PREFACE

The Oxford Book of Upper-Voice Polyphony provides equal-voice choirs with an extensive collection of polyphony hitherto only available as individual titles or as part of smaller collections, some of which is printed here for the first time in modern notation. The selection of compositions included in this anthology is a personal choice of the editor and comprises Latin polyphonic compositions exclusively. It is an excellent resource with which to introduce upper-voice choirs to this repertoire and contains motets that can be used throughout the liturgical year, with scoring from two parts through to double chorus. While a large canon of music exists for upper-voice choirs accompanied by continuo and bass viol, or other consort wind instruments, the fundamental focus of this publication is to present a collection of music for *a cappella* performance in the classroom, concert hall, or church. The pieces contained in the anthology offer a *coup d'œil* into the vast range of equal-voice compositions from the so-called 'golden era' of choral composition, which has been eclipsed by the more well-known mixed-voice repertoire.

The sources for equal-voice compositions are often labelled as *voci pari* (or *voces pares*, *voix pareilles*, *voces ad aequales*, *voces mutatae*). This scoring may have been chosen by a composer in response to their available vocal resources, such as for choirs in a monastery or convent, or for boys' voices only. Other plausible reasons for the scoring include a deliberate intention by the composer to increase expressivity in the chosen text, or a commercial strategy on the part of publishers to exploit a niche market. It was common to find a small number of *voci pari* compositions in mixed-voice (*voci pieni*) publications from the era. Examples include Victoria's *O Regem caeli*, which was printed in a 1572 collection that is predominantly for mixed voices, and similarly Guerrero's *Sancta et immaculata virginitas*, which appeared in a 1589 mixed-voice publication. It is interesting to note that printers often retained the traditional CATB labelling (cantus, altus, tenor, bassus—similar to the modern SATB choral scoring) when publishing *voci pari* partbooks, possibly owing to the existence of ready-made title woodblocks for printing. The most important aspect in identifying *voci pari* scoring is therefore the choice of clefs, rather than the vocal labelling. For treble voices, this typically comprised a combination of high clefs, which include treble clefs (G_2 clefs) and alto clefs (C_3 clefs) and is known as *chiavi alte* or *chiavette*. The exact clef combinations differ from composer to composer and even from piece to piece.

A practice of fluidity between the scoring of high clefs (for treble voices) and low clefs (for male voices) in *voci pari* composition is witnessed in publications in the 1540s. When Cristóbal de Morales's setting of *Candida virginitas* was published by Girolamo Scotto in 1543, it used the high-clef combination G_2–G_2–C_1–C_3, but when it was reprinted six years later by Antonio Gardano, the piece employed the low-clef combination C_3–C_4–C_4–F_4, sounding an octave lower than the first edition and indicating performance by *voces mutatae*, or mature male voices. Another example is the anonymous five-voice setting of *O salutaris hostia* from 1543, which used the high-clef combination G_2–G_2–C_1–C_1–C_3, whereas the reprint in 1549 used the low-clef combination C_3–C_4–C_4–F_3–F_4. These examples establish a precedence for *voci pari* compositions moving liberally between upper-voice and lower-voice ensembles. With this in mind, some motets in this anthology, including those by Gombert, Handl, Josquin, and Sheppard, originally scored with low clefs, have been transposed up an octave for upper-voice choirs. This practice of alternative vocal options for male and female voices, disregarding the clefs presented in collections, continued into the seventeenth century, including a publication by Johann Donfrid in 1622, which provides optional voicing for a significant number of motets in the index.[1] In this collection, motets originally conceived for treble voices have also been transposed, in some cases, to suit modern upper-voice ranges.

The use of high clefs has accumulated much analysis by musicologists, including Andrew Parrott, Patrizio Barbieri, and Andrew Johnstone.[2] Each one has suggested various options for transposing music printed with high clefs down by an interval of between a second and a fifth for performance by a

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[1] Johann Donfrid, *Promptuarii musici concentus ecclesiasticos* (Strasbourg, 1622).

[2] Andrew Parrott, 'Transposition in Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610: An 'aberration' defended', *Early Music*, 12 (1984), 490–516; Andrew Parrott, 'Monteverdi: Onwards and downwards', *Early Music*, 32 (2004), 303–17; Patrizio Barbieri, '"Chiavette" and modal transposition in Italian practice (c.1500–1837)', *Recercare*, 3 (1991), 5–79; Andrew Johnstone, '"High" clefs in composition and performance', *Early Music*, 34 (2006), 29–53.

mixed-voice choir rather than equal voices. However, where a printed edition includes the text *voci pari*, such transpositions, while possible, are clearly not the intention of the composer. While there is ample empirical evidence from sixteenth-century theorists and composers alike of this downward transposition for mixed voices,[3] for each example there are other sources supporting the fact that compositions notated in high clefs should not be transposed.[4] One of the most unique pieces in this collection is Tiburzio Massaino's *Cum pervenisset beatus Andreas*, which was printed with five G$_2$ clefs, meaning no transposition for mixed voices is possible.

