

University Library Archives and Special Collections, item number GB-0033-SMY 3a. The Scherzo movement is also part of a separate String Quartet in E-flat major located in the British Library, Add. MS 46858, 67–76 ff. All three movements (from the String Quartet in C minor, the String Quartet in E-flat major, and the Serenade in D major) are 260 bars; only the Serenade movement is in G major; and the String Quartet in C major contains a different accompaniment rhythm in the trio section than the String Quartet in E-flat major or the Serenade in D major. Other differences include slight changes in articulation (staccato versus no staccato, etc.). Unlike the movements from the String Trio, however, Smyth did not ‘rework’ the Scherzo movement by adding passages or drastically changing the harmonic nature of the movement; in fact, the Quartet Scherzo and the Serenade Scherzo have the same total number of bars. However, she shifted the movement from G minor to G major, and she simplified an accompaniment rhythm in the trio section. With this additional information, it seems that the first movement of the Serenade was the only part that did not exist in earlier work.

Snyder expertly engraves the score itself. All editorial markings, including dashes, brackets, and the like, are clearly explained in the critical report. The layout is clear and readable, and it serves as an excellent study score. Performance materials are in preparation as of the writing of this review, and the price was not available. It will also be an acceptable performance score if the score is available in a spiral-bound format. The only critique of this invaluable resource is the cost of the bound engraved edition; at just over four hundred dollars (US), it is a resource more likely to be purchased by a library than an individual scholar, conductor, or student. The facsimile is available for an additional cost. The engraved edition is also available via Recent Researches in Music Online, but only through a library or institutional subscription. While this edition is invaluable for future Smyth research, the cost of the performance materials may hinder the performance of the work.

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Russell Stinson, *Bach's Legacy: The Music as Heard by Later Masters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). 177 pp. £22.99

In the introduction to a recent edited book on methods in historical musicology, Frank Hentschel drew attention, somewhat apologetically, to the absence of a chapter dedicated to reception history (an omission accentuated by the numerous references to reception research elsewhere in the volume).<sup>1</sup> This simultaneous presence and absence is entirely characteristic of reception studies in musicology over the last couple of decades. Although the issues and approaches central to reception remain crucial for contemporary musicology, the concept of reception history is

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Hentschel, ‘Einleitung’, in *Historische Musikwissenschaft: Gegenstand – Geschichte – Methodik*, ed. Hentschel (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2019): 9–17, here 15.

nowadays seldom explicitly invoked, while theoretically oriented discussions of reception are few and far between.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the issue is one of over-familiarity: in treating it as a standard part of the musicological toolkit, we no longer feel the need to justify the assumptions behind the study of reception, still less to engage with the theoretical literature that originally inspired it. Another factor discouraging engagement with the concept (probably the one that lies behind Hentschel's omission of it from his book) is the fusty and off-putting nature of the canonic texts on reception, most of which date from the late 1960s and 1970s. Although Hans Robert Jauss and other early advocates of reception history engaged with challenges that are still pressing today, their approach now seems rigid and restrictive, imposing constraints on the study of reception rather than maximizing its possibilities.<sup>3</sup> While later generations of literary historians and musicologists have continued to invoke Jauss (and in particular his concept of the 'horizon of expectations'), this points less to the merits of his work than to the dearth of subsequent models for theorizing reception. As Michele Calella notes in a recent overview of reception studies in musicology, the uncoupling of the practice from its theoretical roots has transformed reception into an 'ecumenical' category, capable of coexisting with a range of different methods.<sup>4</sup> But there is a danger that this ubiquity comes at the price of stripping reception of its critical thrust and transformative potential.

For make no mistake: reception still has a crucial role to play in historical musicology. At a time when critique remains the dominant mode of engaging with the monuments of the past (whether through the hermeneutics of suspicion, decolonizing the curriculum or cancel culture), reception history stands for a more open-ended approach: a means to demonstrate the dynamic and positive ways in which canonic texts and figures have engaged successive cultures and outgrown their original ideological contexts. In other fields – the standout example is biblical studies – reception has become the key resource in staving off disciplinary meltdown, serving to rehabilitate the canon and justify its study.<sup>5</sup> In order for reception history to fulfil this kind of transformative role, however, it needs to be rigorous and reflexive in methodology and committed to dialogic engagement with the texts and cultures it brings into conjunction. In terms of method, the key issues are familiar. How should we decide which responses are important? What criteria should shape our selection and focus (a problem drastically exacerbated by the digital availability of vast swathes of potentially relevant texts)?<sup>6</sup> No less pressing is the question of purpose: why exactly

<sup>2</sup> One notable exception is Michele Calella and Benedikt Lessmann with Cora Engel, eds, *Zwischen Transfer und Transformation: Horizonte der Rezeption von Musik* (Vienna: Hollitzer, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, 'Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft', in *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970): 144–207.

