

THE BROADWAY SYMPHONY AND SEATTLE CHAMBER SINGERS

George Shangrow, conductor

presents

Claudio Monteverdi

1610 VESPERS

December 2 & 4, 1988

St. Alphonsus Church

featured soloists

Ann Erickson, soprano
Susanna Walsh, soprano
Kyla DeRemer, alto
Robert Leavens, tenor
Stephen Wall, tenor
Robert Schilperoort, baritone
Peter Kechley, bass

Intonation: Dominum ad adiuvandum me

Psalm 109: Dixit Dominus

Concerto: Nigra sum

Psalm 112: Laudate pueri Dominum

Concerto: Pulchra es

Psalm 121: Laetatus sum

Concerto: Duo Seraphim

Psalm 126: Nisi Dominus

Concerto: Audi caelum

Psalm 147: Lauda Jerusalem Dominus

INTERMISSION

Hymnus: Ave Maris Stella

Sonata sopra: Sancta Maria ora pro nobis

Magnificat

The Broadway Symphony and Seattle Chamber Singers are
artists-in-residence at University Unitarian Church.

This concert sponsored in part by a grant from Western Piano & Organ, Inc.

Intonation:

O God, make speed to save me.

O Lord make haste to help me.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning
is now and ever shall be:
world without end. Amen.
Alleluia.

His left hand is under my head
and his right hand
embraces me.

Psalm 109: Dixit Dominus

The Lord said unto my Lord:
"Sit thou on my right hand,
until I make thine enemies
thy footstool."
The Lord shall send the rod of
thy power out of Zion:
"Be thou ruler, even in the midst among thine
enemies.
In the day of thy power shall the people offer thee
free-will offerings with an holy worship:
the dew of thy birth is of the womb of the mornin^g."
The Lord sware and will not repent:
"Thou art a Priest for ever
after the order of Melchisedech."
The Lord upon thy right hand
shall wound even kings in the day of his wrath.
He shall judge among the heathen: he shall fill the
places with the dead bodies: and smite in
sunder the heads over divers countries.
He shall drink of the brook in the way:
therefore shall he lift up his head.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son:
and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever
shall be: world without end. Amen.

His left hand is under my head
and his right hand
embraces me.

Concerto: Nigra sum

I am black but comely,
O ye daughters of Jerusalem:
Therefore the King hath loved me,
and hath brought me
into his chambers,
and he said to me:
Arise up my love and come away,
for lo, the winter is past,
the rains are over and gone,
and the flowers appear in our
land, the time of pruning
is at hand.

For lo, the winter is past,
the rains are over and gone.
Arise, my love, and come away.

Psalm 112: Laudate pueri Dominum

Praise the Lord, ye servants:
O praise the name of the Lord.
Blessed be the name of the Lord:
from this time forth for evermore.
The Lord's name is praised: from the rising up
of the sun unto the going down of the same.
The Lord is high above all heathen:
and his glory above the heavens.
Who is like unto the Lord our God, that hath
his dwelling so high: and yet humbleth himself
to behold the things that are in heaven and earth?

He taketh up the simple out of the dust:
and lifteth the poor out of the mire:
That he may set him with princes:
even with the princes of his people.
He maketh the barren woman to keep house:
and to be a joyful mother of children.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son:
and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and
ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

For lo, the winter is past,
the rains are over and gone.
Arise, my love, and come away.

Concerto: Pulchra es

Thou art fair, my love, beautiful
and comely, O daughter of Jerusalem:
thou art fair; my love,
beautiful and comely as Jerusalem,
terrible as an army
set in array.
Turn thine eyes from me,
for they have made me flee away.

My beloved
is radiant white and ruddy:
the hair of his head
is like the crimson of the king,
bound in little plaits.

