

## INTRODUCTION

### THE COMPOSER

Despite some twelve years of service as *maestro di cappella* in the *Duomo* of Milan, Simon Boyleau (fl. Milan and Turin c. 1544–after 1586) has never enjoyed the posthumous reputation afforded his successor Vincenzo Ruffo let alone that of his illustrious predecessor Franchino Gaffurius. Serving the Cathedral from 1484 to 1522, Gaffurius established Milan's musical reputation, while Ruffo, during his tenure from 1563 to 1572, drew wide attention through his attempts to create a musical style that responded to the Counter-Reformation ambitions of Archbishop Carlo Borromeo. It is between these two pillars that we can situate the lesser known Simon Boyleau, a conservative musician yet one of sufficient competence and stature to have held the post of *maestro di cappella* there for a total of nearly twelve years.<sup>1</sup> Evidence of his contemporary reputation, even beyond Italian soil, is the reference made to him in Conrad Gesner's encyclopaedic *Pandectarium sive Patritionum Universalium* (Zurich, 1548).<sup>2</sup> Whilst it seems clear that Boyleau's early publications were produced in order to assist him in securing an appointment in Italy, Getz connects his appointment as chapel master at the *Duomo* to that of Ferrante Gonzaga as Governor of Milan from 1546 to 1554.<sup>3</sup> There is no evidence, however, to suggest his arrival in the city prior to his appointment in 1551, and it is possible that the Frenchman might have resided in the Veneto during the years between the publication of the 1544 motets and this appointment to the post in Milan.<sup>4</sup>

Boyleau's employment at the *Duomo* divides into two periods. He was *maestro di cappella* from July 1551 until 1557 when he was either dismissed or resigned over disciplinary issues relating to the singers of the choir. His whereabouts and employment immediately following this incident is not clear, although he apparently had some contact with Santa Maria dell' Annunciazione alla Vecchiabbia, the convent at which Carlo Borromeo's sister resided.<sup>5</sup> He was reappointed to the *Duomo* as Vincenzo Ruffo's assistant until the latter's departure for Pistoia in June 1572, he then continued as interim *maestro* until July 1574, and was reappointed *maestro* from November 1574 until early 1577.<sup>6</sup> From late 1562 until January 1569, he worked nearby at the esteemed Santa Maria presso san Celso.<sup>7</sup> Leaving Milan, Boyleau joined the *cappella* of Turin Cathedral as a singer in 1577, and subsequently took on the position of *maestro* from 1583 until 1585.<sup>8</sup> He was dismissed at the end of 1585, but remained in the city for some months, possibly working as organist there in 1586.<sup>9</sup> Also by 1586, Boyleau was in the service of the Piemontese court in Savoy. On 28 June of that year he was rewarded by Duke Carlo Emmanuel I of Savoy for services and compositions including the instruction of a page and the composition of four sacred works for the duchy.<sup>10</sup> These works include a short four-voice mass, and three motets, *O sacrum convivium*, *Salve regina* and *Benedictus meus*.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The present publication is a revised and condensed version of Sally Watt, "Simon Boyleau, *Motetta quatuor vocum* (Venice: G. Scotto, 1544): An Edition and Study", 2 vols, *MMus diss.*, University of Melbourne, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Christine Suzanne Getz, *Music in the Collective Experience in Sixteenth-century Milan* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) 83–84. See also Frank Dobbins (Carlo Mosso), "Boyleau, Simon", *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* [MGG], 2nd ed. (Kassel and New York: Barenreiter, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> James Haar and Lucia Marchi, "Boyleau, Simon", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/o372>, accessed 2 September 2008, and Getz 83–84.

<sup>4</sup> Boyleau's French origins are confirmed on the title page of the 1544 motet book where he described as being of the *Genere Galli*, and also *Iuvenis in arte musica*. For further information, see Lucia Marchi, "Simon Boyleau: studio biografico ed edizione critica dei *Madrigali a quatuor voci* (1546)", *Universita degli studi di Pavia diss.*, 1995–1996, 15.

<sup>5</sup> Getz 85.

<sup>6</sup> Frederico Mompelio, "La cappella del Duomo dal 1573 al 1714", *Storia di Milano XVI* (Milano: Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri per la Storia di Milano, 1962) 508.

<sup>7</sup> Getz 83, 85.

<sup>8</sup> Dobbins (Mosso), "Boyleau" *MGG* and Haar and Marchi, "Boyleau" *New Grove*.

<sup>9</sup> Dobbins, "Boyleau" *MGG*.

<sup>10</sup> Dobbins, "Boyleau" *MGG*.

<sup>11</sup> Cordero di Pamparato, Stanislao, "Emmanuele iliberto de Savoia", *Rivista Musicale Italiana* 35 (1928): 29–30. These compositions allegedly appear in a manuscript held in the Turin Biblioteca Nazionale, although due to fire damage to the library during the second half of the sixteenth century, this source is now incomplete. None of the motets set the same texts as those in Boyleau's 1544 publication, although it is possible that some of the music was re-used and set to different texts.