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JOSHUA R. JACOBSON

**THE CHORAL MUSIC OF
SALAMONE ROSSI**

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Hashirim Asher Lish'lomo
The Songs of Solomon

Title page of the alto part-book

Preface

For hundreds of years much of the music of Salamone Rossi lay forgotten. Then, in a scenario familiar to music historians, a nineteenth-century composer "rediscovered" the music of the Baroque master and went to great pains to have it published and performed.

In the mid-1800's Baron Edmond de Rothschild, on vacation in Italy, came across some curious old books containing choral music with Hebrew words. Upon his return to Paris, the Baron showed these books to Samuel Naumbourg, Cantor of the Great Synagogue of Paris. Naumbourg, in turn, took them to the young Vincent d'Indy, and the two, in collaboration, issued the first modern edition of selected motets and madrigals in 1876, more than two and a half centuries after the original publication.

The response to Naumbourg's rediscovery was slow. In 1893 the music historian Eduard Birnbaum published an article about Rossi and several other Jewish musicians at the Mantuan court. In the early 1930's an article by Paul Nettl on much the same subject appeared in the *Musical Quarterly*, and Salabert Publications issued the first octavos of Rossi's motets. Enthusiasm mounted in the 1950's. The Sacred Music Press reissued the 1876 publication by Naumbourg and d'Indy, Alfred Einstein wrote two important articles on Rossi as composer of madrigals and synagogue music, and the historiographer Cecil Roth wrote the first of his studies on the Jewish contribution to the Italian Renaissance. In 1962 Joel Newman completed his Ph.D. thesis, an exhaustive study of the madrigals of Rossi, and in 1967 Newman, together with Friz Rikko, issued volume one of the first modern scholarly edition of the motets.

Several articles on Rossi have graced the pages of this journal. In 1968 Neal Zaslaw reviewed a performance of the motets and in 1972 the same author reviewed the publication issued by Newman and Rikko. In October of 1980 the present author offered a brief analysis of Rossi's only published balletto, and an editorial in the same issue reported on the first performance by a new ensemble that had appeared under the name of "De Rossi Singers."

Now, more than 350 years after his death, the literature on Rossi is growing, there are a number of reliable performing editions of his music,

and, in Jerusalem, Prof. Don Harran is preparing the publication of Rossi's complete works. It is hoped that this small monograph will lead to a better appreciation for, and more frequent performances of, the choral music of Salamone Rossi Hebreo.

— J.R.J.

Introduction

Salamone Rossi was active at the court of the Gonzaga family in Mantua at the turn of the seventeenth century as a violinist and composer. Very little is known about the details of Rossi's life, but we may surmise that he was born about 1570 and died about 1630. What little information we do have is gleaned from his published works, consisting of six books of madrigals, one book of duets, one book of canzonets, four books of instrumental works (including sonatas, sinfonias and various dance pieces), a single *balletto*, and a path-breaking collection of Hebrew motets for the synagogue.

Living in the shadow of such great figures as Monteverdi and Gastoldi, Rossi has generally been overlooked by historians and performers; yet much of his music possesses great depth and charm. Moreover, in several ways, Rossi was in the avant-garde. He was the first madrigal composer to favor the so-called mannerist poets. His first book of madrigals (1600) was published with an unprecedented optional *chitarrone* tablature appearing with the *canto* part book.¹ His second book of madrigals (1602) featured a *basso continuo* part, placing it in the vanguard of experiments with accompanied monody, and antedating by three years Monteverdi's first attempt at concerted madrigals.² In the field of instrumental music, Rossi likewise occupied a pioneering position. His book of *Sinfonie et Gagliarde*, published in 1607, contains the first trio sonatas in the literature.³ Further, he is the composer of the only extant collection of polyphonic music for the synagogue (*Hashirim Asher Lish'lomo*, 1622/23) to appear in print before the nineteenth century.

The composer was a descendant of the illustrious Italian-Jewish family "de Rossi," which is the Italian translation of the Hebrew family name "Me-Ha-Adumim." This proud family, which included the famous and controversial Bible scholar Azariah de Rossi and a number of fine

¹The practice of accompanying solo songs with lute was common enough at the time, but Rossi's *Libro primo* may have been the first publication in Italy of through-composed madrigals with an original lute tablature.

²Claudio Monteverdi, *Il quinto libro de madrigali a cinque voci* (1605).

³Manfred Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1947), p. 53.

musicians, traced its ancestry back to the exiles from Jerusalem, carried away to Rome by Titus in the year 70 of the Christian era.

When the winds of humanism swept over Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, many Jewish communities experienced a profound change of orientation as they abandoned their centuries-old state of isolation and began to intermingle with their Christian neighbors with a freedom hitherto unknown. Caught up in this fervor of a new age, Jews for the first time studied Western music, as well as painting, dancing, theater, philosophy, and literature. By the mid-sixteenth century many Jews were employed in the various Italian ducal courts as instrumentalists, composers, actors, and dancing masters.

The most talented of this circle of Jewish artists was Salamone Rossi, who epitomizes the Italian Jewish community's participation in the artistic efflorescence of the Renaissance. On the one hand, Rossi had left the confines of the Jewish community to work at the court of the Gonzagas as a colleague of Monteverdi, Gastoldi, and Viadana. As a composer, he was well known for his work in the popular vocal and instrumental forms of the day. His employers thought so highly of him that they even exempted him from wearing the yellow badge of shame that was required to mark the attire of all Jews at that time.

Yet, on the other hand, Rossi was never totally assimilated into the Christian community. On the title pages of his published compositions his name appears as "Salamon(e) Rossi *Hebreo*." Despite his participation in the artistic life of the Mantuan court, he remained involved in a Jewish theater troupe and a Jewish instrumental ensemble. Furthermore, unlike his Christian colleagues, he composed no liturgical music for the church. Indeed, Rossi's special niche in the history of liturgical music stems from his unique collection of synagogue motets, the composition of which drew on both his knowledge of the prevailing styles of church music and his command of the Hebrew language. Rossi succeeded in a difficult balancing act: he was able to remain active in two conflicting worlds without having to compromise his artistic goals or his religious conviction.

Canzonets

Rossi's output of published secular vocal music is summarized in the following chart:⁴

<i>Canzonette a 3</i>	1589
<i>Madrigali a 5, Libro primo</i>	1600
<i>Madrigali a 5, Libro secondo</i>	1602
<i>Madrigali a 5, Libro terzo</i>	1603
<i>Madrigali a 5, Libro quarto</i>	1610
<i>Madrigali a 4, Libro primo</i>	1614
<i>Musiche de alcuni eccellentissimi musici composte per La Maddalena</i>	1617
<i>Madrigali a 5, Libro quinto</i>	1622
<i>Madrigaletti a 2</i>	1628

Many of these publications were extremely popular. His first book of madrigals was reprinted three times, the second book twice, and the fourth book once.⁵ Nineteen of the madrigals appear in the manuscript collections of the English amateur musician Francis Tregian. Two of his canzonets were adapted by the English composer Thomas Weelkes and appear (without attribution to Rossi) in Weelkes's *Ayres or Phantasticke Spirites for Three Voices* (1608).⁶ His first published work, a collection of nineteen canzonets, was published in 1589. From the fact that the collection contained *nineteen* canzonets (instead of the usual twenty-one), and the fact that the dedication was dated August 19th (1589), Joel Newman deduces that the composer was nineteen years old at the time, thus placing his date of birth at 1570.⁷

⁴The definitive study of Rossi's secular vocal music was written by Joel Newman in 1962. (Newman, Joel. "The Madrigals of Salomon de' Rossi." Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1962).

⁵Joel Newman and Fritz Rikko, *A Thematic Index to the Works of Salomon Rossi* (Hackensack, N.J.: Joseph Boonin, 1972), pp. 26, 36, 52.

⁶The fact that *I bei ligustri e rose* and *Donna il vostro bel viso* are the only two "Ayres" with Italian texts in Weelkes's collection strongly suggests that they came from a common source. Such borrowing was not unusual in this period. It is generally known that Thomas Morley (an older colleague of Weelkes) pirated the *balletti* of Giovanni Gastoldi (an older colleague of Rossi at Mantua). Perhaps the best known of Morley's "borrowings" is his *Sing We and Chant It*, based on Gastoldi's *A lieta vita*.

⁷Newman, "The Madrigals of Salomon de' Rossi," p. 109.

These nineteen canzonets *a 3* seem to presage the interest in three-part writing that was to characterize much of Rossi's mature work, and indeed many genres of the early Baroque in general. Fairly typical of the canzonets is *I bei ligustri e rose*, which is reproduced below as Example 1.⁸ In its subject matter, the text is fairly typical of the popular vocal music of the period: praise of the beloved's beauty is juxtaposed with a lament for the author's unrequited love. The composer presents four verses of this poem, to be sung in strophic fashion to the same music. Each verse contains two couplets: the first in iambic trimeter and the second in (occasionally modified) iambic pentameter, both with one extra weak beat at the end.

I bei ligustri e rose
Ch'in voi natura pose
Donna gentil, mi fanno ogn'hor morire
Si grav'è la mia pena e'l mio martire.

Le vostre bionde trecchie
Furon d'amor le frecchie
Onde langue e sospira il miser core
Si grav'è la mia pena, e'l mio dolore.

