

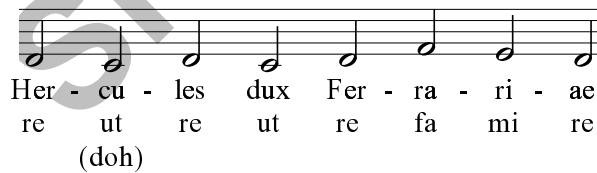
# Josquin: *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae*

## Notes on the use of *Soggetto Cavato*

In this work, which is of special significance in the history of music, Josquin was the first to use a technique subsequently imitated by other composers. The technique goes under the picturesque title of *Soggetto cavato dalle parole*, meaning "subject carved out of the [chosen] words". It refers to the process of deriving a melodic phrase from the vowels in a word, name or phrase by assigning the vowels to the solmization syllables *ut (doh)*, *re*, *mi*, *fa*, *sol* and *la*.

This idea had already been in use as part of a musical punning technique, or simply by using the solmization syllables with no special reference to names or phrases. Josquin's original contribution was to use the technique to incorporate a dedication to his patron (Ercole) Hercules I, Duke of Ferrara into a liturgical work, in this case, the Mass.

Josquin derived the melodic *soggetto* from the name Hercules dux Ferrariae as follows (the example shows the melody in C-major):



This melody became the *cantus firmus* of Josquin's Mass, sung throughout by the Tenor voice and anticipated by the Superius at the beginning of the Kyrie and the third section of the Agnus Dei.

Note: Josquin's original setting called for the four voices: Superius, Altus, Tenor and Bassus. In the current edition, adapted for modern choirs, the voices are Alto, Tenor I and Tenor II and Bass. The *cantus firmus* is in the Tenor II voice.