

21 (5/3) CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI BEFORE AND IN VENICE

1. Outline of Life: Cremona 1567–Venice 1643
 - a. One of the earliest compositional prodigies: first book of madrigals at age 15
 - b. 1590 moves to Mantua to enter the service of Vincenzo I Gonzaga [pic] to be “suonatore di vivuola”
 - c. Mantua: Birthplace of the Frottola (early 16th c.); main composer Giaches de Wert.
 - d. Travels to Florence and probably sees opera for the first time. First performances of musical theater in Mantua 1598.
 - e. Work included teaching (a tenor and soprano), directing the women’s choir, composing short theatrical pieces.
2. From the Nine Books of Madrigals
 - a. *Cruda Amarilli*, published 1605, Fifth Book of Madrigals, but composed before this
 - b. Five voices plus continuo *ad libitum*
 - c. (Giovanni Maria) Artusi controversy: 1600, Venice: *L’Artusi, overo Delle imperfettioni della moderna musica*. (The Artusi: or on the imperfections of modern music)
 - d. Had previously written first book entirely on dissonance (*Seconda parte dell’arte del contraponto*) — unlike some people claim, Artusi embraced dissonance, but believed that it needed to be treated properly, which a certain unnamed composer (revealed to be Monteverdi) did not.
 - e. Particularly striking in *Cruda Amarilli*: unresolved leapt from dissonance to a new dissonance. (9–7 which resolves down; bars 12–14; from *New Grove*)

The image shows a musical score for the madrigal "Cruda Amarilli" by Claudio Monteverdi. It is a five-part setting for voices and continuo. The lyrics are "Ahi las - so". The score is arranged in two systems. The first system shows the vocal lines (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and the continuo line. The second system shows the continuo line. The music features a dissonant leap from a 9th interval to a 7th interval, which then resolves down. The score is arranged in two systems, with the first system showing the vocal lines and the second system showing the continuo line.

- f. Piece was defended by his brother Giulio Cesare Monteverdi who promised a further defense in a book to come called *Seconda pratica, overo Perfettione della moderna music*; either lost or more likely never published
3. *L’orfeo* and the *Vespers of 1610*
 - a. *Orfeo* (1607) *favola in musica* — composed for a small private audience at the Gonzaga Court
 - b. Tells the story of Orpheus’s descent to the underworld to bring back Euridice
 - c. *Possente Sprito* — Orpheus (and Monteverdi) at the high of his powers
 - d. Strophic variations with changing instrumental accompaniment.
 - e. Two staves — why?
 - f. *Arianna* (1608) — said to be his masterwork, but lost! except for one lament.
 - g. *Vespers* — sacred equivalent of *Orfeo*. Dedicated to Pope Paul V; delivered to Rome, perhaps as audition piece. Accompanied by a Mass in pure Prima Prattica style

4. The Move to Venice [W-T reading]
 - a. Death of Vicenzo Gonzaga in early 1612: his son Francesco immediately reduced the size of the court. Francesco lived only one year, but his successor (Cardinal Ferdinando) favored Monteverdi's rival: so not a good sign
 - b. Fortunately, the *Maestro di cappella* of Saint Mark's in Venice dies in 1613. Monteverdi auditions for the post (has to write a Mass); gets the job, is robbed on the way to Venice, but finally arrives!
 - c. Immediately writes to everyone in Mantua about how good Venice is; the Mantuans try to recruit him back immediately.
5. Venice life
 - a. Good salary
 - b. No need to publish as much (drat!)
 - c. *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (composed Venice 1624/5; published 1638)
 - i. Performed for a private performance during the Venice Carnival
 - ii. Text from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*
 - iii. *genera concitato* (Monteverdi) or *stile concitato* (everyone else): agitated
 - iv. *concitato* was an attempt to reproduce the harmonia (mode) from Plato's Republic which would "imitate the utterance and the accents of a brave man who is engaged in warfare." Appears in *Il combattimento* as fast repeated notes in the voice and instruments.
 - v. Special effects in the strings, p. 142 bottom: "Qui si lascia l'arco, e si strappano [pull out] le corde con duoi diti." First ever use.
 - d. *Zefiro torna e di soavi accenti* from the *Scherzi musicali* (musical humors) of 1632
 - i. Fixed repetitions of bass pattern
 - ii. Repeated G-major cadences, interrupted by abrupt shift in key at "piango" (I cry)
 - e. Late operas: *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (1640) and *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1642)
 - i. both much less recitative than *Orfeo* and certainly than *Peri*
 - ii. *Poppea*: historical subject was highly unusual
 - iii. Venice opera was **public** not court sponsored
 - iv. How much did Monteverdi write? Almost certainly not the ending
 - v. "Virtue and Justice look on helpless as Evil Triumphs:" story
 - vi. castrati singers and trouser roles: operatic convention [W-T reading]

Next class, light reading and listening (pre-exam)

Opera in Venice after Monteverdi (maybe)

Barbara Strozzi

Venice's Influence: Heinrich Schütz

Reading:

Wright/Simms, Chapter 31, Strozzi and Schütz, pp. 256–61.

"Schütz Recounts his Career," Weiss-Taruskin, #49, pp. 184–86.

Listening: Strossi, *Lagrime Mie* (1650s); Schütz, *Saul, was verfolgst du mich?* (1650)

Course evaluations