

THE PALESTRINA CHOIR

A historic and contextual appraisal of the choir's significant repertoire choices, and newly commissioned works since its centenary year in 2003

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ABSTRACT

Shortly after the turn of the Millennium, Dublin's Palestrina Choir celebrated its centenary year (2003). In this thesis, key moments of sacred music reform in Ireland are discussed in the context of how that affected the standards and practices of the Palestrina Choir throughout the years. An appraisal of the current repertoire performed by the choir is conducted, which discusses both the traditions carried through from the choir's early days that have affected the its aesthetic, and also the significant steps being made to expand the choir's repertoire through brand new commissions. These topics are explored through available academic discourse, primary sources found in the Pro-Cathedral Archives, and qualitative interviews conducted with significant figures from the choir of the last thirty years. Repertoire choices of particular significance are explored individually in a more detailed appraisal in Chapters Two and Three.

The main finding of this thesis is that the historic traditions of the early days of the Palestrina Choir still have a profound effect on the choir's overall aesthetic, but lesser known compositions, and brand new commissions written for the choir have started to generate a symbiosis of both ancient and modern, solemn and vernacular, and traditional and ambitious.

INTRODUCTION

Dublin's Palestrina Choir is one of three cathedral choirs in Dublin City, alongside its Anglican counterparts in Christ Church Cathedral and St. Patrick's Cathedral. Unlike the two Anglican choirs, the Palestrina Choir's legacy is still very new, and its history and repertoire have only been sporadically researched and documented throughout the years. The purpose of this thesis is to conduct an appraisal of the repertoire considerations of the millennial era of the choir. The thesis will look both contextualising these considerations in relation to significant timeframes in the choir's history, and discussing new developments that have contributed to the choir's repertoire list since the turn of the millenium. This will be achieved in the following three ways:

1. Studying literature relating to significant church music reform in Ireland which have had an effect on the repertoire considerations of the choir.
2. Discussing primary sources found in the Pro-Cathedral archives. These include Sunday Missalettes, posters dating back to the 1980s, and scores from the choir's current library catalogue.
3. Analysing qualitative interviews with significant members of the choir's short history, including the choir's current Director of Music Blanaid Murphy, librarian James Reynolds, titular organist Professor Gerard Gillen and composer by association Colin Mawby.

The choir's formation by Edward Martyn and the Archbishop of Dublin Dr. William Walsh came at a very important time in the annals of church music in Ireland; a time when the Cecilian Reform Movement had achieved widespread traction across Germany, Ireland and parts of the United States.¹ The goal of the movement was to purify the music used in the celebration of the liturgy.

¹ Daly, Kieran Anthony: *Catholic Church Music in Ireland 1878-1903: The Cecilian Reform Movement* (Oregon and Dublin: The Four Courts Press Ltd., 1995), 3.

Advocates of the reform achieved this by removing any secular influences, ornately soloistic elements and also anything that was seen to be 'overly romantic and sensual' from the repertoire being performed.² The Cecilian Reform Movement's goal was to return the main focus of church music to suitable declamations of the Latin text. As a by-product of this process, the window of repertoire which was deemed suitable narrowed to a short list consisting strongly of renaissance polyphony and Gregorian Chant.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Vincent O'Brien and his boys choir from the Christian Brothers school of St. Mary's Place, Dublin had achieved positive recognition for their performance of this style of Italian polyphony. This was a large part of the reason that the Palestrina Choir was even formed in the first place, with the presence of such a choir greatly inspired Edward Martyn to organise a position for O'Brien's male-voice choir in the Pro-Cathedral. The formation of the choir, and the historical context it emerged from will be discussed in further detail in Chapter One.

As well as the Cecilian Reform Movement in Ireland, Pope Pius X released a papal letter called a 'Motu Proprio' in 1903 setting out a list of rules dictating strict guidelines for the role of sacred music in the church.³ These guidelines solidified many of the ideals which Edward Martyn had already been championing. A subsequent papal decree, entitled 'Musicam Sacram', released after the second Vatican Council in 1967 (often referred to as Vatican II), took a much less stringent stance on many of the ideals which the Cecilian Reform Movement and the 'Motu Proprio' had championed. The purpose of the Vatican Council was to try and address the church in the context of a more contemporary, progressive society.

² Daly: *Catholic Church Music in Ireland*, 3.

³ Adoreus Bulletin: 'Motu Proprio' [accessed 8 August 2015].

As a result of this document, one of the more significant outcomes was that decisions relating to music in the liturgy could now be made by the administrator of each particular church, based on their discretionary view on what is suitable for the liturgy in their church, with an added emphasis on promoting substantial congregational involvement. The effect that this had on the repertoire history of the choir will be discussed in relation to two significant times in the choir's history: Chapter One discusses the time of the choir under the direction of its first female Director of Music, Dr. Íte O'Donovan, and Chapter Two will look at the knock on effects from this period of time as the choir entered the new millennium under the direction of Blanaid Murphy.

Many of the traditions that have developed since the early days of the choir's history still have an influence on the repertoire choices made by the choir today. Significant elements of the choir's current repertoire will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Two, to assess how many of the choices made today are steeped in traditions passed down through the years. This chapter will also discuss any new factors which have contributed in a significant way to the cultivation of the current repertoire list performed by the choir.

There have been significant advances in the choir's scope and ambition, particularly in the area of newly commissioned repertoire since the centenary year. It can also be seen in its growing catalogue of CD recordings that have been released by the choir.⁴ Chapter Three will appraise some of these newly commissioned works and discuss their importance to the choir's current repertoire list.

⁴ The Palestrina Choir (2015) [accessed 29 August 2015].

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CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXT, HISTORY & REFORM

1.1 Introduction: Context, History and Reform

Chapter One will contextualise some background to the Palestrina Choir, by presenting the choir and the history of its repertoire in three ways:

1. By placing the Palestrina Choir in the timeline of Dublin's three Cathedrals, and by offering a historic overview of St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral, which has housed the choir since its inception.
2. Through discussion of significant areas of church music reform, specifically those reforms that have affected church music in Ireland since the formation of the choir.
3. By exploring periods of particular significance to the choir's history in greater detail. A full timeline of musical directors and organists that have worked with the choir since it first began will also be documented.

From this timeline, the eras of two directors will be discussed in further detail: the time of the choir's founder Vincent O'Brien (1903- 1948), and the time of Dr. Ité O'Donovan, who was appointed as the first female director of the choir in 1982 and held the title until 1996. Historic records relating to the Palestrina Choir and its repertoire choices throughout its one hundred and twelve year history (to date) are limited and the choir's repertoire choices are at times not detailed at all. However, the two eras explored in this thesis have literary and documentary evidence available, which is why they have been chosen specifically for discussion in this study.

The information collected will help create a roadmap leading up to the current choir under Director of Music Blanaid Murphy and to the repertoire that the choir now performs in the millennial era of its existence.

1.2 A Brief History of Dublin's Cathedrals

Dublin city is home to one Roman Catholic cathedral and two Anglican cathedrals. The Roman Catholic cathedral is called St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral (often shortened to 'The Pro-Cathedral') and it is the active catholic cathedral for the diocese.

Christ Church Cathedral, or 'Holy Trinity' as it was originally named, was built in 1030 and its cathedral choir dates back as far as 1493.¹ This was when the Christ Church choir school was first founded and its first Master of Music was appointed.² In the cathedral's archives, some attendance records for the choir school are available as far back as 1762.³ Despite the strong tradition of boy choristers in the choir dating back over 500 years, decreasing numbers of boys meant that the choir school closed in 1972.⁴ The decision to allow female choristers to enter the choir in 1975 was considered 'radical' at the time, but ultimately ensured the continued survival of the choir.⁵

St. Patrick's Cathedral was first consecrated on St. Patrick's Day in 1254, although a church had first been built on that site in 1192 (also consecrated on St. Patrick's Day). In 1431, the Archbishop of Dublin Richard Talbot started the St. Patricks Cathedral choir school.⁶ An early charter from 1432 shows that six boy choristers were rostered to sing, and prior to that, the lower parts were sung by the canons and vicars of the cathedral.⁷

¹ Boydell, Barra: 'Christ Church Cathedral Dublin', *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland*, ed. Harry White and Barra Boydell (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), 194.

² Christchurch Cathedral website (2015) [accessed 12 July 2015].

³ Boydell, Barra: *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin* (New York and Woolbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 7.

⁴ Boydell: 'Christ Church Cathedral Dublin', *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland*, 194.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ St. Patrick's Cathedral Grammer School website (2015) [accessed 12 July 2015].

⁷ Houston, Kerry: 'St. Patrick's Cathedral Dublin' *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland*, ed. Harry White and Barra Boydell (Dublin: Universoty College Dublin Press, 2013), 952.

1.3 St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral: Home of the Palestrina Choir

St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral on Marlborough street is where the Palestrina Choir has performed since its formation in 1903. The name 'Pro-Cathedral' is traditionally given to a parish church which is temporarily serving as the Diocesan Cathedral.⁸ St. Mary's retains its 'Pro-Cathedral' status because when Christ Church Cathedral was first built, centuries before the reformation and the presence of the Anglican church in Ireland, it was consecrated as Dublin city's Roman Catholic cathedral. That position is still technically held by Christ Church and has yet to be revoked, even in the years since it has become the city's Anglican cathedral.⁹ To this day, The Pro-Cathedral holds the active role as Dublin's Catholic diocesan cathedral.

The construction of the Pro-Cathedral was organised by John Thomas Troy, who was named Archbishop of Dublin in 1786.¹⁰ During this time, the church of St. Mary's parish was located on Liffey Street in a chapel which had been built in 1729 by the parish priest John Linegan.¹¹ Troy began to apportion funds to create a 'dignified spacious church' in the capital.¹² In 1803, Troy formed a committee that placed a deposit on the Marlborough Street site. After ten years of construction, the Pro-Cathedral was completed. It opened its doors to the public on 14 November 1825.¹³

Within the church, the choir traditionally performs from the rear choir balcony. One significant structural change that occurred between the early days of the choir and the present day is that the organ console was moved at the behest of the titular organist Professor Gerard Gillen in 1995.¹⁴ During an interview with

⁸ Hardons, John: 'Modern Catholic Dictionary' (2015) [accessed 25 July 2015].

⁹ Sacred Destinations website (2015) [accesses 13 July 2015].

¹⁰ Archdiocese of Dublin website (2015) [accessed 13 July 2015].

¹¹ St. Mary's Pro Cathedral website (2015) [accessed 13 July 2015].

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Gillen, Gerard: 'Pro Cathedral Dublin' *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland*, ed. Harry White and Barra Boydell (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), 863.

¹⁴ Interview with Professor Gerard Gillen, 19 August 2015.

Professor Gillen, which was conducted for the purposes of this thesis, he commented that the role of Musical Director and organist had often been a combined role in the past, (which will be seen in more detail in Chapter Two):

When I came here first in 1976, the choir was in a bad way. The archbishop at the time decided to divide the office of director and organist, as Oliver [O'Brien] had been doing both at the time. He thought it would help things. There was only about 12 boys in the choir at the time. The men had been very loyal. They had all grown up with chant. But they were more a collection of solo voices than a choir.¹⁵

Professor Gillen took on the role of organist in 1975, and during the 1990s organised for the console to be moved to the right wing of the balcony to maximise the efficiency of space for the conductor and the choir.¹⁶

1.4 Three Areas of Church Music Reform

In the last one hundred and forty years, Ireland has experienced many significant moments of church music reform, many of which would go on to affect the repertoire choices of the Palestrina Choir:

1.4.1 The Cecilian Reform Movement

The formation of the Palestrina Choir in 1902 came at a time when Ireland had just experienced a thirty year period of reform in the church's attitude towards liturgical music. This area of reform had first come to prominence in Germany when priest and composer Franz Xaver Witt founded the German Society of St. Cecilia.¹⁷ The movement would subsequently become known as the *Cecilian Reform Movement*. Its main agenda, according to Witt, was 'to protect church music from further erosion and to bring it back to 'true' liturgical performances'.¹⁸

¹⁵ Professor Gillen interview.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Daly, Kieran Anthony: *Catholic Church Music in Ireland 1878-1903: The Cecilian Reform Movement* (Oregon and Dublin: The Four Courts Press Ltd., 1995), 10.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

There was a growing feeling around this time that liturgical settings of music were ‘secularising the ecclesiastical art’,¹⁹ and had journeyed too far from conveying the true meaning of the Latin text. To address this even further, a number of pieces were triumphed as being true proponents of suitable church music. The work of sixteenth and seventeenth century Italian composers in particular was highlighted, most notably pieces such as Allegri’s *Misere*²⁰ and G.P. da Palestrina’s *Missa Papae Marcelli*.²¹ When speaking about Palestrina in the book *Catholic Church Music in Ireland 1878-1903*, Kieran Anthony Daly comments on the main reason why such value was being placed on pieces like these:

Among the aspects of Palestrina’s style that most appealed to the leaders of what was to become known as the Cecilian Reform, was the importance placed upon the sacred text. The special character of the *Missa Papae Marcelli* was noted, with its concentration on clear text declamation and avoidance of any polyphonic elaboration that would interfere with it.²²

As a guideline for the movement, Witt set the German Society of St. Cecilia five categories of church music to incorporate as the standard practice:

1. Plainsong
2. Congregational Singing
3. Organ Playing of Fitting Music
4. Polyphonic Vocal Music, ancient and modern
5. Instrumental Music²³

In the United Kingdom and Ireland, there were varied discussions both for and against the Cecilian Reform Movement, some examples of which Kieran Anthony Daly also details in his text on the Cecilian Reform Movement. The first quotation is taken from the ‘Dublin Review’, a London based magazine:

¹⁹ Daly, Kieran Anthony: *Catholic Church Music in Ireland 1878-1903: The Cecilian Reform Movement* (Oregon and Dublin: The Four Courts Press Ltd., 1995), 8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²² *Ibid.*, 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, 14.

The school of Palestrina is full of melodious expressions, but destitute of the descriptive and pictorial spirit of the music of the great German composers (Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven etc.) [...] It must be remembered also that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is not merely an act of vocal prayer but a magnificent tribute to the holy creator...The warmest admirers of plainchant will hardly assert that its capabilities are adequate to the subject²⁴

In the second quotation detailed by Daly, part of an article written by H.S Butterfield is presented. Butterfield was a contributor to an English periodical called 'The Tablet'.²⁵ Butterfield comments on the benefits of the emergence of the Cecilian Reform Movement in Ireland, calling not only on choirs, but also clergy to get involved in the promotion of suitable liturgical music:

The movement is nearing our shores. In Ireland, with the approbation [approval] of the Cardinal Archbishop of Dublin [...] [a committee] has issued a circular inviting the clergy and laity generally to assist in establishing in Ireland an organisation similar to that in Germany [...] for the cultivation and promotion of true liturgical music.²⁶

Despite the apparent critiques, and the lamentations on the loss of the more expressive Viennese masses, The Cecilian Reform Movement had been well received in Dublin by the 1870s, with key players such as the Archbishop of Dublin Dr. William Walsh and the soon-to-be Director of Music of the Palestrina Choir, Vincent O'Brien, both active members of the Dublin society.²⁷ A periodical championing the movement, entitled 'Lyra Ecclesiastica', was first published in 1878 under the helm of Reverend Nicholas Donnelly, who was a priest in the Pro-Cathedral from 1864 to 1879. In this periodical, the ideals of the Cecilian Reform Movement were detailed. Not only that, but any practices that were considered to out of line with these ideals were published, and the perpetrators admonished:²⁸

²⁴ *Dublin Review*, January 1864 'Music and its Religious Uses', p 128.

