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### João Silva, *Entertaining Lisbon: Music, Theatre & Modern Life in the Late 19th Century*

New York, Oxford University Press, 2016

María Zozaya-Montes

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## REFERENCES

João Silva, *Entertaining Lisbon: Music, Theatre & Modern Life in the Late 19th Century*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, 324 p.

- 1 João Silva was awarded his PhD by the University of Newcastle for his thesis on music and theatre in Portugal. In his book *Entertaining Lisbon*, a captivating work of Cultural History research, he “studies the connections between construction of the modern Portuguese nation-state and popular entertainment between 1867 and 1910, focusing on theatrical music” (p.1). He analyses the creation of realities and social images through music, explaining how cultural construction was related to the idea of modernization and its connection with growing nationalism.
- 2 We consider this study to be highly complementary to sociability studies, like those by Maurice Aguilon, Mona Ozouf and Laura Mason on the rituals to construct a nation, or the new Cultural History by Jane Fulcher, regarding the nation’s image throughout music. Studies about leisure and sociability greatly benefit from this kind of approach, i.e. one that interprets music from the standpoint of social and cultural history. Moreover, this type of research has more value because, as the author remarks, “Until recently, historical approaches to Portugal’s 19th Century music have concentrated on opera and on concert music, neglecting the popular entertainment market” (p. 6). From a structuralist perspective, Silva makes a profound and brilliant study of Lisbon, showing a new reality socially constructed through newspapers, performances and the music industry. He quotes authors such as Raphael Samuel and Roland Barthes and

theories of the invention of tradition by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Following Carlo Ginzburg and Robert Danton, João Silva reduces the scale of observation to Microhistory. He draws on the work of other recognised authors in the understanding of pleasure, such as Jacques Lacan or Victor Turner, and incorporates Pierre Bourdieu's ideas when explaining how the symbolic behaviour introduces the categories of *cultural capital* and *social habitus*.

- 3 The book starts with the premise that it is complex to consider 19th-century Lisbon as the cultural fabric representative of a heterogeneous Portugal. However, the city's entertainment landscape provides fertile ground for his study of "the role that popular musical theatres played between 1867 and 1910" (p. 3). Focusing on Lisbon's theatrical activity, he studies the symbolical creation of a nation, and "traces the complex relation between a cultural nation-state and popular entertainment" (p. 2). He considers that the modern country was negotiated and acclimatised on stage, where the primary messages were about nationalism and patriotism, and where the vernacular language and popular music incarnated the concepts of cultural motherhood and nation-state. He examines the importance of entertainment in developing and naturalizing the idea of a local nationalism, independent from monarchist symbols. As posited by the author, this was the perfect scenario for kings being replaced—in symbol only—by all the new powers represented by popular music. Through this mechanism, an idea of modern Portugal was shaped during the process of urbanization and industrial automation.
- 4 Popular theatre written in the vernacular began to offer the image of the old and the new, thus naturalizing the idea of modernity within the philosophy of progress. Meanwhile, it began to negotiate the perception of the local and the cosmopolitan. João Silva remarks on the complexity of defining what constitutes the "national" in theatrical genres (p. 94), particularly when the pieces played in Lisbon were based on imported models and operas that shared international conventions. Merely by being performed in the local language, pieces were automatically associated with patriotism and nationalism, even if their Portuguese composers had studied abroad. The author explains how popular music usually is considered to be "local", made by heterogeneous ethnic groups, while "national" implies homogeneity, unifying all Portuguese under the same patterns.
- 5 Silva illustrates his theory in five chapters focusing on individuals, plays and objects. The book approaches essential topics that, in my opinion, can be divided into four subjects. Firstly, he studies the transformations of the period, as related to urban issues, and technical progress as the multiple changes that modelled Lisbon into an urban city and the quotidian images that reflected modernity. On the one hand, Lisbon radically changed, transforming into a modern city from 1867 to 1910. Emulating Hausmann's urban planning, big avenues were built along with major buildings, commercial enterprises and a wide range of industries, with electric transports and public lighting. This transformation was staged in popular dramas. Silva also reveals modernization in the circulation of goods and forms of propaganda, and other ways of distributing music, such as librettos, sheet music, programs, reviews, postcards, posters and photos. These means were connected to technological breakthroughs in mechanical instruments to record and reproduce sound. Technical innovations embedded with the image of modernity were the automated piano, the *phonola*, the *aeolian*, the pianola, the phonograph, and the gramophone, with its piano rolls, hand-