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Renaissance Choirs

The Performance of Roman Sacred Polychoral Music in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries: Evidence from Archival Sources

Noel O'Regan

Roman archival sources do not normally preserve detailed lists of the singers and/or instrumentalists who performed liturgical music on specific occasions. An exception, however, exists in the case of the one or two large-scale patronal feastday liturgies celebrated by each of the city's institutions at which, from the 1580s onwards, polychoral music was invariably used, involving even those with established choirs in hiring extra musicians. As a result, pretty comprehensive lists for such celebrations survive in the archives of a number of these establishments. Their survival among the bundles of *mandati* or *giustificazioni di pagamenti* is somewhat sporadic, and is usually due to the fact that the *mandato* or order for payment was written on the back of the list presented by the *maestro di cappella* who had been in charge of the music. These lists detail only the extra singers and instrumentalists hired for these special liturgies and do not give information on the role played by any musicians in the regular employ of the institution. Sometimes, though not generally, the external musicians are divided into separate choirs. Information about the construction of platforms and the moving of organs for these celebrations can often be found in lists of payments to

carpenters or porters. This article presents the data so far available from the author's researches, and that of others, for seven institutions, and discusses what it tells us about performance practices in Rome on these major feastdays. Although some of this material comes from the end of the 16th century, the majority dates from the early years of the 17th. The concern here (with a few exceptions) is with patronal feastday celebrations only, though polychoral music, particularly for two choirs, was used on a wide variety of other occasions for which archival evidence is not so complete.¹

Sacred Polychoral Music in Rome

With the Organs a child's voice shriller and louder than the instrument, tuneable with every pipe: Among the quyre, Cornet or Sagbut, or such like above all other voices.

This quotation, taken from Gregory Martin's *Roma Sancta* (written in 1581 but describing Rome as he found it during his visit in 1576-8),² may be the earliest account of a double-choir performance in the city: he seems to be describing one choir of soloists (including a boy soprano) accompanied by the organ and another accompanied by cornet and sackbut. Martin does not specify where he heard this performance, indeed the context in which he is writing implies that it was a regular occurrence in the city. We know from publications that music for two choirs was being performed in the city in the mid-

¹ For a full discussion of Roman polychoral music see Noel O'Regan, *Sacred Polychoral Music in Rome 1575-1621* (unpublished D. Phil. dissertation, University of Oxford, 1988) and the same author's forthcoming book, *Roman Sacred Music in the Age of Palestrina*.

² Gregory Martin, *Roma Sancta*, ed. George Parks (Rome, 1969).

1570s: Palestrina published the first real *cori spezzati* music by a Roman composer in his *Mottetorum...liber tertius* of 1575, and this was followed by Victoria's *Liber primus qui missas, psalmos, Magnificat* . . . in 1576. The earliest Roman polychoral mass setting—Palestrina's double-choir *Missa Confitebor tibi*—is found in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cappella Sistina 149, which Mitchell Brauner has dated *ca.* 1577.³

The first archival reference to the use of three choirs singing polyphony in Rome is found for the year 1582 in the archives of the archconfraternity of S. Rocco where the virtuoso violinist Giovanni Battista Jacomelli was paid fifteen *scudi* for the patronal feast:

a tre cori con diversi stromenti nella messa et doi vespri⁴

The same confraternity paid sixteen *scudi* to Paolo Quagliati in 1586 for three choirs at both vespers and a mass *secondo solito farsi ogni anno*.⁵ Other bodies moved to three choirs a little later. The archconfraternity of the Gonfalone still had only two choirs in 1586, but employed three in 1588.⁶ In 1587 the Aragonese/Catalan national church of S. Maria di Monserrato paid seventeen *scudi* to Felice Anerio for its patronal feast of the Nativity of the Virgin *per tre chori continui*, a reference to the choirs singing together rather than

³ Mitchell Brauner, *The Parvus Manuscripts: A Study of Vatican Polyphony ca. 1535-1580* (Ph. D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1982), Chapter 8.

⁴ Rome, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Ospedale S. Rocco, 149, non-foliated. See Noel O'Regan, "Music at the Roman Archconfraternity of San Rocco in the Late Sixteenth Century," *Atti del Convegno "La musica a Roma attraverso le fonti d'archivio," 4-7 Giugno 1992* (Lucca, 1994), 521-52. The silver *scudo*, divided into ten *giulii* and one hundred *baiocchi*, was the normal unit of currency in the papal states; the value of the gold *scudo di oro in oro* fluctuated in line with the relative values of the two metals, but was usually about eleven *giulii*.

⁵ S. Rocco, 327, f. 62.

⁶ Rome, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Fondo Gonfalone, 406, non-foliated.

separately in procession.⁷ At the Castilian S. Giacomo degli Spagnoli we know that there were three choirs in 1594 and for a special celebration in 1601;⁸ at the archconfraternity of SS. Trinità dei Pellegri there were three in 1594,⁹ while S. Luigi had three in 1596.¹⁰

References to four and more choirs are rare. A description of the services held at the Chiesa Nuova to mark the second anniversary of the death of Philip Neri in 1597 notes that the mass and vespers were sung

con musica a quattro chori, quanto sia mai stato cantato, non solo in [questa] chiesa ma forse in Roma.¹¹

However two pieces for four choirs, and even one for five, are found in a set of manuscript partbooks, Rome Biblioteca Nazionale Manoscritti Musicali 77-88, which have been dated to the early 1580s.¹² Roman music for more than two choirs was never published in any

⁷ Rome, Pontificio Collegio Español, Archivio di S. Maria di Monserrato, F IV 376, non-foliated.

⁸ Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana, Fondo Cappella Sistina, *Diario* 19 (1594), entry for 31 July; Rome, Pontificio Collegio Espanol, Archivio di S. Giacomo degli Spagnoli, A IV 128, non-foliated.

⁹ This is mentioned in a now-lost document published in Georg Kinsky, "Schriftstücke aus dem Palestrina-Kreis", *Festschrift Peter Wager zum sechzigsten Geburtstag* (Leipzig, 1926), 108-117.

¹⁰ See Jean Lionnet, *La musique a Saint-Louis des Français de Rome au xviie siècle (première partie)*, supplement to *Note d'archivio per la storia musicale, nuova serie*, 3 (1985), 37.

¹¹ Rome, Archivio dei Filippini, A IV 13: Francesco Zazzara, *Diario delle onoranze a S. Filippo dalla morte alla canonizzazione 1621*, entry for 26 May 1597.

great amount since it was expensive to produce and had a limited market among only the richest institutions; music for two choirs, on the other hand, was widely published from the 1580s onwards. The first piece for three choirs to be published in Rome was Victoria's setting of Ps. 121, *Laetatus sum* in 1583 (the only such setting in this publication). The earliest publication for four and five choirs by a Roman composer was Asprilio Pacelli's *Sacrae Cantiones* for from five to twenty voices in 1608—though he had already left Rome (in 1603) to become *maestro di cappella* to the King of Poland. The next was Francesco Soriano's *Psalmi et Motecta* for three and four choirs of 1616, published while he was *maestro di cappella* at S. Pietro in Vaticano. A liturgical diary compiled by Andrea Amico, a canon at S. Pietro, reports that the music was for three and four choirs on the feast of its Dedication (November 18th) in 1614 and 1620;¹³ since the forces used in other years were similar, it seems reasonable to assume that three and four choirs were consistently used there from 1602 onwards (see below).

From the 1620s onwards there are more frequent archival references to four choirs, with five beginning to make a more regular appearance at the end of that decade (see lists below).¹⁴ There were also some spectacular occasions such as the first mass of Giovanni Fran-

¹²See Noel O'Regan, "Palestrina and the Oratory of SS. Trinità dei Pellegrini", *Atti del secondo convegno internazionale di studi palestriniani* (Palestrina, 1991), 95-121.

¹³Rome, Archivio Capitolare di S. Pietro, *Diario Caeremonialia Sacrosanctae Basilicae Principis Apostolorum de urbe ab Anno 1602 ad annum 1620*, Auctore Andrea Amico Beneficiato, ff. 173-174; 431v.

