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Rutland Boughton and the Glastonbury Festivals, by Michael Hurd (review)

Julian Onderdonk

West Chester University of Pennsylvania, jonderdonk@wcupa.edu

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genre, the carnival *samba* and the ballroom *samba* of the 1920s and 1930s. (P. 155)

When discussing the relationship of Villa-Lobos's individual style to the various musics that have appeared under the label of nationalism Béhague writes: "The determination of the meanings of musical nationalism warrants, therefore, more reflection, to which the present study attempts to contribute, for all of these ideas have relevant applications to the case of Brazilian musical nationalism in general, and to Heitor Villa-Lobos's position within it, in particular" (p. 149). This reviewer agrees, and welcomes the appearance of a study that offers valuable insights into the music of Brazil's best-known composer.

DAVID P. APPLEBY
Fort Worth, Texas

Rutland Boughton and the Glastonbury Festivals. By Michael Hurd. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. [xiv, 415 p. ISBN 0-19-816316-9. \$69.00.]

In a field so often dedicated to the rescuing of neglected figures, Michael Hurd is surely the Good Samaritan of twentieth-century British music scholarship. The author of the superb and moving biography *The Ordeal of Ivor Gurney* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), he has in this book turned to the even more-forgotten Rutland Boughton, the once-famed composer of *The Immortal Hour* (1914) whose spectacular fall from grace was the consequence of an uncompromising artistic and social idealism. A radically revised and enlarged version of Hurd's earlier *Immortal Hour: The Life and Period of Rutland Boughton* (London: Routledge, 1963), *Rutland Boughton and the Glastonbury Festivals* is in two parts: a biographical section, comprising two-thirds of the text, which follows Boughton's life chronologically; and a critical section, which attempts a brief but nonetheless inclusive survey of Boughton's work as a composer and journalist. His compositions are here discussed by genre, with special attention given to his operas and music dramas, above all to the ambitious Arthurian

cycle that took thirty-seven years to complete. Sixty-two music examples accompany the text, while a discography and appendixes listing his compositions and literary writings follow.

That there is yet another appendix, one giving the cast listings for the principal productions of the Glastonbury Festival (1914–26), is a reminder of what the book's title already asserts. This is a critical biography that places special emphasis on Boughton's work as that Festival's founder and spiritual father. Indeed, it is Boughton's association with Glastonbury, argues Hurd, that confirms his importance in twentieth-century British music. The fulfillment of a personal vision of an English Bayreuth dedicated to the performance of his own works, Glastonbury nonetheless touched a nerve in British musical life and became for many a rallying point for the cause of British opera. Edward Elgar, Thomas Beecham, and Edward Dent, among others, took a personal interest in the Festival, where early English operas by Henry Purcell and John Blow were produced alongside those of contemporary English composers like Edgar Bainton, Clarence Raybould, and, of course, Boughton himself. Perhaps most important, Glastonbury attracted and served as a training ground for a young generation of singers, Steuart Wilson and Astra Desmond among them, who were to make a significant contribution to British music in the interwar years.

As portrayed by Hurd, Boughton is a fascinating and complex individual. A zealous and energetic man who inspired deep loyalty in others, he was also his own worst enemy, driven by artistic and sexual compulsion to alienate his friends and benefactors. A pragmatist who brilliantly adapted materials to hand (productions were mounted in the cramped town hall, usually with piano accompaniment), he was also a naive idealist whose staging of his Christmas drama, *Bethlehem* (1915), as an allegory of capitalist oppression effectively terminated all financial support for the Festival. A lifelong radical and member (from 1925) of the Communist party, he became—through the phenomenal operatic success of *The Immortal Hour*—the darling of the idle rich and the personal friend of the Marchioness of Londonderry, society hostess and admirer of Benito Mussolini.

But if Boughton's was a contradictory personality, this was in large part because of the period in which he lived and worked. In a musical world still dominated by the privileged and well connected, composers of lower-class origin were in a difficult position. Few succeeded, and those who did rarely emerged unscathed. Even at the height of his fame, Elgar believed that prejudice against his shopkeeper origins denied him his proper recognition. It is this predicament, the "inferior" composer's struggle against the "system," that Hurd captures so effectively in his portrait of Boughton. But while he explains much of Boughton's eccentric behavior—his humorless earnestness and often naive sense of purpose—in terms of his outsider status, Hurd stops short of any suggestion of high political maneuvering against the composer: "When projected performances of his works failed to mature it was not because of some capitalist conspiracy, but simply the luck of a very tricky game" (p. 194). Instead, he concentrates almost exclusively on Boughton's psychological response to his situation, attributing his increasingly erratic and paranoid behavior to an unbalanced personality. One can imagine a radically different interpretation of this material—indeed, the recent *The English Musical Renaissance 1860–1940: Construction and Deconstruction* by Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes (London: Routledge, 1993) offers just that—but not one that is carried out more sympathetically or with a deeper understanding of the contradictions inherent in the human heart.

In short, this is another excellent biography from an author who is intensely aware of the inseparability of character and environment. Its value resides in its double portrait of an individual and the artistic and political world in which he lived. Nor should we underestimate the importance of the book's musical discussion. Its concentration on Boughton's music dramas, in particular, fulfills a service in providing information essential to any understanding of the British opera revival. Were one to quibble, it might be wished that the author had been slightly more careful in attributing his citations, especially where the printing of letters is concerned. (To his credit, he presents a great many of these, including a riotous series of Bernard

Shaw's.) Beyond his control, though, is the disturbing number of typographical errors contained in the text that considerably hinders the flow of the prose.

JULIAN ONDERDONK
New York University

Fritz Reiner: A Biography. By Philip Hart. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1994. [xii, 329 p. ISBN 0-8101-1125-X. \$30.00.]

Although Fritz Reiner has been dead for more than thirty years, his reputation has been kept fresh and glowing by his recordings, many of them reissued on CDs. A biography of him has been overdue. Philip Hart, who knew him well, is an ideal biographer, admiring yet cognizant of his subject's darker side. Hart's research is as thorough as any we are likely to have, including interviews with Reiner's surviving daughter in Switzerland and his grandson in Ljubljana, Slovenia, as well as interviews with all manner of persons who worked with Reiner—students, orchestra members, managers, and journalists. Hart also consulted orchestra archives and a wide range of published and unpublished documents. As an orchestra administrator himself, Hart is sensitive to the kinds of problems experienced by Reiner and his associates.

Reiner was born in 1888 in Budapest when it was a regional capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As a student at the Franz Liszt Academy, he was influenced by Béla Bartók and Leo Weiner, composers whose works he championed later as a conductor. No course in conducting was offered, but Reiner received thorough grounding in composition, theory, and piano. After some work as a rehearsal pianist, he conducted his first public performance at nineteen, substituting for the staff conductor by conducting *Carmen* at an independent theater, the Vigopera. Later, as a teacher, Reiner maintained that the best place to learn conducting was not in the classroom, but in an opera house, where, in Europe at least, a full range of vocal and instrumental music was available.

It was primarily as an opera conductor that Reiner's career began in Laibach (now Ljubljana), in Budapest, and at the Saxon