

Beatus Vir

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)

Without doubt, Monteverdi was the greatest of the Italian composers of the late Renaissance and early Baroque period. He revolutionised the music of the theatre and the church through his dramatic and imaginative use of instruments and voices, and by the extraordinary daring of his harmonies. Though Monteverdi was not the first to compose operas, his *Orfeo* (1607) is credited as the first truly dramatic example. In 1613 he was appointed to the prestigious post of *Maestro di Cappella* at St. Mark's, Venice. He remained there until his death in 1643, devoting his time to directing the choir and composing a series of wonderful sacred pieces which spread his fame throughout Europe.

The extended psalm-setting, **Beatus Vir**, which was probably composed in 1630, was published in the composer's 1641 collection *Selva Morale e Spirituali*. This setting of Psalm 112 is a superb example of Monteverdi's dramatic style. It contrasts pairs or small groups of voices with the weight of the full chorus, a technique known as *stile concertato* - one of the most characteristic features of the Italian baroque. The piece is scored for six-part chorus and soloists, with organ, basso continuo and two *obbligato* violin parts.

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Beatus vir qui timet Dominum, in mandatis ejus volet nimis.

Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord: he hath great delight in his commandments.

Potens in terra erit semen ejus generatio rectorum benedicetur.

His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the faithful shall be blessed.

Gloria et divitiae in domo ejus et justitia ejus manet in saeculum saeculi.

Riches and plenteousness shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

Exortum est in tenebris lumen rectis misericors et miserator et justus.

Unto the godly there ariseth up light in the darkness: he is merciful, loving, and righteous.

Jucundus homo, qui miseretur et commodat disponet sermones suos in judicio.

A good man is merciful, and lendeth: and will guide his words with discretion.

Quia in aeternum non commovebitur. In memoria aeterna erit justus, ab auditione mala non timebit.

For he shall never be moved: and the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.

Paratum cor ejus sperare in Domino. Non commovebitur donec despiciat inimicos suos.

He will not be afraid of any evil tidings: for his heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord.

His heart is established, and will not shrink: until he see his desire upon his enemies.

Dispersit dedit pauperibus, justitia ejus manet in saeculum saeculi. Cornu ejus exaltabitur in gloria.

He hath dispersed abroad, and given to the poor: and his righteousness remaineth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.

Peccator videbit et irascetur, dentibus suis fremet et tabescet, desiderium peccatorum peribit.

The ungodly shall see it, and it shall grieve him: he shall gnash with his teeth, and consume away; the desire of the ungodly shall perish.

Gloria patri et filio et spiritui sancto,

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper et in saecula saeculorum. Amen

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