



distinctions between convention and exception on which much of Bloechl's argumentation seems to hinge. Nevertheless, this book is an asset to the field of French opera scholarship: it opens up new avenues for analysing how specific, recurrent scene types reflected the political experiences of the Parisian elites, and thus how the genre served as an essential – yet subtle – tool in what Foucault termed 'the government of men'. What is more, Bloechl's larger argument about the political imaginary as a defining element in the experience of theatre should be appealing to a wide array of scholars far beyond those interested in French opera.

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Eighteenth-Century Music © Cambridge University Press, 2019

[doi:10.1017/S1478570618000362](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478570618000362)

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JOMMELLIANA: UN OPERISTA SULLA SCENA CAPITOLINA. STUDI SUL PERIODO

ROMANO DI NICCOLÒ JOMMELLI

Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2017

pp. xxviii + 171, ISBN 978 8 870 96907 8

Few opera-seria debuts made such a mark as Niccolò Jommelli's *Ricimero, Re de' Goti* (1740) at the Teatro Argentina in Rome. Singled out in Charles de Brosses' oft-quoted travelogue and featured in an annotated caricature by Pier Leone Ghezzi, *Ricimero* sparked thirty-four years of success in every realm of vocal music, both secular and religious. Even so, Jommelli's early years have not been dealt with as extensively as his 'middle' period in Württemberg (1753–1769) and his late endeavours for Naples and Lisbon (1769–1774). Happily, the tercentenary of the composer's birth, in 2014, has yielded three Italian conference reports that uncover lesser-known Jommellian areas, including the early operas. Alongside *Niccolò Jommelli: l'esperienza europea di un musicista 'filosofo'*, edited by Gaetano Pitarresi (Reggio Calabria: Edizioni del Conservatorio di Musica F. Cilea, 2014) and *Le stagioni di Niccolò Jommelli*, edited by Maria Ida Biggi, Francesco Cotticelli, Paologiovanni Maione and Iskrena Yordanova (Naples: Turchini, 2018), a third collection deals specifically with Jommelli's early endeavours for Rome. That this anthology and its linked conference have been undertaken by two early-career scholars, Gianluca Bocchino and Cecilia Nicolò, deserves praise and emulation.

Italian *auctoritas* has dictated that a senior scholar, Andrea Chegai, be invited to preface the volume with a *captatio benevolentiae* that, oddly enough, does not properly introduce, much less endorse, the volume and its topic. Instead, Chegai's contribution muses on recent developments in scholarship on eighteenth-century opera, most notably the rise of the digital humanities. Chegai both recognizes and condemns the digital humanities, arguing that their promotion of 'accumulation' and 'collectionism' stands in the way of a 'lucid historical perspective' (xii; all translations are mine). Further open-ended remarks are offered on opera seria's subject matter, the difficulties underlying the interpretation of old chronicles, the ephemerality of operatic scores and, inevitably, the issue of *Regietheater* in our time. I wished, instead, to learn more about Chegai's historical perspective on Jommelli, if not about the possibilities and challenges of 'urban musicology' carried out on an oeuvre that transcends the boundaries of one particular city – several of Jommelli's Roman operas were in fact revived elsewhere, which is insufficiently acknowledged in this book.

The first part of the volume sketches the composer's mid-eighteenth-century context. Cecilia Nicolò discusses Rome's role as a springboard for operatic careers. She seeks to uncover the motivations of Jommelli's benefactors, who enjoyed a close relationship with the papal authorities. However, she argues that 'while in other European cities, the operatic theatre could constitute one of the symbols of power, the Church in Rome,



