

due to negligence. It is unforgivable for anyone writing on jazz to notate the blues scale with a flatted sixth instead of a flatted seventh, and this incorrectly from a source (p. 78). Some are undoubtedly typographical, and some are due to mistakes of fact. They are too numerous to bring out in any great detail here. Furthermore, many of the ideas presented are not clearly stated and show the author to be without complete command of his subject. Finally, a good deal of the important literature in the field has been neglected. A study in which King Oliver and his recordings play such a major role should have utilized, or at least cited, *King Joe Oliver*, by Walter C. Allen and Brian A. L. Rust (Belleville, N.J., 1955), the definitive work on the man, his life, and recordings.

I find it hard to believe that this dissertation could have been accepted as a piece of scholarly research and writing. Its basic idea—the transcription and analysis of tunes taken from a certain style period of jazz—is good. Such an undertaking, however, requires a broad knowledge of the music, historically, esthetically, and theoretically, and a fine hand to develop it. Pyke was weak in the majority of these requirements. Yet, with more care, and with proper guidance, he could have done much better.

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Joseph Emilio Rotondi
Literary and musical aspects
of Roman opera, 1600-1650

Ann Arbor: University Microfilms (UM order no. 59-2265), 1959. (287p., University of Pennsylvania diss.)

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Any study and revaluation in English of early opera deserves the interest of musicologists, but one which promises a "unique approach" through a consideration of literary as well as musical aspects is especially welcome. For it was particularly in this formative period of both Florentine and Roman opera that the librettist played an important role in determining the ultimate shape of the work. Whether the text was written by a humanist poet, "to make a simple test of what the music of our age could do" (Rinuccini in the dedication of his *Euridice*, 1600), or by the composer himself who chose from among those literary forms and conventions available to him, it cannot have failed to influence the musical setting. One is therefore pleased to

see from the title and preface of Mr. Rotondi's dissertation that he does not plan to ignore the libretto, "the guiding principle for all the sister arts," but all the more disappointed when the expectations aroused are not fully satisfied in the body of his work.

The book is organized in two sections. The first three chapters deal with general background material and purely literary matters, and the last two with musical problems. Chapter I briefly discusses the "political and social atmosphere" in 17th-century Italy, the literary sources of libretti, and the nature of serious and comic opera. It gives special consideration to the problem of the origins of comic opera, and finally presents a section that treats of the subtitles of 17th-century opera. Chapter II narrows the scope of the discussion to Rome, the musico-dramatic production in that city from 1600 to 1650 (exclusive of any consideration of their libretti), and closes with a rather superficial judgment on the nature of the existing patron-artist relationship, a relationship that incurs the scorn of the author. After a preliminary enumeration of *commedia* elements in Roman libretti, the final chapter of this literary section (Chapter III), investigates the plots of each of five libretti, chosen precisely because of their ambiguity of dramatic genre. In an attempt to resolve their ambiguity, Rotondi applies the criteria of *commedia* established in the previous chapter, and concludes that they belong to the category of *commedia in musica*. This chapter is the most original, interesting, and in some ways provocative one of the work.

The second section moves from a consideration of the external forms of acts and scenes (Chapter IV) to the internal designs of solos and vocal ensembles (Chapter V). Here it is only for the sake of convenience that the discussion is limited to the same five works, for each is treated independently of the others, and surprisingly enough, independently of its own libretto.

The dissertation contains an appendix, consisting of 64 pages of musical examples, a short index, and a bibliography composed entirely of secondary sources. Mr. Rotondi offers very little information about the nature or whereabouts of his primary sources. Under the heading "Musical Manuscripts", he lists the five operas and in each case cites one score to which he presumably has access. Two operas were studied from the first editions of their scores, but the other three are cited only in the form of British Museum transcripts of the original editions, copied in 1915. In no case does he tell us where the first editions may be found. It is curious that Mr. Rotondi had to avail himself of 20th-century copies, for the first editions of at least two of these works are in the possession of, for example, the Santa Cecilia Library in Rome. Similarly, his sources for the libretti seem to have been either Solerti's modern editions in *Albori del melodramma*, or the musical scores themselves. Thus, any discrepancy between the original libretto and its setting would pass unnoticed.

The division into two sections, with the musical one slightly outweighing the literary in quantity, though not in depth, proves to be

a hindrance to a thesis which all but promises its readers a synthetic reevaluation of the sister arts of poetry and music. In fact, Mr. Rotondi adheres to a strict dichotomy between literary and musical considerations throughout his study. He attempts no synthesis and draws no conclusions that might serve to overcome the rather artificial, if convenient, separation of the two aspects. For example, nowhere does he state or even imply that the structural placement of the chorus or the balanced distribution of solos and ensembles might be part of the librettist's art. His failure to relate the libretti to their musical settings is particularly regrettable, for these works are products of an era in which the *seconda prattica* and the new recitative style heralded the text as music's mistress.

