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MUSIC AT GERMAN COURTS, 1715–1760: CHANGING ARTISTIC PRIORITIES
Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011
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This book has been eagerly awaited by those who have heard the work of Samantha Owens, Barbara Reul and Janice Stockigt at conferences during the last decade. As Michael Talbot says in his Foreword, it ‘provides a conspectus of music at selected German courts in the central decades of the eighteenth century’ (x). Talbot also calls it a ‘celebration’, and it is certainly on a scale that would have delighted eighteenth-century royalty: including the three editors, there are no fewer than fourteen contributors. After the Introduction by Owens and Reul, the chapters have been arranged in groups corresponding to the size and nature of the courtly establishment, so there are four chapters (by Stockigt, Alina Żórawska-Witkowska, Mary Oleskiewicz and Bärbel Pelker) dealing with ‘Kingdoms and Electorates’, three (Owens, Bert Siegmund and Wolfgang Ruf) under ‘Duchies’, three (Reul, Michael Maul, Dieter Kirsch) under ‘Principalities and Prince-Bishoprics’ and three (Ursula Kramer, Rüdiger Thomsen-Fürst and Rashid-S. Pegah) under ‘Landgraviates and Margraviates’. A final chapter (Steven Zohn) deals with “‘Die vornehmste Hoftugend’”: German Musicians’ Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Court Life’. There are fourteen tables, many of them running to several pages. All eight chapters originally in German have been efficiently translated into English by Owens and Reul; only the translation from the Polish of Żórawska-Witkowska’s chapter has a few instances of unidiomatic English. Somewhat surprisingly, there is no bibliography.

Not all of the book’s material is ground-breaking – nor is it intended to be. A good deal of research has already been carried out on eighteenth-century courts, and the editors acknowledge this. But, as they also point out, much of this research has focused on Berlin and Dresden, ‘primarily because of an interesting connection to the [Leipzig] *Thomaskantor* [J. S. Bach] and his oeuvre’ (1). With its focus on the medium- and smaller-sized courts, as well as the larger ones, the book does a great deal to redress the balance. As nearly all previous writing on the subject has been in the German language, it is very welcome to have the present work entirely in English. In addition, the strong focus on archival material means that the findings of earlier scholars have often been amplified and sometimes corrected. There are no musical examples and not much discussion of the music, but that is arguably beyond the scope of this volume anyway.

Given the impressive weight and diversity of material throughout the book, careful organization is of the greatest importance and it is obvious that the editors have given this a good deal of consideration; their original plan was to establish a series of ‘snapshots, or in effect “core sample” years’ (12). These were to be at fifteen-year intervals but, as they observe, the range of material ‘dictated a rather more diverse selection of dates’ (13). Some chapters, particularly those by the editors, retain the ‘snapshot’ idea, while others ignore it. As the editors admit, it is ‘the present authors’ own areas of expertise’ that have determined the book’s focus (2, note 5), and the work is all the better for this.

Many of the ‘changing artistic priorities’ referred to in the book’s subtitle only came about as a result of the years between 1715 and 1760 being a time of relative peace between two major wars. The impact of war on the cultural life of the courts can hardly be overestimated. In the seventeenth century, it was not just the Thirty Years’ War that wreaked havoc: the War of the Palatine Succession (1688–1697) caused major upheavals of court musical establishments, as did the War of the Spanish Succession at the start of the following century; at the end of the period covered by this book, war broke out again in the form of the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763). As Janice Stockigt remarks in her chapter on Saxony-Dresden, ‘the Seven Years’ War left Saxony in financial ruin’ (37), and Saxony, as other chapters in the book make abundantly clear, was by no means alone. But during the period of peace between 1706 and 1756, court musical establishments thrived. As a general trend, the numbers of musicians attached to the courts at this time show a



steady increase. For example, Mary Oleskiewicz's survey of the Prussian court between 1740 and 1756 shows an increase in the number of instrumentalists from twenty-three or twenty-five to thirty-eight. Only in 1760, a time of warfare, does the number decrease again.

Statistics such as these are at the core of the book: both in the main text and in the tables that follow each chapter, considerable detail is given concerning the membership of the various *Hofkapellen*. But the raw data also need contextualizing and interpreting. For example, town musicians, and players and singers from other courts, were often brought in for important large-scale events. According to Michael Maul, the fifteen full-time musicians at the court of Sondershausen were 'joined in part by their students, in part by lackeys, clerks, and secretaries at court' (295). Other peripheral musicians likely to take part in performances were the court trumpeters and members of oboe bands. Even in times of hardship, it appears that many rulers considered trumpeters to be indispensable to court ceremony. In addition, it is apparent from many of the chapters that court musicians were often expected to play more than one instrument; as Owens points out, J. C. Pez reported in 1714 that members of the Württemberg *Hofkapelle* were 'all experienced on three to five different instruments' (168). Only towards the end of the period covered by this book was there a trend to end this plurality and concentrate on single instruments. Ursula Kramer implies a lowering of standards when members of the Hesse-Darmstadt *Hofkapelle* were required to play 'multiple' instruments (352). This is perhaps a twenty-first-century viewpoint coming from our days of instrumental specialism: there is nothing to suggest that eighteenth-century musicians could not be highly proficient on more than one instrument.

