ISSN 3034-3836 (Online)

Choral Music

Original article
UDC 784.5
https://doi.org/10.56620/RM.2025.1.089-102
EDN: ZRRFNU

Concerning the Issue of Compositional Technique in Polychoral Works (Based on the Motets by Thomas Tallis and Alessandro Striggio)

Gleb A. Konkin

Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory, Moscow, Russian Federation,
gleb.conkin@yandex.ru✉, *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7318-0407*

Abstract. The article is devoted to the comparative analysis of two significant compositions from the Renaissance era — the motets endowed with forty separate voices: Alessandro Striggio's *Ecce beatam lucem* and Thomas Tallis's *Spem in alium*. The distinguished principles of counterpoint having been revealed, as well as the different kind of work with the musical material and choral parts refute the widespread thesis that Striggio's motet could be considered as a model for Tallis' motet. At the same time, it is possible to observe a common general compositional technique for both of these motets — by means of imitational writing. The latter explains the logic of the composition of these two musical masterpieces: the gradual buildup of the respective parts and the combined groups of parts makes it possible to display control of the vertical element with a forty-part *tutti* and avoid parallelisms. The imitational and polyrhythmic counterpoint in *Spem in alium* also casts doubt over the hypothesis of the possibility of preliminary "chordal" sketches for ten voices in the case of Tallis's motet, although this could be valid in the case of the motet *Ecce beatam lucem*, which is similar in its texture to the chordal tonality that appeared in the subsequent musical period.

Keywords: polychoral motet, Thomas Tallis, Alessandro Striggio, imitation, counterpoint, soggetto

For citation: Konkin G. A. Concerning the Issue of Compositional Technique in Polychoral Works (Based on the Motets by Thomas Tallis and Alessandro Striggio). *Russian Musicology*. 2025. No. 1, pp. 89–102. https://doi.org/10.56620/RM.2025.1.089-102

Translated by Dr. Anton Rovner.

Introduction

The second half of the 16th century is significant with the spread throughout Europe of a new type of music written for two or more choruses. By polychoral music, we mean such compositions wherein the vocal parts are grouped into two or three strata of sound (choruses) and where the present division is fixed by the composer in writing. It must be indicated that the use of the antiphonal principle of the call and response between the different parts of the chorus or choral sections, as it may be frequently observed in 16th century motets,[1] does not classify a certain composition automatically as being polychoral. Sometimes, in regards to the polychoral motets by Thomas Tallis and Alessandro Striggio, as well as other compositions possessing an unusually large number of voices, the term hyperpolyphony is applied, [1, p. 9] which is usually used for the sonoristic compositions from the 20th century. However, it is viewed as not being very precise, since it remains not indicated, from what precise moment does the polyphony become transformed into the hyper. Should only the forty-part motets be classified as hyperpolyphonic, or do the motets with a smaller amount of voices also have that prerogative, and why? This question, as well as a host of other similar ones, arises in this connection.

Most frequently, the birth of such polychoral compositions is connected with the Venetian school and is attributed to Adrian Willaert, [2, p. 1] who worked as a maestro di cappella and as a composer at the St. Mark's Cathedral.[2] In all likelihood, polychoral music comprised an essential part of the ceremonial element of the Medici court. [3, p. 5; 4, p. 1] Most of the preserved compositions of this category from the years 1557–1601 were written by Florentine composers, among which Stefano Rossetto and Alessandro Striggio stand out especially vividly. At the present time, it is hardly possible to measure the fullness of this phenomenon: many of the compositions were lost or have survived up to our time only fragmentarily.[3] Written during that time the letters frequently contain mentions of various musical works for a large number of voices that are presently unknown to us.[4] At the same time, the origins of the phenomenon itself, in a nutshell, stems from the Franco-Flemish school, especially in the canons based on several themes, consisting in themselves the potential toward a spatial division of the parts, which in itself already leads to polychoral writing. [2, pp. 4–5]

The timeliness of the present article can be explained by the unfading interest

---

[1] Such is the eight-voice motet *Laudate pueri Dominum* by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina from the Second Book of Motets of 1572.

[2] The research works of recent years have shown that the aforementioned phenomenon formed itself throughout Europe and it was by no means only connected with Venice. The first compositions of such kind — starting from those for two choruses — were connected with the names of composers who worked in various cities in Italy and France. [3, p. 5]

[3] Davitt Moroney provides a list of compositions with 30 or more parts dating from the second half of the 16th century. [Ibid., p. 6]

[4] As may be seen from the correspondence between Albrecht V and Maximilian of Bavaria, there existed a forty-part motet by Orlando di Lasso, which even included an additional *basso continuo* part. [Ibid., p. 23] In addition, at the wedding of Wilhelm of Bavaria in the winter of 1568, the composer directed the performances of several compositions for several choruses, which included a mass for 24 voices by Annibale Padovano and a certain forty-part motet by Alessandro Striggio, which, as may be presumed, conceals *Ecce beatam lucem* behind it. [4, p. 7]

towards Thomas Tallis' motet *Spem in alium* and Alessandro Striggio's *Ecce beatam lucem*: the recent decades have been marked by the emergence of a set of publications in which the aforementioned motets have found themselves within the focus of attention. For the most part, these are works of historical and source study problem ranges, [5; 6, pp. 192–196; 7; 8] but there are also research works available, — albeit, few in number, — devoted to the issues of the style and technique. [4; 9; 10] As far as it is known, the issues of the modes and counterpoint of Renaissance polychoral music have not yet become a topic of separate study in Russian musicological literature.[5] As a result, presently there does not exist any special research work aimed at comparing the motets of Tallis and Striggio, being the sole survived compositions with the largest quantity of voices, from the positions of compositional techniques, which would provide answers to a number of questions: wherein lie the difference and the similarity of the principles of polychoral composition in the works of Tallis and Striggio, what tendencies does each one of them bear witness of, and how valid is the hypothesis of the influence of Striggio's motet on the creation of Thomas Tallis' *Spem in alium*?

