The Latin Playwright Georgius Macropedius (1487–1558) in European Contexts

Edited by

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Georgius Macropedius, engraving by Philips Galle, in Benito Arias Montano, Virorum doctorum de disciplinis bene merentium effigies XLIII (Antwerpen: [n.pub.], 1572)
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Macropedius and Music: Georgius Macropedius as a Composer of Songs for the Theatre and Other School Performances

Louis Peter Grijp

The theatrical works of Macropedius contain a striking amount of singing. Does that mean that Macropedius had a special affinity with music? Was he musical? What role did music actually play in his life? Did he teach music at the Latin schools where he worked?

Let’s begin with the last question, although it is not as easy to answer as one might think. It is not clear to what extent music was taught at the Latin schools in Liége and Utrecht where Macropedius taught. Music is not mentioned in the curricula that have been preserved from those schools during Macropedius’s time. The students devoted their time primarily to Latin and Greek: grammar, prosody, writing letters and poems, logic and rhetoric, debate and declamation, and classical literature. In addition, there were naturally also religion classes. In the detailed curriculum that has survived from the Utrecht Sint Hieronymusschool (St Jerome School) of 1565 (about eight years after Macropedius had left it),¹ the lesson plans are listed for every hour of each of the eight classes in the school, but music is not mentioned.

And yet Macropedius put his name to a school textbook of sacred songs: Hymni & sequentiae, which must have been published in 1552 in ’s-Hertogenbosch. No

¹ Macropedius worked from about 1530 until 1557 at the St Jerome School. The curriculum of 1565 is summarized in Henk Giebels and Frans Sliu, Georgius Macropedius (1487–1558): Leven en werken van een Brabantsche humanist (Tilburg: Stichting Zuidelijk Historisch Contact, 2005), pp. 133–36.

Translation by Ruth van Baak Griffioen.
copy is known to have survived,² so it is difficult to say what Macropedius’s contribution was. This was most likely a school edition of a previously published hymn book. In the numerous other school texts that Macropedius wrote — about grammar, logic, the art of letter writing, etc. — we find almost nothing about music. His book about metrics (Prosoedia, 1550) contains a few notes of music, to show the students how to imagine the long and short syllables of the verse metres. In Macropedius’s textbook about the ecclesiastical calendar (Kalendarium chironometricum, 1541) we finally find an observation about music lessons. Macropedius introduces a simple counting method, which he lays out in simple verses. Whoever wants to know more, he says, must consult what ‘very learned men’ have written. ‘Precisely because these books by those men do exist, I have decided to leave out what I dictated to my students twelve years ago about measure and melody in church music.’³ This passage tells us that Macropedius taught music twelve years before 1541, in other words, in 1529. At that time he was still active in Liège. But in a curriculum preserved from the St Jerome School in Liège in 1536, music lessons are still not mentioned.⁴ From other Latin schools we know for certain that music was taught. At the successful Latin school in Zwolle, for example, the students had to go to church at 6 AM, 7 AM, and 9 AM to sing Mass.⁵ In Utrecht the education at the chapter schools consisted of Latin, that is, grammar and a bit of logic, and also music. These are the three subjects consistently mentioned in the case of other late medieval schools.⁶ The singing and music lessons were necessary so that the boys could sing during the various worship services. The St Jerome School, however, organized along humanist lines, offered an alternative: here the emphasis was on classical Latin, and Greek was also offered. This aim was heartily supported by city authorities. An edict even stated that boys of twelve who wanted to further their study of Latin had to go to the St Jerome School; the Cathedral Chapter School, on the other hand, was henceforth to concentrate on church music lessons. Intelligent boys whose voices had broken could obtain a grant from the chapter to finish their education at the St Jerome School.⁷

Music in the Modern Devotion

Music thus played a subordinate role in humanist schools such as the St Jerome School. This came about also because music was viewed with diffidence by the Brothers of the Common Life, that is, the Modern Devotion movement, to which Macropedius belonged. These men had deep reservations against the magnificent polyphony that so blossomed in the Netherlands just at this point in the sunset years of the late Middle Ages. The masses and motets of Josquin, Obrecht, Pierre de la Rue, and all the other world-famous composers of the Low Countries served, in the eyes of the followers of the Modern Devotion, only the outer pomp and circumstance of the Church. As far as they were concerned, what really mattered — that the words of the devotion of the faithful should be expressed — got lost in the virtuoso counterpoint of the time. The voices entered one after another, more often than not in canon, and then tumbled all over each other, so that practically nothing of the words could even be understood. Within the Modern Devotion communities, in both the cloisters as well as the brotherhoods, they strove for music that was easily understood, and which moreover would not distract from the message because of its musical virtuosity. When they sang in harmony, they did so in the simplest possible way, ‘note against note’, with the text occurring simultaneously in the various voices, so that the text remained perfectly understandable. This did require some musical training; at the very least the singers had to be able to read musical notation. But that level of musical ability was nothing compared to what a member of a polyphonic church choir had to be able to do.⁸

