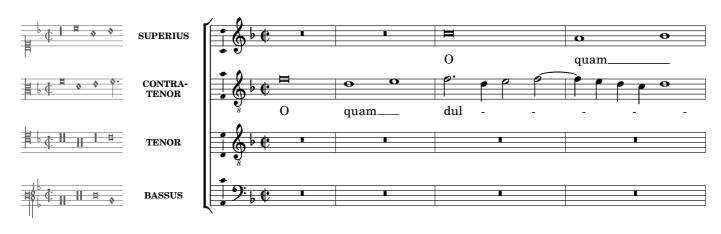


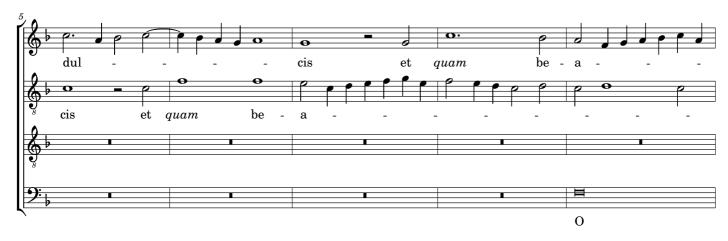
O quam dulcis

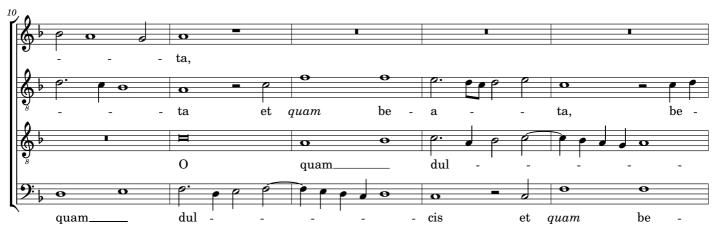
Jean Richafort (c.1480 – after 1547)

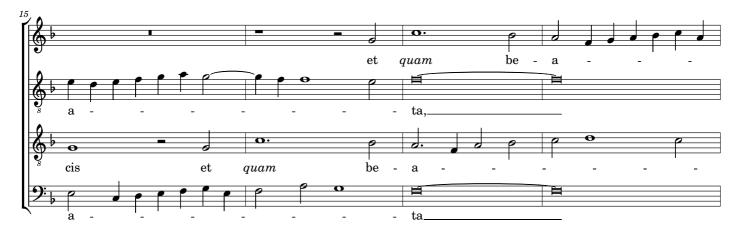
Attaingnant, $Motettorum\ Liber\ II\ [Paris,\ 1534]\ (RISM\ 1534/4)$

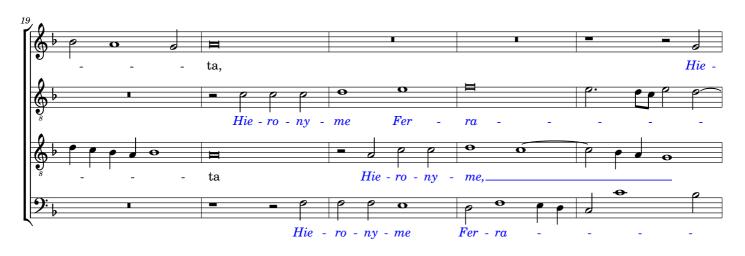
'Plurimorum martyrum'

