

contemporaries. One of the book's most poignant moments comes in 1950:

It had only been seven years since Harrison moved to New York, but by 1950 his social and artistic worlds were in upheaval. The time when Harrison and Cage would go out to dinner nearly nightly were long past. In January 1950, Cage had met the composer Morton Feldman and, soon afterward, a precocious teenager named Christian Wolff. That fall, the three met sometimes daily in Cage's loft, trying out radical ideas such as graphic notation . . . Not surprisingly, then, the other group Cage and Feldman were hanging around with were radical visual artists, including the founders of the so-called New York school of abstract expressionism. (p. 154)

Cage, Feldman and Wolff shot the breeze at Greenwich Village's Cedar Tavern with de Kooning, Kline, Pollock, Rothko and friends. Harrison, 'still uncomfortable in social situations', and drawn to studies of medieval modes and strict counterpoint that were far removed from the avant garde's radical spontaneity, 'frequently cloistered himself in his messy apartment, meeting only occasionally with a few remaining friends – [Remy] Charlip, [Ben] Weber, Cowell – and his students'. Later, Alves and Campbell write, Harrison would bristle 'at the success of Cage and other composers whose new aesthetic he could not bear' (p. 294).

Harrison's story is also one of social awkwardness, outsidership, anger and frustration. It is strewn – and to his biographers' credit they don't shy away from this – with damaged friendships, broken hearts and bad behaviour. As well as a tale of an American artist and the American arts, it is also one of sexuality, identity and difference in the twentieth century.

I am a vegetarian, a frank admirer of other races, and a speaker of the international language Esperanto. I'm a polypolitical logician and an economic stabilitarian . . . I'm a promoter of population restraint and sexual freedom. I'm a writer of letters to the editor and a reader of science fiction. Indeed I know that we shall voyage to the flaming stars. I'm a calligrapher and not last of all I'm a living composer. Yes, I'm a fairly thorough crackpot and I'm delighted to be so'. (Lou Harrison, 'Crackpot Lecture', 1959.)

Too large to fit in my bag, I carried this book in my hands for several days while at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in November, plonking it on available surfaces and preparing my review in between concerts. Everyone who saw it was intrigued and they all had the same response, even those who had received their musical education in the United States: 'Wow. There's a composer I know almost nothing about, but wish that I knew more of'. It is to be hoped that this generous, sympathetic

and exquisitely researched book will answer that need, and give Harrison's music the profile that his life earned for it.

Tim Rutherford-Johnson
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Scott Pfitzinger, *Composer Genealogies: A Compendium of Composers, Their Teachers, and Their Students*. Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield. £100

Scott Pfitzinger's massive book is a thoroughly surprising release, not least because it seems as if such an encyclopaedic examination of teachers and followers in Western art music should have been produced long ago. Indeed, it is an indication of just how long-overdue such a project is that its cover, which depicts a family tree leading from Johann Sebastian Bach near the trunk to Richard Strauss near the branches, seems like an artefact from a far earlier, less rhizomatic era. In fact, Pfitzinger's study as a whole seems, whether knowingly or not, to be rather conservative when considered within the larger context of cultural studies in the twenty-first century, entirely bypassing questions of the production of truth, meaning, and authority so central to the structuralist and post-structuralist projects, not to mention the innumerable fields of critical study that have emerged in the humanities since the 1960s.

Roman & Littlefield's website describes this as a reference work, so it might be expected that Pfitzinger would use his introduction to comment on the state of the field and what critical developments informed his contribution. Instead, one gets the sense that the research on a whole is more of a passion project than a formal scholarly engagement. Nevertheless, his lack of engagement with broader scholarly discourse amounts to more of a missed opportunity than a serious flaw in his research. The work of his study is largely a separate matter, and it is as a self-standing index rather than a contribution to a field of scholarship that its most convincing claims can be made. At first glance, this is an exhaustive piece of research; the back matter claims it contains information on more than 17,000 composers. Pfitzinger notes in his introduction that his hope is that this work will help the reader to make 'connections' they might not have found otherwise. He has furthermore structured his book in a way that does not obviously indicate any potential connections besides those the reader might personally make: rather than sort composers by region, nationality, or style, he simply lists them alphabetically. This seems to be a

wise decision, and gives the book as a whole a sort of sandbox feel – a reader is tempted to flip to a random page and see where it takes them, in a sort of ‘choose-your-own-WAM-lineage’ way.

