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The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Music seeks to provide the most up-to-date knowledge on seventeenth-century music, together with a vital questioning of the way in which such a history can be told or put together for our present purposes. Written by a distinguished team of experts in the field, the chapters not only address traditional areas of study such as opera and church music, but also look at the way this extremely diverse and dynamic musical world has been categorised in the past, and how its products are viewed from various cultural points of view. While this history does not depart entirely from the traditional study of musical works and their composers, there is a strong emphasis on the institutions, cultures and politics of the age, together with an interrogation of the ways in which music related to contemporary arts, sciences and beliefs.

TIM CARTER is the author of the Cambridge Opera Handbook on Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (1987), *Jacopo Peri (1561–1633): His Life and Works* (1989), *Music in Late Renaissance and Early Baroque Italy* (1992) and *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre* (2002). He has also published numerous journal articles and essays on music in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Italy; those to 1998 were reprinted in *Music, Patronage and Printing in Late Renaissance Florence* and *Monteverdi and his Contemporaries* (both 2000). In 2001 he became David G. Frey Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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Preface

It would be difficult to claim that the idea of a history of seventeenth-century music is a new one. Indeed, some of the first significant attempts at writing a general history of music date from the seventeenth century itself, so writing that century's history today would not be entirely out of sympathy with the attitudes of the time. Nevertheless, Wolfgang Caspar Printz's history of music, *Historische Beschreibung der edelen Sing- und Kling-Kunst* (Dresden, 1690), is profoundly 'unhistorical' by later standards, given that it presents an anecdotal array of traditional knowledge about music, with the primary purpose of justifying and extolling the art. Comparing this sort of history with those of only a century later by writers such as Charles Burney (*A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present*, 1776–89), John Hawkins (*A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, 1776) or Johann Nikolaus Forkel (*Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik*, 1788–1801) reveals striking differences of perspective and value; whatever their drawbacks, these later attempts present a sense of critical narrative based on researched material that seems much closer to modern conceptions of what history should do. Thus there would be little virtue in writing an account of seventeenth-century music purely from the historiographical perspective of its time. On the other hand, the differing perspectives of different times, places and beliefs suggest that there is no single 'true' story to tell about any century's musical culture.

There is no shortage of music histories in print today, and these themselves show a variety of approaches. The oldest that is still generally available is the postwar Dent–Norton series, in which music is divided up into stylistic periods rather than centuries – Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque etc. – so that only the 'Twentieth Century' does without a label, as if its stylistic category is yet to be processed. The Prentice Hall series follows much the same format, albeit more economical in scale to cater for the mass market of music-history courses. The *New Oxford History of Music* was more ambitious, often dividing the standard periods into more than one volume (distinguished by a specific date-range) or dispensing with some of the traditional stylistic categories altogether (hence *The Age of Humanism, 1540–1630* or *Opera and Church Music, 1630–1750*). But

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despite *NOHM*'s valiant efforts, 'Renaissance' (which is certainly relevant at least for the earlier part of our period) has undoubtedly proved one of the most durable of the 'standard' labels for the history of Western music, given its application to such a wide range of historical, cultural and artistic phenomena. 'Baroque' is of the most recent application, is the most ambivalent, and has been perhaps the first to be discarded by some historians. Although its etymology is now largely ignored, the word still implies something mannerist and frivolous, standing between the grander-sounding eras of the 'Renaissance' and 'Classicism'.

Some histories devoted to specific instrumental repertoires will use 1700 as a cut-off date, such as the histories of keyboard music 'up to 1700' by Willi Apel (1967) or 'before 1700' by Alexander Silbiger (1995). Indeed, Apel also produced a study of Italian violin music (1983) that restricted itself to the seventeenth century alone. One significant general music history, Lorenzo Bianconi's *Il Seicento* (1982), specifically addresses our century shorn of the conventional Baroque epithet or the eighteenth-century appendage of 1700–1750. Might it be that the increasing tendency to divide volumes by date reflects an imperative to neutralise the standard post-war categories, and, in the case of the seventeenth century, to emancipate that century's music from the role of warm-up act to the German giants of the early eighteenth?

