

that now form James's most obvious legacy to Australian music. Tunley puts it very well in his Introduction: 'To mention the name William Garnet James nowadays—especially in the company of the young to middling generation—is to invite some puzzling stares, until someone remembers that they have sung or heard some of his *Australian Christmas Carols*' (p. 7). The carols were composed while James was still at the ABC, with the first set published in 1948 and the next two sets in the mid 1950s. They were well received in Australia and beyond. In 1961 came 'perhaps the biggest boost to their popularity' (p. 95) with the World Record Club recording of the carols conducted by Bernard Heinze. In fact James's list of compositions is lengthy and came as a surprise to this reader. The list is dominated by songs and short piano works. As Tunley says 'he was essentially a miniaturist, drawn particularly to song writing, for which he had a real gift' (p. 97). Tunley makes illuminating comments on selected examples of James's compositions and throughout the book makes some interesting suggestions of those that would be particularly suited for revival in performance. The Appendix A provides a full chronological listing of the compositions.

David Tunley has given us a fine introduction into the life and times of William James. The appendices also add value offering, in addition to the work list, lists of visiting musical performers whose tours for the ABC and its predecessor were organised by James, as well as broadcast scripts by James dating from 1927, 1947 and 1955. This book was a pleasure to read. It is written with sympathy, and is full of insight into James's career and the people and events around him. It should without doubt be read by those interested in the musical history of twentieth-century Australia.

Paul Griffiths, *A Concise History of Western Music*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006

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Reviewed by Paul Watt

Music researchers of the future may well look back at the first decade of the twenty-first century and wonder why two histories of western music were published. Richard Taruskin's huge *History of Western Music*, in five volumes, was published by Oxford University Press in 2005, and Paul Griffiths's *A Concise History of Western Music* was published by Cambridge the following year. It is worth noting that in the period c. 1890–1910 there was a rush to the presses of music histories on both sides of the Atlantic: do these books by Taruskin and Griffiths, reflect or suggest a *fin de siècle* and trans-Atlantic publishing trend to reassess musical history?¹ Time will tell.

¹ Books published in this twenty-year period are numerous but include H.G. Bonavia Hunt, *A Concise History of Music from the Commencement of the Christian Era to the Present Time: For Students* (London: Charles Scribner's, 1888 with many reprints in the 1890s), W.S.B. Mathews, *A Popular History of Music* (London: Grevell, 1888, also reprinted many times) and Waldo Selden Pratt, *The History of Music: A Handbook and Guide for Students* (New York: Schirmer, 1907).

While general histories of music are commonplace, the 'concise history' genre is not. In fact, there have been only three such books written in English, so far as I know: by H.G. Bonavia Hunt (1888), William Lovelock (1953), and Barbara Russano Hanning and Donald J. Grout (1997). While these three books were written primarily as textbooks, Paul Griffiths's volume appears to be the first concise history of music to be published as a trade book (that is, a book for the general public).

I was drawn to Griffiths's book for a few reasons. First, the music-publishing world was abuzz a few years back with word that Cambridge had signed a prominent figure to write a short history of music and consequently my interest was aroused. Second, after tutoring some undergraduate music subjects and re-visiting some of the textbooks I used in my BMus days in preparing the classes, I was reminded of just how inadequate these standard textbooks are for undergraduate fare, so I wondered if Paul Griffiths's book might be useful for undergraduate teaching. And it certainly can be. Indeed, it is a sad state of affairs when the standard undergraduate music textbooks are recycled into new editions with little serious attention paid to social, cultural and political dimensions in music. That the many achievements of an entire generation of musicological research into the cultural and aesthetic import in music is ignored in these old-fashioned textbooks in favour of the formalist and conservative-narrative approach to music history is lamentable: the general reader and our students deserve a more imaginative and critically engaging introduction to music history. Paul Griffiths's book serves this purpose extremely well.

