Fr Anselm Ferrer (1882 – 1969)
The Cecilian Movement in Montserrat

Written reflection in independent work
A recording of my concert on April 26th 2019 will be attached
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INTRODUCTION

From the year 2003 to 2007, or what is the same, from 9 to 13 years of age, I was part of the Escolania de Montserrat, a boy’s choir based at the Benedictine abbey of Montserrat that has more than seven centuries of history, being one of the oldest musical institutions in Europe. There one lives, receives general education of all subjects and above all sings, studies several music instruments and works from a very young age in a professional musical environment. In my case, I performed, for example, at the Gran Teatre del Liceu during the season 2004/2005 at the opera A Midsummer night’s dream by Benjamin Britten or with prestigious conductors such as Jordi Savall.

One of the most loved works when we were at the Escolania was the Ave Maria by Father Anselm Ferrer, which we often sang at Vespers and occasionally in special celebrations, such as during the Vigil of the Virgin of Montserrat, every 26th of April, coinciding also with the date of death of Father Anselm.

Over the years, my fascination for this work has not diminished, on the contrary. For this reason, I recently wondered why I did not know more works from this composer who seemed to have so many things to say. Being a choirboy I only knew by him this Ave Maria and a Salve Regina for four equal voices of great beauty that we also sang quite often – since we sang a Salve Regina daily at the church. And, actually, this ended up becoming the key question of this master thesis: where does the composer Anselm Ferrer comes from? Did he compose more works? And if he did, will they be of the same quality as the Ave Maria?

Taking into account the context in which Anselm Ferrer was born, at the end of the nineteenth century, these questions became more interesting. As we shall see along the work, the nineteenth century was the most disastrous for Montserrat’s history and therefore also for the Escolania. After two centuries of splendour, such as the 17th and 18th centuries, the Monastery was practically completely destroyed during the Peninsular War (1808-1814). This destruction was followed by the hectic political context of Spain in the nineteenth century, which meant that the recovery of the sanctuary was slow and full of difficulties. In fact, until the twentieth century, normality would not be recovered completely.
In such an adverse context and after many years without having a great composer of the Montserrat school, arose the figure of Anselm Ferrer, who composed a short work but of an unquestionable coherence, unity and beauty. This thesis wants to shed light on this figure and its time, a period that remained to be studied, as one of the greatest voices in contemporary montserratine history insists on the prologue of his book *Els creadors del Montserrat modern*.¹

In order to understand better the figure of this man I have decided to divide the work into three sections: in the first place and since Fr Anselm Ferrer and his composing style was fully identified with the movement of reform of sacred music known as Cecilian Movement, I will establish the context of sacred music in the nineteenth century, as well as from where this movement arose and what influence it had in the promulgation of the *Moto Proprio Tra la sollecitudine* by Pope Pius X (1903).

In the second chapter I will focus more specifically on Montserrat's context and on the role of Anselm Ferrer as a conductor of the Escolania. I will firstly describe the situation of the Monastery in the nineteenth century and the role that Fr Manuel Guzmán, the most immediate predecessor to the figure of Anselm Ferrer in charge of the choir, had in recovering the Escolania. Then, I will analyse the figure of Anselm Ferrer as a conductor, pedagogue, musical educator and composer. To do this, in addition to the corresponding bibliography, I have consulted other sources of documentation, especially ancient magazines currently digitized, documentation until now unpublished provided by G. Andreu Martínez, monk from Montserrat, or the Monastery and Escolania musical archives.

Finally, in the last section I will do an analysis of some of the musical works by Anselm Ferrer. Given the large number of musical examples provided, the amount of works analysed and the limited extent of Ferrer’s work, I firmly believe that the reader will be able to get a fairly accurate idea of the style of this composer.

¹ MASSOT, Josep (2012). *Els creadors del Montserrat modern*. Barcelona: Publicacions de l’Abadia de Montserrat
This thesis will have a practical accomplishment during my Final Master Concert with the Swedish Radio Choir, in which we will perform the *Ave Maria* by Fr Anselm. Precisely, the fate wanted the concert to take place on April 26th 2019, exactly fifty years after the death of the composer and a few hours before being performed also in Montserrat during the Vigil of Montserrat’s Virgin.

And beyond the Royal College of Music of Stockholm, my research will also be reflected in my professional life as a conductor, since with my own choir have been proposed to perform at the Anselm Ferrer’s homage concert that will be held during the International Organ Festival of Montserrat that takes place each summer at the Abbey. The concert will be on August the 10th this year and we will perform some of Ferrer's most outstanding works in dialogue with some of the composers that most influenced him as a musician.
1. ANTECEDENTS AND PROMULGATION OF THE MOTU PROPRIO OF 1903 BY POPE PIUS X

What was the situation of sacred music in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century that led Pope Pius X to promulgate the \textit{Motu Proprio Tra la sollecitudine}\textsuperscript{2} in 1903? And this one, did it arise from nowhere? What preceded it? As we will see below, the promulgation of the Motu Proprio did not come from nowhere, but responds to a current that began and developed especially during the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, basically supported by two foundations: on one hand, the Renaissance sacred music revival, which became a new model for the composition of religious music. On the other hand, the restoration of the ancient Gregorian chant by the Benedictine community of Solesmes.

1.1. The situation of the sacred music in Catalonia during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century

The nineteenth century was a time of major difficulties for the development of the religious music both in Catalonia and Spain. Firstly, due to the unceasing civil wars and political instability, which entailed constant changes of government between liberals and absolutists - less and more favourable to religion, respectively - and an agitated social environment with an important growth of the anti-religious sentiment that entailed the burning of convents or the destruction of parochial archives, among others.\textsuperscript{3} On the other hand, the successive ecclesiastical confiscations considerably weakened the economic health of the church, which was forced to reduce the expenses dedicated to the musical chapels. Thus, although the musical composition and activity of the chapels did not stop completely in most cases, they did saw their activity reduced to a minimum.\textsuperscript{4}

The second main reason for this crisis in religious music is due to the rise and popularization of the opera and the influence of this genre and other theatrical genres in the writing of sacred music. Indeed, most of the religious compositions of the nineteenth century, especially during the first half of this, are inspired by the operatic model of \textit{bel
canto; that is, with a clear predominance of the melodic line, not necessarily connected to
the meaning of the text and a simplification of instrumental accompaniment. This style
led to the creation of works that in the most cases were deteriorated and of poor
quality.

However, along the 20th, both in Catalonia and in the rest of Europe, the sacred works
from the Spanish Golden Age, in particular those of Morales, Guerrero and Victoria
began to recover, giving rise to the beginning of several musicological publications. This
look at the sacred music of the Renaissance led to a renewal of the religious repertoire
while serving as a model for the new composers of sacred music. Especially, from the
moment when the Motu Proprio proposes as a supreme model of sacred music, together
with the Gregorian chant, the music of Renaissance composers, and mainly the music of
Palestrina.

1.2. The Cecilian Movement

The Cecilian Movement - name that takes from Saint Cecilia, the patroness of
musicians – is an aesthetic and religious movement born towards the middle of the 19th
century in the catholic church of the south of Germany for the reform of Catholic
church music. The Cecilian Movement proposes Renaissance music and Gregorian
chant as the ideal model of sacred music, viewing Palestrina as the leading figure in
church music. As we said, the movement was born in Germany, but it also had a strong
response first in Italy and later in Spain. Below I analyse briefly the three cases.

Germany

In Germany, Kaspar Ett (1788 - 1847) and Karl Proske (1794 - 1861) are two of the
main predecessors of the Cecilian Movement. Fascinated by the ancient masters, Ett
began a series of ancient music performances, performing, for example, during the

5 Ibid.
6 GMEINWIESER, Siegfried (2001). "Cecilian Movement". SADIE, Stanley; TYRRELL, John [ed]. The
Good Friday of 1816, the famous *Miserere* by Allegri. Proske, on the other hand, carried out a huge task of compiling old musical works. Thanks to his successive trips to Italy, sponsored by Ludwig I of Bavaria, he ended up gathering an immense library with works from the 15th to the 18th centuries.\footnote{LÓPEZ-CALO, José (2006). “Hilarión Eslava (1807-1878), precursor del Cecilianismo en España”. *Príncipe de Viana*. Navarra, 2006, n. 238, pgs. 577-608}

But the key figure of this early movement came later with Franz Xaver Witt (1834-1888), who following the ideals of Ett and Proske, went a step further and promoted the creation of the first *Allgemeiner Cäcilien-Verband für Deutschland* (General Germanic Association of St. Cecilia) in 1868. This association was officially approved by Pope Pius IX two years later, in 1870, and served as a model for the next associations.

**Italy**

The creation of the first German association was the first step towards an internationalization of the movement and the creation of other associations in several countries. As important as the German was the Italian Cecilian Movement, especially because of the subsequent influence it had on the Holy See.

There is, however, a fundamental difference between the two currents: while in Germany the priority was the recovery of the ancient repertoire, in Italy it was the creation of new music.\footnote{Ibid.} This explains the emergence of composers such as Lorenzo Perosi (1872 - 1956) – who had a great recognition as a composer during his life and was also the conductor of the Sistine Chapel for 54 years -, Oreste Ravanello (1871 – 1938) or Giovanni Tebaldini (1864 – 1952), names that will appear later in this thesis.

