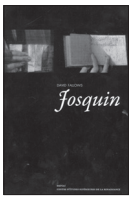


David Fallows
*Josquin*
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Ten years have now passed since the composer Josquin Desprez who we thought we knew well suddenly turned into a quite different person. It happened in a hurried postscript to an article by Lora Matthews and Paul Merkley.[1] Here they documented that the Josquin who worked at the cathedral of Milan from 1459 was an esteemed singer who died in 1498 and not the famous composer. Even earlier David Fallows had expressed doubts about the established biography of Josquin.[2] Could it really be true that the musician, who shortly after 1500 was regarded as the most prominent composer and who by the later writers of music histories was declared the 'first musical genius', only started to create a name for himself during the 1490s? He would then be in his late fifties, near the end of his life according to the expectancy of his times. Matthews and Merkley discovered that Josquin was a younger person, and that he was not to the same degree a pioneer in all musical areas, but a composer who reacted to and developed ideas of older colleagues. The life of Josquin as known to all students of music since the late 1950s was a conflation of at least two, maybe three or more contemporary musicians bearing confusingly similar names.

The Josquin research, which engages many musicologists especially those working on the new collected edition of his works[3] and takes up altogether a lot of space in renaissance music research, was by this revelation suddenly left with its foundations solidly set in thin air. The field was now wide open for new interpretations not only of the scarce facts concerning the life of the composer but also of his musical production, its scope and authenticity, and of the pressing problems concerning chronology.

David Fallows has with energy and imagination taken on the task of surveying these areas of research in order to bring some order to the disparate data concerning life and works. As in his classic Dufay study of 1982[4] he combines an interpretation of Josquin's life with analyses and contextual evaluations of his music. In the new book the structure is different from the earlier. While we concerning Dufay know of a surprising wealth of information to build on, we know as well as nothing about Josquin. Fallows was able to write a row of substantial chapters on Dufay's life and career and then survey his music in separate chapters according to genre. Such a framework would be impossible with Josquin. In Richard Sherr's *Josquin Companion* of 2000 the bare facts of his life could be tabulated on a few pages.[5] The new findings and revisions since then can only add a few lines, and a deplorable number of Josquin's works are contested with regard to authenticity or dating. Therefore Fallows has to weave everything together in a broad, colourful tapestry of biographical scraps, analyses of musical style, possible datings and a wealth of hypotheses and right-out speculation about life, music and context. He has also seen it as his mission to defend Josquin's unique position as the first musician widely acknowledged by the educated

1 Lora Matthews and Paul Merkley, 'Iudochus de Picardia and Jossequin Lebloitte dit Desprez: The Names of the Singer(s)', *The Journal of Musicology,* 16 (1998), 200–26.
2 David Fallows, 'Josquin and Milano', *Plainsong and Medieval Music*, 5 (1996), 69–80.
3 *New Josquin Edition*, general editor Willem Elders, Utrecht 1987–.
4 David Fallows, *Dufay* (The Master Musicians; London: Dent, 1982, 2. rev. edn. 1987).
5 Richard Sherr (ed.), *The Josquin Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 11–18.

public as a great composer, while at the same time he recognizes that a new field open for historical interpretation calls for a re-evaluation of Josquin's contemporaries. All this it takes a very sure hand to keep together.

Fallows brings his enormous experience and knowledge of the repertory to the project. It is hard to think of anybody better qualified. His interpretation of the life and music of Josquin is in general highly credible; it is well written and for long stretches engagingly told. He has obviously enjoyed setting up the story of a fascinating composer as a tale. This tale is clearly structured and filtered by the author's set of preferences and beliefs, and in most cases he takes care to spell out his reasons for believing or not believing certain hypotheses. Musical analysis becomes an important ingredient in the tale. Every step in Josquin's career is illustrated by copious music examples, which Fallows argues fit into the picture he draws. Some of the datings of the music will surely meet resistance from fellow musicologists. The examples are commented on with insight and analytic acumen. In this way the reader meets a storyteller who knows the music and who lets its sound and scoring play an active role in his line of reasoning. This is the aspect of the book that I value the highest.

In his Introduction Fallows focuses on the *Misse Josquin* printed by Ottaviano Petrucci in Venice in 1502. It is the first print ever containing music of one single composer, and he rightly points out its paradigmatic nature. The print defined to a general public the dominant genre of great musical works as *Masses,* the print medium moved so to say the mass from its primarily liturgical relevance into a musical reality, and it signalled that a composer could be famous enough to be referred to by only one name, *Josquin,* which the publisher calculated on being strong enough to carry through a risky commercial venture, the publishing of long and complicated polyphonic works. Also the selection of works was paradigmatic in its showing up different types of masses, and the medium itself, music printed in handy part books, set the pattern for the future. The highly successful publication (the collection ran to at least five reprints during the next few years) 'seems to have established Josquin definitively as the core composer of his generation and to have launched him on the career that was to make him the most influential composer of the sixteenth century.' (p. 7). The Introduction is masterly written. Much of what it has to say is not new, but Fallows explains his ideas and draws his canvas in such a lucid manner that his text reads as new insights and in a way sets up a paradigm for the following chronologically ordered chapters. Not everything in the book can live up to this level of presentation.

Chapters II-XII take the reader on a journey from Josquin's birth sometime in the early 1450s with an extended discussion of his place of birth and of his family (a lot of new information here) to his death in 1521 and a discussion of his legacy as 'Parent of music'. The last nearly 200 pages contain bibliography, indices and the enormous appendices, which document as far as possible every aspect of the story told (A. Documents; B. References; C. Personalia; D. Musicians called Josquin and cognates; E. Some people called Desprez or similar; F. Editions). If one loses track of the similar named persons discussed, this is the place to look.

A serious bid on a description of Josquin's youth, which until present has lain in darkness, is presented in Chapter III 'Early years: 1466–75'. It is fuelled by the recent discovery of a 'Gossequin de Condet', an altar boy of St Géry in Cambrai who in 1466 ended his service and received a payment to help him on his way. Fallows identifies this young man with the 'Jossequin Lebloitte dit Desprez' who in the same year was made heir of his wealthy uncle and aunt in Condé. And having the gifted youth placed in the important musical centre of Cambrai close to Guillaume Dufay Fallows reverses the for many years well-established opinion that the 'Des Pres' listed in Loyset Compère's famous singers motet *Omnium bonorum plena* along with Dufay, Ockeghem, Busnoys, Caron and others certainly could not be Josquin Desprez. He argues convincingly that

Josquin at the time had made the acquaintance of the ten year older Compère and made it into the list, and he comments on the works by Josquin, which must be regarded as very early, in the light of this proximity to the music of the aging Dufay and the young Compère.

No more than a couple of weeks had passed after I had received Fallows' book from the publishers before the journal *Acta Musicologica* arrived with an article by Joshua Rifkin titled 'Compere, "Des Pres," and the Choirmasters of Cambrai: *Omnium bonorum plena* Reconsidered'.[6] Here Rifkin (to whom Fallows dedicates his book) with stringent logic and magisterial commandment of all sources point for point demolishes Fallows' main arguments. This is the way of scholarship. However, Fallows might still be right. What both authors downplay in their reasoning is that we know nothing of Compère's early years, we have no idea of the connections he had established, of his friendships, or of his preferences when he wrote the text of *Omnium bonorum* around 1470;[7] the logic and purpose we tend to read into sources for which we cannot document a context may simply be misleading.

What really convinces is the musical relations that Fallows is able to ascertain between Dufay's musical world and early works like *Missa L'ami Baudichon* or *Alma Redemptoris mater / Ave regina celorum*. Should, for example, the *difficilior lectio* of the source ascriptions for *Missa L'ami Baudichon* be strengthened by new evidence,[8] and the mass be proven to stem from the hands of the young Johannes Tinctoris (also mentioned among the composers in *Omnium bonorum*), it would be much more harmful to Fallows' presentation of Josquin's early career than the possible exclusion from Compère's motet. But the musical links between the aging Dufay and the young Josquin, which Fallows hears and communicates in his writing, will still be of importance for an understanding of Josquin's later and well-authenticated works.

