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secondly, pp 176-7, where Frisch has 'Wenn denkst du mein' instead of the correct 'Wann denkst du mein'

The final verdict on this collection must be that the editor has missed an opportunity to provide a consistently stimulating investigation of Schubert's music. Although the index includes a representative list of Schubert's compositions, only comparatively few are examined in depth; the focus is, for the most part, on the vocal works. Two factors must surely make any prospective reader think twice before investing in the book: its dependence on reprinted material, and its general appearance, which seems rather basic for a book of this price. I can see only the keenest students of Schubert feeling it necessary to buy it. The more analytically minded will find most of the new presentations wanting in real penetration.

Nicholas Rast

NOTES

- 1 For a discussion devoted entirely to the whole-tone scale in Schubert, see K P Bernet Kempers, 'Ganztonreihen bei Schubert', in *Organicae voces Festschrift Joseph Smits van Waesberghe* (Amsterdam: Instituut voor Middeleeuwse Muziekwetenschap, 1963), pp 7-10
- 2 See Theodor Adorno, *Mahler Eine musikalische Physiognomik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1960); Arnold Schmitz, *Beethovens 'zwei Prinzipie'* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1923) and *Das Romantische Beethoven-Bild* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1927)
- 3 See Lawrence Kramer, *Music and Poetry The Nineteenth Century and After* (Berkeley: University of California, 1984) and 'Decadence and Desire: The *Wilhelm Meister* Songs of Wolf and Schubert', *Nineteenth-Century Music*, Vol 10, No 3 (Spring 1987), pp 229-42
- 4 See Harald Krebs, 'The Background Level in Some Tonally Deviating Works of Franz Schubert', *In Theory Only*, Vol 8, No 8 (December 1985), pp 5-18

Louise Duchesneau, *The Voice of the Muse A Study of the Role of Inspiration in Musical Composition* Series XXXVI on Musicology, Vol 19 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1986) 201pp £19 95

Louise Duchesneau locates her study of musical inspiration within the methodological framework of semiotics – more particularly, within the framework of music semiotics pioneered by her teacher, Jean-Jacques Nattiez.¹ The work begins with a review of some of the more elementary principles of music semiotics. The reader is introduced to three dimensions of semiotic investigation: poietics (the study of the creation of a work), neutral level (the study of the work itself) and esthetics (the study of the perception/reception of a work).

Although at times methodologically vague, semiotics has rightly attracted attention within music theory circles as a paradigm holding the potential for generating new insights. Part of the attraction of the semiotic paradigm is its breathtaking sweep, encompassing a number of hitherto independent approaches to the study of music and of musical experience. At least in terms of the Nattiez model, historical and perceptual insights are overtly welcomed into the analytic process. In practice, however, much of the semiotics-inspired work in music has focused on the neutral level and so has

betrayed a certain reluctance to venture into the new ground suggested by the model. The neutral level is the semiotic dimension most akin to traditional analysis (and hence most familiar to analysts). Thus the reluctance to explore the poietic and esthetic dimensions is understandable. In this context, Duchesneau's study of musical poietics represents a significant event.

Her book is divided into three parts. Part I presents a history of the idea of inspiration; Part II proposes a taxonomy of sources of inspiration; and Part III applies the ensuing analytic categories to a single case study, Smetana's Piano Trio.

The history of the idea of inspiration given in Part I is terse but contains a number of valuable insights. Duchesneau summarizes the etymology of the words 'muse' and 'inspire', unravelling their origins in the idea of religious prophecy. The classical image is that of an angel whispering in the artist's ear. She also provides a fascinating discussion of the term 'genius'. In each case there is a strong grasp of the evolution of the terms discussed, and the author supplies graphs and charts summarizing their semantic histories.

An unfortunate omission is the failure to consider the term 'motif'. Originally derived from the Latin 'motus' (motion), the word later came to mean the cause of or impetus for action rather than the action itself. In the world of art, the term had the initial implication of an underlying motive or intention on the artist's part.² Thus 'motif' was at one point virtually synonymous with 'inspiration'. However, the meaning of the word 'motif' has changed. The shift from the idea of motif as a prime cause to that of motif as a technical term is signalled by the change in definitions given in the fifth and sixth editions of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*. In the 1798 edition motif is defined merely as 'that which moves and leads to doing something', while by 1835 a second definition has been added: 'the melodic phrase, the original idea that dominates the whole piece' (Levin's translations). What we find in the history of the idea of 'motif' is a shift away from the internal, personal motives of the artist towards an organizing principle manifest in the concrete materials of the work.

