62 *Tempo* 64 (251) 62–82 © 2010 Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017/S0040298210000069 Printed in the United Kingdom

BOOK REVIEWS

Back to the Future

The Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music edited by Björn Heile. Ashgate, £60.00.

'Modernism' today seems a subject of the past. For many it has been consigned, with relief, to history's incinerator. Even as a subject of musicological inquiry, modernism is something that *happened*, was abandoned, and now resides in a hermetically-sealed cell, more remote from our present than the Ars Nova of 14th-century Paris.

To treat any period of music in such a way is deeply suspect. This collection argues against such readings, presenting ways in which we might (and must) reconsider modernism, enlarging our understanding of its breadth, depth and reach, and projecting a happier future for its reception. It does this through the sharpness of its arguments for the expressive, technical and social achievements of musical modernism. 'It almost seems as if this music is being discussed in its historical context for the first time', writes Björn Heile in his introduction (p.4), and one is inclined to agree.

The Modernist Legacy has its origins in papers presented at the Fourth International Conference on Music Since 1900, held at Sussex University in 2005. It should not be judged, however, by the standards of the hastily edited conference report. No: this is a collection of top-drawer contributions, intelligently compiled and thoroughly polished for publication. They all deserve more attention than I can give them here.

As an attendee in 2005, I well recall the impact made by Ian Pace's polemical paper, and it is a pleasure to be able to absorb its challenges at leisure. Pace's target is the discourse surrounding modern music: reviews, articles, programme notes, analyses, performance traditions and private conversations. This discourse, he argues, is well-established enough to 'in essence determine who and what is to be commissioned, which works are to be performed, who is to perform them and so on' (p.84).

Pace identifies two modes within this discourse: music as entertainment, and 'aristocratic' music. By the latter he means music to be 'appreciated primarily through apprehension of its technical workings or its allusions, on the basis of highly specialized knowledge' (p.95). This becomes established as the only alternative for music from a cathartic populism. In illustration he provides examples of reviews of Barrett, Lachenmann and others that attempt to distance the music from accusations of ivory tower aristocracy, but can only do so through emphasizing the superficial, titillatory aspects of a work: an appeal to entertainment rather than a genuine engagement with the music's complexities. These are not two modes of composition but of reception. Neither is satisfactory, and the continuation of this artificial dichotomy will prove increasingly damaging to the future of new music. Pace's essay is argued with the force that comes from the revelation of a hitherto obscured common sense.

Andrew Timms identifies a different problem: the historiographical awkwardness of identifying modernism with atonality and, as such, with music history's endpoint. He finds in such a commonplace identification an easy way out for an intellectually lazy postmodernism:

> modernism-as-atonality has been used to signify modernism as nasty, unlikeable and historically insignificant music; theories which therefore tell of modernism's end have been convenient to the postmodernists, who have thus had a secure target at which to aim their fire. (p.23)

Timms argues against the restrictive identification of modernism with a particular compositional technique. Heile argues against similar constraints on the historical dimension of modernism. His essay (first presented at the 2007 ICMSN) is ostensibly 'a contribution to the ongoing debate on, and formation of, a conceptual framework for issues of globalization in twentieth-century music' (p.103). Yet it is also a case study in the continuing relevance of the investigations of the 1960s European avant-garde, and the continuing failure of many musicologists to properly absorb – or even cursorily read – their profound contributions to wider musical debate. Specifically, Heile discusses *Weltmusik*, 'one of the most influential concepts among the European avant-garde from the late 1960s to the early 1980s' (p.103). In doing so, he argues for a reconsideration of the postwar avant-garde, typically characterized as self-absorbed and resistant to outside influence. In fact, he argues, the opposite was the case through the 1960s and 70s, with many of today's debates about globalization and world music having been rehearsed in those years.

The idea of *Weltmusik*, if not initiated by Stockhausen, following his *Telemusik* of 1966, was certainly invigorated by him. His self-glorifying and new-agey pronouncements found few serious followers (and may have served to obscure for future readers their underlying issues), but they energized critical responses from others, including Kagel, Nono, Pousseur and Schnebel. 'Rather than insulating itself in a small self-constructed universe,' Heile argues, 'the post-war avant-garde was deeply interested in the "world outside" and many composers strove to reflect the changing reality brought about by globalization' (p.116).

The cult of personality – exemplified by Stockhausen – and the effect it has on reception is a recurring theme. David Osmond-Smith, discussing Aldo Clementi, refers to the 'discursive dues' that must be paid by a composer to gratify 'the public appetite for fictions of intimacy' (p.123). In contrast, Clementi's music frustrates such illusions by luring 'those with a hunger for interpretation down perilous paths' (p.129). Lois Fitch re-reads the writings of a more publicly verbal composer, Brian Ferneyhough, to uncover a hitherto underplayed influence of Gilles Deleuze. In doing so she aims to expose the physicality of Ferneyhough's material, which is 'often considered secondary, in the extant literature on the composer, to his famously abstract, parametric procedures' (p.162). Here we encounter the tendency for a composer's initial presentation of themselves to calcify into dogmatic reception. In highlighting the influence of Deleuze, Fitch initiates a reconsideration of the composer's expression as 'as an almost tactile listening experience of being truly *in* the material' (p.175).

Why should public profile be such an issue for modernist composers? The answer seems to return us to Pace's model of the critical discourse. Modernist music – complex and obscure – is identified by default as 'aristocratic'. The blinkered view of musical history that leads many critics and musicologists to characterize all modernism by a handful of polemical works and essays almost guarantees that any music that doesn't openly revolt against such ancestry will be forced into the 'aristocratic' box and judged for how well it fights its way out: thus the appeals to entertainment. It is not surprising that composers, and the promotional framework within which they work, seek to emphasize those aspects of personality that might attract a public reluctant to engage fully with the music itself.

Eric Drott, in analysing the published statements of the three leading spectralists – Hugues Dufourt, Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail – identifies the most far-reaching development of such strategies. In their writings these composers adopted many of the rhetorical tropes of an emerging avant-garde. In doing so, they associated themselves with various post-1968 political groups, such as the nascent environmental movement, and thus 'certified their status as an anti-institutional group within the field of contemporary music, which in turn set them against dominant, established figures in the avant-garde – the latter embodied no doubt by serialism' (p.48). In reacting to serialism they were reacting to the establishment. Drott argues (through the spectralists) that serialism's dismantling of sound into a collection of malleable and efficient parameters mirrors tendencies in capitalism. The exploitation of sound in this way further reflects, in Grisey's ecologically conscious writings, modernity's exploitation of the natural environment. Spectralism is proposed as an answer to these deficiencies through a more fluid representation of acoustical reality that does not impose strict boundaries between parameters but admits of ambiguity and symbiosis. Just as in the natural environment, the exploitation of one resource or parameter damages the whole ecosphere.

The spectralists' anti-establishment rhetoric not only positions them strategically against a serial hegemony, and thus usefully advances their cause as something new, but also provides clues to a genuine political programme underlying their work. Drott details this programme convincingly. The aim is to imagine musical form

> as a kind of federation of equal yet non-identical identities … The musical work's capacity to acknowledge and embrace difference without distorting it becomes a potent emblem of social and cultural tolerance. (p.58)

The technique of instrumental synthesis – one of the central innovations of spectral music – may be seen, Drott argues, as one way in which the delicate balance between diverse sonorities may be achieved. Thus, the modernist rhetoric of the spectralists is not simply self-serving, but is an expression within an integrated programme of aesthetic innovation and political progress.

The second half of the book moves to specific analyses, and one is tempted to read these as examples of what an alternative discourse on modernist music might look like. This would be a discourse that does not depend on mystifications or ideology, but instead an honest approach to a work on the terms of its own material and formal processes. Catherine Laws's revealing analyses of Feldman – whose music is so often described as magically intuitive and therefore unanalysable – are a model of such an approach. Mark Delaere carefully unpicks Birtwistle's *Hoquetus Petrus*, set-

ting it in the context of British modernism's fascination with the medieval. On the whole, this is another sympathetic model, moving from an exposition of the historical context to a detailed analysis of the music itself. Unfortunately it veers somewhat in its concluding paragraph, which attempts, in an unnecessary change in focus, to embrace Ligeti and other hocketing composers. This bumpy conclusion mars an otherwise excellent item.

The concept and application of the musical parameter is surely one of the most significant technical legacies of musical modernism, and its use underscores several essays. Beate Kutschke argues that Gerhard Stäbler's use of parametrical manipulation in his *druber …* allows him to free the screams that make up the material of that piece from their semiotic referentiality and allow the listener to focus on their sonic materiality. In contrast, Drott and John Croft (writing on Lachenmann) draw attention to the artificiality of the parameter as a model of sonic reality. Croft's essay in particular investigates the possibilities for musical poetics after even this has become problematized.

It is John Dack, however, in his discussion of Henri Pousseur's *Scambi* and *Huit études paraboliques*, who pays most analytical attention to parametrical thinking. Dack's analyses throw up several interesting aspects to Pousseur's exploration of open form in electroacoustic music, but it is the bold suggestion of a connexion between Pousseur's practice and contemporary club culture that most intrigues. Unfortunately, this is not explored in further depth: Pousseur's stipulation of parametric continuities between successive units of material in *Scambi* surely resonates with the intuitive, aurally-guided decisions made by a club DJ when choosing what track to play next. This paper does, however, present only the early fruits of a larger research project (documented at www.scambi.mdx.ac.uk), where such questions may be pursued.

Ève Poudrier's concluding contribution is the most analytically daunting. Her work isn't served by occasional errors in her figures (an eight-quaver pulse in example 12.2 is labelled as eight crotchets), or vertical misalignments between rhythms intended for direct comparison. What emerges, however, from her statistical analyses is a path to identifying perceived middleground metrical structures in Elliott Carter's polyrhythms.

Her essay, and the book, ends by advocating a role for the analyst in unpicking such parametrical interactions to the benefit of listener and performer, highlighting the relationship between perception and the parametrical operations of the

composer and providing hope for a rich listening future for musical modernism:

> While a present-day listener may be led to interpret a specific musical passage based on his or her previous experience of a given parameter, one may still want to consider the possibility that the composer's use of this parameter is not meant to be interpreted in this predetermined way. In attributing meaning to the perceptual and cognitive aspects of musical experience, one must allow for the possibility of the future development of perceptual and cognitive skills that are more adapted to specific styles, genres or works. In striking a balance between the music as *written* and as *experienced*, it would seem that the analyst could hope to contribute to a living musical culture. (p.233)

Tim Rutherford-Johnson

Roger Sessions. A Biography by Andrea Olmstead. Routledge, £29.99.

