# *JEROME OF MORAVIA, O.P.*[1]

JEROME OF MORAVIA was born on the 30th of September 1200, at Olmutz, the Fortress gate of Bohemia, where his father, one of the Minnesingers attached to the Emperor's Court, had been rewarded with an estate by Frederick Barbarossa. As these Court musicians were, to a man, the creatures of the Ghibelline sovereigns, the son could not altogether escape the taint of heterodoxy that stamped the enemies of the Church, though this malign spirit was largely neutralised by the fidelity of his mother, Ysentrude, who, as a maid of honour to the wife of Conrad II of Hungary, had caught some measure of the intense piety that distinguished his daughter St. Elizabeth. At an early age the boy was placed in the care of the Archbishop, who wisely recommended the tempering influence of the severe discipline of the Song School. During his leisure hours between school and chancel Jerome found delight in fingering the psaltery,

[1]This short essay in aid of a biography of Jerome of Moravia is founded upon the following facts. (1) His musical compositions assigned to the first third of the century by Coussemaker, who thus dates J's birth about 1170; (2) The testimony of Echard that he entered (or left) the Sorbonne in 1260; (3) His treatise written after 1263; (4) Sundry fleeting references; (5) Naumann's evidence that he taught at Paris all his life and that all the notable musicians down to the time of John de Muris (d. 1380) were connected with Notre Dame and the Sorbonne. Grove's Dictionary dismisses Hieronymus de Moravia in four lines, but supplies a whole column, replete with dates, for his contemporary, Garland. Musical archaeology is still in its infancy. When Dr. Farmer's Arabian studies, the English Plainsong Society's works, the Notre Dame, La Sainte Chapelle, the Sorbonne, the Vatican and the Dominican archives have been ransacked, Jerome's career will stand out more clearly; but it will probably fall fairly closely within the lines I have indicated.

rota, gigue and symphony, and made the day merry with the simpler songs of the Troubadours. He would listen wide-eyed to his father's tales of the fifth Crusade and the Wartburg Tournament, though more frequently—for his father's visits were rare—he would fall asleep to his mother's stories of Tristram, Parsifal, the Nibelungs, and the Holy Grail. Soon ambition awoke and made the Cathedral school with its midnight Lauds distasteful. At fourteen he entered upon his *trivium* at Brunn, but he was old enough even then to find a magnet in Cologne, which was nearer Eisenach, the home of Reinmar, Wolfram and other stars in the Minnesingers' firmament; and nearer also to his father. He attained his immediate goal in 1216. At Cologne the quadrivial course was lightened by his passion for harmony and acoustics, but his hopes were dashed when his father made it plain to him that the knightly singers' calling was hastening to decay. At eighteen Jerome had to recognise the need of turning his talents into another channel. The career of Franco of Cologne, Organist of Paris University and Precentor of Notre Dame, indicated where that channel lay; moreover, while Law and Medicine might be had at any University, Paris was the only school of scientific Music. Jerome decided to try his fortunes there; but knowing the dislike with which his liege-lord, Frederick II, regarded Paris, and, fearing to compromise his father, he resolved to act as if kicking over the paternal traces. With money in his pouch and a rebec upon his shoulder, he sang his way to France *en Troubadour*.

He entered Paris in the spring of 1219, and found immediate favour with the German colony, which included students from Hungary, Bohemia, and even from his native principality. His arrival coincided with the return of two remarkable men, St. Dominic from

Toulon and John Garland from Toulouse.[2] Rumour told that Garland was the favoured candidate for the cantoral staff which Franco, now advanced in years, was anxious to resign. Jerome was too young to feel the new influence which the Friars had introduced into the worldly and sceptical atmosphere of the University; but, in common with many ardent spirits of his years, he was mysteriously stirred by the personality of the Dominican, Jordan of Saxony, and he felt himself drawn towards the Priory of St. James. The young Moravian was, however, absorbed in his art; in consequence of which the impression did little more than strain the Ghibelline salt from his blood, reinforce the teachings of his mother, and arouse his indignation against the persecution to which the Preachers were being subjected by Parisian society.

