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VICENTE MARTÍN Y SOLER: *UN MÚSICO ESPAÑOL EN EL CLASICISMO EUROPEO*

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Weighing in at some 659 pages, this book represents a major scholarly achievement. Rich in research and richer still in insights, this study of a single composer's dramatic works makes a significant contribution to our understanding of late eighteenth-century opera and ballet. Although for two centuries Vicente Martín y Soler has been remembered primarily as the composer whose opera *Una cosa rara* eclipsed Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* in popularity, this Spaniard is now emerging in studies of the European musical stage as an important and fascinating figure in his own right. My own PhD dissertation, 'The Da Ponte Operas of Vicente Martín y Soler' (University of Toronto, 1991) – the basis for subsequent articles in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* – examines the five operas that Martín wrote with Lorenzo Da Ponte for Vienna and London. Christine Martin, in her dissertation of 2000, published as *Vicente Martín y Solers Oper 'Una cosa rara': Geschichte eines Opernerfolges im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim and New York: Olms, 2001), wrote a reception history of *Una cosa rara* that vividly demonstrates its phenomenally wide distribution throughout Europe. A popular biography by Giuseppe de Matteis and Gianni Marata, *Vicente Martín y Soler* (Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim, 2001), has also grown out of a recent movement in Spain that seeks to repatriate this forgotten son of the nation. Now, with his new study of the composer's works, Waisman catapults Martín to prominence.

Perhaps more than any other itinerant composer of this period, Martín adapted his compositional style to the prevailing regional styles favoured by his patrons. Within Italy and in European capitals that were subject to Italian musical influence (Madrid, Vienna, London and St Petersburg) he composed eleven *opere buffe*, five *opere serie*, one oratorio and thirty-four ballets. In St Petersburg he was also entrusted to assist in establishing a Russian operatic idiom, which he did with three Russian dialogue operas that indirectly paved the way for the later work of Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka. In addition, Martín fulfilled a private commission from the local Francophile aristocracy for the composition of an *opéra comique*.

If this diverse range of commissions posed a challenge to the composer, they also posed one to the author of this book. The sheer amount of material that had to be gathered and absorbed for this study is simply staggering, not just in terms of opera scores, librettos and archival material, but also in terms of the pertinent secondary literature existing in Spanish, Italian, English, German, French and Russian. This massive undertaking was buttressed to some extent by two related projects: Waisman prepared scholarly editions of Martín's operas *L'arbore di Diana* (2001), *Il burbero di buon cuore* (2003) and *La festa del villaggio* (2006) for a series published in Madrid by the Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, as well as co-organizing (with me) the very first conference devoted to Martín, which took place in Valencia in November 2006 (see the report by Waisman in *Eighteenth-Century Music* 4/2 (2007), 332–334). The cross-fertilization of research between the papers from this conference (which are scheduled to be published in 2009) and Waisman's book is most apparent in the latter work's chapter on Martín's ballets, '*Il fortunatissimo incontro de'balli: la producción de música para danza*', which was contributed specially by Angela Romagnoli. In this chapter Romagnoli carefully considers the problems of reconstructing the coordination between music and danced action, evaluates the trustworthiness of different types of sources and, in what is her most novel contribution to ballet studies, characterizes the compositional principles Martín follows in his ballets.

While the conference was organized in order to make a chronological survey of Martín's career throughout Europe, the book is built around the thesis that Martín represents a composer who is at once both Spanish and cosmopolitan. It opens with a chapter of biography, presenting a considerable amount of new research. The next chapter is devoted to a detailed study of Martín's first opera, *Il tutore burlato*, made in an



attempt to uncover his musical roots. Waisman goes on to present three chapters that deal with Martín's opere buffe, which form the bulk of his operatic output as well as the focus of the book. A single further chapter surveys the opere serie, the oratorio, the opéra comique, the Russian operas and various small vocal compositions, after which a chapter on ballet completes the coverage of the works. A final, reflective chapter on the essence of Martín's style and his place in history pulls all these thematic threads together to weave a brilliant conclusion. The back matter consists of a detailed list of works and three appendices, while throughout the entire text there are copious music examples that illustrate the analysis and discussion of Martín's works.

At the heart of Waisman's thesis is his identification of the Spanish elements in Martín's compositional style. The elements are largely rhythmic: the alternation of 6/8 and 3/4 metre (a constant feature in the frottole and galliard of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but a central characteristic of much Spanish music in the eighteenth), a dotted rhythmic pattern that is exemplified in the Prince's serenade 'Ho visto ai pianti' in *Una cosa rara* and the articulation of triple metre in a pattern of 1 + 2 beats. Waisman points out how all three rhythms are present in the 'Viva, viva' section of the second finale of *Una cosa rara*, which was once incorrectly celebrated as the first waltz to be performed on stage. Another Spanish element, the dance known as the *seguidilla*, frequently appears in Martín's operas, sometimes as a labelled dance, sometimes only in the form of a particular rhythmic feature. For example, in the serenade just mentioned, Martín sets the endecasyllabic verses supplied by Da Ponte as if they were twelve-syllable verses by breaking elisions into two syllables or adding an extra musical beat in order to produce the alternating verses of 7 + 5 syllables that are characteristic of the *seguidilla*. Other features of Martín's style can be traced back to the *tonadillas escénicas* that he heard as a youth in Madrid. These typically demonstrate self-harmonizing melodies in 6/8 metre, three-voice textures where the top two voices move in parallel thirds, and passages in 'Andalusian' harmony. (This last term, which is also known as *afandangada* harmony among practitioners of flamenco, refers to passages in the Phrygian mode that cadence on what tonally would be the dominant of a minor key, and thence often jump directly to the tonic of its relative major.) In my dissertation I used the term 'song style' to refer to Martín's distinctive style as it appeared in the five operas I studied. From the wider perspective of observing this style throughout Martín's entire oeuvre and of understanding its Spanish roots, however, Waisman found my definition too restrictive and preferred instead to integrate 'song style' as a particular manifestation of a broader category of composition, which he calls 'tipo de canción'.

