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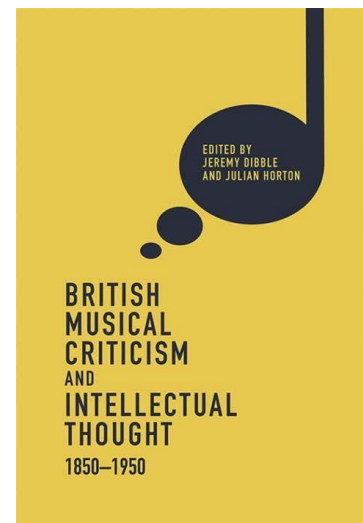
Ryan Ross, Editor

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Jeremy Dibble and Julian Horton, eds. *British Musical Criticism and Intellectual Thought 1850-1950*. Music in Britain, 1600-2000 (Book 19). Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2018. xv, 372 pp. ISBN: 9781783272877 (hardback).

This new collection of fourteen substantial essays represents a welcome addition to the growing literature on the writers who sought in one way or another to shape public opinion during an extraordinary period in the evolution of the role of music in British life, marked by radical transformations in musical culture both at home and abroad. Such upheavals cried out more than ever for mediation between composers and audiences in the creative field, and for a heightened degree of discernment in the interpretative domain—not least in relation to new technologies, which transformed the ontological status and social context of performance (and Britain was throughout the period a central hub of international musical life, whatever the fluctuating status of its compositional contributions). Furthermore, the rise of mass education and mass media hugely expanded audiences and the demand for informed guidance. It was also a period that saw the emergence of an unprecedentedly wide range of new voices in music by native composers, of a richness not heard for several centuries. Critics certainly had their work cut out.



British Musical Criticism and Intellectual Thought 1850-1950 is very much a “studies” volume, not a “companion,” to invoke a distinction familiar from Cambridge University Press’s well-established series classifications. It does not aspire to be a comprehensive survey, either as a chronicle or a matrix of broader topics, and is organized for the most part around individual critics (with all their inevitable contradictions as fallible human beings) rather than overarching themes—though some of these do emerge across the volume, particularly binary tensions between empiricism and

idealism, nationalism and internationalism, and analysis and theory. As is typical, there are advantages and disadvantages to such an approach. In many cases we are given a more complex and nuanced picture of individual agents and their motivations, and a richer contextualization of their thinking, than would typically be offered in a broader conspectus; but the book does not entirely avoid the risk (ever-present in the real rather than ideal world of assembling a volume of this kind) that the individual authors' interests and agendas will allow important topics to fall through the cracks. While overall the balance sheet stands healthily in the black, some columns carry a fair bit of red ink.

The collection covers most, if by no means all, the major figures we would expect. We encounter engagements of differing scope and emphasis with the work of such figures as J. W. Davison, Henry Chorley, Henry Hadow, Hubert Parry, Ernest Walker, Ernest Newman, George Bernard Shaw, Rosa Newmarch, Donald Francis Tovey, Edward Dent, Hans Keller, Constant Lambert, Bernard van Dieren, Peter Warlock, Cecil Gray, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Herbert Howells. Given the well-known British suspicion during this period (and indeed persisting to some extent today) of theory in the arts and humanities, the "intellectual thought" of the title may give pause. Indeed, one of the most substantial chapters, Sarah Collins's excellent "Anti-intellectualism and the Rhetoric of 'National Character' in Music: The Vulgarity of Over-Refinement," tackles such issues head-on (though her fine-grained reading challenges fundamental assumptions about how anti-intellectualism may be mapped onto any notional axis of conservative-progressive polarity in compositional trends). While this period saw the emergence in Britain of historical musicology, and to a lesser extent music analysis, as more formalized disciplines, it nevertheless predated the wider professionalization of musical scholarship that took place after 1945, and it sustained an exceptionally vigorous culture of journalistic as well as academic criticism. But whatever the resistance to making explicit an engagement with systems of thought, all these writers were shaped in one way or another by the broader intellectual currents of their time, and the contributors do a commendable job for the most part in illuminating these sometimes unexpected contexts, such as the specifically British strain of Idealism that informed the young Ernest Walker, for instance, or the comparative critical methods espoused by Ernest Newman.

Despite the generally high quality of what this book does offer, there are nonetheless some notable lacunae. Some are acknowledged: in a footnote to the first page of their Introduction, the editors express regret that "it has been necessary to exclude a number of important figures such as J.A. Fuller Maitland, H.C. Colles, Edwin Evans, Arthur Eaglefield-Hull, Samuel Langford, A.H. Fox Strangways, W.J. Turner, and Neville Cardus, in the interests of space and detailed discussion." Fair enough: the book is already hefty at 343 pages, excluding a select bibliography (generous but intentionally not a complete list of works cited) and an index. Nevertheless, it is a pity that Edwin Evans could not be included given his pioneering use of analytical detail in criticism; and Fuller Maitland (as well as William Barclay Squire) would have highlighted the importance of the growing interest in early music, which, aside from receiving some coverage in the chapters on Dent and Warlock et al., does not emerge as strongly as might have been expected.

Two other major developments of this period receive surprisingly little attention. First, aside from some reference in Jonathan Clinch's fine chapter on approaches to modernism in Howells's radio talks, the broader impact of radio and of the BBC (and of the gramophone before that) are passed over almost entirely. Not only had new technologies transformed the way in which performers and composers interacted with listeners, but radio in particular soon became an important medium for the dissemination not just of music, but of ideas about music—and to unprecedentedly large audiences. It would have been good to have a chapter on the pioneering work of Percy Scholes

