Abstract

Although Baldassare Galuppi was arguably the best known and most successful Italian composer of the eighteenth century, his name, his history, and his works have been relinquished to the periphery of the historiographical narrative. While Galuppi's masses, operas, and solo motets have been examined, his vespers psalms have been neglected by previous musicologists; most of the existing studies have been superficial, with little consideration of important questions such as formal approach, stylistic development, compositional idiosyncrasies, questions of authenticity, or what those factors might collectively tell the twenty-first-century musicologist about music in settecento Venice.

The bulk of this work consists of an examination and analysis of the vespers Psalm settings for voices and orchestra that survive in Galuppi’s autograph manuscripts. By correcting long-perpetuated falsehoods and omissions of biographical detail, it accurately places the composer within the framework of the Venetian settecento. It then investigates his role as the public face of Italian music, and of comic opera in particular. Consideration of the composer’s reception history, of the flourishing of printed music criticism, and of nationalistic undercurrents among factions of the opera world answers important questions about Galuppi’s posthumous legacy.

Framing Galuppi’s autograph vespers psalms against those of his Venetian predecessors and contemporaries, Antonio Lotti, Antonio Vivaldi, Benedetto Marcello, Giuseppe Saratelli, Antonino Biffi, Nicola Porpora, and Ferdinando Bertoni, appropriately situates them within the context of eighteenth-century Venetian sacred music and provides a point of departure for the analysis of the structural qualities of his works. Traditional Roman numeral analysis reveals tonal features unique to Galuppi, particularly in relationship to his formal structure, which, in turn, provides a basis for gauging the degree to which Galuppi's harmonic language was atypical for Venetian sacred music. The survey of vocal styles, examination of the characteristics of the instrumental writing, analysis of the use of the psalm texts, study of the relationship of text to Galuppi’s music, identification of formal idiosyncrasies, and investigation of other salient compositional attributes yield a deeper understanding of his sacred music and provide a musical fingerprint that serves as a useful basis from which to extrapolate further information from the surviving corpus of autograph manuscripts, as well as for assessing those works for which no autograph survives. This study then identifies and articulates key characteristics of Galuppi's compositional style that shed light on the authenticity issues that plague other doubtful Galuppi attributions.

Finally, this study summarizes each of the individual autograph works in order to supplement and correct the definitive catalog of Galuppi’s sacred music, Ines Burde’s Thematisch-Systematisches Verzeichnis der venezianischen Kirchenmusik von Baldassare Galuppi, including observations of characteristics of each of the works studied, speculation on their provenance, and extrapolation of details of the circumstances of their creation.