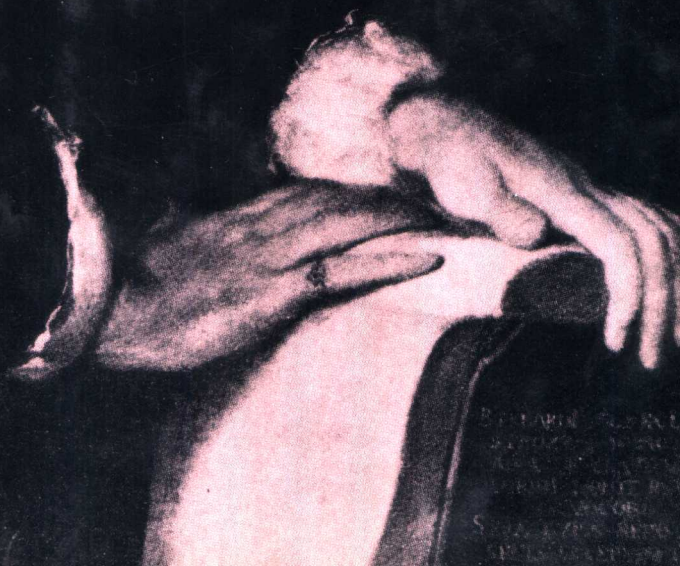




MONTEVERDI

PAOLO FABBRI

TRANSLATED BY TIM CARTER

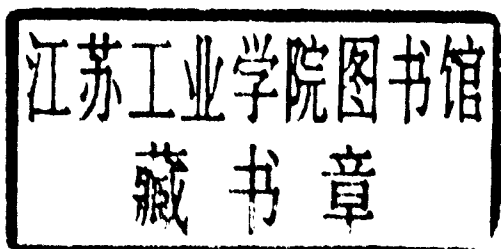


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Foreword

Paolo Fabbri's *Monteverdi* (Turin, Edizioni di Torino, 1985) quickly established itself as a classic in the field of Monteverdi studies. Its rich documentation and powerful new insights into the life and work of so significant a composer in late Renaissance and early Baroque Italy changed fundamentally our view of the man and his music, and set a new standard for bio-bibliographical work in musicology. An English translation was clearly a must.

For the present edition, Professor Fabbri significantly revised his text (in 1988–9), removing much of his discussion of the music, given that it was designed for a specific Italian readership (present readers can find ample material in the rich bibliography in English on the composer). He also added new biographical and other information, and corrected a few minor errors in his original. Other changes have been occasioned by developments in the field. Fabbri's list of works has effectively been superseded by Manfred Statkus's *Claudio Monteverdi: Verzeichnis der erhaltenen Werke* (Bergkamen, Musikverlag Statkus, 1985) – there is a digest in English in Denis Arnold, *Monteverdi*, 'The Master Musicians', 3rd edition revised by Tim Carter (London, Dent, 1990) – and his long bibliographical note by the listings in K. Gary Adams and Dyke Kiel, *Claudio Monteverdi: a Guide to Research*, 'Garland Composer Resource Manuals', xxiii (New York & London, Garland, 1989). Thus we have not given a classified work-list here (although just about every work by Monteverdi is mentioned in the text and thus listed in the index), and the bibliography is limited only to specific works cited (by short-title reference) in the notes.

In the case of Fabbri's many documents concerning Monteverdi and his period, I have tended to translate things anew, with only two major exceptions (minor ones are cited in the notes): first, Denis Stevens's exemplary English edition of *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi* (London, Faber & Faber, 1980); and second, the translations of documents by Monteverdi and Artusi in Oliver Strunk's *Source Readings in Music History* (London, Faber & Faber, 1952). I wish to thank Professor Stevens most warmly for his kind permission both to use his translations (including revisions for a much needed second edition forthcoming from Oxford University Press) and to make minor

changes (in terms of styling and, very occasionally, of substance) as seemed necessary. Sadly, reasons of space have prevented giving the originals of the documents translated here, which could easily have doubled the length of the book (the one exception is the new addition (pp. 220–1) to the canon of Monteverdi letters). However, my tendency to favour somewhat literal translations – even at the expense of literary elegance – should help give a sense of the often tortuous nature of early seventeenth-century Italian prose in all its richness and vitality.