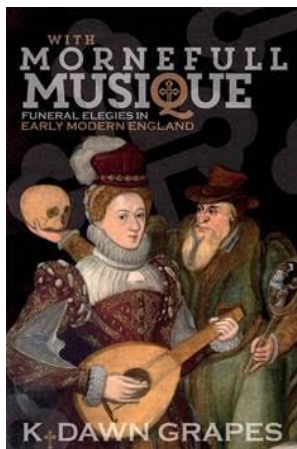


and Sir Henry Walford Davies in music appreciation, for instance, which was enormously important in bringing formative style-critical concepts as well as broader historical background to a mass public (Walford Davies is discussed briefly by Clinch, but a fuller treatment would have been welcome). Another far-reaching development was the emergence of jazz and other new varieties of popular music, which soon developed their own critical literature, and the valuation, categorization, and influence of which were hot-button issues—not least for the young BBC. There is occasional reference to such debates (most substantially in Christopher Mark’s commentary on Lambert’s *Music Ho!*), and to include more significant consideration would no doubt have necessitated additional chapters; but it is surprising that this did not at least prompt a disclaimer of some kind. And fuller consideration of the subject would surely have reinforced one point that emerges forcefully from the book in several places: namely, the persistent impotence of criticism in turning the general public away from things that they have decided they like. As with Verdi, Wagner, or Tchaikovsky at the end of the nineteenth century, widespread critical anxiety, even panic, over the intoxications of jazz and other popular music fell largely on deaf ears.

Such lacunae, however, should not distract from the status of this book as a major and timely contribution to the field of British music studies. If anything they serve to highlight the richness of the territory, and the need for further volumes to complement this excellent collection.

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K. Dawn Grapes, *With Mornefull Musique: Funeral Elegies in Early Modern England*. Music in Britain, 1600-2000 (Book 21). Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2018. xi, 276 pp. ISBN: 9781783273515 (hardback).



The idea of an entire scholarly monograph devoted to funeral music might seem niche if not slightly morose. K. Dawn Grapes’s new study on the subject provides a nuanced and carefully contextualized look at the surprisingly complex social, political, theological, and cultural networks that created the uniquely English genre of the funeral elegy during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The groundwork for this exciting study has been laid by musicologists such as Joseph Kerman and Philip Brett, and more recently by Jeremy L. Smith and Katherine Butler, who have examined music’s role in royal image-making as well as political and religious controversies surrounding William Byrd, Thomas Morley, Elizabeth I, and James I. News of even more forthcoming publications on the performative and gendered contexts of Elizabethan and Jacobean music illustrates the general health of the sub-discipline and increased interest in multi-disciplinary studies devoted to musical networks and performing spaces at the turn of the seventeenth century. The funeral elegy provides a unique case study that speaks to these interests. This genre sheds light on elitist social structures, the circulation of printed and manuscript music, power and privilege, and cultural attitudes toward death in early modern England.



The scope of Grapes's study is bound on one end by the publication of Byrd's *Psalmes, Sonets, & Songs* in 1588, and on the other by a set of musical elegies in Henry Lawes's *Choice Psalmes* printed during the English Civil War (1648). Grapes endeavors to reconstruct more nuanced portraits of individuals, giving them new humanity, through these commemorative compositions. For a culture obsessed with death, these pieces served to extend the life of the departed and provide essential commentary on contemporary conditions and issues for the living.

Grapes's argument begins by contextualizing the funeral elegy as a literary and musical form beginning in the sixteenth century. A fusion of the literary elegy and the musical lament, the textual formula for the English funeral elegy is a plea for remembrance, a testimony to character, lament, and finally a reference to the departed's afterlife. Musically conservative in style, the elegy employs rhetorical gestures—sighing motives, imitation, cross-relations, repetition of the departed's name—that evoke the physical responses to grief and death. Grapes explores this multidisciplinary fusion through a variety of disciplinary strategies including literary analysis, reformation politics and liturgical changes, and historicized musical analysis. For example, after the Reformation in England, Catholic services, which once provided an outlet to focus on the departed, no longer existed and were replaced with rituals that centered on consolation for the living (16). Funeral elegies, through poetic and musical conceits, offered a formal expression of grief and legacy. They not only described loss, this unique musical genre also refigured it as transformation through complex literary-musical tropes and cultural referents, including the *memento mori* (symbolic reflections on death and mortality) and *ars moriendi* (how to die well) traditions.

This multi-faceted approach to exploring a neglected musical genre (Grapes makes the case in her introduction that the last substantive study of the English funeral elegy was Vincent Duckles's work from 1966) is where I believe Grapes's arguments will appeal to scholars outside of musicology. For example, she demonstrates how the early modern English funeral elegy could, through works by William Byrd and John Watson, highlight the social connections of some of the most powerful men in Elizabethan England. Likewise, through an analysis of Thomas Vautor's 1619 elegy, "Melpomene, Bewail thy Sister's Loss," for James I's beloved juvenile son Prince Henry (who had died of typhoid fever many years earlier), Grapes demonstrates how the piece managed to elicit a revival of mourning that brought together a religiously and politically divided country in collective grief. In addition to this skillful cultural critique, Grapes's careful musical analysis is always historically situated and, in particular, demonstrates how specific rhetorical gestures and tonal centers in elegies reference other works or conventions that would have had immediate meaning for early modern listeners. This technique is key to reconstructing and understanding sound cultures of the era.

Chapters Six and Seven are particularly rich because of the fascinating questions Grapes raises and the gaps in information the archives yield. Focusing now on elegies written for women, she contends that the absence of funeral elegies composed for some of the most powerful women of the era, Elizabeth I included, demonstrates the elite social hierarchies the genre cultivated and maintained, and that composers prized its "powerful currency of maleness" (181). Focusing on a fascinating piece by William Cobbold from 1588, "For the Death of Her," Grapes offers us a rare glimpse into what a woman's life was like—one who resided outside the uppermost social circles in Elizabethan England. Mary Gascoigne died in childbirth in 1588. Grapes examines the few traces of her life that remain, from her genealogy and social connections, to the cultural contexts of maternity (and mortality) and the *ars moriendi*. She creates an intimate portrait of Gascoigne through Cobbold's piece—one that is understandably incomplete due to the woman's social rank and family connections. Yet Grapes eloquently concludes that Cobbold's elegy is trace evidence