Certainly, affirmative action may have played its role in the trend away from stylistic periods and towards centuries. Less positively, one might say that it also betrays a certain failure of nerve, by which we feel reluctant to make any period-division that evidences a value-judgement of some sort; working by centuries is at least clean, neutral and (apart from the usual disputes as to exactly when a century begins and ends) incontestable, even if it is relatively meaningless. But there might be a more urgent, topical reason too: with the recent change of century (and indeed, millennium) we perhaps view century-divisions with more seriousness than might have been the case fifty years ago in the new awakening following a catastrophic war. The seduction of the temporal boundary has, of course, been compounded by other 'convenient' occurrences, namely the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and – most graphically – the events of 11 September 2001. Although comparing such world crises with Western music history must inevitably make the latter seem parochial, it is clear that we frequently look for musically striking events to divide centuries. It has, for instance, often been noted that 1600 conveniently marks the 'invention' of opera and the appearance of the first documentary evidence associated with the 'crisis' of Monteverdi's *seconda pratica*. We should be warned, of course, by the fact that the other end of the seventeenth century does not seem so neat. Yet 9/11 might also help us form important historical questions regarding

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apparent watersheds: have attitudes and thought processes really undergone a sea-change since that atrocity, and was it itself really that unexpected? Likewise (back in the parish), many have increasingly downplayed the conventional musical break at 1600 in favour either of an earlier start to the new style (by way of a new emphasis on rhetoric and affect in the Italian madrigal of the last quarter of the sixteenth century) or of a later one (the changing role of aria-styles in the musico-poetic discourse of the 1630s). And either way, 'Renaissance' styles and values clearly continued in some major repertories throughout the period. One might also perceive a 'generation gap' from the 1640s to the 1670s by which the narrative threads conventionally linking the early to the late Baroque are at best exiguous and, for some countries or genres, as yet non-existent: it is much easier to construct a coherent story of, say, the sixteenth century than it is of the seventeenth.

It would be disingenuous to claim that the editors and authors of the present volume set out with the idea of a seventeenth-century history entirely independently of the fact that Cambridge University Press was producing similar volumes on the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There is certainly a pattern to which to conform here, but what would happen if one were to continue the series backwards (sixteenth century, fifteenth century etc.)? It seems likely that here, at least, there would be a strong tendency to revert to conventional periods ('Renaissance', 'Medieval' or just 'Early' music). Perhaps that is to do with the market. Perhaps, however, it is also due to the fact that the sixteenth century, for instance, on its own seems too diffuse, its musical developments too static and comparatively lacking in canonical composers (with the obvious exceptions such as Josquin Desprez and Palestrina). The seventeenth century is clearly richer in terms of famous names whose music is generally both individualistic and diverse – Monteverdi, Cavalli, Schütz, Lully, Purcell, Buxtehude, Corelli and Alessandro Scarlatti – even if these evidently do not match (at least in number) those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But even if we were to justify our history of the seventeenth century as marking as much the birth of the 'modern' era as it might do in the history of science – we do not – it is the most problematic of the 'useable centuries' in terms of the standard historiographical preconceptions of linear temporality and great, monumental figures. Indeed, it perhaps comes closest to the twentieth century in terms of challenging conventional historical methods and modes of interpretation. If the twentieth century seemed fraught with the splintering of ideologies, styles, and even definitions of what counts as music (not least through the vertiginous opening up of 'world music' and the unpredictable workings of the unfettered market for the popular and the commercial), similar issues seem to be at stake in the seventeenth. Admittedly, the Eurocentric world of seventeenth-century

