

# current musicology

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Edited by BRIAN SEIRUP

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## Joseph Riepel and the Emerging Theory of Form in the Eighteenth Century\*

By Nola Reed Knouse

Music received intense scrutiny and categorization in the eighteenth century, as did nearly every field of knowledge. Typical of most eighteenth-century writers on music, theorists such as Johann Mattheson, Johann David Heinichen, Jean-Philippe Rameau, and Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg concentrated on examining and describing discrete elements and processes of music. Melody, harmony, and counterpoint proved convenient as individual topics deserving (and receiving) attention; yet, any acknowledgement or definition of an interrelationship among these areas, especially in connection with musical form, was only implied. The appearance of Joseph Riepel's *Anfangsgründe zur musicalischen Setzkunst* (1752–68) coincided with a change in this situation, and by the later eighteenth century musical form became the focus that placed all else into perspective. With respect to their most outstanding features, Riepel's theories were the logical outgrowth of theoretical trends that were already manifest. These features—the practical as opposed to the speculative approach; the emphasis on melody as the most important aspect of a composition; the analysis of the form of small and larger works; and the use of specifically musical terms to describe musical phenomena—were combined for the first time in Riepel's work, which is thus of focal importance in the history of music theory of the eighteenth century.

A most important characteristic of any pedagogical work is the primary perspective or viewpoint that underlies the author's explanations, particularly in a treatise that claims to explicate musical composition (as opposed to performance, for example). Within the eighteenth century, we may speak of three broad and overlapping categories of treatises. First, there is a large number of works that deal with very specific compositional tools and techniques, such as counterpoint, figured bass, and chord classifications or progressions. Included in these works may be acoustical discussions, analyses, and various sorts of exercises. This class of works was predominant in the first half of the century and laid the foundation for the following two categories. A second category that was important especially in the middle of the

eighteenth century is the performance manual. Works of this type often include valuable discussions of musical style and contemporary performance practice as well as technical information about specific instruments. In general this group is the least speculative of the three classes under consideration. The third category I wish to mention includes treatises of a more encyclopedic nature. The titles of these works show clearly the intent of the authors to present large amounts of broad knowledge—not about thoroughbass, or counterpoint, or harmony, or playing the flute, but about *music*. These works attempt to join the practical and speculative sides of music as two sides of the same coin, with a concomitant development and application of specifically musical terminology. Analyses of partial and complete pieces serve as examples for composition. Above all, *melody* is relied upon as the primary building block of musical composition. Thus, overall musical form is approached through the analysis or construction of melody in symmetrical segments that are articulated by harmonic formulas.

It is not difficult to trace the emergence in the eighteenth century of the concept of melodic primacy. We might begin by mentioning the *Musicalische Handleitung* (1710–21) of Friedrich Erhard Niedt. In his extensive examples of melodic variations, we see that the melody is clearly subservient to the bass. Niedt demonstrates melodic inventiveness by writing characteristic dance rhythms over the same thoroughbass, which is thus the governing factor in these compositions. Let us next consider Heinichen's *Der General-Baß in der Composition* (1728). Although the title gives a clear indication of Heinichen's point of view, melody is not at all ignored in the treatise. Instead, melody is portrayed as a necessary companion to a good bass; and, especially in Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the work, Heinichen demonstrates his understanding of the "working relationship" between melody and bass. In this chapter he discusses the treatment of dissonance in the theatrical style, and it is clear to him that melody and bass must interact to a great extent: in many cases the melody, or solo part, is the primary source of information for the accompanist about the harmony. Mattheson, in so many ways a central figure in the study of eighteenth-century theory, also holds a position of great significance here. In *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* of 1739, Mattheson states that "melody is the body, the beat or movement is the soul, and harmony serves as the garment" of music.<sup>1</sup> He considers melody to be "the basis of everything in the art of composition. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Thus in learning to compose one should begin with melody. And, according to Johann Adolph Scheibe in *Der Critische Musicus* of 1739, it is through the melody that all sorts of passions and affects are aroused and expressed.<sup>3</sup> Thus we have progressed from Niedt's perspective of melody as strictly subservient to the all-important bass line, to Heinichen's view of melody as moving hand-in-hand with the bass, and finally to Mattheson's concept of melody as of primary importance in

determining the structure and effectiveness of a composition.

To my knowledge Riepel is the first writer who maintains—throughout all of his works—that melody is of first importance. His primary work, the *Anfangsgründe zur musicalischen Setzkunst*, appeared as five chapters between 1752 and 1768, and he intended to write five more.<sup>4</sup> In addition, his *Baßschlussel* is not a *Generalbaßschule*, but rather the reverse: in this work, published posthumously, Riepel discusses how to set a bass to a preexisting melody! In all his works, then, Riepel stresses the primacy of melody, and in particular of melodic structure marked by symmetry and clarity. By far the majority of Riepel's examples consist of a melodic line only, even when he discusses the harmonic implications of that melody. In support of his views, Riepel defines types of melodic motion, and he also makes clear distinctions between a few basic melodic and harmonic functions and an infinite number of variations of those functions. Through this approach Riepel's student progresses from the painstaking construction of a sixteen-bar minuet to the detailed analysis of a symphonic movement, presumably on the way to writing one of his own.

While many writers adopted Riepel's view, there were of course others who took a modified stand. One such writer is Marpurg, who discusses the relative importance of melody and harmony in part 1 of his *Handbuch bey dem Generalbasse und der Composition* of 1755. (Bear in mind that Marpurg elsewhere recommends Riepel's first two chapters to his readers as an excellent study of melodic structure.)

There is disagreement whether harmony originates from melody, or vice versa. At least two melodies, a higher and a lower, are required for a harmony, and thus harmony is no sooner present than is a melody. In this point of view, harmony of course arises from melody. This is the viewpoint of Mr. *Mattheson*. If, however, one considers that no simple melody can be imagined that is not based upon the harmonic combination of intervals, then in this point of view harmony precedes melody. This is the viewpoint of Mr. *Rameau*. In my opinion, the most certain fact seems to be that in all pieces harmony and melody originate at the same time, (a) because for each succession of single tones a succession of as many others that can harmonize with them can be easily conceived, and (b) because one cannot put forward a harmony without at the same time presenting as many melody notes as the harmonic [progression] itself contains tones.<sup>5</sup>

Once eighteenth-century theorists began approaching music from the point of view of melody, they adopted new ideals of musical composition, namely, structural clarity, simplicity, and symmetry; cantabile or flowing motion; and motivic or thematic coherence. Development of these principles

required study of melodic style, structure, and function, and the development of a language appropriate for such studies.

An ideal melody was, in Mattheson's words, "facile, clear, flowing, and agreeable."<sup>6</sup> Riepel takes great care to assist the struggling composer to realize this goal, primarily by distinguishing structure, or function, from surface articulation. Characteristically, he defines a few basic stereotypes and then shows how these may be varied in an endless number of ways.

Riepel considers harmonic formulas on two levels: at the local level, that is, internal to the phrase; and at the phrase level, that is, up to and including the cadence. On the local level, he defines three harmonic formulas, *Monte*, *Fonte*, and *Ponte*. "*Monte*," he explains, is "a mountain to climb; *Fonte*, a fountain falling, and *Ponte*, a bridge to go over" (2:44).<sup>7</sup> Thus the *Monte* in example 1a is an ascending sequence,  $V^7/IV-IV-V^7/V-V$ , in two-measure segments; the *Fonte* in example 1b is a descending sequence,  $V/ii-ii-V-I$ ;

**Example 1a.** Riepel, 2:43.

Example 1a shows two staves of music in 3/4 time. The top staff contains a melodic line with a cadence marked by a square at the end. The bottom staff contains a melodic line with a section labeled "Monte" marked by a bracket and a square, and a cadence marked by a square at the end.

**Example 1b.** Riepel, 2:43–44.

Example 1b shows two staves of music in 3/4 time. The top staff contains a melodic line with a cadence marked by a square at the end. The bottom staff contains a melodic line with a section labeled "Fonte" marked by a bracket and a square, and a cadence marked by a square at the end. There are triplets indicated by a '3' over the notes.

**Example 1c.** Riepel, 2:44.

Example 1c shows two staves of music in 3/4 time. The top staff contains a melodic line with a cadence marked by a square at the end. The bottom staff contains a melodic line with a section labeled "Ponte" marked by a bracket and a square, and a cadence marked by a square at the end. There is a triplet indicated by a '3' over the notes.



and the *Ponte* in example 1c is a prolongation of the dominant leading to tonic. He uses these to clarify his discussion of types of phrases, as well as to give his student material to fill out the second part of a short piece. For Riepel, then, these three are tools, both in composition and in defining phrase types. Heinrich Christoph Koch in particular recognized the value of these formulas, although he did not adopt Riepel's somewhat fanciful terms.

At the phrase level, Riepel defines two basic phrase types: the *Grundabsatz*, or tonic phrase (marked with the solid box in example 1), and the *Änderungsabsatz* (marked with the open box). He makes an interesting point in his explanation of the second term: he chose the term "modulatory phrase" not because a modulation takes place within this phrase, but because a modulation follows it. This modulation, he recognizes, may lead to a strong cadence in the dominant, or it may simply pass back to the tonic.

