
INTRODUCTION

Sieneſe convents were sites of a rich and varied musical culture during the ſeventeenth century. Documents from theſe institutions confirm that Siena’s nuns performed virtually every genre of music, ſacred and ſecular, current in Italy during that time. Although they might have entertained themlſelves (and guests) with madrigals, arias, and even opera, the holy women were moſt often engaged with ſacred music. They generally performed ſuch repertory from behind the grates for convent-specific rites and on important feaſt days to an admiring public gathered in their outer churches.¹ Records ſuggest that nuns commiſſioned much of this music from the male muſicians who regularly taught at the convents although virtually nothing of that repertory has yet come to light. The only ſurviving ſource of ſacred music compoſed ſpecifically for uſe by Sieneſe nuns is from the pen of the ariſtocratic muſical dilettante Alessandro Della Ciaia.

Relatively little is known of the life and times of Della Ciaia. He was born in 1600 to rich, noble Sieneſe parents. In 1636, he married Suplizia Santi, a young woman from another prominent hometown patrician clan; during the courſe of their marriage the couple had at leaſt ſix children. Della Ciaia died ſometime before January 1678. We are fortunate that Isidoro Ugurgieri Azzolini thought highly enough of Della Ciaia to include him in his biographical compendium, the *Pompe ſaneſi* of 1649. There, he alluded to Della Ciaia’s ſtudies under the well-reſpected teacher-compoſer Deſiderio Pecci, and he deſcribed his ſubject as “an intelligent compoſer and a lovely ſinger” who could play “harpsichord, lute, and theorbo moſt beautifully.” He noted that Della Ciaia was fond of compoſing and playing for his friends, eſpecially “in ſervice of God,” and he alluded to a number of manuſcript works that the moſt nobleman reſuſed to publiſh.²

Fortunately, Della Ciaia did decide to publiſh at leaſt ſome of his compoſitions. His three extant collections comprise a book of madrigals, *Madrigali a cinque voci, con baſſo continuo, opera prima* (Venice, 1636), a book of ſmall- and large-scale motets, *Sacri modulatus ad concentum duarum, trium, quatuor, quinque, octo, novemque vocum accomodati* (Bologna, 1666),³ and the volume of intereſt here, *Lamentationi ſagre, e motetti ad una voce col baſſo continuo* (Venice, 1650). This laſt is a collection of ſcored ſettings for ſolo voice and continuo of the nine Lamentations of Jeremiah and of nine motets. The editor’s afterword to the print makes the function of the publiſcation clear:

O reader, you might perhaps wonder why the preſent Lamentations and motets that I have gathered are all compoſed in the ſoprano clef. The author wrote theſe works not for professional reaſons or out of ambition to have them publiſhed but to ſatisfy both his

¹ For a comprehensive ſtudy of convent music in the city, ſee Colleen Reardon, *Holy Concord within Sacred Walls: Nuns and Music in Siena 1575-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Preſs, 2002).

² For a more detailed account of Della Ciaia’s life and works, ſee Reardon, *Holy Concord*, 63-64; 154-91.

³ A large-scale motet from this collection, with a rubric indicating its ſuitability for “the entrance of a virgin in a convent,” is tranſcribed and analyzed in Reardon, *Holy Concord*, 62-74. Frits Noſke provides a complete tranſcription of another large-scale work from the 1666 collection, the *Lamentatio Virginis in deſiſtione Filii de cruce*, in *Saints and Sinners: The Latin Musical Dialogue in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Preſs, 1992), 283-314.

talents and the pious requests of some friends on behalf of their relatives who are nuns. He therefore composed the works to conform to the range in which the nuns would have to sing them.⁴

Singers interested in performing the repertory from the 1650 print can find a recent edition of one of Della Ciaia's Lamentation settings⁵ but none of his solo motets. The motets are of special interest because they can be linked to feast days that Sieneese nuns in any number of houses would have celebrated with music throughout the year. Several are general purpose—for a saint or for the dedication of a church—and others are linked to specific monastic rites. One example of each of these categories is offered here for the first time in a modern edition.

