

INTRODUCTION

BASSVS GENERALIS
SANCTISSIMÆ
VIRGINI
MISSA SENIS VOCIBUS
AD ECCLESJARUM CHOROS
Ac Vesperæ pluribus decantandæ,
CUM NONNULLIS SACRIS CONCENTIBUS,
ad Sacella sive Principum Cubicula accommodata.

OPERA
A CLAUDIO MONTEVERDE
nuper effecta
AC BEATISS. PAULO V. PONT. MAX.
CONSECRATA.

Venetijs,
Apud Ricciardum Amadinum.
M D C X.

CONTINUO
OF THE MOST HOLY
VIRGIN,
A MASS FOR SIX VOICES
FOR CHURCH CHOIRS*
And Vespers to be sung by more voices,
WITH SOME SACRED CONCERTOS,
WORKS suitable for the Chapels
or Chambers of Princes.

BY CLAUDIO MONTEVERDE
recently composed
AND DEDICATED TO THE MOST HOLY POPE
PAUL V.

[Published in] Venice,
by Riccardo Amadino
1610.

*This line is not in the other part books

Monteverdi's 1610 *Vespers* is unusually challenging for those who find their musical experience enriched by imagining the circumstances of a work's original performance. There have been several theories to account for its composition, but none of them has met with universal approval. It is not even agreed that it is a single composition rather than an anthology of separately-created movements. There is controversy about how the music in the 1610 edition should be ordered and a host of specific problems of performance practice fundamentally affect the whole character of the work.¹

SOURCE

The sole source for the music and information about it (apart from a German reprint of a couple of movements in 1615)² is the edition of 1610. The title page printed above is that of the *Bassus generalis*. The publication begins with a mass: *Missa da capella a sei voci, fatta sopra il motetto In illo tempore del Gomberto*.³ The *Bassus generalis* part book (organ continuo, subsequently abbreviated Bg) has a separate heading after the Mass: *Vespro della B[eata] Vergine da concerto composto sopra canti fermi* (Vespers of the Blessed Virgin in the concerto style composed on plain chant). The publication ends with a *Magnificat A 6 voci*, very much in the style of the *Magnificat a7*, but without instruments, except organ.

Like virtually all music of the time, the *Vespers* was published in parts: eight part books, with lengths ranging

from 24 to 52 pages. The *Bassus generalis* part has some of the more elaborate sections printed in score so that the organist can follow (or lead) the singers more easily. The full version of the title page makes a clear distinction between the Mass, intended for church choirs (the word is applicable to small, one-to-a-part groups as well as larger ensembles) and the music for vespers, for the private chapels or chambers of princes. Some have tried to make a further distinction, linking the Vespers to the chapels and the sacred songs to the chambers. This point was particularly an issue when it was thought that the smaller-scale pieces in the collection could not have been performed liturgically. But that is forcing the language of the title page too far, and more recent research has shown⁴ that the liturgical objections were invalid.⁵

LOCATION

Three cities have been associated with the *Vespers*: Mantua (where Monteverdi was employed from about 1591 until 1612), Rome and Venice.

Rome features little in Monteverdi's life, apart from the dedication of the *Vespers* to the Pope and his visit there in 1610. The dedication may have been intended to show that he would be a suitable candidate for a senior Papal musical position. The Mass, in a learned and polyphonic style, was certainly appropriate for conservative Vatican ecclesiastical taste. Monteverdi might have expected the Psalms⁶ to win favour for the way that they showed how the traditional chant formulae could be combined with the latest compositional style, though his music was like nothing else sung in Rome at the time. He may have had

¹ This preface does not enter into discussion of whether the anachronistic term 'work' is appropriate and whether what we call the 1610 *Vespers* was conceived as an entity.

² Nos. 1 & 2 are included in the anthology *Reliquiae sacrarum concertuum Giovan Gabrielis, Iohan-Leonis Hasleri, utriusque praestantissimi musici*, Nuremberg 1615. Its divergences from the 1610 edition are noted, and the substitution of vocal parts for the sections of cantus-firmus that are only in the Bc part enable *Dixit Dominus* to be performed without organ.

³ The edition published by the Early Music Company is available at notated pitch, down a fourth and in between.

⁴ Though recently questioned by Roger Bowers in *Music & Letters*, vol 90 no 3 (2009), pp. 331–371.

⁵ Experts in title-page typography may be able to draw some meaning from the use of capitals and punctuation.