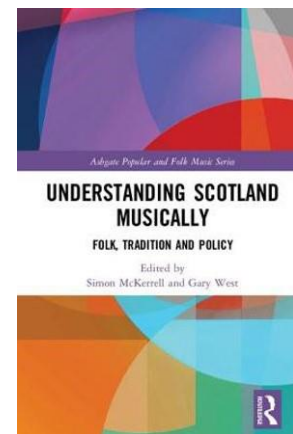


that Mary Gascoigne “lived and was worth remembering” (200). Musicologists such as Linda Austern, Candace Bailey, and Jane Flynn, as well as literary scholars like Katherine Larson, have been recently working within these gaps in early modern women’s musical experiences to elucidate the gendering of music and “public” and “private” musical spaces in early modern England. Grapes continues these efforts by spiraling outward from this seemingly narrow body of works to offer a more nuanced view of early modern English cultural attitudes about death, while breathing new life into a topic that has long been neglected in musicological scholarship. This pair of chapters in particular constitutes first class sleuthing and will hopefully yield future studies from Grapes and others involved in this exciting topic.

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Simon McKerrell and Gary West, eds. *Understanding Scotland Musically: Folk, Tradition and Policy*. Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Studies. London and New York: Routledge, 2018. xxi, 290 pp. ISBN: 9781138205222 (hardback).

Understanding Scotland Musically wears its title almost defiantly: why not *Understanding Scottish Music*? The emphasis thus shifts from the music to the country. The subtitle reveals the focus on traditional music and concern with its sustainability (via “Policy”), so that those looking for Hamish MacCunn or Helen Hopekirk will be disappointed, though Peter Maxwell Davies makes a brief appearance in Karen McAulay’s thoughtful musicological approach to the changing nature of Scottish music. Edited by Simon McKerrell and Gary West, this volume of 17 essays is drawn from the proceedings of an eponymous conference given at the University of Newcastle in 2014, with an additional essay by Meghan McAvoy and a wry Afterword by Simon Frith.



Judging from this volume, traditional music (versus “folk” music, which is freighted with commercialism) means different things to different people. One of the strengths of the book is that the contributors are an eclectic mix of established and emerging scholars (several are newly minted PhDs), traditional music performers, arts administrators, librarians, archivists, and so on. David McGuinness, harpsichordist and director of Concerto Caledonia, described on their website as “an early music ensemble,” argues for a more nuanced definition of “traditional,” drawing on examples of “invented tradition” and deploring the fetishization of “oral transmission,” which he considers inapplicable to fiddle music appearing in printed collections from very early on. He seems unaware that styles of playing, such as ornamentation and bowing, are key to this repertoire: they are not notated, and are usually learned by ear either from a live mentor or from historical recordings. Ronnie Gibson, a PhD student who specializes in Scottish fiddle music, focuses somewhat musicologically on historical transmission, proposing a fascinating example of lineage from one of McGuinness’s favorites, Niel Gow, though he cannot claim a continuous playing tradition from that time. Both he and McGuinness join the early music movement in its impossible quest for authenticity, but for many of us the aspect of oral/aural transmission is one of the delights of learning “traditional” music.



Turning to a community context, established traditional fiddle player Jo Miller outlines the history of the Glasgow fiddle workshop. Taught by professionals, the group learns by ear, a traditional mode of communication that is vital to the survival of the art. Miller was a founder of the innovative Scottish music BA program at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and Josh Dickson, a fine piper and the current director of the Traditional Music program, updates us both on what has happened since its inception and the philosophy behind its creation and transformation.

In the first essay, which addresses the “Policy” part of the subtitle, Simon McKerrell considers Scottish traditional music as a form of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), assessing its sustainability in the light of dwindling governmental support, lack of membership in the 2003 UNESCO Convention, and rising commercialism. Do we set apart traditional music from its commercial counterpart, or can the two be combined? He considers various models, including the “solo trader musician,” small scale organizations and festivals large and small, and mass mediated commercial production via radio, television, and online. Organizations such as *Tobar an Dualchis* and Creative Scotland are precariously funded. McKerrell advocates shifting the policy debate away from UNESCO rights-based approaches to ICH, and considering a different framework encompassing both commercial and non-commercial traditional music.

Building on his experience as an arts administrator, David Francis (who also identifies as a dance caller and storyteller), gives a useful history of the revival from the 1960s. His report of 1999, submitted just months before the opening of the Scottish Parliament, resulted in government support for certain traditional music groups until the shifting politics of the newly devolved nation effected change; more recently a report of 2010 has resulted in the creation of Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS), which Francis heads, funded by Creative Scotland. The revival also interests Stuart Eydmann, who offers an idiosyncratic view based on his academic research. Not surprisingly, the 2014 referendum surfaces as a focus for thinking about Scottish identity, and Mairi MacFadyen, styled as “an ethnologist, ethnomusicologist and activist,” provides reflections on the significance of Scottish music and song in the creative campaign for Scottish independence.

The increasing hybridity of traditional music is a significant feature of this volume. In “Slaying the Tartan Monster,” Meghan McAvoy, a recent PhD in Scottish Studies from Stirling University, uses the title’s metaphor to explore narratives of nationalism and innovation through the hybrid music of Treacherous Orchestra, a Celtic fusion band. Using the terms “folk” and “traditional” interchangeably, unlike other contributors, she sees them as intrinsically porous. Drawing on contributions from writers such as Niall MacKinnon, Hamish Henderson, and Hugh MacDiarmid, her essay provides useful literary background on the politics of the movement. In another chapter, Phil Alexander, a former member of the band Salsa Celtica and neither Scottish nor Caribbean, defends its brazen fusion of Scots and Caribbean styles. Now 20 years old, the band is known for its Cuban Scottish sound and blend of instruments.

