

# Vocal Music for Chamber and Church in the Early Baroque

## P R E L U D E

### *Chapter Outline*

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The religious differences that had separated northern Protestant Europe from the Catholic south in the sixteenth century continued to echo in seventeenth-century music. Several new genres of sacred music emerged, such as the sacred vocal concerto and the oratorio; these were cultivated both in southern Europe, where Catholic sacred music flourished, and in northern Europe, where Lutheran church music spread through German-speaking lands and Scandinavia. Throughout Europe, instrumental music found its place in both religious and secular circles, expanding on genres that had their beginnings in the sixteenth century. This development will be explored in the next chapter, but many of the general characteristics of Baroque music that we will continue to examine in connection with vocal genres pertain to instrumental music as well.

The changes occurring in intellectual and artistic realms profoundly influenced the course of music history. While seventeenth-century thinkers discarded outmoded ways of viewing the world and proposed new explanations, musicians expanded their vocabulary to meet new expressive needs. As scientists such as Galileo and Newton developed new ideas within the framework of older methods, so composers—such as Claudio Monteverdi in his madrigals and Heinrich Schütz in his motets—poured more intense and more varied emotions into the musical genres they inherited from the Renaissance. Much early seventeenth-century music was truly experimental but by the middle of the century the new resources of harmony, tone color, and form had created a common language with a clear vocabulary, grammar, and syntax.

## Vocal Chamber Music

Although opera by midcentury had become the focus of musical life in Venice, elsewhere it was still an uncommon event. Chamber music for mixed voices and instruments remained the standard fare for private music-making (see

Figure 10.1). The concertato medium, whether monody or other textures with basso continuo, permeated all genres of chamber and church music. Composers found new ways of organizing their works—including ritornellos, strophic variations, repeating bass patterns, and contrasting styles and textures—to create large-scale forms and enrich their music's expressive resources.

From the beginning of the century, Italian composers turned out thousands of pieces for solo voice or small vocal ensemble with basso continuo. Following Caccini's *Le nuove musiche*, these pieces were published in numerous collections of madrigals, arias, dialogues, and duets, and some were more widely known than any of the operas. Several of the formal types that became crucial to opera were first perfected in solo song. An example is the strophic aria, which permitted a composer to repeat the same melody, perhaps with minor rhythmic modifications, for each stanza of poetry; write a new melody over the same bass line for successive stanzas; or keep the same harmonic and melodic plan for all the stanzas, but vary the surface musical details. The last two procedures, known as strophic variations, were favorite techniques for instrumental as well as vocal composition (see Chapter 11).

The importance of the concertato medium—competing or contrasting forces—can be gauged by its impact on the madrigal. We can trace the change from the unaccompanied polyphonic madrigal to the concerted madrigal with instrumental accompaniment in Monteverdi's fifth through eighth books of madrigals. Beginning with the last six madrigals of his Fifth Book (1605), Monteverdi includes a basso continuo and sometimes calls for other instruments as well. Solos, duets, and trios are set against the full vocal ensemble, and there are instrumental introductions and recurring instrumental interludes (ritornellos). Monteverdi entitled his seventh book *Concerto* (1619) and described it as containing "madrigals and other kinds of songs," without specifying that it includes strophic variations and canzonettas as well as through-composed madrigals.

### Strophic aria

### Concerted madrigals



Figure 10.1. *Le concert*, a painting by Nicholas Tourmier from the early seventeenth century, illustrates the new concertato style of mixed voices and instruments—in this case, solo voice with bass viol, spinet, violin, and lute. (Louvre, Paris, Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY.)

**IN PERFORMANCE** Embellishment and Improvisation in the Baroque

Baroque music emphasizes the performer and the performance, not the composer and the work. Baroque musicians regarded written scores merely as a basis for performance rather than as an unalterable text. Performers were expected to add to what the composer had notated not only in order to complete or supplement the original ideas, as when they realized a basso continuo, but also and especially in order to enhance the music's expressive powers, as when they ornamented a melody while performing. Performance practices relating to improvisation and embellishment varied from nation to nation and from one generation to another, but they were always an essential part of the performer's training and skill. Although the task is complex and controversial, modern players and scholars try to reconstruct these practices based on written treatises, descriptive accounts, and transcribed improvisations.

*Example 10.1: Claudio Monteverdi, Possente spirito, from L'Orfeo, Act III*

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system shows the 'Original melody' (a simple line with lyrics 'tan - ta - bel -'), an 'Embellished version' (a more complex line with many ornaments and slurs), and the 'Basso continuo' (a line with figured bass). The second system continues the melody and basso continuo with lyrics 'lez - za il pa - ra - di - so ha se - co.' and 'lez - za il pa-ra-di - so ha se - co.'

