

*Music, a Connected Art: Die Illusion der absoluten Musik. A Festschrift for Jürgen Thym on his 80th Birthday*, edited by Ulrich J. Blomann, David B. Levy, Ralph P. Locke, and Frieder Reininghaus. Collection d'études musicologiques/Sammlung musikwissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen, 103. Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 2023. 365 pp.

The multi-lingual heading reflects the authors' range of interests, and those of the dedicatee, Jürgen Thym. The essays are in English (the majority) and German: 28 essays in over 300 pages (with many music examples). This, I freely admit, does not make easy reviewing. A promotional leaflet calls the book "a kaleidoscope that reveals a wealth of new impulses for further research ... consistent with the distinguished lifelong career of the scholar-teacher to whom this Festschrift is dedicated." In a partly successful attempt at organizing such diverse material, the editors have grouped the essays into five sections: (I) The Nature of Music, Music-Making, and Listening; (II) Music and Poetry (the largest group: 12 essays); (III) Music and Theater/Opera/Film; (IV) Music-making in Time and Place; and (V) Music and the Individual Composer's Voice. That these groups barely cohere is no reflection on the essays themselves.

In Section I, Ulrich J. Blomann speculates on music's origins while admitting to skating on scientifically thin ice (p. 25); he proposes music as first "a medium assumed to be an intelligible language for conversing with gods, spirit, demons, and ancestors" (p. 21), a hypothesis incapable of verification and perhaps as fanciful as theories he rejects (serenade, lullaby, war cry). Wilfried Gruhn is on firmer ground, approaching what we actually hear through psychology and physiology; Michael Broyles is concerned with *where* we listen, taking a cue from Glenn Gould's eccentric notion that live concerts would not outlast the 20th century.

Gould's view requires belief in the title's "illusion of absolute music"—an illusion that runs into difficulty with texted vocal works and instrumental programme music. That, however, is insufficient to refute theories of abstraction (e.g., for Bach's preludes and fugues); the alleged illusion is real enough to many listeners' experience of enjoyment without being aware of the music's wider contexts. Such awareness is not increased in this age of broadcast and recorded music, which lacks the visual dimension of live music-making, and when attention to contemporary music is hampered by the accumulated legacy of past centuries. We are a long way from replacing the attractions, to listeners, of sharing space with performers; though Broyles's conclusion, that music "can no longer be limited to the realm of the purely aural," implies that it has, somewhere, sometime, been so limited. Has it? And even purists accept its intellectual attraction and charm. Innumerable paintings and sculptures of

musicians present music as a social activity, giving pleasure—another possible hypothesis for its origins.

R. Larry Todd discusses making music from the letters of names. By taking a few liberties, he finds GADE in that composer's music, transposed and identifiable through its ubiquitous intervals: whole tone, perfect fifth/fourth. Implicitly, this recognizes that musical creativity is bound up with pitch; we should be thankful for its preservation by notation—despite the truism that “the score is not the music.”

Section II takes a lead from “music as connected art”; as Broyles suggests, “perhaps the Greeks had it right” in having “no separate word for music” (p. 46). Essays on approaches to folk- and “art”-song form a connected group that might have stood on its own, given the importance of folk song to composers of Lieder. However, Hanns-Werner Heister's account of parodic words to an old popular song and Hartmut Möller's of the Rostock Liederbuch hardly bear on Schubert's cycles, which figure in five essays. Susan Youens criticizes a French translation of *Winterreise*, concluding that it is indeed betrayal; in “Gute Nacht” the scenario is changed “to strip the poem of its very *raison d'être*” (p. 102). Yonatan Malin interestingly compares the endings of the first and last songs, “Gute Nacht” and “Der Leiermann”; in both, the final stanzas follow “traditional gestures of poetic closure” and, with the last song, musical closure. Lorraine Byrne Bodley reviews Schubert's strange prose account of a possibly imagined dream; it is closer in date to *Die schöne Müllerin*, but she remarks that “unlike *Winterreise*, it ends” (p. 113).

Seth Brodsky, interwoven with discussion of Schubert's *Doppelgänger*, asks why we do not date developments in music history from the Haitian revolution rather than the French. Is this not a non-question? Histories of music, in my experience, do not suggest that the French revolution initiated radical change, and continuities (opera, symphony) remained strong. Rob Haskins engages hermeneutically with John Cage's late music. The works considered are all vocal but also derive from words about complex biographical factors: interesting, so long as one finds the music interesting.

Jennifer Ronyak returns to Lieder, sensitively interpreting Robert Schumann's Op. 24, No. 8 through its chorale topic and open ending (which might preclude performance on its own). Matthew Valverde (“Whose Spinnrad is it anyway?”) proposes that we accept “deconstruction” of gender-specificity in song performance: hardly a novelty, following performances of *Winterreise* and *Frauenliebe und Leben* by persons of the opposite sex to the poetic “voice.” Indeed, early in this thoughtful essay, our attention is drawn to the long history of precisely this practice. A problem may arise when the voice part is transposed up or down an octave from what the composer anticipated, with unchanged accompaniment; this can affect the musical texture adversely (perhaps a lesser

problem in Lieder than in Baroque opera when a castrato is replaced by a baritone).

Harald Krebs compares settings of Eichendorff's *Nachtblume* by Fanny Hensel (née Mendelssohn) and Hugo Wolf, suggesting they are "not as different in style as one might expect" given the generation gap. The differences stand out strongly, however: her *Allegro* (major mode), his *Sehr langsam* (minor mode); her harmonically "transcendent" climax, his "consistent melancholia" (p. 163). Stephen Rodgers introduces the work of Marie Hinrichs, mentioning details that I cannot properly comment on without music examples.<sup>1</sup> However, I trust this author and like his conclusion: "even the simplest of musical materials can be richly significant" (one might add: not only in vocal music).

Albrecht Riethmüller concludes this section with a word–music relation that is neither about singing, nor why Beethoven's D minor sonata (Op. 31, No. 2) is called *The Tempest*. He reviews arguments about the first movement's opening and wordless recitative, successively from Bekker, Halm, and Schole, each criticizing his predecessor. This historically interesting topic fits well with the book title's implicit ban on formalism. Dismissing Hanslick's determination to promote autonomy need not, however, imply rejecting the discipline of music analysis; rather it promotes fully contextualized analysis (as in Nattiez's adoption of Molino's tripartition) without removing the need for serious investigation of how the music "works."

Section IV's essays are no less diverse. Caroline Ehman discusses the appearance in 21st-century opera of Faust-like figures, who engage with dangerously powerful forces, as in Adams's *Doctor Atomic*. Frieder Reininghaus treats the resonance of eastern conflicts in western music; the most covered is probably the Trojan war, with the Crusades not far behind. He also introduces recent examples such as Corbett's *Das grosse Heft*. Lighter in tone is Kim H. Kowalke's musing on faulty memory, pointing to instances that seem to derive, not always with acknowledgment, from Weill's 1948 musical *Love Life*. Rufus Hallmark muses on his own love of musicals, and his realization that film adaptations usually lose in comparison with original stage versions (e.g., *My Fair Lady*). Singing in a spoken scene works better in live performance (I agree); he asks if the reverse is true, when a movie (e.g., *Mary Poppins*) is staged. Here, however, the true original is a book I loved in childhood, and the music makes bland the original razor-sharp characterization of the central character.

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<sup>1</sup> [Editor's note:] We have learned that the Hinrichs song was omitted accidentally. Rodgers's chapter has now been [re-published, and with the score](https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/mmp/vol1/iss5/), in the open-access journal *Music & Musical Performance*: <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/mmp/vol1/iss5/>.

Section IV has two musicological and two pedagogical essays, each offering much food for thought. Kerala J. Snyder introduces the work of Simone Vesi and her forthcoming edition of his *Vespers*. The next three essays focus at least partly on Beethoven, from different angles. Theodore Albrecht outlines Beethoven's connection with the orchestra of the Theater an der Wien, and discusses the *Choral Fantasia* that ended the "monster concert" of 1808. Mary Natvig takes Beethoven as a starting point for a discussion of teaching music history today, resonating less with Albrecht than with Brodsky; issues of race and gender arise, even in a context largely centered on what, as Ralph P. Locke reminds us, Richard Taruskin called "the Western literate tradition." Locke's own contribution is partly a reminiscence of his teaching at the Eastman School of Music with Jürgen Thym as chair for many years. Like Natvig, who took over one of Thym's courses, Locke was teaching what is broadly conceived as "classic-romantic"; and it is refreshing to read a reference to "(rightly) venerated masterpieces" before proceeding to the role of "Non-Canonical" music.

Section V has a title ("Music and the Individual Composer's Voice") that seems to imply more coherence than actually appears. Other essays have focused on individual composers, and David Beach, with examples from J. S. Bach, also refers to pedagogy: the value for performers of revealing underlying structures in heavily ornamented music. His examples are an unaccompanied violin prelude, expertly reduced; the first prelude of the "48" (with reference to Schenker's analysis); and the second prelude, compared to the first, pointing both to similarities and differences of voice leading and hypermeter (without qualifying their possible claim to being 'absolute' in some sense).

Marie Rolf, in "Will the Real F. Mendelssohn Please Stand Up?," shows how the *Ostersonate* was misattributed to Felix but is now recognized as by Fanny. Rolf does full justice to her and her music by analyzing its relation to its programmatic intention. David B. Levy tackles the background to the *Ring* cycle, showing how interest in operatic treatment of the *Nibelungenlied* was in the air shortly before Wagner began work. His starting point, which G. B. Shaw anticipated, is that *Götterdämmerung* is more traditionally operatic than the rest of the cycle because of its link to that epic; but Wagner shifts decisively to other sagas at the end. Finally, Douglas Reed introduces us to the historical, technical, and non-absolute contexts of a modernist organ work by William Albright, *Juba*, with a link to access his own recording.

In conclusion, a few more regrets and niggles. Having no indented paragraphs hinders reading; there are lapses in copyediting. Todd places the letter H (within BACH) beneath the notated B-flat, which seems musically more plausible than B-natural (p. 54). Malin's essay uses "strophe" and "stanza" interchangeably and "example" refers to short quotations of poetry—indented and not needing a number—as well as to quoted music. This leads to confusion

on p. 118: “Example 4 provides the last four lines of stanza 4,” whereas Example 4 is music and its caption reads (correctly) “end of strophes 1 and 2.” There is an odd reference to a “harp that is never still” (p. 121); “Leier” is better translated on the previous page as “hurdy-gurdy.” Perhaps autocorrect is to blame when a famous author appears as “Forester,” but “Forster” is correct in the nearby footnote (pp. 42–43) and in Locke’s citation of the *Howard’s End* Leitmotiv: “only connect” (p. 244), a pleasing allusion to the book’s title.

But enough: having myself edited a *Festschrift*, I sympathize with the editors’ attempt to group articles, though I am unsure it was entirely necessary in such a “kaleidoscope” with its “wealth of new impulses for further research.” It is a cornucopia of offerings that cite the dedicatee appreciatively in most of its contributions. The publication concludes with a fully coherent Section VI: “Greetings and reminiscences,” personal tributes, not all from contributors, one of them (Samuel Adler) in music using a cipher on “Jürgen Thym.” Finally, there is the impressive list of his wide-ranging publications and the honours deservedly bestowed on him.

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