

Preface

It is now more than twenty years since the appearance of *The New Monteverdi Companion*, edited by Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune, to whom this book is dedicated. During those years the re-evaluation of Monteverdi and his work by performers and historians alike has proceeded apace and shows no sign of abating. New generations of performers now work comfortably with the instruments of Monteverdi's day and continue to explore the types of vocal production with which he might have been familiar; and listeners can now experience a wide range of live and recorded interpretations of Monteverdi's music. More is known now about the context in which Monteverdi worked, and fresh questions have been asked about his musical output, not least those arising from the so-called 'New Musicology'. On his operas alone three new books have appeared within the last five years.

Monteverdi is now a familiar figure on the musical scene, and one whose music seems to speak directly and powerfully across the centuries to present-day audiences. Nevertheless, the world in which he worked was in many respects very different from our own, and the differences are themselves worth exploring. The present *Companion*, while centred on Monteverdi's music, seeks to place it in the context of the institutions for which Monteverdi worked and his intellectual, social and religious environment. It draws together many of the new strands of thought on the composer developed over the last twenty years and, indeed, adds to them. Monteverdi's own letters form a constant source of reference in the essays of this book, and we have all benefited from the availability not only of Éva Lax's edition of the Italian texts (Florence, 1994), but also of Denis Stevens's English translations (London, 1980, revised edn. Oxford, 1995); in order that readers can easily consult any of these editions, the letters are referred to in the text by date only, or by date and recipient if more than one letter survives from the same date.

Books in the *Cambridge Companion* series are aimed at the general reader, as well as students of music, and do not normally include detailed musical analyses. We felt, however, that when dealing with music of this early period, and with settings of Italian and Latin texts, students in particular might value some guidance on how to approach the study of individual works, or excerpts from works. We thus invited those of our contributors dealing with the larger *corpora* of Monteverdi's work to

contribute short, analytical, *intermedi*, placed between the main chapters of the book, rather as musical *intermedi* were placed between the acts of spoken plays in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In order to make it easy both to find individual works by Monteverdi and modern editions of them, the list of Monteverdi's works at the end of the book has been arranged in chronological order, rather than by type of work, and an index of titles and first lines also supplied. This also means that we have been able to include in a single sequence works that are now lost. Manuscripts and sacred *contrafacta* are also listed.

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