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Review of Manuel Pedro Ferreira and Teresa Cascudo (eds.), "Música e História: Estudos em Homenagem a Manuel Carlos de Brito" and José F. Ortega, "Cantes de la Minas, Cantes por Tarantas"

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Reviews

Ferreira, Manuel Pedro, and Teresa Cascudo, eds. *Música e História: Estudos em Homenagem a Manuel Carlos de Brito*. Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2017. ISBN 978-989-689-662-1

Ortega, José F. *Cantes de la Minas, Cantes por Tarantas*. Sevilla: Signatura Ediciones, 2011. ISBN 978-84-96210-78-3; accompanied by CD *La voz de la mina: Antología de los cantes mineros de La Unión*. Jeromo Segura, voice, Rosendo Fernández, guitar. Instituto Andaluz del Flamenco, Consejería de Educación, Cultura y Deporte; Fonográfica del Sur, Utrera (Sevilla); SE-1048-14, ISBN 8-425655-384442

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The present article reviews two important books received by the Center for Iberian and Latin American Music in the last couple of years. Each of these volumes represents an important step forward in the way we understand musics that may seem familiar but have yet to be fully comprehended, if that is even a reasonable expectation. Indeed, those already acquainted with these areas of research are aware that they still offer numerous avenues of possible investigation.

The first book, “Music and History: Studies in Homage to Manuel Carlos de Brito,” is a festschrift inspired by and dedicated to one of the indispensable figures in the historiography of Portuguese music. An introductory essay and list of his publications by the volume’s editors make clear the high esteem in which this scholar is held by innumerable colleagues, students, and friends. His prolific and groundbreaking research has provided the impetus for yet another major contribution to our collective knowledge of Portuguese music, as well as related topics elsewhere in Europe, covering a wide range of issues from the Middle Ages to the modern era, with particular attention paid to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This is altogether fitting insofar as Dr. De Brito is the author of the seminal study *Opera in Portugal in the Eighteenth Century* (1989), which received the Musical Research Prize of the Conselho Portugues da Música, and *Estudos de Historia da Musica em Portugal* (also 1989). Among his many other seminal contributions, he is editor-in-chief of the *Dicionário de Música e Músicos Portugueses*, forthcoming from the Gulbenkian Foundation. As a result of his several other edited and co-authored volumes, as well as numerous articles, reference entries, and reviews, De Brito has achieved the sort of legendary status reserved for the elite musicological few.

Born on 26 April 1945 in Porto, he was educated at the Lisbon National Conservatory, Lisbon University, and later earned his doctorate at London University (King’s College). For many years he has headed the Musicology Department at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. The editors of this collection have attained a conspicuous measure of eminence in their own right. Manuel Pedro Ferreira earned his doctorate at Princeton University, writing a dissertation on Gregorian chant at Cluny. He is a professor musicology at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa and directs the Centro de Estudos de Sociologia e Estética Musical (CESEM). He is a leading specialist in music of the medieval

and Renaissance periods and the author/editor of numerous articles and several books, including *Aspectos da música medieval no ocidente peninsular* (2009-10) and *Revisiting the Music of Medieval France* (2012). Teresa Cascudo is a professor of musicology at the Universidad de Rioja (Logroño). She earned her doctorate at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa and has published extensively on the history of music in Portugal from the end of the nineteenth century to the present day, with particular emphasis on the works of Fernando Lopes-Graça and musical nationalism. She brings special insights to this topic, having managed the Lopes-Graça archive at the Museu da Música Portuguesa.

The editors have assembled an impressive team of international specialists, and there are chapters in Portuguese, Spanish, and English. The collection is handsomely presented, with ample tables, reproductions, and musical examples. Contributor biographies and an index complete a book that is a fitting tribute to a great scholar and an invaluable addition to the growing literature on the Iberian musical heritage, in all its many facets. Indeed, what emerges from this collection of essays is the realization that though Portugal may be a relatively small nation, it has a musical heritage worthy of a much larger country. Despite the herculean labors of De Brito and many other fine scholars, a treasure trove of Portuguese music still awaits our discovery and careful examination. This book provides not only a useful guide for our exploration but something even more important: the inspiration to follow in De Brito's footsteps.

The other book under consideration here deals with Iberian music of an entirely different persuasion from that examined in the festschrift. José F. Ortega is a professor of musicology at the Universidad de Murcia and specializes in the flamenco *palos* (genres) native to southeastern Spain, such as the *tarantas*, *cartageneras*, and *mineras*. In his introductory essay, Ortega confirms an observation many of us have made over the years, i.e., that flamenco doesn't always get the respect it deserves among music scholars, who have been slow to take it seriously. True, there has been an impressive increase in serious flamenco scholarship over the past decade, and this is a trend that is going to continue. But Spanish musicologists and ethnomusicologists have sometimes been discouraged from pursuing research into this fascinating art form because of its historic association with marginalized, lower-class segments of Spanish society, principally though not exclusively Gypsies (hereafter referred to as Roma). Foreign music scholars were reluctant to map this terrain because of a dual handicap:

1) In addition to being "fascinating," flamenco is a very complex and multifaceted art form, featuring a daunting variety of *palos* and their assorted categories and subcategories based on rhythmic organization (*compás*) and emotional intensity (*jondo*, *medio*, *chico*). Unless one is to some extent a member of the flamenco "community" by virtue of being able to play, sing, or dance it, making significant inroads in our collective understanding will prove nearly impossible. One is left with confronting the standard, timeworn, threadbare clichés without the necessary means to get past them and arrive at a deeper level of comprehension. Precisely because musicologists are used to dealing with notated music, flamenco poses the additional challenge of being an oral tradition, and one that has historically been thought to be incapable of transcription into standard notation because of its many subtleties in pitch and rhythm. However, no matter how "exotic" flamenco may be, it is still an art form indigenous to Europe, and as such it has tended to fall in the disciplinary cracks: too Western for ethnomusicologists of a postcolonial orientation, and too folkloric for musicologists focused on the notated music culture of social elites.

