



# NABMSA Reviews

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K. Dawn Grapes, Editor

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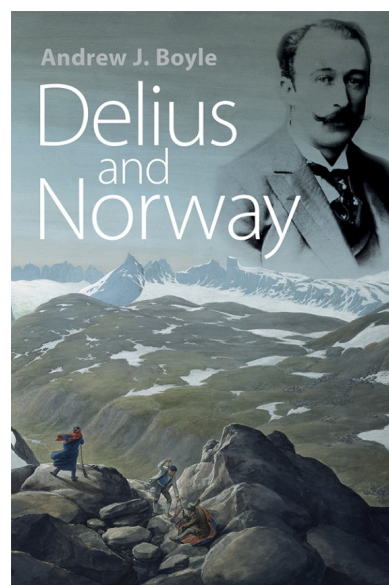
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Andrew J. Boyle. *Delius and Norway*. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2017. 344 pp. ISBN 978-1-78327-199-3 (hardback).

Anyone with an interest in the music of Frederick Delius will have felt the presence of Norway looming large over his creative output and his life. Yet despite its ubiquity—his constant talk in correspondence of its landscape, its culture, and his many Norwegian friends, the Norwegian texts and folk tunes that he set, and the expansive Nordic mountainscapes of his compositions—Norway is rarely given more than cursory notice in studies of Delius's life and works. While often labeled his “spiritual home” and his friendship with Edvard Grieg highlighted, the effect of Norway on Delius is something mentioned almost in passing. It is exciting, then, to read Andrew J. Boyle's new study, *Delius and Norway*, which fills in many gaps in our knowledge of Delius's life, and further expands our understanding of his music. This is the first comprehensive work to approach Delius's personal and musical relationship with Norway.



Delius spent twenty summers in Norway—some of which are detailed for the first time in Boyle's study—and a significant body of his composition was inspired by the country's landscape and culture. *Delius and Norway* is essentially a chronological biography, demonstrating how constant a presence Norway was throughout Delius's life. The narrative is interspersed with musical analysis of the many works of Norwegian influence, particularly those Boyle has labeled as “Mountain Music,” pointing out ever-present stylistic tropes that “were evidently developed in response to emotions he associated with mountain landscapes” and the “metaphoric content of

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a mountain journey.” These include horn calls and episodic structures, filled with musical “peaks” and “plateaus” (45).

Boyle’s work presents a Delius rarely seen: the young, energetic man, hiking across mountains and fjords, full of personality and humor. This work is an important step in further breaking down the ever-present “Delius myth,” of the isolated, tortured artist, perpetuated by the photographs and images circulated of Delius as a blind, paralyzed, and ill old man, which once prompted Percy Grainger to complain of people attempting to make representations of Delius’s personality match the mood of his music. When discussing Delius’s final years, Boyle goes to great effort to remind readers of Delius before his final health breakdown, quoting descriptions of him prior to his illness by friends and family members who “were irresistibly drawn towards his light” (282).

Boyle also refutes other prevalent myths of Delius’s biography. Every account of Delius’s life includes reference to his final summer in Norway, when Grainger, Jelka Delius, and his nurse carried him up a mountain, supposedly to watch the sun set one final time: a “momentous event in the relationship of Frederick Delius to his spiritual homeland” with a “mythology” that has accumulated around it (293). As Boyle notes, however, many aspects of this story appear to have been romanticized. For instance, at this time of year, the sun sets in Norway much later in the evening than Delius was out. Boyle questions, quite rightly, why such a “remarkable and singular feat” requires “the embroidery of added mythologies” (294). While throughout the book there are occasional moments of speculation, particularly in relation to Delius’s personal feelings and relationships with women (his letters on these matters tend to be rather sparse), these are generally relatively well informed and argued, inferring much from, for example, Nina Grieg teasing him about his flirting, or the piecing together of passing comments over a number of years.

In addition to helping shatter some of the myths in relation to Delius’s life, Boyle also provides a fascinating reassessment of many compositions, whose inspiration and meaning have long been considered settled. For example, Delius did not only travel to Norway for the mountains; he spent many summers by the Kristiania Fjord, enjoying the sun and sea with friends such as Edvard Munch. Yet much of his apparently “summer” music has long been associated with idyllic English pastoral landscapes, despite that fact that he never in his adult life chose to spend a summer there. Furthermore, a work claimed by commentators to be “quintessentially English”—*On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*—Boyle convincingly asserts to be “one of the most thoroughly Norwegian works Delius ever composed” (261). Beyond the fact that one of its themes is a Norwegian folk song, with its subtitle even stating as much—a fact Cecil Gray described as “irrelevant” (87)—Delius composed it to express his desire to be in the Norwegian landscape, explaining in a letter about the work that “Spring always means for me a longing for Norway” (261).

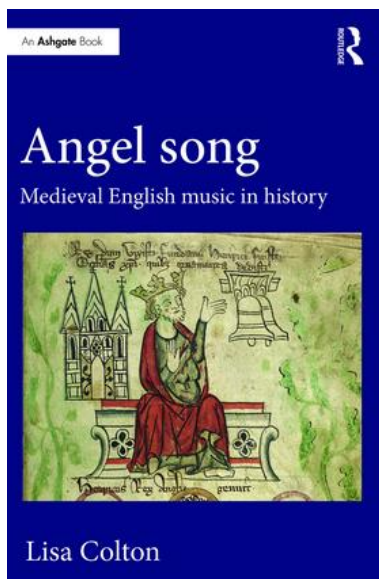
The book also deftly weaves elements of Norwegian political history throughout the narrative, as the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were particularly important in Norway’s relationship with the rest of Scandinavia and the height of its fight for independence. Boyle notes, “Delius was present for much of the new forging of a Norwegian identity,” and his misjudgment of “how incendiary the political temperature was” led to his unfortunate fall from favor with the Norwegian public in 1897 (11–2). The “humorous variations” he wrote on the Norwegian national anthem as incidental music to Gunnar Heiberg’s play *Folkeraadet* resulted in “one of the fiercest protests in the history of Norwegian theatre” (139). This event greatly altered his attitude and relationship to Norway: while he still visited and remained inspired by the landscape and nature, he lost many friends, and from then on “would look to Norway for neither a professional network nor an audience” (215).



Boyle clearly has a facility with Norwegian sources, making new translations of original documents in both Norwegian and German, and uncovering a great deal of new material from the Norwegian National Library, the National Archives of Norway, the Grieg Archives of Bergen Public Library, and the Munch Museum. The book concludes with two useful appendices, one listing all known trips by Delius to Norway and the principal places he visited, and the other a list of works with either Norwegian or Danish texts and associations, demonstrating visually the enormous scope of influence this culture had on Delius's creative output. (Denmark and Norway were inextricably linked historically, culturally, and politically throughout the nineteenth century, and the written form of Norwegian used by most educated people up until about 1900 was practically identical to Danish).

This book may have critics, particularly those who prefer to see Delius as the exemplar of the *fin de siècle* European cosmopolitan, as does any work that attempts to assert one aspect of Delius's national identity above another. Even Boyle acknowledges, "so varied is the chemistry of his creative alchemy that no single country can lay claim to Frederick Delius" (xi), but that is exactly why this book is so important. So many different cultures, countries, philosophies, and experiences made up the personality and music of Delius and it is timely that this particular long-overlooked aspect—his relationship to Norway—receives the meticulous and sympathetic attention that it does here.

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Lisa Colton. *Angel Song: Medieval English Music in History*. London and New York: Routledge, 2017. x+192 pp. ISBN 978-1-47242-568-3 (hardback).