Paolo Fabbri himself read and commented on this translation, which in turn prompted further revisions and reinterpretations. I am indeed grateful to him, to John Whenham for help with the bibliography, to Francesca Chiarelli for her advice on numerous tricky passages in the Italian, and to Angela Cleall for her invaluable help in checking my manuscript.

Tim Carter

Preface

In preparing to add a new title to the already long list of studies on Monteverdi, I have first and foremost wanted my text to be both useful and usable, attempting to bring together all the facts and documents that can help achieve a historical understanding of the composer's output. I hope that my frequent recourse to long extracts from Monteverdi's letters, and also to other accounts of various kinds by his contemporaries, will be regarded by the reader not as tedious – or worse, a nuisance – but as an unparalleled source of information, offering direct access to material previously scattered here and there and now made available even independent of my own interpretations. I say this with a deep-seated belief in the vitality and power of historical documents of this kind.

I wish to thank Paola Chiarini Ricci, Oscar Mischiati, Livio Stanghellini, Elvidio Surian and Antonio Vassalli, who made suggestions, offered information and gave me help in various ways. Furthermore, I am indeed grateful to Tim Carter for his devotion to improving my work. Finally, I have long owed a particular debt to Lorenzo Bianconi, who has been generous to an extreme with advice and information, even to the extent of reading and commenting on my manuscript. If there is anything of value here, it is clearly thanks to him.

Paolo Fabbri

Notes on Monteverdi's texts

The attributions of the poetic texts set by Monteverdi in the listings here take account of the traditional literature, of the new information given in Nino Pirrotta's 'Scelte poetiche di Monteverdi' ('Monteverdi's Poetic Choices') – plus other sources cited as appropriate in the notes – and also of the results of the work of Lorenzo Bianconi and Antonio Vassalli on poetic sources used by musicians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Since these last attributions represent unpublished research (for which we gratefully acknowledge the generosity of Bianconi and Vassalli), we feel it useful to give full details here:

Madrigali spirituali (1583). All the texts are taken from F. Rorario, *Rime spirituali* (Venice, 1581).

Canzonette (1583). The common attribution of 'Io mi vivea com'aquila mirando' to Battista Guarini has no secure foundation. 'Corse a la morte il povero Narciso' is found anonymously in the *Ghirlanda di canzonette spirituali* (Venice, n.d.).

Madrigali . . . Libro primo (1587). 'Amor, per tua mercè vatten'a quella' is in G. M. Bonardo, *Madrigali* (Venice, 1571); 'Se pur non mi consenti' is in L. Groto, *Rime* (Venice, 1587); 'Se nel partir da voi, vita mia, sento' is also in Bonardo's *Madrigali* (1571).

Il secondo libro de madrigali (1590). 'Questo specchio ti dono' is in the *Gioie poetiche di madrigali del signor Geronimo Casone et d'altri celebri poeti* (Pavia, 1593).

Il quarto libro de madrigali (1603). 'La piaga c'ho nel core' is in A. Gatti, *Madrigali* (Venice, 1614); 'Io mi son giovinetta' and 'Anima dolorosa che vivendo' are in the *Nuova scelta di rime di diversi eccellenti scrittori dell'età nostra*, i (Casalmaggiore, 1590).

Concerto: settimo libro de madrigali (1619). 'Io son pur vezzosetta pastorella' is in the *Mostre poetiche dell'Incolto accademico Immaturo* (Venice, 1570; this perhaps explains Cicogna's remark concerning this collection (*Saggio di bibliografia veneziana*, p. 557) that 'there are various poems, some of which are said to have been set to music by

Claudio Monteverde'). 'O viva fiamma, o miei sospiri ardenti', often attributed to Alfonso Gesualdo, draws only its first line from Gesualdo's poem: the rest is different. We have no evidence for the common attribution of 'Se pur destina e vole' to Ottavio Rinuccini.

Scherzi musicali (1632). The common attribution of 'Armato il cor d'adamantina fede' to Ottavio Rinuccini has no secure foundation.

Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi (1638). 'Se vittorie sí belle' is in F. Testi, *Rime* (Venice, 1613). The common attribution of 'Perché te 'n fuggi, o Fillide' to Ottavio Rinuccini has no secure foundation.