Et le due chiare Stelle
Vaghe lucenti, e belle
Aspri lacci d'Amor, crude Catene
Mi san partir sì gran dolori, e pene.

Deggio dunque servire
Chi non mi vuol udire?
Sì cruda e fiera è la mia dura sorte,
Che servir deggia chi mi dà la morte.

The beautiful privets and roses
with which nature has endowed you,
gentle lady, make me die every hour,
so deep is my pain and my martyrdom.

Your blond tresses
were the arrows of love
from which my miserable heart suffers
and sighs,
so deep is my pain and my sorrow.

And the two clear stars,
graceful, radiant and beautiful,
bitter snares of love, cruel chains,
know how to cause me such great
sorrow and pain.

Must I then serve
her who does not wish to listen to me?
So cruel and fierce is my hard fate
that I must serve the one who
gives me death.

The musical form is again typical of the lighter vocal pieces of this period: its scheme is A A B B. The setting of the second half of the verse is exactly twice as long as that of the first half, reflecting both the extended length of the second couplet and its greater emotional impact.

Foreshadowing the trio-sonata texture in instrumental music, the upper two voices are of equal range, and frequently cross each other in imitative counterplay. While fifteen of the nineteen canzonets employ a tenor or bass, in this work the lowest voice is an alto. Nevertheless, the low range of this voice clearly places it in a function different from the other two.

In its harmonic texture the work is fairly conservative, most of the chords being either on the tonic or dominant in the home key of A minor, or

⁸The transcription of all examples of Rossi's choral music was done by the present author.

EXAMPLE 1

Soprano 1
I bei li - gus - tri e ro - se ch'in

Soprano 2
I bei li - gus - tri e ro - - se

Alto
I bei li - gus - tri e ro - se

5

voi na - tu - ra po - se, ch'in voi na - tu -

ch'in voi na - tu - ra, ch'in voi na - tu - ra

ch'in voi na - tu - ra po -

1. 2. 10

- ra po - se. se. Don - na gen -

po - - se. se. Don - na gen -

- se. se. Don - na gen -

its relative major, C. The voice leading in the upper two voices is mostly by step, except for several expressive leaps (e.g., measures 5, 14, 15). The lowest voice at times participates in imitation with the upper two voices (measures 5, 10, 13), and at times it assumes the role of a functional bass (measures 1-3, 7-10, 12-13, 21-23).

til, mi fan - no ogn' hor mo - ri - - - -

til, mi fan - no ogn' hor mo - ri - -

til, mi fan - no ogn' hor mo - ri -

15 20

re. si gra - - ve e la mia pe - na e'l

re. si gra - - ve e la mia

re, si gra - - ve e la mia pe - na e'l

25

mio _ mar - ti - - - re. re.

pe - na e'l mio _ mar - ti - re. re.

mio _ mar - ti - re. re.

The texture alternates between blocks of homophony and genuine counterpoint. Particularly expressive are the chains of suspensions from measure 14 to the end, perhaps even somewhat out of place for the light canzonet. Despite the strophic form, these suspensions work equally well in all four verses; the grief-stricken final line in the first strophe is paralleled in each of the three succeeding verses.

The setting by Thomas Weelkes of the same text in his 1608 *Ayeres or Phantasticke Spirites for Three Voices* is so similar that we can surmise that, at the very least, the English composer was extremely familiar with the music of his Italian contemporary (see Ex. 2). Both settings are scored for three treble voices with similar ranges and patterns of part writing. The texture is nearly identical, with alternating homophony and polyphony.

EXAMPLE 2

Soprano 1

I bei li - gus - tri e ro - se,

Soprano 2

I bei li - gus - tri e ro - se,

Alto

I bei li - gus - tri e ro - se, Ch'in

5

Ch'in voi na - tu - ra, po - se,

Ch'in voi na - tu - ra, po - - se,

voi na - tu - ra, po - - - - se, Ch'in

10

Ch'in voi na - tu - ra, po - se.

Ch'in voi na - tu - ra, po - - - - se.

voi na - tu - ra, po - - - - se.

Don - - na - - gen - til

Don - - na - - gen - til mi

Don - na gen - til mi fan - no ogn'

15

mi fan - no, ogn' hor mo - ri - - - -

fan - no, ogn' hor mo - ri - - - -

hor mo - ri - - - -

20

re, Si grave - - e la - - mia

re, Si grave - - e la - - mia pe - na e'l

re, Si grave - - e la - - mia pe - na e'l

Rossi's long melismatic suspensions for the last line of the verse reappear in Weelkes's setting. The harmonization is again extremely similar, nearly all chords representing the tonic or dominant of the home key or its relative major. And, perhaps most noticeably, Weelkes's melody (the canto part) is nearly identical with that of Rossi.

25

pe - na e'1 mio mar - ti - re,

mio mar - ti - - - re, si

mio - mar - ti - re, si grave

30

si grave - - e la mia pe -

grave - - e la mia pe - na e'1 mio mar -

- e la mia pe - - na e'1

35

- na e'1 mio mar - ti - - - re. re.

ti - re, mar - ti - re. re.

mio - mar - ti - re. re.

And yet there are certain differences that catch our attention as well. The first thing we notice is that Weelkes's setting is in G minor, while Rossi's is in A minor. Next we note that in the first few measures Weelkes alters the rhythm of the lower two voices to create a lilting homorhythmic texture in triple time. When the contrapuntal section begins, Weelkes

EXAMPLE 3

Soprano
Spaz - ziam pront' o vec - chia - rel - le, Ques - to

Alto
Spaz - ziam pront' o vec - chia - rel - le, Ques - to

Tenore
Spaz - ziam pront' o vec - chia - rel - le, Ques - to

suo - lo va - go e so - lo, Far d'an -

suo - lo va - go e so - lo, Far d'an -

suo - lo va - go e so - lo, Far d'an -

reverses the order of the vocal entrances, and, rather than presenting an exact canon, as Rossi had done, has the upper voices form a tonal answer. Finally, as adventurous as Rossi was with his suspensions at the end of the verse, Weelkes seems to present an even more striking case by repeating the text of the last line, doubling the length of the final section.

Thus, while it seems clear that Weelkes's setting from his 1608 publication is a copy of Rossi's setting of 1589, it is by no means an exact copy; it is rather an arrangement on which the English composer put the personal stamp of his own style, reinterpreting the earlier work in the manner of his time and environment.

* * *

Rossi composed only one *balletto*, the light-hearted "Spazziam," a modest contribution to the incidental music for Giovanni Andreini's play *La*

5

gei pre - do più bel - le, Far d'an -

gei pre - do più bel - le, Far d'an -

gei pre - do più bel - le, Far d'an -

Ritornello
violin

gei pre - do più bel - le.

violin

gei pre - do più bel - le.

gamba

gei pre - do più bel - le.

Maddelena.⁹ In some respects this work seems to resemble the canzonet just discussed: the three-part texture, the light, amorous text, the simplicity of its harmonic and formal plan. Yet in the *balletto* the dance-like rhythms are more prominent, the texture more consistently homorhythmic, and there is a refrain to be performed by a string trio (Ex. 3). These features place it closer in spirit to the music of two of Rossi's Mantuan colleagues, the *balletti* of Giovanni Gastoldi (1591, 1594) and, particularly, the *Scherzi musicali* (1607) of Claudio Monteverdi (see Ex. 4).¹⁰

⁹ For a detailed analysis of this balletto see this author's article "Spazziam: A Balletto by Salamone Rossi" in the October 1980 issue of *American Choral Review*.

¹⁰ Gastoldi was in residence at the Mantuan court from 1572 to 1608, and Monteverdi from c. 1592 to 1612.

10

The musical score consists of two systems of three staves each. The first system is in 6/8 time and features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a bass clef. The melody is primarily in the treble clef, with a bass line in the bass clef. The second system is in 3/4 time, also with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a bass clef. The melody continues in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Like Monteverdi's *Scherzi*, "Spazziam" is a "hemiola" song, the rhythmic structure suggesting measures alternating between 3/4 and 6/8. Furthermore, the lyrics in both cases reveal the same scansion.

The most prominent feature that the work has in common with Monteverdi's *Scherzi* is the instrumental refrain. In the preface to the *Scherzi*, Monteverdi's brother, Giulio Cesare, gives instructions for the performance of these works. One may assume that the suggestions regarding instrumental participation would be equally appropriate for Rossi's *balletto*.¹¹

Play the ritornello twice before you begin to sing. The ritornellos should be played after the end of each verse, with the upper parts on two violins, the bass on chitarrone or harpsichord or similar instrument. After singing the first

¹¹Joshua Jacobson, "The 'Hemiola Songs' in Monteverdi's *Scherzi musicali*" (forthcoming).

EXAMPLE 4

Ritornello

Canto primo

Canto secondo

Basso

verse with three voices accompanied by violins, the first soprano part may be sung solo, at pitch or an octave lower; the last verse however should again be performed in three parts with violins.¹²

Although "Spazziam" is the only actual *balletto* by Rossi that has come down to us, two other examples should be mentioned briefly. Joel Newman conjectures that a *balletto a 4* was among the pieces that Rossi composed as the first *intermezzo* for Guarini's comedy *Idropica*, presented at the Gonzaga court in 1608.¹³ Unfortunately, the music of the entire *intermezzo* is lost.

