

# Letter to the Editors

I should like to respond to Peter Wright's very interesting article 'Johannes Brassart and Johannes de Sarto' published in the April 1992 issue of this journal. In the course of recent research at the Vatican Archives, I have come across some biographical data that may help both to supplement information that Dr Wright presents about the composers and to lend documentary corroboration to the convincing stylistic grounds for their relationship. With respect to Johannes Brassart, we now have secure documentary confirmation of his death date (previously unknown) as having occurred fairly close to 22 October 1455.<sup>1</sup> This document presents a supplication to Pope Calixtus III for a benefice whose incumbent, Johannes Brassart, had recently died. The benefice is a canonry at the collegiate church of St Paul in the diocese of Liège, the annual income of which is rated at a substantial eight silver Marks. In the document, Brassart is described as both a former *cantor-capellanus* and *rector principalis* of Emperor Frederick III. The nature of this kind of document virtually assures us that the latter title was his official title at the time of retirement from the emperor's chapel. The benefice was requested by Arnoldus Pictrar, a cleric from the diocese of Liège. I suspect that this cleric is identical with the musician Arnold Pickart, who in 1469 was listed first in a *rotulus* of members of the imperial chapel, and who is described there as a priest of the diocese of Liège.<sup>2</sup> That it was a member of the imperial chapel who requested the deceased musician's benefice strongly suggests that Brassart had retained some connection with his former colleagues, particularly those from his native Liège.

The new documentary information I propose to offer for Johannes De Sarto may perhaps clear up the confusion over attributions to this composer (footnote 8, p. 43) and may also help to confirm a relationship between Brassart and De Sarto. The first document, dated 18 June 1457, is a papal supplication from Johannes Doussart, a cleric of the diocese of Liège.<sup>3</sup> He is requesting a chaplaincy at a

<sup>1</sup> Archivio Segreto Vaticano, *Registri Supplicationum* 485, f. 253, dated 22 October 1455.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 635, ff. 202r-4r, dated 6 January 1469.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 504, f. 46r.

collegiate church in Fosse, near the city of Liège. The document makes no mention of his status as a member of the imperial chapel, but that would be entirely appropriate if he were no longer a member of the chapel when he lodged this request at the papal Curia. The fact that he lists Liège as his diocesan affiliation inclines me to believe that he is the erstwhile *cantor* of Frederick III's chapel, as this is the diocesan affiliation of the majority of imperial chaplains listed in the *rotulus* of 1469 (see note 2). If this is indeed the case, then Brassart and De Sarto would be linked not only by a shared professional venue, but also by origin (and presumably also professional training) and the possession of ecclesiastical offices in the same diocese and city, Liège.

The second document, also a papal supplication, was lodged by one Johannes Dusart, a priest from the diocese of Cambrai.<sup>4</sup> This cleric had recently acquired a canonry at the collegiate church of Notre Dame in Valenciennes in the diocese of Cambrai, through an exchange with another cleric of that diocese. The date, the diocesan affiliation of both parties, and the locations of the benefices in the diocese of Cambrai, all point to the fact that *this* De Sarto is not the same person as the petitioner from Liège in the first document. It would seem that there were, in fact, two musicians with similar names, one attached to the imperial chapel, with associations with Liège, an imperial city; and the other a member of the musical circle at the cathedral of Cambrai. It is clearly the latter who was named in Compère's motet, and the former who may well have been a colleague and protégé of the 'rector principalis' of the imperial chapel, Johannes Brassart. I hope that this new information from the Vatican Archives will prove useful to scholars studying the careers of these composers.

PAMELA F. STARR  
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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 612, f. 299r, dated 7 August 1467.

