Treble Voices In Choral Music:

WOMEN, MEN, BOYS, OR CASTRATI?

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Born in Princeton, New Jersey, Timothy Mount recently received his MA in choral conducting at California State University, Fullerton, where he was a student of Howard Swan. Undergraduate work was at the University of Michigan. He has sung professionally with the opera chorus of the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, the Kenneth Jewell Chorale in Detroit, the Festival Singers of Canada, and the Aspen Chamber Choir. Last year he was conductor of the Pomona College Choir, during William Russell's sabbatical.

Whether a composer envisioned male or female (or both) treble voices in the performance of his choral works is an interpretive problem too often ignored by choral conductors. Ignorance of this problem may produce poor performance practice and increase the danger of making every piece sound the same, regardless of the musical period of its composition. Because there has been so little research in this area the conscientious musician is left with only the vague generalization that men and boys were used in the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque periods while mixed choirs, consisting of both sexes, were not used until the time of the Romantic period. But what types of voices were used in the years c. 1740-1810? What role did female vocalists play, if any, prior to the Classical period? Were castrati ever used in choruses? Why were women excluded from choral music for so long? And how does all this affect choral interpretation? These are some questions this paper will attempt to answer.

An historical survey of the different types of treble voices which participated in singing choral music should begin in the early part of the 15th century. In "The Beginnings of Choral Polyphony," Bukofzer concludes that the earliest known example of choral polyphony (i.e., more than one singer to a part) appeared in a "Gloria" and "Credo" by Guillaume Legrant in 1426. Giant choir books, large enough for an entire chorus to see, were first made in Italy in the middle and the second half of the 15th century. In England, choral music began about 1430 with the English polyphonic carol.

> Polyphonic choral music took its cue from and developed out of the Gregorian unison chorus; this explains why the first choral music occurs in the church and why secular compositions are slow in taking up the new fashion. The medieval church knew principally only the unison choir and the solo ensemble. The polyphonic choir was an idea foreign to the medieval tradition. The beginnings of choral polyphony coincide with the beginnings of the musical Renaissance (Bukofzer, 3:189).

By 1400 the Catholic Church allowed women to participate in congregational singing of hymns. The early Protestant churches also provided for female congregational participation in the singing of hymns and psalms. Composers, including Walther, Senfl, Praetorius, Hassler, and Schein,

> wrote polyphonic settings of chorale tunes for use by choirs, as well as tunes for the congregation. It was often the practice for congregation and choir to alternate stanzas of the chorale, the congregation unaccompanied and in unison, and the choir in parts, accompanied by organ or other instruments (Rice, 17:21-22).

Thus, female participation was limited to congregational unison singing of psalms and hymns.

Most authorities agree that no mixed groups sang as the official, liturgical choirs of the Catholic Church prior to the 18th century. This custom was not confined to Catholicism but was also found in Protestant churches. While he was organist at Arnstadt in 1706, Bach was officially reprimanded and questioned ". . . by what right he recently caused the strange maiden to be invited into the choir loft and let her make music there" (David, 7:53). This "strange maiden" probably was Maria Barbara Bach, Johann Sebastian's cousin and future first wife. The strict nature of this rule forbidding women to enter the choir loft is shown by the absence of the congregation: Bach and Maria Barbara were only practicing and church was not even in session!

There were certain places where women were allowed to perform religious music: these were the convents, cloisters, and religious schools for girls. Nuns were permitted to sing choral music (obviously, for high voices only) among themselves and even for invited audiences. This practice was established in the Middle Ages when the music was limited to plainsong. Later, however, polyphonic works were also performed. On his musical tour of Italy in 1770 Burney describes several **conservatorios** or music schools in Venice for girls. These schools must not be confused with the vocational conservatories of today. They were supported by the Church and cared mostly for foundling and orphan girls. Several composers, including Hasse, Porpora, Gasparini, and Vivaldi, composed music for the girls at such institutions.

Only men and boys were allowed to sing in liturgical choirs throughout Europe before the middle of the 18th century. A good example of the ideal choir can be obtained from evidence concerning the activity in the court chapel where Lassus worked at Munich in the middle of the 16th century — "ideal" because Lassus was respected, successful, and had the best available musical resources. The ensemble Lassus worked with is not only well documented but a painting also survives (McKinney, 15:217). In addition to instrumentalists there were thirteen male altos, fifteen tenors, twelve basses, sixteen choirboys to sing the soprano part, and five or six castrati.

