The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg, 1908-1923 (review)

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even gleefully telling me this in Paris in the 1970s), but the general public over time may have drawn some strange conclusions from these recordings. Woodley is right: a good deal of further work remains to be done (my guess about Ricardo Viñes's potential role here is that he was simply less inclined than Casadesus "to do what he was told"). Woodley's discussion of chamber, orchestral, and vocal performances reinforce all: he has much to say about the pitfalls of formulating general principles of historical performance habits and reception across generations of wildly-changing technologies.

One wishes that Roger Nichols's concluding essay could have been longer: it weaves some threads from earlier contributions into a rather large question about twentieth-century historiography and musical style. To paraphrase: How is it that such a brilliant, indeed "deep" composer as Ravel is rarely found in "serious" discourse about twentieth-century music? Nichols believes that much behind this derives from cultural expectations—demands—placed upon composers of "serious" music in recent generations, and his quotes from contemporary composers and scholars bear him out. On the one hand, Ravel is chastised for "classical" structures and thinking (however creative); on the other, he serves as a convenient historical beacon (i.e., *Boléro*) for composers like Philip Glass. Worse: the difficulty of untangling his various "perfections" still grates. Why? We need to hear more from Nichols on this.

Quibbles: why so little acknowledgment of German scholarship, much of which is among the very best? (I find only one citation, a short article on Ravel's shortest work.) And recalling Nichols's conclusion: I wonder about some of the established analytical *topoi* such as "Ravel's mask(s)," much emphasized in the introduction—"No mask, no Ravel" (p. 1). Really? The bibliographies and indexes for this volume are entirely satisfactory, and it has been carefully and reliably edited. Many thanks to Deborah Mawer, to her contributors, and to the Cambridge University Press.

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The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg 1908–1923. By Bryan R. Simms. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. [ix, 265 p. ISBN 0-19-512826-5. $49.95.]

The music that Schoenberg wrote between his break with tonality and his unveiling of the twelve-tone method has fascinated and perplexed musicians, scholars, and audiences down to the present day. Joining the substantial literature on individual works and several previous books that have examined parts of the repertory from various perspectives, Simms's monograph is the first in English to survey the entire period. It thus fills a gap in scholarship between Walter Frisch's *The Early Works of Arnold Schoenberg, 1893–1908* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993) and Ethan Haimo's *Schoenberg's Serial Odyssey: The Evolution of his Twelve-Tone Method, 1914–1928* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1990). While Simms's book appears to have been aimed at a more general readership than these studies are, it will be a valuable resource for anyone interested in Schoenberg's music.

Building on his long-term engagement with Schoenberg's music, Simms interweaves analytical and descriptive commentary, references to the sketches and creative process, statements from Schoenberg's own writings, biographical material, and insights from recent historical and analytical studies, all presented in an engaging and readable manner. After a brief introduction to the term "atonality," individual chapters focus on groups of works related by genre or structural features while tracing the overall chronology. The bulk of the text consists of overviews of the formal, melodic, and harmonic features of each piece, including discussions of most individual movements for multimovement works.

As is to be expected with a book that deals with so much music, not all of the analyses are completely convincing. For example, the interpretation of the first of the *Five Pieces for Orchestra* as a fugue (pp. 75–76) distorts the formal balance of the piece and obscures the degree to which the contrapuntal techniques of stretti and augmentation were used not as an end in themselves but as a means for creating, as Schoenberg wrote, "an uninterrupted

change of colors, rhythms, and moods" (cited in *Music Since 1900,* ed. Nicolas Slonimsky, 5th ed. [New York: Schirmer Books, 1994], 132). In other cases significant details are omitted, as in the discussion of the fragmentary "Liebeslied" (p. 164), where it would have been worth pointing out that the transpositional levels of the five-note violin melody were derived from the pitch-class content of the segment itself, a clear link to techniques Simms discusses in the context of opp. 18 and 22.

Simms effectively introduces many central concepts for Schoenberg's music, including his approach to tonality, the idea of developing variation, and the unity of musical space. The presentation of what Schoenberg called "composing with tones" is derailed somewhat by his attempt to link it more directly to the twelve-tone method and "composing with basic shapes" (pp. 180–81). As a result, Simms cordons off those examples of "composing with tones" that are based on the manipulation of ordered and unordered collections of pitch-classes into a new category he calls "permutational variation" (p. 174), a distinction that goes against Schoenberg's more inclusive presentation of the concept (Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea,* ed. Leonard Stein [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975], 89, 247).

In several cases it would have been useful to have more explicit discussions of how the analyses presented here relate to previous studies (as, for example, in the case of the symphony sketch material (pp. 153–62), which could have been profitably placed in the context of Haimo's more detailed presentation). Similarly, it would have been helpful for Simms to clarify his approach to pitch, such as in the presentation of the "triadic tetrachords" (pp. 16–17), and how it relates to current set-theoretical models. There are gestures in this direction, as in the overview of approaches to op. 11, no. 1 (pp. 64–66), and the discussion of the "signature set" (pp. 79–81), but more could have been done to explain the foundations of Simms's own analyses. The general avoidance of integer notation may have been intended to make the book more accessible to the nonspecialist, but many of the relationships he points out could have been more clearly presented through its use. This would have required some explanation, but would have also obviated the need for some of the rare passages of ungainly prose, such as the description of inversional relationships on page 36.

