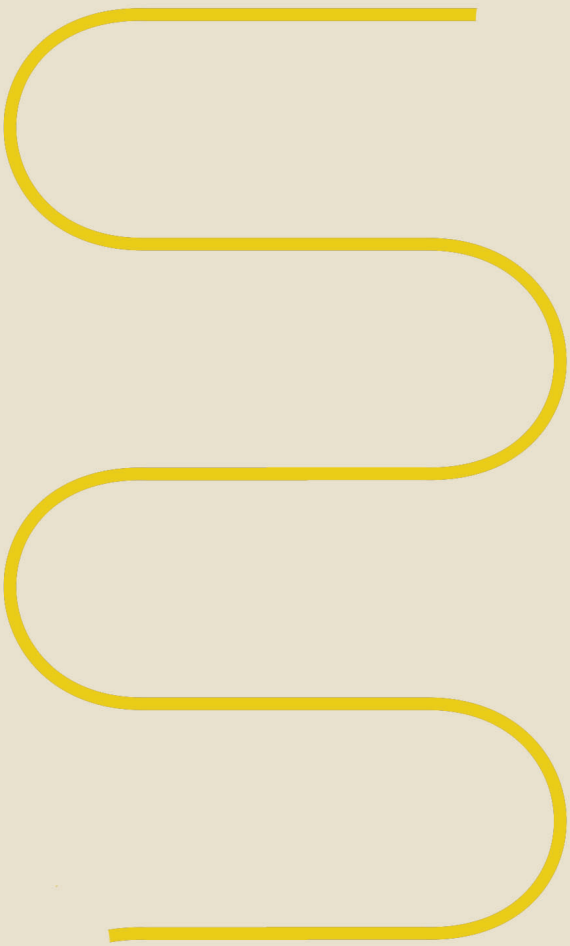
Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672): Choral Composer Extraordinaire

CHESTER L. ALWES



This article commemorates the 350th anniversary of the death of German composer Heinrich Schütz (Henricus Sagittarius[1]) on November 6, 1672, and makes a humble plea for present-day choirs to rediscover his amazing choral music. General histories of music portray Schütz as the conduit whereby the marvels of the early Italian Baroque (primarily, the concerted, polychoral style associated with the Gabrielis and San Marco in Venice, and, later, the focus on smaller concertos intended for solo voices and continuo) make their way to Germany. Unlike his older colleague, Michael Praetorius (1571–1621), Schütz had the advantage of studying in Venice with Giovanni Gabrieli (ca. 1554/57–1612). Schütz's lengthy career not only translates the Venetian polychoral style into German (*Die Psalmen Davids*, 1619), but he also receives credit for the first German opera (*Dafne,* 1627 [lost]), the first German oratorio (*Die Auferstehungshistoria,* 1623), and the elevation of text to a new vital role in German choral music. In his novella, *The Meeting at Telgte,* Günther Grass has him making an uninvited appearance at a fictional meeting of German artists after the Thirty Years War to discuss if it were even possible to create viable art after that cultural catastrophe.

Chester L. Alwes
Professor Emeritus of Choral Music and Music Education
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
calwes@illinois.edu

Of Schütz's importance, Grass writes:

> "Never, even in his incidental compositions, had he achieved the mediocrity required by Protestants for their daily use. He had provided neither his elector nor Christian of Denmark with anything more than the strictest minimum of courtly music…. When publishers insisted on additions conducive to works used in churches, such as the notation of the thorough bass, Schütz, in his prefaces, deplored these adjuncts and warned against their use, since, in his opinion, the basso continuo should never be anything but a rarely used expedient."[2]

Biographical Overview

Space does not allow a full rehearsal of Schütz's biography (which is readily available elsewhere).[3] But several important waypoints in his journey deserve mention:

One

He was "discovered" by Landgrave Moritz of Hesse-Kassel during a 1598 overnight stop at the inn managed by Schütz's parents. Hearing Schütz's beautiful singing voice, Moritz offered him a free education at the Humanist Latin school he had founded in Kassel (the *Mauritzianum*). In return, Schütz would become a member of his Court's *Kapelle* under the tutelage of Georg Otto (c. 1550-1618). Despite parental misgivings, Schütz arrived in Dresden in 1599.

Two

To satisfy his parents, Schütz enrolled in the University of Marburg to study law. But Landgrave Moritz was so impressed with Schütz's potential that he traveled to Marburg and made Schütz an offer he couldn't refuse—fully underwritten study with the Venetian master Giovanni Gabrieli (1554/57–1612).[4] In 1609, Schütz departed for Venice, where, despite Moritz's desire that he learn to compose polychoral concertos, he received from Gabrieli a thorough grounding in the "self-sufficient textures of Renaissance-style polyphony."[5] After two years of study with Gabrieli, Schütz published his first major work, *Il Primo libro / de madrigali / di Henrico Saggitario / Allemano / in Venetia* MDCXI (op. 1, 1611).[6] Moritz decided to underwrite a third year of study with Gabrieli, one that ended with the master's death in 1612, whereupon Schütz returned to Hesse-Kassel to work off his indebtedness to Moritz.

Three

The benefits of Moritz's investment were short lived, for in 1614 Schütz was invited to Dresden to help his retiring *Kapellmeister* Rogier Michael (ca. 1553–1623) and his visiting helper "von Haus aus,"[7] Michael Praetorius (1571–1621) in supplying music for the christening of Duke August, who later became the archbishop of Magdeburg. Given that the Saxon Elector, Johann Georg, was Moritz's political superior, the Landgrave was forced to acquiesce. Moritz would come to regret this submission bitterly: shortly after arriving in Dresden, Schütz was offered the post of *Kapellmeister* for the Saxon Electoral Chapel, a position that provoked a "not altogether seemly"[8] exchange of letters between the Elector and Moritz, became permanent in 1617. During his first months in Dresden, Schütz was called upon to supply music not only for a state visit by Emperor Matthias and Archduke Rudolf of Austria but also for a three-day celebration of the centenary of the Reformation.[9]

Four

The following year marked the beginning of the seemingly endless Thirty Years War (1618–48), which brought devastation to most of Germany and imposed severe hardships, both financial and artistic, on Schütz's tenure.[10] In 1619, Schütz finally published the lavish music Moritz anticipated from his study with Gabrieli, *Die Psalmen Davids sampt etlichen Moteten und Concerten.*[11]

Five

In 1628, Schütz returned to Venice, where he met Claudio Monteverdi, Alessandro Grandi, and Ignazio Donati. Through them he discovered the small-voiced concerto, leading to his publication of *Symphoniae sacrae* I in 1629.[12]

Six

In February 1633, Crown Prince Christian of Den-

mark invited Schütz to Copenhagen to supervise the wedding music (October 5, 1634) for his daughter, Magdalena Sybilla.[13] Soon after Schütz's arrival, King Christian IV appointed the musician as the court's Visiting Capellmeister (with a considerable stipend). After the death of his mother in February 1635, Schütz returned to Dresden, where, as he wrote in his Preface to the *Kleine geistliche Konzerte,* "Praiseworthy music has not only fallen into great decline through the constant perils of war…but in many places has ceased altogether, suffering the general ruin and disorder that results from unholy strife."[14] On his return to Dresden, Schütz carried a letter from Christian IV to Johann Georg requesting the he might soon be permitted to return to Copenhagen "to complete the work that he has done with our *Kapel.*"[15]

Seven

Dismayed by the continued decline in the court's music and aware of his advancing age, Schütz wrote to the Elector (June 21, 1645) seeking to retire, which Johann Georg denied. Due to this perceive snub, Schütz was frequently absent from Dresden, returning only on a full-time basis in early summer 1649. During this interim the Peace of Westphalia was signed (October 24, 1648).[16] Another petition for retirement accompanied the presentation to the Elector of the third book of the *Symphoniae sacrae* (1650). This presentation (with the *Memorial* of 1651) was simply ignored. Johann Georg died in October 1656.

Eight

With the accession of Johann Georg II in 1657, Schütz finally achieved a degree of relief from his duties, having received the honorary title "Senior Kapellmeister" and permission to retire, even though still required to fulfill duties at court three or four times a year.[17]

Developing a Style

Of the foregoing list, the first four items are the most important. Schütz's discovery by Moritz led to his study with Gabrieli in Venice, an education in composition that grounded the young composer firmly in the linear, text-driven style of the Renaissance masters. This emphasis overrode (but did not supplant) the more contemporary, grander style of the polychoral concerto, the style that led Moritz to send Schütz there in the first place. His second Venetian sabbatical afforded Schütz the opportunity to study with the most progressive Italian vocal composers of the day: Claudio Monteverdi and Alessandro Grandi.

From them Schütz became proficient in the construction of what was an enhanced sacred type of monody. The modest forces used proved to be extremely important to Schütz during the increasing deprivations of the Thirty Years War. Far from being a concession to his limitations, the first two books of the *Symphoniae sacrae* and *Kleine geistliche Konzerte* forced Schütz to learn and embrace the rhetorical style that dominates his middle period. Gone were the resources that allowed composing grand, polychoral concertos. In their place, Schütz developed an expressive style dependent on rhetoric (a concept Gabrieli forced him to embrace in his book of madrigals). This dichotomy was by no means absolute; there is ample evidence that Schütz never forsook the grandeur of the Venetian school, but these works had to accommodate the declamatory style of the smaller vocal concertos, leading to a style that mixed the best elements of both disciplines.

