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The English Musical Renaissance, 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction, by Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes (review)

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fanno 1790 nel Nob.mo Teatro di S. Samuele." The depiction of William Henry Moss as Caleb lacks reference to the song, printed below it, that is not shown (10: 332 and 334). Perhaps the worst reproduction (for which the publisher is presumably responsible) is the caricature of Regina Mingotti in 10: 264; it cuts off one-half of her figure (including her face!) and one-half of "2000 P[e]r AN[NU]M" on the right side, one and one-half of the patrons on the left, and two lines of text followed by "Publish'd Oct 8th 1756" at the bottom. I have been able to check these portraits because Burnim has generously given his photographs (from which the reproductions in *BDA* were made) to the Harvard Theatre Collection, where they—like the card file—will be available to scholars who need to view them for details that are unclear in the printed version.

Reviewers have corrected and supplemented various entries, but in view of the marvelous virtues and massive size of *BDA*, any critique seems "to attack an elephant with a peashooter," as Robert Halsband wrote at the end of his review of volumes 1–6 in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (79 [1980]: 444–46). Also, any reviewer's list pales next to the "over two hundred helpful additions or corrections" to *BDA*, volumes 1–6, which author Edward Langhans noted when he reviewed Ben Schneider's *Index to The London Stage* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979) in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (14 [1980/81]: 72–78). One category that I thought well worth criticizing was the inclusion of "double" entries: for example, the cellists Mareis and Marzi are the same

person; the pipers McLane and Neil M'Lean could be the same, so they should be cross-referenced; Nicolino is merely a diminutive for Nicola Haym; the Signora who signed a receipt "Io Cieca" is Francesca [Checa] Boschi; and "Signor N. N." has N[o] N[ame] because he, the third man for the burlettas of 1760–61, had not yet been found. But even such criticism seems somewhat beside the point, for the authors clearly included all such "dubious cases" because they are "scrupulous to a fault: their motto is evidently 'when in doubt, leave him or her in'—and rightly so," as Judith Milhous commented in her review of volumes 3–4 in *The Eighteenth Century: A Current Bibliography* (2 [1979]: 162–65).

Southern Illinois University Press provided a generously large typeface on paper of sturdy stock for *BDA*. Presumably in order to rein in the number of volumes (twelve were originally foreseen), it did move to thinner paper for volumes 7–10 and to a somewhat smaller typeface for volumes 7–16 (which are, nevertheless, still printed in a significantly larger font than that utilized for *The New Grove*). In every way, *BDA* is therefore a theatrical sensation, and it should be in the library of anyone concerned with musicians and other stage personnel ranging in time from Angelo Notari (b. 1566) to John Braham (d. 1856). Reading it is an enthralling experience, and—as Roger Fiske wrote at the end of his review of volumes 7–8 in *Musical and Letters* (64 [1983]: 104–5)—"there is nothing else remotely like it."

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The English Musical Renaissance, 1860–1940: Construction and Deconstruction. By Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes. New York: Routledge, 1993. [xii, 270 p. ISBN 0-415-03493-0. \$69.95.]

This publication constitutes an important reassessment of the origins and accomplishments of the English musical renaissance, that period in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century music history when British composers are said to have liberated themselves from foreign influences and begun writing in a distinctively national idiom. The fourth survey of the renaissance to appear, this book covers the same

ground as those other studies, but from a quite different perspective—one which seeks to dismantle the myths and fabrications of received tradition. Influenced by developments in cultural theory and embracing the concept of the social construction of music, the book posits a connection between the rebirth of English music and the rise of English nationalism in this period. Arguing that the cause of a national

music was engineered by members of a social elite anxious to promote national unity, its authors seek to deconstruct the aesthetic pretensions by which the *politics* of the renaissance, its internecine struggles and selective molding of reputations, have been successfully obscured.

It is a provocative thesis, but not one that is altogether new. Scholars have been chipping away at the traditional renaissance consensus for more than a decade now, especially in the realm of folk-song studies. All the same, no other critical reevaluation of the period has attempted anything on quite this scale. Drawing on a spectacular array of sources, Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes bring together much new and interesting material. They are particularly strong on the early years of the renaissance and its struggle against the high Victorian distrust of the arts. (One persuasive idea suggests that the revival's intellectual grounding in a tepid version of Aestheticism served both to bridge that distrust and to ensure a Brahmsian—i.e., non-Wagnerian—stylistic conservatism.) The authors also reveal much about the renaissance's political factions and personal alliances, shedding light on such issues as Edward Elgar's independent position, the struggle over BBC policy in the 1920s, and the infighting within the musical press. Above all, they exhume the careers of such once-prominent but now-forgotten figures as Rutland Boughton, John Foulds, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

