal time. Banchieri's list of Vespers hymns is very similar in its content to the sixteenth-century hymn cycles of Festa and Palestrina. Diruta, on the other hand, provided sanctoral hymns for Sts. Clare, Francis, and Antony of Padua. In 1574 Diruta entered a Franciscan monastery; thus, his inclusion of a hymn to St. Francis may be explained in part by his own identity as a Franciscan. Antony of Padua was also a Franciscan, and St. Clare was a contemporary of St. Francis, who played a key role in establishing in Assisi the community of nuns headed by Clare.

15 Banchieri, *L'Organo Suonarino*, ed. Bellotti, 81–83; Marcuse, "Banchieri," 193–97.

16 Banchieri, *L'Organo Suonarino*, ed. Bellotti, 83–84; Marcuse, "Banchieri," 200–01.

Organ Versets in Italy

This consideration of organ versets begins in the mid-sixteenth century with the hymn settings of Girolamo Cavazzoni (published in 1543), and extends through the organ hymn cycle of Fasolo, published just a little over a century later in 1645. Son of the organist and composer Marco Antonio Cavazzoni (ca.1490–ca.1560), Girolamo Cavazzoni worked in Mantua as organist at Santa Barbara. His extant organ music comes to us from two publications, the first of which dates from 1543, the second of which was published without a date.¹⁷ The two volumes taken together provide twelve hymn settings (see Table 3).¹⁸ In each case, Cavazzoni provides a single setting rather than a series of shorter versets. Because these hymn settings are divided between Cavazzoni's two published volumes it is not clear that Cavazzoni intended to produce a hymn cycle, and liturgically this group of hymns is not as complete as in a typical sixteenth-century vocal polyphonic hymn cycle. Yet this group of hymns has its own liturgical consistency: with the exception of the seasons of Advent and Lent (penitential seasons of preparation during which the use of instruments might be omitted), the customary feasts and seasons of the temporal cycle are all represented, as is the usual hymn for Sundays throughout the year. The sanctoral cycle is represented only by the hymn for Marian feasts and four of the five customary hymns for the common of saints, but one could argue that in so doing Cavazzoni was providing composed examples for some of the most frequently observed sanctoral feasts, the assumption being that they are to be considered *representative* of his improvisational work as an organist. Cavazzoni's setting of "Exultet coelum laudibus," for the Common of Apostles, is constructed with the hymn cantus firmus in the bass voice.¹⁹ The upper voices open with a brief point of imitation on the opening melodic contour, but in general the upper voices seem more freely conceived than derived from the cantus firmus.

17 Claudio Sartori, *Bibliografia della musica strumentale Italiana stampata in Italia fino al 1700*, Biblioteca di Bibliografia Italiana 23, 2 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 1952), 1:10, speculates that the second volume was also published in 1543. H. Colin Slim, "Cavazzoni, Girolamo," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2d ed. (London: Macmillan, 2001), 5:316, states that the second volume "must have been printed before 1549, the date of the death of its dedicatee, Benedetto Accolti, Cardinal of Ravenna."

18 For a modern edition of his hymns see Girolamo Cavazzoni, *Orgelwerke I, Libro Primo (1543)* and *Orgelwerke II, Libro secondo*, ed. Oscar Mischiati (Mainz: Schott, 1959–1961).

19 Cavazzoni, *Orgelwerke II*, 41.

Table 3

Hymns of Girolamo Cavazzoni

<i>Feast</i>	<i>Hymn</i>
Christmas	Christe redemptor omnium/Ex patre
Epiphany	Hostis Herodes impie
Octave of Easter	Ad coenam agni providi
Ascension	Jesu nostra redemptio
Pentecost	Veni creator spiritus
Corpus Christi	Pange lingua gloriosi
Sundays, <i>per annum</i>	Lucis creator optime
Marian feasts	Ave maris stella
Common of Apostles	Exultet coelum laudibus
Common of One Martyr	Deus tuorum militum
Common of Confessors	Iste confessor
Common of Virgins	Jesu corona virginum

