



# Monteverdi Vespers of 1610

**2CD**

*Vespro Della Beata Vergine*

**Allegri: Miserere**  
**Palestrina: Stabat Mater**  
**Schütz: Latin Motets**

*Pro Cantione Antiqua*  
*(Vespers with*  
*Collegium Aureum*  
*Musica Fiata*  
*Hannover Boys Choir)*  
*Director Heinz Hennig*

**alto**

**Claudio Monteverdi's** (1567–1643) formative years coincided with a period of religious fervour and of great church music. It was also a time of magnificent public spectacle such as that of the *intermedio* for the wedding of Catherine de Medici, and extravagant spectacle was also to be found in church services, particularly in Venice. St Mark's in Venice had a large choir which usually numbered 25 choristers, though even this large number was exceeded on feast days when their ranks would be bolstered by instrumentalists. These musicians would be spread around the Cathedral so as to delight and amaze the congregation. Churches lacking the ability to supply brass players or with an incomplete choir learnt to make do with an organ which usually provided a simple accompaniment but occasionally offered something slightly more lavish in the way of embellishment. This became known as the *basso continuo*.

Following initial study in his home town Cremona, Monteverdi gained his first employment as a string player in Duke Gonzaga's household in Mantua and in 1601 he succeeded to the post as the Duke's director of music. It is not known how much church music he composed between 1601 and 1610, but during this period he became known for his complex motets and of course for the operas *L'Orfeo* (1607), *L'Arianna* (1608 – largely lost excepting the famous lament) and a ballet *Il Ballo delle Ingrate* (also 1608), scores noticeably more complex than other extant material from that time.

Given the musical forces required it seems highly likely that the *Vespers* were conceived with a grand event in mind, possibly the marriage of Prince Francesco Gonzaga to the Infanta Margherita of Savoy. The first thing one notices when glancing at the order of pieces within the *Vespers* is the alternate settings of Psalms and Motets. Each succeeding Motet is set for an increasing number of voices and the Psalms also build up some intensity so that the last, *Lauda Jerusalem*, is by some stretch the most brilliant of the group. Monteverdi then gives the hard working singers a 'breather' by giving most of the interesting material of the Sonata sopra *Sancta Maria* to the instrumentalists. This is followed by the hymn *Ave maris stella* and then the grand finale *Magnificat*. Monteverdi, renowned as a perfectionist, had meticulously planned this increasing complexity in composing the *Vespers* and in fact he composed two different versions – one with an instrumental consort and a second in which the voices are accompanied by organ *continuo*. Naturally for the second version the *Sonata* is omitted, whilst the *Magnificat* is also significantly altered.

The *Vespers* open with *Deus in adjutorium*, a piece that acts as Overture familiar to those who know *L'Orfeo*, when in the opening *Toccata* fanfares over a drone warned the audience three times that 'this evening's show was about to commence'. Here the voices chant the response whilst in between each verse the instruments play a dance-like *ritornello*.

Over the title page Monteverdi wrote '*composta sopra canti fermi*' which means that plainsong was to be liberally used throughout, which was a rather old-fashioned notion. The *Dixit Dominus* uses plainsong interspersed with more elaborate embellishment, both vocal and instrumental. Sometimes the organ *continuo* carries the plainchant line whilst the singers sing around it. Some of the motet texts were taken from the Song of Songs, enabling Monteverdi to demonstrate his more voluptuous style and *Nigra sum* and *Pulchra es* both seem almost operatic at times as the voices intertwine erotically and seemingly play with the accompanying instruments. Sandwiched between the two comes the psalm *Laudate pueri* full of sudden contrasts. The next psalm *Laetatus sum* grows both in volume and passion that ends with a glowing welter of sound. *Duo seraphim* is another quasi-operatic motet, but its passion arises from a meditation on the Trinity rather than erotic thoughts. *Nisi Dominus* is a psalm setting for two choirs who perform in canon, occasionally joining ranks. The final motet *Audi, coelum* is an echo-piece of the type much beloved in baroque opera and also in the elaborate Venetian anthems. Here the effect produces one of the most sublime moments in the *Vespers* when all the elaborate counterpoint winds down to a hushed ending. *Lauda Jerusalem Dominum*, the final psalm of the *Vespers*, is set very high for the singers. The tenors provide some stability with the plainchants whilst the other voices pursue one another hectically. Following the *Sonata sopra* Monteverdi cleverly divides his forces into different combinations for the hymn *Ave maris stella*, an effect which prepares his audience for the many complexities of the *Magnificat* which test the limits and capabilities of the performers to the utmost.

