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TEODORO RICCIO'S CONUNDRUM  
OF *MISSA LUDOVICUS DUX WIRTENBERGENSIS* RESOLVED?\*

*For Anna*

Teodoro Riccio's *Liber primus missarum* of 1579,<sup>1</sup> dedicated to the king of Poland, Stephen Batory (r. 1575–86), was most probably intended as a diplomatic gift to strengthen the ties between the king and Riccio's employer, the Prussian duke Georg Friedrich (1539–1603). The collection contains six masses, all based on pre-existing material; three compositions appear to be parody masses, while the other three employ monophonic models.<sup>2</sup> The fifth work listed in the index, *Missa Ludovicus Dux Wirtenbergensis*, at first glance appears to be a *soggetto cavato* mass with a cantus firmus constructed in a similar way to the one in Josquin's *Missa Hercules Dux Ferrarie* dedicated to Duke Ercole I d'Este.<sup>3</sup>

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\* I owe special thanks to Prof. Kenneth Kreitner for his prompt and careful reading of an early draft of this text and his helpful comments. I am also grateful to the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments, which have helped to focus my arguments. It goes without saying that any errors in this article are mine alone.

1 Modern edition in Teodoro Riccio, *Liber primus missarum*, ed. Christian Thomas Leitmeir, Warsaw 2019 (= Monumenta Musicae in Polonia).

2 Ibid., pp. 20–21.

3 In the wake of Josquin's *soggetto cavato* mass, that technique became quite popular during the Renaissance and was often used to honour important political figures. Duke Ercole II d'Este was a dedicatee of at least a few such compositions. For example, Cipriano de Rore's five-voice *Missa Hercules* (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Mus. ms. 9) is a true *soggetto cavato* mass and sets the words 'Vivat foelix Hercules secundus dux ferrariae quartus', while Rore's monumental seven-voice *Missa Praeter rerum seriem* (based on Josquin's Christmas motet), combining the techniques of cantus firmus and parody, presents the text 'Hercules secundus dux ferrariae quartus vivit et vivat' as a cantus firmus sung by the

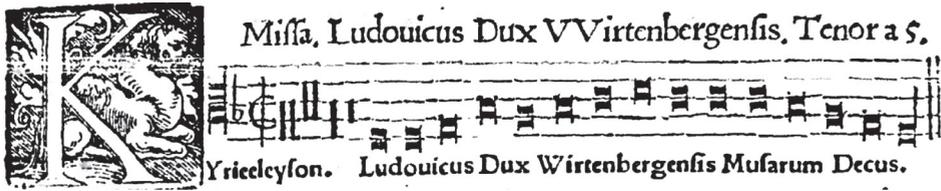


Fig. 1. The *soggetto cavato* (?) of *Missa Ludovicus Dux Wirtenbergensis*

However, analysis of *Missa Ludovicus Dux Wirtenbergensis* proves that such is not the case. Agnieszka Leszczyńska was probably the first who noticed that:

[T]his is not a *soggetto cavato* as usually used in such situations, because the notes of this theme (ffgbabdcdfcccbagf) do not form a sequence of solmisation syllables that match the syllables of the text in terms of vowels. Either Riccio was not aware of the essence of the *soggetto cavato* technique and only employed long notes and a homage text to make his cantus firmus similar to the classical manifestations of the *soggetto cavato*, or he borrowed a theme from another work, adding new words to it.<sup>4</sup>

Likewise, Christian Thomas Leitmeir later presented a detailed and thorough analysis of the *soggetto cavato* and came to the same conclusion.<sup>5</sup> In the introduction to the edition of Riccio's *Liber primus missarum*, he sums up his observations:

[W]hereas the *soggetto cavato* in Josquin's mass [*Hercules Dux Ferrarie*] was derived from the words of the motto, no such connection can be established between the words of Riccio's mass [*Ludovicus dux Wirtenbergensis*] and the pitch structure of its ostinato, even if one tried to relate solmisation syllables to either consonants or vowels, or indeed any combination of the two. If Riccio had intended to translate the name into a musical motto, the original dedicatee remains elusive. Neither Stephen Batory nor any other sovereign of the time matches the melody.<sup>6</sup>

altus secundus. See e.g., Alvin Johnson, 'The Masses of Cipriano de Rore', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 6 (1953) no. 3, pp. 227–239. On Josquin's mass, see: Edgar H. Sparks, *Cantus firmus in Mass and Motet 1420–1520*, Berkeley 1963, pp. 217, 331–336; Bonnie Blackburn, 'Masses Based on Popular Songs and Solmization Syllables', in: *The Josquin Companion*, ed. Richard Sherr, Oxford 2000, pp. 82–87; David Fallows, *Josquin*, Turnhout 2009, pp. 256–262; Willem Elders, *Josquin des Prez and his Musical Legacy: an Introductory Guide*, Leuven 2013, pp. 117–119; Peter Phillips, 'Heaven and Earth: a Performer's Guide to Josquin's Masses', *The Musical Times* 159 (2018) no. 1944, pp. 3–87, esp. 43–47.