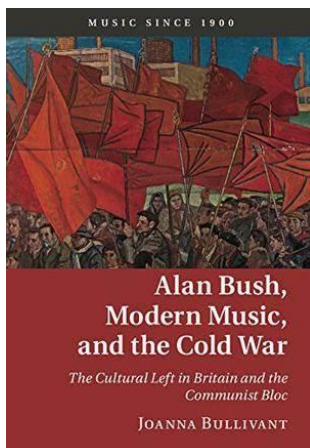
Those seeking a more historical approach will find much of interest to read in Danni Glover’s well researched and clearly written chapter on Thomas Percy (of the *Reliques*), and Patricia Ballantyne’s fine and eminently readable account of the globalization of Highland dancing. The National Theatre of Scotland’s 2011 production of David Greig’s play, *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart*—a modern take on traditional collecting and notions of authenticity—is the focus of Stephe Harrop’s essay on the Scottish ballad transposed to a theatrical setting. In a distinctly personal reflection, M. J. Grant provides an auto-ethnographic view of her experience of Scottish music at a distance, in this case from Berlin.



There are two surprising lacunae in this book: pipes (of any kind) and Gaelic song. The editors dedicated the volume to their piping teachers, and indeed the pipes get a passing mention in Gary West's concluding chapter. But that is all, despite the fact that the appearance of a highland piper on stage invariably rouses any audience. The highland pipes' less raucous cousins—small pipes and border pipes—surely deserve a place here, too. I was also surprised to find only one essay referring to the Gaelic language, in Fiona Mackenzie's chapter on her creative approach to the life of Margaret Fay Shaw on Canna. Mackenzie, herself a fine Gaelic singer, is now archivist for the Cameron collection on the island, which we all hope will be opened up to a wider public soon despite obvious access challenges. I would have welcomed something on the work of well-established Gaelic singers such as Catherine Anne MacPhee and Christine Primrose, who has just received the MBE for "Services to Gaelic Music to Culture and to Education in Scotland and Internationally," and recording labels such as Greentrax. All things *Gàidhlig* also suffer from no mention of teaching institutions such as Sabhal Mohr Ostaig and the flourishing summer school on South Uist, Ceòlas, which both have music programs. Clearly such omissions are due to the nature of conference proceedings, which are inevitably selective, but the absence of what many perceive as intrinsically Scottish is telling. These gaps aside, the volume is a good start at heightening awareness of Scottish traditional music in all its diversity, and will hopefully inspire performers and scholars alike to continue to explore this vibrant and fascinating area.

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Joanna Bullivant. *Alan Bush, Modern Music, and the Cold War: The Cultural Left in Britain and the Communist Bloc*. Music Since 1900. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017. xviii, 270 pp. ISBN: 9781107033368 (hardback).



Great Britain's role in the Cold War is frequently forgotten and gravely mischaracterized; the United Kingdom was far more than just a Western capitalist ally, but rather a nation undergoing significant shifts in both geopolitical influence and national character. One could also refer to Alan Bush as frequently forgotten and gravely mischaracterized. In her monograph *Alan Bush, Modern Music, and the Cold War*, Joanna Bullivant argues for a more nuanced understanding of Bush. Scholars and critics are quick to portray him and his music as overly political or too ideological to have much artistic merit, particularly when positioned alongside Britain's emerging postwar modernism. Bush, a near-lifelong member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, took up tenets of Socialist Realism in the 1930s and 40s. Bullivant artfully demonstrates, however, that Bush did not wholly disengage from modernism; instead, he found a way of engaging both aesthetic doctrines, promoting a

unique form of British socialism.

Bullivant is quick to note that while her book is the first full-length musicological study of Bush's output, it is far from comprehensive. Following a brief introduction, she traces Bush's life and music chronologically. In each of her seven chapters, Bullivant hones in on one specific music-political entanglement that has been a stumbling block for understanding Bush; chapter titles often



draw from the recycled labels given to the composer. Examples include “Bush as Modernist,” “Bush as Activist,” and “Bush as Stalinist.” By framing the study in this way, Bullivant has the best of all worlds. She achieves breadth by covering all significant periods of Bush’s compositional life and nearly every genre (the symphonies, while mentioned, are not discussed in any detail). At the same time, she reveals how careful readings of Bush scores can provide new insights into the study of music and socialism.

Chapter One juxtaposes Bush’s engagement with continental modernism with his communist beliefs. In the 1930s, these predilections were not mutually exclusive. For many critics at the time, modernism was to be the sound of communist revolt and upheaval—both were radical movements seeking to overthrow the bourgeois establishment. Bullivant performs close readings of Bush’s *Concert Piece* and the Piano Concerto. The concerto analysis is first-rate, connecting the work’s choral finale to Beethoven’s Ninth. In effect, the conflict between soloist and orchestra evaporates as all instruments turn to support the chorus, symbolizing the public rising to arms. Bullivant furthers the idea of collective action in the second chapter. She describes Bush’s attempts to refigure Soviet mass songs for a British working-class audience. With both his original music and his arrangements, Bush aimed for accessible music that citizens could easily integrate into daily life.

The next three chapters concern World War II and its immediate aftereffects. Chapter Three challenges historiography about Bush’s outsider status due to his communist beliefs. While it is true that the BBC briefly banned his music during the war years, there were still numerous performances of his pieces throughout Britain. Bullivant asserts that “any construction of Bush...as an outsider in British society, or as a straightforward, ultimately political agent of Moscow—must be rejected” (115). The next chapter concerns Bush compositions as agents of cultural memory. Both pieces—*The Winter Journey* and *Lidiče*—are choral works which meld socialist advocacy with collective mourning. By memorializing destruction in both Britain and Eastern Europe, Bush hoped to bring together a free Europe united through socialism. Bullivant’s fifth chapter considers a single year: 1948. This time was pivotal for socialist music. In February, Andrei Zhdanov prepared his infamous Central Committee resolution condemning all formalist music, and in May, Prague hosted the Second International Congress of Composers and Musicologists (attended by Bush). Bullivant argues that just as artists finally achieved Socialist Realism, Bush came into his adult, socialist aesthetic. Her example to support this reading, however, is his *English Suite* from 1945-46. This work aligns nicely with both Bush’s writings on thematic organization and Socialist Realism, but with it the thread of 1948 dissolves.