The five operas selected for this study were all written in Rome within a span of twenty years: *La morte d'Orfeo* (1619) by Stefano Landi (1590-1655), himself the librettist; *L'Aretusa* (1620) by Filippo Vitali (c. 1600-1653), libretto by Msgr. Ottavio Corsini; *La catena d'Adone* (1626) by Domenico Mazzocchi (1592-1665), librettist, Ottavio Tronsarelli; *Diana schernita* (1629) by Giacinto Cornacchioli (dates not supplied by the author, but given in the new Ricordi encyclopedia as ca. 1590-1658?), libretto by G.F. Parisani; and *La Galatea* (1639) by Loreto Vittori (1604-1670), himself the librettist. It would have been interesting to note, for example, that two of the composers, Vitali and Vittori, were of Florentine background, that the prolific poet Tronsarelli composed at least one other text for Mazzocchi (*Il martirio de'Santi Abundio*, 1631), or that Vittori's libretto bears the same title as an earlier one by Chiabrera. In no case, however, are the composers or librettists identified in their historical context. This information would have been more than a courtesy to the unspecialized reader; it might have modified some of the conclusions drawn by Mr. Rotondi, whose preoccupation centers solely on the works themselves.

The main concern of the first, the literary, section of the dissertation is to establish the genre of the five chosen libretti as *commedia*. Rotondi tells us that his investigation was prompted by the disparate opinions of historians as to the origin of "comic opera" (its beginnings are placed anywhere from *L'Amfiparnaso* (1597) to *La serva padrona* (1733) with Rospigliosi's *Chi soffre spera* (1639), the most frequently cited mean), and by his disagreement with the prevailing notion that serious opera was infiltrated by comic elements. Three of the five works chosen for his study are often cited as examples of this process of infiltration and, according to Rotondi, one of them (*Diana schernita*) is taken for a veritable comic opera by several scholars. Rotondi maintains that the problem may be clarified by considering the dramatic genre of the libretto. Thus, in the third chapter he closely examines the literary affinities of these libretti to 17th-century comedy and thereby hopes to alter the established conclusions about the early existence of comic opera in Rome.

Let us review the crucial third chapter more closely. Rotondi recognizes the Aristotelian divisions of literature as the basic categories

adopted by 17th-century poets. Consequently, his own theoretical criterion for *commedia* throughout the dissertation is supplied by the dictum in the *Poetics* that comedy mirrors life at close range. He derives other criteria from the literary practice of the age and applies these also to the Roman libretti under scrutiny. Parody looms large in Rotondi's list of *commedia* elements and accounts for modifications of plot and the satiric treatment of mythological characters as ordinary people, as well as for the frequent paraphrasing of traditional sources, for example, a canto by Dante in *L'Aretusa*. The most characteristically Roman manifestation of parody, and one intended to attract clerical patronage, was the use of allegory, "a serious aspect of *commedia*." (Tronsarelli, for example, whose libretto is avowedly modelled on Marino's idyll *Adone*, equates his characters with such moralistic abstractions as good, evil, reason, and concupiscence in the description of his plot, or moral, printed at the beginning of the score.) The less than idealized treatment of love and sex is another aspect of *commedia* Rotondi culled from literary practice and then discovered in some of the works studied. (In *Diana schernita*, for instance, the goddess is made to undress in front of her lover, whom she turns into a stag.) The third and most obvious manifestation of *commedia* is described by Rotondi as the popular element. This may be introduced in the form of a *ballo*-like shepherd's chorus, or a comical situation such as the pursuit of a young and elusive lad by a shepherdess of "prudent age" (*La Galatea*).

Although these features are indeed present in the chosen libretti to greater or lesser degrees (*Diana schernita* has few, if any, elements in common with, for instance, *L'Aretusa*), it is doubtful whether they always provide sufficient reason in themselves to justify the identification of all five libretti as *commedie*. One of the main difficulties here is the author's failure to distinguish clearly between the terms "comic elements" and "*commedia* elements," and between "comic opera" and *commedia in musica*. The preface and first chapter suggest fleetingly that three of the operas discussed have musical as well as literary characteristics in common with *Chi soffre speri*, and therefore would be accepted by some scholars as genuine "comic operas," but the matter is not resumed when he considers the musical settings. Furthermore, the whole question of whether "comic elements" may in fact be present in serious opera, as serious elements are in *commedia*, is ignored. Another difficulty created by Rotondi's Aristotelian bias is his refusal to recognize the independent genre of tragicomedy, which had been greatly discussed by literary theorists since the writings of Giraldi Cinthio in the mid-16th century. In this respect, the works of Tasso and Guarini are much more important as literary sources for Rotondi's libretti than either Trissino's *Sofonisba* or Bibbiena's *Calandria*. The acknowledged source for Tronsarelli's libretto, Marino's *Adone*, was a kind of pastoral (De Sanctis calls it an *idillico*, a genre separate from the *comico*), and one cannot ignore the link between the oft-used Orpheus legend and Poliziano's *Orfeo* (not cited among the literary sources), which popularized it. As for some of the other criteria set up the author—quotations

from Dante and others, allegorization and moralization, the introduction of "popular" elements and situations—these were conventions which can also be seen in the earlier pastoral tragicomedies and in the Florentine libretti as well. To say that some of the Roman operas use these conventions with more satirical intent than others might be tenable, but to insist that their appearance in every case makes the libretto a *commedia* strains the thesis to the breaking point.

