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### Review Of "The Age Of Chopin: Interdisciplinary Inquiries" Edited By H. Goldberg

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they tend to break off just when things are getting interesting; readers who want to follow the analyses need complete scores. These few problems, however, do not lessen the value of the book as a worthy contribution to Brahms scholarship, and to a better-rounded view of the composer's life and work.

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**The Age of Chopin: Interdisciplinary Inquiries.** Edited by Halina Goldberg. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. [xii, 368 p. ISBN 0-253-34319-4. \$59.95.] Music examples, indexes, notes.

*The Age of Chopin: Interdisciplinary Inquiries*, edited by Halina Goldberg, includes essays originally presented at a symposium bearing a similar title held at Indiana University, Bloomington in 1999 to commemorate the sesquicentennial of Frédéric Chopin's death. The publication is not a conference proceedings—that is, it does not represent the sum of papers delivered at the symposium. Nor is it a volume of “selected essays” that might most strongly articulate the underlying premise of the original event. Rather, it is, as Goldberg defines in the preface, a “collection” and, as such, it approximates the symposium's design: it is headed by an introduction and divided into four parts (“Memories, Images, and Dreams,” “Analytical Perspectives,” “Gender, Genre and Genius,” and “Chopin Appropriated”), three of which borrow their headings from session titles. In all, the volume includes a brief introduction and thirteen essays; the majority of these contributions appear in print for the first time.

In the introduction, “Chopin Then and Now: A Fantasy,” historian Daniel Stone gets things off to a troubling start by imagining a Chopin born in 1950. Why? Stone suggests that “[t]he degree to which [Chopin's] experience reflected his times is highlighted by the hypothetical construction of a modern Chopin, born in Stalinist Poland in 1950 and perhaps emigrating to New York in 1970” (p. 10). But a fantasy of a modern-day Chopin, “one who might have been an atonalist or a jazz pianist” (p. 10), cannot “highlight” real, lived his-

tory, in this case, Chopin's. It can merely contemporize the socio-political contours of a Poland under Russian control. Problems of logic aside, Stone's point (if you will) is condescending. It presumes that the reader lacks the imagination (training?) to envision a Poland more distant than its Communist past. And Stone says as much: “By readjusting the dates in this manner I hope to make Chopin's experience more immediate and accessible” (p. 1).

Bożena Shallcross's essay that follows does not necessarily improve matters. In “Chopin at Home,” Shallcross, a scholar of Polish literature, proposes “to show that Romanticism, as a philosophy of individualism—powerfully represented in literature, music, and the visual arts—opens for artists the concept of the home as a new mode of self-expression and a sphere particularly conducive for experimentation” (p. 13). In other words, Shallcross wishes to demonstrate that, through such things as acquired objects, decor, and aura of place, Chopin strongly identified with his domestic environment and, in turn, his contemporaries also defined the composer by his surroundings. The idea is interesting, not least because it allows Shallcross to engage in a discussion of the Romantic “language of fragments” (p. 16) discernable in a selection of Chopin's letters, and in Franz Liszt's vivid description of Chopin performing in his apartment on *chaussée d'Antin* in Paris. Unfortunately, hard-going (at times, imprecise) language and hasty scholarship too often obscure Shallcross's keen literary observations of a Romantic taste for blurring the boundaries between the real and the imagined. One wishes the author had taken a bit of time to clean up and flesh out the arguments in this short piece.

Unfortunately, the uneven effort that characterizes Shallcross's piece is representative of the volume as a whole. Of the thirteen essays included in this collection, eight appear more or less as they originally were presented while five have been significantly expanded. Among the eight shorter essays, four can be singled out for their coherent arguments and clear presentation, even if they remain modest in scope. Art historian John B. Nici makes a plausible case for interpreting Eugène Delacroix's famous portrait of Chopin (a fragment, in

fact, of a much larger canvas) as a manifestation of the Romantic aesthetics of transference, a surrogate self-portrait of the painter himself. In "Idiosyncrasies of Phrase Rhythm in Chopin's Mazurkas," Carl Schachter focuses on two features of Chopin's Mazurka in A-flat, op. 24, no. 3: the delayed initial tonic chord, and the piece's twelve-bar phrases. Schachter argues that these features contribute to "the remarkable rhythmic fluidity" of this work and other Chopin mazurkas where these features are also present (p. 99). James Parakilas's essay on the Nocturne examines Parisian vocal nocturne repertory as a possible source of inspiration for the piano nocturne in an attempt to "resolve some of the issues that make the piano nocturne so elusive a genre to define" (p. 206). In "Gender and Genius in Postrevolutionary France: Sand and Chopin," historian Whitney Walton suggests that while both George Sand and Chopin were considered geniuses, assumptions about gender problematized Sand's genius in ways that it did not Chopin's, leading Sand to seek "solutions" to the predicament of the female genius.

Of the five expanded essays (by Halina Goldberg, Eric McKee, Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, Maja Trochimczyk, and Sandra P. Rosenblum), all but one obtain mixed results, even as they each offer material unequivocally useful to the field of Chopin scholarship. The exception is McKee's article, "Dance and the Music of Chopin: The Waltz." A beautifully balanced work of historical inquiry and musical analysis, it is indeed the jewel of this volume. McKee's aim is straightforward: he wishes "to provide new analytical insights into the waltzes of Chopin by viewing them in light of early nineteenth-century urban dance practices as found in Europe and specifically in Warsaw" (p. 106). At issue here, as McKee rightly observes, is the fact that most often Chopin's dance music is divorced from bodily association, seen instead through the (limiting) lens of the autonomous artwork.

McKee's essay is neatly arranged in three sections. Using a thoughtful array of primary and secondary sources in the first section, McKee establishes that, for nearly all of Warsaw's inhabitants during the first three decades of the nineteenth century (seemingly only the infirm did not take

part in the fun), social dancing was a vibrant and ubiquitous activity, strongly influenced first by French tastes then by the "waltz craze" traversing European dance floors at that time. He then eloquently argues that "Chopin's conception of dance music grew directly out of his experience with urban ballroom dancing both as a dancer and dance musician" (p. 121). Perhaps most provocatively, however, McKee proposes in the last section that, in his waltzes, Chopin translates physical motions of the dance into musical gestures that serve as compositional source material to be developed on a number of different levels of musical organization. Finally, he suggests that discrete compositional motivations lie behind the waltzes Chopin left unpublished as compared to those he chose to publish. If rumors are to be believed that this essay represents part of a larger study as yet unpublished, then we have something to look forward to.

If one can overlook various editorial shortcomings (including the distracting and inconsistent cross-referencing to other essays in the volume within the body of the texts of the last four essays, and numerous typographical errors) the patient reader will find a substantial amount of information spread unevenly over a wide range of disparate topics. Conceivably, students and scholars of Chopin alike will be able to turn to this volume as a useful resource (Rosenblum's painstaking archival work on the reception and performance styles of Chopin's music in nineteenth-century America, in particular, comes to mind), as well as find much here to think about in further detail. In this respect, Goldberg's "collection" may not entirely succeed at "prompt[ing] a reassessment of various aspects of Chopin, the man and his oeuvre" (p. ix). But it does "allow us to better perceive the various facets of Chopin's music and personality, and . . . enhance[s] our awareness of the various contexts that shaped Chopin's mind and art as well as the reception of his music" (p. vii).

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**Henry F. Gilbert: A Bio-Bibliography.** By Sherrill V. Martin. (Bio-Bibliographies in Music, 93.) Westport, CT: