

Review: Renaissance Man

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with dabs of true colour visible here and there and a good many fresh blurs. The translation seems clear and faithful, but the language has a hint of the smug and the pretentious that does not come over too well in English.

★

A brief note on some other recent Mozart literature. Robbins Landon's *Mozart and the Masons* is a short book, generously illustrated, based on a recent lecture. It looks carefully into Mozart's connections with freemasonry and particularly thoroughly at an anonymous picture of a meeting of a Viennese lodge (it was partly reproduced in the March 1983 MT, p. 154). Landon persuasively suggests that Deutsch's ironic 'identification' of Mozart in that picture, in the right foreground, is in fact correct; he also identifies several others present, including C.L. Giesecke and members of the Esterházy family, and dates the picture to early 1790.

Of the three opera books, the Cambridge volume has the most to offer. Edward Foreman contributes a useful essay on the story before Da Ponte, Bernard Williams a perceptive one on the Don Giovanni idea; the remainder, by Julian Rushton, includes a detailed synopsis (rather inconsistent in layout), a valuable discussion of the libretto, an essay on its stage history (somewhat superficial, and insular, on the 20th century), a substantial, closely argued though not indisputable analytical discussion of the music, and a small anthology (I found it of little interest) of writings on the opera. There are things to disagree with, but plenty to stimulate. Neither Rushton nor David Wyn Jones, who contributes an essay to the Opera Guide, seems to realize that Mozart at first expected to write the opera in four acts. The material in the latter volume, in spite of a sensible article by Michael Robinson on the comic element, is more slender, and not distinguished; while the translation by Norman Platt and Laura Sarti printed here has, as I have indicated in these columns before, serious deficiencies in meaning and accentuation. There is an article here on Da Ponte; the *Figaro* volume includes one on Beaumarchais. Here again, however, the musical discussions have little to offer. The translation is Dent's. It seems a shade disingenuous to include a note on the order of events in Act 3, arguing in favour of the Moberly-Raeburn reordering but ending with two lines referring to Alan Tyson's MT article (July 1981) on the subject without saying that his evidence effectively quashes the Moberly-Raeburn theory; still odder to cite in the bibliography for 'readers interested in the autograph score' an article on a copy of Mozart's later revisions but not the Köhler *Mozart-Jahrbuch 1967* article or Tyson's, the only studies dealing with the autograph itself.

STANLEY SADIE

European Music Year 1985 has been launched at the Giorgio Cini Foundation, Venice. Objectives include making known the works of living composers and improving musical education and training as well as the social situations of musicians, whether composers, performers or teachers.

Magister Dufay

Dufay by David Fallows (*Master Musicians*)
J. M. Dent (London, 1982); 321pp.; £9.95

David Fallows's book on Guillaume Dufay has all the old-fashioned virtues: it begins with a fairly straightforward account of the composer's life and continues with an intelligent survey of the works. It is well written, well documented and well thought out. Its novelties come in the new hypotheses Fallows tries out in the course of bringing together everything that has been written about Dufay until now. Thus he makes much of Dufay's presumed presence at the Council of Constance, a possibility no one before has suggested so seriously or explored so fully. It was in Constance, Fallows would have us believe, that Dufay had his first encounter with English music, and also with his future employers in Italy, the Malatesta of Rimini. And the most interesting and novel chapter on Dufay's music re-examines various mass cycles and other mass music that might or might not be by the composer. Fallows suggests that Dufay's *Saint Anthony Mass* is actually for Saint Anthony of Padua rather than Saint Anthony Abbot, as we have previously supposed, and uses that hypothesis to lead him into a discussion of various other mass cycles and mass music, some in the Trent Codices and some in other MSS, that might or might not be by Dufay. His conclusions are sensibly tentative but, quite unusually in a book of this sort, he offers stimulating suggestions for further research, and asks good questions that might well yield answers which will bring us further towards understanding Dufay's music, or at the very least that of his contemporaries.

Fallows is arguably better when he writes on Dufay's life than when he writes on Dufay's music. If he has a slight tendency to believe his own hypotheses more easily than those of other people, that is, perhaps, only human, and it is a quality that at least makes his account of the composer fresh and provocative. When he comes to the music, the fact that the book appears in the *Master Musicians* series may weigh too heavily on the author, who slightly over-explains some musical matters, presumably on the grounds – possibly sensible – that a general audience cannot be expected to understand what are, after all, not very technical terms; and Fallows does not always seem convincing when he tries to relate two pieces by means of snippets of conventional melodic material which they have in common.

I do not mean to suggest, however, that Fallows is anything but intelligent and stimulating when he writes of Dufay's music. The mixture of analysis, opinion, historical fact and hypothesis that informs his comments on particular pieces very often lands squarely on target. Even if every reader will disagree about one or another of his insights, it is clear that Fallows writes with conviction and from a detailed and committed knowledge of the scores, virtues that ought not to be undervalued.

Not the least helpful part of the book are the

three appendices, containing a very full and detailed calendar of events, both in Dufay's own life and in the greater world; a classified list of his works, which every student of Dufay will constantly consult (and doubtless annotate); and finally a catalogue of the more important persons mentioned in the text, with useful thumbnail sketches of their careers and contributions. Of course, the most important thing about the book is that it appeared at all in the *Master Musicians* series, for its publication marks a new stage in the long process of 'early music' coming of age. The world at large has acknowledged that a composer of the 15th century can be important to us today. May there soon be a companion volume on Josquin. HOWARD MAYER BROWN

Renaissance man

Leonardo da Vinci as a Musician by Emanuel Winternitz
Yale UP (New Haven and London, 1982); xxv,
241pp.; £20

'The shaping of the invisible.' Starting from Leonardo's breathtaking definition of music, the author explores a neglected side of the man who is rightly regarded as the prototype of the universal genius. The book is divided into three parts, entitled 'Roots and growth', 'The performer' and 'The thinker'. In 1482 Leonardo set off for Milan where, under the rule of Lodovico il Moro, the arts and sciences flourished. The author singles out Gaffurius, Pacioli and Gunasco (music theorist, mathematician and instrument maker respectively) as important influences and emphasizes Leonardo's reputation as a musician, teacher and improviser. Leonardo played the lira da braccio and, more unusually, invented a lira in the shape of a horse's skull – a bizarre idea reflecting contemporary preoccupations with the grotesque, but one which was probably based on acoustical observation, owing to the resemblance between the shape of a lira's sound-board and the skull of a horse. Winternitz also examines Leonardo's role in the feasts and entertainments at the Milanese court, the chief evidence for which are drawings for costumes and a few inconclusive fragments of musical notation.

The most fascinating section of the book concerns Leonardo as a thinker (in this section, only two of the six chapters have not previously been published). In the chapter on Leonardo's researches into acoustics, Winternitz gathers into a rational sequence the random observations scattered through Leonardo's notebooks. Leonardo's methods derive from his belief in the universe as an indivisible, homogeneous organism in which the same basic laws operate in different circumstances. Thus he proceeds by analogy to show how sound waves behave in the same way as light, or as waves on water. Leonardo is easi-

ly led into the realms of poetry: when he compares the wind needed to activate an organ or wind instrument with the human spirit, he hits on an idea which foreshadows the poetry of the 19th century. Leonardo invented the viola organista, the technique of which is based on the hurdy-gurdy, but with a much more complicated mechanism, on which it is possible to play polyphony. Other inventions include a drum whose pitch can be changed during performance, thereby anticipating the pedal machine drum by nearly four centuries, and the 'glissando' flute, one of a number of instruments designed by analogy with the human anatomy (in this case, the larynx). Finally, Winternitz examines the *Paragone*, a treatise comparing the respective merits of painting, poetry and music with the aim of showing that painting is the most noble. Here Leonardo's ideas disappoint (and Winternitz does not shirk from exposing Leonardo's inconsistencies and ambiguities): the argument is of course a completely sterile one, as Molière has brilliantly shown in *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*.

This is an impressive and thorough contribution to our knowledge of Leonardo's musical interests and will be of use to organologists and instrument-makers (who may be inspired to undertake reconstructions) and historians of the philosophy of music. All the more obvious, then, are some of the book's defects. It is difficult to distinguish between supposition and proven fact in chapters 2 and 3, where Leonardo's connections with his contemporaries are discussed. A more thorough acknowledgment of secondary sources (especially with regard to the friendship of Leonardo and Gaffurius) would have been helpful. The second problem, one suspects, is connected with the first: there is no bibliography (only a few references to other literature in the footnotes and, rather eccentrically and unsystematically, in the index). This is a surprising omission, given that the publication is in other respects quite lavish (e.g. the admirably clear photographs and wide margins). Winternitz is happier in those sections dealing directly with Leonardo's sketches without the intervention of secondary sources, and it is these sections which are the most readable and informative.

JAMES CHATER

The Viola: Yearbook of the International Viola Society contains 12 articles on the instrument, each in English and in German; obtainable from Bärenreiter, £9.24.