² The last mention of this book is by Jean Noël Paquot, Mémoires pour servir a l’histoire littéraire des dix-sept provinces des Pays-Bas..., vol. xii (Leuven: Imprimerie Académique, 1768), p. 209.
³ Among the works of Macropedius Paquot lists Hymni & Sequentiæ, quibus... Dominici & Festi Diebus utimur, brevibus... Scholiis illustrati. Syllae-Ducis 1552. ⁴ See also Giebels and Slits, Georgius Macropedius, p. 178.
⁵ Giebels and Slits, Georgius Macropedius, p. 165. That Macropedius considered adding something about music to this calendar and calculation book can likely be explained by the double meaning of the subject of musica: not only practical (church) music but also the theoretical subject of proportions, demonstrated with string lengths.
⁶ According to Joannes Sturm in 1536, excerpted in Giebels and Slits, Georgius Macropedius, p. 86.
⁷ Giebels and Slits, Georgius Macropedius, p. 178.

Theatre Performances at the St Jerome School

Macropedius's Modern Devotion background would most likely have strengthened his humanistic outlook on music. The goal of music for him would not have been primarily to embellish liturgy but rather to contribute to an upbringing within classical culture. In that case too the text took pride of place, while music might better be kept as simple as possible. Various genres offered opportunities to advance this goal, such as theatre pieces on classical models and annual songs. In addition, these two genres could include not only classical but also religious themes.

Indeed Macropedius in his theatrical works called for a great deal of music, choruses, and songs: about sixty musical numbers within eleven plays. This makes them reminiscent in a way of the musicals that are nowadays performed in schools. Once per year all the stops are pulled out to make such a performance a success. This would also have been the case with Macropedius's 'comedies', as they were called. In principle there was a theatrical performance at the end of each semester. Traces of this are found here and there in the city accounts. So for instance in 1526 or 1527 the 'clerks of St Jerome' gave a 'suverlick batement' (religious play) on the feast day of Mary Magdalene 'opte plaets' (on the square in front of the Utrecht city hall). The city council paid them six pounds as a treat for the performers. 9

Ten years later in 1537, and thus during the time that Macropedius served as rector, the students of the St Jerome School played a 'comedy and play' on Saint Lambert's Day; the city council paid 'twelve quarts of wine' to a certain Jan Spruyt, probably a barkeep. In 1548, innkeeper Ryck Verhorst gave eight 'municipal tankards' of wine at the city council's expense to the 'Rector of the St Jerome School and the masters who performed the play'. The rector must have been Macropedius, who fulfilled that function at that time. Performances from later times are also documented in the city accounts. The annual occasions must have continued throughout the entire sixteenth century. The poet Joost van den Vondel remembered that when he was ten years old (which was around 1597) he saw a performance by the students of the St Jerome School in Utrecht. In front of the city hall a podium was constructed with a drawbridge attached to it. Goliath and his army had to march over this, until David's slingshot hit him, so that the giant 'crashed down so hard the stage cracked'.10

The performances were evidently quite spectacular, and the drinking money that was paid out indicates that they were valued from the higher-ups. This was all good for the school's image, the rector would have realized. But that was not his primary purpose. For Macropedius it was mostly about the students sharpening their memories and developing their vocabularies and fluency, he writes in the prologue to his play Andrisca. They learned to present themselves. But they could also learn moral lessons from the plays. All things considered, giving plays was highly beneficial for the pupils' education.11

Music in the Plays

For Macropedius the choruses were important for the structure of the play and for the rhythm of the performance. Each of his plays (and also those of many of his colleagues) was divided into five acts, and the choruses served to separate the acts one from another.12 The action stopped for a moment, and the choir could sing something contemplative about what had just happened, often a moral lesson to be drawn or a general nugget of wisdom. Macropedius used the chorus this way already in one of his first plays, Rebelles (1535). This comedy, Macropedius's liveliest, is about the fate of two naughty boys, or 'rebels'. The central problem is discipline. The boys' mothers have spoiled them, sending them to school on the condition that they not receive any corporal punishment. This was evidently a topic under discussion at the time. Macropedius, as an experienced teacher at a strict school, was of the opinion that in an extreme case one had to be able to deliver a drubbing. Without that, chaos would ensue. And that is exactly what happens in Rebelles.

