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USE OF THE SIMULTANEOUS CROSS-RELATION
BY SIXTEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH
AND CONTINENTAL COMPOSERS

Tim Montgomery
Music H 391
The principle of the simultaneous cross-relation in vocal music has generally and commonly been associated with the English composers of the sixteenth century. (M p. 71; R 824 n.34) This assumption has been more specifically connected with secular music, namely the English madrigal. (Dy p.13) To find the validity of this assumption in relation to both secular and sacred music I have compared the available vocal music of three English composers, two major and one minor: Thomas Tallis (1505-1585), William Byrd (1543-1623), and Thomas Whythorne (1528-1596). In deciding whether the simultaneous cross-relation was an aspect of English music exclusively, I examined vocal music of three composers of the continent, contemporaries of the English, for the use, if any, of the simultaneous cross-relation. Giovanni Palestrina (1525-1594), Orlando di Lasso (c. 1532-1594), and Carlo Gesualdo (c. 1560-1613).

The conclusions I have reached are based on observations of available music which will serve as a representation for comparative analysis of this principle.

Cross-relations are of two types: 1. An occurrence of a chromatic contradiction between two notes of the same triad. This is the type with which this paper shall be chiefly concerned: the simultaneous cross-relation. 2. The cross-relation may result from a chromatic contradiction of similar character in two adjacent chords. (Dy p. 13)

In the music of Palestrina, Lasso, and Gesualdo I found
not a single instance of simultaneous cross-relation. This is in itself noteworthy in comparison to the music of the English in which there were a comparatively large number. Even more noteworthy is the fact that Gesualdo, in his madrigals, carefully avoids the harsh effect of the cross-relation. This is remarkable in one best known as a harmonic experimenter. (R p. 430f.)

Thus, having found no cross-relations in music by the sixteenth century continental composers, and many in music by the English, the general assertion is justified, that the frequent use of the simultaneous cross-relation is characteristic only of sixteenth century English composers.

Of the thirteen motets by Thomas Tallis that I examined, five contained at least one simultaneous cross-relation. This same frequency of usage was found in the music of William Byrd. Of 157 works examined, there were twenty-four instances of the simultaneous cross-relation. These two resemble each other strikingly in that the cross-relation occurs at a definite cadence point of the voices involved as opposed to the continuing vocal line of the other voice involved. This resemblance may be accounted for by the fact that Byrd was a pupil of Tallis and also at one time a business partner (R p. 784f.), but whether the influence of the teacher Tallis upon the pupil Byrd explains the frequency of the same phenomenon in Byrd's music, or whether it is a national trait, is still speculative.

A good example of Tallis' use of the technique appears in "Salvator Mundi" (pr. in Gr p. 106), where in measure 12 the
soprano line cadences on G, as does the tenor, three beats later. The cross-relation occurs between these voices and the first and second alto respectively. In both instances the alto voice has just entered as the soprano and tenor lines are cadencing.

In each instance of the cross-relation in Tallis the principle is the same: purposeful structuring of the lines to bring about a contradiction or colorful clash between two lines. Other examples of the identical principle occur in Tallis' "Lamentations" (B part I, m.5), and in "In ieiunio et fletu" (ms. ed. J. Kerman, m.48).

Similarly structured, but more audibly exposed, are two other examples: in the final measures of both the Agnus Dei from a Mass for Four Voices (pr. in Gr p.102), and a four-voiced Nunc Dimittis (CA p.15 mm.33 and 34), a poignant final cadence is achieved by the cross-relation between the top voice and an inner one.

Of particular interest is a simultaneous reoss-relation in part II of Tallis' "Lamentations" (ed. Buck mm.60 and 61).
It is the only instance in the Tallis works examined in which this technique is used for text illustration. A cross-relation occurs twice on the word "angustias" (misery or fear). The structure of the contradicting lines is the same purposeful technique as in the other instances, but used to a more purposeful effect of word painting.

