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# NEWSLETTER

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ISSUE NO. 43

SPRING 2024

## *The Pleasures of the Quarrel*

An Eighteenth-Century Operatic Mash-Up  
Performed at Cornell University on March 27, 2022  
Available on YouTube, with subtitles

Rebecca Harris-Warrick

I like to joke that this performance could only have been concocted by a musicologist, because who else would have thought to put a side-bar from music history textbooks onto the stage? The quarrel in question is the infamous “Querelle des bouffons” (the War of the Buffoons) that agitated the operatic world in Paris between 1752 and 1754, generating some 2,000 pages of polemical opinion pieces arguing the relative merits of French and Italian opera. Whereas historians do dip into the texts—particularly the strident ones by the Baron Grimm and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who famously concluded his *Lettre sur la musique française* by claiming that the French had no music—they rarely pay attention to the operas that formed the background to the polemics. As it turns out, there are many pleasures to be discovered in the repertoire that underlay the quarrel and even though I was unsure right up until the day of the performance that such an unintuitive concept would work on the stage, our mash-up was so successful that I am hoping that other institutions will be interested in picking it up.

The program featured three key works, all of them performed in Paris in 1753, although never together. First came excerpts from the prologue to Mondonville’s *Titon et l’Aurore*, in which Prometheus steals fire from the heavens in order to bring mortals to life; Amour (Cupid) arrives to give them love. This work, which was seen as upholding traditional French operatic values, features a mythological plot, elevated poetry that is highlighted in the musical setting, a score with a rich harmonic vocabulary, and integrated dancing. Next came an excerpt from the intermezzo *Il Giocatore* (*The Gambler*) by Giovanni Maria Orlandini, sung in conversational Italian in a buffo style and without any dancing. Serpilla accuses Baccocco of gambling away all their money and demands a divorce, until she remembers the caresses they once shared. This work had circulated around Europe under various titles since 1715 and in Paris acquired some new music by Pietro Auletta, one duet from which was included here. These two operas were both performed at the Académie Royale de Musique (the

Paris Opéra); our third work, on the other hand, a one-act *opéra bouffon*, came from the stage of the Opéra Comique, whose director aimed to profit from the notoriety of the quarrel by beating the Italians at their own game, but with a libretto in French. *Les Troqueurs* (*The Swappers*) by Antoine Dauvergne has a proto *Così fan tutte* plot, in which two men decide to swap fiancées, without checking first to see if the women agree. Unsurprisingly, the exchange does not go well ... All is ultimately resolved and celebrated in a sparkling ballet.

In order to make the scenario comprehensible to an audience that had never heard of the War of the Buffoons, Catherine Turocy, director of the New York Baroque Dance Company who served as both stage director and choreographer, devised spoken dialogue for the four singers that framed each opera. Acting both as themselves and in character, the singers offered spirited banter that informed and amused. Program notes (and my pre-opera talk) explained the context of the aesthetic dispute over the merits of French and Italian opera and offered guidance as to what to listen and watch for. Because the performance took place in a large hall with a stage, not in a dedicated theater, projections transported the audience from Bailey Hall back to Paris in 1753 and served in lieu of scenery to establish the locations. And even though Louis XV and his queen, Maria Leszczyńska, did not get directly involved in the debate, their respective “corners” in the Paris Opéra’s theater were so strongly identified with the different sides (the king’s corner supported French opera, the queen’s corner Italian), that we placed the “monarchs” on either side of the stage, where they participated in the action from time to time.

