

MONTEVERDI, MADRIGALS AND MEANING

A CRITIQUE OF SOME OF RECENT
METHODOLOGIES USED TO APPROACH
THE MADRIGALS AND OPERAS OF
CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI.

Submitted to: Dorothy DeVal

Submitted by: Johanna Devaney

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Introduction

A hundred years ago musicology was content with recounting the details of the lives and works of the great composers. It was antiquarian in nature, facts without analysis. As musicology moved into the middle twentieth century it began to align with other disciplines. The rise of social and cultural history introduced new paradigms to the world of musicology.¹

That is not to say that the antiquarian approach was without value. In Renaissance musicology for example there was a wealth of information to be discovered. The biography of Monteverdi by Emil Vogel published in 1887 is still the basis of most of the facts known about the composer's life,² facts which are the foundation on which contemporary research and analysis is based. Recent scholarship on the work of Monteverdi has been heavily influenced by the social and cultural paradigms introduced into the discipline. The madrigals and operas of Monteverdi have proved to be a particularly fruitful area for such work as the stories that they adapted, the issues of patronage surrounding the commissioning of the

¹ The methodology of historical musicology in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was similar to the approach to history of Ranke and his followers, an approach which saw the past a "knowable". That is, an approach which was based on the belief that if one collected all the facts and analyzed them carefully with the correct critical methodology one could "know" what happened. The twentieth century saw new approaches to history that incorporated the social and cultural context of the time – to this end history began to use anthropological paradigms to augment their understanding of the past. Likewise musicology has reached out to anthropological methodology in an attempt to understand the social and cultural context of compositions.

² For more information on Monteverdi's life see Dennis Arnold's *Monteverdi*. (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd. 1963), Paolo Fabbri's *Monteverdi*. (original Italian version Turin: E.D.T. Edizione di Torino 1985, English translation by Tim Carter Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1985) and Denis Stevens' translations of *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi*. (London: Faber & Faber. 1980)

For Monteverdi's compositional style see Eric Chafe's *Monteverdi's Tonal Language* (Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan 1992), Slike Leopold's *Monteverdi: Music in Transition (Original German publication – 1982, English translation Oxford: Clarendon Press 1991)*, Gary Tomlinson's *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1987)

Denis Arnold and Nigel's Fortune's *The Monteverdi Companion* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 1968) and *The New Monteverdi Companion*. (London: Faber and Faber: 1985) are valuable resources which contain articles which address both biographical and stylistic issues surrounding Monteverdi.

works, and the context in which they were performed all offer valuable insight into the social and cultural situation in Northern Italy in the first half of the seventeenth century.

State of the Question

The introduction of new paradigms of analysis into the discipline has been met with some criticism that musicology is moving away from the music itself, focusing too much on the circumstances around the music and thus not dealing with the music directly. The publication of Joseph Kerman's *Contemplating Music*³ in 1985 presented an extensive critique of the lack of criticism in contemporary musicology. By the term criticism Kerman is referring to “the study of meaning and value of art works.”⁴ The subtitle of the work *Challenges to Musicology* accurately reflects Kerman’s bias against what he perceives to be the musicological establishment; an establishment entrenched in “practical research” (i.e. the collection of dry facts), an activity that does not in itself yield an understanding of the music. Kerman points that while “the positivistic musicologists are respected for the facts they know about music, they are not admired for their insight into music as aesthetic experience.”⁵ The circumstances around the music are addressed, but not the music itself.

Kerman’s dissatisfaction with musicology dates back to the mid-sixties and his article “A Profile for American Musicology”⁶ where he first critiqued in print the lack of criticism in musicology. He aligns with Leo Treitler’s articles⁷ of the time in their mutual frustration with the musicological establishment. They were however different in their approaches to

³ Published by Harvard University Press. The work was entitled *Musicology* in its British edition (London: Fontana 1985).

