The Three Extant Masses of Claudio Monteverdi

VAUGHN ROSTE

Claudio Monteverdi (1567 - 1643) is noted more for his madrigal compositions and for his seminal contributions in the operatic field than for his sacred music. However, as the person who was employed at St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice—arguably the best musical post in the world at the time—for the last 30 years of his life, surely his sacred music should not be overlooked. Although his *Vespers of 1610* (Vespero della Beata Virgine) is generally well known, his motets—almost 100 in all—are infrequently performed. Perhaps the best-known motet would be *Beatus Vir* (SV 268)[1]; his other most recognizable titles, such as *Nisi Dominus*, *Duo seraphim*, or *Lauda Jerusalem*, are excerpted from the *Vespers of 1610*. But many are unaware that Monteverdi made any contributions at all to the central genre of sacred music: the mass. In an attempt to remedy this situation, this article addresses each of Monteverdi's extant masses in turn.

Vaughn Roste is director of choral activities at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma <roste@nsuok.edu>.

The Three Extant Masses of

Only three of Monteverdi's masses survive, a number that stands in sharp contrast to the 104 masses produced by his predecessor Palestrina (1525–94), who lived for seven fewer years than Monteverdi. However, there is evidence to suggest that an unidentified number of Monteverdi's masses have been lost, as evidenced in the composer's correspondence (127 original letters by Monteverdi are still in existence). Denis Stevens, in his *Sacred, Secular, and Occasional Music,* summarizes the epistolary evidence as follows:

> In 1616 he mentions a mass for Christmas Eve, in 1618 a concerted mass for the Feast of the Most Precious Blood, and another for Ascension Day. [L]etters of 1621 and 1627 mention a '*messe solemne*' and a mass for Christmas Eve, it being the custom for the director of music [at St. Mark's] to write a new one every year at this season. Unfortunately, no trace of any such work survives from the period 1616 to 1627, and the two masses published later cannot be confidently assigned to any particular year.[2]

In addition to the above revelation, Tim Carter mentions a 1625 mass written in honor of the visit of Polish Crown Prince Władysław Sigismund to Venice,[3] but does not speculate which mass this might be; it may overlap with the list above. Left with such incomplete information, scholars are unable to ascertain how many masses Monteverdi originally composed, but we must assume that no less than five additional Monteverdi masses have been lost.

The three extant masses by Monteverdi, however, are identified in Table One. Fine editions of all of these masses are in print by Carus-Verlag (see bibliography for more information).

This article takes into account the circumstances surrounding the composition of each mass and in the chronological order of their publication. For expediency, the word "extant" will not appear as an adjective in every statement, but must be understood as a necessary caveat for all the claims about Monteverdi's masses which follow.

Missa In Illo Tempore (1610)

On July 16, 1610, the Mantuan singer, Bassano Casola, wrote a letter to Cardinal Federico Gonzaga describing Monteverdi's first mass as:

> showing great effort and learning, since he is obliged to manipulate constantly in every note throughout all parts, always reinforcing [the presence of] the eight motives taken from the motet *In illo tempore* by Gombert.[4]

Of import, Monteverdi's first mass was a parody mass, and is among the last to ever be composed. It has also been called "the very first work consciously kept archaic and deliberately written in a musical style already obsolete"[5] (which seems to ignore other possible contenders for that title such as *Nuper Rosarum Flores,* composed by Dufay in 1436 for the dedication of the Florence Cathedral when isorhythm was almost a generation out of style). As with Gombert's motet which was its inspiration and source, Monteverdi's mass was also written for six voices. Unlike what we might expect coming from the pen of one of the era's greatest madrigalists, however, the mass is largely bereft of any word-painting: only the usual suspects appear, such as a descending line for *descendit de coelis* and an ascending line for *et ascendit in coelum* in the "Credo." The only musical nod to the more modern musical style is in the *basso continuo* part included in the score, which rarely deviates from the lowest vocal part. "If the author of this mass were unknown, one would be tempted to attribute it to some composer of the Roman school, contemporary with Palestrina. The *basso seguente* is the only sign that the work is posterior to 1607, for it was in that year that Adriano Banchieri used it, apparently for the first time..."[6]

Monteverdi's *Missa In Illo Tempore* was published in the same volume as his *Vespers* in 1610. By this time Monteverdi was 43 years old and had already published five of his nine books of madrigals. He likely had several motives for its composition, beyond the challenge and self-development. Artusi's accusations of 1600 may have still been ringing in his ears: in particular, Monteverdi's use of unprepared dissonance in his madrigal *Cruda Amarilli,* an A in the soprano part against a G in the bass, was singled out as so harsh that it offends the ear. By intentionally composing in an archaic style, Monteverdi may have wanted to demonstrate that the *Prima Prattica* was still a valid compositional method—not outdated, but still in use.