At twenty-one he graduated with musical distinction. In the treatise required for his degree he advocated a novel tuning of the Rybebe (viola) which his father had adopted from Arabian sources, *viz.*, in

[2]John Garland (see Grove) was English (according to W. G. Flood, Irish, from County Louth). At Oxford, 1206. At Paris, 1212, where he opened a school. In 1218 at the siege of Toulouse (probably invited by De Montfort to entertain the troops). After the migration from Paris, 1229, assisted in the formation of the University at Toulouse. Forced by Dominican 'persecution' to leave. After many dangers, escaped to Paris, where he was residing in 1245. Wrote five treatises. Roger Bacon declares that a man of some eminence named Garland was known in Paris about 1267. The reference to persecution leads to the surmise that Garland was either himself a heretic or an abettor of Count Raymond of Toulouse and that, when the Dominicans were charged with the duty of examining Manichaean suspects, Garland was refused a licence to teach. Since his 'escape' occupied some fifteen years, it is presumable that he returned to England. With respect to the date 1245, when Henry III of England was defeated in 1242 or the Albigenses were reduced to impotence in 1244, Garland may have thought himself free to revisit Paris.

fourths alone instead of fourths and fifths. As a practical test the examiner, Garland, ordered him to supply a discant to the antiphon *Gaudent*, sung by an assistant. At his own request, he was allowed to vary the free counterpoint of his mellow and powerful voice with a commentary on the bell-chimes, a form of specialism which won the applause of the assembled candidates. Having won his solfa baculum, he opened a school, and, on receiving the tonsure and the first two minor Orders, was made Precentor of St. Eustache. In this capacity he became known to the Queen Dowager Blanche, who invited him to the Palace to instruct the young prince Louis. His person, talents and frank amiability gave him a passport to the royal circle and in particular to the affections of Isabel of Chalons, whom he was permitted, after the coronation of Louis in 1226, to espouse in the private Chapel of the minstrel Count Thibaut. His fortunes were now in the ascendant; but the fact that he was in close accord with the King, the Bishop, the Chancellor, and the obnoxious Friars, detracted from his popularity with the vested interests of the University.

The traditional hostility between Town and Gown came to a head with a tavern brawl in 1228. The civic authorities acted with vigour and, as a protest, most of the lecturers and students left the city. The Cathedral School and the Friars' Institutes held the fort alone. The Dominicans were not disposed to abet the delinquents by embarking upon a sympathetic 'strike' which would leave the University derelict. At the same time Jordan, the Master General, worked for reconciliation and to such effect that by 1231 most of the Professors had resumed their offices. Garland also had joined in the great migration; but, when he returned, he found himself supplanted by the favourite of St. Eustache. In view of the crisis, the impediment

of marriage had been waived, and Jerome promoted Doctor of Music by privilege of the Bishop.

At the Chapel of St. James, where the laity were welcomed, Jerome had been struck by the decorum[3] which was reflected in the devotional heartiness of the melodic side of the Liturgy, at a time when harmony usurped the place of honour in the notable parish churches and piety and song appeared to be divorced. Jerome was wise enough to see that the prevailing fashion was an anomaly which he did not feel obliged to follow. At St. Eustache, therefore, he had endeavoured to extend the *Cantus choralis* and reduce the *discantus* to a minimum. He did not succeed. With Garland at the helm the opposing forces were too strong. At Notre Dame he had a freer hand. As a complement to the clerical *schola cantorum*, he reconstituted the University and parochial Choral Societies to enable the laity who thronged the nave to participate with greater profit in the collective singing. For the same purpose, with the help of Albertus of Cologne, he erected at the West End a powerful organ which, for richness of tone and facility of action, rivalled the Strasburg instrument, which had also been built to the acoustical design of Albertus Magnus, by Ulric of Engelbrecht. His own *conductus* (voluntaries) were played on a choir organ hidden behind a pillar in the chancel. The professional singers at the lectern were doubled and trebled and as far as possible put out of sight. Musical embroideries were confined within reasonable limits and nothing was sung which had not first been written. Boys were trained to supply the highest part of the four-voiced motets of which never more than two were heard at a single function. The cymbals, harp, 'choir' and sackbut were no longer heard even on the greater feast days. The organ alone

[3]The Dominican Order, at this time, were singular in chanting the office *coram Sanctissimo*.

was authorised, but even this was silenced in the penitential seasons. With the active support of the Bishop, he gradually evolved order out of what had long been threatening to terminate in chaos.

