

Canto Primo

Agi-os o The-os Agi-os
os, o The-os Agi-os o
The-os Agi-os o the-os
Agi-os o The-os sanctus Je-us
sanctus fortis sanctus fortis sanctus for-tis 2
Agi-os ischyros, ischy-ros, ischyros 2
agi-os ischyros agios ischyros a-
-gi-os Athanatos, Agios Athanatos eleyson eley-
son eleyson eleyson eleyson Agi-os Atha-
-natos e-leyson eleyson - imas eley-
son, eleyson eleyson eleyson Sanctus et
immortalis mise-rere no-bis miserere, miserere

From the manuscript of *Agios o Theos*, in Barsanti's hand.
Original manuscript (CJ.1) preserved in the Library of Westminster Abbey, London.
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Extrait de *Agios o Theos*, écrit de la main de Barsanti.
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Aus der Handschrift von *Agios o Theos*, in Barsantis Hand.
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Foreword

THE *SEI ANTIFONE* OF FRANCESCO BARSANTI present musicologists with a number of interesting questions, not least of which is why he would suddenly choose to compose a major set of choral works in the Palestrinian counterpoint more than a hundred and fifty years after that style had gone out of fashion. For a composer who had spent his entire career up to that point writing instrumental music in the virtuoso idiom of the high Baroque, such a radical departure from his usual practise fairly begs explanation. Unfortunately, as few of Barsanti's personal papers have survived the almost 250 years since his death, definitive answers to such questions are difficult to come by.

A precise date for the composition of the motets could help in evaluating Barsanti's motives by giving some idea of his personal circumstances at the time, but no scholar has yet succeeded in determining one. While there are more surviving contemporary sources of these works than of any of his instrumental compositions, none of them are dated and the closest estimate that can be made from available information is that the *Sei Antifone* were composed sometime between 1742 and 1760. For Barsanti, and for the development of music itself, those eighteen years comprised a period of rapid and inexorable evolution. At roughly the same time that Barsanti found his employment by the Edinburgh Musical Society stagnating in spite of three recent successes (the 28-piece *Collection of Old Scots Tunes*, the ten *Concerti Grossi*, and the nine *Overtures*), Handel was hoping to rekindle his own fading star in Dublin with *Messiah*, the Graun brothers were beginning to explore what would become the *Empfindsamkeit* movement in Berlin, and Bach – after yet another heated dispute with the stodgy burgomeisters of Leipzig – was, in the words of Christoph Wolff, 'contemplating [the] past, present, and future,' and turning his immense musical intellect toward an exploration of the outermost limits of the fugal style that he himself had defined. Decidedly, music was changing, and for Barsanti – now feeling the first chill winds of the autumn of man's age wafting through his life – the essential question was perhaps not whether to change with it, but rather in what direction that change should take him.



HISTORY SHOWS that change of any sort inevitably breeds resistance, and in British musical circles in the first half of the 18th century this resistance took the form of a niche revival of interest in the *stylo antico*, dating back to the late Renaissance. Between the late 1720s and the mid 1740s, numerous small musical societies were established in the British isles, many passionately devoted to the performance and preservation of this older music. Indeed, as Oliphant¹ writes, John Immyns, founder of the Madrigal Society in London, was 'so thoroughly imbued with the love of the ancient school of part-writing that [...] he looked upon

Bononcini and Handel as the greatest corruptors of the science.'

The two most important and enduring of these clubs were the Academy of Ancient Music (founded in 1726), and the Madrigal Society itself, which first met in 1741 as 'The Monday Night Club' and survived in various forms right into the 20th century. The membership of these groups was unusually equalitarian, to say the least: Oliphant quotes Sir John Hawkins as saying that 'most of [the members] were mechanics; some weavers from Spitalfields, others of various trades and occupations, who were well-versed in the practise of psalmody...' – but professional musicians such as Johann Christoph Pepusch, Benjamin Cooke the Younger, Jonathan Battis-hill, and Thomas Arne, as well as gentlemen-scholars such as Charles Burney and Hawkins himself, were among the members of the two societies. Barsanti, who knew both Burney and Hawkins well, appears to have become a frequent visitor and *intimé* at the Academy of Ancient Music after his return to London from Edinburgh. The AAM's 'sister' organisation, the Madrigal Society, inducted him as an official member in 1759.

