

Vita e Opera del piu prolifico compositore del baroco Tedesco
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by Gabriele Formenti

One is always rather delighted to see the spotlight turned on the composer who is for good or bad in the Guinness Book of Records under the heading “Most Prolific Composer”! Thus it follows, only the brave and bold dip into this monumental oeuvre and come out with a half-decent grasp of the scope and spectrum of these numerous works all neatly classified with their TVWV and TWV numbers; some are simply bedazzled by the scale of things! And throw in the towel! And so we have to salute Gabrielle Formenti for even attempting this formidable and daunting task!! Myself being an avid baroquophile with Telemann as my musical *Leitstern* for some 35+ years, have been instructed by some of the very best in this wide field of study and performance, after my first exposure in the mid-80s to the exquisite “*Fruehlingskantate*” TVWV20:10 of 1720, from B.H.Brockes: *Irdisches Vergnuegen in Gott* from which both Handel and Telemann sought out inspiration in several works. The mere mention of “Brockes” ought to invoke the string of Passions that ensued from this famously penned work by this eponymous Hamburg senator, poet, librettist in 1712.. Interestingly around 1722, some years after Telemann's Frankfurt premiere on the 2nd April 1716 (N.B. TVWV5:1 Ran to 117 Numbers! P.196!) there was a performance of a “Pasticcio” composed of four settings with Telemann's in dominance; also it is said the first hamburg Passions 1722-4 contained some extracts; the Mark Passion of 1723 was lost in WW2! It was given in Leipzig 1739. Back to this audacious undertaking by Gabrielle Formenti to tackle the scope and full spectrum, the musical measure of G.P. Telemann, a colossal task for anyone, and here you can only be as good as, and reflect upon your own chosen points of reference. Perhaps moving in the inspired, insightful and studious footsteps of Steven Zohn's most excellent 2008 “Music for a Mixed Taste” Gabrielle Formenti, as a baroque flautist himself, was emboldened to enter the “lists” of musicology with this first monographic study in Italian. Boldly, bravely drawing impetus from S. Zohn and the now rather dated R. Petzoldt, which has errors, but is filled with a real feast of useful quotes, and a few notable musical examples on show. Alas, I do feel duty-bound to point out some “bold” slips/errors /oversights which do alter things, and not for the best! Some are obvious printed errors, and some have sadly “crept in”, even an own goal with: *Il Gardellino*!! On page 95, we see reference to “*La Putain*” (*Die Dirne*) this should be defined as (Anhang) TWV55:G1 especially as TWV55:G1 exists in its own right, and has in fact, been recorded twice (Atma and CPO) Incidentally, when Patrick Peire was tackling these Suites for Brilliant Classics, he told me he felt this piece sitting in “Anhang-limbo” was so very characteristic of Telemann's usual musical m.o.I must agree, and when you listen to TWV55:F7 and compare it again to TWV55:F10, there are rustic echoes to be found re-modeled here and elsewhere too! The foray into the Telemann autobiographic chapters are well selected and cover the salient events, with the images being well chosen to aid the reader; rather like in the 1980's hardback pocket pictorial biography by Walter Siegmund-Schultze. So visually this study is well supplied, and it must be said the extremely dilligent work cross-referencing, branching out into some fascinating musical associations and cleverly made observations do yield some musicological fruits to gaze at! Especially the Bach-Telemann links, some I wasn't aware of!? Bravo here! Yet, if only, yes if only!? the author of this study had gone a little bit futher on from merely citing of Professor Ian Payne's own “*Erstausgabe*” of TWV51:E2*, (**Severinus Urtext Telemann-Ausgabe SUTE94*) he might have glanced at nearly 60 Overture-suites editions! Including those expanded suite versions based on the *Kleine Cammer-Music* (1716): (**SUTE 67-71) this step into the Severinus-Press would also have informed the perfunctory remarks “inedito” in the TWV55 work listing at the end of this study. Note too the rather clumsy classification of the important Bach-linked work (P.61) of TWV51:G2!! The exploration of the Polish musical idioms in the instrumental works is well thought out, this is particularly evident in the double flute concerti...in which we do hear that rustic stomp and bagpipe drones. Going into a quite brief survey into the Overture-suites, some of the fairly well-known works are highlighted, with some omissions of clearly intended linked vocal works e.g. TWV55C3

Hamburger Ebbe & Fluth (Wassermusik) to the extensive, descriptive and eulogistic *Admiralitaetsmusik (Serenade)* TVWV24:1, both 1723, and the fine TWV55:F11 "Alster-echo" Suite with the sadly lost Serenade TVWV13:6 *Auf zur Freude, zum Scherzen, zum Klingeln* both given for the ducal visit of 1725, when it was said to have been greeted by a "real" cannonade from Hamburg's ramparts! Whilst examining the excellent and witty "Burlesque de Quichotte" Suite, it should be noted that this "berne" (<*acute accent) refers to a kind of "Strappado" punishment: "Faire sauter dans une couverture" (P.83 La Rousse etymologique) not to being hoodwinked or tricked as in modern French. This leads nicely on to the late TWV55:D22 Tragi-comique Suite with its ailments/defects and remedies...all quite possibly a serious poking of fun at the dedicatee (<*acute accent on e) of these late suites and divertimenti, namely the Duke Ludwig VIII of Hessen-Darmsstadt!

This collection known in musicological circles as the "T6 Konvolut" was found in a church tower in Riga (In the hands of G.M. Telemann, the Grandson, who owned lots of his Grandfather's works which held enough usefulness to have been reworked for several Riga performances).

The Work known as the "Grillen-Sinfonie" TWV50:1 is probably an intended play on words, meaning both, "Cricket/Grasshopper" yet more logically in musical these terms, eccentric, odd ideas or thoughts; the first notion would have annoyed Mattheson who tore into Telemann years earlier with sharply critical quill aiming (In his opinion) at odds, employed singing voices used in the Spring-cantata: "Alles redet itzt und singet" TVWV20:10 (Brockes) for all the birds and bees, cattle, "insects" etc...thus possibly here a very clever musical rebuff!! Fits well with the barely hidden "digs" in the TWV 55:D22 Suite too. The ducal pursuits of hunting, and even toasting and drinking can be found in the later suites and divertimenti, in fleeting, quickly portrayed episodes, so typical of the sprightly, episodic wit of Telemann which he kept right into his old age.

Should be noted that the wind quintets are now classified in TWV44:, thus formerly TWV55:F9 "La Chasse" is now TWV44:10! Steven Zohn correctly uses these definitions! (P.663 Music for a Mixed Taste).

It must be said that the exploration of Telemann's instrumental works is overall very neatly done with some very good observations, through the various phases and blendings of the "mixed taste" and the section on Corelli's Op.5 is particularly fine! Happy to be on home turf? The highly original graph regarding the distribution of instruments found in the *Getreue Music-Meister* (P.169) is a very clever touch of a modern presentation of information! Nice too to see a "real" image of a Calcedon from a Polish museum...it's mentioned in some Telemann cantatas, and elsewhere along with mandora, pandora instruments...types of mandolin.

