



Given its focus on a cosmopolitan composer such as Sarti, who was active in Italy, Austria, Denmark, Russia and Ukraine, and who composed in various cultural and political environments, the project is ideally situated in Berlin, the city where Sarti ended his life and which symbolizes a reunified Europe. We shall also explore the cultural network of Sarti's family, his contribution to the musical life of the city and the traces of Sarti still to be found in Berlin today; this will form part of a separate study.

The current state of the project will be updated on the website <www.udk-berlin.de/musikwissenschaft/sarti>.



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ALBERT RECASENS (Madrid) writes:

The three hundredth anniversary of the Peace of Utrecht and of the end of the War of the Spanish Succession have been giving rise to various commemorative musical programmes. Of special importance has been that undertaken by the Festival de Música Antigua de los Pirineos (FeMAP), a young but ambitious festival organized in more than twenty locations in the Catalan and Andorran Pyrenees, with the first performance of a programme devoted to Francesc Valls that took place on 12 July in La Seu de Urgell. On the one hand, the festival wanted to mark the centenary of the surrender of Barcelona on 11 September 1714, which had such significance for Catalonia in its loss of privileges and laws, as was also the case for the rest of the kingdoms ruled by the Crown of Aragon. On the other hand, the festival planned to pay tribute to the figure of Francesc Valls (?1665–1747), the maestro active in Barcelona during the years of the fighting and one of the most distinguished composers of the Spanish Baroque.

Valls's musical activities were centred in the Cathedral of Barcelona. On 17 December 1696, a few months after having competed successfully for the post of *maestro de capilla* at the church of Santa María del Mar, he was named substitute *maestro de capilla* of the cathedral at Barcelona on the retirement of his predecessor, Joan Barter. On the death of the latter in 1706 Valls assumed the full position. After his retirement in 1726 he dedicated himself to writing his monumental compositional treatise *Mapa armónico práctico*, which he finished in 1735. During his thirty years of service at the cathedral Valls was immensely active, composing the greater part of the more than six hundred works that are currently known, most of these in sacred genres, whether set to Latin or Spanish texts. Nevertheless, his best-known work is the *Missa Scala Aretina* of 1702, famous for having prompted a storm of polemics, with contributions from more than fifty Spanish musicians as well as figures from abroad such as Alessandro Scarlatti or the Portuguese Pedro Vaz Rego. Even if the origin of the controversy may have been aesthetic (the unprepared ninth in the second-soprano entry of the 'Miserere nobis' of the Gloria), various writers such as Francesc Bonastre have pointed to its political undercurrent (Francesc Bonastre i Bertran, 'Pere Rabassa, "... lo descans de Mestre Valls": notes a l'entorn del tono *Elissa gran Reyna* de Rabassa i de la missa *Scala Aretina* de Francesc Valls', *Butlletí de la Reial Acadèmia Catalana de Belles Arts de Sant Jordi* 4–5 (1990–1991), 81–104): the dispute only unfolded many years later, between 1715 and 1720, and those who intervened in the controversy had close connections with others on one or the other side. Valls was even the victim of a reprisal on the part of the Bourbon faction by being expelled from his post, presumably for having sided with the Habsburg Archduke Charles (Valls was named in the list of those banished from their posts, the 'Officials Ecclesiàstichs extrañats per orde del Rei', of April 1719). Álvaro Torrente has advanced the view that the mass might have been composed in 1702 for the closing ceremony of the Catalan court ('Villancicos de Reyes: propaganda sacromusical en Cataluña ante la sucesión a la Corona española (1700–1702)', in *La pérdida de Europa: la Guerra de Sucesión por la monarquía de España*, ed. Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio, Bernardo José García García and Virginia León (Madrid: Fundación Carlos de Amberes, 2007), 226), which was presided over by Felipe V, and Josep Rafael Carreras i Bulbena suggested that the mass might have



been used to celebrate the victory of the Imperial troops in the Battle of Almenar in 1710 by the Archduke in Barcelona (*Carlos d'Austria y Elisabeth de Brunswich Wolfenbüttel a Barcelona y Girona / Karl von Oesterreich und Elisabeth von Braunschweig Wolfenbüttel in Barcelona und Girona* (Barcelona: Tip. 'L'Avenç', 1902; facsimile edition Barcelona: Rafael Dalmau, 1993), 283).

