INTRODUCTION

The Élévation au St Sacrement, “O amantissime salvator noster Jesu dulcis” (H. 264) was written by Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643-1704) during the 1690s, while the composer was employed by the Jesuits at the Church of St. Louis in Paris. This petit motet is scored for high tenor, tenor, bass, and continuo. It is a setting of a passionate prayer of adoration, supplication, and contrition for use at the elevation of the sacrament during the Mass or at other devotional services, such as at the popular evening service of Salut. The text “you have given us for food and drink the bread of angels and the wine of the elect, your very body and blood” aligns the prayer most directly with the Mass and the moment of transubstantiation.

There are two versions of “O amantissime salvator noster Jesu dulcis” by Charpentier (H. 264 and H. 264a)—both located in Charpentier’s autograph manuscript collection (F-Pn Rés. Vm¹ 259). An analysis of the handwriting, as well as other evidence such as annotations and the musical style, strongly suggest that, contrary to earlier thinking, H. 264a (located in cahier [b]) pre-dates H. 264 (located in cahier LXIII). H. 264, which forms the basis of this edition, should therefore be regarded as a revised version of the original motet. Variants between this version and H. 264a are given in the critical notes.

Sources

H. 264: F-Pn Rés. Vm¹ 259 (24): cahier LXIII (volume 24), folios 33r-34r (Meslanges autographes).
H. 264a: F-Pn Rés. Vm¹ 259 (27): cahier [b] (volume 27), folios 45r-47r (Meslanges autographes).

The Meslanges autographes (F-Pn Rés. Vm¹ 259) is a collection of 28 volumes of Charpentier’s music, virtually all written in the composer’s hand, and housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. It comprises two series of cahiers: one numbered 1-75 with Arabic numerals (known as the “French” series); the other numbered I-LXXV with Roman numerals (known as the “Roman series”). Although the two series were largely compiled both concurrently and chronologically, thus enabling the dating of works within the manuscript collection, certain anomalies arise in the handwriting, paper, watermarks and annotations which suggest that some pieces were later revised or newly written and placed within either series, thus altering our understanding of the chronological sequence of cahiers within the autograph manuscript.¹

As discussed in my article in the *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music*, cahier [b] (which contains H. 264a), includes five works by Charpentier copied in the same order as they appear in cahier LXIII:

H. 7a: an incomplete Mass setting (including just a fragment of the Agnus Dei);
H. 365a: a motet in honor of St. Louis, “In honorem Sti Ludovici” (which is a shorter version of the motet (H. 365) found in cahier [b];
H. 213a: a setting of Psalm 129, “De profundis” (H. 213 forms part of the complete mass setting (H. 213) in cahier LXIII);
H. 364a: a petit motet “Pour le S[a]int Esprit”; and
H. 264a: “Elevation à 3 voix par[eilles]” (entitled “Elevation au St Sacrement” in cahier LXIII).

Annotations in cahier [b] refer to other versions of the works. For example, on folio 41v of cahier [b], the instructions “jusque la de mesme,” then “accommodez cecy” suggest references to earlier works. A comparison of the handwriting itself, particularly the G-clef formation, in cahiers [b] and LXIII, strongly suggest that cahier LXIII was copied out later than cahier [b], rather than, as H. W. Hitchcock suggested, earlier.3

Unlike nearby cahiers within the “Roman” series or parallel cahiers in the “French” series of the autograph manuscripts, cahier LXIII is not written on Jesuit paper. Although the music dates from the 1690s, during Charpentier’s tenure at the Jesuit Church of St. Louis, Charpentier’s use of non-Jesuit paper has led Patricia Ranum to conclude that

Charpentier’s autograph notebooks for the 1690s confirm that he did indeed accept extra-Jesuit commissions. The motet in honor of St. Louis (H.365) and the élévation that precedes it (H. 264) in notebook LXIII bear all the hallmarks of having been written for Louis XIV — if, that is, one assumes that Charpentier continued to separate his works into “ordinary” and “extraordinary” commissions after Mlle de Guise’s death in 1688 (see


my Vers une chronologie), which would mean that notebook LXIII contains compositions that were not part of his weekly obligations as music master.4

Although such a theory—namely that the music could have been written for King Louis XIV—is possible, it seems more plausible that the music in cahier LXIII was composed for use at the church of St. Louis (for which a motet in honour of St. Louis, such as H. 365 or 365a, would have been appropriate).5 Louis XIV favored celebrations of the Messe basse solenelle at which the priest intoned the words of the Mass, rather than using polyphonic settings of the Mass texts. The existence in cahier LXIII of a polyphonic Mass setting (Messe des Morts a 4 voix, H. 7), including settings of the Kyrie eleison, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, as well as an elevation motet and a setting of the De profundis, make the contents of cahiers LXIII and [b] more suitable for use at a requiem Mass at the Church of St. Louis than for use at the royal chapel.6 The contents of cahier LXIII may, however, represent music composed for celebrations outside of the regular services held at the Jesuit church. Music in cahier LXII includes the names of singers known to have sung at the Church of St. Louis (such as the well-known bass soloist “Mr Dun”). The church, renowned for its spectacular liturgical celebrations, was known as “l’Église de l’Opéra”—not least because opera singers, such as Mr Dun, were regularly hired as soloists.

