

Introduction

In the decade following his death, Monteverdi's name remained prominent in the musical world. Publishers – and not just Italians – reprinted his works or, and preferably, presented hitherto unpublished music in anthologies and above all in single volumes wholly devoted to his compositions. There were revivals of his operas, as with the staging of *La coronazione di Poppea* in Naples in 1651 with the title *Nerone* (the libretto was printed there in the same year by Roberto Mollo) and perhaps elsewhere.¹ Nor do we lack acknowledgments of his standing by important musicians, such as the *maestro di cappella* of the French royal chapel, Thomas Gobert, who when writing to Costantin Huygens in 1646 could cite 'some madrigals composed by Monteverdi' as an example of the most enchanting 'Italian manner': Gobert particularly admired 'his search for and exploration of many beautiful chords and dissonances'.² Similarly, Heinrich Schütz, in the preface to his *Symphoniarum sacrarum secunda pars* (1647), made clear the personal debt arising from his having encountered the composer of the *Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi*. And for the rest, it is an indication of Monteverdi's popularity in Austria and Germany – to which we shall return – that he was included in the *Tractatus compositionis augmentatus* by Schütz's pupil, Christoph Bernhard (1627–92). Here Monteverdi is cited together with his pupils Giovanni Rovetta and Francesco Cavalli in Chapter 43, 'Von der Imitation', as standing among the representatives of the 'stylus luxurians comunis' ('common luxuriant style') and of the 'stylus [luxurians] teatralis' ('theatrical luxuriant style').³

In Italy, and given the rapid decline of the madrigal, the genre which had made up so great a part of his output, Monteverdi was valued above all for the expressive quality of his writing for solo voice, particularly in a theatrical context:

And in fact, if we examine the style called recitative, and which one would believe were better called monodic, tell me what displeases you in [the music of] Giulio Caccini, Iacopo Peri and Claudio Monteverdi (who is known to have emerged from that most fine Florentine school)? . . . Thus one should also value . . . the lament of Ariadne by Monteverdi, set to music with the assistance of the noble poet Ottavio Rinuccini . . .⁴

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So the *stylus dramaticus*, or recitative style, is associated usually as regards metre with comedies, tragedies and dramas in general, generally founding itself more on the affections used to express the poetic subject than on musical cadences and luxuriant vocalizations.

Among the chief celebrated musicians who practised this type of style was Claudio Monteverdi, as his *Arianna* reveals.⁵

The excellent musician Claudio Monteverdi composed *Arianna* on the model of these two first operas [*Dafne* and *Euridice*], and having become *maestro di cappella* at St Mark's, Venice, he introduced there a certain manner of stage-works that have become so famous through the magnificence of theatres and of costumes, the delicacy of voices, the harmony of the instrumental ensembles, and the learned compositions of this Monteverdi, Soriano, Giovanelli, Teofilo and many other great masters.⁶

Monteverdi was firmly rooted in the world of late sixteenth-century polyphony, and particularly in those circles which had cultivated a type of madrigal destined for sophisticated listeners who accepted departures from classical compositional norms for specific expressive ends. He remained essentially faithful to his training as a contrapuntalist, seeking to render in music the poetic world of the affections. All the new techniques which he assimilated and developed for their own ends in the course of his career revolved around this nucleus, and it was during this career that he demonstrated the greatest openness towards the new, which was constantly and fruitfully grafted to the tree of the great polyphonic tradition.

With the change of taste towards a simpler style, one of show, inclined towards outward appearances and even playing to the gallery, it was inevitable that the greater part of Monteverdi's output should have been quickly consigned to the margins, even if it was admired for the learning it displayed. His fame as a composer of sacred music was more resilient, given the more severe adherence to stylistic norms in this repertory, but above all he was remembered as an opera composer because of the interest attracted by the new genre mixing music and theatre. But even here, his theatrical output was rendered obsolete by the omnipresent demand for new works, and particularly by the fluidity of his style, which was felt to be excessive and over-complicated in an age moving quickly towards the polarization of simple recitative and tuneful arias.⁷