**Gregorio Allegri's** (1582-1652) celebrated nine part *Miserere* was copied from memory by the fourteen year old Mozart and hence is probably not as written by Allegri, since up to the nineteenth century performers in true Baroque fashion tended to embellish the musical line as they wished. It seems probable that that famous treble solo high C was also a late addition. The *Miserere* is often heard nowadays with the three choirs spread around the church such that there is a four part choir close to the congregation, a male choir intoning the chant slightly further away, and another four part choir in the far distance.

**Salve, o Regina** is the earliest monodic setting of this text and was published in 1624; he was to follow it with four different versions, variously for one, two and three voices, including one for two voices and two violins. The declamatory style and florid ornamentation shows the maturing at the *seconda prattica* in church music from this innovative and outstanding composer of the form, and one can appreciate how closely allied was this style to secular and dramatic settings of quite different texts.

Very little secular music survives by Giovanni Palestrina (1525–94) and over the years his work has been held in such esteem by the Catholic Church, that even recently composers have been encouraged to follow his style. It is easy to understand the rationale behind this as Palestrina rarely allows the meaning of the text to become obscured by the vocal line (although on the rare occasions when he worked outside Rome he demonstrated his willingness to adapt his style as is demonstrated in a letter to the Duke of Mantua when he begs to be informed whether the Mass should be ‘short, or long, or written so that the words might be understood’). His *Stabat Mater* is one of his few works for eight voices (two four-part antiphonal choirs) and remained the exclusive property of the Papal Choir until the late 18th century, when Dr Charles Burney had it published in London.

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### **Heinrich Schütz**

Much has been written about the life of Heinrich Schütz and the times in which he lived. Born in 1585, he spent 57 of his 87 years as Kapellmeister at the Electoral Court in Dresden. The Thirty Years War compelled him three times to leave his native land for Denmark. He studied in Venice with Giovanni Gabrieli and later revisited Italy to observe the further development of its musical styles. For the music of Schütz, in all its various facets, admiration is profound and description of it is plentiful. Einstein called him ‘the most spiritual musician the world has ever known’. Other appraisals include ‘this great word-painter’ and ‘one of music’s mighty prophets who walked humbly with his God’.

Schütz died some 30 years before the birth of J.S. Bach and G.F. Handel. Although his talents were becoming less and less recognised as his life came to a close, he undoubtedly led the way for these two great masters. While remaining faithful to the basic Protestant principles, he helped to rejuvenate German music with the introduction of the fresh and exciting styles of the ‘Nuove Musiche’ of his Venetian mentors.

The magnificent 'Fili mi Absalon' for bass voice, with five sackbuts and organ with violone continuo, shows that Schütz is to be numbered with the great composers of the lamento style, Josquin, Lassus and Palestrina. The rich texture of the ritornello, a form not often used by Schütz, contrasts with the plangent cries of David ... 'Would I had died in your place', and the sombre colours point the depth of the grief. 'Heu mihi Domine' is the most intense of the works herein offered. The masterful use of the rising and falling semitone seems to express all that can be said in portraying anguish, and in begging for mercy.

**Notes by Edgar A. Fleet**

**Pro Cantione Antiqua** began in 1968 as a vocal group intent on singing music from the medieval, Renaissance and Baroque eras. It was founded by Mark Brown, Paul Esswood and James Griffett who met while singing at Westminster Cathedral under Colin Mawby. They were soon joined by Michael George, Ian Partridge, Kevin Smith, Brian Etheridge and Paul Elliot, each of whom were to go on to become soloists in their own right. Since then several other well-known singers have, from time to time, been members of this group whose recorded repertoire gradually expanded to take in music of periods somewhat later than originally intended.

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**Cover image:** Virgin at Prayer by Sassoferato (1609-85) courtesy WikiCommons/Uomodis08

**Design** produced by Imergent Images Ltd ([info@imergent.co.uk](mailto:info@imergent.co.uk))

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- ALC 1015 Music for Tudor Kings (Henry VII & VIII) / Hilliard Ensemble
- ALC 1039 English Madrigals from the Oxford Booke / Pro Cantione Antiqua
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Monteverdi Vespers: texts

TRACK

[2] **Intonatio; Deus in adiutorium  
- Domine in adiuvandum**

Deus in adiutorium meum intende:  
Domine ad adiuvandum me festina.

Gloria Patri et Filio  
et Spiritui Sancto.

Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper  
et in saecula saeculorum.

Amen. Alleluja. *(From Psalm 69,2)*

[3] **Psalm 109 (Dixit Dominus)**

Dixit Dominus Domino meo:

Sede a dextris meis:

Donec ponam inimicos tuos,  
scabellum pedum tuorum.

Virgam vidutis tuae

emittet Dominus ex Sion:

dominare in medio inimicorum tuorum.

Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae

in splendoribus sanctorum,

ex utero ante luciferum genui te.

Iuravit Dominus, et non poenitebit eum:

Tu es sacerdos in aeternum

secundum ordinem Melchisedech.

Dominus a dextris tuis,

confregit in die irae suae reges.

Iudicabit in nationibus. implebit ruinas,

conquassabit capita in terra multorum.

De torrente in via bibet:

propterea exaltabit caput.

Gloria Patri et Filio

et Spiritui Sancto.

Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper,  
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

[4] **Concerto: Nigra sum**

Nigra sum, sed formosa,

filiae Ierusalem,

Ideo dilexit me rex

et introduxit me in cubiculum suum

et dixit mihi :

Surge, amica mea, et veni.

Iam hiems transiit,

imber abiit et recessit,

flores apparuerunt in terra nostra.

Tempus putationis advenit.

*(From Cant. cant. 1,5,4; 2,10-13)*

[5] **Psalm 112 (Laudate pueri)**

Laudate pueri Dominum,

laudate nomen Domini,

Sit nomen Domini benedictum ex hoc

nunc et usque in saeculum.

A solis ortu usque ad occasum

laudabile nomen Domini.

Excelsus super omnes gentes Dominus

et super coelos gloria ejus,

Quis sicut Dominus Deus noster,

qui in altis habitat,

et humilia respicit in coelo et in terra?

Suscitans a terra inopem,

et de stercore erigens pauperem:

Ut collocet eum cum principibus,

cum principibus populi sui.

Qui habitare fecit sterilem in domo,

matrem filiorum laetantem.

Gloria Patri et Filio

et Spiritui Sancto.

Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper

et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

[6] **Concerto: Pulchra es**

Pulchra es, amica mea,  
suavis et decora filia Jerusalem.  
Pulchra es, amica mea,  
suavis et decora sicut Jerusalem  
terribilis ut castrorum  
acies ordinata,  
Averte oculos tuos a me.  
quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt.  
(From Cant. cant. 6,4-5)

[7] **Psalm 121 (Laetatus sum)**

Laetatus sum in his, quae dicta sunt mihi:  
In domum Domini ibimus.  
Stantes erant pedes nostri,  
in atriis tuis Jerusalem, Jerusalem,  
quae aedificatur ut civitas:  
cuius participatio eius in idipsum.  
Illuc enim ascenderunt tribus,  
tribus Domini:  
testimonium Israel  
ad confitendum nomini Domini.  
Quia illic sederunt sedes in iudicio,  
sedes super domum David.  
Rogate quae ad pacem sunt Jerusalem:  
et abundantia in diligantibus te:  
Fiat pax in virtute tua:  
et abundantia in turribus tuis.  
Propter fratres meos et proximos meos,  
loquebar pacem de te:  
Propter domum Domini Dei nostri.  
quaesivi bona tibi.  
Gloria Patri et Filio  
et Spiritui Sancto.  
Sicut erat in principio et nunc ei semper,  
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

[8] **Concerto: Duo Seraphim**

Duo Seraphim clamabant alter ad alterum:  
Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.  
Plena est omnis terra gloria eius.  
Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in coelo:  
Pater, Verbum et Spiritus Sanctus.  
Et hi tres unum sunt,  
Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.  
Plena est omnis terra gloria eius.  
(From Isaiah 6, 3 / Joh. epist. 1. 5, 7-8)

[9] **Psalm 126 (Nisi Dominus)**

Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum,  
in vanum laboraverunt qui aedificant eam.  
Nisi Dominus custodierit civitatem,  
frustra vigilat qui custodit eam.  
Vanum est vobis ante lucem surgere:  
surgite postquam sederitis,  
qui manducatis panem doloris.  
Cum dederit dilectis suis somnum:

ecce hereditas Domini filii:  
merces, fructus ventris.  
Sicut sagittae in manu potentis,  
ita filii excussorum.  
Beatus vir qui implevit  
desiderium suum ex ipsis:  
non confundetur  
cum loquatur inimicis suis in porta.  
Gloria Patri et Filio  
et Spiritui Sancto.  
Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper,  
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

[10] **Concerto: Audi coelum**

Audi, coelum, verba mea,  
piena desiderio

et pedusa gaudio.