*[wherever there is] so much beauty as hers is paradise.*

The word *ornamentation* now connotes something superficial, an added decoration that has no intrinsic merit; but for the Baroque musician it was the chief way of moving the affections. At the beginning of the Baroque era, Giulio Caccini even coined the Italian term *affetti* to indicate collectively the ornaments he taught with his new style of solo singing (see Chapter 9). Eventually, both vocalists and instrumentalists recognized two principal ways of ornamenting a melodic line. First, brief formulas called *ornaments*—such as trills, turns, appoggiaturas, and mordents—were added to certain notes to emphasize accents, cadences, and other significant points in the melody. Special signs sometimes—though not always—indicated their placement (see Chapter 11). The French were especially artful in specifying the exact placement and precise execution of ornaments. Second, more extended embellishments—such as scale and arpeggio passages (*passaggi*) and other types of flourishes—were added to create a free and elaborate paraphrase of the written line. This process—sometimes called division, diminution, or figuration—was especially appropriate to melodies in slow tempo. Example 10.1 is an excerpt from the aria in Monteverdi's opera *L'Orfeo* (see Chapter 9). Orfeo sings the aria at a point in the drama when Euridice's life depends on his musical powers—the more moving his song, the better his chances of retrieving her—demonstrating how closely ornamentation was linked to persuasive expression. The aria was published with the original tenor melody on the top staff and, below it, an embellished version representing the ornamentation added by a singer in one performance.

Performers were free not only to embellish a written score but also to change it in other ways. Singers often added cadenzas—elaborate passages decorating important cadences—to arias, and later these became a feature of solo instrumental works as well. Sections of variation sets and movements of suites were omitted or rearranged as desired. Title pages of ensemble collections encouraged players to choose which instruments and even how many to use for a performance. In every respect, the written music—whether published or not—was regarded as a script that could be adapted to suit the convenience and the varying tastes and habits of the performers. French musicians, for example, emphasized rhythmic freedom over the melodic ornamentation characteristic of Italian opera. For example, passages notated in equal values were typically played unequally, lengthening the first of every pair of eighth notes in a series, and shortening the second, resulting in a string of uneven, triple-like rhythms called *notes inégales* (“unequal notes”). A related French practice is overdotting, in which a dotted note is prolonged beyond its notated value—according to the performer's taste—while the next note is necessarily shortened. These changes, which may be heard in the NAWM recording of Lully's opera overture (82a), for example, emphasize the beats and sharpen the rhythmic profiles of the passages to which they are applied. But more important, they were thought to impart a certain stylish elegance to the performance, not unlike the “swing” effect in jazz.

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## Madrigals of War and Love

Monteverdi's eighth book, entitled *Madrigali guerrieri et amorosi* (Madrigals of War and Love, 1638), features a remarkable variety of concertato forms and types, including madrigals for five voices with continuo; solos, duets, and trios with continuo; and large works for chorus, soloists, and orchestra. The eighth book also contains two sung *balli* (dances or ballet) and the *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (The Combat of Tancredi and Clorinda), a work blending mime and music that was first performed in 1624. Here Monteverdi set the portion of Tasso's *Gierusalemme liberata* (Jerusalem Delivered) that describes the armed confrontation between the crusader knight Tancredi and the pagan heroine Clorinda, ending with her death (see Figure 10.2). Monteverdi assigns the narrative text to a tenor, who delivers it in recitative. The brief dialogue between Tancredi and Clorinda is sung by characters who also mime the actions during the narrative. The instruments (strings with continuo) accompany the voices and play interludes that suggest the action—the galloping of horses, the clashing of swords, the excitement of combat. To convey anger and warlike affections and actions, Monteverdi devised what he called in the book's preface the *conciato genere* ("excited style"), characterized by rapid reiteration of a single note, whether on quickly spoken syllables or in a measured string tremolo. Other composers imitated this device, which became a widely used convention.

Figure 10.2. The scene from Torquato Tasso's epic poem *Gierusalemme liberata* (1590), in which Tancredi, after mortally wounding an enemy warrior in the Crusades, discovers on removing the Saracen's armor that it is his beloved, Clorinda. Monteverdi set their speeches to music in his *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*. Accompanied by two violins, a viola da braccio, and basso continuo, Clorinda sings, "The heavens open; I go in peace."

(From Tasso, *La Gierusalemme liberata con le figure di Bernardo Castello* (Genoa, 1690). Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.)



Many works used basso ostinato (Italian for "obstinate" or "persistent bass"; often called "ground bass" in English), a short pattern in the bass that repeats while the melody above it changes or, in some cases, elaborates a matching melodic outline. Most ostinato basses were in triple or compound meter, usually two, four, or eight measures long. There was a well-established tradition in Spain and Italy of singing or playing popular songs and dances, composed or extemporized, to familiar ostinato basses such as *Guárdame las vacas* (see NAWM 63b), its close relative the *romanesca*, and the *Ruggiero*. (*Ruggiero* was one of the heroes of Ariosto's epic, so the name betrays the pattern's origins in the Renaissance oral tradition of singing the stanzas of epic poetry to a repeating melodic formula with a standard harmonization that eventually became a bass pattern.) Such patterns, which provided a ready-made, logical structure for composing or improvising a lengthy song or dance, underlie many vocal and instrumental works of the early seventeenth century (see Chapter 11).