⁶ The *Magnificat* is treated in the same way as a psalm, so is not specified separately here.

other reasons for the dedication. A letter he wrote on his return shows that at least one object of the visit was to secure a scholarship at a seminary for his son, Francesco; he also reports on singers there, so he may also have been acting as a talent scout for the Mantuan court.

Venice was the centre of the music publishing industry. Amadino was his current publisher, and it would not be surprising for a composer to visit the city when he had a complicated publication to see through the press. It has been suggested that the 1610 print was intended to impress those who appointed the *maestro da cappella* at the Ducal Basilica of San Marco. But the current holder of the position, Giulio Cesare Martinengo, had been appointed soon after the death of his predecessor Giovanni Croce in May 1609, leaving no time for applications from as far as Mantua. Although Martinengo's health and administrative abilities were poor, it is unlikely that there was time for rumours of his deficiencies to reach Monteverdi in time to compose anything specifically to impress the Venetians, though one possibility might be that the 'sacred concertos' were added to the collection to show that he was familiar with current styles of small-scale motets.

Monteverdi was appointed as a member of the ten-strong choir at the Gonzaga court at Mantua in 1591 and became *maestro da cappella* in 1601. He will have been responsible for the music at the family church within the palace, Santa Croce, which no longer survives. This was completely separate from the basilica of Santa Barbara, which was an independent foundation with its own staff and was not served by the court musicians. He probably composed a considerable amount of church music, but none survives except what was published in 1610.

Various occasions have been suggested which might have required the composition or compilation of a new and lavish service of *Vespers*, but none has enjoyed any degree of musicological consensus. The use of the same fanfare to open *L'Orfeo* (performed in 1607) and the *Vespers* suggests that it was intended for some celebration connected with the court, though not necessarily in its own chapel. For instance, from 1608 Duke Vincenzo hosted the congregations of the Order of the Knights of Christ in Sant' Andrea, and they may have celebrated a Marian feast there.⁷

VESPERS

The service of *Vespers* began with a versicle and response and was followed by five psalms, a hymn and the *Magnificat*. The hundred and fifty psalms were divided among the daily services so that the whole Psalter was recited each year. This pattern was broken on major festivals, which had their own particular groups of psalms. The psalms, originally Hebrew hymns, were made more appropriate for Christian worship in two ways. A doxology was added to each of them praising the Holy Trinity, and each psalm was framed by a generally-biblical text (an antiphon) relating the psalm to its place in the church year. By ancient tradition or special papal licence,

different psalms and antiphons from those of the Roman liturgy were permitted. In Mantua, Santa Barbara had its own recently-created liturgy, while San Marco in Venice maintained long-standing local customs, despite papal disapproval. But other churches in Mantua, including Santa Croce, followed the standard Roman practice for the allocation of psalms and antiphons.

Monteverdi published the collection as *Vespers of the Blessed Virgin*. There are several Feasts of the Virgin throughout the church year, the Purification (2 Feb), Annunciation (25 March), Visitation (2 July), Our Lady of the Snow (5 Aug), the Assumption (15 Aug), Nativity (8 Sept) and Conception (8 Dec) being the ones for which a celebration on the scale of the 1610 publication might be appropriate. Each Feast began with the *Vespers* on the preceding afternoon with the Second *Vespers* service on the day itself.

Monteverdi's publication provides music for the opening responses, the five Marian psalms, the hymn and the *Magnificat*. He also includes a series of smaller-scale pieces (the 'sacred songs' of the title page) which are placed, in ascending order of the number of parts, between the psalms and look as if they might well function as antiphons. When editors and performers first started to present the *Vespers* in a liturgical context, this caused problems. The texts of these pieces, though sometimes corresponding with antiphon texts, did not belong to the cycle of antiphons for any single Marian feast. So it was postulated that the antiphons were extraneous items that were merely thrown in as chamber music. But there were still problems, since the modes of the psalm settings do not correspond with the modes of the chant antiphons of any Feast, and some editions have included antiphons whose modes match but which would never have been sung together at a single service. When sung entirely in chant, the tone chosen for a psalm should agree with the mode of the antiphon. Practice may have been more lax, but Monteverdi seems almost perversely to have avoided matching his psalms with the mode of the antiphons for any of the Marian feasts.

