

Guillaume Du Fay

Opera Omnia 02/08

Supremum est mortalibus bonum

Edited by Alejandro Enrique Planchart



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Supremum est mortalibus bonum
Pro pace, pro duo magnis luminarii mundi.

Guillaume Du Fay

Cantus
Su - - pre - - mum est mor - ta - li - bus bo - num Pax

Faulx bourdon
Su - - pre - - mum est mor - ta - li - bus bo - num Pax

Contratenor
Su - - pre - - mum est mor - ta - li - bus bo - num Pax

Tenor
Supremum

11
op - ti - mum sum - mi De - i do - num.

20
Pa - - ce ve - - ro le - gem prae - stan - ti - a Vi -

Pa - - ce ve - - ro le - - gem prae - stan - - ti - - -

I, 1

28
get at - que re - - cti con - stan ti - - a;

a Vi - get at - - que re - - cti con - stan ti - - -

34
Pa - ce di - - es so - lu - tus et lae - -

a; Pa - ce di - - es so - lu - tus et lae - -

42

tus, No - - cte som - nus tra - hi - - tur qui - - e - -

tus, No - cte som - nus tra - hi - - tur qui - - e - -

50

tus; Pax do - cu - - it vir - gi - nem or - na -

tus; Pax do - cu - it vir - gi - nem or - na -

I, 2

58

re Au - ro co - mam cri -

re Au - ro co - mam cri -

66

Au - ro co - - mam cri - nes - que no - - da - - re;

nes - que no - da - re;

74

Pa - ce ri - - vi psal - len - tes et a - - ves

Faulx bourdon

Pa - ce ri - - vi psal - len - tes et a - - ves

Pa - ce ri - - vi psal - len - tes et a - - ves

80

Pa - tent lae - ti col - les - que su - a -

Pa - tent lae - ti col - les - que su - a -

I, 3

88

ves Pa - ce di - ves per - va - dit vi - a - tor

ves Pa - ce di - ves per - va - dit vi - a - tor

96

Tu - tus ar - va in - co - lit a - ra - tor.

Tu - tus ar - va in - co - lit a - ra - tor.

104

110

O san - cta pax, di -

O san - cta pax,

II, 1

118

u ex - pec - ta - - ta,
di - u ex - pec - - ta - ta,

126

Mor - ta - li - bus tam dul - cis, tam gra - -
Mor - ta - li - - bus tam dul - cis, tam gra -

134

ta,
Fauxbourdon
ta,
ta,
ta,

140

Sis ae - - ter - - na, fir -
Sis ae - - ter - - na,

II, 2

148

ma, si - ne frau - - de,
fir - ma, si - - ne frau - - de,

156

Fi - - - dem te - - - cum

Fi - - - dem te - - - cum

164

sem - per es - - se gau - - - de.

sem - per es - - se gau - - - de.

170

Et qui no - - bis, o pax, te de - -

Et qui no - - bis, o pax, te de - -

II, 3

178

de - - re

de - - re Pos - -

186

Pos - si - de - ant re - gnum si - ne fi - - ne:

si - - de - - ant re - - gnum si - ne fi - ne:

194

200

Sit no - ster hic pon - ti -
Sit no - - ster hic pon - ti - -
I - - - sti sunt du - -

[outside isorhythm]

206

fex ae - ter - - - - - nus:
fex ae - ter - - - - - nus:
ae - - - - - o - - - - - li - - - - - vae.

212

Eu - ge - ni - us et rex Si - gis - mun - dus.
Eu - ge - ni - us et rex Si - gis - mun - dus.
Eu - ge - ni - us et rex Si - gis - mun - dus.

215

A
Faulx bourdon
A
A

223

A

This block contains the musical notation for measures 223 through 228. It consists of three staves: a vocal line in the upper staff, a lute line in the middle staff, and a basso continuo line in the lower staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The vocal line begins with a whole note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, Bb5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, Bb6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, Bb7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, Bb8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, Bb9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, Bb10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, Bb11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, Bb12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, Bb13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, Bb14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, Bb15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, Bb16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, Bb17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, Bb18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, Bb19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, Bb20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, Bb21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, Bb22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, Bb23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, Bb24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, Bb25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, Bb26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, Bb27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, Bb28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, Bb29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, Bb30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, Bb31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, Bb32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, Bb33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, Bb34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, Bb35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, Bb36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, Bb37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, Bb38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, Bb39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, Bb40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, Bb41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, Bb42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, Bb43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, Bb44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, Bb45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, Bb46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, Bb47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, Bb48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, Bb49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, Bb50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, Bb51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, Bb52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, Bb53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, Bb54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, Bb55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, Bb56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, Bb57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, Bb58, C59, D59, 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Bb344, C345, D345, E345, F345, G345, A345, Bb345, C346, D346, E346, F346, G346, A346, Bb346, C347, D347, E347, F347, G347, A347, Bb347, C348, D348, E348, F348, G348, A348, Bb348, C349, D349, E349, F349, G349, A349, Bb349, C350, D350, E350, F350, G350, A350, Bb350, C351, D351, E351, F351, G351, A351, Bb351, C352, D352, E352, F352, G352, A352, Bb352, C353, D353, E353, F353, G353, A353, Bb353, C354, D354, E354, F354, G354, A354, Bb354, C355, D355, E355, F355, G355, A355, Bb355, C356, D356, E356, F356, G356, A356, Bb356, C357, D357, E357, F357, G357, A357, Bb357, C358, D358, E358, F358, G358, A358, Bb358, C359, D359, E359, F359, G359, A359, Bb359, C360, D360, E360, F360, G360, A360, Bb360, C361, D361, E361, F361, G361, A361, Bb361, C362, D362, E362, F362, G362, A362, Bb362, C36