Bullivant focuses on Bush’s operatic output from the 1950s and 60s in her last two chapters. First, she isolates *Wat Tyler*, a troubled work which, while winning a prize during the 1951 Festival of Britain, had to wait five years for a BBC broadcast and another nineteen for a British production, even as the opera spurred Bush’s operatic success in the GDR. Bullivant demonstrates that *Wat Tyler* is rooted in “radical communist conceptions of English history”—a retelling of the Norman conquest where English peasants become victims of an imperial regime (180). Bush built upon interest in English history in the postwar era to create a national opera on socialist themes; this subtlety, however, was lost on initial audiences. Bullivant ends with a meditation on bodily desire in Bush’s final operas, *The Sugar Reapers* and *Joe Hill*. Both operas challenge GDR historiography, highlighting contradictions in the national battle against Americanization and sexual liberation. In both operas, the body becomes a site of yearning, though the context differs from interracial romance in *Sugar Reapers* to political martyrdom in *Joe Hill*. Through this demonstration, Bullivant artfully proves that Bush’s operatic success in the Eastern Bloc was not



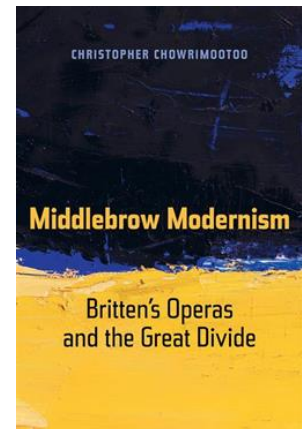
pure politics, but rather a complex negotiation between socialist ideals and modern themes.

Bullivant's volume is a thorough introduction to the life and music of Alan Bush. A few minor typographical errors mar the text, and two of the three appendices could have been smoothly integrated into the body of the book. Bullivant also provides ample biographical and historical information surrounding every composition analyzed. This could have been distracting or overwhelming in other books, but when discussing a lesser-known artist like Bush, the context is both refreshing and necessary. This book is a must-read for all scholars of the mid-twentieth century, providing a needed reassessment of the Cold War and British communism during this turbulent era of geopolitics.

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Christopher Chowrimootoo. *Middlebrow Modernism: Britten's Operas and the Great Divide*. California Studies in 20th-Century Music (Book 24). Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018. xii, 229 pp. ISBN: 9780520298651 (paperback).

Christopher Chowrimootoo's monograph *Middlebrow Modernism: Britten's Operas and the Great Divide* is an insightful study on the elusive concept of the middlebrow in the critical reception of Benjamin Britten's stage works. After placing the middlebrow between the lowbrow popular market and the highbrow modernist elite, the author admits that it cannot be considered in isolation and can only be contemplated in relation to these two extremes. Moreover, he calls attention to the fact that the middlebrow was commonly discussed in Britten's lifetime as a space between other poles: aestheticism and asceticism, sensationalism and intellectualism, literal representation and abstraction, tonal and atonal, etc. The middlebrow incorporated the first of the above poles to maintain a compromise between catering to audiences and pursuing stylistic experimentation. It should be noted that Chowrimootoo focuses primarily on the critical discourse surrounding contemporaneously composed classical music and contextualizes the term middlebrow as a rhetorical device used by proponents of the highbrow to differentiate between their position as the avant-garde and those composers and audiences they excluded. These proponents set exclusionary requirements for modernists, which included an adherence to serialism, abstractionism, intellectualism, and an ambivalence toward the general audience. In other words, while the middlebrow composers catered to audiences, the modernists pursued their own ideals. From the latter's perspective, it did not matter that they were not attracting popular interest, because they would eventually be vindicated by posterity.



After a brief discussion of Britten's first opera, *Paul Bunyan*, Chowrimootoo provides case studies of five of the composer's other stage works: the operas *Peter Grimes*, *Albert Herring*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Death in Venice*, and the church parable *The Burning Fiery Furnace*. Each of the case studies provides an analysis of the contemporaneous critical reception of its work's premiere, as well as the musicological discourse on it that has since been published. Britten's attention to audience sensibility and demand, coupled with his selective use of modernist techniques, resulted in him becoming seen as a middlebrow composer who enjoyed success with the ticket-buying



public as well as with the government institutions that encouraged classical musicians to provide the citizenry with a cultural education as a form of public service. After Chowrimootoo discusses the precarious position of *Paul Bunyan* in the critical discourse of the time, he frames the reception of five of Britten's major stage works according to different qualities corresponding to the great divide between the brows: *Peter Grimes* in the context of realism against sentimentality, *Albert Herring* between innovation and tradition, *The Turn of the Screw* between the psychological and the supernatural, *The Burning Fiery Furnace* between asceticism and aestheticism, and *Death in Venice* between intellectual abstraction and emotional immediacy. On the surface, Britten's music drew from both sides of the divide. More importantly, what Chowrimootoo shows is that the commentators' selective critique of these works—which emphasized some elements while ignoring others—was crafted to shape a particular vision of the composer: Britten as modernist, as middlebrow, as popular kitsch, etc. Britten's supporters, for example, tended to position the composers' works on the more modernist side of the divide, despite their apparent middlebrow characteristics. By emphasizing the former and obscuring the latter, these critics sought to propagate the image of Britten as a more serious composer. Chowrimootoo then groups these advocate-critics with the musicologists and biographers who have since argued that Britten was a great, if not the greatest, composer of the twentieth century. In calling attention to scholars' tendency to canonize their own subjects of choice, he opens the question of what musicologists in general have to gain by supporting narratives of exceptionalism in their research.