Creation History of the Motets by Tallis and Striggio. The Different Editions of *Spem in alium*

It is customary to date *Spem in alium* as having been composed in the late 1560's or the early 1570s, i.e., not having been written prior to Alessandro Striggio's trip to England in June 1567. The meeting between the two musicians may have taken place at that same time, and Striggio's compositions may also have been performed in private aristocratic salons, including the motet *Ecce beatam lucem*, which may have become the model for Tallis' composition. [3, pp. 1–2; 4, p. 29–31] However, at the present time there have appeared assumptions that the object of inspiration for the English composer may have been the recently discovered forty-part mass *Ecce si beato giorno* by the selfsame Striggio. [3, p. 32] Both the mass and the motet *Ecce beatam lucem* were composed approximately during the same period, in the 1560s. The former was performed in 1567 before the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire Maximilian II, and then at the Bavarian and French royal courts — just before Striggio's trip to England. The present mass was based on unknown work, which has not been discovered. [Ibid., p. 33] At the same time, the motet creation date is unknown, since the documents of various years (1561 and 1568, respectively) mention a "canzona for 40 voices," [Ibid., pp. 25–27] but there are no indications of any concrete compositions. It is also entirely unclear[6] about the circumstances of the creation of Tallis' *Spem in alium*. As the patron who commissioned the work, Thomas Howard, the 4th Duke of Norfolk is most often mentioned, who was the son-in-law of Henry Fitzalan, the 12th Earl of Arundel, a famous patron of the arts and amateur musician. [4, p. 5; 5, p. 179]

[5] At the same time, a number of new works in the sphere of study of Russian polychoral music from the Baroque period have appeared. Among them, the articles of Anna Bulycheva [1] and the numerous publications of Natalia Plotnikova must be highlighted.

[6] There exists the assumption that Tallis' motet was composed for a secret sworn ceremony (self-dedication) devoted to a conspiracy against the incumbent Queen Elizabeth I in order to bring Mary Stuart to the throne. [7, p. 43] The most plausible version seems to be the one, according to which the composition was performed in the palace of the 12th Earl of Arundel around 1574 as a bright tribute to the queen, who attended an aristocratic evening. [8, p. 463]

The first venue for the presentation of such a large-scale work is usually indicated as being the Long Gallery in the Arundel House, the private residence of Earl Henry Fitzalan — the place mentioned in the short-story by Thomas Wateridge. [6, p. 192][7]

The motet has been preserved only in several posthumous manuscripts, the earliest of them dates around 1616 (GB-Lbl Egerton 3512).[8] The other manuscripts of this work have been written down later, such as, for instance, the manuscript G. Mus. 420 (preserved in the Library of Gresham College), however, it was copied from the selfsame GB-Lbl Egerton 3512. The manuscript GB-Lbl Egerton 3512 contains an English subtext with the words of an unknown author: "Sing and glorify."[9] The performance of the famous "song of forty parts" in 1616 in the presence of the king himself found reflection in documents. [7, p. 25] At the same time, the manuscript from the Gresham College possesses only a Latin subtext. This second manuscript forms the basis for the motet's publication in 1928 in a compilation of Tallis' music from the series "Tudor Church Music," as well as the edition published by Philip Legge.[10] The new version of the motet made by Hugh Keyte in 2020, on the other hand, is derived from the manuscript GB-Lbl Egerton 3512 and differs from all the other publications by an alternative division of the chorus: not into five eight-voiced choruses, but into four ten-voiced ones.

The original manuscript was preserved in Lord Lumley's library at the Nonesuch Palace up to the fire of 1596. [5, p. 180] The text sourse for *Spem in alium* is a responsory that was performed at the matins within the framework of "The Story of Judith," one of the lengthy series of Sunday services taking place after Pentecost. [Ibid., p. 178] Under the guise of Judith, various researchers see alternately either Mary Stuart, [7, pp. 41–42] or Elizabeth. [11, p. 10]

It is important to emphasize that, notwithstanding the identical amount of voices, the inner structural division into the separate choruses in the motets differs. It is customary to suppose that the motet *Spem in alium* is meant for eight five-voice choruses, and *Ecce beatam lucem* — for five eight-voice choruses. Philip Legge, who made his own edition of the music of *Ecce beatam lucem*, based himself on

---

[7] Stevens supposes that the indicated space would have been convenient for the performance of the polychoral composition, [5, p. 175] however, Hugh Keyte and Kerry McCarthy do not exclude the possibility that the motet was given its premiere at England's "architectural wonder" — the Nonsuch Palace, which was an uncommonly beautiful construction (which is testified by the title itself). The celebrated octagon-shaped banquet building and the two towers may have brought Tallis to the idea of creating a composition for 8 choruses, each of which would have been placed in one of the wall niches of the premises. [6, p. 195; 7, p. 17]

[8] Score copy, 1616. British Library, London. GB-Lbl Egerton 3512.
URL: https://www.diamm.ac.uk/sources/4133/#/ (accessed: 22.11.2024).

[9] This is explained by the fact that Tallis' motet with another text, as may be presumed, was performed at the inauguration of the son of the ruling king James I, Prince Charles as the Prince of Wales in 1616, and maybe also at the inauguration of Prince Henry six years earlier. Hugh Keyte presumes that the motet could not have been performed at the inauguration of Prince Henry, since it is clearly visible that the copyist of the manuscript Egerton 3512 was compelled to create a countertexture with a new text in English at the spur of the moment, and this meant that no English version existed before 1616. The mention in the text of two names at once (that of Prince Henry, who died close to that moment, and the living Prince Charles) could be explained as a tribute of respect for the deceased prince. [7, p. 26] It is possible to disagree with the scholar at least for the reason that the version meant for Prince Henry's inauguration may simply not have been preserved.

