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BOOK REVIEWS

Heinz Holliger – Spurensuche eines Grenzgängers by Kristina Ericson. Varia Musicologica 2. Peter Lang, Berne, £42.00

Musik im Exil: Die Schweiz und das Ausland 1918–1945 edited by Chris Walton and Antonio Baldassarre. Peter Lang, Berne, £35.60.

Frontiers, artistic and geo-political, provide a linking theme of these books. In the long interview of 5 November 2001 with which Kristina Ericson concludes her text, Heinz Holliger remarks that art belongs on the borders: 'Die Grenze ist die Heimat der Kunst, schon immer gewesen'. Ericson demonstrates very lucidly how this thesis applies equally to Holliger's compositions in a technical and an expressive sense, the physical and psychical aspects being intimately connected at every stage of his oeuvre. How these two sides of his music have developed over the years is illustrated by the Trakl song-cycles for contralto and orchestra Holliger composed in 1960 and 1992/93 respectively. The later cycle's greater nearness to the borders of the subconscious, Ericson argues, was the product of a deeper understanding of the musical means, but also of an active interest in contemporary music, literature and life generally. This led inevitably to a greater artistic complexity.

The book's sub-title (*'Das kompositorische Schaffen im Spiegel der Beschäftigung mit Sprache, Atem, Schweigen'*) enumerates three special features of the oeuvre. Writing to the Jewish poet Nelly Sachs in 1966, Holliger remarked that just recently he had been concentrating on instrumental pieces, but that the *word* was always in his mind when he was composing. Boulez, one of his composition teachers, called Holliger's way of thinking '*schumannien*', and Schumann's name crops up time and again in this survey. Holliger's attachment to words has been such that, with one exception, there is a literary dimension to all the compositions selected by Ericson for close analysis. From his early interest in Christian Morgenstern as mood and nature poet, Holliger progressed via the ill-fated contemporary Swiss author Alexander Xaver Gwerder to two figures who have retained his abiding devotion: Georg Trakl and Nelly Sachs. Settings of Paul Celan's *Psalm* (1971) and Samuel Beckett's monodrama *Not I* (1978/80) are further milestones on this road. Of compositions from the 1990s, Ericson singles out three of the *Fünf Mileva-Lieder*, based on poems by a child of Holliger's musician-friends Catrin and Thomas Demenga.

The exception to the pieces having some literary basis is *Tonscherben*, the 1985 'orchestral fragments' Holliger dedicated to the memory of the Polish-born Israeli poet David Rokeah. These nine miniatures prompt the sole speculative element in Ericson's studies, for she prefaces her analysis of each one save the last with a quotation from Rokeah's *Acht Etüden*, poems inspired by a Holliger performance of Bruno Maderna's Oboe Concerto No. 3. This is, in fact, an imaginative simulation of Holliger's own practice in the instrumental nocturnes of *Elis*, which he prefaced with lines by Trakl. Almost from his earliest years, Holliger began to deviate from traditional word-setting – though he has recently veered back in that direction. In the *Lieder ohne Worte* of the 1980s and 1990s words are present only as musical ideas or motifs.

While featuring poetic texts in his Trakl and Sachs compositions, Holliger was developing a range of fully musical responses to their images and symbols. A 30-page discussion of his handling of Trakl's 'Nachtlied' is eloquent testimony to this process.

Two of the other sections of Ericson's survey, concerning *Not I*, examine 'Wortmotivik' and 'Musikalische Umsetzung als Textinterpretation'. Although much in Holliger's writing for his soprano soloist was guided by speech patterns, it is the free musical construction which is finally decisive, and this entails creative 'interpretation'. Samuel Beckett was enough of a musician himself to recognize the fact. 'I don't like my words being set to music,' he groused to Morton Feldman. Holliger, for his part, is quoted as saying (my translation): 'I don't want to compose texts that are in need of music. Neither do I want to surmount them. What I want is for the text and the music to regard and to determine each other like a mirror'.

Breath, the second of Ericson's special topics, is covered principally in three central chapters. Breath control, for Holliger, is as necessary for the string player as for the singer and wind instrumentalist. Hence the discussion of his 1973

String Quartet and other works under the rubric 'Der Atem des Streichinstrumentes'. Whereas the String Quartet ends in total exhaustion, vitality was to prevail in such friendlier string pieces as those Holliger wrote for the Chamber Orchestra of Europe as recently as 2000/01. In an earlier chapter, Ericson considers works for wind instruments and Holliger's *Atembogen* for orchestra of 1974/75. Most are associated with a crisis in Holliger's creative output, whereby the hitherto germ-free (his own phrase) style became contaminated by noise and other impurities. In *Pneuma* the wind ensemble serves as a giant lung. The same act of breathing one's last is performed, with theatrical heightening, by the wind soloist in *Cardiophonie*.

