Vespro della B. Vergine
da concerto, composta sopra canti fermi

Edited by Philip Legge

Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)

Instrumentation: In the Vespres Monteverdi explicitly specifies instrumentation of three cornetts, three trombones, two violini da brasso, four viola da brasso of varying ranges, and a contrabassa da gamba; additionally in the Magnificat, there are brief entries for two recorders (pifara) and two flutes (flauto) which in practice can be played by the same two players. In the Domine a wind instrument plays on every part except the viola da brasso in the Altus partbook, so this has provided an opportunity to add the otherwise un-utilised third cornetto on the presumption of an omission by Amadino, Monteverdi’s publisher. This arrangement also results in complete six-part wind and sixpart string ensembles, which can alternate as desired; in the double chorus psalms the orchestral parts have been designed so that these ensembles may accompany one or other of the choirs (i.e., I-string wind, or I-string Il-string).

The continuo is unspecified by Monteverdi (except for organ registration given in the Magnificat à 6) but may include a variety of instruments, including chitarone, regal, organ, harpsichord, and even harp. The part shown here should be freely adapted by the available players.

Period instruments are to be preferred if they may be obtained, however the Vespres can be played on modern instruments, in which case the following allocation of instruments is a suggested guide:

- 2 flutes [a bonus if the flautists can also play recorders]
- 2 oboes and cor anglais doubling as oboe 3 [replacing 3 cornetts]
- 3 trombones [probably 2 tenors and bass if an alto trombone, or indeed baroque trombones or sackbuts cannot be found]
- string ensemble of 3 violins, 3 violas, 2 violoncellos, 1 contrabass [preferably 5.5.2.1 against modern instruments]

Allocation of chorus parts to instruments: The players of Monteverdi’s day would have read from partbooks identical to those used by the choir, so this edition shows the entire chorus part in the corresponding instrumental parts; however, from time to time the part is marked as a cue, so that the instrumentalist may follow the progress of the music silently. The parts are identified by numbers in black circles which refer back to the partbooks of 1610: 1 is Cantus (usually Soprano 1), 2 is Tenor (T. 1), 3 is Altus, 4 is Bassus, 5 is Quintus (usually Tenor 2), 6 is Sextus (S. 2), 7 is Septimus (usually A. 2 or B. 2), and 8 refers to the Bassus Generalis, which usually contains a through bass part and occasionally some upper lines in short score. In some partbooks where two parts are shown these are distinguished by the terms verso and recto, corresponding to their placement on the page.

Domine, Dixit Dominus, Lamentus sum, & Audi cecum:

1 S. 1, cor. 1, vl. 1;
2 S. 2, cor. 2, vl. 2;
3 A. 1, cor. 3, vl./vla 3\(^*\);
4 T. 1, alto trb., vl. 1;
5 T. 2, tenor trb., vl. 2;
6 B. 1, bass trb., vc., cb.;
7 Continuo;
8 \(\text{tacet}\).

Laudate pueri: Canto continuo, cb.;

**version A**

1 S. 1, vl. 1;
2 A. 1, vl. 3/vla 3;
3 T. 1, vl. 1;
4 B. 1, vc.;

**version B**

1 S. 2, cor. 2;
2 A. 2, cor. 3, tenor trb.;
3 T. 2, cor. 3, tenor trb.;
4 B. 2, bass trb.

Sonata sopra Sancta Maria:

1 S. 1;
2 cor. 1;
3 vl. 2;
4 vla 2, ten. trb.;
5 bass trb;
6 cor. 2;
7 vl. 1;
8 alto trb., vl. 1;
9 vc.;
10 Continuo, cb.

\* If the string ensemble has one player per part then the optimum balance of strings is [2.3.1.1] and the vl. 3/vla 3 part should be a viola part. If the string ensemble has two players to a part, then it is best to allocate 1 violin and 1 viola to this part, in which case the total numbers of string players are [5.5.2.1]. It should be noted that depending on the (in-)flexibility of the players, or if there are unequal numbers of violin and viola players, then this part can be either a violin or a viola part.
1 Domine ad adiuvandum

sex vocibus et sex instrumentis

O Lord, make haste to help me.
Glória Patri, et
and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
As it was in the beginning, and...
is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen. Alleluia.