For these reasons, we have to wait for academic historical writing of the eighteenth century to rekindle interest in Monteverdi's works. Already at the turn of the century, a number of theorists were citing Monteverdi, perhaps reflecting the enduring interest in the madrigal nurtured in particular Roman musical circles (witness the work of composers such as Michelangelo Rossi, Antonio Maria Abbatini, Domenico Dal Pane and Alessandro Scarlatti).⁸ For example, in his *Guida armonica* (c.1690) Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni chose an extract from 'Cor mio, non mori? E mori' (from Monteverdi's Fourth Book of madrigals) as an example of movement 'from a unison to a tenth';⁹ and in his *Musico testore* (1706) Zaccaria Tevo revived the Artusi–Monteverdi con-

troversy, demonstrating clear sympathy for the arguments of the Bolognese canon.¹⁰ In addition to the notices in the theatrical listings of Bonlini (1731), Groppo (1745) and in the updated version of Leone Allacci's *Drammaturgia* (1755), Francesco Arisi gave biographical details of Monteverdi (and of his son, Massimiliano) – drawn from Caberloti's *Laconismo* – in the third volume of his *Cremona literata* (1741).¹¹ Similarly, in mid-century Francesco Saverio Quadrio recalled Monteverdi's activity as a madrigalist and opera composer,¹² and later (1783) Stefano Arteaga dusted the cobwebs off the famous *Lamento d'Arianna*.¹³ Slightly earlier, Padre Martini had mentioned Monteverdi in his practical treatise on counterpoint, where he reprinted in full two madrigals from the Third and Fifth Books ('Stracciami pur il core' and 'Cruda Amarilli, che col nome ancora') and the 'Agnus Dei' from the *Missa 'In illo tempore'* with extended analytical commentary preceded by general notes on the composer's music.¹⁵

Among English historians, both John Hawkins (1776) and Charles Burney (1789) offered biographical outlines of Monteverdi, focusing in particular on *Orfeo* and furnishing their discussions with numerous music examples.¹⁶ Unlike Hawkins, a lawyer and musical dilettante, Burney, an organist and composer, was not content merely to refer to the controversy with Artusi: he also illustrated some of its details, following in the footsteps of Padre Martini, whom Burney had visited during his travels in Italy (moreover, he specifically cites Martini's *Esemplare* and himself reprints 'Stracciami pur il core'), dwelling on Monteverdi's somewhat incorrect (in Burney's view) part-writing. This criticism was to be revived a century later by Verdi, who, listing for Boito a series of composers suitable as didactic models for young musicians, included in his sixteenth-century group Palestrina, Victoria, Marenzio, Allegri 'and so many other good writers of that century, with the exception of Monteverdi, who laid out the parts badly'.¹⁷ The entry on Monteverdi in the first edition of Ernst Ludwig Gerber's *Historisch-biographisches Lexicon der Tonkünstler* (1790) does not go much beyond what Martini, Hawkins and Burney had put together,¹⁸ although it was enlarged with more recent information in the revised edition some 25 years later:¹⁹ here the entry begins by calling Monteverdi 'the Mozart of his time'.

But dictionary-writers of the second half of the nineteenth century were able to note the new discoveries concerning Monteverdi made around the middle of the century by local historians such as Canal and Caffi. Also, more light was being cast on his period thanks to the renewed interest of some scholars of the first half of the century (Forkel, Kiesewetter, Thibaut, Baini, Winterfeld, Ambros) in composers and music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although the last decades of the nineteenth century saw other important contributions from Italians (Canal, Davari, Guido Sommi and Giorgio Sommi Picenardi), significantly it was in the official journal of the new German musicology (the *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft*) that Emil

