



Maybe, by apotheosizing the eighteenth-century folk ideal, the Ninth gives musical form to one of the most basic narratives of the Christian West, performing a musical return to a lost paradise.

Or not. One thing is more certain than all this hermeneutic speculation: whatever audiences and critics have understood the Ninth to have been saying, they have often felt that its music is saying it directly to them – that they are being addressed and enlisted by it. (173)

Mathew's hermeneutic fatigue is evident in this casual backhand, as he deflects attention from semantics to pragmatics, from referential meaning to communicative act. It is an elegant stroke and refreshingly original.

His final chapter ('After the War') begins by exploring the nostalgia that Beethoven's patriotic works aroused during the prosaic Restoration, after their historical *raison d'être* had passed. Mathew detects the same nostalgia in modern enthusiasts of Beethoven's public works as they cling anxiously to their faith in the music's political relevance: 'It is as if Beethoven's interpreters need continually to refuel these masterpieces with the importance that their rhetoric calls for – something that becomes ever less supportable as the cultural presence of this music wanes in the twenty-first century . . . the action has always just happened, the great deeds belong to history now, and the best we can do is recall or commemorate the past in reading and contemplation' (196). Critics must confine themselves to 'gestural politics', wielding conference papers and monographs instead of muskets and sabres.

*Political Beethoven* shows symptoms of a broader disenchantment with hermeneutics. Like Carolyn Abbate, Mathew has little patience with 'gnostic' decipherment but shows much interest in the effects of music as performance (see Carolyn Abbate, 'Music: Drastic or Gnostic?', *Critical Inquiry* 30/3 (2004), 215–256). His book succeeds not only in reconstructing the listening experience of Beethoven's contemporaries, but also in explaining the qualities that have allowed the composer's public works to speak so potently in later historical contexts. If anything, perhaps, Mathew draws these transhistorical connections too firmly. There is a trace of Adornian fatalism in his elegiac conclusion, a pining for the Great Synthesis of collective and individual among whose ruins we are fated to wander. Yet the Ninth Symphony has continued to resonate with the ethical and political concerns of audiences, if not critics, who seem to feel no sense of belatedness. If, as Mathew claims, all political experience of music belongs within its own context, then who are we to question its relevance?

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*Eighteenth-Century Music* © Cambridge University Press, 2015  
doi:10.1017/S1478570615000056

VINCENZO MANFREDINI (1737–1799), ED. MASSIMILIANO SALA  
*REGOLE ARMONICHE: FACSIMILE OF THE 1775 VENICE EDITION WITH AN ANNOTATED  
ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY ROBERT ZAPPULLA*

Turnhout: Brepols, 2013

pp. xvi + 216 + 116 (unnumbered plates), ISBN 978 2 503 54883 8

The composer and music theorist Vincenzo Manfredini (born 1737 in Pistoia, died 1799 in St Petersburg) was the offspring of a family of musicians who, over several generations, contributed to the musical life of Pistoia in Tuscany and other cities in Italy, and enjoyed the patronage of the European nobility in places as far apart as Monaco and Moscow. Trained in music by his father Francesco Onofrio (1684–1762), choirmaster of the Pistoia Cathedral, in 1752 Vincenzo Manfredini went to study with Giacomo Antonio Perti, choirmaster of the Basilica of San Petronio in Bologna, and subsequently with Giovanni Andrea Fioroni, choirmaster of Milan Cathedral. In 1758 Manfredini travelled to Russia as a member of an opera troupe. He found employment



at the Imperial court in St Petersburg as director of music and of the Italian opera company, composer of operas and ballets, and harpsichord teacher. Back in Bologna by the year 1769, he spent the latter part of his life composing operas, symphonies and string quartets, teaching, writing on music and engaging in public debates with other musicians.

