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Tomson, and provide lovely expression to ideas offered up less artfully elsewhere in the volume; others are playfully compelling, as is Guillermo Verdicchia. As many interviews with authors can be, other contributions are fairly unhelpful in further sussing out the complex issues of representing lives, and some of the playwrights presented here are prone to trafficking in platitudes. Consistently, authors characterize themselves as parasitic, or even verge on ethical irresponsibility. Lorena Gale, often a powerful voice in the field and in performance, blithely asserts that “I do not see any ethical issues involved in portraying the lives of real people, dead or living, in the theatre,” ignoring a great deal of human contractual behavior (312). This assertion is balanced by Marie Clements’s brief meditation on the accountability of the playwright of auto/biography, but generally, valuable nuggets for academic critics and theorists are harder to find in this section.

Perhaps the only other obstacle that such readers might find is the volume’s adherence primarily to the work of Canadian playwrights and theatre practitioners. While the work of these artists certainly deserves greater attention than it currently receives, particularly in light of the Anglo-American dominance of the extant criticism, some readers will find it more difficult to apply the arguments being offered up without a critical mass of familiar texts and performances.

That said, for the student of life writing in any genre, these essays will provide useful test cases and variations on a wide range of theories of auto/biography current in the field. And for the student of theatre, these studies of the narratives of real life will provide compelling material to think through the epistemologies of performance, ranging from suspended disbelief to political and representational efficacy. While the volume might have benefited from a bit more judicious selection, and perhaps even expansion of the best pieces, the arguments here are by-and-large sound and compelling, and offer a great deal to the student of either or both fields to consider and build upon.

Ryan Claycomb

Jolanta T. Pekacz, ed. *Musical Biography: Towards New Paradigms*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. xi, 232 pp. ISBN 0-7546-5151-7, \$99.95.

Developments in musicology have an infelicitous tendency to lag some years behind those elsewhere in the humanities, and the burgeoning field of biographical theory is no exception. Jolanta T. Pekacz’s edited volume, which unites eight distinguished (predominantly North American) scholars drawn primarily from the disciplines of musicology and history, therefore represents

a valuable addition to existing research.¹ Proceeding via a series of individual case studies that crystallize around European, notably German, biographical endeavors of the last two centuries, this pathbreaking collection of critical essays on musical biography is broad in scope. Sources considered in the course of the volume include periodical articles, music criticism, conference presentations, travel writings, correspondence, archival materials, and films, rather than merely confining enquiry to biographies in the conventional sense of the term.

At the same time, I was soon led to wonder whether the subtitle “Towards New Paradigms” is the most apposite description of the anthology’s contribution to scholarship. While two of its authors offer articles dealing with contemporary biographical projects—Michael Saffle on Alan Walker’s multi-volume Liszt biography, and John C. Tibbetts on Renato Castellani’s epic 1982 film biography *The Life of Verdi*²—the majority of the volume comprises critical reflection upon historical case studies, and as such seems to look towards the past much more than the future. By way of explanation, the editor offers (8) that the first stage in activating new directions for the enrichment of musical biography is a thorough examination and re-evaluation of the assumptions that have heretofore underpinned traditional modes of life writing. Nonetheless, the volume is rather limited in its discussion of the implications for future scholarship of the findings of its various studies; in this respect, I remain not entirely convinced that its endeavors to “help forge new approaches to musical biography” (book sleeve) are successfully realized. Certainly I find the subtitle somewhat misleading in that it sets up expectations of a text whose primary purpose is to specify ways in which musical biographies might be more appropriately written in future, whereas this essay collection explicitly aims to extend alternatives without prescribing such limitations (16).

Even if exploration of “the rich potential of the new theories and methods for writing musical lives” (8) does not emerge particularly strongly as one of the volume’s central concerns, the application to musical subjects of ideas that arise from the critical literature on biography that has flourished in preceding decades is undeniably a point of departure. Several of the authors skillfully intertwine discussion of biographical theory with that of their specific field of study. James Deaville’s examination of the pioneering late nineteenth-century collective biography of women musicians by Marie Lipsius (“La Mara”), the renowned German writer on music, is especially successful in this regard. I did not, however, find this theoretical underpinning to be consistently woven into the fabric of the volume as a whole. In some chapters, such as that by Toby Thacker, the relative absence of reference to biographical theory renders its relationship to existing humanities research unclear.

Similarly, Marian Wilson Kimber's illuminating study of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel's personal travel writings—and their subsequent employment in a biographical text written by her son Sebastian—would doubtless have been further enriched by drawing upon the substantial theoretical bibliography on women's auto/biography.

A slightly more stable grounding within contemporary musicological scholarship would also have been welcome in a volume that professes to offer a "sense of the current directions in research on musical biography" (16). Reference to one particularly significant monograph devoted to the subject, Hans Lenneberg's *Witnesses and Scholars*, is confined to a couple of allusions in footnotes. Since Lenneberg discusses at length the dependence of music lexicography of past epochs on autobiographical materials, and also includes an interesting section on La Mara, use of his research would have strengthened Deaville's chapter if none other. Likewise, the one international conference on musical biography in recent years is altogether unmentioned apart from in the prefatory acknowledgments (viii);³ with the exception of Pekacz herself, none of its contributors are included in the volume's bibliography, even though some of their research has appeared in major publications. Existing scholarship on musical biography, while unquestionably still in its infancy, is nevertheless somewhat richer than the impression given by this text.

