



Noel O'Regan. *Institutional Patronage in Post-Tridentine Rome: Music at Santissima Trinita, 1550-1650*. London: Royal Music Association, 1995. ix + 117 pp. \$29.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-947854-06-5.

Reviewed by Lyn Blanchfield (Binghamton University)
Published on H-Italy (April, 1997)

Music Patronage in Early Modern Rome

This slim yet dense volume discusses the musical activities of the archconfraternity of Santissima Trinita dei Pellegrini in post-Tridentine Rome. Founded in 1548 as a confraternity dedicated to the care of pilgrims, SS. Trinita possesses remarkable archives (transcribed by O'Regan in the appendices) that document the performance and patronage of sacred choral and instrumental music yet, as the author claims, these archives have been little used by music historians. This confraternity hired many of Rome's most respected composers, including Palestrina, and provided music for its own rites as well as for the city's major religious celebrations. Considering this institution's substantial involvement in music during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the apparent lack of scholarly works on this seems surprising. O'Regan intends to fill this gap by providing a broad overview of this confraternity's dedication and patronage of music.

The author's goal is threefold: to examine the confraternity's rich archives, to provide another institutional context for the study of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Roman music besides the Cappella Pontifica and the Cappella Giulia, and to discuss the network of political and economic patronage of music in Rome through this less well-known religious institution. O'Regan's goals do justice to the musical importance of this confraternity and the complexity of its economic and political relations in an attempt to keep its music alive, yet considering the brevity of this work—only seventy-nine pages of text—the author's discussion of these issues is limited. Although O'Regan has carefully researched this confraternity's archives and offers valuable information

that highlights SS. Trinita's role in the musical world of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Rome, he does not provide a comprehensive interpretation that fully explains SS. Trinita's place in a larger political and musical context.

After a brief introduction to the use of music and the patronage of musicians by Roman confraternities, O'Regan proceeds chronologically by dividing the confraternity's musical involvement into four main periods. The first period begins with the inception of SS. Trinita in the 1540s by the Florentine Philip Neri, among others, and to the confraternity's first step into music when, in the 1560s, it decided to purchase two books of music and an organ. O'Regan appropriately focuses on how SS. Trinita established itself and ends by examining the confraternity's first major performance in the festivities for the Holy Year of 1575. He emphasizes the political and economic importance of this event for SS. Trinita by discussing the music it provided for processions and Holy Week activities as well as for the many "welcoming parties" intended to impress outside visitors.

The second period, the third chapter, covers 1575 to 1587 in which the Florentine Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici was elected Protector. Since de' Medici assumed an active role in building up SS. Trinita to enhance its (and his own) prestige, O'Regan begins to focus more on the political patronage of this institution and music, though he is limited in his discussion due to the length of this work. The connection between this Roman confraternity and the political interests of Tuscany would be a valuable area to explore further. According to

O'Regan, the confraternity expanded its musical involvement in this period in rituals such as the processions of Holy Thursday, Trinity Sunday, and Corpus Christi. Between Holy Thursday and Good Friday all Roman confraternities walked in procession with choral music to St. Peter's; SS. Trinita paid for singing. According to the 1578 statutes of the confraternity, this was the "most important procession undertaken by our company" yet O'Regan says little else about the necessity of music for the event or the competition that must have existed between all of the confraternities (p. 22). This chapter does provide a good overview of how music became a regular component in the confraternity's religious ceremonies, particularly for the Lenten devotions. O'Regan appropriately focuses on how SS. Trinita began to regularize the performance of music by hiring "maestri di cappella" and chaplains who could sing polyphony. This regularization of music and musicians marks a crucial point in this institution's history. O'Regan's examination of this critical period is thorough, underscoring his primary goal to see how this institution functioned and managed to build itself up as a major player in the musical scene of Rome.