Indeed, the figure of Perosi helps to understand the relationship between the different Cecilian movements and the influence of this current on the subsequent promulgation of the Motu Proprio: the Italian composer went to study, first of all, in Regensburg, cradle of the German Cecilian Movement, with the composer Franz Xaver Haberl (1840 - 1910). Afterwards, he worked as a chapel master at Saint Mark in Venice, convened by Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto, with whom he would exchange certain ideas for
a reform of sacred music. A few years later, on August 4th 1903, Cardinal Sarto would be elected Pope adopting the name of Pius X, working again close to Perosi, who was working on the Sistine Chapel since 1898.

Spain: the cases of Hilarion Eslava and Felip Pedrell

Also in Spain we find figures that anticipated the principles of the Motu Proprio and initiated a theoretical and musical restoration of religious music and a review of the great 16th century polyphonists. In this case, however, it is not a movement as organized as the German or the Italian one, but move forward thanks to the important impulse of different individualities, such as Hilarion Eslava or Felip Pedrell. In fact, in Spain, the first Cecilian Association would not be created until 1912, after the celebration of the III National Congress of Sacred Music of Barcelona. Felip Pedrell would be precisely one of the promoters and second vice-president.9

Hilarion Eslava (1807 -1878) was one of the most prestigious Spanish musicians along the 19th century. He received a solid musical training at Pamplona Cathedral, where he sang as a choirboy. In 1844 he won the entrance exams as a conductor of the Royal Chapel of Madrid, a post he held until his death. Later, in 1854 he was appointed professor at the Conservatory of Madrid. Eslava was, therefore, a highly respected musician at that time.10

Concerning his role with regard to sacred music, Eslava was the first Spanish musician to propose a plan for the improvement of Spanish sacred music, leaving a huge corpus of theoretical writings. In 1852, he created the Asociación de la Lira Sacro Hispana, an association with the ambitious objective of publishing the best works of religious music, by today’s and ancient composers.11

In his writings he also regrets the poor state in which the music chapels in Spain are found - and which in other times had been so opulent - and proposes as a solution the

11 Ibid.
creation of specific schools of religious music and the opening of the posts for Chapel Masters to seculars.\textsuperscript{12} In addition to the theoretical corpus, Eslava also applies these doctrines to its compositional style. We can see, therefore, how Eslava anticipated practically 50 years to the doctrines promulgated by the \textit{Motu Proprio}, both in his theoretical writings and in his musical compositions. Thus, we can consider him as a clear predecessor of the Cecilian Movement.

Whereas Eslava stood out as a composer and for his ideas for the reform of Spanish sacred music, Felip Pedrell (1841 - 1922) carried out an enormous task of musicological, pedagogical and popularization of religious music from the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{13} Paradoxically, he considered himself principally a composer, although his compositional side has nowadays fallen into oblivion.

Pedrell gets in touch and gets passionate about the religious music of the old masters from a very young age, being a choirboy at Tortosa’s Cathedral, and he will end up devoting much of his life to it.

Among his most important musicological work, I will highlight two publications: the \textit{Hispaniae Schola Musica Sacra}, consisting of a compilation of eight volumes of religious music with works by Morales, Guerrero and Cabezón, among others, and the \textit{Thomae Ludovici Victoria Abulensis Opera Omnia (1902 – 1913)}, the publication of the complete works by Tomás Luis de Victoria, doubtlessly its favourite composer.\textsuperscript{14}

However, the most relevant of Pedrell’s facets for this thesis is the great dissemination he made of this music that he so much admired. Pedrell had an innumerable list of students to whom he transmitted or, in many cases, he discovered and passed on the affection for early music. Among his most outstanding students we can mention Manuel de Falla, Isaac Albéniz, \textbf{Father Anselm Ferrer} or Lluís Millet – founder of the \textit{Orfeó Català}.

Precisely, Lluís Millet explained about him: “Those lessons, rather than the training in the art of sounds, was a continuous propaganda of the old Spanish polyphonists, who

\textsuperscript{12} Íbid.
\textsuperscript{13} GONZÁLEZ DE LA RUBIA, Domènec (2009). \textit{La música religiosa a Catalunya en el segle XX}. Barcelona: Editorial Boileau. IBSN: 978-84-8020-860-4
\textsuperscript{14} Íbid.
the professor was constantly discovering and analysing (...) Sometimes the professor sat on the piano and made us know passages of those authors".15

1.3. The recovery of the Gregorian chant by the Solesmes School

Together with the movement of reform of sacred music and the recovery of the Renaissance polyphony, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, the French Abbey of Solesmes carried out the task of recovering the original Gregorian chant, whose melodies had been highly modified rhythmically and melodically and distorted during the last centuries.

This attempt to recover the original Gregorian chant began with the initiative of Dom Prosper Guéranger (1805-1875), promoter of the reopening in 1833 and later abbot of the Benedictine community of Solesmes, which had stopped his activity in the year 1790. Guéranger, interested in the renewal of the liturgy, urged a revision and reedition of the Gregorian chant from the original sources.16 These studies consequently led to a new way of interpreting the Gregorian chant, much lighter and more flexible, with a especial focus on the natural accentuation of the text, and quite different from the interpretation practiced at that time; slower, heavier and in some cases even adding bar lines.17

Guéranger's work continued with Dom Joseph Pothier (1835 - 1923) and Dom André Mocquereau (1849 - 1930). The latter had a strong influence and with the years a deep friendship with the monk of Montserrat Fr Gregori Sunyol, who became an expert in Gregorian chant. Gregori Sunyol was later the main introducer of the Solesmes School in the Abbey of Montserrat, where the new Gregorian chant was adopted since the 17th of July 1902.18

15 Translated by the author from GONZÁLEZ DE LA RUBIA, Domènec (2009). La música religiosa a Catalunya en el segle XX. Barcelona: Editorial Boileau. IBSN: 978-84-8020-860-4
16 http://www.solesmes.eu/historia
Finally, all the work carried out by Solesmes takes on a fundamental relevance when Pope Pius X orders the community the new official edition of the Gregorian chant, the *Vatican Editio*, which from the Motu Proprio of 1903 replaces the *Editio Medicea* as a reference edition of the church.

1.4. The Motu Proprio by Pope Pius X (1903)

Thanks, to a large extent, to all this background and school of thought we have seen, and knowing closely some of the main actors of the same - remember the relationship between Cardinal Sarto, later Pius X, and Perosi when both were in Venice - Pius X promulgated the 22th of November 1903, barely three months later from being elected Pope, the *Motu Proprio Tra Sollecitudine*, a document in which all kinds of aspects related to religious music are treated and which became, *de facto*, the new legal code for the Catholic church music.

The Motu Proprio consists of 29 points. The purpose of this work is not to make an exhaustive comment, but I mention below some of the most relevant aspects that it dealt with:

- Gregorian chant is the official chant of the Catholic Church (adding that recent studies have restored purity and integrity)
- The Renaissance polyphony, especially the one by Palestrina, is the ideal model of sacred music. The new compositions will be accepted as long as they approach and respect the Palestrinian model as much as possible and move away from the opera or theatre model.
- The organ is the most appropriate instrument for liturgical celebrations. Others are excluded, such as percussion instruments or the piano.
- The creation of *Scholae Cantorum* is encouraged to teach the execution of sacred music.
- Music is a servant of the liturgy, not the other way round.

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19 For the complete text see Annex V
20 [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/es/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-x_motu-proprio_19031122_sollecitudini.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/es/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-x_motu-proprio_19031122_sollecitudini.html)
- The liturgical text must be sung as it is in the books, without alteration or inversion of the words, without undue repetition, without breaking syllables, and always in a manner intelligible to the faithful who listen.
2. Fr ANSELM FERRER AND THE CECILIAN MOVEMENT IN MONTSERRAT

2.1. The Escolania de Montserrat: brief introduction

Santa Maria de Montserrat is an abbey of the Order of Saint Benedict located on the mountain of Montserrat, 48km Northwest of Barcelona. At the abbey is venerated an image of the Mother of God from the 12th century.\(^{21}\)

The origin of religious worship in the mountain is uncertain, but we know that around 880 there was already a hermitage – the first written testimony that there was a hermitage is from the year 888, in a donation from the Count of Barcelona, Guifré el Pilós, to the bishop of Vic.\(^{22}\) Between 1025 and 1035 the monastery was founded under the tutelage of Ripoll and towards 1082 Montserrat was already an independent monastery with its own abbot.

Always connected to the history of the Monastery, the Escolania de Montserrat, a boys’ choir that has the purpose of singing and serving the Monastery's liturgy, was born. In 1307 there are already documents that prove the existence of the choir, a fact that indicates that it is one of the older music schools in Europe.

The musical prestige of the Escolania de Montserrat has lasted for centuries, at the same time that it has provided the creation of a long school of brilliant composers and musicians along with its history. To name a few: Joan Cererols (1618 - 1680), Miquel López (1669 - 1723), Anselm Viola (1738 – 1798), Narcís Casanoves (1747 - 1799) or contemporary composers such as Bernat Vivancos (1773).

