A New Venetian Coronation 1595 McCREESH A New Venetian Coronation



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Vocal and instrumental music by Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli: performing editions by Paul McCreesh, based on material supplied by Clifford Bartlett and available from The Early Music Company Ltd Organ music: performing editions by Jan Waterfield and William Whitehead Gussago duet after a transcription by Liuwe Tamminga, with kind permission Shawm music: edited by William Lyons
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WINGERION

Andrea & Giovanni Gabrieli

A New Venetian Coronation

1595

GABRIELI CONSORT & PLAYERS

PAUL MCCREESH

"And then they sing a beautiful Mass of the Trinity with the Collect of St Mark... and the players sound Piffari, and after the Epistle, behind the High Altar, and at the Elevation they sound cornetts or other instruments, and in this as in all important solemnities they sing and play from the organ lofts..."

BONIFACIO, CEREMONIALE... (ASV PROCURATIA DE SUPRA REG 98, 1564)

Describing the procedure for the celebration of the Doge's Coronation Mass

"The church of St Mark was so full of people that one could not move a step, and a new platform was built for the singers, adjoining which there was a portable organ, in addition to the two famous organs of the church: and the other instruments made the most excellent music, in which the best singers and players that can be found in this region took part. The Most Illustrious Signory came... and thus the Mass began, sung by four choirs with all the solemnity that was possible..."

sansovino, venetia città nobilissima (1604)

Describing the music for the Mass of the visiting Japanese Princes in 1585



PROGRAMME I THE PROCESSION 8.20 BELLS

INTRADA TERTIA / SEXTA / SEPTIMA Hans Leo Hassler (1601) TRUMPET SONATA NO. 333 Cesare Bendinelli (1614)

THE MASS

- 2 TOCCATA SECONDO TONO 2.02 Giovanni Gabrieli (1593) Jan Waterfield *Organ*
- 3 INTROIT 4.24
- 4 ARRIVAL OF THE DOGE: TOCCATA 26 1.01 Cesare Bendinelli (1614)
- 5 INTONAZIONE PRIMO TONO 0.30 Giovanni Gabrieli (1593) William Whitehead *Organ*
- 6 күгіе à 5 *1.59* Andrea Gabrieli (1587) Richard Butler *Tenor*

- 7 CHRISTE À 8 2.13
 Andrea Gabrieli (1587)
 Richard Butler *Tenor*, William Gaunt *Bass*
- Richard Butler *Tenor*, William Gaunt *Bass*
- 9 GLORIA À 16 5.02 Andrea Gabrieli (1587) Mark Chambers *Falsetto*, Richard Butler *Tenor*, Eamonn Dougan *Baritone*
- IO COLLECT 1.23
- II EPISTLE 1.05
- 12 GRADUAL: CANZONA [13] À 12 2.48 Giovanni Gabrieli (1597)
- **I3** GOSPEL 2.03
- 14 INTONAZIONE SETTIMO TONO 1.14
 Andrea Gabrieli (1593)
 Jan Waterfield Organ

- 15 OFFERTORY: DEUS QUI BEATUM MARCUM À 10 2.51 Giovanni Gabrieli (1597) Mark Chambers Falsetto, David Allsopp Falsetto
- 16 PREFACE 3.06
- 17 SANCTUS & BENEDICTUS À 12 3.40

 Andrea Gabrieli (1587)

 Richard Butler *Tenor*, William Gaunt *Bass*
- 18 ELEVATION: SARASINETTA 2 1.01
 Cesare Bendinelli (1614)
- 19 CANZONA [16] À 15 4.34 Giovanni Gabrieli (1597)
- 20 PATER NOSTER 2.02
- 2I AGNUS DEI 1.25
- 22 INTONAZIONE QUINTO TONO ALLA QUARTA BASSA 0.42 Giovanni Gabrieli (1593) William Whitehead *Organ*

- 23 COMMUNION: O SACRUM CONVIVIUM À 5 3.59
 Andrea Gabrieli (1565)
 David Allsopp Falsetto, Richard Butler Tenor,
 Eamonn Dougan Baritone, Greg Skidmore Baritone,
 William Gaunt Bass
- 24 CANZONA [9] À 10 4.23 Giovanni Gabrieli (1597)
- 25 POST COMMUNION PRAYER 1.58
- 26 SONATA LA LEONA 2.15Cesario Gussago (1608)Jan Waterfield and William Whitehead Organs
- 27 OMNES GENTES À 16 4.26
 Giovanni Gabrieli (1597)
 Mark Chambers *Falsetto*, Richard Butler *Tenor*,
 Eamonn Dougan *Baritone*

TOTAL RUNNING TIME 73.55

MUSIC AND CEREMONY AT ST MARK'S

The Basilica of St Mark served a dual function as both private chapel of the Doge and principal church of the State, and as such figured prominently in Venetian political life. With its own distinctive liturgy, a minutely detailed ceremonial, sumptuous mosaic decoration, works of art and magnificent music, the Basilica not only reflected vividly the worldly glories of the Serenissima Repubblica, but also served to illustrate a complex fusion of political and religious ideology. Differing ranks of feasts called for specific types of music: in particular, the formal appearance of the Doge at Mass and Vespers on 30 or so days each year required the exposition of the great golden altarpiece, the Pala d'oro, the presence of instrumentalists and the performance of elaborate music. Every few years a major event would demand yet more lavish celebration: the signing of a treaty, a naval victory, the end of a plague, the visit of a prince or ambassador, or the coronation of a Doge. These festivals are frequently described in Venetian histories and, even judged by Venetian standards of opulence, would be of quite stupendous extravagance. This performance recreates one such event, the Coronation Mass of Doge Marino Grimani celebrated on the morning of 27 April 1595.