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Introduction

In the decade following his death, Monteverdi's name remained prominent in the musical world. Publishers – and not just Italians – reprinted his works or, and preferably, presented hitherto unpublished music in anthologies and above all in single volumes wholly devoted to his compositions. There were revivals of his operas, as with the staging of *La coronatione di Poppea* in Naples in 1651 with the title *Nerone* (the libretto was printed there in the same year by Roberto Mollo) and perhaps elsewhere.¹ Nor do we lack acknowledgments of his standing by important musicians, such as the *maestro di cappella* of the French royal chapel, Thomas Gobert, who when writing to Costantin Huygens in 1646 could cite 'some madrigals composed by Monteverdi' as an example of the most enchanting 'Italian manner': Gobert particularly admired 'his search for and exploration of many beautiful chords and dissonances'.² Similarly, Heinrich Schütz, in the preface to his *Symphoniarum sacrarum secunda pars* (1647), made clear the personal debt arising from his having encountered the composer of the *Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi*. And for the rest, it is an indication of Monteverdi's popularity in Austria and Germany – to which we shall return – that he was included in the *Tractatus compositionis augmentatus* by Schütz's pupil, Christoph Bernhard (1627–92). Here Monteverdi is cited together with his pupils Giovanni Rovetta and Francesco Cavalli in Chapter 43, 'Von der Imitation', as standing among the representatives of the 'stylus luxurians comunis' ('common luxuriant style') and of the 'stylus [luxurians] teatralis' ('theatrical luxuriant style').³

In Italy, and given the rapid decline of the madrigal, the genre which had made up so great a part of his output, Monteverdi was valued above all for the expressive quality of his writing for solo voice, particularly in a theatrical context:

And in fact, if we examine the style called recitative, and which one would believe were better called monodic, tell me what displeases you in [the music of] Giulio Caccini, Iacopo Peri and Claudio Monteverdi (who is known to have emerged from that most fine Florentine school)? ... Thus one should also value ... the lament of Ariadne by Monteverdi, set to music with the assistance of the noble poet Ottavio Rinuccini ...⁴

So the *stylus dramaticus*, or recitative style, is associated usually as regards metre with comedies, tragedies and dramas in general, generally founding itself more on the affections used to express the poetic subject than on musical cadences and luxuriant vocalizations.

Among the chief celebrated musicians who practised this type of style was Claudio Monteverdi, as his *Arianna* reveals.⁵

The excellent musician Claudio Monteverdi composed *Arianna* on the model of these two first operas [*Dafne* and *Euridice*], and having become *maestro di cappella* at St Mark's, Venice, he introduced there a certain manner of stage-works that have become so famous through the magnificence of theatres and of costumes, the delicacy of voices, the harmony of the instrumental ensembles, and the learned compositions of this Monteverdi, Soriano, Giovannelli, Teofilo and many other great masters.⁶

Monteverdi was firmly rooted in the world of late sixteenth-century polyphony, and particularly in those circles which had cultivated a type of madrigal destined for sophisticated listeners who accepted departures from classical compositional norms for specific expressive ends. He remained essentially faithful to his training as a contrapuntalist, seeking to render in music the poetic world of the affections. All the new techniques which he assimilated and developed for their own ends in the course of his career revolved around this nucleus, and it was during this career that he demonstrated the greatest openness towards the new, which was constantly and fruitfully grafted to the tree of the great polyphonic tradition.

With the change of taste towards a simpler style, one of show, inclined towards outward appearances and even playing to the gallery, it was inevitable that the greater part of Monteverdi's output should have been quickly consigned to the margins, even if it was admired for the learning it displayed. His fame as a composer of sacred music was more resilient, given the more severe adherence to stylistic norms in this repertory, but above all he was remembered as an opera composer because of the interest attracted by the new genre mixing music and theatre. But even here, his theatrical output was rendered obsolete by the omnipresent demand for new works, and particularly by the fluidity of his style, which was felt to be excessive and over-complicated in an age moving quickly towards the polarization of simple recitative and tuneful arias.⁷