Five Lines, Four Spaces. The World of My Music by George Rochberg, edited by Gene Rochberg and Richard Griscom with an Introduction by Gene Rochberg. University of Illinois Press, $40.00.

American Muse. The Life and times of William Schuman by Joseph W. Polisi. Amadeus Press, $32.95.

Andrea Olmstead has a long and honourable record of commitment to the Sessions cause. Her first book, *Roger Sessions and His Music* (1985), published in the year of the composer's death, was followed by *Conversations with Roger Sessions* (1987) and *The Correspondence of Roger Sessions* (1992). A follow-up, 16 years on, in the form of a substantial biography, comes as Sessions's music continues to make only rare inroads on the contemporary performance and recording scene.

Olmstead has probably been motivated as much by what she sees as the failings of Frederik Prausnitz's *Roger Sessions. How a "Difficult" Composer Got That Way* (2002) as by any conviction that posterity is failing in its duty to an undeservedly neglected Master. The result is disappointing in some ways: in particular, a firmer editorial hand should have corrected various repetitions, non-sequiturs and other infelicities. Yet the portrait which emerges is compelling, at least on the purely biographical side: Olmstead's intention 'to "shake up" received wisdom' leads her to underline Sessions's 'sexual ambiguity', his awkwardness with all relationships – one legacy from a formidably domineering mother – and his general ineptitude in financial and practical affairs. Sessions himself put it with startling if self-deluding confidence, in a letter from 1924 to his first wife: 'I have come to realize that I am a *supremely* gifted person; that I have within me possibilities which cannot be overestimated, but which have been largely unrealized for a variety of reasons, some of which have been due to causes outside myself, others *undeniably* – and these the most important – to causes in my character or the state of my development'.

Olmstead draws an unsparing conclusion:

> what is remarkable about Sessions's career is not that his music is not as well known as it ought to be, but rather that – considering his obedience to a stringent idealized self-image, a psychological block towards careerism, as well as a genuine lack of business ability – it is known at all.

Her narrative certainly bears out this view, to the extent that the life story as such is often dispiriting, if not positively unedifying. More's the pity that the opposite side of the Sessions coin – his work as teacher, writer and composer – is less well charted, and Olmstead's initially declared aim of asserting that 'Sessions is not – in any meaningful sense – a twelve-tone composer at all' rings particularly hollow – unless we adopt an unhelpfully narrow definition of that much-abused term. It is surely the case that what might best be encapsulated as 'serial thought' came to dominate Sessions's techniques and procedures. But this book tends to steer clear of close reading of musical details – a focus which makes it particularly questionable to include the composer's own long description of his *magnum opus*, the opera *Montezuma*, when we are given so little idea of what the music is actually like. This is not the way to make Sessions's work better known than it already is.

Speaking with characteristically detached frankness about his great friend and mentor Ernest Bloch, Sessions seemed to endorse the view that 'after the success of *Macbeth*, which was really rather spectacular, Bloch did everything that he could to destroy his own success'. Such an apparent will to fail is not so uncommon among highly creative yet deeply conflicted artists; it might also be attributed to 'the only musician whom I have found with whom I feel to have very much in common', Luigi Dallapiccola. But with Sessions himself it seems more as if he felt driven to stand in the way of any 'rather spectacular' success in the first place. Hence the force of Olmstead's parting accolade that 'he rose above his own neuroses to be able to help others conquer self-criticism'. Here is an explanation for the admiration of his many distinguished pupils and colleagues within the academy. And it might also contribute something to an interpretation of a musical language that struggled to find foundations secure enough to support the substantial structures that Sessions was driven to devise.

Prausnitz homed in on a crucial feature of the Sessions style in his comment that

> what Sessions had learned from his Italian friend was the way in which a twelve-tone melody might be combined with elements of apparently tonal reference, as in the case of the minor triads that underlie a deceptive message of hope at the beginning of Dallapiccola's opera *The Prisoner*. Conversely, a tonal idea could become an integral part of a twelve-tone environment, as Sessions found when he really set to work on *Montezuma* in 1959.

That 'modern-classic', synthesizing tendency, which implied something different from the balanced opposition and maintained separation of diatonic and post-tonal, grew in significance as composers reacted negatively to the extremes of the post-war avant-garde. In their very different ways, both William Schuman and George Rochberg, though belonging to younger generations, showed responses which were not totally different from those of Sessions.

Rochberg (1918–2005), who proclaims that he was 'enormously fond' of Sessions – a 'fine and serious composer' who was 'basically a loner' – was no less committed to the idea of continuing the symphonic tradition. *Five Lines, Four Spaces. The World of My Music* is a late text from a writer who had already polemicized his position in *The Aesthetics of Survival: A Composer's View of Twentieth-Century Music* (1984, revised edition 2004) on the basis of a calculated self-distancing from the kind of issues he has dealt with in *The Hexachord and Its Relation to the 12-tone Row* (1955). Gene Rochberg's brief introduction to her late husband's text underlines the polemical dimensions, referring to his 'major role' in 'making possible the continuation of a vital, healthy approach to creating art and loosening the grip of a sterile avant-garde'. The text itself reinforces the fact that Rochberg was never able to distinguish the modernist from the avant-garde, or to appreciate that the devising of accommodations between 'atonal' and 'tonal' could involve the deployment of extended or suspended tonalities in ways which Schoenberg, Berg, and even Webern had not merely sanctioned but practised: very strikingly, Berg's Violin Concerto is not once mentioned in this book.

Rochberg's literary style remained captiously confrontational to the end: early on we find him declaring that 'I have never been able to reconcile myself to the perfunctory manner in which [Brahms] brings to a close the final measures of his still-amazing Fourth Symphony'. Such contrariness can be bracing, and Rochberg was perfectly justified in reminding his readers of the ways in which horrific wartime experiences and tragic family events cannot be stoically set aside as of no account when seeking to explaining his own artistic impulses. Yet it is equally impossible not to sense an element of complacency in the way old prejudices are constantly recycled, despite bearing less and less relation to reality as generally conceived not just by critics and academics but by composers themselves. Rochberg's understanding of 'modernism' might have rung true for a few years either side of 1950, though Dallapiccola was an exception even then, and one of the most bizarre aspects of this memoir is its description of a 'friendship' between Rochberg and Dallapiccola in which the American seems not to have realized the degree to which the Italian was pursuing precisely the kind of interaction between tonal and 'atonal' forces that he himself would come to advocate.

By the time this book was conceived, Rochberg's concept of modernism had long since ceased to make much sense, except as a goad to drive forward his own creative obsessions. His search 'for ways to anchor atonal adventures in tonal thinking' was shared not just by Dallapiccola but by many if not most of the major figures of his generation, and his belief that 'most musicians and composers still automatically assume' that 'tonal' and 'atonal' are 'logically antithetic to each other' is simply wrong. His subsequent claim that 'the development of atonality was *not* antithetic to tonality but was, on the contrary, a necessary extension of musical thought into previously avoided borderline states of consciousness' is an unexceptionable statement of what some might think of as a modernist mainstream, which has flourished since the early 1900s and continues to flourish. As for the assertion that 'modernism from its inception sought to obliterate all vestiges of the past in all art, not just music': this is a perfect illustration of how extremism can forfeit all contact with reality. Similarly, Rochberg's attempt to counter Joseph Straus's 1999 analysis of 'the myth of serial tyranny' in 1950s and 60s America oversimplifies wildly, asserting that

> the real, lived-and-experienced atmosphere of the 1950s and 1960s was dominated psychologically, aesthetically, and intellectually and riven by the earlier emergence of a powerhouse of artistic presence in the person of Arnold Schoenberg and his two satellite, equally strong artist-composers, Alban Berg and Anton Webern.

Only by allowing for Rochberg's confusion of 'modernism' with 'avant-garde' can one give him the benefit of the doubt. As for the declaration that 'the stubborn unwillingness of human beings to accept that existence – as lived, felt, thought – is an entirely uncertain enterprise was what undid twentieth-century music': one can only won-

der how it was possible for a thinking musician with a vigorous professional life to arrive at such conclusions.

There are some vivid portraits in this highly solipsistic, pleasantly episodic, publication: for example, the picture of Varèse as 'the "last of the romantics", for even as a modernist, he *lived* as a romantic, seeing himself as the defeated victim of a personal fate against which ultimately he could only rage'. One would expect Rochberg to have little interest in American serialists like Babbitt or Perle – the latter's '12-tone tonality' passes unmentioned. More surprising is his no-less pungently expressed hostility to Copland, and other beneficiaries of Stravinskian bounty via Nadia Boulanger. Even so, the counterpole of this litany of complaint and disaffection is a story of compositional success, and of encounters with (usually) admiring conductors and executants.

Opinions on Rochberg's compositions are bound to be divided. Listening to two substantial pieces, the Violin Concerto and the Fifth Symphony, while reading this book, left me feeling strongly that the problem is not technical conservatism, still less the aspiration to enter the post-tonal, modernist mainstream – Rochberg writes of the concerto in terms of 'a refracted form of tonality filtered through the more complex dissonant prism of the atonal': the problem is the straining for epic-heroic effects, often amounting to 'hamming it up' in near-Hollywood style, four-square and histrionically portentous. So much seems more acted than authentic. But very few composers since 1900 have managed to convey heroism without hamminess, to speak epically without seeming empty. Something not too dissimilar is brought to mind by Edward Rothstein's *New York Times* piece on William Schuman after the composer's death in 1992. 'The music is handsome, honest, well-managed. … It is music of a fluent public speaker. It is easy to follow; it is declamatory; it contains much variety. But often, I am afraid, it is not that interesting'. Rothstein sought to sugar the pill by acknowledging Schuman's special gifts as an administrator (the Juilliard School, Lincoln Center), and concluding that 'accomplished composers are a rarity, but Schuman's accomplishments are rarer still. His public role will not soon be filled'.

Somehow that simply compounds the faint praise: but Joseph W. Polisi, the current head of Juilliard, manages to compose an interesting, even absorbing tale as he tells the Schuman story. The implication throughout is that, with more self-doubt, more neurosis, Schuman might have been a better composer. It is not that Schuman was a bland, easy-going individual:

> his abiding drive to succeed often pushed his professional relationships to the edge of dissolution, and his firm belief that his actions were correct, no matter what advice he might receive to the contrary, would eventually cause considerable problems for him.