More recent research has shown that the supposed problems came from expecting medieval practices to be relevant to the 17th century. There were a variety of ways of relating psalm and antiphon. The antiphon before the psalm was reduced to the opening words, and was often only sung in full after the psalm. Stephen Bonta argued that the antiphon after the psalm could be replaced by an independent motet or an instrumental piece (in this context described as antiphon substitutes), liturgical propriety being satisfied as long as the liturgical text was said (not necessarily loudly enough to interrupt the music).⁸ So at some parts of the service liturgical and musical events happened in parallel rather than as a single activity.⁹ The order of the items in the 1610 edition presents some

⁸ The Latin verbs *canto* and *dico* are normally translated as 'sing' and 'say', but in liturgical contexts, *dico* implies some precision of pitch.

⁹ Roger Bowers argues (2009) that the licence was only for organ playing, but the large quantity of small-scale vocal motets that began to appear around 1610 suggests they were in demand.

⁷ Roger Bowers (2009).

liturgical problems. The *Vespers* pieces are printed in order of performances at Vespers, but the five psalms are each followed by a motet: a paraliturgical vocal piece. We tend to call any short piece of renaissance polyphony a motet, but from 1600 the word was used for settings for soloists that could be performed more informally. Three of the psalms (*Dixit*, *Laudate pueri* and *Nisi Dominus*) are followed by suitable Marian texts. *Duo Seraphim*, however, is in honour of the Holy Trinity, and cannot be justified by association with the independent Trinitarian Santa Barbara. The *Sonata sopra Santa Maria*¹⁰ may perhaps function as the antiphon to the *Magnificat*. If instrumental pieces are required, Cima's *Concerti ecclesiastici* (also of 1610) offers a choice of four pieces in an otherwise vocal collection of motets. Concerto is a key word: it implies music in the new, post-Peri and Caccini style, with one-to-a-part performance.¹¹

STYLE

The heading in the organ part book 'Vespers of the Blessed Virgin in concerto style composed on plain chant' draws attention to a feature of the work of prime significance: in the *Vespers*, Monteverdi allies the most modern musical language with the old technique of composing on the chant. Each psalm is constructed upon one of the tones to which psalms had been chanted for perhaps the preceding millenium. At a time when the traditional music of the church was under attack for its barbarity, Monteverdi chose to make it the centre of his first ambitious church-music publication.

The work calls on a wide variety of musical styles, almost as if Monteverdi is trying to show the full range of his capabilities. The most conservative are the double-choir settings of *Nisi Dominus* and *Lauda Jerusalem*. In both, the cantus firmus is hardly varied; but the other voices have an extraordinary rhythmic suppleness and vitality, and that feature is even more noticeable elsewhere. Generally, the textual declamation of church music was relatively staid; the model for this aspect of the *Vespers* was not so much previous church music as the more subtle word-setting of vocal chamber music. It is noticeable that even non-specialist modern choirs sing the *Vespers* with much more vigour than they sing Palestrina and without the ecclesiastical patina of holiness – in terms of mid-19th-century English practice, reversing chronology, more west gallery than chancel. And Monteverdi's sometimes ungrammatical part-writing fits with the analogy.

Monteverdi was known to the musical world primarily for his madrigals: his fifth book had been published in 1605. He had learned, particularly from Marenzio, the ability to encapsulate a word or short verbal phrase into a musical phrase which characterised the words while permitting a flexible contrapuntal treatment: it is this skill which makes the larger-scale music of the *Vespers* so original. The final section of *Audi caelum* is a fine example. A lesser composer could easily have set it virtually homophonically, and on a casual listening it might sound thus. But it is built up from

a series of short, highly individual and memorable phrases and the total effect depends on the subtle balance of all the lines: 'Benedicta es', with its falling fifth, 'Virgo Maria' with its rising third and leaning on the 'i', and the duet in thirds of 'in seculorum'. Even the line one seems to hear may not be the part of a single voice: the chances are that if you sing to yourself the first 'benedicta es', you will in fact sing a combination of the two soprano parts.

A distinctive feature of the *Vespers* is the series of Glorias which concludes each psalm and the *Magnificat*. In *Dixit Dominus*, we hear the cantus firmus for the first time by itself, abruptly and movingly transposed a tone lower. In the *Magnificat*, the texture is again reduced, with two tenors calling to heaven in echo with a florid declamation that seems utterly unrelated to the psalm tone which is being sung by a soprano. For most of the settings of 'sicut erat in principio' Monteverdi adopts a style of slow chords with extremely close canonic imitations between the parts moving in short note-values.

