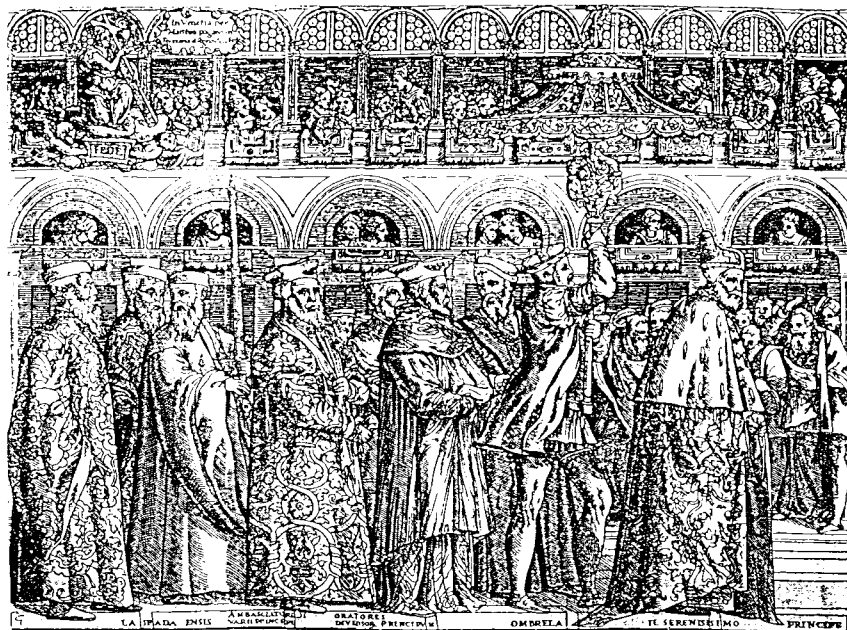


CAMBRIDGE TAVERNER CHOIR

Owen Rees *director*

EUROPE 1600



VENICE

Sunday 8 June, 8.15 pm
Jesus College Chapel

PROGRAMME

Laudate pueri Dominum	Claudio Monteverdi
Adoramus te Christe	Monteverdi
Cantate Domino	Monteverdi
Canzon settima: La Malfatta (publ. Venice 1600)	Antonio Mortaro
Domine ne in furore tuo	Monteverdi
Letaniae della Beata Vergine Maria	Monteverdi
INTERVAL	
O magnum mysterium	Giovanni Gabrieli
Dixit Dominus (1610)	Monteverdi
Christe adoramus te	Monteverdi
Pulchra es (1610) (Caroline Preston Bell, Tanya Wicks <i>sopranos</i>)	Monteverdi
Lauda Jerusalem (1610)	Monteverdi

The Cambridge Taverner Choir

director Owen Rees

organist Andrew Prior

sopranos

Diana Baumann
Josie Dixon
Helen Garrison
Bryony Lang
Caroline Preston Bell
Margaret Simper
Sally Terris
Tanya Wicks

altos

Toby Gee
Martin Neill
Nicholas Perkins
Rupert Preston Bell

tenors

Paul Baumann
Philip Mills
Tom Salmon
Edwin Simpson
David Thomson

basses

James Durrant
Frank Salmon
Gary Snapper
Paul Watson

We are most grateful to the Master, Dean of Chapel, and Fellows of Jesus College, for their kind permission to perform in the chapel.

Venice, although a declining economic power by 1600, was still one of the greatest musical centres of all Europe. The centre of the city's musical and ceremonial life was the basilica of St Mark (the church of the Doge) and the great piazza in front of it. In the second decade of the seventeenth century the musical establishment of St Mark's consisted of a *maestro* (Claudio Monteverdi), an assistant *maestro*, 24 singers, two organists (one of whom, from 1585 to 1612, was Giovanni Gabrieli), sixteen instrumentalists, and two *maestri* in charge of the instrumental music. The splendid musical styles cultivated at St Mark's were in part a celebration of Venetian civic pride, the glory of *La Serenissima*. One famous aspect of this musical splendour is the employment of *cori spezzati*, two or more choirs spatially separated and engaging in dialogue. The Christmas motet *O magnum mysterium* is a good example of the style, and is typical in turning to dance-like triple metre for the last section ('alleluia').

