Modeling as a Clue to Chronology in the Second Generation of "Fors Seulement" Chansons

Christine Suzanne Getz

The rondeau cinquain "Fors seulement" has provided as rich a heritage to the French chanson as has the "L'homme armé" melody to the cantus firmus mass. Some thirty fifteenth- and sixteenth-century settings of "Fors seulement" are known to survive, and these may be divided readily into three distinct categories. The first of these is the large group of chansons derived from the setting by Ockeghem found in the Dijon Chansonnier. The second comprises four chansons dated c. 1500 utilizing a "new" cantus firmus unrelated to Ockeghem's version, while the third includes three works that stem from Pipelare's four-voice setting based on the "new" cantus firmus.

Of particular interest to the history of the "Fors seulement" tradition is the origin of the cantus firmus serving as the basis for the compositions placed in the second category, which includes an anonymous three-voice setting found in London, British Library, Ms. Add. 35087 (BL), an anonymous four-voice setting appearing in Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, Ms. Q 19 (BO), an anonymous four-voice setting located in Cambrai, Bibliothèque de la Ville, Ms. 124 (CAM), and a four-voice setting by Matthaeus Pipelare (MP). The identification of an original source for the "new" cantus firmus through either manuscript and print dating or style study has been considered impossible, chiefly because the surviving chansons transmitting it, with the exception of the anonymous chanson in CAM, surfaced during the twenty-one-year period 1497-1518.
Moreover, no exact date of origin can be fixed for any of the primary manuscript sources, save the aforementioned Cambrai manuscript.\textsuperscript{5} Further difficulties are posed by the numerous manuscript and print concordances for Pipelare's setting.\textsuperscript{6} Consequently, scholars have resorted primarily to discussion of a few tenuous melodic relationships among the works transmitting the "new" cantus firmus, an approach that has yielded more confusion than conclusive results.

The anonymous four-voice setting in CAM appears to have been eliminated as a possible original source for the cantus firmus by both Helen Hewitt and Martin Picker, principally because it features an elaboration of the cantus firmus not found in the remaining chansons and quotes additional elements from later settings obviously modeled upon those of the second group. Its only manuscript source is clearly dated 1542; the lateness of this date may have been a factor as well in the elimination of the CAM setting as an original source.\textsuperscript{7} On the one hand, Ronald Cross (see Table 1) has implied that MP may have been the first to introduce the "new" cantus firmus, a hypothesis that appears plausible when considering the dating of manuscript sources alone.\textsuperscript{8} Picker, on the other hand, has suggested, but not demonstrated, that MP relied heavily upon the setting in BL.\textsuperscript{9} Hewitt appears to accept the version in BL as the original source of the cantus firmus but proposes no clearly stated theory concerning the cantus firmus' subsequent transmission.\textsuperscript{10} Picker suspects that the settings in BL and BO may have taken the cantus firmus from a third source that yet is to be identified (X). However, Picker further implies that while Pipelare may have derived his setting from that found in BL, no similarly recognizable relationship between the chansons in BL and BO exists.\textsuperscript{11}

A thorough musical examination of the settings found in BL and BO, as well as an analysis of the setting by Pipelare, demonstrates that both MP and BO were mod-