Regrettably, the authors' rational distrust of the received tradition—the source of much that is illuminating in the book—is also the cause of much wild speculation. Beginning with the notion that the renaissance constituted a Gramscian “historical bloc”—a social and cultural construction in which a single ideology or value system dominates—they forward a theory of intellectual conspiracy on a massive scale. For them, the renaissance was the initiative of “a self-appointed and self-perpetuating oligarchy” (p. 3) whose organizational epicenter was the Royal College of Music. George Grove, Hubert Parry, Ralph Vaughan Williams were the dynastical figureheads of the renaissance “establishment.” Ruthless in their pursuit of a national music, this RCM cadre sought to “colonize” and “convert” all potentially dissident elements, in-

dividuals and institutions alike. Those refusing to toe the line saw their reputations ruined, their careers marginalized, and their achievements buried.

That there is a politics informing every cultural expression and activity is (to this reader at least) beyond dispute. To this extent, the authors are surely justified in invoking Antonio Gramsci, who understood better than anyone else the power relationships driving bourgeois culture. Where they are mistaken is in attempting to single out the perpetrators and their misdeeds. Gramsci may have been right about the nature of power, but he was far less certain than these authors seem to be about how to itemize it. Certainly, he knew better than to posit the simplistic causal relationships that permeate this book. The establishment “patronised and lionised” Elgar, we learn, “in an attempt to make him one of its own” (pp. 50–51). George Dyson, “a man of northern, authentically working-class origins,” is appointed to the RCM directorship in 1938 “in order to justify the radical pretensions of the musical establishment” (p. 91). Even Arnold Bax, whose Celtic affiliation once “represented a challenge to ‘Englishness,’” is “recuperated” by the “dominant cultural centre of National Music” (pp. 172, 174). Always, the renaissance is depicted as moving “towards its targets” (p. 212), advancing its policies and ambitions “with a conscious purpose” (p. 239). Such exaggeration is not the worst of it, however: in eagerness to make their case, the authors also misread sources. For example, the letter in which Vaughan Williams supposedly censures the left-wing Boughton for mixing music and politics says nothing of the kind (p. 204). The former's comment about the need to “slay enough prophets” (p. 203)—a remark commemorating those who must necessarily fall in the *cause* of a national music—is presented as a statement sanctioning the liquidation of those composers failing to conform.

Again, it must be emphasized that some sort of establishment consensus surely *did* grow up during the period. A specific campaign is far less easy to identify and pin down. The authors probably come closest to the truth when they accuse “the guilty men [who] were the professional writers, critics and teachers, those who literally

'authorised' the Renaissance" (p. 203). (It is no coincidence that the authors' case appears strongest when tackling the renaissance historiography.) Unsatisfied, however, with placing the blame on musical and general "opinion," a notoriously opaque and diffuse force, they go on to implicate the creative artists themselves. The result is a monolithic conception of the renaissance—a projection of hard-and-fast party lines and factions—that quite simply runs contrary to fact, as a close reading of the text reveals. The authors identify Adrian Boult as a prime mover, calling him "the greatest practical exponent of National Music" (p. 170), but forget what they document elsewhere—that he was severely criticized for ignoring English music as BBC music director. They relish the irony of the dissident Frederick Delius's "repatriation" as a quintessential English pastoral composer, but miss a potentially greater irony: that the scheme was instigated by Thomas Beecham, himself "no friend of the folk-song school" (p. 166). Their assertions about the dominance of the historical-pastoral musical style, meanwhile, not only result in errors of fact, as when they suggest that Vaughan Williams's dissonant Fourth Symphony was widely rejected after its first performance, but effectively deny the creative independence of an entire generation. Portraying Gustav Holst as little more than a representative of the folk-song school, for example, they scandalously minimize the achievements of that complex and versatile figure. Even the interest that "nationalist" composers showed in abstract, nonprogrammatic forms during the 1920s and 1930s is dismissed as but a halfhearted, strategic concession to the internationalism of the interwar period. In many respects, the authors' inflexible view of the "pastoral consensus" perpetuates the very distortions and oversimplifications that, in their attacks on the renaissance historiography at least, they so ably expose.

Even granting these problems, there is little question that the most disturbing aspect of this book is not its factual inconsistencies nor its forced interpretations, but rather its arrogant tone. The authors bring an enormous amount of valuable material to the subject and pursue promising, often unprecedented, lines of inquiry. (Among

their successes is a perceptive analysis of the renaissance's ambiguous relationship to German musical culture.) And whatever one's response to it, the sheer force of their critical distrust will at least help to ensure that future scholarship in British music avoids the easy solutions of the past. But such achievements are vitiated by their propensity for the cutting remark and nasty aside, a tactic whose only observable effect is that of putting readers on the defensive. Not that the authors are oblivious to this. For them, the polemical tone is wholly justified by the facts of the renaissance's long-term fictions and falsehoods. In seeking to expose these, moreover, they argue the need to demolish the artistic and aesthetic beliefs on which the renaissance was built. Indeed, reducing everything to a political and economic materialism, the authors would deny the very existence of aesthetic values. Art, they assert, is purely about money and power, and the idealism of art—its ability to express genuine protest, even to effect reform—is nothing more than the elaborate confidence trick of the privileged and powerful.

