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Making Music in Britain: Interviews with those Behind the Notes by Elizabeth Haddon. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. 240 pp, £47.50 hardback. ISBN 0754638235

This collection of interviews with 13 professional musicians offers insight on the lives, opinions and experiences of some prominent composers, performers and writers on music: Dame Janet Baker, Django Bates, Hilary Finch, Graham Fitkin, Howard Goodall, Antony Hopkins, Stephen Hough, Nicola LeFanu, Richard McNicol, Sir Roger Norrington, John Rutter, Andy Sheppard and Kathryn Tickell. The eclectic group of interviewees cover between them a vast range of musical styles and perspectives: the mixture of musicians working in different areas is a deliberate counter-balance to existing biographical studies, which tend to focus mainly on composers, although no rationale is given for the choice of these individuals over others.

Elizabeth Haddon's role as a freelance musician and teacher leaves her refreshingly free of the research assessment constraints within which British academics are forced to operate: she gives no explanation of her research methods, her commentary on the interviews is confined to a brief, though very insightful, introductory chapter, and there are no assertions of contribution to knowledge or promise of future research. This approach gives the book a distinctive voice amongst

recent publications, and makes it widely accessible to musicians of all kinds, as well as valuable for researchers for whom the interviews themselves offer rich data on topics ranging from the influence of parents on instrumental learning, through to the processes of composition and improvisation.

The absence of any methodological discussion, though in keeping with the style of the book, did raise some questions about the interviews which, while presented as transcripts, are too fluent not to have been edited, perhaps quite substantially. It would also have been nice to know at what point in a relationship with the interviewees this dialogue emerged: one question refers to 'earlier when we were talking', which gives the feel of a radio discussion programme and leaves readers wondering what else they missed in the earlier conversation. Haddon's questions are very well-informed, sometimes overtly through reference to previously read or heard information, and sometimes in their insightful probes and easy transition between topics. The interviews are a pleasure to read, not least because the interviewees themselves are thoughtful and reflective, speaking on topics that are clearly important to them. There is a useful biography and a portrait photograph at the start of each chapter, where again the journalistic style dominates: these are 'most distinguished artists' and 'leading composers', claims which convey the author's respect for her interviewees and an enthusiasm which is again a welcome respite from the cautious tones of much contemporary research.

Themes of education and influences on musical development are prominent in each interview, and make for fascinating reading: no clear patterns of school-based influence emerge, though there are some individual accounts of inspiring or obstructive music teachers, and much reference to the

performing opportunities associated with school and the wider community. Haddon summarises the early influences of her interviewees as follows:

A common factor is having been brought up in an environment where music was present and was taken seriously, although the family might not necessarily be musicians. Somehow, often as a result of a particular experience, music becomes a passion, even an obsession, and regardless of what kind of formal tuition is received, meaningful experiences are sought and gained (p. 3)

Learning, rather than teaching, is thus highlighted as the critical factor, offering further support to the argument that some degree of self-education and motivation is vital for success in all kinds of music. Formal education alone, it seems, is not enough: 'Using a variety of learning methods and seeking the support and advice of other

musicians is a successful strategy which all the musicians have adopted' (p. 3).

Making Music in Britain is comparable with Alison Oddey's book of interviews, *Performing Women* (St Martin's Press, 1999), in which female actresses and comics offer their views on their careers and development. Oddey provides a summary discussion at the end of her book, and something similar from Haddon would have been a welcome opportunity to hear more of her interpretation of the interviews and their implications. That might have made it a different kind of book, and possibly less widely appealing: this has the feeling of impeccably presented but rather 'raw' material, which will be fascinating for a wide range of readers who are willing to engage with the book and draw their own conclusions about contemporary musical life in Britain.

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