In addition to these leading names, the Escolania has provided of excellent musicians, most of them nowadays anonymous, the main music chapels of Catalonia and Spain. Already in 1610, Fr. Yépez (quoted by Saldoni), for example, writes that he knows that


\(^{22}\) *Ibid.*
in numerous churches and cathedrals of Spain there are chapel masters who had previously been choirboys at Montserrat.  

Currently, around 50 boys between 9 and 14 years old form the Escolania de Montserrat, continuing with the Montserrat’s long musical and educational tradition.

2.2. The Escolania during the 19th century

Doubtlessly, the history of the Monastery and the Escolania lived through the most adverse moments during the first half of the 19th century.

In the first place, due to the almost complete destruction of the Monastery by the Napoleonic troops during the Peninsular War (1807 – 1814) in 1811. Beyond the enormous material loss, this fact would also be catastrophic for future generations of musicians, since with the burning of the Monastery the music library also disappeared. A music library which was, according to Baltasar Saldoni, *perhaps the more rich, ancient, numerous and varied library of Europe*, that contained not only all the works of great Montserrat composers (March, Cererols, Casanoves...) but also many works of music from the Sistine Chapel, given the agreement between the Holy See and Montserrat that allowed the Benedictine sanctuary to have copies of its music.

Secondly, the following decades, Escolania’s activity suffered many interruptions due to the Spanish political instability of the nineteenth century that has been mentioned in the first chapter of the work. In 1818 the school opened again, but the activity was stopped between 1822 and 1824, and with the confiscation of Mendizábal from 1835, that disposed the church of many of its properties, the activity stopped once more. It will not be until 1851 that the Escolania has a regular activity again.

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23 SALDONI, Baltasar (1856). *Reseña histórica de la escolania o colegio de música de la Virgen de Montserrat*. Madrid.
24 Ibid.
Finally, at that moment started the long recovery of the Escolania and the Monastery. The material recovery came with the construction of the new building for the Escolania, partially constructed already on 1854. The musical recovery came later, especially with the arrival of Fr Manuel Guzmán as the conductor of the choir in 1889.

![Montserrat the year 1860 (font: Spanish National Library)](image)

*Fr Manuel Guzmán, restorer of the Escolania (1889 – 1909)*

When he already had a solid musical career, having been organist at the cathedral of Salamanca and chapel master of the cathedrals of Ávila, Valladolid and Valencia, in 1888, Joan Baptista Guzmán (1846-1909) decided to become a monk at the Monastery of Montserrat. Seeing the solid prestige with which he counted, his arrival at the Monastery was seen almost as providential for the Escolania, since after all the complications of the nineteenth century, the choir had spent decades in a deplorable state. The Monastery - and more specifically, the Abbot Deás – swiftly recognised the opportunity and took advantage of it: so much so that the next day Guzmán had made the simple perpetual vows, the abbot named him conductor of the choir and chapel master, with full powers to make and undo according to his criteria.

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
Fr Manuel Guzmán reformed the studies of the Escolania, focusing on the improvement of the instrument training and, above all, on the improvement in voice emission. He also introduced new repertoire, both from old polyphonists such as Victoria, Guerrero or Morales and from contemporaries like Hilario Eslava, with whom they knew each other personally, Úbeda or Goula. And actually he himself was a very prolific composer, although he wrote clearly in a pre Motu Proprio style in most of his works. Currently, only a few of his works are still performed regularly.

A last essential aspect of his role as conductor of the Escolania was the training he gave to a future musicians and even future conductors of the choir, such as Fr Anselm Ferrer, Fr Àngel Rodamilans or Fr David Pujol, who continued his work during the 20th century. For all these reasons, Fr Ireneu concludes: "Father Guzmán can be considered the greatest restorer that ever have had the Escolania. He is the foundation of the current Escolania".

2.3. Fr Anselm Ferrer: the Cecilian Movement in Montserrat

Brief biography

Fr Anselm Ferrer (named Josep) was born in Capellades, Barcelona, in 1882. Being 10 years old, in 1892, he joined the Escolania, where he studied until 1898 under the command of Father Guzmán and where he already stood out for his soprano voice. After finishing his stage at the Escolania he spent one year at the Seminary of Barcelona. Only one year later he returned to Montserrat to become a monk.

He collaborated from the very beginning in the musical functions of the Monastery, either as an organist or as a conductor of the chants. When Abbot Deás saw his good musical aptitudes, decided to send him to Italy in 1907 to undertake musical studies. In

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29 See Anex 1
30 See Anex 2
Rome, in addition to his studies in theology, he studied with Boezzi, conductor of the Capella Giulia at that time. He also tried to receive lessons from the totem of the new sacred music, Lorenzo Perosi, but he did not succeed. However, this attempt can be seen as a sign of his goals as a composer. Later, in 1910, he still travelled to Naples to study at the Conservatory with Camilo De Nardis and where he composed and premiered the first great work of his catalogue, the Missa Abbatialis.33

Owing to the consecutive deaths of first Father Guzmán (1909) and shortly after, Fr Ramir Escofet (1911), who had substituted Guzmán in charge of the choir, Ferrer had to interrupt his musical studies in Naples - studies that would resume in the future in Barcelona with Josep Barberà - as he was called to Montserrat to take the lead of the Escolania and the Music Chapel of Montserrat. He took the charge in August 1911.

Reformist of the Escolania

If we consider Fr Guzmán as the restorer of the Escolania, Fr Anselm Ferrer may well be considered the great renovator. Ferrer was the conductor of the Escolania from 1911 until 1933. During these more than 20 years and with a broad vision given his studies abroad, Fr Anselm renewed in all aspects the musical life of the Escolania, always following the guidelines marked by the Motu Proprio of 1903.34

He organized again the musical studies establishing graduate courses and regular exams.35 Counting on the help of Abbot Marcet, new pianos and all kind of instruments were bought for the choirboys - previously, at the time of Fr Guzmán, the students taught between themselves the different instruments and practically they did not have instruments to study, just two or three harmoniums. It also renewed the arrangement of the musical studies floor, a renovation that took place in 1930 and which is still quite similar today.36

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
As Father Ireneu states, one of the aspects that most worried him was the voice education of the children, whose emission improved greatly during his time as a conductor according to the testimonies of that time. In fact, his comments on voice emission are surprisingly modern for a man of his time and his condition, without any vocal studies. In a letter, until now unpublished, on September 24th 1952 to Lluís Maria Millet, Father Anselm Ferrer makes a critical commentary on a concert that the Orfeó Català had recently made in Montserrat. In addition to having a good knowledge of several singers or former Orfeó's singing professors, he underlines aspects that he considers important, such as good vocalization or the influence of the mother tongue on the emission of the vowels. He also makes careful observations regarding the timbre and the choir’s voice emission.

**Escolania’s repertoire**

In addition to these aspects referring to musical studies, Fr Anselm Ferrer also renewed the polyphonic repertoire of the choir, always following the directives of the Motu Proprio. Thanks to the chronicles of the *Revista Montserratina* and the *Revista Musical Catalana* we are able to know what was the usual repertoire of the Escolania during the stage of Father Anselm Ferrer as a conductor.

Therefore, we can conclude that the Escolania’s repertoire of the first decades of the 20th century came mainly from three points:

1) Great composers from the Montserrat school: Joan Cererols, Anselm Viola, Narcís Casanoves or even Fr Guzmán.

2) Contemporary composers from the Cecilian Movement, such as Lorenzo Perosi (1872 – 1956), Giovanni Tebaldini (1864 – 1952) or Oreste Ravanello (1871 – 1934), from the Italian school, or Franz Xaver Witt (1834 – 1888) and Ignaz Mitterer (1850-1924), from the German school. But also contemporary Catalan composers such as

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38 Letter from Fr Anselm to Lluís Maria Millet (1952). See Anex 3


Lamote de Grignon, Lluís Millet, A. Pérez-Moya or Antoni Nicolau and Spanish composers like Josep Maria Úbeda and Vicente Goicoechea.

3) Renaissance composers: above all Palestrina and Victoria, two authors who appear almost in each one of the chronicles on the repertoire that the Escolania performed. It was very common for the choir to sing either motets or complete masses of the two authors. In fact, in a chronicle of the Holy Week in 1932, Fr David Pujol, who became conductor of the choir just one year later, comments on how usual is to listen the whole T. L. de Victoria Responsories along the Easter,\(^{41}\) a tradition that the same author of this work has also experienced during the first years of the 21st century. It is clear, then, that Fr Anselm had a vast and deep knowledge of this music style.

On the other hand, in another letter to Lluís Millet father of January the 4th 1919, Father Anselm asks him for some of the works of the Orfeó Català, both sacred and profane, by Catalan composers of that time – most of them nowadays fallen in the oblivion - like Josep Sancho Marraco, Joan Vidal Roda or Antoni Noguera. A fact that once again demonstrates the knowledge of the musical situation that Father Anselm had beyond the walls ofMontserrat and the constant interest he had in renewing Escolania’s repertoire.\(^{42}\)

To know all these names become especially relevant, as most of them would be Fr Anselm’s models as a composer.

*Other activities*

Fr Anselm not only introduces the guidelines of the Motu Proprio with the new repertoire he performed, but he had also a relevant role as a writer of musical disclosure articles. He especially wrote at the Montserrat magazine *Vida Cristiana* or *Revista Musical Catalana*.\(^{43}\)

Finally, his work as a restorer of the Escolania did not finish with his replacement in front of the choir in 1933. Six years later, in 1939, recently finished the Spanish Civil

\(^{41}\) ibid.