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Vogel's still fundamental biographical essay appeared (in 1887). That period also saw new editions of Monteverdi's music: the *Lamento d'Arianna* published by Gervaeert in Paris in 1868, the madrigal "'T'amo mia vita" la mia cara vita" printed in London in 1883, and *Orfeo* issued by Robert Eitner in Berlin in 1881.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the number of editions of Monteverdi noticeably increased: the *Lamento d'Arianna* was republished by Parisotti (together with the Messenger's narration from *Orfeo*; 1885–1900), Solerti (1904) and Respighi (1910); d'Indy edited *Orfeo* (1905; the year before, his revision had been used for a performance of the opera in Paris) and *La coronazione di Poppea* (1908); and Torchi published the *Ballo delle ingrate* and the *Combattimento di Tancredi et Clorinda*. Similarly, *La coronazione di Poppea* was issued by Goldschmidt (1904) and Van den Borren (1914), *Orfeo* by Orefice (1910; the edition followed a concert performance the year before at the Milan Conservatory during the season of concerts presented by the Amici della Musica). Other editions included a selection of twelve five-part madrigals by Leichtentritt (1909) and Arnold Mendelssohn (1911), the *Sacrae cantiumculae* by Terrabugio (1910), and the Mass from the *Selva morale e spirituale* by Tirabassi (1914). But in that period, Monteverdi's fame, especially as an opera composer (and thanks to the first modern revivals), began to escape the narrow confines of musicological and scholarly circles, and in the refined aestheticism of those years the composer was also set up as a shining example of an archaic musical culture to be contrasted with the 'popular' tastes of modern times: witness the evocation of the 'divine Claudio' (the melancholic Mediterranean genius to be pitted against the barbaric Wagner) among the antique-Venetian bric-à-brac of D'Annunzio's *Fuoco* (1898), while a reflection of similar interests cultivated in French circles can be seen in the introduction to the *Traité d'harmonie théorique et pratique* by Dubois (1891).

These eager rediscoveries which slowly but surely brought Monteverdi back into the musical – and not just musicological – consciousness of the new century were to culminate in the publication of Monteverdi's complete works in 1926–32 (vols. I–XIV) and 1941–2 (vols. XV–XVI) edited by Gian Francesco Malipiero. Malipiero's edition appeared as part of a publishing programme ('Il Vittoriale degli Italiani'; 'The Triumph of the Italians') which one can ascribe to that climate of exalting national values which was always open to nationalist influences. In the case of the Venetian composer Malipiero, such notions – and likewise any hint of an archaizing preciousness due to his direct contact with the ideas of D'Annunzio and his followers – were to some extent overtaken by his curious and admiring attention for a great predecessor who had worked in Venice several centuries before, using a language that was new but not revolutionary and who, indeed, had also been subject to censure from some of his contemporaries. Malipiero was searching for a personal style that leapfrogged Romanticism and therefore had a significant interest in the pre-Classical period: certainly in Monteverdi he was admiring one of the

greatest musicians of that time, but perhaps he also felt some kind of affinity bonding him with that distant, lonely figure. In the short preface to the first volume of the complete edition, Malipiero announces his project to transcribe and publish all the ‘works of one of Italy’s *true* geniuses, not to resuscitate a dead man’ but to demonstrate ‘yet again how the great manifestations of art always remain *modern*’. He concludes by recalling the unfairness of the criticisms to which Monteverdi had been subjected and the later repentance of his critics: ‘may this perhaps serve as a warning to the worthy descendants of the aforementioned persecutors of Claudio Monteverdi?’

From then on, editions, books and articles (and naturally, musical performances) focusing on Monteverdi multiplied still further, making him perhaps the most widely known composer of the period before Bach.

I

Cremona

I Birth, family, surroundings

‘15 May 1567, Claudio Zuan [= Giovanni] Antonio, son of Messer Baldasar Mondeverdo, godfather Signor Zuan Batista Zacaria, godmother Madonna Laura de la Fina’. Thus reads the entry, itself dated 15 May 1567, in the baptismal register of the church of SS. Nazaro e Celso in Cremona, recording the baptism of the first child of Baldassarre Monteverdi and Maddalena Zignani, who had been married towards the beginning of 1566.¹

An apothecary, surgeon and doctor, Baldassarre had first kept a shop near Cremona Cathedral; only after his marriage did he move to the parish of SS. Nazaro e Celso in the Belfiore district of the Piazzano quarter. Claudio was born in this house, and was followed by Maria Domitilla and Giulio Cesare, baptized on 16 May 1571 and 31 January 1573 respectively. Maddalena died some time around 1576, but after Baldassarre remarried Giovanna Gadio in 1576–7 other children came to join those of the first marriage: Clara Massimilia (baptized 8 January 1579), Luca (baptized 7 February 1581) and Filippo (baptized January 1583). A third marriage (to Francesca Como, after 1583) seems not to have increased the family still further.

Cremona stood at the south-eastern edge of the state of Milan; for its economic and political importance it was the second city of the state after the capital. But Cremona was also close to the dominions of Venice (which stretched to the city), of the Gonzagas (the duchy of Mantua) and of the Farnese (the duchy of Parma). Less than ten years before Claudio Monteverdi’s birth, the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) had sealed the legitimacy of the Spanish dominion over Milan – formerly a duchy ruled by the Sforzas – which in fact went back to 1535. Thus in political terms Cremona was dependent on Philip II of Spain, whose authority was transmitted through a Castellan who worked side by side with the local administration and who was responsible to the Governor of Milan.

Baldassarre Monteverdi had a degree of family wealth and was a man of some public significance: indeed, as well as owning several houses, archival documents record him among those who organized the Spanish census of 1576, and in April 1584 he is documented as being one of the founders of the Collegio dei Chirurghi (College of Surgeons) of Cremona, in whose statutes

(approved and published in 1587) his name appears at the head of the list of those belonging to that professional body.

By 1584, his eldest child, Claudio, although not yet 20, could claim some reputation as a musician – at least in local circles – due chiefly to the fact that he had already published two books of music (the *Sacrae cantiunculae* of 1582 and the *Madrigali spirituali* of 1583), with a third on the way (the dedication of the *Canzonette a tre voci* is dated 31 October 1584). On the title-pages of these editions – as with all the later ones similarly dating from his years in Cremona (the *Madrigali a cinque voci ... Libro primo*, 1587; *Il secondo libro de madrigali a cinque voci*, 1590) – Monteverdi states clearly that he is a pupil of Marc' Antonio Ingegneri: 'Egregii Ingegnerii Discipuli' (*Sacrae cantiunculae*); 'Discepolo del Signor Marc'Antonio Ingegnieri' (*Madrigali spirituali*, *Canzonette* and *Madrigali a cinque voci ... Libro primo*); 'Discepolo del Sig.^r Ingegneri' (*Il secondo libro de madrigali a cinque voci*). Thus his teacher assumed responsibility for the dissemination of the works of a student who had not yet reached the age of majority and so was not permitted – in keeping with the civil statutes – to execute public contracts in his own name: this was not to be repeated in Monteverdi's *Terzo libro de madrigali a cinque voci* (1592), published by the composer when he was 25 and no longer resident in Cremona (Ingegneri in fact died a few days after Monteverdi signed the dedication).²

Ingegneri, born in Verona and a pupil of Vincenzo Ruffo, had moved to Cremona in around 1568, serving as a singer and organist at the cathedral: he seems to have been *maestro di cappella* by 1576.³ The musical resources of the cathedral had been reorganized in the 1520s to make them suitable for the performance of modern polyphony in the Flemish style.⁴ Normally there were a dozen singers plus an organist;⁵ by the second half of the century, on particularly solemn occasions they would be joined ever more regularly by one or two instrumentalists. For example, from 1579–84, the cornett player Don Ariodante Regaini was taken on 'to play in all the *concerti*' alongside the choir; similarly, when it was decided in 1582 to 'lower the organ of the greater church by about a semitone', this was intended so as to adapt the instrument 'for the choir and for the *concerti* that are done and that will be done with all the types of musical instruments which will share in the choir and in the *concerto*'.⁶

But if Cremona's musical life was centred on the cathedral, around it were placed the parallel activities of other churches in the city. From the presence of organs, we know of music in S. Agostino (the composer Tiburzio Massaino was a member of its monastery at various times in the late sixteenth century), S. Anna, S. Francesco, S. Abbondio, S. Pietro, and S. Agata (where Rodiano Barera was *maestro di cappella*). And a little way outside the city, the Cistercian Benedictine, Lucrezio Quinziani, lived in the monastery of S. Maddalena. Musicians born, and sometimes trained, in Cremona, include Costanzo Porta, Antonio and Uomobono Morsolino, Agostino Licino, Carlo Ardesi, Lorenzo Medici and Benedetto Pallavicino: Monteverdi had direct dealings with some