VOCAL ENSEMBLE

Until recently, the *Vespers* was thought of as a choral work. While there sometimes seemed to be a clear distinction between solo and choral writing, at others the style changed imperceptibly from one to the other, and there was always difficulty when this change was staggered between the parts. But problems vanish when one forgets the modern assumption that a large-scale vocal work must have a chorus and approaches it as a being in the *concertato* style,¹² as implied by the heading to the organ part. It is now generally assumed that the instrumental sections require only one instrument a part. If one approaches the music from the viewpoint that it is for soloists unless there is any good reason otherwise, one finds some sections in which the doubling of voices is acceptable but none where it is necessary. Monteverdi's music was for virtuoso singers attached to the court, probably some of the singers who had participated in *Orfeo* in 1607. Coincidentally, the Mantuan cappella had ten singers. However, it is a work that all singers should be able to experience, even if compromises have to be made so that they can do so.¹³

TRANSPOSITION

From about 1550 (maybe earlier) for about a century, vocal ensemble music in much of Europe was normally intended for combinations of Soprano (Canto), Alto, Tenor and Bass and written in two alternative sets of clefs.¹⁴

G2 C2 C3 C4 [sometimes F3 for C4]
or C1 C3 C4 F4

It is unlikely that the music was written for two different

¹² I am convinced that *concertato* and similar words imply solo ensembles, but have reached that conclusion in the way a child learns the meaning of a word through usage rather than from formal research.

¹³ There is some analogy with the Bach Choir controversy (and not merely because of Andrew Parrott's involvement in both). Although Bach envisages choruses as one-to-a-part, he does sometimes add a cappella to the solo ensemble, and Praetorius recommends copying out cappella parts for extra ensembles located around the church.

¹⁴ Letters and numbers refer to the clef and the position on the staff: G2 is the modern treble clef, C3 is the C alto clef, F4 is bass clef, though each clef can be on any line of the staff.

¹⁰ The title is given thus in Italian in the 1610 publication.

¹¹ The word was still used by Bach in 18th-century Leipzig for what we now call Cantatas.

ensembles (e.g. that, when the boy trebles were available, the basses were given a holiday). Also, in view of the careful restriction of compass of each individual part in Palestrina-style church music to not much over an octave, it is unlikely that the same singers sang both configurations at the pitch they were notated. So the two different configurations were intended to work with the same body of singers with roughly the same compasses. Music not requiring all voices tends to fall within the same patterns: The infernal choruses in Acts III & IV of *L'Orfeo* are high-clef without the bottom part, so need to be sung lower.

Editors aiming at modern church choirs tend to transpose high-clef pieces down a tone and low-clef ones up a tone or minor third. This generally fits our SATB choirs fairly well – for the outer voices at least. But it seems that the low configuration is the ‘standard’ one: the sources mention transposing high pieces down, not low ones up. Several sets of psalms published in Venice in the decades after 1610 have explicit indications for this in the organ parts. The normal voice compasses of the period seem to imply falsettists or castrati on the top (or boys, but not trained to sing high like modern trebles), high tenors, baritones and basses. Top parts probably only started going up when castrati expanded upwards in operatic roles.

I have been checking the ‘clef-code’ theory against virtually all the new editions I’ve reviewed over the last 30 years (and also when I’ve sung or played the repertoire) and found no exceptions or strong evidence against it, though the situation in England was more complex. Roger Bowers argues from tessitura that the high-clef pieces in the *Vespers* come out too low when transposed down. There is, in fact, a paradox that composers seem to have used high clefs for music with a lower tessitura, probably to avoid key signatures beyond the one or (rarely) two flats acceptable in the 16th century. Writing *Lauda Jerusalem* a fourth higher avoids a one-sharp signature. Sharp signatures were not used, as is shown by the opening of the *Vespers*, where D major is printed with no signature and each sharp added as accidentals. Some polychoral music has a high choir with a G2 clef at the top and a low one with an F4 at the bottom; different conventions apply then – the G2 part, for instance, may well be for cornetto. But the double-choir pieces with G2 clef in the *Vespers* have F3 as the bass, not F4.