- audio. -

Dic, quaeso, mihi:

Quae est ista,  
quae consurgens ut aurora rutilat,  
ut benedicam?

- dicam. -

Dic nam ista pulchra ut luna,  
electa ut sol,  
replet laetitia  
terras, coelos, maria

- Maria. -

Maria virgo illa dulcis  
praedicata de propheta Ezechiel  
porta Orientalis

- talis. -

Illa sacra et felix porta,  
per quam mors fuit expulsa,  
introduxit autem vita

-ita -

Ouae semper tutum est medium  
inter homines et Deum  
pro culpis remedium

- medium. -

Omnes hanc ergo sequamur,  
qua cum gratia mereamur  
vitam aeternam,

Consequamur

- sequamur. -

Praestet nobis Deus,  
Pater hoc et Filius  
et Mater, cuius nomen invocamus dulce  
miseris solamen.

- Amen. -

Benedicta es, virgo Maria,  
in saeculorum saecula.  
(Anonymus, 16. Jh. (?) )

#### [11] Psalm 147 (Lauda, Jerusalem)

Lauda, Jerusalem, Dominum:

lauda Deum tuum, Sion.

Quoniam confortavit seras portarum tuarum:

benedixit filiis tuis in te.

Oui posuit fines tuos pacem:

et adipe frumenti satiat te.

Qui emittit eloquium suum terrae:

velociter currit sermo eius,

Oui dat nivem sicut lanam:

nebulam sicut cinerem spargit.

Mittit cristallum suum sicut buccellas:

ante faciem frigoris eius quis sustinebit?

Emittit verbum suum, et liquefaciet ea:

flabit spiritus eius, et fluent aquae.

oui annuntiat verbum suum Jacob:

iustitias et iudicia sua Israel.

Non fecit taliter omni nationi:

et iudicia sua non manifestavit eis.

Gloria Patri et Filio

et Spiritui Sancto.

Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper,

et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

#### [CD2:1] Sonata sopra

«Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis »

#### [2] Hymn (Ave maris stella)

Ave maris stella,

Dei mater alma,

atque semper Virgo

felix coeli porta.

Sumens illud Ave

Gabrielis ore,

funda nos in pace,

mutans Evae nomen,



Solve vincla reis,  
profer lumen caecis,  
mala nostra pelle,  
bona cuncta posce.  
Monstra te esse matrem,  
sumat per te precem,  
qui pro nobis natus  
tulit esse tuus.  
Virgo singularis,  
inter omnes mitis,  
nos culpis solutos  
mites fac et castos.  
Vitam praesta puram,  
iter para tutum,  
ut videntes Jesum  
semper collaetemur.  
Sit laus Deo Patri,  
summo Christus decus,  
Spiritus Sancto  
tribus honor unus.  
Amen. (*Anonymus, 1 l. Jh*)

### **Magnificat**

[3] **1. Magnificat anima mea**  
Magnificat anima mea Dominum.

[4] **2. Et exultavit**  
Et exultavit spiritus meus  
in Deo salutari meo.

[5] **3. Quia respexit**  
Quia respexit humilitatem  
ancillae suae:  
Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent  
omnes generationes.

[6] **4. Quia fecit mihi magna**  
Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est:  
et sanctum nomen eius.

[7] **5. Et misericordia**  
Et misericordia eius a progenie  
in progenies timentibus eum,

[8] **6. Fecit potentiam**  
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo:  
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.

[9] **7. Deposuit potentes de sede**  
Deposuit potentes de sede,  
et exaltavit humiles.

[10] **8. Esurientes implevit bonis**  
Esurientes implevit bonis:  
et divites dimisit inanes.

[11] **9. Suscepit Israel**  
Suscepit Israel puerum suum  
recordatus misericordiae suae.

[12] **10. Sicut locutus est**  
Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,  
Abraham et semini eius in saecula.

