



Eighteenth-Century Music © Cambridge University Press, 2011
doi:10.1017/S1478570610000540

JOHANN FRIEDRICH REICHARDT (1752–1814), ED. ROBERT MEIKLE AND DAVID HILL
CLAUDINE VON VILLA BELLA: A SETTING OF JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE'S SINGSPIEL IN THREE ACTS

Recent Researches in the Music of the Classical Era 79

Middleton: A-R Editions, 2009

pp. lxi + 432 + 9 plates, ISBN 978 0 89579 647 9

Critical editions of eighteenth-century German operas by composers outside the Viennese orbit are scarce. The situation mirrors the perspectives and preoccupations of musical scholarship and performance, both of which can only benefit from the appearance of this handsome and meticulous edition. Its title page tells us straight off that the poetic source of the opera had as much to do with its selection as did either its composer or its fortunes on German stages. In fact, in its initial run at Charlottenburg and Berlin in July of 1789 Reichardt's setting was performed only four or five times, and performed badly, despite the participation of some of the best talent in German operatic circles, including the sopranos Frideriecke Unzelmann and Aloysia Lange. Six years later the Weimar Court Theatre attempted a revival, but the work was dropped after only a single performance.

Yet Reichardt's setting possesses both artistic merit and points of historical interest and importance sufficient to justify its inclusion in A-R's Music of the Classical Era series. The text is, with some changes, the second of two versions that Goethe wrote. The immediate motive for revising the earlier *Claudine von Villa Bella* (published in 1776 but never performed), along with its companion *Erwin und Elmire* (1775), was not performance but publication. In 1786 the publisher Göschen had issued a prospectus for an eight-volume edition of Goethe's collected works, in the fifth of which *Claudine* and *Erwin* were to appear. The deeper impulse was aesthetic: by 1784 Goethe had become an ardent partisan of Italian comic opera, and was determined to revise his earlier efforts 'in order to bring a German composer closer to the Italian manner' (cited in Elmar Bötcher, *Goethes Singspiele 'Erwin und Elmire' und 'Claudine von Villa Bella' und die opera buffa* (Marburg: Elwert, 1912), 30). No doubt the composer that he had in mind was the recipient of these remarks, his childhood friend Philipp Christoph Kayser. Appropriately enough, Goethe completed his Italianization of *Claudine* and *Erwin* in Italy during the winter of 1787–1788, with Kayser at his side.

The differences between the two versions of *Claudine* have been amply studied in the literature on Goethe. For the 'German composer' he hoped to bring around to his new aesthetic, the title pages alone would have already conveyed one of the most significant of these differences. Goethe had called the earlier *Claudine* a 'Schauspiel mit Gesang' – a play with songs – which, despite its Sturm und Drang untidiness and a novel finale-like structure, located it within the frontiers of Franco-German comic opera of the day. The revised version he labelled a singspiel – a sung play – a term that at the time meant a German opera sung from beginning to end (or in other words, just the opposite of what it has come to designate in today's parlance). In the revised versions of both *Erwin* and *Claudine* Goethe substituted blank verse for the dialogue found in the earlier versions, an unambiguous invitation to set the entire text to music in 'the Italian manner'.

Reichardt, who had been an enthusiastic admirer of Goethe's poetry and dramas since their first meeting in 1780, set the revised text of *Claudine* as soon as he could get his hands on it, and soon thereafter brought his score to the poet in Weimar, where he stayed in Goethe's house for nearly two weeks. His setting left Goethe's blank verse unset, however. In an earlier study, the editors of the present edition speculate that Goethe and Reichardt 'seem to have agreed that the dialogue would be spoken' (Robert Meikle and David Hill, 'Johann Friedrich Reichardt's Setting of Goethe's Singspiel *Claudine von Villa Bella*', in *Goethe and Schubert: Across the Divide*, ed. Lorraine Byrne and Dan Farrelly (Dublin: Carysfort, 2003), 139). Whether or not this was the case, Goethe's verse dialogue gave the first cast considerable trouble. This should not have come as a surprise, for by 1789 the actor-singer was a thing of the past, even in northern Germany, and musicians like Unzelmann and Lange had no training in managing seas of spoken iambic pentameter. The



