



Instead of painting a sweeping historical purview that stretches from the 1660s to 1752, perhaps Fabiano could have focused more on performances of Italian opera in the first half of the eighteenth century, a period that immediately precedes the emergence of Bambini's troupe in 1752.

Chapter 1 presents a much bigger problem that is never acknowledged in the book. What is the 'Italian opera' about which Fabiano writes? Mazarin introduced seventeenth-century *dramma per musica* to French society. Nowhere does Fabiano mention the Italian operatic reforms by Zeno, nor does he define 'Italian opera'. More problematically, he seems to group all of the operas performed in the Italian language in France under the label 'Italian opera', assuming that Francesco Buti and Luigi Rossi's *Orfeo* is somehow related to Giambattista Pergolesi's intermezzo *La Serva padrona* and Angelo Anelli and Ferdinando Paër's opera semiseria *La Griselda* (1803). The problem is that Fabiano does not explain these generic differences. Quite the contrary, he uses Pierre Perrin's denigration of 'Italian opera' in 1661 as a means of ironing out generic differences, thus projecting a vague concept of 'Italian opera'.

The underestimation of the generic differences of Italian opera seems to stem from a neglect of Anglo-American research on Italian and French opera. A brief glance at the bibliography reveals prominent Anglo-American scholars such as Daniel Hertz, Martha Feldman, Margaret Murata, Wendy Heller, Neal Zaslaw, Reinhard Strohm and Mary Hunter to be missing. Even though these scholars have not worked directly on Italian operas performed in France, their work provides in-depth discussion of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian operas. How can we discuss 150 years of Italian operas (wherever they are performed) without clarifying the multiple genres that form 'Italian opera'? What do we gain from a 'vague' concept of 'Italian opera'? Is it sufficient to talk about Italian opera in Paris solely as an 'Other', an 'explicit poetic opposition' to French opera (9)?

These drawbacks undercut Fabiano ambitious aims and reduce his history of Italian opera in France to that of institutional history. An otherwise excellent book may have benefited from more critical discussion of Italian operatic genres and in-depth analyses of selected operas. That said, the numerous tables in the book, and the forty-six pages of appendices carefully documenting relevant archival sources make it an indispensable reference for scholars working on the operatic scene in eighteenth-century France.

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HANS-JÖRG NIEDEN

DIE FRÜHEN KANTATEN VON JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH: ANALYSE – REZEPTION

Munich and Salzburg: Musikverlag Katzbichler, 2005

pp. 134, ISBN 3 87397 147 X

My first impression of this book, deriving from its title and physical appearance, was a mixture of surprise and curiosity. The surprise came from the title's close resemblance to a famous monograph by Alfred Dürr – *Studien über die frühen Kantaten Johann Sebastian Bachs* – his doctoral dissertation first published in 1951 and revised in 1977, and still considered by many to be the cornerstone of modern Bach scholarship. In contrast, Niden's book looked rather too thin to compete with Dürr's thesis, which aroused my curiosity. The two key words appended to the title of this book – 'analysis' and 'reception' – are important as they represent areas that Dürr did not explore.

Niden's book examines only six cantatas currently believed to predate Bach's Weimar period (whereas Dürr's book examines all the Weimar cantatas), and they are discussed in the following order: 'Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich' (BWV150), 'Christ lag in Todes Banden' (BWV4), 'Aus der Tiefen rufe ich, Herr, zu dir' (BWV131), 'Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit' (BWV106), 'Gott ist mein König' (BWV71) and 'Der Herr denket an



uns' (BWV196). There follows another chapter that is neither a conclusion nor a summary but an independent essay enigmatically entitled 'Höranmerkungen' where the author attempts to make a case as to how we might approach these pieces in order to achieve a better understanding of Bach's art. There is also a short preface where the author explains his main focus, approaches and objectives, but nowhere explains how these six cantatas were chosen and why they were arranged in this order; nor, somewhat disconcertingly, does he state what he expects to learn from studying these early cantatas that cannot be learned from Bach's later works.

Nieden's discussion of each cantata in fact appears well conceived, and is organized fairly systematically into the following sections: chronology, text, form and structure. Under 'chronology', he purposefully sets both the direction and context of his discussion by outlining the facts already known from the works of Dürr, Martin Geck and others. He also makes frequent references to the comments of century-old scholars such as Spitta, Schweitzer and Pirro, in order to gather together their intriguing insights and fit them into a broad spectrum of Bach scholarship, thus providing a pleasant variety of perspectives.

Discussions of 'texts' that Bach used in the cantata follow, in particular where they originated and what Bach did with them. While much of the information given here is already widely available in the secondary literature such as in Dürr's monograph *Die Kantaten von Johann Sebastian Bach* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1971), Nieden usefully supplements knowledge by drawing on the Theological Bach Studies through to the more recent works of Renate Steiger and Martin Petzoldt.

The discussion of 'form' was one of the most illuminating parts of Dürr's study, giving him the opportunity to discuss stylistic issues in order to make a convincing argument against the then-established chronology. While Nieden elaborates Dürr's argument a little, it is rather disappointing to see Nieden merely confirming the validity of Dürr's approach, neither challenging him nor advancing his argument.