Moving next into the many, multifarious choral works, which present a "massive" source of works to grapple with within the sacred and secular aspects of the oeuvre, each with their own specific genres. The various cycles of cantatas will slowly reveal their treasures (French-cycle 1714-15 now underway CPO!) The complete *Harmonischer Gottesdienst* 1725-6, has been now revised for the Baerenreiter editions 2006-7 (Gutav Foch And Ute Poetsch) that is 72 works! So along with the chamber settings of the *Fortsetzung des harmonischen Gottesdienstes* 1731/2 another 72 cantatas for one voice 2 instruments and b.c. Making ostensibly 144 works! (Re: P.182 *Propone 140!*) Now, relevant to this, I did my first little musicological study in 2007 (Classified Information) adding the next layer to this expansion/continuation of works; there are about 59 large-scale work which use the chamber, smaller versions of the *Fortsetzung* works as a nucleus, and are full-blown cantatas in their own right from circa 1741/2; from whence we have, the very first pair onto CD= *Kuendlich gross ist das gottselige Geheimnis*= TVWV1:1020 (CPO 999 515-2) and the chamber version being: *Goettliches Kind*= TVWV1:1020a!! (Capriccio 10 741) and unfortunately this has an impact in the final listings in the choral: *Catalogo delle Opere* at the close of this study. What adds more confusion, until you see it clearly, some 15 works here do share the *same Incipit*, for both Chamber and larger-scale versions: i.e. TVWV1:1 <SAME > TVWV1;1a being both called "*Abscheuliche Tiefe des grossen Verderbens* (Sonntag nach Weihnachten). Sharper knowledge of the discography teaches us much here, and it is a relief to see vol.7 of the Toccata Classics complete *Harmonischer*

Gottesdienst set, which began in 2006. One has to again say a respectful, well done to Gabrielle Formenti for *even* attempting this feat of a unified study, let alone daring to climb the mountain at all, with the 1,480 extant Cantatas from a possible total of well over 2,000, given that approx 300+ are lost; what did Handel glibly say: “He(GPT) could right a five-part motet quicker than most a letter”!

The lack of *any* of the now known [deest] works is here, including:

*Germanicus*1704/10)TVWV21:deest is quite telling!

Considerable aid and use might have been made of Siegbert Rampe's 2007 book *G.P.Telemann und seine Zeit*; with also support from the splendid earlier book by Eckart Klessmann (2004) which has some amazing chapters especially towards the end! Dating and correct titles of works is important, yet some slips do occur : “Die” Amors der Vesperta TVWV21;22 of 1727! In the aforementioned S.Rampe book (P.472-3) there's approx 12 [deest] Operas! There are clues to these elsewhere in some listings.

It felt just a little odd digressing to the selection of the Cornett(ino)(Zink) Cantatas (Found on CPO 999 542-2) yet the digression shows use of an older style of instrumentation attached to shading the text this harks back to a much older style akin to Schuetz and Praetorius. I did enjoy the image of the wind instruments. However, another choice here might have been the Cantate CD (C58012) with the clearly audible very early works indeed (Student/Hildesheim days??) and possibly *the* Psalm 6!! (TVWV7:3 533! Music found in the young Telemann's baggage on arrival in Leipzig to study. The Operas are dealt with quite well, I did see the mentioning of the “*grandioso*” “Miriways” Overture...which is a fabulous curtain-opener with 2 horns, and has keen stylistic links to that of TWV55:F12 (SUTE 115!) It is truly incredible to think of all the operatic works that flowed from one quill, one great musical esprit, that began in those heady student days (*Etudiants* gaillards:TWV 55:C4! SUTE 86 !) which most certainly “ruffled” Kuhnau's feathers appearing like some musical *parvenu*; continuing right up to the final closing moments of the famous “*Gaensemarkt*” opera house in 1738.

Moving onto the Passions, which for Hamburg total 46 individual settings, with 22 extant, plus the *Danziger Choral-Passion* of 1754 (TVWV5:53) which used the Mathew 1750 for the overall structure of its actual sung insertions. In this section of the study Gabriele Formenti relies on Jason B.Grant's 2005 examination of the narrative style and its changes through the following years, dividing the Passions into 3 groups, 1722-1736, 1737-1754, and 1755-67. The various settings seem to have been correctly assessed and the two known times that parodies, or borrowings from a previous Passion's layout were used, have been identified. It is hard not to stress enough the truly incredible diversity here, and the sheer drama and emotively charged pathos evoked in increasingly Enlightenment terms..some of the later Passions display some astounding depictions with highly dramatic scenic alertness caught in extremely vivid in often visceral music. The influences from the Passion-Oratorios are keenly felt, and as the years advance into the more Galant, *Empfindsamer* period circa 1750+ this is exemplified.. Sadly, in the Catalogue listings at the end of this Study some dreadful errors have crept in, e.g. whilst compiling the list of Passions, and given several times: “Ein Loemlein”...geht und traegt die Schuld... the famous quote from John Gospel. This irksome error is also found in some cantatas and other places and will challenge your patience, and possibly knowledge of German! IF Only a final sweep of proof reading had been made to iron out these erroneous “slips” or printing faults?! Beware the Umlauts floating over the wrong vowels!!! TVWV2:3 Haettel!?! 2:7 Gaetzen!?! Even some missing: TVWV3:12 :Goetter!