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of them during his lifetime. As for secular music, permanent institutions included the *piffari* of the Comune – five players – and the musical resources of the Castello, groups focusing primarily on wind instruments. Nor would any even brief survey of music in Cremona be complete without mentioning the instrument-makers' shops which we know flourished there – among the organ-builders, the Maineri and Cristoforo Faletto, and among the makers of lute and string instruments, not least the Amati.⁷

But the most important figure in the musical life of Cremona in the second half of the sixteenth century was Marc'Antonio Ingegneri from Verona, who gained such fame in his adopted city that Alessandro Lami could include him among the distinguished Cremonesi surveyed in his *Sogno non meno piacevole che morale* (Cremona, Cristoforo Draconi, 1572). Lami devotes to Ingegneri part of the eleventh *ottava* of Canto III (with an unfortunate enjambment):

La Fama poi che ne fur gionti a fronte
 cantando disse: 'Vedi l'Ingegneri
 Marcantonio, le cui virtù son conte
 ai Rossi, ai Caspi mari, agl'Indi e Iberi.'⁸

Fame, since they had arrived before her, / singing said: 'See Ingegneri / Marcantonio, whose virtues are renowned / to the Red and Caspian Seas, to the Indies and Iberia.'

Similarly, Pietro Cerone from Bergamo, writing in Spain in the 1590s, includes Ingegneri among the modern 'practical composers' of madrigals whom one can 'imitate safely and without danger', together with 'Pedro Vincio, Philippe de Monte, Orlando de Lassus, Iuan de Maque, Costancio Puerta [Porta], Vicente Ruffo, Matheo Asula . . . Franciso Guerrero, Thomas de Victoria [!?], Anibal Stabile, Ruger Iuvaneli [Giovannelli], Iuan Cavaccio, Luzasco Luzasqui, Lelio Bertani, Benito Palavicino, Lucas Marenzio, Iuan Baptista Mosto, Felix Anerio, Oracio Vecchi, Andres Dragoni, Iuan Fereti, Geronimo Conversi'.⁹ Some of these musicians were well known to Monteverdi (consider Luzzaschi, Bertani, Pallavicino, Marenzio and Vecchi) and include individuals he met personally or knew through their works. For Cerone, Ingegneri was also to be included among the madrigalists – and among the founding fathers – of that subtle and artful style for an exclusive and initiated élite otherwise known as 'musica reservata':

Philippe de Monte and Lucas Marenzio have written very beautiful and suave chromatic passages, or to describe them more properly, soft, lascivious and effeminate ones. Pedro Vincio and Marco Antonio Ingiñero were the first to distinguish themselves by the variety of their counterpoints, that is to say double, inverted, retrograde, at the tenth, at the twelfth, and in all the ways used today in Italy, of which one can almost say that they were the inventors. And be warned that the music governed by such counterpoints does not satisfy everyone, but only the professionals, and not the common people and those new to music; nor is it acceptable to the mere singer, given that it does not possess that sweetness and suavity that the natural ear desires. In fact, all its flavour rests in the artfulness of the parts and not in the euphony

of the voices, in the combination of counterpoints and not in the suavity of consonances. Hence a true judge can only be the capacity for technical understanding of the complete musician, and not someone or other's mere ear.¹⁰

Like his teacher, Monteverdi was to be a singer and string-player before becoming a composer.¹¹ His apprenticeship with Ingegneri has remained documented only by the title-pages of the printed music books dating from his years in Cremona. One can perhaps assume on the basis of the most typical musical careers of the period that the young Claudio was a boy-singer in the *cappella* of the cathedral, and later, perhaps when his voice broke, an instrumentalist working alongside the choir. Or he could have been a private pupil of Ingegneri in his house in the parish of S. Bartolomeo, like Camillo Gudazzi, who in 1606 edited the posthumous publication of his teacher's *Sesto libro dei madrigali a cinque voci*.¹² In the absence of any evidence, and however likely this may be, it all remains hypothesis.