02/08 *Supremum est mortalibus bonum*

Sources

Q 15 (II), fols. A 206v-207r, R 190v-191r, M 203, “du fay.” Full black notation with void coloration. Text in cantus and contratenor, incipits in the tenor. Rubrics in the cantus: “au faulx bourdon” at measures 1, 75, 135, and 216. The tenor has a lacuna (measures 111 to 194). These are copied on fol. 206v with the rubric “residuum tenoris, O sancta pax,” but no actual cue as to where they should be inserted.

BU, pp. 56-57, “G. du Fay. Pro pace. Pro duobus magnis luminaribus mundi.” Full black notation with void coloration and flagged semiminims. Text in cantus and contratenor, incipits and partial text in the tenor. Rubrics in the cantus: “faulx bourdon” at measure 1, “au faulx bourdon” at measures 135 and 216.

Cop 17, p. 14, fragment of the cantus.

ModB, fols. 66v-67r (new 69v-70r), “Dufay.” Text in cantus and contratenor, incipits and partial text in the tenor. Rubrics in the cantus: “au faulx bourdon” at measure 1, “faulx bourdon” at measures 75 and 135. Measures 1-110 of the tenor copied only once with a repeat sign and the first two mensuration signs.

MuEm, fols. 107v-109r. Text in cantus and contratenor. Incipit, “O sancta pax” in tenor (measure 111). Rubrics in the cantus: “faulx bourdon” at measures 1, 67 (sic, to measure 75), and 216.

Tr 92₁, fols. 32v-34r, “Dufay.” Text in cantus and contratenor, partial text in the tenor. Rubrics in the cantus: “a faulx bourdon” at measures 1, 75, 135, and 216. In fol. 34r measures 1-110 of the tenor were copied again, this time with the mensurations ϕ and $\phi 3$ one over the other. The scribe then cancelled the opening rests but forgot to cancel the first mensuration sign.

Clefs and Mensurations

		1	111	201
Cantus	c1	ϕ	$\phi 3$	ϕ
Contratenor	c3	ϕ	$\phi 3$	ϕ
Tenor	c4	ϕ	$\phi 3$	ϕ

Text

<p>Supremum est mortalibus bonum Pax, optimum summi Dei donum. Pace vero legem praestantia Viget atque recti constantia; Pace dies solutus est laetus, Nocte somnus trahitur quietus; Pax docuit virginem ornare Auro comam crinesque nodare; Pace rivi psallentes et aves Patent laeti collesque suaves Pace dives pervadit viator, Tutus arva incolit arator. O sancta pax, diu expectata, Mortalibus tam dulcis, tam grata, Sis aeterna, firma, sine fraude, Fidem tecum semper esse gaude. Et qui nobis, o pax, te dedere Possideant regnum sine fine: Sit noster hic pontifex aeternus: Eugenius et rex Sigismundus. Amen.</p>	<p>The highest good for mortals is peace, the best gift of God on high. In peacetime the supremacy of the law has force and constancy in right; in peacetime the day is free and happy, at night quiet sleep is prolonged; peace taught the maiden to adorn her hair with gold and tie it in a knot; in peacetime the streams and singing birds are seen to rejoice, and the pleasant hills; in peacetime the wealthy traveler reaches his destination, and the ploughman cultivates the fields in safety.</p> <p>O holy peace, long awaited, so sweet and pleasing to mortals, may you be eternal, firm, inviolate, and ever rejoice that good faith is with you. And may they that have given us you, O peace, possess their realms without end; let Eugene be our pope for ever and Sigismund our king. Amen</p>
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Tenor	
Isti sunt duae olivae.	These are two olives.

The organization of this piece is markedly different from that of all other motets of the first half of the fifteenth century. It makes use of two different cantus firmi, one for the isorhythmic section and another for a second section outside the isorhythm. The first cantus firmus is a freely composed melody divided rhythmically into three taleae of thirty breves, of which the last six are rests. There are two statements of this cantus firmus (and therefore six taleae). This is preceded by an *introitus* of twenty breves and followed by a non-isorhythmic ending lasting fifty-five breves divided as follows: twelve breves over a second cantus firmus, the first phrase of the antiphon *Isti sunt duae olivae*, twenty-one breves of three voice *cantus coronatus* setting the name of the pope and the emperor, and an amen lasting twenty-two breves. The cantus and the contratenor are non isorhythmic throughout. In the *Introitus*, the six-breve rests of taleae two and four, and in the first eight breves of the amen, the polyphony consists of *fauxbourdon* with the contratenor serving as the foundation voice. All the other passages when the tenor is silent consist of duets between the cantus and the contratenor. The appearances of passages in *fauxbourdon* do not seem to follow any pattern. Structure: I + c/3t > c/3t + P [3:2].