Yet if Schuman genuinely believed that administration was not 'one whit less creative than composing. It all has to do with proportions, priorities and balances', it is tempting to conclude that he didn't value composing all that highly anyway.

Polisi is frank about Schuman's conflicting qualities: 'he could be gleeful, playful, entrepreneurial, aggressive, visionary, and self-assured, as well as introspective, arrogant, vulnerable, self-righteous, and naive'. Wisely, the main text concentrates on a well-documented account of the life which includes the commissioning, performance and reception of the compositions but hives off technical discussion of ten of them to a 150-page Appendix of which 126 pages comprise score extracts. Polisi acknowledges the 'mainstream' aspect of these works in his comment that – at least in his later years – Schuman would use 12-tone elements without embracing the 'system' as such. More significantly, 'he often juxtaposed disparate tonalities in polychords that obscured but did not entirely erase the tonal center'. Virgil Thomson pinned down the Schuman effect at an early stage: 'his serious works have shown a respectable seriousness of attitude without much private or particular passion, while his gayer ones have expressed either a standard American cheerfulness or the comforting bumptiousness of middle-quality comic-strip humor'.

Recent listening to a range of his works via Naxos recordings confirms the accuracy of that rather negative assessment. Like Rochberg, Schuman managed a regular succession of prestigious commissions and performances throughout his career; both followed on from the aspiring strain pioneered in American symphonic music by Roy Harris. Remote from the radicalism of Cage or Carter, they can seem laboured or sententious alongside the more laid-back Reich or Adams, while Adams in his more post-Sibelian vein has managed unpompous seriousness with more flair: and Sessions, too, while more truly radical, has lacked authoritative advocacy from prominent performers. Will Sessions be remembered primarily as a teacher, Rochberg as a polemicist, Schuman as the musical animateur of Lincoln Center? Time will tell: meanwhile, these books offer vivid reminders of the driven nature of musical creativity, and of the traumas composers can endure in seeking to discover the best practical and professional contexts in which to live and work.

Arnold Whittall

Werkstatt-Spuren: Die Sonatine von Pierre Boulez. Eine Studie zu Lehrzeit und Frühwerk by Susanne Gärtner. Publikationen der Schweizerischen Musikforschenden Gesellschaft, series II, vol. 47. Bern: Peter Lang, £46.50

Susanne Gärtner's book is a monograph on Boulez's early Sonatina for flute and piano. Her study is a prize-winning dissertation from Basel University which draws on sketch material housed at the Paul Sacher Stiftung (PSS) as well her own experience as a professional flautist – Gärtner has played with the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, the Radiosinfonieorchester Basel and the Trio Ascolto. It is this combination of practice and theory that has shaped the study into a compulsive analytical project with ambitions to offer a comprehensive account of the work. The work's genesis is in large part the story of the book: an early version of the Sonatina was made in 1946 and a revised version completed in 1949. The early version, Gärtner maintains, reveals much about Boulez's reckoning with his musical predecessors and teachers, and this is reflected in the book's title (*Traces of an Apprenticeship*), which alludes to Boulez's own early essays *Relevés d'apprenti*. The appendix includes, among other useful items, a checklist of differences between the two versions and a list of corrections to the printed edition, which was published by Amphion in 1954. The sources for the early version are located in Brussels, Paris and Basel. Gärtner was instrumental in piecing together this part of the work's history (pp. 154–157), as well as in bringing the correspondence between Boulez and Andrée Vaurabourg-Honegger to the PSS. The first part of the book is given over to an account of Boulez's student years; the second part of the book presents an analysis of the Sonatina.

Gärtner's account of Boulez's study in Paris with Vaurabourg-Honegger, Messiaen and Leibowitz is both diligent and extensive. She has crafted a convincing interpretation in her main text, whilst footnoting many subsidiary issues and conflicting reports that have cropped up in the secondary literature. If one were to be critical, the completeness of the referencing of the less important sources is overdone at times. First, following the account of his studies in harmony and counterpoint, documenting what is known of the lessons and Boulez's contact with his teachers, Gärtner reviews examples of works completed during 1944–1945; then, after describing the dodecaphonic studies with Leibowitz, we are offered a look at the *Psalmodies* and the

Quatuor pour Ondes Martenot, on which Boulez was working in 1945–1946. The period of study with Leibowitz is the most controversial, *viz* the break between teacher and pupil: Boulez, 'Vous êtes merde!', and later in a letter to John Cage he described Leibowitz as a 'false prophet' (pp. 69, 85 n.84). It is also the most complicated in terms of the documentary evidence. Gärtner finishes the first part of the book with a lengthy tour of the stylistic references present in *Douze Notations* for piano. Fair copies and drafts of these early works are held at the PSS.

Gärtner's analytical approach is systematic in addressing the work from various perspectives. In monographs of this sort, one is forced into a kind of myopia dictated by the choice of work. Nonetheless, the work is important in a number of ways. It is Boulez's masterpiece, his 'Opus 1': 'I was, for the first time, pretty much sure of my vocabulary', he reported in conversation with Sylvie de Nussac in 1983 (p. 149). Its two versions straddle a huge development in his musical language – in between he composed the First and Second Sonatas, *Le Visage nuptial*, *Le Soleil des eaux* and the *Livre pour quatuor* (p. 336). Gärtner shows how the row of the Sonatina has characteristics that connect it with Webern's rows, not unlike some of Leibowitz's pieces (pp. 164–167). Further, the musical material has many similarities with passages from Messiaen's works (pp. 179–182, 187–189) and with Jolivet's 'style incantatoire' (p. 195), the latter being largely eliminated from the later version. Comparisons between the 1946 and 1949 versions of the Sonatina illuminate the development of Boulez's serial writing. Passages of the early version are not actually 12-tone in the classical sense, but rather are 'dodecaphonically derived': that is, the row functions as a common denominator for heterogeneous material (p. 235). Formally, the Sonatina derives much from Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony op. 9. In particular, Boulez was interested in the transformations of a single theme (pp. 163, 179). He said that the succession of formal experiments in this work and in the Second Sonata illustrates the end of a compositional concern with traditional forms (pp. 229–230).

Messiaen is seen as the reference-point for Boulez's rhythmic technique; a number of examples of canonic writing in his works are cited (p. 264). The discussion of counterpoint raises the issue of musical texture. Retrospectively, Boulez remarked on how density and register functioned as constituent elements of what he called temporal 'envelopes' in the Sonatina (p. 268 n.17). Likewise, further on in the discussion of rhythm, with the mention of 'temps strié' and 'temps lisse' (p. 277), Gärtner connects older techniques with more recent ideas, which in fostering a kind of genealogy of technique, illustrate how issues of the earlier work continue to resonate. Leibowitz's ideas about the application of poetic metre to rhythm have been seen as narrow and limiting. *Pace* Reinhard Kapp's work on Leibowitz, which has raised the importance of Leibowitz's contribution,[1] Gärtner emphasizes the distance between Leibowitz and Boulez, and reasons that by 1946 Boulez had developed an extensive arsenal of rhythmic techniques (p. 300). Examples of metrical changes between the two versions of the Sonatina are intriguing (pp. 158–162, 279). Changes of a similar magnitude can be seen in the printer's proofs of the Third Sonata (PSS). I am grateful to Robert Piencikowski for bringing these to my attention. Perhaps this subject – one notation for the composer, another for the performer – deserves a more encompassing study.[2]

Boulez described the process of taking what he found interesting in his studies, this separation of material, as a 'dissociation chimique' (pp. 13, 148). Gärtner sees her analysis of the Sonatina as an identification and exploration of those elements, of references to earlier musics and compositional techniques, which have been retained as a result of this filtering process. For those who wish to skip the deliberations on material, form and compositional techniques Gärtner revisits the idea of 'dissociation chimique' in a useful summary of her findings at the end of the analytical part (pp. 329–338). Her book provides a thorough documentation of Boulez's study in Paris as the immediate precursor historically and musically to the writing of the Sonatina. Indeed, as Gärtner suggests, the Sonatina might well be seen as the practical, compositional part of an apprenticeship that complements the theoretical concerns of his early writings. This book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in approaching Boulez's early works.

Neil Boynton

[1] See for example Reinhard Kapp, 'Shades of the Double's Original: René Leibowitz's Dispute with Boulez' in *Tempo* No. 165 (June 1988), pp. 2–16. (Ed.)

[2] On this topic, see also Boulez in conversation with Philippe Albèra: 'Organiser le désordre', *L'Étincelle: Le journal de la création à l'Ircam*, no. 5 (June 2009), pp. 14–17 (pp. 15–16); the journal is available online <http://etincelle.ircam.fr/>.

On Russian Music by Richard Taruskin. University of California Press, $39.95/£27.95.

The Danger of Music by Richard Taruskin. University of California Press, $39.95/£27.95.

If Richard Taruskin doesn't end up being considered the most important musicologist of his generation, it won't be for lack of hard work. His writing, which has been accurately and justifiably described as being 'of breathtaking scope and crushing weight',[3] includes the wonderful, path-breaking *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, the monumental *Oxford History of Western Music*, *Text and Act* (dealing mainly with issues of judgment in textural and performance authenticity), and books on Russian music in general and Mussorgsky in particular. He was co-compiler and editor of *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*, and he has also written extensively for newspapers (most notably *The New York Times*), non-specialist journals (such as *The New Republic*), musical journals and scholarly publications. Nor will it be for any lack of intellect, erudition, or any other abilities. Taruskin's writing is clear, engaging, and entertaining, and always displays musical, historical, and cultural knowledge and understanding which can only be described as dazzling. He can explain difficult and sometimes arcane issues in language which, as well as always being lucid and understandable to the non-specialist, is always distinguished in its literary quality – one is often startled to be reminded suddenly, in the midst of some article, that it was actually written for and printed in a newspaper. The range of his interests include many aspects of Russian music, most especially 19th-century Russian Opera, 15th-century music, music of the 20th century, musical nationalism, theories of modernism, and analysis both musical and cultural.

These two books are compilations of a considerable amount of Taruskin's journalistic work, along with occasional items such as lectures, program notes, and notes for recordings, *On Russian Music* deals with Russian music; *The Danger of Music* covers a wider range of topics, but is largely concerned with contemporary music and its situation in society. The title of *On Russian Music* is a tribute to one of Taruskin's heroes and role models, the British musicologist Gerald Abraham, among whose 21 books is one with the same title – and which, Taruskin writes, was 'a foundational part of my personal musical consciousness'. Taruskin admires Abraham and holds him as a model, not only for his advocacy of Russian music, but also for the enormous volume of his writing; the fact that he was also a generalist (as manifested in his editorial work on the *New Oxford History of Music*) and his almost sole authorship of *The Concise Oxford History of Music*; and most especially for his efforts in those works to move away from what Taruskin considers the narrow and Germanocentric emphasis of Anglophone musicology.