With the increasing complexity of descant and counterpoint in Renaissance and Baroque music, it became more and more difficult for boys to perform these difficult treble parts by themselves. Usually by the time they had achieved some musical proficiency, their voices were ready to change. There were three alternatives to using boys' voices to sing treble parts: castrati, a mysterious Spanish technique of falsetto singing, and male altos.

Castrati first sang in the Papal Choir in 1562. The use of castrati, while not officially condoned by the Church, was at least tolerated until the 19th century. Monteverdi used castrati at St. Mark's in Venice. After his visit to the cathedral in Milan, Burney describes a small choir consisting of "one boy, and three castrati for the soprano and contr'alto, with two tenors and two basses" (4:65,I). Castrati were also employed in the court chapels and cathedrals of Northern Europe — for example, in Lassus' choir. Michael Haydn employed castrati in Salzburg and Mozart mentioned them frequently in his letters and used them in his operas and sacred works. Thus, while preferably employed as soloists, castrati probably sang choral music but almost always in conjunction with boys singing the same part. In France and England, however, their sphere of activity was confined to the Italian opera, boy sopranos being preferred for choirs.

Protestant churches were more reluctant in allowing castrati in their services. Yet some of the more difficult treble arias in Bach's cantatas must have been sung by adult falsettists. Spitta (19:310,II) believed that it was not uncommon for these men to command a range up to "E and F in Alt.," i.e., the third E and F above middle C! The only

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way Spitta is able to account for this is a belief in the existence of a mysterious, secret, vocal technique which by Spitta's time had disappeared. Very little is known of this special technique of soprano falsettists.

In the sixteenth century the Sistine Choir included some famous Spanish **falsetti** who may have supplanted the boys provided by the Orphanotropia or Scholae Cantorum. Rockstro states that the **soprano falsetto** was extensively cultivated (in Spain) by means of some peculiar system of training, the secret of which has never publicly transpired. At the close of the sixteenth century, Spanish soprani were in very great request (Hough, 10:3).

Adult male altos have long played an important role in English choirs.

> The tradition of countertenor singing in English cathedral choirs has never been broken since earliest times . . . and its distinctive tone-colour is an essential part of English choral music (Dart, 6:49-50).

In a footnote to Burney's **Musical Tours** (4:114,I) Scholes states that in Burney's day male altos were used to the total exclusion of women:

> We see how late took place the swing over from the use of male singers of the part to that of female by the singers of the choirs of the Crystal Palace Handel Festival: in this, male altos in 1895 were 418; in 1900, they were 73; and in 1903 they were 3.

The use of countertenors was not confined to England, however, but popular throughout Europe and even in North America (especially English-speaking Canada) for centuries. John Hough provides evidence of falsetto singing beginning in the 12th century. He quotes a translation of St. Bernard of France: ". . . sometimes the masculine vigour being laid aside it is sharpened into the shrillnesse of a woman's voyce" (10:2). There is other evidence of male altos singing at French courts in the 16th and 17th centuries and the court at Weimar where Bach was employed.

Most female vocalists prior to c. 1750 were restricted to secular music, and particularly to the opera. Monteverdi regularly employed women soloists in his operatic presentations. A woman soloist also appeared in F. Manelli's **Andromeda** in 1637. A painting of the opera **La Contesa dei Numi** composed by Leonardo Vinci, painted by Panini, and performed in Rome in 1729, depicts a chorus of men on one side of the stage and women on the other (Pincherle, 16:123) Numerous illustrations and paintings may be found of women participating in the singing (and playing) of Renaissance madrigals, frottoli, and part-songs, especially in Italy and France. But this type of secular singing was generally confined to only one person singing each part.

In England, women vocalists sometimes sang solos in secular music: e.g., in **The Siege of Rhodes,** one of the first English operas. Shaw, in his introduction to the Purcell Society Edition mentions that the name of a woman soloist, a "Mrs. Ayliff," was written on Purcell's score of his 1693 **Birthday Ode to Queen Mary.** However, the second soprano part in the solo quintet of the same work was sung by "the Boy" and the mezzo-soprano and alto solos were performed by men.

