



REVIEW: BOOK

The Power of Pastiche: Musical Miscellany and Cultural Identity in Early Eighteenth-Century England

Alison C. DeSimone

Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2021

pp. xiii + 315, ISBN 978 1 942 95477 4

Stephanie Carter

International Centre for Music Studies, Newcastle University, Newcastle, UK
stephanie.carter@ncl.ac.uk

Recent accounts of musical repertory and performance in early eighteenth-century England have focused on what has traditionally been seen as a period of relative inactivity stretching between the death of Henry Purcell (1659–1695) and the arrival of George Frideric Handel (1685–1759). Alison DeSimone's *The Power of Pastiche: Musical Miscellany and Cultural Identity in Early Eighteenth-Century England* provides an important contribution to these endeavours by exploring the notion of musical miscellany – that is, the numerous ways in which musicians and audiences created, interpreted and reacted to the cultural manifestation of musical variety – and its relationship to cosmopolitan cultural identity in the first decades of the eighteenth century.

DeSimone explores the musical landscape of early eighteenth-century London within a broader narrative of the city's cultural history. The period between roughly 1700 and 1720 witnessed a homegrown desire to define Britishness, especially following the formation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain through the Act of Union in 1707, alongside an unprecedented growth in cosmopolitanism as European musicians sought to capitalize on the lucrative possibilities available in the city. Viewing London's cultural scene through this lens, DeSimone focuses on the soundscape of the metropolis as it was shaped by musical miscellany. The concept of miscellany was, of course, not new to England in 1700: manuscript collections and commonplace books are evident as far back as the sixteenth century, and published music anthologies appear in the seventeenth. As DeSimone argues, however, the phenomenon of the cultural manifestation of variety particularly 'shaped England's musical landscape in the early eighteenth century' (4).

The Power of Pastiche consists of an introduction plus five chapters, each of which focuses on an aspect of miscellany. Chapter 1 explores this through variety concerts, which comprised a patchwork of entertainment types ranging from vocal and instrumental music to readings and even juggling and acrobatics. It focuses on two case studies: violinist Gasparo Visconti (1683–after 1713), known as 'Gasperini', and countertenor John Abell (1653–after 1716). DeSimone employs these two figures in order to explore the diversity represented by programming choices and promotion tactics, what the author calls a 'smorgasbord of entertainments' (52), through which London audiences were exposed to new music within a familiar setting. For musicians, the variety concert provided the opportunity and space to market themselves as versatile freelancers and to establish their reputations. Chapter 2 focuses on the 'miscellaneous' authorship of pasticcio operas, starting with *Thomyris, Queen of Scythia* (1707), for which the librettist Peter Motteux (1663–1718) borrowed music from Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725) and Giovanni Bononcini (1670–1747), with the help of Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667–1752), in order to cobble together this new work. Using *Almahide* by John Jacob Heidegger (1666–1749) as a further case study, DeSimone demonstrates the processes of alteration and compilation that characterized the creation of pasticcio opera, and the influences

that individual singers performing the production and London audiences, with their desire for Italian-style virtuosity, both had on their decisions. Those creating such arrangements took into account language, the need to select complementary arias and the need to intervene editorially in music and text where necessary, all of which were intended to suit contemporary preference and, ultimately, market forces. DeSimone considers the significance of these factors in the creation of pasticcio opera for the English stage, paying particular attention to Bononcini's influence on pasticcio and, more broadly, the importance of his music to the soundscape of early eighteenth-century London.

Chapter 3 analyses published songbook miscellanies, addressing the contents of the anthologies as indicative of consumers' identity in the contemporary marketplace. The author provides excellent context for the contents of these songbooks, examining the different genres of the songs in relation to aspects of everyday life (including politics, drinking, sex and money). Chapter 4 showcases the miscellaneous activities of composers in London during this period. By exploring the freelance careers of Charles Dieupart (c1667–c1740), John Ernest Galliard (died 1747), Nicola Haym (1678–1729) and Thomas Clayton (1673–1725), DeSimone examines how these individuals engaged with miscellany culture. Her discussion considers their flexibility in musical styles, as they aimed to demonstrate their musical cosmopolitanism, and also their entrepreneurial skills in their variety of professional roles as composers, performers, arrangers, librettists, translators, teachers and agents. Finally, Chapter 5 investigates the treatment of musical miscellany by learned writers, including early examples of music criticism published in *The Spectator*, and considers its importance in Enlightenment philosophy more widely. Here the author expands beyond musical confines to explore the wider cultural appreciation of miscellany, broadly defined, as demonstrated in other arts such as gardening and painting.

DeSimone's analysis of variety in the careers and works of composers and performers is well structured and contextualized within broader social and political narratives of contemporary English life. I had, however, hoped that the volume would also address the entrepreneurial role of the editor and publisher – as well as their importance in developing audience taste and cultural identity – as part of the exploration of published songbook miscellanies in Chapter 3. I suspect the reason this topic was not addressed is partly lack of evidence, although work on this topic has been done for other periods. There are various studies of early-modern European music print culture and the role of editors in published anthologies – including how their political leanings and cultural preferences shaped collections – that might have provided a starting-point. These include Susan Lewis Hammond's *Editing Music in Early Modern Germany* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), Stacey Jocoy's 'Decoding Musical Resistance: English Vocal Music in the Service of the King, 1625–1660' (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois, 2005) and my contribution 'Published Musical Variants and Creativity: An Overview of John Playford's Role as Editor' in the volume edited by Rebecca Herissone and Alan Howard, *Concepts of Creativity in Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013), 87–104.

The Power of Pastiche successfully traces musical miscellany through the breadth of genres, styles and opportunities available to musicians and audiences of early eighteenth-century London. In so doing, the book builds upon existing scholarly interests in cultural and literary studies to address musical miscellany, providing a much-needed focus on music that lays the foundation for understanding cosmopolitan identity in, and the soundscape of, early-Enlightenment England. Ultimately, *The Power of Pastiche* is a valuable contribution to the understanding of miscellany, musicking and the diverse nature of musical life in the time and place under study. Its wide-ranging case studies shed light on often-neglected composers and performers, not only offering a compelling framework through which to investigate the musical landscape of the metropolis c1700, but also providing a vital musical perspective on the shaping of cosmopolitan cultural identity in England.

Stephanie Carter is an Associate Researcher at Newcastle University. Her research focuses on early-modern music print culture, and her work has appeared in various journals and essay collections. She co-edited, with Kirsten Gibson and Roz Southey, *Music in North-East England, 1500–1800* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020) and is currently co-editing 'The Music Trade in Britain, 1650–1800'.