With peace secure at home and abroad Louis had by 1244 begun his preparations for the sixth Crusade. La Sainte Chapelle was ready to enshrine the relic of the Crown of Thorns in 1248. Jerome was the first of its long line of Chanters and, on the occasion of the King's marriage, was invested with the historic staff topped with the onyx head of Valentinian II. As Master of the King's Music, he was the cynosure and patron of all the minor composers and, remembering his own origin, he could not withhold his sympathy when Tannhauser,[4] reduced to indigence and repentance by the death of the excommunicate Frederick (1250), applied to him for help. At the royal table he was brought into closer contact with Robert, the royal chaplain, and with Vincent of Beauvais, St. Thomas Aquinas and Humbert de Romans, with each of whom he afterwards found occasion to collaborate.

By the end of the twelfth century the Gregorian chant had so far deteriorated into national dialects that, when the first generation of Friars, recruited as they were from many countries, assembled in Choir, they found it difficult to sing the Office without confusion. To remedy this the General Chapter at Cologne (1245) appointed a commission of four representatives from France, Spain, Lombardy and England to compile a uniform antiphonal. The book presented at Holborn in 1250 proved to be unacceptable and the delegates were instructed to amend their first attempt before the meeting at Metz in the following year. A 'Correc-

[4]An historic personage, fl. 1250. Wagner makes him a competitor at the Wartburg, 1207; also a suppliant at the feet of Urban IV (1261-1264)!

torium' was sanctioned in 1251; but after a three years' trial, it was found wanting in two respects; (1) it was an inferior compromise built up of numerous variants, and (2) its prolixity was against the spirit of the Constitutions. Nothing would suffice but a Gradual approved by historic, musical, liturgical, and Papal authority. The Master General was implored to take the matter into his own hands. Humbert, though preoccupied with more weighty matters, had no hesitation in accepting the task, since he felt confident that the chief composer of the age, though not a member of the Order, could be persuaded to solve the problem. Two things were imperative, namely to hark back to the source and to cut away the accretions. Jerome had the requisite knowledge at his fingers' ends; he was a man of moral repute; and, unlike Guido of Cherlieu, St. Bernard's agent in a similar difficulty, he had no narrow preconceptions. The Arch-Precentor was approached and at once suggested a new transcription of the Montpellier MS. Using his influence with the King, Humbert borrowed Jerome's services and, on his journey to Lyons secured the loan of the codex.[5] By the end of 1255 an authentic Gradual neatly divested of its interminable *melismata*, was awaiting the judgment of the Paris Chapter, 1256. It received immediate approval, and a preface, incorporating rules of interpretation counselled by the Royal Organist, was added by Humbert,

[5]The copy (1260) in the Brit. Mus. Add. 23935 is of French workmanship. Jerome was in Paris. The most expert musicians of the four provinces had wasted nine years on an unsatisfactory Gradual; Humbert uses a more trustworthy source and an unimpeachable book is complete in as many months. If the successful compiler were not Jerome, it is hard to believe that he allowed his name to be incorporated in a work that had come from the hand of a rival. As an archetype superior to that of St. Gall numerous Gregorians down to Dom Pothier have had recourse to the Montpellier MS.

who laid the work before Pope Innocent IV for final approval in 1257.

While Louis was away in the East, from 1248 to 1254, a revival of Manichaeism in Lombardy was followed by renewed hostility towards the Dominicans in Paris. Among the complaints, which cloaked the religious animosity of men like the minstrel Ruteboeuf and William de St. Amour, was the charge that the Dominicans taught theology to poor students *gratis*, thereby lowering the market price of learning. It occurred to the Treasurer, Robert, that the sting might be taken from the indictment if the secular professors could be induced to follow their example, and, with Louis's help, a college was opened in 1258 under Robert's own title of the Sorbonne. Its *familia* was to consist of associates rich or poor and guests admitted on a premium of £40 a year, all on a common footing of poverty; without taking vows, living the cenobitical life, and governed by a Prior under the administration of a Provisor. Jerome had by this time amassed considerable wealth and, as he was now a widower with a leaning towards the religious state, he made no demur when pressed by Louis to help to put the college on its feet by entering as a guest and making the Sorbonne his home. He wore the uniform, shared the common table and, in the intervals of directive work at La Sainte Chapelle, placed his musical talents freely at the disposal of the poorest students of the University. But his heart was not in the Sorbonne. Close association with the Dominicans had long been tempting him to throw in his lot with them unreservedly. In 1260 he gave up his fellowship, and took the black and white habit of St. Dominic.[6] He came at the very moment when the

