

typos in the main text (pp. 25, 103, 107, and p. 49 n. 94); the editor of *Grotesken-Album* is Carl Seelig (not Charles Seelig); and the present author's name is misspelt in the bibliography (p. 174). Unfortunately, Example 4.2 (p. 151) has had its annotated text partially cropped in the typesetting process and while the spatial organization of Example 4.3 (p. 152) is important to retain, it could have been reassembled at a more legible size, the positioning of the last system not being crucial to the motivic connections being made.

These details aside, Julie Brown has opened up a hugely fascinating area of musical modernism that remains largely unexplored. One outcome of her study would be to continue a philosophical investigation of the grotesque for a range of composers and their works. Another outcome might be to extend research into bodily meanings in music, which currently tends to be located in semiotics or psychology. This might include: bodily meanings in specific instruments; bodily metaphors in a range of music; parallels between bodily meanings in music, the visual, and dramatic arts; and gestures composed into the score, whether written instructions or instrumental or motivic gestures. Some of these areas are already more advanced in ethnomusicology and would benefit from input from other disciplines, such as anthropology. Whichever directions are pursued, this monograph should generate further interest in a field of musicology that deserves much more attention.

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*Ligeti, Kurtág, and Hungarian Music during the Cold War.* By Rachel Beckles Willson. pp. xviii + 282. Music in the Twentieth Century. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 2007, £50. ISBN 0-521-82733-1.)

Post-war East European composers no doubt faced similar internal struggles and external isolation (witness Adrian Thomas, *Polish Music since Szymanowski* (Cambridge, 2005) and Valentina Sandu-Dediu, 'Dodecaphonic Composition in 1950s and 1960s Europe: The Ideological Issue of Rightist or Leftist Orientation', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 26 (2007), 177–92), yet post-war Hungarian music, caught aesthetically between a reverence for Bartók's legacy and the lure of progressivism, and politically between the hegemony of Kodály and the demands of the Zhdanov reform, is surely a unique case. As a former

student of Kurtág, and the author of *György Kurtág's The Sayings of Péter Bornemisza, Op. 7* (Aldershot, 2004) among other relevant studies, Rachel Beckles Willson is exceptionally suited to explore this history from multiple perspectives. Her fascinating study of Hungarian music during the Cold War brings a nuanced reading and first-hand sources to bear on complex political situations and rivalries that spanned decades. Along the way she employs Ligeti, the successful émigré, and Kurtág, the 'home-town hero', as avatars for two divergent musical paths that, although associated with different aesthetic and ideological positions, remain rooted in their common cultural heritage.

Beckles Willson mitigates the reductive nature of a nationalist survey, particularly one regarding a region so fraught by turmoil, by leavening historical reconstruction with sociological observations, discourse analysis, and musical analyses (some more successful than others). A useful Personalia lists most of the Hungarian cultural figures that populate the book (my one caveat is that musical compositions are not consistently dated, and one must occasionally leave the text to source them). Place, parlance, and people are touchstones throughout her study; Ligeti and Kurtág wend in and out of a narrative securely rooted in the cultural life of Budapest, and focused on the Hungarian language as a material link between the worlds of music and politics.

Following Otto Dann's ideas ('The Invention of National Languages', in Tim Blanning and Hagen Schulze (eds), *Unity and Diversity in European Culture c. 1800* (Oxford and New York, 2006), language assumes both a literal and metaphorical role, as the notion of a state-sanctioned musical language takes hold after the Soviet Union's occupation. New music's 'Hungarianness' was intimately bound up with language: the prosody of text settings, and the notion of a harmonic and melodic language rooted in folk heritage. Zoltán Kodály is another constant in the narrative's first half. As a central figure of 1940s musical life who tenaciously clung to power until his death in 1967, Kodály stood at the epicentre of the culture wars; he insulated students and the Liszt Academy from the worst excesses of the regime, yet he lost whatever cultural capital he retained when he capitulated to communist authorities. And Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* appears as a document that reframes Hungarian musical debates at various times in musical (retrogression vs. progress), transnational (East vs. West), and personal terms (as a possible reference for Ligeti's *Requiem* of 1963–5 and Kurtág's *The Sayings of Péter Bornemisza* of 1968).

