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[Compte rendu de l'ouvrage de] Valeria De Lucca, 'The Politics of Princely Entertainment: Music and Spectacle in the Lives of Lorenzo Onofrio and Maria Mancini Colonna (1659–1689)', dans *Journal of Seventeenth Century Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020)

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The Politics of Princely Entertainment: Music and Spectacle in the Lives of Lorenzo Onofrio and Maria Mancini Colonna (1659–1689). By Valeria De Lucca. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. [389 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-063113-0.]

Reviewed by Anne-Madeleine Goulet*

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1. Introduction

1.1 In this captivating work, Valeria De Lucca documents three decades of evolution in theatrical and musical patronage (1659–89) via a study of two high-ranking aristocrats, Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna (1635–89) and his wife Maria Mancini (1639–1715), who figured among the most active and influential patrons in the musical life of Rome. In the seventeenth century, this city presented a distinctive configuration within the Italian peninsula and more broadly within Europe: center of the Catholic Church with a sovereign pontiff at its head who exercised a power both spiritual and temporal, Rome was the capital of the Papal States, an essential locus of international diplomacy, and a city whose topography, political life, economy, and social relationships had long been dominated by a score of great families, particularly by old feudal families like the Colonna and the Orsini.

2. The Protagonists

2.1 In 1659 Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna inherited from his father the title of Grand Constable (*Gran contestabile*) of the Kingdom of Naples, which made him the de facto head of the Spanish faction in Rome. He shared with Flavio Orsini (1620–98) the honor of Prince Assistant to the Papal Throne (*Stator proximus a Solio pontificis maximi*), which from the sixteenth century permitted the heads of the two families to assist by turns, standing at the right of the Pope during special ceremonies. A fine connoisseur of opera and a refined intellectual, Colonna embodied the profound change that was then occurring in Roman aristocratic society, whereby social prestige gained by military feats gradually yielded in importance to the organization of spectacles and musical entertainments or to collecting works of art or costly objects.

2.2 Although born in Rome, Maria Mancini—one of Cardinal Jules Mazarin’s nieces—had lived in France until her marriage to Contestabile Colonna in 1661. Concerned by the budding romance between his niece and Louis XIV and anxious to conclude a politically important marriage between the king and Maria Theresa of Austria, the Cardinal hastened to find a husband for the young woman. Maria, well known to historians of sociability in seventeenth-century Paris as the dedicatee of the

Dictionnaire des Précieuses, ou la clef de la langue des ruelles (1661), by Antoine Baudeau de Somaize—who served as her secretary—had returned to the papal city thoroughly steeped in French culture. She energetically attempted to occupy the limelight by making herself a promoter of operas in Rome and Venice, an organizer of *serenate* and of *conversazioni* (social gatherings), or even a leading actor in balls and public displays. After giving birth to her third child in 1665, Maria decided to withdraw from her marital duties to preserve her health. The situation with her husband quickly deteriorated to the point that in 1672, she fled together with her sister Hortense, who had herself decided to withdraw from the “hateful slavery” of marriage and had joined her sister in Rome. After a period of wandering, first in France, then in Savoy and Flanders, Maria took herself to Spain. After the death of Colonna in 1689, she would return to Rome once at the end of 1691 and then move back to Spain, which, however, she had to leave in 1702 for having too openly expressed her support for the Hapsburgs just as Phillip V, the grandson of Louis XIV, acceded to the throne. Maria then undertook renewed years of wandering in Italy before dying in Pisa in 1715.