[10] URL: https://www.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Spem_in_alium_(Thomas_Tallis) (accessed: 22.11.2024).

the manuscript from 1587, presently preserved in the Austrian Library. In his version, the motet is performed by five choruses, in their turn, divided within each of the choruses into two separate sections — half-choruses. Such division, according to Legge, arranged by the different keys in each voice, and while following each one of them, one half of each chorus was higher than the other in terms of register. In the edition of the "English Church Music" series from 1928 and in the edition of the music published by the selfsame Legge in 2008, Tallis' motet *Spem in alium* is presented as being divided into eight choruses, i.e., in the accepted version.

Hugh Keyte suggested his version of the music being divided into ten four-part choruses. In his argumentation, the editor made a reference to the fifty-voice motet by Stefano Rossetto *O consolamini, consolamini*, [7, p. 15] wherein each of the four constituent choruses possesses its own inner divisi. At the same time, in essence, Keyte's edition differs very little from the aforementioned editions of Tallis' motet.[11] It must be specified that in the GB-Lbl Egerton 3512 manuscript the singers' voices are not endowed with any designations and are assembled into groups of 8 voices in the same register (5 groups with the parts in the keys of G2, C2, C4, C3, F4). Each voice is numbered from top to bottom, so it does not present any difficulty to assemble them into one of the eight constituent choruses.[12] In the music examples presented below, the author of the article provided the authentic indications of the voices utilized by Tallis himself and his contemporaries.

Spem in alium and *Ecce beatam lucem*: The Peculiarities of Textural Use

The motets are composed in the same church mode, namely, the seventh, and one overall technique of pervasive imitational writing. At the same time, both of the masters, nonetheless, demonstrate different treatment of the musical material, at times diametrically opposite from each other. Tallis gives preference to the principle of exposition of the small theme or the *soggetto* in all the voices, while Striggio prefers the technique of mono- and polyrhythmic counterpoint.[13] The logical formation of the compositions occurs differently in each case. The pervasive imitation is characterized by the presence of the small theme that is expounded in turn in all or most of the voices. Starting with a monophonic voice, the musical texture thickens due to the constant addition of parts, which are developed already on free musical material (Example No. 1). This kind of method of work may be seen in the musical manifestation of four out of the six lines of Tallis' motet (while in Striggio's motet it is virtually absent[14]),

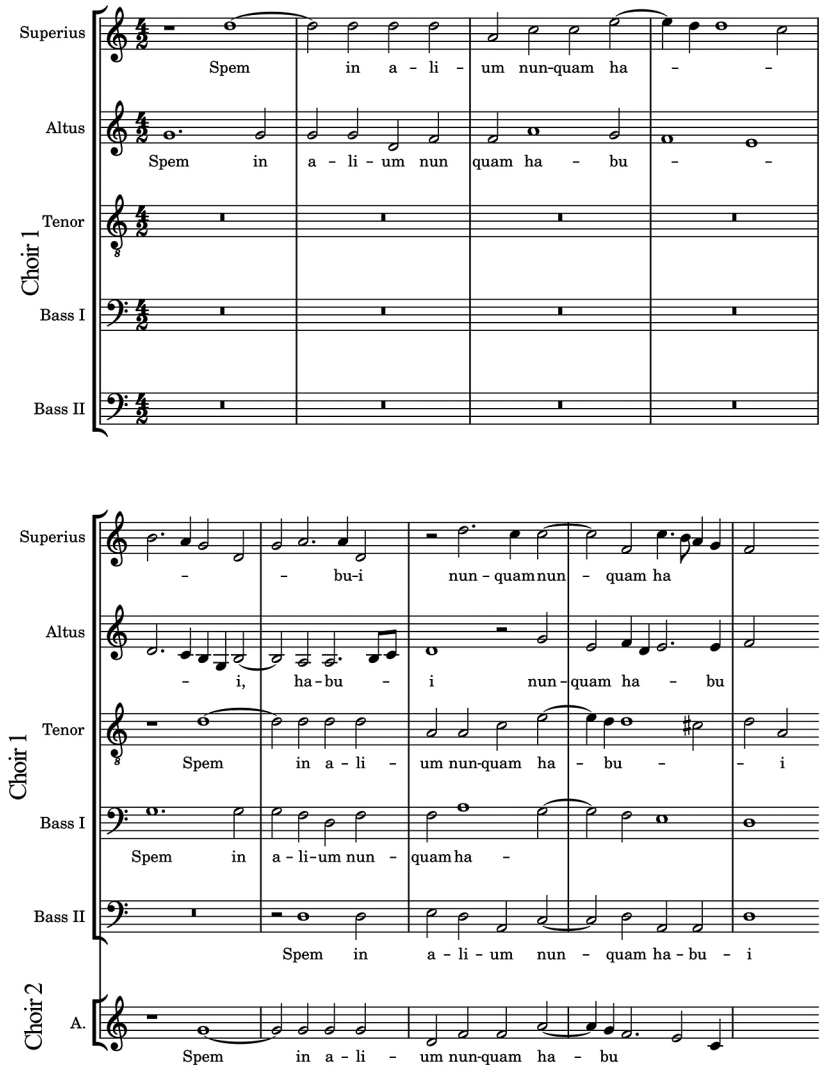
[11] The chanting of certain words and the bass parts in the seventh and eighth voices (in Legge), which Keyte changed the order of, were also subjected to editing. For the present research, the differences in the edited versions must be acknowledged as being unessential and in no way affecting the arrived-at conclusions.