The text of the second cantus firmus, although absent from Q15, probably on account of the confusion produced when the scribe realized he had originally left out the last three taleae (his exemplar was probably copied as ModB and BU are copied), was surely intended to be sung, since it sets up the section with the names of the pope and the emperor. The melody is the opening of the magnificat antiphon used for SS John and Paul (but also for SS Peter and Paul and for their octave), CAO 3438 (LU 1510), transposed up a fourth.

The motet was written for the meeting of Pope Eugenius IV with King Sigismund on 21 May 1433. The motet was connected to the Peace of Viterbo (April 1433) through a long chain of misreadings by Rudolf von Ficker, De Van, and Bessler, detailed by Fallows.¹ As usual, André Pirro had the correct date, but his account was ignored by scholars who wrote later.² Laurenz Lütteken also provides an extended discussion of the dating.³ The ceremonial meeting between Eugenius and Sigismund is described in a letter of Poggio Bracciolini to Niccolò Nicoli.⁴ A full historical account of the meeting appears in Joseph Aschbach, *Geschichte Kaiser Sigismund's*.⁵ The coronation of Sigismund as emperor by Eugenius, depicted in the cover, took place ten days later, on 31 May 1433, but this image, from Filarete's bronze doors at St. Peter's Basilica, is the best known image of both men.

This is the first motet by Du Fay where, instead of a double cantus, the second texted voice lies well below the first and sometimes crosses below the tenor. In a perceptive reading of the motet as heard by an educated listener of Du Fay's time, Julie Cumming shows not only how startling and innovative *Supremum est mortalibus bonum* is, but to the extent that the different textures and rhythmic surfaces of the piece appear to have been deliberately composed to reference the union of sacred and secular traditions reflected in the meeting of the pope and the king.⁶ In Tr 92 the pope's name has been erased, and the king's name has been replaced with a "N" (for *nomen*). In MuEm the references to the pope and the emperor are replaced with references to Duchess Beatrix of Munich and her second husband, Pfalzgraf Johann von Neuberg.⁷

¹ David Fallows, *Dufay*, rev. ed. (London: Dent, 1987), 280, note 23.

² André Pirro, *Histoire de la Musique de la fin du XIV^e siècle à la fin du XVI^e* (Paris: Renouard Laurens, 1940), 70.

³ Laurenz Lütteken, *Guillaume Dufay und die isorhythmische Motette: Gattungstradition und Werkcharakter an der Schwelle der Neuzeit*, Schriften zur Musikwissenschaft aus Muenster 4 (Karl Dieter Wagner, Hamburg and Eisenach, 1993), 289-91.

⁴ Poggio Bracciolini, *Lettere*, ed. Helene Harth, 2 vols. (Florence: Olshki, 1984/087), I, no. 44.

⁵ Joseph Aschbach, *Geschichte Kaiser Sigismund's*, 4 vols. (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1838-45), IV, 107-14. See also Ferdinand Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter*, VII, 38-39.

⁶ Julie Cumming, *The Motet in the Age of Du Fay* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 158-63. Other analyses in Ludwig Finscher and Annegrit Laubental, " 'Cantiones quae vulgo motectae vocantur.' Arten der Motette im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert," *Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft*, III/2, ed. Carl Dahlhaus and Hermann Danuser (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1990), 301-2.

⁷ Ian Rumbold, "The Compilation and Ownership of the 'St. Emmeram' Codex," *Early Music History* 2 (1982), 161.

The *introitus* and the first three taleae are signed Φ , the last three taleae are signed $\Phi 3$, and the final section returns to Φ , the notation of the tenor is identical under both signs, and the organization is identical since the breve under $\Phi 3$ has three semibreves, and the *mensura* fall on the breve under both signs. It is likely, however, that Du Fay in this case intended the breve (and thus the *mensura*) in Φ to be two thirds of that in Φ , producing a faster tempo for the last three taleae of the isorhythmic section with a return to the original tempo at the end. The tempo shifts in this motet are among the least intuitive shifts one finds in music of this time, and Du Fay appears to have been aware of it because the rhythmic texture immediately after the shifts is about the simplest in the motet, with long values that would allow the performers to get their bearings easily. Both tempos were most likely intended to be fast, since in this piece Du Fay writes an unusually large number of dissonances on the semibreve, sometimes at the start of a mensuration unit in ways one rarely find in most of his other music. One dissonance that remains unbelievable is the one that would be produced by the strict observance of the fauxbourdon at measure 141, a ninth over the bass on a cadential sonority. Surely on the second read-through the singer would have broken the strict parallelism with the cantus and sung a D rather than an E, and that is what I have adopted. In any event, I would suggest a tempo of MM 120 to 144 for the semibreve in Φ , shifting to MM 180 to 216 in $\Phi 3$ (the beat, in both cases is on the perfect breve, moving at MM 40-48 in Φ and 60-72 in $\Phi 3$).