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Young Choristers, 650–1750 (review)

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Notes, Volume 66, Number 3, March 2010, pp. 551–554 (Review)

Published by Music Library Association

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/not.0.0287>

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Chapter 5, devoted to the anonymous treatise *Alia musica*, is probably one of the most innovative. Atkinson thoroughly reassesses existing scholarship on the treatise, and presents a revised table of contents, in which he distinguishes four different authors, identified by the first four letters of the Greek alphabet. This last author, the compiler of the final version of the *Alia musica*, resolves the problem of the eighth mode (with the same ambitus as the first, and the same final as the seventh) by defining a *meta* (*mediam chordam*) specific to every mode: G is the “mean pitch” of the eighth mode, as opposed to a in the first.

Chapter 6, “Pseudo-Bernelinus, Berno, Pseudo-Odo, and Guido d’Arezzo,” shows that only gradually were the modes interpreted as conjunctions of species of fourths and fifths, which made it possible to distinguish between the modes on a systematic basis, found for the first time in an interpolated version of the *Prologus in tonarium* of Bern of Reichenau (d. 1048). The emergence of these developments is contemporaneous with the rise of diastematic notation. From Pseudo-Odo on, the tone system consisting of the lowest tone, represented by an uppercase gamma, followed by the letters A-G, and their octave equivalents a-g and aa-gg, forms the standard system of Western music until well into the Renaissance. Odo defines the (co)determinants of a chant as the final, the *distinctiones* (intermediate cadences), and the ambitus; Guido of Arezzo still acknowledges the importance of the *initium*, but likewise gives greater weight to the final. An interesting notion highlighted by Atkinson is Guido’s *transformatio*: the use of B♭ instead of B♮ transforms a chant from one mode into another; when it is used in a chant on G, for example, this chant will sound as in the *protus* (p. 223). Similarly, the technique of partial transposition forms a means to notate “nonsystemic pitches” (p. 227), in particular the low B♭ not included in the tone-systems of Pseudo-Odo or Guido. (As Atkinson points out (pp. 129–33), the *Scolica enchiridis* had already introduced the technique of the *vitia* to allow for “foreign” pitches such as F♯ or E♭.)

The epilogue takes the liturgical chants’ occasional incongruities with tone systems and notation as its point of departure, and compares the solution offered by Bern of

Reichenau (transposition with a fourth upwards) to those of three post-tenth-century authors, Johannes Affligemensis, Marchetto da Padova, and the anonymous author of the first treatise in the Berkeley manuscript. The book concludes with a list of manuscripts, editions, and literature, indexes of chants and manuscripts, and a general index.

A modest book review cannot possibly convey the richness of a study such as *The Critical Nexus*. Charles Atkinson analyzes his sources with wonderful precision and constructs his argument with great clarity, always careful to do justice to the authors, to highlight their specific contributions, and to show the evolution of the recurrent *Leitmotif* throughout this fascinating history. All readers, regardless of their level of specialization, will find their understanding both broadened and deepened. To be sure, this is a work that merits to become a classic, that deserves to be read and reread, studied and discussed among students and scholars time and again, and is therefore highly recommended to all musicologists and libraries.

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Young Choristers, 650–1750. Edited by Susan Boynton and Eric Rice. (Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music.) Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008. [ix, 265 p. ISBN 9781843834137. \$95.] Music examples, illustrations, bibliography, index.

Susan Boynton and Eric Rice, editors of *Young Choristers, 650–1750*, have assembled an excellent volume that traces the training of young singers in religious institutions in England, Italy, France, Spain and German-speaking lands. The book, arguably the first to address this critical topic, will do much to alter a time-honored belief that children are no more than imperfect unthinking adults. An array of evidentiary materials, almost a dozen music examples, select illustrations, and ample footnotes accompany twelve well-written chapters.

The introduction sets the stage for understanding concepts of family, supplying definitions and technical terms associated with the parallel topics of childhood and

choirs in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Among numerous stipulations are items that designate child singers as performers in a wide range of musical roles, "singing both choral and solo chants, intoning psalms, antiphons, and hymns and chanting lessons" (p. 4). The authors cite work done by Craig Wright and others on Jean Gerson's *Doctrina pro pueris Ecclesie Parisiensis* (Education for the Boys of the Church of Paris), written in 1411, one of the most revealing of sources on the need for protection of young children. It is clear that the dangers of child abuse lay behind chapter bylaws expressing concern for care in selecting personnel. The punishments leveled against sixteenth-century theorist Giovanni Maria Lanfranco and his contemporary, the composer Nicolas Gombert, each accused of violating choirboys in their charge, prove that such laws were not unwarranted.