In the first act, the mothers present their sons to Master Aristippus (whose name means more or less 'the best horse in the stable') and demand that there not be any hitting. And the end of the act, the choir of schoolboys13 sings that a soft-

12 Foreword from Vondel, Salmoneus, cited in Giebels and Slits, Georgius Macropedius, p. 106: 'nederplote, dat de stellaedje kraeckte'.
13 More about the goals of the Latin school play can be found in Bloemendal, Spiegel van het dagelijks leven?, pp. 64–68.
14 By no means, however, do all humanist plays contain choruses.
15 'Chorus ex Aristippicae Scholae auditoribus' (The Choir of the Students of the School of Aristippus).
The choir sings about the ruin to which money can so easily lead. Meanwhile we've
hearted upbringing will eventually work against the mother (the first stanzas of the
choruses are printed with music in Appendix 1, pp. 74–76 below).16 This chorus
reacts to what has occurred and points in general terms to the calamity to come.
After the chorus, the action continues. The boys secretly play a game during class
and come to blows. This puts them in the position to be soundly thwacked by the
master. The chorus rounds off the act with the thought that a teacher must not be
afraid to dole out blows if the situation calls for it.

And so it goes. In the third act the indignant mothers haul their little dears out
of school and give them money to go into business. Everyone but the mothers
understands that this will come to nothing, and the choir sings that women are
disastrous beings — evidently Macropedius had a lot to experience with angry
mothers. Then everything really does go wrong. The friends quickly burn through
their money at bars and brothels, and when the money's gone they rob a farmer.
The choir sings about the ruin to which money can so easily lead. Meanwhile we've
arrived at the fifth and final act. The rebels have been arrested and sentenced to the
gallows. But then Master Aristippus shows up as the angel of deliverance: he makes
use of his privilegium fori, meaning that students who've gone bad must be judged
by the school rector instead of the usual judge. So all's well that ends well, and
everyone understands the necessity of corporeal punishment for problem students.

The play does not end with a chorus, but rather with a spoken epilogue. That
means that the chorus does not function so much as the conclusion of an act but
as an intermezzo, literally as an en acte. It does, however, often look back at the
preceding act. The chorus puts into words the moral lessons that Macropedius's
students could pick out of the comedy: 1) spare the rod and spoil the child,
2) hitting is a necessary evil, 3) women are stupid, and 4) money leads to ruin. All
of this is naturally easier to remember once you've sung it and, moreover, sung
from memory.

What must the performance of these choruses have been like? They were, in any
case, sung. How large the choir was we do not know. Elsewhere in the neoclassical
theatre literature the figure of four singers is stated, but we don't know whether
Macropedius followed that rule. In seventeenth-century Dutch theatre the usual
number of singers in a choir was just two. In principle at the St Jerome School the
choir would have consisted of boys. In the biblical play Lazarus mendicus, however,
a choir of both boys and girls is called for. It is conceivable that for the perfor-
mance, male students were dressed as girls.

In the complete edition of Macropedius's theatrical works, the Omnes fabulae
comicae published by Harmannus Borculous in Utrecht (1552–53), music nota-
tion accompanies almost every chorus.17 The melodies are notated monophon-
ically. That does not necessarily imply that they were performed that way; more
likely they would have been accompanied by instruments such as the lute, bass viol,
harpischord, or organ, but there is no concrete evidence for this. It is also possible
that there were sung vocal accompaniments. Occasionally in the edition of the
Omnes fabulae comicae something of a two-voiced practice appears. Lazarus mendi-
cus for instance includes two refrains that are to be sung by angels, and they are
notated in two voices. In Josephus the entire first chorus is printed in two voices, for
soprano and tenor.

These are not random additions, as can be seen from an earlier, separate edition
of Lazarus mendicus by J. Turnhout in 's-Hertogenbosch (1545). In this edition
most of the choruses and other songs are set to two voices, either the whole or just
the refrain. To most of the melodies a simple vocal bass has been applied in the same
rhythm as the upper voice (see Appendix 2, pp. 76–82 below). The bass does not
in any way detract from the intelligibility of the text. The impression given is that
Lazarus mendicus was always performed with two voices, and probably the other
plays as well, but that the idea with the Omnes fabulae comicae was to present the music as uniformly as possible; in this case, monophonically. Perhaps the budget
was tight or the printer Borculous possessed limited possibilities. He used block
printing, in which all notes and stems are carved by hand from a single block of
wood. This system was used primarily in books containing far more text than music,
such as music treatises. In actual books of music it was customary to print from
single types, one for every note. Editions of Macropedius's theatrical works
fall in the category of books with more text than music. Borculous's music
woodcuts sometimes look a bit clumsy, but then, he was also one of the first people
to print music in the northern Netherlands.18 Apart from Lazarus mendicus, earlier

16 All the monophonic theatre-music of Heautus is published in Rochus von Liliencron, 'Die
Chorgesänge des lateinisch-deutschen Schuldramas im XVI. Jahrhundert', Vierteljahrschrift für
Musikwissenschaft, 6 (1890), 309–87, and in the excellent but unpublished master's thesis by
Dekker, 'Georgius Macropedius en de muziek'.