There are a lot of surprises in Paul Griffiths's book: for example, chapter titles. There is none of the standard and expected subdivisions of renaissance, baroque, classical, romantic and twentieth-century music; instead there are eight parts all identified with the concept of 'time.' For example, the part of the book dealing with 1815–1907 is called 'Time escaping' and the period 1908–1975 is named 'Time tangled.' Moreover, twentieth-century music is discussed in three chapters and is not lumped into one. Further intriguing subdivisions are evident in the chapters for part 6, 'Time escaping': 'The deaf man and the singer,' 'Angels and other prodigies,' 'New Germans and old Vienna,' 'Romantic evenings' and 'Nightfall and sunrise.' To conservative readers, this nomenclature may be gimmicky (I must confess I am not convinced the 'time' descriptions convey a precise-enough meaning) but they are attention-grabbing and interesting.

A second surprise is the book's first two chapters: the clumsily named 'Chapter 0' is titled 'Prehistory' while chapter 1 is called 'From Babylonians to Franks.' For a book on western music, it is pleasantly surprising that the volume begins with a discussion of the origins of music in such diverse locations as present-day southwest Germany, China and Africa. Griffiths discusses the origins of song and instruments or, as he describes it, the 'archaeology' (p. 2) of western music and the centrality of the 'psychology of hearing' to humankind's musical experiences. This is an excellent way of positioning western music in historical context. The second chapter deals with the notion of time in music and Griffiths's concern to convey to the reader music's sensuous nature and its bearing on our present. These ideas are elegantly stated right at the beginning of the chapter:

Music, being made of time, can travel through it. A performance of, say, a Beethoven symphony will bring a whole structure of time forward from two hundred years ago,

so that we may experience it now. And because we cannot see or touch music but only hear it, it reaches us out of its past with an unusual immediacy. Things we see or touch are necessarily outside of us: music, though, seems to be happening inside our heads, imposing itself directly on our minds and feelings. It is right here with us, and yet simultaneously back there in the past in which it was made (p. 5)

This style of writing will not be to everyone's taste, but many readers will find this prose lively and a very long way from the turgid prose of those boring undergraduate textbooks.

The most impressive aspect of *A Concise History of Western Music* is its wide-ranging, comparative and inclusive content. Music of the cabaret, Elvis Presley and the Rolling Stones are all considered. Debussy and Ives are discussed in the same sentence when the author discusses composers exploring new harmonies: in fact, Griffiths often makes parallels between European and North American musical cultures. And not only is this book about 'the music' but it's about ideas and aesthetics. Griffiths is just as at home talking about standard repertory as he is with explaining Athanasius Kircher's *Musurgia universalis* of 1650 or ideas of musical progress by E.T.A. Hoffmann and Adorno. I especially enjoyed Griffiths's brief explanation of Mendelssohn's aesthetics and his discussion of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. Griffiths skilfully avoids the often lame and generalist clichés made about romanticism and Berlioz in the standard reference literature.

Cambridge University Press evidently see this book as a trade book, but at the time of writing, in July 2008, the book is only available as a hardback at AU\$75, which is expensive for a general book. Surely there is scope to make a paperback edition and to pitch it as a teaching tool? However, even though there is a glossary and a decent bibliography and discography, it is not a textbook, but it could easily be used as a key undergraduate teaching text, along with the standard textbooks that talk more about 'the music.' Integrating its use for lecturing or tutoring would not be too difficult, and the payoff might be worth it. My guess is that many students would find the music history described in this publication far more interesting and compelling than what they are likely to find elsewhere.

The book may have benefited from some illustrations (other concise histories from CUP have them) but at 360 pages the book is starting to lose its conciseness. If adding illustrations would have meant less of Griffiths's prose, then it is as well to have foregone the pictures, for Griffiths's book is a delight to read and his wide-ranging musical interests are abundant. More importantly perhaps, he has given the musicological world and the general reader—and, it is to be hoped, students of music history—a particularly clever book.