Curiously, one of Rossi's synagogue motets was written in the form of a *balletto*. This highly unusual commingling of sacred and secular forms will be discussed more fully in the concluding section.

¹²Monteverdi, *Scherzi musicali* (Venice, 1607); quoted in Claudio Monteverdi, *Scherzi musicali*, edited and with a preface by Hilmar Trede, translated by Margaret Bent (Kassel: Baerenreiter, 1974), p. vii.

¹³Newman, "The Madrigals of Salomon de' Rossi," p. 51.

5

Musical notation for measures 5-7, consisting of three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs).

10

Musical notation for measures 8-10, consisting of three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs).

Musical notation for measures 11-13, consisting of three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs). The lyrics "A - ma -" are written below the staves. Each staff has a first ending bracket labeled "1." and a "last time" instruction above the final measure of the first ending.

15

ril - li on - de m'as - sa - le Fie - ro

ril - li on - de m'as - sa - le Fie - ro

ril - li on - de m'as - sa - le Fie - ro

stral di no - vo ar - do - re Di mio

stral di no - vo ar - do - re Di mio

stral di no - vo ar - do - re Di mio

20

be - ne e di mio ma - le Mio mi -

be - ne e di mio ma - le Mio mi -

be - ne e di mio ma - le Mio mi -

glio - re e - mio peg - gio - re A - ma -

glio - re e - mio peg - gio - re A - ma -

glio - re e mio peg - gio - re A - ma -

ril - li on - d'io gio - i - sco Pur del

ril - li on - d'io gio - i - sco Pur del

ril - li on - d'io gio - i - sco Pur del

25

duo - lo ond' io lan - gui - sco.

duo - lo ond' io lan - gui - sco.

duo - lo ond' io lan - gui - sco.

Madrigals

As a composer of madrigals, Salamone Rossi appears to fit into the conservative mainstream, were it not for two aspects by which he stands out as an innovator: his choice of the most fashionable contemporary poetry, and his use of instrumental accompaniment.

The styles of poetry most favored by madrigal composers in the second half of the sixteenth century were the conventional, the sentimental, the artificially idealized, and, of course, the pastoral.¹⁴ Towards the end of the century sentimentality turned into pathos, and by the turn of the century, a number of poems began to exhibit the exaggerated sensuality that came to be known as "mannerism."

Mannerism has been called "the fascinating old age of Renaissance art."¹⁵ Its poetry is characterized by a serious self-consciousness; a preponderance of *oxymora* (i.e., the juxtaposition of two words or statements that seem, on the surface, to be self-contradictory) such as sweet-bitter, living-dying; frequent use of standardized sighs such as *ohimè*; and stock-in-trade emotional key words such as *morire*, *sospire*, *languire*, and *ardo*.¹⁶ Love is the subject of nearly every poem, but love is often unrequited, the poet seeing himself as a martyr, dying, sighing, suffering and burning — so totally consumed is he by passion for his beloved.

From the beginning of his career Rossi demonstrated a preference for the lyrics of the most up-to-date mannerist poets. Rossi's first book of madrigals contains nineteen madrigals, twelve of which are on poems by Guarini that had been published in 1598, just two years earlier. Rossi's third book of madrigals contains seventeen settings of poems by the greatest of the mannerists, Giambattista Marino, poems that had been in print for barely a year. In Rossi's fifth book of madrigals Marino's poems are used exclusively!¹⁷ In the six published madrigal books, 48 of the 108 poems are

¹⁴Alfred Einstein, *The Italian Madrigal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 182.

¹⁵Newman, "The Madrigals of Salamon de' Rossi," p. 76.

¹⁶Einstein, *The Italian Madrigal*, p. 210, and Newman, "The Madrigals of Salamon de Rossi," p. 81.

¹⁷Alfred Einstein, "Salamone Rossi As Madrigal Composer," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23 (1950-51), p. 392.

EXAMPLE 5

Per il Chittarrone. 15 CANTO

Or n:io deh nò languire Che fai teco lan-
 guir l'anima mia Odii caldi sospiri a
 te gl'inui a La picta'el des-
 re S'i ti potessi darmorend'aita S'i ti potessi dar-
 rend'aita Morrei per darti vita Ma viu'ohimè ch'ingiuſtamente
 more Chi viuo tienela'trui per il core ch'ingiuſtamente more Chi
 viuo tienij nel altrui pett'il co re.

by Marino, 28 by Guarini, 8 by Chiabrera, and 6 each by Rinaldi and Rinuccini.¹⁸ By way of contrast, Rossi's colleague Monteverdi did not approach Marino's verses until his sixth book of madrigals (1614), and even after that only sparingly.

Alfred Einstein was the first historian to point out that six compositions in Rossi's first book qualify as *madrigali concertati*.¹⁹ On the title page the composer indicated that these works could be performed in any of three ways: in five parts *a cappella*, or in five parts with lute accompaniment, or

¹⁸Newman, "The Madrigals of Salomon de' Rossi," p. 83.

¹⁹Einstein, "Salamone Rossi as Madrigal Composer," p. 389.

Cor mio deh non languire. 15

as solo songs with lute accompaniment. It was another five years before Monteverdi published madrigals with *obbligato* instrumental accompaniment.

An examination of *Cor mio, deh non languire*, number 15 of Book I, offers insights into Rossi's style of composing these accompanied madrigals. The most immediate distinguishing feature of this work is the tablature for a bass lute (chittarone) that is printed in the *canto* partbook opposite the vocal part. This arrangement facilitated purely monodic performances by allowing the performers to read from the same page spread (see Ex. 5).

Next we notice that, in contradistinction to the usual practice of scoring the two soprano parts in equal range, here the *canto* part lies consistently higher than the other four voice parts (see Ex. 6). Furthermore, it is never

missing from the overall texture for more than a brief rest; the *canto* and *basso* are the only parts supplied with the full text of Guarini's poem. The lute part itself generally follows the scoring of the lower four voices, but not slavishly. Significantly, it does not double the *canto* part. Of course, all of these characteristics are crucial to the performance of this work in the manner of accompanied monody.

EXAMPLE 6

Canto
Cor - - - mi - o deh non lan -

Alto
Cor mi - o deh non lan - gui -

Quinto
Cor mi - o

Tenore
Cor mi - - o

Basso
Cor mi - o deh

Chitarone

5 10

Canto
gui - re Che fai te - co lan - guir l'a - - ni - ma

Alto
re Che fai te - co lan - guir l'a - ni - ma mi -

Quinto
Che fai te - co lan - guir l'a - ni - ma mi -

Tenore
l'a - ni - ma

Basso
non lan - gui - re Che fai te - co lan - guir l'a - ni - ma

Chitarone

15

mi - a o - di i cal - di sos - pi - ri

- a o - di i cal - di sos - pi -

mi - a o - di i cal - di sos - pi -

mi - a o - di i cal - di sos - pi -

20

a te gl'in - vi - a La - ple - ta -

ri a te gl'in - vi - a La - ple - ta - te

a te gl'in - vi - a

ri a te gl'in - vi - a La - ple - ta -

ri a te gl'in - vi - a La - ple - ta -

*G-sharp in the original.

Einstein was quite enamored of this madrigal. He called it "an especially beautiful example of how well Rossi grasped the style of the genuine monody, the *cantare senza battuta* or free musical declamation. . . . It is not inferior to any monody by Caccini or Peri."²⁰ From the very first

²⁰Ibid., p. 394.

25

te o'l de - si - - - - - no s'i ti po -
 La pie - ta - te o'l de - si - no s'i ti po -
 te o'l de - si - - - - - no
 te o'l de - si - - - - - no s'i ti po -

30

te - ssi - dar _ no - ren - d'a - i - ta s'i ti po - tes - si - dar
 te - ssi - dar _ no - ren - d'a - i - ta s'i ti po - tes - si - dar mo -
 s'i ti po - tes - si - dar
 s'i ti po - tes - si - dar
 tes - si - dar _ no - ren - d'a - i - ta s'i ti po - tes - si - dar mo -

*Whole note in the original.

phrase we can feel the expressive power of Rossi's language. The melody in this lover's lament is characterized by phrases that are constantly falling (until the very last phrase), often by the interval of a fourth. Rossi frequently writes out the ornaments he expected from his singers. Perhaps the most striking ornamentation in this madrigal occurs in the very first phrase of the *canto* part. In the middle section of the madrigal (on the text

35

— mo - ren - d'a - i - ta Mor - rei per dar - ti vi - ta Ma
 ren d'a - i - ta Ma
 — mo - ren - d'a - i - ta Mor - rei per dar - ti vi - ta Ma
 mo - ren - d'a - i - ta Mor - rei per dar - ti vi - ta Ma
 ren - d'a - i - ta Mor - rei per dar - ti vi - ta Ma

40

vi - vi ohi - mè ch'in - gius - ta - man - te mo - ro Chi
 vi - vi ohi - mè ch'in - gius - ta - man - te mo -
 vi - vi ohi - mè Ma vi -
 vi - vi ohi - mè ch'in - gius - ta - man - te mo - ro
 vi - vi ohi - mè ch'in - gius - ta - man - te mo - ro ch'in -

“s’i ti potessi dar”) we find the free musical declamation that characterizes turn-of-the-century monody.

