

Leandro Gallerano: Music for Vespers (1629)

A guide to the music by Richard Robbins

M E S S A
E SALMI CONCERTATI
A TRE, CINQUE, ET OTTO VOCI
Aggiuntoui, il Terzo Choro ad libitum.
DI LEANDRO GALLERANO
ACCADEMICO OCCULTO DETTO L'INVOLATO
Maestro di Capella della Venerand' Arca del Glorioso Sant' Antonio di Padoua.
OPERA DECIMA SESTA.

Antiphon: *Hodierna die omnes vigilemus*/Psalm: *Dixit Dominus*

The introductory motet *Hodierna die omnes vigilemus* probably served as a substitute for the antiphon of the first Psalm. Composed on a para-liturgical text of unknown authorship, this motet is scored for tenor duet, instrumental trio (Gallerano specifies two violins, with chitarrone or another bass instrument, chosen at the discretion of the performer), and organ continuo. An opening *sinfonia* plays the rhythmic pattern typically associated with the *canzona*; a tenor duet follows, invoking the blessing of the saint to be honored by the Vespers of the day. Gallerano indulges in a bit of text painting in the contrasting middle section, and the motet ends with a return of the opening musical material.

The *Dixit Dominus*, is scored for five principal voices (soprano, alto, two tenors, and bass), instrumental trio, organ continuo, and an optional third choir (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, performed *ad libitum*, and doubling pitches found in the principal voice parts). Gallerano's rapid juxtaposition of contrasting textures governs the overall structure of the psalm, as block chords performed by the full ensemble alternate with imitative, contrapuntal writing for the solo voices. Gallerano includes more instances of text-painting in this psalm, most notably employing written-out ornamental *passaggi* to represent rushing water at "*De torrente in via bibet*". Gallerano reprises the musical material from the outset of the psalm at the closing text of the Gloria Patri ("*sicut erat in principio*" - a play on words). This reprise is followed by highly rhythmic contrapuntal writing for the full ensemble, a dramatic and forceful ending.

Psalm: *Confitebor tibi Domine*

Confitebor tibi Domine is scored for three principal voices (alto, and two tenors), and organ continuo; an additional soprano and bass line (doubling the tenor and continuo, respectively) are designated as *ripieni* by the composer, as are an additional instrumental trio, and a third choir (which simply doubles the principal voices). Metrical and textural contrast serves as the primary means of formal organization, as contrapuntal writing for the three principal voices alternates with homophonic material for the full ensemble.

Psalm: *Beatus vir*

Beatus vir is scored for two choirs: the first, for soprano (or tenor) duet, alto, and bass; the

second, for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. Unlike most of the other movements of Gallerano's Vespers, in which the underlying structure is governed by metric and textural contrast, the composer here employs a recurring refrain. While the forces used in this movement might seem a conscious imitation of *cori spezzati* by the composer, the soprano duet in the first choir features writing that is more soloistic in character, with frequent dotted rhythms necessitating quick text declamation. The rhythmic demands of the first choir exceed those of the second choir throughout the piece, possibly indicating that one of these choirs was intended for soloists, and the other for a larger chorus, or one for virtuoso singers, and the other for the less skilled. Text-painting is rare, with an exception made on the text "*commovebitur*".

Psalm: *Laudate pueri*

Laudate pueri is scored for eight principal voices (two sopranos, two altos, three tenors, and bass), an optional SATB choir, and organ continuo. The sheer number of principal voices provides Gallerano the opportunity to combine them into various solo, duet, trio, and quartet groupings, in addition to using *tutti* forces for select passages. While maintaining a tonal center of G, the modality of the psalm is ambiguous, as Gallerano moves between the minor and major from phrase to phrase. Three contrasting sections (the tenor solo, quartet, and *tutti* passages) appear throughout the *Laudate pueri*, varied slightly, serving as refrains which interrupt the psalm and doxology. The solo vocal writing in this movement is some of the most poignant of this particular Vespers cycle.

Psalm: *Laudate Dominum*

Laudate Dominum distinguishes itself from the other psalms in this collection by its exclusive use of the older *cori spezzati* style. This psalm is scored for two choirs of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, with a continuo part doubling the lowest pitch (*basso seguente*). Gallerano employs the familiar organizational scheme of *cori spezzati* music: generally, one choir declaims a passage, which is repeated by the other choir, with some variation, before both choirs come together in a forceful *tutti*. While Gallerano does not stray from expected cadences, he makes extensive use of modal mixture and cross-relations, a nod to the *cori spezzati* style of the Gabriellis, and other Venetian composers. Gallerano's use of *chiavette* implies a transposition downward; the present edition transposes the parts down a fourth.

Antiphon: *Cantate almæ Matri Mariæ*/Canticle: *Magnificat*

As he does with the first psalm in this Vespers, Gallerano introduces the final canticle in the cycle with a motet for tenor duet, two violins, a bass instrument (chitarrone is again suggested), *ripieno* choir, and organ continuo. The motet, *Cantate almæ Matri Mariæ*, on a pious poem extolling the virtuous attributes of the Virgin Mary, features an opening *sinfonia* modeled upon the familiar *canzona*, followed by an imitative duet.

The *Magnificat* is scored for five principal voices (soprano, alto, two tenors, and bass), instrumental trio (two violins, and bass instrument), a *ripieno* chorus, and organ continuo. The full ensemble majestically proclaims the opening words of the canticle in block chords, accompanied by the violins playing ascending and descending scalar passages. Following the meter change, the music of the canticle follows a regular pattern: a portion of the text is sung by the five principal voices in an imitative fashion, which is punctuated by a brief passage for principal voices, strings, and optional third choir.