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Book Reviews: "Darius Milhaud" by Paul Collaer; "The Operas of Darius Milhaud" by Jeremy Drake

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covers the performance, reception, and publication of Bartók's music in Britain in the seven years separating his last visit to the country and his death in 1945.

Again and again, Gillies uncovers evidence that Bartók seems to have been his own worst liability in matters of public relations. His amorous intentions for Thildi Richter (daughter of Hans) and Jelly Arányi contributed to the loss of the musical support of these two important Hungarian-musical families in Britain. Bartók's apologetic stage presence and note-imperfect performances emerge as impediments to winning converts to Bartók's musical style. Heseltine and Gray found Bartók personally ingratiating, but grew cooler towards the man and his music when confronted with the highly dissonant works of the late teens and early twenties. By giving equal coverage to Bartók the performer and Bartók the composer, Gillies invites comparison between the two. Just as Bartók's performances were at the same time respected but off-putting, his stage presence was meek and his touch steely. Still, the extent to which Bartók was generally respected and even ardently supported by a few stalwarts speaks well for the sophistication of the English. Bartók certainly baffled this musical public, but perhaps less than audiences anywhere else in the world.

Bartók in Britain serves a dual purpose: to explicate Bartók and to paint a picture of the musical life in Britain from 1904 to 1945. Because of the spotty nature of reviews, correspondence, and personal recollections, both portraits are by necessity sketchy, but the glimpses of the person and the country are potent. Gillies makes surprisingly little effort to synthesize the whole. Perhaps he recognizes that it is dangerous to draw generalizations from a study that is limited by geography. Nevertheless Gillies could use more commentary to alleviate what occasionally becomes a chronicle of an itinerary. At its best Gillies's direct writing style exhibits a dry wit as when writing about the reception of a concert with Jelly Arányi, "As so often in the past, [Bartók's] music was recognized as the most original, and also the ugliest, in the programme" (p. 143).

In the last several years Gillies has been on an impressive publishing spree. In addition to *Bartók in Britain*, he has edited a

series of reminiscences of Bartók for *Bartók Remembered* (New York: Norton, 1990) and has prepared an edition of Bartók's letters on music soon to be available. The work is important. Perhaps future projects will allow Gillies to reflect on the sources of information he has amassed in these works and share with us his own critical evaluations of Bartók.

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Darius Milhaud. By Paul Collaer. Translated and edited by Jane Hohfeld Galante, with a definitive catalogue of works compiled from the composer's own notebooks by Madeleine Milhaud and revised by Jane Hohfeld Galante. San Francisco: San Francisco Press, 1988. [xv, 400 p. ISBN 0-911302-62-X. \$45.00.]

The Operas of Darius Milhaud. By Jeremy Drake. (Outstanding Dissertations in Music from British Universities.) New York: Garland Publishing, 1989. [439 p. ISBN 0-8240-0192-3. \$80.00.]

For a composer as well known and as well liked as Darius Milhaud, it is surprising that there are so few books about him. There is, of course, his own autobiography, *Ma vie heureuse*, known in Donald Evans's translation as *Notes Without Music* (London: D. Dobson, 1952). Beyond that, we have to turn to various articles and general books on twentieth-century music to discover much information about Milhaud and his music. This situation has been somewhat corrected by the recent publication of two books: Paul Collaer's *Darius Milhaud* and Jeremy Drake's *The Operas of Darius Milhaud*.

Collaer, a colleague and close friend of Milhaud, first wrote his book in 1939. It was not published until 1947 and included discussions of Milhaud's music through opus 191. In 1982 he revised and updated the book and included Milhaud's remaining works (opp. 192-443). The English translation by Jane Galante was published in 1988. She knew Milhaud and worked

closely with Madeleine Milhaud in preparing a "Catalogue of Compositions," which forms the substantial last part of the book. *The Operas of Milhaud* is Drake's 1983 doctoral thesis, reproduced from typescript by Garland Publishing as a part of its series, Outstanding Dissertations in Music From British Universities, replete with typographical errors and handwritten musical examples.

Both of these books are welcome additions to the field and they complement each other somewhat. They cover slightly different territories and are written in very contrasting literary styles. Collaer's work is the more general of the two. While it touches on some biographical details, it deals mainly with Milhaud's music itself. Collaer even refers us to Milhaud's biography if we feel the need to put the music into a chronological and social context. He prefers to think of his book as "a kind of guided tour through the composer's works, stopping before the masterpieces" (p. xv). The book is general from two points of view. It includes chapters on all the different genres, as well as several chapters devoted to musical generalizations about Milhaud's music as a whole. It is also general in the sense that the musical studies are somewhat superficial (a guided tour) and seem to be aimed at the general reader.