4 Agnieszka Leszczyńska, 'Recepcja XVI-wiecznych protestanckich druków muzycznych w braniewskim kolegium jezuickim' [The reception of sixteenth-century Protestant music prints at the Jesuit College in Braniewo], in: *Muzyka wobec tradycji. Idee – dzieło – recepcja* [Music and tradition: ideas, work, reception], ed. Szymon Paczkowski, Warsaw 2004, pp. 191–197, esp. 194 n. 13.

5 Christian Thomas Leitmeir, 'Teodoro Riccio's *Liber primus missarum* (1579): a Musical Ambassador between Prussia and Poland', in: *The Musical Heritage of the Jagiellonian Era*, eds. Paweł Gancarczyk, Agnieszka Leszczyńska, Warsaw 2012, pp. 123–154, esp. 137–140.

6 Ch.T. Leitmeir, 'Introduction', in: T. Riccio, *Liber primus missarum*, p. 21.

A similar comment, relevant to analysis of Riccio's mass, was made by Philip Jackson. Discussing Jachet of Mantua's *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae*, he pointed out that the first notes of its *soggetto cavato*, when expressed in solmisation syllables, did not correspond to the text in the anticipated manner, and he assumed that the mass was originally intended to honour another person, such as Charles V.<sup>7</sup> Jackson clearly expresses similar doubts about Jachet's mass as Leszczyńska and Leitmeir do with regard to Riccio's composition. From these descriptions, one may conclude that even if it looks like a *soggetto cavato*, the melody with the words *Ludovicus dux Wirtenbergensis Musarum Decus* does not necessarily employ the *soggetto cavato* technique in the traditional manner. In other words, the use of a long-note cantus firmus does not equate to a *soggetto cavato*, as its pitches were (presumably) not extracted from the text appearing above. So is this puzzle at all solvable? My suggestion is that the words *Ludovicus dux Wirtenbergensis* were linked to a melody derived from chant repertoire, and these two elements – the words and a melody intertwined – were designed to produce and communicate a certain message to the listener. In my opinion, this was all carefully planned by the composer, who, it should be remembered, converted from Catholicism to Lutheranism.<sup>8</sup>

One of the chant melodies I have recently come across bears some resemblance to the melody used by Riccio as a 'soggetto cavato' in his mass. This melody with the text 'Cornelius centurio, vir religiosus ac timens Deum' is used as an antiphon for the feast of SS. Peter and Paul (29 June) (Fig. 2 and 3).<sup>9</sup> The other interesting thing – in my opinion relevant to the problem at hand – is that the fragment of the story about Cornelius in the Acts of Apostles is prescribed as the first reading for Easter Sunday or Easter Monday.<sup>10</sup>

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| <p>Ant. Cornelius centurio, <u>vir religiosus</u><sup>11</sup><br/>ac timens Deum, vidit<br/>manifeste angelum Dei dicentem sibi:<br/>Corneli, mitte et accersi Simonem<br/>qui cognominatur Petrus; hic dicit tibi<br/>quid te oporteat facere.</p> | <p>Ant. Cornelius the centurion, <u>a pious</u> and God-fearing man, he saw<br/>clearly an angel of God telling him:<br/>Cornelius, send for Simon,<br/>who is also called Peter; he will tell you<br/>what you should do.</p> |
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7 Philip T. Jackson, 'Two Descendants of Josquin's Hercules Mass', *Music and Letters* 59 (1978) no. 2, pp. 188–205, esp. 194.

8 Walter Blankenburg, Norbert Dubowy, 'Riccio, Teodoro', in: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Second Edition*, ed. Stanley Sadie, London 2001, vol. 21, p. 323; Ch.T. Leitmeir, 'Introduction', in: T. Riccio, *Liber primus missarum*, p. 20; A. Leszczyńska, 'Recepcja', p. 194.