\(^{42}\) Letter from Fr Anselm to Lluis Millet (1919). See Annex 4

War (1936 – 1939) Fr Anselm brought together and taught in barely two months a new group of choirboys, both older students and new ones. Among these new students we can find, for example, who was later Fr Cassià, abbot of the Monastery a few decades later during more than 20 years.\(^\text{44}\)

\textit{Composer}

Taking into account his long life and his full commitment towards the music, his work as a composer may be seen as surprisingly short. However, his choral work, completely sacred, was deeply coherent, always identified in the Cecilian Movement. In Fr Gregori’s words, one of his most relevant disciples, his style could be defined as “full, solemn, grave, elegant and precise”.\(^\text{45}\)

Among his works, some of which will be analysed in the next chapter of this work, can be highlighted the following ones:

- His two masses for four mixed voices and organ: \textit{Missa Abbatialis} and \textit{Missa Cum Jubilo} (1953)
- Several \textit{Salve Regina} and \textit{Salve Montserratina}\(^\text{46}\). Stand out the \textit{Salve Montserratina Solemne} for six mixed voices and organ and the \textit{Salve Regina} for five mixed voices.
- Several hymns for choir and organ: \textit{Laudibus Cives}, \textit{Himne a la Mare de Déu}.
- \textit{Te Deum} for choir and organ.
- The \textit{Lamentations} for 4 and 6 mixed voices \textit{a cappella} (1934), clearly inspired by the same works of the Renaissance authors.
- His last motets: \textit{Ave Maria} (1947) and \textit{O Sacrum Convivium} (1957)

Even at the end of his life, being 85, he was interested once more for the renovation of the liturgical music that came after the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965), composing new chants for the Ordinary parts of the Mass in Catalan. These chants are still performed nowadays in numerous churches of Catalunya.


\(^{45}\) BUSQUETS i MOLAS, Esteve (1972). \textit{Història de Capellades}. Capellades. pgs. 346-3468

\(^{46}\) The \textit{Salve Montserratina} is a Salve form that combines verses sung in Gregorian by the monks with polyphonic verses sung by the Escolania. It was originated during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century due to the lack of singers but it still remains today and is sung every day at the end of Evensong.
Fr Anselm Ferrer reflections around Motu Proprio

In 1953 Fr Anselm held a conference in Girona on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of Motu Proprio *Tra sollecitudine*. In this lecture, until now unpublished, Ferrer reflected on the importance that had the promulgation of it and the profound changes that it caused over the years inside sacred music.\(^{47}\)

Ferrer, born in 1882, lived the first years of his life in a musical environment pre Motu Proprio, and for this reason his testimony becomes especially interesting. He talked about the, according to him, disastrous influence that the opera and theatre music had on sacred music, *so often light and even danceable, those compositions that did not respect the sacred text and are subjected to the whims of the composer, who disrupted the syllables with effective silences.* Abuses in which even well educated musicians fell, such spread out was this music style.\(^{48}\) (Could he be thinking, among others, about his predecessor, Fr Guzmán?)

In light of this, Fr Anselm Ferrer praises the spirit of the reform of sacred music and confirms a remarkable change after several decades. And this change occurred not only in the specific field of music but also, and this is especially relevant to him, in a more respectful attitude of the devotees during the liturgy and in a much more active participation of those in the same. In fact, as an example he talks about the success and acceptance among the faithful that are having in Montserrat the composition of hymns in vernacular language, anticipating a few years to the next liturgical reform.

But beyond the confirmation of these facts that have been discussed carefully in the first chapter of this work, what is important here is the verification, once more, of the complete support of Fr Anselm in favour of the reform, highlighting the numerous virtues that it has led not only to religious music but also to the spiritual life of the Christians.


\(^{48}\) Ibid.
3. Fr ANSELM FERRER’S COMPOSITIONAL STYLE – AN ANALYSIS

As it has been said, one of the main characteristics of Ferrer’s composing style is its coherence and unity among his works. His life’s work is not very extensive but it is quite prolonged over the time, and despite that, still maintains always a highly personal harmonic, melodic and contrapuntal style. This fact does not mean, however, that his work is exempt from evolution over the years, as we shall see below.

It is because of the coherence in his musical compositions that, when analysing a significant part of his music, I have chosen to previously establish some general parameters of what he can call “Ferrer style”, for then go deeper into the characteristics of some of his most relevant works. Taking into account his vast knowledge of the Renaissance music and seeing that it was one of his main sources of inspiration at the time of composing, in some cases we will compare his music with that of masters of this period to see their similarities.

3.1. General approach

Harmony

Father Anselm always used a completely tonal harmony. And this will be the main difference between Ferrer’s style and the Renaissance masters, because although his contrapuntal treatment of the voices is always more inspired by the style of the Renaissance, he will never use the modality as a harmonic system.

Concerning the harmonic rhythm and the harmonic processes of his works, he always uses a slow harmonic rhythm, with smooth changes, never abrupt. Harmonically, the phrases are generally long, with basic harmonic processes but prolonged over the time. We can observe, for example, the beginning of his O Sacrum Convivium, where he writes a twelve-measure phrase to establish the tonality of B-flat major, using only a drone on the tonic on the first place and authentic perfect cadence later.
But how to avoid monotony and keep the interest taking into account such long and not very complex harmonic processes? Ferrer manages it through the constant use of extended chords, mostly based on suspended notes. The most common of those chords he uses are the seventh chord, the sus⁴ and sus², and what we could say is Ferrer’s favourite chord, the dominant seventh chord plus the suspended fourth. Below, three examples of the use of this chord.

The constant use of these chords is, actually, what gives to Ferrer’s work that majestic, rich, dense and full character that he always sought to confer on the liturgy and fits so well with the definition of his style made by Fr Gregori which we have seen on the previous chapter. Below, we can see the constant use of these suspended chords at Ave Maria’s organ introduction.
Voice treatment: counterpoint and melodic aspects

Anselm Ferrer follows the Palestinian rule to seek the major clarity and intelligibility in the text, what makes him to combine constantly a homophonic counterpoint texture with passages of a dense but not very complex counterpoint. At this point we have to differentiate the treatment of the voices regarding their masses from the one of the motets. At his Masses the counterpoint is closer to the Baroque style, occasionally writing strict fugues, as is the case of the Kyrie of the Missa Abbatialis. On the other hand, in his motets such as Ave Maria or O sacrnum convivium, the model is the Renaissance counterpoint, using an imitative style but never the severe counterpoint of a fugue.

Another singularity can be seen at the Lamentations for Holy Week, where he uses a homophonic texture but in a recitative form.
Concerning the melodic treatment, Ferrer’s melodies are generally characterized by the regular use of leaps of forth, fifth or octaves, normally followed by conjunct motion. He uses this procedure both at the beginning of the phrases to give amplitude and at the end to relax the musical tension.

![Figure 6. O Sacrum convivium. Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)

![Figure 7. Ave Maria. Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)

![Figure 8. Missa Cum Jubilo (Gloria). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)

![Figure 9. Missa Cum Jubilo (Gloria). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)

A second important melodic characteristic of Ferrer’s works is his preference for the embellished suspended resolutions at the end of the phrases; that is, those resolutions that, instead of going directly to the note they should resolve, make first a melodic ornamentation – normally through the skip to a consonance – and later resolve to the initially expected note. That’s a very common Renaissance embellishment called *nota cambiata*, although while the composers of that period used always a third skip, Ferrer expands it to leaps of fourth or even fifth.

![Figure 10. Missa Abbataudis (Credo). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)

![Figure 11. Salve Regina a 5. Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)
Finally, a last singularity of Ferrer’s melodic writing is to double a melody to the lower octave – for example, to get together the voices of soprano and tenor singing the same melody but every voice at his range – especially at climax points. Is a technique seen for the first time in his two *Lamentations* and that he will repeat again in his next works: *Salve Montserratina Solemne*, the last great motets or his *Missa Cum Jubilo*. This procedure also moves him away from the Renaissance composers but brings him close to his contemporaries or slightly previous Cecilian composers that he knew so well. Let’s see, if not, the use that Hilarión Eslava does of this technique in his *O Salutaris Hostia* and the use made by Ferrer in his four-voices *Lamentations* I was referring to.
Ferrer always wrote only for a cappella choir or choir with organ accompaniment, strictly following the Motu Proprio's rules.

Concerning the choir formation, he basically used two types of choir disposition: for the masses - *Abbatialis* and *Solemnis* - and Hymns - *Laudibus Cives, Te Deum, A la Mare de Déu de Montserrat* - he wrote for four voices mixed choir (SATB) with organ. On the other hand, as of the decade of the 30s, he also uses another formation, slightly more complex and dense, to 6 voices SATTBB (a cappella or with organ accompaniment). It is the model he uses for one of the *Lamentations*, his *Salve Montserratina Solemne* or his two great motets. And it is the same model as the one used for example by Palestrina in the canonical work of the Renaissance, the *Papae Marcelli* mass, which was, actually, a well-known piece for Ferrer, as the Credo was part of the regular repertoire of the Escolania. It is not, then, strange that he used a similar model.