As the person who dreamed up this concept, I was responsible for selecting the operas and the excerpts within them, editing two of the scores, and organizing ancillary events (which included giving various talks and helping set up two exhibits, one in the Rare Book Library, the other in the Music Library). Once I had settled on *Les Troqueurs* as one of the works, which required two sopranos and two baritones, I had to find two other works that featured one mixed couple of each voice type (*budget oblige*). I made the hard decision to do without a chorus in *Titon et l’Aurore*, given how central choruses were to French opera, but as happened at the time, the dancers filled many of the same roles and supplied actions that the

*continued on page 8*



*Serpilla and Baccocco reconcile in  
Il Giocatore.  
Projections set the action in an Italian  
restaurant*

## From the Editor

Michael Vincent

The SECM Newsletter is published twice yearly, in Fall and Spring. Submissions in the following categories are encouraged:

- Original research articles;
- News of recent accomplishments from members of the society (publications, presentations, awards, performances, promotions, etc.);
- Reviews of performances of 18th-century music;
- Reviews of books, editions, or recordings of 18th-century music;
- Conference reports;
- Dissertations in progress on 18th-century music;
- Upcoming conferences and meetings;
- Calls for papers and manuscripts;
- Research reports and research resources;
- Grant opportunities.

Contributions should be submitted as an attachment to an e-mail message (preferably in Microsoft Word format) to the SECM Newsletter editor (michael.vincent@unf.edu). Submissions must be received by September 1 for the Fall issue and by March 1 for the Spring issue. Annotated discographies (in the format given in the inaugural issue, October 2002) will also be accepted and will be posted on the SECM web site.

### SECM Officers

Drew Edward Davies, President (2023–25);  
Alison DeSimone, Vice President (2022–24);  
Evan Cortens, Secretary-Treasurer (2023–25)

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Neal Zaslaw (2020)



### New Members

Qingfan Jiang, Christopher Ogburn, Rikki Wolpowitz

## President's Message

Drew Edward Davies

When recently re-reading James Webster's masterful article "The Eighteenth-Century as a Music-Historical Period?" in preparation for a graduate class, I felt a strong resonance between his description of the founders of this Society as "persons researching non-canonical composers, institutions genres, and regions" with the intent "to foster the exchange of information and ideas" (*Eighteenth-Century Music* 1, no. 1 (2004):11) and current projects and priorities of Society members and our colleagues in the field at large. Just a few days ago in March 2024, Haymarket Opera gave the modern premiere of Maria Margherita Grimani's *La decollazione di San Giovanni Battista* (1715), and in this newsletter Rebecca Harris-Warrick reports on an operatic "mash-up" at Cornell University inspired by the *Querelle des bouffons* and we read about the revival of operas by Johann Christian Bach and symphonies by Gaetano Brunetti.

I am sure that all members of the Society are thrilled to learn about and discuss these performances and others, and thus I heartily encourage submissions to this Newsletter about such activities, whether as member news or as feature articles or reviews, and invite those colleagues active in exploring "new" repertoires of eighteenth-century music outside of SECM to join.

Looking ahead, the Society is beginning to consider options for conference venues in 2025 and beyond. If you have an idea for a location or would consider hosting a conference at your institution, please contact me directly at dedavies@northwestern.edu.



### Spring 2024 Member News

**Stewart Carter** has recently published the following articles: "Playing for God: Brass Instruments of the Moravian Brethren in the Atlantic World," in *Shaping Sound and Society: The Cultural Study of Musical Instruments*. Ed. Stephen Cottrell. Abingdon, Oxon / New York: Routledge, 2024, 158–76; "Early Performances of Haydn's *Creation* in the American South: The Moravian Connection," in *Becoming American: Moravians and Their Neighbors, 1722-1822*. Ed. Ulrike Wiethaus and Grant P. McAllister. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2023, 151–65; "Military Trumpets and Percussion in China's Qing Dynasty: The *Art militaire des chinois* of Joseph-Marie Amiot," *Historic Brass Society Journal* (2023): 33–67.

Recent publications by **Jane Schatkin Hettrick** include the article "Desperate Measures: Andreas Streicher's *Melodienbuch* (1824) and His Attempts to Improve Congregational Song in the Lutheran Church in Vienna," in *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*, Epiphany–2024, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 7–16. In this essay, she examines a unique Lutheran hymnal that survives in only one copy. *The American Organist* (Jan. 2024) contains her article "The Holiness in Beauty: Mozart among the Theologians," which was an expanded version of a paper presented at the conference "Lutheranism and the Classics VI," Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, IN, Oct. 2021.

Conductor and lecturer **Peter Leech** (who contributed an article to the Spring 2016 SECM Newsletter on the musical patronage of Cardinal Henry Benedict Stuart) continues his exploration of sacred music in eighteenth-century Rome with a new CD of

music by Giovanni Battista Casali (1715–92), featuring many first recordings: *Giovanni Battista Casali: Sacred Music from Eighteenth-Century Rome*. Toccata Music Group

**Paula Maust's** book *Expanding the Music Theory Canon: Inclusive Examples for Analysis from the Common Practice Period* was published by SUNY Press in December 2023. The book includes 255 musical examples by sixty-seven women and/or people of color, including a significant number of works from the eighteenth century.

**Magnus Tessing Schneider & Meike Wagner** have co-edited a recently-published volume titled *Performing the Eighteenth Century: Theatrical Discourses, Practices, and Artefacts* (Stockholm University Press, 2023). It is focused on the theoretical and methodological challenges of historically informed performance, with a special focus on eighteenth-century music and theatre. It has been published with open online access, available on the publisher's website.

**Michael Vincent** has recently published a book chapter: "He knew no music other than his own": Spain and Isolation in Biographies of Luigi Boccherini," in *The Black Legend of Spain and its Atlantic Empire in the Eighteenth Century*. Ed. Catherine M. Jaffe and Karen Stolley. Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2024, 235–52.

**Neal Zaslaw** announces that the long-awaited new edition of the Köchel-Verzeichnis, the *Thematic Catalog of the Musical Works of W.A. Mozart*, has been announced to appear in mid-September 2024. The volume can be ordered on the Breitkopf & Härtel website (<https://www.breitkopf.com/work/20546/>) at a pre-publication discount.



## Announcements

This spring, Opera Lafayette will be reviving Jean-Joseph Mouret's comic opera *Les Fêtes de Thalie* for the first time since the eighteenth century. The work is an opera-ballet, meaning that it has independent acts connected by a governing idea, in this case three stages of women's lives: the Girl, the Widow, the Wife. What makes this work particularly special is its frame, a prologue and epilogue that argue the merits of comic opera on a stage (the Paris Opera) that favored tragedies. Conducted by Christophe Rousset and directed by Catherine Turocy.

Washington, DC, at the Kennedy Center: Friday, May 3 and Saturday, May 4, 2024, at 7:30 PM.

New York City, Museo del Barrio: Tuesday, May 7 at 6 PM.

Also in NYC: OL's "From St. Cyr to Cannons: Moreau and Handel's Esther," Thursday, May 9 at 7 PM, St. Peter's Church.



## SECM Tenth Biennial Conference Review

*Jeana Melilli*

The University of North Texas in Denton graciously hosted the Tenth Biennial Conference of the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music, October 5–8, 2023. All papers were conveniently given in one location, on campus at the Music Building, and the attendees were treated to lively scholarly discussion as well as magnificent

performances of eighteenth-century music from a variety of student ensembles at UNT.

Our generous host, Rebecca Geoffroy-Schwinden, kicked-off the proceedings at the pre-conference gathering with a discussion of what it means to be an eighteenth-century location. Denton was incorporated in 1866, but both the city and UNT are in possession of notable eighteenth-century items. Pre-conference events included performances on eighteenth-century organs around Denton, and a sampling of eighteenth-century manuscript holdings at the UNT music library. Coupled with the burgeoning scholarship on people who inhabited the area prior to Texas's statehood, Denton proved itself to be a worthy host city, broadening the notion of what it means when the eighteenth century is invoked.

Friday, the conference began in earnest. The first morning session covered the latest in Metastasio research in hybrid format. The panelists, Anne Desler (University of Edinburgh), Carlo Lanfossi (Università degli Studi di Milano), Jessica Peritz (Yale University) and Paul Sherrill (University of Utah) showed the breadth of Metastasio's influence, from England to Naples, blending performance studies with cultural history and analysis in their approaches. A panel on "Investigating Sources" followed. Scot Buzza (University of Kentucky) shared his research on the different sources of Psalm texts used in San Marco in Venice, which were influenced over the centuries by politics and orality more than the written texts. Don Fader (University of Alabama) discussed a new approach to the French cantatas of Philippe II d'Orléans. The texts reflect a variation on the cantata genre that reveals a mixture of Italian textual influence and music inspired by French operatic techniques.