Another source of confusion is the author's dogged overuse of the subtitles of the libretti in an effort to have the poets themselves support his conclusions about the nature of their works. Alas, this is not always practicable, and in the sole case (*La morte d'Orfeo: tragicommedia pastorale*) where the link between subtitle and genre is obvious Mr. Rotondi misses his opportunity. Three of the remaining works are called *favola* and two of these have the additional qualification, *boschereccia*. Taken together, the words mean merely "woodland tale," but Rotondi conjures up an implied opposition between a simple rustic setting and the "atmosphere of the Arcadian countryside," and then reasons as follows: since the subtitle indicates a deviation from the original model (a hypothetical *favola bucolica*), it therefore describes a parodistic genre which necessarily belongs to comedy. *L'Aretusa*, however, is called simply *favola*, as were the pastoral poems by Rinuccini and Striggio, and here Rotondi turns to Fanfani's "comprehensive dictionary of the Italian language" to show that the word may have had comic overtones. (No date is given for his reference, but the earliest edition of Fanfani's *Vocabolario* appeared in 1865.) Interestingly enough, the earlier *Vocabolario degli accademici della Crusca* (I quote from the Neapolitan edition of 1746-48) defines the word as follows: "Falsa narrazione, Trovato non vero, talora non verisimile, come gli apologi, o le trasformazioni d'Ovidio, talora verisimile, come le novelle del Boccaccio" (an untrue story, an unreal invention, sometimes without verisimilitude, as the apologues, or the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, sometimes possessing verisimilitude, as the *novelle* of Boccaccio), and gives as its more specialized theatrical meaning, ". . . o Intreccio di commedia, o di poema" (either the plot of a comedy or of a poem). In any case, if *L'Aretusa* is a *commedia* partly by virtue of its subtitle, as Rotondi maintains, then the whole question of the genre of *La favola d'Orfeo* and of *Dafne* must be reconsidered.

Although the musical section of the dissertation has fewer pitfalls, it is also less daring in its conjectures. The chapter on structural designs consists of twenty-five pages of outlines wherein are listed the various vocal and instrumental pieces in their order of occurrence within each work. No commentary is provided for these outlines, which are in themselves difficult and tedious to read, but the section is prefaced by five pages in which the author explains his terminology. Here, in addition to the relatively formless type of solo usually in recitative or arioso style, one finds the forms strophic, ostinato, and canzona described and applied either to monodic or choral stanzas. The last term, borrowed from Apel, is intended to call to mind a

sectionalized form with contrasting meters, textures, and so forth. Perhaps madrigal would have been a more appropriate term.

A certain lack of consistency in the description of choral textures is distracting. "'Contrapuntal' . . . shall be used interchangeably with 'polyphonic' and 'fugal'. . . the word 'canonic'. . . as a relief term for 'fugal' to avoid excess repetition of the latter term." The cursory survey given at this point in the dissertation could well have been expanded by an attempt to link the use of these forms to the dramatic situations and verse forms of the libretti. One could ask, Are certain stanza forms more commonly assigned to comic characters? Is the emergence of an aria style distinct from the expressive recitative in any way connected to a similar development in the libretto? Does the monodic chorus occupy a special position in the drama? On the subject of the chorus, Mr. Rotondi expresses his disagreement with those who consider it to be simply an ornamental feature of Roman opera. But he supports the assertion that it occupies a "position of great importance and [is] an integral part of the complete dramatic scheme" only by the observation that the chorus frequently repeats the texts of solos or smaller ensembles and thereby "highlights the emotional aspects" of the libretto.

In the final chapter, where a closer examination of formal types is undertaken, the departure from the Florentine melodic style is described as "not great," and the generalization that the Roman declamatory style was perhaps "more lyrical" at times or possessed "more verve" is added as an afterthought. In fact, a more thorough examination of the two schools, again with greater attention to the treatment of the libretto, is necessary before meaningful conclusions may be drawn. I should like to see, for example, a comparison of such details as the treatment of text declamation, the use of dissonance in affective passages, and so forth, as well as of the larger structural designs which are by no means absent in the earlier Florentine opera. Only in this way will it be possible to form a complete picture of the continuity and development of Baroque opera.

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