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Polychoral Motet Versions and Theatrical Music by Asprilio Pacelli: Insights from the Manuscript I–Rn, Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46

One of the most significant sources documenting polychoral music performed in Rome in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is a manuscript anthology preserved at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma, catalogued as Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46. This collection comprises thirty-four works for two and three four-voice choirs. The anthology originally appears to have consisted of twelve partbooks, of which nine survive: Altus, Tenor, and Bassus of the first choir; the complete second choir (Cantus, Altus, Tenor, Bassus); and Cantus and Altus of the third choir.[1] Prior to its transfer to the Biblioteca Nazionale, the manuscript formed part of the music collection preserved in the archive of Santa Maria in Vallicella (commonly known as Chiesa Nuova). This provenance is indicated by the distinctive shelfmark format "N: 18" inscribed

[1] Within this shelfmark, numbers 40–46 correspond to the partbooks of the first two choirs, while 33 and 34 pertain to those of the third choir. A detailed description of the source can be found in *Catalogo del fondo musicale della Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele II di Roma*, *introduzione storica di Arnaldo Morelli* (Rome: Consorzio Iris per la valorizzazione dei beni librari, 1989), 17, 53–58. See also RISM Catalog, ID no. 850036506. The manuscript is available in digital format: https://opac.sbn.it/risultati-ricerca-avanzata/-/opac-adv/detail/MSM0015756? (accessed 22 September 2025).

on the cover of the *Cantus Tertii Chori* partbook, a feature characteristic of that collection.[2] Noel O'Regan has hypothesized that the manuscript may have originated within the musical environment of the Roman Archconfraternity of Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini e Convalescenti, attached to the church of the Most Holy Trinity, which also maintained an oratory. It is well documented that polychoral repertoire was frequently performed during services and ceremonies organized by the confraternity.[3] Evidence for this provenance includes the presence of compositions intended for the liturgy of the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity—specifically, the antiphon *Gloria sit tibi Trinitas* (which opens the anthology) and the motet *Duo seraphim*—as well as the choice of composers, many of whom were closely associated with the confraternity. These include (in alphabetical order):[4] Ruggero Giovannelli, Bartolhomeo Le Roy, Luca Marenzio, Giovanni Maria Nanino, Giovanni Bernardino Nanino, Stefano Nascimbeni, Asprilio Pacelli, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and (as indicated in the anthology) "Corrado Tudesco". The latter composer, described in the confraternity's records as "il maestro di cappella tedesco", resided in Rome during January and February 1599, serving as chapel master at Santissima Trinità.[5] Significantly, his work is entered twice in the manuscript (nos. 24 and 35).[6] Similarly brief was the association of Stefano Nascimbeni with the Eternal City—and more specifically with the same confraternity—where he was engaged in February and March 1598.[7]

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[2] *Catalogo del fondo musicale*, 17.

[3] Noel O'Regan, *Institutional Patronage in Post-Tridentine Rome. Music at Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini 1550–1650* (London: Royal Musical Association, 1995), 64–66.

[4] Throughout the article, the spelling of composers' names follows the RISM Catalog style, https://opac.rism.info/ (accessed 9 September 2025).

[5] Thomas Noel O'Regan, "Sacred Polychoral Music in Rome 1575–1621," vol. 1–2 (PhD diss., University of Oxford 1988), vol. 1, 123, 345.

[6] O'Regan ("Sacred Polychoral Music," 357) identifies him as Conrad Stuber (c. 1550–c. 1605), a composer and music theorist active primarily in Swabia. From 1587, Stuber entered the service of Eithelfriedrich IV von Hohenzollern-Hechingen in Hechingen, a staunch advocate of the Counter-Reformation. See: Anthony F. Carver, "Stuber [Stuberus, Stueber], Conrad," in *Grove Music Online.* 2001 (accessed 10 September 2025); Cfr. Christian Thomas Leitmeir, "Catholic Music in the Diocese of Augsburg c. 1600: A Reconstructed Tricinium Anthology and Its Confessional Implications," *Early Music History* 21 (2002): 142, 157, 158.

[7] O'Regan, "Sacred Polychoral Music," 355.

Table 1. Compositions in I–Rn, Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46

No.	Copyist	Attribution in the Source [Revised Attribution]	Incipit of a Composition	Foliation in A I	Number of Voices
1	A, B	– [Bartholomeo Le Roy]	*Gloria sit tibi Trinitas*	1r	8
2	B	Giovanni Battista Locatello	*Laudate pueri*	1v–2r	
3	C	Giovanni Maria Nanino	*Domine quis habitabit*	2v	
4		Felice Anerio	*Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi*	3r	
5		Giovanni Troiano	*Venite filii audite me*	3v	
6		**Asprilio Pacelli**	*Genesi vir piisime*	4r	
7		**Asprilio Pacelli**	*Pean agelatois*	4v	
8	D	Ruggero Giovannelli	*Inter vestibulum et altare*	5r	12
9	C	– [**Asprilio Pacelli**]	*Alma Redemptoris mater*	5v–6r	
10	E	– [Luca Marenzio]	*Laudate Dominum in sanctis*	9v–10r	
11		– [Luca Marenzio]	*Jubilate Deo ... cantate*	10v–11r	
12		–	*Salve Regina*	11r–v	
13	F	–	*Responde virgo*	12r–v	
14		Ruggero Giovannelli	*Duo seraphim*	12v	
15	D	–	*Confitemini Domino*	13r	8
16		– [**Asprilio Pacelli**]	*Salve Regina*	13v–14r	
17		– [**Asprilio Pacelli**]	*Cantate Domino*	14v–15r	
18		Rinaldo Jallon[8]	*Qui vult venire post me*	15r–v	
19		– [Costanzo Porta]	*Factum est silentium*	15v–16r	
20		–	*Laudate Dominum in sanctis*	16v–17r	
21		Giovanni Bernardino Nanino	*Cantate Domino*	17v–18r	
22		Stefano Nascimbeni	*Tantum ergo*	18r	

[8] Rinaldo Jallon, now largely forgotten, is documented as serving as *maestro di cappella* at the cathedral in Rieti from 29 October 1597 until the end of May 1598. See: Angelo Sacchetti Sassetti, "La Cappella Musicale del Duomo di Rieti," *Note d'archivio* per la storia musicale 18, no. 2 (March-April 1941): 73.

23		Luca Marenzio	*Egredimini filiae Syon et videte*	18v–19r	
24		Corrado Tudesco [Conrad Stuber]	*Puer natus in Bethlehem*	19r–20r	
25		Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina	*Haec dies*	20r–v	
26		Stefano Nascimbeni	*Benedicamus Domino*	20v	
27		Giovanni Pieroni	*Hodie coelestia regna*	21r	
28		Giovanni Pieroni	*Magnificat*	21v–22v	
29		Giovanni Pieroni	*Cantate Domino*	22v–23r	
30		Stefano Nascimbeni	*Ingeniosus amor*	23v	
31		Giovanni Piccioni	*Vox de coelis Catharinae*	24r	
32		Giovanni Pieroni	*O crux splendidior*	24v	
33	G	Giovanni Troiano	*Nativitas tua*	25r–v	
34		-	*Consolamini*	26r–v	
35 [= 24]		- [Conrad Stuber]	*Puer natus in Bethlehem*	27r–28r	

The manuscript I–Rn, Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46 contains no dates; however, scholars believe it was compiled in the late sixteenth[9] or early seventeenth century.[10] It was copied by seven unidentified scribes (designated here by the letters A–G; see Table 1), some of whom left certain works without attribution. Ongoing source research has made it possible to identify Bartholomeo Le Roy as the author of the first composition, *Gloria sit tibi Trinitas*.[11] This piece, along with three others (see Table 1, nos. 3, 11, 19), was included in the anthology *Selectae cantiones*, prepared and published by Fabio Costantini in 1614.[12] The compiler, likely relying on a source containing a false attribution, perpetuated an error—still found in the scholarly literature and in the RISM Catalog—by assigning the motet *Factum est silentium* (no. 19) to Asprilio Pacelli. In

[9] *Catalogo del fondo musicale*, 53.

[10] O'Regan, "Sacred Polychoral Music," 122. The author notes that the watermarks remained unidentified.

[11] O'Regan, "Sacred Polychoral Music," 343.

[12] *Selectae cantiones excellentissimorum auctorum Octonis vocibus concinendae. A Fabio Constantino Romano* [...] *cum Basso ad Organum* (Roma: Bartolomeo Zannetti, 1614), RISM Catalog, ID no.: 993121389; RISM B/I: 1614[3]. The composition by Marenzio included in this anthology is presented in its version for two choirs.

reality, the work was composed by Costanzo Porta, who had published it in his own collection in 1580.[13] Two three-choir works without attribution (nos. 10 and 11) have been linked to Luca Marenzio, as they appeared under his name in the anthology *Melodiae sacrae*, published in Kraków in 1604.[14]

One of the composers represented in the manuscript is Asprilio Pacelli.[15] In the context of his oeuvre, Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46 proves exceptionally valuable, as it contains: (1) unique versions of his polychoral works known from printed editions, thereby offering insight into his compositional process; (2) two compositions not preserved in any other source, including a piece written for a theatrical production, which represents a forgotten aspect of the composer's creative output.

Pacelli's professional career, which began in the Eternal City and continued at the court of King Sigismund III Vasa in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, offered the musician numerous opportunities to present polychoral compositions—both his own and those of others. Such repertoire was performed, among other contexts, within the activities of Roman confraternities where Pacelli worked successively from 1587 to 1595: Gonfalone, Santa Maria dell'Anima, Santa Maria dell'Orazione e Morte, Sant'Omobono dei Sarti, Santissima Resurrezione, and Santissima Trinità.[16] In the next stage of his career (1595–1602), he served as *maestro di cappella* at the Collegio Germanico and its adjoining church of Sant'Apollinare, and later briefly at the Vatican's Cappella Giulia. In both institutions, polychoral music occupied an important place in

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[13] Costanzo Porta, *Liber quinquaginta duorum motectorum, quatuor, quinque, sex, septem, & octo vocum* (Venezia: Angelo Gardano, 1580), RISM Catalog, ID no. 990052584, https://stimmbuecher.digitale-sammlungen.de/view?id=bsb00071867, (accessed 9 September 2025).

[14] These compositions, situated within the context of Marenzio's polychoral works, are discussed by Marina Toffetti, "Structural variants and contrapuntal re-elaboration in the versions for two and three choirs of Luca Marenzio's motet 'Jubilate Deo ... cantate'," in *Studies on the reception of Italian music in central-eastern Europe in the 16th and 17th century*, ed. Marina Toffetti (Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 2018), 173–210, https://mi.pl/pl/p/Marina-Toffetti-ed.-Studies-on-the-reception-of-Italian-music-in-central-eastern-Europe-in-the-16th-and-17th-century/416 (accessed 30 September 2025).

[15] The present study builds on my latest research concerning Asprilio Pacelli (cf. references in the footnotes) and further elaborates on issues previously signaled in: Aleksandra Patalas, *De Asprilio Pacello ac illius musica. Conterfectum adhuc non perfectum* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Sub Lupa, 2021), https://fontesmusicae.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/B-VI-Pacelli-www.pdf (accessed 30 September 2025).

[16] For the composer's biography and relevant literature, see: Patalas, *De Asprilio Pacello*, especially 21–28.

the repertoire, and during this period Pacelli managed to publish, among other works, a collection of double-choir compositions—*Motectorum et psalmorum qui octonis vocibus concinuntur, Liber primus* (Rome: Nicolò Muzi, 1597).[17] Evidence of his works for a larger number of choirs (up to four) is found in compositions preserved in a manuscript originating from the Collegio Germanico, now held in Regensburg under the shelfmark BH 6296.[18] Pacelli also employed polychoral technique at the royal court in Poland, where he remained until his death in 1623. During that time, in 1608, he published the collection *Sacrae cantiones*, which—alongside single-choir motets—includes works for two to five choirs.[19] Posthumously, in 1629, a collection of his polychoral masses was also issued.[20]

Due to the presence of two compositions bearing Pacelli's name in Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46, I decided to verify his possible authorship of the anonymous motets. I analyzed these works and compared them with his printed compositions for a larger number of choirs. It turned out that three of them—*Alma Redemptoris mater*, *Salve Regina*, and *Cantate Domino*—show similarities to pieces with the same titles known from the editions of 1597 and 1608. The degree of resemblance between the manuscript and printed versions varies in each case, which allows for the hypothesis that Pacelli was skilled in recomposing his works and thus may have frequently resorted to self-reworking. In the case of *Cantate Domino* and *Alma Redemptoris mater*, we can speak of the

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[17] Asprilio Pacelli (ca. 1567–1623), *Motectorum et psalmorum […] Liber primus*, ed. Aleksandra Patalas (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Sub Lupa, 2021), https://fontesmusicae.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/C-24-Pacelli-www.pdf (accessed 30 September 2025).