For the first concert of its third series, FeMAP commissioned a fresh look at the *Missa Scala Aretina* from La Grande Chapelle. Directed by Albert Recasens, La Grande Chapelle is a Spanish vocal–instrumental ensemble founded in 2005, though it includes musicians from throughout Europe. It is known for its musicological recovery operations and uses its own recording label, Lauda, which is wholly dedicated to Spanish repertory of the renaissance, baroque and classical periods. The ensemble has aimed to rediscover Valls's great work by taking account of the personnel available at the Cathedral of Barcelona at the start of the eighteenth century: eleven solo voices, two violins, two trumpets, double bass, bassoon, harp and two organs. These are much smaller forces than those used, for example, by John Hoban in the first modern performance of the work in the Queen Elizabeth Hall in April 1972, subsequently recorded by the same conductor with the London Oratory Choir and Thames Chamber Orchestra (CRD Records 3371, 1980), or in the version directed by Gustav Leonhardt with the Koor en Barokorkest van de Nederlandse Bach Vereniging (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 88725460312, 1993). Relying on the materials provided by manuscript M1489/1 in the Biblioteca de Catalunya and having examined other works by the composer and information relating to practices in the cathedral, I have opted to dispense with the oboes and reinforcement of the violin parts (both later additions) so as to obtain a more balanced relationship between the various forces – three choirs (the first of which is SAT only) and the fourth 'choir' of violins and *clarines*. The use of one to a part throws the transparency of the individual lines into relief (there are many passages involving imitative counterpoint) and underline contrasts between the various voice parts. Although the edition used is that by José López Calo (Sevenoaks: Novello, 1978), we revised this by trying to detect additions made to the original parts, especially with reference to dynamic markings and the figured bass.

However important this new interpretation of the *Missa Scala Aretina* may have been, undoubtedly more so were the seven 'modern premieres' of works by Valls that were interspersed between the individual mass movements (without any liturgical relationships between them). These were the *lectio De lamentatione Ieremiae prophetae* (for eight voices), the *tono al Santísimo En el misterioso circo* (a 4), the responsory *Sancta et immaculata* (a 8), the motet *Surrexit Pastor bonus* (solo soprano with violins), the sequence *Lauda Sion* (a 8), the villancico for Saint Thomas *Sombras cobardes* (a 12) and the anthem *Ave María* (a 8), all transcribed by Mariano Lambea (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Institució Milà i Fontanals), habitual collaborator with La Grande Chapelle. We also included two motets from the *Mapa harmónico práctico* that exist in different performing editions, *Plorans ploravit* and *Domine vim patior* (both a 4), which demonstrate the composer's great harmonic daring. In his Latin-texted works Valls, like his fellow Spanish composers, upheld the polychoral *stile antico* tradition, solemn and austere in flavour, though this does not preclude passages of great creative power. In his works to Spanish texts, the villancico and the *tono*, and in the solo Latin motet, on the other hand, he turns to modern instrumental language and aims to express the texts more vividly. Valls had no doubt become familiar with these newer ways thanks to his contacts with Italian and Austrian musicians during the period when the court of Archduke Charles was settled in Barcelona (1705–1713).

Those who were present in the beautiful cathedral of La Seu were generous with their applause at the end of the ninety-minute concert. This felt like just reward for many months of investigative work, making this recovery operation an event of unique value. The concert was broadcast live by Catalunya Música (Catalunya Radio) and Radio Clásica (Radio Nacional de España).

(Translated by W. Dean Sutcliffe)