9 There exist some variants of the melody. The most common deviation from the melody presented here is a leap upwards of a fourth after the second note, instead of a third. Obviously, there are other melodies similar to the one used by Riccio (e.g. the Easter Vesper hymn *Ad cenam agni providi*, the Paschal *Asperges me*), but in those cases I was unable to build up logical arguments to account for their use in the mass.

10 *Lectio Actuum Apostolorum* 10, 37–43, see *Liber usualis*, Paris–Rome 1954, pp. 785–786; see also e.g. *Missal of the Jagiellons of Jasna Góra*, ed. Remigiusz Pośpiech, Opole–Częstochowa 2013, p. 145.

11 Like Cornelius ('vir religiosus'), Ludwig was known as 'der Fromme' (a pious man).



Fig. 2. *Cornelius centurio, vir religiosus*, antiphon (fragment), Wrocław, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, MS I F 401, fol. 170v

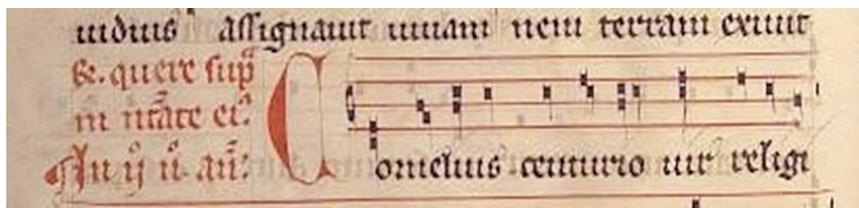


Fig. 3. *Cornelius centurio, vir religiosus*, antiphon (fragment), Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 30 (olim 38/9 f.), fol. 203v

Several centurions are mentioned in the New Testament.<sup>12</sup> The accounts of them reveal the degree to which Christ's message and influence crossed social, ethnic and political lines and barriers. They are presented as the finest men in the Roman army, pious and good. One account of a centurion, probably the best known, is found in the Gospel of Matthew (8: 5–13),<sup>13</sup> in which a conversation between a centurion and Jesus is related. This man approached Jesus, pleading: 'Lord, I have a servant lying sick at my house, cruelly tormented with the palsy'. And Jesus said to him: 'I will come and heal him'. The centurion answered: 'Lord, I am not worthy to receive thee

12 In general, a centurion was a Roman officer commanding a century or company, the size of which varied from fifty to one hundred men. But in the Vulgate and the Douay Bible, the term is also applied to an officer of the Hebrew army.

13 The same story with slight changes appears in Luke, 7: 1–10.

under my roof; my servant will be healed if thou wilt only speak a word of command'.<sup>14</sup> By calling Jesus 'Lord', the centurion showed his humility, modesty and even submission, but above all his great faith in declaring that he believed that Christ need only say the word and his servant would be healed. By his attitude and conduct, the centurion won Jesus over. In the Book of Acts, two centurions are mentioned by name: Julius, a centurion who brought St Paul to Rome (Acts 27 and 28), and Cornelius, the first Gentile admitted into the Church (10: 1–48).<sup>15</sup> The story told about the latter is more important for our purposes. In the Acts, Cornelius is depicted as a Godfearing man who always prayed and was full of good works. The story opens by telling us that Cornelius was stationed at Caesarea and 'belonged to what is called the Italian cohort. He was a pious man who worshipped the true God, like all his household, gave alms freely to the people and prayed to God continually'.<sup>16</sup> One day an angel appeared to him and told him to send for Peter. Cornelius sent his men for Peter, and the Holy Spirit told Peter to go with them. In the house of Cornelius, Peter was teaching the many people who had gathered there. He told them about the gospel of Jesus Christ, and they felt the influence of the Holy Ghost and knew that his words were true. When Peter's friends learned that he was preaching to non-Jews, they were shocked. However, Peter told them that he had learned that the gospel of Jesus Christ was for everyone. While he went on speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who were hearing the word. God's intervention indicated that those who believed in Jesus Christ should go out to the Gentiles without fear of becoming impure and without burdening them with obligations to observe the provisions of the law.

