

*Aesthetics of Baroque  
Music in Italy, Spain,  
the German-Speaking  
Countries and the  
Low Countries*

Second Edition

AESTHETICS OF MUSIC  
VOLUME 6

David Whitwell



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DAVID WHITWELL

# Aesthetics of Music

VOLUME 6  
AESTHETICS OF BAROQUE MUSIC IN  
ITALY, SPAIN, THE GERMAN-SPEAKING COUNTRIES  
AND THE LOW COUNTRIES

EDITED BY CRAIG LABELSTEIN

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# FOREWORD

WE DEFINE MUSIC to be that form of music performed live before listeners. We define Aesthetics in Music to be a study of the nature of the perception of music by the listener.

We believe the performance of music in actual practice falls naturally into four classes. These are Art Music, Educational Music, Functional Music and Entertainment Music.

## I. ART MUSIC

Art Music we believe is defined by four conditions, *all of which must always be present*. These are:

1. *Art music is inspired.* Art music is music in which it seems evident that the composer has made an honest attempt to communicate genuine feelings. Feelings, which may range from lofty and noble to superficial and vulgar, must be presumed to be generally recognizable in music, as they are in any other art form, including painting, sculpture, dance, and architecture. In Art Music, lofty and noble feelings are paramount.

Due to the common genetically understood nature of emotions, it must also be understood that in music emotions or feelings cannot be 'faked.' They will always be recognized as such by any contemplative listener.

2. *Art Music has no purpose other than the communication of its own aesthetic content.* Art Music is free of any purpose or function, save the spiritual communication of pure beauty.
3. *Art Music is that which enjoys a performance faithful to the intent of the composer.*
4. *Art Music must have a listener capable of contemplation.*

If any of these conditions are missing, the performance must result in a lesser aesthetic experience. For example, the *Ninth Symphony* of Beethoven played in a stadium, during the half-time of a professional football game, would fail for the lack of the presence

of Condition Number Four. The same Symphony heard in a concert hall, but in a poor performance, not faithful to the intent of the composer, would fail for the lack of the presence of Condition Number Three.

## II. EDUCATIONAL MUSIC

Educational Music may or may not have the same conditions as Art Music, excepting Condition Number Two; it may or may not occur within an educational institution. Educational Music is didactic music, music which has the specific and *additional* aim to educate. In the strictest sense, if the *primary purpose* of Music is to educate, it cannot be Art Music—for Art Music has no purpose.

## III. FUNCTIONAL MUSIC

Functional Music is music put at the service of something else. We include here, for example, all kinds of religious music, music for weddings, music for the military, and occupational music. Functional Music may share the same conditions as Art Music, excepting Condition Number Two.

One may ask, How can a Mozart Mass be called Functional Music, and not Art Music? If the observer were not contemplatively listening to the music, but were rather contemplating religious thoughts, then the Mozart Mass becomes merely a very high level of Functional Music. If, on the other hand, the observer is a contemplative listener of music, forgetting about religion, then the Mozart Mass is Art Music, but has failed in its purpose as church music.

Military and wedding music are examples of music in which the contemplative listener is missing entirely. How about airport, supermarket and elevator music where there is no listener at all? According to the definition we have given above, recorded music without listeners is not to be considered music at all.

#### IV. ENTERTAINMENT MUSIC

Entertainment Music is music with no object other than to please. It will always be missing Condition Four, the contemplative listener. For this reason, Entertainment Music may be inspired music, but the composer is unlikely to be inspired by lofty and noble emotions, knowing there will be no contemplative listener. Entertainment Music and Art Music can never be the same thing because of Condition Number Two: Art Music has no purpose other than the communication of its own aesthetic content. It is inconsistent with the nature of great art to have any extrinsic purpose, including the purpose to entertain.

The first philosopher to address the impact which Art has on an observer was Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, as part of a discussion of Tragedy, which like music has both a material, written form and a live performance form. In this treatise, Aristotle first considers the nature and contribution of each of the specific components of the written form of the Tragedy in his typically methodical style. His great contribution, however, comes when he has completed this discussion, for he then goes beyond the material form of the play itself to discuss the observer. He makes it clear that not only is the end purpose of the elements of the play to produce a specific experience in the observer, but that the nature of this experience is what distinguishes Tragedy from other dramatic forms, such as Spectacle. It was in this moment that he created a new branch of Philosophy which we call 'Aesthetics.'

Our purpose is to provide a source book of representative descriptions of actual performances, observations by philosophers, poets and other commentators which contribute insights to our understanding of what music meant to listeners during the early Renaissance. It is for this reason that when discussing contemporary treatises on music that we concentrate on those passages which offer insights relative to the aesthetics of music and musical performance rather than the usual technical subjects such as scales, modes and counterpoint which fill most books on Renaissance music.

Since traditional musicology has focused almost exclusively on sacred and secular vocal music of the Renaissance, we have also

included numerous references which we hope will reveal a much wider world of music during this period.

We are also interested in contemporary views on the physiology of knowing, especially with regard to the relationship of the senses and Reason, and related psychological ideas, such as Pleasure and Pain and the Emotions, which might offer a frame of reference for their perspective on the perception of music.

This is the sixth volume in a series of eight, ranging from the music of the ancient civilizations through the Baroque Period.

David Whitwell  
Austin, Texas

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This new edition would not have been possible without the encouragement and help of Craig Dabelstein of Brisbane, Australia. His experience as a musician and educator himself has contributed greatly to his expertise as editor of this volume.

David Whitwell  
Austin, 2013



# 1 THE MUSICAL SCENE IN ITALY

ITALY WAS STILL NOT ITALY.<sup>1</sup> One of Europe's oldest civilizations remained, since the fall of the Roman Empire, a series of individual kingdoms, principalities, duchies, city-republics and the land controlled by the pope. Spain, Austria, France, and the popes kept the peninsula in a continual life of conflict. That out of this had come the Renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is a tribute to the power of art.

One is tempted to suppose that, after the extraordinary leadership of Italy in the arts during the Renaissance, she needed a period of rest. A more objective view might see the influence of a colder intellectual climate caused by the Church after the Council of Trent.<sup>2</sup> This is most apparent in painting, where nudes were no longer allowed and only the fervent pleas of a group of artists prevented the Pope Clement VIII from having Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* completely painted over. In music, the noble patrons turned to entertainment and great numbers of distinguished musicians left for other countries, making Italian music important everywhere except in Italy.

## MUSIC OF THE COURT

Those musicians who remained in Italy found themselves domestic servants to an aristocracy (including the nobles of the Church) which preferred to be entertained to being moved. Even Monteverdi, a genius who clearly saw the future of music, spent much of his life working for nobles incapable of appreciating his ability. In one letter he complains that due to the pressure of composing music for a court wedding,

I have had a frightful pain in my head and so terrible and violent an itching around my waist, that neither by cauteries which I have had applied to myself, nor by purges taken orally, nor by blood-letting and other potent remedies has it so far been possible to get even partly better. My father attributes the cause of the headache to mental strain.

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1 Our purpose here is not an attempt to summarize the development of Baroque music itself in Italy, and its composers, but rather to present a brief overview of the environment in which the music was performed and its general aesthetic nature. At the same time, we take the opportunity to include important material not found in general music history texts.

2 The Inquisition remained a fearful part of the conservative Church climate. Monteverdi, in his letters, writes of having to go to great lengths to have his son (a doctor of medicine!) released from prison for having read a book which he did not realize was on the prohibited list.

Further, he complains, that after suffering from cold, lack of clothing, servitude, and very nearly lack of food, at the wedding His Highness failed to compliment his work before the noble guests. Nevertheless, he concludes the letter 'I bow and kiss your hands.'<sup>3</sup>

Pressed to compose music for a court allegorical pageant, he wearily wrote a Mantuan court official, 'how can I, by such means, move the passions?'<sup>4</sup>

In such an environment, the composer takes his joy where he can find it. Monteverdi wrote the music for an allegorical tournament celebrating the marriage of Duke Odoardo Farnese of Parma and Margherita de' Medici of Florence in 1628 and even he must have been pleased with a moment described by one eyewitness.

As soon as Signora Settimia, representing Aurora, began to sing, all conversation among the spectators ceased ... All ears were so consoled by the sweetness of the voice and the divine quality of the song, that among the 10,000 people seated in the theater, there was no one ... who did not grow tender at the trills, sigh at the sighs, become ecstatic at the ornaments, and who was not stupefied and transfixed by the miraculous beauty and song of an heavenly siren.<sup>5</sup>

During the first part of the seventeenth century many court entertainments were of the allegorical type we associate with the sixteenth century, which only reminds us that, except for opera, most musical traditions passed into the seventeenth century unmindful that the Baroque Period had arrived. Such an entertainment, a large-scale allegorical ballet, was given by the 'Most Serene Infantas of Savoy, in honor of Madame of France,' at the court in Turin in 1620.<sup>6</sup> An eyewitness reports that the evening began with a lavish banquet with music.

These gastronomic pleasures were further enhanced by the sweetness of the music, which gave nourishment to the ears and filled the souls of those present with contentment.

This banquet concluded at midnight! Following a trumpet fanfare,

The entire cloth was seen to disappear in a flash behind the clouds, revealing all at once such a quantity of wonderful and admirable things that many of those present were lost in amazement. In the first place, the scene depicted a parched Alpine mountain, with crags vegetated by nothing but a few nettles and briars among the cracks and stiff, unyielding and discolored grass. At the top of this mountain, the Temple of Glory shone out with brightest rays; this was made in crystal with columns of gold. In the middle, the Most Serene Infantas Maria and Caterina could be seen with twelve of their ladies dressed as queens. At the foot, in the middle, Toil wielded his bludgeon, striking down lions, serpents, wild boars and sundry other beasts; at the base of

3 Letter to Annibale Chieppio (December 2, 1608), quoted in Claudio Monteverdi, *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi*, trans. Denis Stevens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 57ff.

4 Ibid., 115ff.

5 Quoted in Tim Carter, 'The North Italian Courts,' in *The Early Baroque Era* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1994), 39.

6 This description is found in Lorenzo Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. David Bryant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 271ff.



the mountain, Love, Indolence, Oblivion, Sloth, Slumber, Gluttony, Sin and Pleasure sleepily and lazily kept watch.

Now, Toil sang a madrigal.

He who treads the flowery path  
Of tyrant pleasure  
Finally will wretched fall,  
Deceived, in the bottomless pit of everlasting loss ...

Following this song, the Sins began a ballet.

The cornetts and trombones took up a broken melody with artfully contrived retardations, to which rhythm the Sins recommenced their ballet ... in perfect measure and in such perfect time as to leave an indelible impression on the minds of those present.

Now Heroic Virtue sang a song, followed with another song by Apollo. Next the Muses 'added their full chorus of voices' prior to an appearance of the Poets and another ballet.

To the sound of a grave and dramatic harmony they formed a most graceful ballet with unsurpassable elegance and design.

Following the ballet and a song by Glory, the temple of Glory was slowly exposed from inside the mountain. Suddenly an arch rose, upon which were seated Victory, Fame and Honor. Now, holding her scepter, Glory sang again,

Go forth, ye who earned,  
On the path of toil,  
The laurels of Glory ...

After an hour, the ballet concluded with 'a most beautiful ballet of forty figures,' to the music of violins, followed by all the singers and instrumentalists joining together for 'a melody of extraordinary sweetness.' The ballet was over, but not the dancing. The violins remained to play branles 'and other favorite dances for the pleasure of the ladies and gentlemen present.'

