

## RISE OF OPERA AND CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI

1. Madrigal Comedy: Orazio Vecchi's *L'amfiparnaso* (Chandos Records, 2004)
2. Beginnings of the Baroque Style
  - a. A Renaissance of Sorts in the late 16th century
  - b. Florentine **Camerata**
    - i. Salon of Count Giovanni de' Bardi in Florence
    - ii. *intermedi*
    - iii. Caccini, *Perfidissimo volto* from *Le nuove musiche* (c. 1590)
      1. Monody
      2. Continuo (=basso continuo or thoroughbass or [un]figured bass)
  - c. Cavalieri, *Rappresentatione di Anima, et di Corpo* (1600): expanded *intermedo* into a full play.
  - d. Jacopo Peri (1561–1633)
    - i. *Euridice*
    - ii. *Il stile recitativo*
  - e. Together we have the *stile moderno* or the *seconda prattica*, but the *stile antico* or *prima prattica* would continue
3. Monteverdi: Outline of Life: Cremona 1567–Venice 1643
  - a. One of the earliest compositional prodigies: first book of madrigals at age 15
  - b. 1590 moves to Mantua to enter the service of Vincenzo I Gonzaga [pic] to be “suonatore di vivuola”
  - c. Mantua: Birthplace of the Frottola (early 16th c.); main composer Giaches de Wert.
  - d. Travels to Florence and probably sees opera for the first time. First performances of musical theater in Mantua 1598.
  - e. Work included teaching (a tenor and soprano), directing the women's choir, composing short theatrical pieces.
4. From the Nine Books of Madrigals
  - a. *Cruda Amarilli*, published 1605, Fifth Book of Madrigals, but composed before this
  - b. Five voices plus continuo *ad libitum*
  - c. (Giovanni Maria) Artusi controversy: 1600, Venice: *L'Artusi, ovvero Delle imperfettioni della moderna musica*. (The Artusi: or on the imperfections of modern music)
  - d. Had previously written first book entirely on dissonance (*Seconda parte dell'arte del contraponto*) — unlike some people claim, Artusi embraced dissonance, but believed that it needed to be treated properly, which a certain unnamed composer (revealed to be Monteverdi) did not.
  - e. Particularly striking in *Cruda Amarilli*: unresolved leap from dissonance to a new dissonance. (9–7 which resolves down; bars 12–14; from *New Grove*)

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- f. Piece was defended by his brother Giulio Cesare Monteverdi who promised a further defense in a book to come called *Seconda pratica, ovvero Perfezzione della moderna music*; either lost or more likely never published
5. *L'orfeo* and the *Vespers of 1610*
    - a. *Orfeo* (1607) *favola in musica* — composed for a small private audience at the Gonzaga Court
    - b. Tells the story of Orpheus's descent to the underworld to bring back Euridice
    - c. *Possente Sprito* — Orpheus (and Monteverdi) at the high of his powers
    - d. Strophic variations with changing instrumental accompaniment.
    - e. Two staves — why?
    - f. *Arianna* (1608) — said to be his masterwork, but lost! except for one lament.
    - g. *Vespers* — sacred equivalent of *Orfeo*. Dedicated to Pope Paul V; delivered to Rome, perhaps as audition piece. Accompanied by a Mass in pure *Prima Prattica* style
  6. The Move to Venice [ W-T reading ]
    - a. Death of Vincenzo Gonzaga in early 1612: his son Francesco immediately reduced the size of the court. Francesco lived only one year, but his successor (Cardinal Ferdinando) favored Monteverdi's rival: so not a good sign
    - b. Fortunately, the *Maestro di cappella* of Saint Mark's in Venice dies in 1613. Monteverdi auditions for the post (has to write a Mass); gets the job, is robbed on the way to Venice, but finally arrives!
    - c. Immediately writes to everyone in Mantua about how good Venice is; the Mantuans try to recruit him back immediately.
  7. Venice life
    - a. Good salary
    - b. No need to publish as much (drat!)
    - c. *Combat[t]imento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (composed Venice 1624/5; published 1638)
      - i. Performed for a private performance during the Venice Carnival
      - ii. Text from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*
      - iii. *genera concitato* (Monteverdi) or *stile concitato* (everyone else): agitated
      - iv. *concitato* was an attempt to reproduce the harmonia (mode) from Plato's Republic which would "imitate the utterance and the accents of a brave man who is engaged in warfare." Appears in *Il combattimento* as fast repeated notes in the voice and instruments.

- v. Special effects in the strings, p. 142 bottom: “Qui si lascia l’arco, e si strapano [pull out] le corde con duoi diti.” First ever use.
- d. *Zefiro torna e di soavi accenti* from the *Scherzi musicali* (musical humors) of 1632
  - i. Fixed repetitions of bass pattern
  - ii. Repeated G-major cadences, interrupted by abrupt shift in key at “piango” (I cry)
- e. Late operas: *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria* (1640) and *L’incoronazione di Poppea* (1642)
  - i. both much less recitative than *Orfeo* and certainly than *Peri*
  - ii. *Poppea*: historical subject was highly unusual
  - iii. Venice opera was **public** not court sponsored
  - iv. How much did Monteverdi write? Almost certainly not the ending
  - v. “Virtue and Justice look on helpless as Evil Triumphs:” story
  - vi. castrati singers and trouser roles: operatic convention [ W-T reading ]

### Last 8 minutes: Ending comments

- 1000 years of music: Hope that is exciting, the only sad thing is you’ll never have the opportunity to learn so much music again (first world music course perhaps).
- Consonance and Dissonance became defined, and redefined, and redefined.
- Polyphony being a new thing which had to be explained to forms recognizable today, and norms of behavior taught in theory classes and used in popular music.
- From the dominance of the Greeks to their disappearance in the Middle Ages to their rediscovery in the early Baroque.
- Importance of text clarity to importance of music to importance of text
- Went from knowing almost nothing about the circumstances of performance → instruments still in use today (if not modern techniques).
- Went from monks and a prolific composer named anonymous to men and women of all walks of life and all levels of piety in Europe and also as we saw Tuesday in South America whom I hope most of us can relate to in one way or another.
- Some things we never saw in this class: We never ran into composers who hated all the music of their time; we never saw anyone who thought, “oh six-voice masses are good, but symphonies like Beethoven’s would be better.” I hope that in this class we got a sense that if we lived in the 12th century—even if we were as innovative as Perotin—we’d be the product of our times. And that we can take from this that we are products of our time—we don’t pine for the innovations of 23rd century music; we don’t think of our music as lacking something that will come in the future—but music WILL continue to develop. Just as we think that we are innovative today, and that we know so much about how music has worked, how music does work and how music will work—I hope that we in this class know that someday we will be the *ars antiqua*, the *stile antico*, the *prima prattica*, of some new development or new idea, some *ars nova* of the future. For this reason, when I study the music of the distant past, it makes me more excited about the music of the present and the music of the future. And I’ve learned so much about all three with you this semester, and I want to thank all of you for giving so much to me and each other. Have a great holidays and see you around MIT in the Spring.

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