

BOOK reviews

Edited by Mark Kroll

The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music.

Simon P. Keefe, editor. 816 pages. Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Reviewed by Mark Kroll.

This remarkable book, written by an impressive array of established and younger scholars, represents a major contribution to our understanding and appreciation of the 18th century. Covering more than 100 years of music in Continental Europe, Britain, America, and even the South American colonies of Spain and Portugal, it is a must-have for any early music library.

The book is divided into three large parts ("Church," "Theatre," and "Salon and Concert Room") and consists of 24 chapters on just about everything you would want to know about this era. Three appendices ("Chronology," "Institutions in major European cities," and "Personalia"), a "Prelude" ("The musical map of Europe c. 1700"), a "Postlude" ("Across the divide: currents of musical thought in Europe, c. 1790-1810"), and two delightful and instructive "Interludes" ("Listening, thinking and writing" and "Performance in the eighteenth century") round out the volume.

One of the work's most admirable features is its organization, a major challenge in a study of this magnitude. With so many different threads, styles, and genres to be traced and discussed, the book could have easily become a disjointed series of individual articles only marginally connected to each other and to the subject. Editor Simon Keefe avoids this pitfall at every turn and miraculously succeeds in maintaining a sense of unity and coherence throughout. He does so, as he tells us in the preface, "by eschewing a chronological approach.... [W]e organize our volume by genre...[and] as a counterbalance—and potential respite for those reading cover to cover—we include 'interludes' on topics relevant to all genres...as well as a 'prelude' and 'postlude.'" All of this works perfectly, and the decision to use footnotes makes the work even more user-friendly. I am sure I am not the only reader who dislikes flipping continually between the middle

and back of a book to find a citation in an endnote. In fact, I wish my own books had adopted this format!

Now comes the reviewer's challenge: to evaluate an 800-page book in 800 words. Since it is virtually impossible to describe the contents of each chapter in detail, or even to list the names of all the authors without running out of space, I will single out a few representative contributions to whet your appetite for more.

Good things can be found in the opening pages: in the "Prelude" we read about "the eighteenth-century preoccupation with national style." Most people know that this was a

Stephen Rose provides several colorful quotes attributing national styles to the flora, fauna, and climate of a country (this was, of course, before global warming).

style-conscious period, and author Stephen Rose provides several colorful quotes to underscore this fact, including several attributing national styles to the flora, fauna, and climate of a country (this was, of course, before global warming). Charles Burney, for example, believed that "Music, indeed like vegetation, flourishes differently in different climates," and Athanasius Kircher in Germany was of a similar opinion: "the Germans for the most part are born under a frozen sky and acquire a temperament that is serious, strong, constant, solid and toilsome, to which qualities their music conforms."

We are also reminded that the 18th century was not only a style-conscious era, but an historical and literary one as well. Thus we read later in this book that "The first histories of music originated in the eighteenth century, reflecting a new interest in music of the past," and that many of the famous musical debates (such as the *Querelle des Bouffons*) were led not by musicians

but "by men of letters...who were often involved in spoken theatre."

The section on performance practice was, not surprisingly, of particular interest to this reviewer, and I was pleased to see that the focus here is placed on the concept of music "being spoken"; that is, on the importance of using rhetoric and rhetorical gesture when performing this repertoire (or the music of any era, I should add). Embellishment—or as the author puts it, "Going beyond the text"—is also discussed with clarity. We read, for example, that "Corelli's music" was "not conceptual.... [I]t lived in sound, in performance." Any questions?

All good things must come to an end, and so does the 18th century (and this book). The final chapter examines the major changes in styles and tastes that occurred as the "long" 18th century morphed into the 19th. The author here takes an interesting approach, comparing the length of the "Mozart" entry in two editions of Ernst Ludwig Gerber's *Historisch-biographisches Lexicon der Tonkünstler*, the first published between 1790 and 1792, the second between 1812 and 1814. In the earlier edition, the article on Mozart "is roughly comparable to those on Pasquale Anfossi, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, Carlo Broschi, Leopold Kozeluch...and significantly shorter than those on the likes of Johann André,...Reinhard Keiser,...G.E. Nauert" and a host of other composers. By 1812, however, "at almost twenty-four columns" Mozart's "new entry marks a thirteen-fold increase" in length. Well, he finally got it right!

So does this book. Congratulations to Simon Keefe, to all his authors, and to Cambridge University Press for making this resource available to us.

Mark Kroll recently edited Six Concerti Grossi by Francesco Scarlatti and Charles Avison's Concerto Arrangements of Geminiani's Violin Sonatas, op. 1 for A-R Editions. He is currently preparing Geminiani's Sonatas for Violin and Basso Continuo, op. 4 for the complete edition of the composer's works.