Among the entertainments popular among the aristocracy in seventeenth-century Italy were the horse ballets, which also spread to Germany as 'Ross Ballet' and to France as 'Carrousel.' These entertainments evolved as a replacement for the earlier tournaments, which had become too dangerous after the invention of firearms. Typically these horse ballets were given in the central plaza of the city, with great tiers of benches forming a stadium of sorts. There was usually a central allegorical theme (such as the early 'War of Love' in 1615 in Florence), large constructed floats and military troops arranged in symmetrical formations.

For one of these events in 1628, Monteverdi had to set a thousand lines of text to music. He confesses in a letter that when he could no longer find ‘emotional variety, I tried to change the instrumentation.’<sup>7</sup> The music most often consisted of the aristocratic trumpet and timpani corps, but since their repertoire was memorized little has survived.

There was also a curious military relationship with these horse ballets, for in the previous centuries the problem of the organization and movement of large movements of troops had evolved into theories of complicated geometric patterns as the basis of attack and defense. Consequently Baroque military treatises often chart their formations on the basis of choreographic principles rather than from purely strategic logic. An example is Möller’s *Trilekunst zu Fuss* (Lübeck, 1672) which recommends for the defense of Lübeck the placing of the troops in a configuration resembling the coat-of-arms of the city!<sup>8</sup>

In Venice, instead of the horse ballets the public saw great water pageants sponsored by the aristocracy. In 1685, for example, a great naval ‘battle’ was given in honor of the visiting Duke of Brunswick. This ‘battle’ was fought between Venetian and Turkish galleys, with the former achieving a glorious victory. The musicians are described as 24 trumpets, oboes, drums and 36 singers.<sup>9</sup> The visiting Englishman, John Evelyn, observed the annual water procession on Ascension Day in 1645 and recalls,

innumerable Gallys, Gundolas, & boates filled with Spectators, some dressed in Masqurade, Trumpets, musique & Canons, filling the whole aire with din.<sup>10</sup>

Monteverdi in a letter of 1627 mentions such a procession to celebrate a naval victory during which ‘solemn music’ was sung.<sup>11</sup>

Continuing the Renaissance custom, many nobles continued to maintain high quality musical establishments. An extant letter of Monteverdi reveals that he had been instructed by the court at Mantua to lure away a five-member wind band currently employed by the Spanish governor of Milan. Monteverdi describes their abilities, indicating they do equally well in functional and concert music, and makes recommendations regarding their salary.<sup>12</sup> We get a glimpse of the range of duties for such a wind band in a letter several years later, when Monteverdi is again commissioned to find a player. Monteverdi, in reporting on his conversation with a prospective player, says he told him,

If His Highness the Prince were pleased to take you on, this gentleman very much likes not only to hear a variety of wind instruments, he also likes to have the said musicians play in private,

7 Letter to Alessandro Striggio (February 4, 1628), quoted in Monteverdi, *The Letters*, 390.

8 Paul Nettl, ‘Equestrian Ballets of the Baroque Period,’ *The Musical Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (Jan, 1933): 74, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/738825>. One can see examples of these figures in Machiavelli’s *The Art of War*.

9 Pompeo Molmenti, *Venice* (London, 1908), I, iii, 198.

10 John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn* (Oxford, 1955), II, 432.

11 Letter to Enzo Bentivoglio (September 25, 1627), quoted in Monteverdi, *The Letters*, 370.

12 Letter to Alessandro Striggio (August 24, 1609), *Ibid.*, 64.



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DR. DAVID WHITWELL is a graduate ('with distinction') of the University of Michigan and the Catholic University of America, Washington DC (PhD, Musicology, Distinguished Alumni Award, 2000) and has studied conducting with Eugene Ormandy and at the Akademie fur Musik, Vienna. Prior to coming to Northridge, Dr. Whitwell participated in concerts throughout the United States and Asia as Associate First Horn in the USAF Band and Orchestra in Washington DC, and in recitals throughout South America in cooperation with the United States State Department.