Space does not permit a thorough discussion of Riepel's treatment of the endless variations of these formulas. Suffice it to say that he recognizes the four-measure phrase as a norm and defines four methods of melodic extension (repetition, extension of a figure, interpolation, and restatement of a cadence); these four means are applied to a short piece, resulting in the melodic line of a full-blown symphonic movement.

Riepel brings his concept of "composing by function" into sharp focus through an extensive treatment of the *ars combinatoria* in the production of new themes. He produces the twenty-four possible orderings of the four notes C, D, E, and F and then composes eighteen four-measure themes using these possibilities (2:27–29). In the first six of these, he uses two of his twenty-four measures in each theme, beginning each theme with one of the permutations. After he runs out of permutations beginning on the tonic, he uses just one of the twenty-four per theme. When the student sees all this, he exclaims in astonishment, and the teacher replies, "This is not at all astonishing, but rather completely natural" (2:29). Inherent in the use of combinations and permutations is the concept of function—the realization that certain measures are interchangeable with regard to general function. They are not all equally tasteful, and this is Riepel's most important point here: of the myriad of possibilities that he presents, one must select only the best.

Alongside the growing emphasis on melodic structure as the focal point of musical composition came a corresponding development of analytical techniques as aids to the teaching of composition. Analysis of course was not unknown in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, but the focus of analysis changed as the century progressed. An important example from early in the century appears in Heinichen's *Der General-Baß in der Composition*, where the author discusses an entire cantata by Alessandro Scarlatti.<sup>8</sup> His primary purpose is to illustrate appropriate accompaniment, and his comments focus on details, specific chords and resolutions, not overall design. With Matthe-

son, however, we begin to see analysis intended for the composer, as in the much-discussed analysis of a minuet in *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*.<sup>9</sup> Here Mattheson has dealt with a short piece, and briefly, to be sure, but he states explicitly that his analysis should be used as an example of a technique to be applied to other sorts of pieces.

Riepel, too, adopts this approach, and on the opening page of his first chapter he states: “with regard to its working out, a minuet is no different from a concerto, an aria, or a symphony, as you will see in a few days. Thus let us begin with the small and insignificant, so that we will soon achieve something greater and more praiseworthy” (1:1). The teacher begins the student’s first composition lesson by asking him to write a simple minuet. The student, not suspecting what is to follow, declares that there is nothing easier than writing a minuet, and produces the minuet shown in example 2a.

**Example 2a.** Riepel, 1:1–2.



The teacher’s remarks first focus on the structure of the piece as a whole:

*Number 1.* I say that even numbers of measures in all compositions are pleasing to the ear and are especially required in a minuet. But you have written an uneven number in the second part, that is, 13 measures.

*Number 2.* Each part should generally consist of no more than 8 measures. Thus you have erred not in the first part, but in the second; perhaps because you do not even know how one can distinguish segments of two, three, and four measures! Thus you have

*Number 3.* Not clearly enough separated the beginning, or the theme, into recognizable two- or four-measure segments.

(1:2)

Riepel defines melodic segments here by their length and their relationships to one another, stating that “a *Zweyer* consists of two measures that are usually similar to the following two measures in their motion . . .” (1:2). The significant relationship here is vaguely defined in terms of “motion” (*Bewegung*), which seems to involve both rhythm and pitch.

The teacher’s comments now move to the level of the specific notes and rhythms:

*Number 4.* I see sometimes stationary measures, sometimes too many measures of stepwise running notes, where on the contrary, perfectly or imperfectly moving notes are required in a minuet until the cadence.

(1:2)

Again Riepel fails to define his terms, but it is clear from his examples that he distinguishes three types of rhythmic figures in a minuet: the *dead*, that is, a single note that lasts for an entire measure; the *imperfectly moving*, that is, a figure containing a half note and a quarter note (thus the measure contains some rhythmic motion); and the *perfectly moving*, that is, a figure that has rhythmic activity on every beat. For a minuet, he forbids the use of two imperfectly moving measures in succession. Moreover, he forbids the use of a dead measure in a minuet, except at the end of both parts of the form. The use of these three types of rhythmic figures makes a great difference in the character of a minuet. For instance, the minuet in example 2b is more singing as a result of its frequent use of imperfectly moving measures, while the one in example 2c, with its consistent use of perfectly moving measures, is livelier.

**Example 2b.** Riepel, 1:6.



**Example 2c.** Riepel, 1:6.



The teacher's remaining comments concern both pitch and rhythm in the minuet in example 2a:

*Number 5.* I see in the second part not a single measure that has any similarity with those of the first part; one must see this above all, because a complete coherence is required of a minuet just as much as of a concerto, an aria, symphony, and so on. Consequently, I could make at

least a half dozen minuets from yours because you have used so many different types of notes and measures.

(1:2)

Upon the insistence of the teacher, the student finally succeeds in producing a “two-fold relationship” between the two parts; in example 2d, both the first and the second phrases of each part are clearly related.

**Example 2d.** Riepel, 1:7.



For his last comments on the first minuet, the teacher gives suggestions from “established minuet composers” (who are unfortunately left nameless).

*Number 6.* Once a well-proven competent composer confided to me that a minuet should be a success, without fail and without much effort, if it ascends in the first part and falls back in the second. But in yours I see just the opposite.

(1:2)

From the examples it is clear that Riepel refers here to the overall melodic contour; that is, in the first part of the minuet the first notes should not be the highest, and in the second part the final measures should be lower than the rest or at least level with them. The contrast in effect between the student’s earlier minuet (example 2e) and one that follows this guideline (example 2f) is quite clear. In the latter, the ascent of the first part occurs by means of the ascending figure in mm. 5–6, and the descent of the second part results from the descent in the last two measures.

**Example 2e.** Riepel, 1:7.



**Example 2f.** Riepel, 1:8.

After this lengthy treatment of such a seemingly simple topic, the following interchange occurs (which must be somewhat discouraging to the long-suffering student!):

*Student.* Thus may I now claim that I know how to write an orderly minuet?

*Teacher.* You must never boast. The rules alone don't make the difference. For if another wrote a minuet whose organization was not as clear, but whose melody was livelier, then perhaps such a minuet would be far more popular among the amateurs than one of yours that obeys the rules and has the correct proportions.

(1:8–9)

By these extended comments on such a simple piece, Riepel demonstrates his belief that the only way to learn to compose is by composing. Throughout his works, he uses a great many examples to illustrate his guidelines, including many that he considers wrong or in bad taste, telling his student that “you can often learn far more from badly written pieces than from good ones. Just pay attention to the mistakes, and take care to improve your own” (1:39). Meanwhile, he states again and again that it is not his intention to present rules for composition; he understands that the rules follow practice rather than dictating it.

In addition to short examples, Riepel considers several longer pieces, one of which he identifies as a complete symphonic movement (example 3a). The student's initial remarks about this piece are as follows:

One easily notes immediately that it was written by a master. Everything hangs together; everything flows. At the letter **L** he acted as if he wanted to take up the beginning theme again at the fifth; but, in order to hold the hearers' attention for a few measures and to deceive, he has actually not begun it until **N**. At **M** the repetition is made more beautiful by the minor third, because it is soon resolved. The entire Allegro stays in the tonic C and the fifth, for at **O** he has allowed the sixth to appear only for a little while, in the same way the fourth F at

[P] and the second D at [Q]. At [R], I thought he would repeat an entire half from the beginning, but he soon ends. In a word, there is many a pleasing deception in this piece. I only have two questions. I know that here and there, in the middle of a piece, it is suitable to offset a half measure. But why did he not write, at the beginning at [I], in the same way as he did at the simple + sign or at the double ++ sign? For it seems to me that at [I] there is a half measure too little or too much, completely contrary to nature.

(2:74)

Here the student presents the alteration shown in example 3b. With the addition of the half measure at [I], he finds it necessary to alter the measures between [N] and the + sign, in order to keep the cadence at the + sign in its correct metrical position; here he implies the omission of a half measure. Example 3c contains this revision, which the student has written in the tonic. The teacher responds as follows:

You are right. But such a great master no longer either studies or really composes, but rather he only writes; that is, all his thoughts lie at the point of the pen. . . . And so much less does he have reason to look back at the ABCs of counterpoint. I have told you in the first chapter that a little disorder sometimes strikes the ear as more flowing. You and I may not be so daring.

(2:74)

Riepel does not present an organized description of symphonic form, preferring to discuss details of symphonic compositions. Likewise he assumes that his readers are familiar with the concerto as a genre, and he does not define the form. He does, however, present his ideas about the relative lengths of its sections and about key schemes. (These ideas are quite similar to those of Johann Joachim Quantz.) He is interested in what he sees as the hybrid nature of the concerto; at one point he likens a concerto to a symphony and solo heard at the same time (4:38), while on another occasion he compares the concerto to various vocal forms. The remainder of his comments about the concerto are primarily concerned with details of judgment and good taste.

The development of any new discipline, especially in its earlier stages, presents unique problems and opportunities to its proponents, not the least important of which is the development of a language for the discipline. The possible problems are especially obvious: there are the dangers of overdefinition, or jargonizing, or of misdefinition, with all of their long-term consequences. And there are always dead ends: paths that lead nowhere, groups of

**Example 3.** Riepel, 2:72–75.

Allegro assai

(a)

(a)

(a)

(a)

(a)

(a)

(a)

(a)

Example 3, continued.