In summary, women probably were allowed to participate in vocal music before the middle of the 18th century only as follows: 1) congregational unison singing, 2) predominantly sôlo or ensemble (one singer to a part) secular music, and 3) females performing only with other females.

Why were there no mixed choirs before the middle of the 18th century? Most of the significant choral music up to that time was composed for and performed at court or church. (Theater or opera music was largely a function of the courtly aristocracy and oriented primarily towards the vocal solo.) Thus, the answer to this must be found by analyzing separately the needs of each institution.

The amateur singing societies, which were the first important mixed choirs, were an outgrowth of an educated middle class interest in music beginning in the 18th century. Previous to this time political, social, and economic forces prevented the growth of a large educated middle class. Also, the choirs of the aristocratic courts were composed primarily of professional and student singers; and, historically, women have usually been prevented or discouraged from pursuing professional careers and career-oriented education and training. Thus, these choirs were male-dominated.

There were several reasons why women were prevented from singing choral music in churches. One was the Church's attitude toward secular music and, in particular, music for the stage. Because women sang opera, their participation in church music might have been construed as an improper intrusion of the profane into the sacred:

> What would St. Augustine have said could he have heard Mozart's **Requiem,** or been present at some Roman Catholic Cathedral where an eighteenth-century mass was performed, a woman hired from the Opera-House whooping the Benedictus from the Western Gallery (Bridges, 2:25).

Church dogma, primarily that of the Catholic Church, also kept women from membership in church choirs for a long time. As early as the 4th century women were not allowed to sing in church by order of the Didascalis of 318, the Council of Laodicea (367), and the Synod of Antioch (379). And as recently as 1903 Pope Pius X issued a **moto** proprio on sacred music expressly forbidding the use of women in liturgical choirs. However, the **moto proprio** was not strictly obeyed, especially in the United States where women have long sung in Catholic choirs with the tacit permission of the bishops. But it was not until 1958 that Pope Pius XII, in his **Musicae sacrae disciplina,** allowed churches to use mixed choirs of men and women or girls so long as they remained outside the sanctuary and ". . . everything unbecoming is avoided" (Mume, 11:178).

Often it was simply outright sexism which under the guise of religious propriety played a part in excluding women from church choirs. For example, in 1826 a writer (John La Trube) brought charges against an English church choir and its organist including the "want of reverence" ensuing from the admission of women to the choir.

> "What can be more unpleasing," he asks, "than to see a female with unabashed front, standing up in the presence of the full congregation, and

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with outstretched neck, screaming above the voices of the multitude and the swell of the organ, like a seagull in a tempest!" (Liemohn, 14:107)

The first evidence of women singing religious music in church comes from Germany. In 1715 Johann Mattheson became director of the Lutheran cathedral in Hamburg and presented an oratorio of his own composition. In it he included three female opera singers as soloists. "Never before had women been permitted to take part in the formal music of the Lutheran churches in Hamburg" (Cannon, 5:50). Liemohn enlarges on this:

> [Mattheson] used three or four women in his choir, against stiff protests at first, but with growing favor as the people became more accustomed to the practice. Nevertheless we cannot say that his experiment was either wide-spread or long-lived (14:67-68).

Whether these women sang solos alone or with the choir is open to question. Nevertheless, the event was noteworthy. Mattheson was director of the Hamburg cathedral from 1715-1728. Not only a conductor, he was also a critic, theorist, diplomat, composer, instrumentalist, and singer. Although unsuccessful in permanently establishing women in church choirs, he influenced German musical thought considerably, especially in the introduction of dramatic and concerted music into the Lutheran Church. He became close friends with Handel when the latter arrived as a young man in Hamburg in 1703 and later helped persuade Handel to settle in England.

Perhaps Mattheson was also influential in Handel's decision to sometimes use women in the choruses of his oratorios. In a contemporary but undated print reproduced in **The Oxford Companion** (Scholes, 18:plate 121) there is a picture of Handel presiding at the rehearsal of one of his oratorios. The soloists and the choir include women and no boys are visible. On the same page, however, is a print by Hogarth (dated 1734) entitled "Oratorio as seen by Hogarth" which does picture several boys but no women.