Psalm 121: Laetatus sum

I was glad when they said unto me:
"We will go into the house of the Lord."
Our feet shall stand in thy gates:
O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is built as a city:
that is at unity in itself.
For thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the
Lord: to testify unto Israel, to give thanks unto the
name of the Lord.
For there is the seat of judgment:
even the seat of the house of David.
O pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
they shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls:
and plenteousness within thy palaces.
For my brethren and companions' sakes:
I will wish thee prosperity.
Yea, because of the house of the Lord our God:
I will seek to do thee good.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son:
and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever
shall be: world without end. Amen.

My beloved
is radiant white and ruddy:
the hair of his head
is like crimson of the king,
bound in little plaits.

Concerto: Duo Seraphim

The two seraphims cried one to the other:
"Holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth.
The whole earth is full of His glory:
there are three that bear record in Heaven:
the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit,
and these three are one:
Holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth:
the whole earth is full of his glory."

Where has your beloved gone to,
you fairest of women?
Which way has your beloved turned?
We will seek him with you.

Psalm 126: Nisi Dominus

Except the Lord build the house:
their labour is but lost that build it.
Except the Lord keep the city:
the watchman waketh but in vain.
It is but lost labour that ye haste to rise up early,
and so late take rest, and eat the bread of care-
fulness,
for so he giveth his beloved sleep.
Lo, children and the fruit of the womb,
are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord.
Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant,
even so are the young children.
Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them:
they shall not be ashamed when they speak with
their enemies in the gate.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son:
and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be
world without end. Amen.

Where has your beloved gone to,
you fairest of women?
Which way has your beloved turned?
We will seek him with you.

Concerto: Audi caelum

Heaven hear my words,
full of desire
and suffused with joy.
Tell me:
who is she who rises
bright as the dawn,
and I shall bless her?
Say if this one,
beautiful as the moon
and chosen as the sun
fills the heaven and earth with joy:
The sweet Virgin Mary,
foretold by Ezekiel,
the prophet from the East,
this holy and happy portal
through which death was driven out
and which established that life,
which is ever the perfect and sure link
between God and man
for overcoming sin.
Let us all therefore strive,
with what grace we can,
to attain this eternal life.
Let us all therefore strive,
and may God,
the Father, Son and Mother
give comfort to the afflicted.
And may the Father,
Son and Mother
whose sweet name we invoke,
give comfort to the afflicted.
Blessed art thou, O Virgin Mary,
world without end.

As long as the king is at his table,
my spikenard gives forth sweet perfume.

Psalm 147: Lauda Jerusalem Dominum

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem:
praise thy God, O Sion.
For he hath made fast the bars of thy gates:
and hath blessed thy children within thee.
He maketh peace in thy borders:
and filleth thee with the flour of wheat.
He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth:
and his word runneth very swiftly.
He giveth snow like wool:
and scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes.
He casteth forth his ice like morsels:
who is able to abide his frost?
He sendeth out his word, and melteth them:
He bloweth with his wind, and the waters flow.
He showeth his word unto Jacob:
His statutes and ordinances unto Israel.
He hath not dealt so with any nation:
neither have the heathen knowledge of his laws.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son:
and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and
ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

As long as the king at his table,
my spikenard gives forth sweet perfume.

From the beginning, before all time
was I created, and in eternity
I shall not perish; in his holy
dwelling I served before him.
Thanks be to God.

Hymnus: Ave maris stella

Hail, O star that pointest
towards the port of heaven,
thou to who as Maiden
God for Son was given.

When the salutation
Gabriel had spoken,
peace was shed upon us,
Eva's bonds were broken.

Bound by Satan's fetters,
health and vision needing,
God will aid and light us
at thy gentle pleading.

Jesu's tender Mother,
make thy supplication
unto him who chose thee
at his Incarnation:

That, O matchless Maiden,
passing meek and lowly,
thy dear Son may make us
blameless, chaste, and holy.

So, as now we journey,
aid our weak endeavour,
till we gaze on Jesus,
and rejoice for ever.

Father, Son and Spirit,
Three in One confessing,
give we equal glory,
equal praise and blessing. Amen.

Make me worthy to praise you, Holy Virgin.
Give me strength against your enemies.