for ethical reasons, had to remain at a compulsory distance from the theatre' (7). There may be some truth to this, but her argument is contradicted in the volume's next essay, by Alessandro Avallone, who argues that mid-eighteenth-century Roman opera grew into a 'consolidated and blossoming institution . . . *recognized by the theocratic government*' (24, my italics). That several high-positioned clerics indeed supported opera is shown by the very cover image of *Jommelliana*: Giovanni Paolo Panini's depiction of Jommelli's 1747 *componimento drammatico* at the Teatro Argentina, whose front row is occupied by twenty-one cardinals (sporting red *zucchetti*), with many additional clerics sitting in the parterre. Nicolò makes the valid point that the documentary evidence of Jommelli's patronage and reception in the Holy City is scant, but she might also have drawn on socio-artistic patterns discernible in other composers' careers, as well as on the evidence that can be gleaned from Jommellian revivals outside Rome – for instance, that of *Astianatte* in Perugia (1743) and Barcelona (1762 and 1763). Alas, no such broadening of perspective is offered.

Avallone primarily discusses Jommelli's connections with the political-diplomatic network of the Holy City. It is well known that Jommelli's two principal protectors in Rome represented 'diametrically opposed . . . political tendencies' (26), with Alessandro Albani serving the Austro-English cause (the cardinal even spied for William III), and Henry Benedict Stuart, the Duke and later Cardinal of York and grandson of the deposed Catholic King James II, being associated with the Jacobites. Jommelli's integration into both coteries certainly suggests acute diplomatic skills on the composer's part; but whether his idiosyncratic aesthetic – his expansion of the orchestra's role and disruption of formal schemes *vis-à-vis* his loyalty to Metastasian dramaturgy (35) – constitutes an expression of diplomacy, as Avallone suggests, rather than an illustration of opera seria's flexibility remains to be seen.

In her contribution, written in French, Élodie Oriol explores the strategies that helped Jommelli, a native of the Campanian town of Aversa and alumnus of two Neapolitan conservatories, to attain a place in the Roman musical firmament, particularly in the Roman chapels. Citing a 1749 letter from Girolamo Chiti, Saint Peter's *maestro di cappella coadiutore*, to Padre Martini, the author enumerates the conditions with which Jommelli had to comply in order to perform a function similar to Chiti's at Santa Maria dell'Anima: he was given unsalaried work; he was banned from attending *comédie*, even his own (whether this term denotes musical 'comedies' or 'dramas' in general is not explained); and membership in the Congregazione di Santa Cecilia, achieved by passing an exam, was required.

Lucio Tufano attends to Gioacchino Pizzi, the librettist of *Creso* (1757) and custodian of the Arcadian Academy, of which Jommelli was a member. Besides reproducing two Anacreontic contributions Jommelli made to the Arcadians, Tufano's chapter uncovers and discusses a curious ode by Pizzi, *Per la venuta in Roma del celebre maestro di cappella il signor Niccolò Jommelli* (1753). This intriguing poetic paeon to Jommelli adds a new layer of information to the composer's presence in the Holy City. It is a pity that Tufano does not offer a reading of Pizzi's *Creso* itself, if only to tell readers why the libretto failed to find favour with the Roman audience despite its success in London and elsewhere.

The second portion of *Jommelliana* is devoted to four seria scores. Gianluca Bocchino and Elisabetta Guarnieri each contribute part of a chapter on *Ricimero*, the first and most cogent part of which ascribes the impact of Jommelli's seria debut to its eulogistic subject, celebrating 'Roman magnificence and virtue' (78). Issues of patronage are again tackled, with a focus on the fifteen-year-old (!) Duke of York's role as dedicatee. Bocchino furthermore draws links between *Ricimero* and Porpora's *Flavio Anicio Alibrio* (1722), dedicated to the Duke of York's mother, Maria Clementina Sobieska; both works were derived from the same libretto by Zeno and Pariati. Guarnieri unfortunately misattributes the librettos of several further *Ricimero* operas (Galuppi, 1745; Calderara, 1756; Ferradini, 1758; Borghi, 1773; Pietro Antonio Guglielmi, 1777; Zingarelli, 1785) to Zeno and Pariati, rather than to Silvani, which leads her to a false conclusion as regards to the former librettists' success in the second half of the *Settecento*. Furthermore, Guarnieri's analysis of Jommelli's score is restricted to indicating the 'morphology' – the basic parameters of tempo, metre, key and form – of each number's A section, offering the weak conclusion that 'in *Ricimero* we find some of the solutions that will later become real hallmarks of the author from Aversa' (99).