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music (and the present book remains, *almost* unashamedly, Eurocentric) seems relatively limited by contemporary standards, but it was undoubtedly the era in which the Scientific Revolution and the rise of the nation-state set the pattern for things to come. There were even the first, tentative glimpses of the world of music beyond the Western tradition (facilitated by colonial expansion and latent in the encyclopaedic approaches of Athanasius Kircher and Marin Mersenne), something that seemed to confirm the superiority of the universalising tendencies of modern Western thought while also opening up the possibility of cultural differences to be recognised, if not necessarily reconciled, within the European context. In short, many of the contradictions, challenges, threats and possibilities that we experience today might be shown to have their roots in seventeenth-century thought and culture, and a history of music in this era must surely be able to play a part in the way in which we understand ourselves.

This last thought renders it abundantly plain that the way in which the present book is constructed is very much a product of our time and its priorities, both overt and covert. The fact that it is not written by a single author (such as a Manfred Bukofzer, Claude Palisca or Lorenzo Bianconi) is in part a question of competence in a time of increasing specialisation, but it also reflects an earnest belief in the value of diversity of approach and opinion. Moreover, we two editors have evolved conceptions that neither would have generated independently, and whatever plans we might have had were inevitably subverted – but hopefully bettered – by the rich variety of authors, all current leaders in the field. This multiplicity, randomness, and contingent editorial synthesis of the contributions seem to chime surprisingly well with the situation in seventeenth-century music, and, of course, it mirrors our own times precisely. It is not the case that strong-willed authorship has entirely disappeared, but that several strong voices can sound simultaneously, any uniformity often coming from ‘hidden’ factors, such as seemingly innocuous editorial decisions as to order, or what to cut or modify, and from the very format of the volume as determined by the Press.

For the latter, the present volume follows previous Cambridge Music Histories by avoiding music examples and illustrations. This may be a cause for celebration (because many more people, from diverse fields, now read about music), or gloom (because fewer now read music itself, and there is perhaps a general refusal to engage with its inner workings). Certainly, the way in which the entire musicological field has opened out in recent decades, rendering its discourse closer to those of literary criticism and of the other arts, means that music now seems less isolated from the cultural conversations of its time and of ours. There is a sense in which a historian of music can be a ‘critic’ in much

the same way as an ‘art critic’ might relate to painting or sculpture, as someone who does not necessarily have any expertise in the actual execution of the art. Again, there is something here that resonates with the situation around the turn of the seventeenth century when music became an object of elite public discourse, beyond the day-to-day activities of the profession of practical music. There were also obvious fears about the general ‘lowering of standards’ as certain composers and performers seemed to circumvent the established rules in the name of some extra-musical imperative. Yet it would certainly be wrong to assert that musical expertise has disappeared (now as then), or that writers deprived of musical examples do not care very deeply for a direct sensual, emotional and intellectual engagement with music.

It remains to be seen whether the tradition of Western art-music can survive in 21st-century society, but it is almost certain that it would die if musicians and scholars batted down their hatches and talked and played only to one another. If this volume undoubtedly loses something with a lessened engagement with the nuts and bolts of music, it also gains much by examining the diverse ways in which music interacts with the surrounding culture. Our examination of the seventeenth century can also be an examination of some of the conditions and presuppositions of the present, challenging us to articulate our musical priorities and to define that which makes the classical tradition worth preserving in the first place. By drawing music nearer to the world of letters, we can also lay the foundations for a regeneration of the amateur but sophisticated musical culture that has always been so vital for the health of music within modernity.