**12. Sonata sopra „Sancta Maria ora pro
nobis“ (a 8)**

Holy Mary, come to the aid of us poor ones,
strengthen the faint-hearted,
console those who weep,
pray for your people,
be a help to the priests,
intercede for pious women,
may all feel your aid
who celebrate
your holy festival.

Magnificat

My soul doth magnify the Lord:
And my spirit hath rejoiced
in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his hand-
maiden.
For behold, from henceforth: all generations shall
call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me:
and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on them that fear him
throughout all generations.
He hath showed strength with his arm:
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of
their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat:
and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things:
and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He remembering his mercy
hath holpen his servant Israel:

As he promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his seed,
for ever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son;
and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now
and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Holy Mary, come to the aid of us poor ones,
strengthen the faint-hearted,
console those who weep,
pray for your people,
be a help to the priests,
intercede for pious women,
may all feel your aid
who celebrate
your holy festival.

Let us praise the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Excellence.

One simple word that says so much.



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LISTENER'S GUIDE TO THE 1610 VESPERS

At first hearing the sound of Monteverdi's sacred music overwhelms the listener with its sensual beauty. It seems to be some kind of gourmet treat for the ears, a combination of flavors smooth, mellow, rich, pungent, and rare. Or, it is like walking into a tropical jungle. You are surrounded by an intricate maze of intertwining green branches, vines, leafy canopies, laced with light from an invisible sun. Brilliantly hued flowers, scarlet, purple, gleam like jewels in the lower twilight, and spangled snakes slither from branches.

Some listeners will find that the sensual richness of this music suffices to secure their enjoyment for the duration of the work. Others, however, will soon find themselves thinking, "Well, it's pretty, but there sure is a lot of green."

There is more to listen to in this music than the colors of the sound. The structure of the work as a whole is dramatic. The text is full of fascinating mythic threads. The individual pieces are highly varied in style, form, and musical techniques, and we find here musical innovations that prepared the way for later developments in Western music.

I. The Structure of the Work

The 1610 Vespers is organized in the traditional format of an evening "Vespers" service, and was most probably intended as a divine office, not simply a performance piece. In keeping with this view of the Vespers our performance will include the "service music" that would accompany the singing of the psalms, hymn and canticle that constitute the main body of the work. The service music includes the antiphons framing each psalm, the capitulum concluding the psalms, the versicle concluding the Hymn, and the antiphon-benedicamus-deo gratias concluding the whole work. All of the service music is simple plain chant.

The liturgy for a Vesper service has three main parts:

- I. Five Psalms
- II. A Hymn
- III. A Canticle

In these Vespers the five psalms are texts traditionally associated with Advent and Christmastime, and the commemoration of Mary's visit to Elizabeth (Psalm 112). The Hymn here is "Ave maris stella", a prayer addressed to Mary, and the Canticle is "The Magnificat," Mary's song of praise to God.

This basic, 3-part liturgical form is elaborated in the 1610 Vespers by the inclusion of four "concertos", which follow each of the first four psalms, and by the addition of the "Sonata sopra" following the Hymn.

II. The Mythic Drama

The liturgical form of the 1610 Vespers serves to support a mythic drama expressed through the structure of the work and by exotic allusions in the texts and the music. The drama has three parts, corresponding to the three primary sections of the liturgy. In Part I we are introduced to two lovers searching for one another. Their longing and anticipatory joy are presented through the antiphons with texts from the Song of Songs, and the Concerto, "Pulchra es".

It was not uncommon in the piety of 12-17th century catholicism to represent Christ as a bridegroom and the Church as a bride, with the Song of Songs as support. The union of God and human beings, heaven and earth, spirit and flesh, was dramatized in poetry, liturgy, and song as a sacred wedding, or lovers' tryst. The medieval carol, "My Dancing Day", reveals this tradition. In that carol Christ sings,

*"Tomorrow shall be my dancing day,
I would my true love did so chance,
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to my dance."*

The image of Christ as lover and dancer has its roots in the very early (2nd century?) association of Christ with the Greek god of music, Orpheus who, in search of his beloved, journeyed into hell to rescue her from death, using the power of music to still the monsters guarding the gates of the underworld. It is interesting, in light of this ancient association, to note that Monteverdi uses for his opening orchestral accompaniment instrumental music from his opera, "Orpheo." It is also interesting to observe that a "carol" was originally a circle dance. All carol music has its origin in dancing, and its theological reference is to Christ/Orpheus, the dancing master.

