

Foreword

Introduction

The *Vespro della Beata Vergine* is part of a collection which appeared in 1610 bearing the title “Sanctissimae Virgini Missa senis vocibus, Ac Vespere pluribus decantandae.”¹ It begins with the *Missa In illo tempore*, a mass which parodies Nicolas Gombert’s motet of the same name, and is followed by the sequence of pieces known as the Vespers of the Blessed Virgin, which we present in our score: responsory, five vesper psalms for Marian festivals, hymn and magnificat (in two versions), as well as the concerti *Nigra sum*, *Pulchra es*, *Duo Seraphim*, *Audi coelum* (interpolated between the psalms), and the *Sonata sopra Santa Maria*.²

Very little is known about the genesis of the Vespers of the Blessed Virgin, or more specifically, about the collection containing it. The collection was first described in July of 1610 by Monteverdi’s assistant Don Bassano Casola (the dates of his lifetime are unknown). In a letter to Cardinal Ferdinando Gonzaga, the younger son of Monteverdi’s noble employer Vincenzo Gonzaga, Casola wrote that Monteverdi’s six-voice “Messa da Cappella” on themes from Gombert’s motet “In illo tempore” was currently being published. Along with the mass, psalms for a Vespers of the Blessed Virgin (“Salmi del Vespro della Madonna”) were being printed. These were to consist of varying and diverse inventions and harmonies over a *canto fermo* (cantus firmus). Casola further reported that Monteverdi intended to travel to Rome in autumn, in order to personally dedicate the collection to his Holiness the Pope.³

The print does indeed bear a dedication to Pope Paul V. which is dated 1 September 1610. Researchers unanimously assume that Monteverdi wished to recommend himself as a composer to the Pope – and most likely to other potential church employers – with this collection. The characteristic of a “portfolio” has left an essential impression on the 1610 print in many respects, and it is certainly an important key to understanding the collection. Certainly, this was the reason for combining a mass and vespers music in one volume. The mass was traditionally conservative, while more modern trends⁴ were pursued in the vespers; Monteverdi utilized the tension between these contrasting idioms more than any other composer of his time.

On 1 September, the date of dedication, the print may well have been nearly complete, since Monteverdi set out for Rome shortly after this date, already arriving at the beginning of October.⁵ Monteverdi’s attempts to attain entrance into the Seminario Romano for his son Francesco was the main purpose of his trip to Rome. However, the trip was hardly successful: Monteverdi neither succeeded in securing a place for his son at the Seminario nor did he obtain an audience with the Pope to present his print in person.

Monteverdi may possibly have met the Pope already in 1607 in Mantua. This could explain why Monteverdi quoted his opera *L’Orfeo*,⁶ which had been performed for the first time that year in Mantua, in the vespers’ responsory and magnificat.

Monteverdi’s intention of travelling to Rome was probably also the motive for the publication of the mass and vespers, which might have been planned for a longer period of time, but had not yet been carried out. Casola’s first reference to the collection already

associates it with the trip to Rome (cf. above). Publication most likely took place under considerable time pressure, since Casola mentions the work on the print in July as a novelty, the dedication is dated 1 September, and Monteverdi already had to leave for Rome shortly after this date. At any rate, such time pressure could explain certain discrepancies in the print of 1610, especially the existence of deviant versions of various pieces in the basso continuo score (see below) – which are presumably earlier – as well as a larger number of printing errors.

Whether a “premiere performance” of all or some of the pieces took place before the collection went to press is unknown. While it seems more plausible in the case of the mass that it was created especially for this publication, the instruments employed in the three movements with obbligato instruments (Nos. 1, 11 and 13) vary considerably, which allows for the assumption that at least some of these pieces were composed for different occasions,⁷ with instrumentation specifically tailored to the particular performance situations. Differing versions of the basso continuo and the vocal parts in no less than five pieces allow the assumption that existing pieces were revised.

However, church music did not actually belong to Monteverdi’s vocational obligations in Mantua, but this does not rule out that he also took part in church music performances at important festivities.⁸ Various hypotheses on the occasion and purpose of the compositions have been brought forward in the last fifty years, none of which could be supported by any documentary evidence at all up until now.⁹ No performances can be verified for Monteverdi’s Venetian period either (although we can at least safely assume that individual sections were performed). By contrast, when Monteverdi applied for the position of *maestro di cappella* at San Marco in Venice, the 1610 print was surely an essential argument for actually entrusting him with the position.¹⁰

¹ For the complete title cf. Critical Report.

² The mass and the second “small” version of the *Magnificat* are not part of the present edition. However, they are available separately from the same publishing house: Carus 40.670 and 27.205.

³ In the original: “Il Monteverdi fa stampare una Messa da Cappella a sei voci di studio et fatica grande, essendosi obligato maneggiar sempre in ogni nota per tutte le vie, sempre più rinforzando le otto fughe che sono nel motetto, in *illo tempore* del Gomberti e fa stampare unitamente ancora di Salmi del Vespro della Madonna, con varie et diverse maniere d’inventioni et armonia, et tutte sopra il canto fermo, con pensiero di venirsene a Roma questo Autunno, per dedicarli a Sua Santità.” This letter was first published by Emil Vogel, “Claudio Monteverdi. Leben und Wirken im Lichte der zeitgenössischen Kritik und Verzeichnis seiner Werke,” in: *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 3 (1887), p. 430. The letter has been cited often in literature on the Vespers.

⁴ Cf. Uwe Wolf, *Notation und Aufführungspraxis. Studien zum Wandel von Notenschrift und Notenbild in italienischen Musikdrucken der Jahre 1571–1630*, Kassel, 1992, vol. I, p. 44ff.

⁵ One must consider that at the time, music prints could only be produced in a few locations. Monteverdi’s collection appeared in the very center of music publication, in one of the large printing offices of Venice (Riccardo Amandino). From there, the copies first had to reach Monteverdi.

⁶ Jeffrey Kurtzman, *The Monteverdi Vespers of 1610. Music, Context, Performance*, Oxford, 1999, p. 14. The Pope was staying in Mantua in May 1607. The performance of *L’Orfeo* had already occurred in February of 1607, but it still could have been a topic at the court.

⁷ For example, the absence of a third cornetto part in the responsory (the part of the first viola would match perfectly) is just as difficult to explain as the absence of violas in the Sonata and the *Magnificat*.