At Handel's own performances of **Messiah** (1742-1759) the soprano and alto solos were taken at various times by women, countertenors, castrati, and even a boy. More than four soloists often sang in each performance. "This was of some importance, because, in contemporary practice the soloists sang with the chorus, and they must have constituted a substantial part of the small ensemble" (Lang, 13:340). For example, in the first performance of **Samson** in Covent Garden (1743) the three female soloists joined with the boys in the accompanying "choirs of virgins" to Dalila's aria "My faith and truth, O Samson, prove." But with the exception of these soloist additions, oratorio choruses remained all male. We may then summarize Handel's chorus: 1) women were the exception rather than the rule, 2) they were used only in addition to the male voices, usually, the soprano part exclusively, and 3) the typical chorus consisted of basses, tenors, falsettists, and boys. These same generalizations may be applied to other 18th century oratorio choruses, e.g., the Covent Garden revival of Thomas Arne's **Judith** (1773), the famous Handel commemoration program in Westminster Abbey (1784), and the Stoughton Musical Society (1774).

On the continent similar mixtures of singers were evident. Donington's last piece of evidence in **The Interpretation of Early Music** (1st edition) is very interesting in this respect. This document is a list of musical directors and personnel of various European opera houses, courts, and churches compiled by Friedrich W. Marpurg. No reliable generalizations or definite conclusions can be derived from this list. It simply reflects the variety of treble voices — women, men, boys, and castrati — in choruses between 1754 and 1758.

What were some of the reasons for the gradual introduction of women into the practice of choral music? The influence of men like Mattheson who helped break down the barrier between theater music and church music has already been mentioned. Many people took seriously the ideas of Rousseau and the Enlightenment. Religious dogma and authority were often questioned. Another factor contributing to the growth of mixed choirs was the increasing number of women soloists in opera, oratorio, and other sacred works. The type of treble soloists used often depended on the occasion for which a work was written, where it was to be performed, and the available performing resources. For example, at the first performance of Mozart's **Miss brevis in B-flat** K. 275 (272b) in 1777, a castrato sang the soprano solo. However, in 1791 this same solo was sung by an eleven-year old girl. We also know that Constanze Mozart sang the soprano solo in the first performance of the **Mass in c minor** in Salzburg (1783).

The music itself was also responsible for the growth of female participation. Music in the second half of the 18th century became melody-dominated, as opposed to previous Baroque polyphony. Perhaps this was why women sang only the soprano parts in oratorio in England. Burney provides an excellent contemporary (1772) account of this need for strength in the soprano part:

> Two boys, in particular, sung advent very agreeably; but there is generally a want of steadiness in such young musicians, which makes it to be wished that females were permitted in the church to take the soprano part, which is generally the principle, as the voices of females are more permanent than those of boys (4:17,II).

This was in Brussels. A little later in another church in the same city:

> [I] was glad to find . . . two or three women who, although they did not sing well, yet their being employed proved that female voices might have admission in the church, without giving offence or scandal to piety, or even bigotry. If the practice were to become general, of admitting women to sing the soprano part in the cathedrals, it would, in Italy, be a service to mankind, . . . in general the want of treble voices, at least of such as have had sufficient time to be polished, and rendered steady, destroys the effect of the best compositions, in which, if the principal melody be feeble, nothing but the subordinate parts, meant only as attendants, and to enrich the harmony of the whole, can be heard (4:20-21,II).

The greatest factor which helped to break down the prejudice against mixed choruses was the growing educated middle class interest in music after the middle of the 18th century. The first amateur mixed chorus worthy of note was organized by Karl Christian Fasch (1736-1800). Fasch was associated with the two important early Classical composers, C.P.E. Bach and Georg Benda and worked at the court of Friedrich the Great. Several of his female pupils persuaded fellow students and friends to form a small mixed choir which Fasch was requested to direct. He complied, and by 1790 between 10 and 16 people attended regular choral rehearsals at the summer house of Councillor Milner near Berlin. In 1793 the choir was granted use of a room in the Royal Academy of Arts from which they derived their name **Singakademie**. The group numbered 147 in 1800 when Fasch died. In memory of their founder the society performed Mozart's **Requiem** conducted by their new leader, Karl Friedrich Zelter.