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Beethoven aus der Sicht seiner Zeitgenossen. Klaus Martin Kopitz and Rainer Cadenbach, editors. 1187 pages (2 volumes, slipcased). G. Henle Verlag, 2009. *Reviewed by Lewis Lockwood.*

This beautifully produced book in two volumes is the largest and most authoritative collection of contemporary impressions of Beethoven that has ever been published. Many Beethoven enthusiasts know the little volume brought out years ago by the estimable O.G. Sonneck (*Beethoven: Impressions by His Contemporaries*, 1926, 1964, Dover reprint 1967). By comparison this new compilation, mostly in German but with all material in original languages, including English and French, is six times the size of Sonneck's little book. It has been masterfully edited by Klaus Martin Kopitz and the late Rainer Cadenbach, with help from Olivier Korte and Nancy Tanneberger. Its scope is as wide as the world of Beethoven's acquaintances, from Adamberger to Zmeskall, and includes their letters, memoirs, poems, descriptions, and all manner of personal accounts of Beethoven the man.

To give a sample, Julius Benedict (1804-1885), a pupil of Hummel and of Weber, told Thayer in 1861 that one day in 1823 he had encountered in a music shop "a stout, short man with a very red face, small, piercing eyes, and bushy eyebrows, dressed in a very long overcoat which reached nearly to his ankles." Introduced to Beethoven the following week in the same shop and then meeting him later, Benedict remembers Beethoven's interest in current opera performances, his opinion that "Germans cannot write a good libretto" and much more, including Benedict's description of the Schuppanzigh Quartet's inability to make sense of Opus 127 when they gave its premiere in 1825.

Another sample is provided by the English composer Cipriani Potter (1792-1871), who met Beethoven in 1818 and wrote his memoirs in 1836, nine years after Beethoven's death. Potter's account is more substantive than anecdotal and he dwells at some length on Beethoven's works and styles. But his poignant description of the way in which Beethoven's piano playing

was affected by his deafness is enlightening, and another piece of testimony that he gave to Thayer in 1861 gives us vivid evidence of Beethoven's opinions of composers and pianists, including Mozart, Handel, Cherubini, Moscheles, and Cramer. When Potter told Beethoven that his Septet had made a powerful impression on him, Beethoven replied that when he wrote it he did not know how to compose, but that now [in 1818] he did. "I am writing something better now." It was the "Hammerklavier" Sonata.

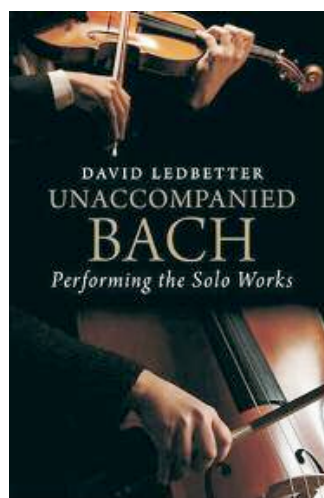
Careful editing amplifies, and here and there corrects, statements by these contemporaries. Thus, when the notorious Anton Schindler writes in a letter of 1839 to Julius Rietz, a conductor in Düsseldorf, that, to his horror, Ferdinand Ries had performed the "Eroica" with an orchestra of 135 members, of whom 41 were wind-players, Schindler tells Rietz that if Beethoven had known about such a thing he would have "killed him." Schindler claims that "Beethoven never wanted his symphonies to be played by an orchestra larger than 60, because he did not want to write very loud music, and said that a large orchestra could not produce the many and frequently changing nuances that he wanted." But Kopitz points out that in Beethoven's "Tagebuch" (his personal diary) of 1812-1818, he writes, "At my last concert in the Redoutensaal [in 1814] there were 18 first violins, 18 second violins, 14 violas, 12 violoncellos, 7 contrabasses, and 2 contrabassoons." Admittedly, the 1814 orchestra size was apparently much larger than usual, but it shows that on some occasions very large forces were used, and modern ideas of fidelity to historical conditions need to take into account that these conditions could vary considerably in certain times and places.

Elsewhere in these volumes we find several accounts of Rossini's two visits to Beethoven in 1822, including one by Ferdinand Hiller and a long one that purports to record a conversation between Rossini and Wagner, when they met in Paris in 1860. Rossini says that in 1822 he heard the "Eroica" for the first time, was "staggered" by it, and resolved to meet Beethoven. Doing so, he was glad to find that

Beethoven admired *The Barber of Seville*, but there is much more to read and ponder in their exchanges, including Beethoven's alleged remark that while Italians excelled in opera buffa, opera seria was not their strong suit because "you do not have enough musical knowledge...." Remarks like this are not entirely surprising, coming from Beethoven in his last years, and the various accounts brought together in this book help us to see them in perspective.