In *Angel Song*, Lisa Colton examines how the English musical canon coalesced around a relatively small set of composers, works, and musical practices. Using some of these as case studies, she sets out to "reappraise medieval English musical history" (5) and to reveal common trends in the reception and historiography of English medieval music. These sweeping aims may seem at odds with such a focused study, but Colton has chosen her case studies carefully, and the result is a thought-provoking and readable examination.

Colton begins with the elephant in the room, tracing the elevation of *Sumer is icumen in* to its central place in the English musical canon and assessing how various factors affected its reception and the nature of its status. She addresses the song's entrance into the canon in the eighteenth century, showing how an emphasis on musical structure, compositional style, and other elements of the "great works" paradigm complicated matters for Burney and generations of other scholars. A survey of the musical and textual criticism that *Sumer is icumen in* underwent at the hands of music historians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reveals how it remained a privileged part of musical discourse, including the implications of its ubiquity in anthologies. Colton also examines the competing receptions of the canon as a secular work and a sacred one, drawing on the alternate Latin text, *Perspice*



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*Christicola*. Finally, turning to popular perceptions and appropriations of *Sumer is icumen in* offers the opportunity to explore a variety of meanings ascribed to the song through its use in film and by twentieth-century performers and composers.

Colton uses music for Edward the Confessor to reassess the role of politics in medieval English music. She challenges the perception that England's music was largely separate from its political history, arguing instead that during the Hundred Years' War, "votive music in honor of royal and saintly forebears" (44) carried a political message. Colton demonstrates that the cantilena *Regem regum collaudemus* refers to Edward the Confessor in the text, highlighting his sanctity, among other things. After using a close reading of the text to propose that the motet *Civitas nusquam conditur* was intended for the translation of Edward's relics, she shows how the texts emphasize Edward's "hagiographical image as a peacemaker, wise and divine ruler, and virgin" (48). Turning finally to the cantilena *Singularis laudis digna*, Colton situates the Marian text convincingly within the context of fourteenth-century English politics and connects other symbolism to the Hundred Years' War. She concludes that although politics was treated less overtly in English music than on the continent, it was nonetheless embedded there. Understandings of nationhood, Colton shows us, were more symbolic than literal, rendered in song by depictions of the king, his ancestry, and royal piety and sanctity.

Moving on to address the concept of authorship on English musical history, Colton explores issues of attribution and the nature of authorship in the Middle Ages. She begins with a discussion of how scholars like Harrison, Lefferts, and others have used genre and liturgical function to construct a history of English music, an approach necessitated by lack of known authorship and other difficulties (though a body of widely circulated and copied works did create a canon of sorts). Colton also notes that more attributed pieces of music appeared after English was accepted as a "high-status vernacular" (after Chaucer, et al.). Turning to the case of St. Edburga, she argues that descriptions of Edburga's musicality were complex references to the various aspects of her identity and sanctity. The motet *Virgo regalis fidei* is a contrafact of an item for St. Katherine of Alexandria, and as such becomes an intertextual trope linking the two saints. Music functioned tropically here, and the author rightly concludes that these examples illuminate how a variety of overlapping traditions functioned in medieval England. In the case of Richard Scrope, characterizing the Archbishop of York as a composer allowed for politically useful connections to St. Thomas of Canterbury and the attribution of the sequence *Scrupulosa* to Scrope activated a link to St. Ursula and the feast of Eleven Thousand Virgins. Musicianship served in both cases as a signifier of piety and sanctity, and it could also be turned toward political purposes.

Colton makes the case in chapter 4 that John Dunstaple the composer was in fact the same person as a John Dunstaple, Esquire of Steeple Morden. First, she calls into question the composer's death date by identifying problems with the two epitaphs on which scholarly consensus has relied. This offers the opportunity to connect one epitaph to Dunstaple's motet *Preco prehemencie* and to suggest that these epitaphs may have encouraged readers to view Dunstaple as a kind of John the Baptist figure. Although Colton acknowledges the problem of reconciling the 24 December 1453 death date of the composer with the Steeple Morden figure, she offers the inventive possibility that the dating on the epitaph may have been "a piece of poetic licence" (92). It may have been more important to place the death of the astronomer-musician on a liturgically significant date that emphasized the star of Bethlehem. Colton supports this by showing how Dunstaple's musical, devotional, and astronomical interests gave special significance to Epiphany. A close examination of Dunstaple's will, real estate dealings, and his heirs renders what first appeared far-fetched to be a plausible theory and also strengthens the case that the two Dunstaples were the same person. This is all reinforced by the contents and ownership of a missal adapted to include a Mass for the Feast Day of The





Three Kings of Cologne. Although the author's claims may be speculative, the argument is thoughtful, researched thoroughly, and argued persuasively.

Chapter 5 explores issues of identity and ethnicity in the historiography of English music. Colton argues that the language employed in musicological discourse, in particular that which "treated musical properties as if they related to ethnic fingerprints," are evidence that anxieties about nationalism and migration have been mapped onto creative practice (118). After addressing how manuscripts of various types have served as sources of identity, Colton examines scholarly attitudes towards "native" English music, noting the heavy influence of nineteenth-century nationalism in shaping the discourse. Peter Lefferts's study of the motet in England is singled out for its objectivity, while Gustave Reese's scholarship provides an example of more subjective approaches. Both, however, ascribe "Englishness" to specific musical features and techniques. She also points out the problems inherent in making attributions based on musical style, accounting for the anonymity of works in the sources, and other issues of assigning English origin securely to medieval music; the motet *Sub Arturo plebs*, attributed to Johannes Alanus, serves as a case study here. Throughout the chapter, Colton offers a deft critique of scholarly approaches that have had an enormous impact on historiography. In particular, she exposes scholars' "anxieties" about the necessity of determining a work's (or composer's) national origin and their focus on using the music itself as evidence of that origin.

Chapter 6 reappraises the *contenance angloise* itself. Rather than the commonly accepted view that Martin le Franc's poem referred primarily to issues of musical style, Colton argues instead for a radically different, primarily extra-musical definition of the *contenance angloise*, one connected intimately to the period's devotional and political literature. First, she traces the various interpretations of the term *contenance angloise*, its association with specific musical features, and its use in musicological literature. In the poem, the words are split between poetic lines. Colton suggests that this feature shows le Franc consciously highlighting wordplay between "angel" and "angle" that referenced a long-held understanding of English national identity as the "angelic" English. She reinforces the idea developed earlier in the book that sanctity and piety played a significant role in conceptions of English identity, this time using English hagiographical and devotional traditions to associate the idea specifically with the pun. *Contenance*, although flexible in meaning, might also be connected to England, having had a long history of use in the English vernacular. The use of the term *contenance angloise* may have been, then, an homage to the English through *imitatio*, itself an important aspect of fifteenth-century intellectual culture.

An epilogue concludes that casting English royalty as the pious descendants of saints and holy kings was essential to the English crown's political primacy in the Middle Ages. Colton suggests that "the concept of England as both ethnically coherent and special was the most fundamental national project of the later Middle Ages" and that this has resulted in the "whitewashing of English music history" (150). She concludes that the "mythologizing of composers, works, or styles" has diverted attention from "building an accurate picture of music and musical practices in medieval England" (151). As the author notes, current research is moving away from these older approaches, so the situation may not be as extreme as she suggests. Nonetheless, the present study offers a fresh perspective and a number of exciting new directions in both content and methodology. Colton's research is meticulous and she makes interpretive arguments clearly and persuasively. Although each chapter stands well on its own, taken as a whole, this book is an invitation to reconsider myriad aspects of music in medieval England and a welcome addition to the literature.