The harmonic language here is relatively tame. We do not find the audacious chord changes of the “second-practice” madrigals. Also conservative is Rossi’s approach to musical text portrayal. He generally eschews extreme “madrigalisms” in favor of a setting that suggests the sense of an

45

vi - vo tien nel al - trui pett' il co - re ch'in -
 re, ch'in - gius - ta - men - te no - re Chi vi - vo
 vi chi - me ch'in - gius - ta - man - te no - re
 chi vi - vo
 gius - ta - men - te no - re Chi vi - vo

gius - ta - men - te no - re chi vi - vo tien Chi vi - vo
 tien nell' al - trui pett' il co - re
 chi vi - vo tien
 tien nell' al - trui pett' il co - re chi vi - vo
 tien nell' al - trui pett' il co - re nell' al - trui

*In the original: two quarter notes and a half note.

entire section of the poem. The only single words that are "painted" in such a fashion are *invita* (with a long moving melisma), *desire* (with a melisma that reaches upwards, then comes to rest), and the obligatory *ohimè* (with a falling half-step). In all three of these cases the expressive figures are found in the *canto* part exclusively.

60

tien nell' al-trui pett' il co- nell' al-trui pett' chi vi-vo tien nell' al-trui tien nell' al-trui pett' il co- re nell' al-trui pet- pett' il co- re nell' al-trui pet- to il'

65

co- re.
il co- re.
pett' il co- re.
- to il co- re.
co- re.

Guarini's poem is solidly in the mannerist camp:

Cor mio, deh!
non languire,
che fai teco languir
l'anima mia!

My heart, please
do not languish!
For you will make
my soul suffer with you.

Odi caldi sospiri
 a te gl'invia
 la pietate e desire,
 s'i ti potessi dar
 morend' aita,
 morei per darti vita;
 ma vivi, ohimè!
 ch'ingiustamenta more
 chi vivo tien
 nel altrui pett'il core.

Hear the warm sighs
 sent to you
 from compassion and desire.
 If I could save you
 by dying,
 I would die to give you life!
 But, ah! please live!
 For he dies unjustly
 who, alive, finds his heart
 in another's bosom.

A somewhat different picture emerges when we look at one of the unaccompanied madrigals from Rossi's first book. *Dirmi che piu non ardo* is clearly meant to be performed as a polyphonic work, exploiting contrasting combinations of vocal timbres in imitative texture. None of the characteristics of the monodic style is present here. There is no lute part, and the *canto* is an equal partner in the polyphonic fabric, often closely allied with the *quinto*, not separated by range and function, as was the case in *Cor mio* (Ex. 7).²¹

The first phrase of this madrigal exhibits a dark brooding sound, produced by a trio of male voices. The texture is strictly homorhythmic, with suspensions appearing at the approach of the cadence.²² The key word *occhi* (eyes) is then highlighted by the pointed instances of semibreve rhythm, the introduction of the treble voices, and an unprepared shift of tonality. (The graphic device of suggesting the image of the eye in the use of semibreves [whole notes] — a convention of the time — is not always readily discernible in the transcription due to the modern barring). The setting continues in various combinations of contrapuntal imitation until the voices come back together in block chords on the next key word, *ardo* (I burn). This phrase is concluded with strong declamation on the text "e di qual foco!" (and with what fire!).

²¹For the transcription of this madrigal I am indebted to two of my colleagues, Julia Griffin and Jim Meadors, for their assistance. The chittarone was tuned as follows: a, e, b, g, d, A; with a course of five bass strings tuned to G, F, E, D, and C (marked 0, 8, 9, X and 11, respectively). Thus, while the vocal parts are notated in G minor, the lute part is in D minor. Judging from the high tessitura of the vocal parts and the clefs to which they were assigned (treble, mezzo-soprano, alto, alto and baritone), one can assume that the singers would have been expected to transpose their parts down a fourth to accommodate to the lute accompaniment. Curiously, neither Einstein nor Newman have called attention to this fact, choosing instead unquestioningly to quote the 1876 edition by d'Indy and Naumbourg. In the preface to the latter edition d'Indy even states that he transposed the lute part up a fourth and adjusted the transcription to make it more suitable for keyboard players. In this edition I have chosen instead to transpose the vocal parts down, and have presented an exact transcription of the lute tablature.

²²This section foreshadows the male trio in Monteverdi's madrigal a 5 "T'amo, mia vita" from his fifth book (1605).

EXAMPLE 7.

Canto

Quinto

Alto
Dir - mi che più non ar - do, Dir - mi che più non

Tenore
Dir - mi che più non ar - do Dir - mi che più non

Basso
Dir - mi che più non ar - do Dir - mi che più non

5

a - mo, a voi begl' oc - chi, a voi me

a - mo, a voi begl' oc - chi, a voi me ne ri -

a - mo, a voi begl' oc - chi, a voi me ne ri -

10

Oc - - - chi

Oc - - - chi che pe - ne -

ne ri - chia - mo. Oc - chi che

chia - - - mo. Oc - chi

ch'ia - mo. Oc - chi che pe - ne -

che pe - ne - tra - te de l'al - ma mia nel più ri -

tra - te de l'al - ma mia nel

pe - ne - tra - te nel più ri -

che pe - ne - tra - te de l'al - ma mia nel

tra - te de l'al - ma mia nel

15

po - sto lo - co, sa - pe - te pur
più ri - po - sto lo - co, sa - pe - te pur
po - sto lo - co, sa - pe - te pur
più ri - po - - sto lo - co, sa - pe - te pur
più ri - po - - sto lo - co, sa - pe - te pur

20

— ch'io ar - do. Oc - - chi
— ch'io ar - do e di qual fo - co. Oc - - chi
— ch'io ar - do e di qual fo - co. Oc - - chi
ch'io ar - do e di qual fo - co. Oc - - chi
— ch'io ar - do e di qual fo - co. Oc - - chi

25

lu - ci be - a - te, di - te - lo a chi noi

lu - ci be - a - te, di - te - lo a chi noi

lu - ci be - a - te, di - te - lo a chi noi

lu - ci be - a - te, di - te - lo a chi noi

lu - ci be - a - te, di - te - lo a chi noi

cre - de che non vi - vrei che non vi -

cre - de che non vi - vrei s'io non ha -

cre - de che non vi - vrei s'io

cre - de che non vi - vrei s'io

cre - de che non vi - vrei s'io

30

vrei s'io non ha - ves - si fe - de. Oc - - chi,
 ves - si fe - - - - de. Oc - - chi,
 non ha - ves - si fe - - de. Oc - - chi,
 non ha - ves - si fe - de. Oc - - chi,
 non ha - ves - si fe - de. Oc - - chi,

35

lu - ci be - a - te, di - te - lo a chi nol cre - de che non vi -
 lu - ci be - a - te, di - te - lo a chi nol cre - de che non vi -
 lu - ci be - a - te, di - te - lo a chi nol cre - de
 lu - ci be - a - te, di - te - lo a chi nol cre - de
 lu - ci be - a - te, di - te - lo a chi nol cre - de che

40

vrei che non vi - vrei che non vi -
 vrei s'io non ha - ves - - - si
 che non vi - vrei, che non vi - vrei s'io non ha -
 che non vi - vrei che non vi - vrei s'io
 non vi - vrei s'io non ha - ves - si

vrei s'io non ha - ves - si fe - de.
 fe - - - - - de.
 ves - si fe - de.
 non ha - ves - si fe - - de.
 fe - - - de.

The next section begins with a return to the key word *occhi*, delineated again by the extended semibreve rhythm and chord change from F major to A major, a favorite second-practice device.²³ The phrase "che non vivrei" (I could not live) moves along in quick rhythm, featuring pairs of voices in various combinations. This last section is then repeated, transposed up a fourth.

* * *

In his last published composition, Rossi turned once again to the application of trio-sonata texture to the vocal medium. The twenty-five *Madrigaletti* of 1628 are scored for two and three voices with a figured basso continuo accompaniment.²⁴ Two of them also have brief instrumental ritornelli for two violins and continuo.

Here again, Rossi demonstrates that he is solidly in the modernist camp. "As early as 1608 Paolo Quagliati had already observed that most music-lovers preferred the *musica vota* — the *musica concertata* over a basso continuo — to the *a cappella* madrigal, or rather to the old madrigal of the sixteenth century, and he was right."²⁵ Giulio Caccini and the other members of the Florentine Camerata were arguing in both words and notes for the replacement of the old polyphonic madrigal with the new monodic song. Beginning with the year 1619 Monteverdi had begun to devote most of his attention to monodic madrigals, which he now called "*concerti*."

Monody was replacing polyphony in sacred music as well. In 1602 the Mantuan composer Lodovico Viadana had published the first collection of sacred monody. In 1620 the Venetian composer Alessandro Grandi, reflecting the new taste in liturgical music, published a collection of sacred monodic duets, clearly sectionalized works, forerunners of the Baroque cantata, which he called "*cantandi*."

Volò ne' tuoi begli occhi is fairly typical of the *madrigaletti* in Rossi's collection (see Ex. 8).²⁶ The text is by the mannerist poet Marino, but absent here are the excesses that characterized the texts of so many of the earlier madrigals. Rather we now find a mood guided by a light-hearted look at the amorous misadventures of Cupid. Real emotions are eschewed; the metaphor of mythology has detached the tale from reality.

²³Rossi used this harmonic device only once in his synagogue motets, to paint the word "bachinu" (we wept); see p. 51.