⁴ Kerman, Joseph. *Contemplating Music*. Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985 p 16

⁵ Kerman p 12

⁶ Kerman, Joseph “A Profile for American Musicology” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 18 (Spring 1965), pp. 61-9

⁷ Specifically Treitler’s “Music Analysis in a Historical Context” *College Music Symposium* 6 (Fall 1966) p 75-88 and “On Historical Criticism” *Musical Quarterly* 53 (April 1967) p 188-205

criticism; while Kerman focused on using a literary criticism paradigm Treitler looked to critical approaches used in the field of history. Kerman cites the historical scientific methodology proposed by J.H. Hexter during the sixties as a parallel to Treitler's. Treitler's main argument was that the musicological establishment focused too much on the lineage of works rather than evaluate their quality. While Hexter argued that historians were too preoccupied by the "why" rather than the "what" of historical events.

Kerman's contributions to the musicology are limited not only through his own work but also through the work of his students. His protégé Gary Tomlinson is an example of this and his work on Monteverdi, namely *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance*⁸ published in 1987 two years after *Contemplating Music*), provides an interesting point of comparison between its methodologies and approaches and Kerman's views. Tomlinson follows Kerman's preference for analysis paradigms of the written word as the basis of his musical analysis. In *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* Tomlinson appeals to the theorists of linguist A.L. Becker's categories for the analysis of text and context.⁹ Tomlinson succeeds in producing reasonable analyses of a fair amount of Monteverdi's work, and for these pieces he provides a context for the in the composer's own oeuvre, from this context he offers some ideas on how these works fit in with Monteverdi's general aesthetic values, as they changed and developed over time, and finally provides a context for the works within the

⁸ Tomlinson, Gary. *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1987

⁹ Tomlinson quotes Becker's description of his categories: "1. The relations of textual units to each other within the text...2. The relations of textual units to other texts...3. The relations of units in the text to the intention of the creators of the text...4. The relation of textual units to non-literary events with which units in the text establish relations of the sort usually called reference." (p ix). He then provides the following description of analysis paradigm through his own musical interpretations of each category: "from analysis of individual works (Becker's relations within texts), to the placing these works in traditions of similar works (relations among texts), to description of Monteverdi's expressive ideals manifest in his works (the creator's intentions), to elucidation of the relations of the works to the broader ideologies of the culture that produced them (extratextual reference)." (p xi-x).

culture contemporary to Monteverdi; basically everything he set out to do in his introduction.

In order to explore the general cultural context of Monteverdi's work Tomlinson provides a chapter at the end of the book that runs down major social, cultural, and political developments in northern Italian society from the last fifteenth century to the early seventeenth century and then sketches a brief synopsis of how Monteverdi's works were a result of these contexts and fit into contemporary trends. What Tomlinson's approach to cultural context is lacking is any sense of a dialectal relationship between the music and society as it sees the music only as a reaction to contemporary trends, not as a means of exploring and examining the development of these trends.

Inline with his critique of musicology Kerman argues that the other approaches to music, namely theory and analysis, do not offer an adequate method of "criticism" to reveal the aesthetic meaning of a piece of music. He sees music theory as being "analogous to vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and rhetoric"¹⁰ while music analysis is "analogous to parsing, linguistic rendition, and *explication du texte*."¹¹ While both fields can contribute to an aesthetic understanding of the music, they are too entrenched in technical details and lack the wider context of a musicological analysis to achieve this understanding on their own.

In regards to Renaissance musicology, using Iain Fenlon's patronage studies as an example, Kerman argues that

"criticism (is) the most glaring lacuna in Renaissance studies. A critical orientation for musicology is more, not less, important for music of the Renaissance than for music of Romanticism. Conversely, the criticism of Renaissance music needs musicology more than does the criticism of later music."¹²

¹⁰ Kerman p 13

¹¹ Kerman p 13

¹² Kerman p 125

The basis for Kerman's distinction between the necessary approaches to Renaissance and Romantic music is that he believes there still remains a collective memory of Romantic music that provides a context for the experience of it and discussion about it. However he stresses that the context is only the starting point and that the real focus of any study should be the actual music.