[13] **11. Gloria Patri**  
Gloria Patri et Filio  
et Spiritui Sancto.

[14] **12. Sicut erat in principio**  
Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper  
et in saecula saeculorum  
Amen. (*Luke 1, 46-55*)

**CD 1 (68:37)**

**1. Miserere Mei**

11:56

**Grigorio Allegri (1582-1652)**

*Pro Cantione Antiqua Soloists here:*

*Suzanne Flowers, Catherine Bott - soprano*

*James Griffett –tenor; Michael George- bass*

**Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)**

**Vespro Della Beata Vergine / Marienvesper (1610)**

*(Pro Cantione with Collegium Aureum, Musica Fiata,*

*Hannover Boys Choir: details below)*

**2. Intonatio: Deus in adiutorium -**

Domine ad adiuvandum

2:05

**3. Psalm 109 (Dixit Dominus)**

8:43

**4. Concerto: Nigra sum**

3:46

**5. Psalm 112 (Laudate pueri)**

6:32

**6. Concerto: Pulchra es**

3:30

**7. Psalm 121 (Laetatus sum)**

7:53

**8. Concerto: Duo Seraphim**

6:04

**9. Psalm 126 (Nisi Dominus)**

4:50

**10. Concerto: Audi coelum**

8:13

**11. Psalm 147 (Lauda Jerusalem)**

4:49

**CD 2 (71:31) Vespers cont.**

**1. Sonata sopra**

“Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis”

7:13

2. **Hymn** (Ave maris stella) 8:57

**Magnificat**

3. Magnificat anima mea 0:58

4. Et exultavit 1:31

5. Quia respexit 1:42

6. Quia fecit mihi magna 1:18

7. Et misericordia 2:04

8. Fecit potentiam 1:07

9. Deposuit potentes de sede 2:18

10. Esurientes implevit bonis 1:13

11. Suscepit Israel 1:19

12. Sicut locutus est 1:10

13. Gloria Patri 2:39

14. Sicut erat in principio 2:02

***Bonus Contemporary Pieces***

15. **Salve, 0 Regina** (Monteverdi)\* 7:00

*James Griffett –tenor; Bradford Tracey- organ*

16. **Fili mi Absalon** 7:45

(Heinrich Schütz 1585-1672) \*\*

(soloist: Michael George)

17. **Heu mihi Domine** (Schütz) \*\* 4:40

18. **O Quam tu pulchra es** (Schütz)\*\* 4:38

(soloists: I.Partridge & M.George)

19. **Stabat Mater** (Palestrina) \*\*\* 11:38

## **Pro Cantione Antiqua, UK**

Guest Soloist in Vespers: Barbara Schlick - soprano

### **Soloists in Vespers\***

Countertenors: Michael Chance, Paul Esswood, Timothy Penrose\*, Robin Tyson

Tenors: Joseph Cornwell, Andrew Green, James Griffett\*, Ian Partridge\*

Basses: David Beavan, Michael George\*, Adrian Peacock, Stephen Roberts\*,  
(Directors: (Allegri, Palestrina: Mark Brown) (Schütz: with London Cornett & Sackbut Ensemble, Restoration Academy, Director: Edgar Fleet)

### **Collegium Aureum & Musica Fiata**

Franzjosef Maier - leader & solo violin; Werner Neuhaus, Gerhard Peters - solo violins

Ruth Nielsen – violin, Heinz-Otto Graf, Theo Kempen-viola, Horst Beckedorf - cello

Rudolf Schlegel – contrabass, Heinrich Haferland - viola da gamba

Roland Wilson, Jean-Pierre Canihac, Hans-Peter Westermann - cornets

Wolfgang König, Peter Sommer, Richard Lister - trombones

Siri Rovatkay-Sohns, Ulrike Volkhardt - recorders

Anthony Thomas – lute, Lajos Rovatkay - positive organ

**Hannover Boys Choir** Director: Heinz Hennig

Monteverdi Vespers: Originally produced and conceived with valued help from  
Klosterkammer (Monastery) Hannover.

Based on Broadcast by NDR in Festival Week "Musik und Theater in Hohenhausen".

Producer: Dr. Albert Karsch for Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Hannover (NDR)

Artistic supervisor: Reinhold Brunotte; Engineer: Willy Dolassek

Venue: Galeriegebäude, Herrenhausen; Original Date (Vespers): 6.7.1979

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