But here, in the 1610 Vespers the pair of lovers do not appear as Christ and the Church, but as Mary and the Church. The waiting congregation is the bridegroom searching for the beloved one, Mary. Her arrival is heralded in the fourth concerto, "Audi caelum":

"Tell me:
who is she who rises
bright as the dawn?"

With Mary's advent the first section of the drama concludes. The love play is over, the beloved has arrived. The bridegroom then addresses her in the Hymn, "Ave maris stella".

The title given to Mary, "O Star", has roots more ancient even than the association of Christ with Orpheus. The pre-patriarchal great mother goddess of the ancient near east was known by many names, one of them being "Astarte." From her name the word "star" derives. The Great Mother Goddess was associated with the night, and with the stars. She was said to have given birth to all beings, life as plentiful as the points of light in the night sky. Her symbols, the crown of stars and the crescent moon, and her title, "Queen of Heaven" became ascribed to Mary. Throughout the history of Christian piety Mary has carried the ambivalence of the Great Mother's story. Has she been assimilated into a patriarchal religion, or is she about to "take back the night?" Monteverdi's Vespers, like many of the great cathedrals, centers the focus of piety on Mary who emerges here full of beauty and power.

The comparative simplicity of the seven hymn verses, and the dance-like instrumental interludes between each verse, strengthen the dramatic posture of Part II of the mythic drama. This is the singing and dancing of the people, the Christmas merrymaking of the congregation welcoming the beloved Mary with joy.

Finally, the climax of the drama comes as Mary herself speaks. Her words are the Magnificat canticle, a song of praise to God whose creative purpose is to lift up the oppressed and throw down the high and mighty, to fill the hungry with good things, and send the rich empty away. The original setting for the Magnificat text in the Gospel of Matthew pictures the pregnant Mary singing her joy when she greeted Elizabeth, also pregnant (with John the Baptist). Her story and song are prefigured by Hannah in the Old Testament, whose canticle in I Samuel 2 carries the same themes.

As a whole, the mythic drama of the 1610 Vespers is a movement from longing to greeting, from absence to presence, from waiting to fulfillment.

III. Musical Highlights

1. "Domine ad adiuvandum" This opening movement is an orchestral toccata with the chorus singing massive D major chords. The instrumental music has dancing ritornella sections. Monteverdi is using music from the overture to his opera "Orpheo."

2. Psalm 109: Like each of the Psalm settings in the Vespers this movement is built around a plainsong melody which is heard in its entirety at the beginning. Note the dramatically contrasting sections. Monteverdi juxtaposes an archaic church style (motetic polyphony) with free, madrigal-like solo parts.



GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

MESSIAH

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3. "Nigra sum": In this solo "concerto" Monteverdi makes an innovation in sacred music by using an agitated style of recitation heretofore only heard in Florentine opera.

4. Psalm 112: An example of word painting can be heard in this movement. At "suscitans" (raising up) the chorus sings a rising line in triple time that then soars aloft in the plainsong melody.

5. "Pulchra es": A beautiful duet, anticipating the development of the aria, with richly embellished, extended lines.

6. Psalm 121: More word painting! The text speaks of going up to Jerusalem, and the bass line consists of a repeated "walking bass" (a ground bass).

7. "Duo Seraphim": Considered by some to be the most exquisite movement in the Vespers this duet, then trio (following the words) involves extremely difficult, dramatic vocal techniques. Notice that the elaborate coloraturas subside into simple unity on the words "unum sunt", the Three "are one."

8. Psalm 126: The gregorian plainsong is sung throughout in the tenor line. The middle section uses double chorus, each in 5 parts.