[18] See: Aleksandra Patalas, "Rękopis BH 6296 z Bischöfliche Zentralbibliothek w Ratyzbonie w świetle badań nad twórczością Asprilia Pacellego" [The Manuscript BH 6296 from the Bischöfliche Zentralbibliothek in Regensburg in the Light of Research on Asprilio Pacelli's Works], in *Muzykolog humanista wobec doświadczenia muzyki w kulturze. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana profesor Małgorzacie Woźnej-Stankiewicz* [The Musicologist as Humanist in the Face of the Experience of Music in Culture. A Festschrift Dedicated to Professor Małgorzata Woźna-Stankiewicz] (Kraków: Musica Iagellonica, 2021), 171–191.
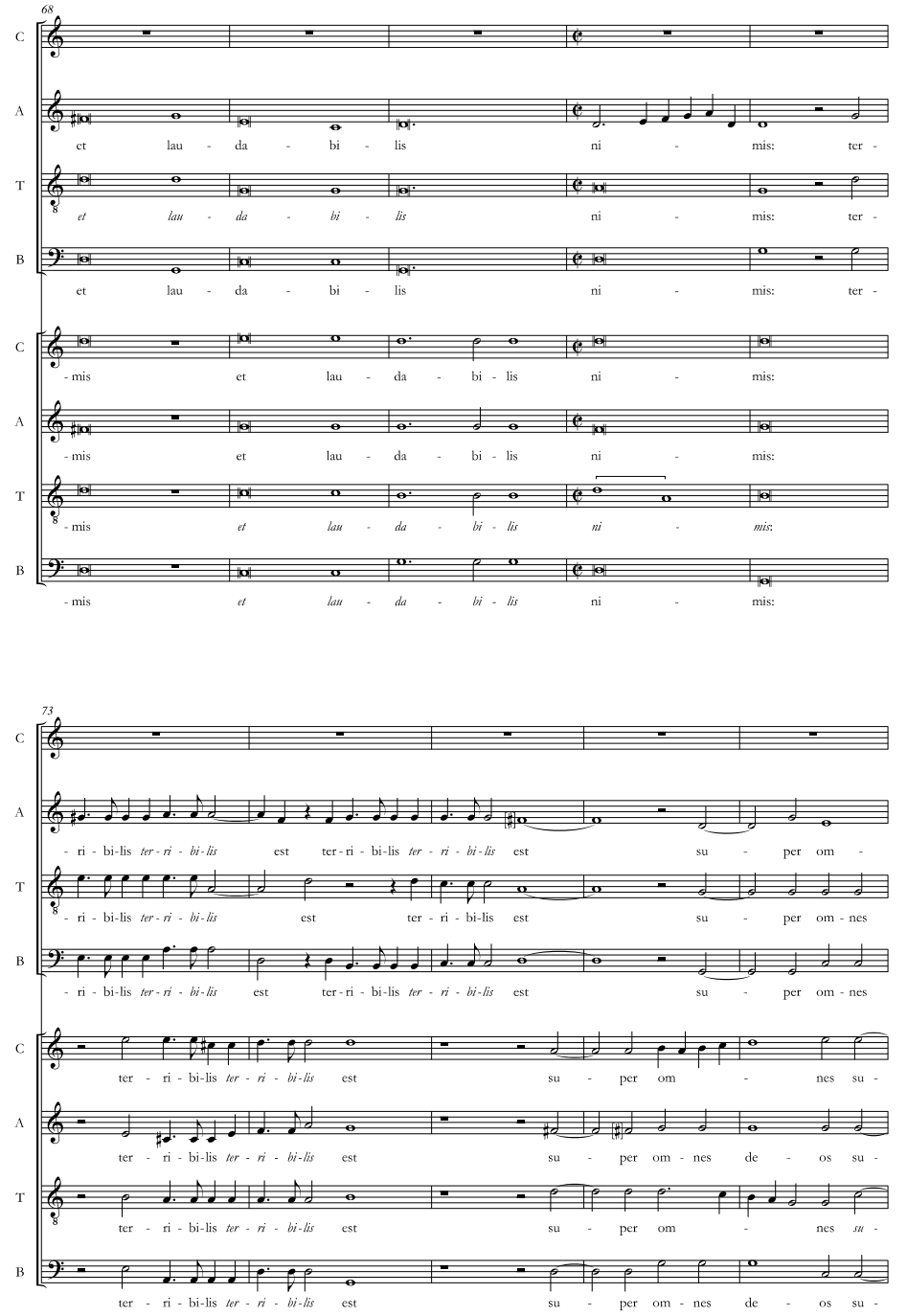
[19] Asprilio Pacelli, *Sacrae cantiones quae quinque, sex, septem, octo, novem, decem, duodecim, sexdecim, & viginti vocibus concinuntur, liber primus* (Venezia: Angelo Gardano e fratelli, 1608), RISM A/I P 28. Newly published edition: Asprilio Pacelli, *Sacrae cantiones*, ed. Barbara Przybyszewska-Jarmińska (Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Stowarzyszenie Liber Pro Arte, 2012).

[20] Aleksandra Patalas, "Asprilio Pacelli in Poland: Compositions, Techniques, Reception," in *Italian music in Central-Eastern Europe: around Mikołaj Zieleński's "Offertoria" and "Communiones" (1611)*, ed. Tomasz Jeż, Barbara Przybyszewska-Jarmińska, Marina Toffetti (Venezia: Edizioni Fondazione Levi, 2015), 235–260, https://www.fondazionelevi.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Italian_Music.pdf (accessed 30 September 2025).
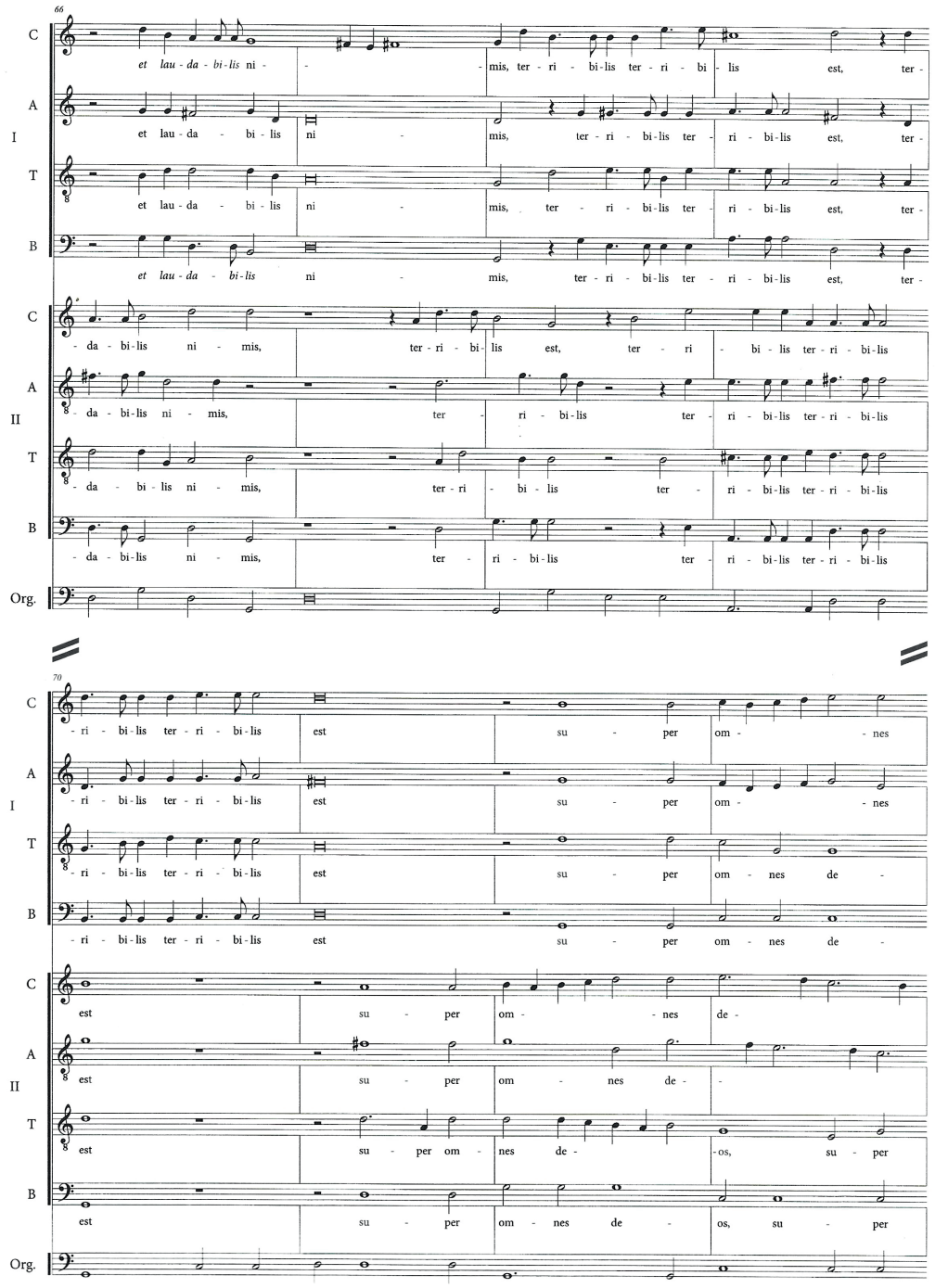
existence of two distinct versions of these compositions, whereas with regard to *Salve Regina*, it is more accurate to state that in the piece published in 1597 Pacelli employed self-quotations drawn from the antiphon entered in the manuscript Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46.

Cantate Domino

This composition, based on the opening four verses of Psalm 96 (95), scored for two choirs *a voce piena* and recorded in the manuscript as No. 17, represents an earlier version of the motet later included by Pacelli in the collection *Sacrae cantiones* of 1608. The sequence of the two versions' creation appears certain: while residing in Poland, the composer undoubtedly submitted the latest version for print, whereas the older one was entered in the Roman manuscript before Pacelli left the Eternal City. In the 1608 print, the vocal scoring remained unchanged, but was supplemented—according to the editorial convention typical of the early seventeenth century—with a part 'pro organo.' Both versions share the same tonal plan (see Table 2) and do not differ significantly in length, as the printed version is only five measures shorter. Essentially, both rely on the same or very similar motivic material (with exceptions) and types of polyphony. The opening measures (1–12) are nearly identical in both versions; however, in the following measures (12–14), the composer extended the dialogue between the choirs to emphasize more strongly the words "canticum novum". The middle sections of the two versions differ to a greater extent, though the underlying concept remains unchanged: from the words "Annunciate de die…" to "Quoniam magnus", each successive half-verse begins with a longer 'statement' by a single choir (alternating I, II, I, II). Differences between the versions are particularly evident in the section setting the text "Cantate Domino et benedicite nomini eius." Originally, this was divided into two segments: in duple time ("Cantate Domino") and in triple time ("et benedicite nomini eius"), with a cadence in duple time again. In the 1608 version, Pacelli set the entire passage in triple meter and extended the dialogue between the choirs, thereby achieving a more striking effect that underscores the joyful character of the text and abandons the division of the verse. In the printed version, he proceeded similarly with the half-verse "Quoniam magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis", eliminating the use of the triple meter present in the manuscript version. Furthermore, revisions affected the sections setting key



Example 1a. Asprilio Pacelli, *Cantate Domino*, I-Rn, mm. 68–77



Example 1b. Asprilio Pacelli, *Cantate Domino*, ed. 1608, mm. 66–73

words near the end of the psalm: "laudabilis" and "terribilis est" (see Examples 1a, 1b).[21] In the earlier version, the accompanying musical structure was more static and concise; later, it was replaced by a dynamic texture based on rapid and intensified choral dialogue, with the choirs declaiming the text in quick succession. The new version, full of sonic energy, far more effectively conveys the majesty of God.

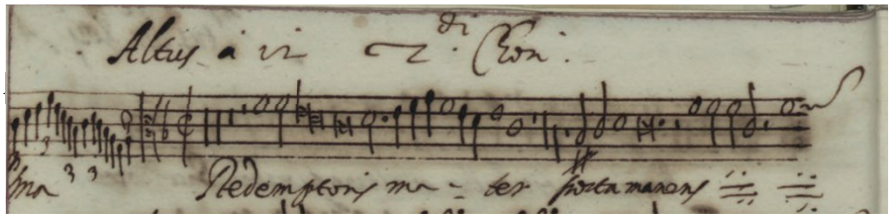
As we have shown, the reworking of the motet *Cantate Domino* did not stem from a desire to adapt it to new performance conditions. Pacelli's evident aim was to refine the composition in terms of form and expression, thereby highlighting the verbal text—a goal fully understandable in the context of stylistic transformations occurring within *musica moderna*. The printed version of the work (likely also due to the universal significance of the psalm) was so well received that it was reprinted in the early seventeenth century in two well-known German anthologies: those of Abraham Schadeus (1612)[22] and Erhard Bodenschatz (1621).[23]

Table 2. Asprilio Pacelli, *Cantate Domino*: Comparison of Two Versions

Text Divided into Half-Verses	**Mensuration**	**Measures (Finalis)**	**Distribution of Musical Material Between Choirs**	**Version**
Cantate Domino canticum novum	C	1–14 (*G*)	I – II+I – I – II – I+II	1608
	C	1–12 (*G*)	I – II+I – I – tutti	I-Rn
Cantate Domino omnis terra	C	14–21 (*C*)	I+II – II+I	1608
	C	12–19 (*C*)	I+II+I+II – II+I (= tutti)	I-Rn
Cantate Domino et benedicite nomini eius	3	22–37 (*G*)	I – II – I – II+I – tutti	1608
	C 3 – C	19–21 21–32 (*G*)	II+I (= tutti) II – I – II – tutti	I-Rn
Annunciate de die in diem salutare eius	C	37–43 (*C*)	I	1608
	C	32–38 (*C*)	I	I-Rn
Annunciate inter gentes gloriam eius	C	43–54 (*D*)	II I+II+I+II+tutti	1608
	C	38–50 (*D*)	II I+II+I+II+tutti	I-Rn