THE VENETIAN CORONATION RITE

Venice's meritocratic form of government, and the role of the Doge as primus inter pares, led to a coronation ritual that differs substantially from most other European rites. After a complex system of balloting by 41 senior statesmen, the election of a new Doge was heralded by the ringing of bells. If the choice proved popular, widespread rejoicing would often follow.

The official coronation ceremonies were tripartite. The Doge entered St Mark's where he received the Ducal banner and was presented to the people; he was then carried around the Piazza San Marco, throwing specially minted coins to the crowds, and finally he was crowned with the Ducal beretta on top of the Scala dei Giganti in the courtyard of the Ducal palace. These formalities, although performed in the presence of St Mark's clergy, were essentially secular and it was only with the actual Coronation Mass, celebrated in the Basilica the next morning, that the new Doge's appointment was solemnised.

The election of Marino Grimani (1532-1605) was welcomed with particular enthusiasm by revellers who ripped up stalls in the Piazza to fuel a huge bonfire. Grimani responded to this popular support by rewarding the populace with ample gifts of wine, bread and money.

In 1595 St Mark's maestro di cappella was Baldassare Donato, a sound THE CAPPELLA administrator, if a somewhat insipid composer, who had spent his entire life in MARCIANA the Basilica's service. Giovanni Gabrieli served as one of the organists, and composed much large-scale festival music. The Cappella Marciana comprised some 16 singers with an instrumental ensemble of cornetts, sackbuts and a few string players, often greatly augmented by freelance musicians. The Doge's own piffari e trombone and retinue of fanfare-trumpeters were also present at major events, contemporary descriptions mentioning up to 24 trumpeters and drummers. In addition to the Basilica's two famed organs it was customary to

hire additional chamber organs. The introit was usually sung by the *Cappella Marciana*, but all other plainchant was sung by a separate body of clerics.

There were at least seven areas around the altar area from which musicians performed, including the two organ galleries and the *pulpitum magnum cantorum* or *bigonzo* by the screen. The division of forces into two, three or four spacially separated vocal and instrumental 'choirs' is one of the most characteristic features of Venetian sacred music. The musicians almost certainly faced inwards towards the altar and the Doge's seat, the main aim being to tickle the ears of the dignatories rather than fill the Basilica with washes of sound. Much of the music bears this out: even in the very grandest polychoral pieces there is still a delicate interplay between voices and instruments.

THE MUSIC

It is difficult to date so much of the Venetian repertoire, especially sacred music which was often published in large, retrospective and sometimes posthumous collections. There is evidence that music remained in repertoire some decades after composition, *stile antico* polyphony rubbing shoulders with motets and *concerti* in a more up-to-date style. The Kyrie, Gloria and Sanctus are performed in settings by Andrea Gabrieli (c.1533-1585), Giovanni's uncle and a previous organist at the Basilica. The four-choir Gloria may date from the Mass of the visiting Japanese Princes in 1585, whilst the more expansive settings of Kyrie-Christe-Kyrie and Sanctus-Benedictus are a masterful blend of poised polyphony and the rich sonorities of three contrasted choirs. The Communion

motet *O sacrum convivium*, probably the earliest work included, is altogether more intimate, at once restrained and ecstatic.

Giovanni Gabrieli's compositions also feature prominently, including a brilliant setting of the collect for St Mark, Deus qui beatum Marcum, in classic cori spezzati style. The festive motet Omnes Gentes, one of the few four-choir pieces written before the new century, is included as a final motet of praise. The text, from Psalm 46, refers in passing to the Ascension, but as this Psalm occurs in the office for all three major feasts of St Mark, Venetians may well have viewed this work as suitable for any festival of state rejoicing. Giovanni Gabrieli's canzonas and sonatas are a landmark in instrumental music: extensive, elaborately scored works of a wide expressive range. The canzona à 12 is a wonderfully cheerful work for three choirs of largely equal voices. The canzona à 15, for three five-part choirs, is an altogether more sombre work for which Gabrieli, unusually, indicates a suggested scoring - the wonderfully sonorous combination of 12 trombones with two cornetti and a single 'violino' (in fact, a viola). Perhaps most surprising of all is the canzona à 10, predominantly for high instruments in which the two highest parts have solo sections consisting of the most elaborately written virtuosic divisions, prefiguring the later Venetian concerto.

