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Jean Mongrédien. *French Music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism, 1789–1830*. Translated by Sylvain Frémaux. General Editor, Reinhard G. Pauly. Portland, Oreg.: Amadeus Press, 1996. 394 pp. ISBN 1-57467-011-5 (hardcover)

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With the exception of some notable research, such as that of Elizabeth Bartlet,<sup>1</sup> musical events that occurred in France between 1789 and 1830 tend to have been passed over by musicologists. Artistic, literary, and musical achievements have been relegated to near-obscure when compared with the importance of political and economic events. Jean Mongrédien's book, originally published in French by Flammarion in 1986, fills this lacuna with a seminal contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the music of France during these years. His study of archival sources has produced a mass of data over which he maintains complete control, so that the reader never feels overwhelmed with facts and figures. Despite his thorough research, this is no mere listing of names, dates, and places. Quite the contrary: Mongrédien's informal, almost anecdotal, style results in a smooth, clear narrative that is eminently readable.

In each of seven chapters Mongrédien covers a different facet of musical life. The titles of these chapters are an indication of the breadth of his coverage, which comprises education, music of the Revolution, opera, sacred music, concerts, and instrumental music (primarily symphonic, but also including chamber music and notable performers). The last chapter deals with the influence of German music on French, an influence Mongrédien shows to have been significant much earlier than had previously been believed. He approaches each area through the context of its historical background: a careful and detailed study of society, people, and institutions provides the framework within which musical materials and styles are considered.

Mongrédien begins his chapter on Revolutionary compositions by conceding that the music itself was usually of little intrinsic aesthetic value. Rather, it was its role that was important, its worth as a propaganda instrument, for the members of committees struck to organize revolutionary celebrations saw music as a powerful weapon that could evoke strong emotions. Many celebrations took place out of doors, where simple music, performed loudly by large groups of musicians playing wind instruments and percussion and accompanying huge choirs, could generate maximum effect. Such music could also provide a secondary propagandist function, that of comparison with small chamber performances, to the considerable detriment of the latter, which revolutionaries saw as effete, effeminate, and aristocratic. Mongrédien's meticulous research into the background and performance of some of these works, including the most famous, "La Marseillaise," is painstakingly documented. He produces evidence that even composers of note, such as Cherubini and Gossec, were not above composing potboilers for the revolutionary movement,

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<sup>1</sup>M. Elizabeth C. Bartlet, "Etienne Nicolas Méhul and Opera during the French Revolution, Consulate and Empire: A Source, Archival and Stylistic Study" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1982).

and took advantage of the enormous musical forces at their disposal to experiment with new musical ideas.

The chapter devoted to the music of the lyrical theatre is one-third the length of the entire book, thus indicating Mongrédien's main interest. This chapter is subdivided into several sections. The first of these addresses the use of opera for political ends, something which has, of course, a long tradition in France. As with revolutionary songs, the aesthetic value left much to be desired, with music, text, and staging being created with the sole purpose of enacting and enhancing revolutionary ideals. These propaganda vehicles, couched in a very loose musico-dramatic framework, were performed alongside operas from the traditional repertoire, staged continuously throughout the years of revolution and Empire—provided, of course, that the censor approved. One side benefit for researchers is that immaculate and extensive records (the *Journaux du Théâtre de l'Opéra*) were kept at the Opéra—whatever name it was given—during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary years (Bibliothèque de l'Opéra, ms. Usuels 201). Mongrédien has scoured these and the Archives Nationales to provide information about performances and personnel, and contemporary newspapers for review and commentary. One intriguing result of his research shows that the star system flourished, with the most popular singers, the tenor/high baritone François Lays, for example, earning fifteen times as much per annum as the singer of a small role, and receiving bonuses to boot.

The balance of this chapter is given over to the main performance venues, the Opéra, the theatres that offered *opéra comique*, such as the Feydeau, and those that produced Italian opera, like the Théâtre italien. Mongrédien takes the same approach to each venue: a brief account of the creation of each theatre and of its troupe, followed by a longer and more detailed section that describes the repertoire performed in each, all impeccably researched and annotated. Of particular interest is the reception of *Die Zauberflöte*. Long believed to have been negative, Mongrédien proves that reaction to *Les mystères d'Isis*, an adaptation of *Die Zauberflöte*, was highly enthusiastic, that it was in fact by far the most popular foreign opera performed at the Opéra, remaining in the repertoire for ten years, and that, in spite of the fairly limited adaptation, Mozart's genius was acclaimed: "This music contains energy and strength, and heavenly melody as well." (p.74).

Perhaps the most interesting chapter is the last one, which chronicles the influence of German music on French. Mozart's music had always had a following, but Mongrédien's researches show that there was a steady stream of cultural exchange between Germany/Austria and France during this period, an exchange that included composers, performers, and even music publishers, with the arrival in Paris of Heinrich Simrock. As early as 1800, allusion was made in the popular press to the music of a certain Louis Vanbee-Thoven, seven years before his Symphony no. 1 was performed in Paris, and many years before his music had its overpowering effect on Berlioz. German symphonic music enjoyed steady popularity, but an attempt to introduce German Sing-spiel, even the works of Mozart, met with failure after an initial surge of

interest. This chapter, like all the others, is replete with intensive detail reported in an eminently readable style.

Although Mongrédien's study lacks much discussion or analysis of actual music, I do not feel that this is a serious problem. In part at least, his intent was surely to provide the basis for further investigation into the material his scholarly researches have uncovered. I would, however, raise three small quibbles. First, as is often the case with works about French music, what this book deals with is, almost exclusively, the music of Paris, not the music of France (though part of the chapter on opera deals with Lyon). Second, Mongrédien's title is slightly misleading. He does not address the music of the Enlightenment at all, except when discussing Lacépède. His book really evaluates the history of Parisian music from the fall of the Bastille to 1830. Third, the dates given in the French Revolutionary calendar (pp. 347–48) do not accord with those published in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, particularly with respect to the *jours sans-culottides*, to which part-month Mongrédien ascribes only four days, the *EB* anywhere between fourteen and eighteen, depending on the year. These small points aside, *French Music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism* is a fundamental and most welcome addition to musical scholarship.

Alison Stonehouse

Timothy L. Jackson and Paul Hawkshaw, eds. *Bruckner Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. xvi, 301 pp. ISBN 0-521-57014-X (hard-cover).

Although the period between 1860 and the First World War had its fair share of "controversial" composers, the subject of the present volume appears—at least in retrospect—to have outdone them all. Not only did Anton Bruckner (1824–96) suffer a lifetime of hostility, neglect, and misunderstanding (Gustav Mahler, his great successor in the Austrian musical firmament, did not fare much better, after all), his posthumous reputation has been subject to vicissitude and factionalism. Moreover, the ebb and flow of professional and popular opinion has been driven by what is all too often an unstable, capricious mix of musical and non-musical considerations. Whether it is the temporal and sonic abundance of Bruckner's symphonies, his aggrandizement as a cult-figure by National Socialism, or any one of a number of other (real or imagined) "problems," positions taken for or against virtually any question about the man and his music have been defended vigorously (often to the point of disregard for the niceties of rational and dispassionate argument) by adherents of a wide variety of national and geographic "camps."

It will not surprise the student of modern *Rezeptionsgeschichte* that the most stubborn and—even if only through indifference—broadest resistance to Bruckner has been based in North America. Although negligible shifts in sentiment have occurred even here, an earlier, substantial improvement in the composer's