

REVIEWS

Niveau Nische Nimbus. Die Anfänge des Musikdrucks nördlich der Alpen. Edited by Birgit Lodes. Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 2010. (Wiener Forum für ältere Musikgeschichte, Band 3) [446 p. ISBN 978-3-86296-004-0. €69]

While the early music printing of Italy, France, England and the Netherlands has received much scholarly attention in the second half of the twentieth century, this has not been the case for German-speaking countries. Only in the last decade have some scholars started to undertake projects investigating the work of selected music printers or even specific publications—as a result there is still a great need for further, comprehensive studies. Thus, the recently-published volume *Niveau Nische Nimbus: Die Anfänge des Musikdrucks nördlich der Alpen*, is a very welcome and highly anticipated contribution, and an excellent starting point for anyone with an interest in this area. The book is a collection of extended and re-worked papers, the proceedings of a conference held in Vienna in 2007, on the occasion of the five hundredth anniversary of the first music books printed north of the Alps.

Three publications, the *Melopoiae* and *Harmonie* printed by Erhard Oeglin in Augsburg, and the *Concentus harmonici* brought out by the Basel printer Gregor Mewes (all printed in 1507), therefore stood at the centre of the conference, but the seventeen contributions of the proceedings go far beyond them. In her opening article, the conference organiser and editor of the volume, Birgit Lodes, describes the three publications drawing on the buzzwords in the title of the volume: their technical *niveau*, their status as a *niche* product and their particular *nimbus*. It becomes evident already in this first contribution that the music books printed north of the Alps were by no means imitations of what had been published in Venice a few years earlier, but that they developed their own, independent ways in terms of technique, repertoire and dissemination.

This central article is framed by two further contributions dealing with the very early stages of music printing in German-speaking areas:

Mary Kay Duggan writes mostly on liturgical and paraliturgical *incunabula*, including psalters and broadsides, while Gundela Bobeth explores the role of the *Melopoiae* in the dissemination—both written and printed—of humanistic ode compositions. A second section of the volume addresses the relationship of manuscript and print culture, from a general perspective (Thomas Schmidt-Beste) as well as the more specific aspects of authorship (Michele Calella) and the origins of German tablatures (Nils Grosch).

The predominance of studies of Italian music print culture has led, at least in the Anglo-Saxon literature, to a specific and rather monolithic view of how the music printing business—and more specifically its markets—functioned, a view very much influenced by the Italian model. That this does not hold true for the area north of the Alps is demonstrated in the four articles summarised under the heading of ‘markets and marketing’. Hans-Jörg Künast makes it very clear that in the German-speaking areas no ‘music printer’ or ‘music publisher’ existed as such, but that music was only ever a by-product for printers of text. Künast then puts the distribution of music books north of the Alps into the wider context of the book market, especially in relation to book fairs. It is the German market for music books which also stands at the centre of John Kmetz’s article; with only very few publications leaving the German-speaking areas in the sixteenth century, Kmetz labels it a ‘closed market’.

Stanley Boorman examines another aspect of the music book market north of the Alps, namely how music publications (printed all over Europe) were distributed there, and how publishers specifically targeted certain buyers. Publishers’ strategies are also the focus of Royston Gustavson’s article, which analyses the competitive strategies within—once again—the specific situation north of the Alps. These four articles show very clearly how the northern market has to be viewed in completely different terms to its southern counterpart, a fact that becomes even more evident in the last seven contributions of the volume, which all deal with aspects of the printed repertoire.

Here, three genres are singled out which are particular to music printing north of the

Alps: music treatises (Thomas Röder, Markus Grassl), tablature books (Markus Grassl, Andrea Lindmayer-Brandl) and German songs both in song books (Nicole Schwindt, David Fallows) and broadsheets (Frieder Schanze). Amongst these interesting articles, Schanze's contribution should be singled out for its excellent first overview of broadsides with printed music before 1550, which will become a useful resource for many researchers.

Taken together, all the seventeen contributions in the volume provide an admirable overview of early music printing in German-speaking lands, and clearly demonstrate how this topic should be dealt with in its own terms rather than in constant comparison with the Italian counterpart. In providing such a focus, however, the contributors run the risk of neglecting more international aspects, especially the sometimes surprisingly international repertoire printed north of the Alps; in this sense the topic is occasionally presented as being more of a 'niche' than it actually is. This might have been prevented by including studies of a printer's or publisher's entire output of music books (including a more international repertoire), but, with the notable exception of Andrea Lindmayr-Brandl's discussion of Peter Schöffer the Younger, such studies are missing from the volume, exposing the need for future research.

There is much more to praise than to criticize in this volume, but it would have been beneficial to have more contributions in English or to at least include English abstracts of a greater length to avoid making this a topic of research in a 'closed market'. Finally, calling it the study of early music printing in German-speaking areas would have been more appropriate to the content than the description 'north of the Alps', as no article dedicated to the work of music printers from the Netherlands, for example, is included.

Nevertheless, with its clear, high-quality layout and the very useful indexes at the end of the book (one each for manuscripts and printed editions of music mentioned in the text, as well as composers and their works), this volume is easy to use and enjoyable to read. It is both an ideal starting point for those wanting a broad survey of the topic, as well as a source for more

detailed scholarly discussion. As such it should be on the reading list of every scholar of music printing.

Elisabeth Giselbrecht
University of Cambridge

The Era after the Baroque: Music and the Fine Arts 1750–1900. By Robert Tallant Laudon. Hillsdale, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 2008. [viii, 92 p. ISBN 97801-57-647124-1. \$28]

Robert Tallant Laudon, Emeritus Professor of Musicology at the University of Minnesota, has recently produced a slender tome, elegantly proposing a new rubric for rethinking the narrative of the Classic and Romantic periods of Western music. In his extended essay, *The Era after the Baroque: Music and the Fine Arts 1750–1900*, the author suggests an overarching concept through which the music historian can incorporate information relative not only to the fine arts, but to history in a broader context. Laudon proposes to call the period the "Promethean Era." This book focuses primarily on discussing his paradigm and why this label is apt for this century and a half.

Unlike those scholars who divide this period into Classic and Romantic periods, Laudon draws attention to the way in which the musical tendencies of 1750 continue through the nineteenth century, transforming to meet different dramatic, technical, and commercial demands. What makes this period musically cohesive is composers' attention to formal procedures—structural, harmonic, and melodic. The architectural strategies, furthermore, were part of a larger design to delineate emotional character and, later, to depict unfolding dramas. To acknowledge these structural and expressive ideals from 1750 to 1900, the author proposes to reassign names to the three fifty year periods, under one larger framework. Laudon, recognizing the revived interest in things classical, suggests calling the period under study the "Promethean Era," divided into early, middle, and late periods. The mythological Titan, Prometheus, brought technological advances to humans through the use of fire, but he also introduced letters and numbers to serve as their memory. He also gave humanity such