

Canzona in Twelve Parts

Giovanni Gabrieli

Gabrieli was one of Monteverdi's most important predecessors as musical director at St. Mark's, Venice. In this short piece, the twelve parts are divided into three instrumental groups which sometimes play together, sometimes alternatively; no particular instruments are specified, but our division into strings, recorders, and cornetti and trombones was a very typical arrangement.

In both this piece and the Monteverdi we are using modern instruments except where there is no near equivalent, as in the case of the cornetti.

Vespers of the Blessed Virgin

Claudio Monteverdi

Along with the more commonly set mass, the evening service of vespers provided rich opportunities for ambitious musical settings in its sequence of five psalms, hymn and magnificat. An even more varied plan was adopted by Monteverdi by the interpolation of an elaborate orchestral movement and solo and small ensemble items between the main choruses. The range of styles encompassed by the work is most remarkable - operatic declamation, expressive miniatures, grand choruses, concerto-like instrumental writing and plainsong jostle together in a diversity hardly equalled by any other piece.

Domine ad adiuvandum me - Chorus

O God make speed to save me: O Lord make haste to help me.

Dixit Dominus (Psalm 109) - Chorus

The Lord said unto my Lord: Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. This psalm setting is preceded, like the later ones, by a short plainsong antiphon.

Nigra sum - Tenor solo

I am black but comely... therefore the King has loved me and said Arise and come away, for the winter is past.

Laudate pueri Dominum (Psalm 112) - Chorus
Praise the Lord, ye servants, praise the name of the Lord.

Pulchra es - Soprano duet

Thou art fair, my love, O daughter of Jerusalem.

Laetatus sum (Psalm 121) - Chorus

I was glad when they said unto me: We will go into the house of the Lord.

Due Seraphim - Two tenors and bass trio

The two seraphim cried: Holy is the Lord God.

Nisi Dominus (Psalm 126) - Chorus

Except the Lord build the house, their labour is in vain that build it.

INTERVAL OF 20 MINUTES

Lauda Jerusalem (Psalm 147) - Chorus

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem: praise thy God, O Sion.

Audi coelum - Tenor duet and solo group
Heaven hear my words; who is she who rises bright as the dawn?... the sweet virgin Mary.

Sonata sopra Sancta Maria - an orchestral concerto, over which a fragment of plainsong is sung eleven times. "Holy Mary, pray for us."

Ave maris stella - Chorus, soli and orchestra
Hail, O star that points towards the port of heaven. This item is based on a medieval hymn. Magnificat - chorus, soli, duets and orchestra
My soul doth magnify the Lord.

The phrases of text quoted above can do no more than indicate the general area of meaning of each item, all of which abound with imaginative word setting, and some of which (especially the Magnificat) consist of a sequence of short contrasted sections.