(a) 

(c) 

(a) 

(a) 

(a) 

(a) 

(a) 

(a) 

(a) 

(a) 

(a) 

(a) 

(a) 



terms that fall by the wayside. Perhaps the most frustrating difficulty, however, arises from the use of a single term for several concepts. All of these problems accompanied the development of theories of form in the eighteenth century.

The value of a term rests upon its usefulness—its applicability to various situations, its relevance to the user's purpose, its aptness to its object. Perhaps the simplest use of a term is as a label, and many such definitions seem to be clear-cut. For example, Riepel defines various kinds of segments by the number of measures: a *Zweyer* is a segment of two measures; a *Dreyer*, of three; a *Vierer*, of four; and so on. Even this definition, however, must later be clarified: a *Zweyer* consists of two measures, in  $\frac{2}{4}$  or  $\frac{3}{4}$  meter, that are generally similar to the following two measures. Moreover, in  $\frac{4}{4}$  or  $\frac{6}{4}$  meter it is necessary to count by half measures, so that a *Vierer*, for example, has four measures in  $\frac{2}{4}$  time but only two in  $\frac{4}{4}$  time. Riepel uses these terms throughout his work simply as labels—to give him a “place to hold to” in any musical example.

Riepel invents the terms *Laufer*, *Rauscher*, *Springer*, and *Singer* (runner, rusher, leaper, and singer) as labels for four types of melodic motion (example 4). He uses them in discussions of style and genre (the *Rauscher* being appropriate to an allegro of a symphony, for example, but not to a minuet) and also in analytical discourse (saying, for example, “the measures from the *Singer* on . . .”). Though greatly concerned with melodic style, later writers did not generally adopt these particular labels; still, they occasionally used similar terms.

Riepel's analytical terms are not as easily defined and may be confusing. Distinctions between his terms are less clear-cut, and developments in analytical concepts lead to refinements in definitions, even within a single work.

**Example 4.** Riepel, 1:39.

The image displays four musical staves, each illustrating a different type of melodic motion as defined by Riepel. All staves are in 3/8 time. The first staff, labeled 'Singer', shows a sequence of four measures: a half note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. The second staff, labeled 'Laufer', shows a sequence of four measures, each containing a continuous eighth-note pattern. The third staff, labeled 'Rauscher', shows a sequence of four measures, each containing a continuous sixteenth-note pattern. The fourth staff, labeled 'Springer', shows a sequence of four measures with a more complex, leaping melodic line.

Consider for example the term *Absatz*. Riepel first uses this term early in his first chapter, where he defines it as a place where the melody pauses and the bass leaps up a fourth. In the same chapter he equates *Absatz* with *Abschnitt*, *Einschnitt*, and *Caesura*. In chapter 2, published three years later, he redefines the term: an *Absatz* must be at least four measures long in  $\frac{2}{4}$  time, and a shorter segment is an *Einschnitt*. Moreover, he also begins to define types of *Absätze*, distinguished by their harmonic goal—the tonic phrase and modulatory phrase discussed earlier. An *Einschnitt*, he writes in chapter 2, occurs in the second measure of a four-measure segment, and there are tonic *Einschnitte* and modulatory *Einschnitte*, as well as tonic and modulatory *Absätze*. He does not, however, go into detail about these types of *Einschnitte*, writing only that “there are many types of *Einschnitte*, yet one can easily distinguish them from the *Absätze* by only paying attention to the metrical structure. I do not want to tire you out with a lot of writing about this, but rather I will leave it to your instinct, which is already well known to me . . .” (2:54). He thus shows a concern for practicality in his pedagogical technique: why define more terms than are really necessary?

Some of Riepel's terms seem to have faded into oblivion, for example, the terms for his three melodic-harmonic stereotypes, the *Monte*, *Fonte*, and *Ponte*. He admits choosing these terms somewhat facetiously, as making fun of the many foreign words scattered around by many writers in order to cover their own lack of understanding. Other terms used by Riepel were freely adopted by later writers. Löhlein, in his *Clavierschule* of 1765, uses a great many of the same words as Riepel, including terms for segment length (*der Einer*, *der Zweyer*, etc.), for phrase divisions (*Einschnitt*, *Absatz*), and types of phrases (*Grundabsatz*, *Änderungsabsatz*). Yet he neither defines his terms nor mentions Riepel. This fact might imply that these terms were commonly known by 1765. (We can trace the terms *Einschnitt* and *Abschnitt* as far back as Pater Meinrad Spiess's *Tractatus musicus* of 1745.) Different authors often used a single term with diverse intent. For example, Spiess says that the term *Einschnitt* is derived from the Latin *interpunctiones*, and means a segment or separation, but not a complete thought or period. For Riepel, the *Einschnitt* is a subdivision of the phrase. He hints at the possibility of classifying *Einschnitte* as he classifies phrases, that is, by their ending harmony, but he feels that this would promote confusion rather than understanding. As David Beach points out, Kirnberger at times uses the term to mean phrase, that is, *Satz* or *rhythmus*; at other times, the term means the same as *Glied*, an articulated segment of the phrase, and on still other occasions, *Einschnitt* means the same as *Cäsur*, or phrase division.<sup>10</sup> For Koch, the *Einschnitt* is, in Nancy Baker's words, “a subdivision of the phrase which is complete (*vollkommen*) if it consists of at least two measures in simple meter. If it is of only one measure, it is incomplete (*unvollkommen*), and, for reasons of symmetry, should be suc-

ceeded by a similar segment."<sup>11</sup>

The study of form, as a discipline of importance equal to that of melody and harmony, was a new development in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and the writings of Joseph Riepel played a leading role in this new branch of study. Among the most striking aspects of Riepel's theories is his independence of thought; although he refers to the works of other theorists of the century (for example, Rameau, Marpurg, Murschhauser, and C. P. E. Bach), he uses their concepts primarily as adjuncts to his own ideas. He shows an admirable willingness and facility in the creation of apt terminology to describe new ways of putting together musical materials, and the usefulness of this terminology is demonstrated by its adoption by later theorists.

Precedents for Riepel's specific concepts are vague and somewhat scattered. It is clear that he was influenced by the writings of earlier theorists, but the great majority of his most significant ideas, and his ways of combining them, seem to be original. The influences of Riepel's work were extensive, and indeed his influence through Daube, Kirnberger, and Koch affected the works of nineteenth-century theorists who dealt with musical form and melodic structure. Although many of Riepel's most interesting ideas (for example the *Monte*, *Fonte*, and *Ponte*) were not adopted by later writers, his most important innovations did have a significant influence, setting the practical tone, with specifically musical terminology, for the further development of the study of musical form.

#### NOTES

\* This paper is a revision of the one I read at the national meeting of the Society for Music Theory in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in October of 1984. My thanks to those who made suggestions and comments at that time and since then.

<sup>1</sup> Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg, 1739), translated with commentary by Ernest C. Harriss (Ann Arbor, UMI Research Press, 1981), 496. Mattheson's *Kern melodischer Wissenschaft* of 1737 is a systematic treatment of melodic composition, and it was in large part incorporated into the second part of *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>3</sup> Johann Adolph Scheibe, *Der Critische Musicus* (Hamburg, 1739), 307.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Riepel, *Anfangsgründe zur musicalischen Setzkunst; nicht zwar nach alt-mathematischer Einbildungsart der Zirkel-Harmonisten, sondern durchgehends mit sichtbaren Exempeln abgefaßt*. The contents of this work are as follows:

Chapter 1. "De Rhythmopoeia, oder von der Tactordnung." Regensburg, 1752.

Chapter 2. "Grundregeln zur Tonordnung insgemein." Frankfurt, 1755.

Chapter 3. "Gründliche Erklärung der Tonordnung insbesondere, zugleich aber für die mehresten Organisten insgemein." Frankfurt, 1757.

Chapter 4. "Erläuterung der betrüglichen Tonordnung." Augsburg, 1765.

Chapter 5. "Unentbehrliche Anmerkungen zum Contrapunct, über die durchgehend- verwechselt- und ausschweifenden Noten u. Theils auf Borg und theils auf eigne Gefahr mit musikalischen Exempeln abgefaßt." Augsburg, 1768.

Chapter 6. "Vom Contrapunct." Unpublished.

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, *Handbuch bey dem Generalbasse und der Composition* (1755), vol. 1, 22–23. Translation mine.

<sup>6</sup> Mattheson, 307.

<sup>7</sup> Throughout this paper, citations to Riepel's *Anfangsgründe* occur in the text and show the chapter followed by the page number. All translations from this work are mine.

<sup>8</sup> Johann David Heinichen, *Der General-Baß in der Composition* (1728), part 2, chapter 4.

<sup>9</sup> Mattheson, 451–53.

<sup>10</sup> David Beach in Johann Philipp Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition* (1771–76), trans. David Beach and Jürgen Thym, with Introduction and Explanatory Notes by David Beach (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982), 403n.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy K. Baker, *From Teil to Tonstück: The Significance of the Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition by Heinrich Christoph Koch* (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1975), 327.

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———. *Baßschlüssel, das ist, Anleitung für Anfänger und Liebhaber der Setzkunst, die schöne Gedanken haben und zu Papier bringen aber nur klagen, daß sie keinen Baß recht dazu setzen wissen*. Regensburg, 1786.