In contrast to Cavazzoni’s settings, which incorporate the appropriate hymn melodies, the organ versets of Antonio Valente (fl. 1565–1580) and Giovanni Maria Trabaci (ca.1575–1647) bear no relationship to chant and are not based on a cantus firmus. Valente is known to have served as an organist in Naples from 1565 to 1580. His *Versi spirituali* of 1580 consists of forty-three freely composed organ versets, distinguished one from another on the basis of mode rather than cantus firmus.²⁰ Trabaci, another Neapolitan organist, provided an extensive collection of organ versets as part of his 1615 collection of organ works printed in Naples.²¹ He provided one hundred versets—twelve on each of the eight church modes, with an additional four for the eighth mode. The flexible use of these versets is indicated by the composer, who stated that they were written so that the organist could “respond with organ versets to sung versets at masses, vespers

20 For an inventory of this collection see Sartori, *Bibliografia della musica*, 1:36–37. For a modern edition (unfortunately, heavily edited) see Antonio Valente, *Versi spirituali per organo*, ed. Ireneo Fuser (Padua: Zanibon, 1958).

21 For an inventory of this collection see Sartori, *Bibliografia della musica*, 1:208–11.

and all divine services."²² Valente's collection of 1580 and Trabaci's of 1615 are significant for the history of the organ verset in Italy, showing versets that are intended to be used flexibly—governed only by mode—in varied liturgical contexts of the Mass and Offices.

One year prior to Trabaci's collection of freely-composed organ versets, Bernardino Bottazzi's (fl. 1614) organ instruction book *Choro et organo* was published (Venice, 1614). Bottazzi, a Franciscan from Ferrara, noted on the title page that he wrote this work so that the organist "can easily and quickly learn a secure method of playing organ Masses, Antiphons, and Hymns on any type of cantus firmus."²³ To illustrate his method he provided a series of his own compositions in this volume, including twenty-two hymn versets based on *canti firmi*, a single verset for each of the twenty-two hymns. Bottazzi's volume also prints the hymn melodies in full before each organ verset, thus providing a valuable source of hymn melodies from early-seventeenth-century Italy.²⁴ In this volume Bottazzi observed that "in hymns, and in sequences the imitation of the cantus firmus is greatly necessary" (p. 9).²⁵ In terms of its liturgical content (see Table 1), Bottazzi's volume corresponds closely with Diruta's choice of feasts and hymns; unlike Banchieri, both omit hymns for the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent.

Girolamo Frescobaldi's (1583–1643) *Il secondo libro di Toccate* (1627) provides organ versets for only four hymns (see Table 4).²⁶ Why would Frescobaldi choose these particular four hymns to represent his work as an

22 Quoted in the modern edition of his organ versets; see Giovanni Maria Trabaci, *Hundert Versetten über die acht Kirchentonen/Cento versi sopra li otto toni ecclesiastici 1615*, Diletto Musicale 1231, ed. Rudolf Walter (Vienna: Doblinger, 1998), 2. For a study of Trabaci's *Versi* see Roland John Jackson, "The Keyboard Music of Giovanni Maria Trabaci" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1964), 109–38.

23 Noted in Edward E. Schaefer, "Bernardino Bottazzi's *Choro et organo* and the Italian Organ Mass of the 16th and 17th Centuries," *The Organ Yearbook* 18 (1987): 46–77, here at 65.

24 A facsimile is available: Bernardino Bottazzi, *Choro et organo, primo libro*, Bibliotheca musica Bononiensis 2, 131 (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1980). There is no evidence that a secondo libro was ever published.

25 Noted in Frederick Hammond, *Girolamo Frescobaldi* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 368.

26 The modern edition is Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Il secondo libro di toccate d'intavolatura di cembalo e organo, 1627–1637*, Opere complete 3, ed. Etienne Darbellay (Milan: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 1979), 78–85. A facsimile is available in the series *Archivum Musicum*: Collana di testi rari 4 (Florence: Studio per Edizioni Scelte, 1980).

