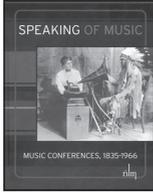


## Book Reviews



James R. Cowdery, Zdravko Blažebović, and Barry S. Brook (eds.)  
*Speaking of Music: Music Conferences, 1835-1966*  
 RILM Retrospective Series, 4; New York: Répertoire International de  
 Littérature Musicale, 2004; xxii, 740 pp., illus.  
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*RILM Abstracts of Music Literature* is probably the best known and most frequently utilized database on music literature worldwide. Everyone knows RILM, and at the same time everyone knows the most essential limitation of RILM: the registration of literature only from 1967 and onwards. With the purpose of covering selected materials published prior to this date the *RILM Retrospective Series* was launched on the initiative of one of RILM's founders, Barry S. Brook (1918-97). Up until the publication of the present volume of the series, *Speaking of Music: Music Conferences, 1835-1966*, edited by Brook, James R. Cowdery and Zdravko Blažebović, only three volumes have been published, namely the annotated bibliographies on 1. *Thematic catalogues in music* (B.S. Brook, 1972, rev. edn. 1997), 2. *Thèses de doctorat en langue française relatives à la musique* (J. Gribenski, 1979), and 3. *Guitar and vihuela* (M.A. McCutcheon, 1985), respectively.

Like the rest of the RILM-volumes, *Speaking of Music* – consisting entirely of lists, abstracts and registers – is a pure reference book containing myriads of bibliographic facts presented in entries that follow the usual editorial and formatting conventions of RILM. In addition to the necessary directions for use (pp. xvii-xix) James Cowdery's preface constitutes the only four pages of running text in the volume. He recounts the genesis of the book spanning more than a quarter of a century, and refers to a number of previously published bibliographic compilations of congress reports that *Speaking of Music* naturally has taken as a starting point (pp. xiii-xiv). At the same time Cowdery answers an obvious question regarding the documentation of such musicological gatherings, which can leave behind 'traces' from next-to-nothing to fully worked-out collections of articles: what is the degree of coverage? In this respect the editors have made a wise 'inclusive' choice, in that *Speaking of Music* provides citation even in those cases where the conference report includes neither full papers nor abstracts, but only the titles and authors of the papers presented (p. xiv). This has resulted in a total of 6,459 bibliographic entries collected and edited by a substantial team of editors and no less than 125 abstractors.

The volume is divided into abstracts and indexes. The abstract section, which constitutes the main core of the volume, is divided into two parts. Firstly, a chronologically ordered (secondarily by city) index of all the congress reports and symposium proceedings from the years 1835-1966 including a full listing of all the papers given (record numbers 1-511, pp. 1-108). Secondly, the collection of abstracts of the individual conference papers, subdivided into 11 main categories, which altogether cover the basic classification scheme of *RILM Abstracts of Music Literature* with almost 100 classes (nos. 512-6,459, pp. 109-583; when reference in the following is made to entry numbers the abbreviation *SoM* for *Speaking of Music* will be used). The index section contains brief but valuable indexes on 'Conference locations' and 'Conference sponsors', and the volume is rounded off by an extensive index on 'Authors and subjects' spanning a total of nearly 150 pages.

Congress proceedings can be published in a number of ways, i.e. as a single volume book, as part of a series of books, as a special issue of a journal, or just as a larger or smaller contribution in an (inter-)national journal. The fact that all types are represented in *Speaking of Music* reflects on the one side the commendable inclusiveness of RILM and on the other side it almost automatically must indicate that it will not be difficult to come up with congresses that are missing in *Speaking of Music*. But how many congress reports were actually published during the period 1835-1966?

In the advertising material for *Speaking of Music* it is stated, that the book is 'a bibliography of some 6,000 papers ... from nearly 500 conferences'. While the first figure appears accurate, the second – not inessential figure – must be described as an overstatement. In the section indexing the reports, 'Chronology and contents', several of the reports have been assigned more than one number at the same time as the paragraph contains quite a few reviews of symposium proceedings. For instance, the Musicological Congress in Basel 1924 occupies the numbers 102 (Bericht), 103 (Festschrift) and 104-13 (reviews). When the 511 record numbers are corrected accordingly, the total number of conferences is reduced to c. 410.

Regarding 'missing' conferences, according to Nigel Simeone in his paragraph on 'Congress reports' in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn. (London, 2001), 'the musical congress report has its origins in the second half of the 19th century, specifically in the publication of papers given at three conferences on sacred music (1860-64 Paris and Mechelen) ...' (vol. 6, p. 300), an information confirmed by David A. Thresher's listing of 'Congress reports' in Appendix IB of the *New Grove* (ibid., vol. 28, p. 43). Nevertheless, although the *New Grove* appendix is cited as a source for *Speaking of Music* (p. xiv), the report covering these events, *De la musique religieuse* (ed. by T.J. de Vroye and X. Van Elewyck; Paris and Leuven, 1866), is for some reason not listed here, indicating either a remarkable shortcoming on behalf of the RILM editors or a remarkable misinterpretation on Simeone's side.