²⁵ The Tablet website (2015) [accessed 12 August 2015].

²⁶ Daly: *Catholic Church Music in Ireland*, 20.

²⁷ Gillen, Gerard: 'Church Music in Dublin, 1500- 1900', *Four Centuries in Ireland*, ed. Brian Boydell (London: BBC, 1979), 26.

²⁸ O'Donoghue, Patrick: 'Music and Religion in Ireland', *Irish Musical Studies: Music and Irish Cultural History*, ed. Gerard Gillen and Harry White (Portland and Dublin: Irish Academic Press Ltd., 1995), 116-152 (p.127).

We have heard with great regret that the latest addition to the repertoire of the choir of the Church of the Three Patrons, Rathgar, is an adaption of 'chi mi frena' from Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor [...] it is a satisfaction to know that, thanks to the initiative of his Grace, the Archbishop, the recurrence of such scandal will be rendered impossible before long.²⁹

1.4.2 Motu Proprio: Pope Pius the Tenth

At the turn of the twentieth century, the parish choir already in place at the Pro-Cathedral was made up of amateur singers, with a mixture of male and female members.³⁰ The inclusion of women in church singing changed drastically with the release of a papal letter from Pope Pius X in 1903, called a *Motu Proprio*.³¹ Following this letter, the standard church choir was to consist only of boys and male choristers:

Singers in church have a real liturgical office, and that therefore women, being incapable of exercising such office, cannot be admitted to form part of the choir. Whenever, then, it is desired to employ the acute voices of sopranos and contraltos, these parts must be taken by boys, according to the most ancient usage of the Church.³²

A *Motu Proprio* is a letter signed and issued by the pope, by his own volition.³³ As well as changing the structure of church choirs to include only men and boys, the *Motu Proprio* also details various specifications on the use of sacred music in the liturgy. These new specifications also reinforced many of the ideals that were already being championed by the Cecilian Reform Movement in the late nineteenth century, particularly the importance on the role of plainchant:

Gregorian chant has always been regarded as the supreme model for sacred music. Therefore, it is fully legitimate to lay down the following rule: In its movement, inspiration, and mood, the more closely a church composition approaches the Gregorian form, the more sacred and liturgical it becomes.³⁴

²⁹ Gillen: 'Church Music in Dublin, 1500- 1900', 26.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Adoreus Bulletin: 'Motu Proprio' [accessed 8 August 2015].

³² *Ibid.*

³³ American Catholic Press: 'Motu Proprio of Pope Pius X on Sacred Music' [accessed 9 August 2015].

³⁴ Adoreus Bulletin: 'Motu Proprio' [accessed 8 August 2015].

The *Motu Proprio* also answered the concerns that had been raised by members of the Cecilian Reform movement about liturgical music, in particular that music such as the Viennese Masses of Mozart and Haydn, had become too much like a 'sacred concert'.³⁵ It did this by reaffirming that the presence of music must always be a secondary element to the delivery of the liturgy. This once again was an ideal which the Cecilian's had been promoting:

The principal function of sacred music is to clothe with suitable melody the liturgical text proposed for the understanding of the faithful. Therefore, its purpose is to add greater efficacy to the text [...] Since modern music has come into being mainly to serve secular purposes, greater care must be taken with regard to it [...] In general, in church celebrations, it must be considered a very serious abuse for the liturgy to appear secondary to and in a way at the service of the music...so because music is merely a part of the liturgy and its humble servant.³⁶

1.4.3 Second Vatican Council: *Musicam Sacram*

The second Vatican Council was conducted between 1962 and 1965. Its goal was to look at the church and the liturgy in its entirety, as a way of helping address the church's position in the contemporary world. This was followed by a document entitled *Musicam Sacram*, which prescribed a new list of guidelines on suitable church music. Among this list, elements such as sacred polyphony and Gregorian chant still held a place, but the emphasis was moving more towards enhanced congregational participation and singing in the vernacular.

In his text *Renewal and Resistance*, Paul Collins tells of the growing 'yearning to restore liturgical music to an even older golden age, when congregations (not choirs) filled the churches with their singing' and that around this time, the church congregations 'welcomed the opportunities to participate'.³⁷ This posed problems for the Palestrina Choir, because the Solemn Mass tradition that had been in place since the Cecilian Reform Movement and the *Motu Proprio*,

³⁵ Daly: *Catholic Church Music in Ireland*, 4.

³⁶ Adoreus Bulletin: 'Motu Proprio' [accessed 8 August 2015].

³⁷ Day, Thomas: 'Renewal and Resistance: Catholic Church Music from the 1850s to Vatican II', ed. Paul Collins (Switzerland: International Academic Publishers, 2010), 1-12 (p. 11).

especially in Dublin churches, meant that the Roman Catholic church in Ireland was unprepared for the change to a more congregation-friendly, vernacular style of music:

The changeover to a vernacular liturgy in the wake of the second Vatican Council's reform came as a bombshell [...] to the English-speaking Catholic world in particular [...] Vernacular liturgical music, in so far as it had existed up to then, had done so at the periphery of the Church's musical activities; it had now become a central and urgent requirement of the renewed, reformed and thoroughly vernacularized liturgy with its demand for 'active congregational participation'³⁸

As stated previously, the *Musicam Sacram* still placed value on the use of sacred polyphony and Gregorian chant in the liturgy with both of these elements described as suitable additions to sacred music in the liturgy in Article 4 of the Preface of the in the *Musicam Sacram*. However, this was followed with the added addendum that music of this style should only be performed if suitable resources are available to carry it out.

The following come under the title of sacred music here: Gregorian chant, sacred polyphony in its various forms both ancient and modern, sacred music for the organ and other approved instruments, and sacred popular music, be it liturgical or simply religious [...] It should be borne in mind that the true solemnity of liturgical worship depends less on a more ornate form of singing and a more magnificent ceremonial than on its worthy and religious celebration [...] To have a more ornate form of singing and a more magnificent ceremonial is at times desirable when there are the resources available to carry them out properly.³⁹

The capabilities of the Palestrina Choir, and its history of performing this type of traditional repertoire is more than likely a contributing factor to why sacred polyphony and Gregorian chant weren't replaced entirely in the Pro-Cathedral in the aftermath of the *Musicam Sacram*. A significant change that was implemented was that more impetus was given to the Administration of each church itself to dictate what it deemed the most suitable music to be used during certain parts of the liturgy. This would go on to cause changes to some of the repertoire performed by Palestrina Choir during the 1980s and in the subsequent

³⁸ Gillen, Gerard and Johnstone, Andrew: *Irish Musical Studies: A Historical Anthology of Irish Church Music*, ed. Gerard Gillen and Andrew Johnstone (Oregon and Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd., 2001), 34.

³⁹ Vatican Archive: 'Musicam Sacram'. [accessed 26 August 2015].

years to follow. This was because certain restrictions were placed on the repertoire that could be performed:

The unity of hearts is more profoundly achieved by the union of voices [...] Pastors of souls will therefore do all they can to achieve this form of celebration [...] They will try to work out how that assignment of different parts to be performed and duties to be fulfilled, which characterizes sung celebrations, may be transferred even to celebrations which are not sung, but at which the people are present.⁴⁰

1.5 Historic Analysis of Two Significant Eras

Since the formation of the choir in 1903, the choir has been led by a total of seven Directors of Music, some of which held dual roles as both director and organist. Only four organists have held the role in a sole capacity.

Directors of Music⁴¹

Vincent O'Brien 1903-1948
 Oliver O'Brien 1948-1978
 Sean O hEarcaigh (formerly Graham Harrison) 1978- 1982
 Íte O'Donovan 1982-1996
 Joseph Ryan 1996 (10 months)
 Orla Barry 1996-2002
 Blanaid Murphy 2002- present

Organists⁴²

Brendan Rogers 1903- *unspecified*
 Vincent O'Brien *unspecified* to 1948 (dual role as Director and Organist)

 Colm O'Brien 1948- *unspecified*
 Oliver O'Brien *unspecified*-1976 (dual role as Director and Organist)
 Gerard Gillen 1976- present

(correct as of the submission date of this thesis: 17/09/2015)

For the purposes of contextualising the repertoire considerations of the millennial era of the Palestrina Choir (which will be discussed in Chapter Two), I will first be taking a look at two significant timeframes in the history of the Palestrina Choir to show exactly where the choir has come from and what it has developed into. The first of these eras is when the choir was formed under

⁴⁰ Vatican Archive: 'Musicam Sacram' [accessed 26 August 2015].

⁴¹ Gillen, Gerard: 'Pro Cathedral Dublin' *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland*, ed. Harry White and Barra Boydell (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), 863.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Vincent O'Brien in the early twentieth century. The second timeframe that is discussed is the period of time from the early 1980s to the late 1990s while the choir was under the direction of Dr. Íte O' Donovan.

1.5.1 Choir Formation and the Vincent O'Brien Era

What became known as the 'Palestrina Choir' in 1903, was first a boys choir from the Christian Brother's School in St. Mary's Place, Dublin. They were under the Direction of Vincent O'Brien, who was a music teacher at the school at the time.⁴³ O'Brien's choir came to the attention of Edward Martyn, a devout catholic land-owner from Galway, who is described by the current titular organist, Professor Gerard Gillen, as being almost 'fanatical in his faith'.⁴⁴ His love of early Renaissance polyphony and plainchant fell in line with many of the ideas that the Cecilian Reform Movement had been aspiring towards at the time.

Martyn first heard O'Brien's choir perform in a Cecilian Festival in St. Teresa's Church Clarendon St. in 1898 performing Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli*.⁴⁵ He was immediately delighted to find a vehicle for his high ideals of church music:

[Martyn's] discovery that his own high ideals of church music were shared by a young, brilliantly gifted Irish musician made Martyn feel that he might well create the perfect church choir as a model for the whole of Ireland [...] [He] made an offer by drafting out a legal document showing how he would financially endow a Pro-Cathedral choir on condition that O'Brien be appointed choirmaster because O'Brien was "alone capable at the present time of doing the work properly."⁴⁶

⁴³ Nolan, J.C.M.: 'Edward Martyn and the Founding of Dublin's Palestrina Choir', *New Hibernia Review/ Iris Éireannach Nua*, Vol.4, No.1 (2000), 88-102 (p. 92).

⁴⁴ Professor Gillen Interview.

⁴⁵ Nolan: 'Edward Martyn and the Founding of Dublin's Palestrina Choir', 92.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

In J.C.M. Nolan's text *Edward Martyn and the Founding of the Palestrina Choir*, he describes a letter written to Archbishop Walsh in which Martyn assured the Archbishop that O'Brien's choir was prepared to perform new music of the Cecilian Movement composer. This was music which Martyn apparently didn't actually enjoy, and described as being 'arid and uninspired',⁴⁷ favoring instead the early Renaissance polyphony of composers such as Victoria and Palestrina. Nolan comments that this letter was sent by Martyn as a 'further move to sweeten the Archbishop'.⁴⁸ At the same time, because O'Brien's choir had been performing Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli* to such success and acclaim, the newspaper reviews of the Cecilian Festivals first coined the term 'Palestrina Choir' as a nickname.⁴⁹

At the turn of the twentieth century, both the achievements of the Cecilian Reform Movement and the *Motu Proprio* released by Pope Pius X had caused a major impact on the music that was being performed in churches at the turn of the twentieth century in Dublin. The formation of the Palestrina Choir by Martyn and Archbishop Walsh had also predated the *Motu Proprio* by a year. It so happened that many of the practices set out by the papal letter coincidentally mirrored the things which Martyn had already been striving to initiate in church music:

The pope's views were put into definitive form in the *Motu Proprio* issued on November 22 1903, St. Cecilia's Day. What then became clear was that, more than a year before the papal document was issued, Edward Martyn's ideals and patronage had helped to install in Dublin's Pro-Cathedral a choir that fulfilled all of the pope's aesthetic preferences.⁵⁰

In a piece about Martyn's legacy, written by Denis Gwynn for a periodical entitled *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* in 1930, he is described as profoundly 'detesting hearing women singing in church', and that 'his enthusiasm for [the] Palestrina [Choir] was undoubtedly due to his most

⁴⁷ Fleischmann, Aloys: 'Music and Society, 1850-1921', *A New History of Ireland Volume 6, Ireland Under the Union*, ed. William Edward Vaughan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 500-522 (p. 516).

⁴⁸ Nolan: 'Edward Martyn and the Founding of Dublin's Palestrina Choir', 95.

⁴⁹ Daly: *Catholic Church Music in Ireland*, 158.

⁵⁰ Nolan: 'Edward Martyn and the Founding of Dublin's Palestrina Choir', 97.

abnormal hatred of women'. Gwynn also describes Martyn as being a 'born misogynist'.⁵¹ The Palestrina Choir remained under the helm of male directors for seventy-nine years, until its first female director was appointed in 1982.

1.5.2 1982-1996: The Íte O'Donovan Era

Dr. Íte O'Donovan is a choral conductor who has been based in Dublin, Ireland since 1975. Her musical studies began in 1981 when she received a Bachelor of Music from Trinity College. She then studied in Queen's University, Belfast, where she received a Masters in Renaissance Music in 1986. In 2014, she studied in University College Dublin where she received a Doctorate in Musicology.⁵² O'Donovan took over the post Palestrina Choir in March 1982, and held the position until 1996.

Since O'Donovan took over as Director of Music, the documentation of all the repertoire being performed by the Palestrina Choir has become significantly more concise. Mass leaflets and monthly posters have been archived in the Pro-Cathedral library dating back to 1982:



Figure 1.1: Missalette Header-1982 (Source: Pro Cathedral Archives)

⁵¹ Gwynn, Denis: 'Edward Martyn', *An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol.19, No.74 (1930), 227-239 (p. 234).

⁵² Dublin Choral Foundation: 'Íte O'Donovan' [accessed 2 September 2015].

James Reynolds has been the librarian for the Palestrina since the time O'Donovan took over as director of music, having previously sung as one of the Gentleman of the Choir (a term used to describe the adult male choristers). During an interview with Reynolds, conducted for the purposes of this thesis, he shared the following insights about the repertoire choices during this part of the choir's history:

At the time [when Ité began as director], some of the Gentlemen had left, and so she was left with decreased numbers. The Gentlemen were a mixture of levels, some of which were amateur and more enthusiast, and they wouldn't have been as good readers, or have had as much voice training. She would have started with some of the simpler masses of Orlando Di Lasso such as *Missa Quinti Toni*, *Otavi Toni*. She progressed from there to the Palestrina *Missa Brevis*. As time went by, the voice coach Ronnie Dunne [Veronica] sent her some talented younger singers from the College of Music, which is now the DIT Conservatory. All the while, some of the younger boy choristers would have progressed through the ranks and arrived as adults with very fine instruments, such as the tenor Emmanuel Lawlor.⁵³

The masses listed above feature a four voice divisi of soprano, alto, tenor and bass. As the years progressed, both the level and numbers of the Gentlemen had begun to grow. With the added strengths of former boy choristers who graduated from the treble line of the choir, some more challenging repertoire was subsequently being incorporated into the programme, adding to the four voice mass settings of the staple composers like Lassus and Palestrina.

Figure 1.2 (overleaf) shows a mass leaflet from September 1982 where Orlando di Lasso's *Missa Octavi Toni*, a simple mass for 4 voices was performed. On the following page, Figure 1.3 shows a subsequent poster from October 1989 which features a large variety of new masses that have been added to the repertoire. From these documents, the change in the scope and difficulty of the repertoire can be seen, especially with the re-introduction of Viennese Masses by Mozart. These would have been resoundingly out of place in church music during Vincent O' Brien's time as director of the choir because of the strict rules set out by the Cecilian Reform and Pope Pius X's *Motu Proprio*:

⁵³ Interview with James Reynolds, 29 July 2015.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Choir: AVE MARIA (Victoria)

SANCTUS: XVIII

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION:

Choir: Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat.

ALL: CHRISTUS VINCIT, CHRISTUS REGNAT, CHRISTUS IMPERAT.

DOXOLOGY: Per ipsumsaeculorum.

ALL: AMEN, AMEN, AMEN.

COMMUNION RITE

PATER NOSTER - ALL

AGNUS DEI: Missa Octavi Toni (Lassus)

Figure 1.2: Missalette- September 1982 (Source: Pro Cathedral Archives)



MUSIC in the PRO-CATHEDRAL

OCTOBER 1989

11.00 a.m. Mass (Latin) MISSA BREVIS IN Bb K275 (Mozart) Motets by Palestrina <i>Organ Postlude: Concerto in D minor BWV 593 (J. S. Bach)</i>	SUNDAY 1
11.00 a.m. Mass (Latin) MISSA OCTAVI TONI (Lassus) Motets by Victoria & Byrd <i>Organ Postlude: Prelude & Fugue in D (F. Schmidt)</i>	SUNDAY 8
11.00 a.m. Mass (Latin) Centenary Mass for Margaret Burke Sheridan 'CORONATION MASS' in C K 317 (Mozart) Motets by Mozart, Schubert & Franck <i>Organ Postlude: Prelude & Fugue in E minor BWV 548 (J. S. Bach)</i>	SUNDAY 15
11.00 a.m. Mass (Latin) MISSA AETERNA CHRISTI MUNERA (Palestrina) Motets by Brückner <i>Organ Postlude: Finale Op. 71 (Fl. Peeters)</i>	SUNDAY 22
11.00 a.m. Mass (Latin) Boys of the Palestrina Choir MISSA BREVIS (Britten) Motets by Durufle & Lallouette <i>Organ Postlude: Prelude & Fugue in A minor BWV 543 (J. S. Bach)</i>	SUNDAY 29

Boys of Palestrina Choir sing Vespers on Fridays at 5.05 p.m.

Pro-Cathedral, Very Rev. Dermod McCarthy, Administrator. Gerard Gillen, Titular Organist.
Marlborough St., Dublin 1. Ite O'Donovan, Director of the Palestrina Choir. Andrew Synnott, Organ Scholar.
Telephone 745441

Figure 1.3: Sunday Mass Poster - October 1989 (Source: Pro Cathedral Archives)

The main issue faced by the choir at this time was that certain restrictions were applied by the Administrator of the Pro-Cathedral. This meant that only the polyphonic *Kyrie* and *Agnus Dei* movements were allowed to be sung during performances in the liturgy, and plainchant settings were used for the performance of the *Gloria*, *Credo* and *Sanctus*, to involve the congregation.

At the time, all of this [repertoire] was decided under the music committee; the resident organist Professor Gerard Gillen, íte [O'Donovan], the Archbishop, the administrator and the choir chaplain. Their job was to ensure the choir was doing the proper music in keeping with the liturgy. Íte was restrained by the music she could do at the time by the committee. For example, the *Gloria* and *Sanctus* had to be plainchant, so that it would remain a part of the congregational singing.⁵⁴

The role of congregational involvement in church music had been a major part of the Cecilian Reform Movement, the *Motu Proprio* and, much closer to O'Donovan's time as Director, the *Musicam Sacram* released after the second Vatican Council. The emphasis placed on plainchant in the liturgy during this time is something which would have been particularly praised in the early days of the choir, as well as something which the 'Musicam Sanctam' highlighted as being of particular importance. However, because so much importance was afforded to congregational singing, and also the increased emphasis on the vernacular liturgy, the more difficult and less widely known instances of plainchant were also subsequently restricted. The Gregorian chant Introit of the Solemn Latin mass and the congregational processional hymn were not both allowed to be performed together at the same mass, and were confined to one or the other being performed every second Sunday. Despite this restriction, O'Donovan found a way to ensure that all of the plainchant Introits would ultimately be performed, thus helping to maintain an age old tradition that had been a part of the choir since it first began:

It was typically either an Introit OR a hymn to start the mass, not both. So she would alternate them every second week, and then vice-versa each year. [That meant] that after 2 years, all of the Introits would have been sung through at least once. She would occasionally do a full chant mass, with polyphonic motets but not polyphonic mass movements.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ James Reynolds Interview.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

1.6 Final Thoughts: Chapter One

Based on the documentary evidence available, the initial formation of the Palestrina Choir was a very fortunate coincidence, thanks to both the presence of the Cecilian Reform and also the vigours of Edward Martyn to achieve his goal of creating a choir that performed the highest standard of Renaissance polyphony.

The aesthetics of the choir were steeped in the traditions of the Cecilian Reform Movement, and subsequently Pope Pius X's *Motu Proprio*. Because of these strict guidelines, the repertoire appears to have remained in a form of stasis for many years, until the release of the *Musicam Sacram* brought the attention back to the practice church music.

Only now, in the last fifteen years, does the choir appear to be testing the boundaries of the available catalogue of sacred repertoire, as it attempts to negotiate the line between strict tradition and modernity. Chapter Two will look at the current workings of the choir, and discuss the choir's repertoire development since the turn of the millennium.

CHAPTER TWO

REPERTOIRE CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Introduction: Repertoire Considerations

This chapter will explore certain aspects of the repertoire performed by the Palestrina Choir under the choir's current Director of Music, Blanaid Murphy. The purpose of this exploration is as follows:

1. To conduct an appraisal of the choir's current list of masses in order to ascertain how it has developed and changed.
2. To highlight elements of repertoire that have stood the test of time and continue to be performed by the choir today.
3. To look at any significant new additions introduced to the choir's repertoire list since the centenary year

As discussed in Chapter One, the masses being performed throughout the 1980s and 1990s show that the repertoire was gaining momentum, and becoming more challenging. This was being achieved despite the restrictions that governed many of the choir's choices. Blanaid Murphy took the post of Director of Music of the Palestrina Choir in 2002. Her arrival also coincided with the choir's centenary year celebrations, which brought a renewed focus to the quality of the music performed by the choir.

In an interview conducted for this thesis, Murphy spoke about many of the choices that were made with regards to repertoire during her time in the choir, some of which be discussed in further detail in this chapter. The choir's repertoire choices were also discussed in interviews conducted with the Palestrina Choir's titular organist Professor Gerard Gillen, and with the choir's resident librarian James Reynolds.

2.2 Masses: The Blanaid Murphy Era

Since the turn of the millennium, the current library catalogue shows that the masses have been building upon the legacy left behind by the 1980s era of the choir, under the Direction of Dr. Íte O'Donovan. Having overcome the logistical difficulties associated with lower numbers of singers, the choir had established a strong reputation for performing polyphonic masses and motets. However, as previously discussed, the choir suffered from the restrictions put in place by the administration of the Pro-Cathedral, meaning that traditionally it was only permitted to perform the polyphonic *Kyrie* and *Agnus Dei*.

As well as the administrative restrictions placed on the repertoire, the choir's budget also played a significant factor in access to new and more expansive repertoire. This was highlighted by the choir's librarian James Reynolds:

An interesting point about the repertoire, is the constraints of the budget. Each year, you could only buy a small amount of scores. This is before the time of CPDL [Choral Public Domain Library¹], where open copyright music is freely accessible. We had all of the Chester books of motets, and then a staple diet of maybe 8 or 9 Palestrina masses, and 4 or 5 Victoria masses... [Nowadays] the amount of money allowed for new music in the budget has increased dramatically. It means that in the last 15 years, we have 3 or 4 times the amount of masses. Around the turn of the century there was a very generous administrator who had also been a previous member of the choir, named John Flaherty.²

Changes in the administration, as well as access to greater apportioning of funds to the choir's library means that the millennial era of the choir does not suffer under the same restrictions that were placed on Dr. Íte O'Donovan's choir in the 1980s.

Fig. 2.1 (overleaf) shows a list of masses performed by the Palestrina Choir from 2011 to 2014, provided by Reynolds.

¹ Choral Public Domain Library website (2015) [accessed 9 August 2015].

² Interview with James Reynolds, 29 July 2015.

MASSES 2011-14	COMPOSER		
		Missa Sine Nomine	Palestrina
Missa pro defunctis (1614)	Anerio	Missa ut, re, mi	Palestrina
Missa Conditor alme siderum	Animuccia	Missa Emendemus in Melius	Palestrina
Mass for 3 Voices	Byrd	***Missa Papae Marcelli	Palestrina
Mass for 5 voices	Byrd	Missa Hodie Christus Natus Est	Palestrina
Mass for 4 voices	Byrd	Missa Brevis	Palestrina
Missa Sexti Toni	Croce	Missa Aeterna Christi (men)	Palestrina
Requiem Mass	Durufié	Missa Veni Sponsa Christi	Palestrina
Mass in D	Dvorak	Missa Alma Redemptoris Mater	Palestrina
Requiem	Fauré	Missa O Magnum Mysterium	Palestrina
Irish Mass	Flynn	Missa O Virgo Simul et Mater	Palestrina
Missa Brevis	Grayston Ives	***Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi	Peeters
Missa Secunda	Hassler	Missa Festiva	Peeters
Missa Octava	Hassler	Mass in G	Schubert
Missa Dixit Maria	Hassler	Missa De Beata Maria	Victoria
Missa Super Verba Mea	Hassler	Missa Simile est Regnum Caelorum	Victoria
Missa Sancti Johannis de Deo	Haydn	Missa Salve Regina	Victoria
Little Organ Mass	Haydn	Missa O Quam Gloriosum	Victoria
Missa Brevis in F	Haydn	Missa Officium Defunctorum	Victoria
Missa Sancti Nicolai	Haydn	Missa Requiem à 4 voices	Victoria
Missa Pange Lingua	Josquin	Missa Traha Me Post Te	Victoria
Missa Brevis	Kodaly	Missa Quarti Toni	Victoria
Messe Solennelle	Langlais	Missa Dum Complentur	Victoria
Missa Bell' Amfirit Altera	Lassus	Missa Quam Pulchri Sunt	Victoria
Westminster Mass	MacMillan	Missa Laetatus Sum	Victoria
Missa Caro Mea	Mawby	Missa Ave Regina	Victoria
Mass for Four Voices	Monteverdi	Missa Pro Victoria	Victoria
Missa Queramus cum Pastoribus	Morales	Missa Gaudeamus	Victoria
Mass in d minor	Mozart	Missa Ave Maris Stella	Victoria
Spatzen Mass	Mozart	Miss Vidi Speciosam	Victoria
Coronation Mass	Mozart	Missa O Magnum Mysterium	Victoria
Little Organ Mass	Mozart	Messe Solennelle	Vierne
Missa Ego Flos Campi	Padilla	Double Choir Mass	Widor

Figure 2.1: Catalogue of Masses in the Pro-Cathedral Library (Source: James Reynolds)

The masses and motets that were traditionally performed in the 1980s, during O'Donovan's time, have since paved the way for opportunities to perform masses and motets with up to 8 voices. A further development for the repertoire is that the current administration of the Pro-Cathedral allows for the performance of the polyphonic *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*.

2.3 Significant Repertoire

2.3.1 Historic: Papae Marcelli

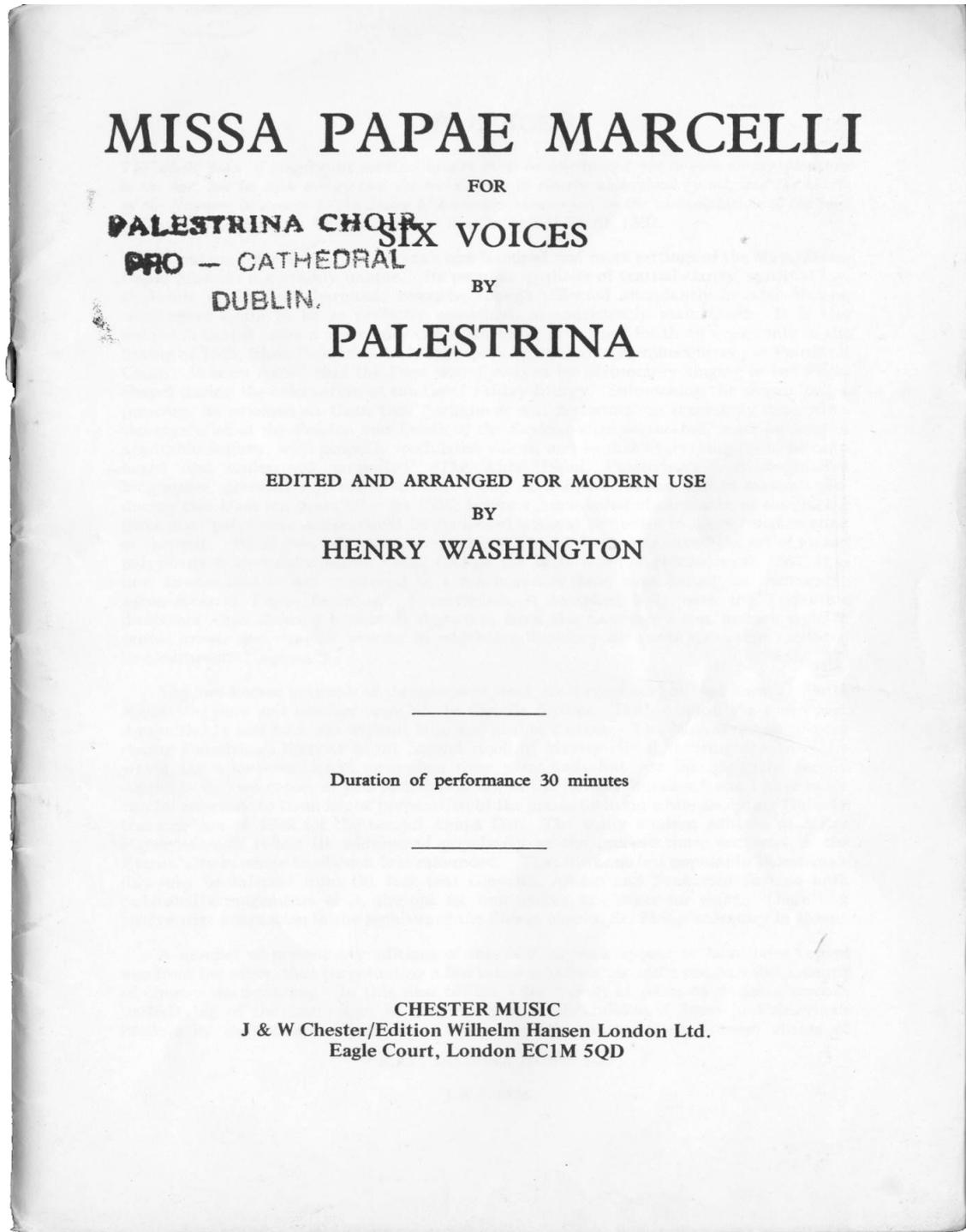


Figure 2.2: Cover of Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli* (source: the Palestrina Choir Library)³

³ da Palestrina, Giovanni Pierluigi: *Missa Papae Marcelli*, ed. Henry Washington (London: Chester Music, 1963).

Missae Papae Marcelli, written by the Italian composer G.P. da Palestrina, is an example of a mass which has stood the test of time and maintained its position as a staple piece which has been performed by the Palestrina Choir since the choir was first formed. As discussed in Chapter One, *Missae Papae Marcelli* was very successfully performed by Vincent O' Brien and his male voice choir at the turn of the twentieth century as a part of the annual Cecilian Music Festivals in Dublin City. This put into motion a series of events which led to the Palestrina Choir taking up residence in the Pro-Cathedral.⁴ As well as that, *Missae Papae Marcelli* was also considered to be a shining example of the initial development of the Cecilian Reform movement due to its tasteful polyphony and plaintive setting of the text. Kieran Anthony Daly describes these aspects in the following way in this text *Catholic Church Music in Ireland, 1878-1903*:

Palestrina's delicate use of dissonance and his avoidance of chromaticism was perfectly in tune with the movement's aversion to accidentals and their equation of any hint of chromatic line with external romantic expression and sensuality.⁵

The piece is traditionally voiced for six voices [SATTBB] with the *Agnus Dei* briefly adding an extra divisi in the soprano line bringing it up to seven voices for the conclusion of the mass. When describing this mass, Blanaid Murphy describes its particular significance with the following statement:

Palestrina's *Papae Marcelli*, which is obviously a coveted piece [...] [even] now, still, its one of the more regular pieces that we would do.⁶

Upon inspection of the Sunday missalettes and posters of the Palestrina Choir during the 1980s, and in consultation with the Palestrina Choir's librarian James Reynolds, the first documented performance of the *Papae Marcelli* during Dr. Íte O' Donovan's time as Director of Music is likely to have been on Sunday October 20th 1985, which can be seen here in Figure 2.3 (overleaf):

⁴ Daly: *Catholic Church Music in Ireland*, 176.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶ Blanaid Murphy Interview.



MUSIC in the PRO-CATHEDRAL

October 1985

11.00 a.m. liturgy		SUNDAY
MISSA AETERNA CHRISTI MUNERA (Palestrina)		6
Motets by Tallis and Monteverdi		
<i>Organ Postlude: Incantation pour un Jour Saint (J. Langlais)</i>		
<hr/>		
11.00 a.m. liturgy		SUNDAY
MISSA CUM JUBILO (Plainchant) GLORIA (Palestrina)		13
Motet by Palestrina		
<i>Organ Postlude: Choral No. 1 in E Major (C. Franck)</i>		
<hr/>		
11.00 a.m. liturgy		SUNDAY
MISSA PAPAE MARCELLI (Palestrina)		20
Motets by Allegri and Durufle		
<i>Organ Postlude: Choral No. 2 in B Minor (C. Franck)</i>		
<hr/>		
11.00 a.m. liturgy		SUNDAY
(Boys of the Palestrina Choir)		
MISSA BREVIS (Britten)		27
Motets by Durufle and Faure		
<i>Organ Postlude: Prelude, Fugue and Variation (C. Franck)</i>		

Pro-Cathedral,
Marlborough St., Dublin 1
Telephone 745441

Very Rev. Michael O'Donohue, *Administrator.*
Ite O'Donovan, *Director of the Palestrina Choir.*

Gerard Gillen, *Titular Organist.*
Raymond O'Donnell, *Organ Scholar.*

Figure 2.3: Monthly Poster Displaying Sunday Masses (Source: Pro Cathedral Archives)

In Murphy's time as Director of Music, the most noteworthy performance of the *Missa Papae Marcelli* was during the centenary year celebrations. It was a particularly fitting way to mark the anniversary year, considering how instrumental the mass was in stimulating the formation of the choir in 1903:



**St. Mary's
Pro-Cathedral**

Solemn Latin Mass

**Celebrant
Desmond Cardinal Connell**

CHOIR

*Liturgical Celebration of the Centenary Year
of*

The Palestrina Choir, 1903 - 2003

Patron: Desmond Cardinal Connell
Director - Blánaid Murphy
Titular Organist - Professor Gerard Gillen

*Missa Papae Marcelli - Palestrina
Nunc Dimittis - Mawby
Sing a new Song to the Lord - McCann
Tu es Petrus - H. Mulet*

Sunday, 5th October 2003

Figure 2.4: Missalette- Centenary Year (Source: Pro Cathedral Archives)

2.3.2 Modern Repertoire: Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi

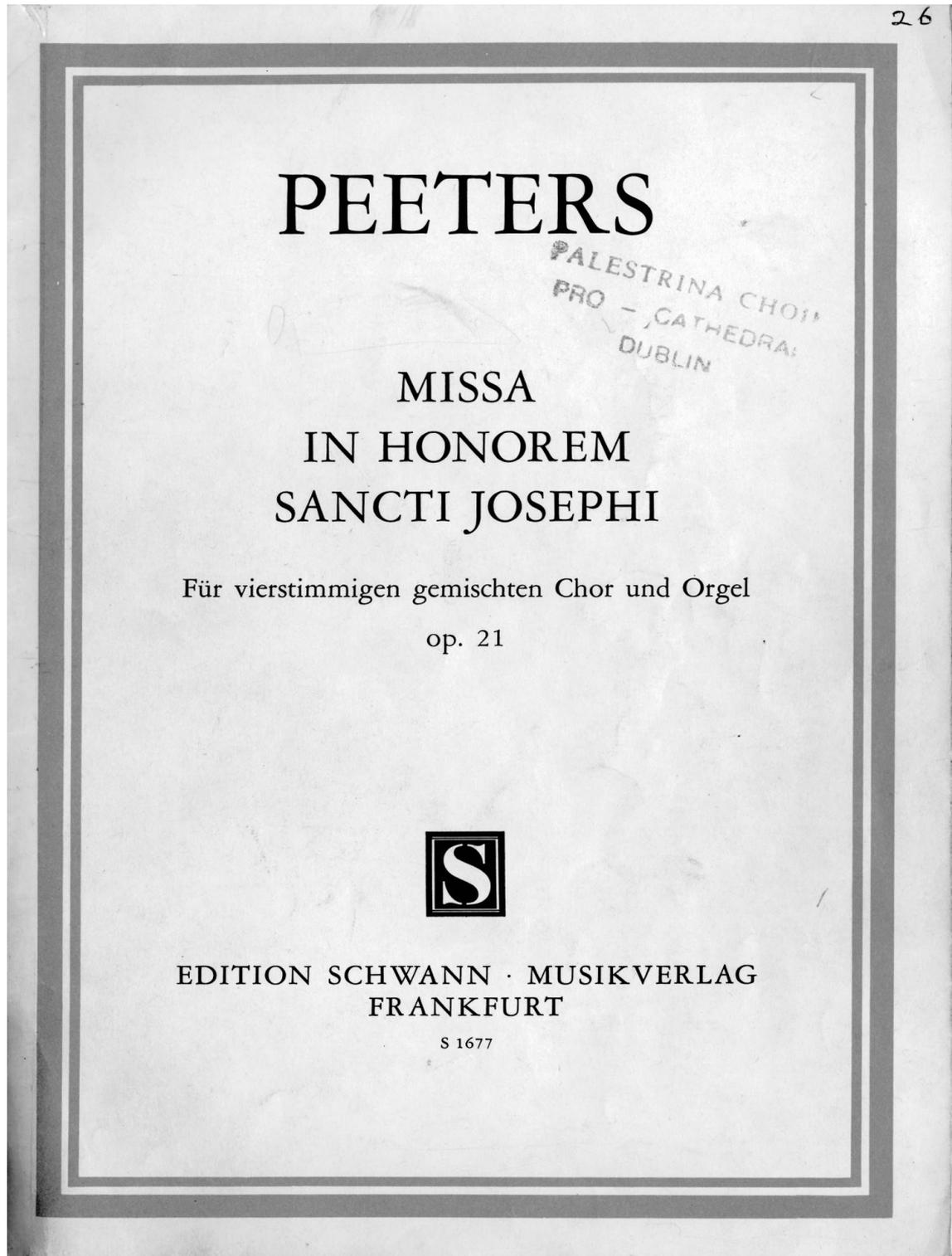


Figure 2.5: Cover of Flor Peeters *Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi* (source: the Palestrina Choir Library)⁷

⁷ Peeters, Flor: *Missa in Honorem Sacti Josephi* (Frankfurt: Musikverlag).

Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi by Belgian composer Flor Peeters is a mass that was introduced to the Palestrina Choir since the centenary year by Blanaid Murphy. While Peeter's most prolific works have been his compositions for solo organ,⁸ he also wrote a number of Latin mass settings for SATB choir. The most widely renowned of these is called *Missa Festiva*.⁹ In sharp contrast, *Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi* is not actively documented, and has no significant recordings available to date. In the year 2015, Murphy has begun recording sessions with the Palestrina Choir for a new CD, which is tentatively set to feature this mass as its central recording.¹⁰ The significance of this mass setting goes ever further beyond just that for the current Palestrina Choir because the Pro-Cathedral's titular organist Professor Gerard Gillen studied his trade under Peeters in Belgium. This provides a tenuous link from Peeters to the Pro-Cathedral, adding a further layer of significance to the presence of the mass in the choir's repertoire. Professor Gillen divulges some information about his education with Peeters in the following quotation:

I studied with him in Antwerp, he was director of the Conservatoire over there, as well as the organ professor. When I was there, he was getting on, coming to the end of his working career there. He was a huge name at that time, not only in Belgium, but also in the United States. He was constantly in demand both as a teacher and as a recitalist.¹¹

Murphy describes her approach to choosing the piece as follows:

I think the most interesting [and] less widely performed work we do is the *Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi* by the Belgian composer Flor Peeters. That mass is one in particular I was keen for the choir to record, as it's never yet been done [...] It's not even on the repertoire list of most cathedrals. I think it's an absolutely lovely mass [...] it requires you to sing very well, but yet it's not angry like his other [more widely performed] mass, *Missa Festiva*, which is very angry, and quite aggressive and in my opinion not as good, whereas this is a very pleasing mass. [It] makes you sing well.¹²

⁸ Bach-cantatas.com: 'Flor Peeters (composer)' [accessed 12 August 2015].

⁹ Eddins, Steve: 'AllMusic Review' [accessed 4 September 2015].

¹⁰ Blanaid Murphy Interview.

¹¹ Interview with Professor Gerard Gillen, 19 August 2015.

¹² Blanaid Murphy Interview.

The music relies almost entirely on the interplay of homophonic textures and unison lines to convey a very clear declamation of the text for the majority of the mass. It is at times reminiscent of Gregorian chant due to the syllabic underlay and the sparse use of melismas. Small moments of polyphony between the parts are sporadically introduced throughout. In many cases, this gives reinforcement to the text at the beginning of some of the more important sentences, for example, the *Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris* text in the *Gloria* (meaning ‘Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father’):

Andante
25 *mf*

rall.

Do-mi-ne De-us, A-gnus De-i, Fi-li-us Pa-tris.

mf

Do-mi-ne De-us, A-gnus De-i, Fi-li-us Pa-tris.

mf

Do-mi-ne De-us, A-gnus De-i, Fi-li-us Pa-tris.

mf

Do-mi-ne De-us, A-gnus De-i, Fi-li-us Pa-tris.

Figure 2.6: Peeters, *Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi, Gloria*, 25-29.

The plaintive syllabic homophony, and predominance of unison lines throughout this mass, show the appreciation that Peters had for plainchant and the influence that it had on his choral work. Professor Gillen describes this influence in the following quotation, commenting as well on the tonal soundworld created within this mass:

Peeters came from a tremendous tradition of chant, and it was a staple diet of their liturgies. It informs his music to a very large extent, even dictates his harmony throughout. It would have touches of modernity, in the sense of dissonance, but it was always modal inflected, always in the context of a basic modality as opposed to diatonic. Those masses would have all been written for the cathedral choir in Maline, Belgium [also known as Mechelen]. He only wrote a few [masses], and *Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi* isn't really that well known. It's a little gem really!¹³

¹³ Professor Gillen Interview.

The influence of chant in *Missa Sancti in Honorem Josephi* is seen very clearly throughout the work. Four of the six movements begin with a melody line in either unison or octaves. As mentioned above, the setting of the words is quite syllabic, allowing for clear declamation of the text. The following Figures 2.7, 2.8 and 2.10 (below and overleaf) show the opening of the *Kyrie, Gloria and Agnus Dei* movements of the mass, to give a better impression of the plainchant influence, and the syllabic writing style can be easily identified:

Zeitdauer: 2 Min.

Kyrie

FLOR PEETERS, Op. 21

Andante sostenuto $\text{♩} = 54$

Sopran

Alt

Tenor

Baß

Ky - ri - e e -

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son,

Figure 2.7: Peeters, *Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi*, *Kyrie*, 1-4.

Zeitdauer: 4 Min.

