

Curious and Modern Inventions: Instrumental Music as Discovery in Galileo's Italy.

Rebecca Cypess.

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Rebecca Cypess's study of seventeenth-century instrumental music makes a distinctive contribution to the field by avoiding the standard historical narrative of instrumental styles derived from vocal music, instead exploring ways in which specifically instrumental idioms emerged from the cultural environment of early modern Italy. The author's wide reading in early modern sources and current scholarship (in particular the work of Andrew Dell'Antonio) is evident throughout. The book's central premise is an early modern instrumental turn that reconceptualized man-made inventions not only as products of artisanal skill, but as devices for generating knowledge. Just as Galileo explored the sky through his telescope, musical instruments, printed music, and knowledge systems like the violinist's *habitus* enable listeners to explore the realm of human affect. Cypess calls this the "paradox of instrumentality": the use of material objects to engage the immaterial field of subjective experience through imitations of motion, contrast, and variety. In chapter 1 she cites the sonatas in Biagio Marini's 1623 *Sonate, symphonie, canzoni . . . con altre curiose & moderne inventioni* as a quasi-didactic example of how varying musical textures and novel performance techniques—including *scordatura* (unorthodox violin tunings) and echo effects—produce movements in affect while highlighting instrumental materiality.

The remaining six chapters draw analogies between selected books of instrumental music and various modern cultural tropes. Chapter 2 reads Marini's *Affetti musicali* (1617) as fodder for conversations of the kind memorialized in Stefano Guazzo's *Civil conversatione* (1574) and printed collections of letters. When played in social settings the music engenders *meraviglia* by imitating a wide range of sounds, including echoes, *stile antico* counterpoint, and the timbres of other instruments. Drawing on Dell'Antonio's concept of "aural collecting," Cypess shows how this novel and varied book of music created a virtual dialogue with listeners' past musical experiences and with their affective response. Chapter 3 compares Marini's *Affetti musicali* to a portrait gallery—a plausible link since each piece in the book is titled with a Venetian surname—comparing it to the painting collection of Andrea Vendramin, which was itself reproduced in a manuscript compiled in 1627. A different type of portraiture—universalized depictions of particular affects—underlies Cypess's discussion of the evocatively titled dance choreographies in Fabritio Caroso's *La nobilità di dame* (1600) and dances and sonatas by Salomone Rossi.

In what may be the book's most effective chapter, Cypess reads Marini's 1623 *Sonate* and Carlo Farina's *Capriccio stravagante* (1627) as collections of "curiosities" that engage the shifting value attached to that word: while the 1623 *Crusca* dictionary cites *curiosity* as a vice and a "disorderly desire to know," Descartes and Bacon cast it in a more positive light as part of the rationalist project. Musical miscellanies came to frame novelty as

a modern means of exploration: Marini's sonatas present sonic illusions like echoes played by hidden violinists and double-stops that allow two violins to sound like four. In Farina's *Capriccio stravagante* a violin consort imitates other instruments and animal noises, juxtaposing natural and artificial objects in ways comparable to the variety in the *Kunstkammern* of Johann Georg I of Saxony, Farina's employer.

The last two chapters relate to early modern conceptions of time and history. Frescobaldi's *Toccate e partite* (1615) sometimes employs the regulated time of the clock, with a steady beat and strictly coordinated rhythm between relatively equal contrapuntal parts, and sometimes enacts a more subjective experience, with a flexible beat that accommodates more individualistically embellished melodic lines; this suspension of regular, rationalist time evokes the experience of religious devotion. Dario Castello's two books of *Sonate concertate in stil moderno* (1621 and 1629) engage the early modern relationship to history: the modern sonata, by sometimes exposing its origins in the Cinquecento canzona, "stages the tension between the *stile moderno* and the *stile antico*" (207), betraying an intense self-consciousness of modernity.

Curious and Modern Inventions is itself something of a collection of curiosities: it is wide ranging and always interesting, though readers will find some of Cypess's cultural analogies and musical analyses more revealing than others. Its broadly argued thesis should inform all future work in the field of seventeenth-century instrumental music, and also deserves attention from scholars of early modern intellectual history.

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