Like Abraham, Taruskin has had a lifelong fascination with Russian music; but in his case that fascination was deepened and reinforced by his heritage and his family history. The mother tongue of Taruskin's Russian Jewish forebears was Yiddish, not Russian; but his brief encounters, through older members of his family, with both the sound of the Russian language and its written, Cyrillic-alphabet form gave it, for Taruskin, an air of exotic mystery and appeal. This general, passing interest was made concrete and personal in the 1950s when his family discovered, to their surprise, that they had relatives in the Soviet Union.[4] Taruskin became a correspondent of his 'Uncle George' (actually his cousin),[5] who showered his family with gifts, including records not available outside of the Soviet Union. Thus given a compelling reason to learn the language, Taruskin began to study Russian seriously during his sophomore year at Columbia University, eventually majoring in Russian. Although his early graduate study, also at Columbia, was focused on playing viola da gamba and studying Renaissance music, he eventually proposed a Russian dissertation topic – specifically the music of Alexander Serov, an opera composer active in the 1860s – in order to get a Fulbright traveling grant to live in Russia for a while and also to meet his relatives. While his initial motivation for going to Russia to study 19th-century Russian opera may have been (as he describes it) calculated, self-interested, and cynical, he became passionately interested in the musical and esthetic debates in which Serov, Cui, and Dargomizhsky were involved, and in Russian music of all periods. Taruskin's musical experiences in Russia also led him to question the

[3] 'Settling Scores' by Paul Mitchinson. *Lingua Franca*, July-August 2000 (*http://paulmitchinson.com/articles/settling-scores*).

[4] The Taruskins believed there could not be any surviving relatives in the Soviet Union, since the area of Russia they were from was occupied by the Germans during World War II. They had not anticipated the fact that some of their relatives had moved to Moscow when the Provisional Government of 1917 abrogated the Pale of Settlement.

[5] 'In Russian, a first cousin once removed is called an uncle once removed (*dvoyurodn y dyadya*)…': *On Russian Music*, p. 190.

validity of certain attitudes about contemporary music – notably the privileging of certain styles and the accepted musico-historical narrative – then current in American academic circles. He writes rather movingly about an encounter with Shostakovich's *Leningrad Symphony*, a work which his training at one of the centers of American academic music had taught him to despise (along with its composer) as simple-minded; the experience caused him to re-evaluate the ways of listening to and thinking about music which had been instilled in him 'at home'.

Most of the articles in *On Russian Music* were written out of enthusiasm for, even love of the subject, and their advocacy is irresistibly persuasive. When Taruskin writes about the music of Glinka, or Tchaikovsky (especially *Eugene Onegin*), or Mussorgsky (especially *Boris Godunov*), or the operas of Rimsky-Korsakov, or some of music of Prokofieff (especially his operas) or Shostakovich, he makes it seem as if it must all be both wonderful and burningly important, and that one should drop everything and rush out and listen to it immediately, to experience and to savor first-hand all the aspects of it that he has revealed to us. This is not to say that all is laughter and light, though; Taruskin has immense knowledge and an even more immense personality, and he is very happy to throw both of them around. He enters with gusto into the controversies about Tchaikovsky's death and the authenticity of *Testimony*, the book published in the west by Solomon Volkov as the autobiographical work of Shostakovich. He musters armies of facts, presents them with overwhelming logic and authority, and administers them like a cudgel, with brutality, avenging zeal and – obviously – enormous enjoyment. The effect is both exhilarating and terrifying.

In the course of debunking the fairly recent theory (its proponents would say discovery; he would say scurrilous and baseless rumor) that Tchaikovsky's death was a result of suicide at the behest of an honor court, Taruskin – aside from excoriating any and every advocate of that claim – manages to throw considerable light on changing perceptions of the 'Russianness' of his works and on how the reception of Tchaikovsky's music changed from his lifetime to after his death. (He makes it clear that many assessments of his personality and his music since the posthumous revelation of his homosexuality have been tinged, at the very least, by homophobia.) Taruskin's examination of the questions regarding *Testimony* is exhaustive and, he certainly makes it seem, conclusive. Although he is clear that the issues involve the book's authenticity rather than its veracity (one is tempted to think this makes it a controversy that only a musicologist could love), he clearly regards it as a moral issue, which he treats with all the sternness (and rage) of one of your more forbidding Old Testament prophets. Although his focus in these issues is on the truth of the matter at hand, it is easy to see how the force of the presentation of his arguments, and his willingness (sometimes, it seems, eagerness) to make harsh assessments of his opponents' reasoning, methods and, sometimes, their motives, could leave them feeling personally attacked. Certainly Taruskin himself is happy to detail the times that people have responded to his attacks on their arguments with equally vehement rebuttals directed at his person, rather than at the substance of his assertions;[6] as far as he is concerned such a reaction is simply proof that he is right.

Unsurprisingly, the second half of the book is dominated by articles about Prokofieff and Shostakovich, the most important Russian composers of the 20th century. Their personal histories are inextricably intertwined with the history of the Soviet Union, and that situation, at least in the West, accounts for the changing views of their work and the varying historiography of their lives, which reflect changing western relations with Russia, up to and beyond the fall of the USSR.

Prokofieff was a successful and celebrated émigré composer-performer active in Europe and the United States when, in 1932, he accepted Soviet citizenship; he took up permanent residence in Russia in 1936 and after 1938 lived in enforced isolation from the west, with ever-increasing personal and professional difficulties. In a series of articles Taruskin examines the reasons for Prokofieff's return to Russia and the social and political implications of present-day performances of some of his more overtly state-serving Soviet works. He devotes several articles to Prokofieff's operas, dealing specifically with *The Love for Three Oranges* and *The Fiery Angel*, as well as the development, through his Soviet operas, of his operatic ideals. Shostakovich, long considered in the West to be a sort of stooge yes-man of the Soviet state, was increasingly been regarded in the later years of his life and, even more, after his death, as a sort of under-the-radar dissident 'able at the height of the Stalinist terror to perform heroic acts of public resistance (absolutely transparent to all his fellow dissidents but absolutely opaque to those in power)'.[7] That view was reinforced by the publication of *Testimony* (whoever wrote it) in

[6] The format of the book is that the articles are given more or less in their original form, with 'postscripts', when necessary, which offer a history of the response to the article, with Taruskin's further commentary.

[7] *On Russian Music*, p. 325.

1979. This existential doubleness, as Taruskin calls it, 'his eventual status as the one and only Soviet artist to be claimed ardently, and equally, by the official establishment and the rising counterculture alike',[8] is the focus in one way or another of all the Shostakovich articles in the book. It is also the reason Taruskin predicts that Shostakovich will overtake Schoenberg and Stravinsky as 'the most consequential composer of the twentieth century', since his music inevitably and inescapably forces us to confront the domains of 'music's meaning and its social reception', which is the subject matter of the 'newer, far more consequential, musicology', as opposed to the 'old' musicology, whose subject matter is only composers and music composition.[9] This is clearly, for Taruskin, the main issue in every case.

Taruskin describes himself as having 'a passionate style, and a demanding ethical sentiment', and both are apparent in his efforts to problematize works: exploring the aspects of those works where 'conventional artistic or "esthetic" notions come into conflict, at least in my view, with ethical ones'.[10] One of the first works which is examined in this light is the movement from *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Mussorgsky whose title is usually given as 'Two Jews: Rich and Poor'. Taruskin points out that Mussorgsky's actual title was 'Samuel Goldenberg und "Schuŷle"'; Samuel and Schuŷle are the same name, one in German, the other in Yiddish. The point is that the picture (which has never been located as any work of Victor Gartman, the artist memorialized in the work) is not a depiction of two Jews, but of the same man, implying that 'no matter how dignified or sophisticated or Europeanized a *zhid's* exterior, on the inside he is a jabbering, pestering little "Schumuŷle".'[11]

Two works of Prokofieff, *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan the Terrible*, both scores for movies by Eisenstein, receive considerable attention. Taruskin asks to what extent, as works of art, they can be disassociated from their original intended use, as instruments of Stalinist propaganda, and what our response to them should be.

> Whatever the sympathy we feel for the human plight of the artists who worked under killing constraints, and however strong our human impulse, therefore, to focus on their "purely artistic" achievement, is it really possible to ignore the content of their work? And if it is possible, is it desirable that we make ourselves indifferent to the horrific ideas to which they lent such compelling artistic support?[12]

Taruskin discusses various reasons offered by others why the works should continue to be performed, without anybody worrying overly much about their political content or their intended use, on account of their 'musical excellence', and forcefully and convincingly refutes all of them.

> Is great art ennobled by this attitude? Are we? Or are we not debased and degraded, both as artists and as human beings, by such a commitment to "abstract musical worth"?[13]

After reading this one might well be left wondering if Taruskin is advocating banning these works – or, if not going quite that far, is he saying that they *shouldn't* be performed even if performance were allowed? In any case, even if he doesn't want to ban them, how would he allow that anybody, under any circumstance, could continue to perform them in good conscience?[14]

The title chapter of *The Danger of Music* concerns a parallel but more recent, and therefore much more immediately sensitive, situation. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the Boston Symphony decided that it would be inappropriate to carry on with a previously scheduled performance of choruses from *The Death of Klinghoffer* by John Adams with words by librettist Alice Goodman. The cancellation of the performance provoked a flurry of condemnations, accusing the orchestra of censorship, or worse. Taruskin saw the orchestra's decision rather as an act of discretion and of sympathy for victims of terrorism and, in his article, supported the decision to cancel the performance, examining the arguments put forth by the opponents of the cancellation – that the audience was being 'protected' from a work that would challenge them and make them think, that the work offered 'the solace of truth', or that it offered answers and understanding rather than comfort – and disputing each of them. (What's wrong with wanting comfort at such a time? he asked.) In the article he (forcefully) presents a number of criticisms of *The Death of Klinghoffer*, mostly related to the depiction of the Palestinians, pointing out that the opposite number to the Palestinian hijackers of the *Achille Lauro* and murderers of Leon Klinghoffer, who are always presented as noble 'men of ideas', is

[8] Ibid., p.299.
[9] Ibid., pp. 299–300.
[10] Ibid., p. 9.
[11] Ibid., p. 198.
[12] Ibid., p. 271.
[13] Ibid., p. 280. He significantly follows those sentences with this one: 'And for a final thought, has that commitment nothing to do with the tremendous decline that the prestige of classical music – and of high art in general – has suffered in our time?'
[14] In an internet interview recorded at the University of Oregon Taruskin explains that ideally a performance of such a work, unaltered, should be presented along with a discussion of the issues, either by means of program notes, or an introductory lecture or some other means. UO Today Show #382 Richard Taruskin, *http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzGotK8JToQ*. (In the interview he is specifically discussing Bach's *St. John Passion*.)

not the Israelis, but rather middle-class American Jews, who are presented as being materialistic and grotesque.[15]

The issues involved in Adams's work and in its cancellation are highly explosive and leave no one, however they view them, unmoved. In the new postscript in *The Danger of Music*, Taruskin addresses the response to the article, in particular one of the points raised by defenders of *The Death of Klinghoffer*: that Adams and Goodman (and its director, Peter Sellars) did not have any anti-Semitic intentions. 'Even before considering the claim', Taruskin writes,

> the premise must be dismissed, since it seeks to adjudicate the issue by examining 'intention' (according to the old poietic fallacy) rather than reception. As in the case of nationalism, where a scholarly consensus has by now realized that works of art are to be regarded as historically nationalist (or not) by virtue of the way they are perceived, whatever the maker's intention …[16]

Aside from the fact that this quote includes an implied claim from musicological politics about who rules musicology, or should do – guess who? – and that it presents reception as being an unchanging, static state,[17] 'poietic' is a crucial term for Taruskin; indeed it is his book's central issue.

