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Robert Toft. *Aural Images of Lost Traditions: Sharps and Flats in the Sixteenth Century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992. viii, 199 pp. ISBN 0-8020-5929-5

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REVIEWS/COMPTES RENDUS

Robert Toft. *Aural Images of Lost Traditions: Sharps and Flats in the Sixteenth Century.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992. viii, 199 pp. ISBN 0-8020-5929-5.

Experienced editors of Renaissance polyphony know only too well that a comprehensive and completely justifiable application of *musica ficta* cannot be achieved on the basis of rules contained in treatises alone. Information on the subject is rarely concentrated in a single chapter of a treatise, and as soon as more than one theorist is consulted, any consensus on how to solve a particular issue becomes ever more elusive. Rather, the true art of adding sharps and flats during the Renaissance is better learned from the performer. As Robert Toft states in the first chapter of the book under review, "Treatises establish the general guidelines for using sharps and flats but do little to clarify specific practical applications, presumably because the addition of *b mollis* and *b durum* to vocal music was the concern more of performers than of theorists" (p. 10). As a result, modern editions are always bound to reflect some personal editorial bias rather than a dogmatic application of theoretical rules, and tastes in such matters tend anyway to follow trends in the field. Since many of the modern performers who specialize in singing this repertory show considerable autonomy in making their own decisions about musica ficta, the current fashion in editions appears to be a certain austerity in recommending sharps and flats, as evident in Richard Taruskin's new edition of Busnoys.[1]

Unfortunately, Renaissance singers are dead and modern performers demonstrate a reluctance and uncertainty towards determining exactly what to do about unspecified accidentals in sixteenth-century polyphony. In their award-winning recording of Josquin's *Missa Pange Lingua* (GIM009), for example, the Tallis Scholars approach practically every cadence, whether internal or terminal, perfect (on an octave or unison) or imperfect (on a third, fifth, or sixth), or on the final of the mode (E Phrygian) or on another degree, with an unraised leading note, despite sixteenth-century evidence that would suggest otherwise. Even passages which normally invoke such standard rules as the *fa supra la* convention are similarly left unaltered. On the other hand, in the Credo of their more recent recording of Josquin's *Missa L'homme armé sexti toni* (GIM019), the

1 Antoine Busnoys, *Collected Works, Part 2: The Latin Texted Works: Music*, ed. Richard Taruskin (New York: Broude Trust, 1990).

application of ficta to avoid a melodic tritone at the end of "et sepultus est" results in a bitter (but delicious) vertical semitone dissonance between E and E-flat. Clearly, more systematic information must be produced to arbitrate the conflicting notions of how to apply ficta in early sixteenth-century polyphony since these performance traditions are irretrievably lost to us.

Or *are* they lost to us? In his sensible and well-reasoned book, Robert Toft implores scholars and performers alike to consider the perspectives that intabulated arrangements of this repertory made by sixteenth-century lutenists and vihuelists can bring towards understanding how and when singers added sharps and flats to the music they sang. Comprising hundreds of arrangements of Mass movements, motets, chansons, madrigals, and lighter vocal forms, these "aural images" provide the closest thing to an actual "recording" of Renaissance vocal music by Renaissance musicians. They become of particular value when more than one intabulation exists for a single piece. It is worth pointing out that four intabulations exist of the *Missa Pange Lingua* alone, of which the intabulation in the Vincenzo Capirola Lutebook (ca. 1517) dates from twenty years before the Mass was first published in 1539.[2] Not one of them would substantiate the performance cited above, showing instead that the application of sharps and flats was neither conservative nor uninformed. These versions corroborate the theoretical accounts regarding cadences, particularly in approaching perfect intervals by a semitone or by the closest imperfect interval.

The crucial importance of intabulations is largely due to the specific information in notating accidentals that only tablature can provide. Whereas vocal sources do not notate many of the sharps and flats to be sung, and theorists offer advice that is either conflicting or too general, tablature notation shows *exact* finger placement on the neck of the instrument. Assuming that these tablatures are faithful to the intentions of the composer, intabulations are the most revealing sources for knowing how flexibly musica ficta was employed in performance. And even when they appear not to support the model – and two intabulations of the same piece will occasionally disagree on details of chromatic alteration – they prove that we cannot really speak of a "fixed" performance tradition in Renaissance music. Different traditions of interpreting the pitch-content of a single work appear not only to have been tolerated during the Renaissance but to have been expected. In short, "the intabulations ... when coupled with the theoretical guidelines, provide the truest reflection of contemporary practices that we can hope to obtain" (p. 47).