Table 1
The Three Extant Masses of Claudio Monteverdi

SV	Title	Key (Mode)	Orchestration	Date of publication
205	*Missa da capella* (aka "Missa In Illo Tempore")	C Major (Ionian)	6 voices + basso continuo	1610
257	*Missa da capella*	F Major	4 voices + basso continuo	1641
190	*Missa da capella*	g minor	4 voices + basso continuo	1650

> There were probably two [motives for writing the mass *In Illo Tempore*]. One was to include in his volume then in preparation, which was to be dedicated to Pope Paul V, a work that would show that he could make a good *maestro di cappella* for a Roman church, where such tastes were still cultivated. Another was to show that he was no simple revolutionary, but really believed in his theory that there were two 'practices': one in which 'the music [is] not commanded but commanding, not the servant but the mistress of the words;' the other where the expression of the words was paramount.[7]

One should also not neglect the impact of the death of his wife in 1607, which left him the sole guardian of three children: Francesco, Camilla, and Massimiliano, aged 6, 4, and 3 respectively. "The inner prompting is undoubtedly to be sought in the spiritual emotions attendant upon the deaths of those dear to him; emotions that rendered the master, always inclined to melancholy, particularly susceptible to religious experiences."[8]

Nevertheless, his career aspirations were perhaps the single biggest reason for the composition of this mass. By the time of the publication of Monteverdi's first mass, he had been living in Mantua for twenty years. During this time, he had been passed over for a promotion: on the death of Giaches de Wert (1536–96), the post of maestro della musica in Duke Gonzaga's court went to Benedetto Pallavicino (1551–1601). Monteverdi did not ascend to that until Pallavicino's death. But, during this period, he had witnessed the growth of his international reputation (e.g., six of his madrigals were published in Copenhagen anthologies in 1605 and 1606) and his operatic career—the first composer who can be said to have truly had one. *Arianna* was staged in Mantua in 1608—and *Orfeo* had been composed the previous year. Thus, after 20 years in Mantua, it would not be surprising if Monteverdi had been looking further afield.

Monteverdi traveled to Rome to personally present the freshly-published mass to its dedicatee Pope Paul V (r. 1605–21). Ostensibly, the trip's purpose was to secure a place at the Seminario Romano for his son Francesco, but his travelling to Rome raised suspicions that his ulterior motivation was to seek another post even at the time. Moreover, his secrecy in making the trip only fuelled doubts concerning his loyalty to his patrons the Gonzagas. Monteverdi surely made sincere subsequent attempts to placate his employers, but the damage may already have been done. Monteverdi's employ in Mantua did not last much longer: after Duke Vincenzo's death on February 18, 1612, his successor Francesco reduced the size of the ducal court, and Monteverdi was dismissed on July 29. In the end, however, this dismissal opened the door for him to audition for the position at St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice, where he would spend the rest of his life.

History records that Monteverdi provided a mass for his audition for the post of *maestro di cappella* at St. Mark's in Venice, but there is no way of knowing for certain that it was the *Missa In Illo Tempore* that specifically served this purpose. This is the only mass of Monteverdi's known to have been complete at this time, but it is not written in a style destined to impress cosmopolitan Venetians. Scholars have suggested it was the *Vespers of 1610,* rather than a mass, that Monteverdi used as his audition piece. If subsequent performance history is allowed an opinion, the popularity of Monteverdi's *Vespers,* which is much more frequently performed and better known than the *Missa In Illo Tempore,* would surely lend credence to that claim. A parody mass written in the old style would be a logical audition piece for a Roman audience—even if it was, nonetheless, a bold attempt to try to impress audiences who were already accustomed to Palestrina's music—but less likely to win him admiration in the most serene republic of Venice.

Lewis Lockwood writes, "in choosing a motet by Gombert as his model, Monteverdi selected the one composer of the first half of the sixteenth century in which the compositional style was prominently known for its density of textures, interplay of motives in all voices, and absence of rests."[9] Monteverdi's mass remains true to its source in all these respects. In the absence of any previous Monteverdi masses, it is impossible to ascertain to what extent this style represents Monteverdi's personal preference or is an homage to Gombert (c. 1495 – c. 1560) by intentionally emulating his compositional mannerisms. In other words, can the use of Gombert's motet as the source of Monteverdi's mass be interpreted as a compliment to Gombert, nominating him as the prime example of *Prima Prattica*? That view would be a surprising assertion, because Gombert never enjoyed as fine a posthumous reputation as did Palestrina, Victoria, or Morales. It more likely was merely a matter of convenience. "Gombert's motet *In illo tempore* had two important advantages for Monteverdi: it contained motives with a strong harmonic basis, and it was fully Ionian, with no trace of the older Church modes. The work was therefore quite suitable for Monteverdi's

Request Your
FREE
CHORAL RESOURCE PACKET & RESOURCE CD!

All Things Musical
The Nation's #1 Music Education Resource in Print, Digital & Online
Toll Free 1-888-803-6287
allthingsmusical@aol.com
AllThingsMusical.com

own tonal inclinations."[10]

Stevens avers Monteverdi may have chosen a parody mass and a Gombert model as its basis for his first foray into in this genre due to his close association in Mantua with Giaches de Wert, "a master of northern polyphony and a skilled hand where the parody mass was concerned."[11] This circumstance likely may have also influenced his selection of a motet by Gombert.

