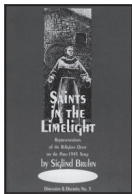


Schließlich sei angemerkt, dass zwar kleinere formale Mängel auffallen – wie die falsche Zuordnung bzw. das teilweise Fehlen der Kolumnentitel, wodurch das Zurechtfinden im Buch erschwert wird, oder die insgesamt schlecht redigierte Druckfassung, deren zahlreiche orthographische Fehler durch das Korrekturlesen eines Muttersprachlers hätten vermieden werden können –, die jedoch den positiven Gesamteindruck der Publikation nicht wesentlich schmälern. Dies gilt besonders wenn man bedenkt, dass jenem Gebiet von musikwissenschaftlicher Seite her – gemessen an seiner Verbreitung – bislang relativ wenig Aufmerksamkeit zugekommen ist, und es Hesselager somit gelungen ist, angesichts der letztlich schwer fassbaren Thematik dennoch wichtige Denkanstöße zu vermitteln. Die Lektüre zeigt nicht nur, auf welche Weise man sich etwa aus ästhetischer oder historischer Perspektive Instrumentationsfragen und dem Musikverstehen nähern kann, sondern schärft vor allem den Blick für die enge Verschränkung jener Themenkomplexe und schafft damit die erforderliche Bewertungsgrundlage wenn es heißt: “Making Sense of Sounds”.

Nicole K. Strohmann



Siglind Bruhn: *Saints in the Limelight. Representations of the Religious Quest on the Post-1945 Operatic Stage*

Dimension & Diversity Series, 5; Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2003

635 pp., illus.

ISBN 1-57647-096-2

USD 54

A new trend in interdisciplinary studies often produces some fascinating results both for scholars and other interested readers. A new work by the German-American scholar Siglind Bruhn, *Saints in the Limelight. Representations of the Religious Quest on the Post-1945 Operatic Stage*, is indeed the kind of book that makes you wonder why it has not been written before.

The work is divided into seven parts with an introduction and a conclusion, and it also includes seven appendices, bibliographical references and an index. The author analyses 38 operatic stage works written by 31 composers from 16 countries in Europe and North America.

A first glance at the cover may not exactly reveal the treasure inside. The violet cover picturing a monk against the background of ancient walls might lead one to suppose the book deals with The Middle Ages. Violet, the liturgical colour of both Advent and Lent, the time of penance and expiation, is commonly associated with the word ‘saint’. We are given no clue as to who the monk could be. The word ‘Operatic’ is missing on the title page, a quite confusing mistake, which might suggest that the book deals with theatre performances only, and not with operas. Furthermore, a mere glance at the table of contents confirms that this is, in fact, a very unusual book. The seven parts of the book have the following titles: ‘Allegories and the Embodied Christ’, ‘National Heroes’, ‘Antiheroes’, ‘Messengers of Christ’s Saving Grace’, ‘Teachers of the Compassionate Path’, ‘Charismatics and Mystics’, and finally, ‘Victims and Martyrs’. While the reader is most likely familiar with the names of many of the protagonists of the operatic works and their composers, he or she will probably encounter several unfamiliar ones as well. Moreover, it quickly becomes clear that the author transgresses the bounds of what the Church sees as a saint. Besides well-known Catholic saints, such as St. Joan of Arc, Thomas of Canterbury, St. Francis of Assisi, there are names which are familiar from other cultural contexts (Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi), Church-reformer Luther (in a Catholic context hardly a saint, rather the opposite) and finally, names you have probably never heard of (the protagonist of Gian-Carlo Menotti’s *The Saint of Bleeker Street* or Manoloios from

Bohuslav Martinu's *Greek Passion*). Among others, we also find the Lutheran priest Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a victim of the Nazi regime in Germany. It is a fascinating, multifarious and in many cases, startling selection. If you are puzzled by what in a saintly context may be unfamiliar names, then check out the author's definition of saint, which can be found in the introductory chapter: 'individuals responding to a religious vocation'. 'These' – Bruhn continues – 'are called saints for easier reference' (p. xv). 'They are not all material for papal canonization but include people on the fringes of the established church – heretics and reformers – as well as fictional heroes' (p. xvi). Your observations from examining the table of contents may well be confirmed now, as you read that 'Certain saintly persons come from non-Christian traditions' (*ibid.*).

While reading the book, I was constantly overwhelmed and delighted by the sheer amassment of knowledge in one tome. Each new character, new saint, is introduced by a concise account summing up the facts of his or her personal story. The chapter dealing with Joan of Arc, for instance, contains a five-page historical and hagiographical account, a two-page specification of 'The Maid of Orleans in Theatrical Guise' and finally, a two-page account of 'Joan of Arc in the Opera and the Cinema'. Only then do we get to the analyses of four musical works based on the life and deeds of Joan of Arc: Arthur Honegger's (1935), Henri Tomasi's (1955), Norman Dello Joio's (1959), and finally Giselher Klebe's (1975). Each analysis starts by examining the libretto first and then the music itself. Siglind Bruhn is a master of highly focused musical analysis. Her elucidation of the most important characteristics brings great clarity to the understanding of the operatic work. This is a highly sophisticated contribution to the field of musical hermeneutics, of reading the musical text with the aim of understanding the particular story in the most appropriate way. Siglind Bruhn is able to abstract from the possible interpretations of the music made by the composer himself, which, after all, is the litmus test of all successful hermeneutical approaches.