[21] Example 1b comes from the 2012 edition of Pacelli, *Sacrae cantiones*, 145.
[22] RISM B/I 1612[3], RISM ID no.: 993121352.
[23] RISM B/I 1621[2], RISM ID no.: 993121542.
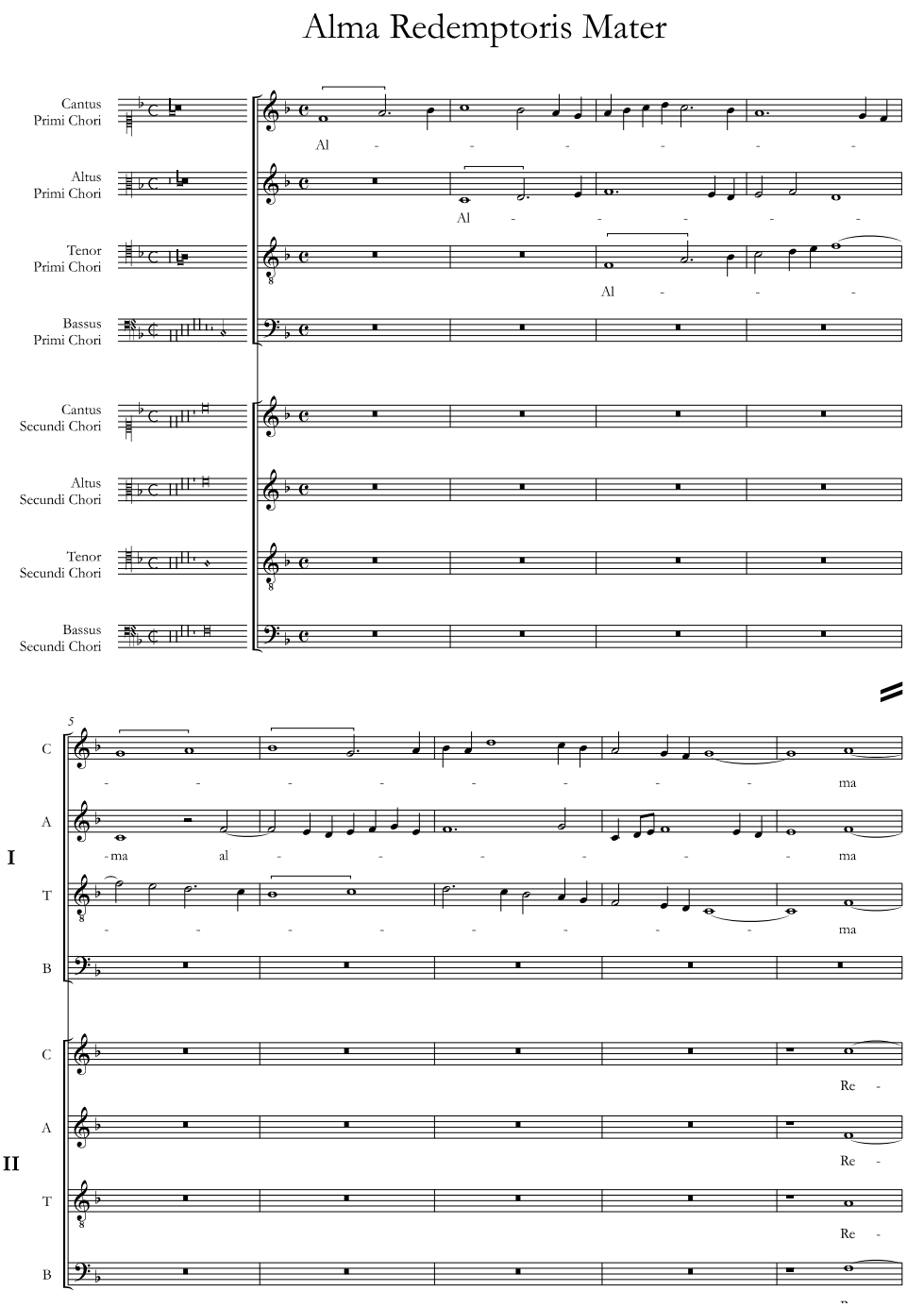
In omnibus populis mirabilia eius	C	54–59 (*E*)	I II+I+II+I+II+I	1608
	C	50–56 (*E*)	I II+I+II+I+II+I	I-Rn
Quoniam magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis	C	59–68 (*G*)	II I – II – I – II – I – II+I	1608
	C 3	57–61 (*G*) 62–72 (*G*)	II I – II – I+II+tutti	I-Rn
Terribilis est super omnes deos	C	68–83 (*G*)	II+I+tutti – I II+I+II – I+II – I+II+I (=tutti)	1608
	C	72–88 (*G*)	I – II – I II+I+II – I+II – I+II+I (=tutti)	I-Rn



Example 2a. Asprilio Pacelli, *Alma Redemptoris mater*, I-Rn, Altus Secundi Chori

In the case of *Alma Redemptoris mater*, the scale of differences between the two versions of the antiphon is somewhat different from the previous example. The manuscript preserves a version for three choirs *a voce piena*, comprising 120 measures in transcription, whereas the printed edition of 1597 contains a work for two choirs of the same type, spanning 102 measures. The order in which the two versions were created is not as obvious as in the case of *Cantate Domino*, since—hypothetically—Pacelli may have introduced changes even to the already published version. It seems more likely, however, that the reworking resulted from the need to adapt the composition to the performance capabilities of a greater number of music ensembles, thus reducing rather than expanding the scoring. On the other hand, the composer made this new version somewhat more contrapuntally complex and therefore more 'ornamental,' which is evident from the very beginning of the piece. In the manuscript, the first word of the antiphon is sung as a solo intonation (Example 2a),[24] whereas

[24] Examples 2b, 3b, 4a, 5b, 6b, 7a, 8a, and 8b come from the 2021 edition of Pacelli, *Motectorum et psalmorum*, 227, 235, 231, 232, 238, 259-260, 265, 267.



Example 2b. Asprilio Pacelli, *Alma Redemptoris mater*, ed. 1597, mm. 1–9

in the printed version it received an elaborate imitative *exordium* (Example 2b), demonstrating that the two-choir version is not a mechanically 'abridged' form of the three-choir version but rather its artistic development. The similarity of the two versions (see Table 3) is determined by their comparable overall design (e.g., placement of sections in triple meter, tonal plan), shared melodic material (in most sections), and literal quotations transferred from the manuscript version to the printed one (Examples 3a, 3b). The composition in print exhibits a clearer structure, resulting from a more distinct separation of roles between the choirs (Example 4a); in the manuscript version, this boundary was sometimes blurred (Example 4b). Nevertheless, both versions have their own internal logic and interesting individual solutions. The dramatic setting of the words "succurre cadenti" (Examples 5a, 5b) resonates more strongly in the manuscript version, whereas the supplicatory "surgere" is more emphatically marked (*tutti* in measure 33) in the printed version. The section that most clearly differentiates the two versions is the ending (to the words "peccatorum miserere"). Originally (Example 6a), in the manuscript version, it was conceived as two segments. In the first, more dynamic one, all choirs maintained in homorhythm engaged in dense dialogue and declaimed the text through repeated notes. Only in the second segment (mm. 116–120), on the word "miserere", did their lines become softer and more melismatic, emphasizing the plea for mercy. In the printed version, however, the ending became more unified, devoid of dramatic elements, and focused on highlighting the sinner's supplication.
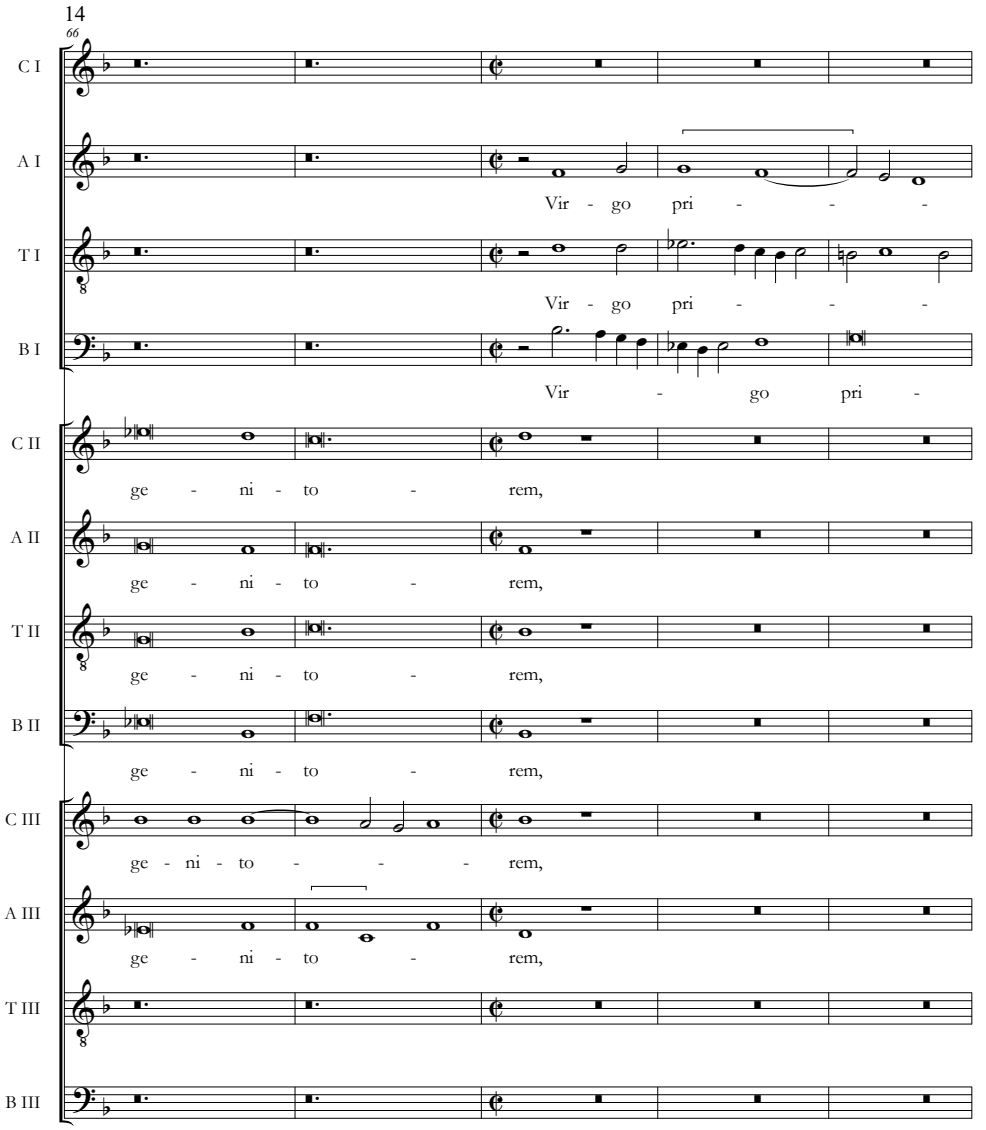
In the case of the antiphon *Alma Redemptoris mater*, the revision was most likely prompted by practical considerations—namely, the need to adapt the work to a smaller performing ensemble. At the same time, Pacelli introduced other changes aimed at subtly enriching the polyphonic texture, clarifying the formal structure, and reinforcing the essential message contained in the prayer text.

It is worth noting that the imitative *exordium* employed at the beginning of the printed version appeared once more in Pacelli's output—quoted verbatim in the setting of the same antiphon in its four-voice version, which the composer published in the collection *Chorici psalmi et motecta* in 1599.[25]
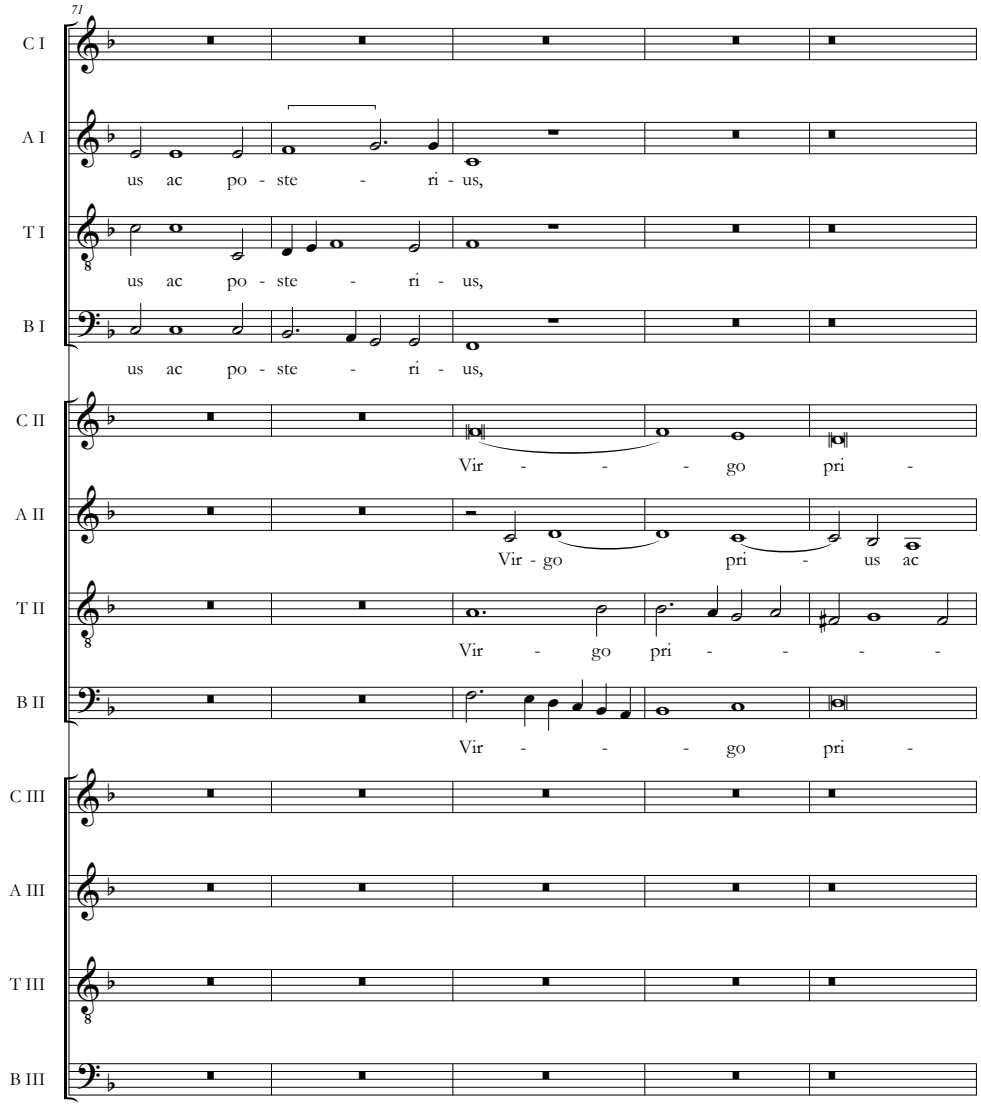
[25] Modern edition of the collection: Asprilio Pacelli, *Chorici psalmi et motecta quatuor vocum. Liber Primus*, ed. Fabrizio Mastroianni (Stroncone: Associazione San Michele Arcangelo, 2011). Between the two-choir version and the four-voice version, we also observe other similarities: an analogous structural layout and two brief self-quotations (on the words "et stella maris" and "ac posterius").

