Politics and Pergolesi: Examining How Eighteenth-Century Italian Politics Influenced the Growth of Pergolesi’s Neapolitan Style, and Opera Itself

Matthew Janik
The University of Guelph

Recommended Citation
Politics and Pergolesi: Examining How Eighteenth-Century Italian Politics Influenced the Growth of Pergolesi’s Neapolitan Style, and Opera Itself

This article is available in Nota Bene: Canadian Undergraduate Journal of Musicology: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/notabene/vol4/iss2/8
Politics and Pergolesi
Examining How Eighteenth-Century Italian Politics Influenced the Growth of Pergolesi’s Neapolitan Style, and Opera Itself

Matthew Janik
Year II – The University of Guelph

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi transplanted his reactions to changes in Italian socio-political structures to the stage in La Serva Padrona. Through a contextual analysis of events contemporaneous to Pergolesi’s time, and by reflecting upon written sources and musical examples, this paper examines how both La Serva Padrona, and Pergolesi himself were affected by growing class divisions between the opera going public, the royal courts’ inability to properly govern, and the decentralization of Italian politics.

In this paper, I pursue the development of Pergolesi’s Neapolitan style, and examine the cultural, economic and political settings which surrounded La Serva Padrona. Resulting from Italian decentralization, I explore how the cultural growth of Naples caused it to become isolated from the rest of Italy, allowing its conservatory students, such as Pergolesi, to develop a distinctive intermezzo style. I examine how Italy prospered from large revenues generated by exporting their unique culture to foreign markets, resulting in larger budgets, which Pergolesi and his contemporaries were able to utilize. I investigate how a substantial amount of public funding and interest was provided by the politically-weakened administration associated with King Charles VII of Naples, which protected the aristocracy’s wealth.
Through the examination of these contexts, I bring together themes of Italian culture, economy and politics to identify the environments in which *La Serva Padrona* thrived, failed, and caused international reform.