The structuring of line I have referred to is clearly defined by R. O. Morris:

"Where a melody rises or falls by a tone, and then falls or rises by the same interval, the tendency is to reduce the tone to a semitone by chromatic alteration when possible." (M p.12)

This accounts for inflection of individual lines, but the combining of the inflection with a clashing uninflected tone he points out as a technical feature intrinsically English:

"There was a general tendency on the part of singers at this period, in scale passages, to sharpen the seventh going up and to flatten it coming down, so that fairly close juxtapositions of B♭ and B♯, C♮ and C♯, and so on, would inevitably occur quite often, whether specifically intended by the composer or not. But the Englishmen went much further than the foreign composers, for they positively went out of their way to bring about these single clashes in a single chord." (M p.71)

This observation explains the principle I have found to be consistently operative in Tallis, Byrd, and Whythorne.

In a majority of instances of the cross-relation, the seventh degree of a given key in a section of a piece is inflected according to the rule of musica ficta stated by Morris.

In Byrd's motets in Cantiones Sacrae (1575), the same principle of structure occurs. But Byrd employs the simultaneous
cross-relation more frequently than his teacher Tallis. However, Byrd does, in this more frequent usage, involve the cross-relation in more exposed places and to more varied effect. The most striking example I have found occurs in his setting, "Be unto me O Lord a Tower" (WB m.34). Here the cross-relation occurs on the third degree of G major, the key of the preceding measures. The soprano sings a B♭ against E♭ in the tenor, descending to A, the third degree of the following F major section. I have not observed a comparable usage in either Tallis or Whythorne, but find it typical of Byrd's individuality in expanding a principle already established as a national trait.

Whythorne, in "Grace after Meate" (Wh m.17), like Tallis and Byrd, uses the cross-relation in defining a cadence point of all voices.

Of similar structure is a second instance of a cross-relation in "Behold now praise the Lord" (Wh m.159).
An instance of word painting was found in Whythorne's four-voiced song, "If I had not foreseen" (Wh mm. 12 and 23). In the setting of the word "protest", Whythorne sets a cross-relation twice in a one chordal section (mm. 11-24), making it more obvious and therefore more effectively expressive:

In view of the observations of individual composers and pieces, there is a conclusion in order: the English use of the cross-relation in the sixteenth century was not confined solely to secular music but occurs in motets and liturgical settings. Another point of prime importance is stated well in the Grove's Dictionary discussion of the cross-relation:

"The parts which were falsely related were always, in themselves, melodically coherent. Clashes arose normally, through the simultaneous pursuit of two distinct and conflicting melodic idioms. False relations are thus outstanding examples of the evolution of harmonic values from melodic sources [italics mine]" (Dy p. 13).

This states well, I feel, the apparent reasoning of Tallis, Byrd, and Whythorne whenever, however, and to what expressive extent their use of the cross-relation was employed. In aiming for melodic coherence, and at times expressive descriptive effect, the sixteenth century English composers used the cross-relation with musical success and national distinction.
"Appendix"

In the following appendix is a list of the works examined and the simultaneous cross-relations found. Of seventy-six works of Tallis, there were fifteen instances of cross-relations occurring in five songs. Byrd used a total of twenty-four cross-relations in twenty works of the 157 examined. Of Whythorne's seventy-six songs, three contained a total of four cross-relations.

In the Bibliography which follows, reference is made to the music listed in the Appendix for the purpose of indicating which collections or editions were used. As each work in the Appendix is numbered, reference to this material will be made in terms of "items".

Vol. I
1. Aspice Domine, quia facta.
2. Attolite portas
3. Da mihi auxilium
4. Diliges Dominum
5. Domine, secundum pars I
6. Ideo deprecor pars II
7. Emendemus in melius
8. Gloria Patri
9. Laudate pueri
10. Libera me, Domine pars I
11. Dies mei transierint pars II
12. Libera me, Domine, de morta aeterna
13. Memento homo
14. Miserere mihi, Domine
15. Olux beata pars I
16. Te mane laudum pars II
17. Deo Patri sit gloria pars III
18. Peccantem me quotidie
19. Siderum rector
20. Te deprecor
21. Tribue Domine