These samples can be multiplied a hundred-fold throughout the book, and each commentator will have to be read with a critical sense of who he or she was and what the writer's viewpoint may have been, both musically and personally. But everyone interested in Beethoven will be grateful to Klaus Martin Kopitz for providing us with this enormous compilation, carefully edited and annotated, which will be a standard work for many years to come.

Lewis Lockwood is an emeritus professor of music at Harvard University. His fields of study in musicology have been primarily the Italian Renaissance and the music and life of Beethoven.



Unaccompanied Bach: Performing the Solo Works. David Ledbetter. 288 pages. Yale University Press, 2009. *Reviewed by Raymond Erickson.*

This is a book to be studied, not simply read, and the last four chapters, which deal with the unaccompanied works for violin, cello, flute, and lute, require scores at hand to follow the analyses. Thus, the volume is not really for the general reader, but for the early music performer and scholar grounded in har-

mony and counterpoint. A reader so equipped will, however, learn a great deal.

The focus is mainly on Bach's strategies of composition: large- and small-scale thematic and harmonic organization within a movement; thematic and other relationships between movements of multi-movement compositions; parallels with other composers and works; aspects of French and Italian style that are combined to make the "mixed style" that was recognized as distinctly German.

Chapter One, "German Traditions of Solo Violin Music," provides a rich account of Italian and German violin traditions from the early 17th century to Bach. Composers and music unmentioned in most discussions of this topic are cited. In similar detail Ledbetter treats the cello (including its relationship to the bass viol) and the lute tradition—this last a particular strength of the author and of this book. The 174 endnotes for this chapter demonstrate that Ledbetter has certainly done his homework.

Chapter Two, "Concepts of Style and Structure," defines the principles underlying Ledbetter's subsequent analyses of Bach's unaccompanied works. His statement that "the infection of the dance by the sonata is largely the story of the instrumental suite between 1680 and 1720" adumbrates one of the main arguments underlying his analyses. Moreover, he identifies certain structural templates—both thematic and harmonic—that undergird much of Bach's unaccompanied music.

Particularly valuable in the analyses of the individual works are the figured bass abstracts given for many movements. This is not a new idea, but it is gratifying to see this device used to such good advantage. For example, comparing the abstracts for the Allemanda and Corrente of the D minor Partita (Bach's term) for Violin, one easily sees the use of C# and Bb in the bass of the first few bars of these movements (and of the Sarabanda, too)—which explains the unorthodox (if embellished) tetrachord D-C#-B-Bb-A used at the beginning of the *Ciaccona* (Bach's term), a hugely important point Ledbetter makes very casually. He also gives 26 versions of the bass formula, some of which he relates to the best known 17th-century Italian *ciaccona* pattern. However, I find these connections too tenuous and instead



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regard all the bass formulas as transformations of the descending tetrachord characteristic of the French theatrical *passacaille*, the form and mode of which Bach's work best approximates. This is not to ignore the fact that Bach's *Ciaccona*, in its textural features, draws substantially on Italian and German traditions, producing a true monument in the German "mixed style." (Those wishing to pursue this further are referred to my article "Toward a 21st-Century Interpretation of Bach's *Ciaccona* for Solo Violin, BWV 1004/5," which appeared in the *Newsletter* of the American Bach Society in Spring 2003, especially since it is not included in Ledbetter's extensive bibliography).

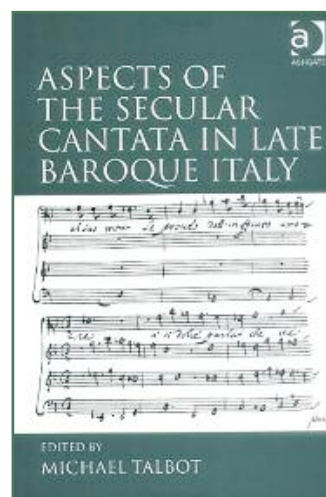
But what about "Performing the Unaccompanied Works"? Here the book fails to live up to its subtitle. Ledbetter never lays down general guidelines of Baroque performance practice and how they differ from modern conventions. He does discuss *notes inégales* and highlights points of particular expressive potential; for example, his continuo abstract for the Allemande of the flute suite beautifully elucidates the accelerating harmonic rhythms that could influence a performer's articulation and phrasing. But there is no systematic treatment of meter signatures (which have implications for tempo and affect), and there are only occasional suggestions (proper to a specific piece) having to do with bowing, tonguing, other aspects of articulation, vibrato, and the like. He seems unaware that the minuet dance step unit was six beats, which implies a lesser stress on the down-beat of even-numbered measures, and the Index contains no entries for "articulation," "bowing," "meter," "tempo," "tonguing," movement headings such as "Adagio," or individual dance types, although "vibrato" is listed.

