Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme

Ricciardi, Emiliano, dir. and general ed., and Craig Stuart Sapp, technical dir. Tasso in Music Project (TiMP): Digital Edition of the Settings of Torquato Tasso's Poetry, c. 1570–1640. Other

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Tasso in Music Project (TiMP): Digital Edition of the Settings of Torquato Tasso's Poetry, c. 1570–1640. Other.
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tassomusic.org.

Torquato Tasso's (1544–95) literary and musical legacies are richly intertwined, as composers from across Europe set his poetry to music in the years between 1570 and 1640. The full relationship between Tasso's influence in Italian secular vocal music and his influence on the literary culture of Italy has not been fully explored, however. In part, this gap is due to archival constraints. Until recently, scholars needed to perform lengthy searches of scattered resources to answer their questions about the musical settings of Tasso's poems, as most of this corpus was not previously available in modern editions. With the Tasso in Music Project, the scene has changed. The musical contribution, representing over 200 composers from across styles and regions, would on its own be highly valuable. Perhaps even more notably, however, the Tasso in Music Project integrates a rich literary repository to facilitate comparative analysis on a whole new scale.

The project, directed by Emiliano Ricciardi and Craig Stuart Sapp, was officially launched in 2020 and has since attracted attention and accolades from scholars and performers. Funded initially by a University of Massachusetts Amherst Faculty Grant and subsequently by a three-year National Endowment for the Humanities Scholarly Editions and Translations Grant, the project gained international support in 2018 through the sponsorships of several Italian institutions, including the University of Ferrara. The interest indicates a sustained attention on the part of interdisciplinary scholars. As Ricciardi and Sapp explain, the Italian madrigal is itself a highly interdisciplinary form, "as much about poetry as it is about music."[1] The project restores the importance of the philological tradition within the history of the musical text.

The Tasso in Music Project is highly ambitious and data rich. The formal features of the digital edition foster interdisciplinary approaches to studies of

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1. Ricciardi and Sapp, "Editing Italian Madrigals," 25.

Tasso. The website not only enables quick and easy access to the repertoire but is also organized in a simple yet powerful way to facilitate browsing and analysis. The user interface is consistent and not unintuitive, but most users will need to make use of the project's extensive documentation in order to get the most out of the website. The primary menu at the top of the page is organized by the tabs "Home," "About," "Browse," "Search," "Analysis," "Editorial Policies," and "Participants." This menu is static and allows for consistent navigation through each of the associated submenus. Desktop users will find the menu to be clear and easy to navigate. Users on mobile devices and tablets may have more difficulty in selecting menu options with precision without zooming in as, depending on the device, the menu can appear quite small. While "Analysis" and "Participants" route users to a single page, the other menu options each provide further options.

The "Home" tab allows for the website's most linear browsing. The project has four main repertories, organized by poem or poem group: "Rime," "Gerusalemme liberata," "Aminta," and "Other" (which includes the poems "Ecloghe," "Rinaldo," "Lagrime della Beata Vergine," "Re Torrismondo," and "Gerusalemme conquistata"). The home page features four tabs, one for each of these works. Selecting a work yields musical settings, literary information, literary sources, and literary variants. Users who are interested in the musical and literary tradition of a specific text from these poems and poem groups will be able to quickly find it using this route.

Users with questions formed around keywords, pitch, interval, or rhythm patterns can use the "Search" menu option. Searches can be filtered and ranked in a variety of ways, such as by musical patterns, music-to-text ratio, and more. The analysis tools offered include text-extraction and melisma analysis, allowing users to identify keywords and patterns. For users more interested in gaining a broad sense of the repertoire, the "Browse" function also allows for music browsing and literary browsing, sorted by catalogue number, genre, title, dedicatee, and sources.

The Tasso in Music Project avoids some common issues encountered by large projects with multiple sources and contributors with its serverless approach. The project is statically hosted using Jekyll and GitHub Pages. Because it does not rely on a server to communicate with a database, the project is more secure than traditional counterparts with back ends. The serverless design also enhances stability since server updates or disruptions will not impact the

website's functioning. Perhaps most importantly for the long-term health of the project, though, is the ease of use and wide adoption that GitHub offers. As an open-source solution, GitHub promotes transparency and collaboration and allows anyone to look under the hood of the project and even to request changes. This practice could ease the way for wider adoption and engagement on a technical as well as a content level. The comprehensibility of formats for non-technical users is a high priority for the Tasso in Music Project. For instance, metadata is stored using the ATON format for easier readability and collected into a single directory or folder.

The Tasso in Music Project models an innovative approach to larger-scale website or database projects dealing with different data sets in a comparative way. According to the directors, future plans include the development of additional tools for studying the music–text relations, such as tools for studying the relationship between "the prosody of the poetic texts (accented and unaccented syllables, primary and secondary accents) and rhythmic durations, as well as the relationship between literary and musical syntax (e.g., the musical treatment of enjambments)."[2] These tools will doubtless further enhance the user's ability to think musically about poetry and poetically about music.

The phenomenological turn in literary studies makes this project particularly timely. Scholars taking historical phenomenological approaches will value the ways in which the website can bring to life early modern sensory history. The Tasso in Music Project allows for a rich exploration of the acoustic world of early moderns, which in turn grants insight into the ways in which embodied experiences, like listening to and performing music, generated knowledge. In addition to shedding light on the career and legacy of Tasso, the project gives tools for better understanding how embodied praxis preserves performance and allows for the past and present to meet.

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2. Ricciardi and Sapp, "Editing Italian Madrigals," 39.

Work Cited

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