That Holliger was here approaching new frontiers is confirmed by his 12-minute piece for a cappella mixed chorus based on Paul Celan's *Psalm*. Ericson heads her relevant chapter 'Die Stimme des Chores' ('voice' in the singular) to stress the corporate function of the Holliger choir. The character of *Psalm* was captured by the composer in the grisly phrase 'a song of praise sung with the throat cut'. He also describes it in the score as music close to the limits of audibility. Like the 'black hole' (Peter Gülke) into which *Atembogen* finally tumbles, the pregnant general pauses in *Psalm* are important aspects of Ericson's third special topic: *silence*.

This topic recurs intermittently throughout Ericson's book. She quotes Roman Brotbeck's argument that with Holliger, 'Schweigen' provides an actual compositional starting-point. Unlike other works of their age, the Hölderlin choruses of the *Scardanelli-Zyklus* don't trace a process of extinction; rather, what is already dark and moribund yields a tiny chink of light. Ericson perceives a similar starting-point in *(t)air(e)* for solo flute, which is part of the Scardanelli complex. Something akin to this also obtains in the last fragment of *Tonscherben*, a spectral funeral march that Holliger compares to an X-ray. On the printed page, the first five bars of the fragment look skeletonic indeed.

Deflated by Holliger's stealthy pinpricks on contemporary sensibilities, the listener may find all this deeply depressing. For me, his music was an object of curiosity rather than enthusiasm until the break-out from quiet desperation in the 1990s. During that time Holliger persisted, Hamlet-like, in walking the tightrope between 'Sein' and 'Nicht-Sein'. His description of the Violin Concerto as an anti-concerto might appear to be no more than an avant-garde ritual of antagonism. But new factors have entered the creative balancing-act: unconcealed anger on the one hand (a piece in memoriam Sándor Veress), dark comedy on the other (the *Schneewittchen* opera), augmented by the earthy qualities of indigenous folk music (*Alb-Chehr*). And the last few years have ushered in a new playfulness which is often reflected in the work-titles. One looks forward to a recording of the song-cycle *Puneigä* for soprano and instrumental ensemble, based on poems by the Piedmontese author Anna Maria Bacher.

Nonetheless, Ericson is right to emphasize the essential continuity underlying Holliger's oeuvre. To return from recent compositions to the 1970 studio recording of *Der magische Tänzer* – a captivating work never performed since – is to find striking evidence for this. Moreover, the composer has qualified Ericson's broad division of his music into 'periods', remarking that extrovert works were often taking shape alongside more hermetic ones. As Holliger once commented, further ventures along the lines of *Psalm* would have logically led to suicide.

Running to 640 pages, Ericson's stout softback derives from a thesis written under the critical eye of Ernst Lichtenhahn. With its many sub-divisions the table of contents resembles a legal document, but this should not deter any student: both the synoptic and the analytical sections are a pleasure to read. Because of their length, neither the *Scardanelli-Zyklus* nor Holliger's 'Snow White' opera after Robert Walser is examined in detail; nor is the Violin Concerto completed in 2002. There is obvious scope for separate monographs on these pieces.

To supplement material from interviews previously published, the text includes three conversations that Ericson conducted with Holliger, as well as numerous *obiter dicta* gleaned by her during more than a decade. It is interesting to learn of Holliger's upbringing in the small Swiss town of Langenthal, where his father was a Wagner-loving physician and his mother helped in the surgery. The same goes for early works such as an elegy inspired by the Berg Violin Concerto, which he had not then heard! I have spotted only one typo ('Dürrer' for Dürer, p. 333) and one miscalculation (the duration of Holliger's opera, p. 560). In all, this is a magnificent appraisal of a remarkable oeuvre.

In the final interview with Ericson, Holliger mentions the devastating effect on children today of the 'shareholder mentality'. Humanistic concepts of a rounded education have been betrayed by marketing managers. The editorial preface to *Musik im Exil* includes the caveat that the 'free market' is now cashing in on the so-called degenerate art of the Nazi era. Not that the

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scope of these articles is limited to the effects of Hitler's Germany; they are intended to illuminate 'the phenomenon of exile in general'. In practice, however, 'Ausland' in this book does largely mean Germany.

