

# **Mobility, Diplomacy, and Musical Exchange between England and Venice, 1600-1660**

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## **Abstract**

Political histories of early modern diplomacy have traditionally avoided discussing the arts, focusing instead on the more bureaucratic concerns of government agents. And though Italian influence is a central theme in histories of seventeenth-century English music, little musicological attention has been devoted to the complex political, confessional, and mercantile networks that facilitated this transmission of musical ideas across borders. My study redresses these lacunae by examining the early modern embassy as a distinctly musical space and digging into the daily mechanics of ambassadorial activity, showing how Anglo-Venetian musical exchange was in fact vital to diplomatic, commercial, and confessional relations between two rival maritime empires. I have reconstructed musical life in diplomatic and other mobile communities that voyaged between Venice and Stuart England by consulting primary source materials typically left to political historians, such as diplomatic dispatches in the British State Papers and government intelligence records in the State Archives of Venice. Drawing on multi-disciplinary theories of cultural mobility, I trace the movement of music amid transnational networks of ambassadors, ecclesiastics, merchants, tourists, students, spies, and other travelers. I eschew a traditional musicological focus on a few famous composers, instead contextualizing their activities within an account that includes professional performers and pedagogues, amateur musicians, and women musicians, in order to broaden out from individual biography to the social systems through which individuals and repertoires moved.

My argument is threefold. First, English communities in Venetian dominions understood music to be remarkably significant to both civic and private life in the Republic. Not only did

English travel diarists characterize Italians as an exceptionally musical people, but Italian music was also a major artistic export to Stuart England, and Venetian musicians visibly played an important role in the Republic's socio-political infrastructure. Second, in looking to the city of Venice as both a musical leader and an imperial metropole to be emulated, English communities in Venetian territories began to shift the balance of power in England's direction in part through engagement with music. Anglo-Italian musical transculturation was thus critical to the burgeoning English imperial project, particularly to England's eventual commercial conquest of the Mediterranean. Finally, and more generally, the Anglo-Venetian case demonstrates how deeply musicking was entrenched within early modern statecraft. Tracking the movements of mobile musicians reveals a critical, yet understudied domain of international relations. Attention to music and sound in less overtly "musical" historical contexts can reveal valuable new information about broader histories of transculturation, diplomacy, commerce, confessionality, and empire.