

It is, at first at least, somewhat striking that although Knust's methodological take on Wagner has everything to do with theatrical *performance*, there is no reference whatsoever in his work to methodological considerations in contemporary performance studies, or to current theoretical discussions of the concept of performativity. Also, Anglo-American Wagner-studies are practically absent from the otherwise very extensive and useful bibliography of the work (no mention, for instance, of the above mentioned contributions by Carnegie or Smart, dealing with related issues). Knust may have had good reasons for such choices, for certainly there is not much in his work that smacks of either academic tradition. Even so, there are common concerns, and his dissertation certainly makes up a welcome and informative addition to existing literature dealing with the historical dimension of questions of performativity.

Jens Hesselager



Nicholas Cook, *The Schenker Project. Culture, Race, and Music Theory in Fin-de-siècle Vienna*

Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007

355 pp., illus.

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Hardly trained in Schenkerian theory at all, I might not be the obvious choice for reviewing a book on Heinrich Schenker. Yet, this is one of the most interesting books, I have read for years. Nicholas Cook takes on the challenging task to examine not just what is Schenker's project in terms of what he wanted to obtain, but to go beyond that asking how his aesthetic views, his aims, and his analytical tools were embedded in the culture of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Vienna. Music theory is viewed as an expression of values of a culture, where conscious views and choices are only the top of the iceberg, and shared values within that culture are at least as important. Cook states 'that Schenker's theory may be profitable understood as a discourse on the social and political at the same time that it is a discourse on the musical' (p. 9). On top of that, issues of race and place are included, as Schenker as a Jew of East-Galician origin was a member of Viennese culture only on certain conditions, he did not choose himself. As an outsider in terms of race and place of origin, Schenker had to fight even harder to be accepted as someone representing the values of classical music of which Vienna considered itself the centre. Cook suggests that this might be one reason, why Schenker stressed conservative and nationalistic positions which affected the grounds of his views on music theory and aesthetics.

It might not be a surprise that it is hard to give a fair impression of the richness of Cook's argument. The book comprises five large chapters, of which the first is called 'Foundations of the Schenker Project'. This is mainly discussions of Schenker in the context of the philosophy of his days, arguing that it is not a matter of 'influence', as most of his ideas were 'common currency' combined into a distinctive conception. 'More productive, then, is the attempt to recapture the connotations of what Schenker wrote, as for example when his theoretical terminology resonates with contemporary aesthetic, political, or racial discourses: such dimensions of meaning would have been taken for granted by Schenker's contemporaries, and there is nothing harder to recapture from the historical record than what is taken for granted.' (p. 46f.). This leads to discussions on his views in the context of formalist aesthetics and issues of musical logic. Second chapter, 'The Reluctant Modernist', argues that Schenker's views are founded in fin-de-siècle pessimism and that his 'critique of music formed, and

should be read as, part of a more general critique of fin-de-siècle culture', which is why his project 'aimed at a comprehensive reform of musical culture' (p. 97). Starting out as a fearless critic of contemporary music of the 1890s, his tone was still forward-looking. After a decade or two, his project became one of reconstruction and saving what was left of tradition.

The third chapter, 'The Conservative Tradition', discusses Schenker's conservative rhetoric in which the discourse of political conservatism occasionally is reflected in his rhetoric of conservative aesthetics. It is well known that some of his most extreme utterances were excluded from later editions and translations of his text. To Cook there is no point in playing this aspect of Schenker's views down, rather the point is to try to understand it: 'to understand is not to condone, while to condemn without understanding is futile' (p. 147). Chapter four, 'The Politics of Assimilation', discusses Schenker's project in the context of Jewish tradition and the conditions for being a Jew in Viennese society. His East-Galician background was yet another issue, as this part of the Austrian Empire was considered – rightly – the least modern and most remote part of the empire. German-speaking Jews, who had lived in Vienna for generations, were no less reluctant to accept the Galician Jewish migrants arriving in Vienna in large numbers than the non-Jewish inhabitant of the city. Fifth chapter, 'Beyond Assimilation', deals in the first part with ideas of aestheticism as a way of uniting individuals in a *Gemeinschaft*, where social and racial boundaries are of no importance. The second part is a discussion of 'The posthumous Schenker', addressing the issue of Schenker reception after his death. The core argument of the book is recapitulated at the end of the book, in a 'Conclusion' with the subheading 'Music Theory as Social Practice'.

Cook's project is a hermeneutic project, an attempt to reconstruct the spiritual, political, and social reality of Schenker's Vienna in order to 'bridge ... "the unbridgeable cultural chasm between our world and Schenker's"' (p. 32). Not only the outspoken discourse but also the quietly acknowledged common opinions of the culture are to be captured. Getting all this into one book and one argument is risky business. It is not one straight-forward argument but a complex of interdependent issues tangled together in various ways. One might say it demonstrates the difference between writing history and describing a culture. Still, Cook manages to keep it all together, although the complexity of the matter makes reading a true tour-de-force and I must admit that it is quite a job to finish the book. However, it is worth the effort.

Michael Fjeldsøe



Morten Kyndrup

*Den æstetiske relation. Sansoplevelsen mellem kunst, videnskab og filosofi*

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Den dansksprogede litteratur om æstetisk teori er sparsom, og ethvert nyt bidrag må hilses med glæde. Morten Kyndrups *Den æstetiske relation* er på en gang et sådant bidrag og en opfordring til en intensiveret beskæftigelse med æstetisk teori i streng forstand. Bogen munder ud i en stærk fortale for en ny 'videnskabeliggjort' æstetik, der udvikler nye og passende redskaber for forståelsen ikke blot af vores forhold til kunsten men også af æstetiske relationer, som de indstiller sig uden for kunstens traditionelle område f.eks. i mode, reklame og industrielt design. Vejen frem mod præsentationen af dette højst relevante og velbeskrevne teoretiske projekt er imidlertid lang og for nogle strækningers vedkommende tornebestrøet.