²⁴Here again we see a parallel to Monteverdi, whose last three madrigal collections (1619, 1638 and 1651) are given over, for the most part, to vocal duets and trios.

²⁵Einstein, *The Italian Madrigal*, p. 865.

²⁶Newman, "The Madrigals of Salomon de' Rossi," p. 205.

Chiaccio e foco nell' amata

Volò ne' tuoi begli occhi
 Ignudo, donna, per scaldarsi Amore;
 Ma la luce e l'ardore
 La vista gli acciecò, arse le penne.
 Per albergar sen venne
 Dentro il gelido core;
 Ma nel suo gelo argente
 Spense la face ardente.
 Onde fuggi, gridando: Ove avrò loco,
 Se costeitutta è ghiaccio
 e tutta è foco.

Ice and Fire in the Beloved

He flew into your beautiful eyes,
 lady, to warm himself, the naked Cupid,
 but the light and the heat
 blinded his eyes and burnt his wings.
 Then he went to look for lodging
 in her frigid heart,
 but it was so icy cold
 it quenched his ardor.
 Fleeing from there, he cried,
 "Where shall I stay?
 She is all ice and fire!"

The two soprano voices are nearly identical in range and function as equal partners in the texture, either in imitative counterpoint or in parallel thirds or sixths. At one point the second voice is altogether silent as the first soprano sings a solo phrase, seven bars in length.

The opening couplet, describing the innocent flight of Cupid, is set in disjunct motion, with a number of octave leaps to depict the flight. The texture is imitative, with the second voice entering a fifth lower after ten beats. After the opening chord of G major, the tonal center of C major is established, with a shift to the relative minor at the final cadence. At the downbeat of measure ten of the transcription, the voices come together for the first unison and the first authentic cadence. This marks the first clear formal demarcation in the piece.

The next section, reflecting the change of character in the second couplet, is set to a conjunct melodic line, with a burst of sixteenth notes on the word *arse* (burnt). The texture is again imitative; as in the first couplet, the voices do not come together until their unison at the end of the section.

Section three, encompassing the next two couplets of the poem, is set very differently. In only seven measures the first soprano, alone, dispenses with four lines of text in *recitativo* declamation. The section begins with a jarring tonal shift from G major to F major. The harmonies move relatively slowly, as befits a *recitativo*, ending with a half-cadence in A minor.

In contrast, the final section, set to the last couplet of the poem, encompasses eighteen bars, nearly half of the entire composition. Here the voices move in an alternation of parallel motion and playful imitation. The brief *stretto* on the word *gridando* (complaining), the sixteenth-note melismatic flourishes on the word *foco* (fire), the quick rhythms and the straightforward harmonic structure all reinforce the light nature of this work, even at the most poignant moment in the text.

EXAMPLE 8

Canto

Vo - lè ne' tuoi be - gli oc - chi i - gnu - do,

Canto

Vo -

Basso continuo

6 7 6

5

Don - na, per scal - dar - si a - mo - re, per scal - dar - si A -

lè ne' tuoi be - gli oc - chi i - gnu - do, Don -

(6) 6

mo - re per scal - dar - si A - mo -

na, per scal - dar - si A - mo - re, A - mo - -

2 (6) # 4 #

10

re; Ma la lu - ce e l'ar - do - re La vis - tagli ac - cie - cò, ar - - se le

re; Ma la lu - ce e l'ar -

(6)

pe - - ne Ar - - - - -

do - re La vi - sta gli ac - cie - cò, Ar - - - - -

6 6 6

15

- se le pen - ne. Per al - ber - gar son ven - no Den - tro il

- se le pen - ne.

(6) 4 #3

20

ge - li - do co - re: ma nel suo ge - lo al - gen - te Spen - se la

(6) # (6)

This system contains three staves. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics. The middle staff is a blank grand staff. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment line with lyrics. The piano part features chords and a bass line.

fa - - - ce ar - den - te. On - de fug - gi gri - dan - do

On - de fug - gi gri -

(#)

This system contains three staves. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics. The middle staff is a blank grand staff. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment line with lyrics. The piano part features chords and a bass line.

25

gri - dan - do O - ve av - rò lo - co, Se co - stei tut - ta ò

dan - do: O - ve av - rò lo - co,

This system contains three staves. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics. The middle staff is a blank grand staff. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment line with lyrics. The piano part features chords and a bass line.

ghiac - cio Se co - stei tut - ta è ghiac - cio e tut - ta è fo - co Se co -
 Se co - stei tut - ta è ghiac - cio e tut - ta è fo - co Se co -

(6) (6) 4 #3

30
 stei tut - ta è ghiac - cio e tut - ta è fo - co Se co - stei tut - ta è
 stei tut - ta è ghiac - cio e tut - ta è fo - co

(6) (6) 4 #3

ghiac - cio Se co - stei tut - ta è
 Se co - stei tut - ta è ghiac - cio e tut - ta è

(6)

35

ghiac - cio e tut - ta è fo - - - - - co e tut - ta è
fo - - - - - co

(6)

fo - - - - - co e tut - ta è fo - - - - -
e tut - ta è fo - - - - - co e tut - ta è

#

40

- co e tut - ta è fo - - - - - co.
fo - - - - - co e tut - ta è fo - - - - - co.

(6) #3 4 #3

Rossi is clearly setting a new mood in these little "trio cantatas," one that is very different from that of the emotionally heavy madrigals of his early period. The less serious treatment of the text, the monodic texture, and the division of the composition into clearly marked sections place Rossi's last publication in the camp of *le nuove musiche* and in the vanguard of the nascent Baroque era.

Sacred Music

In 1623 the publishing house of Bragadini in Venice issued a collection that was the first of its kind, and it was destined to remain unique for over two hundred years. This publication consisted of polyphonic settings by Salamone Rossi of thirty-three psalms and hymns. What made this collection so unique was the fact that these works were not Latin motets for the church; they were Hebrew motets for the synagogue. In order to better understand the significance of this publication, we shall digress briefly to examine the nature and sources of seventeenth-century Italian synagogue music.

After the Roman destruction of the Jewish kingdom in the first century of the common era, a large portion of the population was forced into exile. Surrounded by alien cultures, the Jews of the Diaspora preserved as best they could the chants of their Middle Eastern homeland. The use of musical instruments in the synagogue was prohibited as a sign of mourning for the lost musical traditions of the great Temple that once stood in Jerusalem. Furthermore, lest the ancient chanting modes become diluted, the rabbis zealously guarded against the introduction of any gentile elements into the sacred music of the synagogue. Thus, while polyphony was developing in the Western church, Jewish worship music remained basically monophonic, modal, improvised from a set of basic melodic formulas, and closely bound to the natural rhythms of the texts. Cantors were most often laymen drawn from a congregation that was generally well acquainted with the Hebrew liturgy and its music. Example 9 is a transcription of a chant that may have been sung in a seventeenth-century Italian synagogue.²⁷

Seen thus in its context, Salamone Rossi's collection of synagogue motets represents a radical break from tradition. While in the church polyphonic music had been evolving for more than four centuries, in the synagogue it was suddenly grafted onto a tradition that had maintained its monophonic nature for more than sixteen centuries.

Rossi's sacred works were composed in the first decades of the seventeenth century and published in 1622. The title of the collection,

²⁷The example is from the reading of a lesson from the Pentateuch, quoted in Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in Its Historical Development* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1929; reprint ed., New York: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 40. This mode was common in nearly all Italian synagogues and dates back at least to the seventeenth century.

EXAMPLE 9

freely 3

Va - yik - ra Mo - she le - chol zik - ney Yis - ra - el

va - yo - mer a - ley - hem mi - she - chu

u - kchu - la - chem tson le - mish - pe - cho - tey - chem

ve - sha - cha - tu ha - pa - sach

Hashirim Asher Lish'lomo (The Songs of Solomon) is a play on words referring to both the title of the biblical book of love songs and the first name of the composer. While this work represented a bold innovation for the synagogue, it did not differ greatly from the conventions of early Baroque music. Like contemporary collections of sacred music, it contained a variety of liturgical forms. The thirty-three motets, set for from three to eight voice parts, include psalms, hymns and prayers for the Sabbath and holiday services (or for concerts of sacred music) and one wedding ode.

Having virtually no precedent in the polyphonic setting of the synagogue liturgy, Rossi was free to borrow, alter or reject a wide variety of styles, Middle Eastern and Western. Wisely, he did not attempt to employ any of the musical characteristics of the ancient Jewish chants. Their oriental modality, rhythmic freedom and improvisatory nature would not have blended well with contemporary techniques of European polyphony. The synagogue could not accomplish overnight what had taken centuries to develop in the church. Instead, Rossi availed himself of the current styles of European art-music — sacred and secular — from *stile antico* polyphony to the nascent trends in monody, *cori spezzati*, and *seconda prattica* chromaticism.

Yet, on the other hand, the composer felt himself bound to certain traditions of the synagogue. In deference to the Rabbinic prohibition against instrumental music in the synagogue, Rossi set the entire collection for unaccompanied chorus. Of course, it may be surmised that if performances took place outside of the synagogue, instruments might have been used to double the voices, a widespread practice of the time. Although there are no

direct references to indicate whether the treble parts would have been sung by women or boys, we may assume the latter. Like the Christian church fathers, the rabbis did not allow mixed voices in the worship service.