In connection with this point, I felt that a volume on *musical* biography could have gone further in examining the former half of that formulation as well as the latter, if only to identify ways in which it is distinct from other forms of the genre that are already much more widely theorized. The relationship between biography and music is creatively investigated by a number of the articles; Steven Huebner embraces the tension between Ravel's personal life and the reception of his works, for example, while Michael Saffle demonstrates that our understanding of certain stories perpetuated in Liszt biography is enhanced by reading them in tandem with the subject's compositional activities. Nonetheless, the crucial question of biography's relevance to analysis of the works—a wider concern of humanities disciplines for some years—was only tangentially addressed by the volume. Similarly overlooked is one of the most fascinating recent developments in the use of biographical information within musicology: the proliferation of hermeneutical readings of music according to such attributes as gender, sexuality, race, class, and ideology. A product of anti-positivist trends within the discipline since the late 1980s, this present fashion would seem to have been recognized as one of musicology's "new paradigms" for biographical study by at least one of the volume's contributors (Saffle 91); however, its assumptions, implications, and potentialities have still to receive detailed exploration.

Of course, a single text can only achieve so much in terms of addressing the scarcity of musicological research on the theoretical, methodological, and critical contemplation of biography. Several of its authors note that space precluded a more comprehensive investigation of their subject; opportunities for the wider evaluation of musical biography as a genre are further restricted by the volume's orientation around a set of case studies. The majority of the chapters, though they yield many valuable insights that might feasibly be exported to other areas of research, fundamentally draw upon and contribute to scholarship on individual canonical composers. Yet in her editorial introduction, Pekacz seems to set the dearth of critical re-assessment of biography within musicology in opposition to the plethora of recent single-composer studies on biographical issues (5), as though the two are mutually exclusive. Adoption of this model therefore creates confusion as to the exact nature of the advancement to scholarship represented by many of the chapters that follow, including her own. Furthermore, in writing of the continuing relationship between biography and musicology, Pekacz notes the "focus, still typical for most musicologists, on individual composers who are believed to have made a significant contribution to music history" (2). It is strange that this "typical" focus should find itself largely perpetuated in a volume intended to help free the discipline from the shackles of its traditional biographical assumptions.

Future scholarship would surely benefit from greater liberation from the self-contained nature of individual studies, thereby to make broader inferences about the genre of musical biography as a whole rather than that of single composers.⁴ As an example, two of the volume's essays deal with the appropriation of major composers within specific geographical and ideological contexts: those by Toby Thacker (on Bach and Handel in the German Democratic Republic) and Jolanta T. Pekacz (on Chopin in nineteenth-century Poland). Drawing comparisons between these studies would hence doubtless have afforded additional insights, not least given that the biographical agenda of reclaiming subjects for a particular nation was problematized in analogous ways in both of the projects under scrutiny, since Handel and Chopin each spent his adult life away from his country of origin. This line of inquiry may also be extended beyond the confines of the volume itself; for instance, many of the elements discussed by Saffle within the context of Liszt biography—a performer's unselfish promotion of the works of others at the expense of his own, acts of recognition of the genius of a young musician by a senior contemporary, and even the mythologized receipt of a kiss from Beethoven—have parallel manifestations in other composers' biographies too. David Gramit's chapter, a comparative examination of German autobiographies of non-professional musicians of the late eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries, prompts Pekacz to remark that “Musical biography does not have to be understood in the singular” (14), and perhaps it may be fruitful to develop such an approach more widely.

None of the above observations should detract in any way from the volume’s substantial value in yielding many fascinating new insights into a largely untapped source for musicological research. Rather, they are intended to identify avenues for future exploration of a vast area in which much work remains to be conducted, and which this essay collection has made more alluring and promising than ever before. That would, after all, seem to be a logical extension of the scholarly reflection upon music-biographical studies that Pekacz and the other contributors have striven to cultivate.

NOTES

1. For the record, the chapter listing is as follows: Jolanta T. Pekacz, “Introduction” (1–16); Toby Thacker, “‘Renovating’ Bach and Handel: New Musical Biographies in the German Democratic Republic” (17–41); Jolanta T. Pekacz, “The Nation’s Property: Chopin’s Biography as a Cultural Discourse” (43–68); Steven Huebner, “Maurice Ravel: Private Life, Public Works” (69–87); Michael Saffle, “Lingering Legends: Liszt after Walker” (89–110); Marian Wilson Kimber, “Fanny in Italy: The Female Composer as Travel Writer” (111–33); James Deaville, “This Is (Y)our Life: (Re)Writing Women’s Autobiographies in Music in Nineteenth-Century Germany” (135–58); David Gramit, “Unremarkable Musical Lives: Autobiographical Narratives, Music, and the Shaping of the Self” (159–78); John C. Tibbetts, “A Life on Film: Renato Castellani’s *The Life of Verdi*” (179–99). The volume includes a bibliography (201–22) and index (223–32).
2. Tibbetts is also the author of a recently published monograph on musical biopics, *Composers in the Movies: Studies in Musical Biography*.
3. The 37th Annual Conference of the Royal Musical Association, “The Theory and Practice of Musical Biography,” King’s College London, UK, 19–21 October 2001.
4. This approach is effectively employed in an earlier article by Jolanta T. Pekacz subjecting musical biography to detailed critical examination, “Memory, History, and Meaning: Musical Biography and its Discontents.”

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