

Joseph N. Straus, *Music by Women for Study and Analysis*  
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993. \$49.95, pp. 130.

What is noticeable in Western music theory textbooks is the lack of examples from women composers. The aim of this anthology is to provide musical excerpts, suitable for first and second year harmony courses, from works written by women.

Nineteen composers from different historical periods are represented in this book. They are: Amy Marcy Cheney Beach (on p.123 'Amy' is missing), Margaret Bonds, Lili Boulanger, Nadia Boulanger, Cécile Chaminade, Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, Elizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, Josephine Lang, Isabella Leonarda, Alma Schindler Mahler, Marriane Martinez, Mary Carr Moore, Florence Price, Louise Reichardt, Clara Wieck Schumann, Ethel Smyth, Barbara Strozzi, Maria Wolowska Szymanowska and Pauline Viardot-Garcia.

The examples themselves are poorly annotated, displaying only titles and indicating opus and bar numbers. The original typefaces of many of the excerpts have been retained. Unfortunately, the Schumann examples have been poorly reproduced, with individual stave lines being faint or non-existent. Each chapter broaches one of the standard harmony topics (inversion of chords, augmented sixths, modulation etc.), while the examples are ordered in difficulty within each chapter. Song texts are translated into English. However, these are the only pedagogical indications and no discussion on theoretical constructs is forthcoming. Worse still, there are no referential symbols to indicate to the uninitiated theory student just what they should be examining. This anthology, therefore, is a series of excerpts which, on their own, have little meaning without the assistance of a mainstream theory text and comprehensive classroom instruction.

On close inspection, the choice of works does not project women as composers who wrote and

continue to write across genres. The examples mainly come from the chamber repertoire, in particular, vocal works. Only three examples are orchestral—all from Beach's *Symphony in e minor*. The lack of orchestral examples tacitly reinforces the stereotypical image of women composers being unable to handle large-scale musical forces. If Straus and his team could not find suitable orchestral music in published form, could they not have extended their search to manuscripts? Surely the cost of typesetting a few unpublished orchestral excerpts would not have been financially prohibitive? Furthermore, Straus suggests that if people pursue an interest in music by women composers they will be entering a 'rich and varied subculture' (p.xi). Do Western women composers really want their music to be considered subcultural?

Regrettably the anthology does not furnish the reader with any biographical information on the individual composers. Such information would have furthered the author's desire to give 'students and teachers of music a more complete understanding of the history and range of their art' (p.ix). Unlike other theory books which concentrate on the 'Great Masters', this book highlights the output of less well-known composers. But, by only referring to their nationality and dates of birth and death, Straus does little to overcome their obscurity.

As a workbook for the classroom, this anthology will adequately complement the mainstream theory texts. However, it is a pity that it does not further general awareness of women composers through the presentation of a range of genres and treatment of the material in a contextual manner.

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