Part II of Duchesneau's book is structured in the form of an analytic taxonomy. She distinguishes three categories of musical inspiration: what she dubs inspiration from ABOVE (religious and metaphysical inspiration), inspiration from INSIDE (psychological imperatives) and inspiration from OUTSIDE (social and other factors). There is some similarity here to the three categories of inspiration identified in Jonathan Harvey's Ph.D. dissertation, namely: the unconscious, the ideal and the audience.³ Although Duchesneau cites Harvey's dissertation and terminology, she fails to provide any explanation as to why her terminology might be superior to his.

A sociologist might claim, for example, that the ABOVE category is superfluous. To the extent that a religious or metaphysical belief is sociologically normative within a given community, the inspiration really amounts to one from OUTSIDE. Conversely, to the extent that a religious or metaphysical belief is generated by a personal vision, the inspiration really amounts to one from INSIDE. The ABOVE category would thus seem to be redundant. But it is important to understand Duchesneau's categories not as 'real' sources but as nominal tags for inspirations as colloquially reported by creative artists. Innumerable artists over the centuries have claimed to be motivated by a religious or metaphysical vision, and the sheer volume of such claims legitimates the ABOVE label as a descriptive category. (In the chapter on inspiration from ABOVE, incidentally, Duchesneau relies on Arthur Abell's book *Talks with Great Composers* for information about Brahms. This work is considered spurious by Brahms scholars and is a wholly inappropriate source upon which to base a discussion of Brahms's musical inspiration.)

Duchesneau's OUTSIDE category is more problematic. The apparent advantage of the term 'OUTSIDE' is that it embraces a larger field of external factors than is implied in Harvey's use of the term 'audience'. Duchesneau includes in her term both the social imperatives associated with an audience and technical innovations in music-making, as well as such mundane motives as the excitement generated by a commission. She also includes other musical works in this category. Finally, she includes the concrete materials of music itself. The OUTSIDE category thus turns out to be a remarkable grab-bag of motives and influences, which utterly dwarfs the other two categories. Harvey's 'audience' category at least had the virtue of being manageable.

This chapter contains an unfortunate lapse, in presenting ideas from Boulez as an example of the concrete materials of music acting as a source of inspiration (p 117). Duchesneau cites the initial conception for *Pli selon pli* as the idea of a continuous crescendo lasting over an hour. The idea, however, comes into conflict with the practical difficulties of executing it. Duchesneau rightly notes: 'One must then be ready to alter the initial idea in relation to the actual musical reality, as Boulez himself remarks

' But the example fails to elucidate the topic of discussion, namely, musical materials themselves as a source of inspiration. In this example, the materials are not the inspiration; rather, the materials command attention only to the extent that they interfere with the original conception.

The most disconcerting problem evident in Duchesneau's work, however – to look beyond Part III for a moment – is to be found in her concluding chapter. Having erected an edifice of scholarship concerning the origins of the work of art, she begins coolly to dismantle it. We are led to the conclusion that artistic inspiration is, after all, unimportant. Although it is appropriate to voice the caveat that the quality of inspiration can be independent of the aesthetic value of the work it helped to procure (p 178), other claims of Duchesneau seem reckless. Her claim that 'inspiration is unimportant for the aesthetic reception of a piece of music' (p 179) is true only for an analysis which remains rooted in the neutral level. From both the poetic and esthetic points of view the claim is more problematic. Duchesneau maintains:

It is not important *where* the inspiration came from or *how* it manifested itself and therefore, knowledge of the composer's inspiration should not affect our perception of the quality of the work (p 178)

In using the word 'should' Duchesneau signals a change of role from that of descriptive scholar to that of music critic. Her point of criticism, however, is not the work but a certain aspect of esthetic behaviour. Before commenting on this criticism, let me continue for a moment with the descriptive enterprise. If we examine actual esthetic behaviour, it is clear that knowledge concerning the inspiration of a work manifestly does affect the way in which listeners interpret and value that work. Such knowledge does not change the 'nature' of a work as elucidated at the neutral level. But it does change the work at the level of reception. Listeners are not immune to the influence of the world of ideas. To believe otherwise is to ignore the role of history in shaping the quality of musical experience. Through programme notes and many other sources, listeners are primed favourably or unfavourably towards a musical work – even before they hear a single sound.