Certain patterns, such as the descending tetrachord (a stepwise descent spanning a fourth), became associated with particular affections. Monteverdi used a minor descending tetrachord ostinato in his *Lamento della ninfa* (Lament of the Nymph) from his eighth book of madrigals. Its falling contour and relentless repetition are perfectly suited to convey inescapable sorrow. In the passage in Example 10.2, the recurring instrumental bass line establishes a tonal center and regular phrases, while the vocal melody suggests the nymph's distress through strong dissonances (marked with an x) and irregular phrases that struggle against the restrictive four-measure groupings of the pattern. Three male singers, who form the inner voices of the five-part concerted texture, introduce and comment on her lament, turning this madrigal into a miniature unstaged drama. Throughout the Baroque period, especially in opera, composers used various forms of the descending tetrachord ostinato, which became emblematic of sorrowful affections.

Ostinato basses

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Lament

Example 10.2: Monteverdi, *Lamento della ninfa*, with descending tetrachord bass

fa che ri - tor - ni il mio a - mor co - m'ei pur fu, o —

o tu m'an - ci - di ch'i - o non mi tor - ment - ti più.

[Spoken to Love:] Make my love return as he once was, or kill me yourself so that I will not torment myself any longer.

A new genre of vocal chamber music developed from the strophic aria and the extended, quasi-dramatic madrigal (such as Monteverdi's Lament of the Nymph): the cantata, meaning simply a piece that was "sung." By midcentury, the

Cantata

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Strozzi's chamber  
cantata

genre had established itself in Italy as a piece for voice and continuo on an intimate poetic text having several sections that included recitatives, arias, and arioso passages. Among leading cantata composers of the mid-seventeenth century were Luigi Rossi (1597–1653) and Giacomo Carissimi (1605–1674) in Rome—the first an opera composer, the second remembered chiefly for his oratorios (see below)—and Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677) in Venice (see biography).

Strozzi's *Lagrime mie* (NAWM 72), published in her *Diparti di Euterpe* (Pleasures of Euterpe, 1659), is representative of the solo chamber cantata in its successive sections of recitative, arioso, and aria, and of Strozzi in its emotional focus on unrequited love. The first section, which invokes the distraught lover's tears, begins with a stunningly doleful cry, which bursts upon the ear at the top of the vocal register and makes its way downward over a stationary harmony, faltering in its syncopated rhythms and prolonging the dissonances D $\sharp$ , A, and F $\sharp$  to imitate the lover's wailing and lamentation (see Example 10.3). The passage

 Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677)

Figure 10.3. Female musician with viola da gamba, almost certainly a portrait of Barbara Strozzi around 1637, painted by Bernardo Strozzi (perhaps a relative). Her seductive costume, the flowers in her hair, and the musical attributes (instruments and songbook) suggest that the subject is a personification of *La Musica*, allegorized as an invitation to sensual love.

(State Art Archives, Dresden. Photo: Artothek.)

Strozzi was a rarity among Baroque composers in that she achieved notoriety as a singer and composer despite not having access, as a woman, to the realms of opera and church music. She sang her

own music, the bulk of which was intended for intimate, private gatherings, and consequently became the central figure in an academy created in part to showcase her talents.

She was born in Venice, the adopted (and perhaps natural) daughter of poet and librettist Giulio Strozzi. Her father nurtured her ambitions as a composer and introduced her to the intellectual elite of Venice. From her teens, she sang at the Strozzi home for gatherings of poets and other writers, formalized in 1637 as the Academy of the Unisoni. She studied with Pier Francesco Cavalli, the leading Venetian opera composer and a student of Monteverdi's. She was supported financially by her father, by the noble patrons to whom she dedicated her publications, and probably by Giovanni Paolo Vidman, the apparent father of at least three of her four children.

Between 1644 and 1664, Strozzi published eight collections of music (one is now lost). Her publications contain over one hundred madrigals, arias, cantatas, and motets, placing her among the most prolific composers of vocal chamber music of the century. Indeed, she published more cantatas than any other composer of the time. Her choice to publish her music was unusual for women musicians in the seventeenth century and may reflect the feminist sympathies of her father and his circle.

**Major works:** 3 collections of cantatas and arias,<sup>2</sup> of arias, and 1 each of madrigals and motets.

Example 10.3: Barbara Strozzi, *Lagrimie mie, opening*

[Lamento]

La - gri-me mi - e,

*Tears of mine, [what holds you back] . . . ?*

recurs several times like a refrain, helping to unify the rather loose poetic and musical structure of the rest of the work. The opening section has the rhythmic flexibility and harmonic language of the most expressive recitative; yet it is also marked by the word repetition and intervallic motion associated with aria. Throughout the cantata, Strozzi changes style and figuration frequently to capture the successive moods and images of the text with a fluidity that recalls Monteverdi's late operas. And several times in the bass line she subtly alludes to the slowly descending tetrachord to underline phrases like "lumi dolenti, non piangete" (sorrowful eyes, do not weep!). The effect, combining contrasting musical elements and shifting emotions, is typical of the concerted chamber style at midcentury.

Although the Italian style of monody was imitated in other nations, composers outside Italy also produced songs of distinctly national character. In France, the most important genre of secular vocal music was the air de cour (court air), a homophonic, strophic song for four to five voices or for solo voice with lute accompaniment, written by composers associated with the French royal court and sung as independent vocal music or as part of a court ballet. Airs de cour are mostly syllabic with simple, diatonic, elegantly arching melodies, and tend to lack the melismas, sequences, motivic construction, chromaticism, and word-painting used by Italian composers. Many airs de cour feature irregular alternation of long and short notes or of duple and triple metric groupings, showing the influence of the French language and of chansons by Renaissance composers (see Chapter 7). A lighthearted example of an air de cour is *Ma bergere non légere* (published 1613 NAWM 73), by Gabriel Bataille (ca. 1575–1630), a song about wooing a shepherdess that shows its courtly sophistication through teasing poetic imagery, varying lengths of poetic lines, and a rushing, irregularly phrased melody that runs up and down the scale in breathless excitement while maintaining an elegant balance. Like many a dance tune, the melody is in two repeated sections, a simple binary form. The lute part is fully written out; the French did not widely adopt basso continuo notation until the 1660s.

Airs de cour

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## Catholic Sacred Music

Just as Bernini used theatrical effects in his religious sculpture and architecture (see "The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa," page 209 and Figure 10.4), so Catholic composers of the Baroque adopted the theatrical style for church music, setting



religious texts as sacred concertos that made use of basso continuo, the concertato medium, monody, and operatic styles from recitative to aria. The goal was the same in both cases: to convey the Church's message in the most dramatically effective and, thus, persuasive way.

### Stile antico

Yet sacred music did not abandon polyphony altogether. Composers were routinely trained to write in the old contrapuntal style associated with Palestrina (Chapter 8) and known as the *stile antico* ("old style"), which coexisted alongside the *stile moderno* ("modern style"). A composer might deploy both styles, sometimes in a single piece. Over time, the *stile antico* was modernized as composers added a basso continuo and dependence on church modes gradually gave way to major-minor tonality. At the end of the Baroque period, Johann Joseph Fux codified this quasi-Palestrinian counterpoint in his famous treatise *Gradus ad Parnassum* (Steps to Parnassus, 1725), which remained the most influential textbook on counterpoint for the next two centuries.

### Large-scale sacred concerto

From before the time of Willaert (Chapter 8), composers in the Venetian region wrote for two choruses that sometimes echoed one another in antiphony, a style particularly suited to psalm settings. The medium of divided choirs (*cori spezzati*), which encouraged homophonic choral writing and spacious rhythmic organization, did not originate in Venice but found a congenial home there. In the polychoral music of Giovanni Gabrieli—who served as organist and composer of ceremonial music at Saint Mark's—the performance forces grew to grand proportions (hence the modern term *grand concerto*). Two, three, four, or even five choruses, each with a different combination of high and low voices, mingled with instruments of diverse timbres, answered one another antiphonally, alternated with solo voices, and joined together in impressive walls of sound. Sometimes the choirs were separated spatially, with groups in the two organ lofts, one on each side of the altar, and another on the floor. In Chapter 7 we saw how Gabrieli's innovative instrumental works explored these resources (see NAWM 65). He also wrote polychoral motets for St. Mark's in Venice that included two or more choirs, vocal soloists, and instrumental ensemble, and one or more organs playing continuo. One of his most spectacular large-scale sacred concertos is *In ecclesiis* (NAWM 74), written for an annual celebration in Venice and published posthumously in 1615. Here Gabrieli combined four vocal soloists, a four-part chorus, a six-part instrumental ensemble, and organs in a kaleidoscope of styles from modern arias and instrumental canzonas to Renaissance imitative polyphony, slowly building to a massive sonorous climax.

### Polychoral motets

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### Small sacred concerto

The small sacred concerto for few voices, in which one, two, or three solo voices sang to the accompaniment of an organ continuo, was much more familiar to the average churchgoer than the large-scale concerto, which was used to celebrate major feast days only in the wealthier churches. One of the first composers to exploit this smaller medium for church music was Lodovico Viadana (1560–1627), who in 1602 published a collection, *Cento concerti ecclesiastici* (One Hundred Sacred Concertos). These were intended for performance during Mass, replacing the older-style motet during the Offertory or Communion.

