

John Bull. *Salve Regina*

The five verses on the *Salve Regina* occupy a special place in the keyboard works of John Bull (1562/3 - 1628). They can undoubtedly be included among the compositions dating from the 'Flemish' period of the English organist, who fled Anglican England in September 1613 to settle in Flanders, where he worked briefly (from 24 September 1613 to the end of August 1714) at the Catholic court of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella in Brussels. His colleagues there included the Brussels-born Peeter Cornet (c1570 - 1633) and his compatriot Peter Philips (1560/1 - 1628), who had also fled England in 1582 "for the Catholic faith". In 1615, Bull was appointed assistant organist at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Antwerp, and became its principal organist two years later, a post he held until his death on 15 March 1628.

A new edition of Bull's *Salve Regina* was needed: the only publication available so far (in the complete works edited by John Steele & Francis Cameron, revised by Thurston Dart, *Musica Britannica*, London, Stainer & Bell, vol. I, 1967; vol. II, 1970) suffers from an overly literal transcription of the source, written in German tablature. The editors have transcribed all the rhythmic values as they are, which results in a very 'black' text with common values in semiquavers and demisemiquavers, making the performer want to play this music much too fast. Our reading re-establishes the usual rhythmic values, a demisemiquaver in the tablature becoming a quaver and so on, resulting in a more 'peaceful' text. We have taken advantage of this re-reading to make a few corrections and modifications to Thurston Dart's text that our regular playing of this score has inspired after many long discussions.

The only source for the *Salve Regina* is manuscript 17.771 in the Vienna National Library, which contains only works by John Bull (including a version attributed to him of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck's *Fantasia cromatica*). Excepted for 123 canons, which are written in score (on four staves), the entire work is written in German tablature, a system of writing that Bull is unlikely to have practised or even known. A remarkable feature of this manuscript is its extremely small format: 9 x 12 cm, so that the question arises not only as to whether it is possible to play from this tiny text, but even as to how the copyist achieved the feat of writing so small that the author of these lines had to leave the library to buy a powerful magnifying glass from a local optician... Thurston Dart's suggestion that this little manuscript was designed to be played on a clavichord [with a small sound...] seems quite naïve to us. We would rather see the explanation in the fact that the manuscript, with its richly decorated binding, formed part of the private library of Emperor Leopold I (who reigned from 1658 to 1705), where it held the role of a precious 'Prachtstück'.

Apart from the problem of the transcription of rhythmic values mentioned above, and the reconstitution of the left hand in bars 23 to 33 of the first verse, which appears on a page that was unfortunately trimmed during the binding, the only important question concerns accidentals. The tablature is quite precise in this area: altered notes are clearly distinguished by a little loop or scroll attached to the letter representing the natural note. Even more: for B, the tablature uses two different letters: B for B natural, and H for B flat. But it is impossible to transcribe the tablature purely and simply without wondering in many places whether the copyist (who in this case is also the translator into tablature of a manuscript probably in the composer's hand) is infallible, or whether he himself has made one or other mistake. Several of these hesitations are taken up in the critical report, leaving the performer the choice between different readings. But these annotations are undoubtedly not exhaustive, and although our aim has been to produce a text that is as legible and faithful to the source as

possible, the reader is invited to ask himself any questions that a responsible interpretation might suggest...

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Critical report

Conventions

The first column of the Critical report mentions the bar number.

In the second column, voices are indicated by capital letters (B = Bass, T = Tenor, A = Alto, S = Soprano).

The third column gives the beat in Roman numbers, possibly followed by its division.

Notes are indicated by letters C, D, etc., until B or H, followed by their height (1 = bottom octave, 2 = tenor octave, 3 = middle octave, 4 = treble octave).

[1. Versús. Salve Regina]

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|-------|-------|--|
| 26 | B & A | Text partially missing in the tablature. The probable repetition of the # sign before the four C3 of the trill has been cut off. |
| 27-33 | B & T | Text mostly missing in original tablature: only a few rhythmical signs are partially legible. |

2. Versús [Ad te clamamus]

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|----|---|----|---|
| 6 | S | I | The rhythmical signs are: 1 group of 4 stems with 3 flags, followed by 2 groups of 4 stems with 4 flags. The two last groups are clearly D4 C#4 D4 C#4 and D4 C#4 H4 C#4. But the first group, which should also count 4 notes, reads only three: C#4 D4 B4. Thurston dart adds a D4 to these 3 notes, while we prefer the more melismatic C#4. Of course, one might find other solutions by amending the rhythmical pattern, giving one of the 3 notes the value of a ♩. |
| 18 | T | IV | G2 > B2 |
| 21 | T | IV | The tablature clearly reads F2 natural; one might however prefer F#2. |
| 22 | S | I | The second, third and fourth notes (B2 B2 C3) are clearly written under the lowest limit of a half-register; this seems to indicate that this verse was composed for two keyboards. A solution for playing on a single manual could be: B3 ♩ D3 C3 ♩... |

3. Versús [Eia Ergo]

This verse is clearly a solo for the left hand. The left-hand solo begins on the third verse of bar 5; it overpasses the C/C# usual break between bass and treble, therefore indicating a performance on two keyboards. When playing on one keyboard only, with split registers, one can play the scale, bar 9, one octave lower from E to D.

- 10 B The rhythmical values of the tablature are (dividing the number of crotchets by 2 as usual): ♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪; the notes are A2 A1 B₁ C2 A1 E2 D2 C2 D2 B₁ E3. We propose to change the sixth value ♪ into ♪. The solution proposed by Dart is worth quoting (adapting his diminished values to ours): ♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪.

4. Versús. O pia.

The title should be *O clemens*; in the alternatim, *O pia* is normally sung in eighth position, after *O Clemens*. It must be noted that the *cantus firmus* in the treble voice may be played with a 4' stop on the pedals, a similar situation as in the *O Clemens* of Peeter Cornet's *Salve Regina*.

- 9 B II/2 The tablature clearly reads A2; however, one could prefer F#2, to avoid the rather inelegant repetition of A2.

5. Versús. [Pro Fine]

- 19 S The tablature clearly reads 3 times F3 (F natural); one might however prefer F#. The tablature is not very clear and one could also read D3 for the first note.
- 33 B I/3 The tablature clearly reads H (B natural); one must however prefer B₁. The same argument is valid for the second H of IV.
- 35 B II/2 The tablature clearly reads H (B natural); one must however prefer B₁.