If there is an unlikely hero to this narrative it is the unassuming Kurtág. His dramatic rise to the forefront of Budapest's Cold War musical life relied on a precise combination of presence and absence: Kurtág's lack of a public voice complemented his visibility as composer, performer, and pedagogue, to lend his music a tacit power and integrity. Ligeti's relation to his abandoned home is a bit more problematic; yet, as Beckles Willson notes, the time is ripe for a clear-eyed appraisal of his own sense of continuity with Hungarian musical life, set alongside the reception history of Ligeti's work within Hungary itself. The narrative relies on musical interludes devoted to each composer in turn to illuminate and render particular the somewhat abstract account of journalists, journals, societies, and ideologies. Drawing on Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of 'presence', Beckles Willson opposes Ligeti's 'physicalised' music to Kurtág's more spiritual approach, ever mindful that the music itself resists 'the conceptual in general as if in a *deliberately* engineered strategy' (p. 6).

The book divides into two parts separated by the 1956 Hungarian revolution, after which Beckles Willson looks at Hungarian cultural life both from within and without (through the eyes of Ligeti, Kurtág, and their correspondents). She views music from 1920 to 1945 through the prism of Hungarian music's relation to land and language. Two early avant-garde movements, as well as official support for ethnographic research, countered the conservative dominance of Ernő Dohnányi and the Erkel/Liszt school after 1934. The journalist Antal Molnár's nationalist conception of classicism opposed Bartók's later music to Schoenberg's individualistic approach, with Bartók and Kodály positioned as exponents of Hungarian classicism vs. a didactic focus on 'people's music', the virtues of pentatonicism, and indigenous prosody.

As Kodály became caught up in the Hungarian-language movement, his focus shifted to a broader political canvas. Kodály's linguistic chauvinism was seen as part of the fight against fascism, a position that led to his later rapprochement with Socialist Realism in its battle against German culture. By 1945 the loss of Jewish musicians and Dohnányi from the Liszt Academy left Kodály the sole musical figurehead in Budapest. He joined an alliance between the Social Democrats and Communists in the service of national renewal, trading his devotion to the rural folk music for urban workers' songs. The immediate post-war years were marked by Jewish assimilation, and a rhetoric of Hungarianness that, combined with social activism, characterized Bence Szabolcsi's influential Bartók seminars,

which extolled 'Bartókian music, heard though Kodály-ian morality' (p. 32). Schoenberg once again was brought in as a foil for Bartók; his unbending musical autonomy stood opposed to the 'social humanism' of the latter.

Soon the intoxicating freedom of the immediate post-war years gave way to the limits of Stalinism, and religious and nationalist organizations (e.g. the Hungarian Musicians' Free Association) were replaced by communist institutions built on the Soviet model (e.g. the Hungarian Musicians' Union). Kodály and Szabolcsi were under fire, but their venerated status, and the fluid situation in 1950, shielded them from the harsh treatment accorded figures in other artistic spheres. Cultural restrictions affected not only musical life but also discourse about music. Stalin's own position on language shifted in 1950, transferring power to champions of preservation, and offering Kodály and Szabolcsi an avenue for the democratization of art music. Thus the tenor of musical debates shifted once again: András Mihály pitted Bartók against the monstrous other represented by *Doctor Faustus's* Leverkühn, and Kodály saw ancient folk melodies supported as evidence of language's classlessness.

A highlight of Beckles Willson's study is her citation and analysis of meticulous minutes kept by the Musicians Union at the panel auditions for their regularly held festivals. These ritualistic affairs were a case study in political theatre, as praise and passive aggressive criticism were meted out in ideological terms. Ligeti emerges as a trickster hero of these proceedings, adroitly deflecting critiques of his friends' works with great rhetorical finesse. (A droll snapshot is provided by the transcript of a spurious debate about whether the 'manly' text of Ligeti's own *Tunes from Inaktelke* was appropriately scored for female voices.)

Although the absent Bartók received more respect, Kodály remained a commanding musical figure throughout this period. His folksong interests were subsumed by new pedagogical projects both inside and outside the academy that supported the new regime. Thus while Lajos Bárdos and Ligeti's works were attacked, Kodály won the Kossuth Prize and received two honorific titles. A modest ethical battle raged within the many dance and vocal works composed for music societies and workers' choirs, where references of peasant song and sacred music competed with Russian melodies and forms. Beckles Willson singles out Ferenc Szabó's *In Fury Rose the Ocean* of 1955 as the most representative example of the cantata, the genre best able to forge a link between Hungarian nation-

alism and socialist needs; Ligeti (*Cantata for a Youth Festival*, 1949) and Kurtág (*Korean Cantata*, 1953) both contributed to this genre, with mixed success.

