An Investigation Into Arcangelo Corelli's Influence On Eighteenth-Century Spain

By Craig H. Russell

Although it has long been known that Arcangelo Corelli's music was immensely popular across most of Europe, it has not been widely recognized that he was revered and acclaimed by the Spanish. The fact is that they regarded him as one of the preeminent composers of the eighteenth century. His works were copied out into many contemporaneous manuscripts, and the leading Spanish theorists of the time, progressive and conservative alike, mentioned him frequently and always with a tone of admiration and respect.

Theoretical Sources

Spain was engulfed by a series of polemics in the early eighteenth century concerning the virtues and vices of the newly-introduced Italian style. Conservative Spanish theorists accused the Italians of failing to distinguish between sacred and secular styles: the lyrical and tuneful arias of the Italians that were creeping into sacred compositions were intended only to delight and please the senses; the austere polyphonic style of the Spanish masters, in contrast, was meant to inspire noble and reverent contemplation. The Italians were accused of ignoring the laws of counterpoint and composition and were criticized for introducing violins (a secular and "frivolous" instrument) into sacred music. Corelli, however, was so respected for his compositional skills that he was usually exempted from these scathing attacks of the conservative Spanish theorists. Francisco Valls and Padre Benito Feijoo, both of whom launched invectives against the superficiality of the Italian newcomers and their shallow musical style, had kind words for Corelli. As Valls wrote:

At the present time there is a great abundance of composers of toccatas, sonatas, and symphonies (the majority of which can be said to be compositions that neither connect nor resolve according to the rules) for which reason any mediocre violinist plunges into the composing of symphonies ignoring the rules of music. Some of them come out without any rhyme or reason whatever: any little snippet or passage—that by chance might have occurred to this or that author while playing the violin—is clumsily inserted come what may. They put to it a harsh accompaniment and many times it does not fit. What results, then, is a deformed monster with neither feet nor head. This is not the case with all of Corelli's works and other ancient foreign authors; their music is very good, well-wrought, sonorous, and appropriate for the Temple. This is exactly what is missing in many of the other works we have been speaking about. These authors of the "Fantastic Style" only seek the applause of the mob, caring for nothing more. Many times they fall into tunes more appropriate for dance than for the Church.
Feijoo, in his later writings after he had mellowed toward the Italian style, showed his clear preference for Corelli over the entire French school put together.

[With respect to the fine arts], the greatest credits are Italian; well for however much the French, as a rule, would like to attribute to themselves considerable advantages in these arts, I believe that all their poets put together do not equal a Torquato Tasso, nor all their musicians combined a Corelli, all their painters a Raphael, nor all their sculptors a Michelangelo.

Not always did Corelli receive such accolades from the conservative Spanish theorists. The anonymous *Manifiesto cargo que haze un inteligente en la música* cautions the Church's chapel masters to avoid "singing and playing music with gaiety and liveliness that the Divine Rites do not require. The liveliness was introduced without method or measure [by those] with the presumption and desire to imitate Corelli's [music]."

Both sides in the polemic, progressive as well as conservative, championed Corelli's works. Writers who enthusiastically welcomed the Italian musical influence into Spain saw in Corelli's music the lyricism and grace of the new style combined with the compositional craft and command over counterpoint associated with the polyphonic school. Juan Francisco de Corominas, the first violinist at the University of Salamanca and one of the most articulate defenders of the modern style, cited Corelli in his rebuttal against Padre Feijoo's assertion that the modern Italians had no skill or art with fugal or imitative writing. He suggested that Feijoo should consult Corelli's works, "especially the fifth and sixth [opus]es of Corelli and all those of Albinoni. With such concertos one will be enlightened." Corominas later listed those composers worthy of praise for their mastery of romantic alterations. With this list, Corominas undoubtedly was addressing an earlier statement by Feijoo that praised Antonio Literes' use of chromaticism to underscore the dramatic sense of the text. Corominas acknowledged Literes' skill but argued that he was not unique in this ability. His equals were to be found in the Spaniards Joseph de Torres, José de Nebra, Juan de Lima Serqueira, and Antonio Yanguas, and in the Italians Tomaso Albinoni, Antonio Vivaldi, and, of course, Arcangelo Corelli.

