

DUM TRANSISSET SABBATUM

(SATBB)

Third responsory for Matins
of Easter Sunday (Mk 16:1-2)

John Taverner
(c. 1490-1545)

Opening as preserved in the sources (bars 1-4):

SOPRANO
Dum transis- Dum tran - sis - set Sa - ba - - - tum,
B: -sis - - set Sa - ba-

ALTO
Mari-

TENOR
B: signature Eb
Dum transis- Dum tran - sis - set sab - ba -
B: -ba-

BASS I
Dum transisset Dum tran - sis - set Sab - - -

BASS II
Dum transis- Dum tran - sis - - - set Sab - ba -

Reconstructed opening (bars 1-4):

Dum tran - sis - set_

SOPRANO
Sab - - ba - tum, sa - ba - - - tum,
B: Sab - - - ba - tum, sab - ba -
C: Sab - - ba -

ALTO

TENOR
Sab - ba - tum, sab - ba -
B: -ba -

BASS I
Sab - - - - ba - - -

BASS II
Sab - ba - - - - - tum, sab - ba -

5

sab - ba - - - - tum,

Ma - ri - - - - -

tum, Ma -

tum: Ma - ri - - - - -

10

Ma - ri - - - - a Mag - da - le - - - -

a Mag - da - le - - - -

ri - - - - a Mag - da - le - - - - ne, Mag -

a Mag - da - le - - - -

a Mag - da - le - - - - ne

15

ne - - - - -

ne, et

da - le - - ne, Mag - da - le - - - -

ne et Ma - ri - a - - - -

Mag - da - le - - - - ne et Ma - ri - - - -

20

et Ma - ri - - - a, Ja - co - - -
 Ma - ri - - -
 ne et Ma - ri - - - a Ja - - -
 Ja - - -
 a Ja - co - - bi

bi et Sa - - lo - - - me e - -
 a Ja - co - - bi et Sa - lo - me, et Sa - lo - - -
 co - - bi et Sa - lo - - - me e - me - -
 co - - bi et Sa - lo - me - -
 et Sa - lo - me, et Sa - lo - - -

B:

30

me - - - - - runt - - -
 me e - me - runt - - -
 runt - - -
 e - me - - - runt - - -
 me, e - me - - - runt

35

a - ro - ma -
runt a - ro - ma - ta, a - ro - ma - (7)
a - ro - ma - - - - - ta, a -
B: -ta
C: -ta, a - ro - ma -
a - ro - ma - - - - -
a - ro - ma - ta, a - ro - ma - ta, a - ro - ma -

A

39

ta, a - ro - ma - - - - - ta, ut
- - - - - ta,
- ro - ma - ta ut ve - ni - en -
- - - - - ta, ut ve - - - - ni - en -
- - - - - ta, ut ve - ni - en - - - - - (A)

44

ve - ni - en - - - - - tes
ut ve - ni - en - - - - - tes
- - - - - tes un - ge - rent
- - - - - tes un - ge - - - - - rent
- - - - - tes un - ge - rent Je - - - - - B

49

un - ge - rent Je - sum.

un - ge - rent Je - sum.

Je - sum. B: -sum.

Je - sum.

sum.

54 **B**

Al - le - lu - ya, Al -

Al - le - lu B: -ya ya, al - le - lu - ya,

Al - le - lu - ya, Al - le - lu -

Al - le - lu - ya, Al

Al - le - lu - ya, Al - le - lu -

59

le - lu - ya, Al - le - lu -

al - le - lu B: # A al - le -

ya, Al - le - lu (9)

le - ya, Al - le - lu (8)

ya, Al - le - lu

65

ya, Al - le - lu - ya.
 (B): lu - ya, al - le - lu - ya.
 ya, Al - le - lu - ya.
 (11) lu - ya.
 ya, Al - le - lu - ya.

VERSE

[Three soloists]

Et val - de ma - ne u - na sab - ba - to - rum ve - ni - unt ad -
 mo - nu - men - tum, or - to jam so - le.

(12)

Repeat from **A**
to the end, then
sing the Gloria:

GLORIA

[Three soloists]

Glo - ri - a Pa - tri et Fi - li - o et Spi - ri - tu -
 i San - cto.

Repeat from **B** to the end.

NOTES

(1) While both sources clearly have the E_b here (**A** with an on-stave accidental and **B** with a signature accidental), the four-voice arrangement in the Gyffard books has the E_b on the third minim beat, which performers may find more attractive.

(2) B: Mag - - da - le - ne

(3) The words from here until the '-ne' at bar 20 are in **A** only.

