9 Music in Monteverdi's Venice

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In November 1619 Francesco Dognazzi, *maestro di cappella* to the Duke of Mantua whose forebears had been Monteverdi's employers, arrived in Venice (see Monteverdi's letter of 8 March 1620). When Santi Orlandi, who had been in charge of music at the Gonzaga court, had died in the previous July, Monteverdi had been invited to return to the Duke's service. In Venice, where rumours of Monteverdi's departure from his post at S. Marco were already rife, Dognazzi's mission was to advance the cause of a return to Mantua. In this he failed. Writing to Alessandro Striggio, a Mantuan court secretary who had been Monteverdi's librettist for *Orfeo*, Monteverdi enumerated some of his reasons for staying in Venice:

> Nor is there any gentleman who does not esteem and honour me, and when I am about to perform either chamber or church music, I swear to Your Lordship that the entire city comes running.
>
> Next, the duties are very light since the whole choir is liable to discipline except the director of music – in fact, it is in his hands, having a singer censured or excused and giving leave or not; and if he does not go into chapel nobody says anything. Moreover, his allowance is assured until his death: neither the death of a procurator nor that of a doge interferes with it, and by always serving faithfully and with reverence he has greater expectations, not the opposite; and as regards his salary, if he does not go at the appointed time to pick it up, it is brought round to his house. And this is the first particular, as regards basic income; then there is occasional income, which consists of whatever extra I can easily earn outside S. Marco, of about two hundred ducats a year (invited as I am again and again by the wardens of the guilds [*signori guardiani di scole*]. Because whoever can engage the director to look after their music – not to mention the payment of thirty ducats, and even forty, and up to fifty for two Vespers and a Mass – does not fail to take him on, and they also thank him afterwards with well-chosen words.
>
> Now let Your Lordship weigh in the balance of your very refined judgement that amount which you have offered me in His Highness's name, and see whether – on good and solid grounds – I could make the change or not.
>
> (Letter of 13 March 1620)

Here, and in a number of other letters, Monteverdi underlines the
[163] range of employment that was available in the palaces, churches, convents

Fig. 9.1 Upper hall of the Scuola di S. Rocco, Venice

and confraternities of the city. In Mantua, where the composer had lived and worked for over twenty years, musical life was substantially centred on the court and, though to a much lesser extent, the cathedral.[1] Venice, with its much larger population, republican political structure and cosmopolitan character, was different. Monteverdi's specific mention, in his letter to Striggio, of the opportunities provided by the confraternities, is amplified by the remarks of the English traveller and eccentric Thomas Coryate, who visited Venice in 1608, an experience which he described in some detail in his *Crudities* published in London three years later. Among the wonders of the city, 'hastily gobled up' (as the title page puts it), were a number of musical events, principally the celebration of the feast day of S. Rocco, which Coryate had attended in the main hall of the Scuola di S. Rocco (Fig. 9.1). There, surrounded by Tintoretto's vast glowing canvases, he had

> heard the best musicke that I ever did in all my life both in the morning and the afternoone, so good that I would willingly goe an hundred miles a foote at any time to heare the like . . . This feast consisted principally of musicke, which was both vocall and instrumental, so good, so delectable, so rare, so admirable, so super excellent, that it did even ravish and stupifie all those strangers that never heard the like . . . For mine own part I can say this, that I was for the time even rapt up with Saint Paul into the third heaven.[2]

Coryate's lyrical description then continues by praising the choir of twenty voices and the large instrumental ensemble (he noted ten trombones, four

cornetts, two violas da gamba, three violins, two theorbos and seven organs), precisely the kind of forces that we normally associate with Venetian polyphony of the High Renaissance. By the early seventeenth century, when Coryate visited Venice, reports of the sumptuous public musical life of the city on such occasions had become reasonably common. The great occasions of church and state were celebrated with increasingly elaborate music and ceremony, while at the larger confraternities (*scuole grandi*), where patronal feast days were elaborately marked, professional musicians and instrumentalists were employed.[3] A fundamental element in these arrangements was the choir of the basilica of S. Marco. As the principal church of Venice (though not its cathedral) and the private chapel of the doge (though in practice controlled by the *Procuratori di San Marco de supra*, three of the most distinguished and powerful members of the Venetian patriciate), S. Marco was the focal point of official civic and devotional life, and many of the musicians employed there also worked on an occasional basis elsewhere in the city. Competition between the singers and instrumentalists of the basilica to find additional work was intense, and on more than one occasion the authorities were obliged to intervene in order to regulate the practice. This was partly in an attempt to eliminate the negative effects that the pursuit of lucrative outside employment was having on the performance of duties at S. Marco itself.[4] On his arrival in Venice as *maestro di cappella*, Monteverdi inherited not only this formidable body of singers and instrumentalists which performed a central role in the musical life of the city, but also a post with a distinguished history.

During the sixteenth century, the position of choirmaster had been held by an impressive succession of musicians, beginning with Adrian Willaert who occupied the post from 1527 until his death in 1562.[5] The extent of Willaert's achievement can be gauged by the increasingly elaborate music that was performed at S. Marco during his time there, including the double-choir Vespers psalms which he elaborated on the basis of existing practice, as well as by the variety of his own numerous publications. As a teacher he was one of the most influential figures of the century, and after his death the succession at S. Marco passed to his pupils, first to Cipriano de Rore (who remained in the post for only one year) and then to the composer and theorist Gioseffo Zarlino. During Zarlino's time as *maestro di cappella* the organists of S. Marco began to assume an important role as composers. This was partly due to Zarlino's preferences. His chief interest lay in his work as a theorist, which brought him considerable status in intellectual circles and membership of the prestigious if short-lived Accademia della Fama,[6] and his own compositions are neither as numerous nor as varied in style as those of Willaert. At

the same time, the increasingly heavy burdens of state and religious ceremonial brought with them extra duties. New music was required for such occasions, and the day-to-day organisation of the chapel was now more complex; in response to the taste for large-scale pieces, the chapel had expanded, and extra musicians were added on special occasions.

The first notable organist-composer at S. Marco was Claudio Merulo, appointed in 1557, but it was with the employment of Andrea Gabrieli that the musical activities of S. Marco entered a new phase. During his youth Andrea had been organist at one of the Venetian parish churches, but in his thirties he spent time at the Bavarian court at Munich. There he came under the influence of Orlande de Lassus, arguably the most famous composer of the time, who directed a large choir of singers and instrumentalists. When he returned to Venice, Gabrieli brought with him ideas that had been refined by his experience of music written for *cori spezzati*, with the choir separated into two or more groups and the singers supported by instruments. Although Andrea also wrote more modest church music suitable for smaller establishments, it was the large-scale works for two or more choirs that earned him his reputation, and it was this style that was widely imitated, particularly by his own pupils. Of these the most important was Giovanni Gabrieli, Andrea's nephew, who followed in his uncle's footsteps by working under Lassus at Munich for a time and then returning to become organist at S. Marco in 1585, in succession to Merulo.[7]

The major musical monument to the polychoral style in the period immediately after Willaert is the *Concerti* of 1587, in which most of the motets are by Andrea Gabrieli; published within two years of his death, the collection, which was assembled for the press by Giovanni, has the character of a commemorative volume. With some of their texts taken from the liturgy for the major feast days in the Venetian calendar, and others in the vernacular, the *Concerti* preserves the musical elements of annual ceremonial occasions, of both civic and religious importance, when the ducal *trionfi* were carried in procession and all the ritual apparatus of the state was on display.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the choir of S. Marco was arguably the finest music establishment of any church in Italy outside Papal Rome. This was due not to historical accident, but rather to an evolving policy which valued music as an essential component of the official rhetoric of Venetian self-presentation. The music and ceremonial of the Venetian church and state were regarded by its ruling patricians as intimately related and vital components of the elaboration, through artistic means, of the 'myth of Venice', a political concept that

stressed the unique qualities of Venice and deployed them as a powerful weapon of propaganda.[8] At the centre of the myth was the idea of the singularity and perfection of the Republic. On one level the city was admired for its extraordinary topography and sheer physical beauty, and throughout the Renaissance period foreigners expressed their astonishment at the richness of the city's churches, the elegance of its palaces, the mosaics of S. Marco, and the public ceremonies surrounding the doge. Along the Rialto, with its mixture of traders and merchants from every part of Europe and the Orient, sights were to be seen that could not be found anywhere else in Europe. Praise of Venice invariably began with applause for its unparalleled sights and urban charm as a city quite literally (and, as legend emphasised, miraculously) founded upon the seas.

The notion of Venetian political stability and freedom from internal discord had been developed in the fifteenth century by humanists who identified Venice with models of republicanism drawn from classical antiquity. In this way the Venetian constitution came to be seen as the receptacle of ancient political wisdom and the reason why Venice, almost alone among the Italian states, had remained unconquered for more than a millennium. For Venetians, the myth was a precious political asset which the patrician classes used to foster a civic spirit in this densely populated, overcrowded, and cosmopolitan city. In the decades after the Council of Trent, consolidation of its social fabric was attempted by the increased use of the city and its main spaces for an annual cycle of ceremonies and rituals, strengthened by the enhanced conception of Venice not only as the Perfect Republic but also as the City of God. Throughout Europe, public ceremonies and processions frequently functioned as expressions of the political order, but in Venice the practice was of considerable complexity and, in its most elaborate form, the ducal procession (*andata*) involved close interweavings of history and myth, music and liturgy.[9]

In its most developed version, as enacted on some forty occasions in the course of the year, the *andata* included all the principal office-holders together with some minor officials, the ambassadors of foreign states, the canons of S. Marco, the patriarch, and, at the physical core of the procession, the doge himself. As the most elaborate Venetian processional form, the *andata* effectively became an image of the city itself, accessible to those who had never seen it through Matteo Pagan's monumental series of eight woodcuts (Fig. 9.2), as well as in maps and engravings of scenes from Venetian life, presumably produced for pilgrims, tourists, and bibliophiles rather than for Venetians themselves. While the hierarchical ordering of the procession was fixed, the

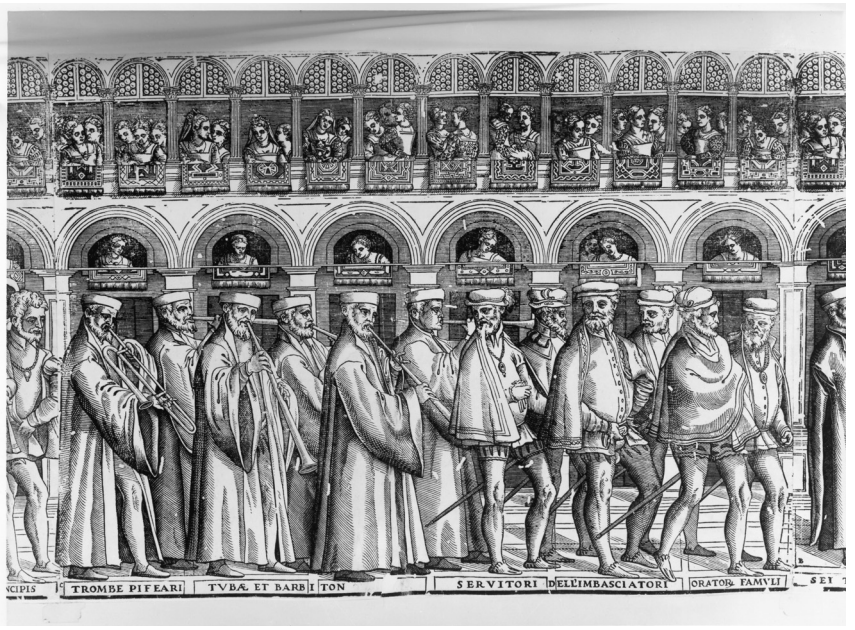

Fig. 9.2 Matteo Pagan, Procession in the Piazza San Marco (detail)

personnel who walked in the *andata* were constantly changing; those who participated did so as the temporary holders of official positions. In addition to the principal actors, the *andata* also displayed the ducal *trionfi*, symbolic objects including eight banners, six silver trumpets, a candle, a cushion, a faldstool, and a sword, presented to Doge Sebastiano Ziani by Pope Alexander III in 1177. These gifts, which as Francesco Sansovino, the author of the first guidebook to the city recognised, empowered the doge as a princely equal of popes and emperors, were carried in the ducal procession on all the major occasions in the ceremonial year.[10] They were both historical relics and emblems of status and authority.

In addition to the silver trumpets, which were sounded, the doge's trumpets and shawm players also took part in the *andata*; they are clearly depicted in a number of images of the event, including Franco's engraving showing the arrival of the ducal procession at S. Giorgio Maggiore to hear Vespers on Christmas Day (Fig. 9.3). The canons of S. Marco also walked in the ducal procession, and it was through their participation that the *patriarchino*, the rite peculiar to S. Marco, could be transposed from one place to another. When this took place, an act of appropriation was secured through musical and liturgical means. In consequence, when Mass was celebrated as part of the ducal procession to a particular church or convent, it was done so according to a liturgy that since 1456 had been

Fig. 9.3 Giacomo Franco, The doge arrives at S. Giorgio Maggiore to hear Vespers on Christmas Day

exclusively associated with the basilica. In this symbolic practice the use of the *patriarchino*, polyphonically decorated by the choir of S. Marco, served to emphasise the doge's authority. In effect the *patriarchino* was a liturgy of state.

Although the *andata* was both exclusive and hierarchical, its basic arrangement was supplemented on occasion by the addition of other social groupings such as the confraternities, the trade guilds or even a particular parish. This broadened participation and was presumably intended to underline the allegedly harmonious corporate organisation of the city, another basic underpinning of the myth of Venice. While the *scuole* represented the notion of communal devotion and charity, the guilds symbolised the complementary idea of commerce as the foundation of civic concord. On many of the more important feasts in the

Venetian calendar, the choir of S. Marco walked in the *andata*; so too did the singers employed by some of the wealthier *scuole*. In expanded form, these processions amplified the liturgy outside the basilica by making use not only of the central civic space of the city but also of other areas far from the Piazza S. Marco. In this way, civic and liturgical acts that were usually associated with ducal authority were able to broaden their audience, which could participate not only passively (by observing) but also actively by walking in the procession, chanting litanies and singing *laude*. At the same time, the wide geographical dispersal of the *andata* knitted together *sestieri* (the districts into which the city was divided for administrative purposes), parishes, confraternities and guilds in a closely woven fabric of religious and civic observance.

It is likely that Monteverdi's litany settings were originally composed for some such occasion, perhaps involving a processional element. Certainly such events required considerable preparation, as the composer himself remarked in his letters. One of the most elaborate of all that took place during Monteverdi's lifetime was the sequence of ceremonies celebrating the foundation of the votive church of S. Maria della Salute on the Grand Canal to give thanks for the end of the plague of 1630–1 (Fig. 9.4), a major epidemic in which one third of the population perished. On a number of separate occasions stretching from October 1630 until November of the following year, which together constituted the seventeenth century's most substantial addition to the tradition of Venetian civic and religious ritual, Marian litanies were sung and the basilica's prized Byzantine icon of the Madonna Nicopeia carried in procession. It has been suggested that a number of Monteverdi's extant works, including two of the settings of the 'Salve Regina' and the *concertato* Gloria published in the *Selva morale e spirituale* (1641) were composed for these ceremonies.[11]

As Coryate's experiences suggest, Venetian ceremonies were also able to incorporate a wider audience that included foreigners, such as the visitors for whom the city itself was a place of pilgrimage in its own right – the home of an impressive assortment of relics, chief among them the body of St Mark, which had been brought from Asia Minor in the Middle Ages – as well as an important staging post on the great spiritual journey to the Holy Land. The feast of Corpus Christi is perhaps the most spectacular example of state appropriation of an event of universal spiritual significance for a mixture of economic, political and devotional reasons.[12] On this occasion, foreign pilgrims joined in the traditional procession in the Piazza, one of many that took place annually (Fig. 9.5); each one, accompanied by a member of the Venetian nobility, carried a candle that was subsequently placed in front of the Holy Sepulchre in

Fig. 9.4 S. Maria della Salute

Jerusalem. In this process, the city became a psychological and symbolic extension of the sacred space of Jerusalem itself, and the ceremonies in the piazza and the basilica, carried out in the presence of the doge, an official benediction of a great Catholic enterprise. The Corpus Christi procession is a reminder that although the motivations for Venetian civic and religious rituals were complex and interlocking, the audience for them was certainly not uniform but expanded and contracted for different occasions.

The major annual feast days in the Venetian calendrical cycle corresponded to those in the Roman calendar, but to these were added others that commemorated important events in Venetian history. In this way the characteristically Venetian was associated with the universally Christian;

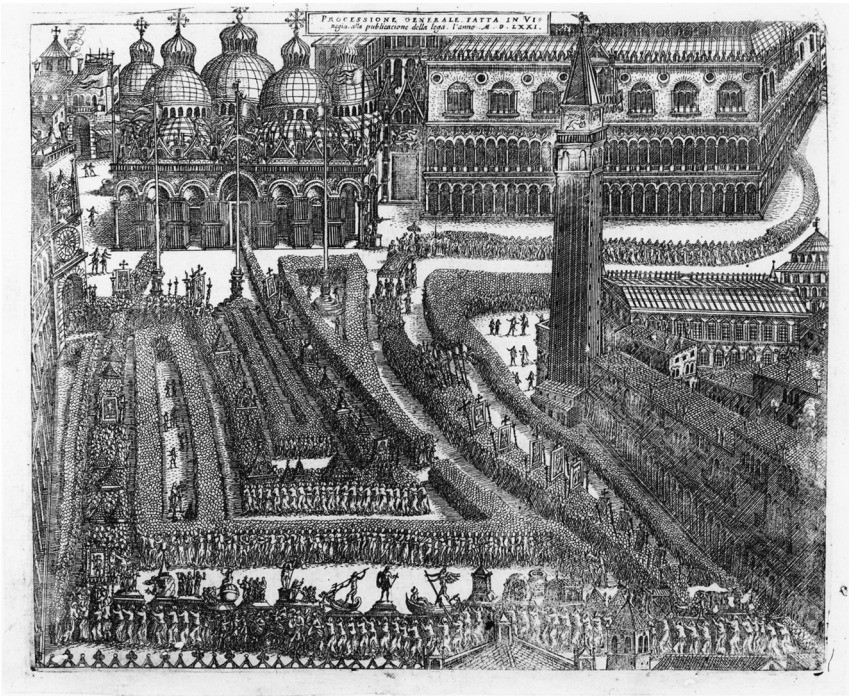

Fig. 9.5 Giacomo Franco, Procession in the Piazza S. Marco

patriotism and faith were thus conveniently and inextricably fused. The most obvious example of such paired and complementary meanings arises in the case of St Mark himself, whose cult lay at the centre of Venetian mythology. As the possessors of the Evangelist's body, supposedly transferred to the city in 827, the Venetians modelled their relationship to Mark on that of the popes to St Peter. In Venetian eyes Venice was as autonomous as Rome, and the doge's authority, inherited from Mark, as absolute and independent as that of the occupant of the Chair of St Peter. In the course of the Middle Ages, Mark had come to personify not merely the privileges of the doge, but the Republic itself. As a fifteenth-century canon of S. Marco, Gabriele Fiamma, put it: 'I was born a Venetian and live in this happy homeland protected by the prayers and guardianship of St Mark, from whom that Most Serene Republic acknowledges its greatness, its victories and all its good fortune.' The churches of the city bristled with paintings showing events from the life of the Evangelist; no fewer than four major feast days were dedicated to St Mark and his symbol was extensively used as an image of Venetian authority throughout the empire. In the city itself, the ducal palace, the basilica and piazza of S. Marco constitute a distinctive civic and ceremonial space symbolic of the unity of the religious and political features of the Venetian

constitution. In view of the strong identification of the Venetian Republic with St Mark, it is not surprising that liturgical or paraliturgical texts in praise of Venice's principal patron saint are so common in the repertories of music written by musicians working in the city, especially those associated with the basilica itself. Through such means the constitution and government of Venice were both celebrated and sanctified on major ceremonial occasions.

In addition to its symbolic value as the emblem of a harmonious state, music was essential to the propagation of the Venetian myth through performance. As with every other aspect of the organisation of S. Marco, the choir was ultimately under the direct control of the Procurators, and their records reveal the importance of music to them and a concern to attract musicians of quality to the basilica. Although the Procurators often attended auditions and made recommendations about new appointments, in practice the daily decisions about disciplinary matters, the choice of repertory and the routines of rehearsal were made by the *maestro di cappella*. Asides in Monteverdi's letters reveal that the major Christian festivals at Christmas ('this solemn feast is the greatest that the director of music has in the entire year' (Letter of 30 October 1627)) and Easter were the most demanding. On one occasion the composer apologised to Striggio for not sending his opinion about the libretto for *Le Nozze di Tetide*:

> This delay on my part came about because of the hard work that had to be done on the Mass for Christmas Eve, for what with composing it and copying it out I had to give up the entire month of December, almost without a break . . . now finished with the labours of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, I shall have nothing to do in S. Marco for some little time.
>
> (Letter of 29 December 1616)

Elsewhere Monteverdi refers to the 'many duties I shall have at S. Marco during Holy Week' (letter of 7 March 1619) and letters from July 1620 suggest that preparations for the feasts of the Most Precious Blood and the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which occurred on the first two days of the month, brought additional burdens (see Letter of 11 July 1620). So too did the annual celebration of the victory against the Turks at Lepanto in 1571, which coincided with the feast day of S. Giustina, whose relics are in Padua. On that day (7 October), the traditional *andata* processed from S. Marco to the church and convent of S. Giustina in the north of the city. The occasion is reflected in musical compositions such as Giovanni Bassano's five-voice motet 'Beata virgo et martyr Iustina', published in his *Motetti per concerti ecclesiastici* (1598) and presumably written for the annual celebration. Although none of

Monteverdi's works is definitely known to have been written for the feast day, he refers more than once in letters to the amount of musical preparation that was required. In late 1627 Alessandro Striggio invited the composer to visit Mantua, and in his reply Monteverdi wrote that he would not be able to come during the month of October 'since I have to attend to certain feasts ordered by our Most Serene Doge'.[13] Two weeks later the composer explained to another correspondent that he was unable to leave Venice

> until the seventh of the next month, for on that day the Most Serene Doge goes in procession to S. Giustina to give thanks to God our saviour for the joyous naval victory. He is accompanied by the entire senate, and solemn music is sung. As soon as this function is over, I shall get on the boat with the courier and come to obey Your Excellency's commands.
>
> (Letter of 25 September 1627)

Such special occasions apart, the daily round centred on music for Mass and Vespers; this latter service was particularly elaborate on major feast days, when the *Pala d'oro*, the large gold altarpiece which is the major treasure of the basilica, was opened to public gaze. Built in Constantinople in 976, the *Pala* was enlarged with gold panels in the twelfth century, decorated with jewels after the sack of Constantinople in the thirteenth, and placed in its present frame in the fourteenth. On weekdays and minor feasts it was hidden behind a special wooden altarpiece, painted by Paolo Veneziano and his sons in 1345. But on the major feasts of the church year an elaborate mechanism was used to remove Paolo's altarpiece and to unfold the *Pala d'oro* for the population to see. On these occasions, the singers of S. Marco used to perform the psalms in plainchant, but from some time about the middle of the sixteenth century it became established that psalms should be sung in eight parts arranged in two choirs. By Monteverdi's time there were more than fifty days in the church year when this happened.

Identification with the Republic through participation in civic and religious ceremonial was only one kind of allegiance, which structured the lives of seventeenth-century Venetians; at a local level there was the parish and the *scuola*. Most citizens would have belonged to one of the two hundred *scuole piccole*, whose memberships were often restricted according to criteria of occupation or national origin and which were sometimes patronised by wealthy patrician families who acted as benefactors.[14] Many were attached to parish churches; others were tied to a specific function such as assisting prisoners condemned to death. Such pious confraternities were to be found in all Italian cities during this period, but nowhere else was there anything quite like the principal Venetian

institutions of this sort, the *scuole grandi*. Their main function, like that of the *scuole piccole*, was to promote virtuous living and to distribute benefits, both material and spiritual, among both their members and impoverished outsiders; in addition they provided manpower for the Venetian galleys. Membership was open to both rich and poor, but priests and nobles were excluded from positions of responsibility in the *scuole* (though not from membership itself). By the sixteenth century their financial resources had become very great, and much was spent on the construction and decoration of their meeting houses. At the time there were some who believed that such ostentatious behaviour was not becoming conduct for bodies that were essentially charitable foundations, but the results were much admired, and by the second half of the century, the *scuole* had established themselves as one of the sights of Venice.

Although the *scuole grandi* were independent foundations, they were regulated by the state and were expected to participate in processions on public occasions. As the ceremonial life of Venice became more elaborate in the course of the sixteenth century, so the demands upon this public and civic aspect of the activities of the *scuole* increased. By Monteverdi's time it seems to have become common practice for musicians from the basilica to be imported by the *scuole* on important occasions (most commonly the patronal feast) to perform pieces from their repertory. An account book which gives details of the music performed on the feast day of S. Rocco in 1595 reveals that a large body of singers and instrumentalists was involved, including the *cappella* from S. Marco and Giovanni Gabrieli, all under the direction of Giovanni Croce.[15] It was precisely an occasion of this sort that sent Thomas Coryate into raptures a few years later, and which Monteverdi had in mind when he wrote of his work for them. Another witness, Jean- Baptiste Duval, secretary to the French ambassador to Venice, was present at Vespers celebrated for the members of the Scuola di S. Teodoro in the church of S. Salvatore on the feast day of their patron saint in 1607. Of the musical arrangements, he wrote:

> There was given in that place a concert by the finest musicians, both vocal and instrumental, principally by six small organs besides that of the church (which is very fine), and by trombones (or sackbuts), oboes, viols, violins, lutes, cornets, recorders and flageolets.[16]

Yet though it is difficult to know how important the *scuole grandi* were to the development of Venetian musical repertories, it is clear that each of them contributed a good deal to the musical life of its immediate area, acting as a focal point for local enactments of civic and religious ritual. Singers and instrumentalists were involved in the High Mass that was

celebrated in each of the *scuole* on the first Sunday of every month. Following this, the musicians formed a vital part of the procession that wound its way from the *scuola* to the church with which the foundation was particularly associated; after a further Mass was celebrated there the procession returned to the meeting house. On the remaining Sundays of the month the musicians of each *scuola grande* participated in a Mass in one of the religious houses in the local vicinity. Such events formed an important part of Monteverdi's professional life.

Outside the *scuole grandi* there was a considerable amount of music in the other churches of the city. This was particularly true of the two large mendicant churches of SS Giovanni e Paolo and the Frari. The former maintained a permanent choir, an organist and a music master to teach the novices. A number of *scuole piccole* were also attached to the church; among them was that of S. Pietro Martire, a reasonably wealthy institution that was able to support musicians for a polyphonic Mass twice a month as well as on the feast day of its patron saint. At the Frari, Duval was present at the celebration of Mass in 1608, when music was provided by 'trombones, spinets, bass viols, violins, lutes and oboes', and the following year, during Compline, he recorded the participation of 'two portative organs ... trombones, lutes, theorbos, cornetts and bass violins.[17] Many medium-sized parish churches also paid for music on important occasions. This is not surprising: many members of the choir of S. Marco held ecclesiastical status (sometimes in defiance of propriety), and this enabled the Procurators to provide them with additional income from benefices, so that many Venetian churches had a formalised connection with at least one musician from S. Marco. The Procurators were well placed to distribute such sinecures, for in addition to administering the church treasury they were also executors for a large number of estates that had been entrusted to their care. Through this system of additional payments and benefits, they attempted to maintain a high quality of musical life at S. Marco; at the same time the practice may occasionally have benefited musical activity at a parish level. Even in the smaller parish churches singers and instrumentalists would be employed, if only once a year.

Although little is known of domestic music making beyond the fact that Venice was one of the most important centres in Europe for both the manufacture of instruments and the printing of music, which must in itself have made a considerable impact upon the musical and social life of the city. Middle-class post-mortem inventories often list music books and instruments, suggesting both a degree of musical literacy and the widespread ownership of lutes and clavichords in particular. Both were portable, and in the summer months were often played in gondolas. This

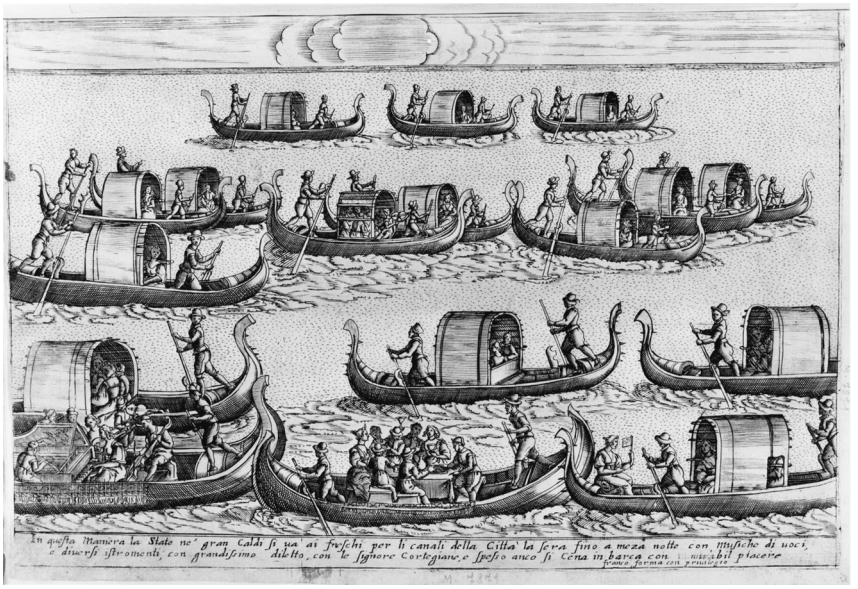

Fig. 9.6 Giacomo Franco, Gondolas in Summer

kind of social *divertissement* can be seen in an early seventeenth-century engraving by Giacomo Franco (Fig. 9.6), which shows precisely the sort of activity that the English visitor Richard Lassells described some decades later: 'They steere for two miles upon the laguna, while the musick plays, and sings epithalamiums all the way along, and makes Neptune jealous to heare Hymen called upon his Dominions.'[18] Musical performances were clearly a popular activity in the houses and palaces of the patriciate, and in the embassies of the various foreign nations that contributed to the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the city. Similarly, the Palladian villas which the aristocracy built in the countryside of the *terraferma* must have resounded to madrigals and other kinds of music-making, or so we must infer from the scenes shown in Paolo Veronese's fresco cycle in the Villa Barbaro at Maser, or Giovanni Antonio Fasolo's on the walls of the Villa Caldogno, near Vicenza.

A number of Monteverdi's private Venetian patrons can be identified. The *Lamento d'Apollo* (part of the ballet *Apollo*) was performed in the palace of Giovanni Matteo Bembo in January 1620 (see Monteverdi's letter of 1 February 1620), and the *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*, an avant-garde theatre piece setting stanzas from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, was given its first performance in Girolamo Mocenigo's palace during Carnival 1624. The short opera, *Proserpina rapita*, was commissioned by the same family to celebrate the wedding of Lorenzo Giustiniani and Giustiniana Mocenigo in April 1630. Elsewhere in the

city Monteverdi worked for a number of patrons including the English ambassador Sir Isaac Wake, the Florentine community at SS Giovanni e Paolo, and the Milanese 'nation' attached to the Frari. Monteverdi also provided music for the private oratory of Marc'Antonio Cornaro, *primicerius* (the senior ecclesiastic) of S. Marco (letters of 8 and 17 March 1620); some of the small-scale motets published in the 1620s may reflect this connection.

From the descriptions of visitors, archival documents, and sometimes from the printed music itself, a good deal can be reconstructed about the music performed outside the basilica of S. Marco – in parish churches, confraternities, during official public ceremonies and processions, and even in the squares and streets of the city. For many visitors it was not only the physical beauty of Venice that was compelling but also the endless spectacle and ceremony in this city of processions. These features of Venetian musical life continued past the watershed of the late 1630s, when the first public operas were presented in a number of existing theatres built and owned by patrician families. In addition to this phenomenon, to which Monteverdi himself contributed in the last years of his life, musical activity also began to shift to the four main Venetian *ospedali*, charitable institutions which maintained musical chapels. Yet despite the superficial brilliance of the city and its institutions, the economic, political and social realities were different. By the time of Monteverdi's death, every intelligent Venetian knew that the game was up. Behind the myth, decorated and supported by music and the other arts, the structure was already rotten. Despite the brilliance of Venice in the remaining decades, the Republic was in the process of irreversible decline; when Napoleon arrived to dismantle what remained, no resistance was offered.