This book explores the work of three significant American women composers of the twentieth century: Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon. It offers a unique approach to a rich body of music that deserves theoretical scrutiny and provides information on both the lives and music of these fascinating women, skilfully interweaving history and musical analysis in ways that both the specialist and the more general reader will find compelling. In this important new study, Ellie Hisama has employed a form of analysis by which she links musical characteristics with aspects of the composers’ identities. This is revealing both for questions of music and gender and for the continuing search for meaning in music. The book thus draws attention to the value of the music of these three composers and contributes to the body of analytical work concerned with the explanation of musical language.

Ellie M. Hisama is Associate Professor of Music at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York and is Director of the Institute for Studies in American Music at Brooklyn College.
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GENDERING MUSICAL MODERNISM

The music of
Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon

ELLIE M. HISAMA
To my parents,

Toshiaki and Kay K. Hisama
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FOREWORD BY IAN BENT

Theory and analysis are in one sense reciprocals: if analysis opens up a musical structure or style to inspection, inventorying its components, identifying its connective forces, providing a description adequate to some live experience, then theory generalizes from such data, predicting what the analyst will find in other cases within a given structural or stylistic orbit, devising systems by which other works – as yet unwritten – might be generated. Conversely, if theory intuits how musical systems operate, then analysis furnishes feedback to such imaginative intuitions, rendering them more insightful. In this sense, they are like two hemispheres that fit together to form a globe (or cerebrum!), functioning deductively as investigation and abstraction, inductively as hypothesis and verification, and in practice forming a chain of alternating activities.

Professionally, on the other hand, “theory” now denotes a whole subdiscipline of the general field of musicology. Analysis often appears to be a subordinate category within the larger activity of theory. After all, there is theory that does not require analysis. Theorists may engage in building systems or formulating strategies for use by composers; and these almost by definition have no use for analysis. Others may conduct experimental research into the sound-materials of music or the cognitive processes of the human mind, to which analysis may be wholly inappropriate. And on the other hand, historians habitually use analysis as a tool for understanding the classes of compositions – repertories, “outputs,” “periods,” works, versions, sketches, and so forth – that they study. Professionally, then, our ideal image of twin hemispheres is replaced by an intersection: an area that exists in common between two subdisciplines. Seen from this viewpoint, analysis reciprocates in two directions: with certain kinds of theoretical enquiry, and with certain kinds of historical enquiry. In the former case, analysis has tended to be used in rather orthodox modes, in the latter in a more eclectic fashion; but that does not mean that analysis in the service of theory is necessarily more exact, more “scientific,” than analysis in the service of history.

The above epistemological excursion is by no means irrelevant to the present series. Cambridge Studies in Music Theory and Analysis is intended to present the work of theorists and of analysts. It has been designed to include “pure” theory – that is, theoretical formulation with a minimum of analytical exemplification; “pure” analysis – that is, practical analysis with a minimum of theoretical underpinning; and
writings that fall at points along the spectrum between the two extremes. In these capacities, it aims to illuminate music, as work and as process.

However, theory and analysis are not the exclusive preserves of the present day. As subjects in their own right, they are diachronic. The former is coeval with the very study of music itself, and extends far beyond the confines of Western culture; the latter, defined broadly, has several centuries of past practice. Moreover, they have been dynamic, not static fields throughout their histories. Consequently, studying earlier music through the eyes of its own contemporary theory helps us to escape (when we need to, not that we should make a dogma out of it) from the preconceptions of our own age. Studying earlier analyses does this too, and in a particularly sharply focused way; at the same time it gives us the opportunity to re-evaluate past analytical methods for present purposes, such as is happening currently, for example, with the long-despised methods of hermeneutic analysis of the late nineteenth century. The series thus includes editions and translations of major works of past theory, and also studies in the history of theory.

In this volume, Ellie Hisama offers a fascinating critique of the place of women in the movement that historians nowadays call musical modernism – a movement pervasively associated with male composers such as Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Webern, and Bartók. Her critique invokes three women composers who occupied significant roles in American musical life during the twentieth century, and who have attracted growing attention in recent times: Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon, all of whom composed a substantial amount of music in a post-tonal idiom, either free-atonal, or serial.

Hisama’s critique is purposefully focused on a small number of works: a string quartet (Crawford), two songs (Crawford, Gideon), two solo piano pieces (Bauer), and a violin and piano work (Gideon). She examines the musical fabric of each piece or movement in detail, using ingenious methods of analysis designed specially for the music concerned. She contends persuasively that when such a “close reading” recognizes and takes into account the impact of the composer’s gender and political views on a work, then it can offer us valuable ways to hear and apprehend that work.