For a composer who was so attentive to his Spanish musical origins, it may be surprising to learn that some of the dances labelled *seguidillas* are inauthentic. Martín apparently modified them to conform to the operatic model that was made popular by Paisiello's *Barbiere di Siviglia*. Similarly, he adopted the use of the mandolin to represent Spain, although the mandolin was not a Spanish instrument (then, as now, Spaniards played the guitar). This flexibility on the part of the composer was, in Waisman's view, a conscious attempt to meet his audience's expectations. At a time when Spanish music, previously ignored or disparaged, was newly fashionable and welcomed in the rest of Europe as something attractively exotic, Martín capitalized on his musical heritage and marketed himself as a Spanish composer, while still conforming to Europe's preconceptions of Spanish music. This strategy contributed in no small measure to his wide appeal.

As he matured as a composer, Martín developed a facility for setting the Italian language to music. His later operas exhibit the correct declamation of text so consistently that any faulty accentuation in a particular vocal number is for Waisman a sure sign that it was not composed by Martín. Authorship is a particularly thorny issue in the London operas, as the original production scores and librettos of these works do not survive. For the London operas we have to rely on continental sources, which in all probability contain numbers that were imported into the opera. For instance, the prima donna's aria 'Son pur folli' from *La capricciosa corretta*, an aria that is present in several scores, contains errors of accentuation, together with other aspects of text-setting foreign to Martín's usual practice, which mark it as a likely substitute aria written by another composer. For another prima donna's aria, 'Per vivere contenta' from *L'isola del piacere*, which exhibits similar faulty accentuation of the text, Waisman was able to identify the composer as Ferdinand Paër and to locate the opera from which it was taken: *L'oro fa tutto*, written for Milan in 1793.



Waisman's overview of Martín's works exposes an unexpected number of self-borrowings, which he tabulates in Appendix 2. The reuse of existing material occurs most often in the overtures, but in *La vedova spiritosa* (1785) the self-borrowing occurs in seven vocal numbers as well, and in *Il burbero di buon cuore* (1786) it occurs in most of the numbers in the second act. Among the borrowings, Waisman reveals Lucilla's aria 'Vado, ma dove?' (later reset by Mozart) from *Il burbero* to be an arrangement of 'Misera gens afflictæ' from the oratorio *Philistæi a Jonatha dispersi* (1784). By contrast, the operas *Una cosa rara* and *L'arbore di Diana*, in which Martín developed his distinctive style, are almost entirely free of borrowings. Waisman also shows that Martín borrowed music from elsewhere at least once: in *La scuola dei maritati* he turned a Russian folksong into the aria 'Nel cor mi sento un giubilo', which eventually became one of the opera's greatest hits.

Waisman's method of analysing stand-alone works is to create a context for them by comparing them to related compositions. In the case of Martín's first opera, *Il tutore burlato* (Madrid, 1775), Waisman compares it to two previous settings of related librettos, Giacomo Insanguine's *La finta semplice, ossia Il tutore burlato* (Naples, 1769) and Giovanni Paisiello's *La frascatana* (Venice, 1774), a comparison that effectively characterizes Martín's opera as a student work. Waisman compares Martín's sole oratorio, *Philistæi a Jonatha dispersi*, composed in 1784 for the Ospedaletto in Venice, to Domenico Cimarosa's *Absalon*, composed for the same institution and the same soloists in 1782, and concludes – based on the similarities between them – that Martín followed local conventions in fulfilling his commission. In the case of the opéra comique entitled *Camille* (1796), Waisman's comparison of Martín's setting to the original setting of the same libretto, made by Nicolas Dalayrac in 1791, reveals how closely Martín modelled his opera on Dalayrac's work in order to solve his problem of composing in an unfamiliar language and genre.

