

John Mullen, *The Show Must Go On! Popular Song in Britain During the First World War*. Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series, ed. Stan Hawkins and Derek B. Scott (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2015; London and New York: Routledge, 2016). xii + 250 pp. £65.00

The centenary of the First World War has galvanized a plethora of academic conferences and publications, in addition to numerous public commemoration events. In the discipline of music, the centenary has inspired a flowering of new scholarly activity related to musical life during the war in Western Europe and North America. Previously understudied, particularly from the perspective of popular music, the First World War has been a long time coming to the discipline of music.¹ But John Mullen was one of the few working on music of the war before it was popular to do so. The present volume *The Show Must Go On! Popular Song in Britain During the First World War* is a translation and revision of “*The show must go on!*” *La Chanson populaire en Grande-Bretagne pendant la Grande Guerre, 1914–1918*, published by L’Harmattan in 2012. But its arrival on the Anglophone market in 2015 is timely. Although Mullen’s volume runs the risk of not garnering the attention it deserves, given the number of recent and forthcoming publications on music and the war, it sets itself apart from other scholarship because it deals with a subject matter no one else has tapped from a critical standpoint: the enormous corpus of British popular song between the years 1914 and 1918.² Moreover, it is the most extensive analysis to date of the spaces, industry and audiences of British popular musical entertainment during the war. Surely for that Mullen’s study will be recognized as an important contribution to Anglophonic music-oriented literature of the war and to British studies.

Mullen’s first two chapters define the spaces and genres of popular music entertainment in Britain during the war. As he shows in Chapter 1, ‘Portrait of an Industry: Producing Popular Music, 1914–1918’, music halls were the most common venue for popular music in urban areas. Here Mullen mostly focuses on large cities – particularly London – but his archival work in Burnley in Lancashire indicates that even small cities had music halls which could host thousands of people per night. This chapter also surveys other components of the music industry, including singers, dancers, musicians, composers, lyricists, and publishers. Chapter 2, ‘A Patchwork of Genres’, surveys the ‘carefully crafted range of products’ of this ‘dynamic and creative’ wartime popular music industry (p. 64). Specific entertainments he discusses are music hall shows, revues, seasonal pantomimes, musical comedies, blackface minstrelsy, shows by or for soldiers, shows in prisoner of war camps, and professional civilian shows for the soldiers abroad (with special focus on Lena Ashwell and Harry Lauder). Boundaries between these genres were not hard and fast, he shows; often labels were applied without precision and solely for marketing purposes (p. 64).

¹ Notable book-length exceptions are Lewis Foreman, *Oh, My Horses! Edward Elgar and the Great War* (London: Elgar Editions, 2001), 2nd revised edition (London: Triflower, 2014), and Glenn Watkins, *Proof Through the Night: Music and the Great War* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

² Peter Bailey and Michael Kilgarriff both deal with wartime music but only as larger studies that encompass many decades. Moreover, Kilgarriff’s volume is a catalogue. See Michael Kilgarriff, *Sing Us One of the Old Songs: A Guide to Popular Song 1860–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Peter Bailey, ed., *Music-Hall: The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

Throughout the volume thus far and in what follows, Mullen seeks to elucidate the meanings this music carried for listeners. He lays this emphasis out in the Introduction to the book. Here, special attention is given to the makeup of audiences in the spaces and entertainments described in Chapter 1 and 2. Operating from a 'history from below' perspective, he hopes in his analyses to gain a 'better understanding [of] the ordinary people of the time' (p. 3). Here he certainly means Britain's working class population, as they were the segment of society in Victorian and Edwardian times that most often frequented the music hall and the types of popular music entertainments Mullen documents. He also shows that the theatre and hall owners attempted to attract a more respectable clientele by the war years, mainly because of fear of 'losing their entertainments license under the pressure of moralist organizations aiming at "cleaning up" the entertainment industry' (p. 13). Such clean-up did indeed prompt a widening of the audience base, as attendance did begin to include some members of the middle class and, in some cases, even the aristocracy. Thus, in Chapters 3 through 6, when Mullen gets to specifics of repertoire, he often focuses on how these songs registered with listeners of the day, given the context of not only the audiences' class and life circumstances, but also the war.

Chapter 3, 'The Songs and Their Content', establishes categories of classification for wartime popular songs based on lyrics. For this analysis Mullen examined 1,063 songs from music hall and revue (and occasionally musical comedy) shows from the war years, most of which he accessed as sheet music at the British Library. This corpus makes up just a quarter of the total number of songs produced between 1914 and 1918. Before delving into the topics of songs, Mullen generalizes about performance practice and general features. The singers generally performed these songs in 'a neighbourly tone', which audience members would have identified as working class and therefore like themselves. This 'staging' of 'working-class community communication' in the music hall, Mullen terms the 'theatre of complicity' (p. 82). Performers who did not sing as a character used opera or operetta registers, a practice that

aimed both at pleasing the public who can admire the technical mastery, at the same time as it is part of an atmosphere of respectability in the music hall, and a desire to share the values of high culture and high society. (p. 76)

The lyrics are simple and poetically unsophisticated, and the songs tend to have a chorus with which the audience was encouraged to sing along. Mullen does not generalize about musical style of these songs.

