

Abstracts and Contributors

Alana Mailes

A Harmonious Armistice: Music in Diplomatic Negotiations for the Peace of Asti

In the spring of 1615, the English ambassador Dudley Carleton, an envoy of King James I, travelled to Turin to negotiate the Peace of Asti, an armistice that temporarily halted the War of the Montferrat Succession between Savoy and Spain. Political historians have traditionally depicted this diplomatic intervention as a series of talks between Carleton and other elite male state officials. As the present article will illuminate, however, Carleton's communications were mediated by many other people and cultural experiences that have been overlooked. The Peace of Asti was, in fact, a highly musical affair. I examine seventeenth-century diplomatic papers to reconstruct the English embassy's multifaceted engagement with music and musicians throughout Northern Italy during Carleton's peacemaking expedition, including his retinue's music tourism to convents, attendance at court masques, patronage of a number of chamber and cavalry musicians, and attention to political ballads sung in the region. Notably, I provide new evidence suggesting that music directed or composed by Salamone Rossi was performed at the Gonzaga Court to entertain Carleton's entourage. This article analyzes the Peace of Asti from the critical standpoint of the New Diplomatic History, making a case for the significance of music and musicians to early modern emissarial protocol, sociality, and strategy.

Keywords: Turin, Savoy, Dudley Carleton, Duke Charles Emmanuel I, Salamone Rossi

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Steven N. Machtinger

Mozart's Last Letter to His Father: Esotericism and Mysticism in Late Eighteenth-Century Viennese Society

In what turned out to be his last letter to his ailing father, dated April 4, 1787, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart sought to console Leopold (and himself) with musings about

the immortality of the soul. While scholarly commentators have regarded it as possible that the letter's text alludes to the son's and father's shared experiences of Freemasonry, they have disagreed about whether sufficient evidence exists to reach such a conclusion firmly. However, the holograph of the letter became publicly available for the first time in November of 2020, and furnishes the opportunity to revisit the matter. Examination of this original document reveals that Mozart drew an esoteric figure of two interlocking triangles next to his signature. The symbolic meanings of this figure and their relationship to the content of letter can be illuminated through consideration of two speeches delivered by Mozart's friend and patron, Count Franz Joseph Anton von Thun-Hohenstein, at the Masonic lodge *Zur wahren Eintracht* (True Concord) in 1783 and 1784. In these addresses, the count, a member of several secret societies, including the *Asiatische Brüder* (Order of the Asian Brethren), invoked the same figure of two interlocking triangles as an esoteric, mystical symbol of transcendence and reconciliation.

Keywords: Freemasonry, Kabbalah, alchemy, Rosicrucianism

Steven N. Machtinger (steve@mozartquest.com) is a lawyer, violist, and scholar whose research focuses on philosophical issues arising from Mozart's life and work in the context of the late Enlightenment. A member of the Mozart Society of America, he has presented papers on Mozart's operas at conferences in New York and Salzburg and on Mozart's instrumental music at meetings of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. His most recent article, "Vestiges of Plague Literature in Mozart's *Idomeneo*," will appear in the forthcoming book *Mozart in Salzburg* (Steglein Publishing), edited by Simon Keefe.

Daniele Carnini

Self-Awareness (and Institutionalization) of a Crisis in Italian Opera's "Age of Plurality" (1806–15)

The present article investigates an era that in the historiography of Italian opera bears a label ("interregnum between Cimarosa and Rossini," defined by Stendhal) long conditioning its study, almost as a minor, transitional period. But did contemporaries perceive a crisis (if not transition) in opera, following the glorious years of the Neapolitan school? My discussion will demonstrate that the intellectual elite, driven by its classicist orientation, indeed felt a crisis to have arisen, and at the same time formulated a new lexicon and discourse marked by the Napoleonic power that prevailed at this time throughout Italy. The French aimed, as in other fields, to reform music and recast the theatrical world according to their own national practices. However, this aim conflicted with the habits of the Italian public, engendering an unmanageable situation. My discussion furthermore highlights the diverse nature of the subject matter under consideration, proposing, in place of the disparaging "interregnum," the notion of an "age of plurality," which better reflects the richness

of this period and avoids constructing it teleologically in relation to the messianic expectation of the coming of Rossini.

Keywords: Napoleonic Italy, early nineteenth-century Italian opera, Milan, Naples, Rome

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Federica Marsico

Beyond the Implicit: *The Bassarids* and *Venus und Adonis* by Hans Werner Henze

This article argues that Hans Werner Henze’s operas *The Bassarids* (1966) and *Venus und Adonis* (1997) unfold queer subtexts through their librettos and music. It identifies covert queer features of the characters and their relationships, through analysis of dramaturgy and musical style. The proposed reading indicates that the theatrical medium provides artists with the opportunity to dramatize uncomfortable and even scandalous topics such as non-normative gender identities. Music functions together with other communicative forms (text, narrative, and staging) to generate multimedia performances aimed at conveying implicit queer messages.

Keywords: queer musicology, gender studies, twentieth-century opera

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