For these reasons, we have to wait for academic historical writing of the eighteenth century to rekindle interest in Monteverdi's works. Already at the turn of the century, a number of theorists were citing Monteverdi, perhaps reflecting the enduring interest in the madrigal nurtured in particular Roman musical circles (witness the work of composers such as Michelangelo Rossi, Antonio Maria Abbadini, Domenico Dal Pane and Alessandro Scarlatti).⁸ For example, in his *Guida armonica* (c.1690) Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni chose an extract from 'Cor mio, non mori? E mori' (from Monteverdi's Fourth Book of madrigals) as an example of movement 'from a unison to a tenth';⁹ and in his *Musico testore* (1706) Zaccaria Tevo revived the Artusi-Monteverdi con-

troversy, demonstrating clear sympathy for the arguments of the Bolognese canon.¹⁰ In addition to the notices in the theatrical listings of Bonlini (1731), Groppo (1745) and in the updated version of Leone Allacci's *Drammaturgia* (1755), Francesco Arisi gave biographical details of Monteverdi (and of his son, Massimiliano) – drawn from Caberloti's *Laconismo* – in the third volume of his *Cremona literata* (1741).¹¹ Similarly, in mid-century Francesco Saverio Quadrio recalled Monteverdi's activity as a madrigalist and opera composer,¹² and later (1783) Stefano Arteaga dusted the cobwebs off the famous *Lamento d'Arianna*.¹³ Slightly earlier, Padre Martini had mentioned Monteverdi in his *Storia della musica*,¹⁴ Martini later granted the composer full prominence in his practical treatise on counterpoint, where he reprinted in full two madrigals from the Third and Fifth Books ('Stracciami pur il core' and 'Cruda Amarilli, che col nome ancora') and the 'Agnus Dei' from the *Missa 'In illo tempore'* with extended analytical commentary preceded by general notes on the composer's music.¹⁵

Among English historians, both John Hawkins (1776) and Charles Burney (1789) offered biographical outlines of Monteverdi, focusing in particular on *Orfeo* and furnishing their discussions with numerous music examples.¹⁶ Unlike Hawkins, a lawyer and musical dilettante, Burney, an organist and composer, was not content merely to refer to the controversy with Artusi: he also illustrated some of its details, following in the footsteps of Padre Martini, whom Burney had visited during his travels in Italy (moreover, he specifically cites Martini's *Esemplare* and himself reprints 'Stracciami pur il core'), dwelling on Monteverdi's somewhat incorrect (in Burney's view) part-writing. This criticism was to be revived a century later by Verdi, who, listing for Boito a series of composers suitable as didactic models for young musicians, included in his sixteenth-century group Palestrina, Victoria, Marenzio, Allegri 'and so many other good writers of that century, with the exception of Monteverdi, who laid out the parts badly'.¹⁷ The entry on Monteverdi in the first edition of Ernst Ludwig Gerber's *Historisch-biographisches Lexicon der Tonkünstler* (1790) does not go much beyond what Martini, Hawkins and Burney had put together,¹⁸ although it was enlarged with more recent information in the revised edition some 25 years later:¹⁹ here the entry begins by calling Monteverdi 'the Mozart of his time'.

But dictionary-writers of the second half of the nineteenth century were able to note the new discoveries concerning Monteverdi made around the middle of the century by local historians such as Canal and Caffi. Also, more light was being cast on his period thanks to the renewed interest of some scholars of the first half of the century (Forkel, Kiesewetter, Thibaut, Baini, Winterfeld, Ambros) in composers and music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although the last decades of the nineteenth century saw other important contributions from Italians (Canal, Davari, Guido Sommi and Giorgio Sommi Picenardi), significantly it was in the official journal of the new German musicology (the *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft*) that Emil