Drake's book, on the other hand, is more scholarly. Since his subject is narrower, he can afford to devote more attention to each work and attempt deeper analytical insights. Because of its scholarly density, *The Operas of Milhaud* is not always as easy to read as Collaer's survey. We may be tempted to skim through some of the more detailed descriptions and to glance only briefly at the charts and formal outlines. Yet these formal outlines present us with the clearest summary of Milhaud's musical constructions. We should also be prepared to encounter many untranslated French quotations. While not presenting difficulties to music scholars, they may put off other readers.

For purposes of comparison, I will deal mainly with the two authors' discussions of opera. A major difference between them lies in their respective perceptions of Milhaud's music. Collaer views all of Milhaud's works as part of a stylistic unity, with little variance from one work to another. Drake,

however, sees a constant evolution in the music, and a clear division into style periods.

In order to present and sustain his viewpoint, Collaer gives numerous generalizations that are hard to justify: "Each composition is an extension of all the others" (p. 23); "Milhaud's musical style never varied" (p. 26); "his basic melodic inspiration, his handling of counterpoint, and the whole mood that his music communicates never changed after 1910" (p. 27); "Chronological order is not particularly important since . . . the tools of this composer's craft varied very little after about 1910" (p. 79). Such statements are sometimes left unsubstantiated, or are backed up by too few carefully selected examples.

Drake works from a different perspective. He first discusses several individual works, notes their similarities and differences, and then derives generalizations from them. For example, after his introductions, he has a chapter on *La brebis égarée* and another on the three parts of *L'Orestie*. It is then that he presents his initial ideas of neo-classicism. After a return to the more specific operas, *Les malheurs d'Orphée*, *Esther de Carpentras*, *Le pauvre matelot*, and the three "Operas-Minutes," he is then able to consolidate his ideas into a significant part of his book on style in these neo-classical works. He adopts the same approach with the operas of the middle and final periods. Drake can therefore list distinguishing characteristics of these style periods, such as the following:

Neo-classical: Brazilian popular music, jazz, polymetricity, (poly)modality, ostinatos, very little counterpoint

Middle Period: thick texture, held chords rather than counterpoint, motivic development, long "amorphous" phrases, milder harmonies, less obvious polymodality, more 4-square rhythms

Final Period: small instrumental forces, more counterpoint, more supple rhythms, shorter phrases, few ostinatos

Since Collaer does not believe in chronological evolution, he presents Milhaud's dramatic music out of sequence. He first presents those works that are on a small scale, works that portray "the essential

loneliness of the individual" (p. 105). These are *La brebis égarée*, *Les malheurs d'Orphée*, *Le pauvre matelot*, and *Esther de Carpentras*. (In his category of "dramatic works" he also includes the ballets, such as *La création du monde*.) He then goes on to discuss the large-scale, monumental works, such as *L'Orestie*, *Christophe Colomb*, *Maximilien*, *Bolivar*, and *Médée*, which he describes as "syntheses of human belief, morality, and the kind of behavior that is conditioned by divine law" (p. 105).

One of the assets of Collaer's discussions is the large number of musical examples he includes. Although a few works are not illustrated at all (*Bolivar*, *La mère coupable*, and *Saint-Louis*), most are represented by several examples, with the section on *L'Orestie* containing twenty diverse passages. Given the scholarly nature of Drake's work, it may seem strange that it contains so few musical examples, though Drake does provide careful references to page and measure numbers for readers who wish to consult the scores. In addition, the types of musical examples that Drake presents are usually quite different from those in *Darius Milhaud*. While Collaer provides exact passages from the piano-vocal scores, Drake is more likely to give us chord formations (p. 57), variants or transformations of a theme (p. 59, 171), or a comparison of motives from several works (p. 190, 191).

Galante's translation of Collaer is excellent in both accuracy and readability. She carefully preserves his colorful writing style. At its best it offers vivid imagery; at its worst, it could be called "purple prose." For instance, he compares the melodies in *Orphée* with "various kinds of flowers, some as fresh as lilies of the valley, others somber like mauve tulips" (p. 83). A particular passage in *La brebis égarée* is said to be "smiling inwardly" (p. 57) and a passage from *Le pauvre matelot* is "bare as a plaster wall, against which is laced an espalier of successive chromaticism" (p. 89). Despite these occasional excesses, Collaer's writing is informative and easily understandable. We should also bear in mind that even though the author is Belgian, he is extremely chauvinistic about French music and decidedly biased against anything German, particularly the music of Wagner. While it makes sense to contrast Milhaud's language and aesthetic with Wagner's, it serves no real

purpose to say that in Wagner's music, the dramatic flow is "submerged in a mist of labored conventions," or that "it loses the direct path to our hearts" (p. 29).

Both books are also welcome for reference purposes. Collaer's book contains a valuable catalogue of compositions compiled by Madeleine Milhaud and revised by Galante. The discography lists only historical recordings in which Milhaud himself performs or conducts, and the bibliography, compiled by R. Wood Massi, contains only works in English.