Sure guides

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg edited by Nicholas John (Opera Guide 19)
Calder (London, 1983); 128pp.; £2.50
Il trovatore edited by Nicholas John (Opera Guide 20)
Calder (London, 1983); 80pp.; £2.50

Verdi remains top favourite in this series of Opera Guides, making six out of 20. With *Meistersinger* I'd rather be reviewing *Falstaff*; yet it's still as hard to resist the elemental power with which Verdi conjures white hot music from wild situations of swapped babies and incinerated gypsies as it was when I first learnt these tunes from the local organ-grinder. In the first of the three essays, Marcello Conati rehearses many of the reasons why people have found *Il trovatore* impossible and absurd. Yet within a decade of the first performance Verdi could gleefully write that 'when you go to India and to the interior of Africa you will hear *Trovatore*'. It's about as true today. If Hanslick castigated Verdi's 'depraved aesthetic instinct', he was equally harsh on the 'painful artificiality' of the *Meistersinger* prelude. Roland Matthews's introductory Wagner essay deals ably with the many complexities of the opera, touching on Wagner's sense of humour, the significance of 'Wahn', the lurking violence so marvellously controlled and true to life.

The relationship of music to drama in the two works is dealt with by D. R. B. Kimbell and Arnold Whittall, the one paying proper tribute to Verdi's structural powers as well as his immediacy, the other revelling in the Wagnerian inspiration and technique that make of *Die Meistersinger* so wondrous a tapestry of sound and sense. The third Verdi essay, by Donald Shaw, concentrates on the Gutiérrez play *El trovador* from which Cammarano derived his libretto, showing the gains and losses en route; for Wagner, Timothy McFarland discourses on the significance of Nuremberg in German history and thought, how Wagner idealized its greatness at the moment industrial Germany was finally undermining it. The librettos form the bulk of both guides; the English translations have survived much use and are serviceable. If I prefer the *Trovatore* 'It's' to *Meistersinger* 'Tis', this pair is readily interchangeable, and little else obtrudes. In the case of *Trovatore*, the enigmatic

p.00 (p.19) should be p.34, and there has been a muddle over music examples 31 and 32; in *Meistersinger* there is reference to music examples 6a and 6b, which don't separately exist. Otherwise the guides are carefully fused and cobbled.

ROBERT ANDERSON

Wagner as producer

Wagner rehearsing the Ring by Heinrich Porges, translated by Robert L. Jacobs
Cambridge UP (Cambridge, 1983); xiii, 145pp.; £9.95

A devotee for many years, Porges stood high enough in Wagner's esteem to be offered life-companionship with him in 1864. But then Cosima swept in. A photograph in the book shows Porges with dank locks and flaccid features; there seems no doubt Wagner got the better bargain. But the enthusiasm never waned, and Porges was at hand to take detailed notes of all Wagner was up to in preparation for the 1876 *Ring*. It's odd his account has never been Englished before: Robert Jacobs fills an obvious gap. The translation reads well, and Wagner the producer makes excellent eavesdropping. Porges considered him a 'Gesamtschauspieler', and here he is buzzing about, tipping down Wotan's spear when Freia and the fresh apples are withdrawn, chiding the Valkyries when they huddle in groups, objoining Siegfried not to suggest he was 'violating the standards of civilized society', demanding drama in the 'Todesverkündigung', persuading the orchestra to keep singers afloat rather than drown them, bursting into song as Brünnhilde prophesying the birth of Siegfried. He was ubiquitous, *sempre incalzando*, exhausting, and inspiring.

Porges knew the *Ring* inside out, text and music. Or so he thought. A careful read, though, reveals soon enough that words and music examples don't always represent the *Ring* Wagner wrote. Sometimes they distort it and even mock. The preface suggests that 'the extracts from the libretto and reduced score of the *Ring* are as given by Porges'. This is largely true, as the original *Bayreuther Blätter* show. But why perpetuate Porges's bishes? There are at least 100, some of them howlers (such as wrong key-signatures, accidentals, rhythms and so on). And why add a further 30 to the total? The book has delights and uses, but scores little for accuracy. The weight of my Beckmesserish task was slightly increased by a wrong reference to the *Blätter*: Act 3 of *Siegfried* will be found in 1896, not 1893. So Mr Jacobs has insufficiently looked after us. And the proofreaders at Cambridge, I suspect, have insufficiently cared for him. A commendable venture, then, much spoilt in the detail. 'Hoitoho' (p.65) is about all I can manage too.

ROBERT ANDERSON

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