Table 3. Asprilio Pacelli, *Alma Redemptoris mater*: Comparison of Two Versions
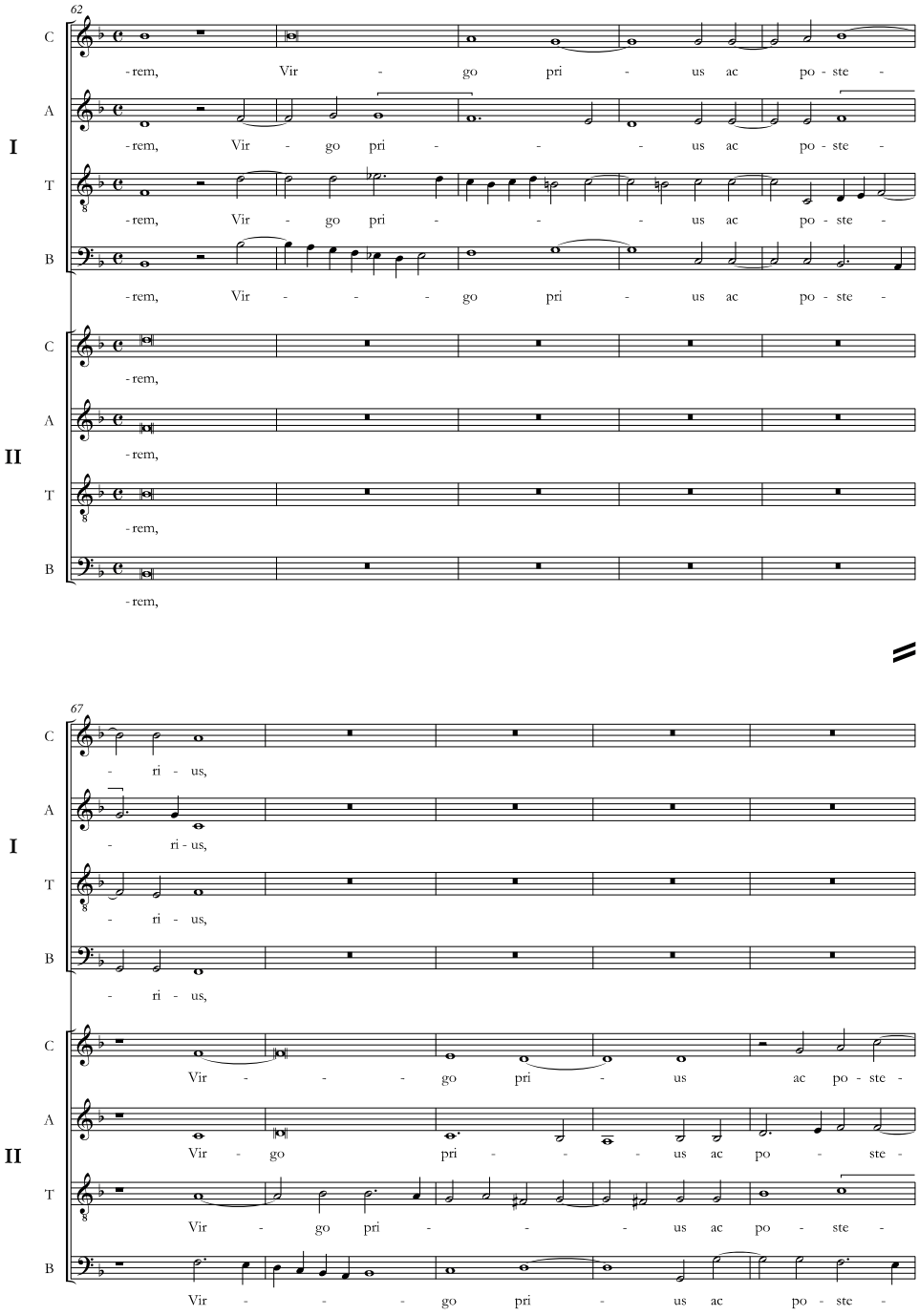
Text Segment	**Mensuration**	**Measures (Finalis)**	**Distribution of Musical Material Between Choirs**	**Version**
Alma	C	1–10 (*F*)	I (CAT)	1597
	-	-	-	I-Rn
Redemptoris Mater	C	9–14 (*F*)	II	1597
	C	1–11 (*F*)	I – II	I-Rn
quae pervia caeli	C	14–20 (*F*)	I – II	1597
	C	10–17 (*C*)	III – I	I-Rn
Porta manes et stella maris succurre cadenti	C	21–32 (*B flat*)	I+II+I+II I I+II+I+II	1597
	C	16–36 (*B flat*)	II+III+I+tutti I – III II+I+III+II+I+III+II+I – III – II – I	I-Rn
Surgere qui curat populo	3	33–39 (*G*)	tutti – II – I – II	1597
	3	36–44 (*G*)	III – II – I – III	I-Rn
tu quae genuisti Natura mirante	C	39–50 (*F*)	I – II – I+II (= tutti)	1597
	C	50–56 (*F*)	II – I – I+II+III (= tutti)	I-Rn
tuum sanctum genitorem	3	50–62 (*B flat*)	I – II – tutti	1597
	3	56–68 (*B flat*)	III – II – I – III+II	I-Rn
Virgo prius ac posterius	C	62–72 (*C*)	I – II	1597
	C	68-78 (*C*)	I – II	I-Rn
Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud Ave	C	72–91 (*C*)	I – II – I+II+I – II – I – II+I – II	1597
	C	76–101 (*F*)	III – I+II+III+I+II – I+II+III – III+II+I (= tutti)	I-Rn
peccatorum miserere	C	91–102 (*F*)	I – II+I+II – tutti	1597
	C	102–120 (*F*)	I – II – III – I – II – III – I+II+III (= tutti)	I-Rn
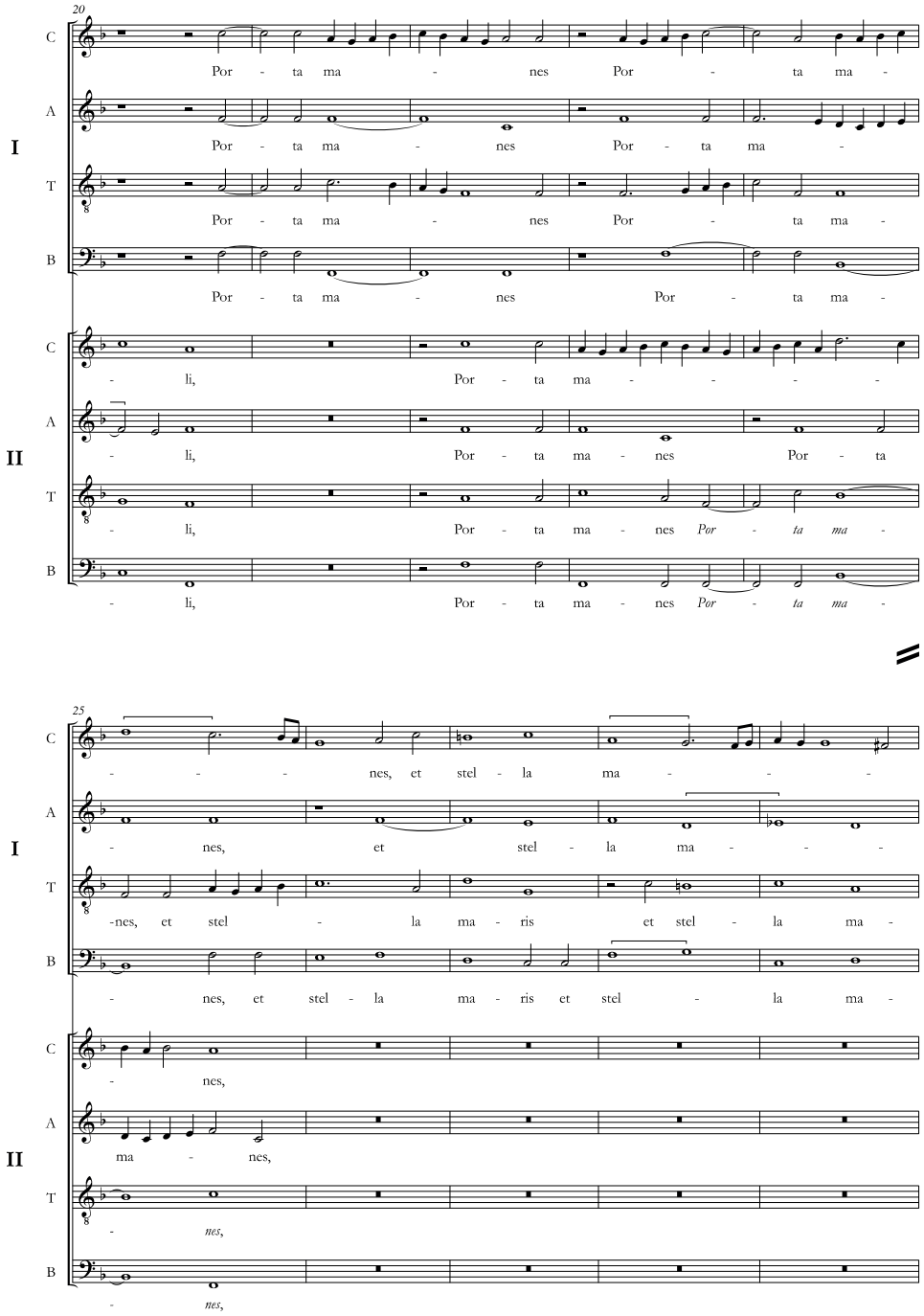


Example 3a. Asprilio Pacelli, *Alma Redemptoris mater*, I-Rn, mm. 66–75
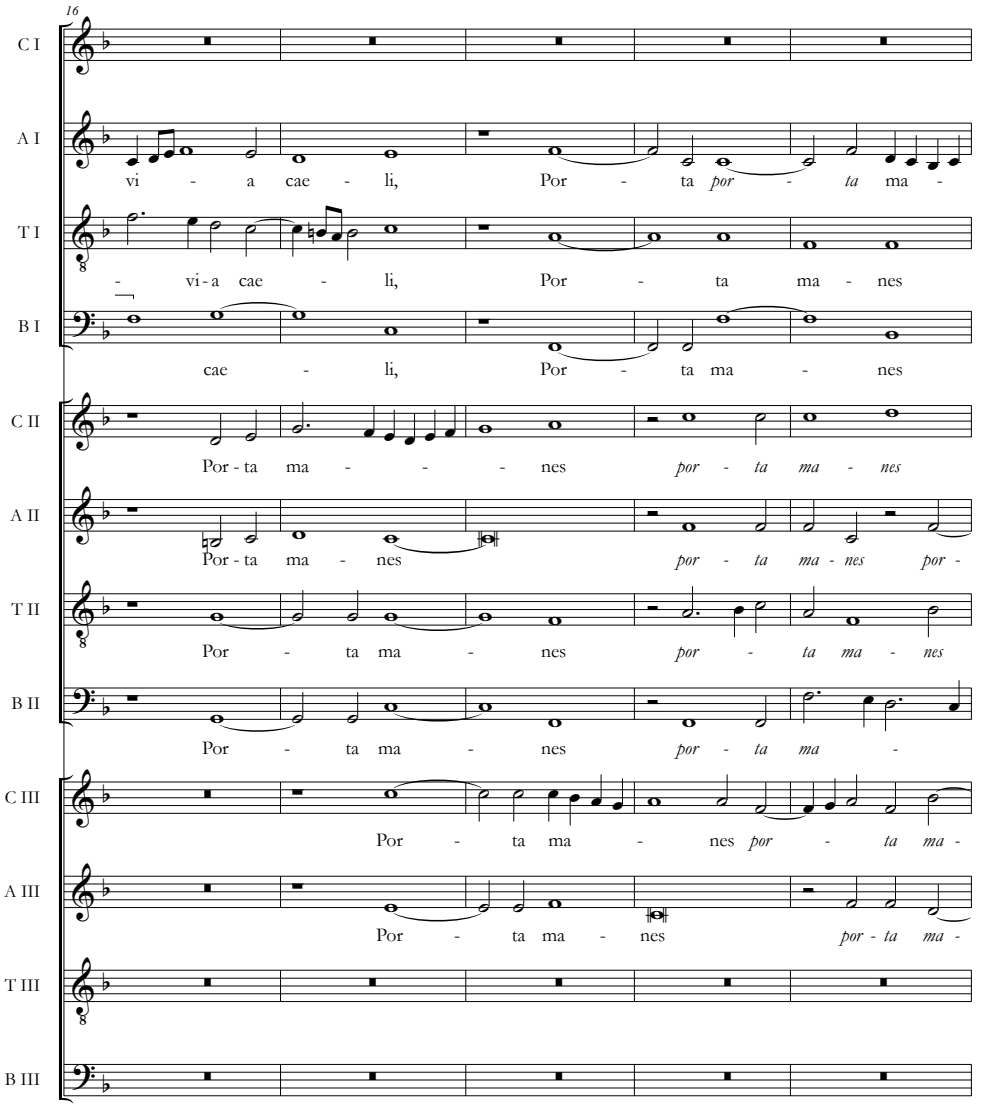


