

Hearing Faith: Music as Theology in the Spanish Empire. By **Jonathon B. Slough.** *Studies in Reformation Studies* 1. Leiden: Brill, 2020. xvi + 244 pp. \$128.00 cloth; \$128.00 e-book.

The seventeenth-century *villancico* tradition in Spain and its empire has not been studied extensively in Anglophone musical scholarship, likely in part because of a perception of its stylistic conservatism and simplistic scoring compared to the *concertato* experiments emerging from the Italian peninsula at the time, which are framed as the indices of progressive stylistic development in the standard U.S. historiographical narrative. The overall goal of Cashner's book is to make an argument for engaging more thoughtfully with the repertory:

Villancicos constituted a major element of the soundscape of the early modern Ibero-American world. They shaped the everyday experiences of thousands of people across social strata. They provide evidence for a sustained effort by Spanish church leaders to use music to make faith appeal to the sense of hearing, and they reflect widely held beliefs and attitudes about music's spiritual power. (10)

From the beginning, Cashner makes his project explicit: "This book is a study of how Christians in early modern Spain and Spanish America enacted religious beliefs about music, through the medium of music itself" (3). As the reader learns more about the scope of the repertory and the kinds of rhetorical and sonic devices employed to make spiritual understanding manifest through sounded text, the subject of Cashner's topic sentence becomes implicitly narrower: the examples he provides focus on elite literary traditions and compositions for large churches and solemn events. Still, Cashner effectively makes the point that *villancicos* were especially effective because of their appeal to a socially diverse audience and their role in helping to shape a collective worldview grounded in the Catholic faith. While nuances of compositional craft and literary allusion would have been accessible only to the ruling elites, the overall dramatic and sonic clarity and directness of the repertory and the way that it both drew on and reaffirmed established spiritual conventions and social hierarchies would have been comprehensible and appealing to a broader public. This accounts for the popularity of the *villancico* tradition as a paraliturgical and devotional genre in New Spain through the end of the eighteenth century, and Cashner's book is the most comprehensive and accessible overview to date in English of the importance and sophistication of the genre during the seventeenth century.

In part 1, Cashner frames his approach to the repertory and its significance in two broad sections titled "Villancicos as Musical Theology" and "Making Faith Appeal to Hearing." The former investigates the way *villancicos* often exemplify "singing about singing" in the context of declaration of faith, both in the composer's choice of texts and in sonic detail, creating a "musical discourse about music" that "becomes a way of *performing* theology" (6). Through an unprecedented review of thousands of *villancicos* from Spain and New Spain, Cashner provides evidence of over eight hundred of what he describes as "metamusical" compositions in a variety of categories that dwell on human music-making, as well as the sounds of nature and "unheard" divine harmonies. In providing detailed examples of these works, Cashner draws on the valuable editions he has created for the Web Library of Seventeenth-Century

Music (<https://www.sscm-wlscm.org/>). A reader who has not yet had the opportunity to engage with Cashner's book or editions may get a taste of the material at <http://www.andrewcashner.com/villancicos>. In this first part of the book Cashner also dwells on how "spiritual ear training" was an essential concept in a culture that understood faith as deriving from hearing. Again, he grounds the general observations to that effect that are provided in both doctrinal and catechetical writings in specific short examples of *villancico* compositions that he argues are explicitly designed to train and appeal to the ears of the faithful.

Part 2 consists of three more extended case studies in which Cashner elucidates in detail the complex doctrinal rhetoric deployed not only in the texts of the *villancicos* he examines but in the specific musical decisions made by their composers to lead listeners to spiritual understanding in particular contexts. Cashner's arguments here are carefully and thoroughly documented through primary materials closely associated with Spanish religious writing; his stylistically insightful musical analysis explicates how composers deployed sophisticated musical-expressive devices to shape their *villancicos* through sometimes subtle variants to established genre-convention.

Cashner's deep dives into textual and musical details of spiritual hermeneutics require sustained attention on the part of the reader, and his ability to move nimbly from details of doctrinal exegesis to nuances of compositional choice can be challenging for a reader who is not equally learned in both topics. However, he is careful to frame his close readings with clear and compelling introductions and conclusions to his case studies, which effectively convey the significance of each instance and help the reader understand how these disparate cases share essential characteristics. Given the effectiveness of Cashner's introduction and the strong case-study framing, I would have valued a more comprehensive concluding chapter at the end of the book; the short "conclusion" at the end of the final case study is only two pages long and raises important points that could have been fruitfully developed with more explicit reference to some of the key threads that run through the book. But this is a minor issue and does not diminish the extraordinary value of Cashner's scholarship and interpretative insights to both musicological and theological study of early modern culture. I will eagerly use this book in my teaching and will encourage rising scholars to draw on it as a model of careful and compelling interdisciplinary work.

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***Sacred Journeys in the Counter-Reformation: Long-Distance Pilgrimage in Northwest Europe.* By Elizabeth Caroline Tingle. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2020. xiii + 246. \$99.99 hardcover.**

This is a scholarly but accessible overview of a very important aspect of Catholic piety in the early modern period and one which acted as a significant boundary marker with Protestant regions. Given the havoc wrought on historical research by the COVID pandemic, the book also offers a salutary example of the possibility of producing excellent work by intelligent exploitation of printed sources. While the book contains a wealth of