literary scholar Jörg Krämer claims that Reichardt composed the verse dialogue as recitative for the Weimar production of 1795 (*Deutschsprachiges Musikkultur im späten 18. Jahrhundert*, 2 volumes (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998), volume 1, 505, note 123). This seems unlikely. True, he did set the versified dialogue in the new version of *Erwin und Elmire* as recitative in 1791, but this was mainly for publication. Its subsequent performance at Berlin in early 1793 was in a concert format, something Reichardt himself had recommended in his Preface to the published score. There is no evidence that Reichardt even knew about the Weimar production of *Claudine*, for which, in the event, Goethe grudgingly allowed his brother-in-law Christian August Vulpius to turn his blank verse into prose.

Despite his deep admiration for Goethe's art, Reichardt did not set the text exactly as it appeared in Göschen's edition. It is in tracking and understanding the departures he made that the present critical edition is especially valuable. The text as Reichardt set it – both the musical numbers and the verse dialogue – is printed separately in the front matter, together with a fine literal translation (rendered in prose throughout). Departures from the Göschen edition of the text, flagged and enlarged on in endnotes, receive more substantial analysis and explication in the Critical Report at the end of the volume, which compensates for the edition's rather slender Introduction with a wealth of information and commentary. Especially convenient and enlightening is a section devoted to 'Addition and Substitution of Musical Numbers' (380–383). Six important deviations from Goethe's published text are discussed here. In one of these, an aria for Claudine (No. 8) was moved from the first to the second act and reassigned to her confidante Lucinde. The editors argue convincingly that this was done to redress an imbalance between the two parts, possibly at the behest of Aloysia Lange, who sang Lucinde. Perhaps to soothe any wound to Madame Unzelmann, a replacement aria for Claudine was inserted into the place left vacant in Act 1. This new text and also another aria for Rugantino later in the same act (No. 9½) appear not to be by Goethe at all. Whether their music is similarly by someone other than Reichardt, as the editors suggest, must remain an open question until we gain a better understanding of the composer's musical practices and proclivities.

The appearance of this edition provides an apt laboratory for assessing the character and significance of Reichardt's abundant settings of Goethe's operas and verse. In the present instance, this means confronting critically Goethe's self-proclaimed indebtedness to Italian opera buffa. The following entry in *Italienische Reise* (for 6 February 1788) intimates that this was more a matter of compromise than out-and-out conversion: 'Since I now know the requirements of the lyric theatre more precisely, I have sought through a number of sacrifices to meet the needs of the composer and actor' (*Goethes Werke*, volume 11, *Autobiographische Schriften III*, ed. Erich Trunz, with commentary by Herbert von Einem (Hamburg: Christian Wegner, 1950; reprinted Munich: C. H. Beck, 1981), 516; my translation). The 'sacrifices' (Aufopferungen), given that he was revising and not starting from scratch, were not a matter of forgoing what he may have wanted to do, but jettisoning what he had already done in the earlier version.

The new features of the work that are modelled closely on opera buffa have been thoroughly scrutinized in the literature by both Germanists and music historians. Less salient, but just as important for understanding Reichardt's opera, are the areas that remained beholden to German practice. There are at least four. First, the strophic lied tradition was too deeply embedded to be ignored. The *Romanze* in particular (borrowed from opéra-comique but fashioned into a distinctive German narrative type) survived in even the most Italianate of German operas, as seen in Pedrillo's 'Im Mohrenland' in Mozart's *Die Entführung*. Second, at court as well as on public stages, German theatres continued to offer both spoken drama and opera. Even the Emperor's Burgtheater in Vienna followed this practice during the era of the National Theatre and National Singspiel. Third, poets regularly published their opera texts as self-standing artistic products. In the case of the revised version of *Claudine*, Goethe himself worried about the figure it would cut next to *Egmont* in the Göschen edition. Finally, there were significant limits on the extent to which German verse could be bent to the musical ends that Italian opera had been refining for nearly two centuries. The extent to which Goethe approximated Italian *poesia per musica* is impressive. He placed accented syllables at the end of stanzas where a major cadence was certain to fall, and he shifted metre to signal musical shifts in



his action ensembles and finales. In his recitatives he softened the jog-trot of unbroken iambs into something closer to Italian verse types.