These issues are important because enough has been learned about Baroque performance practices to justify a *fundamental* rethinking by *performers* of Bach's unaccompanied works, which are more burdened by 20th-century performing traditions than other repertory. Recent recordings testify that even period instrument players are still bound to many of these conven-

tions.

Because Ledbetter does not challenge these performance traditions directly, the book on "Playing the Unaccompanied Works of Bach" in the light of modern performance practice scholarship, remains to be written. Nonetheless, he has given us myriad penetrating insights into this very important repertory and into Bach's compositional process.

Raymond Erickson, editor of *The Worlds of Johann Sebastian Bach* (Amadeus Press, 2009), has taught historical performance practice for 35 years at Queens College and the CUNY Graduate School; he is director of "Performing Bach in Style," a workshop for players of modern instruments to be held in June 2011.



Aspects of the Secular Cantata in Late Baroque Italy. Michael Talbot, editor. 452 pages. Ashgate, 2009. Reviewed by Maria Anne Purciello.

It has long been an idiosyncrasy of contemporary scholarship that the solo cantata—one of the dominant vocal genres of the Baroque period—should be so largely neglected. When viewed in light of the considerable number of sound recordings of this repertory, the ever-widening gap between performance and scholarship becomes even more surprising. Michael Talbot's volume of collected essays, *Aspects of the Secular Cantata in Late Baroque Italy*, takes an important first step in beginning to redress this imbalance.

Focusing on the solo cantata, as conceived by Italian-born composers working between 1650 and 1750,

the essays in this volume offer something for everyone, whether the reader is new to the genre, a seasoned performer, or a veteran historian. Essays range from general considerations of the cantata and its incorporation of dramatic elements, to specialized source studies. For the generalist, several chapters address works by "canonized" composers, exploring topics such as changing aesthetics and poetics in Scarlatti's music and Stradella's subjective approach to poetry when setting arioso sections. Those who wish to delve deeper might turn to the essays on Bononcini's reception history, the published cantata repertory in Venice and Bologna, Leonardo Vinci's "Neapolitan" cantatas, or stylistic distinctions in Benedetto Marcello's cantatas. Theorists will enjoy the chapter on functional and expressive qualities of harmonic movement in recitative, while performers and recording connoisseurs alike will delight in essays addressing specific issues in performance practice.

Performers and recording connoisseurs alike will delight in essays addressing specific issues in performance practice.

While all of the essays offer important contributions to our understanding of the genre, two essays in particular stand apart for their originality and their potential long-term effect on performance and scholarship. The first of these, by Graham Sadler, provides a fresh new look at orchestration in the early 18th-century *cantate française*. Although an essay focusing on the French cantata might seem out of place in a collection professing to address the cantata in late Baroque Italy, Sadler provides the necessary link to the Italian repertory by comparing the French cantata with its Italian predecessor before embarking on an extraordinary reassessment of our expectations for the genre. Examining the French tendency to use reduced scores, Sadler overturns the assumption that the French cantata soloist was traditionally accompanied by relatively bare continuo scoring, concluding that, unlike its Italian counterpart, the *cantate française* often featured a full orchestral texture. Such a revised understanding of the instrumentation used in this repertory significantly expands our modern-day concept of the Baroque instrumental palette, calls for a broader range of

color and sonority in contemporary performances of the genre, and challenges the generic classifications traditionally ascribed to the cantata.

Similarly, Roger-Claude Travers' essay introduces a relatively new perspective on the role that the recording industry played in the revival of early music in the 20th century. In an era when the ever-increasing number of early music sound recordings seems to exist independently from the level of

scholarly interest, not enough attention has been paid to the ways in which these two seemingly unrelated fields actually influence each other. By focusing on the history of the Baroque chamber cantata recordings, Travers is able to identify three periods in the revival of the genre that, in retro-

spect, parallel the advances in the way that contemporary audiences and scholars have come to understand early music repertory in general. In so doing, he reveals an intimate relationship between performance, the music industry, and scholarship and the way that each acts to spur the others forward.

When taken together, the essays in *Aspects of the Secular Cantata in Late Baroque Italy* provide a fairly comprehensive overview of the current state of scholarship on the chamber cantata, highlighting those topics that have received scholarly notice and calling attention (by virtue of its omissions) to those areas deserving further exploration. One avenue for future study revealed by the present volume is a study of cantatas written by female composers during this period. While several articles in the collection make reference to contributions to the genre made by Barbara Strozzi and Elisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre, the present volume lacks a detailed exploration of the cantata as conceived by either of these composers or their female contemporaries and thus leaves the door open, inviting scholars to pick up where the current contributors have left off.

Maria Anne Purciello is a member of the music history faculty at West Chester University's School of Music. Her research focuses on questions of genre and the role of comedy in Baroque vocal and dramatic music. 🍷

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