2 Chicago, Newberry Library Ms 107501. Modern edition in *Compositione di meser Vincenzo Capirola, Lutebook (circa 1517)*, ed. Otto Gombosi (Neuilly-sur-Seine: Société de Musique d'Autrefois, 1955).

Toft's study is not the first to trumpet the importance of intabulations in this regard. Howard Brown had been urging us for over twenty years to consider these works both as a practical guide for the application of accidentals as well as for information about Renaissance embellishment. The repertory is too large and too rich to ignore. Masses and motets by just the triad of Josquin, Gombert, and Morales account as models for over one hundred intabulations (which is a mere fraction of the entire intabulated repertory). Many intabulations are by the most skilled instrumentalists of the century including Francesco da Milano, Alonso Mudarra, Luys de Narvaez, Albert de Rippe and, of course, Vincenzo Galilei, whose treatise *Il Fronimo* (1568/84) is dedicated to illustrating the procedures of this venerable art.[3] Despite the amateur status of the vihuelist Diego Pisador, mention must be made of his intabulation of eight *complete* Masses by Josquin contained in his *Libro de música de Vihuela*, Salamanca, 1552.

Given the many other types of information intabulations can offer, it is indeed puzzling as to why musicologists continue to ignore this repertory, and by extension, why intabulations have never been included as part of a composer's *opera omnia*. (It is good to see that the new complete edition of the works of Andrea Gabrieli will include a volume devoted to the intabulations of his music, edited by Dinko Fabris.) The process of intabulation as a musical exercise was accorded a position within the sophisticated procedures of parody and paraphrase (as Brown has also pointed out), and Paladino's fantasias on vocal models are among the most sophisticated musical constructions of the entire century. Occasionally, intabulations are the only sources from which to reconstruct lost part books (alto and tenor parts are easily reconstructed from intabulations), and even entire four- or five-voiced works. Intabulations can also be extremely accurate as a barometer of musical tastes of the period, for then, as today, arrangements of popular songs were selling points for publishers.

In the end one must conclude that the exclusion of intabulations from the study of vocal music of the period results from two long-standing myths of deplorable inaccuracy: that instrumental training was completely segregated from the training of composers and singers of vocal music, and worse, that instrumentalists knew nothing about counterpoint. This statement is indeed difficult to justify, given the fantasias and intabulations by lutenists such as Francesco,

3 See the recent study of Vincenzo Galilei's intabulations in Howard Mayer Brown, "Vincenzo Galilei in Rome: His First Book of Lute Music (1563) and its Cultural Context," in *Music and Science in the Age of Galileo*, ed. Victor Coelho (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992): 153-75, in which he says: "*Fronimo* deserves more scholarly attention than it has received, if only to put to rest the persistent notion that sixteenth-century lutenists knew nothing about traditional views on music theory, a difficult argument to make in any case about a lutenist who was also the author of a counterpoint book as well as a famous theorist" (p. 174).

Albert de Rippe, Adrian Le Roy, and Galilei, as well as Simone Molinaro and John Dowland – the last two being equally if not more famous for their vocal music. In a forthcoming article on the "Cavalcanti Lute Book" (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique Albert 1er, Ms II 275), I show that the training of lutenists was virtually indistinguishable from that of a singer or composer,[4] and that solmization and modal theory were very much part of the lutenist's musical formation.

* * *

I have devoted considerable space in this review to the importance of intabulations in order to underscore the original approach of Toft's book compared to previous studies of musica ficta. Karol Berger's now well-known writings on the subject offer a sturdy treatment from the point of view of theorists from the early fourteenth century to Zarlino. In addition, Berger has employed his knowledge of the conventions of musica ficta to the analysis of Renaissance music most successfully. In a very recent article by Berger, the emphasis is again on theoretical writings and a systematic interpretation of how their rules can be explained.[5] Although Berger hints at the value of studying accidentals found in intabulations ("Musica Ficta," p. 125 n74), he does not consider intabulations in his discussion, drawing conclusions primarily from treatises that confront the problems of musica ficta. Relative to this, it should be pointed out that Berger goes to some lengths to divorce what are properly issues of performance, which he deems as *variable*, from issues that are part of the *unvarying* "domain of the musical text" ("Musica Ficta," p. 107). Intabulations, it would appear in Berger's taxonomy, belong to the domain of "variable" performance.