Her readings, carried out with the utmost skill, suggest ways in which the three composers severally coped with a male-dominated world – challenging it, accepting while undercutting it, even getting the upper hand (literally!) over it temporarily, and so forth – and at the same time dealing with a social and political world in which their views were sometimes far from orthodox. Indeed, it shows them working against the background of the Great Depression and later the fanatical oppression of the McCarthyist era. Hisama gives us enough historical and biographical information to see also how the musical processes that she uncovers reflect aspects of their family, social, and professional lives.

Her book brings together the general fields of feminist theory and social critique, and the specific field of formalist music theory, and intertwines them so successfully, with such depth of insight, and with such cleverly invented analytical tools, that it will surely set a new standard not only for gender discourse about music, but also for discourse concerning race, sexuality, and class.
Portions of this study were delivered at the University of Minnesota, the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, Wesleyan University, Ithaca College, Mount Holyoke College, University of California at Riverside, Ohio State University, Princeton University, Connecticut College, and Pennsylvania State University. For their helpful responses I would like to thank Elizabeth West Marvin, Richard Hermann, Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, Leo Treitler, Joel Lester, Catherine Torpey, John Rahn, Taylor Greer, Jeff Stadelman, Marion Guck, Suzanne Cusick, Fred Maus, Nicholas Cook, Rachel Joffe Falmagne, Arlene Dallalfe, Jyl Lynn Felman, Margaret Hunt, Miriam Whaples, Barbara Whitten, Ruth Busch, Monica Jakuc, Roger Graybill, Lori Burns, Lyn Ellen Burkett, Naomi André, David Brackett, Michele Edwards, Cathy Shuman, and Amy Dooling. I am indebted to Alexander Vishio, David Sanjek, Shaugn O'Donnell, Tim Campbell, and Joanne Burkholder for their generous assistance with various questions, and to the late Martin Bernstein, Maurice Peress, the late Irene Heskes, Barbara Petersen, Şahan Arzruni, Leo Kraft, George Perle, and Lucille Field Goodman for graciously allowing me to interview them. I am grateful to Milton Babbitt, from whom I first heard of Marion Bauer, for sharing his memories about American music's recent past. I thank my colleagues at Brooklyn College, City University of New York for their support, especially Ray Allen, Nancy Hager, Bruce Machnyt, Philip Rupprecht, and Jeff Taylor. Warmest thanks to Kathleen Mason Krotman, Lorraine Reilly, and Peg Rivers for their kind assistance, and to my students at Brooklyn College, Connecticut College, Ohio State University, and the University of Virginia for sharing their enthusiasm and ideas.

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Ruth Crawford Seeger, String Quartet 1931, third and fourth movements © 1941 by Merion Music, Inc. Used by permission of the publisher.

Miriam Gideon, “Night is my Sister,” from *Sonnets from Fatal Interview* for voice and string trio, published by American Composers Alliance © 1961 by Miriam Gideon. Used by permission of Herbert Kurz.


ABBREVIATIONS

Complete publishing information for the following can be found in the Bibliography.

JNS-MRCS  Joseph N. Straus, *The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger*
JT-RCS    Judith Tick, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer’s Search for American Music*
MB-TCM    Marion Bauer, *Twentieth Century Music: How It Developed, How to Listen to It* (1947 edn unless otherwise noted)
MBp-NYU   Marion Bauer papers, 1936–51, New York University, Bobst Library Archives
MG-RCS    Matilda Gaume, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: Memoirs, Memories, Music*
MGf-BMI   Miriam Gideon files, Broadcast Music, Inc.
MGj-NYPL  Journals of Miriam Gideon, Miriam Gideon papers, New York Public Library, Music Research Division
MGp-NYPL  Miriam Gideon papers, New York Public Library, Music Research Division
NLS-SPM   Nancy Louise Stewart, “The Solo Piano Music of Marion Bauer”
NYPL      New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Music Research Division
RCd-LC    Ruth Crawford diary, Seeger Collection, Library of Congress
RCI-LC    Ruth Crawford letters, Seeger Collection, Library of Congress
SC-LC     Seeger Collection, Library of Congress
NOTE ABOUT TECHNICAL TERMS

For readers unfamiliar with post-tonal theory, I provide a definition of technical terms the first time they are used and give the page reference for these definitions in the index. These definitions are not meant to be exhaustive, and readers may wish to consult texts by Joseph N. Straus and John Rahn that introduce the fundamentals of post-tonal theory.¹ Some of the terms used are of my own devising.

Pitches will be identified according to the Acoustical Society of America’s system of notation, where C4 equals middle C.

Contours will be identified by cseg names according to the conventions established by Elizabeth West Marvin and Paul Laprade.²

Pitch-class sets will be identified by their Forte name followed by their prime form given in brackets, or in abbreviated form by their prime form.³