

Dinko Fabris, Margaret K. Murata, eds.. *Passaggio in Italia: Music on the Grand Tour in the Seventeenth Century*. Historical Performance Practice Series. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2015. 276 pp. \$104.00, paper, ISBN 978-2-503-53568-5.



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Given the importance of the Grand Tour as a historical and social phenomenon, it is perhaps surprising that it has taken so long for a book examining music in the context of the Grand Tour to appear. This book has been nearly ten years in the making, as it evolved from a theme that formed part of the 2006 Early Music Festival in Utrecht and an international conference that ran in conjunction with the festival under the title “The New Music: The Seicento in Italy.” The volume comprises fifteen essays, all relating in some way to the Grand Tour in the seventeenth century, written by leading scholars in the field.

The Grand Tour has long been recognized as an important route for the transmission of artistic, literary, and cultural ideals and ideas from Italy to northern Europe. Cultural tourists to Italy were not confined to aristocratic young men completing their education, but also included artists wishing to visit the remains of classical monuments and see the work of great masters of the past; diplomats, posted to the peninsula on a tour

of duty that may or may not have been welcome; and administrators making a short visit at the behest of an employer and trying to absorb as much as possible of a brief cultural encounter. The many types of documents left by foreign visitors from all parts of northern Europe and from different social backgrounds are a rich source of information about music. Perhaps more importantly, they give insights into how music was used and perceived by those hearing it and witnessing performances at a specific point in time, and thus can give some inkling regarding aspects of performance that cannot be gleaned from surviving scores. Some foreigners embedded themselves in the culture and became something akin to a “participant observer” providing valuable “insider” views, while others observed from a distance, maintaining their “foreign” status, leaving us different types of records that are often valuable in demonstrating that a single event or performance may have had multiple meanings depending on the perception of the individual listener or audience member. The range of such sources is con-

siderable, and they form the basis of some of the studies in this book.

Although the scholarly approaches and the topics covered are diverse, there are threads that unite the essays. After the two opening chapters, one by each of the editors, which offer wide ranging commentary on musical encounters as described in travel literature, the majority of the remaining chapters focus on vocal music as it is represented by, and reported in, various literary and documentary sources. Here, the “new music” of the seventeenth century on which the Utrecht festival focused—that is, monody, solo singing, and the new genres of opera and oratorio—predominates. There are some chapters that need specialist musical skill in score reading, but most have a cross-disciplinary element that is likely to offer new perceptions to scholars across a range of historical disciplines. Franco Piperno’s essay, for example, reflects on the affinity between the architect and the musician, suggesting analogies between the architectural monuments that the traveler would have seen in Rome, such as the buildings of Carlo Fontana and Alessandro Galilei, and the instrumental music of Arcangelo Corelli. In contrast, the chapters by Richard Wistreich, John Griffiths, and Natascha Veldhorst focus closely on aspects of the musical scores, their performance and transmission, providing new information of importance to musicologists.

Not unsurprisingly, several of the essays cover topics relating to Venice and, more specifically, to opera production. The opera house was a locus for social, political, and diplomatic activities and therefore a draw for the foreign visitor. While the technicalities of the music discussed in these essays may not appeal to the general reader, chapters dealing with the relationship of early operatic enterprises to the *Commedia dell’Arte* (John Walter Hill) and theatrical production (Beth Glixon) are likely to be of use to literary and theater historians as much as musicologists. Wendy Heller’s exploration of Barbara Strozzi’s relationship to

the Academia degli Incogniti, likewise, will have a general appeal, as it offers some unique musical and literary pathways into the history of a woman operating in a man’s world. Hendrik Schulze, in his essay, uses techniques familiar to book historians in a study of opera manuscripts to draw out conclusions about Francesco Cavalli’s performing and composing activities.

The earliest case study in the book, that of a French visitor to Florence in 1589 who left observations about the marriage celebrations of Ferdinando de Medici and Christine of Lorraine, is the topic of Iain Fenlon’s contribution. The core argument of this chapter rests on the manuscript source, the full text of which is given in an appendix, and the reminder that elaborate spectacles may have had multiple meanings depending on who was viewing them and under what circumstances. Louise Stein’s essay on the activities of Spanish diplomats in the latter half of the seventeenth century, though it focuses on the opposite end of the chronological and geographical spectrum, is in many ways a companion piece to Fenlon’s. Stein gives further insight into how foreigners engaged with, or indeed disengaged with, Italian music and, more specifically, opera in Venice and Rome. These contributions demonstrate that for a fuller understanding of such events and performances, it is essential to interrogate the way in which we read documents that may have been compiled for very different purposes—diplomatic, propaganda, or personal observation.

The readings of travelers’ accounts that examine comments about music and related activities that are presented in this volume may provide useful points of reference for literary and cultural historians for whom such comments may previously have had limited meaning. The use of such documents, however, is not entirely consistent throughout the book as some sources are translated, and some are not. Even so, just to have such a range of observations made available is of immense value. With a topic of this scope, the vol-

ume is inevitably quite narrowly focused. The emphasis on vocal music means that anyone looking for insights regarding instrumental music, for which far fewer musical sources survive and for which we are far more reliant on eye-witness accounts, will be disappointed. As editor Dinko Fabris says in his own essay, “in this aural collection of impressions from Italy, there are naturally many lacunae and omissions” (p. 32). Indeed there are, but in opening up a new pathway for musicologists and historians to explore the cultural environments encountered on the Grand Tour, this book is most welcome.

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