There is no extant Venetian trumpet music, but judging from concordances between the few surviving sources of early trumpet music the repertoire seems to have been pan-European. The fanfares are taken from a contemporary manuscript tutor by the Italian trumpeter Cesare Bendinelli. Organ toccatas

and intonations by both Gabrielis punctuate the service at various points. There are descriptions of both St Mark's organs playing together, but again no music survives. Following the widespread 16th century practice of organ intabulation, Cesario Gussago's Sonata 'La Leona' has been transcribed for two organs. The music for the Doge's Piffari ensemble of shawms and trombones is by Hans Leo Hassler, a pupil of Andrea Gabrieli and friend of Giovanni Gabrieli, active in Venice in the late 16th century. The chant is taken from a number of Venetian sources, including a 16th century Gradual from the Basilica's treasury.

THE RECONSTRUCTION

The sequence of music in this performance takes the form of a liturgical reconstruction, not only incorporating the texts and ceremonial procedures of the Venetian Rite, but also reflecting the musico-liturgical practices of the era. In northern Italy it was customary to suppress certain items of the liturgy in order to place greater emphasis on extra-liturgical music. Most often the official text was said by the celebrant 'in secreto' at the High Altar. This practice was never sanctioned by the official (Roman) authorities but in Venice, more than anywhere else, it allowed music to take an ever-increasing importance in services – at St Mark's there was even a rule allowing priests to be fined if they interrupted the music!

Certain points in the Mass were considered particularly suited to musical elaboration with toccatas, motets, sonatas and canzonas, especially the Gradual, Offertory, Elevation, Agnus Dei, Communion, Postcommunion and Deo Gratias. It is not yet clear how much of the official text was spoken, *sotto voce*,

under such music, and in any case there seems to have been considerable flexibility in practice. In Venice, even the Agnus Dei was sometimes omitted and it is possible that almost all the chant items from the Preface onwards were covered by the multiplicity of musical substitutes. The Coronation Mass was celebrated with its own unusual and hybrid liturgy, that of a Mass of the Holy Trinity with the collect of the feast of St Mark.

Venetian liturgical sources are always complex, and research is constantly developing. If some decisions regarding minor aspects of the reconstruction are conjectural, it is nonetheless based on a thorough interpretation of all the major Venetian sources. In any case such details are relatively unimportant – the reconstruction is of necessity speculative in terms of the actual music performed on that April morning over 400 years ago. More interesting is the possibility of recreating something greater than the sum of the individual pieces, and to put all the music into a richer, more colourful and more dramatic perspective. We may have lost our ability to respond to religious and civic ritual so beloved of renaissance Venetians, but in reconstructing such events we can perhaps rediscover something of the artistic and spiritual riches of this great city at the zenith of her powers.

Paul McCreesh



As bells are rung throughout the city, the Piazza San Marco is filled with throngs of people. Wielding its way around the Piazza is an elaborate procession that includes the Doge's shawm band, fanfare trumpeters and drummers. The order of service for the beginning of the ceremonial mass is not clear from historical sources. However, it is assumed that the organs would play as the congregation assembles. As the *Cappella Marciana* and the clergy reach the altar steps, an introit is sung...

INTROITUS / INTROIT

Benedicta sit sancta Trinitas, atque indivisa unitas: confitebimur ei, quia fecit nobiscum

misericordiam suam.

Benedicamus Patrem et Filium, cum Sancto Spiritu.

Benedicta sit sancta Trinitas...

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto: sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper: et in saecula saeculorum. Amen

Benedicta sit sancta Trinitas...

Blessed be the Trinity, holy and undivided unity: Let us give thanks unto him for the mercy he hath done to us.

Let us bless the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit.

Blessed be the Trinity...

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit:

As it was in the headinning is now.

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

Amen

Blessed be the Trinity...

A fanfare sounds for the ceremonial entry of the Doge and the Coronation Mass commences.

Kyrie eleison. Lord, have mercy upon us. KYRIE

Christe eleison. Christ, have mercy upon us. Kyrie eleison. Lord, have mercy upon us.

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Glory to God on high. GLORIA

Et in terra pax And on earth peace hominibus bonae voluntatis. to men of good will.

Laudamus te. Benedicamus te. We praise Thee. We bless Thee.

Adoramus te. Glorificamus te. We adore Thee. We glorify Thee.

Gratias agimus tibi propter We give thanks to Thee magnam gloriam tuam, for Thy great glory,

Domine Deus, Rex caelestis,

O Lord God, heavenly king,
Deus Pater omnipotens.

God the Father almighty.

Domine Fili unigenite, O Lord, the only-begotten Son,

Jesu Christe. Jesus Christ.

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Lord God, Lamb of God,

Filius Patris. Son of the Father.

Qui tollis peccata mundi, Thou that takest away the sins of the world,

miserere nobis. have mercy on us.

Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Oui sedes ad

dextram Patris,

miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus sanctus, Tu solus Dominus.

Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe.

Cum Sancto Spiritu,

In gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

ORATIO / COLLECT

Dominus vobiscum.

Et cum spiritu tuo.

Oremus.

Deus qui hunc diem glorioso beati Marci evangelisti

tui martirio consecrasti, preasta quaesumus ipse apud te

pro nobis existat praecipuus suffragator
qui unigenite tui fieri meruit

evangelicus praedicator.

Thou that takest away the sins of the world,

receive our prayer.
Thou that sittest at

the right hand of the Father,

have mercy on us.

For Thou alone art holy,

Thou alone art the Lord.