A condition seemingly ingrained in this kind of history writing becomes quite worrying along the road. It is the speed and ease by which hypotheses are transformed into facts – it happens as it was just in passing and without renewed discussion. In by far the majority of cases it is easy to forgive Fallows, because it is characteristic of his style of painting an exiting personality in words. And every time Fallows introduces a new step forward in the chronological journey he very carefully discerns events, which can be documented, and the wealth of hypotheses concerning Josquin's activities. Great parts of the biography must however remain hypothetical, and Fallows uses a lot of space to discuss the hypotheses he thinks he is able to substantiate and often ends up by establishing that it would fit beautifully into the pattern 'if Josquin was …'.

In some cases the result of this appears quite funny. For example, it is clear that Fallows is convinced that Josquin really was among the eight singers, which king Louis XI of France took over from his deceased uncle René d'Anjou, the Count of Provence and Duke of Bar, Anjou and Lorraine – and titular King of Sicily and Jerusalem (Ch. V, King Louis XI: 1480–83). Josquin's service in the chapel of René (1475–80) can be documented, while his stay at the French court during the years 1480–83 and the placing of important compositions, which Fallows connects with this service (e.g. *Liber generationis, Factum est autem* and *Misericordias Domini*), must remain hypothetical. Yet a couple of pages further on this has been transformed into something more tangible. When Josquin for the first time after the Burgundian wars early in 1483 visited Condé, where he by inheritance had become a land owner and a man of considerable means, he was received with wine at the collegiate church. 'The reasons for the *vin d'honneur* may seem obvious: as a musician who had already served two kings, he was now a distinguished visitor to the little town.' (p. 105). The two kings are

6 *Acta Musicologica*, 81 (2009), 55–73.
7 Cf. J. Rifkin, J. Dean, D. Fallows et al., 'Compère, Loyset', in *Grove Music Online* (Dec. 2009).
8 Cf. Rob C. Wegman, 'Who Was Josquin?', in Sherr, *The Josquin Companion*, 21–50, at 31–34.

René and Louis. Fallows is likewise careful when he pp. 113–15 argues that there is some possibility that Josquin between the summer of 1485 and the end of 1488 served at the splendid court of King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary (Ch. VI, Italy and Hungary: 1484–89). But on p. 174 when discussing Josquin's connection to Ascanio Sforza Fallows talks of '… a composer who had served three kings …'. This sneaky merging into facts of hypothetical royal services is here mostly funny as it is unnecessary, and it does not strengthen Fallows' argumentation.

However, it becomes questionable when royal services are used as an argument in favour of a new hypothesis as when Fallows argues that Josquin in the late 1490s '… at a point where he had achieved all possible ambitions, including service for three kings and two popes, as well as composing several of western music's most perfect masterpieces, he spent two or three years in Cambrai working on the style of his music and trying to find new kinds of sounds' (p. 196). In my view this type of hyperbolic argument only weakens his otherwise credible account of Josquin's career. Fallows is much more to the point when he first discusses this 'empty' period of Josquin's life in the 1490s '… although there is at present not a shred of evidence to support it … and the document may turn up next week.' (pp. 191–92).

In some passages reading Fallows' discussions of the details is like eavesdropping on a learned seminar for a closed circle of scholars discussing topics of apparently unlimited importance to them and their positions among the participants, but less transparent to bystanders. But on the other hand it demonstrates that it is living persons with passions and leanings who perform musicology – that the book treats live scholarship, not dead facts.

Luckily the situation surrounding Josquin is relatively unique. The lives and works of his contemporaries are also under discussion, but without a similar savage fight over the meaning of every scrap of evidence. They have not been subject of as many false ascriptions (that we know of) or the same sort of fame without surely ascribed works in contemporary sources – or to be blunt, their afterlife in the musical repertory did not produce a confusing plenitude and creativity comparable to Josquin's. Luckily one must say, for if the contemporaries and predecessors of Josquin had been subjected to the same urge to undermine approved lists of works, the Josquin discussion would break down completely in chaos and loss of bearings. The new Josquin book can only accent the need for renewed research into and evaluation of his contemporaries. And in spite of its sometimes unsteady facts and tendency to circularity in argumentation this book is extremely important by virtue of the structure it imposes on a vast amount of material concerning also the whole period of Josquin.