The editors close their Introduction with a remark that Dittersdorf made after attending a rehearsal of Reichardt's *Claudine* in 1789: 'I wish that all the pieces I have written and probably ever shall write were as pure as this one.' (xi; originally quoted in Max Friedländer, 'Varianten zu *Claudine von Villa Bella*', *Jahrbuch der Goethe-Gesellschaft* 8 (1921), 54). This is high praise indeed for a Viennese to bestow on a Prussian, and it illuminates at least one of the sources of the high regard in which Goethe held Reichardt's music at the time.

THOMAS BAUMAN



RECORDINGS

Eighteenth-Century Music © Cambridge University Press, 2011
doi:10.1017/S1478570610000552

TOMASO GIOVANNI ALBINONI (1671–1751)

HOMAGE TO A SPANISH GRANDEE: SELECTIONS FROM 'CONCERTI A CINQUE', OP. 10

Collegium Musicum 90 / Simon Standage (violin and direction)

Chandos, CHAN 0769, 2010; one disc, 69 minutes

This 2010 release from Chandos Early Music presents eight concertos – Nos 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11 and 12 – selected from Tomaso Albinoni's Op. 10. Simon Standage and Collegium Musicum 90 give a refreshing new reading of the last printed collection by the Venetian *musicò di violino*, published by Michel-Charles Le Cène at Amsterdam in 1735 or 1736. Although one of three known copies of the original edition of Albinoni's Op. 10 was discovered in a Swedish private collection in 1966, this opus did not gain the favour of critics or musicians in the following decades. Even so, two complete recordings were made by I Solisti Veneti and I Musici di Roma and were released several times on record and on compact disc. Recently, Albinoni's Op. 10 seems to have enjoyed a rise in popularity, with several ensembles sampling its concertos. Collegium Musicum 90 has already recorded four CDs of better-known works by Albinoni, whose aristocratic and measured style encounters a fitting rendering in its interpretation by this ensemble.

Albinoni introduced galant features in Op. 10, sprinkling the melodic line with appoggiaturas, triplet semiquavers and syncopations, but he remained loyal to his sober musical taste in the architecture of the parts. In these late concertos, issued when Tartini was already celebrating his early triumphs, Albinoni permits the *violino principale* to play larger solo passages in only a few cases. Maybe it was for this reason that Simon Standage included concertos Nos 8 and 12 in his selection, as these can truly be called solo violin concertos, while the others are string concertos without a particular soloist. Producing a beautiful and well-rounded violin tone in the slow movements, Standage resists falling into over-indulgent expressivity, but he might even have been a bit more courageous in ornamenting more passages in the manner that he used in the Largo of the eighth concerto (in track No. 11, for example, the line of the solo violin part might have been embellished to a greater degree). The final cadenzas marked in the first movements of the two violin concertos could have been more developed.

The convincing articulation, accentuation and tempo choices of Collegium Musicum 90 clearly find their apogee at the outset of the first movement of Concerto No. 11; this work is written in 'Spanish style', and fittingly so, since the 'Homage to a Spanish Grandee' refers to Don Luca Fernando Patiño, the dedicatee of Op. 10. Collegium Musicum 90 plays with impeccable technique and without the roughness common to so many early music ensembles. One might comment, though, that sharper distinctions could have been drawn between the *piano* and *forte* passages. Although the harpsichordist employs little motivic licence in realization of the figured bass, it is very effective when this does occur. The recording engineer seems to have pared