

Thematic Dossier **Recent Research on Iberian Polyphony c.1500: Music, Composers, Sources, and Transmission**

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THIS DOSSIER IS THE FIRST COLLECTIVE OUTPUT of the project *The Anatomy of Late 15th- and Early 16th-Century Iberian Polyphonic Music*, directed by João Pedro d'Alvarenga. It started in June 2016, based at CESEM at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa.¹

The background context for this project was the realization of the large extent to which the time-honoured centre/periphery discourse dominates the narrative regarding music around 1500. For traditions considered peripheral—and that definition includes early Iberian polyphonic repertoires—this manifests itself in two main interrelated phenomena. On the one hand, these repertoires are barely acknowledged for their intrinsic technical and aesthetic value, owing largely to the fact that they are not seen on the surface to comply with centric models. The inevitable hierarchical stance that the centre/periphery dynamics engenders has led to a view that they are, at best, emulations of cultural products transplanted from other European centres rather than legitimate cultural elaborations blending both local and foreign influences. This is heightened by the tendency of Western music historiography—admittedly a construct of long-established scholarly traditions—to emphasise national trends and anachronistically impose national frameworks. On the other hand, and surely as a consequence of the lesser interest that non-canonical traditions attract, they remain inadequately known and under-contextualized, especially beyond their geographical and cultural reach. This creates a paradoxical circular loop, which results in the repertoires' misrepresentation in, or even absence from, the general historical discourses on Western Music.

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In the last decades, however, the validity of narratives resulting from the centre/periphery dichotomy has been challenged, resulting in initiatives aiming at producing a more balanced account of Western music. In 1993, in his pioneering *The Rise of European Music*, Reinhard Strohm suggested that the international language of the fifteenth century could only be described through an integrated view of the various European musical traditions. His proposal acknowledged the operation of 'central' and 'lateral' traditions (the labels now devoid of value judgement), but he considered them as fluid categories, especially as they need to be understood within a polycentric system (in which the quality of central and lateral might be even upended depending on the context). More crucially, Strohm's understanding of the international style was one confirmed by the interactions of the different traditions through the multifarious processes of the creation and distribution of music.²

Similar tenets were applied to the study of Iberian music in the ground-breaking project *Musical Exchanges, 1100-1650: The Circulation of Early Music in Europe and Overseas in Iberian and Iberian-related Sources*, directed by Manuel Pedro Ferreira (also conducted at CESEM, in 2010-13).³ This integrative approach has successfully evidenced the crucial role of local and regional realities within the dynamics of international circulation and stylistic exchange of repertoires.

More recently, the latest instalment of the *Cambridge History of Music* series devoted to the fifteenth century has adopted this same approach. For the volume's editors (Anna Maria Busse Berger and Jesse Rodin) the international musical style of the fifteenth century is currently being 'defined more broadly than ever before. As several essays in this volume attest, many so-called peripheral areas are turning out to have been important centers in their own right'.⁴

It is then crucial that lateral traditions be properly studied and understood, so as to improve the accuracy of our definition of the international style—a need stated by Strohm, who appealed to scholars to 'concentrate on researching the traditions which earlier neglect has tended to marginalize'.⁵ Therefore, by venturing on a comprehensive study of the existing Iberian polyphonic repertoires from the period around 1500, the *Anatomy* project is addressing a critical gap. We aim at furthering the accessibility of this repertory through the dissemination of the research results in

² Reinhard STROHM, *The Rise of European Music, 1380-1500* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993).

³ The *Musical Exchanges* project (PTDC/EAT-MMU/105624/2008) produced a number of significant outputs, one of which, the *Portuguese Early Music Database* at <<http://pemdatabase.eu/>> has established itself as a landmark online resource.

⁴ Anna Maria BUSSE BERGER and Jesse RODIN, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of Fifteenth-Century Music*, edited by Anna Maria Busse Berger and Jesse Rodin (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 1-18, at p. 3.

⁵ Reinhard STROHM, 'The "Rise of European Music" and the Rights of Others', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 121 (1996), pp. 1-10, at p. 10.

various publications (beginning with this dossier), and also through a forthcoming online open repository of critical editions of extant early Iberian polyphony, the *Archive of Iberian Polyphony*.⁶

The articles presented here show some results of the systematic re-examination of the repertory carried out in the project, including the reassessment of sources and the circulation of music, reconsideration of composers' careers and style, and a fresh look at the establishment of central/local dynamics within the Iberian repertory.

As regards music sources, Alvarenga ('On the Transmission') sheds light on the complex mechanisms of circulation and preservation of music in Iberian sources, whereby the later Portuguese sources happen to transmit more faithful renditions of the music than their earlier Spanish counterparts. Nelson ('From Anchieta to Guerrero') also draws on the transmission of Spanish music into Portuguese manuscripts. She tackles the case of the *Salve Regina* and shows how the genre developed in the early decades of the sixteenth century by considering the example of Spanish settings surviving in Portuguese sources. Raimundo ('The Dating of the *Cancioneiro de Paris*') focuses on a lesser-known Portuguese songbook, which retrospectively transmit early *villancicos*. His study allows us to grasp the evolution of the genre.

The papers tackling composers take advantage of recently unearthed contextual material in an attempt to clarify the composers' standing. Wagstaff ('Re-Examining Pedro Fernández de Castilleja Again') traces the profile of Pedro Fernández de Castilleja against a backdrop of evidence that his stature in Seville Cathedral was greater than previously thought. Knighton ('The Polyphonic Songs') proposes new hypotheses for the career of Pedro de Escobar by a close reading of his secular music. In doing so, she tries to fill in the gaps in the composer's biography, now that it is proved that he is different from the composer Pedro de Porto and, consequently, only seven years of his career are now known about. Rodríguez-García ('What did the Composer Antonio de Ribera Learn') looks at Antonio de Ribera's music in search for influences from the composer Alonso Pérez de Alba and the whole tradition of Seville cathedral. This follows new information that records Ribera as a young singer at Seville Cathedral when Alba was chapelmaster there.

Whereas most of the previous articles confirm the pervading influence that Spanish music had on Portugal particularly in the early decades of the sixteenth century, two papers deal with cases where Portuguese music became the central tradition. This realization is crucial, as it overturns current views on the rapports between Portuguese and Spanish music. Alvarenga ('Textual and Chant Traditions') looks at what is considered the oldest extant polyphonic piece from the Portuguese Royal Chapel, the context of which shows traits of a practice independent of Spanish

⁶ Soon available at <<https://iberianpolyphony.fcsh.unl.pt>>.

influence; Raimundo ('Two Unnoticed Portuguese *villancicos*') describes an example of the currency that two Portuguese *villancicos* had in the Spanish and Italian worlds.

All these contributions have benefited from collegiality, sharing of ideas and discussion within the *Anatomy* project's team of researchers and consultants, to whom we would like to express our heartfelt thanks. They all developed from conference papers presented in 2017 (*Open Symposium on Late 15th- and Early 16th-Century Iberian Polyphonic Music*, Lisbon, Portugal, 6 January 2017; *45th MedRen – Medieval and Renaissance Music Conference*, Prague, Czech Republic, 6 July 2017; *ENIM 2017 – 7th Conference on Musical Research*, Braga, Portugal, 10 November 2017) and 2018 (*International Conference 'The Anatomy of Polyphonic Music around 1500'*, Cascais, Portugal, 27-30 July 2018). Each one is a piece of a puzzle we intend to help putting together.