Table 4

Hymns of Girolamo Frescobaldi

<i>Feast</i>	<i>Hymn</i>	
Sundays, per annum	Lucis creator optime	(3 versets)
Marian feasts	Ave maris stella	(4 versets)
Common of Apostles	Exultet coelum laudibus	(3 versets)
Common of Confessors	Iste confessor	(4 versets)

organist participating in alternation performance of Vespers hymns? The common denominator is their use throughout the church year, as opposed to a one-time use (e.g., the hymn “Veni creator spiritus” for Pentecost) or a seasonal use (e.g., “Ad coenam agni providi” for the Easter season). “Lucis creator optime” was used on Sundays throughout the church year, “Ave maris stella” for a variety of Marian feasts, and hymns for the common of saints (“Exultet coelum laudibus” and “Iste confessor”) for a variety of feasts throughout the church year. Thus, from a practical standpoint, he gave organists of his day hymn versets that would enjoy much use throughout the church year.

Four other hymn settings attributed to Frescobaldi appear in a Roman manuscript source (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, MSS Chigi Q.VIII.205).²⁷ The four hymns are (in manuscript order): “Lucis creator optime” (Sundays throughout the year), “Veni creator spiritus” (Pentecost), “Exultet coelum laudibus” (Common of Apostles), and “Christe redemptor omnium, Ex Patre” (Christmas). The settings of “Lucis creator optime” and “Exultet coelum laudibus” in this manuscript source are not concordant with the settings of those hymns in Frescobaldi’s 1627 published collection. In fact, there has been a debate about whether these manuscript hymn settings were actually composed by Frescobaldi. While Etienne Darbellay

27 These hymn settings have been edited by W. R. Shindle in Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Keyboard Compositions Preserved in Manuscripts*, Corpus of Early Keyboard Music 30, 3 vols. (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1968), 3:1–6. A facsimile is available as *Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica MSS Chigi Q.VIII.205–206*, 17th-Century Keyboard Music: Sources Central to the Keyboard Art of the Baroque, vol. 15, no. 3, introd. by Alexander Silbiger (New York: Garland, 1989); hereafter cited as Silbiger 1989.

is inclined to defend their attribution to Frescobaldi,²⁸ Alexander Silbiger observed that “The authenticity of these unique works appears dubious at best; they are written in a much simpler and more predictable style than any of Frescobaldi’s printed works.”²⁹ Silbiger was careful to make clear that “there are no external factors that argue conclusively against the acceptance of these [Chigi] manuscripts as a reliable source for Frescobaldi’s works. What is lacking, however, is any evidence in their favor.”³⁰ Even if the four manuscript hymn settings were to be attributed unequivocally to Frescobaldi, what would not change is their character as simple teaching pieces, quite distinct in their style from the hymn versets found in the 1627 volume; again, Silbiger:

Compared with the settings in Frescobaldi’s TOCCATE II of some of the same hymns, the Chigi settings are rather simple; if they are not the work of a beginning composer, they must at least have been written for a beginning performer.³¹

Frescobaldi’s hymn versets in his 1627 collection make one wish that he had seen fit to publish a complete cycle of hymn versets. His settings are characterized by a clear focus on the hymn melody, which permeates the contrapuntal texture of each verset. In the first verset of “Exultet coelum laudibus,” for example, Frescobaldi uses the first, third, and fourth phrases of the hymn to generate points of imitation. In the second verset he uses long-note cantus firmus statements of each of the four hymn phrases—successively in the bass, alto, soprano, and (again) the soprano voices.³² In

28 Darbellay’s discussion is found in his “I manoscritti Chigi Q.IV.24 e Q.VIII.205/206 come fonti frescobaldiane: criteri filologici di autenticità,” in *Girolamo Frescobaldi nel IV centenario della nascita: Atti del convegno internazionale di studi (Ferrara, 9–14 settembre 1983)*, Quaderni della rivista Italiana di musicologia 10, ed. Sergio Durante and Dinko Fabris (Florence: Olschki, 1986), 107–23.