Vogel's still fundamental biographical essay appeared (in 1887). That period also saw new editions of Monteverdi's music: the *Lamento d'Arianna* published by Gervaeert in Paris in 1868, the madrigal "'T'amo mia vita" la mia cara vita' printed in London in 1883, and *Orfeo* issued by Robert Eitner in Berlin in 1881.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the number of editions of Monteverdi noticeably increased: the *Lamento d'Arianna* was republished by Parisotti (together with the Messenger's narration from *Orfeo*; 1885–1900), Solerti (1904) and Respighi (1910); d'Indy edited *Orfeo* (1905; the year before, his revision had been used for a performance of the opera in Paris) and *La coronazione di Poppea* (1908); and Torchi published the *Ballo delle ingrate* and the *Combattimento di Tancredi et Clorinda*. Similarly, *La coronazione di Poppea* was issued by Goldschmidt (1904) and Van den Borren (1914), *Orfeo* by Orefice (1910; the edition followed a concert performance the year before at the Milan Conservatory during the season of concerts presented by the Amici della Musica). Other editions included a selection of twelve five-part madrigals by Leichtentritt (1909) and Arnold Mendelssohn (1911), the *Sacrae cantiumculae* by Terrabugio (1910), and the Mass from the *Selva morale e spirituale* by Tirabassi (1914). But in that period, Monteverdi's fame, especially as an opera composer (and thanks to the first modern revivals), began to escape the narrow confines of musicological and scholarly circles, and in the refined aestheticism of those years the composer was also set up as a shining example of an archaic musical culture to be contrasted with the 'popular' tastes of modern times: witness the evocation of the 'divine Claudio' (the melancholic Mediterranean genius to be pitted against the barbaric Wagner) among the antique-Venetian bric-à-brac of D'Annunzio's *Fuoco* (1898), while a reflection of similar interests cultivated in French circles can be seen in the introduction to the *Traité d'harmonie théorique et pratique* by Dubois (1891).

These eager rediscoveries which slowly but surely brought Monteverdi back into the musical – and not just musicological – consciousness of the new century were to culminate in the publication of Monteverdi's complete works in 1926–32 (vols. I–XIV) and 1941–2 (vols. XV–XVI) edited by Gian Francesco Malipiero. Malipiero's edition appeared as part of a publishing programme ('Il Vittoriale degli Italiani'; 'The Triumph of the Italians') which one can ascribe to that climate of exalting national values which was always open to nationalist influences. In the case of the Venetian composer Malipiero, such notions – and likewise any hint of an archaicizing preciousness due to his direct contact with the ideas of D'Annunzio and his followers – were to some extent overtaken by his curious and admiring attention for a great predecessor who had worked in Venice several centuries before, using a language that was new but not revolutionary and who, indeed, had also been subject to censure from some of his contemporaries. Malipiero was searching for a personal style that leapfrogged Romanticism and therefore had a significant interest in the pre-Classical period: certainly in Monteverdi he was admiring one of the

greatest musicians of that time, but perhaps he also felt some kind of affinity bonding him with that distant, lonely figure. In the short preface to the first volume of the complete edition, Malipiero announces his project to transcribe and publish all the 'works of one of Italy's *true* geniuses, not to resuscitate a dead man' but to demonstrate 'yet again how the great manifestations of art always remain *modern*'. He concludes by recalling the unfairness of the criticisms to which Monteverdi had been subjected and the later repentance of his critics: 'may this perhaps serve as a warning to the worthy descendants of the aforementioned persecutors of Claudio Monteverdi?'

From then on, editions, books and articles (and naturally, musical performances) focusing on Monteverdi multiplied still further, making him perhaps the most widely known composer of the period before Bach.

Cremona

I Birth, family, surroundings

'15 May 1567, Claudio Zuan [= Giovanni] Antonio, son of Messer Baldasar Mondeverdo, godfather Signor Zuan Batista Zacaria, godmother Madonna Laura de la Fina'. Thus reads the entry, itself dated 15 May 1567, in the baptismal register of the church of SS. Nazaro e Celso in Cremona, recording the baptism of the first child of Baldassarre Monteverdi and Maddalena Zignani, who had been married towards the beginning of 1566.¹

An apothecary, surgeon and doctor, Baldassarre had first kept a shop near Cremona Cathedral; only after his marriage did he move to the parish of SS. Nazaro e Celso in the Belfiore district of the Piazzano quarter. Claudio was born in this house, and was followed by Maria Domitilla and Giulio Cesare, baptized on 16 May 1571 and 31 January 1573 respectively. Maddalena died some time around 1576, but after Baldassarre remarried Giovanna Gadio in 1576–7 other children came to join those of the first marriage: Clara Mas-similia (baptized 8 January 1579), Luca (baptized 7 February 1581) and Filippo (baptized January 1583). A third marriage (to Francesca Como, after 1583) seems not to have increased the family still further.