So what has all of this got to do with the dedicatee of this particular mass, Duke Ludwig of Württemberg (1554–93), known as 'der Fromme' (the Pious)? Is it really possible that the collection of masses intended as a gift for the king of Poland with the aim of 'fostering the political bonds between neighbouring rulers'<sup>17</sup> could contain a composition which might be taken as a kind of affront to the Polish king? It is true, as Leitmeir points out, that the presence of a mass in honour of Ludwig of Württemberg in a volume dedicated to the king of Poland should be viewed as astonishing, especially since the duke was known to be the most zealous supporter of Lutheranism in the Holy Roman Empire. Let us assume, though, that the presence of this mass in the collection was intended and carefully planned, as its purpose was precisely to show how much Georg Friedrich cared about maintaining a good relationship with Stephen Batory and Catholic Poland. So what prompted Riccio to include such a composition in this publication? One reason immediately comes

14 <https://www.newadvent.org/bible/mat008.htm>, accessed 20 May 2023.

15 In the Acts, other centurions are also mentioned (Acts 21: 32, 22: 25, 23: 23).

16 <https://www.newadvent.org/bible/act010.htm>, accessed 20 May 2023; all the following quotations from the Bible come from the same source.

17 Ch.T. Leitmeir, 'Teodoro Riccio's *Liber primus missarum* (1579)', p. 126.

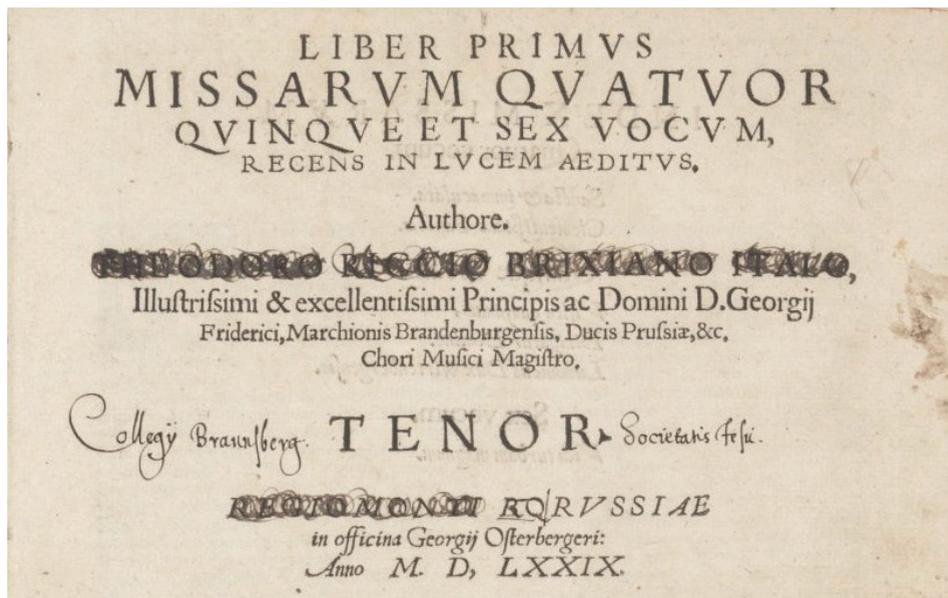


Fig. 4. Teodoro Riccio, *Liber primus missarum* (Königsberg 1579), Uppsala, Universitetsbibliotek, Carolina Rediviva, Vok. mus. i. tr. 394–398, Tenor, title page

to mind. Georg Friedrich, Riccio's employer, was Ludwig's uncle, as his half-sister, Anna Maria von Brandenburg-Ansbach (1526–89), had married Christoph, Duke of Württemberg (1515–68). Two sons were born of this marriage: Eberhard (1545–68) and Ludwig (1554–93). When Christoph and his elder son died in 1568, Ludwig was next in line to the throne. Until 1558 he was under the strict tutelage of his mother, the privy councillor, Melchior Jäger, and then his uncle, Georg Friedrich von Brandenburg-Ansbach.<sup>18</sup> The other reason for Riccio's action is not so obvious, but is highly possible; namely, there may be a symbolic meaning coded in *Missa Ludovicus Dux Wirtenbergensis*, and this concealed message, not so easily noticeable at first glance, was designed to stress even more the duke's positive attitude towards the king of Poland. From the Acts of the Apostles, we learn that Cornelius and his household were the first Gentiles welcomed into the Christian community and should no longer be considered fundamentally separate from the Israelites. Two fragments of Peter's speech appear to be important in this context. Peter says: 'God has been shewing me that we ought not to speak of any man as profane or unclean' (Acts 10: 28). And then he continues: 'I see clearly enough that God makes no distinction between man and man; he welcomes anybody, whatever his race, who fears him and does what

18 Ludwig Alberti, 'Ludwig Herzog von Württemberg', in: *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 19, Leipzig 1884, p. 597. See also: Ch.T. Leitmeir, 'Teodoro Riccio's *Liber primus missarum* (1579)', pp. 137–138.