The reconciliation between the theoretical and practical allows Toft to map out a new itinerary. Travelling on some of the roads paved by Brown, Toft demonstrates that since the flexibility that intabulations reveal in the use of sharps and flats are by no means incompatible with theoretical rules governing the same issues, one is on firm ground in justifying their importance and study. Indeed, "intabulations reveal the diversity with which theoretical doctrine was translated into actual practice" (p. 133). Since Toft's main point is to suggest "that we consider adopting the period's pitch-content in a very real fashion,

4 See Victor Coelho, "Raffaello Cavalcanti's Lute Book (1590) and the Ideal of Singing and Playing," in *Le concert des voix et instruments à la Renaissance*, ed. J. M. Vaccaro (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, forthcoming).

5 Karol Berger, "Musica Ficta," in *Performance Practice: Music before 1600*, ed. H. M. Brown and S. Sadie (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1989), 107–25.

adding sharps and flats to vocal works following the practices found in intabulations" (p. 132), his work takes on an eminently practical tone. It is precisely at this point where Toft and Berger take different forks in the road: Toft believes unequivocally that "many of the sharps and flats encountered in intabulations are directly relevant to their vocal models and that the vast majority of instrumentalists ... understood how to apply theoretical principles to the vocal works they intabulated" (p. 45).

Accordingly, in chapter 1, "Theoretical Framework," Toft surveys the rules governing ficta in treatises from Tinctoris (1476 and 1477) to Correa (1626), with the main discussion centering on treatises contemporary with a specimen intabulation repertory of 1530 to 1560. Although Pietro Aaron and others had urged composers to make their intentions (regarding ficta) more clear, ambiguity prevailed in vocal notation well into the seventeenth century. Toft focuses on the theoretical solutions to four musical contexts that call for an application of sharps and flats: the treatment of *clausulae* (cadences), vertical dissonance, melodic dissonance, and mimetic passages. According to Zarlino all cadences on a unison or octave must be approached from the closest imperfect interval – that is, from a half-step below (subsemitone) or a half-step above (suprasemitone). Given this rule, there was no need to indicate the half-step with a sharp or flat; it was simply understood, as other theorists – notably Gaffurius, Aaron, Lanfranco, and Bermudo – confirmed. Nor was there a need to indicate the raised third when it occured above a cadence-note: Bermudo, citing Ornithoparchus, wrote that "there was scarcely a *clausula* for voices in which one [voice] does not remain on the major tenth" (p. 24).

Certain situations involving vertical dissonance were problematic, however, and in such cases "the performer had to decide which consideration should take preference – the need to avoid the vertical dissonance or the desire to approach the cadence-note by the subsemitone" (p. 20). But, vertical dissonance was permitted on a number of occasions, and some theorists (Zarlino for example) list a good many exceptions to the *mi contra fa* rule. This is true also of rules prohibiting *in principle* the sounding of dissonant octaves and false relations. While theorists viewed these as "distasteful" (Zarlino, cited on pp. 32–33), false relations, dissonant octaves, and melodic tritones were tolerated in Renaissance counterpoint, since they are occasionally unavoidable, and "form an integral part of compositional style of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries" (p. 34). Indeed, much of the greatest music of the Renaissance is precisely that which extends the boundaries of the modal species, and a proper performance can easily justify these "anomalies." Perhaps we should heed the words of Mudarra, who noted in his famous *Fantasia que contrahaze la harpa en la manera de Luduvico*: "Desde aqui fasta açerca del final ay Algunas falsas tañiendose bien no pareçen

mal" ("From here until the end there are some dissonances; played well they do not sound bad").[6]

Having established the *Freiheit und Zwang* inherent in Renaissance theories of adding sharps and flats, Toft allows the music to speak for itself in chapter 2, "Pitch-Content in Josquin's Motets," which contains the central arguments of the book. The reader will find much here that is consistent with Toft's earlier writings on Josquin, particularly his 1983 King's College (London) doctoral dissertation and related articles on pitch-content in Josquin's motets. Toft has always taken a comparative approach to pitch-content, using pitch and modal information provided in intabulations of Josquin's motets (which, of course, specify exact pitch-content) in order to illuminate the manner in which Josquin's music was interpreted in his own time. Determining which of the dozens of intabulations of his music Josquin would have endorsed is not really the issue here – though I would have preferred Toft to have stuck his neck out more in this respect – but rather an "understanding of how performers during the sixty years after his death interpreted the vocal sources of his motets" (p. 45).