3. The Vicissitudes of Colonna Patronage

3.1 The chronological analysis of Colonna patronage proposed by Valeria De Lucca suggests six large phases, summarized here schematically. Between 1663 and 1667, the couple made several trips to Venice, where they actively promoted opera. In Rome, between 1668 and 1672, they continued their musical activities, but each with different aims: whereas Lorenzo Onofrio wanted to create a “new Venice,” Maria was set on “transforming ... Rome into her beloved Paris” (p. 134). After Maria’s flight from Rome in 1672, Colonna, while fostering private musical performances at his palace, took part in projects involving collective patronage, notably at the heart of the first commercial opera house in Rome, the Teatro Tordinona, which had opened its doors in 1670. As Viceroy of Aragón from 1679 to 1681, the Contestabile established himself in Zaragoza: it was during this sojourn that his oldest son Filippo (1663–1714) married Lorenza de la Cerda (1666–97), daughter of Juan Francisco, eighth duke of Medinaceli and prime minister to King Charles II of Spain. Upon his return to Rome, Lorenzo Onofrio gave the responsibility of constructing a new theater in his palace at the Piazza dei SS. Apostoli to architect Carlo Fontana. It opened its doors in 1682 and there are records of its activities through 1686 as a hybrid between court and commercial theater. During the very period when he was Viceroy *ad interim* of the Kingdom of Naples (from the end of 1687 to the beginning of 1688), the Contestabile continued the

politics of magnificence pursued by his predecessor, the marqués del Carpio, who had died in November 1687. The final phase of Colonna patronage was the year of life that remained to Lorenzo, who returned to Rome after the arrival of the new viceroy, the conde de Santisteban.^[1] Lorenzo's death in April of 1689—the same year that Christina of Sweden and Pope Innocent XI both died—closed an important era in the history of music and more specifically of the lyric stage. Within the family, the torch passed to the succeeding generation, that is, to Filippo II Colonna and his Spanish wife Lorenza, now called on, in their turn, to become prominent patrons of music and musicians.^[2]

4. Sources Used in the Study

4.1 In pursuing her inquiry, De Lucca did not limit herself to textual sources—librettos and scores—but used every arrow in her quiver, carrying out a cross-referenced and finely contextualized reading among all kinds of archival materials, whether correspondence, notarial documents, account books, or even *avvisi* (contemporary chronicles sent to and from the leading courts of Europe) and iconographical sources. She conducted a vast archival campaign throughout all of Europe—beginning not only with the Colonna family archives (today preserved in the library of the monastery of Saint Scholastica in Subiaco, near Rome) but also in archives in Florence, Naples, Rome, Vatican City, and Venice, and extending to the Archivo General in Simancas, which holds the archives of the Madrid court, and to Palma de Mallorca, and uncovered true nuggets, such as the inventory of books, scores, and librettos that Colonna chose to bring with him to Zaragoza, containing three-hundred entries (p. 208 and following).

5. A Cultural Investment Ahead of its Time

5.1 The micro-historical approach that De Lucca has taken, pursued with a constant awareness of the socio-political reality of the cities studied and of the norms that prevailed there at the time, yields an original and rich analysis that goes well beyond the framework of a local history of music. This is a major contribution toward grasping the operating strategies common to the great families of the era in terms of cultural investment, as we might term it today. Caught in a tight network of social relationships, the couple are viewed in terms of their interrelations with members of other Roman families and those from other cities in Italy and Europe, with artisans and merchants from all walks of life. Like other aristocrats of the era, they traveled often

across the peninsula—to Venice, to Milan or Naples—and indeed well beyond, to Madrid or Zaragoza, for example. Their sojourns, whether of short or long duration (which involved moving almost the entire *famiglia*), offered privileged moments for negotiating cultural exchanges: thus in Venice, the couple were not only received by the local patriciate and diplomatic corps, but they themselves received others in their successive rented residences, and for this purpose took scores or manuscript copies of music with them. The couple thus contributed to the shaping of a cultural identity suited to the city of Rome while playing a not negligible role in the diffusion of particular artistic preferences in Italy and in Spain.

5.2. Far from limiting itself to a chronicle of events or to a study of a single composer or a particular musical genre, De Lucca's book analyzes a *milieu*, thus taking the path opened by Francis Haskell who, in the field of art history, called early on for an emphasis on artistic milieus rather than critical accounts of works.^[3] In doing so, the book completes and furthers the pioneering work of Elena Tamburini on the theaters of the Colonna family.^[4] The vision of the artistic reality of the period that results from this approach, in which a common repertory of themes runs through the arts, delivers a valuable understanding of the performing arts in Rome. The city is not only a frame or a stage set; it represented a composite of material and social factors that inflected the nature of performance. The material aspects of performances are notably the object of attentive analysis, whether it is a question of performance spaces, costumes, scene changes, or special theatrical effects: around 1686, thirty-four machinists worked for the Colonna theater (p. 263), which gives some idea of the techniques and efforts deployed to create the illusions.

