

Canadian University Music Review Revue de musique des universités canadiennes

John Harley. *William Byrd: Gentleman of the Chapel Royal.*
Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press; Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1997.
480 pp. ISBN 1-85928-165-6 (hardcover)

Eugene Casjen Cramer

Volume 20, numéro 1, 1999

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1015653ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1015653ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Canadian University Music Society / Société de musique des universités
canadiennes

ISSN

0710-0353 (imprimé)

2291-2436 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Cramer, E. C. (1999). Compte rendu de [John Harley. *William Byrd: Gentleman of the Chapel Royal.* Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press; Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1997. 480 pp. ISBN 1-85928-165-6 (hardcover)]. *Canadian University Music Review / Revue de musique des universités canadiennes*, 20(1), 119–121.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1015653ar>

preference for footnotes over endnotes, but at least these citations are given after each article rather than collected at the end of the volume.

Owing to the germination of these papers in a conference with not only a single topic (i.e., the motet), but also a specific focus (i.e., that of “hearing” the motet), many of the papers share resemblances in concepts and interpretations. Though none depend on one another, there has been some attempt to cross-reference the work in other chapters. It is obvious in more than one essay that at least some contributors read one another’s work prior to publication; this has resulted in a more unified book than a set of conference proceedings might generally produce. *Hearing the Motet* has much to recommend it.

As we approach the next millenium, it is probable that this trend towards interdisciplinary research methods will continue. Although I do not expect that traditional musicological analyses will be dismissed completely, it seems that, in order to further our understanding of the music from previous eras, scholars must persist in their efforts to reinvent these more “old-fashioned” methods of interpretation. *Hearing the Motet* shows the strengths of both old and new approaches; it can stand as both a valuable tool, and a model for further research.

Debra Lacoste

John Harley. *William Byrd: Gentleman of the Chapel Royal*. Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press; Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1997. 480 pp. ISBN 1-85928-165-6 (hardcover).

William Byrd is one of the few composers whose music encompasses both vocal and instrumental music. Moreover, his vocal music consists of both sacred and secular compositions, and he contributed to the repertoire of both the Roman Catholic and Anglican liturgies. In *William Byrd: Gentleman of the Chapel Royal*, John Harley has provided the interested musician and knowledgeable amateur with a “life and works” type of book on this very important English composer of the late Renaissance.

The first 151 pages of this volume are devoted to an exhaustive examination of Byrd’s life—there are 739 footnote citations in this biographical section alone. Every detail imaginable seems to have been tracked down and I am in awe of the time and labour Harley has invested in this biographical enterprise. Although the painstaking examination of Byrd’s Roman Catholic roots and connections as well as his ability to find powerful protectors is enlightening, the details of his disputes over property become tiresome quite quickly. And, when all is said and done, one needs to ask: “What has been gained by knowing ‘everything’ about Byrd’s property disputes, recusancy, businesses, etc.?” Perhaps, the few pages devoted to Byrd’s biography in Fellowes’ venerable book (*William Byrd*, 2nd ed. [Oxford University Press, 1948; orig. ed., 1936]) is all that we needed to know?

The above having been said, the biographical section has several aspects to recommend it. First of all, the introduction consists primarily of an “Outline Chronology of Byrd’s Life and Music” on facing pages. Second, there is a series of tables detailing the historical background of the various periods in

Byrd's life as organized by the author, i.e., 1539–62, 1563–71, 1572–76, 1577–93, and 1593–1623. These are invaluable in placing Byrd and his music in historical perspective. Finally, the writing in this portion of the book is quite fine and eminently readable.

The second, or works, section of Harley's book covers 202 pages. According to the author, in this part of the book the purpose is "to provide a brief account of his [Byrd's] music with particular emphasis on its chronology" (p. xi). To this end Harley gives a "speculative chronology" of Byrd's music up to 1571, from 1571 to 1592, and of the Pavans and Galliards from 1572 to 1591. The chronology of the music of the last thirty years of Byrd's life is dealt with in the discussions of the primary publications: *Masses* (*a* 4, 1592–93; *a* 3, 1593–94; and *a* 5, 1594–95), *Gradualia, ac cantiones sacrae* (1605 and 1607), the *Psalmes, Songs, and Sonnets* (1611), and *The Teares or Lamentacions of a Sorrowfull Soule* (1614). One of the appendices, Appendix H, is a "Catalogue of Byrd's Works" (pp. 408–27) that complements and, to a certain extent, updates the other recent catalogues by Kerman (*The New Grove*, 1980) and Turbet (*William Byrd: A Guide to Research*, 1987). In these latter discussions especially, Harley has attempted to make use of the most recent research, e.g., Philip Brett's work on the *Gradualia*. However, when reading Harley's attempt to date works more specifically than the date of the volume in which they were published, it must be remembered that such ruminations can be little more than that, and in most cases they are, at best, guesses. It is also wise to remember that the human mind works in mysterious and all but unfathomable ways, and, therefore, that the time-honoured technique of collecting and weighing internal evidence to prove a point is not always a trustworthy method of determining a chronology as this author discovered in his work on Tomás Luis de Victoria, who, for example, in the revision of his set of Lamentations (1585) not only took out some of the archaic, cambiata-like dissonant skips, but also added some where there were none in the earlier, manuscript, version (see Eugene Cramer, "The Officium Hebdomadae Sanctae of Tomás Luis de Victoria: A Study of Selected Aspects and an Edition and Commentary," 2 vols. [Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1973]).

In addition to chronology, Harley occasionally also provides a bit of analysis, mostly descriptive in nature and often not very much more than a guided tour. For many readers this is as far as they want to go into the music. However, those who want to know more about Byrd's music, how it works, and what gives it its distinctive sound will find this book a disappointment. Some of those in the latter group, such as this reviewer, will also find the use of descriptive terms such as the anachronistic term homophony (and its derivations) off-putting. I continue to be concerned, even amazed, that writers continue to use this term, which is apt when discussing a Schubert song, to describe a texture in which the voices are related rhythmically rather than melodically when there are other and more accurate terms available. Of these, my preference is for the term homorhythmic inasmuch as it identifies that aspect of the music that is "the same." Another acceptable, but slightly longer

and somewhat vague term (especially when taken out of context) that has been used of late is sonorous counterpoint.

One of the aspects of an analysis about which the author has been fastidious, and on which he has obviously spent considerable effort, is the identification of the mode of the work in question. This subject is, however, a very thorny one and the subject of numerous thoughtful studies. It is refreshing, therefore, to have Harley observe, when a work does not fit precisely into one or other of the customary modes, that Byrd might not have been "overly concerned with the niceties of modal theory" (p. 313), and, elsewhere, that a work is "in the key of G with two flats" (p. 322).

In a postscript (almost an afterthought) Harley addresses the reception history of Byrd's music. In the course of this review he states that "for most of this century Byrd has had a standing in English music equalled only by that of Purcell and Handel" (p. 369). Without justifying this assertion, he continues by asking the question, "What is it that gives Byrd this pre-eminence?" To his credit, Harley does attempt to grapple with this fundamental question. However, one would think that having written a book about a musician of such standing, the author could have come up with more substantive reasons for Byrd's status in the history of music than those that follow: the sheer quantity of it, the care he took to see that most of it was preserved, its competence, its invention, its originality, its unexpectedness, its sincerity, its depth, and its controlled but profoundly experienced emotional content. Even if one were to know what the author meant by the last seven items in this list (and he does not offer any explanation that I was able to find), their relationship to Byrd, as opposed to any other composer, is, for the most part, lacking in this volume, and, therein, lies its greatest fault.

The above criticism notwithstanding, Harley has written a book that has a place in the literature on William Byrd. The biographical portion is very thorough and is not likely to be superseded for some time to come. Conversely, the primary value of the works/chronological portion is likely to lie in the succinct overview of Byrd's music it provides and the further research and stylistic analysis it is likely to engender.

Eugene Casjen Cramer

Jonathan P. Wainwright. *Musical Patronage in Seventeenth-Century England: Christopher, First Baron Hatton (1605–1670)*. Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1997. 470 pp. ISBN 1-85928-278-4 (hardcover).

Although much attention has been paid to the French influence on musical life at the Restoration Court, it was not the only, nor even the most important influence on English music of the seventeenth century. Underpinning much English "baroque" music, and indeed, even much French music from the period, are Italian methods. Jonathan Wainwright attempts to rectify the oversight of Italian influences by examining the operation and structure of seventeenth-century English musical patronage in the form of a case study of the activities of Christopher, First Baron Hatton (1605–70). Hatton owned one of