Unaccompanied music can be performed at whatever pitch is convenient. But as soon as instruments are involved, there must be some formalisation. In the 16th century, organs were used in the catholic liturgy for alternating with the choir (whether singing chant or polyphony). By the 1590s, they were accompanying as well. The use of organs demanded that the vocal pitch should be graded by at least semitone intervals. But not all keys were available in the normal organ temperaments, so the choice of degrees of transposition was limited. The *Vespers’ Magnificat* (in G minor, though with only a one-flat signature) will work down a fourth in D minor with no signature, but presents problems in the intervening keys except E minor, whereas *Lauda Jerusalem* in C would work down a tone in B flat, is just about tolerable in G and is in fact better down a fifth

in F. There is more flexibility on a north-Italian instrument with split keys for D#/E♭ and G#/A♭. Apart from theoretical difficulties, I doubt whether the fingering-patterns familiar to continuo players extended (extend?) to lavish use of ‘black’ notes; notated organ music certainly avoids remote keys.

Around 1600, the chief instruments other than the organ that were used in church were the cornetto and trombone (English, unlike other languages, has a specific word for the early trombone: sackbut). Cornetti have a very limited flexibility of pitch adjustment, and surviving instruments cluster around A=465.¹⁵ This gives a standard European church pitch, which survived in Germany at least until the early 18th century. The basic top note of the cornetto is the A above the treble staff. The top notated note in ‘Esurientes’ is the D a fourth above that. It occurs several times in both cornetto parts and is very exposed. Notes above A were used later, but the leading Venetian composer, Giovanni Gabrieli, who will have had access to the best players of the time, treats A as the normal top note. In ‘Esurientes’, the violin takes over from the cornetto on a top A (if transposed). If untransposed, the top D is the earliest example that takes the violins so far above first position, so its use is implausible for such an exposed entry. The *Vespers* is pioneering in the nature of its writing for violin. Recorders (if that is what the instruments in No. 13/3 are) should not be used elsewhere in the work: they are there for special, perhaps symbolic effect.

CURRENT PRACTICE

The *Vespers* are now usually performed with early instruments. In my experience, specialist groups adopt the transpositions, some big choirs do so as well, but some still prefer not to transpose. On purely practical grounds, if down a fourth is rejected, I recommend an alternative transposition of *Lauda Jerusalem* down a tone; we can also supply *Magnificat* down a minor third. Irrespective of academic arguments, this is a work that all singers should have a chance to experience and enjoy.

VOCAL TESSITURA

This is a general problem, not just a matter of the transpositions. I’ve printed our score with the ‘alto’ part in octave-treble. This is partly for practical reasons – to avoid leger lines and the need for a wide gap between the alto and tenor parts to make room for them. Some pages are very tight: it looks odd if there is a significantly bigger gap below the alto part than below the others, so either the font-size has to be smaller or the edition has fewer systems to a page.¹⁶ The crux is *Nisi Dominus*. The print is about as small as it can be – perhaps too small for comfort already. The alternative of larger print would require each system to fill the page vertically, with much larger print and consequently a vast increase in the total number of pages and hence the cost of the score.

But it is also a matter of the voice required. Soloists can,

¹⁵ Details in Bruce Haynes, *A History of Performing Pitch: The Story of “A”* (Lanham, 2002)

¹⁶ This version compensates a little by using a larger text size than the 1990 edition.

of course, be chosen to fit the style, compass and type required. But amateur choirs are rarely auditioned for the a specific work. In an ideal performance, the problem is finding high, light tenors for the C3-clef parts.¹⁷ There are plenty of ladies who have a low range, but they are often not encouraged to use it. My advice to conductors is to ask if any sopranos fancy trying the 'alto' (i.e. tenor) part. Lady altos tend initially to object to the octave adjustment, but are usually happy by the coffee-break in the first rehearsal. I've only heard of one singer who withdrew from a choir. Mixing high tenors and low ladies works very well in choral performances. The not-quite-tenors then have the C4-clef tenor parts, and the bass parts are manageable by proper basses. The low Ds in 'Et misericordia' are not exceptional; I've heard of no-one wanting to transpose up the similar passage in the Gloria a7 notated at pitch in F4 clefs!¹⁸

Some people like the high ending to the *Magnificat*, though once I got used to it, I prefer the richness of the low tessitura. *Lauda Jerusalem* is a problem for the middle parts at any pitch. If untransposed, the change of tessitura is a shock (though can be rationalised as word-painting). To avoid too shrill a sound, I recommend performing it a tone lower if the authentic fourth isn't adopted. The *Magnificat* is sometimes performed down a minor third, though I don't believe it theoretically.

