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Teresa Cascudo García-Villaraco (ed.), *Un Beethoven Ibérico. Dos siglos de transferencia cultural*

Granada, Comares Música, 2021, Xii + 397 p.

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- 1 This remarkable collection of essays is entitled “An Iberian Beethoven” rather than “The Iberian Beethoven” for good reason. All such “cultural transferences” result in a construct, which might have been quite different if a single factor, historical, geographical or other, had been different, and whose perspectives may still alter with time.
- 2 But the reality is that we now have unparalleled access to historical documentation that enables an understanding of the processes that led to the construction of this particular Iberian Beethoven (in fact, one might speak of “Iberian Beethovens”), and this is the first book to bring current scholarly work on the subject together, in such a way as to construct an historical narrative from what may initially appear to be rather diverse perspectives and methodologies. The framework for the large number of contributions is elegantly set out by Teresa Cascudo in her Introduction, in which she notes,

[...] in great part, the themes under discussion in this volume are new. This does not mean that the dissemination of Beethoven’s music did not feature in earlier discussions, in which we find research which [...] complements the content of this book, in which we have made of Beethoven the prism through which we approach various aspects of western urban musical life from the beginning of the 19th century as it occurred in various cities in the Iberian Peninsula.¹ (p. 8)

- 3 It may, then, seem curious that the book's first section is entitled "To the North of the Pyrenees", but the first essay, by Michael Christoforidis and Peter Tregear, in fact offers a revelatory discussion of the inverse of what most of the book is concerned with, covering the attention paid by Beethoven and his circle to the political events in Spain between 1820 and 1823, during which the country was ruled by a liberal government following the military revolt against absolutist rule (it is enough to think of *Wellington's Victory* in this context to grasp the idea). There follows a discussion of the political implications of the composer's interest in classical Greek literature and ideas, linking this with the émigré Greek community in Vienna and the proposed revision of *The Ruins of Athens*, and then the ramifications for and of *Fidelio* and what the authors describe as the "echoes of Mediterranean uprisings in the Ninth Symphony". The second essay, by Marie Winkelmüller-Urechia, is a case study of the still-underperformed Arriaga's use of sonata form in his string quartets and what he learnt in this regard from Beethoven, justly arguing not only for his continued relevance, but for his originality.
- 4 Section 2, "Private versus Public", contains a detailed survey of the presence of Beethoven in the libraries of the elite in Spain up to 1827 (by Carolina Queipo, Lluís Bertrán and Judith Ortega), specifically those of the Real Cámara, and the Tusquets and Adalid families of Barcelona and A Coruña respectively, followed by an analysis by Teresa Cascudo of the emergence of Beethoven as what might today be described as a celebrity in the Iberian Peninsula, part of what she describes as "the transnational process of mythification and popularization whose origins we have located in the erection of the famous statue in Bonn in 1845" (p. 90), something of clear significance in the multinational creation of the idea of Beethoven as heroic romantic artist, railing against heaven and earth, that came to permeate European culture in the broadest sense. The third section of the book deals with Beethoven's reception outside the Iberian capitals of Madrid and Lisbon, and specifically Granada and Oporto. This kind of detailed contextual analysis (by María Belén Vargas Liñán and Hélder Sá respectively) is particularly valuable, bringing to life the figures and institutions involved in the musical life of these cities and their roles in the formation of the audiences' tastes. Vargas Liñán does this by tracing concert activity in Granada during the 1880s and the way in which Beethoven's work was subsequently received by the press; Sá concentrates on the important figure of Bernardo Moreira de Sá, the very well connected violinist, conductor, teacher and promoter, and his ground-breaking work in establishing Beethoven's chamber music in the repertoire.
- 5 The next two chapters deal with the first performance of the Ninth Symphony in Barcelona in 1900 (Jaume Carbonell and Xosé Aviñoa) and the Madrid première of *Fidelio* in 1893 (Carolina Queipo and José María Domínguez); local political and historical context in these two cases is of the greatest importance. In discussing the reception of *Fidelio*, for example, Queipo and Domínguez point to certain phrases from the pens of Peña y Goñi and Pascual Millán, "which all contain messages that seem to go beyond the opera itself and the actual production, given that they allude to the inappropriateness of 'staging a funerary drama in the current circumstances, when exequies come upon us from every side.'" (p. 160). The allusion is to the bomb that was thrown into the stalls of the *Liceu* in Barcelona on 7 November by an anarchist, killing twenty and wounding many more; it is not hard to imagine the resonance that the opera would have had in such circumstances.

- 6 There follows a series of three chapters dealing with the reception of Beethoven's instrumental music, by Eduardo Chávarri Alonso, Beatriz Hernández Polo and Elena Torres Clemente respectively, the latter, on Falla's views on and processing of Beethoven's music being of particular interest. One senses the lack of a fourth chapter, dealing with Portugal, but given that this book pushes boundaries in research so far, I prefer to take the view of the optimist and believe that such research will be a natural part of its future development.
- 7 Portugal appears inevitably in the next two sections, dealing with the celebrations in 1927 and "Beethoven politicized". Mariana Calado discusses the Lisbon musical press's reactions to the outstanding events organized for this, and Luís Santos reflects on "The Symphonic Beethoven in Republican Lisbon (c. 1910-1920)", linking the febrile atmosphere of republican sentiment in the Portuguese capital of that time with the "artist engaged in the political and social causes of his time, that is to say, the ideals of the French Revolution and the values of freedom, progress and overcoming. It is not surprising, therefore, that such a perspective is demonstrated in the writings of the musical critics most identified with republicanism, as was the case of Júlio Neuparth." (p. 263) María Palacios discusses "symphonic music and masculinity" as part of the Madrid celebrations, an image built up particularly in the writings of the influential critic Adolfo Salazar, and the chapters by Maruxa Baliñas Pérez and Diego Alonso on, respectively, Beethoven and the anarchist movement, and the image of the composer in the work of the Marxist Otto Mayer-Serra fascinatingly extend the analysis of the making of the Beethovenian image even further.
- 8 The final two sections deal with "Beethoven and the State" and "Global Beethoven". In the first, the composer's presence (by means of a complete series of the symphonies) in the 1953 Santander Festival, the success of which had the effect of kick-starting the tradition of festivals in Spain more generally, and the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the Spanish Constitution in 2018 (Jesús Ferrer Cayón and Marina Hervás respectively) is analysed in detail. What is very striking in Ferrer Cayón's chapter is the absorption of Beethoven into a Spanish cultural vision: he quotes the historian and musicologist Federico Sopeña as saying that, aesthetically, the symphonic cycle had represented "the height of the Hispanic assimilation of the grand European style", and the press spoke of the "'Spanish fury', the 'unitary, masculine understanding, never that of the salon' of the whole Beethoven Cycle, 'the confluence of the Spanish and the European.'" (p. 324). In the second, Diego García Peinazo discusses Miguel Ríos's popular adaptation of the *Ode to Joy* in 1968 and Ismael Peñaranda Gómez and Daniel Lloret Andreo end with "Digital Beethoven". Valuable though these last reflections will undoubtedly be to future generations, they are unsatisfactory if one reads the book through from beginning to end, because one begins to expect, on account of its overall quality and the sense of narrative thrust induced by its organization, as I noted earlier, if not a conclusion, then at least some kind of speculative epilogue – one might wonder if Teresa Cascudo's already substantial Introduction could not have been expanded and divided in two in order to facilitate this.
- 9 But this is a detail: the only real criticism I have of this pioneering volume of essays is the lack of an index, which is a very serious lacuna in a book of this breadth and depth, as anyone wishing to look up references to a single person or event discussed within it will have cause to discover; perhaps this will be remedied by the second edition which one may legitimately hope will become necessary in short order.

NOTES

1. Translated by the author.
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AUTHORS

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Ivan Moody studied at the Universities of London, Joensuu and York. His music has been performed and broadcast all over the world. As a musicologist, he has published widely on the music of the Balkans, Russia and the Iberian Peninsula. He has contributed to *Grove*, *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, the *Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology* and the *Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky*. His book *Modernism and Orthodox Spirituality in Contemporary Music* was published in 2014 and he has edited and co-edited five other books. He is currently engaged on a number of research projects dealing with music and cultural identity in the Mediterranean and the Balkans. He is a Research Fellow at CESEM – Universidade Nova, Lisbon, Founding Chairman of ISOCM, Editor of *Journal of the International Society for Orthodox Church Music* and Co-Editor of the *Revista Portuguesa de Musicologia*.