Gloria

Allegretto $\text{♩} = 92$ *f Legato*

Et in ter-ra pax ho-mi-ni - bus bo - nae vo-lun-

Et in ter-ra pax ho-mi-ni - bus bo - nae vo-lun-

Figure 2.8: Peeters, *Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi*, *Gloria*, 1-4.

Zeitdauer: 1½ Min.

Agnus Dei

Andante espress. $\text{♩} = 66$

mi - se -

A - gnus De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di: _____

Figure 2.9: Peeters, *Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi*, *Agnus Dei*, 1-6.

2.4 Final Thoughts: Chapter Two

Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli* is likely to remain a staple part of the repertoire of the Palestrina Choir for as long as the choir continues to perform under that name.

The recent addition of lesser known works into the catalogue, like *Missa in Honorem Sancti Josephi*, suggests that the choir is ready and willing to expand the boundaries beyond the Renaissance polyphony of composers like Palestrina, Victoria and Byrd. Under the Direction of Murphy, and thanks to easier access to diverse choral scores through services like Choral Public Domain Library, the Palestrina Choir's library has been constantly expanding in the past 12 years. It now featuring somewhere in the realm of 65 masses, as seen in the table at the start of this Chapter.

The ambition to expand the repertoire has subsequently resulted in a significant rise in the amount of brand new works being commissioned by the choir, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

NEWLY COMMISSIONED REPERTOIRE

3.1 Introduction: Newly Commissioned Repertoire

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the choir was in an unusual position in terms of its performable repertoire. Despite a supportive Administrator at the Pro-Cathedral, and following the strides made by Dr. Íte O'Donovan during her time as Director of Music, the boys of the Palestrina Choir at the turn of the millenium still only knew the *Kyrie* and *Agnus Dei* of most of the masses that they had been performing up to that point. In an interview with Blanaid Murphy, conducted for the purposes of this thesis, she comments on the time immediately after becoming Director of Music. In particular she mentions the challenges faced by the choir:

[The previous admistrator of the Pro-Cathedral John Flaherty] had been a boy in the choir and he was a very supportive man indeed. He was there when I arrived as Director of Music and for the first 6 or 7 years I was there. At the time, the choir was in very bad shape. As I mentioned before, the boys knew only relatively small amount of masses. I then discovered that this meant they only knew the *Kyrie* and the *Agnus Dei* [...] The repertoire was quite small, and straight away after that was the centenary of the choir [2003]. It's really quite a lovely thing [the choir]. So people that maybe didn't see them often would certainly come to hear them at an event like the centenary. Places like the John McCormack society were wanting us to do concerts. We really weren't ready!¹

Murphy took over as Director of Music of the Palestrina Choir in 2002, just one year before the choir celebrated its centenary year. Despite her initial concern about the repertoire limitations, the centenary year proved to be a springboard for the commisioning of new music for the choir. Four new pieces from four different composers were written for the choir to mark the celebration of the choir's one hundred year celebrations:

¹ Interview with Blanaid Murphy, 21 July 2015.

We commissioned 4 works. One was by Columba McCann from Glenstal Abbey, called 'Sing a New Song to the Lord'. We had a piece by Mawby, a Nunc Dimmitis, because that was Archbishop [at the time] Desmond Connell's motto, the words from the Nunc. Then we did a piece by Michael McGlynn called *Lauda Animamae*. Finally, a piece by Andrew Synnott, a carol called *Dorma Jesu*.²

Following the centenary, and the accompanying flurry of new compositions, the culture of commissioning new works for the choir continued to develop throughout the early 2000s and right up to the present day (2015). This chapter will provide an appraisal and brief musical analysis of two particularly significant composers commissioned by the Palestrina Choir, to highlight aspects of the growing scope and ambition of the current era of the choir following the years of strict tradition that permeated the choir's history.

3.2 Composer by Association: Colin Mawby

When Murphy began working with the choir in 2002, the ideal standard that she was striving for was that achieved by Westminster Cathedral in London. The choir of Westminster Cathedral was formed in 1902 just one year prior to the formation of the Palestrina Choir. Murphy takes inspiration from this cathedral as a benchmark ideal for the Palestrina Choir, especially because of the links that have formed with the composer Colin Mawby:

I view [Westminster Cathedral] as an ideal to aspire for. Which is why I appreciate our connection to Colin Mawby, who was both a chorister and then the director of music at that cathedral.³

Conductor and composer Mawby has been an active collaborator with the Murphy and the Palestrina Choir since 2004. During an interview conducted for the purposes of this thesis, Mawby talks about his involvement with the choir, and offers his thoughts on the millennial era:

² Blanaid Murphy Interview.

³ *Ibid.*

During 2007 I took the choir for 3 months [for a period after Murphy's son was born]. I've now since done a lot of composition for them. I had done some work with Íte O'Donovan, but it wasn't composition work. [Since 2007] Blanaid has commissioned me for all sorts of things. I think the Palestina Choir is extremely good, the boys are extremely good and the men have improved enormously over the years. So now there's no restriction on what I can write.⁴

Mawby was born in 1936, and is an accomplished composer and conductor, who has worked extensively in both the United Kingdom and Ireland with groups such as Westminster Cathedral Choir, RTÉ and Chamber Choir Ireland (formerly known as the National Chamber Choir of Ireland). In his biography on the Contemporary Music Centre website, he describes his aesthetic as follows: 'My music is approachable. I make great use of sonority and have been much influenced by plainchant. I value the spiritual element in music and have a healthy contempt for musical fashion. I *do my own thing*'.⁵

Mawby's background in Westminster Cathedral working with male voices and boy trebles meant that he already had a strong understanding of the sounds and vocal capabilities of male-voice choirs. As previously discussed, the Palestrina Choir had faced some issues and limitations during the 1980s because of multiple factors ranging from singer numbers to restrictions on the repertoire that was performed. According to Mawby's assessment of the choir, it has now managed to overcome some of those issues in recent years.

3.2.1 Missa Caro Mea

Out of his many works commissioned by the choir, two stand out as his most substantial and important. The first of these was a new mass written for the fiftieth Eucharistic Congress in 2012. The mass was entitled *Missa Caro Mea*, written in the traditional Latin text in the form of a polyphonic *Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*. It also featured Responsorial

⁴ Interview with Colin Mawby, 24 July 2015.

⁵ Contemporary Music Centre: 'Colin Mawby'[accessed 8 September 2015].

Acclamations, Procession and Recessional pieces for use throughout the liturgy, using the vernacular English text.

*Missa Caro Mea*⁶ was commissioned for the choir with private funding donated by Gemma and Triona King, two consecrated virgins who practice their faith at the Pro Cathedral.⁷ At its debut performance at the Eucharistic Congress, Murphy talks about how the mass received a resounding standing ovation after the performance of the anthemic recessional piece ‘His Truth is Marching On’.⁸ The use of anthemic, familiar pieces like this in new commissions is an idea that first came from Murphy herself:

[We] had instances where we took a familiar melody and set it for choir which had been very successful, such as O Sacrament Most Holy, and God Be Glorified. So I said to Colin, “Is there a good piece for this mass that could be incorporated?” And Colin ended up suggesting the ‘Glory Glory Hallelujah’. I was initially reluctant, thinking that it might be a bit brashy. But it was really very successful. Especially with the text ‘Triumphant songs of praise!’.

27

tion. *f* Glo - ry, glo-ry hal - le - lu - jah! Glo - ry, glo-ry hal - le

tion. *f* Glo - ry, glo-ry hal - le - lu - jah! Glo - ry, glo-ry hal - le

tion. *f* Glo - ry, glo-ry hal - le - lu - jah! Glo - ry, glo-ry hal - le

Figure 3.1: Mawby, *Missa Caro Mea*, *His Truth is Marching On*, 27-30.

⁶ Mawby, Colin: *Missa Caro Mea* (Dublin: Pro Cathedral, 2002).

⁷ Colin Mawby Interview

⁸ McGarry, Patsy: ‘The Teetotal Twins known as G&T turn 60’ [accessed 6 September 2015].

As discussed previously in Chapter One, the *Musicam Sacram* of 1967 placed a strong emphasis on the involvement of the congregation, and in many instances the Solemn Latin Mass which had been celebrated up to that point was replaced with a mass delivered in the vernacular language. In his *Missa Caro Mea*, Mawby has presented a piece of music which successfully combines two aesthetics from the choir's history: a traditional Latin mass setting, and an accompanying set of responses in the vernacular for the purposes of increased congregational participation.

14

S. Chri - ste, Chri - ste.

T. Chri - ste, Chri - ste.

B. Chri - ste, Chri - ste.

ff

Figure 3.2: Mawby, *Missa Caro Mea*, *Kyrie*, 14-16.

the songs that an - gels sing

the songs that an - gels sing U - nite the hymns of praise we

the songs that an - gels sing U - nite the hymns of praise we

mf

Figure 3.3: Mawby, *Missa Caro Mea*, *Processional*, 49-53.

3.2.2 Responsorial Psalms and Gospel Acclamations

The second and most substantial commission written by Mawby for the Palestrina Choir was an expansive project undertaken by the composer and the choir alike. Following talks with Murphy, a decision was made to write a collection of new Responsorial Psalms and Gospel Acclamations to be sung each Sunday and Feast Day that the choir is active during the year⁹. Not only that, but it was expanded to cover a span of three years, with Year A, Year B and Year C. The choir performs the Psalms and Acclamations on a rotation system that recycles after three years. Figures 3.4, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 show an example of a Responsorial Psalm from each of the written years, as well as one example of a piece which is uniformly used on Pentacost Sunday regardless of whether Year A, B or C is being sung:

Fifth Sunday of Lent Year A
Responsorial Psalm

With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of re-

Figure 3.4: Mawby, *Responsorial Psalm*, Year A (sample)

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

O give thanks to the Lord. for his love endures for ever.

Figure 3.5: Mawby, *Responsorial Psalm*, Year B (sample)

⁹ Mawby, Colin: *Responsorial Psalms and Gospel Acclamations* (Dublin: Pro Cathedral).

Twenty - Sixth Sunday Year C U
 Responsorial Psalm

Dex
 My soul, give praise to the Lord, gives praise to the Lord.

All

Figure 3.6: Mawby, *Responsorial Psalm*, Year C (sample)

Pentecost Sunday
Responsorial Psalm

Send forth your spirit, O Lord, and re-new the face of the earth.

Figure 3.7: Mawby, *Responsorial Psalm*, Every Year (sample)

Murphy speaks about the lead up to this large-scale collaboration as follows:

We had the idea of Colin being the 'composer in residence'. When I went to him first, he saw it as a massive undertaking, so he began firstly with the weeks relevant to advent. After those, he had become so affected by the music and the text, that he continued on with the project. Rather than being a composer in residence though, it became more like a composer by association.¹⁰

This is the biggest commission that Mawby has undertaken to date, and the most substantial and ambitious work commissioned by Murphy for the Palestrina Choir. The approach to a work of this size was not without its challenges, which Mawby describes in the following statement:

¹⁰ Blanaid Murphy Interview

The project came about through Blanaid [Murphy], and John Flaherty [the previous PRO Cathedral Administrator and former Palestrina chorister] financed that. It was three years work and when you set out on something like that, you initially maybe don't get it right. But then eventually you do. With something on that scale, standards are bound to vary. Some are good, some not so good, some are absolutely superb. That's the way it goes. But it really got me to think about the meaning of the psalms, and the text. The text of the psalms cover *everything*! All the sins, whatever you like to do...it's there! Covered in some way.¹¹

This careful consideration and attention to detail of text recalls some of the aesthetics of the Cecilian Reform Movement and the *Motu Proprio* released by Pope Pius X discussed in Chapter one. The importance of congregational participation in the liturgy was also a strong ideal of both, while also being a particularly emphasised feature of the *Musicam Sacram* in 1967. In regards to the congregation's involvement, the refrain of Mawby's Responsorial Psalms are sung by the choir and the congregation together. To facilitate this, the refrain tones are notated in the mass leaflet every week for the congregation to join in. According to Mawby, writing responses for the congregation in this way is somewhat of a challenging prospect:

One of the biggest problems in general is writing things for the congregation to sing. It's very hard to do that. It's not a problem about marrying them to what the choir sings, its mostly that some of the responses are so short.¹²

Despite the difficulty expressed by Mawby about writing music that involves the congregation, further analysis of some examples of these Responsorial Psalms shows that the responses are written in a plaintive, diatonic structure with no added accidentals (examples of these can also be seen in the figures on the previous page). To help encourage congregational involvement, the standard practice used by the choir at present is sing the first response with the choir alone, and for the congregation to join in on the repeat. Despite Mawby's initial concern, the shortness and simple structure of these refrains help the congregation to join in after a single hearing, if they so choose.

¹¹ Colin Mawby Interview

¹² *Ibid.*

The verses follow a chant-like structure where the text is written in an unmetered way between the written harmonic chord changes. The words are sung in the manner of a spoken sentence, with each voice type staying on the corresponding written pitch rather than inflecting the voice in a speech-like manner. An example of this style, as seen in Mawby's Responsorial Psalms, is shown below in Figure 3.8:

1. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

2. If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,

3. My soul is waiting for the Lord. I count on his word.

4. Because with the Lord there is mercy

Figure 3.8: Mawby, *Responsorial Psalm, Verse* (sample)

In the Gospel Acclamation, the piece is performed in the order of 'Alleluia, Alleluia, Verse, Alleluia, Alleluia (the final Alleluia repeat features a treble descant). Across the three years worth of Acclamations, the refrains are traditionally unison with a simple organ accompaniment, in a hymnal style. The verses are made up of a wide variety of voicings, ranging from full choir up to eight parts all the way down to verses written for solo voice. The texture is always homophonic, so the communication and intelligibility of the text is never in question, a trait which is shared with the preceding Responsorial Psalms. Mawby made the following statement about his approach to the varying voicings of these verses:

It was a consideration of variety, to give different aspects to the sound. When you think of some of these polyphonic masses, they have ATB [Alto, Tenor and Bass] sections, double choir sections. If you look at something like Victoria's Magnificat, he obviously felt the same, to create variety within the texture of voices to enhance the piece...So within an SATB setting, you have to seek out that sort of variety. I never cease to be amazed about the economy of creation. You get the economy of the voices of the choir, and then the variety within that, range, rhythm etc.¹³

¹³ Colin Mawby Interview

Figure. 3.9 (below) shows a verse which uses both a solo voice and homophonic choir. Figure. 3.10 (overleaf) shows an example of a fully homophonic verse.

