

Rhythmical versions of the Minister's part

In the Notes to the revised edition (2022) of Shaw's *Preces and Responses*, I raise the question as to whether the Minister's part might be sung in free time, or metrically, like the choral answers. The earliest known source of music for the English Prayerbook, Merbecke's *Book of Common Prayer Noted* of 1550, presents both the Priest's part and the answer in the same rhythmical notation, based on three note lengths given in black notation representing the breve, semibreve and minim, together with the use of a dotted semibreve and paused note at the end of phrases. When Tallis composed his *Preces & Responses*, he placed the same chant formulas used by Merbecke in the Tenor part of his *Responses* after the Creed, though in different rhythms. Byrd and Morley copied this practice for their own sets, and in such cases, the musical relationship between the Minister's versicles and the choral answers is particularly close, even when the Minister's part is sung in free rhythm.

Early seventeenth-century manuscript sources of the *Preces and Responses* by Tallis, Byrd and others either have no indication of the Minister's part, or present various forms of it, suggesting that practice was far from uniform. In the Tenor part found in Queens' College, Cambridge, Old Library G.4.17, the call and response are presented in different forms of notation, with equal black notes used for the Minister's part, and normal 'white' measured notation for the choral answers; this juxtaposition may well imply that the Minister's part was in sung in a freer manner than the choral answers, as is customary today. However, when John Barnard published his *First Book of Selected Church Musick* in 1641, he used the same normal measured 'white' notation for both call and response, and the same can also be found in his own *Preces and Responses* in Royal College of Music MSS 1045-51, and also in the Cantoris Tenor partbook MS 43 at Peterhouse, Cambridge, in the *Preces* by John Amner. When William Boyce published his *Cathedral Music* in 1760, he also provided a Priest's part in rhythm for his version of the *Preces & Responses* by Tallis, but with new rhythms.

For those wishing to sing rhythmical versions of the Minister's part, a number of files are provided here, though the first two are purely for historical interest:

4a. Merbecke's original monophonic *Preces & Responses*. The form of words and liturgical order of the 1549 Prayerbook, on which Merbecke based his work, were soon made obsolete by the revised Prayerbook of 1552. Merbecke uses the same form of rhythmical notation for both the call and response, though he says nothing about how strictly the note values should be adhered to in performance. He provides rhythmic notation for all the unchanging liturgical items at Matins and Evensong, including Canticles, Collects etc.

4b. John Barnard's Priest's part, also provided for historical interest only. It shows a number of quicker rhythms than found in Merbecke's print, and perhaps reflects what was sung at St Paul's Cathedral, where Barnard was a minor canon. The print contains only one complete set of *Preces & Responses*, with music by Tallis, but also other settings of the *Preces* by Byrd and Gibbons. He uses the same music for the Priest's part in all the sets of *Preces* provided, though at varying pitches. His use of rests at the start of some of the Priest's versicles and not others may relate to the more

continuous manner of performance that results when both call and response are sung in rhythm. He also provides rhythm for a monophonic rendition of The Lord's Prayer.

4c-g. These files contain new editorial versions of the Minister's part in rhythm, provided for all the sets of Preces & Responses included in CMS Publications R48 (rev.). They do not observe the rhythms provided by either Merbecke or Barnard, but have been devised to fit with the rhythmical style of the choral answers employed by the respective composers. They naturally have no claim to authority; they are simply an attempt to recreate a manner of rhythmical performance for the Minister's part, bearing in mind that there is no reason to suppose that the original Priests and Ministers who sang them for Tallis, Byrd, Morley, Smith & Tomkins would have sung the particular rhythms found in either Merbecke or Barnard. Those singing from these versions are of course at liberty to adjust the rhythms as desired. Since Tallis's set is probably the earliest of them all, I have kept the rhythms of the Minister's part close to Merbecke's form, including the 4-syllable form of 'righteousness'. Byrd uses almost exactly Merbecke's melody and rhythm at 'O God, make speed to save us' for the top voice of his choral answer 'O Lord, make haste to help us', so Byrd's rhythm has been provided for the preceding Minister's part for 'O God, make speed to save us'. In general, Byrd's choral answers proceed more slowly than the other sets, so the Minister's part is correspondingly slow in the proposed rhythmical version; by contrast, faster rhythms are found in Morley's set, with a greater use of crotchets, so the Minister's part provided here is quicker.

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