

use of instrumental synthesis). Perhaps this is where Cagney's teleology feels most plausible: there was, as Murail said, an inevitability to the failure of Grisey's efforts, and the sophistication of Cagney's disentangling of the threads that led to that sort of oversimplified history of spectralism is an important starting point for a correction of the record.

Notwithstanding my enthusiasm, there are certainly imperfections, or at any rate compromises, if largely ones which are probably unavoidable artefacts of the approach taken. The book is an account of the formation of the spectral approach and aesthetic, with Grisey's role in that centred. As such, the text more or less comes to a halt at the point at which it becomes possible concretely to speak of something called spectralism, which Cagney takes to happen around about 1982. A reader hoping for detailed exegeses of, say, *Talea* (1986), *Le noir de l'étoile* (1989–90), *Vortex temporum* (1994–96) or perennial favourite *Quatre chants pour franchir le seuil* (1997–98) will be disappointed. Equally, as the text moves towards the broader topic of spectral music in France, the musical detail lessens. This means that, though mentioned, pieces like Dufourt's *Saturne* (1978–79), Murail's *Sables* (1975), *Mémoire/Erosion* (1976) or *Gondwana* (1980) and Levinas' *Appels* (1974) or the *Concerto pour une piano-espace n° 2* (1980) perhaps don't receive the full treatment they might deserve if this were a book purely about French spectral music's establishment as a force in new music.

There are tantalising but necessarily un(der) developed hints of the importance for the broader history of what turned out to be spectralism (no geographic qualifier) of the impact of Romanian spectral music – thinking, perhaps, of that encounter with Octavian Nemescu's *Concentric* (1968–69) at Darmstadt in 1972, when French approaches were much more nascent – as well as the significance of Risset's broader work at Bell Labs, a genealogy which embraces the spectral music of James Tenney, as well as the interrelationships between composers like Grisey and the Oeldorf Group of composers: for a time, as Cagney makes clear, Jens-Peter Ostendorf and Mesias Manguashca at least were regarded and regarded themselves as very much part of what would become the *courant spectral*. It's no criticism of Cagney to say that he doesn't treat these aspects as fully as they deserve: rather it points to how much work remains to be undertaken around these histories, especially in terms of the international dimensions of the spectral.

It's unlikely to have escaped your notice that books about Grisey are, it turns out, like buses,

in that you, like me, may have been waiting ages for one, and now, all of a sudden, there are two out: Jeffrey Arlo Brown's *The Life and Music of Gérard Grisey: Delirium and Form* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2023) came out half a year or so before the present volume. They're both, at least in their hardback editions, pretty pricey, so if you're in the market for a Grisey book, it's at least fairly likely that you're only going to want to buy one. Those looking for psychological insights into Grisey's human tics and foibles will not find them in Cagney: he largely lets Grisey's words be interpreted by their historical, cultural and musical contexts. Brown's account spends much more time drawing links between Grisey's private life and his public work, and does so highly successfully: it's an excellent biography and I'm very glad that it's in the world. By contrast, Cagney's is an intellectual history of the formation of (French) spectral music, for the most part through the lens of arguably its most musically significant practitioner, in which spectralism remains both wholly familiar and entirely transformed by the depth of Cagney's reading of its genealogies. In this sense, I think it should signal a shift in the depth and rigour with which spectralism is dealt with in English-language commentary. If I *had* written it, I reckon I'd be justified in thinking I'd done something really worthwhile: I hope that's just how Cagney feels and that he goes on to tell more of the stories he can only touch on here or inspires others to tell them. For people interested in new music, this is a genuinely significant book.

Martin Iddon

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Amrei Flechsig, ed., *Alfred Schnittke in Hamburg: Aspekte einer transnationalen Biographie und späten Schaffensphase* [Aspects of Transnational Biography and of the Late Creative Period], Olms, 2023, 205 pp. €49.

In 1990, Alfred Schnittke and his wife, Irina, settled in Hamburg, the city remaining the composer's home until his death in 1998. The years that followed were the most productive of the composer's life. He was already at the peak of his fame and attracted many commissions for large-scale works. He was remarkably industrious despite serious health problems, suffering strokes in 1985, 1991 and 1994, the last paralysing the right side of his body.

Given Schnittke's already established celebrity, all of this played out in the public sphere. Yet most of the music from this period still stands in the shadow of his earlier works. Fortunately, Hamburg remains proud of its adopted son, and this volume presents the proceedings of a conference there in 2014, marking Schnittke's 80th anniversary. The conference was organised by Amrei Flechsig and Christian Storch, and Flechsig has now assembled the papers into a satisfyingly coherent collection. (The volume is predominantly in German; three chapters, those by Ivana Medić, Tim Sullivan and Elena Dubinets, are in English.)

