Thomas F. Heck, with contributions from Robert Erenstein, M. A. Katritzky, Frank Peeters, A. William Smith, and Lyckle de Vries. *Picturing Performance: The Iconography of the Performing Arts in Concept and Practice.* University of Rochester Press, 1999. xii, 255 pp.

Reviewed by Barbara Russano Hanning

One picture is worth a thousand words. Despite all the caveats and cautionary tales included in this collection of essays entitled *Picturing Performance,* the authors convincingly convey their belief that iconography is an invaluable critical tool. During the course of separate contributions by six different specialists, scholars are repeatedly urged to pursue the investigation and proper application of visual sources, are provided with very specific guidelines, and are appropriately reminded that interdisciplinary cooperation is essential in the interpretation of images of the performing arts. Organized and edited by Thomas Heck, Professor of Musicology and head of the Music and Dance Library at Ohio State University, the book presents, as its subtitle promises, essays in the theory and practice of the iconography of the performing arts. Its central chapter (chapter 3 of six) consists of four brief "Discourses in Applied Iconography" in music, dance, theater, and the performing arts; the last-named, which actually precedes the other three, is an introductory essay in methodology, illustrated by sources concerning the *commedia dell'arte.* Surrounding these discourses, which constitute the book's core "applications" of iconographic concepts, other chapters offer a wide variety of theoretical perspectives, from a review of terminology and art-historical methods to the semiotics of scenography and a guide to research resources. The latter includes a gratifyingly practical emphasis on the internet, thanks largely to Heck's awareness that the Web's impact on iconography has already been significant and will certainly increase in the very near future.

The word iconography has been defined and used in many ways, but in pictorial analysis it is generally acknowledged to mean the study of subject matter and meaning in works of art and, as a corollary, the study of signs and symbols in art. Having established the distinction between iconography and iconology (a distinction eroded by current usage, as he points out), Professor Heck provides an extremely learned survey of the various uses of the term through the ages, from Cesare Ripa's first descriptive col-

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lection of emblems (*Iconologia,* 1593) to the most fashionable modern parlance—including phrases in which "iconography" is preceded by modifiers such as "sexual," "political," "religious," etc. Indeed, in a usage recently coined by a freelance journalist, iconography denotes a new language in itself, a "potent imagist shorthand" manipulated by the media in the form of logos, slogans, bumper stickers, or soundbytes to encode their messages by writing (or graphing) words that project images or icons (36). Heck has devised a clever chart (40–41) to show at a glance the plethora of related "tributaries" branching off from the principal or mainstream "river *icon*": ichnography as well as iconograph and iconography; iconic, hypericonic, iconicity; iconophilia; iconotext, and so on—a more dazzling array of derivatives than Charles Sanders Pierce, one of the founders of semiotics, probably could have ever imagined! In this opening chapter, Heck also includes a summary of the influential method outlined in Erwin Panofsky's groundbreaking *Studies in Iconology* (1939), in which the art historian proposed three progressively deeper levels of "reading" works of art: pre-iconography (describing and naming the separate elements in the work), iconography (analyzing them), and finally iconology (interpreting their meaning). In the spirit of his "river icon" metaphor, Heck proposes a new word, "icononomy" (pronounced i-con-ón-o-me), to replace "pre-iconography" as a more precise way to characterize the first level of Panofsky's interpretive scheme.

The second chapter, contributed by Dutch art historian Lyckle de Vries, continues in the theoretical vein of the first. This author revisits Panofsky's method, chronicling in greater detail its development and the extent of its hold on art historians. He then offers a critique of its shortcomings and urges the acceptance of a revisionist method of interpretation, one which gives greater place to *function* and *tradition.* For Panofsky, who basically exalted Italian Renaissance painting, art history was essentially the highest form of cultural history, and his view of Art always implied a capital "A"; for the Dutch revisionists, who see seventeenth-century genre painting, for example, as a worthy but less erudite type of art, iconography merely *contributes* to our understanding of cultural history.[1]