Given that our history represents our contemporary conceptions of the seventeenth century, it is worth rehearsing in brief the changes in the reception of seventeenth-century music over the intervening years. Only if our present reception of that era were to be the most accurate or ‘true’ so far would all earlier reception be rendered worthless. Yet there is clearly no guarantee of truth in this regard, even if our methods of dealing with factual evidence seem more precise than ever (and we should remember that empirical methodology was itself still in its infancy in the seventeenth century). Perhaps a primary question to ask of the history of the reception of seventeenth-century music (and indeed, culture in general) is whether that era has always been viewed with the ambivalence that tends to characterise much of its twentieth-century reception, namely as a period of flux, disorder or even sterility, separating the perfection of the Renaissance from the summits of the high Baroque and Classical periods. Given that it is only in the last 60 years – save some prior flurries of interest in particular composers (notably Monteverdi, Lully and Purcell) – that scholars and performers have developed an extensive concern (whether

'historical' or not) for seventeenth-century music even remotely comparable with that of the two surrounding centuries, has anything changed in our more recent times to render the era seemingly more significant?

The significance of such issues of reception-history has only recently begun to be realised, and much terrain remains to be charted (Haskell offers a start). There certainly seems to be little evidence that the early eighteenth century saw itself to be conceptually severed from the seventeenth. The fact that the most potent political regime of the age, Louis XIV's France, straddled the turn of the century is obviously significant, and indeed the continuity in French performances of Lully's great *tragédies en musique* right up to the Revolution is difficult to ignore. If we examine the historicist habits of the German duo, J. S. Bach and Handel, it is striking that both tended to use seventeenth-century music as if it were their own. Almost all of Handel's 'borrowed' material (except from himself) comes from the immediately preceding generation, and Bach's recently rediscovered 'Altbachisches Archiv' represents members of his family from the entire seventeenth century; many of these pieces show signs of performance in his later years. If this generation of composers who died around 1750 shows a continuity with the previous century, much the same could be said of musical institutions of the time. Most courts continued to employ (or dismiss) their musical employees in much the same way as before; public opera (which had spread to the major centres of northern Europe by the last decades of the seventeenth century) continued wherever it was economically viable; church music and its associated educational institutions were generally unscathed by the change of century. If public performance, unattached to court, church or opera, came into its own in the eighteenth century, this was often an extension of institutions that sprang up in the previous era: the academy, *collegium musicum*, organ recital etc. The only sign of a conscious revivalist culture was in England from around the 1720s: societies such as the Academy of Ancient Music and the Concert of Ancient Music self-consciously performed music by composers of the late sixteenth century up to Purcell. Perhaps this fashion for restoring the past related to the revival necessitated by the Restoration in the 1660s, the Concert of Ancient Music's resolution to play music over twenty years old mirroring the same sort of gap that would have been experienced after the Civil War and Cromwellian eras.

Many of these continuities (even those that made a continuity out of restoration) were of course broken in the latter half of the eighteenth century, when indeed even most of the composers active before 1750 seemed outmoded. It is interesting to note which seventeenth-century repertoires continued to survive: the music of Corelli still had classical status throughout the eighteenth century, enjoying an unprecedented number of reprints. Institutions that

were not 'progressive' (particularly churches) could still cling to earlier music: obviously significant in this regard is the publication of William Boyce's *Cathedral Music* (1760–73), which did much to maintain the restorative fervour of post-Commonwealth England by implying a continuous tradition of English sacred music stretching back to the era of Tye and Tallis. The new histories of music certainly do not ignore the seventeenth century, although Burney and Hawkins clearly sensed an affinity with the latter half of the previous century but not necessarily with the former.

