

Ascensión Mazuela-Anguita  
(ed.)

## **Women and music networks in Europe**

GRANADA, 2024

# COLECCIÓN MUSICOLOGÍA

— ESTUDIOS —

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This book is part of the results of two projects: 1) “Mujeres y redes musicales en Granada: diálogos entre pasado y presente”, directed by Ascensión Mazuela-Anguita and funded by the programme “Proyectos de Investigación del MediaLab en Cultura y Sociedad Digital, Plan Propio de Investigación y Transferencia” of the Universidad de Granada; and 2) “Prácticas polifónicas hispánicas (siglos XVI-XIX) en perspectiva digital: fuentes musicales, pervivencias, mujeres” (PID2021-123990NB-I00), directed by María Gembero-Ustárriz and Emilio Ros-Fábregas and funded by the Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades de España / Agencia Estatal de Investigación 10.13039/501100011033, and by “ERDF A way of making Europe”.



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Edita: Editorial Universidad de Granada

Campus Universitario de Cartuja

Colegio Máximo, s.n. 18071 Granada

Telfs.: 958 24 39 30 - 958 24 62 20 • [www.editorial.ugr.es](http://www.editorial.ugr.es)

ISBN: 978-84-338-7417-7

Depósito Legal: Gr./1543-2024

Maquetación: CMD. Granada

Diseño de cubierta: Tarma, estudio gráfico

Imprime: Printheus. Bilbao

*Printed in Spain / Impreso en España*

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# Introduction

ASCENSIÓN MAZUELA-ÁNGUITA

MOST musicological studies have focused on important institutions —such as the royal court, noble houses, and cathedrals— as well as on composers, musical genres, and written music. However, the application of categories such as «composer» and «musical work» to the study of music before the nineteenth century would inevitably lead to the phenomenon of women's voices in music history being lost; but, as Robert Darnton has suggested: «we constantly need to be shaken out of a false sense of familiarity with the past, to be administered doses of culture shock»<sup>1</sup>. In the past, the teaching of music was generally based on oral and memorised practices, and the boundaries between performance and composition were far from clear. Given both the problem of women's professional status in a period when women were usually classified according to their condition in relation to men as girls, maidens, wives, widows or nuns, and the moral restrictions imposed on women, sources and methodologies other than those employed in a creation-focused musicology are required to analyse women's experience of music. However, «women in positions of power pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable through the patronage of music and musicians and the organization of, as well as participation in, musical events»<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, women's participation in the musical process might be more clearly discerned through the perspective of everyday life<sup>3</sup> and the exploration of networks for the dissemination of music, musical artefacts, and musical culture<sup>4</sup>.

Cultural historians have addressed the importance of interchange in the European Science Foundation Project *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Eu-*

1 Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre* (New York: Vintage, 1985), p. 4.

2 Ascensión Mazuela-Anguaita, «Pushing Boundaries: Women, Sounding Spaces, and Moral Discourse in Early Modern Spain Through the Experience of Ana de Mendoza, Princess of Eboli (1540-92)», *Early Modern Women* 13, no. 1 (2018): pp. 5-29, p. 6.

3 Mariló Vigil, *La vida de las mujeres en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 1994), p. 6.

4 Jan Fuhse, «The Meaning Structure of Social Networks», *Sociological Theory* 27 (2009): pp. 51-73.

*rope* (initiated in 1997 and published as four volumes in 2006-7)<sup>5</sup>, and cultural theorists across all humanities disciplines have recognised the role of networks of interchange and borrowing in the formation of cultures. However, until recently, music was excluded from these studies of cultural networks. Music, because of its sonic nature, played a unique role in the processes of cultural exchange: music travels readily across the barriers between different languages, and it allows contending religious and cultural identities to be realised in performance. The role played by women in the configuration of transnational music networks over the centuries was preliminary explored in the workshop «Women and Music Networks in Early Modern Europe: Dialogues between Past and Present», which was celebrated in Granada between 16 and 17 September 2021<sup>6</sup>. This event brought together scholars from all over Europe and the United States to present recent research into different aspects of the role of women in the configuration of music networks from the early modern period onwards. The focus was on discussion of women's music networks in the context of an interdisciplinary approach, to identify which areas and themes have been and remain to be explored.

This book, which is a result of that workshop, contains nine chapters by authors from the fields of musicology, but also philology, modern languages, book history, and literature. Its aim is to show that a broad cross-section of women played a relevant role both in the processes of dissemination of music and musical discourse, and in the promotion of the interaction between musicians, taking into consideration issues of social status to nuance gender categories. This book is to offer a different approach to the study of western musical culture, by using a combination of sources and methodologies other than those usually employed in traditional creation-centred musicology. This combination is required to challenge women's invisibility in music history by studying, from a cross-disciplinary perspective, the participation of women in the configuration of transnational music networks, from the early modern period onwards. The chronological context under consideration allows us, following Braudel's idea of *longue durée*, analysis of changing processes and continuities across the period, and to discern dynamics of power without the restrictions of periodisation.