After a brief discussion of topics of music hall songs before the First World War (including discussion of Boer War songs), Mullen identifies top themes and frequently occurring words in songs of the period under study, based on a statistical analysis that he presents in the form of charts (pp. 87–8). The two most popular topics are love and war or life in (p. 89); other top recurring words and ideas are 'home' / 'blighty'; 'girl' / 'lass', 'boy' / 'lad'; 'love'; 'soldier' / 'tommy', 'song' / 'sing' and 'Ireland' / 'Irish'. The rest of Chapter 3 looks at other kinds of songs that were not among the most popular themes, but that were still published and performed regularly: comic songs; songs about the Irish and Ireland; English and Scottish regional songs; songs about the US south; and songs about show business. Particularly insightful here is Mullen's focus on how people of the time would have understood these songs. For example, of the songs about Ireland and the Irish, Mullen points out that while many in the audiences would be

descendants of Irish immigrants or immigrants themselves, racist stereotypes of the Irish in the music hall were common. But this was not the only meaning conveyed. In this repertoire Ireland also 'served as a focus for the nostalgic fantasy of a supposedly simpler and happier rural lifestyle' for the urban working class during war (p. 93).

Mullen's next two chapters consider songs most directly related to the war. Chapter 4 assesses the representation of relationships between men and women and the social position of women during the war. Although he finds that 'women on the music-hall stage prepared the way for more active female roles in society' (p. 121), the music hall songs themselves promote neither a liberal attitude towards women nor women's suffrage; in fact, in many cases they are anti-suffragette and treat women misogynistically. What many songs *do* address is the 'supposed nature of women – adorable but annoying when single, dominating and unattractive when married, wicked as mothers-in-law' (p. 125). Other songs idealize women, particularly mothers (p. 127). Women's changing roles and romantic relationships during the war are also addressed. These types are typically from the point of view of a man who has met his 'perfect love' who often is of a different geographical origin, such as Normandy or Tipperary, or who finds herself in unusual life circumstances, due to the war – such as in 'My Little Red Cross Girl' or 'Little Rosalie, My Pretty Refugee' (p. 134). Of marriage, many songs 'present the situation of a husband and wife as that of a poor oppressed man faced with a tyrannical or even violent scold' (p. 138). Songs about the war and life in wartime are the focus of Chapter 5. Categories of war-themed songs he finds are recruitment, uniting the nation and empire, keeping up morale and, towards the end of the war, black humour such as in 'Oh, What a Lovely War' (p. 160) and then after Armistice, victory songs (p. 172). He finds no anti-war songs or songs that speak of hatred against the Germans, unlike in French and American wartime popular songs.

Looming throughout Mullen's analysis of British wartime music and industry in Chapters 1–5 are the performers themselves. His view is 'that these songs emerge from the interaction between a number of different participants – singers, composers, lyricists, investors, managers and members of the audience – and contain richly layered configurations of consensus and conflict' (p. 73). Thus, Mullen draws attention to the people involved in these industries, particularly star singers, throughout the chapters. Moreover, the lives of four of the best-known music hall singers – Harry Lauder, Vesta Tilley, Marie Lloyd and Harry Champion – are explored in short narrative portraits called 'A Star in Focus', which are inserted in between chapters.

Chapter 6 moves away from the world of the musical hall to non-commercial songs sung during the war: religious hymns, folk songs and soldiers' songs. Again he provides context before introducing each of these repertoires: before folk music he discusses Cecil Sharp's efforts, and before the soldiers' songs he discusses why soldiers joined the army and how they reflected on their wartime experiences. The latter section includes a table listing favourite themes of soldier songs and percentage rates at which these themes occurred. He also notes an absence of patriotic songs among soldiers. Rather, the general tone of soldiers' songs is one of dissent.

Supplemental materials in the book are valuable. The 13-page appendix 'A Political, Military and Cultural Timeline of the Great War' enables one to see when song and performance dates coincided with war events. Also, an extensive bibliography includes secondary sources, contemporary periodicals consulted, and recordings available on compact discs. Links in footnotes to recordings and

video online are also helpful, as are links to photographs. But it certainly would have been nice to see at least a few photographs reproduced in the volume. There are also several errors in editing, including missing spaces and extra words, such as 'rejection of' (p. 53) and 'but the two of the subsequent shows' (p. 64).

As Mullen's conclusion reiterates, this book is primarily about the wartime music hall in Britain. His description of other commercial music genres in Chapter 2 provides a context for understanding the position of music hall in British society and musical life, but these other genres rarely come up later in the book. Moreover, the summary of non-commercial song types in Chapter 6 and foray into hymn, folk music and soldiers' music seem like an odd add-on to a book that is really about the music hall on the urban British home front during the war. But Mullen himself admits that 'there is much room to research other non-commercial repertoires of the time' (p. 217). He rightfully calls for others to explore the music hall in big cities of the Empire, such as Toronto and Melbourne and encourages more comparisons with contemporary American popular music. Overall the strength of this study lies in its attention to social context, a multi-faceted wartime music industry, and summary of an enormous body of literature that is largely unknown. One will not walk away from this book knowing how these songs sound in terms of melody, harmony, and so forth. Mullen is not a musicologist; his discipline is British studies, and this volume certainly reflects that. What one will learn is what these songs are about, the style of their lyrics, where they were performed, and perhaps most importantly for Mullen, how the songs registered with audiences of the time.

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Marie Sumner Lott, *The Social Worlds of Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music: Composers, Consumers, Communities* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015). xviii + 310 pp. \$55.00.

The Social Worlds of Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music is an important contribution to nineteenth-century studies. Its seven chapters illuminate a repertoire that is seldom studied – indeed never studied from the rich and detailed sociological angles that Lott presents. The Introduction sets the scene for the new perspectives that this study will embrace, touching on important themes that will surface throughout the book: conceptions of public and private in the era (notably the grey area in between); masculine leisure and musical performance; print culture; and ideas of high and low in music. The communities of chamber musical practice that Lott considers are mostly European – and largely German – but in the final chapter she does cast a wider net, considering American contexts in connection with Dvořák.

Immediately new and useful is Lott's emphasis on chamber music's audience: as she shows in the ensuing chapters, there are tangible, 'market driven' hallmarks