Other amateur groups were soon formed in the early 19th century. In Leipzig

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the **Singverein** was formed in 1802, and the **Gesangverein** in Luebeck was founded in 1805. A choral society was organized in Erlangen in 1806.

Another early amateur chorus was the **Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde** (Society of the Friends of Music) founded in Vienna in 1813 at the instigation of Dr. Joseph von Sonnleithner. The choir's first patron (1814-1831) was Cardinal Archduke Rudolf, Beethoven's pupil and patron. Members of the **Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde** joined the regular chorus of the **Kaerntnerthor Theatre** to sing the premier in 1824 of Beethoven's **Ninth Symphony** and three movements of the **Missa Solemnis.** In a pre-concert conversation with Lichnowsky, Schindler said:

> The choruses at the theatre are also good; Schuppanzigh says that the women's choir of the society [**Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde**] is not of the best because they are all young girls, which is true . . . . The women's choir is thoroughly bad . . . . Twenty to twenty-four for each part in the chorus are already on hand (Thayer, 21:159,III).

Ten years earlier Beethoven wrote a cantata, **Der glorreiche Augenblick,** for the Congress of Vienna in 1814. In this work the chorus is divided into three separate groups of men, women, and children. Thus, Beethoven wanted and probably had performing resources for two distinct and different tone colors for his treble voices, a technique later used by Berlioz and other composers. Beethoven was not the first composer interested in the effect of different tone colors in treble voices. A **Gaude Virgo** in the Trent Codices by the 15th century French composer H. Battre includes specific directions indicating that certain passages should be sung by **pueri** (boys) and others by **mutate voces** (changed voices.

In London and other large English cities boys and adult male falsettists still prevailed in singing the treble parts in choirs. However, in the smaller towns there was a scarcity of trained boys' voices and women therefore often sang in the smaller church choirs.

In the rest of Europe small mixed choirs consisting of men and women alone became common by the time the Romantic movement was firmly established after about 1840.

The following statements summarize the variety of different vocal forces used in singing treble parts in choral music from the 15th century to the middle of the 19th century:

1) Prior to c. 1750 women participated in singing vocal music as follows: a) congregational unison singing, b) predominantly solo or ensemble (one singer to a part) secular music, e.g., madrigals, oratorio, opera, and c) females performing only with other females. The only exceptions were women singing in opera and oratorio choruses in the 17th and 18th centuries.

2) In sacred music before c. 1750 treble parts were sung by boys, castrati, and adult male falsettists.

3) Women first started singing sacred music in the middle of the 18th century.

4) The first important mixed choirs were amateur choral singing societies. The first of these societies were formed c. 1800.

5) By the middle of the 19th century, mixed choruses singing sacred and secular music were common. In England, however, boys and men continued to sing treble parts in the church choirs of large cities.

INTERPRETATION: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

How does the fact that boys, castrati, falsettists, women, and various combinations of all four were common at different times in the history of choral music affect modern interpretation of music written before the middle of the 19th century?

It is impossible to know exactly the kind of vocal quality produced by castrati. They sang not only soprano parts but alto as well. Although the vocal bands remained relatively unchanged from childhood, their capabilities in terms of breath support and body resonance increased as they aged. Therefore, it is possible that their voices were characterized by the general quality of boys' voices with a richer, more colorful tone, vocal agility, and volume potential.

It is much easier to discuss boys' voices. Throughout most of childhood boys and girls have essentially the same vocal quality. But as boys approach puberty and the eventual voice change, there is an increase in brilliance and clarity of the upper pitches of their voices. At this time the voice can become quite buoyant, resonant, and expressive if properly trained — and the boys of the early **scholae cantorum** and court chapels certainly received more intensive training than the average elementary or junior high school child today.

Authorities disagree concerning whether or not vibrato is a natural function of children's voices. It is certainly not impossible to instill some degree of vibrato in the young voice. However, the general rule is probably: ". . . as the voice matures so will the vibrato of the singer" (Swan, 20:54). It may therefore be assumed that a relatively "straight" tone characterized at least the soprano parts in music intended for and performed by boys.

