

BOOK REVIEW: *Western Music and Race*. Ed. by Julie Brown. . pp. xxii + 285. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 2007, £50. ISBN 0-521-83887-0.)

By Stephen Downes, University of Surrey

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This is a high-quality collection of seventeen essays with topics that are stimulatingly diverse in method, geographical focus, and repertory. It is a worthy successor to the ground-breaking collection of essays edited by Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman, *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago, 2000). Julie Brown's introduction, 'Music, History, Trauma: Western Music and Race, 1883–1933', does more than simply outline the book's concerns and contents. It is in itself an essay of notable substance. Brown notes that during the historical period covered by the book racial anxieties in the West were crucially linked to the politics of imperialism and nationalism and developments in science, the 'emerging biologies of race'. In art and politics they were also, of course, tied to the powerful and problematic legacy of Richard Wagner. For Brown the notion of trauma is centrally important. In her argument she draws especially usefully on the work of Dominic LaCapra, for example his *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca, 1994). Though it lies beyond the book's chronological span, the Holocaust looms large as its horrors inevitably generated profound shifts in discourses of race. Brown identifies it as a 'point of rupture between a period of discursive openness about race as a determining feature of cultural and specifically musical production on the one hand, and of silence about it on the other' (p. xviii). Clearly, the category of 'race' is far from monolithic, and thus the book seeks to emphasize the processes of 'racializing'.

The first part of the collection—'Overviews and Critical Frameworks'—packs a heavyweight punch with four essays of notable style and import. As the subtitle of the section indicates, they open up key issues in the theoretical and critical discourses on race and music. Later essays often sustain this high level of quality but their ambitions are more case-specific. For this reason I will devote more space to summarizing the essays from Part I than to those in later sections. The first essay is Philip Bohlman's 'Erasure: Displacing and Misplacing Race in Twentieth-Century Music Historiography'. In what in many ways represents the 'keynote address' of the collection, Bohlman identifies discourses of displacement as crucial in the construction of notions of race. Those without place are racialized as Others: representation of self-identity is denied them through a process of 'erasure'. Bohlman states that 'historically, erasure has occurred when the West appropriates a music of an "Other" and transforms it to serve as a music of the "Self"'. The ramifications of this process fundamentally inform the way music is conceived in the modern world: 'the very notions of difference in music upon which modernist musical thought is predicated arise from the racialised displacement of presumed otherness' (p. 7). Racial discourses permeated the early science of music and contributed significantly to the musical discourses within modernist nationalism. They also impinged upon judgements of value and profundity. 'When music expressed race', Bohlman argues, 'it was through claims that music was bound to both speech and bodily movement, hence not to music itself as a system of abstract and self-referential symbols. ... The music of the racial Other possessed no metaphysical space of its own, for it had always already been displaced through the discursive representation of music' (p. 12). The rest of Bohlman's essay is a fascinating demonstration of how these discourses operate in the 'collecting and controlling' of 'cultural otherness', whether in the 'laboratory *mentalité*' manifest in the recordings of songs of displaced soldiers made during the First World War for the Austrian Academy of Sciences, or in the maps and observations of the post-war 'new anthropology'.

In 'Secrets, Lies and Transcriptions: Revisions on Race, Black Music and Culture' Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr. considers how the act of notating the Negro spiritual carried out important cultural work.

Notation served to detach or abstract the music from its original contexts: when the spirituals were coded in notated form they were divorced from 'black culture'. This process of notation 'encouraged the transcribers to "overcode" them with meanings'; they were burdened with interpretations drawn from the 'religious frameworks and political agendas' of the ethnographer. In summary, 'with one gesture of the pen, untutored orality became lettered culture, space becomes disciplined identity, cultural unconsciousness becomes historical consciousness' (p. 29). Ramsey argues that recording in Jazz did the same work, but with the difference that sound recording has a 'decidedly non-literary quality' and thus 'undermines many modernist ideals that privilege the written as the sole signs of progress, history and consciousness' (p. 35). The essay is rather condensed, but serves as a valuable summary of ideas expounded more thoroughly in parts of Ramsey's monograph, *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2003). Brian Currid's "'Gypsy Violins" and "Hot Rhythms": Race, Popular Music and Governmentality' discusses shifts in the development of the construction of modern 'gypsy' identity through discourses of biology and how this is mirrored by the figure of the black musician in the Anglo-American world. He exposes the critical image of the 'hot blood of the gypsy violinist' and the biological basis of 'hot rhythm' as markers of racial difference. These images of musical identity were also reinvented by the modern structures of 'governmentality' (a term Currid draws from Foucault) as a form of 'state productivity' and an 'alliance between emerging forms of governmental practice and hygiene and the production of essentialised, racialised conceptions of population in musical sound' (p. 48).

