

Annotations regarding the performance of Metabasis

Musicians who are familiar with the performance practice of music of the late Renaissance can resort to the usual way of playing. Those who are not, may do well to bear the following points in mind:

1. Make yourself familiar with playing 'con sprezzatura' (mostly a slight agogical accentuation within the faster passages without affecting the beat). Herein lies a basic prerequisite for a vibrant performance of this piece.
2. If the basso continuo is played on the piano, here too, the musician may embellish his performance with some arpeggiati (though not in the third song "Dritter Gesang" - apart from one expressly designated chord).
3. A permanent vibrato, as often applied on modern strings, is not advisable. This would not support the transparency of the contrapuntal - of course sometimes monodic - chromatically enhanced modal structure of this composition. Instead of this, a light sound, animated by occasional messe di voce, would be much more suitable.
4. Regarding the performance of the two sinfonie, gaining some knowledge about the application of ornaments within pre-baroque music would be very helpful. Typical baroque ornaments like trills, starting on the upper note, and arbitrary grace notes should not be played here.

As in ancient music, the names of the movements are meant to be merely descriptive and do not refer to the classical tempi. The added tempo markings may be seen as suggestions – leaving some margin for the more rhythmically free affetti passages.

In order to avoid clustering of figures and to save the musicians' time, I decided to present the basso continuo in an already realized format without any figures. The harmonies given here (including some "missing" chord tones) are obligatory, but of course not the position in which they do appear in the right hand. Therefore, playing the version of the basso continuo suggested here would be fine, whereas attempting a more individual arrangement might be too. Furthermore, depending on taste and instrumentation, the basso continuo for the intonation and the two sinfonie may even be omitted.

The singers may abstain from putting in additional ornaments, and with regard to the fourth song "Vierter Gesang", I don't recommend additional ornamentation for the instrumental quartet either. However, the two sinfonie, especially regarding the repetitions, will gain some benefit from the application of stylistically adequate ornamentation. The intonation in the very beginning should however be presented completely 'come sta', which of course doesn't necessarily apply for the basso continuo accompaniment.

The tuning represents a particular aspect here: the more harmonic the better, whereby the reconciliation of B-flat minor and C-sharp major within one piece of music is certainly not without difficulty. Normal meantone tuning would produce definitely dissatisfying results. I would rather like to suggest a kind of meantone tuning, modified in regard to the required chords and the context in which they do appear. Compared with equal temperament, it would also grant some sonic advantages in this context, even though the harmonic differences between these two will be less significant than those between tempered tuning and usual meantone tuning. Therefore, finding a proper balance might require just a little testing – something most lutenists would be very familiar with. However, combining something like the always being in-tune archicembalo with fretless strings (or perhaps recorders) would be the best approach.

Finally, I would like to add that the present composition, though building on the counterpoint and the harmonics of that period, is not meant as a stylistic copy of music of the late Renaissance, but rather as a piece that, like most of my other works, draws vital aesthetic impulses from that particular kind of music. I also should mention, proofreading has been done over and over again with painstaking thoroughness. Therefore, the score can be regarded as reliable.