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## Julius Hartt's "Letter to a Young Musician"

By Myron Schwager

When I came to America in 1916, my beginnings were very hard; I found many devoted friends, but in my heart I was still very lonely. . . .

A little more than a year after that, a man with an extraordinary face . . . came to see me in my poor little apartment, 955 Lexington Avenue. It was *Julius Hartt*, perhaps the greatest American I have met after 36 years in this country. I had found a real friend, and a most comprehending one. His conception of life and Art were similar to mine, and in him I felt a brother. I still have his "Letter to a Young Musician" and I consider this *by far the best writing* I have read on the subject since 36 years.

—*Ernest Bloch*

From this first meeting, recounted to the Julius Hartt Musical Foundation in a letter of 8 March 1952,<sup>1</sup> Ernest Bloch was drawn to Julius Hartt (1869–1942). The two musicians were kindred spirits who believed that innate musicality, intelligence, and industry were qualities that could not be replaced or equalled by Madison Avenue hype, and they struggled persistently against the commercialism of music. This crusade resounds through Hartt's "Letter to a Young Musician" (2 March 1918) the fifth of six articles written for the *Hartford Times* between 1917 and 1918, under the rubric "Letters of a Musician." Here Hartt elevates the concept of art for art's sake, and forcefully claims that music has little to do with reputation, success, or large fees. It is not surprising that Bloch informed his friend that the reading of his article had once more stirred in him "the ardent desire" to see Hartt's thoughts "pour forth to all those that await them, in the belief that his message would 'help them to live.'"<sup>2</sup> Hartt had a sense of mission when it came to music, and the ability to communicate it to virtually every segment of society. Bloch took Hartt's gifts very seriously and encouraged him to make himself available to a wider public.<sup>3</sup> Although his name was subsequently to achieve more visibility and distinction in connection with the thriving Hartt School of Music (since 1957, part of the University of Hartford, CT), Hartt remained a provincial figure of whom there is little public knowledge.

A Bostonian by birth, Julius Hartt settled in Hartford in 1909 as organist of the Asylum Hill Congregational Church. He was quickly respected as a piano teacher and educator. He eventually became the music critic of the *Hartford Times*, responsible for covering the most important events throughout the East, including the Bethlehem Bach Festival, the Metropolitan Opera, and performances of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Ernest Bloch took it upon himself to introduce Hartt's thoughts as ex-

pressed in these "Letters" to his students<sup>4</sup> and felt that it was important for America that they be published in book form.<sup>5</sup> Since no person has taken this task upon himself, it seems fitting to include here the complete text of the "Letter to a Young Musician," which Bloch considered so very special and with which he clearly identified.

### **To a Young Musician**

Dear confrere: I have no other warrant for thus addressing you than the interest in your artistic and material welfare which any right-minded musician of maturer years might be assumed to feel for a younger comrade. The impulse to write you in this intimate and unconventional way came to me the other day under circumstances of which I should like to tell you in some detail. The occasion was a late afternoon musical; the place a spacious and beautiful gothic chamber rich with the evidences of generous means and perfect taste. The composer whose spirit and voice settled down on this twilight hour was Johannes Brahms; the music brought forward was this master's two rarely heard and lovely sextets for strings, Opus 18 and Opus 36. The performers were May Mukle, artist through and through and most accomplished of women cellists; Pablo Casals, artist of artists, musician of musicians, virtuoso of virtuosos; David Mannes, one of the most distinguished of contemporary violinists; and three players less well known, but artists every one—Reber Johnson played the second violin, and Rebecca Clarke and Giulio O. Harnisch the violas. The audience that quietly stole into the shadows of that great room included artists known world over, as well as humbler folk. All alike were drawn thither by the call of art for art's sake. For the beautiful thing about all this, my friend, was the spirit of the occasion. And the spirit of the audience no less than of the performers, really was the spirit of art for art's sake. These great souled artist performers gave themselves over to the joy of noble music for sheer love of it; and their happiness they shared with their friends. That was all. But it was no impromptu undertaking. There had been much painstaking and careful preparation. It was my privilege to be present at the final rehearsal. And please believe me, if the rank and file of lesser performers, whether as individuals, or groups of larger or smaller dimensions, were to bring to the preparation of their public musical undertakings half the loving care and scrupulous thoroughness with which these great artists made ready for a purely private appearance before their friends, the world over would be spared a vast amount of slovenly and impossible music. I wish you could have heard Casals' frequent though gentle insistence upon repetition after repetition of delicate and exacting passages. I wish you could have witnessed Mannes' affectionate deference to "Pablo," and Casals' generous rejoinders to "David." The spirit of it all was so beautiful. So unlike the deadening and deadly professionalism that cuts the soul out of art; it was all so like the music—as truly the essence of the music as the perfume is the essence of the flower. And when the next day I sat listening in that twilight hour to music as truly gothic in spirit as was that shadowy room or any venerable cathedral (music pointing finger-like towers of aspiration toward heaven) I gave myself up not only to dreamy realization of exquisite music but to half-conscious musings upon the things that men live for and that we musicians strive for.

In the presence of the slow movements of those celestial born sextets, how tawdry, how coarse, how cheap, seemed the possession of mere things, how trifling fame, money, power, position. In the scherzos how vibrantly pulsed the joy that is the normal birthright of every human being whose deathless inner life is free under God's jewelled heaven. In the allegros what horizonless expanses of imagination; what serene and all-reconciling outlook over the great world of humanity throbbing, surging with passion and pain, love and hate, hope and despair, joy and sorrow, plenty and want, ugliness and beauty, sickness and health, childhood and old age, death and decay, time and eternity! And yet what unity; what symmetry; what masterly adjustment of means to ends; what perfection of form; what balance of heart and brain! (Albeit Brahms' scales

incline toward the intellectual.) And, because it is great and true art, how surely this music pertains to the real life of Brahms; not less surely than that all true art is an expression of the inner life of its creator—God's life. For every creative life is a spark of the great Creator's life. Brahms' personal history was simple and uneventful. He traveled comparatively little and gravely avoided the public gaze. His life was one of contemplation. He lived in an atmosphere of reality—God's reality; reality of spirit, the reality of nature. And the incidentals which most men with gross and perverted vision mistake for essentials, and worship as ancient Israel worshipped the golden calf, Brahms looked upon as incidentals; and with austere disdain refused to be beguiled by the lure of mammon. He was devoted to the ideals of beauty. But he knew that beauty is a relative term. He knew that beauty implies ugliness; and he instinctively felt that as art must mirror life and nature it therefore must disclose beauty not as a universal element but as the sublime antithesis and conqueror of ugliness. And thus it is that the music of Brahms rings true to life. And thus it was that the noble Brahms Sextets came as a message of truth and beauty to the listeners in that darkening room on the occasion of which I am speaking.

You are wondering why I am writing you all this. I will tell you. Young musicians often seem to think of music as a professional garment, a sort of uniform that identifies the wearer as a member of a distinctive aesthetic cult. They do not very generally seem to realize that music is a life to be lived. True artistry is a creed; it is a religion. It is not primarily as most young musicians imagine, and many older musicians would seem to believe, a means of livelihood. Artistry does not consist in the ability to perform creditably a larger or smaller amount of fine music. It does not consist in reputation. Large fees bear no necessary relationship to it. Success, as the world views success, is not its symbol. Again I say, my friend, art is a life; it is a kind of living. And it is a kind of life and a kind of living far from the popular or fashionable among music's nominal devotees. Again I say art is a creed; it is a religion. It is a creed and a religion that like all creeds and all religions that ennoble men and uplift humanity rests deep in the inexorable and eternal principle of the cross. Whatever the complexion of your religious thoughts or mine, please do not assume that I am using the word cross in any theological sense. I mean simply that the true artist's life must conform to the principle of the cross. I mean that the true artist's creed begins with self denial. I mean that the artist's salvation hinges upon self forgetfulness. I would wish that every young musician like yourself would come early to realize that control and subjugation of self, in a hundred thousand ways, is the real technic to be acquired—the technic of right living. Now at the threshold of your career I wish that you could clearly see that no artist's art is greater than his life. I wish that this great truth might sink deep into your inner consciousness—that art is life. Believe me what you play at your instrument is not only the music of your composer, but it is yourself. Your art is not a professional garment—it is you. If your soul is a little soul, if your life is a little life, then your art is a little art, and you are a little artist. If your ideals rise no higher than your own personal concerns, your own advancement, your own success, your own glory, then you are heretic to the only real creed of artistry: and whatever devices of concealment you may cultivate, your heresy will be branded large upon the thing you call art. And all real artists and all clear visioned lovers of art will see your shame.

I have known of musicians, young and old, whose everlasting inquiry centered in money. I have heard of musicians, or would-be musicians who could never be sufficiently interested in the very thing they professed to love, to live in close communion with it an hour or two a week without promise of financial reward. Think of that, will you! And then tell me if a lunatic could imagine anything more fantastic than such cheap musical jockeys posing as musicians or as artists. So you think that a spirit like that pertains to real artistry? I say no. And it is at this point that I would like to make application of the little story of the twilight musical. It is the moral to be deduced from that musical that I would like this letter to suggest. Several of the artists who played those Brahms Sextets on that February afternoon have world-wide reputations. They command the largest fees. They stand unchallenged as consummate artists. Their



activities are many and important. And yet here they were with their friends quietly communing with Brahms. There were no money considerations. There was but one motive, and that motive "art for art's sake." That was like the music they were playing too. That was like Brahms. And that was like, and is like, world without end, all true art, and all true artists.