Below I compare the end of the *Papae Marcelli* Credo with the end of Ferrer’s *O Sacrum Convivium*, to see how similar is the choral writing.

Concerning the organ role, this is basically to give support to the choir, playing short introductional phrases or interludes, but when playing together with the choir it has the function of doubling the voices. That’s one of the reasons why some of his works for choir and organ can be perfectly performed a cappella.
Obviously, there are some exceptions: when it concerns to his hymns or parts of his Salves the organ has a more relevant, independent and sometimes even virtuoso role.

Text treatment

As it has been discussed throughout the previous analysis of several parameters, Ferrer took always the Palestrinian rule of seeking the major clarity and intelligibility of the text. It must be understood. That’s why he uses homophonic textures very often or even choral recitatives, and why his counterpoint is dense but never mixing more than one single text sentence at the same time.

Form and structure

Here Fr Anselm follows again the Renaissance model. The structure of his pieces is always linear, without any recapitulation. The only exception is the hymn *Laudibus Cives*, with a strophic form. But this form is caused partially for the very origin of the Gregorian anthem, which is also strophic.

3.2. Analysis of Fr Anselm Ferrer’s works

We have seen several examples from numerous pieces by Ferrer. At this point, then, I will only highlight those most relevant aspects of each work that I have chosen to analyse more deeply. In order to reaffirm and argue my previous exposition on Fr Anselm’s style. I will not analyse the whole corpus of music, since such a task exceeds a work of this type. However, I have made a diverse and varied choice, to see as much aspects as possible of Ferrer’s music. Taking into account his brief corpus of works and the amount of examples previously reported, it will be a sufficient representative sample.

Good Friday Lamentations

This work for 4 and 6 voices a cappella premiered in 1932 is one of the most interesting in the catalogue of Anselm Ferrer. Especially, for its innovative harmonic language and
also because we find some relevant musical aspects that Ferrer would develop later in his great motets.

As I said, the harmonic idiom of this lamentation is the most experimental of Ferrer's work. And although for us, nowadays, it seems to be a most classic harmony, in the context the works were performed certain harmonic connections could be surprising and even adventurous. To prove that, we can have a look to a chronicle about the music that could be heard during the Easter of 1932 in Montserrat published at the *Revista Musical Catalana*. The author of the chronicle precisely refers to the harmonic language of this work writing that its harmony was of an *exquisite modernity*.49

Let's see, for example, some of the first measures of this lamentation, where Ferrer finalizes two phrases with an enlarged sixth chord. In the first case, from measure 8 to 9, it resolves to a seventh-dominant chord. In the second, however, from measure 10 to 11, he continues with the same harmonic function but through a more original melodic connection. In a composer who always looked after the counterpoint and the melodic line like Ferrer, this fact is also relevant.

![Image](image.png)

*Figure 16. Good Friday Lamentations (first measures). Fr Anselm Ferrer*

Again at the end of the piece Ferrer experimented with the harmony: first with these parallel chords at the three lower voices and then using a chromatic theme. As in several occasions, at the end of the system Ferrer uses a seventh-dominant chord plus a sus4.

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Apart from the harmonic aspect, there is a textural technique that Ferrer only used in his lamentations – probably because of the great amount text – and that is the choral recitative. He wrote only melodic values and gave rhythmic freedom to recite the text.

Finally, at the end of the Lamentation Ferrer wrote for the first time for the choral disposition previously mentioned of SATTBB. At the same place he used, also for first time, the melodic technique of doubling a melody to the octave below, a technique that he will use many times in the following pieces, as we mentioned before.
Salve Montserratina Solemnly

The particularities of the Salve Montserratina form, a unique type of Salve originated in Montserrat, have been previously explained. Precisely, the separation in different movements by the Gregorian chant allows Ferrer to create and experiment with different techniques in each case, which makes this work one of the most complete and diverse of Ferrer's catalogue. It was written on 1934 for SATB choir with organ accompaniment.

In the first and forth movement Ferrer wrote in the same style we have seen in the O Sacrum Convivium; a long-values writing, with a chord chaining full of harmonic suspensions. In this case, the first movement is quite short, which allows him to lead the harmonic tension very clearly towards the climax of the movement.

Figure 20. Salve Montserratina Solemnly (et spes nostra). Fr Anselm Ferrer
However, at the second and third movement Ferrer chose a more contrapuntal writing. For instance, we can see below the beginning and the end of the short fugue from the third movement. The fugue theme with the text *nobis post hoc exilium* comes from the Gregorian chant.

As it can be noticed, in this part the organ has at certain moments a more relevant and virtuoso role – taking into account that the tempo is quite fast. Two examples of this virtuosity can be seen during the first measures of the pedalier or either in the right hand arpeggios at the end.
Ave Maria

One can consider the Ave Maria as Ferrer’s greatest masterpiece. And that is because here we can find together all the characteristic elements of Ferrer’s style in one piece and better constructed than ever.

At the beginning of the work, for example, he uses a similar process as in O Sacrum convivium to establish the main tonality (G major). The harmony is simple and clear, but the harmonic changes and dissonances are perfectly chosen. Let us look at the fine changes of the first chords: 1) from the G-major chord in root position to the E-minor first inversion and 2) b-minor in root position to G-major first inversion. Afterwards he writes a perfect authentic cadence: II7 – V7 – I.

![Figure 22. Ave Maria (beginning). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)

In between these harmonic processes the counterpoint is more carefully worked than ever. Let us look at the dialogue between both tenors at the passage gratia plena o Dominus lecum.

![Figure 23. Ave Maria (tenor dialogue). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)
Ferrer writes again his typical melodic embellishment in the final cadences, similar to the Renaissance *nota cambiata*:

![Figure 24. Ave Maria (embellishment). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)

And observe the magnificent construction of the climax of the first section of the piece, in which he chose to have a less dense harmony in exchange for reinforcing the main melody. To do it, he doubles it at the octave, as he often does:

![Figure 25. Ave Maria (climax). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)

Throughout the work the text is always clear, audible, understandable. With this purpose, Ferrer mixes homophonic with more contrapuntal passages. For instance, at the beginning of the second part, at the *Sancta Maria* he chooses a homophonic texture.

![Figure 26. Ave Maria (Sancta Maria). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)
In addition of all aspects I have mentioned, Ferrer added certain melodic elements that provides the piece of a remarkable thematic coherence and gives it unity and meaning. Let us look at how some organ sections are defily connected to the next choral passages:

*Figure 27. Ave Maria (organ motifs). Fr Anselm Ferrer*

*Figure 28. Ave Maria (choral answers). Fr Anselm Ferrer*

**Laudibus Gives**

*Laudibus Gives* is an A-major hymn to St Benedict for four voices mixed choir with organ accompaniment composed on 1934. It has a seven-part form, although the Gregorian chant in which the piece is based has six verses. The difference is due to the repetition of the first verse again in number IV. Ferrer organised the work as it follows:

I – Main theme. *Maestoso*. A-major. Four voices mixed choir

II – *Adagio*. c♯-minor. Soprano solo (new theme)

III – *Andante*. Tenor Solo. E-major (new theme)

IV – Main theme. A-major

V – *Moderato*. Baritone solo. F-major and C-major (new theme)

VI – Four voices. No stable tonality: E-major, c♯-minor, E-major (some melodic and harmonic passages from the tenor solo)

VII – Main theme (doxology text) + Amen. *Andante maestoso*. A-major
As we see, it presents a kind-of-rondo form (a (I) - b (V) - c (V) - a (I) - d (VI') - e (V) - a' (I) + CODA), writing the main theme in I, IV and VII in the main tonality and leaving two verses between them where to develop new music. But from my point of view, the most interesting aspect of this piece is the constant melodic, motivic and harmonic development. Although the principal musical material is almost completely new in the sections II, III, IV and V, the development made by Ferrer of some musical aspects smoothly connect each section. On the other hand, the organ has also an important role here, developing its own leitmotiv through the entire piece and connecting each section with brief interludes, as we shall see later. That’s why although having so many contrasting themes, the work has a coherent discourse.

