1 The resounding city

GEOFFREY BAKER

The Spanish colonization of Latin America was distinctly, perhaps uniquely, urban in focus: 'Of all the peoples that Rome had brought within its domain, the Iberians most closely imitated their conquerors in the significance they assigned to the city. In turn, Iberians reconstituted this prominence in the Indies, heightening it, in fact, in all matters social and cultural.'[1] To the colonizers, the foundation of new cities (and the refoundation of old ones, such as Tenochtitlan and Cuzco) was key to imposing order on the New World. There is thus a strong argument for placing the city at the centre of our picture of colonial music history.

Since the turn of the century, scholars of European music have begun to argue that we should do more than simply look at music in cities; rather, we should examine urban contexts more analytically and try to understand their relationship with the music created within them. How did the city leave its mark on musical production, and how did music shape urban experience?[2] In other words, there is a perceived need not just for musicology *in* the city but a musicology *of* the city.

If there have been tentative steps towards an 'urban musicology' in Europe, the argument for such an approach is perhaps even stronger in Latin America, given the unprecedented importance of urbanization in its history. Musicologists working in Latin America have long devoted attention to music in urban institutions, but with little attempt to focus on the urban dimension itself.[3] Meanwhile, in the wider literature on colonial urban history, music and musicians are almost entirely absent, and the colonial city is largely silent.[4] It behoves musicologists to address this widespread absence of sound in colonial urban history: rather than taking the city for granted as the locus of most musical activity, how can musicology respond to, illuminate and take its place in the broader field of urban historical studies?

It is just as important to think about how a Latin American urban musicology might differ from its European counterpart. To address this issue, we need to pose a more fundamental question: what is the relationship between the Spanish city and its Latin American progeny? My approach to these questions will entail a dialogue with Ángel Rama's influential book

The Lettered City; my aim will be to grasp the role of music as a vital constituent part of the colonial city, as Rama did for writing, and therefore to combat the tendency to push sonic history into the margins of scholarly inquiry. By introducing the element of sound alongside that of the word, I also hope to expand and complicate Rama's vision of the 'symbolic city'.

The city as idea(l)

At the heart of Rama's work lies the idea that the New World city differed from its European counterpart in that it was an ideal city, an imaginary construct as well as a physical location.[5] It was preceded by, and modelled on, a collection of urban norms (most famously, the grid plan) that expressed a will to order: it was a projection of a desired future rather than the medieval European city's accumulation of the past. Rama labels this discursive construct, founded on the written word, 'the lettered city': he writes of two superimposed grids, a physical plane, and a symbolic plane 'that organizes and interprets the former . . . , rendering the city meaningful as an idealized order'.[6] The word *order* is key, for it lay at the heart of the colonial project. Rama examines how colonial *letrados* (men of letters) constructed the symbolic plane as a means of ordering the physical and social environment. In the hands of these *letrados*, writing served as an instrument of power, crucial to the discursive construction of the Latin American city and attempts to establish cultural hegemony in the New World.

If the colonial city was an ideal, a project as much as a settlement, then Latin American urban musicology should take account of the role of music in this process of symbolic urban construction. I would argue that a correspondence can be drawn between urbanism and music, specifically between the urban ideal and the concept and practice of harmony that were transplanted from Europe to Latin America by the Spanish colonists. The city was conceived in terms of the *urbs*, or built environment, and the *civitas*, or human community that populated the city. While these two faces of the city were intimately entwined in theory and in practice, it is worth considering them separately to perceive clearly how the notion of harmony underpinned both urban form and urban society.[7]

The inextricable connection between sonic and physical harmony was well established in Renaissance Europe. Renaissance theorists' understanding of harmonic principles was based on the Pythagorean relationship between sound and number, exemplified by the mathematical ratios produced by a vibrating string.[8] Behind such understandings of harmony was

a belief in absolute patterns or essences that manifested themselves in perceptible phenomena, such as musical harmony and the mathematics of the monochord. Perfect musical intervals thus had both numerical and spatial equivalents, with all three seen as differing but fundamentally unified expressions of a universal cosmic harmony. Therefore it was but a small leap to the idea that such musical intervals and their expression as ratios corresponded to ideal architectural proportions, a theory explored by Leon Battista Alberti in his *De re aedificatoria* (*c.*1450) and later put into practice by architects such as Andrea Palladio and Francesco Giorgi. Although most famously associated with the Venetians, the application of musical proportions to architecture was also established in Renaissance and baroque Spain, and harmonic principles informed the design of the Jesuits' churches in their Bolivian missions.[9]

