
MUSIC IN ART

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR MUSIC ICONOGRAPHY

Vol. XLIV, no. 1–2

Spring–Fall 2019

RESEARCH CENTER FOR MUSIC ICONOGRAPHY
THE GRADUATE CENTER OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR MUSIC ICONOGRAPHY

Vol. XLIV, no. 1–2

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EDITOR

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Music in Art (ISSN 1522-7464) is the continuation of the *Ridim/RCMI Newsletter*, volume 1 (1975) to volume XXII (1997). The journal is published yearly and annual subscription rates are \$180 for institutions and \$50 for individuals.

Articles may be submitted in English, French, Italian, Spanish, or German. Authors are responsible for obtaining permission to publish each of their illustrations and music examples.

Music in Art is abstracted in *RILM Abstracts of Music Literature*; *Scopus* (Elsevier); *Music Periodicals Database*; *Bibliographie des Musikschritftums* (BMS); and cited in *Music Index* and *European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (ERIHplus).

Printed by Imprimerie REF, Montreal, in December 2019.

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REVIEWS



Lorenzo BIANCONI, Maria Cristina CASALI PEDRIELLI, Giovanna DEGLI ESPOSTI, Angelo MAZZA, Nicola USULA, and Alfredo VITOLO, *I ritratti del Museo della musica di Bologna da padre Martini al Liceo musicale*. *Historiae musicae cultores CXXIX* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2018), xvii, 684. ISBN 978-88-222-6349-0.

When the English organist, traveler, and man of letters Charles Burney visited Bologna in August 1770, his hope was to spend time with two legendary figures, the retired Farinelli, and the great castrato's friend, the teacher, scholar and composer Padre Giovanni Battista Martini. Both were famous among musicians, though Farinelli's celebrity extended far beyond the admiration of connoisseurs. Both men were also collectors. Farinelli was wealthy; his collection of fine things included a magnificent array of paintings (many of them showing royalty from across Europe who had fallen in love with, and paid well for, Farinelli's singing) and several valuable harpsichords, each of them holding a special place in his affections, and each named after a favorite painter: there was a Florentine pianoforte on which was painted, in gold letters as Burney admiringly reported, *Rafael d'Urbino*, then there were harpsichords named after "Coreggio," "Titian," and "Guido."

Burney's European tour was itself a sort of collecting project, undertaken in order to gather information for the great *History of Music* that he planned to write (it would appear in four volumes, beginning in 1774). In order to be a proper music scholar, and above all, a historian, Burney felt it necessary to see – and hear – for himself the instruments and the institutions, the organs and churches, the courts and theatres, the performers and theorists, and, above all, the archives and collections that would allow him to trace out the long history of the art of music. Padre Martini, the great teacher, was engaged on a similar project, deeply involved in creating his landmark *Storia della Musica* for which five volumes were planned, though only three had appeared – in 1757, 1770, and 1781 – by the time of his death in 1784. In his rooms at the Convent of San Francesco Martini had assembled an extraordinary library

of books on music, scores in manuscripts and prints, some of great age and rarity, 18,000 volumes in all, as Burney reported. In the subsequent decade Martini would amplify his library with a seminal collection of musician portraits, one that by 1776 was reported (probably with some exaggeration) to have contained more than 400 portraits, almost all of them in oils. To create a history, one must have tools: instruments, books, archives, and – the subject of this magnificent new scholarly catalogue – portraits.

In Germany, the collecting of musician portraits had already been underway since the 1750s, most especially in that circle of musicians concerned with what would be one of the greatest musical legacies, that of J.S. Bach. C.P.E. Bach, the most important curator of his father's works, was a collector of music and books, but especially of portraits. His collection amounted to nearly 400 items by the time of his death in 1788, listed in painstaking detail in the catalogue of his estate and covering the whole history of music, from its mythical invention by Apollo, through Pythagoras and the early number theorists, through Lutheran church musicians and pastors, to contemporary theorists, composers and performers, as well as the writers, patrons, and visual artists they worked with and around.