At the California State University, Northridge, which is in Los Angeles, Dr. Whitwell developed the CSUN Wind Ensemble into an ensemble of international reputation, with international tours to Europe in 1981 and 1989 and to Japan in 1984. The CSUN Wind Ensemble has made professional studio recordings for BBC (London), the Koln Westdeutscher Rundfunk (Germany), NOS National Radio (The Netherlands), Zurich Radio (Switzerland), the Television Broadcasting System (Japan) as well as for the United States State Department for broadcast on its 'Voice of America' program. The CSUN Wind Ensemble's recording with the Mirecourt Trio in 1982 was named the 'Record of the Year' by The Village Voice. Composers who have guest conducted Whitwell's ensembles include Aaron Copland, Ernest Krenek, Alan Hovhaness, Morton Gould, Karel Husa, Frank Erickson and Vaclav Nelhybel.

Dr. Whitwell has been a guest professor in 100 different universities and conservatories throughout the United States and in 23 foreign countries (most recently in China, in an elite school housed in the Forbidden City). Guest conducting experiences have included the Philadelphia Orchestra, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, the Czech Radio Orchestras of Brno and Bratislava, The National Youth Orchestra of Israel, as well as resident wind ensembles in Russia, Israel, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, England, Wales, The Netherlands, Portugal, Peru, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Canada and the United States.

He is a past president of the College Band Directors National Association, a member of the Prasidium of the International Society for the Promotion of Band Music, and was a member of the found-



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Dr. Whitwell's publications include more than 127 articles on wind literature including publications in *Music and Letters* (London), the *London Musical Times*, the *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (Salzburg), and 39 books, among which is his 13-volume *History and Literature of the Wind Band and Wind Ensemble* and an 8-volume series on *Aesthetics in Music*. In addition to numerous modern editions of early wind band music his original compositions include 5 symphonies.

David Whitwell was named as one of six men who have determined the course of American bands during the second half of the 20th century, in the definitive history, *The Twentieth Century American Wind Band* (Meredith Music).

A doctoral dissertation by German Gonzales (2007, Arizona State University) is dedicated to the life and conducting career of David Whitwell through the year 1977. David Whitwell is one of nine men described by Paula A. Crider in *The Conductor's Legacy* (Chicago: GIA, 2010) as 'the legendary conductors' of the 20th century.

'I can't imagine the 2nd half of the 20th century—without David Whitwell and what he has given to all of the rest of us.' Frederick Fennell (1993)

# ABOUT THE EDITOR

CRAIG DABELSTEIN began studying the piano at age seven and took up the saxophone at age twelve. Mr Dabelstein has Bachelor of Arts (Music) and Bachelor of Music degrees from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, where he majored in the performance of classical saxophone repertoire. He also has a Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching and a Graduate Certificate in Editing and Publishing from the University of Southern Queensland.

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Craig Dabelstein is a research associate for the *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band* series of books, contributing analyses to volumes 7, 8, 1 (rev. edn), and the *Solos with Wind Band Accompaniment* volume. He served as the copyeditor and layout designer of the *Australian Clarinet and Saxophone Magazine* from 2007 to 2009 and he has written many CD and book reviews for *Music Forum* magazine. He is the editor of the second editions of the books by Dr. David Whitwell including *A Concise History of the Wind Band*, *Foundations of Music Education*, *Music Education of the Future*, *The Sousa Oral History Project*, *Wagner on Bands*, *Berlioz on Bands*, *The Art of Musical Conducting*, and the *Aesthetics of Music* series (8 volumes) and *The History and Literature of the Wind Band and Wind Ensemble* series (13 volumes). From 1994 to 2012 he was a staff member at Brisbane Girls Grammar School. He now teaches woodwinds and conducts bands at St. Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace, Brisbane, Australia.