The afternoon featured papers on operatic compositional techniques. Hedy Law (University of British Columbia) examined Gluck's librettist, Du Roullet's reworking of Racine in *Iphigénie en Aulide*. Michael Goetjen (MIT) argued that Mozart's concert arias were more than compositional exercises. Paula Maust (Peabody) ended the day's sessions with a lecture recital on Elizabeth Turner's "Six Lessons for the Harpsichord." She mixed her archival research findings with performances from Turner's collection. Both the compositions and the number and musical influence of her subscribers disproved recent criticism of Turner's compositions.

*Mariachi Águilas de UNT*, led by Erika Soveranes, offered an uplifting ending to the day, performing a variety of traditional mariachi pieces. The attendees were encouraged to sing along where appropriate (see Figure 1).

Saturday morning began with a panel on Global Identities, featuring papers from Stewart Carter (Wake Forest University), Matt Darnold (University of North Texas), and Sam Girling (University of Auckland). The topics ranged from Joseph-Marie Amiot's French manuscripts about Chinese music, the influence of French colonialism in Rameau's "Les sauvages," to the tambourine and its relationship to women. Luca Lévi Sala (Manhattan College) and Olga Sanchez (University of Chicago) finished the morning with papers on Haydn.

Saturday afternoon featured a panel discussion on the *Grove Music Online's* Women, Gender, and Sexuality Project. Rebecca Cypress (Rutgers University), Alison DeSimone (Independent Scholar), Julia Doe (Columbia University), Natasha Roule (Independent Scholar), Rebecca Geoffroy-Schwinden and Paula Maust discussed the mechanisms and criteria they are instituting to refine, edit, and add to the narrative of women's music-making.





*Mariachi Águilas de UNT, led by Erika Soveranes. Photo credit: Chandler Hall*

DeSimone pointed out that many of the Wikipedia entries for women composers were more up-to-date and used better language than similar *Grove* entries. Chandler Hall (University of North Texas) listed a collection of quotes from the current *Grove* that casually objectified eighteenth-century women musicians, often stemming from eighteenth century narratives. In establishing a new framework more welcoming to entries on women and gender-marginalized composers, there is a concern of bifurcating the *Grove* if editors working on other centuries do not adopt similar protocols.

Neal Zaslaw presented the Plenary Lecture, “Piano-forte pour la parfait harmonie, or, How many notes are there in an octave?” via pre-recorded video that afternoon. The experimental keyboard, capable of many different tunings led to lots of speculation about how to play such an impossible looking instrument. After his presentation, Zaslaw responded to questions via live video feed.

Saturday evening’s concert featured UNT’s Baroque Ensemble on period instruments and their early music choir Vox Aquilae. The theme, “Music of the Americas,” brought together Baroque music from Mexico by Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla, Ignacio Jerusalem y Stella, Manuel de Sumaya, and from Brazil by José Maurício Nunes Garcia, among others.

Sunday’s papers focused on student scholarship and early-career advice. Aimee Brown (Sydney Conservatorium of Music, The University of Sydney) won the Student Paper Prize with her exciting work on dance notation and a new software that helps musicians play eighteenth-century dance music better, especially when dancers are involved. Sashi Ayyangar (Northwestern University) presented a paper on the influence of Handel on the musical borrowings of his German contemporaries. Afterward, Peter

Kohanski (University of North Texas) and Jeana Melilli (University of Florida) reported on their dissertations-in-progress and received helpful feedback from the audience.

The conference ended with a panel discussion, featuring Rebecca Geoffroy-Schwinden, Laurel Zeiss (Baylor University), and Steven Zohn (Temple University) regarding publishing for early-career scholars. Panel members gave advice regarding writing in long-form, how to differentiate the dissertation from a first book, and how to apply and manage the criticism received in the peer-review process. Zohn encouraged everyone to submit to major journals, reminding the attendees that editors are always looking for well-written articles.

The Tenth Biennial SECM Conference proved to be an exciting mix of panels, papers, performances, and lively discussions. Thanks to the hard work of UNT students Peter Kohanski and Chandler Hall, the audio/visual component and hybrid format went off without a hitch. The foundational work of established scholars alongside the efforts to expand the narrative to be more inclusive was on full display. This work manifested itself in the student performances the attendees were treated to. Eighteenth-century music is alive and well, and we look forward to the next meeting of the Society.



## Book Review

*The Operas of Johann Christian Bach An Introduction.* Jason Grant, ed. Los Altos, California: The Packard Humanities Institute, 2022 [xii, 160 p. ISBN 978-1-938325-51-9 (hardcover)]

*David Yearsley*



Even frivolous fictional characters have found a convenient whipping boy in the youngest son of J. S. Bach. The late, lamented Dr. Peter Schickele's send-up biography of P.D.Q. Bach quips that the talentless rogue had the "originality of Johann Christian." Yet even this stinging Bach-handed compliment has historical precedent. One of J. C. Bach's most ardent defenders, his friend Charles Burney, had to admit in the fourth and final volume of his massive *General History of Music* of 1789, that in Bach's operas, "the richness of the accompaniments perhaps deserve more praise than the originality of his melodies."

In spite of this qualification, Burney lauded the so-called London Bach as a master musician and allotted him ample space in his *General History*, claiming it as a "great pleasure ... [to] take this opportunity to do justice to his talents and abilities" and noting that "many of the admirable airs [i.e., arias] in the operas he composed for our stage long remained in favor."

Between 1762 and 1778, this Bach wrote eleven operas for leading theaters across Europe, a patch that ran from Turin to Naples to Milan to London to Mannheim to Paris. Johann Christian was the only member of his huge musical clan to compose an opera, never mind one shy of a dozen. Also, therefore, he was the only Bach to leave the family heartland and with it, the family's faith. Johann Christian was a cosmopolitan and—shock horror—a Catholic: he spent seven years in Italy (where he converted from Lutheranism), then two decades in London, with a final operatic foray to Paris four years before his death in his adopted country of England at the age of only forty-six. J. C. Bach was the elegant, enterprising exception that proved the rule of Bachian rootedness in German soil.

Mostly known today as a purveyor of pleasant chamber music, piano sonatas and concertos, J. C. Bach is also remembered as the welcoming mentor of the eight-year-old prodigy Mozart in London in 1764.

Burney's glowing, if not completely unalloyed praise of Bach's music notwithstanding, we moderns have had little access to J. C. Bach's theatrical works. There have been occasional revivals and recording projects, such as a sampler from the exquisite French counter-tenor Philippe Jaroussky of some of the arias Burney mentions (<https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/08/14/bringing-landscapes-to-life-the-music-of-johann-christian-bach/>), but his operas still wait mostly in the wings. Here's hoping that in the coming years the footlights will be fired up and the London Bach's music given its chance to tread the boards again.

Such a revival of J. C. Bach's operatic fortunes will be made possible thanks to a group of scholars now being mobilized in a project funded by the Packard Humanities Institute (PHI) to produce reliable, rigorous editions of these works under the editorial leadership of Paul Corneilson. Over the past quarter-century, Corneilson has been at the head of the recently completed campaign to publish some 140 sumptuous volumes making up the complete works of Carl Philip Emanuel Bach (<https://www.cpebach.org/>), Johann Christian's elder half-brother with whom the fifteen-year-old went to live and study after their father's death in 1750.

Every eighteenth-century opera must begin with an overture, and Bach's bolt from the gate with tremendous gusto. So too, this grand musicological endeavor of editing his stage works begins with a vivid, if less rollicking prelude in the form a slim book. It is a fascinating and detailed volume, both scholarly and readable, though its title doesn't exactly leap off the marquee. Published by

the Packard Humanities Institute in 2023, this assiduously researched collection of essays proceeds chronologically through Bach's eleven operas after a framing biographical essay by John Rice. Always listening out for the nuances and routines of Bach's compositional procedures, Rice paints a picture of Bach's "Life in Opera" that is animated and engrossing, a *tableau vivant* of dramatic opportunities seized, strokes of luck made possible by labor, competition and collaborations, disappointments and triumphs, fame and fleeting fortune.