Another – and especially to a Scandinavian reader unfortunate – lacuna is the complete lack of documentation of the Nordic musicological congresses initiated in 1948 and since then continued (c.) every fourth year. Although the first congress report in book format was not published until after the eighth congress in Gothenburg in 1979, the preceding congresses are well documented in reports published in Scandinavian journals, e.g. the following: regarding the 1st conference in Oslo 1948, cf. *Norsk Musikkgrenskning*, (1947-50), pp. 12-23; the 2nd in Stockholm/Uppsala 1954, cf. *Norsk Musikkgrenskning*, (1954-55), pp. 11-13; the 3rd in Copenhagen 1958, cf. *Dansk Aarboeg for Musikforskning*, (1961), pp. 76-85; the 4th in Stockholm/Uppsala 1962, cf. *Svensk Tidskrift för Musikforskning*, 45 (1963), pp. 123-37 (in addition, it is noted that no traces of the 5th conference in Århus 1966 – a report of which can be found in *Dansk Aarboeg for Musikforskning*, (1966-67), pp. 165-86 – are to be found in the 'real' RILM of 1967 ff. either).

As mentioned above, the editors have chosen to include reviews of the proceedings, an aspect, though, that is neither mentioned nor elaborated in the preface of the book. It is quickly ascertained that the registered reviews (c. 70 in all) are very unevenly distributed across the period 1835-1966, and apart from seven 'isolated' reviews dating from 1963-66 *Speaking of Music* does not include reviews published later than 1939. Moreover, a comparison with the recordings in Marie Briquet's *La musique dans les congrès internationaux (1835-1939)* (Paris, 1961) – referred to as Barry S. Brook's 'starting point' (p. xiii) – shows that for the period up until the Second World War, *Speaking of Music* does not contain entries that are not already present in Briquet. In this context it is also interesting that Briquet registers several reviews, which are absent in *Speaking of Music*, e.g. J.I. Prieto's review of the third IMS congress in Barcelona, 1936 (*SoM*, no. 224), apparently published in *España sacro musical*, 7 (1936), pp. 713-20 (Briquet, no. 80). Summing up it can be stated that for the period preceding World War II *Speaking of*

*Music* apparently is not as comprehensive as Briquet's catalogue, and as to the subsequent years nearly no registrations at all can be found in *Speaking of Music*.

There is yet another aspect emphasizing the fact that a catalogue like Marie Briquet's is not altogether outdated – and for the same reason can not be said to be replaced by *Speaking of Music*. In Briquet one can find 'traces' of important congresses, which have not been documented by a published report. Considering the above-mentioned inclusive choice it is thus unfortunate – and incomprehensible – that *Speaking of Music* does not contain information on e.g. the Second International Congress of the IMS in Cambridge 1933. Briquet, on the other hand, lists the authors and titles of the papers presented together with reviews published in the same year by Knud Jeppesen in *Acta Musicologica*, og P.-M. Masson in *Revue de musicologie* (Briquet, no. 79). Also regarding the Sixth International Congress of the IMS in Oxford 1955 no information can be found in *Speaking of Music*. Of course, the line has to be drawn at some point, but when information is readily available in the published 'predecessors' of *Speaking of Music*, the reason not to take advantage hereof can be difficult to grasp.

The section on 'Chronology and contents' at the beginning of *Speaking of Music* is directly connected to the first of the indexes, 'Conference locations', in which all the conferences are listed in a well-arranged way along with their entry numbers according to the pattern nation-city-conference theme. At one glance this index gives you a lot of information regarding the locations of musicological activities during this 130-year period. In approximate numbers the conferences was primarily located in France and Belgium (25%), Germany, Austria and Switzerland (25%), and Italy (10%). The English-speaking countries do not account for more than 10% of the conferences, while the remaining 30% is distributed among other nations. The dominance of France is further emphasized when looking through the first pages of the chronology section; with very few exceptions all conferences from 1835 to the turn of the century were held in France.

A closer inspection of the section on conference locations, though, unfortunately reveals a number of shortcomings. The major event of 1909, the 'Haydn-Zentenarfeier' in Vienna (*SoM*, no. 65), with an impressive international attendance, is for some reason not registered in the index of locations, and neither are a number of other conferences (cf. *SoM*, nos. 13, 58, 172-75, 199, 265, 303 and 305). In addition, it seems a bit odd that one spelling of the names of cities is used in the chronology section, and another in the index, e.g. 'Florence'/'Firenze', 'Vienna'/'Wien'.