Cross-relation
p.267 m.59

Vol. II Cantiones Sacrae (1589)
22. Aspice, Domine, de sede pars I
23. Respice, Domine pars II
24. Defecit in dolore pars I
25. Sed tu, Domine pars II
26. Deus, venerunt gentes pars I
27. Posuerunt morticinia pars II
28. Effunerunt sangiunem pars III
29. Facti sumus oprobroium pars IV
30. Domine, praestolamur pars I
31. Veni, Domine pars II
32. Domine, secundum
33. Domine, tu iurasti
34. In resurrectione tua
35. Laetentur coeli pars I
36. Orietur, pars II
37. Memento, Domine
38. Ne irascaris pars I
39. Civitas sancti tui pars II
40. O Domine, adiva me
41. O Quam gloriosum pars I
42. Benedicto et claritas pars II
43. Tribulationes civitatum pars I
44. Timor et hebitudo pars II
45. Nos enim pro peccatis pars III

p.144 m.52
p.175 m.26
p.241 m.11, m.28.
p.204 m.52
p.249 m.39

p.101 m.26

p.58 m.34
p.162 m.44
46. Tristitia et anxietas pars I
47. Sed tu, Domine pars II
48. Vide, Domine pars I
49. Sed veni, Domine pars II
50. Vigilate, nescitis enim

Vol. III Cantiones Sacrae (1591)
51. Afflicti pro peccatis pars I
52. Ut eruas nos a malis pars II
53. Apparab et in finem
54. Cantate Domino
55. Circumsederunt me
56. Cumctor diesbus
57. Descendit de coelis pars I p.151 m.14; p.155 m.53
58. Et exivit per auream portam pars II
59. Domine exaudi orationem pars I
60. Et non intres in iudicium pars II
61. Domine, non sum dignus
62. Domine, salva nos
63. Exsurgere, Domine p.135 m.32
64. Pac cum serv sau tu
65. Haec dicit Dominum pars I
66. Haec dicit Dominam pars II
67. Haec dies
68. Infelix ego omnium pars I
69. Quid igitur faciam pars II
70. Ad te itur pars III
71. Laudibus in sanctis pars I
72. Magnificum Domini pars II
73. Hunc arguta pars III
74. Levemus corda nostra
75. Miserere mei Deus
76. Quid est homo pars I
77. Divertea a malo pars II
78. Recordare Domini pars I
79. Quiescat Domine pars II
80. Salve Regina pars I
81. Et Jesum benedictum pars II
82. Tribulatione proxima est pars I
83. Contumelias et terrares pars II

Vol. VI Gradualia (Part i) (1607)
84. Ab artu solis
85. Alleluia Cognoverunt discipuli
86. Beata Virgo
87. Dies Sanctificatus
88. Ecce adoenit
89. Ego sum panis vivus
90. Haec dies
91. Hodie Christus natus est
Iesu nostra redemptio
O Admirabile commercium
O magnum misterium
O quam suavis
Pascha nostrum
Puer natus est nolius
Resurrexi
Surgi illuminare
Terra tremuit
Tui sunt coeli
Veni corremit
Victimae Paschali
Viderunt omnes fines
Viderunt omnes fines
Videmus stellam eius

Vol. XIII Songs of Sundrie Natures (1589)

108. An earthly tree
109. Cast off all doubtful care
110. And think, ye nymphs?
111. Love is a fit of pleasure
112. Attend mine humble prayer
113. Behold how good a thing
114. And as the pleasant morning
115. Christ rising again
116. Christ is risen again
117. Compel the hawk to sit
118. From Citheron
119. There careless thoughts
120. If love be just
121. From depth of sin
122. From virgin's womb
123. Rejoice, Rejoice
124. I thought that Love
125. If in thine heart
126. Is Love a boy
127. Boy, pity me
128. Lord, hear my prayer
129. Lord, in thy rage
130. Lord, in thy wrath
131. O dear life
132. O God, which art most merciful
133. O Lord, my God
134. Of gold all burnished
135. Her breath is more sweet
136. Penelope that longed
137. Right blest are they
138. See those sweet eyes
139. Love would discharge
140. Susanna fair
141. The greedy hawk
142. The nightingale so pleasant
143. Unto the hills mine eyes I lift
144. Upon a summer's day
145. Then for a boat
146. Weeping full sore
147. When first by force
148. When I was otherwise
149. When younglings first
150. But when by proof
151. While that the sun
152. Who made thee Hob?
153. Wounded I am
154. Yet of us twain

