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The tacit knowledge of Claudio Monteverdi as expressed in the opera La Tragedia di Claudio M

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Summary

The presented dissertation is a report on a multilayered project that zooms in on a significant year in the history of Western music, the birth of opera as a modern genre, with Claudio Monteverdi in its centre.

We could categorise it as an inquiry into the narrative of Monteverdi, but I suggest labelling it as dramatised artistic research. It is based on Michael Polanyi's epistemological theory of tacit (implicit) knowing and simultaneously addresses that kind of knowledge. The latter, for instance, manifests itself in compiling the libretto, composing new music for the production and the creative work of the Commedia dell'arte actors, as can be seen in rehearsal videos.

La Tragedia di Claudio M is an experiment to embody historical highlights in the first development of opera as a genre. In Polanyian terms the project is an interpretative framework, functioning as an artistic probe to reach over four centuries in time. It stages Monteverdi, his patron, librettist, and his singers using the verbatim theatre technique based on letters, treatises, and other documents. The story spans approximately one year, from the aftermath of the premiere of *Orfeo* in the summer of 1607 to the performance of *Arianna* in the spring of 1608. The libretto has four layers: historical, mythological, allegorical, and dramatic. All these are interwoven during the action, which is mainly dictated by the sequence of events during the year at stake. The depth of the four layers and their interconnection are commented on and documented in several subsidiary chapters of the dissertation.

A special position is selected in the opera for the controversy between the rational defence of traditional composition models by theorist Giovanni Maria Artusi and the intuition-based innovations of theatrical music which marked the style of the practitioner Monteverdi. In the chapter 'The Narrative' it is made clear what role Monteverdi played in the narrative that was created about him and which lasted for centuries to come, even after his music had surfaced and started a new life from 1900 onwards. It is no coincidence that the core of the conflict is situated in the labyrinth of the Minotaur. It was the 'year of truth', a year of transformation for Monteverdi, which he confirmed later by stating that it almost took his life, but also that he found '*la via naturale alla imitazione*' by composing the *Lamento d'Arianna*. Though he promised to explain himself and his style in a treatise about the *Seconda Prattica*, revealing what had been a tacit process of creation, the book was never written, and the ineffable kept its proper position.

The making of *La Tragedia di Claudio M* was a collective process. In this process, the role of text (oratione in Monteverdi's terms) mirrored, where possible, the original ideology. This meant a challenge for the team of five composers and just as much for the five singers to allow the text its generating potential. The influence of seven Italian actors and their embodied knowledge enabled the project to function as an indwelling experience from the first rehearsal to the last performance. Polanyi's conditions, such as passion, commitment, belief and truth to reach new knowledge by immersion, have been found on all levels, resulting in a comprehensive coherence of details. The deliberate choice of small-scale chamber opera staging enhanced the immediacy and intimacy that were sought to accentuate embodiment literarily. Consequently, the audience's proximity did not require extra communicative projection, but on the contrary, invited participation on a tacit level.