Later in the century, Antonio Eximeno used an abbreviated version of the first movement from Corelli's Sonata Op. 5, No. 1 as a musical example in his *Del origen y reglas de la música*. Eximeno stated that "at the beginning of the century Arcangelo Corelli contributed to the perfecting of music; he almost can be regarded as the inventor of the art of playing the violin of whose instrument little attention was paid before his time. He discovered the fundamental positions of the hand, studied the way to carry the bow with elegance, and composed many sonatas to exercise the hand and develop good taste in beginners." He praised Corelli's music for "the natural progression of the fundamental bass, the clarity of the modes, the naturalness of the voicings, the regularity of modulations, and the perfect resolution of disso-
Eximeno continued that the cultivation of instrumental music "reaches perfection in the works of Corelli, which are always held in high esteem for the variety of the beautiful and well sustained themes, for the exact observance of the rules of harmony, for the soundness of the bass lines, and for the suitability in training the hand of performers."

The excerpt from Corelli's first solo violin sonata was used by Eximeno in defending his treatise against a biting attack from Pezzuti, the editor and director of the Roman journal Eftmeridi Letterarie. Pezzuti's letter was vicious, vindictive, and—not surprisingly—unsigned. In it, Pezzuti dismissed Del origen y reglas de la música as "silly chatter" and took aim at Eximeno as being a mere mathematician and reactionary who "wants to meddle in musical practice with the 'cute' French invention of the fundamental bass."

"What could be more ridiculous," he continued, "than calling a string the bass if it turns all the harmony upside down when it is put at the bottom."

Eximeno's response was a more subdued yet eloquent rebuttal:

I agree that in today's fashion (where the bass is almost always lyrical) if the fundamental were added to a composition it could destroy some of the elegance that derives from the omission of the said bass or its transfer to the treble part, as in the first "Adagio" of Sonata No. 1, Op. 5 by Corelli, that begins with an exchange of parts; the treble part makes the leap up of a fifth normally done by the bass, and the bass moves stepwise as the treble would normally do. This exchange of parts is an elegant touch that would be destroyed if the motion of the [fundamental] bass were put in the lowest-sounding part. Elegance and craftsmanship should not be confused with the basis of harmony.

Modern scholars often credit Corelli with being the teacher of Joseph Herrando, the author of the first violin tutor in Spanish and one of the most prominent Spanish violinists of the eighteenth century. This claim first appeared in Eitner's Quellen-Lexikon and subsequently was spread through the influential writings of Rafael Mitjana. Mitjana bases his claim on an alleged statement by Herrando in his introduction to the Arte y puntual explicación that he was, indeed, Corelli's pupil. Marc Pincherle, however, questions the evidence. In no known copy of the treatise has he found any such statement by Herrando. Eitner and Mitjana's claim, then, must be regarded with caution. It is ironic that the one example chosen so often from among so many to illustrate Corelli's influence in Spain, is probably spurious.

Musical Sources

One of the great difficulties in working with Spanish sources of the early eighteenth century is the paucity of primary source material. Andrés Ruiz Tarazona has proposed several reasons for this unfortunate situation; he accurately places much of the blame on the contemporary Spanish publishers who had little interest or skill in music publishing and also on the series of disastrous fires in the eighteenth century that gutted many sacred and secular libraries. One of the greatest of these losses was occasioned by the fire on
Christmas eve of 1734 that completely destroyed the Royal Palace and its entire music holdings.

Of the few extant primary sources of instrumental music from early eighteenth-century Spain, a remarkably high percentage contain pieces by Corelli. The two most important compilers of keyboard music from the time, Antonio Martín y Coll and Francisco de Tejada, include many Corelli compositions in their anthologies. Three trio sonatas ascribed to Corelli are present in the Biblioteca de Catalunya in Barcelona. Transcriptions of his works appear in two baroque guitar sources of the time: Manuscript 1560 in the Biblioteca Nacional in Mexico City and Santiago de Murcia's exquisite manuscript collection, the *Passacalles y obras de guitarra por todos los tonos naturales y acidentales* (1732).

Perhaps the strongest link between Corelli and the Iberian peninsula is found in Santiago de Murcia, the foremost baroque guitarist in eighteenth-century Spain. Not only do Corelli's compositions appear in Murcia's manuscript, but it is quite possible that the two men actually met. Recent research by Mario Rinaldi has shown that the famous meeting between Alessandro Scarlatti and Arcangelo Corelli in Naples recounted by Charles Burney probably took place not in 1708, as Burney reported, but in 1702. The two musicians collaborated on Scarlatti's *Tiberio, Imperatore d'Oriente* and a Scarlatti serenade in early May 1702. Philip V of Spain, Murcia's patron, was in Naples at the time and must have been the unnamed king that Burney placed in attendance at the musical performance. In the eighteenth century it was customary for a king to travel with a small entourage of musicians and servants from his own court, and in all probability Santiago de Murcia was included in that circle of musicians. After all, he was the leading guitarist in the Spanish court at the time and would be a likely candidate for such a journey.

Murcia includes numerous Corelli transcriptions in his *Passacalles y obras*. Out of the hundreds of borrowed and transcribed works in Murcia's baroque guitar books, only Corelli wins the privilege of being specifically credited as the composer of a borrowed work. There are four movements in the *Passacalles y obras* that can be traced to Corelli originals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Murcia, <em>Passacalles y obras</em></th>
<th>Corelli, Opus 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tocata de Coreli. Por este mismo tono.</td>
<td>Sonata No. 8, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grave</td>
<td>fol. 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegro</td>
<td>fol. 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despacio</td>
<td>fol. 87v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giga</td>
<td>fol. 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigue una Giga de Coreli. Dificil, por este termino.</td>
<td>Sonata No. 5, VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giga</td>
<td>fol. 95v</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copyright (c) 2003 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) Columbia University
One curious aspect of the Tocata is its patchwork or "pasticcio" construction. The various movements are borrowed from different sonatas: the first two movements from Sonata No. 8; the ensuing slow movement not being found in any Corelli work. Its three-voice chords and slow pace, however, are of the same character as some of the adagio sections in Corelli's trio sonatas. This short movement—scarcely two phrases long—ends on the dominant chord to prepare for the final movement, a transposed version of the final gigue from Sonata No. 5. Murcia ornaments the opening "Grave" with trills, mordents, vibrato, appoggiature, and rapid scale runs. He is but one of many eighteenth-century musicians to record ornamented versions of Corelli's solo sonatas: there are ten other sources. 28

The presence of sixteen movements from Corelli's sonatas in a manuscript anthology of Mexican provenance testifies to his popularity in the Spanish colonies in the early eighteenth century.

Ms. 1560, Biblioteca Nacional in Mexico City

Baroque Guitar

Sonata IX de la Opera V de Coreli. fol. 27v Op. 5, No. 9
Largo Movement: I
Giga Alegro II
Adagio III
Tempo de Gavota IV

Giga de la Sonata 3ª de la Opera V de Coreli. fol. 31v Op. 5, No. 3, V
De la Sonata X. fol. 33 Op. 5, No. 10
Sarabanda largo Movement: III
Gavota Alegro IV
Giga Alegro V


Violin

Chiga de Coreli. Opera 5ª. fol. 61v Op. 5, No. 5, V
(many errors)

[Untitled] fol. 62v Op. 4, No. 10
(The short "Adagio" precedes the "Presto"; the "Grave" is omitted.) Movement: III

[Untitled] fol. 64v Op. 6, No. 8, VIII
(Violins I and II of the concertino group)
Lezion del Maestro Corelio
Primer Biolin
(Violin I of the concertino group, from the "Grave" movement)

Lezion a solo del M. Jerardo.
Allegro. Coreli.
(Violin I of the concertino group, from the final "Allegro")

[Untitled] Coreli
(Violin I of the concertino group)

Folias Coreli.1. Complet.