The main theme has a classical conception, with a clear periodization and harmonic organization: 15 measures divided into (4+4)+(4+3) with the following harmonic scheme (I - (V Jennings V) + (I6 - (V+7))I). The choral writing is practically always homophonic, with the sopranos singing the melody. All together presents a typical hymn writing. Compare, for instance, the hymn *Iste Confessor* by D. Scarlatti (1685 – 1757) with *Laudibus Cives* by Ferrer:

![Figure 29. Iste Confesor. Domenico Scarlatti](image)

![Figure 30. Laudibus Cives. Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)
The section II presents a contrasting theme in C♯-minor, only for soprano and organ and with a much more intimate character. The melody is formed mainly for descending conjunct motion and ending with a motif that will appear later in other sections:

Figure 31. Laudiibus Cives (Section II). Fr Anselm Ferrer

In section III in E-major for solo tenor the character is again more majestic, and unlike the previous section, here the conjunct motion has normally an ascending direction. There are anyway motivic elements from II:

Figure 32. Laudiibus Cives (Section III). Fr Anselm Ferrer

Ferrer introduces new harmonic elements that will appear also later. At the beginning of the solo there is a long (13 measures) drone on the tonic. Though, later, to increase the tension to the climax at the end of the section repeats two times the harmonic pattern (VI-II-VI-II) before the last perfect authentic cadence:

Figure 33. Laudiibus Cives (end Section III). Fr Anselm Ferrer
After the exact repetition of I again, it comes a new theme with the baritone solo in F-major (section IV). Ferrer takes here, one more time, previous harmonic or melodic elements to develop them. For instance, the solo starts again sustained by a drone on the tonic and later is repeated again the pattern VI-II-VI-II before the climax. The main difference lies on the melodic character: here there is not any predominance of a melodic direction, but that is more undulating. That gives a more peaceful atmosphere in contrast with the powerful tenor solo section. Let’s see the first measures to understand the character:

![Image of musical notation]

Figure 34. *Laudibus Cives* (Section IV). Fr. Anselm Ferrer

In fact, the atmosphere achieved in this last section fits perfectly with section V in E-major. During most of this part we have a choral harmonization of the tenor solo but in a completely different mood. The choir starts singing for the first time a cappella, *pianissimo*, and in short interventions connected by the organ. As during the whole hymn, the choral writing is almost totally homophonic:

![Image of musical notation]

Figure 35. *Laudibus Cives* (Section V). Fr. Anselm Ferrer
And that was the tenor solo. As we shall see the thematic connection is more than evident:

![Figure 36. Laudibus Cives (tenor solo). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)

Instead of following the entire tenor solo, Ferrer writes an interesting harmonic passage just before the last recapitulation. Playing with the unclear tonal centre and the enharmonic relations between C#-Major/minor and D-flat major, he writes a modulating passage that ends with a perfect cadence to E-major, that becomes the dominant of the main tonality when the last section starts right after. Using the rhetoric terminology, it is clear that we are in front of a *confutatio*, which shakes the listener before the very last recapitulation.

![Figure 37. Laudibus Cives (Section II). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)
Concerning the organ part, it is worthy to briefly analyse the motivic development of this part, as it works thematically quite independently from the choir, but is at the same time the element that connects every section. The whole organ part development is based on the following leitmotiv:

Figure 38. *Laudibus Cives* (organ first measures). Fr Anselm Ferrer

And it continues appearing in its short form when the choir comes in:

Figure 39. *Laudibus Cives* (organ). Fr Anselm Ferrer

But is during the transitions that it has again a relevant role. Moreover, the chromatic nature of the leitmotiv allows to make quick modulations to each new tonality. Let’s see the transition between I and II (A-major to c#-minor):

Figure 40. *Laudibus Cives* (organ modulation). Fr Anselm Ferrer

Or between III and IV (A-major to F-major):

Figure 41. *Laudibus Cives* (organ modulation II). Fr Anselm Ferrer
In some cases, this small leitmotiv evolves to a continuous movement, but keeping the same thematic original idea. It happens, for instance, during the tenor solo (III) or the baritone solo (IV). Look especially at the left hand:

![Figure 42. Laudibus Cives (organ leitmotiv development). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)

Finally, while this leitmotiv and its development belong only to the organ part, occasionally the organ and the choir have a dialogue together, either imitating each other or presenting new contrasting ideas between the choral interventions. Below the dialogue between the soprano and the answer of the organ:

![Figure 43. Laudibus Cives (organ dialogue I). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)

![Figure 44. Laudibus Cives (organ dialogue II). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)

And the second type of dialogue in section V:

![Figure 45. Laudibus Cives (organ dialogue III). Fr Anselm Ferrer](image)
3.3. The choral conductor’s perspective

The previous analysis on Fr Anselm Ferrer’s music and, actually, the whole thesis, had a colossal influence on my posterior work as a choral conductor, both in my Final Concert with the Swedish Radio Choir and in my professional career.

From the homogeneous writing for men's choir an indispensable work of balance with the choir is emitted, particularly between tenor two and baritone voices, often very close to each other. That's what I did, for example, in certain passages of the *Ave Maria*, such as in the *Sancta Maria* or at the beginning of the piece, where a good balance between the men voices gives the colour and solidity that Ferrer’s style requires.

Given his clear inspiration in the Renaissance music, I also had to reinterpret some dynamic or articulation marks. For instance, it is common to find certain words in the *Ave Maria* with the "->" accent symbol. Even so, in my opinion and my current knowledge of his music after my investigation, I would never interpret these accents as we usually do, but simply as Ferrer's way of showing where the natural accent of the word is. That's what I explained to the choir and so I worked it.

The previous fact connects with the importance that for Fr Anselm and the Cecilian composers had the clear diction of the text, as we have seen along the work. That is why I also insisted in my work as a conductor on the importance of a good diction of the consonants.

Similarly, by analysing the type of harmony that Ferrer uses and the clarity of sound that his music requires, I asked to minimize the vibrato, as would be required, for example, when performing Renaissance music. Paradoxically, in the recordings of Ferrer’s music from the 50's conducted by him, the sound of the Escolania has a strong and continuous vibrato. However, at that time also the early music was interpreted in that way, an aesthetic that currently has changed.

Finally, as conductor and also organist, I put special emphasis on the balance between the organ and the choir in my concert with the Radio Choir. Having analysed the double role of the organ in Ferrer’s work, I chose to clearly differentiate the registration
between the moments in which the organ only doubled the choir from the others with a more soloist role, but trying to keep always a warm and round sound.
CONCLUSIONS

The first of the conclusions is that I have broadly answered the key questions that led me to start this thesis: to know more deeply who Fr Anselm Ferrer was, in which aesthetic movement was he identified or what was the amount and quality of his work. After this thesis I know that there was a movement for the reform of Catholic Church music called Cecilian Movement, what origins it had and what consequences. I have verified that Ferrer's work and thoughts are part of this musical style, and that, actually, we cannot understand the arising of a composer like him if we do not know the fundamentals and purposes of this movement beforehand. And that may answer another question: why Fr Anselm’s composing style was so different from the style of Fr Guzmán, his conductor and teacher at the Escolania and main predecessor in charge of the choir.

Thanks to this deep knowledge of Ferrer's work I have also confirmed its validity as a composer: although nowadays most of the Cecilianist composers are hardly performed, I firmly believe that Ferrer’s work is fully valid for being heard today in concerts or liturgical events. Therefore, ahead of the question of whether the *Ave Maria* was an isolated case, the answer is clear: it is not, quite the opposite. It is the zenith of a coherent, personal and fully recognizable work over time.

Regarding the external reader that can read this thesis, I have achieved a goal that may seem basic but that is essential: to present the work and importance of a musician completely unknown, of course internationally, but also in Catalonia. Obviously, a work of these characteristics and with such a general approach would hardly have contributed anything new to a composer known to the general public. But dealing with a composer totally unknown and of whom a musical analysis of his work had never been done, I believe that a thesis of this kind is relevant. In addition, I have also made public some testimonies from Ferrer’s time until now unpublished or forgotten that might help to understand better the figure of this man.

The next section of these conclusions is what refers to my vision and contribution to this theme concerning my role as a conductor.
Having analysed Ferrer’s musical style, I have a more accurate idea about the interpretation of his music I should do: how to decide better the phrasing of his long musical phrases, for instance surely selecting fewer stress points than what we used to do when we performed it in Montserrat; the influence of Renaissance music in his work, style from where we have to depart when approaching its interpretation; how important was for Ferrer – as the Cecilianist he was – the intelligibility and clarity of the text; or also the importance of taking care of the dialogue between the well-written lines of counterpoint of Ferrer’s music - another aspect that was not taken into account when we performed their works in Montserrat, given the endless tempi and the small dynamic and articulation range with which we sang.

After this thesis, I will also carry out a job that can only be done by a conductor: to program his music and revive it. In the first place, performing the Ave Maria at my Final Concert with the Swedish Radio Choir on April 26th 2019, and also a work written in 1932 dedicated to the Escolania and most probably conducted by Ferrer himself: the O vos omnes by Pau Casals – who, in fact, stylistically has many similarities with Ferrer's style.

This work will also have positive consequences in my professional life as a conductor. Thanks to the archival research that I started a few months ago, I have been able to build a concert program that I am going to perform with my own choir, Cor Cererols, at the Montserrat International Organ Festival 2019. The concert will serve as homage to the figure of Anselm Ferrer, of whom this year we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

Finally, the last of the conclusions is that this thesis opens new doors to continue and compete with the research about this composer. For instance, a complete catalogue of his musical works has still to be done. A task for the musicologists that exceeds my role as a conductor, but that some day I hope it will be carried on.

As a whole, I think it has been a really enriching thesis, personally, musically and for my professional career. However, I hope these pages will not be only enriching for me, but also for the reader who will approach to them, and that they may awaken interest to know more about this man and his music, and finally to perform and enjoy it.


