

Lalo's Concerto in F. Hartmann's comment, 'there were scarcely two consecutive measures which contained the notes exactly as they had been written!' tells us as much about late-nineteenth-century performance conventions as about Ysaÿe himself. Incidentally, it is amusing that it wasn't until Hartmann's outburst, 'it isn't accurate!' (p. 197), that Ysaÿe reluctantly agreed to 'look through the score a little after lunch' (p. 198). An equally rich episode is Hartmann's explanation of Ysaÿe's memory lapses, which occurred, according to Hartmann, because '[Ysaÿe] knew every work so completely that he would lose his part in the whole and might very likely emphasize something in the horns or in the strings or in the reeds' (p. 199). Although Hartmann's description of Joachim's Quartet was not as flattering – 'this playing was so dry, so lifeless, leathern, scratchy, and out of tune!' (p. 209) – he fondly recalled his friendship with Grieg, as well as Grieg's enthusiastic reception of his G-major sonata as performed by Hartmann in Kristiania (Oslo).

Facsimiles of the 'Minstrels' transcriptions (Debussy's autograph score and Hartmann's manuscript score), three previously unpublished letters from Debussy to Pierre Louÿs and a catalogue of Hartmann's compositions and transcriptions complete this exposure of an obscure virtuoso as seen through his own eyes. While this book might primarily attract those interested in aspects of Debussy biography, it will have a broader appeal to those of us who enjoy the interplay between fact and fiction in accounts of history that remain, unashamedly, acts of nostalgic recollection. Beware then, that Hartmann knew how to spin a yarn and that this skill made for a provocative and colourful remembrance of artistic relationships and their impact on the course of musical life.

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Kern Holoman, *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire 1828–1967* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). 655 pages. \$95

The term 'chronicle' has a hoary, venerable caste to it. It is the name of two books of the Bible, and suggests a telling of history that reaches far back into the past. As a style of history it puts emphasis on the representation of events in an accurate sequential relationship, rather than establishing broader themes, and suggests an account that takes place on a detailed, blow-by-blow level. It is a term that is more associated with institutions than with social or intellectual history – particularly ones that document their history through a systematic accumulation of the archival written record. It is in this sense that Kern Holoman uses the term for his book *The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire 1828–1967*. 'My principal concern here', he writes, 'is [to] get the facts of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire set out – unlike the archive itself – in some trackable order. It is for that reason that I have preferred the chronicle approach, starting in Chapter 5, to an organization by themed critiques' (p. 22). Holoman's work is a comprehensive look at one of the oldest orchestras in Europe, its structure, personnel, repertoire and legacy. The implied exhaustiveness of the term 'chronicle' also seems apt here, given Holoman's intimate knowledge of the Société's primary sources. His project is the result of an 'ongoing effort ... to read every file in the archive' (p. 18). There are potential pitfalls in using a strictly chronological path, particularly on the level of detail that Holoman supplies. One of the challenges is the sheer management of information, and having the trivial remain merely trivial, while having no broad

themes brought forward through global analysis. Fortunately, Holoman has a gift for placing an anecdote into a context that immediately provides it with larger meaning. And in spite of the painstaking detail of his account, Holoman sees a larger significance in the Société's history, referring to it as 'a microcosm of French history' (p. 22). 'The potent forces of democracy, exclusivity, and revolutionary fever that collided in and around the Conservatoire during the 1820s and 1830s forged and then tempered an organization that was as flexible as it was strong' (p. 14). Holoman is also able to sustain a larger perspective on his subject through a canny organizational strategy combined with a lively writing style.

While the bulk of Holoman's work follows a straightforward chronological path, his opening chapters, grouped together in a section labelled 'structure of the Société des Concerts', provide a much more synchronic view of the institution. These first chapters cover the core structural elements of the Société, establishing a normative pattern for the institution, even while Holoman acknowledges the amount of variance over time. The first chapter, 'Beginnings', describes the general state of orchestral concerts in 1828, the year of the Société's birth, the forerunners of the Société, particularly the concert series given at the Conservatoire, as well as the current state of the institution's archival/documentary record. The second chapter, 'The Musicians', is actually an overview of the Société's governing structure, and the statutes and regulations that determined the musicians' responsibilities and benefits. Holoman next turns his attention to 'The Hall' and the other physical spaces in which the Société worked. Finally, 'The Concerts' describes the rhythm of the rehearsal and concert schedules and the financial realities of subscriptions and ticket sales.

One of Holoman's main themes is the continuity of the orchestra's governing structure and institutional identity, and these four opening chapters collectively impress these points on the reader. Holoman's decision to separate his work into synchronic and diachronic sections, however, does result in a certain amount of informational overlap. The advantages and disadvantages of this dual manner of storytelling show when Holoman begins his chronological narrative in Chapter 5.

There is a certain amount of redundancy between the structural overview and the chronicles themselves. Holoman's chronicles are divided into three periods of approximately fifty years each, and further divided into eras determined by the orchestra's major conductors. Of necessity, the first period, which covers the establishment of the Société, re-examines information already encountered in the chapters on organizational structure. On the other hand, the opening chapters provide the reader with a stable backdrop that provides a context for the unfolding of events.

Of the several broad themes that Holoman keeps in play during his narrative, two stand out. There were two qualities that made the Société des Concerts a cohesive organization throughout its 139-year history – one ideal and one practical. 'What gave the institution its palpable esprit de corps was the simple nobility of its commitment to art music. What made it permanent was a strong constitution – the *statuts réglementaires*, or simply, the statutes' (p. 55). Holoman seldom loses touch with these two aspects of the Société's institutional identity. The Société's commitment to art music is a theme worked out in its choice of repertoire, and in the tension between preserving a canon and keeping the repertoire fresh through expansion. A commitment to the great symphonic repertoire is evident from its inception in the degree to which they programmed the works of Haydn, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Schumann and, above all, Beethoven. Founded in the year following

Beethoven's death, the Société bore much of the responsibility for promoting Beethoven's music to the French public. The Société des Concerts took its mission of giving life to the great masterworks seriously indeed.

The chief commitment of the early years, incontestably, was Beethoven: 'Within five years all nine symphonies were mastered, and during [founding conductor] Habeneck's two decades the society acquired, studied, and performed everything of Beethoven that anyone had ever heard of' (p. 108). This preservationist impulse remained a strong component of the Société's identity throughout its history, and the Société was a major force in the establishment of the modern symphonic canon. But Holoman also explores how these ideals fared in the face of practical tensions. Issues of repertoire choice are real concern: in the first few decades of the Société,

Habeneck, sensing that the Beethoven fever would run its course, insisted on a variety of measures meant to refresh the programs and encourage the development of a national symphonic school. Nonetheless, even within this essentially conservative institution there was a counterforce that sought to expand the repertoire by cultivating some version of a French national symphonic school. (p. 136)

The other factor that gave the Société its strong identity was its system of self-governance in the form of its statutes. It is in part the stability of the statutes over time that help Holoman construct a static model of the organization in his book's opening chapters, a model determined by the strong vision of its founding conductor, Habeneck: 'the statutes of the society, its code of behaviour and identity, had essentially frozen the institution in Habeneck's image' (p. 137). While there were methods in place to revise the statutes, this was difficult enough that they retained a real sense of permanence to them, a sense of legal immutability that kept them effective. There were some aspects of governance where this sense of immutability limited the statutes' flexibility. One of the statutes' primary functions was to define the rights and responsibilities of different levels of society membership, and to determine the criteria for advancing to full membership. One particularly sticky issue involved the regulation of the chorus, whose right to full membership in the Société was routinely questioned or restricted. Holoman astutely locates the tension between the instrumental and vocal *sociétaires* in the disparate responsibilities of the two groups and in the primary commitment of many of the singers to the Opéra. It is also true, however, that much of it was related to the Société's strict ban on the admission of women as full members – this was a problem given how integral women were to a full chorus: 'In the case of women singers, the situation was considerably more ambiguous, with a few being named as *sociétaires* solo but most holding apprentice or, at best, adjunct memberships' (pp. 26–7). Holoman revisits this issue often, and recognizes that the statutes themselves, in this and in other situations, could exert a confining force on the organization.

Holoman's emphasis on the statutes' flexibility and strength increases the drama during some of the Société's larger crises, when the statutes were put to the test. One example of this would be Holoman's discussion of the standoff between the Société and Charles Münch, who served as President and first conductor during and immediately following World War Two. In 1946 Münch sought permission to conduct in Boston under terms that the Société's administration felt amounted to breach of contract. Holoman places this conflict in the context of an ongoing power struggle between Münch and then Société

secretary Jean Savoye, but even more so in a breakdown of the statutes' authority, a situation that was several years in the making.

In a single meeting the very structure of the Société des Concerts, suggested the violinist Fontalirand, had unraveled. In truth it had been unraveling for some time, largely through the routine ignoring of the statutes that wartime had engendered, and resultant transfer of administrative and artistic power from the musicians to the conductor and general manager. Münch had no intention of recognizing a contractual obligation to the Société des Concerts. (p. 466)

The rift between Münch and the Société lasted several years, and it was only under a complete change of leadership that the organization stabilized.

While Holoman's work has excellent narrative continuity, it also exhibits a great ease of use for the scholar interested in a specific period, a specific conductor, or even a specific episode in the Société's history. The clear chronological organization helps this, as does the index, which is excellent, covering not only major personalities and concert works, but also some of the recurring issues that Holoman excels at highlighting: touring, unions, salaries, repertoire or recording, to name a few. The notes, too, are a model of documentation. The bibliography is something of a curiosity: the book contains only a select bibliography but points the reader to a web-based full bibliography. Holoman also includes some useful general information appendices outlining the chronology of the various governments of France during the Société's existence, the administrative leadership of the Société, and the tenure of its various conductors. Apart from a small smattering of typographical errors, mostly of the type that escapes the attention of a modern spell-checker, this book shows an impressive attention to detail. What is ultimately more impressive, however, is how coherent and well-told a tale these details serve, and the enthusiasm and love Holoman displays for his topic.

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Stephen C. Meyer, *Carl Maria von Weber and the Search for a German Opera* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003). 253 pages. \$39.95

Historically, Germany has been the country most identified with Western classical music and, consequently, music has been the art form perceived to have the most potential to help define German nationalism. Stephen C. Meyer's book *Carl Maria von Weber and the Search for a German Opera* explains the relationship between music, opera and the social construct of German national identity as it developed in the early nineteenth century. The interrelatedness of the search for both a German opera and nation is explored through the description and explanation of the music, plot and reception of Weber's *Der Freischütz* and *Euryanthe*, along with Winter's *Das unterbrochene Opferfest* and Méhul's *Joseph*. This study is reinforced by the use of writings by Weber's contemporaries on music criticism and German nationalism, which is Meyer's original contribution to this subject area.¹ The

¹ This book is probably based on the author's dissertation 'Performing Identity: The Search for a German Opera in Dresden, 1798–1832' (PhD dissertation, SUNY, Stony Brook, 1996), although this is not stated in the Acknowledgements.