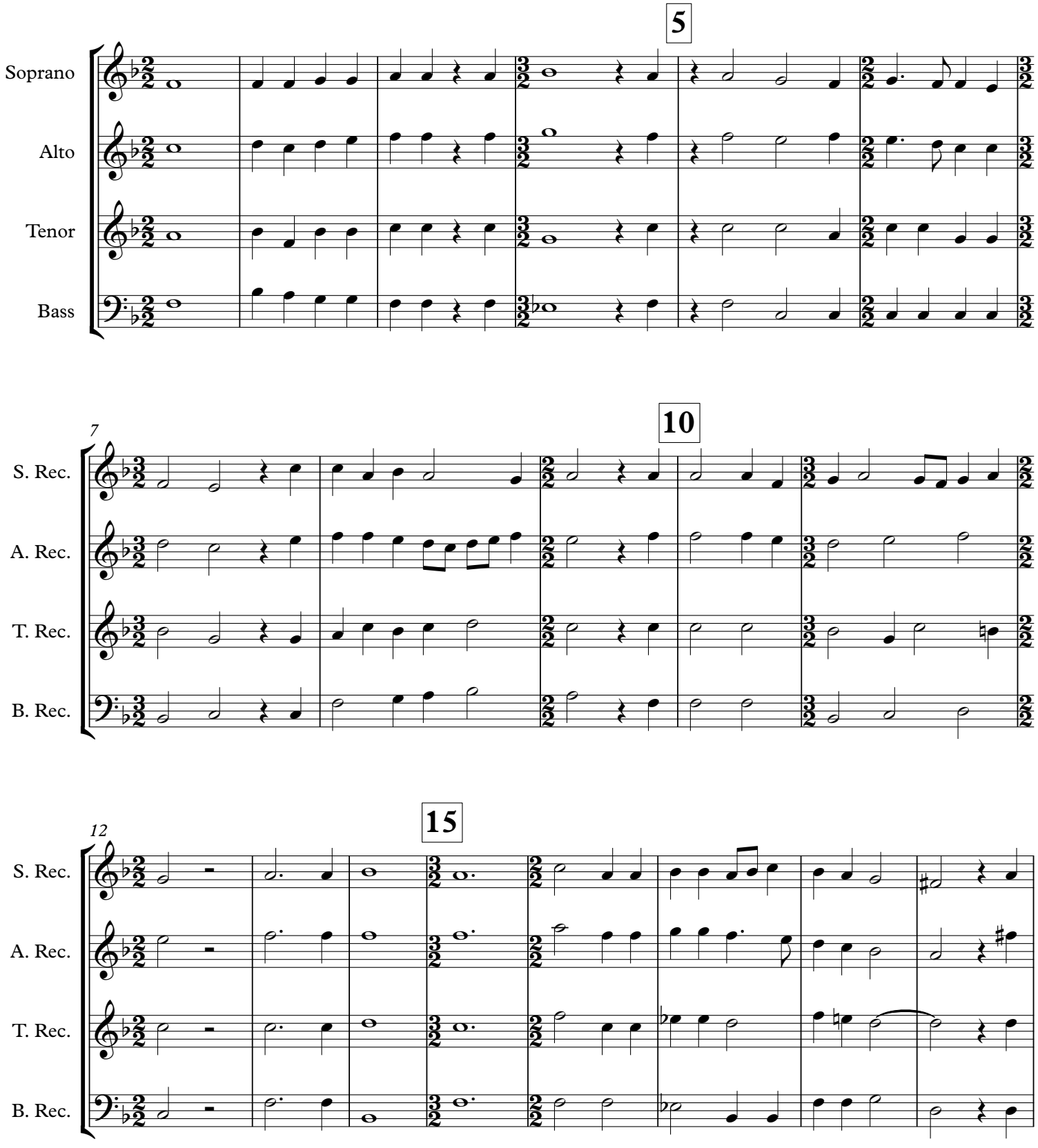
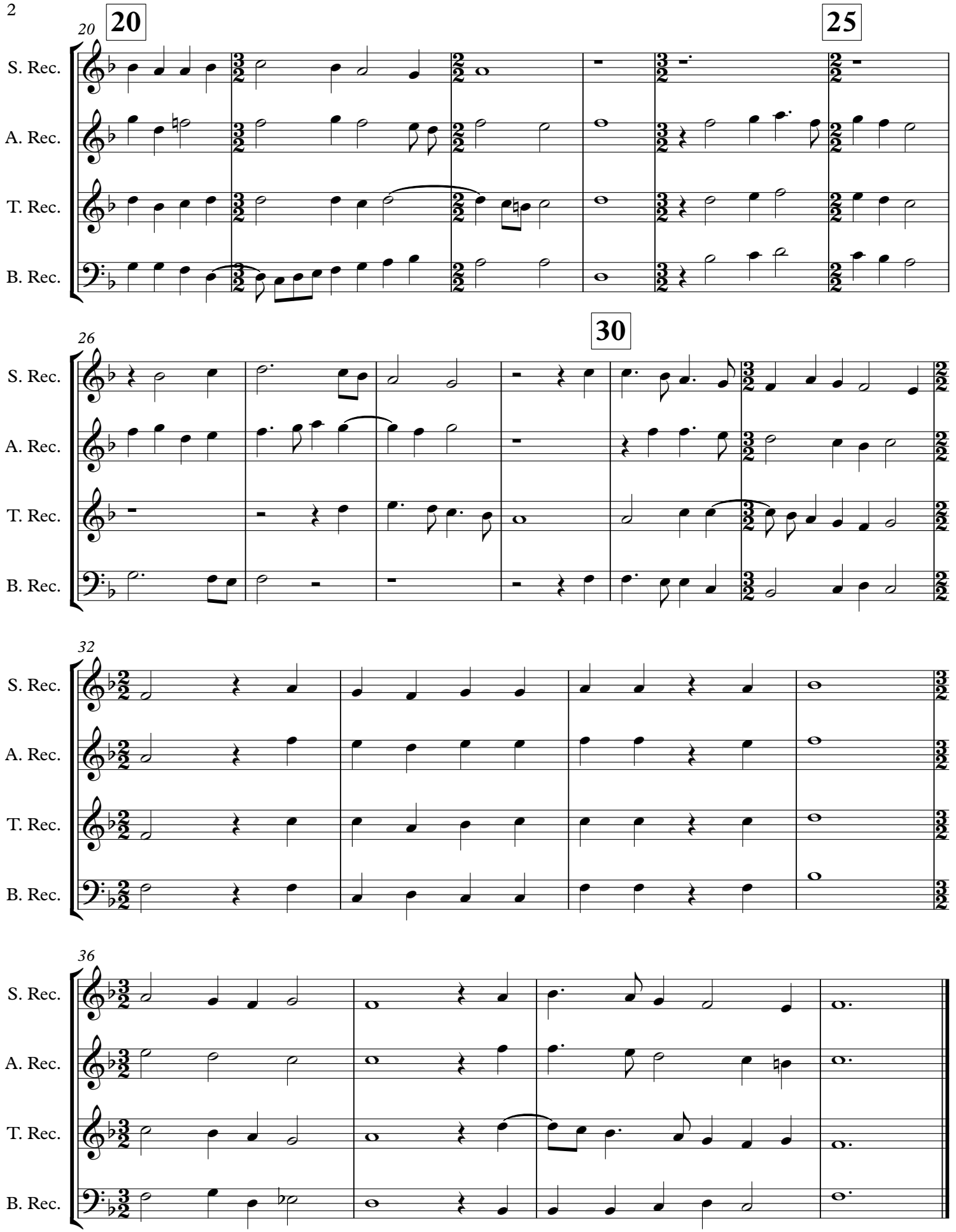
Y Vostris

No. 4 from San Juan Ixcoi Manuscript #8 [c. 1530]

Anonymous
MS. 8, f. 42 verso - 43 recto




20
20
25
S. Rec.
A. Rec.
T. Rec.
B. Rec.
26
30
S. Rec.
A. Rec.
T. Rec.
B. Rec.
32
S. Rec.
A. Rec.
T. Rec.
B. Rec.
36
S. Rec.
A. Rec.
T. Rec.
B. Rec.

Renaissance Wind Band Music from Guatemala

Early Guatemalan music from the era following the Spanish Conquest is contained in three principle manuscript sources: the Santa Eulalia Music Manuscript, San Mateo Music Manuscript Ixtatan and San Juan Ixcoi Manuscript #8. The nine codices represented in these manuscripts formed the repertoire of San Miguel Acatán, Guatemala. San Juan Ixcoi and Santa Eulalia were monasteries established by the Spaniards in the northwestern highlands of Guatemala, in Mayan country.

The music dates from the 16th and early 17th centuries. Pieces by Spanish, Flemish and local composers are present. Thomas Pascual, chapel master at San Juan Ixcoi in 1635, inserted a paragraph in Nahuatl into the Santa Eulalia Music Manuscript #7, thus establishing a relationship between it and the San Juan Ixcoi Manuscript #8.

In Spain during the early l6th century, it was. common practice for most large cathedrals to maintain a wind band for use in the services. This practice often was instituted in countries of Spanish Conquest, and thus it should not he too surprising to find that these wind band traditions were transplanted to Guatemala. Undoubtedly, many of the untexted pieces of the manuscripts mentioned above were intended for such an ensemble. Guatemalan historical records mention shawms and sackbuts and *flautas grandes* being used in sacred services in the areas of San Juan Ixcoi and Santa Eulalia.

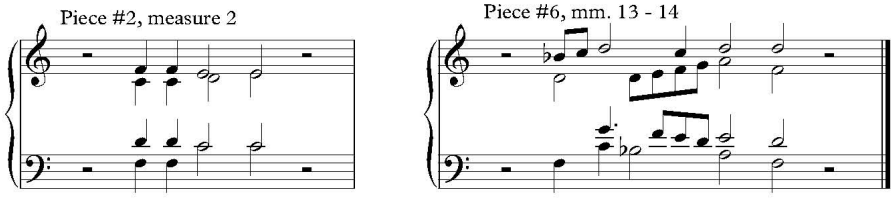
The textless pieces in San Juan Ixcoi Manuscript #8 are written in an instrumental rather than a vocal style. Some of the are dance pieces. Some are written in a canzona style or an instrumental style distinctive of the area.

The individual(s) who wrote these compositions probably had some relationship with the two monasteries mentioned above. The monasteries provided instruction in the writing of Continental notation and the Indians, who were fascinated by this notation, became quite adept in copying music. These pieces may have been composed by Spaniards, Indians or persons of mixed blood. Priests, monks, students, or even the wind band performers themselves may have written this music. The level of sophistication for a few of these pieces suggests the hand of a master. The simpler works may have been written by students.

As can be observed in the music of this edition, some of the compositions are in a traditional Renaissance style (see nos. 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7). Other pieces seem to strike out in their own independent direction (see nos. 4 *Y Vostris*, 8 and 9). The four-part writing falls within the traditional ranges needed for wind band instruments.

Number 5 in the San Juan Ixcoi manuscript, *Salamanca ybi ronoher vinai queba,* is composed in a traditional Renaissance style, beginning with the canzona rhythmic pattern (♩ ♪ ♪). Sharp dissonances are avoided and cadences are approached in a traditional Renaissance manner.

The more unusual works in the manuscript exhibit some striking characteristics. Parallel rhythmic motion occurs frequently in all four parts. Fourths and fifths appear to be preferred as vertical sonorities. Some sharp dissonances are to be found and some rather unusual resolutions appear such as:



A performance edition of nine of these pieces is available at the University of Texas at Austin Music Library.