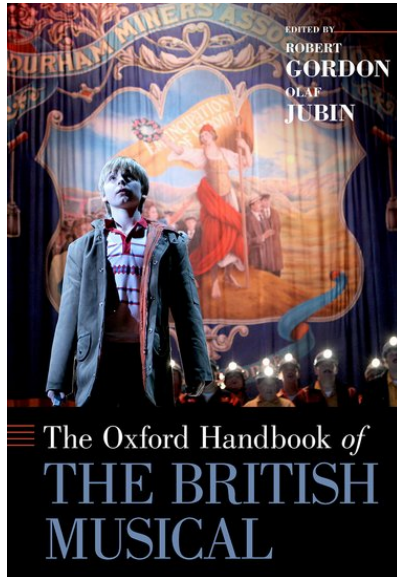
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Robert Gordon and Olaf Jubin, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. xviii+754 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-998874-7 (hardcover).



This eagerly anticipated collection of twenty-eight illuminating essays provides important insights into popular British musical theatre; throughout the volume, the authors reflect on defining qualities of the genre, including its keen awareness of national identity, innovative approaches to form and presentation, and omnipresence of social class. As becomes evident throughout the historical and contemporary case studies, the British musical shares the same gene pool as its ubiquitous American cousin, the Broadway musical, but cultivates and maintains its own distinctive elements.

The book is organized into six parts. The first three offer a largely chronological survey of the field: “Britannia Rules: The Early British Musical and Society” covers a large swath extending from the eighteenth century (*The Beggars Opera*, 1728) to the 1920s, “British or American: Artistic Differences” concerns mid-century repertoires, and “New Approaches to Form and Subject Matter” explores works written since the late 1950s.

The final three sections are arranged according to theme. “‘The British Are Coming!’” investigates particularly British dimensions of the genre. The essays in this section focus on repertory and includes chapters on subsidized revivals of American works; producer Cameron Mackintosh’s visionary efforts that make *Les Misérables* a distinctively British work, despite its French subject matter and genesis; visual spectacle, as evident in musicals ranging from *Cats* to *The Lord of the Rings*; and musicals that focus on class and sexual identities, utilizing *Billy Elliot* as an exemplar. Next comes “Trailblazers,” the chapters of which focus on individuals from various specialties who have contributed significantly to the British musical: playwright, actor, and composer Noël Coward, director Joan Littlewood, composer Lionel Bart, lyricist Tim Rice, producer Cameron Mackintosh, and composer and entrepreneur Andrew Lloyd Webber. Finally comes “‘The Art of the Possible’: Alternative Approaches to Musical Theatre Aesthetics,” in which distinctively British approaches to the genre are explored. Chapters address particular approaches to musical dramaturgy and non-integrative models, the jukebox musical (with *Mamma Mia!* as a case study), musicals expressly created for cross-generational audiences, and cultural diversity in the musical realm.

Throughout the volume, authors explore aspects of the British musical that address ideas of British nationhood. For example, Carolyn Williams, in her chapter on Gilbert and Sullivan, looks at this repertory as “auto-ethnographic” with its depictions of class, gender, and nation. Likewise, David Linton, when discussing the West End revue during the Great War and afterwards, looks at the genre as a place where national and racial identities can be located and negotiated (159). Uniquely British elements, such as Cockney culture, the power of unions, and regional differences, are performed and interrogated in the British musical to the point that these become defining elements of the genre.

The collection also accentuates the genre-defying traits inherent in the British musical. Dominic McHugh’s remark concerning Noël Coward, that genre is “a loose mode of reference” (445), is appropriate for most of the works discussed in the *Handbook*. With influences from music hall, comic opera, revue, and various incarnations of star-centered musical comedy to Bertold Brecht



and the rock music industry, the British musical embodies an amalgamation of various musical approaches, both professional and amateur. In discussing *Billy Elliot*, an image from which adorns the volume's dust jacket, Robert Gordon looks at how this particular show "exploits popular British forms of entertainment," which includes amateur performances and "endless recycled showbiz numbers" (430). *Billy Elliot* is embedded with performances ranging from camp to classical ballet, and it is precisely this sort of conflation that, in part, defines the British musical.

Innovation is another key feature of the British musical. The paradigm of the concept musical, whose genesis is often associated with Stephen Sondheim's *Company* (1970), is indeed the fundamental structure of Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse's *Stop the World-I Want to Get Off* from 1962, according to David Cottis. Similarly, the notion of creating staged musicals from rock albums is a distinctive British trait, as Ian Shapiro demonstrates in his discussions of *Tommy* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Additionally, the sung-through popular operatic style of *Les Misérables* and its progeny, including *The Phantom of the Opera*, is, thanks to Cameron Mackintosh, a British export. The same can be said for the jukebox musical, where songs from a famous individual or group provide the musical numbers for the show; George Rodosthenous offers an especially insightful essay on this approach in which he investigates the metatheatrical use of ABBA songs in *Mamma Mia!*, a musical that invokes karaoke as a narrative device (621). Musicals written for the family market constitute another distinctive British approach; Rebecca Warner explores shows such as *Matilda* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, whose intentional cross-generational appeal comes through offering themes that "are often explored from multiple perspectives" (644) with stories that frequently concern transcendence in some sort of fantastic location that can be transferred into everyday life (642).

Another common theme in the essays is the ubiquity of social class. Class identification is central to musicals ranging from *The Beggar's Opera* through the corpus of Gilbert and Sullivan in the nineteenth century and musical comedies such as *Mister Cinders* and *Me and My Girl* in the first part of the twentieth to more recent shows like *Blood Brothers* (1983) and *Billy Elliot* (2005) that focus on working-class families. George Burrows, in discussing British musical comedies from the 1920s and 1930s, views the works in his chapter from the vantage point of class-conscious discourse, asserting that they are "enacting alternative and revitalizing social structures" (172). This remark applies to nearly every essay in the volume. Some musicals criticize the class system, others endorse it, but virtually every British musical addresses it in some way.

*The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical* as a whole represents a highly distinguished level of scholarship and acumen. This is a volume that demonstrates the diversity, inherent social awareness, and musical and dramatic distinctiveness of the British musical. As with other titles in the Oxford Handbook series, one of this volume's goals is to stimulate further inquiries on the topic. One place in which this is starting to happen is through the series *Palgrave Studies in British Musical Theatre*, edited by Dominic Symonds and Millie Taylor, two professors of musical theatre in the UK. The series's first volume, *Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Respectable Capers'* by Michael Goron, appeared in 2016.<sup>1</sup> While several studies exist on specific aspects of British musicals since the 1980s, and of course on Gilbert and Sullivan, British musical theatre remains largely a nascent field and one for which *The Oxford Handbook of the British Musical* provides a critically engaging and abundantly nuanced overview.

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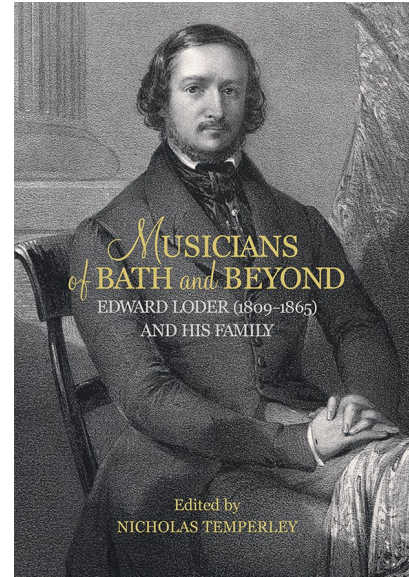
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<sup>1</sup> This title was reviewed in *NABMSA Reviews* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2017).