Although the range for boys' unchanged voices has a potential of G below middle C to two octaves above middle C or higher, more practical and safer ranges are: low voices — B-flat below middle C to C above middle C; high voices — middle C to the second F above. But boys who are true altos are quite rare, and historically, falsettists or countertenors often provided the necessary voices.

In modern performances of older works some conductors ask for a very thin, "white," almost breathy quality from the women because they realize that boys' voices were used. While it is certainly possible to obtain this kind of tone from boys' voices and falsettists, a group of boys and countertenors well trained in the use of some vibrato and vocal resonance is capable of producing a bright, full, resonant tone. Also, castrati and women soloists were often added to the treble voices, thereby contributing vocal maturity to the sound.

The voices of boys and countertenors are certainly not as powerful as those of mature women and this must be considered in the performance of music written before the 19th century as well as in works by Britten, Stravinsky, and others who sometimes prefer children's voices. In other words, considerations of balance are important. In all-male choirs, how could the boys be heard above the instruments and the bigger voices of the basses and tenors? Denis Arnold (1:982-85) suggests several possibilities. Large concert

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halls were relatively rare before the 19th century and concerts were often given in the smaller rooms, chambers, and chapels of the aristocratic courts. In large cathedrals the vocalists were usually mingled in with the instrumentalists, not placed in back of them. In the theater instrumentalists were often placed in the wings behind the scenes. But most important, loud volume and a wide vocal range were often secondary in importance to vocal ornamentation, and this probably demanded an overall decrease in dynamics from those with which we are familiar today.

The music and acoustical factors often provide clues pertaining to tone quality. For example, the overlapping phrases, free rhythm, and polyphonic imitation of Palestrina demand the thin, white tone mentioned above. The same can be said for music written for a place such as St. Mark's in Venice with its very slow acoustical decay and magnified, reverberant sound. But, as Dr. Burney suggested, the music itself may demand something different from the forces that were actually used for its presentation.

In consideration of the vocal qualities of male treble voices, subtlety of dynamics, acoustics, and compositional style, it may be concluded that the most appropriate choral tone for much early music would be best characterized as light, "floating," and bright. Several choral techniques are conducive to this kind of tone.

Precise pitch is essential. Even slight pitch variations within each part will increase the number of partials in the overtone series and affect the overall blend of the choir. Therefore, vibrato, which is essentially a rapid fluctuation of pitch, must never become too wide. Rhythmic precision within each section is also necessary; otherwise, different pitches will sound at different times.

Diction is inseparable from the cultivation of a bright choral tone and a unified pronunciation of each word is important. For example, every diphthong and triphthong should be analyzed to decide what two or three vowel sounds form the syllable and how long each sound is sustained. Dark vowels (e.g., "o") produce a greater number of audible partials in the overtone series than bright vowels (e.g., "ee"). Therefore, a slight brightening or modification of the dark vowels will brighten the tone. Emphasis on pure explosive consonants ("p", "t", "k") and voiced explosive consonants ("b", "d", "g", "j") will provide a crisp quality of tone.

Another valuable technique is vocalization and rehearsal at a very soft dynamic level. Vocal exercises, at least in the first stages of tone development, should be descending scale passages beginning in the head register of the voice. The value of this exercise is to transfer the light, ringing quality of the head register down into the middle or chest register.

The low tessituras of treble parts in music of the Renaissance and Baroque periods may be due to a greater prevalence of falsettists as well as different standards of pitch. In either case, an easy solution to the problem of consistently low pitches is simply the transposition of the entire piece upward, thereby avoiding the dark, often "hooty" quality in the lower ranges of all voices in modern, mixed choirs.

The addition of even one good countertenor to a small alto section can contribute a very pleasing, appropriate tone quality in the performance of Renaissance and Baroque music. Even untrained countertenors can be used on treble parts, especially in less serious, secular music.