<sup>4</sup> Michele Calella, 'Musikhistorische Rezeptionsforschung jenseits der Rezeptionstheorien', in Calella and Lessmann, eds, *Zwischen Transfer und Transformation*, 11–27, here 22.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Christopher Rowland, Emma Mason, Jonathan Roberts and Michael Lieb, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Emma England and William John Lyons, eds, *Reception History and Biblical Studies: Theory and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015); and the ongoing series of *Wiley Blackwell Bible Commentaries*, ed. John Sawyer et al. (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2005–).

<sup>6</sup> On which see Emma England, 'Digital Humanities and Reception History; or the Joys and Horrors of Databases', in *Reception History and Biblical Studies*, ed. England and Lyons, 169–84.

are we studying these responses and what do we hope to get out of them? Do these responses speak only to their own horizon, or do they impinge on our own understandings and values? At its most interesting, reception history changes our grasp of how different cultural and temporal horizons intermesh, blurring the boundaries between the original texts, their receptions and our own responses.

Perhaps I am setting the bar too high, but simply documenting what people in one period thought of the music of another does not a reception study make. Equally problematic is an approach that seeks to correct the supposed naiveties and misconceptions of the receivers under scrutiny. In relation to Bach, the latter approach reminds me of Friedrich Blume's 1947 monograph *Johann Sebastian Bach im Wandel der Geschichte*, in which the author lambasts the vulgarity and obtuseness of successive generations of Bach's interpreters from the composer's death to the mid twentieth century; Blume fulminates at 'editions which flout all standards of honesty and truthfulness', denounces the 'uninspired and dishonest performances ... the hair-raising absurdities perpetrated even by such masters as Reger and Busoni', and aims at proving 'how intrinsically hollow must have been the conception of Bach which led to such travesties'.<sup>7</sup> The last time I quoted Blume's words was 14 years ago, when reviewing Russell Stinson's first monograph on Bach reception (*The Reception of Bach's Organ Works from Mendelssohn To Brahms*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).<sup>8</sup> Back then, I was frustrated by Stinson's treatment of his nineteenth-century sources, which in places echoed Blume's impulse to scoff at figures whose attitudes and approaches diverged from his own. At least the Stinson of 2006 took a less stuffy tack, frequently resorting to quips and one-liners in debunking the efforts of nineteenth-century performers in place of Blume's moralistic certainties.<sup>9</sup> But what troubled me about these humorous asides was the sense that they tended to substitute for more penetrating commentary; Stinson seemed more content to reinforce our prejudices about nineteenth-century Bach reception than to probe the diverse range of approaches actually operative in the period. Another, related frustration was Stinson's reluctance to venture much beyond the works and writings of his chosen composers. While we learned how Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt and Brahms engaged with Bach as composers, performers, editors and teachers, there was little attempt to explore broader attitudes and practices in the period, let alone the aesthetic and cultural factors shaping them.

How does the Stinson of 2020 compare with the one of 2006? While in 2006, Stinson barely mentioned the word 'reception', here he describes himself as a 'reception historian' and aligns his book with the 'discipline of reception history' (p. 1). He also offers a brief rationale for reception studies, arguing that 'the historical layers imparted by ... recontextualization add immeasurably to the music's significance' (p. 1). What he doesn't discuss is how to sift and evaluate the glut of material available to the historian of Bach's reception in the nineteenth century, or indeed how to engage that material in order to derive maximum insight from it. His approach, as in the earlier book, is to present a chronological sequence of

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Blume, *Johann Sebastian Bach im Wandel der Geschichte* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1947), trans. by Stanley Goodman as *Two Centuries of Bach: An Account of Changing Taste* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950): 71.

<sup>8</sup> James Garratt, 'Russell Stinson, *The Reception of Bach's Organ Works from Mendelssohn to Brahms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)', *Music & Letters* 89/3 (2008): 419–21.