Example 3a. Continued
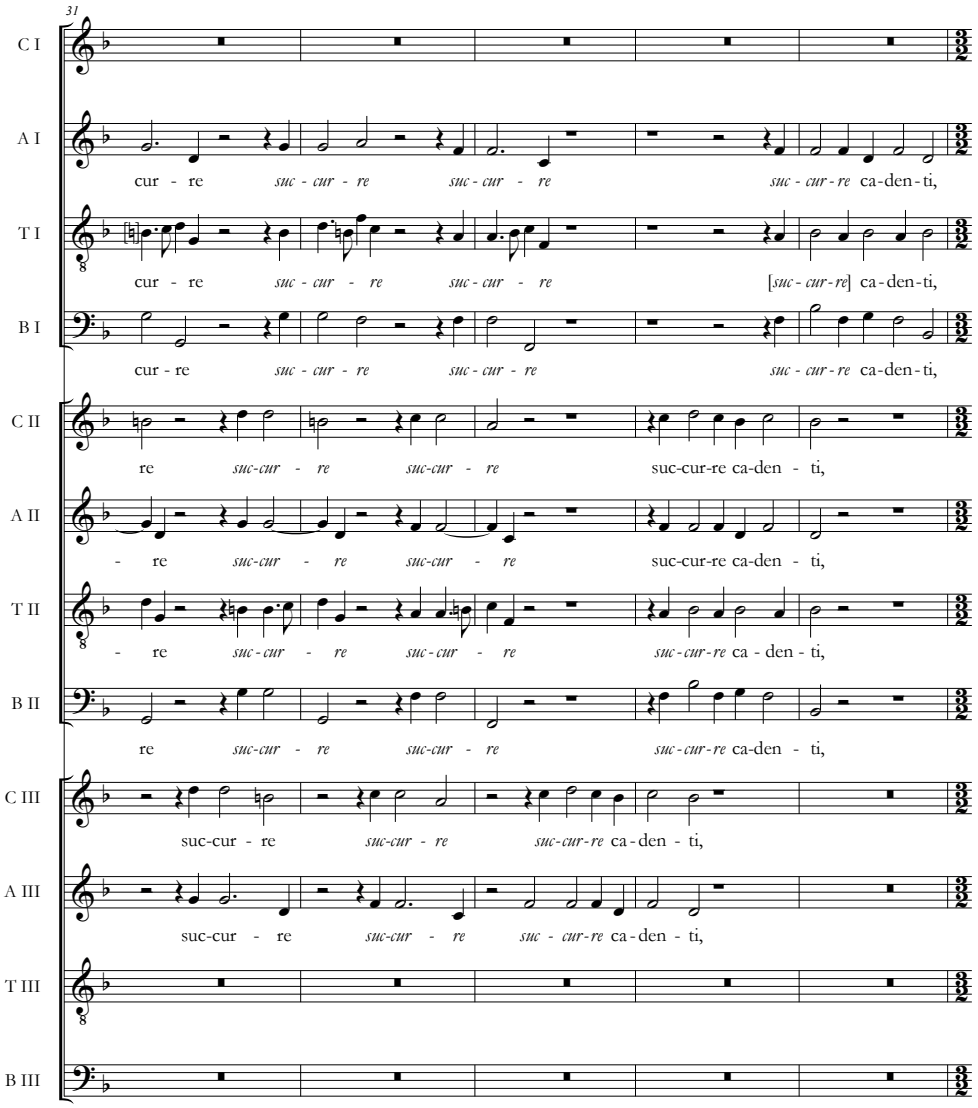


Example 3b. Asprilio Pacelli, *Alma Redemptoris mater*, ed. 1597, mm. 62–71



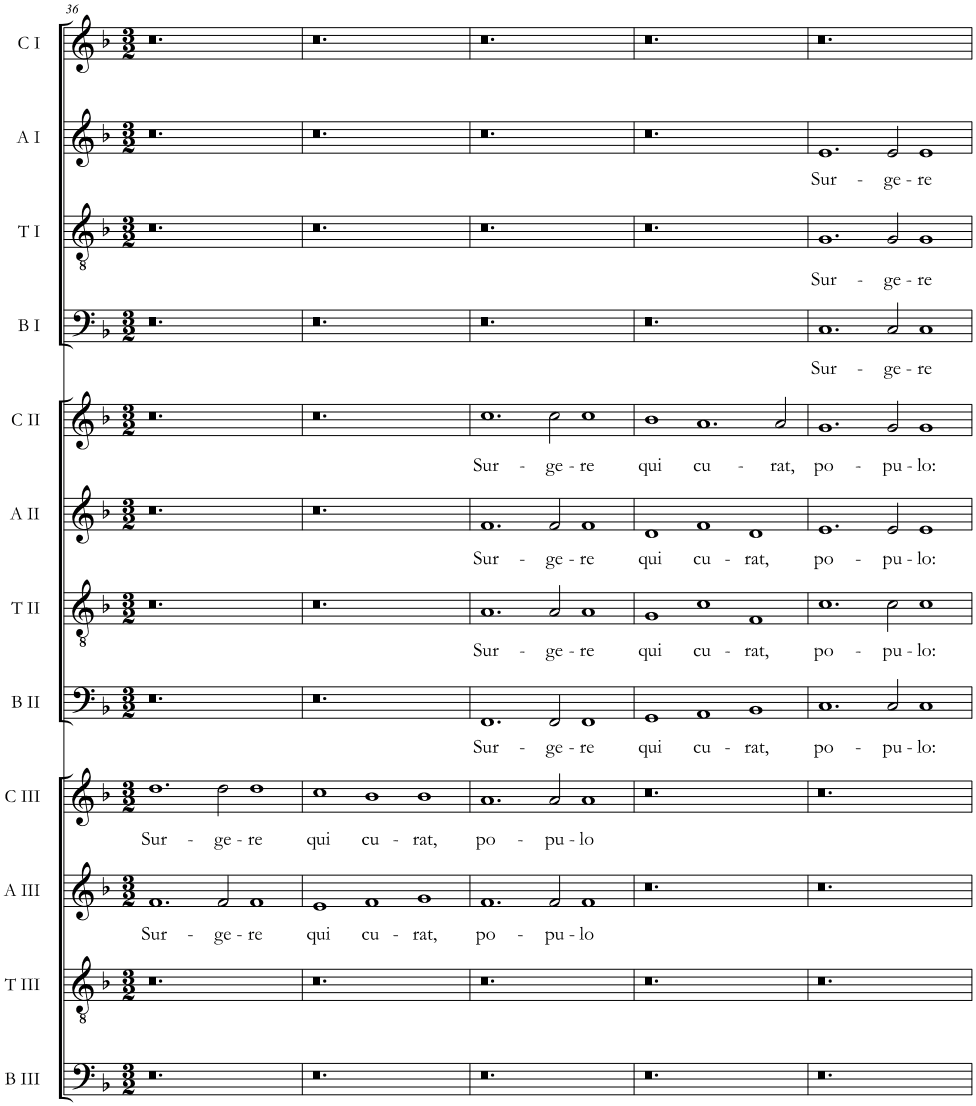
Example 4a. Asprilio Pacelli, *Alma Redemptoris mater*, ed. 1597, mm. 20–29
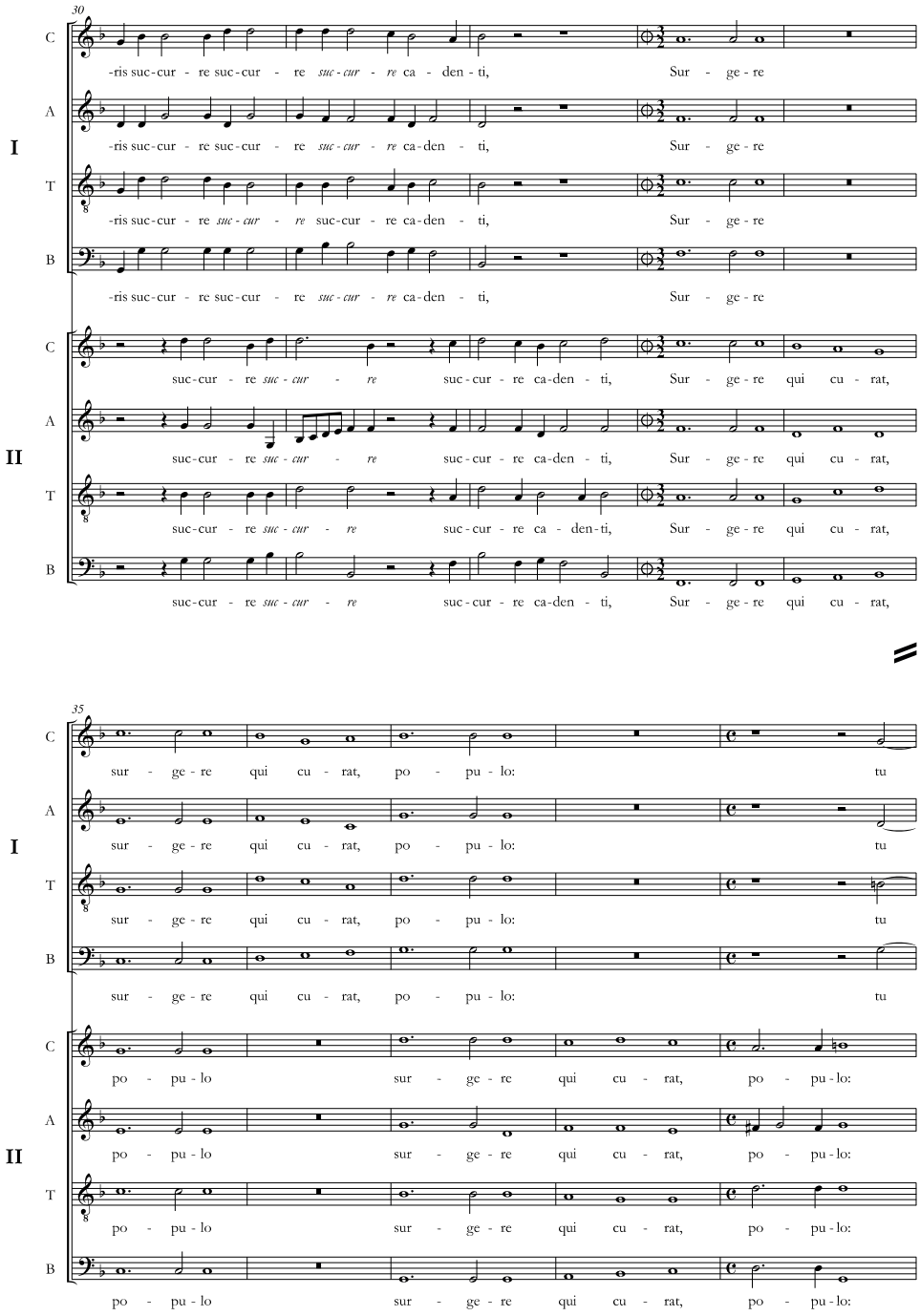


Example 4b. Asprilio Pacelli, *Alma Redemptoris mater*, I-Rn, mm. 16-20
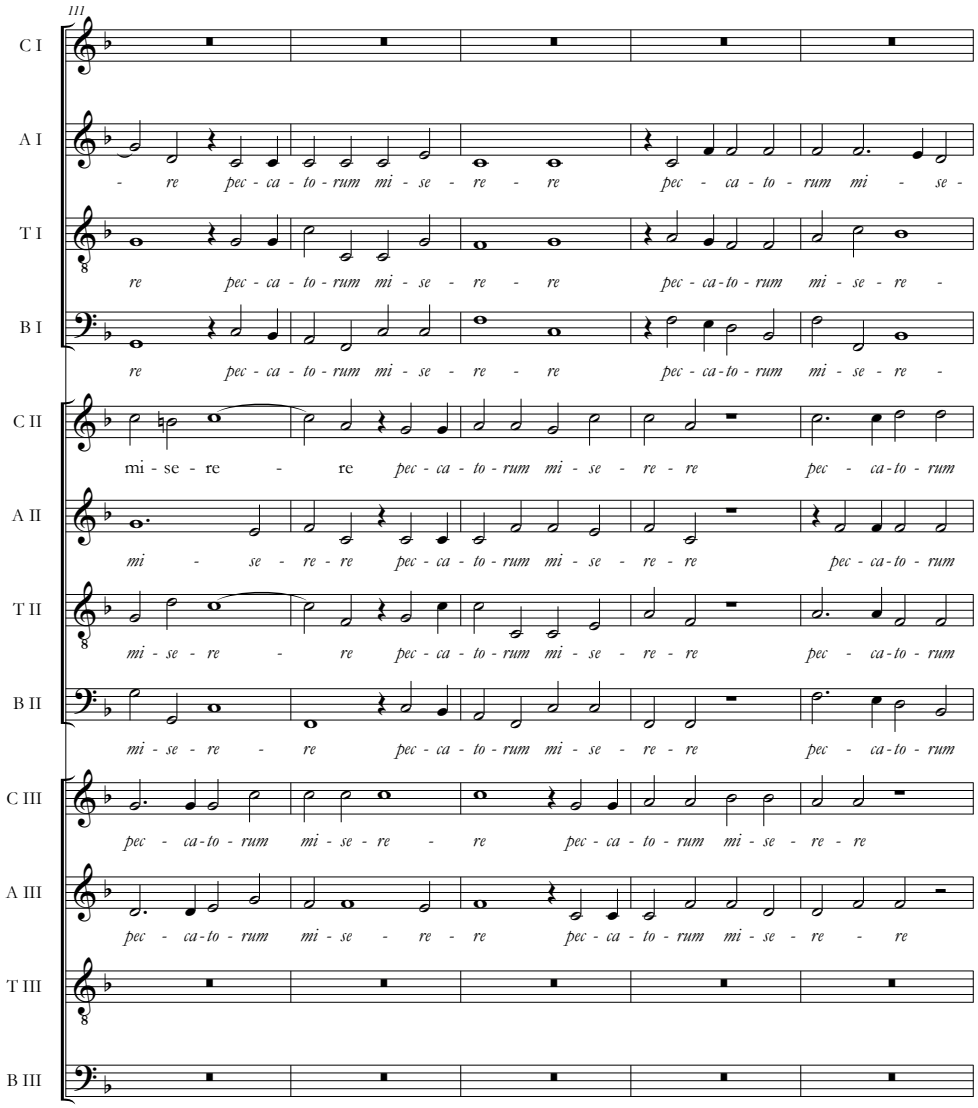