Verse 133

Andante

The sheep that be long to me listen to my

voice, says the Lord, I know them and they fol-

Figure 3.9: Mawby, Gospel Acclamation, Verse: Solo and Full Choir

(An interesting point to make about this set of Psalms and Hallelujahs is that they have not yet been typeset or published. The choir performs from a printed copy of the original hand-written manuscript written by Mawby himself)

Verse

maestoso f

May the Fa-ther of our Lord Je-sus

f

mp sempre cresc

Christ en-light-en the eyes of our mind, so that we can

mp sempre cresc

Figure 3.10: Mawby, Gospel Acclamation, Verse: Full Choir

3.3 New Latin Mass by Irish Composer Kevin O'Connell

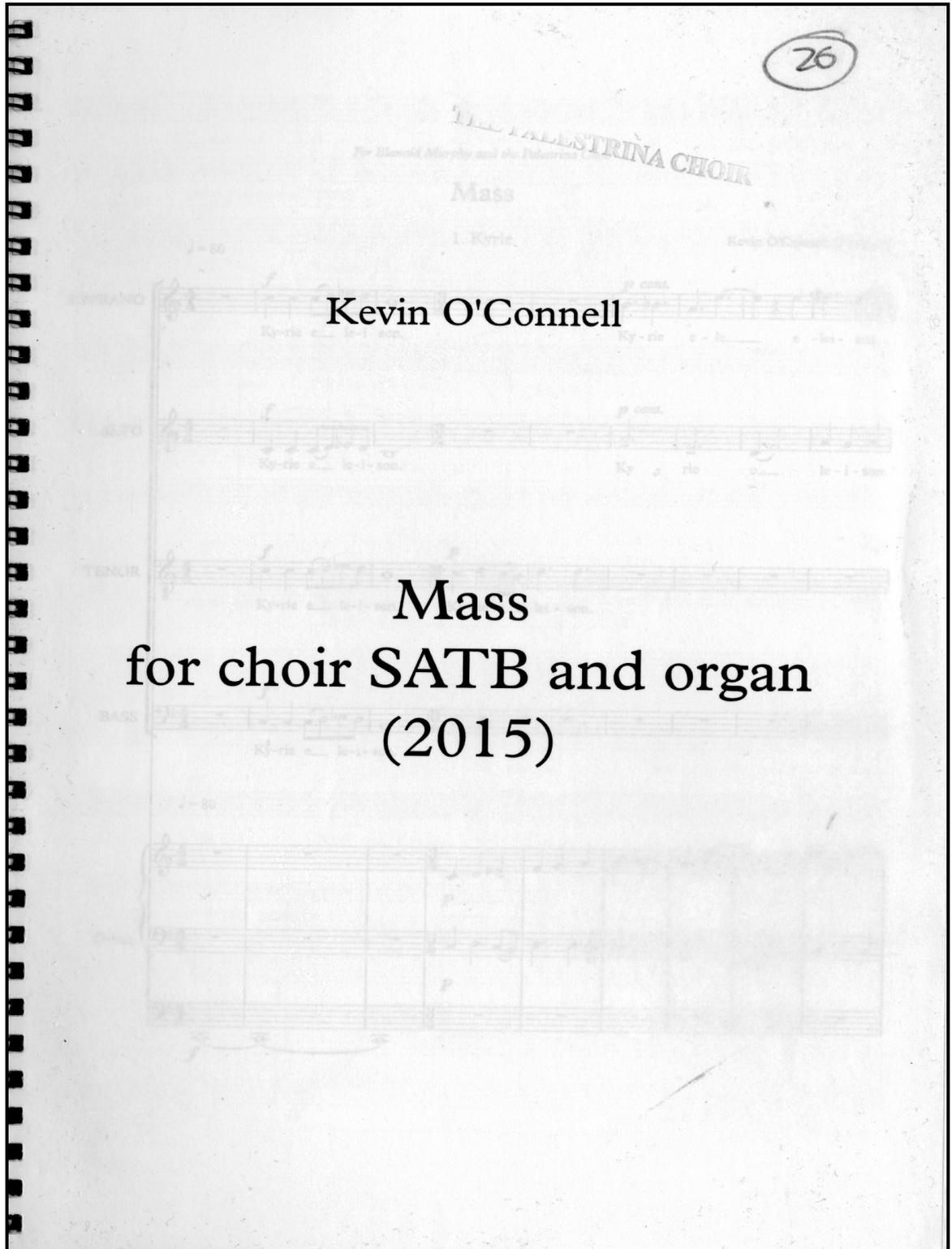


Figure 3.11: Cover of Kevin O'Connell's Latin Mass (source: the Palestrina Choir Library)¹⁴

¹⁴ O'Connell, Kevin: *Mass for choir SATB and organ* (Dublin: CMC, 2015).

21 June 2015, marked a significant event in Irish liturgical composition when the Palestrina Choir debuted a newly commissioned mass by Derry born composer Kevin O’Connell.¹⁵ According to the Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin, only a small list of modern composers have achieved noteworthy success when it comes to writing a Latin mass setting. This list includes composers such as James MacMillan, Lennox Berkeley, Edward Rubbra, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten and, as discussed in Chapter Two, the Belgian Composer Flor Peeters.¹⁶ The collaboration for this mass began as a more casual discussion among colleagues as both O’Connell and Murphy lecture at Dublin’s Royal Irish Academy of Music; O’Connell in Composition, and Murphy in Conducting.¹⁷ The project grew and developed until O’Connell and Murphy successfully applied for Arts Council funding. O’Connell, during an interview conducted by the Contemporary Music Centre in Dublin, commented that as a composer you have a ‘squadron of giants behind you’, referring to the centuries of composers that have written liturgical settings in the past:

I had very much wanted to write a mass, but I was nervous because it is such a big undertaking. The way this works is that this is a liturgical mass. It *can* be performed in concert, and I hope it will be, but its primary function here is to be performed as part of a Latin liturgy [...] We [as composers] can compose music that is congregationally accessible, whether for singing or at least for listening to, but that doesn’t descend to the depths of banality that one often hears in Catholic Churches particularly.¹⁸

The composition uses the structure of the Latin mass, as it is traditionally performed, in the order of *Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*. The *Credo* does not appear as part of the composition, because as previously discussed, a polyphonic Creed does not feature in the Solemn Latin mass. It is traditionally performed in plainchant, or in some cases spoken by the choir and the congregation.

¹⁵ Kevin O’Connell website (2015) [accessed 29 July 2015].

¹⁶ Contemporary Music Centre: ‘A new choral work by Kevin O’Connell for the Palestrina Choir receives its premiere on 21 June’ [accessed 29 July 2015].

¹⁷ Royal Irish Academy of Music (2015) [accessed 30 August 2015].

¹⁸ Contemporary Music Centre: ‘Kevin O’Connell on his new setting of the Latin Mass’ [accessed 29 July 2015].

The *Kyrie* begins with an organ drone on a single low 'C', establishing the opening unison sung by the choir. The opening 3 bars form a motif which appears 3 times throughout the work; twice to establish the text *Kyrie Eleison* and a final time to finish the piece:

1. Kyrie

♩ = 80

SOPRANO

Ky-rie e__ le-i son.

ALTO

Ky-rie e__ le-i-son.

Figure 3.12: O'Connell, *Mass for choir SATB and organ, Kyrie, 1-4.*

The opening of the *Kyrie* continues to hover loosely around C major, with plentiful use of accidentals. Both polyphonic and homophonic devices appear throughout the opening of this mass. During the polyphonic sections, the accidental movement is mostly stepwise by semitone with rare instances of the vocal lines stepping by tone. Horizontally shifting rhythmic alterations are used throughout these sections to create incidental moments of minor 2nds, major 7ths and minor 9ths throughout. An example of this can be seen in bars 10 to 18, shown below in Figure 3.13:

Figure 3.13: O'Connell, *Mass for choir SATB and organ, Kyrie*, 13-18.

The homophonic sections are less frequent. Where they do appear, O'Connell often chooses to offset the parts with an interplay between strict quavers and triplet quavers rather than staying traditionally vertical in texture. The effect is that the trajectory in the voices achieving a surging forward momentum. An example of this can be seen in the opening bars of the *Christe*, from bar 30 to 32. A brief moment of clean homophonic chords is then perforated by the introduction of cross rhythms, where the Soprano 1 & 2, Alto 1 and Tenor 1 & 2 parts are passing around a triplet motif while all remaining vocal parts are maintaining a steady quaver pattern. This can be seen below in Figure. 3.14, which shows this rhythmic effect between the tenors and the basses :

Figure 3.14: O'Connell, *Mass for choir SATB and organ, Kyrie*, 40-42.

The *Gloria* opens with a single melody line on the right hand of the organ, which is followed by a duet between the alto and tenor lines. This grows into a polyphonic trio between the soprano, alto and bass lines, before finally establishing the first tutti of the piece in the onset to bar 80. For the entire introduction of the *Gloria*, the organ line doubles the vocal lines exactly. Like the *Christe Eleison* section during the *Kyrie*, the text of the *Gloria* shifts horizontally back and forth between the vocal parts, with only sparse moments where the text aligns vertically. This staggering of the text in this way creates a very loosely defined texture where each vocal part seems to operate independently of the other. Rhythmically, the polyphony of the opening of the *Gloria* almost looks like an homage to the works of early Renaissance polyphony. However, harmonically the aesthetics at play here are quite different from those seen in these early polyphonic works, which continue to dominate the choir's repertoire. Palestrina's music, for example, was described in Chapter Two containing 'delicate use of dissonance'.¹⁹ O'Connell instead opts for extended periods of sparse dissonance, creating moments of intense ebb and flow in the harmonic structure, which at times results in the tonality sounding ambiguous and somewhat austere.

The texture of the *Gloria* changes abruptly in bar 95 with a homophonic duet passing the text of *Laudamus te, benedicimus te* (We praise you, we bless you) back and forth between the upper voices and lower voices. The effect of the sudden introduction of homophony at this point is made even more striking because of the staggered rendering of the words during the opening lines of the *Gloria* that precede it. A brief moment of plainchant establishes a sudden refinement of the soundworld in bar 107. From here until the end of the *Gloria*, the texture remains homophonic and entirely in unison. Rather than allowing the piece to become plaintive or pastoral, O'Connell instead introduces elements of rhythmic virtuosity. The vocal parts sing an oscillating octave motif beginning at the text *Domine Fili Unigenite Christe* (Lord Jesus Christ only begotten son of

¹⁹ Daly, Kieran Anthony: *Catholic Church Music in Ireland 1878-1903: The Cecilian Reform Movement* (Oregon and Dublin: The Four Courts Press Ltd., 1995), 3.

God). The text is clean and rhythmically precise. The desired effect is prescribed by O'Connell in the score markings simply as 'exultant'.²⁰ Figure 3.15 (below) shows the an example of the polyphonic writing in the *Gloria*. Figure 3.16 shows a section of rhythmic virtuosity with a unison melody:

ho-mi-ni bus bo-nae vo-lun-ta-tis.

poco >

bo nae vo-lun-

ho mi-ni-bus bo-nae vo-lun-

ho - mi-ni- bus bo-nae vo-lun-

Figure 3.15: O'Connell, *Mass for choir SATB and organ, Kyrie*, 78-82.

Do-mi-ne Fi-li u-ni-ge ni te Je su Chri ste.

f

Do-mi-ne Fi-li u-ni-ge ni te Je su Chri ste.

f all

Do-mi-ne Fi-li u-ni-ge ni te Je su Chri ste.

f

Do-mi-ne Fi-li u-ni-ge ni te Je su Chri ste.

Figure 3.16: O'Connell, *Mass for choir SATB and organ, Gloria*, 117-118.

²⁰ O'Connell, Kevin: *Mass for choir SATB and organ* (Dublin: CMC, 2015), 14.

The *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* are in line with O'Connell's aesthetic of strongly contrasting textures. The piece begins with an emphatic forte declamation of a repeated 'Sanctus'. This is immediately contrasted with a light and dance-like section that continues for the rest of the movement. Crotchet rests punctuate the line, at times happening in the middle of a word. The effect created by this is that individual syllables throughout the text are given more emphasis. The pulsing effect caused by the addition of slurs (as shown below in Figure 3.17) creates further emphasis by elongating some syllables to two beats. The end result of this technique is that the dance-like motifs still feel solemn and well grounded.

Light, rhythmic ♩ = 60

160 *p*

Do-mi - nus_ De-us S-ba - oth._

Do-mi - nus_ De-us Sa-ba - oth._

p Do-mi - nus_ De-us Sa-ba - oth.

Do-mi , nus_ De-us Sa-ba - a - oth._

Figure 3.17: O'Connell, *Mass for choir SATB and organ, Sanctus*, 160-166.

Like the *Gloria* movement, the *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* feature moments of chant like unison and solo singing. O'Connell has chosen to punctuate these plaintive moments of unison singing with some more exaggerated, rhythmic

patterns. The *Benedictus* features a semiquaver motif that makes effective use of dissonant minor seconds and major sevenths between the E natural sung by the trebles and F naturals in the tenor. The *Agnus Dei* features a repeated pattern of semiquavers sung in unison from the bass with a quick decrescendo from mezzo-forte to piano. Figures 3.18 and 3.19 (below) show an example of each of these motifs respectively:

p tranquillo *solo or small group*
 Be-ne-dic tus. qui ve - nit in no-mi-ne Do-mi-ni.
p tranquillo *solo or small group*
 Be-ne-dic tus. qui ve - nit in no-mi-ne Do-mi-ni.
p tranquillo
 Be-ne-dic tus.
p tranquillo
 Be-ne-dic tus.

Figure 3.18: O'Connell, *Mass for choir SATB and organ, Sanctus*, 195-197

mf *p*
 Mi-se-re-re no-bis. *solo*
 qui tol-lis pec-ca-ta mun-di.

Figure 3.19: O'Connell, *Mass for choir SATB and organ, Agnus Dei*, 237-238.

3.4 Final Thoughts: Chapter Three

The potential legacy of these new compositions is a very significant development for the Palestrina Choir. It begins to indicate the position that the choir is currently in when it comes to making decisions about new repertoire.

Mawby managed to achieve a unified style and soundworld for the Responsorial Psalms and Gospel Acclamations performed at the Pro-Cathedral by the Palestrina Choir. These settings are unique to the choir, and because of Mawby's background as both a former chorister and director of Westminster Cathedral Choir, the compositions have a style which highlights the strengths and vocal capabilities of a male voice choir. At the same time, his clear attention to detail with the text declamation also give us a modern example of some of the more traditional standards of music that were being championed and practiced throughout the years by the choir.

The avant-garde modernity of O'Connell's *Mass* means that it is never going to appeal to everyone's taste. His compositional aesthetics lie far from the strict guidelines that governed church music when the choir was first formed. Despite some occasional moments of stylistic exaggeration, he has succeeded in writing a stimulating and exciting mass setting that achieves its goal of working in the context of a traditional Solemn Latin Mass. In particular, O'Connell played to the strengths of the choir by writing melodies which incorporating elements of plainchant, and his composition has the potential to inspire up and coming composers to attempt the difficult task of setting the text of the Latin mass to music in future compositions.