Taruskin explains the term very clearly in an article about Schoenberg entitled 'The Poietic Fallacy':

> The word poietic comes from the field of semiotics, from which a now somewhat old-fashioned tripartite model of analysis, first proposed by the French linguist Jean Molino, was long fashionable in musicology. Communications have senders and receivers. An analysis that is concerned with the sending of the message, hence with its devising, is a poietic analysis (from the Greek wood *poiein*, 'to make,' but distinguished by the unusual spelling from poetic to avoid confusion with more ordinary usages). An analysis that is concerned with the receiving is an esthesic analysis (from the Greek *aisthesis*, 'perception,' similarly distinguished from esthetic). There was also in Molino's original formulation a *niveau neutre*, a neutral level, that analyzed the structure of the message itself; it has been pretty much discarded once it was realized that analysis itself was an esthesic function.[18]

'The Poietic Fallacy', although largely concerned with Schoenberg's music and its (and his) place in music history, is – at least ostensibly – a review of *Arnold Schoenberg's Journey*,[19] a book by the composer Alan Shawn, which Taruskin describes, patronizingly but not inaccurately, as 'a modest and friendly attempt to help willing music lovers discover pleasure in Schoenberg'.[20] It is not insignificant that Taruskin writes 'in Schoenberg' rather than 'in Schoenberg's music', since as far as he is concerned the two cannot under any circumstances be separated. There are standard hoary defenses of Schoenberg's music, which Taruskin considers and finds wanting: that it is influential (on other composers) and that it is well composed. These are both poietic arguments, since they are not in any way concerned with the music's effect on listeners, but solely with its making, and its influence on makers and the making of yet more music. Taruskin is certainly right to point out the emptiness of those arguments. Shawn's intent is to address that issue. He wants to make a claim that the music is important to him because, to put it as guilelessly as possible, he finds it beautiful and likes to listen to it: if it has that effect on him, it might also have that effect on others, and he would like to help make that at least possible. In other words, he wants to defend it, as well as he can, on esthesic grounds.

Unfortunately Shawn's choice of words gives Taruskin an excuse for attacking his project: not really on its substance, but on Shawn's formulation of it. Shawn writes: 'Schoenberg's voice …, the voice that speaks to us through the work has not been heard in a natural way without interference.' 'Is there a "natural" way to listen to music or to experience any cultural artifact?', Taruskin wants to know; and furthermore, 'Whose way is the natural way?' And what is 'interference' anyway?

> Shawn seems to think it consists of "words about music" or "ideas about" the thing rather than "the thing itself." But if his understanding of Schoenberg has ripened over the years so that he now wants to share it with us, it can only be because he has had some benefit of interference. And what he offers us now is more interference.[21]

(One might wonder what point beyond being able to read music – if not that – would be too much interference.) The further problem is that Shawn

[15] In discussion of this issue in the above-mentioned interview on YouTube, Taruskin blandly says 'I didn't mean it as a criticism of the opera'. It would be very easy, when actually reading the article, to be fooled on this point.

[16] *The Danger of Music*, p. 178.

[17] W. H. Auden's 'Metalogue to the Magic Flute' (W. H. Auden, *Collected Poems*. New York: Random House, 1976, p. 441) offers an interesting commentary on reception.

[18] The third level, the *niveau neutre*, is the hardest part to pin down, since it is what one might call the thing itself. In the realm of music it is particularly hard to describe, since it's not easy to specify exactly where the music is located – not in the score and not exactly, or completely anyway, in the sound of it. If nothing else, one might think of it as the blank object onto which the interpretation of the esthesic function is projected by the receiver. In any case, it is not possible simply to disregard it or explain it away, as Taruskin does.

[19] Allen Shawn, *Arnold Schoenberg's Journey* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2002; paperback reprint. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004; 340pp).

[20] *The Danger of Music*, p. 301.

[21] *The Danger of Music*, p. 302.

– like Roger Sessions, some of whose words in advocacy of 'the profound and intense beauty' of Schoenberg's music Taruskin also considers, dissects, disqualifies, and discards – is a composer, *not a listener*, and therefore completely disqualified from serving 'as a guide to nonprofessional listeners, however willing'.[22]

A scholarly consensus, apparently, has now realized that composers never listen to music and certainly that none of them has ever had any kind of experience as a listener and/or thought about that experience (had she/he ever had one) in any way that could ever at all be meaningful or helpful to another person, professional or otherwise. They are only concerned, as members of the guild, a small clique of aesthetes, with how it's put together and with, as it were, who's on first. They're completely captive, to the exclusion of anything else, to an idea of musical, intellectual, and historical progress which can be traced back to Franz Brendel in the middle of the 19th century. Fortunately Taruskin – who is, after all, a trained historian, absolutely free of all those professional prejudices – will tell us all about it, with the great authority conferred on him by his advanced standing in his discipline.

Taruskin continually attacks Schoenberg, his music, and its defenders on the basis that they only speak of poietic matters and are not concerned with its effect (would he allow one to say 'with how it sounds?') on its listeners. However he himself only once alludes to the effect of the music: he describes *Erwartung* as 'horrendously dissonant and ugly'. Otherwise he is either attacking the music on the basis of the misguided (he asserts, and in a lot of cases he's right) poietic arguments of some of its defenders, or on the technical ways in which it does not conform to the processes and assumptions of earlier music (and who's being poietic then?). He writes:

> …there is simply no point in maintaining that Schoenberg's music is music like any other music. More than any body of music I know, it represented a crux in the history of ideas.

So John Adams cannot be in any way, to any extent, defended on the poietic basis of his intentions, but Schoenberg can never be separated either from his intentions, actual or purported, or from the intentions and philosophies of people preceding him, or of those of his later admirers. There is, in fact, no way that anyone can ever consider his music (favorably, anyway) on esthesic grounds, and anyone who hasn't experienced that fact – not just understood, but truly experienced it – is USELESS.

'How Talented Composers Become Useless' is the title of a notoriously nasty article about the music of the late American composer Donald Martino, who was then an emeritus professor at Harvard. In his new postcript to it Taruskin even more emphatically denies the possibility that the music of Schoenberg or of Milton Babbitt or of any 12-tone composer could actually be found appealing in any way to anybody – even (and especially) any of the composers who wrote the music. They might *claim* to find that, at least to them, it had meaning – beauty, if you like – anything other than self-referential quality and professional influence; but they must be just lying.

> As I pointed out in the article itself, the claim that the music was closed to nonprofessionals and was only to be evaluated by its practitioners had integrity. Its assertive truth claims were credible; its defensive claim of beauty is not. It was only when its apologists began claiming for academic serialism qualities that the lay audience complained of missing that allegations of bad faith became common[23]…

They might just as well claim to find a lecture on, for instance, 'Pointwise Periodic Homeomorphism' beautiful.

Because Martino made the fundamentally incorrect assumption that his music could contain elements of 'conventional expressivity' unconnected to 12-tone harmonic language (which Taruskin says is not really a language since it has only vocabulary – a deliberately dissonant stream of sound – but no syntax) and therefore not supported by musical content, the results are a crude, coarse, and primitive confusion rather than natural human music. To follow this music is most difficult; to remember it, impossible. The pianist David Holzman, whose efforts at recording the music of Stefan Wolpe deserve gratitude, only inspires regret in his efforts at recording Martino's music ('…content to seek cozy academic approbation instead of seeking to establish a viable role for new music in the public sphere').[24] Taruskin clearly considers that one of his missions should be to afflict the comfortable, but if any of the afflicted

[22] *The Danger of Music*, p. 303.

[23] *The Danger of Music*, p. 90. With the others Taruskin lumps in George Perle, who isn't a 12-tone composer, but (he says) might as well be – not necessarily because of how the music sounds, but because Perle's role in explicating serial techniques makes him guilty by association.

[24] *The Danger of Music*, p. 88. How is it that George Perle might as well be a 12-tone composer, but not Stefan Wolpe (though neither of them is)? Taruskin does not explain.

should get caught in the crossfire, it worries him not. His tone in this article is extremely abrasive, if not downright abusive. Since in addition to asserting that Martino's music is 'primitive, simplistic, crude' and largely meaningless, he goes on to assert that Martino, as a teacher, was 'an entirely negative example' and was mis-educating his students – not out of intention, since he didn't know any better, but as a result of having been mis-educated himself[25] – it is hard not to read it as being deliberately and harshly personal.

It is probably significant that as far as Taruskin was concerned, any protests against his article were not defences of Martino and his music from a quite personal attack, but only 'the infuriated response to my piece from strong adherents to style that [William] Bolcom[26] [in one of the responses] wrote off prematurely as passé, convinced as ever of its – and their – historical right'. These could be dismissed – along with a book defending what Taruskin calls 'defensive claims of beauty', which used the first sentence of his article as its epigram[27] – as 'special pleading, double standards, and invective, leavened by a novel strain of duplicity' and 'victimology'.[28] When a musicologist colleague of Martino's at Harvard protested that the article was a damaging personal attack, Taruskin brushed it off, since as 'a Harvard professor emeritus in America' he was 'no longer in any jeopardy from the likes of me, and his reputation with the general public, being close to nonexistent, was not likely to suffer either from my airing of issues that transcended personalities'.[29] It is probably superfluous to point out that for many people, especially Martino, the article hardly transcended personalities. Elsewhere in the book[30] Taruskin says that he thinks that it is important to name names so as to make it clear that he is not merely setting up straw men. But in fact he is having his cake and eating it too: merely naming people (and verbally abusing them) doesn't necessarily mean they're not also being used as straw men.

