

# Apta caro – Flos virginum

The motet “Apta caro – Flos virginum” is probably one of the most outstanding achievements of Gothic artistic expression. The greatest formal rigidity here brings forth the most natural expressiveness. Like twining vines the melody weaves itself around the intricate chicaneries of the isorhythmic structure, always maintaining its aspect of hovering, a phenomenon that is constantly renewing itself.

The soul of the tenor and thus of the entire composition is the wonderful melody of the famous antiphon “Alma redemptoris mater”, which for centuries inspired so many great musicians to try their hand. The color of this melody is presented twice. The entire work is divided into three taleae. Color and talea therefore do not coincide but rather overlap, each talea showing a highly intricate form. It consists of three times three compound measures, each being divided into three brevis measures, and thus links different strings of syncopes which permeate each other.

To this is added the contratenor with its similarly complex rhythmic structure. Both tenor lines complement one another in such a way that there never is a general rest in the underlying structure of the motet.

This is the prerequisite for a constant series of hockets in the two upper parts. The hocket may be interpreted as a rejoicing which provides adequate artistic expression to the religious theme of this solemn Marian motet. The upper parts move in 9/8 time, leading within the overall structure to six rhythmic levels of integration with an internal proportion of 1:3.

Each of the two upper voices preserves its own character. The motetus progresses primarily in stepwise motion and in comparatively calm note values, played about by the ecstatically leaping triplum. Even where the two merge into a single sound, there is a continuing sense of their essential difference.

What allows these many elements to grow into one brilliant organism is probably the succession of sounds that are initiated by the pedal notes of the Alma melody. From here emanates the warmth, the quiet breath which turns this highly artificial construct into a message of humanity.

Olaf Raitzig

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Codex Ivrea folio 5v–6r,  
Trém, CaB, Ch, Mod, Dur, Fsl

♩ ~ 72  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$ ;  $\frac{3}{4}$   $\frac{3}{4}$

A-  
Flos

10 15  
pta ca-ro plu-mis in ge-ni-i de-si-di-e bar-rum et stu-di-i  
vir-gi-num de-cus et spe-ci-

Contra tenor

Tenor Alma redemptoris mater

16 21  
la-bo-ris-que fo-co mol-li-ti-es et con-iu-ga cen-tro seg-ni-ti-es, quo  
es, ad-ul-te-re lu-cis con-

22 27  
pi-gres-cit plum-bum con-su-mi-to, na-blum tan-ge-vo-cis plus so-li-to,  
nu-bi-o non in-di-ga vel au-ri-ra-di-

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28 33

duc pul - mo - nis carbasis car - di-nem lingue li-ni gutt-ris arund-inem tu-am Cli-o

o, si gem-ma - rum ve - spe - ra-scit di - es te sur-

34 39

li - tu - ram lit-te-re quam co-netur in pre-ces fun-de - re. Ju-sto pri - us a mo - tu pe-cto-ris om-ni scal-pro

gen - te. De-

40 45

po - li - at re - tho - ris cri - spa- tu - ra Ci-te - i pe - cti - nis

cor i - pse, quo ni-chil gra - ti - us, et a-

46 51

sti - lo lau - des pa-ren - tis vir-gi-nis, mi-se-re-ri qua so-la tra - hi - tur iu - stus

gra - da gra - ti - e li - ne - a, qua Stix a-

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52 57

Mi-nos et qua Mors mo-ri- tur. A - ge ca-ro, rum-pe vi-va - ri - a  
trum sol, squa - lor tra- be- a, li - mus o - strum, quo tin - xit Ti - ri-

58 63

laci-marum, pre cum su-spi-ri - a tam po-tenti vo-me pro-fun-ditus su-um tu-us spi-ritum spi-ri-  
us, fit can - den - te. Mul-

64 69

tus. Ad-e - ri - gi po-scat im-per-vi - a no-us al-me Tem- pe ce-le - sti - a,  
ta bis- sus vir - tu-tum, cal-cu-

70 75

et Cer- be-rus quem fa - mes tor - que-at, te spera-tam per-de - re lu-ge-at! O  
lo nu- me - ro - rum non cer - ta,

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76 80

pro - pri - a bo - ni - ta - te de - a de - o nu - pta to - ti - us i - de - a  
fi - li - a na - ti, ma - ter pa - tris, plu - e

81 85

for - me, cu - ius non pos - se fi - ge - re gra - dus pu - det na -  
pi - a, la - cri - ma - rum nim - bos pro po - pu - lo

86

tu - ram mi - se - re: Car - ni hu - ma - ne subve - ni pro - pe - re.  
te po - scen - te.