17 About this publication, see Frans Slits, 'Ratse! urn Omnem Georgii Macropedi Fabulac Comi-
cae', in Ad Litteras: Latin Studies in Honour of J. Brouwers, ed. by Arpad P. Orbán and Marc G. M.

18 As far as we know, Borculous began music printing in 1539, when he printed Macropedius's
annual song 'Ode de extremo Christi judicio'. Around the same time in Antwerp, the leading city
of the Dutch book trade, true books of music appeared in which first the staff lines were printed
and then the notes, a process which produces a cleaner result than block printing does. Examples
include the Devot ende Profitelicky Boeckchen (Devout and Helpful Book, 1539) and the
(separate) editions of Macropedius's theatre plays were published without music notation. It is possible that the inexperience of Dutch printers with music printing played a role here.

So despite Borculous's monophonic presentation it is possible that the choruses from other plays by Macropedius were sung in two parts, just as those from *Lazarus mendicus* were, although there is no evidence for this, at least not for the performances in Utrecht. We do find a polyphonic chorus in the Cologne edition of Macropedius's *Andrisca* (1539). The chorus is set to four voices, the first section note-against-note, the second section more polyphonic, with voices that imitate each other and thus interweave. That does not align with the principles of the humanists and the Modern Devotion. Macropedius is likely not to have had a hand in that edition, and indeed in the *Omnes* edition a different melody is printed altogether. Evidently new music was composed for a performance in a place with a richer singing tradition than the Utrecht St Jerome School. Macropedius's plays were in any case performed all over Europe: he was the leading Latin playwright of his time.

It is striking that not all the music in Borculous's edition is notated for high voices, as one might expect for a boy choir. The first two choruses of *Rebeles*, for example, are notated in alto clef (with the C-clef on the middle line), and the third chorus with the C-clef on the top line, which corresponds to the baritone clef (F-clef on the middle line). In *Lazarus mendicus*, the angels sing in soprano clef, but Lazarus sings in the baritone clef. In the two-voiced version of *Lazarus mendicus* the second voice is usually notated in baritone clef. In the *Omnes* edition the bass clef is often used in the other plays. We don’t have to take the notated pitches literally, but if Macropedius had been working only with boy sopranos and altos he would definitely have used higher clefs. The plays were in fact performed mostly by boys from the highest classes, whose voices would have in many cases already broken. In addition, that effect is less strong than one might think. The voices of twenty-first-century boys have long since broken by age eighteen, but in earlier times the voice change occurred markedly later than nowadays, owing, one gathers, to different nutritional levels and general health standards. Even some of Macropedius's older students would still have been able to sing quite well with their high boy's voices.

Souterliedekens (Psalm Songs, 1540). The so-called Kamper Liedboek (Songbook from Kampen), also dated to about 1540, includes polyphonic music.

12 This composition is published in Von Liliencron, 'Die Chorgesänge', pp. 369–70.
be accompanied by dance in service to the action, but this would not have been a general rule.

Macropedius as a Composer

Where did Macropedius get the melodies? It is generally assumed that Macropedius himself composed the music for the choruses in his plays. That is probably true, although strictly speaking there is little evidence for it. The only information we have consists of two distichs under the 1572 portrait of Georgius Macropedius:

Quae referas nostris grata spectanda theatris
Argumenta sacrae suscipis historiae.
Idem animi numerosque potes cecinisse Georgi
Strinxisse in numeros carminis inque notas.

The subjects you bring to our theatres for us to enjoy watching
You take from the holy histories.
And in the same spirit, Georgius, you can sing verses
And fit them into the metres (numeros) of both the poetry (carminis) and of the musical notes (notas.)

We could interpret those last words to mean that Macropedius wrote the music for his verses. Moreover, everything points in that direction. To begin with, the melodies are simple, as Macropedius himself says on the title page of Omnes Jabulae comicae (Utrecht, 1552). Arguing that he was the composer, his texts of the choruses are taken over from Rebelles, for example, have very comparable melodies, especially similar in rhythm. That is also because Macropedius — we're now going on the assumption that he was the composer — wanted to express the metre of the verses in the rhythm of the music. The texts of all four choruses are written in iambic dimeters, that is, each line of verse consists of two iambs twice. Given that each iamb consists of one short and one long syllable, the rhythm of such a verse would in principle be a series of eight notes, alternating short and long. The first verse of the chorus at the end of the first act can serve as an example: 'Ma-trum per in-dul-gen-ti-am'. The boldface syllables are long — they form the second, long syllable of each iamb — and receive a long note in the music. Because the remaining lines of verse have the same metre, this could very well get rather dull. But in the second verse Macropedius permits a variation. In 'Gna-to-rum et in-so-len-ti-am', the syllable -len- should be set to a long note and -ti- to a short one, but Macropedius switches the two. A similar metric reversal (a sort of hemiola) occurs frequently in the dance music of the time. In this way Macropedius introduces crucial variety to his iambic dimeters, the metre he also used for the remaining choruses of Rebelles.

