

Denise Yim, *Viotti and the Chinnerys: A Relationship Charted through Letters*
Aldershot, Hants.: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004.
ISBN 0 7546 3161 3. 312 pp., 8 pp. b&w plates

Reviewed by Paul Watt

Giovanni Battista Viotti (1755–1824) is remembered as one of the foremost violinist-composers of his era, even perhaps, as Yim claims, one of the best to have lived. Viotti was a man of many wide-ranging interests: at various times he tried his hand as an impresario, a wine merchant and, most notably of all, director of the Paris Opera from 1820 to 1822. As a composer, he wrote twenty-nine violin concertos, ten piano concertos and sundry other works. As a violinist, he was prized for his particularly sensitive interpretations and virtuosic flair, though he retired from the stage prematurely. In 1821 he was decorated Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. His career took him to many countries, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and France among them, but it was England that was most important to him, through his association with the Chinnery family. This book focuses on Viotti's life from 1792, the year in which he arrived in England.

The Chinnery family was a rich and prominent one and, over time, their homes became the most desirable avenues for foreign composers and musicians trying to enter the London musical scene. Margaret Chinnery, the lady of the house, was a well-educated and accomplished musician, and her love of music was evident in many ways, especially in the care she took in the music education of her children. For example, her daughter Caroline was already an accomplished pianist by age 10, and took up harp lessons with the famed François Joseph Dizi shortly after she turned 13. Viotti also taught the Chinnery children and composed for them. Given their mother's facility with languages and literature, the Vinnery children also studied the literary greats. The Vinnery household often opened its doors to visiting dignitaries and diplomats from other countries (William Chinnery was chief clerk at the British treasury for thirteen years from 1799, hence such illustrious connections). And from the early 1790s, Viotti was installed *chez* Vinnery in 'a truly successful *ménage à trois*' (p. 9). However, Viotti was to become Margaret's sole companion after 1812 when her husband fled England after having been sacked from the Treasury for embezzling £80,000 (in 2006 Australian terms, this equates to approximately \$13 million!).

Denise Yim's book traces not only Viotti's relationship to the Vinnery household, and in particular the support of Margaret Chinnery, but his varied and particularly interesting working life. Yim has drawn on a huge array of primary sources, chiefly the Chinnery family papers, which were donated to the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney in 1973 by E.A. and V.I. Croome. The papers include 'over two thousand letters, journals, poetry, education material and other miscellaneous papers, with a date range from 1793 to 1843' (p. 5). Yim has made good use of these materials, and many more besides, and in moments where there are gaps in letters or details require further proof, Yim is at the ready. A good example of this is Yim's detective working in explaining why Viotti found asylum in Hamburg on his cruel expulsion from England. In a footnote, Yim took the trouble to look at the history of the post-office packet service in the late eighteenth century to explain fully why Hamburg was Viotti's only choice.

There are many examples of such detective work throughout the book, which not only makes it an interesting read, but also demonstrates the author's commitment to detail.

The letters and other sources that Yim draws on provide a fascinating glimpse into the musical life of not only England, but France as well. Yim describes in some detail Viotti's perilous association with the French court during key moments of the French Revolution that put his life in danger and facilitated his move to England; she draws on comments made in the letters about the awful quality of French singers; the state of English music taste (which can only be improved by importing foreigners, according to Margaret Chinnery) and provides a window into musical manners, customs and patronage in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In England, there is considerable detail on Viotti's involvement with Salomon at the Hanover Square Rooms (where Viotti received extremely favourable reviews, both as composer and performer); on concerts in Bath with Venanzio Rauzzini in 1794 (where Haydn was to visit shortly thereafter); and, later, on Viotti's role in plans to establish a new Academy of Music in London.

I offer just a few minor criticisms directed to the publisher, not the author. The first is that nowhere in the title or subtitle are dates or the word 'music': for readers unfamiliar with the names of Viotti and Chinnery this book too easily passes by potential buyers, libraries especially. Second, the jacket and text design are old-fashioned and unimaginative: it is time, indeed, that Ashgate began to make its books look more appealing, especially in an age that is so visually discriminating. Third, I would recommend that should the book be reprinted or made into an e-book a list of currency equivalents be inserted into the preliminary pages, so the reader can calculate in today's terms the prices and sums mentioned throughout the book.

Denise Yim is a meticulous researcher, great story-teller and gifted writer who—if you will excuse the cliché—really brings to life Viotti and his milieu. Indeed, this book is a model of vigorous and engaging scholarly writing. It appears this monograph is Yim's first on music: let us hope it is not her last.

Katherine A. McIver, ed., *Art and Music in the Early Modern Period: Essays in Honor of Franca Trinchieri Camiz*
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Reviewed by Alan Davison

Art and Music in the Early Modern Period: Essays in honor of Franca Trinchieri Camiz is a collection of seventeen essays by some fifteen contributors. Franca Trinchieri Camiz was an art historian with a special interest in late Renaissance and early Baroque art and music, and who provided much of the initial impetus for this volume. She died tragically of Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease in 1999.

The essays vary in subject matter and approach, but all engage with the interconnection between art and music and all, according to the inside sleeve at least, take a multidisciplinary approach. The essays are divided into three main sections: Art and Music in Italy; Art and Music in Northern Europe; and finally, A Tribute to Franca Trinchieri Camiz. The last section contains three contributions by Franca Camiz herself and a bibliography of her works on music and art.