¹⁴Graham Dixon, "The Origins of the Roman 'Colossal Baroque'," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 106 (1979/80), 115-128, lists examples from a variety of institutions from the 1620s onwards which are not generally repeated here. Dixon's article and the same author's *Liturgical Music in Rome 1605-45* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Durham, 1982) are the main writings on this subject. This study is intended to complement and expand on these and, in particular, to show that the origins of the polychoral idiom go back well into the 16th century.

cesco Anerio, celebrated in the Jesuit mother-church of the Gesù after his ordination to the priesthood in 1616 with eight choirs.¹⁵ In 1628 Paolo Agostini presided over the the most impressive multiple-choir jamboree held in Rome up to that point: at the basilica of S. Pietro in Vaticano, on the feast of St. Peter and Paul, he directed twelve choirs (representing the twelve Apostles).¹⁶ On both of these occasions, most of the available musicians in the city took part and were clearly happy to do so, in the one case to honor their colleague Giovanni F. Anerio and in the other perhaps for the acoustic experiment and the sheer fun of having so many choirs placed around the dome of S. Pietro. By 1639 there may have been up to sixteen choirs at S. Pietro, with one—an echo choir—placed up in the dome.¹⁷ Polychoral performance also seems to have formed part of the patronal feastday celebrations of the Compagnia dei Musici di Roma, although no lists of participants survive (they were presumably not paid)—indeed it would be odd if it hadn't, given its ubiquity among the institutions for which the members of the Compagnia worked. The triple-choir *Missa Cantantibus Organis Cecilia*, which survives in manuscript in S. Giovanni in Laterano and whose various sections are attributed to different members of the Compagnia, may well have been composed for use on one or more of these feastdays.

One of the difficulties in interpreting archival references to polychoral performance stems from the use of the word "coro," which in documents of the period was not unambiguous. Like the English word "choir," it could indicate both a group of singers and the place where they sang; this could either be the permanent location with

¹⁵ Giacinto Gigli, *Diario romano* (1607-1670) ed. G. Ricciotti (Rome, 1958), 37. See the further discussion of this event below.

¹⁶ See the lists below. Dixon, "The Origins," mistakenly says 1629 for this extravaganza.

¹⁷ Pietro della Valle, *Della musica dell'età nostra* in Angelo Solerti, *Le origini del melodramma* (Turin, 1903), 172.

benches and lectern where they normally performed or a specially-constructed platform on which they stood on special feastdays (though the word *palco* was also used to describe this). To add to the confusion, more than one group of singers could share the same platform, perhaps singing the same music, while retaining their separate identity; in the latter situation, the effect to the listener would not be greatly different from that of a choir with two singers per part. There is confirmation of this practice in the surviving parts, written on single sheets, of a Magnificat setting by Giovanni Francesco Anerio which survive in the Biblioteca Governativa del Conservatorio Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, but which originated in the archconfraternity and hospital of S. Spirito in Sassia. There are parts for four SATB choirs, but the music for Choirs III and IV is identical.¹⁸ Thus, to the modern performer and editor the piece is effectively for three distinct choirs, with one choir doubled up in performance. This practice was probably not uncommon, so that other pieces which have come down to us with parts for three or four separate choirs might well have been performed with one or more of these choirs doubled up. Ludovico da Viadana recommended this practice in the preface to his *Salmi a quattro chori* of 1612.¹⁹ Since no music for more than six choirs survives in Roman sources—and very little for more than four—it is quite likely that descriptions of eight, ten, and twelve choirs detailed above meant in practice that the choirs were doubling up on music composed for four, five and six separate choirs. Jean Lionnet has suggested that this was the case in 1639 when Maugars described a performance by ten choirs at the church of S. Maria sopra Minerva.²⁰ In the discussion below the

¹⁸ This piece is discussed and partially transcribed in Noel O'Regan, "Blessed with the Holy Father's Entertainment": Roman Ceremonial Music as Experienced by the Irish Earls in Rome, 1608", *Irish Musical Studies* 2 (1993), 1-61.

¹⁹ Given in English translation in Jerome Roche, *North Italian Church Music in the Age of Monteverdi* (Oxford, 1984), 118-9.

²⁰ Lionnet, *La Musique*, 88. André Maugars, *Response faite à un curieux sur le sentiment de la musique d'Italie*, ed. E. Thoinan (Paris, 1865, repr. London,

word "choir" will be used to translate "coro" and will normally mean an identifiably separate group of musicians, but the ambiguities just mentioned need to be borne in mind.

The standard patronal feastday celebration consisted of three liturgical services: first Vespers on the eve of the feast, solemn High Mass the following morning and second Vespers in the afternoon. As well as these, there were also often processions or other non-liturgical devotions such as the unveiling and display of a relic, crucifix or image. Many of the city's confraternities had the privilege of obtaining the release of a prisoner, who had been condemned to death or to the galleys, on their patronal feastday(s) and he became the focus of two processions, one on the vigil to take him from prison to the confraternity's oratory, and the other from there to its church before the High Mass on the feast itself. Other confraternities processed with the Blessed Sacrament, such as the archconfraternity of the Resurrection, which went around the Piazza Navona on Easter Sunday morning.²¹ The hiring of extra singers and instrumentalists had much to do with the need for two or more groups of singers to take their places in these processions.²² Most confraternities and other institutions gave dowries to young needy girls in order that they might be able to marry; these were also paraded in procession

1965), 27. Paolo Agostini's six-choir *Dixit Dominus* in Fondo Cappella Giulia V 71 could well have been sung at S. Pietro by twelve (doubled) choirs in 1628 and by six in 1629.

²¹ Noel O'Regan, "Tomàs Luis de Victoria, Francisco de Soto and the Spanish Archconfraternity of the Resurrection in Rome", *Early Music* 24 (1994), pp. 279-295. Francesco Luisi, "La capella musicale nell'Italia della controriforma", *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi nel IV Centenario di Fondazione della Cappella Musicale di S. Biagio di Cento (Cento 13-15 Ottobre 1989)*, ed. O. Mischiati and P. Russo (Florence, 1993), 75-103.

²² For a fuller discussion see Noel O'Regan, "Processions and their music in post-Tridentine Rome," *Recercare* 4 (1992), 45-80.

(partly, at least, so that they might be viewed by prospective husbands) on patronal feastdays. As well as music, there were many other expenses for these celebrations: the *festarolo* played an important role in decorating the church and oratory inside and out, as well as the route of the procession, with branches, flowers, and hangings. Trumpeters and other wind-players were hired from the bands of the pope or of the Capitol; gunners came from Castel San Angelo to set off charges of gun-powder and fireworks; carriages were sent for dignitaries, especially for cardinals; food and wine had to be provided for those, including the musicians, who remained over for Vespers.

Not all music sung on such occasions was for three and more choirs. At Vespers, these forces were confined to at most two or three psalms plus the Magnificat and a motet or Marian antiphon at the end. The archives often make it clear that fewer singers and instrumentalists were used for First Vespers than for the Mass and Second Vespers. The greatest numbers were always hired for the Mass, though here the large forces might only have been used for a few motets. Double-choir settings of the Ordinary of the Mass are rare and triple-choir ones even rarer.²³ It was probably often sung in a single-choir setting, even if the singers were divided into more than one choir. The triple choir *Missa Tu es Petrus* found in Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Fondo Cappella Giulia XIII 19, is a good example of this practice, related to that of doubling up on choirs in real polychoral music discussed above. This setting is not properly polychoral: the three choirs simply alternate or double on basically six-voice music arranged from Palestrina's motet *Tu es Petrus* (not from the composer's own six-voice mass based on it).

²³ Dixon, "The Origins" and *Liturgical Music* give details of polychoral masses published by Vincenzo Ugolino and others from the 1620s onwards.

Lists of Singers and Instrumentalists Hired by Various Churches

The information presented in the lists at the end of the article is taken directly from the archives of the various establishments with the exception of S. Luigi dei Francesi and S. Girolamo della Carità.²⁴ The information presented, where available, covers the number and type of extra singers, the instrumentalists hired, any extra organs, organists or conductors to relay the beat and the number of platforms constructed. Where the total number of choirs involved is specified in a separate source it is included in the final column. The total number of organs is similarly given only when this is explicitly mentioned. The voice-type of individual singers is often not given directly in the particular archival document, but it can usually be worked out by comparison with other lists or from the salary rolls of the major institutions which supplied these singers. If this has not proved possible the singers involved are listed as "+1" etc. in brackets. Where a particular column is left blank, the relevant information cannot at present be supplied from the archives. All surviving lists from these institutions up to the death of Pope Paul V in 1621 are included (except for S. Maria Maggiore which only goes up to 1612); thereafter a representative sample is given in order to show changes in practice up to ca. 1650. The tables give the maximum number of singers hired, i.e. those for the mass: often the number at First Vespers was less, and sometimes there were fewer at Second Vespers as well.

This information will be analysed in the following pages under various headings.