Oddly, Pfitzinger only briefly mentions what would seem to be the most obvious question when preparing such a chronicle: at what point does one stop? His response is simply that he included composers ‘as long as they participated in the tradition of what is called ‘classical music’, including electronic music and film scores’. His intentional omissions include ‘singer-songwriters, pop music composers, and jazz composers, unless they crossed over [*sic*] into classical and film music’. These categories are presented as self-evident, and Pfitzinger would likely consider it a distraction to attempt a qualitative differentiation, for example, between the categories of ‘singer-songwriter’ and ‘troubadour’. But the question remains: how far into obscurity is Pfitzinger’s study willing to reach?

As it turns out, quite far indeed. To use a particular genealogy that I am relatively familiar with, Pfitzinger’s listing for Alban Berg’s students is surprisingly exhaustive, including a fascinating figure I have never heard of before: Ethel Glenn Hier. A Google search returns almost nothing, except that Ethel was born in a neighbourhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1889, studied composition in Juilliard and later in Germany (which is presumably where she encountered Berg?) before returning as a teacher in America, dying in Winter Park, Florida, in 1971. Of course, it far exceeds the scope of Pfitzinger’s study to fill in other details about such figures, leaving the reader with a sizeable amount of work cut out for them. In the many small revelations like these, Pfitzinger’s book is at its finest. Beyond a resource for fact-checking, it not infrequently becomes a spur for further research – whether of the serious/scholarly or Wikipedia-trawling variety – which has the potential to be greatly rewarding for both the individual and the study of Western art music in general.

Still, even taken as a reference work, it has various limitations and blind spots. The entry for Berg correctly lists Fritz Heinrich Klein – an Austrian composer who, simultaneously with Schoenberg, developed a sort of twelve-tone method, which he called ‘extonal’ – as a student. But the entry for Klein does not list any of his students, despite the fact that he was a composition instructor for over 20 years at the Bruckner Conservatory in Linz. The same is the case with Ethel Glenn Hier, who (I have discovered lately) likewise taught composition for a

significant portion of her professional life. There are a number of such omissions which may be given, e.g. Arnold Schoenberg is not listed as one of Paul von Klenau’s teachers, despite the latter studying with him in Vienna and later adopting a personalised, tonally-inclined variant of his teacher’s twelve-tone system; Yefim Golyshev’s students are not listed, although Herbert Eimert was among them. Admittedly, in the current scholarly conception of music history, these concerns are quite specialist, and if Pfitzinger treated every entry with the same thoroughness then his study would fast enter a ‘map vs. territory’ dilemma. There are also more basic, nonsensical errors, such as the listing of Neue Einfachheit composer Hans-Jürgen von Bose (1953–) as a student of pre-Wagnerian (stylistically speaking) Romantic composer Johann Joseph Abert (1832–1915). These are a sizable editorial oversight which makes it seem doubtful that this book underwent any sort of thorough proofreading. But, since these errors are presumably not deliberate, they do not reflect as fundamentally on Pfitzinger’s methodology as his omissions, the points at which he decided not to pursue his investigation further.

As his chronicle approaches the present day, Pfitzinger’s bias becomes more apparent. While his records of recent American composers are up-to-date to a formidable degree, outside of North America his chronicle is spottier, the most notable example of this being the fact that there is no mention of Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf whatsoever. To give more examples: the Canadian composer Annesley Black (currently based in Berlin) is listed as a student of Mathias Spahlinger, but the German composer Johannes Kreidler is not; the only student of Peter Ablinger given is the American composer Dan Tramte.

Of course, I have discovered these omissions only due to my own interest in the composers in question; indeed, my perception of them *as* omissions in the first place is merely indicative of an imperfect overlap between what music I think is notable and what music Pfitzinger does. Since this is – unexpectedly and rather amazingly – the work of a single man, such a bias is inevitable. For his part, Pfitzinger makes an appeal in the introduction for readers with ‘corrections, additions, or updates’ to send an email to an account devoted to this project, composergenealogies@gmail.com.