The third, central chapter shifts the book's focus to "practice" by presenting four discipline-specific "discourses in applied iconography." Here the prescriptive hand of the editor, Thomas Heck, is visible in that each essay conforms, with more or less success, to the same tripartite organization: *traditions* (the past); *techniques* (the present: methodologies and their application in the different fields); and *trends* (projected outcomes in the near future). The first section, concerning performance in general, but centering on the author's research on itinerant *commedia dell'arte* troupes around 1600, is by M. A. Katritzky. Potentially the most interesting to this

reviewer, the essay is unfortunately the least successful in the group. The illustrations—a series of *commedia dell'arte* actors in performance—are too small to enable the reader to make sense of many of the author's points about them. Furthermore, Katritzky's presentation of basic methodology apparently aims at enlightening "those who simply don't know where to start," and this "iconography-for-dummies" approach adds insult to injury after we have been led through a painfully difficult and labyrinthine series of comparisons. Perhaps inexperienced scholars in music, dance, or theater iconography would find the companion essays in those subjects equally frustrating; but I seriously doubt whether even a novice need be told to "obtain legible reproductions," as Katritzky instructs in the third of her five-step approach to doing research in the performing arts (86).

"Of all the performing arts, music has been the one most frequently memorialized in art," writes Heck (221), himself the author of the next section, a comprehensive essay on the development and methods of musical iconography. As the subject is presumably of greatest interest to readers of this journal, Heck's essay justifies a bit more commentary. His survey of "traditions" takes off, appropriately enough, by quoting Howard Mayer Brown's definition of musical iconography from his *New Grove* article (1980) and by noting its dependence upon Panofsky.[2] With Joan Lascelle, Brown had identified three main types of evidence that works of art can provide about music: the history and development of musical instruments (organology); the manner of performance of earlier music (performance practice); and the place of music in society (cultural history). Heck adds a fourth category of musicological pursuit, namely, composer and performer iconographies, which began to appear in the nineteenth century. These were apparently the earliest type of studies in musical iconography, and were soon followed by illustrated anthologies of "Music in Society" and pioneering volumes of "History of Music in Pictures" during the first half of the twentieth century. An important milestone in the field, duly reported by Heck, was the foundation in 1971 of the RIdIM project (the Repertoire international d'iconographie musicale, or International Inventory of Musical Iconography) at the City University of New York, indicative of the musicological community's hopeful response to the heightened awareness of "the vast extent of historical visual material pertaining to music" and its attempt to establish indexing and methodological norms for the new discipline (96–97).

Heck mentions many of the major scholars who have more recently contributed to the four categories of musical iconography, beginning with portraiture (his added category) and ending with Brown's cultural studies, sometimes also dubbed musical iconology. Here, Heck considers Emanuel Winternitz, the founder of this most important branch of the discipline,

but does not do justice in my opinion to some of Winternitz's intellectual descendents in the U.S., like James McKinnon (1982) and especially Richard Leppert (1988, 1993).[3] In the "trends" section, Heck adduces the advances in information gathering and retrieval, citing the systematic inventorying fostered by various European centers of RIdIM;[4] the continuing standardization of indexing fields (either with the Iconclass alphanumeric notation system, which Heck outlines, or with the controlled vocabulary promoted by the *Art and Architecture Thesaurus*); and the increased communication among archivists, scholars, and students via the World Wide Web. In fact, Heck's most important contributions to the volume are the explicit directions he affords the reader about using the internet as a tool for research.

The remaining "applied discourses"—about dance and theater iconography, written respectively by A. William Smith and Robert Erenstein—follow the same general tripartite format of discussing traditions, techniques, and trends. Perhaps because of their common dependence upon the parameter of time, these newer branches of iconography must rely more heavily on the moving image, and therefore on the comparatively recent media of film, video, and now digital resources, all of which entail new problems of collection, storage, and retrieval. Furthermore, as Erenstein points out, theater history was a late bloomer, as it first had to suffer through a stage of separation anxiety on the part of literary critics who were reluctant to admit evidence to the study of drama that emanated from nonliterary sources. In general, Erenstein's section on "techniques," or the "how-to of theater iconography," is far more interesting and enlightening than that offered by Katritzky at the beginning of this third chapter.

