

**Joël Heuillon**

### **Space/spaces in the vocal music of the early Baroque**

There are at least two key aspects to the issue of space in the written Western music of the early Baroque (late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> c.): space as something to be represented in music, and space in its physical dimension as an extension of musical performance.

Space as the object of representation was a fluid concept: In the space of two generations, the theoretical, potential, enclosed "Cosmos" we inherited from the ancients (a model which has been in crisis ever since) would give way to a palpable, material space--that of Nature. This unstable, dynamic, material world was a space in which people lived and was used as a tangible allegory for the reproduction of subjects' inner space: 'place' as a projection of their emotional world. Dramatic music would revolutionize the organization of its musical accompaniment (*continuo*) with a constantly developing tonic system implemented through the representation of emotions: singers express their inner world through the words of a song/libretto, while the musical accompaniment makes it manifest through a dynamic unfolding in time and space on the stage.

This process was brought into being by humanists who envisioned the possibility of a music theatre and had experimented with various effects (stereophony, echoes etc.) in an attempt to imbue music with the characteristics of a 'spectacle' which, as it unfolds, reifies the theatrical space. Sacred music, both as a genre which was equally concerned with its effect on its recipients (the faithful) and as the heir of ancient methods (polyphony) which have been shorn of their contrapuntal sensitivity (homophony), would exhaust the potential of space in religious buildings through the production of various intense auditory effects (multispatiality).