There are also reasons why a mass based upon Gombert's motet would be published alongside a collection of pieces for the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary. "The three words *in illo tempore* point unequivocally to the fact that we are dealing with a liturgical Gospel text, and the continuation '*loquente Jesus ad turbas*' indicates the feasts for which both motet and mass were intended: the Vigil of the Assumption [and] the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary."[12] The *Missa In Illo Tempore* can be considered a Marian Mass, thus it makes perfect sense to include it in the same publication as his *Vespers for the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

Casola's reference (quoted above) to the "eight motives" [*otto fughe*] Monteverdi derived from Gombert's motet is an error, since there are ten of them clearly identified on the front page of the original part books. Lockwood points out, however, that the quoted *fughe* conform more closely to Monteverdi's mass than Gombert's motet.[13] Additionally, their order of presentation in the list differs from their order of appearance in the mass; two contemporary prints each list slightly different *fughe*. These facts, coupled with Casola's reference to eight *fughe*, begs the question to what extent the listing of the *fughe* really originated with Monteverdi, or if they did, which version of the list should be viewed as more authentic? Regardless, the point is made that ten (not eight) *fughe* form the basis of Monteverdi's mass, since one or more of them can be found almost ubiquitously within the composition. "The imitative polyphony gives way to homophony only in *Et incarnatus* and *Benedictus*."[14]

> Scarcely a bar goes by without direct use of the themes, deployed with all the contrapuntal devises—inversions, augmentation, diminution—as though it were really and truly an 'Art of Fugue.' And, although the 'Gombert' mass is written for six-part choir, as is Palestrina's *Assumpta est Maria,* almost as to challenge comparison with the great Roman composer, there is none of the sheer glorying in choral sonorities that we find there. Apart from a traditional reduction of forces for the *Crucifixus,* Monteverdi uses the full choir nearly all the time, allowing himself little or no contrast in sound or texture. Certainly he obeys many Palestrinian rules. Dissonance is now an orderly affair of preparation and suspension and there are none of those maverick discords found in the *Vespers* music. The melody is deprived of any ornament and is extremely smooth, with neither the expressive leaps so common in his secular music nor the irregular rhythms which make *Lauda Jerusalem* so exciting.[15]

Monteverdi's ten fuge are supplied in Figure 1 on the following page. As Joan Conlon points out, "the *fughe* share other similarities with one another: *fuga* five is easily found at the end of *fuga* one, and *fuga* two can be found buried in the middle of *fuga* three."[17] Her latter observation continues to mystify me (unless she is talking about the opening turn, which is found in *fuga* three transposed down a fourth, but perhaps she was looking at the set of *fughe* from the other surviving source instead of this set, which comes from her book), she correctly observes that the *fughe* are all very similar. Although they cover all the diatonic notes of C major, they all end on either tonic or dominant, and all but *fuga* seven start there as well. The first two notes of *fuga* seven are the last two notes of both *fuga* one and five, making it easy to transition from one to another. The ninth *fuga* also bears much similarity to the first; in fact, in this case 9 + 5 almost = 1.

The scholarly assessment of Monteverdi's first mass has not been overwhelmingly positive. Some point to it as a "perfect example of the *prima prattica* style,"[18] but other critics point to Monteverdi's lack of word-painting as a defect, claiming that there could be at least some noticeable difference in presentation between *crucifixus* and *et resurrexit* as was quite common at the time but which Monteverdi studiously avoids. Denis Arnold called the mass "curiously emasculated."[19] Other scholars say that the mass shows great effort, but it is still labored at points and the counterpoint does not flow as freely as it would in later masses; apparently Monteverdi's full potential as a composer in the style of the *Prima Prattica* had yet to be realized. The general consensus seems to agree with Casola, vindicated after all these years: that the *Missa In Illo Tempore* "was a work of great learning for Monteverdi to write, and it sounds like it."[20]

Missa da capella a 4 voci in F Major (1641)

As the *maestro di cappella* at St. Mark's, Monteverdi had approximately 25 singers at his disposal, with an equivalent number of instrumentalists available for festival days.[21] Yet, none of Monteverdi's masses illustrate the grand Venetian innovation of *cori spezzati* as one might well expect from St. Mark's, probably because "by the time Monteverdi arrived in Venice, the ways of *cori spezzati* were becoming distinctly old fashioned."[22] This circumstance may not, however, be so much a sign of Monteverdi's conservatism as a conclusion drawn from masses of his which happen to have survived. Masses would not always be grandiose affairs; many smaller masses would be required for regular production as well. The two masses written by Monteverdi in Venice probably stemmed from the observance of daily mass at St. Mark's, a practice which had fallen slack but which Monteverdi re-instigated upon his arrival.[23] He bought masses by Roman composers (including Palestrina) that had been printed by the local Venetian presses and added to the repertory himself; beyond even the two masses by him which survive from this period, a point confirmed by the following correspondence.

