

Introduction

By: Dr. Paul Merkley

What a pleasure it is to read the four pieces in this volume! The temporal range of the subjects is very great, but running through them all is the intangible theme of energetic inquiry, with the willingness to push the history of music further. In each of the four subjects, questions are brought forward to place a sharp point on each discussion.

Deborah Qandah's contribution concerns two questions of considerable complexity: the authorship of a motet associated with and sometimes ascribed to Pierre de la Rue, and the tortuous circumlocutions of the Milanese genre the *motetti missales*, motets that were used to substitute for ordinary sections of the mass. Both questions present a bibliographic and conceptual thicket for anyone who ventures there; both of these subjects have engaged some of the most intrepid musical scholars. This paper probes the authorship of a motet by considering its style and its source transmission (especially CS 36) with respect to attributions. The possibility, reached in the conclusions, of motets written by someone else and added on to La Rue's mass (by someone else) is plausible and intriguing.

With the two papers on Ligeti's music, we come full circle in this volume. The first paper on Ligeti, titled "The Reception of Ligeti, Post 2001: A Space Odyssey" by Carlyne Sumner, is concerned with the reception of his music. The reader may wonder whether chaos theory took a hand in history when the music of an obscure young composer was heard on a radio broadcast by Stanley Kubrick's wife, then incorporated, legal entanglements and all, into the film 2001: A Space Odyssey, that brought this new music to the attention of a very wide audience, one that it would not otherwise have reached. The author notes some of the legal details—in fact, while this volume has been edited, these questions have been taken up in the *New Yorker* magazine. Is it

easier for an audience to accept challenging music while watching a film, and does this account in part for the tremendous diffusion of this innovative music? These and other questions are well considered in this paper.

In the second, “The Compositional Techniques and Influences behind Ligeti’s ‘Atmosphères’” by Stephanie Mayville, it is demonstrated that the *Klangfarbenmelodie* of Webern (and Boulez) has set the stage for the micropolyphony of *Atmosphères*. Just as Webern was inspired in part by the music of Isaac, the author notes the influence of Ockeghem’s counterpoint on Ligeti, and also traces the inception of Ligeti’s new style for acoustic instruments through an early electronic piece. The paper follows the labyrinthine paths of influence and design through bifurcation and chaos theory. The accounting of musical techniques and the placement of these in a stylistic context is carried out to good purpose here.

Elsa Marshall’s “20th-Century Discussions of Instrumentation and Timbre in Regards to Pierre Boulez and *Le marteau sans maître*” is particularly strong and finely nuanced in its careful explication of period texts. Her analysis of commentary on taped compositions is revealing, and the principles are well applied to *Le marteau*. If Boulez regarded timbres are more closely analogous to words than to sentences, and if individual timbres for him were not intended to have specific connotations, then his construction of timbral rows and implementation of them in his expanded serialism makes sense. Further, the explanation of commonalities or similarities in the timbres of that work could be compared to pitch invariance.

Together these papers make a marvellous group. They show the product of careful consideration and determined questioning by keen minds, taking past work into account and moving scholarship to new areas. They hold familiar subjects in a new light, and examine them from different angles. These questions are placed under a microscope and looked at through a kaleidoscope, and the results are well worth reading.

There can be little doubt of the exciting future of music history, if it is worked on by authors like these.