

Henri Collet, Un tratado de canto de órgano (siglo XVI). Manuscrito en la Biblioteca nacional de París. Edición y comentarios (1913)

A product of his musicological research, this work, finished in May 1912 according to the prologue (pg. 11) and written entirely in Spanish, is the “complementary thesis” to the main thesis in two volumes presented by Henri Collet for his Doctor of Letters degree, *[Le mysticisme musical espagnol au xvi^e siècle](#)* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1913). Collet defended both theses on 11 March 1913 at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Paris. Dedicated “To Madame Pierre Aubry”, the widow of the musicologist and École des chartes graduate who had devoted the bulk of his research to medieval French music but also to manuscripts of early music conserved in Spanish libraries, notably including the repertoire of *Cantigas de Santa María* of Alfonso X of Castille, on which Collet also worked, this academic work of a philological character was published in Madrid in 1913 by Librería Gutenberg de José Ruiz/Ruiz hermanos, sucesores.

With 136 pages of text followed by a copious unpaginated supplement of 191 music examples in staff notation, the work consists of an edition with commentary of the anonymous sixteenth-century MS “nº 219” in the Spanish section of the “Bibliothèque nationale de Paris” (pg. 9) [F-Pn esp. 219] (1860 classification; former Fonds, nº 7817). According to Collet, this manuscript contains important rules of composition with regard to the counterpoint of its era, rules directly connected to the “scholastic tradition of Aristotle, Boethius, and Isidore of Seville” (pg. 10)—as explained from a historical point of view in the first chapter of his main thesis—and which seem appreciably influenced by the French humanist, moralist, and theologian Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples (1450–?1536). The anonymous author of this treatise does not limit himself to a merely speculative and theoretical domain but offers practical rules too; hence Collet’s description of the text as a “method of polyphonic [or] figured music” (pg. 131).

Before the edition properly speaking of the original treatise in three parts (the first devoted to “numbers” [i.e. mensuration], the second to counterpoint, and the third, incomplete, to proportions)—an edition accompanied by its indispensable critical apparatus (section IV of Collet’s work, pp. 45–129)—Collet describes the physical state of the manuscript (Section I, pp. 13–14), a task already accomplished in part by the philologist, romanist, and hispanist Alfred Morel-Fatio in his *Catalogue des manuscrits espagnols [et portugais]* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1881). Collet then considers the question of the author’s identity by comparing the work to contemporary treatises (Section II, pp. 15–33), and finally analyses its theoretical content and attempts to characterise its literary style (Section III, pp. 35–43). In his

conclusion (section V, pg. 131), he expresses the hope that, thanks to this work, musicologists and a broader public will take an interest in the musical life of Spain's golden century, "so unjustly and unfortunately neglected to this day" (pg. 131).

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Trans. Tadhg Sauvey

Further reading

- Canguilhem, Philippe (dir.), *Chanter sur le livre à la Renaissance. Les traités de contrepoint de Vicente Lusitano*, Turnhout, Brepols, coll. « Épitome musical », 2013 [410 p. ; ISBN 978-2-503-55040-4].
- Stevenson, Robert, « Vicente Lusitano New Light on His Carrer », dans *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 15, n° 1 (spring, 1962), p. 72-77.

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