> It is clear that he was now fluent in the old style, and these two Masses flow more naturally than had the

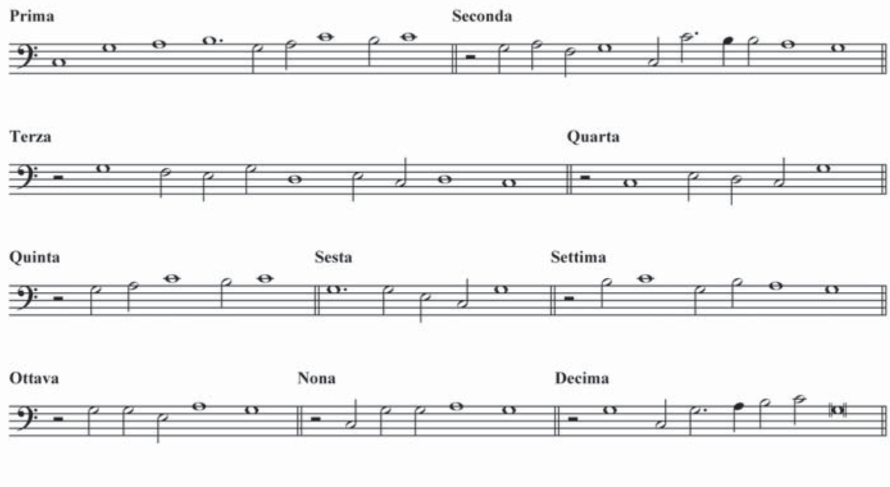

Figure 1. The 10 *fughe* identified by Monteverdi as sources for his musical material[16]

> ‘Gombert’ paraphrase. Since these were for ordinary days, they were written for a four-voiced choir accompanied by organ and did not demand the strenuous efforts of the earlier work. There are indeed ample rests, as Monteverdi reverted to the earlier Netherlandish practice of contrasting the upper and lower two sections of the choir. Nor are these pieces consciously learned. There is no parading of themes at the head of the Kyrie....[24]

Nonetheless, the other two Monteverdi masses are also written in *Prima Prattica* style, and bear many similarities to his first mass: “The mass is in the *stile antico* and is based almost entirely on the use of imitative counterpoint; only a few passages in the *Credo* approach chordal style. The counterpoint is in the eloquent style of Lasso, and as the continuo does no more than support the lowest voice and can therefore be omitted in performance…”[25] Scholars use this mass to illustrate the development of Monteverdi’s skill in the archaic style of composition, calling the *Mass in F* “one of Monteverdi’s most tightly-knit sacred compositions, with motives introduced during the *Kyrie* providing the thematic substance for the entire remainder of the mass.”[26] Some consider it a credit to Monteverdi that he never abandoned the old ways.

> [I]t would be difficult to assign it to its composer without other evidence, its un-Palestrinian sequences and harmonic drive are enough to show that it is the work of someone still possessed of tremendous energy; and there is something touching about a man who, accused of insidious revolution and wildness, shows a belief in, if not eternal principles, at least historical perspective, order and stability.[27]

Although the date of publication of the *Mass in F* is not hard to determine (it was published in the *Selve Morale e Spirituale* collection in 1641), its date of composition has proven more difficult to establish. Its performance has historically been linked with the celebration of the cessation of the plague, which had killed some 50,000 Venetians in 1631, and so its premiere is thought to have occurred on November 21 of that year, for the Feast of the Presentation of the Virgin thanksgiving celebration. A lack of clear documentary evidence, however, means that this is merely an educated guess.

The title of this mass, *Missa da capella a 4 voci,* economically indicates not only its simplicity (a reduction in the number of voices from Monteverdi’s first mass), but also its style of composition, as the term *da cappella* is indicative of a stylistic contrast with the other possibility, *concertato.*[28] Yet, this mass includes a peculiar aspect singular to Monteverdi’s sacred music: alternative movements that may be substituted as desirable. Three curious rubrics in the original print mention alternative *concertato* versions of three parts of the *Credo*: the *Crucifixus,* the *Et Resurrexit* and the *Et iterum*. These *concertato versions* can be found in the same publication separated from the rest of the mass by a *Gloria a 7 voci*. Yet, substituting these alternative movements into their respective places in the F-Major Mass results in three problems.

The first is they do not have the same instrumentation as the movements they were written to potentially replace, leaving some to suggest they were additions written for a later occasion. Specifically, the *Et Resurrexit* requires two violins that echo two solo vocal lines with their own soloistic part, and the *Et Iterum* is written as a trio for two alto soloists and a bass who otherwise make no appearance in the four-voice mass.

The second problem is the abrupt stylistic change that performing these concerted movements within a stile antico mass presents: the florid and melismatic writing in the *Et Iterum* and the chromatic descending lines in the *Crucifixus* are completely out of character with the rest of the *Mass in F*.