An article entitled 'Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology', first published in *19th Century Music*, examines the history, historiography, politics and 'the meaning encoded in artistic production' of a style of music (and an aesthetic) that began in the 1920s. Neoclassicism has been regarded as a reaction to the carnage and disruptions of World War I and to the rapid modernist 'developments' in the decade or so preceding the war, which came to seem emblematic of it and its causes. Usually thought of as retrospective and alluding to the forms and language of older, particularly 18th-century, music, it is associated especially with the music of the middle-aged Stravinsky and the younger Hindemith, and distinguished, in its clearly intentional modernism, from a different sort of impulse where the stylistic retrospectivism is nostalgic (Taruskin cites the example of the later works of Richard Strauss). Taruskin writes:

> Once we begin looking at the neoclassical repertory without teleological or dialectical prejudices, the first thing we learn is that it [neo-classicism] was an intransigent thing, neither a refuge in the past nor a maintenance of a nervous status quo. Like its collateral descendant, the "historical performance" movement, it was a tendentious journey back to where we had never been.

The term neo-classicism had been used earlier, in 19th-century France, first as a pejorative implying an unimaginative and inferior kind of imitation of earlier music (French critics would use it to describe the music of Mendelssohn and Brahms, for instance). Later on it was applied to a style of music that sought to oppose German musical hegemony by going back to the roots of French music from the Baroque and earlier ('dans le style ancien').[31] As early on as *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring*, certain French critics saw in the works of Stravinsky 'purity, sobriety, objectivity, impersonal precision, and so on'[32] – and Taruskin points out that it was those qualities, rather than any kind of particular stylistic references to past music, that was much more the crux of the project of neoclassicism.[33] These qualities made the Russian composer a 'paragon of Frenchness', and the center of resistance to the decadently 'psychological' Germans. Taruskin comments:

[25] *The Danger of Music*, p. 88.
[26] Taruskin writes (p. 89) that he did not deny Bolcom's 'minor premise', that 'the music of Donald Martino is proof that a strict twelve-tone composer can still make sensuous and passionate music'. Once he has characterized his music as 'crude', and its gestures as primitive and largely meaningless, it is not clear what positive qualities he is allowing it, or how much any of them would matter.
[27] *The Pleasure of Modernist Music*, edited by Arved Ashby (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004).
[28] *The Danger of Music*, p. 89.
[29] *The Danger of Music*, p. 92.
[30] *The Danger of Music*, p. 443.
[31] Taruskin also points out that this movement was in some cases a cover for a certain amount of anti-Semitism.
[32] *The Danger of Music*, p. 387.
[33] Taruskin goes to pains to make the point that *Pulcinella* is not part of the neo-classical canon. He also points out several times that although the first time the term 'neo-classicism' was used in connexion with Stravinsky, by Boris de Schloezer, was in 1923, the year of the composition of the *Octet*, generally thought of as the beginning of the neo-classic style, it was not in regard to that work, but rather to *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*.

> One is tempted to suggest that by misreading Stravinsky so early as a classicist and a positivist, [Jacque] Rivière[34] actually turned him into one. For one is influenced not only by anxiety but also by praise, the more so when the praise is at once so intelligent and so hyperbolic. It is not so hard to understand why, just emerging from a milieu in which he was ranked far below Glazunov (and even behind Maximilian Steinberg, his teacher's son-in-law), Stravinsky should have been susceptible to the blandishments of those who placed him higher than Debussy. He did what was necessary to keep the praise coming.[35]

Although marked by a significant musical change – 'the rediscovery of the leading tone and the reintroduction into his music of the dominant function', as Taruskin views it –

> Stravinsky's ironized cultivation of the phonology and morphology of eighteenth century music was literally a reactionary move, a furious rejection of the horrible new order – Bolsheviks overruning his native country, proletariats rampant everywhere – that he called 'modernism.' He went around telling interviewers that 'modernists'– the expressionistic 'revolutionary' Schoenberg, naturally, above all – 'have ruined modern music,' just as modernists of a different stripe had befouled the modern world … In the precise meaning of the word, his was a counterrevolutionary art'.[36]

Both Stravinsky's pure, simple, sovereign, precise, and geometric art, and the socially motivated antiromanticist art of Hindemith claimed derivation and inspiration from Bach, and 'by the mid-1920s Schoenberg, too, had journeyed back to Bach, joining in the authoritarian reaction against anarchy and psychopathology'. Schoenberg's devotion to Bach, 'a heritage dogmatically viewed as supreme' Taruskin thinks, was 'tinged with chauvinism',[37] representing a claim of German musical hegemony that was uncomfortably closely connected to German demands for political domination.

Stravinsky's compositional devotion to 'pure form in which music means nothing outside of itself', an art of clarity, sanity, and objectivity 'under the stern auspices of order and discipline', moves all too easily into being an art of elitism, sovereign certainty, and authority – in which he was, as his disciple Arthur Lourié wrote, 'the dictator of the reaction against the anarchy into which modernism degenerated',[38] in other words, the Mussolini of music. Taruskin documents and discusses Stravinsky's admiration for the Duce himself in a chapter entitled 'The Dark Side of the Moon', reviewing a book by Harvey Sachs about the activities of musicians in Mussolini's Italy.[39] Taruskin thinks that Stravinsky's devotion to order and discipline, which he at least implies was a desire for a sort of musical fascism, was one of the factors that eventually led him to embrace 12-tone music: 'The twelve-tone composers are the only ones who have a discipline I respect. Whatever else it may be, twelve-tone music is certainly pure music', Stravinsky said in an interview in 1952.[40] Another major factor, Taruskin asserts, was Stravinsky's long-standing desire for and delight in having the 'role of defining, at times fairly dictatorially, what would be á la mode' and his great fear of becoming 'demodé'.[41]

All of this sets the stage for 'Stravinsky and Us', a lecture delivered as the BBC Inaugural Proms Lecture at the Royal College of Music in London in August of 1996. In this, the penultimate chapter of *The Danger of Music*, a number of the major preoccupations of the book come into play. Taruskin starts by examining the Stravinsky myth, or rather several Stravinsky myths, 'some of these of Stravinsky's own devising, others myths to which he had willingly submitted, still others myths to which his work had been assimilated without his direct participation'.[42] The first part of the talk concerns the historiography of *The Rite of Spring*, and especially the lies Stravinsky told about it after the fact: that it was conceived initially as a piece of pure, plotless instrumental music ('une oeuvre architectonique et non anecdotique'),[43] that there was only one folk song in it, and that it was wholly a product of intuition with no musical tradition behind it. 'And yet myths are not merely lies', Taruskin writes. 'They are explanatory fictions, higher truths – enabling or empowering narratives that take us *a realibus ad realiora*, "from the real to the more real …".'[44] In Stravinsky's case, these myths were useful in his efforts to shed his persona as a Russian composer and to establish himself as a cosmopolitan composer of absolute music without 'extramusical' content of any kind. The importance of knowing the truth behind these myths in relationship to the work itself and its 'full human significance' is disputed by Pieter

[34] 'the precocious editor of *La Nouvelle Revue française*, the aggressively nationalistic literary forum founded in 1909 … by a group of seven writers that included André Gide.' *The Danger of Music*, p. 387.
[35] *The Danger of Music*, p. 388.
[36] *The Danger of Music*, p. 388, 390.
[37] *The Danger of Music*, p. 397.
[38] Arthur Lourié, *Sergei Koussevtizky and His Epoch* (New York: Knopf, 1931), p. 196, quoted in *The Danger of Music*, p. 395.
[39] Harvey Sachs, *Music in Fascist Italy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987; 271pp.)
[40] 'Rencontre avec Stravinsky', *Preuves* 2 (1952): 37, quoted in *The Danger of Music*, p. 400.
[41] *The Danger of Music*, p. 431.
[42] *The Danger of Music*, p. 421.
[43] Michel Georges-Michel, 'Les deux Sacres du printemps', *Comoedia*, 11 December,1920, quoted in *The Danger of Music*, p. 421.
[44] *The Danger of Music*, p. 422.

van den Toorn in his book, *Stravinsky and "The Rite of Spring"*. Taruskin considers his arguments, focusing finally on a paraphrase by van den Toorn of a statement by Stravinsky – actually a misquotation, which it suits Taruskin's purpose to stick with: 'form is everything'. Form, not content or any social context, is paramount.

> The esthetic rapture Van den Toorn seeks demands, once again, a willed ignorance, a willed blindness. Directing attention resolutely away from content and focusing entirely on form is hardly an 'immediate' response to art … It is a learned response – learned from Stravinsky. It has its costs.[45]

To exemplify and explore these costs, Taruskin examines and discusses the *Cantata* of 1952, the first work Stravinsky wrote after *The Rake's Progress*. Taruskin describes the *Cantata* as being 'one of the most revered items in the later Stravinsky catalog' and 'one of Stravinsky's best known and surely most written-about late works'.[46] After the completion of *The Rake's Progress,* which had taken him three years to write and which was his longest work, Stravinsky had come to feel that he had exhausted for himself the creative possibilities of the neoclassic style he had cultivated for about 30 years and that he had come to a compositional impasse, which he feared would end his career as a composer. Taruskin chooses to consider that this was really a personal crisis, brought on by Stravinsky's discovery when he went to Europe for the first performance of *The Rake's Progress* (his first visit there since the war), that younger composers were more interested in the music of Schoenberg than they were in his own. Thus, rather than a compositional crisis, it was really a consequence of his terror of being considered old hat. Whatever the reason, Stravinsky himself became increasingly interested in Schoenberg's music, as well as that of Webern, with which he became acquainted through his associate Robert Craft. His interest in and study of this music (and, Taruskin says, serious study of Ernst Krenek's primer on 12-tone composition), began to be evident in the music that he wrote at the time, where various serial operations (although dealing with groups of fewer than 12 notes) became more prevalent, and eventually led, over the next six years, to his 'conversion' to 'the twelve-tone system'. The *Cantata* was the beginning of this development in Stravinsky's life and career.