⁸ Cf. among others John Whelan, *Monteverdi: Vespers 1610*, Cambridge, 1997, p. 29ff.

⁹ Various theses are summarized by Kurtzman 1999, p. 11ff.

¹⁰ A Venetian document mentions that not only the test pieces Monteverdi performed, but also his printed works spoke for his election (cf. Whelan, 1997, p. 40 and Kurtzman, 1999, p. 52f). We can presume with certainty that only church works were consulted. Aside from the early three-voice pieces *Sacrae cantilunculae* (1582) and the print of 1610, Monteverdi had not published any sacred works.

The 1610 Print

Along with Monteverdi's later collection *Selva morale e spirituale* (1641), the print of 1610 belongs to a category referred to as repertoire prints, which unite in one volume music for the two most important worship services of the universal church, the Mass and Vespers. The description of the collection in the signature marks on the vocal parts is in keeping with the tradition of such repertoire prints: "Messa & Salmi di Claudio Monte Verde."¹¹ Although the collection's contents possess parallelisms in genre with a number of other repertoire prints (mass, psalms, magnificat and motets),¹² there are major differences between Monteverdi's collection of 1610 and other contemporary prints of this kind:

1. Psalms and concerti are not in separate categories, they alternate.
2. The magnificat settings are two versions of the same composition.
3. The mass setting adopts a very archaic form of parody mass.
4. Psalms and magnificat follow a clearly-defined and even named common principle.

Especially the first point has been the topic of much discussion. The hypothesis that we have a complete vespers setting at hand – and not merely a series of vespers compositions – is primarily and definitively based on this fact. We know of only one other collection with this type of combination,¹³ and it is not truly comparable.¹⁴ The presence of the two magnificats is just as puzzling, and may support the hypothesis of a coherent vespers setting. Many collections contain numerous magnificats, but these usually differ in type and psalm tone, in order to recommend a given collection for as many vespers and occasions as possible.¹⁵ Together with the ritornelli ad libitum (in No. 2) and the falsobordone notation in the vocal parts of the responsory, the unusual presence of two versions of the same magnificat (with and without obbligato instruments) has awakened the impression that we are dealing with one and the same coherent vespers setting in two versions (with and without obbligato instruments) – and not with a collection kept as general as possible.¹⁶

By contrast, points three and four underline the very unusual programmatic demands of the collection, in which Monteverdi wishes to display a stylistic variety with high impact. Stylistic extremes are evident in the consciously conservative mass and the innovative concerti: both are extreme in the forms found here, but neither is unusual when taken for itself. However, the psalms and the magnificat are the most breathtaking. "Vespro della B. Vergine da concerto, composto sopra canti fermi" is the programmatic subtitle found in the basso continuo score,¹⁷ which describes the daring combination of the retrospective cantus firmus technique with the highly-modern concerto style in one composition. As was the custom, Monteverdi varied the style from psalm to psalm, but still remained true to his chosen fundamental principle. As with the parody form of the mass, Casola had also described this fact in his letter to Ferdinando Gonzaga as a prominent characteristic: "Salmi del Vespro della Madonna, con varie et diverse maniere d'invention et armonia, et tutte sopra il canto fermo."¹⁸ Even if one can dispute about liturgical unity (see below), compositional and artistic unity is in itself already attested to by this unusual subtitle.

This programmatic concept of the 1610 collection may also be responsible for points one and two as mentioned above. Taken for

themselves, the inserted concerti and the sonata follow a logical order of increasing the number of participants, a standard feature of many collections of the time. The positioning between the psalms sharpens the contrast and increases the collection's coloration. There is also evidence for the fact that motets (to which the concerti belong) were performed between the vespers psalms. This type of order would therefore have been expedient, exemplary, and programmatic – independent of any general liturgical context. The two versions of the magnificat¹⁹ could also be indebted to Monteverdi's incentive to prove his capability to create equivalent compositions: one for a large instrumental apparatus, and an a *cappella* version.

In all of the movements scored for instruments where the actual number of participants exceeds the number of available part-books (i.e., seven), vocal and instrumental parts are printed together on each left and right hand facing page of a part-book, respectively. The page turns for these shared parts concur.²⁰ The distribution of the additional voices was carried out differently in the part-books for each composition. In the three works with obbligato instrumentation (Nos. 1, 11 and 13), the same instrument is hardly ever assigned to the same vocal part twice (see below). The *Missa* and *Magnificat* are treated as works with more than one movement. When voices pause during a certain piece, the marking "tacet" is used. Other compositions are treated as individual works of their own, since these are not mentioned in the part-books which are not involved.

The oversized "Bassus generalis" part-book contains, for the most part, a basso continuo part largely without figuration, which still frequently takes on the form of a *basso seguente* in longer passages. On the other hand, the four concerti are printed in full score in the "Bassus generalis," as was the general custom with this type

¹¹ Michael Praetorius abbreviates the title even further and speaks of Monteverdi's ("Claudii de Monteverde") "Psalmi vespertini," a common title-page formulation of the time (*Syntagmatis Musici ... Tomus Tertius*, Wolfenbüttel, 1619, reprint, Kassel, 1954 (Dokumenta musicologica, I: XV), p. 128; Praetorius describes the verse sequence of the hymn "Ave maris stella" here).

¹² Some examples: Giovanni Paolo Cima, *Concerti ecclesiastici*, Milan, 1610; Francesco Rognoni Taegio, *Messa, salmi interi et spezzati, Magnificat, falsi bordone & motetti*, Milan, 1610; Valerio Bona, *Messa e vespro a quattro chori*, Venice, 1611; Tomaso Cecchino, *Psalmi, missa, et alia cantica*, Venice, 1619; Sigismondo Arsilli, *Messa, e vesperi della Madonna*, Rome, 1621.

¹³ Paolo Agostini, *Salmi della Madonna, Magnificat A 3. Voci. Hynno Ave Maris Stella, Antiphone A una 2. & 3. Voci. Et Motetti. Tutti Concertati*, Rome, 1619.

¹⁴ On the one hand, the antiphons do indeed have antiphonal texts, and on the other, they are – exemplarily? – noted between the psalms. However, in the table of contents (tavola), both are listed in separate groups.