Finally, the inclusion of these movements entails a more ambitious tonal adventure (F major, d minor - D major with picardie third, G major, C major, F major) which, while logically continuous, is more convoluted than the straightforward tonal path taken by the keys of the movements they would replace: in the original *Mass in F*, every movement begins and ends in the key of F. The replacement movements are thus out of place instrumentally, stylistically, and tonally with the rest of the mass.

Based upon some contemporary descriptions of the premiere, it has been suggested[29] that these three movements are only part of a completely concerted *Credo,* but no evidence has ever been found to suggest that Monteverdi completed an entire *Credo* in *concertato style,* so we must assume they are what Monteverdi's score claims they are: movements composed as possible substitutes.

Hans Ferdinand Redlich once posited that Monteverdi was second-guessing his own policy of *Prima Prattica* by including alternate movements that provide much contrast to the otherwise somewhat monochromatic set.[30] Others suggest that the replacement movements were occasional pieces composed later with specific individuals in mind, and may even represent portions of an incomplete concerted mass. It is most interesting to consider the replacement movements as an evolution in Monteverdi's thought. If they do not represent part of an incomplete mass themselves, apparently Monteverdi thought that the *Prima* and *Secunda Prattica* could co-exist, not only simultaneously in history, but also musically, as adjacent movements within the same composition.

Without the alternative movements, a performance of this mass is straight forward. Denis Stevens calls it "sober and uneventful."[31] He was also the first to point out the connection between the short theme that pervades every movement of this mass and another of Monteverdi's own madrigals (Figure 2). The possibility exists, then, that Monteverdi's second mass was also a parody mass, but this time the parody model was one of Monteverdi's own works.

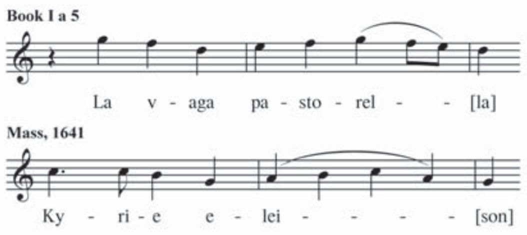
Book I a 5
La v - aga pa - sto - rel - - [la]
Mass, 1641
Ky - ri - e e - lei - - - - [son]

Figure 2. The Similarity of Themes in Monteverdi's *Mass in F* and "La Vaga Pastorella"[32]

Missa da capella a 4 voci in G Minor (1650)

Monteverdi's final mass, in G minor, is considered by many to be his finest. The G Minor Mass includes much more melismatic writing, and switches freely and easily between contrapuntal and homorhythmic sections, which represents Monteverdi's writing at the height of his career. No longer is he writing in ordinary keys such as C major and F major: G minor provides more color, and, perhaps, more inspiration. In his monograph "Monteverdi Church Music," Denis Arnold writes:

> There is a distinct sense of modern tonality: this music does not sound particularly 'antique' because the old modal system has gone. The rhythms are also more modern because they are more regular, and there are occasional extended melismas which look as though they could have been written by Palestrina but in practice seem almost like—admittedly rather conservative—ornaments. And, if the F major Mass (printed in the Selva Morale) is rather dry in its refusal to exploit choral sonorities, the G minor has some moments of distinctive brilliance.[33]

The mass was not published until 1650, which is to say posthumously. The collection *Messe et Salmi* was not printed in Venice until seven years after Monteverdi's death, which is a testament to his enduring legacy that his music was apparently considered to still be in demand after his passing. Yet, this fact makes it even more difficult to determine a date of composition for this mass than it is for the others. This author knows of no scholars willing to place it more specifically than in the last decade of Monteverdi's life. However, it is generally assumed that Monteverdi composed his three masses in the same order in which they were published, since there is no evidence to date that contradicts this assumption.

In his analysis of this mass, Brindle points out that Monteverdi bases the entire mass around a single subject that can be divided in half or into three equal parts (Figure 3).

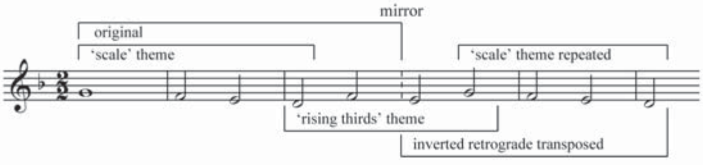

Figure 3. Claudio Monteverdi, *Mass in G minor*[34]
Reduction of the Theme

In a two-part division, the second half is the mirror of the first; each fits neatly into the same tetrachord. When divided into three parts, Brindle identifies where in each movement either the descending scale pattern (the first and final thirds) or the ascending thirds pattern (the middle third) can be found. Even in the brief homophonic sections the overall pattern of a descending tetrachord can be identified in each part. Witness the soprano's descent from Bb to F#, the alto's and bass's descent from G to D, and the tenor's from D to A in Figure 4.

Nor is it only in the homorhythmic sections in which this theme appears, but as one might expect, it is used extensively in the contrapuntal sections as well. The mass uses so many sequences based upon descending patterns of scales and thirds that the subsections of the theme outlined above become its major unifying feature. Brindle recognizes that "in building a relatively long work on a very small amount of material, there is a danger of monotony, particularly when harmonies as well as themes are derived

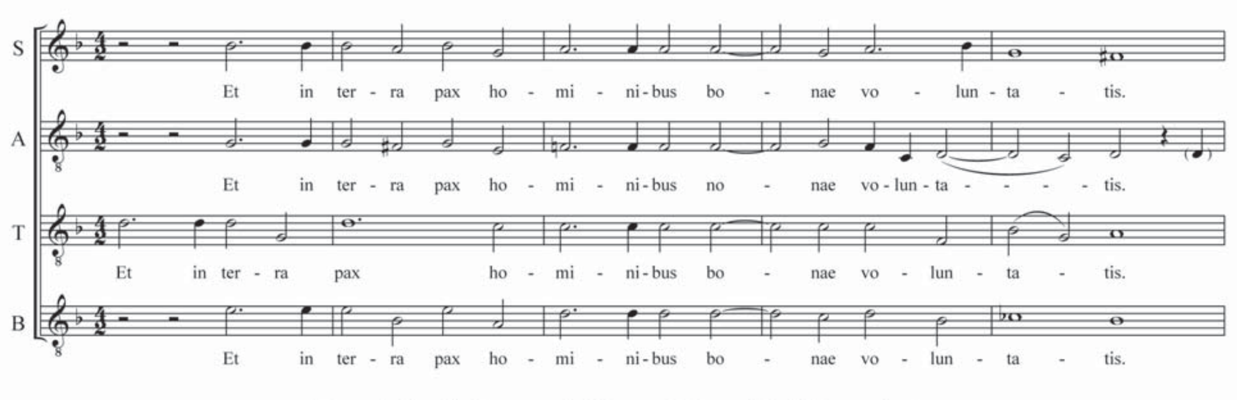
S
Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus bo - nae vo - lun - ta - tis.
A
Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus no - nae vo - lun - ta - - - - tis.
T
Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus bo - nae vo - lun - ta - tis.
B
Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus bo - nae vo - lun - ta - tis.

Figure 4. Claudio Monteverdi, *Mass in G Minor*, "Gloria," mm. 1 – 5.

from the same motive. But the G Minor Mass seems no less rich than Monteverdi's two other extant masses."[36] Over the course of his career, Monteverdi seems to have found a way to constantly imbue a work with a sense of direction, purpose, and freshness, even in a work such as this which utilizes a minimum of musical resources in its creation. "To sum up, it would seem that, far from being merely an exercise in the *stile antico,* the mass was a *tour de force* in a new form of constructivism. It aimed at a method of drawing almost every note progression and much of the harmonic structure from a bare minimum of material that amounted to no more than a mere handful of notes."[37]

Conclusions

With only three extant masses, Monteverdi's contributions to the genre are neither especially memorable for their quantity, and save for their intentionally archaic style, nor are they likely to be remembered for their quality, with much competition in the field from other composers in both the Renaissance and Baroque eras. Yet, Monteverdi's masses represent much more than historical curiosities written in archaic styles; some scholars consider his masses to be the pinnacle of achievement in the genre for his time. "Not only does Monteverdi, in the more important of his religious works, refrain from those audacities of harmony which characterize his madrigals and lyric dramas, but also he surpasses all the purists of the epoch. He uses a style of archaic austerity."[38] As such, they surely deserve to be performed more frequently than they currently are.

Monteverdi's motivations in composing these masses are difficult to ascertain, but he obviously composed masses for reasons beyond mere need or vocational expectation. He may have relished the fresh challenge they presented. Inasmuch as his operas and madrigals illustrate Monteverdi's prowess in the *Secunda Prattica,* his masses afforded him the rare opportunity to illustrate the breadth of his compositional style(s) and capabilities in composing in the *Prima Prattica* manner as well. So, Monteverdi was no "reluctant composer of church music," as Leo Schrade labelled him. On the contrary, he attacked the field with relish. In the end, sacred music was a major element of his compositional output, and his masses are central to his contributions to sacred music. The fact that the publication of his masses spans the duration of his lifetime (and extends beyond it), indicates that he never abandoned the genre; moreover, the fact that his three major publications of sacred music each include a mass likely indicates he viewed the mass as central to both his worship experience and his sacred compositions. Monteverdi's masses provide a unique doorway into examining his sacred *oeuvre,* and may well prove to be what he considered to be the core of his spiritual works. "These three masses . . . must be accorded the same central position in his lifework as must, for instance, Anton Bruckner's three masses in his. They bear witness for Monteverdi as the guardian of powerful traditions."[39]

Monteverdi's masses also provide a singular lens through which to view his evolution as a composer:

> Though one might believe that works in such a studied style must be cold, Monteverdi's changing personality is reflected quite well in his three stile antico Masses. If in Mantua he was tense, determined to show the world his skill and passion, in Venice he was more relaxed, more philosophical in accepting (as the Most Serene Republic itself was doing) increasing age. There is almost a sense of relief and calm in the works.[40]

The question remains about Monteverdi's motivation in writing in the archaic style: was it out of a perceived need, real or imagined, that this was the type of music preferred by his adjudicators, or desirable for church music in general? Was it merely for the intellectual challenge in writing in a completely different style? Or, did his motivation stem from a desire to perpetuate what he believed was an important tradition in sacred composition? Can the notion that his masses are written in *stile antico* be interpreted to mean that Monteverdi therefore agreed, in principle, with the ideals and reforms of the counter-Reformation?