Table 1 on the next page illustrates the realities of this stylistic synthesis, using three principal categories: works that are choral, works that are soloistic, and those in which these two elements are mixed.

Synopsis

The exclusively choral works are the *Cantionae sacrae* (1625), the *Geistliche Chor-Music* (1648), the small-textured liturgical pieces of the *Zwölf Geistliche Gesänge* (1657), and Schütz's "swan-song," the eight-part, double-choir settings of the massive Psalm 119, another setting of Psalm 100, and the sublime *Deutsches Magnificat.* With the notable exception of the *Musikalische Exequien,* the music Schütz published from 1628 to 1648 shows the most the debilitating effects of the Thirty Years War and is exclusively soloistic.[18]

While this article focuses on two collections—the *Cantiones sacrae* and the *Geistliche Chor-Music*—it was the

Table 1: Division of Schütz's Extant Published Works According to Vocal Forces Needed

Italian Madrigals, op. 1, SWV 1–19 (1612)	soloistic
Die Psalmen Davids, op. 2, SWV 22 – 47 (1619)	mixed
Historia der Aufferstehung, op. 3, (1623)	soloistic and mixed
Cantiones sacrae, op. 4, SWV 53–93 (1625)	choral
Becker Psalter, op. 5, SWV 97–256 (1625)	soloistic and mixed
Symphoniae sacrae I, op. 6, SWV 257–276, (1629)	soloistic
Musikalische Exequien, op. 7, SWV 279–81 (ca.1634–35)	mixed
Kleine geistliche Konzerte Erster Theil, op. 8, SWV 282 – 305 (1636)	soloistic
Kleine geistliche Konzerte Zweiter Theil, op. 9, SWV 306–37 (1639)	soloistic
Symphoniae sacrae II, op. 10 SWV 341 - 367(1647)	soloistic
Geistliche Chor-Music, op. 11, SWV 369 - 397(1648)	choral
Symphoniae sacrae III, op. 12, SWV 398–418 (1650)	mixed
Zwölf Geistliche Gesänge, op. 13 SWV 420–31 (1657)	choral
Other Significant Works	
Ps. 116: Das ist mir Lieb (SSATB), SWV 51 (1616): (Included in Burkhardt Grossmann's anthology of sixteen settings of *Psalm 116: Angst der Höllen und Friede der Seelen*)	choral and soloistic
The Christmas History, SWV 435 (1664)	mixed
Sieben letzte Worten J. C. am Kreuz, SWV 478 (c. 1647)	mixed
Matthäuspassion, SWV 479 (1666)	mixed
Lukaspassion, SWV 480 (1664)	mixed
Johannespassion, SWV 481 (1665)	mixed
Opus Ultimum –Schwanengesang SWV 482–494 (1671)	choral

"Psalms of David" (1619) that marked the ultimate return on Landgrave Moritz's investment in Schütz to create overwhelming concerted works that would make the Landgrave's court the envy of all Germany. The twenty-six compositions were likely written over an extended period during which Schütz had to wrestle with translating the Venetian polychoral style to accommodate German texts. In his Preface to the "Psalms of David," Schütz claimed that he was the first composer in Germany to write choral music "in stilo recitativo," in other words, word-driven compositions in the German language. It may initially seem that these works with multiple choirs and extended vocal ranges lie beyond most modern choirs. Anyone contemplating performance of this music needs to understand the fundamental distinction between the *Favoriti* choirs (those sung by the best available [i.e., solo] singers) and the *cappellae,* grand tuttis for voices and/or instruments designed to add spectacular grandeur.[19]

These *cappellae* are not obligatory if a conductor is open to a less splendorous performance than the composer envisioned. The *cori favoriti* are, on the other hand, essential and may not be omitted. Schütz conceived these choirs as soloistic music, less for vocal virtuosity than for the ability to ornament and declaim the text. Schütz offered another possibility for modern performance of those psalms with especially high ranges: here, the conductor may have instruments replace the singers. Indeed, several of the later works use only one or two sung vocal parts, leaving the other parts to undesignated instruments.

Cantiones sacrae, op. 4, 1625

The *Cantiones sacrae* are a potential gold mine of choral repertory. Schütz draws most of his texts from Andreas Musculus's *Precationes ex veteribus orthodoxis doctoribus…* (1553). Half of the forty Latin texts are from the Hebrew Bible; the next largest category set texts by such venerated Church Fathers as Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109), Hugo of St. Victor (d. 1141), and Bernhard of Clairvaux (d. 1153). The choice of texts is important: it explains the otherwise inexplicable dedication of the work to Prince Hans Ulrich von Eggenberg, the chief minister of Archduke Ferdinand of Styria, who became the Holy Roman Emperor in 1619.[20] To grasp the significance of this dedication, we must remember that the Saxon Elector Johann Georg I tried his best to steer a course of neutrality for the first decade of the Thirty Years War. Hence, Schütz's dedication of his Latin motets to a close advisor to the current Holy Roman Emperor may comprise part of that calculated political strategy. In addition, Schütz may have hoped that these Latin texts would guarantee a wider market for his work since both Catholics and Protestants used them.

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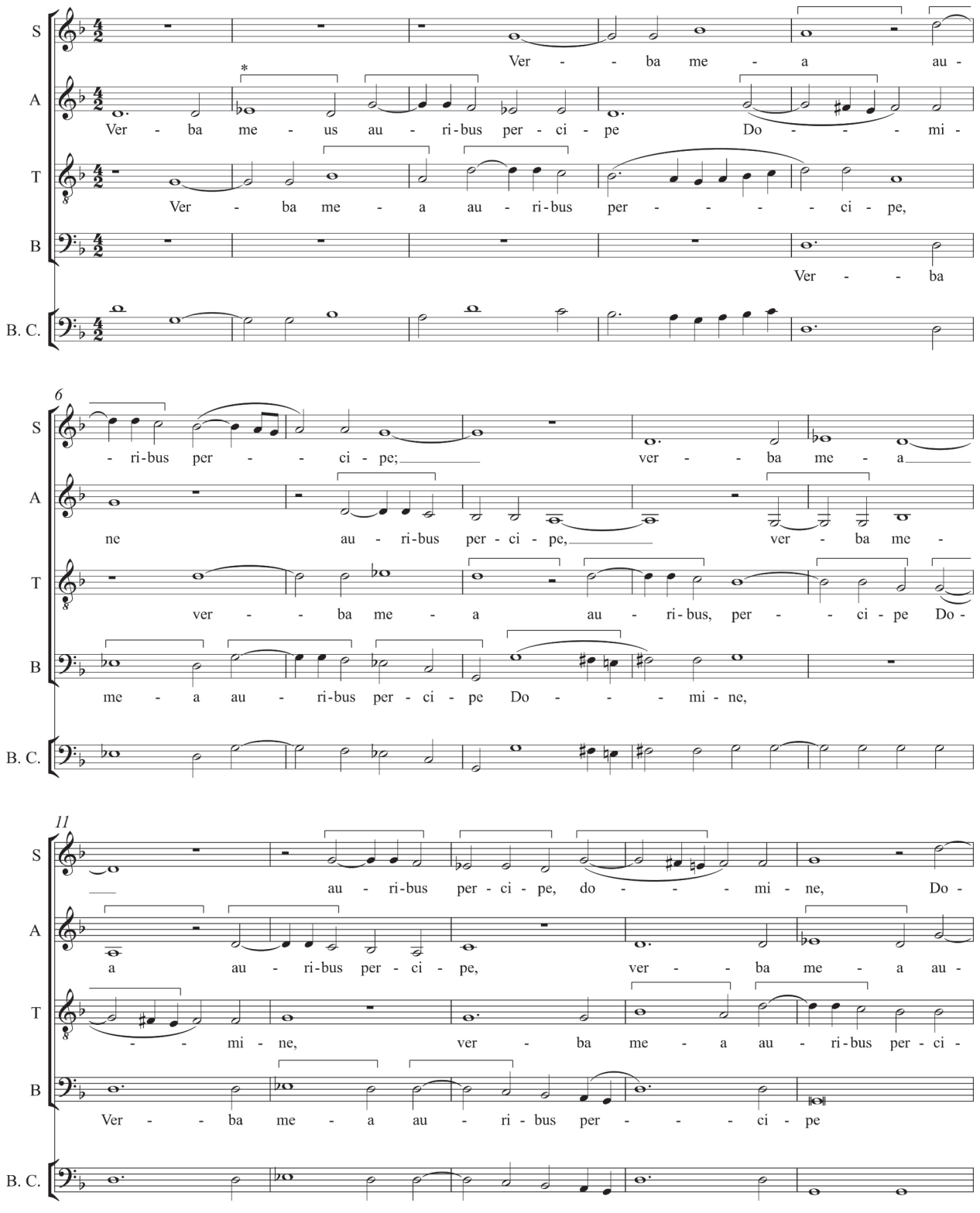
Another curiosity is that he regarded the *Cantiones* as his "opus ecclesiaticum primum," inferred from the designation of the first volume of the *Symphoniae sacrae,* op. 6 (1629), as his "opus ecclesiasticum secundum." This designation ignores his Psalms of David, a collection of concerted settings of German, not Latin texts. It is, therefore, quite tempting to view his "sacred" op. 1 (the *Cantiones sacrae*) as the sacred equivalent of his "secular" op. 1, the Italian madrigals.