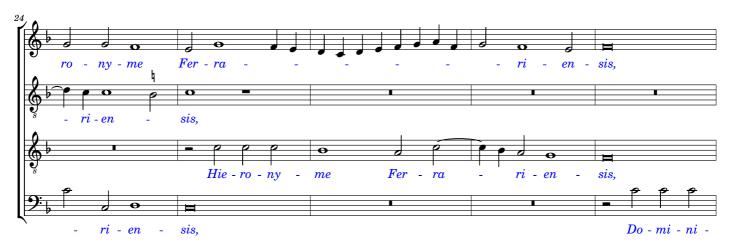


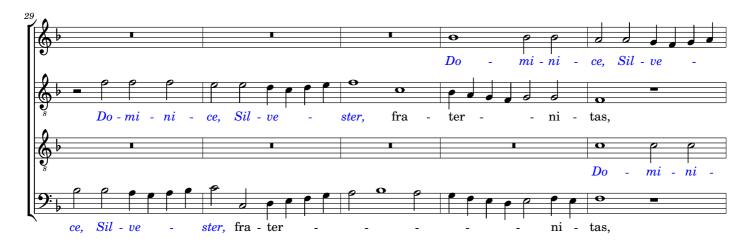


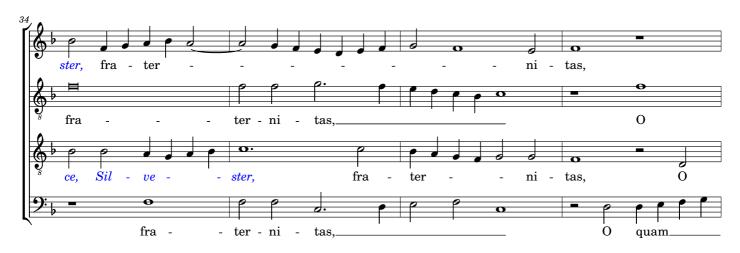




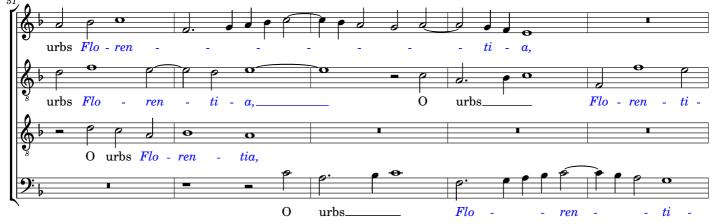


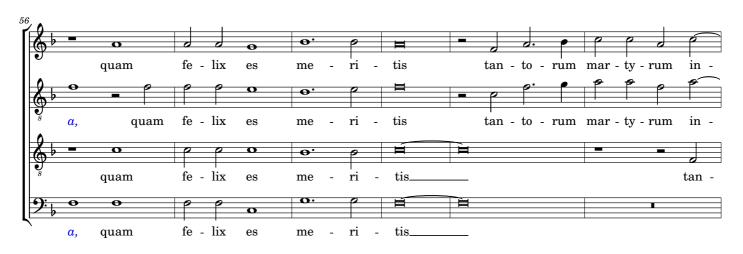


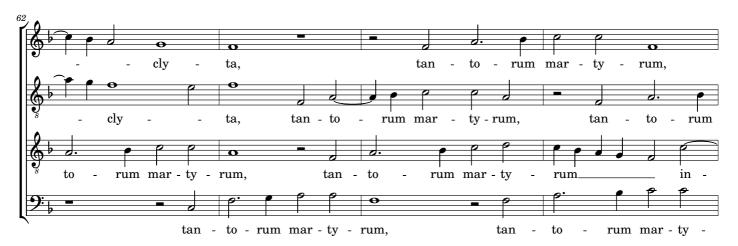




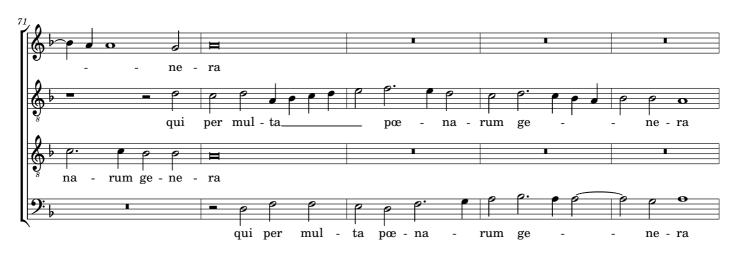


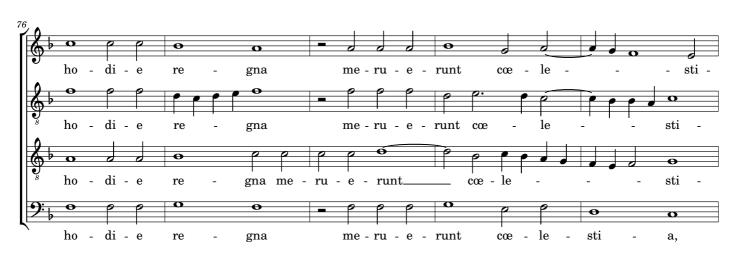


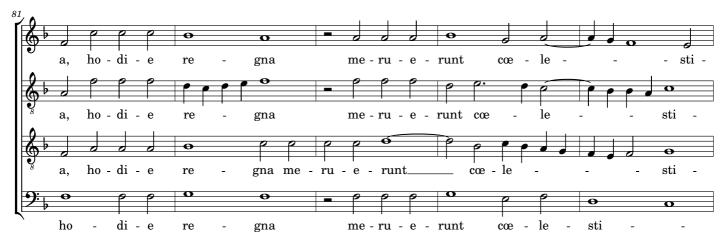


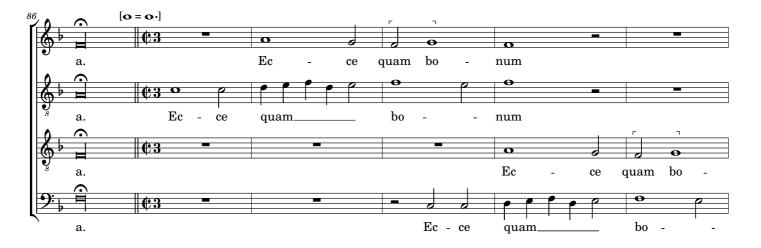


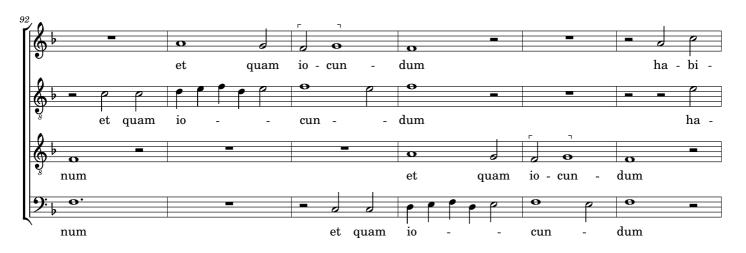


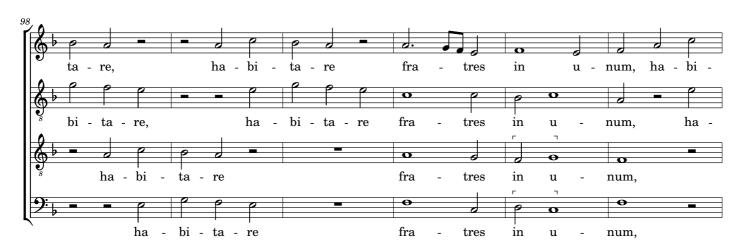


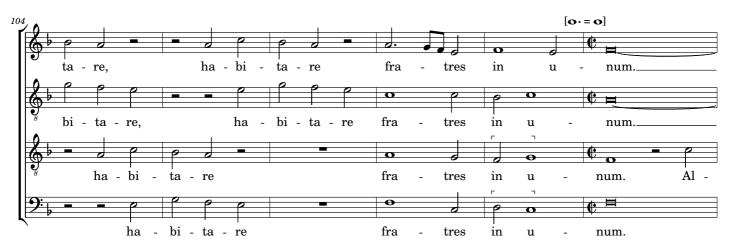


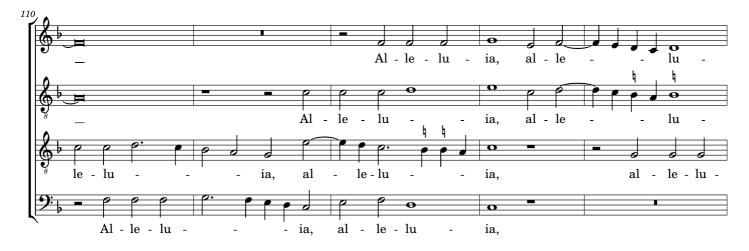


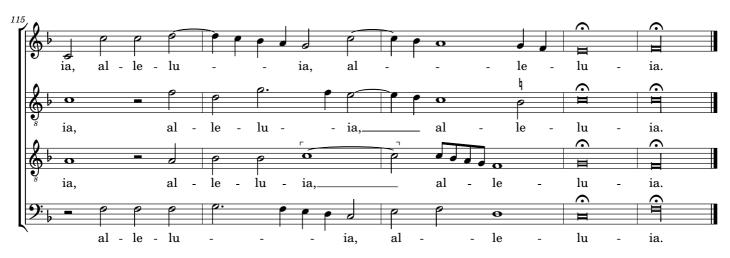












O quam dulcis et quam beáta, [Hierónyme Ferrariénsis, Domínice, Silvéster], fratérnitas,

- O quam gratis et colénda christiánitas,
- O urbs [Floréntia], quam felix es méritis tantórum mártyrum ínclyta, qui per multa pænárum génera hódie regna meruérunt cæléstia.

Ecce quam bonum et iocúndum habitáre fratres in unum.

Allelúja

O how sweet and how blessed, [Jerome of Ferrara Dominic, Sylvester], is brotherly love,

- O how pleasing and to be worshipped is Christianity,
- O city [of Florence], how happy you are to be renowned from the merits of such great martyrs, who, through many types of punishment, today have attained the heavenly kingdom.

Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is: brethren to dwell together in unity. Alleluia.

[Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498) and Psalm 132:1 (Vulgate)]

