

REVIEWS



BOOKS

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ANDREA BOMBI

ENTRE TRADICIÓN Y MODERNIDAD: EL ITALIANISMO MUSICAL EN VALENCIA (1685–1738)

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No two concepts carry greater polemical weight in Spanish musicology than those of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’, both reminiscent of one of the longest debates in the history of early modern Spanish music. Andrea Bombi’s title – which translates as *Between Tradition and Modernity: Musical Italianism in Valencia (1685–1738)* – evokes such debates and may suggest to the reader, at first glance, that the book centres on the Italian influence upon Spanish music from the perspective of these controversies. But Bombi’s book covers a much wider terrain. Such polemics and their repercussions in Spanish musical historiography have been re-examined recently by Juan José Carreras and Emilio Ros-Fábregas, among others; see Carreras, ‘From Llíber to Nebra: Spanish Dramatic Music between Tradition and Modernity’, in *Music in Spain during the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Malcolm Boyd and Juan José Carreras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7–16, and Emilio Ros-Fábregas, ‘“Foreign” Music and Musicians in Sixteenth-Century Spain’, in *The Royal Chapel in the Time of the Habsburgs: Music and Court Ceremony in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Juan José Carreras and Bernardo García García, English edition by Tess Knighton (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), 65–84. Rather than delve further into these polemics, Bombi sets out to reconstruct, in an unprecedented manner, the development of Valencian music and its assimilation of the Italian musical style. The author distances himself from previous scholars who narrated the history of Valencian music from a traditional and one-sided perspective – that is, focusing their attention on the musical production of the city’s two main institutions: the chapels of the Cathedral and of the College of Corpus Christi – and examines a vast corpus of unknown or insufficiently studied documents of the period while also considering the urban environment in which the city’s musical institutions developed. In so doing, Bombi is able to provide an excitingly rich and holistic view of Valencian music.

Bombi’s extensive study appears in two parts: the first is a book of more than six hundred pages that contains the author’s historical narrative of Valencian music, while the second is a CD-ROM that reproduces over one thousand pages of the primary sources – documents, literary texts and musical scores – that aided Bombi in his historical reconstruction. The book is divided into three parts, dealing with chronicles (chapters 1–3), devotional music (chapters 4–8) and musico-theatrical works (chapters 9–11), all of which provide compelling evidence that supports the author’s central thesis: Italianism – a gradual process, not a rupture – began in the closing decades of the seventeenth century, and not with the arrival in Valencia in 1714 of Pere Rabassa (a Catalan composer acquainted with the Italian musical style), as was commonly believed. Bombi’s Introduction outlines two key concepts that are examined in depth throughout the book. The first, ‘Italianization’, has to do with simple imitation of Italian style, though it can occur equally through direct cultural contact or in conjunction with the second key concept, ‘Italianism’ or indirect cultural contact. Both processes are equally examined throughout the study, even though only one of them is mentioned in the title. The second key concept is one that resonates throughout the book but is sometimes obscured by the incredibly large number of documents and vast amount of music examined, as well as the wide



range of socio-political, economic and historical issues that are touched upon. This idea is, to my mind, among the most intriguing arguments of the book: Italianism identifies the attitude of those who promoted the assimilation of the Italian style. Bombi cleverly brings to the foreground the background process of musical patronage, as well as its role in advancing certain types of music, in order to explain the assimilation of Italian musical practices and style in Valencia. Bombi's title now acquires new connotations.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the various chapels in Valencia and the circulation of music and musicians in its kingdom. In chapter 2 Bombi provides an exciting and detailed description of the Valencian musical landscape (unknown to date) based on the news contained in the chronicles of an important institution overlooked by traditional musicology: the Convent of Santo Domingo or Real Convento de Predicadores. Through the study of these chronicles, the author is able to recreate the aural and visual dimensions of the various processions around which the Valencian religious calendar revolved, analysing the multiple layers of sound and sight that converged during these ceremonies or festivities. He also draws significant conclusions concerning the important roles played by the many patrons – fraternities and *capillas de música*, or chapel musical establishments – that participated (and sometimes even competed with one another) in these processions. The role of the chapels is further explored in chapter 3, “A uso de Italia: pocas voces y muchos instrumentos”: las capillas de música y el italianismo’ (‘In the Italian Way: Few Voices and Many Instruments’: The *Capillas de Música* and Italianism). Here, both Italianism and Italianization are discussed in juxtaposition, though the main point (about the role of the chapels in promoting the assimilation of the Italian musical style) sometimes gets lost in the details. Bombi claims that the process of Italianization depended to a great extent on the presence of foreign (Swiss and German) military musicians in Valencia between 1727 and 1735. Valencian chapels learned from, collaborated with and hired these military musicians. In so doing, these musical establishments helped to advance the assimilation of Italian musical style, including for example the introduction of a greater variety and greater numbers of instruments. By hiring these musicians, smaller chapels were able to compete with the bigger institutions, in particular the cathedral. Although the author does not make an explicit connection between the use of military music and devotion or social rank, perhaps we can infer that this was another important motive for the clergy's interest in the military musicians.