Drake's frequent citing of manuscripts and preliminary sketches is very informative (pp. 4–11, 64–66, 71–72, 115–118, etc.). An appendix supplies a brief list of significant data concerning each opera, including the source of the libretto, the size of orchestra, and the dates of composition, orchestration, and first performance. What is particularly revealing here is how few operas are available in full score and how very few recordings there are of any of these works. Most operas have been preserved only on tape from French radio broadcasts and are housed in the Phonothèque Nationale in Paris.

Both authors think highly of Milhaud's operas (with the exception of *La mère coupable*) and their efforts should rekindle interest in these works. The operas received favorable responses during Milhaud's lifetime, but they are totally neglected now. Books on opera barely mention Milhaud and those that do are often derogatory. Guy A. Marco's *Opera: A Research and Information Guide* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984) relegates Milhaud to a few citations in a checklist. The *History of Opera* edited by Stanley Sadie (New York: Norton, 1980) and *Opera: A History* by Christopher Headington, Roy Westbrook and Terry Barfoot (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987) each have only a brief paragraph devoted to Milhaud. In his book, *The Experience of Opera* (New York: Norton, 1971), Paul Henry Lang includes him in the chapter "Out of the Main Stream." Donald Jay Grout's *Short History of Opera* devotes a few pages to Milhaud and treats him reasonably fairly and objectively, yet, Milhaud's stature as an opera composer diminishes over the span of the several editions. In the first (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947) he is called a "lead-

ing composer of French opera during the interwar period" (p. 524), but is merely the "most prolific of all twentieth-century composers" in the second and third editions (1965, p. 563, and 1988, p. 660, respectively).

Milhaud fares even less well in Ethan Mordden's *Opera in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). Mordden refers to "freakish polytonal blocks" (p. 137), and to "an obstreperous polyphonic orchestra" (p. 152). He describes Milhaud as "dry as tinder" and writes that "his superb is fragile [*sic*] and his gravity often lighthearted" (p. 212). It is in the light of such extreme bias that Drake's thorough and objective discussions of Milhaud's operas should be viewed. Perhaps even Collaer's gushing praise mainly counterbalances the current vogue of negative opinions. Both books would contribute to a re-evaluation of Milhaud's music, resulting in a greater number of available scores, performances, and complete recordings.

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György Ligeti: A Bio-bibliography. By Robert W. Richart. (Bio-bibliographies in Music, 30.) New York: Greenwood Press, 1990. [xii, 188 p. ISBN 0-313-25174-6. \$39.95.]

Robert W. Richart's *György Ligeti: A Bio-bibliography* will be of mixed value to Ligeti scholars. Although it is the most extensive bibliographical work on this composer since Ove Nordwall's *György Ligeti: eine Monographie* (Mainz: Schott, 1971), several abbreviated or missing elements make this study less than satisfying overall. The layout follows the standard format of Greenwood's series (which extends to forty volumes as of this writing): a brief biographical essay, followed by a list of works and performances, a bibliography of writings by and about the composer, and a discography. Two appendixes provide a classified list of compositions and a selective list of concerts and festivals devoted to Ligeti. An ample index of names and subjects rounds out the volume. Richart is the second recipient of the Music Library Association's Walter Gerboth Award (1987) and

the author of a master's thesis titled "An Analysis of György Ligeti's *Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet*" (University of Oregon, 1982).

The biographical essay, consisting of only five pages, aims merely to orient the reader. However, such brevity is often detrimental, as in this passage from p. 4: "Ligeti and his wife, Vera, left Hungary in December of 1956. He arrived eventually in Cologne." Richart omits the life-threatening details of their escape, which involved hiding under mail bags on a postal train, and being forced to walk the final leg of the journey to the Austrian border, while dodging the Soviet border patrol. Ligeti's own description of the journey appears in Paul Griffiths's *György Ligeti* (London: Robson Books, 1983, pp. 23–24), which remains the only book-length biography of the composer in English to date.

Griffiths's biography also notes that many of the early compositions listed as missing in Nordwall's monograph have since come to light (*ibid.*, 22), and that the composer intends to publish many more of his early works in addition to those that have recently appeared from Schott. Unfortunately, Richart has chosen to list only twenty-two selected compositions from Ligeti's Hungarian period. It is difficult to discern the author's criteria for selection: he includes several brief unpublished works, but only two of the twelve choral works published in Hungary before 1957. Richart does refer readers to Nordwall's catalogue, which lists details on ninety-two published and unpublished works written before 1957, and mentions a revised list by Fred Sallis of the early works, which has not appeared in print as of this writing. Richart's post-1956 work list does appear to be complete, with the possible exception of one work: *3 Objekte*, for two pianos (1976), supplied by Nordwall in his Ligeti work list in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. I have not been able to find any other mention of this title; if it does exist, it appears to be unpublished. It is surprising that Richart could not venture to confirm nor correct such an entry in a standard reference work, especially since he claims to have been in correspondence with Nordwall (p. xi). The work list does contain considerable information for most of Ligeti's works, including year of composition, publisher (but not the year of publication), tim-