Chapter four explores the music of SS. Trinita at its peak between 1588 and 1623. These years were fruitful under the protectorship of the grandnephew of Pope Sixtus V, Cardinal Alessandro Peretti, known as Montalto. As O'Regan argues, Montalto became active in increasing the political and economic prestige of the confraternity yet showed a great interest in music and was a major patron of some of the best musicians in Rome. His political influence enabled the confraternity to receive considerable donations from the pope and his circle as well as from other important Roman families, further involving SS. Trinita in a complex web of Roman noble families vying for political power. O'Regan correctly chooses this chapter to discuss the influence of some members of prominent Roman families as major officials of the confraternity. O'Regan attempts to examine briefly the web of families, cardinals, popes, musicians, and "maestri" involved in the politics of SS. Trinita yet is unable to explore fully and to interpret all the details and angles of this network.

The political peak of SS. Trinita occurred during the Holy Year of 1600, when the confraternity and its prominent cardinal supporters walked in procession with music at the festivities of Holy Thursday and ended up embroiled in a dispute with the confraternity of the Gonafalone over which group would walk over the Ponte San Angelo first. Although O'Regan describes the details of the dispute quite well, his brief explanation—"the fight

also reflected conflict between a long-established confraternity (the Gonafalone) and a relatively newly arrived one"—leaves the reader wondering about how the long history of this conflict influenced SS. Trinita in its musical and political development (pp. 54-55). This section is one of the few places where O'Regan explores the much larger picture of musical patronage and political conflict among confraternities in Rome, a picture that needs to be examined further if we are to understand the precise roles of SS. Trinita as a promoter of music in relation to other Roman religious institutions.

O'Regan completes his chronological study of SS. Trinita by examining its activities from 1623 to 1650. The seventeenth century saw a decrease in the confraternity's involvement in music due to its limited financial resources, yet O'Regan believes this period was more stable than previous ones since SS. Trinita had a "more settled and realistic vision of its place in society" (p. 58). This period also saw "the largest celebration known to have been held at SS. Trinita during its first hundred years": the celebration of Trinity Sunday in 1644 (p. 60). O'Regan describes briefly the five choirs of singers and other musicians hired for the patronal feast of SS. Trinita that occurred only one week after the consecration of the newly finished church's high altar, yet he says little else about the significance of this event.

One of the strong points of O'Regan's work is his final chapter on the music performed at SS. Trinita. Presented with incomplete archives, O'Regan amazingly reconstructs the vast repertory of the church and the oratory by consulting a variety of contemporary sources and manuscripts that contain works by composers involved in the confraternity. His strength in both archival research and the identification and description of musical works comes through in this chapter and the appendices (his transcriptions of the archival material related to music), revealing his comprehensive knowledge of this confraternity and its music.

O'Regan's desire to be comprehensive in discussing the politics, finances, patronage, and music of SS. Trinita over a one hundred-year period is admirable and shows his interest and dedication to this project. However, given the brevity of this text, O'Regan cannot be as comprehensive as he wishes. He attempts to provide a microstudy of one confraternity and its musical involvement yet cannot do so without placing SS. Trinita within the larger context of musical patronage and family influence in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Rome. Given limited space, he can only hint at SS. Trinita's place in

relation to other confraternities as well as to the larger political and economic network of popes, cardinals, and noble families competing for power and prestige. Despite this problem, O'Regan provides an excellent overview of how one confraternity establishes itself as a major musical force in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Rome. This work has much to offer; it gives a solid introduction to the patronage of music by one confraternity al-

though it does not completely fulfill all of the author's goals. O'Regan begins a valuable discussion in which we can explore further the combination of music, religious institutions, and politics in early modern Rome.

Copyright (c) 1997 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact H-Net@h-net.msu.edu.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-italy>

Citation: Lyn Blanchfield. Review of O'Regan, Noel, *Institutional Patronage in Post-Tridentine Rome: Music at Santissima Trinita, 1550-1650*. H-Italy, H-Net Reviews. April, 1997.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=957>

Copyright © 1997 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.