[12] The top voice of the first chorus is numbered as the first, the bass of the first chorus — as the fifth, and the top voice of the second chorus, correspondingly, continues the numeration and is listed as number six, and so on.

[13] Frequently, the monorhythmic counterpoint passes into polyrhythmic counterpoint, which can be seen in the first measures of Striggio's motet.

[14] In light of such observations, the indication of the pervasive imitation technique in *Ecce beatam lucem* is somewhat conditional. The latter is interpreted rather broadly, and a musical worked composed in such a technique may include (and this is encountered frequently) sections in mono- and polyrhythmic counterpoint. At the same time, the issue of classification of the technique of church singing in the case of a total absence of imitational development of at least only the small theme remains unsolved and requires separate examination.

Example No. 1 Thomas Tallis. *Spem in alium*.
The beginning of the motet with the exposition of the first small theme

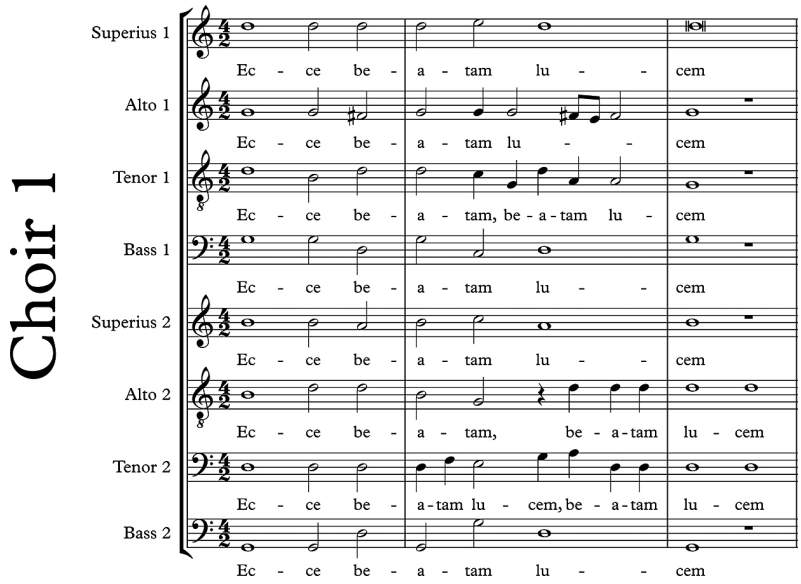


simultaneously with this, such a principle of exposition alternates with both mono- and polyrhythmic counterpoint in *Spem in alium*.

Striggio starts from a "block-like" division of the texture, wherein the voices of a separately taken chorus (or choruses) enter at the same time in one and the same rhythm (Example No. 2). This method of composition is fundamentally different from the "diagonal" writing in Tallis' motet, and it becomes difficult to determine, from what voice had the process of composition begun.[15] Such is also the assessment of Grigory Lyzhov: "It is always a more problematic goal to reassess the speed of composition of a work written in a monorhythmic "chordal" structure than in an imitational one." [12, p. 294]

[15] It is fair to observe that Striggio seldom uses imitations, and in this aspect the short double cannon set to the words "quam perennis esca" is especially illustrative; however, the composer combines it with monorhythmic writing, as well.

Example No. 2 Alessandro Striggio. *Ecce beatam lucem.*
The beginning of the motet with a principle of monorhythmic counterpoint



Such choral "arrays," short in their duration, always conclude with a delineated cadenza, in contrast to pervasive imitation, the boundaries of which are frequently veiled by means of addition of new voices, or the continuation of sound of the entered parts.

The pervasive imitational writing in its "classical" appearance with the expounding of the small theme makes it possible to achieve continuity and suaveness in the music. It is particularly this quality, crucial for the technique, which helped Tallis in his successful solution of the spatial organization of the choruses: at the words "Qui irasceris, et propritius eris" six choruses come in consistently with the small theme,[16] and several measures later, the parts fall silent. During the performance, the listener could observe, how the music suavely transports itself in space, traversing from the eighth chorus to the third. The graphic design of the score in this section of the form is diagonal in the literal meaning and resembles a rhombus, which provides a reference to the future, to similar spots in Edison Denisov's *Requiem*. The logic of the interaction between the choruses is presented as being clear: at the very beginning, on the first two phrases the motion proceeded consistently from the first chorus to the eighth, while on the third phrase — from the eighth to the third, after which the two first choruses enter with new musical material.[17] If we are to imagine that the choruses were really distributed in a circle[18] (for example, in the octagonal premises of the Nonsuch Palace), then the sound has traversed a

[16] The first exposition of the theme in the part of the top voice of the seventh chorus is superimposed on the conclusion of the forty-part fragment.

[17] This is visibly shown in the scheme: [9, pp. 124–125].

