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CONVENT MUSIC AND POLITICS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY VIENNA

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Of all the splendour-loving European dynasties of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, perhaps the Habsburgs in Vienna used music most effectively to promote their image and to sustain their power. Especially during the reigns of Emperors Leopold I (1658–1705), Joseph I (1705–1711) and Charles VI (1712–1740), music played a significant role in every aspect of court life. The emperors themselves were active as composers and as performers on a variety of keyboard and wind instruments. A great deal has been written about the operas, oratorios, cantatas and instrumental music composed for Habsburg entertainment. Scholars such as Friedrich Riedel have written extensively about the music in Austrian churches and monasteries, but little has been published about the music performed and composed in convents. In *Convent Music and Politics*, Janet Page admirably undertakes the task of filling this gap. Page meticulously traces the rise of convents in Vienna, their relationship to the court and their ultimate decline and dissolution in the late eighteenth century. She discusses the range of musical activities at seven cloisters within the city walls founded in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as at two that were built after 1700 in what is now the city's third district.

Throughout the book the author emphasizes two themes: the interaction of music and piety, and the links between cloistered communities and society outside the convent walls. Visits to Viennese convents by members of the imperial family were common; Table 1 details more than fifty such visits in the year 1715 alone. Page reveals the rich musical traditions at convents such as the Königinclöster, St Agnes zur Himmelpforte and St Ursula. Much of the music was provided by the nuns themselves, who performed choral music and played keyboard, stringed, wind and fretted instruments. The choral music sometimes included parts for female *Bassistinnen*. At times, male singers participated by standing behind a doorway or on a stair landing unseen. For special occasions, especially those attended by members of the imperial family, the number of performers could be supplemented by members of the *Hofkapelle*, musicians from St Stephen's Cathedral, or even military trumpeters and percussionists.

Page's first chapter sets the scene by discussing in detail the music for the entrance, clothing and profession ceremonies of Viennese nuns. For the most high-born women, these ceremonies could be quite elaborate and festive, but simpler rites were also observed for women of lesser status. In chapter 2 the author explores the rich musical tradition at St Jakob auf der Hülben, where performances of at least fourteen oratorios and *feste teatrale* by composers such as Maria Anna von Raschenau and Francesco Scarlatti took place on the patron saint's day (July 25) between 1694 and 1716 (Page lists these performances in her Table 2). Page offers a full biographical sketch of Raschenau (1650–1714), the daughter of an imperial doorkeeper. Of the six works that Raschenau composed for the patron saint's day, complete scores are preserved for two and a partial score for a third. With copious music examples and style-analytical comments, Page clearly demonstrates that Raschenau's music deserves to be placed favourably alongside that of court composers such as Carlo Badia, Marc'Antonio Ziani and the Bononcini brothers. Later, in chapter 4, Page suggests Raschenau as 'the best candidate for primary composer' of *Castilda*, an oratorio with a libretto pertinent to the War of the Spanish Succession that was performed before an illustrious crowd, including Emperor Joseph I, whose birthday followed the patron saint's by only one day. The oratorio tradition at St Jakob seems to have died out after 1716, but a new tradition of presenting *Trauer-Gesänge* during Holy Week appears to have sprung up there later in the reign of Charles VI. Among the works of this sort known to have been performed near the end of Charles's reign is one by Georg Christoph Wagenseil for which only the libretto has survived.

In chapter 3 Page focuses on the Ursuline convent, where music played an important role in educating girls, the convent's principal mission. The convent had been founded by the Dowager Empress Eleonora



Gonzaga, widow of the Emperor Ferdinand II, in 1660. The Ursuline convent's more relaxed approach to the use of music for the religious education of girls contrasts sharply with the restrictive methods used in Italian convents. For example, male organists provided instruction and appropriate music. A tradition of performing suitable plays with music arose in the late seventeenth century. While the nuns at the Ursuline convent included many who were accomplished musicians, most of the music for the convent was provided by outside composers such as Badia, who wrote at least twenty-four oratorios and *sepolcri* for the nuns between 1694 and 1708. Page devotes a substantial portion of chapter 3 to a discussion of the texts and an analysis of the music of Badia's *Santa Teresa* (1708) and *Il martirio di S. Susanna* (1707).

During Holy Week the emperor and his family moved about from church to church and from convent to convent. In chapter 4 Page shows the ways in which convent passion music drew upon both sacred and secular models, including opera, Jesuit drama and even *commedia dell'arte*. The librettos for the convent passion presentations, including one by the celebrated puppeteer and actor Johann Hilverding, offered opportunities for limited dramatic action. Page provides extensive analysis of music for passion productions in Italian by Badia, relating her comments to the shifts in style in Vienna from the end of the seventeenth century to the early eighteenth. She also discusses German-language pieces such as two pastoral works by Franz Anton Gruner and *Trauer-Gesänge* by Georg Reutter Jr, all of which appealed to the emotions of ordinary people.