A more serious point of ambiguity in the book is the status of "atonality" as a concept. At several points Simms stresses the diversity of the atonal repertory and the difficulty of establishing clear borders between it and what preceded and followed, as he writes, "atonality was never a fixed style or settled compositional method" (p. 83). But there is a constant tendency to move from the general category of "atonal music" in the book's title to a more normative notion of an "atonal style" or "atonal idiom," as is evident in the following passages: in the op. 14 songs Schoenberg "retained the new atonal style that George's verse had inspired" (p. 32); the first movement of op. 10 is a "stylistic retrenchment, a stepping back from the fully atonal George songs that he had composed earlier that spring and a return to the late tonal style" (p. 40); the symphony documents "a more general rethinking of the atonal style" (p. 158).

The tension between atonality as a separate category or as integrally related to the surrounding music reflects an ambivalence in Schoenberg's own attitude toward these pieces as markers of revolution or evolution in his development. Simms has provided a comprehensive foundation for more wide-ranging discussions that would, for example, consider the changing role of the atonal music in his thought over his life. Simms points out important features of Schoenberg's changing compositional approaches and aesthetic stance over these years, but more work needs to be done into why these changes might have occurred and how they relate to broader cultural, social, and political developments. The explanations that he provides rely primarily on biographical events, in particular the crisis in Schoenberg's marriage in 1907–8, which Simms links very directly to the Second String Quartet (p. 42) and *Die glückliche Hand* (p. 103). The most highly developed sections of the book from a cultural perspective are commentaries on the poets Schoenberg favored at various stages: Richard Dehmel, Stefan George, and

Rainer Maria Rilke. Less successful is the discussion of *Erwartung* as "a realistic study of hysteria" (p. 94), with its peculiar characterization of the woman as possessing "no trace of intellect or creativity, and she is also faithless, weak, and cunning" (pp. 109–10), a reading that is inconsistent with the libretto and the intellectual and social concerns of the librettist, Marie Pappenheim (see Elizabeth Keathley, " 'Die Frauenfrage' in *Erwartung:* Schoenberg's Collaboration with Marie Pappenheim," in *Schoenberg and Words: The Modernist Years,* eds. Charlotte M. Cross and Russell A. Berman. [New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2000], pp. 139–78.) Similarly, Simms's insightful comments on neoclassical features in the *Serenade,* op. 24, points to the need to look at Schoenberg in terms of the broader impact of World War I on many artists' view of the nature and purpose of art and the relationship between the artist and the audience.

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Sibelius Studies. Edited by Timothy L. Jackson and Veijo Murtomäki. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. [xx, 397 p. ISBN 0-521-62416-9. $74.95.]

Like its companions in Cambridge University Press's continuing series of composer-based collections, the present volume offers a wide array of approaches to the life and music of Jean Sibelius. The most widely recognized Finnish composer of his era, Sibelius has generated tremendous interest among composers, musicologists, and performers in recent decades. Numerous new publications reflect this renaissance of scholarship, including *The Sibelius Companion,* edited by Glenda Dawn Goss (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996); Guy Rickards, *Jean Sibelius* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997); and Glenda Dawn Goss, *Jean Sibelius: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland, 1998). The volume under review complements these works and is a valuable contribution to the literature on the Finnish legend and his music.

The book's twelve essays range considerably in the level of their accessibility. Those in the first section, "Reception History and Aesthetics," are the most approachable for the general reader. Eero Tarasti's "An Essay in Post-colonial Analysis: Sibelius as an Icon of the Finns and Others" surveys the Sibelius cult through the author's own theory of existential semiotics, detailing the rise of Sibelius as a Finnish icon and idol. Robert Layton's "From Kajanus to Karajan: Sibelius on Record" chronicles the recorded legacy of the composer. In "Sibelius the Progressive," Tim Howell focuses on *Tapiola* as a means of demonstrating forward-looking aspects of Sibelius's craft, namely the development of a multilevel music from a single idea, repeated passages that are presented in different contexts to different aesthetic ends, repetition patterns, a uniformity of pitch relationships, the articulation of linear and circular time and their intersections, and the notion of temporal variations.

The second and third sections of the volume, "Ideology and Structure" and "Analytical Studies of the Symphonies," present detailed discussions of Sibelius's music from a variety of perspectives. While frequently thick and challenging in their prose, the essays as a whole offer significant insight into Sibelius and his compositional technique. Considerable demands frequently are made upon the reader, however, as far as a comprehensible knowledge of current trends in theory and analysis is concerned. Readers should possess a thorough knowledge of Schenkerian theory and have ready access to scores of the works under discussion. These essays are not intended for the general reader but rather for a specialist audience who has time to really sit down and ponder the points presented by the authors.

Peter Franklin's "Kullervo's Problem—Kullervo's Story" is a postmodern reading of *Kullervo* that, perhaps more than any other essay in the book, requires a score due to multitudinous references to measure numbers and rehearsal letters. Depictions of sexuality, gender, narrativity, and allegory are addressed in the essay. Eija Kurki, in "Sibelius and the Theater: A Study of the Incidental Music for Symbolist Plays," and Veijo Murtomäki, in "Sibelius's Symphonic Ballad *Skigsrået:* Biographical and Programmatic Aspects of His Early Orchestral Music," provide discussions of