Fig. 5. Teodoro Riccio, *Liber primus missarum* (Königsberg 1579), *Missa Ludovicus Dux Wirtenbergensis*, Uppsala, Universitetsbibliotek, Carolina Rediviva, Vok. mus. i. tr. 394–398, Tenor

piety demands. God has sent his word to the sons of Israel, giving them news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all' (Acts 10: 34–36). In saying this, Peter realised and acknowledged that God had already set this groundbreaking precedent that the Gentiles were part of his plan of salvation. Also, Peter understood that in the Mystical Body of Christ, and in human brotherhood in general, we are all one and working toward a common goal of life in harmony with God and each other. Cornelius is considered to be one of the first gentile converts to Christianity. His conversion teaches us much about what the church was and what it was supposed to look like. This story offers an outstanding model of God's shattering of traditional divisions between people, allowing everyone to be a member of Christ's church.

There is still one aspect of the problem which needs to be discussed here. In the Braniewo (Braunsberg) copy of Riccio's publication, in the Kyrie and Gloria of the mass, the words 'Ludovicus dux Wirtenbergensis Musarum decus' were replaced by the words 'Resurrexit Dominus sicut dixit Alleluia',<sup>19</sup> and on the front page and at the end of the dedication, Riccio's name was scrupulously crossed out (Fig. 4 and 5). In addition, at St Mary's Church in Elbląg (Elbing), the motto was replaced by 'Micaël Dux coelistis militae defende nos'.<sup>20</sup>

19 A. Leszczyńska, 'Recepcja', p. 194. For the description and analysis of the music collection once belonging to the Jesuit College in Braniewo and now held at the Uppsala University Library, see: Agnieszka Leszczyńska, *Musicalia Collegii Braunsbergensis Societatis Jesu*, Warsaw 2021 (= *Fontes Musicae in Polonia*), esp. 'Introduction', pp. 25–41.

20 T. Riccio, *Liber Primus Missarum*, p. 21 and 79. The text starting with the words 'Micaël Dux', reminiscent of the original 'Ludovicus dux', could have been employed to change the purpose of the mass. I would suggest that it was made to turn the composition into a votive mass intended for performance at St Mary's in Elbląg during a series of conflicts between Sweden and Poland in the seventeenth century. The change may have been the result of word association ('dux'); in the Book of Daniel, Michael is called 'princeps magnus' (12: 1–2; also 10: 13–14) (synonyms of 'dux' are 'princeps', 'rex' and 'imperator').

The textual intervention of the Jesuits of Braniewo College may indicate their lack of awareness and understanding of Riccio's intentions; simply, they were so fervent in their religious zeal that they may not have understood the central message. This is highly likely in light of what is known about their censorship activity.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, one may wonder why they used the Paschal words 'Resurrexit Dominus sicut dixit Alleluia' instead of the original ones? Were they chosen at random? Let us return to the Acts (10: 39–43), to the account of Cornelius, where Peter declares:

[T]hey killed him [Jesus], hanging him on a gibbet; but on the third day God raised him up again, and granted the clear sight of him, not to the people at large, but to us, the witnesses whom God had appointed beforehand; we ate and drank in his company after his rising from the dead. And he gave us a commission to preach to the people, and to bear witness that he, and none other, has been chosen by God to judge the living and the dead. All the prophets bear him this testimony, that everyone who has faith in him is to find remission of sins through his name.

In the passage cited above, Peter mentions Jesus' resurrection in the context of the equality of men before God (Catholicism and Lutheranism should be of equal importance, as all men are equal before God), whereas the words 'Resurrexit Dominus sicut dixit Alleluia' were probably derived from the First Epistle to the Corinthians (15: 1–19), in which Paul (a convert to Christianity after persecuting the very followers of the community that he joined) argues that he is not fit to be called an apostle, since there was a time when he persecuted the church, but by God's grace and through faith he is in the way to salvation; Paul states that Christ was crucified and died for the sins of all humankind. Moreover, one of the chant melodies connected with the words 'Alleluia resurrexit Dominus alleluia sicut dixit vobis alleluia', precisely its opening motif, is somewhat reminiscent of the beginning of the melody from the mass *Ludovicus Dux Wirtenbergensis*.<sup>22</sup> Undoubtedly the story of *Cornelius centurio* and the words 'Resurrexit Dominus' come from a similar biblical context, in which teaching the principle of the equality of all humans is emphasised. This may indicate that the Jesuits were aware of Riccio's intention and by using the Paschal text made a tactful allusion to his message.<sup>23</sup>

