



COMMUNICATION: CONFERENCE REPORT

# Tenth Biennial Conference of the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music

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This conference, a three-day event hosted by the University of North Texas College of Music, in Denton, presented a cornucopia of different approaches, methodologies and repertoires relating to eighteenth-century music. The first day opened with a panel of short presentations by both musicologists and theorists, ‘New Perspectives on Metastasio Research’, which featured four speakers with an introduction by moderator Nathaniel Mitchell (University of North Carolina at Greensboro). Mitchell offered a new take on the dramatic problem of metaphor aria in Metastasio’s librettos, proposing that this type be seen as a process of self-understanding on the part of the character who sings it. Anne Desler (University of Edinburgh) presented a picture of Metastasio’s formation as a librettist in the early part of his career in Naples via the connections he established with important singers, notably Nicola Grimaldi. Carlo Lanfossi (Università di Milano) made comparisons between the use of *Didone abbandonata* as a source of pasticcios and the practices of modern opera companies, emphasizing their respective appeals to contemporary sensibilities. Jessica Peritz (Yale University) read the antique Roman plots of Metastasio’s *drammi per musica* as examples of the ‘lyric empire’ of Italian opera across Europe in response to the Italian region’s political disunion. Finally, Paul Sherrill (University of Utah) presented an analytical view of the ways in which the formal organization in the twenty-four arias by Marianna Martines served the composer’s particular dramatic purposes.

The remainder of the day was devoted to shorter two-paper sessions and a lecture-recital, finishing off with a delightful performance by the University of North Texas Mariachi Ensemble. The session ‘Investigating Sources’ began with a paper by Scott Buzza (University of Kentucky), ‘The Psalm Texts of San Marco: Theme and Variations’, an analysis of the different versions of the texts used at the Basilica di San Marco in the eighteenth century. He concluded that these discrepancies resulted from oral usage and a divergence between the interests of canons (who were attempting to convey the uniqueness of Venice and its liturgy) and of musicians (who were concerned with reusing and reselling their music beyond the confines of the republic). My talk (Don Fader, University of Alabama), ‘The Cantatas of Philippe II d’Orléans Rediscovered: Rewriting the Early History of the *Cantate française*’, employed these newly discovered works to reinterpret the genre’s inception as the product not of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau’s mythological verse but rather of experimentation by the duc d’Orléans and his musicians. These works employed pastoral poems set to unorthodox forms in order to follow more closely their troubled speakers’ unpredictable changes of affect in a way that would have seemed less artificial to French listeners than the Italian alternation between recitative and aria.

An afternoon session on opera included another pair of talks. ‘Mythologizing Racine: Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1774), *le merveilleux*, and Euhemerism in the French Enlightenment’, by Hedy Law (University of British Columbia), took up the problem of the *merveilleux* in a rationalist

Enlightenment context. She claimed that while Racine had avoided the original metamorphosis of Iphigenia on the grounds of *vraisemblance* (verisimilitude) and instead emphasized the myth's political aspects, Gluck dwelled on the mystical aspect of the *merveilleux* in its operatic incarnation as unusual music that evoked the supernatural. Michael Goetjen (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) presented 'Between *Idomeneo* and *Tito*: Serial Style in Mozart's Concert Arias of the 1780s', an investigation of the ways in which Mozart filled out the hiatus in his composition of *opere serie* by composing what are now referred to as 'concert arias', but are in fact a heterogeneous group of works that allowed the composer to experiment with form and dramatic presentation in a way that would have been more difficult in an operatic setting. The afternoon finished with a lecture-recital by Paula Maust (Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University), 'Pedagogical Strategies in Elizabeth Turner's c. 1756 "Six Lessons for the Harpsichord"', which demonstrated that Turner's music should not be forgotten, not only because of its quality and renown in its own time but also because of its pedagogical value.

Day two was divided into morning paper sessions, and an afternoon panel and plenary lecture. The first of two morning panels, 'Global Identities', included a paper given by Stewart Carter (Wake Forest University), 'From gongchepu to Western Staff Notation: Joseph-Marie Amiot's *Divertissements chinois* (1779)', concerning the writings of Amiot, a Jesuit missionary stationed in Beijing, who not only described a system of Chinese notation but also transcribed Chinese pieces into a new system that combined Chinese and Western elements. Matt Darnold (University of North Texas) presented 'Rameau's "Les sauvages": Resonances of French Coloniality', focusing on the harmonic aspects underlying the drama of the last *entrée* of *Les Indes galantes*, demonstrating the complex relationships between characters of different origins. Finally, the paper by Sam Girling (University of Auckland), 'Gracefulness or Raucousness? The Role of the Tambourine in the Late Eighteenth Century and its Relationship to Female Identity', traced the rise in repertoire for the tambourine in Britain and its role as an amateur instrument for women. This repertoire both emphasized and subverted typical female roles in the period via a performance viewed as 'graceful' and accompanimental but also potentially challenging and virtuosic. The talk by Olga Sanchez (University of Chicago), 'The Hymn as a Musical Topic in Haydn's Symphonies', demonstrated that the triple-time opening themes of some later symphonies by Haydn, often referred to as 'hymn-like', in fact stem from operatic scenes representing rituals or other supernatural actions involving female characters.

The afternoon panel presented a new initiative staged via *Grove Music Online*, the 'Women, Gender, and Sexuality Project' (see [www.oxfordmusiconline.com/page/4072](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/page/4072)), which aims to restore the place of women in the history of eighteenth-century music, both by highlighting important neglected musical figures but also by challenging assumptions about the contributions they made. The seven panellists – Rebecca Cypess (Rutgers University), Alison DeSimone (University of Missouri–Kansas City), Julia Doe (Columbia University), Rebecca Geoffroy-Schwinden (University of North Texas), Chandler Hall (University of North Texas), Paula Maust and Natasha Roule (independent scholar) – each discussed aspects of their recent new or revised articles in *Grove*, highlighting broader issues relating to gender and historical narratives about women, and also inspiring a lively discussion with the attendees. The following plenary lecture, by Neal Zaslaw (emeritus, Cornell University), documented late eighteenth-century attempts to create a 'piano-forte pour la parfaite harmonie', a piano equivalent to the archicembalo of the seventeenth century with an advanced keying system to simplify fingering. The day ended with a concert by the University of North Texas Baroque Orchestra and the choral ensemble Vox Aquilae, who presented 'Music of the Americas'. The short final day was largely taken up by sessions devoted to ongoing dissertation research and the panel 'Publishing Advice for Early-Career Scholars'. It included a paper given by Aimee Brown (University of Sydney), 'Eighteenth-Century French Dance for Musicians – A New Notation System', which examined

the effectiveness of adapting her system of musical notation to indicate signs for dance steps from period choreographies.

**Don Fader** is Professor of Musicology at the University of Alabama. His research takes in a broad spectrum of issues in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French and Italian music. A recipient of the Bourse Chateaubriand, the Westrup Prize and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, he is the author of numerous articles and essays and has published four editions. His book *Music, Dance and Franco-Italian Cultural Exchange c. 1700: Michel Pignolet de Montéclair and the Prince de Vaudémont* was published in 2021 (Woodbridge: Boydell). He is currently working on editions of several newly discovered pieces – trios by Montéclair for A-R Editions and French cantatas by Philippe d'Orléans for the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles – as well as a book on Philippe II d'Orléans and the mixing of national styles in French court contexts.