Monteverdi became *maestro* at St Mark's in 1613 and remained in the post until his death in 1643. While in Venice he wrote and published sacred music in a wide variety of styles. Four of the works heard tonight—*Adoramus te Christe, Cantate Domino, Domine ne in furore tuo*, and *Christe, adoramus te*—first appeared in Giulio Bianchi's *Motetti libro primo* of 1620. The contrasts of moods and textures within these pieces and between them are remarkable: in *Christe, adoramus te*, for example, the chordal declamation of the opening gives way to extraordinary rising chromatic scales in imitation between the five voices at 'quia per sanctam crucem tuam' ('who, through thy holy Cross'), after which a solo voice (tenor on the first occasion, soprano on the second) is suddenly 'revealed' at the words 'redemisti mundum' ('hast redeemed the world'). In *Domine ne in furore tuo* the 'fury' of the opening, with its vigorous rising scales and flurries of dense imitative entries, dissolves at the words 'miserere mei, Domine' ('have mercy upon me, O Lord'), with five parts declaiming the words together and sighing thirds in the topmost voice. *Cantate Domino* (a psalm text which begins 'Sing unto the Lord a new song') contrasts a triple-metre opening (with lilting hemiola rhythms at cadences) with duple time thereafter, and also juxtaposes the grandeur of 'quia mirabilia fecit' ('for He has done marvellous things') with the dancing short notes of 'cantate et exultate' ('sing and rejoice').

The devotion to Mary played a particularly important part in Venetian religious culture. The annual ceremony—presided over by the Doge—of the 'marriage' of Venice to the sea took place on the feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin. In addition, an icon which was among the most precious possessions of the treasury of St Mark's—the Madonna Nicopeia—was carried in procession on this feast and on three other Marian feasts each year: the Purification, Assumption, and Nativity of the Virgin. On these occasions Litanies of the Blessed Virgin Mary were sung by the choir of St Mark's. It has been suggested that Monteverdi's setting (*Letaniae della Beata Vergine Maria*) for six voices and continuo (first published in 1620) may have been written to mark the moving of this icon to the newly restored altar of St John Baptist in the basilica in 1618. The repetitive nature of the text and its structure—a very extended series of short invocations—provided challenges to which Monteverdi rose in most impressive fashion, producing a clearly structured work which is full of contrast.

The evening service of Vespers provided one of the most important opportunities for the composition and performance of polyphony in northern Italy at this period. Before coming to Venice, Monteverdi had assembled settings of the psalms and other items for Vespers on Marian feasts together with a selection of motets (most of them Marian) for a volume published in 1610. This collection of items (usually known today as 'Monteverdi's Vespers') is sometimes seen as closely associated with Venice, and with St Mark's in particular, even though Monteverdi cannot have known when he published this music that the post of *maestro* at St Mark's would fall vacant in the near future. Doubtless, however, he continued to make use of items from the 1610 print once he had moved to Venice. In tonight's concert we perform two of the psalms from this print (*Dixit Dominus*—sung, as Monteverdi specifically allows in the print, without the instrumental ritornelli—and *Lauda Jerusalem*), together with one of the motets, *Pulchra es*, a setting of words from the Song of Songs for two soprano soloists and continuo. The psalms are based heavily on the relevant chant psalm-tones, which can be picked out in *Dixit Dominus* in the

opening motive, in the bass during the solo sections, and—transposed down a tone to produce an extraordinary dark effect—in the solo tenor at 'Gloria Patri'. In *Lauda Jerusalem* a single tenor part 'sandwiched' between two three-part choirs has the psalm tone until the 'Gloria Patri', when it passes to the sopranos of choir 1 and then choir 2.

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