Thou alone art most high, Jesus Christ.

With the Holy Ghost,

In the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

God who has consecrated this day

to the glorious martyrdom
of blessed Mark the evangelist,

grant, we pray, that he may stand

before Thee for us as chief advocate,

who was worthy to become the

evangelist and preacher of your only Son.

Per Dominum nostrum

Jesum Christum filium tuum;

qui tecum vivit et regnat eiusdem

spiritus Sancti Deus,

per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen

rum Through our Lord

Jesus Christ thy Son,

who livest and reignest with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God,

world without end. Amen.

Lectio Epistolae beati

Pauli Apostoli ad Corinthios.

Fratres, gaudete, perfecti estote,

exhortamini,

idem sapite, pacem habete:

et Deus pacis et dilectionis

erit vobiscum.

Salutate in vicem in osculo sancto.

Salutant vos omnes sancti.

Gratia Domini nostri Jesu Christi

et caritas Dei

et communication sancti Spirtus sit cum omnibus vohis. Amen

A reading from the Epistle of

Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Brethren, rejoice, be perfect,

be of good comfort,

be of one mind, live in peace;

and the God of love and peace

shall be with you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the saints salute you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,

and the love of God,

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,

be with you all. Amen.

EPISTULUM / EPISTLE

A canzona replaces the chanting of the gradual.

EVANGELIUM / GOSPEL

Dominus vohiscum The Lord be with you. Et cum spiritu tuo. And with thy spirit. Sequentia sancti Evangelii Here begins the holy Gospel secundum Johannem. according to John. Gloria tibi Domine. Glory be to thee O Lord. In illo tempore, And in that time. dixit Jesus discipulis suis: Jesus said to his disciples: cum venerit Paraclitus. when the Comforter is come, quem ego mittam vobis a Patre, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the spirit of truth, Spiritum veritatis qui a Patre procedit, which proceedeth from the Father, ille testimonium perhibeat de me. he shall testify of me. Et vos testimonium perhibitis, And ye shall bear witness, quia ab initio because ye have been mecum estis. with me from the beginning. Haec locutus sum vohis. These things have spoken unto you, ut non scandalizemini. that ve should not be offended.

Absque synagogis facient vos. They shall put you out of the synagogues: Sed venit hora. yea, the time cometh, ut omnis qui interficit vos arbitretur that whosoever killeth you obsequium se praestare Deo. will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you. Et haec facient vobis, because they have not known the quia non noverunt Patrem neque me. Father, nor me. Sed haec locutus sum vohis. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come. ut, cum venerit hora eorum. ye may remember that I told you of them. remeniscamini quia ego dixit vobis.

In Venice, the Credo was frequently omitted and as the gifts are brought to the high altar an offertory motet is sung.

Deus qui beatum Marcum evangelistam tuum evangelistae praedicationis gratia sublimasti: tribue, quaesumus, eius nos semper et eruditione proficere et oritione defendi.

Alleluia

O God who hast exalted Saint Mark thy evangelist by the grace of the reaching of thy gospel: Grant us, we beseech thee, that we may both profit by his teaching and ever be defended by his prayers. Alleluia

OFFERTORIUM /
OFFERTORY

PRAEFATIO / PREFACE

Per omnia saecula saeculorum.

Amen.

Dominus vobiscum.
Et cum spiritu tuo.

Sursum corda.

Habemus ad Dominum.

Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro

Dignum et justum est.

Vere dignum et justum est,

aequum et salutare, nos tibi semper,

et ubique gratias agere:

Domine sancta, pater omnipotens,

aeterne Deus.

Qui cum unigenito Filio tuo

et Spiritu Sancto,

unus es Deus, unus es Dominus; non in unius singularitate personae,

sed in unius Trinitae substantiae.

For ever and ever.

Amen.

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks unto our Lord God

It is meet and right to do so.

It is very meet, right and our bounden duty that we should at all times and in all places

give thanks unto thee,

O Lord, holy Father Almighty

Everlasting God,

who with the only-begotten Son

and the Holy Spirit
art one God, one Lord.

not in the singularity of one person

but in the Trinity of one substance.

Quod enum de tua Gloria,

revelante te,

credimus, hoc de Filio tuo,

hoc de Spiritu Sancto,

sine differentia discretionis sentimus.

Ut in confessione verae sempiternaeque deitatis, et in personis proprietas,

et in essentia unitas.

et in majestate adoretur equalitas.

Quam laudant Angeli, atque Archangeli,

Cherubim quoque ac Seraphim:

qui non cessant clamare quotidie una voce dicentes:

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,

Dominus Deus Sabaoth.

Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.

Hosanna in excelsis

For what we believe of thy glory

from thy revelation,

this we believe of your Son and of the Holy Spirit,

with no difference or distinction;

So in confessing the true and everlasting

Deity, the individuality of the persons

and their essential unity

and their equal majesty is adored.

This the Angels and Archangels,

Cherubim and Seraphim praise,

who unceasingly shout with one voice saying:

Holy, Holy, Holy,

Lord God of hosts.

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

SANCTUS

Hosanna in the highest.

BENEDICTUS

Benedictus qui venit Blessed is he who cometh in nomine Domini. in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in excelsis. Hosanna in the highest.

