

REVIEWS



BOOKS

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VANDA DE SÁ AND CRISTINA FERNANDES, EDS
*MÚSICA INSTRUMENTAL NO FINAL DO ANTIGO REGIME: CONTEXTOS, CIRCULAÇÃO E
REPERTÓRIOS*

Lisbon: Colibri, 2014

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La vera costanza, a libretto by Francesco Puttini, contains instructions for an overture that also functions as stage music. After the 1776 Rome premiere, with music by Pasquale Anfossi, these instructions reappeared verbatim in a number of librettos, including the one printed for the 1785 Lisbon setting by Jerónimo Francisco de Lima. As specified in this libretto, the curtain should be raised by the end of the Grave movement of the overture, at which point the audience would see a storm at sea and a ship in distress. The last movement accompanies ‘the roaring of the sea, lightning flashes and rumblings of thunder’. As the tempest calms down, so does the music, while a boat with four survivors approaches the shore. All this commotion is watched from the shore by a couple who sing *a due* as the overture transitions to the first scene. With the help of local fishermen, the castaways reach dry land and the vocal ensemble is complete. In their overtures, both Anfossi and Lima employed the string figurations of a typical eighteenth-century musical storm, but while Anfossi returned to the original key and offered a convincing final chord, Lima followed Haydn’s solution of not providing closure to the third movement, but proceeding straight into the first scene.

Lima’s musical storm and the sound effects prescribed in the libretto have been recorded on a 2015 selection of overtures and arias by the composer, with Ensemble Concentus Peninsulae under the direction of Vasco Negreiros, featuring soprano Monika Mauch and special effects realized by machinists/scholars Rosana Brescia and Miguel Ángel Coso Marín (*Rabbia, furor, dispetto: Sinfonie ed arie, Jerónimo Francisco de Lima (1741–1822)*, PTY 715134). Although it would be desirable to have overture and first scene recorded together, as in the original score, Negreiros has modified the third movement of the overture in order to produce a self-contained concert piece. Negreiros, who is also a musicologist, explains the rationale for this operation in one of the chapters of the book under review. His main goal was to expand the corpus of Portuguese orchestral music by giving ‘independent use’ to the piece (135, 156). Inspired by Haydn’s similar modification in *Lo speziale*, Negreiros created a short but effective transition from the final B \flat seventh chord (which prepares the first scene of the opera; the overture is in C major and the first scene in E flat major) to a return of the tonic through a chromatic ascent to V⁶. He then wrote a twenty-five-bar second recapitulation, mostly using previous material. While far less than the whole movement that Haydn added to his concert version of the overture to *La vera costanza*, the final result still raises some issues. Some would say it is redundant, or that the added material gives new meaning to the original recapitulation, while others may question the use of special effects in the concert version, apparently contradicting the intended attempt to divest the overture of its opera-house connections. Although somewhat controversial, and maybe thanks to that, Negreiros’s research illustrates some of the most innovative aspects of recent Portuguese musicology.

Edited by Vanda de Sá and Cristina Fernandes, the book *Instrumental Music by the End of the Ancien Regime: Contexts, Circulation and Repertories* provides a welcome look at the last decades of absolute



monarchy in Portugal – from the 1770s to the 1820s – and a number of issues related to instrumental music that have escaped the attention of previous scholarship. In spite of external and internal conflicts, political repression and economic decline, these were interesting times for instrumental music and public concerts in Portugal, as the book's contributors are able to demonstrate. Dealing with issues ranging from the distribution and uses of printed and manuscript music to the presence of instrumental music in sacred contexts, the ten chapters of this book coherently address original subjects, while using new approaches to tackle more traditional topics, such as the role of instrumental music in concert life and the circulation of instrumentalists between sacred and secular, and courtly and public spheres.

Rui Vieira Nery opens the book with a chapter that explains why instrumental music was so relevant for Portuguese society during those problematic decades. He shows how the literature of the period – from locally produced comic plays to travel narratives by foreign visitors – depicts instrumental music as a powerful symbol, which could function both as a marker of hierarchy and a strategy for social change. Nery's text intersects nicely with a chapter by Maria João Durães Albuquerque on the market for printed and manuscript music, which addresses the circulation of scores and the wide variety of products and services that music vendors offered to various social and professional groups. Chapters by Nery and Albuquerque form the first section of this book, which deals with the production and uses of instrumental music in social contexts.

The transition to the second section, addressing instrumental music in secular contexts, is very fluid. Vanda de Sá's chapter provides a good counterpoint to Nery's text by examining the culture of the minuet in Portugal and its underlying discourses. She also identifies a number of transformations determined by local tastes and commercial needs, and in that sense the chapter is also in dialogue with that of Albuquerque. Cristina Fernandes contributes an informative chapter on the circulation of musicians between the Real Câmara (royal chambers) and public concerts. These included private soirées, mixed spectacles within theatrical functions and *assembleias* promoted by foreign residents, resulting in what she calls a 'mutual contamination' of repertoires, practices and instruments (77). Francesco Esposito delves deeper into the subject of public concerts, dealing with the well-known and little-studied *academias* and *benefícios*, while also speculating about the reasons for the overwhelming presence of foreign instrumental music and the lack of a concert culture based on commissions and sponsorship. This section also includes the chapter by Vasco Negreiros discussed above.