And what would a life in opera be without amorous adventures? These pages reveal that Bach had an ear for singers, and an eye for them too—and also for at least one ballerina. We learn from Lucio Tufano's lively chapter on Bach's two Neapolitan operas, *Catone* and *Alessandro nell'Indie*, from late 1761 and early 1762 respectively, that the powers-that-were admonished the up-and-coming composer to desist from his rampant flirtations. Love did not scuttle his operatic ascent. Bach might have met the soprano Cecilia Grassi in Naples, though he began collaborating with her in chamber music in his famous London concerts only in the later 1760s, marrying her at some point after that.

Before his emigration to England, while still the second organist at the Milan Cathedral, Bach demonstrated great theatrical promise with his hugely successful substitute aria written in 1759 for the castrato Filippo Elisi on one of the most celebrated texts of the time, "Misero pargoletto" by the leading lyric poet of the Age, Pietro Metastasio. This was a touchingly fitting operatic entrance exam for a young man who carried the Bach name across Europe, but unlike his brothers had been deprived of his father's guidance in his teenage years.

Unhappy child,	Misero pargoletto,
you do not know your fate.	Il tuo destin non sai.
Ah, never tell him	Ah! non gli dite mai
who his father was.	Qual era il genitor.

Soon after that, in the Carnival Season of 1761, when Bach was still just twenty-six years old, he got his real chance, not knowing that he had just two more decades left to him on this world's stage. This initiation test required that he scale the mightiest of operatic monuments, *Artaserse* whose libretto was also by the ubiquitous Metastasio. By the time the young German tackled this tale it was more than thirty years old and had been set to music by dozens of other composers. Novelty was at a premium. We learn from Margaret Butler's lively and illuminating essay on this first Bach opera that he succeeded in the endeavor against what she calls, conjuring an appropriately operatic scenario, "a perfect storm of calamities." Bach got a fee of just 130 *zecchini gigliati* for five months of work; the leading man, Gaetano Guadagni, received twice that for just seven performances.

Within a year Bach was composing his second opera, now for one of the most storied houses on the continent—the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples. Butler's colleagues in the volume go on with panache and precision to take us behind the scenes of Bach's further efforts on the Italian peninsula and then across the Alps and English Channel.

The volume is expertly edited by Jason Grant, a long-time member of the team until recently laboring on C. P. E. Bach's music. His preface takes up a scant two-thirds of a page, and comes off rather like one of those announcements made before an opera perfor-

mance in which the audience is reminded to switch off their devices and informed that the soprano has a head cold. But Grant does set out an admirable goal for the book: “to promote admiration and understanding of these works.” I rise from my seat to give his words and his editorial efforts a sincere and hearty: “Bravo!” The essays’ generous cultivation of our admiration and understanding spark my ardent desire for future productions in opera houses of our time.

The authors assembled by Grant judiciously lay out the genesis of each work, the byzantine (if also conventional) opera plots, the often rocky and rushed production schedules, the sometimes chaotic state of the musical sources that will allow for a reconstruction of viable editions, before finally turning to modern revivals. The dangers of excessive repetition lurk round every page-turn given the overlapping network of musical theatre-makers encountered—composers, librettists (who were often essentially script doctors), vocalists, instrumentalists, dancers-choreographers, scenic designers, and patrons. But Grant deftly avoids these pitfalls, not an easy feat since the business of international *opera seria* was built on a star system dominated by fabulously well-paid singers, first among them the *castrato* headliners: Bach worked with Guadagni, Guarducci, Tenducci and select others, including the intact tenor Anton Raaff. For singing heroic parts they received far more than the composers did for their creative services. Like Bach, the singers—and many instrumentalists too—took their musical wares to where the money was. There was lots of it in London.

