

Canons by Tobias Michael and Others in the Albums of Burckhard Grossmann the Younger*

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Puzzle canons by Tobias Michael, recently discovered in albums, offer concrete musical evidence of the Thomascantor's contrapuntal skill. Until now, Michael's reputation as an advocate of counterpoint has rested largely on indirect evidence. Like Heinrich Schütz, he numbered among the musicians asked to contribute letters in defense of Marco Scacchi, printed in Scacchi's *Judicium cribri musici* (c. 1649). As a teacher, Michael apparently taught his pupils to write or improvise various kinds of counterpoint. In a letter of application to the post of Thomascantor, his pupil Elias Nathusius attested in 1657 to the contrapuntal procedures learned under his teacher:

I do not fear extemporaneously composing or singing, with or without text, a musical canon at the unison, octave, fourth, fifth, below or above, for two or three voices: and these were our beginning models of composition. My late Herr Praeceptor [Michael] tested me well and, without boasting I can say, found me quite clever in composing counterpoint: simple, composite, *duplex* (or double counterpoint), inverse (or contrary motion), retrograde, etc., with and without text, and also in finding the key to an unknown canon (about which he also corresponded with the likewise late Herr Scheidt, noble princely Capellmeister in Halle).¹

Heinrich Schütz's allusion to Michael in the preface to his *Geistliche Chor-Music* also hints at the Thomascantor's support for older techniques of composition.

Despite these accounts, very little musical evidence survives to substantiate this reputation. The cultivation and circulation of such techniques usually took place privately in handwritten exchanges, like the one between Michael and Scheidt mentioned in Nathusius's letter, or through a tradition of improvised techniques passed down from teacher to student². Michael's published works rarely flaunt this kind of

* I am grateful to Joshua Rifkin for bringing to my attention the canons discussed here. This article has also benefited from comments and suggestions by Denis Collins, Thomas J. Mathiesen, Daniel R. Melamed, and Katelijne Schiltz.

1 »Einen Canonem Musicum in Unisono, Octavâ, Quartâ, Quintâ, Inferiore vel superiore, duabus, vel Tribus Vocibus, ohne, oder mitt Texte zu componiren ex Tempore, und zu singen, scheue ich mich nicht: Und sind dieses unsre primordia speciminum Melopoëticorum gewesen. Contrapunctum simplex, Compositum, duplex (oder doppelt Contrapunct) Inversum (oder in Motu Contrario) Retrogradum, etc: ohne, und mit Texten, zu componiren, Auch eines frembden Canonis Schlüssel zu finden, hatt mich mein Seeliger Herr Praeceptor [Michael] wohl ehr probiret (Sintemahl Er dergleichen mitt dem auch Seeligen Herrn Scheid, Vornehmen Fürstlichen Capellmeistern zu Hall in Schrifften gewechselt) und, ohne Ruhm ziemlich gescheid gefunden.« Nathusius's letter is found in the Leipzig Stadtarchiv, Tit. VII B(F). 116. The text here comes from Michael Maul, *Elias Nathusius. Ein Leipziger Komponist des 17. Jahrhunderts* in: JbMBM (2001), p. 90; the letter was also reprinted in Arnold Schering, *Aus der Selbstbiographie eines deutschen Kantors (Elias Nathusius, † 1676)*, in: Hans Joachim Zingel (Hrsg.), *Festschrift Max Schneider zum 60. Geburtstag*, Halle / Saale 1935, p. 86–87.

2 Burmeister noted that strict canons, which he calls *fuga imaginaria*, are »more for play than for actual use«; Joachim Burmeister, *Musical Poetics*, translated with introduction and notes by Benito V. Rivera, New Haven 1993, p. 186–187.

learning, partly because the tricks listed by Nathusius held limited value in the printed music market. Michael's printed repertoire, found mainly in the two volumes of his *Musicalischer Seelenlust*, offers only one example of any contrapuntal complexity. His setting of Psalm 23 from the *Musicalischer Seelenlust Erster Theil* (1634) uses double canon: three notated voices (Cantus 1, Cantus 2, and Bass) turn into five when the alto and tenor sing the two cantus parts in canons at the fourth and octave below³.

