

# UC Riverside

## Diagonal: An Ibero-American Music Review

### Title

Tomás Vicente Tosca, and Antonio Ezquerro Esteban, eds. Tomás Vicente Tosca y la renovación musical en el siglo XVIII. Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 2021.

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7mz8h866>

### Journal

Diagonal: An Ibero-American Music Review, 8(1)

### Authors

Benner, Karen Zacy  
Lazos, John G.

### Publication Date

2023

### DOI

10.5070/D88160610

### Copyright Information

Copyright 2023 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



## Review

Tomás Vicente Tosca, and Antonio Ezquerro Esteban, eds. **Tomás Vicente Tosca y la renovación musical en el siglo XVIII**. Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 2021.

KAREN ZACY BENNER

Champlain College

JOHN G. LAZOS

Independent Researcher

There is an illusion that good news does not come as often as we would like to. But when an eighteenth-century Spanish music treatise makes its appearance as a preamble of many other materials to come, then, this is something that needs to be mentioned about. For some, the two years and plus hiatus may have been a break, but not for our Spanish colleagues who worked diligently during this period researching on their own music sources, which brings us to the mentioned treatise. *Tomás Vicente Tosca y la renovación musical en el siglo XVIII* (in English as “Tomas Vicente Tosca and the renewal of music in the eighteenth century”) is the first volume to appear of the collection *Consonantía*, an ambitious research and publication ongoing project, under the direction of a group of renown Spanish scholars and investigators, which, through recuperation, digitalization, and analysis, seeks to expand the reception and study of an important collection of music treatises and music documents dating from seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which have been housed at the Library of the University of Barcelona. This facsimile edition of Tomás Vicente Tosca’s “Tratado VI. De la Música, Especulativa, y Práctica” (in English as “Treatise VI. On Music, Speculation, and Practice”), corresponds to Antonio Ezquerro Esteban, who worked closely with Paulino Capdepón Verdú, Oriol Brugarolas Bonet, and Neus Verger Arce as collaborators, and which is introduced by two comprehensive essays that are essential reads for anyone interested in the history of music in Spain, in the Hispanic world, and the history of music theory.

Capdepón Verdú’s overview of music theory in the period of Tosca, and Antonio Ezquerro’s reconsideration of the scientific approach to music in Tosca’s *Compendio mathematico* (1707) are the two comprehensive essays which introduce the 153-page facsimile treatise and prepare the reader to engage with the treatise and its connection within the broader spectrum of the time and place of origin. Capdepón’s essay about Spanish Music Theory treatises written during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries presents an overview of the influencing treatises of Pietro Cerone, Andrés Lorente, Pablo Nessarre, as well as the writings about music by Tosca’s contemporaries, Antonio de la Cruz Brocarte, Pedro Ulloa, Benito Feijoo, Pedro París y Royo, and Francisco Valls. Capdepón captures the dynamic published discourse in music theory in Spain which contextualizes Tosca’s innovation as a music theorist and writer, who sought to approach music as a system of acoustic properties and principles. The author also addresses past controversies concerning the term of *buen gusto* and church-appropriate composition and practice styles in 18<sup>th</sup> century Spain, all of which sets the stage for Ezquerro in depth consideration of reclaiming the value of Tosca’s scientific approach within the author’s massive *Compendio mathematico* (1707-1715). Ezquerro introduces the reader to this monumental corpus, written in Spanish by Vicente Tosca y Mascó (1650-1723), the erudite friar,

mathematician, physicist, architect, engineer, cartographer, and astronomer. The second of its nine volumes, begins with the 6<sup>th</sup> of 28 treatises, dedicated to the scientific development of music, the *Tratado VI de la Musica especulativa, y práctica* (in English as “Treatise VI on Speculative and Practical Music”). Ezquerro argues that Tosca sought to draw the understanding of music away from a metaphysical *obscurantism* into a rational scientific-based discipline. He notes that although Tosca worked within traditional parameters, he innovated new trends which resulted in advances to the discipline of music and its study. As a founding member of the *novatores*, a scientific movement in Spain which promoted experiment-based knowledge, Tosca focussed on mathematics and the other disciplines of the quadrivium: arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. The significance of Tosca relies as one of the first writers to seriously address the physics of sound and its acoustic properties, his writings on tuning, intervals, and chords predate, by almost two decades, Jean Philippe Rameau’s *Traité de l’harmonie*. Ezquerro’s research further elaborates upon the connections between Tosca and his contemporary, Ulloa, as presented by Capdepón; neither of these erudite scholarly priests were practicing composers or musicians. What is known in Tosca’s case, concerning to his studies at the University of Valencia, is that allowed him to pursue additional scientific studies and develop an expertise which was put to practice, providing advice for road engineering, canals and locks systems. Ezquerro ties in the writings of the scholars to whom Tosca refers, notably Claude Francois Milliet Dechales, a Jesuit mathematician of the seventeenth century, whose encyclopedic didactic approach is evidenced in the scope of the *Compendi mathematico*. As it concerns the music treatise specifically, Tosca’s references include the sixteenth-century music theorists Gioseffo Zarlino, Francisco de Salinas, and the seventeenth-century Jesuit, Athanasius Kircher. Apart from presenting a synthesis of Tosca’s life, studies, and scholarly influences, Ezquerro prepares the reader to appreciate the facsimile of the *Tratado VI* of the 1757 edition published in Valencia by Joseph García, and its division into four *libros*: the presentation of intervals, consonant and dissonant; a comparative overview of diatonic and chromatic intervals, enharmonic equivalences in relation to the four tetrachords and seven hexachords; the vibrational properties of instruments; and the facets of music composition, including notation and time divisions. Ezquerro states that the principal contribution of this work is that it brings together, even before Newton, in a Spanish treatise, the science and music in accordance with the ideals of classical science. The historical significance of Tosca’s corpus is confirmed by its three editions published during the eighteenth century and its dissemination throughout Italy, France, Germany, and the Hispanic world, including the New Spain.

Tosca’s eighteenth-century music treatise is more than a wealth of fresh knowledge; it is also the return of a past scholarly tradition. It is at the same time the first volume of a long-awaited list of publications that will be known from now on as collection *Consonantia*. In conclusion, we should be grateful that the Spanish researchers and investigators are claiming their place in the intellectual scope of tradition by the recuperation and the study of their past, while presenting to us with its facsimile editions. Naturally, and most significantly, this is a piece of news that we would like to communicate with the readers of *Diagonal*.

Benner, Karen Zacy, and John G. Lazos. “Review: Tomás Vicente Tosca, and Antonio Ezquerro Esteban, eds. *Tomás Vicente Tosca y la renovación musical en el siglo XVIII*. Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 2021.” *Diagonal: An Ibero-American Music Review* 8, no. 1 (2023): 80–81.