Primed by Grant & Company’s *Introduction*, and once the opera editions are out in the world (the editor doesn’t reveal the expected completion date for this high-stepping musicological revue of eleven volumes), we’ll warmly welcome back a master of contrast and *cantilena*, his antique heroes and heroines, along with the necessary villains forgiven their crimes. Here’s predicting, that in the hands of imaginative musicians and theatre-makers, the youngest Bach son will prove that uplift and entertainment-value can sometimes be rightly prized above originality.



## Recording Review

Gaetano Brunetti: *Sinfonías*, vol. 5  
Camerata Antonio Soler directed by Gustavo Sánchez  
Templante CMBK 2249

*Drew Edward Davies*

With the exception of works by Luigi Boccherini, performances and recordings of music from Enlightenment Spain remain scarce, despite the accessibility of source material, modern editions, and a growing landscape of scholarship by international authors. A case in point is the music of Gaetano Brunetti (1744–1798), a composer of Italian origin who served as a court musician under Charles III (r. 1759–1788) and Charles IV (r. 1788–1808) and produced a substantial corpus of chamber and orchestral music, including 39 symphonies. Brunetti was a near contemporary of Francisco Goya, although unlike the famed painter, the composer did not survive into the early nineteenth century to witness the downfall of the Bourbon court. Most of Brunetti’s works remained in manuscript due to the circumstances of their production as well



as the general rarity of music printing in Spain at the time. However, this does not mean that they have lain out of reach; unique sources to no fewer than 20 of Brunetti’s symphonies, many them holographs, are housed at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., alongside dozens of the composer’s chamber works (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Gustavo Sánchez’s project to record all of Brunetti’s surviving symphonies with the Camerata Antonio Soler, a period instruments ensemble based in El Escorial, Spain, promises to deliver an exciting new window into the music of the Spanish court during the 1760s through 1780s. Ambitiously conceived to encompass 14 albums, the series debuted in 2014 and has already grown to eight completed discs containing 25 symphonies, two of the *sinfonia concertantes*, and other works. This essay concerns the fifth volume of the series, released in 2022, which is the most recent volume I have had the opportunity to acquire. It presents the premiere recordings of Symphonies No. 16 in D Major, L. 305; No. 17 in B flat Major, L. 306; and No. 35 in E flat Major, L. 324.

These three symphonies, each cast in four movements and lasting just over twenty minutes, are not insubstantial works. Composed in approximately 1789, these symphonies date from the first years of the reign of Charles IV and count among the last symphonies Brunetti wrote, given that in the 1790s he tended to favor quintets, sextets, and other chamber music. Germán Labrador López de Azcona, the author of the Brunetti thematic catalog, wrote the informative liner notes, which are printed in Spanish and English.<sup>2</sup> As might be expected, graceful periodic melodies and repetitive rhythmic motives predominate in this music, which is rarely contrapuntal. While none of these three symphonies possesses the fraught character of the one Brunetti symphony that does have some renown, Symphony No. 33 in C Minor, “*Il maniático*,” they are nonetheless, like that work, often imaginative in scoring and form.

For example, Brunetti differentiates himself from his contemporaries by substituting the conventional minuet with a “*Quin-*

1. See Library of Congress, “Collection. Gaetano Brunetti Manuscript Scores,” <https://www.loc.gov/collections/gaetano-brunetti-manuscript-scores/about-this-collection/>.

2. Germán Labrador López de Azcona, *Gaetano Brunetti (1744–1798): Catálogo crítico, temático y cronológico. Colección de monografías, no. 8.* (Madrid: Asociación Española de Documentación Musical, 2005).





Figure 1: Brunetti, *Symphony No. 17 in B-flat* (1789). Retrieved from the Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/item/89756073/](http://www.loc.gov/item/89756073/)

retto” third movement in which the “A” section is written for a wind ensemble of two oboes, two horns, and bassoon. The strings play only in the middle section, which takes the place of the Trio. To me, these are the most exciting sections of these symphonies, not merely on account of the novel form, but because of the quality of the wind writing; the bassoon lines in particular are refreshingly active and idiomatic. Although brief, these excursions into the sound world of *Harmoniemusik* are welcome and delightful. Unexpectedly, Brunetti embeds a minuet into the Finale of the Symphony No. 17 in B flat major, and thus he does not avoid the stylized dance altogether. Its interruption of the otherwise conventional Allegro spiritoso finale is, again, delightful and entertaining.

