

Music. *Far above the usual level of the many recent books on the "woman question" is Sophie Drinker's thoughtful "Music and Women." Mrs. Drinker is the wife of the Philadelphia lawyer and amateur musician Henry Drinker, whose books on music and choral editions are well known. The Drinker family is steeped in music, and Mrs. Drinker's book shows what may be accomplished in a specialized field by an intelligent and sensitive amateur. . . . The musical renaissance in the United States during the last quarter century has been marked by new, energetic young composers, a rapid growth in scholarship, and increasing amateur participation in music, especially in choruses. Bukofzer's "Music in the Baroque Era" represents the new scholarship at work in a period whose music is more and more being sung in amateur choral groups.*

Melody from the Distaff

MUSIC AND WOMEN: *The Story of Women in their Relation to Music.* By Sophie Drinker. New York: Coward-McCann. 1948. 323 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by SYDNEY GREENBIE

NOT SINCE Olive Schreiner's "Woman and Labor" has a more important, more stimulating book been written about women. Steadfastly hewing to her theme of music and women, never once mentioning a male musician, Mrs. Drinker takes her reader through the history of half the human race from the day women first began to croon to their young or wail over their dead, to sing as they spun, and to chant battle hymns or welcome their men home from the wars. Music, she says, began as incantation. Woman was the preferred person to make incantations because she was the bringer of new life. As mother, she had authority over life and death as musician, priestess, and medicine maker. The first dirges, made to direct the dead across the beyond (dirge comes from the Latin *dirigere*, to direct), were developed out of the wail of childbirth. One of the memorable passages in her book is in the chapter "Bringers of Life" where Mrs. Drinker paraphrases Christ's admonition, "Except as a man be born again" in the following words: "By a process of symbolic thinking, simple, profound, almost inevitable, music that has definite association with childbirth becomes the music of death. . . . And beyond this death, there may be birth if she who gives birth will sing in the face of death the song she made out of the struggle of birth."

Again and again Mrs. Drinker asks devastating questions. In "Victims of Taboo" she pleads:

What has happened to the woman of our civilization? Why are we

not matching in creative output the simple women of cultures much less developed? Everywhere, outside the highly civilized centers of Western culture, there are women whose participation in music is active and creative. Women's contributions in the form of love songs, lullabies, dirges, ballads, and epics are among the musical treasures of an art that itself has recognition in the annals of human achievement. Are we less women than those singers and musicians? We love, work, play, bear children, seek reassurance in a sense of oneness with the life force. We inherit a magnificent art of music. Why, then, do not women as composers make on the level of our highly developed culture symphonies, requiems, songs, dances equivalent to those that are created

Symphony

By Mae Winkler Goodman

THE musicians are there, the instruments, the stage: cello and harp, oboe, and violin cupping the sound, unborn. The drums, the flute, the glittering French horn holding the pent-up melody within; even the ether waits the burden of song. Then suddenly the golden chord is struck, the music comes alive, yet parent-less: not the clarinet, not even the musicians give it birth; it grows alone, it swells apart from earth even apart from heaven. Then slowly, it recedes down the long halls of air, and again the bland instruments, the stage, the musicians reappear.

by women in other cultures? Why are we so inhibited?

In the 323 pages through which Mrs. Drinker makes her way, she has packed one of the most devastating challenges to our culture, our religion, our social justice, our psychological perspicacity that has come from an American woman. There she sits and rethinks and rewrites our cherished notions of civilization. For 5,000 years before Christ, the woman's bond with the life force was fully recognized and valued, till, in Sappho, we had "the last perfect flowering of thousands of years of woman's song." Up to that time, woman "did not take their religion from men, or leave it to men to make their music."

Then came the "Twilight of the Goddess" and there fell upon civilization "a kind of creeping blight," "a kind of feminine spiritual starvation." Mrs. Drinker pulls no punches as she challenges the artistic status of man. "Men's unbridled energy wounded woman to the quick. For the mother-musician, singing naturally in rituals of her own making, out of the fulness of her own vital experience," they substituted "young boys, castrated males, and the courtesan." Dressed in women's skirts, men took over women's rituals, choruses, music, and dancing. They substituted a "refined homosexuality" for womanhood, with "all its decadence and utter ridiculousness" until it displayed itself even "in some of Plato's greatest passages on love and life."

Then came Christianity. In the beginning, the benign influence of Jesus, who numbered among his first and most potent followers many women, prevailed. For 400 years, says Mrs. Drinker, women shared in the joys and sorrows of the new religion. The chapter on "Mary" is particularly moving. But then, bit by bit, the churchmen pressed women further and further from the altar. Even the nuns were relegated to the rear. They were "forbidden to act in the liturgical plays." From here on, in chapter after chapter, Mrs. Drinker examines the status of woman and music through "The Lady," "The Prima Donna," "The Camillae," "St. Cecilia," —a succession of disheartening, yet illuminating revelations. Her analysis is destructive, but it is not negative.