Manfredini's legacy as a music theorist stems from a number of contributions to the *Giornale enciclopedico di Bologna* and from two musical treatises: the *Regole armoniche o sieno precetti ragionati per apprendere i principj della musica, il portamento della mano, e l'accompagnamento del basso sopra gli strumenti da tasto, come l'organo, il cembalo ec.* (Venice: Guglielmo Zerletti, 1775; second, revised edition, Venice: Adolfo Cesare, 1797) and the *Difesa della musica moderna e de' suoi celebri esecutori* (Bologna: Carlo Trenti, 1788). As Raffaella Barbierato has shown, the *Regole armoniche* is a plagiarized and extensively annotated version of an earlier manuscript treatise, the anonymous *Precetti ragionati per apprendere l'accompagnamento del basso sopra gli strumenti da tasto come il gravicembalo il cembalo etc.* (I-Vnm Number 739, 1664; see Barbierato, *Il Ms. 739 della Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana di Venezia (1664)* (Cremona: Turris, 1988)). Thus Manfredini's achievement resides not so much in the conventional content of the main text as in the forward-looking observations found in the footnote apparatus. It is from reading the latter that one can catch a glimpse of what some commentators from northern Italy thought of the Gluck–Calzabigi attempt at reforming Italian opera seria, the relative merits of melody and harmony, the primacy of the major and minor modes and the practicality of the French system of solfeggio – all cutting-edge issues which are more commonly encountered in the writings of eighteenth-century French, German and English authors.

Edited by the Italian musicologist Massimiliano Sala, the book under review is both the first volume in a series of 'Musical Treatises' issued by the Centro Studi Opera Omnia Luigi Boccherini in Lucca, and the second volume in the series 'Groppoli per la storia della musica a Pistoia' from the Associazione Amici di Groppoli in Pistoia. It comprises three parts: (1) four scholarly essays on aspects of Manfredini's life and works, (2) an annotated English translation of the first Venetian edition of the *Regole armoniche* and (3) a facsimile of the same edition. The authors of the essays are Jean Grundy Fanelli ('The Manfredini Musicians of Pistoia'), Gregory Barnett ('Manfredini's Commonplace Book'), Rudolf Rasch ('Vincenzo Manfredini and the Circle of Fifths') and Peter Walls ('Vincenzo Manfredini's 1778 "Italian" Quartets'). The author of the English translation is Robert Zappulla, who is also responsible for a brief commentary and notes.

Although the volume is an Italian undertaking, it is published in English, and one cannot help but think that this decision, together with a level of editorial oversight that raises suspicions of attempted economy, is to blame for the numerous mistakes and typographical errors. Other problems include the omission of an index, and the fact that although American spelling is adopted throughout, both English and American musical terminology are used indiscriminately in the essays. The outcome is at times well below the standards of the best academic presses – especially for a publication of this calibre and cost. This is doubly regrettable for, on the other hand, the layout of the main text, of the footnotes and of the music examples is excellent.

A more serious shortcoming is the quality of the English translation of Manfredini's treatise. This represents the bulk of the Brepols volume (pages 103–215) and also its most important selling-point – or so one would imagine. Inexplicably, the author has favoured a literal translation of the eighteenth-century Italian prose at the expense of a more idiomatic and flowing rendition into modern English. The effect is amusing at times, disconcerting at others. For instance, when advocating his own way of teaching how to play the thoroughbass on keyboard instruments, Manfredini refers to his experience in Russia with the following words: 'Almen di ciò ne ho veduto più volte la pruova, e specialmente in Russia, ove i miei scolari in un anno, o poco più accompagnavano all'improvviso' (xi). Zappulla translates this passage as 'Until now I have witnessed, many times over, rivalry, especially in Russia, where my students, in a year or slightly little more, suddenly were able to accompany' (108); far better would be something closer to 'At least I have seen evidence of this on numerous occasions, and especially in Russia, where my students were able to improvise the accompaniment within a year or slightly more'. Furthermore, the convoluted syntax of the original Italian text is on occasion imperfectly understood. As a result, the meaning of the more obscure