Why did Schnittke move to Hamburg? His connections with the city dated back to a first visit in 1977, and in 1989 his ballet *Peer Gynt* had been a major success there. But, as Flechsig makes clear in her article 'Alfred Schnittke and his Hamburg Publisher', the main motivation was the agency of Sikorski, and particularly its energetic artistic director, Jürgen Köchel. Flechsig details the extraordinary lengths Köchel went to to facilitate the move, finding Schnittke work and accommodation, and even acting as chauffeur. Köchel died in 2021, so the chapter following Flechsig's, where Köchel recounts the story in his own words, is particularly valuable. His assembled archive of letters and documents forms the basis of the narrative, and we are told, tantalisingly, that a section of this is now held at the library of the Hannover Hochschule.

Another introductory chapter, by Boris Belge, reframes Schnittke's final years from a 'transnational' perspective. The aim is to overcome reductive interpretations in which a Russian composer becomes a German one. Belge points out that the move was more of a transition, with Alfred and Irina spending the previous year, 1989, living in West Berlin. Also, the couple maintained their Moscow flat and returned regularly. Belge also locates Schnittke in a broader diaspora, one of many Russian composers living abroad by the mid-90s.

Schnittke's *Faust* opera is discussed in detail. The section opens with a chronology, compiled by Köchel, who wrote the libretto, of Schnittke's efforts to compose this work. The first stage was the *Faust Cantata*, premiered in 1983. This was one of Schnittke's greatest successes but was always planned as the final act of a staged opera. By the time he moved to Hamburg, a bidding war had ensued between European opera houses. Schnittke worked on the opera in the early 1990s, but his 1994 strokes brought the project to a halt. Hamburg Opera considered the

score performable, despite the fragmentary second act, and staged it in 1995, in a heavily curtailed version by conductor Gerd Albrecht. In his chapter, Stefan Keym compares the final score to the composer's earlier plans. He is aided by much documentary material provided by Köchel. The second act proves the most interesting. This recounts the 24 years of youth granted to Faust. Schnittke's original idea was to have the outer acts set in the sixteenth century and this middle act in the present day. Suggested collaborators included Andrei, the composer's son, to write electronic music, and Günter Grass, among other authors, for updated text. Ivana Medić addresses issues of 'irony, satire, parody and grotesque' in the opera, following the methodology applied by Esti Sheinberg to the music of Shostakovich. Keym and Medić are at odds over the subtext of the opera, Medić claiming that the demonic dimension represents Soviet repression, Keym attributing it to Western consumerism, at least in earlier drafts. Medić argues that Schnittke actively undermines the conventions of opera for expressive effect, a fact missed by dismissive critics. Both she and Keym make compelling claims for the quality and originality of the opera, saying that incomplete presentations to date have not done it justice.

Another neglected major work is discussed by Inna Klause, *Schiwago* (*doctor*). This retelling of Pasternak's novel was a collaboration with renowned Moscow theatre director Yuri Lyubimov in 1993. As Klause describes, the work is radically polystylistic, and therefore unlike most of Schnittke's other works from the period. Lyubimov considered the work an opera, but Schnittke disagreed; Klause opts for 'musical parable'. Unfortunately, the score remains unavailable for research, confining Klause to generalised discussion of the music.

Tim Sullivan addresses 'Monogram Technique in Schnittke's Late Works'. He follows on from an earlier study by Christopher Segall, which identified many monograms, usually based on the names of composers or performers, in Schnittke's music and categorised their use. Sullivan argues that this categorisation cannot be applied to the late music. He demonstrates that elements of serial technique are combined with monogram construction but in ways that vary from one work to the next. Sullivan's major achievement here is to show how a monogram based on 'Deutschland' underpins the pitch structure of the Seventh Symphony, a work previously impervious to meaningful analysis.

The final chapter concerns Schnittke's Ninth Symphony and its multiple realisations. The

score, written by Schnittke with his left hand, was barely legible and required significant editing. Irina entrusted the task to Gennady Rozhdestvensky, who presented his version in Moscow in 1998 at a concert in which Schnittke was awarded, in absentia, a lucrative prize by Mstislav Rostropovich. Neither man comes off well in the story that Elena Dubinets assembles from press accounts. Rozhdestvensky took a liberal approach, transforming a reflective and highly ascetic work into a jamboree of classical quotations, Soviet songs and free jazz. Rostropovich, seemingly oblivious, commented approvingly on national television, 'If you gave it to criminologists, they would confirm that this is precisely what was written.' Schnittke was horrified, to the extent that Irina considers the episode the cause of his death. She had the edition withdrawn and sought a new editor. Eventually, a version by Alexander Raskatov was premiered in 2007. Dubinets traces the protracted history of the

work and also points out the many difficulties the score poses, resulting in variations even between recordings of the Raskatov realisation – yet another frustrating loose end among Schnittke's late works.

This volume presents a valuable survey of the final creative period of Schnittke's life. Given the huge quantity of music he produced in Hamburg, it is understandable that only a small proportion is covered, though each analytical essay provides new insights. More valuable is the biographical information, especially from the sources provided by Jürgen Köchel. Much of Schnittke's late music remains an enigma, and the value of many works has not yet been realised, a situation that can only be improved through further performances (especially of his operas) and through scholarship of this quality.

Gavin Dixon

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