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*MISSA SCARAMELLA: THE SECOND LIFE OF AN INCOMPLETE
OBRECHT MASS*

ABSTRACT Jacob Obrecht's *Missa Scaramella* survives as a unicum in two partbooks (altus and bassus) in Kraków's Biblioteka Jagiellońska. A reconstruction of the mass has recently been published by Fabrice Fitch (in collaboration with Philipp Weller and Paul Kolb). To 'verify' the results of that reconstruction, this review will look into claims made about the original notation of the cantus firmus (*Scaramella va alla guerra*) and compare it with another, independently conceived, reconstruction of the *Missa Scaramella* by Marc Busnel.

KEYWORDS reconstruction, Renaissance polyphony, Jacob Obrecht, music edition, review

ABSTRAKT „*Missa Scaramella*”. *Drugie życie niekompletnej mszy Obrechta*. Niekompletna *Missa Scaramella* Jacoba Obrechta przetrwała jako unikat w dwóch księgach głosowych – altus i bassus – przechowywanych w Bibliotece Jagiellońskiej w Krakowie. Niedawno opublikowana została jej rekonstrukcja autorstwa Fabrice'a Fitcha, przygotowana we współpracy z Philippem Wellerem i Pauliem Kolbem. Celem niniejszej recenzji jest krytyczna weryfikacja wyników tej rekonstrukcji poprzez analizę twierdzeń dotyczących oryginalnego zapisu cantus firmus (*Scaramella va alla guerra*) oraz porównanie edycji z alternatywną, niezależnie opracowaną wersją *Missa Scaramella* autorstwa Marca Busnela.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE rekonstrukcja, polifonia renesansowa, Jacob Obrecht, edycja muzyczna, recenzja

Blank staves attract attention. I remember vividly, during my undergraduate composition studies, leafing through the brown softcover volumes of the New Obrecht Edition published by the Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis (KVNМ). My eye was drawn – inevitably perhaps for an aspiring composer – to the empty staves in lieu of a discantus and tenor in the *Missa Scaramella* in volume 11.¹ The only source for this mass consists of two partbooks, an altus and a bassus, formerly in the Preußische Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin under the shelfmark Ms. mus. 40634, and now held at the Biblioteka Jagiellońska in Kraków (see Fig. 1). The choice of the New Obrecht Edition's editors to print blank staves throughout, signalling the loss of the discantus and tenor parts, was a felicitous one; it opened up the space to reimagine those voices.² I have since lost my juvenile (and probably not very successful) attempts to fill some of the blanks in Obrecht's mass, but the exercise did spark a lasting interest in reconstructing incomplete polyphony.³ A few years later, in 2013, I also learned of Fabrice Fitch's reconstruction-in-progress of the *Missa Scaramella* during one of the *écoles thématiques* on the reconstruction of Renaissance music at the Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance (Tours), which have been an eye-opener to me in many respects.

It is, therefore, a true joy to see Fitch's reconstruction in print now, also published by the KVNМ, although not – as would perhaps have been fitting – as an addendum to the New Obrecht Edition. Prior to this publication, Fitch had illuminated several aspects of the reconstruction in articles and conference papers and had been instrumental in bringing the *Missa Scaramella* to sound again in a recording and concerts by the Binchois Consort.⁴ Begun in 2010, together with Philip Weller (to whom Fitch dedicates the edition), Fitch continued to work on the reconstruction after Weller's passing in 2018. He was later assisted by Paul Kolb in the identification of particularly

This article reviews Jacob Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, ed. Fabrice Fitch with Phillip Weller and Paul Kolb, Utrecht: Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 2024, pp. XXV+50. ISBN: 978-906-375-236-1.

