

INTRODUCTION

Biagio Marini's Opera 18 and 20 form part of a trilogy of publications of sacred music published in Venice in 1653, 1654, and 1655.¹ Opus 18 and Opus 20 contain music for Vespers suitable for all feast days throughout the year (Sundays and special holidays): mostly Psalm and Magnificat settings. The works in Opus 18 are in the modern concerted style, that is, for one or more soloists and instruments, whereas those in Opus 22 are for four-part choir with (or without?) organ.

The appearance of these publications coincided with a characteristically peripatetic period in Marini's life: one that saw yearly changes in his employment. A document dated January 17, 1652 (*more veneto*) states that Marini had been hired as both a singer and player at St. Mark's; a subsequent document, dated August 25, 1653, states that he had departed from his position without official leave some months before.² On the title page of the *Salmi*, Opus 18, dated 1653, Marini is described as *Maestro di Capella delli Cavalieri Nell'Accademia della Morte di Ferrara*.³ Yet the title page of Opus 20, dated the following year, gives the composer's name without any mention of post or title.⁴ In 1655, the year his Opus 21, *Lacrime di Davide sparse nel miserere*, was published, he took up a position in Vicenza, the last one in his career for which documentation is presently known.⁵ Assuming they existed, his Opera 17 and 19 must have also appeared during the early 1650's; what sort of music they contained is unknown. Since the terms *Libro primo* and *Libro secondo* appear on the respective title pages of Opera 18 and 20, it is doubtful that Opera 17 or 19 contained Vesper Psalms.

Salmi per tutte le solennità dell'anno, Opus 18

The title page reads:

Psalms for all the Solemnities of the year, concerted in the modern style, for one, two, and three voices by the Cavaliere Biagio Marini, *Maestro di Capella delli Cavalieri* of the *Accademia della Morte di Ferrara*, Book One, Opus 18, dedicated to the Most Serene Archduchess Anna of Austria, born Princess of Tuscany. The Gardano Press, Venice, 1653, by Francesco Magni.⁶

¹ For a brief biographical summary, see the Introduction to WLSCM No. 3.

² Roark Miller, "Divorce, Dismissal, but No Disgrace: Biagio Marini's Career Revisited," *Recercare* 9 (1997): 7–8.

³ Selfridge-Field has pointed out that information on title pages of publications at that time could be outdated. See Eleanor Selfridge-Field: "Addenda to Some Baroque Biographies," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 25 (1972): 236–37.

⁴ In his entry on Marini, Robert Eitner states "1653 ist er Kapellmeister an der Accademia della Morte zu Ferrara und 1654 Kapellmeister an S.Maria della Scala zu Mailand [Milan] (Titel)." "Titel" must refer to the statement on the title page of Opus 18 concerning Marini's activity in Ferrara since the title page Opus 20 does not connect him with any post. Robert Eitner, *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Quellen-Lexikon* (repr. ed., Graz, 1959), 5: 333–334.

⁵ Willene D. Clark, *The Vocal Music of Biagio Marini* (diss., Yale University, 1966), 2 vols., 2: 48.

⁶ For the original Italian texts of the title pages, see the Critical Report.

The dedicatee was the daughter of Cosimo II de' Medici and Maria Maddalena, sister of the Emperor Ferdinand II of Austria. Anna was married to Ferdinand Karl, son of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm to whom Marini had dedicated his Opus 16 in 1649. Currying Habsburg favor was nothing new—witness the dedication of Opus 2.

Opus 18 comprises settings of eleven Vesper psalms, the response *Domine ad adjuvandum*, and the Magnificat. (Table 3, p. 4). Notable is the omission of the lengthy psalms *In exitu Israel*, *Memento Domine*, and *Domine probasti me*, as well as *De profundis*, and *Confitebor angelorum*. Partbooks were printed for alto, tenor (occasionally a part is cited as being performable either by tenor or soprano), bass, two violins and continuo. The full forces are specified for only five of the psalms and the Magnificat.⁷

These settings might best be described as virtuoso chamber music, with the works for one and two voices being prototypes of the solo and duet cantatas that were emerging at mid-century. Although the tenor part (or, in four of the pieces, the soprano part) is given demanding *passaggi* in this collection, pride of place must go to the bass singer (who, on occasion, may have been Marini himself). In fact the entire collection opens with a short but showy setting for bass of the response *Domine ad adjuvandum* that precedes the first psalm *Dixit Dominus*.

The other work for solo bass, *Lauda Jerusalem*, provides an excellent example of the compositional approach Marini employs in Opus 18. The psalm verses are set in a sequence of contrasting sections, some in recitative style, prefaced and interspersed with short instrumental *sinfonias* and *ritornelli*. Notable is the abrupt entry of the singer in measure 8 of the opening *sinfonia*. For a few measures the voice intones the first phrase of the eighth *tono* version of the plainchant; the phrase is repeated at the end of the piece at “*Sicut erat in principio*” (mm. 146–150). Marini's setting of Psalm 112, *Laudate pueri* is the only piece in either of his Vesper collections that may be assembled complete from the surviving partbooks. It may be regarded as a duet cantata. The Magnificat utilizes all three voice parts plus the violins—sparse, perhaps, in comparison with a ceremonial work a 8, but effective in a small chapel or large room.

Vesperi per tutte le festività dell'anno, Opus 20

Opus 20 is dedicated to King João IV of Portugal:

Vespers for all the Feasts of the year for four voices, to be sung by a choir with the organ, dedicated to His Sacred Majesty, the Most Serene Lord João IV, King of Portugal, etc., Book Two, Opus 20, by the Cavaliere Biagio Marini. The Gardano Press, Venice, 1654, by Francesco Magni.

⁷ A complete set of partbooks was reportedly in the Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Wrocław prior to World War II. See Emil Bohn, *Bibliographie der Musik-Druckwerke bis 1700, welche in der Stadtbibliothek, der Bibliothek des Akademischen Instituts für Kirchenmusik und der Königlichen und Universitäts-Bibliothek zu Breslau aufbewahrt werden*. (repr. ed., Hildesheim: Olms, 1969), 273. The *Tenore o Canto*, *Alto*, *Violino secondo*, and *Basso continuo* partbooks were apparently destroyed during the bombardment of Breslau during World War II. The set of partbooks in Budapest (see Critical Report) lacks only the *Alto* and *Violino secondo*. Clark, *op. cit.*, was apparently unaware of the Budapest set.

Whether Marini had his eye on an actual post in Lisbon, or at least was knowingly contributing to what has been described as the largest music library of its time is unknown. The fate of Opus 20 once it reached Lisbon may have been ignoble: “there is every indication that much of the library’s non-Iberian repertory...was never actually studied or performed.”⁸

Although it would be erroneous to characterize the music of the *Vesperi* as representative of a conservative, *prima prattica* approach, its more austere, antiquarian scoring: *Canto, Alto, Tenore, Basso*, plus Organ, contrasts sharply with that of the *Psalmi*. At the heading of each piece the *tono* is given and for all but one psalm there is the indication *sine intonatione*. Table 4 (p. 5) lists the contents of Opus 20, the *tuoni*, and the roots of the final cadences.

The music of the *Vesperi* embodies a considerable amount of *ruvidezza*—odd melodic shapes and leaps, unprepared dissonances, consecutive seconds, fifths, and octaves.⁹ Some may be deliberate madrigalisms—the awkward leaps in the Canto part in measures 19–20 of *De profundis* perhaps were meant to illustrate “iniquitates” (transgressions). But what are we to make of the consecutive fifths between Canto and Tenore in measure 4 or between Canto and Alto in measures 15–16 of the same piece? Are they intentional, or are they examples of compositional negligence calling into question Marini’s skill in handling a four-voice polyphonic style? Handwritten emendations in the partbooks, one involving the addition of an entire measure, suggest that the typesetting and/or the materials with which the typesetter had to work may have been less than pristine.¹⁰ Yet there is no question that the eighteen pieces comprising the print form an imposing mass of music, with passages ranging from pedestrian to impressive.