¹⁵ Uwe Wolf, "Et nel fine tre variate armonie sopra il Magnificat. Bemerkungen zur Vertonung des Magnificats in Italien im frühen 16. Jahrhundert," in: *Neues Musikwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch 2* (1993), pp. 39–54.

¹⁶ Manfred H. Stattkus also sees two versions of the same work (SV 206, 206a); cf. Claudio Monteverdi, *Verzeichnis der erhaltenen Werke. Kleine Ausgabe*, Bergkamen, 1985, p. 50ff.

¹⁷ Heading of the responsory in the basso continuo score.

¹⁸ Cf. footnote 3.

¹⁹ Scholars have discussed several questions, such as: which of the versions is the earlier one, are they two versions of the same composition at all, or are they merely similar compositions? (see Whenham, 1997, p. 78f. and Kurtzman, 1999, p. 264ff., with a summary of the discussion to date). Meanwhile, some indications speak in favor of the idea that the interrelationship of the two *Magnificats* is more complicated, and cannot simply be described with the one-dimensional terms "first version" and "second version". Both compositions contain passages for which one could well argue that they should be considered to be earlier material. Most likely, precursors existed which influenced one another reciprocally.

²⁰ For details, see the table in the Critical Report, p. 143.

of music.²¹ Full scores are also extant for the *Crucifixus* of the mass, for Nos. 13g and 13l. This part-book also contains short scores for Nos. 1 (two voices), 4 and 6 (three voices). In our edition, we therefore generally refer to a “basso continuo score.” Incidentally, the “Bassus Generalis” is already labeled as the “Partitura del Monteverde” in its signature marks. In the organ part published within the performance material of this edition, we have followed the notation of the short score and print the staves of orientation as given in the original “basso continuo score”; in addition, we have supplemented the vocal texts which were not rendered in the original basso continuo score.

Liturgical Problems

In the monastic hours of prayer, vespers consists in essence of the responsory, five psalms, which vary according to the church festivals, and the Magnificat. Other spoken texts may be added. Psalm and Magnificat are framed by antiphons (sung before and repeated after the psalm), which establishes a reference to the respective festivals.²² The psalm tone conforms to the tone of the antiphon; various cadential phrases (*differentiae*)²³ of the psalm tones facilitate reconnecting with the antiphon. For a long time, literature on Monteverdi's *Vespers* has described the fact that no Marian festival exists with the psalm tone order which occurs in the print of 1610. Numerous hypotheses fall into line with these findings, ranging from the assumption of special liturgies,²³ via the assertion that tonal reference was no longer taken seriously in Monteverdi's age, to the denial of liturgical unity, which prevails today.

Many indications, however, point to a liberal treatment of the psalm tones at least, although it is not entirely clear what this means in detail. Apparently, the *differentiae*²⁴ were no longer in use. Collections exist which allegedly offer material for all of the high festivals of the church year, containing all the psalms implemented in the vespers, but all using just one psalm tone²⁵ apiece. Monteverdi also uses final cadences for the psalm tones which were apparently the only ones remaining. He sometimes employs the liturgical tones at different levels – at the beginning and end of the psalm as well – making a coherent return to the antiphon impossible.²⁶ In his overview of vespers for the church year, Adriano Banchieri lists only psalm tones²⁷ which vary from festival to festival for the magnificat, additionally underscoring the apparently slight significance of the psalm tones (and hence for the antiphons as well?).

The position of the concerti between the psalms is most often explained with the explanation that instead of a repetition of the antiphon these concerti were performed as substitutions. This theory has been reinforced by accounts of Vespers in which motets were performed between the psalms. However, accounts of vespers services in which motets were performed between the psalms²⁸ must not inevitably be interpreted as documentary evidence that they were substituted for the antiphons. This could have been a practice which was not “liturgical” in a narrower sense of the word, since vespers of the early seventeenth century were nearly concert-like in character. This might possibly explain more conclusively why Monteverdi exemplarily placed concerti between the psalms than the idea of antiphon substitution.²⁹ In principle, one can only regret the lack of research on liturgical practices at this point, without which a solution ultimately cannot be given.

By now, the majority of researchers assumes that the vespers part of the 1610 print cannot be viewed as a liturgical entity for which a contemporary performance can be postulated.³⁰ But rather, Monteverdi would have expected individual sections to be performed in different contexts. The fact that Monteverdi broke with the custom of placing the concerti in a separate section of the print – in addition to the order of psalms and the magnificat in their liturgical succession customary in prints of the vespers – and set them between the psalms instead, could indicate an intended order of performance. This, in turn, should be understood as “exemplary” and not as an actual “performance unit.”

Editions of the Vespers – an Historical Overview

Over the course of the years, the Vespers of the Blessed Virgin have been the subject of more editions than any other seventeenth-century composition. Carl von Winterfeld³¹ was the first researcher to publish isolated examples. Gian Francesco Malipiero brought out the first edition of the complete collection in 1932³²; it appeared within the complete edition of Monteverdi's works, of which he was the general editor. It was not an academic edition by today's standards. No critical remarks were given, and only a few footnotes make reference to grave deviations from the source. The numerous mistakes in the musical text are partially a result of the editor's alterations, and even more so of misinterpretations of the historical evidence handed down to us. Nevertheless, his edition was the starting point for a series of editions (which frequently adopted Malipiero's mistakes, as must be admitted). Practical editions followed, which were often marked by encroachments of various kinds: re-instrumentation, abridgements, rearrangements, and transcriptions of the late mensural notation, which seems absurd to us today. Simultaneously, editors begin to omit parts of the print of 1610 (concerti) or amend it (antiphons); in both cases, the goal is the construction of a liturgical vespers.³³

²¹ The score has no text, since a separate vocal part exists; by contrast, secular monodic music was only published in score form.

²² Cf. Whenham, 1997, p. 8ff. on the structure of the vespers service after the reforms of the Council of Trent.

²³ The most prominent example is Graham Dixon's hypothesis that the vespers is actually not in honor of the Virgin Mary, but was composed for St. Barbara of Mantua, following a special liturgical form for Mantua (“Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610: „della Beata Vergine“?,” in *Early Music* 15 [1987], pp. 386–89). This view must primarily be countered with the argument that a vespers according to Mantuan liturgy would hardly have been fitting for a dedication to the Pope, and probably not even for publication.

²⁴ Whenham 1997, p. 22; Pietro Pontio, *Ragionamento di musica*, Parma, 1588, reprint, Suzanne Clercx (ed.), Kassel et al., 1959 (Documenta Musicologica, I: XVI), p. 97f.

²⁵ For example, Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi, *Psalmi ad vespers in totius anni solemnitatibus*, Venice, 1588, *1592; Adriano Banchieri, *Salmi festivi interi, coristi, allegri, et moderni*, Venice, 1613. Cf. also Whenham, 1997, p. 15.

²⁶ For details, cf. Whenham, 1997, p. 60ff.

²⁷ Adriano Banchieri, *L'Organo Suonarino*, Venice, 1605, reprint, Amsterdam (together with the editions of 1611 and 1638), n. d. (Bibliotheca Organologica, XXVII). In the “Norma a gli organisti” (p. 118ff.), only the hymn and the magnificat tones in both vespers are named for the various feasts.

²⁸ Whenham, 1997, p. 20. Banchieri refers to organ playing between the psalms (*L'Organo Suonarino*, Venice, *1611, p. 45 of the facsimile edition, see footnote 27).

²⁹ Cf. also Whenham, 1997, p. 19.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2, and Kurtzman, 1999, p. 39.

³¹ Carl von Winterfeld, *Johannes Gabrieli und sein Zeitalter*, Berlin, 1834, reprint, Hildesheim 1965, vol. III, p. 112f. (*Dixit Dominus*) and p. 114f. (*Deposuit et Magnificat* a 7).

³² *Monteverdi Opere*, vol. XIV, parts 1 and 2.

³³ For information on editions up to 1999, cf. Kurtzman, 1999, p. 15ff.

For a long period of time, Gottfried Wolters' edition (1966) of the complete vesper section of the print (with only the *Magnificat* à 7) was authoritative for musical practice.³⁴ Wolters' edition is the first which contains critical remarks, albeit incomplete. The note values and the meters are still subject to drastic changes. Although the score only contains the original instrumental voices, Wolters supplied a full orchestration of the entire *Vesper* within the part material, as was the case in many editions. Fortunately, he retained the historical instrumentation to a large extent. Liturgical supplements (antiphons) are mentioned in an appendix. Wolters' edition has influenced the transmission of the *Vespers* as no other. With Clifford Bartlett's edition of 1986 (rev. 1990/2010³⁵), a new series of critical editions based on the source was initiated. However, the musical substance was alienated anew, due to problematical hypotheses (cf. transpositions and triplet transcription in the sonata, as mentioned below). On the other hand, problems of the 1610 print are left unsolved, and are passed on to performers due to exaggerated adherence to the source.³⁷ Three new editions have also appeared in the 21st century (the present one is the fourth). Among these, Antonio Delfino's³⁸ new edition, which has been published within the framework of the new complete edition of Monteverdi's works (2005), deserves mention. It is the first (and only) edition up until now which meets up to modern expectations of a critical edition, especially in its treatment of the historical material handed down to us and in its objective rendition of the musical text. On the other hand, the shortened forms of triple meter (transformed into sextuplets) in Delfino's edition are disturbing and no longer up-to-date; these result from the obsolete guidelines of the Monteverdi edition.

Editorial Principles of this Volume

Our edition follows the print of 1610 as closely as possible. In order to establish the most valid reading of the print, several – not entirely identical – copies were consulted which vary with respect to the preserved condition, print quality, and musical variants. Instrumentation, time signatures, and note values are rendered unaltered (in the case of deviations in time signatures in some passages we have followed that indication which is in the majority). Accidentals have been interpolated as necessary. Missing accidentals which are nevertheless imperative have been added in normalized print, and are listed in the critical remarks. Accidentals which appear to be sensible, but are not necessarily compelling, have been added in small print. In order to correct passages which are obviously erroneous, handwritten emendations in extant prints of the seventeenth century have been consulted.

The print of 1610 does not contain any (printed) bar-lines; only in the basso continuo score is the musical text subdivided by lines at irregular intervals (whole notes, breves, or larger). We have set bar-lines according to the meter of the age (2/2 meter in common time, 3/2 and 3/1 time). This bar-line allocation not only corresponds to the "beat" according to music theory of the time, but also agrees with measure numbers which were added by hand during longer pauses in various printed copies. We have consciously foregone adding further interpretational features, such as proportional parameters, metronome markings, figuration of the basso continuo, and the like.

In preparing the parts, we have paid heed to do justice to the most variegated needs imaginable, in order to offer material fitting for performances which utilize smaller choral groups after the manner

of the seventeenth century, and for the larger choirs prevalent today. Instrumental parts for the pieces possibly performed *colla parte* always contain material for the entire movement (at times with two alternative voices). The verse numbers which have been specified throughout should facilitate instrumentation and diction in rehearsals. Scoring suggestions may be found on p. 153ff. of this volume.

Specific Problems of Notation, Publication and Performance Practice

The Instruments

The 1610 print only specifies obbligato instruments by name for Nos. 1, 11 and 13. In addition, the "Ritornelle" of No. 2 for six voices and No. 12 for five voices possess no concrete designations for the instruments. The scoring for pieces with a fixed instrumentation differs clearly from one another, as does the distribution of the instruments in the part-books of the print (cf. table, p. XVI).

With respect to several instrument names which Monteverdi employed, the instruments he meant cannot always be positively identified. This applies especially to the bass instrument of the violin family (in the 1610 print: "Viola da braccio," more precisely in the score of *Orfeo* [1609]: "Basso di Viola da braccio"). It seems likely that this is an instrument related to our violoncello, probably even one that is in its direct developmental line. The term "violoncello" is not verifiable for the year 1610, however instruments which are comparable to the violoncello have been preserved for the late sixteenth century.³⁸ In our edition, we have denoted this part as "Violoncello."

On the other hand, the term "Contrabasso da gamba" most likely describes a 16-foot violone which belongs to the viol family, just as our modern double bass does. In correspondence with this, the term "Violone" has also been used in this edition.

The "Flauti," found only in the *Magnificat* à 7 (No. 13c), are most certainly recorders (range: *f'* to *a'*). The "Fifari" (*g'* to *g'*) called for in the same piece are more difficult to ascertain. The two voices are named differently in the print of 1610: "Fifara" in the Altus partbook, and "Pifara" in the Tenor. Both names were used in a general sense for wind instruments; when used specifically, they designated traverse flute (Fifara) and the shawm (Pifara). We have chosen "Fifara." The range can be played well on a Renaissance traverse flute, although the single-octave range could also indicate an instrument which could not be overblown. As mentioned, large differences exist between the pieces with respect to the number and type of instruments, indicating different original contexts.

³⁴ Claudio Monteverdi, *Vesperae beatae Mariae virginis. Marien-Vesper 1610*, ed. by Gottfried Wolters, Wolfenbüttel and Zürich, 1966.

³⁵ Monteverdi, *Vespers (1610)*, revised editions 1990 and 2010, respectively, ed. by Clifford Bartlett, Huntingdon, 1990 and 2010.

³⁶ For example, many incongruities still remain in the edition: Claudio Monteverdi, *Vespero della beata Vergini da concerto, composto sopra canti fermi SV 206*, ed. by Jerome Roche, London et al., 1994, such as rhythmic deviations between the bass and the basso continuo, or divergent mensural notational signs and time signatures.

³⁷ Claudio Monteverdi, *Missa da capella a sei. Vespero della Beata Vergine*, edizione critica di Antonio Delfino, Cremona 2005 (Claudio Monteverdi: Opera Omnia. Edizione nazionale a cura della Fondazione Claudio Monteverdi, Volume nono).

³⁸ Cf. for instance H. von Loesch, article "Violoncello," in: *MGG*³, Sachteil, vol. 9 (1998), col. 1686ff, 1998.

In the 1610 print, the instruments were distributed in the part-books in a manner which offered a reasonable solution for every individual piece. This is also true with regard to the combinations of vocal and instrumental parts in the respective books. However, their configuration also makes a “continuous performance” in the sense of a coherent vespers impossible – which was probably never intended. The following table lists the instruments of the pieces and their distribution among the part-books.

Instrument	No. 1	No. 11	No. 13
Flauto I	–	–	Altus
Flauto II	–	–	Tenor
Fifara I	–	–	Altus
Fifara II	–	–	Tenor
Cornetto I	Cantus	Tenor	Sextus
Cornetto II	Sextus	Quintus	Altus
Cornetto III	–	–	Tenor
Trombone I	Tenor	Septimus	Sextus
Trombone II	Quintus	Bassus	Altus
Trombone Basso	Bassus	–	Tenor
Trombone doppio	–	Bassus	–
Violino I	Cantus	Sextus	Quintus
Violino II	Sextus	Altus	Bassus
Viola I	Altus	–	–
Viola II	Tenor	–	–
Viola III	Quintus	–	–
Violoncello I	Bassus	Septimus	Septimus
Violoncello II	–	Septimus	–
Violone	Bassus	–	–

Chiavette/Transposition

In the 1970's and 1980's, a hypothesis arose which was the subject of widespread discussion, namely, that two parts of the *Vespers (Lauda Jerusalem and Magnificat)* notated in higher clefs called “chiavette” should be transposed downwards for performance.³⁹ This points to a practice in sixteenth-century vocal music, in which the level of notation was chosen with reference to the mode and not to the pitch-level which sounded. Since pieces on the high modes of G, A, and C would have contained too many ledger lines, a different clef combination was used: the so-called high clef notation, or chiavette. In customary clef combination, voices were notated in soprano, alto, tenor and bass clefs (c1, c3, c4 and f4); in the chiavette, the clefs for violin, mezzo-soprano, alto and baritone were used (g2, c2, c3 and f3).

Conversely, singers knew that they could expect a high range in a piece with this combination of clefs, and that the composition should be sung in a lower transposition. Organists and instrumentalists who played melody lines had to be proficient in transposing.⁴⁰

Around 1600, the prerequisites changed in a variety of ways. On the one hand, a great expansion of tonal range can be observed due to the use of high and low choirs in opulent polychoral music. Choirs in high and low clef combinations often sang simultaneously in polychoral music, sometimes in entirely new clef combinations. Additionally, the introduction of the basso continuo and obbligato instruments demanded a fixation of the absolute

pitch-level. In the early seventeenth century, music with basso continuo accompaniment still often contained explanations for organists indicating the transposition option. Pieces even exist in which transpositions for the continuo part are already provided, (or continuo parts at alternative pitch-levels) a fourth or fifth below the vocal part.⁴¹ It quickly becomes apparent that transposition is not necessarily linked to clef choice, since pieces with the same clef combination were not treated consistently within a collection, or alternative pitch-levels are designated with suggestions for alternative dispositions.⁴² The wide spectrum we meet with in this respect in prints of the time testify to the fact that there can be no talk of “transposition automatism” by any means.

While transposition instructions of this kind were very widespread in vocal music with basso continuo accompaniment, they were seldom found in instrumental music, and did not appear in vocal-instrumental music at all. In the few cases in which the vocal parts were intended to be transposed, a transposition of the instrumental voices has already been carried out. While one could link up with the practice of transposing from the chiavette in the vocal parts, such a tradition is entirely lacking for the obbligato instruments. Indeed, the possibility of conveying a transposition by means of clef combinations does not even exist here: For example, violin parts are predominantly written in the treble clef at the beginning of the seventeenth century, in contrast to the soprano voices.

These issues may already illustrate that an intended transposition of the pieces named – most especially of the *Magnificat* – is highly improbable, and cannot be presupposed, at the very least. Two other points dispel the last doubts: In the transposition downwards which is presumed, the ambitus of Cornetto III and Trombone II falls below the playable level. In the vocal parts, a transposition also causes more problems than it solves. For this reason, transposed editions often have to place notes an octave higher,⁴³ since in fact, the range of the voices in pieces with high clefs differs from the range of the others only marginally.⁴⁴ But one technical argument regarding notation is even more important: The chiavette owed their existence to attempts at avoiding ledger lines (higher than one line), since they were difficult to depict in letterpress print. For this reason, a high clef combination was also chosen for the voices in the 1610 print. However, this choice only solves the comparably slight problems in the vocal parts: In the instrumental parts, especially the violins and the cornets, realigning the clefs cannot circumvent the ledger lines produced by the high range. This situation caused great problems for the printer: The numerous ledger lines in high notation could hardly be mastered, and the graphic notation is barely legible in many places. (cf. facsimile). In notation a fourth downwards much less trouble would have arisen. This would have been a compelling argument for lower notation, if a lower range were intended. The only imaginable reason for the arduous, high notation is that high sonorities were desired.