Example 5a. Asprilio Pacelli, *Alma Redemptoris mater*, I-Rn, mm. 31–40
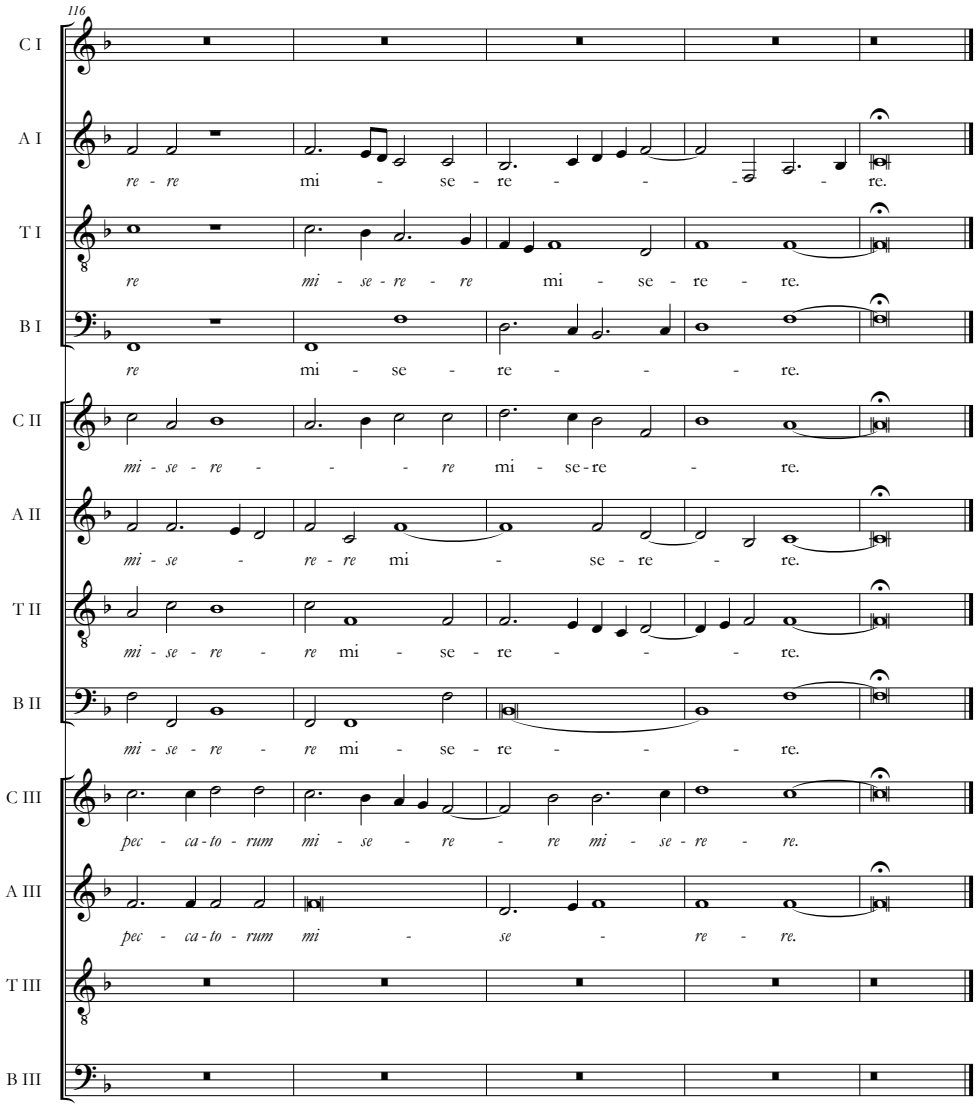


Example 5a. Continued
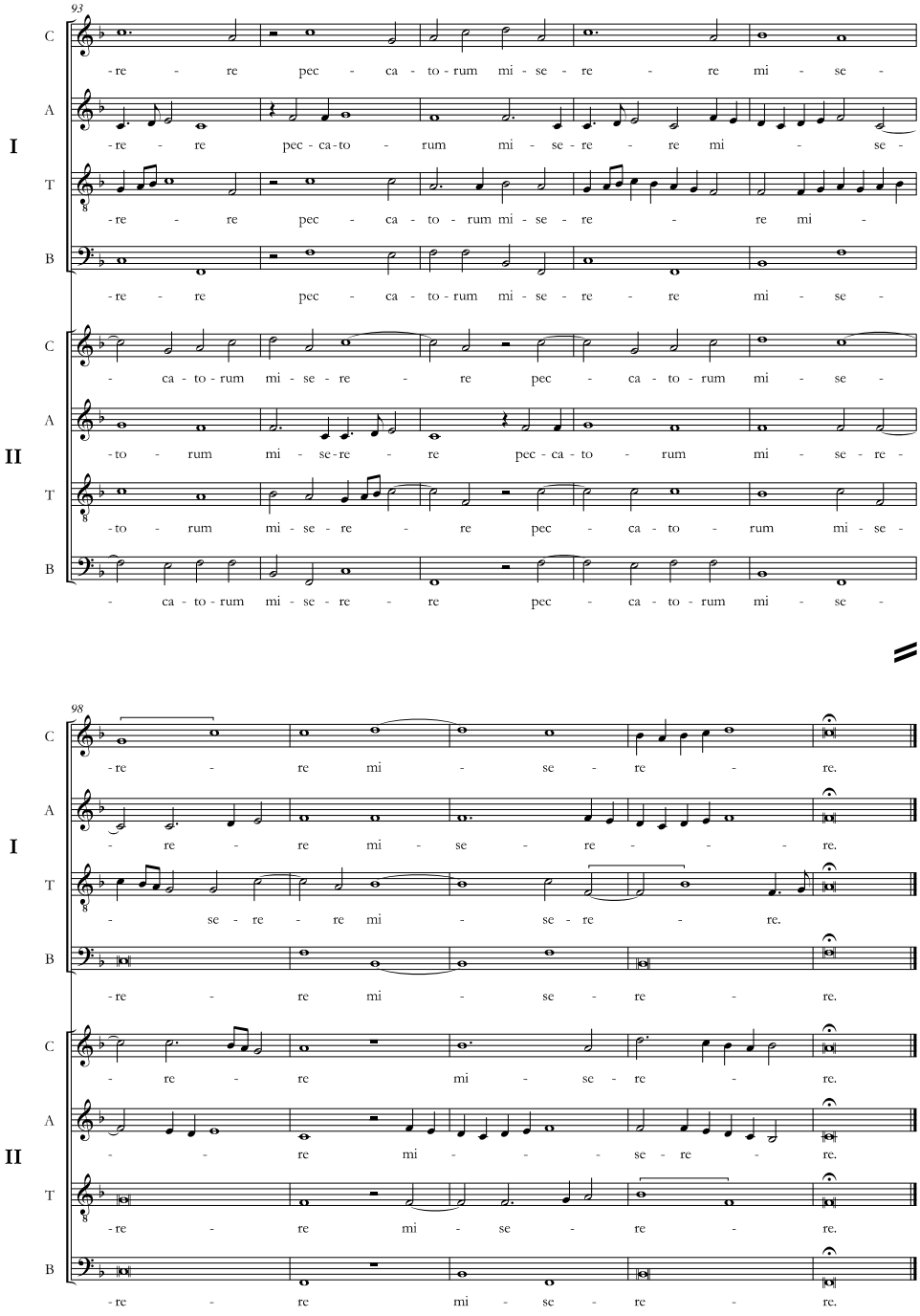


Example 5b. Asprilio Pacelli, *Alma Redemptoris mater*, ed. 1597, mm. 30–39



Example 6a. Asprilio Pacelli, *Alma Redemptoris mater*, I-Rn, mm. 111–120



Example 6a. Continued
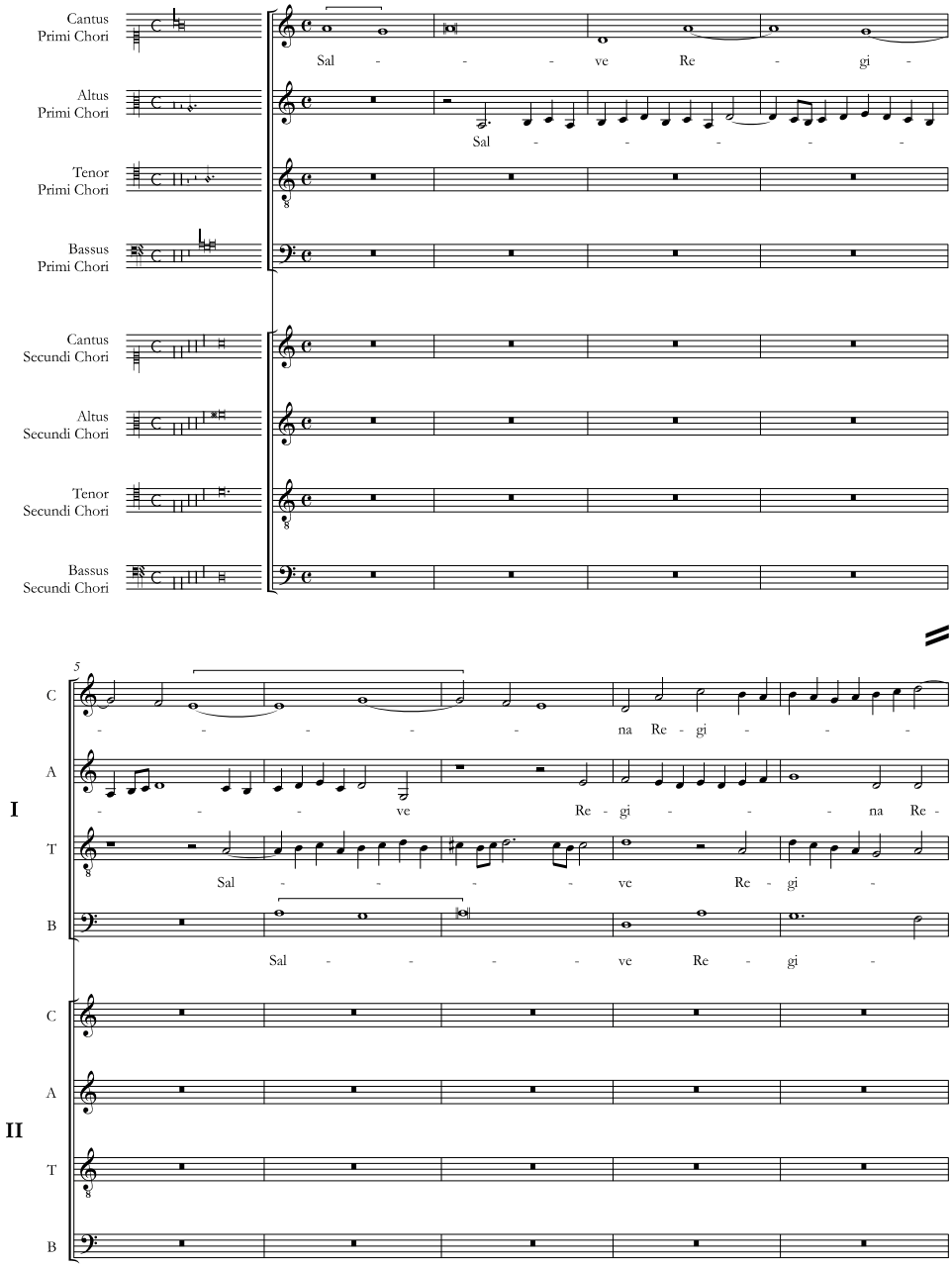


Example 6b. Asprilio Pacelli, *Alma Redemptoris mater*, ed. 1597, mm. 93–102

Salve Regina
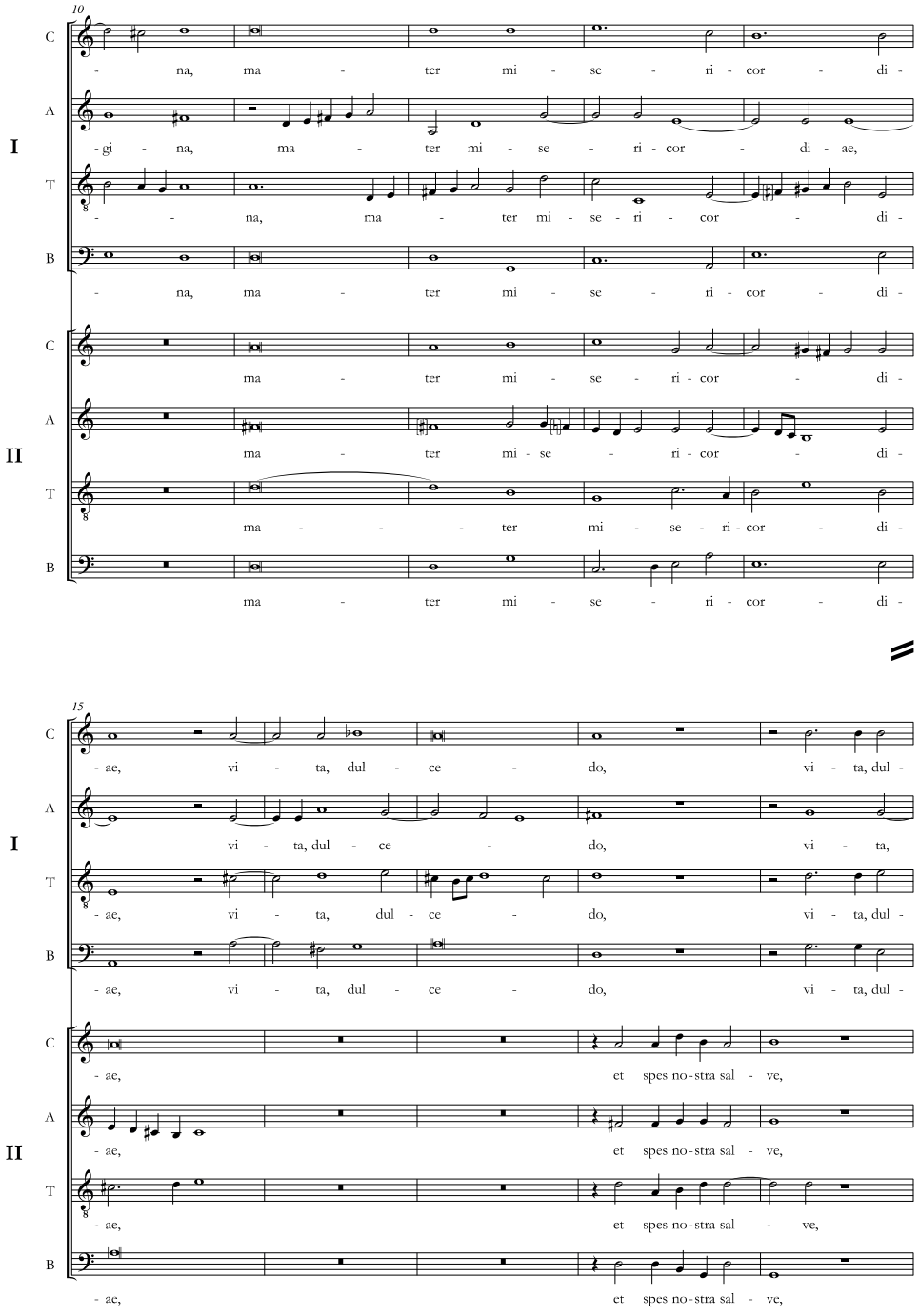
In the case of the two settings of the antiphon *Salve Regina*, similar in length (105 and 101 measures) and scored for two equal choirs *a voce piena*, we encounter a different type of relationship than in the works discussed above. Despite the overall shared design of both compositions (contrasts in mensuration introduced in the same places, identical tonal plan), their motivic material differs in many sections. At first glance—comparing even the openings of the works—we find no similarities and would treat them as separate compositions. The version published in the 1597 print (Example 7a) opens with an imitative, melismatic *exordium* that alludes (in the Cantus and Bassus of the first choir) to the chant melody of the antiphon *Salve Regina*. The piece entered in the Roman manuscript (Example 7b) requires the addition of a chant intonation, as it begins with "Regina mater"; from the outset, it appears simpler, intended for everyday use, hence its declamatory melodic character, uncomplicated polyphony, and lack of dynamic dialogue between the choirs.