Waisman divides Martín's opere buffe into two broad categories, 'ópera doméstica y burguesa' (domestic and bourgeois opera) and 'pastoral, mitología, exotismo, magia: ópera alotópica' (pastoral, mythology, exoticism, magic: allotopical opera (I shall explain the term 'allotopical' below)). The first can be understood as the conventional Goldoni comedy of character. The second category, however, requires some explanation. Waisman is of course familiar with the scholarly viewpoint from which the pastoral is considered to be a strand within the *commedia dell'arte* tradition. However, he feels that the differences between the two categories in Martín's opere buffe, in both the librettos and the music, are so large as to require a clear separation of the two. At the same time, he finds the term 'pastoral' to be too broad and abstract to do justice to the concrete traits that all the operas in the second category seem to have in common. He therefore coins a new adjective to describe the second category, 'allotopical', which he defines as 'located in a different place' – that is, a place other than 'the real world'. In an allotopical opera the picturesque is more important than the action, while the story unfolds with a certain amount of fluidity and continuity on the one hand and elements of symmetry and stasis on the other. Spectacular elements are combined with choruses, dance and special scenic effects, which can include magic. Short numbers are situated within larger frames, and the music shows a preponderance of the *tipo de canción* and song styles. Further research may provide corroboration for Waisman's categorizations, but for now, at least, they encourage the reconceptualization of accepted ideas.

Managing the large amount of material that is presented in such a book requires the utmost rigour in the production process and strong editorial support. Unfortunately, the book exhibits some weaknesses in this respect. I came across some inevitable typographical errors – for example, '1781' and '1987' instead of '1787' (both appearing in note 199 on page 80) and 'Manzini' instead of 'Mandini' (118) – as well as some more substantial mistakes. The list of self-borrowings in *Il burbero di buon cuore* on page 241 does not exactly match the data reproduced on page 606. On page 582 Waisman refers to a score of *Camille* that is located in 'Estocolmo, Statens musikbibliothek' (whose usual siglum, I should point out, is 'S-Skma'), but in the list of works on page 564 he identifies the library as 'S-Sk'. Other difficulties for the reader include the lack of page numbers in the cross-references and an index that is not as detailed and complete as it should be. When I tried to pursue a tantalizing reference to the Viennese publisher Artaria on page 13, for instance, I could not find the name in the index. Ferdinand Paër, who is listed in the index, has a reference to page 115 but not 364, where he is also mentioned. All such editorial shortcomings could, of course, be rectified in an English



translation, should one be made, and I think one is certainly merited. Waisman himself would do a magnificent job, as he is as strong a writer in English as he is in Spanish.

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*RECOGNITION IN MOZART'S OPERAS*

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Of the many scholarly publications on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart that appeared in 2006, a year that marked the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the composer's birth, Jessica Waldoff's *Recognition in Mozart's Operas* is one of the more substantial and thought-provoking. Its observations have been carefully assembled over a number of years (Waldoff began publishing on this topic in the early 1990s) and it contains interesting reinterpretations of some of Mozart's operas (most notably *La finta giardiniera* and *Così fan tutte*). It also advances a theory of recognition – and the 'recognition scene' in opera – that is meticulously devised and applied. The question of whether this theory of recognition is well formed enough to influence opera theory in general is more vexed, however, and I shall discuss this point in due course.

Waldoff begins her book by claiming that issues concerning plots and plotting have been 'marginalized' (7) in opera studies. She believes that we have given too much primacy to music, and that Joseph Kerman's notion of the composer as dramatist has resulted in 'musical drama' being reduced to 'dramatic music' (83–84). This is not a new idea, but the way in which she redresses the balance is certainly novel: she immerses herself in an analysis of those 'turning-points' in plots where truths are revealed and fortunes reversed, and she attempts to show how the ingredients of such 'recognition moments' can radically alter an opera's meaning. Along the way, she calls on Mozart himself, who says in a letter dated 13 October 1781 that 'an opera is sure of success when the plot [*Plan des Stücks*] is well worked out' (95). We should, however, be cautious here: Mozart is not saying that if the plot is not well worked out then the opera will fail; and he does not tell us exactly what is entailed by a plot being 'well worked out'. In this respect, it might have helped the argument if a 'control work' had been discussed, where the claim could be made that the weakness of the plot indeed caused the opera to 'fail' – *Così fan tutte* is not such a work for Jessica Waldoff, as we shall see – or where some clearly stated essential ingredients of a 'well-worked-out' plot were obviously missing.

The theoretical aspects of this study have their roots in the pioneering work of the literary theorist Terence Cave, whose important study *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) was published more than twenty years ago. Cave and Waldoff both take their cue from Aristotle's *Poetics*, which states that the most important part of tragedy is the plot (*Poetics*, 50a), and that tragic plots tend to have three important ingredients: recognition (*anagnōrīsis*), reversal (*peripeteia*) and suffering (*pathos*) (*Poetics*, 52a–b). The focus here on tragedy is obvious, but for Aristotle 'recognition' essentially means the unmasking of disguised or estranged persons. None of Mozart's operas is quite a Greek tragedy – not even *Idomeneo*, which comes closest to this category – and in the context of the Enlightenment, in any case, recognition might be seen to encompass more complex experiences than the detection of camouflaged persons. Waldoff has therefore expanded Aristotle's ideas to include the recognition of new types of knowledge, or new moments of self-awareness on the part of operatic characters – and sometimes new insights by their audiences. Hence she is able to claim that the most problematic moments in Mozart's operas 'are recognition moments, but have not been understood as such because of the neglect into which recognition has fallen' (15). Moreover, these