Musik im Exil is a welcome supplement to the two tomes I reviewed in the Swiss issue of *Tempo*.[1] It is published in hardback and dedicated to the memory of Räto Tschupp (1929–2002). Though little known outside the German-speaking world, Tschupp conducted first performances of many works by Swiss and non-Swiss composers from Bärtschi to Zbinden, and from Bartók to Yun.

The publication has the financial support of a foundation established in the name of Hans Schaeuble. Aspects of Schaeuble's own life and work are reviewed by Chris Walton and Annalise Plummer Roy respectively. Walton deals even-handedly with this Swiss composer of German extraction who spent time in Berlin just before and after the outbreak of World War II. What I've heard of Schaeuble's music does not seem particularly striking. But his professional craftsmanship unquestionably belies his Swiss reputation – the book's 1945 *terminus ad quem* is stretched here – as a wealthy amateur. And while his pan-German sympathies and inherited wealth brought Schaeuble one form of rejection, his homosexuality in prim and proper Zurich created another.

In 'Hans Schaeuble and Dodecaphony' Plummer Roy expands on her Schaeuble article in the *Tempo 218*.[2] The other English-language contributions to *Musik im Exil*, too, are based on solid work-analysis – although Malcolm MacDonald, writing on the *Sinfonia* (1927–28) of the Polish émigré Czesław Marek, modestly describes himself as an annotator.

In a study of Hindemith's formal and harmonic language in *Mathis der Maler*, the American scholar Timothy L. Jackson sketches the musical semantics of exile and consolation. There was once a Swiss actor who, tripping over his lines in a Shakespeare rehearsal, burst out: 'I do hate pieces with words in'. I was reminded of this incident by Jackson's eight pages of text and 39 whole pages of music examples. Although the history may be familiar to native readers, perhaps he should have mentioned the ostensible reason for including Hindemith's Matthias Grünewald opera in *Musik im Exil*. Following the Nazi ban on the scheduled première, the work was first staged on 28 May 1938 at the Zurich Stadttheater. Jackson's specific purpose is to question Michael Kater's recent representation of *Mathis* as kow-towing to Nazi ideology. Whether or not one accepts the alternative reading proposed, it is good to have Hindemith released from a simplistic take on a complex score.

Several of the book's 11 German-language contributions are devoted to organizations. Most of present-day Europe is faced with the thorny political, social and cultural issues of the immigrant worker. The problem lends immediacy to Thomas Gartmann's piece on the Schweizerische Tonkünstlerverein [STV] between 1933 and 1945. There's a distinctly comic side to the long-running saga of the Swiss national anthem(s). The narrow protectionism preached in the organ of the STV, on the other hand, carried stern implications for outsiders such as the composer Vladimir Vogel, the composer-conductor Paul Klecki and that notable German-born advocate of Swiss music, Hermann Scherchen. The dispute over Scherchen caused an infamous spat between Frank Martin as STV president and a French-Swiss colleague. After 1945 the Scherchen controversy rumbled on because of his Communist leanings. The names of Scherchen and Vogel crop up again in an article on the ISCM and the activities of its Swiss section between 1933–1939. Anton Haefeli sees the musical and political conservatism of Paul Sacher – later to be a source of disappointment for Heinz Holliger – as representative of Swiss thinking during those years.

In her account of the beginnings of the Lucerne International Festival, Verena Naegele shows how the festival was always an amalgam of artistic and commercial interests. Much vaunted since as a reaction to Austria's nazification, the first Lucerne Festival was initially planned to take place *before* Toscanini's resignation from Salzburg. The prime mover was Jakob Zimmerli, then Stadtpräsident of Lucerne, who also played a major part in the founding of the Wagner Museum in Tribschen. Naegele links the spirit of the nascent Lucerne Festival with the concept of *geistige Landesverteidigung* ('spiritual defence of the country'): an assertion of Swiss independence that was, inevitably, governed by opportunism. Lucerne never became the out-and-out pocket of resistance to fascism which the Zurich Schauspielhaus was during that era.

Like most collections of conference papers – accruing in this case from the 65th Music Week in Braunwald – *Musik im Exil* is a very mixed bag. The articles appear in the alphabetical order of contributors' names. It is left to readers to draw

[1] 'Schweizer Töne' and 'Entre Denges et Denezy', *Tempo 218* (October 2001), pp.45–47.