Conductors should not be so pedantic as to always insist on recreating the exact number and type of performing forces used in the past. Whenever boys, women, and castrati joined in various combinations in the singing of treble parts in choral music, problems of blend were certainly created. In this respect, the modern mixed choir is often more fortunate. Although variety of vocal color within sections was probably evident in performances of the past, it cannot be concluded this was desired; often, these combinations of voices merely reflected expediency in terms of economics and availability of vocal forces, church dogma, and prejudice against women.

INTERPRETATION: PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Given the historical survey of treble voices and general suggestions for interpretation, Giovanni Gabrieli's **Jubilate Deo** has been chosen as a practical example of how this information may be applied to performance.

There is little evidence concerning the number and types of singers at St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice during Giovanni Gabrieli's tenure as organist (1584-1612). However, enough related information can be found to arrive at the conclusion that boys, adult male falsettists, and castrati probably sang treble parts. An ordinance concerning the choir of St. Mark's was issued in 1403 and stated:

> Since it reflects on the fame and honor of our dominion if our Church of St. Mark has good singers, in view of the fact that this church is the ranking one of our city, the undersigned have resolved to engage eight Venetian-born boys as assistants, to be taught in singing. However, a boy from Montona should be exceptionally included, as he is now in the employ of the church and sings excellently (Kenton, 12:31).

Winterfeld, the great 19th century musicologist, claims that in the early 16th century there were no less than forty singers at St. Mark's. It is also known that Gabrieli spent several years of his youth at the Munich court and enjoyed a close professional and personal relationship with Lassus. Thus, Gabrieli may have easily been influenced by the numbers and types of singers at Munich (see above). Like the court at Munich, St. Mark's was a very important and well-endowed musical institution and could easily afford the best possible musical resources. It was also found that Gabrieli's successor, Monteverdi, used castrati at St. Mark's (see above).

Even if the above information were not available, an examination of the compositional style of **Jubilate Deo** would indicate that Gabrieli probably intended the treble parts for male singers. For almost one-third of the piece all eight vocal parts sing polyphonically at the same time. A wide vibrato and dark, heavy vocal tone would quickly obscure the individual vocal lines. Similarly, the continually changing rhythmic patterns and metric accents found in **Jubilate Deo**

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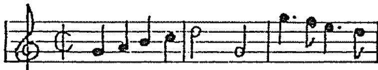
demand the buoyant, light, clear tone discussed previously.

There is no reason for the women of a modern mixed chorus to try to imitate the sound of boys, castrati, or falsettists. But in order to do stylistic justice to the score, several rehearsal techniques for **Jubilate Deo** will be suggested. The first of these is the use of pianissimo singing, particularly where the choral texture is extremely thick. This technique also enables the singers to hear the other voice parts and increase the individual performer's awareness of the polyphonic texture.

The second technique is that of staccato singing. The vocalists may either sing the words or use an explosive, voiced consonant (e.g., "d") but it is essential that no note, no matter what its value, is sustained longer than one eighth-note. If pianissimo singing and staccato singing are combined, the proper tone quality should result when normal dynamics and articulation are resumed.

A valuable procedure for obtaining rhythmic precision (and therefore, clarity of tone) is the mental reduction of rhythmic passages into smaller note-values. For example, the first three measures of the soprano I part in **Jubilate Deo** would be reduced to eighth-notes. The singers must "feel" the eighth-notes while singing the written note-values.



becomes

Extremely loud dynamics should be avoided in performances of **Jubilate Deo.** This is especially important in the tenor and bass voice parts. It must be remembered that boys and falsettists probably sang the treble parts and they would never have been heard if the basses and tenors sang with a fortissimo. If the Schirmer edition of **Jubilate Deo** is used, perhaps each of Woodworth's editorial dynamic markings might be decreased one dynamic panel, i.e., a forte marking would become a mezzo-forte, a mezzo-forte a mezzo-piano, etc. Cadential ornamentation is entirely appropriate in this work and if it is added the volume of sound must be reduced at the cadence in order that the ornaments can be heard.

Outside the scope of this study, but nevertheless very effective, is the emerging ritornello or concertato-ripieno technique of the early Baroque period. The structure of **Jubilate Deo** lends itself very readily to this technique in which tutti sections of full chorus with organ and instruments doubling the voice parts (the ripieno) may alternate with sections sung by soloists or small chorus accompanied by organ alone (the concertato).

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