

MONTEVERDI – VESPERS OF 1610

THE MONTEVERDI CHOIR AND ENGLISH BAROQUE SOLOISTS

SIR JOHN ELIOT GARDINER, CONDUCTOR

SUN, APR 19, 2015 • 7:30PM

CPAIO ARTIST

“THE ENSEMBLE WAS DAZZLINGLY
PRECISE AND POWERFUL.”

– *The Daily Telegraph*



PERFORMANCE BENEFACTOR

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SUN, APR 19 • 7:30PM

PROGRAM

Vespro della Beata Vergine, SV 206 Claudio Monteverdi
Versicle & Response: *Deus in adiutorium/Domine ad adjuvandum* (1567-1643)
Psalm 109: *Dixit Dominus*
Motet: *Nigra sum*
Psalm 112: *Laudate pueri*
Motet: *Pulchra es*
Psalm 121: *Laetatus sum*
Motet: *Duo Seraphim*
Psalm 126: *Nisi Dominus*
Motet: *Audi coelum*
Psalm 147: *Lauda Jerusalem*
Sonata sopra "Sancta Maria; ora pro nobis"
Hymn: *Ave maris stella*
Magnificat

Francesca Aspromonte, soprano
Francesca Boncompagni, soprano
Mariana Flores, soprano
Krystian Adam, tenor
Nicholas Mulroy, tenor
Andrew Tortise, tenor
Alexander Ashworth, bass
Gianluca Buratto, bass
Robert Davies, bass

Capital City Girls Choir

ENGLISH BAROQUE SOLOISTS

Violins

Kati Debretzeni
Anne Schumann

Violas

Fanny Paccoud
Lisa Cochrane

Cellos

Robin Michael
Kinga Gáborjáni

Double Bass

Valerie Botwright

Recorders

Rachel Beckett
Catherine Latham
Marion Scott

Dulcian

Györgyi Farkas

Cornetti

Helen Roberts
Richard Thomas
Michael Harrison

Sackbuts

Adam Woolf
Abigail Newman
Stephen Saunders

Organ

James Johnstone

Harpsichord

Oliver-John Ruthven

Chittarrone

Evangelina Mascardi
David Miller
Benjamin Narvey
Josías Rodríguez Gándara

Harp

Gwyneth Wentink

MONTEVERDI CHOIR

Sopranos

Emily Armour
Charlotte Ashley
Francesca Aspromonte
Francesca Boncompagni
Esther Brazil
Jessica Cale
Mariana Flores
Angela Hicks *
Alison Hill
Gwendolen Martin
Eleanor Meynell
Katie Thomas

Altos

Sarah Denbee
James Hall
John Lattimore
Simon Ponsford
Richard Wyn Roberts
Kate Symonds Joy

Tenors

Krystian Adam
Peter Davoren
Peter Harris
Nicholas Mulroy
Graham Neal
Nicolas Robertson
Andrew Tortise
Gareth Treseder

Basses

Alex Ashworth
Gianluca Buratto
Robert Davies
Samuel Evans
Jake Muffett *
Rupert Reid
David Shipley
Lawrence Wallington

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PROGRAM NOTES

Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643): *Vespers of the Blessed Virgin (1610)*

Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers represents a landmark in early 17th-century sacred music. It is surprising, then, that we know so little about its conception. Vespers is part of the Divine Office, the daily round of prayer from Matins through Compline (in the Anglican rite, the equivalent of Vespers is Evensong). The service is structured around a respond, five psalms with antiphons, a hymn, and the Magnificat. While the sequence is fixed, many elements vary according to the day. The "problem" with Monteverdi's 1610 setting is that while he includes most of the "correct" texts, some of its contents (such the motets between the psalms) do not fit any standard liturgy. The problem for modern performers is whether to treat it as a single "work" – rather than a miscellany – and if so, how to fill the liturgical gaps (or not).

The title-page of the 1610 edition fudges things accordingly, listing a "Mass for six voices suitable for church choirs and Vespers to be performed by larger forces together with some motets suitable for chapels and the apartments of princes." That fudging also relates to the apparent function of the print. Monteverdi, now aged forty-three, had been in the service of Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga of Mantua for some twenty years, and his *maestro della musica* for nine. He came to dislike Mantua intensely, for its bad climate, its provinciality, and for his being constantly overworked. In the 1580s and '90s, the city was a center of musical excellence vying with Ferrara and Florence, its main rivals among the north Italian

courts. The early years of the new century, however, saw the first hints of a political decline that culminated in the disastrous sack of the city by Imperial troops in 1630. Monteverdi felt that it was time to move on.

Thus the 1610 volume was probably intended to affirm Monteverdi's reputation both as a composer and – no less important – as a choir director. The Mass is in the old style of Renaissance vocal polyphony, but the Vespers exploits a wide range of vocal and instrumental forces in the most up-to-date manner. However, Monteverdi enriches these newer idioms with traditional elements. Thus we find old-style polyphony side-by-side with monodies and duets in the Florentine fashion and with grand instrumental writing in a Venetian vein. Similarly, Monteverdi uses the archaic formal techniques of cantus firmus and plainsong paraphrase along with vocal and instrumental writing of distinctly operatic brilliance.

As with his first opera, *Orfeo*, of 1607, the Monteverdi of the Vespers has one foot in the Renaissance and the other in the Baroque. The two works are closely related in terms both general and specific: for example, the opening respond reworks the opera's initial toccata. And if the 1610 collection was intended to find him new employment, then eventually it succeeded: in 1613, Monteverdi moved to Venice to take up the prestigious position of *maestro di cappella* of St. Mark's Basilica, a post held until his death in 1643.

Tim Carter is David G. Frey Distinguished Professor of Music at UNC-Chapel Hill.

BIOGRAPHIES

ENGLISH BAROQUE SOLOISTS

Under the patronage of HRH the Prince of Wales

The English Baroque Soloists have long been established as one of the world's leading period instrument orchestras. Throughout their repertoire, ranging from Monteverdi to Mozart and Haydn, they are equally at home in chamber, symphonic and operatic performances and the distinctive sound of their warm and incisive playing is instantly recognizable.

The English Baroque Soloists are regularly involved in joint projects with the Monteverdi Choir, with whom they famously took part in the trail-blazing Bach Cantata Pilgrimage in 2000, performing all of Bach's sacred cantatas throughout Europe. More recently, the two joined forces again in a "Bach Marathon" event at the Royal Albert Hall (2013), and collaborated on recordings and tours of Bach *Motets* (2011) and *Ascension Cantatas* (2012), both of which reached No. 1 in the UK classical charts.

The ensemble has performed at many of the world's most prestigious venues including La Scala in Milan, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Sydney Opera House. In the course of the 1990s they performed Mozart's seven mature operas and recorded all Mozart's mature symphonies and his complete piano concerto cycle. Their recent recordings of Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* and Mozart's Symphonies Nos. 39 and 41 were released by the Monteverdi ensemble's own record label, Soli Deo Gloria.

In 2014, the Monteverdi Choir's 50th anniversary year, they performed with the Choir in tours of Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* in Cambridge, Versailles and Barcelona, and Handel's *Dixit Dominus* at several summer festivals.

2015 has already taken the English Baroque Soloists and the Monteverdi Choir to Munich, Frankfurt, Lucerne and Paris to perform Bach's *B minor Mass*. Further projects this year include performances at several major

summer festivals, as well as the orchestra's first Far East tour in over a decade with concerts in Hong-Kong, Seoul, Beijing and Shanghai.

THE MONTEVERDI CHOIR

Under the patronage of HRH the Prince of Wales

The Monteverdi Choir, founded in 1964, is famous for its passionate, committed and virtuosic singing. Over the past 50 years, it has been consistently acclaimed as one of the best choirs in the world, noted for its ability to switch composer, language and idiom with complete stylistic conviction.

Among a number of trail-blazing tours, the most ambitious was the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage in 2000, during which the Choir performed all 198 of J.S. Bach's sacred cantatas in more than 60 churches throughout Europe to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the composer's death. The entire project was recorded and released by the company's record label, Soli Deo Gloria. It was hailed as "one of the most ambitious musical projects of all times" by *Gramophone* magazine.

The Choir is also a fertile training ground for future generations of choral and solo singers: members often step out to sing solo parts and many former members have gone on to enjoy successful solo careers. Since 2007, the Monteverdi Apprentices Program has added an exciting new dimension to its profile.

The Choir has over 150 recordings to its name and has won numerous prizes. It regularly participates in staged opera productions, including recently *Le Freyschütz* (Weber), *L'Etoile* (Chabrier) and *Carmen* (Bizet) at the Opéra Comique in Paris.

Last year, the Choir celebrated its 50th anniversary with performances of Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* in Cambridge, Barcelona and Versailles

and an extensive European and US tour of Handel's *Dixit Dominus*. It collaborated with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in a performance of Schumann's *Manfred* under the direction of Sir John Eliot Gardiner, and released an acclaimed new album of English polyphony, *Vigilate!*.

Earlier in 2015, Bach's *B minor Mass* tour took the Choir to Munich, Frankfurt, Lucerne and Paris. Further projects this year include performances at several major summer festivals, as well as the Choir's first Far East tour in over a decade with concerts in Hong-Kong, Seoul, Beijing and Shanghai.

SIR JOHN ELIOT GARDINER, CONDUCTOR

Sir John Eliot Gardiner is one of the most versatile and sought-after conductors of our time. Founder and artistic director of the Monteverdi Choir, the English Baroque Soloists and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, he appears regularly with leading symphony orchestras. After serving as artistic director of the Opéra de Lyon (1983-88) and *chef fondateur* of its orchestra, the center of his opera projects in France moved to the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris.

Acknowledged as a key figure in the early music revival of the past four decades, Gardiner has led his own ensembles in groundbreaking projects and international tours including the yearlong Bach Cantata Pilgrimage to mark the 250th anniversary of the composer's death in the millennium year. Two of Gardiner's ensembles celebrated momentous anniversaries in 2014. With the Monteverdi Choir he returned to King's College, Cambridge to perform Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*, 50 years to the day after their inaugural concert in the famous chapel. The 25th anniversary of the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique was marked by the filming of a

BBC TV documentary on Beethoven, their first visit to Latin America, and a celebratory European tour. The two ensembles came together in August for a BBC Prom performance of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, widely acclaimed and hailed by one critic as "the concert of the year."

The extent of Gardiner's repertoire is illustrated by more than 250 recordings for major record companies and by numerous international awards including the *Gramophone* Special Achievement Award for live recordings of the complete church cantatas of J.S. Bach on the *Soli Deo Gloria* label. In 2013 he won the Critics' Circle's Outstanding Musician award.

Awarded a CBE in 1990, he was nominated Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1996 and made Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur in 2010. He received the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 2005.

The Monteverdi Choir and the English Baroque Soloists would like to thank and acknowledge the following for their support of this tour: Dunard Fund USA; the Negaunee Foundation; William and Judith Scheide; Michael Cioffi & Monteverdi Tuscany Castiglione cello del Trinoro; and the American Friends of the Monteverdi Choir & Orchestras, Inc.

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