But this alone does not completely avert uniformity, we notice if we sing through the choruses of Rebelles. The melodic figure of a stepwise falling fifth, for instance, is used in the second and fourth line of the stanzas of the first chorus, but also in three of the four lines of the second chorus and in the last line of the fourth chorus. At other moments in the Rebelles choruses this falling figure is worked out in a slightly different manner. In other words, the four chorus melodies resemble each other not only rhythmically but also melodically. In addition, Macropedius's modal choices are also uniform: almost all his melodies are in the Dorian mode, which was in fact the most commonly used mode in the popular music of his time.

All this uniformity does not exactly point in the direction of a very creative compositional talent, and that applies also to the variety — or rather, lack of variety — among the melodies in the rest of Macropedius's work. The rector reused his own melodies too, more than once. The four melodies of the choruses from Rebelles, for example, recur in a number of other plays. In Aluta (1535), which comes from about the same time as Rebelles, at least three chorus melodies are taken over from Rebelles. They are sung by a choir of housewives from Bunschoten, a fishing village in which Macropedius liked to set his comedies. In Petricus (1536) all the melodies come from Rebelles and Aluta. The third and fourth choruses from Asotus (1537) are sung to the melodies of the third and fourth choruses of Rebelles.

Not only did Macropedius reuse melodies from one play to another, he also did so within one and the same play. In Bassarius (1540), for example, all the choruses are set to the same melody, and the same is true in Adamus and Hypomone seu patientia. In Hecastus the first and second choruses use the same material, and the

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23 This is most explicit in Dekker, 'Georgius Macropedius en de muziek', p. 9.
24 Virorum doctorum de disciplinis benemerentium effigies XLIII a Phil. Gallo (Antwerp, 1572), Eff. B. S, cited after Dekker, 'Georgius Macropedius en de muziek', p. 1. See also the frontispiece of this volume.
25 'Adiectae sunt Choris post singulos Actus notulæ quaedam musicæ, quo simplici tenore quique positur cita laborem versiculos modulari' (To the choruses after each act musical notes are added; to such simple melodies one can sing the verses without difficulty). Title page from the Omnes fabulae comitae (Utrecht, 1552).
26 The syllables 'rum' and 'et' are elided and sung to one note.
third and fourth share as well. In *Lazarus mendicus* the first three choruses and the first song of Lazarus make use of the same melodic material (see Appendix 2, pp. 76–79 below). None of this indicates a rich musical imagination. But it could also be that Macropedius’s time was often extremely limited — he himself said that he had to write some of these plays in a few days, alongside his usual teaching duties — because in other plays there is in fact varied music for all the choruses.

*Examples and Traditions*

Where did Macropedius get the idea to put choruses between the acts? As a Hellenist he of course knew of the choruses in the Greek tragedies that Erasmus translated. But those choruses had complex lyric forms and moreover they were extremely difficult to comprehend. The humanists also admired the Roman Seneca, who too wrote choruses in between the acts of his dramas. Those certainly were also a source of inspiration for Macropedius, for Seneca likewise was fond of having his choruses dispense general wisdom. But Seneca’s choruses are stichic (that is, composed of lines of the same metrical form throughout) and do not lend themselves to singing.

Macropedius did not have to solve this problem himself. Other humanists had preceded him, such as Johannes Reuchlin, who created the first Latin school drama with his *Scenica progymnasmata* (*Elementary Exercises in Theatrical Form*), also known as *Henno*. *Henno* was performed with much success in 1497 in Heidelberg. The edition that appeared the following year, complete with music, was reprinted often. Macropedius named Reuchlin as the inspiration for his own theatre pieces. Reuchlin wrote choruses between the five acts of *Henno*, set to simple monophonic melodies, just as Macropedius later did in *Rebelles* and his other plays.

Striking differences remain, however. As mentioned, Macropedius’s choruses are metrical, and thus based on the length of the syllables. They do not rhyme. These two characteristics correspond to the poetry of the ancients. Reuchlin’s choruses, by contrast, do rhyme, and in addition his verses more resemble accent verses rather than metrical ones based on syllable length. We find rhyming accent verses in songs in Germanic languages such as Dutch and German, but also in popular Latin religious songs such as hymns, as well as in medieval Latin student songs. Macropedius, on the other hand, wrote in classical metres and also used the possibilities for variation that these metres offer. For instance, we often see in his work that one long syllable is exchanged for two short ones. In the second chorus of *Rebelles*, for example (see Appendix 1, p. 75 below), in measure 5 a long syllable is split into two short ones (‘-fi-ci-’). In the first line of the same piece there is a double variation, where the first quarter note is split into two eighths: the first (short) syllable of the iamb is made long, and then split into two short syllables (‘Sa-pi-’).