Exploding the myth that singers and instrumentalists were trained in different systems, Toft begins his chapter by showing that lutenists were well aware of the theoretical principles of their time. Modal theory and solmization formed part of their musical training, as manuscript sources and biographical evidence confirm. Many lutenists were also singers, composers of vocal music, and teachers of singing, and one can confirm beyond doubt "that instrumentalists and singers indeed did work within one and the same theoretical framework" (p. 44).

Intabulations of Josquin's motets confirm (as most theorists recommended) that all perfect intervals should be approached by the closest imperfect interval. Consequently, intabulators almost invariably added a sharp or a flat – sharp to an ascending leading note, flat to a descending one – in approaching perfect cadences. In cadences approached by suspensions, the subsemitone was normally employed regardless of function of the cadence. There will always be a few exceptions, of course: Dorian pieces, which are traditional problems; places where the raised leading note produces a vertical dissonance; and in cadences with doubled subtones. German intabulations also introduce some striking chromaticism that sounds jarring even to our ears. Newsidler's arrangement of *Mille Regretz* and Gerle's intabulation of *Qui habitat* contain unusual cadential figures between a major sixth and its resolution outwards to the octave, producing (while suspended over a held bass note) a major sixth, *minor sixth*, major sixth, octave (rather than major sixth, *perfect fifth*, major sixth, octave; see

6 On this piece, see the study by John Griffiths, "La 'Fantasía que contrahaze la harpa' de Alonso Mudarra; estudio histórico-analítico," *Revista de Musicología* 9 (1986): 29–40.

Toft's examples on p. 59). It is true that the use of the minor sixth rather than the fifth in these instances simplifies the lutenist's left-hand stretch somewhat, but regional rather than technical considerations seem to have dictated these progressions. (A similar cadence appears in Francesco da Milano's Fantasia no. 90, m. 3, and it is significant that the source for this work is a manuscript also of German provenance.[7])

It is difficult to reconcile these striking German chromatic inflections with quite an opposite German approach – the only regional trend Toft was able to detect – described in chapter 3. In this short eight-page chapter entitled, "The German Custom," Toft seizes upon a revealing preface from a German publication of 1555 which states that while the use of unnotated semitones was common in foreign music, it was not the practice in Germany. This leaves me unconvinced; the cadential practices by Hans Gerle show more of an ambivalence towards alteration than a documentable and specific regional habit. For Toft, however, Gerle's use of semitones – of which three different categories are distinguished, the third being a mixture of the first two – is another example of "the flexibility of the theoretical framework" (p. 99), a refrain which by this point in the book has little relevance in the face of obvious differences in the musical skills of lutenists. Toft himself is unable to explain "why Gerle chose to set one text with subsemitonal *clausulae* and another with subtonal *clausulae*. No textual or musical reasons suggest themselves" (p. 97).

The *mi contra fa* dissonance is most easily resolved by flatting the note understood as *mi*, and this is the solution found in the majority of the intabulations. Nevertheless, intabulations also show the retention of *mi* against *fa*, regardless of the mode, "substantiat[ing] Zarlino's claim that in compositions for many voices it was not so vital to avoid nonharmonic relations" (p. 79). Toft believes that dissonant clashes were understood within the Renaissance "sound ideal" (p. 79), a statement that can be corroborated by many Italian lute fantasias of mid-century.[8] Similarly, the treatment of melodic tritones in the intabulations is no more and no less doctrinaire than theoretical examples, the frequency of tritones depending "on the level of dissonance that each performer desired in his performance" (p. 92).

Finally, chapter 4, "Traditions of Pitch-Content," analyzes the pitch-content of four motets in order to amplify one of the main points of this book: that for

7 *The Lute Music of Francesco Canova da Milano (1497–1543)*, ed. Arthur J. Ness (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 234.