2) This task is made more difficult precisely because one is an outsider, most likely without a mastery of regional and Roma dialects that characterize the song verses. In other words,

flamenquistas are understandably leery of foreigners who may appear to be examining them from an anthropological perspective, as if they were an isolated hominid species in some equatorial rainforest. While we may consider Roma and their socio-economic equals as “exotic others”—and that is certainly the way they have been portrayed in operas like *Carmen*, intended for a bourgeois audience—they in turn are entitled to view those outside their immediate environs as “others” as well.

Among the difficulties that all would-be flamencologists face is the tendency to associate Andalusia and its native flamenco with the provinces in the central-southern part of the Iberian Peninsula, i.e., Granada, Sevilla, Málaga, and Huelva. Some *palos* are generic to this swath of territory, such as the *bulerías*, *alegrías*, *siguiriyas*, or *soleares*. But there are local variants of the *seguidilla* and *fandango* in particular that are flamenco standards: *granadinas*, *sevillanas*, *malagueña/verdiales/rondeña*, and *fandango de Huelva*. This fixation on certain regions has come at a high price, and that is our underdeveloped knowledge of *palos* characteristic of southeastern Andalusia, in particular Almería and Murcia. These areas were among the last to depart from Muslim sovereignty, and their deep Middle Eastern cultural imprint has left us some of the most distinctive forms of flamenco expression, especially *tarantas*.

Bearing all these realities in mind, the significance of Ortega’s research comes into sharp focus. What I especially appreciate about his approach is that it breaks with a long tradition of exclusively descriptive discourse concerning flamenco. He delves into his subject with surgical precision, including extensive use of musical examples and textual excerpts to illustrate his points. Granted, no system of notation can adequately convey the microtonal inflections, florid melismas, and rhythmic intricacies typical of most flamenco singing. But traditional western notation will suffice for illustrating the melodic contour, basic pitch content, and modal properties of almost any *cante*. This is no inconsiderable challenge in regard to the repertoire Ortega skillfully examines, as the aforementioned Middle Eastern imprint is readily apparent in the vocal production and melodic characteristics of *tarantas*. But he boldly goes where few scholars have gone before, accepting as they did Hilarión Eslava’s famous dictum that flamenco *cantes* like *cañas*, *polos*, and *tiranas* are nearly impossible to transcribe with accuracy (p. 11).

Ortega proceeds in very systematic fashion through this geographical and musical territory. After setting forth his methodology, he comes to grips with the various sorts of songs that characterize southeastern Andalusia. He first examines the *tarantas*, which he deems to be the foundation for all the various types of *cantes mineros* typical of southeastern Spain. Since mining has historically been a mainstay of the local economy, mining songs are the logical focus of this survey. The *tarantas* is closely related to other regional styles of *fandango*, including the *malagueña*.

As is the case with the word flamenco itself, however, the origins and precise meaning of *taranta* are a subject of debate. It may be derived from Tarento, an Italian seaport well known to the Italians who participated in the Reconquista and helped to liberate and settle Murcia and Almería, whose residents are often referred to as Tarantos. The name further suggests some connection with the tarantella, though musically and choreographically, the *tarantas* and tarantella are very far apart. Whatever its ultimate origins, *taranta/o* refers to a particular *palo* of *cante/baile/toque* associated with Almería and Murcia. As is often the case with terms like *bulería* or *sevillana*, the plural establishes the large variety of melodies and rhythms within the *palo*. To improvise *por tarantas* is to create a performance within the general melodic and metric parameters of the genre. In characteristic flamenco fashion, prominent styles of a *palo* are often associated with a particular artist, e.g., *tarantas del hijo del Rojo*.

Nearly eighty pages are devoted to the origins, texts, modalities, melodies, and various styles of the *tarantas*. Subsequent chapters deal in similarly detailed fashion with related *palos*: 3. Cartageneras; 4) Mineras y otros cantes cercanos; 5) Levanticas; 6) Murcianas; 7) Tarantos y cantes de madrugá; 8) Fandangos mineros y otros cantes. As a scholar, Ortega is nothing if not generous with his discoveries. After a brief Epílogo, his appendices include 1) short biographies of the many flamenco artists associated with this musical heritage; and 2) a glossary of terms. A bibliography and alphabetical index of *copla* incipits round out the volume. If anything is lacking here, perhaps it is a more comprehensive index of the book's contents, which would have been helpful.

Ortega's writing style is both informative and clear, and even the non-native speaker of Spanish will be able to navigate his prose with a minimum of incomprehension. Thus, this book will prove to be of maximum utility and interest to both specialists and aficionados alike, whether or not they are Spanish, *gachó* or *gitano*.

Of special interest is the CD that accompanies the volume, containing representative recordings of the various *palos* treated in the text. These elegant and deeply moving performances are, in and of themselves, a very attractive and important contribution to the literature. Jeromo Segura is a latter-day Orpheus whose impassioned voice could make Hades himself weep out of tragic despair, while Rosendo Fernández's eloquent guitar accompaniments provide the perfect counterpoint, solidly grounded in tradition but featuring some expressive harmonic novelties and deft embellishments. There is considerable vocal and instrumental virtuosity on display here, but never for its own sake. These renditions of *tarantas* and related *palos* never descend to the meretricious and will thus more than satisfy the most exacting *aficionados*, of whom the present author fancies himself one.

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