Textual Sources and Musical Style

The Latin motets in Della Ciaia's 1650 collection were cobbled together from a variety of sources; they include snippets of liturgical items, devotional poetry, and quotations or paraphrases from the Bible, especially from the psalms. Most of the time it is difficult if not impossible to identify a specific source for every phrase in the works. Befitting the style of the texts, Della Ciaia's settings are both sectional and through-composed. They feature declamatory passages—often punctuated with melismatic perorations—that generally alternate with lilting tunes in triple time. Chromaticism appears for passages of text that refer to pain and suffering; the composer also made use of other kinds of word-painting. Della Ciaia exploits shifts in the hexachord (from *mollis* to *durus* or vice versa) to underline textual passages dealing with transformation or reversal. He is fond of ostinatos and uses them to great effect to portray states of ecstasy that he associated with nuns' music-making. The motets display a wide range (often used expressively), and demand much from a singer. The virtuoso nature of the compositions allows us to infer the high level of musical training that Sieneese nuns received.

Ecce venio ad te, Domine

Two of the most significant liturgies for all orders of nuns were clothing and profession. In the clothing ceremony, marking the beginning of the novitiate, a girl literally discarded her secular garments and donned a nun's habit. The profession ceremony, which took place a few years later, transformed the novice into a full-fledged member of the monastic community. Texts beginning with the words "Ecce venio ad te" can be found in such rites at convents both inside and outside Siena.⁶ The opening is an echo from the Song of Songs and represents the response of the beloved to the repeated cries of "Veni, veni" that permeate that canticle. The second phrase of the motet (beginning with "Respice in me") is inspired by Psalm 24:16-17 and the final

⁴ Ti maravigliarai per avventura, o lettore, che le presenti lamentazioni e mottetti da me raccolti, tutti sotto una chiave di soprano sieno composti. Ma l'autore, al quale uscirono dalla penna non per professione o per ambizione di mandarle alla stampa, ma per gradire il suo genio e le pie richieste d'alcuni amici per monache loro parenti, ha obbedito al tuono della voce nella quale esse dovevano cantarle, e vivi felice.

⁵ Colleen Reardon, "'Ha innalzato un muro attorno a me': lamentazioni per monache senesi," in *I monasteri femminili come centri di cultura fra rinascimento e barocco*, ed. Gianna Pomata and Gabriella Zarri (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2005), 38-43.

⁶ See Reardon, *Holy Concord*, 50-74; 269 n. 45.

phrase (beginning with “Apprehende arma”) by Psalm 34:2.⁷ The tone of the text is confidential, and its insistence on the motif of pain reflects the common practice among holy women of drawing nearer to Christ through voluntary or involuntary suffering.

The musical setting stresses the idea of delay. When the singer describes how her heart’s pains have multiplied, Della Ciaia composes a long and difficult melisma to illustrate that proliferation and to extend the cadential formula. At the phrase, “how slowly I rush,” the singer performs a rocking triple-time motif that, taken in sequence, twice postpones an expected cadence (mm. 32-43). When the vocalist admonishes her beloved to come to her and to “not be late,” Della Ciaia writes a long-held note that is again taken in sequence and prolongs the approach to the cadence (mm. 66-76). The climax of the work comes near the end when the singer asks her beloved to take up arms and defend her; at this point Della Ciaia unleashes his highest notes and calls upon virtuoso passagework.

Gaudens gaudebo

The text for this motet begins with a quotation from Isaia 61:10 and proceeds to paraphrase Psalms 70:23, 53:8, and 80:3; 1 Paralipomenon 16:8-9; and the key phrase “Sound the trumpet in Sion” from Joel 2:1. The text summons the faithful to celebrate, through musical performance, the arrival of a male saint among the heavenly host. Della Ciaia left the choice of saint up to the performer, who need only choose the appropriate name and insert it where “N.” appears in the text. By changing the “Beatum” in measure 62 to “Beatam,” the “Beatus” in m. 123 to “Beata,” and the “coronatus” in measures 130, 142, and 162 to “coronata,” the text could herald the arrival of a female saint in heaven. The motet is therefore usable on the feast day of virtually any saint in the liturgical calendar.