In his Preface, Schütz claims that his publisher "extorted" the presence of basso continuo from him.[21] In reality, the majority of the forty Latin motets do not depend on continuo, being performable without it. Gottfried Grote's NSA edition acknowledges the existence of an array of styles ranging from motets in the "old manner of contrapuntal polyphony" to a quite modern style (*novam canendi* ratio) in motets 18, 32, and 33–36, all of which were clearly conceived with continuo in mind.[22] While his fivefold division seems arbitrary in its description of this stylistic continuum, such changes are evident. Thus, the motets that evoke the "old" contrapuntal style are the easiest for modern choirs to perform (save for the problem of vocal range). This "white-note" notation is prominent in SWV 53–55, 61–62, 65, 66, 69, and 71–72. The opening measures of SWV 61, *Verba mea auribus percipe* (Psalm 5:2–3) illustrate a style familiarly found in Renaissance motets (Figure 1 on page 18).



*Brackets are groups of three beats

Figure 1. Heinrich Schütz, *Verba mea auribus principe,* SWV 61, mm. 1–15.

Aside from the paired presentation of the head motive, this motet behaves like a modal Renaissance motet. Given its original low clefs, signed b-flat, g final, and vocal ranges (S/T: d–d; A/B: g–g), the motet is clearly in mode two on G. The paired vocal entries present the first theme on final and dominant respectively; thus, there are eight presentations of the theme (two in each voice). In keeping with seventeenth-century modal practice, the piece shows a mixture of g Dorian and g minor (via the presence of signed e-flats). Finally, the continuo is actually a *basso seguente,* merely outlining the lowest sounding voice part.

The next stylistic group mixes this older style with more active declamatory rhythm.[24] This mixed style appears throughout the five Passion motets in Phrygian mode (SWV 56–60). Figure 2 gives the opening of the second motet, *Ego sum tui plaga doloris* (SWV 57):

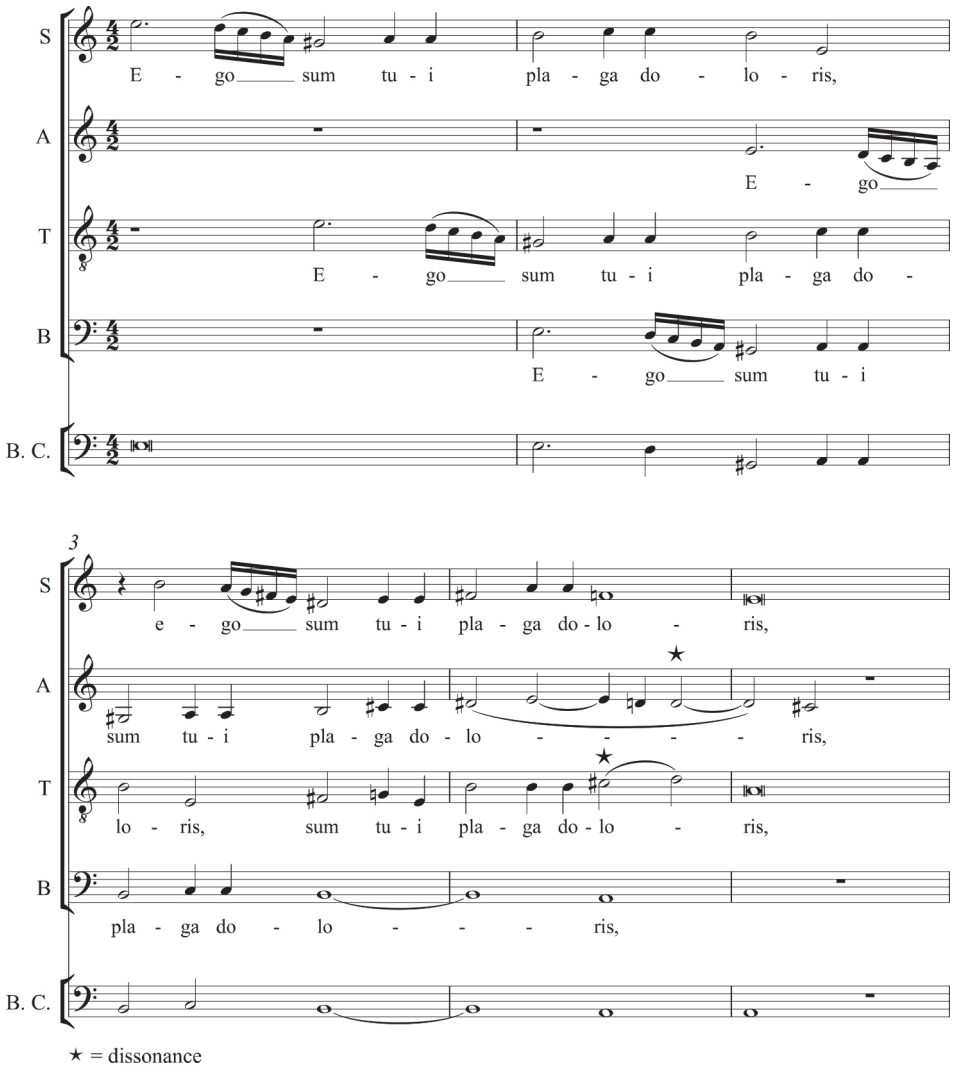


Figure 2. Heinrich Schütz, *Ego sum tui plaga doloris,* SWV 57, mm. 1–5.

Here, despite the use of imitation, we become aware that this is imitation of a fundamentally different type and function. The plunging sixteenth notes sound like a violent shudder; they scream *secunda prattica*, capturing the sense of the text, "I am the blow of your pain." The first four entries all descend from e to g♯ in a manic stretto, followed by a fifth entry in the soprano starting on b, the forbidden dominant of the mode. But the real essence of the piece appears in the progression that closes this brief excerpt—Schütz's signature augmented sixth chord (a–c♯–f natural) plus a wrenching 4–3 suspension in the alto. While imitation is everywhere present, it is not the type found in Renaissance motets; after the canonic stretto of the opening, the succeeding imitative phrase openings do all sorts of things that boggle the mind—inversion, entries on the members of an A minor triad (mm. 12–13). All of this culminates in the searing dissonances of the text, "I caused the wounds of your passion, the labor of your crucifixion" (Figure 3 on page 21).

***Cantate Domino* (SWV 81), the only one of the forty motets set completely in triple meter, is by far the most often performed motet from this collection.**

Here, consonant duets in thirds overlap to produce brief, exquisite dissonances, again featuring that signature augmented 6th chord. The entire passage, which starts a measure earlier than the example and is missing the concluding five measures, is a varied repeat of the same melodies that cycle through the circle of fifths from A to C (the reciting tone of e hypophrygian).[25] This example reveals yet another, different type of imitation. The imitation is between pairs of voices that outline the second inversion of a triad. This texture (and its musical predecessors) repeats three times: on the triads of a minor, d minor, and g minor. Schütz repeats the same material three times to generate a formal design based on the circle of fifths, working backwards from the third iteration ending on C (thus, a–d g–C). Such imitative repetition of the same material is a device often encountered in the *Cantiones* and in other collections (notably, the "Psalms of David"). This type of pre-tonal thinking suggests that the music grows by moving away from and returning to a tonal center. The other indisputable takeaway from this example is that Schütz's process is inherently "madrigalistic." The three iterations of "Cruciatus tui labor" each prove a musical portrayal of the crucified Jesus, each one more dissonant than its predecessor.

Another wonderful example of musical pictorialism occurs in the eleventh motet, *Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat* ("I sleep but my heart keeps watch"). Beginning in m. 14, Schütz sets the text "aperi mihi" ("open to me") by employing imitation that literally "opens up" by having voices enter in close stretto[26] (Figure 4 on page 22).

Here, the four voices enter on successive quarter notes, a pattern that continues through three sequential repetitions. Another device, favored by such madrigal composers as Luca Marenzio and Claudio Monteverdi, is the simultaneous appearance of two different themes (setting different texts). Beginning in m. 18, the bass and soprano repeat this imitative sequence, while the alto and tenor set the words *soror mea, columba mea, immaculata mea* ("my sister, my dove, my immaculate one").[27] Finally, the prima pars of Schütz's setting of Ps. 6 (*Domine ne in furore tuo arguas me*) exemplifies a composition that is inconceivable without the presence of continuo (Figure 5 on page 23).

Beginning in m. 10, Schütz sets the text *Miserere mei* ("Have mercy on me") twice in successive statements by the soprano and alto. Both phrases involve the descent of a diminished octave (f^2–$f^{\sharp 1}$ and g^1–$g^{\sharp}$), an interval impossible to sing without the sustained continuo beneath. Another madrigalism appears in m. 18, where the alto and bass both sing "*infirmus sum*" ("I am weak"); Schütz portrays the word "weak" by writing a simultaneous cross relation (f^1 [A]–$f^{\sharp}$ [B]). Again, the presence of a continuo part that doubles these pitches is essential to a successful performance.

Cantate Domino (SWV 81), the only one of the forty motets set completely in triple meter, is by far the most often performed motet from this collection. Other recommendations would include any of the first ten

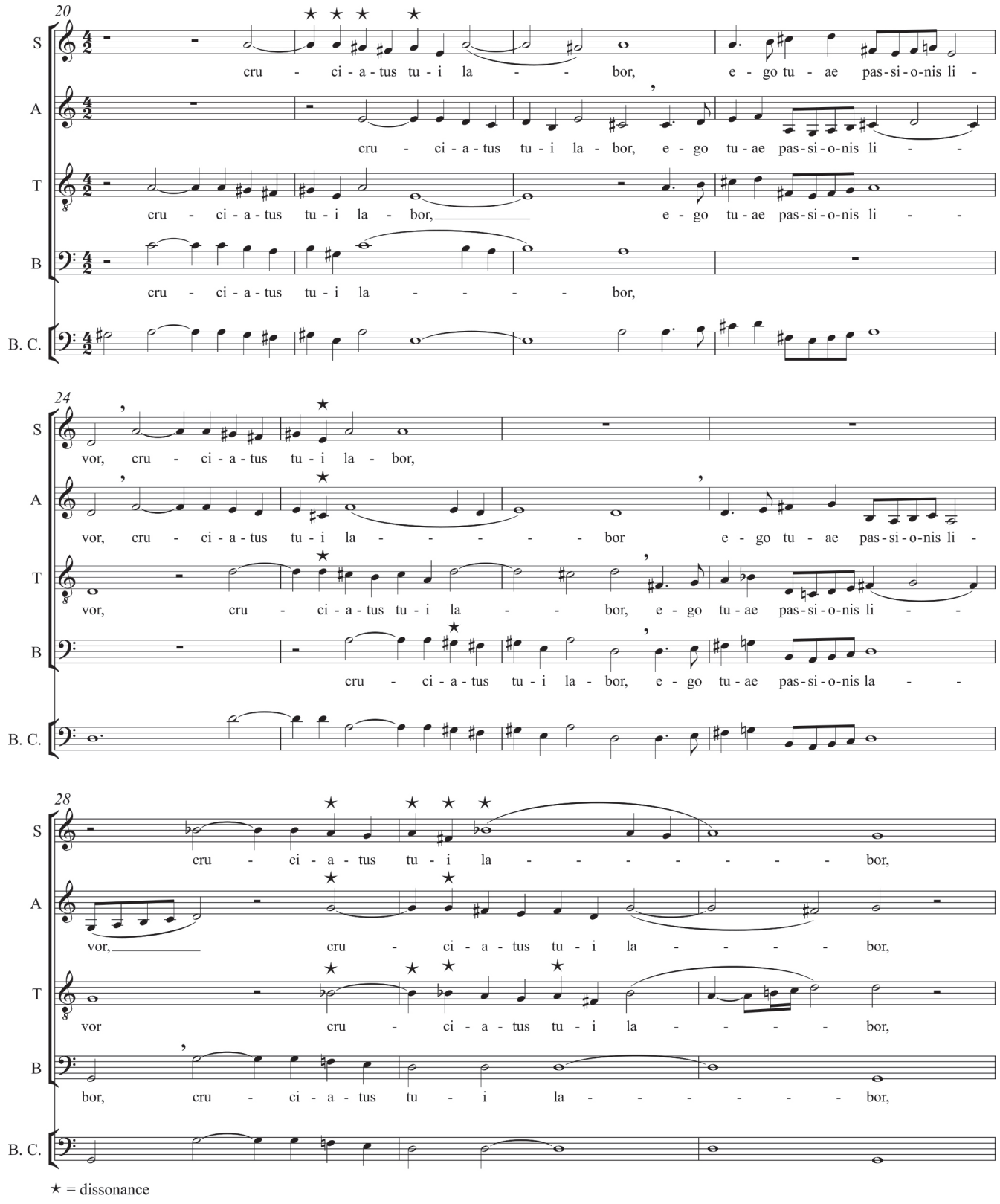


Figure 3. Heinrich Schütz, *Ego sum tui plaga doloris,* SWV 51, mm. 20–30.

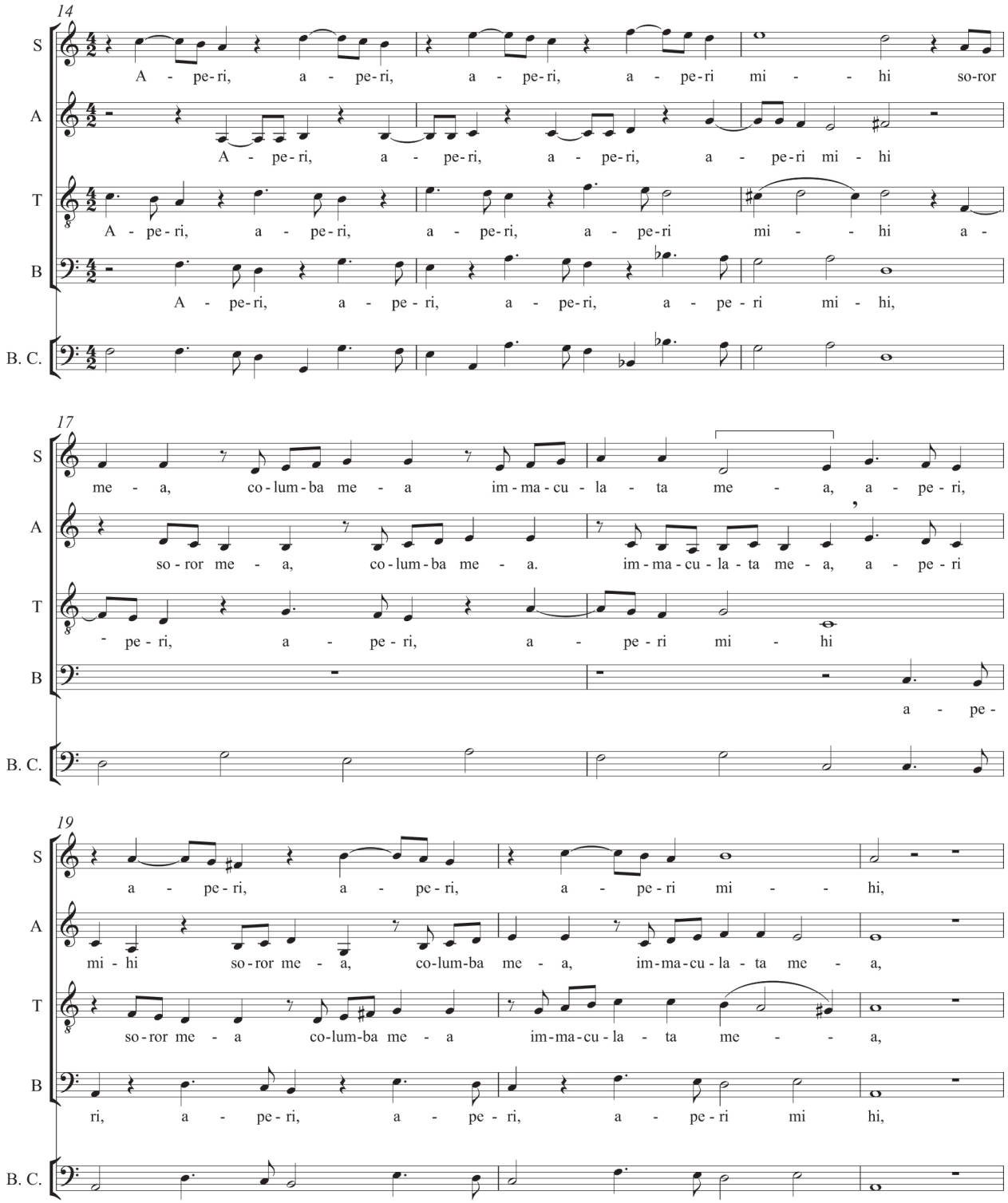
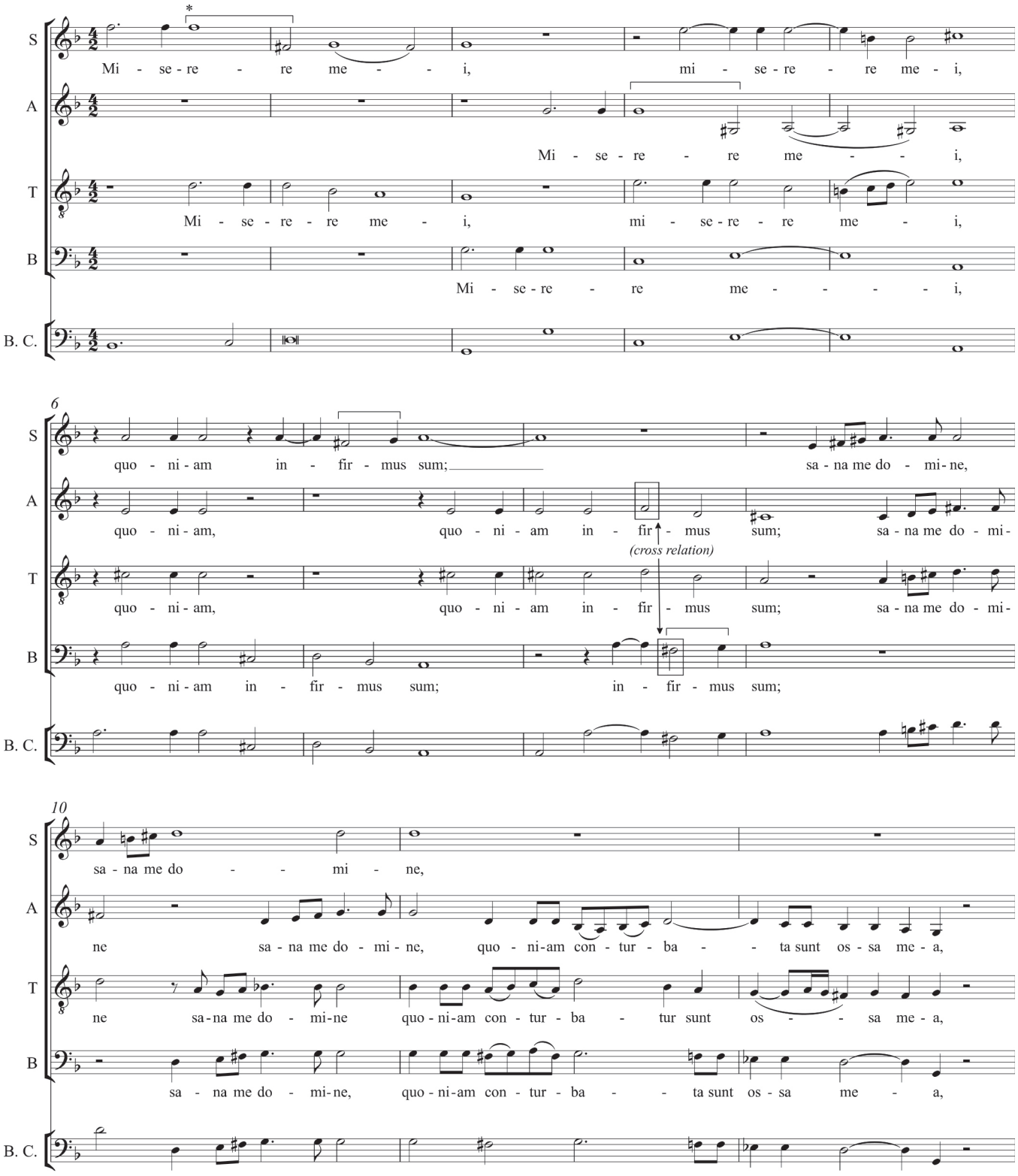


