The Music of Harrison Birtwistle

Harrison Birtwistle has become the most eminent and acclaimed of contemporary British composers. This is the first book to provide a comprehensive view of his large and varied output. It contains descriptions of every published work, and also of a number of withdrawn and unpublished pieces. Revealing light is often cast on the more familiar pieces by considering these lesser-known areas of Birtwistle’s œuvre.

The book is structured around a number of broad themes – themes of significance to Birtwistle, but also to much other music. These include theatre, song, time and texture. This approach emphasises the music’s multifarious ways of meaning; now that even the academic world no longer takes the merits of ‘difficult’ contemporary music for granted, it is all the more important to assess what it represents beyond mere technical innovation. Dr Adlington thus avoids in-depth technical analysis, focusing instead upon the music’s wider cultural significance.

Robert Adlington is a Lecturer in Music at the University of Nottingham.
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The Music of
Harrison Birtwistle

Robert Adlington
For Mum and Dad
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Abbreviations and note on sources

The following abbreviations are used in this book:


Programme notes for which no date or other details are given are held by Universal Edition, London.