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Transcendent Mastery: Studies in the Music of Beethoven
(review)

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Notes, Volume 66, Number 3, March 2010, pp. 546-549 (Review)

Published by Music Library Association

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/not.0.0296>



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position within which being a central concern of Wolff's essay on individuality in Bach's music (Christoph Wolff, *Bach: Essays on His Life and Music* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991], 146–65). Eric Chafe's analytical essay on the tonal designs, the theme of hypocrisy, and the mass parodies of Cantatas 136 and 179 displays the rich detail and rewarding conclusions we admire in Wolff's own analytical studies. And Thomas Christensen's linking of Bach's compositional practice to the improvisations of Conrad Paumann relies on Wolff's own work on the manuscripts of the Nuremberg organist's *Fundamentum organistendi* (Christoph Wolff, "Conrad Paumann's *Fundamentum organistendi* und seine verschiedenen Fassungen," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 25 [1968]: 196–222).

Neal Zaslaw, on the other hand, responds to Wolff's Mozart scholarship. Indeed, he engages in direct dialogue with Wolff's work on the cadenzas of Mozart's piano concertos. Whereas Wolff has claimed that Mozart "jealously guard[ed] his personal performance materials" (Christoph Wolff, "Cadenzas and Styles of Improvisation in Mozart's Piano Concertos," *Perspectives on Mozart Performance*, ed. R. Larry Todd and Peter Williams [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 230), Zaslaw suggests that Mozart taught his cadenzas to talented students, gave them away, or perhaps even sold them along with the concertos themselves. Zaslaw's case also argues for an important aesthetic point—that cadenzas are supposed to be exciting, surprising, witty, and even risky. "If the same cadenzas are used over and over, [this] important aesthetic feature is devalued" (p. 249).

Among the other contributions, two in particular stand out. Elaine Sisman demonstrates compellingly how each work in a multi-work opus may have an individual as well as a communal life. This "opus concept" is dependent on what she calls "tertiary rhetoric," a mode of communication in which "works within opuses communicate with each other and with their audiences as individuals and as aggregates" (p. 89), thereby enabling "a larger set of meanings to emerge" (p. 82). And Reinhard Strohm, dissatisfied by recent trends in hermeneutics, distinguishes between "metaphor as an aspect of creation in art and metaphorical readings as strategies of

interpretation" (p. 279). The upshot is that the composer him- or herself is granted the possibility of a metaphorical action that may transcend the musical work.

The closing essays in this volume take up issues of interpretation and pedagogy, often challenging time-honored tenets in both musicology and performance. First, Christopher Hogwood proposes that we jettison the "style-free" early grounding" (p. 369) performers today generally receive in favor of a period-specific pedagogy. For the performer of eighteenth-century music, this would mean adopting the teaching strategies used by instrumental tutors of the time. Largely ignoring the "landscape view," the performer would thus focus more on local details and smaller units—phrase inflection, articulation, graded tempo changes, and the like. Robert Levin then challenges one of the fundamental goals of historical musicology—that a primary objective of the scholar is to "establish a text that reflects the composer's ultimate, final version, the so-called *Fassung letzter Hand*" (p. 403). Through an examination of Mozart's drafts, sketches, and autographs of the piano concertos as well as certain habits of Mozart's compositional process, Levin demonstrates that, at least in the case of these works, there is no final or definitive text. As the sources reveal, Mozart's piano concertos were continuously altered by the composer in performance, leading Levin to argue persuasively that "the opportunities provided by this rich set of alternative readings deserve to be known and performed" (p. 406).

These last contributions provide a fitting conclusion for this honorary collection of essays so diverse in topic, methodology, scope, and disciplinary grounding. Not only are their ideas applicable to the entire century of Bach and Mozart, however whole or divided it may be, but they also speak to the tremendous importance of musical scholarship within the world of performance, a hallmark itself of the work of Christoph Wolff.

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Transcendent Mastery: Studies in the Music of Beethoven. By Bathia Churgin. (North American Beethoven Studies, no. 4.) Hillsdale, NY: Pen-

dragon Press, 2008. [xvii, 413 p. ISBN 9781576471227. \$58.] Music examples, illustrations, bibliography, indexes.

It is always fascinating to read works of eminent scholars who have studied a certain repertoire over many years, as their writings reflect a vast knowledge of the field. Bathia Churgin has taught us much about the music of Sammartini, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, the history of sonata form, and a host of other areas throughout her career. Her recent work on Beethoven includes the upcoming critical editions of Symphonies nos. 3 ("Eroica") and 4 with Sieghard Brandenburg. In the present volume, the fourth in the North American Beethoven Studies series, Churgin gives a close reading of four of the composer's works rather than a sweeping overview of his life and compositions. Her purpose, according to the preface, is "to consider widely and deeply four of Beethoven's most excellent works," helping readers "become acquainted with the special character of each genre as well as the overall development of Beethoven's style" (p. ix).

