



Malcolm Hill

(1944 -)

Nobles Are Exempt

for Bass and
Chamber Organ
(or Viol)

mj331.5 composed 2013

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Five Vocal Symphonies to fit between Six Motets by Don Carlo Gesualdo

In a letter to Gesualdo of 10 December 1592 the poet Torquato Tasso (1544-95) wrote that he had sent over 40 texts for Gesualdo's sole use in madrigals, following the composer's specific requirements. Six days later he sent another five sonnets. Although they were great friends, Gesualdo set only a few of these texts. The friendship abruptly stopped when Tasso produced two poems which seemed to side with the murdered couple.

Malcolm Hill divided each of two Tasso sonnets *In Morte di due Nobilissimi Amanti* and *Sullo Stresso Argomento* in two, to give the freely-translated text for four vocal symphonies to be sung between the first five Gesualdo motets. While the motets should be performed unaccompanied, the vocal lines of the symphonies are accompanied by either chamber organ or three viols.

Gesualdo : *Deus refugium*

Solo vocal symphony : *Weep, O Graces*

Gesualdo : *Reminiscere miserationum*

Duo vocal symphony : *Weep, Erato*

Gesualdo : *Ave, dulcissima Maria* [SATTB]

Solo vocal symphony : *O souls*

Gesualdo : *Gaudeamus omnes*

Solo vocal symphony : *Let whoever blames you*

Gesualdo : *Peccantem me*

Because I sin daily and do not repent, the fear of death disturbs me, for in hell there is no redemption. Have mercy on me, my God, and save me.

Solo vocal symphony : ***Nobles are exempt***

Nobles are exempt from prosecution, for them the rules of law do not apply. Zarlino codified the rules for setting words to music, for years his work was studied by all. But for nobles these rules need not apply. He quoted Horace: *Versibus exponi tragicis res comica nonvult* [A theme for comedy refuses to be set forth in the verses of tragedy] and *Aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare poetae, Aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae* [Poets aim either to benefit or to amuse or to utter words at once both pleasing and helpful to life]. He forbade some vocal intervals and described how others may be used; but for nobles these rules need not apply.

Gesualdo : *Ave sanctissima* [SSATTB]

Nobles Are Exempt

Between Gesualdo's *Peccantem* and *Ave sanctissima*
for Bass and Chamber Organ (or Viol)

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♩ = 58

The musical score is written for Bass and Chamber Organ (or Viol) in 3/4 time. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 58. The score is divided into systems, with measures 5, 8, 11, and 15 marked at the beginning of their respective systems. The bass line is in the lower register, and the organ/viol line is in the upper register. The organ/viol line features complex, often chromatic, patterns. The bass line contains the vocal melody with lyrics. The lyrics are: "No - bles are ex-empt from pro - se - cu-tion, no- bles are ex-cempt; For them the rules of law do not ap- ply, for them the rules, the rules do not ap-".

5

No - bles are ex-

8

empt from pro - se - cu-tion, no- bles are ex-cempt;

11

For them the rules of law do not ap

15

ply, for them the rules, the rules do not ap-

ply. Zar-li - no co - - di -

fied the rules____ for set - ting words____ to sing, for

years his work was stud - ied by all. But____ for

no - bles____ these rules need not____ ap - ply.

He quo-ted Ho-race:

Vér-si-bus ex-po-ni tra-gi-cis res co-mi-ca non vult and

44

Aut pro-des-se vo-lunt, aut de-lec-ta-re po-e-tae,

48

Aut si-mul et iu-cun-da et i-do-ne-a di-ce-re vi-tae.

52

He for-bade some vo-cal in-ter-vals and de-

55

scribed how o-thers may be used. But for no-bles

59

— these rules need not ap-ply.

62