CONCLUSION

The appraisal of the repertoire of the millennial era of the Palestrina Choir, and the historic background and context that the choir has emerged from reveal that the choir is currently at a crossroads of *tradition* and *ambition*.

We can determine from the explorations in Chapters One and Two that many of the older traditions that were first introduced at the time of the choir's formation have stood the test of time and still affect many of the repertoire considerations being made today by the current Director of Music Blanaid Murphy. This is most apparent in the importance that is still placed on Gregorian chant. It is also apparent in the ongoing prevalence of Renaissance polyphony by composers like G.P. da Palestrina and Tomas Luis de Victoria that continue to dominate the choir's current library.

The second Vatican Council and the release of *Musica Sacram* is something which appears to have affected the choir in a number of different ways. Based on the choir's capabilities and reputation, polyphonic masses remained in the repertoire, which can be determined from the archived mass leaflets from the 1980s and 1990s. However, the masses that remained were restricted to performances of only the *Kyrie* and *Agnus Dei* movements. The current era of the choir has managed to re-instate the full Latin polyphonic masses (without the *Credo*), with the polyphonic *Gloria* and *Sanctus* now a part of the regular running of the liturgy again. Based on the testimonies of Blanaid Murphy and James Reynolds, this appears to be largely due to renewed support for high quality music by the Administrations of John O'Flaherty, and subsequently Canon Damian O'Reilly since the turn of the millennium.

Gregorian chant is a defining repertoire choice which is seen in all three eras discussed in this thesis. The fact that Murphy still places such credence in the amount of plainchant performed by the choir shows a respect and appreciation

for past traditions. The inclusion of masses and motets based on plainchant motifs is also a repertoire consideration which Murphy feels quite strongly about.

Despite the many traditional values still present in the repertoire of the choir, significant attempts are being made to create a catalogue of brand new music by contemporary composers. This is something which makes the choir a potential force to be reckoned with in the area of modern sacred music going into the future. The Latin mass by Kevin O'Connell, despite being musically ambitious and at times almost virtuosic, still found its place within the parameters of the Latin Solemn Mass. The culture of promoting vernacular, congregational singing is something which Colin Mawby has incorporated with great success into his *Missa Caro Mea*, Responsorial Psalms and Gospel Acclamations.

Despite the choir's relative youth, by comparison to its Anglican counterparts in Dublin, the Palestrina Choir is currently maintaining its position as a key player in Irish church music. This has been achieved despite the absence of dedicated choir school to train the choristers, and despite the many varied restrictions and difficulties the choir has experience throughout the years, from Vatican decrees, to periods of low numbers of choristers. The recent ambitions of the current choir in the realm of more modern sacred music is certainly something which appears to have given it renewed focus and an increased public profile. The only thing that remains to be seen is if old traditions will find a way occupy the same space as the shiny and the new!

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview with Blanaid Murphy: Director of Music

Date: 21 July 2015

S. Is there information available in relation to older repertoire choices?

B. There's a lot of pieces from Ite O' Donovan's time. There's also may be some information available in the Diocesan Archives. And in my office somewhere, I've got an LP of an old broadcast of the Palestrina choir in 1930. It's a very undocumented thing (Palestrina).

S. This was part of the reason that inspired my interest in the area.

B. I'm hoping to do a doctorate on the Palestrina, under Professor Kerry Houston. He did his research on St. Patricks. Barra Boydell then did Christchurch. So it would be quite good for someone like yourself to get started into the area.

S. Absolutely.

B. I know that John Flaherty was in the choir when he was a boy, going back 50 years. And they didn't do very good repertoire then. I know that under Vincent O' Briens time they did extremely good repertoire; Palestrina masses, Victoria masses. And then his son Oliver wasn't as able really. At that point they learned more by rote. When I arrived, judging by the library, there wasn't a real sweep of very good repertoire, mostly pockets of it. Nothing that would rival somewhere like westminster cathedral. I've tried to massively extend the repertoirre to make the library a great place. I was mostly surprised by how little there was there when I arrived, instead of finding 'Wow, they've got this' etc.

S. So it may have been a more 'Tried and Trusted' method?

B. Well there were things like Palestrina Papae Marcelli which is obviously a coveted piece. Now still, its one of the more regular pieces that we would do. Even so, we didn't have very many 'Palestrina' masses in the library.

S. Did you find when you took over as musical director, that one of your goals to include 'Palestrina' repertoire, being the namesake composer of the choir?

B. Well I certainly thought that the all the music needed to expand rapidly. One of the things we haven't yet expanded into is the work of Orlando Di Lasso. A lot of the masses are quite short. When we had weekday masses, we did quite a few. But Palestrina and Victoria are two which I certainly looked at, because there was so many and because we were doing the Latin masses, we followed the proper days quite carefully, and there were generally major motets for every occasion of the year. In this instance, it's a wonderful opportunity, most choirs wouldn't have access to that.

S. Is there historical information available about the repertoire performed by the Palestrina choir?

B. Well, there certainly is going back to Ite O Donovan's time, in the 80s. There's definite record in the library, old programmes and mass leaflets.

S. You mentioned the Diocesan archives?

B. The Diocesan Archive contains a lot of details about the setting up of the choir, Edward Martin letters etc. Now, whether or not it contains many past records of the music, I'm not so sure.

S. And those records, are they public?

B. You can make a request to see them. Back in earlier days of the choir, there would have been lots of chant done. A particular dominance of that.

S. I'm looking to get an overview of the current repertoire performed, and with that information, distill it down to a number of the more frequently performed pieces, and to explore each of those specific pieces in a more detailed way. You've already mentioned that Palestrina's Missa Papae Marcelli is one such piece. Can you talk about some other pieces like that which might have a similar position in the repertoire of the Palestrina Choir?

B. Because St. Mary's Pro Cathedral being the base of the Palestina choir, I try to include a lot of Marian repertoire into our masses and performances to draw significance to the Virgin Mary being in the name of the church where we perform. If you wanted to look at a piece which I view as a real gem from that section of our repertoire, then I would have to say that it's the Vidi Speciosam mass and accompanying motet by Victoria. A glorious work! I do know, for example, that the work of Victoria was very regarded in the choir. When Cardinal Connell was a seminarian he used to come into the cathedral on Holy Week and they would sing the office of Victoria. They, or the Palestirna choir would have sung the responses during holy week. During that time, Victoria would have been performed a lot. Sorry if I'm being a bit vague, but the information available is a bit vague unfortunately.

S. In general, when it comes to repertoire choices, do you find there is a set standard? Or is it more likely for a musical director to draw more subjectively from their own influences?

B. When it was begun, Edward Martin had VERY high ideals. He was a very unusual man. He was a catholic land owner in Galway, which was unusual in itself. His older brother, who was very favoured by his mother, died. And so he was left. He didn't stay with the mother, or get married, and he went travelling around Europe Cathedrals. It was the Palestrina Papae Marcelli which inspired

him. He heard Vincent O' Briens choir singing it in Clarendon St. In the PRO, in the Canon's office has the initial minute books, which are really colourful. I remember John Flaherty showing them to me. The secretary at the time was quite a funny person obviously, and he or she recorded , rather amusingly the wranglings of these meetings. And then, at some point, a couple of years in, the secretary changed and became much more perfuctary. So they're acutally very interesting. He had very high aspirations that the choir should rank among these great European Cathedrals. He was quite interesting in another way too, because he was very involved in the setup of the abbey. He was a bit of unsung hero hero. And he was the first president of Sinn Fein. A very provocative man. He did NOT like women at all though. In the initial documentation of the choir it was written that it would only consist of men. It didn't say the director though! [laughs]

S. You mentioned John Flaherty. What position did he hold?

B. He was the Admiistrator before Canon O' Reilly. And he had been a boy in the choir. He was a very supportive man indeed. He was there when I arrived as Director of Music. For the first 6 or 7 years I was there. At the time, the choir was in very bad shape. As I mentioned before, the boys knew, maybe 5 to 8 masses. I then discovered that this meant they only knew the *Kyrie* and the *Agnus Dei*. They wouldn't have been performing the *Gloria* and the *Sanctus*. So unfortunately, that meant they knew next to nothing. Typically there would have been a chant *Gloria* and *Sanctus* performed. The repertoire was quite small. And straight away after that was the centenary of the choir (2003). It's really quite a lovely thing (the choir). So people that maybe didn't see them often, would certainly come to hear them at an event like the centenary. Places like the John McCormack society were wanting us to do concerts. We really weren't ready.

S. So celebrating the choir which had began in 1903

B. Yes, January 1903. The document was signed in November 1902. The new Palestrina choir actually usurped the position of the parish choir which were effectively turfed out at that point. Actually, Gerard Gillen would be a wonderful person to talk to. He goes in the Pro about 35 years. I also think Sean O Hearcaigh would be good to talk to. He was the director before Íte O' Donovan and after Oliver O'Brien. Also, up to the time of Oliver O'Brien, the Choir Director and the organist was a combined role and the organ console was in the centre of the gallery. So, quite against his will, he was removed as organist and put as the sole role of the director. At which point Gerard Gillen took over as organist. Gerard would also be another interesting person to chat to about the history of the choir.

S. Can I ask you a little about the current state of boys choirs. Both Christchurch Cathedral and St. Anne' Church choir had boys choirs which disbanded, with a contributing reason being that they were not connected to a boys school, or a choir school. The replacements of these choirs ended up being mixed professional choirs. DoYOU feel like the Palestrina choir is bucking that trend, by the sheer example of its lasting longevity?

B. I used to wish we had a choir school, but now I'm actually so happy that we don't. Because, we don't have the added commitment of a school timetable combined with a choir timetable. St. Patrick's have trouble finding boys for this reason. The demographics show that people don't want to drive into the city centre. And because its not a boarding school, that means a daily commute. Our boys come in 3 or 4 evenings a week, which our parents are able to handle. I sometimes wish I had more time with the boys, but I think the amount of repertoire we have now speaks for itself, and I don't think we can do much more in terms of our current repertoire output.

S. So do you make a special effort to avoid repeating music throughout the year?

B. Two years ago (2013), we progressed through the year without repeating a single mass any Sunday, not once. Recently, I made a list with Jimmy Reynolds, the choir librarian. I mean, this year for example we did 44 masses in total. But we easily have done double that in our repertoire collection, certainly with what I've been doing with the boys in the last number of years. We a huge list to call upon. I'm constantly trying to improve the level of the motets now.

S. Going back to repertoire considerations, is there anything which might be more of a less known setting of mass or motet that the Palestrina performs? Maybe even one that you yourself wanted to bring to the choir specifically?

B. I think the most interesting work less performed work we do is the Missa Sancti Joseph by the Belgian composer Flor Peeters. That mass is one in particular I was keen for the choir to record, as its never yet been done. I heard it once somewhere, I can't remember where, it's not even on the repertoire list of most cathedrals. I think its an absolutely lovely mass. Its interesting for the choir, it requires you to sing very well, but yet its not angry. His other mass, Missa Festiva, is very angry, and quite aggressive. In my opinion not as good. Whereas this is a very pleasing mass. Makes you sing well, and everything around it is very good. In fact, professor Gillen was a student of his, which is quite a good link to have with the choir. We also began CD recordings this year, and the Flor Peeters is potentially to be the featured track on that CD. An interesting point too while I think about it, we were founded within a year of Westminster Cathedral, and I suppose I view that as an ideal to aspire for. Which is why I appreciate our connection to Colin Mawby, who was both a chorister and a nd then the director of music at that cathedral. He has been living between the two countries, and has written a lot of music for the choir. I'm actually meeting him in London next week if you'd like to talk to him about his music. He's very excentric, but an incredible mind. When you talk to him, your mind gets pulled in many directions! He thinks very originally. Another interesting person from the history of the PRO is the past administrator Dermot McCarthy, who was here in the time of Ite O'Donovan around the time of the

Change of the Vatican Council in 1964. He was big into performance, and would have even got actors from the Abbey to come in to perform the Passion during Holy week.

S. You mentioned the Vatican council. Is that something which had a big impact on the choir?

B. Enormously. Many changes didn't really take effect until many years later. It was difficult. The predominance of Latin went. In the context of things, in particular for Palestrina choir, some bad decisions were made. We lost Holy Thursday as a mass that the choir would participate in. We only got it back in 2012. We were one of the only Cathedral choirs in the world that didn't participate in the full Holy Week. It was quite an odd anomaly which seemed to have held on. And some of the men were positively rejoicing when it was brought back in.

S. You already mentioned Colin Mawby. Can you talk about other pieces which were written specifically for the Palestrina choir?

B. During the century week we commissioned 4 works. One was by Columba McCann from Glenstal Abbey, called 'Sing a New Song to the Lord'. We had a piece by Mawby, a Nunc Dimittis, because that was Cardinal Connell's motto, the words from the Nunc. Then we did a piece by Michael McGlynn called *Lauda Animamae*. And finally there was a piece by Andrew Synnott, a carol called *Dorma Jesu*. At that time, there was quite a lot of commissions. Because we never had a lot of money, we ended up doing a lot of commissions with Colin Mawby. Most recently we managed to get Arts Council funding to commission a brand new mass by the Irish composer Kevin O'Connell. There's an Irish language mass by Paul Flynn, simply called 'Aifreann', which we didn't commission, but that we debuted. It's what I would describe as a good usable mass, something which is very accessible by the congregation. For a CD recording, we commissioned pieces by David Mooney. The CD was called 'The

Bells of the Angelus' and it included pieces by Mooney like 'Hail Glorious St Patrick' as well as other arrangements of Irish hymns. And they've now been performed all around the world. We were also able to revive the very ancient melody of the Deus Meus, which was arranged by David Mooney too. Another Mawby commission was a mass which we commissioned for the Eucharistic Congress. A truly magnificent mass, the ending of which is truly electric. I had found in the past that it had been very beneficial to take a well known melody and work a new piece around it. Because it gives a continuity to the people listening to things in the past. We had done that a few times prior to that, for example in hymns such as 'O Sacrament Most Holy'. So I asked Mawby if he could find a melody that would be usable, and then he himself came up with the Glory, Glory Hallelujah theme of 'His Truth is Marching On'. At first I was skeptical, but in fact, the movement went very successfully.

S. Is there any other aspect of singing at the PRO that you feel are important?

B. A lot of the pieces we perform are based around Gregorian chant. Examples like Durufle's Requiem and his motets, as well as a lot of Colin Mawby's pieces. A lot of places perform pieces like this, but because we have such a connection to Gregorian chant, I think its something we achieve quite well, and very meaningfully. Another example might be a Victoria Ave Maria.

S. Is the prevalence of chant in the current repertoire by your design? Or did carry through from previous versions of the choir?

B. There had been a lot performed in Ite O' Donovan's time, and then it fell off. We weren't initially allowed to do the Introitus at the opening of the mass, but now we do. I'm determined to do even more chant with the men and the boys. I think the mens chant has developed unbelievably well in last number of years. The boys haven't developed that skill as much. Time constraints were an issue, and because the men did the introit so well, as a result the boys haven't done it as much. It's quite an unknown art, I myself had sung a little as a child. A lot of it is how you approach it. It can be quite intimidating originally.

