

Admittedly there are passages in the book that had at least this non-major in cultural theory struggling for first-time comprehension. In particular I would have welcomed parts of the Epilogue, where Reichardt is most lucid in her explanation of the ‘real’, being grafted into the Introduction. By the time I reached the following resonant sentence on p. 118, the penny had finally dropped: ‘By articulating the feeling of being “out of joint”, of exclusion, Shostakovich’s music articulates the most fundamental element found at the core of modern subjectivity.’ With this, Reichardt not only eloquently summarizes the angle of her approach but also offers potential liberation from the horns of the abstract/mimetic dilemma upon which so much Shostakovich commentary has been impaled.

DAVID FANNING

*University of Manchester*

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*Writing through Music: Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics.* By Jann Pasler. pp. xiv + 513. (Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 2008, £32.99. ISBN 978-0-19-532489-1.)

This collection of thirteen essays, first published between 1987 and 2007, can serve as an appetizer for Jann Pasler’s eagerly awaited magnum opus, a trilogy entitled *Useful Music, or Why Music Mattered in Third Republic France*. But these essays are not entirely confined to that period, and the collection is a substantial reminder of some of the ways in which musical life, musical composition, and musicological ways of studying them have changed over the past century or so.

In the final essay, whose subtitle, ‘Rethinking the “Popular” in Late Nineteenth-Century French Music’, tells us more about its remit than the main title—‘Material Culture and Postmodern Positivism’—one sentence encapsulates the value of Pasler’s kind of documentary and institutional research, highlighting differences between then and now: ‘we know that in 1891 the government, through its Cahier de Charges, forced the Opéra to perform more new works’ (p. 445). They were evidently encouraged to do so because, Pasler believes, ‘we should not...assume that ordinary people liked only what they already knew, or that the march of progress meant the march of the classical German canon’. So, although ‘elites increasingly gravitated to music representing the distant past, seeking to shelter their hopes and ideals from the realities of the bourgeois

Republic...those hoping to improve their lot in life...remained focused on the present’. The stage was set for that ‘modernist reaction’ about which Pasler has very mixed feelings. Not that this reaction has, overall, amounted to a very great deal. It is safe to conclude that Saint-Saëns’s *Samson et Dalila* (1877), Pasler’s example of a relatively new work that was popular in the 1890s, would probably still outsell any score by Boulez or Grisey at French box offices or CD stores today. Only if ‘modernism’ as principle and practice is opened up to Debussy, Ravel, Satie, and even Les Six does the possibility emerge of something more refined and progressive than Saint-Saëns displacing that music in the lives of those who might still be hoping to improve their lot without migrating into the elitist bourgeoisie.

Pasler’s most refreshing and vivid reconstructions of musical culture place the content and character of particular compositions in the perspective of distinctive modes of communication and promotion. Her focus on female musicians offers personalities as well contrasted as the post-Wagnerian tub-thumper Augusta Holmès and the Countess Greffuhle, whose enterprise as entrepreneur made possible the French premieres of *Tristan and Götterdämmerung*. It’s a small but significant step from consideration of promoters as individuals to study of the programmes they planned and the programme notes they provided. The extent to which these can be validly interpreted as ‘emblems of ideology’, in Pasler’s phrase, is not entirely self-evident. But, as her lavishly illustrated discussion indicates, she is persuaded that ‘concert programs are...important records of audience reception and demonstrate that the French were self-conscious about their musical tastes’ (p. 434). This is partly because she has seen handwritten annotations ‘recording...aesthetic judgements’ (‘charming’, ‘mediocre’, ‘too long’, and the like). Another, more striking, aspect of this small-change of reception is the fact that, from the 1870s through the 1890s, the Paris daily *Le Figaro* ‘reproduced two to four pages of scores each Wednesday’ (p. 430). No wonder the government felt able to insist on new operas being promoted.