Chapter 4 opens the second section of the book by introducing the literary sources used for the study of devotional music. These include four under-studied late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century manuscripts or *cancioneros* – two by José Ortí y Moles, one by José Vicente Ortí y Mayor and the other by Francisco Figuerola – that compile sacred texts conceived for religious celebrations. Chapter 5 examines the *cancioneros* within their urban context and draws significant conclusions regarding the use of devotional genres in different institutions, consumption patterns in the cathedral and in women's convents, and the musical changes in devotional genres during the period in question. Among Bombi's findings, one that is crucial to his central thesis is that certain elements of modernization, including recitatives and arias, opera and *cantada*, already appear in the texts produced during the period 1700–1713; that is, before the arrival of Pere Rabassa (233).

In chapter 6 Bombi leaves the urban environment to concentrate on the relationship between text and music in seven villancicos by Antonio Ortells composed during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Based on the premise that poets provided the composers with what he calls implicit scores, ‘linked to horizons of expectations intrinsic to their genres and to the different celebrations’ (‘ligadas a los horizontes de expectativas propios del género y de las distintas celebraciones’, an idea the author acknowledges is inspired by Ellen Rosand's work on Venetian opera and librettos in *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991)), Bombi dissects the architecture of the seven villancicos and offers a summary of the most relevant and original findings of his doctoral dissertation from which this chapter and indeed book emerge (245). Ortells's compositional style and his use of the *recitado* are then examined in detail in chapter 7. Here we encounter the first in-depth musical examples of Italianism in the seventeenth century. The author provides compelling examples that illustrate the literary and musical characteristics of the *recitado*, and in particular demonstrates that in some cases the term hints at the realistic nature of conversation-like passages, and is thus used as an adjective, while in other cases the term *recitado* is used as a noun that refers to a distinct musical section in which a soloist meditates. In neither



case, however, does this term refer, in seventeenth-century Valencian sources, to ‘sections conceived according to the dictates of the Italian recitative style’ (*secciones concebidas según los dictámenes del estilo recitativo italiano*), as in the eighteenth century; rather, it suggests Italian-inspired sections that were formulated according to Spanish compositional resources (315). Bombi demonstrates that the seventeenth-century *recitado* became both assimilated by tradition and widely disseminated in Valencian devotional and secular works. The effects of the assimilation are further explored in chapter 8, on the villancico-cantata, where the author analyses four villancicos by José Pradas (1689–1757). In these villancicos, Bombi explains, traditional sections are combined with *recitados* and arias (397). The author is quick to remind us that because the *recitados* and arias were already assimilated, they did not attract attention (unlike the novelties regarding instrumentation discussed in chapter 3). In fact, the author believes it is precisely this assimilation that made it possible, for example, for the Italian cantata to gain such ready acceptance in Valencia in the eighteenth century.

The third part of the book, which shifts from the religious to the less studied secular repertory, begins with a fascinating chapter on the Academia de Valencia (active between 1690 and 1705) and its musical practices. Here the author’s focus is on the role of the Academia on the musical taste of the city’s cultural elite as well as on the dissemination of musical Italianism. For the first time in the book, we find explicit and detailed information on practices outside of Valencia, including the academies in Madrid, Italy and France. In discussing the *fiestas académicas*, Bombi observes that these works emulated the theatrical works produced at the Madrid court. Valencian writers who travelled to Madrid brought home with them information on court practices, as witnessed in the performance in 1690 of a *comedia* by Calderón de la Barca, *La fiera, el rayo y la piedra* (1652). He also notes that the *recitado* is so assimilated that it is used in the *fiestas* in the same way as are the traditional Iberian genres, a fact that he regards as a ‘manifestación del italianismo musical’ (469). What the author does not mention in this chapter – perhaps owing to lack of documentation – is the question of whether there was any interaction between contemporary court composers and dramatists in Madrid (Durón, Litéres, Cañizares, Bancos Candamo and so on) and Valencian composers and, in particular, the writers who travelled to the capital. Indeed, the relationship between Valencia and the court may also now lead the reader to wonder what influence (if any) Madrid had on Valencian devotional music, an aspect not mentioned in part one of the book.