The attribution of the manuscript piece to Pacelli is primarily supported by the presence in the printed work of two clear, non-accidental self-quotations. These are structures of relatively calm motion yet heightened harmonic tension, associated with words expressing supplication to the Virgin Mary: "illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte" (Example 8a) and "O clemens, o pia" (Example 8b).
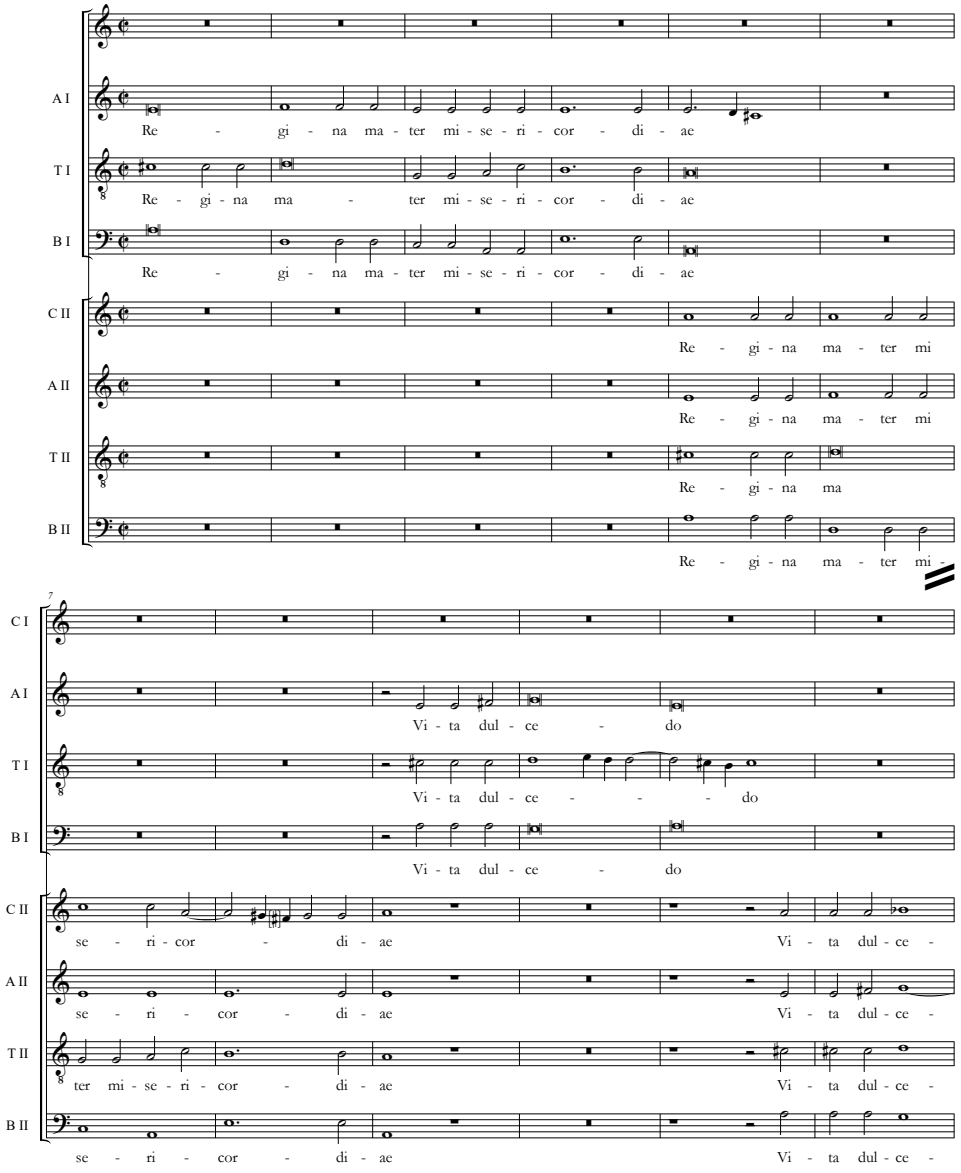
Salve Regina
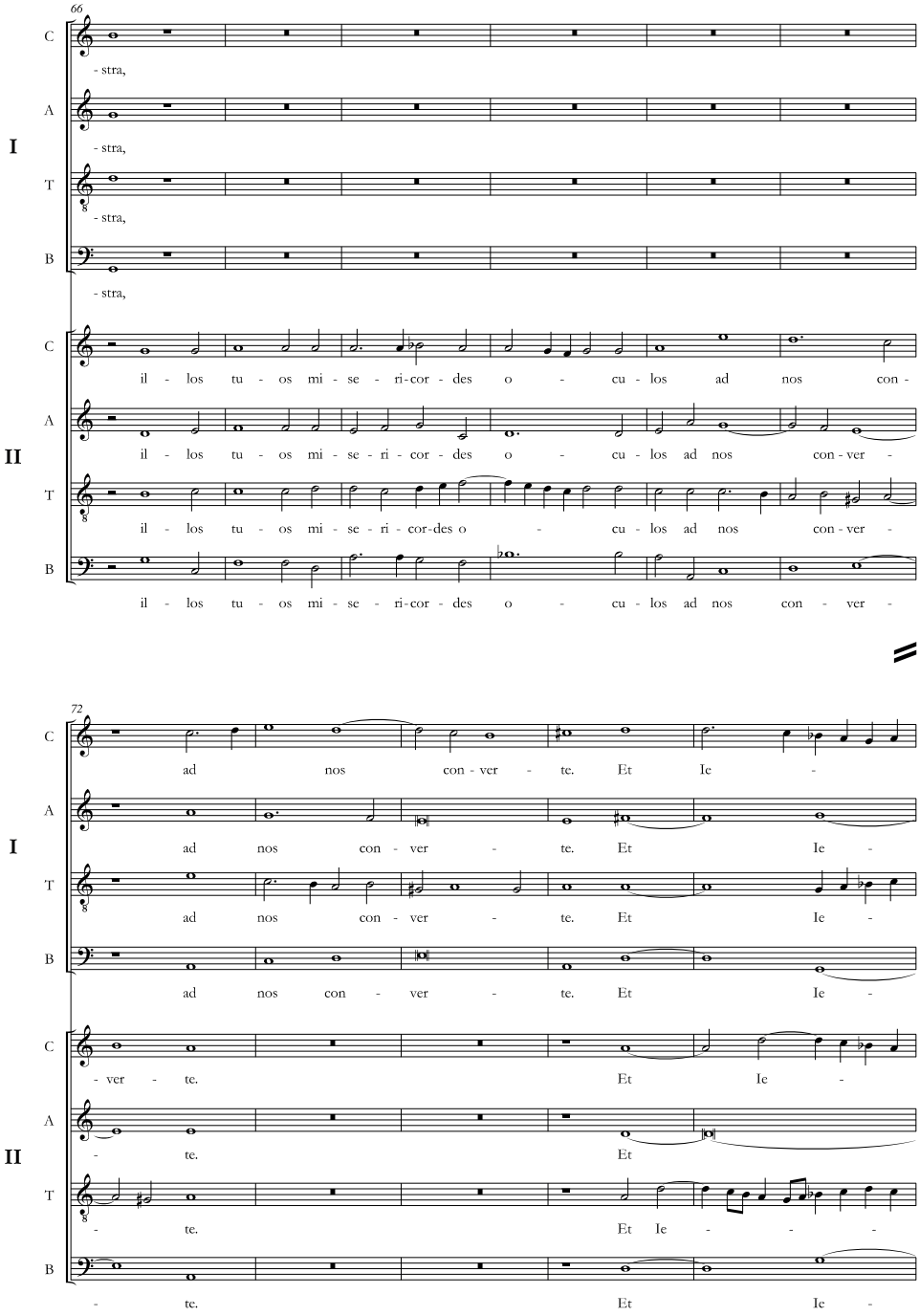


Example 7a. Asprilio Pacelli, *Salve Regina*, ed. 1597, mm. 1–19
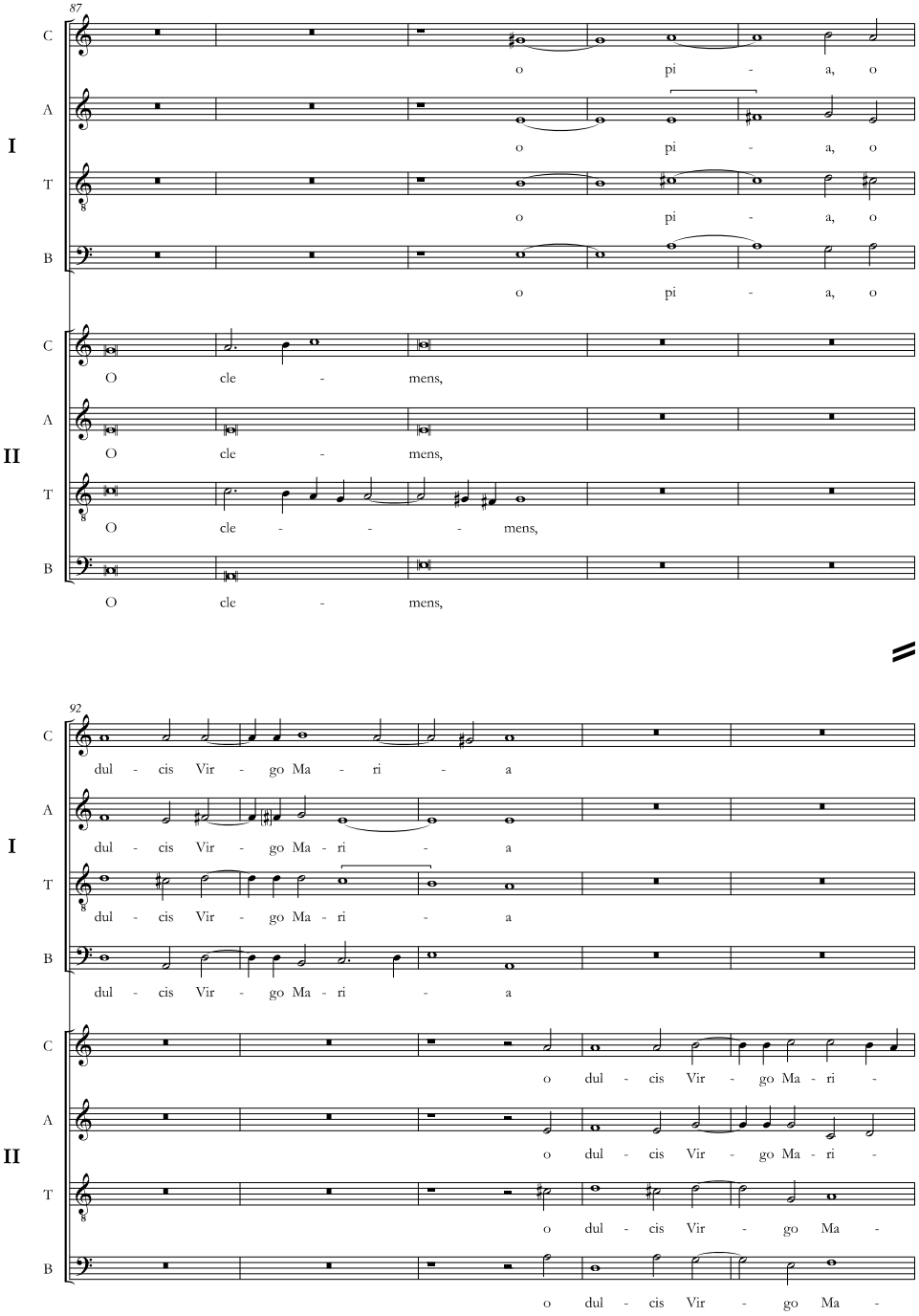


Example 7a. Continued



Example 7b. Asprilio Pacelli, *Salve Regina*, I-Rn, mm. 1–11
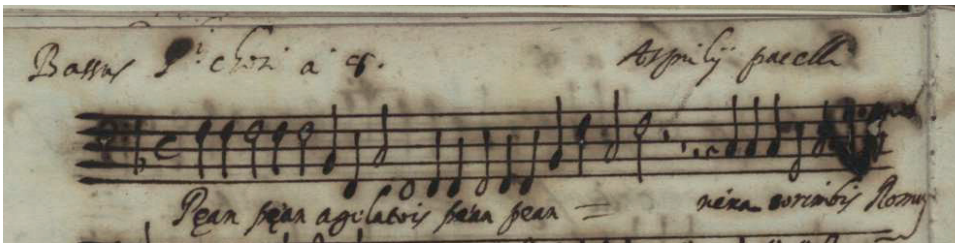


Example 8a. Asprilio Pacelli, *Salve Regina*, ed. 1597, mm. 66–76



Example 8b. Asprilio Pacelli, *Salve Regina*, ed. 1597, mm. 87–96

Paean

Of the two compositions attributed to Pacelli in the manuscript Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46, the first, *Genesi vir piissime*, may indeed have been his work, although, given that it survives in only one source, it is difficult to dispel all doubts. Compared to his other pieces, it stands out for its considerable brevity and simplicity of treatment, in this respect resembling the *Salve Regina* discussed above, preserved in the same manuscript. The basis of the setting is a hymnic text addressed to an unspecified saint, echoing the hymn to St. Mary Magdalene.



