

"ave maris stella" by guillaume dufay essay sample

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Ave Maris Stella is composed by Guillaume Dufay. He was born in approximately 1398 and died in about 1474. He was known as the innovator of the 15th century during the renaissance. When he was younger he was brought up as a choirboy in the Cambrai cathedral. That is also where he spend majority of his time. In about 1420 he was ordained a priest. From then on he got a degree and was appointed to many important and influential positions in the church. He traveled to many different locations, writing songs for mass as he went. The fact that he was a priest and fine composer, made him valuable. Everyone wanted him to compose music for themselves and for special events. Guillaume was the innovator of that for many reasons.

He came up with a whole new way of style that people did not use back then. One style that he brought the musical era was the control of dissonance. He used dissonances properly and appropriately instead of randomly like most composers back then used. A second style was that he blended the voices in a way that they all work together to make the sound more complete and together, other composers had a part stand out. The third style was that he used the four main part voices in his most songs, the tenor, bass, alto and soprano, instead of using three, five, or even six. Finally, the fourth style he used was the repetitiveness of rhythmic patterns as a way to make the piece complete. People loved his pieces so much people caught on and started using his ideas for their own.

Ave Maris Stella is a popular hymn of an unknown origin. This hymn has been written by many composers from a-little before baroque to the present day. Some of the writings employ four different plainchant tunes for the Ave Maris
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Stella; the first three were written for solemnities, feasts, and memorials of the Blessed Virgin Mary a fourth is an alternative to the memorial tone. These plainchant tones have been used as the cantus firmus for some polyphonic settings of the mass. Ave Maris Stella has been anthem of the Acadiana. The Acadians were highly devout, and had and still have a high degree of devotion to the Virgin Mary. This is evident in their anthem which instead of being written in French is written in Latin. It was adopted as the anthem of the Acadian people at the Second Acadian National Convention, held in Miscouche, Prince Edward Island in 1884. To this day, it remains a source of Acadian patriotism. The hymn was sung in its original version until French lyrics were finally composed in 1994.

Out of respect for the original hymn, the first verse in the Acadian national anthem remains in Latin. This song is a motet that was dated to at least the 9th century because it was kept in the Codex Sangallensis, a 9th century piece of music would now be at the Swiss Monastery in St. Gallen. The hymn is frequently attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux and sometimes has been attributed to King Robert they both were too late to have authored it. It can be found in ancient codices of the Divine Office for Vespers on Marian feasts. Today it is still in use in the Divine Office and in the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. Twelfth century Cistercian mystic Bernard of Clairvaux passionately explored new symbols for the beauty of the Virgin Mary. He read her name, Maria, as maris stella (star of the sea). However, the luscious Latin of this hymn, from its opening " Ave" which echoes the greeting of the Angel Gabriel, through its series of petitions to Mary the mediatrix of sinners fits Bernard's devotion to the Virgin. Similarly, by the dawn of the

Renaissance, the Gregorian chant hymn Ave maris stella inhabited chantbooks throughout the churches and chapels of Europe.

When Guillaume Dufay set about to write his cycle of polyphonic Vespers hymns, he lavished loving care on the crafting of his Ave maris stella. As all of Dufay's surviving hymns, Ave maris stella is set for three voices, with the well-known chant melody the obvious foundation. In this case, Dufay gives to the highest voice a melody based upon an embellishment of the chant. Despite the graceful passing tones with which he mediates the chant's striking opening leap, and the relatively high level of embellishment that continues, the chant melody remains audible throughout. Dufay even subtly responds to its features: the plainchant melody ends two phrases with graceful melismas, and Dufay reflects them in a series of extended cadences.

Accompanying the elegant chant paraphrase are two lower voices, of which several different versions survive. Dufay wrote an intricate tenor voice, and it is possible to perform the hymn with an annotated middle voice singing parallel fourths beneath the melody at all times. In this case, the tenor provides much of the piece's rhythmic drive and interest. However, there also exists a notated contratenor part. In the three-voiced "composed" version, this counter tenor voice lends even more spark to the setting, with quasi-imitation, voice crossings, and a greater level of syncopation. Yet another extant version provides Dufay's melody with a completely different (and somewhat more bland) pair of lower voices. Church choirs, even the

pope's own singers, were performing and adapting Dufay's hymn for decades.

Guillaume Dufay influenced many generations of composers and had a great influence on the history of the development of music. This includes how some things are known and done today. His main changes in music were the use of third intervals, the new structure of staves, and the path towards harmonies used today. He also introduced harmonies which then brought out the melodies in his pieces. Dufay also changed chants to harmonies, which then would make the music flow more smoothly than the complex rhythmic textures that most composers would use in that time period. Dufay wrote the rules and imitations for a canon, which is a song or melody with two or more parts. Another thing Dufay did to change music history was that he was the first composer to have ever used a folk song in a mass. The things that Guillaume Dufay did and the music he wrote inspired people and changed the way people wrote and see music forever.

The texture of Ave Maris Stella is polyphonic, because the soprano, tenor, and contratenor faux bourdon work separately from each other giving it its contrary motion that goes along with the polyphonic texture. Dufay used both melismatic and syllabic declamation. On measure 20 it clearly shows syllabic declamation. There is one pitch per syllable. "Tans" is on a G note and "He" is on an E note. On measure 21 it shows melismatic declamation, "No" has multiple pitches.

Dufay uses paraphrasing and musica ficta in his piece, Ave Maris Stella.

Paraphrasing is taking the original Cantus Firmus melody and adding new

notes and rhythms to it. Dufay, unlike many earlier composers, put his paraphrasing in the supremes instead of the tenor. Part of the original Cantus Firmus is; D to A to B and back to A. And in the Soprano part, labeled by X's, you can see where the original Cantus Firmus is. Dufay of course adds eight notes and dotted quarter notes to make it more interesting. Besides the paraphrasing he uses musica ficta. In measure 22, you can see a sharp (#) placed above the score. This means that putting a sharp is completely optional, but the composer, Dufay, found putting a sharp and making a harmonic minor and giving it a different tone, sounded much better.