The individual Passion settings that are extant give ample testament to the composer's remarkable abilities to depict each emotive tableau in strikingly original ways, borrowing increasingly from the musical ideas found in the more freely composed Passion-Oratoria and with a sense of operatic, dramatic freedom. One fact should have been mentioned, the John Passion of 1745 was the sole Passion to be published during the composer's lifetime. Good to see the Mark 1755 counted

here, a fairly recent discovery made in Krakau! Especially as the Mark Passions are the least represented: Only 3 from 12! (I have only in last few years heard “all” the Arias in the Mathew 1730, and know the final extant Passions 1759-67 fairly well!)

To round off this vocal section the impressive stream of works from the latter years, the truly extraordinary cluster of late passion-oratorios! When Telemann seemed to gain a tremendous second wind of creative energy, and produced some real masterpieces (capolavori). Two points here, it is very good to focus on the 1759 setting *Der Messias* (F.G.Klopstock) TVWV6:4 a+b, the poetry has such an angular, awkward rhythm and flow, it is quite amazing that Telemann managed to extract such a clever and smooth melodiousness delivering impactful declamatory moments. There was another work from this same poetic source in a triumphant Easter (*Triumphgesang*) work now sadly lost!

It was in my opinion, it's an oversight not to include anything from the deeply impressive and moving: *Der Tod Jesu* TVWV5:6 1755, which although overshadowed later by Graun's setting, being mostly italianate in nature, whereas Telemann used French meter in recitatives as he did in the fluent musical ideas in the Mathew 1746 Passion, clearly shows the enlightened evolution of this genre.

A rather flimsy comparison is made between the “Betrachtungen” found in *Seliges Erwaegen* TWV5:2, and the “four” in the mighty *Der Tag des Gerichts* TVWV6: 8 of 1762, four decades later, far from it, the former work takes its main creative poetic stimuli from “distilled” extracted motifs found in the Brockes Passion text, you can detect the direct parodies, “cross-pollination” by closer examination of the relevant scenes' poetry. The imposing and dramatically charged: *Tag des Gerichts* is conceived across the mighty D-major pillars at each end of the first and last *Betrachtung*; and who could forget the stupendous opening of the second *Betrachtung also in D*, when Jesus travels on lightening bolts! At least one item, aria/chorus from each of the late works could have been given as an exemplary, demonstrative hint to the whole oratorio; at least cited if not in actual score. Such a shame about the final spelling slip on the very last page (P.200) *Ein ew'ger “Palm” umschlingt mein Haar* from this breath-takingly fine work. (Saw no mention of the lost *Davidische Gesaenge* 1719/20 TVWV6:1)

In summation, this is a most admirable, valliant attempt to encompass the vast and varied genres of music produced by one of the most fluent and versatile masters of the age, a protean polymath, who embraced every aspect with all his artistic abilities leaving us a prolific legacy to examine, enjoy and contemplate. I feel Gabriele Formenti is perhaps more at home in the instrumental details, and this section is filled with many interesting observations, yet the vocal side could have been a bit more refined here and there, but here again you are only as good as your most recent reference materials at hand, the books by S. Rampe and E. Klessmann would have yielded much, especially Rampe's work listings! All in all, despite the odd *errata* this is a commendable monograph (In Italian) in just 200 pages, on Telemann which may prove to be a stepping-stone for some, and “grist to mill” for other like-minded musicologists and musicians, stimulating them to pick up an edition or recording and explore the vast oeuvre further, grasping hold of the fleeting comet's dazzling tail!

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