Taruskin gives a complete history of the composition of the *Cantata*: the source of the texts Stravinsky used (a school anthology of English poetry edited by W. H. Auden, his collaborator on *The Rake's Progress*); the influence on Stravinsky's music, particularly on the rhythms of his word-setting, of the early English music he had been getting to know over the 1940s; the sequence of the composition of the movements of the work; and the thematic connexions between the movements, especially between 'The Maidens Came,' the first movement that Stravinsky composed, and 'Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day,' the movement for tenor soloist, which sets a secular medieval carol that narrates, through the imagery of dancing, the life of Christ. This latter movement has a very complex canonic structure, which shows the effects of Stravinsky's encounters with Schoenberg's *Suite*, op. 29, and is the first work in which Stravinsky began to employ some of the serial techniques which he was finding there and finding out about from other sources.

Taruskin takes note of Stravinsky's very detailed, extensive, and somewhat dry, program notes on the movement, written for the first performance of the *Cantata*, in November of 1952 (according to Taruskin, the first technical analysis which he had offered of any work of his since a note on *The Firebird* 42 years earlier). This, he writes, indicates Stravinsky's desire to have people see how he had done what he did, to the exclusion of anything else about the piece. (Taruskin compares this impulse, unfavorably, with a quote from Schoenberg, '… I have always been dead set against…seeing how it is done; whereas I have always helped people see: what it *is*!'.[47]) After noting that Stravinsky discusses the texts of the *Cantata* only in terms of their sonic properties, with no reference at all to their meanings,[48] he then points out what neither Stravinsky, nor any of 12 commentators who he names, nor any of 'the other musician-commentators who have offered detailed descriptions of the Cantata in print'[49] who he doesn't, ever alluded to: the fact that one of the 12 quatrains of the text of 'Tomorrow Shall

[45] *The Danger of Music*, p. 425.

[46] *The Danger of Music*, p. 428 and p. 425, respectively. Both of those designations are debatable, but it serves the purpose of Taruskin's argument to insist on them.

[47] Letter of 27 July, 1932; Arnold Schoenberg *Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 164, quoted in *The Danger of Music*, p. 433. In this case, it suits Taruskin to allow that, on at least one occasion, Schoenberg had a non-poietic thought.

[48] He notes (*The Danger of Music*, p. 437) that this was a practice of Stravinsky's throughout his career.

[49] *The Danger of Music*, p. 435.

Be My Dancing Day' makes reference to the idea (justly described by Taruskin as deplorable, and in modern times universally regarded as reprehensible and theologically baseless) of the inherited guilt of all Jews for all time for the death of Jesus.[50] All four of the Christian gospels relate, in the story of Jesus's passion, that he was brought before a Jewish religious court, which condemned him and turned him over to the ruling Romans, who, under pressure from the leaders of that establishment and a mob stirred up by them, executed him. The interpretation of the responsibility of the Jewish religious establishment in that time and place and its ramifications for later Jews varies from one Gospel to the other, depending on the specific agenda of the individual author. In any case, the involvement of some particular Jews at that specific time with the death of Jesus, who was also a Jew, is part of the story, and that fact is reflected in this poem, as it is in any setting of any of the versions of the passion story, Bach's of St. Matthew and St. John, for instance.

Taruskin is emphatic that the issue for him is not Stravinsky's motives in setting the text, nor whether or not Stravinsky was anti-Semitic (although he makes a strong case, supported by quotations from Stravinsky, that in fact he was, and in discussing Stravinsky's pro-fascist leanings in 'The Dark Side of the Moon', he writes that 'his anti-Semitism was deeply ingrained'). Rather the issue is Stravinsky's blindness, or insensitivity – Taruskin is willing to let the reader choose – to the import of the words he was setting in this particular poem, 'seven years after Hitler', and whether this indifference was 'esthetically justified'.[51] Taruskin quotes Craft, who wrote that Stravinsky, since he considered 'the offending line' to be part of Christian dogma, at least at the time it was written, and since he had not intended to hurt or offend anybody, was surprised at the adverse reaction that the text received from some quarters.[52] He agreed to changing the line to read 'my enemies on me made great suit' in some of Craft's performances of the *Cantata*, and he was willing to change the line for a recording he made in 1965 (though Alexander Young, the tenor soloist, refused to perform the altered line, considering it a desecration of the poem).

Taruskin points out that Gustav Holst also set the poem as a choral piece, although in 1916, long before the Holocaust. He asserts that Holst's lesser stature as a composer would make the performance of his piece nowadays less acceptable than a performance of Stravinsky's 'revered' setting would be. He seems to believe that the Holst setting is used in Anglican services ('…where a different set of audience expectations and a different set of premises regulating audience behavior are in force').[53] In fact Holst intended the piece for community choruses to sing at choral festivals. The poem is secular, there is no clear place where it would fit in the Anglican liturgy, and the length of his setting would probably militate against its use as an anthem.[54] In any case, if *venue* is what makes the performance of Holst's setting acceptable, would a performance of Stravinsky's setting in a church service make his use of the poem any less problematic? Taruskin stops short, in 'Stravinsky and Us', of raising the point that, if the text in question is anti-Semitic, so also must be the texts of the Bach Passions (and that by listening to the Bach Passions we also lend 'our unprotesting presence to an execration of the Jews', becoming 'complicit in it, and even more than that', by claiming esthetic justification for them and maintaining 'a pretense that nothing of the sort is taking place'[55]). In the article 'Stalin Lives On In the Concert Hall' in *On Russian Music* he does imply that the Bach *St. John Passion* is anti-Semitic, without pursuing the point.[56]

'But how should we deal with the question, if we agree that there is a problem?' Taruskin asks. 'Ought moral sensibilities, as much as artistic ones, discourage performance of excellent music?' He raises the possibility of performing the tenor solo movement of the *Cantata* without words,

[50] 'The Jews on me they made great suit,/And with me made great variance;/Because they lov'd darkness rather than light,/To call my true love to the dance'; and later, 'Before Pilate the Jews me brought …', quoted in *The Danger of Music*, p. 438. In 1965 the Second Vatican Council declared that the Jews were not responsible for the death of Jesus.

[51] *The Danger of Music,* p. 443.

[52] Robert Craft, *An Improbable Life* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002), pp. 137–138. Quoted in *The Danger of Music*, p. 443. Among those who complained about the text at the time were Mildred Norton, a Los Angeles reviewer, Jacob Drachler, a painter and literary anthologist, and Alexandre Tansman, Stravinsky's friend and biographer, who, according to Craft, Stravinsky never spoke to again after having received his letter complaining abut the text. Lawrence Morton, who ran the Evenings of the Roof concerts in Los Angeles, requested a change in the line when he programmed the work.

[53] *The Danger of Music,* p. 446. One might wonder what these unspecified expectations and behaviors that excuse an execration of Jews might be.

[54] When his friend Ralph Vaughan Williams scheduled a performance of Holst's setting (whose title is *This Have I Done for My True Love*) for his Leith Hill Festival in 1951, he found that it did engender controversy – due to its associating the life of Christ with dancing and romantic imagery. See Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 315–316.

[55] *The Danger of Music*, p. 441.

[56] *On Russian Music*, p. 281. This issue is also addressed in the interview on YouTube interview cited earlier. Since only the *St. John Passion* is involved in these discussions, it is not clear whether Taruskin considers the *St. Matthew Passion* any less offensive.

either as an instrumental solo or as a vocalise. This course of action, he writes, would 'of course' be unacceptable (to others, not to him), since it would be 'unauthentic,' 'a violation of the integrity of the musical text as the composer left it', which, according to the ethics of classical music, is largely a product of 'the mythmaking authority of Stravinsky'.[57] Taruskin asks if such 'ethics' are really ethical, if they ascribe a greater value to the integrity of works of art than to human concerns. Here he uses exactly the same words he had used in *On Russian Music* in regards to certain Stalinist celebratory works of Prokofieff.[58]

The question of how one should react to this situation was raised directly by John Rockwell in a *New York Times* article[59] prompted by the Taruskin book review that became the chapter of *The Danger of Music* entitled 'The Dark Side of the Moon'. Rockwell asked: 'Should any of this dampen our enthusiasm for the music of Stravinsky or Schoernberg or Webern?' Taruskin's answer is: 'They shouldn't, any more than those offended by Mussorgsky's caricature of Diaspora Jews in *Pictures at an Exhibition* need avoid performances of *Boris Godunov* or those offended by Wagner's anti-Semitic tract *Das Judenthum in der Musik* need resist the beauties of *Tristan and Isolde*'. His attitude seems to be quite close to that of George Orwell regarding the poetry of Ezra Pound, on the occasion of Pound's being rewarded the Bollingen Prize for Poetry for his *The Pisan Cantos* as the best book of poetry published in 1948. After relating Pound's anti-Semitic and pro-fascist activities during the 1930s and the Second World War, Orwell wrote:

> None of this is a reason against giving Pound the Bollingen Prize … But since the judges have taken what amounts to the 'art for art's sake' position, that is, the position that aesthetic integrity and common decency are two separate things, then at least let us keep them separate and not excuse Pound's political career on the ground that he is a good writer.[60]

It is important to Taruskin's purposes here, however, to make the assumption that absolutely no one in the world of classical music – either in the performing world or in the academic world –could possibly be able or willing to assume Orwell's attitude. He insists that Stravinsky's artistic stature, and the nature of musical high art in general, are *universally* considered as reasons, not just to deny that, in this case, aesthetic integrity is a different thing from common decency, but also that it makes even asking the question, in regards to musical arts, inadmissable. Taruskin's claim is that 'many if not most professional writers on music simply cannot cope intellectually with an argument that calls for the ethical or political evaluation of a work of art'.[61]

The issue of anti-Semitism, once raised, tends to put an end to any argument, so one hesitates (as one is clearly meant to do) to ask whether or not the poem that Taruskin categorically labels as completely anti-Semitic, deplorable, and an execration of Jews, is in fact what he says it is. Even though the quatrain in question is an ugly and repellent expression in its 'rehearsing as it does the old guilt-libel against the Jews as children of darkness and as deicides',[62] can promoting the notion of the blood guilt of the Jews be taken as the intent of the poem, or even an important aspect of it? If it is, would merely changing three words ('My enemies on me made great suit', rather than 'The Jews on me they made great suit') really remove that message and make it acceptable? For that matter, does changing the words make it any less clear who the enemies are? Is it possible to relate the life of Christ without mentioning that there were Jews involved? And, if not, does that mean that any text that does that is, without question, anti-Semitic? Taruskin asserts that anyone who disagrees with him on this point in any respect, and for any reason, is performing 'intellectual back-flips in denial'; they are not simply incorrect but must be trying to 'sanitize' the text and render 'nonartistic evaluations of his [Stravinsky's] work impertinent or altogether inadmissible'.[63] By questioning him at all, they are being morally and ethically blind and indifferent (and, incidentally, proving him right).

