

## Luther and Music

### Quotes and definitions:

*Ars bene modulandi*: the art (science) of good modulation. "The science of good modulation is concerned with the relating of several musical units according to a module, a measure, in such a way that the relationship can be expressed in simple arithmetical ratios" (quoted from the modern author Otto von Simson), e.g., 2:1 is the octave, 3:2 is the fifth, and 4:3 is the octave.

*Aequalitas*: (St. Augustine) symmetry or balance

Three levels of music (Boethius):

*musica mundana*: cosmic music

*musica humana*: human harmony of soul and body

*musica instrumentalis*: audible music, both vocal and instrumental

The doctrine of Ethos: music forms good character: it governs the feelings of the heart, it quiets and cheers the soul; it produces (in Luther's words) "fine and skillful people."

"After the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world (Martin Luther, from his preface to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae jucundae* (1538)

"Music is a beautiful and lovely gift of God which has often moved and inspired me to preach with joy. St. Augustine was afflicted with scruples of conscience whenever he discovered that he had derived pleasure from music and had been made happy thereby; he was of the opinion that such joy is unrighteous and sinful. He was a fine pious man; however, if he were living today, he would hold with us." (trans. in: Buszin, *Luther on Music*, p. 89)

"I rejoice to let the 79<sup>th</sup> Psalm [O God, the heathen are come...] be sung as usual, one choir after another (i.e., alternation practice). Accordingly let one sweet-voiced boy step before the desk in his choir and sing alone the antiphon or tract *Domine, ne secundum*. After him let another boy sing the other tract, *Domine, ne memineris*; and then let the whole choir kneeling sing *Adjuva nos, Deus*, just as we sang it in the Popish Feasts, for it sounds and looks very devotional." (from Luther's *Exhortation to Prayer against the Turks*, 1541)

Luther's motto: "nos interim omnia probabimus, quod bonum est tenebimus:"

"Meanwhile we shall try all things, and what is good we shall retain." (found in the *Formula missae* (1523); derived from St. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians 5:21:

"Test everything, hold fast to what is good, abstain from every form of evil."

## Bibliography

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