Macropedius would thus have gotten the idea of sung choruses from Reuchlin, including their simple character, but his technical realization is more closely based on ancient poetry than those of his predecessor. Musical settings of similar ancient or neoclassic verses had already been tried. In the 1490s the German humanist Conrad Celtis had his student Petrus Tritonius set Horatian odes to music. Celtis had his students sing Tritonius’s four-part homophonic settings (that is, settings in which all the voices move at the same time) at the end of their lessons on Horace. In 1507 these were published under the title *Melopoiae*. Tritonius had set the long and short syllables strictly to long and short notes, even more consistently than Macropedius would later do in his choruses. Other composers such as the famous Ludwig Senfl made new arrangements or wrote new compositions according to the same principles. Celtis also wrote a successful play, *Ludus Dianae* (1501), with choruses set to music in the same style as those of the *Melopoiae*.

Although Macropedius does not name Celtis it is clear that his chorus songs were inspired by the humanist tradition of the Horatian odes. The realization that one did not have to be a great composer to set such odes probably strengthened his resolve to compose the music for his choruses himself, just as Celtis also probably wrote the (multivoiced) music for his *Ludus Dianae* himself.28

The Latin authors were moreover not the only ones who organized the structure of their plays with music; this was a well-known phenomenon in all of

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27 See e.g. the ‘Ad lectorem’ (To the reader) that accompanies *Flucta*: *Si haec videatur plerisque in locis hiulca aut minus elaborata, non mireris, candide lector, quod in diebus quattuor urgente versibus rather than metrical ones based on syllable length. We find rhyming accent

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Renaissance theatre. Italian and French playwrights wrote choruses too. In the Netherlands, Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert applied choruses to his plays *Israel* (1575) and *De blinde van Jericho* (*The Blind Man of Jericho*, 1582), calling them *Chorus*. One can surmise that Coornhert borrowed this practice from the neoclassicist tradition. The choruses of important playwrights such as P. C. Hooft (1581–1647) and Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679) were probably suggested by the humanist tradition, too, or partly suggested by it, since they of course also knew the French tragedies with their choruses. In Vondel’s case we know that he saw a school drama in Utrecht, and in Hooft’s case we can imagine that as a Latin school student he participated in the performance of humanist dramas. In any case, as far as music is concerned, early modern theatre appears to be indebted to the neoclassic tradition.

**Other Theatre Songs**

So far we have looked mostly at choruses, but sometimes Macropedius put additional music in his plays: songs that are woven into the action. In a later version of *Rebelles*, for example, he added a scene in which the mothers, at a feast, toast the schoolmaster as the saviour of their offspring. The converts sing a song for the occasion, in which God’s goodness is praised and the lessons to be learned from the play are summed up once again.

*Lazarus mendicus* contains a variety of solo songs. At the end of the first act, the mortally ill beggar Lazarus raises a song of lament when he is persecuted by his opposite, a rich miser. Two fellow beggars sing the refrain. The whole song together is called a chorus in the editions of the play, undoubtedly because the song closes the act. In the third act, Lazarus sings a similar lament, also with a refrain of beggars, but now it is not labelled ‘chorus’ but rather ‘Lazarus’s Hymn’, and indeed it is not placed at the end of the act. In the fourth act, an angel sings a song as he comes to the dying Lazarus, and a little later Lazarus himself sings a ‘Chorus seu hymnus Lazari morientis’ (*Chorus or Hymn of the Dying Lazarus*). Two angels sing the refrain to this hymn. The song functions as a chorus because it closes the fourth act, but it is at the same time the high point of the drama. In the ‘s-Hertogenbosch edition the solo passages of the abovementioned songs are given monophonically, but the refrains are in two voices. Also remarkable are two other songs sung by the rich miser and his brothers. These are not named choruses but rather drinking songs: ‘Cantio compotantium cerevisiam’ (*Song of the Beer Drinkers*) and ‘Cantio compotantium vina’ (*Song of the Wine Drinkers*). They occur in the middle of the fourth act. We can conclude that in *Lazarus mendicus* the songs serve not so much to separate the acts with moments of reflection but rather constantly form a component of the action, which in some cases also happens to separate the acts of the play.

**Annual Songs**

Macropedius expressed his compositional talents in one more genre: the annual songs or *cantilenae scholasticae*. Each year the students of the St Jerome School sang a school song on the eve of St Martin’s Day (11 November). This can be seen in the Utrecht city accounts. So for instance on St Martin’s Eve 1519, six pounds were given to the students of St Jerome’s ‘die hoer cantilenen op te pласt’ (who sang their cantilena on the square [in front of the city hall]). Also in 1523 the ‘klerken’ (clerks) of St Jerome’s received the same amount for the singing of their cantilena.