The first half of the anthology is written in tablature notation for the five-course baroque guitar, whereas the latter pages for violin utilize modern staff notation. The baroque guitar arrangements of Corelli's solo violin sonatas draw solely upon the violin part and make no attempt to simultaneously realize the basso continuo line. Awkward silences result in the baroque guitar arrangements whenever the original violin part is resting and the basso continuo line is the part of primary interest. In the famed "Folia," the manuscript simply omits the variations in which the basso continuo is the more active and interesting of the two parts. The violin section of the same manuscript also contains many Corelli works. When both violin parts from the concertino group in Opus 6 appear, they are copied side by side on facing pages: the first violin part is always on the verso side of a folio with the second violin part appearing on the facing recto folio.

The keyboard anthologies of the period—like the baroque guitar sources—make a point to mention Corelli by name when he is the author of a work even though the other pieces in the collection bear no ascription. One such source, Martin y Coll's *Huerto ameno de varias flores*, arranges for keyboard the first three violin sonatas from Corelli's Opus 5.

*Huerto ameno de varias flores*  
Corelli

Tocata. Alegres de Corelli.  
fol. 186  Op. 5, No. 1
Tocata Segunda  
fol. 191  Op. 5, No. 2
Tocata 3ª  
fol. 196  Op. 5, No. 3

The manuscript's version of Sonata No. 3 is incomplete: it stops after the third movement of the original, omitting the final two allegros.

Another important Spanish keyboard source from the early eighteenth century, the *Libro de música de clavicímalo* compiled by Francisco de Tejada, ascribes three works to Corelli.
The “Alemanda de Coreli” with its following “Segunda Parte” and “Tercera Parte” are drawn from the Allemande, Corrente, and Gavotte of the first trio sonata in Corelli’s Opus 2. The original prelude has been deleted and the trio texture has been reduced to only two functional parts (the basso continuo and first violin). Perhaps Tejada omitted Corelli’s second violin part in his keyboard arrangement to assure that the difficulty of the arrangement would not exceed the skill of the novice performer; all of the selections in Tejada’s manuscript are designed to be playable by any performer of modest ability. The same texture reduction occurs in the “Aria de Coreli.” Other simplifications appear as well: the idiomatic arpeggios of the first violin are reworked into rather bland and less demanding scale runs; the numerals of the figured bass are omitted altogether; and octave displacement of the basso continuo, coupled with an added note or two in the left hand to fill out the texture, obscure the voice-leading in several instances. The “Piesa de Coreli” is a short minuet in D-minor with answering phrases between the top and bottom lines. In spite of the attribution to Corelli, the work bears no resemblance to any known work by him.

Arrangements and transcriptions of Corelli’s works in Spanish sources are plentiful, but quite remarkably, only one extant Spanish manuscript preserves intact Corelli’s music and its original instrumentation. The “Sinfonia a 3. Due Bioline & Basso de Corelli” (Manuscript 744/38 in the Biblioteca de Catalunya in Barcelona) is an accurate copy of Sonata No. 4 from the Opus 4 collection of trio sonatas. Another source in the Biblioteca de Catalunya (Manuscript 763/15), copied in the same hand, contains two more sonatas ascribed to Corelli:

“Sinfonia a 3. Due Violino & Violone Organo”
(identified on the parts as “Sonata tersa de Coreli”)

| Adagio   | (10 measures) |
| Allegro  | (19 measures, binary with repeats) |
| Giga Presto | (26 measures, binary with repeats) |
| Presto   | (21 measures, binary with repeats) |

“Otra Sinfonia a 3 Due Violini Biolone & Basso di Corelli”

| Adagio   | (16 measures) |
| Allegro  | (21 measures, binary with repeats) |
| Adagio   | (6 measures) |
| Adagio Menuet | (8 measures, binary with repeats) |
The veracity of the ascriptions should be questioned: the first trio sonata is not found in any other source. The overall structure and imitative violins are not atypical of Corelli's style, but the unimaginative harmonies and cliché passagework argue against the authenticity of this particular work.