Whatever continuities seventeenth-century repertory and practice enjoyed in the eighteenth century, the French Revolution and its shockwaves across Europe meant that there was now a sense in which the past was irreconcilably severed. In the nineteenth century, earlier music was rediscovered and re-invented with a fervour that had never pertained before, if also with an unavoidable sense of difference. Nevertheless, it is perhaps here that we see the beginnings of the tendency to overlook the seventeenth century, even against the background of the growing interest in the past: most models that acquired particular prestige (e.g., Palestrina for both Catholic and Protestant traditions, Bach and Handel for German, French and English cultures) tended to come from just before or just after our period. Generally, if seventeenth-century music appeared in nineteenth-century anthologies or specialist publications (e.g., of the Musical Antiquarian Society in England, 1840–47) this was sometimes through a general antiquarian concern for whatever had survived from the past rather than from an interest in the seventeenth century *per se*. 'Arie antiche' (whether real or fake) could subsequently provide fodder for beginning singers, while seventeenth-century keyboard pieces, especially of the more picturesque variety, could grace the music stands of women performers in the salon and drawing-room. The era could also feature in programmes that were devised to show a particular historical progression, such as in the *concert historique* invented by François-Joseph Fétis in Paris during the 1830s. Yet the tendency to view earlier musics as merely a precursor to, or a primitive form of, 'real' music necessarily did them a disservice, not least by inserting them within lines of 'progress' representing just the first steps to the Parnassus of the High Baroque, Classical and Romantic masters. Also, the apparent absence of strong compositional voices, or for that matter of strong biographical presences, tended to relegate early music to a series of 'Kleinmeister', particularly if they came from the seventeenth century.

What is striking is the comparative lateness with which singular national figures of our period made it into the revival industry. Lully began to make an appearance at the Paris Opéra in the 1850s, coinciding with the publication of extracts of several of his dramatic works in vocal score. But only in the wake of

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the culturally demoralising Franco-Prussian war (1870), and then the battles pro- and anti-Wagner, did he begin to play a significant part in the French patriotic cause, if only by virtue of his association with a great seventeenth-century literary figure, Molière. Lully's (and others') music was soon to be published in editions that attempted to present the entire cultural heritage of the nation, and yet often it was perceived as just that, a 'heritage' to be kept in the museum, rather than to be given life through performance. As Ellis shows, French music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was often deemed to lack a necessary virility, namely that which was demonstrated by the recent vigorous revival of Handel and Bach. It was not until 1930 that an edition dedicated specifically to the complete works of Lully appeared, and even the recent attempt at an *œuvres complètes* has had a somewhat unhappy history. In England, although Purcell was celebrated in performance by the Purcell Club in Westminster Abbey from the middle of the nineteenth century, the Purcell Society which published his works was not founded until 1878 (and the project was not complete until 1965); and the first stagings of his music did not occur until the 1890s. However, the anniversary year of 1895 became an important trigger for the so-called 'English musical Renaissance'. In Germany, the Schütz revival was also surprisingly late. Philipp Spitta pioneered the rediscovery of Schütz's music in the wake of his extensive Bach studies, and he provided the impetus for the complete edition begun in 1885 to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the composer's birth. Perhaps the greatest service to seventeenth-century German music (of the generation from Praetorius to Schütz) was done by Brahms within his programmes as a choral conductor. It may also be that his absorption of some of the rhetorical and motivic elements of this repertory within his own music rendered later generations progressively more accepting of this idiom. Learned through the filter of Brahms, the language of Schütz could become 'modern' once more.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, seventeenth-century music continued to fare relatively poorly in comparison to the German, French and Italian composers of the High Baroque. Indeed, these latter, together with later eighteenth-century composers, were ideal models for the neo-classical climate of the interwar years; earlier seventeenth-century music presumably did not possess enough formal discipline to provide much in the way of models (one significant exception was Richard Strauss's use of Lully's music in his works surrounding *Ariadne auf Naxos*) save, perhaps, in the sphere of expressive intensity and declamatory freedom. The French continued to play an important role. The first 'modern' performance of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1904, followed by *L'incoronazione di Poppea* the following year) occurred in a French institution, not an Italian one: namely, the Schola Cantorum that Charles Bordes and