Gaudens gaudebo is the most joyous of all the motets in the 1650 collection. Della Ciaia deploys melodious tunes in triple meter for most of the setting, perhaps in response to the motif of musical performance present in the text; he also highlights those passages that refer directly to singing or playing. For example, the singer launches into a long melisma at the precise moment that she is “singing” the Lord’s glory (mm. 21-27). Another striking passage is found in measures 69-93. Here, the composer imitates the triadic fanfare of the trumpet in common time when the singer gives the command to “sound the trumpet in Sion.” When she urges the drums to join in the celebration, Della Ciaia reverts to triple time and resorts to one of his favorite devices, the ostinato bass. Over a simple alternation of the notes C and G in the continuo, imitating the “well-tuned” drums, the singer weaves ecstatic melismas.

Note on Performance

Documentary evidence from Siena’s convents suggests that either an organ or a theorbo would be the most appropriate instrument to realize the continuo accompaniment. The presence of a spinet in at least one Sienese house means that a harpsichord could also be pressed into service.

For a successful performance of these works, it is vital that the singer both understand the text and find the appropriate manner to communicate its meaning through the choice of tempo and approach to meter (among other parameters). Sections marked “C” are sometimes

⁷ All citations of biblical verses are taken from *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983).

declamatory and sometimes more lyrical; the declamatory passages can be taken freely, especially when the continuo part has long-held notes. Triple-meter sections are dance-like in spirit and should be sung in strict time.

CRITICAL REPORT

The motets presented here are transmitted in only one known source, which survives in a single copy at the Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Wrocław:

LAMENTATIONI / SAGRE, E MOTETTI / AD UNA VOCE / col Basso Continuo. / DEL SIGNOR ALESSANDRO DELLA CIAIA / NOBIL SANESE, / & Accademico Filomato. / OPERA SECONDA. / Raccolta, e data in Luce da Filippo Succhielli. / CON PRIVILEGIO. / IN VENETIA / Appresso Alessandro Vincenti. M. DC. L.⁸

In the following editions, a whole note equals a semibreve in the original notation. Della Ciaia's barring and his time signatures have been retained. A modern G clef has been substituted for the original C1 clef in the vocal part. The trills found above the staff in mm. 52 and 54 of *Ecce venio ad te, Domine* are present in the print, but any sharps or flats above the staff are editorial suggestions.

The use of chromatic alterations follows modern practice; that is, an added sharp or flat remains in force for notes at the same pitch level throughout an entire measure as well as for notes tied over a bar line. Della Ciaia's practice was to insert the chromatic alteration for all affected notes not immediately repeated, even within the same bar. In two cases, Della Ciaia altered a note in one octave and then included no chromatic alternation of the same pitch in another octave. In those two places, a natural sign has been added in the score itself (see *Ecce venio ad te, Domine*, measure 61, the penultimate E-natural sixteenth-note of the measure; *Gaudens gaudebo*, measure 65, the final F-natural sixteenth-note of the measure). A sharp sign replaces the *quadro* found in *Gaudens gaudebo*, measure 99. Natural signs replace the sharps Della Ciaia used to raise flatted notes a half step; they also replace the flats Della Ciaia included in the figured bass to caution the instrumentalist not to play a major third or a perfect fifth above the continuo line (e.g., *Ecce venio ad te, Domine*, m. 87).

The continuo part preserves two features of the original print that are useful to an instrumentalist. The first is the custom of breaking up long notes into smaller, tied values to indicate precisely where chord changes—indicated by figures—occur above a held bass line. When, on the other hand, Della Ciaia wished to preserve the same harmony over a tie in the continuo line, he often repeated the figure given with the first note under the following note or notes. This feature, too, has been retained. The only figures added to the continuo part are, in fact, repetitions of this kind that Della Ciaia forgot to include; they appear in brackets.

The texts were transcribed directly from the motet and punctuation was added. Repeated text, indicated by “ij” in the print, in the edition is shown through the use of italic font.

⁸ The shelf mark is 50054 Muz. UNIKAT. A dedication follows the title page; the musical settings begin on page 4 and continue through page 99. An unnumbered page with an afterword (translated above and transcribed in n. 4) and an index ends the volume. *Ecce venio ad te, Domine* appears on pages 55-58 of the print, and *Gaudens gaudebo*, on pages 83-88.

Capitalization in the print is inconsistent and uppercase was retained only for nouns referring to celestial deities (e.g., Domino, Archangeli). One erroneous “heic” was tacitly corrected to “heu” (*Ecce venio ad te, Domine*, mm. 25-26). The division of lines given below follows no poetic form; it is a matter of pure practicality, allowing for reasonable syntax as well as for a side-by-side translation.

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