[2] 'A Search for Identity: Hans Schaeuble and his *Musik*, op.18', *Tempo 218*, pp.20–27.

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together and reflect on the contents. Mathias Spohr offers one of the more general articles with his discourse on exile and popular music. Norbert Graf (his c.v. is missing from the authors' biographies) compares the careers of five Swiss musicians who attended the Berlin composition classes of Busoni or Schoenberg.

Between 1922 and 1951 Arthur Honegger contributed to more than 40 film scores. One was for a Swiss and German co-production, two more for Swiss feature films on which Honegger collaborated with the Belgian composer Arthur Hoérée. Thomas Meyer asks whether it was the war which prevented Honegger, as a Paris resident, from participating in any more Swiss productions after 1938 and suggests that it was not. Rather, Honegger had moved on from the style of *Le Roi David*, and his approach was too sophisticated for the Swiss film industry of the time.

Friedrich Geiger focuses on Vladimir Vogel's *Ticinella*, a wind quintet avowedly composed in honour of the Ticino canton. Antonio Baldassarre examines one of Paul Klecki's – later Kletzki's – Lieder as well as his conducting score of Mahler's Fourth. Both, writes Baldassarre, reveal an understanding of musical form as something in a continual state of renewal, and hence continually jeopardized. Surveying the group of pieces that Ernest Bloch called his 'Jewish Cycle', Walter Labhart mentions in passing that Bloch's grandfather was a cantor in the Swiss-German community of Lengnau. This was one of two Surbtal villages, each acquiring its own synagogue, which a federal Diet gave to the Jews. It must be one of the less well known facts of the latter-day Diaspora that a Jewish ghetto came about in 18th-century rural Switzerland.

Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen discusses the brief German fame of the writer and composer Robert Bosshart (1899–1937). Bosshart's anti-semitism, Hinrichsen argues, was a reflection of his anti-modernism. This is a useful case-study of an obscure musician. For richer musical pickings, however, one must turn aside to an article Hinrichsen has published elsewhere.[3] In it he discusses Othmar Schoeck's stage composition *Penthesilea* and discovers a spectacular contrast between the endings of the 1927 Dresden and 1928 Zurich versions.

Which brings me, by a circuitous route, to an issue peculiar to 'Die Schweiz und das Ausland'. It is not exactly a matter of 'exile', and it goes back farther than 1918. As Hinrichsen relates, Bosshart was among a number of Swiss composers to act upon the idea that acknowledgement at home was dependent on successes in Germany. (The great exception is the symphonist Fritz Brun – and look at the gradual eclipse of his music, despite Scherchen!) Here, economic but also cultural factors played a role. In the 19th century the Swiss writer Gottfried Keller was a staunch patriot, and at the same time a staunch believer in the bond uniting Alemannic Switzerland and Germany. It was that bond which prompted a series of books published between 1922 and 1943 under the umbrella title of *Die Schweiz im deutschen Geistesleben* ('Switzerland in German Intellectual Life').

Not counting double and triple volumes, nearly a hundred titles appeared in the series. Until 1925 they were published in Leipzig, thereafter in northern Swiss Frauenfeld as well. They ranged over literature, history and the fine and applied arts. Apart from Otto von Greyerz on the Swiss-German folk song, only two authors addressed music: Hans Corrodi with the first two editions of his Schoeck monograph and Antoine-Elisée Cherbuliez with *Die Schweiz in der deutschen Musikgeschichte* (1932). Immediately before World War I Cherbuliez had played the cello in the Meiningen Hofkapelle under Reger. He is described in Anselm Gerhard's article as a music publicist and in the appended English abstract as a musicologist. In fact he taught at the University of Zurich from 1923 to 1958, gaining a reputation for the breadth of his learning. As his name might suggest, he lectured fluently in both German and French. Perhaps it is only with the benefit of hindsight that the political hazards of his yoking of Swiss to German musical culture become clear.

But time and again the putative harmony has been fraught with tension. It is with considerable caution that the Berne-based Gerhard – himself an incomer from across the border – investigates the series.

Peter Palmer

Audio Culture – Readings in Modern Music edited by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner. Continuum, £12.99.

The significance of recording technology for the time from its invention up to the present is widely acknowledged, so a collection titled *Audio Culture – Readings in Modern Music* suggests a publication which focuses on an important issue of the music of the last 50 or 60 years. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner have explained that:

[3] Archiv für Musikwissenschaft Vol. 59 (2002) No. 4, pp. 267–97.

