



(another possibility). After all, this is a work composed and initially performed in a city that from 1462 had locked its Jews in a ghetto.

It is indisputable that the music is finely crafted, but in a way this makes the issue of representation more troubling. The text remains problematic, regardless of which of the various composer's settings is being considered. Perhaps what we can draw from the piece is a lesson on clothing objectionable sentiments in brilliant music, and the incentive to consider how the changing views of historical texts affect our assessment of the music to which they are set.

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ANTONIO VIVALDI, *JUDITHA TRIUMPHANS DEVICTA HOLOFERNIS BARBARIE*,
RV644

ED. MICHAEL TALBOT

Milan: Ricordi, 2008

pp. liii + 314, ISBN 978 88 7592 855 1

Of the four oratorios Vivaldi is known to have composed between 1713 and 1722, only *Juditha triumphans*, from 1716, has survived. Luckily the sole source is in the composer's hand; while mostly neat and ready for the copyist, it also includes some hastily penned passages that illustrate last-minute changes. As Talbot points out in his excellent Introduction to this new edition, which forms part of the ongoing Vivaldi *Edizione Critica*, the formal coherence and timbral magnificence of *Juditha triumphans* were quickly recognized in the early days of the Vivaldi revival in the 1940s (xxxiii). More recently, a plethora of recordings since 1998 (including those of The King's Consort, Academia Montris Regalis, Capella Savaria, Modo Antiquo, I Barocchisti and the Orchestra of the Antipodes) have made the work even more popular among a wider public.

Juditha triumphans is truly one of the great masterpieces of early eighteenth-century Venice. Richly orchestrated and thoughtfully conceived for the talented women and girls of the Ospedale della Pietà, the treasures of *Juditha triumphans* stimulate speculation on the nature of Vivaldi's other lost works in this genre as well as curiosity about the nature of the few surviving works of his Venetian contemporaries. At first glance, this 'sacrum militare oratorium' is distinguished from contemporaneous operatic traditions by an increased use of the chorus and a Latin libretto; moreover, the ancient tongue of the Roman Republic imparts here a cultural capital that served to legitimize the civic virtue of the institution as well as the pedagogical worthiness of the original performances themselves. Above all, we find an overt and extravagant use of obbligato instruments, designed to display the formidable talents of the female performers on the diverse instrumentarium of the Ospedale. Included in the already large orchestral scoring for *Juditha triumphans* are solo parts for soprano chalumeau, viola d'amore, four theorbos, a mandolin, oboe and organ, two treble recorders and a five-part collection of mysteriously-named 'violettes all'inglese', which Michael Talbot has convincingly demonstrated to be equivalent to a chest of viols ('Vivaldi and the English Viol', *Early Music* 30/3 (2002), 381–394). This kind of sonic sumptuousness makes the work just as attractive now as it must have been then. Benedetto Marcello alludes to the popularity for obbligato treatment in sung drama at the time in a brief satirical jab made in his *Il Teatro alla moda* of 1720, which includes the lampooning 'ariette accompanied by stromenti pizzicato, sordini, trombe marine, piombé [Jew's harp] etc.'. One seeks in vain for other works of the 1710s or 1720s approaching the stature of Vivaldi's work; however, most are lost. Talbot mentions in passing an intriguing (and hitherto unpublished) serenata with a



similarly diverse use of obbligato instruments by Giovanni Porta (*Il ritratto dell'eroe*, 1726), which has been languishing without a shelfmark in a library in Stockholm (xxviii), but in the end *Juditha triumphans* really does stand out among the very few surviving works in its unwavering commitment to orchestral opulence.

This opulence serves the exotic setting of the text very well, written as it was 'hisce belli temporibus [in this time of war]', as the libretto's title-page declares. The war in question was Venice's sixth campaign against the Ottomans and an appended poem by the librettist Giacomo Cassetti parses the allegorical content of the oratorio for those who purchased the wordbook: 'War is upon us, and a fierce enemy threatens: JUDITH is ADRIA [Venice], and her companion ABRA the [Christian] Faith. . . . Holofernes is the Turkish ruler [the Sultan], the eunuch [Vagaus] his general, and so the whole VENETIAN fleet will enjoy a very great victory.' This victory, of course, actually never took place and, as Talbot notes, the work's 'spirit of triumphalism reflected an aspiration when Venice's forces were at their lowest ebb, rather than a reality' (xxx). The militaristic tone of the oratorio is seemingly further enhanced by the absence of an introductory sinfonia; the score as it survives begins *in medias res*, with bellicose timpani and trumpets amidst a bloodthirsty throng of Assyrians. Vivaldi's sinfonia (there must have been one, as Talbot notes on page xxxvi) was separated from the manuscript at some point, so some recordings and modern-day staged adaptations that choose to perform a sinfonia generally substitute another from Vivaldi's oeuvre. In this edition Talbot decides to 'cut the Gordian knot' and so presents the work without an overture, observing that any 'imported sinfonia will sound too obviously like a foreign body' (xxxix–xl). Various alternative suggestions are made, and to these I would add those large concertos that can often be transposed and adapted so that the opening chorus follows an opening pair of fast and slow movements. Examples of such works are RV555, RV558, RV562 and RV562a; the last is the sole instrumental concerto of Vivaldi to include a written part for timpani and so maintains a link (however tenuous) with the opening chorus.