Howard Mayer Brown's 1987 review, 'Recent Research in the Renaissance' in *Renaissance Quarterly* (40: 1-10) addresses Kerman's criticisms. Brown's position aligns with Kerman's in that he feels

“that we really ought to feel the need to confront the music of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries directly. And the truth is that there is no consensus about how to do that, no agreed-upon way of talking about the music of the Renaissance. What is worse, there is very little sign that such questions are actively being debated.”¹³

Brown does however criticize Kerman for being too narrow and not recognizing that “certain kinds of things are worth doing and are indeed necessary to do.”¹⁴ Brown's article includes a critique of four studies on music and patronage in Renaissance cities, including Iain Fenlon's *Music and Patronage in Sixteenth-century Mantua* (Cambridge University Press, 1982),¹⁵ which demonstrates his view that there is indeed a place in musicology for 'dry facts' and social history, and that these studies do indeed facilitate the understanding of the music. Brown raises the issue of subjective vs. objective analysis of the past. He sees the shift towards positivism as being a reaction to the subjectivity of past studies and suggests that the act of addressing the music itself seems to be a subjective, non-scientific, approach whose time has past. For him the downfall of the contemporary approach is that the facts are

¹³ Brown p 1-2

¹⁴ Brown p 1

¹⁵ The other books he examines are Lewis Lockwoods' *Music in Renaissance Ferrara, 1400-1505* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), Reinhard Strohm's *Music in Late Medieval Bruges* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), and Allan Atlas' *Music at the Aragonese Court of Naples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

usually not evaluated. He finds main fault in the four books in that they didn't go beyond the pay records or music transcriptions – they merely documented and reported these facts without developing theories on the implications of their discoveries.

For Brown a contextual analysis of music should allow one an understanding of the music as product of its society. For this to be possible he argues that patronage studies must encompass the details of the patron, the demand for the music, and how the style of a particular piece stands in the context of other works of that time. From this perspective he feels that the positivistic approaches of patronage are warranted, even valuable, as they provide the basis for the understanding of the society in which the music was produced. Moreover the study of patronage in a number of places allows commonalities to be recognized and a general theory of patronage in the Renaissance to be developed. A theory that could be drawn upon to give meaning to further facts collected. If this is achieved Brown believes that

“(such) contextual studies can help us to understand the nature of an individual composition as a product of the society that produced it. Presumably, the obverse is also true, and a piece of music should (in theory at least) be able to illuminate the nature of the society for which it was commissioned and first performed.”¹⁶

Where he sees the danger of a descent into antiquarianism is in the reluctance the authors of the books he critiques have in postulating on the meaning and implications of the facts that they uncover.¹⁷

¹⁶ Brown p 9

¹⁷ The second edition of Brown's *Music in the Renaissance* (Prentice Hall 1999) Louise Stein discusses Brown's view in the early nineties about “music as a cultural and political force in the Renaissance, about the place of music in Renaissance society, and about the extent to which patronage by individuals institutions shaped musical genres and even specific pieces of music” and how the composer's works were shaped by “the tastes of their patrons, the requirements of the liturgy, the demands of particular occasions, the talents of the person for whom they composed, and the intellectual trends that influenced music as well as other arts” (p xviii)

Claudio Annibaldi, in his 1998 paper “Towards a theory of musical patronage in the Renaissance and Baroque: the perspective from anthropology and semiotics” in *Recercare* (10: 173-182), builds on Brown's analysis. Specifically his idea is that part of the problem is that there is no homogeneous theory surrounding patronage in the Renaissance. Annibaldi summarizes his attempt to address this issue in his prior work,¹⁸ which he approached through an anthropological perspective, and this article examines the role of semiotics in this process.

Working from the assumption that music “was intended to symbolize and represent the social status of the patron commissioning it”¹⁹ Annibaldi reaches the conclusion that the relationship between the music and patron is an “interplay between the musical events produced by musicians and commissioned by patrons and the ‘world’ in the presence of which those events took place”²⁰ and that “the object of the relationship between musician and patron is to be identified not as the composition of a score but as a performance.”²¹

Annibaldi divides patronage into two types: humanistic, that which “reflects the patron’s good taste and knowledge”²² and conventional, that which “involves musical repertoires generically associated with the upper classes.”²³ He then aligns these two classifications with Roman Jakobson’s metaphor and metonymic linguistic communication.

