

## Reviews of books

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**Geoffrey Baker and Tess Knighton (eds.),** *Music and Urban Society in Colonial Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, xix + 371pp. 25 plates. 8 tables. 3 graphs. Bibliography. £60.00.  
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*Music and Urban Society* is a very welcome volume indeed. It offers an extremely useful overview of musical activity in most of the major, and some of the minor, urban centres of Colonial Latin America, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Twelve of the thirteen chapters provide carefully researched accounts of organized practice and performance in the Spanish American cities of Lima, Mexico City, Santafé (Bogotá), Caracas, Santiago (Chile), Buenos Aires; in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and smaller towns in the Brazilian regions of Minas Gerais and São Paulo; in the even smaller Jesuit reductions of Paraguay/Bolivia and a post-Jesuit reduction in Moxos (Bolivia); and, not least, in the only functioning city in the Spanish colonial Philippines, Manila. These twelve essays recount the organization of mainly public, mainly ecclesiastical, almost exclusively European classical performance, usually adapted to suit the available forces; the training, recruitment and management of musicians; and, where possible, the nature of the performances themselves, the origin of the music played and the language of expression, where relevant. There are copious tables and graphs providing statistical information relating to these matters and frequent town plans to show the disposition of church and civil property and the zoning of the layers of civil society, usually radiating out from centre to periphery in order: Spaniards (*peninsulares*), criollos (colonial-born Iberians), mestizos (those of mixed European-indigenous heritage), mulattoes, indigenous and slaves of African origin. As is inevitable in a historiographical exercise such as this, most of the evidence of performance practice is gleaned from contemporary accounts, which are, of course, constricted by the agendas of their early modern authors, with some inferences possible from surviving festivals in more indigenous or less socially privileged areas. These witnesses are liberally quoted, and equally dextrously interrogated to highlight for the reader those omissions which must not be accepted verbatim. The twelve factual chapters are uniformly informative, sensitive to the complexities of colonial society in the several different contexts examined and each offers a veritable treasure trove of archival material blended with existing historical scholarship on each of the cities or communities under the microscope.

My quibbles are few. Geoffrey Baker's first chapter, which attempts a riff on the Uruguayan critic Ángel Rama's *The Lettered City* (*La ciudad letrada*), while

distinguished in itself sits ill as a prelude to the twelve empirical chapters which follow. Indeed, Baker's confection of a 'resounding city' in response to Rama is itself considerably deflated in the first two pages of Bernardo Illari's chapter 11, on professional music in Buenos Aires, which pits the relatively clear, different, and seminal without question, theories established in Rama's 1984 publication and the Spanish historian José Antonio Maravall's *Culture of the Baroque* (*La cultura del barroco*, first published in Spanish in 1975) against the increasingly provable untidy heterodoxy of life as it was actually lived in colonial Hispanic cities. While Illari chooses José Luis Romero, another figure much quoted in this collection, as his standard bearer over the other two, he has the very good grace at the end of his chapter to admit that Romero's *Latinoamerica: las ciudades y las ideas* (1975) 'is now dated' and 'debate must continue'. My second quibble relates to the plates. It would have been very much more desirable to have the reproductions of paintings in colour, and the maps, in particular, at least at full page size. All the maps are too small and some are incorporated into the text in postage-stamp sizes, sufficient as proof that such documents exist, but no use at all to the reader who might wish to peruse them, even with a magnifying glass. My final quibble is to do with translations. It is to be expected that most of those working on the material of this period in the Hispanic colonies will have some competence in Spanish or Portuguese. Therefore the numerous quotations from archive material would have been much more useful to most researchers in this area had they been included in the original language as well as in English translation. The seven appendices in Spanish, on the other hand, are an absolute joy, as indeed is this book in all but these few, relatively minor, aspects.

In conclusion then, as Tess Knighton observes in her excellent preface, research on the musical heritage of colonial Latin America and the Philippines, especially in terms of access to materials which are still only coming to light, is still very much at 'an early stage in this process of recuperation' and this volume may well prove to be a giant step in a monumental causeway.

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**Alan Borg and David Coke**, *Vauxhall Gardens: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011. xiii +473pp. 166 plates. 4 maps. Bibliography. \$95.00/£55.00.

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Whether we look to them for evidence of a rising 'middling rank', an 'urban renaissance', an emergent 'public sphere' or a 'separate sphere' for women, scholarly interest in pleasure gardens has blossomed over the past two decades. Seasonal (as in summertime) commercial resorts, pleasure gardens such as Spring Gardens, Vauxhall and Cremorne offered Caroline, Georgian and Victorian Londoners a place to escape the confines of the city. For the price of a shilling one entered another realm, one in which fantasies of Edenic equality and exotic locales came to life in the glittering grove. Displays of painting and sculpture, musical performances and the crowd itself fostered a playful spirit of the sort that would later be associated with theme parks. Though separated by a century, both types of resort provided paying visitors with the expected unexpected. Similar pleasure