(4) B: et Sa - lo - me

(5) This 'et Salome' is omitted in **B**.

(6) **B** has this F as a dotted semibreve (i.e. tied to the following note). See note 4.

(7) This 'aromata' is omitted in **B**.

(8) B: Al - le - lu - ia

(9) **B**: '-lu' until '-ya' at b. 69

(10) B: Al - le - lu

(11) The source (**B**) has '-ya' here.

(12) The 1519 Sarum antiphonal has B_b . In light of the modality of the polyphony, it may be preferable to choose this reading.

TEXT AND TRANSLATION

LATIN

℞. *Dum transisset Sabbatum, Maria Magdalene et Maria Jacobi et Salome emerunt aromata ut venientes ungerent Jesum. Alleluia.*

℣. *Et valde mane una sabbatorum veniunt ad monumentum orto iam sole.*

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.

ENGLISH

℞. And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. Alleluia.

℣. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

COMMENTARY

John Taverner wrote two five-voice settings of ‘Dum transisset sabbatum’—the third Matins responsory for Easter Sunday in the Sarum liturgy—and possibly also wrote a four-voice arrangement that survives of the first setting. Taverner’s are the earliest surviving settings of this Easter office text, which captures the moments right before the appearance of the resurrected Christ to the Three Marys at the tomb: the threshold between mourning and rejoicing, between night and the ‘rising of the sun’. Another novelty is that Taverner, set the choral section of the responsory (the *repetendum*) to polyphony rather than the more complicated verse, which, usually sung by more specialised and skilled singers anyway, had been the section of the responsory more typically set to polyphony in the past.¹

In its five-voice setting, this first ‘Dum transisset’ is preserved in two important Tudor sources, the Baldwin (GB-Och Mus. 979–83) (A) and Dow (GB-Och Mus. 984–8) (B) partbooks, and the four-voice arrangement for lower voices is preserved only in the Gyffard partbooks (GB-Lbl Add. 17802–5) (C). The Baldwin partbooks, known after their copyist John Baldwin (1560–1615), were originally five, but the tenor book no longer survives. They are thought to have been compiled c. 1575–81. Baldwin, an experienced singer and amateur composer associated with St George’s Chapel, Windsor, maintained close ties to Byrd’s musical circle, and was later associated with the Chapel Royal, of which Tallis was a member. He may have copied his fine partbooks from sources used at these institutions. Roger Bray writes that ‘small details’ such as Baldwin’s more relaxed attitude to accidentals should not

¹ Hugh Benham, *John Taverner: His Life and His Music* (London: Routledge, 2017), 213.

cast into doubt the thoroughness and skilfulness of his work, although we know that he occasionally altered text-settings in order to ‘modernize’ them, such as removing long final-syllable melismata that were a typical feature of the florid English style of the early sixteenth century.² Nevertheless, the text-setting is often helpfully clear.

The same cannot always be said of source **B**, a set of partbooks known after their copyist and owner, Robert Dow (1553–88), Fellow of Laws at All Souls’ College, Oxford. Copied *c.* 1581–8, perhaps in Oxford or in London,³ this set of five partbooks is a crucial source for Tudor polyphony, although the fact that the texts were evidently copied in before the notes frequently renders questions of text underlay unclear. What is more, comparison with other sources such as the printed *Cantiones sacrae* of Byrd indicate that Dow, far from being a ‘passive transcriber,’ often ‘adjusted the musical texts as he copied them, imposing his views about how words and music should be fused together.’⁴ This may have often included changing rhythms. For this reason, in this edition the underlay is primarily taken from **A**, although any alternatives are always provided. Ultimately however, given that both Baldwin and Dow were prone to changing the word underlay according to their taste (and there is reason to believe that their approach to *ficta* and accidentals was similar), we should avoid the notion that sources such as these can fully represent the ‘composer’s intentions’, not only in terms of underlay but also more generally. Rather, we should consider them as material records of how this piece was regarded and mediated by individuals during a time in which notation was far more flexible than it is now, and in which performers exerted a much larger degree of agency over textual details as they typically do in classical music today.⁵ When dealing with this repertory the task of the editor is, in my view, to work out and sort through the various readings, decide which are principal and variant, and then to equip the performer with the necessary critical apparatus to understand and freely to alter the editor’s decisions (if they so desire). The concept of *Urtext* is, for this repertoire, unattainable and even undesirable, and this piece is an excellent example of why this is.

