



Dratwicky has raised elsewhere the problem of vocal inadequacy in (some) soloists, we assume he has discounted this factor for the moment.

The book comes to focus on administrative history, and Dratwicky's collection of documents deserves its own project, fit to tackle the Opéra in the round. The plethora of texts hopes to promote (to borrow Carr's words) 'some kind of contact with the mind of those about whom [the historian] is writing' (*What is History?*, 24). Dauvergne worked long years in underpaid assistant functions; after resigning in 1782 he lived nine months of the year outside Paris for want of funds. His financial reward, even at the top of the Opéra, came late. A startling account (250) shows that the Opéra performers attempted an administrative take-over as early as 1767. When they finally succeeded, without Dauvergne (1782–1785), they ran up a large debt and were decried as inefficient, yet 1783 was a bumper year for successes and 1784 saw five major new operas: this during a decade marked by extraordinary expansions of ambition. Was Dauvergne influential in this respect? Obviously, anecdotal history is not enough to explain these phenomena. The Opéra management is accused of 'la décadence et la corruption' (316) yet these are paraphrases, not authorial conclusions. As administrator, Dauvergne sometimes 'seemed niggling', his jealousy even comical, causing animosity from the artistic and public community (305), which even suspected him of vengefulness towards a young composer, Étienne Floquet. We are left to imagine the true picture. Happily, the texture tightens towards the end; the later 1780s become Dauvergne's finest moment as *directeur*, judged by quality, quantity and diversity of productions at the Opéra.

Signs of haste are various. The wrong illustration from *Hercule mourant* appears (223), the engraving of the Little Theatre at Versailles (95) gets separated from its discussion (91–92), which in turn neglects to point the reader to it. The music examples are not usually captioned with their act and scene designations: they rely on their placement in the main text for such identification, but this system is haphazard more than useful. The French symphony is declared to have taken off 'from the start of the 1760s', ten years later than the time this actually occurred at the Concert Spirituel (256); the myth is perpetuated that earlier programming remained traditional (51). 'Picpus' (a Paris street) replaces 'Picus', a character in *Canente* (207). We have 'Saint-Mard' for 'Saint-Marc' (363), and 'three' Grétry comedies instead of four (368), because *Colinette* has been forgotten (see page 350). Indeed, *Colinette* might have been a Dauvergne commission: such questions remain to be resolved. Notwithstanding its length and generous ambition, then, Dratwicky's book constitutes only a first step in giving Paris the kind of treatment it deserves, and which others have already applied to Vienna's musical life during the same decades. In truth, there is material here for two books. Paris lacked a Mozart, and in any case it is good to seek alternative ways of tackling opera history. Single-composer studies will continue to be needed, but probably do not constitute the best way of understanding the complexities of French musical life before the Revolution.

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PETER HOLMAN

LIFE AFTER DEATH: THE VIOLA DA GAMBA IN BRITAIN FROM PURCELL TO DOLMETSCH

Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010

pp. xxii + 394, ISBN 978 1 84383 574 5

When I first received Peter Holman's book about the history of the viol in Britain, I questioned the premise of a study that covers such a wide span: what did Purcell's viol fantasias have to do with the Dolmetsch family? It turns out that the viol has always had some kind of association with Britain, allowing the author to trace the development of the instrument from one generation to the next. The result is an elegant and



well-structured piece of research that is satisfying to read and will no doubt prove invaluable for future researchers interested in the wide range of music and musicians that Holman discusses. As with any work that amasses such an impressive body of historical evidence, there are inevitably points of interpretation that invite contention; some of these are raised in the course of the present review.

The book begins a little before the time of Purcell, during the golden age of the viol consort; many modern-day viol players (hereafter violists) will recognize the names of these composers – John Coprario, Orlando Gibbons, William Lawes, John Jenkins – from their consort sessions. Holman discusses these composers and their works in their proper historical contexts, drawing upon research by other scholars as well as his own previous book *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court, 1540–1690* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). He then proceeds to discuss violists of post-Restoration England, including ‘Visitors and Immigrants’ (13), providing brief surveys of their works. These surveys, while helpful to readers unfamiliar with this little-known repertory, at times seem overly descriptive: labelling compositions ‘short-winded’, ‘unpretentious’ or ‘unadventurous’ does not provide for a greater understanding of these works; instead, it creates a yardstick for comparison based on a modern stylistic preconceptions.

Holman then examines the change of the viol’s role from consort instrument to a solo and continuo instrument; he produces evidence of the French practice of using a continuo viol as part of the *petit chœur*, like those used at the time in the Paris Opéra. Though the author admits there is little evidence for this in Restoration England, he makes the likely assumption that such a practice would be compatible with the French-style dramatic works of English composers of the mid- to late seventeenth century. This French influence does not, however, extend to the author’s discussion of the mysterious ‘Large Bass Instrument’ (43) that is required to reach the low A’s in certain English compositions from around 1700. Despite being the lowest string on the French seven-string bass viol, this instrument is not considered a likely candidate, largely because it is not mentioned by James Talbot in his manuscript (1690). The author names the German violone with five or six strings as the more likely instrument, even though these instruments are provided with tunings by Talbot that extend to G¹ or below. This assertion would benefit from a more rigorous explanation: why are the lowest notes of these musical works consistently A¹ (and not lower) and why is the Talbot manuscript truly reliable in this matter?

The discussion then leads to violists of the eighteenth century, both professional and amateur. With regards to the amateurs, the author claims that most players ‘were members of the professions: clergy, doctors and lawyers’ (61). While Holman does discuss evidence of players who belonged to these professions, it can be argued that much of this information is available to us because of the record-keeping efforts of the respective institutions to which these players belonged. For this reason, it would be prudent to avoid making any kind of generalization about amateur violists of this time.

Holman names two Italian cellists as possible professional viol players: Nicola Haym and François Goodsens. Nevertheless, as he acknowledges, all the evidence he provides for Haym and Goodsens as musicians points to the fact that they were cellists, except for a few references to the ‘bass viol’, which is hardly solid evidence considering the inconsistent use of the term during the period; the term could have simply been used to refer to the cello or a cello-like instrument such as the bass violin. Holman confronts this issue deftly (54–56), bringing clarity to the problems of nomenclature of bass string instruments at the time.

Given the due caution exercised elsewhere, it seems surprising the Holman entertains the notion of Filippo Amadei as a potential violist. The evidence he unearths, that of transport costs for a ‘Base viol’ while in Paris, en route from Rome to London, relies on the improbability of Amadei’s purchase of a violoncello in Paris in spite of his access to superior Italian instruments. In any case, although the French were well known for their viols, they were also performing on *basses de violon*, which were used and presumably made in France until at least the second decade of the eighteenth century.

The author then discusses the attraction of players and makers towards unconventional instruments in the mid-eighteenth century, a phenomenon he describes as a ‘Cult of Exotic Instruments’ (135). How this relates directly to the viol is difficult to understand at first because, as Holman shows, the instrument had always been in use in Britain: indeed, given the strong tradition of viol-making in Britain ‘up to about 1720’



and evidence of a professional violist in the 1730s (Saint-Hélène; see 131), this treatment of the issue was initially surprising. However, his concentration on instrument maker Frederick Hintz, who made a variety of these 'exotic' instruments, including viols and cellos, clarifies the issue: Hintz's instruments really belong to a different tradition of viol making, that of the heavier and more cello-like German tradition. As Holman convincingly demonstrates, the rise in interest in such musical instruments also coincided with the arrival of prominent German musicians in London. This in turn seems to have prolonged the cultivation of the viol in England significantly, as seen in the activities of the violist Carl Friedrich Abel in London in the 1760s and the English amateur players who were associated with him.

Holman then focuses on violists of the later eighteenth century, with a deservedly large emphasis on Abel. This discussion naturally proceeds to Thomas Gainsborough and aristocrat musicians of the time. The mention of harpsichord composer Elisabetta de Gambarini as a potential violist is slightly puzzling, as this assertion seems to be based entirely on the presence of a viol on the frontispiece of Gambarini's publication (this portrait appears in the book, but the viol – if it is truly a viol – is difficult to make out). However, the author also admits that the appearance of the instrument may have been simply a pun on her name (Gambarini/gamba).

The remainder of the book traces evidence of the viol up to the late nineteenth century, with the beginnings of the early-music revival resulting from the efforts of musicians such as François-Joseph Fétis, Nicholas Bochsa, Walter Petit and Arnold Dolmetsch. Despite the subtitle of the book, Holman actually concentrates on the period between Purcell and Dolmetsch, rather than including their significance to the viol's history. A slightly expanded remit would have permitted him to include influential figures such as Nathalie Dolmetsch (the daughter of Arnold), a prominent violist who also produced numerous publications and was one of the founding members of the Viola da Gamba Society of Great Britain. Indeed, her name is conspicuously absent; surely she deserves at least a mention alongside the twentieth-century scholar-performers who appear towards the end?

The book would have benefitted from more thorough proofreading; there are some surprising typos and omissions that would be obvious to most readers. Fortunately, these errors do not detract from the overall outstanding research that this book offers. *Life after Death* is a valuable reference book that I will no doubt consult again and again.

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PAOLA PALERMO AND GIULIA PECIS CAVAGNA

LA CAPPELLA MUSICALE DI SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE A BERGAMO DAL 1657 AL 1810

Turnhout: Brepols, 2011

pp. xi + 526, ISBN 978 2 503 51033 0

The musical establishment in the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo was one of the most prestigious in northern Italy from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, after those of San Marco in Venice and San Petronio in Bologna. Its distinguished *maestri di cappella* included Maurizio Cazzati and Giovanni Legrenzi in the seventeenth century, Giovanni Battista Bassani in the eighteenth and Giovanni Simone Mayr in the nineteenth. The two authors of this fascinating archival study collaborated on this monumental volume garnered from their respective theses (*tesi di laurea*) from the University of Pavia. Blessed with rich archival materials from most of the period under consideration, the authors have reconstructed the organization of the *cappella musicale* from 1657 to 1810. The study concludes in 1810 because the documentary materials from then on are too fragmentary to be useful. (For information on the earlier history of the *cappella musicale* see the excellent studies by Alberto Colzani ('Musica sacra in Santa Maria