In the last essay in this section, 'The Concept of Race in German Musical Discourse', Pamela M. Potter argues that 'the path of the race concept in musical discourse was a circuitous one, complicated by the blurred lines between science and dilettantism, the growing influence of anti-Semitism as a political movement, and the infiltration of nationalism and utilitarianism into academic disciplines'. She demonstrates how the 'application of the race concept to music scholarship was further complicated by the relative newness of the field of musicology, and especially the smaller discipline of comparative musicology'. Her context is provided by a substantial summary of Benoit Massin's essay 'From Virchow to Fischer: Physical Anthropology and "Modern Race Theories" in Wilhelmine Germany', in George W. Stocking (ed.), *Volkgeist as Method and Ethic* (Madison, 1996). The race concept emerges in especially interesting forms and consequences in journalism and in the shifts of 'comparative musicology' between rigour and amateurism. In these discourses notions of evolution, origin, and primitivism play crucial roles. Significantly, Potter reminds us that 'it is important to keep in mind that until the First World War, serious scholars generally drew very careful distinctions between the culturally based categories of nation (of *Volk*) and the more biologically based category of race'. While comparative musicology engaged only very slightly with the race concept until after the rise to power of the Nazis, race 'as a buzzword had escaped the confines of scholarship and was thrown around haphazardly by other musicologists, music critics and composers' (pp. 56–7). Potter has long established her credentials in this field. This essay sustains this reputation. (For the later years of the book's period see Potter's more wide-ranging *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler's Reich* (New Haven, 1998).)

Part II—'Racial Ideologues'—begins the process of narrowing down the range of reference of contributions to a series of case studies. An essay from John Deathridge is mischievously titled, 'Strange Love; or, How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Wagner's *Parsifal*'. The playful puns continue with a subtitled section 'Sex and the Pity', but this is a serious and valuable essay. The territory may be familiar (if there had been no essay on *Parsifal* and Wagner's relationship to the work of Gobineau in this collection then it would have become the white elephant in the room) but Deathridge reads the sources incisively and unpicks some complicated relationships. The essay's only slight disappointment comes when there is a move to discussion of musical detail, for this is rather brief. The editor's own essay 'Otto Weininger and Musical Discourse in Turn-of-the-Century Vienna' makes for a smooth topical succession. Weininger has recently been recovering his status as a prime

figure of notoriety from the *fin de siècle* period. His notion of feminine hysteria in *Sex and Character* (1903), which focused on Wagner's characterization of Kundry, has been invoked, for example, in the widely read hermeneutic work of Lawrence Kramer (see his essay on Richard Strauss's *Elektra* in his *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2004)). Brown's essay is welcome as it offers a finely nuanced critical summary of Weininger's work, not only covering the well-known *Sex and Character*, but also the less familiar *On Last Things* (1904), which in particular contains some typically gnomic aphorisms on Wagner and *Parsifal*. Essays on Ernest Bloch (by Klára Móricz), Percy Grainger (by Malcolm Gillies and David Pear), and Kaikhosru Sorabji (by Nalini Ghuman) move the territory well beyond the Wagnerian into territories until now largely uncharted in musicological work on race. All these essays contribute to the impressive range of contexts opened up by the book and pre-figure the topical diversity of the final, third section, 'Local Contexts', which sustains the book's organization as a move from opening essays on broad issues to focused case studies.

In this last section there are enjoyable and authoritative contributions on French contexts from Jann Passler (on race and the *chansons populaires* in the Third Republic), Jane Fulcher (on 'Honegger and the Aesthetic Allure of French Fascism'), and Andy Fry (on the *revue negre* in inter-war Paris). Erik Levi is typically readable, reliable, and informative on anti-Semitic discourse in German writing on music 1900–33 and Alain Frogley offers a fascinating, if 'preliminary', study of racial discourses in the American reception of British music in the early twentieth century. Mediterranean contexts are well served by an essay on Fascist Italy by Roberto Illiano and Massimiliano Sala and two studies of Spain—Gemma Pérez-Zalduondo on 'Racial Discourses in Spanish Musical Literature, 1915–39' and Michael Christoforidis on 'Manuel de Falla, Flamenco and Spanish Identity'. However, one might become slightly concerned about the balance of coverage. Given the spread of the seventeen essays included, two essays on Spain, fine though they are, seems a little indulgent. To allow space for three essays on France is also rather generous. However, I would not want to be without these contributions, rather I would like the collection to have also included some of its notable absentees, many of which (rather surprisingly from Brown, whose work on Bartók has often engaged in topics close to that of this book) come from central and eastern Europe. I don't think I am misreading the geographical implications of the book's title to regret the lack of essays on Poland, Russia, or Scandinavia (though American 'Nordicism' is discussed in Gillies and Pear's essay on Grainger). This is already a prize-winning collection (it received the American Musicological Society's 2008 Ruth Solie Award for a collection of essays of 'exceptional merit') and one can readily see why. The opening essays are subtle and provocative: they are sure to generate further debate on what remains an under-developed topic in musicology. The case studies will be consulted for their authoritative and pithy expositions and analyses.