A reproduction of the title page of the alto part-book appears as the frontispiece.²⁸ In accordance with the practice of Hebrew printing, each part-book opens from right to left. The entire prefatory text is in Hebrew, with the exception of the name of the publisher which appears in Italian. The translation of the title page is as follows:

Alto/The Songs/of Solomon/Psalms, songs and hymns of praise/which have been composed according to the science of music/for three, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 voices/by the honored master Salamone Rossi, may his Rock keep him and save him,/a resident of the holy congregation of Mantua,/to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing His most/exalted name on all/sacred occasions. A new thing/in the land./Here in Venice, 1622/at the command of their Lordships/Pietro and Lorenzo Bragadini/in the house of Giovanni Calleoni./By the distinguished Lords/

Pietro and Lorenzo Bragadini

Example 10 shows a sample page of music from the tenor part-book. Notice that the text underlying the notes is written in the original Hebrew characters, rather than in transliteration. This fact indicates not only that Rossi intended this music to be sung by members of the Jewish congregation, but also that there were a sufficient number of musically literate Jewish vocalists in the Mantuan ghetto.

However, the placing of the text did present a problem for the printer, since one reads Hebrew from right to left, whereas the notation of the music, of course, runs from left to right. His solution, in one of the first attempts to coordinate Hebrew text with printed music, was to align the first letter of each word with the last note to which it was set, leaving the singer to figure out how the notes and syllables should coincide. The difficulties and ambiguities inherent in this practice strongly suggest that performances would have involved only one singer on a part.

In all of the motets, clarity of text is paramount. Deferring to synagogue convention, but in contrast to the prevailing motet style, words are hardly ever repeated. Two exceptions to this general rule are the repetition of the final verse of each Psalm setting and the repetition of each verse of the two settings of Psalm 118, where the repetition was liturgically required.

In order that the words be easily understood by the listener, the composer for the most part availed himself of a predominantly homophonic texture, with imitative polyphony used only occasionally as points of contrast. This again represents a departure from the prevalent "motet style"

²⁸Courtesy of the Hebrew Union College Library, Cincinnati, Ohio.

EXAMPLE 10

שלח קולות שנינו

חמלך בענותי דברא בעלמא רבא שמיח ויתקיש יתגול
 ובעלמא ישראל בית דכל וכוהו יבוסכו בדיכין בלכותה
 ויתרוס ותפאר ושתבח יתברך אמן ואמרו קריב זכמן
 לעילא הוא בריך רקדמא שביח ותהלל ותהוד ותעלה ויתנשא
 בעלמא דאמרו ונחמא תושבתא שרתא ברכתא מן כל לעילא
 קים ישראל בית דכל ובעותחן עלותחן תתקבל אמן ואמרו
 רבא שלמא יהא אמן ואמרו דבשמא אבוהן
 עשה אמן ואמרו ישראל כל ועל עלינו טובים וחים שמיא מן
 אמן ואמרו ישראל כל ועל עלינו שלום יעשה ברחמי הוא במרומו שלום

1 2 א ב

in which the dominant texture was one of continuous imitation with occasional sections of homophony interspersed for contrast.

Rossi could not have been unaware of the musical reforms of the Catholic church that were influencing the composition of church music in Mantua, as elsewhere. The Council of Trent (1562) advised that:

... the whole plan of singing ... should be constituted ... in such a way that

the words may be clearly understood by all, and thus the hearts of the listener be drawn to the desire of heavenly harmonies. . . .²⁹

The modern homophonic texture, at that time still infrequently heard in church music, was a perfect vehicle for conveying the text to the congregation in the clearest possible manner.³⁰ It also stands as an interesting counterpart to Lodovico Viadana's experiments in sacred monody, which were then being performed in Mantua.³¹

Standardized devices of text expression, which until the seventeenth century had belonged primarily to the realm of secular music, were used by Rossi to elucidate the meaning of the words. For example, a startling chromatic progression depicts the word "wept," a flowing melisma suggests the word "river," and an abrupt change to lively rhythms is used for the word "rejoice."

Despite his reverential approach to the text, Rossi found that his musical innovation caused a great deal of controversy. From the correspondence of Rabbi Leone of Modena, we gather the following incident which took place in a synagogue in Ferrara in the first decade of the seventeenth century.

We have among us some connoisseurs of the science of singing, that is to say of music, six or eight knowledgeable persons of our community . . . who raise their voices at the festivals, and they sing at the synagogue songs of praise . . . in honor of God according to [musical] rules and the proportions of the voices. . . . But a man stood up to chase them away . . . saying that it is not right to do so, because it is forbidden to rejoice, and . . . [that the singing of] hymns and praises . . . according to the mentioned science of singing is forbidden. . . . Although the congregation clearly enjoyed [our singing] . . . [this man] rose against us and condemned us publicly, saying that we had sinned before God.³²

Anticipating a great furor to arise over the publication of this controversial volume of synagogue music, Rossi's friend, the liberal Rabbi Leone, himself an amateur musician, supplied as a preface to the collection

²⁹Gustave Reese, *Music in the Renaissance* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1954), p. 449.

³⁰In the realm of church music, homophony had its place for short contrasting sections within larger polyphonic works, in the *falsobordone* psalm tones and in shorter (or less elaborate) Mass settings.

³¹Lodovico Viadana, *Cento concerti ecclesiastici* (1602). Viadana was *maestro di cappella* at the Mantuan cathedral from 1594 until 1597.

³²Israel Adler, "The Rise of Art Music in the Italian Ghetto," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 336-337. In this article Adler puts forward his thesis that there were several other attempts (aside from Rossi's) during this period to introduce art music into the synagogue. However, Rossi's collection is the only one to have survived intact.

a lengthy and learned *responsum* on the subject of music in the synagogue. His conclusion was unequivocal:

I do not see how anyone with a brain in his skull could cast any doubt on the propriety of praising God in song in the synagogue on special Sabbaths and on festivals. . . . No intelligent person, no scholar ever thought of forbidding the use of the greatest possible beauty of voice in praising the Lord, blessed be He, nor the use of musical art which awakens the soul to His glory.³³

This preface to Rossi's collection concludes with a copyright notice that is the first of its kind in protecting the rights of a composer. Its warning was couched in no uncertain terms:

We have agreed to the reasonable and proper request of the worthy and honored Master Salamone Rossi of Mantua . . . who has become by his painstaking labors the first man to print Hebrew music. He has laid out a large disbursement which has not been provided for, and it is not proper that anyone should harm him by reprinting similar copies or purchasing them from a source other than himself. Therefore . . . we the undersigned decree by the authority of the angels and the word of the holy ones, invoking the curse of the serpent's bite, that no Israelite, wherever he may be, may print the music contained in this work in any manner, in whole or in part, without the permission of the abovementioned author. . . . Let every Israelite hearken and stand in fear of being entrapped by this ban and curse. And those who hearken will dwell in confidence and ease, abiding in blessing under the shelter of the Almighty. Amen.³⁴

A volume such as this should awaken our interest, even if the music were insignificant. In fact, many of these motets are choral gems that are attractive even apart from historical curiosity or ethnic pride. We shall now take a somewhat closer look at five of the motets.

Of all Rossi's motets, the one that most resembles the *stile antico* is *Elohim Hashivenu*, a setting of verses 4, 8 and 20 of Psalm 80, which was chanted in Italian synagogues on Sabbaths and holidays during the ceremony of *gelilah*, the rolling and covering of the Torah scroll.³⁵ The three verses that were selected form a refrain within the Psalm:³⁶

³³Salamone Rossi, *Hashirim Asher Lish'lomo*, ed. by Fritz Rikko (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1967-73), vol. 3, p. 28. Throughout this volume I have taken the liberty of using my own translation of the original sources.

³⁴Rossi, vol. 3, p. 35.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 65.

³⁶In *Elohim Hashivenu* (as in Rossi's setting of the *kedushah*) double bars are inserted at the points where textual verses are omitted. Several scholars have advanced the hypothesis that the missing verses were chanted by the cantor alone. This would conform not only to the regular synagogue liturgical practice of responsive singing between cantor and congregation, but also to the practice of *alternatim* hymn settings by Rossi's Christian colleagues.

EXAMPLE 12

Alto

E - - - - -

Tenore

E - - - - -

lo - him

- - - - - lo - him

manner of treatment — Lasso's motif is eight measures long, Rossi's is seven. In the former work it is heard once only, at the beginning; in the latter it serves three times as a musical refrain. Indeed the rising minor third with which the motif begins becomes an element that unifies the entire motet.

One hears generally in Rossi's music, and particularly in this motet, the same coexistence of Renaissance and Baroque elements that characterizes much church music of this transitional period. From the beginning there is a strong hint of the Dorian mode, yet the cadences are all clear dominant-

EXAMPLE 13

Canto

E - - - - -

Alto

E - - - - -

lo - him

- - - - - lo - him

EXAMPLE 14

Canto
A - do - nai, E - - - -

Alto
A - do - nai, E - - - -

Tenore
A - do - nai, E - - - -

Basso
A - do - nai, E - - - -

- - lo - him

- - lo - him

- - lo - him

- - lo - him

to-tonic progressions in root position.³⁹ The opening phrase is written in transparent imitative counterpoint in the old style, but it is followed by two phrases that are designed in a more chordal texture. Each voice part is written with an independent contour, an ingratiating rise and fall of the line. Yet throughout much of the motet there is a marked polarity between bass and soprano. Cross-relations are common, but so are melodic and harmonic sequences and full triads at the cadences, often using the Picardy third.