The folksong-based, neoclassical divertimento, the dominant model for instrumental music prior to 1945, shifted back to the romanticism of Erkel and Liszt, as promoted by Szabó. Yet the increasingly public opposition to revolutionary cant emerged in the form of instrumental works based on charged poetic topics (Pál Járdányi's *Vörösmarty Symphony* and Enre Szervánsky's *Concerto in Memory of Attila József*), as well in as in the resolute, Bartók-influenced instrumental works Kurtág and Ligeti wrote in 1953–4. The debate on formalism in music shifted in 1949, as the folk music research pioneered by Bartók continued to bring 'abstract' music in line with national definition. Meanwhile the ongoing Bartók/Schoenberg debates were fuelled by Ernő Lendvai's hugely influential analyses of Bartók (begun in 1947, but lauded by Járdányi and Ligeti some time later).

Beckles Willson balances her account of the new regime's bustling life with two depictions of 'silence' marked by absence (p. 59). The emigration of Sándor Veress (professor of composition at the Liszt Academy from 1943), to Switzerland in 1949, is dealt with at length, while three of Ligeti's early settings of the singular Hungarian poet Sándor Weöres stand metonymically for the silence of compositions written for the desk drawer. Ligeti's settings of Weöres's 'children's poetry' allow Beckles Willson to bring her narrative back to both the Hungarian language and the musically specific. Although it is difficult to see the direct relevance of Ligeti's settings to the situation of Hungarian music (Beckles Willson sees portents within them of Ligeti's decision to leave in 1956), they certainly represent the confluence of the Bartókian strain with a more experimental approach.

The 1956 revolution was the culmination of three years of unrest since the death of Stalin, and the ensuing thaw was reflected by Budapest's increasing cultural diversity, constrained by poverty and the revival of the nationalist music myth as a bulwark against the interest of younger composers in serialism and the West. Ligeti and Kurtág, the erstwhile classmates and close friends up to the former's death in 2006, come to the fore at this point in the narrative as not only vastly different composers but as symbols for two vastly different people. The post-1956 half of the book is by necessity more fragmented, moving back and forth from public musical life in Budapest to the complex private

relationships Ligeti and Kurtág had with Hungary and one another. Beckles Willson charts these relations through correspondence with expatriate colleagues, but also through an exegesis of their post-1956 music. The portrayal of their music and discourse is viewed in highly ideological (although never simplistic) terms, with musical discussions grounded in the intersection of music and language.

Beckles Willson charts Ligeti's post-emigration experience through letters that suggest 'a prolonged moment of in-between-ness' (p. 87). Exchanges with his former teacher Veress, among others, are portrayed as a kind of self-purgation, expressed viscerally in verbal terms that match the corporeal force of Ligeti's music. She finds works such as *Aventures* (1962) overwhelmingly physical, such that commentators, in fits of neurotic repression, searched for rational explanations ill-suited to a work beyond conceptual meaning altogether (pp. 96–7). This depiction of raw force is difficult to reconcile with Ligeti's admitted fondness for labyrinthine compositional techniques (discussed in the *Requiem* of 1963–5, and select choral works of the 1980s). Yet the emotional distance encoded by those techniques suits their accompanying texts, and fits the portrait of a composer so estranged from his heritage that he asked Harald Kaufmann to identify him as an Austrian composer who only happens to come from Hungary (p. 120).

Both Ligeti and Kurtág adopted Bartókian polarities of sonority and symbolism that do not permit a simple, oppositional reading, just as both used opaque musical settings for texts on spirituality and death (Kurtág's *The Sayings of Peter Bornemisza*, Op. 7 (1968) and Ligeti's *Requiem*). The story of Kurtág's musical ascendance begins with the String Quartet Op. 1 (1958–9), unappreciated at its premiere yet central to his later construction as the voice of a new generation of Hungarian composers. Kurtág's public reticence set his compositions in relief and lent them an air of mystery. As the 'vessel of sounds that were otherwise still suppressed' (p. 123), his exploration of 'truth' justified his resort to modernist language; when *The Sayings* premiered in Darmstadt, it heralded Hungary's reintegration with the West.

The summer Bartók Seminar in Szombathely (begun in 1967), further cross-disciplinary collaboration, and the New Music Studio energized musical life in post-1968 Budapest. Beckles Willson attributes Kurtág's dominance of the cultural scene to his various 'presences', as well as his contacts. He collaborated with important poets and visual artists, worked closely with the

composer, conductor, and cellist Mihály, and was a revered member of the performance faculty at the Liszt Academy. His refusal to grant interviews or explain himself was perceived as a moral requisite: a rejection of public success in favour of inner truth, as expressed by the poets he set.