Newly found puzzle canons by Michael, however, give further musical evidence to back up his reputation as a contrapuntist. He entered each of these canons into albums compiled by acquaintances. One has already been examined by Michael Maul, who found it in the album belonging to Seth Calvisius the younger⁴. Two further examples, not recognized before, appear in a pair of albums once owned by Burckhard Grossmann the younger. These albums have recently drawn attention thanks to Joshua Rifkin, who discovered a previously overlooked inscription by Heinrich Schütz in one of them⁵. Rifkin also noted several other inscriptions and canons in the albums: two by Tobias Michael, one by his brother Christian (c. 1593–1637), and one by the Jena organist Caspar Trost (1589–1651). Table 1 lists the canons from Grossmann's albums in chronological order:

Table 1: Canons in Burckhard Grossmann's Albums (facsimiles and transcriptions of inscriptions are found in the appendix)

Album	Inscriber	Location	Date	Voices	Canonic technique(s)
I	Caspar Trost	–	3 May 1624	3	at unison
I	Tobias Michael	–		3	at 4 th and 8 ^{ve} below; augmentation
I	Christian Michael	Leipzig	27 June 1632	3	at 5 th below & 4 th above
II	Tobias Michael	Leipzig	c. 1637	2	5 th below or 4 th above (invertible)

On the one hand, three of the canons – the ones by Trost and Christian Michael and Tobias's second inscription – are short, simple, and easy to solve. They resemble many other canons in 16th- and 17th-century albums. Their solutions are straightforward, involving canons at the unison, fourth, and fifth (examples 1–3 show the resolutions). Trost's canon quotes the incipit of »Christ ist erstanden,« but is otherwise unremarkable. The perpetual canons by Tobias and Christian Michael are likewise commonplace. Unlike more substantial canons, none of these is a closed piece of music with a formal ending dictated by the composer.

On the other hand, Tobias Michael's 1625 entry in album I requires a more complicated solution involving alteration of the notated rhythm (example 4).

The key to this canon's resolution is clearly stated in the rubric:

3 The purpose of the canon, moreover, has less to do with showing off his compositional skills and more to do with making a musical pun on the text: the shepherd leading the sheep in the psalm becomes the canon's two pair of dux and comes.

4 Michael Maul, »Musica noster amor« – *Musikereinträge im Stammbuch von Sethus Calvisius d. J.*, in: SJB 32 (2010), p. 149–155; the album also contains the only known inscription by Tobias's brother Samuel.

5 Joshua Rifkin, *Heinrich Schütz und seine Brüder: Neue Stammbucheinträge*, in: SJB 33 (2011), p. 151–167. The two volumes are now housed at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague, Sig. 133 C 14 – B & C, and the individual pages are currently available in digital format through the library's online catalogue (<http://op4.kb.nl/>). The background to this particular album and the younger Grossmann's biography have already been treated by Rifkin and need little elaboration here. Grossmann's first album also contains an inscription with lute tablature, fol. 177.2', not discussed here.

Die Erste Stimme wirdt gesungen wie sie selbst gesetzt ist.
Die Andere eine Quart darunter, wirdt aber auß ieder noten / sie sey wie sie wolle, mit punct,
oder ohne punct / ein halber tact gemacht.
Die Dritte eine octav darunter / doch daß auß ieder noten ein gantzer tact gemachet werde.⁶

Example 1: Caspar Trost, Album I inscription, canon at the unison (1624), resolution

Example 2: Christian Michael, Album I inscription, canon at the 5th below and 4th above (1632), resolution

Example 3: Tobias Michael, Album II inscription, canon at the 5th below (c. 1637), resolution

⁶ A facsimile and transcription of this canon also appears in the appendix.

The musical score is presented in five systems, each with three staves. The top staff is the original melody. The middle staff is a canon at the 4th below, and the bottom staff is a canon at the 8th below. The piece concludes with a resolution. The notation includes various note values, rests, and bar lines.

Example 4: Tobias Michael, Album I inscription, canon at the 4th and 8^{ve} below (1625), resolution

In other words, the top voice sings the part as written, the second sings the same a fourth below but in a steady rhythm of one note every half tactus, and the third sings the part an octave below changing notes only once every tactus. The resolution thus resembles augmentation, although the rhythmic values are not increased proportionally but rather flattened into semibreves and minims. An additional side effect of this procedure is a simple mensuration canon between the two lower voices. Proper resolution of the canon, moreover, produces a musically complete piece.

