

BOOK REVIEWS

Étienne Jardin and Patrick Taïeb, eds, *Archives du concert: La vie musicale française à la lumière de sources inédites (XVIIIe–XIXe siècle)* (Venice: Actes Sud/Palazzetto Bru Zane, 2015). 376 pp. 39€.

Research into European concert life in the last couple of decades has established a strong foundation of knowledge about major aspects of leading concert institutions, a situation that challenges scholars to find new sources and rethink their angles of interpretation for future study. There is particular reason to look outside the capital cities and the usual classical-music repertoires, and to raise issues involving social or political frameworks surrounding concert life. Quantitative methods can be applied to a variety of subjects to help us go beyond conventional questions, like just adding up how many pieces by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven were performed by an orchestra. This book, *Archives du concert: La vie musicale française à la lumière de sources inédites*, forges ahead in just such a fashion, employing a remarkable set of little-studied sources with important new approaches. The book presents 200 pages of records from between 1822 and 1848 detailing the *droit des pauvres*, the ‘poor tax’ charged to concert producers, material through which Étienne Jardin has put the broad outlines of the concert world into a significant new perspective. Patrick Taïeb likewise contributes a lucid analysis of how the tax in evolved from 1541 to 1807. The book also includes two revealing studies of eighteenth-century topics: concerts of opera selections offered by provincial academies, written by Florence Doé de Maindreville; and the posters put up all around Paris for the Concert Spirituel, contributed by Beverly Wilcox.

Patrick Taïeb portrays the *droit des pauvres* as variously a moral cause brought by the Church against entertainment and an effort to bring social justice against the rich. Begun in 1541 by the Parlement of Paris, the tax was strengthened by Louis XIV and revised by the Revolutionary government in 1789 and 1791. After the abolition of theatre monopolies unleashed chaotic competition, the Directory and the Empire tinkered with the tax until a comprehensive set of laws was put in place in 1806–1807 that would last until 1941. In the process, concerts were differentiated from the theatres and grouped with such entertainments as balls, magicians and horse shows, a bureaucratic niche that was attacked for demeaning the musical world in general.

Étienne Jardin’s chapter on concerts 1822–1848 is a gold mine of information, though the reader should be forewarned that the technical aspects of how the tax was applied are not easily understood. Nonetheless, the data that immediately catch the eye are those for the growth in the number of concerts and in the geography of concert halls around Paris. The frequency of concerts given on an ad hoc basis went up drastically in 1831, back down the next year, but then shot up three times the original number in the years 1844–1847. Concerts given more or less on a daily basis (chiefly those of Philippe Musard and Henri Valentino, called here *grands concerts*) were the most numerous from 1823–1840, vastly overshadowing the single events, bringing ‘une petite révolution économique’ (100). The discussion is limited somewhat by a failure to describe in greater detail the main formats that concerts presented; most of them were *concerts à bénéfice*, not

récitals, as one passage suggests, a kind of programme which was only beginning to emerge in this period.

All told, as many as 183 rooms or auditoriums were used to present concerts during this period, most of them offering just one or more than five events. A series of maps of Paris show that from around 1838 an increasing number of concerts were held north of the City of Paris though not in the south (102–13). Salle Herz, led by Henri Herz, led the competition with a new model of concert management after its construction in 1838, having twice as many events as the Salle Érard.¹ Crucial details are dealt out along the way – that music magazines benefited in multiple ways from giving their own concerts, and that the Parisian concert season ended just when the one in London was about to begin. Even though Jardin concludes that few of those who gave concerts made much money, the detail of individual concerts demonstrate that big profits must have been gained not only by Paganini and Liszt but also by Ferdinand David and charities that attracted the richest public. Interestingly enough, the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, the city's first classical music orchestra, worked out a deal with the officials collecting the tax to keep the charge low. The book also includes a fascinating feuilleton written by Edmond Viel for *Le Ménestrel* in 1840, illustrating the deep instability of musical culture in the period and the sharp tensions between rival tastes for virtuosos, popular melodies and the new repertory of classical music.