With a collection such as this, the composer becomes a historian, the performer a scholar. Inspired by C.P.E. Bach's passion for collecting – and perhaps also by the increasing renown of the Martini collection in Bologna – and for the historical awareness, connoisseurly expertise and scholarly knowledge these collections represented, many others in his circle followed suit. Son of a J.S. Bach student, Ernst Ludwig Gerber's *Historisch-Biographisches*

Lexikon der Tonkünstler (first edition 1790, 1792) was itself a vast collection of music, books and portraits; the lexicographer claimed that this was nothing unusual, for the “Zeal for Collecting” was rampant among amateur and professional musicians alike. The Göttingen professor of music and author of the first biography of J.S. Bach, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, who would write the first German-language history of music (*Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik*, 1788, 1801) amassed a collection of 2328 books, 1661 items of printed or manuscript music, and over 600 portraits. In the city of Schwerin, in the north, the C.P.E. Bach enthusiast and comprehensive collector of his works, J.J.H. Westphal, would build a collection of 518 portraits of musicians, over 600 theoretical books, and 3000 musical works. The collections of Forkel and Westphal, intimately connected to the Bach circle (and the reason for the survival of many Bach sources today) ultimately became part of the library of the collector of Bachiana Georg Poelchau; a singer who married money, his holdings ran to more than a thousand musician portraits and many thousands of books, printed music and precious manuscripts, and became the foundation of the music library of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin. Collecting was a matter of thinking about, preparing for, writing history. Conversely, understanding and writing about history was a matter of making collections.

The portrait collection of Padre Martini is preserved more or less intact in Bologna in the Museo Internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica. This remarkable collection continued to be treasured and expanded during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and up to today, and is a resource of unsurpassed richness for scholars of music history, of Italian music culture, of the cultural history of Bologna, of portraiture, and of eighteenth-century collecting practices. This is made abundantly clear by the scholarly catalogue, both useful and sumptuous, that has recently been published by Leo S. Olschki. The catalogue is an impressive achievement, the depth of its scholarship (both art historical and musicological), the clarity of its presentation, the sheer scope of its 311 individual entries (not counting the appendices on lost or damaged items), and the rigor of each of these contributions as well as the introductory essays, make it a model for projects of this kind.

Angelo MAZZA’S introductory essay describes in illuminating detail the origins of the collection, and Padre Martini’s activities as a collector, his information gleaned from the voluminous correspondence preserved with Martini’s library in Bologna. Martini’s concept for the collection was clear: as he told Burney at the end of August, 1770, the fifth and final volume of his comprehensive *Storia della Musica* was to have been a set of biographies of the most famous musicians, along with engraved portraits of each of them (on the model of the famous *Vite* of Giorgio Vasari). Although some portraits were in Martini’s possession earlier, his idea to create a uniform and comprehensive collection of musician portrait paintings in oils, that would be publicly exhibited (as opposed to prints and drawings, that would

generally be kept in folders and portfolios) appears to have matured at the beginning of the 1770s, at around the same time that the rules for admission to the composition class at the Accademia Filarmonica were reformed. Eagerly pursuing students, colleagues and contemporaries in letters sent across Europe during the ensuing years, Martini appears to have built almost the whole collection in little more than a decade.

Indeed, Burney made no mention of a portrait collection in Martini’s possession, as if it were then not yet a project of significant interest. Yet by 1774, as Angelo Mazza reports, Johann Gottlieb Naumann wrote to Martini from Dresden that he knew that Martini was working on a collection of portraits of famous “maestri”, ancient and modern. In August 1773 Martini wrote in a letter that he had made a collection of “more than 80 portraits, many of them my students,” but by 1776 the printed guidebooks to Bologna described the famous “studio” of Martini in the Convent of San Francesco as a great room, two stories high, which contained “more than 400 portraits of professors and composers of music.” As we learn from Mazza’s study of the Martini correspondence, whereas around forty of the letters written between 1735 and 1772 contain portrait requests or allusions to portraiture, in the eleven-year period between 1773 and 1784, no fewer than 250 do so. Martini had caught the collecting bug.