Figure 4. Heinrich Schütz, *Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat,* SWV 63, mm. 14–21.



*Bracket indicates a diminished octave

Figure 5. Heinrich Schütz, *Domine, ne in furore tuo arguas me,* SWV 85, mm. 9–20.

pieces, nos. 13 (SWV 65 and 16 (SWV 68) and the so-called "Table Graces," (SWV 88–93), five brief prayers set in a homophonic style.[28]

Geistliche Chor-Music (SWV 369–97)

In 1648, the same year in which the Peace of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years War, Heinrich Schütz published a collection of twenty-nine choral works dedicated to the city of Leipzig, the famed choir of St. Thomas Church, and in memory of his friend, the Thomaskantor Johann Hermann Schein (1586–1630). As is the case in many seventeenth-century collections, this one is organized by the number of voice parts needed.[29] The first twelve motets are for five voices, the next twelve for six voices, and the final five for seven voices. The two groups of twelve motets seem similarly organized as to the feasts in which they were to serve: both have motets for Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, and All Saints Day arranged in that sequence. They differ in the number of motets per feast (e.g., the collection opens with two á 5 motets for Advent, while the second group has three (nos. 13–15). The first group concludes with a setting of John 3:16, a text appointed as the Gospel for the Monday after Pentecost (*Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt,* SWV 80); its counterpart in group two is the motet *Ich bin ein rechter Weinstock* (SWV 390).[30]

Easily the most frequently performed and best known of this set are two pieces intended for All Saints Day: *Die mit Thränen säen* (SWV 378) and the *Selig sind die Toten* (SWV 391), and the setting of John 3:16. Like Grote's edition of the *Cantiones sacrae,* Wilhelm Kamlah uses haphazard transposition[31] to adapt the range to allow performance by modern choral ensembles. At least two of the motets originate much earlier than the collection's date of publication: *Das ist je gewisslich wahr* (SWV 389) was composed as a memorial to Bach's friend, the *Thomaskantor* Johann Hermann Schein (d. 1630), and *Der Engel sprach zu den Hirten* (SWV 395), a seven-voice, German-texted version of Andrea Gabrieli's Latin Christmas motet, *Angelus ad pastores ait,* which Schütz likely copied during his study with Giovanni Gabrieli in Venice.[32]

Schütz's preface to the publication is grammatically obtuse and filled with flowery language (as was normal in such formal documents of the time). More important, however, is the contradictory statements it contains. First, the composer states that the works are most appropriately performed *a cappella* (i.e., without basso continuo); yet the 1648 print (like the *Cantiones sacrae*) includes an optional continuo part as well as allowing doubling of the voices *colla* parte. The title page describes the continuo as being included "according to advice and desire, but not from necessity."[33] Schütz also recommends that organists should write out a supporting organ score or tablature, an exercise less important for aesthetic effect than for greater accessibility as German church music.[34] Early in the document, Schütz both acknowledges the success and popularity of the Italian-based style music with continuo, and advises the young musician not to adopt this style automatically, preferring that they become experienced in handling the modes, various types of fugue and double counterpoint, and especially the mastery of self-sufficient polyphonic vocal music, the approach Schütz himself had to pursue in his study with Gabrieli.

Four of the final six pieces[35] show a distinctly different approach to scoring, analogous to those motets found at the conclusion of the "Psalms of David." Motets 24, 26, 28, and 29 use a mixture of vocalists and unspecified instruments:

SWV 392: *Was mein Gott will, dass g'scheh allzeit*
(A, T, four lower instruments)

SWV 394: *Sehet an den Feigenbaum* á7
(Instr., S, Instr., T, 3 lower instruments)

SWV 396: *Auf dem Gebirge hat man ein Geschrei gehört*
(2 A, five lower instruments)

SWV 397: *Du Schalksknecht*
(T + six lower instruments)

The popularity of *Die mit Thränen säen* and *Selig sind die Toten* require no further discussion here. There are, however, three other works that are not only performable but are also a joy to sing, and thus deserve some discussion:

SWV 380: *Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt á 5*

SWV 387: *Die Himmel erzählen die Here Gottes á 6*

SWV 389: *Das ist je gewisslich wahr á 6*

The first (SWV 380) is one of two works that Schütz specifically labeled "Aria." Obviously not a typical solo aria, the designation refers to a work with a homophonic texture, a variety of text-based declamatory rhythms and, frequently, a repeated bass line for each strophe over which the composer writes different melodies.[36] SWV 380, cast in binary form (with repeats) is almost entirely homophonic (Figure 6).

The example presents the second section, which begins with pure homophony, but quickly shows greater rhythmic freedom in the inner parts, while the bass and soprano engage in a melodic duet (mm. 18–21). After a transposed repetition of mm. 15–22, the second section turns to triple meter for the text "sondern das ewige Leb-