During the Sanctus, the celebrant commences the Canon 'in secreto'. At the elevation a fanfare is sounded, bells are rung and the altar is incensed. The celebrant continues 'in secreto' while a solemn sonata is played. He chants the closing words:

PATER NOSTER

Per omnia saecula saeculorum. For ever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Oremus. Let us pray.

Preceptis salutaribus moniti, Admonished by saving precepts et divini institutione formati, and following the divine institution,

audemus dicere: we are bold to say:

Pater noster, qui es in caelis, Our Father, who art in heaven,

sanctificetur nomen tuum.hallowed be Thy name.Adveniat regnum tuum.Thy kingdom come.Fiat voluntas tua,Thy will be done,

sicut in caelo, et in terra. on earth as it is in heaven.

Panem nostrum quotidianum Give us this day da nobis hodie. our daily bread.

Et dimitte nobis debita nostra, And forgive us our trespasses

sicut et nos dimittibus as we forgive those
debitoribus nostris. that trespass against us.

Et ne nos inducas in tentationem: And lead us not into temptation,

sed libera nos a malo. but deliver us from evil.

Per omnia saecula saeculorum. For ever and ever.

Amen. Amen.

Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Et cum spiritu tuo. And with thy spirit.

Agnus Dei, Lamb of God, AGNUS DEI

Alleluia.

Qui tollis peccata mundi, Who takest away the sins of the world,

Miserere nobis. Have mercy upon us.

During the communion a motet is sung; it is followed by another canzona.

O sacrum convivium,
O sacred feast
in quo Christus sumitur,
in which Christ is taken,
recolitur memoria passionis eius,
mens impletur gratia
the mind is filled with grace,
et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur.
and a promise of future glory is given us.

Alleluia.

COMMUNIO /

A New Venetian Coronation 1595

POSTCOMMUNIO / POSTCOMMUNION

Dominus vobiscum.

Et cum spiritu tuo.

Oremus

Proficiat nobis ad salutem corporis et animae, Domine Deus noster, huius sacramenti susceptio: et sempiternae sanctae Trinitatis, eiusdemque indeviduae unitatis confessio. Per Dominum Jesum Christum Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti, Deus: Per omnia saecula saeculorum

Amen.

Dominus vohsicum

Et cum spiritu tuo. Ite missa est. Alleluia.

The Lord be with you. And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

May the receiving of this sacrament and the confession of the eternal Holy Trinity and its undivided unity be of benefit for the salvation of our bodies and souls, O Lord our God. Through our Lord Jesus Christ Thy son, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. For ever and ever

Amen.

The Lord be with you. And with thy spirit.

Go, the mass is ended. Alleluia.

As the clergy, the Doge and his retenue prepare to leave the Basilica in procession, the Cappella Marciana conclude the Mass with a festive motet.

Omnes gentes plaudite manibus: jubilate Deo in voce exultationis. Quoniam Dominus excelsus, terribilis, rex magnus super omnem terram. Subjecit populos nobis et gentes sub pedibus nostris. Elegit nobis hereditatem suam, speciem Jacob quem dilexit. Ascendit Dominus in jubilo, et Dominus in voce tubae. Alleluia.

O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He will subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. God is gone up with a merry noise, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Alleluia.

MOTET

INTERVIEW

PAUL McCREESH & CATHERINE BOTT

Paul McCreesh is interviewed by Catherine Bott, presenter of BBC Radio 3's Early Music Show.

Catherine Bott: I'd like to begin by taking you back to your early years and to ask when you first heard music by Giovanni or Andrea Gabrieli, and what effect it had on you.

Paul McCreesh: It would have been when I was at University. As with most young musicians, for many years I only knew the music that I played – ie the great symphonic repertoire. As a music student at the University of Manchester, one of the first 'set works' was Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. The colours of the old instruments and the different aesthetics of the music, of which I knew virtually nothing, opened my ears to an entirely new sound world. I immediately went on to discover more of this repertoire, including music by both of the Gabrielis, although at this time (the late 1970s) very few of these recordings would have been on period instruments. I do remember Andrew Parrott releasing a recording of music by Giovanni Gabrieli with the London Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble a few years later: hearing that music for the first time on old instruments, played really rather well, was quite a revelation.

What was it that particularly gripped you about this music?

I suspect that for me, as with many people, a great deal of the attraction lay in Venice herself – indeed, many early recordings of this repertoire were issued under titles such as *The Glories of Venice*. The grandeur of those recordings painted a romanticised picture of Venice, all bronzed mosaics, re-echoing

cupolas and the sheer opulence of the sumptuous architecture. But why not? Venice has always been a city of myths: the impossible dream city, built on water, espoused to the Virgin Mary and equally inviolate in her unconquered state. Even in the Gabrielis' time these tales were intrinsically linked with this fantastical city. You cannot avoid thinking of Venice other than in glorious technicolour — burgundies, mustards, ochres and brilliant azures. Those early brass recordings revelled in all of this, perhaps over-grandly or even crudely, but impressively nonetheless.

When did you decide you were going to start a group and at what stage did you decide to call it the Gabrieli Consort & Players?