“The difference between “conventional” and “humanistic” patronage is both cultural and semiotic. A piece issuing from “conventional patronage” symbolized the rank of its patron through reference to repertoires traditionally associated with the elite class. Hence it achieves

¹⁸ Annibaldi, Claudio “Per una teoria della committenza musicale all’epoca di Monteverdi” *Claudio Monteverdi: studi e prospettive. Atti del convegno* (Mantova, 21-24, ottobre 1993), eds. Palo Besutti, Teresa M. Gialdroni and Rodolfo Baroncini, Olschki, Firenze 1998, p 459-75

¹⁹ Annibaldi, Claudio “Towards a Theory of Musical Patronage in the Renaissance and Baroque: the Perspective from Anthropology and Semiotics” *Recercare* 10(1998) p 173-4

²⁰ Annibaldi p 174

²¹ Annibaldi p 174

²² Annibaldi p 174

²³ Annibaldi p 174

its ends by “contiguity”, by proving to be a sort of musical accessory of the elite itself. In contrast, a piece generated by “humanistic patronage” symbolizes the rank of its patron through a display of his artistic sensibility. It thus achieves its end by “similarity”: by displaying compositional qualities that parallel the sophisticated tastes of the class in question”²⁴

Working with the assumption that “in the Renaissance and Baroque the elite class supported live musical events that were intended to symbolize their patrons’ social status through the style used to fulfill their liturgical, ceremonial or recreation function”²⁵ Annibaldi introduces the semiotic function of music into his anthropological approach to musicology (which stands in contrast to the traditional political approach to patronage) as a way of traversing the distance between the historical facts pertaining to the patronage surrounding the creation of the music and the reality of the music itself.²⁶ Annibaldi’s approach is to analysis of the *Combattimento di Tancredi et Clorinda* will be discussed below.

Thesis Statement

This paper attempts to use these views on patronage as a springboard to examine recent paradigms employed to explore the work of Monteverdi. It will attempt to address the issue of whether these approaches facilitate an understanding of the music, or if they move scholarship away from the actual music. The critique of these written sources will be complemented by a discussion on possible approaches to score study of the madrigals the *Lamento d’Arianna* and the *Combattimento di Tancredi et Clorinda*. Though there has been

²⁴ Annibaldi p 176

²⁵ Annibaldi p 179

The issue of Monteverdi’s placement in the historical context is also frequently – if he a late Renaissance, Mannerist, or early Baroque composer is circumvented here by Annibaldi’s theory that the choice of which style of use was conscious and symbolic.

²⁶ “The anthropological side to this model, which I discussed in the introduction to *La musica e il mondo*, was to be evaluated in comparison with the customary interpretation of music patronage in idealized or political terms. The semiotic side presented here, on the other hand, should be judged in the light of the next step it enables us to take: that of, by gathering a number of case studies that illustrate the stylistic convention under which the Renaissance and Baroque composers worked” (p179)

important musical analysis²⁷ done on these works in the past fifteen years this paper focuses on the patronage and gender studies done with these pieces and critiques the paradigms of analysis.

Lamento d'Arianna

The Lamento d'Arianna is an interesting case study because the madrigal is a reworking of the lament from the opera titled simply *Arianna*. Though a copy of the libretto exists, all copies of the score of the opera have been lost. Thus this reworking of the lament is all the music that survives. The survey of scholarship on this work focuses on the following articles: Tim Carter's "Intriguing Laments: Sigismondo d'India, Claudio Monteverdi, and Dido alla parmigiana (1628)"²⁸ in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* (49 (1996): 32-63) and "Lamenting Arianna"²⁹ in *Early Music* 27 (1999): 373-93; Suzanne G. Cusick's "The was not one lady who failed to shed a tear – Arianna's lament and the construction of modern womanhood"³⁰ in *Early Music* (22 (1994): 21-41); Leo Franc Holford-

²⁷ Gary Tomlinson offers a traditional musical analysis of the *Lamento d'Arianna* and the *Combattimento di Tancredi et Clorinda* in his book *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1987). Silke Leopold dedicates an entire chapter to Monteverdi's treatment of the Lament style in her *Music in Transition* (eng. Trans. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1991 – see chapter four "The Lament" p123-145) and examines the *Combattimento* as "a paradigm for the concitato genre" (p195-6). Eric Chafe's *Monteverdi's Tonal Language* (Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada 1992) examines the use of monody in the *Lamento d'Arianna* and the use of *stile concitato* in the *Combattimento*.