Scholarly research by Craig Monson, Robert Kendrick, and Laurie Stras, which has explored Italian convent music in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has greatly influenced the contents of this anthology.[5] The setting of *Sicut lilium inter spinas* from the anonymous 1543 publication, *Musica quinque vocum: motetta materna lingua vocata*, is of particular interest.[6] Stras has attributed the authorship of this collection to the nun and composer Leonora d'Este (1515–75), and has developed a strong case, which is examined in greater detail in the commentary.[7] Cornerstones of the *voci pari* tradition by Palestrina, Lassus, and Victoria have been included alongside works by other composers who may not be as familiar to contemporary audiences. The aim of the anthology is to provide a solid foundation for upper-voice choirs wanting to explore this broad and beautiful music, from which they can expand their repertoire to perform other motets originally conceived for this vocal ensemble.

Editorial practice

The Oxford Book of Upper-Voice Polyphony has been compiled and edited using primary sources exclusively. The sources are referenced in the commentary with *Grove* library sigla, followed by the title, place, and year of publication, where known. The aim has been to keep each score as uncluttered as possible to assist choirs in their reading and interpretation of the music.

A significant number of the pieces in this anthology were transcribed from one extant source, which precludes the development of a critical edition, cross-referencing, and comparative analysis. The variants included in the commentary are deliberately few to avoid repetition of material in the notation on the scores and the accompanying text. Prefatory staves provided at the beginning of each piece illustrate the original clefs, time signature, key signature, and the first pitch note and value in square notation, as well as the name of the original partbook or voice, where given. Editorial accidentals appear above the vocal line in small type. All note values have been reduced to give a ♩ pulse, but in performance practice, conductors offering two ♩ beats in a bar will achieve a more stylized result from choirs performing this repertoire. The ♩ beat also facilitates smoother transitions between the rhythmic-related duple and triple metre sections. The choice of key signature and transposition is a personal perspective of the editor to suit standard upper-voice ranges and these are noted in the commentary.

The Latin texts follow modernized conventions relating to spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, and both the *Liber Usualis* and *The Oxford Latin Dictionary* were consulted to establish a consistent approach. Some words such as *caeli*, which has multiple spelling variations in the sources (*e.g. coeli, celi*), have been standardized. Editorially completed text underlay is not shown in italics, and indications of ligatures and coloration have been removed in order to present an uncluttered score. The sources have often been unclear with regard to syllable allocation. Different prints and editions have been consulted, but where this was not possible a stylistic approach of adhering to the accents in spoken text has been taken. The translations printed at the foot of each score are non-literal and should assist

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[3] Adriano Banchieri, *Cartella Musicale* (Venice, 1601) and *Ecclesiastiche Sinfonie* (Venice, 1607); Giovanni Francesco Anerio, *Antiphonae, seu sacrae cantiones* (Rome, 1613); Lodovico Viadana, *Cento concerti ecclesiastici* (Venice, 1602).

[4] Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Il Primo Libro delle Canzoni* (Rome, 1628); Claudio Monteverdi, *Madrigali guerrieri et amorosi* (Venice, 1638).

[5] Craig Monson, *Divas in the Convent: Nuns, Music, and Defiance in Seventeenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012) and *Disembodied Voices: Music and Culture in an Early Modern Italian Convent* (California: University of California Press, 1995); Robert Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens: Nuns and their Music in Early Modern Milan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996);* Laurie Stras*, Women and Music in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[6] Anon., *Musica quinque vocum: motetta materna lingua vocata* (Venice, 1543).

[7] Laurie Stras, *Women and Music in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

choirs in their overall interpretation of the motet. The editorial decision to omit an option of singing the pieces in English was taken in the initial development of the collection, primarily to be faithful to the Latin tradition, and also to avoid translations that would be less effective with the music, phrasing, or accents.

Keyboard reductions are provided for rehearsal use only and are presented in their most readable and playable form using two treble clefs throughout. Owing to the continuous overlapping of vocal lines, the movement between individual parts could not be replicated in the reductions. The consequence is a presentation of parallel octaves and fifths, but this was considered more beneficial than the untidy crossing of upstems and downstems. In tendering uncluttered reductions, *musica ficta* have been incorporated without qualification to avoid incessant use of small and bracketed accidentals in and above the score. Accidentals follow the standard convention of homophonic keyboard music and are not duplicated within a bar. Keyboard reductions have been deemed unnecessary for the two-part and three-part compositions.

The tempo and dynamic indications are editorial; while some conductors will find them irritating, to others they provide a starting point in their exploration of the repertoire. The most important aspect in the practice of singing polyphony is the shaping and phrasing of each line, and subsequently how these weave together to create a complex texture and an aural plurality of layers. Editorial hairpins have been kept to a minimum to enable conductors and singers to consider the shape of each phrase. The most successful performances achieve a heterogeneous soundscape in their layering, noting the rise and fall of dynamics, accents, and stresses to mirror the spoken text, and consistent shaping within each individual phrase.