9. "Audi caelum": Beginning with a solo first section, combining monodic speech-song and virtuoso coloratura passages, other voices join at the words "let all" ("omnes"), to create a beautiful, delicate contrast to the preceding and following Psalm settings. Listen to how the second tenor enters as an echo of the first soloist.

10. Psalm 147: The fifth and final Psalm is a setting of one of the Psalms for Christmastide. It contains sections in a gay, secular style, but concludes with church-like propriety, to close Part I of the work.

11. Hymn, "Ave maris stella": Part II of the Vespers is comprised of the Hymn and the Sonata. The seven verses of the hymn are set first slowly for the full chorus in motet-style, then simply and more quickly (2 verses) as a four-part hymn, then for solo voices (3 verses) ornamented at will, and finally with a repeat of the opening slow full chorus. Between each verse of the hymn there is an orchestral interlude (ritornella). The dance-like music is the same each time, but the orchestration changes and occasionally the instrumentalists innovate ornamentation. Listen for the time when the violins take a riff.

12. Sonata: This dancing instrumental piece, balancing the opening movement's orchestral flourishes, is dramatically punctuated by the plain chant line, heard in the voices. "Sancta Maria ora pro nobis" ("Holy Mary, pray for us"). Each time the chant occurs it is sung with a different rhythm.

13. Magnificat: The climaxing section of the vespers is this elaborate setting of the 12 verses of Mary's song. The plainsong melody, repeated in each verse, forms the basis for mini-concertos, each verse setting contrasting with the previous one, and giving special interpretation to the text. Especially beautiful is the "Et misericordia." Notice how the proud are represented by brazen trumpets, and the humble by gentle violins in "Deposuit potentes". The full chorus comes in for the concluding "Sicut erat" which weaves together fast coloraturas and the grandly slow, obligato plainsong, taking us back to the style in which the work began. The final simple chanting of the Magnificat antiphon, the Benedicamus and Deo gratis ends the Vespers.



NOTES ON THIS PERFORMANCE

The musicologist and conductor, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, sets forth the special challenges and opportunities for those who venture into the performance of Monteverdi's larger works:

"In accordance with the practice of the age, the composer does not provide the interpreter with a full score ready for the performance, neither can or will he do this, since it would restrict the variety of possibilities....Every conductor...had to be able to adapt it to the prevailing local circumstances without violating the composer's intentions; on the other hand, a richly equipped ensemble had to be able to put its possibilities to the fullest possible use, and...the greatest possible scope had to be left for the creative imagination of the individual musician and singer. We should remember that practically every good musician of that time was also a composer, and that free improvisation, even of music in several parts, was cultivated almost as a sport. Thus every performance of a large-scale work during that period would have had its own individual character."

In keeping with the style of early baroque music we have made an effort in this performance of Monteverdi's Vespers to make creative use of the instruments we have on hand that are either copies of original instruments of the era (renaissance recorders, positive organ, and harpsichord), or are modern day descendants of early baroque instruments (strings, oboes, bassoon, contra-bassoon, trumpets, and trombones). Where Monteverdi indicated scoring we have followed his orchestrations. Elsewhere we have chosen orchestrations that will bring in the colors of the various consorts (winds, brass, strings), or highlight the structure or drama of a particular piece. At appropriate points our performers add free improvisation and ornamentation.

Though published in the fall of 1610 the time and place of the first performance of these Vespers is shrouded in mystery, and considerable scholarly debate also surrounds many aspects of the piece. According to some the work received its first performance on Christmas Eve at San Marco Basilica in Venice where Monteverdi succeeded Gabrieli as Director of Music in 1613. The work was forgotten for several centuries until it was revived in 1935, and now has been recorded in several different interpretations. The tradition that associates the work with Christmas Eve is a happy one--it complements the rich, joyful and tender character of this sacred work in praise of Mary, and suggests the possibility which we are advocating--that performance of the 1610 Vespers becomes a Christmas tradition.

- notes by Rebecca Parker

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