³⁹In this collection, approximately ninety percent of the chords are triads in root position. The others are in first inversion.

EXAMPLE 15

Canto
Cum es - sem par - - -

Alto
Cum es - - sem par -

- - - vu - lus

- - - vu - lus

In *Elohim Hashivenu* Rossi created a full-length motet out of only three verses of text, with only five word-repetitions (and those only in the inner voices). Accordingly, he used melismatic writing to lengthen the text. As we shall hear in the other motets, this procedure was exceptional for a composer intent on textual clarity. More typical in this regard is Rossi's *Shir Hama'alot*, a setting for three voices of Psalm 128 in its entirety.⁴⁰

Composition in three voice-parts was always especially attractive to Rossi, forming a significant portion of his published works. Of his 145 instrumental compositions, 120 are *sonate a 3*. His first published work (1589) was a book of nineteen three-part canzonets, and his final publication (1628) was a book of twenty-five *madrigaletti* for two high voices and continuo. Seven of the thirty-three motets in the collection under discussion are likewise scored for three voices. Like Gastoldi and Monteverdi, Rossi was experimenting with three-part writing as a vehicle for the new Baroque trio style. In this texture, the upper two voices are paired as a melodic unit, often moving conjunctly in parallel sixths or thirds and juxtaposed against a harmonic bass that frequently sounded the root note of each chord, thus moving in leaps of fourths and fifths.

⁴⁰The only significant melismatic writing in this motet is on the opening word, *Shir* (meaning "song"), and on the words *haholech bidrachav* (walks in His paths), where the upper two voices burst forth in an ornate passage reminiscent of violin passagework. In fact, Rossi was a violinist of considerable reputation, and this manner of figuration is even more common in his instrumental compositions.

In the three-voice setting of Psalm 128, the first twenty-nine measures display this treble/bass polarity, as the excerpt given in Example 16 demonstrates. In the middle section, contrast is achieved with a predominantly homorhythmic texture, as can be seen in Example 17. In the final twelve bars the word *shalom* is tossed back and forth among the voices in a playful madrigalesque style, creating a more contrapuntal fabric (Ex. 18). Typical of Rossi's settings, such textual repetition occurs only in the last verse, where it provides the scaffolding for a jubilant musical ending.

EXAMPLE 16

Canto
ha - - ho - lech bid - ra -

Alto
ha - - ho - lech bid - ra - chav

Basso
ha - - ho - lech, ha -

chav

ho - lech bid - ra - chav

ho - lech bid - ra - chav

There are several examples of "word painting" in this motet. In the setting of the psalm title, the superscription "*Shir Hama'alot*," Rossi elongates the first word *shir* (meaning "song") into a melisma.⁴¹ Verse four, which depicts the joy of family life, is set in quick triple meter, a device used by many composers of Renaissance motets in connection with texts of

⁴¹Psalms 120-134 all begin with the same superscription, *Shir Hamaalot* (or *Shir Lamaalot*), which literally means "A Song of Ascents" but is interpreted by many modern Bible scholars to mean "A Pilgrim Song." Of the six Rossi motets that begin with this superscription, four, including this one, begin with a descriptive descending melisma in G Dorian on the word *Shir*.

EXAMPLE 17

5

Canto
Esh - te - cha ke - ge - fen po - ri - ya be - yar - ke -

Alto
Esh - te - cha ke - ge - fen po - ri - ya be - yar - ke -

Basso
Esh - te - cha ke - ge - fen po - ri - ya be - yar - ke -

tey vey - te - - - cha

tey vey - te - cha

tey vey - te - cha

rejoicing. Finally, the hocket-like exchange of the word *shalom* at the end of the motet (see Ex. 18) may have been intended by Rossi as a play on words. *Shalom*, commonly used as a greeting between two people, stands in the context of this psalm simply for “peace.”

Another work beginning with the same superscription is Psalm 121, set for five voices. In this motet the composer’s imagination seems to have been sparked by the contrasts that are evident in the eight verses of the Psalm. They are reflected in the musical texture through the use of a typical Venetian *concertato* device whereby differing combinations of voices are exploited to produce a variety of coloristic effects.

Rossi’s setting for five voices of the *Kaddish* prayer stands out as the only motet in the entire collection using the popular *balletto* style. In general, one should not be surprised to find that Rossi composed *balletti*; after all, the most popular volume of light music in the sixteenth century was the 1581 publication of *balletti* for four voices by Giovanni Gastoldi,

EXAMPLE 18

Canto
sha - lom sha - lom sha - lom

Alto
sha - lom sha - lom al yis - ra -

Basso
sha - lom al yis - ra - el, sha -

5

sha - lom al yis - ra - el

el, al yis - - ra - el

lom sha - lom al yis - ra - el

Rossi's colleague at the court of Mantua.⁴² These *balletti* were short light songs of love and mirth, consisting of a number of strophes all set to the same music. Phrases were simple and symmetrical with much internal repetition, often ending with fa-la-la refrains. The harmony was diatonic, set in the "familiar" style of block chords moving in regular metric patterns. The dance origins of these songs could be heard in strongly accented rhythms, often in triple meter, with the characteristic hemiola at the cadence.

What is surprising, however, is that Rossi should apply this style of music to the Jewish doxology. First of all, this text does not lend itself particularly well to strophic setting, as it is not metric nor set in even versification like a hymn. Secondly, the text is certainly not light or amorous. This most solemn prayer of sanctification and glorification of God is recited not only in every public worship service but also in the memorial

⁴²Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune, eds., *The Monteverdi Companion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 115. It is surprising that (aside from this motet) Rossi composed only one *balletto*, *Spazziam*, composed in 1617 for Giovanni Andreini's "sacred drama" *La Maddalena*.

service for the dead. And yet, with the notable exception of a typical lively text, all the characteristics of the *balletto* outlined above apply to this motet. Clearly, Rossi's application of the *balletto* style to the *Kaddish* indicates a conscious attempt on the part of the composer, perhaps even a tradition in his community, to infuse this prayer with jubilation rather than solemnity.

While the *Kaddish* is musically the lightest of the motets, *Al Naharot Bavel* (By the Waters of Babylon) is certainly the most darkly dramatic. Its text is Psalm 137, which depicts the anguish of the exiled Jews and their longing to return to Jerusalem. Rossi's approach to the text is personal in the extreme, suggesting an ardent Jewish nationalism.

Since this motet is considered a lamentation in the Jewish liturgy, Rossi may have turned for his models to the Latin late sixteenth-century settings of the Lamentations of Jeremiah.⁴³ Pietro Cerone described the prevailing church music practice in his treatise, *El melopeo y maestro* (Naples, 1613):

The style for composing the Lamentations is such that all the parts proceed with gravity and modesty, nearly always singing together. . . . In this kind of composition, more than in any other, the composer makes use of dissonances, suspensions, and harsh passages to make his work more doleful and mournful, as the sense of the words and the significance of the season demand. . . . They are always sung by very low and heavy voices.⁴⁴

As we shall see, all of these characteristics are present in Rossi's setting of Psalm 137.⁴⁵

⁴³It is difficult to determine whether or not this motet would have been performed in a liturgical service. Psalm 137 was chanted in Italian synagogues on the fast of *Tisha B'Av*, immediately following the cantillation of the Lamentations of Jeremiah. However, it seems highly unlikely that even a liberal rabbi would have allowed choir singing on this fast day which commemorates the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Perhaps Rossi allowed himself to indulge in intense pictorialism because this motet would have been sung at a concert, not in a worship service. This would suggest a kinship with the "spiritual madrigal," which was especially popular at the Mantuan court. Like Rossi's setting of Psalm 137, many of these spiritual madrigals featured dolorous texts set with *seconda prattica* affections. (*The New Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Madrigale spirituale," by Suzanne Cusick).

⁴⁴Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History: The Renaissance* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1965), p. 83.

⁴⁵Rossi seems to have been alone among his contemporaries in applying the "lamentation style" to this psalm. Comparing his setting of Psalm 137 with those of three composers with whose music he was undoubtedly familiar, Viadana, Lasso, and Palestrina, we are struck by certain differences. Rossi's is, of course, the only motet in Hebrew, the others being in Latin. It is also the only one to exploit extremely low registers, the only one to manipulate chromaticism and harmonic rhythm for expressive "word painting," the only one to use a chordal syllabic texture, and the only one in which not one word of text is repeated. Rossi is also the only one among the four composers to set all nine verses of the psalm; Lasso composed only the first verse, Palestrina the first two, and Viadana the first four. One thing that all four settings do have in common is the tonal center of A minor.

EXAMPLE 19

Canto
ech na - shir

Alto

Tenore
ech na - shir

Basso
ech na - shir

The first thing that strikes us when we hear this music is its low tessitura, conveying a solemn, brooding quality.⁴⁶ This somberness is reinforced by the predominance of minor triads.