²⁴Eleonora Simi-Bonini, *Il Fondo Musicale dell'Archivio di S. Girolamo della Carità* (Cataloghi di Fondi Musicali Italiani 15; Quaderni della Rassegna degli Archivi di Stato 69, Rome, 1992), 195-6. Lionnet, *La Musique a Saint-Louis des Français de Rome au xviième siècle (deuxième partie)*, supplement to *Note d'archivio per la storia musicale, nuova serie*, 4 (1986). The present study is indebted to the information provided by Jean Lionnet in this and its companion volume (see note 10), as well as in private discussion with the author. Some of the information on S. Giacomo and the English College can also be found in Jean Lionnet, "La musique à San Giacomo degli Spagnoli au XVIIème siècle et les archives de la Congrégation des Espagnols de Rome," *La musica a Roma attraverso le fonti d'archivio, Atti del convegno internazionale, Roma 4-7 giugno 1992* (Lucca, 1994), 479-505 and Graham Dixon, "Music in the Venerable English College in the Early Baroque," *ibid.* 469-78.

Number of Choirs and of Singers on Each Part

Apart from S. Luigi dei Francesi, the surviving lists only occasionally give the breakdown of singers into choirs. At the French church between 1599 and 1613 there were consistently three choirs of visiting singers for the patronal feast of St. Louis; the norm was one singer per part with an occasional extra alto or tenor in Choir III; there were sometimes only three singers in one of the choirs (the missing singer must have been replaced by an instrument or by one of the singers in the church's regular employ) and occasionally one of the choirs was made up of *voci pari* combinations. Thereafter lists of singers for the feast of St. Louis are sporadic, and/or do not give the breakdown into choirs, until 1629. In this year the numbers being hired increased considerably, with two solo choirs being pitted against one choir of six singers and another of eight, each accompanied by instruments and organ, while a fifth choir was made up of instruments only. Even greater forces were used in the following year when three solo choirs (two of five voices) contrasted with two larger ones (two to three singers per part). Both lists give five choirs and unusually also give the distribution of instruments between the choirs. These two years with exceptionally large forces at S. Luigi represent the expansionist attempts of Pietro Paolo Sabbatini as *maestro*; the governors of the church refused to pay him all he had spent and he was replaced by Vincenzo Ugolini in 1631. However, five and six choirs remained the norm for the patronal feast subsequently.²⁵

At S. Girolamo della Carità there were two choirs (labelled "primo choro" and "secondo choro" in 1604: one was solo while the other had two singers per part. In 1624 the same number of singers were

²⁵ Jean Lionnet, in *La Musique* (première partie), speculates that there could have been six choirs in 1630 and ten in 1633, using all the available external singers (not broken down into choirs in the archives) and those in regular employ at the church.

divided into three solo choirs; in the light of the discussion on the doubling-up of choirs above, the music might possibly have been for three choirs on both occasions with two sharing a platform in 1604. At S. Giacomo the singers are clearly grouped into choirs in 1615 and 1616—though not labelled as such in the archives. In 1615 there were four choirs, two of soloists and two with six and ten singers, respectively. In 1616 there was only one solo choir, pitted against two of six singers, and the distribution of instruments is also given. The three choirs which are known to have sung at the special celebration to mark a royal birth in Spain in 1601 were clearly made up of soloists, since twelve singers were hired. At SS. Trinità dei Pellegrini in 1641 there were three choirs with one singer per part (the two sopranos in Choir I most likely sang separate parts—this remained a feature of the first choir at SS. Trinità in subsequent years and was part of a general trend towards extra sopranos. In 1644, the year of the consecration of the archconfraternity's church, its patronal feast was celebrated by hiring more musicians than usual to make up five choirs: there was again roughly one singer on each part.

At S. Maria Maggiore there was a clear increase in the number of singers around 1602/3. If we assume that there were two outside choirs up to 1602 and three thereafter (we know that there were three in 1611²⁶), there was again largely one singer per part, with some parts having two; the same is true of the English College where there was also clearly a move from two to three choirs of outside singers between 1615 and 1619.

These archival lists only give the extra singers and instrumentalists brought in from outside. For institutions without regular singers on the payroll, these were clearly all that performed. However, for those

²⁶ John Burke, *Musicians of S. Maria Maggiore, 1600-1700: A Social and Economic Study*, supplement to *Note d'archivio per la storia musicale, nuova serie*, 2 (1984), 75.

establishments with singers and perhaps instrumentalists already employed, some ambiguity remains in knowing how they were used. The Cappella Giulia (twelve adults, i.e. three per part, and six boys), S. Luigi dei Francesi (six-eight adults and four boys) and S. Maria Maggiore (ditto) all provided singers to other institutions for patronal feastday celebrations. SS. Trinità and S. Giacomo degli Spagnoli also had permanent choirs for a time.²⁷

At S. Luigi, while the regular singers were certainly capable of taking part in polychoral music, on only one occasion does one of them appear in the lists, Pirro (Bernabei) in 1602. It seems that he was intended to serve in the third choir but was promoted to the second and another, presumably inferior, contralto took his place in the third choir. Bernabei was not paid. The fact that he is included in this list implies that in other years he and the other regular singers did not take part, at least in the three choirs whose members are listed (except, perhaps, where one of these is short a singer). One cannot rule out the possibility of the local singers providing another choir (or even two) for some pieces, perhaps doubling up on the same music as the third choir, as discussed above. The regular forces at S. Luigi also included a cornett and trombone and, in 1600, a violin. That these took part in the polychoral music, in that year at least, is indicated by the phrases *un altro violino* and *doi altri tromboni* in that year's list: since no others are listed, the regular players must have been involved. This is, however, the only year in which the word *altro* is used. Also of significance is the fact that only from 1625 onwards is a small payment made on this feast to the *musicisti della chiesa* or the *cantori ordinarii*, indicating that they took some part in the service. Even then, this might not necessarily have been in the polychoral music: the local choir could have provided single-choir items, such as some psalms and the hymn at Vespers and the ordinary of the Mass.

²⁷ For SS. Trinità in 1591-4 see Noel O'Regan, *Institutional Patronage in Post-Tridentine Rome: Music at Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini 1550-1650* (RMA Monograph 7, forthcoming); for S. Giacomo in 1616-23 see Jean Lionnet, "La musica."

At S. Maria Maggiore the regular singers may have been involved in the polychoral music, particularly in the earlier years and at Easter and the Nativity of the Virgin, the two less important feasts. This must certainly have been true on the latter feast in 1592 when only sopranos and basses were hired.

The situation at the Cappella Giulia is the most complex of all. It is clear that, once the dome of the new basilica and its attendant chapels were completed during the 1590s and used for large-scale feast-day celebrations, the sheer enormity of the space forced even this, the largest of the city's permanent choirs outside of the Cappella Pontificia, to buy in extra singers and instrumentalists (there is no evidence of this before 1597). The Cappella Giulia could have provided three choirs of soloists from its own resources but the acoustics of the building—and even more so after the completion of the long nave in 1615—demanded much more.

Indeed, while the number of visiting singers varied considerably it was still usually more than the number required to make up three and even four choirs of visiting solo singers. On the other hand, the evidence from both Andrea Amico's diary (see note 13) and Francesco Soriano's *Psalmi et motecta... 8,12,16vv* of 1616 suggests that music for three and four choirs was the norm at the basilica over the period. The lists of outside singers are not divided into choirs, with the exception of the feast of the Dedication in 1600 when they are listed in the following order: SATBB/ATB/ATB, the first group consisting of papal singers. The third group, all from S. Luigi dei Francesi, attended for Mass and second Vespers only, further evidence that these groupings correspond to choirs. There were also two cornetts and two sackbuts: the cornetts could have taken the top parts of Choirs II and III. Here we seem to be dealing with one singer on almost all parts, without the home choir, which might, of course, have made up a large fourth choir. On the other hand, for the feast of St. Peter in that same year, a very large group of visiting musicians was hired: fourteen papal singers, twelve other singers

and eleven instrumentalists. There were two organs and two extra conductors, one for the second choir and one for the third, with no evidence of more than three choirs involved; here there must have been multiple singers on virtually every part. The archives make reference in some years to the "platform of the papal singers," implying that they occupied it as a group (as they did when the pope was present in S. Pietro). While they were not hired as a body for these feasts, the fact that they are usually listed together may imply that they normally made up one choir—though it could simply be because they were paid as a group. There can hardly be any question of some being merely there as passengers for show, or of their taking turns singing as soloists, given that they were paid individually and at a higher rate than other Roman singers (papal singers normally earned two *scudi* on such occasions compared to others' one and a half). The fifteen or so singers regularly hired corresponds to the number of "active" singers within the papal choir—those with the best voices and those regularly involved in outside work.²⁸ Again, the question of the participation or non-participation of the regular Cappella Giulia singers must be left open: the simplest explanation in this and subsequent years is that the papal singers made up one choir, the other visiting singers another and the third was made up from the permanent Cappella Giulia members. An extra choir of soloists, when necessary, could have come from among the papal singers. It might be more accurate to say that each of these three groups occupied a separate platform; on that platform they may have been subdivided into smaller choirs, doubling up on the music.

At S. Giacomo degli Spagnoli, where a regular choir was built up between 1612 and 1616 (ATB + 2 boys by 1614; 2A, 2T, 2B + 4 boys by 1616), some of these singers are included among the lists for the feast of St. James in 1614 and 1615, but not in 1616 or subsequent years. In fact two of the four local singers listed in 1615 did not ac-

²⁸ See Richard Sherr, "Competence and Incompetence in the Papal Choir in the Age of Palestrina," *Early Music* 22/4 (November 1994), 606-629.

tually sing and their names are crossed out with *no canta* written across them. Their specific listing here for this year only is a strong indication that they did not take part in the polychoral music in other years. A payment at S. Giacomo in July 1594 speaks of "fourteen selected singers who sang the first and second Vespers" together with four instrumentalists on the patronal feast of St. James.²⁹ Three choirs had sung a motet during mass on that occasion and it is likely that there were three and perhaps four choirs at Vespers, either way with mainly one singer per part. The use of the word "selected" (in Spanish "escogidos") is significant in reinforcing the soloistic nature of much of the polychoral music outside of the Cappella Giulia. One point worth making about S. Giacomo is that the sopranos in the papal chapel were mainly Spanish and it seems that they gave often their services free or in return for some small gift (pairs of gloves in 1590). This may explain the low number of sopranos in the payment lists from S. Giacomo in 1601 and 1604.

At the archconfraternity of S. Rocco in 1588, when a small choir of four singers was employed, it was decreed that only eight good voices and three instrumentalists were to be hired for the patronal feast on August 16th "con minor spese che si possi fare per aiuto delli nostri cantori."³⁰ In the event twelve *scudi* were expended. As we have seen earlier, from 1582 to 1586 there had been three choirs of visiting musicians at S. Rocco at a cost of fifteen/sixteen *scudi*. It is clear that in 1588 only two choirs of visiting singers were employed and the third choir was made up from the local singers, even though these were not singers of the top rank. Of the other institutions, SS. Trinità did have some regular singers in 1593 and 1594 (three sopranos and one alto, tenor, and bass), but there is no evidence of their having taken part in the polychoral music.

²⁹ S. Giacomo degli Spagnoli, A-IV-117, non-foliated.

³⁰ S. Rocco, 65, f. 18v.

The evidence for local participation thus remains inconclusive, preventing an unambiguous figure being put on the total number of choirs involved in many cases. Apart from the Cappella Giulia, the data points to one or two solo choirs (with occasional doubling on one part) and a third and fourth choir which could also be solo, but was often larger. Further evidence that there were at least two singers on some parts comes from concertato polychoral pieces with reduced-voice sections where two voices of the same type are at times labelled as coming from the same choir—e.g. two sopranos marked *primo coro*. An example is found in Giovanni Maria Nani's concertato Magnificat (Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Fondo Cappella Giulia XIII 25), which has verses for SSATB and SSAT marked *secondo coro*, although this choir has the normal SATB disposition in eight-voice sections. Some publications, such as Francesco Martini's *Sacrae Laudes de Beatae Mariae Virginis* . . . 4-8vv of 1617, use the rubric *canto solo si placet* on reduced-voice sections, again indicating that there was more than one singer on the part. The surviving Roman music makes no contrast between a large choir or *cappella* and a *coro* (or *cori*) *favoriti* of soloists, as is often found in Venetian music; the preference in Rome was for equal and equally-clefed choirs.³¹

Number of Organs

Organs were used to accompany polychoral music as a matter of course. Where practicable the institution's regular organ was used and this was supplemented by small portable organs called *organetti*.³² It can be seen from the tables that the number of organs varied,

³¹ As well as Francesco Soriano's 1616 pieces mentioned earlier, manuscripts in the Santini collection in Münster and the Proske collection in Regensburg contain a number of Roman pieces for three and four choirs copied from the now missing codices of the former Collegio Romano. See O'Regan, *Sacred Polychoral*.

³² Organs of this type are discussed in Patrizio Barbieri, "On a Continuo Organ Part Attributed to Palestrina," *Early Music* 22/4 (November 1994): 587-605, which also shows a picture of such an organ on p. 600.

and was often less than the number of choirs, with two choirs sharing one organ, probably on the same platform, since their number too is often less than the number of choirs. It was already common for double-choir music to be accompanied by only one organ and such music was normally published with a single *Bassus ad organum* part, up to Quagliati's *Motetti e Dialoghi a Otto Voci* of 1627, the first with two. The table lists only extra organs and it is not always clear whether or not in fact the church's regular organ was also used—just as is it sometimes unclear whether the church's regular organist took part or not. Practice could vary from year to year, as illustrated by S. Giacomo: in 1597 two organists were hired, one to play the great organ of the church and the other a hired *organetto*, with no mention of the regular organist. In 1604, on the other hand, two small organs were hired and two organists, one of whom played the great organ, so that the regular organist must have played one of the hired *organetti*. In 1615 the situation is unambiguous: three small organs were hired and three organists paid, one of whom was the regular organist. In 1616 the church purchased its own *organetto* and added a festival organist to its payroll (Paolo Tarditi was employed as both organist and *maestro di cappella* at this point, but he was presumably required to direct the music on great feasts and needed a substitute at the organ). In that year only one other organ was hired, but two extra organists to accompany Choirs II and III, so that the great organ must have been used. In 1619, on the other hand, two organs and two organists were hired, so that the festival organist must have played on the church's own *organetto* rather than on the great organ. With no information on the placing of choirs in S. Giacomo, it is difficult to make sense of this variation in practice.

S. Pietro acquired its own *organetto* in 1605, which was normally used after that date. There, the great organs were not utilized on the two major festivals because of their positions away from the dome area. Lists of payments to porters for the transport of organs make it clear that, from at least 1608 onwards, three small organs were employed. The payment-lists also describe the bringing together of

these portable organs for tuning before each feastday. There is no evidence for more than three organs, although we know that music for four choirs was sung on at least some occasions.

The diary of Andrea Amico provides a good example of the need for organ accompaniment for polychoral—in this case double-choir—music.³³ Francesco Soriano's double-choir rearrangement of Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli* was performed in the basilica of S. Pietro in 1618 and the venue for the mass was moved from the choir to the Cappella Gregoriana specifically so that the fixed organ there could be used, since the *organetto* normally in the choir was out in one of St. Peter's dependent churches. Again, one organ was regarded as sufficient for both choirs.

At SS. Trinità, the small organ from the oratory was moved to the church for the two major feasts from 1587 onwards and used in conjunction with the fixed organ there which, as in other institutions, was tuned before the patronal feast. At S. Maria Maggiore, there was also a portable organ, but no payments survive for its transportation on any of the feasts in the table; it was used on other occasions, e.g. at Christmas in the basilica's Cappella Sistina which held the relics of the crib. On major feasts all choirs were quite close to the basilica's main organ (see below), and it alone seems to have been used.

Other evidence for the use of organs, not included in the tables, comes from the Chiesa Nuova where there were three choirs and two organs on the anniversary of Philip Neri's death in 1610,³⁴ and S. Cecilia where there were three choirs and three organs on her feast in 1604.³⁵

³³ *Diario...Andrea Amico*, ff. 350v-351v.

³⁴ Zazzara, *Diario*, 26th May 1610.

³⁵ Rome, Monasterio di S. Cecilia, *Cronica del venerabile monasterio di S. Cecilia di Roma* (1610). I am grateful to Maryvelma O'Neill for this information. Further information is given in Dixon, "The Origins."

Other Instruments

Overall, the most common instrumental grouping comprised one each of violin, cornett, lute, and theorbo; these are also the four instruments given individual parts in Paolo Tarditi's 1620 *Psalmi, Magnificat, cum quatuor antiphonis ad vespervas octo vocibus*, the only Roman publication to include obbligato instrumental parts. It is also the combination of instruments found in the small number of such pieces in Roman manuscript sources.³⁶ Cornett and trombone was also a popular combination, particularly at S. Maria Maggiore, where plucked string instruments do not normally seem to have been used. An affidavit drawn up by Francesco Soriano and Giovanni Andrea Dragoni on behalf of Asprilio Pacelli at SS. Trinità dei Pellegrini in 1594, when the latter was suing for the money to which he felt entitled for large-scale music on the patronal feast and that of Corpus Christi, speaks of violins, cornetts, trombones, and lutes in the plural but presumably meant one of each.³⁷ The bassoon and serpent made occasional appearances, as did different sizes of *viola da braccio*. As well as the lute and theorbo, the harpsichord or virginals was often used as a continuo instrument, as was the *cetera* and *pandora*. During the 1610s the *violone* (also called *bassone* or *viola grossa*) became common as a foundation instrument, particularly at S. Pietro; the abandonment of other instruments there between 1609 and 1625 is atypical and does not seem to have any obvious explanation.

In only three of the lists are the instruments assigned to individual choirs, twice at S. Luigi (1629 and 1630) and once at S. Giacomo (1616). In this last each choir had a high instrument (violin with Choirs II and III, cornett with Choir I) and a plucked string instru-

³⁶ Giovanni M. Nanino, *Magnificat Tertii Toni* mentioned above; *Confitebor tibi* by Giovanni Francesco Anerio and Ottavio Catalani's *Dicite coeli* (both found in Regensburg, Priesterseminarsbibliothek, Proske Sammlung).

³⁷ See note 9.

ment (lute, theorbo, *tiorbetta* respectively); the second choir also had a *violone*. This matches well with the 1620 pieces of Paolo Tarditi, *maestro di cappella* at S. Giacomo at this time, where he assigned violin and lute to Choir I, cornett and theorbo to Choir II. At S. Luigi in 1629 each of the four vocal choirs were accompanied by violin and lute, with the addition of a cornett and theorbo to Choir I; there was also a purely instrumental choir of violin, cornett, and two trombones. In 1630 there was no instrumental choir and Choir V was made up of voices only; the other three choirs each had violin and lute with extra plucked-string instruments in Choirs I and II.

How were the instruments used? We have no surviving pieces for more than two choirs which involve instruments and, for two choirs, only Tarditi's nine psalms and Magnificat and a handful of others. Some trends are clear from these: one is a preference for combining low voices with high instruments, usually bass and violin/cornett. Another is that the instruments are given obbligato parts sparingly, in just a few verses. In the *tutti* verses Tarditi asked that the instruments be used *per ripieno*—presumably this means doubling voices of appropriate ranges. This is the case in Giovanni Francesco Anerio's psalm *Confitebor tibi*, which does not give the instruments any obbligato role in solo passages, but simply uses them to double some vocal parts (with minor variations) in eight-voice sections and to play regular short instrumental *sinfonie*. On the other hand, Ottavio Catalani's Christmas dialogue *Dicite coeli* uses instrumental color to highlight the drama: the narrator and Mary are accompanied by organ alone, the shepherds by the lute and the earthly chorus by violin, cornett, and theorbo. There is also an effective *sinfonia*, with forte and piano markings, to represent the heavenly chorus.³⁸

Unlike their Venetian counterparts, Roman composers almost always remained within the ranges provided by the standard clef combination (C¹C³C⁴F⁴) or the *chiavette* (G²C²C³C⁴/F³). Even in the relatively few pieces with obbligato instrumental parts, there is not the ex-pansion of range at both ends found in Giovanni Gabrieli's

³⁸ The piece is transcribed in O'Regan, *Sacred Polychoral*.

polychoral music. Information on how the various continuo instruments might have been used can be found in Agostino Agazzari's *Del sonare sopra il basso* of 1607.³⁹

Numbers of Platforms and Positioning of Choirs

The lists of payments to carpenters and other workers for the construction and movement of platforms do not normally give details of placing. It is clear from the lists that (a) most institutions constructed one or more platforms for singers on major feasts and (b) the number of platforms often did not coincide with the number of choirs, so that two or more choirs shared the same platform (where the word *palchi* is used in the plural without specifying how many, it is indicated by a 1+ in the tables below). There are a number of other institutions whose archives record payments for the construction of platforms on patronal feasts, but do not give full information about the numbers of choirs, singers, etc. involved. S. Rocco, for example, built one in 1582 when they had three choirs (*un palchetto incontro al organo*);⁴⁰ S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini built one in 1587 and 1591.⁴¹ S. Marcello built two in 1594 (*due palchi grandi per la musica del Papa e San Pietro*—echoing their segregation on independent platforms at St. Peter's mentioned above), but only one in 1615 and 1616,⁴² while S. Agostino had two in 1595, 1598, and 1603, three in 1597 and 1599, but only one in 1596.⁴³

³⁹Given in English translation in Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1952), 424-31.

⁴⁰ S. Rocco, 64, f. 374v.

⁴¹Rome, Archivio di S. Giovanni di Fiorentini, 198, non-foliated.

⁴²Rome, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Fondo SS. Crocefisso, A XII 1594, non-foliated; A XII 101, non-foliated.

⁴³Rome, Archivio di Stato, Fondo S. Agostino, 117, ff. 14, 25v, 31, 41, 48v, 92v; 118, ff. 12, 14v.

The positioning of choirs depended on the institution and information is often patchy. At S. Maria Maggiore a carpenter was paid one *scudo* in 1595 "for having made a platform for the singers beneath the tomb of Pope Nicholas."⁴⁴ The payment was made on the 14th of August and must refer to the basilica's two major feasts of the Assumption and St. Mary of the Snow (August 5th and 15th). The tomb of Pope Nicholas IV was on the left of the main altar, opposite the organ which had a gallery for the singers underneath it (see Fig. 1). Two choirs could have been placed opposite each other, one in the gallery and the other on the platform; both would not have been too widely separated so that the main organ would have been sufficient and no extra conductors would have been needed—all this ties in well with the archival information recorded in the lists. A detailing of the basilica written in 1621 describes the gallery of the singers, *musicae chorus*, under the organ, and speaks of an *alter chorus*, over the tomb of Pope Nicholas;⁴⁵ we have no information on the positioning of the third choir, common after 1602. There is also no information at present available for S. Luigi and that so far found for S. Giacomo is inconclusive.

Information for S. Pietro in Vaticano, however, is more substantial. From at least the early 17th century the platforms of the singers at the feast of the Dedication were placed in the tribune or apse and this section of the basilica used, since only the pope could say Mass at the main altar under the dome and he was not present at this feast.

⁴⁴Rome, Archivio Capitolare della Basilica di S. Maria Maggiore, *Giustificazioni 1595-96*, 14th August 1595.

⁴⁵Pietro De Angelis, *Basilica S. Mariae Maioris de Urbe*, p. 72.

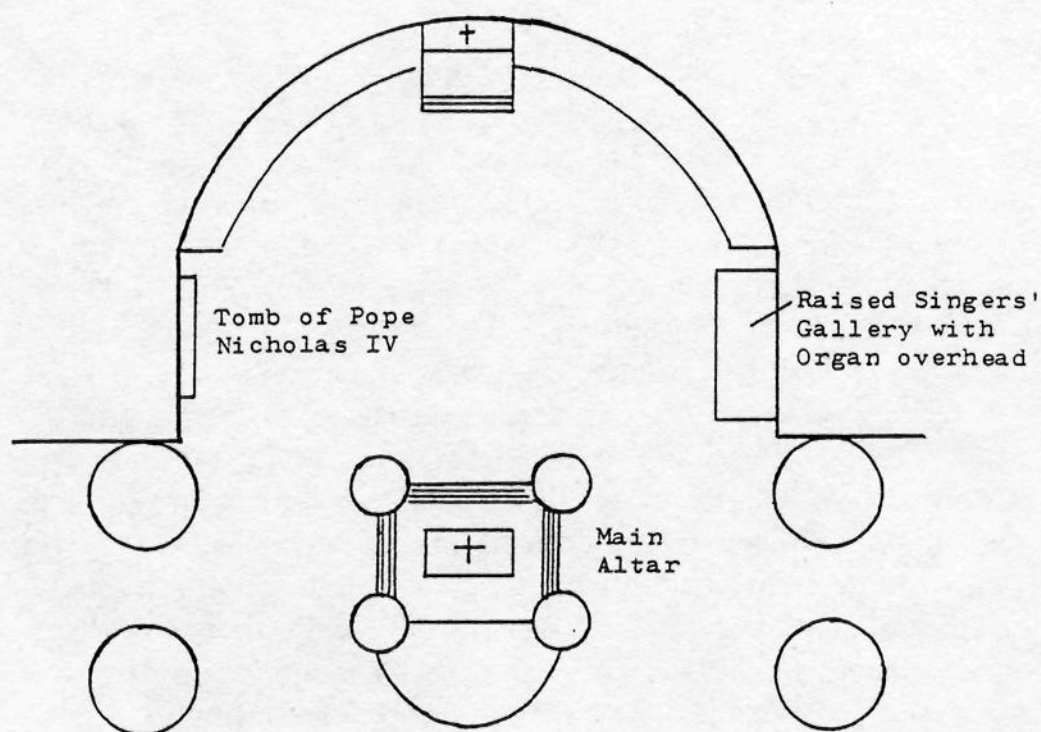
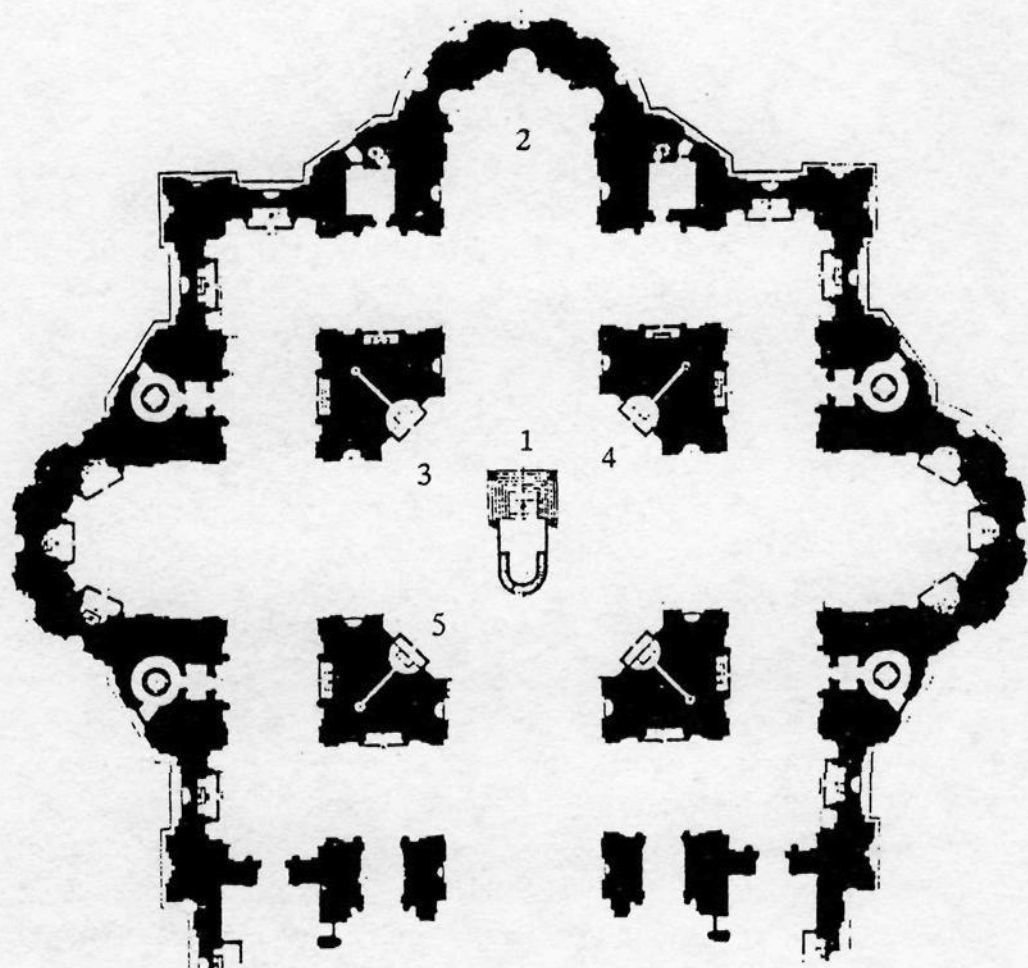


Fig. 1



1. High (papal) altar
2. Tribune
3. Veil of Veronica (*Volto Santo*)
4. Head of St. Andrew
5. Tomb of Pope Paul III

Fig. 2

For second Vespers on the feast of St. Peter, on the other hand, the main altar was the focus and was incensed during the Magnificat; the platforms were placed in the area under the dome (the pope officiated at first Vespers and at Mass on this feast, but second Vespers was left to the basilica's own clergy and singers to celebrate). The positions of the platforms are referred to variously in the archives as "at the main altar," "at the Holy Face (*volto santo*)," "at the niche (*nicchia*)" or "at the Apostles." There were four niches in the four great pillars supporting the dome (later to be filled with statues by Bernini and others). The veil of Veronica with the imprint of the Holy Face, the basilica's most precious relic, was moved to the southwest pillar in 1605 and the foot of this pillar is the most commonly cited location for a singers' platform (see Fig. 2). The payments usually speak of platforms (in the plural) being constructed at the "Holy Face," but in some years it is specified that the second platform was placed at the corresponding northwest pillar, where the head of St. Andrew was kept, and at other times at the southeast pillar, which at that stage held the tomb of Pope Paul III Farnese. In 1609, for example, two platforms were built at the "Holy Face" and at the tomb of Paul III, while a third was built for the papal singers at the northeast pillar;⁴⁶ this would have been used by them at first Vespers and Mass, but may also have been occupied by those papal singers who were hired for second Vespers. An engraving of the canonisation of St. Charles Borromeo in 1610 shows the papal singers on a platform at this northeast pillar;⁴⁷ in 1622 when four saints were canonized (including Philip Neri and Ignatius Loyola), the en-

⁴⁶Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Fondo Cappella Giulia 164, f. 28.

⁴⁷The engraving is given in Irving Lavin, *Bernini and the Crossing of Saint Peter's* (New York, 1968), fig. 2, and in Richard Sherr, "Performance Practice in the Papal Chapel during the Sixteenth Century," *Early Music* 15/4 (November 1987), 452.

graving shows two platforms with singers, one at the northeast pillar and the other at the southwest.⁴⁸ The latter may well have been occupied by the Cappella Giulia, which sang as the pope entered the basilica and need not necessarily indicate wide separation of choirs at papal ceremonies. That the choirs were widely spaced on the feast of St. Peter is attested to by the frequent use of extra conductors to relay the beat. The twelve platforms in 1628 and the six in 1629 were placed at intervals around the high altar.

We are not told the exact location of the platforms in the tribune for the feast of the Dedication, but the infrequent use of extra conductors indicates that they were not widely separated. It may be significant that the two years in which Amico tells us the number of choirs, 1614 and 1620, are those in which an extra conductor is included in the lists. In 1614 Amico recorded that "Mass commenced, at which there was nothing extraordinary except the most beautiful music with three and four choirs."⁴⁹ The number of extra singers in this year is actually fewer than in previous years, so it seems unlikely that the use of three and four choirs would have been extraordinary; it may be, however, that the choirs were more widely spaced in this year than usual. Two, and often three, platforms were used on this feastday from 1605 onwards.

Overall, there seems to have been little consistency in the number of platforms constructed in Roman churches, but at least one was almost always made, holding at least one choir; we are not normally told where this was situated, or where the other choir(s) were positioned. At the Chiesa Nuova in 1599, where there were four choirs, one platform was placed at the crossing of nave and transepts.⁵⁰ We do not know where the other choirs were placed, but in 1607 one was situated in the gallery above Philip Neri's chapel, which opened off the left transept; this gallery opened both into the transept and

⁴⁸ Given in Lavin, *Bernini*, fig. 5.

⁴⁹ *Diario* . . . *Andrea Amico*, ff. 173-4.

⁵⁰ Zazzara, *Diario*, 26 May 1599.

the chancel.⁵¹ There is a similar gallery on the other side which might also have been used. By 1614 both galleries had organs and a corridor was built around the outside of the apse in order to connect them.⁵² This is the only positive evidence of the use of such galleries in Rome, apart from the special occasion in the Gesù, mentioned earlier. The normal situation seems to have been that platforms placed in the arches between the pillars in the body of the church were used. As Jean Lionnet has written:⁵³

. . . the deployment of multiple choirs placed along the nave of a church created a sonorous space which corresponded to the architectural spaces which were being created in Rome during that period. The public, immersed in this sonorous space, were thus more easily moved to devotion and to prayer which, in that epoch, was more of an individual experience than a collective joining in a common liturgical experience.

How big were the platforms? The only payments which mention specific measurements come from the archives of S. Maria Maggiore in 1614 and the Cappella Giulia in 1600. At S. Maria Maggiore the payment was for two "platforms manufactured for the music on three occasions, once of 12 palms and the other of 15 palms square, one made with 4 fixed trestles belonging to the said church."⁵⁴ Taking the Roman palm as equal to 223mm,⁵⁵ the platforms would

⁵¹ Archivio dei Filippini, C I V, 22nd May 1607. I am grateful to Arnaldo Morelli for this information.

⁵² *Ibid.*, May 1614. This information also comes from Arnaldo Morelli.

⁵³ Lionnet, *La Musique* (première partie), 36.

⁵⁴ S. Maria Maggiore, *Giustificazioni* 1614-15, 7th October 1614, non-foliated.

⁵⁵ The Roman palm is given as 223.3282 mm. in *Aide Memoire a L'Usage des Officies D'Artillerie de France*, Vol. II (Paris, 1819), 899.

have been 2.7 and 3.4 metres square, respectively; they would, therefore, have been quite sizeable and able to take at least eight singers and up to twice that number. The two platforms constructed at S. Pietro in 1600 were even larger, measuring 22 by 18 palms, or 4.9 by 4 meters.⁵⁶ Another payment for the manufacture of a platform for singers at S. Pietro in 1607 included four benches for sitting on, emphasizing its sizeable nature.⁵⁷ The platforms normally had parapets and were covered around the sides with hangings so as to disguise the supports.

Platforms were not confined to the interiors of churches: they were also built at strategic points along the way during outdoor processions. We know from pictorial evidence that this was the case at the Easter morning procession around the Piazza Navona of the archconfraternity of the Resurrection at S. Giacomo degli Spagnoli (no payments for these platforms can be found in the archives).⁵⁸ This institution hosted one of the largest groups of singers of the period on Easter morning 1591, the year in which it was raised to the rank of an archconfraternity; sixty-two singers came from virtually all of the regular choirs then in existence in the city. The procession was followed by solemn Mass, and later by Vespers at which many of the same singers would have sung polychoral music.

Extra Conductors

Payments to people who relayed the beat from the *maestro di cappella* to other choirs appear only sporadically in the lists of payments. Only in S. Pietro do they occur regularly, reflecting a greater separation of the choirs there, particularly on the feast of SS. Peter and Paul. Extra conductors were also often employed at S. Giacomo and sporadically at S. Luigi. The importance of having good sight-

⁵⁶Cappella Giulia, 154, f. 82.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 162, f. 78.

⁵⁸See Noel O'Regan, "Tomás Luis de Victoria," and Francesco Luisi, "La cappella musicale."

lines between the choirs is stressed by the ambassador of the Duke of Urbino in his report in the *Avvisi di Roma* (10 August 1616) on Giovanni F. Anerio's first mass in the Gesù (when the diary of Giacinto Gigli tells us that there were eight choirs placed in eight of the newly-completed *coretti* above the openings between the pillars of the nave). He wrote that:

a great number of the most select musicians of Rome sang a composition by the same Anerio for eight choirs, a new invention which would have been more rewarding and better enjoyed had the other choirs, beyond the first four near the tribune, been placed in a direct line down the nave of the church (*posta per linea diretta oltre la distanza delli primi quattro propinqui alla Tribuna dall'altri verso la navata della chiesa*), and if the pilasters placed in the angles [of the *coretti*] had not forced the musicians to turn around, and in consequence interfered with the accord between the voices; as a result [of the better positioning] the skill of the musicians and of those who directed them would have been more apparent and no error or dissonance of any sort would have ensued.

The exact meaning of the ambassador's recommendation is somewhat unclear, but obviously there had been problems of coordination caused by some choirs being unable to see the principal conductor (who would have been in the *coretto* containing the first choir) properly. The use of the *coretti* must have seemed like a good idea at the time, but clearly the performance was something of a disaster and the usual practice of building platforms in a line sticking out into the nave was preferable (and/or using a centrally placed chief conductor with others to relay his beat to the remaining choirs).

Conclusion

Despite the ambiguity inherent in the shortcomings of payment records as a source of information for performance practice, some things are clear. Different sizes of church buildings and their varying acoustic properties meant different needs, with smaller and older

churches needing fewer singers. This led to considerable variety of practice in the numbers of singers hired and used and their positioning, as well as the number and type of instrumentalists employed. We should be wary of trying to establish a single Roman performance practice for this period. At the same time, many common features emerge. Romans preferred to use wooden platforms constructed in the body of the church rather than *coretti* which were part of the fabric. Choirs were mainly made up of soloists, but very often two of these were grouped together on the same platform and could sing the same music; alternatively one or more choirs could be made up of more than one singer per part. In its early years, Roman polychoral music was largely performed by solo singers and this trend continued, even if not in all institutions. Instrumentalists were spread between the choirs (though on at least one occasion they made up a separate group), with each choir normally having a high instrument (violin or cornett) and a plucked string instrument (lute, theorbo etc.). Choirs generally had their own organ, but often two of the choirs shared one of these. While the Roman practice of doubling up on choirs leaves some ambiguity in interpreting archival information, it can also provide flexibility to modern performers of this music to experiment in the surroundings in which it is being reconstructed. Finally, the description by André Maugars of the festal music on the vigil and feast of St. Dominic at S. Maria sopra Minerva in 1639 provides the most complete and the most evocative account of the impression made by a Roman polychoral performance on a musically aware listener:⁵⁹

This church is very long and spacious and there are two organs placed high up, one on the the left and the other on the right of the high altar; alongside these two choirs were placed. Along the nave there were another eight choirs, four on one side and four on the other, raised

⁵⁹The author's translation is based on the French and Italian versions given in Jean Lionnet, "André Maugars: risposta data a un curioso sul sentimento della musica d'Italia," *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana* 19 (1985), 681-707.

on platforms eight to nine feet high, equidistant one from the other and opposite each other in such a way that everyone could see everybody else. With each choir there was a portative organ, as was customary, and this should surprise no one, since one can find more than two hundred of these in Rome, whereas in Paris one can hardly find two in tune with each other. The *maestro*-composer gave the beat to the first choir, which contained the most beautiful voices. With all of the other choirs there was someone who did nothing else but watch the main beat of the first choir and relay it to his own group, so that all of the choirs sang to the same beat without delay. The music was polyphonic, full of beautiful melodies and a large number of pleasing solos. At one time a soprano from the first choir sang a solo, to which those of the third, fourth and tenth choirs responded; at another two, three, four or five voices from different choirs sang together; yet again, all the singers from the different choirs sang in turn, one after the other. Occasionally two choirs sang together and then another two responded; at other times three, four or five choirs would sing together, followed by one, two, three, four, or five solo voices. At the *Gloria Patri* all ten choirs sang together. I must confess that I have never been so carried away. During the hymn and the prose, where the *maestro* tries particularly hard, I heard a beautiful and perfect chant of subtle variety, ornamented with excellent inventions and various and pleasing rhythms. During the antiphons one heard some very fine *sinfonie* played by one, two or three violins with the organ and one of the archlutes, playing certain airs in dance tempo in dialogue one with the other.

LISTS OF EXTRA SINGERS, INSTRUMENTALISTS ETC. EMPLOYED ON PATRONAL FEASTS BY ROMAN INSTITUTIONS

V = Violin; C = Cornett; Tr = Trombone; L = Lute; Th = Theorbo

ENGLISH COLLEGE

St. Thomas of Canterbury (December 29th)

YEAR	EXTRA SINGERS No.	S A T B	INSTRUMENTS				Other	EXTRA ORGANS	EXTRA ORGANISTS
			V	C	Tr	L	Th		
1607	11		1	1	1	1			
1619	13	5 3 3 2	1	1			1	1	1
1620	16	5 4 3 4	1	1		1		1	1
1621	13	3 4 3 3	1	1		1			1

Trinity Sunday

YEAR	EXTRA SINGERS No.	S A T B	INSTRUMENTS				Other	EXTRA ORGANS	EXTRA ORGANISTS
			V	C	Tr	L	Th		
1613	8	2 3 1 2							
1615	9	2 3 2 2	1				1	1	1
1620	13	3 3 7	1	1		1		1	1
1621	14	3 4 3 3	1	1		1			1

1624	14	5 3 3 3	1 1	1 1	2
1625	15	3 5 3 4	1 1	1 1	2
1625+	9	2 3 2 2	1 1	1 1	1

*Special celebration to celebrate birth of child to Queen of Spain. The music was for three choirs
+ Feast of S. Ildefonso (23 January)

ARCHCONFRATERNITY OF THE RESURRECTION AT S. GIACOMO DEGLI SPAGNOLI

Easter Sunday (EXACT NUMBERS OF SINGERS NOT GIVEN IN ARCHIVAL LISTS: NUMBERS HERE ARE BASED ON INTERPRETATION OF INFORMATION IN THOSE LISTS)

YEAR	EXTRA SINGERS No.	S A T B	INSTRUMENTS				EXTRA ORGANS
			V	C	Tr	L Th	
1581	7	2	3(+2)	1 1	1 1		
1583	11	3 4 2 2	1 1	1 1			
1591	62			3 1			1
1594	20	5 5 5 5	1 1	1 1	1		1

Pifaro, clavicembalo
(C, Tr at Vespers only)

Pifaro, cembalo

SAN LUIGI DEI FRANCESI St. Louis (August 25th)

YEAR	EXTRA SINGERS No.	Distribution	INSTRUMENTS				EXTRA ORGANS	TOTAL ORGANS	EXTRA ORGANISTS	EXTRA CONDUCTORS	NUMBER OF CHOIRS
			V	C	Tr	L Th					
1595											3
1599	11	SATB / SATB / ATB	2	1	3	3	1	1	1		
1600	12	SATB / SATB / AATT	1	1	2	1		1	1		
1601	12	SATB / SAB / SATB	1	1	1	1		2	2		
1602	12	SATB / SATB / AATT	1	1	1	1		2	2		
1603	11	SATB / SAAB / ATT	1	1	1	1		2	2		
1604	12	SATB / SATT / AATT	1	1	1	1		2	2		
1605	13	SATB / SATT / SAATB	1	1	1	1		1	1		
1606	12	SATB / SATB / SATB	1	1	1	1		1	1		
1608	12	SATB / SATB / SATB	1	1	1	1		1	1		
1609	13	SATB / SATB / SATB	1	1	1	1		1	1		

1612	12	SATB / SATB / SATB	1 1 3	1	1	1
1613	12	SATB / SATB / SATB	1 1	1 Traverso	2	1
1614	16	5 3 3 3	1 1 4	1 Viola grossa	2	2
1615	16	5 3 2 3 (+1)	1 1 2?	1 Spinnet	2	2
1624	14	5 3 3 2 (+1)	4 instruments	2	2	1
1629	22	(Distribution: SATB V,C,L,Th,Cetera, Organ / 2S,2A,2T,2B V,L,Cimbalo, Organ / SATB V,L,Organ / 6 singers V,L,Organ / V,C,2Tr	5 2 2 4	1 Cimbalo, Cetera	4	4
1630	32	9 7 9 6 (+1)	3 1 2 4	2 Pandora, Cimbalo, Violone, Bassoon	2	4
(Distribution: SSATB V,L,Th,Organ / 2S,2A,2T,2B V,L,Th,Pandora,Cimbalo,Organ / SATB V,L,Organ / 3S,2A,3T,2B C,L,Organ / SATB (+1) C,AltoTr,Tenor Tr, Violone, Bassoon						

SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE

St. Mary of the Snow (August 5th)

YEAR	EXTRA SINGERS No.	SATB	INSTRUMENTS V C Tr L Th	NUMBER OF CHOIRS
1597	9	3 2 2 2		
1601	8	2 2 2 2	1 1	
1602	11	3 1 3 3 (+1)	1 1	
1603	13	3 3 3 4		
1604	15	5 3 3 4		
1607	14	4 3 4 3	1 1	
1610	17	5 4 4 4	1 1	
1611	14	4 3 4 3	1 1	
1611*	14	4 3 4 3	1 1	3
1612	16	3 4 5 4	1 1	

* This was the official possession of the new Archbishop, Cardinal Nazaret

Assumption of the Virgin (August 15th)

YEAR	EXTRA SINGERS No.	S A T B	INSTRUMENTS				Other	PLATFORMS
			V	C	Tr	L Th		
1588	7	2 2 2 1	1	1				1
1592	4	2 2	1	1	1			
1595	7	2 2 1 2	1	2				1
1597	5	2 1 1 1						
1601	6	2 2 2	1	1				
1602	8	3 1 2 2	1	1				
1603	11	1 3 3 4						
1604	11	3 3 3 2						
1607	14	4 3 4 3	1	1				
1610	16	4 4 4 4	1					
1610*	13	3 3 3 4	1	1	1	1	Viola	
1611	14	4 3 4 3	1	1				
1612	16	3 4 5 4	1	1				

*Nativity of Virgin (September 8th)

Easter Sunday

YEAR	EXTRA SINGERS No.	S A T B	INSTRUMENTS			
			V	C	Tr	L Th
1604	6	2 2 1 1			1	1
1607	7	1 3 1 2	1	1		

SAN PIETRO IN VATICANO:
SS. Peter and Paul (June 29th)

YEAR	EXTRA No.	EXTRA SINGERS S A T B	INSTRUMENTS V C Tr L Th	Other	EXTRA ORGANS	TOTAL ORGANS	EXTRA ORGANISTS	EXTRA CONDUCTORS	PLATFORMS	CHOIRS
1598	6	2 2 2	1 1 1	4 C/Tr	2	2				
1599	7	1 2 2 2	1 2 3	2 Bassoons	2	2	1			
1600	26	2 7 8 9	1 3	6 C/Tr, Bassoon	2	2	1	2		
1601	16	4 5 3 4			2	2	1	2		
1602	18	6 5 3 4			2	2	1	1		
1605	21	6 5 5 5	2		2	3	2	2		
1606	24	5 6 6 7	3		3		2	2		
1607	19	4 5 5 3 (+2)	3	Gran serpente	2	3	2		1+	
1608	17	4 3 5 4 (+1)	3		2		2		1+	
1609	24	4 6 6 6 (+2)	1 2	11 C/Tr	1	3	3			
1610	20	5 5 5 5			3	3	2			
1614	21	8 4 5 4		Bassone (= Violone)	2	3	2			
1616	20	6 5 3 6		Violone	2	3	2			
1617	18	4 5 4 5		Violone	1	3	2	2	2	
1618	20	7 4 4 4 (+1)		Violone	2	3	1	2	2	
1619	19	5 5 5 4		Violone	2	3	2	2	2	
1620	20	5 5 6 4		Violone	2	3	2	2	3	
1621	23	6 6 6 5		2Viola	2	3	2	3	3	
1625	32	8 8 9 7		Violone	3	4	4	3	3	
1626	22	4 5 6 7	1 1 1	Violone	2	3	2	3	1	
1628	87	23, 20, 19, 17	7 5 7	3 Viola, Violone, Violino contralto, Fagotto	12	12	11	11	12	12
1629	20	4 7 3 6	6 4 8	2Viola bastarde, Fagotto	4	5	5	5	6	6

DEDICATION OF BASILICA (November 18th)

YEAR	EXTRA SINGERS No.	S A T B	INSTRUMENTS V C Tr L Th	Other	EXTRA ORGANS	TOTAL ORGANS	EXTRA ORGANISTS	EXTRA CONDUCTORS	PLAT- FORMS	CHOIRS
1597	8	2 2 2 2								
1600	11	1 3 4 3	2 2							
(Distribution: SATTB (papal) / ATB / ATB)										
1601	12	5 4 1 2			1					
1602	16	4 4 4 4								
1605	24	4 7 7 6	2 3		3		1		3	
1606	30	9 7 7 7	1 3				3		2	
1607	23	7 5 6 5	1 1				3			
1608	20	6 5 5 4	1	8C/Tr	2	3	3		2	
1609	19	5 6 4 4			2	3	2		2	
1610	20	4 6 5 5	3		2	3	2		1 +	
1612	21	5 4 5 7			2		2			
1614	19	6 4 3 6		Violone	2		2		2	
1615	28	9 6 5 8		Violone	2		2	2	2	
1616	19	4 5 4 6		Violone	2		2		1 +	
1617	22	6 6 6 4		Violone	1	3	2		3	3/4
1618	21	5 4 6 4 (+2)		Violone	1	3	2		3	
1619	21	5 6 6 4		Violone	2	3	2		3	
1620	21	7 5 4 5		Violone	2	3	2		3	
1625	22	5 5 6 6	3 3	Violone	2	3	2	1	3	3/4
1628	23	5 5 7 6	2 2 5	Violone, Fagotto	4	5	2	1	3	
1629	30	5 8 8 9		2 Violoni	3	4	2	4	4	6