Two chapters (Stockigt and Alina Żórawska-Witkowska) deal with the sharing of musicians and combining of ensembles at the *Hofkapellen* of Dresden and Warsaw courts, both under the jurisdiction of the Electoral prince Friedrich August and later his son, Friedrich Christian. There was precedent for this in the previous century: the three *Hofkapellen* from Hanover, Osnabrück and Celle came together in the 1690s to form a large-scale ensemble along the lines of Louis XIV's *vingt-quatre violons*. No mention is made of this and there is little reference to the French violin bands that had been attached to some of the courts at around the same time. It would have been useful to know whether these string ensembles were still present at eighteenth-century courts, especially as the oboe bands most certainly were and receive suitable attention from many of the book's contributors. Given the book's starting-point of 1715, I would not expect too much on seventeenth-century court musical life, but there is no avoiding the fact that eighteenth-century court music was largely based on the organizational practices established in the 1680s and 90s, if not before. Some contributors agree: Owens's Württemberg-Stuttgart chapter starts with a brief survey of the court in the seventeenth century and the influence of the French style, while Bert Siegmund (Saxony-Gotha-Altenburg) and Rüdiger Thomsen-Fürst (Baden-Durlach) also have preliminary sections dealing with the same period. Ursula Kramer describes Hesse-Darmstadt in the later seventeenth century as well as the period of Graupner's arrival and then appointment as Kapellmeister in 1711. But others stick rigidly to their eighteenth-century brief, and where this happens I feel that the chapters are weakened.

A survey such as this needs a closing chapter to bring many of its threads together. Talbot's eloquent Foreword goes some way toward doing this and it is a pity that he could not have been persuaded to write a final chapter presenting some general conclusions. Steven Zohn's 'German Musicians' Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Court Life' does attempt this in places, but it is more a comment on court life from the point of view of the musician. Zohn concentrates on the satirical novels of Beer, Kuhnau, Telemann, Pisendel and Quantz. But, while he admits that 'not all of these writings can be taken at face value', it is hard to see how the observations of musicians like Johann Kuhnau with little experience of court life can have much bearing on conditions of work in the *Hofkapellen*. Indeed, it is extraordinary that Kuhnau is described as a 'noteworthy court musician' (413); Kuhnau, Bach's predecessor at the Leipzig Thomaskirche, spent his entire working life as a town musician. Readers wanting information on German satirical novels will perhaps find Stephen Rose's recently published *The Musician in Literature in the Age of Bach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) more satisfactory.



Apart from the instance already noted, major errors seem to be absent. There are some minor points. Carnival was not linked to particular months but to the start of Lent (95). The mid-seventeenth-century suites by Johann Jacob Löwe are not 'Italian-influenced' (243). Italian-influenced dances were certainly common in Germany, but the suite genre is a case of the Germans influencing the Italians, not the other way round. Moritz Wilhelm's dates are given as '1664–1718' (239) and followed with the surprising observation that 'he reached the age of majority in 1708' – apparently at the age of forty-four. And, as I read through the book, I did become increasingly annoyed at the lack of a bibliography. Some of the cross-referencing is not all that it should be. For example, Stephen Zohn's comment on Pez is awarded a footnote pointing to an earlier chapter, but his comment on Krieger's dismissal is not. There is also some inconsistency in the translation of the German source material: as we have seen, Owens translates a comment by Pez as 'experienced on three to five different instruments', but Zohn for the same passage gives 'proficient', which is subtly different. There is further inconsistency over just what is translated from the German. To give one of a number of examples, 'Friedenstein' is translated (197), but 'hausväterlicher Hof' on the same page is not. The latter had admittedly been dealt with earlier in the book, but there is no cross-reference to highlight this. It is perhaps inevitable that there will be duplication of material in a volume of this type, but was it necessary to have another description of *Hofkapellen* (224) when the term had already been admirably dealt with in the Introduction? The book is well produced and the tables clearly set out. The spine covering on the review copy appears rather flimsy and is already showing signs of distress. I suspect library copies will need reinforcement. However, these are minor irritations. This is clearly a major work; any book on the subject that contains such profound scholarship is most welcome. To have it in English is even more so. For anyone with an interest in eighteenth-century music from the German courts, it will surely become an indispensable work of reference.

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STEPHEN ROSE

THE MUSICIAN IN LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF BACH

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In this eye-opening study of German prose fiction written between 1660 and 1710, Stephen Rose has unveiled for us a richly detailed, complicated and above all unfamiliar portrait of the musician around the turn of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. The texts he explicates include novels, stories and treatises by a cluster of musician-writers, chiefly Johann Beer, Johann Kuhnau, Wolfgang Caspar Printz and Daniel Speer, with a backward glance at the father of them all, Hans Jakob Grimmelshausen, and a forward one to the disciplining, classifying work of Johann Mattheson in the first half of the eighteenth century. These texts, and there are many of them, do not easily reveal their deeper meanings or broader significance. Earlier generations of scholars of German baroque literature devoted most of their effort to the difficult work of establishing authorship and dates, and preparing more or less accurate editions of them all. Rose builds well upon this solid foundation, and, without any disrespect to his predecessors, one can say that he has made this body of work comprehensible and attractive to a twenty-first-century audience. His skill in decoding and contextualizing them is consistently impressive. The thread he traces through all of them – the key, as it were, to his decoding of them – is anxiety, and particularly anxiety about the status of the musician in society.