Nicholas Temperley, ed. *Musicians of Bath and Beyond: Edward Loder (1809–1865) and his Family*. Woodbridge, UK; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2016. 314 pp. ISBN 978-1-78327-078-1 (hardcover).

This volume of essays, edited by leading authority on Victorian music, Nicholas Temperley, examines the musical activities of the Loder family, with particular focus on Edward Loder (1809–1865). The Loder family achieved reputable status in most fields of musical activity: performing, composing, teaching, and they also ventured into the music business. The story of this family began with Andrew Loder (1752–1806) in Bath in the 1780s, ending with the death of Fanny Loder in 1904.<sup>1</sup> But it was John David Loder's (c.1788–1846) indefatigable contributions to the musical life in Bath—the fashionable spa town that was famous for its many musical concerts and entertainments—that brought the family name to the foreground. John Loder established himself by playing lead violin in bands and orchestras in the town. His reputation eventually extended into other provincial cities and London, where he taught violin at the Royal Academy of Music, and, most significantly, he published an authoritative English treatise on violin playing, all “surprising achievements for a provincial musician,” as Temperley observes (2). Other prominent musical Loders were John's nephew, George (c.1816–1868), a travelling musician who spread the family name across the globe; John's own children, especially Edward; and his niece, Kate (1825–1904).



The Loders were most active in the decades that span the “least known and most despised period in British musical history”: the late Georgian and early Victorian periods (1). Scholars have now begun to reject this prejudice and are exploring English music from this era with significant discoveries. Other titles published under the Music in Britain, 1600–1900 series by Christina Bashford, Suzanne Cole, and Peter Holman, to name but a few, confirm this surge in interest. This volume is essential for those who seek to further their knowledge on the musical outputs of British provincial musicians during this time, and also to gain a greater understanding of the social and economic forces that shaped their careers. Those less familiar with the music scene in the Victorian era might be surprised to find that it was thriving with the foundation of English sacred and secular music societies, English opera productions, and English chamber music concerts, with music playing a fundamental role in the life of all classes. Temperley observes, “there is still plenty of material here for scholars to tackle” (290). He comments that the increasing interest in late Georgian and Victorian music is due to a shift in methodological approach focusing more on “musical life,” audience reception and experiences of musical works, rather than solely on composers and their products (1). This volume not only informs us of the musical talents and efforts of the Loder family, but also of Temperley's life-long interest in Victorian music, particularly music for the stage, his discovery of Edward Loder, and his firm, longstanding belief that Edward “deserves a permanent place in British musical life” (4). Overall the authors are successful in justifying this point, and their assessment of his musical output is a sound balance of impartiality and commendation.

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<sup>1</sup> The Loder Family Tree shows the members who were most active in music, with the four main musicians in boldface (xv).



The volume is structured into three parts and concludes with Temperley's account of finding and organizing the revival of Edward Loder's opera *Raymond and Agnes* (1855). Part one, "The Musical Profession in Early Nineteenth-Century England," has four chapters, each one rigorously researched and referenced, and as a whole presents us with a detailed and informative view of the musical landscape in which the Loders and many other musical families were operating. In "Earning a Musical Living: The Loders' Career Choices," Stephen Banfield begins with an in-depth examination of the career options and financial prospects facing professional musicians living and working in the provinces. Banfield provides fascinating insight into the types of musical and non-musical enterprises that musicians had to engage with in order to make a decent living; his essay is a convincing portrayal of the realities that surrounded the Loder family, as well as other prominent and lesser-known musicians at this time.

In chapter 2, "The Musical Life of Bath, 1800–1850," Matthew Spring closely examines how Bath's music scene altered in this period. Bath was a thriving, unique urban center for music entertainment, trade, and teaching, and boasted numerous families of music professionals, including the Loders, who taught music and also branched into the Bath music business. Spring comments on how external factors, such as financial problems, the political climate, and change of social milieu had a drastic impact on the entertainment venues and musical enterprises that had flourished in the town.

In her chapter, "The Theatre Royal, Manchester, in Edward Loder's Time," Liz Cooper discusses the significant impact this institution had for Edward Loder's career. The Theatre Royal had long enjoyed successful operatic seasons, starring notable performers, and had an excellent reputation for its orchestra and opera productions. Cooper traces the history and individuals involved in the running of the theatre, setting the backdrop for Edward Loder's arrival as music director in 1851. Cooper argues that Loder was the most important person affiliated with the Theatre Royal: he composed more music for the venue than any other composer in his four years as musical director and he left a remarkable legacy.

The final chapter of part one, "The Climate for Opera in London, 1834–1865," highlights the complex musical, critical, financial, and practical issues that affected English romantic opera: the struggles and insecurities English opera composers faced in trying to find their native musical voice without heavy reliance on Continental styles; the absence of a designated venue for the performance of native works; and the contradictory expectations of critics and audiences. Alison Mero makes passing reference to Edward Loder's operas in this chapter, and we are presented with an overall picture of the operatic climate in Victorian London and of the immense difficulties and prejudices that had to be overcome in order to establish English national opera.

Part two, "The Loder Family," traces the musical life history of its members in five chapters, each one focusing on a prominent musical Loder. There is an inevitable overlap of material with some earlier chapters, but this is brief, and any unnecessary repetition is adeptly avoided. Andrew Clarke starts with a biographical account in chapter 5, "Loder & Sons, Bath: A Band of Musicians." Having read Banfield's and Spring's contextual essays, the reader is now sufficiently knowledgeable about the financial and social situations in the provinces, including Bath, that affected this middle-class family. Clarke's chapter begins with Andrew Loder (1752–1806)'s decision to pursue a musical career in late eighteenth-century Bath, ending with Kate Loder's domestic performance of Brahms's *German Requiem* in London in 1871. In between these two relations, the reader is introduced to numerous musical Loders, both men and women, from the immediate family and other musical families connected by marriage. The Loder family tree is an essential reference for this chapter. Bath was the musical nucleus in which more than a dozen Loders worked, and Clarke argues convincingly that their commitment and dedication to the musical life of Bath halted the rapidity of the town's decline. Clarke could



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have exhausted the reader with the sheer number of Loders and relatives discussed, but this is an intriguing and engaging account of an exceptional musical family. We avidly follow the Loder generational movements from the provinces, into the city, and out across oceans.

As John David Loder's biography has previously been covered in the volume, David J. Golby undertakes in chapter 6, "A Master Violinist and Teacher," an assessment of John Loder's career to determine how he achieved a position of eminence so rare for most provincial musicians at this time. Golby places Loder in the broader context of British nineteenth-century instrumental performance and pedagogy, comparing Loder's reputation and output as performer and pedagogue alongside his contemporaries. John Loder was a distinguished and respected violinist, but according to Golby, it was his written works, instructions, and treatises for the instrument that separated him from the rest of the native pedagogues, allowing him to achieve a level of reverence and authority usually reserved for continental musicians and their texts.

In chapter seven, "Edward James Loder (1809–1865): A Life in Music," Andrew Lamb presents a chronicle of Edward Loder as man and musician. We read of his ambitions, marriages (the second bigamous), constant financial difficulties, bankruptcy, disappointments, tours to different cities, and the endless struggle to secure his name and career in a ruthless musical world, all ending in ravaging illness. As most of Edward's compositions are lost, Lamb relies on newspaper entries that document performances of his works and critics' responses. Edward was a prolific composer of several genres of vocal and instrumental music, and, of course, works for the theatre. Loder also ventured into music criticism: his comments revealed his expert knowledge and understanding of theatre orchestras. His time as musical director for the Princess's Theatre, London, and Theatre Royal, Manchester, was spent both conducting and composing, and for a time gave him some stability. Edward Loder's death in 1865, aged fifty-five, makes for sober reading; tragically, all his hard work did not pay off.

Most Loders toured around and worked in various towns and cities in England, but it was George who traveled the most extensively. Julja Szuster's chapter "George Loder's Contribution to Musical Life in Colonial Australia" looks at his movements from London, to America, and then to Australia and New Zealand. Many ambitious and adventurous musicians from Britain, Europe, and the US were drawn to Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century. Social, financial, and political reasons forced many musicians living in San Francisco to move there; for George, there were personal reasons as well. According to available evidence, George had plenty to offer the countries he worked in and inhabited. He was a versatile musician and composer who sought to introduce new music to varied audiences in the regions of America and Australia. He toured widely with eminent and international performers, and he made his mark conducting opera, as well as being a director of light music, theatre work, and touring ensembles. While some of his performances with his second wife, Emma Jane Newman (c.1833–1867), did not impress the critics, they could not condemn him for his untiring efforts to entertain and educate.

The final chapter of part two, "'A Magnificent Musician': The Career of Kate Fanny Loder (1825–1904)," looks at the varied career and influence of the last prominent musical member of this family. In her essay, Therese Ellsworth considers Kate Loder as performer, composer, and teacher. Her chapter includes an appendix list and tables of her compositions and performances. Of the forty compositions, only a title exists for some, and contemporary accounts are the only resources available to provide descriptions and critics' reactions. In all three spheres of musical activity, Loder made a lasting and great impression. And even though she would have encountered restrictions in her career to which her male contemporaries were never subjected, Loder nevertheless seized every possible opportunity to attain the highest level of musical professionalism and expertise, and she did so with unrelenting talent and zeal.



The final part of the volume, “The Music of Edward Loder,” examines, analyzes, and evaluates his compositional output, with particular emphasis on his serious operas. Nicholas Temperley divides his chapter “‘Three fifths of him genius and two fifths sheer fudge’: Heights and Depths in Edward Loder’s Work” (the title borrowing from Edgar Allen Poe) into five sections: Piano Music, Other Instrumental Music, Songs, Vocal-Ensemble and Choral Music, and Dramatic Music. Most sections have music examples to illustrate Temperley’s points. We know from previous chapters that Loder was in an unfortunate position: he was financially insecure and unable to find a salaried position. Because of this, Loder, like many other composers in similar situations, had to resort to composing popular, conventional pieces to amuse amateur players. It is for this reason that Loder’s works have been dismissed. But Temperley argues that Loder’s serious, light, and sacred works show a command of melodic invention, harmony, tonality, mood, and style, despite the restraints and obstacles that hindered his creativity.

In chapter 11, “‘Ah, trait’ress, me betraying’: Edward Loder and his Librettos,” David Chandler looks at the status of English theatre composers and the restrictions imposed upon them. Music was subservient to the written word and composers had to appease the demands of actors, singers, and mediocre librettists to the detriment of their compositional efforts. Chandler’s essay explores the impact this had on Loder’s operas overall, making reference to other contemporary and earlier English theatre composers. He concentrates on four of Loder’s operas that were the most musically impressive, as well as highlighting the frustrations that Loder encountered during their production.

In chapter 12, “Edwards Loder’s Serious Operas,” Paul Rodmell focuses on three of Loder’s operatic works that have survived: *Nourjahad* (1834), *The Night Dancers* (1846), and *Raymond and Agnes* (1855). These compositions span the beginning, middle, and end of Loder’s career and allow Rodmell to explore Loder’s approaches to the genre and his development as a composer. Rodmell argues that there is evidence of Loder’s compositional maturity, and he uses music examples to support his analysis. Again we read of Loder’s ambitions and failed attempts to secure fame and success as a theatre composer, and also of his experiments to create stage music that both pleased contemporary audiences and critics, but also his demonstrated dramatic awareness and characterization. It is the latter that has attracted the attention of current musicologists, but unfortunately was not the main concern for Loder’s viewers.

Valerie Langfield concludes part three with an in-depth discussion of Edward Loder’s lauded opera, “*Raymond and Agnes*: Orchestration and Dramatic Characterisation.” We have read several times throughout the volume that this opera signalled Loder’s maturity as theatre composer, and Langfield provides a detailed plot summary interspersed with music examples and analysis. She observes that his use of melody, form, tonality, key, characterization, rhythm, and orchestration in this work moved away from conventional operatic practices of other composers and of his earlier operas. Loder demonstrated sensitive awareness, thoughtfulness, compositional imagination, and command that helped underpin the drama.

In the epilogue following Langfield’s chapter, Temperley describes the huge collaborative venture and complexities involved in staging and performing a revival of this work in 1966: securing funding; sourcing the complete score; writing a new libretto in absence of the original (the printed libretto was eventually located, but after the production); revising the music and the text; audience [mis]behavior; and critics’ response. Despite mixed reviews of the performance, some condemning the libretto, most critics did recognize Edward Loder’s exceptional abilities as an English opera composer. Many exciting developments have occurred since the 1966 revival, and Edward Loder’s works have been performed, recorded, and discussed in recent conferences and study days. Some of the songs and pieces (by Edward, Kate, and George)



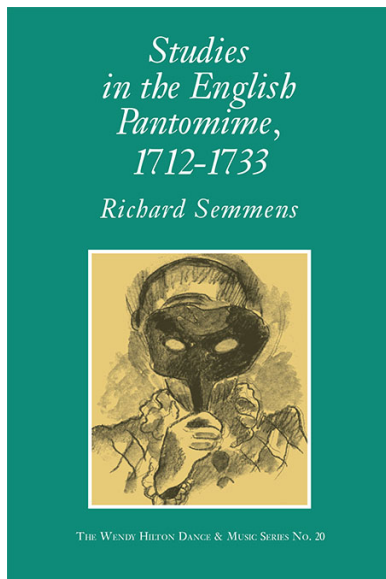
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discussed in the volume have been uploaded onto an online audio supplement, as no other recordings of their works exist. Temperley mentions in the introduction that a recording of *Raymond and Agnes*, in a new edition prepared by Langfield, is scheduled for later this year (5). It seems at long last that Edward Loder and his family are finally starting to achieve the recognition they have long deserved.

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Richard Semmens. *Studies in the English Pantomime, 1712–1733*. The Wendy Hilton Dance & Music Series 20. Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2016. ix+199 pp. ISBN 978-1-57647-277-4 (paperback).

If we could attend the theatre in early eighteenth-century London, we would most likely be treated to a night of overwhelming variety. It was amongst spoken plays, Italian opera, masques, and dancing entertainments that the English pantomime grew into one of London's most popular musico-theatrical traditions. Richard Semmens's monograph digs into the origins and early years of the pantomime tradition, focusing on the choreographer and pantomime creator John Weaver rather than John Rich (a typical focus for books and articles on the early pantomime). *Studies in the English Pantomime* is often engaging, although Semmens frequently gets absorbed in details that sometimes need a bit more context to be fully appreciated. Nevertheless, this book helps to fill in gaps in the

history of the pantomime, and provides a thorough study of a few works in particular, making it essential for anyone studying early eighteenth-century musical culture in England.