I established the ensemble in 1982, as I left University, with a tour of the cathedrals of the north of England. At that time, I was particularly interested in older music and the Gabrielis' music embodied the beauty and exoticism of all that I loved about this repertoire; maybe the very flamboyance of this music was also a good mirror of my personality at that time. I very much wanted to establish a group that was at once a vocal and instrumental ensemble: the interplay between voices and instruments that is the hallmark of Venetian music has become an important part of my philosophy, so the Gabrieli name has served incredibly well as an identity for the ensemble, whatever the repertoire.

When you started Gabrieli there were several groups named after composers – Gardiner had the Monteverdi Choir, Norrington had the Schütz Choir – in many ways, this was the obvious formula for ensemble names. But from the first time

that I saw you and the Gabrieli Consort & Players in action, there was a blazing commitment from you to this music: your understanding and love of the repertoire was unmistakable.

I'm very touched that you comment on my love of the music: that is still there, very much so. I believe that certainly part of my motivation to conduct, and perhaps the most important part of my talent, is a simple generic love of music from all ages. When starting a new ensemble, you have to believe that you have something to say and – like every 20-something year old conductor – that you can do it better than others. As I've got older, I've learnt that I can't necessarily always do it 'better' (at least not in everyone's eyes!) but I can certainly do it differently, provided that I feel I have something to say about the music. I think I'm blessed with a very strong response to music, which is crucial for a conductor.

Let's talk about your early performances of A Venetian Coronation. How did the project come into being?

My interest in liturgical reconstructions stemmed not from any sort of latent desire to enter the priesthood, but rather from my constant concern with programme planning – alas, that's an obsession that still keeps me awake at night. Careful programming has always been something of a hallmark for the ensemble, but in all honesty it's something of an agony for me; I spend literally hundreds of hours thinking about how to put music together. When, as in early or vocal repertoire, you have an abundance of short pieces of music, the conundrum of how to structure a programme is even greater. The liturgy itself,

and the way it has developed over many centuries, is an interesting and beautiful art form: to employ the structure of the liturgy immediately lends the programme a natural shape and form. It puts the music in a wholly convincing historical and emotional context and lifts the music to another level, so that both polyphony and plainchant shine more brightly in the context of the ebb and the flow of the liturgical service.

How much do we know about the music that was performed at this Coronation? Is there a great deal of historical documentation on the subject or have you had to rely on educated guesses to make musical choices?

Oh, it's completely speculative! We have no idea exactly what was performed on that April morning in 1595, but of course the real joy of the project is to create something. We have the form of the service, we have the music of the period and we have to use imagination to put the two together coherently, in a way that makes sense both structurally and musically. You might be amused to know that the order that the music appeared on in the original CD was not the order that I had planned (as has happened many times in my life since). That is part of the reason why I want to revisit this project now, 25 years on: even now, I will do it in a slightly different way.

Listening to the original CD earlier this week, I was very struck by the wonderful use that you make of different spaces and acoustics. The atmospheric opening with 50 seconds of bells immediately transports the listener...

Yes, and whilst I think we were the first to do that, it's an idea that has often

been stolen since! It's an effective but simple way of setting the scene and of drawing the listener in; one thing you can be certain of in any church service is that it doesn't start with a blazing motet and I wanted to reflect that. This gradual introduction (a simple organ intonation follows the chiming of the bells) reflects both the preparations for the liturgical celebration in the Basilica and the culmination of the procession, as it elaborately wends its way across Piazza San Marco and into the Basilica. For this new recording I suspect we will take this idea even further, painting a yet more elaborate sound picture during the procession and using the more ambient background of a fuller church. Controversial, maybe, but I think it's good to continue experimenting.

Were you conscious at the time that you were doing something really quite bold and daring?

The period in the late 1980s when I began working on this project remains one of very few times that I've ever really sat down to serious scholarly research – I spent a great deal of time in Venice's libraries (very little of the pertinent information had been published at that time) and in discussion with scholars of the period. Obviously, I had no idea that this recording would enjoy such success and I think it's important to remember that whilst the recording has been very popular, it is also one of the most scholarly recordings that's ever been made. That rather gives the lie to the idea that you can only be one thing or the other. In fact, looking back over 30 years of Gabrieli, I think it's the creative tension between intellectual pursuit and scholarship on the one hand, and my desire to be a very free and

expressive musician on the other, that is at the heart of my interpretations.

Few people appreciate that San Marco is not the grand, spacious 'film set' of a cathedral that one might expect, but rather a series of chambers. Clearly that has a bearing on music written for that building.

Absolutely: the music of San Marco is essentially chamber music that was mainly intended for the delight of the Doge and his invited guests, seated in the choir area. Of course there is grandeur in the music but the relative delicacy of cornetts, sackbuts and old violins – as opposed to a modern symphonic brass ensemble – demands a subtler approach, which I hope comes across on the recording.

So these liturgical services were for the Doge, not the common people, and the music, similarly, was concentrated at one small part of that enormous building? I suspect it was a very closed world. There is a school of thought that the music and art of 16th and 17th century religion was an attempt to be more inclusive, to bring the 'great unwashed' to God, but I suspect that's probably optimistic religious mythology. The Reformation would not have happened had religion not been almost the exclusive preserve of a very small, educated group of people. My guess is that, even in a relatively egalitarian city such as Venice, the complexities of this sort of religious worship would only have had real meaning for the upper echelons of society.