Importantly, Chowrimootoo confronts the ambiguities inherent in conceptions of the middlebrow, yet he does not seek to resolve them. Instead, he accepts that Britten identified as both a composer who valued accessibility and public service, and as one who advocated for the serious study and interpretation of his music. In the case studies mentioned above, he drew from both sides of the binaries, and sought to combine them into an organic whole. While Britten's supporters in the critical community emphasized the more modernist aspects of his music, Chowrimootoo also calls attention to the composer's detractors who claimed that Britten's attempts to compose serious modernist works were superficial at best and that the operatic genre itself was an anachronism which depended upon aural and visual spectacle, pretensions of sophistication, and the use of stock characters and plots. Theodor Adorno, who opposed Stravinsky's neoclassicism while favoring Schoenberg's serialism, found the middlebrow eclectics—Britten, Copland, and Shostakovich—to be the real danger, because they held pretensions to both serious modernism and audience accessibility by utilizing a “calculated feeble-mindedness.” Adorno also considered twentieth-century opera in general to be a bourgeois institution that had already outlived its relevance. Chowrimootoo, however, seizes the opportunity to uncover the inconsistencies, contradictions, and duplicities apparent in modernists' claims of artistic purity. He points out that they too drew from theatrical techniques in order to engage audiences. Even the modernist firebrands Pierre Boulez and Adorno sometimes deviated from their modernist positions: the former conducted the operas of Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner while the latter reminisced about the flamboyance and drama of Richard Strauss, Arnold Schoenberg, and Alban Berg. Ultimately, the author reaches the conclusion that the so-called great divide was a precarious artificial construction created by both self-proclaimed proponents of the middle and highbrows in order to suit their own interests and identities as critics and musicologists.

In summation, *Middlebrow Modernism* is a valuable contribution to the emerging musicological study of the middlebrow and its reception. It also provides a framework for further middlebrow studies in the works of other composers: those who pursued a balance between modernist ideals and public interest, as well as challenged the positions of modernists who sought to create purist avant-garde personas. Examples for such a study include British composers Malcolm Arnold,

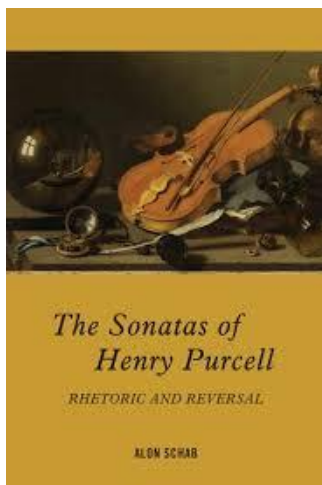


William Walton, and Ralph Vaughan Williams; continental composers Paul Hindemith, Francis Poulenc, and Jean Sibelius; and American composers Leonard Bernstein, Marc Blitzstein, and Aaron Copland. In a recent article, Pauline Fairclough considers the middlebrow concept as an interpretive lens on Soviet composers (such as Aram Khachaturian, Sergey Prokofiev, and Dmitri Shostakovich) who were also dedicated to audience accessibility in the context of the Soviet Union actively suppressing experimental modernism.¹ Interestingly, Chowrimootoo shifts his attention from Britten and instead places the critics and musicologists themselves at the focal point of his study. In their writing, these advocates shaped Britten's life and works to suit their image of the composer, and used this conception to reinforce their own positions. In many ways, the primary object of study in *Middlebrow Modernism* is less Britten's work as a composer, and more the critical discourse regarding the interpretation of his music.

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Alon Schab. *The Sonatas of Henry Purcell: Rhetoric and Reversal*. Eastman Studies in Music (Book 146). Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2018. xv, 263 pp. ISBN: 9781580469203 (hardback).



Henry Purcell's two printed volumes of trio sonatas—*Sonatas of III Parts* (1683) and *Sonatas of IV Parts* (1697)—show the composer's new embrace of Italianism, although admittedly not without some signs of continuity with the native English fantasia, of which his own collection in The British Library was near in time to the first published set of sonatas. The press of Italianism was strong; the presence in London of violinists like Nicola Matteis, described by John Evelyn in 1674 in superlative terms,¹ would have been difficult to ignore, and Arcangelo Corelli's first volume of trio sonatas was published in Rome in 1681, giving the genre and style a heightened presence.

The collections of sonatas have long been important markers of Purcell's Italianism. Despite this, they have not received as much attention as one might expect. Authors of general studies of Purcell have provided valuable discussion, but scholarship focused on the sonatas alone (or in tandem with the fantasias) is less frequent.² Given the relatively small number

¹ This article resulted from Fairclough's presentation in the conference "Music and the Middlebrow," which was organized by Kate Guthrie and Chowrimootoo. See Fairclough, "Was Soviet Music Middlebrow? Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, Socialist Realism, and the Mass Listener in the 1930s," *Journal of Musicology* Vol. 35, No. 3 (Summer, 2018), 336-67.

¹ Austin Dobson, ed., *The Diary of John Evelyn*, Vol. 3 (1906; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 373.

² However, see Ellen Boal, "Tempo Indications in Purcell's Fantasias and Sonatas," *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society* 31 (1994), 9-24, and Mary Cyr, "Tempo Gradations in Purcell's Sonatas," *Performance Practice Review* 7 (1994), 182-198. See also, Alan Howard, "Purcell and the Poetics of Artifice: Compositional Strategies in the Fantasias and Sonatas" (Ph.D. diss., King's College, London, 2006), and



of such writings, Alon Schab's *The Sonatas of Henry Purcell: Rhetoric and Reversal* may be seen to help fill a gap in our engagement with this important repertory.

