

The path from the prima to the seconda pratica

Program for soprano, theorbo, lirone and organ

Laudate Dominum

Claudio Monteverdi (1567 – 1643)

Toccata quarta secondo Tuono

Claudio Merulo (1533 – 1604)

Egredimini, filiae Sion

Alessandro Grandi (1570 – 1630)

Jesu mi dulcissime

Alessandro Grandi

Ave maris stella

Rocco Rodio (c. 1535-after 1615)

O quam tu pulchra es

Alessandro Grandi

Quam vidistis pastores

Ludovico da Viadana (1560 - 1627)

O quam suavis et decora

Francesco Cavalli (1602-1676)

Decantabat populus Israel

Ludovico da Viadana

From the prima to the seconda pratica in the Venetian republic: continuity and shift.

With this program **La Cecchina** blurs the clear borders that separate the renaissance from the baroque period. These secular and stylistic limits are important to understand two very different aesthetics.

La prima and la *seconda pratica* are often considered opposed, although they nourished each other. They can be considered a break as well as a continuous line: the new composing technique, known as basso continuo, needed the counterpoint lines, while the text took over the main role. The baroque period did not refute the renaissance: it emerged from it.

At this time Venice was one of the most important cities in Italy. It attracted famous composers, such as **Claudio Monteverdi** (1567 – 1643). The composer Artusi criticized two of his madrigals, which made Monteverdi defend the new style known as seconda pratica. At the same time Monteverdi continued composing in the old style.

Other composers from the Venetian school at the end of the 15th century prepared his path. **Claudio Merulo** (1533 – 1604) was one of them. He worked as an organist in St. Mark's of Venice at the same time as Andrea Gabrieli. He was famous for his innovative way of composing for keyboard instruments, combining counterpoint sections with long ornamented passages.

In 1617 **Alessandro Grandi** (1586 – 1630) was hired at St. Mark's while Monteverdi was choirmaster. Grandi studied with Giovanni Gabrieli and, like Monteverdi, he kept composing in the old style as well as in the new one. He wrote polyphonic parts over a bass line and explored the ornamentation and chromatic resources to bring importance to the text. He became one of the most famous composers of his time.

One of the most important figures related to this musical change is **Ludovico da Viadana**. In 1602 he published in Venice *Cento concerti con il basso continuo*, becoming one of the first composers who used this new technic for sacred repertoire.

While Monteverdi and Grandi were working in St. Mark's, **Francesco Cavalli** (1602-1676) took the post as a professional singer in the choir. His career in St. Mark's was impressive. He took over Monteverdi's post as organist and choirmaster. Cavalli became famous for his operas, but he also composed sacred music with a style related to the prima as much as the *seconda pratica*.

As the century came to an end the new style became established and detractors disappeared. Gradually text gains importance. The expressivity and the emotional charge of the words leaves almost no space for an elaborate and polyphonic *basso continuo* line. This was the end of the *prima pratica* in the secular repertoire.

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