For the most part, the texture is chordal and syllabic. Here again, when Rossi does use melismas it is for textual emphasis. As in the settings of Psalms 121 and 128, the word *shir* (sing) is set to a short melisma (Ex. 19). The opening words of the Psalm, *Al Naharot Bavel* (By the waters [or, more literally, "by the rivers"] of Babylon), are composed with gentle melismatic lines that suggest the flowing of rivers (Ex. 20). This particular pictorialism may not have been original with Rossi. Lasso's setting of Psalm 137 for four voices likewise features such a "flowing" melisma on the word *flumina* (rivers). Lodovico Viadana's setting of the same Psalm opens with a phrase so similar to Rossi's as to suggest more than coincidence. Viadana, who was *maestro di cappella* at Mantua from 1594 to 1597, wrote a work on this same psalm for solo bass and continuo in the first published collection of sacred monody, his famous *Concerti ecclesiastici* of 1602. Given Rossi's own interest in monody at that time (his book of madrigals with *basso continuo* was published in the same year) and the actual proximity of the two composers, it seems reasonable to assume that Rossi was familiar with this work. Compare the opening phrase of the Viadana motet with the bass part of the opening phrase of Rossi's work (Exs. 21, 22).

Phrase after phrase of this motet is expressed pictorially. Reiterated chords, similar to *falsobordone* style but in sharp rhythmic definition, are used to lend conviction to two passages — first the patriotic vow, "If I forget

⁴⁶Perhaps Rossi was influenced in this regard by Lasso's Requiem settings for low voices (1577 and 1589).

EXAMPLE 20

Canto
Al na - ha - rot Ba - vel

Alto
Al na - ha - rot, al na - ha - rot Ba - vel

Tenore
Al na - ha - rot, na - ha - rot Ba - vel

Basso
Al na - ha - rot Ba - vel

EXAMPLE 21

Basso
Su - per flu - - - -

Basso continuo

- - mi - na

EXAMPLE 22

(#) (#)
Al na - ha - rot Ba - vel

thee, O Jerusalem," then the call for revenge on the cruel enemy, "Remember, O Lord, the Edomite nation" (Exs. 23, 24).

EXAMPLE 23

Canto
Im esh - ka - chech ye - ru - sha - la - yim

Alto
Im esh - ka - chech ye - ru - sha - la - - - yim

Tenore
Im esh - ka - chech ye - ru - sha - la - yim

Basso
Im esh - ka - chech ye - ru - sha - la - yim

EXAMPLE 24

Canto
Ze - chor A - do - nai liv - ney e - dom

Alto
Ze - chor A - do - nai liv - ney e - dom

Tenore
Ze - chor A - do - nai liv - ney e - dom

Basso
Ze - chor A - do - nai liv - ney e - dom

In Psalm 128 Rossi had set the word *shalom* in a hocket-like fashion perhaps to depict the congregants exchanging greetings of friendship. In this motet the composer uses a similar device, but for a different effect. At the words, "those who said, 'Destroy it, destroy it!'" one can hear the word *aru* (destroy) exchanged among the choral voices and then building in intensity until it is sung by all in an emphatic homorhythmic cadence (Ex. 25).

While Rossi frequently availed himself of expressive chromaticism in his madrigals, a single instance in the motets is to be found in this work. On the word *bachinu* (we wept), he juxtaposes two major chords whose roots are a major third apart: D major — B major. This progression was almost a

EXAMPLE 25

Canto
ha - o - me - rim a - ru, a - ru

Alto
ha - o - me - rim a - ru, a - ru

Tenore
ha - o - me - rim a - ru, a - ru

Basso
ha - o - me - rim a - ru, a - ru

signature in second-practice madrigals of the late sixteenth century. Gesualdo used it to depict the word "die" in his madrigal *Io Tacero* (Ex. 26). Rossi's use of this harmonic motto is much simpler, but it is perhaps the more shocking, embedded in an otherwise diatonic context (Ex. 27).

Another form of expressive chromaticism in this motet is the lowering of a note by a semitone from its expected pitch, thereby creating an *unexpected* minor triad. While this figure was not uncommon in motets of this period, Rossi's use of it seems to be unusually expressive. In the phrase *talinu kinorotenu* (we hung up our harps) the expected f-sharp in the soprano part is altered to f-natural at the end of the phrase (Ex. 28).

EXAMPLE 26

Canto
Ma se av - ver - rà ch'io mo - ra

Quinto
Ma se av - ver - rà ch'io mo - ra

Alto
Ma se av - ver - rà ch'io mo - ra

Tenore
Ma se av - ver - rà ch'io mo - ra

Basso
Ma se av - ver - rà ch'io mo - ra

EXAMPLE 27

Canto
sham ya - shav - nu gam ba - chi - nu

Alto
sham ya - shav - nu gam ba - chi - nu

Tenore
sham ya - shav - nu gam ba - chi - nu

Basso
sham ya - shav - nu gam ba - chi - nu

The final work to be considered is the hymn *Adon Olam* for double chorus. The practice of *chori spezzati*, i.e., antiphonal choirs spatially separated, spread throughout the Italian peninsula from its well-known center at the Basilica of San Marco in Venice. Nine of the thirty-three motets in Rossi's collection are scored for double chorus. Typical of his writing for this medium is a texture created with blocks of sound that alternate, dovetail, and, at climactic moments, come together to create a full eight-part texture.

Adon Olam, the concluding hymn at Sabbath and festival morning services, consists of ten stanzas of rhyming couplets in iambic tetrameter. Surprisingly, in Rossi's setting the music is not strophic, as is normally the

EXAMPLE 28

Canto
ta - li - nu ki - no - ro - tey - nu

Alto
ta - li - nu ki - no - ro - tey - - - nu

Tenore
ta - li - nu ki - no - ro - tey - nu

Basso
ta - li - nu ki - no - ro - tey - nu

case in congregational hymns (whether for church or synagogue). Instead, the music grows organically from verse to verse with only limited thematic recurrence.

In verses four and seven we hear a change from duple to triple meter. How was this suggested by the text? We do not find the expected allusion to rejoicing. Rather here the composer may have been borrowing yet another symbolic device from his Christian colleagues. Since the Middle Ages, the ternary division was considered "perfect" because it consisted of "beginning, middle, and end."⁴⁷ Mention of the Trinity in a church motet frequently became the signal for the composer to change to triple meter. Verses four and seven of this hymn allude to a quasi-trinity of divine attributes.

verse 4:

He was,
He is,
He ever will be the Glory.

verse 7:

He is my God,
the Giver of my life,
my Comfort in times of sorrow.

The uniqueness and success of this collection of motets lay in the ability of its composer to fuse Jewish and Christian elements without compromising either one. Indeed, Rossi had his feet in both worlds: he lived in Mantua's walled-in ghetto but worked in the royal court of the Gonzagas. As we know, his patrons generously exempted him from wearing the shameful yellow Jew-badge, but when signing his publications he consistently and voluntarily appended the word "Hebreo" (or "Ebreo") to his name. He achieved fame through the music he composed in the most modern styles of the time but in his later years he also applied the old-fashioned polyphonic principles to the liturgy of his own people, a move that was as controversial as it may have been popular.

The impact of this collection on the liberal Jewish community of Mantua can perhaps be best summed up in this poem by Rabbi Leon of Modena:

Let [King David] rejoice in the depths of his heart,
And find gladness in it above all . . . hidden
treasures.
For there has arisen in Israel . . . one bearing the
name of [Solomon], son of [King David];

⁴⁷Willi Apel, *The Notation of Polyphonic Music 900-1600*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1949), p. 96.

One of great talent, versed in the singer's skill,
Who has performed music before princes, yea even dukes
as in nobles. . . .
He set the words of the Psalms of David into music,
organized [into parts],
Designating them for gladsome song before the Ark on
Sabbaths, feasts and festive seasons . . . as in nobles. . . .
Let all those who take hold of the harp, timbrel and
psaltery
Raise their song today!
Let your voices sound forth well!
Hearken to my song, all you sweet-voiced singers!⁴⁸

⁴⁸Rossi (see fn. 33) vol. 3, pp. 11, 21.

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[No editor listed] Paris: Editions Salabert, 1933.

Ah, dolente partita

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Alte Meister des Bel Canto

Ed. by Ludwig Landshoff. New York: C.F. Peters, 1927. (Contains six of the madrigaletti [1628].)

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Ed. by Joshua Jacobson. New York: Broude Bros., 1987.

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Ed. by Fritz Rikko. Bryn Mawr, Penn.: Theodore Presser, 1976.

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Ed. by Michael Isaacson. Ft. Lauderdale, Florida: Music 70, 1978.

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Ed. by S. Naumbourg and V. d'Indy. Paris: 1876; facsimile ed., New York: Sacred Music Press, 1955. (Contains selected madrigals [1600, 1610] and motets [1622/23].)

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Columbia ML 5204 (Re-released in 1979 as Columbia Odyssey Y35226). New York Pro Musica; Noah Greenberg, director. (*Odecha, Barechu, Lemi Echpots, Al Naharot Bavel, Elohim Hashivenu, Halleluya Ashrey Ish, Ghiaccio e foco, Vo'fuggir, Ohimè, Cor mio, Dir mi che piu non ardo, Felice chi vi mira, Non è questo, Ho si nell' alma*)

Musique Judaeo-Baroque

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Anthology of Musical Traditions in Israel AMTI-7901. The Cameran Singers; Avner Itai, director, 1978. (*Lemi Echpots*)

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The Author

JOSHUA R. JACOBSON is Chairman of the Department of Music and Director of Choral Activities at Northeastern University, Boston, as well as the founder and conductor of the Zamir Chorale of Boston.