The difficulty of cracking this puzzle must have demanded a written rubric. The main hint Michael himself gave was the cryptic phrase »Duo cum faciunt idem non est idem«, a phrase attributed to Terence whose meaning can be translated, »When two do the same thing, it is not the same.« Grossmann himself, rather than Michael, probably wrote out the rubric. Its red ink appears in a hand different from the

canon's author and has been fit between the lowest staff and the Latin epigram⁷. If Michael had originally offered the canon as a challenge for his friend, Grossmann's rubric also lets his later readers know that he had indeed solved the riddle.

This rubric also helps realize Tobias Michael's canon found by Maul in the album of Seth Calvisius the younger, for which no solution was evident (example 5)⁸.

Example 5: Tobias Michael, canon at the 5th between alto and soprano in the album of Seth Calvisius the younger, resolution

This canon has three notated voices: alto, tenor, bass. No rubric is supplied, but if we apply the principle of Grossmann's instructions – that one or more of the voices should sing its part in even notes, disregarding the notated rhythm – the canon works: singing the alto line a fifth higher in even half notes generates a soprano voice.

Although I have not found the exact same contrapuntal procedures among the works of composers Michael likely knew, his techniques are not unprecedented. Several other canons from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are produced by playing one of the canonic voices in notes of a single duration. English sources preserve a few examples. As Denis Collins has recently pointed out, in the late 16th-century English manuscript collection of 29 canons, British Library Add. 31391, attributed to »W. B.«, no. 8 is solved when the second canonic part sings the line entirely in semibreves⁹. A similar procedure occurs in no. 13 from John Farmer's *Divers & Sundry Waies of Two Parts in One, to the Number of Fortie vppon one Playnsong*, London 1591 (example 6)¹⁰.

7 The same red ink appears in several other entries in the album, and in each case it was probably Grossmann's hand clarifying or adding information about the inscription. For example, he occasionally amended an entry to indicate the position of the person who signed the page. On fol. 130.2^v, the abbreviation »I.V.D. A[nno] 1640« (Iuris Utriusque Doctor) appears in red, squeezed below the signature of a jurist, Sigismundus Findekeller, and the year of the entry, 1635. Findekeller, who had indicated his position as a law student in 1635, had apparently graduated, and Grossmann updated the entry accordingly. Other examples in red ink do the same: On fol. 139.1^v, he added »Med. Doct. A[nno] 1642« next to the signature of an erstwhile medical student. For Tobias Michael's inscription, Grossmann's addition is much more extensive but serves a similar purpose of clarifying the entry.

8 Maul (footnote 4), p. 152.

9 Denis Collins, introduction to Elway Bevin, *A Briefe and Short Instruction of the Art of Musicke*, Aldershot 2007 (= Music Theory in Britain, 1500–1700: Critical Editions), p. 25–26.

10 This also survives in manuscript, British Library RM 24.d.7, an 18th-century copy (Collins, p. 26).

Example 6: John Farmer, *Divers & Sundry Waies*, no. 13, resolution

Furthermore, in *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (London 1597), Thomas Morley introduces a cross canon that uses the procedure twice (figures 1 and 2). The two canons are resolved, as Morley explains, by singing the horizontal line entirely in dotted minims and the vertical line in semibreves. Unlike Michael's example, Morley's contains two different canons on two separate lines that make a fourvoice whole. But it does apply the same basic canonic technique to more than one rhythmic value at the same time.

Michael's canons also have features akin to published examples by Samuel Scheidt. Scheidt's *Tabulatura Nova I* (1624) contains a set of twelve canons, a few of which follow a principle similar to the two Michael inscriptions in examples 4 and 5. For the sixth of these (SSWV 120), labeled »Canon à 3. Voc. Ad decimam ad Basin sine Pausis«, Scheidt prints a single voice. The two clefs (C1 and F4) at the beginning instruct the player to perform the notated voice simultaneously beginning on *f* in the bass and *a'* in the upper voice (»ad decimam«), as indicated by a custos mark after the C clef. The player, however, must also realize a third voice by playing the notated bass voice solely in dotted breves up a fifth. Scheidt prints this slow moving line beneath the single voice. The fact that he labeled it *Resolutio* suggests that here he did not envision an independent cantus firmus, like many of his other examples, but rather a part wholly derived from the canon printed above it. In both this canon (example 7 on p. 160) and the following (SSWV 121, not reproduced here), the player must augment the notated voice and ignore changing rhythmic values, producing a steady and slow-moving cantus firmus. When realized, both pieces sound like miniature chorale preludes with the cantus-firmus traversing only the chorale's incipit. Compared to Michael's examples, Scheidt's are extremely simple. Nevertheless, the contrapuntal restriction is similar: the player must abandon the rhythmic variety of the notated voice and instead play in a steady rhythm.

