

THE WELL ENCHANTING SKILL

Music, Poetry, and Drama in the Culture
of the Renaissance

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF

F. W. STERNFELD

EDITED BY

JOHN CALDWELL

EDWARD OLLESON, AND
SUSAN WOLLENBERG



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F. W. Sternfeld
(*photograph by Françoise Legrand*)

Foreword

by Sir Michael Tippett

I have known Fred Sternfeld for a long time; indeed, I can't remember precisely when, why or how we first met. I am not a scholar, so it could not have been in relation to anything covered, for instance, by the essays in this symposium.

It must have been due solely to Fred's interest in what living composers were up to: also, to his duties in the Faculty of Music at Oxford. From meeting younger generations of performers and conductors, I've indeed realized what a charismatic figure he was in his university teaching days. There is no doubt that he passed on to all his students a rare erudition, which nevertheless treated the music of all periods as something living and vital.

When I was free, I myself used to go to Oxford, at his request, to attend performances of my music and answer questions from students and others, generally in the Holywell Music Room. I came to know this room very well and feel an affection for it, because of its association with Fred. I developed a great fondness, as well as esteem, for Fred as my guide on these occasions. Generally, we would relax afterwards in the warm hospitality of his home with his wife Sophia, without whose company my visit could not have been complete.

Here I learnt what the three themes were which brought Fred and myself ever closer: opera, Shakespeare and Goethe. Fred seemed to know it all. Even in my own workroom, if I wanted help over something from Goethe, I would receive the answer simply at the touch of the telephone. I have only known now—from Sophia, I think—that Fred has total recall: from a mind stacked with experience and knowledge. Goethe was the subject of his doctoral thesis at Yale University. Much later, in the prime of his scholarship he turned to Shakespeare and music. But the *magnum opus* of his mastery will surely be his book on the origins of opera. It was heartbreaking when eye troubles seemed to make the completion of the book unlikely.

My dear Fred, now that the danger is set aside, at least to some extent, please use all your time and faculties to continue it to the end. This is what all the contributors to this collection of essays in your honour would wish. It is what close friends like myself would wish. It is certainly what Sophia would wish.

To be formal, Frederick W. Sternfeld is honoured through the essays in this book because he has been the contributor in person to so many friends, colleagues and students. Here, we find scholarship herself emulating the achievements of the man.

February 1989

Michael Tippett

Preface

A Festschrift is a slightly un-English phenomenon; and for all Fred Sternfeld's acquired and deeply treasured Englishness it is his cosmopolitan nature that has enlivened the study of opera, of English music and poetry, and of much else besides, in the University of Oxford during the past 30 years and more. Rarely has a candidate for this form of scholarly approbation been more obviously worthy of it, as the distinction of our contributors shows. The idea of this collection of essays has been a long time in the gestation, an inevitable feature of modern academic life. But here it is at last, and happily coinciding with a new peak in the creativity of its dedicatee.

To cover all of Fred's multifarious interests in a single volume would have been quite impossible. A glance at Peter Ward Jones's Bibliography will show how widely they range. Goethe, film music and James Joyce are amongst those represented in his earlier published work and never finally relinquished. The connecting threads in a lifetime of musical scholarship are drama, poetry, England and the Renaissance. They have come together most impressively in his work on Shakespeare and on opera, and especially in recent years on early opera and its precursors, the subject of a forthcoming book. But no catalogue of his scholarly concerns could do justice to the breadth of his mind, an inspiration to generations of undergraduates, research students, and fellow teachers. The subject matter of the present volume has been deliberately limited to the sphere of the Italian Renaissance, and to English music, poetry, and drama of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries — two areas in which Fred Sternfeld has left a special mark. This has meant the inevitable exclusion of many who would have liked to join us in paying tribute to him now, but without some such limitation no single publication would have sufficed.

Fred was born in Vienna on 25th September 1914—just after the chain of events that ushered in the modern world had been set in motion. But his formative years were spent in the relative stability of the post-War city; he received a classics-based *Gymnasium* education, and from 1933 he studied at the University with Robert Lach and Egon Wellesz. He also spent some time in England, studying with Dent in Cambridge. His recollections of what must have been increasingly difficult years are recounted without bitterness—they are of singing under Strauss, of swimming the lakes and climbing the mountains of his native Austria.

But in 1938 he emigrated to the USA, where he completed his doctorate on Goethe and Music under Schrade at Yale (1943); he taught at the Wesleyan University, Middletown (Conn.) from 1940 to 1946 and at Dartmouth

College, Hanover (New Hampshire) from 1946 to 1956. While at Dartmouth he taught not only music but also mathematics (to naval cadets). There he continued to pursue his remarkable range of musical interests, including a lifelong interest in modern music, but there was a decisive turn towards the study of the Renaissance and of music in Shakespearian drama. In 1948 he founded the journal *Renaissance News* which he edited until 1954.

In 1956 Fred came to England with Sophia and took up a University Lecturership at Oxford with, from 1965, a Fellowship at Exeter College; in 1972 he became Reader in the History of Music, from which he retired in 1981. To England he brought not only his wealth of scholarship but also that strong yet subtle English idiom which endeared him to so many and has proved such an effective medium in his teaching. The stream of publications continued unabated and has earned him international respect. As lecturer, tutor and supervisor he is remembered with special affection. Never, it seems, does he forget a pupil; and many who were not, formally, his pupils have been, as it were, adopted and given like support and encouragement. His lecturing, for example on Wagner's *Tristan* or Verdi's *Otello*, frequently attracted outsiders, filling the Music Faculty's lecture-rooms to capacity; and he has always been in demand as a speaker outside the Faculty, not only at international musicological events but at meetings of undergraduate clubs and learned societies to speak on all sorts of aspects of music and German, Italian or English literature. His long-lasting seminar for postgraduate students has introduced many to the disciplines of scholarship and has won him lifelong friendships.

It is difficult to imagine what English musical thinking would have been like during the last 30 years without Fred Sternfeld. Our Foreword illustrates one aspect of his wide-ranging attachments and his unassuming interest in the making of modern opera. He is a superbly knowledgeable connoisseur of that demanding art-form, bringing to bear on it not only his profound musical insight but his imaginative understanding of theatrical craft. He is both a severe critic of professional performances and a sympathetic encourager of student enterprises, knowing instinctively what can legitimately be expected at all levels. It is a rare conversation with him that does not at some point touch on Peri, or Monteverdi, or Gluck, or Mozart, Wagner, Verdi, Stravinsky or Tippett. If not that, then perhaps Ovid, Poliziano, Goethe or Stoppard. All this he has combined with devotion to research and an unflinching willingness to edit, to serve on committees, and generally to oil the wheels of scholarship.

We offer these essays in esteem and affection, wishing their recipient on his 75th birthday many more such productive years as those that have passed.

John Caldwell
Edward Olleson
Susan Wollenberg

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I
*Music, Theatre, and Text in the
Italian Renaissance*

I

A Typology of Francesco Corteccia's Madrigals: *Notes towards a History of Theatrical Music in Sixteenth-Century Italy*

Howard Mayer Brown

IN spite of extensive preliminary studies by scholars such as Alessandro D'Ancona, Angelo Solerti, Federico Ghisi, Wolfgang Osthoff, Nino Pirrotta and, not least, Frederick Sternfeld, the history of music in the Italian theatre of the sixteenth century remains to be written.¹ Such a history will not be easy to write because of the daunting richness and diversity of the material to be studied, and because of the difficult bibliographical problems that need to be faced. In the first place, the historian of the Italian Renaissance theatre must account for differing conventions in a number of written genres: farce, comedy, tragedy, pastoral, sacred plays and so on, and he must in addition attempt the even more difficult task of assessing the role of music in the ephemeral activities of the various sixteenth-century *commedia dell'arte* troupes.² Moreover, many of the songs mentioned in the play texts themselves come from a repertory different from that played and sung between

¹ Alessandro D'Ancona, *Le origini del teatro italiano*, 2nd edn., Turin, 1891; Angelo Solerti, *Musica, ballo e drammatica alla corte medicea dal 1600 al 1637*, Florence, 1905; Federico Ghisi, *Feste musicali della Firenze medicea (1480-1589)*, Florence, 1939 (repr. 1969); Wolfgang Osthoff, *Theatergesang und darstellende Musik in der italienischen Renaissance (15. und 16. Jahrhundert)*, Tutzing, 1969; Nino Pirrotta & Elena Povoledo, *Li due Orfei. Da Poliziano a Monteverdi*, Turin, 1969 (rev. & trans. Karen Eales as *Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi*, Cambridge, 1969); Frederick W. Sternfeld, 'Aspects of Italian Intermedi and Early Operas', *Convivium musicorum: Festschrift Wolfgang Boetticher*, ed. H. Hüschen & D. R. Moser, Berlin, 1974, pp. 367-71; idem, 'The Birth of Opera: Ovid, Poliziano and the *lieto fine*', *Analecta musicologica*, xix (1979), 30 ff.

² See Marvin T. Herrick, *Italian Comedy in the Renaissance*, Urbana, 1960; idem, *Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century*, Urbana, 1964; idem, *Italian Tragedy in the Renaissance*, Urbana, 1965.

the acts as *intermedi*.³ And the concept of 'theatrical music' must be defined broadly enough to encompass compositions performed at entertainments that took place not within the playhouse (or, more accurately, in rooms turned into theatres), but rather out of doors or in palaces or assembly rooms when plays were not being offered. That is, a history of Italian theatrical music will need to account for compositions commissioned and performed in connection with banquets, processions and mythological tableaux, performed in the streets, in palace courtyards, on rivers and in other outdoor locations, and intended for the entertainment of distinguished guests, the celebration of important events in the history of ruling families and for a variety of other kinds of civic, courtly and state occasions.⁴

The bibliographical difficulties in writing such a history will be immense, if only because the surviving play texts and the accounts of dramatic performances list and describe so much music that no longer exists, and because so much theatrical music hidden among the works of the madrigalists cannot be associated with particular events. The knowledge of so much dramatic music now lost should, of course, be used as evidence in evaluating the past, for we have more information about the proportion of surviving to lost compositions intended for Italian dramatic occasions than for almost any other repertory of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The extant music commissioned for and first performed at unidentified (and probably unidentifiable) theatrical events has hardly been studied at all, perhaps because to do so involves more speculation and hypothesis than scholars feel they should indulge in. The fact remains, however, that we need to sift through the works of all the madrigalists to try to distinguish compositions written for dramatic occasions from the rest before we can begin to assess the character and extent of theatrical music in the Renaissance, a task I wish to begin in this essay by considering the kinds of madrigals Francesco Corteccia wrote and by attempting to identify those most likely to have been composed for dramatic or political occasions.

The secular music of Corteccia forms an ideal repertory for a study of the social uses of the sixteenth-century madrigal, if only because the composer spent his entire life in Florence and seems to have enjoyed particularly close

³ On the music performed in the plays themselves see Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre*, pp. 76–119. On *intermedi* see Nino Pirrotta, 'Intermedium', *MGG*, vi. 1310–26; Elena Polvoledo, 'Intermezzo: Dalle origini al secolo XVIII, Italia', *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*, vi. 572–6; and David Nutter, 'Intermedio', *The New Grove*, ix. 258–69.

⁴ On Florentine (and other) dramatic entertainments of various kinds, see *Les Fêtes de la Renaissance*, ed. Jean Jacquot, Paris, 1954–75, esp. Michel Plaisance, 'La Politique culturelle de Côme I^{er} et les fêtes annuelles à Florence de 1541 à 1550', iii. 133–52; A. M. Nagler, *Theatre Festivals of the Medici, 1539–1637*, New Haven, 1964; *Il luogo teatrale a Firenze . . . Firenze, Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Museo Mediceo, 31 maggio/31 ottobre 1975* (exhibition catalogue), ed. Mario Fabbri, Elvira Garbero Zorzi & Anna Maria Petrioli Tofani ('Spettacolo e musica nella Firenze Medicea, Documenti e restituzioni', i), Milan, 1975; and *Il potere e lo spazio. La scena del principe: Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del Cinquecento* (exhibition catalogue), Milan, 1980.

ties with the ruling Medici family, especially Duke Cosimo I.⁵ Corteccia seems to have produced compositions regularly for the Florentine State from the 1530s onwards.⁶ As a member of the Florentine Academy and the *de facto* official composer to the Medici he is the very model of a musical courtier, and thus more committed than most of his contemporaries to the composition of dramatic and political music, genres more closely related to one another in sixteenth-century Italy than in many other periods. Moreover, there seems no reason to challenge Alfred Einstein's speculation that Corteccia took unusual pains to prepare the publication of his own madrigals.⁷ He reissued his first volume of madrigals *a 4* (published originally in 1544) in 1547, the same year that saw the publication of a second volume along with his only book of madrigals *a 5* and *a 6*.⁸ Although his music was confused with that by Arcadelt in anthologies of the 1530s and 1540s, few of his madrigals not included in the three volumes he edited were ever published.⁹ Thus virtually the entire corpus of his surviving secular music appeared in print in 1547, when he was about 45 years old. That fact, too, simplifies the study of the composer's intentions with regard to his music, for it focuses the attention narrowly on a particular time and place: Florence from the restoration of the Medici in 1530—and especially

⁵ See Mario Fabbri, 'La vita e l'ignota opera-prima di Francesco Corteccia musicista italiano del Rinascimento', *Chigiana*, n.s. 2, xxii. (1965), 185–217.