Scoring

Both H. 264 and H. 264a are scored for haute-contre (C3), taille (C4), basse (F4), and continuo (F4). Charpentier composed over thirty works for this same combination of singers—most of which date from the late 1680s and 1690s when he was employed at the Jesuit Church of St. Louis. Most of these works are either elevation motets or occasional motets. The voices are treated equally, with the upper two voices sharing a similar vocal range. There is no indication in the score which instruments comprised the continuo group. Evidence found elsewhere in the autograph manuscript suggests, however, that the organ would be the most suitable instrument, with the possible addition of a stringed bass instrument, such as a basse de violon or a basse de viole.

---


5 In addition to H. 365 and H. 365a, there are four motets written specifically in honor of St. Louis: Motet de St Louis (H. 320, located in cahier 17) is an incomplete motet in honour of St Louis; In honorem Sancti Ludovici Regis Galliae canticum tribus vocibus cum symphonia (H. 323, located in cahier 22); In honorem Sancti Ludovici regis Galliae (H. 332, located in cahier 38); In honoreum S[anc]ti Ludovici regis galliae (H. 418, located in cahier 63).

6 As well as being employed by the Guise family, the Jesuits and the Sainte Chapelle, Charpentier was associated with various chapels, such as Notre Dame de la Mercy et de la Rédemption des Captifs in the rue du Chaume. See Patricia Ranum, “Il y a aujourd’hui Musique à la Mercy” Mademoiselle de Guise et les Mercédaires de la rue du Chaume” (http://www.ranumspanat.com/mercy_article.htm).
Commentary

“O amantissime salvator noster Jesu dulcis” falls into four sections, delineated both by changes in meter and style, which reflect the sentiments expressed in the text. The motet opens with declamatory writing, as the penitent worshipper addresses his beloved Lord, “O our most loving savior, sweet Jesus, O our most merciful redeemer, kind Jesus.” In the later version of the motet, Charpentier writes *ports de voix* directly into the vocal line (mm. 4-5 and 9-10). In the earlier version, a simpler rhythm was written for the voice, almost certainly with the assumption that the singers would have extemporized the *ports de voix*. Although an essential and distinctive feature of French vocal writing, the *port de voix* was rarely printed during the late seventeenth century, yet descriptions in treatises make it clear that this was both an essential and ubiquitous ornament in vocal music of the period. Various French treatises refer to the *port de voix* and its intended execution, but the descriptions are often vague or contradictory, particularly whether or not it should be performed before or after the beat. The *port de voix* is reserved for the expressive setting of the words “dulcis” (measure 4) and “pie” (measure 9).

At measure 10, the meter changes to 3/2 and the writing becomes more lyrical for the words of adoration, gratitude and longing, where dissonance is used for expressive purposes. The third section returns to a more declamatory style as the penitent sinner acknowledges his sinful state—a “vile creature, a worm of the earth”—and asks what he can give to his God in return for all that the Lord has bestowed upon him. The melodic writing is strident, with dissonance used to emphasize the penitential feel of the text. This style of declamatory writing is adopted by Charpentier elsewhere for settings of similar texts. Although the final section sets the text “Behold, I despise myself totally. I totally deny myself, I subject my body and soul to you and I resign all that is mine for what is well pleasing to you,” the musical style suggests a sense of positive resignation on the part of the repentant worshipper who looks to God for succor.

Editorial Procedures

*Key signature and accidentals*

This edition closely follows the notation of the original manuscript. The original key signature of one flat has been retained, with no modernization for the key of G minor. The use of accidentals, however, has been modernized to follow the modern bar-line convention, whereby an accidental remains in force for the duration of a measure unless it is canceled, rather than the original practice of adding an accidental for each note within the measure. The additional accidentals in the original source have been tacitly removed. Accidentals and the bass figuring have been modernized so that natural signs (rarely found in Charpentier’s autograph manuscripts)
are used where appropriate, rather than the original sharps and flats. Cautionary figures or accidentals are placed in brackets.

**Meter**

The original meter signatures have been retained throughout. In the 3/2 section, mm. 10-69, the void notation used in the original manuscript has been retained, along with the beaming and slurring of notes used in the original notation.