Cremona stood at the south-eastern edge of the state of Milan; for its economic and political importance it was the second city of the state after the capital. But Cremona was also close to the dominions of Venice (which stretched to the city), of the Gonzagas (the duchy of Mantua) and of the Farnese (the duchy of Parma). Less than ten years before Claudio Monteverdi's birth, the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) had sealed the legitimacy of the Spanish dominion over Milan – formerly a duchy ruled by the Sforzas – which in fact went back to 1535. Thus in political terms Cremona was dependent on Philip II of Spain, whose authority was transmitted through a Castellan who worked side by side with the local administration and who was responsible to the Governor of Milan.

Baldassarre Monteverdi had a degree of family wealth and was a man of some public significance: indeed, as well as owning several houses, archival documents record him among those who organized the Spanish census of 1576, and in April 1584 he is documented as being one of the founders of the Collegio dei Chirurghi (College of Surgeons) of Cremona, in whose statutes

(approved and published in 1587) his name appears at the head of the list of those belonging to that professional body.

By 1584, his eldest child, Claudio, although not yet 20, could claim some reputation as a musician – at least in local circles – due chiefly to the fact that he had already published two books of music (the *Sacrae cantiunculae* of 1582 and the *Madrigali spirituali* of 1583), with a third on the way (the dedication of the *Canzonette a tre voci* is dated 31 October 1584). On the title-pages of these editions – as with all the later ones similarly dating from his years in Cremona (the *Madrigali a cinque voci* ... *Libro primo*, 1587; *Il secondo libro de madrigali a cinque voci*, 1590) – Monteverdi states clearly that he is a pupil of Marc' Antonio Ingegneri: 'Egregii Ingegnerii Discipuli' (*Sacrae cantiunculae*); 'Discepolo del Signor Marc' Antonio Ingegneri' (*Madrigali spirituali*, *Canzonette* and *Madrigali a cinque voci* ... *Libro primo*); 'Discepolo del Sig.^r Ingegneri' (*Il secondo libro de madrigali a cinque voci*). Thus his teacher assumed responsibility for the dissemination of the works of a student who had not yet reached the age of majority and so was not permitted – in keeping with the civil statutes – to execute public contracts in his own name: this was not to be repeated in Monteverdi's *Terzo libro de madrigali a cinque voci* (1592), published by the composer when he was 25 and no longer resident in Cremona (Ingegneri in fact died a few days after Monteverdi signed the dedication).²

Ingegneri, born in Verona and a pupil of Vincenzo Ruffo, had moved to Cremona in around 1568, serving as a singer and organist at the cathedral: he seems to have been *maestro di cappella* by 1576.³ The musical resources of the cathedral had been reorganized in the 1520s to make them suitable for the performance of modern polyphony in the Flemish style.⁴ Normally there were a dozen singers plus an organist;⁵ by the second half of the century, on particularly solemn occasions they would be joined ever more regularly by one or two instrumentalists. For example, from 1579–84, the cornett player Don Ariodante Regaini was taken on 'to play in all the *concerti*' alongside the choir; similarly, when it was decided in 1582 to 'lower the organ of the greater church by about a semitone', this was intended so as to adapt the instrument 'for the choir and for the *concerti* that are done and that will be done with all the types of musical instruments which will share in the choir and in the *concerto*'.⁶

But if Cremona's musical life was centred on the cathedral, around it were placed the parallel activities of other churches in the city. From the presence of organs, we know of music in S. Agostino (the composer Tiburzio Massaino was a member of its monastery at various times in the late sixteenth century), S. Anna, S. Francesco, S. Abbondio, S. Pietro, and S. Agata (where Rodiano Barera was *maestro di cappella*). And a little way outside the city, the Cistercian Benedictine, Lucrezio Quinziani, lived in the monastery of S. Maddalena. Musicians born, and sometimes trained, in Cremona, include Costanzo Porta, Antonio and Uomobono Morsolino, Agostino Licino, Carlo Ardesi, Lorenzo Medici and Benedetto Pallavicino: Monteverdi had direct dealings with some