29 Silbiger 1989, v–vii; and Silbiger, *Italian Manuscript Sources of 17th Century Keyboard Music* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1980), 152–56, 160–61, here at 161; hereafter cited as Silbiger 1980.

30 Silbiger 1980, 160.

31 Silbiger 1980, 161.

32 Frescobaldi, *Il secondo libro di toccate*, ed. Darbellay, 80–81. On Frescobaldi’s means of treating the hymn melody, see Edoardo Bellotti, “L’Organo e il ‘Cantus Firmus’ in Italia: Una prassi liturgica da Frescobaldi al XIX secolo riflessione storica e problemi attuali,” in *Die Orgel als sakrales Kunstwerk: Orgelbau und Orgelspiel in ihren Beziehungen zur Liturgie und zur Architektur der Kirche*, Neues Jahrbuch für das Bistum Mainz, Sonder-

short, Frescobaldi's hymn versets are *not* pedagogical examples in the mold of Diruta and Bottazzi; rather, they are masterfully crafted hymn versets that draw their contrapuntal substance and shape from the hymn melody itself. As the hymn melody permeates the organ verset the organ continues to sound the melody sung by the choir in the alternate stanzas. In this way the organ participates in an associative communication process in which a well-known melody brings to mind an equally well-known text and its associated liturgical identity. That these texts and melodies were, in fact, well known is due not only to the stability of this long-standing tradition of Vespers feasts, hymns, and melodies, but also to the cyclical nature of that tradition, anchored (as it was) in the recurring rhythm of the church's year. That is alternation practice at its very best—rich in liturgical and musical meaning.

To summarize: From Frescobaldi we have only four hymns, each with multiple versets. From Bottazzi and Diruta we have cycles of hymn versets, but only one verset per hymn, and the pedagogical nature of these collections is clear—especially so with Diruta. Giovanni Battista Fasolo's contribution to this genre, however, is a rather full cycle of hymn versets for organ, each hymn represented by multiple versets, and some hymns with two groups of multiple versets. Thus, among these seventeenth-century organist/composers, only Fasolo provided a genuine hymn cycle for the organ.

Fasolo, like Diruta and Bottazzi also a Franciscan, worked in Rome, Naples, and Palermo. His *Annuale* of 1645 was intended to provide the church organist with essential repertory for the entire church year.³³ Included in the *Annuale* are:

- for the Mass, three complete series of versets
- for Vespers, the hymn cycle
- for Vespers, Magnificat versetti, in all eight modes
- ricercars, one in each of the eight modes
- canzonas, one in each of the eight modes
- four fugues

band 1994/1995, ed. Friedrich W. Riedel (Mainz: Verlag des Bischöflichen Stuhles, 1995), 151–70, here at 155. See also Hammond, 205.

33 For modern editions see 1) Giovanni Battista Fasolo, *Annuale (Venedig 1645): Versetten, Ricercaten, Canzonen und Fugen durch das ganze Kirchenjahr für Orgel*, ed. Rudolf Walter, 2 vols. (Heidelberg: Willy Müller-Süddeutscher Musikverlag, 1965); and 2) Giovanni Battista Fasolo, *Annuale, vol. 1: Te Deum & Hinni per tutto l'Anno*, ed. Jörg Jacobi (Bremen: edition baroque, 2010).

The hymnic content of Fasolo's *Annuale* is summarized in Table 5.