²⁸ This article examines the commission of Monteverdi to write music for the wedding of Duke Odoardo Farnese and Margherita de' Medici of Florence in Parma in 1628. Carter constructs what is known of Sigismondo d'India's (another composer who applied for the commission) *Lamento di Didone* and Monteverdi's *Lamento d'Arianna* and speculates that D'India's use of conventional declamatory style, rather than aria, may have been a key factor in the decision to choose Monteverdi over him.

²⁹ A study of Arianna focusing on performance issues, revisions to the libretto, its function as a tragedy and the some speculation on the possible organization of the whole opera.

³⁰ Cusick reflects on the eyewitness account of the premiere of "Arianna" which stated that "there was not one lady who failed to shed a tear" and examines if this response was purely instinctive or if "culturally prescribed notions of womanhood affected their response". Cusick applies a "gynocentric" reading using "tropes of contemporary gender and marriage ideology" as a basis to build a construct of the experience of the early-modern woman and uses this as a basis for way in which Arianna would've been interpreted. She also examines Monteverdi's use of musical rhetoric and structure to dramatize the circumstances of Arianna in such a way that it spoke to the experience of the early-modern woman.

Stevens's "Her eyes became two spouts: classical antecedents of Renaissance laments"³¹ in *Early Music* (27 (1999): 373-93); and Anne MacNeil's "Weeping at the water's edge"³² in *Early Music* (27 (1999): 406-17).

Carter's "Intriguing Laments" article uses the popularity of the *Lamento d'Arianna* as a springboard for this patronage study. The article focuses on the competition between Sigismondo d'India and Monteverdi for the commission to write music for wedding of Duke Odoardo Farnese and Margherita de'Medici. Carter uses both archival data and musical analysis to construct his argument that the musical style of Monteverdi gave him as much, if not more, of an advantage than his position at San Marco in securing the commission. Carter's "Lamenting Ariadne" article is an attempt to reconstruct not only the circumstances surrounding the commissioning and performance of *Arianna* but also the experience of opera itself. Since no scores exist for the opera Carter bases his article on eyewitness accounts, Rinuccini's libretto and the score for *Lamento d'Arianna*. Given the general approach and the recent date of these articles as well Carter's discussion of Annibaldi's work in his recent conference paper one can reasonably surmise that Carter's approach to these issues is clearly informed by the issues raised by Annibaldi, Brown and Kerman and his incorporation of facts and analysis puts him in line with their methodologies.

³¹ Analysis of the roles of men and women in Greek tragedies (specifically Ariadne and Theseus and Dido and Aeneas) and their prescribed roles of emotional expression. The author focuses on the laments found in the classic tellings of these stories and analyzes some renaissance laments (including Monteverdi's *Arianna*) in this context.

³² Examines the use of the themes of abduction, abandonment and sacrifice in elite wedding celebrations in early seventeenth century Italy. MacNeil addresses the description of the ladies weeping as a trope rather than an actual event. She questions whether the weeping occurred, and if it did, if it wasn't in fact a "studied reaction to an equally studied trope". MacNeil further analyzes the implications of the story of *Arianna* in the context of Mantuan nobility concluding that "Monteverdi's version of the tale of *Arianna* focused on events within the circle of the Mantuan court and its collective memory as they struggled to create an entertainment that could not afford to be mistaken for anything but a representation of nobility and grandeur of its patron's house". Thus the description of the weeping was an act of propaganda to ensure this end.

