

## The Saga of Sicut

A solver of mysteries I will claim to be this day! It was January past when I was asked by my most talented choir to be in charge of researching and writing our documentation as I had done the previous year. A composer as famous as Palestrina should be no problem and besides, I enjoy new research rabbit holes!

And thus it began: books, websites, and journals galore, learning the ins and outs of the man who was Rome's musical genius. Combing the toms, looking for what his fans wrote about him at the time. Information was flowing and my energy was high! As I had some experience from the previous year, I knew the search for the extant piece would prove more challenging to acquire than other documents. The last time I went on this mission it took, what? 4 hours? I was not prepared, however, for it to become quite the adventure it became. I began an internet search hoping the source document would reveal itself quickly. Hours and hours went by and the closest thing I could come by was a tiny piece of the wrong song from the right book, found on a random YouTube video. So then, I moved to universities. I discovered that 3 universities have the piece, eureka! I made the call first to Illinois, striking up a conversation with their library staff, who looked but could not locate the volume I needed, despite having the classification number at the ready. Transferring me to the music library I still felt full of confidence. It was here I met with Dave. A man that I can say, when looking back, should be awarded assist of the year!

Dave, whom I knew had precious little time to comb through old volumes (because he told me so), told me that they did in fact have a copy of Giovanni Peirluigi de la Palestrina's Liber Secundus and that it was on microfilm. Wahoo! They could create an electronic copy, but it would cost me quite a bit of cash and it could be days before it would be ready. It was even in a different department so even more staff would be involved. Well okay, I thought, already writing Dave's thank you card in my head. I would fork out the cash for the entire volume, it could come in handy one day. I mentioned casually that I was actually only looking for one specific piece, just a few pages at most. Dave, who I now feel a keen affection for, despite never having seen his face, made the ultimate sacrifice for me, "On Friday," he said, "I will have a little free time, what's the specific piece, I'll take a quick look for it." "It's called the Sicut Cervus, popular song should be quick. It should be listed right in the contents as well, if it was like the other thousands of books I've now looked at from the time, thank you so much!" He would send it on Monday, now a week or so after the hunt began. I still figured I had a chance of finding it online just in case Dave could not deliver, I went about exploring the relationship of Palestrina to the Council of Trent seeing if I could find a hint there...I know, long shot, but I was feeling that squashing desperation sneak in. Maybe it was one of those situations where the text had been saved but the originals destroyed? Some of my research was pointing to a man with a political agenda after all.

Monday came to pass and lo and behold an email from Dave.

"Hello Erin,

David \_\_\_ here, from the University of Illinois Music and Performing Arts Library. I'm running into a snag here with the Palestrina motet you were hoping to get scanned. I am not finding "Sicut Cervus" on the roll of microfilm.

Can I ask how you were led to that call number? When I search Sicut Cervus nothing comes up in the results,

Thanks

Dave"

Well that's curious. Everything I have researched said it was clearly out of this particular book of motets. I thought maybe the rub was the fact that I had only started studying music about a year ago. Maybe my Latin was even more shoddy than I thought; could it be that I had the wrong book after all?

So, I took a screen shot of the call number, wrote all of the song lyrics down and did the only other thing I could think of; I called a Laurel! "Mistress Ilyana am I wrong about this?" She confirmed I was not....and came through with a piece of the music written modernly, but in its historic neumes. With this affirmation I felt more comfortable, but a little defeated. If it existed I wanted to find the Sicut Cervus, I WOULD find it, and so I did what you always wish your enemy

would, I wrote it down (isn't that the saying?). Proclaimed did I to Facebook on a page belonging to our choir! Armed with more knowledge after a few more days of research I wrote Dave back with all the info I could. The song would be found in the 10<sup>th</sup> sections. That's right, the 10<sup>th</sup>s. I had no knowledge of what exactly that meant so I went on to explain as best I could. "It won't have a title Dave, at all, I was wrong, it may just be a number... Should I come to Illinois it's only a 4 hour drive?" Just as curious as I, as to why it couldn't be found, Dave said he would leaf through the 150+ pages again.