One of Bombi’s greatest achievements in the reconstruction and reinterpretation of Valencian music history is found in chapter 10, where he examines the operas performed in Valencia between 1728 and 1738. Basing his work once more on under-studied primary documents, the author challenges the established view that the Captain General of the City and Kingdom of Valencia, the Prince of Campoflorido, was a supporter of music, and that he had an active role in promoting Italian opera (see Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, *Orígenes y establecimiento de la ópera en España hasta 1800* (Madrid: Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos, 1917), and Arturo Zabala, *La ópera en la vida teatral valenciana del siglo XVIII* (Valencia: Institución Alfonso el Magnánimo, 1960)). Campoflorido, as Bombi’s research shows conclusively, did not have an avid interest in music as a form of art but rather as a political tool, and what is more, he did not have (nor did he show any interest in having) his own *capilla de música*. An important question that drives the author’s research in this area is that of reception, and specifically the audience for which opera was intended. Bombi’s thorough analysis of documents related to the prince and of the city’s public theatre records allows him to conclude that Campoflorido’s productions of Italian opera were for a circumscribed and select audience and that the productions of opera at the public theatre of *La Olivera*, which were scarce, were intended solely for the city’s elite and affluent population. The question of reception persists in the next and last chapter of the book, in which Bombi studies the repertory of the Italian operas produced at the palace and the operatic adaptations of Spanish *comedias* produced for the public theatre. Importantly, the author claims that even if musical Italianism had been assimilated for decades, opera failed to become incorporated into Valencian musical life. For this he provides several sociopolitical and economic reasons, including the ruling class’s inability to identify opera as a means of social representation. Bombi interprets this failure as ‘just one among many symptoms of internal division within a society immersed in a complex and lengthy process of restructuring’ (*‘uno más entre los síntomas de la división interna de una sociedad*



sumida en un complejo y prolongado proceso de recomposición'; 586), alluding to the aftermath of the 1701–1714 War of the Spanish Succession. So while the Valencian people had been exposed to Italian musical forms that were assimilated into their musical tradition – in both devotional and secular works – they were deprived of direct contact with the genre that most represented Italian culture: opera.

Synthesizing more than a decade of research, this authoritative study provides a detailed, descriptive and richly documented account of Valencian music. In examining Valencia's transition from tradition to modernity, Bombi opens up a rich cultural context that includes such neglected aspects as consumption, production and civic identity. To paraphrase an earlier observation by Tim Carter, the author's accomplishment is twofold: his (re-)examination of the privileged institutions and genres favoured by traditional musicology offers an enticing view of 'the tip of the iceberg', while his insightful contextualization of devotional and profane music in its urban environment goes on to reveal a 'large portion of that submerged iceberg' (Carter, 'Urban Musicology' (conference report), *Early Music* 28/2 (2000), 313). Aside from a few editorial weaknesses – inconsistencies in the punctuation of titles, for example, together with such slips as incorrect page numbers in the Table of Contents, mislabelled figures and occasional omissions from the Bibliography – this study is an excellent one. The reader is smoothly guided through a complex maze of documents and issues. Translations into Spanish of the many Catalan excerpts in the body of the text would have particularly aided non-native Spanish speakers, helping to make the documents more accessible to those who do not read Catalan. Still, the documentation provided here is invaluable. Bombi, whose expertise on Valencian music is unsurpassed, has once again enriched the field of Spanish musicology.

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THOMAS MCGEARY
THE POLITICS OF OPERA IN HANDEL'S BRITAIN
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Students of music in Georgian London have long been waiting for a book that provides guidelines for defining the political resonances of its Italian operas. Robert D. Hume's influential article concerning an earlier period ('The Politics of Opera in Late Seventeenth-Century London', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 10/1 (1988), 15–43) was followed by his invaluable handbook on ascertaining contemporary meanings in verbal art, *Reconstructing Contexts: The Aims and Principles of Archaeo-Historicism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999). For *The Politics of Opera in Handel's Britain* Thomas McGeary takes from Hume's article the phrase 'generic expectation' and uses it repeatedly to decry the (alleged) approaches of other scholars to his topic. I wish that as a methodological starting-point he had instead used *Reconstructing Contexts* (cited only twice), which could have saved him a lot of space and this reader considerable confusion.

McGeary explores politics, journalism, opera management, spoken drama and Italian opera librettos of the period 1705–1742. After the Introduction and a long chapter on the methodology of political interpretation of librettos, individual chapters interleave political and theatre history of the period 1714–1742 with expositions of political writing in other genres (journalism, especially opposition journalism using opera stars and management as analogies; ballad operas; plays) and rebuttals of previous interpretations of Handel's operas. A final chapter enumerates, with copious examples, the civic and monarchical principles enunciated in the librettos. Appendices give the known political affiliations and offices of Royal Academy shareholders, list directors of the Opera of the Nobility with political allegiances in June 1733, and usefully compile thumbnail synopses of operas premiered by the Royal Academy and the Opera of the Nobility and music theatre works provided for royal events.