Where resources permitted, the grand concerto was combined with the concerto for few voices, as in Monteverdi's pioneering *Vespers* of 1610, which includes all varieties of solo, choral, and instrumental groupings. In these settings for the liturgical Office, Monteverdi also incorporated the traditional psalm tones while employing the new musical resources of the time—recitative, aria, and concerto.

Alessandro Grandi (1586–1630), Monteverdi's deputy at Saint Mark's in Venice in the 1620s, composed many solo motets that used the new styles of monody. His *O quam tu pulchra es* (NAWM 75), published in 1625, blends elements from recitative, solo madrigal, and lyric aria. The changing styles reflect the moods of the

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## IN CONTEXT The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa

By the mid-seventeenth century, the dramatic gestures and attitudes of the stage permeated sacred works, too, as we shall see in the music of Schütz and Carissimi. Nowhere is this more evident than in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome, where Gian Lorenzo Bernini's marble sculpture *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* dominates the Cornaro Chapel. The Cornaro family commissioned Bernini, working in Rome, to design a side chapel within the church as their final resting place. The commission gave Bernini the opportunity not only to create a sculptural group for the chapel's altarpiece, but also to plan and decorate its entire setting. Perhaps at the family's request, he chose as his subject the popular Saint Teresa of Ávila (see Figure 10.4).



Figure 10.4. *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, sculpted by Giovanni Bernini (1598–1680) for the Cornaro Chapel in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. (Scala/Art Resource, NY.)



Figure 10.5. Bernini, *Cornaro Chapel*, marble relief on side wall.

(Scala/Art Resource, NY.)

Saint Teresa (1515–1582), a Spanish nun, was one of the greatest mystics of the Catholic Church. In her autobiography, she describes how, in one of her many visions, an angel repeatedly pierces her heart with a golden arrow, her pain made bearable by the sweet sensation of her soul being caressed by God. With consummate skill, Bernini transformed Saint Teresa's words into action and reaction: the angel is frozen *in the act* of plunging the arrow into the saint's breast, bringing about her mystical union with Christ, the heavenly bridegroom. Saint Teresa *reacts* by swooning in an ecstatic trance, her limbs dangling, her head tipped back, her eyes half closed, and her mouth forming an almost audible moan. The pair is bathed in a warm and mysterious glow coming through the chapel's hidden window of yellow glass, architecturally contrived to throw a spotlight on the scene.

Bernini reinforces the theatricality of it all with his stunning treatment of the chapel's side walls: there, in pews that resemble theater boxes, he depicts the members of the Cornaro family in almost three-dimensional relief, as though they are witnessing the enactment of this dramatic mystery (see Figure 10.5). Because Bernini created the illusion of the Cornaro family sitting in the same space in which we are moving, we feel as if they are alive. In this way, we, too, are drawn in, both physically and emotionally, to the Baroque world of Saint Teresa's vision; we become the audience at a command performance of this silent, sacred opera.

Discussion about the chapel and its sculpture is based on Rudolf Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini: The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque*, 2nd ed. (London: Phaidon, 1966), pp. 24–26.



text, drawn from the Song of Songs, a book in the Hebrew Scriptures whose dialogue between two lovers was taken as a metaphor for God's love for the church. As shown in Example 10.4a, the wonder of the opening line, "Oh how beautiful you are," is captured in recitative style by a sustained note in the voice, a skip to a dissonance in the bass, and a quick descent to a resolution in the voice, while parts of the text suggesting action are set in aria style in triple meter (Example 10.4b). The use of modern musical styles and the language of love parallels Bernini's sensuous depiction of St. Teresa in ecstasy (see Figure 10.4) in suggesting the intensity of communion with the divine. No doubt many more people encountered the modern vocal styles in church services and devotional music than in opera or in private concerts of secular vocal music.

### Oratorio

In Rome, the dramatic impulse found an outlet in sacred dialogues, which combined elements of narrative, dialogue, and commentary. Toward midcentury, such works began to be called oratorios because they were most often performed during the Lenten season (the period of penitence before Easter) in the oratory, the part of a church where groups of the faithful met to hear sermons and sing devotional songs, in keeping with the reforming spirit of the Council of Trent (see Chapter 8).

### Oratorio versus opera

Like operas, oratorios used recitatives, arias, duets, and instrumental preludes and ritornellos. But oratorios differed from operas in several ways: their subject matter was religious; they were seldom, if ever, staged; action was described or suggested rather than mimed; there was often a narrator, called a *storicus* ("story-teller") or *testo* ("text"); and the chorus—usually an ensemble of several voices singing one to a part—could take various roles, from participating in the dramatic

#### Example 10.4: Contrasting styles in Grandi's *O quam tu pulchra es*

##### a. Recitative style

O ——— quam tu pul-chra es, o ——— quam tu pul-chra es.