Example 9. Asprilio Pacelli, *Paean*, I-Rn, Bassus Primi Chori

Far more intriguing, however, is the composition that long seemed mysterious to me. Its identification was hindered by the poorly legible text in the Roman manuscript (Example 9), particularly the partially erroneous incipit: "Pęan pęan agelatois", which also appears in the RISM Catalog. The musical setting of this piece differs from Pacelli's other polychoral works through its consistent use of homorhythmic texture, declamatory melodic style, and simplified yet highly regular rhythmic structure (Example 10).[26] This unusual solution, along with uncertainties regarding the text, became clear once the origin of the work was established.

The author of the text proved to be Bernardino Stefonio, a Jesuit who taught rhetoric at the Collegio Romano between 1591 and 1602 and also wrote theatrical works and shorter pieces in Latin.[27] In doing so, he contributed to the

[26] Transcription of the composition in: Patalas, *De Asprilio*, 226–232.

[27] See: Francesco Lucioli, "Stefonio, Bernardino," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 94 (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2019), https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bernardino-ste fonio_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ (accessed 9 September 2025).

tradition of school theater, in which students of the institution had participated since 1551.[28] Stefonio was well known in the literary circles of his time, maintaining professional and friendly relations with leading writers such as Tasso, Guarini, and Marino. His greatest success was *Crispus*, first performed at the Collegio Romano in 1597 and repeatedly printed, hailed as a new Christian tragedy modeled on the finest classical examples. The manuscript of this play, referring to its premiere, states that the music was composed by Francesco Soriano, Anerio (Felice?), and Asprilio Pacelli.[29] At that time, choral pieces for the ends of acts and individual solo interventions were set to music. These works are now considered lost.

The *Paean* composed by Pacelli for two choirs *a voce piena* is an excerpt from another tragedy by Stefonio, entitled *Flavia* (see Table 4),[30] written for the celebrations of the Holy Year 1600. The work was first performed in the Aula Maxima of the Collegio Romano. The production, accompanied by elaborate stage design and possibly lasting up to ten hours, was sponsored by Cardinal Aldobrandini. The performance was a great success and was revived in 1621 at the Seminario Romano.[31]

The play recounts a dramatic episode in the history of ancient Rome under the Flavian dynasty. The perpetrator of the tragedy is Emperor Domitian, who orders the execution of three Christians: his adopted sons and heirs, Vespasian and Domitian, as well as his cousin—their father—Clemens. This marks the fall of the dynasty. The play is structured in five acts divided into scenes, each ending with a choral intervention. At the close of the first scene of Act IV, before the death sentence has been pronounced, the atmosphere is joyful: a troop of Roman soldiers under the command of a general sings a jubilant paean
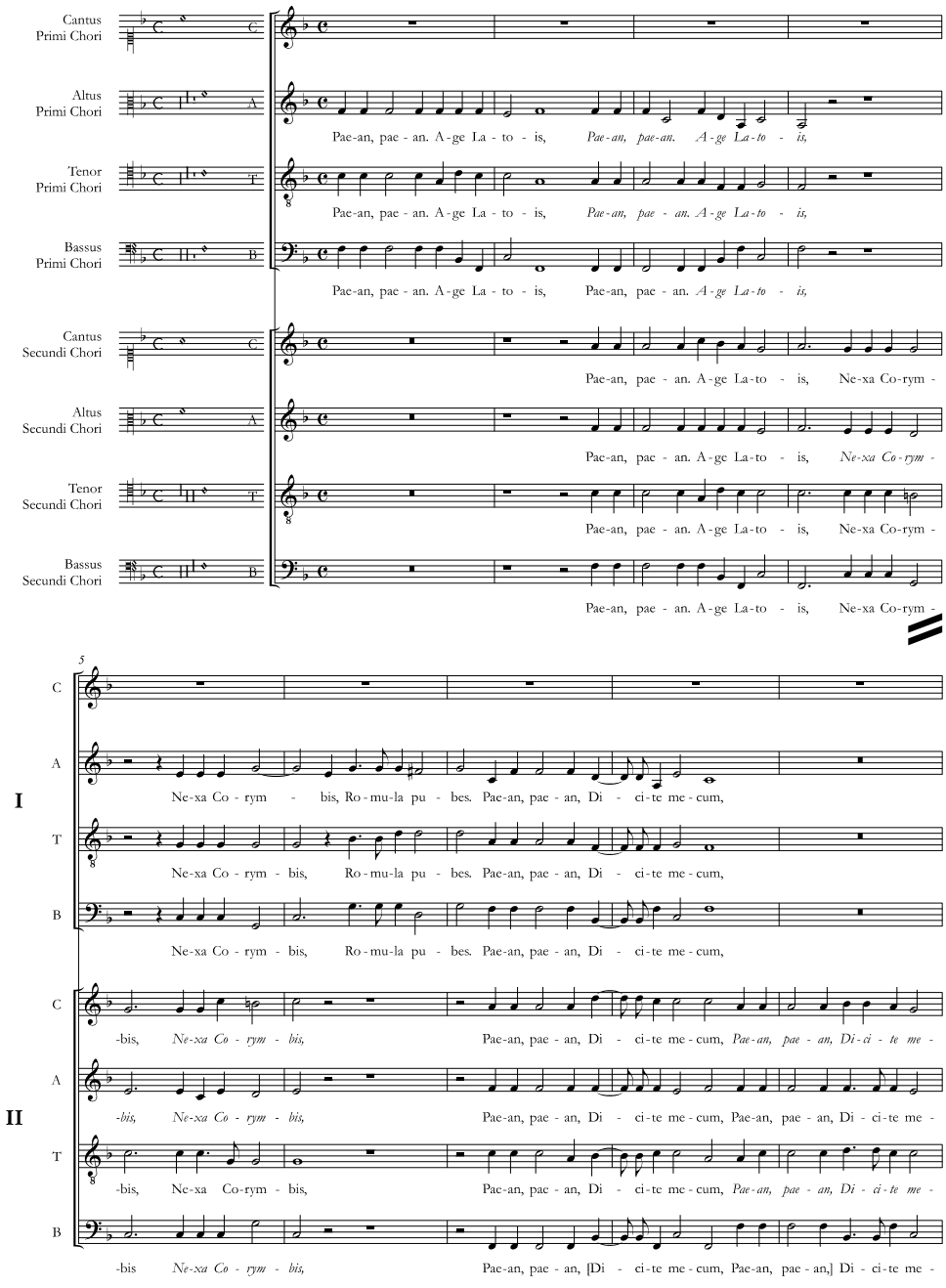
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[28] See: Salvador Bartera, "Bernardino Stefonio Flavia Tragoedia" (2002), Classics Publications and Other Works, https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_claspubs/1, 12. Cfr. Margaret Murata, "Classical Tragedy in the History of Early Opera in Rome," *Early Music History* 4 (1984): 101–134; Marc Fumaroli, "Le 'Crispus' et la 'Flavia" du P. Bernardino Stefonio SJ: Contribution à l'histoire du théâtre du Collegio romano (1597–1628)," in *Les fêtes de la Renaissance*, vol. 3, ed. Jean Jacquot (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1975), 505–524.

[29] Manuscript preserved in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in Rome (I-Rvat), MS Barb. lat. 1658, fol. [1]: „Musici praestantissimi Sorianus, Nerius, Asprilius," https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Barb.lat.1658 (accessed 9 September 2025).

[30] See: Bernardino Stefonio, *Flavia. Tragoedia* (Roma: apud Haeredem Bartholomaei Zannetti, 1621), https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_I4JoOrhyhvsC/page/n227/mode/2up (accessed 9 September 2025).

[31] Bartera, "Bernardino Stefonio," 14.

Paean paean Age Latois



Example 10. Asprilio Pacelli, *Paean*, I-Rn, mm. 1–9

Table 4. Bernardino Stefonio, *Flavia*, Act IV, Scene I, Chorus of Soldiers, translation by Salvador Bartera[32]

Original text	Translation
Paean, paean.	Un peana, un peana.
Age, Latois	Suvvia, gioventù
Nexa Corymbis,	romulea, intrecciata
Romula pubes	con corimbi latoni,
Paean, paean,	intona con me
Dicite mecum,	un peana, un peana.
Maiore sono	A voce più alta
Dicite mecum,	intonate con me,
Paean, paean,	giovani romani,
Romula pubes.	un peana, un peana.
Nemorum Virgo,	Eco, vergine dei boschi,
Extrema brevi	che ripete per un istante
Resecuta modo	le ultime note di un canto,
Tota volutet	faccia risuonare
Carmina septem	tutti quanti i canti
Collibus Echo.	sui sette colli.
Paean, paean,	Un peana, un peana,
Dicite mecum:	intonate con me,
Romula pubes,	giovani romani,
Strenua bello	pronti in battaglia
Frangere gentes.	a vincere le genti.
Paean, paean,	Un peana, un peana,
Dicite mecum.	intonate con me.
Regis ab Aula	Con buon auspicio
Regis in Aulam	trasferisci gli auspici
Omine cum bono	dal palazzo del re,
Omina transfer.	al palazzo del re.
Ter cane mecum,	Canta tre volte con me,
Martia pubes,	gioventù cara a Marte,
Paean, paean,	un peana, un peana,
Paean, paean,	un peana, un peana,
Paean, paean.	un peana, un peana.
[supplement in the score:] Io triumphe.	O trionfo!

[32] Bartera, "Bernardino Stefonio," 253.

in honor of the two Caesars (Vespasian and Domitian), its words echoed in response. Pacelli composed the music for this chorus (Table 4), which begins with the words "Paean, paean. Age, Latois...". He demonstrated a keen sense of dramatic context, employing effects such as echo, while also adapting the music to the abilities of the performers—students of the Collegio Romano. Although eight-voiced, the piece is technically not far removed from the choruses included by Emilio de' Cavalieri in *Rappresentatione di Anima et di Corpo*, performed in February 1600 at the Oratory of Chiesa Nuova.[33]

As a result of indepth research into the works of Asprilio Pacelli, it was possible to attribute to him three compositions notated as anonymous in the manuscript I-Rn Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46. These proved to be earlier versions of pieces that he later published in his two authorial collections of 1597 and 1608. A comparison of both versions of these works revealed that the composer re-composed them in different ways and for various purposes. The example of the motet *Cantate Domino* demonstrates that, over time, Pacelli refined his command of polychoral technique: he created more evocative dialogues between the choirs and brought the textual layer of the work into sharper relief. Wishing to satisfy the widest possible circle of performers, he recomposed the antiphon *Alma Redemptoris mater* from a three-choir to a two-choir version, which he then included in his printed collection. At the same time, he made it more sophisticated and ornamented. The two versions of the antiphon *Salve Regina* show how Pacelli reused previously composed individual polyphonic structures and incorporated them into the fabric of a new composition. This approach—treating a musical piece as material that can be shaped in various ways—is also evident in the preface to his collection *Chorici psalmi et motecta* (1599),[34] where he describes different possible variants of pieces arising at the stage of performance. The tendency to rework earlier material was certainly

[33] Anna Szweykowska, Zygmunt M. Szweykowski, "Rappresentazione di anima e di corpo Cavalieriego. Muzyka dla sceny," [*Rappresentazione di Anima e di Corpo* by Cavalieri. Music for the Stage], *Muzyka* 28 no. 1 (1983): 13–66.

[34] Noel O'Regan, "Asprilio Pacelli, Ludovico da Viadana and the Origins of the Roman Concerto Ecclesiastico," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 6 no. 1 (2000), https://sscm-jscm.org/v6/ no1/oregan.html (accessed 9 September 2025); see also: Patalas, *De Asprilio*, 124–126.

not unique to Pacelli; similar procedures may be observed, for example, in the output of another Roman composer of the period, Luca Marenzio.[35]

The analysis of the piece entitled *Paean*, which was entered near the beginning of the manuscript Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46 as the seventh piece, and the discovery of its genesis drew attention to a previously unknown area of Pacelli's activity as a composer of music for theatrical productions staged in Jesuit circles. The identification of this composition as a chorus from Bernardino Stefonio's tragedy *Flavia*, performed in Rome in the year 1600, constitutes an important factor enabling the dating of the manuscript Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46 to the first years of the seventeenth century. Owing to its subject matter and secular character, the work clearly stands out from the other compositions copied into the source; its presence weakens the hypothesis that the manuscript Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46 originated in the milieu of the archconfraternity Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini e Convalescenti.

[35] Marina Toffetti, *Structural variants*, 201. The author states that *This very tendency to re-elaborate pre-existing material could, in fact, be said to represent a typical modus operandi of Marenzio's polychoral output*.

Summary

The essay examines works by Asprilio Pacelli preserved in the manuscript I–Rn, Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46. The source contains two compositions attributed to Pacelli. Through detailed analysis, a misattribution concerning the piece *Factum est silentium* has been corrected: contrary to the RISM Catalog, the work is by Costanzo Porta rather than Pacelli. At the same time, three other compositions inscribed anonymously in the Roman manuscript have been successfully attributed to Pacelli. The article presents the evidence supporting these attributions. It argues that two pieces from Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46—*Alma Redemptoris mater* and *Cantate Domino*—represent earlier versions of works later published by Pacelli in his prints of 1597 and 1608. A third composition, *Salve Regina*, provided musical material that the composer reused in a piece issued in 1597. Special attention is given to a work signed with Pacelli's name but listed in RISM under the corrupted title *Pean agelatois*. The study briefly outlines the origins of this composition, which proved to be a fragment of a tragedy *Flavia* by Bernardino Stefonio, a poet employed at the Collegio Romano, where the piece was performed in 1600. The dating of this work supports Noel O'Regan's hypothesis that the manuscript Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46 was compiled in the early years of the seventeenth century.

Keywords: Asprilio Pacelli; Bernardino Stefonio; Jesuit theater; authorial versions; manuscript I–Rn; Mss musicali 33–34, 40–46