The moral is plain.

JULIUS HARTT

It is easy to see why Ernest Bloch was drawn to Julius Hartt and why the "Letter to a Young Musician" had such a special appeal for him. The advice which Hartt gives is as timeless as it is perceptive and entertaining. Two years later, Bloch's discussion of the New York debut of Morris Perlmutter<sup>6</sup> would echo the concept of art for art's sake without concern for personal aggrandizement, themes which Hartt passionately expressed in his "Letter to a Young Musician."

I think thus that Morris and even you have every reason to be satisfied. This concert does not change anything, either in his inner life or in yours; it was a necessity of some sort, although it is agreed that New York is the musical capitol, and that there he must bring his fires to bear! But I ask myself if, secretly, our friend Morris did not dream, in this detestable Aeolian Hall, of the beautiful verdures of Hartford, of his peace, of the sure activity, that he and you carry on in that small town of peace and nature . . . and at North Windham as well . . . For myself, I dreamt of it there . . . And I think that the musical future of this country is made much more in these honest efforts, from one side to the other, than in this great commercial fair which is distasteful to all of us.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the high regard with which Julius Hartt was held and the high standards which he set in musical criticism, musical art, and music education, he was neither exclusive nor snobbish. While he felt that the best music should be made available to the masses, he decried those who would deny the value of recent inventions such as the player piano and the phonograph. Rather than taking the high-minded position of those who would have seen such inventions as a cheapening of the musical experience, he saw them as an educational opportunity, which he likened to "a great university extension course in musical art."<sup>8</sup>

Hartt had strong words for those who are elitists:

. . . but of all forms of snobbery, the snobbery of education, of culture, is the most contemptible, most vulgar. And there is a kind of musical snobbery that comes under the latter head. Now I have knowledge of musical clubs that, whatever they profess or purport to be, really are snob clubs—clubs of and for Our Best People, of and for "We."<sup>9</sup>

Once having been snared into a function of one such club which greatly repulsed him, he advised the avoidance of snobs and claimed that it was better to seek admission to a drum corps of the Salvation Army:

For there you'd find some intrinsic good breeding (the cornerstones of good breeding are genuineness and kindness of heart, aren't they?) and native musical feeling.<sup>10</sup>

Hartt's waging of war for the sake of musical art did not go unnoticed, nor his concern with developing the whole musician go unappreciated. In his six "Letters of a Musician," he battled against virtuosity for its own sake, and for music as a phase of education. A measure of his success is the high standard achieved by the school bearing his name. In fact, the Hartt School was one of the first to offer a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in performance. Ernest Bloch frequently read parts of these essays in public and apparently kept the "Letters of a Musician" until well after their author's death. As late as 1952 we know that Bloch still possessed the "Letter to a Young Musician" and that he considered it the best writing he had read on the subject since it had appeared.<sup>11</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Bloch to the Julius Hartt Musical Foundation, 8 March 1952, University of Hartford archive number 952208. Bloch's letter is quoted more extensively in my article, "A Contribution to the Biography of Ernest Bloch," *Current Musicology* 28 (1979): 42. That article also includes a catalogue of Bloch's letters housed in the archives of the University of Hartford.

<sup>2</sup> Bloch to Julius Hartt, 16 February 1921, University of Hartford archive number 921166.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* See also Bloch to Moshe Paranov, 9 May 1944, University of Hartford archive number 944344.

<sup>5</sup> Bloch to Hartt, 16 February 1921.

<sup>6</sup> Morris Perlmutter, the protege of Julius Hartt and co-founder of the Hartt School, studied composition with Bloch. In 1920, Perlmutter changed his name to Boris Paranov to avoid confusion with another pianist of the same name. Ultimately, the name Boris was dropped in favor of "Moshe." Now President Emeritus of the Hartt School, he is affectionately known as "Uncle Moshe" to his students of several generations.

<sup>7</sup> Bloch to Hartt, 24 October 1920, University of Hartford archive number 920574.

<sup>8</sup> Hartt, "Mechanical Devices Aid When Put to Worthy Uses in Case of Musical Art," *The Hartford Times*, 8 November 1919.

<sup>9</sup> Hartt, "To A Lady," *Hartford Times*, 29 December 1917.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Bloch to the Julius Hartt Musical Foundation, 8 March 1952 (see note 1 above).

## reviews

### **Claude Palisca. *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.**

The movement known as “musical humanism” has caught the attention of scholars in various disciplines for over a century. In the late 1800s, Rochus von Liliencron (trained in philology and theology) wrote two important articles on German neoclassical settings of Latin quantitative verse and stimulated interest in the subject among his peers. Paul-Marie Masson, in 1907, wrote his pioneering article on “l’humanisme musical” (a term he seems to have coined) in sixteenth-century France. D. P. Walker popularized the phrase in English and wrote about several aspects of musical humanism: *musique mesurée*, magic, and science. Frances Yates devoted much of her book *French Academies of the Sixteenth Century* (1947) to Baïf’s *Académie de Poésie et de Musique*. More recently, Édith Weber has given us a two-volume study of the German settings of classical Latin verse, and Karl-Günther Hartmann has investigated the backgrounds and origins of these settings.

Until now, however, little had been written on this movement—as a movement—in Italy. (Of course, this is partly because the “movement” was no more unified than the humanist movement in general.) True, scholars like Claude Palisca and Nino Pirrotta had given us articles and chapters of books discussing the influence of humanism on Italian music, clearing up numerous details; but the larger picture remained fuzzy. Returning to a subject that he had dealt with in part already in his 1953 doctoral dissertation, Palisca offers us a book that has occupied him for at least twenty years, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought*—a splendid achievement, one that the humanists themselves would have admired and envied.

Palisca’s goal is “to show that with music, as with the other arts and letters and learning in general, the movement we call the Renaissance began in Italy, and that its chief source of inspiration was the revival of antiquity” (p. 22). To do this, he has combed through a large number of treatises—manuscripts as well as printed works, out-of-the-way texts as well as familiar ones—and has arranged his findings so as to give a clear, chronological record of Italian musical humanism.

Several chapters in Palisca’s book are devoted to the mathematical side of music. Those who have struggled through a few treatises on speculative music will know how difficult this material can be—even in a modern, anno-

tated translation. And the difficulty increases, of course, when the ancient treatises (with their inevitable corruptions) come into the hands of Renaissance commentators, who are themselves often puzzled by what they find there. Palisca's chapters on theory necessarily present problems for the average reader, since the advanced musico-mathematical thought of the ancients—Aristoxenus, Ptolemy, Cleonides, Euclid, Boethius—is inherently abstruse. No commentator in any century can change that. Yet these issues were of great importance throughout the Renaissance, and Palisca lucidly shows how writers of antiquity influenced theorists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Despite the recondite nature of the passages on ancient musical theory, much of Palisca's book is readily accessible and of considerable interest to any reader seriously concerned with Renaissance music and humanism. An entire chapter is given to "Harmonies and Disharmonies of the Spheres." Although many sixteenth-century writers firmly believed (or feigned to believe) in the music of the spheres, a fair number did not. The great *auctor* Aristotle, in *De Caelo*, had himself denied the existence of celestial music; Tinctoris, Coluccio Salutati, Salinas, and Giovanni Benedetti joined the Aristotelian camp. In the chapter on "The Ancient *Musica speculativa* and Renaissance Musical Science," moreover, we learn that certain long-believed legends—like the story that Pythagoras (or sometimes Jubal) determined his musical ratios after hearing the different pitches produced by various sized hammers upon anvils—were questioned in the sixteenth century. Scientific experiment often contradicted the information passed down from antiquity. Indeed, as modern science developed, some sixteenth-century writers eventually concluded that science and music were two different branches of learning. Benedetti, for instance, realized that "musical practice was not science" (p. 265). Similarly, Girolamo Mei argued that the "sciences search for the truth of all the contingencies and properties of their subject, and together with them their causes, having as a goal the truth of knowledge and nothing more, whereas the arts have as their aim to operate, something different from understanding" (pp. 267–68).

In his chapter "Greek Tonality and Western Modality," Palisca shows how Renaissance theorists tried to unravel the mysteries of Greek modal systems. "Nothing in music theory," he tells us, "so baffled Western students, from the tenth century to the Renaissance, as the system of *tonoi* and octave species and the so-called *harmoniai*" (p. 280). Some theorists were relieved to discover that the church modes differed from the ancient Greek modes. For Zarlino, this new information brought "liberation from an alien and obsolete system, which could now be set aside in treating the art of polyphonic composition" (p. 301). In fact, the importance of the modes diminished markedly as the sixteenth century drew to a close; the "modern modes had none of the

affective qualities of the ancient, so it made no difference what mode a composer chose when setting a text" (p. 318). But some composers and theorists—like Bardi, who understood "the difference between the modern modes and the ancient tonoi coupled with octave species" (p. 324)—still tried to incorporate features of the older system into modern music.