Cusick's article also uses eyewitness accounts and the score of the *Lament d'Arianna* as the basis of her research, though she approaches this with a very different analytical paradigm than Carter. She attempts a "gynocentric" reading of the opera into to build a construction of early modern womanhood. Her integration of score analysis into this approach is interesting but her analysis doesn't go beyond the realm of decoding word painting. Rather than explicating the score as a text she merely implements the results of an existing musical analytical approach in a new way.

The main focus of Cusick's article is rooted emotional response elicited by the music. Eric Chafe's analysis of *Arianna* in *Monteverdi's Tonal Language*, the publication of which predate's Cusick's article by two years, provides a similar discussion but from the angle of traditional music theory and analysis. Chafe uses Monteverdi's declaration that in *Arianna* he successfully imitated human passion and emotion as the basis for his tonal analysis. Chafe concluded that

"what was needed to project both her emotional conflicts and her victory over them was a secure grasp of the relationship between local and large-scale tonal events, one that bridged the gap between momentary impulse and overarching unity. Monteverdi's achievements in this piece is owing in no small part to the tight control over the modal-hexachord relationships."³³

Thus Chafe successfully addresses and uses the music as the basis of his argument. However at no point Chafe move beyond the immediate effect of the piece, no broader context for the piece is given, and thus remains in the realm of music theory. The issue as to whether the piece is a product of Venetian society or owes more to the Mantuan roots of the opera is not addressed directly or even implied. Thus the study is more music theory.

Returning to the application of modern sociological paradigms, Holford-Stevens and MacNeil take the gender role construction approach used by Cusick for analyzing eyewitness

³³ Chafe p165

accounts and scores. Holdford-Stevens' article examines both the legends of Arianna & Theseus and Dido & Aeneas and looks at scores by Willaert, Arcadelt, and Pari. Ultimately he interprets the results of his analysis with a paradigm similar to the one implemented by Cusick, however he provides more overall context than Cusick as he examines the actual classical legends being used and how they are interpreted. MacNeil builds on the themes of abduction, abandonment, and sacrifice in the legend. She appeals to the text of the libretto, but not the music of the *Lamento*, to identify these themes and draws parallels to customs in early modern Italian wedding ceremonies. As such this article tends more towards sociology than musicology.

Combattimento di Tancredi et Clorinda

The *Combattimento* offers less scope for analysis since it was published as one of many madrigals in Monteverdi's Eighth Book of Madrigals and there is less documentary evidence about its performance than there is with the opera version of *Arianna*. The *Combattimento* did not reach the level of popularity of the *Lamento d'Arianna*, nor did Monteverdi discuss the *Combattimento* as much in his own communications. In spite, or perhaps because, of this the *Combattimento* proved to be a point of interest for Annibaldi. His article offers a suggested approach to analysis of the *Combattimento* focuses on the use of *stile concitato* and *stile rappresentativo* in the work. Annibaldi performs a similar analysis on Frescobaldi's toccate for keyboard instruments. These two works are chosen by him as representative of a period which is of great interest because

“it was a period in the history of Western music when a *stile moderno* and a *stile antico* were emerging as stylistic options strikingly opposed to one another, yet equally available to composers”

Annibaldi ties his analysis into the issue of patronage by first establishing the context of the work's performance at the Carnival in Venice. He then incorporates his anthropological/semiotic approach by examining how the performance was a representation of the patron. Thus he argues that the style of the music performed was also a symbolic representation of the patron since

“when the support of art music was chiefly provided by the elite class, an individual composition (or genre) was conditioned by the society that caused it to come into being through implicit demands for a style appropriate to the social status of its patron”³⁴

It would be interesting to see a detailed analysis using this approach. In the article in question Annibaldi merely highlights the style used in the composition but doesn't examine the score in any detail. Though he argues that it is the performance, not the score, that is the result of the musician-patron relationship there is still valuable information about how the style was achieved and even how closely it was adhered to by a closer reading of the score.