Florence Doé de Maindreville makes a welcome contribution by analysing word-books, *Paroles du concert*, that were given to listeners at events held in Amiens, Lille, Reims, Rouen and Valenciennes. Not very many *Paroles du concert* are extant – for example, 16 for 1733–1742 but only two for 1763–1772. But the careful treatment given the texts in this chapter makes clear that opera and concert interacted closely in France on a long-term basis during the eighteenth century. The years of activity of the five institutions studied ranged from 1733 in Lille to 1772 in Reims; the events occurred the most often in Rouen, the city whose theatre emerged as the second most important in the country, but lasted the longest in Reims, from 1739 to 1790. The word-books seem always to have been sent out before the event, in part so that listeners could see what changes were made in the texts, as was frequently done by concert directors. Yet the concert in Reims offered supposed complete performances of Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1733) in 1757 and *Fêtes de Paphos* (1758) by Jean-Joseph de Mondonville in 1764.

The question arises whether the question of performing rights came up, since the Académie Royale de Musique held a monopoly over performance of French opera throughout France. This law prevented the Concert Spirituel from offering any selections from French opera throughout its history from 1725 to 1790, leading its directors to present performances of Italian opera selections from its third season. Lauren R. Clay has shown that from the 1680s the director of a provincial theatre would obtain performing rights as a concessionaire or 'entrepreneur' of the Opéra, and that disputes in this regard occurred in the middle of the eighteenth century.² This issue does not come up in the chapter, making one wonder whether the academies or concert societies offering acts of French operas related with the Parisian officials.

¹ Laure Schnapper, *Henri Herz, magnat du piano: la vie musicale en France au XIX^{ème} siècle, 1815–1870* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2011).

² Lauren R. Clay, *Stagestruck: The Business of Theater in Eighteenth-Century France and its Colonies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013): 87–91, 99–104.

Florence Doé de Maindreville demonstrates that operatic acts gradually gave way to programmes that mingled a variety of genres, instrumental as well as vocal, even though we can be sure that opera remained the centre of attention. The term *éclectique* applied here to the programming is less alarming to the ear than *miscellaneous* has been in English-speaking countries, but it is nonetheless important to recognize the careful patterning by which such programmes were constructed. It is nice to read here that a 'variable geometry' was employed to integrate different genres, from a motet ending an otherwise operatic programme to the alternation of opera, concerto, opera, symphony and so on (52–3). In one cases, pieces from *Hippolyte et Aricie* were presented in the course of three events. In other cases, the patterning practiced for the Concert Spirituel was imitated especially for the performance of the canonic motets by Michel de Lalande, though along with French opera numbers as was not permitted in Paris. In the long run, we are told, no single model came to predominate in the multifarious programming in French cities. The concerts held in Bordeaux between 1783 and 1793, about whose programming I have written, were more consistent in its patterns of programming than the ones done earlier in the century. It is interesting that motets were less common in cosmopolitan Bordeaux, where a concert held on Christmas day might have no sacred music.³

The opening chapter by Beverly Wilcox illustrates perceptively how a practical matter can figure centrally in the functioning of a performing institution.⁴ The Concert Spirituel advertised its performances chiefly by having 400 posters, *affiches*, put up on the streets of Paris several days prior to each event. Three such items have turned up over the years, dating from 1754, 1779 and 1787; Wilcox herself discovered the earliest one recently, oddly enough stored in the Bibliothèque Nationale itself. She argues that the *affiches* were crucial to the survival of the Concert Spirituel because its directors functioned as financial entrepreneurs, responsible for profit or loss, even though the institution was governed by the French state. The posters had much wider visibility than the notices placed in the newspapers and were therefore vital to keep drawing a paying public. Posters printed in black went up first and were replaced with red ones on the day of the concert. For that matter, no printed programmes were given to those who attended, but rather a member of staff announced the programme at the beginning of each concert.

William Weber
California State University, Long Beach
william.weber@csulb.edu

doi:10.1017/S1479409816000197
First published online 8 July 2016

³ William Weber, 'Les programmes de concerts, de Bordeaux à Boston', *Le Musée de Bordeaux et la musique 1783–1793*, ed. Patrick Taïeb, Natalie Morel-Boroitra and Jean Gribenski (Rouen: Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2005): 175–93.

⁴ Constant Pierre, *Histoire du Concert Spirituel, 1725–1790* (Paris: Société française de Musicologie, 1975); Beverly Wilcox, 'The Music Libraries of the Concert Spirituel: Canons, Repertoires, and Bricolage in Eighteenth-Century Paris' (PhD diss., University of California, Davis, 2013).