sentences is often lost in translation. The situation is even worse when Manfredini quotes from French texts: Jean Le Rond D'Alembert's appeal 'N'imitons pas ces musiciens qui se croyant géomètres, ou ces géomètres qui se croyant musiciens, entassent dans leurs écrits chiffres sur chiffres' (*Éléments de musique théorique et pratique* (Lyon, 1766)), for example (xii), does not mean 'Let us not imitate these musicians who believe in geometricians, or these geometricians who believe in musicians, who pile up in their writings figures upon figures' (108), but rather 'Let us not imitate those musicians who, believing themselves geometricians – or those geometricians who, believing themselves musicians – pile up figures upon figures in their writings'. The 'Translator's Commentary' (203–206) and 'Notes' (207–215) are useful aids but only partly make up for the faults with the translation.

The four musicological essays are a valuable addition to the scant literature on Manfredini. However, some of the content is not entirely relevant. For example, while well documented, the long essay by Grundy Fanelli (1–42) deals above all with the biography of Vincenzo's father, Francesco Manfredini (5–32), and only in passing with that of the author of the *Regole armoniche* (34–35). Likewise, Walls's essay (73–101) provides some useful contextual information for Vincenzo Manfredini's compositional activities yet does not attempt to relate his practical work to his theoretical speculations. Rasch's fairly short essay (61–71) also reads more like a spin-off from his previous more substantial contributions on the same topic than a new piece of research on Manfredini (see Rudolf A. Rasch, 'The Musical Circle: From Alfonso to Beethoven', published in four parts in *Dutch Journal of Music Theory / Tijdschrift voor muziektheorie* 2/1 (1997), 1–17; 2/2 (1997), 110–133; 4/1 (1999), 23–39; and 4/3 (1999), 206–213). Barnett's essay (43–60) is by far the most interesting and, in fact, relevant of the four. It sets out to answer some fundamental questions of authorship with respect to both the *Regole armoniche* and the anonymous manuscript from which its main text was plagiarized, the *Precetti ragionati*. It is perhaps a revealing paradox of multi-authored volumes such as this that Barnett's research findings have not ultimately informed the production of the book as they should have.

The real 'value for money' of the Brepols publication lies in the beautifully produced facsimile of the *Regole armoniche* in 116 unnumbered plates. At a time when researchers regularly access primary source material through low-resolution reproductions freely available online, it is both a privilege and a pleasure to be able to sit in one's study with an actual book, turning the pages, annotating the margins, and comparing text and examples with those from other contemporary literature as one reads along. This is particularly important in the case of the *Regole armoniche*, given the genesis of the work. Ironically, though, the greatest merit of this book turns out also to be its worst pitfall, since it is not clear what type of reader the volume is intended for. To benefit from it, musicologists would have to be fluent in Italian: as mentioned above, the quality of the English translation is insufficient to be of use to professional scholars. However, as soon as one starts reading the treatise, one also begins to wonder about its similarities and differences when compared with both the *Precetti ragionati* and the second, expanded edition of the *Regole armoniche* (1797), which included discussions of singing and counterpoint as well. Moreover, whereas the first edition of the *Regole armoniche* has long since been available in facsimile (*Regole armoniche: A Facsimile of the 1775 Venice Edition* (New York: Broude, 1966)), no modern or facsimile version of the second edition or indeed of the *Precetti ragionati* exists. On the other hand, if the volume is indeed intended for 'a broader public' (xi), it is not clear why all quotations from primary sources in Italian have not been translated into English, for example. One wonders whether, as it stands, this Brepols publication is what the editor had in mind from the outset or, rather, the result of a process of musicological accretion, so to speak. If this was indeed the case, Vincenzo Manfredini's own philosophy may help guide similar editorial projects in the future: 'meno numeri, meno parole, e più verità' (108; fewer numbers, fewer words, and more truth).

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