Semmens begins his book by discussing the reception of pantomimes and the strange (and often difficult) categorization of these hybrid forms of musico-theatrical entertainment. His way into the topic is through the works of Weaver, dancer and mastermind behind early pantomimes such as *Harlequin Doctor Faustus* (the subject of chapter 2) and *The Judgment of Paris* (treated in the final chapter). Semmens never really introduces Weaver, and throughout chapter 1, the author makes reference to the fact that Weaver was frequently not living in London, without explaining what the dancer was up to elsewhere in England or Europe (see pp. 4 and 7). Instead, Semmens leaps right into arguments pertaining to Weaver's separate treatment of both serious and grotesque dancing and the dancer's motivations for creating pantomime—largely due to a desire to resurrect the arts of the ancients (9). While this chapter succeeds in addressing Weaver's ambitions and provides excellent context for the types of serious and comic dancing by particular types of *commedia* and mythological characters, the introduction lacks context and the reader feels dropped into the material without background. This will not bother those who are specialists in the period and genre; it will be, however, more difficult for those who have less knowledge of early eighteenth-century London theatre.

Chapters 2 and 3 are particularly strong; Semmens is certainly at his best when writing about music and making conjectures about the content and structure of these early pantomimes. In chapter 2, Semmens reconstructs *Harlequin Doctor Faustus* quite convincingly, and he makes





his speculation clear at various points in the text. Chapter 3 concerns *The Necromancer*, about which more has been written since John Rich produced this pantomime. Semmens makes important arguments concerning how pantomime music circulated in printed form, and its relationship to popular ballad tunes of the day. Most compelling is his argument that “[the tunes’] straightforward simplicity and their versatility (through variable repeat schemes) rendered them particularly susceptible to wide circulation in either oral transmission or print culture” (32–33). The tables that Semmens creates show convincing reconstructions of both pantomimes and are a helpful resource in envisioning how these works might have been brought to the stage, even though (as he admits) his process is in large part well-researched speculation (46, 87). Although there are certain points where he spends a little too much time on specific details that do not always seem argument-driven, these two chapters must be lauded for Semmens’s ability to draw so many conclusions from very little concrete historical or musical evidence.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide the historical and cultural context that seemed lacking early on in the book. In chapter 4, Semmens discusses the pantomimes amongst other types of musico-theatrical events in London during this twenty-year period, such as masques, dramatic odes, other harlequinades, revivals of seventeenth-century operas, and Italian operas. He spends a good portion of the chapter analyzing William Hogarth’s famous engraving *Masquerades and Operas* (1724), showing how the pantomime is a kind of variety entertainment that linked operas, masquerades, and even magic shows through its incorporation of singing, dancing, special effects, costuming, and miming. The section on prison culture at the end is fascinating (one pantomime, by John Thurmond, responded to the contemporary event of a prison escape by Jack Sheppard), but seems a little out of place here—it may have worked better as a separate article. The final chapter also takes Hogarth as a starting point, by examining Theophilus Cibber’s grotesquerie *A Harlot’s Progress, or the Ridotto al fresco* (1733) and its links with John Weaver’s final pantomime for the London stage, *The Judgment of Paris*. Semmens makes important arguments concerning how visual art may have influenced theatrical culture—a subject that has not been fully examined in this early period of English theatrical history.

*Studies in the English Pantomime* is a well-written and ultimately useful book, exploring a genre that has only recently been getting the proper scholarly treatment it deserves. Semmens writes very well, especially when discussing these works in analytical detail. He also gives appropriate credit to the many recent studies that have been published about pantomime, John Rich, and musical theatre in London more generally, such as *The Stage’s Glory* (2012) and *The Lively Arts of the London Stage* (2014). The musical examples are well set, and the book’s production is largely professional, although there are a handful of mis-capitalizations in the earlier chapters (page 8 has four: “Opera,” “Serious,” and “Opera Dancing” are all capitalized despite context), and one misspelling (“de” instead of “he” on page 13). In addition, a glossary of dance terms would have been helpful, as Semmens references many movements that may be unfamiliar to the lay reader (or even the musico-theatrical researcher). Nevertheless, Semmens’s *Studies in the English Pantomime* provides a much needed, close look at the beginning of a decidedly English tradition. This book draws important connections between pantomime and British society in the first few decades of the eighteenth century, offering an alternative narrative to those studies focusing primarily on Italian opera and the Royal Academy of Music.

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Vicki P. Stroeher and Justin Vickers, eds. *Benjamin Britten Studies: Essays on An Inexplicit Art*. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2017. xxviii+526 pp. ISBN: 978-1-78327-195-5 (hardback).

## BENJAMIN BRITTEN STUDIES Essays on An Inexplicit Art



*Edited by Vicki P. Stroeher and Justin Vickers*

This book is structured in four parts, of which nine of sixteen chapters are apparently authored by Americans or scholars living in the USA—surely a first in non-conference Britten studies, a nice global touch in our Brexit times indicative of Britten’s continued movement away from the tribe. The volume has a substantial conclusion and epilogue.

After an admirable introduction by that venerable English gentleman of Britten scholarship, Philip Reed, which provides a comprehensive yet contextually succinct overview of the history of writing on Britten, part I is titled “Identity: Exile and Return.” In the opening chapter, Paul Kildea’s nimble and skillful counterpointing of Britten and the Viennese musicologist and Britten scholar Hans Keller (profitably investigating the tensions of exile for both—Britten’s temporarily in the USA and Keller’s permanently in the UK), leads naturally, via the topic of musical identity crisis, to co-editor Vicki P. Stroeher’s chapter “Britten, *Paul Bunyan*, and ‘American-ness’.” This combination of chapters admirably develops the notion of the push-and-pull of Britten and Auden’s operetta in relation to their adopted country against both socio-political and musical backgrounds. Both chapters raise questions regarding Britten’s deliberate degree of resistance to the subject of “America,” especially in light of Britten’s subsequent return to the UK. (Interestingly, Auden, whose libretto seemed to more deliberately torpedo the American subject on one level as he later admitted, remained in the USA.)

Jenny Doctor’s chapter—a fusion of different elements—gives a fascinating view into the circumstances, creation, and music for the competing CBS and BBC radio accounts of wartime Britain to America. Doctor’s case is certainly augmented by a recently released recording of the relevant CBS music (and one track of the BBC) on CD, which the reader should ideally have in hand (hint: Spotify). Co-editor Justin Vickers’s useful chapter connects the story of the English Opera Group, as an essentially Britten-based institution, to the Aldeburgh Festival that, from its very origins, was more internationally focused. The EOG ultimately yielded, via extinction, to the AF—thereby becoming part of its continuing legacy. Vickers produces extensive charts, including a most substantial one of the first decade of the Aldeburgh Festival.

Part II relates to “Britten and Intimacy” and Byron Adams provides a typically robust and searching chapter on Britten’s potential relationship with a tradition of Uranian boy-worship in England. His insights into linkages between Britten’s teacher John Ireland and the role (often viewed as autobiographical) of Aschenbach in *Death in Venice*, possibly resonating with many of Britten’s own phobias, are imaginative and persuasive. Louis Niebur’s investigation of Britten’s strategies of public and private interpersonal power and surrender in *Canticle I* and Lloyd Whitesell’s typically insightful close reading of heterophony, time, and identity crisis grounded in *Death in Venice*, tease out the manner in which certain musical techniques might more or less concretely embody metaphysical elements and ideas—Britten’s musical language as a kind of super-*leitmotif*.

The transition into part III (“Britten and his Craft”) opens with a continuing, though differently situated, view of time via Colleen Renihan’s gaze at engaged citizenship and the performed act



of remembrance in *Gloriana* (a belatedly happily growing operatic arena for recondite insights). Following is Kevin Salfen's passionate advocacy for the (continued) deeper resonance of Japanese Nō drama in the last two of Britten's three parables for church performance; Christopher Mark's trenchant analysis of a single pitch interval—the augmented sixth—across the *oeuvre* with a view to opening up new hermeneutical interpretive strategies (as well as demonstrating his protean comprehension of Britten's compositional technique in the tradition of his mentor Peter Evans); and Philip Rupprecht's brilliantly engaging “notes” on the topic of rhythm, temporality (and/or ametricality) in both local and *supra* musical senses as related to genre and style and the need for further research of such: might we expect a future Rupprecht monograph? This collection of chapters provides a central “heart” to the book that concentrates on often particularized and specific techniques with a view to quarrying new interpretive strategies. This group, in a certain way, represents the most rigorous set of musical analyses in the traditional sense.