The other trio sonata is more problematic and intriguing. If one transposes the opening Adagio to F-major, it replicates the first measure of Corelli's Sonata Opus 3, No. 1. By the second measure, however, the two pieces diverge. Similarly, the manuscript's Alegro [sic] mirrors the opening of his Sonata Opus 1, No. 12, only to depart by the second measure. The chains of suspensions, the rich harmonic progressions, and the inventive melodic qualities are all in keeping with Corelli's compositional style. Yet while the quality of the writing in these two movements is elegant and finely crafted, the final movements are another matter. Movements III and IV resemble no known Corelli composition and are so short and simplistic as to arouse one's suspicion over Corelli's possible authorship. Whether or not these two sonatas are spurious, the very fact that the Spanish scribe attributes them to Corelli demonstrates the Italian's importance in Spain at this time.

That Corelli was popular in Spain is not surprising. All of Europe fell under his influence and the Iberian peninsula was no exception. What is particularly significant, however, is the manner in which his influence surfaced in Spain. Of the extant musical sources, relatively few copy Corelli's compositions in an unaltered state; keyboard and baroque guitar arrangements abound whereas relatively few sources preserve the original instrumentation. Yet it is apparent that Corelli commanded the respect of both conservative and progressive theorists: even though most important musicians of the time were identified with one side or the other in the series of polemics that consumed eighteenth-century Spanish theoretical writings, Corelli was elevated above the bickering. Arcangelo Corelli, in the eyes of the Spanish, was one of the great masters of the age.

NOTES

1 The best discussion of these polemics is found in Antonio Martín Moreno's El Padre Feijoo y las ideologías musicales del XVIII en España (Orense: Instituto de Estudios Orensanos "Padre Feijoo," 1976). Moreno includes an invaluable appendix of the authors and the works associated with both sides of the polemics. Francisco José León Tello, in his La teoría española de la música en los siglos XVII y XVIII (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas and the Instituto Español de Musicología, 1974), discusses in great detail the conservative and progressive theorists of the time.
2 Francisco Valls, "Mapa armónico práctico, breve resumen de los principales reglas de música sacado de los más clásicos autores especulativos y prácticos, antiguos, y modernos, ilustrado con diferentes exponentes, para la más fácil, y segura enseñanza de muchachos" (M. 1071 in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid), fols. 229v-230.
3 Padre Benito Feijoo, "Disvade a un amigo suyo, el autor el estudio de la lengua griega y le persuade el de la francesa," carta 23 in vol. V of Cartas eruditas y curiosas en que por la mayor parte se continua el discurso de el Théatro critico universal (Madrid, 1777), pp. 382-83. See Martín Moreno, Padre Feijoo, p. 77.
4 Manifiesto cargo que hace un inteligente en la música, a los constituydos en la obtención de los magisterios de capilla, y órgano (n.p., n.d.), p. 15. The only extant copy is in the Conservatorio Eugenia de Granada. See Martín Moreno, Padre Feijoo, p. 278.

5 Juan Francisco de Corominas, Aposento anti-critico, desde donde se ve representar la gran comedia, que en su Teatro critico regaló al pueblo el RR. P. M. Feijoo, contra la música moderna, y uso de violines en los templos (Salamanca, 1726), pp. 27–28. See Martín Moreno, Padre Feijoo, p. 224.

6 Corominas, Aposento, pp. 21–22.


8 Antonio Eximeno, Del origen y reglas de la música, con la historia de su progreso, decadencia y restauración (Madrid, 1796), book 2, plate 9. This publication is a Spanish translation of Eximeno’s Dell’Origine e della regole della musica colla storia del suo progresso, decadenza e rinnovazione (Rome, 1774). León Tello devotes considerable attention to Eximeno’s writings in his Teoría española, pp. 266–347. The first of Eximeno’s three books in Del origen y reglas de la música has been published in a modern edition with an introduction by Francisco Otero (Madrid: Editorial Nacional, 1978).


10 Ibid., p. 175. See León Tello, Teoría española, p. 399.


12 Otero, on p. 17 of his introduction to Eximeno’s Del origen, identifies the author of this letter as being Pezzuti. He includes the entire letter (pp. 297–300) and Eximeno’s response (pp. 301–12) in the back of his edition.