*Oh how beautiful you are.*

##### b. Aria style

Sur - ge, sur - ge, pro - pe-ra, sur - ge, spon - sa me - a.

*Arise, hasten, arise, my bride.*

dialogue to meditating on or narrating events. Early oratorio librettos were in Latin or Italian.

The leading composer of Latin oratorios was Giacomo Carissimi, one of several composers in Rome associated with Queen Christina of Sweden (see Chapter 11). Carissimi's *Jephte* exemplifies the midcentury oratorio. The Latin libretto comes from the Book of Judges 11:29–40, with some paraphrasing and added material to emphasize the Lenten themes of obedience and suffering. The narrator introduces the story in recitative. Jephtha, leader of the Israelites, vows that if the Lord gives him victory over the Ammonites in the impending battle, he will sacrifice the first thing he sees on his return home. That turns out to be his beloved only daughter, who, along with her friends, welcomes Jephtha with songs of rejoicing (solo arias, duets, choruses). After a section of dialogue, in recitative, between father and daughter in which she learns of her father's vow and accepts her fate, the chorus relates how the daughter, still a virgin, goes away to the mountains with her companions to bewail her approaching untimely death. She then sings a lament, to which the chorus responds, as in a Greek tragedy (this final scene is in NAWM 76). The lament is a long, affecting recitative, sweetened, as was customary in sacred music, with moments of florid song and with arioso passages built on sequences. Two sopranos, representing the daughter's companions, echo some of her cadential phrases. The choral response, a moving six-voice lamentation, employs both polychoral and madrigalistic effects, including a descending tetrachord in the opening measures of the basso continuo.

Carissimi's *Jephte*

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## Lutheran Church Music

In German-speaking regions, composers in both the Catholic and Lutheran churches soon took up the new monodic and concertato techniques. Sacred music in Austria and Catholic southern Germany remained under strong Italian influence, with Italian composers particularly active in Munich, Salzburg, Prague, and Vienna. Composers in the Lutheran central and northern regions gradually began to employ the new media, sometimes using chorale tunes as melodic material. Alongside compositions in *stile moderno*, Lutheran composers continued to write polyphonic chorale motets as well as motets on biblical texts that did not use chorale melodies. Many were in the large-scale concerto medium, showing German musicians' admiration of the Venetian fashion.

The pioneering German composer Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672), like many of his countrymen for centuries to come, completed his musical education in Italy. He studied in Venice with Giovanni Gabrieli from 1609 to 1612 and renewed his acquaintance with Italian music in 1628, when he found it much changed under Monteverdi's tenure at Saint Mark's (see biography and Figure 10.6).

Consequently, Venetian magnificence and color appear frequently in Schütz's music. His sacred works were published in a series of collections that show a remarkable variety. The first, *Psalmen Davids* (Psalms of David, 1619), combines sensitive treatment of German texts with the magnificence of the Venetian large-scale concerto for two or more choruses, soloists, and instruments, following the model of Gabrieli. The first book of *Symphoniae sacrae* (Sacred Symphonies, 1629) presents concerted Latin motets for various small combinations of voices and instruments. Published in Venice during Schütz's second sojourn there, it shows the strong influences of Monteverdi and Grandi, combining recitative, aria, and concerted madrigal styles.

Heinrich Schütz

Sacred concertos

 Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672)

The first German composer of international stature, Schütz is known especially for his church music and for his intellectual and emotional depth in conveying the meaning of words.

The son of an innkeeper, Schütz showed an early talent for music. Although his family did not want him to pursue music as a career, his singing at age twelve so impressed Moritz, landgrave of Hesse, that the nobleman insisted on bringing Schütz to Kassel and sponsoring his education in music and other subjects.

Moritz persuaded him to go to Venice in 1609 and study composition with Giovanni Gabrieli. After Gabrieli died in 1612, Schütz returned to

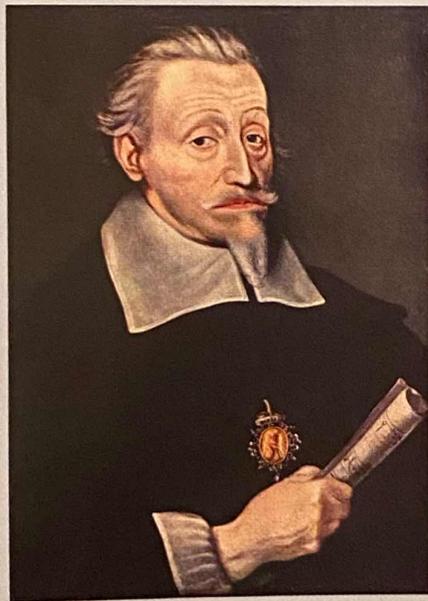


Figure 10.6. Heinrich Schütz at about age seventy (ca. 1655), in a portrait by Christoph Spetner.