Duchesneau's own case study in Part III paradoxically provides the best refutation of her conclusion. Drawing on Vladimir Karbusicky's suggestion that the opening theme of Smetana's Piano Trio is closely related to that of the fourth movement of Clara Schumann's Piano Trio, Duchesneau argues that Smetana's work was motivated by the

death of his oldest daughter (Bedřiška) in 1855 Smetana held high expectations of his daughter and explicitly fashioned his image of her future musical career along the lines of Clara Schumann This history makes Smetana's use of Clara Schumann's Piano Trio theme more than a casual derivation Duchesneau continues:

The theme of Smetana's *Trio* is thus also a *symbol*; of Clara as a woman, as a pianist, as a composer and ultimately as the model for his daughter Without knowledge of Clara's theme, the *Trio* is an intimate requiem containing personal reminiscences, with it, a symbolic level is added to the main theme, which greatly enriches our understanding of the work (p 172)

This quotation stands in stark contrast with the previous one On the one hand Duchesneau claims that knowledge of the composer's inspiration enriches our understanding of the work, while on the other she says that such knowledge should not affect our perception of the work's quality One might be charitable and suppose that Duchesneau is making a subtle distinction between 'enrichment' and 'quality', but there is nothing in the text to support this interpretation I think that Duchesneau has merely stumbled into a contradiction which is pervasive throughout musical scholarship

Assuming that Duchesneau has put her finger on the inspiration for Smetana's Trio, how could this insight not help but enrich the *esthetic* dimension of the work? Why, as musicologists, do we expend so much energy in trying to establish such links if we believe that they are ultimately no more than curious anecdotes which have nothing to do with musical experience? Duchesneau is reticent to acknowledge the importance of her discovery because she is fearful of straying outside of the neutral dimension of analysis This is not a problem unique to Duchesneau, for it points up a common difficulty scholars have in relating historical understanding to the work itself The notion of a neutral level appears to provide an attractive haven away from the complexities of wordly interpretation But in reality the neutral level offers at best a transient shelter⁴

The crux of this issue is to be found in the religious roots of the idea of inspiration In Medieval times it was possible to conceive of music being produced not only by a kind of divine intervention but also by composers colluding with evil forces Duchesneau has no 'BELOW' category to correspond with her 'ABOVE' The notion of a 'bad' inspiration is, of course, tacitly dismissed by contemporary scholarship Like modern theology, which has almost abandoned the notion of devils as purveyors of evil, modern musicology feels uncomfortable with the idea that inspiration might be 'false' (Theodor Adorno provides a notable exception) It is now possible to pose a fundamental question: Is an increased 'understanding' of a work properly something which influences the work's aesthetic value? If the answer to this question is that 'understanding' ought not to influence aesthetic value, then it is important for music analysis not to be something which in any sense 'legitimizes' music But if the answer is that 'understanding' ought indeed to influence aesthetic value, then we need to spend some time considering what kinds of information should enhance, and what kinds should detract from, the aesthetic value of a work In the latter case, scholars would have to rekindle the old problem of whether 'inspiration' comes from 'ABOVE' or 'BELOW' – albeit in a modern sense which is devoid of the metaphysics of devils and angels Personally I find neither answer satisfying, but see no middle ground between the horns of this dilemma

Quite apart from the esthetic value of the idea of inspiration, the study of inspiration

remains important from the poietic standpoint, for at least two reasons. First, it provides one of the loci from which scholars can begin to analyse the compositional process. Secondly, for the composer, inspiration – whether from ‘above’, ‘inside’ or ‘around the corner’ – remains a crucial engine for creative activity. For a composer languishing in the doldrums of inactivity, the loss of one’s ‘muse’ is more than some heady abstract issue: it is a practical problem with potentially dire consequences.

David Huron

NOTES

- 1 Among many publications see especially *Fondements d'une sémiologie de la musique* (Paris: 10/18, 1975); ‘Varèse’s *Density 21 5*: A Study in Semiological Analysis’, *Music Analysis*, Vol 1, No 3 (October 1982), pp 243-340
- 2 See Harry Levin, ‘Motif’, in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed Philip P Wiener, Vol 3 (New York: Scribner, 1973), pp 235-44
- 3 J D Harvey, ‘The Composer’s Idea of His Inspiration’ (Diss., Glasgow, 1965)
- 4 See the discussion of the neutral level in Jonathan W Bernard, ‘On *Density 21 5*: A Response to Nattiez’, *Music Analysis*, Vol 5, Nos 2-3 (July-October 1986), pp 208ff