The Danish reader will be pleased to find analyses of two works by Danish composers, Per Nørgård's *Siddharta* (1979) and Nils Holger Petersen's *Vigilie for Thomas Becket* (1989). It was in the reading of the analyses of these works that I fully came to appreciate Siglind Bruhn's achievements. Her profound analyses add complexity and multidimensionality to the understanding of these works.

Siglind Bruhn's theoretical considerations, found both in the introduction and in the concluding chapter, are of great interest. In the introduction, for instance, the author examines the relationship between the church and the theatre. The opera as a genre had been regarded variously as 'a chapel of Satan despoiling the Church of God,' taken from a German pamphlet from 1729, (p. xxii and footnote 12) and as a quasi-liturgical celebration (Wagner's *Bühnenweihfestspiel*, p. xxiv). To avoid some of the prejudices towards the religious quest in opera, many composers used other designations for their music theatre works, such as, music drama, mystery, passion opera, liturgical opera, or church opera, and many others. What I miss in Bruhn's examinations is reflection on the composers' confessional affiliations. Is it, for example, easier for a Protestant to write an opera with a religious quest, than it might be for a Catholic or a Russian Orthodox composer? How do the composers choose to show their 'saintly' protagonists in relationship to their own religious beliefs?

A very important question is raised in the concluding chapter: 'Why Now? Why Opera?': 'what prompts composers of the mid- and late twentieth century – an epoch marked by widespread lack of interest in conventional religiosity and a deliberate pluralism of values, a time that shuns the idea of universal moral exemplars – to explore the spiritual and the numinous and to do so in the music-dramatic medium' (p. 586). The author gives a number of answers. It might be because many of the examined protagonists are not perfect individuals, but quite

the opposite, the imperfect and weak ones, the persons that, in spite of this imperfection, might be raised to sainthood. As such they might be used as models for modern people. They are also quite often independent individuals, both in regard to secular society and the reigning religious establishment.

In our time, a time of materialism and non-belief, the metaphysical, or, as Bruhn calls it, 'eternal questions' (p. 587), are in fact very urgent, maybe more urgent, than they have ever been before. 'Saints are models insofar as they characteristically keep their eyes fixed on a goal that transcends the material, mortal life. They stand not only for the yearning that aspires to the absolute, but also and prominently for the ability to eclipse allegedly given limitations' (ibid.). Siglind Bruhn assumes that composers choose opera as the vehicle for their religious yearning because opera is a genre 'that has never been coopted and appropriated by traditional expressions of religion' (p. 588). And as such, it offers a great deal of freedom for the modern composer, freedom concerning his or her own interpretations of this particular issue.

Apart from all its previously mentioned virtues, Siglind Bruhn's book is extremely well-written. The language is concise, elegant and sophisticated, and the reader is led to the heart of the matter by a firm but friendly hand.

*Eva Maria Jensen*



Petter Stigar, *Elementær harmonilære. Korallharmonisering, kontrapunkt, generalbass og variasjonssatser*

Bergen: Fakkbokforlaget, 2004

362 pp., music exx.

ISBN 82-450-0067-1

NOK 428

Udgivelsen er en 350 sider lang indføring i elementær harmonilære og klassiske satslærediscipliner. Forfatteren er førsteamanuensis ved Griegakademiet ved Universitetet i Bergen, der siden 1995 har samlet musikuddannelserne fra konservatoriet, lærerhøjskolen og universitetet under en hat. Han anser satslære for at være såvel et aktivitets- som et refleksionsfag, og bogen er opbygget således, at udvalgte analysesystemer indarbejdes og diskuteres undervejs. Det drejer sig primært om harmoniske analyser og Schenkerinspirerede reduktionsanalyser, idet hensigten med bogen – ifølge præsentationen på dens bagside – er at fremhæve ligevægtsforholdet mellem samklangsmæssige og lineære strukturer i tonal musik.

Bogen har herudover to erklærede hovedformål. Det ene er at "slå et slag for den klassiske satslæren, som alment betragtes som en forudsætning for beskjæftigelse med klassisk musik på seriøst nivå" (s. 4). Det andet er at formidle en amerikansk satslærepædagogisk tradition – et valg, som på den ene side indebærer en afvisning af den Riemann-funderede funktionsanalyse, som traditionelt anvendes ved skandinaviske uddannelsesinstitutioner, til fordel for en funktionstillempt trinanalyse. På den anden side indebærer det et bidrag til harmonilære-fagområdet i form af en præsentation af Schenkerinspirerede reduktionsanalyser, som kan afdække enkle, lineære sats tekniske grundmønstre, hvor akkord-for-akkord-analysen er utilstrækkelig.

Målgruppe og genstandsområde lægges klart i forordet. Arbejdet henvender sig til studenter på universitets- og højskoleniveau uden sats tekniske forudsætninger og behandler vesteuropæisk musik fra senrenæssance til tidlig romantik med "vekt på Bach og wienerklassikerne" (s. 4). Således er der heller ingen tvivl om værdisynet, hverken i forordet eller senere, hvor de kendte komponister omtales i vendinger som "de store mestre" (s. 6), "de største blandt de store" og "ingen ringere enn" (s. 224).