Palisca discusses the affective power of music and the relations between words and music in "A Natural New Alliance of the Arts." He adduces some passages in which Italian writers deny the existence of classical poetic feet in the vernacular. Perhaps he should have mentioned, at least in passing, Claudio Tolomei's *Accademia della nuova Poesia*, founded around 1538 and dedicated to the composition of Tuscan quantitative verse (though, oddly enough, the *Accademia* seems to have had no effect on or connection with contemporary music—unlike Baif's academy in France).

Palisca devotes a chapter to "The Poetics of Music"; here, the power of music is linked to the Platonic notion of *furor divinus*. While some Renaissance writers (Ficino, Francesco Patrizi) wholeheartedly believed in divine frenzy, others remained skeptical. Lorenzo Giacommini Tebalducci Malespini, for example, felt that what "the Platonic writers called poetic furor . . . was really 'an internal disposition that is often hidden from our knowledge,' a natural gift for conjuring up images charged with associations and affections" (p. 405).

The book closes with a chapter on dramatic music, perhaps the best-known area of Italian musical humanism. Palisca begins by questioning Jacopo Peri's assertion (in the preface to *l'Euridice*) that "the ancient Greeks and Romans 'according to the opinion of many' sang entire tragedies on stage" (p. 408). Did "many" really believe this? Exploring various tracts on poetry, Palisca discovers that some Italian scholars scarcely considered music a part of tragedy, while others felt that it had a place mainly in the choruses. Francesco Patrizi, however, did in fact believe that "tragedy was sung in its entirety" (p. 412). Mei, as one might expect, wrote about various aspects of music in tragedy, though his "statements [about it] represent not so much documented fact as conclusions based on wide reading of many disparate sources" (p. 425). Yet Palisca reminds us that "[m]odern scholarship has tended to vindicate, at least in part, the view, for long unpopular, that music had a large part in the performance of classical tragedies" (p. 425).

Students of sixteenth-century music and of Italian humanism will welcome this *magnum opus*, the result of many years' research by one of our finest Renaissance scholars. All passages from the original texts are accompanied by parallel translations. The index, moreover, conveniently provides a wealth of information both about the *loci antiqui* in which music plays a part and about Renaissance texts that refer to the ancient treatises. A recent reviewer has censured the book because it presents facts impartially, without

engaging in the kind of imaginative (though often quirky) discourse one has come to expect from New Haven—in essence, because it is not trendy. I find it saddening to think that a book so lucid and erudite should come under fire for failing to be something that the author patently never intended to write. One might as well criticize it because the lines do not scan. The “old” historicism still has much to teach us—as Palisca’s book proves most eloquently.

—Erik S. Ryding

**Elliott Antokoletz. *The Music of Béla Bartók: A Study of Tonality and Progression in Twentieth-Century Music*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.**

Of the major composers active in the early twentieth century, Béla Bartók has been most exclusively the object of study by music theorists; nearly all of the important studies that have been made of his music have been analytical. In this body of literature, two principal strands of thought are conspicuous. The first of these centers around the work of the Hungarian scholar Ernő Lendvai. Lendvai’s attempts to analyze Bartók’s music by relating all its features to various proportions, in particular to the ratio of the “golden section,” have been tremendously influential in the past decade or so.<sup>1</sup> The second principal strand of analytical thought in Bartók studies focuses upon the symmetrical pitch collections and chordal constructions that permeate Bartók’s music. The functional role that such formations play in the music of Bartók, Stravinsky, and the composers of the Second Viennese School has been demonstrated by numerous scholars, such as Babbitt, Jarman, Perle, van den Toorn, and Taruskin.<sup>2</sup>

Elliott Antokoletz’s study of Bartók’s music clearly falls into the second of these two analytical groups. According to the author’s preface, the field of Bartók analysis is in need of basic integrative concepts as a framework for the “diverse and often contradictory interpretations” that have heretofore prevailed (p. xi). The study is based upon the premise that there does exist in Bartók’s music an “all-encompassing system of pitch relations,” and that this system can be located in the principle of “*equal subdivision* of the octave into the total complex of interval cycles.” Furthermore, says Antokoletz, “the fundamental concept underlying this equal-division system is that of *symmetry*” (p. xii).

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In his preface, Antokoletz reveals his background, and the reader is immediately able to determine his basic assumptions and approaches in the study. In his adoption of the term (and concept) of the interval cycle, he follows the theoretical work of George Perle. Other aspects that may be traced to Perle include the above-mentioned focus upon symmetrical constructions and, in the final chapter of the book, an argument in favor of Perle's terminology for cyclic collections.<sup>3</sup> Since Perle's work is of consistently high quality—particularly impressive in its combination of analytical rigor and historical sensitivity—I turned to the work of his former student with high hopes indeed. I was not disappointed.

*The Music of Béla Bartók* begins with a discussion of important features of Bartók's musical language in their historical context. The features in question are those that contribute towards equalization of the notes of the chromatic scale and those that encourage the formation of symmetrical pitch collections. According to Antokoletz, Bartók was significantly influenced by the progressive music of his day (the music of Debussy, Strauss, various nineteenth-century Russians, and the composers of the Second Viennese School) and by the Eastern European folk music that he transcribed and edited. Antokoletz does not merely repeat these seeming truisms; he traces the various techniques of symmetrical construction from their earlier uses in the late nineteenth century down to Bartók. He shows not only *where* the composer found them but *how* he came upon them. Antokoletz concludes that Bartók "can be considered a focal point for all these musical sources [the symmetrical techniques discussed in this chapter] since in the course of his compositional evolution he comprehensively absorbed and integrated all these formations" (p. 25).<sup>4</sup>

The second chapter deals with Bartók's harmonization of Eastern European folk songs. Supporting his analyses with quotations from Bartók's own discussions of the proper way to harmonize folk tunes, Antokoletz demonstrates Bartók's method of deriving the material of the accompaniment from the songs themselves. The central portion of the chapter examines Bartók's *Eight Hungarian Folk Songs* for solo voice and piano. The accompaniment in seven of these songs is based upon the principle of symmetrical expansion around a central mode, usually pentatonic, which in each case is the source mode of the tune. In the anomalous song no. 7 the accompaniment is based upon "a contrapuntal and an harmonic elaboration of a single modal interval (tritone) rather than as a balanced polymodal expansion around the basic mode or its pentatonic substructure" (p. 50). The principle of derivation from the mode, however, still applies.

In chapter 3, "Symmetrical Transformations of the Folk Modes," we learn how the reordering of the pitches of a given mode might produce a symmetrical collection. According to Antokoletz, Bartók's frequent concentration



upon melodic intervals of the fourth or fifth allows him to treat diatonic modes as if they were portions of the interval cycle of fifths.<sup>5</sup> The tritone that appears in any diatonic collection can be made to act as "the boundary of a symmetrical formation" (p. 54). The transformation of symmetrical structures is tellingly revealed by an examination of the sketches for Bartók's Fourth String Quartet. Selected passages from the preliminary sketches of both first and second movements show diatonic scalar passages that are reordered to produce symmetrical constructions in the final version (p. 63).

The discussion of symmetrical reordering in chapter 3 leads into the topic of chapter 4, the general principles of symmetrical pitch relations in Bartók's music. As his example, Antokoletz again takes the Fourth String Quartet, since the quartets as a whole are representative of Bartók's style, and since the Fourth in particular "can be seen as the epitome of Bartók's compositional experimentation" (p. 67).<sup>6</sup> The discussion of symmetrical formations in the Fourth String Quartet devotes the most consideration to the role played by three intervallic cells, which are labeled X, Y, and Z.<sup>7</sup> Cell X consists of a four-note segment of the chromatic scale; cell Y, a four-note segment of the whole-tone scale; and cell Z, a pair of interlocking tritones a semitone apart, which can also be expressed as two perfect fourths a semitone apart or as two pairs of semitones a tritone apart. After giving an exhaustive analysis of the construction of each cell and its potentials, Antokoletz proceeds to relate the cells to sets of inversionally complementary semitonal cycles (that is, pairs of ascending and descending scales that interact at varying points). He does so in order to demonstrate the significance of the tritone in the entire complex of interval relations and to illustrate the role of the tritones of cell Z in the formation of octatonic scales.

In chapter 5, Antokoletz focusses upon Bartók's uses of the three intervallic cells X, Y, and Z in his compositions. Cells X and Y play major roles in the Fourth String Quartet and in *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*. Cell Z is even more versatile, playing important structural roles in Bagatelles no. 7 and 12, in many of the *Eight Improvisations for Piano*, and in the First and Second String Quartets, besides the two pieces mentioned above. An especially trenchant statement appears in Antokoletz's discussion of the intervallic cells used in Bagatelle no. 7:

While these cell expansions and transformations are basic to organic growth and structural coherence of the piece, a sense of tonality is produced by chordal structures other than those based on the cells. . . . [W]hile these local traditional tonal assertions have little to do with the unfolding of the cells, they tend to establish a tonal framework for melodic and harmonic relations solely based upon interval content.

(pp. 82-83)

Though his principal focus throughout the book is upon symmetrical constructions, Antokoletz does not try to make them explain every feature of Bartók's music. The flexibility the author shows here, his implied willingness to use a rather eclectic analytical approach in getting at the substance of the music, is a response to the heterogeneity of Bartók's music. I might add that this kind of heterogeneity is also found in the music of most other early-twentieth-century composers, and that Antokoletz's eclectic approach is surely preferable to any rigid insistence upon a priori unity.