In terms of its liturgical content Fasolo's hymn cycle is quite similar to those of his predecessors Diruta and Bottazzi (see Table 1). Like Diruta and Bottazzi, Fasolo does not provide organ versets for the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent. Unlike Diruta and Bottazzi, Fasolo does not provide the standard hymns for two highly ranked feasts—St. Michael and All Saints. He provides a different hymn, "Fortem virili pectore," for the Common of Holy Women, a hymn that was included in the Roman breviary of 1603.³⁴ It is instructive, finally, to compare the liturgical content of Fasolo's 1645 cycle to that of Du Fay from two hundred years earlier. While Du Fay's cycle is more extensive than Fasolo's, nearly all of the hymns and feasts found in Fasolo's cycle are also present in Du Fay's cycle, the exceptions being only the last three hymns in Fasolo's cycle. Thus, the core of the Italian tradition of Vespers feasts and hymns persists, as it also defines Fasolo's seventeenth-century organ hymn cycle.

In his preface Fasolo points specifically to the "terzetto" versets that conclude many of the hymns in his cycle. Fasolo relates the three-part texture of these concluding (frequently doxological) stanzas specifically to the Trinity. He further indicates that the soprano voice, which holds the chant melody, may be played by the right hand an octave higher, while the left hand takes the two lower voices. These concluding terzetti are noteworthy for their clear presentation of the hymn melody, and for often being significantly longer (two or three times longer) than the preceding versets, which usually state at most a portion of the hymn melody, or use the initial pitches of a phrase of the hymn melody to generate a point of imitation (see, for example, the second set of four versets for the hymn "Ave maris stella").³⁵

34 See John Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnology*, 2 vols. (1907; repr., New York: Dover, 1957), 1:382.

35 Fasolo, Walter edition, 10–11; Fasolo, Jacobi edition, 9–11.

Table 5Hymn Cycle by Giovanni Battista Fasolo (*Annuale*, 1645)

<i>Feast</i>	<i>Hymn</i>	
Christmas ^a	Christe redemptor omnium/Ex patre	4 versets
Epiphany	Hostis Herodes impie	3 versets
Octave of Easter ^b	Ad coenam agni providi	3+3 versets ^c
Ascension	Jesu nostra redemptio	5 versets
Pentecost	Veni creator spiritus	3+4 versets ^d
Trinity Sunday and Saturdays per annum	O lux beata Trinitas	2 versets
Corpus Christi	Pange lingua gloriosi	5 versets ^e
Sundays, per annum	Lucis creator optime	3 versets
Marian feasts	Ave maris stella	4+4 versets ^f
St. John the Baptist	Ut queant laxis	3 versets
St. Peter Apostle	Aurea luce	3 versets
Common of Apostles	Exultet luminum	3+4 versets ^g
Common of One Martyr	Deus tuorum militum	3 versets

[Common of Apostles and Martyrs in Paschal Time: With the text “Nel commune delli Apostoli, e Martiri del tempo Paschale, si piglia sopra l’Hinno Ad cenam agni providi” Fasolo indicates use of the hymn “Ad coenam agni providi,” whose melody is the same as that of 1) “Tristes erant apostoli,” the hymn traditionally associated with Common of Apostles in Paschal Time, and of 2) “Rex gloriose martyrum,” the hymn traditionally associated with Common of Martyrs in Paschal Time.]

Common of Many Martyrs	Sanctorum meritis	4 versets
Common of Confessors	Iste confessor	4 versets
Common of Virgins	Jesu corona virginum	3 versets
Common of Holy Women	Fortem virili pectore	3 versets
St. Francis	Proles de caelo	6 versets ^h
“In Secundis Vesperis et ad processiones”	Decus morum dux minorum	5 versets

a Designated by Fasolo also for the Feast of Holy Innocents (December 28).

b Designated by Fasolo also for feasts of Apostles in Paschal Time.

c Second set of three versets: “Versi più allegri.”

d Second set of four versets: “Li seguenti versi sono più allegri.”

e Third verset: “Altri più moderni.”

f Second set of four versets: “Altri Versi più facili, e più moderni.”

g Second set of four versets: “Altri Versi più allegri.”

h Fourth verset: “Alii antecedentibus moderniores.”