In the meantime, fear got the better of me I went back to the internet. I found what appeared to be another copy, on microfilm at the University of Michigan and one at the national library of France. France? Oh boy, I would wait on that so my 9<sup>th</sup> grade Kentucky accented French would not have to come out in public. So, to Michigan I turned. I was again told that they had a copy but oddly that song was not within, perhaps we were all wrong? Doubting myself, and the publication houses of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, I reluctantly began dialing France. This is what I think the conversation was like...when in reality it was much, much, more bumbling!

"Bonjour,

J'ai besoin d'aide pour trouver de la musique.

Quel livre

Uh....Latin.... Motecta festorum totius anni cum Communi sanctorum...quaternis vocibus...liber primus

Uh, little film? Peu Film? Petite film?

"eh, eh.....Je ne comprends pas. »

"Uhm Microfilm ? »

Oh !!!!!

Laughter ensues; apparently microfilm is just microfilm in French."

I was directed to a website where I could request a copy of the book as well as get a quote on the price. Not trusting my knowledge of French musical terms of the middle ages I went to Google Translate and prayed for at least passable comprehensibility. I managed to fill out this first form with clipped and computerized French, with English translations for good measure. It literally took me 4 hours to fill out this form! It took a few days but I received an email back...the most curious email I had yet received.

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Ughhh, I have to find his kids....whelp they died from the plague along with his wife. So, I called the number at the bottom of the email...Hello Mathilde! Who, great blessings to me, spoke English!

“So who are you that you want this piece of music”

“Well I am Erin from Kentucky.

I am in a choir, we research and perform medieval and renaissance music. We have a competition so and I would really love the extant copy as a source.”

“Oh, so you are a professor or director?”

“Neither, just a period music lover who is writing a research paper.”

“I assume this paper is going to be published”

“No madame, it won’t be commercially published, just to the judges and maybe on my blog. I will site the source for sure.” Followed by brief explanation of the SCA.

“I am not sure this volume has ever been checked out” which led to laughter on both our parts. “I will send you the email you need as well as info to create an account to request what you are looking for.”

Oh yeah! We were on to something!

Meanwhile, not being one to sit and wait, I realized I had consulted a Laurel... why not a Pelican! This time I turned to Mistress Petrona! She was local-ish to the Illinois University that supposedly contained the book; maybe she knew of someone who could help. She, as so many Pelicans are, was amazing and went in to action, locating 3 wonderful people who had ties to the music library at the University....one of whom would turn out to be our judge at the regional competition! Ha!

For a quick count on who is now, actively, looking for this piece:

Dave from Illinois  
University of Michigan (I totally can’t remember her name electronic library search and conversation)  
Mistress Illyana  
3 Friends of Mistress Petrona  
Me

Two of the leads were unable to assist because of the time crunch, but one had an in! Unfortunately, what was found, once again, ALL THE LIBRARIES WERE MISSING HALF OF THE BOOK!!! That’s right the 2<sup>nd</sup> book set was not a part of what any of the libraries had. The microfilm was incomplete. After weeks of talking to everyone, looking through online databases, possibly sending fake professorial credentials to France, it had come to an end.

Many days later, when I found out how much a copy of the Sicut would cost from France, (insert giant eyes at the price) when hope was lost and I was literally writing my choir to tell them of my failure, I heard that good ole Facebook message ding! It was one of the lovely ladies Mistress Petrona had put me in touch with. Her music department supervisor had located the Sicut at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the same French library that thought I was crazy for wanting this info. The Supervisor had the credentials to have the file sent over email! Could it be? Was I really about to see this elusive composition?

Another ding!

A click on a link!

Butterflies in my stomach!

Triumph!!!

I was looking at The Sicut Cervus!!!

In an embarrassment of success, I thanked profusely all of those who had to listen to my constant questioning on the Facebook chat, and then lo and behold, I received an email from Dave only a few minutes later, telling me that we were indeed at a dead end.