It is an impressive book. It is big, thick (200 x 300 x 45 mm) and heavy (3 kg), beautifully layouted with lots of space around text and music examples. But it is also somewhat disturbing: It appears to signal that time has run out for early music in ordinary books, that there can only be economy in publishing a scholarly Josquin biography as a table book and not as a book actually usable for students. It is impossible to carry around in a bag, it is like a heavy codex which one imagines chained to a medieval reading desk. One may wonder that such a format really should be the right answer to the challenge from the electronic book.

The big format is on the other hand used to give room for many instructive music examples. They are consciously presented in an old-fashioned layout in quartered note-values, reduced score and often with text underlaid only a single or a few voices. In this way Josquin's music at times looks like baroque music. Fallows gives as one of his reasons for this that '… most of the music has only been seen in original note-values, so there is a possibility that the reduced note-values will help the reader to see familiar works afresh.' (p. XII). And he succeeds, the *Verfremdung* is effective. But the question must be whether it really serves the book's purpose (never explicitly explained). If the purpose is to let Josquin appear to the reader as a complete human being (as complete as possible) who expresses his beliefs and

aims in a multifaceted music, many of the examples rather point by their selection and graphical presentation towards the old picture of Josquin as the perfect artist who constructs an ideal world in tones. In his remarks on the ending of *Missa La sol fa re mi* Fallows discusses the to his ears unexpected ending in A of the Phrygian ostinato mass (the 'Agnus Dei' is presented complete in Ex. 40). 'Here is after all one of the most perfect works Josquin ever composed, immaculately logical until this moment.' (p. 185). In spite of his careful and sensible reasoning in the following comments he seems somewhat stuck in the outdated genius worship, which has marred the Josquin research for ages. This impression is strengthened by the musical example, which is entirely without text; it depicts music heard as pure structure and derived of its reason for existence, the words of the liturgy.

It does not take much of a prophet to predict that a spate of scholarly articles will appear in the near future supporting and developing Fallows' views or proving him quite wrong on several issues. The coming years will probably be the most influential in the book's career. Then it is just to be hoped that Fallows will have the stamina to produce a revised version of his big *Josquin* book – preferably as a handy paperback.

*Peter Woetmann Christoffersen*


Peter Ryom
*J.S. Bachs Kirkekantater. Forkyndelse i ord og toner*
Herlev: Andantino 2009
240 pp., illus.
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DKK 240

Igor Stravinsky, a most competent observer, was once asked what he thought was the most important work in music history; he replied, 'the cantatas by Johann Sebastian Bach'. Numerous publications dealing with the works, performance practice, provenance, and new findings are published every year. In 2009 a Danish book came to light: Peter Ryom's *J.S. Bachs Kirkekantater. Forkyndelse i ord og toner* (J.S. Bach's Church Cantatas. Preaching in Words and Music) which for several reasons is a most welcome and admirable study. Considering the vast amount of literature on Bach in German and English, it is noteworthy that the book is a contribution to Bach literature in Danish, which is not an everyday occurrence. In 1950 Kai Flor published his Bach biography, and much later, in 2000, Jens Kjeldsen expanded the list with his *Mellem kosmos og sjæl* (Between Cosmos and Soul). Most commendable are the publications on the Christmas Oratorio and the St John Passion by Peter Thyssen (2004, 2005), and the St Matthew Passion by Sven Rune Havsteen (2005). Peter Ryom's work offers choir conductors profound knowledge of some of the most central and elevated vocal music that was ever written; in addition, the book is most helpful to performers and authors of programme notes to the works.

Glancing through the index of reference literature reveals that the author has based his research on the latest literature and has thus been brought up to date. The most obvious names such as Blankenburg, Dadelsen, Dürr, Geck, Petzoldt, Schulze, and Wolff are present. Only one major work on the Bach cantatas seems to be missing: Martin Petzoldt's extensive commentary, *Bach Kommentar* (3 vols., Schriftenreihe der Internationalen Bachakademie, Stuttgart 2005, 2006, vol. 3 in prep.). Petzoldt, president of the International Bach Society, presents a theological counterpart to the basic musicological research with special focus on contemporary texts used and chosen by Bach. Mention should be made of this study, since