Beckles Willson looks at the substance and reception history of five significant Kurtág works from this period: *Four Songs to Poems* by János Pilinszky, Op. 11 (1975), *Szálkák (Splinters)*, Op. 6c (1973), *Játékok (Games)* (1973–), *Hommage à András Mihály: Twelve Microludes for Strong Quartet*, Op. 13 (1977), and *S. K.—Remembrance Noise. Seven Songs to Dezső Tandori's Poems*, Op. 12 (1975). Both texted and instrumental works engage poetic and musical symbols that resonate with a sense of national pride and tradition. The pedagogical overtones of a work like *Games* revived the Hungarian didactic tradition, while its minimal text inspired performers. *Games* seemed composed of elusive moments of 'presence', each of which carried a singular moral force. Critics were ecstatic (p. 151).

Against the moral import of Kurtág's silence, Beckles Willson opposes Ligeti's overt self-promotion, exposing several 'creative acts of memory' (pp. 166–7) and embellished childhood memories of Transylvania that played to Western notions of the exotic. Ligeti's repertory of 'masks' included nostalgia, fantasy, systematic procedures, parody (*Magyar Etüdök*, No. 2 as a gloss on Kodály's *Evening Song*), and Bartókian influences. Yet his changing reception within Hungary itself, marked by three visits between 1970 and 1983, cannot be credited solely to his music, with one notable, ironic exception. With Ligeti's Budapest fortunes at low ebb, András Wilhelm declared the Horn Trio (1982)—a work decried in the West as reactionary—a masterpiece ('Ligeti's Horn Trio', *New Hungarian Quarterly*, 25/94 (1984), 213, cited on p. 193).

Meanwhile György Kroó presented Kurtág as 'the most important living Hungarian composer' (*New Hungarian Quarterly*, 51 (1982), 199, cited on p. 199), whose shift from Hungarian texts to other languages—most notably Russian—was but the next stage in his metaphysical quest. Kurtág was now a cult composer with devoted interpreters and fans, for whom works such as *Omaggio a Luigi Nono*, Op. 16 and the *Kafka Fragments*, Op. 24 united two worlds of discourse in 1980s-era Budapest: 'intellectual ecstasy and Central European irony: the meeting points of wise passions' (Péter Balassa, 'Molto moderato', in *Halálnapló [Death Diary]* (Budapest, 2004), 110, cited on p. 210). His embrace of

powerlessness echoed the words of Vaclav Havel that Truth is irreconcilable with power, even as—in the West—it connoted exoticism and desire. As Beckles Willson adds, 'If, in the West, it became necessary to question the idea of purity in—say—"perfect" fifths, then here in the East it was imperative to hypothesize that it could still exist. And yet, of course, it was equally imperative to fail to reach it' (p. 215). Works such as *Attila József Fragments*, Op. 20 (1981) and *Officium breve*, which paid homage to both the distant and recent past (citing Hungarian chant, Webern, and Szervánszky), fit into a newly pluralistic compositional milieu in which music was dissected according to modernist, Western tropes of progress.

Péter Eötvös, a part-time member of the New Music Studio living abroad, returned to Hungary in the 1980s, citing a need to remain close to his mother tongue. His reintroduction paves the way for a consideration of two operas, a genre largely overlooked in *Hungarian Music during the Cold War*. Beckles Willson's epilogue compares the way Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (1911) and Eötvös's *Three Sisters* (based on Chekhov's play, 1998) represent a shared critique of nineteenth-century genre traditions. But her claim, such as it is, rests primarily on the contrast of three separate productions of *Three Sisters*: István Szabó's reactionary reading in Hungarian, using historical costumes and female voices (Eötvös used an all-male cast), a production by Inga Levant set after the Russian revolution, and Ushio Amagatsu's stylized Japanese version. The Amagatsu production preserved the abstract and cyclical qualities of Eötvös's music and libretto, yet history and Russia were effaced. If indeed Hungary seems to come into view, as Beckles Willson states, 'when it elevates longing to myth' (p. 233), then Ligeti and Kurtág offer complementary ways into the 'truth' of Hungarian music. Eötvös represents a generation with a more transparent understanding of this larger truth, which may be why—in 2004—he moved back.

Rachel Beckles Willson has done a wonderful job marshalling disparate sources and modes of analysis to shape a complex portrait of Cold War Hungary's musical and cultural ferment, and her book is an invaluable contribution to the scholarly study of late twentieth-century music.

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