[6]Echard (Scrip. Vol. I, p. 159) says: 'He seems to have flourished in the middle of the thirteenth century about the time of Aquinas, and for some years at least to have lived in the

Order had need of a friar with such musical knowledge as he possessed. Numerous copies of the Gradual of 1256 had been multiplied, but the rules laid down by Jerome had failed to bring about uniformity of execution. The living voice was indispensable. To Jerome was therefore assigned the task of regulating the melodic medium of the daily Office; so that the Paris choir became the standard for the Order; and students, sent for the purpose, carried back to every Dominican house the choral method of St. James's and everywhere the Brethren sang as with a single voice.

St. Thomas about this time was lecturing at Paris and living under the same roof with Jerome till his departure in 1261. Two years later he was charged by Pope Urban IV with the composition of the Office of *Corpus Christi*. It was necessary that the hymns should be composed on models the melodies of which were already popular with the laity. Thus the *Laudes Crucis* of Adam of St. Victor was taken as the pattern

Priory of St. James at Paris. I infer this from the testimony of Peter of Limoges, the *socius* both of Jerome and Robert of Sorbonne, the latter of whom was Jerome's *Socius et aequalis* (the technical term for an accredited member) from 1260.' *Socius* may mean contemporary, fellow student, candidate on probation, or merely friend. Robert (1201-1274) was an accredited member from the start (1258) and Peter and Jerome became attached between 1258 and 1274. Since both St. James's and the Sorbonne were theological colleges, Jerome must have developed his musical powers before he entered either. As a professed monk he could not have proceeded from the Dominican to the secular institute. He joined the Sorbonne first. As he was not a theologian he must have been one of the paying guests. The citation reads as if he were accepted in 1260 and after some years (when, according to Coussemaker, he would be approaching ninety) he became a Dominican. It is more reasonable to believe that he entered in 1258 and that 1260 marks the date of his departure, after which Robert and Jerome continued the intimate relations (*socii*).

for the *Lauda Sion*. For a tonal artist for his antiphons, however, the Angelic Doctor had not far to seek; nor was it mere coincidence that the first poet of the century should have for illustrator the first musician.

The last to seek a brotherly tribute from 'the old theorist' was the Librarian of St. Louis and Tutor to his sons, Vincent of Beauvais, who was still engaged upon his life-work, the *Speculum Mundi*, an epitome of all that was known of philosophy, science and art. He and Jerome occupied adjacent cells. With the consent of his superior Jerome agreed to contribute a monograph upon Music and in 1264 began the work entitled *Discantus vulgaris positio*. After forty years of intimate acquaintance with music and musicians, no one was so well equipped to review the harmonic achievements of his predecessors at Notre Dame, to report upon the summaries of Cotto, Garland, 'Aristotle,' the Anonymi and the Arabian Al Farabi, or to appraise the wisdom of the *Ars cantus mensurabilis* of John of Burgundy, recently promoted provost of the new Hospice of St. John at Cologne.[7] There was a higher motive. If Jerome had learned the reverent ordering of melody from St. James's Priory Chapel, St. Thomas had seen at La Sainte Chapelle how harmony in the hands of a loyal *emeritus* could be made to serve the needs of religion. Moreover, he foresaw that the world would never content itself with melody alone, or even with melody enriched with diaphony and that, as soon as the discantual stem

[7]Jerome begins his description of the *Ars cantus mensurabilis* with the remark, ' This work, commonly attributed to Franco of Cologne, was written, as we have heard from his own lips, by John of Burgundy, Provost of the Hospital of St. John at Cologne ' (founded 1263). (Oxf. Hist., Vol. ii). The value of his own treatise is measured by the verdict that the four rules of harmony he enunciated have remained unshaken to this day (Naumann).

should have flowered into polyphony, the Church herself would seize upon it to adorn her Liturgy. In the *Lauda Sion* therefore he crystallised the norm of Sacred Music in a four-stringed Lyra Eucharistica.

*Sit laus plena, sit sonora, sit jucunda, sit decora,* which rightly tuned (all four conditions duly observed) and rightly plucked (in obedience to canonical law) imparted a *mentis jubilatio*; not a gratification of the aesthetic taste, but an exhilaration of the soul. But, besides being sacred (*decora*) and suitable for general participation (*plena*), harmony (*sonoritas*) must be real (*jucunda*). Jerome was now a professed Preacher, but so situated as to render his pen more effective than his tongue. The system he had restored as Cathedral Cantor taught by example the right manipulation of the Lyre; in his treatise he disclosed how it might be set in tune. He lived to see the initial diffusion of his doctrine. He died in 1278 among his Brethren at St. Jacques.

What is his chief title to honour? Jerome and Palestrina are among the few great harmonists commended in episcopal documents; not for their music but for something more. The Church to-day is suffering still from the inability of the Council of Trent to do in 1563 what Pope John XXII was able to do with a stroke of the pen in 1322. By 1400 sacred song had reverted to its normal condition as a handmaid to the Liturgy, but scarcely a third of the succeeding period of a hundred and fifty years had elapsed when the Springtide of the Renaissance flooded the Church with a kind of music which later added to the strength of the great revolt. The Council appointed a Commission of eight cardinals to advise upon measures to counteract this menace. Six were for abolishing all music but the Chant; but St. Charles and Cardinal Ghislieri (later Pius V), recognising the danger of

such rigorous procedure, urged delay and, in view of the promise held out by Palestrina's *Missa P. Marcelli*, the opinion of the minority prevailed. Beyond the reaffirmation of the pre-eminence of the Chant, nothing else was done. It was otherwise with John XXII. In the encyclical, *Docta sanctorum*, he made no complaint of liturgical abuses, but merely pointed out that the complexity of harmony thrust the chant into a position of inferiority. Harmony was therefore to be deposed. The order was immediately and gladly carried out byv the clergy and the reform remained effective for over a century. Yet one hundred and fifty years before (1170) John of Salisbury and Aelred of Rievaulx were writing in scathing terms of the theatrical fatuities of the professional singers in the chancel. How came Pope John to achieve what appears to be so radical a measure without the slightest opposition? The explanation appears to be that the second fifty years of the period he concluded had been ushered in with a decisive check upon liturgical licence.

All musical historians are at one in testifying that Jerome's career marked an emphatic and immediate change, but they are suspiciouslv reticent as to its characteristics. A tradition had come down to them and this had to be defined in terms of music: wherefore Jerome is made to stand at the parting of the ways between the *Ars antiqua* and the *Ars nova*. But as the new art was born with *falso bordone* (*c.* 1350) became articulate with Dunstable (*c.* 1450), and reached maturity with Palestrina (*c.* 1550), we are not impressed with the suddenness of the transformation. We get a clue to the tradition, however, from the casual observation that there were 'no innovations in the Church after Jerome's time.' This is expanded into the assertion that a slackening of polyphonic output is noticeable; but the statement is belied by the

quality of the 'Tournai' mass (*c.* 1320)[8] which, though archaic enough, is just so much in advance of Jerome's attainments as one might hope for after fifty years of progress. By 'innovations' the Church historian means 'liturgical aggressions.' The tradition manifestly points to a liturgical reform spontaneously effected by Jerome of Moravia. Not that he could exhaust the credit for so wide a movement; for the *Summa* of St. Thomas, the Eucharistic act of Urban and the heavy hand of the gentle Louis co-operated in the *eliminatio noctis* and the *fugatio vetustatis* of the Sequence; but had John Garland stood for fifty years in Jerome's place, Pope John would have had to struggle against a problem as formidable as that which confronted Pope Pius IV. If the Renaissance in Christian Art is the triumph of the principle of Art for Art's sake, then Jerome of Moravia's title to distinction is that he staved off the musical phase of the Reformation for at least two hundred years.

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[8]It may have been the 'Tournai' mass which roused the Pope to action. This mass which harmonised even the response to the 'Ite' was one bespoken by the Tournai notaries for performance at their Guild service. So far as we know, it was the first attempt to deprive the laity of their right to sing the Ordinary of the Mass in a public church. Machaut's *Messe du sacre* 1360 (for the consecration of Charles V), was no invasion of this right. The harmonised mass is legitimate even in the cathedral. In 1408 (Oxf. Hist.) the only harmony employed at Notre Dame was *organum* or *falso bordone* supplied occasionally by boys. Pope John's *Extravaganza* was therefore a self-denying ordinance for the sake of example.