Vincent d'Indy had founded in 1894. Although the primary purpose of this institution was the regeneration of religious music it also presented concert performances of many dramatic works, if in drastically cut versions. It was also in France that Nadia Boulanger pioneered the performance of Monteverdi madrigals in the 1930s, while another Frenchman, Edgard Varèse, presented choral concerts in New York during the 1930s involving music by a wide range of seventeenth-century composers, including Monteverdi, Charpentier and Schütz. By this time, however, a Monteverdi revival had already established itself also in Italy (although there had been sporadic interest from the 1870s on), associated with a national (at times, right-wing) revivalism, a reaction to Romantic excess (whether Wagner or Puccini), a search for cultural roots, and even a sense that modernism might find its anchor in a pre-Classical past. Gian Francesco Malipiero's first complete edition of Monteverdi's works (1926–42) coincided with a particularly ugly period of Italian nationalism. Yet Malipiero's work, and that of many others who followed his lead in the cause of early Italian music, continued unabated after the Fascist era, and for curious reasons, post-war interest in Monteverdi was particularly strong in England.

With the German-based 'Orgelbewegung' from the 1920s, seventeenth-century organ music became more usable, since many surviving instruments contemporary with its composition were now appreciated afresh (the first publications of Buxtehude's organ music date back to 1903). It was also in this period that the music of Schütz became ubiquitous in Germany, coinciding with the Italian rediscovery of Monteverdi. Given that Schütz more or less represented the earliest available repertory of music setting the German vernacular which also conformed to refined, quasi-Renaissance disciplines of composition, his music provided an ideal way of grounding increasingly nationalist sentiment in a 'classical' historical tradition, while also providing music for choral societies to perform (something similar might be said of the German reception of Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers). The English national interest in Purcell also increased between the wars, although it reached its fullest flowering after World War II, particularly with its reworking in the music of Britten and Tippett.

The early-music revival after the war, together with the associated movement in historically informed performance, began to give seventeenth-century music something approaching the attention already given to other centuries. Early pioneers of Baroque opera gave performances that were more (Paul Hindemith) or less (Raymond Leppard) indebted to historical performance, but several works of Monteverdi and Cavalli were well established in the operatic repertory before historical accuracy became more of an imperative (although editions of Cavalli's operas did not appear until the 1960s, and even today we lack

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proper scholarly ones). If the seventeenth century still seemed to lag behind other forms of early music, perhaps it was partly because the strongest performing personalities in the field specialised either in earlier music (e.g., David Munrow and Thomas Binkley) or in that of a somewhat later period (e.g., Gustav Leonhardt and Nikolaus Harnoncourt). It is also likely, however, that the seventeenth century found itself falling between several stools: its music was not choral enough for the Oxbridge singing-men who did so much for the early-music revival in the United Kingdom, and there was more exotic fun to be gained from picking up (and even making) a medieval rebec than from converting a violin to Baroque use. There was (and for the most part, is) no profit in retrofitting a Stradivarius to its original design and purpose, and even in the 1960s and 1970s performances of Monteverdi's 1610 *Vespers* still used oboes, clarinets or trumpets rather than cornetts. Singers did not have the voice to beat the throat (at least until Nigel Rogers showed us how to do it), string players did not have the heart to abandon vibrato (not that they necessarily needed to), the harpsichord could only softly clatter in the background, and the recorder and viol were relegated to (and associated with) a sub-Dolmetsch underworld of relentless if spirited amateurism.

Nevertheless, performers were probably in advance of scholars. The British journal *Early Music* showed a pronounced Medieval–Renaissance bias in its first issue of 1973 (although, given its national provenance, the solitary article on Purcell is not out of place). The next few years show a similar partiality, with further obvious English exceptions (such as Dowland and Gibbons). While the late 1970s show an increase in seventeenth-century topics, particularly English or operatic, it is perhaps only in the mid 1980s that one can sense that seventeenth-century music enjoys coverage equal to other 'early' periods. As for the *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis*, founded in 1977, the first issues involve the seventeenth century only if this is relevant to a study of the entire history of a particular instrument. Otherwise, the bias is very much towards the Middle Ages, followed by the eighteenth century; again, it is only in the later 1980s that the seventeenth century seems to gain parity with the others. While the Heinrich-Schütz-Gesellschaft had been covering wider seventeenth-century issues for several years (its journal dates back to 1979), the first society devoted specifically to seventeenth-century music began its (on-line) journal in America in 1995.