The final section, “Part IV: Britten and Matters of Practicality,” opens with a kind of recapitulatory chapter (to the expository one by Stroeher) by Danielle Ward-Griffin dealing with the issue of Britten's revisionary practice, especially in the recapitulation of *Paul Bunyan* itself as a kind of epilogue to Britten's entire operatic career. (The double-chapter focus on *Bunyan*—and earlier *Death in Venice*—where other major Britten operas are omitted, might be considered a weakness by others, but is a symptom of the particular kind of service this book is out to provide.) Thornton Miller immerses us in the vexed issues of copyright control and performance rights in the Soviet Union, centered on both *Peter Grimes* and *The Prince of the Pagodas*, in a manner that constitutes a penetration of Britten's close relationship with Russia, especially via his relationships with Shostakovich and Rostropovich during 1960s until Britten's death in 1976. Nicholas Clark breaks fresh ground in charting the troubled waters of Britten's interpersonal relationships with, and evolution from, Boosey and Hawkes to Faber publishing, highlighting the intensively intimate manner in which Britten attempted to hyper-control his career via people and institutions. This raises thoughts about the underlying nature of mutual exploitation in those very relationships: to what degree are certain kinds of professional exploitation acceptable/defensible or not?

Lucy Walker provides a vital concluding chapter (in the “Conclusion and Epilogue”) that raises important and, for this reader at least, urgent questions about the nature of archiving a life and, in “Part 2: He is Nothing,” a properly disturbing attempt to rationalize Britten as a man who has utterly ceased to exist in his own self. (The concluding photo of the Britten gravestone—jet black with merely his name and dates, 1913–76—is clearly evidence in support of the defense: or is it prosecution?) The space permitted in this review does not allow for deeper discourse on this subject, but many readers will be well served by reading Walker's “Conclusion” (pun surely intended) at the beginning of the book rather than at the end—or both. Its ramifications lie as the “open secret” beneath the subject matter that has gone before.

The epilogue embodies a deft and touching note by the co-editors who have both laudably undertaken a painstaking and efficient job throughout.

In conclusion, this book probably best serves its subject as a repository of expert disquisitions: “studies” indeed. Many of the chapters are arguably best sampled individually rather than as a sequence. The volume's strength does not lie in any sense as a comprehensive survey of Britten's work—nor does it attempt to. (The reader is directed to, and better served by, the several published “companions” if such an aim is in mind.)



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To say that Britten's art is inexplicit in the sense that it revels in ambiguity would today be unforgivably pat and *cliché*. Of all composers, Britten was one of the most dedicated, gifted, and successful in relentlessly honing his technique to be a simple and explicit communication (Britten's word) to actually, in musical notes, spell out precisely what he wanted to say beneath the veneer of ambiguity. But, taken as a whole, this admirable and welcome series of chapters in this beautifully produced book—a work of art in itself—combine to demonstrate protean aspects of an artist who counted on the reception of the cult of the inexplicit, as a kind of bogus sophistication or conceited “adult perspective,” to conceal a crystal clear “innocent” (albeit “dead” innocence) objective, the nearest indication of which can be found in Lucy Walker's conclusion. Britten knew it, but do we?

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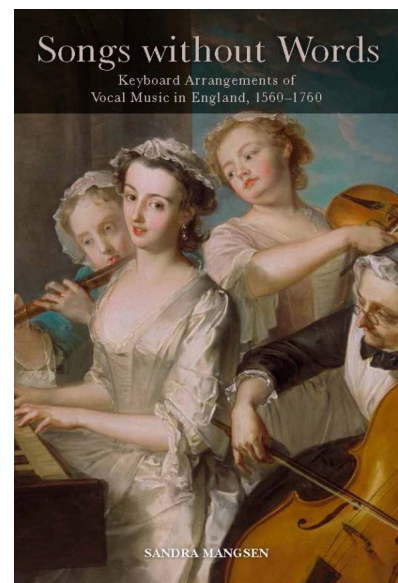
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Sandra Mangsen. *Songs without Words: Keyboard Arrangements of Vocal Music in England, 1560–1760*. Eastman Studies in Music. Woodbridge, UK; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, xvii+263 pp. ISBN 978-1-58046-549-6 (Hardcover).

In *Songs without Words: Keyboard Arrangements of Vocal Music in England, 1560–1760*, Sandra Mangsen looks at keyboard music from the perspective of what happens to songs, arias, and other tunes once they leave their original version and are transformed into arrangements and transcriptions. This topic has been of interest to English keyboard specialists for some time. Christopher Hogwood struggled with it as he considered which pieces belonged in the Purcell Society's edition of the composer's keyboard music, publishing his thoughts in “Creating the Corpus: The ‘Complete Keyboard Music’ of Henry Purcell.”<sup>1</sup> Mangsen tackles this type of question over a period of two centuries, when the reuse of material differed substantially through several periods of stylistic change.

The majority of *Songs without Words* focuses on the eighteenth century, and it is here that Mangsen is strongest. Her investigation into Charles Babell and his impact as a virtuoso professional performer provides a wealth of detail about publishing practices in the early-eighteenth century. In particular, she has mined numerous publications and ascertained which operas and stage works provided the fodder for use in other media. This information will be useful for those interested in myriad aspects of performance culture in this period because so much of the foundational work is readily available and easily located in this book.

At the heart of *Songs without Words* are some troubling assumptions that deserve further consideration. Many Baroque scholars have questioned the concept of the “work,” but this



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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Hogwood, ed., *The Keyboard in Baroque Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 67–89.





serious concept, an essential beginning point for Mangsen's inquiry into fine distinctions between "transcription" and "arrangement," does not feature here. Authors such as Rebecca Herissone have carefully considered a variety of types of scores that potentially represent music transmission, especially in the latter half of the seventeenth century, but these decades receive scant treatment. For example, chapter 1 ("Ballads Transformed") ends with examples from the first decades of the seventeenth century such as Dowland's "Lachrymae" and a discussion of Peter Philips and intabulations. Next should follow something on the mid- and late-seventeenth century, but chapter 2 moves to the early 1700s ("Arias Domesticated: *The Ladys Entertainment* and Other Early Eighteenth-Century Anthologies"). Granted, Mangsen does look back at books such as *Musick's Hand-maid*, but her analysis of this period ignores crucial questions concerning sources like GB-Lbl Add MS 22099, which includes two-part (predominantly) versions of songs ("Fairest Isle") and Corelli violin sonatas. These types of manuscripts are typically catalogued as "keyboard music and other," or "keyboard music and accompaniments," yet we cannot assert beyond a doubt that the accompaniments are not, in fact, skeletal scores for improvised realizations. Another angle to consider is the close connection between print publications and manuscripts such as those John Reading copied for publication but did not see print. These types of sources provide an alternative way of looking at music transmission in a society where more and more people were becoming musically literate.

Mangsen's observation that *The Harpsichord Master* and *The Ladys Banquet* (both volumes) represent a "shared, public repertoire" with strong theatre connections is absolutely correct. Why this is so is a question that will take us deeper into broader interdisciplinary connections of gender, class, and beyond. These queries lead to other core issues with Mangsen's assessment of this repertoire. One is how to define "amateur." Her interpretation is clear in such comments as "these versions [of "Fortune My Foe"] again point up the distinction between manuscripts compiled by or for amateurs and those that demand stronger keyboard technique" (33). I have recently argued that the ways we have distinguished between music for amateurs and professionals are not, in fact, born out by the data.<sup>2</sup> The degree of virtuosity required for a piece of music cannot be the measuring stick for determining the status of the performer or owner.

