

REVIEWS



BOOKS

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ALISON J. DUNLOP

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF GOTTLIEB MUFFAT (1690–1770)

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In the Preface to this book Alison J. Dunlop characterizes its subject as a composer ‘almost erased from history’, summoning Ludwig von Köchel’s poetic description of Muffat as one who ‘counts among the lost’ (8). *The Life and Works of Gottlieb Muffat* therefore represents a massive act of scholarly retrieval, in which the biography and music of a composer honoured far more in the breach than in the observance – not an uncommon fate for many figures in the Austro-Italian Baroque and its aftermath – are substantially and painstakingly restored. Dunlop’s study divides into two parts, a ‘Documentary Biography’ and a ‘Catalogue of Works and Sources’, the latter adapted from the author’s doctoral dissertation completed in 2010 at Queen’s University Belfast. The catalogue itself occupies almost two thirds of the entire study, and represents a Herculean collation of sources (printed and manuscript), thematic incipits and commentary which allows the reader to survey in remarkable detail the provenance and transmission of Muffat’s oeuvre, including works of doubtful or partial authenticity.

The composer’s life is scrutinized with no less thoroughness in the documentary biography that opens the book. The son of Georg Muffat (with whom he is still occasionally confused), Gottlieb Muffat learned much from his father (who would appear to have been his primary teacher before he encountered Johann Joseph Fux in Vienna) and exceeded him professionally in at least one respect, in so far as he was appointed to the imperial court as organist on 3 April 1717, having previously entered imperial service as a court scholar on 1 August 1706. Gottlieb also held an appointment as organist to the chapel of the dowager empress (from 1714 until 1742). Although incapable of performing all of his court duties from the mid-1750s onwards, he was pensioned with full salary in 1764 until his death some six years later. Dunlop remarks that the salary increase which he received in 1723 meant that Muffat was one of the highest-paid musicians at court, not least perhaps because his duties as organist and continuo player were so onerous: on one occasion, Fux attested that in addition to church services, Muffat accompanied *all* operas and related chamber performances given at court. He also travelled to Prague with the court to take part in what Dunlop describes as ‘arguably one of the most important musical events to have taken place in the eighteenth century’ (93), the performance of Fux’s *Costanza e Fortezza* in celebration of Charles VI’s coronation as King of Bohemia. The lustre and sheer extravagance of this event – given in a specially constructed open-air theatre designed by Giuseppe Galli-Bibiena, which was reputed to have accommodated an audience of over four thousand people – symbolizes the importance of music as a conduit of imperial propaganda throughout the Austro-Italian Baroque. By comparison, the obscurity in which Fux’s opera has largely remained since then (notwithstanding an edition of the opera by Egon Wellesz as volumes 34–35 of *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich* (Vienna: Artaria, 1910)) is no less symbolic of the impoverished reception history of music in Vienna before the reign of Joseph II.

This contrast – between the plenitude of documentary material surrounding the administration, composition, performance and immediate reception of music at the imperial court in Vienna (much of



it examined with forensic patience and skill by Dunlop) and the eclipsed condition of its afterlife – pervades the whole book. It is also a contrast which speaks to a radically different understanding of the musical work per se (to say little of the preservation of materials relating to the personal life of a composer) from that which came into being in the late eighteenth century. Although Dunlop traces Gottlieb Muffat's antecedents, immediate family, siblings and descendants insofar as records allow (and brings forward fascinating details about the domestic conditions in which he lived in the heart of Vienna's old city), the complete absence of personal correspondence, diaries and the like brings home to the contemporary reader the status and function of the mid-eighteenth-century composer (at least in Vienna), and how these were absolutely indentured to the requirements of the imperial civil service. Nevertheless, as Dunlop shows, we do have at least circumstantial evidence of the kind of music that Muffat absorbed from his father, from his teacher and mentor Fux (whom he revered) and from his friends. One of these was Alexander Giessel (1694–1766), whose extensive music library gives a material indication of the repertory that Muffat is likely to have known in his formative years as a composer (especially of keyboard music). Giessel was himself a copyist, and the primary sources for Muffat's *ricercars* and *canzonas* (among other works) are in his hand.