In *Liber usualis* (p. 1655) the similar text 'Sancte Michael archangele defende nos in praelio: ut non pereamus in tremendo iudicio' appears as an alleluia verse for the feast of St Michael Archangel (29 September). For a description of the sources from the library of St Mary's in Elbląg, see also: Agnieszka Leszczyńska, 'Późnorennesansowe fragmenty mszalne z dawnej biblioteki elbląskiego kościoła Mariackiego' [Late Renaissance mass fragments from the former library of St Mary's church in Elbląg], in: *Źródła muzyczne. Krytyka, analiza, interpretacja* [Music sources: criticism, analysis, interpretation], eds. Ludwik Bielawski, J. Katarzyna Dadak-Kozicka, Warsaw 1999, pp. 190–200.

21 A. Leszczyńska, 'Późnorennesansowe fragmenty mszalne', esp. pp. 193–195.

22 <https://cantusindex.org/id/001352>; some versions of 001352 are closer than others.

23 It is worth remembering here that the *Cornelius centurio* antiphon is prescribed for the feast of SS. Peter and Paul (29 June), and the account of Cornelius from the Acts is used during the Paschal time.

Riccio composed his mass in honour of Duke Ludwig some time before 1579, but decided to include it in this collection – intended as a gift for the Polish king Stephen Batory – because he was aware of its positive theological message. In light of what can be learnt from the Acts, from the evangelical account of Cornelius, Riccio's way of reasoning (as someone who converted from Catholicism to Protestantism) may have been that despite the dogmatic differences between Lutherans and other Christians, as brothers in faith, they all (we all) deserve to be saved by God. Therefore, the mass dedicated to Duke Ludwig, as a zealous adherent of Lutheranism, should not be taken as an affront, but rather as an attempt to seek common agreement, mutual understanding and respect between Christian confessions.<sup>24</sup>

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24 'A reading of the Mass in light of *Cornelius centurio* could forge an even closer tie to Stephen Batory than that proposed in the article. The reference to a God-serving heathen who has found the favour of the Lord may have resonated with the religious tolerance that lay at the heart of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth'. For this comment and for pointing out this possible interpretation of the meaning of the *Cornelius centurio* story in the discussed context, I would like to express my thanks to the anonymous reviewer.

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#### REBUS Z MISSA LUDOVICUS DUX WIRTENBERGENSIS TEODORA RICCIA ROZWIĄZANY?

Długonutowa melodia z mszy *Ludovicus Dux Wirtenbergensis* (z *Liber primus missarum*, Królewiec 1579) Teodora Riccia nie jest konwencjonalnym cantus firmus typu *soggetto cavato*. Znaczenie i proveniencja tejże melodii stanowi więc nie lada łamigłówkę. W dodatku jak pogodzić hołdowniczy wręcz i koncyliacyjny charakter przedmowy Riccia do *Liber missarum*, zbioru dedykowanego Stefanowi Batoremu, z obecnością w nim mszy, która mogła zostać potraktowana jako otwarty afront w stosunku do katolickiego króla Polski? Antyfony *Cornelius centurio, vir religiosus ac timens Deum* oraz opowieść o setniku Korneliuszu z Dziejów Apostoelskich pozwalają popatrzeć na tę kompozycję z innego punktu widzenia. Być może msza *Ludovicus Dux Wirtenbergensis* jest nośnikiem teologicznego przesłania będącego rezultatem świadomego sprzężenia melodii wspomnianej antyfony z imieniem luteranckiego księcia Ludwika Wirtemberskiego, przesłania, które miało wzmocnić przekaz zawarty w przedmowie i którego celem było poszukiwanie porozumienia, wzajemnego zrozumienia i szacunku między wyznaniem chrześcijańskimi.

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Keywords / słowa kluczowe: Teodoro Riccio, Ludwig, Duke of Württemberg / książę Ludwik III Wirtemberski, Cornelius the Centurion / setnik Korneliusz (św. Korneliusz), cantus firmus, *soggetto cavato*

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