Taruskin describes the *Cantata*, particularly the tenor solo movement, as being 'one of the most revered items in the later Stravinsky catalog' with-

[57] *The Danger of Music*, p. 440.

[58] 'But is great art ennobled by this attitude? Are we? Or are we not debased and dimished, both as artists and as human beings, by such a commitment to "abstract" musical worth? And for a final disquieting thought, has that commitment got nothing to do with the catastrophic decline that the prestige of classical music – and of high art in general – has suffered in our time?' *The Danger of Music*, p. 441. Compare to *On Russian Music*, p. 280.

[59] 'Music View: Reactionary Musical Modernists', 11 September, 1988. Quoted in *The Danger of Music*, p. 214.

[60] George Orwell, *Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Everyman's Library, 2002), p. 1363.

[61] *The Danger of Music*, p. 443.

[62] *The Danger of Music*, p. 437.

[63] *The Danger of Music*, p. 214.

out explaining exactly what he means by that – or what factors cause him to think that's the case, whatever he does mean. Presumably not due to the number of performances it gets. Between 2000 and 2009 the *Cantata* received 11 performances, in comparison to 22 performances each of the *Requiem Canticles* and *Movements* for piano and orchestra, 30 performances of *Monumentum par Gesualdo*, and 83 performances of *Agon*.[64] Each of those pieces is more difficult for the performers than the *Cantata* (except for the tenor solo movement, which is notoriously taxing due to its tessitura and length), requires a larger ensemble, and is, therefore, among other things, harder to perform and more expensive to mount. The one work of similar size of forces and difficulty (and, despite having been written before *The Rake's Progress*, similar in style), the *Mass*, received 60 performances. It might be assumed that our 'reverence' for the work would result in more performances. Since, as Craft writes, the second Ricercar, the tenor solo, in the *Cantata* 'marks the first effect on Stravinsky of Schoenberg's serial principle',[65] it is not surprising that it would garner a fair amount of attention and ink in any discussion of Stravinsky's transition into a full-fledged 12-tone composer; Taruskin does not, however, say whether it is written about more than, for instance, the *Shakespeare Songs* or *In Memorial Dylan Thomas* or, for that matter, *Canticum Sacrum* or *Agon*, each of which is also a milestone in Stravinsky's later career.

Taruskin is ethically offended 'on behalf of Jews today who do not like to be called Christ killers' by Stravinsky's blindness or indifference in setting 'Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day'. If the issue he raises here is explosively and emotionally sensitive, the justice of its condemnation is unquestionable. In linking Stravinsky's work with the issue of anti-Semitism, even if he doesn't assert (actually he seems to take it as a given) Stravinsky's personal anti-Semitism, Taruskin makes that work suspect, to say the least. For Taruskin, though, the problem presented by the *Cantata* is really just a symptom of a greater evil: the notion that art, or any artist, might be thought to be exempt by virtue of alleged artistic excellence from questions of meaning, morality, and social reception – which makes it another aspect of the poietic fallacy. Taruskin links Stravinsky's moral failings in setting what he considers to be an anti-Semitic text with his desperation to remain the most 'à la mode' composer, and, in turn, with his 'progress' after the *Rake's Progress* towards writing 12-tone music. He gives each of those things, through association, a moral and ethical dubiousness of equal weight.

Taruskin condemns the notion of Stravinsky's later career as a 'quest narrative', a teleology which is in turn subsumed into 'one of the great myths of the twentieth century, that of the general teleology according to which the structure of music and the compositional practices that produce that structure have been said to evolve by stages, and inevitably, from tonal to atonal, finally to serial'.[66] In fact, Stravinsky embarked in 1952 on a conscious effort to move from a style whose possibilities he felt he had exhausted to another which would be more fruitful. Whether or not he originally envisioned that style to be serial, he ended up by 1958 as a 12-tone composer, and it is not incorrect to describe the process as some sort of teleology. There is no question that at the time some people did attempt to assimilate Stravinsky's teleology into the larger one. Time has shown the larger one to be inadequate, but that does invalidate the smaller, more personal one. Taruskin is eager to present Stravinsky's transition to 12-tone music as motivated not by serious musical concerns but rather by the composer's petty concerns about his image and celebrity status. He says nothing in particular about any of the works from Stravinsky's later career aside from the *Cantata,* but since they are all products of what he alleges was sheer pandering, one might wonder if he thinks that they are therefore less valid as music – or, for that matter, if the world would be better off without these products of that pandering.

It's noticeable that the intense moral indignation which, in *On Russian Music*, was directed at *Alexander Nevsky*, *Ivan the Terrible*, and other Stalinist state-serving works of Prokofieff, is directed in *The Danger of Music* at Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Cage ('the scariest goy'[67]), and American 12-tone composers. Taruskin also condemns the music of Carl Orff, but with much less ire than that aroused in him by the music of Martino; one gets the impression that for Taruskin the transgression of being a modernist composer is equivalent, if not much greater, than that of producing works of propaganda for Stalin or the

[64] Those numbers are from the web-site of Boosey & Hawkes, Stravinsky's publisher, the only source of the materials one would need to perform the works.

[65] Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 422. Quoted in *The Danger of Music*, p. 429.

[66] *The Danger of Music*, p. 434.

[67] *The Danger of Music* ('No Ear for Music: The Scary Purity of John Cage'), p. 261.

Nazis. He writes with some anger about (quoting William Bolcom), 'the hegemony' of serial music in the American academic establishment, and the 'almost fascistic doctrine of historical inevitability adopted by some serialists',[68] and dismisses with complete contempt any claims that this situation might not have been universal, or not exactly the ruthlessly monolithic totalitarian condition suggested by Bolcom's quote and Taruskin's obviously personal and painful memory. George Orwell wrote that '… every literary judgement consists in trumping up a set of rules to justify an instinctive preference',[69] and it is hard to escape the suspicion that at least some of the time this is a quite good description of what Taruskin is doing, however skillfully and intelligently. Since the alleged attempt by serialists at world domination has clearly not been successful; since 12-tone composers, especially American 12-tone composers in the academic establishment, are currently about as plentiful as ivory-billed woodpeckers, and about as powerful; and since nobody is espousing anymore the teleology which Taruskin is so anxious to debunk, it might just be time to let bygones be bygones and stop beating up on the losers – or, at the very least, to just get over it all. It might also be time to stop blaming modernist composers for the 'catastrophic decline that the prestige of classical music –and of high art in general – has suffered in our time'. Elsewhere in the book Taruskin offers much more thoughtful, insightful and interesting commentary about that decline as a function of altered demographics, evolving social attitudes[70] and the lack of practical music education in elementary and secondary schools.[71]

The Danger of Music opens with a quotation from Schopenhauer (from *Parerga i Paralipomena*):

> Intellectual life floats ethereally, like a fragrant cloud rising from fermentation, above the reality of the worldly activities which make up the lives of the peoples, governed by the will; alongside world history there goes, guiltless and not stained with blood, the history of philosophy, science, and the arts.

Taruskin's answer to that is 'Not'. He is certainly correct to point out that people who make art are in fact guilty and stained with blood, and subject to religious, political, and other delusions which can cause them to do terrible things with a good conscience. It is good to be reminded, and one should always keep in mind, that there is, as Orwell says, a difference between artistic excellence and common decency. That does not exactly mean, though, that the art they make is simply similarly guilty and blood-stained. Taruskin calls attention to Shostakovich's doubleness. Art also has a doubleness; it is the evidence of the social, moral, and political context of its making, but it is also – or at least it can often be – the substance of a hope or desire to reach beyond that to some better state; and although it is important to keep the social and political context and meaning of art always in mind, to deny that it has any sort of transcendent quality is to deny what it is that ultimately gives it meaning and importance.

On the first day of his freshman year at Harvard College the composer Harold Shapero, then 17 years old, met Walter Piston, the teacher of composition there. Shapero had, as a composition student of Nicolas Slonimsky in Boston, caused something of a stir; his reputation as a major talent having preceded him, Piston was eager to get to know him. Early in the conversation Piston asked Shapero what music he liked. After listing some names, Shapero blurted out, 'And I don't like Bach!' Piston puffed a few times on his pipe, thought a minute, and then said, 'He'd be sorry to hear that'. After another minute he added, 'But don't worry. The music won't change'. (An example of the *niveau neutre* if ever there was one.) Certain music, as Taruskin writes, is important to us because it and its creators 'remain our lives' companions', and as we change, their meaning for us changes – so even though they don't change, they seem to. There are some people who find certain music (that of Schoenberg, Babbitt, Cage, or Martino, for example), also to be their lives' companions, and they might well meet with some consternation Taruskin's sovereign declarations that none of it can possibly perform that role, and that, if there are any people out there somewhere who claim to love Schoenberg's music as they do the music of Mozart or Brahms, or to find that, at least for them, the music of Milton Babbitt might possess 'great sensuous beauty', 'lasting emotional drama', or 'strong emotional and expressive'qualities,[72] or, for that matter, musical subtlety – they must either be, for whatever reason, lying about it, or else they're brainwashed. And they might also find Taruskin's insistence that he is the only person is the room who can intellectually cope with the full ethical or political contexts of music a smidgin irritating.

[68] *The Danger of Music*, p. 89.
[69] George Orwell, *Essays*, p. 1262.
[70] In 'The Musical Mystique: Defending Classical Music against Its Devotees' in *The Danger of Music*, pp. 330–353.
[71] In 'Et In Arcadia Ego: Or, I Didn't Know I Was Such a Pessimist until I Wrote This Thing', in *The Danger of Music*, pp. 1–20.
[72] Quoted in *The Danger of Music*, p. 90, from *An Introduction to the Music of Milton Babbitt* by Andrew Mead, without citation.

Writers who offer their insight and commentary (or, if you like, their interference) can also be our lives' companions; and Taruskin – opinionated, maddening, sometimes wrong-headed, but intelligent, impassioned and ethically demanding in insisting on keeping the full context of music always in mind – is a worthy fellow traveler, someone we could easily want along for the ride. He's the smartest person who will ever infuriate you, try to browbeat you, or, when all else fails, knock you down, spit in your eye, and jump up and down on your chest until you cry uncle and admit that he's right.

Rodney Lister