Evidence that Michael passed on this canonic technique to Nathusius comes not only from his student's application to the Thomascantorate but also from another album inscription. In 1674, Nathusius wrote a canon in the album of Andreas Knebel with the rubric »Canon à 2 voc: altera vox cantatur ex Tenore per motium contrarium (neglecto puncto) in quarta superiore, omnes notulas in Minimas mutando, post tempus«¹¹.

11 Christian-Weise-Bibliothek Zittau/Stadt- und Kreisbibliothek, Zittau, Mscr.bibl.sen.Zitt.B.158, f. 103; <http://opac.rism.info/search?documentid=201002844>.

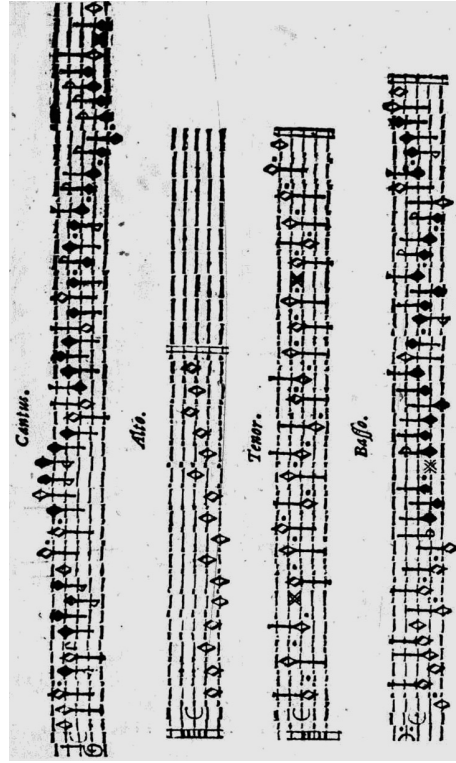
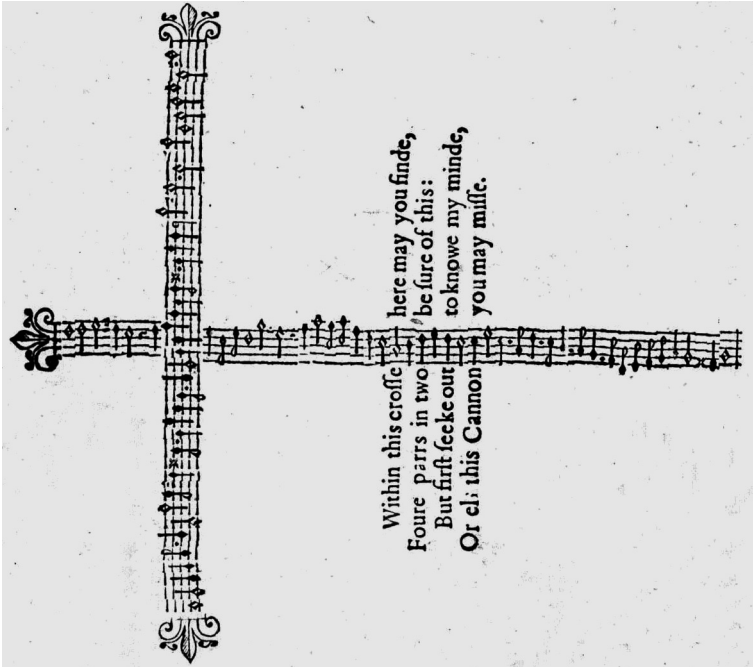


Figure 1: Thomas Morley, *A Plaine and Easie Introduction* to *Practicall Musicke*, p. 174¹¹

Figure 2: Morley's resolution, p. 175

12 Images in figures 1 and 2 courtesy of the Sibley Library, Eastman School of Music, available online at <http://hdl.handle.net/1802/21685>.