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Manuscript. P. Anselm Ferrer. Laudibus Civès

Manuscript. P. Anselm Ferrer. Missa Abbatialis

Unknown Publisher. P. Anselm Ferrer. Lamentatio Sabbato Sancto II
ANNEX I
FR GUZMÁN’S MISERERE

Fr Guzmán dedicates his Miserere a dos coros to Hilarión Eslava writing “I would never have dared to write a Miserere – Eslava’s Miserere was very famous at that time – but for the advice of Maestro Eslava (...) I decided to write this score (...)” (1877 – 1878)
Fr Guzmán’s Hymn to St Benedict, composed in 1890. Observe the rythmic patterns or the melodic figures from the introduction, far away from Fr Anselm style.
LETTER FROM FR ANSELM TO LLUÍS MILLET  
(24th September 1952)

[Image of the letter]

[Handwritten text]

F. d. Luis M. Millet  
Barcelona

24 de setembre de 1952

Damià amic: La fa prop de 7 mesos que vaig recórrer la vossa molt alta. Del 25 de juliol, recòrrer que la recórrer d'aquesta de l'Orfeó a Montserrat, llegís que agraecés i obtuves molta, en ella mateixa, més encara, pel seu descobert a vostè i afecte en que fou escrit i avui la meva modesta persona. Ho primer que un traç de diu és que em preguntem la meva apparentment en contenciosos; un pregó que em la tribució a més de reconegut i més encara a dis-consideració. Ho hauria fet a la nostra festa així dels uns temprada no passe ben en la meva relació i en les limites, com que se'n imponeixen les meves cases dificultant-me el ve-rell mental, i havent-hi avui completat per a fer les fets que tinc entre mans o que em van sortint de menys. Així em s'ha obligat a adonar primer les més pressupòs, deixant un rere aplaïtada la correspondència de tant llarg període i donar que aquestes mytes compliriam encara l'objecte que es preveuen en escriurem.

Perig aristir en bona part al vostre concert, recordant tota la vore per (a...) quan en aquella altra edició de l'Orfeó, l'any 1947, va semblar, en un altre semblant al vostre el mona-vor i l'Orfeó català annexat amb l'entitat i el seu director els noms d'amistat que ja els hi han. Aora l'Orfeó català, fent exèrcit restaurat, continua tasca feta per al i el bon nom, i li torn el seu fundador i primer director, és notó de mateix entusiasme i disciplina dels cantadors, la profusió i la fusió de la massa estat, la afinació i justesa, quasi perfectes, i una
molh remarcable fins al els matesos de dolor i fatiguetat.

Hi hauria de fer algunes observacions crítica, afectància més aviat a la qualitat de les vores i a la emissió; potser també a l’equilibri d’alguna vegada, del conjunt. Mencionem “de natural” no fem en què sembla, la “matèria prima” de tots pocs, per exemple. Però si que en els escénics de cant, i en particular, en vocalització, es pot millorar la qualitat de les seves, especialment si aquests són bens collados. Jo no sé si femen arreu les condicions i amig europea, quan hi haver cantaré com la b. Formelle, Ben Vedrell i algun altre “mitjana cinzencina” i la fre derla com a preferència de cant de les vocals. Les més importants que es facin més beno exercí de vocalització i tenir present els trucaments que per a una bona en
tal·lació té la pròpia llengua dels vocals massa oberta i per a
què hi no es veu en compte, la qualitat i la uniformitat del Fin
llores, així com la i també la “tancada” el fan massa pensa
quit també seguides, com en va tendir notar més d’un cop arrels
vories, cal anotant i uniformant el timbre en totes les vocals.
Per altra banda veังia que a “l’Ofici” ja de temps hi ha hagut
votar una expressió preocupat per la naturalitat però en ella va
treure excel·lent i necessària en tot act. Però cada propietat podria u
utilitzar veures actituds fins per ca, el registre aquest els músics amb
manual “feliç”, o el “feliç” en general, fins per ca, el timbre de la màva se presenta una qualitat superior a la de la
la cantatge, i tot el que prengue, amb certa racionals i quan sempre
pel bon fent, ens dem de ferce l’expressió i calçar-nos el sec. con
no solten la desagúst aquestes observacions més abans i en
mèrit de comencen que volen tenir, una més aviat soi expresió i dem
Sig d’amor o i millorar les nostres zones. (Jo no està pas també tancar
el nostre propi cant i bit d’així)
En punt a la expressió de les vocals del programa (no tenia agent a la man) joc sovint, per donances, encara que no els mestres ara deïtament i a mi deitar que em satisfagan em general, però altres que més m’impression
mas no de salve del votre pate cantatge a la Brancas, entre d’l’Ofice.
Les correspondències, normalment, en la consideració d’estima i amistat de les vocals dels vots de vots, d’altres en tot

Antoni Ferrés
ANNEX IV
Desitjo aprendre amir. He rebut, fa pocs mesos, el llibre de llibres de la mà nica correspondent al grup superior de l'Escola del hum. mifim, i m'he deu que heu i vint cosint molts dies abans. Què devia esser quan estavem fins als exèrcits equipatges i per aquesta causa i tendeia per oblidar no est aviat a mes, mentres es era. Si agraixia molt acon i d'explicar no em tragi fons per més prompta.

Al mateix temps aprofité aquell ocasió per a preguntar, que ja que no hauria pogut parlar encara sobre aquesta còsa que a
vaig envinar el passeig estic d'obres del repertori de l'Orfeó; m'eu faci fer encara entre tant, copia d'algunes i avítes, si no li vingués malament i res no l'hi ofri. Ye emullà les següents:
Nicolau Capfaut
El noi de la neva
Entre flors

Noquer | Hivernança
Sadal Roc | Coffus
Montes | Dona de femià — d'oix

dons
Negre sombra
Sant Mamo | Mantanys regalet.

El rememori per endavant i es
fara hoquen amist conferència amb
V. respecte de tots els peces amenaçables.
Parlant d'altre, he sabut que
V. dona llistina de Harmonia i
de fins al que existia i aquí en ser
vaç. Mi'en alegra per una part, però
un crec en el deber de advertir-li.
a l’ pel seu govern, que aquest poble ha sigut declarat tèbic, i l’ doctor d’ així dalt no esperava que foqués vire gaire. És dament merit que estigués aquí li fou interès per absolutament tot treball i estudi, i merçam a això semblé que és postis bé a l’anar-sem.

És molt de planer i malguer
nyades distòniques que tenia per l’art. 

Hi desitjo aquest any que comencin, ple de tota class de buig
que hi ponguin convenir i de la gra-
cia de Deu, que sigui la seva fe-
licitat en la vida present i sobretot
en la futura que modi i charge d’ar-
ebar.

Afectuosos recors de l’ Robert
i dels escolars, i mení sempre a
stants son ferent per vosté i amist.

[Signature]
INSTRUCTION ON SACRED MUSIC

I General principles

1. Sacred music, being a complementary part of the solemn liturgy, participates in the general scope of the liturgy, which is the glory of God and the sanctification and edification of the faithful. It contributes to the decorum and the splendor of the ecclesiastical ceremonies, and since its principal office is to clothe with suitable melody the liturgical text proposed for the understanding of the faithful, its proper aim is to add greater efficacy to the text, in order that through it the faithful may be the more easily moved to devotion and better disposed for the reception of the fruits of grace belonging to the celebration of the most holy mysteries.

2. Sacred music should consequently possess, in the highest degree, the qualities proper to the liturgy, and in particular sanctity and goodness of form, which will spontaneously produce the final quality of universality.

It must be holy, and must, therefore, exclude all profanity not only in itself, but in the manner in which it is presented by those who execute it.

It must be true art, for otherwise it will be impossible for it to exercise on the minds of those who listen to it that efficacy which the Church aims at obtaining in admitting into her liturgy the art of musical sounds.

But it must, at the same time, be universal in the sense that while every nation is permitted to admit into its ecclesiastical compositions those special forms which may be said to constitute its native music, still these forms must be subordinated in such a manner to the general characteristics of sacred music that nobody of any nation may receive an impression other than good on hearing them.

II. The different kinds of sacred music

3. These qualities are to be found, in the highest degree, in Gregorian Chant, which is, consequently the Chant proper to the Roman Church, the only chant she has inherited from the ancient fathers, which she has jealously guarded for centuries in her liturgical codices, which she directly proposes to the faithful as her own, which she prescribes exclusively for some parts of the liturgy, and which the most recent studies have so happily restored to their integrity and purity.

On these grounds Gregorian Chant has always been regarded as the suprememodel for sacred music, so that it is fully legitimate to lay down the following rule: the more closely a composition for church approaches in its movement, inspiration and savor the Gregorian form, the more sacred and liturgical it becomes; and the more out of harmony it is with that supreme model, the less worthy it is of the temple.

The ancient traditional Gregorian Chant must, therefore, in a large measure be restored to the functions of public worship, and the fact must be accepted by all that an ecclesiastical function loses none of its solemnity when accompanied by this music alone.

Special efforts are to be made to restore the use of the Gregorian Chant by the people, so that the faithful may again take a more active part in the ecclesiastical offices, as was the case in ancient times.

4. The above-mentioned qualities are also possessed in an excellent degree by Classic Polyphony, especially of the Roman School, which reached its greatest perfection in the sixteenth century, owing to the works of Pierluigi da Palestrina, and continued subsequently to produce compositions of excellent quality from a liturgical and musical standpoint. Classic Polyphony agrees admirably with Gregorian Chant, the supreme model of all sacred music, and hence it has been found worthy of a place side by side with Gregorian Chant, in the more solemn functions of the Church, such as those of the Pontifical Chapel. This, too, must therefore be restored largely in ecclesiastical functions, especially in the more important basilicas, in cathedrals, and in the churches and chapels of seminaries and other ecclesiastical institutions in which the necessary means are usually not lacking.