- 1 Jacob Obrecht, *Missa Salve diva parens, Missa Scaramella, Missa Sicut spina rosam*, ed. Barton Hudson, Utrecht 1990 (= New Obrecht Edition 11).
- 2 On the fascination exerted by the musical fragment, see Niels Berentsen, 'Mind the Gap: Reimagining Incomplete Medieval Music', in: *Performing by the Book? Musical Negotiations between Text and Act*, ed. Bruno Forment, Leuven 2024 (= Orpheus Institute Series), pp. 21–22.
- 3 See *ibid.*, pp. 21–26 and N. Berentsen, 'Reimagining Ciconia's Lacunary Ballate', *Studi Musicali* 13 (2022) no. 2, pp. 27–68.
- 4 Fabrice Fitch, 'Restoring Obrecht's *Missa Scaramella*', *Early Music* 50 (2023) no. 2, pp. 578–590, doi.org/10.1093/em/caad055; F. Fitch, 'Cacciando Scaramella: Another Essay in Reconstructing Lost Canons (and an Indecent Postscript)', in: *Music of the Josquin Era, 1460–1560*, eds. Mitchell Brauner, David Fallows and Jesse Rodin, Münster 2024, pp. 439–460; F. Fitch, 'On the Use of the Repeat Sign in Obrecht's *Missa Scaramella* (and a Reconstructed Obligo)', in: *Music Notation in Theory and Practice, 1400–1600*, ed. Paul Kolb, Turnhout (forthcoming); *Obrecht: Scaramella*, The Binchois Consort, CD, Hyperion (CDA68460), 2024.



Fig. 1. Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Ms. mus. 40634 (fol. 132v), altus partbook showing the Osanna I, <https://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl>

complex cantus firmus statements, presumably involving enigmatic canons.⁵ Whilst these collaborators are given pride of place in Fitch's edition (including on the cover), he himself is clearly responsible for its final shape, as well as the lion's share of the work. The *Missa Scaramella* has occupied Fitch for an impressive fourteen years from start to finish, which is reflected in the profound way the reconstruction engages not just the with the surviving altus and bassus, but with the rest of Obrecht's oeuvre as well.

One may thus say 'consummatum est', offer congratulations, and put down one's pen. That, however, would do justice neither to the effort that went into reconstructing the *Missa Scaramella*, nor to questions that may be asked about the status of the results obtained, as well as their presentation in this edition. For instance, in his *Gramophone* review of the Binchois Consort's recording, David Fallows has called reconstructing the *Missa Scaramella* 'absurdly quixotic.' Although he finds the results 'thoroughly convincing' and 'built on a close understanding of how Obrecht functioned', Fallows seems unconvinced that (with two out of four parts missing) any reconstruction could possibly approach Obrecht's original: 'if only one voice is lost there's a good chance of reconstructing something plausible.'⁶ On a more superficial level, one may interrogate certain editorial decisions, such as the fact that the reconstructed discantus and tenor are not reduced in size, as would be customary, as well

5 F. Fitch, 'Restoring Obrecht's *Missa Scaramella*', pp. 1–3, and 10.

6 David Fallows, 'Obrecht', *Gramophone* (October 2024), p. 104.

as the ‘intrusion’ of square note shapes and other mensural elements in an otherwise (vertically aligned, barred) modern score.

VERIFYING A RECONSTRUCTION

Turning first to questions of reliability and plausibility, it seems to me that Fallows’s remarks, more than anything else, indicate the need for a better understanding of the different kinds of musical data (with their respective levels of reliability) that make up a reconstructed musical work such as Fitch’s version of the *Missa Scaramella*.⁷ I would argue that this edition comprises four distinct kinds of musical data: first, manuscript readings of the altus and bassus, which (barring scribal error) can be considered certain; second, the inferred statements of the cantus firmus (*Scaramella va alla guerra*), as well as lengthy and strict imitations, which (as much as anything) can be considered ‘proven’; third, shorter, free imitations, as well as procedures such as motivic repetition or *fauxbourdon*, which may count as probable but cannot be positively established; finally, recomposed material based on a knowledge of Obrecht’s style, which may look very plausible, but ultimately remains speculative.

Of course, the only true verification of a reconstruction lies in the discovery of a new concordance that includes the lost voices, rendering the reconstruction obsolete, something which occasionally happens.⁸ However, Fitch is probably justified in saying that his reconstruction approaches the structural aspects of the *Missa Scaramella* with a ‘high degree of confidence’.⁹ Statements of the cantus firmus have been identified in all sections except the first half of the Sanctus, which Fitch admits remains somewhat of a mystery.¹⁰ Some cantus firmus statements are entirely straightforward, such those in the Kyrie, already identified by Rob C. Wegman (see Ex. 3).¹¹ Others are quite complex, such as the tune’s appearances in the Credo, where the tenor apparently needs to modify it in different ways: first the cantus firmus needs to be read in doubled values, with every second note in coloration, discarding all rests (bars 19–59); later it must be read entirely in semibreves, alternating three white and three black ones (bars 186–245), again skipping the rests, before singing the melody in its usual form (bars 249–272).

7 For discussions on the status of musical reconstructions and their reliability, one may refer to several papers read during the conference ‘Reconstructing and Re-sounding Early Music’ (Geneva, 14–18 October 2024). The paper by Paul Kolb, in particular, contrasts the reconstruction of the *Missa Scaramella* with other, less ‘certain’, reconstructive methodologies, see <https://www.hesge.ch/hem/evenements/re-constructing-and-re-sounding-early-music>, accessed 20 January 2025.

8 For one such a case, see Oliver Korte, ‘Reconstructing Antoine Brumel: How to Bring the Chanson *Dieu te gart, bergere* Back to Life’, *Journal of the Alamire Foundation* 8 (2016) no. 1, pp. 165–180, doi.org/10.1484/J.JAF.5.110674.

9 J. Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, p. xi.

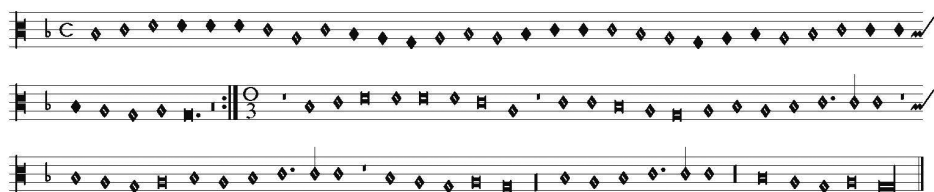
10 Ibid.; F. Fitch, ‘Restoring Obrecht’s *Missa Scaramella*’, pp. 9–11.

11 Rob C. Wegman, *Born for the Muses: The Life and Masses of Jacob Obrecht*, Oxford 1994, p. 280.

The first and second of these, which could have been written as enigmatic canons, are wittily inscribed ‘nox et dies non requiescant’ (‘they have no rest by night and by day’) and ‘qui ambulat in tenebris videt lux’ (‘who walks in darkness sees the light’) by Fitch, paraphrasing Revelation IV:11 and John XII:35–37 (see Ex. 1). Besides a simple ‘revertere’ (indicating retrograde) in the bassus, another verbal canon is found in the altus: ‘pleni ex tenore per antiphrasim’. This inscription cleverly uses the rhetorical term *antiphrasis* (to say the opposite of what one means) to indicate melodic inversion, but the music it produces is very simple: a mirroring ‘voice-exchange’ within a fifth.¹² Despite the fact that none of the surviving verbal canons denote procedures quite as complex as the ones uncovered by Fitch and Kolb, they do show the likelihood that the tenor (as the usual recipient of the cantus firmus) would have contained more of these.

Ex. 1. Jacob Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, ed. Fabrice Fitch with Phillip Weller and Paul Kolb, Utrecht 2024, p. XX: Canon in the tenor of the Credo

[Canon: *Qui ambulat in tenebris videt lux.*]



Summing up, the recovery of a precise notational solution for the cantus firmus statements in the Credo can be seen as verification in and by itself. Using Ockham’s razor, one could argue that the visual simplicity of these solutions provide much stronger hypotheses than a loosely rhythmicized version of the tune or some free material would. Significantly, as the tenor appears to have been the most frequent recipient of the cantus firmus throughout the mass, with occasional appearances in the discantus as well, a significant portion of the *Missa Scaramella* can be reconstructed to three parts in this relatively secure way.¹³

12 J. Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, pp. 36–37 (bars 45–67). Obrecht may well have been familiar with this procedure from the simple polyphony of the *devotio moderna*, where this age-old practice of discant in contrary motion was cultivated well into the sixteenth century, see Niels Berentsen, ‘The Slow Death of Medieval Discant: Considering the “longue durée” in Historical Improvisation Pedagogy’, in: *Early Music Pedagogy Then and Now: From Classical Antiquity to the Renaissance*, eds. Marcello Mazzetti and Livio Ticli, Turnhout 2025 (= Musica Incarnata 3), pp. 159–184.

13 Most of the cantus firmus statements have also been independently identified by Marc Busnel (see below). Busnel, however, does not identify the precise notational shape of the cantus firmus in the Credo, which leads to several differences in its alignment with the surviving voices, particularly in bars 186–245 (‘et in unam sanctam’). On account of the arguments given above, Fitch’s version is clearly to be preferred in this respect.

Another means of verification, especially in cases where no ‘smoking gun’ (for instance a cantus firmus) can be found, is comparison between two or more independently conceived reconstructions. If the two versions are similar, they may be seen as corroborating each other, similar to the replication of an experiment in the sciences. This method has been applied systematically to the incomplete unica in the *Livres de Chansons Nouvelles* printed by Nicolas Duchemin during the Lost Voices Project, the website of which allows users to view reconstructions by different collaborators side by side.¹⁴ Such a comparative analysis is also possible for the *Missa Scaramella*, thanks to another (unpublished) reconstruction by Marc Busnel.¹⁵ Busnel’s version was premiered in 2017 by La Main Harmonique and Les Sacqueboutiers de Toulouse. Although this reconstruction was also presented during the Tours ‘écoles thématiques’, both he and Fitch have confirmed to me that they elaborated their versions of the *Missa Scaramella* without meaningful consultation.

QUESTIONS OF STYLE

The more speculative element of reconstructing a work such as the *Missa Scaramella* is the recomposition of the free sections of the missing parts. Here the reconstructor has to answer questions regarding the ‘phenotype’ of the original. What was the level of activity of these missing voices? Where did they pause? Did they engage in imitative behaviour? And did the composer use particular melodic techniques? Sometimes one may rely on common sense (for instance in supplying cadences); at other times one has to content oneself with completing the musical texture in a stylistically plausible way. In other words, the reconstructor now needs to advance a hypothesis about the style and musical surface of the lost original.

An interesting feature of the *Missa Scaramella* appears in two sections of the Agnus Dei in which Obrecht creates an ostinato by means of repeat signs (altus, bars 76–116, bassus, bars 155–186; see also Ex. 2).¹⁶ Whilst this exact procedure is found nowhere else in Obrecht’s output, he is known – or perhaps even infamous – for his use of ‘minimal music-like’ ostinatos and sequences.¹⁷ Obrecht’s penchant for

14 The Lost Voices Project, <https://digitalduchemin.org/reconstructions/>, accessed 14 April 2025.

15 I am grateful to Marc Busnel for giving me access to his reconstruction, and allowing me to discuss it in the context of this review. I sincerely hope Busnel will publish his version in the near future. A trace of this work can be seen in the following video, in which Busnel shows a beautifully ‘reconstructed’ choir book of the *Missa Scaramella*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qdedC5At48>, accessed 14 April 2025.

16 For more on this, see F. Fitch, ‘On the Use of the Repeat Sign’.

17 For a discussion of Obrecht’s ‘checkered’ reputation, see Fabrice Fitch, ‘For the Sake of his Honour. Obrecht Reconsidered’, *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 48 (1998) no. 2, pp. 150–163, doi.org/10.2307/939210. On reiterative motivic techniques, see Marcus van Crevel, ‘Verwante Sequensmodulaties bij Obrecht, Josquin en Coclico’, *Tijdschrift der Vereniging voor Noord-Nederlands Muziekgeschiedenis* 16 (1941) no. 2, pp. 107–124, doi.org/10.2307/947526; Ludwig Fin-scher, ‘Obrecht’, in: *Musik der Geschichte und Gegenwart Online*, <https://www.mgg-online.com/articles/>

motivic repetition and other 'simplistic' compositional devices has often been cast in a negative light, most notably by Howard Mayer Brown, who associated them with 'the facile side' of the composer's character.¹⁸

One of the principal differences between Busnel's and Fitch's versions is the degree to which the reconstructors have exploited this particular obligato technique. Whereas Obrecht's use of it remains confined to the Osanna sections of the Sanctus, Busnel uses it in all the mass's parts, starting from the Christe (see Ex. 2a). This approach seems like a logical extension of Obrecht's *modus operandi*; however, the result is that Busnel's reconstructed discantus especially contains many more ostinatos than the surviving voices. Fitch uses the technique only once, in the Agnus Dei, but does so to great effect (Ex. 2b; bars 1–45).¹⁹ A pervasive use of ostinatos would not have shocked any contemporary of Obrecht's; however, the question remains as to whether these were – as Busnel seems to assume – his primary point of departure in composing the *Missa Scaramella*.²⁰

On balance, it seems that Fitch is more prone to reuse original material in an imitative, or pseudo-imitative, manner, which often can be seen as the most economical solution.²¹ Busnel more frequently shadows one of the surviving voices in thirds, sixth and tenths: the 'facile' procedures for which Obrecht was criticized by Mayer Brown, but which are, in fact, very frequently found in the repertoire and proposed as models for imitation in counterpoint treatises.²² Fitch's experience of working with the material apparently revealed a 'highly directed, tight-knit, self-consistent counterpoint, and a remarkably legible formal and structural design', to which he did not feel the need to add many elements, such as newly invented ostinatos.²³

mgg09577/1.0/mgg09577, accessed 14 April 2025; János Bali, 'Looking at the Sphinx: Obrecht's *Missa Maria zari*', *Journal of the Alamire Foundation* 2 (2010) no. 2, p. 216, doi.org/10.1484/J.JAF.3.8.

18 Howard Mayer Brown, *Music in the Renaissance*, Englewood Cliffs 1976, p. 157.

19 Fitch's reconstruction of the original notation contains a small mistake: the dotted minim 'a' in the antepenultimate segment (equivalent to bar 35 of the edition) should be a semibreve; see J. Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, p. xxii.

20 Ostinatos were stock formulas taught for virtuosic *super librum* improvisation and used extensively in well-liked works such as Josquin's *Missa Hercules dux Ferrarie*. On their use, see Peter Schubert, 'Contrapunto Fugato: A First Step towards Composing in the Mind', *Music Theory Speculum* 42 (2020) no. 2, pp. 260–279.

21 Sometimes the opposite also occurs: Busnel for instance uses the discantus to create a *fuga alla minima* out of the transposing motif of the bassus in bars 21–24 of the Credo, where Fitch's discantus orients itself (more freely) on the altus.

22 The parallel tenths frequently found between bassus and discantus in both versions, for instance, are referred to as a 'celeberrimus [...] processus notularum' by Franchinus Gaffurius, used by exemplary authors such as Josquin, Gaspard van Weerbeke, Antoine Brumel and – unsurprisingly – Jacob Obrecht; see *Thesaurus Musicarum Latinarum*, <https://chmtl.indiana.edu/tml/15th/GAFPM3>, accessed 4 January 2025.

23 J. Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, p. xiii.

Ex. 2a. J. Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, *Christe*, edited by Marc Busnel,²⁴ annotations by Niels Berentsen (= N.B.)

The image displays three systems of a musical score for the 'Christe' section of J. Obrecht's *Missa Scaramella*. Each system consists of four staves: a vocal line (soprano), an alto line, a tenor line, and a bass line. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. Red arrows point to specific notes in the vocal line, and plus signs (+) are placed above certain notes. The first system starts at measure 17, the second at measure 22, and the third at measure 27. The lyrics include 'Chri - - - - - ste chri - - - - -', 'Chris - - - - - te - - - - - le - y -', '-son,', 'Chri - - - - - ste - - - - -', '-ste - - - - - le y - son,', 'ste e - - - - - le - y - son e - - - - - le - y - son,', 'chri - ste - - - - - le - y - son,', and 'chri - ste - - - - -'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

A good case in point is the opening of the Kyrie, of which only the discantus needs to be recomposed (see Ex. 4). The altus repeats, almost in the manner of a *redicta*, syncopated cadences to *g*' in bars 1, 3 and to *g* in bar 5 (see Ex. 3), and

²⁴ See n. 15.