Ingegneri arrived at Cremona when his own teacher, Ruffo, was in charge of music at the cathedral of nearby Milan. It is likely that he, too, was not unfamiliar with Milanese circles, given the close collaboration between, and the similar policies of, the prelates of both dioceses, Carlo Borromeo at Milan and Nicolò Sfondrato at Cremona. Sfondrato was Bishop of Cremona from 1560, and like his energetic mentor and colleague, and as so many other prelates of this period, he was an active supporter of the ideals developed and encapsulated in the resolutions of the Council of Trent (which ended its meetings in December 1563). To clarify these ideals and to hasten their implementation, Sfondrato convened three diocesan synods (in 1564, 1580 and 1583), while his frequent pastoral visits (in the period 1565–90) were intended to monitor the state of the parish churches and of ecclesiastical institutions and their pastoral activity. In 1566, Sfondrato founded the Cremonese Seminary for the education of the local clergy, and he began a strenuous campaign of repression against the abuses and privileges of the cathedral chapter. 'To promote the religious life of the people, as well as to combat deviations and abuses, he spread Christian doctrine through the schools, encouraged the creation of lay confraternities, supported charitable and welfare foundations, and introduced into some dioceses members of the new orders of regular clergy, such as the Barnabites, the Somaschi and the Theatines.'¹³ Cremona and its territories had been among the most receptive in Lombardy to Protestant propaganda. From as early as the late 1530s, there were attempts to eradicate this thriving heresy, and around 1550 there was uncovered 'a true and complete community, soundly organized: the "ecclesia cremonensis", the first known example of a reformed church in the state of Milan, which had already been active for some time and in contact with other similar communities'.¹⁴ Rooted in various social levels (from the nobility to artisans) and drawing its inspiration from Calvinism, this church, despite repression, was to make its influence felt even later through to the mid-1570s, when it was finally

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eradicated. Both Carlo Borromeo and, in Cremona, Nicolò Sfondrato, combatted these infiltrations of protestantism, and Sfondrato's Counter-Reformation zeal was rewarded by a secure and successful ecclesiastical career: he was made a cardinal in 1583 and elected Pope in 1590, reigning until the next year as Gregory XIV.

Marc'Antonio Ingegneri dedicated to Nicolò Sfondrato as bishop his *Sacrarum cantionum quinque vocibus liber primus* (1576) and the *Liber secundus missarum* (1587), and as pope, his six-voice *Sacrae cantiones* (1591); he also dedicated the *Sacrarum cantionum cum quatuor vocibus . . . liber primus* (1586) to Sfondrato's vicar, Don Antonio Maria Gabello. He further offered religious works to Baron Paolo Sfondrato (Nicolò's brother) – not liturgical pieces like the above but spiritual ones to texts by, for example, Vittoria Colonna – with his *Secondo libro de' madrigali . . . a quattro voci* (1579), which opens with just such a devotional text. This was evidently intended as a positive response to the crusade against the indecency of profane madrigals undertaken by Carlo Borromeo in his pastoral visit to the diocese of Cremona in the Holy Year of 1575.¹⁵

2 *The Sacrae cantiunculae tribus vocibus* (1582)

In a city so zealously committed to the post-Tridentine ideals of the Counter-Reformation, it is not surprising that the young Monteverdi – he was only fifteen – should have made his entrance into print with sacred and devotional works. His *Sacrae cantiunculae tribus vocibus* was printed in Venice by Angelo Gardano in 1582 (the dedication is dated 'Cremonae Kal. Augusti MDLXXXII', i.e. 1 August). It contains 23 short motets for three voices (three divided into a *prima* and a *secunda pars*)¹⁶ to Latin texts taken for the most part from the Vulgate, from the Roman and Ambrosian Breviaries and from the Roman Missal. The first motet, for the Feast of St Stephen, was clearly an act of homage to the canon Don Stefano Canini Valcarengi, under whose protection 'Claudinus Monsviridus' – so the dedication is signed – made his debut in print: we should not forget that dedicators and dedicatees were generally joined by ties of patronage which, if not already in force, were at least desired. The contents are:

- 1 'Lapidabant Stephanum', Response for Matins and Chapter for Nones for the Feast of St Stephen, first Martyr (26 December)
- 2 'Veni sponsa Christi', Magnificat antiphon for First Vespers of the Common of Virgins (the Feast of St Helen)
- 3 'Ego sum pastor bonus', Magnificat antiphon for Second Vespers for the Second Sunday after Easter