It was also in the late 1980s and 1990s that the seventeenth century became a significant subject for some of the newer musicological approaches that were beginning to develop. Whilst the vast majority of authors saw the nineteenth century as their primary playground, the seventeenth also seemed significant owing to its emphasis on text and music, the birth of opera (together with its semantic ambiguity and emerging semiotic codes), the surprising number of

distinguished women composers, and the ambiguities of gender in theatrical music (the interest in the castrato also becoming something of an obsession in popular culture). On the other hand, there has also been much new work in a more ‘traditional’ (or at least post-war) vein, covering specific instrumental repertoires and broad genres such as oratorio and French or Italian opera. Although this writing often seems to take a stand against specific ‘trendy’ approaches, it is significant that most of it brings in far more of the broader cultural contexts than before, often relating music closely to other arts. There has also been a spate of studies relating to specific composers, such as Buxtehude, Corelli, Monteverdi and Purcell, the last two composers receiving significant coverage around the anniversary years of 1993 and 1995.

Obviously, there is no room here to rehearse all the various nuances of the recent culture of historical performance. In many respects, both amateur and professional environments tended initially to favour repertoires of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, as reflected in the journals of the 1970s. However, one other noticeable tendency was initially to eschew the more fixed, canonical repertoires and favour music such as that of the Baroque that allowed a certain flexibility in relation both to notated text and to performance practice (e.g., in the application of ornamentation or rhythmic inequality). Thus the seventeenth century was an ideal arena for the counter-cultural tendencies in historical performance, so Laurence Dreyfus argues, or even an opportunity to challenge Richard Taruskin’s provocative claim that the early-music revival as a whole represented just the last gasp of modernism, and one founded on a fundamentally false premise to boot. It was also soon clear that reconstructing the contextual aspects of seventeenth-century performance meant that one could present spectacles (as in productions of French or Italian opera) that provided a colourful antidote to the sober conventions of traditional concert performance.

Consideration of the recent phenomenal success of the early-music movement inevitably brings in questions of the commercialisation of seventeenth-century music. There is a small but extremely significant selection of ‘hits’ that have essentially become part of a popular-music culture. These might include Corelli’s ‘Christmas Concerto’, suitable for any establishment wishing to impart an air of sophistication, Dido’s Lament, an emblem of tragedy virtually interchangeable with Barber’s Adagio, or Albinoni’s ‘Adagio’ (not in fact by Albinoni but by Italian musicologist Remo Giazotto). Most interesting, perhaps, is Pachelbel’s ‘Canon’, something that seems to suit virtually any occasion or atmosphere. This might have something to do with its ‘unmarked’ serenity, its mesmeric but varied repetitions suggesting a meditative quality. While it is clear that this could easily be related to both New Age and minimalist movements, what is perhaps most significant is the ground bass and the

repetitive harmonic pattern this engenders. For it is surely the ground bass (and Dido is significant here, too) that relates it most directly to popular music of the late twentieth century, sharing something of the latter's foundation in dance. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why some seventeenth-century music has become more marketable. Moreover, its early emphasis on text and melody corresponds with the drive to simplicity following the high modernism of the 1950s; the formal structures that developed in the course of the seventeenth century seldom approach the complexity of those of the Classical era and beyond, yet they have a directness easily assimilated by listeners unfamiliar with the more traditional challenges of 'serious' music.

But to say that some seventeenth-century music has become more relevant owing to its 'easy-listening' nature is obviously a rather feeble justification for its place in our culture. Rather, one could look to its plurality, unexpectedness, and dynamic combination of conservative and radical elements in the search for modes of artistic expression fit for its times. Just how this music stems from a culture that shares some of our proclivities while representing a historically alien world is something that the present book must put at centre stage.

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