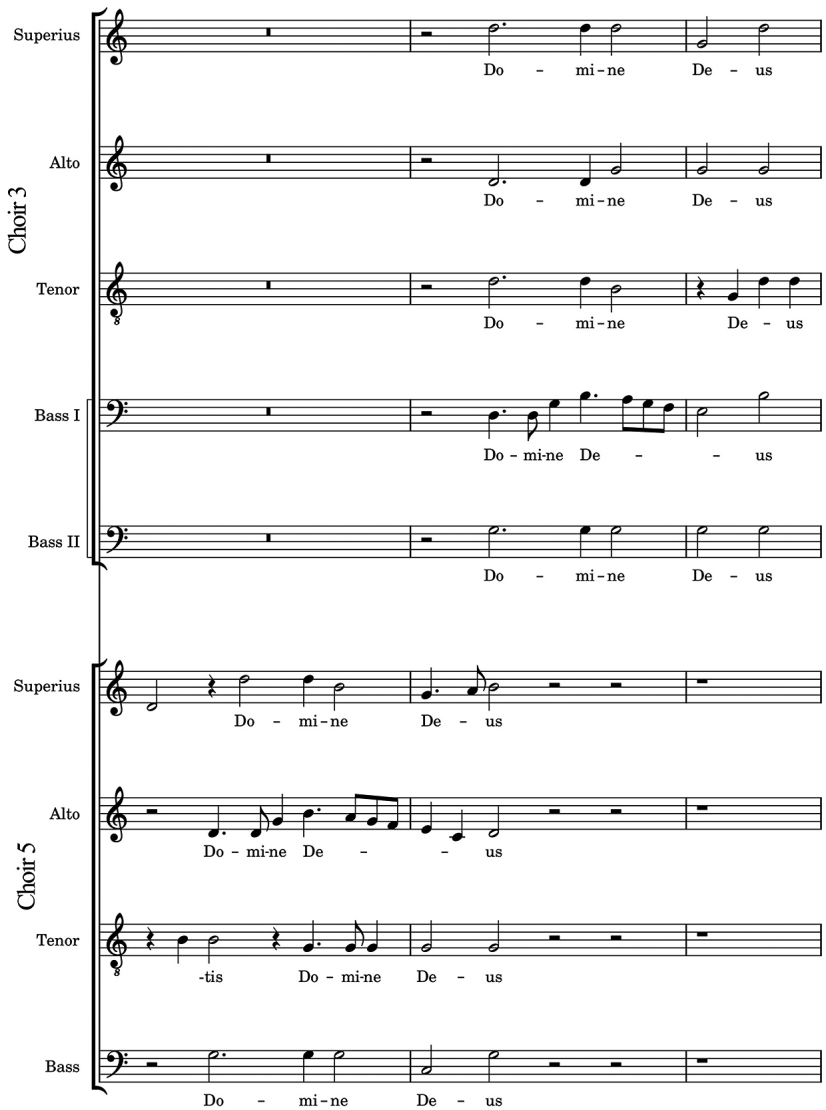
[18] It is interesting that the copy of *Ecce beatam lucem* from 1587, preserved in Zwickau, contains the bass part of the organ (Bassus ad organum), accompanied with an indication to locate the singers and the instruments (among which are the organ, the sackbut, lutes, one cembalo and violas) on the stage. The annotation indicates that the choruses were situated in a circle, at the center of which the instruments were located. [3, pp. 42–43]

complete circle into one side and back. The idea of a gradual transferal of the sound material is an ingenious discovery, through which Tallis' motet differs from Striggio's.

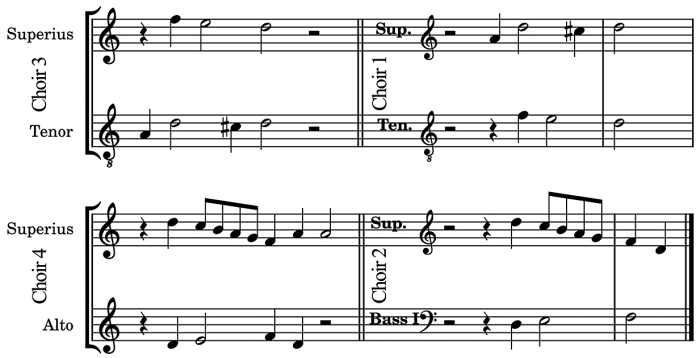
In both compositions, the antiphonal calls and responses between the choruses are also used. Striggio is inclined to repeat the musical material of the choral groups without any changes, such as during the setting of the words "quam multo clar'honore sidera fulgent." On the other hand, Tallis demonstrates a special kind of mastery in this plan: he distributes the musical material between the groups consisting of two choruses situated adjacently to each other (some of the voices — predominantly, the second bass — are allowed to pause). This material is not transferred by the composers into the other choruses with precision, but only several melodically significant fragments are preserved, which sound in another register and receive through the other parts a different intonational and rhythmic framing (Example No. 3). At the words "Domine Deus," during the fourth and fifth statements, the repeated melody, passing from one group to another, sounds on another step, a whole tone higher.

Example No. 3

Thomas Tallis. *Spem in alium.*
A varied repetition of the material in the choruses



Example No. 4 Thomas Tallis. *Spem in alium.*
Vertical-invertible counterpoint upon repetition of the material



Upon the repetition of the musical material of several voices at once, the composer resorts already to a more intricate and refined alteration — he rearranges the musical material between the parts, which results in a quadruple vertical-invertible counterpoint in octaves (Example No. 4).[19]

The chief achievement and complexity of both of the motets are the "tutti" forty-part fragments that intrude into the texture all of a sudden and demonstrate themselves as the rhetorical figures of a noema.

Voice-Leading in Tallis' and Striggio's Motets

Upon analysis of the compositions with a massive amount of performers amounting to forty parts, the question of correct voice-leading becomes legitimate. The forty-part fragments may present a considerable amount of difficulty to compose, in light of various progressions of parallel fifths and octaves between separate voices. With the augmentation of the number of voices, the possibilities for developed voice-leading become fewer, since the pitches in the various parts would coincide more and more, and simultaneously the probability of the appearance of parallelisms would increase. According to simple calculations, Tallis (and, correspondingly, Striggio) would have had to check precisely 780 pairs of voices for the possible presence of parallel intervals. The situation in practice, as it seems, was simpler. In the works of various composers of that period, such as Orlando di Lasso, William Byrd, Giovanni Gabrieli and others, it is possible to observe motion in parallel fifths and octaves, moreover, it is equally true for three- or four-voice counterpoint. Parallels may also be found during opposite motion, which, apparently, was not considered to be a mistake. Gioseffo Zarlino in his treatise *Le istitutioni harmoniche* [14] cautions against parallelisms, particularly, against those moving in the same direction in ascending and descending motion,[20]