The relationship between music and the apparatus of state ceremonial in Vienna is of no less consequence in Dunlop's appraisal of Muffat's music and its sources. Yet comparatively little of the music that survives formed an explicit part of that relationship. Muffat's own prowess as a composer – Susan Wollenberg calls him 'the leading composer of keyboard music in Vienna in the eighteenth century' (Wollenberg, 'Muffat, Gottlieb', in *Grove Music Online* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (9 September 2014)) – was in significant measure unrelated to his court duties as organist and continuo player. The importance of his keyboard music has been further obfuscated by the fact that Vienna as a city 'lagged behind other European cities such as Paris, Amsterdam, Augsburg, Nürnberg and Leipzig in the music printing trade' (141): research by Hannelore Gericke (on which Dunlop judiciously depends) has shown that over seventy per cent of the keyboard music advertised in Vienna between 1700 and 1778 appeared in the last eight years of that period, and correspondingly only two sets of keyboard compositions by Muffat were published in his lifetime (a set of *toccatas* and *versets* intended for church use, which appeared in Vienna in 1726, and a volume of *Componimenti musicali* for cembalo published in Augsburg some time between 1736 and 1739). Although his music was widely circulated in Germany and Bohemia (in manuscript copies), the sole anecdote which survives about Muffat as a composer (cited by Dunlop to attest to his fame) comes from Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurge's 1786 *Legende einiger Musikheiligen*, in which Muffat's teacher (Fux), rather than Muffat himself, is lauded as a composer of distinction (161). Finally, there is the problem of context: as Dunlop remarks, 'Keyboard music in early eighteenth-century Vienna is still largely unexplored terrain' (141).

The closing sections of part 1 of this book form a bridge, as it were, to the *catalogue raisonnée* of part 2. Dunlop assesses in turn the cultivation of keyboard music in Vienna (in so far as the limited evidence of eighteenth-century advertisements allows); the extant condition of Muffat's compositional output (including three keyboard concertos which 'can be confidently attributed to him', 156), together with the striking absence of existing sources after 1741; the reception and transmission of Muffat's music (in which 'the vast majority of Muffat's work remains unpublished and unrecorded', 163); and the provenance and current condition of the sources. These include the archive of the Berlin Sing-Akademie, which contains the largest single collection of Muffat manuscripts, many of them 'likely to be autograph' (195). The rediscovery of this archive in 1999 and its return to Berlin (it was removed to Kiev soon after the invasion of the Red Army in 1945 and is now housed at the Staatsbibliothek) is an absorbing tale in its own right, though it features here only on account of its vital enlargement of Muffat's surviving works. It is worth adding that Dunlop's 'discussion of individual sources' (167–204) is exemplary in its scholarly preoccupation with the transmission of this music, even if some of the information assembled therein is, perforce, available elsewhere. It is hard to overestimate the scruple and sheer concentrated archival inquiry which this discussion must have entailed.



The thematic catalogue itself (211–566) is a heroic enterprise. It is divided into six sections: ‘Works Printed during Gottlieb Muffat’s Lifetime’, ‘Keyboard Partitas’, ‘Anonymous Keyboard Partitas of Uncertain Authorship’, ‘Other Keyboard Works’, ‘Chamber Works’ and ‘Works in the Archive of the Sing-Akademie zu Berlin by Georg Muffat’. Many of these latter works represent transcriptions by Gottlieb Muffat of his father’s music; Dunlop also notes that ‘the decision to have a separate section for works printed during Muffat’s lifetime and under his supervision was taken because they are among the very few works whose authorship is not a matter of contention’ (214).

Inevitably, perhaps, the catalogue itself will be of greatest interest to scholars of keyboard music in the eighteenth century: as its generous incipits suggest, it harvests a body of work that is not only different in voice, style and temperament from the keyboard music of Fux (the fugue subjects alone provide striking evidence of this, whatever the generic continuities between the two composers), but which also confirms the importance ascribed to Muffat by scholars such as Wollenberg and Friedrich W. Riedel. Riedel’s own catalogue of Muffat’s keyboard music, prepared over fifty years ago but as yet unpublished, underpins the present work (the author acknowledges Professor Riedel’s generous support throughout), even if there are several works represented here that do not find a place in the older inventory: twenty-five of the forty-six keyboard partitas listed in the second section, for example, are not found in Riedel. Many such works have only a single source, namely the archive of the Berlin Sing-Akademie, a fact which underlines its (proverbially singular) importance to Dunlop’s work.

Inevitably, too, those thorny questions of authorship and attribution which pervade the cataloguing of eighteenth-century music loom large in this spirited and scholarly undertaking (false attributions of works by Corelli to Fux are a convenient and well-known example of this problem to scholars of Viennese music). The three keyboard concertos listed under ‘chamber works’ in this catalogue are a case in point. Each of them is attributed by means of a single source (the Sing-Akademie archive once again), and two include the following remarks under ‘Authenticity’:

Found in one MS, possibly autograph, 1740s or later. Some aspects of the writing are similar to that in works which are known to be by Muffat. As no works in this genre were previously known, it is difficult to assess whether or not Muffat is the author. Given their relative simplicity, it seems likely that they were written for a pupil. The provenance supports Muffat’s authorship. (474, 478).