³⁹ A partial use of chiavette clefs can be observed in sections of the hymn (outer voice: normal clef signature, middle voices in chiavette clef signatures).

⁴⁰ For a discussion of chiavette clefs in general, as well as different aspects affecting this problem cf. Wolf 1992, vol. 1, p. 270ff. Further literature is listed there.

⁴¹ Numerous examples in: Wolf, 1992, vol. 1, p. 274ff.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ So in No. 10, m. 92, Alto II: last note *g*, transposed down a fourth *d*; in m. 97, Alto I: *f*, transposed down a fourth *c*. In the edition Monteverdi, *Vespro della Beata Vergine*, ed. by Hendrik Schulze et al., Kassel, 2013, these tones have been set an octave higher.

⁴⁴ In No. 10 and No. 13, the peak tones *a*² and *a*¹ of the soprano and the tenor are seldom reached (thus, higher clefs are chosen for the sake of better legibility); in the remaining pieces, *g*² and *g*¹ are reached.

The assertion that the voices and instruments are notated in an unusually high range can be safely viewed as a legend. The ambitus remains within the framework found elsewhere, even in the high voices of Cornetto I/II and Violin I/II.⁴⁵ The true problem of Monteverdi's vocal parts is the huge range (for example, *G* to *f'* in the bass), which cannot be solved by transposition. This can be traced to the widespread technique of singing in falsetto.⁴⁶

However, in order to meet the needs of today's performance practice, as a supplement to this edition *Lauda Jerusalem* and *Magnificat* are also available separately – with complete performance material – transposed down a fourth.

Falsobordone Notation

The vocal parts of the responsory and a few verse halves of Nos. 2 and 6 are notated as choral recitation in the manner of falsobordone. In the parts of 1610 for the responsory, only the basso continuo possesses rhythmical notation and text. In our edition, this rhythmic structure has also been assigned to the voices. In the falsobordone of No. 2, the case arises that individual voices are notated rhythmically at the beginning because they change tones. We have also assigned these rhythmical structures to all of the voices, while adhering to the falsobordone notation thereafter.

Questions of Scoring

Choir and Soloists

In preparing his collection for print in 1610, Monteverdi did not orient himself to a specific ensemble, but rather, to Italy's professional sacred ensembles – a relatively heterogeneous target group. Given this large audience, Monteverdi's print makes an unusually great number of stipulations – with respect to the instruments, for instance. Only very few church music prints of the time call for such a colorful ensemble, although they existed (and evidence for this is not just provided by Monteverdi's print alone). For Monteverdi, opening up a variety of possibilities would also have been more important than strategic commercial considerations.⁴⁷

Performance practice varied in the seventeenth century from place to place, and performances conformed with particular local circumstances. Observing specific dispositional prerequisites, as they have been discussed in our time (such as the hypothesis of the soloistic realization of choral settings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), was entirely foreign to this age: A decision for choir or for soloists was simply a question of the possibilities at hand. As far as we can say today, vocal ensembles with 15 to 25 singers – or a small choir – were the rule in Northern Italy.⁴⁸ Treble voices were sung by boys, falsetto singers or castrati; the alto was also a male voice.⁴⁹ The widespread technique of singing in falsetto partially led to a large ambitus in male voices, especially in higher ranges. We do not know whether the virtuosic vocal sections of the psalms were sung by soloists or by the choir. However, there are indications of this type of alternation in choral pieces (albeit not with Monteverdi). The larger the choir, the more difficult it becomes to master virtuosic passages in tutti. Even today, particular local circumstances offer the best counsel for performance practice.

Colla parte Accompaniment in the Psalms

In the *Magnificat*, Monteverdi gives us some insight into his conception of *colla parte* accompaniment. The first movement has registration which is reserved and affect-oriented, while the

entire instrumental section plays throughout the final movement. On the contrary, the third movement in "tutti," *Et misericordia*, is entitled "a sei voce sole in Dialogo" and, consequently, forgoes the use of melody instruments. It forms a bridge to *Laudate pueri* with the subtitle "à 8 voci sole nel Organo." With this, Monteverdi already clearly states that singing a *cappella* is one possible manner of performance; but nevertheless, it is not to be looked on as customary in general. The same is obviously true, in turn, for playing *colla parte*, although the references in the 1610 print mentioned above indicate that this tended to be the standard.

Ample evidence of widespread *colla parte* accompaniment in Italy around 1600 can also be found beyond the *Vespers* print. In addition, one can also substitute instruments for the vocal parts, an attractive possibility which is very seldom used today. Described occasionally in contemporary documents, this procedure in manifested in different forms in Heinrich Schütz's *Psalmen Davids* (1619), a "German import" of Italian performance practice.⁵⁰ For the very high voices of the high choirs, Schütz wrote that they were "primarily intended for cornetti and other instruments. But if singers are also available, it is much better."⁵¹

Instrumentation of the Basso Continuo

The 1610 print contains no explicit specifications for the basso continuo. Implicitly, the presence of registration in the *Magnificat* allows us to assume that the organ was used as a continuo instrument. However, other contemporary church music prints mention the organ expressly: In church music, the term *basso per l'organo* was used synonymously for *basso continuo*, and the prefaces of basso continuo parts were addressed to "alli honorati organisti",⁵² or the like. In a church music context, the word "organ" means the church organ, and not a chest organ. The registration stipulations in the 1610 print confirm this. In specific cases, it is difficult to concretely determine which other instruments supported the organ. Several melodic bass instruments could be added, especially in polychoral church music scored for large performance groups. However,

⁴⁵ Assertions to the contrary, especially those of Andrew Parrot, "Transposing in Monteverdi's *Vespers* of 1610," in: *Early Music* 12 (1984), p. 490ff., are simply erroneous; cf. Wolf, 1992, vol. I, p. 273, footnote 405. Examples are included here in which transpositions downwards can be ruled out due to the very low bass range.

⁴⁶ A wide tonal range additionally confirms a non-transposed register, since falsetto technique is only helpful when the ambitus has been extended upwards.

⁴⁷ On presumable simplifications of instrumentation for commercial reasons, cf. Uwe Wolf, "...auff der rechten Musicalischen hohen Schule – Heinrich Schütz in Italien," in: Ulrich Bartels (Ed.), *Der Musiker und seine Reisen*, Hildesheim, 2011, p. 54ff.