When it comes to case studies of individual works and composers, Pasler recycles her 1987 essay ‘*Pélleas and Power: Forces behind the Reception of Debussy’s Opera*’, which now seems a rather protracted survey of (for the most part) predictable statements of prepared positions. Challenging new works often bring out the worst in even the most experienced critics. While sometimes reluctant to dismiss a brave

new leap forward that might permanently change the state of things, they also wish to avoid seeming to jump on the latest (elitist) bandwagon just for the sake of it. Hence the limitations, for musicological purposes, of immediate reactions and relatively brief responses in the press. Reception of a different kind is the subject of Pasler's much more recent exploration of 'Deconstructing d'Indy, or the Problems of a Composer's Reputation'. It is worth learning that 'D'Indy was... much less marginal and removed from republican institutions and their ideologies than he, his disciples, and some recent scholars have led us to believe' (p. 136). Here is the authentic scholarly virtue of demonstrating by chapter and verse that something approaching the opposite of received wisdom is closer to the truth. But the general, more theoretical chapters that begin the book are less sceptical about received wisdom: that is fine if you believe that this position is correct, less fine if you want to question some of these interpretations, and their advocates.

The presence in Pasler's titles of two particular terms, narrativity and postmodernism, indicate the nature of the challenge taken on by today's musicological mainstream as suitable contexts for writing about musical life and musical creativity continue to be sought. Pasler's wariness of that entire 'modernist reaction'—against something potentially more useful—requires her endorsement of Andreas Huyssen's sweeping assertion that 'high modernism increasingly repudiated femininity in preference for a male orientation' (p. 413), a view that needs far fuller and more forensic examination than it receives here. The tendency to attach a negative spin to the notion of modernism is also found in Pasler's newly written introduction to the volume. A key comment finds her acknowledging that it is 'difficult to consider modernism and postmodernism as completely exclusive and oppositional' (p. 13), thus implicitly accepting current initiatives that argue for 'postmodernism' as equivalent to 'late modernism'—a continuation rather than a rejection. The full context for her remark is revealing, however:

Whereas modernists such as Pierre Boulez, in their preoccupation with the past and their predecessors, have struggled with how to forget and what to forget, post-modernists such as John Adams see positive benefits in stimulating memory and encourage us to accept our pasts rather than attempting to subjugate or distort them. However, I find in the music of Cage and Oliveros an aesthetic that both embraces postmodern concerns and makes it difficult to consider modernism and postmodernism as completely exclusive and oppositional. By emancipating the

realm of memory, allowing for the interpenetration of different domains, and encouraging the listener to explore relationships through his/her memory, these works engage the listener's participation in an interactive process. (pp. 12–13)

Pasler is not the first commentator to see Boulez as a consistently intransigent modernist—allegedly encouraging us to 'subjugate and distort' our pasts—by failing to allow for any significant change in his techniques and aesthetics since the immediate post-war period. Focusing on the 1989 revision of *Le Visage nuptial* and quoting from an article of 1988, she diagnoses a 'refusal to bow to the pressures of contemporary postmodernism' (p. 66). That—given her understanding of postmodernism—may be correct, but she gives no hint of the extent to which, since the mid-1970s, Boulez the composer (not always in step with Boulez the polemical essayist and lecturer) has come to acknowledge the desirability of identifiable, recurring thematic elements in his compositions, and has resourcefully and imaginatively allowed a sense of hierarchy to re-emerge, creating a kind of musical drama in which the centrifugal and the centripetal act out tensions and relationships. It appears that Pasler has only been able to detect such initiatives, where French music is concerned, in certain younger spectralists: 'if Grisey, until his late works, embraced the notion that consciousness of change is a continuous process not involving repetition, his younger successors have found ways to use repetition of motives, rhythms, and musical situations [*sic*] even within longer linear processes' (p. 96). Boulez might not be a spectralist, still less a younger one. But it is perfectly possible to accept that 'memories' of the composers he admires—Wagner, Debussy in the forefront—can and should affect the hearing of his own works, at least from *Rituel in memoriam Maderna* onwards. After reading Pasler in this vein, it is possible to feel that her time would have been better spent putting literary commentators like Jameson and Huyssen aside and taking on board in-depth analyses of musical high modernism—for example, Michael Cherlin on Schoenberg or Jonathan Cross on Birtwistle, as well as Jonathan Goldman on Boulez.