**Ornamentation**

Ornament symbols appear in the edition as they do in the original. No ornaments have been added. With no extant ornament tables by Charpentier, nor explanations of ornamentation, interpreting Charpentier’s ornamentation remains somewhat conjectural. Charpentier uses two ornament symbols in “O amantissime salvator noster Jesu dulcis”: the tremblement simple (which is the most commonly found ornament symbol found in Charpentier’s autograph manuscripts) and a tremblement symbol preceded by a dot. Although in many instances within the Meslanges autographs, Charpentier writes out a termination for the tremblement (and this is even more common where Charpentier uses the double tremblement sign), there are no such instances in this motet. Evidence found elsewhere in the manuscript and comparisons with contemporary French composers suggest that the tremblement was usually approached from above.

The second ornament appears to be similar to that used by D’Anglebert and described as a tremblement appuyé—a tremblement with a preparation on the given main note. In some instances elsewhere in the Meslanges autographs the dot is written over a half note tied to another half note of the same pitch, over which is written the tremblement. In this motet the dot and tremblement occur over long notes (measure 23, dotted whole note; and measure 79, a half note). The evidence suggests therefore that the dot indicates the tremblement should begin with the main note being held before the tremblement itself begins. The main written note therefore becomes part of the ornament pattern—part of the trill itself.

**Continuo figures**

With the exception of the use of the natural sign, the original continuo figures have been retained throughout the motet. “O amantissime salvator noster Jesu dulcis” is fairly extensively figured. However, the modern performer unfamiliar with some of Charpentier’s unwritten practices concerning figuring should note the following general rules that may affect the appropriate realization of the continuo part.  

---

(1) Dominant chords were assumed to be major unless otherwise indicated. This affects some of the 4-3 suspensions included in this motet where the assumption would have been that the resolution onto the third would be major unless specifically indicated by a $\flat$3. To avoid an unnecessarily cluttered score, editorial changes have been made to the resolutions of 4-3 suspensions, and these are listed in the critical commentary.

(2) It was assumed that the figures 4 and 5 indicated perfect intervals. If this were not the case, then Charpentier would indicate the alteration by an accidental placed next to the numeral.

(3) When the semitone $mi-fa$ occurs, the assumption was that the first chord would be realized as a 6-3 chord, rather than a 5-3 chord, such as on the last beat of measure 1 in this motet. The $F^\#$ in the continuo implied a 6-3 chord, leading to the 5-3 chord on the G in m. 2. In the current edition, these 6-3 chords are noted in editorial brackets.

**Spellings**

The original spellings of the Latin text have been retained throughout. Written directives, such as the instructions at the end of the second section, are included as they appear in the original source. Capitalization has been modernized to follow modern conventions. Textual underlay reflects the French pronunciation of Latin.

**Variants**

There are variants in the rhythmic and melodic writing found in H. 264 and H. 264a, as well as some newly composed passages (such as the final 6/4 section in measures 86-117). These variants are included in the critical notes to enable performers to compare the two versions of the motet.

**Incipit**

The incipit gives the original clef, key signature, meter signature and initial note of the piece. Charpentier does not name the voice parts in this motet, but the clefs indicate that the motet was written for *haute-contre* (high tenor), *taille* (tenor), *basse* (bass), and continuo (probably organ, with melodic bass).

**Acknowledgements**

Permission to publish a modern edition of Charpentier’s “O amantissime salvator noster Jesu dulcis” was granted by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and is gratefully acknowledged by the editor. I wish to thank Alexander Silbiger, John Powell, Graham Sadler, Shirley Thompson, and Michael Bramble for their assistance and advice with editorial questions related to the

preparation of the score. The author gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Memorial University and SSHRC (the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council).

C. Jane Gosine  
Memorial University  
St John's, NL (Canada)

[The Critical Notes follow on the next pages.]
CRITICAL NOTES

M. 3, bc, note 2: 6 in H. 264a

M. 3, bc, note 3: b6 in H. 264a

M. 4, T: H. 264a has a variant in the rhythm (dotted half note, quarter note, rather than dotted half note, two eighth notes):

M. 4, bc, beat 4: editorial #

Mm. 5-6, all parts: H. 264 has an added measure, with a continuo bridge between the entries of the taille and the haute-contre. In H. 264a, the haute-contre enters directly after the taille’s phrase (which ends on a quarter note):

M. 5, bc, note 1: # in H. 264a
M. 6, bc, note 3: ♭ in H. 264a
M. 7, bc, note 3: ♭ in H. 264a

M. 8, bc, note 3: ♭6 in H. 264a

M. 9, bc, note 1: 6 in H. 264a
M. 9, bc, note 2: no figuring in H. 264a
M. 9, bc, beat 4: editorial #

M. 9, T: H. 264a has a variant in rhythm (dotted half note, quarter note, rather than dotted half note, two eighth notes)