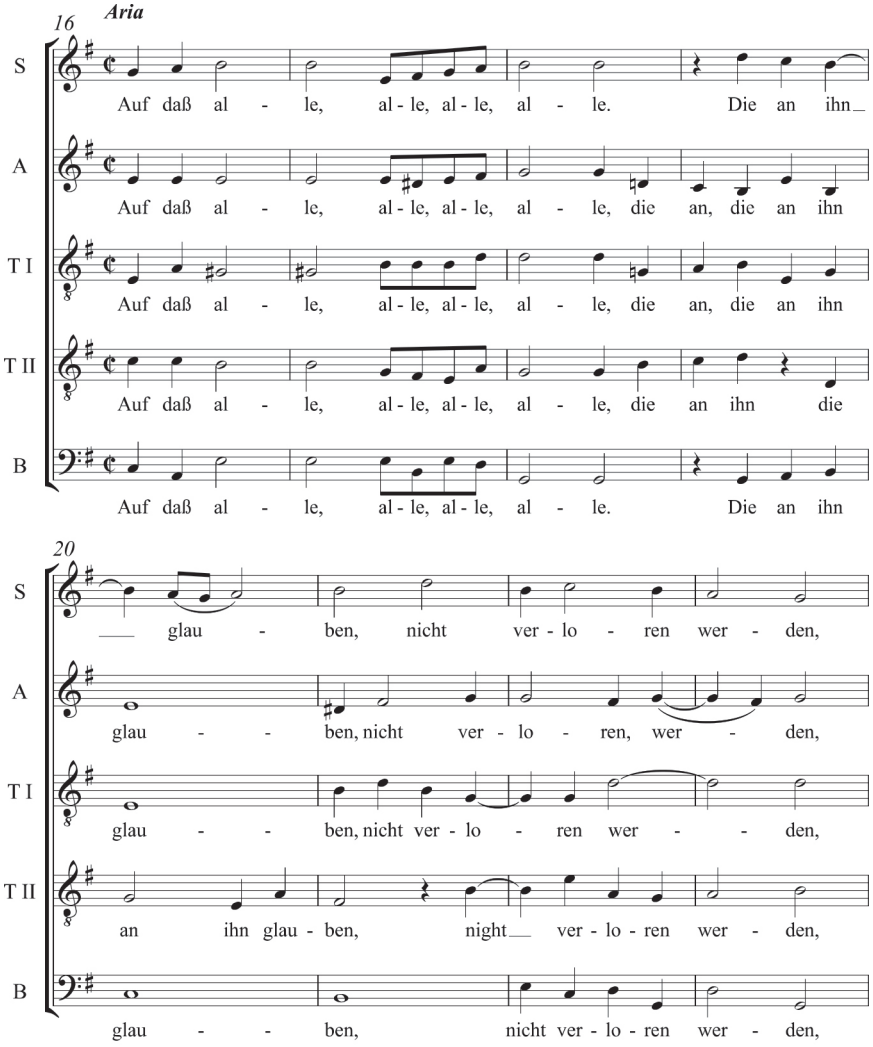


Figure 6. Heinrich Schütz, *Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt,* SWV 380, mm. 16–23.

en haben!" ("But have eternal life!). This is an accessible, worthwhile piece of choral repertory that deserves frequent performance.

Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes SWV 387 has a formal structure that invites a contrast between solo and tutti vocal parts, especially in the grand tutti (mm. 13–22), which frames the bulk of the text of Psalm 19 (mm. 23 – 92). Between these two grand tuttis, Schütz uses a variety of vocal scoring and textures, including a wonderful bit of tone painting for the closing phrase of the fifth verse, "zu laufen den Weg." (Figure 7)

This passage is a prime example of the rhythmic

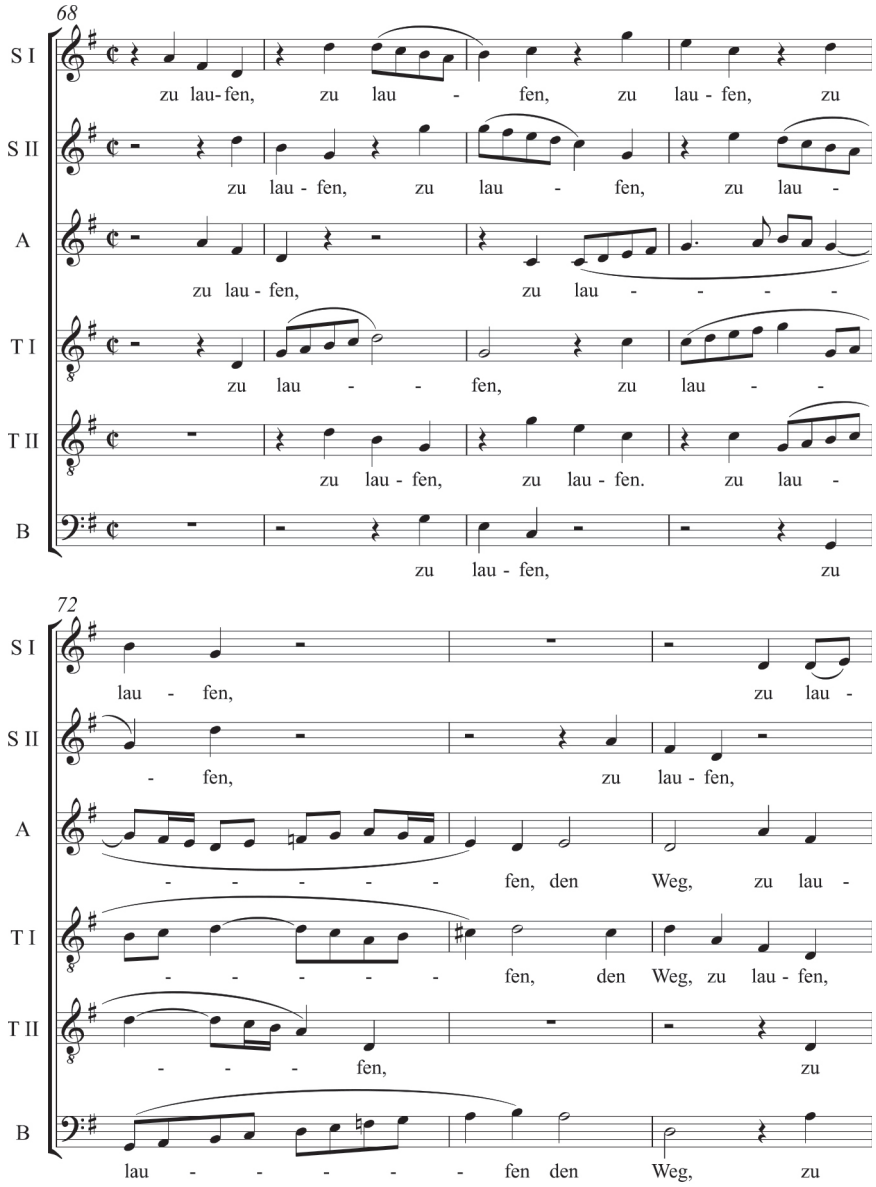


Figure 7. Heinrich Schütz, *Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes,* SWV 386, mm. 68–74.[37]

freedom each line enjoys, a trait Schütz inherited from Renaissance composers. Because traditional bar lines tend to inhibit correct accentuation of the text, the *NSA* uses *Mensurstrich* (bar lines between the staves). While this freedom does not prevent choral performance, it certainly suggests the advisability of using *favoriti* soloists. Indeed, use of soloists for mm. 23–92 is worth consideration since such a reduction in texture would only increase the splendor of the framing tutti *ritornelli*. Even though he does not set the entire psalm text (vv. 7–14 omitted), Schütz includes a brief Gloria Patri (mm. 103–129) comprising a varied reprise of the "zu laufen" material: a third complete, re-texted repetition of the opening tutti and a simple "Amen."

Schütz composed *Das ist je gewisslich wahr* after Johann Hermann Schein died in 1630. Schütz chose as his text three verses from 1 Timothy:

15. *Das ist je gewisslich wahr und ein teuer wertes Wort, dass Christus Jesus kommen st in die Welt, die Sünder selig zu machen, unter welchen ich der fürnehmste bin.*

16. *Aber darum ist mir Barmherzigkeit widerfahren, auf dass an mir fürnehmlich Jesus Christus erzeigte alle Geduld, zum Exemple denen, die an ihn glauben sollen zum ewigen Leben.*

17. [*Aber*] *Gott dem ewigen König, den Unvergängliche und Unsichtbaren, und allein weisen, sei Ehre und Preis in Ewigkeit! Amen.*

Each verse becomes a major formal section in the motet:

v. 15	v. 16	v. 17
mm. 1–65	mm. 65–109	mm. 110–136

Schütz used the punctuation of each verse to determine the structure of its musical setting. The form of each section is more heavily dependent on repetition (both at pitch and transposed) than is typical in Schütz's music. Perhaps the two most interesting features are the repetition (mm. 1–5 = mm. 11–15, and mm. 5–10 = 15–20, each repetition transposed up a third [a–C–E–A]), and the use of a triple meter, ritornello-like segment, which creates a binary structure in the setting of v. 15 (Figure 8 on page 28).

The most interesting aspect of this section is its static harmony and the striking shift down a whole step to G at m. 26 (and repeated at m. 40), which avoids parallelism by a clever manipulation of the two soprano and tenor parts. The simplicity of the music obscures the canonic imitation that goes on between the paired sopranos and tenors. As a note to future performers, transition from duple to triple meter in Schütz most often is "measure equals measure" (*proportio sesquialtera* or 2 in the time of 3). Also note the use of agogic stress in the soprano/tenor pairs, the length of which (agogic stress) cancels any metrical accent on the "downbeat."

The first setting of "die Sünder selig zu machen" (Figure 9a, mm. 31–34 on page 29) is brief; however, Schütz expands it considerably when repeated (Figure 9b mm. 45–59 on page 29).

This repetition allows Schütz to repeat the same imitative passage four times without directly duplicating any part (save for the bass's transposed repetition of the opening alto line, only augmenting the penultimate note).