The third and last section of the book explores instrumental music in sacred contexts. Writing in English, João Vaz examines the repertory of organ verses by Frei Jerónimo da Madre de Deus (c1714–after 1768), describing the manuscript sources, correcting some notational problems and drawing convincing links with Italian keyboard writing and organ building during the period. Cristina Fernandes discusses the orchestral music used or written specifically for the Patriarchal and Royal Chapels, explaining that these venues were far more important in the diffusion of the orchestral repertory – symphonies, overtures, sonatas and organ arrangements of symphonic music – than public concerts, which appeared much later and had a limited impact (233). The two concluding chapters, by Filipe Mesquita de Oliveira and Vasco Negreiros, do not address instrumental music per se, but rather instrumental writing and the orchestral implications of sacred music. Surveying the work of Évora composer Ignácio António Ferreira de Lima (died 1818), Oliveira concentrates on the multiple variants found in the instrumental parts of his religious works. He argues that these variants are due to the continuous use of these pieces during different periods and the requirements of changing instrumental forces. Negreiros addresses similar matters in his examination of Jerónimo Francisco de Lima's *Te Deum*, while providing a vast array of contextual information regarding the variable number of instrumentalists over a period of sixty years, the rise and demise of specific instruments within this period, the architecture of the Real Câmara, and even the spatial disposition of the choir and orchestra. These details, he argues, will help the performer to understand certain practices when the score is not absolutely clear (341).

Most of these chapters are the result of research sponsored by Portugal's Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia and carried out within institutional programmes of the Universidade de Évora and Universidade



Nova de Lisboa. Bridging archival research and performance practice, unafraid of creative experimentation and not easily mystified by theoretical fashions, the authors represented in this book demonstrate the dynamism of recent Portuguese musicology.

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DAVID HUNTER

THE LIVES OF GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

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This substantial volume incorporates material from David Hunter's numerous published articles and scholarly papers produced over the last two decades. The result is a work of impressive bibliographical control, in which sensitive and sometimes controversial topics are probed in the quest to 'evaluate thoroughly the familiar, even over-familiar, story of Handel's life' (11). The author does more than merely scrutinize older biographies for accuracy and update them with fresh evidence and interpretations in order to construct a new 'life' of the composer, however. He also raises wider questions about the concept of biography itself, particularly how earlier 'lives' of Handel were constructed and disseminated, and how these historically contingent documents have fashioned our perceptions of him ever since. Like Ellen Harris's *George Frideric Handel: A Life with Friends* (New York: Norton, 2014), the book is structured around broad themes such as patronage, pensions, friendships and health. However, whereas Harris situates these topics within a chronological narrative, Hunter steers clear of an overall linear presentation of events. This approach has potential advantages: it enables similar topics and themes to be considered at different points in the narrative and from a variety of angles, thereby 'replicating, to some extent, the episodic nature of life' (8), and it avoids portraying Handel's biography as a tidy trajectory of his 'inexorable rise to greatness' (4), thus allowing a more nuanced picture of his personality to emerge. There are also some drawbacks, particularly the acknowledged difficulty of bringing together 'all those seemingly disparate parts into a cohesive whole' (5), and the inevitable duplication of some material. The volume comprises nine chapters, with titles such as 'The Audience: Partner and Problem' (chapter 2), 'Self and Health' (chapter 6) and 'Nations and Stories' (chapter 8). Each is broken down into between three and twelve sub-chapters varying between half a page and twenty pages in length, some of which contain four or five further subsections. These divisions facilitate navigation of the different topics, many of which are effective as stand-alone pieces, although for readers who elect to use the book in this way it would have been helpful to include all headed sections in the list of contents. When tackled as a whole, however, the diffuse nature of the narrative makes this book a challenging read.

The difficulties experienced by the author in marshalling such diverse material into an effective structure are not alleviated by his literary style, which is idiosyncratic and at times convoluted; I found myself having to reread certain passages two or three times before discerning even a vague idea of their meaning. Hunter's penchant for lengthy digression often results in the main argument being put on hold for several pages, and it is perhaps telling that he finds it necessary to end each chapter with a conclusion that attempts to pull together its various strands. Further disruption is created by the large number of footnotes (1,588 of them), which sometimes cover three quarters of a page. The bibliography, admitted to be 'overwhelming' (xv), includes over 160 articles and books on musical matters alone, some of them *recherché* in the extreme. Yet reference to the significant research of Handel scholars like Suzanne Aspden and Ilias Chrissochoidis, who have written extensively on topics covered in Hunter's book, is entirely absent. Another curious omission