Other Works – *Orfeo* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*

There are been a number of other interesting approaches used in Monteverdi research. My survey of *Orfeo* centered around the collection of essays edited by John Whenham titled simply *Orfeo*.³⁵ The book includes an article by Joseph Kerman entitled “Orpheus: the neoclassical vision” which focuses on the way the legend is presented in Striggio's libretto and how Monteverdi realized the text musically. It is interesting to note

³⁴ Annibaldi p 179

³⁵ This book includes articles by Iain Fenlon, Nigel Fortune, Jane Glover, and Joseph Kerman. Fenlon's article “The Mantuan *Orfeo*” is an overview of the patronage issues relating to the commissioning and production of *Orfeo*. Its research is based on archival materials – particularly letters and pay records – and tends toward the descriptive rather than the critical. Fortune's article “The rediscovery of *Orfeo*” chronicles a number of “authentic” performances. This article is purely narrative and appeals only to performance records for substantiation.

that his article is roughly contemporary to Kerman's book and attempts to address some of the issues of methodology he raises there.

Iain Fenlon and Peter N. Miller's *The Song of the Soul: Understanding Poppea* is an extensive monograph on Monteverdi's last opera. The work attempts to "read" the opera by incorporating analysis from a number of angles. On the political side, it examines the story of *Poppea* in the context to the Venetian Incogniti³⁶ and the Venetian/Roman dynamic of the time. From the literary side, it examines the sources used for the work, in particular Tacitus and the issues of Senecan Neostoicism addressed and raised by the opera. It also provides a music analysis which really does little more than augment the plot synopsis. What is significant about this work is its cumulative approach to "reading" the work as text of the intellectual world in which it was created.

Tim Carter's "Re-reading *Poppea*: Some Thoughts on Music and Meaning in Monteverdi's Last Opera"³⁷ in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* (122:2 (1997): 173-204) builds on *Song of the Soul* and Ellen Rosand's 'Seneca and the Interpretation of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*' in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* (38 (1985): 34-71).³⁸ His approach in this article is essentially the same as his approach in his "In Love's harmonious consort?" article on *Il ritorno d'Ulisse. Poppea* presents more challenges because

³⁶ The Accademia degli Incogniti was a society of aristocrats and highly regarded artists in Venice in the seventeenth century. Busenello, the author of *Poppea*'s libretto, was a member. Because of the strong political associations of many of the members and the power it wielded over musical commissions and performances an understanding of the society important in understanding music that had some connection to it (in particular operas performed in the Venetian opera house). See *Song of the Soul* p 33-44 for more information.

³⁷ Examines the "problems" with *Poppea*. Namely the amount that was actually written by Monteverdi, the overly grandiose statements, the "questionable decorum of the plot" as well as the readings of the opera as moralist and as a work of propaganda. Carter also focuses on the representation of Seneca in the context of the contemporary impressions of the philosopher. Carter sets his argument in the context of the readings of the *Poppea* by Rosand, Fenlon and Miller.

³⁸ Rosand's article examines the opera from the angle that it was the first opera based on a historical events. She analyzes the libretto with the aim to draw conclusions on the role of Seneca, the moral implications of the opera particularly the issues of love versus reason and morality the way it might have connected to the contemporary Venetian audience, and the criticisms of Rome implicit in the subject material. Rosand augments her analysis of the libretto with some musical analysis although this is somewhat cursory and is primarily used to prove for her thesis that Seneca was in the fact central character of the opera.

of the varying stylistic characteristics of the music and the fact that it doesn't fit comfortably into any of the generic types of opera.³⁹ Carter also offers a new approach to reading *Poppea*, different from Rosand's and Fenlon's approaches which position Seneca's moral view at the center of the opera and the moral ambivalence of the work as its most important characteristic. In his reading Carter challenges not only the view of Seneca as the central figure but rather he sees the death of Seneca as the event that allows Monteverdi's true motivations for the opera to emerge, the love story of Nerone and *Poppea*, free from the moral issues which Seneca represented. In comparison to the readings by Rosand and Fenlon this approach would produce radically different results as it allows the opera to be addressed as a whole, where the death of Seneca serves only as a temporary obstacle for the amorous intentions of Nerone and *Poppea*, whereas the Seneca reading must consider the opera in two parts, divided by Seneca's death.