It is in the final section, 'structure', that Nieden's discussion opens up in a way that truly engages with his own original agenda. Here he addresses a range of issues such as structural features of each movement, rhetorical devices, harmonic language, and in so doing touches on both musical and textual matters that Bach surely considered very carefully when composing. His original contributions come in the form of 'detailed analytical commentaries', which will be immediately useful to anyone studying these cantatas.

There is one area of Nieden's study that is not covered by Dürr: nineteenth-century reception. In his discussion of BWV4 and 150, for example, he touches on how Brahms engaged himself in performing these cantatas, and in BWV106, explores how Mendelssohn considered the work in the 1830s. While these are indeed fascinating topics for further research, especially since they are based on documentary sources, I would very much like to have read more in-depth discussion of reception. The lack of systematic treatment of this issue suggests that Nieden did not find materials for other cantatas, namely BWV131, 71 and 196, although I doubt very much that this was in fact the case.

The most problematic aspect of this book in my view is the final chapter (Listeners' Comments) where Nieden makes hesitant attempts to seek analytical powers from nineteenth-century aesthetic arguments in order to advance his argument. The citations from the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Eduard Hanslick, Immanuel Kant and Theodor Adorno are used only to show that there are certain issues to be considered in future studies; no concrete conclusions are therefore offered here. Since Nieden already touched upon aspects of nineteenth-century reception, he would have been well served by redirecting his aesthetic argument to modes of nineteenth-century reception rather than simply reprinting material from documentary sources. That said, I can certainly see numerous ideas and materials to be pursued in future studies.

Although this may not be a book for general readers, those who are studying the Bach cantatas discussed will no doubt find Nieden's interdisciplinary approach useful. It should be pointed out, however, that there are many problems with the book's production, for example in the organization of materials, typography, layout, and the quality of some of the music examples. The printing of the main text in a 13-point font with 1.5 line spacing may not be a bad idea, but it makes no sense to include the crudely scanned music examples



with text in 5-point font or smaller. This book is Katzbichler's most recent offering in the field of Bach Studies as volume 40 in their 'Musikwissenschaftliche Schriften' series. I have previously reviewed volumes 36 and 38 in the series, and these were produced in a much more polished way, with a significantly higher degree of editorial control. I am therefore most surprised to find deficiencies in these respects.

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MICHAEL TALBOT

THE CHAMBER CANTATAS OF ANTONIO VIVALDI

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pp. xiii + 234, ISBN 1 84383 201 1

In recent years Vivaldi scholarship has concentrated on highly detailed studies of specific sectors of the repertory. In quantitative terms, the surviving works are heavily dominated by concertos and related genres (sinfonie, chamber concertos and sonatas). The collected works issued in fascicles under Gian Francesco Malipiero (530 fascicles; Milan: Ricordi, 1947–1971) were limited to instrumental music. The sole focus of the catalogues of Pincherle, Fanna and Rinaldi was also instrumental music. Pincherle's catalogue was a companion to his quite remarkable Sorbonne thesis (1913); and Antonio Fanna's catalogue has served as a foundation for the Malipiero edition.

Among those currently working on Vivaldi, it was Peter Ryom who spearheaded a survey of *all* of Vivaldi's music and examined in detail the differentiating characteristics of the sources. The now ubiquitous *RV* (*Ryom Verzeichnis*) numbers come predominantly from his *Kleine Ausgabe* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1974). The comprehensive *Grosse Ausgabe* was issued by Bärenreiter at the end of 2007, the earlier volume (*Répertoire des œuvres*) having been issued in 1986 (Copenhagen: Engstom and Sodring A. S. Musikforlag).

What has all this to do with Talbot's new book on Vivaldi's chamber cantatas? Much of the music-loving public was unaware, until recordings and editions began to appear, that Vivaldi composed vocal music in significant quantity. As a composer of vocal music, Vivaldi has remained all but invisible. If it had been an easy matter to sort out the composer's operas, disembodied arias, mass sections, serenatas (some lost), oratorios (all but one lost) and sacred motets, the remaining volume of the Ryom catalogue would undoubtedly have appeared years ago.

This study of the chamber cantata serves as a companion to the thirty-seven cantatas published by the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi (a co-sponsor of this book) between 1984 and 2002. As the editor of the cantatas, Michael Talbot is highly conversant with the minutiae of the sources and the particular qualities of individual works. This book complements his study of Vivaldi's sacred music (Florence: Olschki, 1995), which similarly went hand-in-hand with new editions of the relevant works.

Although Talbot sees a modest increase of public interest in the cantata repertory, this is not apparent everywhere. The role of the cantata both in Italy and in the United States is primarily that of a pedagogical piece best suited to sight-reading exams (Italy) and to student recitals (USA), although several of the true specialists in baroque vocal techniques have chosen the cantata to exhibit their best work. In relation to much of the rest of Vivaldi's music, the Venetian composer's cantatas are neither well known nor, in the Institute editions (handsome and careful though they are), widely distributed.

Talbot rightly notes that the genre enjoyed great respect in the eighteenth century (though possibly even more in the seventeenth). Its appeal was based on several virtues. It celebrated the evocative power of the