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The Cambridge Companion to Debussy, by Simon Trezise (review)

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and Eighteenth-century Comedy," in *Opera buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, edited by Mary Hunter and James Webster [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 98–111; and Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1971], 312–17.) Goehring's close readings of the music and his reconsideration of Goldoni's impact on Mozart are thought provoking, even though some of the points he makes concerning the tension between beauty and irony in *Così fan tutte* echo those made by other writers (Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A Poetics of Entertainment* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999], 285–98; Scott Burnham, "Mozart's *felix culpa*: *Così fan tutte* and the Irony of Beauty," *Musical Quarterly* 78 [1994]: 77–98).

As with most collections of this type, the level of content and the quality of writing vary. Most of the essays are quite engaging and the material they contain will be accessible to students and general readers. John Daverio's "Mozart in the Nineteenth Century" is particularly admirable in this regard. Daverio takes a complex subject and discusses it clearly and concisely. His points are well supported by quotes from primary sources, but not so many that they overwhelm the reader. Ian Woodfield's "Mozart's Compositional Methods: Writing for His Singers," on the other hand, seems too technical for the average reader. (The same is true of Goehring's essay.) A more general article that overtly addressed the myth that Mozart merely wrote down what he heard in his head would have been more in line with the book's stated goals. In addition, some essays could contain more analysis and supporting evidence. In "Mozart and the Twentieth Century" author Jan Smaczny tries to cover too many issues; as a result he does not address the commercialization of the composer's music nor the tremendous influence of the film *Amadeus* in much depth. Likewise, Buch could provide more support for some of his claims concerning Mozart's works vis-à-vis those of his contemporaries in his chapter on "Mozart's German Operas."

As a whole, the book proves its opening assertion that "few composers repay systematic examination and re-examination in so unambiguously pleasurable and inspiring a fashion as Mozart" (p. 3). *The Cambridge*

Companion to Mozart creates a multifaceted portrait of the composer's career and music that certainly will prove stimulating to students, scholars, and general music lovers. Editor Keefe should be applauded for assembling such a well-rounded collection of essays.

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The Cambridge Companion to Debussy. Edited by Simon Trezise. (Cambridge Companions to Music.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. [xxviii, 326 p. ISBN 0-521-65478-5. \$70 (hbk.); ISBN 0-521-65478-5. \$26 (pbk.).] Music examples, analytical charts, bibliography, index.

As a publishing concept, the Cambridge Companion series of music handbooks presents an editorial challenge. Seeking on the one hand to relate basic biographical and historical information about the subject under study (topics thus far include composers, instruments, genres, and institutions) and to offer a review of the literature, it provides on the other hand a forum for new research and new critical perspectives—including those that might, in the dialectical nature of scholarship, stand at odds with established opinion. Caught, in short, between conflicting urges to summarize and innovate, the series runs the risk of falling between two stools and disappointing generalists and specialists alike.

Happily, the new *Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, edited by Simon Trezise, avoids this pitfall. Debussy scholars appear to be in basic agreement about the nature of the composer's achievement, with the result that even new research tends to reinforce received judgments. Such is certainly the case here, where the most novel items constitute refinements of, rather than challenges to, existing viewpoints. Not that contributors offer no difference of opinion. Debussy's unusual historical position on the cusp of nineteenth-century traditionalism and twentieth-century modernism effectively ensures that any consensus is itself somewhat elastic; accordingly, we find considerable variation over such questions as artistic influence (impressionism, symbolism, or art nouveau?) and stylistic orienta-

tion (traditionalist or modernist?). Such a range of opinion, testifying to Debussy's protean nature and appeal, lends the book a synoptic quality and makes it a useful introduction to the composer.

The volume is divided into four parts. Part 1 ("Man, Musician and Culture") offers an introduction to the composer and his times, and begins with an admirable biographical overview, "Debussy the Man," by Robert Orledge. Traversing well-known primary and secondary sources, Orledge emphasizes the dark side of Debussy's personality and makes a persuasive case for the "sinister undercurrents that lurk beneath [the music's] surface, and which contribute so much to its mystery and profundity" (p. 23). Barbara Kelly's essay, "Debussy's Parisian Affiliations," sets up an opposition between the "radical" symbolist poets and the "conservative" musical establishment (the Conservatoire, the Société Nationale), and proposes that Debussy's involvement with both embodied a tension never completely resolved, perhaps, until his championship of early French music later in his career. The suggestion meshes well with Deirdre Donnellon's "Debussy as Musician and Critic," a survey of the prose writings and published interviews, not least because both investigations demonstrate, to a degree rarely discussed, the importance of French nationalism to Debussy's aesthetic and to his critical reception.

Part 2 ("Musical Explorations") constitutes a loose group of essays on different aspects of Debussy's music and career. David Grayson's "Debussy on Stage" discusses the composer's many dramatic projects, finished and unfinished, and usefully describes forgotten works like *Zuleima* and *Rodrigue et Chimène* in detail. Better-known works like *L'enfant prodigue* are engagingly placed in context—the politics surrounding the Prix de Rome are particularly interesting—and even that old war horse *Pelléas et Mélisande* is given a fresh reading. Roger Nichols's essay, "The Prosaic Debussy," considers the nine settings of nonmetrical texts that the composer made in the 1890s, possibly as a tune-up for *Pelléas*, and concludes that such verse inspired him to write freer vocal lines but also, as a counterbalancing measure, to provide less rhythmically adventurous piano parts. These roles are typically reversed in metrical settings, though