Chapter 4, by Frank Peeters, brings a new perspective to scenography, that of semiotics. Wagnerians will appreciate this brief essay, which is rich in analytic thought about the iconicity of acoustic as well as visual "sign-systems" in the theater. After all, what better way is there to understand a leitmotif and how it functions to convey meaning? The author, who teaches linguistics and theater history in Antwerp, surveys the literature from Roland Barthes to Jean Alter and others, and provides two valuable bibliographies: "Scenography: An Introductory Reading List" and "Recommended Readings in Theater Semiotics."

The last section of the book—chapters 5 and 6, and a supplemental "Bibliographic Orientation" in each of the three fields of music, dance, and theater iconography—is invaluable in that it provides annotated lists of selected iconographic research resources, both traditional and electronic, as well as step-by-step guidelines for accessing databases, imagebases, and other visual resources on the internet. Grouped geographically by countries of Western Europe and North America, and including street

addresses, telephone/fax numbers, and web-addresses, these resources will undoubtedly ultimately be dated, but they are admirably up-to-date as of 1998, when the book went to press. Commercial collections as well as those in museums, libraries, and universities are included. Finally, Heck summarizes the growing impact and enormous potential of computer technology and looks ahead to the problems of intellectual control posed by the "virtual marketplace"—modestly suggesting an appropriate critical/moral stance—and to the challenges of global metadatabases, which will require the adoption of internationally accepted standards of indexing in order to succeed.

Ironically, the book suffers from dark photographic reproductions, none of which are glossy, and strange sudden changes in font size (as on page 122). But much of the information it presents is a welcome and exciting boon to budding iconography scholars and enthusiasts.

Notes

1. It is no accident that Lyckle de Vries is the author of a book on Jan Steen (1977), a seventeenth-century Dutch artist and tavern owner who painted hundreds of genre scenes, including many "merry companies" showing ordinary, robust folk eating, drinking, dancing, and making music. The revisionists whose theories de Vries adapted as a corrective to Panofsky are Henri van de Waal and Christian Tümpel (58–61); he has high praise for American Michael Baxandall, whose new approach to art history goes "far beyond iconography or iconology" (63).

2. Tilman Seebass, who contributed the article on iconography to the new edition of *The New Grove* (2000), elaborated on Panofsky and Brown in his discussion of method, and adheres to the distinction between iconography (the second level of interpretation) and iconology (the third level). At the third, "the scholar may establish an iconology of the intrinsic meaning of the picture and *discuss it as a manifestation of the artist's personality, the patron's ambitions and the onlooker's expectations.* Iconology explains the picture as *a paradigm* of a given culture" (emphasis mine). Although the publication of this book predates the appearance of Seebass's article, Heck is obviously familiar with his work (which takes a much broader approach than did Brown, who was essentially a Renaissance scholar), judging by the number of times he cites Seebass in his footnotes and bibliography. Seebass also edits the most important and long-standing (since 1984) journal in the field of music iconography, *Imago musicae.*

3. In Heck's selective bibliography from 1973 to 1998, only one work by Leppert (1988) is mentioned. Leppert's 1993 book *The Sight of Sound,* which examines the social meanings of music in England and the Low Countries from 1600 to 1900, is an important omission, as is McKinnon's essay (1982) addressing recent trends and prospects in iconography in the collection edited by Holoman and Palisca.

4. Although this originally New York-based world project is now largely under European coordination and auspices, the RIdIM *Newsletter*—started in 1975 by

Professor Barry Brook of The Graduate Center of The City University of New York and published continuously since then—has been transformed by Zdravko Blazekovic into a new "international journal for music iconography" called *Music in Art*. The journal, published twice yearly by RCMI (the Research Center for Music Iconography, located at the Graduate Center), launched its first issue in 1998 (as vol. XXIII, nos. 1–2), consisting of papers on music iconography read at the sixteenth Congress of the International Musicological Society, which took place in London the previous year.

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