Conclusion

What can we learn from studying repertoires of alternation practice in church music, in this case the Italian repertory of Vespers hymn versets? First, the hymn verset repertory plays its part in allowing us to understand more fully the history of organ improvisation on a cantus firmus in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy.

Second, particularly when we examine the hymn verset repertory in the context of vocal polyphonic Latin hymn cycles, we are reminded that church musicians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries composed and improvised—at least in part—within long-standing liturgical traditions of quite remarkable stability. While the musical styles of Dufay, Palestrina, and Fasolo differed, they composed works for Vespers within the same liturgical framework. Those who practice sacred music in the twenty-first century would do well to recognize, study, and understand such liturgical traditions, exploring whether and how musical repertoires generated by this rich liturgical past might continue to prove useful in the present.

Third, the overall repertory of organ music is a rich one by any account. Even if by some quirk of fate we had only the organ works of J. S. Bach and Olivier Messiaen, it would still be a rich and significant repertory. What we sometimes fail to appreciate, however, is that in addition to the works that form our canon of customary and acceptable recital works for the organ, there are extensive repertoires of organ music composed for functional use within the Mass and Office liturgies. Functional repertoires such as these organ versets for Vespers hymns open a window on the workaday life of the Italian organist/improviser in the seventeenth century, revealing not only how these functional repertorial needs were provided, but, as important, how they were anchored in a long and stable liturgical past of vocal and instrumental music.

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Preferred Citation: Rosand, Ellen. *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre*. Berkeley: University of California Press, c1991 1991. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft3199n7sm/>. Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice. Born in Florence, and further developed in Rome, opera essentially defined itself as a genre in Venice. There, and only there, three conditions existed that proved crucial for its permanent establishment: regular demand, dependable financial backing, and a broad and predictable audience. Regularity of demand was guaranteed by the Venetian calendar. Carnival season had been a major tourist attraction in Venice for at least a century. Download Citation | Improvisation in Vocal Contrapuntal Pedagogy: An Appraisal of Italian Theoretical Treatises of the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century | The extemporaneous application of pre-assimilated compositional paradigms into musical performance retained a central position in the training of | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. Improvisation in Vocal Contrapuntal Pedagogy: An Appraisal of Italian Theoretical Treatises of the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century. January 2014. DOI: 10.5642/perfpr.201318.01.03. But organists learn and study improvisation very seriously indeed in France, which is why five organ students at the National Conservatory climbed to the loft at the Church of St. Ferdinand des Ternes recently to learn at the hands and feet of a master improviser, Prof. Loic Mallie. Mr. Mallie, who relaxed with his pupils over a beer at the brasserie across the street before class, had a message for them. "My main training in improvisation was as a jazz pianist in Reno," she said. Ms. Papadakos, a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music, runs a vespers organ improvisation series Sunday evenings at 7 at St. John the Divine, and it continues until the end of June. Advertisement. Continue reading the main story. Improvisation in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Lessons from Rhetoric and Jazz. John Bass. Copyright 2009 Claremont Graduate University. Saying that embellishment was a big deal for sixteenth-century musicians is hardly a bold move; evidence abounds in treatises, music collections, and written accounts from the time. 1 It has also been the subject of a fair amount of keen musicological scholarship over the years. 2 But making sense out of what musicians of the time actually did in performance and trying to reproduce it today has proven to be more difficult, mainly because improvisers, by nature, do no Vespers Hymnody as a Context for Organ Composition and Improvisation in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Italy. Daniel Zager. Conversely, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century polyphonic Latin Vespers hymns are rarely linked to keyboard repertoires that are analogous to these functional vocal repertoires. Thus, performance medium "whether vocal polyphony or keyboard versets" tends to overshadow the broader liturgical category, such as the Latin hymns appointed for highly-ranked Vespers feasts. Table 1 Vespers Hymnody: Cycles of Organ Versetti/Polyphonic Latin Hymn Cycles. A Festschrift for Kerala J. Snyder 4.