Example 7: Scheidt, *Tabulatura Nova*: »Canon à 3. Voc. Ad decimam ad Basin sine Pausis«

All these examples, however, differ from Michael's canon in Grossmann's album I (example 4) in important ways. Most of the English ones use an independent cantus firmus. And while all restrict one of the canonic voices to one or two note values, none applies this principle exactly like Michael. I have yet to find another canon using the same combination of techniques.

In addition, the inscriptions accompanying the canons in Grossmann's albums offer a small amount of useful biographical evidence. At the very least, they pinpoint the composers' locations and provide samples of their handwriting. For example, the albums contain the only biographical information to surface on Christian Michael's activities between 1619 and 1633, apart from his matriculation as a law student at the University of Leipzig in 1630¹³. Wolfram Steude notes no other information on Christian between 1619, when his Electoral scholarship at the University of Wittenberg ended, and 1633, when he replaced his late brother Samuel as organist at the St. Nicholas Church in Leipzig¹⁴. The entry in Grossmann's album is dated in June 1632, a few months before Samuel's death in August 1632. Following his signature, Christian wrote »LL studiosus«, verifying his status as a law student.

These inscriptions also confirm what we already know about contact between the Grossmann family and a circle of composers working in or near Saxony. Each of the composers represented in these albums – Schütz, Tobias and Christian Michael, and Trost – wrote settings of Psalm 116 for Grossmann's father, Burckhard Grossmann the elder (1575–1637). In 1616 the elder Grossmann had been rescued

13 Georg Erler (ed.), *Die jüngere Matrikel der Universität Leipzig 1559–1809*, 2 Bände, Leipzig 1909, reprint Nendeln 1976, vol. I, p. 293.

14 Wolfram Steude, Art. *Michael, Christian*, in: MGG2, Personenteil 12 (2004), col. 161.

from some unmentioned disaster, and as an act of thanksgiving he commissioned sixteen composers to write settings of Psalm 116 for his collection *Angst der Hellen und Friede der Seelen* (Jena 1623). Both the commission and publication of these settings predate all of the entries in the younger Grossmann's albums. The entries nevertheless show that contacts between the Grossmann family and these composers continued after they had fulfilled the elder Grossmann's commission.

The closeness of these contacts is hard to judge from the albums alone. The inscriptions by themselves tell us little about the underlying relationship between inscriber and owner. The entries are formulaic, and their arcane Latin epigrams are often drawn from a stockpile of common phrases. Circumstantial evidence, however, suggests that both Grossmanns, father and son, had longstanding ties with the composers. As organist at the Michaeliskirche in Jena, Caspar Trost probably had regular contact with the Grossmann family, which had lived in the city since 1616. The Grossmanns had an even longer-standing connection with the Michael family. The elder Grossmann had been a choirboy at the Electoral Saxon chapel under Rogier Michael¹⁵. Grossmann commissioned no fewer than four members of the Michael family (Rogier, Tobias, Christian, and Daniel) to write settings of Psalm 116 for his collection¹⁶. Tobias studied for a time at the University in Jena, and although the details of his activities during this time are still obscure, he may have had contact with either Grossmann. He and the elder Grossmann also shared an acquaintance in Salomon Glass, Superintendent in Sondershausen, who wrote gratulatory verses for both Grossmann's 1623 collection and Tobias's *Musicalischer Seelenlust erster Theil* (1634). These connections continued to the next generation, as we witness in the entries in his son's album.

Taken together, these canons and inscriptions contribute to a fuller picture of Saxony's most famous musical dynasty of the early 17th century. In particular, Tobias Michael's inscription from 1625 helps to substantiate his reputation as a contrapuntist. His brothers, however, would not attain such a lasting reputation. Christian and Samuel both wrote Italian-style concerted vocal music, but if they did write any counterpoint on par with Tobias, none has survived. Furthermore, their early deaths from the plague also prevented them from attaining their brother's fame. By the 1640s, even Tobias's health and musical productivity had diminished. Despite his infirmity, however, Tobias appears to have held onto his musical reputation until the end of his life, as his student Elias Nathusius attested.