“Hi Erin--

Well, I'm afraid I'm writing with disappointing news. I've finally figured out that the microfilm in question is indeed the Palestrina "Liber Secundus" of motets...but it's the second book of motets for 5 (or sometimes more) voices, and "Sicut cervus" would be in the 2nd book of motets for 4 voices. I can't find any evidence that we've got the latter manuscript, however, so I think we've run up against a wall on this one.

Sorry we couldn't come up with the material you needed...thanks for your understanding & patience.

Sincerely,

Dave \_\_.”

But wait Dave it has been found!!! I could not wait to email him the link. Alas...I had choir practice! I would email him right when I got home thought I, when all of a sudden...

Ding! Another email from Dave!

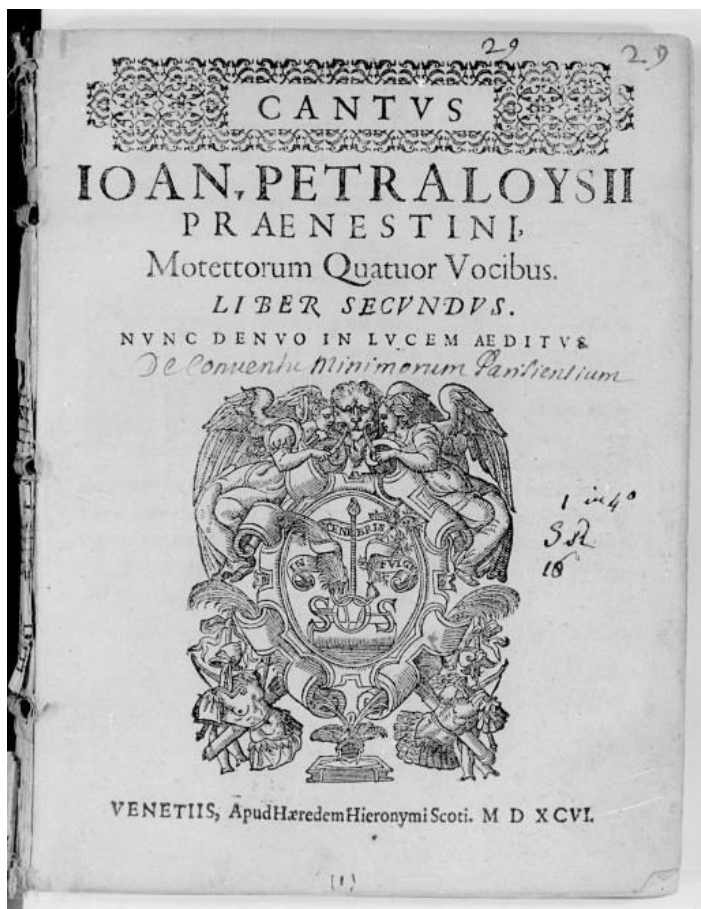
“Or...maybe I spoke too soon. A colleague I enlisted for help just sent me this link he located via WorldCat. And it looks as though it's the correct collection...just goes to remind me to never give up!

All best,

Dave B.”

He had found the link as well; the very same director had sent it to him knowing that yet another person was seeking the illusive Sicut! I thanked him over and over, even though the link had already been sent to me by another source. He mentioned how another person who worked for the library had come in asking about the Sicut, how 2 students came in looking for the microfilm etc. Dave finally asks “Who are these 12-people looking for this piece?” To which I replied, “I am all 12!”

And so ends the saga of the over month, long, journey to uncover a mystery. I think the thing I took away from this stressful and rewarding saga is exactly what Dave's last email said, “never give up!” I felt like I was looking at gold when I finally looked upon the pictures below. Maybe someone else could have found it faster, maybe there was an easier way. All I know is that I am so thankful for all of the amazing people who helped along the way and the knowledge that if you keep turning over rocks you will eventually find the answers you seek.



Prima Pars. 17 37 CANTVS 37

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Icut ceruus desiderat ad fontes aqua-  
roma quarum Sicut ceruus desiderat ad fon-  
tes aqua quarum Ita de fi-  
derat Ita de fiderat Ani-  
ma mea ad te De us anima mea ad te De-  
us.

Del Palestina. A q. Lib. 2. C