p.242 m.17

155. Two Sacred Songs in Four Parts By William Byrd.
156. Ed. by Hans T. David. 1944
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All ye that serve
As many heads
As restless head
As thy shadow
As tis a sign
Behold, now praise the Lord
Beware how sorrows thee oppress
Buy new broom
The divers chance
The doubtful state
For to reclaim
The gifts of nature
Give not thy mind
Grace after meat
Grace before meat
The great offense
The happy life
The haughtiness of some
He that condemmeth
I cannot deem thee happy
I have ere this time
I have not only read
I will yield thanks
If every one
If flattered be
If I had not foreseen
If thou that hast
In friends of each estate
In weal and woe be patient
Is there no choice
It doth belong
It doth me good
It hath been proved
It is a world
Like as the smoke
My soul and all
The music tunes
Now that the truth is tried
Nothing is sharper than low things
O be joyful
O come let us sing
O good Lord, have mercy
O lord above
Of a hard beginning
Of nature's gifts
Out of the deep
The pleasant and the gentle speech
Ponder the proof
Prefer not great beauty
The restless race
221. Shall I this woe sustain
222. Since I embrace
223. Such as in love
224. Take heed of words
225. Till time had taught
226. Thou shalt soon sue
227. Though choler cleapt
228. though crooked cares
229. Though fortune frown
230. Though friends be frail
231. Thy secrets told
232. To overcome by patience
233. To reprehend or mock
234. Whatever hath been
235. When cupid had
236. When fliering fortune
237. When fortune seemed
238. When I remember
239. When that well tipped are
240. When wit doth seek
241. Where praises great
242. Who that for truth
243. Who that to quaffing
244. Who that will weigh
245. Who that to quaffing
246. Luci serene e chiare
247. Ecco, moriro dunque
248. Ohi, gia mi discoloro
249. Io tacero
250. Invan dunque a crudele
251. Dolcissima mia vita
252. Itene o mici sospiri
253. Moro lasso al mio duolo
254. Resta di darmi
255. Gia piansi nel dolore
256. Io Pur Respiro
257. Non T'amo
258. O come e gran martire
259. Tu M'uccidi, O Crudele
260. Moro lasso
-Lasso-

261. Pronuba Juno
262. Praesidium Sara
263. Beati pauperes
264. Beati pacifici
265. Cum rides mihi
266. Data est de lachrymis
267. Quicumque vult salvus
268. Alia est enim persona
269. Et tamen non tres aeterna
270. Haec est fides
271. Zachau, festinans descendc
272. Da pacem
273. Bestia curvafia
274. Gloria patri et filio
275. Lauda Sion salvatorem
276. Dies enim sollemnis
277. Quod non capis
278. Ecce panis angelorum
279. Lucescit jam a socii
280. Nunc Dimittis
281. Deus in adjutorium
282. Auroro lucis rutilat
283. Omnis homo premium
284. Recordare, Jesu pie
285. Lamentations of Prophet Jeremiah
-Palestrina-

286. Agnus Dei, from Mass "Ecce Sacerdas Magnus"
287. Congratulamini Mihi
288. Agnus Dei, from Mass "Veni sponsa Christi"
289. Sicut cervus desiderat
290. Sitivit anima mea
291. Benedictus, from Mass "Lauda Sion"
292. Adjuro vos
293. Alla riva de Tebro
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WB Two Sacred Songs in Four Parts by William Byrd. Ed. by Hans T. David. 1944 items 155, 156.


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CA Classic Anthems "Magnificat" and "Nunc Dimittis" Ed. by Ernest White. 1946 items 165 and 166.

CU Columbia University Choir Series "Blessed are Those" Ed. by Lowel P. Beveridge. 1946 item 161.


Sc G. Schirmer's Choral Church Music "If ye love me, keep my Commandments" item 162.

K "In ieunio et fletu" ed. Joseph Kerman. 1964 ms. copy mechanically reproduced item 160.


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Gesualdo: Gesualdo, Delli Madrigali a cinque voci, Libro Sesto, No. XXII "Gia Piansi" item 255.


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