The entirety of v. 16 of the psalm is set in the motet's long central section (mm. 65–109). This section consists of two parts (mm. 65–86, and 86–109). The second section transposes the music of the first from d to G. The conclusion of the motet sets v. 17, a kind of peroration that returns to the grand, homophonic style of the beginning. The harmony used to set these acclamations to God can be striking: the harmonic shift from a minor to G major in the earlier triple meter section (mm. 21–31 and 35–45) repeats in an expanded version, moving through harmonic centers that ascend by whole steps from C to G, ahead of a "Gloria Patri."

Conclusion

I hope that this brief exposition of two important choral collections by Heinrich Schütz will inspire the new generation of conductors to perform this amazing music. The trend of late has been to avoid historical music (even from the nineteenth century). In the author's opinion, this needs to change! A major reason for this neglect is the perfection of modern performances (on CD or YouTube) by small ensembles dedicated to this music. It is not surprising that, hearing

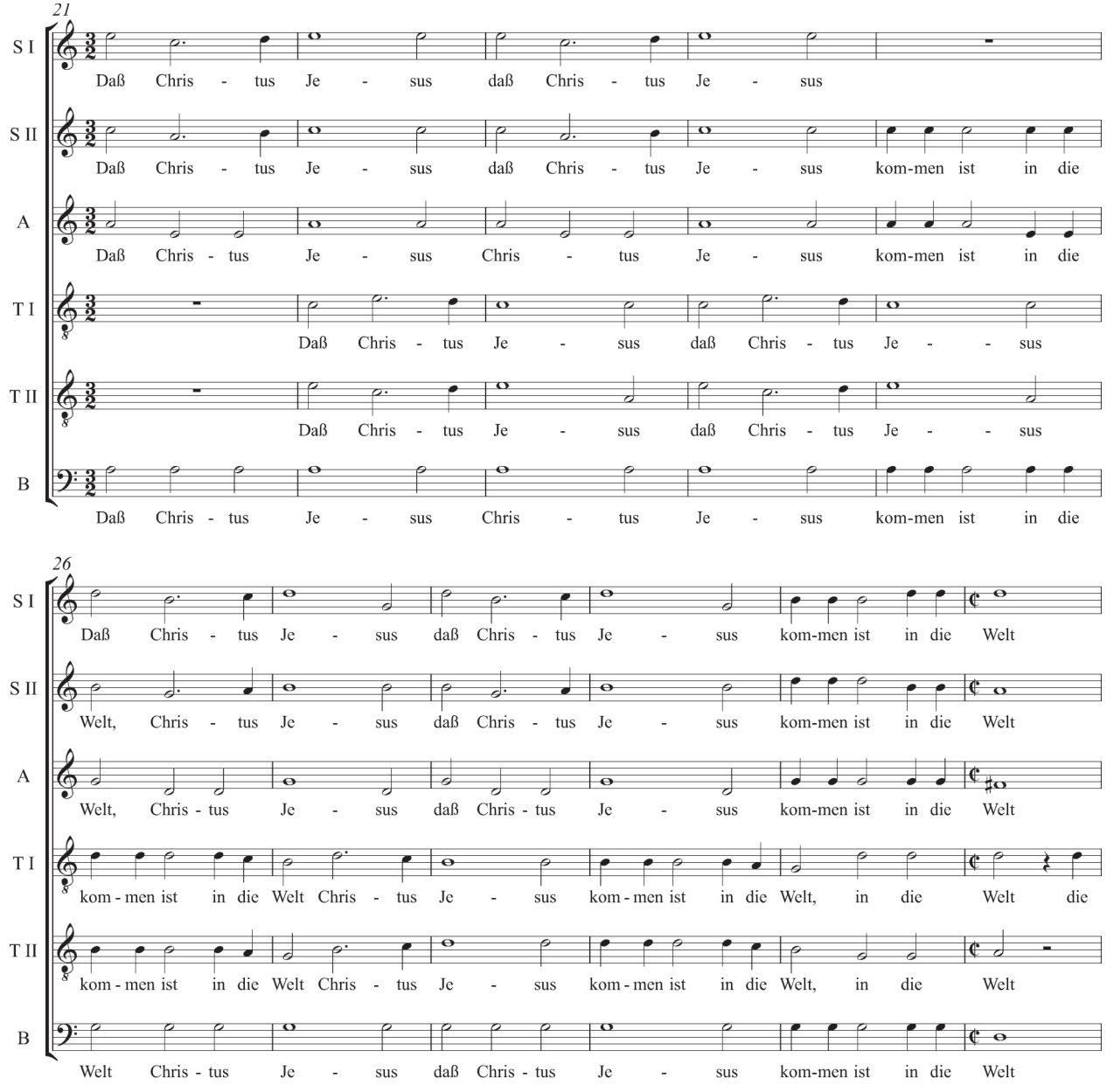


Figure 8. Heinrich Schütz, *Das is je gewasslich wahr,* SWV 388, mm. 21–31.

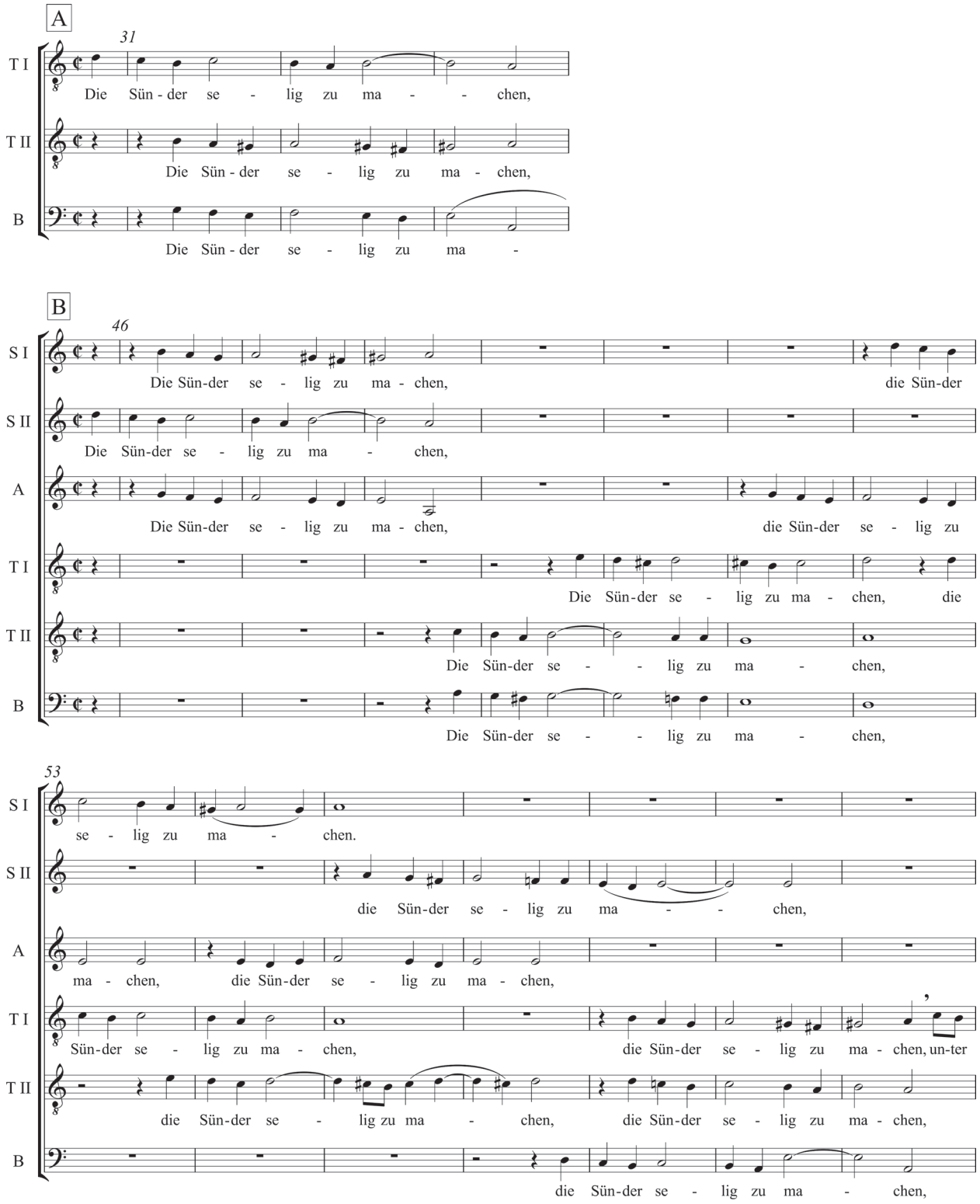


Figure 9. Heinrich Schütz, *Das ist je gewisslich wahr,* SWV 388, mm. 31–33 and mm. 46–59.

these performances, a young conductor might think: "my choir could never do that." In such situations, the educational value of the music must override any urge to duplicate a commercial recording. Composers, old or new, ask only that their music be performed as musically as possible, even if that involves concessions to the reality of the choir's perceived level of ability. The author has frequently performed works by Schütz with undergraduate singers, and they have been consistently enthralled. They work because they derive their total essence from the words—their meaning, syntax, and punctuation—and gain considerable emotional impact from the respect shown for the text. CJ