The woman musician of today [says Mrs. Drinker] is at the crossroads. Her relation to music depends upon her relation to the society in which she lives and to the religious expression of that society. This relation transcends any specific barriers. And since all civilization is now in the throes of rebirth, woman's place in the musical life of the new world is dependent upon what new religious ideas will

be formulated, what new customs will be made.

This will be a furiously debated book. Women will dispute it. The church will react violently to it. The impresario will fume at it. Men may laugh at it. But no one will ignore it. It is one of the most iconoclastic books of our time. After twenty years of meditation and research, this dignified housewife, mother, and grandmother, arrives, all by herself, at revolutionary conclusions. She tears to

shreds some of our most widely accepted traditions. Neither philosopher nor impresario comes out unscathed. There is not a rehashed idea in the book. Every idea is her very own. If you ever thought of music as a sentimental art, a purposeless diversion, or as mere radio drooling, you will be shocked out of your absurd notions into realization that music is the most functional activity of man or woman. If this book doesn't start a hurricane of debate, I miss my bet.

to discuss the esthetic problem of beauty. In his preface he boldly asserts that an historical and "technologized" analysis must take beauty for granted, and continues:

The ideas that underlie musical styles can only be shown in a factual stylistic analysis that takes music apart as a mechanic does a motor, and shows how musical elements are combined, how they achieve their special effect, and what constitutes the difference between externally similar factors.

Here is a philosophy of style criticism with integrity!

The musical examples are numerous and well-chosen; many are fairly extensive, and nearly all clarify what they are intended to illustrate. Bukofzer's style analysis leads to numerous observations on performance practices and warns continually against the danger of applying the characteristics of late baroque style to the whole baroque period.

"French Music Under the Absolutism" (Chapter V) and "English Music During the Commonwealth and Restoration" (Chapter VI) receive the attention too often denied them, but, perhaps for reasons of limited space, the author does not lay a sufficient foundation for the "fusion" and "coordination" of national styles in Bach and Handel which occupy chapters eight and nine. Nowhere is Dr. Bukofzer's insight more evident than in his chapter on form in baroque music:

The essentials of musical structure were carried by style and texture so that the form could be transferred from one medium to another . . . procedures like variation, fugue, and canon . . . could be realized both in the vocal and instrumental medium.

The value of this first book in English on the music of the baroque era is evident in the appendices. They include a "Checklist of Baroque Books on Music" and a working bibliography. A "List of Editions" has a practical list of smaller collections and performing editions, which should encourage some readers to explore the music through performance.

This reviewer wishes that the author had included a list of recordings of baroque music, with critical notes on performance style. Perhaps he has hesitated for fear his honesty, however disarming, might cause the withdrawal of the few baroque works now on single records and in collections such as "L'Anthologie Sonore."

"Music in the Baroque Era" is a significant milestone in the long process by which American musical scholarship is coming of age.

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From Monteverdi to Bach

MUSIC IN THE BAROQUE ERA. By Manfred F. Bukofzer. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1947. 489 pp. \$6.

Reviewed by RAYMOND KENDALL

THIS is a carefully written and significant musical publication, the first definitive work in English devoted to this period. Despite the author's modest disclaimer that he is not a specialist on the baroque in music, one suspects that he will be considered so from now on.

Dr. Bukofzer, who is professor of music at the University of California at Berkeley, addresses himself at once to his task, which is to define and to examine baroque style in music. The definition appears in four different chapters: the first, "Renaissance vs. Baroque Music," and in the last three, "Form in Baroque Music," "Musical Thought of the Baroque Era," and "Sociology of Baroque Music." In these chapters the author integrates his study with the general history of ideas. His conclusions are objective and, in the last chapter, tell the tale familiar to the general historian of the price in blood and gold by which "progress" in the arts is sometimes bought. The intervening eight chapters are devoted to an examination of works by composers from Monteverdi to Bach, selected to illustrate differences in baroque style. Of the composers discussed, only Bach and Handel are presented in clear profile as musical personalities, but absence of biographical data on earlier composers does not detract from—rather it has the effect of enhancing—the relation of their output to early, middle, and late baroque style.

One must allow an author any number of analogies, generalizations, and comparisons provided they do not go more than a little beyond the evidence he presents. For, in creating such a "frame of reference," the author provides us with a skeleton which he subsequently clothes with flesh and blood.

Such a useful and legitimate structure is the table on page sixteen:

Renaissance
One practice, one style . . .
All voices equally balanced . . .
Modal counterpoint, etc.

Baroque
Two practices, three styles . . .
Polarity of the outermost voices . . .
Tonal counterpoint, etc.

Professor Bukofzer recognizes the peril of stylistic symbolism, as for example when he refers to the idea of *a-capella* singing, "It is not surprising that the *a-capella* ideal, once discovered, should have been attached in retrospect to Renaissance music." This interpretation has persisted, but whenever we refer to the Renaissance as the "*a-capella* period" we unwittingly apply a baroque term with questionable implications.

Dr. Bukofzer refuses categorically