For the musicologist in quest of answers, there is a seductive coincidence of dates to be found in this history, as well as a number of new, unanswerable questions implied by it. Did Barsanti join the Madrigal Society and then compose the motets at their behest? Or was he invited to join because he had composed them? By the dates, either scenario is possible although neither can be verified. It can be established that Barsanti published the *Sei Antifone* between 1748 and 1760,² but if the information in Stenhouse's *Illustrations of the Lyric Poetry and Music of Scotland* is to be believed ('Before leaving Scotland, Barsanti dedicated a set of Six Anthems to the Right Honourable Lady Catherine Charteris...'), Barsanti may have *composed* the works as early as 1742, although this seems unlikely.³



WHILE IT SEEMS CLEAR that one possible motive for Barsanti having turned his compositional talents to the Palestrinian style was the very practical one of producing works for which he saw an 'emerging market', the marriage of Catherine Gordon to Lord Francis Charteris in 1745 offers a very different potential reason, albeit one which must be examined with some care. It is known that the Charteris family were loyal supporters of Barsanti both during and after his time in Scotland, and his lengthy and elegant dedication to Lady Catherine implies that the motets were meant as a surprise for her. However, it is a long leap from that premise to the conclusion that the *Sei Antifone* were commissioned by Lord Francis as a gift to his bride (presumably to be sung in the Charteris family chapel), and there is no documentary bridge between them. In addition, Barsanti's Italian title of *Sei Antifone* notwithstanding, only three of the texts he chose are traditionally used in the Catholic mass as antiphons (and none

Critical Report

SOURCE EDITIONS

There are four extant contemporary sources for Barsanti's *Sei Antifone*. Two incomplete sets of manuscript have survived, as well as a total of nine copies of two separate printed editions: the subscription edition published by Barsanti himself between 1748 and 1760, and a subsequent commercial printing published (after 1762) by Peter Welcker using Barsanti's original engraving plates.⁵

SOURCE A is a surviving copy of Barsanti's subscription edition, held at the library of the Royal Academy of Music (London, U.K.). 35 pages, oblong folio. No date. No imprint. Includes title page, dedication to The Right Honourable Lady Catherine Charteris, list of 82 subscribers, and 32 pages of music in score. Provenance: Bequest of the estate of R.J.S. Stevens, 1837.

SOURCE B is a surviving copy of the score published by Welcker, held at the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University (New Haven, Conn., U.S.A.). 33 pages, oblong folio. No date. Imprint: 'LONDON Printed by WELCKER in Gerrard Street St Ann's Soho'. Includes title page and 32 pages of music in score. Provenance unknown.

SOURCE C is the earlier of the two surviving sets of manuscript, and is held in the Muniment Room of Westminster Abbey in London. The set is incomplete, but it includes a full score for *Agios o Theos*, as well as 19 assorted parts for *Asperges me*, *Agios o Theos*, and *De profundis*. While the parts are all written in Barsanti's own hand⁶, there is no autograph or monogram on any of the pages. The score for *Agios O Theos* is the work of an unidentified copyist, and contains 30 corrections and changes in the composer's hand.⁷

The provenance of these manuscripts is uncertain, but it is thought they may have belonged to Benjamin Cooke the Younger (organist of the Abbey from 1762-1793) and were found among his papers after his death. It is fairly clear they were produced for performance use, either by the Academy of Ancient Music or by the choir of Westminster Abbey—of which Cooke was master prior to his appointment as organist—some years before the publication of Barsanti's subscription edition.⁸

SOURCE D is a later manuscript source of performing parts for the antifons, and is held at the British Library in a set of six partbooks which contain a total of 172 five- and six-voice madrigals and motets by various composers.⁹ They are undated and unsigned, but the copyist has been identified from his scribal hand as William Clarke.¹⁰ They are thought to post-date the publication of SOURCE A, and appear to have been copied from it rather than from the draft versions in SOURCE C. Barsanti, a member of the Society at the time they were produced, might logically have played a consulting rôle in the production of

these partbooks, so the few differences in them to earlier sources should be evaluated with that in mind.