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Select Discography

Psalmen Davids, op. 2

Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied SWV 35
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIVe_F63bQM

Jauchzet dem Herren alle Welt SWV 36
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aj-bGUWKdXM

Cantiones sacrae, op. 4

Ego sum tui plaga doloris, SWV 57
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9ll_vjRjhs

Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat SWV 63
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cs59lc58T0w

Cantate Domino
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUHOb4_3R5Y

Domine ne in furore tuas arguas me SWV 85
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0mkUph9aes

Pater noster, SWV 89
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tK36OBEf8Qg

Geistliche Chor-Music, op. 11

Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt SWV 380
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWGrGj0hhkM

Selig sind die Toten SWV 391
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqsB6rQXClY

Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes SWV 386
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pljHSnNzygg

Das ist je gewisslich wahr SWV 388
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvpfQaDrGos

Symphoniae sacrae III, op. 12

Vater unser, der du bist in Himmel
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIcUmI3UdPw

Opus Ultimum

Deutsches Magnificat, SWV 494
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaIcbcDGUMw

NOTES

[1] Sagittarius is the Latinized version of his German name, Schütz, derived from the association of his name (Schütz) with the constellation of Sagittarius (in German, Schütz comes from the noun *Schützer,* which means one who protects; *Schützer* was the German name for the constellation of Sagittarius [the archer]). Similarly, Michael Praetorius adopted a Latinized, humanist name, Praetorius being the Latin equivalent of a town official (*Schultheiss*), which was Praetorius's family name.

[2] Günther Grass, *The Meeting at Telgte* © 1979, Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, Darmstadt; English translation (Ralph Mannheim) © 1981 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 41. (Here, Grass projects an actual meeting of German artists in 1947 [with the same agenda!] three centuries back in time.)

[3] Joshua Rifkin, Eva Linfield, Derek McCulloch, and Stephen Baron, "Schütz, Heinrich": "*Grove Music Online* 2001, May 8, 2022. Hans Joachim Moser, *Heinrich Schütz, Life and Works* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, ca. 1959); Allen B. Skei, *Heinrich Schütz: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland Press, 1981); Gina Spagnoli, *Letters and Documents of Heinrich Schütz, 1656–1672: An Annotated Translation* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, ca. 1990.)

[4] When John Dowland visited Hesse Kassel in 1594–95, Moritz recommended that he study with Luca Marenzio. By the time Dowland arrived in Rome, Marenzio was at the Polish court, where he died in 1599.

[5] Basil Smallman, "Schütz," *Grove Master Musician Series,* ed. Stanley Sadie (London and New York: Oxford University Press © Basil Smallman 2000), 14. (Hereafter, Smallman).

[6] It was Gabrieli's practice to require his foreign students to compose a book of madrigals to "graduate" from "Gabrieli U." The exercise was less a demonstration of fluency in Italian than their ability to compose music that was in every aspect derived solely from the words—their assonance, speech rhythm, and the opportunities the words afforded to use pictorialism. Madrigals by three such Gabrieli pupils—Johann Grabbe, Hans Nielsen, and Mogens Pedersøn—appear in *Das Chorwerk,* 35, ed. R. Gerber (Wolfenbüttel: Möseler Verlag).

[7] "Von Haus aus," lit. "from outside the house," i.e., a visiting musician.

[8] Smallman, 28.

[9] Ibid.

[10] For an excellent recounting of this conflict, see C. V. Wedgewood's comprehensive book, *The Thirty Years War* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1938; repr. Anchor Books 1961). (Hereafter, Wedgewood).

[11] *Neue Schütz Ausgabe* (hereafter NSA), vols. 23–26, ed. Wilhelm Ehmann (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag). A second critical edition, *the Stuttgart Schütz Edition,* was taken over by Carus Verlag (Stuttgart) in 1992.

[12] Schütz's departure for Venice coincided with Elector Johann Georg's decision that Saxony would no longer attempt to remain neutral. Saxony's entry into the conflict led to a severe decline in the court's support of music.

[13] For an excellent discussion of this major event in the composer's life, see Mara R. Wade, "Heinrich Schütz and 'det Store Bilager' ("The Great Wedding") in Copenhagen (1634)" in *Schütz Jahrbuch* 11 (1989): 32–52.

[14] Smallman, 87.

[15] Ibid., 79. Another trip to Copenhagen took place in 1642–44, which the composer referenced in his dedication of his *Symphoniae sacrae* II to the King of Denmark (1647).

[16] In the same year, Schütz published his op. 11, *Geistliche Chor-Music,* dedicated to the *Thomanerchor* and the city of Leipzig.

[17] Smallman, 142.

[18] While rhetoric monody dominates, these collections include music for vocal ensembles (with and without obbligato

instrumental voices).

[19] The distinction between *Favoriti* and *Capelle* is visually clearer in Philipp Spitta's nineteenth-century *Schütz Ausgabe* than in the *Neue Schütz Ausgabe.*

[20] Wedgewood, 60–61.

[21] Schütz's publisher knew that potential buyers of this work would balk if no continuo part had been provided, proving how widely accepted the device had become.

[22] NSA, vols. 8–9, ed. Gottfried Grote (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1960). (Hereafter, Grote) The motets referred to in the text are *Turbabor, sed non perturbator* (SWV 70); *Ecce advocatus meus* (SWV 34); and the three-part setting of Psalm 6, *Domine, ne in furore tuo arguas me* (SWV 85–87).

[23] This example (and those that follow) replicate Schütz's original notation. In the NSA¸ Gottfried Grote transposes the motets to what he regards as a more singable pitch level. Said transposition, while practical, completely obliterates any hope of understanding the mode used in each motet. The new edition of the *Cantiones sacrae* by Walter Werbeck and Heide Volckmar-Waschk (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 2004) restores the motets to their original pitch levels.

[24] These include the Passion cycle (SWV 56–60); *In te, domine speravi* (SWV 66); *Sicut Moses serpentem in deserto exaltavit* (SWV 68); *Ad dominum cum tribularer* (SWN 71); and the Table Graces (SWV 836–40).

[25] In fact, the five-motet Passion cycle (SWV 56–60) reveals its Phrygian character by making cadences to the final and both reciting tones. The first ends in A (the reciting tone of the plagal mode); the second in C (the reciting tone of the authentic mode); and, quite tellingly, the third, ends on the forbidden pitch B (forbidden because of its long-standing association with the tritone, the *diabolus in musica*), to indicate how far the poet feels estranged from and forsaken by God. The fourth and fifth motets end on G and E, respectively.

[26] Schütz uses this same "sprung" rhythm in two settings of the Lord's Prayer—the first in the *Cantiones sacrae* (Latin, SWV 89) and the second in SWV 411, *Vater unser, der du bist im Himmel* (*Symphoniae sacrae* III)—at the text "but deliver us from evil."

[27] Song of Solomon 4:9.

[28] The author has not only successfully performed all these motets but has also published an edition of the *Pater noster* (SWV 89) with Roger Dean Music, 15/2445R.

[29] Schütz uses the same type of organization to order both parts of the *Kleine geistliche Konzerte.*

[30] *Geistliche Chor-Music, NSA 5,* ed. Wilhelm Kamlah (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1968).

[31] In his Preface, Kamlah indicates that motets 8, 12, 13, 20, and 25 appear at original pitch; the rest (save 24) are transposed up a major 2nd. Kamlah fails to include a Critical Report or incipits that show the original clefs of the works, making determination of mode virtually impossible.

[32] According to Smallman, 128, two other motets—*Ein Kind ist uns geboren* (SWV 384) and *Ich weiss das mein Erlöser lebt* (SWV 393)—suggest earlier dates of origin.

[33] Smallman, 126. The original German text is "*Worbey der Bassus Generalis, auff Gutachten und Begehren / nicht aber aus Notwendigkeit / zugleich auch zu befinden ist.*"

[34] Ibid., 127.

[35] Interestingly, the two motets that are completely vocal both seem to stem from an earlier time: SWV 393: *Ich weiss dass mein Erlöser lebt* and SWV 395: *Der Engel sprach zu den Hirten*. (The OUP style sheet or NG2 list of abbreviations uses caps for solo voices and lower case for choral voices.) SWV 395 is the German contrafact of A. Gabrieli's *Angelus ad pastores ait,* published in the 1587 print *Concerti di Andrea ed Giovanni Gabrieli.* However, SWV 393, while not demonstrably the reworking of another composition, features the homophonic style and varied voice groupings found in Venetian choral music.

[36] In her monograph on Dietrich Buxtehude (New York: Schirmer, 1987), the musicologist Kerala Snyder points out that the term "aria" refers to the setting of a strophic text of the type included by Giulio Caccini in *Le Nuove Musiche*. Also referred to as "strophic bass variations," such "arias" feature a repeated bass line, different melodies, and a consistently homophonic texture used for each verse. For an example, see Buxtehude's cantata *Membra Jesu Nostri* (BuxWV 75.2).

[37] This example is, like the *NSA* edition, transposed a major second higher than the original.