Chapter 6, "Tonal Centricity Based on Axes of Symmetry," is the heart of Antokoletz's work. According to the author, there are two ways that Bartók establishes tonal centers in his music: by using the traditional pitch-class hierarchy of a given mode, or by using a symmetrical pitch collection whose axis of symmetry is to be understood as a tonal center. Both methods can be used within the same piece, and Bartók uses special relationships and transformations to integrate them within individual works. The primary purpose of the chapter is to explicate these relationships as they occur in the string quartets and in *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*. For example, in the First String Quartet the prevailing tonal center of A is established in two ways. First, F and C#, which are equidistant from A, are established as secondary tonal centers by both traditional and innovative means. Second, certain foreground events indicate the centricity of A more directly, that is, by the frequent use of symmetrical collections organized around A.

In the seventh chapter the author examines the procedures used to link diatonic, octatonic, and whole-tone scales in Bartók's music. These procedures include the addition of single notes to existing scales to produce new scales, the use of symmetrical constructions of perfect-fourth chords—or combinations of a perfect fourth and a tritone—to mediate between two or more kinds of scales, and the extension of a section of one scalar collection to form another. Closely connected with the use of chords composed of a perfect fourth and a tritone is intervallic cell Z, mentioned above.

Examples of the integration of the various scale patterns include a discussion of several pieces from the *Mikrokosmos* that contain octatonic constructions created by polymodal coordination (juxtaposition of two or more modes so that the total pitch content of the lines creates an octatonic scale). The pitch material of no. 109 ("From the Island of Bali") is partitioned into two Z cells to "establish the priority of the octatonic scale" (p. 252). The *Concerto for Orchestra* displays elision of scalar formations to form hybrid collections, the extension of motives to imply scales, and polymodal coordination in moving between types of scales.

In the penultimate chapter of *The Music of Béla Bartók*, Antokoletz discusses the role of the three principal intervallic cells in the formation of the interval cycles in Bartók's works. The most important functions are again

filled by cell Z. Cell Z can act as a base around which notes are symmetrical-ly added, as in *Bagatelle no. 10*. The cell may be filled in with whole tones to produce variants of cell Y or to generate the two whole-tone scales, as in the *Fourth String Quartet*. In the *Concerto for Orchestra*, cell Z is stated in *stretto* (near the beginning of the third movement), unfolding all six of the tritone interval cycles. These techniques play important structural roles, such as linking motives and foreshadowing thematic connections between the various interval cycles.

In the short concluding chapter, Antokoletz returns to where he started by discussing Bartók's music in the context of its time. The common assumptions "several post-tonal composers" seem to have made about the "equal-division system" are rooted in various strands of musical development: the late-Romantic German tradition, and the nonfunctional pentatonic and diatonic modality of folk music. Bartók's importance in this conflation of traditions is based upon his attempt to use folk traditions in constructing a new musical language. Not that he was the only composer to do so, of course. As Antokoletz examines *The Rite of Spring*, he finds in the opening folk melody the seeds of Stravinsky's abstraction of interval cycles later in the work (p. 314).<sup>8</sup> These and other interval cycle abstractions that Antokoletz finds in Stravinsky's pieces, plus the increasing use of symmetrical constructions in much of the Western music of the early twentieth century, lead Antokoletz to argue in favor of a consistent terminology to be used when discussing these constructions in post-tonal music: namely, the terminology developed in Perle's work on Alban Berg. Antokoletz's justification for extending Perle's terminology is that this extension "permits us to point in a simple, uniform, and objective manner to the properties and relationships of pitch collections of the equal-division system" (p. 328). He delays the use of this terminology until the end of the study so that his analytical concepts and terms might more accurately reflect the evolution of Bartók's musical language.

This is exactly the problem. Antokoletz's eclectic analytical methods are so successful that his belated plea in favor of a unified system loses most of its force. If in Bartók's own mind, and in the social evaluation of his contemporaries, this consistency was not necessary, why introduce it now? Surely it is more productive for us as listeners and students of Bartók's music to adapt our thinking to include the music's apparent heterogeneity than to insist on shoehorning it into a more "objective" conceptual system.

This question pops up occasionally in the course of the book. For instance, in chapter 6, during his discussion of *Bagatelle no. 2*, Antokoletz discounts Bartók's own statement that the piece is in  $D^b$ : Bartók's opinion can only be due to the "local occurrence of pitch-class  $D^b$  and its dominant ( $A^b$ ) in the final chord" (p. 142). Antokoletz would rather rely on the symmetrical pitch relations centered around A in the piece, but surely accounting for Bartók's

explanation more fully would have led to further insights into how Bartók establishes tonal centers in his music. It would seem better in this case to direct the analysis from the piece than from the apparent analytical system.

These are cavils, however; Antokoletz's study is an impressive achievement. It is very readable, informative, and relatively free from any dogmatic insistence upon a single analytical method for all of Bartók's music. For this, as well as for its extension of some of the most sensitive analytical approaches in current use, the book is well worth reading.

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#### NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> Stravinsky's use of symmetrical collections have received the most attention in the past several years. See, for instance, Pieter C. van den Toorn, *The Music of Igor Stravinsky* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), which focusses on the role of octatonic collections in Stravinsky's works.

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<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the interval cycles, see George Perle, "Berg's Master Array of the Interval Cycles," *Musical Quarterly* 63 (1977), 1–30.

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<sup>8</sup> A more recent study of Antokoletz's expands this idea. See "Interval Cycles in Stravinsky's Early Ballets," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 39 (1986), 578–614.

## **Walter Frisch. *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.**

Walter Frisch, in *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*, traces the techniques that Brahms used to mold sonata forms out of melodic material, this as opposed to forcing melodic ideas into a prescribed sonata formula.

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Walter Frisch, in *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*, traces the techniques that Brahms used to mold sonata forms out of melodic material, this as opposed to forcing melodic ideas into a prescribed sonata formula.

Frisch's work has opened up a new perspective on the analysis of Brahms's music, which takes the Schoenbergian concept of developing variation as a starting point.

Frisch begins by recounting Schoenberg's own definition of developing variation:

This means that variation of the features of a basic unit produces all the thematic formulations which provide for fluency, contrasts, variety, logic, and unity on the one hand, and character, mood, expression, and every needed differentiation, on the other hand—thus elaborating the *idea* of the piece.

(pp. 1-2)

To illustrate developing variation, he cites Schoenberg's own Brahms analyses based on this principle. For Frisch, however, Schoenberg's analyses are rather disappointing, on the whole: they are too "idiosyncratic" and give only an inkling of the potential of developing variation. Much the same is true for the analytic attempts of other theorists, such as Rudolph Reti and Hans Keller, taken from this perspective. Frisch finds these analyses myopic, concentrating too much on a single piece and not enough on Brahms's compositional techniques in general. Though his treatment of these theorists is somewhat cursory, the reader does gain a sense of the type of analysis on which Frisch is about to embark.

Frisch begins his second chapter by drawing an important distinction between the concept of thematic transformation and that of developing variation:

[Thematic transformation] is most characteristic of Liszt and his school, although it is also found in Beethoven and Schubert. A transformed theme retains its original melodic outline but may change its mode, harmony, tempo, rhythm, or meter. This procedure differs fundamentally from "development," in which the smallest elements of a theme—its intervals and rhythms—are continuously modified.

(p. 36)

The distinction is thought provoking, but not clear cut. Some of Frisch's own examples can be considered at once both transformations and developments. (For instance, in his sketch of the first fifty-two bars of the Clarinet Sonata in F minor, the B' of the formal scheme A-B-A'-B'-A'' seems both a transformation of B and a development leading to A''). Frisch also demonstrates that the young Brahms employed mostly thematic transformation. His use of developing variation grew more and more complex as he matured.

Does this mean that developing variation is more sophisticated than thematic transformation? Is it a more highly developed form of thematic transformation? Frisch's definitions and his musical examples leave room for such speculation.

As one proceeds through the book, it becomes apparent that, for Frisch, Brahms's compositional technique became increasingly refined over the course of his lifetime. (This contention appears to emerge from the analyses themselves and does not constitute a starting point.) The comparison of the young Brahms with the mature Beethoven, in chapter two, and the discussion of possible influences for Brahms's use of metrical displacement, in chapter three, show that Frisch's perspective is historical. Frisch is not afraid to criticize Brahms's early works; he does not agree with Schumann's "famous overstatement: that Brahms emerged as a composer fully equipped, like Athena from the head of Zeus" (p. 35). In this respect, Frisch is to be commended both for his ability to place Brahms within a wider historical context and for his lack of idolatry. But perhaps more comparisons with other composers would have strengthened Frisch's arguments; it is possible on occasion to get lost in his analyses without being able to see what they reflect about Brahms's special abilities.