Pasler's mention of Adams, Cage, and Oliveros in her quest for the postmodern indicates that, Third Republic France aside, she is most at home in contemplating the current American scene. Hence her admirable pioneering attempt, in 1987, at a large-scale institutional analysis, 'The Political Economy of Composition in the American University, 1965–85'. Here the docu-

mentary strengths, especially in the pithy comments by the likes of Robert Erickson and Milton Babbitt, indicate an affinity with the kind of exercise best known in Europe through Georgina Born's fly-on-the-wall study of IRCAM (published in 1995). It would probably have been asking a lot to add a useful updating commentary to hint at what changes have occurred in the two decades and more since this study was completed. With some of the essays, Pasler has added more recent references in footnotes. As music historians soon become aware, however, the more their work concerns itself with the facts and figures of earlier musical life, the more rapidly it fixes itself as history, in history. At its best, Pasler's historicizing voice is evocative and entertaining in the way it links music to 'real life': 'one could compare Delage's works with transcriptions of Indian recordings to his father's shoe polish—something partially made in India but packaged and sold in France, something still selling today' (p. 281). That is indeed a useful and memorable way of looking at a complex, constantly changing culture.

ARNOLD WHITTALL

*Emeritus, King's College London*

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*Richard Strauss-Blätter* (Neue Folge), Issue 60 (December 2008).

*Die Aufführungen der Opern von Richard Strauss im 20. Jahrhundert, i: Daten, Inszenierungen, Besetzungen.* By Günther Lesnig. pp. 522. Publikationen des Instituts für Österreichische Musikedokumentation, 33. (Hans Schneider, Tutzing, 2008, €98. ISBN 978-3-7952-1262-9.)

It is an undeniable fact that German-language Strauss research has not experienced the same upsurge over the past two decades as its Anglophone counterpart. In part, this is a reflection of the comparative strength of scholarship in the English- and German-speaking worlds before 1989, an era when the majority of significant volumes on Strauss stemmed from the Germanic lands, in some cases eventually appearing in English translation. Even today, when the balance of publication is more evenly shared between the two traditions, the sole journal dedicated to the composer is the *Richard Strauss-Blätter* (Neue Folge), currently edited by Günter Brosche, the former director of the music collection at the Austrian National Library (ÖNB). Admittedly, this biannual periodical of the *Internationale Richard Strauss-Gesellschaft* is international to the extent of pub-

lishing items in either language, with a brief synopsis provided in the other for non-bilingual readers. Nonetheless, in the current issue, the ratio of German to English articles is 4 to 1, not unrepresentative of the balance of contributions as a whole, and the journal remains firmly rooted in Teutonic Strauss scholarship.

Unfortunately, rising publication costs mean that from 2009 the *Blätter* will be replaced by a *Jahrbuch*, and the item under review here is therefore the very last issue of the periodical in its current format. While it is melancholy to report the obsequies of any scholarly journal, the fact that this niche publication managed to publish sixty regular issues (and one special issue) over thirty years is a cause for celebration. The *Blätter* had a considerably longer existence than any of its Straussian precursors, which included the occasionally published *Richard Strauss-Jahrbuch* (2 vols., 1953 and 1959/60) and the *Mitteilungen der Richard Strauss-Gesellschaft* (59 numbers, 1952–68), eventually replaced by the original *Richard Strauss-Blätter* (12 vols., 1971–8), now usually given the designation 'alte Folge' (old series) to distinguish it from its successor. One wonders whether the more sensible option for the cash-strapped society would not have been to abandon the print run entirely in favour of an online publication, a move that would surely only increase its accessibility and circulation. With the ever-increasing digitization of journals from the nineteenth century and earlier, it seems plain wrong-headed for a twenty-first-century publication to cling to an exclusively paper existence.

This valedictory issue of the *Blätter* contains articles on Strauss's relationship with Liszt (Kenneth Birkin), a centenary celebration of the first performance of *Elektra* (Helga Schmidt-Neusatz), Strauss's connection with Greece (Reinhold and Roswitha Schlötterer), Strauss and the organ (Jürgen May), and the 2006 *Rosenkavalier* film reconstruction (Günter Krenn), as well as the usual staples (reviews of books, recordings, performances, and society communications). Birkin's piece ('"der einzige Sinfonier... der auf Beethoven kommen mußte"'. Franz Liszt–Richard Strauss: An Enabling Passion', pp. 5–30) is a lightly revised reprint of an earlier article (*Ich dirigiere mit Vergnügen... Liszt's Influence on Richard Strauss—Strauss Conducts Franz Liszt*, *Studia Musicologica [Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae]*, 43/1–2 (2002), 73–92), although its earlier provenance is nowhere acknowledged here. This article contains an in-depth discussion of Strauss's conducting activities that included