Appendix B

Interview with Colin Mawby: Composer by Association

Date: 24 July 2015

S. I'd love to hear about the music you composed for the Pro, how did you get involved initially?

C. Gosh, I can hardly remember. When Blanaid Murphy's son arrived, I took the choir for 3 months. I've now since done a lot of composition for them. I had done some work with Ite O'Donovan, but it wasn't composition work. Blanaid has commissioned me for all sorts of things. I think the Palestina choir is extremely good, the boys are extremely good and the men have improved enormously over the years. So now there's no restriction on what I can write.

S. I'm especially curious to hear about the responsorial psalms and alleluias that you wrote. Can you talk a little about that?

C. That came about through Blanaid. And John Flaherty financed that. It was three years work. You set out on something like that, and you initially maybe don't get it right. But then eventually you do get it right. When you do something on that something on that scale, standards are bound to vary. Some are good, some not so good, some are absolutely superb. That's the way it goes. But it really got me to think about the meaning of the psalms, and the text. The text of the psalms cover EVERYTHING. All the sins, whatever you like to do...is there! Covered in some way. That's basically it. One of the biggest problems in general is writing things for the congregation to sing. It's very hard to do that. It's not problem about marrying them to what the choir sings, its mostly that some of the responses are so short. I think psalms in general though have to be practical. One thing in particular which impresses me about a boys choir, is how high they can sing. Their upper range is extraordinary, very clean, and they can sustain it very well. It's a very unusual thing. Its not quite the same as the pure english sound.

S. In your alleluia settings then, they change quite a lot in the verses, from full choir, to smaller ensembles, to solos etc. Can you talk a little bit about that aspect?

C. It was a consideration of variety, to give different aspects to the sound. When you think of some of these polyphonic masses, they have ATB sections, double choir sections. If you look at something like Victoria Magnificat, he obviously felt the same, to create variety within the texture of voices to enhance the piece. The thing that amazes me really, is that nearly all the music we know can fit on 7 white notes and 5 black notes. Its extraordinary when you think about it. Billions of pieces of music. So withing an SATB setting, you have to seek out that sort of variety. I never cease to be amazed about the economy of creation. You get the economy of the voices of the choir, and then the variety withing that, range, rhythm etc. And obviously, the polyphonic greats thought the same. Its worth studying pieces like the Victoria Magnificat to see what he does with it.

S. Can you talk about some of the compositional devices at play here?

C. Well, for example, some of my writing works around enharmonic moments, such as where an Aflat becomes a Gsharp, and therefore you can modulate from an Aflat major to and E major around that Aflat/Gsharp moment, if you join them up. Its certainly a matter of judgement though.

[At this point Blanaid Murphy joined the interview]

S. Could I ask you about your Missa Caro Mea. The final movement 'His Truth is Marching On' is particularly resounding piece. Was that a difficult thing to achieve, to take such a familiar tune and create something new with it?

C. No, not at all. It cetainly depends on the quality of the tune though.

B. We had previous to that had instances where we took a familiar melody and set it for choir which had been very successful, such as O Sacrament Most Holy, and God Be Glorified. So I said to Colin, "Is there a good piece for this mass that could be incorporated?" And Colin ended up suggesting the 'Glory Glory Hallelujah'. I was initially reluctant, thinking that it might be a bit brashy. But it was really very succesful. Especially with the text 'Triumphant songs of praise!'. I would particularly like to record it. It was initaly commisioned by the twins Gemma and Triona King, who are consecrated virgins that are affiliated with the Pro Cathedral. It was for the Eucharistic Congress, where Colin's setting of God, Be Glorified was also debuted. They've been quite generous sponsors of the Palestrina Choir.

S. Blanaid, we were just talking a bit about the responsorial psalms that Colin wrote, do you remember the run up to the commision.

B. What happened was, we had the idea of Colin being the composer in residence. When I went to him first, he saw it as a massive undertaking, so he began firstly with the weeks relevant to advent. After those, he had become so affected by the music and the text, that he continued on with the project. Rather than being a composer in residence though, it became more like a composer by association.

S. It's wonderful to have three years of options to work with on rotation...

B. Well the other options were quite...ordinary. The Gelineu would have the best option up to that point.

Appendix C

Interview with Mr. James Reynolds: Choir Librarian

Date 29 July 2015

S. Can you talk a bit about the development of the choir since you've been in the position of librarian here?

J. Ite O' Donovan was appointed in 1982 at easter time. Replacing a man called Sean O Hearcaigh, who was a priest. He since then has leaft the priesthood. He established the choir the choir on the line of the Royal School of Church Music model. This is the training scheme for the boys, with coloured medals, teams, ranks, leaders, head choristers, deputy choristers. Ite continued that model. When she started, she had to work with some of the simpler repertoire. At the time some of the men had left and she was left with decreased numbers. The men were a mixture of levels, some of which were amateur and more enthusiast, and wouldn't have been as good readers, or had much voice training. So she would have started with some of the simpler masses of Orlando Di Lasso. Missa Quinti Toni, Otavi Toni. She progressed from there to the Palestrina Missa Brevis. As time went by, the voice coach Ronnie Dunne (Veronica) sent her some talented younger singers from the College of Music, which is now the DIT Conservatory, and all the while, some of the younger boy choristers would have progressed through the ranks and arrived as adults with very fine instruments, such as the tenor Emmanuel Lawlor. So the quality of the mens sound started to improve, along with the ability to read. And they could tackle more demanding repertoire. At the time, all of this was decided under the music committee; the organist Gerard Gillen, Ite, the archbishop, the administrator and the choir chaplain. Their job was to ensure the choir was doing the proper music in keeping with the liturgy. Ite was restrained by the music she could do at the time by the committee. For example, the *Gloria* and *Sanctus* had to be a chant, so that it would remain a part of the congregational singing. Also, it was tyically either an introit OR a hymn to start the mass, not both. So she would alternate the every second week differently each year so

that after 2 years, all of the introits would have been sung through at least once. She would occasionally do a full chant mass, with polyphonic motets but not polyphonic mass movements. Typically, when the bishop says the mass, it is an English mass. And for the rest of the year, the administrator does a Latin mass. Missa Brevis would have the first PALESTRINA mass performed in this era of the choir (1980s)

S. Is there a record of music performed in the 80s and 90s

J. There is, there's mass leaflets catalogued in the Pro cathedral music library. An interesting point about the repertoire, is the constraints of the budget. Each year, you could only buy a small amount of scores. This is before the time of CPDL, where open copyright music is freely accessible. We had all the Chester books of motets, and then a staple diet of maybe 8 or 9 Palestrina masses, and 4 or 5 Victoria masses. As time went on, we got the whole set of English Tudor Anthems, and then a set of European Sacred Music scores.

S. So do you feel that CPDL has been a valuable asset in developing the repertoire of the choir?

J. Oh it has, definitely. But also, the amount of money allowed for new music in the budget has increased dramatically. It means that in the last 15 years, we now have 3 or 4 times the amount of masses. Around the turn of the century there was a very generous administrator who had also been a previous member of the choir, named John Flaherty.

S. And he also commissioned the set of psalms and alleluias from Colin Mawby, as Blanaid has mentioned to me?

J. It was an idea that Blanaid had to have a sort of 'Composer in Residence'. So that project was to have 3 cycles of the psalms that cover every major feast of the year too. And she proposed this to John Flaherty, that it would be wonderful

to achieve this with someone like Colin who specialises in Catholic music, as an ex director of music at Westminster Cathedral, who happened to be based in Ireland at time. His speciality was composing for choirs and for church music. So across a year, he began to set all the psalms. He has been commissioned throughout the years to write pieces for very special occasions for the choir. We debuted one of his pieces on a tour in Bratislava. He also composed a Nunc Dimittis for Archbishop Connell, because the text was a part of his motto. He composed a very beautiful piece for our participation in a tour in Rome, a piece called Inveni David. We don't have that text set anywhere else in the library, by anyone else. The consecrated virgins, Triona and Gemma King, commissioned a mass for the Eucharistic Congress, called *Missa Caro Mea*, to be performed during that week, with orchestra and choir. Any time we've performed it since, we've managed to get an orchestra. The choir commissioned a piece in honour of John Flaherty. Over the years Mawby has been more than generous. Having him here was wonderful. In 2007, he even took the choir as the musical director for 3 months while Blanaid Murphy was on maternity leave.

S. Tell me a bit more about the records of repertoire choices that you have here in the Pro?

J. Around the time of the mid 80s, we started making posters for local shops and café's with the repertoire for that month listed on it. And a member of the choir would go and put those up. That began I believe in 1985. Around that time we were also doing a selection of Viennese masses by Mozart and Haydn. Mozart's Coronation Mass was one of the first that we did. The idea came from St. Andrew's church on Westland row, where father James O' Brien, who had his own choral society, began to organise groups of musicians and would publicise a performance one Sunday of every month. And people would flock to see it. He believed that since we were the Cathedral, that we should be doing this publicity as well. Very soon after, we began to acquire Mozart masses. And we would hire in professions to sing the solos. Mostly accompanied by organ, but at Christmas and Easter we would hire in strings. Because we were confined

typically to just performing the *Kyrie* and the *Agnus Dei* from these masses, Ite put in a proposal that once a month we would have a day of polyphonic liturgy where we perform a *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei* from the polyphonic mass.

S. Palestrina Papae Marcelli still stands up as the most revered of polyphonic masses. Do you have any information about when it was performed here around the 80s and 90s?

J. If you look through the misselets and posters it should tell you. I think it was probably during 1985, as the men's forces were getting stronger. But again, even the first time it was performed during this era, it would have been solely the *Kyrie* and the *Agnus Dei*. They would have likely worked on the *Gloria* and *Sanctus*, and performed it later at one of the instances where they were permitted to perform a full polyphonic mass. Also, around that same time, one Sunday of every month would have been sang with just the boys, so in instances like, Britten's *Missa Brevis* would have been a popular choice.

S. Could you list what masses were a part of the repertoire of the choir around this time?

J. Well, of the early polyphony there was Byrd 3, 4 and 5 part, *Missa Laura Passa* by Viadana, *Missa Quinti Toni* and *Otavi Toni* by Lassus, Palestrina *Missa Brevis*, *Missa Dia Sanctificatus*, *Papae Marcelli* and *Missa Tu Es Petras* at the feast of St. Peter, *Victoria Quam Gloriosam* and *Missa Quarti Toni*.

Appendix D

Interview with Professor Gerard Gillen: Titular Organist

Date: 19 August 2015

S. You've written some texts in the past about music and religion in Ireland. Would you be able to talk a little bit about church music in Ireland around the time of the Palestrina being formed?

GG. Well, one of the more substantial things that happened around that time was the Motu Proprio of Pope Pius the 10th on church music. That completely gave full official church acceptance to what the Cecillians had been fighting for some 30 years before that. Its most radical thing was that women were banished from the choirs, that's when boys became the official and only recognised singers at the time. That [*Motu Proprio*] more or less forced churches to do something radical about music at the time. Around that time, Edward Martyn came along and offered to fund the choir. He was a Galway man, from a very aristocratic family. Very very wealthy. He was a very devout, almost fanatical in his faith. He then discovered Vincent O'Brien and his choir and part of the deal was that they would all come to the PRO Cathedral as a package, and he offered a stipend of 10000 pounds to facilitate that. That was a huge amount of money in 1903!

At the time, it was pretty strict that the choir would perform chant, as well as what they called 'figured music' not later than the seventeenth century. It was a very restricted repertoire. They weren't really permitted to sing contemporary music. And of course no women could sing, only boys. This was the case all the way up until Ita O'Donovan became the Director in 1982. Of course, the loophole was that she of course wasn't singing!

S. Is that something that could be contested ever, the exclusion of female singers from the Palestrina Choir.

GG. Well, you can justify on the grounds that it is a special musical entity. It sounds quite different to a mixed choir.

S. I'd love to chat to you about Flor Peeters. A staple piece in the choir is his Missa in Honorem Sancti. Josephi. And since you yourself studied organ under him it's a wonderful connection to have in the legacy of the repertoire of the current choir.

GG. That particular work has only been performed by the Palestrina Choir to the level it is now quite recently. He was mainly an organ composer. Its quite a small mass really. I studied with him in Antwerp, he was director of the Conservatoire over there, as well as the organ professor. When I was there, he was getting on, coming to the end of his working career there. He was a huge name at that time, not only in Belgium, but also in the United States. He was constantly in demand both as a teacher and as a recitalist. He himself was a product of a school in Belgium called Lemmens Institute. That is still going strong today. It was named after a well known organist called Jaques Lemmens who started the organ revival in Belgium in the middle of the nineteenth Century. Europe went through a huge religious upheaval in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century. There was huge anti-catholic wave going through France and Belgium. There was a time when Notre Dame in Paris was closed. And the choir kicked out. The result was that across one generation, the art of organ playing was lost. That started the revival, with Jaques Lemmens being one of the first. He was Belgian/Flemish. With the support of the Belgium bishops they set up this school in Meline (Mechelen), a town 15 minute train journey from Brussels. It's also the Ecclesiastical capital of Belgium. That school was set up specifically for the teaching of church musicians, organists and choir directors. Flor Peeters was a student of that. The direct link to Ireland is that many of the graduates of the school came to Ireland to find work. Particularly in the period after the 1st world war. Peeters came from a tremendous tradition of chant, and it was a staple diet of their liturgies. It informs his music to a very large extent, even dictates his harmony throughout. It would

have touches of modernity, in the sense of dissonance, but it was always modal inflected, always in the context of a basic modality as opposed to diatonic. Those masses would have all been written for the cathedral choir in Maline (Mechelen). He only wrote a few, and Sancti Josephi isn't really that well known. It's a little gem really.

S. Can you talk a bit about the organ in the PRO. I understand it wasn't always in the position it is now.

GG. I had it moved, it was in the centre until 1995. I think it's much better, there was really no room, and they were really stuck for space up there. This has greatly improved things, because the organist can now better see the conductor as well. In the early days of the choir, most of the singing was unaccompanied. It was confined to chant, pieces by Palestrina, and a bit of Victoria.

S. How do you think the choir has developed since the time when you first began as resident organist?

G. It's developed very very well. When I came here first in 1976, the choir was in a bad way. The archbishop at the time decided to divide the office of director and organist, as Oliver had been doing both at the time. He thought it would help things. There was only about 12 boys in the choir at the time. The men had been very loyal. They had all grown up with chant. But they were more a collection of solo voices than a choir. That continued for a few years. Oliver retired, and they brought in Sean O'hEarcaigh (Graham Harrison). He really started the reform of the choir. He began modelling it on cathedrals in England.