The setting of *Dixit Dominus* contains features typical of the collection as a whole. Homophony alternates with imitative counterpoint, the latter texture rarely lasting more than six measures at a time. Measures 1–12 of the Canto part are based on the plainchant in its *primo tono* version; the chant melody is recapitulated by the Tenor at the “Gloria Patri” in measures 82–93. Similar chant quotation may be found at the end of the *Magnificat Tertii Toni*, mm. 81–85.¹¹ There do not appear to be any quotes from plainchant in the *De profundis*. Remarkably the composer sets this work in the third tone, rather than the fourth or eighth—the *toni* of the plainchant settings in the *Liber Usualis*.¹²

⁸ Art. “Portugal” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, eds. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (London, 2001), 20: 192.

⁹ Clark has noted that some of these practices were sanctioned by Vincenzo Galilei in his *Discorso intorno all’uso delle disonanze*. See Clark, 1: 185–6.

¹⁰ Words and phrases from the texts are also sometimes awkwardly omitted. See for instance the omission of “humiles” in the Tenor part in measure 55 of the *Magnificat Tertii Toni* from Opus 20.

¹¹ At least six works in the *Vesperi* have quotes from plainchant.

¹² Readers will undoubtedly want to compare the six pieces in this website edition with those in the monumental survey of seventeenth century Vespers settings edited by Jeffrey Kurtzman, *Vespers and Compline*, comprising vols. 11–20 of *Seventeenth-Century Italian Sacred Music* (New York: Garland Publishing).

Acknowledgment

Permission from the University Library of the University of Wrocław, Poland to publish editions based on sources in their possession is gratefully acknowledged.

TABLE 3

Biagio Marini, *Psalmi per tutte le solennità dell'anno
concertati nel moderno stile* (Venice, 1652)

LIST OF WORKS¹³

	Title	Performing forces ¹⁴
1	Domine ad adiuvandum	Bass, two violins
2	Dixit Dominus	Alto, tenor, bass, two violins
3	Confitebor	Alto, tenor, bass
4	Beatus vir	Alto, tenor, bass, two violins
5	Laudate pueri	Soprano or tenor, bass
6	Laudate Dominum	Soprano or tenor, two violins
7	Laetatus sum	Alto, tenor, bass, two violins
8	Nisi Dominus	Alto, tenor, bass, two violins
9	Lauda Jerusalem	Bass, two violins
10	In convertendo	Alto, tenor (or soprano), bass
11	Credidi	Alto, tenor, bass, two violins
12	Beati omnes	Tenor (or soprano), two violins
13	Magnificat	Alto, tenor, bass, two violins

¹³ Pieces are listed in the order they appear in the part books; the order numbers have been added editorially.

¹⁴ All pieces have an *Organo* (continuo) part.

TABLE 4

Biagio Marini, *Vesperì per tutte le festività dell'anno* (Venice, 1653)LIST OF WORKS¹⁵

	Title	Tono ¹⁶	Final cadence
1	Dixit Dominus	1 (transposed up one step)	E
2	Confitebor	2	G (with ♭ signature)
3	Beatus vir	4	E
4	Laudate pueri	8	G
5	Laudate Dominum	8	G
6	In exitu Israel	Mixed	E
7	Laetatus sum	8	G
8	Nisi Dominus	4	E
9	Lauda Jerusalem	8	G
10	Credidi	3	A
11	In convertendo	5	C
12	Domine probasti me	1	D
13	De profundis	3	A
14	Memento Domine David	1	D
15	Beati omnes	6 (can be sung one tone higher)	F (with ♭ signature)
16	Confitebor Angelorum	7	E
17	Magnificat	3	A
18	Magnificat secundo	6	F (with ♭ signature)

¹⁵ Pieces are listed in the order they appear in the part books; the order numbers have been added editorially.

¹⁶ These *toni*-final combinations correspond closely with some of those listed in Gregory Barnett, "Modal Theory, Church Keys, and the Sonata at the End of the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51 (1998): 245–81.