[19] Tallis also revealed himself as a master of counterpoint in the motets from his collection *Cantiones, quae ab argumento sacrae vocantur* (1575), published in collaboration with William Byrd. Tallis resorts to an unconventional canonical sequence of the 2nd category with sections of unequal length in the motet *Salvator Mundi I*. [13, p. 40]

[20] In Chapter 29 of Part II of the treatise, Zarlino writes: "However, it is undesirable that two or more perfect consonances, containing equal proportions, in ascending or descending parts together, would e placed in compositions one after the other, without any other intermediary interval" ("Però non volsero, che due, o più Consonanze perfette, contenute da vna istessa proportione, ascendenti insieme, o discendenti le parti, si potessero porre nelle compositioni l'vna dopo l'altra, senza alcuno altro mezano interuallo"). [14, p. 176] Discussing proportions, Zarlino notices further that appearing in such type of voice-leading the correlation, for example, upon parallel fifths (4:6:9), is geometrical, rather than harmonic, which means that it does not correspond to nature.

and shows examples of incorrect voice-leading in unisons, octaves and fifths. Musicologist Peter Schubert named such types of motion as "anti-parallels" and also asserts that they were frequently used in the music of that time. [10]

Spem in alium and *Ecce beatam lucem* are no exception to this: parallelisms can be frequently encountered in the two compositions, both in the forty-part texture and in the case of a smaller number of voices. In *Spem in alium*, along with the apparent parallelisms, there are also parallel octaves and fifths present "covered" by means of polyrhythmy and pauses in various voices.

Schubert hypothesizes that Tallis may have used some sketches wherein the main concords were notated, stemming from the various combinations of notes permitted by voice-leading (the so-called "available motions"). After such a pre-compositional stage, the composer distributed these voices throughout the separate parts. But in this case, he would have operated by means of the chords, whereas the rhythmical side and the developed voice-lading had to be thought-out separately, which would lengthen the process of composition. The number of "available motions" (which Peter Schubert shows in Example No. 6 of his article [Ibid.]) upon connection of the triads correlating with each other in perfect fourths and fifths in number, are only ten in number.[21] But even such a preparation process does not solve the problem of designing the other thirty parts. The bass instrumental part may have been conducive for the musicians to find their way in the musical score. The later copies of Striggio and Tallis motets have the bass part, but it is not known whether it had existed in the original manuscripts of these works.[22] It must be noted that the lowest pitch of the concordant harmony (which is almost always the root of the triad) finds itself in the bass of various chords, as it may be seen in the final (and most long-drawn) forty-part fragment at the setting of the words "Respice humilitatem nostrum" in *Spem in alium*: the second bass parts of the eighth, the fifth or the third chorus alternately becomes the vertical sonority basis. The same observation is likewise fair for Striggio's motet. It is also characteristic that both composers base themselves in the tutti sections on the melodic motion in the capacity of the interval of a triad.

The aforementioned researcher Peter Schubert supposes that Tallis, composing his motet, may have relied on the principles of voice-leading described by Thomas Campion[23]

---

[21] They are formed by means of enumeration of all the possible permitted progressions: during the bass motion in a perfect fourth, the step of a third degree may pass into any degree of the following concord, the fifth degree — into a third or octave degree, and the octave degree — into those of a fifth or a third degree of the following concord. Moreover, it is possible to shift the fifth scale degree into a fifth degree and an octave degree into an octave degree through contrary motion with the bass (the aforementioned "anti-parallels"). The tenth and final permitted voice-leading is the doubled motion of the third degree to the third degree. For example, upon the motion in the bass from an *F* to a *C*, the third scale degree *A* may appear simultaneously to the pitch *E* in two different voices, but, once again, only in contrary motion.

[22] In the manuscript GB-Lbl Egerton 3512 it is called "The Thorough Bass." One might very well presume the participation of instruments in the performance of Tallis' motet; after all, the aforementioned Earl Henry Fitzalan was the owner of the largest collection of instruments in England (viols, woodwind and keyboard instruments), preserved at the Arundel House. [5, pp. 174–175]

[23] Thomas Campion (1567–1620) was an English composer, poet and scholar. He composed several books of arias (or "ayres," as they were called at that time in England), which are songs set to texts in English for one or more voices with instrumental accompaniment (viols, orpharion, lute).

in his treatise *A New Way of Making Fowre Parts in Counter-point*. [15] The main object of the publication, as can be seen in the title, is counterpoint.[24] By indicating the third, fifth and octave with the numerals 3, 5 and 8, Campion examines the various possibilities of connecting the chords,[25] and also briefly speaks about such a phenomenon as the chord degree displacing. It is fair to consider that the "new" method of counterpoint is particularly new because it already looks into the direction of tonal thinking. All the examples are presented in a monorhythmical four-voice texture, without any developed melodicism in the voices — just as, generally speaking, Campion's own hymn, which concludes the first chapter of the treatise. [Ibid., D3] The composer also fundamentally emphasizes our attention to this structure, and in the introduction to his *Book of Ayres* for voice, viola and lute, he calls imitational music "long, intricate, baited with fugues" and "chained with syncopations." [16, p. 4]

Schubert's attempt to explain Tallis' writing technique by the principles expounded by Campion is not entirely successful, since they are based on different things. Striggio's motet *Ecce beatam lucem* turns out in its basis to be much closer than *Spem in alium* to what Campion speaks about. Already in 1591, Striggio's younger contemporary, Cristofano Malvezzi would compose the thirty-voiced motet *O fortunato giorno*, which was performed within the framework of the festive Florenntine intermezzi of 1589.[26] In this composition, the quasi-chordal principle not based upon imitation is manifested even brighter.

It may be seen that the forty-part sections in the Italian composer's motet are highlighted by the use of sustained notes or those repeated on one pitch, and a significant part of the voices is composed in monorhythmic counterpoint.[27] In the aspect, the conclusion of *Ecce beatam lucem* is especially demonstrative, because there are entire vocal parts groups sustained in one rhythm (Example No. 5).[28]

Tallis, in his turn, rarely use monorhythmic counterpoint; there is no reliance on imitation, i.e., on the demonstration of *soggetto*, in the tutti fragments. Thereby, the composer endows most of the parts of the composition with their individual melodic lines and their rhythms. It seems that the Tallis' path is more complex than that Striggio's one, — here the English composer is compelled to invent for each part its own separate exposition and to control the voice-leading carefully so to avoid parallelisms.

---

[24] A summary of the treatise falls outside this research, so the author limits himself to stating the main ideas present in it.

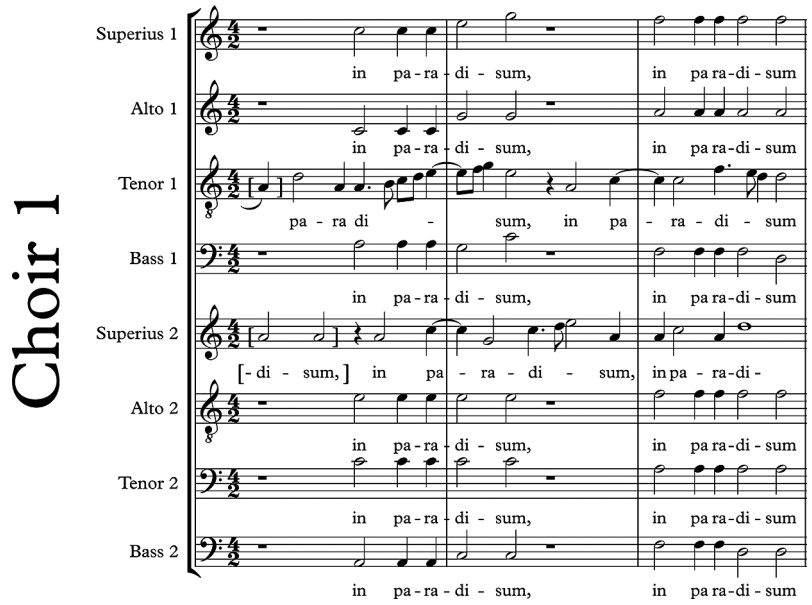
[25] Thomas Campion suggests two versions: the first is based on a definite scheme, wherein the third scale degree of a chord progresses into the octave of the subsequent chord, the octave progresses into a fifth, and the fifth — into the third, whereas the second, on the other hand, does not adhere to any scheme.

[26] Each of the intermezzi virtually presented a mini-opera: *Intermedii et concerti, fatti per la Commedia rappresentata in Firenze nelle nozze del serenissimo Don Ferdinando Medici, e Madama Christiana di Loreno, gran duchi di Toscana*. Venice: Giacomo Vincenti, 1591.

[27] Only once (during the words "cantans sonans adhuc") Striggio saturates the texture with a simple variety of imitation during the course of seven measures — this is virtually a small theme, — tracing out by means of pitch the motion in the span of a major triad.

[28] The final four measures of *Spem in alium* demonstrate a totally opposite approach and present a linearly developed chord (using the term of Grigory Lyzhov [12, p. 291]): during the sustained note *G* in the part of the second basses of the third chorus, most of the other voices are presented in melodic motion, which delineate the sounds of the ultima in the motet.

Example No. 5 Alessandro Striggio. *Ecce beatam lucem.*
Conclusion with the basis on monorhythmic counterpoint



But since monorhythmic counterpoint makes it possible to view and to track all the parts in full, likewise, the developed voice-leading conception based on polyrhythmy has its advantages: the voices complement each other in their vertical parameters, and thereby the conditions of the parallel intervals appearance (and particularly the motion of intervals *on the same rhythm* and along on the same interval) are reduced to a minimum by Tallis. Davitt Moroney notices the same thing and gives various types of the parts rhythmic design. [3, p. 48–49] "All these techniques and strategies required clear intellectual planning but are not especially complicated. They derive logically from certain basic rules of how to write counterpoint above a plainsong," — the scholar concludes. [Ibid., p. 50] It seems, following these opposite fundamental principles of mono- and polyrhythmy in combination with sustained (on the same pitch) notes use is the solution, the explanation for writing these compositions endowed with so many voices. Indeed, the amount of the parts does not affect in a fundamental way the logic of a composition, since the principles of counterpoint, the character of the melodicism, and the work with the musical material remain the same — when the number of voices is augmented, the composer is required to exert a greater amount of attention toward the connections between the voices, a greater amount of control over the voice-leading. Gioseffo Zarlino argues the same: "The choral part is composed in such a way as if only a four-voice texture is meant, without any concern for the other choruses; <…> Since the choruses are composed in such a way that each of them could be sung separately, it follows that nothing would be heard that would offend the ear." [14, p. 268] In any case, both composers were compelled to distribute the sound material among the voices and resort to score notation, which is stipulated by the pervasive imitation technique. From this point of view, other compositions with a smaller, albeit, still a large number of voices, such as *Qui habitat* for 24 voices by Josquin Desprez, or *O bone Jesu* for 19 parts by Robert Carver, bring out the same problems and are essentially by no means simpler, in terms of carrying them

out. As the result of comparative analysis, we could speak about a more intricate type of compositional work in Tallis' *Spem in alium*. This is testified by calibrated architectonics, resting on the principle of numerical symbolism,[29] the independence of melodic lines in the different voices, and the interaction between the choruses within a composition, expressed both in the gradual displacement of the musical material between the parts in the beginning and in the calls and responses with the varied repetitions. Researcher Peter Pesic holds the same view and writes that Tallis used a much larger spectrum of polyphonic possibilities: "Where Striggio chose harmonically simplified declamation, which connected the voices more closely with each other, Tallis provided greater freedom for the separate voices." [17, p. 123] It seems that Strigio's motet, with its reliance on monorhythmic and polyrhythmic counterpoint, follows a later tradition, which was declared as being "new" at the end of the 16th century, as may be observed in Thomas Campion's treatise. These conclusions make it possible to assert that Striggio's motet could not have provided a compositional model for Tallis, as has been mentioned above.

Such are the two different "paths" that may be traced in the examined compositions, within the framework of one technique. In both cases, it may be stated that the latter reached a peak and acquired a new quality: composers began to operate not only by separate lines, i.e., parts, but also with choral strata. Polyphony as a category of composition interacts with stereophony, i.e., replication of sound material wherein the fundamental role is played by a certain spatial distribution of the sources of sound, which directly finds its manifestation in the polychoral compositions.

At the same time, the practice of writing compositions for an extraordinary number of voices continued onwards during the Baroque period, but more often than not possessed a speculative character and did not presume any real musical performance. [18, pp. 391–393]

References

1. Bulycheva A. "Hyperpolyphony" in Russian Baroque Music: Two Choral Concertos a 48. *Opera musicologica*. 2018. No. 1, pp. 8–33. (In Russ.)

2. Carver A. F. Polychoral Music: A Venetian Phenomenon? *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*. 1981–1982. Vol. 108, pp. 1–24.

3. Moroney D. Alessandro Striggio's Mass in Forty and Sixty Parts. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*. 2007. No. 1, pp. 1–70.

4. Posse S. *Thomas Tallis' Spem in alium in Kontext der zeitgenössischen Mehrchörigkeit*. Hamburg: Bachelor+Master Publ., 2013. 52 p.

5. Stevens D. A Songe of Fortie Partes, Made by Mr. Tallys. *Early Music*. 1982. No. 2, pp. 171–181.

6. McCarthy K. *Tallis*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. 262 p.

[29] This aspect is the object of the article by Vladimir Barsky, who speaks about the use of the gematria of Tallis' name in the motet score. [9] However, numerological symbolism can also be interpreted in different ways. Thus, Hugh Keyte justly observes that the number 69 may have concealed the name of Judith, with which the text of the motet is connected (IVDITH — 9+20+4+9+19+9+8=69). [7] Moreover, it must be indicated that personal names in England during the Renaissance era were not spelled in a uniform manner. The name of Tallis, for example, was spelled as "Tallys." [6, p. 25; 9, p. 121]

7. Keyte H. Introduction. *Spem in alium. Motet in 40 parts*. Ed. by H. Keyte. 2021. URL: https://www.thomas-tallis-society.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/SpemIntroJan2.pdf (accessed: 22.11.2024)

8. Natour E. Ch. Elizabeth I, Thomas Tallis and Judith: Music, Resistance and the Iconography of Power. *Renaissance Studies*. 2021. Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 460–476.

9. Barsky V. M. Thomas Tallis: Numeric Secret of Name. *Journal of Moscow Conservatory*. 2018. Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 118–131. (In Russ.)

10. Shubert P. Thomas Campion's "Chordal Counterpoint" and Tallis's Famous Forty-Part Motet. *Music Theory Online*. 2018. No. 1. URL: https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.18.24.1/mto.18.24.1.schubert.html (accessed: 22.11.2024).

11. Doe P. Tallis's *Spem in Alium* and the Elizabethan Respond-Motet. *Music & Letters*. 1970. No. 1, pp. 1–14.

12. Lyzhov G. I. *Teoreticheskie problemy motetnoi kompozitsii vtoroi poloviny XVI veka: na primere Magnum opus musicum Orlando di Lasso: dis. ... kand. iskusstvovedeniya* [The Theoretical Issues of the Second Half of the 16th Century Motet Composition: on the Example of Orlando di Lasso's Magnum Opus Musicum: Dissertation for the Degree of Cand.Sci. (Arts)]. Moscow, 2003. 312 p.

13. Konkin G. Canonic Technique in the Motets by Thomas Tallis and William Byrd from the *Cantiones quae ab argumento sacrae vocantur* collection (1575). *Theory Music Society Journal*. 2023. No. 1 (41), pp. 36–48. (In Russ.) https://doi.org/10.26176/otmroo.2023.41.1.004

14. Zarlino G. *Le istitutioni harmoniche di M. Gioseffo Zarlino da Chiogga, nelle quali oltra le materie appartenti alla musica, si trovano dichiarati molti luoghi vedere*. Venice, 1558. 347 p.

15. Campion T. *A New Way of Making Fowre Parts in Counter-point By a Most Familiar and Infallible Rule*. London: Printed by T.S. for Iohn Browne, 1610.

16. Campion T. *A Book of Airs, as Written to be Sung to the Lute and Viol*. Mount Vernon, New York: Peter Pauper Press, 1944. 93 p.

17. Pesic P. *Polyphonic Minds. Music of the Hemispheres*. Cambridge, Massachussets: The MIT Press, 2017. 330 p.

18. Simakova N. A. *Kontrapunkt strogogo stilya i fuga. Istoriya. Teoriya. Praktika. Chast' 1. Kontrapunkt strogogo stilya kak khudozhestvennaya traditsiya i uchebnaya distsiplina* [The Renaissance Counterpoint and the Fuge. History. Theory. Practice. Part 1. The Renaissance Counterpoint as the Artificial Tradition and the Study Course]. Moscow: Kompozitor Publ., 2002. 528 p.

Information about the author:

Gleb A. Konkin — Post-Graduate Student at the Department of Theory of Music, Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory, Moscow, Russian Federation.

Received: 20.11.2024
Revised: 24.12.2024
Accepted: 26.12.2024