The volume is structured into three parts corresponding to networks of musical patronage, networks of musical discourse, and networks for the transmission of oral and written musics, in order to shed light on questions such as how women contributed to the dissemination of music through diplomatic

5 Robert Muchembled, ed., *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006-2007), 4 vols.

6 This workshop was organised by the project 'Women and music networks in Granada: Dialogues between past and present' (MediaLab-UGR - Culture and Digital Society Research Projects 2021), coordinated by Ascensión Mazuela-Anguila, with the collaboration of the «Escuela de Doctorado de Humanidades, Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas» and the University of Granada Music Department.

encounters, how the moral discourse on women's musical practices influenced the participation of women in music networks and their experience of music, and how women promoted the diffusion of oral and written traditions of music.

Colleen Baade examines various types of interconnections between nuns, nun musicians, nuns' families, professional musicians, and other figures associated with the convent of Santa Clara la Real in Toledo. The chapter focuses on the case of Sor Francisca Calderón de la Barca (1643-1700) and her musical patronage at that convent, providing information about nun musicians at other Toledo convents as well. The next chapter is dedicated to the English sisters Mary Ann (c. 1744-c. 1824) and Cecilia Davies (c. 1756-1836), who succeeded as an instrumentalist (flutist and harpsichordist) and a soprano, respectively, among the elites of Enlightenment Europe. Through the analysis of a collection of letters, Mélanie Traversier identifies the music networks that these musicians used in order to develop their careers. The following essay deepens our understanding of the configuration of women's networks of musical patronage in the context of three particular events that took place in Madrid in the 1920s: the third visit of Igor Stravinsky in Madrid, Poldowski's concert series, and the origin of the Club Femenino Lyceum. Different types of female patronage overlapped in this period: traditional forms of music patronage by aristocratic women and new forms of concert management resulting from new types of feminine associationism. The cases studied by María Palacios Nieto makes evident that the limits between the public and the private in the management of concerts are far from being clear.

In the second part, Laurie Stras focuses on the importance of family connections at the Clarissan convent of San Matteo in Arcetri, which was the home of Maria Celeste Galilei (1600-1634), Galileo Galilei's daughter. The rich musical life of this convent is reflected both in the Biffoli-Sostegni manuscript (Brussels, Bibliothèque du Conservatoire Royal, MS 27766), which contains polyphony for the entire liturgical year, and in the only surviving sixteenth-century archival ledger which records this convent's expenses, as well as in Suor Maria Celeste's letters. Also in the context of sixteenth-century Italy, Laura S. Ventura Nieto offers insight into further types of networks of musical discourse beyond the cloister. Through an analysis of the manual on court behaviour *Ragionamento a Donna Lavinia sua figlioula* (Turin, 1586) that Annibal Guasco addressed at Guasco's daughter Lavinia, this chapter assesses how musical education was a powerful tool for aristocratic women such as Lavinia and her daughter Margherita, to enter the service of a ruler, to make advantageous marriages, to advance socially, and to create bonds between women. From the perspective of musical discourse, José Manuel Pedrosa, a philologist, focuses on frame drum songs from the Hispanic folklore. Through an in-depth analysis of the lyrics of variety of these songs, he shows the erotic symbolism associated with drums in the Hispanic world over the centuries and demonstrates the connections of drums to female bodies which are played by male hands and fingers.

The third part of the book includes three essays which shed light on the transmission of written and oral musics. Alicia López Carral analyses the important role that Isabel I of Castile (1451-1504) played in the development of the liturgical music printing in Granada, as a tool for religious propaganda in this newly conquered city. Anne J. Cruz presents an essay on the «paper networks» that illustrate the cultural and musical life of female convents, with a focus on the case of Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza (1566-1614), an aristocrat who went to the Protestant England as Catholic missionary. The analysis of her letters reflects the networks that she established with other nuns in Spain. Also in the convent context, Mercè Gras and Verònica Zaragoza analyses Discalced Carmelite nuns's musical and poetic practices in the modern period, through the case study of Joaquina de Fivaller y Taverner (1795-1874), a member of the Catalan nobility who entered the Discalced Carmelite convent in Barcelona. The ceremonies of taking the habit and profession of this woman, which included the singing of *villancicos*, reflect the celebratory dimension of music and poetry in the convents of this religious order as well as the circulation of the printed lyrics of the *villancicos* and the relationship between the convent and the poets, composers, and musicians who were involved in the production of these pieces.

Therefore, this book makes women's musical practices more audible and changes the perspective from the traditionally assumed role of women in the configuration of musical-cultural networks in an international context, by bringing together different elements of a complex mosaic of interrelated female musical activities.