Antonella D'Ovidio's take on *Astianatte* shows more assurance in indicating the 'dramaturgy of interior conflict' that defines the musical portrayal of the male and female protagonists in this (compelling) opera. However, her conclusions, too, are teleological in naming 'stylistic prototypes' for later Jommellian operas, while rehearsing earlier observations made by Marita McClymonds and Daniel Hertz as regards, for instance, the role of the orchestra and the ruptures in the lyrical fabric through declamatory interjections. On the other hand, D'Ovidio unveils a fresh archival source from the criminal tribunal of the Roman governor, which details the fees of all personnel involved in the Teatro Argentina's 1740–1741 season, including Jommelli's.

The final contribution, by Francesca Menchelli-Buttini, refines earlier research on the connections between *Cajo Mario* and *Ifgenia* (see my article "Am I in Rome, or in Aulis?": Jommelli's *Cajo Mario* (1746) as Operatic *Capriccio*', *Eighteenth-Century Music* 13/1 (2016), 35–50). A comparative analysis of selected scenes helps the author shed light on subtle variations in the music-textual discourse of both operas, testifying to Jommelli's 'fantasy in reacting with great efficacy to commonplaces' (164). The author digs deep into the intertextual trove of Jommellian opera, discovering precedents for Marzia's address to the Roman Senate in *Cajo Mario* in Pradon's tragedy *Regulus* (1688) and that tragedy's earliest operatic adaptations, but I do not understand why Jommelli's *Attilio Regolo* (also for Rome, 1753) is omitted from the discussion. In addition, it is a pity that the recent literature on topics and *partimenti* is left untouched in these and previous analyses.

Jommelliana offers scholarly spectacle in the guise of primary-source discoveries, but the theatrical curtain on Jommelli's Roman playground remains half-closed, so to speak. The volume's sharp temporal-geographical focus should have inspired more adventurous forays into Roman cultural history, encompassing issues such as spectatorship, civic self-representation, the Grand Tour, antiquarian culture and mid-century neoclassicism (in which Alessandro Albani and his famous librarian-antiquarian, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, played no mean part), the agency of singers and impresarios (Giuseppe Polvini Faliconi is cited on page 25 as instigator of Jommelli's arrival in Rome, and that is about it) and so on. The volume's modest dimensions have precluded discussion of every opera Jommelli composed for Rome (though a complete list in table form would have been useful), but the omission of Jommelli's popular comic intermezzi – *Don Chicchibbio* (1741), *La cantata, e disfida di Don Trastullo* (1749) and *I rivali delusi* (1752) – is regrettable, given their later role in the *querelle des bouffons*, as is that of the enigmatic cantata *Armida* (1746), and of the operas *Cesare in Egitto* (1751) and *Talestri* (1751). May the story continue.

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Eighteenth-Century Music © Cambridge University Press, 2019
doi:10.1017/S1478570618000374

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CONSUMING MUSIC: INDIVIDUALS, INSTITUTIONS, COMMUNITIES, 1730–1830

Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2017

pp. vii + 255, ISBN 978 1 580 46577 9

With a book that invites its reader to look beyond the content of printed artefacts and appreciate their paratexts, packaging and allure as desirable commodities, it seems only appropriate to start by perusing the volume's attractive cover. We are treated to a coloured reproduction of a print from 1786, showing a crowd outside the shop of the publisher and art dealer Artaria in Vienna. The portion of the image shown here is magnified to occupy the full front cover, but is only a detail of the original print, which is some twenty times bigger and boasts a panoramic view of the whole street. This zooming-in on the people flocking to Artaria's shop and gazing intently at the display (one impatient onlooker at the back, too far away to browse