The majority of these portraits consisted of Italian musicians, but Martini also solicited contributions from abroad, and it was considered a distinct honor to be included in his gallery: some of the finest portraits were the result of such requests, including the famous Gainsborough portrait of J.C. Bach; other non-Italians included Fux, Handel, Rameau, Charles Burney, Frederick the Great, Martin Gerbert, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, and the Danish dilettante Thomas Christian Walter in a beautiful painting by Angelo Crescimbeni. The latter was one of the most distinguished painters to have been closely associated with the collection, and produced thirty paintings for it, among them the portrait of Padre Martini himself. Another way to acquire portraits for the collection, of the living but especially the long dead, was to commission local Bolognese painters to create oil portraits from portrait prints. A reflection of Martini’s intensified ambitions for the collection in the early 1770s is the cluster of such “copies” dated 1773. The result was an overall uniformity of format, style, frame, the collection’s focus less on artistic quality than on representation: a collection such as this drew attention to the portrait subjects, not the painters; the coherence and symmetry of its presentation offered an orderly progression through music history that amplified and expanded on the other materials of the library, its manuscripts and scores, treatises and books.

In this new catalogue of the collection, we gain real insight into Martini’s collecting practices, and the pictures he gathered together. The volume begins with Angelo Mazza’s comprehensive introductory essay, and its detail-

ed reference to Martini's letters. Also imparting crucial information is Alfredo VITOLO'S contribution on the ways in which the collection has been cataloged and inventoried (with the corresponding implications for how it was displayed). In a different vein, focusing on a single painting, Lorenzo BIANCONI and Maria Cristina CASALI PEDRELLI offer a detailed study of the brilliant portrait of Carlo Broschi [Farinelli] by Corrado GIOAQUINTO, one of the highlights of the collection.

Ninety-six portraits were added to the collection during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Giovanna DEGLI ESPOSTI'S essay on the collection's expansion after the death of Martini presents a fascinating picture not only of the portraits themselves, but also of the dedication of the Commune of Bologna to the continuation of Martini's project. Notable early nineteenth-century acquisitions of particularly high quality included the glorious portrait of Isabella Colbran, Rossini's first wife, by an unknown artist, that entered the collection in 1807, and that of the famous soprano Girolamo Crescentini, added in 1812. The city was – and is – proud of its musical portrait gallery; between 1883 and 1916 the Commune commissioned from the painter Giuseppe Tivoli five portraits of famous musicians – Bellini, Donizetti, Liszt, Verdi and Wagner, and four of musicians teaching at the Liceo – Bossi, Busi, Parisini, Torchi. As with the portraits acquired and commissioned by Padre Martini, the format of the later portraits is mostly similar, the sitters generally presented without scene-setting backgrounds or the attributes of their profession. Likewise, the painters' names are often unknown, although Esposti points to some important exceptions including the portrait of the famous soprano Teresa Bertinotti Radicati by Gaspare Landi (ca. 1803) and that of the soldier, diplomat, and amateur musician Lord John Fane Burghersh, by Pietro Benvenuti (painted between 1826 and 1830) – beautiful portraits indeed. Another memorable image by a known artist is the intimate drawing by Gustav Doré of Rossini on his deathbed.

To judge from the beautiful reproductions in this volume, the artistic quality of the later portraits, and especially those from the twentieth century, is higher than many of those commissioned by Padre Martini. Yet pain-

terly attributes are not the point: as this book makes abundantly clear, this portrait collection is, as it was intended to be by its originator, an extraordinary record of the history of music and of the leading protagonists of the great music culture of Italy and abroad; at the same time, especially into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is a collection of portraits closely rooted in the institution which houses it today and it includes many students, teachers and directors of the Liceo filarmonico. The gallery presents a vivid visual account of the history of music education in the city of Bologna, as well as a record of networks of Bolognese painters. (One thing that struck me, as I spent time with this book, is how significantly the number of women represented diminishes from around 1850. From 1900 on, only men are represented, and in the second half of the nineteenth century only a single woman).