The answers to these questions must be assumed, but one may still venture an educated guess based upon the evidence. Because Monteverdi included alternative movements for his second mass in concerto style, it follows that Monteverdi did not consider *stile antico* to be the only appropriate manner of composition for sacred music. *Secunda Prattica* is acceptable in the sanctuary. This writer's personal belief: as the composer witnessed the changes in the musical scene, particularly in Venice, Monteverdi astutely perceived the musical trends of his time. He was, after all, one of the first to articulate them in response to Artusi. Monteverdi embraced the view that music would continue to evolve in a similar way in the future, and realized that church composition would inevitably follow much the same path. Monteverdi's composing in an unfamiliar style was for a personal challenge and something he did to illustrate the breadth of his knowledge and talent, not because he wanted to institutionalize a certain style of music for sacred use.

Both Monteverdi's life span and his compositional *oeuvre* reveal him to be a composer with one foot in the Renaissance era and one foot in the Baroque. Nevertheless, the presumption is progressive composers always looked steadfastly and impatiently forward. Monteverdi certainly looked forward, arguably more so than his contemporaries, and even perhaps as much as Beethoven or Schoenberg later would. Yet, Monteverdi's masses also give evidence that he was not one to recklessly discard tradition, and that he, at times, in fact chose to look backward purposefully and fondly.

NOTES

[1] *Beatus Vir* is a SSATTB setting of Psalm 112 for two violins and continuo that has its origins in *Chiome d'oro* (SV 143), an earlier canzonetta published in 1619. See Tim Carter and Geoffrey Chew, "Monteverdi, Claudio" in Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article /grove/music/04487 (accessed Sept 15, 2010).

[2] Denis Stevens, "Monteverdi: Sacred, Secular, and Occasional Music" (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1978), 69.

[3] Tim Carter and Geoffrey Chew, "Monteverdi, Claudio" in Grove Music Online.

[4] *di studio et fatica grande, essendosi obligato maneggiar sempre in ogni note per tutte le vie, sempre piu rinforzando le otto fughe che sono nel motetto,* In Illo Tempore *del Gombert. . .* Translated by Lewis Lockwood, "'Monteverdi and Gombert: the Missa *In illo tempore of 1610*," In *De musica et cantu: Studien zur Geschichte der Kirchenmusik und der Oper: Helmut Hucke zum 60. Geburtstag,* eds. Peter Cahn and Ann-Karin Heimer (New York: Hildesheim, 1993), 458.

[5] Hans Ferdinand Redlich, "Monteverdi's Religious Music," *Music and Letters,* xxvii (1946), 209.

[6] Henry Prunieres, *Monteverdi: His Life and Work* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd. 1926), 114.

[7] Denis Arnold, *Monteverdi Church Music* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1982), 32.

[8] Hans Ferdinand Redlich, *Claudio Monteverdi: Life and Works:* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), 122.

[9] Lockwood, *Monteverdi and Gombert: the Missa In illo tempore of 1610,* 459.

[10] Jeffrey Kurtzmann, *Essays on the Monteverdi Mass and Vespers of 1610* (Rice University Studies 64, no. 4. Houston: Rice University, 1978), 48.

[11] Stevens, *Monteverdi: Sacred, Secular, and Occasional Music,* 68.

[12] Lockwood, *Monteverdi and Gombert: the Missa In illo tempore of 1610,* 468.

[13] Ibid., 462.

[14] Carter and Chew, "Monteverdi, Claudio" Grove Music Online.

[15] Arnold, *Monteverdi Church Music,* 32. Kurtzmann would agree: "The reduction of the texture to four high voices for the *Crucifixus* was a widespread tradition in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century polyphonic masses..." See Jeffrey Kurtzmann, *Essays on the Monteverdi Mass and Vespers of 1610* (*Rice University Studies* 64, no. 4. Houston: Rice University, 1978), 28–29.

[16] Figure adapted from Joan Catoni Conlon, *Performing Monteverdi: A Conductor's Guide* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Hinshaw Music, 2001), 234.

[17] Conlon, 233.

[18] Redlich, *Monteverdi's Religious Music,* 209.

[19] Denis Arnold, *Monteverdi* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1963), 138.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Arnold, *Monteverdi Church Music,* 7.

[22] Ibid., 43.

[23] Ibid., 40.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Homer Ulrich, *A Survey of Choral Music* (Belmont, California: Thompson Learning, Inc., 1973), 71.

[26] Jeffrey Kurtzmann, in the forward to Monteverdi's "Missa in F" (Carus-Verlag 40.671/01, 1991), x.

[27] Arnold, *Monteverdi Church Music,* 33.