⁴⁸ Lodovico Viadana makes very concrete dispositional specifications in his *Salmi a quattro chori*, Venice 1612. He calls for no fewer than sixteen singers in the *cappella* alone, and for multiple singers in all other choirs aside from the *Chor favorito* (in mixed dispositions with voices and instruments). The detailed specifications of the preface have been reprinted in the original Italian with a German translation in: L. Viadana, *Magnificat sexti toni*, ed. by Uwe Wolf, Stuttgart, 2000 (Carus 10.371), p. 31f.

⁴⁹ Kurtzman (1999, p. 376ff.) has reported on different sizes of performing groups in Italian ensembles, which have not yet been fully investigated.

⁵⁰ In SWV 40 and 42–47, for example.

⁵¹ *Schriftstücke von Heinrich Schütz*, Unter Verwendung der von Manfred Fehner und Konstanze Kretz nach den Quellen erarbeiteten Textübertragungen herausgegeben von Michael Heinenmann, Cologne 2010 (*Schütz-Dokumente*, vol. 1), p. 74. In the original: "meistentheils auff Zinken vnd andere Instrumente gerichtet. Jedoch wann man auch Sängers dabei haben kann, ist so viel desto besser." For his psalm compositions, Viadana recommended in 1612 (cf. footnote 48) that the soprano voice of the high choirs be realized exclusively with instruments (Cornetto, *vi* Violino) – regardless of whether they were set for a purely vocal context, or for voices and instruments.

⁵² Wolf, 1992, p. 183ff.

Monteverdi had already specified bass instruments in his 1610 print,⁵³ namely in the pieces with obbligato instruments; these should not be expanded additionally by the continuo group. For the concerti, we therefore suggest employing an organ and a theorbo or archlute, but without a melodic bass instrument.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, a set of parts for melodic bass has been included for all pieces, in order to do justice to all performance situations.

A Second Basso Continuo in the Sonata?

For the sonata, the cantus part contains a vocal line for soprano in short score notation together with a basso continuo voice. It seems self-evident that the continuous basso continuo should be understood to provide cue notes for the soprano to facilitate entries which lie far apart from one another. However, this would be an absolute exception; at the time, printers generally were not this considerate of musicians. Therefore, we have sought for an alternative interpretation for this notation – which can only be speculative without verbal statements on the subject, of course. A form of notation for “voice and basso continuo” was quite common in this age, but it was used in monodic music, in which singers presumably accompanied themselves. Prints with several such scores are also known to exist, in which three singers perform together and each accompanies himself, for instance.⁵⁵ The scores of these prints then all contain the complete basso continuo, only supplemented with the particular voice called for.⁵⁶ The presumption that a singer accompanied himself could also give an explanation for the unusual findings in the sonata. Monteverdi might even have had in mind that the singer should stand far apart from the instrumental group, making a separate basso continuo more important. In another vespers collection, Lodovico Viadana's *Salmi a quattro chori* (Venice 1612), the same cantus firmus also appears in a vespers context, although actually foreign to the vespers: In the *Sicut locutus est* of a magnificat setting, it bears the explicit instruction “da nascato” (from a concealed place).⁵⁷

Questions Concerning Tempo

Duple Time: C versus C

Around 1600 both time signatures were changing in meaning.⁵⁹ Aside from their proper meanings C = “alla semibreve” (one measure lasts one whole note = 2/2-time⁶⁰) and C = “alle breve” (one measure last one brevis = 2/1-time) these two signs were also used increasingly to differentiate styles (or “tempo worlds”) from one another: C for the modern madrigal or concertante style, and C for the conservative motet style, or *stile antico*. Parallel to this, the time signature “alla semibreve” begins to supplant the signature “alla breve” completely. Soon, musicians were only beating time “alla semibreve” for both C and C ; according to numerous statements of the period, the tempo chosen for C was slower, and for C it was faster.

In 1610, this development was coming to a close. Monteverdi differentiates clearly: By utilizing the time signature C , he designates the mass as a work in *stile antico*. The rest of his pieces – vesper psalms, concerti, the sonata, the hymn (I) and the *Magnificat* – all bear the time signature C , which was reserved for modern works. While the occasional appearance of C in the mass can be dismissed as a printing error, the application of the time signatures in the basso continuo score for the *Vespers* originally seems to have had a purpose with respect to performance practice. Here, the hymn and the majority of the movements of the *Magnificat* are notated in C or C ; only the most virtuosic sections (13b, d, i, k and l) bear the

signature C . With this, Monteverdi probably intended to indicate tempo differentiations in his earlier manuscript versions of the *Magnificat*'s individual pieces, which preceded the print. When the work went to print, he dismissed these in favor of the juxtaposition of “conservative” (mass) and “modern” (vespers). As is so often the case in the basso continuo score, the older version remained uncorrected. The movements 13b, d and i in C are additionally marked as slow pieces in the basso continuo score with the tempo designations “adagio” and “tardo.” This could be dispensed with for movements 13g and l, since these were rendered in a full score: The organist could then perceive the entire musical structure and the necessity for a slow tempo.

Triplets in the Sonata

For a long period of time, the triplets in mm. 130–153 of the sonata have been a cause for some irritation, since the notes of the triplets appear to be quarter notes. However, a closer look at this passage reveals that we are dealing with blackened half notes, as the blackened whole notes clearly prove (cf. facsimile). This kind of notation was used frequently in the early seventeenth century and described often in works of music theory; indeed, it was the most prevalent manner of notating triplets in this age. But initially, researchers were uncertain how to construe it, and interpreted the triplets as quarter notes. As a result, shortening the note values of the cantus – the only voice not notated in triplets – became inevitable. In more recent editions (since 1990), this notation has predominantly been correctly depicted, except for those by Kurtzman⁶⁰ and Schulze et al.⁶¹ Kurtzman certainly recognized the blackened notation very well; but in keeping with Michael Praetorius, he interpreted it as sextuplets. This notation, primarily found in England in the early seventeenth century, applied a proportion of 6:1 (instead of 3:2 as triplets) against the white notes.⁶² However, sextuplets of this kind were not only unfamiliar in Italy, they were designated in an entirely different way (with a mensural notational sign).⁶³ Perusing Italian music prints of this period brings innumerable cases to light, which clearly support an interpretation with triplets. The correct reading of the triplets has

⁵³ In No. 1, Trombone III, Violoncello und Violone run parallel with the basso continuo, Violoncello II and Trombone doppio in No. 10 – partly in alternation –, and in No. 13, predominantly the Violoncello.