The editors provide a condensed and abbreviated survey of the standard albeit rigorous curriculum of medieval and early modern church schools. Corporal punishment was de rigueur for breaking rules, for engaging in games of chance or for indecent behavior, but the young choristers were also allowed opportunities for recreation, customarily after meals. Most schools emphasized oral as opposed to written skills. Materials included the most commonly used text, Aelius Donatus' Latin primer, dating from the fourth century (grammar was "to aid in comprehension and thus correct pronunciation of texts that were memorized and sung as part of the divine service"), along with later methods for teaching music, chief among them the system for learning to sing as devised by Guido d'Arezzo (p. 9).

Each chapter of the book addresses a number of common themes. The first of these includes ways in which the various institutions—"monasteries, cathedral choir schools, collegiate churches, private tutelage, and the apprenticeship system" (p. 15)—established administrations for training young singers; another demonstrates the intersections between ecclesiastical and civic organizations. Chapter 1, Joseph Dyer's "Boy Singers of the Roman Schola Cantorum" (missing from the list of chapters printed on the dust jacket), examines documents relating to the *schola* and in

the *orphanotrophium* dating from the second half of the seventh century, when they were first established in Rome, to the early modern period, when "they encompassed both religious confraternities and the choirs of several of the city's churches" (p. 16). Another theme addressed both by Dyer and others concerns "the opportunities and privileges afforded by the scholarship system," as the boys prepared for a variety of ecclesiastical careers (p. 16).

Sandrine Dumont takes a socio-anthropological approach to her study of choirboys and *vicaires* in the Cambrai *maîtrise* from the second half of the sixteenth through to the third quarter of the seventeenth century. Dumont's work (translated and revised by Susan Boynton from an earlier publication) focuses on the social background of the boys, their recruitment, admission to school, a typical school day, and careers beyond choir school; also included are similar data regarding the recruitment of *vicaires*, their salaries and remuneration, lodging, clothing, discipline and how entry into a choir school such as that at Cambrai offered the possibility of career advancement to those boys from the less privileged classes.

Another theme concerns the education of young singers of both sexes in monasteries. This is addressed by Boynton, who examines pre-thirteenth-century monastic communities; by Anne Bagnall Yardley, who focuses on the musical education of young girls in medieval English nunneries; and by Colleen Reardon, who studies the training of young female singers in early modern Siennese convents. Yardley demonstrates how the young girls gained acceptance into the convent based on their abilities in reading and singing; she follows the trajectory of their progress from very young *infants* to *iuvenulae* to *scolares*. Reardon masterfully relates her work in the Italian archival sources of the seventeenth century to those of earlier periods as studied by Yardley.

The theme of educational patronage is addressed in several chapters. Juan Ruiz Jiménez (again translated by Boynton) considers the education of boys in Seville Cathedral in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; he focuses on the persons responsible for training the choristers, and on the differences between the group of

choristers that “reached an exceptional number of twelve in the first years of the sixteenth century” (p. 88) and another smaller choir of six singers (*seises*) as called for in a bull issued by Eugenius IV in 1439 (pp. 87–88).

Jane Flynn draws attention away from institutions toward the vocal education of a single musician, Thomas Mulliner, to illustrate the benefits of the apprenticeship system. Eric Rice surveys the education of choirboys at Aachen’s Marienkirche in the sixteenth century, while Noel O’Regan brings us full circle from Dyer’s study of the medieval *schola cantorum* to the training of choir boys in early modern Rome. O’Regan adds more to our understanding of how the apprenticeship system was yet another way for young singers to develop professional skills.

Boynton, Ruiz Jiménez, Richard Rastall, and Andrew Kirkman address the use of boys in taking the roles of women, angels, and other characters in religious drama. Rastall focuses on evidence that in England young male choristers portrayed female characters in the majority of biblical, saint, and morality plays in community and commercial drama (p. 68). In addition, many of the plays required professionally trained singers, a number identified as choirboys. Rastall compares the age at which boys’ voices changed then (between the ages of fourteen and twenty) with more recent times (around ages thirteen to fifteen). He examines a variety of surviving play texts, some with notated music, including *Mothers of the Innocents*, where adolescent boys and mature men from the town waits sang the well-known “Coventry Carol,” *Lullay lullay, thou little tiny child* (p. 73). Other documents reveal that boys from guilds in Coventry, Norwich and Hull could substitute for adult males at a fraction of the cost. Rastall makes note of a series of plays from the York Cycle when professional singers would not have been necessary. Some institutions were able to maintain large choirs of adolescents. Although he supplies ample documentation, he speculates regarding whether young boys performed certain roles (p. 83).