Harmony also became a guiding principle for utopian urban design. The ancient Greeks sought to fashion the city plan in the image of an orderly universe, and in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the notion of harmony again began to loom large in the idea of the city, as Pythagorean theories and beliefs in the structured patterns of the universe returned to prominence.[10] Central to this regeneration of the link between harmony and urbanism was *De architectura libri decem*, a treatise by the Roman author and architect Vitruvius.[11] In the first chapter of Book 1, Vitruvius stated that music ought to be part of an architect's education, and to this end he devoted a later chapter (Book 5, Chapter 4) to an explanation of harmonic principles. That the urban planner was expected to acquire musical knowledge underlines the relationship between these two realms of theory. Vitruvius's writings on music, architecture and urban planning look backwards to Pythagoras, but also had a significant influence on urban theory a millennium and a half later. Though Vitruvius's work was best known in Italy after its rediscovery in the early fifteenth century, his influence was also felt in the Hispanic world. It was transmitted via the Roman military writer Vegetius into the writings of the thirteenth-century theologian Thomas Aquinas, who left his mark on the Spanish urban theorists fray Francesc Eximeniç and Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo, two of the main inspirations for the *Ordinances for the Discovery, New Settlement and Pacification of the Indies*. This summary of earlier decrees issued by Philip II in 1573 is commonly regarded as the epitome of colonial Latin American urban theory.[12]

On the one hand, then, a line can be traced from ancient Greek and Roman conceptions of urban form as an expression and instrument of cosmic harmony to the grid plan and other norms that became the template for the sixteenth-century Latin American city. On the other hand, the focus

of urban theory was not just the *urbs*, but also the *civitas*, and here too music plays a part in idealizations of the city. Harmony had a social as well as a physical dimension, and thus music played an important role in the configuration of the citizenry as well as the city.

In his influential *Suma de la política*, published around 1454, Sánchez de Arévalo concerns himself with the relationship between music and civic order. Most notably, he devotes Book 2, Chapter 9, to the topic of 'how the city or kingdom should be united in concord . . . and how in it should reign consonance and musical harmony', fully exploring the analogies between music and urban society. He spins an extended metaphor of the ruler as a prudent musician – the tuner of a vihuela, loosening and tightening the strings of the civic instrument to create 'perfect and sweet harmony and concord'. He recommends that a good politician should follow the example of a skilled musician so that he might create 'concord and unity and the sweet consonance of peace by his wisdom and musical prudence'. Sánchez de Arévalo draws explicitly on an ancient source, Scipio Africanus,

> who said that every city and kingdom is like a fine, beautiful harmony and musical song, whose voices, diverse though they may be, are nevertheless brought to consonance and unity through the providence and art of the good singer. Just as, to refer to Scipio, we see that a good organist strives so that there may be no dissonances in his instruments, ensuring that the voices make a melodious sound, so a good politician must work even harder to make sure that in all the parts or members of the city reigns concord and consonance of desires and deeds.[13]

As Sánchez de Arévalo acknowledges, this notion of the *civitas* as a harmonious musical ensemble has a long history, and just as with the harmonic conception of the *urbs*, its journey from the ancient world into the heart of Spanish urban theory can be traced through a number of sources. Scipio's vision was quoted not only by Cicero in *On the Republic*, but also by Saint Augustine in his *City of God*. Augustine wrote: 'Where reason is allowed to modulate the diverse elements of the state, there is obtained a perfect concord from the upper, lower, and middle classes as from various sounds; and what musicians call harmony in singing, is concord in matters of state'.[14] This work, in turn, was a significant influence on Thomas Aquinas and his circle. In *De regimine principum*, written by Aquinas and his pupil Ptolemy of Lucca, we read:

> The true and perfect polity is like the well-disposed body, in which the organic strengths have perfect vigour. If the supreme virtue, which is reason, directs other inferior potencies and they are moved by its command, then a certain pleasantness and perfect pleasure of strengths arises in both, and this we call harmony. Augustine

says that a well-disposed republic or city can be compared to a voice in a melody, in which, with diverse, mutually proportionate sounds, a song becomes pleasant and delectable to the ears.[15]

Aquinas is an important source both for Hispanic urbanism and for Latin American political theory, in which the idea of social harmony was central.[16] His work was influential in ensuring that the Latin American city – both *urbs* and *civitas* – was an ideal conceived in terms of harmony, concord and the blending of diverse musical voices.

The classical idea of the city as the embodiment of harmony thus left a strong imprint on European urban theory in the decades before the Spanish discovery of the Americas, the moment when urbanization took on an unprecedented importance within the Hispanic world. From 1513, when the Crown began to give precise instructions to colonial officials, these instructions bore the hallmark of classical ideals. One of the architects of Mexico City owned a copy of Vitruvius's treatise,[17] and while scholars have debated whether Philip II's 1573 *Ordinances for the Discovery, New Settlement and Pacification of the Indies* are indebted more to Vitruvius or to Aquinas,[18] both authors are rooted in the same tradition of urban theory – linking notions of music, order and the city – that can be traced back to Pythagoras and Plato and that found fullest expression in the Americas.

The city as performance

Music is a privileged site for examining urbanism because it underpins the symbolic city (or, as Augustine conceived it, also in musical terms, the City of God) while being rooted in the everyday practices of the City of Man. Music is an intensely symbolic art form, as it is relatively under-determined, and also an intensely physical one, because of the need constantly to re-enact it anew.[19] It thus provides a performative bridge between Rama's symbolic and physical planes. To the idea of the lettered city we may therefore add that of the 'resounding city': a harmonious ideal that existed *before* the physical form of the city, but also a performative construct, brought into being through the musical activities that urbanized New World spaces. The city resounded both in its essence – its harmonious design – and through its sonic practices, as ceremonies with music provided an aural counterpart to urban planning norms. The order of the grid plan and the 'sweet harmony and concord' of the *civitas* were mirrored in the organization of urban space through civic processions in which music played an important part, in the structuring of time through the sounding of church bells and the

singing of the canonical hours, even in the perfect intervals of a musical composition – harmony for both eyes and ears.

The idea of the city as a performance of itself is not, of course, unique to sixteenth-century Latin America. What was distinctive, however, was the prominence of the performative in a context in which most cities were created *ab initio*. In Latin America, neither physical structures nor a large population were required to make a city, and indeed for the most part they did not exist in the early colonial period; the most important building blocks were the urban ideal and its realization through performance. This performative aspect of urbanization is evident in the ceremony of city foundation, as described by Bernardo de Vargas Machuca in his *Milicia y descripción de las Indias* (1599). City foundation was to be accompanied by a Mass, 'with all the soldiers present and with full devotion and solemnity in order to impress the native population and move their hearts; and with many salvos from the guns, celebrating the event with trumpets and drums'.[20] The physical site of early Latin American cities was often unstable, due to environment, climate, sanitation and insecurity, and thus cities were sometimes moved. Trujillo, in modern-day Venezuela, is known as 'the portable city' for the number of times it changed location; in the case of the Guatemalan capital Santiago de los Caballeros, the formal act of foundation was carried out in 1524, before a site had even been chosen, epitomizing the notion of the city as performance.[21] At least in the earliest phase of colonization, ceremony was almost more important than construction. While the material city was slow to appear, ceremony was instantaneous and little affected by the tangible challenges of the New World; ritual and symbolism provided the stability that was often lacking on the physical plane. In Europe, performance shaped urban identity, but in Latin America, it literally created the city.

Music also makes an appearance in the royal *Ordinances for the Discovery, New Settlement and Pacification of the Indies*. In a discussion of evangelical tactics, the authors propose a kind of religious ambush on indigenous groups that are more resistant to the Christian message. Priests are instructed that 'should they wish to generate greater admiration and attention among the infidels – and if available – they might use music, by way of singers and high and bass wind instruments, in order to entice the Indians to join them'.[22] This echoes an earlier regulation in the same collection concerning architecture, in which the Spanish colonizers are instructed to keep the indigenous population away from the construction process 'so that when the Indians see [the completed buildings] they will be struck with admiration'.[23] In these ordinances, music is evoked in very similar terms to architecture: both are conceived as tools to provoke wonder among native populations,

to convey messages and demand attention – one of the principal functions of the city.[24]