5.3 When placed in their historical perspective, the works staged at the Colonna palace herald the creation of what one day would be called *operatic repertory*: thus, *Orontea*, the *opera regia* by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini and Antonio Cesti, created in 1656 for Innsbruck, was reprised in 1661 in Rome at the Colonna palace in Borgo (today the Giraud-Torlonia, two steps from St. Peter's), furnished with a new prologue by the poet Giovanni Filippo Apolloni, and it became one of the most frequently staged operas of the seventeenth century. Having experienced productions at the Teatro Tordinona between 1690 and 1697, certain individuals—among them Bernini—came to understand that opera could be a remunerative form of entertainment, attracting a public, whether of local or foreign origins, ready to pay for admission tickets. De Lucca's narrative, written in vivid style, sketches the development of commercial

theater (*spettacoli venali*) in Rome, which would give rise to the sale of tickets and constitute a lucrative artistic market.

6. Patronage and Categories of Analysis

6.1 De Lucca chose to focus her book on Rome in the second half of the seventeenth century, an era in which a wealth of music and theater offerings, notably of opera, conveyed the true passion that the Roman elites felt for spectacle. In this unique moment of artistic blossoming, the Colonna distinguished themselves by practicing a courtly patronage based on the privileged relationship between artist and protector, while at the same time distancing themselves from this model: this is, for example, what Lorenzo Onofrio did in seeking to make a profit by producing operas, first with the Teatro Tordinona, and then with his own theater, where he welcomed a mixed audience of guests and paying spectators. To clarify the dynamics of production of this semi-public form of opera, De Lucca does not hesitate to conduct her study at a micro-historical level of analysis or to employ new analytic strategies.

6.2 Contemplating the phenomenon of Colonna patronage from the point of view of the differences between the sexes allows De Lucca above all to explore ways in which gender and social status influenced the means and ends of patronage for men and married women in the early modern era. De Lucca tenaciously questions the reasons for Maria Mancini's constant engagement with the production of spectacles in spite of the opposing forces she had to contend with. Following Patricia Cholakian,^[5] De Lucca invokes the legacy of the Parisian *précieuses* (p. 164). The technique that Maria favored for being seen and heard in fact mixed pleasures, entertainments, and variety, and was entirely adopted from French *galanterie*; we could also recall the example of Cardinal Mazarin who, far from relegating spectacles to occasions as ornament or entertainment, used them as leverage to complement his political program.

6.3 In ferreting out traces of how those who commissioned spectacles understood them, De Lucca furthermore succeeds in evaluating their degree of initiative, or involvement, in these events. We thus learn that Maria Mancini herself, along with her sister Hortense, appeared on stage in the *Balletto delle ninfe et dei venti* (*Balletto of the Nymphs and Winds*), which was given at the Colonna palace in February 1670; that she played a part in choosing the repertory of the first two seasons of the Teatro Tordinona in 1671 and 1672; and even that her children, the *principini* Colonna, danced in the performance of an opera staged in the same palace by Giovanni Pietro Caffarelli, Duke

of Assergi, in 1678. The theater programming appears strongly dependent on the political considerations, the artistic preferences, and even on the mood of the Contestabile. For example, Lorenzo Onofrio's decision not to stage any operas in 1684 can be readily explained by the disappointment he experienced in seeing numerous singers and instrumentalists leave Rome to join the marqués del Carpio, who had just been named viceroy of Naples.

6.4 Thanks to the attention she brings to the Roman context and to factional struggles within the city, De Lucca succeeds in clarifying the new role Roman aristocrats were called upon to play in the complex network of agents responsible for opera production. The forms of collective sponsorship that she identifies as beginning the 1660s and leading to the construction of the Teatro Tordinona under the organizing aegis of Christina of Sweden, allow the author to build the concept of *collective patronage*. This phenomenon developed side-by-side with the gradual establishment of professional circuits of artists who could be in the service of more than one patron: one thinks of Alessandro Stradella and Alessandro Scarlatti among the composers, or Giovanni Filippo Apolloni and Nicolò Minato among librettists. The world of the artists who worked in Rome in different fields included some outstanding names, not only Gian Lorenzo Bernini, of course, whom we have already mentioned—and who, in addition to his abilities as a sculptor, was also a dramaturge and scenographer—but also Filippo Acciaiuoli, known for his theatrical machines, the impresario Marcello De Rosis, the comedian Puparella, or furthermore Pietro Paolo de Fabi, poet and man of the theater, to mention only a few.