Though he was evidently revered in his day, relatively little is known of Jean Richafort's life. His appointments at Sint-Romboutskathedraal in Mechelen (1507–09) and Sint-Gilliskerk in Bruges (1542–47) as *maître de chapelle* are the only periods of his life to be dated with certainty. Between these appointments he is known to have served in the Royal Chapel in Paris around the time of King Francis I's meeting with Pope Leo X in Bologna in 1515.

The heading "Plurimorum martyrum" ("Many martyrs") in Attaingnant's publication of this motet implies its intended use at any liturgical feast of many martyrs — to which end Attaingnant simply prints "[N]" in place of the italicised names in the square brackets above, inviting the performer to, as it were, "insert names of martyrs and the city of their death here". On what basis, then, are these particular names included, and did Richafort have these in mind when he composed the work?

Girolamo Savonarola was born into nobility in Ferrara and entered the Dominican order in Bologna. His preachings of Christian morality found favour in Florence, where he became the guiding spirit of a new republic, styled as a "Christian commonwealth", after the fall of the Medici rule in the late 15th century. However, his rigour and his claim of prophecy led to his being charged with heresy and his eventual excommunication from the Catholic church. His "bonfire of the vanities" in 1497 led to a sharp decline in his popularity, culminating in riots in Florence and the eventual restoration of the Medicis to power. Having been found guilty of religious error, sedition, and falsely uttering prophecies, Savonarola was hanged and burned in Florence's Piazza della Signoria on 23 May 1498 alongside his two chief disciples, Fra Domenico da Pescia and Fra Silvestro Maruffi.

The Latinised names of these three martyrs and their city fit neatly into Richafort's music — but this is more than mere coincidence. The opening verse of Psalm 132 with which Richafort concludes his motet was a motto of Savonarola and his followers; moreover, the Superius and Tenor parts quote from the setting of those words in a *lauda* by Luca Bettini (1489–1527), a Dominican and a devotee of Savonarola. Richafort sets Bettini's duple-time melody in a triple-time octave canon between those two parts.

Savonarola's teachings provided inspiration not only to other notable reformers of the Roman Catholic church, including St Philip Neri and John Henry Newman, but also — perhaps ironically — to Martin Luther and his Protestant Reformation only two decades after Savonarola's death. Further irony is to be found in the very fact that Richafort and so many of his contemporaries set Savonarolan texts and melodies in the highly polyphonic Franco-Flemish compositional style of the first half of the sixteenth century: among Savonarola's puritanical views was a strong dislike of High Renaissance polyphony!

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Editorial Notes: