

Introduction

Marc' Antonio Ziani (*b* Venice, ca. 1653; *d* Vienna, 1715) was one of Venice's leading opera composers. From 1686 he held the position of *maestro di cappella* at S. Barbara, the *Basilica Palatina* of the Gonzaga family in Mantua. In 1700 he was appointed *vice-Hofkapellmeister* in Vienna by Emperor Leopold I. Only in 1712 was he able to advance to the position of *Hofkapellmeister* of emperor Karl VI., which he occupied until his death. As earlier at the court of Mantua, the focus of his work was primarily the oratorio and numerous other sacred compositions. His colorful orchestrations are frequently of particular density, and numerous instruments were provided with obbligato parts.⁴

For the most part, Ziani used the viola da gamba in his operas. One of Ziani's few works with solo violas da gamba that was not intended for the stage is the present *Alma Redemptoris Mater*. The performance dates of many of his preserved compositions are recorded on the respective folder; these works were regularly performed into the 1750s, that is to say, even up to forty years after his death. The present manuscript bears a single performance date: 25 December 1713. Since Ziani is referred to as *Maestro di Cappella di S.M.C.* on the title page, the date of composition can be narrowed down to the period 1712–13. The work is scored for alto voice, two violas da gamba, and a continuo group made up of violoncello, violone, and organ. The alto voice and the two violas da gamba move in the same compass, which leads to a very compact sound impression. The antiphon *Alma Redemptoris Mater* is a part of the liturgy during the Advent and Christmas seasons.

The tripartite work commences with “*Alma Redemptoris Mater*,” which is in 3/4 time, marked *Largo*, and characterized by the alternation of sustained tones with sequential coloraturas. In the following “*Surgere*,” an *Allegro* in 4/4 time, the two instruments alternate in the accompaniment of the alto voice, whereby the two parts are each based on different thematic material. Stylistically, the concluding “*Sumens illud*,” in 3/2 time, approximates Palestrina's vocal polyphony, a style that was still frequently used by the composers of Masses at the Viennese court.

Many of Ziani's earlier works are substantially more demanding in terms of technique and require a greater degree of virtuosity from the performers, but at the same time they seem somewhat heavier in terms of the melodic structure. After long years of stylistic continuity under Leopold I and the short reign of Joseph I, the musical development that had taken place in the rest of Europe started to gain influence also in Vienna. This was particularly true of the style of the Neapolitan opera school after the Kingdom of Naples had come under the direct control of the Austrian branch of the House of Habsburg already in 1707 as a result of the War of the Spanish Succession.

Marc Strümper
Vienna, October 2015

Our Edition

The source of this edition is preserved in the Austrian National Library in Vienna under the call number Mus.Hs. 16321. The manuscript performance material consists of a folder and seven parts. The title reads: *Alma | Alto Solo, con due Viole da Gambe. | Del Sig^r: Marco Antonio | Ziani. Maestro di Cap^{la}: | di S. M. C.* The parts are designated *Alto Solo, Prima Viola da Gamba, Seconda Viola da Gamba, Violoncello, Violone, Organo*, and *M:D:C:* (i.e., *Maestro di Capella*). The *Violoncello, Violone, Organo*, and *M:D:C:* parts all contain the same bass part, whereby only the last two are figured. The *M:D:C:* part was used as the source for our transcription of the bass.

The manuscripts, including the bass figures, are exceedingly legible and practically error-free. Only a few legato slurs are imprecisely placed. Our edition follows the source very exactly. Editorial additions and corrections are, as usual, indicated by dashed lines or square brackets, or are explained in footnotes in the

⁴ For details, see Marc Strümper, *Die Viola da gamba am Wiener Kaiserhof: Untersuchungen zur Instrumenten- und Werkgeschichte der Wiener Hofmusikkapelle im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Tutzing: Schneider, 2004).

score. We have replaced the alto clef of the voice part with treble clef; all other clefs are as in the source. The orthography of the text is oriented on that of the Denkmäler edition that contains this work.⁵

We hope that this edition succeeds in bringing this beautiful solo motet to the attention of musicians outside Austria. In our opinion, this Christmas composition is on a par with Buxtehude's *Jubilate Domino*.

We would like to thank Margarita Kaltenböck for calling our attention to this work and Marc Strümper for the Introduction.

Günter und Leonore von Zadow
Heidelberg, October 2015

Translation by Howard Weiner

⁵ C. Schoenbaum and E. Schenk, *Geistliche Solomotetten des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich 101/102 (Graz and Vienna: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1962).