INSTRUMENTAL DOUBLING

Instruments are specified only in nos. 1, 2, 11, 12 & 13. It has been customary to include them elsewhere. We can well imagine someone like Michael Praetorius buying the 1610 edition and performing it with choirs scattered around the church and supported by groups of instruments. Perhaps because his publications give so much fascinating information about performance at the time, his suggestions have been applied to music for which it was not necessarily suited: there is no reason to assume that music was performed the same way in Mantua as in Wolfenbüttel. It is not unstylish to double voices with cornetts and sackbuts, especially in those psalms that suit choral performance. But the instruments have more effect if used sparingly, and the subtlety of the vocal writing is enhanced by flexible solo singing without instrumental doublings. It should be noted that the *bassus generalis* is not an exact equivalent of a continuo part from a century later, and does not imply the use of a string bass instrument. The *contrabasso da gamba* specified in No. 1 is unlikely to have been a 16' pitch instrument. It might be used as part of a doubling ensemble, but would have played at the notated octave apart from perhaps bending some octaves down at cadences.¹⁹

CONTINUO

¹⁷ The English nickname for the voice is 'Crump-tenor', after a misprint listing 'James Bowman counter-tenor, Rogers Covey crumptenor'; Rogers Covey-Crump has just that sort of high tenor voice that is more satisfactory for low alto parts than a falsettist.

¹⁸ When Andrew Parrott tried out the downward transposition at an amateur weekend course, one of the bottom Ds was sung by someone who was otherwise singing tenor (me), the other by the lute-maker Michael Lowe.

¹⁹ Peter McCarthy *Claudio Monteverdi's Contrabasso da Gamba*.

The normal instrument in church was the organ, which for over half a millennium²⁰ had escaped the ecclesiastical suspicion of instruments. The belief that the continuo idea was invented c.1600 is an oversimplification, but is true for the sort of playing needed for the Vespers. The *Bassus generalis* seems at times to be somewhat carelessly prepared – not including the bass note of a chord, for instance. If the double choirs of nos. 4, 8, 10 & 12 are given separate organs, the players have to guess when they play and when they are silent. It is, in fact, very unusual for polychoral works to have an organ part for each choir, though some MSS sets of music by Giovanni Gabrieli published with a single continuo part include a part for each choir. The chitarrone (possibly invented for the 1589 *Intermedi*) has become a *sine qua non* in most *Vespers* performances, even amateur ones. When the organ is a small continuo instrument, the chitarrone's diapason strings are invaluable, and its dynamic variety is a complement to the less-flexible organ. Also, it adds a bite to the organ's chords and can give a strong rhythmic impulse.

EDITING

Editors have three major tasks: to establish a correct text, to decide what that means, and to present it in such a way as the user of the edition can understand it. There is no shortage of editions of Monteverdi's 1610 *Vespers*: indeed, it would be an ideal example to take for a study of the history of editing. I have been aware of the problems the *Vespers* presents for fifty years,²¹ and for much of that time have been involved in the editing of it in some way or other.

Any edition that attempts to satisfy both the needs of the specialist ensemble of soloists and the amateur choral society has to make certain compromises. We have reached the stage when experienced singers (both professional and amateur) need only a scoring up of the original notation with minimal editorial intrusion. Performance from facsimile would be difficult, since there are inconsistencies and errors in the 1610 edition and the addition of editorial sharps is more complex than in many other prints of the time. But as soon as you put something into score, the immediate problem is what to do about bar lines.

The solution of the best older edition of the *Vespers*, that by Gottfried Wolters, is to use *Mensurstrich* – the placing of bar-lines between rather than through the staves so that the original notation is unaffected by it and the singer can imagine that he is using an unbarred part. There are two objections to this. One is that in the 16th and 17th

²⁰ There are descriptions of organs at Winchester Cathedral and at Ramsey Abbey (a few miles from Huntingdon) in the 10th century.

²¹ I first heard the *Vespers*, broadcast from York Minster, conducted by Walter Goehr, in 1958 or 1959, and the first edition I owned was by him, printed by Universal Edition with the large time signatures that characterised their editions of Schoenberg etc. I attended the concert at which Denis Stevens launched his edition without the motets; he later (having restored them in his second edition) justified their omission, not on musicological grounds, but because Westminster Abbey did not have enough toilets for a long concert. However, my recollection is that the first half of the Abbey concert was lengthened with Sir Adrian Boult conducting a Bach Suite. Both works were played by a multi-stringed orchestra.

centuries, scores are always barred, so there is something of a phoney compromise in a bar-less score. The other is that all except those very familiar with early music find it confusing. There is never any doubt that the music fits a regular beat, which the performer clocks up in his mind whether or not bar lines are present,²² so there is nothing objectionable about their presence.