15 More biographical details of the elder Grossmann can be found in the preface to: Christoph Wolff with Daniel R. Melamed (ed.), *Anguish of Hell and Peace of Soul (Angst der Hellen und Friede der Seelen) compiled by Burckhard Grossmann (Jena, 1623): A Collection of Sixteen Motets on Psalm 116 by Michael Praetorius, Heinrich Schütz, and others*, Cambridge (MA) 1994 (= Harvard Publications in Music 18).

16 Of Rogier Michael's four sons, only Samuel did not contribute.

Appendix

208/3 Voc.

NB
 Die Erste Stimme wirdt gesungen wie sie selbst gesetzet ist.
 Die Andere eine Quart darunter, wirdt aber auß ieder noten / sie sey wie sie wolle, mit punct, oder ohne punct / ein halber tact gemacht.
 Die Dritte eine octav darunter, doch daß auß ieder noten ein gantzer tact gemacht werde.

Duo cum faciunt idem non
 est idem

Sis asinus quemcumq; asinum sors aspera fecit

Ecce habes tuum

Tobiam Michaelam
 Decemb. Anno 25

Figure A: Tobias Michael, album inscription in Burckhard Grossmann, *Album Amicorum* (I), fol. 182.1^r (The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Sig. 133 C 14 – B)

Rubric:

NB

Die Erste Stimme wirdt gesungen wie sie selbst gesetzet ist.

Die Andere eine Quart darunter, wirdt aber auß ieder noten / sie sey wie sie wolle, mit punct, oder ohne punct / ein halber tact gemacht.

Die Dritte eine octav darunter / doch daß auß ieder noten ein gantzer tact gemacht werde.

Inscription:

Duo cum faciunt idem non est idem

Sis asinus quemcumque asinum sors aspera fecit

Ecce habes tuum

Tobiam Michaelam,

[?] Decemb. Anno 25

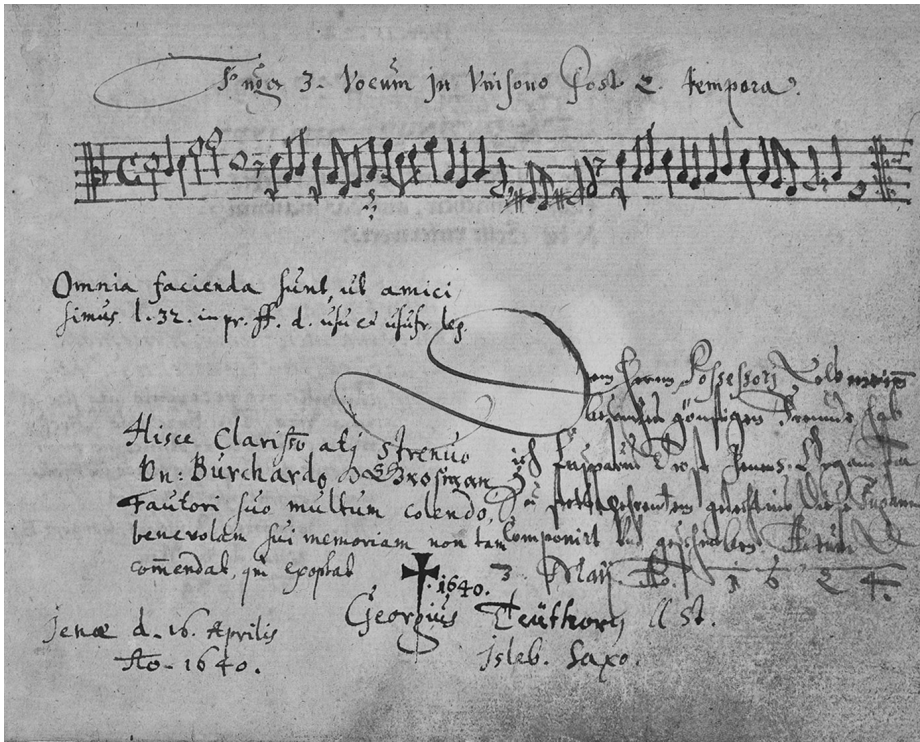


Figure B: Caspar Trost (and Georg Teuthorn¹⁷), album inscription in Grossmann, *Album* (I), fol.171.1^r

Rubric:

Fuga 3. Vocum In Unisono Post 2 tempora.

Teuthorn's inscription:

Omnia facienda sunt, ut amici
simus l. 32. in pr. ff. d. usu et usus[?] leg.