The partbooks are in oblong folio, bound in red leather over board covers, and have been rebound since their production.¹¹ The original imprint, 'MADRIGAL SOCIETY | [name of part]' stamped in gold-leaf on red leather, was cut out and preserved during the re-binding and is pasted into the end-papers of each volume. Provenance: Permanent loan from the Madrigal Society, deposited in 1954.

The lost seventh part-book, which would have contained the second soprano part for *Inter Iniquos*, was likely borrowed from the Madrigal Society's library at some point and never returned. The duplicate bass part reflects the common 18th-century practise of reinforcing the bass line by doubling it, or even by adding bass or continuo instruments. (The Madrigal Society owned a harpsichord and a bass viol at this time,¹² and the assorted manuscript parts held at Westminster Abbey include several figured and unfigured instrumental bass parts without text.)

These partbooks include all six of the antifons as well as an unrelated madrigal by Barsanti, *Chi mai vi fe chi si belle*.

EDITORIAL METHODS

In general, editorial changes or additions to text matter are shown in square brackets. Editorially-added accidentals—either above or in front of the affected note, depending on the reason for their insertion—are shown in parentheses. Phrase marks added by the editor are printed with a dashed line. All notes which have been altered are shown in parentheses, and the reason for the change is described in the 'Corrections' section of the Critical Report.

Exceptions or additions to these general rules are described below under the appropriate headings or mentioned specifically in the 'Corrections' section.

Text Presentation

• **Syllabic division** in the various sources is inconsistent and follows no single rule. In this edition divisions within words are placed according to the modern choral rule of ending syllables on open vowels or soft consonants except for terminal syllables. Thus, *nostrorum*, *peccatis*, and *delicta* are hyphenated *no-stro-rum*, *pe-cca-tis*, and *de-li-cta*. (A hard consonant ending a word—such as the *t* in *projecerunt*—is *not* moved to the beginning of the next word.)

• **Typographical symbols** used to separate syllables vary widely in the sources, and no regard is given to the difference between intermediate and terminal syllables. The text in this edition is presented according to modern conventions: hyphen(s) between *intermediate* syllables of a word, and baseline extenders after the *last* syllable of a word (where appropriate, as for *melismata*).

• Punctuation and capitalisation in all the sources are inconsistent, and do not provide coherent guides to phrasing for the singers. In order to avoid visual clutter in the score (and an overwhelming list of grammatical minutiae in the Critical Report), the editor has chosen to correct the obvious errors and inconsistencies without further comment.

Music Notation

• **Notes straddling barlines.** All sources contain whole notes and breves printed astride the barline between two measures, a notational affectation which was commonly adopted by enthusiasts of the *stilo antico* in the 18th century.¹³



While the musical intent of this is clear (half the note value belongs to each of the two measures), notation of this sort is unfamiliar to most performers today. In this edition, straddling whole notes have been set as two half notes tied across the barline; straddling breves (double whole notes) are similarly printed as two tied whole notes. To avoid visual clutter, these are not bracketed in parentheses.

• **Accidentals.** The source editions are written using the accidental-per-note rule (as opposed to the later accidental-per-measure convention). Accidental marking in this edition has been adjusted to reflect modern practise, wherein an accidental is valid for the duration of the measure in which it appears.

Cancellation of accidentals later in a measure thus becomes an issue;¹⁴ where necessary, the appropriate symbol is added (in parentheses). In most cases the accidental required is patently obvious and the composer's intention is clear, but in those few instances where the music leaves room for doubt, the editorially added accidental is placed *above* the note affected instead of in front of it.

To avoid unnecessary visual clutter in the score, 'courtesy' accidentals are not bracketed but are simply placed where needed.

• **Clefs and Time Signature.** The binary meter in which the pieces were written has been retained and is notated in the incipit with the original *alla breve* symbol, along with the original clefs for each part and an ambitus showing the range. To accommodate today's performers, the time signature is also presented in numerical format and those parts written in C clefs in the original have been transcribed to the appropriate G clef. The original barring has been retained to avoid introducing extra emphasis on secondary strong beats which the composer clearly did not intend.