⁵⁴ In the first half of the seventeenth century, it cannot be fundamentally assumed that a melodic bass constantly played parallel.

⁵⁵ Extensive remarks on this problem in: Uwe Wolf, “Überlegungen zur Notation des Canto in Claudio Monteverdis *Sonata sopra Sancta Maria* – aufführungspraktische und liturgische Konsequenzen,” in: *Kirchenmusikalisches Jahrbuch* 81 (1997), p. 61–66. We know of prints of this kind by Bartolomeo Barbarino and Alessandro Grandi. The expressive goal mentioned is to make music “piu di un chittarone.”

⁵⁶ For a facsimile example, cf. *ibid.*, p. 63.

⁵⁷ New edition cf. footnote 48.

⁵⁸ This development can only be portrayed very briefly here; in *extenso* in: Wolf 1992, vol. I, pp. 22–82.

⁵⁹ Beating time in quadruple units was still unknown in the first half of the seventeenth century.

⁶⁰ Claudio Monteverdi, *Vespro della Beata Vergine. Vesper (1610)*, ed. by Jeffrey Kurtzman, Oxford 1999, p. 270f.

⁶¹ Schulze et al. 2013, p. 123ff. The note values in the soprano are in keeping with the original; the blackened half notes are interpreted as quarter notes, which means that a group of three quarter-note triplets lasts as long as a whole note here. The grouping “whole note + following half note” is only designated as blackened when a blackened whole note appears (without any rhythmical consequences). Evidently, Monteverdi's fairly normal notation has not been understood here.

⁶² On this, cf. Uwe Wolf, *Der color (die Schwärzung) in der weißen Notation*, in preparation.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

we have printed the respective readings of the parts in the main text and have added the reading of the basso continuo score in small print or in ossia passages, in order to make performances of these versions possible.

Edition and Copies

In many cases throughout music history, the natural assumption that all copies of a printed edition ought to correspond to one another does not apply. In Monteverdi's time, the printed musical text often differed in surviving copies. Two explanations come to mind: Either production was always limited to just a few copies, or corrections were already interpolated during the production of the "edition." Even handwritten markings need not stem from the owner, but could already have been inscribed by the printer (corrections, or non-printable signs⁷¹). Users' corrections are also a valuable source, since they relate information about how contemporaries handled printing errors; these should also be examined for an edition.

In Monteverdi's 1610 print, differences can also be found between the printed musical texts of some copies, although they are usually confined to marginal deviations such as pagination, tacet markings and fermatas. Over and above these, various copies contain helpful handwritten corrections and additions, even though we have no substantive evidence that these were made by the printers' office. However, some corrections in copy A^{9d} are so meticulous that they could be from the printer (cf. Critical Report). In addition, individual copies of the 1610 print are rather poor: some markings are incomplete and others so faint, that they appear to be missing in some copies. This especially applies to the Bologna copy, which has been used most frequently of all due to facsimile printing. Some of the alternative readings of this edition are founded alone on the consultation of differing printed copies. We have consulted the complete prints in Bologna and Brescia (1st set), as well as those in Brescia (2nd set), Wrocław and Lucca which are virtually complete.

Performance Practice Today

Since the middle of the twentieth century, Monteverdi's *Vespro della Beata Vergine* has been more firmly anchored in concert life than any other work of the seventeenth century. Even though the assumption of a liturgically cohesive work can hardly be upheld, the "vesper" embodies a superior principle which Monteverdi not only executed in his composition, but also formulated in its title: "Vespro della B. Vergine da concerto, composto sopra canti fermi." Freely translated, this means: "The Vespers of the Blessed Virgin, composed in concertante style over cantus fermi." Monteverdi could not have formulated his uniform principle of composition any clearer than this. The unusual position of the concerti between the psalms can be interpreted as conscious placement. This is one possible location for the concerti within the vespers – the one that Monteverdi most likely intended. At first glance, increasing the number of participants in these movements is a numerical principle of arrangement, but in today's complete performances, it also becomes a dramatic component.

The consequences of this are manifold. On the one hand, artistic unity justifies the long-standing practice of performing the *Vespers* as an entity, as is the case with other cyclically composed works not originally intended for complete performances (such as J. S. Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, *The Art of Fugue* or *The Musical Offering*, just

to name the most well-known examples). When understood as an artistic whole, the work suffices in and of itself. It is not in need of a liturgical framework, especially since the antiphonal order which would be tonally fitting does not seem to exist.

Aside from cyclical performances of Monteverdi's work as a kaleidoscope of multifaceted links between modern style and traditional *cantus fermi*, performances of individual sections certainly have their own justification – whether as a concertante vesper compilation, in various combinations with other works, or in concerts and worship services. This type of utilization as a "quarry" – so to speak – for multifold purposes corresponds to what Monteverdi would have expected for his collection. Therefore, the additional information of the title page "sive Principum Cubicula accommodata" ("fitting for princely chambers") most likely does not primarily aim at specifying certain pieces for particular purposes; but rather, it points to yet another possibility for usage, among many.

This also has consequences for the scoring. If the *Vespers of the Blessed Virgin* is to be performed as a whole, then it would make sense to use the instruments, and possibly even the soloists at hand for the psalms. In a complete performance, Monteverdi's instrumentation of Nos. 1, 11 and 13 should be carefully adapted to one another. The part material of this edition has been laid out to meet with this. In other contexts, one can find other dispositions which may be dealt with freely.

The editor wishes to thank the many choir directors and musical colleagues with whom he was able to continually engage in inspiring discussions and could experiment in concrete performance situations for the *Vespers*. Beyond this, he also extends his thanks to the Biblioteca del Dipartimento di Musicologia e Beni Culturali of the Università degli studi di Pavia in Cremona. Without their source collection and benevolent cooperation, this edition would hardly have been possible. We would also like to thank the library of the Uniwersytet Wrocławski for granting us permission to use their printed copy of the *Vespers* to make facsimiles for the present edition.

Stuttgart, October 2013
Translation: Greta Konradt

Uwe Wolf

⁷¹ These could be cross-beamings, double stops, etc.