Since he states at the end of chapter one that "Brahms's beloved sonata form" will be his principal concern, Frisch confines his discussion of developing variation to movements of this type. He quotes Gustav Jenner's statement that, according to Brahms, "one has not written a sonata if one holds together a few ideas merely with the outward form of a sonata; on the contrary, the sonata form must of necessity result from the idea" (p. 34). (In truth, Brahms may be considered an innovator precisely because he worked within the confines of a new form and brought it to new heights of creativity.) Frisch contends that in Brahms's best music "form becomes a luminous expression of the flexible, powerful procedures of developing variation" (p. 34). Of course, this contention might also be applied to those works of Brahms that are not in sonata form. Frisch does discuss some of the songs by paying particular and sensitive attention to the relation between the music and the text, particularly in his analysis of "O Tod," examined in the chapter on Brahms's late style. But one cannot help being disappointed when Frisch omits discussion of the Horn Trio because it "takes the surprising step of avoiding sonata form altogether" (p. 96). Perhaps the original title of Frisch's dissertation, *Brahms's Sonata Structures and the Principle of Developing Variation* (a work from which this book was drawn), is actually more appropriate.

The analyses that Frisch presents are extremely clear, and his prose style is refreshing. He provides many well-chosen and helpful musical examples. And he keeps a fairly even balance between drawing general conclusions and

presenting what is often referred to as “blow-by-blow” description. Often, however, he gives a beautifully worked out analysis of a sonata’s exposition (such as that of the Piano Quartet op. 25 in chapter three), but then skips a discussion of the development and moves directly to the retransition. Frisch finds many of Brahms’s developments to be disappointing after such carefully developed expositions, although he does describe the phenomenon of lyrical transformation, where a main theme from the exposition suddenly appears in the development in an expanded, more melodic form. (See, for example, his analysis of the Piano Sonata op. 5 in chapter two.) Frisch does devote some attention to the topic of Brahms’s retransitions, which are particularly interesting. Here he effectively demonstrates that the retransition and the beginning of the recapitulation often merge so that the listener will suddenly realize that the recapitulation has begun, without the recognition of its beginning. (See the analysis of the Clarinet Sonata in F minor, in chapter six.) Although one must appreciate Frisch’s selectivity, his analyses of expositions are usually compelling enough to make one wish he would continue them through the remainder of the piece at hand. The analysis of the Third Symphony in chapter five may be the most satisfying, for it traces what he calls the “A–A<sup>b</sup> conflict” through the four movements.

Frisch has gone far toward isolating the technique that gives Brahms’s music its characteristic flow. It has been said that Brahms always seems to know how long a musical phrase should last. Frisch, with his description of what he calls “linkage technique” (a term borrowed from the Schenkerians), has placed a finger on this seemingly mysterious gift. For example, in his analysis of the Violin Sonata in G major, he shows how the first theme of the second group (m. 36) is constructed by elegant modification of two motives from the opening theme. He writes: “The large second group of the violin sonata is a virtual paradigm of the fluent style of developing variation in which each theme grows naturally, almost spontaneously from the preceding one” (p. 119).

Frisch’s analyses are effective because he considers several musical elements—harmony, melody, rhythm—at the same time. He continually checks his analyses from an aural standpoint, and he may be excused for occasionally referring to what a piece “sounds like,” even though this may seem rather subjective. These analyses will be helpful to performers, since they demonstrate how larger phrases grow out of smaller units, and in so doing they provide a key to the intricate details of Brahms’s music.

Frisch’s final chapter, “Epilogue: Developing Variation in Early Schoenberg, 1892–1905,” seems a little sketchy, particularly since his analyses of Brahms are so satisfying. His goal, to show how Schoenberg’s studies of Brahms may have influenced his early works, is a worthy one. It helps to place Brahms’s legacy within a historical context. The actual analyses in the



chapter, however, are not pointed enough, nor as detailed as the Brahms analyses. The chapter serves, as its title implies, as an epilogue and an invitation to others to begin looking at Schoenberg's early works in terms of developing variation.

For those who seek an intimate understanding of Brahms's music, this book will be invaluable. It is to be hoped that Frisch's work will spur others to inspired efforts of equal merit.

—Rebecca R. Pechefsky

**Kenneth Whitton. *Lieder: An Introduction to German Song*. London: Julian MacRae, 1984.**

Books on the art song tend to fall into several categories. General histories such as Denis Stevens's *A History of Song* and James H. Hall's *The Art Song* as well as limited surveys such as Fritz Noske's *French Song from Berlioz to Duparc* are the most prevalent. German-language volumes on specific stages in the development of the Lied abound. Analytic studies are an area unto themselves, dealing with individual composers (Eric Sams has contributed several) or the exploration of text–music relationships (for example, Jack M. Stein, *Poem and Music in the German Lied from Gluck to Hugo Wolf*; Brody and Fowkes, *The German Lied and Its Poetry*; and Thrasybulos Georgiades, *Schubert: Musik und Lyrik*). A third “how to” category embraces works aimed at singers or audiences. Kenneth Whitton's book *Lieder: An Introduction to German Song*, although limited to the German repertoire, transcends categorical bounds. Here is a book that tries to do it all.

*Lieder: An Introduction to German Song*, with a forward by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, is divided into four sections. Part one, “The Development of the German Lied,” is a synoptic history of the genre. Although brevity, of necessity, led to many omissions, some of the resulting oversimplifications yield misleading or incorrect statements. This problem is especially troubling in Whitton's discussion of the origins of the Lied and the nature of the relationship of text and music:

In addition, where, in Renaissance times, the poet and the musician were often one and the same person (a concept reborn in the folk-singer of today), the rise of tonality in the 17th century brought about an interest in the development of new musical forms—without words. Indeed, it has been suggested that one might think of the madrigal as an extreme

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case of the apparent (and growing) lack of interest in the text of a work as the words are thrown back and forth to serve the dictates of the music. . . .

Here, I think, is the beginning of what I noted as the "*Wort-Ton*" problem, the problem of words *versus* music. Which should prevail?

(pp. 13–14)

This "problem" existed as soon as someone first set text to music. In fact, it is the changing nature of this relationship that helps define any given time period.

Errors in factual content are less a problem in part two of the book, which is subtitled "Performer and Audience." Each of its three chapters acts as a soapbox from which Dr. Whitton airs a favorite grievance. "Voices: Sound and Sense" expatiates the necessity for a sound knowledge of German in order to make intelligent decisions about repertoire and interpretation. Whitton's experiences hearing Lieder in England after World War II, when anti-German sentiment was still rife, have clearly colored his perceptions of the art of Lieder singing. Nowadays, it is the rare (professional) singer whose German pronunciation is faulty or who flaunts convention by performing a song inappropriate to his or her gender. Outrageous interpretative gaffes are rare in today's concert halls.

The chapter "Accompaniments and Accompanists" serves as a reminder that the pianist is a crucial part of a collaborative effort. Whitton's praises, however, scarcely extend past the pianist's role as a mood or tempo setter. "Programmes," a short chapter devoted to exploring the logic behind a singer's recital choices, seems superfluous. An experienced singer needs no help, and a novice recitalist would surely have the guidance of a teacher or coach. An educated audience can easily sense the unities and contrasts underlying a well-constructed program.

These three chapters raise the most puzzling question of the book: Who is the intended reader? If Whitton truly believes "that audiences are now musically much better educated, and certainly much more sophisticated" (p. 104), then much of his book would seem to belabor the obvious. At times his comments seem directed at the amateur singer; this renders the emphasis on public performance illogical.

Inconsistency also pervades the third portion of Whitton's book, which is devoted to a discussion of twenty-five popular Lieder. His comments are alternately addressed to performer and audience, and they frequently assume the tone of program notes. This is not surprising considering the number of BBC music guides listed in the skimpy bibliography. For each song, Whitton gives the German text and a translation as well as a few lines of background. His interpretation of the text is occasionally idiosyncratic, sometimes to the

point of error, as in the case of the Baroque aria "Bist du bei mir":

To begin with: Who is the "you" referred to in the poem? Since the song can really only be sung by a high soprano voice, one could assume that the marital partner is indicated, although the quasi-religious mood might suggest a prayer to a beneficent God. On balance, I think that the former is the more likely and that it is an expression of the marital peace and contentment that the writer had experienced. The composer (whether Bach or Stölzel) has certainly succeeded in breathing just this mood of serenity into the setting.

(p. 112)

The similarity of this poem to Baroque cantata texts indicates quite the opposite.

Although Whitton uses frequent musical examples, they are usually only snippets of vocal line; occasionally the accompaniment alone is cited. Rarely do both vocal part and accompaniment appear in the same example. Since the relationship between piano and voice frequently offers insight into the "word-tone" problem emphasized by Whitton, this format for the examples is a curious choice.

The final section of the book is an all too brief overview entitled "Lieder on Record: 1900—the Present Day." The inclusions are personal ones, and as Whitton states, "my purpose here is not to draw comparisons, but to suggest a few recordings which are well worth seeking out and which might help support some of my earlier remarks" (p. 176).

Dr. Whitton, a British authority on German language and literature, is an amateur musician—amateur in its most positive sense as one knowledgeable and in love with a subject. This amateur status is both an asset and a drawback. Whitton's genuine affection for the Lied pervades his writing. Unfortunately, so do his preferences and peeves. What emerges most clearly is a Pantheon in which Schubert is surrounded by a host of lesser gods served by the high priests Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Gerald Moore. What the book gains by devotion it sometimes loses in objectivity, and the author's love for the Lied cannot compensate for this volume's superficiality.

—Orly Leah Krasner