If the necessity of constructing the New World *urbs* is obvious, the *civitas*, too, was a project that needed to be realized: more than just an assortment of settlers, it was a political and religious collective, created through the act of foundation and recreated through ritual practices. The ideal city could not remain in the pages of treatises and the minds of urban planners: it had to be performed, and then memorialized in print or on canvas. Music was intended to effect a harmonious ordering of the city, creating a soundscape to match the idealized, rationally structured townscape. Urban spaces provided the stage on which performance joined the ideal with the real, as sonorous processions through ordered streets served to manifest the concept of the *civitas* as a harmonious entity and project it to the urban population. Far from being ornamental, music had the capacity to encapsulate and project key elements of the urban ideal, such as piety and order. If the *civitas* was idealized as a harmonious consort, then impressive musical performance reflected well on the political virtues of the citizenry: it was the perfect form of urban propaganda.

Richard Kagan stresses the importance to Latin American urbanism of instilling *policía* – a complex term, closely aligned with *civitas*, that encompassed order, good government, Christianity, and what we might call 'urban values' or 'civilization'. *Policía* could be impressed upon citizens through an orderly built environment, and also through ceremonies in public spaces: 'the plaza served both as a school and a theatre where the rudiments of *policía* were taught'.[25] Musical performance in civic ceremonies thus had two closely aligned faces: putting urban society on display, and serving as a tool of *policía*, thereby contributing to deepening urban values and shaping an ideal urban community. Certainly, harmony was more than just a metaphor; in Renaissance Spain, music was attributed with considerable powers over both individual and collective human behaviour, and thus over citizenship. In her study of the music theorist Juan Bermudo, Paloma Otaola González writes that music's capacity to instil order not only affects the individual human body and psyche, but also 'extends to society, since music has not just ethical but also *political* value, contributing to the common good'.[26] An eyewitness account of the ceremonies held in Seville for the beatification of Saint Ignatius Loyola describes the different kinds of music performed along the route of the procession, 'so that everything together created a heavenly consonance and harmony, inciting fervent devotion in the listeners who crowded along the route'.[27] Music was widely accredited with the power to reproduce the harmony of the spheres within and among men;[28]

it was therefore ideally suited to the propagation of *policía*, which also 'represented a combination of two concepts: one public, linked to citizenship in an organized polity, the other connected to personal comportment and private life, both inseparable from urban life.'[29]

Harmony, then, was not just a socio-political ideal, but also a means of achieving that ideal, a tool in the dual process of civilization and Christianization at the heart of the city's purpose in colonial Latin America. The deep-rooted notion of the city as an instrument of evangelization, which can be traced back through Aquinas to Augustine's *City of God*, ensured that *becoming* as well as *being* was fundamental to urban life. In early colonial Latin America, the city was intrinsically linked with conquest, colonization, civilization – all 'doing' words, reminding us that it is useful to conceive of the city in terms of urban practices as well as place and population.[30]

The connections between religion, music, Pythagorean theories and the Hispanic urban ideal are encapsulated in the description of the 'celestial city' by Madre Ana de San Agustín, the secretary of Saint Teresa of Ávila, who said of her visions:

> I was taken up to heaven . . . a vast city, shining and made of crystal and adorned with many rich things and the most beautiful gardens with many different and beautiful and most sweetly-scented flowers. The streets were paved with precious stones . . . [with] great harmony and different kinds of music, with an order and concord that can only be described as heavenly.[31]

The planning of New World cities sought to recreate this City of God on earth, according prominence to religious buildings that dominated the streets and skyline, and to ceremonies that provided visual and sonic reinforcement of the city's sacredness. Colonial Latin American urban settlements and their ritual music combine the characteristics of the Cosmic City, a 'ceremonial site of religious recollection and cosmic narrative', with those of the Authoritarian City, a place of order and discipline.[32]