7. The Too-Free Liberty of “Vivre à la française”

7.1 One of the major new contributions of this book resides in De Lucca's analysis of Maria Mancini's comportment in a city dominated by an ecclesiastical hierarchy and a strong patriarchy, a “paese tutto contrario per le dame” (country completely contrary to women), to recall a phrase used in 1664 by someone close to the young noblewoman, Atto Melani (p. 59, n. 4). Having adopted French culture and having been shaped by the *galant* manners of women's circles, Maria was the object of numerous savage criticisms for her too great “liberty” and her “seemingly obsessive desire to be seen and heard” (p. 137). By means in particular of a shift in the *conversazioni* organized at the Colonna palace, which had been until then a bastion of Spanish culture, good Roman society now encountered there *la galanterie à la française* in action, which was

called “vivere alla francese” and associated with license, permissiveness, and poor conduct. Senses were shocked when, in 1668, Maria and some of the ladies in her entourage paraded around the city during a Carnival masquerade in an allegorical chariot representing the planets. Far from capitulating to this negative reaction, she endeavored to “silence those who would murmur” (her own words), and took on such theatrical roles as Clorinda, Circe, or Armida, three female characters who sought mastery over men. Was this just an appetite for performance and theatricality? Perhaps it was a deep-seated taste for provocation and for scandal in a city where women, at that time, had neither the right to go out in disguise nor to wear masks in public spaces? Maria’s social blindness, which must eventually have led her to resolve to leave the city, is somewhat surprising, but the lesson would be learned by other women aristocrats like Marie-Anne de La Trémoille, the future Princess Orsini, who would marry Flavio Orsini in 1675 and prove the advantages of prudence and calculation.

8. Broader Implications

8.1 A study so well documented and so rich raises numerous issues for further development. The self-fashioning strategy of the Colonna family only had meaning in its relationship to those of other families. De Lucca points out that the 1683 production of the opera *Il Pompeo* in the Colonna theater would inevitably enter into competition with that of *L’Arsate* at the Orsini palace, just south of the Piazza Navona. The study would benefit from expansion, above all to accord the French faction its place. This would allow the filling out of some case histories: for example, that of the singer Anna Rosalia Carusi, updated by Elena Tamburini and expanded by De Lucca. Neither author mentions the failure of the efforts to promote the singer to the French court by the wife of Flavio Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, who was also one of the active protectors of the “baronessa,” as the singer was called. The fact that Anna Rosalia was the *protégée* of the heads of both the Spanish and the French factions should not surprise in an era when adherences and identities could be multiple without raising questions of loyalty. Certainly it is possible that the singer, on her return to Rome in 1682, was “probably attracted by the growing reputation of the operas that were being staged at the newly opened Teatro Colonna” (p. 200), but for her the issue was above all to find a landing site after her failed attempt to establish herself at the court of Louis XIV.

8.2 In terms of patronage, the examination of the respective roads taken by the husband and wife opens new paths of research. Maria Mancini’s involvement in the production

of theatrical spectacles was aimed at obtaining her liberty and intellectual independence. It would be interesting to explore further the nuances of the terms that were used to describe the behaviors of foreign women in the Eternal City, particularly considering the “libertà” that characterized the *contestabilessa*; the “gravità” of the Spanish Lorenza de la Cerda, Maria’s daughter-in-law; and the “disinvoltura” of the French Orsini princess. As regards Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna, his activities in Venice in the 1660s brought him increased visibility and international reputation; they certainly prepared the ground for the political career that he hoped to undertake. From the very first moment that the Contestabile had part of his audience pay for their entrance to his theater, his interest in opera ceased to be only an aspect of “conspicuous consumption,” to take up the concept developed by the sociologist and economist Thorstein Veblen. Without doubt, one might further clarify what lies behind what De Lucca calls Colonna’s “craving for power” (p. 21) and sort out the manner in which his appetite for spectacles manifested itself in Rome as in Venice, two cities dominated by different power games.