Talbot's Introduction and editorial work are of the very high calibre we have come to expect from one of our greatest living specialists on Vivaldi. The Introduction complements the work and research of Eleanor Selfridge-Field and others in the field of eighteenth-century Venetian oratorio and, although it replicates material from Talbot's earlier study *The Sacred Vocal Music of Antonio Vivaldi* (Florence: Olschki, 1995), I would recommend this Introduction as essential reading for any scholar or conductor who is coming to the work for the first time. There is an excellent historical overview in addition to precise discussions concerning the dating of the work, the performers known to have taken part in the first performances, paper types, rastrographies, instrumentation, background to the alternative arias and some details of performance practice. Conductors and directors who seek to stage the oratorio as an opera are gently reminded that there is no historical justification for such an approach, though Talbot does concede that 'from time to time there may be valid reasons' (xxxviii). Those considering this course of action would greatly benefit from Talbot's essay 'How Operatic is Vivaldi's "Juditha Triumphans?"' (in *Music as Social and Cultural Practice: Essays in Honour of Reinhard Strohm*, ed. Melania Bucciarelli and Berta Joncus (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), 214–231). Throughout this work Talbot is refreshingly undogmatic regarding the pragmatic necessities of present-day performances.

Before the appearance of the publication presently under review, *Juditha triumphans* was available in two widely known editions: one edited by Alberto Zedda for Ricordi in 1970 and the other prepared by Robert King (London: The King's Consort, 1997), though the latter is unaccountably not mentioned in Talbot's Preface. The 2009 edition presents the musical text extremely well; the critical apparatus is clear and well formulated and the full score includes no realization of the figured bass. All these characteristics represent welcome changes from Ricordi publications of the past. The few blemishes that occur seem only to have arisen from the vagaries and frustrations of computer-based music engraving. Square brackets and symbols that indicate doubling are often not systematically aligned and occasionally their edges collide with stems and other objects or disappear along leger lines (for example in bar 33 on page 10, bar 94 on page 86, bars 9 and 10 on page 96, bars 74–76 on page 135 and bar 61 on page 146, amongst others). There are some questionable note spacings (for example in bar 61 on page 24, bar 73 on page 25 and bars 116–117 on page 87),



and a mysterious and unexplained clef replaces the usual treble clef on pages 67, 89 and 90. If Ricordi wishes to enhance their already formidable reputation, I would encourage their engraving staff to look to the exemplary and handsome models of currently ongoing complete editions, most notably those of C. P. E. Bach (Los Altos: The Packard Humanities Institute) and J. A. Hasse (Stuttgart: Carus). The musical publications and formatting techniques of the Center for Computer Assisted Research in the Humanities at Stanford University also continue to serve as a benchmark for excellence in the field of computer-aided music engraving.

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VOLTAIRE (FRANÇOIS-MARIE AROUET), *OEUVRES DE 1738–1740 (III); WRITINGS FOR MUSIC (1720–1740)*

ED. ROGER J. V. COTTE, RUSSELL GOULBOURNE, GILLIAN PINK, GERHARDT STENGER, RAYMOND TROUSSON AND DAVID WILLIAMS

Complete Works of Voltaire 18c

Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2008

pp. xxvi + 430, ISBN 978 0 7294 0913 1

VOLTAIRE (FRANÇOIS-MARIE AROUET), *CEUVRES DE 1742–1745 (I)*

ED. OLIVIER FERRET, RUSSELL GOULBOURNE, RALPH A. NABLOW AND DAVID WILLIAMS

Complete Works of Voltaire 28a

Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2006

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Musicologists specializing in the French Baroque owe a debt of gratitude to the Voltaire Foundation for its efforts over the past three decades. The Foundation's meticulously transcribed edition of Voltaire's correspondence, contained within its *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, amounts to nearly one hundred volumes and covers most of the eighteenth century, from 1704 to 1778. This alone would be a significant achievement, providing detailed indices and notes that are richly peopled with composers, singers, dancers, poets and – always – gossip about music. It will be some time before music scholars benefit fully from everything the correspondence holds. Meanwhile, the Foundation's series 'Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century' has approached four hundred volumes, offering a forum for some of the most specialized research available on eighteenth-century France. Here again, the editorial standards are high, and the music research and editions of period sources on music are sound and reliable. By way of comparison, the two recently completed volumes containing Voltaire's writings for musical setting cannot avoid looking small and a bit anticlimactic, and yet with them we come to the heart of the matter, those points at which Voltaire intervened directly in music history: three *livrets* for *tragédies en musique*, none of which was performed, two more for ballets successfully set to music by Jean-Philippe Rameau and some essays and poems that have some bearing on the musical and theatrical worlds of eighteenth-century France. These editions remind us that whatever were Voltaire's complaints about opera (as recorded, famously, in his 1730 Preface to the spoken tragedy *Oedipe*), the poet dedicated a remarkable amount of time during the 1730s and 1740s to working on *livrets*, and even his failed opera projects absorbed his attention later in life.

Bringing these works together in new editions recalls some basic features of Voltaire's opera projects, properties they could be said to share. First, it is remarkable, though not surprising, that his tragic *livrets*