I have loved reading the personnel listed on your first recording: there are some people who are sadly no longer with us, but by and large it is full of recognisable names – artists who were at the start of their careers then.

Inevitably groups such as Gabrieli change and develop over the years and I am pleased that we have always had a very strong track record for developing new talent. It is wonderful to look back at the names on that disc, which include soloists that I work with frequently, such as Christopher Purves, Paul Agnew, Charles Daniels and Peter Harvey and other renowned musicians, such as Angus Smith (a founder member of the Orlando Consort), David Hurley (now a King's Singer of some 20 years), James O'Donnell (Organist at Westminster Abbey), Peter Nardone (recently appointed Organist at Worcester Cathedral)... the list goes on! We all started our careers together, very much as equals, and I have learnt a great deal from these and many other colleagues.

How many of the old guard from the original recording have returned to the scene of the crime?

A few! I'm particularly pleased that we have the same principal cornettist on both discs, Jeremy West, and also Sue Addison, Nick Perry, Steve Saunders and Charles Pott, all wonderful musicians who have worked with Gabrieli over many years. In 1989, when we recorded this for the first time, there were barely a dozen excellent cornett and sackbut players in the country. Our first recording of *A Venetian Coronation* was something of a watershed in that it very much increased interest in these early instruments: today in the UK alone there are 20 or 30 good sackbut players and a host of young players of extraordinary talent coming through the cornett world. The resurgence of interest in these instruments is due in no small part to the wonderful teaching of Gabrieli

musicians such as Jeremy West and Sue Addison. I should also add that it's a great joy that Nick Parker, the producer of the original disc, will be at the helm for this recording too.

What sort of changes should we expect in your performance, when compared to the early recording?

This programme has evolved over the years that we've performed it and we've changed our performance in many ways, particularly with regard to scoring, tempo relationships and pitch. Most obviously, three of the movements will be done at substantially different pitches: we now have a much greater understanding of the system of clef notation known as chiavette, which means that music in certain sets of clefs has to be transposed down. Maybe I should have noticed this when I was in my 20s, but I think it only goes to show how new this territory was! In addition, the complex relationship between duple and triple time is still widely discussed by scholars. Listeners will notice a variety of tempi, fast and slow, in triple time sections. It's a very complicated topic, and it is both frustrating and refreshing that there are questions such as this in old music where clear answers remain elusive. Two of the motets are also performed with solo voices, rather than chorally. Over the years I have come to believe that one to a part singing was very common in major cathedrals: certainly Andrea Gabrieli's magical communion motet O Sacrum Convivium gains a marvellous intimacy performed in this way. Likewise, Giovanni Gabrieli's Deus qui beatum Marcum has a very different colour when performed by two solo voices accompanied by eight sackbuts.

We have changed some of the organ music and, more generally, some of the pacing is different. We are including shawm music for the first time – many of the contemporary woodcuts show shawm players in the procession – and we have also made changes to the trumpet music.

It is always refreshing to come back to a programme after a break of a few years as it allows new ideas to come to the surface. Overall, I hope that the recording will have a very different flavour – it should be an interesting re-take on the same idea and it certainly feels quite different to us as performers when we listen back to that early recording. After all, people play Beethoven symphonies time and time again!

How would you like this new re-take on your wonderful Venetian Coronation recording, almost a quarter of a century on, to be greeted?

I hope that people will welcome this recording remembering what an imaginative and ground-breaking project it was all those years ago. Like all recordings, it marked a particular moment in time but I trust that, even now, it stands out as an interesting concept. I think everyone's understanding of this repertoire has developed over the last quarter century, and so has the playing. One particular challenge of this recording will be for us as performers to recapture the energy and surprise of our first performances of this music.

So has your appreciation of the Gabrielis' music changed?

I still think they are both extraordinary composers. Andrea's music is often staid and more sober, but immensely beautiful. Giovanni's music is generally

A New Venetian Coronation 1595

underestimated because he did not lead the history of music into a new area of development, but he was without doubt one of the great renaissance polyphonists and nobody went further than him in instrumental music for a very, very long time. Indeed, there is no comparable polychoral music from the period, perhaps with the exception of Schütz, who left his own tribute 'At Gabrielius, Dij immortales, quantus vir' – 'but Gabrieli, immortal Gods, what a man!'

From which I infer that 30 years on, you are still glad that you chose to name your ensemble the Gabrieli Consort & Players?

Indeed, I am! I've always been interested in polychorality — or the physicality of space within music making. I'm sure 25 years ago I would never have dreamt that, in the same season as making this recording, I would have released a recording of Berlioz's *Grande Messe des Morts*! There are few things more amazing than Berlioz's use of four brass bands and massed drums in what is perhaps one of the most stupendous climaxes in music, but this effect is foreshadowed centuries earlier in Andrea Gabrieli's sublime 12 part Kyrie. I've lost count of how many times we've performed this work in churches and cathedrals all over the world, but that wonderful moment when all 12 parts enter, after such a leisurely polyphonic working out, still sends a tingle down my spine every time.