13 Otero’s edition of Eximeno’s Del origen, p. 310.

14 Joseph Herrando, Arte, y puntual explicación del modo de tocar el violín, con perfección, y facilidad, siendo muy útil, para cualquiera que aprenda así aficionado como profesor aprovechándose los maestros en la enseñanza de sus discípulos, con mas brevedad y descanso (Paris, 1757). It should be noted that the date of publication is often given as 1756, but the “Privilegio” is dated 25 February 1757.


17 My inspection of copy M. 2539 in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid of Herrando’s Arte y puntual explicación reinforces Pincherle’s skepticism. I found no mention of Corelli in the treatise.


19 “Huerto ameno de varias flores de música recogidas de varios organistas por Fray Antonio Martín[,] año 1709 de Esteva Costa Calvo” (M. 1360 in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid). “Libro de música de clav[i]cimbalo del Sr. Dn. Francisco de Tejada. 1721” (M. 815 in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid). The value of these two anthologies is emphasized if one closely examines the available sources. The Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid has only twenty-eight extant manuscripts of instrumental music of the period. Half of these sources are not anthologies but are volumes dedicated to a single composer or occasionally a pair of composers. There are several manuscripts written for unusual instruments not conducive for Corelli transcriptions: psaltery (sources M. 2310 and M. 2249), harp (sources M. 2478 and M. 816), and fifes and drums (source M. 2791). Source M. 811 for baroque guitar contains no Corelli works. The remaining eight sources are for keyboard. A stylistic analysis of the anthology M. 1250 can safely date the manuscript as coming from the second half of the eighteenth century (by which time interest in Corelli had waned). With the exception of a couple of minuets, passepieds, and a folia, source M. 2262 contains only Italian cantatas making the possible inclusion of Corelli's
instrumental compositions inappropriate. Of the remaining six sources, five are anthologies compiled by Antonio Martín y Coll (M. 1357, M. 1358, M. 1359, M. 1360, and M. 2267) and one by Francisco de Tejada (M. 815). It is therefore quite significant that both men include Corelli transcriptions in their anthologies.

20 “Sinfonia a 3. Due Bioline & Basso di Corelli” (Manuscript 744/38) and “Sinfonia a 3. Due Violino & Violone Organo” and “Otra Sinfonia a 3 Due Violini Biolone & Basso di Corelli” (Manuscript 763/15) in the Biblioteca de Catalunya in Barcelona.


22 Mario Rinaldi was the first to uncover the evidence and put together this convincing argument. See Arcangelo Corelli (Milan: Edizioni Curzi, n.d.), pp. 249–50. For discussion and amplification of Rinaldi’s remarks see Pincherle’s Corelli, pp. 34–37 and Frank Stuart Stilling’s dissertation, Arcangelo Corelli (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1956), pp. 25–27.

23 Pincherle, Corelli, p. 37.

24 I am indebted to Astrid Topp Russell for having suggested this possibility to me.


27 Robert Strizich was the first scholar to mention that Murcia’s Passacalles y obras includes works by Corelli, but he does not give the precise correspondences. See Robert Strizich, “Ornamentation in Spanish Baroque Guitar Music,” Journal of the Lute Society of America, 5 (1972), p. 27. Neil Pennington attempts to identify the correspondences but incorrectly claims that the “Giga” (fols. 88–89 of Passacalles y obras) is from Sonata No. 4 when, in fact, it is from Sonata No. 5. He fails to identify the “Giga” (fols. 95–97 in Passacalles y obras) as being from Sonata No. 3. See Pennington, “Development of Baroque Guitar,” vol. I, p. 311.


29 It is curious that only the last half of the sonata is transcribed. The passagework of the opening movements is no more troublesome or inappropriate for transcription than the latter movements.
The attribution “Coreli” on fols. 68⁵⁷ and 69⁵⁷ was apparently added after the music was copied out, for it is not in the same ink as the rest of the manuscript. This explains the confusion in the attribution on fol. 68⁵⁷; when the scribe first laid out the volume, he clearly intended to write out a work by “M Jerardo.” He had misjudged the space needed to continue the Corelli concerto from the previous pages and was later forced to scribble “Coreli” under the “Jerardo” ascription to correct the error. Although the inks are different, all the writing on the page is in the same hand.