<sup>9</sup> Russell Stinson, *The Reception of Bach's Organ Works from Mendelssohn to Brahms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 118 and 120.

chapters narrowly focused on Bach's reception by the great masters (in this case, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Wagner and Elgar). But is this really 'reception history', given the absence of a narrative frame or core argument? What this book, like its predecessor, has to offer is more a biographical documentation of individual responses to Bach than a reception history.

As well as centring on a particular composer, each chapter bases its picture of Bach's reception on a specific type of source. The first two chapters aim to glean insights from Mendelssohn's and Schumann's correspondence. The Mendelssohn chapter takes advantage of the rich resources provided by the new collected edition of the composer's letters, using them to expand the treatment of Mendelssohn's reception of Bach's organ works presented in Stinson's 2006 book.<sup>10</sup> The approach taken is straightforward: Stinson presents extended quotations from particular letters, contextualizing their content and drawing attention to the key issues that they raise. While not all the letters are of the same level of interest, the benefit of this format is that it allows Stinson to deal expansively with the questions they generate; as might be expected, the strongest sections are those dealing with issues of transmission and performance practice. The Schumann chapter takes a different tack, focusing in particular on the composer's correspondence with the music critic and aesthetician Eduard Krüger. Stinson usefully quotes at length from Krüger's descriptions of individual chorale preludes, drawing not only on his letters to Schumann but also those to the music historian Carl von Winterfeld (it is fascinating to see how the tone of the descriptions is carefully couched to suit the addressees, with technical information predominating in the Winterfeld letters and more poetic effusions in the Schumann ones). There is much that is of interest here, and one gets a real sense of the difficulties confronting Bach lovers in the period prior to the Bach *Gesamtausgabe*; as Stinson demonstrates, Krüger's knowledge of published editions of Bach's music was surprisingly patchy (p. 61). Stinson is at his best in highlighting such inconsistencies and anomalies. He is less adept at probing the historical and aesthetic assumptions underpinning Schumann's and Krüger's viewpoints. In discussing their conception of the St John Passion, for example, Stinson overlooks the extent to which nineteenth-century aesthetic categories shape their response; both musicians draw on the language of the sublime in evoking the 'daemonic power' and 'dark depths' of this work, relegating the St Matthew Passion to the more conventional realm of the beautiful (pp. 84–5).

The last two chapters draw on a different kind of evidence, scrutinizing composers' annotations of key texts (in Wagner's case, the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, and in Elgar's, Albert Schweitzer's *J. S. Bach*) to piece together a picture of their views of Bach. Wagner's fairly sparse annotations are generously supplemented by references to Cosima Wagner's voluminous diaries, enabling a focus on the Bach soirees held intermittently at Wahnfried over the winter of 1878–79. In places, Stinson's commentaries hark back to the censorious tone of passages in his 2006 book; he describes Wagner's view of the D Major fugue from Book 2 of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* as 'frivolous, not to mention self-aggrandizing', criticizing Wagner's 'pronounced (and fully Romantic) tendency to interpret the music of the WTC programmatically' (p. 105). This seems like a misreading, since there is nothing programmatic about Wagner's quip that the first subject and contrasting theme resemble a 'Bürgermeister' and 'Bürgermeisterin'; rather, Wagner is drawing on

<sup>10</sup> Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Sämtliche Briefe*, ed. Helmut Loos and Wilhelm Seidel, 12 vols (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2008–17).

the long-established habit of fleshing out musical topics by linking them to character types. Such symbolic interpretations are also to the fore in Schweitzer's Bach monograph. Indeed, Elgar's scorn for the author – one wonders why he persisted with the book rather than simply discarding it – centres on Schweizer's pictorial interpretations of Bach's cantatas and chorale preludes. While Elgar's testy and sometimes condescending annotations make for an entertaining read, there is no sense here of whether other English musicians in this period shared his bewilderment at Schweizer's approach.

Stinson's approach to reception reminds me a little of those volumes of table talk once compiled to celebrate the wit and wisdom of Great Men (although in places it also resembles Nicolas Slonimsky's *Lexikon of Musical Invective*). While the balance between documentation and interpretation seems awry, this book – like its predecessor – is nicely written and is surely guaranteed to appeal to the music lover with an interest in Bach or his Romantic 'receptors'; indeed, some of the features that may well irk scholars (such as the often-intrusive biographical interpolations) will be useful to the general reader. If one shares Stinson's view that the value of reception and its study lies in the accumulation of layers of historical data, then it is hard to fault the book. But if one is looking for a study that probes the dynamic ways in which the original texts, their receptions and our own responses interact, then the possibilities of reception are far from being exhausted.

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