One of the most critical themes addressed throughout this volume concerns the influence of young singers on musical repertoires. Choirboys sang chant not only

in church services, but also in religious plays, as described by Rastall. O’Regan and Reardon describe the singing of *laudi spirituali*. Reardon and Yardley reveal that in some convents novices sang only chant, whereas the more experienced singers performed a wider variety of compositions. In the fifteenth century, boy singers took part in services for the departed funded by their heirs. These included “music for the dead (Seville), Marian Masses or Salve services on Saturday or daily private performance of the *Salve regina* (Seville, Saint-Omer), and festal Matins (Cambrai)” (p. 17). The chapters on choristers in France describe lodging, education, singing duties, and life after the *maîtrise*, in addition to providing specific case studies. Alejandro Planchart, in his chapter on the education of choirboys in fifteenth-century Cambrai, describes the choirbooks that contain polyphony, such as motets for Vespers, that were regularly sung by the boys. Andrew Kirkman’s chapter on the training of choirboys in a late-medieval *maîtrise* describes the challenges for the young chorister, particularly at the collegiate church of Saint-Omer in northern France (p. 104). Kirkman suggests that such biblical phrases as “Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise, and Suffer the little children” (p. 115) serve as evidence that youths with their higher voices were chosen not only as substitutes for women—forbidden to participate—but because the texts called for children.

In some chapters there remains ambiguity over which singers performed chant and which ones engaged in singing polyphony; there is even less information as to what they actually sang. One or two chapters cry out for more dates, which would make it easier to place the information in temporal perspective. The further pursuit of seemingly insignificant items might have strengthened such contributions. The essay by Ruiz Jiménez, for instance, mentions Francisco de la Torre in a footnote, but goes no further in filling out our incomplete portrait of this Aragonese court chapel composer and teacher. Regrettably, de la Torre’s name is absent from the index. Another popular composer, Francisco Guerrero, was hired as an assistant to Pedro Fernández de Castilleja to teach reading, writing and singing of plainchant and

polyphony as well as lessons in counterpoint (p. 91). From the entry in *Grove*, we learn that Pedro Fernández de Castilleja was likely a sibling of Guerrero's as well as one of his teachers along with Cristóbal de Morales. Better citations to existing literature on the musicians and their networks would have been welcome.

In addition to connecting common experiences, the essays illustrate regional and institutional differences while establishing certain basic traditions that, in some lo-

cales, survived well into the nineteenth century. Today, boys' choirs are few and far between, perhaps owing to the rigors of training and the fear of exploitation of the children. Despite very minor flaws, *Young Choristers* is an extremely important addition to the literature on music education in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

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JEWISH EXPERIENCES

Jewish Musical Modernism, Old and New. Edited by Philip Bohlman. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. [xix, 218 p. ISBN 9780226063263. \$35.] Music examples, illustrations, bibliography, index, compact disc.

Jewish Musical Modernism, Old and New is a collection of essays ranging in topics from history of science (Michael G. Ash), ethnomusicology (Edwin Seroussi, Kay Kaufman Shelemey), and music history (Pamela Potter) to art criticism (Michael P. Steinberg). What unifies the volume is the essays' exploration of the adjective-noun combination "Jewish modernism," which, despite its frequent use, remains an oxymoron at the end. In his introduction Philip Bohlman, the editor of the volume, admits the paradoxical nature of the term, for, as he writes, "paradox permeated every layer and every moment of Jewish modernism" (p. 20). For the basic tenet of Judaism, as the opponents of reform in the Sephardic ritual in Vienna pointed out, is the conservation of tradition. "One of the principal assets that until today ensured the existence of our people . . . has been the preservation of all our traditions and customs against threat and persecution" (quoted by Edwin Seroussi in his essay "Sephardic Fins des Siècles," pp. 70–71) or, we might add, against modernization. Despite opposition from the religious establishment, however, Jewish culture in Central Europe absorbed the modernizing tendencies of its surroundings in the first part of the twentieth century. In fact, the period between the last decades of the nineteenth century and the Holocaust, which Bohlman designates as the "moment of Jewish modernity," witnessed an un-

precedented explosion of Jewish cultural activity in Europe. The practice of Jewish music, which, as Bohlman points out, was limited beforehand "by religious, ritual, and community functions" (p. 7), began to gain autonomy (hence the emphasis on music in the volume—and in this review). Significantly, Bohlman locates the appearance of the concept itself in this time period. "Jewish music" came into being when the adjective "Jewish" ("as a reflection of the religious character of cultural and ethnic identity"), and "music" ("as secular cultural practices") began to appear in combination (p. 2).

Emphasizing emancipation and assimilation as preconditions of Jewish modernism is crucial for understanding the central role of music in this process. As Sander Gilman argues in the preface to the volume, music of high culture became one of the places where the transformation of German Jews was supposed to take place (p. vii). Jews, blamed by anti-Semites for their supposed lack of innate musicality, were eager to show that "they had the sensibility and sensitivity to be full-fledged members of a world of ethics and aesthetics" (p. ix). It was commonly assumed that their complete assimilation could occur only when they "begin to experience the ethical dimensions attributed to 'high culture'" (p. viii). Music was also abstract enough to provide a hiding place in a culture in which association with ethnic minorities could have lim-