Ex. 2b. J. Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, Agnus Dei (Fitch version, p. 43), annotations by N.B.

[illegible]

both reconstructors propose similar cadences in the discantus in bars 2 and 4. Fitch, however, also takes advantage of the imitative potential of the head of the altus and has the discantus enter with it after a breve of silence. Busnel has all the voices enter simultaneously, proposing a discantus in free counterpoint which shadows the altus in thirds in bars 9–12 and – similarly to Fitch – the bassus in parallel tenths in bars 13–14.

Ex. 3a. J. Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, Kyrie I (Fitch version, pp. 1–2), annotations by N.B.

1

Ky - ri - e e - ley - son, e -

5

- son, Ky - ri - e e -

10

ley - son, Ky -

2

15

- son, Ky - ri - e e - ley - son.

Ky - ri - e e - ley - son.

- ri - e e - ley - son.

- ri - e e - ley - son.

Ex. 3b. J. Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, Kyrie I (Busnel version), annotations by N.B.

Superius

Altus

Tenor

Bassus

Ky - ri - e e - le - y - son ky - ri - e le - y -

Ky - ri - e e - le - y - son,

Ky - ri - e e -

5

-son, ky - ri - e e -

- le - y - son, ky - ri - e e -

ky - ri - e e - le - y - son ky - ri -

- le - y - son ky - ri -

9

- le - y - son ky - ri - e - le - y -

- ley - son

-l son, ky - ri - e -

-e e - le - y - son ky -

13

-son, ky - ri - e - ley - son.

ky - ri - e - ley - son.

-le - y - son, ky - ri - e - ley - son.

-ri - e e - ley - son.

On reflection, a comparison between these two versions shows the relative open-endedness of musical reconstruction. We may, for instance, find Fitch's choices more economical than Busnel's, but this does not invalidate the latter's solutions per se. They show Obrecht as a composer keen to explore the potential of ostinato techniques, up to the point where they could become an 'idée fixe' used throughout a whole mass. Fitch's version, by contrast, projects another vision of Obrecht, driven by a 'combinatorial impulse', selective in the use of motivic techniques, and more focussed on (pre-)compositional planning.²⁵ In a recent communication, Fitch has reported that every section of the mass posed some new challenge to him as a reconstructor, which could mean that Obrecht similarly challenged himself in a variety of ways while composing it.²⁶ For what it is worth, this hypothesis fits with the notational complexities and verbal canons that can now be identified in the *Missa Scaramella*, and which point to it having been a particularly ambitious compositional project.

THE EDITION AND ITS USERS

The purpose of Fitch's edition of the *Missa Scaramella* is not to correct the New Obrecht Edition, but to present his reconstruction. Unlike the earlier version, which uses halved values and breaks up syncopated and long notes, Fitch's stated aim is to 'reflect the presumed original notation of the restored musical materials'. In other words, he aims for a kind of 'diplomatic transcription' of the (lost) original text.²⁷ This is a coherent purpose, and certainly useful when examining, for instance, the previously mentioned canons in the Credo; however, it also makes the edition unsuitable for less knowledgeable users. Doubtlessly aware of this issue, Fitch and the KVNМ also provide a performance edition, which can be downloaded free of charge.²⁸ Hence the question that poses itself is whether this performance edition is really more suitable to perform from, and by whom.

To start with the official (printed) edition: it is beautifully typeset, as befits the crowning achievement of such an important project (apparently through the good offices of the Music & Letters Trust). To achieve the aim of notational fidelity, Fitch rejects a number of common current editorial conventions: to signal coloration, he uses diamond-shaped, black semibreves and minims – which, ironically, are round in the Kraków partbooks – instead of square brackets; breves and longs are likewise given

25 J. Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, p. XIII.

26 Fabrice Fitch, 'Compositional Agency and the Reconstruction of Musical Works', paper delivered during the conference 'Reconstructing and Re-sounding Early Music' (Geneva, 14–18 October 2024), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EzBpAFevFQ>, accessed 20 January 2025.

27 J. Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, p. XIII.

28 The performance edition can be acquired here, <https://www.kvnm.nl/webshop/missa-scaramella>, accessed 3 January 2024.

in their (square) mensural form; bar lines are suppressed or dashed whenever they interrupt a note or a rest. Fitch's edition is, however, not fully diplomatic, in that it retains bar lines in principle and uses modern clefs, as well as round semibreves, minims and quavers, so that curious combinations of mensural and modern note shapes sometimes occur. Moreover, Fitch does not provide any editorial accidentals (*ficta* or *recta*), so that, for instance, the delightful clash between F natural and F sharp that must result in the final cadence of the *Pleni sunt caeli* is left to the imagination of the reader.²⁹ Somewhat inconsistently, the same 'principle of non-intervention' is not extended to the text of the mass ordinary, for which a precise (editorial) placement is provided throughout. In sum, the edition presents compromise between a fully diplomatic edition and the more usual modern type (e.g. the New Obrecht Edition) and addresses a particularly well-informed readership.

The performance edition does in fact resolve more problems that inexperienced users would face; it provides the customary editorial accidentals above the staff, coloration is notated in triplets, and most (if not all) longs and *maximae* are subdivided. However, one does get the impression that these are quick fixes, retroactively applied to the printed version. In Ex. 4, we may observe that some notes crossing a bar line have not been subdivided (bar 60), longs are encountered in both their original form and also as tied-over breves (bars 58–60), and passages in coloration are sometimes notated in an unnecessarily complicated way (bassus, bars 52–55). Another issue performers would encounter in the *Missa Scaramella* are mensuration changes. For instance, how should one perform the transition between *tempus imperfectum diminutum* (2/1) and *tempus perfectum* (3/1) on this page? The Binchois Consort sensibly uses breve equivalence (or *proportio sesquialtera*), resulting in a festive, quick rendition of the Kyrie II. A conductor unacquainted with proportional theory would profit from clear instructions (e.g. breve equals dotted breve) in this and similar places. To the contrary, well-informed performers who sometimes like to make up their own mind about text placement are going to miss the customary ligature brackets in this version. In fact, specialized performers may prefer dealing with the idiosyncrasies of the printed edition, placing their own accidentals and deciding on tempi based on the original mensural signs.

29 J. Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella*, pp. 36–37 (bar 75).

Ex. 4. J. Obrecht, *Missa Scaramella* (Fitch version), performance edition,³⁰ Kyrie, p. 4

4

50

55

60

65

30 See n. 28.

All this goes to show that one size does not fit all, and that the future of critical editions of polyphony lies in interactive, digital formats, in which the user can select their preferred parameters (clefs, note shapes, text, accidentals, level of reduction, etc.) and perhaps even view different reconstructed versions side-by-side, as on the Lost Voices website. In the meantime, this edition of the *Missa Scaramella* is an object that will most certainly appeal to musical bibliophiles, performers and scholars alike, and which assuredly deserves a place in music libraries, preferably next to the New Obrecht Edition.

RUINS AND RENOVATIONS

In conclusion, we can say that, as a magnificent ‘musical ruin’, the incomplete *Missa Scaramella* offers researchers a unique opportunity to engage with the craft of polyphonic composition, placing themselves (as if it were) in the shoes of a composer from the past. Fabrice Fitch has done this in an impressive way, by retracing Obrecht’s compositional process from the identification of the mass’s architecture (including the very notational form of the cantus firmus statements) to a faithful ‘re-enactment’ of the composer’s part-writing. Even if a reconstruction can never fully recapture a lost original, we now have a much better idea of what the *Missa Scaramella* would have looked like had the two Kraków partbooks not gone missing. Like the grand abbey of Saint Bavo in Obrecht’s hometown of Ghent (which the composer still would have seen in its full glory, but which was destroyed by the fury of Charles V in 1540) the *Missa Scaramella* must have been an impressive edifice, and one around which – thanks to Fabrice Fitch – we can now take a guided tour.

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