The rector, who traditionally wrote the text, usually chose a religious subject, such as the Last Judgment, the Memento Mori, or the Birth of Christ. But once he also wrote a eulogy to the city of Utrecht (c. 1543). In no fewer than seventy-eight stanzas, the song sings the praises of the Vredenburg Castle, the Old Canal, the churches, and a series of both churchly figures and the local populace.

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33 An overview of Macropedius’s cantilenae can be found in Giebels and Slits, *Georgius Macropedius*, pp. 289–309. See also Frans Slits, ‘Georgius Macropedius als dichter: Schoolzangen’, in De Utrechtse Parnas: Utrechtse Neolatijnse dichters uit de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw, ed. by Jan Bloemendal (Amersfoort: Florivallis, 2003), pp. 12–43; an illustrated edition is Georgius
Utrecht was not the only city in the Netherlands where annual school songs were written and performed. The oldest reports come from Alkmaar and Schiedam (1517). Annual songs were also sung in Amersfoort, Arnhem, 's-Hertogenbosch, and Wesel. In Amsterdam they were performed on Christmas Eve, and several of these poems have been preserved.34

Musically Macropedius’s cantilenas had markedly more going on than his choruses and songs for the theatre. A melody such as the 'Ode de extremo Christi iudicio peccatori formidando' (Song of the Last Judgment of Christ, that the Sinner Must Fear, 1539) is appreciably longer than the average play chorus and especially more varied in its overall melodic shape and in particular in its rhythm, which, with its syncopated cadences, is reminiscent of the style of polyphonic music (see Appendix 3, p. 83 below). Singing the melody takes about a minute and a half, and since the complete song consists of twenty-five stanzas, the performance in front of the city hall in the November chill must have lasted something like forty minutes!

One gets the impression that Macropedius allowed more time for the melodies of his school songs than for the composition of his theatrical music. Annual school songs were in fact ambitious poetic works that gave the students one way or another a lot to chew on: unusual verse lengths, unfamiliar vocabulary, mythological references. This probably all translated to a somewhat higher level of musical ambition. Originally, in 1539 and 1540, the cantilenas were published monophonically, again by Harmannus Borculo, but those of 1551 and 1552 appeared with a second, baritone voice, comparable in style to the theatre music of Lazarus mendicus.

Conclusion

In this paper we have examined Macropedius as the presumed composer of the music in his plays, both comedies as well as serious religious plays. Choral music played an important role in the separation of the play into five acts and provided an opportunity for moral reflection on the subject matter presented. Macropedius kept the music extremely simple. The frequent reuse of melodies suggests that he often lacked either the time or the inspiration to compose afresh. This simplicity of composition is also true of the solo songs that he placed in some of his plays. In his annual school songs, however, Macropedius seems to have given his compositional skills a bit more of a workout. Most of Macropedius's compositions have come down to us as monophonic melodies, and in the cases in which we do have a second voice, it is constructed very simply. Macropedius was a true humanist, in musical matters as well, and so also a true follower of the Modern Devotion: the intelligibility of the text was primary. Simplicity was best, because musical virtuosity could only detract attention from the text. In a musical climate such as that, Macropedius could permit himself to present his own compositions, despite his modest musical abilities.

All in all, music appears to have been for the rector not an end in itself, but a functional phenomenon. Assuming that he himself wrote the melodies for his song texts, he must still have enjoyed it, possessed some talent for it, and taken some pride in having something of his own ready to offer when the occasion demanded it.

Appendices

Acknowledgements

In all the musical transcriptions I have quartered the note values; a breve (double whole note), in other words, is given as a half note, etc. Clefs and barlines are adapted to modern usage.

The music of Rebelles is edited following the original in the Utrecht University Library. I have interpreted the signa congruentiae as repeat signs, as is usual in monophonic music from that time.

The monophonic music from Lazarus mendicus is edited after photocopies of the 's-Hertogenbosch edition of 1545, included in Bussers, 'Lazarus mendicus Georgii Macropedii'. Transcriptions by W. Dekker can also be found there.

The annual song of 1539 is edited from a photo in Giebels and Slits, Georgius Macropedius, p. 292. See also the transcription in Dekker, 'Georgius Macropedius en de muziek', p. 76.

Appendix 1

Music from Rebelles following the edition Omnes fabulae comicae (publ. Utrecht, 1552–53).

Rebelles II, 3. Chorus. Iambici dimetri

Rebelles III, 5. Chorus. Iambici dimetri ut superiores

Rebelles IV, 10. Chorus. Iambici dimetri ut superiores

MACROPEDIUS AND MUSIC
Appendix 2

Music from Lazarus mendicus (edn 's-Hertogenbosch, 1545).