Editions of the *Vespers* have tended to have bar lines four minims apart, though some have changed to shorter bars when the music gets more active, a practice that conforms with the barring in the *Bassus generalis*. Personally, I find long bars restful to the eye and mind; but they cause problems to some singers and players, and an advantage of shorter bars is that it avoids the visual difference between the same phrases starting on the 2nd beat of long bars in some parts and the 4th in others, giving ties in different places. In triple time, some editors' concern with preserving the original notation vanishes and values are halved (Jurgens) or quartered (Wolters and Stevens). I am extremely sympathetic to those who find bars of six semibreves confusing.²³ But there is no difficulty in reading three semibreves per bar, and preserving the original note-values seems to me more important than worrying about where bar lines are placed. However often or few they may be, bar lines are editorial additions, and it is they rather than note values which should be adapted for the convenience of the modern reader. Until we are quite sure of the relationship between Monteverdi's duple and triple times,²⁴ it seems to me confusing to conceal this aspect of his notation. Even with six semibreves to a bar, hemiola patterns sometimes cross the bar line.²⁵ Needless to say, performers must avoid giving the bar line undue emphasis; but since with longer bars the main stress is sometimes at the beginning of the bar, sometimes in the middle, it is less confusing if the phrasing and emphasis comes from the shape of the music itself, not the placing of bar lines or the showing of coloration.

Editions which use long bars almost invariably have ϕ as the time signature. The *Vespers*, however, are mostly notated in ϵ , though there are some inconsistencies between the continuo and the other parts. It seems reasonable to transcribe music of this period that is in the former with four minims per bar but music in the latter with short bars. The *Bassus generalis* sometimes shows other parts on separate staves; then it is barred. The frequency of bar

22 As, I imagine, the *tactus* would in a renaissance singer.

23 One of the few virtues of Raymond Leppard's editions of Monteverdi and Cavalli was his preservation of original note values; but he used long bars, and I remember the trouble he had getting the Dartington Summer School choir to cope with triple sections in Cavalli's *Missa concertata* in the late 1960s.

24 Several articles by Roger Bowers demonstrate the 'correct' relationships, but not everyone believes that the medieval rules were strictly applied as late as 1610. The inconsistency between the *Bassus generalis* and the other parts in the *Magnificat* makes one suspicious of the literal meaning of the mensuration signs. I experienced triple sections sung in a 3=2 rather than the more common 3=1 ratio in some other music recently, and enjoyed the more lilting effect.

25 I did not willingly omit the signs for *coloration*, which signpost hemiola patterns; in 1990, it was either impossible or very fiddly for the typesetting program to show them. (It was adapted soon after to make it easier.) But not all places where singers need to be aware of a 2+2+2 rather than 3+3 pattern are marked thus.

lines is not consistent, though they tend to come every four minims. Whether they derive from Monteverdi's manuscript or were the responsibility of the printer is not known. I would argue that the convenience and expectation of the modern reader here outweighs following the source. The published scores of *Orfeo* (1609 & 1615) mostly have four-minim bars, but both MSS of *Poppea*, copied a few years after Monteverdi's death, prefer two minims.

There are various places in the *Vespers* where the original edition has mistakes. More worrying, there are also places where the parts and the continuo score differ. My guess, without going into speculation about when and where the work was performed before it was printed (if, indeed, it was ever performed as an entity at all), is that what the composer sent to his printer was material from at least two different performances and that he had not checked that it matched. Unfortunately, it does not seem possible to make a general rule and assume that the version of the *Bassus generalis* is consistently better or worse, and on each case the editor or performer must make up his own mind. I have found that each time I look at some problems, my mind changes. It therefore seems wrong to put the one I favour at any particular moment into the main text and hide the other in an impenetrable critical commentary at the end of the score. Therefore I have footnoted the variants so that they are easy to see and performers may make their own choice.

While I have strong views on how the work should be performed, I am also well aware how these views have changed over the thirty years I have been playing the *Vespers*. So, while the edition is conceived primarily for performances which accord with them, it is also intended to be as flexible as possible. I recommend that *Lauda Jerusalem* and *Magnificat* should be transposed down a fourth; but the first conductor to use the 1990 edition wanted *Lauda* down a tone, so his copies were produced thus.