Schab is also helping to fill a gap methodologically, for his monograph is written from the perspective of music analysis at full tilt. In the study of early repertoires this approach has been both rare and methodologically challenging. Reviewing Martin Adams's analytical *Henry Purcell: The Origins and Development of His Musical Style* (1995), Rebecca Herissone underscores both the sparseness of analytical material on Purcell at that time and the difficulties of the approach:

[T]he standard academic literature on the composer, while treating in detail the fragmentary biography and the historical facts about the music, either has entirely neglected analysis of Purcell's material or instead has tended to limit itself to unpenetrating and often naïve descriptions... More fundamental still is the question of how to approach the analytical process itself. As yet, no scholar has produced tangible suggestions about valid methods of analysis for music of this period...³

The problems of the analytical approach to early music are well rehearsed in Cristle Collins Judd's introduction to *Tonal Structures in Early Music*, and tellingly she finds this problematic for both historians and theorists. She writes:

[H]istorians who work with so-called "early" repertoires have been deeply and rightly skeptical of analytical appropriations by the theoretical community: the crimes charged have ranged from anachronism, to lack of familiarity with repertory and sources, to the universal nature of the analytical act. But many theorists have been equally cool to such study, seeing the repertoires as "under-theorized" in coeval sources and, more essentially, lacking associated theoretical apparatus of similar (presumed) explanatory power as those which provide the cohesion in study of later repertoires...⁴

Now, a few decades later, Schab executes his analysis with skill and insight, while also keeping an eye on the problematic nature of the approach. The focus of his book is symmetry and reversal, and he observes that these have, indeed, rarely been studied in the context of Restoration music, pointing out that contemporary English sources offer little in support, and that the manifestations of symmetry and reversal may seem to reside more in the visual score than in aural perception. Much as historically informed performers seek to ground their interpretations in the evidence of apposite treatises and knowledge of source material, Schab lays the groundwork for a degree of "historically informed theory" in drawing on both the evidence of print and manuscript sources of the music as well as close attention to the musical writings of the day. Further, he harnesses the

Cheryll Duncan, "Henry Purcell and the Construction of Identity: Iconography, Heraldry and the *Sonnata's of Ill Parts* (1683)," *Early Music* 44 (2016), 271-88.

³ Rebecca Herissone, review of *Henry Purcell: The Origins and Development of His Musical Style*, by Martin Adams, *Early Music History* 15 (1996), 270-71. In addition to Adams's analytical work on Purcell, the recent scholarship of Alan Howard centering on creativity also embraces an analytical approach, as, for example, his "Understanding Creativity" in Herissone, ed., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Henry Purcell* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 65-113. Inevitably, all recent analysts of Restoration music owe a debt to Herissone's monograph, *Music Theory in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴ Cristle Collins Judd, *Tonal Structures in Early Music* (New York: Garland, 1998), 4. The topic of early music analysis is also engagingly developed by Peter Schubert in "Authentic Analysis," *Journal of Musicology* 12 (1994), 3-18.



musical issues to rhetorical constructions, which not only adds an extra dimension of historicity, but also extends the period literature that can fruitfully come into play. However, at the same time, the focus on material often lying beyond the aurally perceptible may seem—at least at first blush—distant from Purcell’s context and priorities: intellectually gratifying and enlightening to contemplate, but perhaps telling us more about analysis than the “historical” Purcell. Discernibility is an issue that Schab openly owns. Early in his text he writes of the sonatas as “Janus-faced”:

Purcell attempted to create Janus-faced works—works that are, on the one hand, structured according to organizing principles known only to the composer or to those who know enough about composition to seek to evaluate the composer’s craft and, on the other hand, evolve in a convincing order which can be followed by an outside listener with lesser training (15).

This partially echoes the observations of Francis North (1677), whom Schab also cites while introducing a chapter on “indiscernible structures.” North writes of a type of complex counterpoint that employs “other tricks [of hidden artifice]” that “is always worse, and the hearer shall not observe the Art till he be told of it: it is like Acrostick Verse, or rithm in Plays, which shew skill or labour, but serve not those ends for which the pieces were designed” (90). This is not much of a ringing endorsement. The closeness of hidden artifice, Schab’s “indiscernible structures,” to Purcell’s goals and our understanding of them is perhaps not easily grasped. Schab’s work will surely prompt continued reflection on this issue, and for that we can be grateful.

For Schab, the question of closeness to Purcell’s goals is most strongly answered when he discerns intentionality. With a quick look at the Masque of Night from *Fairy Queen*, a brief detour away from the sonatas, he notes symmetries “too consistent to be arbitrary.” This is a consistency that betokens intent. If intended, then we can assume it to be relevant. If relevant here, then arguably it is more generally applicable as well (159).⁵

In several instances Schab’s analyses take on a dynamic quality where the details of observation compellingly lead to larger views. For instance, he considers the enharmonic content of the sonatas a sign of Purcell’s interest in the expressivity of temperament, even speculating the way a keyboard could be tuned with “broken octaves” to accomplish enharmonic effects without recourse to split keys (78-84). In another instance, discussing the fantasia, Z. 732, Schab notes a large-scale reversal in the spacing of entries. This in turn prompts a consideration of listener interaction:

[I]f large-scale reversal is in operation, then Purcell’s rhetorically ineffective use of gradual increase at the beginning of a section may prime the listener for the rhetorically effective gradual decrease toward the end of the section. This is an important point of contact between those compositional considerations that regard listeners’ perception (positioning devices in a section based on their rhetorical effect), and those that regard indiscernible structures (such as mirror symmetry). One may argue that Purcell’s great achievement is the balance between the two (146-148).

Not all of Schab’s analytical detail rises to this degree of dynamism—there are stretches of dense text along the way—but his ability to put the observed detail into action is notable.

⁵ On “creative intention,” see Howard, 68.

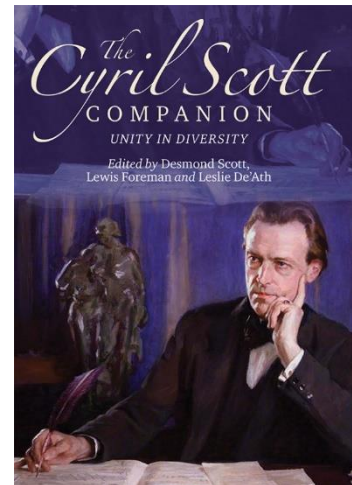


The Sonatas of Henry Purcell is a welcome addition to the literature on Purcell, both for its insights into hidden aspects of compositional method and for the way it will inspire further examination of issues relating to historical analysis. Historical analysis is not new in the literature, but at the same time its parameters and vistas seem more emerging than settled. Schab's work here provides new views of Purcell that all will want to ponder, and in so doing, he draws attention to the value of renewing and broadening our methodologies.