Nichols demonstrates how the songs after 1904 retain much of the rhythmic flexibility gained during the decade of experimentation. In "Debussy and Expression," Nigel Simeone suggests that the traditional association of Debussy with impressionist "vagueness" has too often ignored the precision of his expressive markings, a level of notational detail that itself bears comparison with the impressionist painters' exacting technique. Simeone traces this parallel to a shared "preoccupation with the most effective way of depicting nature" (p. 102), but leaves it to Caroline Potter, in "Debussy and Nature," to consider the matter more deeply by placing the composer's detailed evocations of nature firmly in a naturalistic, antiromantic aesthetic. Her assertion that art nouveau's "natural forms" and "curved shapes" (p. 143) strongly influenced Debussy's organic, freely evolving structures is persuasively argued. Julie McQuinn, by contrast, more conventionally roots such formal innovation in the composer's embrace of the nonsyntactical structures of symbolist poetry, but reaches this conclusion by way of a wide-ranging and highly novel investigation into the erotic preoccupations of Debussy's world. Drawing on cultural history and critical theory, as well as on the published correspondence, McQuinn's "Exploring the Erotic in Debussy" suggests that the sensuality often attributed to Debussy's music has cultural and biographical foundations that strike deep.

Part 3 ("Musical Techniques") initiates formal analysis with Boyd Pomeroy's excellent "Debussy's Tonality: A Formal Perspective," which in a series of case studies demonstrates the range of Debussy's tonal practice—from a traditional (if slightly obscured) tonic-dominant polarity, to a coloristic reliance on nonfunctional seventh and ninth chords, to a highly innovative use of nondiatonic pitch collections, especially the whole-tone and octatonic scales. Pomeroy's conclusion that Debussy nevertheless "remained rooted in triadic consonance and the principle of monotonicity" (p. 155) would seem to put the composer closer to the nineteenth than to the twentieth century and thus sits provocatively with other essays that espouse the more conventional view of him as innovator and modernist. For example, Mark deVoto's "The

Debussy Sound: Colour, Texture, Gesture” does just this in providing a helpful technical overview of Debussy’s unusual instrumental sonorities. Simon Trezise follows suit in his “Debussy’s ‘Rhythmicized Time,’ ” an essay that ostensibly sets out to document his relatively “conservative” treatment of rhythm (pulse, meter), but ends up concentrating on more interesting issues of large-scale rhythm (phrases, periods)—areas fundamentally affected by Debussy’s harmonic and formal innovations. Harder to place in this debate is Richard Parks, whose “Music’s Inner Dance: Form, Pacing and Complexity in Debussy’s Music” uses novel analytical techniques to study the complex interaction over time of different musical elements (harmony, rhythm, attack, instrumentation, texture, etc.). The analysis is ingenious but also of limited historical value since Parks leaves completely unaddressed the possibility that the “veritable counterpoint of changes” (p. 230) he observes in Debussy’s music might also be found in the music of composers from the same or even different eras.

Finally, Part 4 (“Performance and Assessment”) rounds out the volume with Charles Timbrell’s “Debussy in Performance,” an overview of the early recordings and piano rolls, and with Arnold Whittall’s panoramic “Debussy Now.” The latter essay, in particular, makes a fitting conclusion to the book for it offers, in a greatly expanded post-modern setting, a final meditation on the traditionalist-or-modernist debate that runs throughout the essays. Arguing that the terms of that debate remain as pertinent to contemporary composition as ever, Whittall urges the need for further “penetrating” analysis of Debussy’s music, since “the full potential of his relevance for new composition has still to be realised” (p. 287).

Altogether, in its depth of detail and copious endnotes (which summarize vast stretches of the literature), the *Cambridge Companion to Debussy* offers something for Debussy enthusiasts old and new. Beyond this, the wide range of cultural and analytical topics, and their relevance to twentieth-century music history generally, should attract the attention of a wide audience.

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Symphonic Metamorphoses: Subjectivity and Alienation in Mahler’s Re-Cycled Songs. By Raymond Knapp. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003. [xx, 320 p. ISBN 0-8195-6635-7. \$70.00 (hbk.); ISBN 0-8195-6636-5. \$24.95 (pbk.)] Music examples, illustrations, bibliography, index.

The large number of articles, chapters, and books on Mahler’s music that have appeared in the past ten years proves that this—once—ambivalent area of scholarship has come a long way. It is possibly a testimony to the continuing ambivalent nature of the field of Mahler research that some of these first-rate studies are still available only in unpublished dissertations (see, for example, Elizabeth Abbate’s “Myth, Symbol, and Meaning in Mahler’s Early Symphonies” [Harvard University, 1996]; Morten Solvik Olsen’s “Culture and the Creative Imagination: The Genesis of Gustav Mahler’s Third Symphony” [University of Pennsylvania, 1992]; and John R. Palmer’s “Program and Process in the Second Symphony of Gustav Mahler” [University of California, Davis, 1996]). Although naturally indebted to the monumental work of pioneers such as Henry-Louis de la Grange, Donald Mitchell, Deryck Cooke, and Constantijn Floros, these researchers also manage to imbue Mahler scholarship with a much-needed critical focus on interpretative issues beyond those commonly found in analyses of the music’s programmatic elements.

In this light, Raymond Knapp’s *Symphonic Metamorphoses* deserves a place among the most important recent contributions by a single author dedicated to the study of Mahler’s symphonies. As the book’s subtitle suggests, *Subjectivity and Alienation in Mahler’s Re-Cycled Songs*, Knapp focuses on Mahler’s early symphonies, and more specifically on the diverse “metamorphoses” that earlier lieder underwent when Mahler “re-cycled” them in his first four symphonies. Knapp’s insights into the music are informed by a single aim: to investigate the meaning of both original and recycled material, and what it is that Mahler responds to in the original that will—ultimately—help to inform the symphonic web with a series of meanings. The result is a quintessentially