Gustavo Sánchez and the Camerata Antonio Soler deliver refined performances of the symphonies with impeccable intonation and character. The small ensemble—five violins, one viola, one cello, one bass, two oboes, two horns, and one or two bassoons as needed—is similar to the orchestra that traveled with the court among the various official residences outside of Madrid in the 1790s and appropriately gives the music a serenade-like character in which the winds are not overpowered.<sup>3</sup> Stylistically, the group

3. On the plan of the small orchestra, see Germán Labrador López de Azcona, “Gaetano Brunetti (1774–1798), compositor y maestro de música de Carlos IV.” *Quodlibet* 70, no. 1 (2019): 121.

tends to prefer acciaturas to appoggiaturas in the interpretation of the melodic material, especially in the faster movements. This lends a light, late-century sense to the phrasing, although in some of the melodies, such as the main theme of the first movement of Symphony No. 17 in B flat major, I might have preferred a more galant appoggiatura. That detail aside, Sánchez’s performances make a convincing case for these symphonies to enter the broader early symphonic repertory, both in Spain and beyond.

The Brunetti series complements the Camerata Antonio Soler’s commitment to the revival of eighteenth-century Spanish music, and their discography also includes works by Boccherini, José de Torres, Sebastián Durón, Antonio Literes, and namesake Antonio Soler himself. The ensemble also serves as the resident ensemble at the annual International Brunetti Festival in Colmenar de Oreja, the village near Aranjuez where Brunetti lived. Luckily, the Camerata Antonio Soler’s recordings of Brunetti can be heard on Spotify and Apple Music, and selected tracks have been uploaded to YouTube. Nonetheless, they do not yet appear in the Naxos Library, so the physical CDs would be a welcome acquisition for music libraries and personal collections. They contribute significantly and enjoyably to the growing presence of Spain in the legacy of eighteenth-century music today.







*A ballet from Titon et l'Aurore. Photo credit: Jason Koske*

chorus would have articulated. It was important to me that students be involved alongside the professionals, who included the four singers and four of the dancers. The other four, all of them taking ballet classes at Cornell, were chosen by audition and trained in baroque style by Catherine Turocy and her assistant, Julia Bengtsson. The brilliantly evocative projections were designed by an undergraduate double majoring in theater and in architecture, Adam Shulman. The Cornell Chamber Orchestra, conducted

by Michelle Di Russo, was given three sessions in period playing styles by violinist Beth Wenstrom; some of them even danced in the final contredanse. None of the four singers (Lucy Fitz Gibbon, my colleague at the time; Marie Marquis; Dominik Belavy; Tyler Duncan) had worked together before, but they came together remarkably well as an ensemble, in both their acting and singing. The Music Department was primarily responsible for the performance, with co-sponsorship and material support from the Department of Performing and Media Arts. Several other departments and programs from around campus contributed funding.

*The Pleasures of the Quarrel* had to be twice postponed due to Covid and when it finally could go forward, Cornell changed its regulations just in time to allow the singers and dancers to forgo masking. After all the planning and preparation it was unfortunate that circumstances did not allow for more than one performance, but at least the show was videotaped and professionally edited. The performance is available on the Cornell Music Department's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3vWGYjuWDs>) or you can search YouTube for *The Pleasures of the*

*Quarrel*), where it is complete with subtitles in English and full credits for all the participants, with program notes and artist bios linked. As I hope you will see for yourselves, this unlikely concept actually worked as theater; Catherine Turocy and I are making the performing materials available in the hopes that other institutions will be interested in performing POTQ as well. If you would like to discuss the possibility, contact either me (rh14@cornell.edu) or Catherine (nybaroquedance@gmail.com). I devised this program to mark my retirement from 34 years of teaching at Cornell and I could not have had a better send-off.



*The finale of Les Troqueurs*