Hisce Clarissimo atque strenuo
Domino Burchardo Grosman
Fautori suo multum colendo,
benevolam sui memoriam non tam
commendat quam exoptat

Jenae d. 16. Aprilis
Anno 1640
Georgius Teuthorn A st.
Isleb. Saxo.

Trost's inscription:

Dem Herrn Possessori als meinem
besonders günstigen Freunde, hab
ich Casparus Trost Jenae Organista
zu stets gefreuten gedechtnis diese Fugam
componirt und geschrieben. A. und O.
3. Majj Anno 1624.

¹⁷ Teuthorn (d. 1640) was a jurist in Eisleben and attended the University of Jena where he 1639 published a dissertation in law, *Disputatio Iuridica De Erroribus Iustinianeis*. His relation to Caspar Trost is not known.

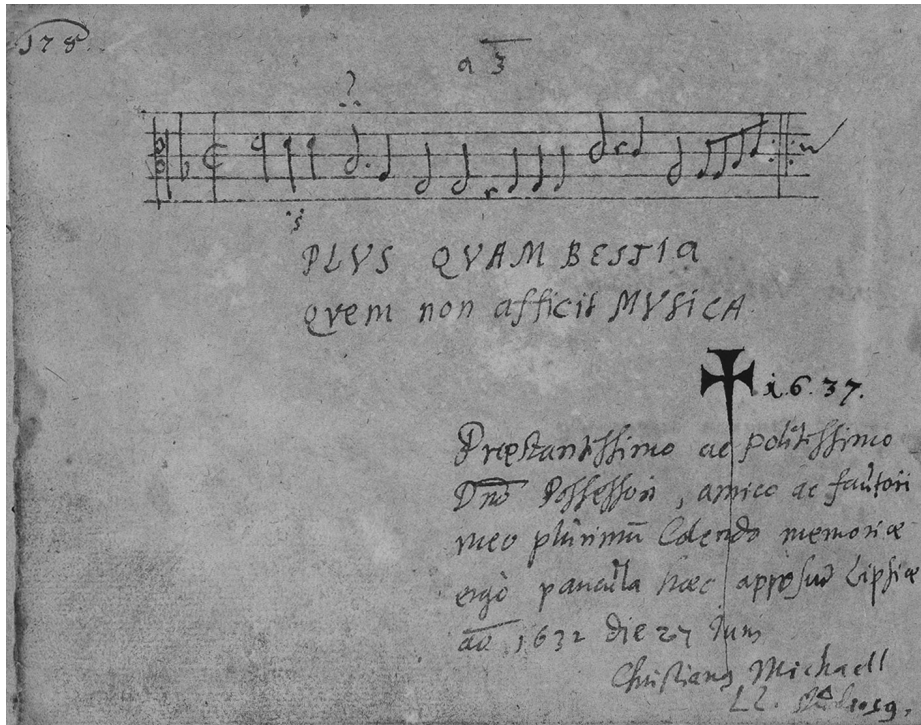


Figure C: Christian Michael, album inscription in Grossmann, *Album (I)*, fol. 142.2^v

Inscription:

PLVS QVAM BESTIA

Qvem non afficit MVSICA

Praestantissimo ac politissimo
 Domino Possessori, amico ac fautori
 meo plurimum Colendo memoriae
 ergo paucula haec apposui Lipsiae
 Anno 1632 die 27 Junii
 Christianus Michael
 LL studiosus¹⁸