(Bibliothek der Leipzig Universität. Lebrecht Music & Arts Library.)

Kassel as court organist, but the elector of Saxony pressured Moritz first to lend and ultimately to grant him the young musician, showing not only that Schütz was greatly esteemed as a musician but that musicians were essentially servants, not entirely free to decide their own destinies.

From 1615 to his death in 1672, Schütz was chapel master for the elector's court in Dresden, although he took leaves to visit Italy, where he made Monteverdi's acquaintance, and to work briefly at other courts. Schütz wrote music for all major ceremonies at court, secular and sacred. The former included the first German opera (1627), several ballets, and other stage works, although almost none of this music survives. He apparently did not write independent instrumental music. What remains is a great quantity and variety of concerted church music. Some had personal resonance: his first sacred collection, *Psalmen Davids*, was published shortly before his 1619 wedding to Magdalena Wildeck, and her death in 1625 prompted simple four-part settings of a German Psalter (published 1628). His *Musikalische Exequien* (1636) was funeral music for a friend and patron. But most was simply service music, each piece perfectly suited to the text at hand and the musicians at his disposal.

**Major works:** *Psalmen Davids* (polychoral psalm settings in German), *Cantiones sacrae* (Latin motets), *Symphoniae sacrae* (sacred symphonies, 3 volumes), *Musikalische Exequien* (funeral music), *Kleine geistliche Konzerte* (small sacred concertos, 2 volumes), *The Seven Last Words of Christ*, *Christmas Story*, 3 Passions.

CD 4|60

In 1636 and 1639, when the Thirty Years' War had reduced the number of musicians in the Dresden court chapel, Schütz published his *Kleine geistliche Konzerte* (Small Sacred Concertos), motets for one to five solo voices with continuo that are perfect microcosms of his style (see vignette, page 213). *O lieber Herre Gott* (NAWM 77) from the 1636 collection illustrates how Schütz matched music to text and used elements of Italian monody. The opening phrase on "O dear Lord God" is a slow, drawn-out recitative, like a prayer. The following words, "wake us up, so that we are ready," are depicted in *arioso* style with faster movement, upward leaps on "up" and "ready," and a rising sequence over ascending chromatic motion in the bass. A later passage conveys joy through *aria* style

## VIGNETTE The Effects of the Thirty Years' War

The Thirty Years' War (1618–48) devastated Germany and depleted the treasuries of the rulers involved. After Saxony entered the war in 1631, the elector of Saxony, Heinrich Schütz's employer, could no longer afford to keep many musicians. In response, Schütz published his *Kleine geistliche Konzerte* (Small Sacred Concertos, 1636 and 1639), which could be performed with the reduced forces available. His preface acknowledged the effects of the war.



The extent to which, among other liberal arts, so also praiseworthy Music has not only gone into a great decline but in many places has been altogether destroyed by the still continuing course of the war in our beloved German homeland, is clear to many eyes, along with the general ruinous

conditions and deep-seated unrest which unhappy war is wont to bring with it. I myself am experiencing this with regard to several of my musical compositions, which I have had to hold back for lack of publishers up to this time and even now, until perhaps the Almighty will graciously grant us better times in which to thrive. But meanwhile, so that my God-given talent in this noble art does not remain totally idle but can create some small offering, I have composed a few small concerted pieces and have now published them as a foretaste, as it were, of my musical work in God's honor.

Heinrich Schütz, Dedication to Part One, trans. Stanley Appelbaum, in *Kleine geistliche Konzerte*, ed. Philipp Spitta (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1996), p. 3.

in quick triple meter with close imitation between the voices. The rapid alternation of styles directly recalls Monteverdi and Grandi.

Two more books of *Symphoniae sacrae*, featuring sacred concertos in German, appeared in 1647 and 1650. The last installment, published after the Thirty Years' War, used the full musical resources of the Dresden chapel, now again available. Many of its pieces are laid out as dramatically conceived "scenes." One of the most stunning is the large-scale concerto *Saul, was verfolgst du mich* (NAWM 78), which calls for two choirs doubled by instruments, six solo voices, two violins, and continuo, and combines the polychoral style of Gabrieli with the dissonant rhetoric of Monteverdi. It brings to life the moment when Saul, a Jew on his way to Damascus to round up Christian prisoners, is stopped by a blinding flash of light and the voice of Christ calling to him: "Saul, why do you persecute me?" The experience leads to his conversion and to his new career as the Apostle Paul, spreading the Gospel. Paired solo voices rising from the depths of the basses through the tenors to the sopranos and violins represent the flash of light and the voice leaping from the desert. Christ's question "Why do you persecute me?" is a mesh of dissonant anticipations and suspensions. Then the polychoral style takes over as the choruses and soloists together reverberate with echoes, suggesting the effect of Christ's voice bouncing off rocky peaks in the desert. This large-scale sacred concerto shows how well Schütz assimilated the bold dissonance practices and coloristic techniques of the Venetians.