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Desmond Scott, Lewis Foreman, and Leslie De'Ath, eds. *The Cyril Scott Companion: Unity in Diversity*. Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2018. xxx; 676 pp. ISBN: 9781783272860 (hardback).

While Laurie Sampsel's *Cyril Scott: A Bio-Bibliography* (2000) "spearheaded the revival of interest in the music of Cyril Scott" (xxviii), the publication of *The Cyril Scott Companion* undeniably represents another landmark. In the present century, Scott's music has been widely republished, performed, and recorded; some of his books, mostly on non-musical subjects, have been reprinted as well. Moreover, his life and music have become the subject of scholarly research and, among other things, led to Sarah Collins's biography *The Aesthetic Life of Cyril Scott* (2013). A look at the official Cyril Scott website (www.cyrilscott.net) immediately shows the presence of the revival. In the foreword of the *Companion*, Marty Brabbins, the conductor of a four-volume CD survey of Scott's orchestral works on Chandos, writes that Scott was "one of Britain's most original twentieth century composers" (xx). In his own time, Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, and other modernist European composers praised Scott's music, and the conductor-composer Eugène Goossens actually called him "the father of modern British music." These are subjective statements, of course, but there is no doubt that Scott remains a most fascinating historical character.



Apart from being a brilliant pianist, Scott composed an oeuvre of more than 400 works, including four symphonies, three operas, piano concertos and sonatas, and numerous pieces of chamber music. Much to his own frustration, however, he became known primarily for his innumerable "popular" short songs and piano compositions. Of these "potboilers," as he called them, *Lotus Land* (1905) was his greatest hit, partially because it gained wide currency through Fritz Kreisler's transcription for violin and piano. As if that were not enough, Scott published more than 41 books. Only four of these are on music, while the rest concern such disparate fields as occultism, theosophy, alternative medicine, poetry, literary translation, theology, and ethics. Most successful were the occult *The Initiate* trilogy (published 1920, 1927, and 1932 respectively), which appeared under the pseudonym "His Pupil," and *Music: Its Secret Influence throughout the Ages* (1933). He also authored two autobiographies and, as I came to learn, one unpublished memoir, *Near the End of Life*. Contemporary critics often argued that the quality of Scott's music suffered from his dissimilar interests, and his fascination with occultism was particularly frowned upon. Ultimately, then, "it was his eclecticism—he could not be pigeonholed as a folklorist, neo-classicist, nature-



mysticist, or romantic-decadent’— that ‘rendered him suspect’ and contributed to the decline in his reputation” (Peter Atkinson citing Christopher Palmer, 84). Yet, Scott’s life credo was “Unity in Diversity,” and he certainly lived up to it. Furthermore, his compositions and writings are very much marked by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European cultural trends, and it is for this reason that the study of the life and work of this polymath and maverick continues to be of importance for (music) historians today. The *Companion*’s subtitle and content show that its editors understand this.

The book’s main portion (around 400 pages long) consists of 26 chapters divided into four sections. The first, “Scott in Context,” has seven chapters written by Stephen Lloyd (on the Frankfurt Group), Richard Price (on Scott, Debussy, and Stravinsky), Lewis Foreman (on Scott and the BBC), Edmund Rubbra (a student’s note), Peter Atkinson (on reviews of Scott’s music), and Desmond Scott (two chapters on his parents separately). Apart from the contributions of Leslie De’Ath (three chapters on piano works and one on choral works), the second section, “The Music,” has another five chapters: Martin Yates (on discovering, editing, and recording Scott), Peter Dickinson (on orchestral recordings), Kurt Leland (on chamber music), Steven Martin (on operas and music for theatre), and Valerie Langfield (on songs). Except for Kurt Leland’s chapter on Scott’s occult writings, the third section, “The Writings,” has six chapters by Desmond Scott, in which he discusses the different, but generally related, genres of his father’s non-musical publications. The last section, “Personal Reminiscences,” contains chapters by Katherine Hudson, “godson” Rohinten Daddy Mazda, and Edmund Rubbra. Apart from Martyn Brabbins’s foreword, the 30-page preliminary section includes a preface by Desmond Scott outlining his father’s long life (Cyril died at the age of 91). Before the index, then, the book has around 200 pages with two appendices (Valerie Langfield on misprints and high/low variants in Scott’s songs; and a chronology of works published during Scott’s lifetime by Leslie De’Ath), and up-to-date catalogues (compiled by De’Ath, with assistance from Desmond Scott and Stephen Lloyd) of Scott’s music, writings (as well as those of his wife, and Desmond’s mother, Rose Allatini) and musical opus numbers, a discography, and a select bibliography. Finally, it should be mentioned that this book is enlivened with more than 50, often unique, illustrations, and numerous music examples. Overall, it is very readable. The only thing I found missing, as in the case of Sampsel’s earlier book, is a chronology of Scott’s life and times.

Following the death of his father’s partner Marjorie Harston-Scott in 1997, Desmond Scott came into possession of a great amount of materials, including unpublished and even unperformed music. Later, he provided these and other primary sources to those who showed real interest in them. Hence, there is no doubt that he has been a prime mover behind the revival of his father’s music and, indeed, the making of this *Companion*, to which he is the main contributor next to Leslie De’Ath. That said, Desmond is anything but hagiographical in his writings. On the contrary, his overview of Scott’s life (preface), discussions of his non-musical writings (third section), and his “Memories of the Man I Barely Knew” (the title of Chapter Seven) are not only objective and significant, but also engagingly written by a son who sincerely tries to understand his father. Personally, I learned much from De’Ath’s chapters on Scott’s piano works—of which he made complete recordings, filling nine Dutton CD’s—and choral works, and from the chapters by Lewis Foreman, Peter Atkinson, Steven Martin, and Valerie Langfield. Throughout its pages, the *Companion* brings new facts and insights to the fore. For many years to come, it will remain the key reference work for those fascinated by this remarkable man and his music—a true companion indeed!

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