18 Grossman himself marked Christian's year of death. This happens in many other entries in his albums.

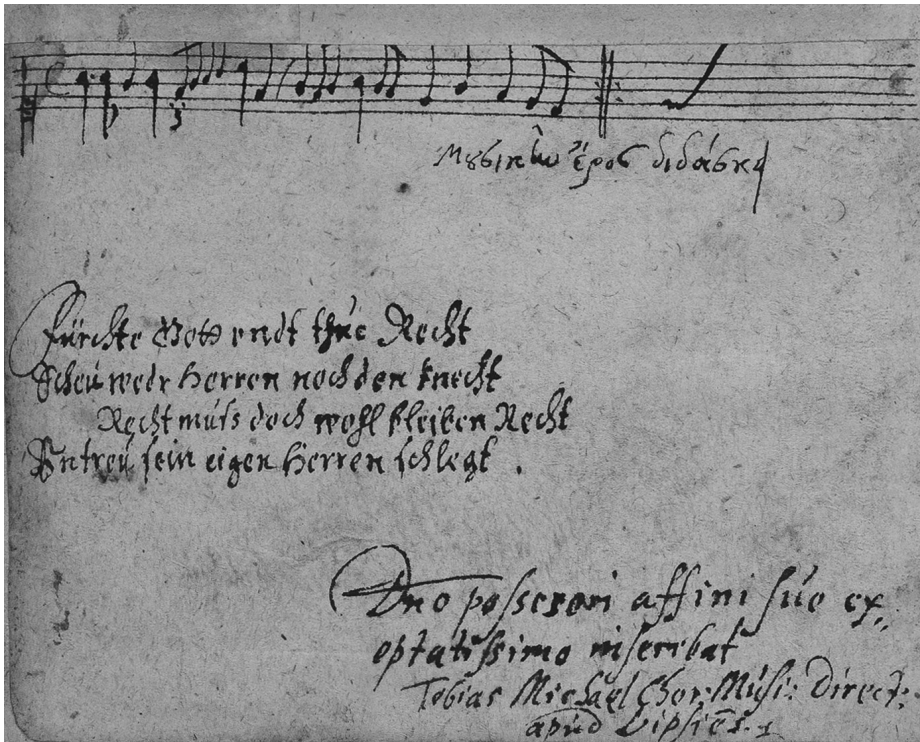


Figure D. Tobias Michael, album inscription in Grossmann, *Album* (II), fol. 227.3^r (The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Sig. 133 C 14 – C)

Inscription:

μουσικὴν ἔρος διδάσκει¹⁹

Fürchte Gott vndt thue Recht
 Scheu wedr Herren noch den Knecht
 Recht muss doch wohl bleiben Recht
 Untreu sein eigen Herren schlegt.²⁰

Domino possessori affini suo ex-
 optatissimo inscribat
 Tobias Michael Chori Musici Director
 apud Lipsienses

¹⁹ »Love teaches music«, a phrase sometimes appearing in early-modern sources in Latin («musicam amor docet»). It seems to be an adaption of the Euripides fragment «ποιητὴν δ' ἔρα Ἔρωσ διδάσκει, κἂν ἄμουσος ἦ τὸ πρῶτον» («After all, Love teaches a poet, even if he's previously alien to the Muse») from the play *Stheneboea*. See Richard Kannicht (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* 5.2, Göttingen 2004, frag. 663. The phrase is transmitted most notably by Plutarch in *Amatorius* 762B and *Questiones convivialis* I, 5: 622C. In the principle manuscript source for the latter, the *Codex Vin-*

dobonensis Graecus 148, from which all other extant manuscript sources derive, the first five letters of ποιητῆν have been crossed out by a later hand and replaced by μουσικ. See Plutarch, *Moralia*, vol. 8: *Table-Talk*, ed. by Paul A. Clement and Herbert B. Hoffleit, Cambridge (Mass.) 1969 (= The Loeb Classical Library), p. 62. This may explain why early-modern editions of Plutarch transmit »music« rather than »the poet«. Michael's source for the text, however, has yet to be discovered.

20 This inscription is a compound of several common phrases. »Fürchte Gott und thue Recht, scheue niemand« must have been fairly common. Michael wrote the same inscription in the album of Seth Calvisius the younger in 1625 (see Maul, footnote 4, p. 152), and another entry in Grossmann's first album, placed there by Frantz Rasche of Jena, contains a similar phrase, »Thue Recht, scheue niemandt« (f. 195.1^r). A similar Latin phrase appears on the printer's emblems on both volumes of Michael's *Musicalischer Seelenlust*: »Recte faciente Niminem timeas«. But in this case the publishers Samuel Scheibe and Johann Francke's heirs issued the emblem on a few other prints, so the connection probably lies with them rather than Michael. The reuse of familiar phrases seems to be a general trend of the time. Witness Schütz's reuse of several stock phrases (Schütz Dok, No. 40, 45, 70, and 86). Tobias's third line, »Recht muss doch wohl bleiben Recht«, comes from Psalm 94: 15, while the phrase »Untreu sein eigen Herren schlegt« can be traced back as early as Georg Rollenhagen's *Froschmeuseler, Ander Theil* (1608), cap. xix., line 5410.