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Robert Riggs, ed. *The Violin*. Eastman Studies in Music, vol. 135. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2016. 306 pp., 15 black-and-white illus., 33 music exx. ISBN 978-1-58046-506-9. \$25.95 (hardback).

The Violin is part of the extensive Eastman Studies in Music series, started in 1994, which compiles chapters by individual authors on a broad range of topics. While previous volumes focused on musicological themes such as specific composers or styles, *The Violin* begins a new focus on musical instruments. The book is intended to pique the interest of musicians, scholars, and general lovers of the violin with a flavorful sprinkling of sociological explorations atop a meal comprised of chapters surveying important areas of violin literature. It is by no means a comprehensive analysis of the topic, nor does it intend to be. The subjects covered might best be described as a mix of core musicology mixed with curiosity-stimulating topics off the beaten path.

The book opens with one of the more whimsical essays, “Associations with Death and the Devil” by the editor, Robert Riggs. The chapter concisely introduces the origins of this trope in the medieval Dance of Death and the violin’s rise as a popular instrument for dance genres in the sixteenth century. Riggs progresses quickly through the baroque literature to the nineteenth century, where the mysterious and otherworldly figure of Paganini inspires both awe and revilement. The essay concludes with a few cursory twentieth-century examples. Overall, it provides an efficient and astute introduction to the topic with numerous musical examples for further exploration to an interested reader. The editor also authored the second chapter, “Violinists and Violins in Literature.” It is divided by genre and offers brief synopses of nineteenth- through twenty-first century literature in which violins and violinists figure as part of key characterization or plot motifs. Literature lovers, rejoice! One can find a nice reading list in this chapter, ranging from thrillers, to tragedies, to short stories.

The editor populates the largest center section of the book with more conventional musicological work in a roughly chronological order. Peter Walls examines “The Violin in Italy during the Baroque Period” in the third chapter, a survey of key repertory, together with descriptions of form and technique required. It traces the emigration of Italian musicians and the spread of their styles and techniques across Europe. The chapter provides a useful summary of musical works as well as technical

treatises in the period. Peter Wollny tackles the perennial favorites of the violin canon in "Bach and the Violin." The author notes the composer's formidable personal arsenal of bowed instruments, including three each of violins, violas, and cellos, along with a single viola da gamba. Underlying the greatness and admiration of Bach's writing for the violin today, is his familiarity with the natural idioms and musical potential of the instrument, however virtuosic the writing, and that stemmed from his skill as a performer in his own right. The author surveys composers in Thuringia writing for the instrument before delving into the historical background and forms of Bach's own works. Usefully, Walls lists surviving manuscripts by archive and number, for easy reference to other scholars.

Riggs returns as author for the fifth chapter about "Mozart, Beethoven, and the Violin." He gives a useful general history of each composer's relationship with the instrument along with concise surveys of the solo and chamber works, highlighting significant technical aspects of the music. Riggs also covers "The Violin Concerto and Virtuosity in the Nineteenth Century" in the next chapter. Given the popularity of this literature among violinists and concert-going audiences, it has been the focus of surprisingly little musicological study. Naturally, Riggs puts a spotlight on the great virtuoso composers of the century as well as the newly established, formal pedagogical schools. The chapter is particularly useful for putting the varied works and schools into a cohesive cultural context. Riggs continues with "The Violin Concerto in the Twentieth Century" for chapter 7. While a bit more pointillistic in its coverage, this chapter nevertheless checks off the major works and their notable characteristics.

The following chapter is of particular interest to scholars of historical performance practice: Etan Ornoy takes on "Recordings as Documentation of Performance Practice." Finally, we come to an age when historical playing styles can be preserved and analyzed in a way of which we only dreamed in previous centuries. The author begins with coverage of the recording technologies in the various decades and their limitations. He clearly outlines his methodology and cites numerous previous studies that can build a full picture of the work done on this topic. He makes a point to elucidate changes in interpretation coming from more recent and extensive scholarship. He also notes the rise of historically informed performance in the recording industry in the latter twentieth century and its impact on mainstream performance practice. While the author covers portamento and vibrato extensively for the earlier performers, he mostly

leaves out bow strokes and articulation until the discussion of later artists. Another area that may provide fertile ground for further study would be comparisons between the numerous method books written by artists represented in late-nineteenth through early-twentieth century discs and their recordings in practice.

Two chapters examine dissemination of the violin outside of European-based classical culture. "The Peripatetic Violin," by Chris Goertzen, focuses on the violin in various non-western and folk cultures. The author describes cultural practices spanning four continents, which include those of the Tarahumara (Rarámuri) of northern Mexico, South Indian Carnatic music, the tango violin of Argentina, and Norwegian folk music. Finally, Goertzen devotes a chapter to fiddling in America, nicely and light-heartedly wrapping up the book's opening devilish theme with an essay entitled "The Devil's Box No More." He traces the origins of American fiddle style in music of the British Isles, early evidence of the music performed, the role of blackface minstrelsy in parodying but also disseminating African-American string playing styles, and the purposely backward-looking origins of Old Time music. He concludes with a more in-depth analysis of contemporary festival-based American fiddling styles.

Overall, *The Violin* will prove most useful to those who are already very familiar with violin playing and the standard literature of the violin. It could serve nicely as a source for those writing concert notes, people looking for clear summaries of important trends in violin solo literature (along with copious references for further study), and those with a general, pleasurable interest in reading more about the instrument they play or enjoy. While it touches on aspects of the physical form of the instrument, that is not a principal focus of the editor or authors. It would serve as a nice addition to the libraries of professional performers, orchestrators, composers, university music faculty, and general readers who already have a high level of knowledge and interest.

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