Yet besides the correction of obvious errors (such as the Abert/von Bose listing mentioned above) the usefulness of any additions or updates, presuming they are as exhaustive as

Pfzinger's original text, remains doubtful. While his introduction gives every indication that Pfzinger intends this as something of a positivist project – something that may eventually, conceivably, contain the records of all composers who have ever taught and been taught by other composers – an increase in facts does not necessarily result in a decrease of bias. For example, one probable result of this initiative is that the students of current English-language composition teachers will be even better represented, while musics outside the Anglosphere – especially non-Western – will not. Such additions would therefore not result in greater perfection but more compounded flaws, not to mention the Wikipedia-esque problem of composers writing in to have their own genealogy included. It is as a flawed but exhilarating compendium that this work best exists, rather than a perpetual information mine. Not so much a stopgap in the scholarly literature but a reference work – and starting point for research – in its own right, Pfzinger's book, for all its flaws, is an invaluable resource for anyone curious of the rawest data of Western art music history.

Max Erwin

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Trevor Barre, *Convergences, Divergences and Affinities: The Second Wave of Free Improvisation in England, 1973–79*. London: Compass Publishing, 2017. £14.99

The cover photo of Trevor Barre's second book on the history of free improvisation in England, following *Beyond Jazz* of 2015, prominently features David Toop (performing in 1978 with Evan Parker and Paul Burwell), whose own promised sequel to *Into the Maelstrom: Music, Improvisation and the Dream of Freedom, before 1970* will no doubt cover some of the same ground. While Barre's volume makes clear the central contribution of Toop to the music of his chosen place and time, my hopes were raised that it would provide a historical focus and discipline lacking both in Toop's free-association approach to his subject (wandering in *Into the Maelstrom* as often outside the title's time period as within it) and Ben Watson's disastrously biased *Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation* of 2004. Were these hopes fulfilled? Yes and no. Barre begins with a 'timeline' before the preface, situating the music within a whistle-stop history of British society and politics between 1973 and 1979, beginning around the accession of the UK to the European

Economic Community (incorrectly called here the European Union, which at that time did not yet exist) and ending around the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in May of 1979. This would seem to indicate a certain rigour in dealing with the material at hand, although the next 40 or so pages of the book are dedicated to a rather rambling disquisition on exactly why these dates were chosen, which seems to me a little unnecessary, especially given how often Barre necessarily ranges outside them. Indeed, *Convergences* reads more like a series of magazine articles than a unified overview, devoting long chapters to an issue-by-issue (often page-by-page) review of the *Musics* journal, the platform of choice for aesthetic statements and squabbles on the British improvisation scene of the time, and to the first moves towards the still incomplete decentralisation of the scene from London to various points around England. (Wales, Scotland and Ireland are nowhere mentioned.)

In general I found its emphatically informal tone, with its constant personal asides (often several within a quoted text, breaking up and obscuring the point being made by the quotation), jokey but unfunny parentheses, and lack of an index, frequently obscuring its usefulness as a document of the music and its time. Inline citations make the book look 'academic' from a distance, but inconsistencies in their format make it look sloppy and undisciplined when viewed more closely, and the density of typos, unnecessary repetitions, and odd phrasing and punctuation indicate that proofreading must have been minimal, which is a shame. To quote his chapter on Keith Rowe: 'Looking at the CD pictures [from the AMM album *It was an Ordinary Day in Pueblo, Colorado*], [Rowe] has turned into A.N. Other Hairy Bloke, so it is rather apposite that he partially sounds like another Hendrix disciple here. But all this emerges, inevitably, from the inevitable AMMusic matrix, which bypasses analysis, ultimately'. (p. 90) Potential readers will be able to judge from the style of this sentence whether the book is for them! But it also highlights another major problem with the book, at least as far as this reader is concerned: not only does AMM's music 'bypass analysis', but so, seemingly, does all the other music mentioned in the book, since there is enormous emphasis on who played with whom where and when, but hardly any on what they played or what Barre thinks about it, besides which some of the few musical descriptions are misleading – the 'layers of sound' of Evan Parker's soprano saxophone music, for example, aren't the product (only) of circular breathing (p. 66). I found interesting and