Wendy Heller's "Tacitus Incognito: Opera as History in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*"⁴⁰ in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* (52 (1999): 37-96) takes a straight cultural historical approach to the libretto, investigating the existing accounts of Nero's life and analyzing which was the likely source for the opera's libretto.

³⁹ Namely tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, and pastoral. See "Re-Reading *Poppea*" p191-2 for further discussion.

⁴⁰ Examine *Poppea* as the first opera which rather than using a mythological source as a basis used history. Specifically Heller examines the source of the story of the opera, Tacitus' *Annals*, and the influence of the Venetian Accademia degli Incogniti in this choice. Heller proposes that "the members of the Accademia degli Incogniti used Tacitus's history of imperial Rome in a highly specialized manner that went far beyond mere anti-Roman propaganda, expressing Venetian concerns with political pragmatism rather than moral censure, with civic virtue rather than withdrawal and solitude, and with fulfillment of natural instincts rather than their suppression".

Conclusion

The homogeneity that characterized the field of musicology in the nineteenth century has gone and, like composition, the ‘modernizing’ of the discipline has left it fractured. As musicology connects more with other disciplines it begins to lose part of its identity. Though this is not a negative thing, it does present the risk of moving too far away from the music. This is exemplified in scholarship that only offers a cursory glance towards the music, focusing instead on the circumstances of the performance.

The integration of approaches from other disciplines is extremely important as an understanding of the context in which the music was produced can augment the understanding of the music itself. There also exists the distinct possibility the reverse is also true. Brown argues that the music is a direct reflection of the society in which it was produced and thus analysis of the music can yield information about the society. The approaches in the articles that I surveyed start from the society and use this knowledge to analyze the music but do not incorporate a dialectal approach that would do the reverse. The Brown and the Annibaldi articles both focused on patronage, both discussing the two-way relationship between the music and the society. Yet neither identified the relationship as dialect or suggested an appropriate paradigm of analysis for dealing the relationship. Which raises the issue of how, perhaps even if, this can be done?

The second issue that came to light when surveying these approaches is that the standard approach to analyzing the music is through the text. That the text is seen as having the social or political meaning and then the music is analyzed how to how it supports the text. Annibaldi’s semiotic approach is a break from this as it approaches the style of the music as a symbol. However his article didn’t go into a detailed analysis so I can only speculate on the details and effectiveness of this approach.

I propose that the answer lies in closer ties between the output of the musicologists and the analysts. Annibaldi takes this approach in terms of semiotics but there are further areas of analysis that can be utilized, such as allegory, rhetoric, and mysticism. Together these fields contribute enough information to approach the relationship between music and society dialectically. With an understanding of the inner structures of both the music and the society it is possible to understand how they influenced each other.

Another key consideration is the physical considerations of the performance space. If one adopts Annibaldi's view that the commission is for the performance rather than the score then the circumstances of the performance become a significant part of the way the piece was perceived in its time. Determining the acoustical properties of the site of performances does require a fair amount of speculation as to the exact venue of the performance is not always known and even when it is it may not currently exist in its original form. However some generalizations in this area can be made in regards to open-air performances vs. indoor performances, performances in churches vs. performances in palaces, and the acoustical properties of the instruments used. The choice of instruments does bring up another interested issue which is whether the choices was based on available resources, the musical intentions of the composer, the political and/or social associations of certain instruments, or a combination of all three. If the last option is true, which seems to be the most feasible, then to what extent did each of the three distinct options govern the choice? However once some defensible assumptions have been made about the performance space the opportunity to examine the acoustical properties of a particular piece in the context of Renaissance psychoacoustics theory provides the opportunity to examine the performance from an angle that allows the opportunity to re-examine the composer's compositional choices both in terms of pitch material, the modal or tonal character of the

piece, and the way in which the text is treated. From this new angle is possible to draw some concrete conclusions concerning the way Monteverdi would've expected his music to be received. Then, through the comparison of numerous pieces analyzed with respect to their acoustical properties and the context of their performances, one would start to build a basis for further analysis in regards to the role of music as a reflection of society and the role of text setting as a means of social and political expression.

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