Another prominent genre in the Lutheran tradition was the *historia*, a musical setting based on a biblical narrative. In *The Seven Last Words of Christ* (1650s?), Schütz set the narrative portions as solo recitative or for chorus with continuo, while the words of Jesus, in free, expressive monody, are accompanied by strings and continuo. The whole is introduced by a short chorus and instrumental *sinfonia* and ends with a repetition of the *sinfonia* and a closing chorus. His *Christmas History* (1664) features recitatives for the narrative interspersed with scenes in the concertato medium, including arias and choruses with instrumental accompaniment.

CD 5|7

CD 2|58

Historia


**TIMELINE** Vocal Music for Chamber and Church in the Early Baroque

**MUSICAL EVENTS**

- Death of Palestrina and Lasso **1594**
- Giulio Caccini, *Le nuove musiche* **1602**
- Monteverdi, *Orfeo* (NAWM 69), in Mantua **1607**
- Monteverdi appointed director of music, Saint Mark's, Venice **1613**
- Giovanni Gabrieli, *Symphoniae sacrae II* **1615**
- Heinrich Schütz, *Psalmen Davids* **1619**
- Alessandro Grandi, *O quam tu pulchra es* (NAWM 75) **1625**  
Schütz, *Symphoniae sacrae I* **1629**
- Heinrich Schütz, *Kleine geistliche Konzerte* (NAWM 77) **1636**
- Monteverdi, *Madrigali guerrieri et amorosi* **1638**
- Monteverdi, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, in Venice **1642**
- Schütz, *Symphoniae sacrae III* (NAWM 78), **1650**  
*Carissimi, Jephte* (NAWM 76)
- Barbara Strozzi, *Lagrime mie* (NAWM 72) **1659**

**HISTORICAL EVENTS**

- 1590** Guarini, *Il pastor fido*
- 1604** Shakespeare, *Othello*
- 1605** Bacon, *On the Advancement of Learning*
- 1609** Kepler sets forth his astronomical laws
- 1618–1648** Thirty Years' War in Germany
- 1620** Mayflower brings first English colonists to New England
- 1632** Galileo charged with heresy for claiming Earth revolves around the sun
- 1635–40** Poussin, *The Rape of the Sabine Women*;  
Rubens, *The Rape of the Sabine Women*
- 1637** Descartes, *Discourse on Method*
- 1645–1652** Bernini, *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*

**Passions**

The most common type of *historia* was a Passion, a musical setting of the story of Jesus' crucifixion. Schütz wrote three in 1666, following the accounts of Matthew, Luke, and John. For these he used not concertato style but the older German tradition of treating the narrative in plainsong and the words of the disciples, the crowd, and other groups in polyphonic motet style.

**Legacy**

During his lifetime, Schütz's music was known mainly in Lutheran areas of Germany, and after his death it faded from the repertory until it was revived in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet he helped to establish Germany as a central part of the European tradition rather than as a peripheral region. His synthesis of German and Italian elements was essential in laying the foundation for later German composers, from Bach through Brahms.

**POSTLUDE**

The extraordinary burst of innovation in the early seventeenth century is as apparent in the chamber and church music of the time as it is in opera. Yet they all drew deeply on sixteenth-century traditions as well, redefining existing genres and approaches by combining them with new styles and techniques. Monody and madrigal joined forces in the service of church music; form was achieved via

the organization of the bass and the harmonies it supported, and through the systematic introduction of ritornellos, ostinato patterns, and variation techniques; and the typical basso-continuo texture—a florid treble supported by a firm bass—was varied by the use of the contrasts inherent in the concertato medium. By these means, composers enlarged and enriched the representational and emotional resources of music.

Like opera, new genres of composition such as oratorio, sacred vocal concerto, and cantata incorporated novel styles of writing such as recitative and aria. Choral textures also assimilated the new dramatic aesthetic. In both Catholic and Lutheran church music, composers availed themselves of a wide range of secular and religious styles to convey particular messages to their listeners. One especially noteworthy development of the period was the recognition that different styles were appropriate for different purposes. Thus, the older *stile antico* was preserved and practiced alongside newer styles; because of its associations with sacred music and with pedagogy, it was often deployed to evoke the solemnity and authority of tradition. At the same time, most styles could be used outside their original contexts for expressive ends, so that, as we have seen, theatrical styles were used in church. Nevertheless, because the primacy of the text and the persuasive delivery of its message were central to any vocal work of the period, rhetorical effectiveness was prized far above stylistic purity.