The extensive index on authors and subjects provides good insight into which subjects dominated the musicological agenda during this period, and which musicologists participated in the presentations and discussions. With the above-mentioned limitations and shortcomings in mind, though, one should not expect to be able to establish a complete conference attendance list of a particular musicologist (bearing in mind the IMS conference in Cambridge 1933, or the Nordic conferences), but the index does provide a pattern of the most active participants regarding conference attendance (e.g. only one musicologist – Walter Wiora – is registered with more than 30 entries, and less than ten persons with more than 20).

As far as Danish musicology is concerned, *Speaking of Music* naturally provides information as well. It is hardly surprising that Angul Hammerich is the first one registered, that is as a participant in the Second Congress of the International Musical Society in Basel in 1906 (*SoM*, no. 53); and for the above-mentioned Haydn-Zentenarfeier in 1909, Hammerich was accompanied by William Behrend, P.S. Rung-Keller and Hjalmar Thuren (no. 65). A total of approximately 30 Danes appear in *Speaking of Music*, the majority with one or two entries. No matter for surprise either that one musicologist in particular places himself in a class of his own, namely Knud Jeppesen with an attendance of ten conferences.

Apart from the degree of coverage a publication like *Speaking of Music* must be measured by the reliability of the bibliographical facts. It is crucial to the whole idea of the book that it appears trustworthy even – or especially – in detail. It therefore seems relevant to carry out a spot test. A random pick on a shelf of conference reports presents the reviewer with the *Bericht über den neunten internationalen Kongress Salzburg 1964*, edited by Franz Giegling, and published by Bärenreiter in two volumes in 1964 and 1966 respectively.

According to Nigel Simeone a particular type of report published in Eastern Europe from the late 1950s onwards is characteristic in that it not only ‘includes formal papers but also transcripts of extended remarks made as part of subsequent discussions, in four languages’ (‘Congress reports’, p. 301). Although the *Salzburg Bericht* can not count as East European it is marked by exactly these characteristics, and thus, admittedly, is not one of the easiest to record. Vol. 1 consists of ‘Aufsätze zu den Symposia’, while vol. 2 consists of the ‘Protokolle von den Symposia und Round Tables’. In the following, I focus shortly on the 14 Round Tables (RT; although not numbered in the proceedings, they are here given consecutive numbers).

As indicated on the first page of each ‘Protokolle’ each RT consists of a ‘Vorsitzender (président, chairman)’, a ‘Sekretär(-in) (secrétaire, reporter)’ and a number of ‘Teilnehmer (participants, panel)’. The 14 protocols have all been written by the reporter (in one instance, RT-2, in cooperation with the chairman, cf. *SoM*, no. 2551). For whatever reason, in *Speaking of Music* nine of the RTs (2-7, 12-14) are listed in their appropriate categories under the name of the reporter (cf. *SoM*, nos. 2551, 1141, 6130, 3249, 1112, 1590, 5112, 3939 and 3898), four of the RTs (1, 8-9, 11) are listed under the chairman’s name (*SoM*, nos. 1021, 1714, 1670 and 4374), while RT-10 are listed under neither the reporter’s nor the chairman’s name, but under the name of one of the participants (*SoM*, no. 957; in addition, this entry does not mention the chairman, J.V. Keldyš, although it ought to according to the index, p. 660). The confusion resulting from this unsystematic approach (presumably carried out by the RILM abstractor David Bloom) is enhanced even further when one compares the *Bericht’s* information on the eight Symposia with the main entry on the congress report in *Speaking of Music* (no. 491): although identically structured in the *Bericht*, the eight symposia appear with great variety (e.g. only regarding the third symposium are all the participants listed in no. 491).

Even though this one spot test has revealed (nearly) no actual errors in the registration of bibliographic data in *Speaking of Music*, the lack of stringency, the absence of immediate logic and the uncertainty as to the systematic approach leaves the reader with a gnawing doubt regarding the crucial aspect of reliability.

Of course, the editors are aware of omissions and shortcomings in the present volume, and according to the preface it is hoped ‘that our readers will call our attention to others’ (p. xiv). With the preceding observations the present reviewer has hopefully made a small contribution in this respect. However, when everything is taken into consideration – the span of years, the width of publications, the number of actors, the scope of ideas and the degree of complexity – *Speaking of Music* is a unique and very valuable and useful bibliographic tool that records vast amounts of information hitherto not readily available in one single volume. And, in the words of Cowdery, ‘... there can always be a second edition’ (ibid.).

Further information on RILM can be found at [www.rilm.org](http://www.rilm.org) or at the Danish RILM-web-site [www.kb.dk/kb/dept/nbo/ma/rilm](http://www.kb.dk/kb/dept/nbo/ma/rilm).

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