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> *Audio Culture* attempts to map the musical terrain of this new sonic landscape. Rather than offering a *history* of contemporary music, the book traces the *genealogies* of contemporary musical practices and theoretical concerns, drawing lines of connection between recent musical forms and earlier moments of recent audio experimentations. (pp. xiv-xv)

The mapping is done in two parts, broadly titled 'Theories' (part 1), and 'Practices' (part 2). At first, this broader division seems helpful, but looking at the subsections of each part, such as 'Modes of Listening' under 'Theories' and 'The Open Work' under 'Practices' (to name just two) is also intriguing. If 'Practices' means more than the theorization of an idea, the issue of the open work as an abstract concept seems to be more fitting for the heading of 'Theories'. The book could have done without this partitioning, and instead just used the headers of the nine subsections: 'Music and Its Others: Noise, Sound, Silence', 'Modes of Listening', 'Music in the Age of Electronic (Re)production', 'The Open Work', 'Experimental Musics', 'Improvised Musics', 'Minimalisms', 'DJ Culture' and 'Electronic Music and Electronica'. Obviously, some cross-over between these subsections exist, but the grouping of texts under each individual focus is good and interesting. Some publications within one section are to be expected: Russolo's 'The Art of Noises: Futurist Manifesto', Attali's 'Noise and Politics', Cage's 'The Future of Music: Credo' and Varèse's 'The Liberation of Sound' are a case in point. But the editors throw in a few texts which are either less well known (Henry Cowell's 'The Joys of Noise') or have not appeared on the reading lists of many academic institutions (an interview with Masami Akita, 1997).

Audio Culture compares well with Robert P. Morgan's updated version of Vol. 7 of Strunk's *Source Readings in Music History* ('The Twentieth Century', New York: W. W. Norton, 1996). As a reader for interested (non-)musicians and non-academics *Audio Culture* is probably more approachable. One characteristic which makes this book a little more reader-friendly is that each subsection gives a brief introduction to what follows, and each published text is preceded by a very crisp (mostly) biographical paragraph (or two), occasionally placing the reproduced text in the context of the writer's output and life or his/her immediate cultural or artistic environment. This is very helpful for less well-known authors.

Some texts in *Audio Culture* are intriguing examples of writings which would not be collected by editors who see the 20th century merely in terms of western art music. Ornette Coleman's 'Change of the Century' is a good representative for this collection; taken from the liner notes to the recording of the same title, these thoughts are unacademically refreshing and insightful. Coleman describes his perception of free group improvisation as experienced with his own 'group'.

With 57 published texts there are bound to be some writings which a single reader will find less interesting or even neglectable. For instance, why was Earle Brown's 'Transformations and Developments of a Radical Aesthetic' reproduced in the section on 'The Open Work', but not his seminal lecture on 'open' form in Darmstadt (published in Thomas (ed.): *Form in der Neuen Musik*, Mainz (Schott) 1966, pp. 57–69)? Some might miss Milton Babbitt's 'Who Cares If you Listen?' (1958),[4] as documentation of a certain disposition of 20th-century art composers towards their potential audience.

One final point goes back to the manner in which the editors have tried to inform the less initiated reader (and with such a breadth of perspectives on 20th-century music, there will be few readers who will not appreciate the introductory paragraphs, described above): some texts have the occasional editorial footnote, but more would be beneficial. It feels as if the editors did not come to a final decision about who this collection is intended for. While the introductory paragraphs seem to suggest that it is aimed at a broad readership, the lack of explanatory, editorial footnotes might alienate a reader. To illustrate this: Cage's aphoristic text 'Composition in Process' from 1982 includes one line that reads just 'HCE', and no explanation is given; for readers not accustomed to Cage, this must be puzzling, maybe even offputting. (The reference is to Joyce's character in *Finnegan's Wake*, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, or Here Comes Everybody, who stands for the all-inclusiveness of everybody, particularly exemplified in Cage's musicircus concept.)

To stay within the metaphor of the editors, this collection is a very valuable mapping of some of the most important issues of our audio culture of the last 50 to 60 years. Despite the above criticisms, Cox and Warner will stir interests, will initate further study, and for that alone, their volume should be in everyone's private library.

Clemens Gresser

[4] Now reprinted in *The Collected Essays of Milton Babbitt* ed. Stephen Peles et al (Preinceton University Press) – reviewed in *Tempo* vol.59 no.233 (July 2005), pp.67–70 (Ed).

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