8.3 The sum of expenses that the Colonna disbursed for music and the theater might be compared against the total annual outlays for the family.^[6] De Lucca points out how difficult it is to delve into the finances of the Colonna couple, particularly because of the almost total absence of payment records for married women in Rome. The work of Claude Dulong nevertheless provides some precious details: we know that Maria Mancini, at the moment of her marriage, held 50,000 *livres* in unencumbered assets, which had not been placed under her husband’s control.^[7] Upon her arrival in Rome, the young woman thereby enjoyed a certain financial freedom. It is possible to hypothesize that this sum served her to pay artists or to support this or that theatrical or musical event. And what about the 136,000 *livres* in jewelry that Mazarin’s niece had brought with her in addition to her dowry, jewels that also remained her property?^[8] It is thus possible to suppose that the gifts with which Maria liked to gratify her artists might have come from this treasure—such was perhaps the case with the valuable necklace she offered Nicolò Minato to thank him for having dedicated the libretto of *Pompeo magno* to her, which, once set to music by Francesco Cavalli, was staged at the Teatro S. Luca in Venice in 1666 (p. 68).

8.4 With this book, which should interest musicologists as well as theater historians, Valeria De Lucca achieves a work of great subtlety, of which the present review offers only a pale reflection. It furnishes the essential concepts for understanding three

decades of profound transformation, in which the high Roman aristocracy, motivated by the “*stessa cultura produttiva*” (the same productive culture)—the phrase is Ferdinando Taviani’s—managed to overcome “the dissimulation and the hatred between families” that ruled in Rome “more supremely than in any other court,”^[9] in order to try out new ways of producing spectacles, thus opening the road to public opera theater.

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[1] Francisco IV de Benavides Dávila y Correa, ninth count of Santisteban del Puerto (1640–1716).

[2] See Chiara Pelliccia, “L’età di Filippo II Colonna (1689–1714): Mecenatismo e collezionismo musicale” (PhD diss., University of Rome Tor Vergata, 2015). On the artistic patronage of Filippo II Colonna, see also studies by Tiziana Checchi, in particular her article “Lusso e magnificenza a Palazzo Colonna: Il *lit de parade* di Giovanni Paolo Schor, la galleria grande, il connestabile Filippo II,” in *Lusingare la vista: Il colore e la magnificenza a Roma tra tardo Rinascimento e Barocco*, ed. Adriano Amendola (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2017), 249–67.

[3] Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters: A Study in Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963).

[4] Elena Tamburini, *Due teatri per il principe: Studi sulla committenza teatrale di Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna (1659–1689), con un’ipotesi di ricostruzione del teatro “piccolo,” elaborata in collaborazione con Sergio Rotondi* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1997). In the field of art history, note also the pioneering study by Natalia Gozzano, *La quadreria di Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna: Prestigio nobiliare e collezionismo nella Roma barocca* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2004).

[5] Patricia Francis Cholakian, *Women and the Politics of Self-Representation in Seventeenth-Century France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000).

[6] A first study in this direction has just been produced by economist Benoît Maréchaux as part of the project

PerformArt, funded by the European Research Council (2016–22). This study has inspired an article that surveys the heritage of the heads of five great Roman families (Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna, Giovanni Battista Borghese, Flavio Orsini, Gaetano Francesco Caetani, and Flavio Chigi): “Patrons, Aristocratic Patrimonies and Finance: Reconsidering the Economic Foundations of Private Magnificence in Rome (c. 1650–1700),” forthcoming in Anne-Madeleine Goulet and Michela Berti, eds., *Noble Magnificence: Cultures of the Performing Arts in Rome, 1644–1740* (Turnhout: Brepols).

[7] Claude Dulong-Sainteny, “Les dernières années de Marie Mancini et son inventaire après décès,” *Bibliothèque de l’École des Chartes* 152, no. 1 (1994): 130.

[8] Dulong-Sainteny, “Les dernières années de Marie Mancini,” 147.

[9] Hortense and Marie Mancini, *Mémoires d’Hortense et de Marie Mancini*, ed. G. Descot (Paris, 1987; 1st ed. 1965), 147–48.