

Anmeldelser

Reinhard Strohm: The Rise of European Music, 1380-1500. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993. 720 s. Ill. Noder. ISBN 0-521-41745-7. £60.

The eminent scholar, Reinhard Strohm, has during the last two decades or so made a substantial contribution to the understanding of 14th- and 15th-century music of which the present book is a superb synthesis. Through the entire book the author shows an erudition which certainly is rare today and the notion that he has sifted an enormous amount of both primary and secondary material would make most musicologists breathless.

Part I deals extensively with the Great Schism (1378-1417) which also from a musical point of view played an important role. First Strohm deals with the traditions of central Europe, i.e., southern France and Aragon, including an interesting discussion of the *Ars subtilior*. Then follows a chapter in which the so-called 'lateral' traditions of Paris, the Low Countries, England, and Italy are defined and examined. Part I concludes with a chapter on the Council of Constance (1414-18) which – because of the participants' divergent background – also had to integrate a variety of music. Part II, *The age of Dufay and Dunstable*, is divided into two sections or chapters the first of which discusses the new Continental style, while the second expounds upon the English and, briefly, on east European trends. Part III, *The common traditions*, takes a completely different path reviewing the use of music in various institutions. Part IV, *Europe after 1450: diversity and participation*, is the most lengthy, nearly half of the book, and combines the approaches found in the three previous parts. The final part of the book appears to be the most fluent, maybe because the information given is not so overpowering as in the previous parts where at times the text becomes tiresome to read and where the reader easily loses the thread. The discussions concerning the *L'homme armé* Masses are especially enlightening and give the reader an intriguing picture of the history of the popular tune and the many versions based on it. Furthermore,

the discussion of the east European sources is indeed fascinating.

A work of this kind does, however, also raise some principal questions. The general approach of the book is traditional in composition where, for example, the short descriptions of MSS seem to be a 'must'. One could wonder if these really are necessary to include in the main text and would not benefit from being relegated to an appendix. Instead a more detailed discussion on music theory and also philosophy (the definition of music, the qualities of music, the purpose and function of music), which were considered an integral part of music, could have been included. All these areas need much more profound research and it is sad that they are usually not mentioned in books on music history, thus promoting the idea that music was (and is) a small independent 'biotope' not influenced at all by the outside world. These aspects, however, do not prejudice the distinction of the present work, for Strohm has clearly proved that his method gives results and also new insights into music.

Nevertheless, there are a few objections which need to be addressed: the analytical sections of the book seem to be the most weak, employing concepts which are not appropriate to the music. Strohm does use modal terms but most often they are employed in a vague manner. Some pieces are characterized as Dorian, that is, without distinguishing between authentic and plagal modes, while others are classified as mode 1 or mode 2 (see pp. 405-6, e.g.). The method is inconsistent and gives the impression that the author is not quite sure how to determine the modes of early compositions or how to describe the tonal material utilized. Though the author seems reluctant to discuss details of mode and tonality in medieval terms (p. 4), they do indeed explain many aspects of the music which otherwise would remain obscure for us today. It tells us a good deal about their compositional procedures which purely modern concepts cannot unveil. It is, of course, an overwhelming task in itself, if one wishes to understand and to be able to use contemporary concepts, but it is a subject which cannot be

avoided or neglected today – especially not by music historians.

The music examples are basically good; however, sometimes the original clefs and initial note values are not given (there is one wrong clef in ex. 10 p. 88 where the G₂-clef should be a F₄-clef). Does that depend on which modern sources the author has quoted? One aspect which would help the reader is the overall *ambitus* of each part, since it would give him some idea of the ranges and the modes of the pieces. The modern reduction of the original mensuration signs is somewhat questionable. In a comprehensive work of this calibre, addressing musicologists and the serious student, it is highly relevant also to show the original mensuration – especially since the book, though containing more than 700 pages, only includes two facsimiles of music from the period discussed! Furthermore, the added accidentals (*musica ficta*) in the examples are sometimes disputable but this area needs more research before it can be tackled appropriately.

Finally, only one frustrating detail needs to be mentioned. Words in italics (as well as the exclamation mark) which occur frequently when the author wishes to emphasize particular aspects become rather a nuisance. They are not necessary and remind the reader of a script prepared for lectures.

In spite of these very minor objections, the book must be considered a *tour de force* of a rare quality and will be a very valuable source of information for future scholars and also as a very useful reference tool. In a lengthy book of this size (720 pages), it is inevitable that some sections will be somewhat heavy and difficult to get through while others are interesting and inspiring. The work is traditional in approach, but at the same time the author is not satisfied by giving one solution only whenever problematic aspects arise; Strohm also tries to tackle them from different viewpoints – an approach which is exemplary and difficult. A new book on this area was badly needed, for the work of Gustave Reese must be considered out-of-date and certainly needs to be re-evaluated and supplemented.

Peter Hauge

Peter Ryom: *Vivaldis koncerter. Engstrøm & Sødring, København 1994. 141 s. Ill. Noder. ISBN 87-87091-666. Kr. 150,-.*

Strangely enough, this is the first book, discounting bibliographies, to deal solely with Vivaldi's concertos. Most general studies of the composer, starting from Marc Pincherle's monograph of 1948, have in practice devoted overwhelmingly more space to the concertos than to other genres, but the fact that Ryom has to specify the concerto genre in the title illustrates back-handedly how far the revival and study of Vivaldi's vocal music have progressed in recent years.

This is a frankly „divulgate“ account with the sharp-edged clarity of a textbook. It is beautifully written and should prove popular with university and conservatoire students. Most of what it says has been said before, but that is no bad thing in an introduction aimed at readers who may not have encountered the information earlier. Occasionally, one finds aperçus that should be noted also by scholars, such as the observation that the wind parts for Vivaldi concertos preserved in Dresden are often orchestral rather than soloistic in nature. Ryom's statement that the fifteen keys in which Vivaldi's known concertos are cast are the same as those used by Bach in his Inventions and Sinfonias for keyboard is a useful fact to commit to memory. Discussing the fast movements of Vivaldi concertos, he observes that when consecutive internal ritornellos reuse the same portions of the opening ritornello they are always contrasted modally. I think he is right. Similarly, he notes that the outer movements of a Vivaldi concerto tend to have the same number of tuttis. If true, this adds one important structural dimension to the argument about the quasi-cyclic relationship of these movements.

The book opens with short chapters on the historical background (the Venetian setting, the sources for Vivaldi's music, the Ryom catalogue and its predecessors) and the concept and early history of the concerto. There are no surprises here, and Ryom's account sometimes appears rather old-fashioned, taking its reference points from musicological literature of earlier decades. The third chapter establishes an overview of Vivaldi's concertos, setting out their chronology and typology. We then arrive at the core of the book: an „anatomy“ of the Vivaldian concerto. This chapter is its real strength and the part that