[28] Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune, eds., *The Monteverdi Companion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 161.

[29] See Stevens, *Monteverdi: Sacred, Secular, and Occasional Music,* 70.

[30] See Redlich, *Claudio Monteverdi: Life and Works,* 124.

[31] Stevens, *Monteverdi: Sacred, Secular, and Occasional Music,* 71.

[32] Ibid., 73.

[33] Arnold, *Monteverdi Church Music,* 41.

[34] Figure adapted from Reginald Smith Brindle, "Monteverdi's G Minor Mass: An Experiment in Construction" (*Musical Quarterly* 54): 353.

[35] Figure adapted from Brindle, 355.

[36] Brindle, 357–358.

[37] Ibid., 360.

[38] Prunieres, *Monteverdi: His Life and Work,* 109.

[39] Redlich, *Claudio Monteverdi: Life and Works,* 123.

[40] Arnold, *Monteverdi Church Music,* 42.

Bibliography

Adams, K. Gary and Dyke Kiel. *Claudio Monteverdi: A Guide to Research.* New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989.

Arnold, Denis. *Monteverdi*. London: J. M Dent and Sons Ltd, 1963.

___________. *Monteverdi Church Music.* London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1982.

___________ and Fortune, Nigel, eds.: *The Monteverdi Companion.* London: Faber and Faber, 1985.

Bowers, Roger. “Some Reflections upon Notation and Proportions in Monteverdi’s Mass and Vespers of 1610.” *Music and Letters* 73 (1992), 347–98.

Brindle, Reginald Smith. “Monteverdi’s G Minor Mass: An Experiment in Construction.” *Musical Quarterly* 54 (1968): 352–60.

Carter, Tim and Geoffrey Chew. “Monteverdi, Claudio.” In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online,* <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/44352> (accessed September 22, 2010).

Conlon, Joan Catoni. *Performing Monteverdi: A Conductor’s Guide.* Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Hinshaw Music, 2001.

Fenlon, Iain. “Wert, Giaches de.” In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online,* <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40707> (accessed September 20, 2010).

Leopold, Silke. *Monteverdi: Music in Transition.* Translated by Anne Smith. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Lockwood, Lewis. “‘Monteverdi and Gombert: the *Missa In illo tempore of 1610.*” In *De musica et cantu: Studien zur Geschichte der Kirchenmusik und der Oper: Helmut Hucke zum 60. Geburtstag,* eds. Peter Cahn and Ann-Karin Heimer (New York: Hildesheim, 1993), 457–69.

__________________. “A View of the Early Sixteenth-Century Parody Mass.” *Queen’s College: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Festschrift,* ed. Albert Mell (Flushing, New York: Q. C. Press, 1964), 53–77.

Monteverdi, Claudio. *Missa in illo tempore.* Edited by Jeffry Kurtzmann. Carus-Verlag 40.670/01, 1993.

Monteverdi, Claudio. *Missa in F.* Edited by Jeffry Kurtzmann. Carus-Verlag 40.671, 1992.

Monteverdi, Claudi. *Messa a 4 voci.* Edited by Denis Stevens. Boston, Massachusetts: E. C. Schirmer Music Publishers No. 4210, 1991.

Monteverdi, Claudi. *Messa a quattro voci da cappella.* Edited by Rudolf Walter. Carus-Verlag 1.542, 1992.

Kurtzman, Jeffrey G. “Monteverdi’s ‘Mass of Thanksgiving’ Revisited.” *Early Music* xxii (1994), 63–84.

________________. “Essays on the Monteverdi Mass and *Vespers* of 1610.” *Rice University Studies* 64, no. 4. Houston: Rice University, 1978.

________________. *The Monteverdi Vespers of 1610: Music, Context, Performance.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Prunieres, Henry. *Monteverdi: His Life and Work.* Translated by Marie D. Mackie. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd. 1926.

_____________. “Monteverdi’s Sacred Music.” *Sackbut* 3 no. 9 (April 1923): 259–68.

Redlich, Hans Ferdinand. *Claudio Monteverdi: Life and Works.* Translated by Kathleen Dale. New York: Oxford University Press, 1952.

___________________. “Monteverdi’s Religious Music.” *Music and Letters,* xxvii (1946), 208–15

Roche, Jerome. “Monteverdi: an Interesting Example of Second Thoughts.” *Music Review,* xxxiii (1971), 193–204.

Schrade, Leo. *Monteverdi: Creator of Modern Music.* London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1964.

Shrock, Dennis. *Choral Repertoire.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Stevens, Denis. Monteverdi: *Sacred, Secular, and Occasional Music.* Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1978.

___________. “Monteverdi’s Venetian Church Music” *Musical Times* 108 (1967) 414–17.

Ulrich, Homer. *A Survey of Choral Music.* Belmont, California: Thompson Learning, Inc., 1973.

Young, Percy M. *The Choral Tradition: An Historical and Analytical Survey from the Sixteenth Century to the Present Day.* Hutchinson Publishing Group Ltd., New York, 1971.