Churgin further notes that the book's emphasis is analysis, largely basing her discussions on the second edition of Jan LaRue's *Guidelines for Style Analysis* (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1992), and Leonard G. Ratner's *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980). As such, her analyses employ LaRue's terminology, with many sections of the book exploring musical elements following his classifications: sound, melody, harmony, rhythm and growth. As the approach is heavily dependent on the reader's knowledge of LaRue's analytical symbols and Ratner's *topoi*, Churgin includes a list of these, along with other symbols and terms (some of her own creation), in a table of abbreviations.

The four works under consideration in this volume are the Violin Concerto op. 61; the Piano Sonata in D major op. 10, no. 3; the final Violin Sonata op. 96, and the String Quartet in A minor op. 132. Its four chapters are organized in a similar fashion, presenting the work's background and context first, followed by a detailed analysis of each movement, a discussion of sketches and/or autograph, and other issues associated with the individual work. Chapters are illus-

trated with tables, figures, music examples, and several plates of sketchbook and autograph pages. The author's rich and nuanced command of the era's music is clear, as she provides numerous comparisons of Beethoven's musical characteristics with works of his predecessors and contemporaries.

In chapter 1, Churgin addresses scholarly issues associated with the Violin Concerto, such as Owen Jander's labeling of the slow movement as a Romance ("Romantic Form and Content in the Slow Movement of Beethoven's Violin Concerto," *Musical Quarterly* 69, no. 2 [Spring 1983]: 159–79), a thesis she finds not entirely convincing. The discussion of the work's surviving autograph details the many corrections and cross-outs contained in the score, most especially in the solo line. Churgin ends with a comparison between editions and a brief discussion of performance practice.

Consideration of "the sharp expressive contrasts of the movements" (p. 96) is one of Churgin's chief concerns when describing previous analyses of the Piano Sonata op. 10, no. 3 in chapter 2, including those of Adolf Bernhard Marx, Lenz, Czerny, and Carl Reinecke. Her discussion of metronome markings and early critical reception of the work will interest performers and listeners alike (this is the first of Beethoven's piano sonatas to garner a review in *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, in October 1799).

In her examination of surviving sketches and the autograph of the Violin Sonata op. 96 (chap. 3), Churgin provides readers with a detailed compendium of the various choices Beethoven made while composing this work. She does an admirable job of making the discussion readable and relevant for those interested in the composer's creative process—no small feat, as descriptions of sketches, compositional choices, and variant readings can be daunting even to the expert.

The book's final chapter fully addresses an issue Churgin alludes to elsewhere in *Transcendent Mastery*: Beethoven's composition of multi-movement cycles throughout his life. The op. 132 String Quartet is the first of the composer's extended late works in the genre (followed soon after by opp. 130 and 131), and its Lydian slow movement ("Heiliger Dankgesang") has elicited praise since the work's earliest readings. Churgin's discussion of the quartet is a tour de force: an almost overwhelming

presentation of historical, textual, and critical materials, interwoven with her own analyses.

For all of its many virtues, several matters make reading this book and following all of the author's arguments challenging for the reader. First is its reliance on LaRue's (and Churgin's) symbolic language of letters and numbers. Those for whom this language is foreign may find a number of passages difficult to understand (I found myself needing to consult the table of abbreviations and analysis tables frequently to remember the meaning of symbols such as "Pay" and "1Po," for example). One wonders if setting off the analytical symbols from the sentence through use of a different font or italics would have solved the problem (an excellent and successful example of this approach is found in volume 2 [*The First Golden Age of the Viennese Symphony*] of A. Peter Brown's *The Symphonic Repertoire* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002]). Churgin presents detailed timeline analyses as tables for each work's movements, but also continues to employ LaRue's symbols within the descriptive prose, often without including measure numbers for the passage, making for some awkward reading and confusion. A better strategy would have been a consistent inclusion of measure numbers to accompany the symbols in these instances. A reader armed with a score (as suggested by the author in the preface) may then refer to passages immediately instead of having to search for the explanatory table, allowing for a better understanding of Churgin's observation or insight. An excellent instance of the successful combination of symbols and measure numbers may be found in the discussion of the first movement of the op. 96 Violin Sonata:

Many subtleties mark the treatment of phrase structure throughout the movement. Peter Cahn points out the three-measure phrases in mm. 17–25 (end of 2P–1Ta) and the three-measure slur bridging the subphrases 1Px and y (mm. 4–6) reflecting 'the rhythmic-metric variety' in the movement. We can add the three-measure slur in mm. 10–12, bridging 1P and 2P, and several later examples such as 2K, in addition to its hemiolas. The elision of phrases also

contracts some four-measure phrases into three measures, as 1Tb¹ elides with 2T (mm. 30–32) and 1Ka¹ elides with 2K (mm. 76–81), itself composed of three-measure phrases. (p. 218)