8 Such as the extraordinary anonymous fantasia on the third tone from The Hague, Gemeentemuseum, Ms 28 B 39 ["The Siena Lute Book"], fol. 15-15v, published in facsimile as *Tablature de luth Italienne dit Siena Manuscrit* ... (Geneva: Éditions Minkoff, 1988).

many works, in this case motets, it is impossible to distinguish a single authoritative version of their pitch-content. When intabulations of a vocal model exist, differences between intabulation and model reveal that a range of possibilities could occur. These variants may testify to divergent oral traditions of a particular work or "geographically localized traditions" (p. 103); Agricola's motet *Si dedero* was even transmitted in two different modes during the sixteenth century, hypomixolydian and hypodorian. The importance of these variants is demonstrated briefly in an interesting analysis of Josquin's *Inviolata, integra et casta est*, which was subjected to two different performing traditions in the sixteenth century as a result of the disappearance of the *b mollis* sign at the end of the *prima pars* in the 1520 print. Consequently, arrangements of this work by Gerle, Ochsenkun, and in some ways Cabezón adhere to this publication and specify B-naturals for almost every B that appears after the disappearance of the sign. Valderrávano's intabulation was modelled on another print, however, that suggested a different pitch content using B-flats for the same notes. Of the remaining three analyses, Toft's treatment of Josquin's *Pater noster* as intabulated by Francesco da Milano and Simon Gintzler is the most valuable.[9] The manner in which both lutenists applied sharps and flats was quite flexible, even inconsistent; but as a result, "their readings present divergent practical solutions for modern performers and editors to emulate" (p. 120).

Scholarly books about ficta never make for very light reading, and in this book the reader will have to contend with an occasionally dense vocabulary that presents the usual problems in this area. This book is different from most others, however, by its unabashed practical approach and the many concessions it makes to the performer of this music. Toft writes well about lute music, and he has good ideas about performance practice. The archaic terminology he uses is thankfully demystified by a useful glossary at the end of the book, and the 116 musical examples are clearly integrated with the text. I should add that these examples, which include entire versions of Josquin's *Absalon, fili mi* and *Pater noster*, and Agricola's *Si dedero* in an Appendix, have been beautifully produced by the University of Toronto Press, though some lutenists will complain, I suppose, that the original tablature of the intabulations does not appear with the transcriptions.

To ficta traditionalists, this book goes out on a limb in its uncritical acceptance of intabulations for their use in determining pitch-content. To those who have worked with intabulations, however, this study makes a solid contribution and promotes many excellent ideas about the flexibility of performance and regional traditions of interpretation during the Renaissance. Whether performers will

9 In Toft's transcription of an excerpt from Gintzler's version on p. 69, m. 78, the lowest note should be read as G, not F.

read this and begin to experiment with the possibilities suggested by Toft is difficult to say. What is clear, however, is that Toft makes a persuasive and historically justifiable case for more experimentation in performance and in editions, and this is something that performers of early music have been waiting for musicologists to say for a long time.

Victor Coelho

Regula Burckhardt Qureshi. *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali.* Cambridge Studies in Ethnomusicology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. 265 pp., music examples, videographs, videocharts, sketches, photographs, summary tables, glossaries, bibliographies, index. [Accompanying music cassette available separately.] ISBN: 0-521-26767-6.[1]

Sufi Music offers an intensive, insightful and thought-provoking case study of music from a dynamic perspective, namely music as "performance" or as the "process of interaction between musicians and listeners, between music and audience responses" (p. 5). The musical event under investigation is the qawwali of North India and Pakistan, in particular, qawwali as it was performed at the Nizamuddin Auliya Shrine of Delhi, India, in 1975 to 1976.

The term "qawwali" names both a genre of Islamic devotional music and the occasion for its performance. At a qawwali assembly, Sufi devotees gather under the guidance of a spiritual leader (sheikh) to experience states of mystical love and divine ecstasy – the core experience of Sufism – through a ritual of listening to music (sama'). The music heard, qawwali, comprises mystical poetry in Farsi, Urdu, and Hindi that is selected and improvised upon melodically, rhythmically, and textually by professional musicians (qawwals) in direct response to the anticipated and perceived reactions of their audience:

> In listening to the songs, devotees respond individually and spontaneously, but in accordance with social and religious convention, expressing states of mystical love. The musicians, for their part, structure their performance to activate and reinforce these emotions, adapting it to the changing needs of their listeners (p. xiii).

Herein lies the axiom or self-evident truth which informed and structured Qureshi's approach. Insofar as qawwali music is "context-sensitive" and "var[ies]

1 Editorial comments by Dr. Wesley Berg are gratefully acknowledged.