BIOGRAPHIES

GABRIELI CONSORT & PLAYERS In 2012, Gabrieli celebrated its 30th anniversary with a season of eclectic repertoire, representative of the ensemble's history and future and also of Paul McCreesh's continual questioning and probing of repertoire both old and new.

Formed by McCreesh in 1982 as an early music group, Gabrieli has both outgrown and remained true to its original identity. Its inaugural performances of Monteverdi and Gabrieli were defined by the desire to employ historical performance ideals and knowledge of the old world to create music anew. Whilst the repertoire has perhaps developed beyond all expectation, this same aesthetic is fundamental to Gabrieli's work today. Their invigorating performances encompass major works from the baroque and romantic oratorio tradition, virtuosic *a cappella* programmes and mould-breaking reconstructions of music for historical events. Gabrieli's past recordings with Deutsche Grammophon have garnered numerous international awards. They now record for McCreesh's own record label, Winged Lion, and their collaborative recordings with Wratislavia Cantans, Wrocław Philharmonic Choir and Gabrieli's own Young Singers' Scheme have already received significant critical acclaim.

Gabrieli has a serious ongoing commitment to working with young musicians and in October 2010 launched the Gabrieli Young Singers' Scheme. This partnership with leading youth choirs gives young singers from across the UK the opportunity to train and perform with Gabrieli's professional musicians, enabling McCreesh and the ensemble to play an active role in ensuring the development of future performers and audiences alike.

Paul McCreesh has established himself at the highest levels in both the period PAUL McCREESH instrument and modern orchestral fields and is recognised for his authoritative and innovative performances on the concert platform and in the opera house. Together with the Gabrieli Consort & Players, of which he is the founder and Artistic Director, he has performed in the world's major concert halls and festivals.

As a young man, McCreesh soon became widely known as an early music specialist. In fact, his repertoire spans a full six centuries and he now works regularly with major orchestras and choirs in the symphonic repertoire and larger choral works, such as Britten's War Requiem, Brahms' German Requiem and Haydn's The Creation and The Seasons. He has established a strong reputation in the field of opera conducting productions of Handel, Gluck and Mozart at leading European opera houses.

McCreesh is passionate about working with young musicians and enjoys established collaborations with Chetham's School of Music and many youth orchestras and choirs, both in the UK and internationally. He has been Artistic Director of the Wratislavia Cantans Festival since 2006 and has been Director of Brinkburn Music (in Northumberland, UK) for many years.

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GABRIELI CONSORT & DI AVERS

FALSETTO

David Allsopp Mark Chambers Daniel Collins Raffaele Pe

TENOR

Richard Butler Benedict Hymas Nicholas Madden John McMunn

BARITONE

Robert Davies Eamonn Dougan² Charles Pott Greg Skidmore1

BASS

Alex Ashworth William Gaunt³ Iimmy Holliday Oliver Hunt

TREBLE CORNETT Jeremy West principal Sam Goble Iamie Savan Adrian Woodward

TENOR CORNETT Nicholas Perry

NATURAL TRUMPET

Stephen Saunders

Adrian Woodward

Robert Vanryne

Emily White

David Carstairs

David Hendry

Tom Lees

Iamie Savan

Daniel Weitz

George Bartle William Brown Philip Dale Tom Lees Martyn Sanderson Miguel Tantos Emily White Adam Woolf

Susan Addison

TENOR SACKBUT

Susan Addison

Philip Dale

BASS SACKBUT

Adrian France Andrew Harwood-White Stephen Saunders

ALTO SACKBUT

DUICIAN William Lyons

SHAWM

Emily Baines Sarah Humphrys William Lyons Nicholas Perry VIOLIN / VIOLA

Oliver Webber SIDE DRUM

Adrian Bending Ieremy Cornes Richard Horne Cameron Sinclair

ORGAN

Benjamin Bavl Joseph McHardy Jan Waterfield William Whitehead

ORGAN I (LEFT)

Copy of early Italian organ by Martin Goetze and Dominic Gwynn

ORGAN 2 (MID-LEFT)

Chamber organ by Peter Collins, by kind permission of the London Bach Society

ORGAN 3 (MID-RIGHT)

Chamber organ by Peter Collins, by kind permission of John Rowntree

ORGANS

ORGAN 4 (RIGHT)

Large continuo organ

by Robin Jennings

Prepared by Malcolm Greenhalgh (A440 meantone)

Paul McCreesh and Gabrieli are grateful for the collaboration and research of ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS many of the musicians performing on this recording, including Adrian Bending, William Lyons, Jamie Savan and Jan Waterfield, and also to Peter Downey for his research on trumpet music. Furthermore we would like to reiterate our thanks to all those that assisted with the development of the original programme, including the late Elsie Arnold, Clifford Bartlett, Don Giulio Cattin, Francesco Facchin, Hugh Keyte, James O'Donnell and Timothy Roberts.

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Gabrieli would like to extend their gratitude to Father Oliver Holt and the monastic community of Douai Abbey for welcoming us to the peaceful surroundings of the Abbey.

¹ Celebrant

² Deacon

³ Subdeacon