The inclusion of measure numbers would also be useful when the author compares Beethoven's works with those of another composer. The reader may be confused by a passage in which the works referenced are not included in an analytical table; for example: "1P and 1S, as well as *Na on the phrase level, are 'classic' examples of the parallel period, a format that became more common in the later 18th century and that we may know from such examples as 1P of Mozart's Symphony No. 41/I and Haydn's Symphony No. 104/I" (pp. 29–30). Most readers of this volume will likely know the Mozart and Haydn passages in this example without needing to consult a score, but measure numbers would make the passage even more clear, especially in instances where the author references lesser-known works. The later chapters use this format more consistently. The numerous analytical tables, descriptive charts, and sectional divisions are useful for the reader, but they frequently interrupt the discussion. Some of this information could doubtless have been absorbed into the prose or organized in a slightly different fashion, making the book a more grateful read.

Although the author praises the individuals who assisted with this volume in her preface, one wonders if it went through an additional iteration after the author's own editing, as Churgin was badly served by those who proofread this book. The work is filled with unfortunate mistakes, numerous typographical errors, and inconsistencies of style (a number of the mistakes could have been prevented simply by running a spell-checking program). The typeface seems a bit large for the page and the layout could have been more elegant. An example of editorial inconsistency is the symbol employed for the pitch B^b, which is presented in at least three different ways throughout the book, sometimes on a single page (see, for example, pp. 10, 11, and 33; those on pp. 10 and 11 are clearly editing mistakes). Although most plates are clear and easily read, several of the included sketch pages are badly reproduced scans and useless for

the reader (the worst of these is the page from the *Landsberg 10* sketchbook found on p. 71).

Bathia Churgin has written an impressively detailed book that will reward readers with much information about the four works and about Beethoven himself. The amount of information included in *Transcendent Mastery* is breathtaking. In praising the volume, Walter Frisch notes

the author's "gift for integrating analysis, history, and sketch and manuscript studies in close readings of some of Beethoven's greatest works." It is unfortunate that poor proofreading and formatting, editing mistakes, and a sometimes thorny analytical system get in the way of an otherwise admirable work.

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MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE

The Critical Nexus: Tone-system, Mode, and Notation in Early Medieval Music. By Charles M. Atkinson. (AMS Studies in Music.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. [xiii, 306 p. ISBN 9780195148886. \$49.95.] Music examples, illustrations, bibliography, indexes.

"The notes are so arranged that each sound, however often it may be repeated in a melody, is found always in its own row. And in order that you may better distinguish these rows, lines are drawn close together, and some rows of sounds occur on the lines themselves, others in the intervening intervals or spaces. All the sounds on one line or in one space sound alike" (p. 229).

These lines, certainly familiar to medievalists, may well be reckoned among the most important in Western music history. They represent the first description of the line diagram known as the staff, and are taken from Guido of Arezzo's *Prologus in antiphonarium* (1030). The quotation stands at the end, and at the apogee, of Charles Atkinson's study of early medieval tone systems, mode, and notation, because, as Atkinson explains,

with this simple step, the fusing of the ancient Greek Immutable System (*ametabolon systema*) with the tonal matrix of medieval music and its embodiment in practical notation was complete. There was now available to the West a practical method of notating music that was fully diastematic, whose intervals represented precise numerical ratios that could be converted directly into sound via the monochord. That notation, however, preserved a systemic architecture based on the mathematical principles of ancient Greek harmonic theory [...],

rather than upon the flexible melodic shapes of the plainchant sung in the Western church. (pp. 229–30)

How many musicologists, even those scholars in the fields of medieval studies, music theory, or liturgical chant, are familiar with the music and music theory of antiquity? The language and concepts of these texts may seem forbidding, and far away from the repertory known to most of us. Yet, as the quotation above indicates, the implications of this theoretical heritage for the development of early medieval music theory, its system of the eight modes (*oktoëchos*), and its dealing, and sometimes struggling, with the intricacies of the chant melodies and their notation, are of paramount importance.

Charles Atkinson, professor of musicology at Ohio State University, has written a book that spells out these implications methodically and with admirable accuracy. The study, dedicated to the memory of the German musicologist Fritz Reckow (1940–1998), is the expanded version of a conference paper read by the author in Kiel in 1985, at Reckow's invitation.

The book is amply illustrated with figures, texts, and examples. This "didactic" approach, complemented with a very rich footnote apparatus, enables the reader to study the book without burdening his reading table with additional reference works, studies and editions. Moreover, Atkinson's profound knowledge of the theoretical