Mm. 10-69: all parts: void notation
M. 11, bc, note 1: ♭7 in H. 264a
M. 13, T, note 1: no ornament in H. 264a
M. 14, HC, notes 1-2: H. 264a has a variant in rhythm (dotted half note and quarter note, rather than two half notes)

M. 15, HC, note 1: no ornament in H. 264a
M. 15, B, notes 1-2: H. 264a has a variant in rhythm (dotted half note and quarter note, rather than two half notes)
M. 18, HC, note 1: no ornament in H. 264a

M. 18, bc: H. 264a has a variant in rhythm (two half notes, rather than one whole note)

M. 19, HC, note 1: no ornament in H. 264a

M. 19, bc: 7 in H. 264a

Mm. 20-21: On folio 45v of volume 27, there is a squiggly line over the parts, suggesting an insertion or revision. Similar lines are found in other works in volume 27 where additions or revisions are made to the music.

M. 21, HC: no ornament in H. 264a.


Mm. 22-27, all parts: H. 264a has rhythmic and melodic variants.
M. 24, bc, note 2: 6 in H. 264a

M. 29, HC, note 3: g’ in H. 264a

Mm. 30-31, all parts: H. 264a has rhythmic and melodic variants.

Mm. 32-33: On folio 45v of volume 27, there is another squiggly line over the parts, with the words “cest icy”.

Mm. 32-33, bc: no tie over the bar-line in H. 264a.

M. 33, bc: # in H. 264a

M. 34, bc, beat 3: #6 in H. 264a

M. 35, bc, beat 4: editorial #
M. 38, bc, beat 1: $b^3$ indicates a diminished, rather than a minor third (see also measure 41).

Mm. 39-42, all parts: H. 264a has rhythmic and melodic variants.

![Musical notation]

M. 41, beat 3: The original continuo figure was: $b^3$

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Mm. 44-45: There is another squiggly line, indicating revisions to the writing.} \\
\text{Mm. 49-50, all parts: H .264a has rhythmic and melodic variants.}
\end{align*}
\]
M. 53, bc, beats 1 and 3: 5 6 (in H. 264a)

M. 54, T, note 1: no ornament in H. 264a

Mm. 54-55, bc: tie over the bar-line in H. 264a.

M. 56, HC, note 1: no ornament in H. 264a.

M. 56, bc: no figuring in H. 264a.

Mm. 58-59, bc: H. 264a has rhythmic and melodic variants (two dotted whole notes, rather than half note rest, followed by three half notes and a whole note).

[Basse continue]

Mm. 61-63, bc: H. 264a has rhythmic and melodic variants, as well as additional figuring.

[Basse]

M. 64, bc: 5 6 6 in H. 264a
M. 65, bc, note 1: ♭ in H. 264a

Mm. 66-69, all parts: H. 264a has some rhythmic and melodic variants, as well as differences in text underlay and figuring.

M. 68, bc, beat 3: editorial #

Mm. 69-70: “Suivez après une petite pause” (H. 264); no instructions in H. 264a.

M. 70, bc: ♭ in H. 264a

M. 70, B, last note: on folio 33v of volume 24, Charpentier writes ‘la’ above the last note in the measure. The note appears to have been written in error as a c’. This has been corrected by Charpentier to read as a d’. Interestingly, Charpentier has clarified the note as being D by writing ‘la’ above the note – indicating that Charpentier is thinking in terms of the soft hexachord (because of the flat in the key signature): in the soft hexachord, the sixth degree is D.

Mm. 70-80, all parts: H. 264a has a variant.
M. 82, bc, beat 4: 9 in H. 264a
#7
6
4
M. 83, bc, beat 1: the original continuo figure is:  ♯
M. 83, bc, beat 3: no figure in H. 264a
M. 84, bc, beat 2: ♩ in H. 264a
M. 84, bc, beat 4: editorial ♯

Mm. 84-85, T: H. 264a has a variant in rhythm (half note, followed by quarter note, rather than half note followed by two eighth notes)

Mm. 86-end, all parts: The final section of the motet (H. 264a) is a variant of H. 264 and includes revisions in all parts (see below).
Marc-Antoine Charpentier: Œlévation au St Sacrement, ed. C. Jane Gosine, November 2008

Introduction, p. xix

M. 98, bc, beat 6: editorial #

M. 115, bc, last beat: the original figure was: $b$

M. 115, bc, beat 1: the original figure was: #

M. 116, bc, beat 6: editorial #