That being said, Mangsen should be congratulated for her thorough investigation into such a broad subject with numerous sources of disparate natures. This repertoire has not received such thoughtful interrogation in a book-length publication, and *Songs without Words* has taken a large step toward helping us understand the complex interweaving of theatre culture, domestic markets, social interaction, and the role of performers/composers/copyists in music transmission between 1560 and 1760. The book is lavishly filled with examples, lists of contents, and facsimiles. The meticulous detail that Mangsen includes throughout the volume stamps her work as a valuable and significant contribution to the literature on English music and will significantly aid future examinations that further our understanding of this exciting period.

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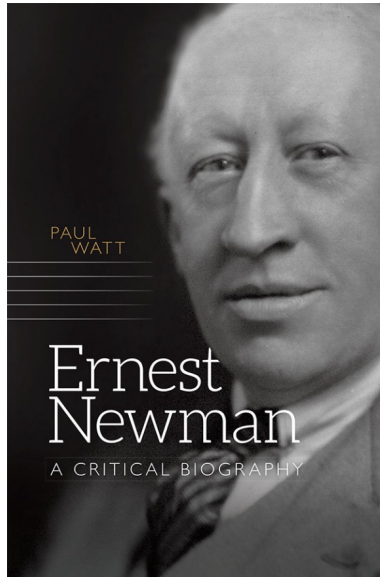
<sup>2</sup> Candace Bailey, "The Challenge of Domesticity in Men's Manuscripts in Restoration England," in *Beyond Boundaries: Rethinking Music Circulation in Early Modern England*, Linda Austern, Amanda Eubanks Winkler, and Candace Bailey, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 114–26.



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Paul Watt. *Ernest Newman: A Critical Biography*. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2017. 274 pp. ISBN: 978-1-78327-190-0 (hardback).



I opened this new critical biography of Ernest Newman not entirely well disposed toward its subject. Newman's high-handed dismissal of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Nietzsche, and perhaps above all his irredeemable biography, *The Man Liszt*, had led me to view him as a high-journalistic philistine. That Paul Watt's book has led me to reconsider Newman, a more interesting, complex figure than I had thought, offers testimony to the author's achievement.

Watt offers what seems to be a fair-minded treatment of the early years, in which Newman, born William Roberts in Liverpool in 1868, considered himself a "new man"—perhaps also an ironic turn upon Cardinal Newman—in the line of Victorian "freethinkers" such as Charles Bradlaugh, Herbert Spencer, and John M. Robertson, as well as Charles Darwin and Auguste Comte. The "rationalist" Robertson, whom Newman knew personally and eventually, somewhat viciously, turned upon, "facilitated" the publication of Newman's first three books: *Gluck and the Opera* (1895); the "rationalist manifesto" *Pseudo-Philosophy at the End of the Nineteenth Century* (1897, as "Hugh Mortimer Cecil"), which involved Newman in an involved tale, outlined here, of imprint theft and suicide; and *A Study of Wagner* (1899). Robertson seems, moreover, to have been an important influence upon Newman's resolve, helpfully contextualized amongst pleas from William Henry Hadow, Charles Villiers Stanford, and John Runciman, amongst others, to improve standards, above all methodologically, in the name of a more "objective" musical criticism.

Watt is alert to his subject's shortcomings. He does not fail to point out, especially through judicious use of contemporary reviews, the derivative nature of *Gluck and the Opera*, although he is perhaps a little indulgent towards a book that makes no use whatsoever of primary sources. It may reasonably be considered, however, a starting point for "the mainstream years" from 1900 onwards, both for better (much) and for worse (Liszt). Much of that, of course, is journalism: both "sound" and more controversial. It is difficult to argue with the description of Elgar's *Enigma Variations* as "the most important piece of music till then produced by an Englishman," without going further back into musical history than Newman ever did: culpable, no doubt, yet not entirely surprising. He certainly proved quite the advocate for much English music, even if many now would question his placing of Joseph Holbrooke, a "good friend," alongside "Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss!" What critic, though, has never made such a questionable call?

That reads, at any rate, more generously than his later lack of interest in contemporary modernist music, and in most French music of any period, Berlioz the notable exception. Debussy and Ravel largely left him "cold." Nevertheless, Watt, drawing on Jenny Doctor's work, acknowledges that Newman's work as a BBC adviser and broadcaster during the late 1920s and early 1930s "was sometimes much more balanced and considered than his rants in the *Sunday Times*." It is interesting, moreover, to read Newman's remarks on audience behavior. Whether we "agree" is hardly the point; they offer material on expectations.



Watt points also to differences following Newman's 1920 appointment at the *Sunday Times*. He showed less interest in British music, and felt less need—more of an ability to say so?—to have it distract his or audiences' attention from other music. He nevertheless continued to fight the cause of taking (non-Italian) opera seriously, lamenting "What is Covent Garden going to bring us in 1950 in the way first of all of new or unhackneyed works, and secondly of methods of opera production?" If lauding Siegfried Wagner as a director of genius seems odd, Bayreuth doubtless offered a contrast to domestic operatic fortunes.

Newman's interest in German musicology—not just, or even primarily, German musical criticism—was refreshing for a writer in his position and contrasts with his earlier career. He proved defensive or ignorant concerning other British writers with interests beyond the Channel: Edward Dent, despite their friendship, and Donald Tovey received little acknowledgement. Nevertheless, Newman's attention to Heinrich Schenker and his criticisms of Nazi musicology—"a growing tendency among German musicologists to treat music as a specifically German art, and to claim credit for 'the Germanic race' for every vital element in its evolution"—are well elucidated.

The Liszt book is helpfully placed within the context of Newman's deteriorating judgments of the composer, not that that excuses—nor does Watt claim it to do so—the bald, frankly trashy character assassination of this "psychological study." Contemporary assessments of the book receive their due, Richard Aldrich writing in the *New York Times Book Review*: "Like Mimi [Mime], he [Newman] doesn't want to kill Siegfried—he only wants to chop off his head." Carl Engel's more thorough, scholarly demolition in the *Musical Quarterly* is also cited, although a little more sparingly and generically than it might have been. Watt disarmingly admits the book "lacked new and original ideas."

If I remain more critical of Newman's four-volume Wagner biography than many, probably most, Wagner scholars, it would be churlish to deny its crucial importance, even today. Watt, moreover, delineates Newman's work on Wagner, not just the *Life of Richard Wagner*, with the good, clear judgment shown elsewhere: "Newman was not the perfect Wagnerite ... at times extremely critical of Wagner's philosophical and political writings, anti-Semitism, and reputation for arrogant and manipulative behavior." It was no coincidence that Theodor Adorno so admired Newman on Wagner. We do well to be reminded that much of what had been previously offered to British readers, especially by newspapers, had been unremittingly hostile. Watt's insights into Newman's biographical method are invaluable.

It would be as pointless to reproach Newman for not being Adorno or indeed, Paul Bekker, whose work (in German) interested him considerably, as *vice versa*. That, if obvious, is not the least lesson to take away from a book properly grounded in Newman's cultural and intellectual milieu. There inevitably remains the occasional typographical error; *A Study of Wager* and *The Wager Clan* both await an "n". This, however, is a well-researched, well-written, well-presented book, drawing upon an impressive bibliography, both musicological and more broadly historiographical.

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