

National Identity in the Arts



Pier Francesco Mola

4. The Art of Transcendence

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The Art of Transcendence

BY THE PEAK OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, the baroque style could be described as an international phenomenon, dominating the monumental commissions of Church and State, and extending even into the Americas. It is the art of transcendence, sweeping away normal boundaries and transporting its audience to other world of the imagination. But it had its origin quite specifically in Italy, especially in the kind of illusionistic painting and sculpture that could transform entire buildings. This will be the subject of our first hour.

In the second hour, we shall look at three specific examples of the transmission of the baroque style to other countries. Rubens, one of the great geniuses of the age, moving freely from court to court. Velázquez working mainly in Spain, and seldom on a monumental scale, but pursuing his own unique inventions. And one other Italian, Caravaggio, whose realism and drama offered a distinct alternative to the prevalent style, and whose influence proved especially important in the development of Dutch art. *rb.*

A. Vespers of the Virgin

Three excerpts from Monteverdi's *Vespers of the Blessed Virgin* (1610) illustrating the dynamic and spatial contrasts that would later become important in baroque music.

- ♫ **Monteverdi:** *Vespers* (opening)
- ♫ **Monteverdi:** *Duo Seraphim* (from the *Vespers* of 1610)
- ♫ **Monteverdi:** *Nisi Dominus*, excerpt (from the *Vespers* of 1610)

B. Looking Up from Below

The development of *di sotto in sù* (looking up from below) ceiling painting in Italy that became an essential part of the baroque style.

- Mantegna:** *Camera degli Sposi* (1465–74, Ducal Palace, Mantua)
- Carracci:** *The Loves of the Gods* (Palazzo Farnese, 1597–1608)

Guercino: *The Triumph of Aurora* (1621, Casino Ludovisi, Rome)

Cortona: *Allegory of Divine Providence* (1633–39, Palazzo Barberini)

♪ **Monteverdi:** *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, coronation scene

C. Heavenly Visions

Di sotto in sù illusionism carried to its limits in the ceilings of the two main Jesuit churches in Rome.

Gaulli: *Triumph of the Name of Jesus* (1674, il Gesù, Rome)

Pozzo: *Apotheosis of Saint Ignatius* (1685–94, Sant' Ignazio, Rome)

♪ **Cavalli:** *Gloria in Excelsis*

D. Bernini's Theater of Wonder

Three works by the sculptor-architect Gianlorenzo Bernini that bring some of the devices of the theater into the church.

Bernini: *Ecstasy of Santa Teresa*, SM della Vittoria, Rome (1647–52)

Bernini: *Cathedra Petri* (1653, Saint Peter's)

Bernini: *Sant'Andrea al Quirinale* (1658–61)

♪ **Monteverdi:** *Vespers* (1610), *Lauda*, *Jerusalem*, *Dominum*

E. The Monster Mass

The opening of Biber's *Missa Salzbургensis*, written for 53 vocal or instrumental parts, distributed among the balconies of Salzburg Cathedral, making it the largest baroque work ever composed.

♪ **Biber:** *Missa Salzburgensis* (1682), Kyrie

F. Ambassador of the Baroque

Rubens' artistic flexibility, personal beliefs, and social skills gave him a parallel career as a diplomat in the courts of Europe.

Rubens: *Apotheosis of James I* (1634–36), central panel

Rubens: *Assumption* (sketch, 1611, HM the Queen)

Rubens: *Peace and War* (1630, London NG)

Rubens: *Life of Marie de' Medici* (1622–24, Paris Louvre)

♪ **Lully:** *Te Deum* (1677), prelude

G. In the Service of the King

Though mostly eschewing the flamboyant style, and working mainly in Spain, Velázquez became one of the most inventive artists of his age.

Velázquez: *Apollo in the Forge of Vulcan* (1630, Madrid Prado)

Velázquez: *The Surrender of Breda (Las Lanzas)*, 1635, Prado

Velázquez: *Las Meninas* (1656, Madrid Prado)

Velázquez: *Las Hilanderas* (1657, Madrid Prado)

♪ **Hidalgo:** *Tompicábalas Amor* (zarzuela song)

H. Caravaggio's Theater of Reality

The hyper-realism and intense drama of Caravaggio's religious work, and his influence on artists from the Netherlands and elsewhere.

Caravaggio: *Conversion of Saul* (2 versions, 1600 and 1601)

Caravaggio: *The Supper at Emmaus* (1602, London NG)

Caravaggio: *Judith and Holofernes* (1598, Palazzo Barberini)

Artemisia Gentileschi: *Judith and Holofernes* (1613, Naples)

Honthorst: *The Denial of Saint Peter* (1623, Minneapolis)

Honthorst: *Adoration of the Shepherds* (1622, Pomerania)

♪ **Sweelinck:** *Hodie Christus Natus Est* (1619)

Dirck van **Baburen** (1595–1624, Dutch painter), Gianlorenzo **Bernini** (1598–1680, Italian sculptor), Heinrich Ignaz Franz **Biber** (1644–1704, German composer), Annibale **Carracci** (1560–1609, Italian painter), Michelangelo Merisi da **Caravaggio** (1571–1610, Italian painter), Francesco **Cavalli** (1602–76, Venetian composer), Pietro da **Cortona** (1596–1669, Italian painter), Giovanni **Gabrieli** (1557–1612, Venetian composer), Giovanni Battista **Gaulli** (1639–1709, Italian painter), Artemisia **Gentileschi** (1593–1653, Italian painter), Orazio **Gentileschi** (1563–1639, Italian painter), **Guercino** (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, 1591–1666, Italian painter), Juan **Hidalgo** (1614–85, Spanish composer), Gerrit van **Honthorst** (1592–1656, Dutch painter), Jean-Baptiste **Lully** (1632–87, French composer), Andrea **Mantegna** (1431–1506, Italian painter), **Michelangelo** Buonarroti (1475–1564, Italian painter), Claudio **Monteverdi** (1567–1643, Italian composer), Andrea **Pozzo** (1642–1709, Italian painter), Peter Paul **Rubens** (1577–1640, Flemish painter), Jan Pieterszoon **Sweelinck** (1562–1621, Dutch composer), Hendrick **Terbrugghen** (1588–1629, Dutch painter), **Titian** (Tiziano Veccellio, 1485–1576, Venetian painter), Anthony **van Dyck** (1599–1641, Flemish painter), Diego **Velázquez** (1599–1660, Spanish painter)