5. The Church has always recognized and favored the progress of the arts, admitting to the service of religion everything good and beautiful discovered by genius in the course of ages — always, however, with due regard to the liturgical laws. Consequently modern music is also admitted to the Church, since it, too,
furnishes compositions of such excellence, sobriety and gravity, that they are in no way unworthy of the liturgical functions.

Still, since modern music has risen mainly to serve profane uses, greater care must be taken with regard to it, in order that the musical compositions of modern style which are admitted in the Church may contain nothing profane, be free from reminiscences of motifs adopted in the theaters, and be not fashioned even in their external forms after the manner of profane pieces.

6. Among the different kinds of modern music, that which appears less suitable for accompanying the functions of public worship is the theatrical style, which was in the greatest vogue, especially in Italy, during the last century. This of its very nature is diametrically opposed to Gregorian Chant and classic polyphony, and therefore to the most important law of all good sacred music. Besides the intrinsic structure, the rhythm and what is known as the conventionalism of this style adapt themselves but badly to the requirements of true liturgical music.

III. The liturgical text

7. The language proper to the Roman Church is Latin. Hence it is forbidden to sing anything whatever in the vernacular in solemn liturgical functions — much more to sing in the vernacular the variable or common parts of the Mass and Office.

8. As the texts that may be rendered in music, and the order in which they are to be rendered, are determined for every liturgical function, it is not lawful to confuse this order or to change the prescribed texts for others selected at will, or to omit them either entirely or even in part, unless when the rubrics allow that some versicles of the text be supplied with the organ, while these versicles are simply recited in the choir. However, it is permissible, according to the custom of the Roman Church, to sing a motet to the Blessed Sacrament after the Benedictus in a solemn Mass. It is also permitted, after the Offertory prescribed for the mass has been sung, to execute during the time that remains a brief motet to words approved by the Church.

9. The liturgical text must be sung as it is in the books, without alteration or inversion of the words, without undue repetition, without breaking syllables, and always in a manner intelligible to the faithful who listen.

IV. External form of the sacred compositions

10. The different parts of the mass and the Office must retain, even musically, that particular concept and form which ecclesiastical tradition has assigned to them, and which is admirably brought out by Gregorian Chant. The method of composing an introit, a gradual, an antiphon, a psalm, a hymn, a Gloria in excelsis, etc., must therefore be distinct from one another.

11. In particular the following rules are to be observed:

(a) The Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, etc., of the Mass must preserve the unity of composition proper to the text. It is not lawful, therefore, to compose them in separate movements, in such a way that each of these movements form a complete composition in itself, and be capable of being detached from the rest and substituted by another.

(b) In the office of Vespers it should be the rule to follow the Caeremoniale Episcoporum, which prescribes Gregorian Chant for the psalmody and permits figured music for the versicles of the Gloria Patri and the hymn.

It will nevertheless be lawful on greater solemnities to alternate the Gregorian Chant of the choir with the so called falsi-bordoni or with verses similarly composed in a proper manner.

It is also permissible occasionally to render single psalms in their entirety in music, provided the form proper to psalmody be preserved in such compositions; that is to say, provided the singers seem to be psalmmodising among themselves, either with new motifs or with those taken from Gregorian Chant or based upon it.

The psalms known as di concerto are therefore forever excluded and prohibited.
(c) In the hymns of the Church the traditional form of the hymn is preserved. It is not lawful, therefore, to compose, for instance, a Tantum ergo in such wise that the first strophe presents a romanza, a cavatina, an adagio and the Genitori an allegro.

(d) The antiphons of the Vespers must be as a rule rendered with the Gregorian melody proper to each. Should they, however, in some special case be sung in figured music, they must never have either the form of a concert melody or the fullness of a motet or a cantata.

V. The singers

12. With the exception of the melodies proper to the celebrant at the altar and to the ministers, which must be always sung in Gregorian Chant, and without accompaniment of the organ, all the rest of the liturgical chant belongs to the choir of levites, and, therefore, singers in the church, even when they are laymen, are really taking the place of the ecclesiastical choir. Hence the music rendered by them must, at least for the greater part, retain the character of choral music.

By this it is not to be understood that solos are entirely excluded. But solo singing should never predominate to such an extent as to have the greater part of the liturgical chant executed in that manner; the solo phrase should have the character or hint of a melodic projection (spunto), and be strictly bound up with the rest of the choral composition.

13. On the same principle it follows that singers in church have a real liturgical office, and that therefore women, being incapable of exercising such office, cannot be admitted to form part of the choir. Whenever, then, it is desired to employ the acute voices of sopranos and contraltos, these parts must be taken by boys, according to the most ancient usage of the Church.

14. Finally, only men of known piety and probity of life are to be admitted to form part of the choir of a church, and these men should by their modest and devout bearing during the liturgical functions show that they are worthy of the holy office they exercise. It will also be fitting that singers while singing in church wear the ecclesiastical habit and surplice, and that they be hidden behind gratings when the choir is excessively open to the public gaze.

VI. Organ and instruments

15. Although the music proper to the Church is purely vocal music, music with the accompaniment of the organ is also permitted. In some special cases, within due limits and with proper safeguards, other instruments may be allowed, but never without the special permission of the Ordinary, according to prescriptions of the Caeremoniale Episcoporum.

16. As the singing should always have the principal place, the organ or other instruments should merely sustain and never oppress it.

17. It is not permitted to have the chant preceded by long preludes or to interrupt it with intermezzo pieces.

18. The sound of the organ as an accompaniment to the chant in preludes, interludes, and the like must be not only governed by the special nature of the instrument, but must participate in all the qualities proper to sacred music as above enumerated.

19. The employment of the piano is forbidden in church, as is also that of noisy or frivolous instruments such as drums, cymbals, bells and the like.

20. It is strictly forbidden to have bands play in church, and only in special cases with the consent of the Ordinary will it be permissible to admit wind instruments, limited in number, judiciously used, and proportioned to the size of the place provided the composition and accompaniment be written in grave and suitable style, and conform in all respects to that proper to the organ.

21. In processions outside the church the Ordinary may give permission for a band, provided no profane pieces be executed. It would be desirable in such cases that the band confine itself to accompanying some
spiritual canticle sung in Latin or in the vernacular by the singers and the pious associations which take part in the procession.

VII. The length of the liturgical chant

22. It is not lawful to keep the priest at the altar waiting on account of the chant or the music for a length of time not allowed by the liturgy. According to the ecclesiastical prescriptions the Sanctus of the Mass should be over before the elevation, and therefore the priest must here have regard for the singers. The Gloria and the Credo ought, according to the Gregorian tradition, to be relatively short.

23. In general it must be considered a very grave abuse when the liturgy in ecclesiastical functions is made to appear secondary to and in a manner at the service of the music, for the music is merely a part of the liturgy and its humble handmaid.

VIII. Principal means

24. For the exact execution of what has been herein laid down, the Bishops, if they have not already done so, are to institute in their dioceses a special Commission composed of persons really competent in sacred music, and to this Commission let them entrust in the manner they find most suitable the task of watching over the music executed in their churches. Nor are they to see merely that the music is good in itself, but also that it is adapted to the powers of the singers and be always well executed.

25. In seminaries of clerics and in ecclesiastical institutions let the above-mentioned traditional Gregorian Chant be cultivated by all with diligence and love, according to the Tridentine prescriptions, and let the superiors be liberal of encouragement and praise toward their young subjects. In like manner let a Schola Cantorum be established, whenever possible, among the clerics for the execution of sacred polyphony and of good liturgical music.

26. In the ordinary lessons of Liturgy, Morals, and Canon Law given to the students of theology, let care be taken to touch on those points which regard more directly the principles and laws of sacred music, and let an attempt be made to complete the doctrine with some particular instruction in the aesthetic side of sacred art, so that the clerics may not leave the seminary ignorant of all those subjects so necessary to a full ecclesiastical education.

27. Let care be taken to restore, at least in the principal churches, the ancient Scholae Cantorum, as has been done with excellent fruit in a great many places. It is not difficult for a zealous clergy to institute such Scholae even in smaller churches and country parishes, in these last the pastors will find a very easy means of gathering around them both children and adults, to their own profit and the edification of the people.

28. Let efforts be made to support and promote, in the best way possible, the higher schools of sacred music where these already exist, and to help in founding them where they do not. It is of the utmost importance that the Church herself provide for the instruction of her choirmasters, organists, and singers, according to the true principles of sacred art.

IX. Conclusion

29. Finally, it is recommended to choirmasters, singers, members of the clergy, superiors of seminaries, ecclesiastical institutions, and religious communities, parish priests and rectors of churches, canons of collegiate churches and cathedrals, and, above all, to the diocesan ordinaries to favor with all zeal these prudent reforms, long desired and demanded with united voice by all; so that the authority of the Church, which herself has repeatedly proposed them, and now inculcates them, may not fall into contempt.

Given from Our Apostolic Palace at the Vatican, on the day of the Virgin and martyr, Saint Cecilia, November 22, 1903, in the first year of Our Pontificate.

Pius X, Pope