While text underlay and accidentals are the most frequent areas in which the editor and performer must make such textual decisions, Taverner’s first ‘Dum transisset’ presents a rarer and more fundamental *structural* dilemma. That is, whether it is to be performed as a responsory, with some or all of its complementing plainchant (incipit, verse and Gloria), or as a motet without any of these elements, as is modelled by sources **A** and **B**. Though in **A** this is less so: in the tenor and first bass parts, the presence of *signa* at the places marked with rehearsal figures in this edition suggests that there may have existed, in Baldwin’s conception, the possibility of performing the piece following its original responsory structure (i.e. repeating ‘ut venientes’ after the verse and ‘Alleluia’ after the Gloria). Perhaps the performers of the Baldwin version had the plainchant to hand in a liturgical book or

² Roger Bray, ‘John Baldwin’, *Music & Letters* 56 (1975): 55–9; David Mateer, ‘John Baldwin and Changing Concepts of Text Underlay’ in J. Morehen (ed.), *English Choral Practice 1400–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 143–160, at 148.

³ John Milsom, ‘Introduction’, in *The Dow Partbooks: Oxford, Christ Church, Mus. 984–988*, DIAMM facsimiles 2, (Oxford, 2010), 5.

⁴ *Idem*, 1. Dow ‘perhaps more than any Elizabethan scribe sought to “improve” the word-setting of composers by lengthening or shortening rhythmic values, dividing notes and applying slurs’: David Mateer, ‘John Baldwin and Changing Concepts of Text Underlay’, in J. Morehen (ed.), *English Choral Practice 1400–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 143–60, at 155.

⁵ For an introduction to these questions see Margaret Bent, ‘Editing Early Music: The Dilemma of Translation’, *Early Music* 22/3 (August 1994), 373–92.

knew it by heart, or maybe Baldwin envisioned a hybrid structure with repeats but no plainchant. Alternatively, the *signa* might be a mere remnant of the copying process, with no functional meaning. In Dow's version, the piece is undoubtedly presented as a single item of polyphony, with no suggestion of plainchant or repeats.

It is clear, however, that this is not the original structure of the piece, and that the Baldwin and Dow versions have undergone alteration, perhaps liturgically motivated (after all, Latin-texted responsories had no place in the reformed Anglican liturgy). The text, cantus firmus (missing from **A**) and *signa* strongly suggest that the piece was originally conceived in the form of a responsory, and this is definitively supported by the four-voice arrangement in **C**, which appears to have escaped any structural tampering. Unlike the five-part versions, it includes the plainchant incipit, and correctly placed *signa* in all voices clearly indicate the appropriate responsory repetitions. It also omits the strange starting note ('Dum') in the cantus firmus of the surviving five-part versions, and has a correctly texted polyphonic section, starting with the word 'Sabbatum'.

With this in mind, it becomes evident that opening as it survives in the Baldwin and Dow versions is the product of a threefold process of alteration: first, the removal of the plainchant incipit; second, the re-texting of the first few bars of the piece, and third, the addition of an extra note onto the beginning of the cantus firmus. This last alteration was probably made for two reasons: the first was to accommodate the entire beginning of the text (without the incipit, the cantus firmus as it was did not have enough notes); the second was to provide a starting pitch in absence of the original incipit. To reflect this structural duality, I have provided the two versions of the first four bars of the piece: the first, as preserved in the sources, retains the initial intoning semibreve ('Dum') and has no incipit; the second is a reconstruction of the opening following the original responsory structure as preserved in **C** and suggested in **A**, in which the plainchant incipit is put back in, a suggested reconstruction of the text underlay is provided, and the solo starting note is removed.

The verse and Gloria are not provided in any source, but are given in this edition, as it is extremely likely that Taverner wrote the polyphony to accompany them. I have taken the plainchant transcriptions from William Renwick's *Music of the Sarum Office. Breviarium Sarisburiense cum nota* (Hamilton, ON: The Gregorian Institute of Canada, 2010), pp. 1237–8. In turn, they are drawn from the 1519 and 1531 editions of the *Antiphonale ad usum ecclesie sarisburiense*, and Walter Frere's facsimile of the *Antiphonale sarisburiense* (London: Plainsong and Mediæval Music Society, 1901). Slight differences between the cantus firmus in **B** and **C** and the standardised Sarum books suggest that differing sources—perhaps showing some local variation—might have been used during copying/composition, or that indeed the cantus firmus was quoted from memory. In any case, the cantus firmus mainly follows source **B** in this edition, and I refer the performer to my edition on CPDL of the four-voice arrangement in the Gyffard books for further comparison and study.

Spellings have been modernised and standardised. Original note values are retained. All barlines are editorial. Editorial *ficta* accidentals are placed above the note. Cautionary accidentals, in round parentheses, are also editorial. Ligatures are marked with square brackets; editorial text is provided in italics.