As a genre, the concerto scarcely featured (if at all) within the domain of the imperial music chapel in Vienna, notwithstanding the fact that Georg Muffat had published a set of concerti grossi in Passau in 1701. Yet the provenance of the manuscript (ably and persuasively discussed on pages 195–198) strongly supports Dunlop’s autograph ascriptions, even if we are left somewhat unsure as to whether or not this music, almost certainly in Muffat’s hand, was indeed composed by him. Nevertheless, these observations are not meant to impugn the rigour of Dunlop’s scrutiny, either of the sources themselves or of their provenance – which, incidentally, is separately described for each source, listing owners down to the present day. (A separate description of the sources, together with an index of copyists, follows the catalogue on pages 510–568.)

The Life and Works of Gottlieb Muffat is a beautifully printed and bound volume, and its typography, layout, illustrations and music incipits are pellucidly achieved. Its exceptionally handsome design is a tribute to its publisher, Hollitzer (Vienna), as well as to its author. As a source study it is a triumph of empirical and archival research, and its combination of documentary biography and thematic representation will surely promote a genuine revival of interest in Muffat and affirm his central (if hitherto muted) importance as a vital figure in the fabric of musical life at the imperial court in Vienna. My one (abiding) regret about this book is that its author did not live to see it published. The loss to her family and friends of this young woman at such an early age is scarcely to be imagined; the loss of such a brilliant and impassioned scholar is likewise very hard to bear. When Richard Ellmann’s biography of James Joyce first appeared in 1959, *The Economist* remarked that ‘At last Joyce has his monument . . . It is difficult to find anything but praise for this book’ (7 November 1959, 527). It is tragically the case that whereas this volume deserves similar praise for its work on



behalf of its subject, it must also serve as a monument to the memory of the gifted musicologist who wrote it. May her work never ‘count among the lost’.

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BERND KOSKA

DIE GERAER HOFKAPELLE ZU BEGINN DES 18. JAHRHUNDERTS

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Working with archival sources can be exciting and frustrating at the same time. Bernd Koska admits in the Preface to his study of the Gera court *Kapelle* in the early eighteenth century (c1698–1736) that it evolved from ‘the juxtaposition of a systematic search for, and coincidental discovery of, primary sources’ (‘aus einem Nebeneinander von gezielter Suche und eher zufälligen Quellenfunden’, ‘Vorwort’, no page number). This expanded and revised version of his MA dissertation in musicology (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2011) comprises eight chapters of text, a thirty-page appendix with tables and transcriptions of documents, two bibliographies, a list of figures and two indexes. These shine light on what courtly musical life was like in a region of central Germany that is typically associated with Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel (1690–1749), director of the Gera *Kapelle* in 1718–1719, and Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688–1758), who worked at the court from 1715 to 1720.

The reference to Gera in Fasch’s autobiographical account from 1757 (published in volume 3 of Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg’s *Historisch-Kritische Beyträge zur Aufnahme der Musik* (Berlin: G. A. Lange, 1757–1758) opens the short Introduction. It could have easily been integrated into the methodology chapter (‘Forschungsansatz’), in which the author explains first how he navigated the at times hopeless archival ‘situation’ and managed to discover new primary sources nonetheless. The directors of the Gera court *Kapelle* are examined next. Emanuel Kegel – born around 1665, not 1655, according to Koska – was appointed *Figuralkantor* and instructor at the local school (*Gymnasium*) in 1693. In 1699 he took over the position of town and court organist and was also given the title ‘Capell Director’. This implies that he was tasked with founding (or at least reorganizing) a bona fide *Kapelle*, albeit with little success. Eventually the court turned to Stölzel, who as a boy had attended the *Gymnasium* in Gera, participated in musical performances and possibly studied with Kegel. Much later, in 1713, Stölzel premiered a *Pastorale* at the court and was apparently offered the (newly created) position of Kapellmeister. He declined in favour of travelling to Italy, but ultimately returned to settle in Gera in March 1718. Curiously, Stölzel did not compose any music for public occasions during his short tenure; it was Kegel who continued to teach the choirboys. Whether or not the organist Johann Abraham Heiler led the *Kapelle* between Stölzel’s departure in November 1719 and Kegel’s reinstatement as *Capell Director* in 1722 could not be confirmed by the author. Nor was he able to determine who was left in charge of music at the court after Kegel died two years later. But Koska proves conclusively that the librettos for Stölzel’s first cantata cycle in Gotha (which were also set to music by Fasch, and in part by J. S. Bach) had been penned by a different brother-in-law of Stölzel, Christian Friedrich Knauer, rather than Johann Oswald Knauer (29–30).

In 1721 and again in 1725, Johann Sebastian Bach visited Gera. Koska speculates that Emanuel Kegel’s daughter Johanna Emilia, soprano at the Weissenfels court and wife of lutenist Adam Falckenhagen, could have helped to facilitate both trips (45–48). More convincing are the arguments that the author presents in