The catalogue itself is thoughtfully organized in sections devoted to chronological periods (the sixteenth century, 1600–1650, 1650–1700, etc.), within which the portraits are presented alphabetically. This has the merit of creating a coherent historiographical trajectory – in keeping with Martini's concept – within which the core assembled by Martini himself remains intact. Each entry includes an excellent, color reproduction of the portrait, with those of particular quality or significance lavishly occupying a complete page; the entries themselves are models of scholarly precision and completeness, with full biographical information, details from the Martini correspondence relating to the acquisition of the portrait, information on other portraits of the same sitter and full bibliographical references. Given the number of portraits in the collection and the depth of the scholarship, this is an enormous project. The definitive study and a volume that will continue to yield its riches – and provide a model for any similar projects. The rigorous scholarship does not deaden the vibrancy of the images: leafing through this wonderful book, history takes human form and comes to life.

Annette RICHARDS
Ithaca

THE CLAIRE BROOK AWARD: 2019



The Barry S. Brook Center for Music Research and Documentation at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York is delighted to bestow the second Claire Brook Award on Lorenzo Bianconi for his book *I Ritratti del Museo della musica di Bologna da padre Martini al Liceo musicale* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2018). Under Bianconi's leadership, the book was written by MARIA CRISTINA CASALI PEDRIELLI, GIOVANNA DEGLI ESPOSTI, ANGELO MAZZA, NICOLA USULA, and ALFREDO VITOLO.

LORENZO BIANCONI is invited to present a public lecture on the topic of the awarded book at The Graduate Center of The City University of New York, in September 2020.

LORENZO BIANCONI has been an important scholar in Italian music academia for decades. He was teaching at the Università di Bologna from 1977 through last year, when he was elected professor emeritus; since 1983 he was full professor at the Dipartimento di Musica e Spettacolo. He has published a number of ground-breaking studies on music of the seventeenth-century, opera, and the history of libretto. Anglo-American scholars know these works from their English editions, many published by the Chicago University Press. He is general editor of the collected works of Francesco Cavalli (with Ellen Rosand, Bärenreiter), and a consultant for the collected works of Rossini and Bellini. In 1994 he founded *Il saggiatore musicale*, the central musicological periodical published in Italy. He is recipient of the Dent medal of the Royal Musical Association (1983), corresponding member of the American Musicological Society (1995), honorary member of the Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna (2001), corresponding member of the Accademia delle Scienze di Torino (2006), and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2015).

THE CLAIRE BROOK AWARD, established in April 2018 by the Barry S. Brook Center for Music Research and Documentation (The Graduate Center of The City University of New York), honors an outstanding monograph, dissertation, edited collection, or exhibition catalogue on a designated topic related to the current work of the Brook Center.

CLAIRE BROOK (1925–2012) was vice president and music editor of W.W. Norton & Co. in New York, in a distinguished lineage that included Paul Henry Lang, Nathan Broder, and David Hamilton. She sponsored the publication of dozens of books in Norton's series "Books that Live in Music," including seminal works on the music of Africa, jazz, and contemporary music, as well as editions of Joseph Machlis's *The Enjoyment of Music* and Donald Jay Grout's *A History of Western Music* that have kept them at the forefront of music textbooks ever since. In 1999 she was awarded the degree of Doctor of Music, honoris causa, by the New England Conservatory. After retirement from Norton, she served for a number of years as Executive Editor of Pendragon Press. Claire left a generous bequest to the Brook Center that has supported many of its activities over the years. It is in her honor that this award has been established.