In the final chapter Page traces the development and gradual decline of convent life in Vienna. Although Charles VI made state visits to two cloisters from time to time, female members of the imperial family, such as the dowager empresses and archduchesses, carried out the bulk of the visits during his reign, making convent life 'more markedly a feminine and private sphere' (198). Johann Georg Reinhardt, Georg Gottwalt, Anton Gruner and Alexander Ender supplied large works in German for special occasions in the late 1720s and 1730s. Of the two new convents outside the city walls, St Elizabeth and the Salisianerinnenkloster, the latter was founded in 1719 and supported by the dowager empress Amalie Wilhelmine. At this convent the girls received training in music and enjoyed occasional festive performances well past the middle of the century.

The swift and rather sad decline of convents within the city walls can be attributed to two factors: the dire financial circumstances of the court following the War of the Austrian Succession and the changing attitudes regarding the role of women in society. During the reign of Maria Theresia, the *Hofmusikkapelle* was reduced to a mere shadow of what it had been during the brilliant epoch enjoyed by her grandfather, uncle and father. In the 1750s the empress limited the number of feast days in the church calendar, frowned upon lavish ceremonies and banned the use of trumpets and timpani, though the ban appears to have been relaxed somewhat after 1767. According to Page, trombones were often played in Vienna, a city renowned for trombone making, but the players heard in convents were usually hired from outside; as convent performances became increasingly 'home-grown', they disappeared (216–222). Further regulations imposed by Maria Theresia in the 1770s established strict new conditions for the entry of young women into convents and reduced financial support. Moreover, rational attitudes in the Age of Enlightenment viewed convent life and the motives of young girls who wished to enter convents with suspicion. Marriage and social usefulness were considered more suitable paths for women. In 1782 and 1783 Joseph II closed six of the seven such institutions within the city walls, leaving only the Ursuline convent remaining. The hasty manner in which the convents were closed and the nuns forcibly retired offers evidence of a harsh and heavy imperial hand. Convent possessions, including music and musical instruments, either devolved to the state or were auctioned off.

The appendices that conclude *Convent Music and Politics* constitute one of the most valuable aspects of the book. In Appendix 1 Page lists chronologically the works performed in Viennese convents c1660–1774, providing detailed information about dates, places, composers, librettists and sources. Selected sources are given in Appendix 2. Pertinent information about the Habsburg family and a glossary of terms and titles appear in Appendices 3 and 4 respectively. It is clear from the extensive bibliography that Page has undertaken a thorough investigation of the primary and secondary literature.



Beyond its obvious usefulness as a historical and style-analytical study, *Convent Music and Politics* serves two additional purposes. It enlarges our understanding of the astonishing variety of institutions that glorified the Habsburgs with music, and it reveals the important part that women played in creating the music that honoured them.

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GIORGIO SANGUINETTI

THE ART OF PARTIMENTO: HISTORY, THEORY, AND PRACTICE

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Four years after its publication, a book of such a great resonance as Giorgio Sanguinetti's *The Art of Partimento* can be supposed to be already well known to specialists in eighteenth-century music; moreover, an editorial on the subject of partimenti was written by Sanguinetti himself for this journal in 2014 (*Eighteenth-Century Music* 11/1 (2014), 3–9). In this review, therefore, I reconsider some aspects of the study from a much broader perspective, in order to focus on the book's reading of the partimento tradition as well as on its role in the 'partimento renaissance' currently underway.

The importance of partimento had already been suggested by Robert Gjerdingen in his illuminating *Music in the Galant Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), and a moderate number of articles and essays by several scholars, Sanguinetti included, also addressed this issue in the late 2000s. *The Art of Partimento*, then, was the first (and indeed remains the only) monograph entirely devoted to these neglected sketches on a single staff, easily recognizable by changes of clef and texture, polyphonic episodes, imitation, the absence of continuo figures and so on, which were at the core of composition teaching in eighteenth-century Naples – one of the most astonishingly productive pedagogical workshops in the history of Western art music.

The book opens with an introduction to the historical context in which partimenti took root, drawing considerably on primary sources and contributions by other scholars (mainly in Italian) that are commendably made accessible here to a wider readership – albeit with some indulgence in redundancy and anecdotalism. The second part is then concerned with theoretical instructions for the realization of partimenti, based on a selection of sources ascribed to different authors, from Alessandro Scarlatti to Giacomo Tritto, organized by subject. Even if dealing essentially with the accompaniment of an unfigured bass, these collections of *regole* – of which Sanguinetti provides a dense sixty-page compendium – supply a rare written account of applied Neapolitan theory, which was in fact an eminently oral tradition.

Finally, in a longer, twofold section divided into Parts Three ('Practice') and Four ('A Guide to Realization'), *The Art of Partimento* reveals its true aim. Despite the neutral, tripartite subtitle, this is definitely practice-oriented, as stated in the Prologue: 'This book is also' – indeed, perhaps one should say mainly – 'a practical guide to the use of partimenti as living teaching tools' (viii). Hence, after introducing some realization techniques and a few realized historical exemplars, Sanguinetti provides a number of complete partimenti arranged according to genre, form and style, as well as according to difficulty. These are also regularly supported by analytical commentaries and Sanguinetti's own partial realizations, so that the reader – a partimento player, from now on – can complete them or undertake fresh renditions following his example. A considerable amount of material is presented, and the effort given to analysis and realization is praiseworthy.