I thought for a long time over the best way to produce instrumental parts. I'm not a great believer in doubling vocal lines; but if you are using a choir rather than solo voices, it is sensible, and the woollier the choir, the more useful sackbuts and cornetts become. Normally, the editor decides which sections are doubled and which instrument doubles which voice – and the conductor invariably disagrees! I therefore decided to leave the choice to the conductor. So for each of the psalms, *Audi coelum* and the hymn, there is a pack of instrumental parts. Each part is complete, including text (so could be used by a singer), and each middle part is in the alto, tenor and octave-treble clef so can be used by strings or wind. It is up to the conductor to allocate the parts and mark tacets. The sections with obbligato instruments (*Deus in adiutorium*, *Dixit Dominus*, the Sonata, the ritornello of the Hymn and the *Magnificat*) are supplied in the normal way, with the parts in a booklet in which the separate sheets of the other movements can be placed as allocated by the conductor.

We provide a separate *Bassus generalis* part for organists

who would rather not be bothered with mid-movement page turns or believe that reading just the bass line encourages more musical phrasing of it; chitarrone players tend to prefer to play from this part. It seemed helpful to provide some figuring, though not with the careful notation of every chord that became the custom for printed editions in the 18th century. At one stage, I thought that it would be useful only to figure chords that were not obvious. But I find that even when playing from a score I am more relaxed if the figuring is a bit fuller. Some absolutely pointless figures may be the result of having played a wrong chord on one occasion so what was originally a pencil scribble got added to the edition. When this edition was first prepared, one still heard wrong chords from players accompanying Monteverdi (minor chords at cadences, for instance), so I am unrepentant about adding even obvious figures.

I do, however, follow certain principles. A sharp indicates a major chord, a flat a minor one (the normal practice of the period). An accidental before a *Bassus generalis* note implies a 6/3 chord so it is not figured. Complicated figures are not given: Monteverdi's basic harmonic logic is clear, and elaborate figuring usually means that the player is trying to follow too much detail.²⁶ There are places where the polyphony is best played as it stands (e. g. the end of *Audi coelum*, where every note counts), but very often the organist should play simple chords as backing for the more elaborate movement of the parts.

The early books on continuo playing suffer from doubling as instructions for composition, and there is virtually nothing about the musicality of the performance. A chitarrone can add a dynamic rhythmic impulse; an organ does so more by varying the density of chords and their duration. Doubling the top line of the texture may not work on a harpsichord, but is fine on an organ: indeed, many awkward passages can be simplified by playing treble and bass and filling the gap with minimal thought – though don't let the right hand go too high. The theorists are right to suggest that it should keep below the top of a soprano stave in C1 clef – a third lower than treble clef.

I have omitted some of the normal trappings of scholarly editions, following what evolved as the King's Music house style. Since original note values and signatures are preserved, there is no need to indicate them separately; original clefs, however, are footnoted. The absence of indications of *coloration* is discussed in footnote 24. It is an important issue in the *Sonata sopra Santa Maria* for more significant reasons than indicating triple cadence rhythms and is noted there where it occurs. Ligatures are basically irrelevant by this date, though those in *cantus firmi* are preserved. I find the normal convention of italicising all added underlay unhelpful. Nearly always the interpretation of a *ij* sign is utterly unambiguous, so that implying that text added in accordance with it is editorial (so therefore the performer can change it if he doesn't like it) is misleading. Underlay needs only be shown as

editorial if there is any doubt. This is, in fact, not a serious problem in the *Vespers*.

There are several insoluble problems of *musica ficta*; the editor can only make clear what the 1610 edition says (sometimes it is contradictory) then add accidentals above the stave. Previous editions, though, have made it difficult to see what the edition states by using modern conventions for accidentals. Our policy for music of this period is to preserve all accidentals except for adjacent notes within a phrase.²⁷ This prevents ambiguity without looking silly. Editorial accidentals are bracketed on the stave.

© Clifford Bartlett, January 2010

²⁶ I was interested to find that the places in *Poppea* where my figuring was awkward or complex coincided with the sections that Alan Curtis argued were not by Monteverdi.

²⁷ This policy was worked out with Richard Charteris for his King's Music editions of Giovanni Gabrieli.