

Musica divina

Sacred music for the House of Gonzaga, from Guglielmo to Ferdinando

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| Benedetto Pallavicino
(ca. 1551-1601) | Misericordias Domini, <i>a 8</i>
<i>Sacræ Dei Laudes octo et una duodecim, duæ vero sexdecim vocibus concinendæ (1605)</i> |
| Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi
(ca. 1555-1609) | Magnificat VIII toni, <i>a 6</i>
<i>Sacra omnium solemnitatum vespertina psalmodia cum B. Virginis Cantico sex vocibus (1593)</i> |
| Claudio Monteverdi
(1567-1643) | Confitebor III alla francese, <i>a 5</i>
<i>Selva morale e spirituale (1640)</i> |
| Salomone Rossi
(ca. 1570-1630) | Yesusum midbar vetsiyya, <i>a 5</i>
<i>Hashirim asher lish'lomo (1623)</i> |
| Claudio Monteverdi | Lauda Jerusalem, <i>a 7</i>
<i>Vespro della Beata Vergine, 'composti sopra canti fermi': Sanctissimæ virgini missa senis vocibus ad ecclesiarum choros ac vespere pluribus decantandæ cum nonnullis sacris concentibus, ad Sacella sive principum cubicula accommodata. Vespro della Beata Vergine (1610)</i> |
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| Salomone Rossi | Keter, <i>a 4</i>
<i>Hashirim asher lish'lomo (1623)</i> |
| Claudio Monteverdi | Laetanie della Beata Vergine, <i>a 6</i>
<i>(1650)</i> |
| Benedetto Pallavicino | Dum complerentur, <i>a 8</i>
<i>Sacræ Dei Laudes octo et una duodecim, duæ vero sexdecim vocibus concinendæ" (1605)</i> |
| Amante Franzoni
(ca.1605-1630) | Dixit Dominus, <i>a 8</i>
<i>Sacra omnium solemnitatum vespertina psalmodia (1619)</i> |

ENSEMBLE BISCANTORES

directed by

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VIOLONE Diana Fazzini
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Today's programme presents sacred music by five composers who composed for a total of five generations of Gonzaga dukes: Guglielmo, and his successors Vincenzo I, Francesco IV, Ferdinando I and Vincenzo II. Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldi and Benedetto Pallavicino were employed first by Guglielmo, then after his death by Vincenzo I. Claudio Monteverdi was hired by Vincenzo I, then summarily dismissed by Francesco shortly after his inheriting the Dukedom. Salomone Rossi is known to have been occasionally employed by Vincenzo - mostly for festive occasions - and at other times by the three successive dukes. Amante Franzoni played a leading role in the ducal chapel of Santa Barbara during the reigns of Vincenzo I, Francesco, Ferdinando and Vincenzo II. Of these five composers, only Claudio Monteverdi needs little - if any - introduction today. The names of the others will not be very familiar to our public, and this is not surprising, since their music has rarely been performed since their own time. In fact, tonight's concert offers performances of largely unknown sacred works by Pallavicino, Franzoni, Gastoldi and Rossi, thanks to the young musicians of *Ensemble Biscantores*, some of whom have dedicated their time and research to reviving these composers. They will be interspersed with liturgical compositions by the "divine Claudio", whose music it is always a privilege to hear: this evening we hear it in the illuminating context of music by his contemporaries at Mantua.

This evening's concert presents four Gonzaga dukes as patrons of sacred music at the court of Mantua, from around 1587 - under the rule Guglielmo - until that of Ferdinando II, which ended in 1626. We do not discuss the musical patronage of the fifth duke in the sequence, Vincenzo II, since of our five composers heard tonight only Franzoni and Rossi were still employed at Mantua during his reign, and then only for an insignificant period. But the four dukes who preceded him - Guglielmo, Vincenzo, Francesco and Ferdinando - all played crucial roles at the court of Mantua as patrons of music. Vincenzo, Francesco and Ferdinando remain memorable today above all for their patronage of secular music at the court, and for their promotion of innovative courtly entertainments, including such spectacular examples of early musical theatre as Monteverdi's magnificently innovative operas *Orfeo* and *Arianna*, and festive genres such as his *Ballo delle Ingrate*, which concluded the festivities for the wedding of the hereditary Crown Prince Francesco Gonzaga to Margherita of Savoy in 1608. But there was another side to music at Mantua: that of patronage of music for the ducal chapel, the Basilica of Santa Barbara, which was developed under Duke Guglielmo in a most extraordinary manner in an all-encompassing project: the building of the church itself, its enhancement through works of art and relics, its liturgical structure and privileges conceded by the Pope, and the music produced for the Basilica itself, intended to glorify its liturgy and bring honour to the court. Guglielmo Gonzaga, ruling Duke from 1550 to 1587, was one of the most extraordinary patrons of music of the Italian Renaissance, since he was - unusually for a ruler - a dedicated and competent composer. His foundation and construction of the ducal chapel of Santa Barbara occupied him almost to the point of obsession for some twenty years. Its extraordinary development - including its unique musical repertoire (often based on chants 'edited' by the Duke himself) which it embodies music written for four Gonzaga dukes and five Mantuan composers