⁶ See Alfred Einstein, *The Italian Madrigal*, trans. Alexander H. Krappe, Roger H. Sessions & Oliver Strunk, Princeton, 1949, i. 278–88. Einstein surely exaggerates in claiming (p. 283) that the theatrical pieces are altogether different from the madrigals proper, implying that they are all artless, homophonic and cut up by rests in all the voices. For the music of the Florentine courtly *intermedi* of 1539 with music by Corteccia see note 10 below. On the music for the courtly *intermedi* in Florence in 1565, with music by Corteccia which no longer survives, see Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre*, pp. 176–82.

⁷ *The Italian Madrigal*, i. 276, 278.

⁸ Modern edition in *Music of the Florentine Renaissance*, ed. Frank A. D'Accone ('Corpus mensurabilis musicae', xxxii), viii–x: *Francesco Corteccia: Collected Secular Works*, American Institute of Musicology, 1981. Madrigals are referred to hereafter by volume and by item within the volume: I = First Book *a 4*; II = Second Book *a 4*; III = Third Book *a 5* & *a 6*.

⁹ On the madrigals attributed to Arcadelt and others that Corteccia published in his three volumes see D'Accone in Corteccia, *Secular Works*, I, p. xiii. For madrigals that have at least one attribution to Corteccia but do not appear in any of his three books see *The Anthologies of Black-Note Madrigals*, ed. Don Harrán ('Corpus mensurabilis musicae', lxxiii), American Institute of Musicology, 1978–80: 'Con lei fuss'io', *sestina* plus *envoi* by Petrarch (I/2, No. 36); 'Donna vostra beltà', *ottava rima* (I/2, No. 33); 'Non ved'hoggi', canzone-madrigal, probably by Pietro Bracharaio (I/2, No. 29); 'Perche la vita e breve', incomplete canzone by Petrarch (I/2, No. 31); 'Se per honesti preghi', madrigal (II, No. 9); and 'Vivace fianna che con dubbia speme', ballata-madrigal (I/2, No. 30). 'Alma perche si trist', attributed both to Arcadelt and to Corteccia (but not in any of Corteccia's own volumes) is in Jacques Arcadelt, *Opera omnia*, ed. Albert Seay ('Corpus mensurabilis musicae', xxxi), II (American Institute of Musicology, 1970), No. 3. 'Oyme mort'e il bel viso' is attributed to Corteccia in *RISM* 1541/15, No. 30, but does not appear in any of his three books. I have found no madrigals by Corteccia using musical material from settings of the same texts by other composers, but this is a subject that needs further study.

after Cosimo's accession to power in 1537—to 1547, the year in which Corteccia's madrigals came off the presses in Venice.

Two cycles of theatrical music are well known among Corteccia's works: the seven madrigals on poems by Giovambattista Strozzi used as *intermedi* for a performance of Antonio Landi's *Il Commodo* given as a part of the celebrations in 1539 for the wedding of Cosimo I to Eleonora of Toledo,¹⁰ and the five madrigals on poems by Ugolino Martelli intended for a performance of Francesco d'Ambra's *Il Furto* by the Accademia Fiorentina in 1544.¹¹ In addition, the booklet issued to commemorate the events of 1539 also includes the compositions by Corteccia and others for the entrance of Eleonora into Florence and for the couple's bridal banquet.¹² The two sets of madrigals for comedies exemplify the two most important kinds of early sixteenth-century *intermedi*: in the first place the aulic or courtly *intermedi* (to borrow Pirrotta's term), presented with elaborate costumes and stage machinery, each tableau sung and played by a different group of often mythological characters, the sort of *intermedi* mounted only for very special occasions of state; and in the second place the simpler *intermedi* performed between the acts of virtually every learned comedy from the 1520s onwards, straightforward cycles of madrigals presumably sung by the same group of musicians at the end of each act.¹³ It is altogether characteristic of the two types that for the one a souvenir booklet was issued to describe the events in detail and to give Corteccia's music, and that for the other no evidence at all survives in any of the texts of the plays to indicate that such a performance took place. We know about it only from the madrigal books themselves.

Whereas much attention has been paid to the elaborate courtly *intermedi*, the rather more frequently performed sets of madrigals intended for normal comedies have been relatively neglected in scholarly literature, doubtless at least in part because they are so ephemeral and so difficult to identify. Besides those for *Il Furto*, we know of three incomplete sets of madrigals written for comedies in the first half of the sixteenth century: those composed presumably by Verdelot for two of Machiavelli's plays, *La Clizia* and *La Mandragola* (two of the four surviving madrigals are the same for both plays), and a cycle of four madrigals by Arcadelt identified through the

¹⁰ The festivities are discussed in detail and all the music is given in *A Renaissance Entertainment*, ed. Andrew C. Minor & Bonner Mitchell, Columbia, 1968. See also Bonner Mitchell, *Italian Civic Pageantry in the High Renaissance: A Descriptive Bibliography of Triumphal Entries and Selected Other Festivals for State Occasions*, Florence, 1979, pp. 50–54.

¹¹ The madrigals for *Il Furto* are in Corteccia, *Secular Works*, I, 37–41. On the 1544 performance, see *Il luogo teatrale*, pp. 83–4.

¹² Ed. Minor & Mitchell, *A Renaissance Entertainment*, pp. 97–223.

¹³ For a summary of the kinds of *intermedi* presented in the sixteenth century—those in which the music was played out of sight of the audience ('*intermedi non apparenti*'), those that were staged ('*intermedi apparenti*'), those that consisted only of instrumental music, those that consisted of *moresche* and *mascherate*, and so on—see Nutter, 'Intermedio'.

nature of their texts as theatrical by Osthoff and Pirrotta, although there is no way of knowing for which comedy the music was originally intended.¹⁴

The function of the *intermedi* was simply to mark the act breaks, either by suggesting the passage of time or by commenting on the preceding or following action.¹⁵ In this respect Corteccia's music for *Il Furto* is typical. To some extent it comments directly on the play.¹⁶ In the first madrigal, 'Udendo ragionar che qui si denno' (I, 37), sung after the prologue, the singers, who identify themselves as gypsies (presumably the personae they maintained for the other *intermedi* as well), mention 'il furto', and in the last madrigal, 'O come nulla vale' (I, 41), sung after Act IV, they anticipate the happy denouement by announcing that it will come about through the return of a man from Spain (that is, Maestro Cornelio's long lost son Valerio). The remaining three madrigals, although they relate to events in the play, do not allude directly to any of the characters. 'Quanto sia dolce voglia' (I, 38), sung after Act I, on man's desire to propagate himself, clearly refers (though without mentioning him) to the old doctor Cornelio and his wish for a young wife and a new heir; it is obviously theatrical, since it addresses the audience directly. 'Non le parol'o l'herbe' and 'A gran torto si lagna' (I, 39 and 40), sung after Acts II and III, on the parlous state of being in love, are about the young lovers Mario and Camilla, although the poems could be taken as being about love in general; they contain no specific references to the play.

The middle three madrigals for *Il Furto* could be performed as they stand as *intermedi* in any one of a number of comedies, so stereotyped are the dramatic situations in Italian Renaissance comedy, and so general are the words set to Corteccia's music. Indeed, it may be that madrigals used as *intermedi* were to some extent interchangeable; they were not always composed specially for a particular play or for a particular performance. Machiavelli, for example, used some of the same madrigals for both *La Mandragola* and *La Clizia*, and in 1568 Antonfrancesco Grazzini (*Il Lasca*) wrote in the preface to his new edition of *La gelosia* that he was including for the first time the *intermedi* originally written for the play but not published in

¹⁴ On the Verdelot *intermedi* for Machiavelli's plays see Osthoff, *Theatergesang*, i. 213–37, and H. Colin Slim, *A Gift of Madrigals and Motets*, Chicago & London, 1972, i. 85, 92–104; the music given there, ii. 333–5, 347–9, should be emended by the altus parts published in Slim, *Ten Altus Parts at Oscott College Sutton Coldfield*, Santa Ana, 1978. On Arcadelt madrigals presumed to be *intermedi* see Osthoff, *Theatergesang*, i. 270–74, and Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre*, pp. 124–5, 151. The four madrigals are published in Arcadelt, *Opera omnia*, IV, Nos. 6, 8, 14 and 17. Einstein (*The Italian Madrigal*, i. 282) seems to imply that Corteccia set *intermedi* for plays by Giovan Maria Cecchi. Texts for the *intermedi* survive for the following plays by Cecchi: *Il donzello* (Venice, 1585), *L'esaltazione della croce* (Florence, 1589), *Il servigiale* (Florence, 1561) and *Lo spirito* (Venice, 1585), but none includes texts set by Corteccia.

¹⁵ See Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre*, esp. pp. 120–72.

¹⁶ The play is in *Commedie del Cinquecento*, ed. Aldo Borlenghi, ii (Milan, 1959), 7–113.