The trouble with this argument (it is also the central failing of the book) is that the evidence offered as ultimate proof of the renaissance's fundamental elitism—its nationalist orientation and "message"—is grossly misjudged. Taking an extreme leftist position, the authors interpret the rise of twentieth-century English nationalism in purely conspiratorial terms. "Englishness," they believe, was nothing more than the strategic cultural initiative by which the ruling class sought to maintain its power in a period of social and economic change. But nationalism was and is in large part an *inevitable* force, the consequence of improvements in communication and industrial technology and of new forms of centralized administration and economic collectivization. It also grew out of a mood of rising international tension and rivalry. Even conceding that the social elite did much to support and sponsor the new nationalism, especially in its cultural manifestations, the conspiratorial thesis cannot be sustained. Not only were the lower classes *not* the credulous dupes that the theory implies, there is good reason to believe that Englishness offered much that was progressive and enabling. The push to full

democracy was central to the nationalist argument, for example, while its reforming emphasis was deeply concerned with questions of working-class material and spiritual improvement.

This is not to say that Englishness did not have regrettable elements or fearful potentialities. At its worst, it resulted in a chauvinistic jingoism that paved the way for Oswald Mosley's black shirts of the 1930s. But the problem with the authors' single-minded devotion to the materialist argument is that they see nationalism only in these terms—as the repressive and rapacious force of fashionable political theory, not the complex and ambiguous one of historical fact. Ironically, for all their talk of the sophisticated interconnection of culture and politics, the authors assume too simple and one-dimensional a relationship between the two. Doubtless, the old uncritical formulations of nationalism and of

the renaissance's connections to it are in need of revision and careful reassessment. Clearly, there was a link between the renaissance's progressive and reforming emphasis and the presence of a class-cultural divide, as its very dedication to working-class "improvement" reveals. But to take the existence of that divide or of that dedication as evidence of nothing more than a continuing exploitation and injustice is to ignore much else that went to make up history. Like any artistic movement espousing some measure of populist principles, the renaissance was laden with contradictions and ambiguities. It will, however, take historians less ideologically motivated and more psychologically penetrating to decode them.

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Musical Life in a Changing Society: Aspects of Music Sociology. By Kurt Blaukopf. Translated by David Marinelli. Portland, Ore.: Amadeus Press, 1992. [xv, 308 p. ISBN 0-931340-52-7. \$39.95.]

Kurt Blaukopf is one of Europe's most influential music scholars. Born in Austria in 1914, he has pursued most of his teaching and research career at the Vienna Institute of Music and Performing Arts, where he established the first institute of sociology of music. Through his involvement in UNESCO and founding of MEDIACULT (the International Institute for Visual Communication and Cultural Development), which he directed from 1969 to 1989, he also gained a reputation outside the confines of academia.

While he has published extensively over the last forty-five years, until recently only a small fraction of his work (dealing mostly with Gustav Mahler's life and works) was accessible to non-German readers. The translation of the acclaimed *Musik im Wandel der Gesellschaft* (Munich: Piper, 1982) provides the first English-language overview of Blaukopf's understanding of music and musical behaviors in various sociohistorical settings. Moreover, it also presents perhaps the most comprehensive discussion of the contribution of sociology to the interdisciplinary study of music ever published in English. This discussion is not only led by an authority in the field but by

an intellectual who has played a significant role in the establishment of the sociology of music as an integral part of the academic curriculum in Austria (and other German-speaking countries), an institutional status this field of study does not enjoy in many parts of the Anglo-Saxon world.

The object of *Musical Life in a Changing Society* is twofold: to discuss various past and present forms of music and musical activity in their respective sociohistorical context of emergence and development, and to examine how different sociomusical theories were developed to account for and help understand these phenomena and the ways in which they change. By addressing musical phenomena and ideas about music as interwoven issues, Blaukopf demonstrates that "trajectories of studies have histories and contexts in exactly the same way as the objects they study" (Tony Bennett, Simon Frith, Larry Grossberg, and Graeme Turner in Tony Bennett et al., eds., *Rock and Popular Music, Politics, Policies, Institutions*, London: Routledge [1993], 1). The trajectory reconstructed by the author follows a path from Auguste Comte, considered to be the founding father of sociology, to Theodor