Since evangelization lay at the heart of the New World city, music – that most powerful of stimuli to devotion – was a fundamental tool of urbanism. In fact, music was arguably one of the means by which Latin American settlements were made urban: if, as Miguel Ángel Marín suggests, elaborate music was a distinctive marker of the city in early modern Spain, then the propagation of European music in the New World may be seen as an essential part of the process of forging Hispanic cities out of 'barbaric' spaces, an attempt to impose European urban values through sound.[33] It is therefore highly significant that the new towns, or *reducciones*, founded to group together and 'civilize' the indigenous population, were to include a

church, two religious assistants and two or three musicians, according to the Spanish Crown. A church musician was conceived specifically as an urban, and urbanizing, official. Further evidence that musicians were responsible for instilling civic values in the local populace can be found in Guaman Poma de Ayala's chapter on indigenous choirmasters in his *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1615). The author concludes the chapter headed 'maestro de coro' (choirmaster) with the words: 'if possible, there should be a school and Christianity and *policía* in every village, large or small, throughout the realm'.[34] If this was the responsibility of the choirmaster, then the importance of musicians in urbanizing New World settlements could hardly have been greater. In Guaman Poma's book, the choirmaster was also the schoolmaster, and his charges are pictured learning at the foot of a music stand: the Platonic and Aristotelian idea that music education helps to form good citizens was put into practice by native *maestros* in village schools across the Andes.[35]

If music was fundamental to the conceptualization of the colonial Latin American city, musicians were among those principally responsible for bringing the ideal of the city into being through performance and inculcating urban values among the population. The author of a late eighteenth-century description of urban festivities in San Luis Potosí (Mexico) conflates the figure of the choirmaster with the mythological character of Amphion, who built the city of Thebes with only the sound of his music. This illustrates the continuity of ancient beliefs in the power of music to shape the world and, specifically, to urbanize a (perceived) *tabula rasa*.[36]

The lettered and resounding cities

Just as the *urbs* and *civitas* were intimately connected, not least via their common idealization as harmony, so were the lettered and resounding cities. Vernacular-texted musical works such as villancicos and *comedias*, found in archives of colonial music across Latin America, are evidence of the overlap between these two faces of the symbolic city. As illiteracy was commonplace, the written messages of the lettered city were often communicated orally, preceded or accompanied by music. We only have to think of the town crier, whose verbal messages were regularly announced to the sound of drums, trumpets or shawms.[37] It is worth remembering that a significant proportion of the urban population depended on a culture that was neither purely written nor oral, but rather 'auditive' – in other words, written texts aimed at a mass audience, diffused orally.[38] Adding this sonic dimension to

Rama's image of the city encourages us to take into account a wider range of texts and consider questions of transmission. Music played an important role in the diffusion of the written word, adding life and meaning to the discourses of the lettered city.

The vast majority of villancico texts have the same relationship to colonial Latin American cities as urban planning ordinances: they impose an idealized Hispanic order over more chaotic local realities. Music was modelled on Peninsular precedents or even imported directly from Spain. The lack of local references in most notated colonial music underlines that it was designed less to reflect the realities *of* colonial cities than to propagate a harmonious vision *to* urban society. Villancicos, like the colonial literary texts that Rama discusses, 'served as tacit plans for urban development in an impeccable universe of signs where the ideal city could be imagined into existence – a model of the order that the urban citizenry should strive to incarnate.'[39] So we may rarely look to the extant colonial music repertoire for exact representations of urban life, though occasional survivals of popular music may be more revealing.[40] Rather, composers and writers elaborated and re-elaborated models that contributed to the cultural reproduction of elite, Peninsular urban values. The musical realm reinforced what Rama refers to as 'the conservative influence of the city of letters, relatively static in social makeup and wedded to aesthetic models that kept the *letrados* constantly harkening back to the period of their collective origin'.[41] Thus the conservatism and stylistic 'backwardness' that have often been noted in colonial repertoire are much more than a simple indication of peripherality or lack of sophistication. Instead, the production of music and accompanying texts reveals the efforts of colonial *letrados* to preserve their ideal in the face of a constantly changing urban reality. Their denial of local musical or textual features and their refusal to countenance hybridity – with only occasional exceptions – reflected an urge to obscure the physical realities of the city in favour of promoting the symbolic plane.

While many villancico texts could be described as conservative or even archaic, others make extensive use of popular speech. However, this popular argot usually appears in an ironic, self-reflexive way, in the mouth of a character who is mocked through his deficient use of language. The constant citation of 'deformed' language, such as that spoken by African slaves, or of Peninsular regional variants, such as Basque or Portuguese, served to consolidate the power of those who wrote and spoke the hegemonic version of Spanish. The linguistic characteristics of villancicos are thus not reflective of a multicultural urban context; rather, they illustrate an adhesion to elite linguistic norms, whether directly or through mocking