Lazarus

Au-rem quo-so tu-am mi-hi, In-clina do-mi-nas Deus.

Lend your ear to my cry, O God

Ex-a di que-pre-es me-as Cum si-m pau-per in qua-que.

Hear, God, my sup-pri-ca-tion, For I am poor, and weak be-sides.

Repetitio Typhli & Bronchi ad singulos quaternarios

Pre-ces vo-ta-que pau-perum Ex-a di do-mi-nas Deus.

Hear our prayer and our vows, O God, Of the poor, lis-ten to our prayer.


Puer trepedians, vel ad numeros saelans.

Stu-xi mag-ni-fi-ca-de-mos, Hau-ta vi quo-que vi-ne-as, A-moe-nis et in

I have built love-ly pa-la-ces And I have plant-ed vine-yards too. Pleas-ant gar-dens, that

And I have-plant-ed vine-yards, Pleas-ant gar-dens, that

Repetitio Me-dicorum

In-ter sta-tu et in a-ni-a Hae c sunt ma-xi-ma va-si-tas.

Of all stu-pid and fool-ish things This is the great-est fel-low of all.
Ex psalmo 13. Us quoque domine oblivisceris me in finem &c. Iambico dimetro tetraetropho.

Lazarus genius flexis.

Quo us quæteria me simul memor Mi-
seri mi, do-mi-ne De-us? Quo us que-
utiam-in my su-
mery, O Lord God? How long, how long will
ma - ti - len A - me re flec - tes ob-
you a - ver! Your coun-
tence a - way from me?

Repetitio Typhli & Bronchi à longestrantium ad singulos versus.

In A - bra - ham's bo-
In A - bra - ham's bo-

la - bi tur nos La - zae
con - so - la - tion, La - zae

(continued on next page)

Bibitarus [Laemargus]

Pro pi no cy - a - tum pro xi mo Ex hau - ni - en - dom
O here's a drink to your health, my friend I'll drink my glass un - til it's dry.

Se du lo Pro pi no cy - a - tum pro xi mo pro pi no
It's dry, O here's a drink to your health, my friend, so say cheers.

Fratres

Ap po ni o ri blan - du - lum Ex hau - ni - en - dom po cu - lum fa - let ni
He brings the wine up to his lips And drinks it all un - til the very last drips.

(continued on next page)

Lazarus morti vicinus
Cum tibi fi dem domini cæter ueri
Orbi, haud qua quan pa de fi affin
se van, Hec ne tab se-ran na tu afin se-qua-ta te
Ei pe tān dem,
a shamed. Treat me just-ly and do de liv er me from This sore of fic tion.

Repetitio angelorum cum duabus vocibus
Ad si nas blan dos A brae vo ca nas La za re fide,
To the gracious bos om of A bra ham, O La za ras you are now call ed.

Praecinet unus angelorum
Al ti si rum po su is tiun hoc Ti bi Re fu gi un La za re
To God Almighty you now have fled To find your re live, O La za ras. No

Lum ti bi ad ve ni et ma lum. Nec pla ga tu o ha bi ta cu lo,
Nor a ny plague e v er es ter your lance.

Repetitio angelorum cum duabus vocibus
In A brae si nas ma lis
In A brae's bos om you'll find rest
Flas sus qui e ces La za re.
When e vil's ba nished, La za ras.

In A brae si nas ma lis
In A brae's bos om you'll find rest
Flas sus qui e ces La za re.
When e vil's ba nished, La za ras.

Appendix 3

Annual song 'Ode de extremo Christi' (edn Cantilena pro schola Hieronymiana, de extremo Christi iudicio, Utrecht 1539).

Cantilena pro schola Hieronymiana, de extremo Christi iudicio, 1539. Ode monocolos tetrastrophos Asclepiadea, de extremo Christi iudicio peccatori formidando.

O be ren dem in ve rum In di ci di
eon
Can te mus pa vi di. quod quod um

/ne-

su mus Vir tu ias va es i, quod quod um

/ae-

nor yet vir tu ous as we ought. And we

are all de filed by sin so fa tal by,

nec ti mor ar gi it.

Nor be stay fear of it.

Nunc pre pon de pu er quan e rit be hoc vos ha tu

Ve ra te Ne men ten trans ram ma la

"O come to me" Less ill times break your spir it so

Fram gent. Bi quam du ra e rit haec dis tric si
ten der And think how ter ri ble To hear that day

Lu di ca, I te, I te, I te, I te, Pro ci pe ra
from the Judge, Be gone, Be gone, Be gone. Last good pros

no ne vor pe vi tum dem.

1) according to the original a half note (longa)